Under Pressure: New evidence on young people’s broadcast marketing exposure in the UK

In January 2018, new evaluative research provided evidence that TV content – both on traditional TV and new ‘on-demand’ channels – remain a substantial risk for high HFSS consumption amongst young people.

This report builds on this evidence and explores the justifications for policies designed to reduce young people’s HFSS consumption level. It does so by a) benchmarking HFSS consumption to establish if its reduction is a priority, b) examining the balance between healthy and unhealthy influences on young people to establish if this age group needs better support and c) estimating broadcast marketing’s relationship with diet, in comparison with non-broadcast forms of marketing, to provide a more holistic account of whether broadcast regulations are functioning as intended. The areas of marketing investigated in this study are as follows:

- Broadcast Advertising
- Offline, non-broadcast Advertising
- Added Value Advertising

Research aims

We aim to:

- Benchmark the levels of youth HFSS consumption and provide further evidence on whether it remains at harmful levels in 2018
- Establish the level of unhealthy messaging faced by young people, and the consequences this might have on their dietary choices
- Add contextualised evidence on broadcast marketing regulations and whether this is a pragmatic priority for policymakers

The general hypothesis is that higher levels of broadcast marketing exposure will predict increased consumption of HFSS products, that HFSS consumption will be harmfully high and that unhealthy messages will be more common than healthy messages.

Policy recommendations

1. HFSS consumption is too high and population level interventions should be implemented.
2. Young people are under huge pressure from unhealthy messaging and updating broadcast advert regulations are the best way to help support them.
Restrictions should apply all broadcast mediums, including television, online on-demand services and radio.