

Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) works with policy and advocacy groups to address unequal access to food and the dominance of large corporations in grocery markets across the country. RAFI partnered with the University of Chicago’s Data Science Clinic to visualize grocery market concentration and food access metrics in different Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and analyze socioeconomic factors linked to these metrics.

The team developed models to examine how demographic, health, and wealth factors influence market conditions. Their analysis uncovered key factors that significantly impact food access and market concentration (Figure 1). This approach highlights current disparities and provides a framework for policymakers to identify actionable areas for improvement.

The analysis identified MSAs at the extremes of market concentration and/or food access metrics such as Laredo, Texas, the Northeast Corridor, and Florida. The results suggest that better transit networks, healthcare access, and lower poverty rates lead to improved food access and market concentration. Figure 2 illustrates how food access and market concentration vary across MSAs, showcasing areas of concern and opportunity. While the analysis offered initial insights, future studies could examine the influence of these underlying factors over time to better understand their effect on food equity.

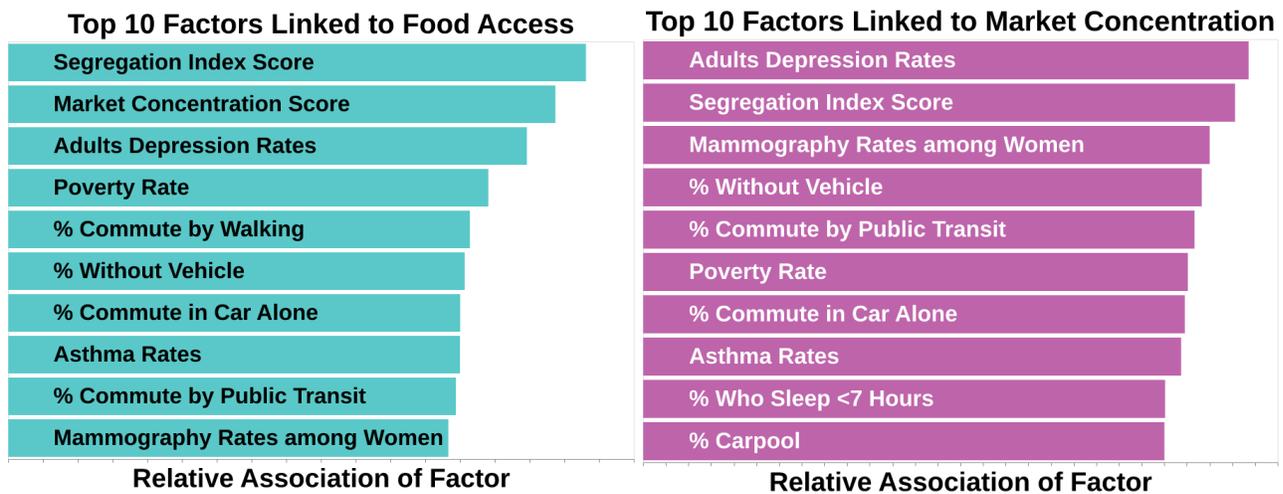


Figure 1: This chart displays the demographic, health, and transportation factors that most influence MSA food access and market concentration metrics.

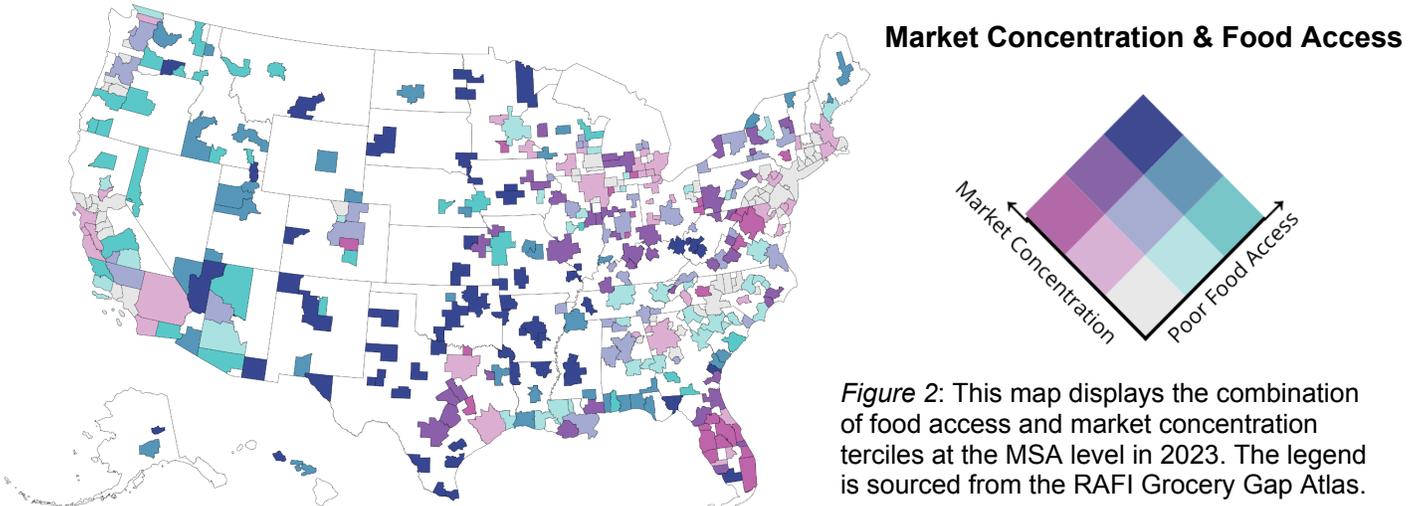


Figure 2: This map displays the combination of food access and market concentration terciles at the MSA level in 2023. The legend is sourced from the RAFI Grocery Gap Atlas.