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Finding food: Issues and challenges in using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to measure food access

Ann Forsyth, Leslie Lytle, David Van Riper

Abstract

A significant amount of travel is to find food. This paper examines challenges in measuring food using GIS, of importance in studies of both travel and eating behavior. It compares sources of data available including fieldwork, land use and parcel data, licensing information, commercial listings, taxation data, and online street-level photographs. It proposes how different kinds of food sales places in a way that says something about their potential for healthy food options. Analysts need to clearly conceptualize key variables, document measurement processes, and be clear about the strengths and weaknesses of data.

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