

Perceived Environments and Physical Activity Among American Indian Adults Living in Oklahoma: The THRIVE Study

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What Is the Purpose of this Study/Review?

- To identify perceptions of the built environment and examine whether or not there is an association between environmental perceptions and reported physical activity (PA) in American Indian (AI) communities, with the larger overarching purpose of improving health in AI communities.

What Is the Problem?

- AIs have a disproportionate burden of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease than people of other races.
- Many AI communities are located in areas with less exposure to factors that promote PA.
- AI communities are sometimes faced with challenges such as high levels of poverty and limited resources allocated towards the establishment of recreational facilities and parks.

What Are the Findings?

- The majority of AI communities had indoor and outdoor exercise areas in their towns, but many people who reside there did not use them.
- Higher town center summary scores (a measurement of the facilities in their town center) were associated with adequate PA (150 minutes of moderate activity per week).
- Nice sidewalks, streetlights, and crosswalks were associated with getting adequate PA in AI communities.

Who Should Care Most?

- City planners and community council members who oversee funding and decision making for built environment.
- Tribal leaders who are concerned about the health of their citizens and in reducing downstream healthcare costs.
- Community members who offer perspective on the values of their community.
- Community-based participatory researchers who are designing interventions to improve PA among Native communities.
- Public health and medical workers who are involved with planning and implementing community health programs.

Recommendations for Action

- This study identifies specific built environment factors, such as enhanced sidewalk infrastructure and marked crosswalks, that affect peoples' PA, which may be utilized by tribal and local organizations to more effectively prioritize community interventions to improve PA and potentially the health of the community.
- The identification of low-cost (marked crosswalks) and higher cost (streetlights and nice sidewalks) infrastructure improvements.
- Future multilevel ecologic interventions designed to increase PA should be designed with these factors in mind.