

An apple a day isn't enough

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Adults from 30 to 60 years old, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, aren't consuming the daily recommended levels of fruits and vegetables. Quebecers, however, eat more of nature's produce than their fellow Canadians.

These are some of the findings of a new Concordia University study, published by [Nutrition Journal](#), which sheds light on who reaches in their fridge crisper often enough to gain the [health benefits](#) of a [balanced diet](#) comprised of [fruits and vegetables](#).

"People from the Atlantic to the western provinces consume fruits and [vegetables](#) less frequently compared to Quebecers," says lead author Mesbah Sharaf, a PhD candidate in Concordia's Department of Economics. "This could be due to cultural influence, since Quebec is a predominantly a French-speaking province with a long history of farming, fruits, vegetables and [dairy products](#)."

Co-author Sunday Azagba, who is also a PhD candidate in the Concordia Department of Economics, says: "This study furthers our understanding of how finances or lifestyle influence fruit and [vegetable consumption](#) to eventually target groups to promote better nutrition policies."

The researchers analyzed data collected from almost 94,000 people, aged 18 to 69 years, from the Canadian Community [Health Survey](#). They looked at factors such as gender, education, income, marital and smoking status to reveal differences in how often people of various backgrounds consume fruits and vegetables.

The analyses revealed that people with low education and low income ate fruits and vegetables less frequently — about 4.5 times per day.

Individuals with higher education and income, for their part, ate nature's produce a little over five times per day.

"There are also significant disparities in the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption by demographics and lifestyle," Azagba says.

Men, singles, smokers, people in their 40s and households with no children, for example, reached for the fruit bowl less often. The research team also found that:

- Quebecers went to the crisper more often than their counterparts in any other province. (The territories were not included).
- Women tended to munch on fruit and vegetables more frequently (5.4 times a day) than men (4.5 times).
- Those who have a weak social network didn't have as much appetite for fruit and vegetables as those who have strong networks of friends.
- People with a higher level of education ate carrots and apples more frequently — regardless of other demographic and lifestyle factors.

Getting the message out

Eating a daily minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables is proven to have a slew of health benefits. According to the World Health Organization and the Food and Agricultural Organization, an adequate intake of farm produce reduces the risks of diabetes, strokes, obesity and high blood pressure.

Despite this evidence, the study authors found fruit and vegetable

consumption for most people is below the daily recommended value. They suggest that people may be encouraged to eat more broccoli and berries by raising their awareness of the health benefits through media and community-based nutrition programs, as well as through government subsidies of such produce.

"There is no one-size-fits-all strategy to promote healthy eating behaviour; a multifaceted approach would be required to successfully address the low consumption of fruit and vegetables, especially among people from low [socioeconomic backgrounds](#)," says Sharaf.

More information: www.nutritionj.com/content/10/1/118

Provided by Concordia University

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