

# FOCUS *Society*

## SUMMARY

From 2007 to 2014, the Food Stress Index Related to Benefits (FSIB) was measured in the Census Metropolitan Area of Montreal. This index was measured only in 2014 in Toronto's Census Metropolitan Area. In addition to a significant jump in the FSIB between 2007 to 2011 in the Montreal CMA, the study reveals that, in 2014, in contrast to dietary risks, Montreal and Toronto are as much influenced by information about dietary benefits for their health.

## FOOD, BENEFITS AND HEALTH; Montreal and Toronto on a par!

The Food Stress Index related to Benefits (FSIB) demonstrates the appreciation effect of buying or consuming a specific food if it is associated with a real or perceived health benefit (i.e. the sphere of prescriptive norms in connection with the social norm of "eat better for your health"). Between 2007 and 2014, this index tells us that the change in eating habits motivated by food benefits can be observed in more than 9 out of 10 respondents (91.0% among all 1500 respondents). Among the 1,500 respondents from 2007 to 2014, the FSIRB average is 5.63. In addition, respondents from Montreal's CMA and Toronto's CMA are influenced by information about food benefits in similar proportions.

### Results

In 2007, 2011, 2012 and 2014, the FSIB was measured using a 11-point scale identical to that risks. We learn that change in eating habits motivated by benefits of products can be observed in

more than 9 out of 10 respondents (91.0% of the 1,500 total respondents; in Montreal's CMA: 87.0% in 2007, 93.2% in 2011, 92.4% in 2012 and 91.8% in 2014; and 91.6% in the Toronto CMA in 2014).

Among the 1,500 all respondents from 2007 to 2014, the FSIB average 5.63. In the Montreal CMA, the index increased significantly between 2007 (with 5.1) and 2011 (with 5.99), but remained stable in 2012 (5.8) and 2014 (with 5.53). The overall average is significantly lower :

- among respondents who completed at most their high school education (with 4.75),
- among those whose personal income is below \$ 15,000 (with 5.05) and in households whose family income falls below \$ 35,000 (with 5.0),
- among men (with 5.19).

Conversely, the overall FSIB is significantly higher :

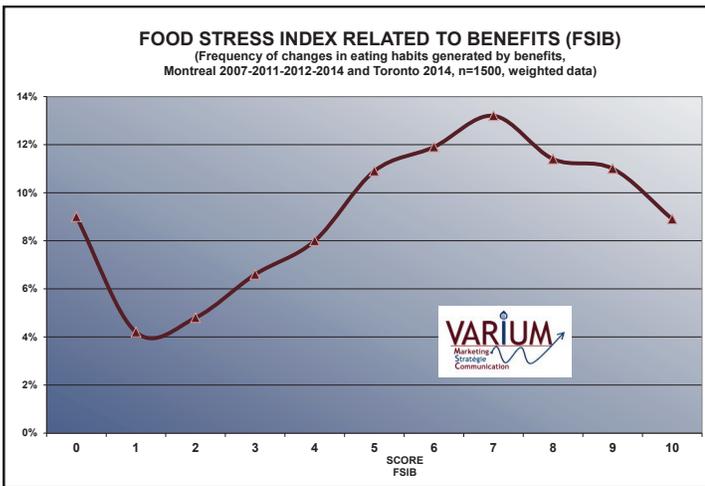


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- among university scholars (with 6.19)
- among those whose personal income is between \$ 35,000 and \$ 55,000 (with 6.12)
- among women (6.05).

Between 2007 and 2012, the level of "food stress" generated by risks displays a strong correlation with the food stress generated by benefits (with Pearson's R 0.45). Therefore, we can say that respondents affected by information about food benefits are also affected by information about food risks.

**2014's Survey: Montreal and Toronto (n = 600)**

The FSIB average 5.65 in 2014 . Otherwise expressed, respondents in the 2014 survey were influenced by an average of 5.65 of the 10 benefits mentioned in scale. In 2014, the index measured in the Montreal CMA ( 5.53) was statistically similar to the one measured in the Toronto CMA (with 5.74).

The overall index calculated in 2014 is significantly lower :

- among respondents who completed at most their high school education (with 4,86),
- within households composed of three individuals (with 5.19)
- among men (with 5.15).

Contrariwise, this index is significantly higher :

- among university scholars (with 5.98)
- within households composed of 4 or more individuals (with 6.10)
- among women (with 6.11).

**In conclusion**

Within the framework of this second part of the study, we worked with a prescribed norm of behavior defined as "... a set of behaviors judged as good, as desirable by the group from which it emanates .." (Dubois, 2002 ). Thus, the social norm of "eat better for your health" (meaning enjoying the benefits of foods for health) strongly influences the eating behavior of a large proportion of Canadian and it has been for at least seven (7) years.

Thus, the influence of this norm is similar in the Montreal CMA and in the Toronto CMA. Yet, the impact of information about the benefits appear greater within a certain profile of the population defined by socio-demographic variables of the study (for example, among women, university scholars ...).

Finally, some components related to risk (FSIR) can be compared to a benefit-related components (FSIB) of the same nature. Thus, the impact of the risk associated with "too much sugar" may be confronted with benefit incidence of "reduced sugar or no sugar added". Furthermore, fears associated with "hydrogenated fat" and "too much cholesterol" can be compared to the benefit "reduced or fat free". In addition, the risks associated with "pesticides in fruits and vegetables" and the "GMO" can be compared to the benefit "organic." This analysis, although not perfect, supports the conclusion that the benefits could be better vectors of changes in eating habits than risks.

FSIB'S COMPONENTS*	
...did you decide to buy or to eat a food product ...?	
a)	... because it contained <b>Omega 3</b>
b)	... because it contained <b>dietary fibres</b>
c)	... because it was <b>organic</b>
d)	... because it contained <b>calcium</b>
e)	... because it was <b>low in or without fat</b>
f)	... because it contained <b>probiotics</b>
g)	... because it contained <b>vitamin C</b>
h)	... because it was <b>low in sugar or without added sugar</b>
i)	... because it contained <b>antioxidants</b>
j)	... because it contained <b>potassium</b>

**METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW**

The « Food Stress » scale and questionnaire were developed by VARIUM's marketing experts. In Montreal, the first phone survey was conducted by SOM between may 26th and June 2nd, 2004 among 400 adults, the third by Opinion du Consommateur, between January 24th and 30th, 2006, among 302 adults; the 2007's survey by Echo Sondage Inc between September 4th and 19th, 2007, among 300 adults; the 2011's survey was conducted by BIP between March 8th to 11th, among 300 adults and the 2012's survey was conducted by Tenor between September 14th and 23rd, among 300 adults all of the Metropolitan Census Area of Montréal. The survey in Toronto was conducted by BIP between November 16th and 27th 2004 among 302 adults of the Metropolitan Census area of Toronto. The 2014's phone survey was conducted by Tenor between October third and the 18th among 300 adults of the CMA of Montreal and 300 adults of the Toronto CMA. The maximum margin of error is ±4,9% for the first survey in Montreal, in 2006, and ±5,7% in Toronto and in every other survey in Montreal, 19 times out of 20.

**SOURCE**

Nicole Dubois, «Autour de la norme sociale», Les cahiers psychologie politique [En ligne], numéro 2, Octobre 2002. URL : <http://odel.irevues.inist.fr/cahierspsychologiepolitique/index.php?id=1640>

For more information on Food Stress

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