

Income, healthy food access linked to life expectancy

July 13 2023, by Elana Gotkine



Income and healthy food accessibility are associated with life

expectancy, with the lowest life expectancy in low-income/low-access census tracts, according to a study published online June 28 in the *Journal of Urban Health*.

Jason Massey, M.P.H., from the American Cancer Society in Atlanta, and colleagues examined the association between measures of [healthy food](#) accessibility and [life expectancy](#) at birth across 67,138 contiguous U.S. census tracts. The researchers used the 2015 Food Research Atlas Index from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on income/[poverty level](#) and distance-based geographic access to healthy food to measure healthy food access for each census tract.

The researchers found that both income and healthy food accessibility were associated with life expectancy at birth; shorter life expectancy was seen in low-income census tracts when comparing tracts with similar healthy food access and in low-access tracts when comparing tracts with income levels that were similar. Life expectancy at birth was lower in high-income/low-access, low-income/high-access, and [low-income/low-access](#) tracts compared with high-income/high-access census tracts (−0.33, −1.45, and −2.29 years, respectively) after adjustment for sociodemographic characteristics.

"Results of this study suggest an association between poor healthy food accessibility and shorter life expectancy at birth at the census tract level," the authors write. "Effective interventions to increase healthy food accessibility may improve diet quality and population health."

More information: Jason Massey et al, The Association Between Census Tract Healthy Food Accessibility and Life Expectancy in the United States, *Journal of Urban Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s11524-023-00742-x](#)

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