



## RESEARCH BRIEF

# EXPLAINING RACIAL INEQUALITY IN FOOD SECURITY IN COLUMBUS, OH

Food insecurity is a leading public health challenge in the United States. In Columbus, Ohio, as in many American cities, there exists a great disparity between Black and White households in relation to food insecurity.

## KEY FINDINGS

- *In our study, there was a 34.2% point difference in food security between White (75.6% food secure) and Black (41.6% food secure) households.*
- *Variables related to food shopping behavior, neighborhood perception, and socioeconomic characteristics explain 13.8%, 11.6%, and 63.1% of the difference, respectively.*
- *It is quite possible that structural racism explains part of the food insecurity gap that remains unexplained by our variables. This could include historical and contemporary policies and practices related to employment, wages, housing, neighborhood investment, banking, small business support, and social safety net programs.*



## About this Study

This research was part of a larger study conducted in 2014 by a food mapping team that included a cross-disciplinary team of researchers from The Ohio State University (representing 8 colleges) and 5 community partners from Columbus Public Health, Local Matters, the Mid-Ohio Foodbank, United Way, and Franklinton Farms. We surveyed 809 individuals across 10 zip codes at 21 survey sites and online, though we were most interested in areas that had been under-surveyed at the time and representative of Columbus residents living along the High Street corridor and in Franklinton. We geocoded over 700 surveys and collected data about food access, food shopping patterns, neighborhood environments, health conditions, food insecurity, and sociodemographic characteristics.

## Conclusion

Household characteristics of income and educational attainment were primary factors driving the gap between White and Black households. Other factors include food shopping behaviors and neighborhood perceptions. For Black households, lower levels of satisfaction of neighborhood food environments and reporting lack of friendships in the neighborhood significantly contributed to the gap in food insecurity. Significant differences in monthly food shopping experiences exist between Black and White households, but transportation alone (i.e., having a car) does not lead to a large racial gap in food insecurity. White households used their own cars more often and walked less to buy their food, shopped 1.4 times more frequently, and traveled 0.6 miles less to buy food each month. When household characteristics and neighborhood perceptions were considered, this was no longer statistically significant.

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The team has published 10 papers from this extensive project and have infographics available for surveys conducted in portions of 43201, 43203, 43204, 43205, 43209, 43211, 43215, 43219, 43222, and 43223.

Contact information: Dr. Michelle Kaiser, [kaiser.267@osu.edu](mailto:kaiser.267@osu.edu)

## CONTACT US

The Ohio State University  
College of Social Work  
Stillman Hall, 1947 College Rd.  
Columbus, OH 43210-1162  
[csw.osu.edu/research](http://csw.osu.edu/research)  
Phone: 614-292-9229