

Am J Prev Med. 2002 Aug;23(2 Suppl):74-9.

The association between urban form and physical activity in U.S. adults.

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**BACKGROUND:** Physical inactivity is associated with multiple adverse health outcomes. Results from the transportation literature suggest that aspects of the urban environment may influence walking for transportation. In this paper we examine the association between a proxy measure of the urban environment and walking behavior.**METHODS:** We analyzed the association between home age and walking behavior in U.S. adults using data from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Logistic regression was used to estimate odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals and to control for the effects of gender, race/ethnicity, age, education level, household income, and activity limitations.**RESULTS:** Adults who lived in homes built before 1946 and from 1946 to 1973 were significantly more likely to walk 1+ miles > or =20 times per month than those who lived in homes built after 1973. This association was present among people living in urban and suburban counties, but absent among those living in rural counties. The association was also found in models that controlled for gender, race/ethnicity, age, education, income, and any health-related activity limitation. Other forms of leisure-time physical activity were not independently associated with home age.**CONCLUSIONS:** These results support the hypothesis that environmental variables influence walking frequency and suggest that home age may be a useful proxy for features of the urban environment that influence physical activity in the form of walking. Such proxy measures could facilitate testing ecologic models of health behavior using survey data.

Publication Types:

Research Support, U.S. Gov't, P.H.S.

PMID: 12133740 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]