

9 SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

Access to high quality, affordable foods like, whole grains, low-fat milk, fruit, vegetables, and lean meat, are important to help build a healthy diet for individuals and families. According to the USDA, a balanced diet of these healthy foods helps reduce risk factors for chronic diseases like Type 2 Diabetes and Hypertension. Grocery stores and fresh food retailers play a critical role as they make neighborhoods livable and help local economies thrive. (<http://thefoodtrust.org>)

The problem is felt most by low-income communities of color. People living in low-income neighborhoods must either make do with the foods available in smaller local stores, which are very often less healthy and more expensive, or spend nearly 20 minutes traveling to the nearest large retailer. (<http://thefoodtrust.org>)

LOCAL FACTS

- About 36,600 Omaha Public Schools students qualify for free or reduced lunch, which is 69.96% of the student population. (*Omaha Public Schools, 2017*)
- When compared to other counties in the United States, Douglas County has:
 - A high percentage of residents with low access to grocery stores (14.4% vs. 19.7%)
 - A low percentage of school children qualify for free lunches (38.8% vs. 41.8%)
 - A high amount of fast food restaurants per 1,000 residents (0.728 vs. 0.583)(<http://food-access.healthgrove.com/l/5503/Douglas-County-Nebraska>)

ACCESS TO PREVENTIVE CARE

Access to comprehensive, quality health care services (including oral health and access to medications) is important for promoting and maintaining health, preventing and managing disease, reducing unnecessary disability and premature death, and achieving health equity for all Americans. Mental health and physical health are closely connected. Mental health plays a major role in people's ability to maintain good physical health. Mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety, affect people's ability to participate in health-promoting behaviors. In turn, problems with physical health, such as chronic diseases, can have a serious impact on mental health and decrease a person's ability to participate in treatment and recovery.

LOCAL FACTS

- A total of 36.4% of Douglas County adults report some type of difficulty or delay in obtaining health care services in the past year. (*CHNA, 2015*)
- Among adults age 18 to 64, 9.1% report having no insurance coverage for healthcare expenses. (*CHNA, 2015*)
- A total of 10.5% of Douglas County adults have been diagnosed by a physician as having major depression while 24.3% of adults have experience symptoms of chronic depression. (*CHNA, 2015*)
- "Americans with major mental illness die 14 to 32 years earlier than the general population." (*NIH, 2011*)

EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY

Employment is often an overlooked factor that affects health. Steady jobs with good wages are the ticket to families being able to raise their kids in neighborhoods with good schools and safe streets. Good jobs also tend to have good benefits, from health insurance to workplace wellness programs, that can ultimately affect how long and how well we live. On the flip side, unemployed Americans not only tend to face loss of income, but also are more likely to develop stress-related conditions (like a heart attack or stroke) or mental health problems such as depression. As a result, employers play an important role in ensuring good health. (<http://journalrecord.com/2015/12/01/guest-the-business-case-for-better-health-opinion>)

People of color earn lower wages than Whites at every education level. People of color with BA degrees still earn \$5 less per hour than their White counterparts. People of color with a high school degree but no college earn \$3 less per hour than their White counterparts. (IPUMS 2008- 2012. Universe includes civilian non-institutional full-time wage and salary workers ages 25 through 64). (<http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/31055>)

LOCAL FACTS

- \$3.9 Billion in GDP lost due to racial disparities in income within the Omaha-area region. (*Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2008-2012*)

CONNECTED / ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

Transportation grants access to a community's assets, and thus is one of the most important economic and social factors that influences people's health and the health of a community. The National Prevention Strategy and Action Plan is working to boost Americans' health in part through encouraging the development of livable, walkable communities, bike lanes, and other healthy transit options.

- Only 50% of US adults meet the guidelines of 150 minutes of physical activity per week. (*Active Living Research, 2015*)
- Using Active Transportation (walking, biking, transit) for commuting decreases the odds of being overweight or obese by 33% compared to commuting by car. (*My Health My Community.org*)
- Annual cost to own and operate a vehicle, according to AAA, is \$8,698, which is costly for more residents. (*AAA, 2015*)

LOCAL FACTS

- Within Omaha, the average percent of households with zero vehicles is 4%. (*MAPA*)
- Only 1.3% of Douglas County residents commute to work via public transportation and 87.5% commute along via car. (*CHNA, 2015*)

LIVABLE MEDIAN WAGE

There is international consensus that income is a determinant of health, shaping access to basic needs and social determinants of health such as housing, education, and job opportunities. Women and people of color—many of whom provide for families—are more likely to earn low wages and therefore disproportionately experience the adverse health effects of poverty. (<https://www.apha.org>)

Full-time workers at Federal minimum wage makes 15,080 annually – at least \$2,000 less than what is needed to cover basic need costs of living in the Midwest. (MAPA 2050, Equity Report)

LOCAL FACTS

- Median Income in Omaha:
 - White Men \$40,505 vs White Women \$28,558
 - Hispanic/Latino Men \$25,132 vs Hispanic/Latino Women \$17,385
 - African-American Men \$23,133 vs African-American Women \$21,140*(Women's Fund of Omaha Workforce Report, 2016)*

QUALITY EDUCATION

Education is critical to social and economic development and has a profound impact on population health. The health benefits of education impact the:

- Individual level via skill development and access to resources
- Community level through the health-related characteristics of the environments in which people live
- The larger social/ cultural context including social policies, residential segregation, and unequal access to educational resources.

At age 25, U.S. adults without a high school diploma can expect to die 9 years sooner than college graduates. By 2011, the prevalence of diabetes had reached 15 percent for adults without a high school education, compared with 7 percent for college graduates. (AHRQ)

LOCAL FACTS

- Douglas County high school graduation rate 85.2% (*County Health Rankings, 2015*)
- Teacher to student ratio 15 students to every 1 teacher. This is above the national average of 11 students to every 1 teacher. (*National Center for Education Statistics, 2015*)
- Douglas County residents with a Bachelor's Degree or higher 37% (*ACS, 2015*)

RELATIONSHIPS/SUPPORT NETWORK

Social connections and relationships influence our long-term health in many important ways. Multiple studies have shown that people who have satisfying relationships with family, friends, and their community are happier, have fewer health problems, and live longer. Loneliness has been associated with a wide variety of health problems including high blood pressure, diminished immunity, cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline. Social support networks can help individuals cope with problems on their own by improving self-esteem and sense of autonomy.

According to APA's 2015 Stress in America survey, average stress levels today are slightly higher than they were in 2014. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is "a great deal of stress" and one is "little or no stress," American adults rated their stress level at a 5.1 today, up from 4.9 in 2014. But worryingly, a significantly greater percentage of adults reported experiencing a stress level of 8 or higher on the 10-point scale. Twenty-four percent of American adults reported this extreme level of stress in 2015, up from 18 percent the previous year.

LOCAL FACTS

- 11.1% of Douglas County residents report that most days are "extremely" or "very" stressful. *(CHNA, 2015)*

SAFE/AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Safe and affordable housing is an essential component of healthy communities, and the effects of housing problems are widespread. Residents who do not have a kitchen in their home are more likely to depend on unhealthy convenience foods, and a lack of plumbing facilities increases the risk of infectious disease. Research has found that young children who live in crowded housing conditions are at increased risk of food insecurity, which may impact their academic performance. In areas where housing costs are high, low-income residents may be forced into substandard living conditions with an increased exposure to mold and mildew growth, pest infestation, and lead or other environmental hazards. Unmet housing needs may include homelessness, near homelessness, poor housing quality, or inability to pay a mortgage or rent.

Again this year, over half of the public (53%) report that they have made sacrifices over the past three years to be able to cover their rent or mortgage. These sacrifices have included taking on an additional job/more hours at work (24%), ceasing to save for retirement (19%), accumulating credit card debt (17%), or cutting back on healthy food (13%) or healthcare (11%).

(MacAuthor Foundation, 2015)

LOCAL FACTS

- In Douglas County, 47.9% of renters spend 30% or more of household income on rent. *(ACS, 2015)*
- In Douglas County, 16.1% of homes are reported to have "severe housing problems" ie: This indicator measures the percentage of households with at least one of the following four housing problems: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen, or lack of plumbing facilities, etc. *(County Health Rankings, 2014)*

SAFE COMMUNITY

According to the US Surgeon General, health and wellness are influenced by the places in which people live, learn, work, and play. Communities, including homes, schools, public spaces, and work sites, can be transformed to support well-being and make healthy choices easy and affordable. Healthy and safe community environments include those with clean air and water, affordable and secure housing, sustainable and economically vital neighborhoods, and supportive structures (e.g., violence-free places to be active).

The chronic stress associated with living in unsafe neighborhoods can accelerate aging and harm health. Unsafe neighborhoods can cause anxiety, depression, and stress, and are linked to higher rates of pre-term births and low birth weight babies, even when income is accounted for. Fear of violence can keep people indoors, away from neighbors, exercise, and healthy foods. (*Community Health Rankings and Roadmaps*)

LOCAL FACTS

- In Douglas County, 4.9% of residents have been a victim of violent crime in the past five years:
 - 9.2% of NE Omaha residents
 - 5.9% of SE Omaha residents
 - 3.6% of NW Omaha residents
 - 3.1% of SW Omaha residents

(CHNA, 2015)
- In Douglas County, 22.4% of residents perceive their own neighborhood as “slightly” or “not at all” safe:
 - 40.3% of NE Omaha residents
 - 35.8% of SE Omaha residents
 - 2.7% of Western Douglas Co. residents

(CHNA, 2015)