

# Obesity APPG: Survey Investigating the Impact of the Government's Calorie Labelling Policy: Analysis and Results

This survey been developed by the secretariat of the APPG on Obesity and finalised with the officers of the APPG. The secretariat of the APPG on Obesity is provided by Healthcomms Consulting and is funded by financial support provided by Slimming World and Johnson & Johnson. These companies have no influence over the work of the secretariat of the APPG on Obesity and they have had no influence over the development of this survey. Full editorial control remains the sole responsibility of the officers of the APPG. Further details of the APPG can be found on the [APPG register](#) and on the [Obesity APPG website](#).

## Survey Analysis – Calorie Labelling in Restaurants and Takeaway Outlets

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In July 2020, the UK Government released its obesity strategy. Almost two years on, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Obesity is keen to understand the impact and perception of the obesity strategy for the general public. A significant policy within the strategy has been the introduction of calorie labelling of food and drinks in restaurants and takeaway outlets with more than 250 employees. Smaller restaurant and takeaway outlets are also being encouraged to implement this policy. The APPG on Obesity is keen to identify what impact calorie labelling has had.

The findings from this survey contribute to the APPG on Obesity's understanding of the effectiveness of this current health policy, and inform its ongoing work to ensure obesity is a top priority for government.

This survey found that 89.9% of the 94 respondents were aware of the Government's calorie labelling policy for restaurants and takeaways, but that only 30.34% of respondents found the calorie labelling policy helpful in terms of making choices about what to eat and drink when out at restaurants or ordering from takeaways.

76.4% of respondents also said that calorie labelling has no impact on whether or not they choose to eat at a certain type of restaurant, whether this be a fast food restaurant, or a healthier alternative.

39.33% of respondents said that they did not believe this government policy has altered healthy eating habits in the UK.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to give broader feedback on the policy of calorie labelling as it is implemented currently. One respondent said that the policy should be expanded to all restaurants and takeaways in order to be most effective.

Another individual said that the Government should have implemented a traffic light system, similar to calorie and nutrient information on food packaging, as not all individuals hold knowledge regarding calories and calorific content.

Three respondents mentioned the impact of the policy on individuals suffering with or recovering from eating disorders. Specifically, that calorie labelling could prevent them from engaging in social situations and/or feeling comfortable eating out.

Multiple individuals raised the accuracy of calories as the measurement of choice, saying that additional knowledge of food, nutrients and calories is often required in order for the information to be actually useful.

These results clearly show that while there is awareness of calorie labelling, the policy has had a limited impact on healthy eating habits. Wider obesity data also shows that the policy has not had an effect on obesity levels, with obesity rates still continuing to rise, with the latest data from NHS Digital showing that the prevalence of children living with obesity has increased from 19.0% in 2010-11 to 25.5% in 2020-21<sup>1</sup>.

## Dataset Analysis

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Of the respondents, 32 were aged 45-54 (35.96%), and 75 respondents were female (84.27%).

There was a geographic spread of respondents across England, as well as 11 respondents from Scotland and Wales, however the largest group of respondents (25.84%) were from London.

Furthermore, although the Government's calorie labelling policy applies to both restaurants and takeaways, respondents ate at restaurants more often than from takeaways, and therefore their answers may be more informed by this pattern.

## Recommendations for the Government

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- To bring forward implementation of the additional elements of the obesity strategy, in order to target obesity more effectively than the current strategies.
- To work with SMEs to ensure that this policy is implemented across all businesses.
- To research and implement additional and wider ranging policies in order to target obesity effectively.

### For More Information:

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<sup>i</sup> NHS Digital, (2021), National Child Measurement Programme, England 2020/21 School Year, <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2020-21-school-year>

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