CARE: Community Alliance for Research and Engagement

DOCUMENTING THE HEALTH OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS
• DIXWELL •

CARE, a partnership between the New Haven community and Yale University, is taking action against chronic disease. To improve the health of our residents, CARE promotes a healthy lifestyle by focusing on three risk factors: diet, exercise, and tobacco use. New Haven is the first US city to join one of the world's largest community-based research studies on chronic disease - with other sites in England, Mexico, India and China.

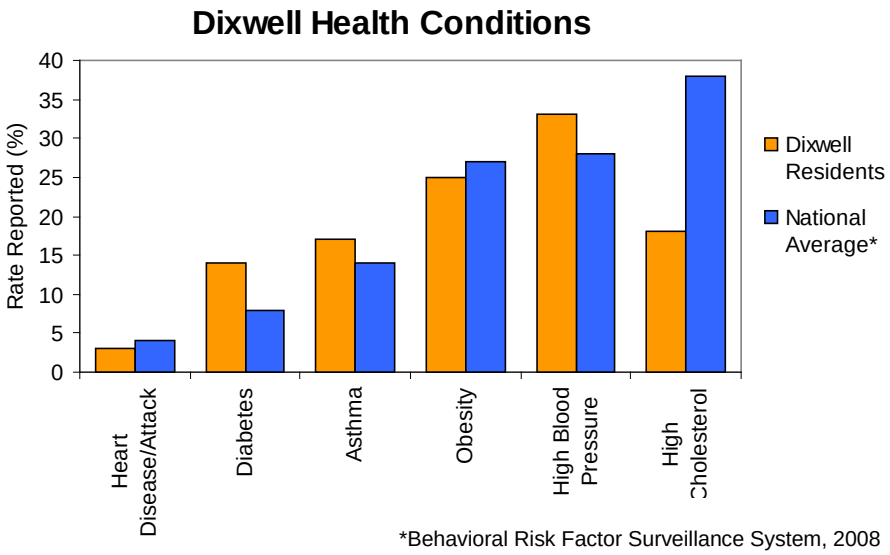
In the summer of 2009, Youth@Work interns created an "asset map" of six New Haven neighborhoods, including the Dixwell neighborhood. The asset maps document neighborhood features related to diet, exercise, and tobacco use. In the fall, 209 Dixwell residents participated in a survey about health and their own habits around these same three risk factors. A total of 1,205 New Haven residents took the same survey in all six neighborhoods.

DIXWELL'S ASSET MAP

- In Dixwell, ten stores, three restaurants, five parks, and two community gardens were mapped.
- Dixwell lacks grocery stores and access to fresh produce: four of the mapped stores were package stores, and six were convenience stores.
- No restaurants in Dixwell promote themselves as having healthy options or post nutrition information, unlike some other neighborhoods in New Haven.

SURVEY RESULTS – GENERAL

- Compared to the other neighborhoods, more Dixwell residents rated their health as "excellent" (19% vs. 16%). This is closer to the national rate of 20%.
- Most people in Dixwell report having a regular place to go for health care (88%), but only 71% have health insurance. This is below the national average of 86%.
- Dixwell residents report a high level of stress: 25% are bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless, 22% feel more stress than is usual, and 6% feel that "life is almost unbearable."



*Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2008 (Centers for Disease Control)

- Reported chronic disease in Dixwell looks similar to the rest of the neighborhoods, except that there was less reported obesity in Dixwell.

NUTRITION

- Twelve percent (12%) of Dixwell residents report **"food insecurity"** – meaning that they or their family did not have enough food (or money to buy food) in the past 30 days. This was lower than other surveyed neighborhoods (18%), and similar to the national average (11%).

- About half of Dixwell residents eat **vegetables** seven days a week and 41% eat **fruit** every day. However, nearly 80% of those who eat fruits and vegetables report having just one or two servings of each per day, less than the recommendation of five a day.

- As in other surveyed neighborhoods, Dixwell participants report eating and drinking many sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages like soda. More than one-third eat sweets daily and 46% drink sugar-sweetened beverages everyday - with 7 of 10 adults drinking two or more per day.

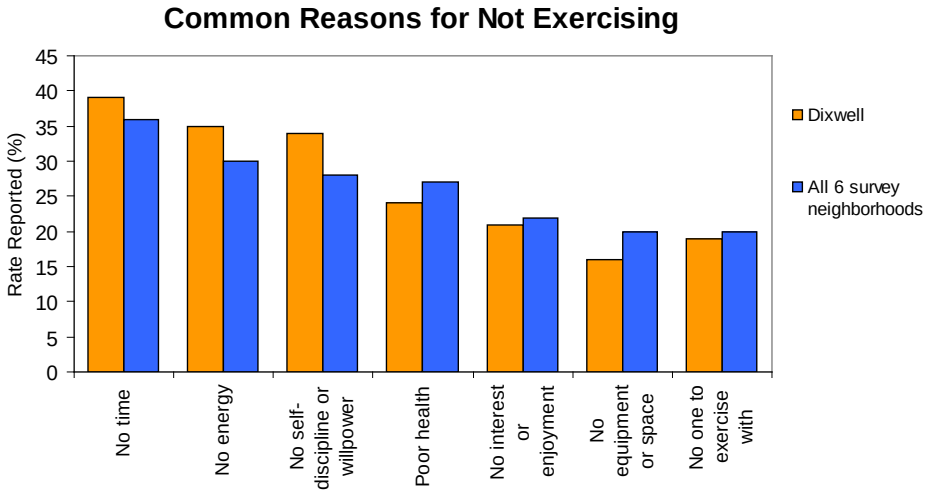
EXERCISE

- Fifty eight percent (58%) of Dixwell residents report doing **no vigorous exercise** (which makes you breathe much harder than normal) and 39% report doing **no moderate exercise** (which makes you breathe somewhat harder than normal) in the past seven days.

- Although exercise habits in Dixwell were similar to those in other surveyed neighborhoods, people in Dixwell were **more likely to walk or ride a bike to work or school.** One-quarter report walking or biking five to seven days a week (compared with 17% in other neighborhoods).

- Similar to residents surveyed in other neighborhoods, Dixwell residents describe challenges to regular exercise, including no time, energy and willpower.

- Feelings of safety can limit exercise options. Nearly 70% of Dixwell residents "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" that **it is unsafe to go for walks** in their neighborhood at night.



SMOKING

- One-quarter (25%) of Dixwell residents are **current daily smokers** – lower than other neighborhoods (31%), but higher than the national average (20%). More than one-third are ready to quit now and almost another half are thinking of quitting in the next six months.

- As in other neighborhoods, a large majority of smokers (79%) said they would be motivated to quit by saving the money they spend on cigarettes.

For more information about CARE and this project:
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