

Factors that influence teens' eating and physical activity behaviors:

Findings from telephone focus groups

Elissa A. Resnick, MPH¹

Leah Rimkus, MPH, RD¹

Sandy J. Slater, PhD¹

Dianne C. Barker, MHS²

Christopher M. Quinn, BA¹

Frank J. Chaloupka, PhD¹

1. Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL

2. Public Health Institute, Oakland, Calabasas, CA

Presenter Disclosures

Elissa A. Resnick, MPH

- (1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:**

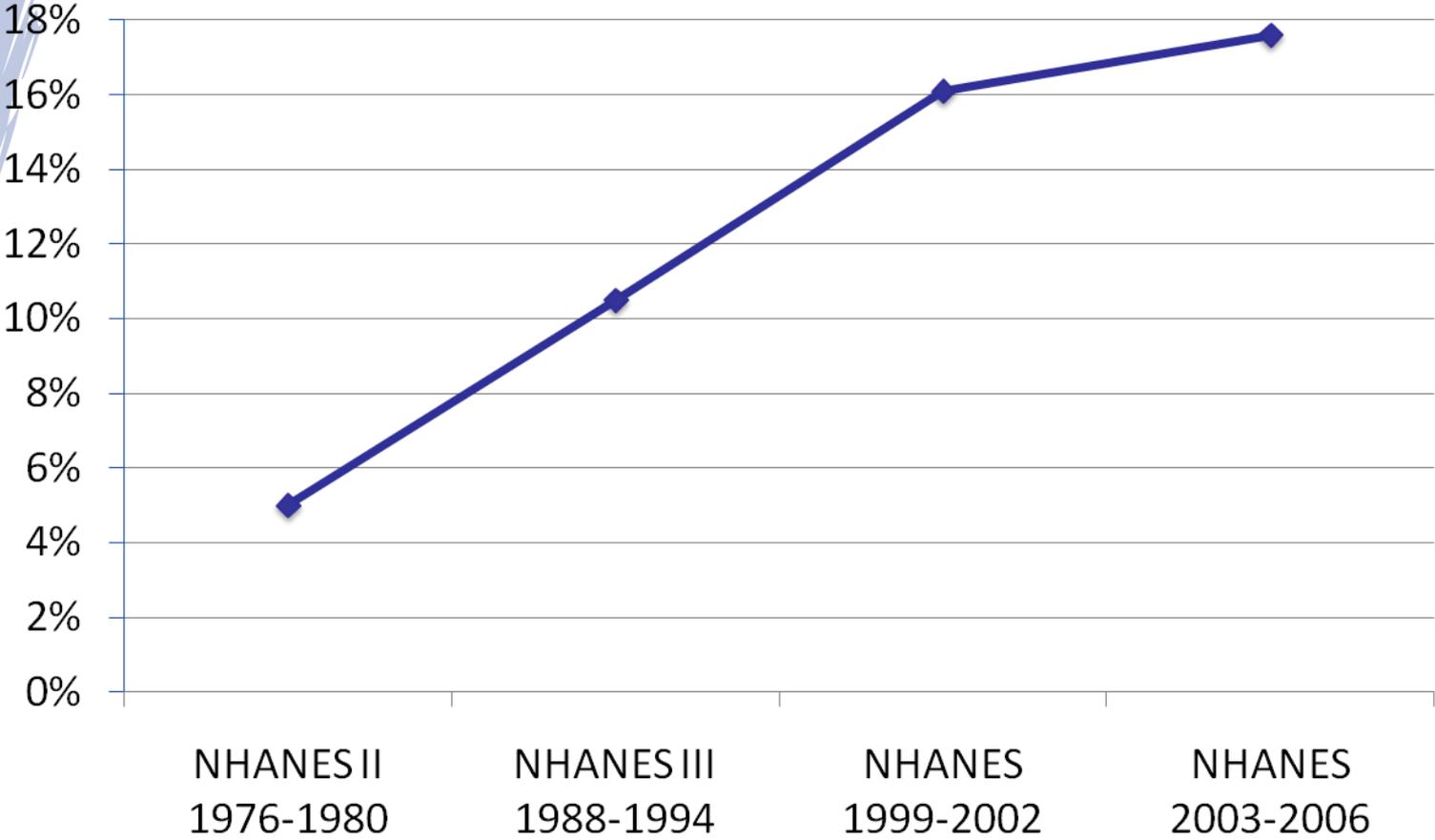
No relationships to disclose



Learning Objectives

- Identify environmental factors that influence adolescents' eating and activity behaviors
 - Compare how these behaviors differ by urban, suburban, and rural locations
 - Discuss ways to customize interventions to address barriers reported by teens
- 

Prevalence of Obesity Among U.S. Children and Adolescents (Aged 2–19 Years)



Source: CDC.gov

Bridging the Gap is ...

- A collaborative effort to assess the impacts of policies, programs & other environmental factors on a variety of adolescent health-related behaviors
- An RWJF initiative begun in 1997 with focus on adolescent alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use and related outcomes
- More recently expanded to include youth eating practices, physical activity, and weight outcomes
- Linked to the ongoing, NIDA-funded, *Monitoring the Future* study



*A Policy Research Partnership
for Healthier Youth Behavior*

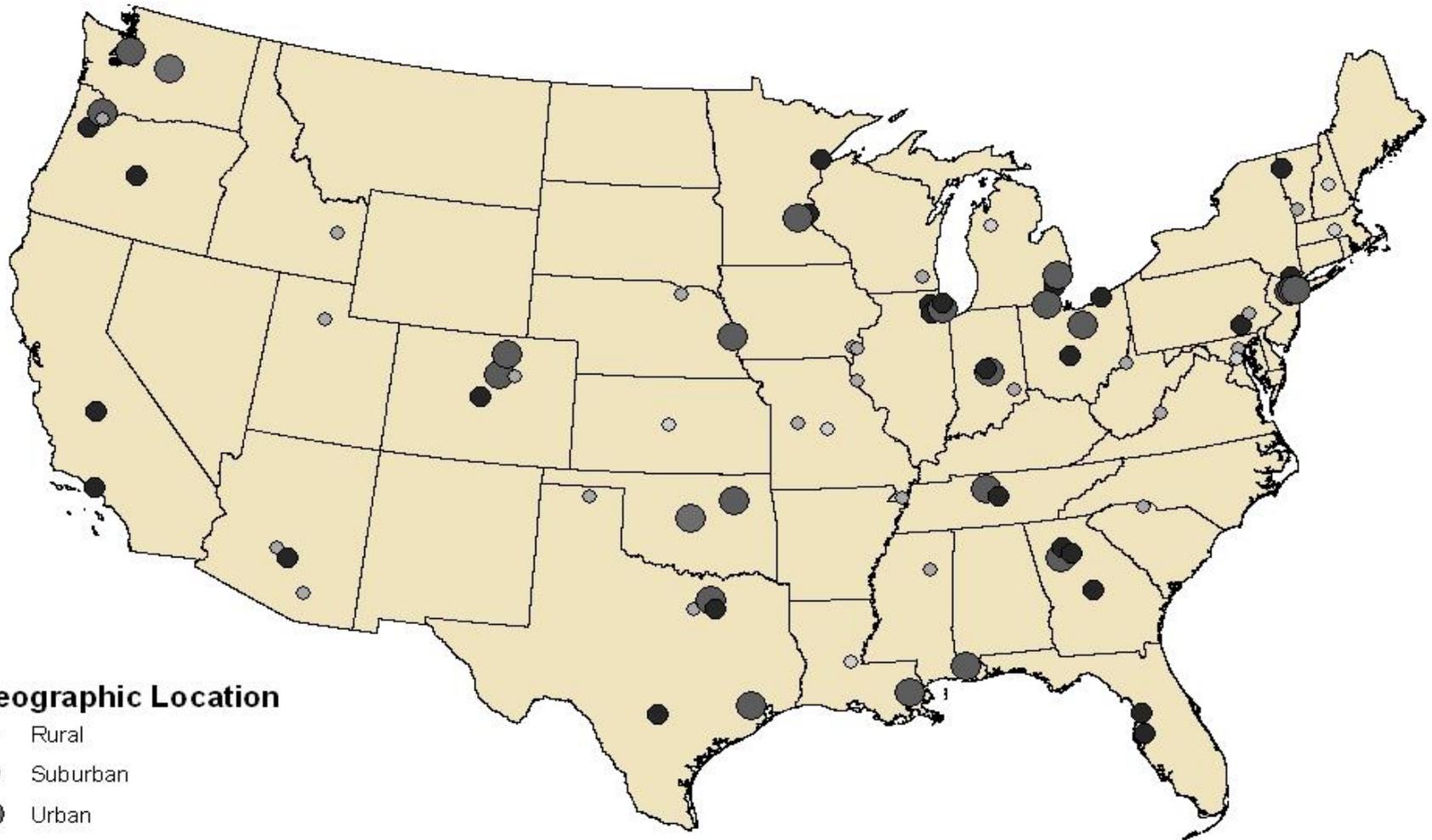
Focus Group Objectives

- Identify the size of the community where teens go to eat and exercise
- Understand youths' eating and exercising behaviors and factors that influence these behaviors
 - Explore the types of foods and beverages that teens consume
 - Explore the types of activities that teens do for fun and/or for physical activity
- Understand differences in behaviors by age, gender and geography

Methods

- Computer -assisted Telephone Focus Groups
 - Kahle Research Solutions Inc.
 - Up to 90 minutes in length
- 12 focus groups with 5-10 participants each
 - Nationwide recruitment thru e-billboards, emails and purchased lists (rural)
 - Selection criteria
 - 13-18 years old
 - English-speaking
 - Attend public school
 - Stratification
 - Male/female
 - Urban/suburban/rural
 - Younger/older
- Parental consent for those younger than 18; written consent forms emailed

Location of Participants in Focus Groups



Geographic Location

- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban

0 625 1,250 Miles

Commonly Mentioned Sources of Food

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks
Many	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Home •None (skip breakfast) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School •Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Home •Movie theater •Convenience store/gas station
Some	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fast food restaurant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fast food restaurant •Fast casual restaurant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fast food restaurant •Mall food court •General store •School vending machine
Few	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Convenience store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •None (skip lunch) •Fast casual restaurant 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Coffee shop •Ice cream shop

Themes

- Rural and urban teens are more likely to get snacks at convenience stores and gas stations than suburban teens
- Urban and suburban teens are more likely to eat dinner out of the house than rural teens
- Teens with open campuses are more likely to eat lunch at fast food restaurants or coffee shops than teens with closed campuses
- Younger teens are more likely to skip breakfast than older teens

Factors Influencing Food Choices

Most Common: Time

- *“I don't usually have time to eat breakfast at home in the mornings, and when my bus gets to school it's too late, so I don't eat breakfast.”*
 - *Female, 13-15, urban group*
- *“If I'm in a rush between classes, I'll go to a vending machine and get like a granola bar, bag of chips.”*
 - *Male, 16-18, urban group*

Factors Influencing Food Choices

Most Common: Convenience

- *“Sometimes I'll grab like a Pop Tart or a bagel or something and take it with me, or I might stop at the vending machine before I go to class.”*
 - Female, 16-18, urban group
- *“I eat school lunch most of the time. Sometimes we'll go over to the gas station across the street.”*
 - Female, 16-18, rural group

Factors Influencing Food Choices

Somewhat Common: Money and Social

- *“I don't usually eat lunch because I'm too busy hanging out with friends and things like that and plus I rarely have money to eat lunch.”*
 - *Male, 13-15, suburban group*
- *“Usually I don't really have money to buy anything, so I just kind of eat what my friends have, like if they share with me. I usually just hang out there.”*
 - *Female 13-15, rural group*

Factors Influencing Food Choices

Least Common: Taste and Nutritional (Mis)information

- *“I don't really like to eat at school. The food is just nasty. I'll usually have fries or bread.”*
 - *Female, 16-18, urban group*
- *“I guess whatever they have healthy to choose, like pizza or a hot dog.”*
 - *Male, 16-18, urban group*

CDC and IOM Recommendations to Improve Nutrition

- Improve availability and affordability of healthier food and beverage choices in public service venues
- Restrict availability of less healthy foods in public service venues
- Incentivize food retailers to offer healthier food and beverage choices in underserved areas

Commonly Mentioned Venues for Physical Activity

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Many	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Home
Some	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School sport •School facility •Commercial gym •Neighborhood (walking/running/biking) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Commercial gym •School sport •Neighborhood (walking/running/biking) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School sport •Park
Few	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •PE class •School facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School facility

Themes

- Urban and suburban teens are more likely than rural teens to have access to parks
- Suburban teens are more likely than urban and rural teens to have access to school physical activity facilities regardless of participation on a team
- Rural teens are more likely than urban and suburban teens to utilize facilities that are far away
- Males are more likely than females to engage in spontaneous or unstructured physical activity (e.g. pick-up games)

Factors Influencing Physical Activity

Most Common: Convenience

- *“I would love a park or some kind of field where I can play football in, instead of having to drive like two miles.”*
 - *Male, 16-18, urban group*
- *“I'm 12 miles away from my school. If I want to go to a park, I have to go between 8 to 22 miles.”*
 - *Male, 13-15, rural group*
- *Moderator: How far is close by and how far would it be when you wouldn't go?*

Respondent: If it was a half hour or an hour away.

 - *Female, 13-15, rural group.*

Factors Influencing Physical Activity

Somewhat Common: Price

- *“I would be on the dance team, but it’s really expensive.”*
 - *Female, 16-18, urban group*

- *“I used to [go to a health club], but then it got pretty expensive so we quit.”*
 - *Female, 13-15, rural group*

Factors Influencing Physical Activity

Least Common: Safety

- “The closest park to my house is probably about 10 minutes away, but it’s pretty run down so I just usually don’t go to it. Then there’s this really nice park about 15 minutes away that I go to with some of my friends sometimes...It’s pretty new, so there’s not a lot of vandalism there. The other one, the closer one just isn’t taken care of at all and the other one is.”
 - Female, 13-15, rural group

From the mouths of babes...

- *“The more I think about it, the more I think about the days where I've said, you know, let's get a bunch of guys together and go play basketball, and then I've realized I can't just walk outside my door and find a hoop. So I really do think that [environment] has some impact.”*
 - *Male, 16-18, rural group*



CDC and IOM Recommendations to Increase Physical Activity

- Require physical education in schools and increase the amount of physical activity in PE programs in schools (CDC)
 - Increase opportunities for extra curricular physical activity
 - Improve access to outdoor recreational facilities
- 

For more information:

www.impactteen.org

www.yesresearch.org

www.bridgingthegapresearch.org