Author’s response to reviews

Title: Energy, nutrient and food content of snacks in French adults

Authors:
Wendy SI HASSEN (w.sihassen@eren.smbh.univ-paris13.fr)
Katia Castetbon (Katia.Castetbon@ulb.ac.be)
Christine Tichit (christine.tichit@inra.fr)
Sandrine Péneau (s.peneau@eren.smbh.univ-paris13.fr)
Anouar Nechba (a.nechba@eren.smbh.univ-paris13.fr)
Pauline Ducrot (p.ducrot@eren.smbh.univ-paris13.fr)
Aurélie Lampuré (a.lampure@eren.smbh.univ-paris13.fr)
France Bellisle (bellisle@uren.smbh.univ-paris13.fr)
Serge Hercberg (s.hercberg@eren.smbh.univ-paris13.fr)
Caroline Méjean (caroline.mejean@inra.fr)

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor in Chief,

Please find enclosed the revised version of manuscript NUTJ-D-17-00121 entitled “Energy, nutrient and food content of snacks in French adults” which has been modified in line with the reviewer comments. All the changes of the second review are highlighted in the manuscript in a green font.

You will find attached our point-to-point reply.
Sincerely yours,

Wendy Si Hassen on behalf of the authors.

First of all, the affiliation of Caroline Mejean has been corrected. (Title page)

1. The wording 'defined as one eating occasion different that the main meals' is used to describe snacking - please correct this language, which is unclear.

We agree that this wording may be confusing. We meant to explain that our definition of snacking is not based on the type or amount of foods consumed.

We have modified the abstract and introduction consequently.

Abstract “Snacking raises concern since it may lead to an additional energy intake and poor nutrient quality. A snacking occasion can be defined as any eating occasion apart from main meals, regardless of the amount or type of foods consumed”

Background

Lines 2-3 “Snacking behavior, defined as any eating occasion apart from main meals, regardless of the amount or type of food consumed”
2. Also, please clarify in the results, discussion and conclusion that the findings relate to weekdays (e.g., first few sentences in discussion should emphasize this). This should also be discussed in the limitation section.

We have added clarifications in the results section:

On weekdays, around 28% of participants snacked in the morning (…)”

Lines 162-164 “Overall snack and main meals of weekdays
Overall, 68 % of subjects snacked on at least one occasion while 86% of participants ate breakfast and around 96% ate lunch and 96% dinner during weekdays (Table 2).”

Lines 173-174“Overall, fatty-sweet products (30%), fruits (13.1%), hot beverages (11.3%), sweet foods (9%) and bread (6%) contributed most to the energy intake from daily weekday snacks (Table 3).”

Line 177 “Regarding breakfast on weekdays, food groups that contributed […]”

Lines 180-181 “For lunch and dinner on weekdays, fish, meat, poultry and eggs contributed most to the energy intake of for these meals (24 and 18%) (Supplement Table 1).”

Clarifications about weekdays have also been made in all table titles.
We have also modified the discussion section as recommended:

Lines 187-190 “Our study showed that almost all adults ate the traditional three main meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) on weekdays while more than two-thirds of them also snacked at least once during the day, especially in the afternoon and, to a lesser extent, in the morning. Overall snack had lower nutrient density but higher energy density than main meals on weekdays”

Lines 198-199 “Our findings confirm that snacking is a very frequent behavior among French adults during the week; indeed, 68% snacked at least once a day”

Lines 284-286 “Because of variable and unusual eating behaviors on weekends, we chose to relate findings of weekdays only. Further analyses describing and comparing all eating occasions on weekends could usefully complement our current results.”

3. Would another limitation relate to the potential correlations between multiple snacking occasions within subjects? Would this have affected your analyses?

We agree that potential correlations between multiple snacking occasions could have been highlighted in our analysis and may have affected the results. Taking this point into account may have reduced variability in the results.

However, in our sample the majority of individuals who snack had only one snacking occasion (around 60%). Multiple snackers had mainly 2 snacks and the percentage of individuals having
more than two snacks was very low. In our total sample it represents less than 9%. Therefore, we estimated that this effect must have been limited.

We agree that this should be added in the discussion part and have consequently added the following sentence in our limitation section:

Lines 267-269 “Further analyses are however needed to assess potential correlations between multiple snacking occasions within subjects that may have affected the variability of our results.”