

Press Release

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Joint Center Releases Reports on How Poverty Concentration and Racial Segregation Exacerbate Health Inequities

WASHINGTON, DC – After a decade-long rise in concentrated poverty, one in 11 residents of metropolitan areas now live in communities where at least 30 percent of their neighbors are poor, according to a pair of studies unveiled today by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

The reports, *A Lost Decade: Neighborhood Poverty and the Urban Crisis of the 2000s*, produced in collaboration with the Poverty & Race Research Action Council, and *Segregated Spaces, Risky Places: The Effects of Racial Segregation on Health Inequalities*, underscore the links between poverty and racial segregation in metropolitan neighborhoods and the health of the people who live in them.

They were released as the Joint Center convened a PLACE MATTERS National Conference that is focusing on the relationship between place and health, especially as it pertains to racial and ethnic health inequality.

According to the Joint Center, the quality of education, health care, available food, public infrastructure and exercise options are powerful factors in shaping opportunities to achieve good health.

Results from the *Segregated Spaces, Risky Places* study show that “segregation continues to be an important determinant of health inequalities . . .the more segregated the city, the higher the incidence of negative health outcomes.”

It also found that while residential segregation diminished slightly over the past decade, “the health disadvantages resulting from racial segregation appear to have intensified.” Using infant mortality as a measure of health, the authors found that “the effects of segregation on infant mortality disparities intensified between 2000 and 2010.”

“Community conditions can overwhelm even the most persistent and determined efforts of individuals to take steps to improve their health,” said Brian Smedley, Ph.D., Vice President and Director of the Joint Center Health Policy Institute.

The *Lost Decade* study noted that “the rise in concentrated poverty since 2000 is a significant setback compared with progress in the 1990s,” with 22.3 million people now living in a

neighborhood where 30 percent or more of their neighbors are in poverty. The study found that, in metropolitan areas, one in four African Americans, one in six Hispanics, and one in eight American Indians are living in neighborhoods where poverty is concentrated, compared with an estimated one in 25 non-Hispanic whites who live in one of these tracts.

Even middle- and higher-income minorities are disproportionately in neighborhoods with high poverty, according to the report.

“What these reports tell us is that racial inequalities in health status and outcomes are closely connected to *place*. In effect, race helps to determine *place*, and in turn, *place* influences health,” said Smedley. “Given the demographic growth of communities of color, these health inequities can have far-reaching negative impact on the nation’s economic performance and quality of life, so we need to address them now.”

“These reports provide further evidence that policies aimed at investing in vulnerable communities should be at the very core of a strategy to close the health gap and improve the health of the nation,” said Ralph B. Everett, President and CEO of the Joint Center.

Both studies (*A Lost Decade: Neighborhood Poverty and the Urban Crisis of the 2000s* by Rolf Pendall, Ph.D., Elizabeth Davies, Lesley Freiman and Rob Pitingolo and *Segregated Spaces, Risky Places: The Effects of Racial Segregation on Health Inequalities* by Thomas A. LaVeist, Ph.D., Darrell Gaskin, Ph.D. and Antonio J. Trujillo, Ph.D.) are available on the Joint Center’s website, www.jointcenter.org.

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is one of the nation’s leading research and public policy institutions and the only one whose work focuses primarily on issues of particular concern to African Americans and other people of color. To learn more, please visit www.jointcenter.org.

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