



Situation Report:

The Scottish Diet: It needs to change

2020 update

Why Scotland is tipping the scales in the wrong direction

Context

This update to the Situation Report on the Scottish Diet continues to highlight the ongoing challenge to improve the Scottish diet. This new report demonstrates the need for change and includes new sections exploring the out of home environment.

We know it's hard to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Although nine out of ten of us agree that obesity is a serious issue in Scotland, at the same time 65% of us are either overweight or obese and most of us believe our own diets to be healthy.

Education alone is not sufficient to change behaviour, particularly when food and drink which is high in fat, salt and sugar is cheap, widely available, and heavily promoted. As Scotland's independent food body, Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has a remit to put the consumer first and to ensure its information is independent and evidence-based.

This update to the Situation Report on the Scottish Diet highlights the ongoing challenge and includes new sections exploring the out of home environment. It is clear that there is no 'silver bullet', which is why FSS advocates

for a range of measures to transform the food environment, shift consumer behaviour and improve the Scottish diet.

This report is designed for use by policy makers, educators, stakeholders including the food industry, health professionals and consumers.

It is important to note that the data included covers a period of time prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report therefore provides a baseline for further investigation regarding the impact of COVID-19 on diet in Scotland.



82% of people think that reducing levels of obesity is a shared responsibility



Introduction

Like most of the western world, Scotland eats too much of the wrong things. It is not just a case of over-indulging occasionally – many of us make unhealthy choices about what and how much we eat throughout the day, every day. We are encouraged by a food and drink environment in which high fat, salt and sugar food is cheap, widely available and heavily promoted.

Our diet – at a glance

- 🍏 The Scottish diet remains too high in calories, fats, sugar and salt, and too low in fibre, fruit and vegetables, and other healthy foods like oil-rich fish.
- 🍏 Two out of three people in Scotland are either overweight or obese. There is a higher proportion of people living with obesity in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas.
- 🍏 Discretionary foods include confectionery, cakes, biscuits, pastries and savoury snacks, in addition to sugary drinks and drinks containing alcohol. These products tend to be high in calories, low in nutritional value and are not necessary for our health.
- 🍏 We buy a lot of these products from shops and supermarkets. They tend to be heavily promoted and represent an unhealthy proportion of our overall diet.
- 🍏 We also buy a lot of discretionary foods when we are out of home, with cakes, biscuits and pastries, and crisps/savoury snacks among the top foods purchased.
- 🍏 It's essential that we reduce the consumption of discretionary foods and drinks if we are to make significant and measurable improvements to diet and health.
- 🍏 We also buy a lot of takeaways, and food delivery is on the rise.



Overweight and obesity

Our poor national diet is contributing to health problems. This puts a huge burden on our health service, as well as on individuals and families.

In Scotland a key dietary concern is the consumption of too many calories – leading to overweight and obesity – especially from energy dense foods and drinks which are high in fat and/or sugar. Today approximately two out of three adults and around three in ten children living in Scotland are at risk of being overweight or obese. There is also a higher burden of overweight and obesity in more deprived areas, with 65% of adults in the most deprived areas being overweight or obese compared to 56% of adults in the least deprived areas. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of type II diabetes, 13 types of cancer, heart disease and stroke.



2 out of 3 adults
are either overweight
or obese



30%
of children at risk
of being overweight
or obese



65% of adults
are overweight or
obese in the most
deprived areas



56% of adults
are overweight or
obese in the least
deprived areas



**87% of type 2 diabetics
are overweight or obese**

How our diet is making us ill

It's not only being overweight or obese that causes health problems

Common diseases where diet is a contributory factor:



6,615
deaths from coronary heart disease in 2018



2,072
deaths from stroke in 2018



29%
of the adult population have high blood pressure in 2018/19



29%
of primary 1 children had obvious dental decay in 2018

Dietary risk factors:



Red and processed meat **increases** the risk of bowel cancer



Salt **increases** the risk of high blood pressure and stroke



Sugar **increases** the risk of tooth decay and can contribute to weight gain



Saturated fat **increases** the risk of cardiovascular disease



Sugary drinks **increase** the risk of type 2 diabetes

Protective dietary factors:



Fruit and vegetables **decrease** the risk of cardiovascular disease and some cancers



Fibre **decreases** the risk of bowel cancer



Oil rich fish **decreases** the risk of cardiovascular disease

Scottish Dietary Goals: where we are now

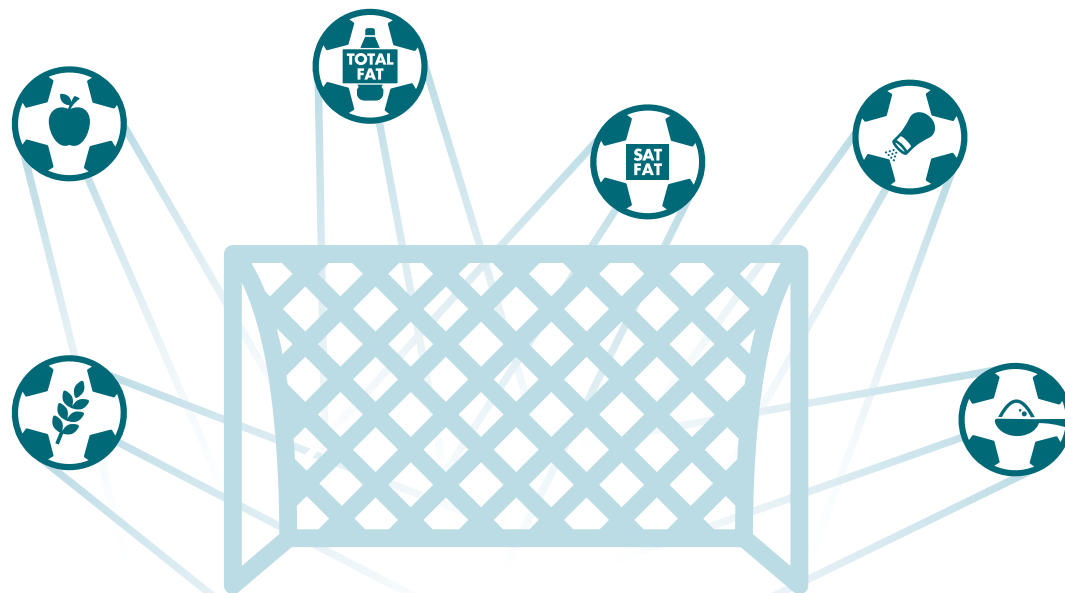
In Scotland, Dietary Goals¹ are used to benchmark the national diet and where we need to be.

Our diets are very energy dense because they contain too much sugar and fat, and this increases our risk of eating too many calories leading to overweight and obesity.

We need to replace sugary and fatty foods with fruit, vegetables and wholegrains to reduce the energy density of our diet. We also need to cut down on salt, although we have reduced our intakes of salt, two-thirds of adults are still eating too much².



The energy density of the average diet in Scotland is 40% over the Scottish dietary goal.



Scotland has been consistently missing its dietary goals for over 17 years.

¹ Scottish Dietary Goals (2016): <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00497558.pdf>

² Assessment of dietary sodium: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-assessment-of-dietary-sodium>

Discretionary foods in the diet

Too much of the Scottish diet today is made up of discretionary foods. These tend to be energy dense foods with lots of calories and little nutritional value.

A high proportion of our calories, fats, sugars (and in some cases salt), comes from discretionary foods. These are foods and drinks that we don't really need for a healthy diet, including confectionery, cakes, biscuits, pastries, savoury snacks and sugary drinks. They should be only eaten occasionally and in small amounts. Alcoholic drinks are also discretionary and are high in calories. For adults who drink, alcohol contributes around 9% of calories to their diet. Adults are advised not to drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week³ however, on average, every adult in Scotland is drinking 36% more than this.⁴



20%

of all calories and fat we eat comes from discretionary products

50%

of the sugar we consume comes from discretionary products



of sugar intake comes from sugary drinks



For adults who drink, alcohol contributes around

9%

of calories to their diet

³ UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines

⁴ Giles, L. & Richardson, E. (2020). Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy: Monitoring Report 2020. Edinburgh: Public Health Scotland. <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/3103/mesas-monitoring-report-2020.pdf>

Purchase of discretionary foods

Spotlight on...the "sugar tax"

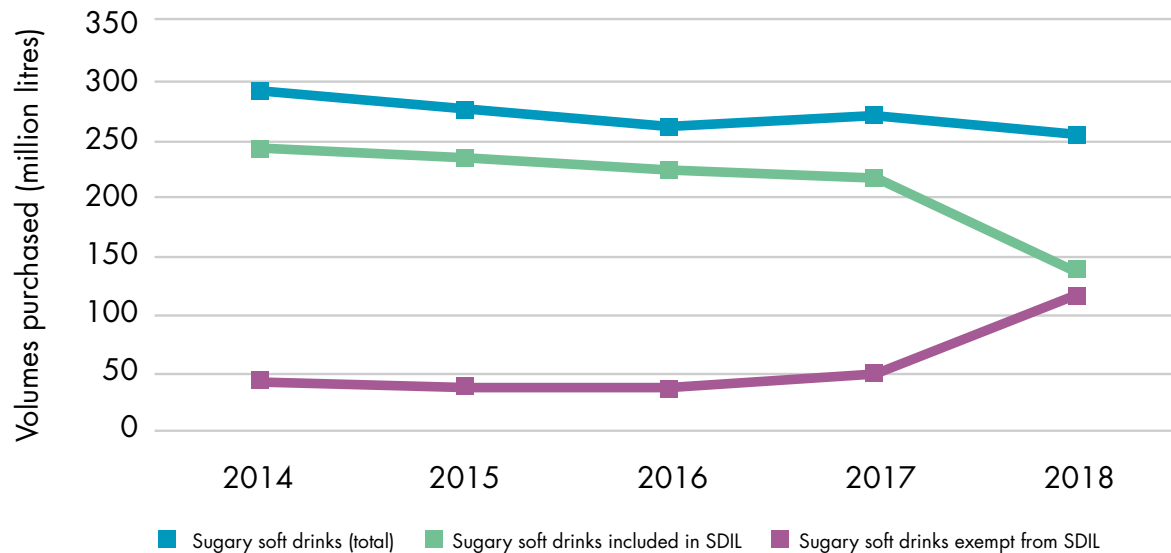
The amount of discretionary foods purchased from shops and supermarkets between 2014 and 2018 has generally increased, however the main exception to this is sugary soft drinks.

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL), commonly referred to as the "sugar tax", came into effect in

April 2018, to support efforts to tackle childhood obesity. The SDIL encouraged reformulation to reduce sugar in soft drinks. Since 2014, there has been a positive reduction in the amount of sugary soft drinks purchased in Scotland which are subject to the levy. However, there has also been a large increase in the purchase of sugary soft drinks exempt from the levy over the same time⁵.



Purchase of sugary soft drinks into the home in Scotland



Overall sugar purchased from soft drinks has reduced by around 7,267 tonnes of sugar

⁵ Soft drinks with <5g of sugar per 100ml are exempt from the SDIL, and drinks with >5g of sugar per 100ml are subject to the SDIL.

Purchase of discretionary foods

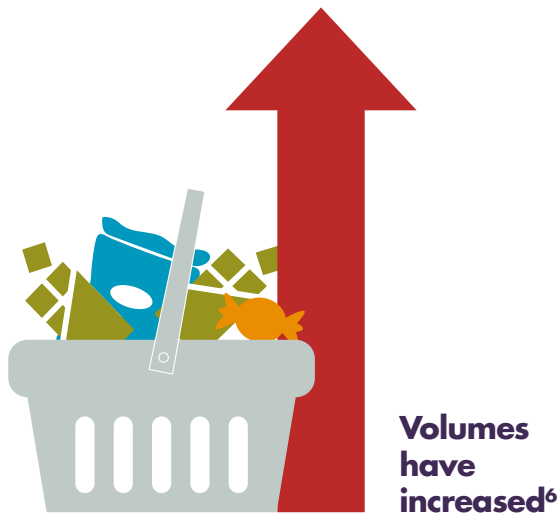
Spotlight on...pack sizes

The amount of crisps, savoury snacks and confectionery that we buy has increased between 2014 and 2018.

Despite reductions in average pack sizes of crisps and savoury snacks of around 7%, the overall amount (volume) purchased has still increased. The average pack size of multipacks of crisps and

savoury snacks decreased the most over this time, by 10%. There was little change in the average pack size of confectionery between 2014 and 2018.

In 2018 multipacks were the most common pack type for crisps and savoury snacks, whilst sharing packs were the most common pack type for confectionery.



⁶ Food Standards Scotland. Monitoring retail purchase and price promotions in Scotland, 2014-2018, (2020)
<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/monitoring-retail-purchase-and-price-promotions-in-scotland-2014-2018>

Price promotions

Around 32% of the calories we buy from shops and supermarkets are on promotion and we know that we tend to buy a lot more unhealthy products on promotion than healthy products. For example, as much as 74% of confectionery was bought on promotion. Surprisingly, on average it can be more expensive to buy foods on price promotion compared to those with no price promotion.



Price promotions: pack types and sizes

In 2018, there was little difference in the average pack size of crisps, savoury snacks and confectionery purchased on promotion compared to not on promotion. However, there is a difference in the types of packs which are most frequently purchased on promotion.

For crisps and savoury snacks, larger sized multipacks and sharing packs were more frequently purchased on promotion compared to smaller, single packs. For confectionery, single packs were the most frequently purchased on promotion alongside seasonal and novelty products such as Easter eggs and chocolate boxes.

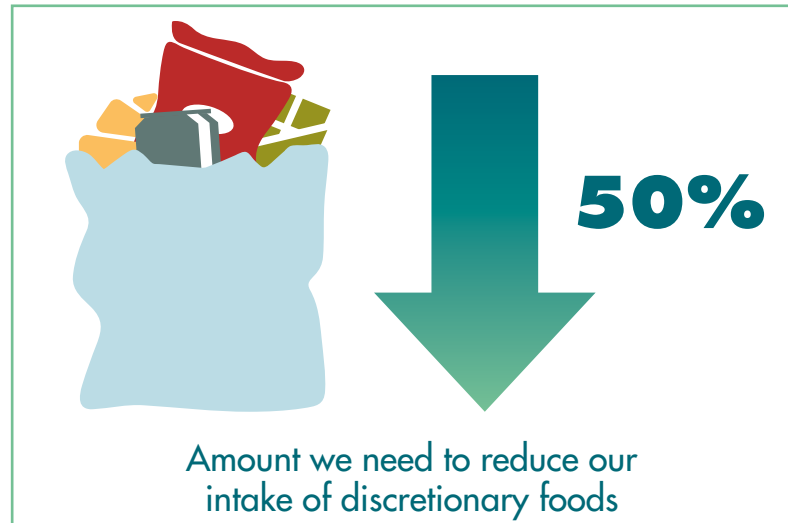


Cutting back on discretionary food and drink

We all eat too much confectionery, biscuits, cakes, pastries, savoury snacks and sugary drinks. For example, an average 7 year old boy in Scotland will eat more than his bodyweight in these foods every year.

We also buy a lot of these foods when we are eating out of home, and they are particularly prevalent when young children are eating out. Around 67% of visits by children up to 9 years old contain a discretionary item, compared to 36% for adults eating out by themselves⁷.

A key step to improving everybody's diet would be to reduce the amount of these foods we eat by **at least** half. This would be a first step, as we should actually be eating even less.



⁷ Food Standards Scotland – analysis of data from Kantar. Out of Home panel (2019).

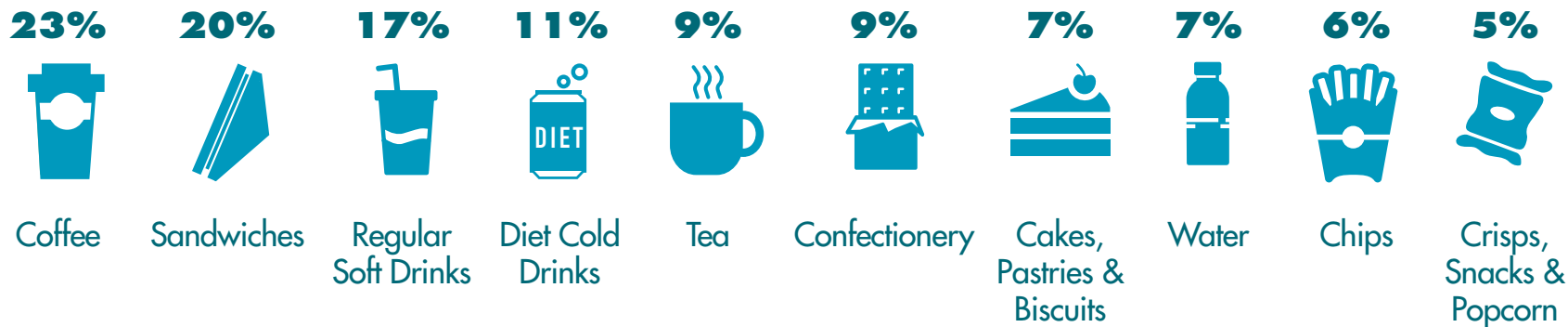
Eating outside the home

The food and drink we buy from cafés, restaurants, takeaways and other outlets tend to be less healthy. The most popular foods and drinks purchased out of home in 2019 were coffee, carbonated drinks, sandwiches, confectionery, tea, cakes, biscuits and pastries, chips, water, juice/juice drinks and crisps/savoury snacks.

Nutrition information is often not available when eating out, and price promotions are commonly used to encourage purchase of confectionery and other sweet items like biscuits, cakes and desserts⁸.

Consumers recognise that they typically eat less healthily out of home, and support the idea of both mandatory calorie labelling and the food industry reducing fat, salt, sugar and the cost of healthy food.

Top 10 food and drink items purchased Out of Home (% visits in 2019)



Eating out of home is viewed as the norm, but is also seen as a "treat"

⁸ Robinson, E., et al., *Point of choice kilocalorie labelling in the UK eating out of home sector: a descriptive study of major chains*. BMC Public Health, 2019. **19**(1): p. 649.



Takeaways and deliveries

In 2019, 11% of the visits we make to the out of home environment in Scotland were for a takeaway.

We spent around £820 million on takeaways in 2019. Chicken, burger, Chinese and Thai, fish and pizza meals were the most popular choices.

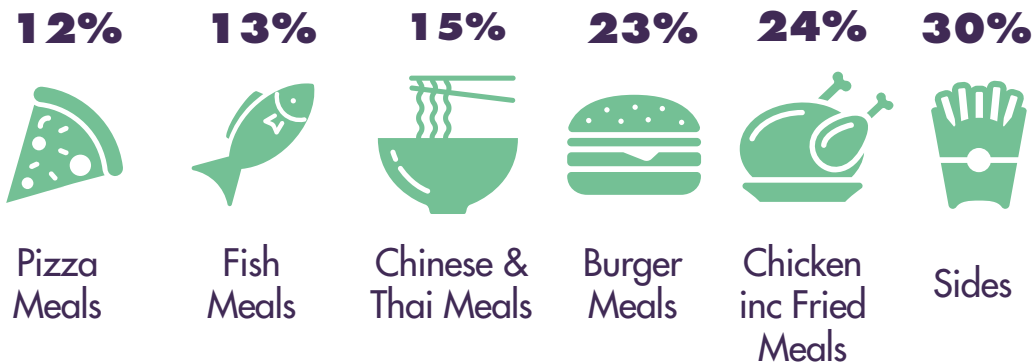
A variety of methods for ordering and delivering takeaways using technology have emerged in recent years and this is a growing market in Scotland.

In 2019, around half of all orders made using online technology were done so via restaurant apps, and the other half were through delivery services such as Just Eat and Deliveroo.

Different delivery platforms attract different consumers, with young consumers being more engaged whilst older consumers opt for more traditional methods of accessing a takeaway such as placing an order over the phone.



Top takeaway meals and dishes in Scotland (% visits in 2019)



Although delivery services are growing rapidly, they are mainly concentrated in cities

Food on the go

We buy a lot of food and drink to eat on the go. On average, each person made nearly 131 on the go visits in 2019.⁹

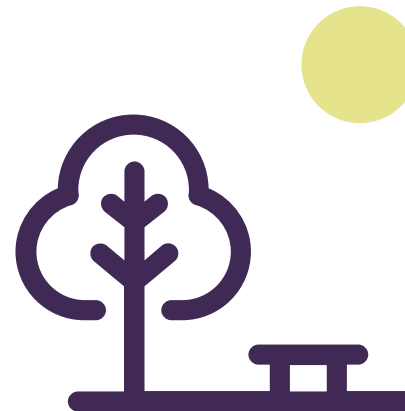
The majority of food we purchased on the go in 2019 was consumed when travelling, outside, or in the workplace.

Convenience led outlets, particularly supermarkets, bakeries and sandwich shops, made up nearly 40% of our visits for eating on the go. Supermarkets have also increased their on the go offerings by replicating food service experiences, such as in store coffee shops and bakeries.

Where food on the go is consumed
(% share occasions in 2019)



Workplace:
37%



Outside:
27%



Travelling:
17%



The workplace makes up a large proportion of on the go occasions, and as a result younger consumers contribute a high proportion

⁹ Food on the go includes any foods and drinks purchased from an OOH establishment but consumed 'off premise' and not taken back home.

Children eating out of home

Purchasing for children and young people made up over 10% of out of home visits made in Scotland in 2019. Quick service restaurants were one of the most popular places to visit, particularly for children under 10 years old¹⁰.

In Scotland, we spent around £515 million on children's food in 2019. People eating out with children made an average of 59 yearly trips and spent £3.61 on average per item.

The most popular main meals purchased for children in 2019 were chicken, burger, pizza, sausage and fish meals. These types of meals can often be less healthy, and there is plenty of scope for improvement.

Promotions were more likely to be used when eating out with children and, although reduces the price of meals, overall it didn't result in more items being purchased.



Children are most likely to be taken to pizza or chicken outlets that offer a children's menu

Top main meals consumed by children outside the home in Scotland (2019)



¹⁰ This includes children and young people up to age 19 years old.

Appetite for change

Although there has been little progress towards improving diet and obesity in Scotland, mind-sets are shifting and support for action to improve the food environment may be growing.

Consumers recognise that it is often difficult to feed their children healthy food when eating out of home

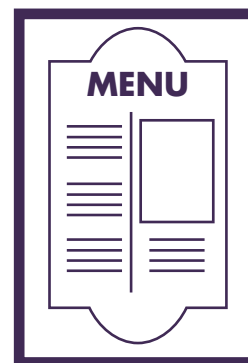
78% of people think children's menus should offer more healthy choices

71% of people think children should be offered smaller portions from the adult menu



91%

of people think cheap, fast food is too readily available



64%

of people think cafes and restaurants should display calories on their menus



44%

of people would support banning promotions on unhealthy products

In conclusion

This Situation Report highlights the continued lack of progress towards achieving the Scottish Dietary Goals, set against a backdrop of persistent high levels of overweight and obesity in Scotland.

Poorer health outcomes from COVID-19 are associated with overweight and obesity and this is shifting mind-sets shown by greater levels of concern about obesity, poor diet and its health consequences. A key step to improving our diets is to cut down on discretionary foods and drinks by at least half. The food environment needs to change to make it easier for consumers to choose a healthier diet, with fewer discretionary foods and more fruit, vegetables and fibre. Everyone, including the food and drink industry, media and government needs to play their part.

It is important to recognise that the data included within this report precedes the COVID-19 pandemic. Results from recent research focussing on behaviour and attitudes highlighted that COVID-19 has impacted considerably on our purchasing and eating habits. 28% of people said they ate healthier meals more often, however 37% also said they snacked more on cakes, biscuits, confectionery and savoury snacks. Around a third of people reported that they purchased fewer takeaways during lockdown. The negative impact of obesity on COVID-19 outcomes has brought into sharp focus the need for wide-reaching and multifaceted ways to prevent and treat overweight and obesity. Food Standards Scotland will monitor purchase and consumption habits in Scotland to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the Scottish diet.



“We already know that poor diet and obesity leads to health issues. We cannot ignore the fact that overweight and obesity is a contributory factor to a person’s ability to deal with the health consequences of COVID-19. As we move through the pandemic, it is going to be really important to assess what we can all do to improve our diet and sustain that improvement going forward, and Food Standards Scotland will continue to play its part to ensure people in Scotland have healthier diets.”

Geoff Ogle, Chief Executive Officer,
Food Standards Scotland

Table 5: Mean fat intake for 2013 – 2015 compared to Scottish Dietary Goal (<35% food energy)

Scottish Dietary Goal for total fat	Current Intake (2013 - 2015)	Progress made
Intake to decrease to no more than 35% food energy	39.3%	No

Table 6: Mean saturated fat intake for 2013 – 2015 compared to Scottish Dietary Goal (<11% food energy)

Scottish Dietary Goal for saturated fat	Current Intake (2013 - 2015)	Progress made
Intake to decrease to no more than 11% food energy	15.3%	Little

Table 7: Mean free sugars intake for 2013 – 2015 compared to Scottish Dietary Goal (<5% total energy)⁴

Scottish Dietary Goal for saturated fat	Current Intake (2013 - 2015)	Progress made
Intake to decrease to no more than 5% food energy	14.3%	Little

Table 8: Mean salt intake for 2014 compared to Scottish Dietary Goal (<6g/day)⁵

Scottish Dietary Goal for salt	Current Intake (2014)	Progress made
No more than 6g per day	7.8g	Yes, intakes have reduced by 13%

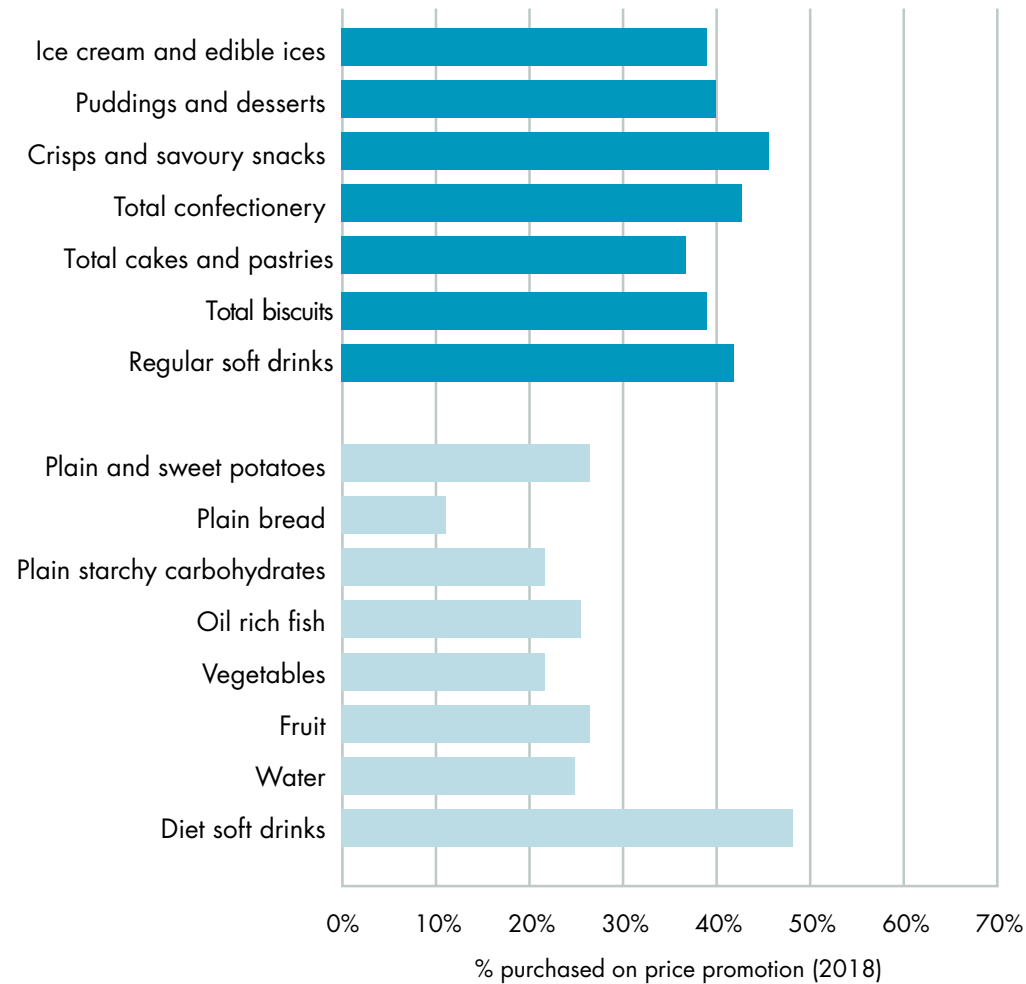
⁴ The Scottish Dietary Goal for sugar was revised in 2016 and now recommends that intakes of free sugars should be no more than 5% of total energy. The previous goal was for non-milk extrinsic sugars and recommended that intakes were no more than 11% energy. Free sugars includes all sugars added to foods and those present in fruit juice and honey. The only difference between the definition of free sugars and NMES is that NMES also includes 50% of the sugar found in dried, stewed or canned fruit.

⁵ National Diet and Nutrition Survey. Assessment of dietary sodium in Scotland, 2006-2014 (2016)

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-assessment-of-dietary-sodium>

Retail purchase and price promotions in Scotland⁶

Figure 1: Proportion of retail purchase (nutritional volume) on promotion in Scotland (2018)



⁶ Food Standards Scotland. Monitoring retail purchase and price promotions in Scotland, 2014-2018, (2020) <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/monitoring-retail-purchase-and-price-promotions-in-scotland-2014-2018>

Table 9: Annual purchase of total regular soft drinks, and regular soft drinks exempt from and subject to the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL), in Scotland, nutritional volume in litres (2014-2018)

Category	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Regular Soft Drinks	289,091,324	275,597,852	261,307,275	269,376,570	256,404,742
Regular Soft Drinks above levy threshold	245,712,364	234,876,633	224,250,585	219,356,552	138,867,710
Regular Soft Drinks below levy threshold	43,378,960	40,721,220	37,056,690	50,020,018	117,537,032

Pack sizes and pack types of confectionery and crisps and savoury snacks in Scotland⁷

Definitions

Crisps & Savoury Snacks	Confectionery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Packs – Weighing up to 39g • Maxi packs – Weighing between 40g & 80g • Family packs – Weighing over 81g • Multipacks - Containing a number of individually wrapped packets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single packs – Weighing up to 100g • Sharing packs – Weighing over 100g • Multipacks – Containing a number of individually wrapped packets • Other - Including boxed confectionery, Easter eggs, seasonal and novelty products

Table 10: Average Pack Sizes for Crisps & Savoury Snacks and Confectionery (2014-2018)

Savoury Snacks: Average Pack Size (g)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Savoury Snacks	162	159	157	155	151
Standard	33	33	34	35	34
Maxi	51	52	49	49	49
Multipacks	189	183	180	176	169
Family	165	160	159	157	156

Confectionery: Average Pack Size (g)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Confectionery	149	149	150	150	149
Singles	50	50	49	51	53
Sharing	165	164	163	164	164
Multipacks	171	164	165	165	162
Other	186	187	186	189	193

Table 11: Purchase of Pack Types on Promotion for Crisps & Savoury Snacks and Confectionery, % purchased (2014-2018)

Savoury Snacks:	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Standard	27	23	28	26	26
Maxi	23	23	21	23	25
Multipacks	57	55	56	53	52
Family	59	58	57	54	54

Confectionery:	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Singles	41	45	47	48	49
Sharing	43	44	43	39	36
Multipacks	56	51	47	46	46
Other	52	49	49	50	50

⁷ Food Standards Scotland. Monitoring retail purchase and price promotions in Scotland, 2014-2018, (2020)
<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/monitoring-retail-purchase-and-price-promotions-in-scotland-2014-2018>

Eating outside the home⁸

Figure 2: Top 10 food and drink items purchased Out of Home (2019)

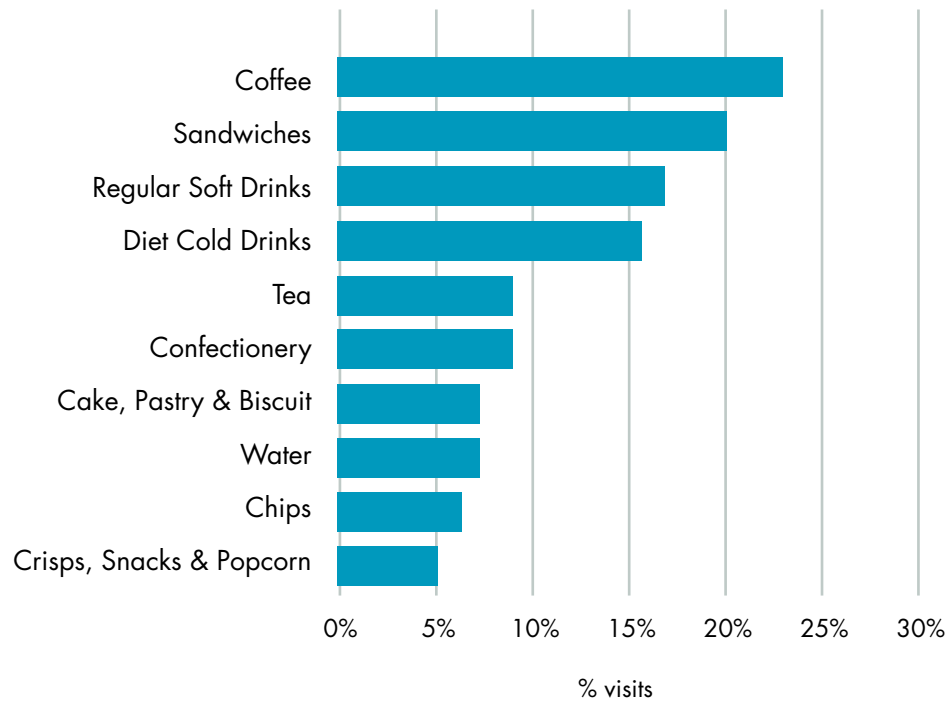
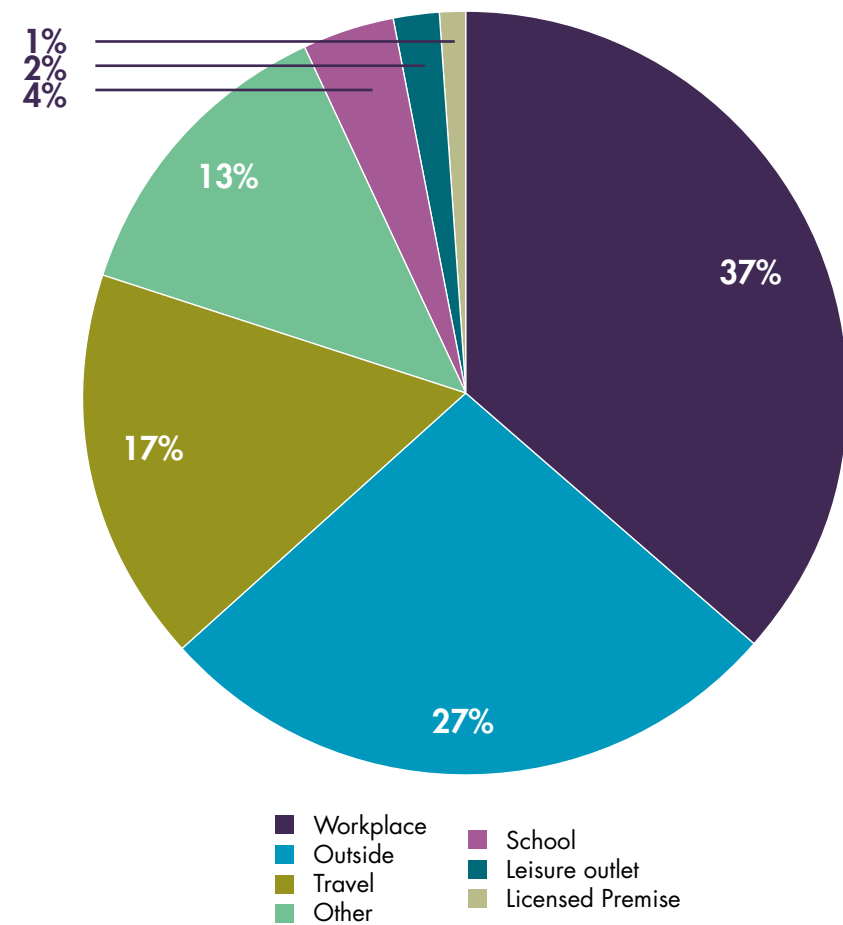


Figure 3: Where food on the go is consumed in Scotland (% share of occasions in 2019)



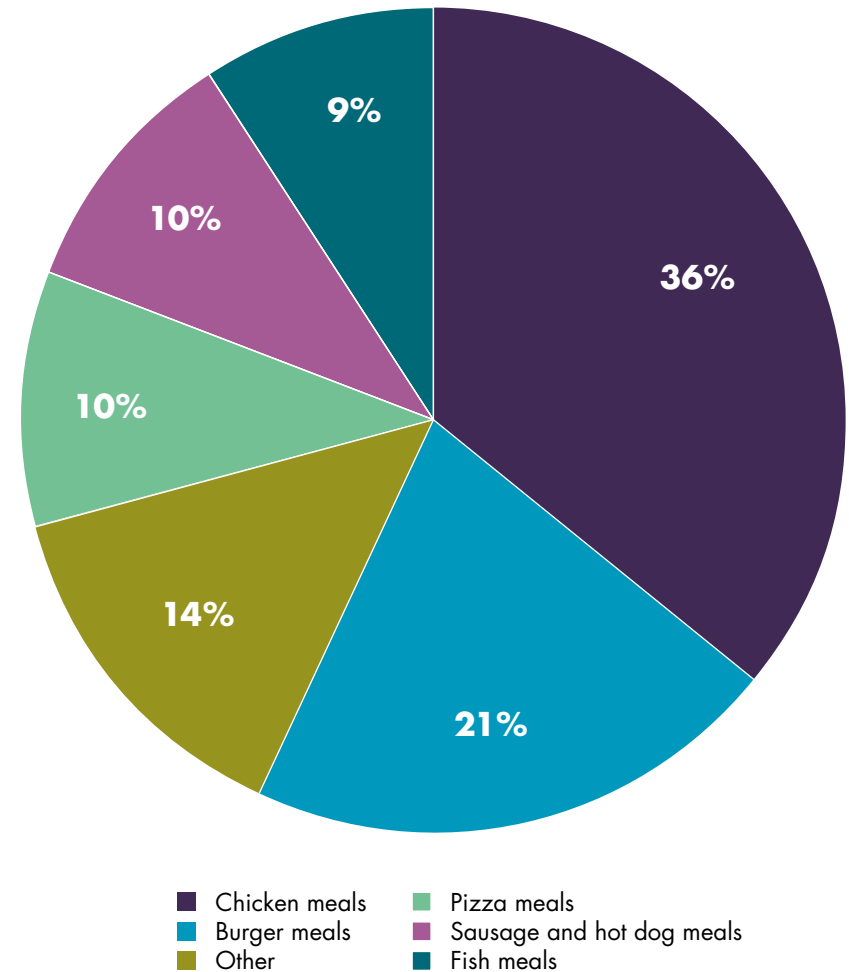
Food on the go accounted for 56% of all out of home occasions in Scotland in 2019

⁸ Food Standards Scotland. The Out of Home Environment, 2019 (2020): <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/the-out-of-home-environment-in-scotland>

Table 12: Total trips (% share) for takeaway main meals in Scotland (2019)

	Total OOH Market (% share)	Total Takeaway (% share)
Sides	23	29
Chicken inc Fried Meals	18	24
Burger Meals	23	23
Chinese & Thai Meals	8	15
Fish Meals	14	13
Pizza Meals	8	12
Other Meals	11	9
Indian Meals	5	9
Sausage & Hot Dog Meals	5	7
Breakfast Meals	13	3
Vegetarian Meals	3	3
Kebab	1	2
Other Meat Centred Meals	6	2
Beef Meals	4	1
Italian Meals	6	1

Figure 4: Top meals consumed by children eating Out of Home in Scotland - % visits (2019)



Main meals accounted for 25.8% of total out of home visits which included children

Calculations for 7 year old boy's intake of discretionary foods

Table 17: Intakes of discretionary foods in 4 – 10 year old boys in Scotland²³

	Intake (g/day)	Intake (g/year)
Biscuits	15	5475
Buns, cakes, pastries and fruit pies	17	6205
Sweet confectionery	11	4015
Chocolate confectionery	12	4380
Savoury snacks	11	4015
TOTAL	66	24,090

Table 18: Median weight of boys and girls aged 4 – 10 years, based on WHO growth standards²⁴

Age	Median weight (kg), boys and girls
4	16.3 kg for boys, 16.0 kg for girls
5	18.6 kg for boys, 18.2 kg for girls
6	21.0 kg for boys, 21.0 kg for girls
7	23.0 kg for boys, 23.0 kg for girls
8	26.0 kg for boys, 26.0 kg for girls
9	29.0 kg for boys, 29.0 kg for girls
10	31.5 kg for boys, 32.0 kg for girls

²³ National diet and nutrition survey rolling programme results from years 1- 4 (combined) for Scotland (2008/09-2011/12): <http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-rolling-programme-results-from-years-1-4>

²⁴ Adapted from: Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition. Dietary Reference Values for Energy, table 8 (2011), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-dietary-reference-values-for-energy>

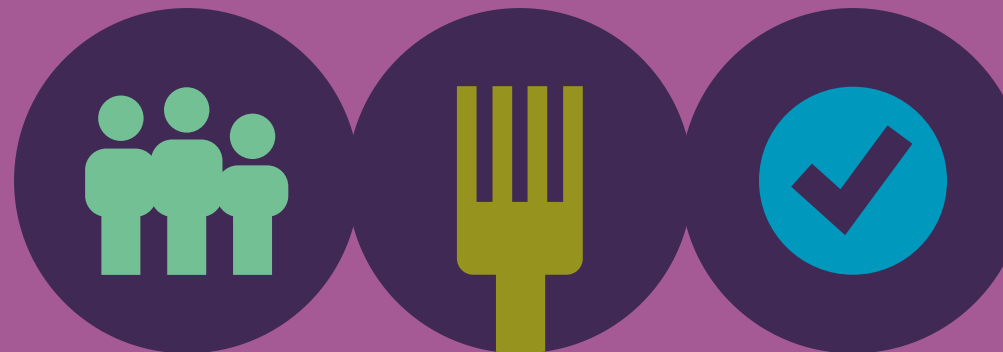
Table 21: FSS Consumer tracking in Scotland during COVID-19²⁸


	Results
% who said they ate healthier meals more often	28%
% who said they snacked more on cakes, biscuits, confectionery and savoury snacks	37%
% who said they purchased fewer takeaways during lockdown	33%

²⁸ Food Standards Scotland. Consumer tracking during COVID-19. Wave 3: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/covid-19-consumer-tracker-wave-3>

Food Standards Scotland

For safe food and healthy eating



 Food Standards Scotland is the food body for Scotland and is here to promote healthier eating, to **keep the food we eat safe** and to make sure we know the food we're eating is what it says it is on the label.

 Food Standards Scotland's **nutrition remit** – to put the consumer first in improving the Scottish diet – commits us to working with government, the food industry, health professionals and the media as well as the public themselves to **achieve healthier eating in Scotland**.

To read more about what we do and to keep up to date with our news, visit

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