

# Macro-Level Predictors of School Wellness Policies in Connecticut

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# Inspiration for this study



***“Connecticut has a proud tradition of local control”***

**June 2005, Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell in her veto of a school foods bill**

# Research Questions:

1. How do you measure SWP quality and variability?
2. What predicts SWP quality?
3. What changes occurred in schools?

# District Macro-Level Sociodemographic Variables

- Median income
- Population
- Racial/ethnic composition
- Political landscape
- Money spent per student

# Connecticut is a diverse state

- District population 1,471 – 139,529
- Median income \$38,127 - \$134,721
- Spent per student \$7,728 - \$14,385
- Minority students 1% - 95%
- Free or reduced lunch 0% - 90%

# District Macro-Level Sociodemographic Variables



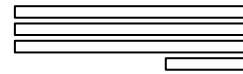
## 2005-2006 School District Nutrition Environment and Food Policies



2006



**Food Service Director Survey**  
100% response rate



2006



**Principal Survey**  
68% response rate

# Baseline nutrition environment and food policies

- Districts without a policy 74%
- Pouring rights contracts 25%
- Soft drinks in high school 29%
- Unhealthy snacks 85%
- No clear association with macro-level variables

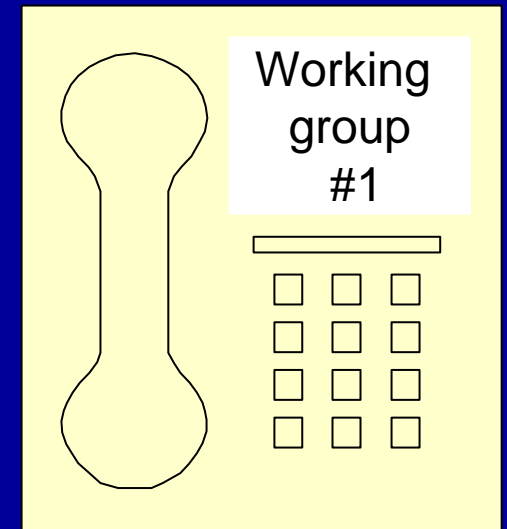
# District Macro-Level Sociodemographic Variables



2005-2006 School District Nutrition  
Environment and Food Policies



2006-2007 School  
Wellness Policy  
Content and Quality





# Coding School Wellness Policies

Scored for “comprehensiveness” and “strength” in 7 domains:

1. Nutrition Education
2. Standards for USDA Nutrition Programs
3. Nutrition Guidelines for Competitive Foods
4. Physical Education
5. Physical Activity
6. Communication & Promotion
7. Evaluation

# Coding School Wellness Policies

Scored for “comprehensiveness” and “strength” in 7 domains:

## 1. Nutrition Education

“Provide accurate information related to nutrition topics”

“Providing research-based, exemplary instruction in both health and nutrition that is integrated within a comprehensive K-12 health education curriculum, and coordinated with the district’s nutrition and food service operation”

# Macro-level variables predict policy quality

- Population
- Free / reduced Lunch
- Racial / ethnic composition
- Political landscape

# District Macro-Level Sociodemographic

2005-2006 School District Nutrition Environment and Food Policies

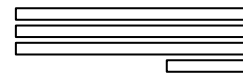
2006-2007 School Wellness Policy Content and Quality



2007



**Food Service Director Survey**  
57% response rate



2007

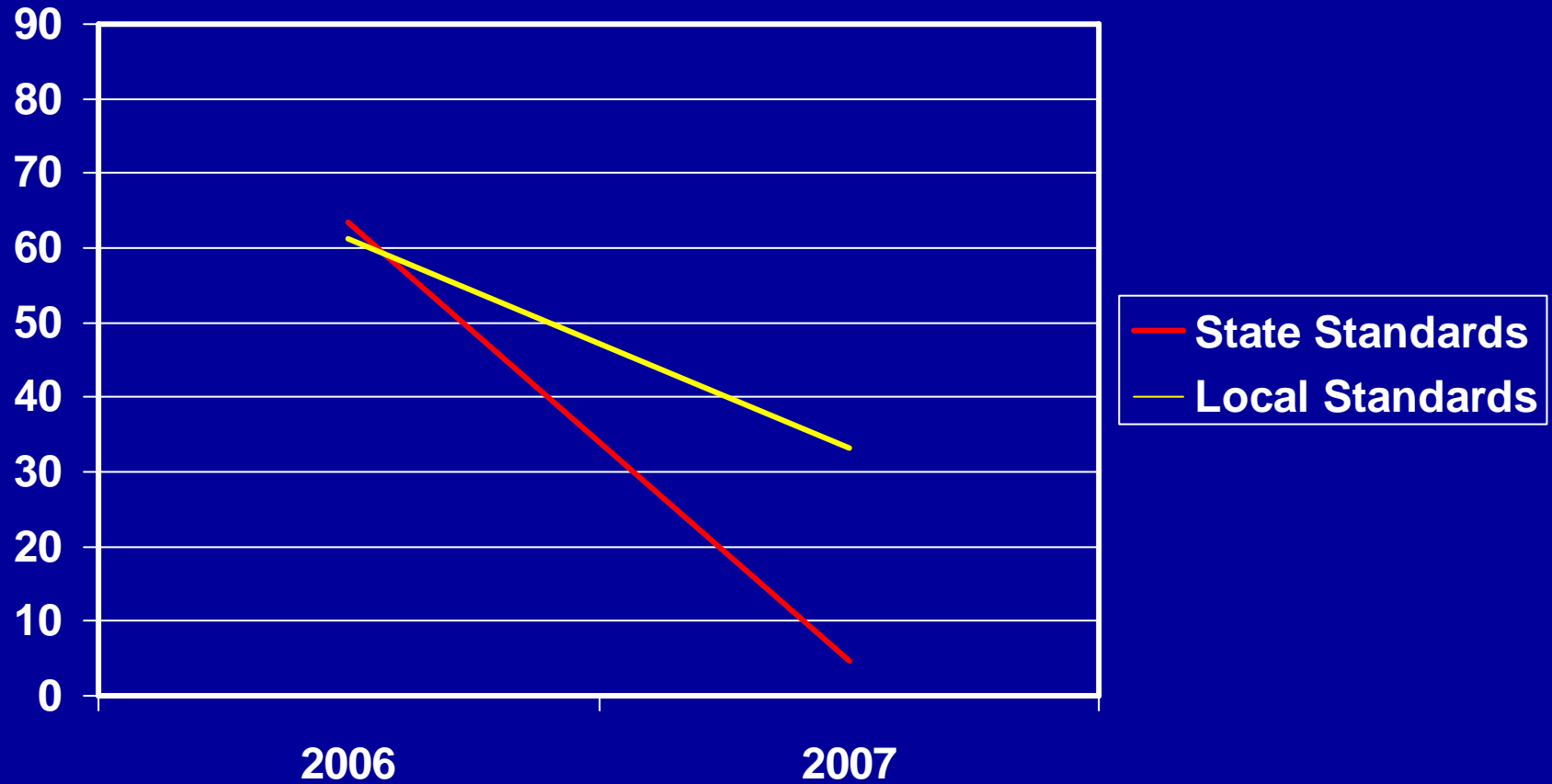


**Principal Survey**  
47% response rate

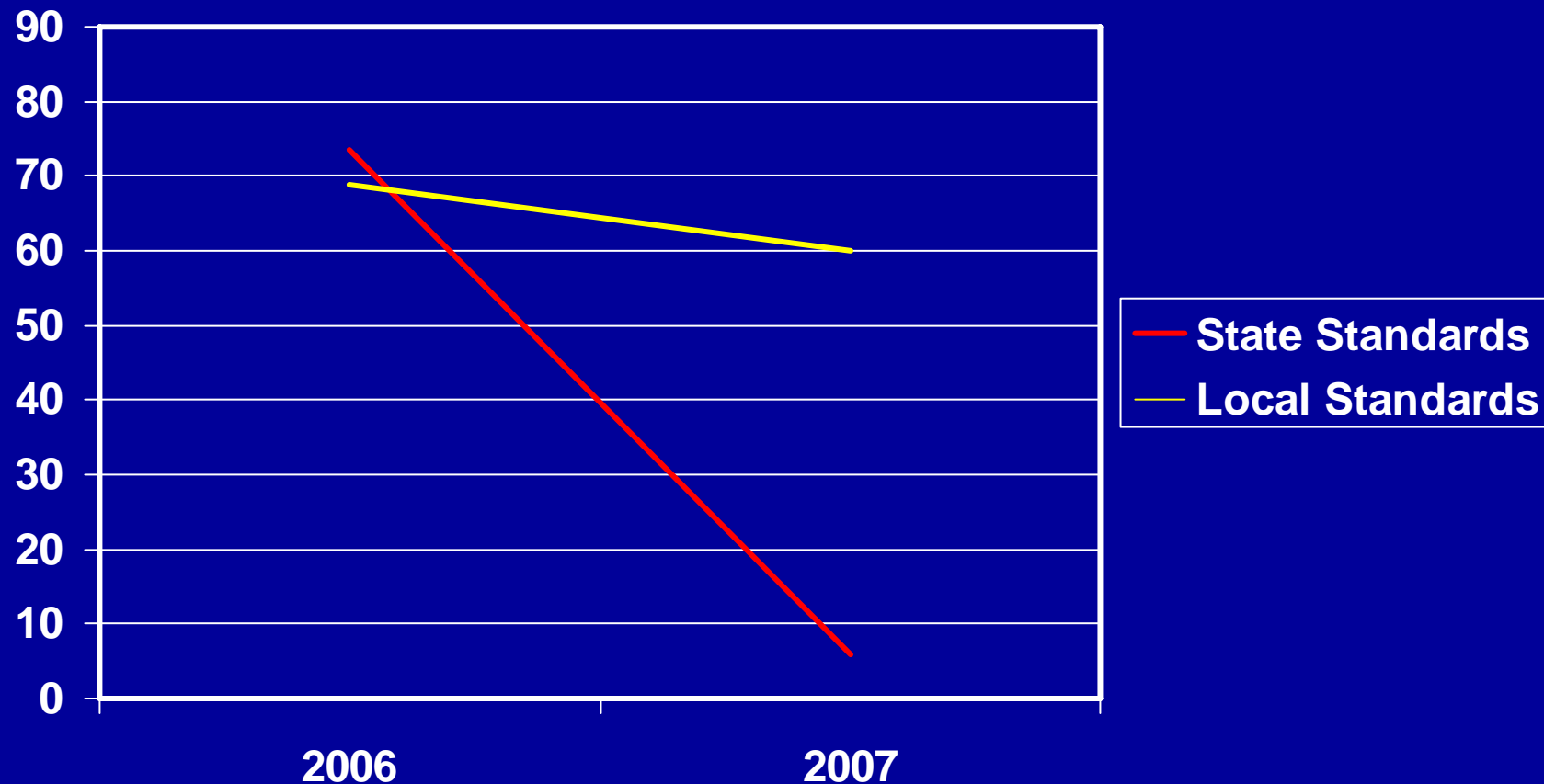
# Stronger policies lead to greater improvements

- SWP Nutrition Standard Strength Score independently predicted reduction in unhealthy snacks
- Role of state “Healthy Food Certification Program”

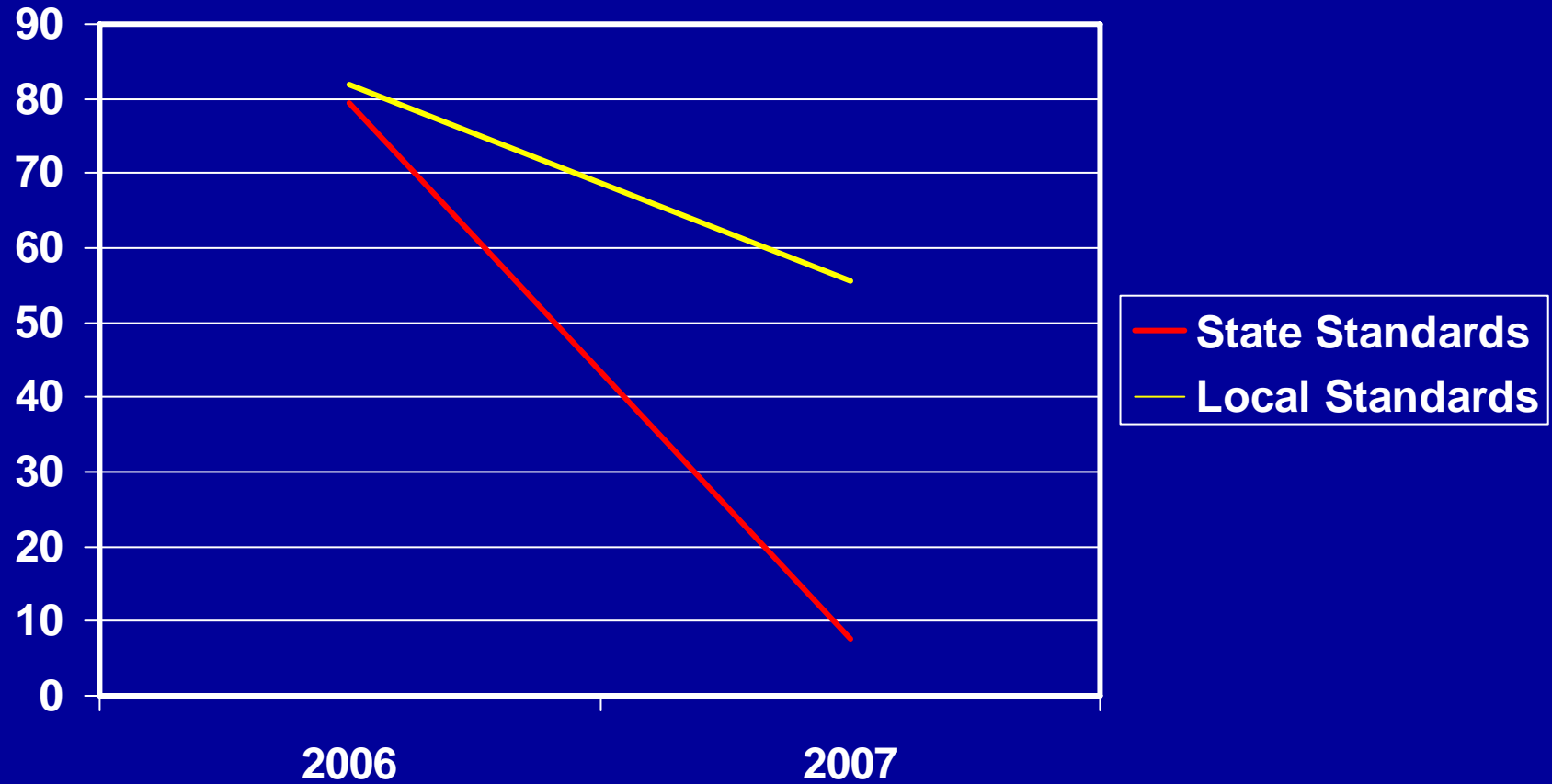
# Unhealthy a la carte snacks Elementary



# Unhealthy a la carte snacks Middle



# Unhealthy a la carte snacks High





# Interpretation for policy makers

- How well does local control work?
  - SWP without federal mandate 25%
  - SWP with federal mandate 98%
- Strong SWPs lead to improvements
- Differences among districts remain
- State standards significantly stronger than local standards
- Consistent change requires state standards