

Food Security

Obj. 12.6: Explain how access, time, cost, and marketing influence eating choices which lead to health disparities.



The Cost of Healthy Eating

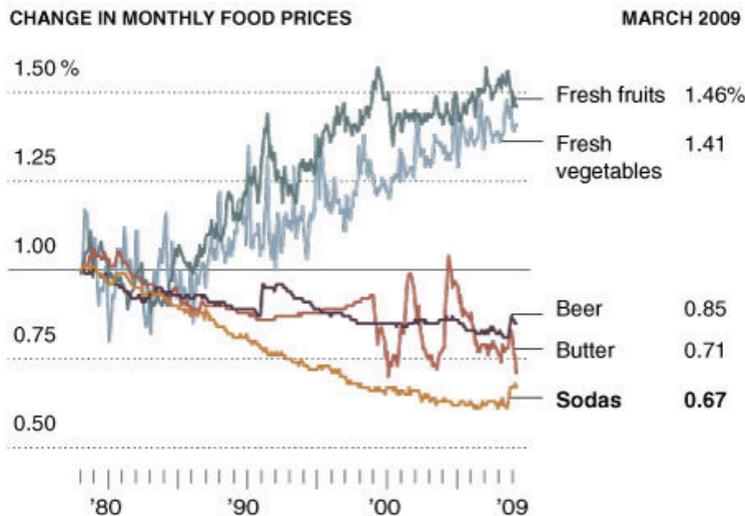
Use the graph below to answer the questions that follow.

The New York Times

May 20, 2009

The Cost of Healthy Eating

The cost of many unhealthful foods, like soda, butter and beer, has fallen in the last three decades, while the cost of fruits and vegetables has risen substantially.



Lines show change in price of items since 1978, relative to overall inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index. The price of vegetables, for example, has risen 40 percent faster than the overall index.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, via Haver

1. By what percentage have the cost of soda and fresh fruit, respectively, changed from 1978 to 2009?
2. What type of foods have become more costly over time?
3. What are some possible explanations for the cost of produce rising while the cost of foods like butter, beer, and soda have fallen?

DISCUSS

Think about your typical daily diet. With a partner, discuss the various influences that lead you to make healthy and/or unhealthy choices.



What is Food Security?

We all know what it means to "eat right." So why do so many people, particularly the poor, turn to fast food outlets and "junk" food?

Food security is a complex issue interconnected with place, economics, and social policies.

Food security means having adequate access to nutritious things to eat. In the developing world, the issue typically is getting *enough* food; in the industrialized world, it's more often a matter of getting the *right* food.

Ironically, high-calorie food is cheap and plentiful in poor urban communities (due to the low cost of corporate food production heavily subsidized by tax dollars), while low-calorie, nutrient-rich food is harder to come by. This leads to a counterintuitive situation in which poverty tends to foster obesity rather than starvation.

Source: Courtesy of *UNNATURAL CAUSES: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?* Produced by California Newsreel with Vital Pictures. Presented by the National Minority Consortia. www.unnaturalcauses.org; www.newsreel.org

What populations are most likely to experience problems with food security?



Key Factors in Food Security

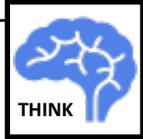
Read about the key factors below. Then rank the factors 1-4 based on the order in which you think most influences **your** family's dietary habits. (1= most influential; 4 = least influential).

___ **Access.** Many low-income neighborhoods lack access to a full-service supermarket. These so-called "food deserts" are dominated by liquor, fast food, and convenience stores, where produce is not only scarce but comparatively expensive and poor quality. Residents of these areas are more likely to rely on public transportation, further compounding the problem of access.

___ **Time.** Many people today, particularly heads of households, work long hours, at multiple jobs or commute to make ends meet. Parents who spend long hours working and commuting have limited time and energy to shop and prepare nutritious meals for themselves and their families. Pre-made meals are fast, easy and affordable.

___ **Marketing.** Often, children and teens get their own dinners. Fast food is not only more readily available, the industry bombards youth with billions of dollars of advertising on television, in the neighborhood, and at school. It's no surprise, then, that many kids will make this choice when left to their own devices.

___ **Cost.** Simply put, "junk" food costs less than healthy food - for producers as well as consumers. The abundance of cheap additives like corn syrup (a product of government-subsidized corporate agribusiness) drives production and profit for manufacturers. For consumers, University of Washington researchers found that the cost to obtain 1,000 calories from nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables was \$18.16, compared to only \$1.76 to obtain the same number of calories from energy-rich, highly processed foods. Moreover, the same foods purchased by suburban residents in large supermarkets cost 3% to 37% more for urban dwellers. For people with a limited budget and limited access to better options, it's not a fair choice.



Consequences and Social Policies:

Food insecurity not only impacts nutrition, it also affects learning, brain development, behavior, immune resistance and in turn, job prospects and life chances over the long term. A poor diet also leads to increased risk for obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular problems and even cancer.

Eating right isn't just a matter of making good choices and having self-discipline. Although it's important to educate people about nutrition and diet, our living conditions, socioeconomic status and other outside factors affect the options available to us and our ability to stay healthy.

Policies that would help improve food security include encouraging investment in poor communities; improving public transportation; developing community gardens, farmers' markets and partnerships between local, sustainable growers and low-income neighborhoods; limiting advertising and the availability of junk food in schools; guaranteeing a living wage; and eliminating sugar and corn subsidies to large manufacturers in favor of locally grown fruits and vegetables.

Source: Courtesy of *UNNATURAL CAUSES: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?* Produced by California Newsreel with Vital Pictures. Presented by the National Minority Consortia. www.unnaturalcauses.org; www.newsreel.org

Which of the four factors driving food insecurity (access, cost, marketing, or time) might be **easiest** for society to change? Which is might be **hardest** to change? Why?



Food Security in Your Neighborhood

Interview a neighbor or fellow resident of your community. Ask them how each of the four factors that contribute to food security are playing out in their home and community. Summarize their responses below.

Access	
Time	
Marketing	
Cost	