

# Children's Eating and Drinking Habits - UK - February 2011

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## What is this report about?

Obesity is still dominating the headlines however it seems that finally there is some evidence of positive change in children's eating and drinking habits. School dinner choices have improved; children are snacking less during the day and appear to have cut back on crisps, sweets and chocolate. It is difficult to tell whether this is because of enforced restrictions on lunchboxes or if children are genuinely responding to external pressure to eat more healthily.

## What have we found out?

- The national pocket money budget stands at around £2.5 billion per annum, approximately 8% less than in 2009. A significant gender gap has been almost closed, while children living in London have faced the steepest cutbacks (£3 less per week than in 2009).
- The cost of goods is increasing, forcing children to prioritise their spend more they have had to in the past. The children's market has effectively shrunk in line with the recession; their spending habits have been curbed just as those of their parents have. Implications for the food industry are that pester power in the supermarket is likely to increase since children have less money to spend, therefore they will want to have a greater influence on their parents' grocery shop.
- Girls are more likely to snack on fruit, yogurt, cereal bars, cheese, ice creams and even vegetables, while boys are more likely to snack on crisps, biscuits and chocolate. Young boys are also more likely to spend their own money on soft drinks.
- Some 44% say they make more of an effort at weekends to eat together as a family, when there is typically more time to relax and take time over dinner. Sunday lunch is still a bit of an institution in the UK: 72% of 7-10s say they have a roast dinner on a Sunday.
- Healthy eating is high on the agenda, with one in four children aged 11 to 15 almost always looking for the healthy option when shopping.
- Almost half of children (7 to 15) have eaten out in the last week. Catering for families' needs, in terms of healthy options and convenience, offers a distinct competitive advantage.

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