

Executive Summary

This report is a summary of research undertaken for the *Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region and Saskatchewan in Motion*. The purpose of the research was to describe, in quantitative terms, the kinds of access that Regina residents have to restaurants and grocery stores, that is, what kinds of facilities are within walking distance of their homes. The research was conducted and this report was prepared by Doug Elliott, the principal of *QED Information Systems Inc.* and publisher of *Sask Trends Monitor*.

A list of all food service facilities in Regina was obtained from the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region and reduced to a total of 631 restaurants and food stores by removing duplicates, facilities with restricted access, or catering operations. Restaurants were classified into four subgroups and food stores into three subgroups as follows:

- 25 bars with food service;
- 188 full service restaurants;
- 42 limited service restaurants (including coffee shops);
- 180 quick service restaurants;
- 112 convenience stores;
- 59 specialty food stores; and
- 25 supermarkets.

Note that these food facilities do not limit a customer's choices, *a priori*, to either "good" or "bad" food but some offer a greater variety of food choices than others. A lot will depend on what the customer chooses to purchase. Nevertheless, healthy choices will be harder to find in some kinds of facilities than in other kinds.

The next stage in the analysis was to calculate the distance between the 333 neighbourhoods in Regina and each of the food facilities. A summary of the findings is presented below in point form.

- For 120 Regina neighbourhoods or 36% of the total, the nearest food facility of any kind is a full-service restaurant. There are, somewhat surprisingly, more neighbourhoods for which the closest food facility is a full-service restaurant than a convenience store.
- The median distance is just over one kilometre to the nearest supermarket (1,138 metres), specialty food store (1,113 metres), or limited-service restaurant (1,175 metres).
- The median distance to the nearest convenience store or a full-service restaurant tends to be shorter with distances of 600 to 700 metres.
- There are 82 neighbourhoods – approximately one in four – with neither a restaurant or food store, within walking distance.
- There are 104 neighbourhoods – approximately one in three – with, at best, a convenience store within walking distance.
- There are 193 neighbourhoods – more than one half – that are not within walking distance of a supermarket or even a specialty food store. Their access to healthy eating choices is therefore limited to the normally more expensive restaurant meals.
- There are 67 neighbourhoods or 20% of the total that have good access to food in the sense that they are within walking distance of a variety of food facilities including at least one supermarket, at least one full-service restaurant, and at least one convenience store. These neighbourhoods tend to be centred on the relatively few supermarkets in Regina.

The distances of food facilities were compared with the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of those living in the neighbourhoods using the most recent census data.

Generally speaking, those with lower socioeconomic status had better access to food services than average. This was in part because these Regina residents tend to live in the central part of the city where access is often better. For example, compared with the city average gross income of \$36,000 in 2005, those not within walking distance of any kind of food facility had an average income of \$40,900. Among those who have good food choices, the average income was \$34,100.

The analysis found that children and those who were employed tend to have poorer access to food facilities in the sense that they have only a convenience store or no food facility at all within walking distance. Compared with 32% of Regina residents, the percentage of groups in this category was:

- 24% of seniors;
- 36% of children;
- 24% of lone-parent families;
- 21% persons who report an Aboriginal identity;
- 26% of recent immigrants;
- 25% of those with less than a Grade 12 education; and
- 33% of those who were employed.

The analysis found that good access to a variety of food facilities within walking distance was relatively uniformly distributed among population groups although seniors and recent immigrants tended to have somewhat better access. Compared with 20% of Regina residents, the percentage of groups in this category was:

- 29% of seniors;
- 19% of children;
- 21% of lone-parent families;
- 19% persons who report an Aboriginal identity;
- 25% of recent immigrants;
- 18% of those with less than a Grade 12 education; and
- 19% of those who were employed.