



DOCUMENTING THE HEALTH OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS • WEST RIVER AND DWIGHT •

CARE, a partnership between the New Haven community and Yale University, is taking action against chronic disease. To improve the health of our residents, CARE promotes a healthy lifestyle by focusing on three risk factors: diet, exercise, and tobacco use. New Haven is the first US city to join one of the world's largest community-based research studies on chronic disease - with other sites in England, Mexico, India and China.

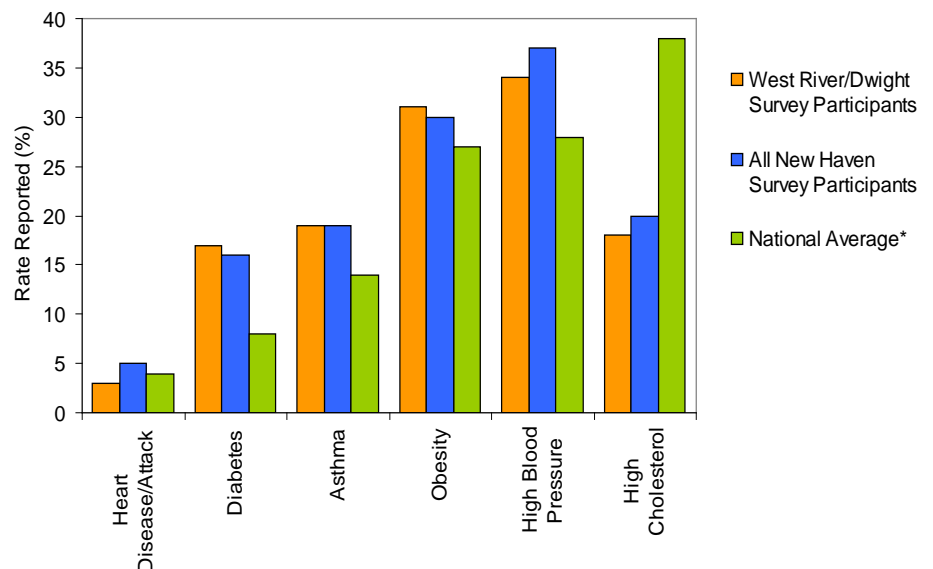
In the summer of 2009, Youth@Work interns created an “asset map” of six New Haven neighborhoods, including the West River and Dwight neighborhoods. The asset maps document neighborhood features related to diet, exercise, and tobacco use. In the fall, 1,205 New Haven residents in the same six neighborhoods – including 214 in West River/Dwight – participated in a survey about health and their own habits around these same three risk factors.

WEST RIVER/DWIGHT'S ASSET MAP

- In West River/Dwight, CARE documented 31 stores, 41 restaurants, three recreational facilities, three stores selling physical activity equipment, 11 parks, and one community garden.
- Shaw's – the city's only supermarket – is in Dwight, but closed March 2010. There are also two small grocery stores, but most stores are convenience (58%) and package (19%) stores.
- Of the 41 restaurants mapped, most were fast food (90%). One-quarter promoted healthy options, but only one had nutrition information posted.
- West River/Dwight had the most parks of all six neighborhoods that were mapped.
- Three of the four stores that sell exercise equipment (e.g., basketball shoes) were in these neighborhoods.

SURVEY RESULTS – GENERAL HEALTH AND STRESS

- Fifteen percent (15%) of West River/Dwight residents report “excellent” health – similar to all six neighborhoods (16%), but lower than the national average (20%).
- Most West River/Dwight residents have a regular place to go for health care (90%), but only 75% have health insurance (well below the national average of 86%).
- West River/Dwight residents report high levels of stress – 65% have some level of tension, stress or pressure (compared with 57% in all six neighborhoods) and one-quarter feel down, depressed or hopeless.
- Overall, reported chronic disease in West River/Dwight is similar to all six neighborhoods. However, rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma and obesity are higher than the national average.



*Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2008 (Centers for Disease Control)

NUTRITION

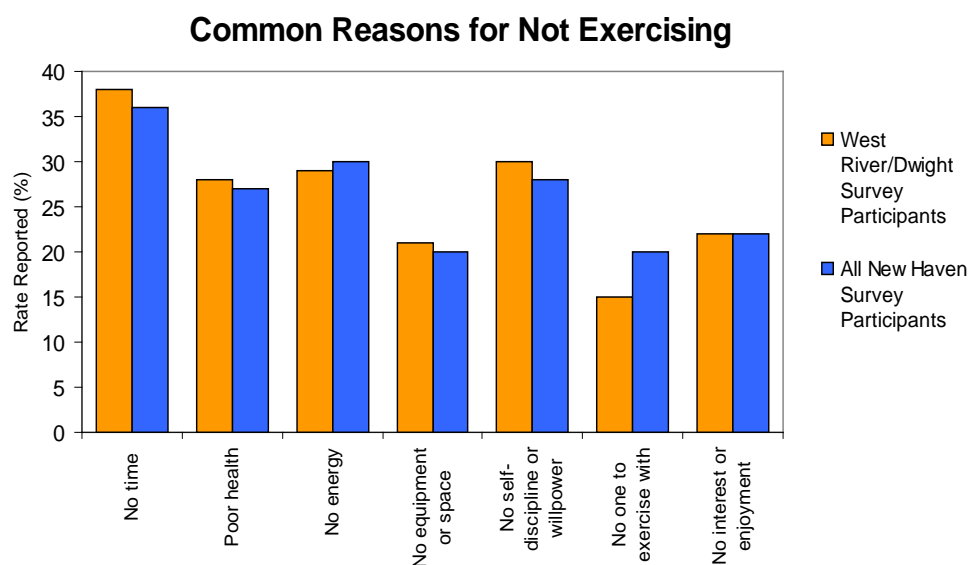
- Fifteen percent (15%) of West River/Dwight residents report **“food insecurity”** – meaning that they or their family did not have enough food (or money to buy food) in the past 30 days. This was slightly lower than all six neighborhoods (18%), but higher than the national average (11%).
- Only 48% of West River/Dwight residents eat **vegetables** every day and 36% eat **fruit** every day. Residents report eating about four servings of fruits and vegetables per day – less than the recommendation of five a day.
- As in all surveyed neighborhoods, West River/Dwight residents report eating and drinking many **sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages daily** – 54% drink sugar-sweetened beverages every day (with 69% of those drinking two or more per day).
- West River/Dwight residents were more likely to report that they are able to find fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood (85% vs. 78%) and less likely to rate the quality of produce where they shop as “poor” (1% vs. 4%). This suggests that residents have benefitted from Shaw’s and its closing will make it harder to find fresh produce in these neighborhoods.

EXERCISE

- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of West River/Dwight residents **do not exercise** regularly – similar to all study neighborhoods but worse than the national average (51%). However, West River/Dwight residents are more likely to walk or ride a bike to work or school 5-7 days/week than residents in all six neighborhoods (25% vs. 17%).

- As in all six neighborhoods, West River/Dwight residents describe several **challenges to regular exercise**, including lack of time, willpower, energy, and equipment or space. More than one in four do not exercise because of poor health.

- Feelings of safety can limit exercise options – 66% of residents “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that **it is unsafe to go for walks** in their neighborhood at night.



SMOKING

- Thirty-six percent (36%) of West River/Dwight residents are **current daily smokers** – higher than the average in all six neighborhoods (31%) and much higher than the national average (13%).
- Over one-third of West River/Dwight smokers said they were ready to quit and another 43% were thinking of quitting in the next six months. As in other neighborhoods, most smokers (80%) said they were motivated to quit by saving the money they spend on cigarettes.

For more information about CARE and this project:
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