



Examine your Built Environment

Choose an area of your community to study. It could be the downtown area, your trip from home to school, or just a random place you visit. Keep the area small to make sure it is easy to study. The checklist below contains features of healthy, accessible communities. Visit your chosen area and work through this checklist. You can also use street view online mapping tools if you are unable to visit in person.

You will return to reevaluate this place after completing a research task that will give you more information about health equity and evaluating the built environment.



Compare the Environments of Two Different Places

Where we live, work, and play affects our health. Environmental justice will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment. Racial and ethnic minority, low-income, and indigenous communities are often disproportionately affected by environmental hazards, such as environmental pollutants and climate-related events. These types of exposures, along with historical injustices, racism, inadequate community design, limited access to resources, and other socio-economic factors, can lead to poor health effects, like increased chronic disease and complications involving pregnancy and infants.


In this activity, you will use CDC's Environmental Justice Dashboard to explore data on environmental exposures, community characteristics, and health burden - factors important to understanding and addressing environmental justice issues.

Access the Environmental Justice Dashboard here:
<https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/Applications/ejdashboard/>

On the main dashboard page, scroll down to the map at the bottom. Use the “Median Income” map to locate two areas to compare:

- One area with high median income (dark blue)
- One area with low median income (yellow)

Scroll over an area, and its name will pop up. Search the dashboard (top right) for your two places to pull up the available data. Use the information and maps provided by the dashboard to fill in data for each of your selected places on the chart provided in the Data Collection Sheet.


**Explore environmental justice data
for your community.**

Compare Your Selected Environments

Once you have filled in your charts, search your data for information that represents each of the five **social determinants of health**.

- Compare the data you recorded for the two places you selected.
- Identify any **disparities** you see and explain how they might affect residents' health.
- Propose interventions that might reduce the **disparities** identified.

Fill in your information on the Data Collection Sheet in the chart provided.



Reexamine your Built Environment

Use the Environmental Justice Dashboard to look up your zip code. Examine the data provided for environmental exposures, community characteristics, and health burden. Pay close attention to the various maps and look for **inequities** within the larger map area. Add the points of interest layers to the maps. Consider the following questions:

- Does the data provided match your preconceived ideas of the place where you live?
- When you looked at the smaller map areas, did you notice any **inequities**?
- Were there any points of interest on the maps that surprised you?
- How did your town's data compare to the two places you examined earlier?

Go back to your original checklist and reevaluate with a more critical eye. View the environment from different lenses. What would a person with a visual or hearing impairment need? A person who uses a wheelchair? A person with a lower income? An older adult? A parent with young children? A teenager?

The Data Collection Sheet has a second copy of the checklist so that you can reevaluate the built environment in your chosen place. Add categories to the checklist to make it more inclusive to all.

If you find yourself really interested in this topic, check out community strategies to improve physical activity from CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity.

<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/community-strategies/index.htm>



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