

In 1923, long before the rise of McDonald's golden arches, an advertisement for beef made this proclamation in the *Bridgeport Telegraph*: "Ninety percent of the diseases known to man are caused by cheap foodstuffs. You are what you eat." The phrase you are what you eat actually dates back to the 17th century. Over time, science has repeatedly demonstrated that nutritional intake directly affects health outcomes. That we are what we eat is a medical fact. But to what degree does what we eat and, thus, our health, depend on where we live and the types of food we have access to? ***Examining The Impact Of Food Deserts On Public Health In Chicago*** probes this very question. Given our foundational premise that the health and vitality of urban communities is a block-by-block phenomenon, our first task was to measure the distance from every City of Chicago block to the nearest grocery store and fast food restaurant. Next, we developed an empirical score to quantify the *balance* of food choice available to residents. Finally, we compared food access and food balance directly to health outcomes, holding constant education, income, and race. We found that majority African American and majority White communities that have out-of-balance Food Desert environments will have **higher rates of residents dying prematurely from diabetes that are statistically significant**, controlling for income, education, and race. African American communities will be the most likely to experience the greatest total years of life lost from diabetes as a result. **Our report is recognized around the world as a first-of-its kind breakthrough study** that has significantly advanced the understanding of the impact that place has on health.



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Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Chicago

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