

Living near foreclosed property linked to higher blood pressure

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Image: Imperial College London

Living near foreclosed property may increase your risk of higher blood pressure, according to new research in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation*.

The study provides the first evidence that foreclosed property may affect neighbors' [systolic blood pressure](#), the top number in a [blood pressure reading](#).

Neighborhood environment is an important social determinant of cardiovascular health, including blood pressure. The scale of the recent U.S. housing crisis has prompted the public health community to seek a better understanding of how foreclosure activity might impact health. The number of foreclosures spiked in the United States in 2007-10 when

more than 6 million homeowners fell behind on their mortgages and banks took ownership of the homes, or foreclosed.

Researchers reviewed data from 1,740 participants (mostly white, 53 percent women) in 1987-2008 in the Framingham (Massachusetts) Offspring Cohort, which is part of the Framingham Heart Study. The researchers distinguished between real-estate-owned foreclosures, which are owned by lenders and typically sit vacant, and foreclosures purchased by third-party buyers, which are generally put into productive use.

Researchers found each additional foreclosed property within 100 meters (328 feet) of participants' homes was associated with an average increase of 1.71 mm Hg in systolic blood pressure. The association only applied to properties that were real-estate owned and there was no effect from foreclosed properties more than 100 meters from participants' homes.

"The increases in blood pressure observed could be due in part to unhealthy stress from residents' perception that their own properties are less valuable, their streets less attractive or safe and their neighborhoods less stable," said Mariana Arcaya, Sc.D., M.C.P., study lead author and Yerby Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies in Cambridge, Mass. "Safety could also be a concern that affects their ability to exercise in these neighborhoods."

"Healthcare providers, particularly those serving neighborhoods still recovering from the recent housing crisis, should be aware of foreclosure activity as a possible source of unhealthy stress for residents," Arcaya said.

Because the study involved predominately white, middle-class, suburban neighborhoods with single-family homes, research on different

populations in urban and rural settings is needed, Arcaya said.

High blood pressure affects nearly 76 million people in the United States and is a major contributor to heart disease and stroke. Risk factors include genetics, advanced age, poor nutrition and excessive body weight and alcohol consumption. Stress and other factors may also contribute to high [blood pressure](#).

Provided by American Heart Association

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