



New Orleans no longer a supermarket ghost town

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Nearly 10 years after Hurricane Katrina, the number of grocery stores in New Orleans has recovered to pre-Katrina levels citywide and access has improved in predominantly African-American neighborhoods, according to new research from the [Tulane Prevention Research Center](#) published in the August issue of the *Journal of Urban Health*.

By 2014, the number of supermarkets in New Orleans ([see map](#)) had returned to more than 30, compared to less than half of that in 2007. Researchers confirmed that, prior to Hurricane Katrina, fewer supermarkets were located in predominantly African-American neighborhoods. These racial disparities worsened after the storm but gradually improved. By 2014, supermarket access was not significantly different in African-American neighborhoods compared to other neighborhoods.

Even though the disparities are no longer statistically significant, the authors noted that the recovery was slow and some neighborhoods still lack supermarkets, highlighting the need to focus on long-term planning, especially after disasters.

“Understanding shifts in food access helps to address larger public health inequalities related to diet, such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and hypertension,” said lead author Adrienne Mundorf, Tulane PRC policy and advocacy manager. “To address these health concerns, it’s important for all residents to have access to healthful food options. We examined supermarkets because they offer a larger volume and wider variety of healthy foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, than smaller stores.”

Programs implemented after Hurricane Katrina, including the city’s Fresh Food Retailer Initiative, have helped to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to communities with previously limited access, though the authors did not assess whether this was the cause of improved food access. They recommended more research to understand the impact on health disparities that may have resulted because of such programs.

The full study is available at <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11524-015-9969-9/fulltext.html>.