

Researchers find 60% of infant and toddler foods sold in US do not meet desired nutritional standards

August 31 2024, by Bob Yirka



Credit: Helena Lopes from Pexels

A team of public health specialists at the University of New South Wales's George Institute for Global Health, in Australia, has found that

approximately 60% of premade infant and toddler foods sold in the U.S. do not meet international nutritional standards.

In their [paper](#), published in the journal *Nutrients*, the group describes how they analyzed nutritional data for 651 infant and toddler food products for sale by the top eight U.S. supermarket chains in the United States and what they found when they compared the data with internationally recognized nutritional guidelines.

The work by the researchers on this new effort started when it came to their attention that despite [parental concerns](#) regarding the increasing popularity and [health](#) impacts of commercial foods marketed for infants and toddlers, no governmental nutritional guidelines currently exist in the United States. That made them wonder about the nutritional value of such foods.

To learn more, they traveled to the U.S. and purchased 669 toddler and baby food items from eight of the most popular grocery chains in Raleigh, North Carolina. They then scanned the barcodes on each of the food items using FoodSwitch to get a list of the materials and nutritional facts for each of the products under study.

They followed that up by comparing the [nutritional value](#) an infant or toddler would receive through consuming the products, to nutritional standards set by the World Health Organization back in 2022.

In looking at the data, the research team found that approximately 60% of the food products studied did not meet the nutritional guidelines. More specifically, they found that 70% of them did not meet protein guidelines and that 44% of them had more sugar than is recommended. Also, approximately 25% did not meet calorie requirements.

Adding to the problem are food pouches—soft packets holding pureed

food with a nipple on the top that allows an infant or [toddler](#) to feed themselves by squeezing the packet, rather than by being spoon-fed. The research team found that just 7% of the products they tested met sugar recommendations.

The research team also found rampant packaging misinformation—99.4% of the products tested had at least one false claim and some had as many as 11.

More information: Daisy H. Coyle et al, An Evaluation of the Nutritional and Promotional Profile of Commercial Foods for Infants and Toddlers in the United States, *Nutrients* (2024). [DOI: 10.3390/nu16162782](#)

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