

RUTGERS

Center for State Health Policy

# New Jersey Childhood Obesity Survey

*Chartbook | Trenton  
Summer 2010*

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# About Rutgers Center for State Health Policy

Rutgers Center for State Health Policy (CSHP) is a policy research center dedicated to helping leaders and decision-makers examine complex state health policy issues and solutions. The Center, established in 1999, is an initiative within Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research, and its mission is to inform, support, and stimulate sound and creative state health policy in New Jersey and around the nation.

The Center's current research focus includes:

- Access to care and coverage,
- Health systems performance improvement,
- Long-term care & support services,
- Health & long-term care workforce,
- Obesity prevention.

In order to accomplish its mission, CSHP marshals the expert resources of a major public research university to:

- Identify and analyze emerging state health policy issues,
- Conduct rigorous, impartial research on health policy issues,
- Provide objective, practical, and timely evaluation of programs and policy choices,
- Convene the health policy community in a neutral forum to promote an active exchange of ideas on critical issues,
- Educate current and future health policy makers, researchers, and administrators,
- Promote the practical application of scholarship in health policy,
- Foster wide understanding of health policy choices.

CSHP was established with a major grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Center is also supported by grants and contracts from other foundations, public agencies and the private sector. A selection of these funders includes: the Commonwealth Fund, the Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality, the NJ Department of Human Services, the NJ Department of Health & Senior Services, and the NJ Department of Banking & Insurance.

# Table of Contents

<i>Executive Summary</i>	2
<i>Survey Methods</i>	3
<i>Definitions and Notes</i>	3
<b>Children's Weight Status</b>	5
<b>Food Behaviors</b>	11
<b>Food Environment</b>	24
<b>Physical Activity Behaviors</b>	36
<b>Physical Activity Environment</b>	45
<i>Conclusions</i>	62

## Executive Summary

The New Jersey Childhood Obesity Study was designed to provide vital information for planning, implementing, and evaluating interventions aimed at preventing childhood obesity in five New Jersey municipalities: Camden, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton, and Vineland. These five communities are being supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids program to plan and implement policy and environmental change strategies to prevent childhood obesity.

Effective interventions for addressing childhood obesity require community-specific information on who is most at risk and on contributing factors that can be addressed through tailored interventions that meet the needs of the community. Based on comprehensive research, a series of reports are being prepared for each community to assist in planning effective interventions. The main components of the study were:

- A household telephone survey of 1700 families with 3–18 year old children,
- De-identified heights and weights measured at public schools,
- Assessment of the food and physical activity environments using objective data.

This report presents the results from the household survey. Reports based on school body mass index (BMI) data and food and physical activity environment data are available at [www.cshp.rutgers.edu/childhoodobesity.htm](http://www.cshp.rutgers.edu/childhoodobesity.htm).

The survey respondent was an adult most knowledgeable about food shopping for the household. Questions were asked from the following five domains:

1. Weight and height of a randomly selected child,
2. Perceptions about the food and physical activity environments around their homes,
3. Barriers related to access to healthy food and physical activity facilities,
4. Food and physical activity behaviors of the index child,
5. Demographic information.

Major findings from the survey are presented in four sections of the chartbook: child food behaviors, food environment, child physical activity behaviors, and physical activity environment. Also included are charts describing demographic characteristics of the sample and presenting BMI estimates for the city based on school-measured heights and weights. Key findings presented include:

**SCHOOL BMI:** Trenton children are more likely to be overweight or obese compared to their national counterparts. The rates are highest among Hispanic children. The largest differences between Trenton public school children and national estimates are seen among the youngest children (49% in Trenton are overweight or obese vs. 21% nationally). National data are based on 2–5 year old children and Trenton data are based on 3–5 year olds.

**FOOD BEHAVIORS:** The majority of Trenton children do not meet recommendations for vegetable consumption. They also frequently consume energy-dense foods such as fast food, sugar-sweetened beverages, and sweet snacks, and this is more prevalent among non-Hispanic black and older children.

**FOOD ENVIRONMENT:** Most parents shop at supermarkets and superstores for most of their food shopping. About one-third report limited availability of fresh produce and low-fat items at these stores. 44% of families do not food-shop in their neighborhood. Lack of stores in the neighborhood, cost, and quality are reported as major barriers to buying healthy foods.

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BEHAVIORS:** Most children do not meet the guidelines for being physically active for 60 minutes each day. Thirty-five percent of children exercise at school only 2 or fewer days per week, and this was more prevalent among girls and Hispanic children. In addition, a large proportion spend more than 2 hours a day watching television, using the computer, and playing video games, and this is more prevalent among boys and non-Hispanic black children. The majority of children do not walk or bike to school and some do not use the sidewalks, parks, and exercise facilities available in their neighborhoods. Half do not live near exercise facilities and a fifth do not have parks nearby.

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ENVIRONMENT:** Although many neighborhoods have sidewalks and some have parks and exercise facilities, a fair number of parents report that their children do not use these facilities to be active. Traffic, crime level, pleasantness of neighborhoods and parks, and condition of sidewalks are the most commonly reported barriers.

Effective interventions will require changes in the neighborhood environment by creating new opportunities, improving existing features, and addressing barriers to practicing healthy behaviors. Efforts are also needed to raise awareness about the issue of childhood obesity and associated behaviors among parents and caregivers.

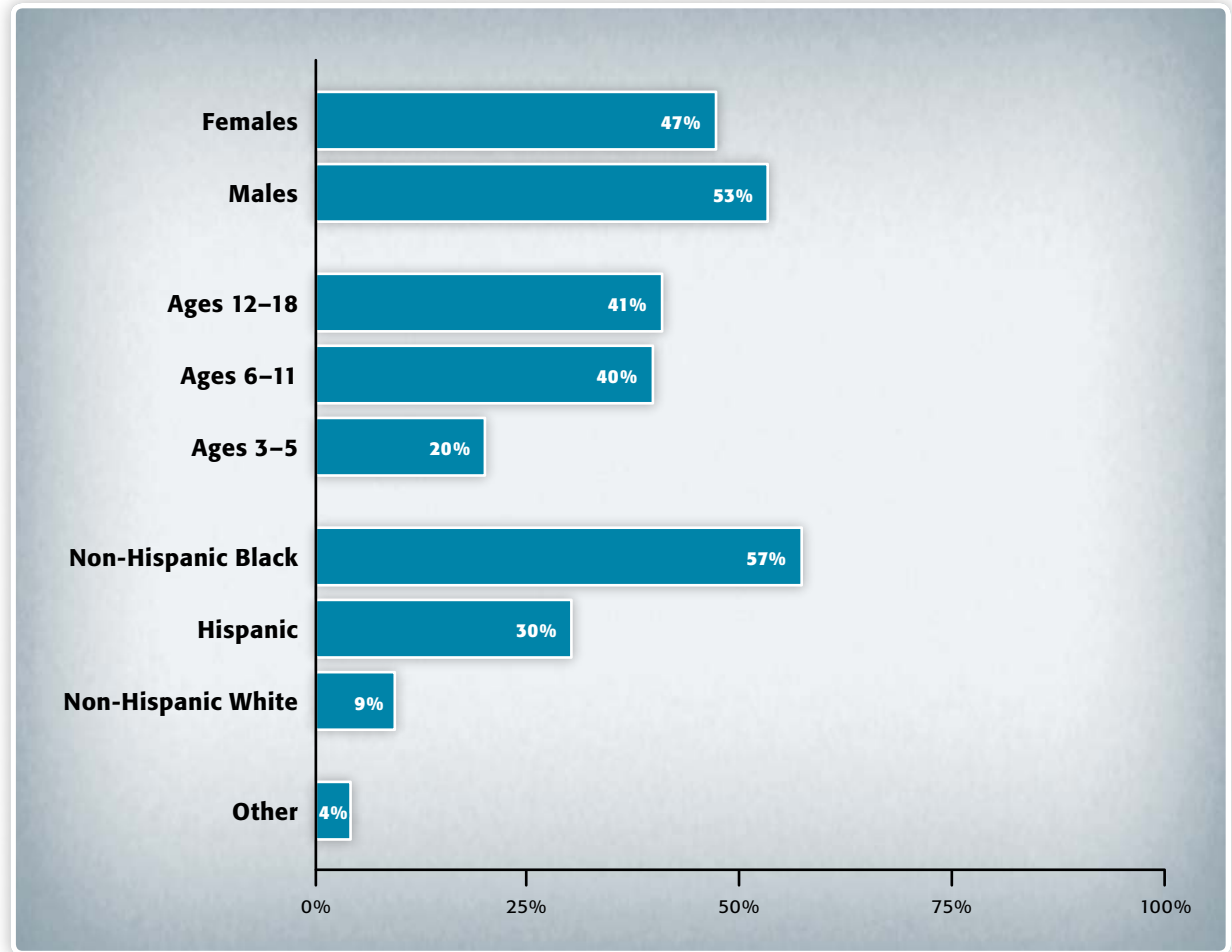
## Survey Methods

- A random-digit-dial landline telephone sample of 400 households from Trenton was surveyed (as were similar samples from Camden, Newark, New Brunswick, and Vineland).
- A household was eligible if it was within city limits and had at least one child in the age range 3–18 years.
- Fieldwork was conducted between June 2009 and March 2010.
- Average interview length was 36 minutes.
- Worksheets and tape measures were mailed to each home to weigh and measure 3–18 year old children and the respondent.
- Overall response rate was 49%.
- The study was conducted by the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy (survey fieldwork by Abt-SRBI) and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

## Definitions and Notes

- A **family** is defined as all people living in the household related by blood, marriage, or living as married and includes adopted, guardianship, and foster children.
- The survey **respondent** is the person 18 years or older who lives in the household and makes most of the decisions about food shopping for the household (usually the parent). In 94% of the families, this person was either the parent or grandparent of the randomly selected “**index child**”. Hereafter, this person shall be referred to as “**the parent**”.
- The **index child** was randomly selected from each household.
- Body mass index (**BMI**) categories are defined by comparing heights and weights data to growth charts specific to age and gender:
  - Not overweight: <85th percentile,
  - Overweight: 85th percentile to <95th percentile,
  - Obese: 95th percentile and up.
- The **neighborhood** was defined for the respondent as the area within a 20 minute walk, a 5 minute drive, or about 1 mile in all directions around the respondent’s home.
- **Food consumption recall time frame** was the past month, with frequency of consumption reported on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Responses were used to calculate frequency of consumption per day. **Physical activity recall time frame** was the past 7 days (active 30 minutes/day, 60 minutes/day) or a typical weekday or weekend day during the school year (TV/computer/video game time).
- All charts present survey data from Trenton, with the exception of the BMI charts which use data measured (and provided) by public schools in Trenton.

## Demographics of Trenton Index Children in the Household Survey (N=400)



**NOTE:** Due to the small number of children in the "Other" category, separate estimates for this group will not be provided in this chartbook. However, they are included in all other estimates (e.g., by age, gender, citywide).

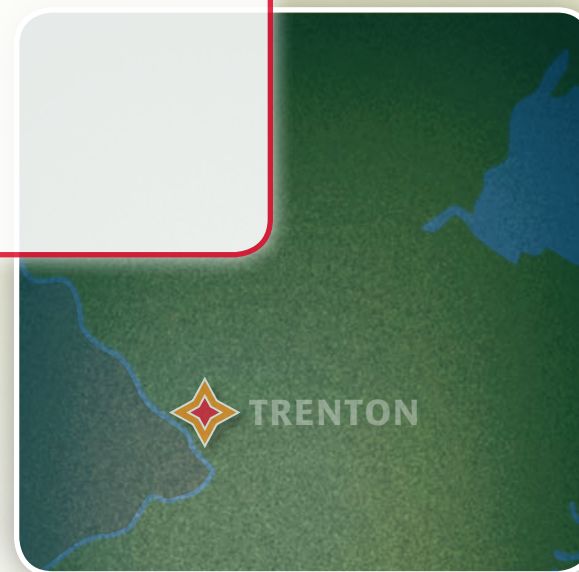
# Trenton Children's Weight Status

*Charts in this section present data obtained from Trenton public schools.*

*De-identified data on students' heights and weights, measured by school nurses, are used to compute body mass index (BMI).*

*BMI data by age, gender, and race/ethnicity are compared to national US data obtained from the 2007–2008 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).*

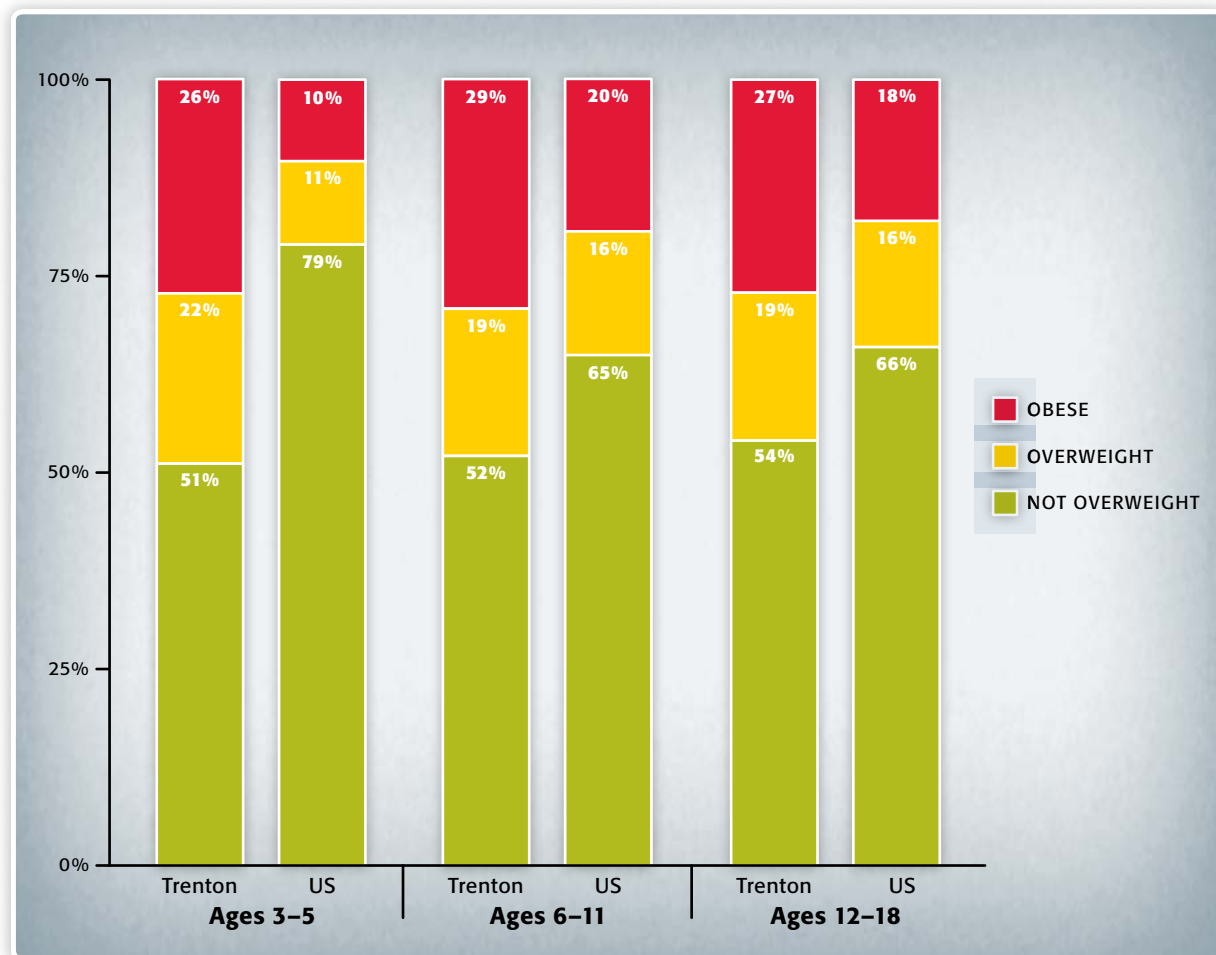
*The last chart in this section presents parental perceptions of child weight status obtained from the household survey.*





## Childhood weight status by age: Trenton public schools vs. US

- Compared to the national data, a higher percentage of Trenton public school children in all age categories are overweight or obese. Nearly 1 in 2 Trenton children in every age category is overweight or obese, and more than 1 in 4 children in every age category is obese.
- The largest differences between Trenton public school children and national estimates are seen among the youngest children (49% overweight or obese in Trenton vs. 21% nationally).

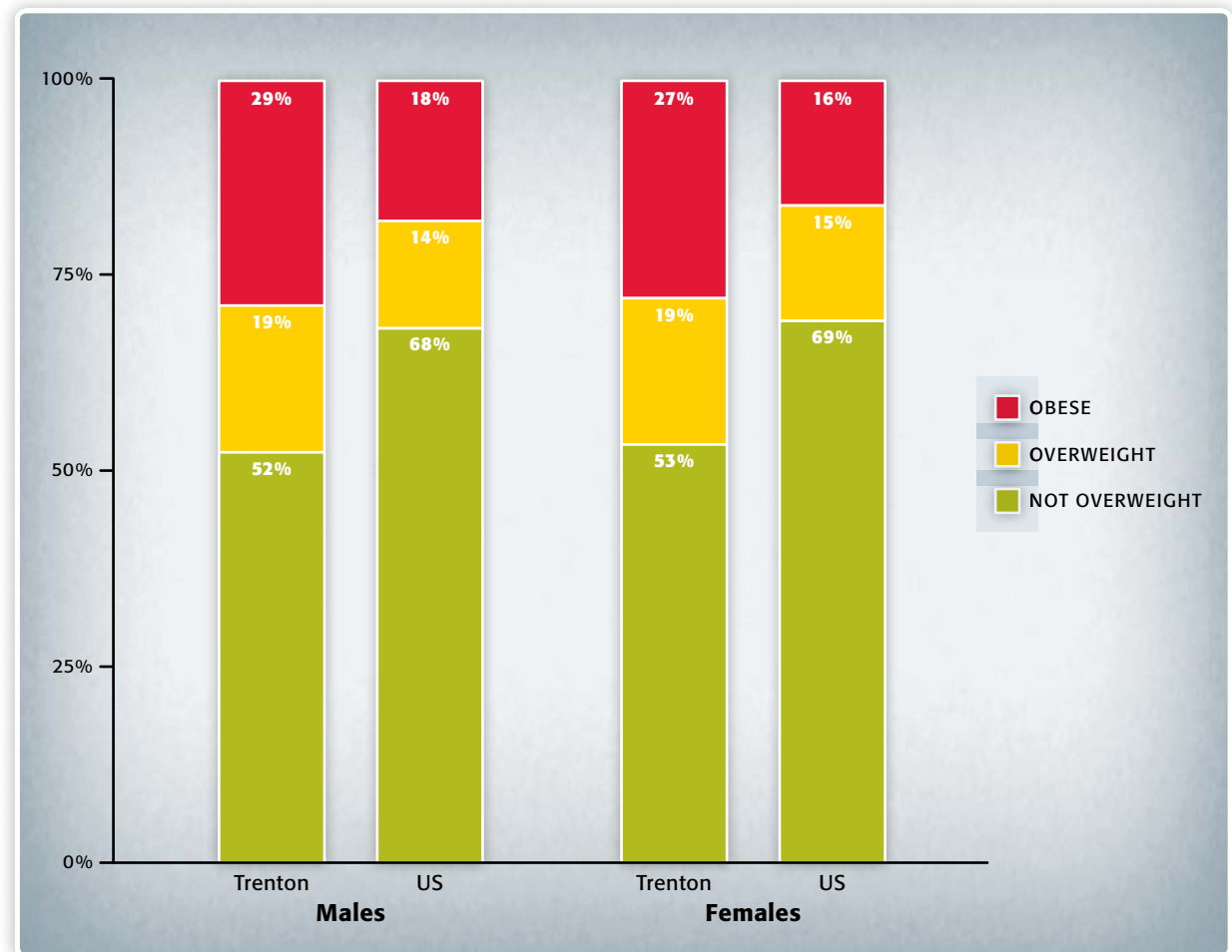


**NOTE:** This chart presents data from Trenton public schools (2008–2009), NOT survey data. National data (NHANES, 2007–2008) are based on 2–5 year-olds, while the Trenton data are based on 3–5 year-olds. Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.



## Childhood weight status by gender: Trenton public schools vs. US

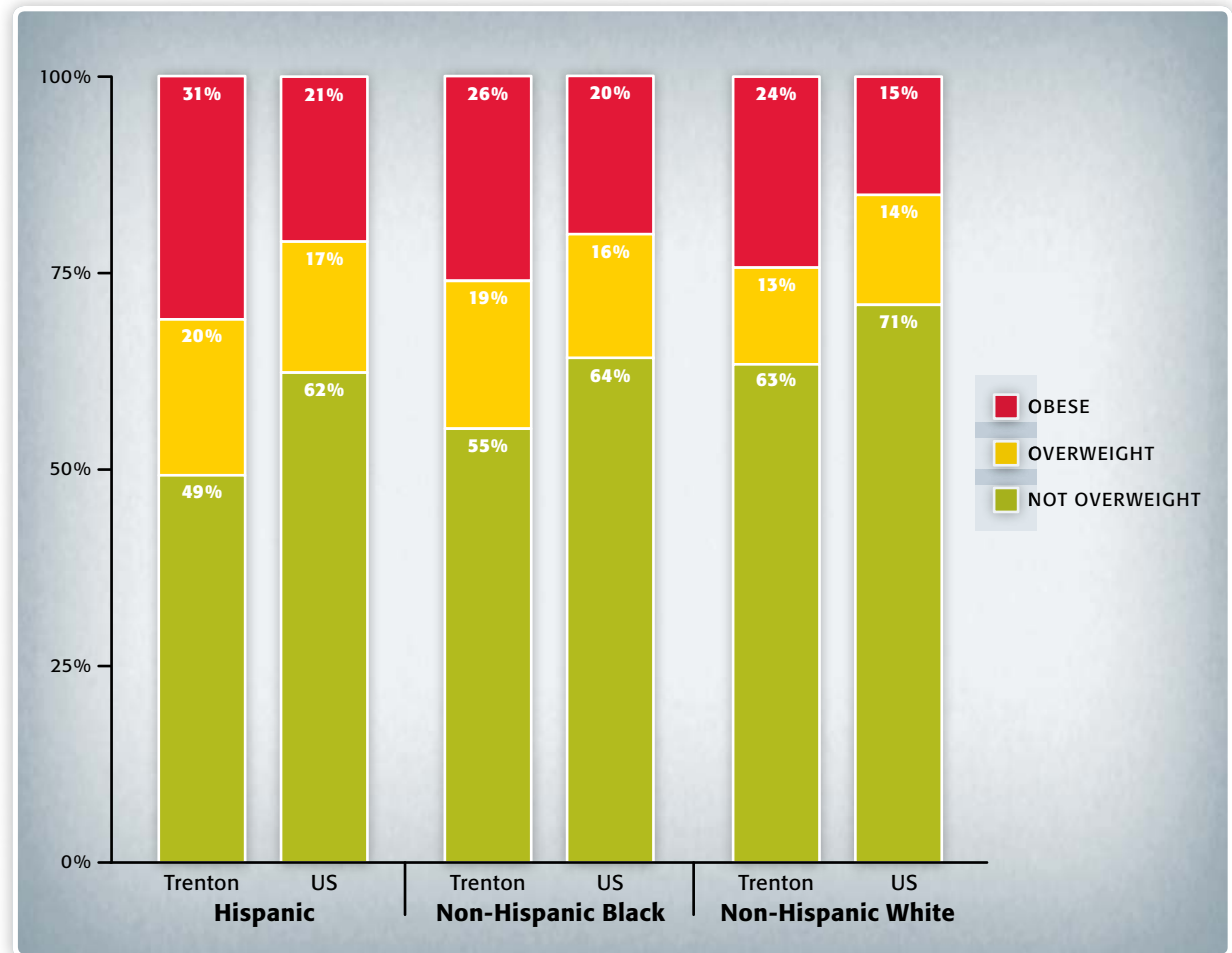
- Compared to the national data, a higher percentage of both boys and girls in Trenton are overweight or obese.
- 48% of Trenton boys and 47% of Trenton girls are either overweight or obese compared to 32% of boys and 31% of girls nationally.



**NOTE:** This chart presents data from Trenton public schools (2008–2009), NOT survey data. National data (NHANES, 2007–2008) are based on 2–18 year-olds, while the Trenton data are based on 3–18 year-olds. Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Childhood weight status by race/ethnicity: Trenton public schools vs. US

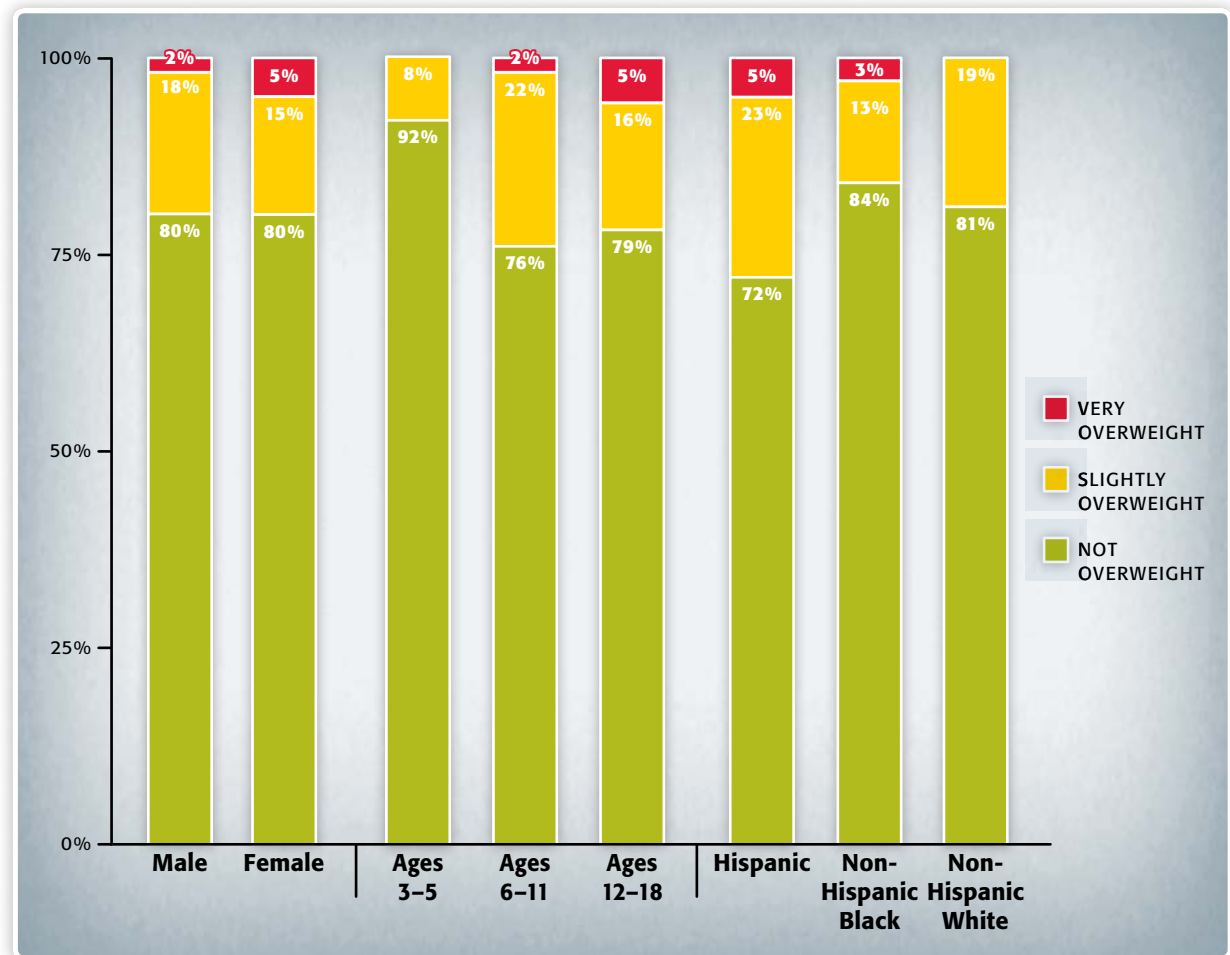
- Compared to the national data, all racial/ethnic groups of children in Trenton have a higher prevalence of overweight and obesity. This is particularly true of Hispanic children in Trenton, where over half of the children are overweight or obese compared to 38% of Hispanic children nationally.
- These differences among Hispanic children are mostly attributable to an excess in the obese category: Hispanic children in Trenton are about 1.5 times as likely to be obese compared to Hispanic children nationally.
- The rates of overweight and obesity for non-Hispanic black and non-Hispanic white children in Trenton are 8–9 percentage points higher than national rates.



**NOTE:** This chart presents data from Trenton public schools (2008–2009), NOT survey data. National data (NHANES, 2007–2008) are based on 2–18 year-olds, while the Trenton data are based on 3–18 year-olds. Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Parent's perception of child's weight status

- Despite the high prevalence of overweight and obesity among children attending Trenton public schools, when asked about their child's weight status in the survey, a vast majority of parents of Trenton children do not think their children are overweight or obese.
- Trenton parents of children ages 3–5 are more likely to say their children are not overweight (92%) compared to parents of children ages 6–11 (76%) and ages 12–18 (79%).
- Parents of Hispanic children are more likely to say their children are overweight (28%) than parents of non-Hispanic black (16%) and white (19%) children.



**NOTE:** This chart (and the remainder of the chartbook) is based on survey data.

## *Key findings from data on children's weight status*

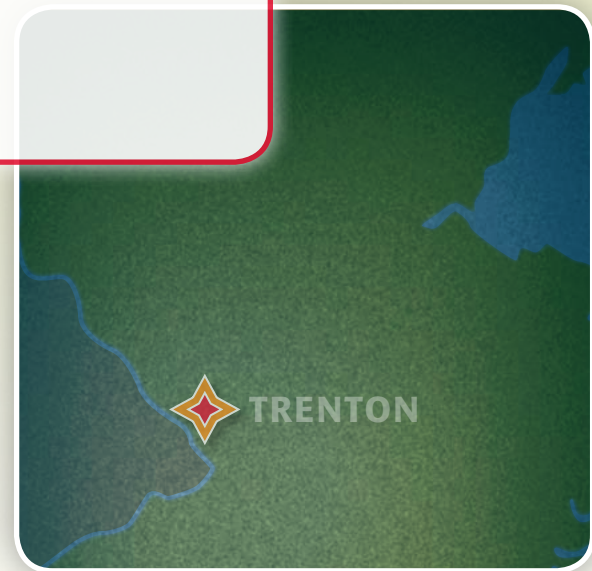
- Based on measured heights and weights data obtained from public schools in the city, Trenton children have high rates of overweight and obesity. Compared to the national data, the rates are particularly high among younger children and Hispanic children. National data for the youngest age group are based on 2–5 year olds while the Trenton data includes only 3–5 year olds.
- Despite these high rates of overweight and obesity in children, the vast majority of parents of children ages 3–18 in Trenton think that their children are not overweight.

# Food Behaviors

*Parents were asked to report on the food behaviors of the randomly selected index child.*

*Respondents were asked to think about the past month and report frequency of consumption of specific types of foods on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.*

*Consumption data are compared to established recommendations, where available.*



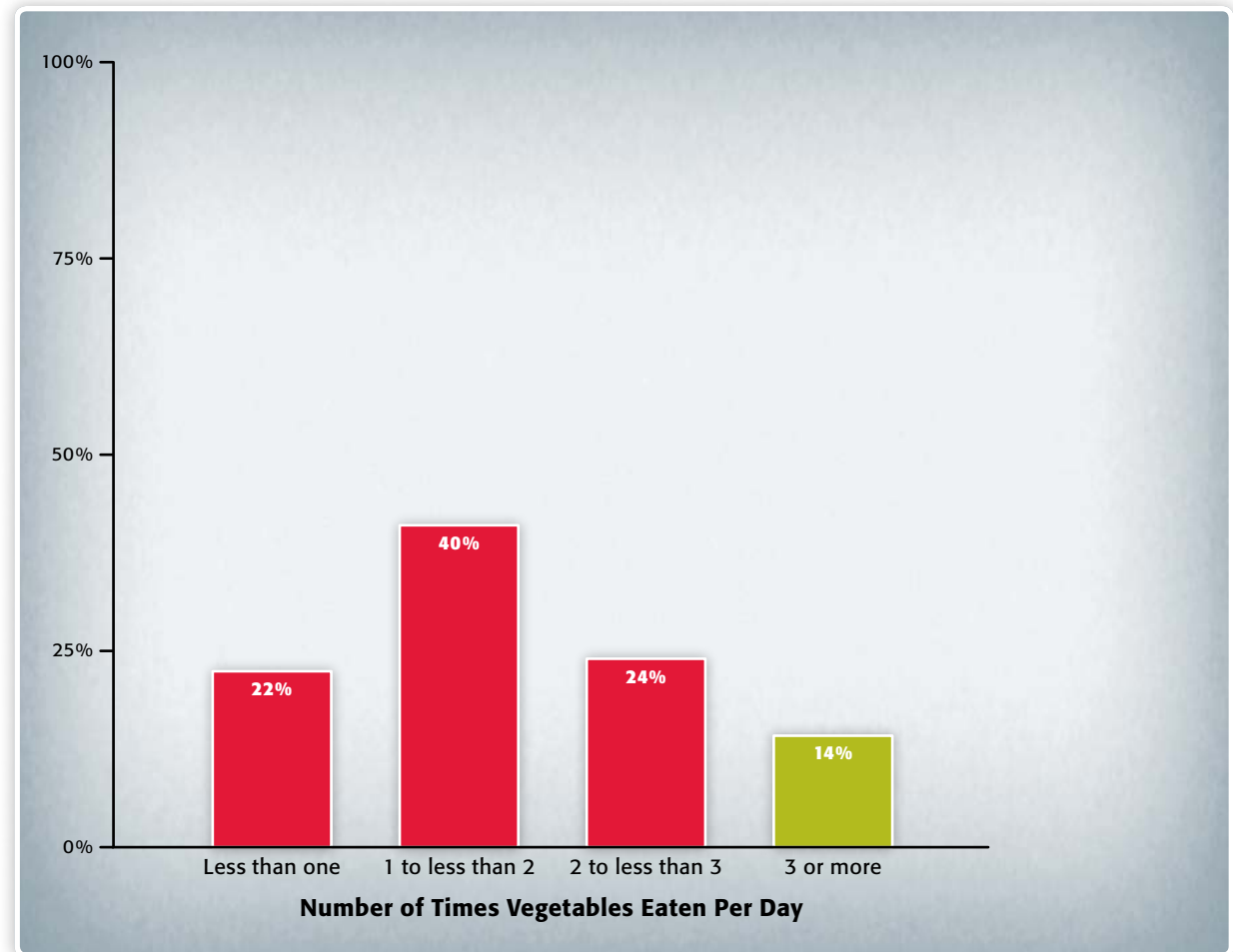
## *Number of times vegetables\* eaten per day*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 objectives state that individuals 2 years and older should eat vegetables at least 3 times a day.

In Trenton

- Only 14% of the children meet the Healthy People 2010 recommendation.
- 22% of the children eat vegetables **LESS THAN ONE** time per day

\* Includes green leafy or lettuce salad, potatoes (baked, boiled, mashed), cooked or canned dried beans, other vegetables (e.g., tomatoes, green beans, carrots, corn, cooked greens, sweet potatoes, broccoli). Excludes french fries, potato chips, tater tots, or other fried potatoes.

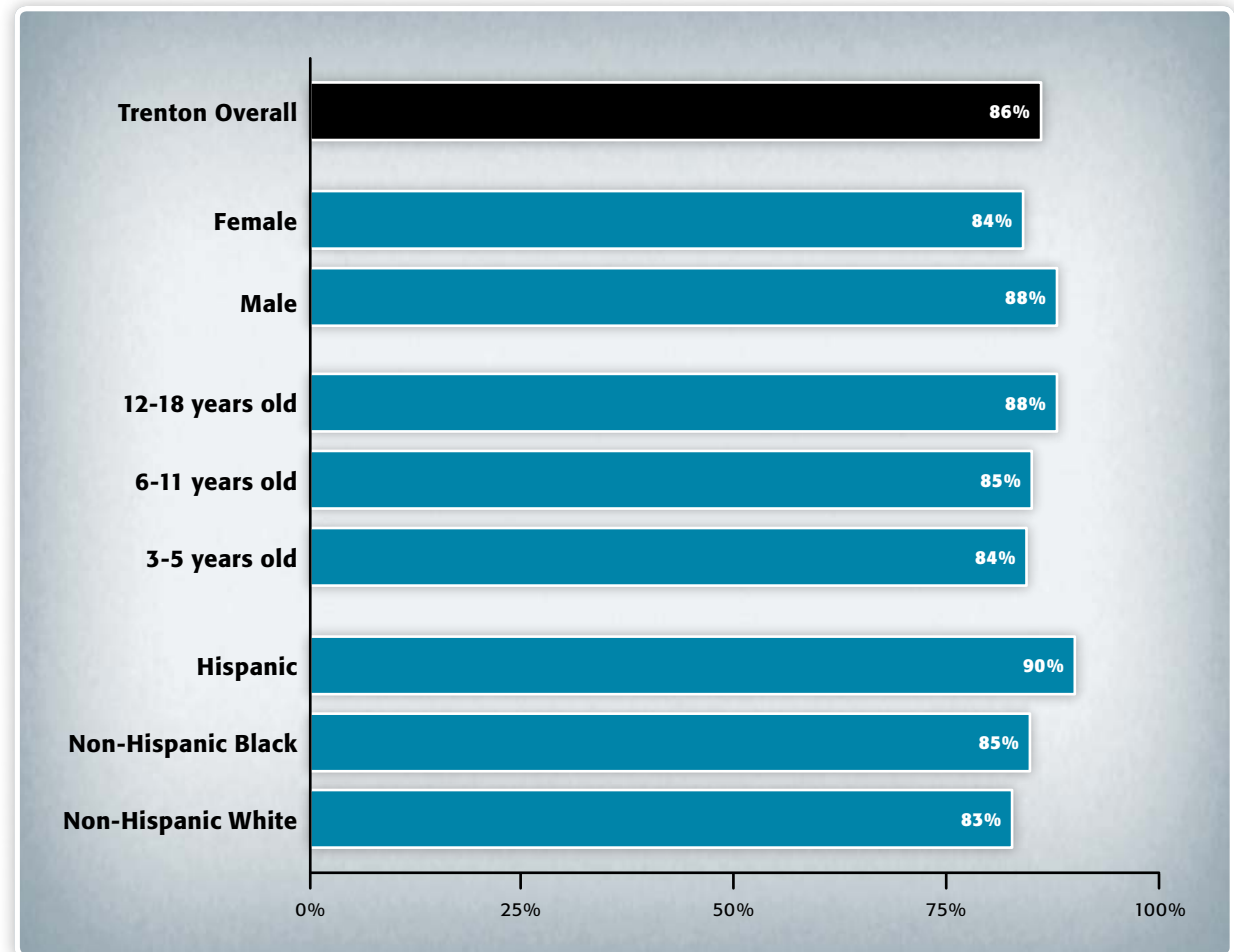


## *Almost all Trenton children eat vegetables\* less than 3 times a day*

The vast majority (86%) of 3–18 year old children in Trenton do not eat vegetables 3 times a day, as recommended by DHSS.

- This behavior varies little by gender or age.

\* Includes green leafy or lettuce salad, potatoes (baked, boiled, mashed), cooked or canned dried beans, other vegetables (e.g., tomatoes, green beans, carrots, corn, cooked greens, sweet potatoes, broccoli). Excludes french fries, potato chips, tater tots, or other fried potatoes.





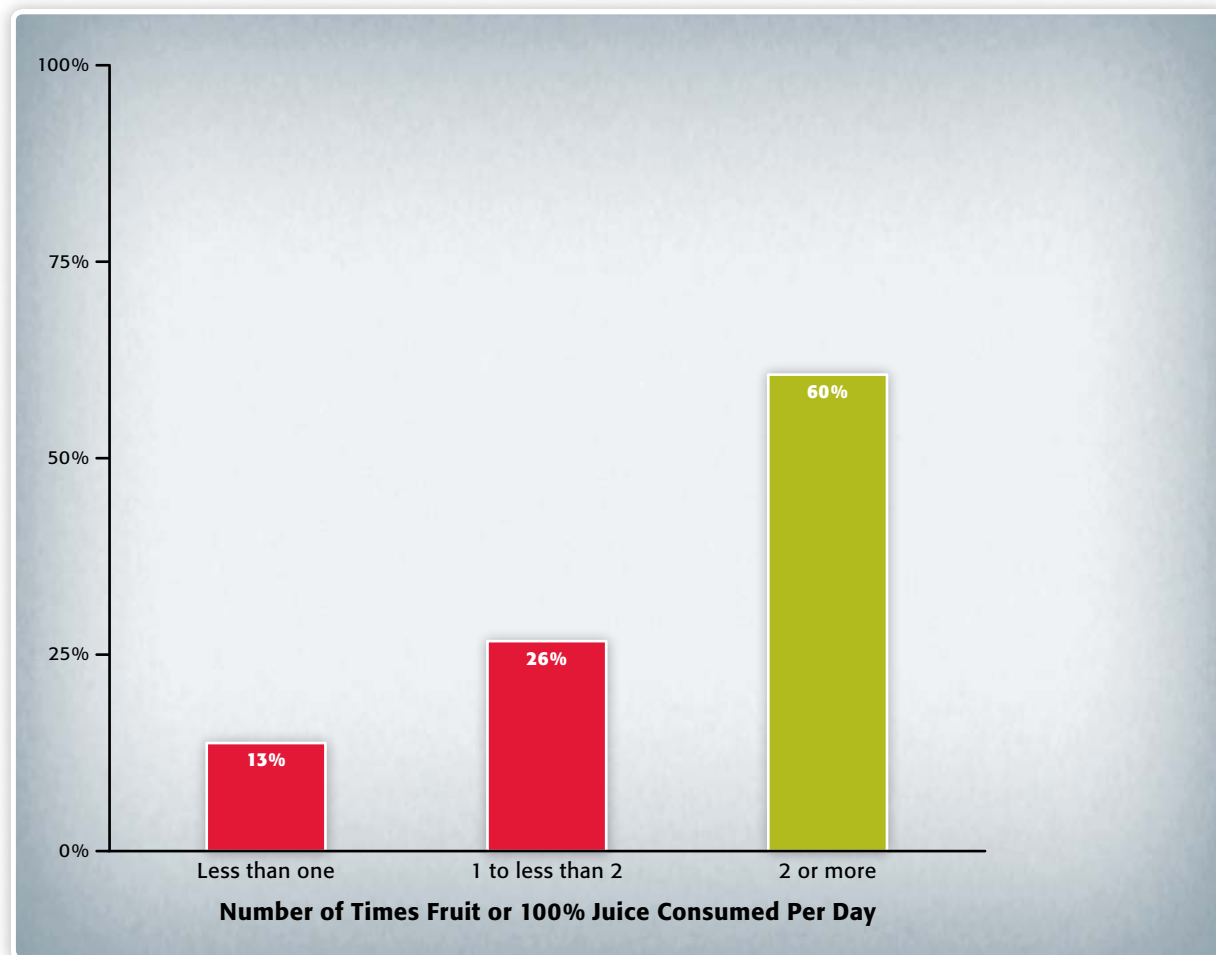
## *Number of times fruit or 100% juice\* consumed per day*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 objectives state that individuals 2 years and older should eat fruit or 100% juice at least two times per day.

In Trenton

- 60% of children meet this recommendation.
- 13% of children consume fruit or juice less than once per day.
- Fruit juice comprises a larger proportion of the total as overall fruit (fruit or 100% fruit juice) consumption increases (not shown in chart).

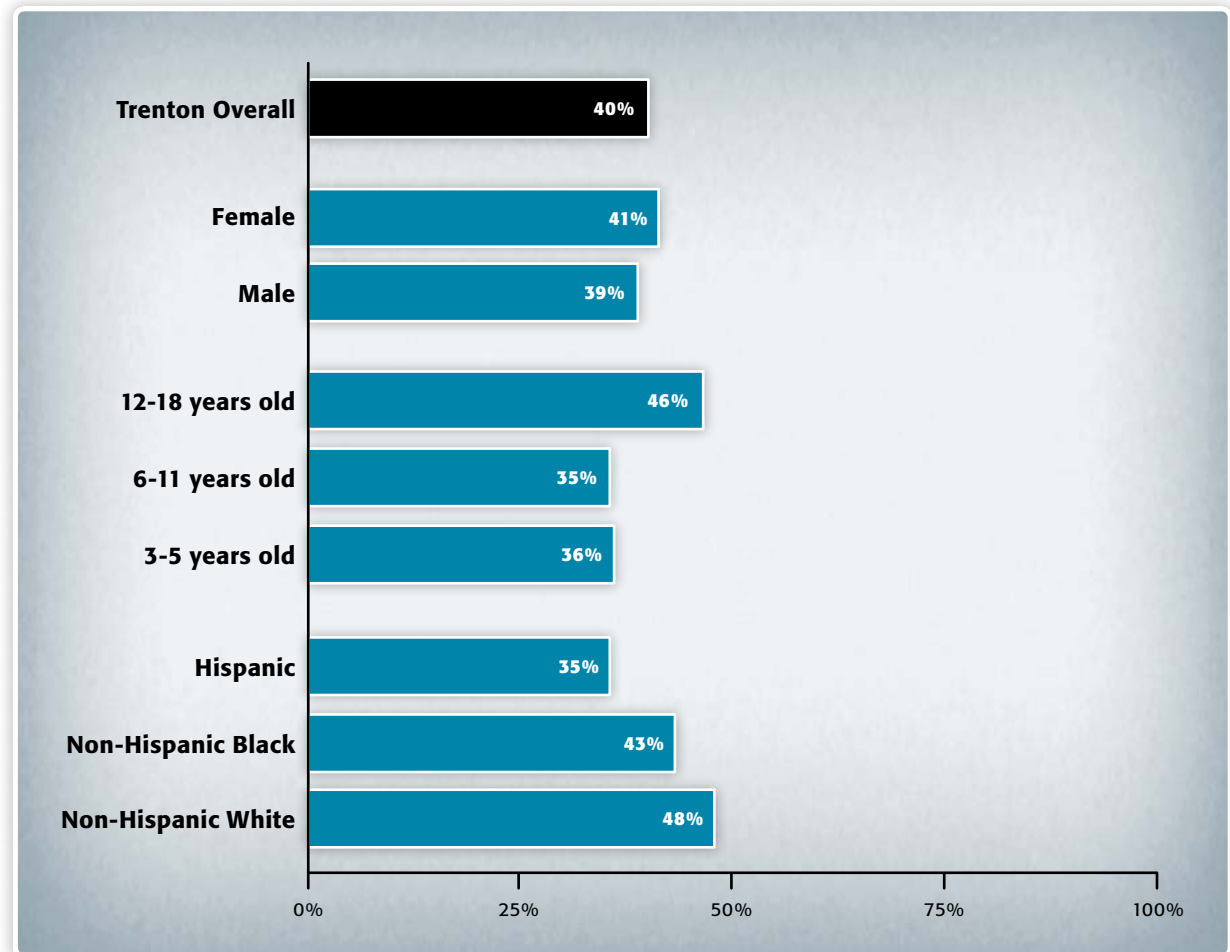
\* Includes fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits and 100% fruit juice such as orange, apple, or grape juice. Excludes fruit-flavored drinks with added sugar like Hi-C, Gatorade, or fruit punch.



## *Percentage who do not consume fruit or 100% juice\* at least 2 times a day*

- Overall, 40% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton consume less than the recommendation of fruit or 100% juice.
- Nearly half of Trenton adolescents (46%) do not consume fruit or 100% juice at least two times a day, compared to 35% of children ages 6–11 and 36% of those ages 3–5.
- 48% of non-Hispanic white children do not consume fruit or 100% juice at least two times a day, compared to 43% of non-Hispanic black children and 35% of Hispanic children.
- This behavior varies little by gender.

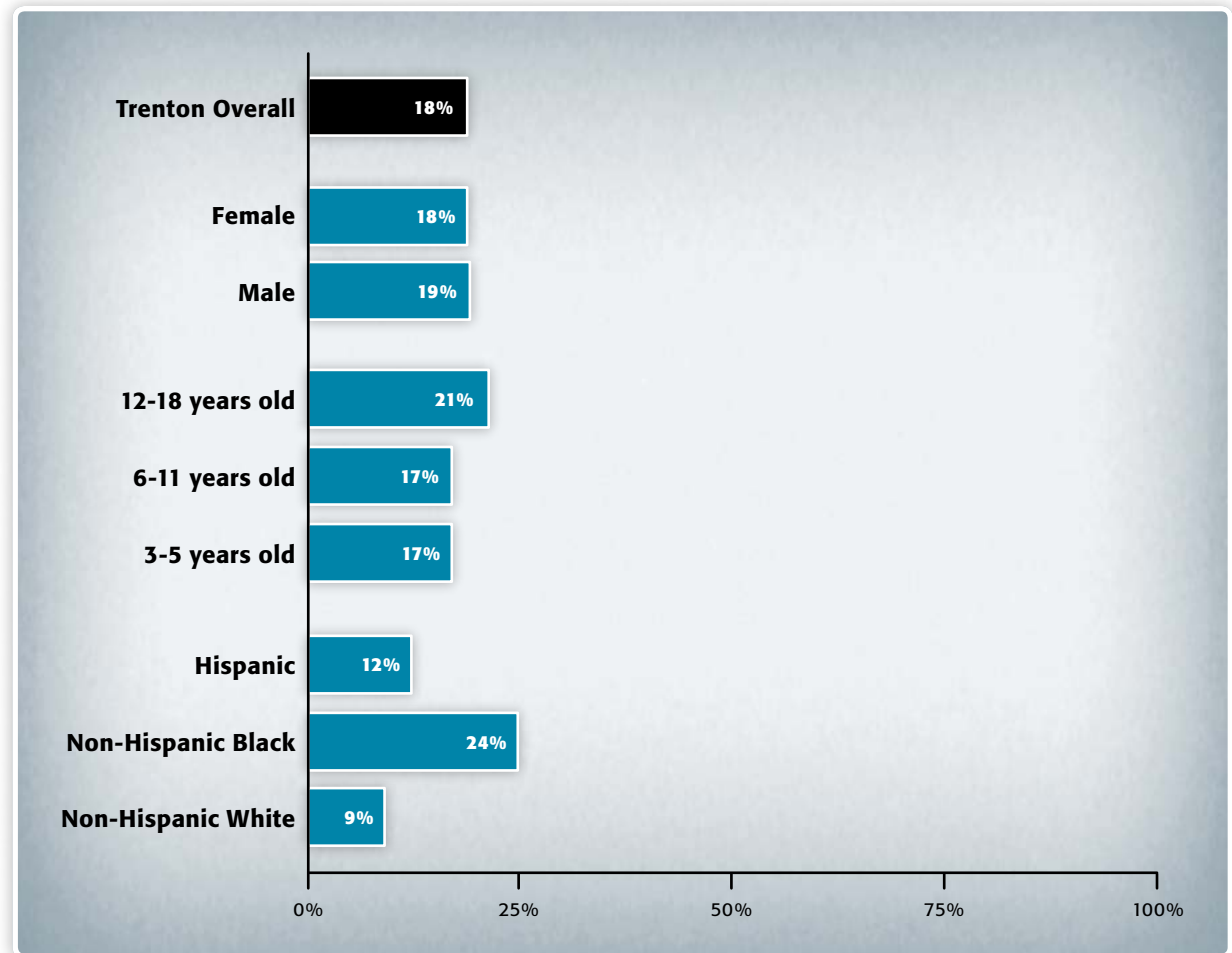
\* Includes fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits and 100% fruit juice such as orange, apple, or grape juice. Excludes fruit-flavored drinks with added sugar like Hi-C, Gatorade, or fruit punch.



## Percentage with two or more fast-food\* visits per week

- Overall, 18% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton eat at fast-food restaurants 2 or more times a week.
- 24% of non-Hispanic black children eat at fast-food restaurants 2 or more times a week, compared to 12% of Hispanic children and 9% of non-Hispanic white children.
- This behavior varies little by gender or age.

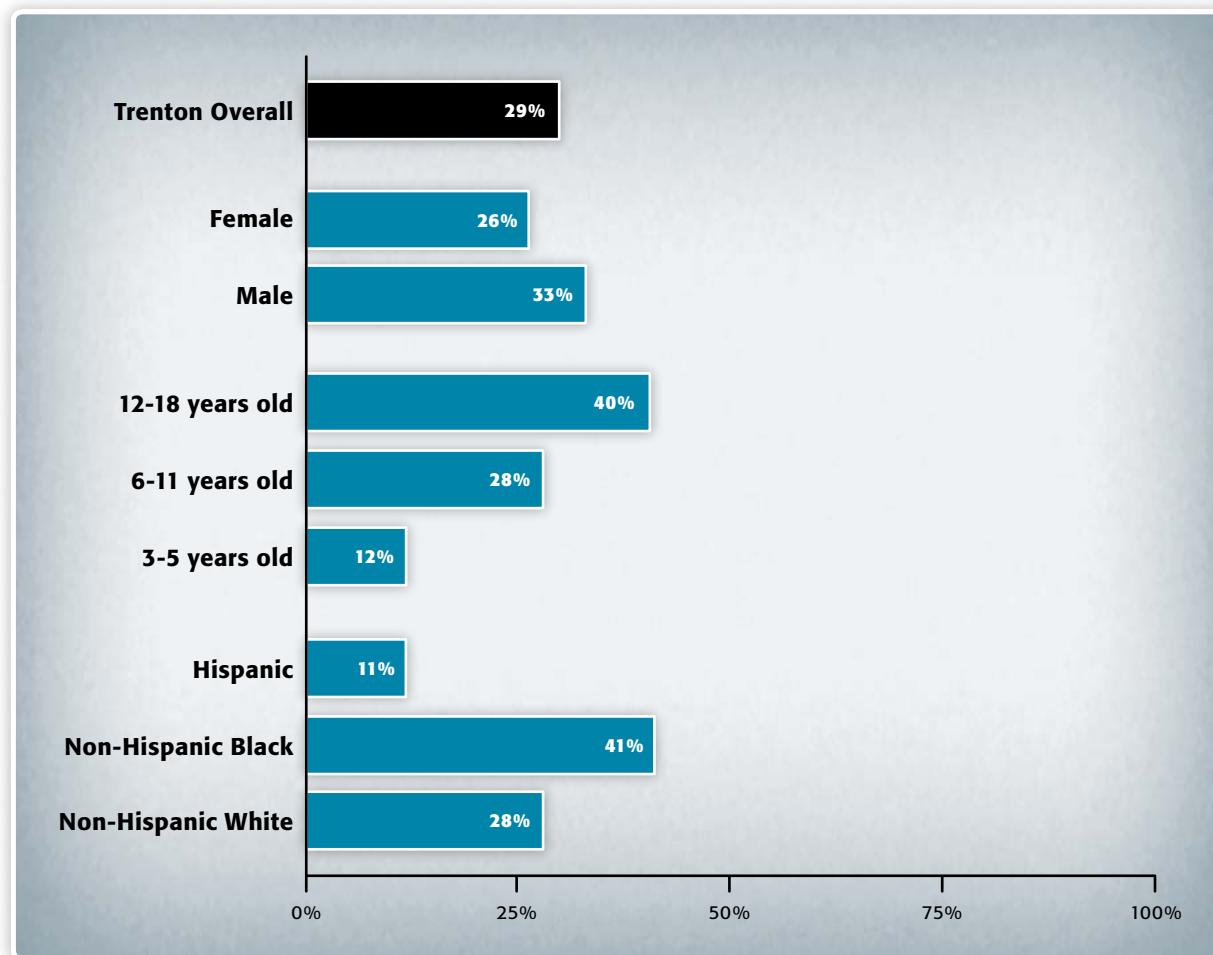
\* Includes any fast food restaurant, deli, or pizza, burger, taco, or chicken place where you pay before you eat.



## Percentage who drink two or more sugar-sweetened beverages\* per day

- Overall, 29% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton drink 2 or more sugar-sweetened beverages per day.
- Consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages increases with age: 40% of Trenton adolescents drink 2 or more sugar-sweetened beverages per day compared to 28% of children ages 6–11 and 12% of children ages 3–5.
- 41% of non-Hispanic black children in Trenton drink 2 or more sugar-sweetened beverages per day, compared to 28% of non-Hispanic white children and 11% of Hispanic children.

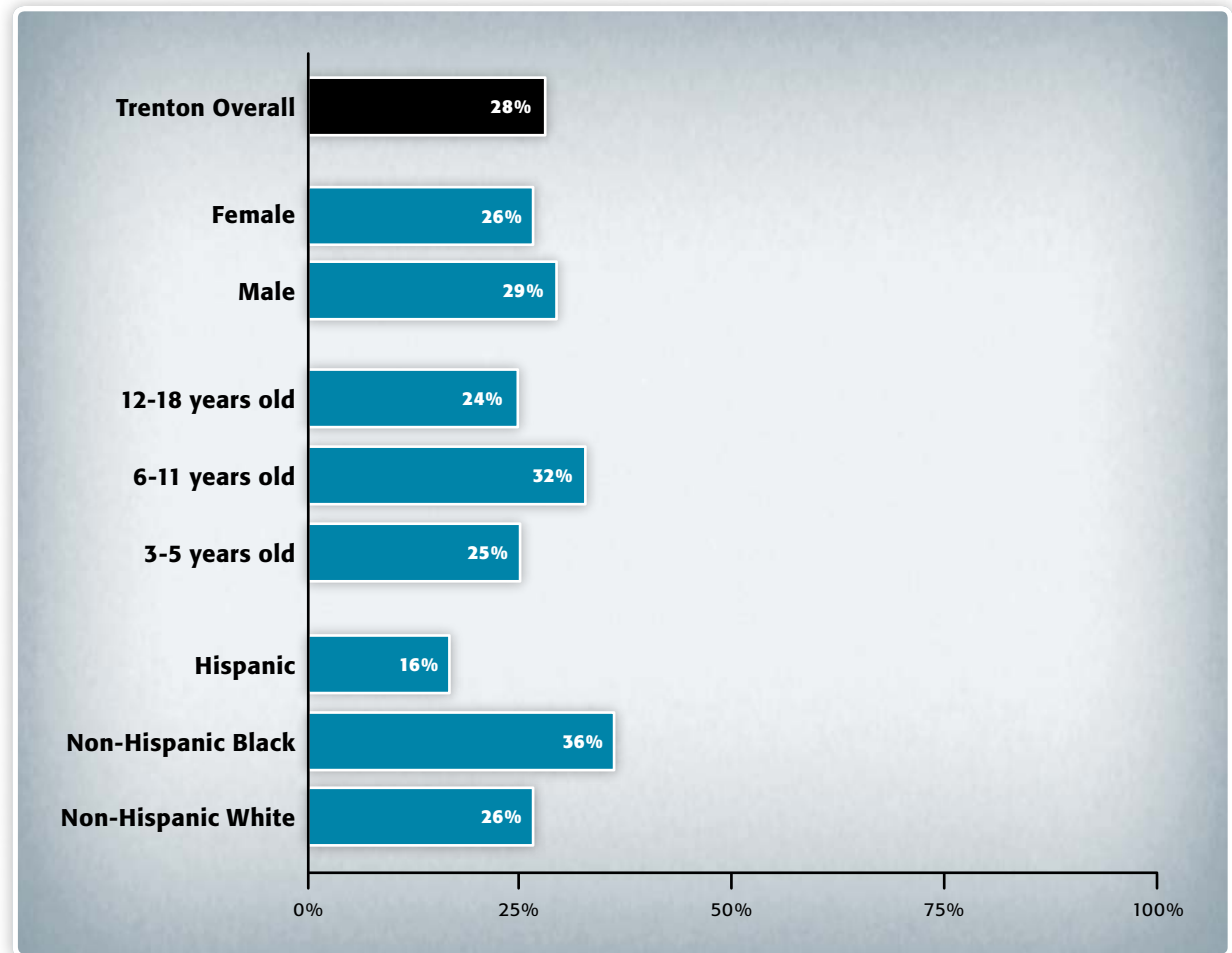
\* Includes fruit-flavored drinks (e.g., lemonade, Sunny Delight, Kool-aid, Gatorade, sweet iced teas) or sweetened soft drinks (e.g., Coke, Pepsi, 7-up). Excludes diet drinks.



## Percentage who eat energy-dense **sweet**\* snacks daily

- Overall, 28% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton eat energy-dense sweet snacks daily.
- Non-Hispanic black children are more likely to eat energy-dense sweet snacks daily (36%) compared to non-Hispanic white children (26%) and Hispanic children (16%).
- This behavior varies little by gender.

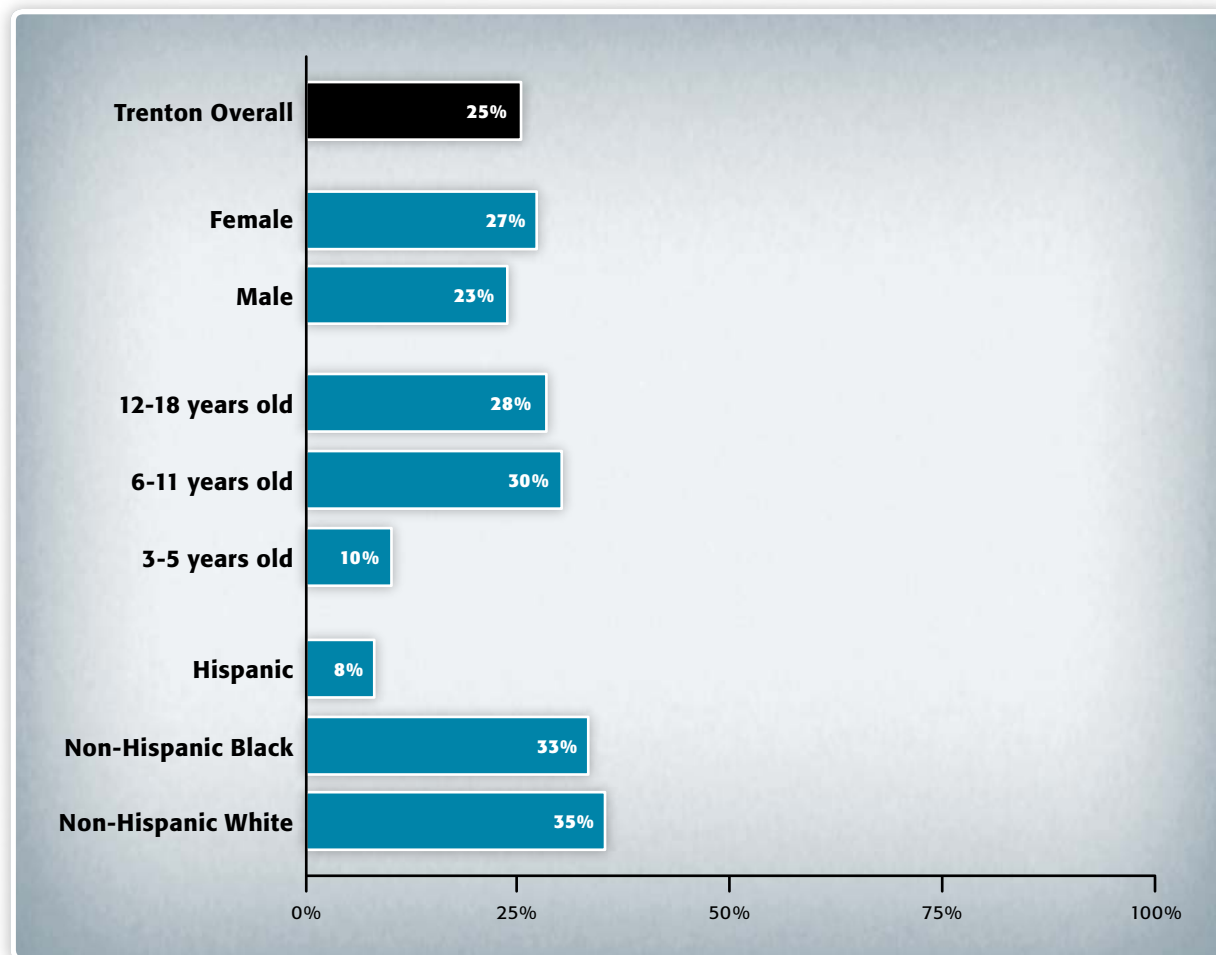
\* Includes any sweets such as cookies, cakes, candy, or pies.



## Percentage who eat energy-dense **salty**\* snacks daily

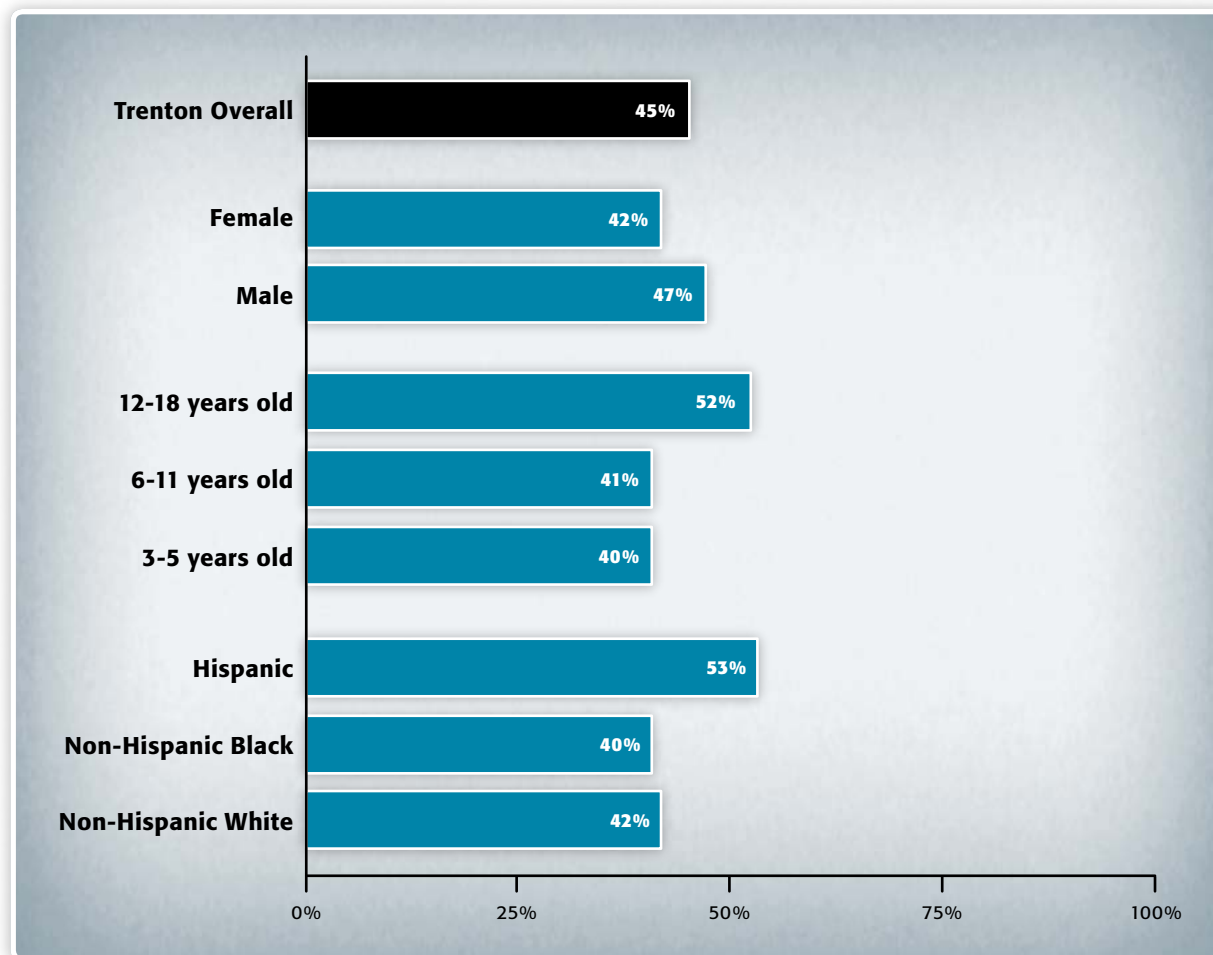
- Overall, 25% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton eat energy-dense salty snacks daily.
- Adolescents (28%) and children ages 6–11 (30%) are more likely to eat energy-dense salty snacks daily compared to children ages 3–5 (10%).
- Non-Hispanic white children (35%) and non-Hispanic black children (33%) are more likely to eat energy-dense salty snacks daily compared to Hispanic children (8%).
- This behavior varies little by gender.

\* Includes any salty snacks such as chips, Doritos, or nachos.



## *Percentage who do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily*

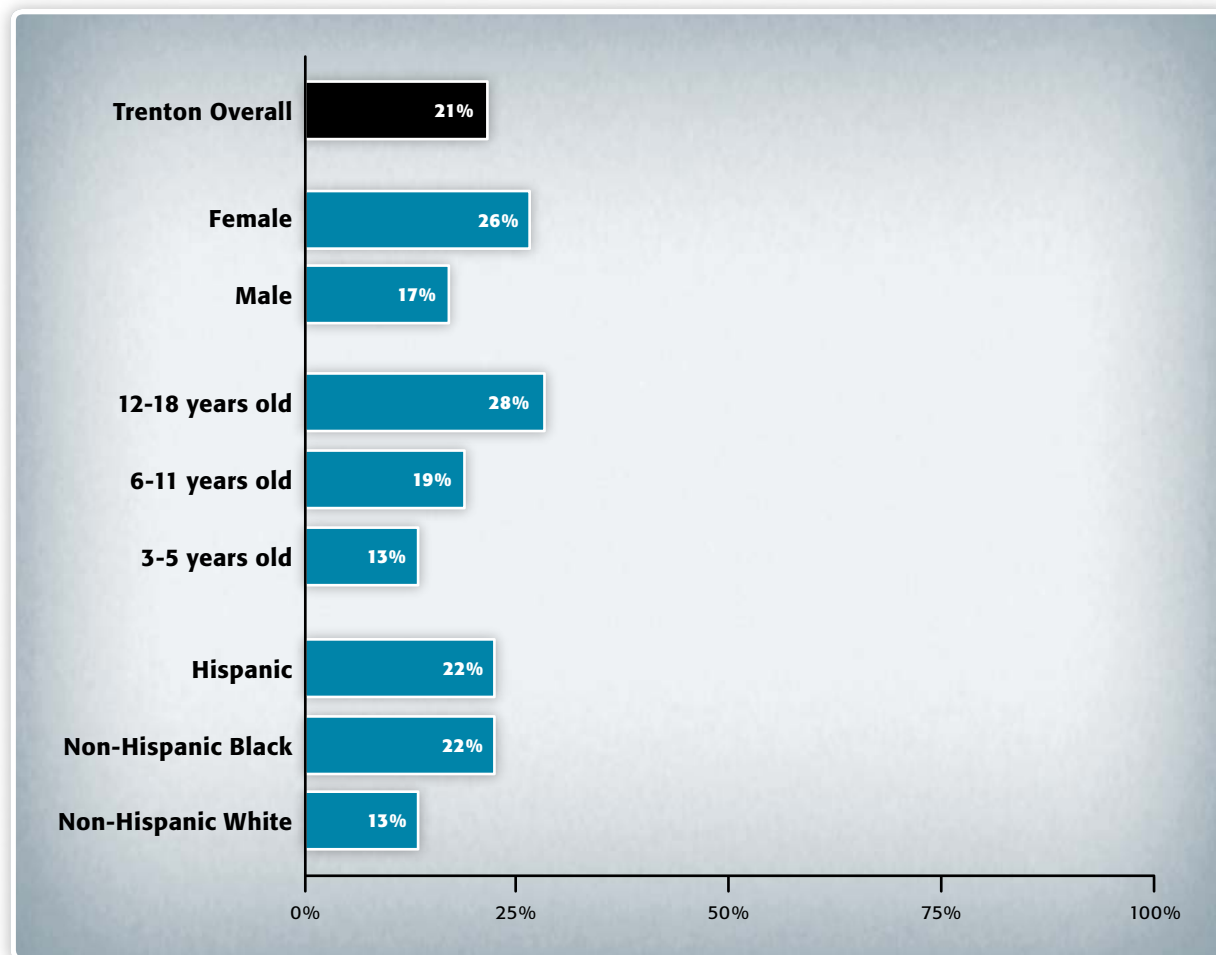
- Overall, 45% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily.
- Consumption of fruits and vegetables as snacks decreases with age: 52% of Trenton adolescents do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily, compared to 41% of children ages 6–11 and 40% of children ages 3–5.
- 53% of Hispanic children in Trenton do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily, compared to 42% of non-Hispanic white children and 40% of non-Hispanic black children.
- This behavior varies little by gender.





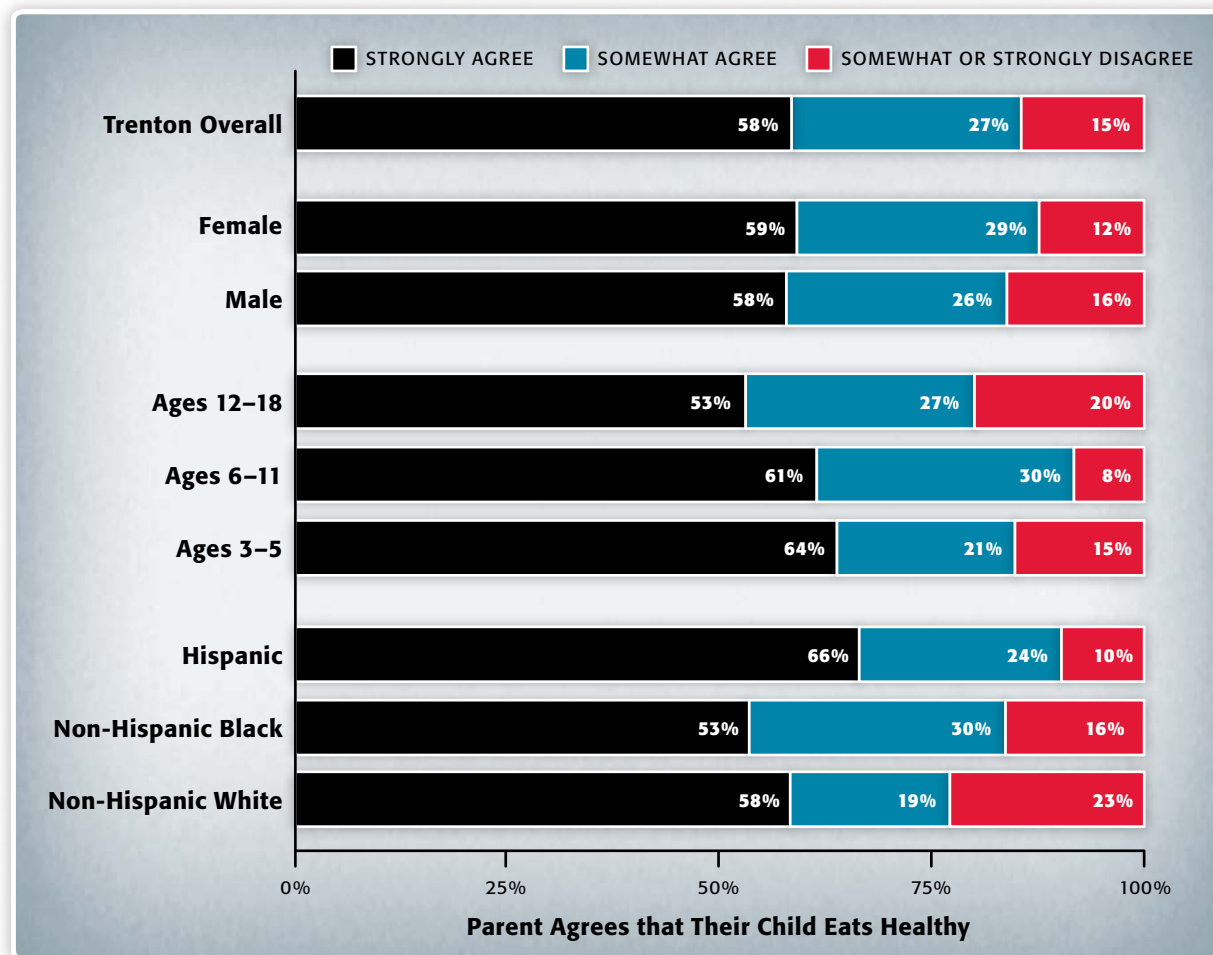
## Percentage who do not eat breakfast daily

- Overall, 21% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton do not eat breakfast daily.
- Eating breakfast daily decreases with age: 28% of Trenton adolescents do not eat breakfast daily, compared to 19% of children ages 6–11 and 13% of children ages 3–5.



*Despite what the previous charts show, parents think their children eat healthy*

- Overall, 85% of parents strongly agree or somewhat agree that, in general, their child eats healthy.
- Parents of adolescents are least likely to think that their children eat healthy (80%).
- Parents of non-Hispanic white children are less likely to think that their children eat healthy (77%) compared to parents of non-Hispanic black children (84%) and Hispanic children (90%).
- This finding varies little by gender.



NOTE: Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## *Key findings from food behavior section*

- Only 14% of the children in Trenton meet the Healthy People 2010 recommendations for eating vegetables three times per day. While 60% of the children meet the recommendations for fruit, the consumption of 100% juice, a more concentrated source of calories, is higher among those who consume more total fruit (fruit + 100% juice).
- Fast food consumption is highest among non-Hispanic black children in Trenton.
- Consumption of energy-dense foods such as sugar-sweetened beverages and sweet and salty snacks is prevalent among children in Trenton, especially among older children and non-Hispanic black children.
- Overall, 45% of Trenton children do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks on a daily basis and an even larger number of older children (52%) and Hispanic children (53%) do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily.
- Eating breakfast daily declines with age: 28% of adolescents in Trenton do not eat breakfast on a regular basis, while the corresponding rates are 19% and 13% respectively for the middle and youngest groups.
- Despite these findings, the majority of parents (85%) in Trenton think that their children eat healthy.

## Food Environment

*Charts in this section describe parents' perceptions of the food environment as well as reported barriers to accessing healthy foods in their neighborhood.*

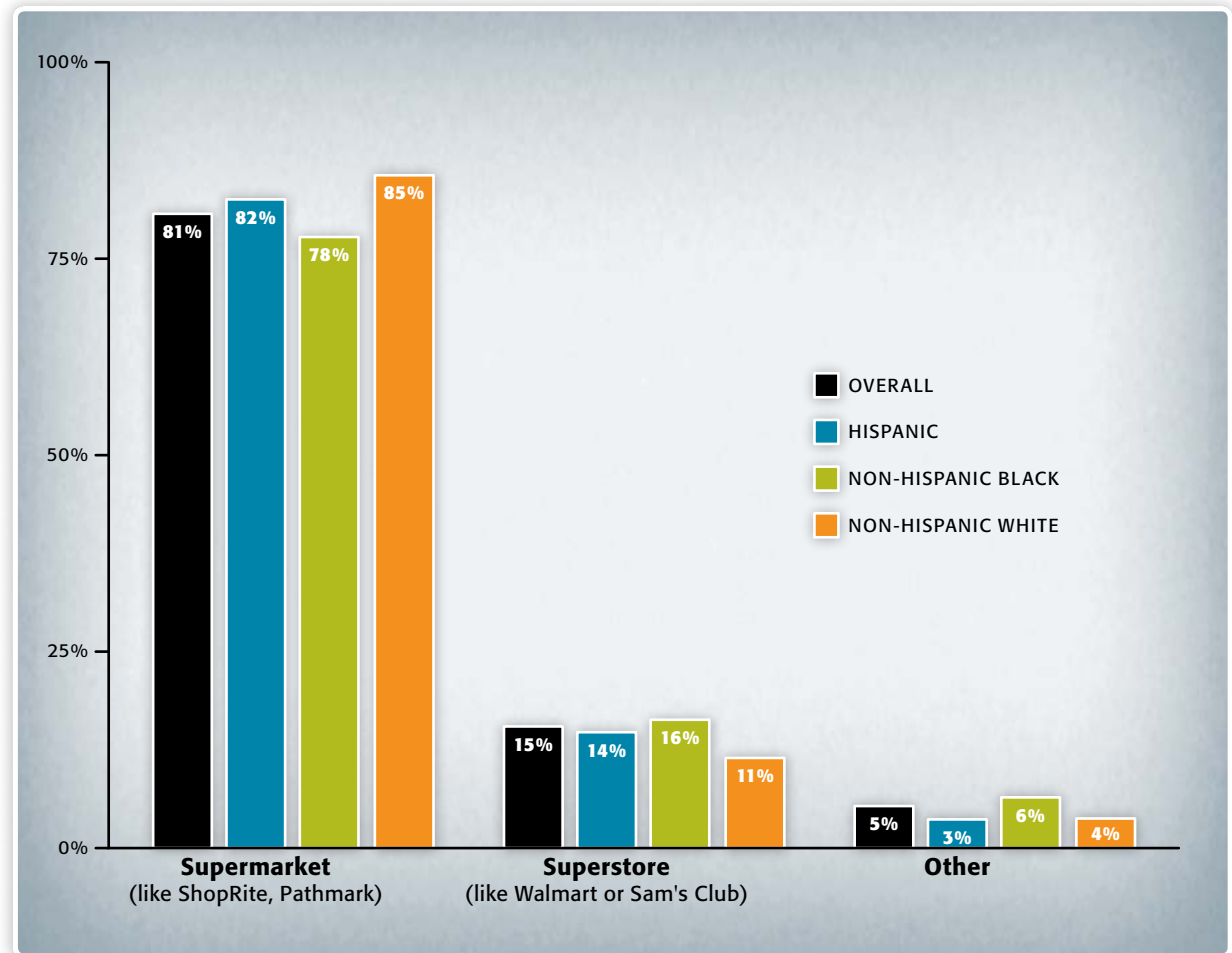
*Neighborhood is defined as the area within a 20 minute walk, a 5 minute drive, or about 1 mile in all directions around the respondent's home.*

*Food shopping practices and preferences are presented, including desirable features of the food store where parents do most of their food shopping.*



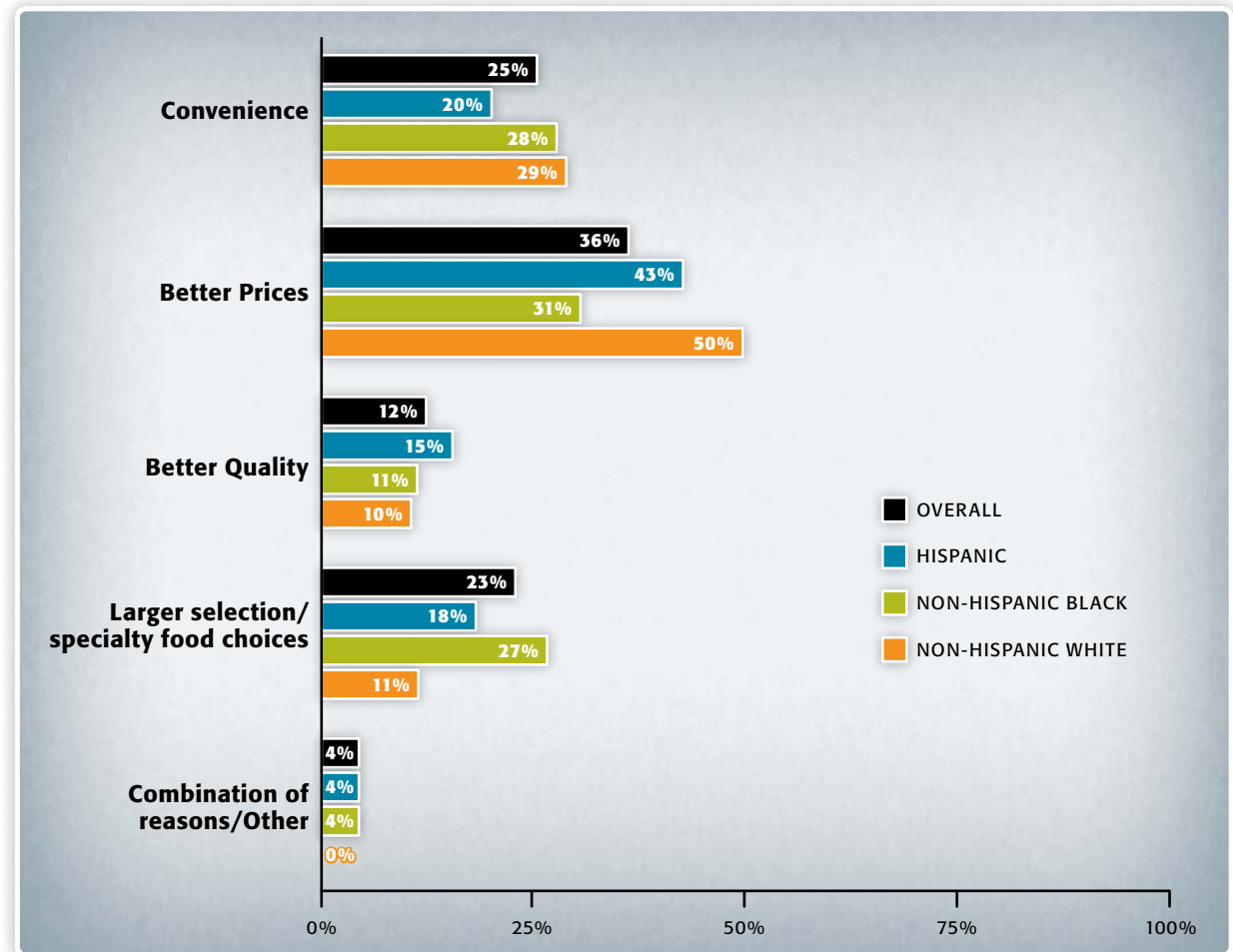
## Parents do most of their food shopping at supermarkets and superstores

- Overall, 81% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 do most of their food shopping at supermarkets (like ShopRite, Stop & Shop, Pathmark), and 15% of them food-shop at superstores (like Walmart or Sam’s Club).
- This varies little by race/ethnicity.



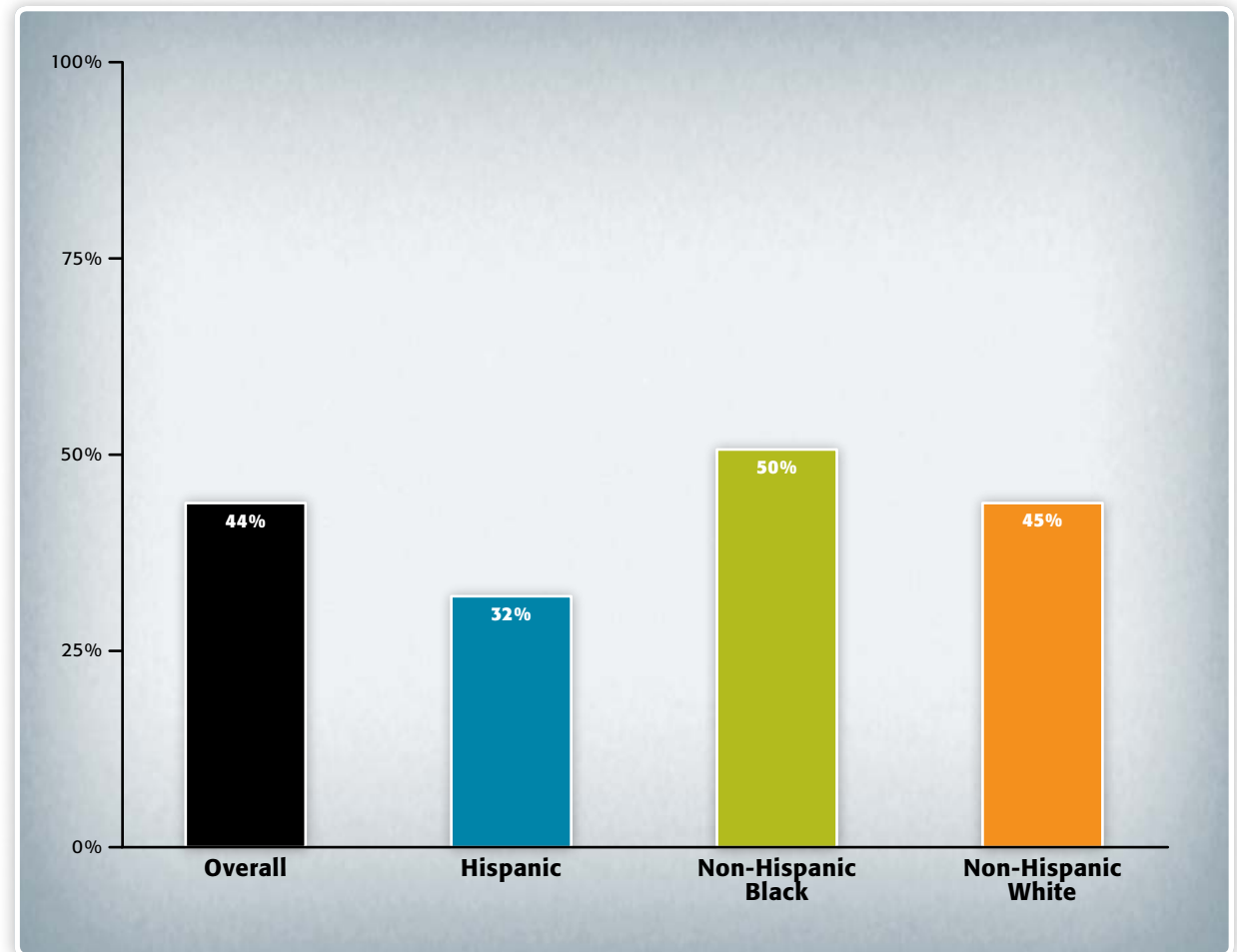
## *Important considerations in choosing main food stores reported by parents*

- In Trenton, parents are most likely to say they choose their food store because of better prices.



## *Percentage who do most food-shopping outside their neighborhood*

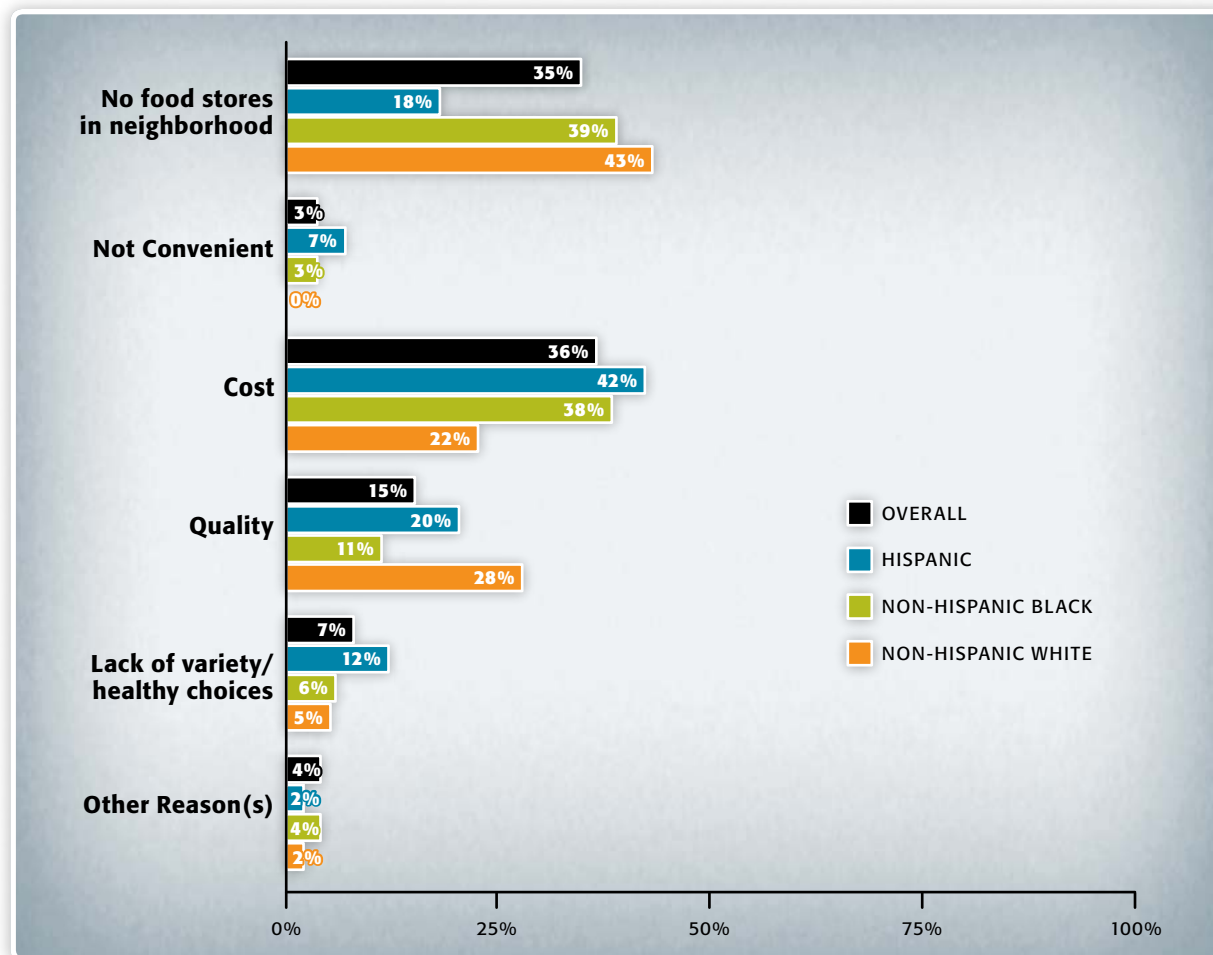
- Overall, 44% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 do most of their food-shopping outside their neighborhood.
- 50% of parents of non-Hispanic black children and 45% of parents of non-Hispanic white children in Trenton do most of their food-shopping outside their neighborhood compared to 32% of parents of Hispanic children.





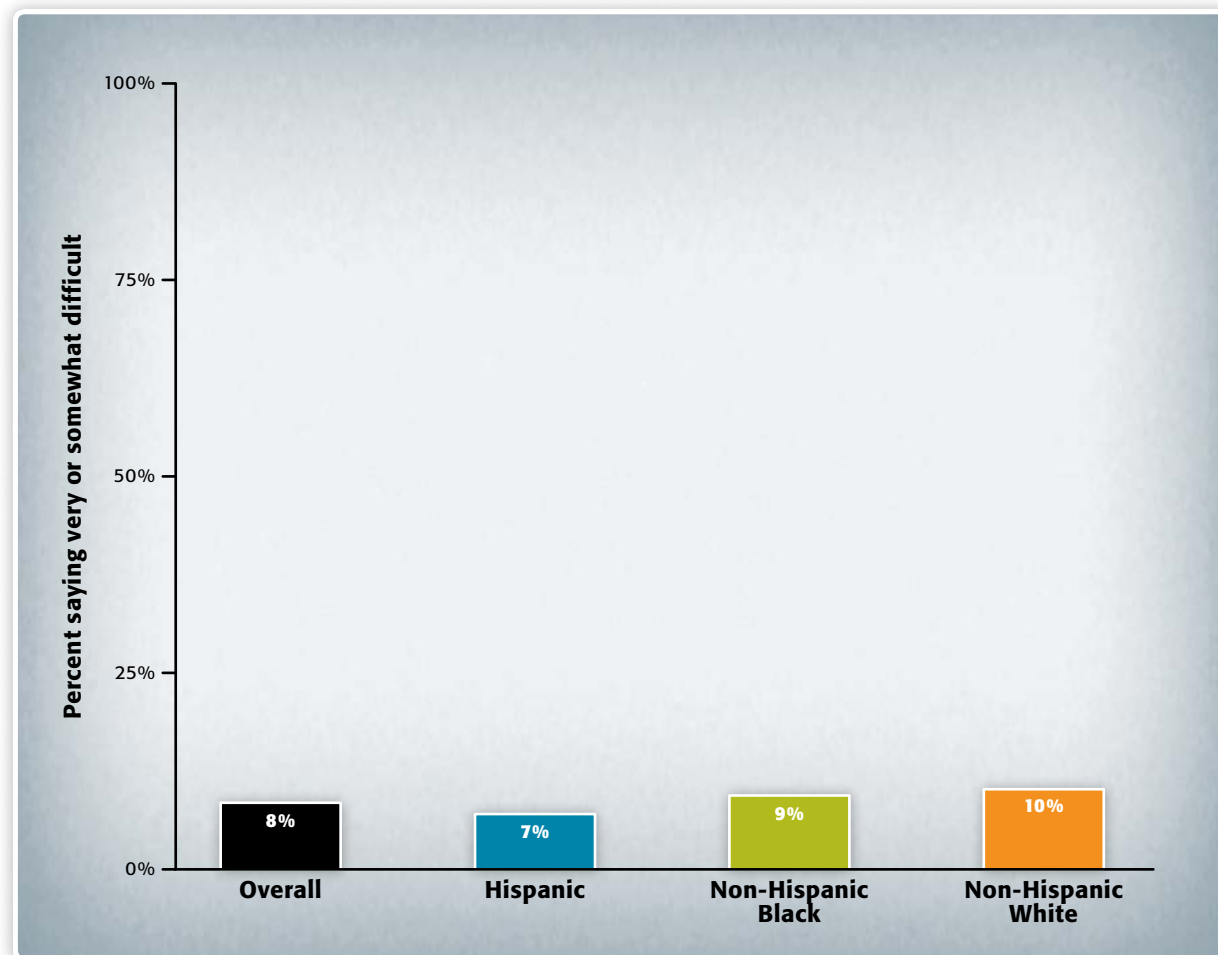
## Main reasons for shopping for food outside of neighborhood

- Overall, parents of children ages 3–18 in Trenton who food-shop outside of their neighborhood do so primarily due to cost (36%) or lack of food stores in neighborhood (35%).
- Parents of Hispanic children in Trenton most frequently cite cost (42%) as the reason they food-shop outside of their neighborhood, followed by quality (20%).
- Parents of non-Hispanic black children most frequently cite no food stores in neighborhood (39%), followed by cost (38%), as the reason they food-shop outside of their neighborhood.
- Parents of non-Hispanic white children most frequently cite no food stores in neighborhood (43%), followed by quality (28%) as the reason they food-shop outside of their neighborhood.



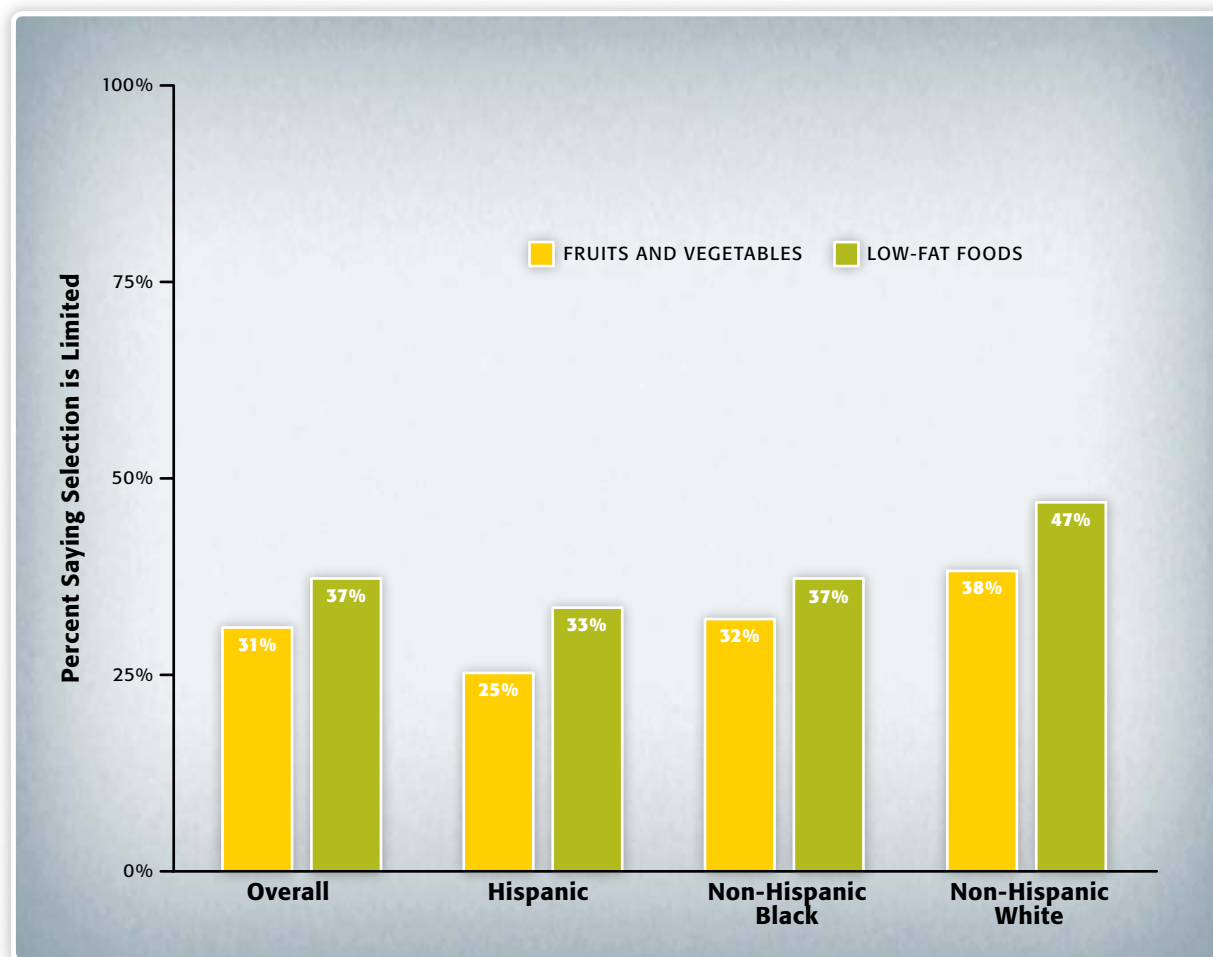
*Percentage who say it is difficult to get to store where most of food shopping is done*

- Overall, 8% of parents in Trenton with children ages 3–18 say it is difficult to get to the store where they do most of their food shopping.



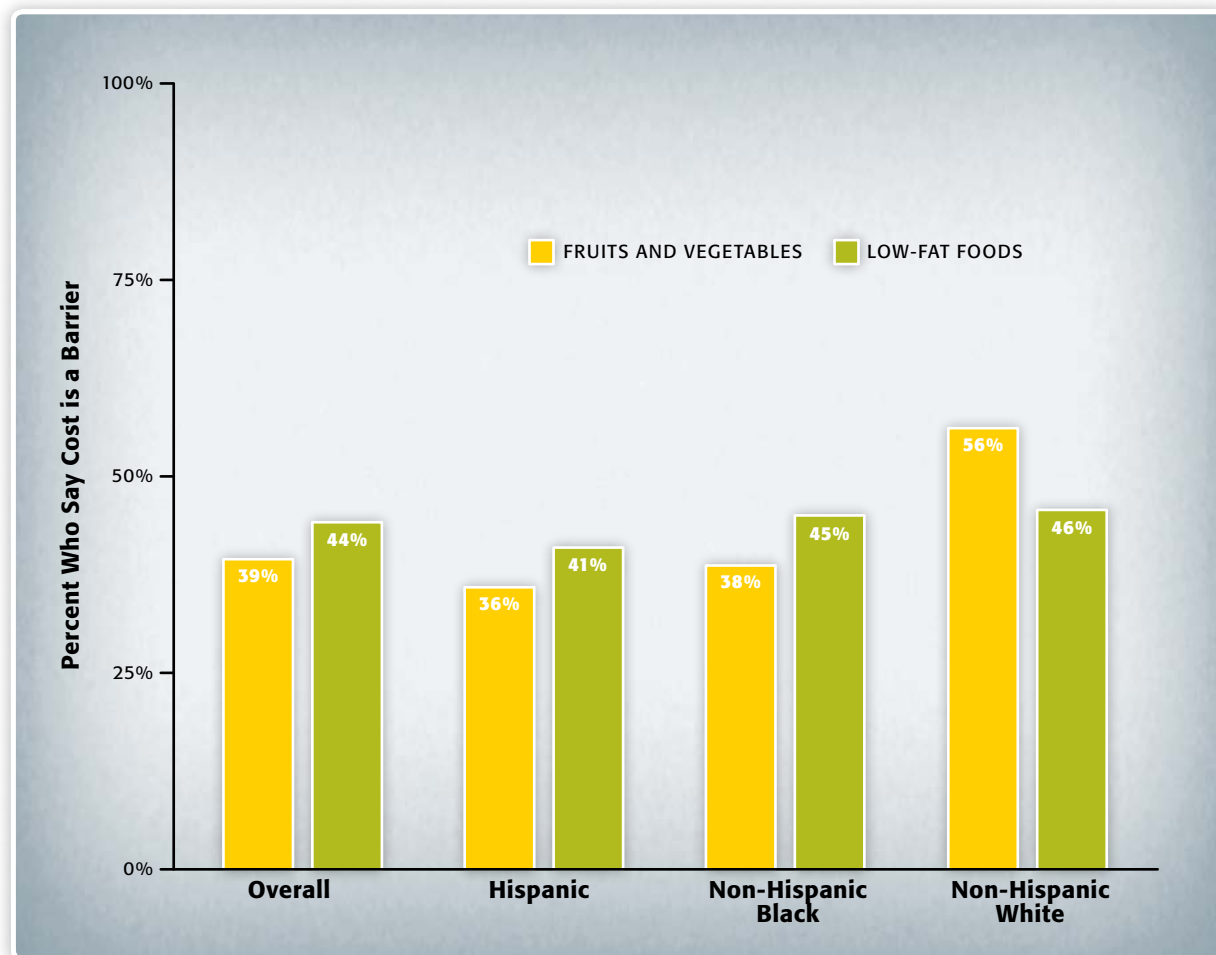
*Percentage who do not have a very large selection of good quality fresh fruits and vegetables or low-fat foods at main food store*

- Overall, 31% of parents in Trenton with children ages 3–18 say their main food store does not carry a very large selection of good quality fresh fruits and vegetables, and 37% state that it does not carry a very large selection of low-fat foods.
- Parents of non-Hispanic white children (38%) are more likely than Hispanic (25%) and non-Hispanic black (32%) parents to report limited selection of good quality fresh fruits and vegetables. The pattern is similar with regard to good quality low-fat foods: 47% of non-Hispanic white parents report limited selection compared to 33% Hispanic and 37% non-Hispanic black parents.



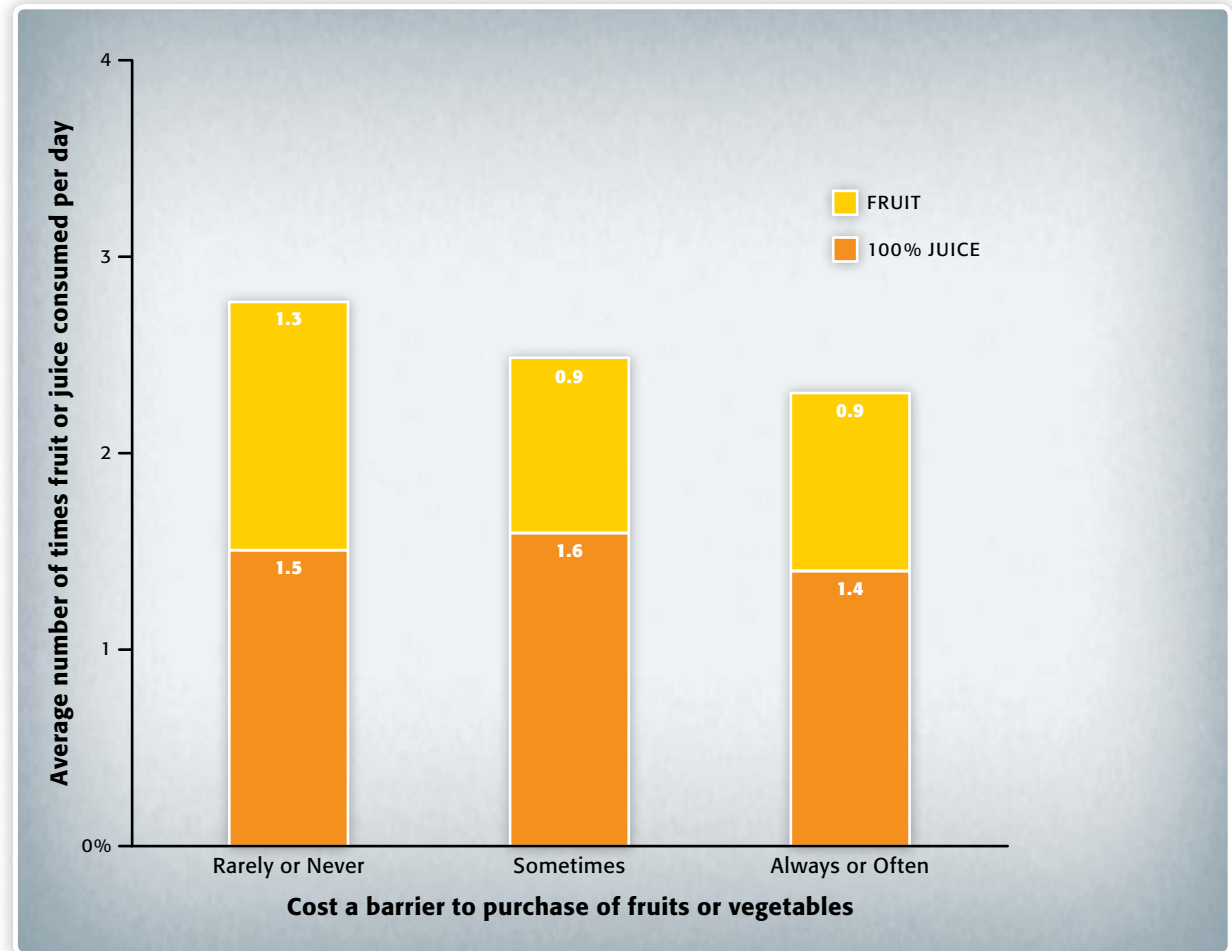
*Percentage who say cost is a barrier to purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables and low-fat foods at main food store*

- Overall, 39% of parents in Trenton with children ages 3–18 say that cost is a barrier to the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at their main food store, and 44% say cost is a barrier to the purchase of low-fat foods.
- 56% of parents of non-Hispanic white children say that cost is a barrier to the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at their main food store, compared to 38% of parents of non-Hispanic black children and 36% of parents of Hispanic children.
- Cost as a barrier to the purchase of low-fat foods varies little by race/ethnicity.



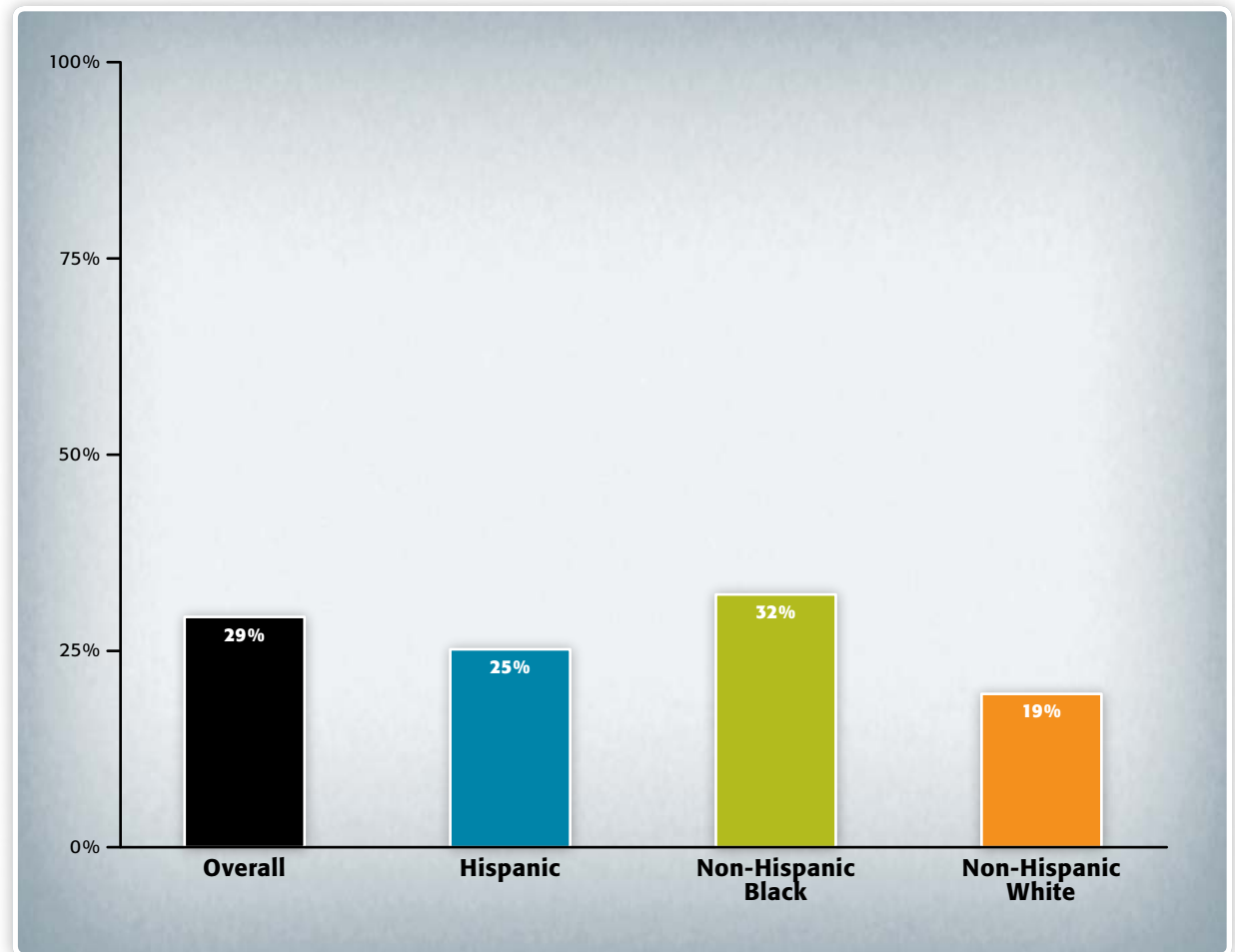
*Average fruit/juice consumption decreases among those who report cost is more often a barrier to the purchase of fruits/vegetables*

- If cost is not a barrier, fruit or 100% juice is consumed 2.8 times per day; but if cost is always or often a barrier, fruit or 100% juice is consumed 2.3 times per day.



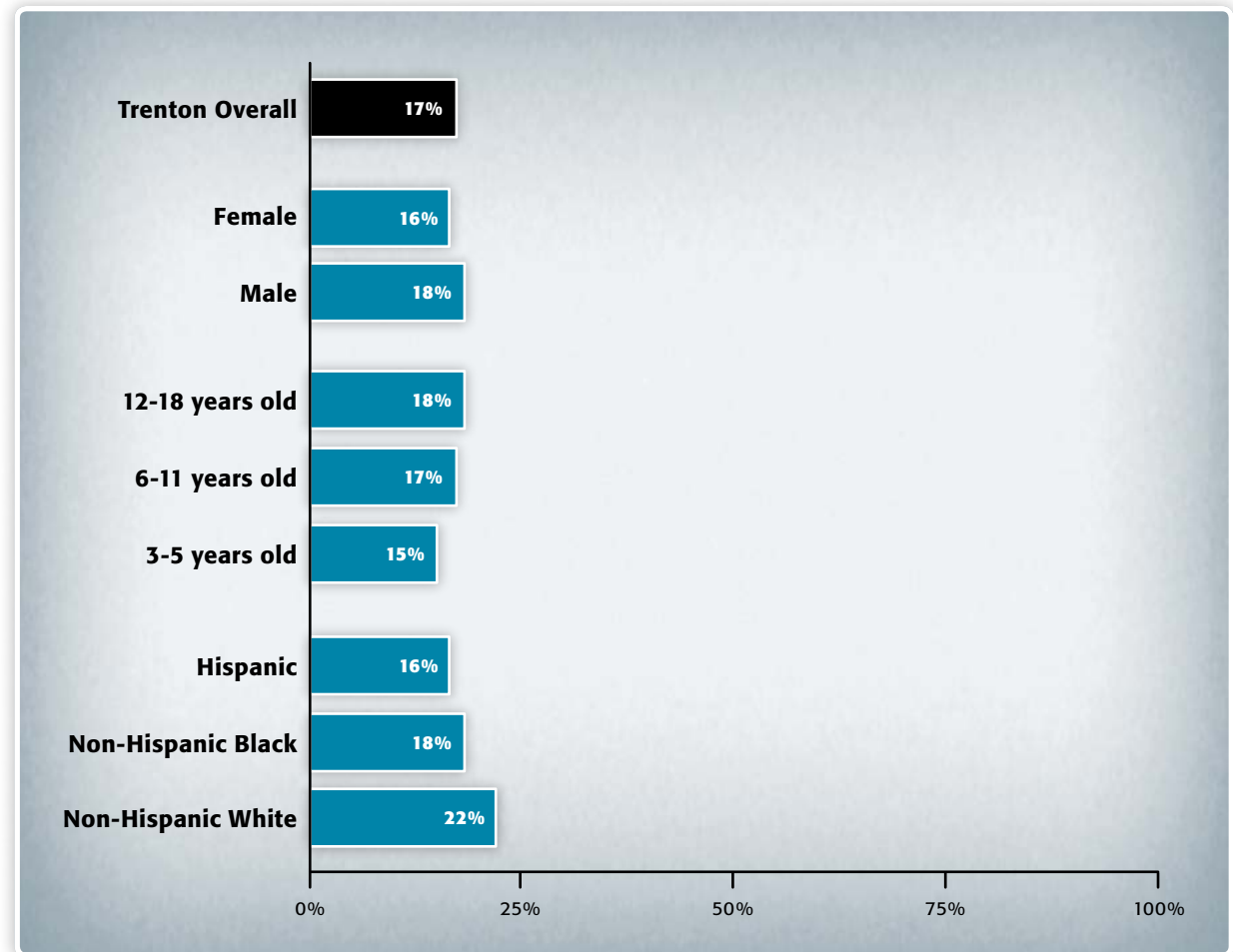
## *Percentage who have a special store for buying fruits and vegetables*

- Overall, 29% of parents in Trenton with children ages 3–18 say that they buy most of their fresh fruits and vegetables somewhere other than at their main food store.
- 32% of non-Hispanic black parents with children ages 3–18 in Trenton say that they buy most of their fresh fruits and vegetables somewhere other than at their main food store, compared to 25% of Hispanic parents and 19% of non-Hispanic white parents.



*Food Insecurity:  
17% of Trenton families  
report that they sometimes  
or often do not have  
enough food to eat*

- Overall, 17% of Trenton parents with children ages 3–18 report that they sometimes or often do not have enough food at home to eat. According to US Department of Agriculture estimates, 15% of households in the country are food insecure.
- This varies little by gender, age, or race/ethnicity.





## *Key findings from food environment section*

- A vast majority of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 go to supermarkets and superstores to do most of their food shopping.
- 44% of the parents do not shop for most of their food in their neighborhood. Cost and lack of food stores in the neighborhood are the primary reasons cited for not shopping in the neighborhood.
- About a third of the parents surveyed report having a limited selection of fruits and vegetables and low-fat foods at the store where they shop. Cost is a barrier for purchasing these items for about 40% of the parents.
- 17% of the Trenton households with children 3–18 years report that they often or sometimes do not have enough food to eat.

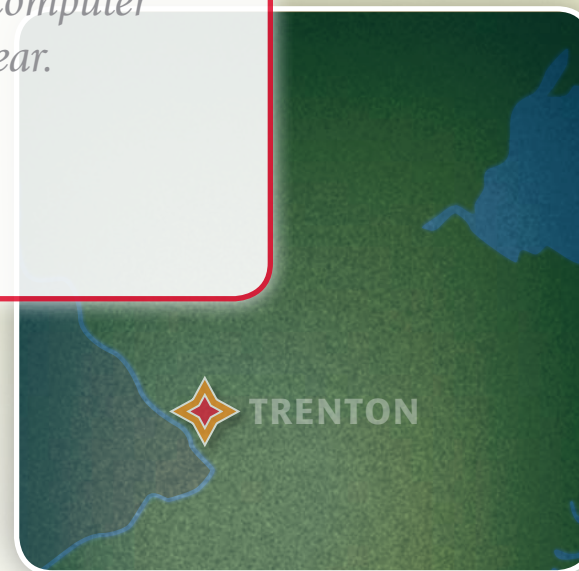
## Physical Activity Behaviors

*Parents were asked to report on the physical activity and sedentary behaviors of the randomly selected index child.*

*Respondents were asked to think about the past 7 days and report frequency of their child being active for 30 minutes and 60 minutes per day.*

*Sedentary behavior was assessed by asking the parent to report on the usual number of hours spent watching television, and playing computer or video games on weekdays and weekends during the school year.*

*Physical activity and sedentary activity data are compared to established recommendations, where available.*



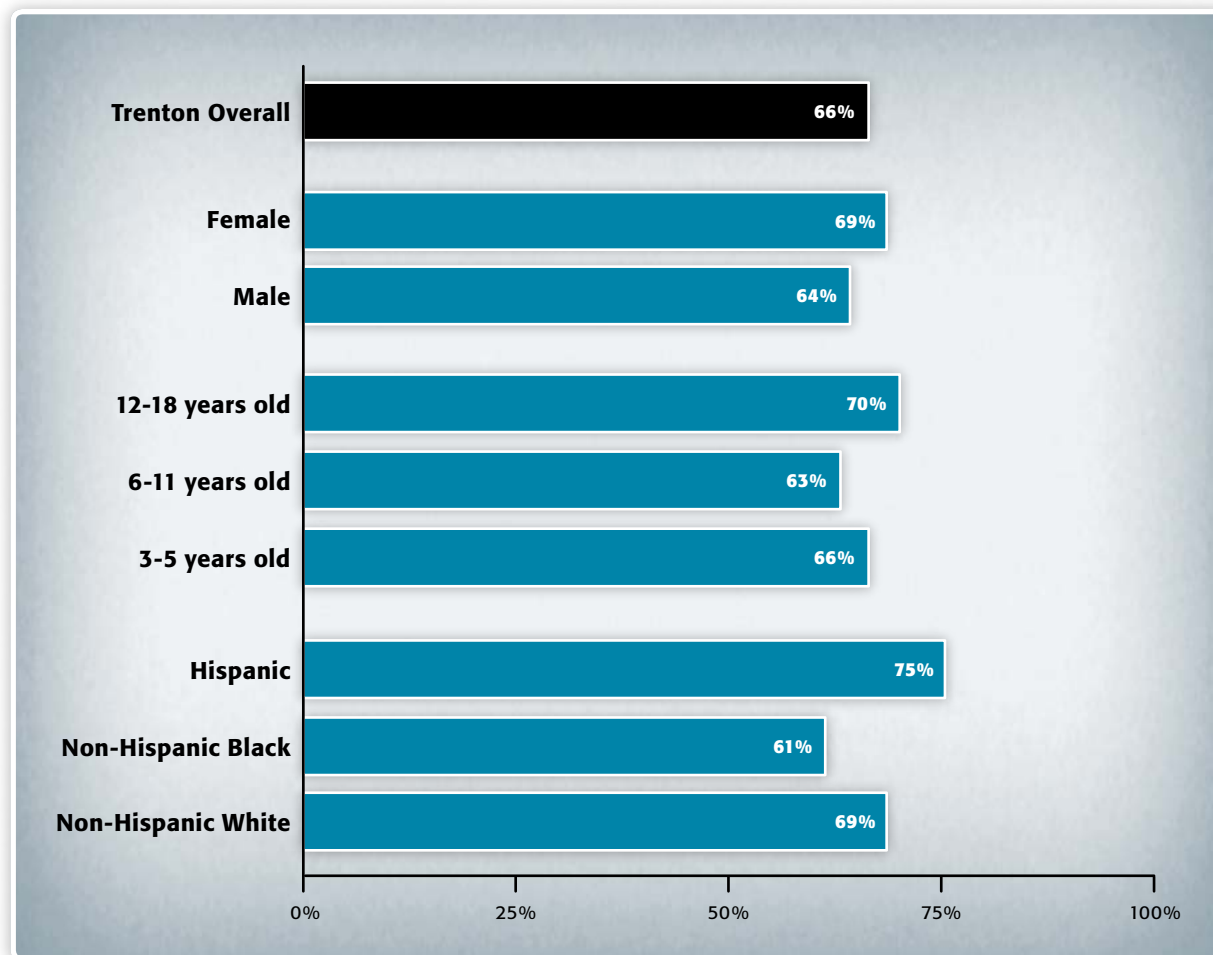
## Percentage not active at least **60 minutes a day**\* 6–7 days a week

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' 2008 *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* recommend that children should be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day.

In Trenton

- 66% of 3–18 year olds do not meet this recommendation.
- 75% of Hispanic children are not active at least 60 minutes a day 6–7 days a week, compared to 69% of non-Hispanic white children and 61% of non-Hispanic black children.
- The likelihood of meeting this recommendation does not vary appreciably by age or gender.

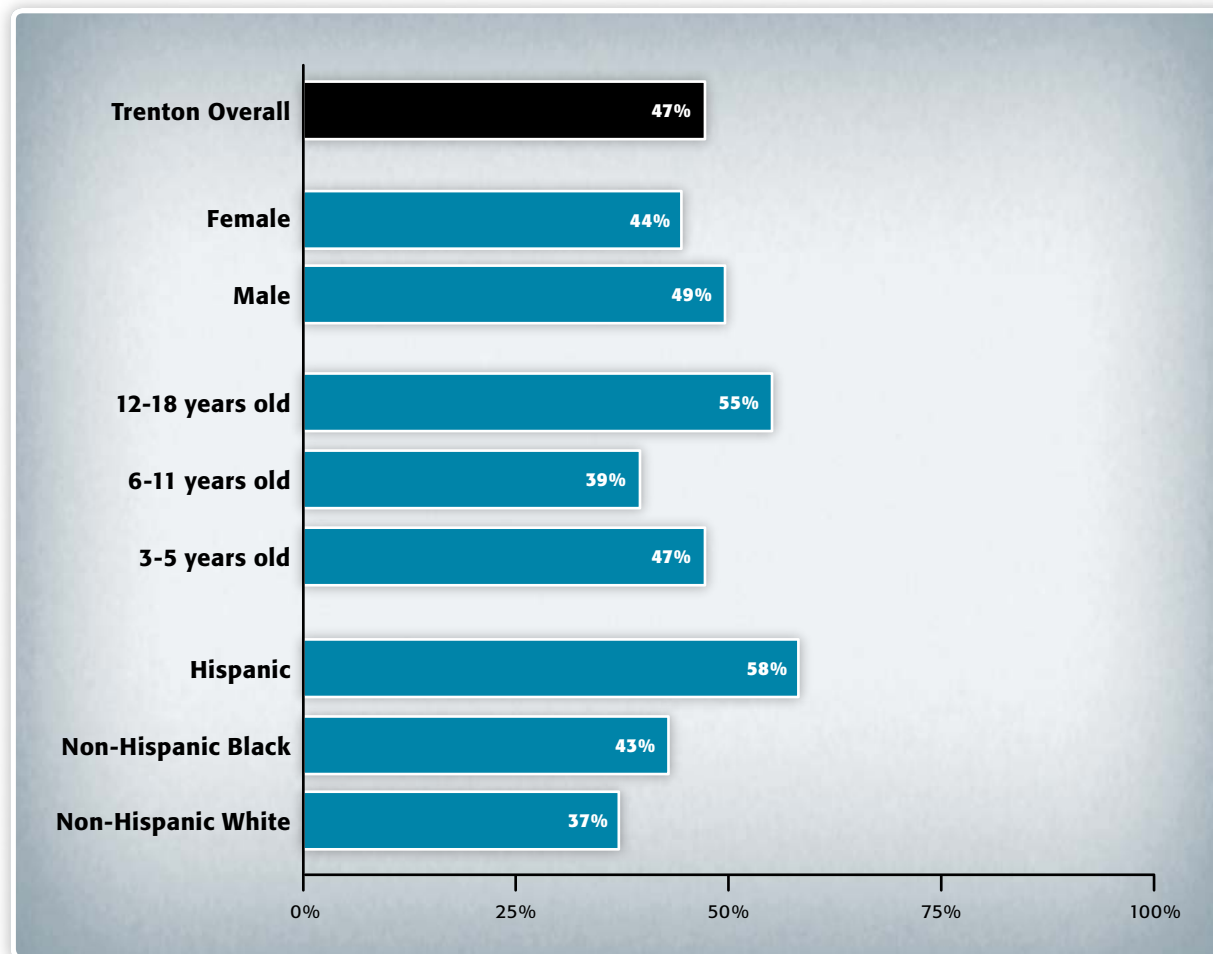
\* Includes adding up all of the times child spent in any kind of physical activity that increased heart rate and made child breathe hard.



*Percentage not active at least **30 minutes a day**\* 6–7 days a week*

- Overall, 47% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton are not active at least 30 minutes a day 6–7 days a week.
- More than half of adolescents in Trenton are not active for at least 30 minutes a day 6–7 days a week, compared to 39% of 6–11 year olds and 47% of 3–5 year olds.
- 58% of Hispanic children are not active at least 30 minutes a day 6–7 days a week, compared to 43% of non-Hispanic black children and 37% of non-Hispanic white children.
- There is little variation by gender.

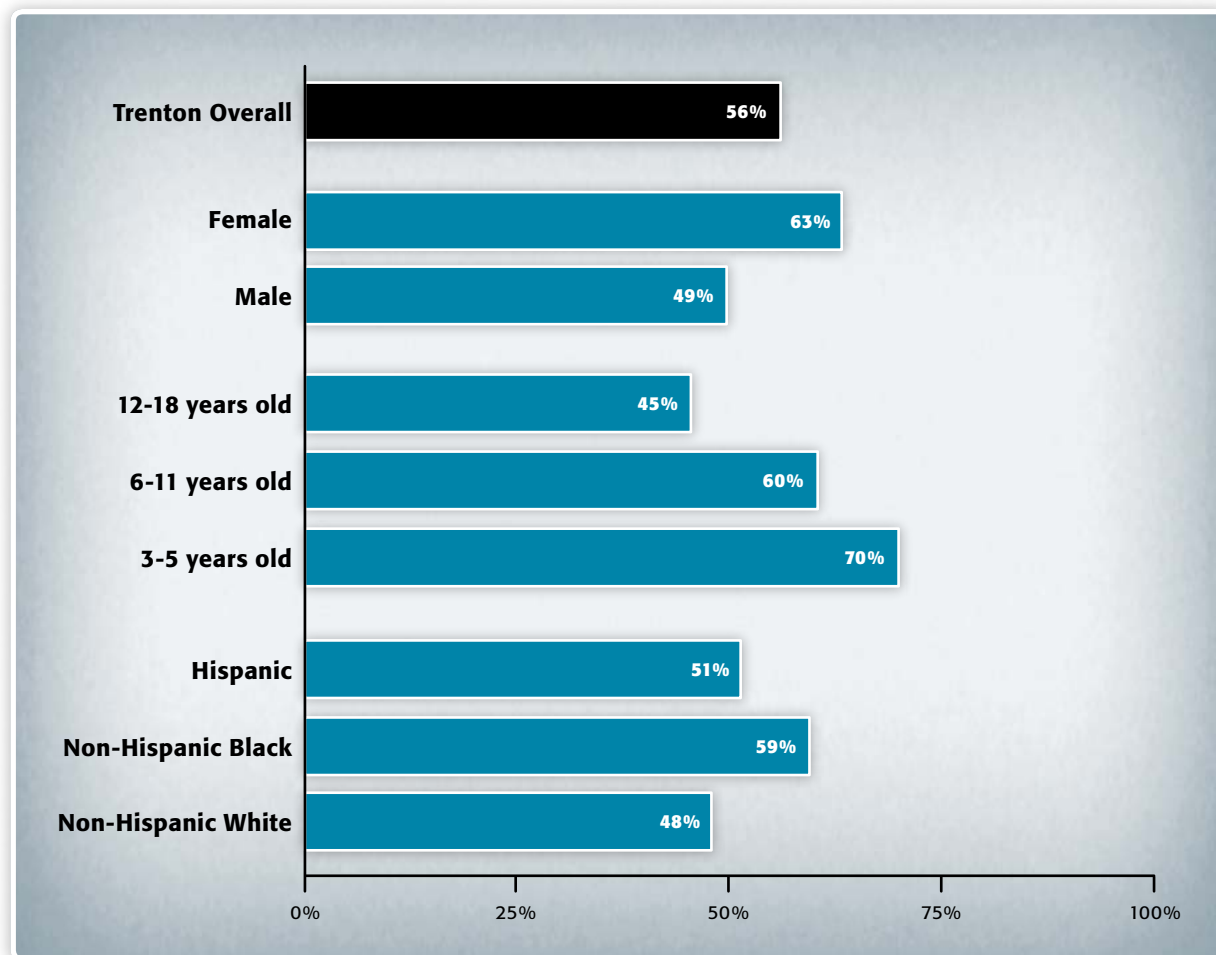
\* Includes adding up all the times child spent in any kind of physical activity that increased heart rate and made child breathe hard.



## Percentage who never walk, bike, or skateboard to school\*

- Overall, 56% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton never walk, bike, or skateboard to school.
- Nearly two-thirds of girls (63%) and one-half of boys (49%) in Trenton never walk, bike, or skateboard to school
- 70% of Trenton children ages 3–5 never walk, bike, or skateboard to school, compared to 60% of those ages 6–11 and 45% of those ages 12–18.
- 59% of non-Hispanic black children in Trenton never walk, bike, or skateboard to school, compared to 51% of Hispanic children and 48% of non-Hispanic white children.

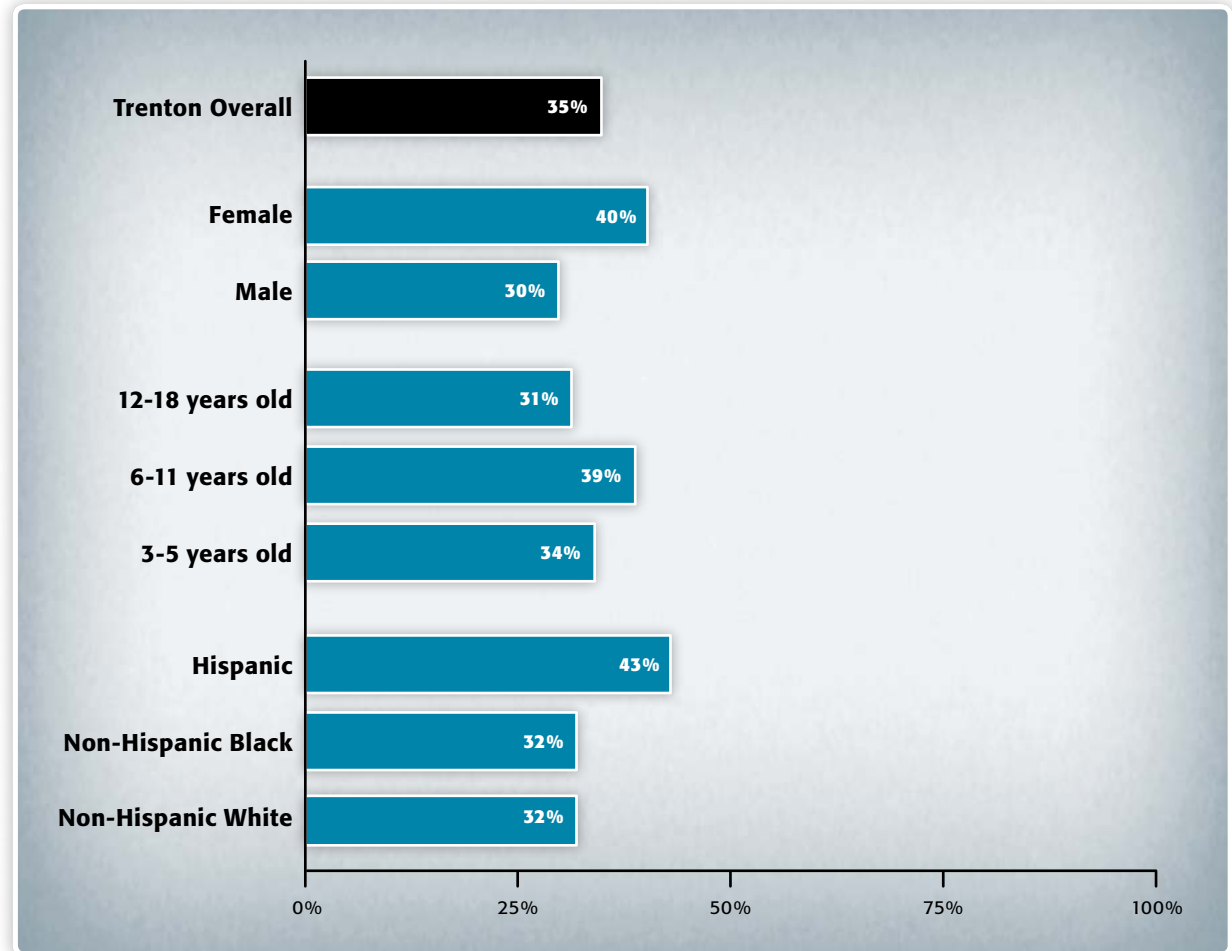
\* Does not include motor scooters. School refers to school, kindergarten, pre-school, or day-care.



## Percentage who get physical activity at school\* 2 or fewer days per week

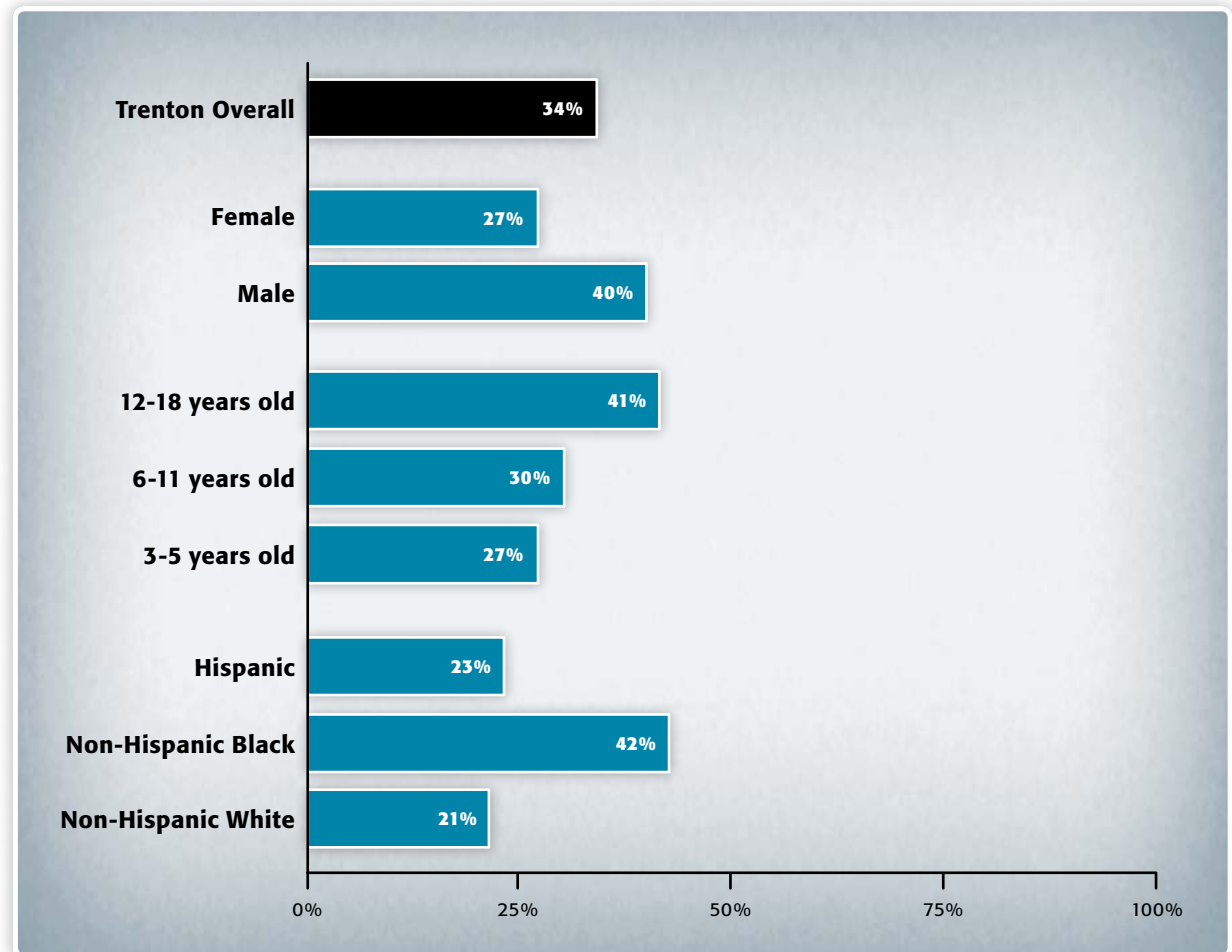
- Overall, 35% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton have 2 or fewer days per week of some type of physical activity at school.
- 40% of Trenton girls have 2 or fewer days per week of some type of physical activity at school, compared to 30% of boys.
- Hispanic children get less physical activity at school (43%) than non-Hispanic black or non-Hispanic white children (32%).

\* Includes any type of physical activity or exercise at school (e.g., PE class, recess). School refers to school, kindergarten, pre-school, or day-care.



*Percentage who spend more than 2 hours a day on **weekdays** on TV, computer, or video games*

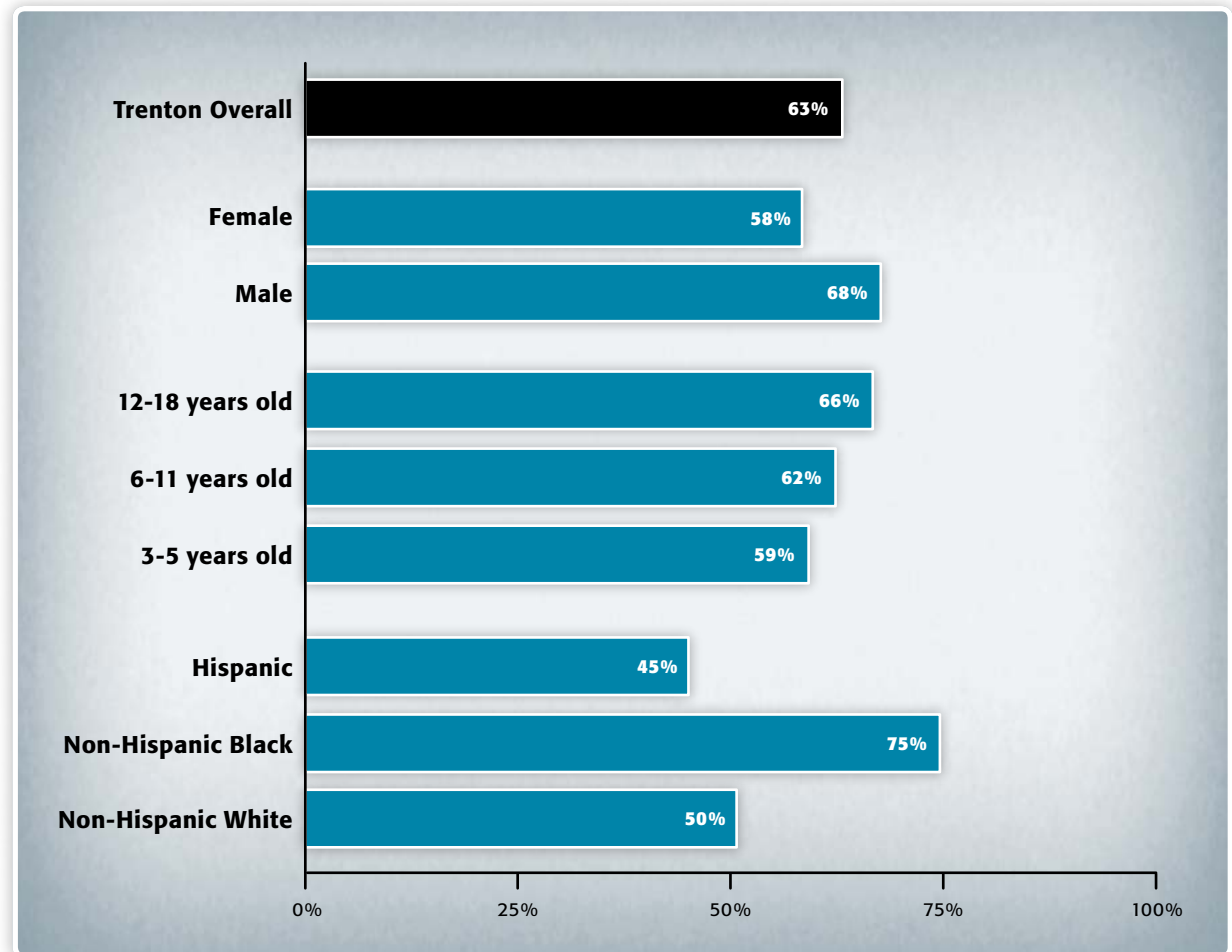
- Overall, 34% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton spend more than 2 hours a day on weekdays outside of school watching TV, being on the computer (not including schoolwork), or playing video games.
- Trenton boys (40%) are more likely than girls (27%) to spend more than 2 hours a day on weekdays outside of school watching TV, being on the computer, or playing video games.
- Adolescents (41%) are more likely to spend more than 2 hours a day on weekdays outside of school watching TV, being on the computer, or playing video games, compared to children ages 6–11 (30%) and ages 3–5 (27%).
- Non-Hispanic black children are almost twice as likely to engage in this behavior as Hispanic and non-Hispanic white children.





*Percentage who spend more than 2 hours a day on **weekend days** on TV, computer, or video games*

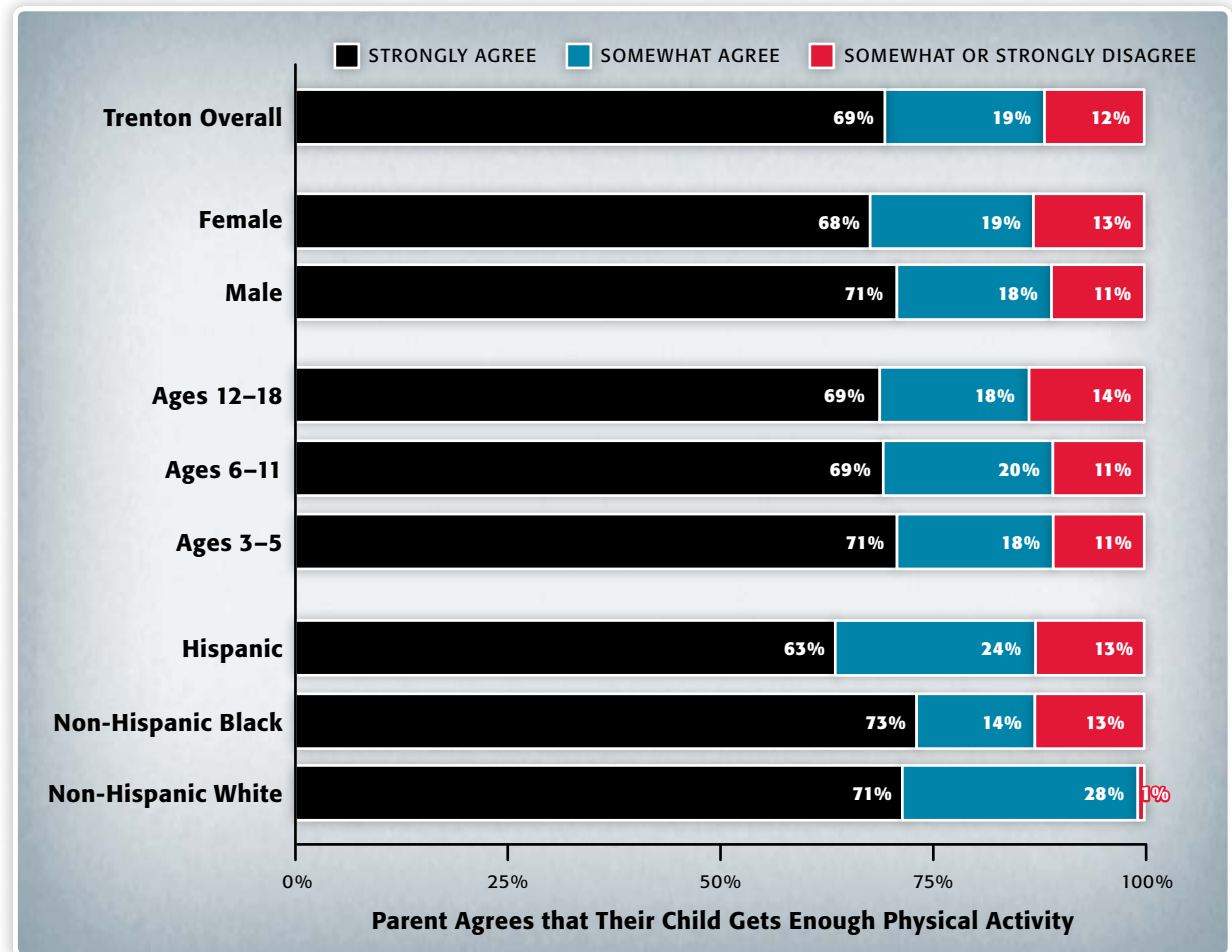
- Overall, 63% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton spend more than 2 hours a day on weekend days watching TV, being on the computer (not including schoolwork), or playing video games.
- Trenton boys are more likely to spend more than 2 hours a day on weekend days outside of school watching TV, being on the computer, or playing video games (68%) than girls (58%).
- 75% of non-Hispanic black children spend more than 2 hours a day on weekdays watching TV, being on the computer, or playing video games, compared to 50% of non-Hispanic white children and 45% of Hispanic children.





*Even though only 34% of Trenton children meet the recommended level of physical activity, 88% of parents think their children get enough physical activity*

- Overall, 88% of parents strongly agree or somewhat agree that, on the whole, their child gets enough physical activity.
- 99% of parents of non-Hispanic white children strongly or somewhat agree that their children get enough physical activity, compared to 87% of parents of Hispanic and non-Hispanic black children.
- There is little variation by gender or age.



NOTE: Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## *Key findings from physical activity behavior section*

- Only 34% of the Trenton children ages 3–18 meet the DHHS’s 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. Hispanic children are even less likely to meet these recommendations. However, 88% of parents think that their children get enough physical activity.
- Girls, younger children, and non-Hispanic black children are less likely to walk, bike, or skateboard to school, while Hispanic children and girls are less likely to get physical activity at school.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children spend no more than two hours per day on entertainment media like television, computers, and video games. 34% of the children ages 3–18 years in Trenton spend more than two hours per day watching TV, playing video or computer games during weekdays and 63% do so on weekend days, and this is more common among boys and non-Hispanic black children. Weekday media time is also higher among older children, although this does not vary by age on weekend days.

# Physical Activity Environment

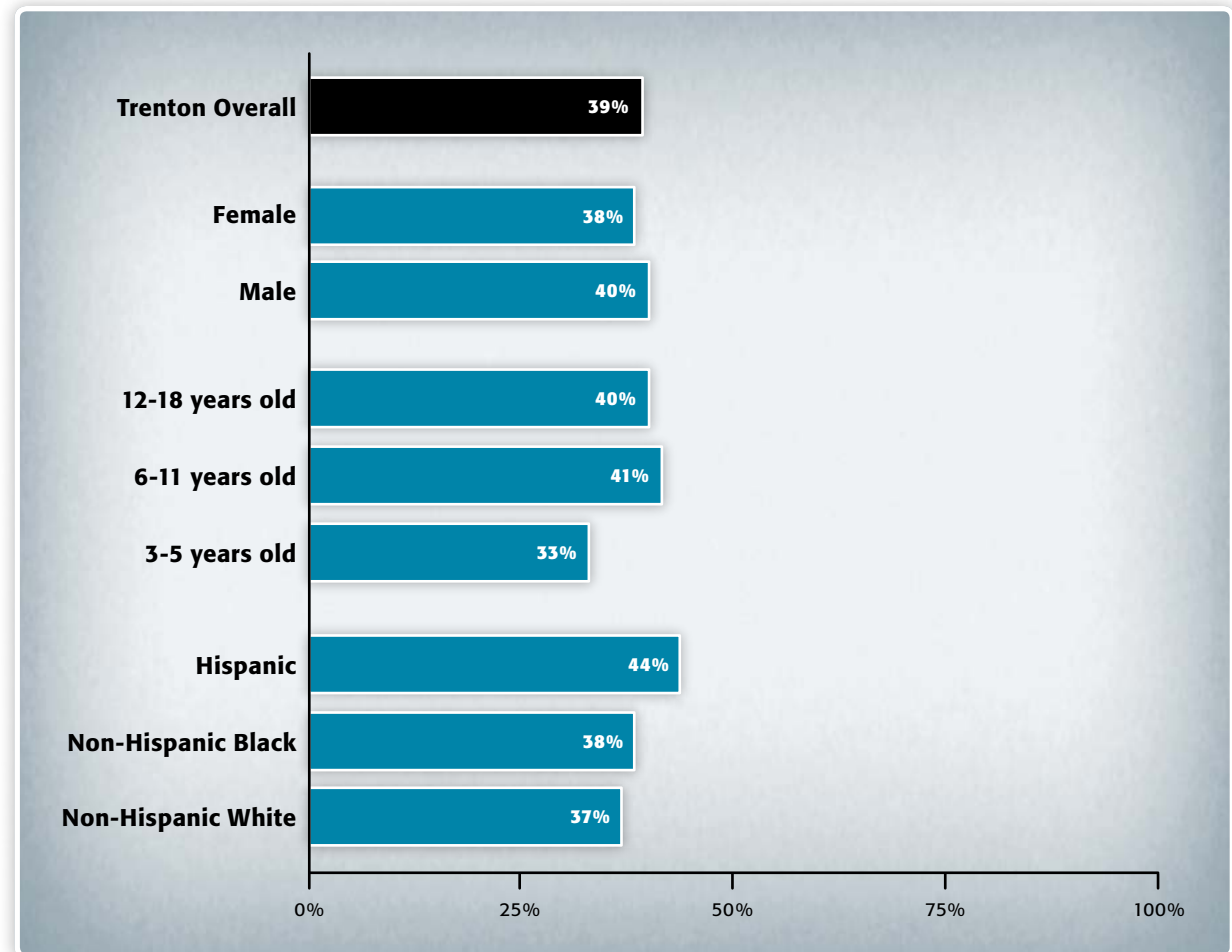
*Charts in this section describe parents' perceptions of the physical activity environment as well as aspects that may serve as barriers to accessing opportunities for physical activity in their neighborhood.*

*Neighborhood is defined as the area within a 20 minute walk, a 5 minute drive, or about 1 mile in all directions around the respondent's home.*



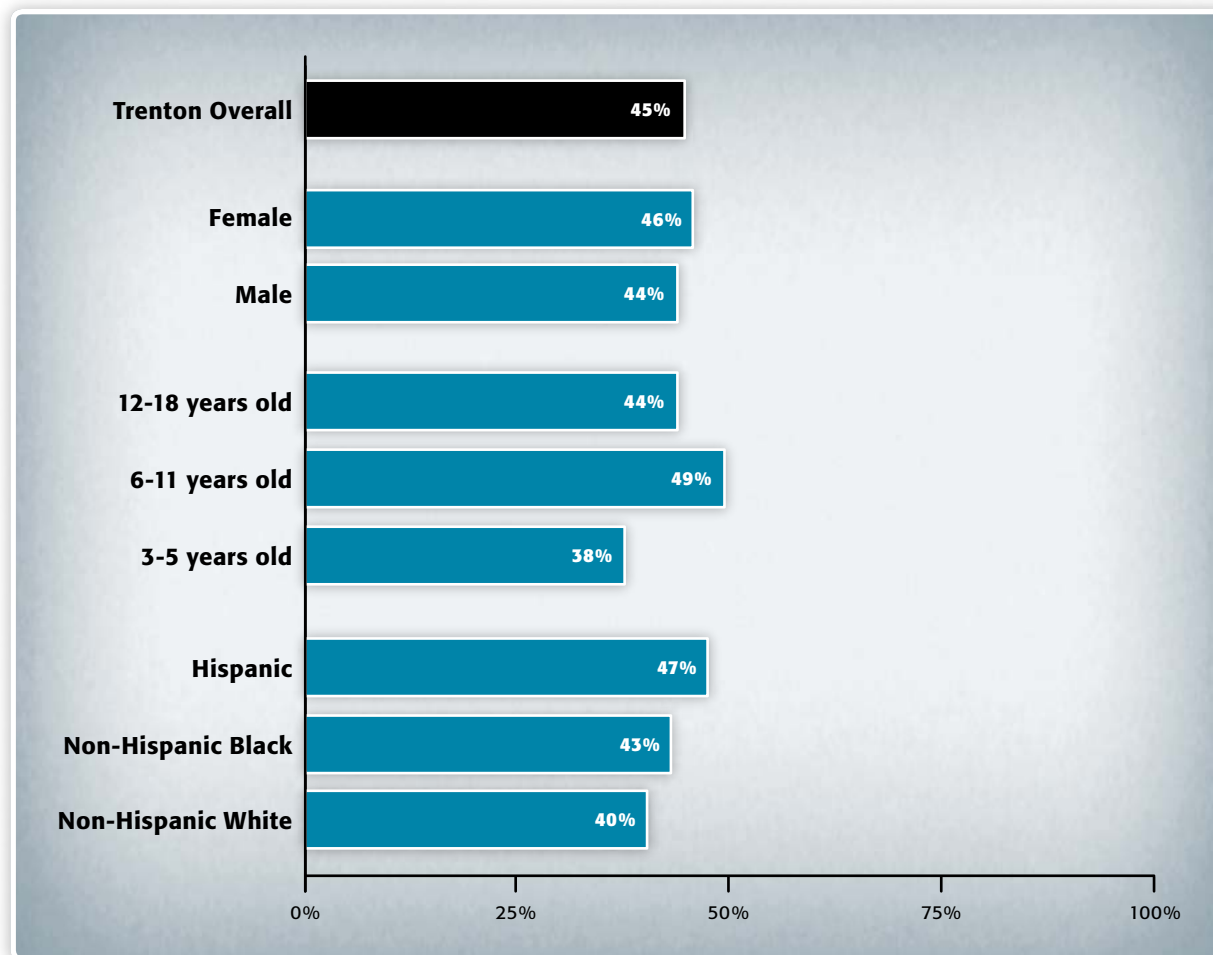
*Percentage who say neighborhood is unsafe due to **traffic***

- Overall, 39% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 think their neighborhoods are somewhat or very unsafe due to traffic.
- There is little variation by gender.



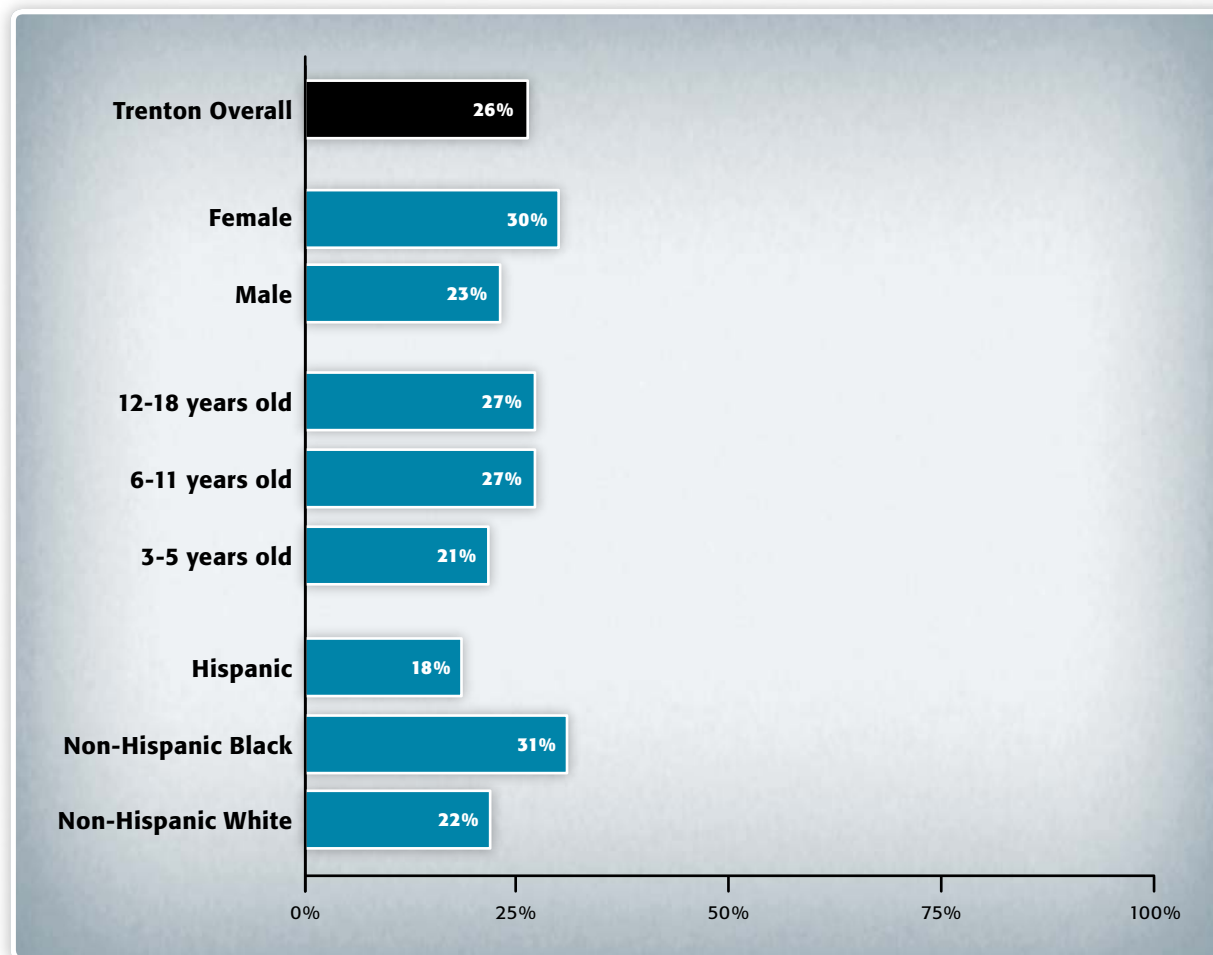
## Percentage who say neighborhood is unsafe due to **criminal activity**

- Overall, 45% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 think their neighborhoods are somewhat or very unsafe due to criminal activity.
- Parents of children ages 6–11 (49%) are more likely to think their neighborhoods are unsafe due to criminal activity, compared to parents of those ages 12–18 (44%) and ages 3–5 (38%).
- There is little variation by gender.



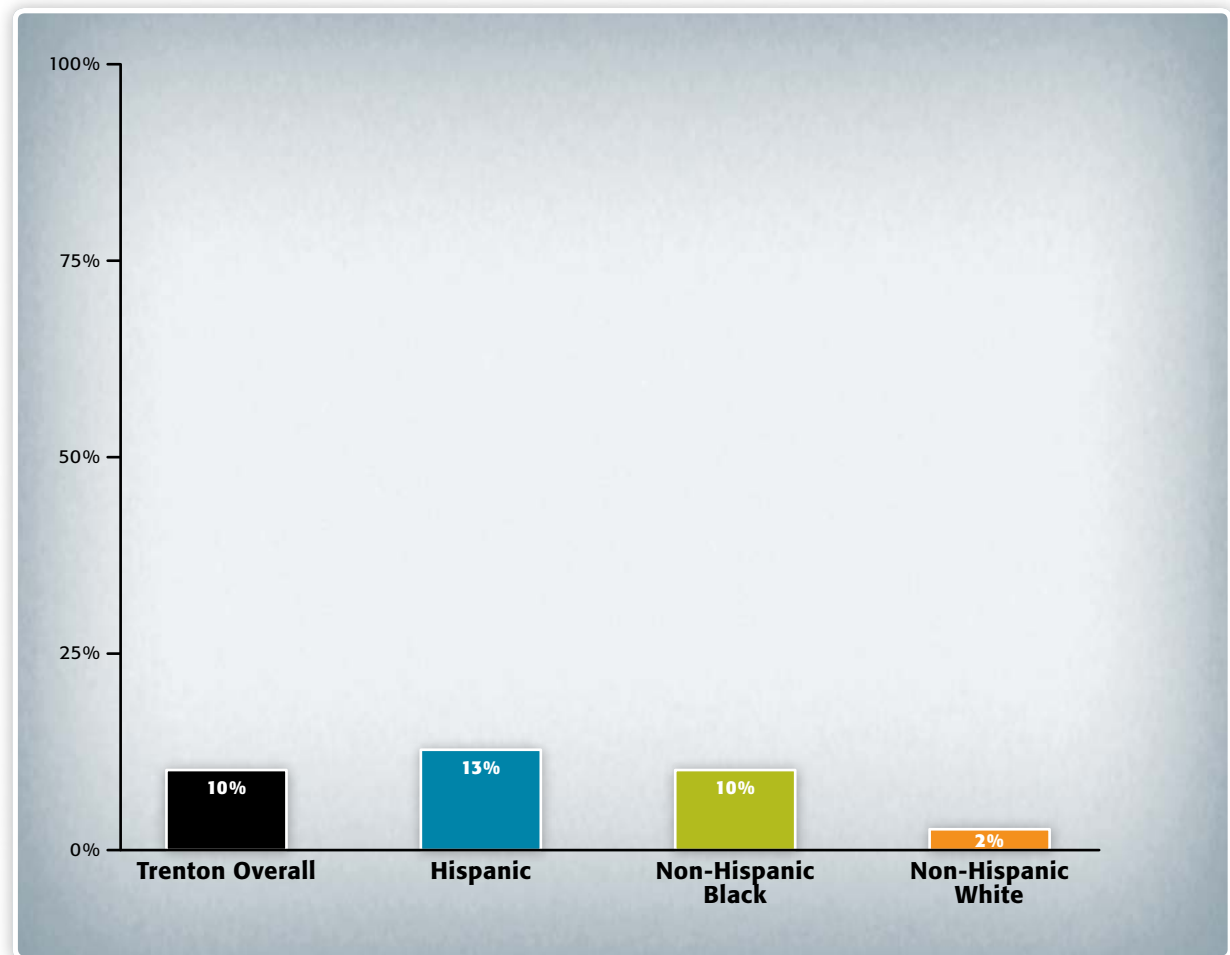
*Percentage who say neighborhood is unpleasant for walking, running, biking, or playing*

- Overall, 26% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 think their neighborhoods are somewhat or very unpleasant for walking, playing, etc.
- 31% of parents of non-Hispanic black children think their neighborhoods are unpleasant, compared to 22% of parents of non-Hispanic white children and 18% of parents of Hispanic children.
- There is little variation by age.



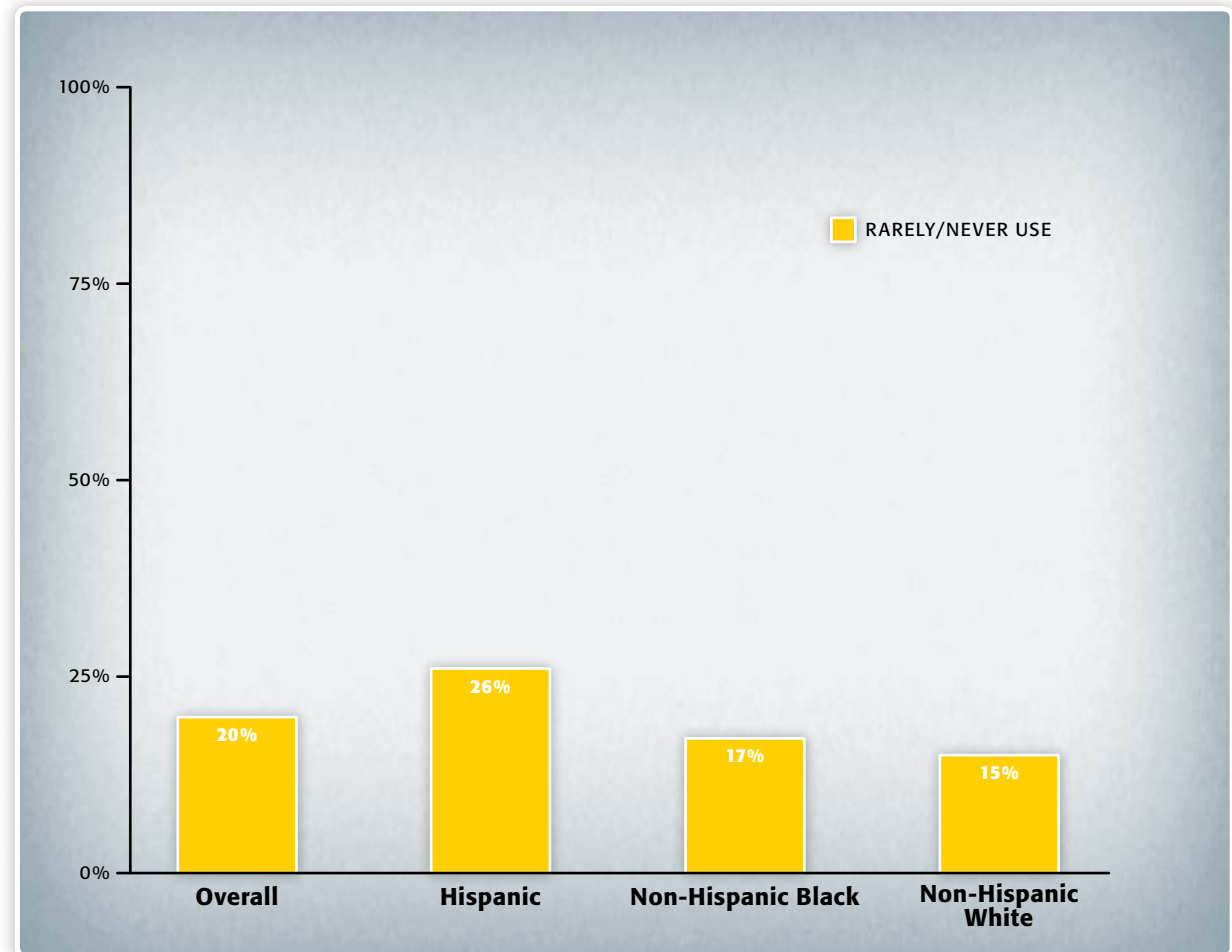
## *Percentage who have no working street lights in most of neighborhood*

- Overall, 10% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 report that they do not have working street lights in most of their neighborhood.
- 10% of parents of non-Hispanic black children and 13% of parents of Hispanic children report that they do not have working street lights in most of their neighborhood, compared to 2% of parents of non-Hispanic white children.



*Percentage of children with no **sidewalks** in neighborhood or who rarely/never use sidewalks in neighborhood to walk, run, bike, or play*

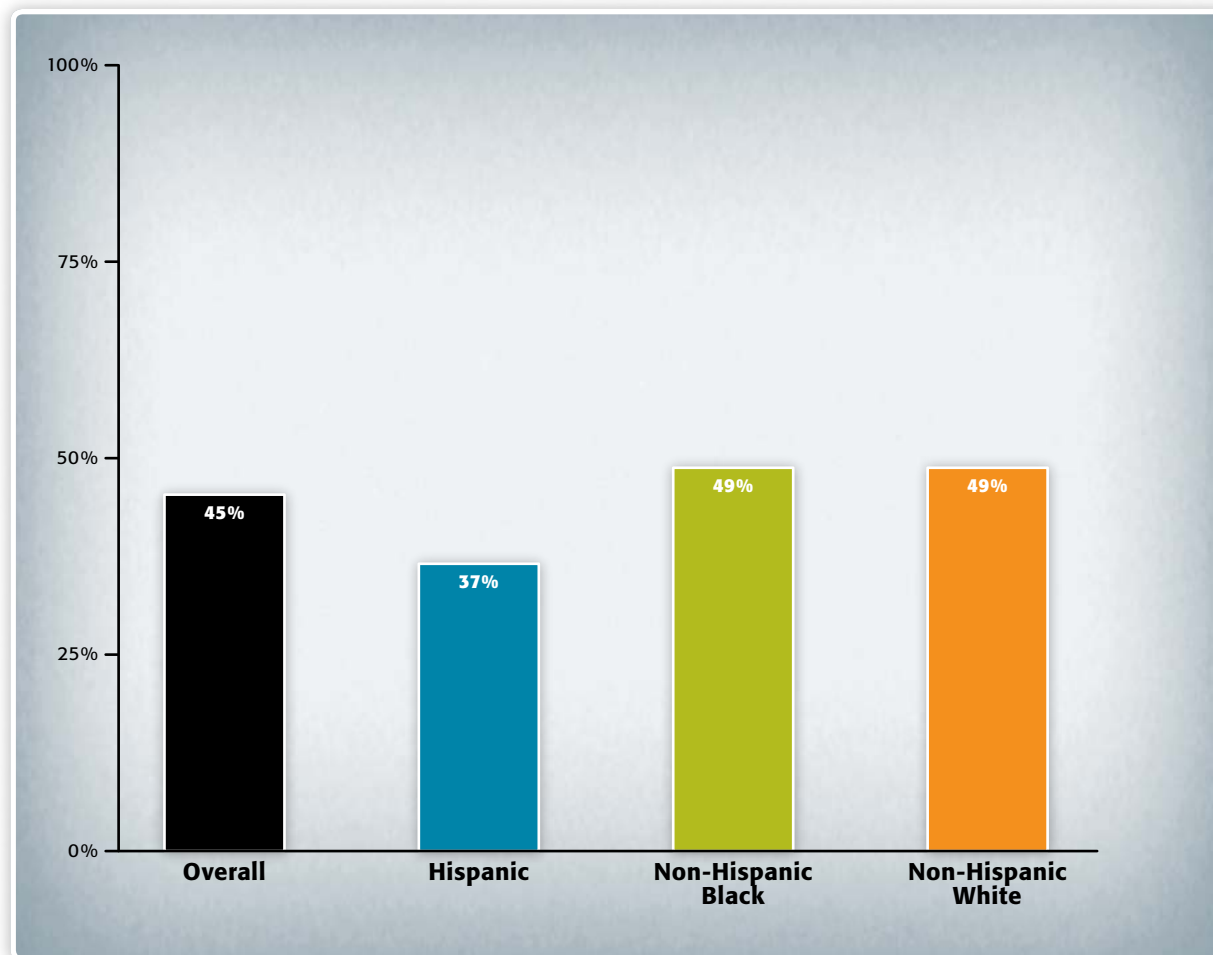
- Almost all children ages 3–18 years in Trenton live in neighborhoods that have sidewalks. However, 20% of children rarely or never use sidewalks in their neighborhood to run, bike, or play.
- 26% of Hispanic children rarely or never use sidewalks in their neighborhood to run, bike, or play, compared to 17% of non-Hispanic black children and 15% of non-Hispanic white children.





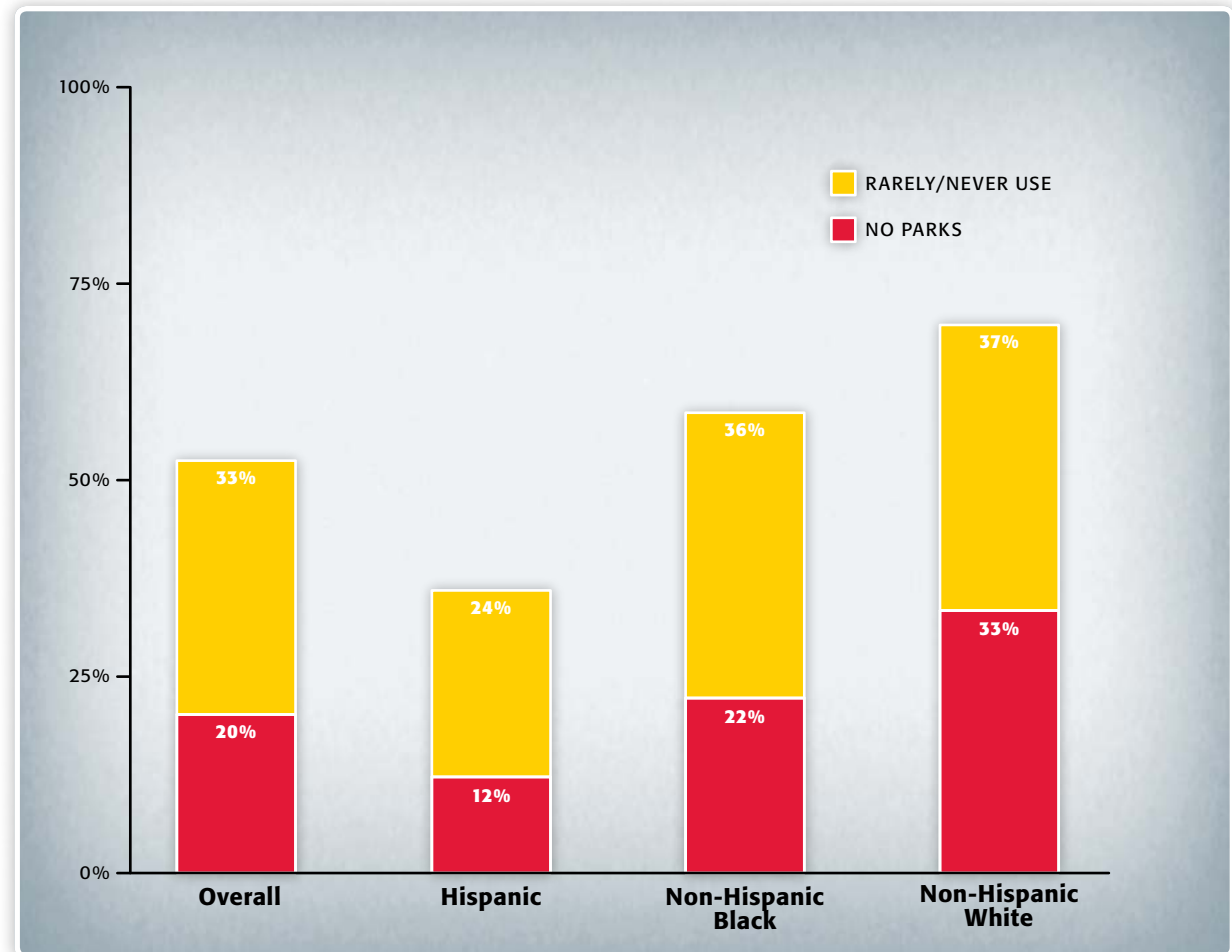
## *Percentage whose neighborhood sidewalks are in fair or poor condition*

- Overall, 45% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 report that the sidewalks in their neighborhood are not in good condition.
- Parents of non-Hispanic black and non-Hispanic white children are more likely to report that the sidewalks in their neighborhood are not in good condition (49%), compared to parents of Hispanic children (37%).



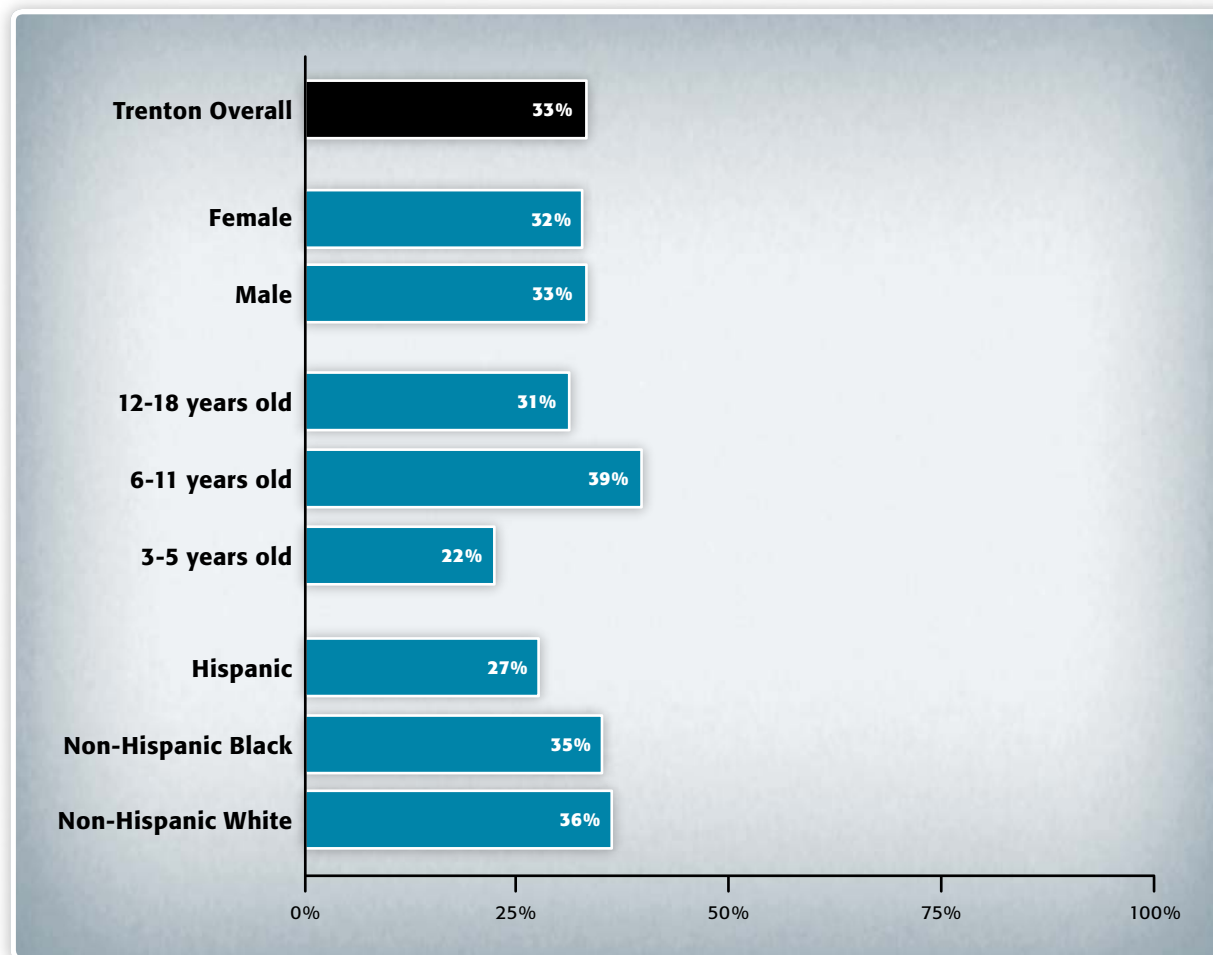
*Percentage of children with no **parks** in neighborhood or who rarely/never use parks to walk, run, bike, or play*

- Overall, 20% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton live in neighborhoods without parks and an additional 33% rarely or never use parks to run, bike, or play.
- 33% of non-Hispanic white children live in neighborhoods without parks, compared to 22% of non-Hispanic black children and 12% of Hispanic children.
- 37% of non-Hispanic white children and 36% of non-Hispanic black children rarely or never use parks in their neighborhood to run, bike, or play, compared to 24% of Hispanic children.



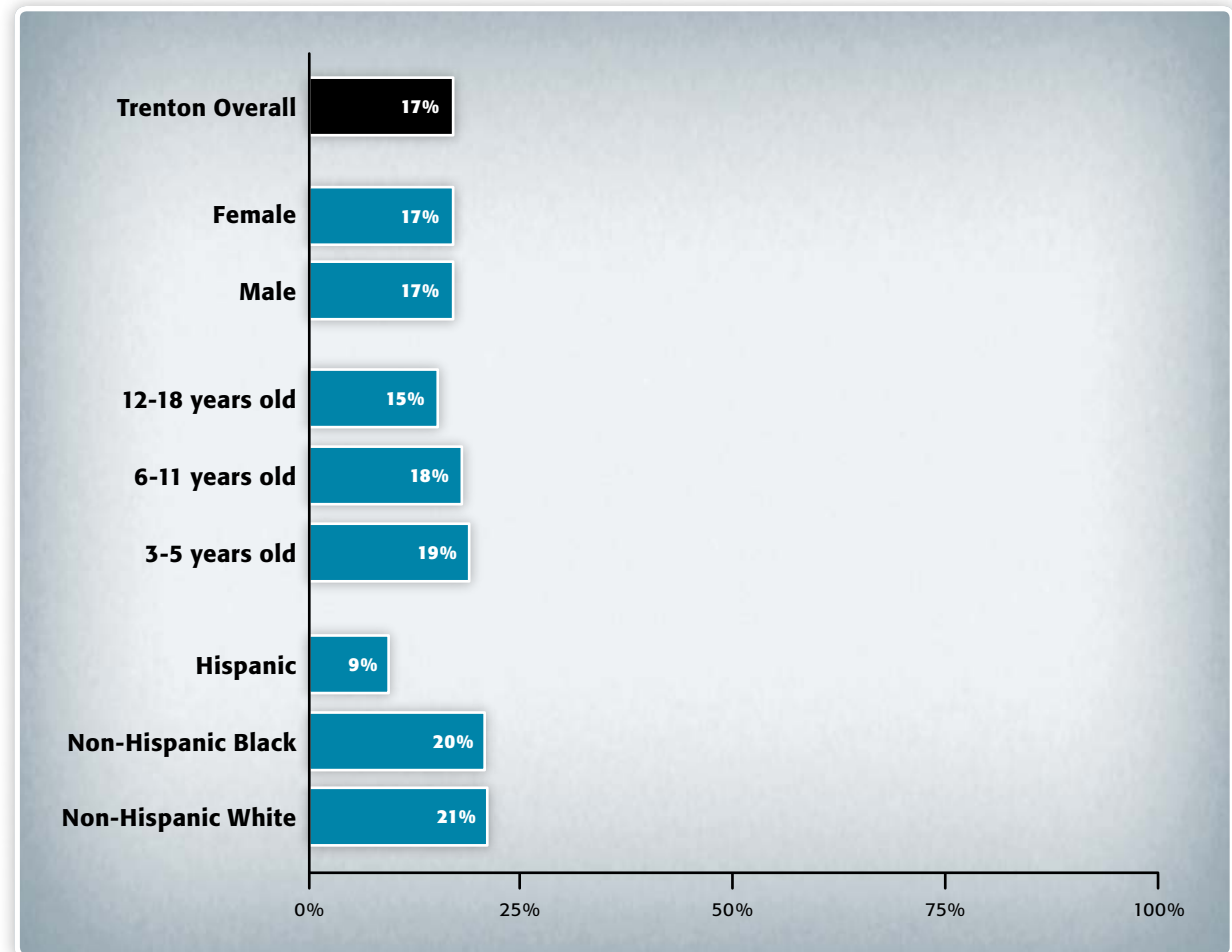
## *Percentage who report neighborhood parks are unsafe due to criminal activity*

- Overall, 33% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 report that the parks in their neighborhood are unsafe due to criminal activity.
- Parents of children ages 6–11 (39%) and ages 12–18 (31%) are more likely to report unsafe parks in their neighborhood compared to parents of children ages 3–5 (22%).
- There is little variation by gender.



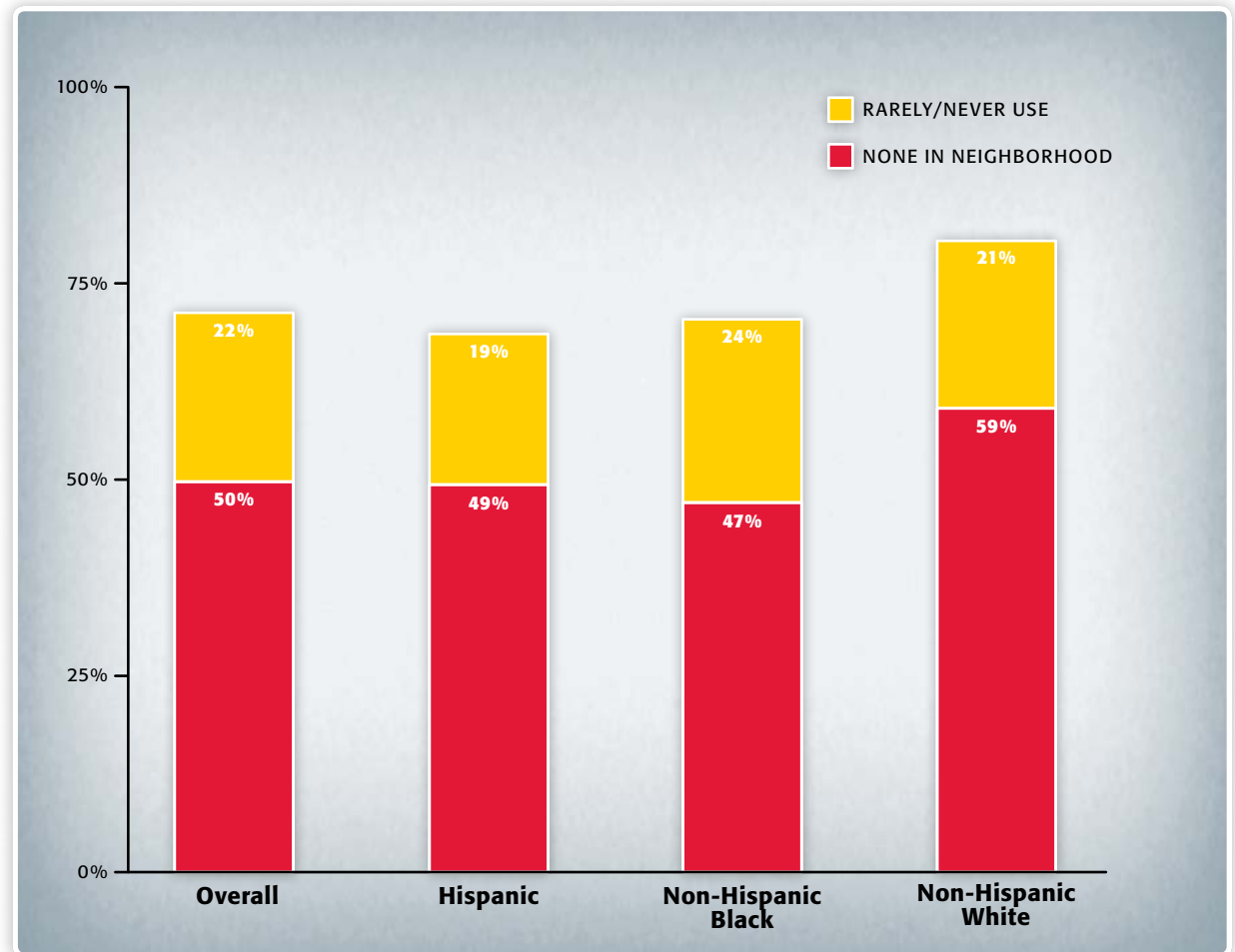
## *Percentage who say neighborhood parks are unpleasant*

- Overall, 17% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 report that the parks in their neighborhood are unpleasant.
- Parents of non-Hispanic white children (21%) and non-Hispanic black children (20%) are more likely to report unpleasant parks in their neighborhood, compared to parents of Hispanic children (9%).
- There is little variation by gender or age.



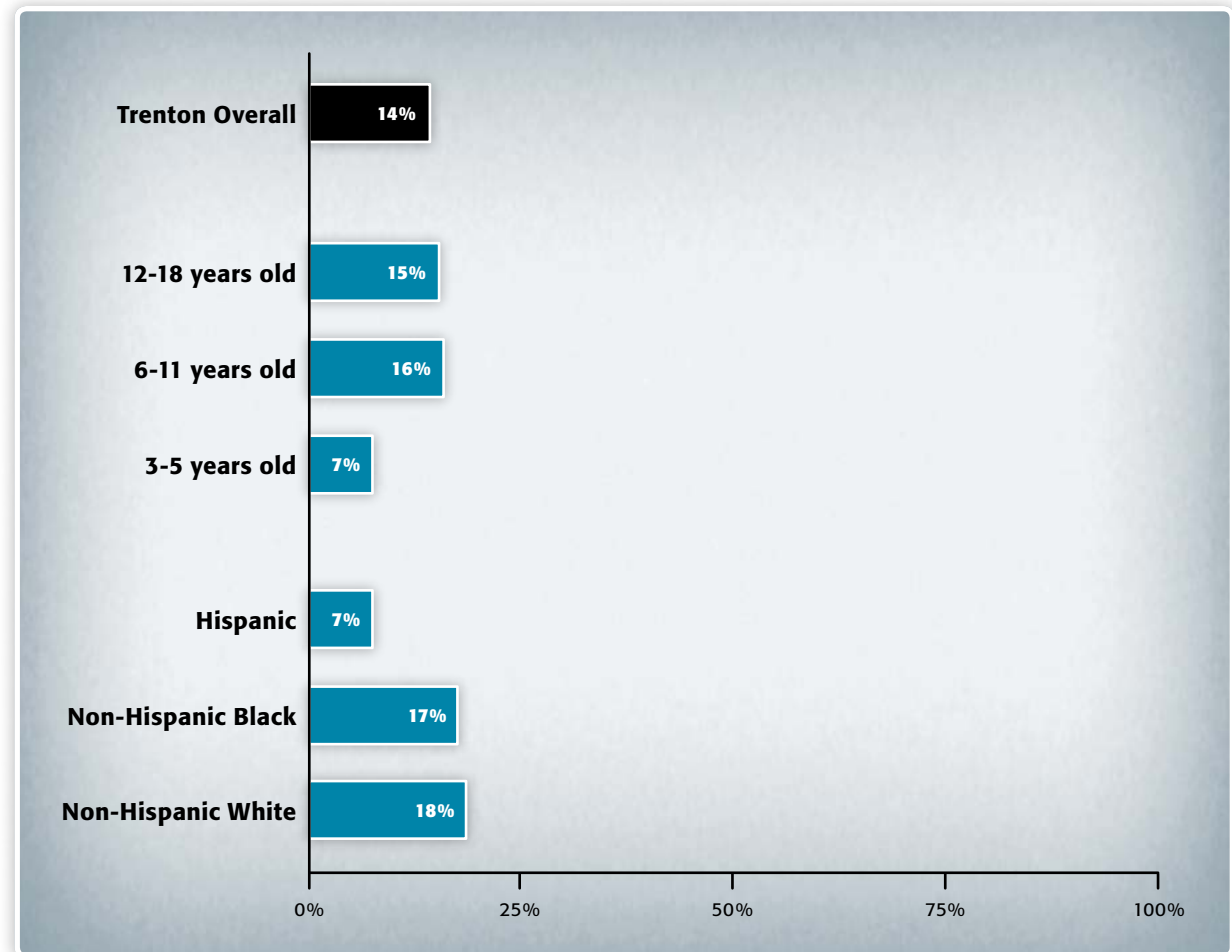
*Percentage of children with no **exercise facilities** in neighborhood or who rarely/never use exercise facilities*

- Overall, 50% of 3–18 year old children in Trenton live in neighborhoods without indoor or outdoor exercise facilities and an additional 22% rarely or never use exercise facilities in their neighborhood.
- Non-Hispanic white children (59%) are more likely to live in neighborhoods without exercise facilities, compared to Hispanic children (49%) and non-Hispanic black children (47%).
- In those neighborhoods that do have exercise facilities, use varies little by race/ethnicity.



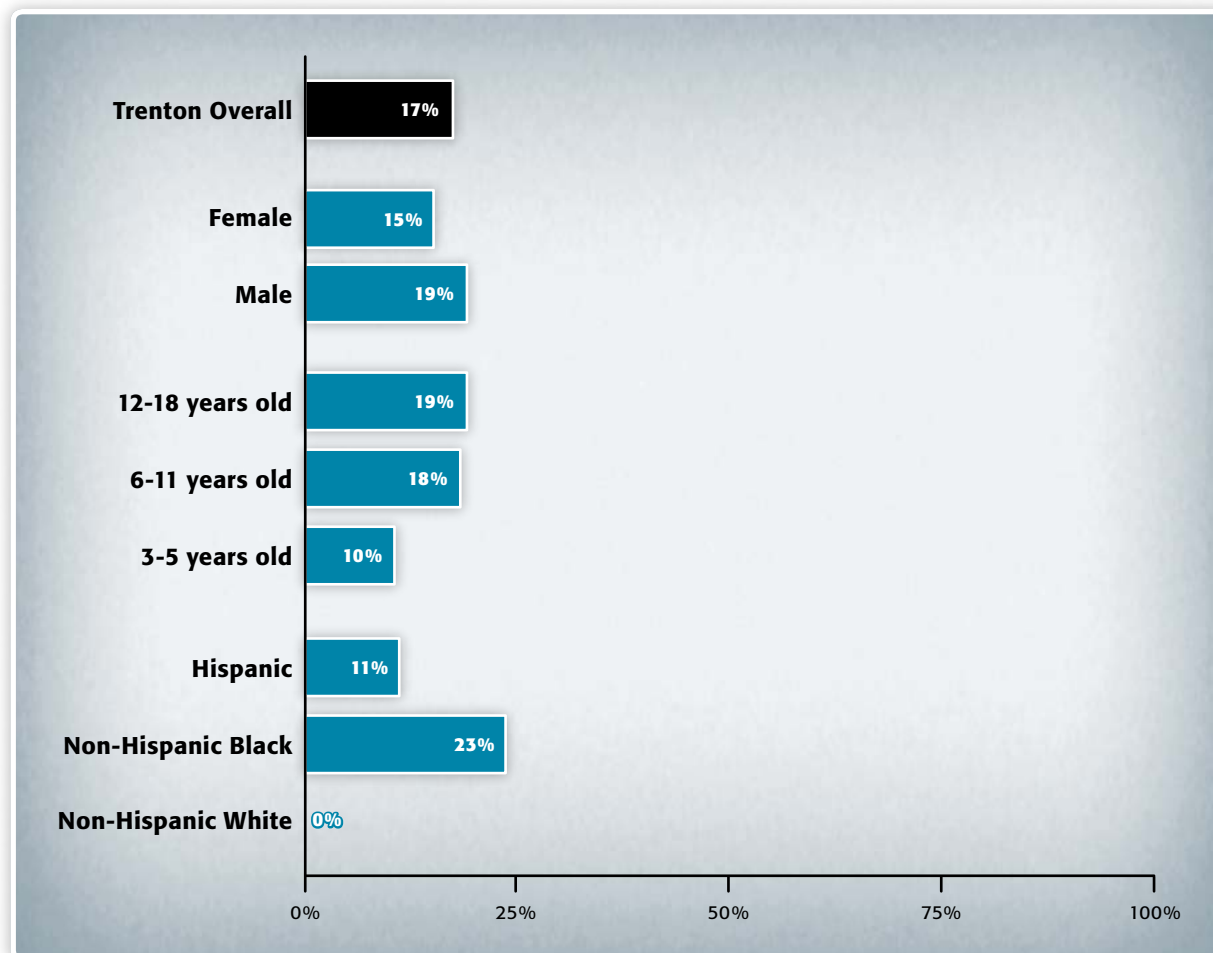
### *Percentage who say exercise facilities in neighborhood have inconvenient hours*

- Overall, 14% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood do not have convenient hours of operation.
- Parents of Hispanic children are the least likely to report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood do not have convenient hours of operation.



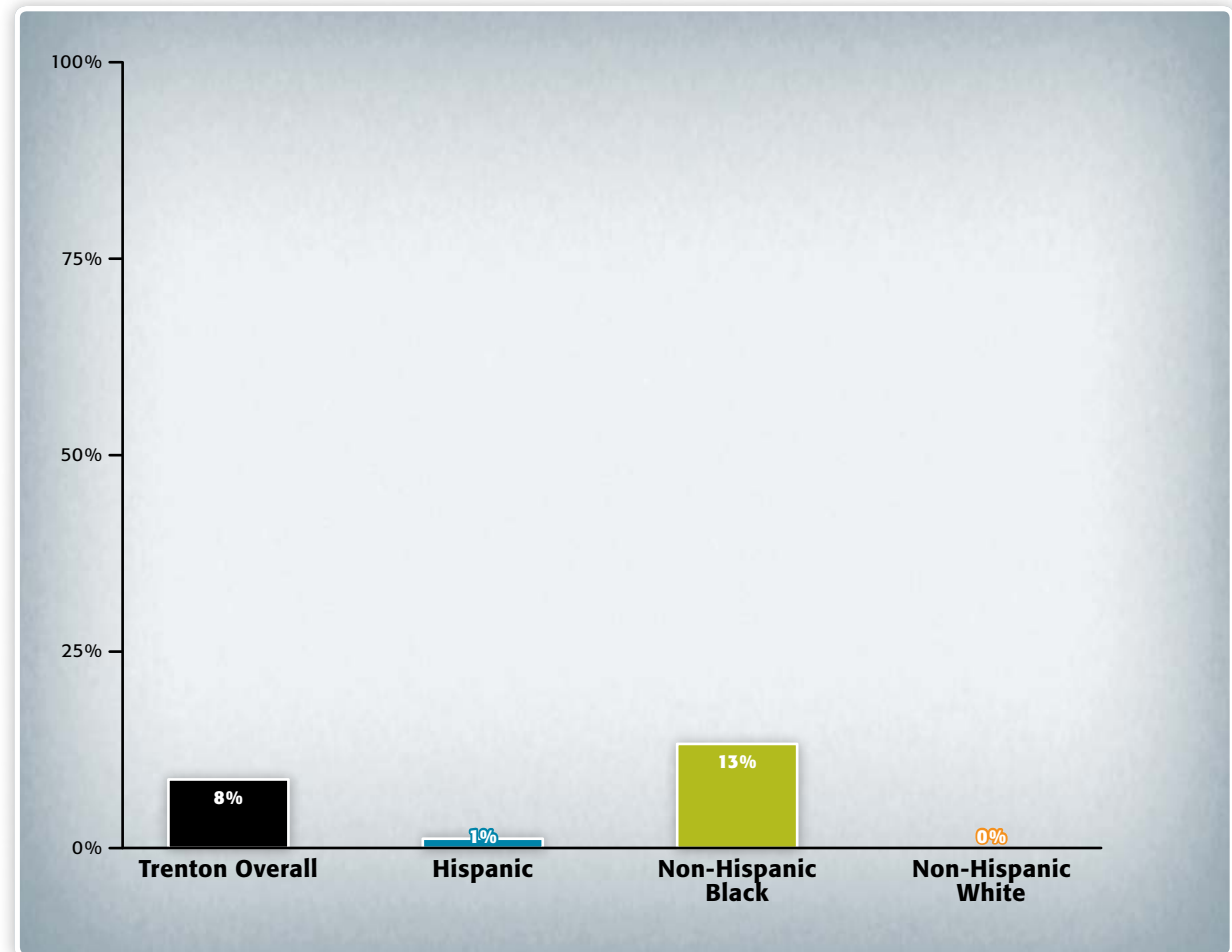
## *Percentage who report neighborhood exercise facilities are unsafe due to criminal activity*

- Overall, 17% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood are unsafe due to criminal activity.
- Parents of non-Hispanic black children are the most likely to report unsafe indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood (23%) compared to 11% of parents of Hispanic children and 0% of parents of non-Hispanic white children.
- This varies little by gender.



## *Percentage who say exercise facilities in neighborhood are in poor condition*

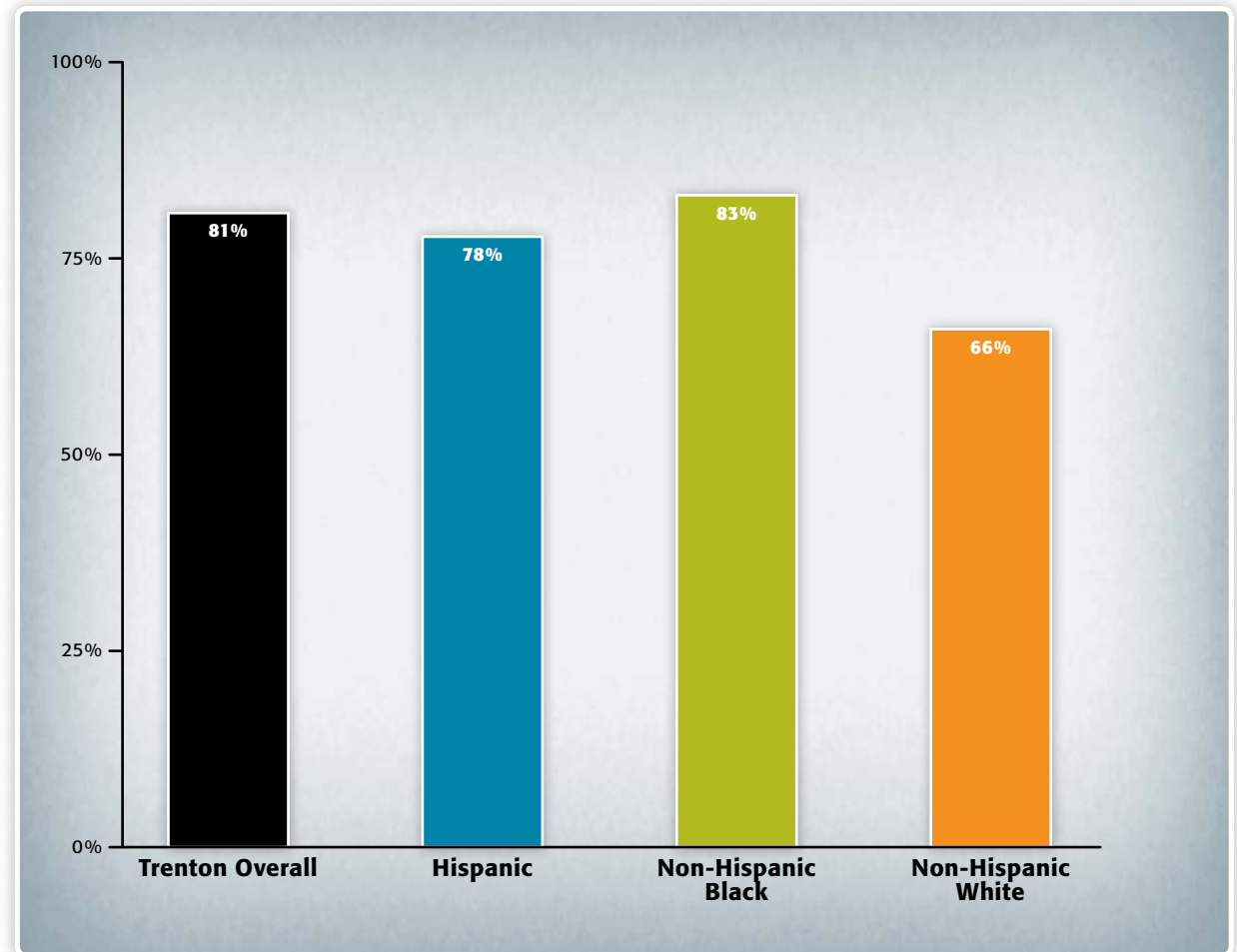
- Overall, 8% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood are in poor condition.
- Parents of non-Hispanic black children (13%) are the most likely to report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood are in poor condition.





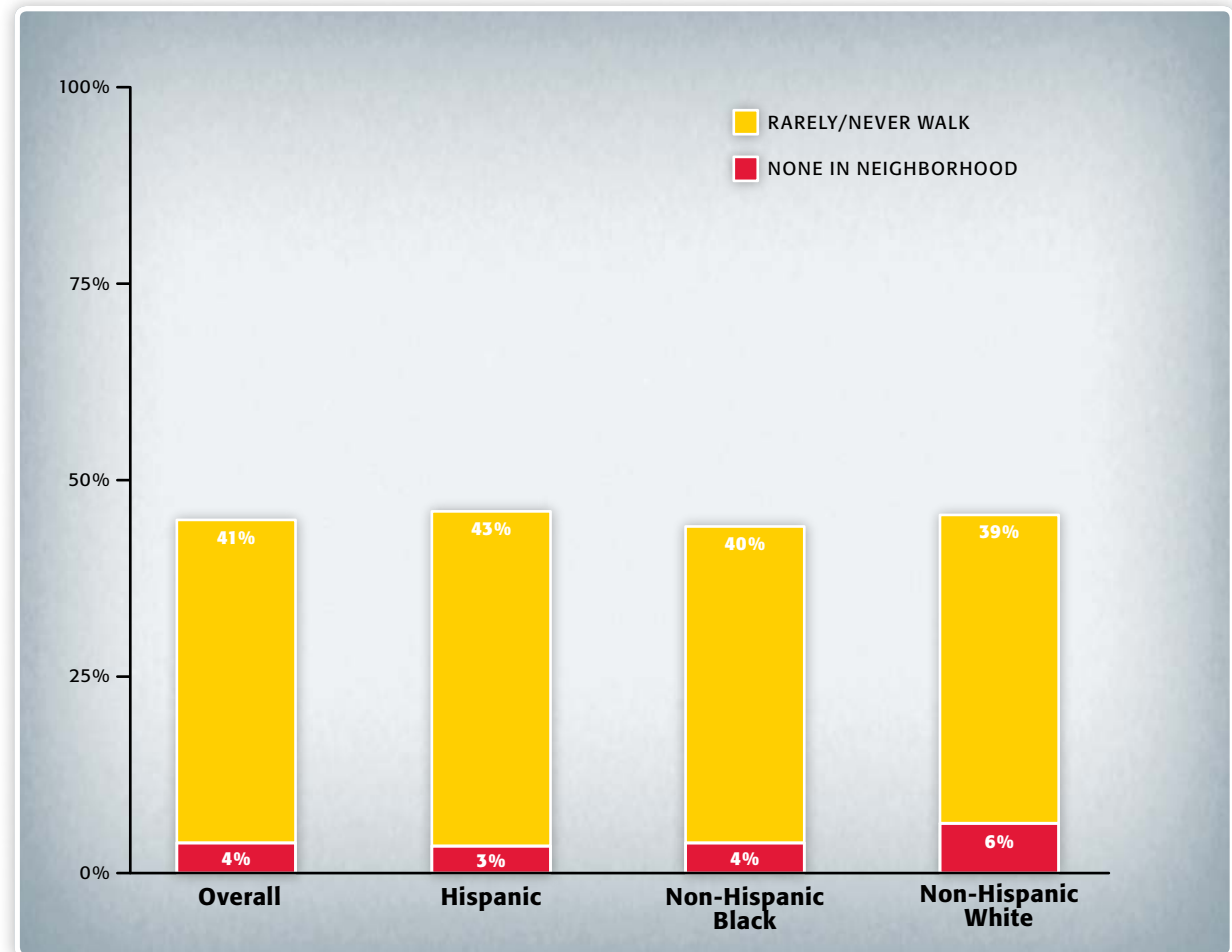
## *Percentage who say exercise facilities are free*

- Overall, 81% of Trenton parents of children ages 3–18 report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood are free.
- Non-Hispanic black children (83%) and Hispanic children (78%) are more likely to live in neighborhoods with free exercise facilities, compared to non-Hispanic white children (66%).



## Percentage reporting presence and use of walking destinations in neighborhood

- Though most Trenton children ages 3–18 live in neighborhoods that have places such as libraries, stores, or recreational facilities within walking distance, 41% of them rarely or never walk to these places, and this varies little by race/ethnicity.



**NOTE:** Includes walking alone or with someone else.

## *Key findings from physical activity environment section*

- Parents perceive high rates of criminal activity, traffic, and unpleasant surroundings in their neighborhood, factors that may serve as major barriers to physical activity for their children.
- While most families live in neighborhoods with sidewalks, almost half feel that the sidewalks are in poor condition and one-fifth report that their children do not use sidewalks to walk, run, bike or play.
- 20% of the parents report living in neighborhoods with no parks. In neighborhoods that have parks, one-third of parents feel that the parks are unsafe. About one-third also report that their children do not use neighborhood parks for any type of physical activity.
- Half of Trenton children ages 3–18 live in neighborhoods with no exercise facilities.
- Parents of non-Hispanic black children are more likely to report barriers to use of exercise facilities such as crime.
- In spite of living in neighborhoods that have walking destinations, 41% of children in Trenton do not walk to such places.

## Conclusions

Unhealthy diet and inadequate physical activity are widespread among Trenton children, calling for interventions that create environments and policies which help children improve their diets and level of physical activity. Most Trenton children do not meet the recommendations for vegetable consumption and physical activity. They frequently eat unhealthy foods (e.g., fast food, sugar-sweetened beverages and energy-dense sweet snacks), especially among older and non-Hispanic black children, and less often eat healthy foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables as snacks), especially among older and Hispanic children. They spend more time in sedentary activities and are less likely to walk or bike to school (particularly non-Hispanic black children) or be physically active at school (particularly Hispanic children).

Parental perceptions of food and physical activity environments suggest that interventions are needed to create additional opportunities for healthy food and physical activity in the neighborhoods and also to address barriers related to existing options. The majority of parents shop at supermarkets or superstores. About one-third of parents report limited availability of fresh produce and low-fat items, and cost remains a major barrier to purchasing these items. Lack of stores in neighborhoods, cost, and quality were the main reasons why almost 44% of the parents surveyed do not shop in their neighborhood. Although many neighborhoods have sidewalks and some have parks and exercise facilities, a fair number of parents report that their children do not use these facilities to be active. Traffic, crime level, unpleasantness of neighborhoods and parks, and poor condition of sidewalks are reported by substantial numbers of parents as barriers to physical activity. Parents of non-Hispanic black children are more likely to report barriers such as crime in their neighborhood exercise facilities.

Effective interventions will require changes in the neighborhood environment by creating new opportunities, improving existing features, and addressing barriers associated with practicing healthy behaviors. Efforts are also needed to raise awareness about the issue of childhood obesity and associated behaviors among parents and caregivers.



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