

## Abstract

# Benchmarking the Energy, Sodium, Sugar and Saturated Fat Content of Products and Meal Combos at NZ Fast-Food Outlets in 2020 <sup>†</sup>

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**Abstract:** Food consumed away from home is contributing an increasing proportion of household food budgets in New Zealand (NZ). This study aimed to benchmark the healthiness of the NZ fast-food supply in 2020. Data on the serving size and nutrient content of products were collected from company websites and in-store visits of 27 fast-food chains. For each fast-food category and type of combo meal, the medians and interquartile ranges were calculated for serving size (g/mL) and energy (kilojoules-kJ), sodium (mg), total sugar (g) and saturated fat (g) per serving. The nutrient contents/servings were benchmarked against the United Kingdom (UK) soft drinks levy thresholds and targets for salt for foods consumed away from home; the NZ daily intake guidelines for energy, sodium and saturated fat; and the WHO recommendation for free sugars. Nutrition information was available for 1777 products and 176 meal combos. More than one in ten drinks would qualify for a UK soft drinks levy, and 47% ( $n = 1072$ ) of products with sodium data exceeded the relevant UK targets. The categories with the highest median energy and nutrient contents per serving were: burgers (2585 kJ-energy and 1091 mg-sodium), savoury pastries (13 g saturated fat) and milkshakes/smoothies (49 g total sugar). The meal combos represented one meal occasion, but an average combo provided 50% of the daily energy requirement, 89% of the maximum sodium recommendation, 81% of the recommended sugar intake, and 46% of the recommended saturated fat intake. Fast-food products and combo meals in NZ contribute far more energy and negative nutrients to the recommended daily intake targets than is optimal for good health. The NZ Government needs to set reformulation targets and portion-size guidance to reduce the potential impact that increasing fast-food consumption is likely to have on the health of New Zealanders. All fast-food chains need to provide sufficient nutrition information about their products to inform consumers.

**Keywords:** fast food; sodium; total sugars; population health; food environments



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**Data Availability Statement:** Because of the commercial and legal restrictions to the use of copyrighted material, it is not possible to share data openly, but unredacted versions of the dataset are available with a licensed agreement that they will be restricted to non-commercial use. For access to Nutritrack, please contact the National Institute for Health Innovation at the University of Auckland at [enquiries@nihi.auckland.ac.nz](mailto:enquiries@nihi.auckland.ac.nz).

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