



Child physical activity at rural Play Streets

Influenced by the type of activities and whether other children are playing nearby



The Issue

- Physical activity has many physical and mental health benefits for children.
- However, many children of color and children in low income and rural communities lack access to safe places to play and be active.
- There is a need to understand how to best increase physical activity and active play opportunities for **all** children.

To better understand how to increase active play opportunities for all children, researchers examined characteristics of where children were most active during Play Streets.



Results

Types of Activities

- A higher percentage of girls were active in areas with inflatables and sport courts or fields than other areas.
- A higher percentage of boys were active in areas with inflatables than all other areas.
- There were no differences based on sex in the percentage of active children in any area categories (e.g., inflatables, sport courts, general activities).



What are Play Streets?

- Temporary activations of public space (e.g., streets, parking lots, open fields) that create opportunities for safe places for children and families to actively play for no cost.
- Can be a single event or recurring (e.g., weekly) in communities that may not have access to safe places for physical activity and active play.
- Have been primarily implemented in urban areas until recently.



Equipment, organization, and supervision



BOYS WERE **1.49** TIMES more likely to be active if the area had equipment to play with.

BOYS WERE **1.99** TIMES more likely to be active if the activities were organized.

GIRLS WERE not significantly more or less active in target areas that had equipment organized activities, or supervision.

Being active in the same space

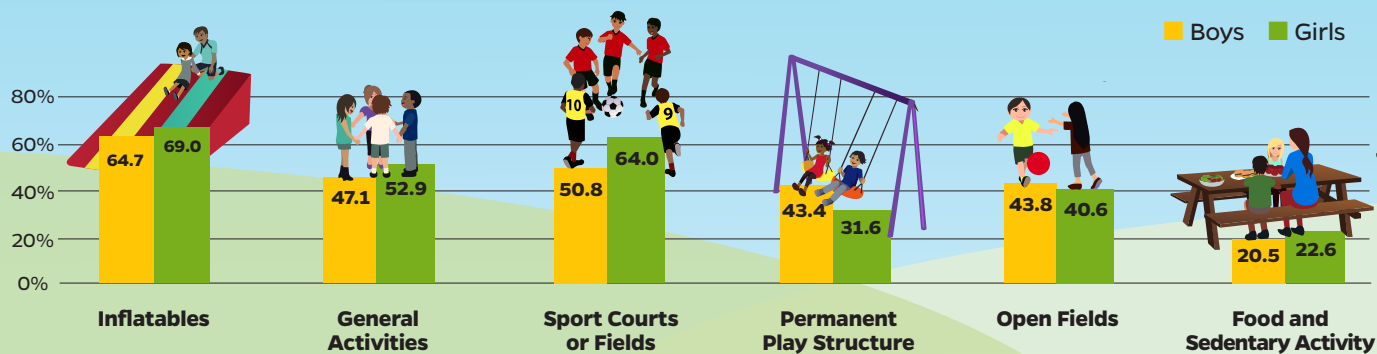
BOYS WERE **2.15** TIMES more likely to be active if there was another active boy in the same area or active girl **1.66** TIMES in the same area.

GIRLS WERE **2.68** TIMES more likely to be active if there was another active girl in the same area or active boy **1.71** TIMES in the same area.



Boys and girls were no more likely to be active when there were active adults in the same area.

Percent of Boys and Girls Active in Each Activity Space



Implications



A best practice is to include a wide variety of activities at Play Streets as many of the activity areas promoted active play among children. Varying the activities based on preferences of the local children and families is ideal and allows organizers to adapt.



Play Streets are social! Children were more likely to be active at Play Streets when in areas with other active children. Plan to offer collaborative active play options and games involving multiple children at once to maximize active play!



Areas with loose equipment and organized activities may encourage more participation from boys; however, girls did not need equipment or organized activities to be active.



While food and sedentary activity areas had the lowest activity levels, they represent vital places for children and families to rest, rehydrate, and get food as well as promote other types of inclusive activities that foster social connections.

Methodology



Four community organizations from rural communities across the United States put on four Play Streets each, for a total of **16 Play Streets** (each 3 hours long) in the summer of 2017.



Play Streets were divided into different areas primarily based on activities present within the area: **inflatables, general activities, sport courts or fields, permanent play structures, open fields, and food and sedentary activity areas.**



An evaluation team observed each area and recorded age (child, teen, adult, older adult), sex (female, male), and activity level (sedentary or active) of each person inside each area.



The evaluation team also noted whether area was **organized, supervised, or contained equipment.**



For more information about Play Streets including pictures, guides, and descriptions please see the Guide to Implementing Play Streets in Rural Communities, www.baylor.edu/publichealth/ruralplaystreetsguide.

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Full article published in the *Journal of Healthy Eating and Active Living*, available at:

<https://profpubs.com/index.php/jheal/article/view/5/22>

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