



Exercise: Only for wealthy suburb dwellers?

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People living in Melbourne's poorest suburbs are far less likely to exercise than those in wealthy suburbs, University of Melbourne researchers have found.

A study of 2349 people from across the metropolitan area revealed that only 46 per cent of people from the city's poorest suburbs, which includes Darebin, Dandenong and Moreland, do enough exercise to maintain good health.

In contrast, 60 per cent of people living in high socio-economic status (SES) areas and 54 per cent in middle SES areas, engage in physical activity deemed sufficient to maintain good health.

"We know people on low incomes and those with low education levels are less likely to exercise, however, this is the first Australian study to show, using a multi level analysis of different factors, that locality seems to influence whether or not someone is physically active," says Associate Professor Anne Kavanagh, Principal Research Fellow at the University's Key Centre for Women's Health in Society.

"Basically, the physical characteristics of where you live do matter."

In the study, participants were asked about their involvement in a range of physical activities including walking, vigorous garden or yard work and vigorous physical activity, such as jogging, cycling and swimming over the previous week.

Levels of physical activity were assessed using items from the Active Australia Survey. People who said they spent less than 150 minutes of activity were considered insufficiently active for health benefit.

Overall, walking was the most common activity with around 80 per cent of respondents reporting walking between one and seven times each week. Walking and jogging were more common among people with a high income. People living in the most disadvantaged areas were 30 per cent less likely to jog than those in the least disadvantaged areas.

The study draws on data collected from the Victorian Neighbourhood Lifestyle Environment Study, (VicLANES), a VicHealth funded project which covers 50 census collection districts across 20 local government areas in inner Melbourne

High SES local government areas where data was collected include: Stonnington, Manningham and Bayside. Mid SES areas included Monash, Yarra and Glen Eira. Low SES areas include Darebin, Dandenong and Moreland. In many local government areas, a mix of high, mid and low SES areas and households were studied. For example in Knox and Maroondah 4 CCDs were studied covering three income groups.

The study is published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health (Urban area disadvantage and physical activity:a multilevel study in Melbourne, Australia. Kavanagh, A M. et al. J. Epidemiol. Community Health, Nov 2005; 59: 934 - 940.)

For a copy of the research paper contact Amanda Tattam, Community Liaison Officer on 0413 997467 / 03 8344 4416 / atattam@unimelb.edu.au

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	High SES (842) % age	Middle SES (795) % age	Low SES (712) % age
Overall Physical activity	60	54	46
Jogging (past mth)	18	17	14
Cycling (past month)	19	19	15
Walking 1-7 times a week	80	82	80
Swimming(past month)	15	16	14

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