



Safe Routes
to School
National
Partnership

Health Equity in Washington



Health Equity means that everyone deserves and gets a fair and just opportunity to lead a healthy life. “This requires removing obstacles to health such as lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.”¹

Historical legacies and sustained realities of structural discrimination (based on race, class, gender, sexuality, immigration status, etc.) and decision-making have created inequality of roles and participation in transportation planning decisions, which has, in turn, disparately impacted transportation options and access for different populations. Transportation can facilitate or prevent access to opportunities (educational, social, recreational, professional, etc.) and participation in the public sphere, therefore limited transportation opportunities compound existing disparities in education, employment, political engagement, health, and safety.

Health Equity prioritizes promotion of equal opportunities for all people to be healthy because no one should be denied the chance at a healthy life because of who they are or their socio-economic opportunities.²

Why Is Health Equity Important?

Members of underserved communities – those from low income communities and communities of color that have been under-resourced and under-prioritized for projects – are more likely to be diagnosed with, and suffer disproportionately from, such chronic illnesses as asthma, diabetes, and hypertension, and to die prematurely from these and other causes. This starts in early childhood and is based on, among other things, transportation decisions and opportunities available to community members. “Inequities are created when barriers prevent individuals and communities from accessing these conditions and reaching their full potential.”³

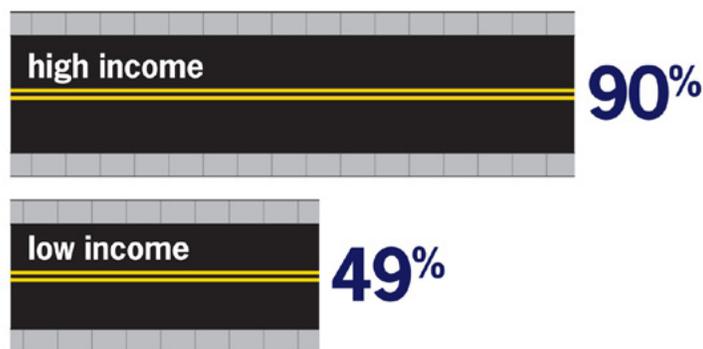
- Adults from underserved communities tend to get less physical activity each day than the rest of the population, and typically more than 2/3 of youth in Washington do NOT get their required daily physical activity^{4,5}
- Many members of underserved communities rely on walking or bicycling to get to basic needs such as school, work, and grocery shopping
- Historic underinvestment in underserved communities results in increased injury and crash fatalities in these communities, and the built environment makes it difficult for individuals to overcome the barriers that exists to create these health disparities

Addressing Health Equity in Transportation Projects

By focusing transportation funds to projects where there is most need, no matter the setting (urban, rural, suburban), transportation projects can reduce barriers to choosing healthy behaviors and promote health for all. Prioritizing Health Equity as criteria for funding transportation projects helps distribute needed resources in a manner that progressively reduces health disparities and improves health for all.

- Prioritize project opportunities in underserved communities to increase opportunities for safe, healthy transportation or recreation, such as walking or riding a bicycle
- Build comprehensive network of sidewalks/bike lanes to connect essential destinations such as schools, grocery stores, transit stops, and parks

Communities with Sidewalks



Bridging the Gap, Income Disparities in Street Features that Encourage Walking, 2012

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Children Killed While Walking



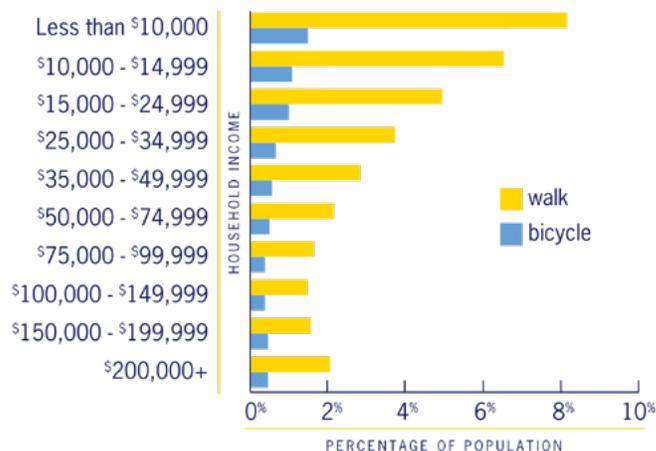
Dangerous by Design, 2011

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References

1. <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>
2. <https://healthequity.sfsu.edu/content/defining-health-equity>
3. <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity>
4. <http://www.askhys.net/FactSheets>
5. Ibid

Walking & Bicycling to Work by Household Income 2008-2012



U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

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