

Spatial inequality and its relationship with local food environments: The case of Barcelona

Unhealthy diets affect most countries globally and socioeconomic disparities exist in terms of the levels of physical access to healthy and nutritious foods which individuals have – this is known as spatial inequality. Spatial inequality is a contributing factor to the consumption of unhealthy diets. Existing literature has shown that often low income neighbourhoods have significantly less access to healthy foods, limiting dietary choices. This inequality has been exacerbated by the global financial crisis as well as the globalisation of the food market.

This study aims to investigate inequality in access to organic & healthy food within the local food environment of Barcelona, chosen as a case study environment due to the high population density and large range of individuals from differing socioeconomic statuses residing in the city. The study investigates whether a relationship was present between levels of food access and two chosen socioeconomic status indicators - Household Income Index and percentage of non-Spanish inhabitants. Data on food store locations was obtained and cross-referenced with this socioeconomic status indicator data to gain an insight into the spatial inequality present in Barcelona.

Results of the study demonstrated a positive correlation between total food access/organic food access and socioeconomic status of neighbourhoods in Barcelona overall - whereby those of higher socioeconomic status have better access to healthy, organic food. However, the study also found that this is not the case in some areas of the city, where factors such as personal preference may be more persuasive.

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