Physical activity of public housing residents in Birmingham, Alabama.

OBJECTIVES: Because few data are available concerning physical activity among minority and low-income persons, we characterized physical activity patterns among public housing residents.

METHODS: Two separate cross-sectional surveys were conducted 1 year apart of randomly selected residents of eight rental communities administered by the housing authority of Birmingham, Ala. Indigenous interviewers completed 687 interviews in survey 1 and 599 in survey 2.

RESULTS: In both surveys, respondents were most frequently young adult African-American women, reflecting the predominance of women in these communities. Participants were generally poorly educated and either unemployed or working in service occupations. Thirty percent of the respondents in both surveys reported no participation in any of 13 physical activities in the previous year; approximately half reported activity levels equivalent to or less than walking 4 hours per week for 8 months of the year. Respondents who were younger and male were significantly more likely to have higher activity levels.

CONCLUSIONS: A sedentary life-style is common among this low-income minority group, and, thus, interventions to promote exercise in these communities are needed.