

WHAT PEOPLE EAT in FOOD DESERTS

Food deserts are geographic areas where access to affordable, nutritious food options is limited or nonexistent because grocery stores are too far away.

FOOD DESERT STATISTICS AND ACCESS TO GROCERY STORES

A food desert is a census tract in the U.S. that's low-income, and its residents typically have limited access to supermarkets and grocery stores. Instead, these individuals usually have access to foods at convenience or corner stores, which may offer limited healthier, nutritionally valuable foods in lieu of cheaper, calorie-heavy foods.



OF THE 65,000 CENSUS TRACTS IN THE U.S.

meet the federal definition of a food desert

13.5 MILLION PEOPLE LIVE IN THESE TRACTS

82% LIVE IN URBAN AREAS

where no grocery store exists within 1 mile

18% LIVE IN RURAL AREAS

where no grocery store exists within 10 miles

23 MILLION

LIVE MORE THAN A MILE

from a grocery store and they lack access to public or private transportation



COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF AMERICANS LIVING IN FOOD DESERTS SHOW A **9% HIGHER RATE OF ADULT OBESITY** THAN THOSE LIVING IN NON-FOOD DESERT REGIONS

WHY RESIDENTS IN FOOD DESERTS HAVE LITTLE ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND NUTRITIOUS FOODS

Top food retailers often avoid building supermarkets or grocery stores in these rural or low-income neighborhoods. Instead, these regions usually feature convenience or corner stores.

The top 75 food retailers in the nation opened **10,300 stores** from 2011 to 2015

2,434 WERE GROCERY STORES

only **250** of these grocery stores were located in food desert regions



Corner stores and small markets have higher price points on fresh food



FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS ARE **2.5 TIMES MORE** PLENTIFUL IN FOOD DESERT AREAS

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides food stamps, is limited because **HEALTHY FOOD COSTS MORE**

HOW SOCIAL WORKERS CAN HELP REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF FOOD DESERTS

CHANGES TO THE SNAP PROGRAM INCLUDING:

- **Increase access** to health foods at local retailers
- **Restricting the purchase** of junk foods and beverages
- Providing **incentives to SNAP users** to buy fruits and vegetables
- Providing **incentives to stores** to stock produce, milk and other healthy foods

SPONSORING LOCAL FOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Teaching kids how to urban farm fresh produce, cook it and allow them to use it for free lunches

More diverse food pantries working in conjunction with local farmers who grow fruits and vegetables



SOURCES

- www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-blumenthal/food-deserts_b_3822428.html
- www.fns.usda.gov/tags/food-desert-locator
- www.dosomething.org/facts/11-facts-about-food-deserts
- www.bigstory.ap.org/article/8b1c0967e99646008ac25e674e378cf/grocery-chains-leave-food-deserts-barren-ap-analysis-finds
- www.ers.usda.gov/media/242675/ap036_1.pdf
- www.good.is/articles/just-deserts-5-ways-to-bring-good-food-to-poor-neighborhoods
- www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/12/07/millions-of-food-desert-dwellers-struggle-to-get-fresh-groceries
- www.pbs.org/newshour/undown/the-socio-economic-significance-of-food-deserts/