

## **To Shield Teens from Junk Food Ads on Social Media Louisiana and Texas Test New Laws**

Social media constantly and persuasively target adolescents with online advertisements of food and drink, mostly for [junk food](#). Regulatory policies in some US states mandate parental consent before adolescents can access social media, and/or restrict targeted advertisements on pages that target young people.



### **Study**

In view of these considerations, the protocol focuses specifically on Louisiana and Texas, two of the first states to implement such policies, where some states have policies restricting anyone under the age of 18 from using [social media](#) without parental consent. Some also prohibit targeted advertising to youth. The current study focuses on understanding how these policies affect adolescents' exposure to food and beverage advertisements on social media.

It is based on a [statistical technique](#) called difference-in-differences, which helps understand how far an intervention causes an observed outcome. The outcome is recorded in the intervention and control groups before and after the intervention. The difference in the differences between the two groups is analyzed. This replicates an experimental study using observational data.

For the current study, 175 adolescents from Louisiana and 175 from Texas, as well as 350 demographically matched comparisons from other states, are recruited annually (totaling 700 participants per year) over a five-year period. This diverse sample of [adolescents](#) is asked to record their mobile screens for an hour during internet use and complete a survey on several topics.

### **Findings**

The screen recordings are assessed for social media type, food and/or beverage advertisements, and the types of foods offered. Notably, these states have differing [regulatory strategies](#) to control advertisements on social media. This allows for a direct comparison of the impact of different laws.

The participants change each year, avoiding the difficulties of same-person follow-up and the [limitations](#) that occur as participants become too old for the study.

This research, funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, fills a crucial need since social media advertisements promoting junk

foods may exacerbate dietary disparities among lower-income Black and Hispanic youth. The study specifically aims to test the hypotheses that these policies will reduce ad exposure more for [lower-income adolescents](#) (H2) and for Black and Hispanic adolescents compared to White adolescents (H3).

### **Conclusion**

“To the authors’ knowledge, this study will be the first time these '[novel yet proven methods](#)' will be used to evaluate social media restriction policies in the USA.”

The policy itself is the first of its kind and fills a need in an unregulated area where regulation is extremely challenging, though crucial for [child health](#). Requiring parental permission prior to children’s social media use may reduce exposure risk or motivate parents to become more consciously aware of their child’s exposure. However, the study also considers the possibility that adolescents might circumvent these controls, which is a limitation discussed in the protocol.

It will also explore how this policy affects [health](#) disparities and examine these effects across states with different demographic and political backgrounds, where the public may respond differently. Thus, different policies can be compared in this study, a major advantage.

Ultimately, it seeks to determine whether lower-income adolescents will see significantly fewer [advertisements](#) than their wealthier peers. The same phenomenon will be explored among Hispanic and Black children compared to their White counterparts. These are study hypotheses to be tested, rather than established findings.

If more states implement such policies, they will not be used as controls. Conversely, if the federal government mandates this policy, the data from the comparison states will serve as baseline data to compare with the outcomes after the [federal law](#) is passed.

The study also includes embedded qualitative interviews with adolescents and parents to further understand the impacts of the [policies](#), providing additional nuance beyond the quantitative findings.

### **Source:**

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20250624/Louisiana-and-Texas-test-new-laws-to-shield-teens-from-junk-food-ads-on-social-media.aspx>