Socioeconomic disparities and nutritional quality of food purchases in France: 40 years of household purchases 1969-2010

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Socioeconomic disparities and nutritional quality of food purchases in France: 1971-2010

Descriptive statistics (source: INSEE, Kantar)

- The evidence of a social gradient in health and food-related diseases shows the crucial role of nutritional quality of diet. However, socioeconomic disparities in diet quality were seldom studied on the long-term.
- Our aim was to analyze the evolution of the nutritional quality of food purchases of French households (1971-2010) and to assess the disparities in nutritional quality according to income and education.

Background and Objectives:

- The evidence of a social gradient in health and food-related diseases shows the crucial role of nutritional quality of diet. However, socioeconomic disparities in diet quality were seldom studied on the long-term.
- Our aim was to analyze the evolution of the nutritional quality of food purchases of French households (1971-2010) and to assess the disparities in nutritional quality according to income and education.

Methods:

• Data: Household purchases, Food-at-Home, Representative population; 1971-1991: INSEE, food surveys, 7-days diary; 1991-2010: Kantar panel surveys, scanner data; Food composition database: CIQUAL 1992 (30 components, 800 foods)

• Methodology: Building time series of average quantities/cap of food purchases, yearly, Converted into calories and nutrients; Assessing the evolution of the nutritional quality of food purchases, using the Mean Adequacy Ratio (MAR: mean percentage of daily recommended intakes for 16 key nutrients, per 2000 kcal of food purchases; Computing deviations according to household income per quartiles (Q1 to Q4) and 4 levels of education (1 to 4) along 5 points in time 1971-2010: 

\[ \Delta_x = \left( \frac{\bar{x} - \bar{m}}{m} \right) \times 100 \]

Results:

• Evolution of energy content of FAH: higher disparities according to education than to income

Higher energy content of FAH for lower income until 1991 and reverse trend from 2002, with variations smaller than 5%; Higher energy content for lower education levels 1978-2010, with variations over 10%.

Conclusions:

• On the whole, the nutritional quality of purchases for FAH, as measured by the MAR, remains lower for the lowest SES (income and education) all over the period 1971-2010.
• Disparities of nutritional quality decreased according to education but remained according to income.
• Main limitation of the study: only one food composition table was used, therefore the evolution in nutritional quality reflects the changes in food purchases patterns (including the introduction of new foods categories until 1992) but not the evolution of the nutrient content of purchased foods.