



Diversity in food systems and food consumption practices

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Diversity in food systems & food consumption practices

18/02/2019

Marie Plessz



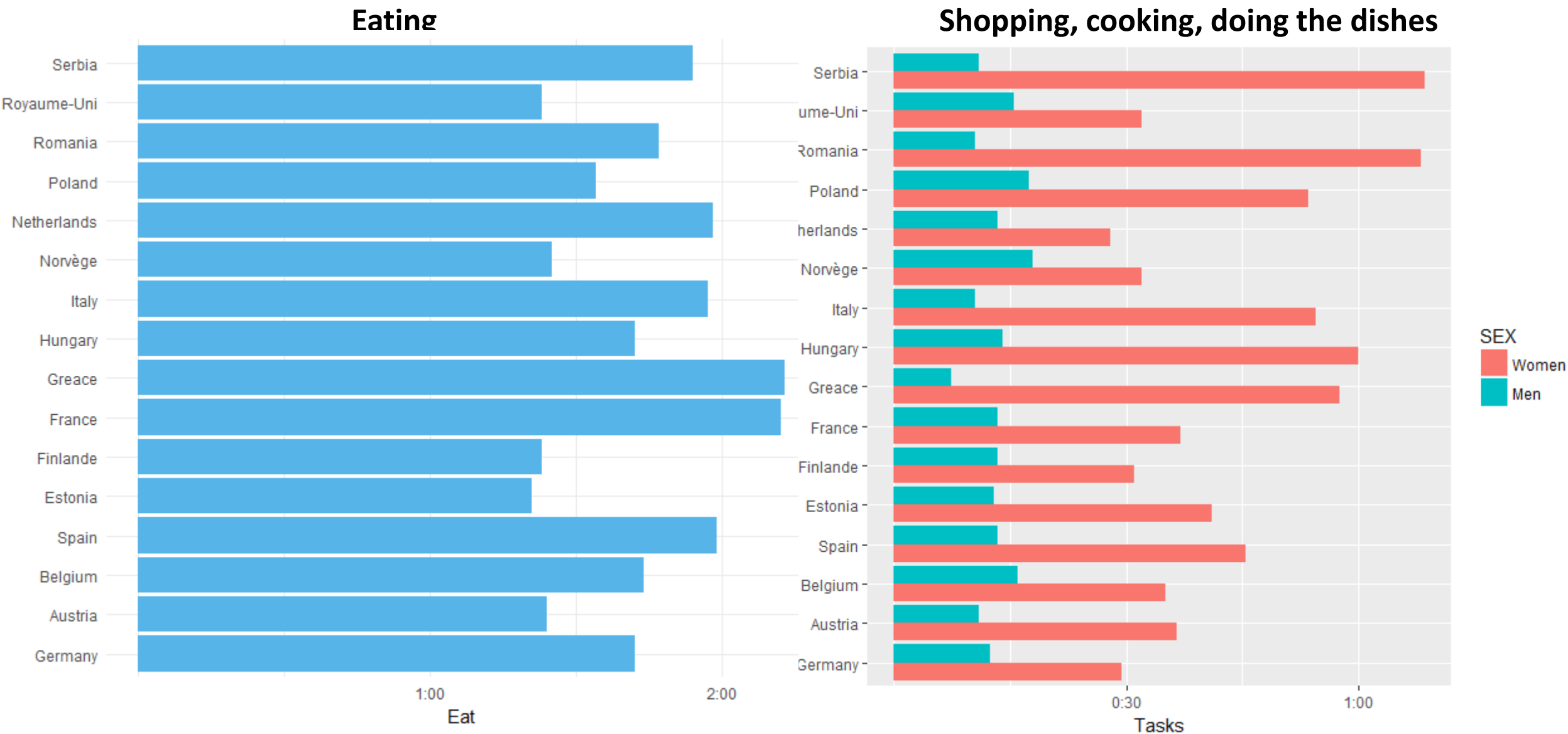
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Food Choice/ Behaviour / Practices

- Take a lot of time
 - bring together many different activities and things
 - Connect with how we view and enact family ties, wellbeing, care, housekeeping, career, identity...
 - Have mostly unintended/ ignored health & environmental consequences
 - Seldom look like choosing between a predefined, limited set of options
 - Are very context-dependent
- ➔ Sociologists increasingly speak about **practices**
- (Warde 2016, Shove et al 2012)

Time spent in food consumption in Europe



Source: European Harmonised Time-use surveys provided by Eurostat,elaborated by M Plessz

Diversity and consumption practices

1. Diversity as generated 'upstream' in the food system

How do consumers deal with diversity in the food system?

Diversity in food consumption practices

2. Diversity as variety

“The absence of uniformity or monotony”

In a household/person/group's food practices

3. Diversity as difference

“Something that makes one thing or person not the same as another thing or person”

Across social/ethnic/cultural groups

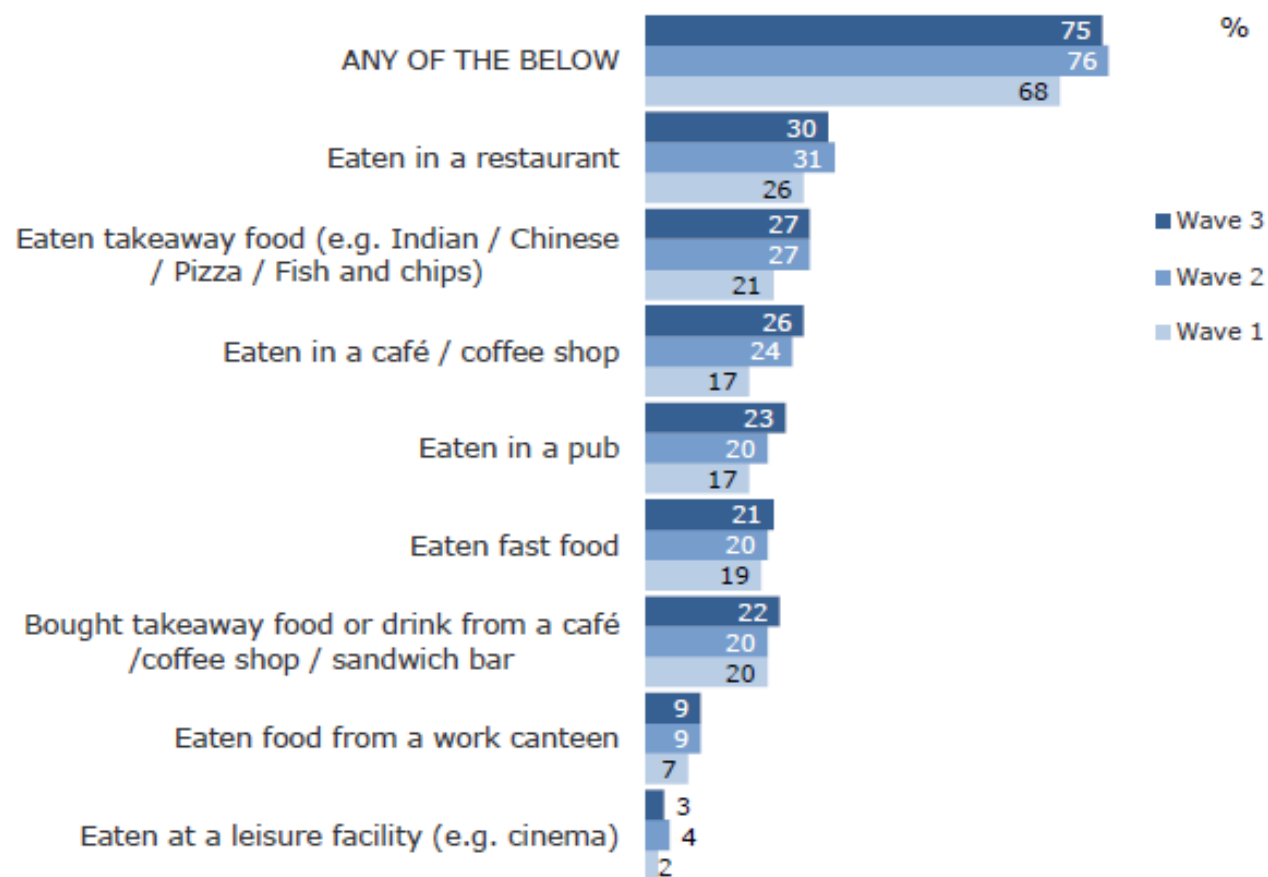
Consumers and diversity in food systems

- Diversity in products and provisioning channels
- Diversity in definitions of appropriate ways of eating
 - Prescriptors: public policies, NGOs, marketing, friends, family
 - Prescriptions: objective and content
 - Prescriptions 'in silos', often competing, sometimes conflicting
- Consumers **work** at reducing diversity and its negative effects
 - Try not to purchase some products,
 - Routines, Tastes
 - Work requires time, energy, skills. May fail.
- Mostly **women** do it

Variety

- Variety in **meal content**: a social norm
 - It is considered appropriate: good housekeeping avoids monotonous meals
 - Generates more **food waste** (Evans 2014)
 - Sometimes ready-prepared, pre-packaged products sold (and viewed) as ways to ensure variety.
- Inside a food repertoire (tastes)
 - A different soup everyday, is it variety?
 - Wider repertoires in higher socioeconomic groups?
- Variety in **eating contexts**
 - Most meals taken at home (80% of dinners in France)
 - Commercial venues, work, school, hospital, retirement home, prison, holiday, on travel...
- Both a social norm and an answer to daily-life organisation
- Generates economic activity but resource-intensive

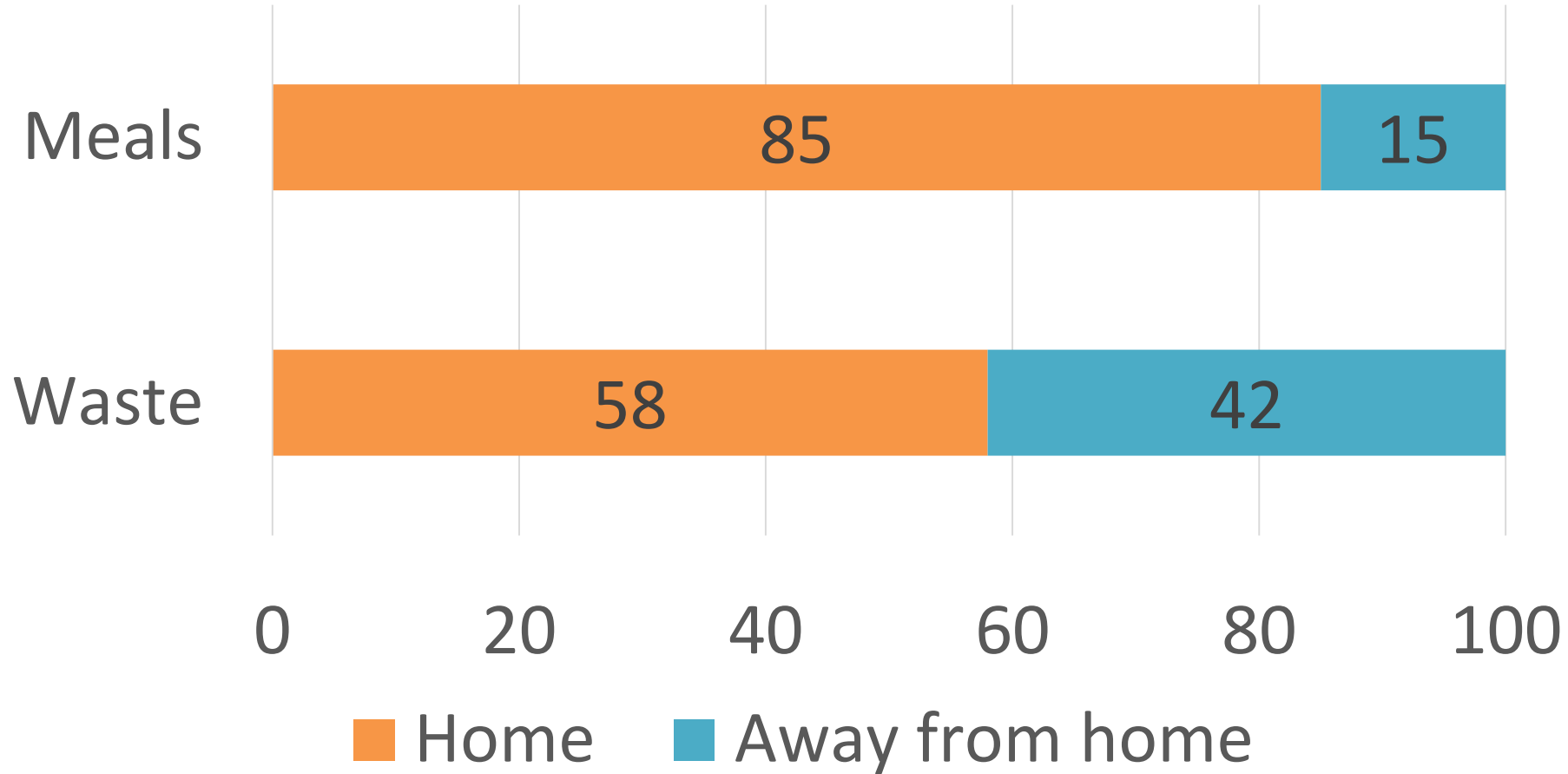
Diversity of eating out in the UK 2014



Source: Q2_33 Have you done any of the following things in the last seven days, that is since last ...
 Note: respondents were able to give multiple responses to this question

Food Standard agency UK

Meal contexts and food waste in France



ADEME, 2016

Differences

- Differences in tastes express class, ethnic and gender identity
 - Liking/avoiding specific foods (Bourdieu, *Distinction*)
 - Signals who you are to others
 - Makes you feel at home/a stranger
- Differences in living conditions
 - Household composition, equipment, housing (garden? Compost, freezer?)
 - Income, work schedules
 - Food skills and capacities
 - Vary across socioeconomic group
- Diversity helps accommodate citizens' tastes and living conditions
→ **social cohesion**
- **BUT** policies focusing on helping citizens make the right choices → **stigma** and **blame** on the most **vulnerable** citizens

3 challenges

- Resource-efficient diversity?
 - Environmental resources
 - Consumers' time and skills
- Gender equity: can we have diversity without generating even more food work and responsibilities for women?
- Social cohesion: can we reduce the market and social value of 'bad variety' without generating social exclusion and stigma?

3 R&I Issues

- Make collective meal arrangements socially inclusive AND healthy AND sustainable
- Share responsibilities and work generated by diversity with upstream actors
- Design policies that focus on the contexts of consumption rather than on consumers

THANK YOU

For your attention

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