

## Community Food Assessments: Retail Inventories and Interviews in Low Food Access Areas

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Morbidity and mortality rates have been linked to poor diet and nutrition and individuals in underserved populations are often at a greater risk for experiencing poor health outcomes due to low access to healthy and nutritious foods. Public health researchers have begun to examine the impact of social, cultural, and economic factors on diet and nutrition. This study utilized an inventory of local stores and combined it with qualitative data to create a unique approach towards understanding a low food access environment in Wichita, Kansas.

A list of food retailers located in the city of Wichita was created using local resources. From that list, 277 food retailers were surveyed to collect price and availability data on certain food items. Qualitative data was collected through interviews from 75 participants living in low food access areas in three zip codes in Wichita.

Various store types were surveyed for food products and found that healthy food was more expensive in low income areas. Qualitative interviews revealed that individuals who live in low food access areas have additional challenges when it comes to eating healthy. Cost, distance to store, and the quality of food items and grocery stores are typical factors discussed in studies about low food access areas.

The findings of this study are consistent with the national literature on low food access areas. Several areas in Wichita had limited geographic access to fresh fruits and vegetables. In lower income areas, healthy food items such as fruits and vegetables were more expensive. These findings were further supported by qualitative interviews conducted in low food access areas. Both the cost and access of healthy, quality food were described as major challenges. These results suggest that understanding food access is a complicated issue that requires a multifaceted, environmental approach.