“Tasmanian Food Deserts”: Poor access to healthy food regardless of rurality

FOOD AVAILABILITY

FOOD ACCESS

FOOD UTILISATION

Centre for Rural Health

Sandra Murray, Kiran Ahuja, Stuart Auckland, Katherine Kent*, Madeleine Ball
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AIM
To determine the availability of a standardised basket of healthy food according to degree of rurality and socioeconomic index, across a representative sample of food stores in Tasmania.

METHODS
• Cross sectional survey
• 44 healthy grocery items across 5 food groups
• Food stores (n=142) were coded:
  • Shop type
  • ARIA category (remoteness)
  • SEIFA tertile (Socio-Economic Index)
• Food item availability was coded (yes/no):
  • Mean items available per shop
  • >90, >80, >60% of items available
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RESULTS

** REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF FOOD STORES **

- Conveniences Stores: 43%
- Major Supermarkets: 16%
- Minor Supermarkets: 26%
- Fruit & Vegetable Shops: 15%

** MEAN % FOOD ITEMS AVAILABLE **

- Total: 74
- Conveniences Stores: 62
- Minor Supermarkets: 93
- Major Supermarkets: 99
- Fruit & Vegetable Shops: 45

** p<0.001 One-way ANOVA **

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**RESULTS**

- 46% >90% of all food items available?
- 57% >80% of all food items available?
- 68% >60% of all food items available?

**CONCLUSION**

- Food availability was poor regardless of rurality or socio-economic index of the shop location
- The highest unavailability of food items was for the majority of shops (convenience stores)
- Need to increase the availability of core food items in convenience stores across Tasmania
  - a skills/education program to empower residents to access and use healthy foods

P>0.05 across ARIA and SEIFA (Chi Square Statistic)