

COST, EQUITY AND ACCEPTABILITY OF MARKETING RESTRICTIONS ON UNHEALTHY FOODS TO PREVENT CHILD OBESITY

A NARRATIVE REVIEW

Childhood obesity is rising globally and is predicted to affect 254 million children by 2030 - a 100 million increase in the course of a decade.*

Countries worldwide have committed to a zero increase in obesity by 2025. To meet this commitment, governments are encouraged to **promote healthy behaviours and reshape obesogenic environments** through a variety of population-wide policies.

Limiting children's exposure to the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages is one such measure. Currently, **over 30 countries have some form of mandatory marketing restriction** in place.

While other reviews investigated the effectiveness of marketing restrictions for preventing obesity, the current review assessed the **cost and cost-effectiveness, equity and acceptability of interventions** to limit child exposure to unhealthy foods marketing.

Cost and cost-effectiveness

Policies to minimise child exposure to the marketing of unhealthy foods are **low cost and highly cost-effective**.

Some global estimates find that marketing restrictions can lead to **a \$6.6 saving for every \$1 invested**. Out of 13 child-oriented obesity prevention policies, marketing restrictions were found to be the **most cost-effective** in the long-term.

Equity

A **social gradient** may exist in child exposure to unhealthy product marketing. Children from lower socio-economic groups appear to watch more television and are therefore **more exposed to food advertising** than children from higher-income groups.

Moreover, students from **lower-income groups tend to eat more unhealthy snacks and more total calories** after being exposed to unhealthy food advertising.

This observation is also mirrored in the finding that marketing restrictions would result in 1.4 times **higher total cost savings** and 1.5 times **higher health benefits for the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups**.

Acceptability

The **general population mainly supports marketing restrictions to protect children**, with some concerns raised regarding possible limitations to free speech.

Health and consumer groups are strongly in favour of legislative controls. Mandatory regulations are opposed by **commercial stakeholders as they prefer voluntary measures**.

Overall, the review concluded that **there is sufficient evidence for policy makers to adopt policies to limit the exposure of children to unhealthy food marketing** in order to tackle obesogenic food environments.





Science and Technology in
childhood Obesity Policy

Cost, equity and acceptability of marketing restrictions on unhealthy foods

Mandatory restrictions on unhealthy food marketing are:



HIGHLY COST-
EFFECTIVE



MODERATELY
FAVOURABLE FOR
HEALTH EQUITY



STRONGLY
SUPPORTED BY HEALTH
PROFESSIONALS and
CIVIL SOCIETY



MODERATELY TO
STRONGLY
SUPPORTED BY
PUBLIC



MODERATELY TO
STRONGLY
OPPOSED BY
COMMERCIAL
ACTORS

More research needed on:

Different household
income and parental
education levels and
ethnic groups

1



3

Linking marketing
and consumption
especially amongst
children

Integrated marketing
(use of multiple
platforms)

2

4

Short-term cost
impacts



MARKETING RESTRICTIONS SAVE \$6.6 FOR
EVERY \$1 SPENT. IT IS THE MOST COST-
EFFECTIVE CHILD-ORIENTED OBESITY
PREVENTION POLICY.

