

# Segregation: **DIVIDED CITIES LEAD TO DIFFERENCES IN HEALTH**

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This fourth brief in the *For the Sake of All* series examines how racial segregation impacts health and social and economic opportunity. The brief will also present recommendations for how we can improve communities in the St. Louis region.

## History of segregation

Segregation continues to divide many communities in the U.S., with many communities divided based on race, social class, or both. These divisions have negative effects on society. The timeline in figure 1 shows key events and policies that shaped segregation across the U.S. and in St. Louis. Segregation in St. Louis was fueled by public policy. For example, restrictive deed covenants made it illegal for African Americans to buy homes in

some neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> Segregation was not limited to where people lived, but also occurred in other aspects of people’s lives, such as accessing health care services. One example is the Homer G. Phillips Hospital located in the Ville neighborhood. For years, this anchor institution was the only hospital that provided health care for African Americans and trained African American physicians, dentists, and nurses. In part because of this history, St. Louis remains one of the most segregated cities in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> The Modern Civil Rights Era ended formal discrimination in education and housing. But the effects of discrimination and segregation still remain today. One example of modern-day segregation in St. Louis is the ‘Delmar Divide’ which was featured in a recent BBC documentary.

Figure 1: Milestones in residential segregation in St. Louis and the United States

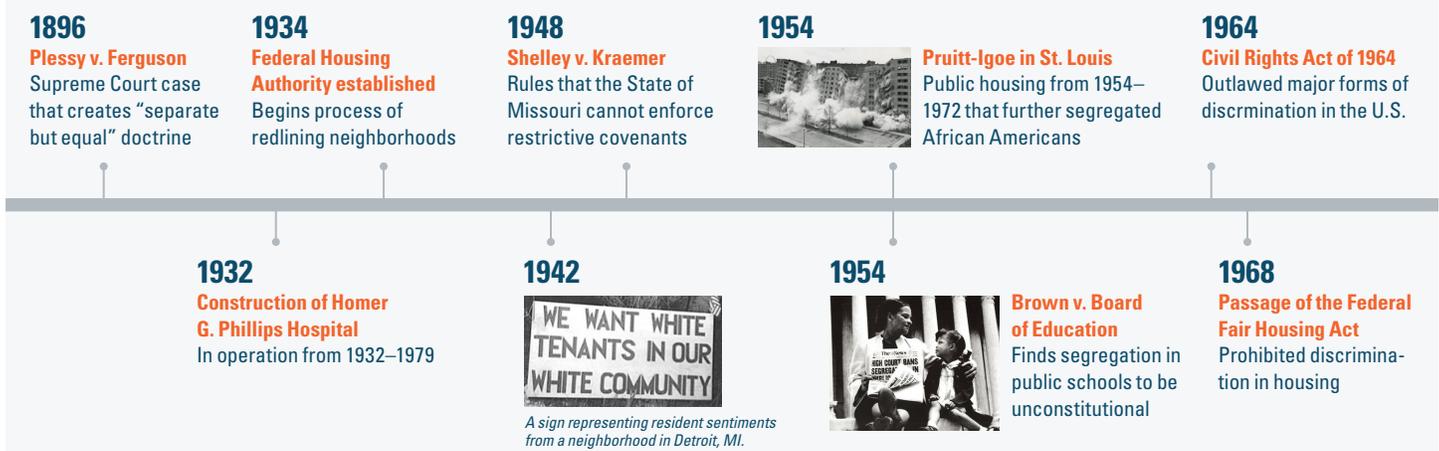


Figure 2: Neighborhoods divided by Delmar Blvd. in St. Louis City



The figures above represent median home values, and median household income. Source: American Community Survey 2007–2011 5 year estimates



Learn more about the BBC documentary on the Delmar divide. [Click here](#) to watch the short video.

## How does segregation affect neighborhoods?

Residential segregation results in neighborhoods with high poverty (figure 3). Neighborhoods with high poverty have fewer public services. They are more likely to have fast food chains, liquor stores, and convenience stores, as well as greater exposure to pollution and violent crime.<sup>3, 4, 5</sup> These neighborhoods are also less likely to have supermarkets, green space for recreation, banks, or other anchor institutions to support economic stability.

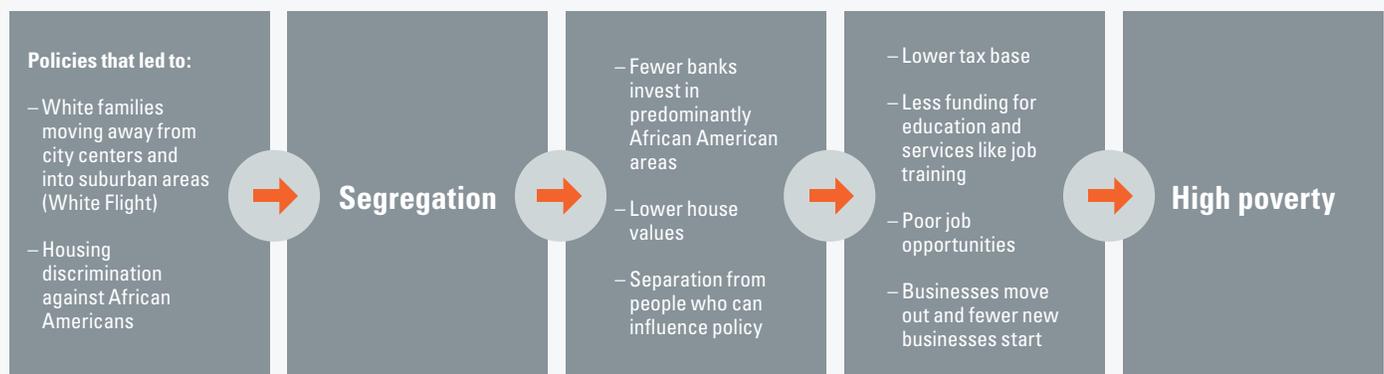


Where does St. Louis rank in segregation compared to other cities? [Click here](#) to find out more.

## How does segregation affect health?

Where a person lives affects their health in many ways. Segregation is one of the many causes of disparities in health.<sup>7</sup> Most of the effects of segregation on health are because of high poverty and the limited access to resources that it causes. Research shows that segregation affects health literacy and access to health care services. For example, communities with high proportions of racial and ethnic minorities have less access to doctors. And fewer doctors accept Medicaid in communities with higher percentages of minority residents.<sup>8, 9, 10, 11</sup> The long-term effects of these many challenges results in people living in neighborhoods with high poverty and poorer health. For example, concentrated poverty also results in higher rates of death from heart disease and all-cancers (figure 4). Notice that roughly the same areas are orange or light blue in each of the maps.

Figure 3: Process by which segregation leads to poverty

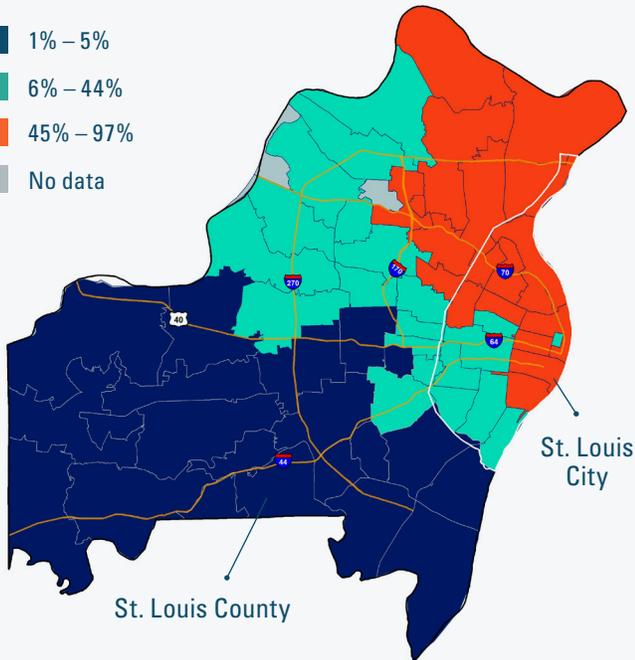


Adapted from University of Michigan's *The Geography of Race in the U.S., Economic Consequences of Segregation*<sup>6</sup>

Figure 4: Areas with higher concentrations of African American residents often have higher rates of poverty and death from heart disease and all-cancers.

Percent African American population by ZIP code

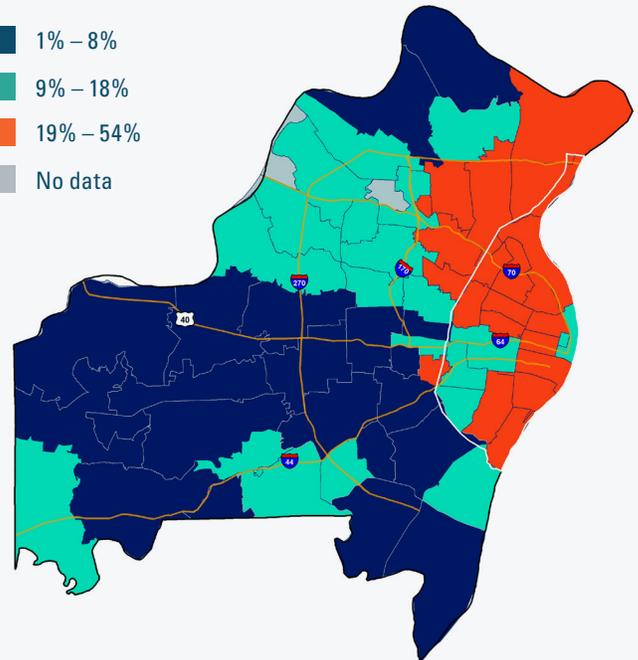
- 1% – 5%
- 6% – 44%
- 45% – 97%
- No data



Source: US Census 2010

Percent of all residents living in poverty by ZIP code

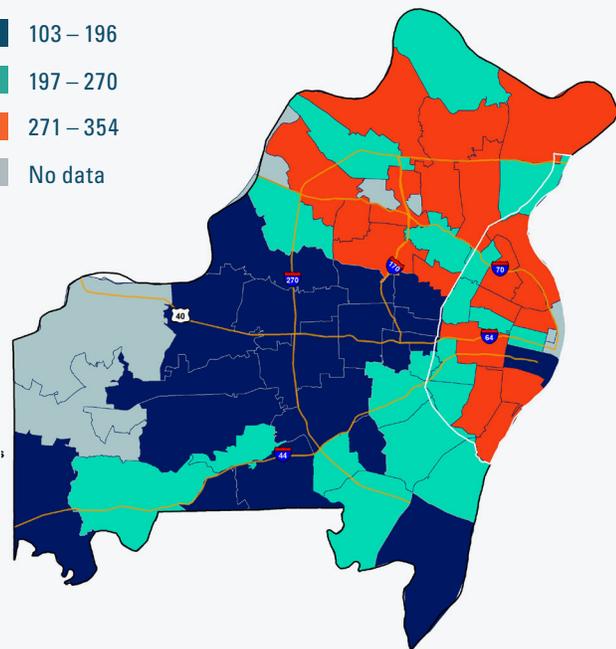
- 1% – 8%
- 9% – 18%
- 19% – 54%
- No data



Source: American Community Survey 2007–2011 5 year estimates

Heart disease mortality rates per 100,000 for all residents by ZIP code

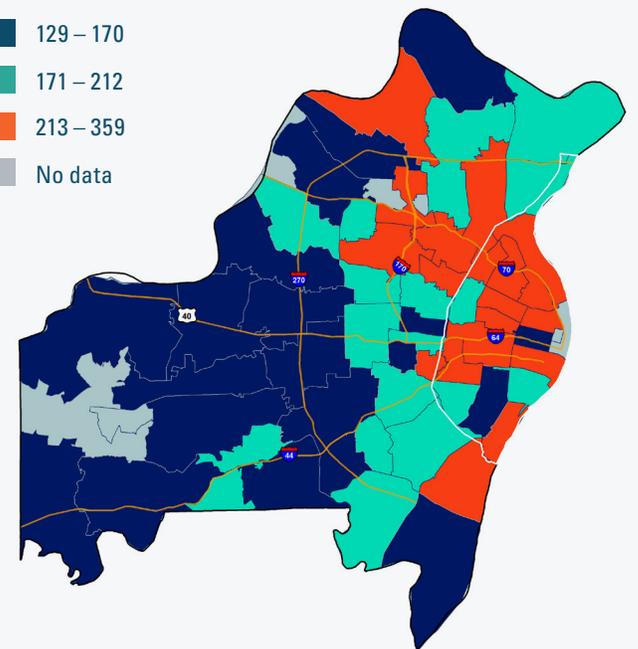
- 103 – 196
- 197 – 270
- 271 – 354
- No data



Source: Chronic Disease MICA 2009–2010

Cancer mortality rates per 100,000 for all residents by ZIP code

- 129 – 170
- 171 – 212
- 213 – 359
- No data



Source: Chronic Disease MICA 2009–2010

Mortality rates were age-adjusted using the US 2000 Standard population. Rates were not included for ZIP codes with less than 20 deaths due to heart disease or cancer.

## How does segregation affect economic opportunity?

Segregation results in disinvestments in the physical environment and contributes to a lower quality of life. In his book, *Mapping Decline*, Colin Gordon argues that the steady loss of population for the City of St. Louis and national prominence for the St. Louis region as a whole is directly linked to its policies about residential segregation. If the region is going to benefit from the full potential of all of its residents, we cannot afford to continue the social and economic isolation of entire communities. There is reason to believe that addressing segregation makes good sense both economically and

from the standpoint of health. Reducing the disparities in access to economic and other opportunities will have a significant role in reducing health disparities.

Because racial segregation is so closely tied to economic segregation, there must be a strong economic component to any solution. Giving everyone access to economic opportunity can improve health and contribute to the economic viability of the region.



For more information on patterns of segregation in St. Louis from Colin Gordon's *Mapping Decline* [click here](#).

## Where you live is associated with your health, education and income; MORE FRAGMENTATION LEADS TO MORE SEGREGATION.

### Promoting strong, diverse, and healthy neighborhoods.

Segregation is one of many factors that influence social circumstances that have an impact on health, such as education and employment. Integration alone is not enough to improve health. This will require a coordinated set of policy changes to improve health and well-being. The set of policies should include:

#### 1 Invest in quality neighborhoods for all in St. Louis

No matter where you live in St. Louis, it should be possible to find safe, affordable housing with high quality schools and access to resources like banks, grocery stores, parks, and jobs.

**A report<sup>12</sup> on cities like St. Louis suggests that some of the best ways to make them vibrant is to:**

- > Allocate resources and partner with the community to restore and maintain viable neighborhoods, making them attractive to new residents with improved services and stabilization efforts

- Use community partnerships to repurpose vacant land for new activities like parks or urban agriculture
- Features of neighborhoods that promote health include:
  - Safe, walkable streets and sidewalks
  - Access to fresh, high quality foods
  - Green space for recreation
  - Environments free of harmful chemicals (e.g., lead, pollutants, industrial waste)
- > Integrate the city into the regional economy through coordinated educational, workforce development, and structural policies
- > Partner with key institutions such as universities, medical centers, and major companies to revitalize the city



Learn about neighborhood revitalization in St. Louis. [Click here](#) to listen to an interview with Todd Swanstrom of UMSL and Hank Webber of Washington University.

## 2 Promote development and housing choice without displacement

As we invest in improving neighborhoods and increasing the number of options for affordable housing for everyone, we have to be aware of the people who already call these neighborhoods home. St. Louis has a strong tradition of neighborhood pride, and residents should have the choice to remain in an improving neighborhood or move to one that better fits their needs.

### In terms of specific policies this means:

- > Enacting tax policies (e.g., stable property tax rates for a predetermined period) that allow residents to remain in their homes even as property values rise
- > Preserving and capitalizing on important neighborhood assets and institutions (e.g., churches, historical sites, community centers)
- > Zoning for and building a mix of apartment complex, condominium, and single-family homes throughout the region
- > Providing Housing Choice Vouchers that increase access to affordable housing, while also connecting families to the neighborhood resources they need in the areas where they choose to live
- > Ensuring meaningful community involvement in development plans and community benefit in terms of jobs and business opportunities resulting from economic growth

## 3 Promote the benefits of diverse neighborhoods and safeguard fair housing

St. Louis already has a rich diversity, but racial and economic isolation means that we cannot fully benefit from its potential. And the implications go beyond St. Louis. As the National Fair Housing Alliance states, “Our global competitiveness is challenged when all of our communities do not have the opportunity to succeed together.” We must not only remain vigilant against all forms of discrimination in housing, but also promote and celebrate diversity in our neighborhoods and communities.

### Policies include:

- > Partnering with local media, major employers, realtors, banks, and others to promote and support communities in the region that are working towards more diversity and inclusion
- > Addressing the “Not-in-My-Backyard” mentality by providing successful examples of mixed-income, mixed-use communities in the St. Louis region and in other cities
- > Encouraging local governments to affirmatively further fair housing by proactively removing barriers to integration



### Local progress to address residential segregation in St. Louis

Learn more about:

St. Louis Equal Housing Opportunity Council (EHOC), the only private, not-for-profit fair housing enforcement agency working to end housing discrimination in the St. Louis region. [Click here to learn about EHOC.](#)

OneSTL, a movement that advances a prosperous, healthy and vibrant St. Louis region. One STL is being funded by a grant received by East-West Gateway. [Click here to learn about OneSTL.](#)

Projects and efforts using community based approaches to address the Delmar Divide. [Click here to find out more.](#)

The Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation, a voluntary school desegregation program. [Click here to find out more.](#)

This is the fourth in a series of five briefs prepared by a team of researchers at Washington University and Saint Louis University. The data and recommendations discussed in the briefs will be explored in-depth in the forthcoming report, “For the Sake of All: A Report on the Health and Well-Being of African Americans in St. Louis.”

Next brief: *Chronic disease in St. Louis*

## Resources

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