

How to Use the Regional Profiles on Healthy Food Access

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in November 2012, the Regional Profiles on Healthy Food Access were created for six regions of the state (see Figure 1). Data were compiled by University of Minnesota Extension Educators as part of the statewide Community Transformation Initiative for Healthy Eating. The primary purpose of the Regional Profiles on Healthy Food Access was to understand the social determinants of health in order to identify populations with 1) significant health inequities, and 2) limited access to healthy food. This understanding would then enhance regional work on behalf of the Community Transformation Initiative for Healthy Eating.

Community members and organizations are increasingly requesting access to the profile data and summaries. This document provides a brief overview of the contents of the profiles and the available data used to create them. All data are from secondary or existing sources and thus there are limitations for their use. This document also lays out some DOs and DON'Ts for their use.

PROCEDURE

University of Minnesota Extension Educators initially identified the key indicators to understanding health inequities and food access limitations (Table 1). Once the indicators were identified, each educator pulled needed data from existing data sources by counties in their region (if county level data were available). Data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet under the appropriate indicator tab (see column of Table 1 for these indicators).

The educators see these profiles as “living and dynamic.” They continually update these profiles when new data become available. For example, the original Census data are updated periodically through the American Community Surveys—so key demographic data were updated when the most recent American Community Survey results were released. The educators also update the profiles when local data are not aligned with existing secondary data. For example, a closure of a local grocery store would be updated under the indicator, “store availability.”

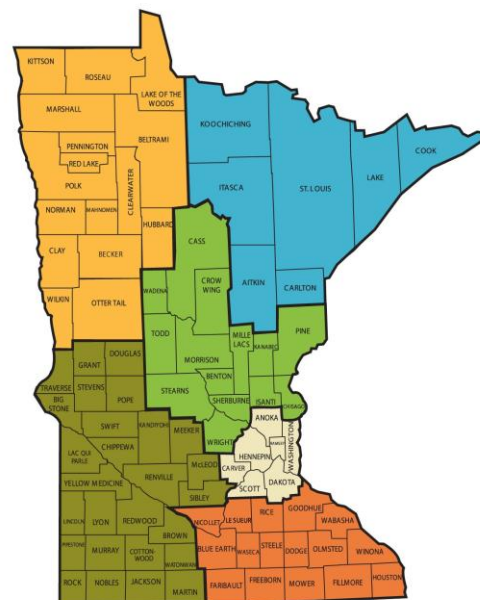


Figure 1. Working regions for community transformation

TABLE 1. KEY INDICATORS OF INTEREST AND DATA SOURCES*

Indicators	Available Data	Data Sources
Socio-Demographic	Population and Density (people/sq mile)	US Census Bureau 2010 Census, Population Quickfacts
	% population, families, and children below poverty level	U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey
	Median household income	U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey
	Unemployment rate in %	U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey
	% High school graduate, age 25+	US Census Bureau 2010 Census, Population Quickfacts
	% Bachelors degree or higher, age 25+	US Census Bureau 2010 Census, Population Quickfacts
	Foreign born persons	US Census Bureau 2010 Census, Population Quickfacts
	Average household size	US Census, ACS, Household and Family 2011
	Female householder, no husband present families (# and %)	US Census, ACS, Household and Family 2011
	Race and Ethnicity	US Census, ACS, Household and Family 2011
Chronic Disease	% Adult diabetes	CDC National Diabetes Surveillance
	Estimated # of people w/diagnosed diabetes	CDC National Diabetes Surveillance
	Heart disease mortality rate, 35+/100,000	CDC Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention: Interactive Atlas
	Heart disease hospitalization rate, 65+/1000	CDC Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention: Interactive Atlas
	% Adult obesity	CDC National Diabetes Surveillance
	Est # of obese adults, 2009	CDC National Diabetes Surveillance
	Low-income preschool obesity rate	USDA Food Environment Data
	WIC-recipients overweight and obese	Minnesota County Health Tables: Morbidity Table 9: Minnesota Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Selected Indicators
Food Access	# and % of households with no car living >mile to store	USDA Food Environment Data
	# and % low income families > mile to store	USDA Food Environment Data
	# and % households with no care living >10 miles to store	USDA Food Environment Data
	# and % low income families living >10 miles to store	USDA Food Environment Data
	% population with low access to supermarket/large grocery store	USDA Food Environment Data
	% low income with low access to supermarket/large grocery store	USDA Food Environment Data
	% households with no car and low access to supermarket/large grocery store	USDA Food Environment Data
	% children 0-17 with low access to supermarket/large grocery store	USDA Food Environment Data
	% people age 65+ with low access to supermarket/large grocery store	USDA Food Environment Data

Indicators	Available Data	Data Sources
Food Assistance	SNAP redemptions/SNAP authorized stores	USDA Food Environment Data
	SNAP participants	USDA Food Environment Data
	SNAP benefits per capita,	USDA Food Environment Data
	SNAP participation rate	USDA Food Environment Data
	# and % households with SNAP use past 12 months	USDA, Environmental Research Service, 2010
	% school lunch participants	Minnesota Department of Education
	% students free-lunch eligible	Minnesota Department of Education
	% students reduced-price lunch eligible	Minnesota Department of Education
	% students breakfast participants	Minnesota Department of Education
	% students summer food participants	Minnesota Department of Education
	WIC redemptions/capita	USDA Food Environment Data
	WIC redemptions/WIC authorized stores	USDA Food Environment Data
	WIC participants	USDA Food Environment Data
Food Insecurity	# and % overall food insecurity rate	Feeding America
	# and % child food insecurity rate	Feeding America
Store Availability	# of grocery stores; % change	USDA Food Environment Data
	# of supercenters & club stores; % change	USDA Food Environment Data
	# of convenience stores; % change	USDA Food Environment Data
	# of specialized food stores; % change	USDA Food Environment Data
	# of SNAP authorized stores	USDA Food Environment Data
	# of WIC authorized stores	USDA Food Environment Data
	% of all restaurants that are fast food	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Local Production	# and % of farms with direct sales	USDA Food Environment Data
	% of direct farm sales	USDA Food Environment Data
	# farmer's markets	USDA Food Environment Data
	# of vegetable farms	USDA Food Environment Data
	vegetable acres harvested	USDA Food Environment Data
	farms with vegetables harvest for fresh market	USDA Food Environment Data
	vegetable acres harvested for fresh market	USDA Food Environment Data
	orchard farms and acres	USDA Food Environment Data
	berry farms and acres	USDA Food Environment Data
	small slaughterhouse facilities	USDA Food Environment Data
	greenhouse veg/fresh herb farms	USDA Food Environment Data
	good hubs	USDA Food Environment Data
	CSA farms	USDA Food Environment Data
	Agritourism operations and receipts	USDA Food Environment Data
	Farm to school program	USDA Food Environment Data
Fitness/Physical activity	% adults not meeting activity guidelines	Decade of Discovery
	rec and fitness facilities	USDA Food Environment Data
	ERS natural amenity index	USDA Food Environment Data
	physical activity level adults	CDC National Diabetes Surveillance

*There is regional variability in terms of type of data collected so all data may not be available in all regions.

LIMITATIONS AND USE

All data used in the regional profiles are secondary data. This means that the data were already collected by another researcher or entity, and are readily available for public use. Extension Educators searched existing databases for data that could help describe the profile of healthy food access for the region or county. The national and state level databases used in these profiles represent a great diversity of ways data were collected, how variables and values were defined, and how error rates were identified. Thus, the data have various limitations.

Using secondary data has been described as drawing of a stick figure of an issue or problem rather than using a photograph. Users should be cautious about how they use the Regional Profiles on Healthy Food Access. As a general rule, the profile data should be used to broadly understand the issues of healthy food access rather than to make specific, strategic plans about an intervention or a program.



DATA DOs and DON'Ts

DO use the profile data to gain a broad understanding of populations and disparities around food access. It is important to review existing or secondary data sources before collecting new data.

DO use secondary data as one source of information for gaining an understanding of the issue you are trying to address, but be prepared to collect additional information from the community and about the problem to better understand the community context in which work may occur.

DO carefully cross-check the secondary data with existing data from the community or region in which you are working.

DO use the secondary sources to reinforce and build the case in your grant proposals.

DO NOT use secondary data as the only source of information to make decisions about specific strategies for programming. Because secondary data were collected for other purposes, they likely will not completely represent the issue or problem in your community or region.

Data are often reported as percentages and averages by counties. When doing multi-county or regional work, **DO NOT** re-average these numbers across counties; rather, provide a range for the counties.

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