

## SMART Cities Abstract

**Title:** Hypothesized influence of economic and social COVID-19 policies on household food insecurity: A theory of change

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The Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and associated public health measures induced widespread disruption, necessitating countermeasures (e.g., financial assistance) to mitigate implications for daily life. These countermeasures, or policy responses, may have impacted household food insecurity. Understanding these impacts can inform future policy making by providing context for observed changes in food insecurity across countries during the pandemic.

The objective was to develop a theory of change to describe how economic and social COVID-19 policy responses may have influenced household food insecurity. Along with other published literature on food insecurity, a conceptual framework of social and economic policy interventions to address food insecurity by Lindberg et al. informed the theory of change. The framework was iteratively revised based on feedback from a working group of nutrition and food security experts from multiple countries.

Several online policy databases were consulted to identify the types of policies introduced in six countries during the pandemic. For policies relevant to labour (e.g., employment protection), individual and family (e.g., caregiver benefits), housing (e.g., eviction bans), and welfare (e.g., food assistance), the potential level of impact on household food insecurity was hypothesized. Potential impact was determined by considering the intended beneficiaries of the policy, the likely mechanism by which the policy might influence food insecurity, and other policy characteristics. Sixteen policy types were identified as potentially having a high level of impact on food insecurity, with six identified as low impact. Targeted financial assistance, for example, was hypothesized to have a high impact because it can directly alter income level and

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consequently food access. Career training opportunities were hypothesized to have a low impact because multiple steps need to occur before food access is altered.

The theory of change will be used to contextualize examinations of changes in household and youth food insecurity during the pandemic, for example, with respect to differences in trends across countries and population subgroups.

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