



Built Environment

MEASURE

The percent of the population that lives in an USDA-defined 'food desert'

A USDA 'food desert' is a census tract that is low-income (poverty >20 percent or median income <80 percent of statewide median income) and where a substantial number or share of people have low access to food, defined as living more than one mile (urban) or more than 10 miles (rural) away from a grocery store or supermarket.

DATA SOURCE

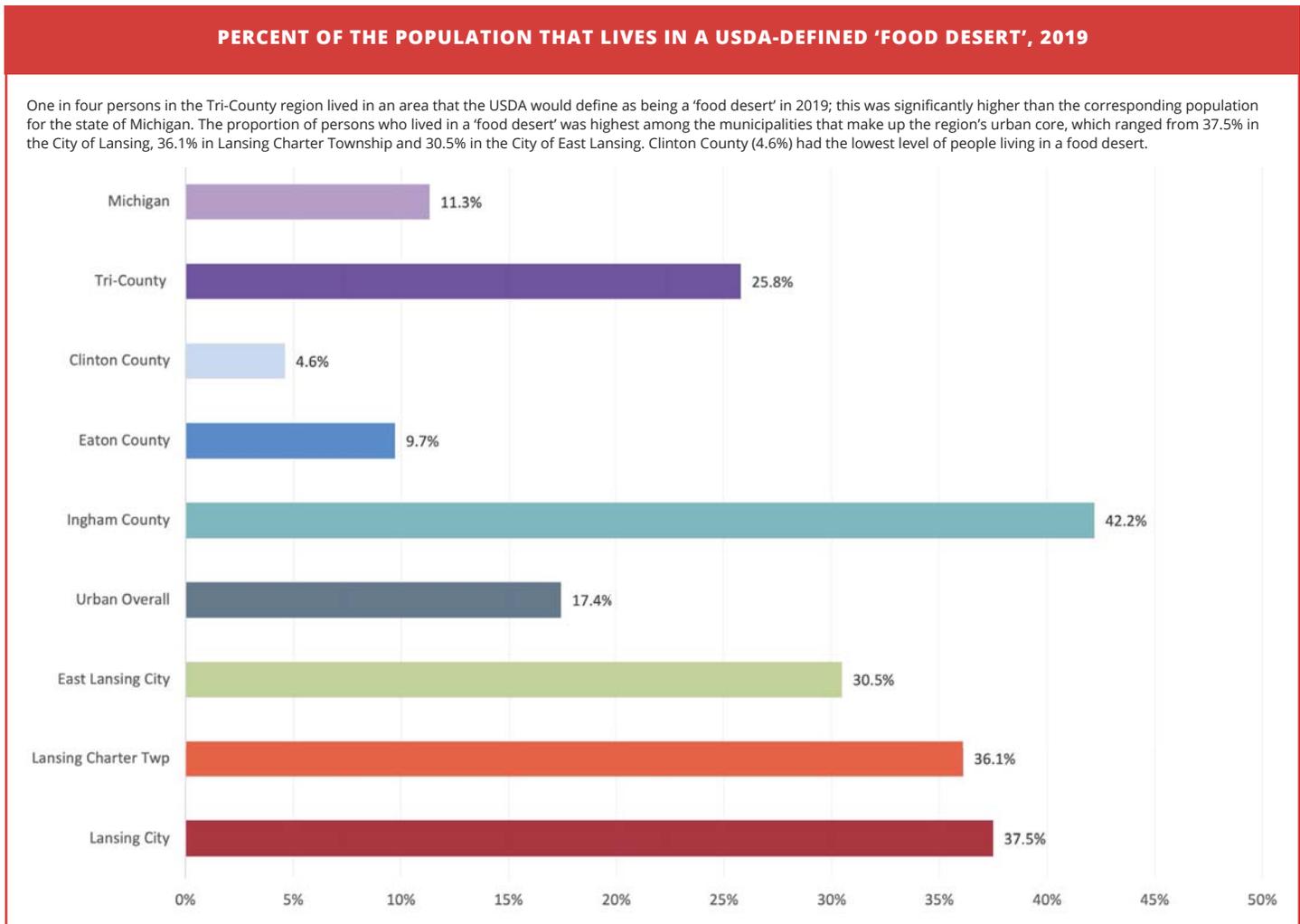
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

YEARS 2010, 2015, 2019

REASON FOR MEASURE

The majority of studies that have examined the relationship between store access and dietary intake find that better access to a supermarket or large grocery store is associated with eating healthier food. Better access to a supermarket is associated with a reduced risk of obesity, and better access to convenience stores is associated with an increased risk of obesity. Recent research suggests that lack of access to specific nutritious foods may be less important than relatively easy access to all other foods.

'Food swamps' may better explain increases in body mass index (BMI) and obesity than "food deserts." Increasing access to specific foods like fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat milk alone may not affect the obesity problem, as most stores that carry these nutritious foods at low prices also carry the less healthy foods.



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PERCENT OF THE POPULATION THAT LIVES IN A USDA-DEFINED 'FOOD DESERT', 2010-2019

In the state of Michigan, the percent of the population who lived in an area defined as a 'food desert' declined between 2010 and 2019, but in the Capital Area, it increased significantly from 12.4% to 25.8%. The increase in the Capital Area was driven primarily by Ingham County which has seen steady and significant increases in the prevalence of 'food deserts' in its urban area and now sits at 42.4%, up from 22.2% in 2015.

