



Have Kids' Meals Become Healthier? Progress and Public Relations

Marlene B. Schwartz, Ph.D.
Director

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YALE RUDD CENTER
FOR FOOD POLICY & OBESITY

Presenter Disclosures

Marlene Schwartz

No relationships to disclose

Children request fast food

- 89% of parents report taking their child to a fast food restaurant at least once the past week
- No longer a “special treat”
- 49% of parents - child asks to go to McDonald’s at least once a week
- 15% of preschoolers ask to go McDonald’s every day

Has nutrition improved?

- Calculated nutrition quality to evaluate change in kids' meals between February 2010 & February 2013.

McDonald's

Wendy's

Burger King

Sonic

KFC

Subway

Taco Bell

Dairy Queen

What changed

- Added healthy beverages
- Added healthy sides
- Increased number of kids' meal combinations by 54%
- But still don't meet nutrition standards

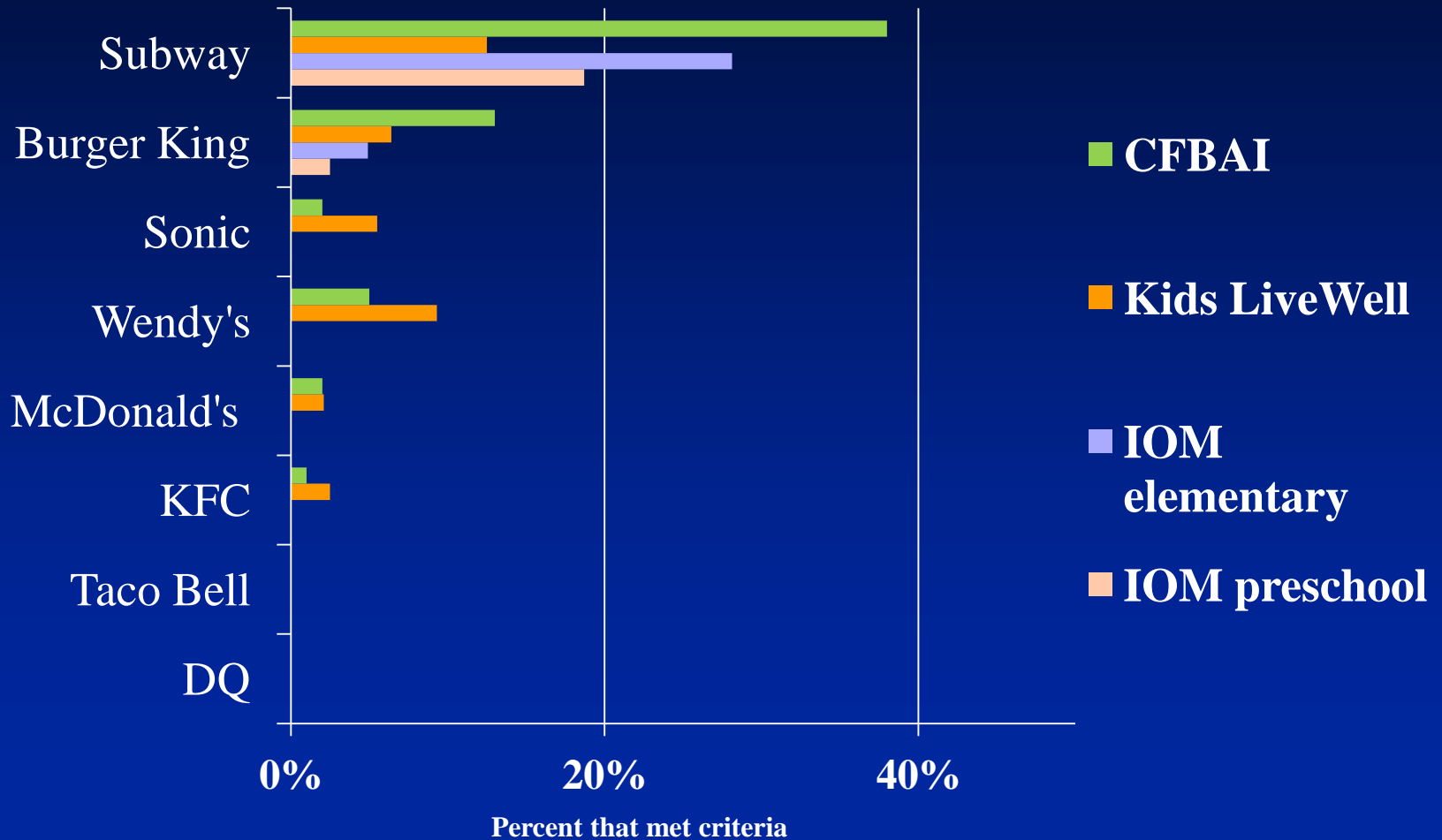
Kids' meal combinations: Met preschool-age nutrition criteria

- 2010
 - 12 of 3,039 kids' meal combinations (.4%) met all preschool nutrition criteria.
- 2013
 - 11 of 4,695 kids' meal combinations (.2%) met all preschool nutrition criteria.

Kids' meal combinations: Met elementary-age nutrition criteria

- 2010
 - 15 of 3,039 kids' meal combinations (.5%) met all elementary nutrition criteria.
- 2013
 - 19 of 4,695 kids' meal combinations (.4%) met all elementary nutrition criteria.

Percent of kids' meal combinations that meet standards (2013)



What did not change

- 97% do not meet CFBAI new uniform category specific standards
- 97% do not meet Kids Live Well
- Main dish items remained the least nutritious component of most kids' meals.

- Why? No whole grains, no vegetables, high levels of saturated fat, sodium, and sugar and low fiber

What doesn't work

- Introduce lots of options
- Set standards that only need to be met by one option

- What does work?
- Healthy defaults

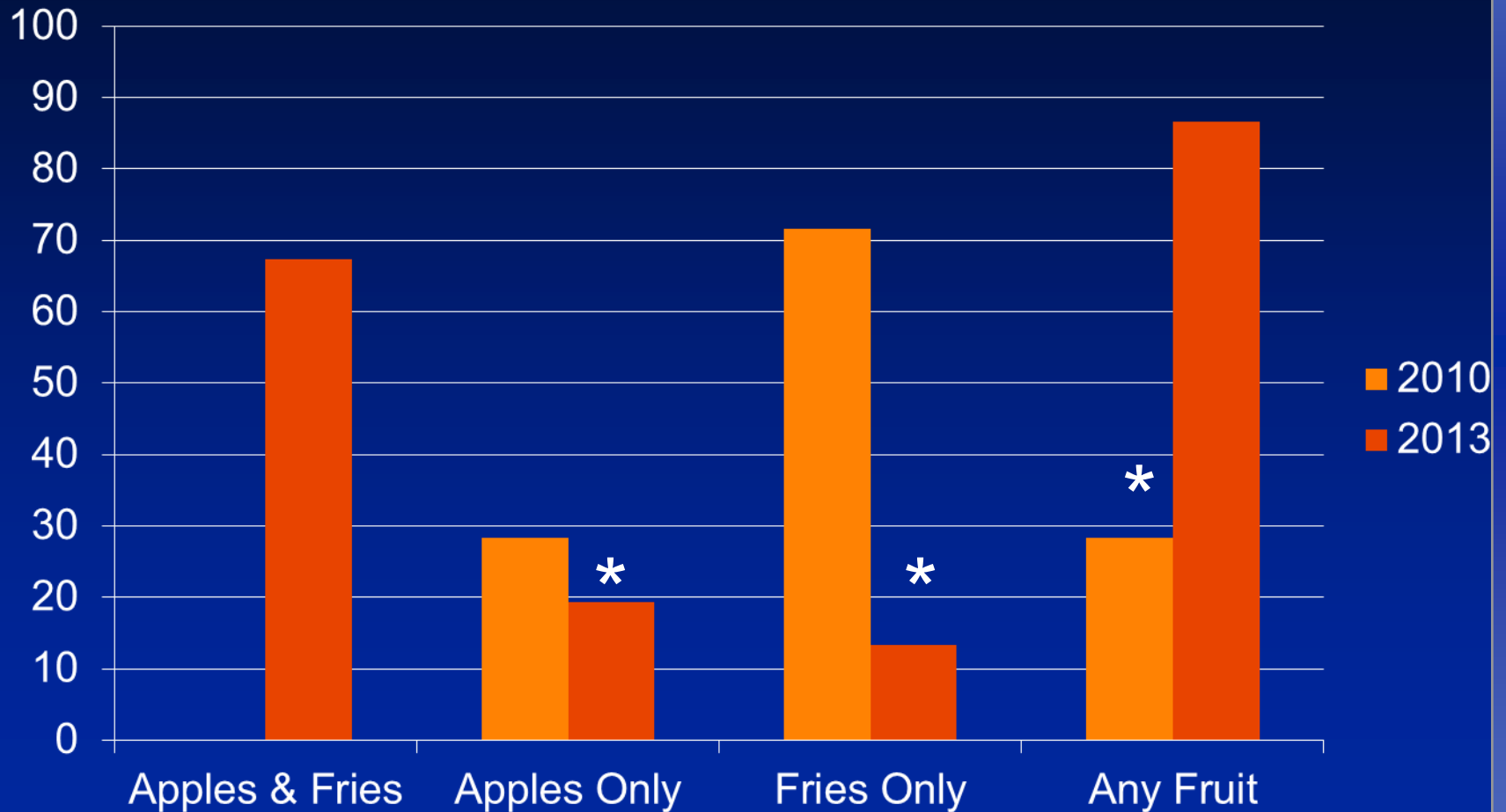
Apple Slices or French Fries?

- July 26, 2011- McDonald's changed the default side options for its kids' meal to include a smaller portion of fries in the Happy Meal and a portion of apples in all kids' meals (Happy Meal and Mighty Kids' Meal).
- No changes to default drink option.
- Also in July 2011, Burger King said that soft drinks and fries were no longer the default options (L.A. Times, 2011)

Evaluation of McDonald's change in default sides

- **Hypothesis:** The new default sides will significantly increase the proportion of children receiving fruit with a McDonald's kids' meal.
- **Methods:** Cross-sectional study utilizing online questionnaire. Data collected in 2010 & 2013. Pre and post McDonald's 2011 change in default sides.

McDonald's Kids' Meal Side Item Selections in 2010 and 2013

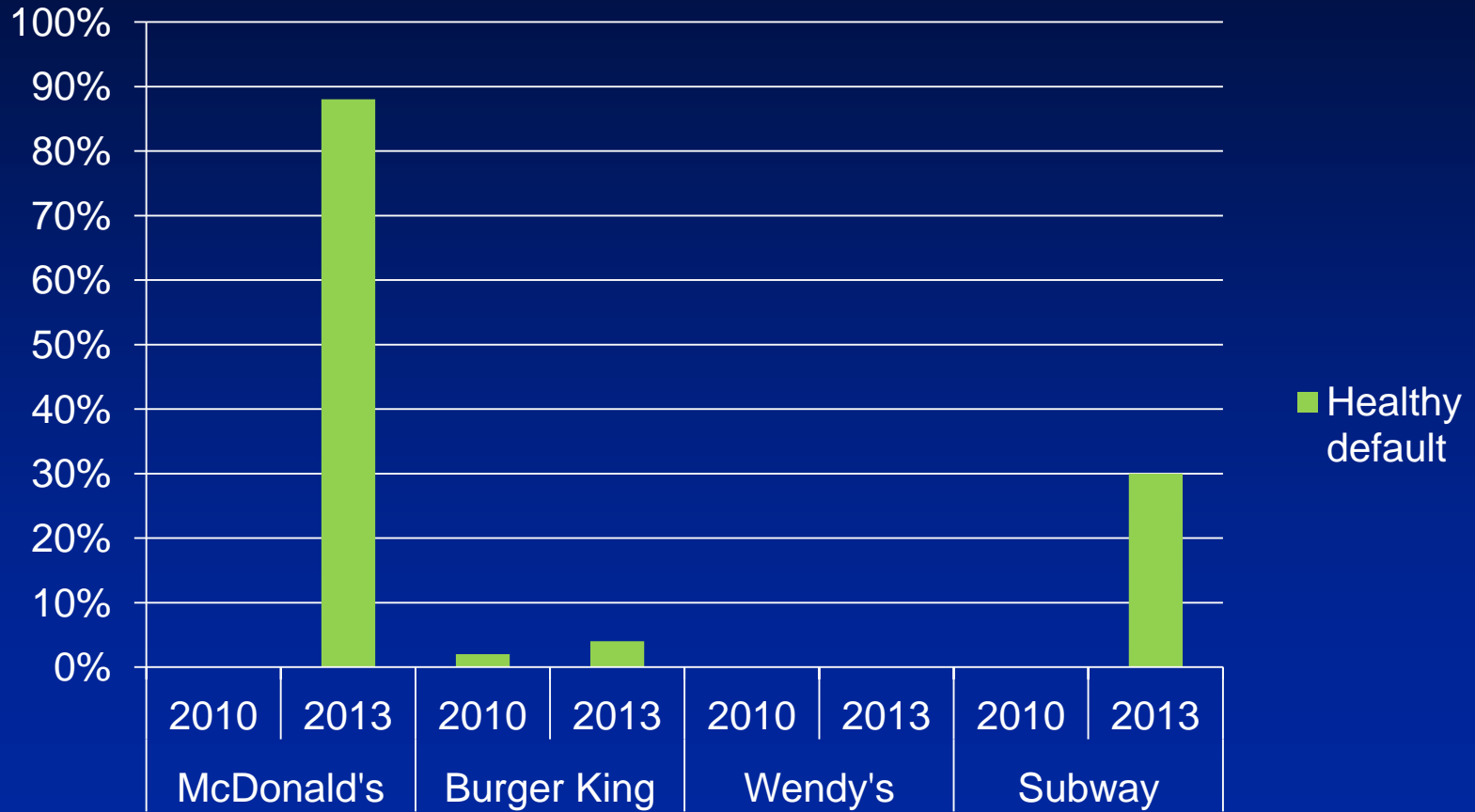


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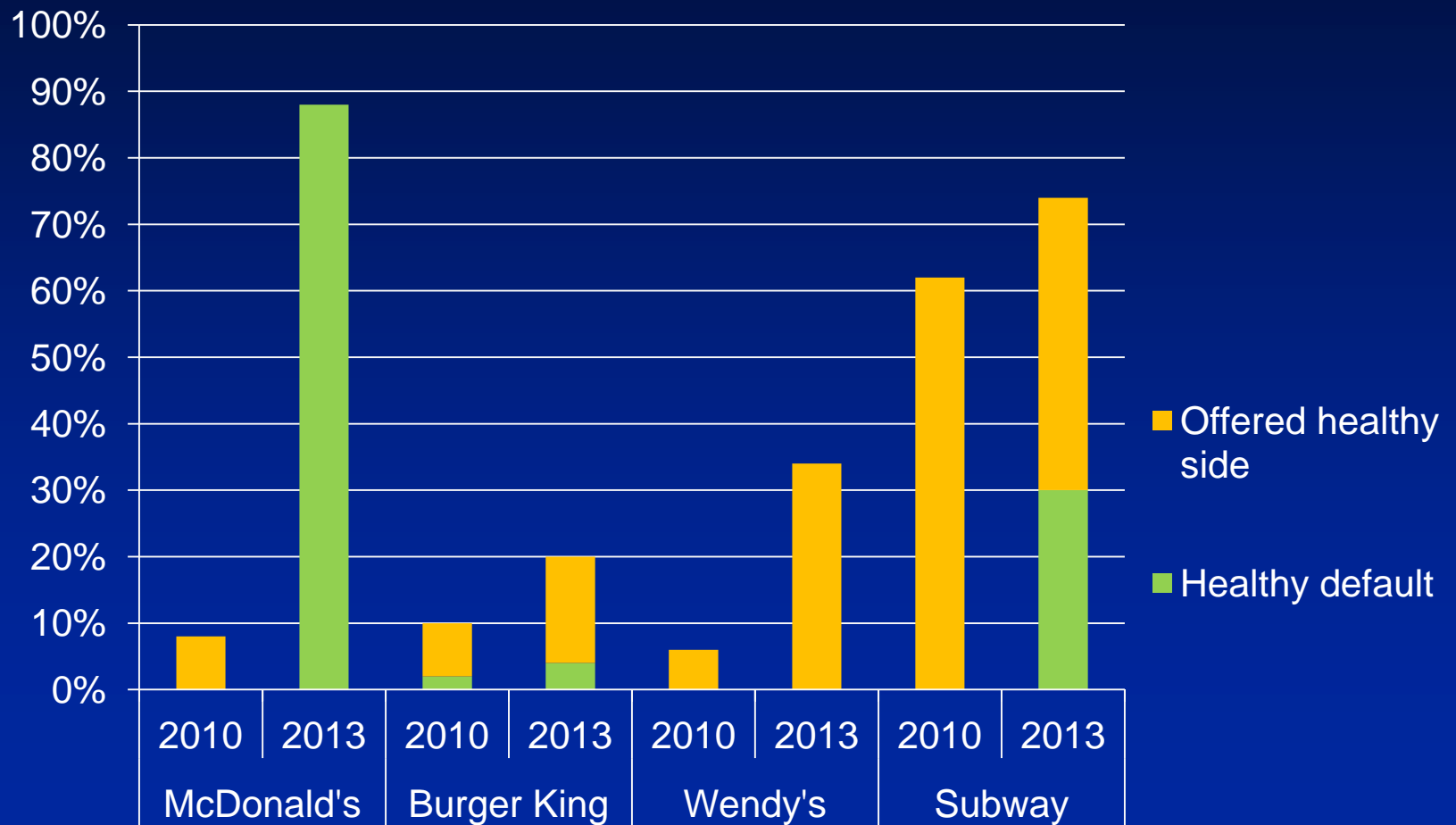
Sales Practices Audit

- Comparison 2010 & 2013
- 200 restaurants national sample
 - 50 each: McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, Subway
- Field personnel request children's meal
 - Hamburger / roast beef sandwich
- Side and beverage provided automatically
- If given a choice, bought the first item offered

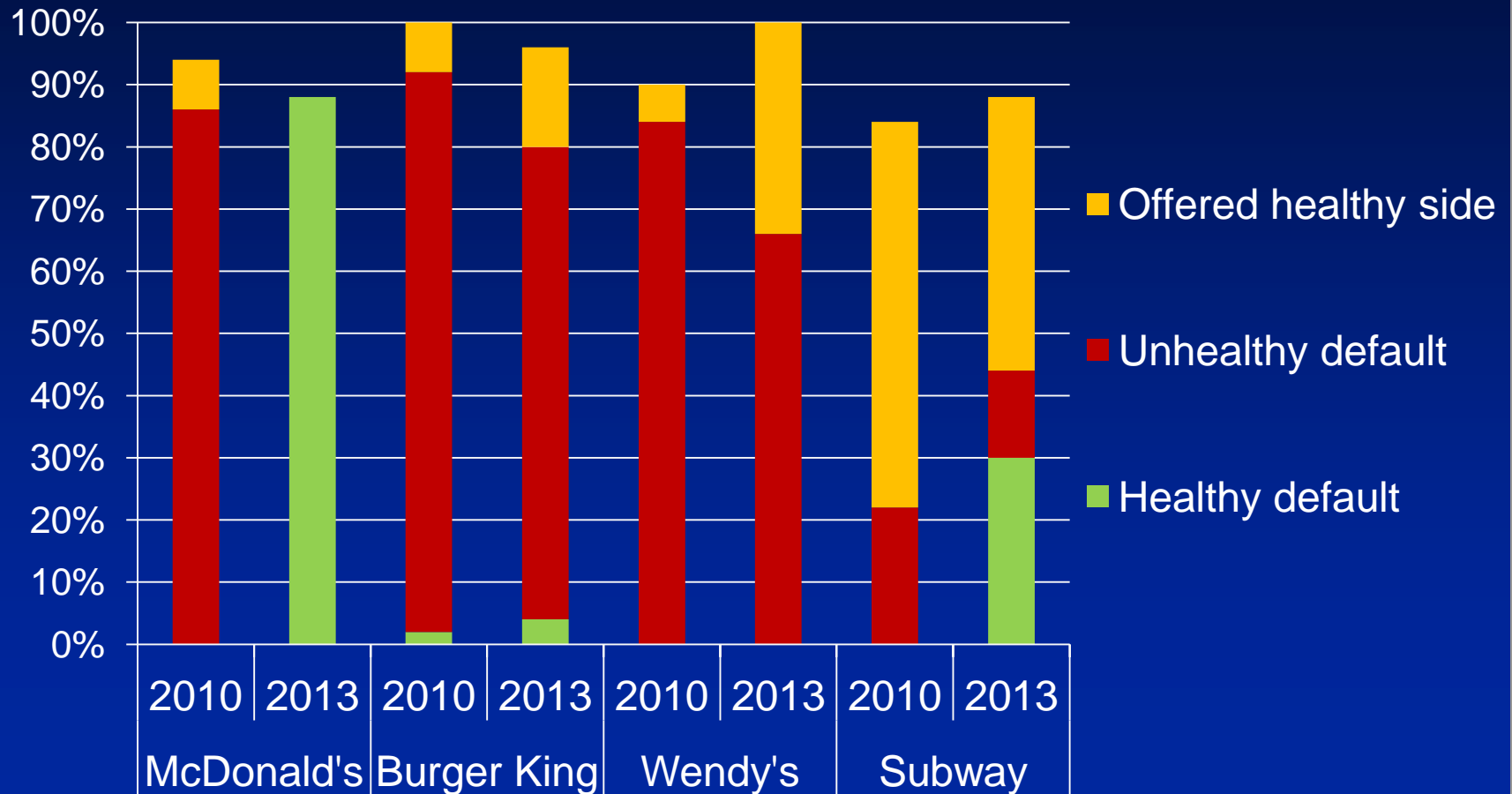
Healthy Default Side



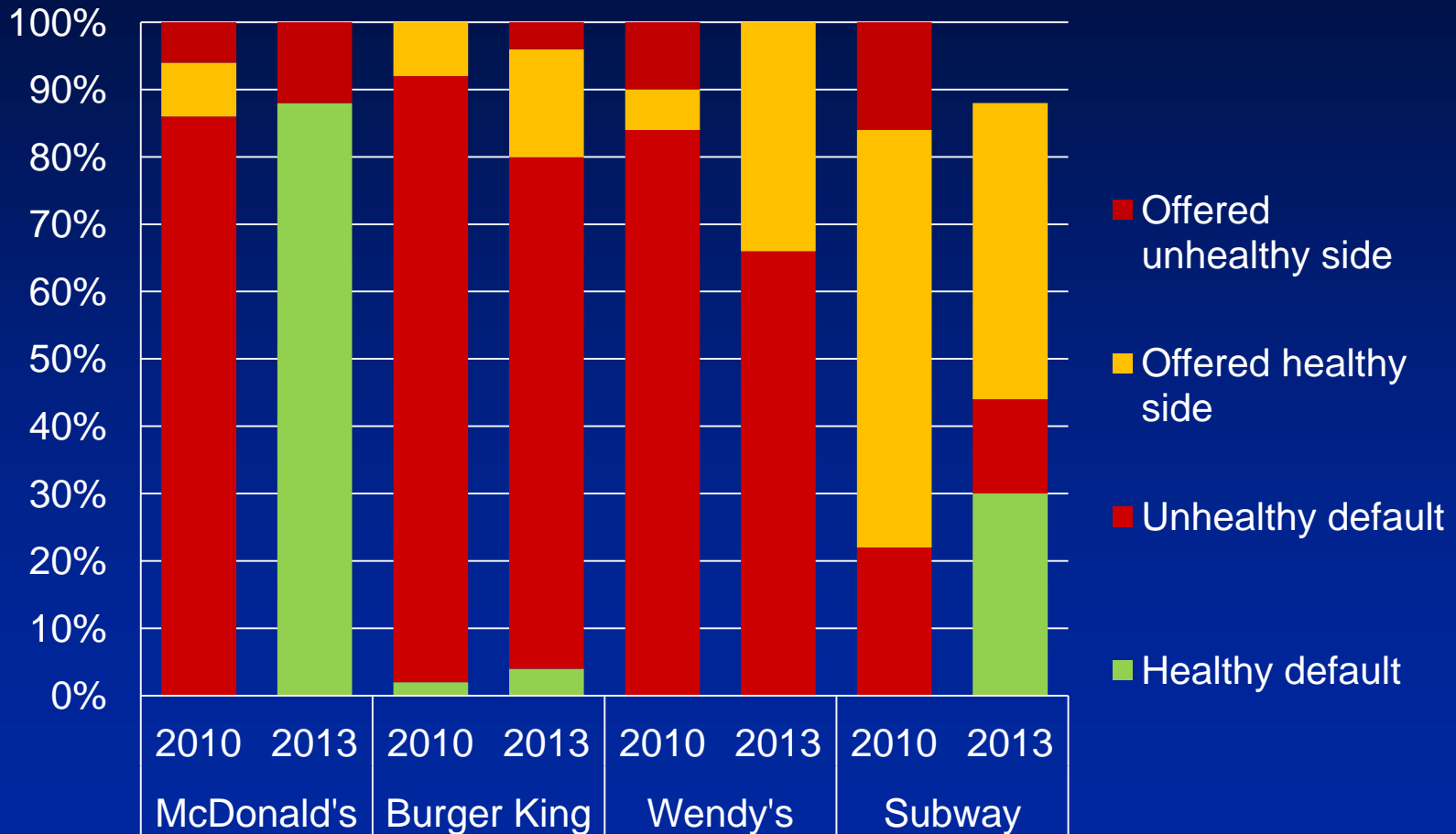
Offered Healthy Side



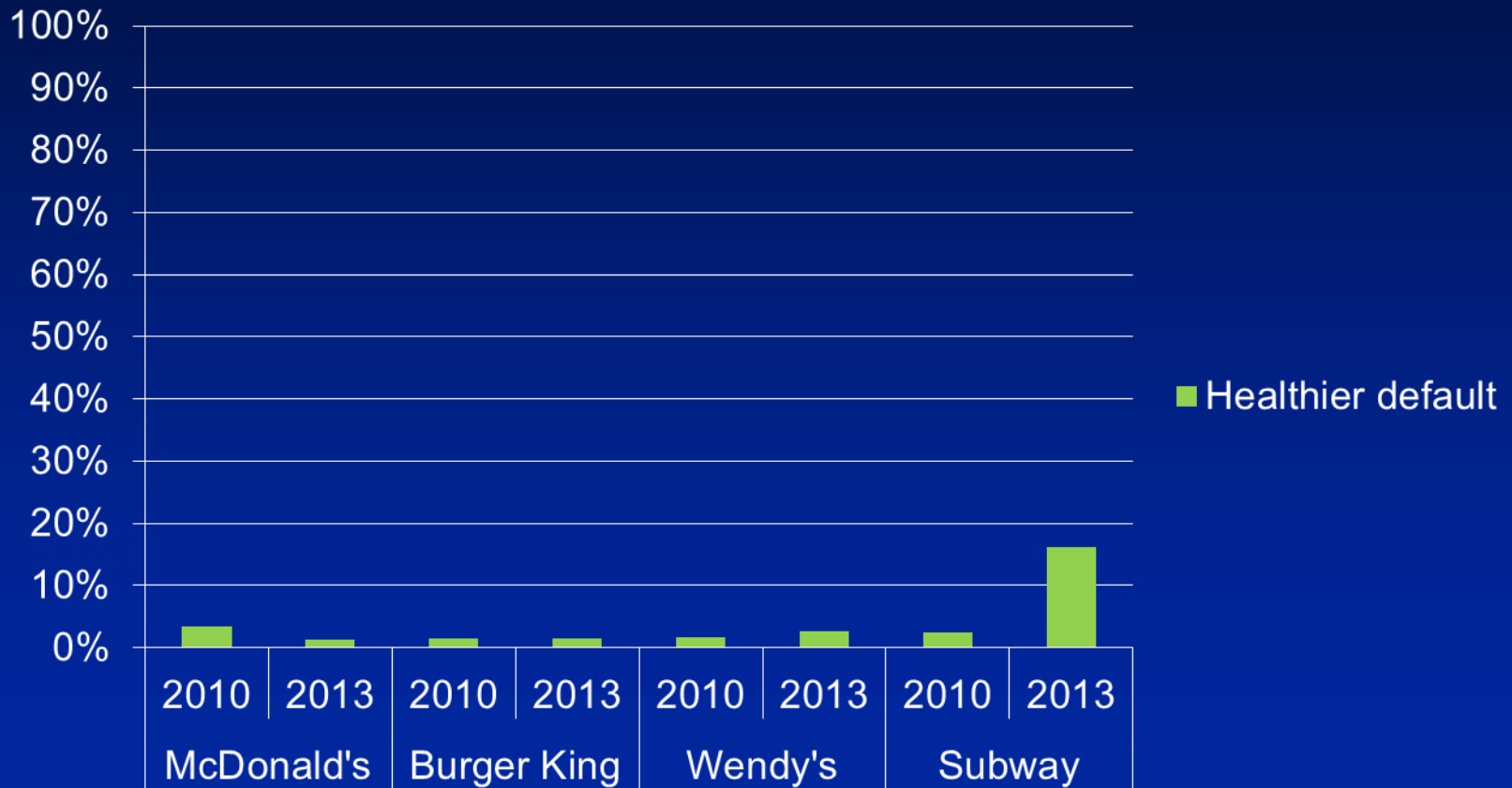
Unhealthy Default Side



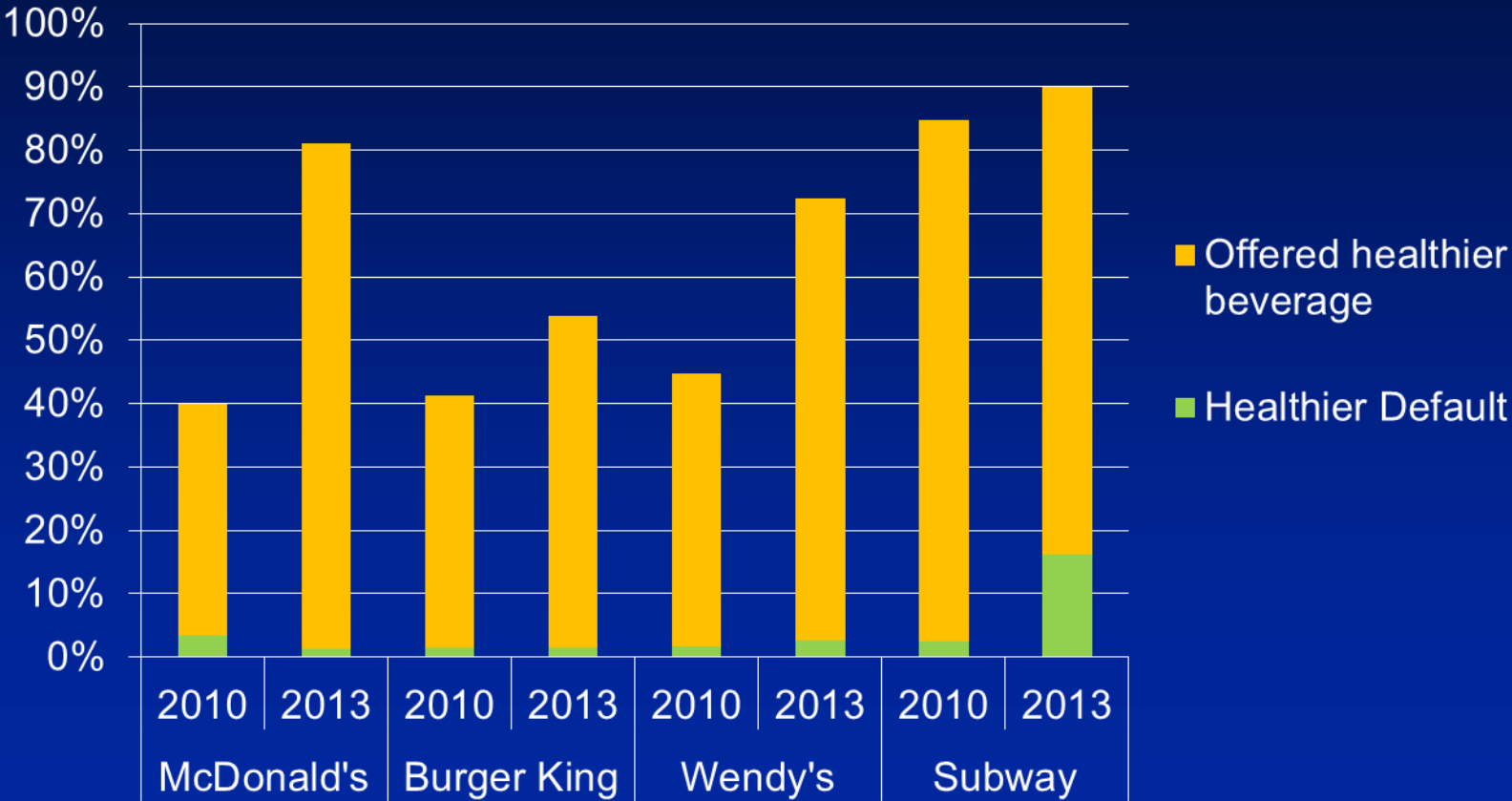
Offered Unhealthy Side



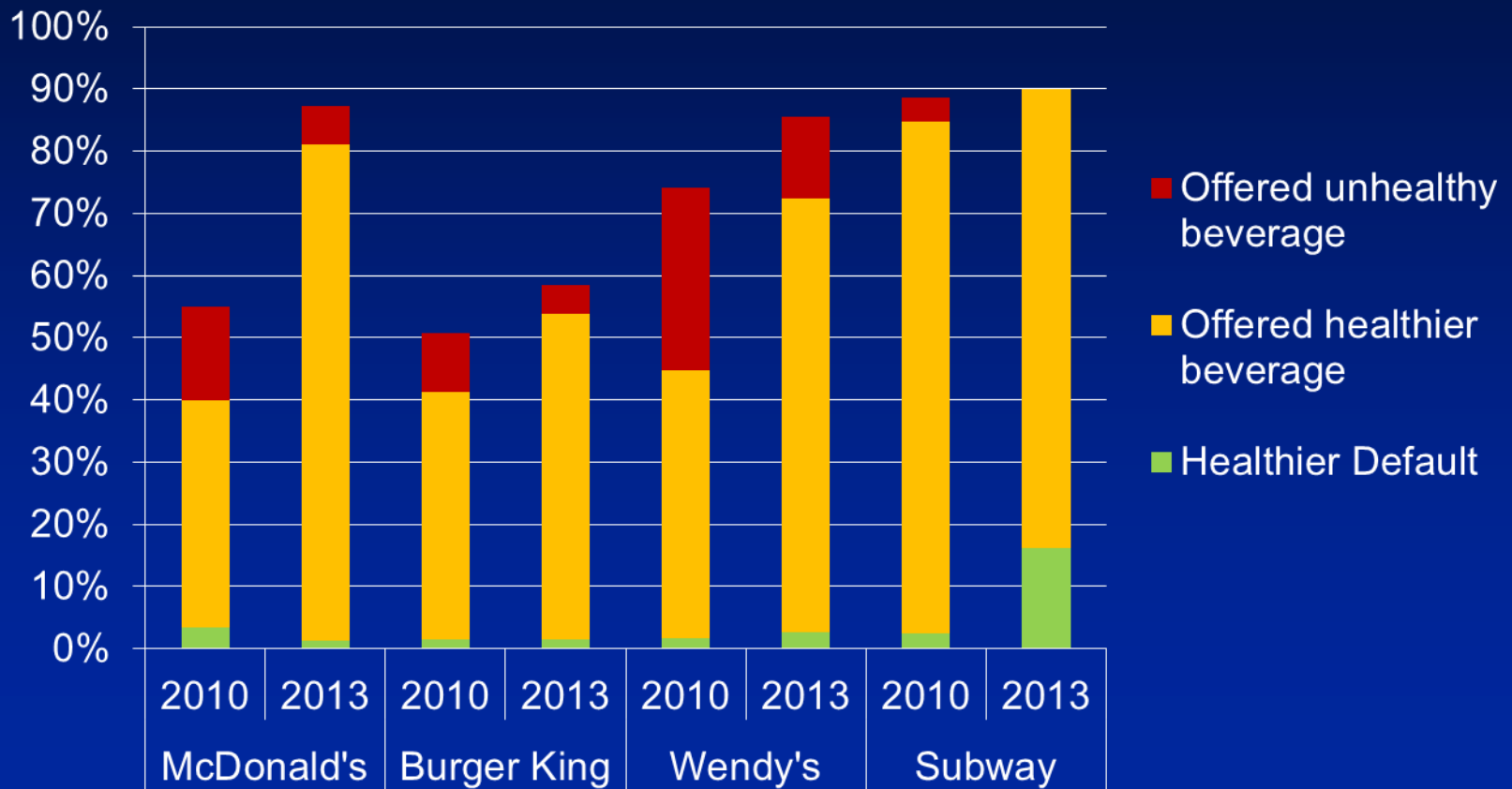
Healthier Default Beverage



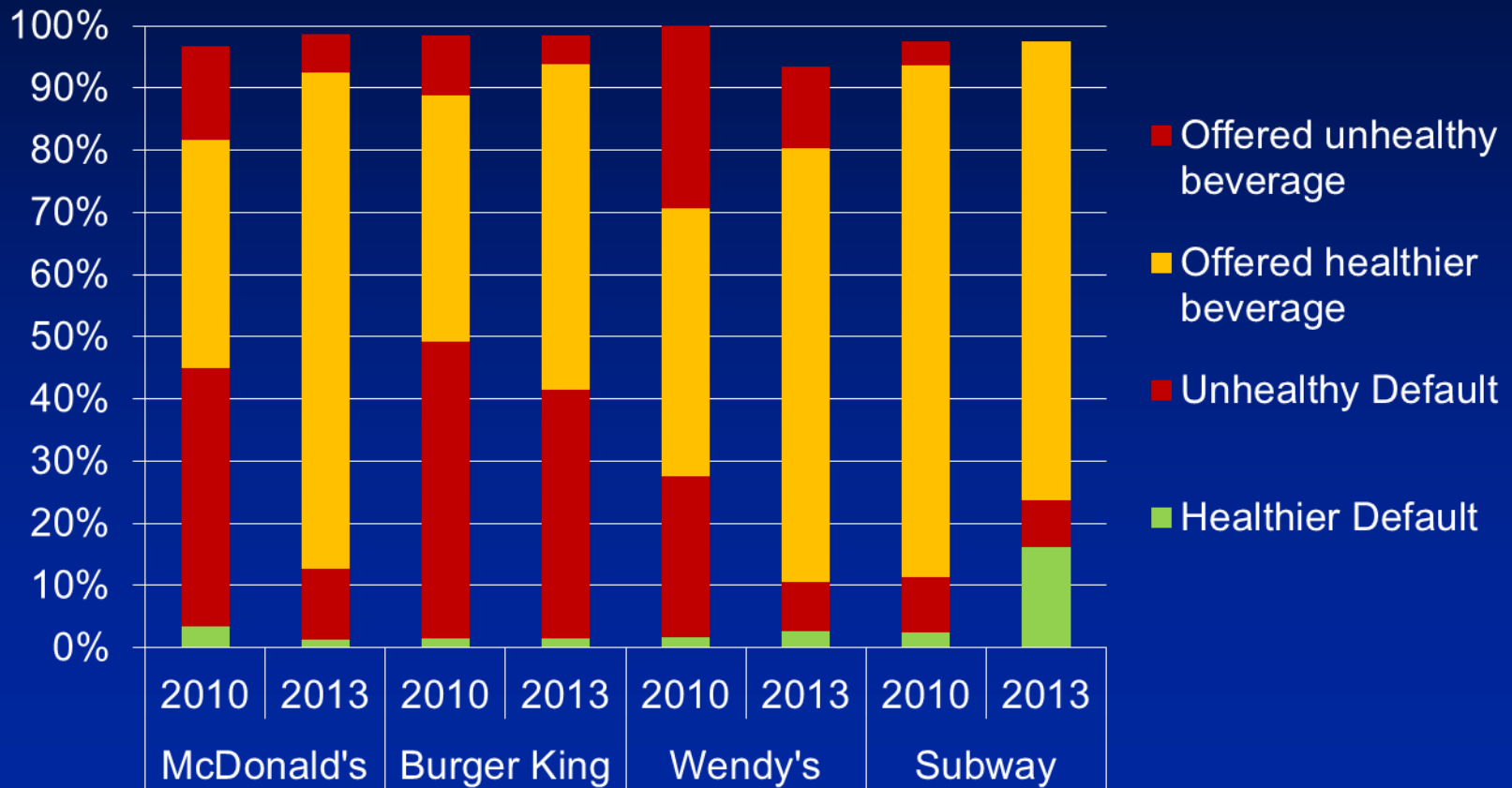
Offered Healthier Beverage



Offered Unhealthy Beverage



Unhealthy Default Beverage



Recommendations

- Every restaurant should offer healthy sides, beverages and main dishes in kids' meals
- These should be the default
- The majority of possible kids' meal combinations should meet industry standards

For lists of the best and worst meals
and interactive tools for parents:

Fastfoodmarketing.org

Acknowledgements

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Thank you

Marlene.Schwartz@yale.edu

Fastfoodmarketing.org

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