

Making Groceries

FOOD AND NUTRITION INSECURITY IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

OCTOBER 2024

New Orleans Health Department

Authored by: Luke Felty



About the New Orleans Health Department (NOHD)

Mission

To protect, promote, and improve the health of all in our community through equitable policies, programs, and partnerships.

Vision

Building a healthy and equitable New Orleans by supporting the well-being of everyone in the region.

Values

Our values are the principles that guide how the New Orleans Health Department's (NOHD) team members approach our work and interactions with one another, partner organizations, and community members.

- **Integrity:** We strive to conduct ourselves in an ethical and accountable manner that ensures we are good stewards of public resources.
- **Responsiveness:** We work collaboratively and respond to the needs and feedback of one another, partner organizations, and community members.
- **Excellence:** We deliver high-quality public health services and programs with compassion and respect, with the goal of achieving better health outcomes for all people in New Orleans.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** We actively welcome, include, and value the input of people with different identities and experiences on our staff, as partners, and among those we serve.
- **Health Equity:** We strive to deliver programs and services that reduce inequities in our community and ensure every person in New Orleans has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.



Contents

About the New Orleans Health Department (NOHD)	2
Contents	3
PART ONE: What is Food Insecurity?	4
An Introduction to Food Insecurity	5
What are the Causes?	6
What are the Effects?.....	8
PART TWO: Food Insecurity in New Orleans.....	9
Quick Facts	10
A Swamp of Snacks, a Desert of Nutrition	11
Food Insecurity and Health	19
Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security	21
Disaster Planning	23
PART THREE: Current & Proposed Solutions.....	25
NOHD: What We're Doing.....	28
Community Organizations & Services.....	32
Conclusion and Recommendations	35
Appendix A: Glossary of Terms	36
Appendix B: New Orleans ZIP Code Map	37
References	38

PART ONE: What is Food Insecurity?

An Introduction to Food Insecurity

According to the USDA, **Food Security** (FS) means “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.”¹ For most people, this means having access to places like full-service grocery stores that sell fresh, healthy foods such as produce and fruit.

At the opposite end of the spectrum there is **Food Insecurity** (FI), which is a lack of access to sources of fresh, healthy foods. There are many reasons that an individual or household might experience **food insecurity**: lack of local grocery stores, transportation barriers, and the inability to afford fresh, healthy foods are among the most common.²

Food Security means “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.” (USDA)



Image 1. Source: Second Harvest Food Bank

Food insecurity and hunger contribute to the occurrence of chronic physical and mental health outcomes like diabetes, high blood pressure (hypertension), heart disease, depression, and more.^{3 4} As of 2023, 13.5% of households across the U.S. meet the criteria of being food insecure, which was an increase from 12.8% in 2022.⁵ Of this 13.5%, the vast majority are people of color who live below the federal poverty line. In 2023, 23.3% of Black, non-Hispanic households in the United States were food insecure at some point, whereas only 9.9% of white households experienced **food insecurity**.⁶ This is why food insecurity is not merely a food issue; it’s an **equity** issue.

¹ (USDA, 2024)

² (HHS, 2024)

³ (Feeding America, 2024)

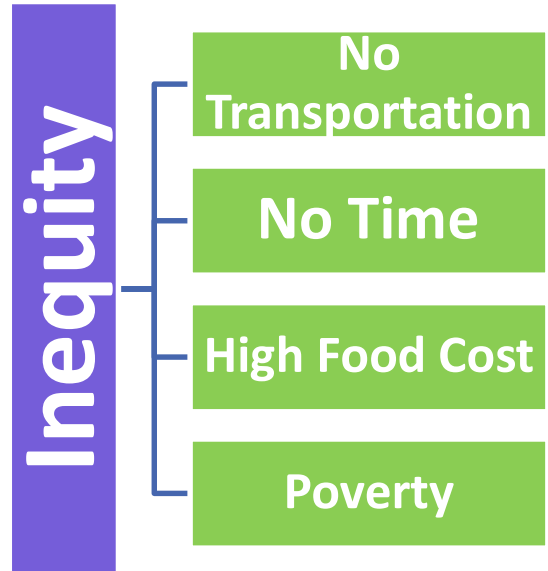
⁴ (NIH, 2023)

⁵ (USDA, 2024)

⁶ (NIH, 2023)

What are the Causes?

Food insecurity is systemic, meaning that it does not have a single cause and instead is caused by a combination of social and economic factors.⁷ As with many issues today, poverty is the primary cause, but food insecurity also reinforces poverty.⁸ It can be easy to take having a ride to the grocery store or being able to afford fruit for granted, but many people do not have the same privilege. For food insecure individuals, there are usually several barriers that prevent them from being able to access food:



No Transportation^{9, 10}

Accessing food in the U.S. without a car can be challenging. In many areas, the nearest grocery store is a mile or more away, and public transportation is not always sufficient. Areas where there are few or no grocery stores for a large distance are commonly called **food deserts**.¹¹



No Time

Grocery shopping and cooking are time consuming. This is a problem for adults who already work multiple jobs, have children, attend school, or lack time due to other circumstances. They may not have the time or capacity to grocery shop and cook regularly.



⁷ (Feeding America, n.d.)

⁸ (Poverty USA, n.d.)

⁹ (Antrum, Waring, & Cooksey Stowers, 2023)

¹⁰ (U.S. Hunger, n.d.)

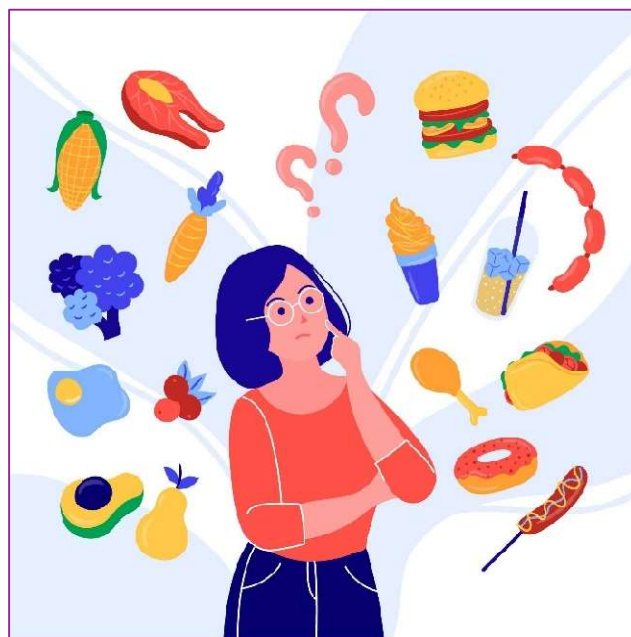
¹¹ (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.)

High Food Cost¹²

On a per-calorie basis, nutritious foods tend to be more expensive than “junk” foods (e.g. snacks) that are high in calories but have little nutritional content.¹³ Areas that only have cheap, nutrient-poor foods for sale are sometimes called **food swamps**.¹⁴ Another element of high food cost to consider is that whole foods require things like oils and seasonings, as well as equipment, to make them as satisfying and appealing to eat as pre-packaged and processed foods.

Poverty¹⁵

People with a low income face more barriers to accessing fresh, healthy food than people with higher incomes. All of the other burdens associated with food access (such as lack of transportation, time, and the high cost of food) are caused or exacerbated by poverty. This is why most benefits developed to address food insecurity, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, are designed to lower the burden of food costs.



¹² (Savoie-Roskos, Jorgensen, & Durward, n.d.)

¹³ (Carlson & Frazao, 2012)

¹⁴ (Cooksey-Stowers, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2017)

¹⁵ (Feeding America, n.d.)

What are the Effects?

Food insecurity has effects that go beyond hunger. Studies have found that poor food access takes a toll on physical and mental health alike. Food insecurity is even associated with increased rates of violent crime.^{16, 17} Poverty, health, food, and public safety are all closely linked together in this way, but there are some clearly negative effects of **food insecurity**:

Physical Health	Mental Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persistent hunger and fatigue• Increased chronic disease rates (high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, and more)• Increased risk of cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anxiety and stress• Depression• Difficulty concentrating• Instability of mood• Poor sleep quality

Physical Health

Food insecurity contributes to the prevalence of some of the most pervasive and deadly chronic health issues in the U.S. today.¹⁸ Limited access to grocery stores that sell fresh, whole fruit and vegetables forces many families with few or no options to choose fast food and corner / convenience stores that mostly sell less nutritious items like snacks, soda, and alcohol. This is why rates of both hypertension (high blood pressure) and diabetes are higher for food-insecure individuals.¹⁹

Mental Health

Food and hunger are essential to regulating mental health and emotions. People experiencing food insecurity have higher levels of psychological distress, which manifests in the form of depression, anxiety, and poor sleep.²⁰ For children, this can lead to trouble concentrating at school and reduced academic performance. Similarly, adults experiencing chronic food insecurity commonly experience workplace difficulties that in turn can reinforce the cycle of food insecurity.

¹⁶ (Feeding America, n.d.)

¹⁷ (National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2024)

¹⁸ (American Heart Association, n.d.)

¹⁹ (National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2024)

²⁰ (Myers C. A., 2020)

PART TWO: Food Insecurity in New Orleans

Quick Facts

New Orleans is famous for its food. Every year, countless tourists visit world-renowned restaurants all around the city to sample the best gumbo, jambalaya, muffalettas, and beignets you can find in the world. Why, then, do so many residents in the city struggle to access food?

At an estimated 16.4%, Orleans Parish's rate of food insecurity is significantly higher than the national average of 13.5%. There are an estimated 62,320 food insecure individuals in New Orleans.²¹

There are several reasons for this:

Food Deserts and Swamps

- In some areas, such as N.O. East, there is an abundance of fast food and convenience stores but relatively few full-service grocery stores.

High Cost of Food

- The average cost of a meal in the U.S. is \$3.99. In contrast, the average cost of a meal in New Orleans is \$4.59.

Transit Barriers

- Areas with the least access to food also tend to be difficult to navigate without a car, and other transit options are limited.

Due to these high rates of food insecurity, New Orleans and Louisiana receive substantial allocations from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). As of June 2024, 21.6% of New Orleans residents received SNAP benefits. Despite this, a large portion of residents who are likely eligible for the program do not currently receive SNAP benefits. According to the Department of Children and Family Services, only 65.3% of families who are income eligible for SNAP are enrolled in the program.²²⁻²³

²¹ (Feeding America, 2022)

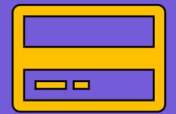
²² (Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, 2024)

²³ Meal cost data is from Feeding America. Statistics in the sidebar are from DCFS and CDC Chronic Disease Indicators.



16.4%

Have low access to grocery stores.



21.6%

Receive SNAP benefits.



38%

Participate in WIC during pregnancy.



48.6%

Eat fruit less than 1x a day.



25.6%

Eat veggies less than 1x a day.

A Swamp of Snacks, a Desert of Nutrition

The food landscape in New Orleans is complex. It is comprised of supermarket chains, small corner stores, farmers markets, urban farms, community supported agriculture (CSAs), food banks, and many more local food organizations and businesses. But, as Figure 1 below shows, depending on where you're standing, you might see an entirely different reality. This is because food access in New Orleans is characterized by inequity. This becomes evident when you look at the distribution of food stores, the cost of food, and the prevalence of poverty.

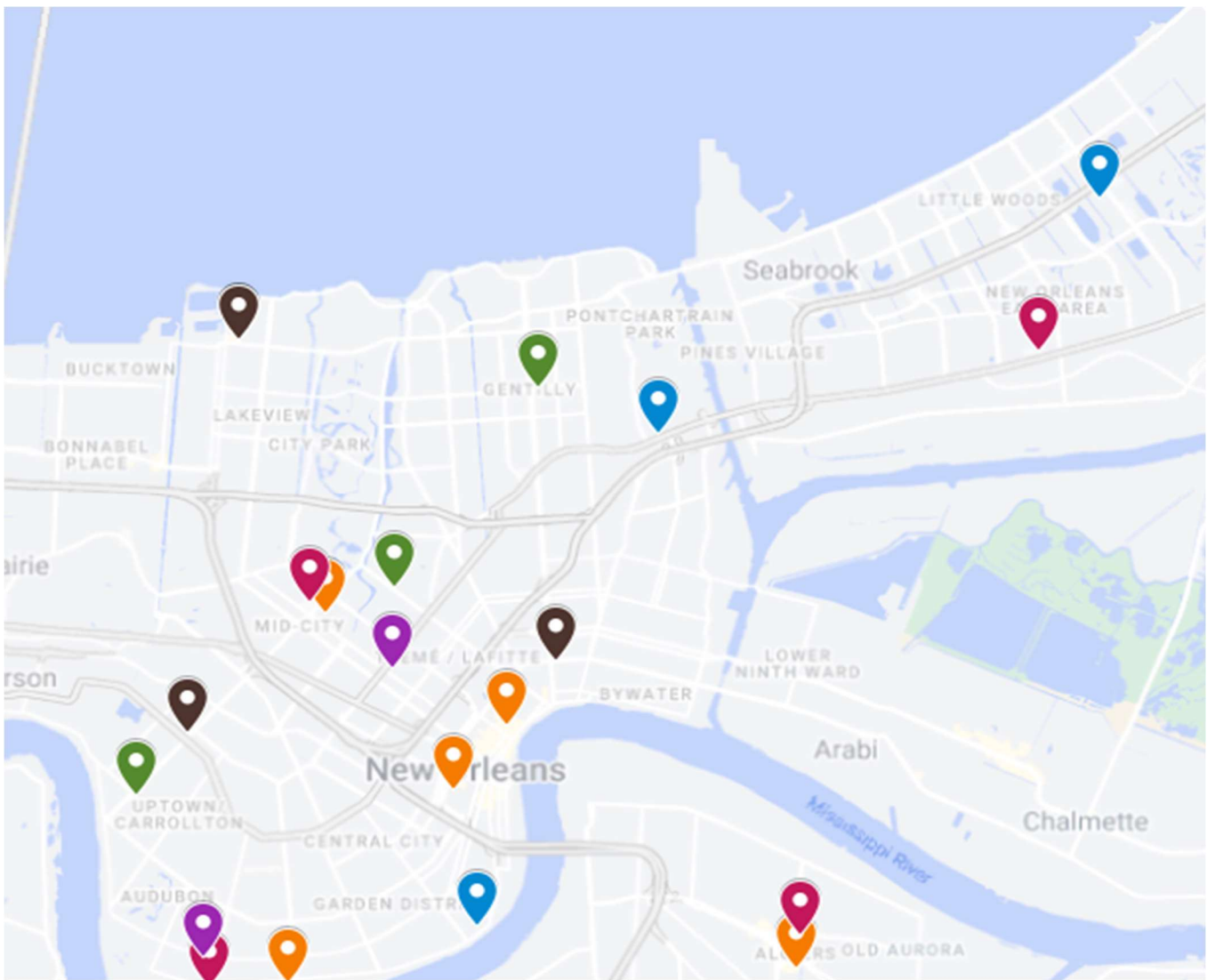


Figure 1. Supermarket chain locations in Orleans Parish. Supermarkets included are Rouses (Orange), Robert's (Black), Winn Dixie (Red), Canseco's (Green), Whole Foods (Purple), and Walmart (Blue).

[Click here to visit the interactive map.](#)

Supermarkets and Corner Stores

One of the most important components to determining an individual or neighborhood's rate of **food insecurity** is the **food environment**. This encompasses the number of retail food stores, such as supermarkets and corner stores, selling fresh and healthy foods in their area. Neighborhoods with more supermarkets within one mile of them have lower rates of food insecurity, and neighborhoods with few or no supermarkets have higher rates of food insecurity.²⁴

Supermarkets

Areas where the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store is more than a mile away are considered **food deserts**. Figure 2 below shows how, in New Orleans, there are areas with a high density of grocery stores, such as in Mid-City where there are at least four supermarkets (Winn Dixie, Rouses, Whole Foods, and Canseco's) all within the same zip code (70119). In contrast, New Orleans East (70126-70129)* has only two major supermarkets (Walmart, Winn Dixie). For reference, a New Orleans Zip Code map can be found at the back of this report (Appendix B).

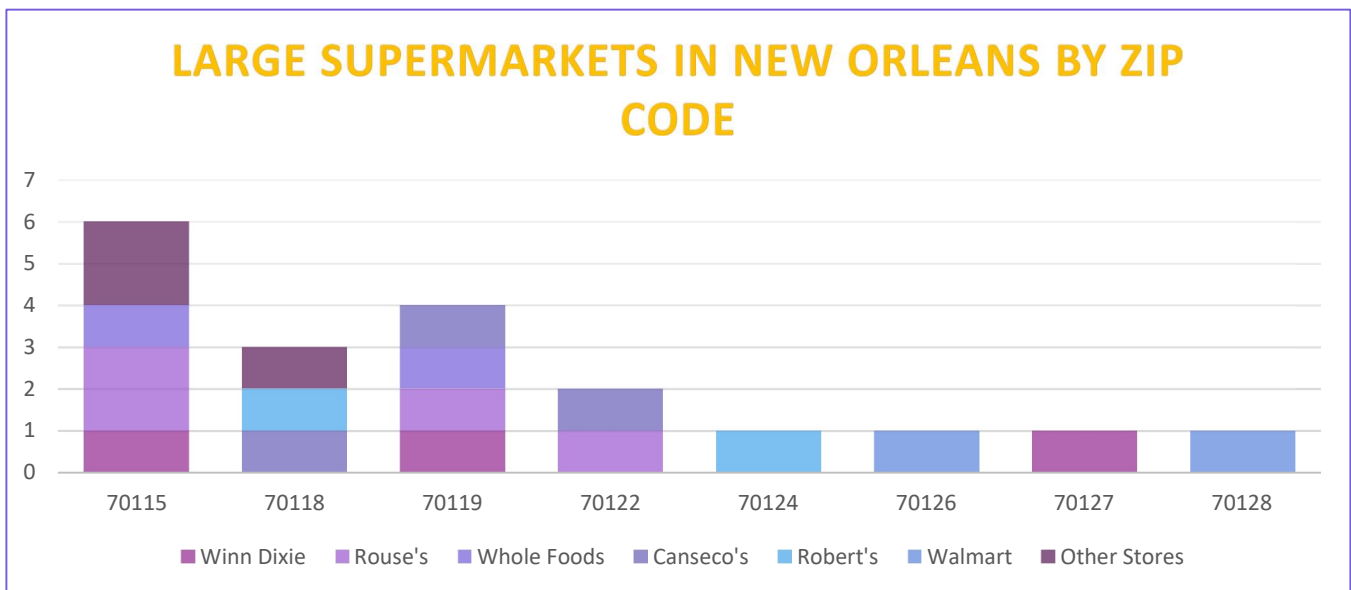


Figure 2. This graph shows the number(s) of each supermarket that can be found in zip codes across Orleans Parish. These figures are based on an online search results scan of supermarkets in Orleans Parish.

***Note:** The 70126 Zip Code covers parts of Gentilly and New Orleans East. The Walmart located there is not within the boundaries of New Orleans East and is not counted towards its supermarket total.

²⁴ (Herforth, 2015)

Corner and Convenience Stores

Some neighborhoods have a lot of retail stores, like corner and convenience stores, that mostly sell foods that are high in calories but light on nutrients. These stores help people meet their calorie needs, but the types of food sold there are associated with negative health outcomes (e.g. hypertension, diabetes, and obesity) when eaten regularly. This is because stocking fresh, healthy foods like fruit and produce can be more expensive or logistically difficult than stocking processed, shelf-stable foods. Areas that only have retail food stores that sell calorie-dense but nutritionally light foods are often referred to as **food swamps**.²⁵



Image 2. Corner stores around New Orleans.

Corner stores occupy an important niche in the food environment and culture of New Orleans.

Image Source: [Edible New Orleans, The Storied Past and Uncertain Future of a New Orleans Icon.](#)

New Orleans is famous for its locally owned corner stores that offer a variety of options. These stores fall between standard convenience stores and supermarkets. For example, many corner stores sell full meals (consisting of items like fried chicken or fish), but fewer stock produce. This difference between supermarket and corner/convenience store access creates what is known as a **nutrition gap**, a situation that occurs when the food available locally does not provide the nutrients needed to be free from malnutrition.²⁶

²⁵ (Cooksey-Stowers, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2017)

²⁶ (Bose, 2019)

Poverty

Poverty is both a root cause and effect of food insecurity in the United States. Food insecurity rates are significantly higher in low-income households and neighborhoods, and hunger contributes to conditions that keep people impoverished. In fact, it can be difficult to separate food insecurity from poverty. For example, both poverty and food insecurity disproportionately affect people of color, and both are strongly correlated with health outcomes like diabetes and hypertension.^{27,28,29} This can lead to a cycle where food insecurity makes it difficult to succeed at work, which further reinforces poverty and food insecurity.

Living in poverty makes it difficult for people to afford diverse and healthy foods, acquire transportation, and find the time needed to buy groceries. For many residents, getting healthy food involves using their already limited income to take a time-consuming bus ride to the nearest grocery store where they will have to pay above-average prices for items like fruit and produce. There is also the added challenge of getting the food back home. It is unsurprising, then, that many people opt for cheaper, more convenient options.

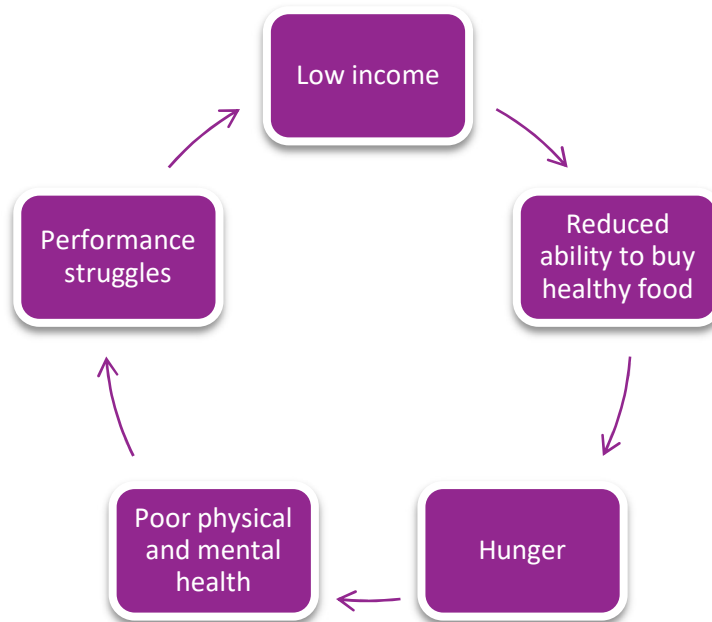


Figure 3. Patterns of food insecurity and poverty reinforce each other.

²⁷ (Feeding America, n.d.)

²⁸ (Bowen, 2021)

²⁹ (USDA, UPDATED 2024)

Inequity

The data on food insecurity are clear: people of color are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity than White people, both in Louisiana and on the national level.^{30, 31} This is made even more evident in Figure 4 below. This reality is underpinned by systemic inequity. Ultimately, the inequity in food access is a product of the inequity in income, wealth, and opportunity between people of color and White people.³²

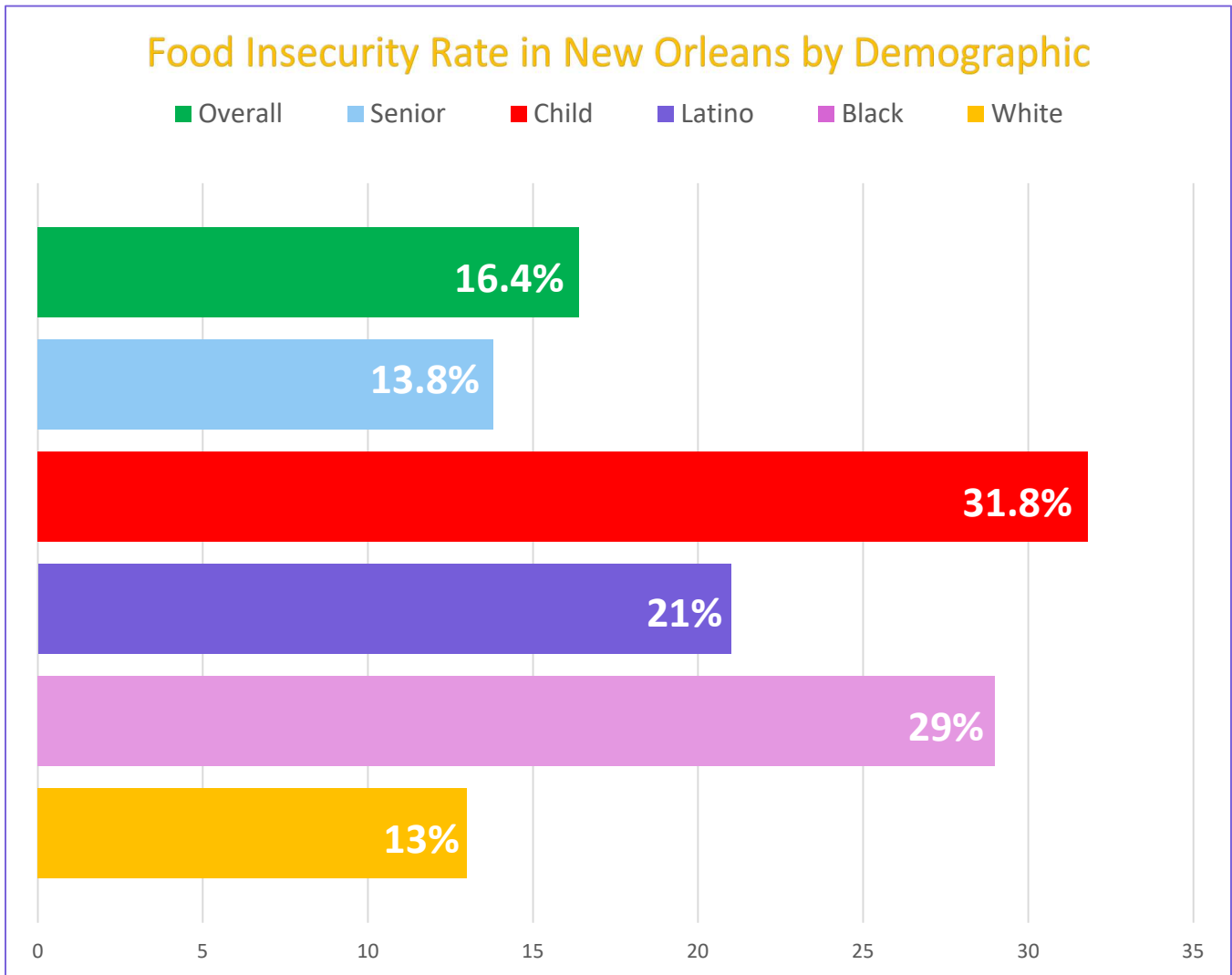


Figure 4. This chart shows the relative prevalence of food insecurity between different demographic groups, including both age and race. Data here was collected from Feeding America’s [Map the Meal Gap](#).

³⁰ (Bowen, 2021)

³¹ (National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2024)

³² (Myers A. M., 2017)

High Cost of Food³³

Despite having one of the lowest median incomes in the country, Louisiana is one of the most expensive states in the country when it comes to buying food. As Figure 5 below shows, the average cost of a meal in Orleans Parish is an entire dollar above the U.S. average. This adds an additional burden to many Louisiana residents who are already food insecure. Because of this, cheap and filling food options are even more enticing, contributing to the prevalence of negative health outcomes.

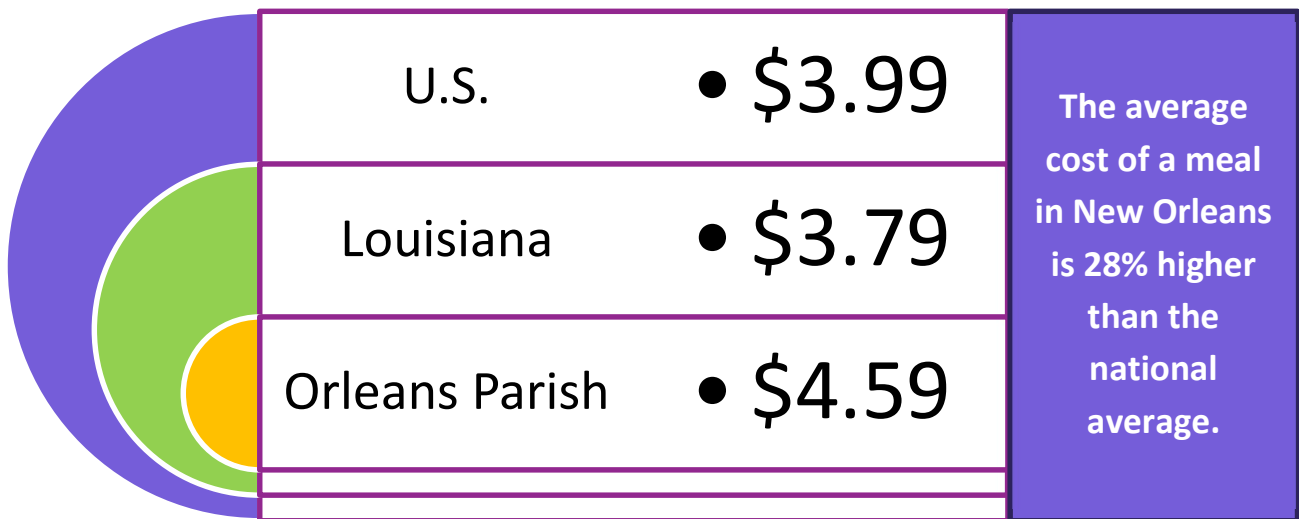


Figure 5. Average meal cost by geographic area. Data collected from Feeding America's [Map the Meal Gap](#).

³³ (Feeding America, 2022)

Transportation Barriers



Due to the high cost of car ownership and insurance in New Orleans, alternate modes of transportation are essential to solving food insecurity.

Image 3. St Charles Streetcar. Source: neworleans.com

Distance Barriers

When determining if an area is a food desert, it is common to count how many local food stores within one mile sell fresh, healthy foods. Yet there are many people in New Orleans who live more than a mile from the nearest supermarket who don't experience food insecurity. This is because access to a vehicle, or the lack of it, can be a core element of food security. For households with access to at least one vehicle, the local food environment does not strongly determine food security. This is because most primary shoppers for households will drive greater distances to access their preferred supermarket, even if there is another one closer to them. For example, a resident with a car in Mid-City can easily drive several miles to Trader Joe's in Metairie if that is their preferred grocery store. In contrast, a resident without a car must rely on walking, buses, or carpooling to reach that same store. In this way, a person with a car living 5 miles away from a supermarket may be more food secure than someone without a car who lives only one mile from the nearest grocery store. In other words, owning a vehicle can ensure food security for people who do not live near a supermarket.³⁴

³⁴ (Wilde, 2017)

Cost of Car Ownership

Research suggests that over 90% of primary shoppers in households with children rely on personal vehicles for grocery shopping.³⁵ Louisiana, and New Orleans by extension, ranks among the most expensive places to own a car.³⁶ Drivers pay well above the national average for car insurance, and there are other fees associated with car registration. For many, vehicle ownership simply is not possible.³⁷ The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey estimates that as many as 17.2% of Orleans Parish households do not have access to at least one vehicle.³⁸

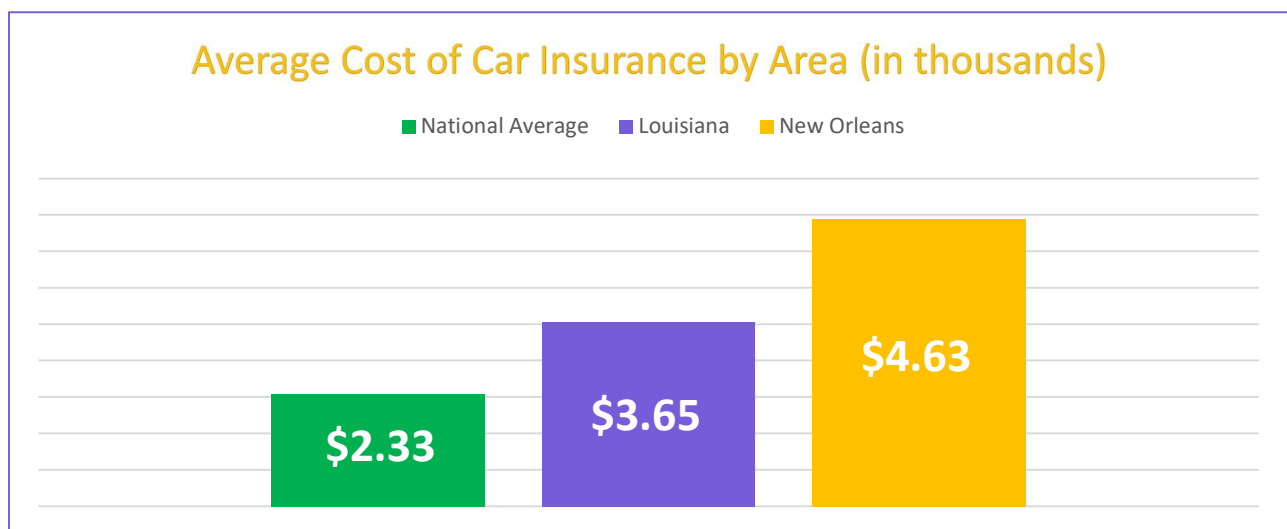


Figure 6. The average cost of car insurance in New Orleans is significantly higher than the national average. Data sourced from bankrate.com: [How much is car insurance in Louisiana?](#)

Having public transportation like city buses available to residents in areas with low food access may help reduce these barriers, but it is not a universal solution. These modes of transportation are often less convenient than using a personal vehicle for grocery shopping; travel by bus can be time-consuming. And, while inexpensive, there is still a cost: \$1.25 each way for an adult, and there are currently no discounts or passes for low-income riders.³⁹ This can be burdensome to communities that already struggle with low income and limited time.

³⁵ (Antrum, Waring, & Cooksey Stowers, 2023)

³⁶ (Taylor, 2024)

³⁷ (Robinson, 2024)

³⁸ (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)

³⁹ (New Orleans Regional Transit Authority, n.d.)

Food Insecurity and Health⁴⁰

The food we eat is a major contributor to our overall health. But how, exactly, do different foods help or harm health? Trying to figure this out can quickly become complicated, resulting in confusion about how to eat a well-rounded diet that contains all the nutrients needed for an active, healthy life. Combined with food security, nutrition education can help reduce the rates of negative health outcomes associated with non-nutritious diets.⁴¹

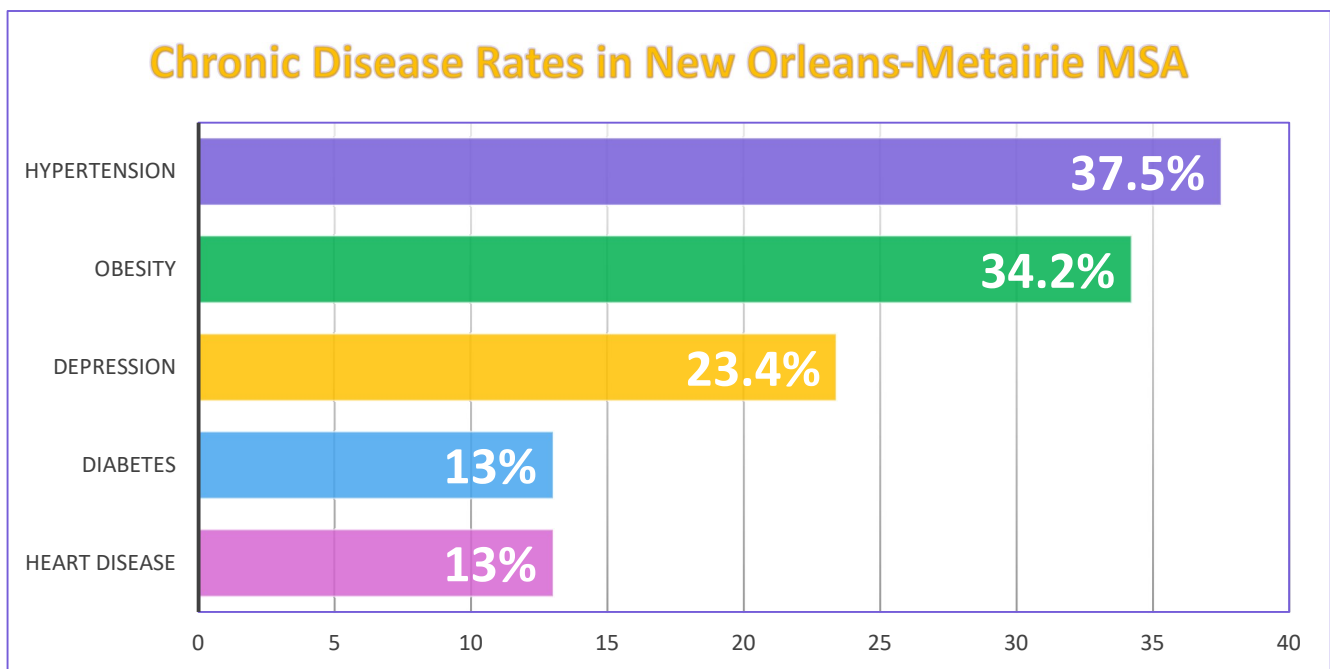


Figure 7. This graph shows rates of chronic diseases often associated with food insecurity. Data here was sourced from the USDA's [Economic Research Service](#)

Education, Access, Equity

Anyone who has scarfed down a fried shrimp po'boy or savored one too many beignets knows that New Orleans loves its guilty pleasures. This city is a buffet of the best comfort and soul foods you can find anywhere, which is part of what makes it special. But for many New Orleanians, these are the most affordable and easily accessible foods year-

⁴⁰ (USDA, UPDATED 2024)

⁴¹ (Contento, 2021)

round. Eating processed, high-calorie foods regularly can lead to health complications.⁴² This is why nutrition education is so important. However, many people who are aware of the health risks associated with these foods still are not able to find fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables where they live.

For many people living in food deserts, going to the supermarket requires reliable transportation, usually in the form of a personal or family vehicle. Research in this area indicates that people who live in food deserts but who have access to transportation are able to shop for healthy foods at supermarkets even if they have to drive several miles.⁴³ For those without a vehicle, however, a person's neighborhood dictates what foods they can access most readily, so low-income and food insecure neighborhoods where nutritious foods are hard to find may face higher rates of negative health outcomes such as obesity, hypertension, and diabetes when transportation is not readily available.⁴⁴

⁴² (Fuhrman, 2018)

⁴³ (Dubowitz, Zenk, & Ghosh-Dastidar, 2015)

⁴⁴ (Michael J. Widener, 2017)

Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security

The graph below shows how the sudden arrival of COVID-19 and the resulting pandemic put an end to a downward trend in food insecurity in New Orleans in 2020.⁴⁵ To combat this, NOHD and community organizations worked hard to leverage federal aid and continue operations to address the new barriers to food access introduced by the pandemic. Special programs created in response to the pandemic led to an increase in measures of food security in 2022, but it remains to be seen how food security will fare now that many of those special programs have ended. It will take time before the full effects of the pandemic on food security are known, but it has had long-lasting effects on the economy, and this is especially evident in New Orleans, where low wages and high inflation have made food increasingly difficult to afford for many residents.⁴⁶

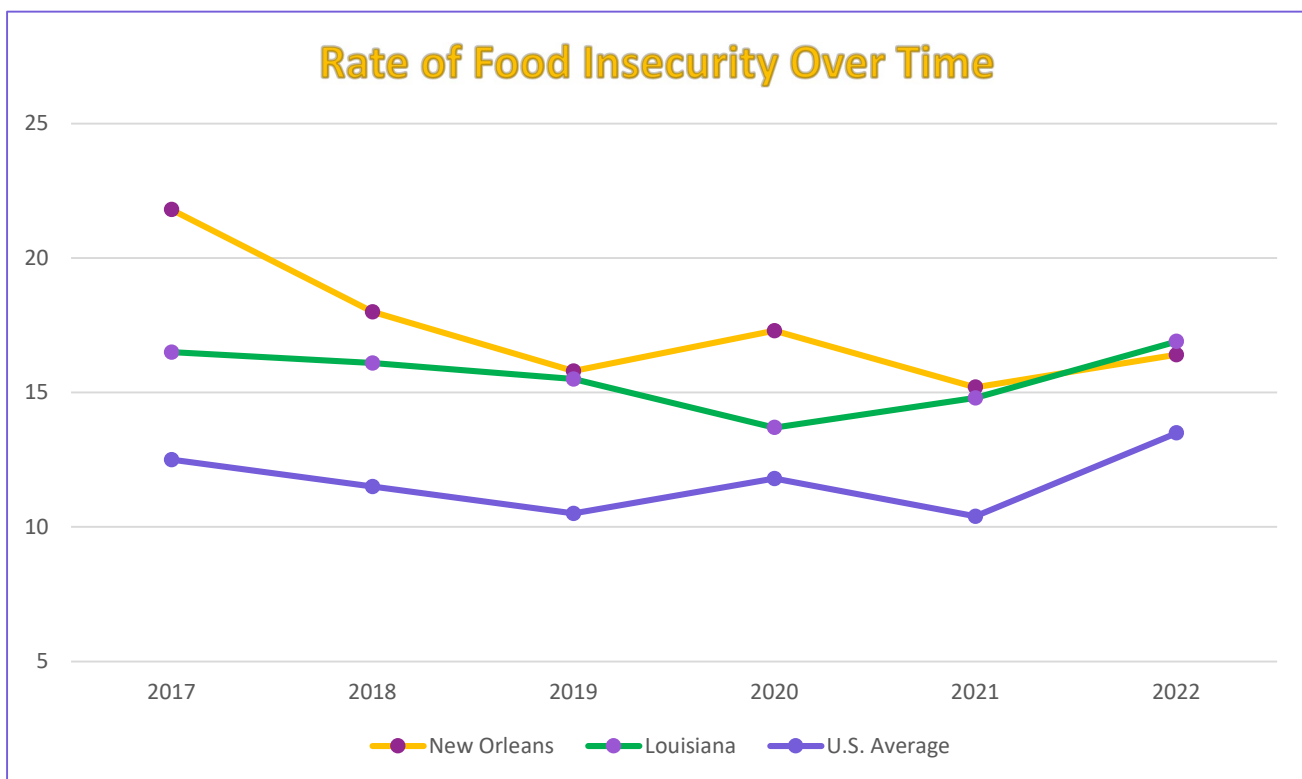


Figure 8. Rates of Food Insecurity change over time and are affected by changes on the local, state, and national scales. Source: [Map the Meal Gap](#).

⁴⁵ (Feeding America, 2022)

⁴⁶ (Éliás BA, 2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden and drastic spike in food insecurity around the world, and many people were no longer able to access or afford staple food items.⁴⁷ One reason for this is that the pandemic had a major disruptive effect on supply chains and food distribution, as businesses and nonprofits struggled to adjust to the rapidly changing logistical and economic landscape.⁴⁸ Food shortages at grocery stores were common in all neighborhoods, average incomes plummeted, and venturing out to the grocery store meant assuming the risk of contracting a potentially lethal disease. In other words, nearly every barrier to food access became an even bigger challenge. The supply chain disruption also had severe consequences for nonprofit organizations, like food banks, that depend on large donations from corporations and similar sources. Food donations fell, fewer people were able to volunteer, and locations that were typically hotspots for food distribution—like schools—were closed, disrupting several of the key components that help institutions like food banks function effectively.⁴⁹

While the COVID-19 pandemic has waned significantly since 2020, many of these disruptions and trends have been long-lasting. According to Feeding America data, Louisiana’s overall food insecurity rate in 2019 was 15.5% before it spiked to 18% in 2020. This figure fell slightly to 17.3% in 2021 and then to 16.9% in 2022, but it is worth highlighting that the rate of food insecurity in Louisiana has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Additionally, the reduction in food insecurity from 2020 to 2021, demonstrated on the graph above, was only made possible by a significant investment in public benefits delivered through a variety of mechanisms. This includes but is not limited to stimulus checks, greater unemployment payments, tax credits, and other measures. Were it not for these programs, it is highly likely that the pandemic’s effect on food security would have been far worse. As a result, it is possible that rates of food insecurity will begin to rise again when investment in these programs is withdrawn.

⁴⁷ (Éliás BA, 2021)

⁴⁸ (Feeding America, n.d.)

⁴⁹ (Second Harvest Food Bank, 2021)

Disaster Planning

New Orleans is no stranger to natural disasters. Every year, we keep our eyes on hurricane forecasts and make sure we stock enough food and water to last a few days without power. A fortunate few have generators that can keep their lights on and refrigerators running, but most residents must either evacuate or face the effects of natural disasters head-on.



Image 4. Damage from Hurricane Ida, which devastated New Orleans in 2021. Image Source: Brandon Bell / Getty, sourced from theatlantic.com. [Photos: The Aftermath of Hurricane Ida.](#)

Periods following natural disasters are times of intensified need and reduced resources. Many factors cause food insecurity to spike following a natural disaster. Power outages cause perishable food spoilage, many roads become obstructed and untraversable, and communications may be limited if cell and internet service are disrupted. Many parts of the city are already a difficult landscape to get healthy, fresh food in, so disasters like these pose a bevy of additional challenges to keeping everyone fed.

Developing and maintaining plans in the event of a disaster is essential to ensuring food security during periods of recovery. While the New Orleans community is remarkably resilient and has demonstrated many times that they will rally together to support each other through mutual aid efforts, it is critical that plans are established on the city level and also by leveraging the capacity of businesses and nonprofit organizations. In New Orleans, developing these mechanisms falls to NOLA Ready, a program administered by the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.



Figure 9. NOLA Ready is the City's Emergency Preparedness Campaign. Visit ready.nola.gov for more information.

Additionally, food access working groups and organizations like the New Orleans Food Policy Action Council have centered disaster planning and preparedness as a priority. Similarly, the members of the Orleans Parish Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) have collaborated to develop a comprehensive food security emergency response plan that will ensure that residents who are unable to evacuate do not go hungry during emergency response and recovery.

Of course, New Orleans' emergency response plan would be incomplete without the legions of citizens who band together during emergencies to distribute much-needed resources. The responses of individuals and mutual aid networks that spring up during emergencies are a critical part of the city's disaster preparedness. This cross-sector collaboration allows for a holistic emergency response plan that will ensure we are prepared for whatever comes our way.

PART THREE: Current & Proposed Solutions

Food Access Recommendations

1. Protect and strengthen nutrition assistance programs that make food more affordable and accessible (e.g. SNAP, WIC, school and summer feeding programs).
2. Support the work of the many food access organizations in New Orleans that are providing direct services to residents.
3. Incentivize healthy food retailers to locate in areas with limited supermarket access, especially where transportation options are limited.
4. Integrate food access support directly into hospitals, clinics, and health centers through produce prescription programs and direct referrals to nutrition assistance programs.
5. Provide funding for a permanent staff member within the New Orleans Health Department to focus on food access and nutrition services and coordination among partners.
6. Require or incentivize donations from supermarkets to food banks / pantries.
7. Support increased access to farmers markets in underserved areas of the City, and ensure those markets offer SNAP "double dollar" programs like Market Match and Greaux the Good.

State and Federal Response

In 2021, the White House rolled out the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, which worsened existing food insecurity issues. The Act put forward \$1.9 trillion of relief for American workers, with around \$160 billion allocated to provide the supplies, emergency response, testing, and public health workforce to stop the spread of COVID-19. In 2023, NOHD received \$1 million in ARPA funding for food insecurity projects. With these funds, NOHD released a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to identify sub-recipients for these funds. The four sub-recipients (Top Box Foods, Second Harvest, Market Umbrella, and Sankofa CDC) began their projects in 2023, and ARPA funding will be available until 2026. You can find more information about these projects in the section 'NOHD: What We're Doing' below.



There has also been a robust state-level response across sectors from the Louisiana state government, businesses, and non-profit organizations (NPOs). In 2022, Market Umbrella launched **Greaux the Good**, a SNAP-matching program that helps Louisiana food purveyors develop SNAP-matching and incentives programs in farmers markets and retail stores. In 2023, the Louisiana State Nutrition Action Council (SNAC) convened for the first time to begin identifying solutions to pressing food access and nutrition issues throughout the state as part of Greaux the Good's Community Partners Council. Similarly, local and state-wide working groups redoubled their efforts to coordinate across parish lines to formulate a comprehensive response to COVID-19 and its long shadow.

NOHD: What We're Doing

Food and nutrition security are a major focus for NOHD. While the department does not provide direct services, it facilitates, manages, and supports several food access-related programs via strategic partnerships. The department works closely with many community partners, including NPOs and hospitals among others, and in early 2024 NOHD collaborated with the New Orleans Food Policy Action Council (FPAC) to fund a permanent, full-time position for a Food Access Specialist in the office of Population Health & Disease Prevention. This position will increase the capacity for managing existing projects while pursuing funding opportunities for future initiatives.

Community Partnerships

In 2023, NOHD selected four food-based community organizations to serve as sub-recipients of funding received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These recipients are providing direct services to New Orleans communities that address food insecurity in the city.

Second Harvest Food Bank | Healthy Food Banking in Central City

Second Harvest is expanding its existing food banking and nutrition education programs. Second Harvest purchases and distributes a wide variety of healthy foods to food-insecure New Orleanians via its extensive partnerships with local food pantries and community organizations throughout the city. This funding helps them expand their operations and compensate for the decrease in food donations from retailers caused by supply chain issues and inflation.



Top Box Foods | Produce Rx & Delivery Program

Top Box Foods has established a "produce prescription" program for medically and economically vulnerable, food-insecure, and COVID-19 affected Orleans Parish patients. Participants receive two deliveries of medically tailored groceries per month for six months, enroll in SNAP and/or SNAP-Ed, receive information about continuous food access resources, and complete a post-program survey about their experience.



Market Umbrella | Market Match Retail Expansion

Market Umbrella, which operates the Crescent City Farmers Markets and several nutrition incentive & fresh food access programs, is expanding its Market Match program to include additional retail partners while prioritizing zip codes in areas of high need, and also prioritizing support of local agriculture. Market Match is a SNAP incentive program in which Market Umbrella doubles the value of SNAP benefits used at their markets and partner stores to increase the buying power of SNAP recipients.



Sankofa Community Development Corp. | Lower Ninth Ward Healthy Food Hub

Sankofa CDC opened the Fresh Stop Market (FSM) at 5029 St Claude Avenue in the Lower 9th Ward. The FSM provides local residents with fresh produce on a weekly basis. The FSM includes a fresh produce retail store and a teaching kitchen, where FSM shoppers can access cardiovascular and diabetes health screenings, nutrition classes, and hands-on cooking workshops to provide education on diet-related illnesses and improvement of health outcomes.



Policy Advocacy

In addition to facilitating and managing programs via grants, NOHD also conducts policy advocacy to support both local and statewide measures concerning chronic disease and food security, such as the [Healthy Kids Beverage Ordinance](#). In 2024, this has included endeavors to secure funding for the USDA Summer EBT program for students. You can read more about NOHD's policy advocacy efforts [here!](#)

State and Federal Programs

NOHD also helps to facilitate state and federal programs on the local level. Click on the names of each program to learn more.

[SNAP & DSNAP](#)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides monthly food benefits to low-income families to supplement their grocery budget so they can afford nutritious, healthy foods. Participants can simply swipe their SNAP EBT cards at select stores to use their benefits. The Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (DSNAP) provides eligible low- to moderate-income households who do not currently receive SNAP benefits with help buying groceries due to lost income or damages following a natural disaster.

[WIC & FMNP](#)

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk. Those who are already enrolled in SNAP may automatically qualify to receive WIC benefits. The Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) is also associated with WIC. Under the FMNP, eligible WIC participants are issued FMNP coupons in addition to their regular WIC benefits. These coupons can be used to buy eligible foods from farmers, farmers markets or roadside stands that have been approved by the state agency to accept FMNP coupons.

[SUN Bucks Summer EBT](#)

SUN Bucks is a grocery benefit available to most of the U.S. Families with eligible school-aged children. They can get \$120 per child to buy groceries during the summer. Families can receive SUN Bucks on top of other benefits like SNAP and WIC, and children can continue to enjoy free SUN Meals from local meal sites in cities or with SUN Meals To-Go in rural areas.

[Greaux the Good](#)

Greaux the Good, Louisiana's statewide nutrition incentive program (NIP), is operated by Market Umbrella. Greaux the Good gives Louisiana direct-to-consumer food sellers

(such as farmers markets, farm stands, and produce stands) the opportunity to create or expand a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) NIP. Greaux the Good provides funding for NIPs for eligible entities and also provides additional funds for administrative and financial support to incentivize purchases made with SNAP/EBT and/or FMNP.

Hunger-Free Campus

Hunger-Free Campus (HFC) is a designation and grant program that targets hunger in public and private universities. Campuses with the designation fulfill requirements like establishing a hunger-free task force and promoting awareness around college hunger. HFC also administers small grants to participating campuses to help them accomplish their hunger-free efforts.

School Breakfast Program

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) provides reimbursement to states to operate nonprofit breakfast programs in schools and residential childcare institutions. The Food and Nutrition Service administers the SBP at the federal level. State education agencies administer the SBP at the state level, and local school food authorities operate the program in schools.

National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946.

Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal program that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults who are enrolled for care at participating childcare centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. CACFP also provides reimbursements for meals served to children and youth participating in afterschool care programs, children residing in emergency shelters, and adults over the age of 60 or living with a disability and enrolled in day care facilities.

Community Organizations & Services

Food Banks & Meal Delivery

If you or someone you know faces daily challenges to getting enough nutritious foods, we're here to help! New Orleans has a large network of food banks and food assistance programs that make sure everyone can get as many healthy foods as they need.

[Second Harvest Food Bank](#) • (504) 734-1322

Second Harvest operates an expansive food distribution program, community kitchen meal service, nutrition education, and public benefits assistance. You can find a local food bank served by Second Harvest [here](#).

[Top Box Foods](#) • (504) 229-2292

Top Box Foods delivers healthy, affordable foods directly to shoppers. They offer fresh fruits, vegetables, high-quality meats, and seafood, all of which can be purchased with SNAP benefits with an added dollar-for-dollar match.

[Sankofa CDC](#) • 5200 Dauphine St • (504) 872-9214

Sankofa Community Development Corporation operates the Sankofa Lower Nine Fresh Food Pantry at 5200 Dauphine Street. The food pantry offers three food and meal assistance programs to households in need, all of which are designed to help individuals and households achieve or maintain access to nutritious foods.

[Culture AID NOLA](#) • (504) 517-5059

Culture Aid NOLA is a no-barrier, no-stigma food distribution program that provides free groceries with no requirements for identification or proof of income. Culture Aid distributes food on Wednesdays at 6PM at Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church and on Saturdays at 9AM at Corpus Christi- Epiphany Church.

Community Gardens & Markets

[Crescent City Farmers Market](#) • (504) 861-4485

The Crescent City Farmers Market operates weekly year-round throughout New Orleans. The CCFM hosts 70+ local small farmers, fishers, and food producers, and more than 150,000 shoppers annually. Markets are held at [Uptown Square on Tuesdays](#) 8am – 12pm, the [Lafitte Greenway Plaza on Thursdays](#) (3pm-7pm), and outside [Tad Gormley Stadium in City Park](#) on Sundays (8am-12pm).

[Sprout NOLA](#) • 300 Broad St • (504) 535-5064

Sprout supports established and developing small-scale and sustainable farmers, community gardeners, and farm workers in Louisiana with technical and social support to build a stronger, more equipped community of growers in Louisiana and to help all New Orleanians be part of a community food system.

[Grow Dat Youth Farm](#) • 150 Zachary Taylor Dr • (504) 300-1132

The mission of Grow Dat Youth Farm is to nurture a diverse group of young leaders through the meaningful work of growing food. Located in City Park, Grow Dat Youth Farm is a youth leadership development program that operates a two-acre sustainable farm. Each year, Grow Dat grows and harvests an average of 32,000 pounds of fresh produce.

Nutrition Education

[LSU AgCenter](#) • (504) 658-2923

The LSU AgCenter operates a variety of Food & Health and nutrition programs. These include:

- **The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)**, a community outreach program designed to assist limited resource audiences in acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and changed-behaviors necessary for nutritionally

sound diets, and to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of the total family diet and nutritional well-being.

- **Flavor of Health**, a nutrition and health program with a community focus that provides classes and workshops on a variety of topics that empower individuals and families to make healthy food and fitness choices and to live healthful lives.
- **SNAP-Ed** uses evidence-based approaches to make healthy diet and lifestyle choices easier for SNAP recipients and other low-income audiences. This program offers interactive lessons, community-based programs, and health-focused coalitions in nearly 40 parishes across Louisiana.

[American Heart Association](#) • (504) 872-3500

The American Heart Association (AHA) of Louisiana provides a variety of resources on healthy living, diet, and fitness. Visit their website for cooking demonstrations, weight loss advice, heart-healthy recipes, and more!

[Ochsner Healthy State](#)

Ochsner's **Healthy State** program, launched in 2020, is a partnership with other healthcare organizations, businesses, churches, schools, community groups and state and local governments with a vision of a healthier Louisiana with greater access to healthcare for all residents. Healthy State works to bring healthcare resources to underserved communities across the state, using research and technology to improve the health and wellness of all Louisiana residents.

Conclusion and Recommendations



With its rich history and unique cuisine, New Orleans is a city unlike any other. It is home to a range of exceptional organizations and professionals who are committed to empowering residents to live happy, healthy lives. It was not long ago that New Orleans was making substantial progress in reducing food insecurity, and there is reason to believe that this trend will resume as the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Similarly, promising efforts on the local, state, and national level to address food insecurity, nutrition, and chronic disease are in development or already underway. These initiatives include produce prescription programs, healthy cooking and nutrition classes, exceptional food banks, SNAP-matching programs, and healthy food financing initiatives, among others. In New Orleans, we love our neighbors and will do anything to help them, come hurricane or high water, and it is this sense of community, this spirit of mutual aid and collective resilience, that will guide us towards a healthier future--just one that still involves gumbo, po'boys, and king cakes (in moderation, of course).

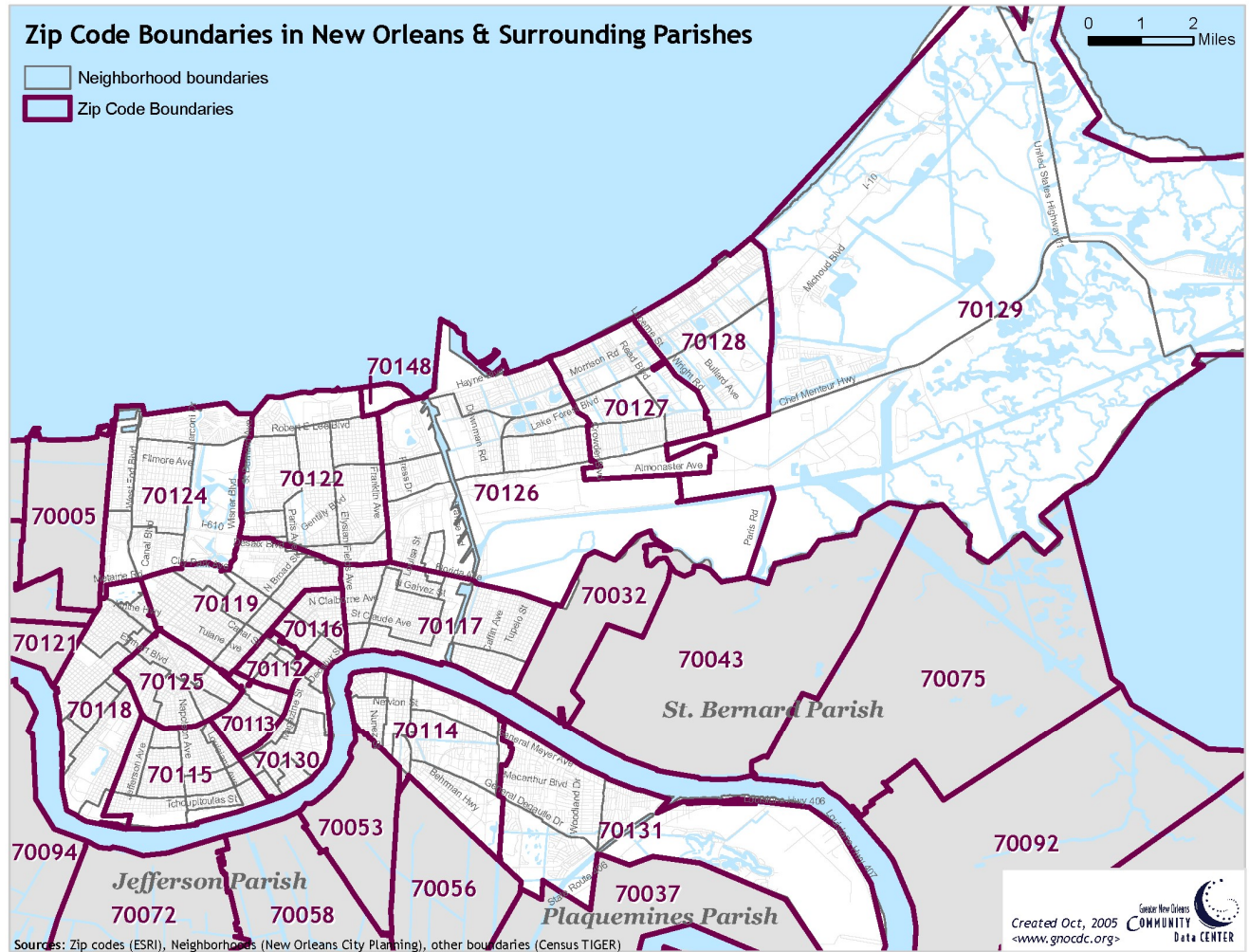
But this is not the end of the story. The only way to codify and ensure sustainable change in the City and state is by advocating for policies that ensure food benefits like SNAP and WIC receive as much funding as required to serve those in need, and that will make essentials like housing, food, and transportation more affordable for everyone. Because food security is not just about eating; it's about supporting and empowering individuals to make the choices that are best for them.

Luke Felty
October 2024

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

- **CHIP:** Community Health Improvement Plan.
- **CSA:** Community Supported Agriculture.
- **Equity:** The quality of being equal or fair; fairness, impartiality; even-handed dealing.
- **FINS:** Family in Need of Services.
- **FMNP:** Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- **Food Desert:** Areas where people have limited access to a variety of healthy and affordable food.
- **Food Insecurity:** Not having enough to eat and not knowing where your next meal will come from.
- **Food Security:** Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.
- **Food Swamp:** Areas with a large number of high-calorie, low-nutrient food options (such as fast food and convenience stores).
- **FPAC:** Food Policy Action Council
- **FSNA:** Food Security & Nutrition Access
- **NOFA:** Notice of Funding Availability
- **NOHD:** New Orleans Department of Health
- **SNAC:** State Nutrition Action Council
- **SNAP:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- **WIC:** Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Appendix B: New Orleans ZIP Code Map



References

1. Food Security in the U.S. USDA. October 25, 2023. Accessed July 2023. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/>
2. Food Insecurity. HHS. Accessed July 2024. Retrieved from Health.gov. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/food-insecurity>
3. Importance of nutrition on health in America. Feeding America. Accessed July 2024. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/hunger-and-nutrition>
4. Food accessibility, insecurity, and health outcomes. NIH. Published April 26, 2023. Retrieved from National Institute of Minority Health and Disparities. <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/resources/understanding-health-disparities/food-accessibility-insecurity-and-health-outcomes.html>
5. Rabbitt M, Reed-Jones M, Hales L, Burke M. *Household Food Security in the United States in 2023.*; 2024. Accessed October 2024. <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/resources/understanding-health-disparities/food-accessibility-insecurity-and-health-outcomes.html>
6. Food accessibility, insecurity, and health outcomes. NIH. Published April 26, 2023. Retrieved from National Institute of Minority Health and Disparities. <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/resources/understanding-health-disparities/food-accessibility-insecurity-and-health-outcomes.html>
7. Hunger and poverty in America. Feeding America. (n.d.). Retrieved from Feeding America. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>
8. What causes food insecurity and what are solutions to it? Poverty USA. Accessed July 2024. <https://www.povertyusa.org/stories/what-causes-food-insecurity-and-what-are-solutions-it>
9. Antrum, C., Waring, M., & Cooksey Stowers, K. Personal vehicle use and food security among US adults who are primary shoppers for households with children. *Discover Food*. 2023. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10258743/>
10. It's not just hunger: transportation's role in food insecurity. U.S. Hunger. (n.d.). Accessed July 2024. <https://ushunger.org/blog/transportation-food-insecurity/>
11. Food desert. Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved August 2024.

-
12. Savoie-Roskos, M. R., Jorgensen, M., & Durward, C. (n.d.). Does healthy eating cost more? Retrieved from Utah State University Nutrition Extension. February 2018. <https://extension.usu.edu/nutrition/research/does-healthy-eating-cost-more>
 13. Carlson, A., & Frazao, E. Are healthy foods really more expensive? It depends on how you measure the price. 2012. Retrieved from USDA. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=44679>
 14. Cooksey-Stowers, K., Schwartz, M., & Brownell, K. Food swamps predict obesity rates better than food deserts in the United State. 2017. *International journal of environmental research and public health*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5708005/>
 15. Hunger and poverty in America. Feeding America. (n.d.). Retrieved from Feeding America. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>
 16. Hunger and poverty in America. Feeding America. (n.d.). Retrieved from Feeding America. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>
 17. Food accessibility, insecurity, and health outcomes. NIH. Published April 26, 2023. Retrieved from National Institute of Minority Health and Disparities. <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/resources/understanding-health-disparities/food-accessibility-insecurity-and-health-outcomes.html>
 18. Food insecurity's long-term health consequences. American Heart Association. (n.d.). Retrieved from Heart.org. <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2021/09/22/food-insecuritys-long-term-health-consequences>
 19. Food accessibility, insecurity, and health outcomes. NIH. Published April 26, 2023. Retrieved from National Institute of Minority Health and Disparities. <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/resources/understanding-health-disparities/food-accessibility-insecurity-and-health-outcomes.html>
 20. Myers, C. A. Food insecurity and psychological distress: a review of the recent literature. *Current nutrition reports*. 2020. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7282962/>
 21. Map the meal gap. Feeding America. 2022. Retrieved from map.feedingamerica.org.
 22. Percent of population that receive SNAP (June 2024). Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services. 2024. Baton Rouge: DCFS.
 23. Statistics in graphics were compiled from Feeding America and CDC data.

-
24. Herforth, A. A. The food environment, its effects on dietary consumption, and potential for measurement within agriculture-nutrition interventions. *Food Security*. 2015.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276060761_The_food_environment_its_effects_on_dietary_consumption_and_potential_for_measurement_within_agriculture-nutrition_interventions
 25. Cooksey-Stowers, K., Schwartz, M., & Brownell, K. Food swamps predict obesity rates better than food deserts in the United State. 2017. *International journal of environmental research and public health*.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5708005/>
 26. Bose, I. B. The "Fill the Nutrient Gap" analysis: An approach to strengthen nutrition situation analysis and decision making towards multisectoral policies and systems change. *Maternal & child nutrition*. 2019.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6767452/>
 27. Hunger and poverty in America. Feeding America. (n.d.). Retrieved from Feeding America. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>
 28. Bowen, S. E.-M. The structural roots of food insecurity: How racism is a fundamental cause of food insecurity. *Sociology Compass*. 2021.
<https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/soc4.12846>
 29. Predicted prevalence of five chronic diseases increased as household food security worsened. USDA. Retrieved from USDA Economic Research Service: ers.usda.gov. Updated 2024.
 30. Bowen, S. E.-M. The structural roots of food insecurity: How racism is a fundamental cause of food insecurity. *Sociology Compass*. 2021.
<https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/soc4.12846>
 31. Food accessibility, insecurity, and health outcomes. NIH. Published April 26, 2023. Retrieved from National Institute of Minority Health and Disparities. <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/resources/understanding-health-disparities/food-accessibility-insecurity-and-health-outcomes.html>
 32. Myers, A. M. Food insecurity in the United States of America: an examination of race/ethnicity and nativity. *Food Security*. 2017.
https://ideas.repec.org/a/spr/ssefpa/v9y2017i6d10.1007_s12571-017-0733-8.html
 33. Map the meal gap. Feeding America. 2022. Retrieved from map.feedingamerica.org.

-
34. Wilde, P. S. For low-income Americans, living ≤ 1 mile (≤ 1.6 km) from the nearest supermarket is not associated with self-reported household food security. *Current developments in nutrition*. 2017.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29955686/>
 35. Antrum, C., Waring, M., & Cooksey Stowers, K. Personal vehicle use and food security among US adults who are primary shoppers for households with children. *Discover Food*. 2023.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10258743/>
 36. Taylor, H. *10 cities with the most expensive car insurance rates*. January 16th, 2024. Retrieved from finance.yahoo.com.
 37. Top 10 most expensive cities to own a car in. Robinson, D. Retrieved from [marketwatch.com](https://www.marketwatch.com). June 29, 2024.
 38. Physical housing characteristics for occupied housing units. U.S. Census Bureau. *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2504*, 2022. Accessed on September 3, 2024.
 39. Fares. New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. Retrieved from [norta.com](https://www.norta.com). Accessed June 2024.
 40. Predicted prevalence of five chronic diseases increased as household food security worsened. USDA. Updated 2024. Retrieved from USDA Economic Research Service: ers.usda.gov.
 41. Contento, I. R. *Nutrition Education: Linking Research, Theory, and Practice*. JB Learning. 2021.
 42. Fuhrman, J. Hidden dangers of fast and processed food. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*. 2018.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6146358/>
 43. Dubowitz, T., Zenk, S., & Ghosh-Dastidar, B. Healthy food access for urban food desert residents: examination of the food environment, food purchasing practices, diet and BMI. *Public Health Nutrition*. 2015.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25475559/>
 44. Widener, Michael J. How do changes in the daily food and transportation environments affect grocery store accessibility? *Applied Geography*. 2017.
 45. Map the meal gap. Feeding America. 2022. Retrieved from map.feedingamerica.org.
 46. Eliás, BA and Jambor, A. Food security and COVID-19: A systematic review of the first-year experience. *Sustainability*. 2021.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351460673_Food_Security_and_COVID-19_A_Systematic_Review_of_the_First-Year_Experience

-
47. Eliás, BA and Jambor, A. Food security and COVID-19: A systematic review of the first-year experience. *Sustainability*. 2021.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351460673_Food_Security_and_COVID-19_A_Systematic_Review_of_the_First-Year_Experience
48. The impact of coronavirus on food insecurity. Feeding America. (n.d.). Retrieved from [feedingamerica.org](https://www.feedingamerica.org).
<https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/coronavirus-hunger-research>
49. COVID-19: Help our ongoing response. Second Harvest Food Bank. Retrieved from no-hunger.org. 2021. <https://no-hunger.org/covid-19/>