



# Did Covid-19 Influence Fruit & Vegetable Consumption?

**Explaining and Comparing Pandemic Peak and Post-Peak Periods**

**Presented by Dr. Eckton Chinyanga**

# BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Even though Covid-19 emergency declarations and protocols have receded globally including in the US (New York Times 2023; U.S. Centers for Disease Control 2023), the pandemic had far-reaching effects including on dietary choices.
- ▶ Early pandemic lockdowns, social distancing, supply chain disruptions, and the general uncertainty in the evolution of the virus prompted changes in diets and food consumption.
- ▶ As the dire impacts of the pandemic on public health dominated the news and public conversations, there was heightened awareness about overall health, with increased emphasis on boosting immune health from balanced diets which include consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole foods.

The goals of this study were to:

- ▶ Explore the effects of the pandemic on:
  - I. Attitudes towards fruits and vegetables(F&V).
  - II. Examine consumers' subsequent changes in consumption patterns during the peak and post-peak pandemic periods

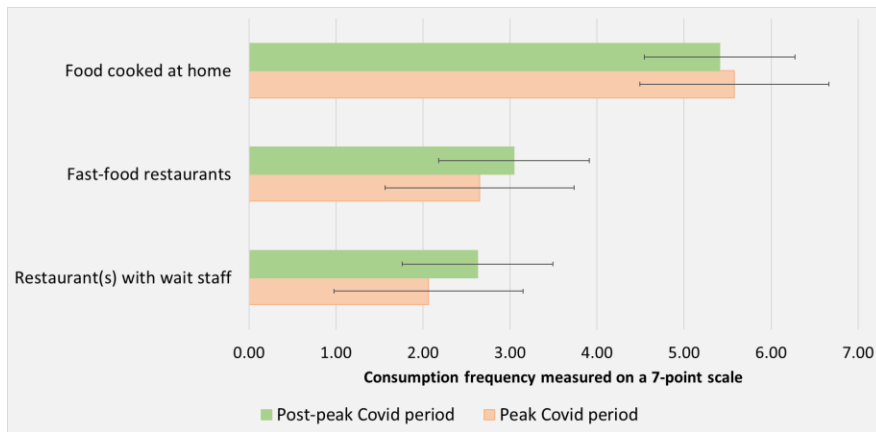


# SURVEY DESIGN AND METHODS

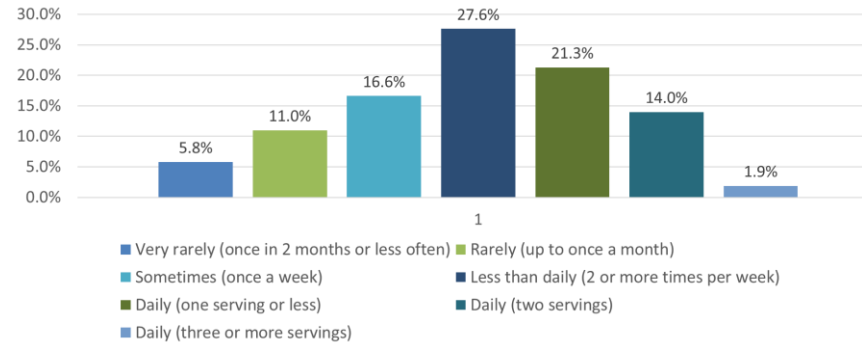
- ▶ A survey was designed that collected data between July to September 2022. Survey participants were selected from 12 US Southern states, with an overall sample size of 416.
- ▶ Respondents were recruited from the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Tennessee.
- ▶ Data was collected via Prolific, an online recruitment platform with a 130,000 active member panel.
- ▶ The main section of the survey was devoted to consumption of F&V in two-time streams: *at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, and at present (survey was conducted in 2022)*. Questions specifically gauged fresh versus non-fresh (e.g., canned, dried, frozen, and 100% fruit juice in the case of fruit) F&V.

# DATA ANALYSIS

## Food consumption frequency by venue of preparation



## Consumption of fresh fruits at the height of Covid-19



# RESULTS

**Factors shaping changes in fruit and vegetable consumption between peak and post-peak pandemic periods**

	Change in consumption post-peak pandemic – peak pandemic			
	Fresh fruits	Non-fresh fruits	Fresh vegetables	Non-fresh vegetables
Variable	Coefficient	Coefficient	Coefficient	Coefficient
Change in food cooked at home	0.267 (0.115)**	-0.037 (0.139)	0.319 (0.138)**	0.337 (0.171)**
Change in fast-food	0.073 (0.094)	0.283 (0.119)**	-0.206 (0.115)*	0.092 (0.140)
Change in food from restaurants	0.144 (0.110)	-0.036 (0.138)	0.290 (0.135)**	0.205 (0.165)
Attention to diet	0.214 (0.094)**	0.226 (0.114)**	0.354 (0.117)***	0.210 (0.133)
Constant	-1.582 (0.343)	-2.256 (0.448)	-2.342 (0.442)	-2.647 (0.534)

# RESULTS & CONCLUSION

- ▶ Paying greater attention to diets since the onset of the pandemic was associated with increased consumption of F&V even past the peak of the pandemic.
- ▶ Attention to diets triggered by the pandemic not only encouraged more frequent consumption of F&V, but this also persisted even past the peak of the pandemic.
- ▶ This can be considered a positive externality from the pandemic, where the pandemic prompted some individuals to reassess their diets and make healthier selections.
- ▶ The pandemic has underscored the significance of overall well-being, and individuals may have developed more recognition regarding the role of diets in promoting holistic health, including the consumption of F&V

# CONCLUSION

- ▶ Despite the devastation of the Covid-19 pandemic across nearly every aspect of society, it stimulated shifts in attitudes, awareness, and behaviors related to health, well-being, and nutrition. The increase in awareness has likely influenced consumption preferences, translating into an increase in F&V which has persisted even past the peak pandemic period.

# Questions & Remarks

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