

# BARRIERS TO FOOD ACCESS & FOOD ASSISTANCE AMONG FOOD INSECURE EMERGING ADULTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



*"But I've seen people who, as soon as they walk in, they just take it [their mask] off. And as soon as they're going to go pay, they put it back on. ... But I mean, it's a lot of people that just kind of feel like you live in their world. You're not sharing the world."*

*"So I've had people spit on me [in food stores]. I've had people yell racial slurs, call me the B word, call me all sorts of words from A to Z, and just tell me to go back to where I came from...now my kids are scared about these people who they don't know is attacking us...And so I have to wait to find somebody to come, like a sibling or have [my partner] come and watch the kids while I run to the store ..."*

University of Minnesota researchers conducted interviews with emerging adults (18-26 years) who experienced food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 33 young adults participated in July to October 2020, including 14 parents of young children.

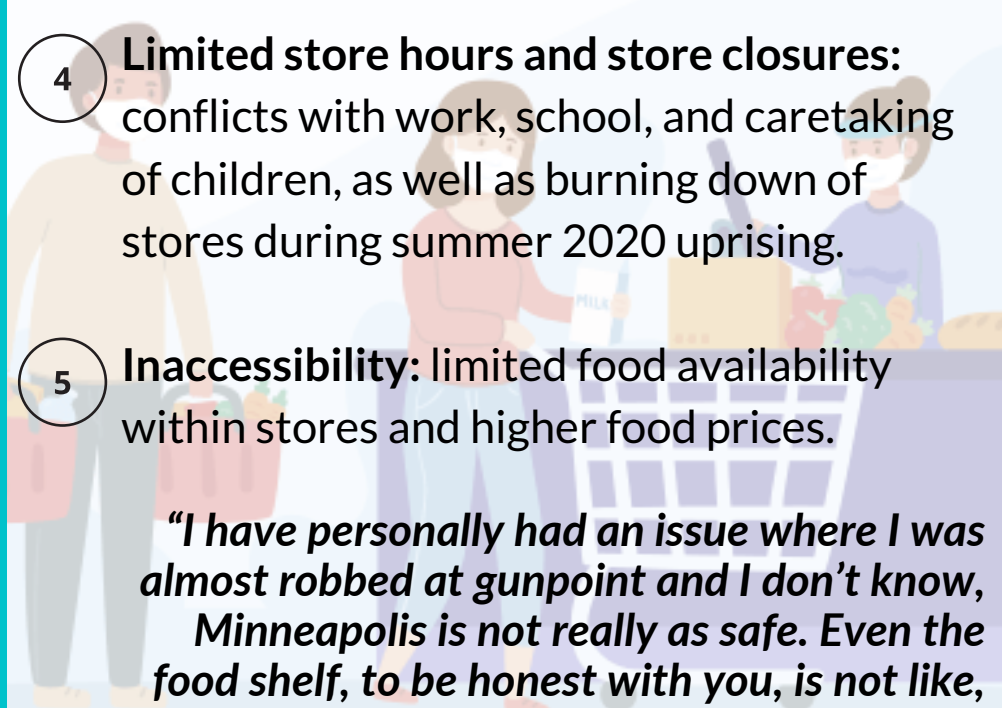
## FINDINGS

Key themes from the interviews identified barriers to local food access and food assistance for food insecure young adults.

### BARRIERS TO LOCAL FOOD ACCESS

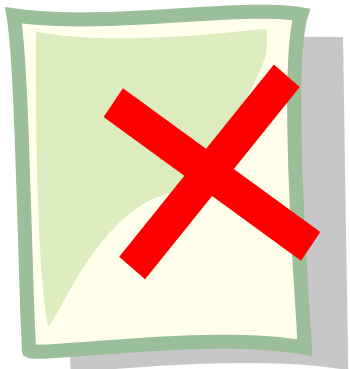
- 1 **Fear of COVID-19 infection in food retail stores due to limited enforcement of safety practices:** limited enforcement of and adherence to mask wearing, physical distancing, and capacity limits.
- 2 **Lack of physical safety:** crime in neighborhoods and food stores.
- 3 **Discrimination in food retail stores:** being attacked, made uncomfortable, or policed by security.
- 4 **Limited store hours and store closures:** conflicts with work, school, and caretaking of children, as well as burning down of stores during summer 2020 uprising.
- 5 **Inaccessibility:** limited food availability within stores and higher food prices.

*"I have personally had an issue where I was almost robbed at gunpoint and I don't know, Minneapolis is not really as safe. Even the food shelf, to be honest with you, is not like, it's not dangerous, but it is not a good place."*



## BARRIERS TO ACCESSING FOOD ASSISTANCE

1. Failure to qualify for federal food assistance.
2. Difficulty in locating a food pantry and having time to visit them during operating hours.
3. Lack of adequate, healthy food at food pantries.



## IMPLICATIONS

Nearly one third of emerging adults have experienced food insecurity in the past year. There are disproportionately high prevalences of food insecurity and food insufficiency among young people living with children and those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color. They had several recommendations with the following most frequently mentioned below.

### BROAD DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION ABOUT FOOD PANTRIES & FREE MEAL PROGRAMS

Multiple modes of communication are needed to inform food insecure emerging adults about food resources. Utilizing a variety of modes and extending hours of operation past business hours increases accessibility of the resources.

### PROVIDE MORE FRESH FRUITS, VEGETABLES, & MEATS

While participants are grateful for resources currently provided and recognize the limited availability of fresh foods, they expressed interest in accessing more foods at food pantries.

### AUTHORS & CONTACT INFORMATION

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*"I guess it's just like the whole system that's kind of flawed. It's, they want us to work, but soon as you start working they turn off all of the little benefits that they were giving you. . . . Instead they should assess people's actual needs."*

*"You see cell phones are such a common thing, but not everybody can afford it and keep up with that bill and have access to get on social media. . . . I feel like there should be other ways too . . . anything like dropping it [flyers with food pantry information] in somebody's mailbox or just things like that around the neighborhood."*

*"I think just helping people have access to more fresh fruits and fresh food, not necessarily the processed food. But that's easier and cheaper to buy. So a lot of people that are in these times that are struggling with money are going to gear towards cheaper processed food."*