

SCOUTS Adolescents and Youth Nutrition Survey 2021

The survey was designed by the World Organization of the Scout Movement, Africa Region ("WOSM Africa" or "SCOUTS") in collaboration with UNICEF East and Southern Africa Regional Office ("UNICEF ESARO") to identify the current practices and knowledge gaps on nutrition among the adolescents in ESA.

The results of this survey will feed into the further development and enhancement of the SCOUTS Food for Life Project that is currently being implemented by across 14 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa namely: South Africa, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Benin, Niger, Lesotho, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, South Sudan, Togo, Tanzania and Namibia. The survey will also inform the joint UNICEF and SCOUTS project in East and Southern Africa on improving the knowledge and practices among adolescents and young people on nutrition and food security.

The survey was conducted via Google forms from 19th to 25th April 2021. 99 respondents participated in the survey. 93% of the respondents were older than 18 years. The respondents were mainly from 4 countries that constituted 60.6% of all the responses: Kenya – 24.2%, South Africa – 23.2%, Uganda – 7.1%, and Benin – 6.1%. Overall respondents from more than 12 countries took part in the survey.

Most of the respondents were male – 61.6%. 67.7.% of the respondents were attending school, college, or university at the time of the survey.

Food Security

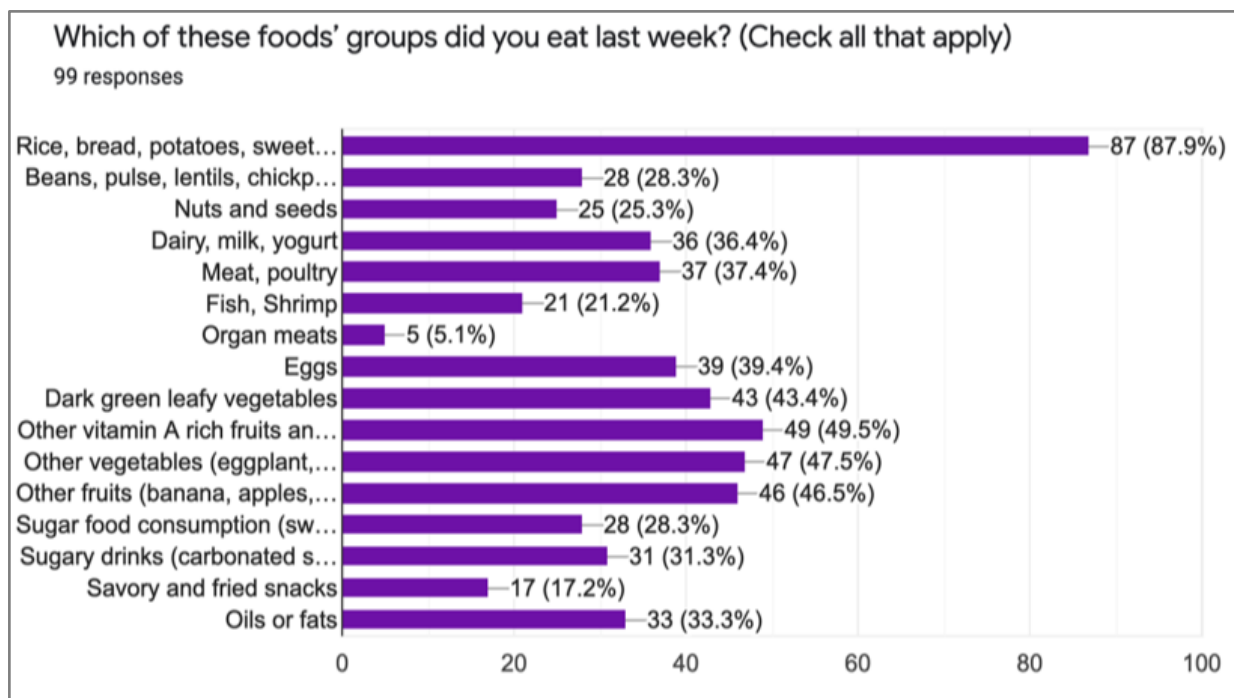
The survey results clearly demonstrated that scarcity of food is a problem for around half of the respondents with the financial resources being the main hindrance for access to food. 50% of the respondents worried about having enough food. 47.5% of the respondents noted that within the last 12 months many times they were not able to get the food they wanted because they didn't have enough money.

The frequency of meals and the amount of food also decreased within the last 12 months as 28% of the respondents noted they skipped a meal or cut the size of a meal because there was not enough food.

Scarcity of food was the reason why 30% of respondents felt hungry or tired many times within the last 12 months. The survey results demonstrate that lack of food may also have implications for mental health, as around 23% of the respondents felt ashamed, sad or mad because their family didn't have enough food many times during the last 12 months or had to do certain things to get enough food.

Food Consumption

Rice, bread, potatoes and sweet potatoes were the most popular foods consumed by 87% of the respondents during the last week (just before or during the survey) while the rest of the food groups were consumed by only 25%-50% (*See Figure 1*). In terms of meals breakfast was the least popular one with only 63% of respondents noting that they had a breakfast the day before taking the survey. 70% had lunch and 74% had dinner on the previous day. 53% of the respondents noted that they skip breakfast 3 or more times a week.



COVID had an impact on the respondents' diet: 22% consumed more junk food since the pandemic started, 28% consumed more fruits and 43% consumed more vegetables, while 39% of the respondents haven't changed the diet.

59.6% of the respondents observed that they were concerned about their weight with a further 13.1% indicating that they were on a diet to lose weight. It was good to note that 80.8% of the respondents were engaged in physical activities with at least 75% of them for more than 10 minutes a day.

Other Observations

Social media was noted as the most preferred source of information on nutritional matters by 60.6% of the respondents. School/university/college was second with 34.3% and TV and radio third at 29.3%.

When it comes to engagement in lifestyle choices that impact on personal health 93.9% indicated that they do not smoke or chew tobacco. However, 35.4% of the respondents indicated that they take alcohol, beer or wine.

Regarding the participation of the respondents in the SCOUTS Food for Life Project, only 31.3% registered their involvement and indicated the activities they have taken part in. They went ahead to suggest ways the SCOUTS can enhance the project to better address the food security and nutritional challenges of young people and their communities in Sub Saharan Africa.

Conclusion

The survey demonstrated that consuming diverse food three times a day is the main behavior gap among the participants in terms of healthy eating. However, the main reason for that appeared to be lack of financial resources. As a consequence, their need to invest more in empowering young people and their families to produce and/or access quality food as well as advocacy to increase the understanding on the importance of healthy nutrition among adolescents and youth.

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Attachments:

Results of the SCOUTS Adolescent and Youth Nutrition Survey