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## **Ban Junk Food in Public Schools, Say Arizonans**

Fifty-nine percent of Arizonans support banning the sale of all non-nutritious foods (junk food) in Arizona public schools, according to the results of a recent telephone survey. Two-thirds of Arizonans (65%) oppose soft drink sales in public schools, and seventy percent oppose fast food franchises selling their products in the schools. While over three-quarters of Arizonans (78%) are aware that obesity rates in the state are increasing, two-thirds (67%) believe that taxing junk food would not be an effective way of battling obesity.

The *Grand Canyon State Poll* was conducted by the Social Research Laboratory at Northern Arizona University. Calling took place between October 3 and October 20, 2003. Six hundred and ten randomly-selected Arizona adults participated in the survey. Survey results are accurate within a +/- 4 percent margin of error, at a 95 percent confidence level.

### **Obesity is an Increasing Problem**

Obesity is a growing problem in American society, according to health department statistics. More than three-quarters of Arizonans (78%) say they are aware that the percentage of Arizona adults who are overweight or obese is increasing. Two percent believe the percentage of obese people in Arizona is decreasing and 13 percent think the obesity rate in Arizona has stayed the same over time.

## **Arizonans Support Banning Non-nutritious Foods in School**

More and more public schools are allowing soft drink and fast food companies to sell their products to students. Two-thirds of Arizonans (65%) oppose allowing soft drink companies such as Pepsi and Coke to sell their products in Arizona public schools. Seventy percent oppose allowing fast food franchises such as McDonald's and Taco Bell to sell their products in the public schools.

Age plays a critical role in determining support for these sales. Arizonans over 59 are more opposed to allowing soft drink companies into the schools (76%) than younger Arizonans. Less than a majority of 18 to 34-year-olds (45%) oppose allowing soft drink companies into public schools. While 73 percent of older Arizonans oppose allowing fast food franchises into the schools, 62 percent of younger Arizonans oppose this practice.

Arizonans of all education levels agree that junk food should be kept out of schools. Seventy percent of those with a four-year college degree oppose soft drink sales in schools and 76 percent oppose fast food franchises in the schools. Among Arizonans with a high school education or less, 55 percent oppose soft drink sales and 61 percent oppose fast food franchises in schools.

A majority of Arizonans (59%) support banning the sale of all non-nutritious foods in Arizona public schools. Thirty-nine percent oppose such a ban. While two-thirds of older Arizonans (67%) and more well-educated Arizonans (67%) support a ban of this type, less than a majority of younger Arizonans (45%) and people with no more than a high school degree (48%) support such a ban.

Kristi Hagen, Associate Director of the Social Research Laboratory, commented, "It's interesting that virtually everyone recognizes the increasing problem of obesity in Arizona; yet, there is a disconnect for some when it comes to banning non-nutritious foods from being sold in public schools. We probably shouldn't be surprised that younger people are more reluctant to ban the sale of soft drinks, fast foods and non-nutritious foods in schools. This is the 'fast food' generation that grew up eating McDonald's and drinking Coke regularly."

### **Non-nutritious Foods Should Not Be Taxed More Heavily**

Initiatives are being developed across the United States and other countries calling for a junk food tax as a way of reducing obesity. Arizonans were asked if they thought such an initiative would be effective or ineffective at reducing the percentage of adults who are overweight or obese. Nearly two-thirds of Arizonans (67%) believe such a tax would be ineffective at reducing current trends toward weight gain. Less than one-third (30%) of Arizonans believe such a tax would be effective at reaching the desired goal. Younger Arizonans were slightly more likely to think such a junk food tax would be effective (36%) than older Arizonans (24%).

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Social Research Laboratory, Northern Arizona University

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**GRAND CANYON STATE POLL  
BACKGROUND MEMO**

Fall 2003

The *Grand Canyon State Poll* was conducted between October 3 and October 20, 2003. A random sample of 610 adult residents of Arizona was asked questions regarding obesity and public health. Survey question results are subject to a sampling error of +/- 4 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from the population. Sampling error does not take into account additional sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The data referred to in this release are presented below.

Over time, would you say that the percentage of adult Arizona residents who are overweight or obese is increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same?

	<b>Increasing</b>	<b>Stayed About the Same</b>	<b>Decreasing</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Total</b>	78%	13%	2%	6%	(605)
<b>Age 18-34</b>	76%	12%	7%	6%	(136)
<b>Age 35-59</b>	80%	14%	1%	5%	(282)
<b>Age 60 +</b>	79%	13%	1%	8%	(163)
<b>No College</b>	73%	15%	5%	7%	(135)
<b>Some College</b>	80%	12%	1%	7%	(233)
<b>College Grad</b>	81%	13%	2%	5%	(221)

How supportive or opposed are you of allowing soft drink companies such as Pepsi and Coke to sell their products at Arizona public schools?

	<b>Supportive</b>	<b>Opposed</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Total</b>	32%	65%	2%	(607)
<b>Age 18-34</b>	51%	45%	4%	(137)
<b>Age 35-59</b>	31%	68%	2%	(283)
<b>Age 60 +</b>	21%	76%	2%	(164)
<b>No College</b>	44%	55%	2%	(135)
<b>Some College</b>	31%	67%	3%	(235)
<b>College Grad</b>	28%	70%	2%	(222)

How supportive or opposed are you of allowing fast food franchises such as McDonald's and Taco Bell to sell their products at Arizona public schools?

	<b>Supportive</b>	<b>Opposed</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Total</b>	28%	70%	3%	(609)
<b>Age 18-34</b>	36%	62%	2%	(137)
<b>Age 35-59</b>	27%	71%	2%	(283)
<b>Age 60 +</b>	24%	73%	4%	(165)
<b>No College</b>	36%	61%	3%	(136)
<b>Some College</b>	28%	70%	2%	(236)
<b>College Grad</b>	22%	76%	3%	(222)

How supportive or opposed are you to banning the sale of non-nutritious foods in Arizona public schools? Non-nutritious foods are foods that are of little or no nutritional value, and are also known as junk food.

	<b>Supportive</b>	<b>Opposed</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Total</b>	59%	39%	2%	(602)
<b>Age 18-34</b>	45%	52%	3%	(135)
<b>Age 35-59</b>	61%	37%	1%	(282)
<b>Age 60 +</b>	67%	31%	3%	(163)
<b>No College</b>	48%	49%	4%	(134)
<b>Some College</b>	58%	39%	3%	(232)
<b>College Grad</b>	67%	32%	1%	(221)

How effective do you think a tax on foods considered to be “non-nutritious” would be at reducing the percentage of adults who are overweight or obese? Would it be very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, or very ineffective?

	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Ineffective</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Total</b>	30%	67%	3%	(604)
<b>Age 18-34</b>	36%	62%	2%	(136)
<b>Age 35-59</b>	31%	68%	2%	(284)
<b>Age 60 +</b>	24%	73%	3%	(162)
<b>No College</b>	36%	60%	4%	(134)
<b>Some College</b>	26%	74%	---	(234)
<b>College Grad</b>	31%	66%	4%	(221)