

Health Literacy in Community Context: Results from the Healthy Chicago Survey, 2022-2023

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Background

- Health literacy influences a person's ability to find, understand, and use health-related information.
- The Community Health Response Corps (Corps), the Chicago Department of Public Health's community health worker (CHW) initiative, aims to improve Chicagoans' health literacy.
- This analysis served as a baseline assessment of perceived community health literacy and to identify priority populations that the Corps could engage with.

Methods

We evaluated Chicagoans' perceived community health literacy by analyzing two questions that were added to the 2022-2023 Healthy Chicago Surveys (HCS). These questions were adapted from validated measures assessing health literacy within given populations. 9,643 Chicago adults answered the **HCS Community Health Literacy questions**:
How easy or difficult is it for you to...

1. Take advantage of activities in your community to improve your health?¹
2. Find someone in your neighborhood to give you health information or health advice?²

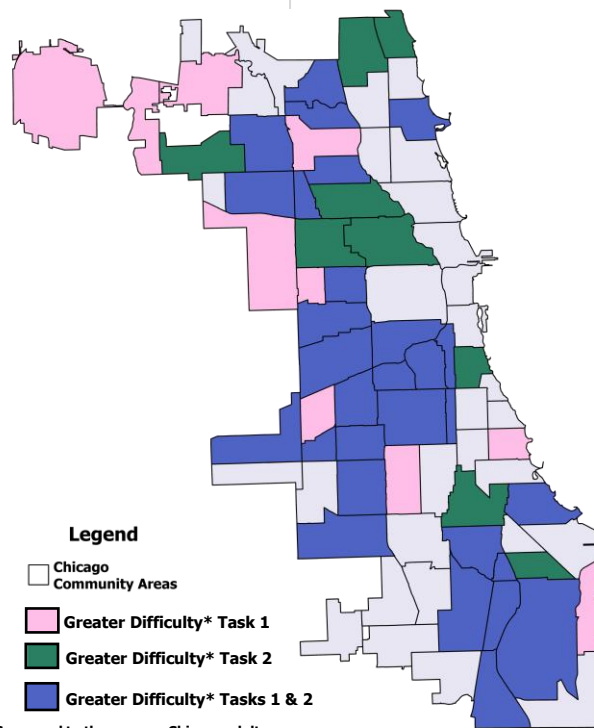
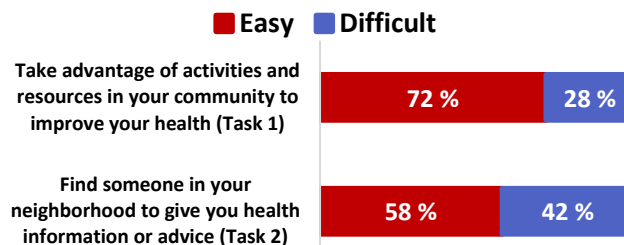
Responses included "very difficult, somewhat difficult, somewhat easy, and very easy" and were collapsed into a binary variable to represent those who reported each task as "easy" or "difficult."

SAS 9.4 was used to employ survey weighting procedures and produce descriptive statistics. Geographic analyses were conducted in ArcGIS Pro. Demographic characteristics analyzed included age, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, education attainment, percent of federal poverty level (FPL) based on household income, and self-reported history of chronic diseases.

Characteristics of populations that reported the greatest disparity in difficulty were identified and displayed.

Results

Chicago Adults' Perceived Community Health Literacy



References

1. Gibbons MC., Illangasekare SM., Smith E., Kub J. *Prog Community Health Partnership* A community health initiative: Evaluation and early lessons. 2016; 10(1)89-101
2. Sorensen K., Van den Broucke S., Pelikan JM., et al. *European Health Literacy Survey Q47-(HLS-EU-Q47)* of the HLS-EU Consortium.

Characteristics of persons who reported a higher percentage of difficulty in taking advantage of activities in their communities to improve their health were:

Variable	Percent	95% CI
Less than a high school degree	44.7	39.2-50.3
History of diabetes	39.4	35.4-43.4
Hispanic or Latine	38.3	35.3-41.2
Household income between 100%-199% of FPL	36.6	33.6-39.6
LGBTQ	35.1	31.4-38.9

Similarly, characteristics of persons who reported more difficulty in finding someone in their neighborhood to give them health information in their neighborhood were:

Less than a high school degree	56.8	51.2-62.4
Household income between 100%-199% of FPL	55.1	51.0-59.1
History of diabetes	52.4	48.3-56.4
Young Adults Ages 18-29	50.0	46.5-53.5
LGBTQ	48.9	45.0-52.7

Conclusions

Characteristics of Chicagoans who reported greater difficulty for these tasks include those who identified as LGBTQ, Hispanic or Latine, those with less than a high school degree, income between 100%-199% of the FPL, as well as young adults and individuals with diabetes. These groups were identified as priority populations.

Identifying these populations who find it more difficult to take advantage of community health resources is a key step in improving Chicagoans' health literacy, or ability to find, understand, and use health information. These findings support the need for CHW services for these communities. Further analysis of these community health tasks can also be used to evaluate the impact of CHW-led initiatives.