

Physical Activity among Asian American Adults: Data from the 2010 Health of Houston Survey

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The Asian American population represents the fastest growing minority groups in the US; yet, little is still known about physical activity (PA) among Asian Americans. This study examines PA among Asian American adults living in the Houston, TX area. **Methods:** Data on adults aged 18 and over were drawn from the Health of Houston Survey 2010—a population-based survey focused in the city of Houston and Harris County. PA was operationalized in two ways: number of moderate leisure-time PA days in the past week; and meeting CDC recommendations for aerobic exercise. Multivariate regression models (negative binomial and logistic) were used to compare the PA of Asian Americans with other racial/ethnic groups in the area (white, African American, and Hispanic) and to determine key predictors of PA among Asian Americans and specific Asian ethnic groups (Chinese, Vietnamese, and South Asians). **Results:** Asians emerged as the only racial/ethnic group that was significantly less likely than whites to have sufficient PA levels (OR=0.66). Both Asians and Hispanics had similarly lower expected numbers of PA days compared to whites (Incidence Rate Ratios or IRR=0.91 and 0.89, respectively), although the effect of being Asian was not significant. Within the Asian sample, Vietnamese had a significantly higher expected number of PA days, compared to their Chinese counterparts (IRR=1.36). Compared to the 18-24 age group, older Asians aged 65 and older had significantly higher expected number of PA days (almost one additional expected day; IRR=1.90) and were 61% more likely to have sufficient PA levels. Low educational achievement and immigrant status were key predictors of decreased PA. **Conclusions:** Results suggest that Asians are among the least physically active of the major racial/ethnic groups. In contrast to other racial/ethnic groups in the US, older Asians tend to be more active than younger Asians and Asian immigrants are less active than US-born Asians. These findings highlight the need for more targeted and culturally competent interventions to promote physical activity in Asian American communities.

KEY WORDS: Physical Activity, Asian Americans, Health of Houston Survey