



# THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DIETARY PATTERNS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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## BACKGROUND

- Unhealthy dietary patterns cause many chronic diseases, and most individuals in the United States (U.S.) do not meet national dietary recommendations<sup>1</sup>
- The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have caused changes in people's diets due to many social and economic changes, especially for individuals living in Los Angeles (LA) County
- Studies outside of the U.S. suggest diets have changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with evidence of both unhealthy and healthy shifts<sup>2-6</sup>

# GAPS & AIM

- Gaps
  - Limitations of previous studies
  - No studies focusing on areas within the U.S.
- Aims
  - To assess dietary shifts in a representative sample of households in LA County
  - To identify the social and economic factors that may be driving these shifts

# METHODS

Our analyses focus on the subset of Los Angeles County residents (n=1071).

## Measures

### Outcome (Diet Changes):

- Respondents were asked “Since L.A. County’s stay-at-home orders started in March 2020, have you been eating different types of foods?”
  - 1. Yes, I am eating healthier food than before (e.g., more fruits and vegetables, and/or less sugary and fried food)
  - 2. Yes, I am eating less healthy food than before (e.g., less fruits and veggies, and/or more sugary or fried food)
  - 3. No, I am not eating different types of foods than before.

# METHODS

## Predictors and covariates:

- Demographics: Age, race and ethnicity, employment, income and household size were all assessed once every three months
- Social network size
- Food insecurity
- Low income and low food access: Data was merged from the USDA food environment atlas
  - A person was coded as being “low income and low access” if they were half a mile or more from a grocery store or supermarket (ten miles if living in a rural area) and had an annual household income of less than 200% of the federal poverty level.

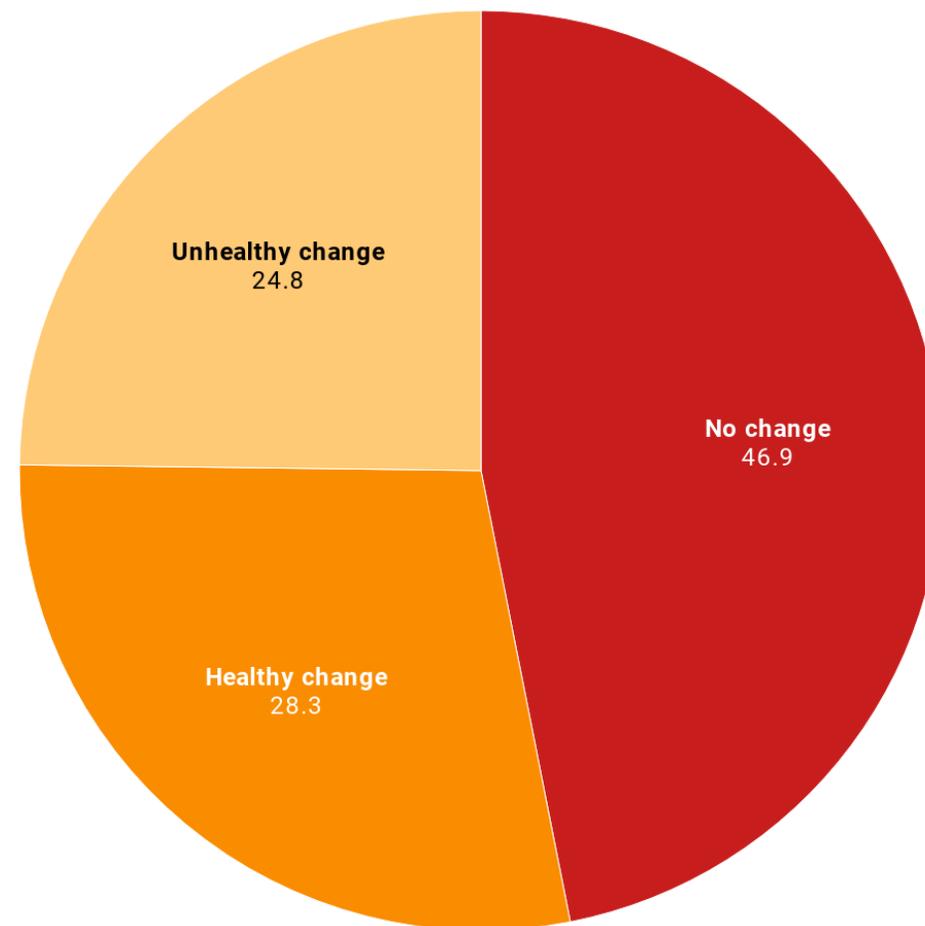
## Analysis:

- Multinomial logistic regression was used to test the association between the potential covariates with changes in dietary quality. Analyses are weighted using the weights from the July survey wave.

# RESULTS

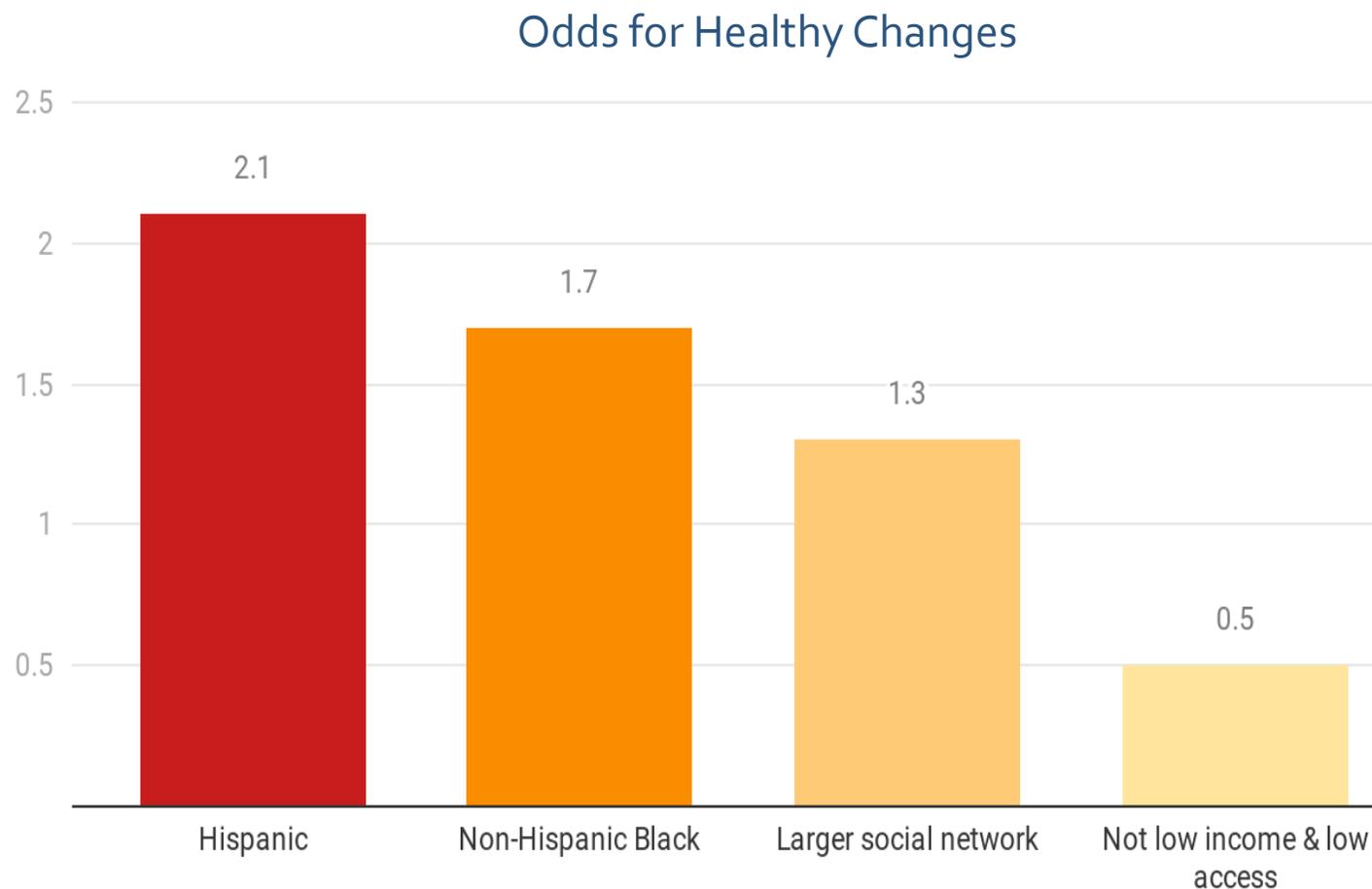
Over 50% of LA County residents reported changes in diet since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

28.3% of individuals had made healthy changes, while 24.8% had made unhealthy changes.



# RESULTS

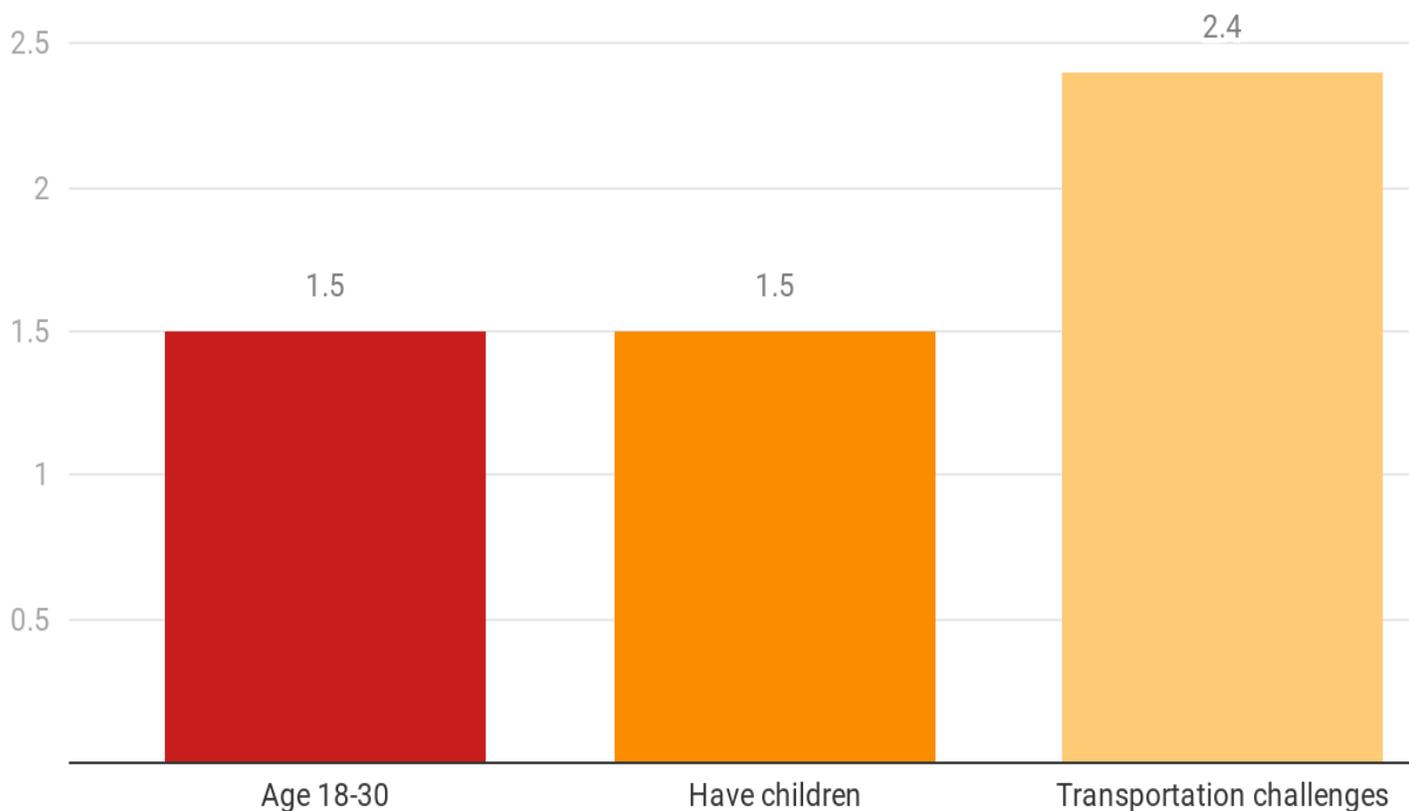
Individuals who had a larger social network, weren't low income with low food access, or identified as Hispanic or Non-Hispanic Black were more likely to make healthy changes.



Significant effects ( $p < .05$ ), controlling for employment and poverty level

# RESULTS

Odds for Unhealthy Changes

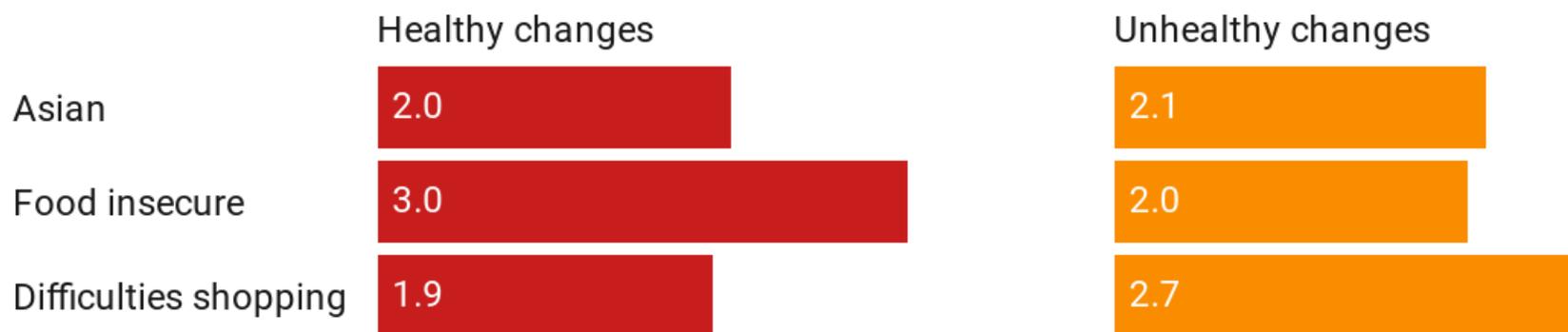


Individuals who were age 18-30, had children, or had transportation challenges were more likely to make **unhealthy changes**.



# RESULTS

Individuals who were food insecure, had difficulties grocery shopping, or identified as Asian were more likely to make **both types of changes.**



## DISCUSSION

- The majority of LA County residents have experienced changes in their diet during the pandemic.
- Adults who are the most likely to have changed their diet are: racial and ethnic minorities, have experienced food insecurity, of younger age, or have had challenges with accessing food.
- The people whose daily lives are most impacted by the pandemic appear to have the biggest dietary shifts
- Future longitudinal research is needed to determine which factors which are influencing some of these individuals to respond to these disruptions with making healthier changes vs. making unhealthier changes

THANK YOU!

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