

People living in highly black concentrated neighborhoods more likely to report their health as poor

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In a study examining the relationship between racial/ethnic neighborhood concentration and self-reported health, researchers at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health found that individuals living in neighborhoods with a high concentration of Blacks were twice as likely to report poor health when compared to their counterparts living in neighborhoods with a lower concentration of Blacks.

Based on data from more than 2,800 people who self-identified as white, black, Hispanic, or Asian, this is the first study to examine the effects of racial/ethnic neighborhood concentration and self-reported health in New York City.

People living in highly Black concentrated neighborhoods were more likely to report their health as poor (27%) when compared to counterparts living in low (17%) and medium Black concentrated neighborhoods (22%). Living in a neighborhood with a high concentration of Blacks, regardless of individuals' race or ethnicity, education, income or access to health insurance resulted in a twofold increased chance that residents would report poor health. This finding persisted even after additional adjustments for the socioeconomic circumstances of the neighborhoods and the individual's perception of their own neighborhoods.

"We used proportion of Black residents living in a zip code as a measure of residential segregation. Residential segregation is the damaging form of racial discrimination in this country and one that affects everyone regardless of their race or ethnicity." said Luisa N. Borrell, DDS, PhD, assistant professor of Epidemiology at the Mailman School of Public Health and co-author of the study. "This study demonstrates that poor self-reported health was associated with patterns of concentration of Blacks in a neighborhood. Our findings also suggest that individuals living in the most concentrated neighborhoods were almost two times more likely to perceive their health as poor compared to those living in less concentrated neighborhoods," according to Kellee White, MPH, doctoral student in the Department of Epidemiology at the Mailman School of Public Health and study co-author. "Moreover, segregated neighborhoods tend to suffer from concentrated poverty, economic disinvestment, and a lack of health resources. It is important to continue to determine the neighborhood elements that may facilitate or impede health."

The study was based on information from the New York City Social Indicator Survey and U.S. Census. Administered since 1997, the NYC-SIS is a biennial survey that measures individual and family well-being on a range of social and economic living conditions, adequacy of governmental services, and satisfaction and perception of the city.

"Although the deleterious effects of residential segregation on health are not well-understood, residential segregation has implications for most of the disparities of interest in the U.S., such as racial/ethnic, socioeconomic position, and geographic region," observed Dr. Borrell.

Source: Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

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