

# Most students exposed to school-based food commercialism

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Most students in elementary, middle and high schools are exposed to food commercialism (including exclusive beverage contracts and the associated incentives, profits and advertising) at school, although there has been a decrease in beverage vending, according to a study by Yvonne Terry-McElrath, M.S.A., of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and colleagues.

Schools are desirable marketing areas for food and beverage companies, although many of the products marketed to students are nutritionally poor, according to the study background.

Researchers estimated exposure to school-based commercialism for elementary, middle and [high school](#) students from 2007 to 2012 using a survey of school administrators.

The percentage of students attending schools with exclusive beverage contracts (EBCs), incentive programs and profits (money from beverage sales) decreased from 2007 to 2012 for all grades. By 2012, 2.9 percent of elementary school students attended schools with EBCs compared with 10.2 percent in 2007; 49.5 percent of [middle school](#) and 69.8 percent of high school students attended schools with EBCs in 2012 compared with rates of 67.4 percent and 74.5 percent, respectively, in 2007. For food vending, 24.5 percent of middle school and 51.4 percent of high school students attended schools with company-sold food vending, the results indicate.

Study findings also show that fast food was available to students at least once a week in 2012 in schools attended by 10.2 percent of elementary students, 18.3 percent of [middle school students](#) and 30.1 percent of high school students.

Overall, food coupons were the most frequent type of commercialism for 63.7 percent of elementary schools students. For middle and high [school students](#), EBCs were most prevalent in schools,

with 49.5 percent of middle school and 69.8 percent of [high school students](#) attending schools with EBCs, according to the study.

"Although there were significant decreases over time in many of the measures examined, the continuing high prevalence of school-based commercialism supports calls for, at minimum, clear and enforceable standards on the nutritional content of all foods and beverages marketed to youth in [school](#) settings," the authors conclude.

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