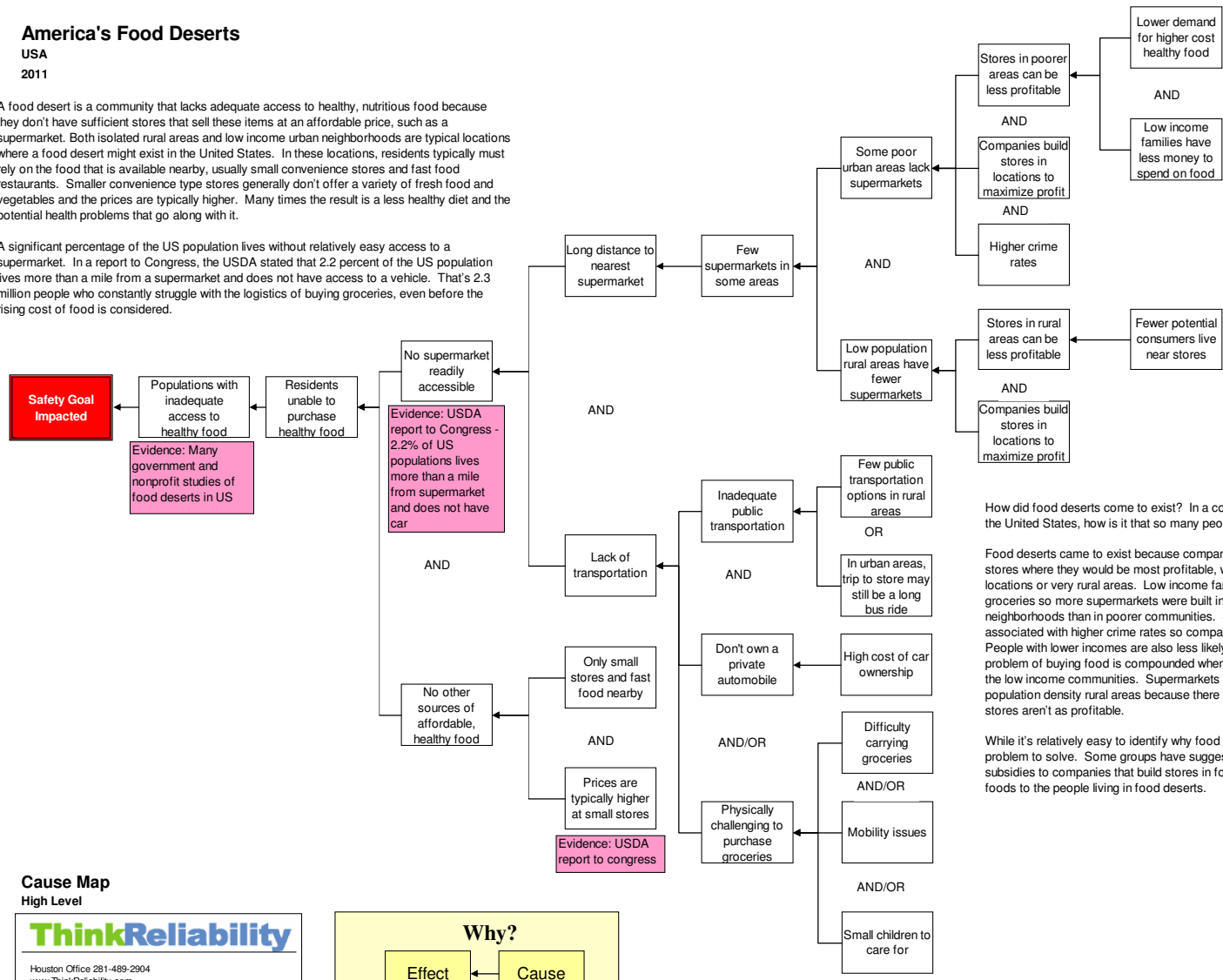


# America's Food Deserts

USA  
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A food desert is a community that lacks adequate access to healthy, nutritious food because they don't have sufficient stores that sell these items at an affordable price, such as a supermarket. Both isolated rural areas and low income urban neighborhoods are typical locations where a food desert might exist in the United States. In these locations, residents typically must rely on the food that is available nearby, usually small convenience stores and fast food restaurants. Smaller convenience type stores generally don't offer a variety of fresh food and vegetables and the prices are typically higher. Many times the result is a less healthy diet and the potential health problems that go along with it.

A significant percentage of the US population lives without relatively easy access to a supermarket. In a report to Congress, the USDA stated that 2.2 percent of the US population lives more than a mile from a supermarket and does not have access to a vehicle. That's 2.3 million people who constantly struggle with the logistics of buying groceries, even before the rising cost of food is considered.



How did food deserts come to exist? In a country as wealthy and as industrialized as the United States, how is it that so many people don't have access to a grocery store?

Food deserts came to exist because companies followed demand and built grocery stores where they would be most profitable, which is not typically low income urban locations or very rural areas. Low income families typically have less money to spend on groceries so more supermarkets were built in the more profitable, affluent neighborhoods than in poorer communities. Some low income urban areas are also associated with higher crime rates so companies were hesitant to build in those areas. People with lower incomes are also less likely to have access to a vehicle so the problem of buying food is compounded when the supermarkets are farther away from the low income communities. Supermarkets are also less likely to be built in low population density rural areas because there are fewer potential customers and the stores aren't as profitable.

While it's relatively easy to identify why food deserts came to be, it's still a tricky problem to solve. Some groups have suggested that the government should provide subsidies to companies that build stores in food deserts. Others are working to bring in foods to the people living in food deserts.

## Cause Map High Level



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