



PREVALENCE OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS IN FOOD DESERTS IN OKLAHOMA

In Oklahoma, the rate of obesity for children under the age of 5 is higher than the national average.^{1,2} Food Deserts, which are areas that contain no grocery stores, have been shown to be influential in shaping the weight status of young children.^{3,4} The food environment of Early Care and Education Environments (ECEs) has the potential to shape children's weight status through the food purchasing behaviors of parents and ECE providers.^{5,6} Three in five preschool-aged children attend an ECE.⁷ A study involving the locations of 2,672 ECEs in Oklahoma was conducted to describe the food environment of the ECEs in Oklahoma. Two kinds of ECEs were considered:

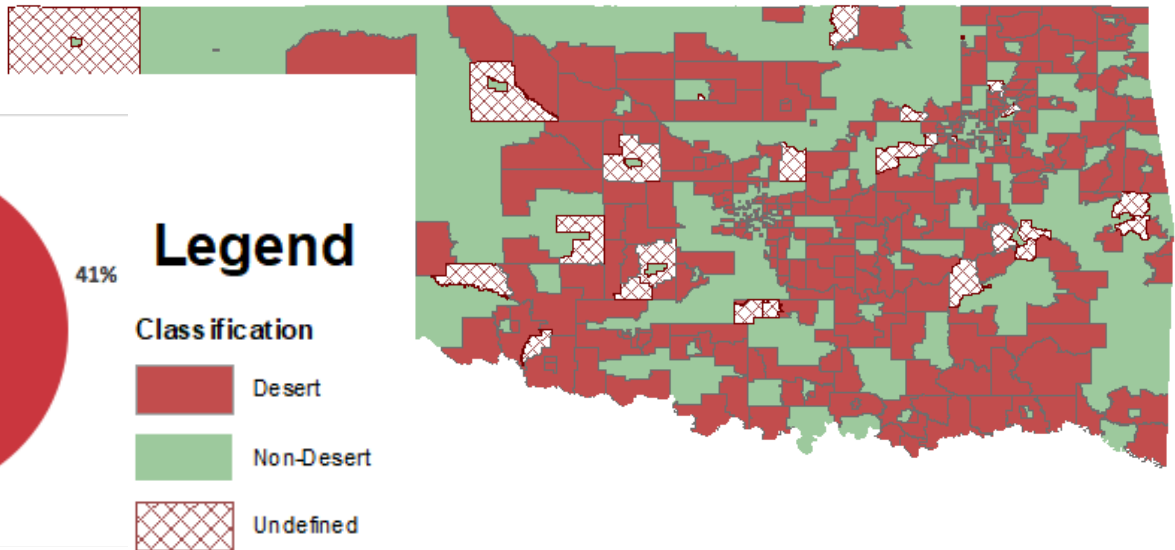
- Family Child Care Homes (Homes): child care environments in a residential home that care for up to 12 children.
- Child Care Centers (Centers): child care environments with a more traditional classroom building and structure.

FOOD ENVIRONMENT CLASSIFICATION

- The food environment of each census tract in Oklahoma was given a score on a scale from 0 to 100, zero contains no healthy food stores and 100 is 100% healthy food stores in that tract.
 - A score of 0 (no healthy food retailers) was categorized as a Food Desert
 - Any score greater than 0 was categorized as a Non-Desert
 - Any census tract with no score (no food retailers) was categorized as Undefined

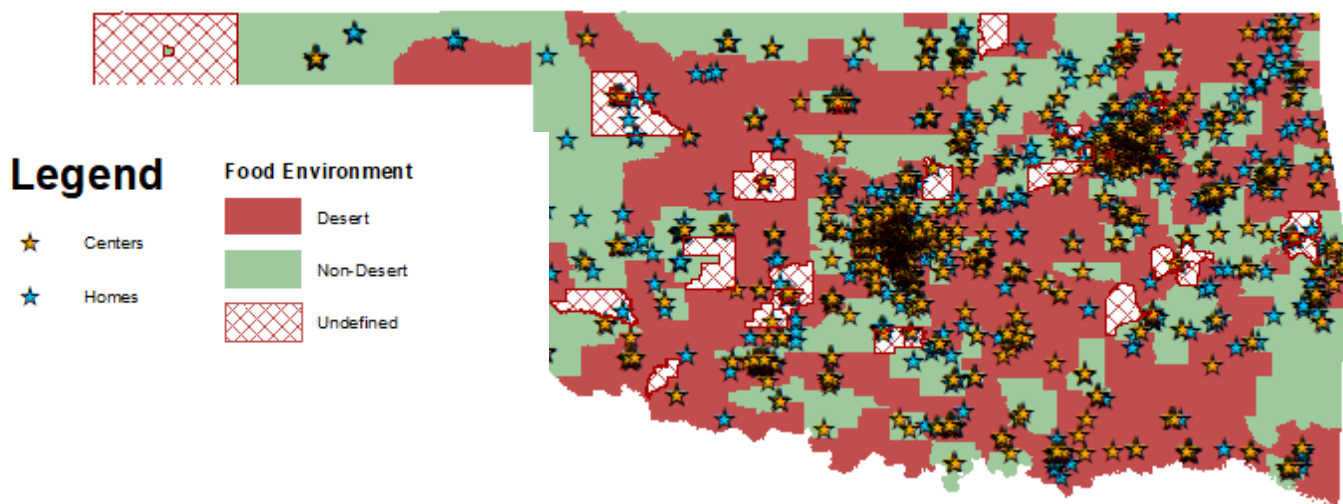
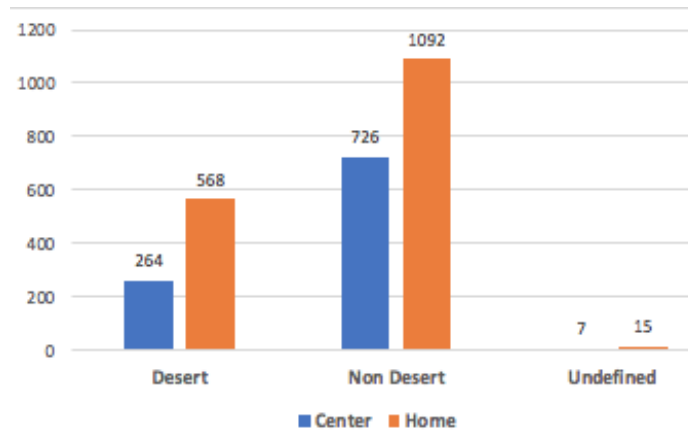
THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT OF OKLAHOMA

- 402 [41%] of the census tracts in Oklahoma are food deserts, meaning they contain no healthy food stores.
- 560 [56%] of the census tracts in Oklahoma are non-deserts and contain at least one healthy food store.
- The remaining 28 [3%] census tracts in Oklahoma contain no food stores, healthy or unhealthy, and were labeled undefined as a result.



THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT OF OKLAHOMA ECES

- The majority of Homes and Centers are located in Non-Desert tracts.
- Homes were more likely to be located in Food Deserts than Centers. (34% vs. 27%)
- Less than 1% of Homes and Centers were located in census tracts without any food stores (Undefined).



IMPLICATIONS IN OKLAHOMA

- Despite the majority of ECEs being located in Non-Desert census tracts, in the average census tract in Oklahoma only 7.3% of the food stores are healthy.
- ~32% of all ECEs in Oklahoma are located in Food Desert census tracts. Increasing the burden on providers to purchase healthy food to serve within the ECE. This may also increase the burden of buying food for families.
- ~1% of all ECEs in Oklahoma are located in census tracts containing no food stores, making these areas particularly concerning when it comes to public health implications.

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