

# What are your children eating beyond the school gate?

April 3 2015

---

More than three quarters of young people buy food or drink beyond the school gate at least twice a week, according to a new report by a University of Hertfordshire research team, on behalf of Food Standards Agency in Scotland (FSA).

## Detailed insights

The new report, called 'The influence of Deprivation and the Food Environment on Food and Drink Purchased by Secondary School Pupils Beyond the School Gate', offers detailed insights from large numbers of young people for the first time on how often pupils in Scotland go beyond the school gate at lunchtime; where they go, what they purchase and the amount that they spend.

## Improvements within schools

Dr. Wendy Wills, Reader in Food and Public Health at the University of Hertfordshire's Centre for Research in Primary and Community Care (CRIPACC), said: "While the aim of this study was to investigate the [food environment](#) beyond the school gate, the findings point to improvements that could be made within schools. The external [food](#) environment can be controlled in a limited way, depending on what policy measures might be introduced, but the school food environment is more conducive to further changes, which would potentially benefit a larger proportion of young people."

Dr. Wills continued: "Taking steps and planning towards a wholesale and long term shift in food culture in schools, through improving the food, service and the physical and social environment, would be an ambitious but worthwhile goal. The findings also suggest that the lunchtime purchase and consumption of regular soft drinks and energy drinks is a concern and this might therefore be an area for further policy attention."

## Findings

As well as recording that more than three quarters (77.0%) of young people said they bought food or drink beyond the school gate at least twice each week, this rose to more than 90% of pupils in some of the most deprived areas studied. Takeaway, chip shop or fast food outlets were the most popular for pupils purchasing food or drink (25.8%), followed by newsagents or sweet shops (25.1%). 88.9% and 87.3% of children said that where their friends go and proximity were important factors, respectively. Five - 249 food businesses were registered within 800 metres (a 10-minute walk) of each case study school. The most commonly reported food items purchased were chips (purchased by 26.1%) and 28% of all pupils purchased a regular soft drink or energy drink, both of which are high in sugar. The median reported spend on food and drink beyond the school gate was £1.98.

The report also found that the service young people received beyond the school gate (as well as in schools) was critical, with rapport between young people and retailers highlighted as important by the qualitative data and 73.8% of pupils agreeing that service was important in the survey.

Dr. Wills added: "The study shows how retailers build rapport with local young people and this is part of the reason why [pupils](#) shop outside school rather than in the school cafeteria – it is also interesting to note that retailers, especially some of the smaller ones in more deprived areas

near schools, rely on these [young people](#)'s custom – it's a reciprocal relationship."

**More information:** To view the report, please visit [www.foodstandards.gov.scot/foods-beyond-school-gate](http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/foods-beyond-school-gate)

Provided by University of Hertfordshire

Citation: What are your children eating beyond the school gate? (2015, April 3) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-04-children-school-gate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.