

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Publishes Research on ‘The Availability of Fast Food Outlets and Grocery Retailers in Northern Ireland and Their Distance From Secondary Schools’

To make it easy for consumers to explore the research findings, an [interactive map](#) has been created, which plots the data and provides a picture of how different areas compare with each other.

Naomi Davidson, Head of Science and Surveillance, FSA NI a contributing author to the report, discusses the background to the research and explains how it can help to make the food environment healthier:

“We know from the Health Inequalities Annual Report that an average of 5.6% of Year 8 pupils in Northern Ireland live with obesity, with a higher proportion observed in the most deprived areas. We also know from research in England that there are more fast food outlets in highly deprived areas.

At the FSA in Northern Ireland we have a remit for dietary health and as part of our efforts to support effective policy development, we felt we needed clearer insight on the fast food landscape in Northern Ireland. To deliver this we commissioned Cada Consulting to undertake a research study to assess the availability of fast food outlets and grocery retailers within a 400m radius, or a five minute walk, from each secondary school in Northern Ireland.”

FSA NI Head of Science and Surveillance, Naomi Davidson.

Key Research Findings

- On average, there are 116.8 fast food outlets per 100,000 of the population in Northern Ireland
- In Northern Ireland on average there are 2.2 fast food outlets within a 400m radius of a secondary school and on average 0.8 grocery retailers within a 400m radius
- Almost one in five (17%) of schools in Northern Ireland have 5 or more fast food outlets within a 400m radius
- 50% of schools have no fast food outlets within a 400m radius while 56% of schools have no grocery retailers within a 400m radius.
- Of the secondary schools with no grocery retailers within 400m, 20% have at least one fast food outlet within 400m.

- Across Northern Ireland, there are approximately 2.5 times as many secondary schools with one or more fast food outlets in the most deprived areas compared to the least; and approximately 3 times as many secondary schools with one or more grocery retailers in the most deprived areas compared to the least.

Key findings are available to view as a [summary infographic](#).

Explaining the implications of the research Professor Susan Jebb OBE, Chair of the Food Standards Agency said:

"The FSA is pleased to be working in partnership with the Department of Health to reduce the prevalence of obesity in NI. Healthy food for our children at school is important to support their day to day learning, but it is also a formative period of their life to develop healthy habits for life.

Understanding the food environments close to schools can help develop policies to increase the likelihood of children having nutritious food during the school day."

FSA Chair, Professor Susan Jebb OBE.

The [research findings](#) will inform the FSA's work with industry to improve children's meals in the out of home sector.