

Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group

# BEYOND RICE AND BEANS

Food Experiences Of Newcomer Immigrants  
and Refugees in Victoria



**VIPIRG**

Fall 2016



Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to research, education, advocacy, and other action in the public interest.

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#### Acknowledgement

This work has been conducted on unceded and unsurrendered Coast Salish territories, specifically of the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ people. We would like to acknowledge the connection between ongoing settler colonialism and food insecurity, which we are addressing in this report.

This report resulted from conversations that took place at various VIPIRG hosted community events in Victoria. The issue of food inaccessibility for newcomer immigrants and refugees is one that has been highlighted by community members for over a year. We would like to thank everyone who participated for sharing their experience, insights, and stories.

Report written in summer and fall 2016 by Duj'on Daniel, Tariro Murwira, and Boma Brown of the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG).

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## **Definitions**

### **Newcomer**

For the purposes of this research, VIPIRG considers a newcomer to be an immigrant or refugee who has been in Canada for a short time, usually a few years.

### **Food Security**

According to Wakefield, Fredrickson, and Brown (2014), food security is “availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in productions and prices” (p. 83). For the purpose of this community-based research project, we acknowledge food security as the condition in which “All people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (Food and Agriculture Organization, 1996).

### **Food Desert**

Food deserts are areas with restricted or low access to affordable, healthy foods.

### **Acculturation**

Acculturation refers to the process of cultural and psychological change, which is a ramification of two cultures meeting. Gasevic, Rosenmoller, Simkus, Garg, and Lear (2014) define acculturation as the “process by which minority groups adopt the nutritional practice and diet of their host country” (p. 1).

### **Racialized**

There are contested definitions of racialization, but for the purpose of this research, we define the term as an individual who is a visible minority. This refers to individuals who can face discrimination based on their perceived race.

### **Non-racialized**

Non-racialized people are individuals who are in the dominant group, who do not face discrimination based on their perceived race.

## **Background of this Report**

### **Food Security**

The four “A’s” were created to commence a more holistic approach to food security. They are: *Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Adequacy.*

*Availability* stands for the provision of sufficient food supply for all people at all times. Historically, this has been a major challenge.

*Accessibility* refers to the equality of access to food is a dimension of food security.

*Acceptability:* As essential ingredients in human health and well-being, food and food practices reflect the social and cultural diversity of humanity. Efforts to provide food without paying attention to the symbolic role of food in people's lives have failed to solve food security problems. This dimension of food security is also critical in determining whether information and food-system innovations will be accepted in a country, given the social and ecological concerns of its citizens.

*Adequacy.* Food security requires that adequate measures are in place at all levels of the food system to guarantee the sustainability of production, distribution, consumption, and waste management. A sustainable food system should help to satisfy basic human needs, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It must, therefore, maintain ecological integrity and integrate conservation and development (Koc, MacRae, Mougeot, & Welsh, 1999, p. 1).

The circumstance of food security and injustice has a notable history in Canada on the federal and provincial level. It is an important issue in regards to public health and is an aspect of the nation’s social determinant of health. Nevertheless, food insecurity and injustice that is experienced by Newcomers and racialized Canadian-born peoples in Victoria has gone moderately unreported. This *research project was designed to compare the experiences of target social groups to their non-racialized counterparts.*

### **Food as a Human Right and Canada’s Obligation**

In 1948, the right to food was recognized as a fundamental and universal right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Prior to that time, Canada, along with many other countries, had signed separate international agreements to advocate for the right to food. Food

security is a systemic issue and of public interest. Friendly (2008) outlines the distinction between public and private issues or goods, “Food security is a public good because it can be simultaneously enjoyed by many people (a public good) in contrast to private food, which is marked by rivalness in consumption” ( p. 15).

International agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are influential to Canada’s political orientation as they influence programs, policies, and how they are developed and delivered. Following the 1948 signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly, Canada signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 1976, which means Canada has a “legal obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to food” (Food Secure Canada, 2012, p. 1). Thus, ensuring food security and positive livelihood of Newcomers through positive relations to food is the national responsibility of Canada. In addition to international agreements, Canada has also shown domestic fidelity towards the advancement of the right to food.

### **Past Research on Food Insecurity in Racialized Groups across Canada**

These studies, in addition to surveys done by Vancouver Public Interest Research Group, are evidence of the detrimental impact of food insecurity on racialized groups within Canada.

- a) In “Perceived barriers in accessing food among recent Latin American immigrants in Toronto,” authors Mandana Vahabi and Cynthia Damba explore how and why recent immigrant households experience more food insecurity than the general population by focusing on recent Latin American immigrants to Canada. The study focuses on Latin Americans’ acquisition of safe, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate food. They look at a sample of 70 Spanish-speaking adults that had moved to Toronto within five years prior to the study. In the study, four main categories of healthy culturally-appropriate food are identified, namely limited financial resources, language barriers, cultural food preferences, and poor knowledge of available community-based food resources and services (Vahabi & Damba, 2013, p. 1). The study pinpoints that Latin American’s food injustice and lack of security within Canada are as a result of inadequate income, transportation cost, and, limited ability to access grocery shops

due to employment conditions (Vahabi & Damba, 2013, p. 1) In addition, the article identifies the participants; inability to obtain well-paid employment despite education and work experience in addition to language barriers. Vahabi and Damba (2013) state that “their difficulties were often related to language barriers and their qualifications not being recognized in Canada.”

The difficulties that Latin American newcomers to Canada endure are rooted in structural stratification with regard to ethnicity and culture. Overall, all of the barriers can be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon orientation of Canada’s social structure, which includes the domination of the English language, domination of employment within the public sphere, and dominance of the contents of food banks.

b) In ‘Food Insecurity and Dietary Intake of Immigrant Food Bank Users’, multiple authors analyze food insecurity and dietary intake of adult Colombians who are new immigrants to Canada and use food banks. The study was conducted with a convenience sample of 77 adult Colombian newcomer immigrants that use food banks in the London, Ontario area. The degree of food insecurity was measured through the Radimer and Cornell questionnaire, food intakes through 24-hour recall, socio-demographics, and questionnaires regarding the changes within dietary patterns prior to and after immigration to Canada. The results of the study found the degree of food insecurity is associated with food intake and the lack thereof. “A large proportion of the study’s participants did not meet Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating (CFGHE) minimum suggestion of fruits, vegetables, milk, and other dairy-based products” (Rush, Ng, Irwin, Stitt, & He, 2007, p. 76)

The results of the London Ontario-based research conveys the need to reduce the effects of acculturation, especially with regard to the adoption of negative food patterns in Canada along with the reduction of traditional diets of Colombian persons. “The study suggests [that] interventions are needed to assist the population from which the sample is drawn in adapting to society, while simultaneously sustaining healthy eating patterns” (Rush, Ng, Irwin, Stitt, & He, 2007, p. 78). It should be noted that Colombian immigrants consumed less meats and vegetables once in Canada, but consumed more grain products. This is problematic and likely due to the orientation of food banks as “most of the items received at the food bank are crackers, cereal, and

bread, all of which may contribute to the increased consumption of grain products” (Rush, Ng, Irwin, Stitt, & He, 2007, p. 77).

The dietary patterns of Colombian immigrants to Canada are disrupted by the vast difference in the diets of Canadian-born persons. Rather than supplement the dietary needs of Colombian immigrants with what is missing, needed, or culturally specific, food banks often mirror the Anglo-Saxon Canadian diets.

### **Importance of this Report: A Statement from the VIPIRG Board & Staff**

In a predominantly white city like Victoria, access to culturally relevant foods and ingredients is very limited. Being able to obtain these foods is important for a few reasons. Food is a vital part of preserving culture. Culture is a key part of one’s identity; it is associated with safety and security. It is important to continue practicing culture by cooking cultural foods; doing this in itself is an act of resistance to the mainstream.

Food is very important to the work VIPIRG does. Communities and cultures gather around food. Further, feeding people is part of Coast Salish protocol. As such, food is provided at all VIPIRG’s events and board meetings. At these events, community members are regularly heard sharing their experiences of using food as an act of resistance. In March 2016, during VIPIRG’s annual ‘Cracks in the Concrete: Coming Together at the Intersections,’ various interactive panels and workshops were held, which included discussions on anti-black racism and immigrant and refugee women. Participants shared their thoughts on how the limited availability of diverse foods in Victoria is damaging to their sense of self and wellbeing.

Similarly, at Food With A Side of Community, a monthly event series organized by the Support Network for Indigenous Women & Women of Colour (SNIWWOC), immigrants and refugees tell of how important it is to have space every month where they can cook and share the foods of their ancestors with the public. Non-racialized individuals also express their appreciation at being given a deeper insight into cross-cultural experiences of food and how intrinsically connected it is to identity. The above sentiments are in line with our research findings, specifically the question, “Would better access to culturally appropriate foods improve your personal life and community relationships?”

The need to focus on food security is triggered by many reasons. Food security is directly linked to indigenous sovereignty. Part of indigenous sovereignty is the land, which brings us food. We cannot talk about indigenous sovereignty without talking about land and sustainability. Since the dawn of time, indigenous people have held a relationship with the land that is about giving and receiving instead of extraction. This means that it is our responsible to take care of the land and ensure that it is always sustainable.

Immigrants and refugees often come to Canada not by choice, but due to extenuating circumstances. Thus, they sometimes feel a disconnect from the land. As such, it makes sense to build solidarity through stewardship of the land. We understand stewardship of the land to mean that we are all collectively responsible for taking care of the land and its occupants. This is especially important for settlers. Indigenous people, immigrants, and refugees have a historical bond because they experience similar marginalization from the government. Although some progress has been made in this regard, there is a need for further improvements that reflect the needs of these communities. As an organization primarily composed of settlers, VIPIRG employs a decolonizing framework to conceptualize food injustice research

## **Summary of our Findings**

We surveyed 260 individuals, 124 of whom identified as being racialized. Our survey findings show that:

- Our findings support data from Statistics Canada which suggests that racialized individuals are the largest group affected by food insecurity. As we outlined earlier, the concept of acceptability is directly linked to food (in)security. Over a quarter respondents strongly agreed that there are challenges accessing cultural specific foods and ingredients. Zero non-racialized participants strongly agreed.
- Racialized individuals are the largest group affected by food injustice. Over a quarter respondents strongly agreed that there are challenges accessing cultural-specific foods and ingredients. Zero non-racialized participants strongly agreed.
- More racialized people found food to be a significant part of their culture in comparison to their non-racialized counterparts. 61% of racialized people strongly agreed that food

was an important part of their cultural heritage, while 36% of non-racialized participants agreed.

- Almost 70% of racialized off-campus respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their personal and community relationships would improve with better access to culturally specific foods, compared to 12.6% of non-racialized respondents.
- Discrimination when accessing food is a major component of food injustice. Our research suggests that 24% of racialized people have experienced this, compared to 3% of non-racialized participants.
- Almost 70% of racialized off-campus respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their personal and community relationships would improve with better access to culturally specific foods, compared to 12.6% of non-racialized respondents.
- The racialized and non-racialized participants sampled had the same median monthly income, but non-racialized people spend more money on groceries every month. These figures show that racialized people are more vulnerable to food insecurity because they have less money to spend on food.
- Non-racialized people feel that they obtain more than basic nutritional benefits from their diet than racialized people.

## **Research Objective**

This project, carried out by Vancouver Island Public Research Interest Group, seeks to determine, explore, and provide avenues of redress for the social inequality and challenges concerning food security and injustice experienced by newcomers such as immigrants and refugees, and also Canadian-born racialized peoples within the Victoria, British Columbia area.

The overall ambition is to draw attention to the food insecurity and food injustice circumstances in Victoria and to convey the importance of access to affordable, culturally relevant foods. Further, we hope to propose policy changes in the Greater Victoria context.

## **Hypothesis**

Food security is access to healthy foods that meet or surpass dietary necessities, and as access to cultural-specific foods. Based on limited evidence prior to the conduction of

community-based research, we believe Newcomers within Victoria simultaneously experience more food insecurity and injustice than their non-racialized counterparts.

## **Research Process and Methodologies**

### **Community-based Action Research**

This report is part of a community-based action research project. The research design and process has included the involvement of multiple community members who identify as immigrants and refugees. Data collection, analysis, and report writing have been conducted by the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG), in consultation with the UVic African & Caribbean Students Association (ACSA) and the Support Network for Indigenous Women & Women of Colour (SNIWWOC).

Community-based research is an attempt to work against exploitative research practices and emphasize collaboration and co-creation of knowledge between research participants and researchers. Rather than *research on* this particular issue, this is *research with* the people affected by this particular issue. For some VIPIRG staff, the impetus to explore these issues came directly from personal experiences and struggles as immigrants in Victoria.

The results of this research will be used by VIPIRG and other community organizations in ongoing campaigns and efforts to fight for better access to culturally relevant foods in Victoria, and increased food security.

### **General Ethical Criteria for VIPIRG Research Projects**

VIPIRG's research projects must have a public benefit, reflect honest findings, and treat participants and the surrounding environment fairly. Additionally, VIPIRG does not make data available for secondary research unless participants have expressly consented to this. More information can be found on our website at <http://www.vipirg.ca/ethical-guidelines/>

### **Applied Research**

This research project has been designed to answer the specific question: “What are the challenges and avenues of redress regarding Newcomers and food injustice in Victoria?” in order to explore food security and injustice for racialized newcomers within the University of Victoria and the Greater Victoria area.

## **Our Questions and Concerns**

- Do you feel like there are challenges in accessing culturally specific foods and ingredients in Victoria?
- How much are immigrants and refugees spending on food?
- Is there a difference between how much racialized and non-racialized people spend on food?
- Does food have an equal cultural significance to racialized and non-racialized people?
- What would people like to change?

## Research Methods

### Methodology

To answer the questions and concerns outlined above, 260 surveys were conducted. One hundred and twenty-four participants in the questionnaire self-identified as being racialized, which also includes being of mixed-race descent, while 136 participants self-identified as being white or non-racialized. Of the 124 participants, 82 were from the University of Victoria's campus while the remaining 42 were off-campus participants. From the 136 non-racialized participants, 103 were from campus while the remaining 33 were not.

The on-campus questionnaire consisted of 15 questions, with several of them pertaining particularly to the University of Victoria campus. The off-campus questionnaire was similar to the former with only campus-specific questions omitted due to a lack of connection to the Victorian general public. The questionnaire in complete form can be found in the Appendix section of this publication.

### Surveys

Our research was guided by questionnaires that probed for the differences between *Newcomers* and their counterparts with regard to food security and injustice. The questionnaires distributed contained two different sections: a rating scale portion to determine levels of agreement and disagreement as well as a short answer portion to allow for a range of responses. Questions were asked to better understand the personal challenges that *Newcomers* face while accessing culturally specific foods and ingredients, the importance of food to cultural heritage, experiences of discrimination based on the purchase and consumption of ethnic foods, the level of nutrition from daily diets, and the distance traveled to access ethnic foods. The short answer questions allowed for us to hear more of participants' personal narratives surrounding food security. The questionnaires had a range of between 13 and 15 questions, and were distributed to the targeted groups on UVic's campus and Victoria at large. Neighborhoods and particular areas such as Quadra Village, North Park, Downtown, Uptown, and James Bay were canvassed for responses.

A mixed methodology approach was used to carry out the research; aspects from both quantitative and qualitative designs were utilized.

## **Quantitative methodology**

Random persons fitting the criteria of *being Newcomers, visible minorities, and White* individuals were approached in the Victoria area and asked for their participation in the study. Data was collected through questionnaires. A total of 260 people individually participated in the study by filling out either campus-orientated or off-campus orientated questionnaire. The on-campus questionnaire consisted of six rating scale questions with possible answers being strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree in order to answer specific questions related to food insecurity and attitudes. In addition, 8 short answer questions followed the Likert scale portion to allow for more elaborate answers.

The total population of the University of Victoria was divided into groups based on different departments within the university, and a simple random sample of the groups was selected. Second- to fourth-year students in academic fields such as sociology, psychology, and political science were randomly selected *from the registration course list on UVic's myPage*. Questionnaires were distributed and collected before the end of the class to meet the criteria of cluster sampling. Convenience sampling was used due to the need for a quick and inexpensive means of acquiring data.

## **Qualitative Methodology**

Scholarly sources in the form of journal articles from the fields of health studies, community relations, and sociology were utilized for further contextual analysis regarding food insecurity among racialized immigrants.

## Findings

The following results have been divided into two distinct sections: the on-campus study results and off-campus study results. “R” denotes the racialized research participants while “NR” denotes the non-racialized research participants.

### On Campus Results

The chart shows that 63.3% of racialized respondents strongly agreed or agreed that there are challenges in accessing culturally specific foods and ingredients, while 15.2% disagreed.

Two participants of the questionnaire did not answer this particular question.

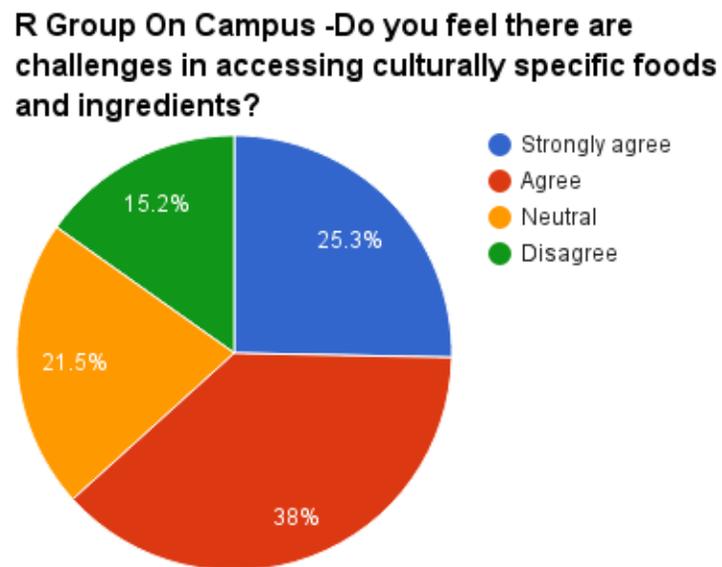


Figure 1: *R-group on-campus views on the ease of accessing culturally specific foods.*

Of the non-racialized group, 3.6% strongly disagreed that there are challenges with accessing cultural specific foods and ingredients, while 53.7% strongly agreed or agreed.

**NR Group on Campus- Do you feel there are challenges in accessing culturally specific foods and ingredients?**

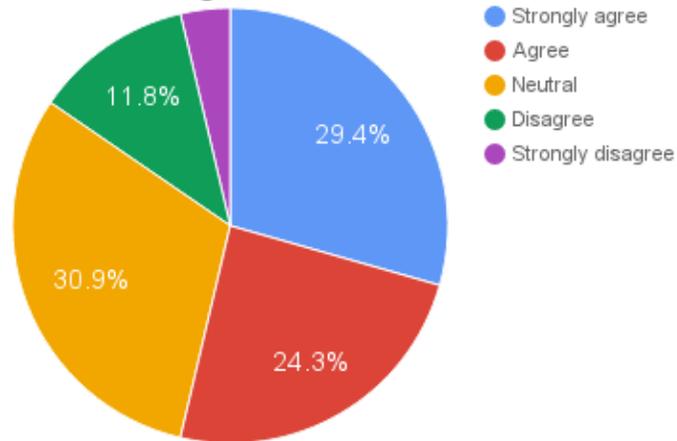


Figure 2: *NR-group on-campus views on the ease of accessing culturally specific foods.*

Of the racialized participants we surveyed, 50% agreed that there were receiving more than basic nutritional requirements from their diet.

**R Group On Campus- Through your diet are you receiving more than basic nutritional requirements?**

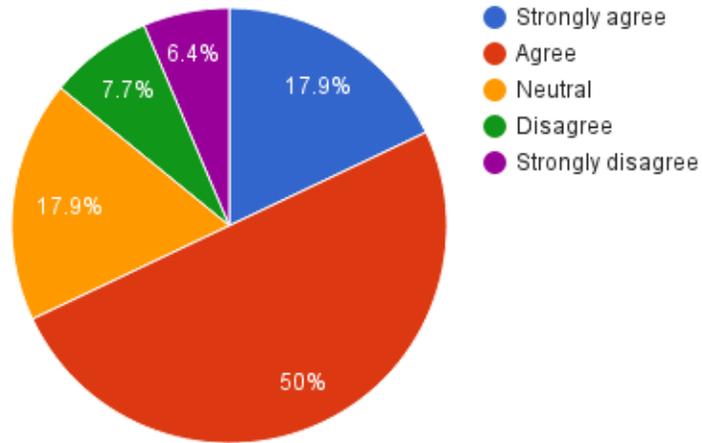


Figure 3: R-group On-campus responses on whether diet provides more than nutritional needs.

Of the non-racialized participants surveyed, 41.7% agreed that they are receiving more than basic nutritional requirements from their diet, compared to less than 1% that strongly disagreed.

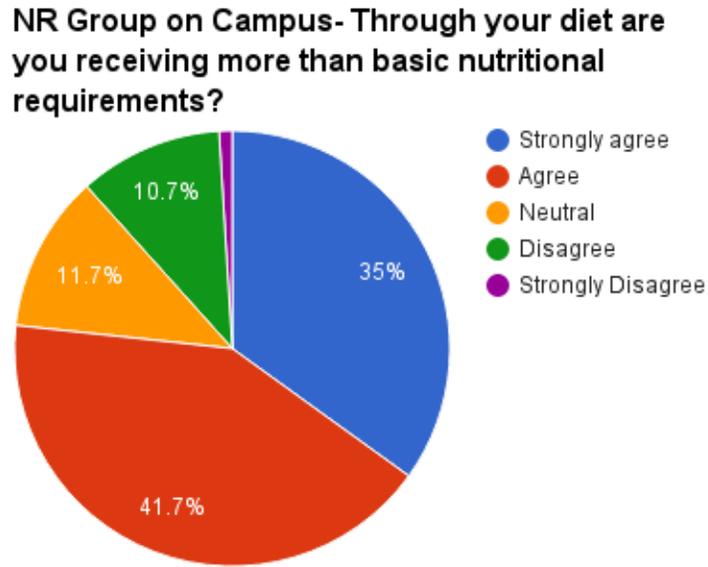


Figure 4: NR-group on-campus responses on whether diet provides more than nutritional needs.

Of the racialized respondents, 1.2% strongly disagreed that food is an important part of their cultural heritage while 61% strongly agreed, and 3.7% were neutral.

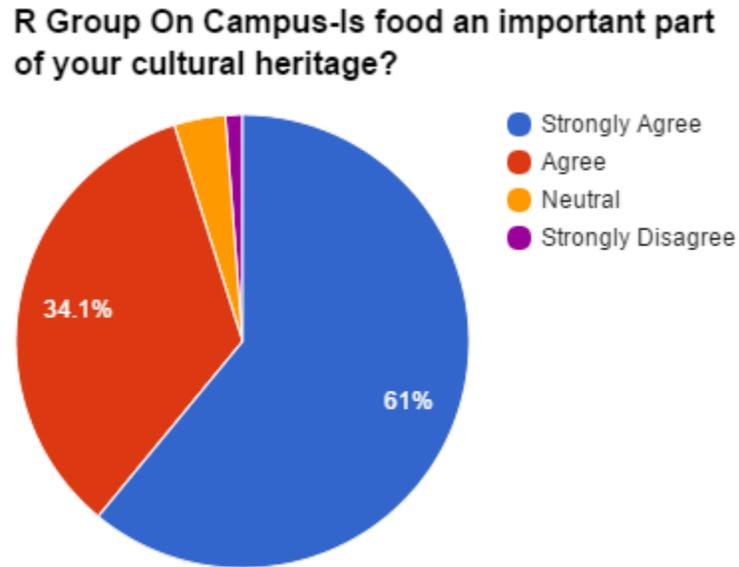


Figure 5: R-group on-campus responses on whether food is an important part of their cultural heritage.

Of the non-racialized respondents, 3.9% strongly disagreed that food is an important part of their cultural heritage while 17.5% strongly agreed.

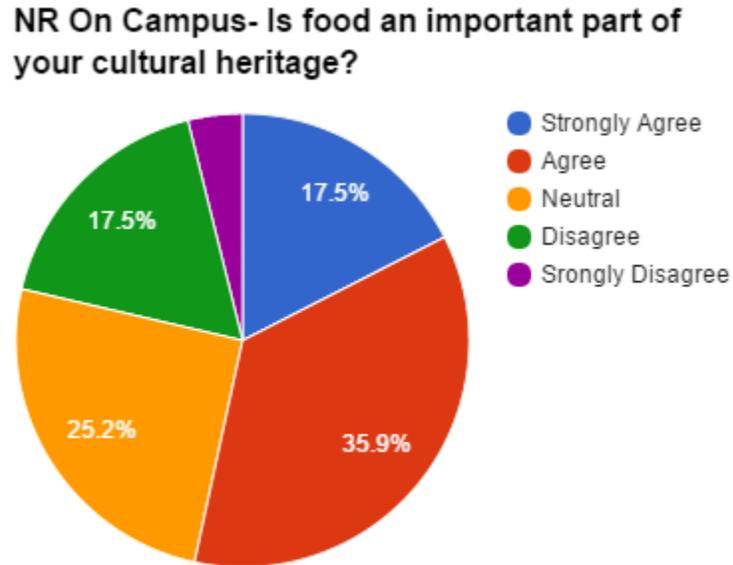


Figure 6: NR-group on-campus responses on whether food is an important part of their cultural heritage

In the student population, 36.6% agreed that having better access to culturally specific foods would improve their social life and community relationships, compared to 3.6% that disagreed, and 2.4% that strongly disagreed.

**R Group on Campus- Would better access to culturally specific foods improve your social life and community relationships?**

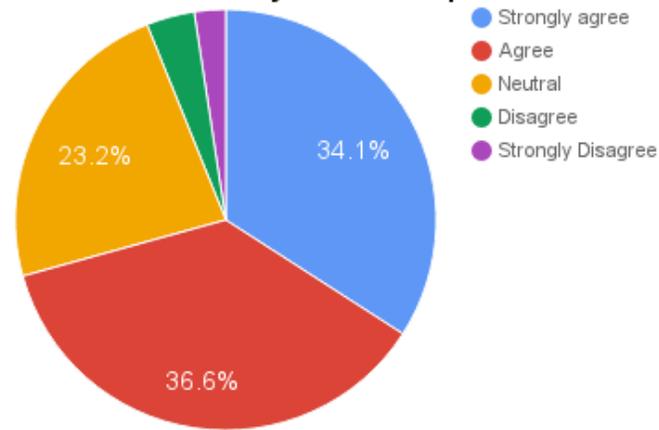


Figure 7: R-group on-campus views on whether better access to culturally appropriate foods improves social life and community relationships.

In the student population, 36.9% agreed that having better access to culturally specific foods would improve their social life and community relationships, compared to 6.9% that disagreed, and 1.97% that strongly disagreed.

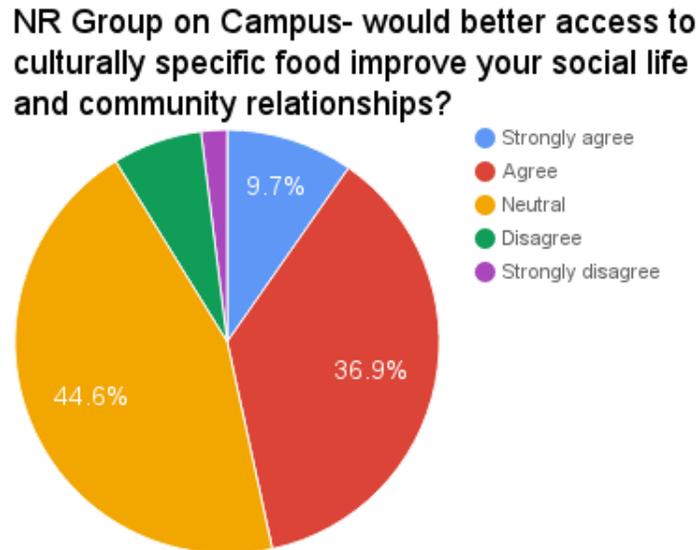


Figure 8: *NR-group on-campus views on whether better access to culturally appropriate foods would improve social life and community relationships.*

One participant of the questionnaire did not answer this particular question

In the racialized student group, 58 racialized participants felt that more cultural eateries or food options would make the Uvic campus more welcoming, compared to 60 non-racialized participants.

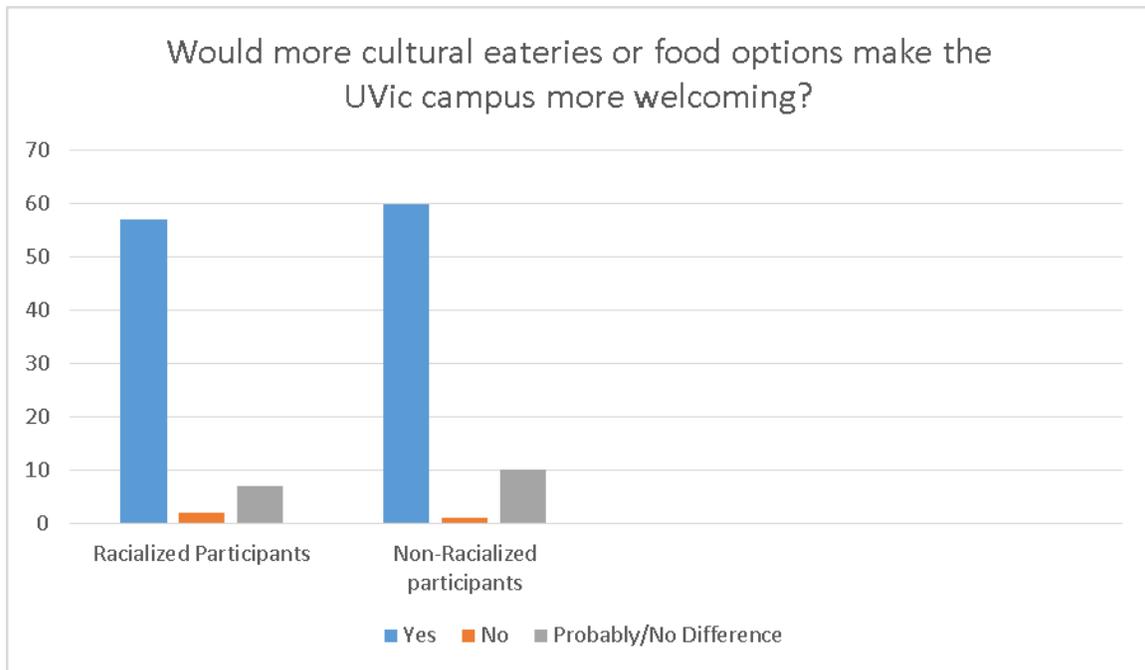


Figure 9: *Participants' opinions on whether having more cultural eateries/food options would make the campus more welcoming.*

Over a quarter of Uvic students have felt some form of discrimination for buying ethnic foods, compared to 6% of non-racialized students.

**R Group On Campus- Have you ever felt discriminated against for buying ethnic foods?**

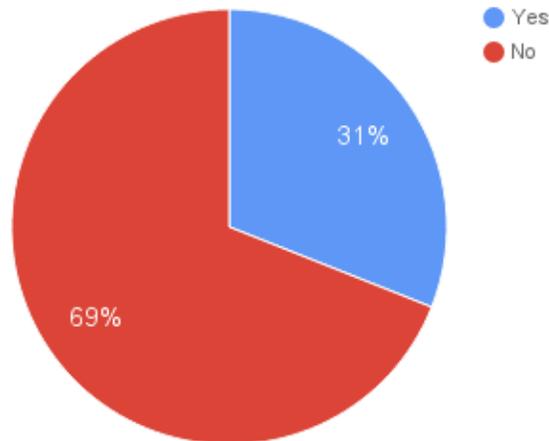


Figure 10: *R-Group on-campus responses on discrimination for purchasing cultural foods*

**NR On Campus- Have you ever felt discriminated against for buying ethnic foods?**

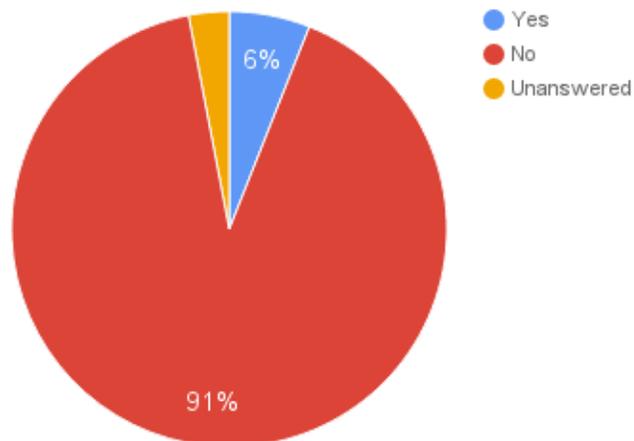


Figure 11: *NR-Group on-campus responses on discrimination for purchasing cultural foods*

## Off-Campus Results

In the off-campus group, 42.9% agreed that there were challenges in accessing culturally specific foods and ingredients compared 27.3% non-racialized participants.

**R Group off Campus- Do you feel that there are challenges in accessing culturally specific foods and ingredients?**

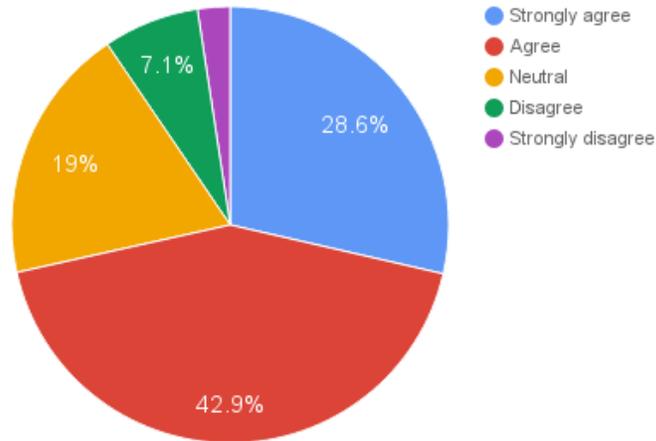


Figure 12: *R-group off-campus views on the ease of accessing culturally specific foods.*

**NR off Campus-Do you feel that there are challenges in accessing culturally specific foods and ingredients**

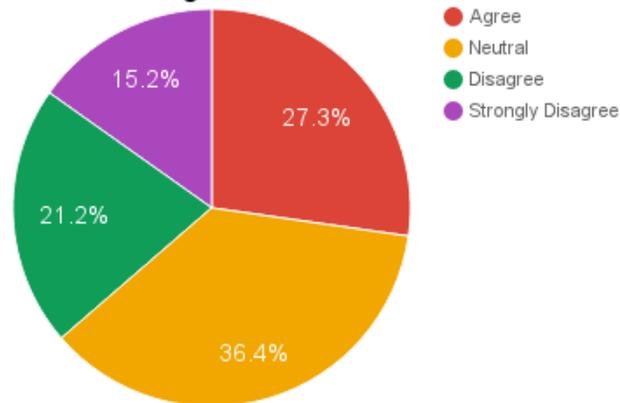


Figure 13: *NR-group off-campus views on the ease of accessing culturally specific foods.*

In the off-campus group, 57.2% of racialized participants agreed that they were receiving more than basic nutritional requirements, while 2.4% strongly disagreed.

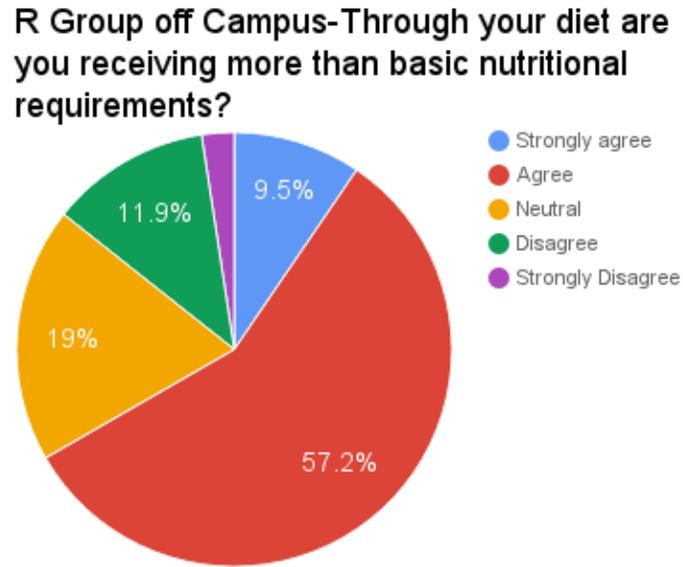


Figure 14: R-group off-campus responses on whether diet provides more than nutritional needs.

In the off-campus group, 42.4% of non-racialized participants agreed that they are receiving more than basic nutritional requirements through their diet, while 9.1% disagreed.

**NR Group Off Campus- Through your diet are you receiving more than basic nutritional requirements?**

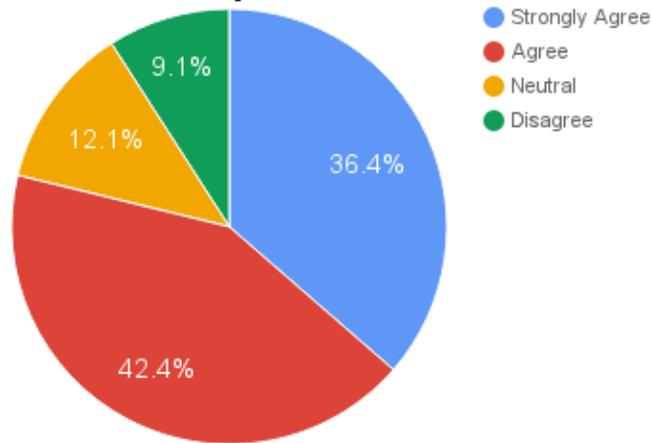


Figure 15: *NR-group off-campus responses on whether diet provides more than nutritional needs.*

Racialized participants overwhelmingly agreed that food was an important part of their cultural heritage. 54.8% strongly agreed, compared to 18.2% of non-racialized participants.

### R Group Off Campus- Is food an important part of your cultural heritage?

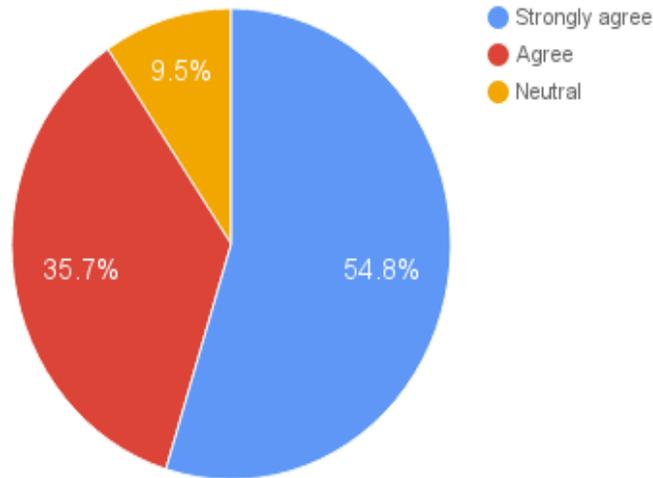


Figure 16: R-group off-campus views on whether food is an important part of cultural heritage.

### NR Group Off Campus- is food an important part of your cultural heritage?

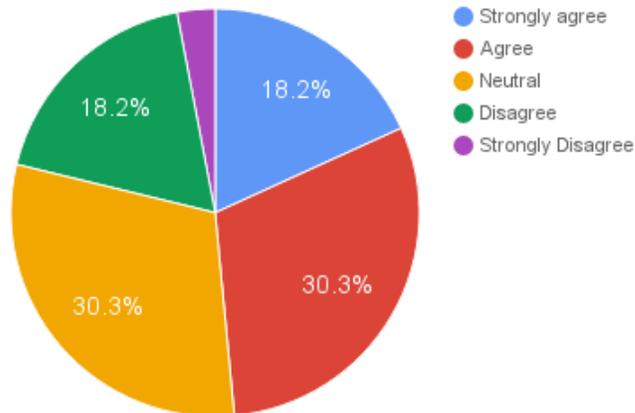
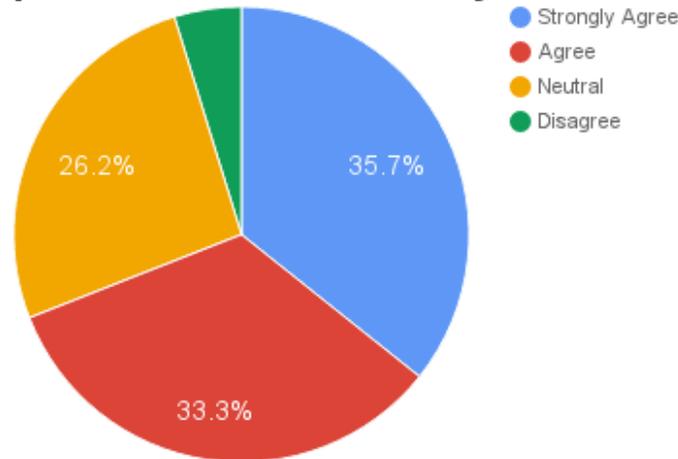


Figure 17: NR-group off-campus views on whether food is an important part of cultural heritage.

Almost 70% of racialized off-campus respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their personal and community relationships would improve with better access to culturally specific foods, while 4.8% disagreed.

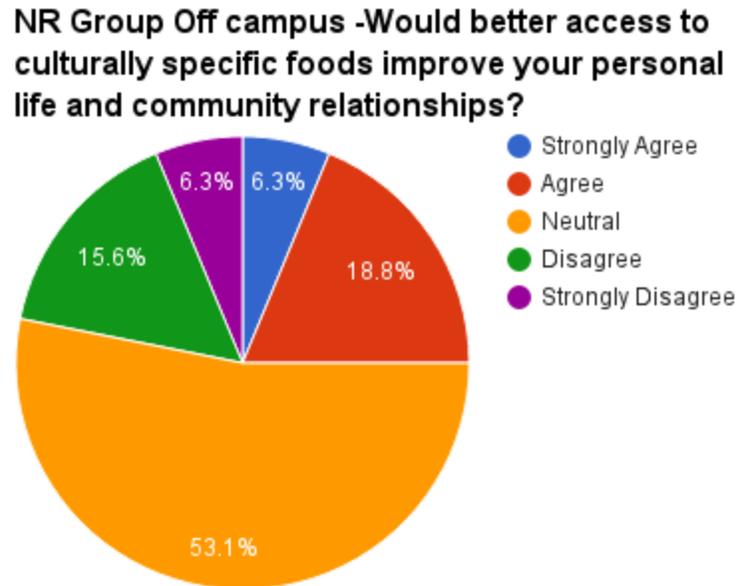
**R Group Off Campus-Would better access to culturally specific foods improve your personal life and community relationships?**



One participant of the questionnaire did not answer this particular question

Figure 18: *R-group off-campus views on whether better access to culturally appropriate foods would improve social life and community relationships.*

Over half of the non-racialized off-campus respondents were neutral, while 12.6% strongly agreed or agreed that better access to cultural appropriate foods would improve their personal life and community relationships.

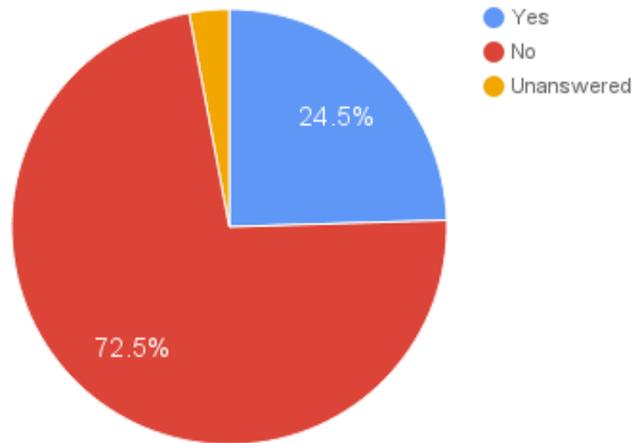


One participant of the questionnaire did not answer this particular question

*Figure 19: NR-group off-campus views on whether better access to culturally appropriate foods would improve social life and community relationships.*

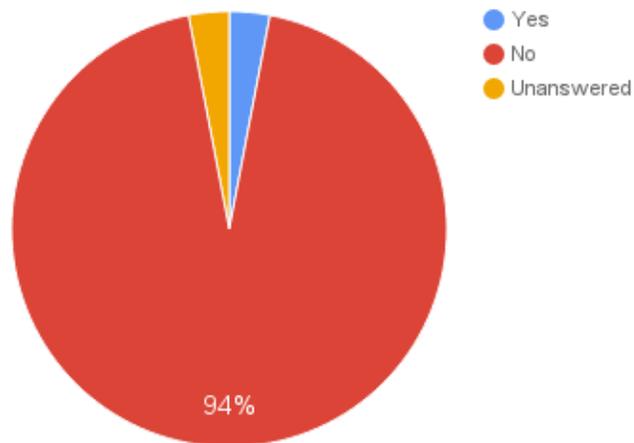
Almost a quarter of racialized respondents have felt some form of discrimination for buying ethnic foods, compared to 3% of non-racialized respondents.

**R Group Off Campus- Have you ever felt discriminated against for buying ethnic foods?**



*Figure 20: R-Group off-campus responses on discrimination for purchasing cultural foods*

**NR Group Off Campus- Have you ever felt discriminated against for buying ethnic foods?**



*Figure 21: NR-Group off-campus responses on discrimination for purchasing cultural foods*

The median monthly income for the racialized and non-racialized group is \$600-1000.

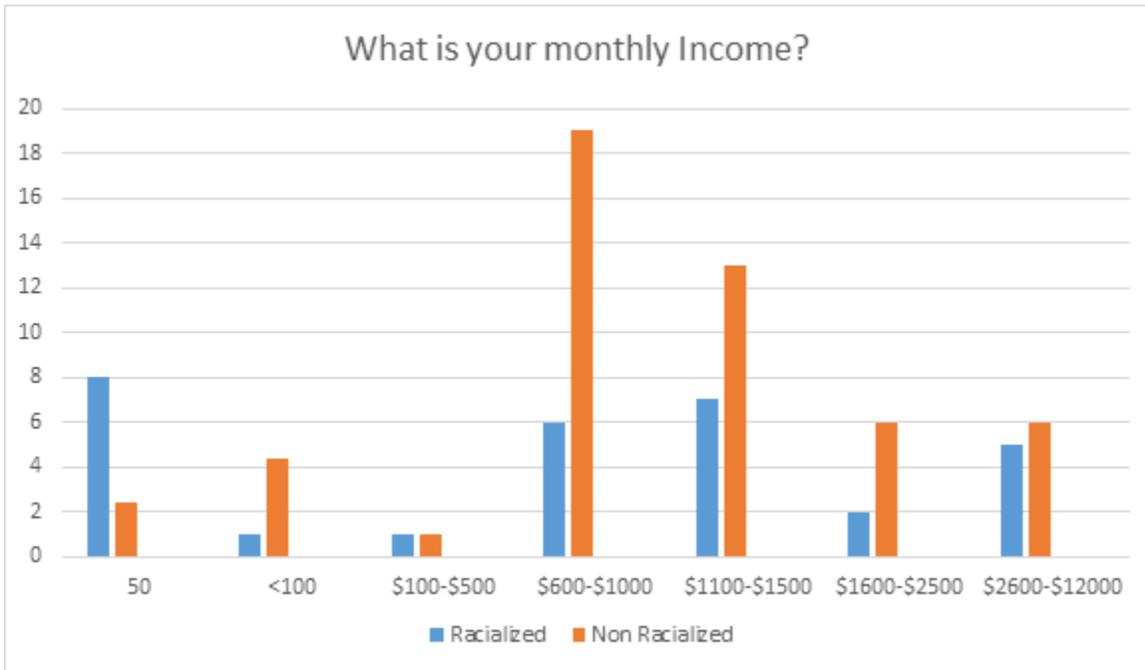


Figure 22: Participants' Monthly Income

The median amount spent on food for the racialized group is \$225-400, while non-racialized participants spent \$100-\$300.

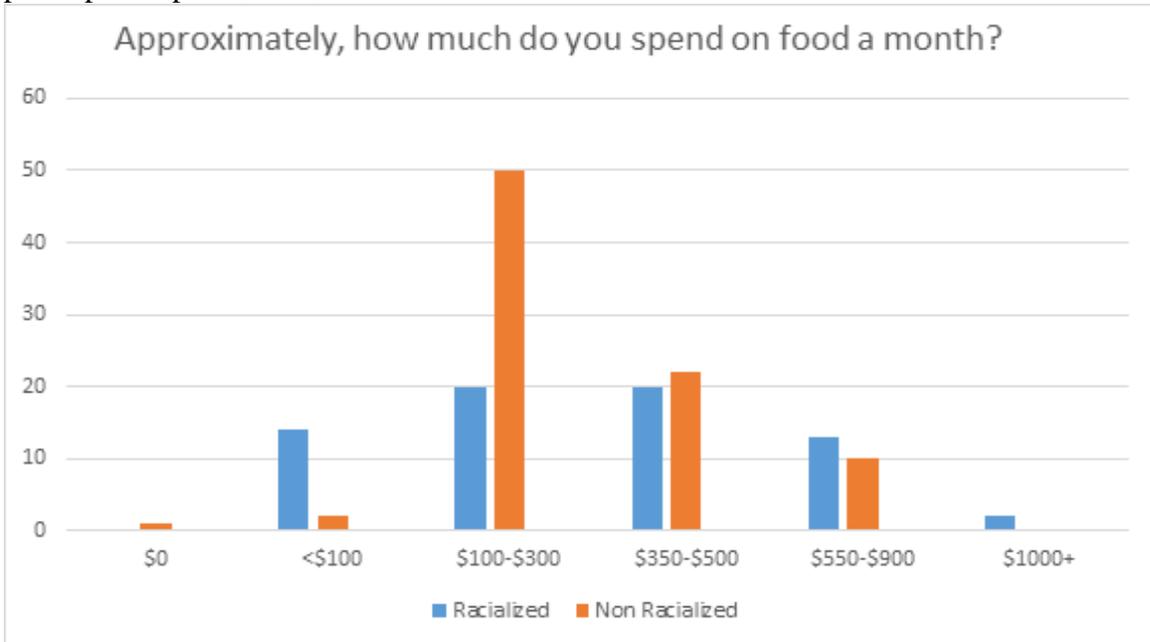


Figure 23: Participants' Monthly Food Expenditure

## Analysis and Recommendations

### Analysis of Results

1) Newcomers and racialized peoples in Victoria experience a higher amount of food insecurity and injustice than their non-racialized counterparts. 66% of Racialized participants versus 21% of Non Racialized people responded that they strongly agree/ agree to the question of “*Do you feel there are challenges in accessing culturally specific foods and ingredients?*” This suggests that available food is predominantly euro-centric and does not cater to racialized groups. In addition, a majority of participants strongly agreed that improved access to culturally appropriate foods would improve their personal life and community relationships.

The results suggest a much stronger disconnect from cultural foods for racialized peoples than white persons. Essentially, Racialized people found food to be a significant part of their culture in comparison to their non-racialized counterparts

2) We did not notice a difference in income between racialized and non-racialized participants. However, our results indicate that racialized people spend more money on food every month. An explanation for this could be the high costs of purchasing ethnic foods in Victoria, as they are generally imported goods. If this is true, it shows that racialized people prioritize buying these foods even when they are expensive.

3) The majority of both racialized and non-racialized participants acknowledged that having cheaper culturally relevant food on campus is very important, giving varying reasons. Most non-racialized participants acknowledge the importance of ethnic food as bringing cross cultural awareness as well as accommodating international students. An interesting conversational nuance is highlighted: here, racialized people are almost understood as interchangeable to foreigners, ie people who are deemed to be from elsewhere, outside of Canada, and are implied to be drastically different from “Canadians”, even though many students who identify as racialized are born and raised in Canada with varying heritages.

4) “Whiteness” is understood as synonymous with “being Canadian”, belonging to the Canadian land, whereas their racialized counterparts are posited as foreign and outside. Through conversing with different students “Race” is understood as signifying “nationality”, and Canada, as a nationality, is understood as a racial entity. These are contributing reasons as to why the complex and diverse experiences of racialized individuals in Victoria are

poorly understood and reflected. Due to this poor understanding, this could be a reason why the food needs of immigrants and refugees are not fully addressed. We know these needs are not being addressed because 25% of racialized participants agreed that there are challenges in accessing cultural specific foods and ingredients, and 37.5% strongly agreed.

5) Discrimination when accessing food is an important component of food injustice. Our research suggests that 24% of racialized people have experienced this compared to 3% of non-racialized participants.

6) Our findings show that non-racialized people agree that having more culturally relevant food will simply enrich the food culture in Victoria, and provide more healthier food options for the community at large as 36% of racialized participants agree. 45% of non-racialized participants were neutral that having more culturally relevant food options would make the campus more inclusive while 36% of racialized students agreed. This shows that there may be a disconnect between how non racialized individuals and racialized individuals perceive the importance of ethnic foods. Similarly, a larger percentage of racialized people agreed that food is a big part of their cultural heritage more welcoming. Non-racialized participants recognized the importance of ethnic food as possibly being healthier in some cases. The understanding of “health” had broader terminology for racialized participants as they understand it to also entail emotional well-being in terms of ‘feeling more at home’, inducing happiness and a sense of community.

## Recommendations

1) We recommend academics and researchers to expand the definition of food deserts. The concept of food deserts is heavily related to the much larger phenomena of food insecurity. As Friendly states, “Food insecurity often means limited access to grocery stores and supermarkets or other places to buy or acquire food.” (Friendly, 2008, p. 8) However, food security and justice should not be solely limited to discussions of food in terms of quantity and quality. Rather it should aim to have a more comprehensive scope by including components of equity, convenience, and the significance of culture.

2) VIPIRG recommends community organizations and governmental agencies to provide more funding to support efforts around food. Our organization is one of very few grassroots non-profits in the country with a community grants program. More funding will be immensely helpful to students, activists, researchers, and community organizers with an interest in building community initiatives with food at the core.

3) Multicultural grocery stores often do not provide a wide array of food options, and these foods are typically purchased at small specialty shops. As such, we encourage the City of Victoria to expand the existing business hub to provide incentives for the creation of small ethnic food shops.

4) In addition to more funding for food initiatives, we think it is equally important to encourage stewardship of the land. We want to encourage the City of Victoria to provide more opportunities for people to grow and take ownership of their own food. That may mean providing greater support to community organizations that can provide residents with their own seeds, gardening tools, pots, and the like.

5) VIPIRG would like to encourage the University of Victoria to create venues and environments that are conducive to these conversations, and reflect the rich diversity of racialized community members. This can be done through educational workshops, ethnic foods in the food bank and awareness campaigns promoting awareness.

6) As of October 2016 the current food insecurity findings on Statistics Canada date back to 2012. Although Statistics Canada regularly updates cross provincial health findings the benefits of having regularly updated food insecurity research would ensure increased knowledge on the matter and be instrumental in facilitating ongoing community change.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Survey Question

#### VIPIRG Research Questionnaire

##### Newcomer Health and Food Justice - Likert Scale and Open Ended Questions

The purpose of this research project is for food security and injustice within Victoria. This is a research project being conducted by Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are person(s) residing in Victoria, British Columbia. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdrawal from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. Your responses will be confidential and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

**Q1: Do you identify as a racialized person? Including mix-race heritage**

- Yes
- No

**Q2: How long have you resided in Canada for?**

- 1 Week – 12 Months
- 1 Year – 2 years
- 2 Years – 4 years
- 5 Years+

**Q3: There are challenges in accessing cultural specific foods and ingredients?**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Q4: Through your diet, you are receiving more than basic nutritional requirements?**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Q5: Is food an important part of your cultural heritage?**

- Strongly Agree

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Q6: Better access of cultural specific foods would improve your personal life and community relationships?**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Q7: Would more cultural eateries or food options make the UVic campus (more) welcoming?**

**Q8: Have you ever felt discriminated against for buying or consuming ethnic food that is related to your heritage?**

**Q9: How often do you eat ethnic food of your heritage?**

**Q10: Approximately how much do you spend on food a month?**

**Q11: Describe your annual income:**

**Q12: Describe the kind of ethnic food you eat**

**Q13: Describe your length or method of travel to obtain food**

**Q14: Describe the importance of having cheaper culturally relevant food on campus**

## **Appendix B: Store Owner Interview**

Store owners were interviewed because they are the main providers of ethnic foods in Victoria. Larger grocery chains only sell limited multicultural groceries, and these store owners provide us with a greater understanding of the demand of culturally relevant foods in Victoria. The following questions were utilized:

1. Please offer a brief description of your store (What kinds of food and groceries does it carry, what is unique about it, etc.).
2. When did you start the store? What made you decide to start a food market/grocery store in Victoria? Were you a new comer in Victoria when you started the store? Did you find it challenging to have access to affordable culturally specific/ethnic food in Victoria?
3. What are your values and convictions in running a food market/grocery store in Victoria?
4. What types of customers were you initially intending and expecting to cater to? Has your expected group been your main buyers? What is the coincidence and divergence?
5. Did you perceive a need in offering affordable culturally specific/ethnic food in Victoria? Do you think having affordable culturally specific/ethnic food is important to you, and/or your family and community? Can you expand on that?
6. Who are your major sources of customers? (racialized/non racialized; newcomer/immigrants, students/non-students)
7. Do you think your store has enriched the food culture in Victoria and contributed to the overall wellbeing of residents in Victoria? (feedback from customers, other business owners, community members, etc.). Are there specific examples that you could recall having been told by customers that they are glad that your store is in Victoria?
8. Are there specific products you would like to feature? Feel free to send us pictures and a short description of them.

## **Appendix C: Quadra Village Butcher Shop**

*Located in the culturally diverse and vibrant community of Quadra Village, Halal Butcher is a family business store that offers groceries from Mediterranean east, India, Iran, and Pakistan, along with kosher fresh meat, including beef, lamb, goat, chicken, turkey, and quail. It also carries Mediterranean desserts. The owner, Medhat Farag, kindly agreed to do an interview with VIPIRG, through which he shared with VIPIRG his convictions and principles in running a grocery store and meat shop in Victoria.*

Q: When did you start the store? What made you decide to start a food market/grocery store in Victoria? Did you find it challenging to have access to affordable culturally specific/ethnic food in Victoria?

A: The store has been here for 12 years. It was founded in 2004. Although I did not find it very challenging to find ethnic food in Victoria at the time, I wanted to establish a place to provide Halal food and serve the Muslim communities in Victoria.

Q: What are your values and convictions in running a food market/grocery store in Victoria?

A: I want to both serve the Muslim communities in Victoria and just provide healthy food to all Victoria residents.

Q: Did you perceive a need in offering affordable culturally specific/ethnic food in Victoria? Do you think having affordable culturally specific/ethnic food is important to you, and/or your family and community? Can you expound on that?

A: Yes. People are searching for healthy food, and that is what we offer. We are a family business that provides fresh and healthy ingredients. Our meat has no chemical or hormone in it and it's always prepared fresh.

*As we were talking, customers kept walking in. Recognizing familiar faces, Madhat greeted them like old friends, proving his close relationship with his customers and the fact that customers are so impressed with the products that they kept coming back.*

Q: What are your major sources of customers (racialized/non-racialized; newcomer/immigrants, students/non-students)?

A: Our products have a wide appeal. We provide food to a mosque (that is located in Quadra Village), to Muslims from different places and cultures. Also because our food is healthy, non-Muslims also love it.

Q: Do you think your store has enriched the food culture in Victoria and contributed to the overall wellbeing of residents in Victoria? What kinds of feedback do you get from customers?

A: Customers often say they really like our food, and they pass the information to their friends. Through word of mouth, more and more people know about our store, and we have just opened another store in Cowichan Bay. We have twitter, a yelp page, a facebook page, and a website. We receive a lot of positive feedback from them.

*Medhat's store is located on 2618 Quadra St and can be reached at (250) 361-1200*

## **Appendix D: Interview with Pulcherie**

*Pulcherie is the founder of the Victoria African & Caribbean Cultural Society (VACCS) and owner of La Calabasse du Nomade, an African grocery and catering business. She is originally from Cameroon but has been a resident of Victoria for 6 years.*

Q: What made you decide to start a food business in Victoria?

A: I did it to raise awareness about African culture. We know that food and music attracts people, and this is a great way to raise awareness. People in Victoria love food, and it's easier to draw attention to certain topics when food is included

Q: Did you find it challenging to have access to affordable culturally specific/ethnic food in Victoria?

A: Of course. Yes! Even now, after 6 years of living in Victoria, I still have to order ingredients from Montreal. People in Victoria are open to having diverse foods. Plantains are more readily available than before.

Q: Did you perceive a need in offering affordable culturally specific/ ethnic food in Victoria? If so, why?

A: Yes. We created a need and it's important to continue doing this. If the supply of these foods stops, people are gonna give up because there are very few alternatives in Victoria.

Q: Do you think having affordable culturally specific/ethnic food is important to you, and/or your family and community?

A: Very important to my family. For my community, it's important as well. Food is part of our culture. If we grow up eating fufu or something else and we move, and we don't have access to it, we'll miss it and feel like we're missing something. So it's important to have these foods around.

Q: What are your major sources of customers?

A wide variety of people, mostly immigrants and refugees.

Q: Do you think your business has enriched the food culture in Victoria and contributed to the overall wellbeing of residents in Victoria? What kinds of feedback do you get from customers?

A: It's good to hear someone say, "Finally, I can get this food in Victoria." This is what I work towards.

*Pulcherie can be reached at 250-884-0379. Visit the VACCS website at [www.vaccsociety.blogspot.ca](http://www.vaccsociety.blogspot.ca)*

## **Appendix E: Caribbean Fusion in downtown Victoria: An interview with Natalie.**

Stir It Up is a small eatery located in downtown Victoria. The store offers Caribbean soul food with a personal twist, as Natalie mentions that not only her dishes represent a fusion of Caribbean food, but also she uses her own recipes came up by herself. She combines jerk chicken and roti in one dish, the former is a signature Jamaican dish and the latter is Trinidadian. She says that sometimes people are surprised to find the combination, but after trying it, they are usually very impressed.

10 years ago, in September 2006, she started the store in the Fernwood neighbourhood in the city of Victoria, and moved to the current downtown location two years ago.

Speaking of the challenges she has encountered in running the store over the years, Natalie mentions that when she first started 10 years ago, there wasn't a large Caribbean community, who would be the ideal clientele of the place, so she had to change the dishes to cater to non-Caribbean people. And because there wasn't quite a community, there weren't many places that served the Caribbean community, as a result many essential spices, ingredients and even drinks were really hard to find in Victoria, so she even had to order them to be shipped from Vancouver and Toronto, at the same time she had to adapt her recipes and dishes to what was available. Moreover, it was hard to find people who knew how to prepare and make the food the way she wanted them to be. With the growth of local Caribbean community, says Natalie, everything has become a lot easier.

It was an early afternoon on a Sunday when we did our interview. The place was quietly embracing the summer sun. Natalie told us that quietness is not that common for the store, as she usually has huge lunch crowd from people walking downtown. Comparing to Fernwood though, her clientele is more scattered now. She told us that there used to be lots of Caribbean and African soccer players who would come regularly after their practice, but now she gets more scattered crowd and serves people from more diverse backgrounds.

There are not many women of colour owned business in Victoria, let alone downtown Victoria. I would only assume that how pleasantly surprised when people who are new to the city find food from their home in the heart of Victoria. And because of its locality, the eatery has become a vital spot for community gathering and building, and the community serves as Natalie's support system.

Speaking of the future, Natalie says that she would like to get fully licensed, so people could come and enjoy a beer with their food. Let's hope her wish come true soon!

## **Appendix F: Ethnic Food Store Directory**

1. A Mart Korean Grocery  
652 Yates Street

2. Fisgard Market  
550 Fisgard Street

3. Fairway Market at Quadra Village  
2635 Quadra Street

4. Alia Halal Meat  
2618 Quadra Street  
<http://www.halalmeat2u.com/>

5. Burnside Food Market  
658 Burnside Road W

6. Gobind Food Market.  
4011 Quadra Street, Unit #8

7. Quadra Filipino Mart  
2008 Douglas Street

8. Mexican House of Spice  
2022 Douglas Street

9. Trini To D Bone  
650 Burnside Road West  
<http://trinitodbone.ca/>

10. Stir It Up Foods  
760 A Yates Street

11. Fig Mediterranean Deli  
216-1551 Cedar Hill Cross Rd  
<http://figdeli.ca/>