

# POINT OF PURCHASE AVAILABILITY OF HEALTHY FOOD PRODUCTS IN A NATIONWIDE SAMPLE OF FOOD STORES

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## Background

Bridging the Gap (BTG) is a nationally recognized research program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation dedicated to improving the understanding of how policies and environmental factors influence diet, physical activity, obesity and tobacco use among youth. The BTG Community Obesity Measures Project (BTG-COMP) focuses on policy and environmental factors at the community level, including those in the retail food environment. The availability of healthy food at check-out may trigger healthier choices at the time of purchase.

## Methods

Cross-sectional data on the availability of four items at check-out (candy, sweetened beverages, bottled water and fresh fruits or vegetables) were collected annually at retail food stores in a national sample of communities where students attending public middle and high schools live. Field staff observed supermarkets, grocery stores, and smaller retail food stores randomly selected from two commercial business lists, Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) and InfoUSA, as well as a sample of retail food stores "discovered" while in the field, based on the expected number of stores in the community.

Altogether, 8,960 retail food stores across 469 communities in the continental U.S. were observed and eligible for this analysis between 2010-2012. Smaller retail food stores (convenience stores and gas stations, drug stores/pharmacies, dollar stores, liquor stores, fresh produce markets, ethnic markets, and general merchandise stores) were the most prominent (80% of all retail food stores).

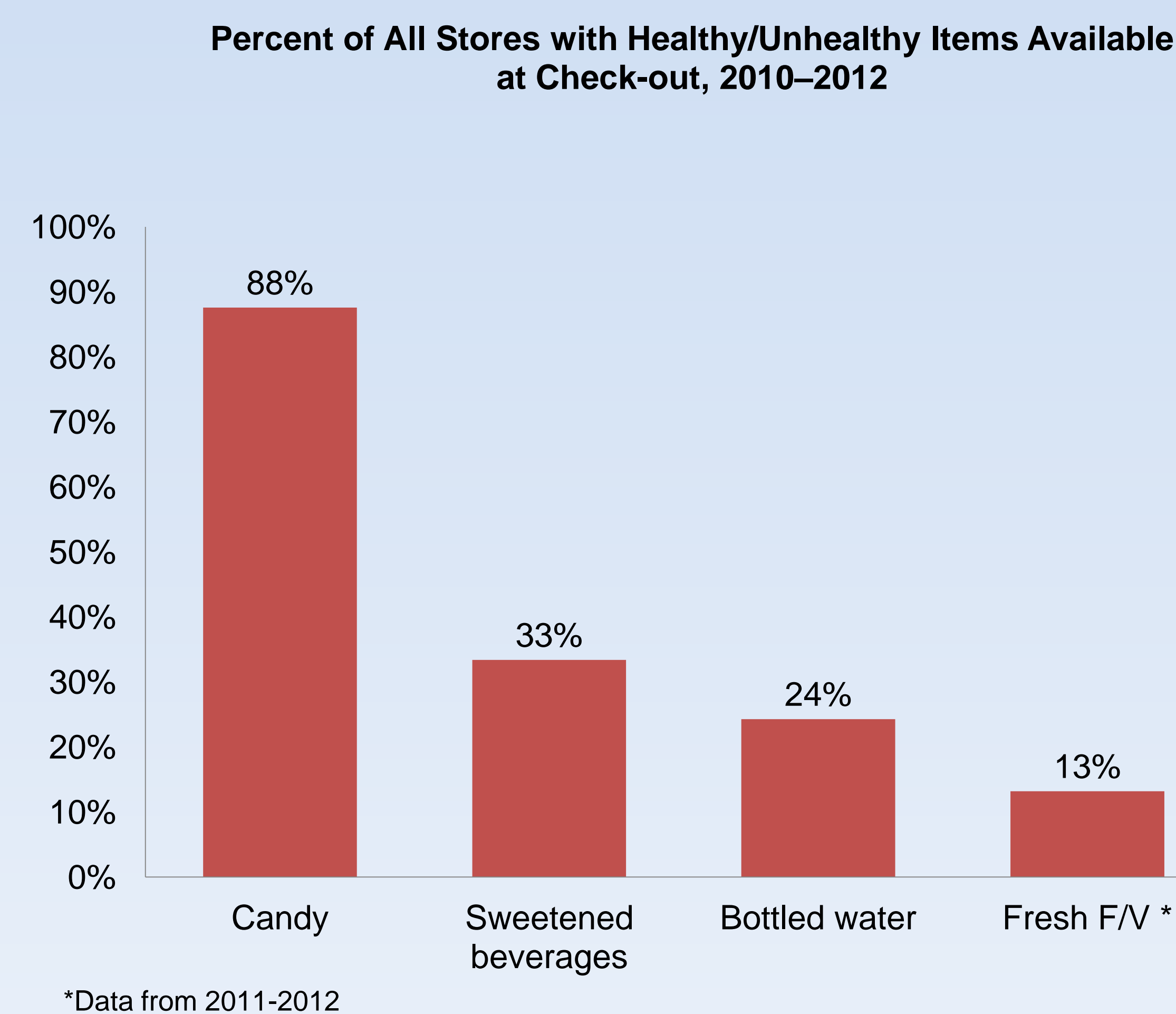
Year	# Sites	# States	# Food Retail Stores
2010	152	42	2,957
2011	157	41	3,111
2012	160	38	2,892

## Summary

- Few retail food stores carry bottled water and fresh fruits/vegetables at check-out
- Sweetened beverages is more available than bottled water at check-out across all store types and communities
- People living in low-income and rural communities have less exposure to fresh fruits/vegetables at check-out
- Increasing healthy foods and removing unhealthy energy-dense snacks and drinks at check-out may encourage healthier snack choices

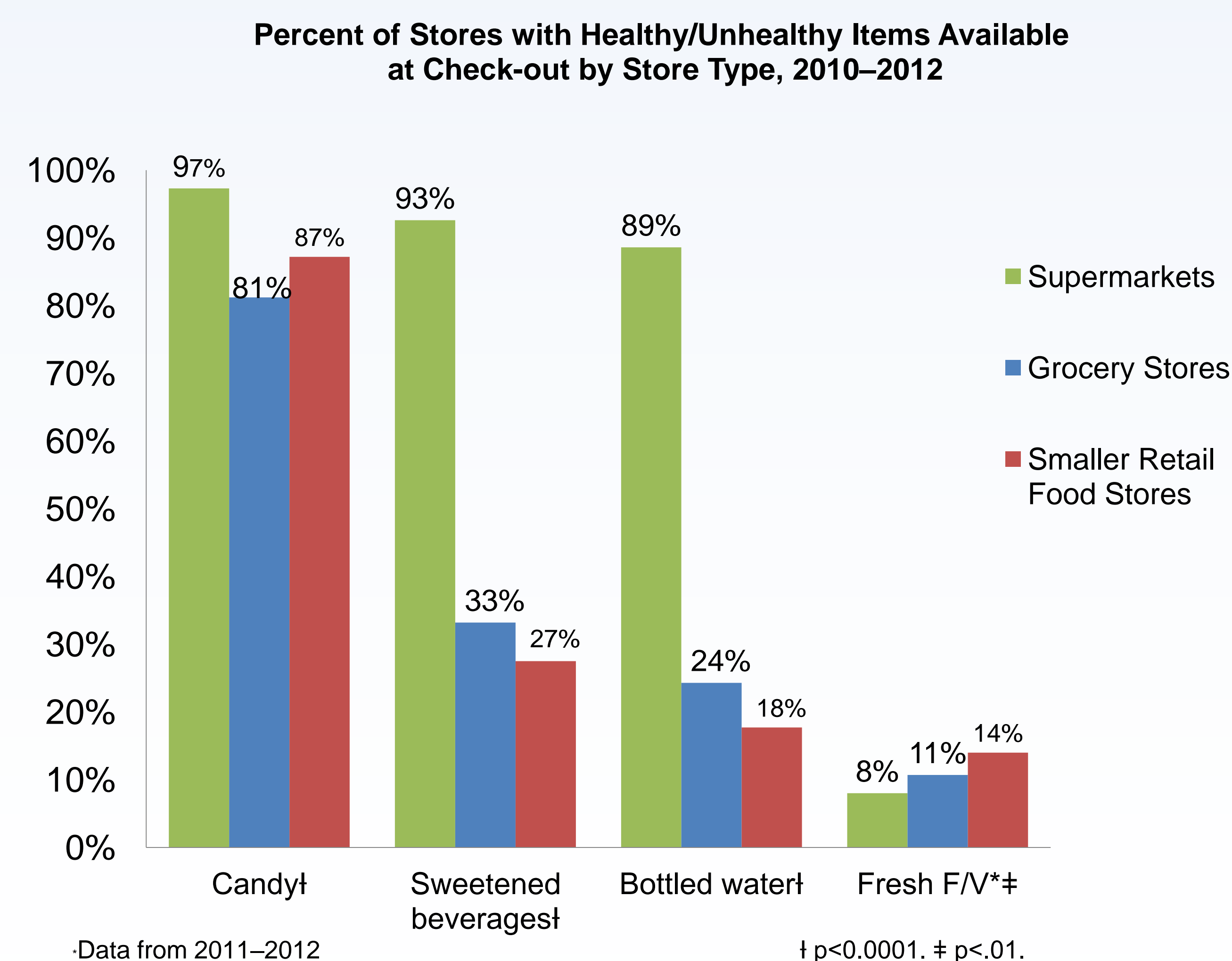
## Results

### Less than One-Quarter of Stores Have Healthy Food/Beverages at Check-out



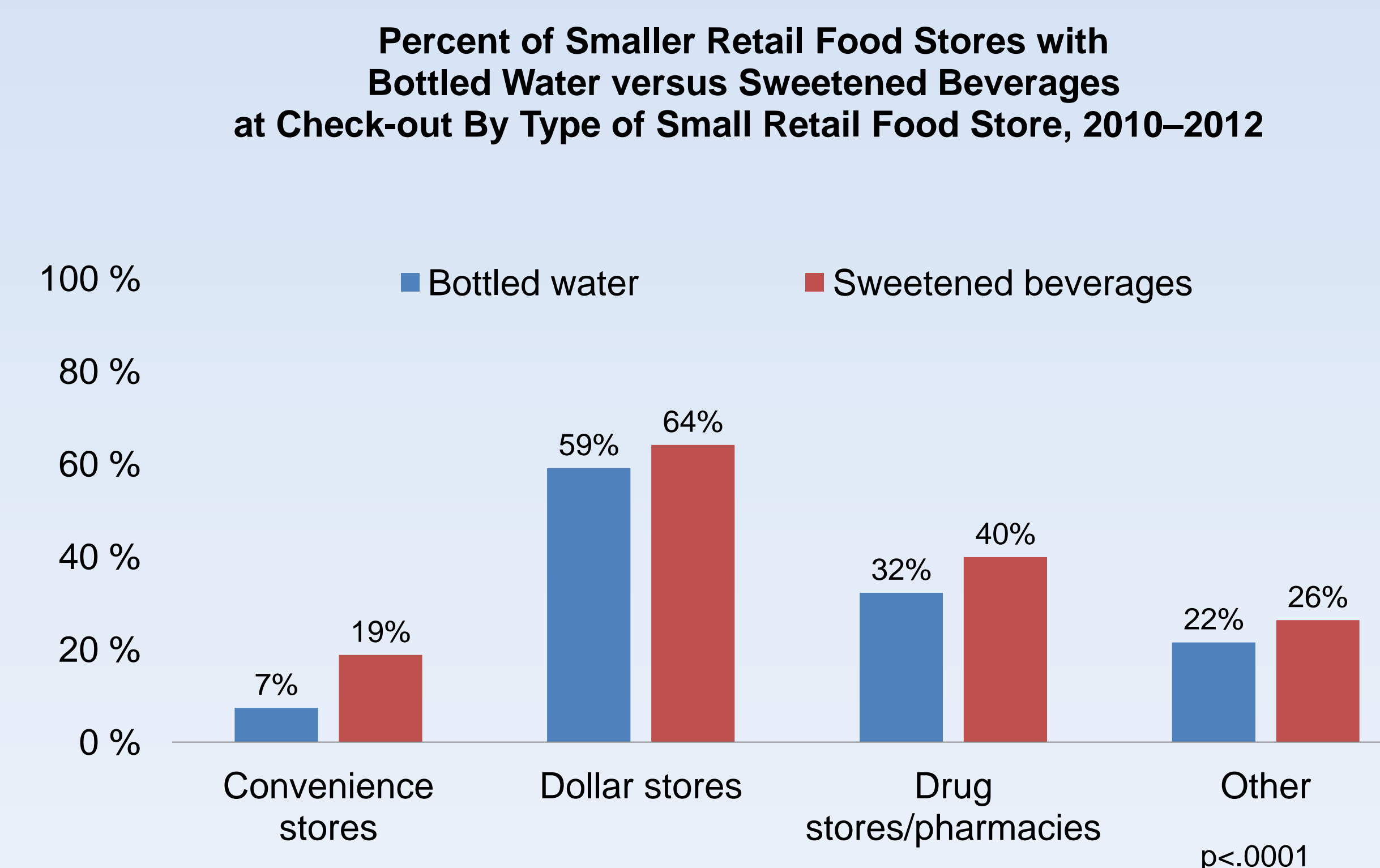
### Presence of Healthy Foods/Beverages at Check-out Differs by Store Type

- Supermarkets are more likely to carry candy (97%), sweetened beverages (93%) and bottled water (89%) than grocery stores and smaller retail food stores at check-out
- Smaller retail food stores are more likely to carry fresh fruits or vegetables (14%) than supermarkets (8%) and grocery stores (11%) at check-out



### Bottled Water is Less Available than Sweetened Beverages at Check-out Across All Types of Smaller Retail Food Stores and Communities

- Dollar stores are most likely to carry bottled water (59%), followed by drug stores/pharmacies (32%)
- Only 7% of convenience stores have water at check-out, compared to sweetened beverages (19%)
- Regardless of community characteristics (e.g., income, race/ethnicity), sweetened beverages are more available at check-out than bottled water (data not shown)

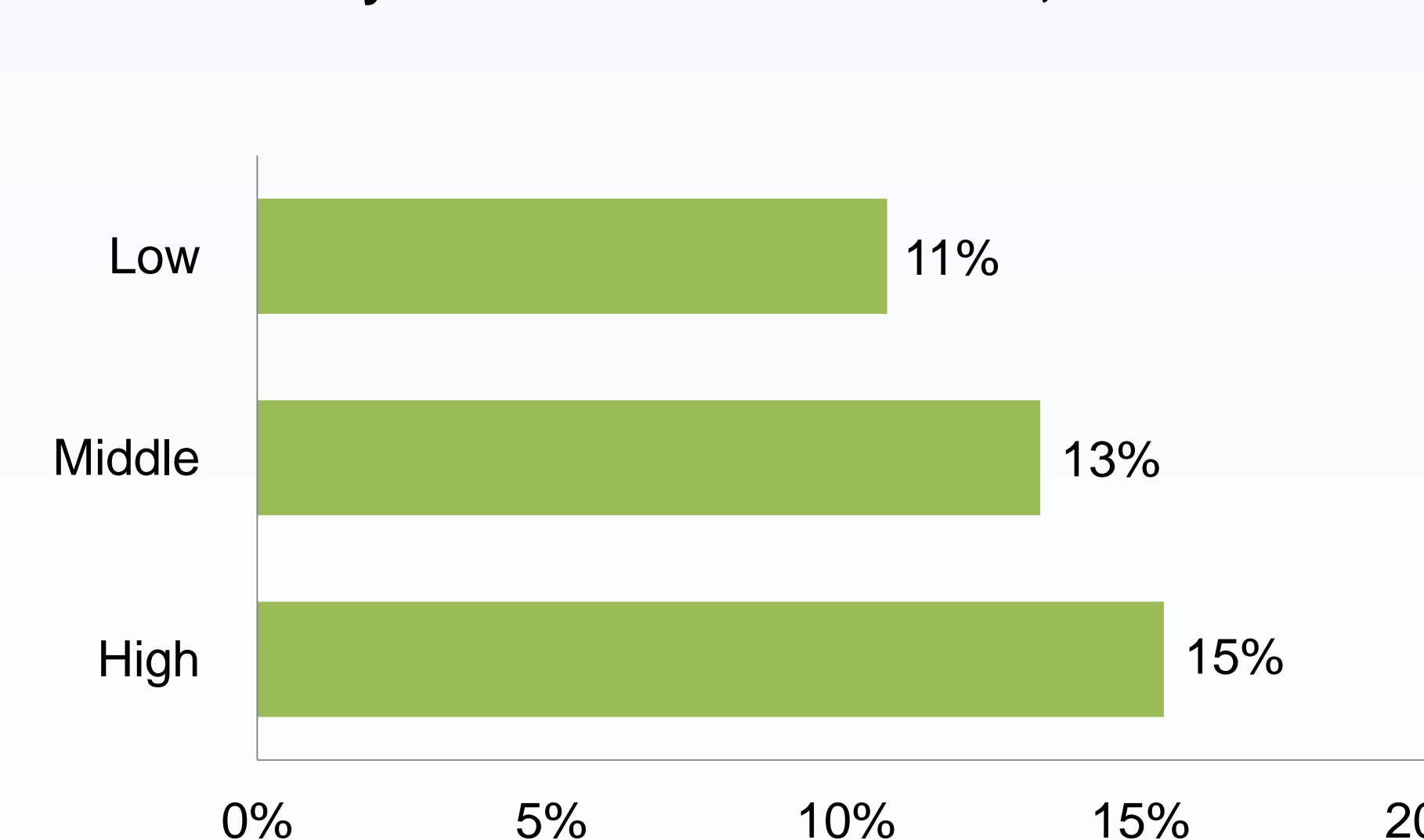


### Availability of Fresh Fruits/Vegetables at Check-out Differs by Community

When controlling for store type, urbanicity, region of the country, presence of other healthy foods, income, and race and ethnicity:

- People living in lower income communities are less likely to find fresh fruits/vegetables at check-out
- People living in rural communities are less likely to find fresh fruits/vegetables at check-out
- People living in majority Hispanic communities are more likely to find fresh fruits /vegetables at check-out than people living in majority White communities (data not shown)

Fresh Fruit or Vegetable Availability at Check-out by Median Household Income, 2011–2012



Fresh Fruit or Vegetable Availability at Check-out by Urbanization, 2011–2012

