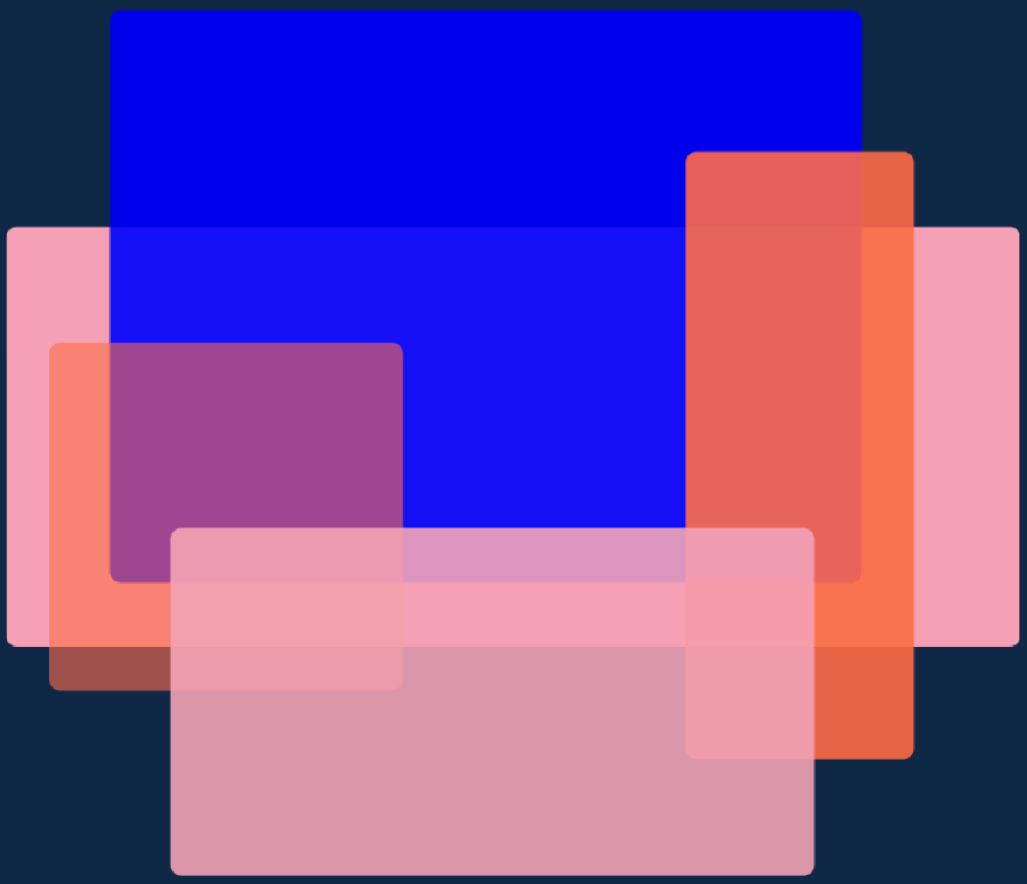
Blueprint
by nesta

Blueprint for halving obesity: rapid review

The impact of increasing access to and transparency of food data on obesity-related outcomes



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Summary table

A comprehensive literature search was conducted. No evidence was available.	
Title	n/a
Authors	n/a
Type of study	n/a
Outcome variable	n/a
Treatment	n/a
Control	n/a
Magnitude of effects	n/a
Population	n/a

Rapid umbrella review

Background

The National Food Strategy's independent review recommended government action to improve data access, transparency and standardised reporting within the food system. This was considered crucial for fostering comprehensive change and improving the system's health and sustainability. In the context of tackling obesity this would place the onus on food retailers and industry to report on metrics related to product healthiness, such as sales of healthy foods versus those high in fat, salt, and sugar.

The UK Government established the Food Data Transparency Partnership (FDTP) in response to the National Food Strategy review recommendations. The FDTP is tasked with agreeing comprehensive data-sharing frameworks and standards amongst food industry leaders to foster greater accessibility and understanding of critical information around food production, distribution, and consumption in the UK. This includes data on a variety of key health metrics for the food consumed in the UK. Opportunities for mandatory reporting on health metrics have not materialised and reporting is now set to be voluntary.

Objective

The objective of this review is to systematically search grey literature to identify evidence for the effectiveness of interventions to improve the availability and quality of food system data. Searches will focus on the grey literature since scoping of literature indicates no peer reviewed published research is available.

Methods

Eligibility criteria

Types of study. Due to the nature of this intervention, in that it is difficult to evaluate using traditional scientific methodology, we expect the number of eligible reviews or primary studies to be low. In the absence of studies that evaluate data transparency interventions using quasi-experimental methodology, we will include studies that use

simulation modelling to estimate the effects of the intervention on our outcomes of interest.

Intervention. We defined the intervention as any action taken by the government (in any developed country) or industry that aimed to increase the transparency, availability, or access of data relating to the food system (eg, retailer data, manufacturer data, out-of-home business data).

Comparator. The comparator would be the counterfactual to taking action (ie, no action, business as usual).

Outcomes. Studies must include either clinical outcomes (eg, weight, BMI, % fat change) or food intake outcomes (eg, energy intake, number of items consumed) in the affected populations.

Information sources and article selection

We followed search methods proposed in Godin et al. (2015), a peer reviewed publication that describes methods for conducting rigorous and systematic grey literature searches. We engaged in the following: (1) grey literature databases (2) Google and Google Scholar search, (3) targeted websites (4) consultation with members of the project's Expert Advisory Group (EAG), and (5) consultation with experts who do not sit on the project's EAG.

The Blueprint Project has an advisory group of 13 academic experts working in food, nutrition and public health. We sought feedback about the best evidence from this group. Moreover, we contacted other experts who do not formally sit on the advisory panel, but who have expertise in food system data transparency. In the absence of relevant evidence, we approached experts to identify data that was either unpublished or under review at scientific journals but not yet published.

Screening

Due to the rapid nature of the reviews, a single reviewer screened titles and abstracts and discussed any uncertainty with a second reviewer. For relevant titles/abstracts, the full text was retrieved for full text review. One reviewer reviewed full texts and discussed uncertainties with the Blueprint EAG.

Assessment of methodological quality

We did not expect that the search would result in multiple high-quality studies for comparison. We were to be led first by the suitability of the study to our research question. If there were multiple relevant studies/reviews identified, we intended to select the best available evidence according to our consultation with members of the Expert Advisory Group.

Data extraction

The JBI Data Extraction Form for Review for Systematic Reviews and Research Syntheses was to be used for data extraction from the studies included in the review. Characteristics to be attached to the review report were to include:

- Study, review or report characteristics: author/year, objectives, participants (characteristics, total number), setting/context, interventions (or details of modelling) of interest, type of method of analyses and outcomes.
- Results: findings of the review and comments.

Results

Searches in grey literature databases, Google and Google Scholar, the NOURISHING database and targeted websites retrieved no modelling or unpublished studies that could answer our research question on the likely impact on obesity of interventions to increase food industry data transparency and reporting. We sought feedback from our EAG and it was agreed that there was no empirical evidence of the impact of the effectiveness of this policy alone.

In the absence of studies that answer this question directly, evidence on the impact of data transparency on greenhouse gas emissions and gender pay disparities could provide some indication on the likely impact of any policies to increase food data transparency on obesity. Analyses of mandatory reporting and data disclosure approaches in these sectors suggest such action can drive change. For instance, the introduction of mandatory reporting on greenhouse gas emissions in the UK in 2013 was associated with an 8% reduction in reported carbon emissions from UK companies relative to controls in other European countries. However, factors other than the introduction of data transparency measures may contribute to the desired

change. Analysis of government-mandated gender pay gap reporting suggested initial reductions in the pay disparities between men and women in the first five years of implementation. An analysis of trends using ONS data from six years prior to the introduction of the mandate suggested that the gender pay gap was already on a downward trajectory prior to the introduction of the reporting regime in 2017.