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Changes in food purchasing practices of French households during the first COVID-19 lockdown and associated individual and environmental factors

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Background/Objectives: To limit the spread of COVID-19, a strict lockdown was imposed in France between March and May 2020. Mobility limitations and closure of non-essential public places (restaurants, canteens, open-air markets etc.) affected peoples' food environment (FE) and thus their food purchasing practices (FPP)⁽¹⁾. This study aimed to explore changes in FPP of French households during lockdown and associations with individual and environmental factors.

Methods: In April of 2020 households from the Mont'Panier cross-sectional study (N = 306), a quota sampling survey conducted in the south of France, were asked to complete an online questionnaire about their FPP during lockdown and other related factors, including perceived FE (distance to closest general food store, perception of increased food prices etc.). The objective FE (presence, number, proximity and density of food outlets) was assessed around participant's home using a geographical information system.

Multiple correspondence analysis based on changes in frequency of use and quantity of food purchased by food outlet, followed by a hierarchical cluster analysis resulted in the identification of clusters. Logistic regression models were performed to assess associations between identified clusters and household's sociodemographic characteristics, perceived and objective FE.

Results: Five clusters were identified: cluster "Supermarket" (38% of the total sample), made up of households who reduced frequency of trips, but increased quantity bought in supermarkets during lockdown, associated with lower incomes and the perception of increased food prices; cluster "E-supermarket" (12%), in which households increased online food shopping with pick up at supermarket, associated with higher incomes; cluster "Diversified" (22%), made up of households who reduced frequency of trips to diverse food outlet types, associated with the perception of increased food prices; cluster "Organic Food Store" (20%), in which households did not change frequency of trips, nor quantity purchased in organic food stores, associated with being older (35–50 vs <35y); and finally, cluster "Producer" (8%), including households who regularly purchased food from producers, but mostly reduced these purchases during lockdown, associated with the presence of an organic food store within a 1-km walking distance around home.

Discussion / Conclusion: Changes in FPP during lockdown were associated with socio-demographic characteristics and perceived FE, rather than with objective FE.

Reference

1. Leone LA, Fleischhacker S, Anderson-Steeves B, *et al.* (2020) *Int J Environ Res Public Health* 17(20), 7397.

Disclosure of Interest

None Declared