

# Neighborhood residents with lowest incomes most likely to care about their communities

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Some may assume that low-income residents of run-down, crime-ridden neighborhoods do not care about their communities. However, research from the University of Missouri suggests otherwise.

Mansoo Yu, an assistant professor of [social work](#) and public health at MU, studied levels of community care and vigilance among residents living in high-crime, low-income areas. Community care and vigilance refer to individuals' [desires](#) to improve their communities, to take pride in their neighborhoods and to monitor and report unwelcome happenings, such as crimes, near their homes.

"We hypothesized that individuals with higher incomes would have higher levels of community care and [vigilance](#), but the opposite was true," Yu said. "Residents with lower incomes were more likely to care about their communities than their higher-earning neighbors."

Yu said he and his colleagues were somewhat surprised by the findings that lower-income residents cared more about their communities.

"One possibility is that, because these individuals had such low incomes, they were more likely to stay in the same area for a long time," Yu said. "Low-income residents might lack the resources to move to other communities, whereas their neighbors with relatively higher incomes might be more able to move to better neighborhoods with safer environments."

Yu said community workers and organizers as well as public health professionals should find ways for residents to develop pride in their neighborhoods and encourage them to take actions, such as volunteering, to improve their communities.

"Healthy local environments are related to overall well-being and good mental and [physical health](#)," Yu said. "Individuals tend to feel safer in their local communities when they have low levels of depression and high levels of self-esteem. More work is needed to improve low-[income](#) areas into healthy environments so individuals' well-beings can improve."

**More information:** The study, "Which Factor has More Impact? An Examination of the Effects of Income Level, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder, and Crime on Community Care and Vigilance Among Low-Income African American Residents," was published in *Race and Social Problems*.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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