

# Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country: Physical Activity



July 2016

## Why is Physical Activity Important to American Indian/Alaska Natives (AIAN)?

AIAN suffer from many chronic health problems, such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. One of the single most important steps to preventing and managing chronic health problems is to engage in physical activity. Physically active people are less likely to suffer from these chronic health problems, and they generally live longer.<sup>1</sup>

## What is Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change?

Policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change is a way to improve health in a community by going beyond individual health and addressing the policies, systems, and environmental structures, or lack thereof, that either promote or inhibit health behaviors in a community. Healthy choices cannot be made if healthy options are not available within a community.

## Statistics About AIAN Physical Activity in California

- ⇒ Over 75% of AIAN adults in California engaged in physical activity, such as walking, running, playing basketball, bicycling, and gardening in the past month (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>
- ⇒ AIAN are less likely to engage in regular physical activity than Whites and more likely to be sedentary or engage in no physical activity (Figure 2).<sup>3</sup>
- ⇒ The top reasons AIAN in California gave for not engaging in physical activity were either lack of motivation (35%) or they did not have enough time (25%) to be physically active in the past month.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1. CA AIAN adult physical activity in past month (n=915)

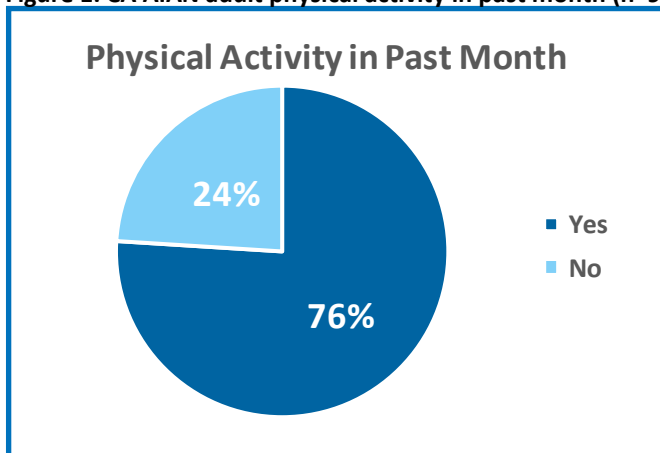
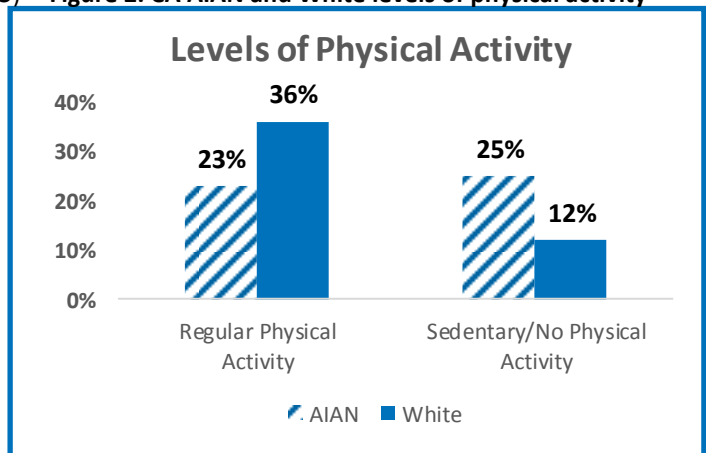


Figure 2. CA AIAN and White levels of physical activity



<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. State Indicator Report on Physical Activity (2014). Atlanta, GA. Retrieved from: [http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/downloads/pa\\_state\\_indicator\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/downloads/pa_state_indicator_report_2014.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>California Tribal Behavioral Risk Factor Community Survey Summary Report (2015). California Tribal Epidemiology Center. Retrieved from: <https://crihb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/CTBRFCSSummaryReport.pdf>

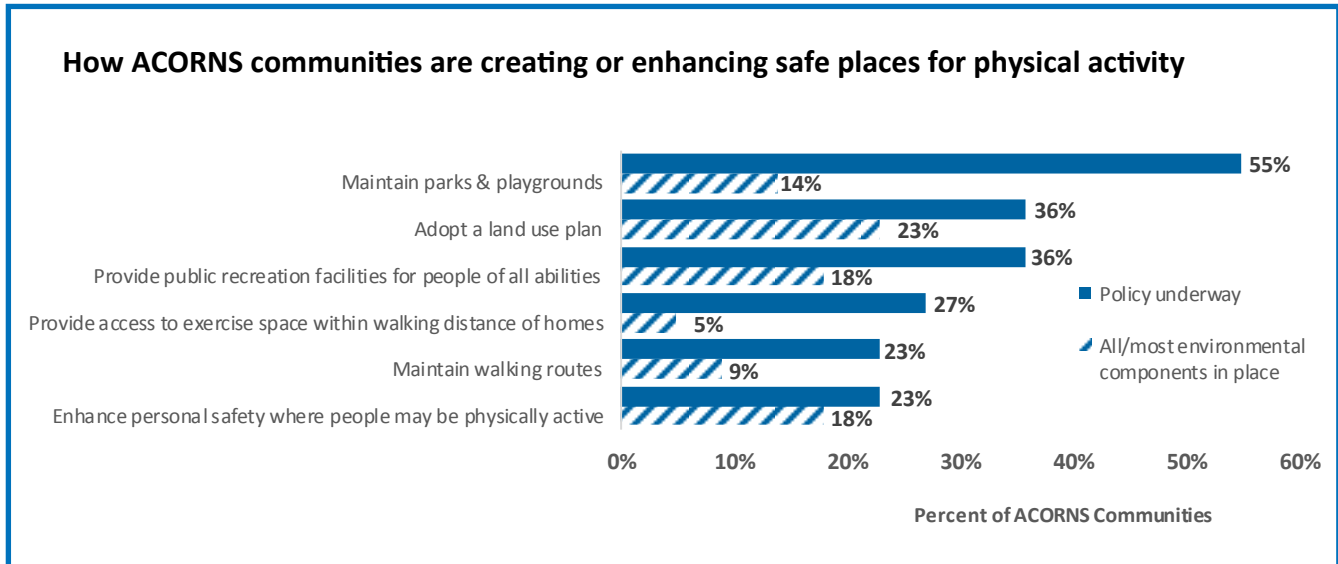
<sup>3</sup>UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. AskChis 2009. Regular, some, or no physical activity (including walking) (California). Available at <http://ask.chis.ucla.edu>. Exported on June 8, 2016.

PSE Examples		
Type of Change	Definition	Physical Activity Example
<b>Policy</b>	Changes in laws, ordinances, mandates, rules, etc.	Ban using or withholding physical activity as a punishment in schools.
<b>Systems</b>	Changes that impact all elements of an organization, community, or related systems.	Provide flexible work arrangements or break times for employees to engage in physical activity.
<b>Environment</b>	Changes to the physical environment.	Incorporating walking paths or recreational areas into community design.

**How Can PSE Change Affect Physical Activity?** PSE changes can create and encourage healthy behaviors by changing the environment to ensure that healthy choices are easily accessible to all community members. PSE changes make it easier and safer to be physically active and healthy, and they impact how communities live, learn, work, and play.<sup>4</sup>

**How Do ACORNS Grantees Use PSE Changes to Influence Physical Activity?** Baseline data collected from 22 ACORNS grantees shows that communities are promoting physical activity by creating or enhancing safe places for their community members to be physically active. In general, a relatively high percentage of communities reported that a PSE policy was underway for each physical activity project. In contrast, a relatively low percentage of communities reported that environmental components were in place to support each project policy (Figure 3). The goal is to increase the percentage of environmental components in place for each physical activity project at follow-up assessment.

Figure 3. Physical Activity: ACORNS grantees that reported a policy underway or all/most environmental elements in place (n=22).



California Tribal Epidemiology Center  
 California Rural Indian Health Board, Inc.  
 4400 Auburn Blvd. Phone: 916-929-9761  
 2nd Floor Fax: 916-929-7246  
 Sacramento, CA 95841 Email: epicenter@carih.org

The development of this document was funded by the Indian Health Service Cooperative Agreement #U1B1HS0014



<sup>4</sup>Brownson, R., Kelly, C., Eyster, A. A., Et. al. (2008). Environmental and Policy Approaches for Promoting Physical Activity in the United States: A Research Agenda. Journal of Physical Activity and Health, Vol. 5, pp. 488-503