

Report on Findings from Thesis Research  
“Community Food Preferences and Food Security”  
Casa Latinos Unidos  
2019  
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***Summary:***

Between August 2018 and November 2018, research was conducted on the food preferences and food security of seven Casa Latinos Unidos constituents to understand the status of food insecurity in the community and preferred foods that may be inaccessible to community members. This study included semi-structured interviews, a focus group, a free-listing activity, and a survey to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the food preferences of first-generation Mexican immigrants in the community?
2. How accessible are these food preferences?
3. What is the level of food insecurity within first-generation Mexican immigrants in the community?
4. How does access to food preferences impact food insecurity?

***Findings:***

**1. Food insecurity is present within the community.**

4/7 individuals who participated in the food security questionnaire indicated some level of food insecurity. The most prominent issue within the community was having to rely on less preferred foods. Other issues included: lack of fresh foods, flavor of foods, price of food, stores don't have all the necessary ingredients or are far away, and the health of food in the US.

**2. Food preferences are primarily grounded in Mexican identity but also include aspect of healthiness.**

Most of the foods listed in activities were categorized as typical Mexican foods by research participants. However, preferences were also framed by health value for their families. Dish modifications were made to make traditional Mexican dishes healthier. Participants overall noted that food in the US was less healthy than food they had access to in Mexico.

***Conclusions:***

There is an issue of food insecurity evident in this small sample size, which may indicate that there is a larger problem in the community. Only one participant had an income reported below the poverty line, and yet four registered as food insecure. Income, therefore, cannot be the direct indicator of food insecurity. Access to food preferences was the primary indicator of food insecurity within the community, and thus it is important to bolster the accessibility of these items in order to reduce food insecurity. Programs should be established to improve the level of access to fresh, tasty, preferred foods within this community. More research needs to be done to reach to other Latinos in the community to further understand the prevalence of food insecurity in Casa Latinos Unidos' constituent population.