University of Michigan School of Social Work

GOOD NEIGHBORHOODS
A great place for kids to live

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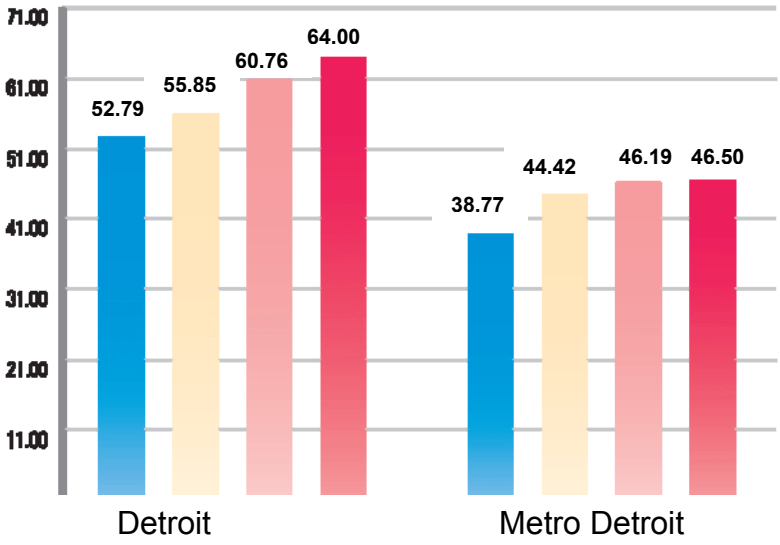
Diet-Related Years of Potential Life Loss by Food Balance Scores by Detroit and Metro Detroit Tracts per 100 Population



- **Up to 1.29** Low score
- **1.30 to 1.50** Low to middle score
- **1.51 to 2.0** Middle to high score
- **2.00 and Over** High to very high score

What communities can do: Communities can give input on city, state, and federal policy programs that affect community health and wellness, such as the Women, Infant and Children program (WIC) and the USDA Food Stamp program. They can also launch their own neighborhood programs to respond to local needs and opportunities, such as offering "the joy of healthy cooking" classes in church kitchens. Community gardens and farm-to-school programs are ways to increase healthy and locally grown foods and local entrepreneurs while increasing community skills and spirit. Children who eat a healthy lunch will likely pay better attention to their studies and will have healthier development patterns. Exercise is also important. Keeping local parks and streets safe encourages families to enjoy the outdoors through physical activities. Diet and exercise are both key to a healthy life and community.

Why it matters: Diet-related health outcomes in both Detroit and in Metro Detroit are worse in areas of Food Imbalance. These effects are independent from other contributing factors such as income, race, and education. Considerable life is lost as a result. To measure this effect, we correlated Food Balance Scores (the distance to the closest grocer divided by the distance to the closest fringe food location) with diet-related Years of Potential Life Loss (YPLL) calculations.

YPLL measures the impact of premature death from a certain cause, in this case Food Imbalance. Red tones signify a poor outcome, blue tones signify a good outcome, and neutral tones signify an average outcome. The chart shows us that, as Census tracts in Detroit and in Metro Detroit become more out-of-balance (moving toward the red zone), premature death increases, most strikingly in Detroit. The pattern repeats itself each time.

How many additional years of collective life are lost in the most out-of-balance areas? For Detroit, diet-related YPLL for the average tract in the in-balance blue zone is roughly 53 years per 100 people, and for the average tract in the most out-of-balance red zone, diet-related YPLL is 64 years per 100 people. This means that there is an additional 11 years of collective life lost per every 100 people on average in those most out-of-balance Detroit tracts. In Metro Detroit, there is an additional 7 years of collective life lost in the most out-of-balance tracts per every 100 people. We are careful not to suggest cause and effect or to generalize our findings to the individual. However, we again find evidence that communities with Food Imbalance are more likely to experience worse diet-related health outcomes than other communities, even when those communities have similar socio-economic characteristics. The types of food options we live closest to – along with many other factors – are related to our health.