

Fast Food Outlets and Grocery Retailers in NI and their distance to secondary schools

Study 2: An analysis of student-level deprivation



Study 1, published in June 2025, looked at how many fast food outlets (FFO) and grocery retailers (GR) are located near secondary schools in Northern Ireland, and whether this differs by area-level deprivation.



Study 2 builds on this by looking beyond where schools are located to consider the deprivation of students attending them when assessing nearby food outlets.

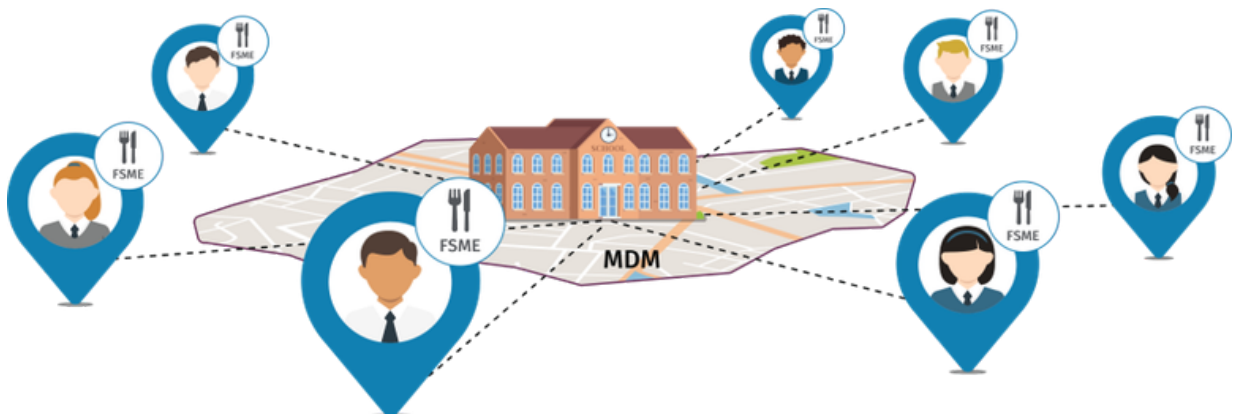


What is new in Study 2?

A student focused view of deprivation when examining distance of FFO and GR to schools

Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) is used as an indicator of student deprivation

It compares FSME and Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) (used in Study 1)



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What do the results show?



There is no clear relationship between how deprived an area is (MDM) and how deprived a school's student cohort is (FSME).

Schools with more deprived student cohorts are more likely to have *some* fast food outlets nearby, but, high density clusters of fast food outlets are more common around schools with less deprived cohorts.



Schools with more deprived student cohorts are slightly more likely to have at least one grocery retailer nearby and high numbers of grocery retailers (2–5) are seen around both more and less deprived cohorts.

Overall this study has shown that

Food environments around schools are highly variable



FSME and MDM capture different aspects of deprivation

Things to consider

The food environment can have a significant impact on the dietary choices and behaviours of young people.

Understanding the food environments close to schools can help develop policies to increase the likelihood of children having nutritious food during the school day.

There are many other factors to take into account that drive food choices and may impact health outcomes, such as: cost, taste preferences, advertising and promotions.

