

60 years vs. 90 years: A new analysis calls Chicago's life-expectancy gap the largest in the US

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In the gleaming Streeterville neighborhood, Chicagoans live to be 90 years old, on average.

But just about 9 miles south, in Englewood, the [average life expectancy](#)

plummets to about 60 years, according to a new NYU School of Medicine analysis.

The 30-year gap between the neighborhoods is the largest in the country, according to the NYU researchers, who examined [life expectancies](#) in neighborhoods in the 500 biggest U.S. cities based on data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from 2010 to 2015.

The analysis comes less than a month after Chicago's new Mayor Lori Lightfoot took office, after campaigning on a promise to focus more attention on struggling West and South side neighborhoods by improving schools, creating jobs and fostering economic development. It also comes as local hospital systems increasingly aim to keep people healthier, partly by addressing social and economic disparities.

Neighborhoods with higher life expectancies tend to have access to good health care, high educational attainment and higher income, among other things, said Dr. Marc Gourevitch, chair of the Department of Population Health at New York University medical school and chief architect of the City Health Dashboard, a public database through which researchers did their analysis.

"There's a saying that your ZIP code has as much to do with health as your genetic code, and I think it's data like this that really shine a light on a statement like that and bring it to life," Gourevitch said.

The researchers also found that cities with bigger life expectancy gaps tended to have greater racial segregation. Chicago was more segregated than most of the other cities they analyzed.

"Often where there are greater concentrations in large cities of Latino or African American populations there can be neighborhoods, at times, where (there has been) more disinvestment in basic social services like

education, housing, clean water, safe streets," Gourevitch said.

The results are similar to those of the Chicago Life Expectancy project out of DePaul University conducted several years ago. As part of that project, DePaul researchers found life expectancy in Englewood to be among the lowest in the city at 67 to 72 years, while life [expectancy](#) in the Loop and Near North was 81 to 84 years.

"It just puts into stark focus the legacy and continuing inequality in Chicago, in that neighborhoods that are less than a dozen miles apart can have such radically different prospects for an individual's life," said Euan Hague, director of DePaul's School of Public Service and a member of the advisory board to the Center for Community Health Equity. The center, directed by DePaul and Rush University leaders, also cites racism and discrimination as factors leading to inequities in health between [neighborhoods](#).

Englewood resident Asiaha Butler has seen the issue in her own family. Her father died of cancer and her mother-in-law died of diabetes, both before the age of 70. Butler is the executive director of the Resident Association of Greater Englewood.

In Englewood, neighborhood parks aren't family friendly, fresh vegetables aren't as readily available and gyms are few and far between, she said. Meanwhile liquor, cigarettes and drugs are readily available.

Streeterville residents can go running in their neighborhood, while people in Englewood are afraid to do so because of violence and other issues, she said.

She called the new analysis alarming but not surprising.

"We're in a concentrated area of poverty and that means there are a lot

of things that really impact our quality of life," Butler said.

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