

Georgetown University food expert debuts white paper on UPF

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A new white paper on ultra-processed foods (UPF) was published by the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business in conjunction with the National Confectioners Association, as the conversation around UPF and other indulgent foods continues to churn in the media and food policy circles. Authored by Hank Cardello, executive director of the Leadership Solutions for Health and Prosperity program at Business for Impact, the analysis found that treating all ultra-processed food products the same way is not an effective policy strategy.

"Policymakers and public health officials must recognise the unique nutritional and cultural aspects of ultra-processed foods and make educated decisions on how to best guide consumer purchasing behaviour," Cardello said. "A one-size-fits-all approach to ultra-processed and indulgent food products is ineffective."

The report "New Consumer Insights on Ultra-Processed Indulgent Foods: How Confectionery Products Are Different," leveraged data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) and a proprietary Natural Marketing Institute consumer segmentation to reveal that chocolate and candy do not function the same as other ultra-processed foods in the diets of U.S. consumers. This result is consistent with a 2022 Georgetown University white paper titled "All Indulgent Products Are Not Created Equal."

The white paper provides additional data and information to help inform policymakers, public health officials, nutrition professionals, and other experts in food policy who are engaged in the burgeoning conversation related to ultra-processed foods. It examines differences in consumer consumption behaviours across indulgent product categories and ultimately demonstrates that confectionery products are unique in the way that consumers engage with them.

Incorporating results from the Portion Balance Coalition's 2024 "Power of Portions" report, the white paper highlights that half of consumers want smaller portions. It also references the work that confectionery companies are pursuing that is focused on helping consumers manage their intake of added sugars by providing portion guidance options and reminding them that chocolate and candy are treats. The report notes that other sectors in the food industry should adopt this pragmatic,

consumer-centric approach.