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Shifting Food Lifestyle Patterns Among Food Consumers, 2020-2022

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INTRODUCTION

The onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020 brought about disruptive changes in people's life and work. This included changes to food consumption patterns, such as reduced visits to grocery stores but increased food purchase quantities, increased online shopping engagement, increased at-home food preparations and reduced food-away-from-home expenditures, among others (IFIC 2020; Redman 2020; Ellison et al. 2021).

In May 2023, the World Health Organization officially declared that the COVID-19 disease is no longer a public emergency of international concern (WHO 2023). However, lingering questions remain as to if the observed changes in people's attitudes and behaviors about food during the pandemic period have become entrenched in their daily lifestyles or if they have returned to their pre-pandemic normal.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify changes in food lifestyle patterns of U.S. food consumers between 2020-2022 relative to the pre-pandemic period.
- Gain insights into the profiles of identified heterogeneous segments in terms of demographic and geographic characteristics.

METHODS

Data Collection

- Nationwide consumer data obtained using an online monthly survey developed and maintained by the UF, FRE Department's Food and Agricultural Market Research Center (2016-2022).
- N= 16,879.

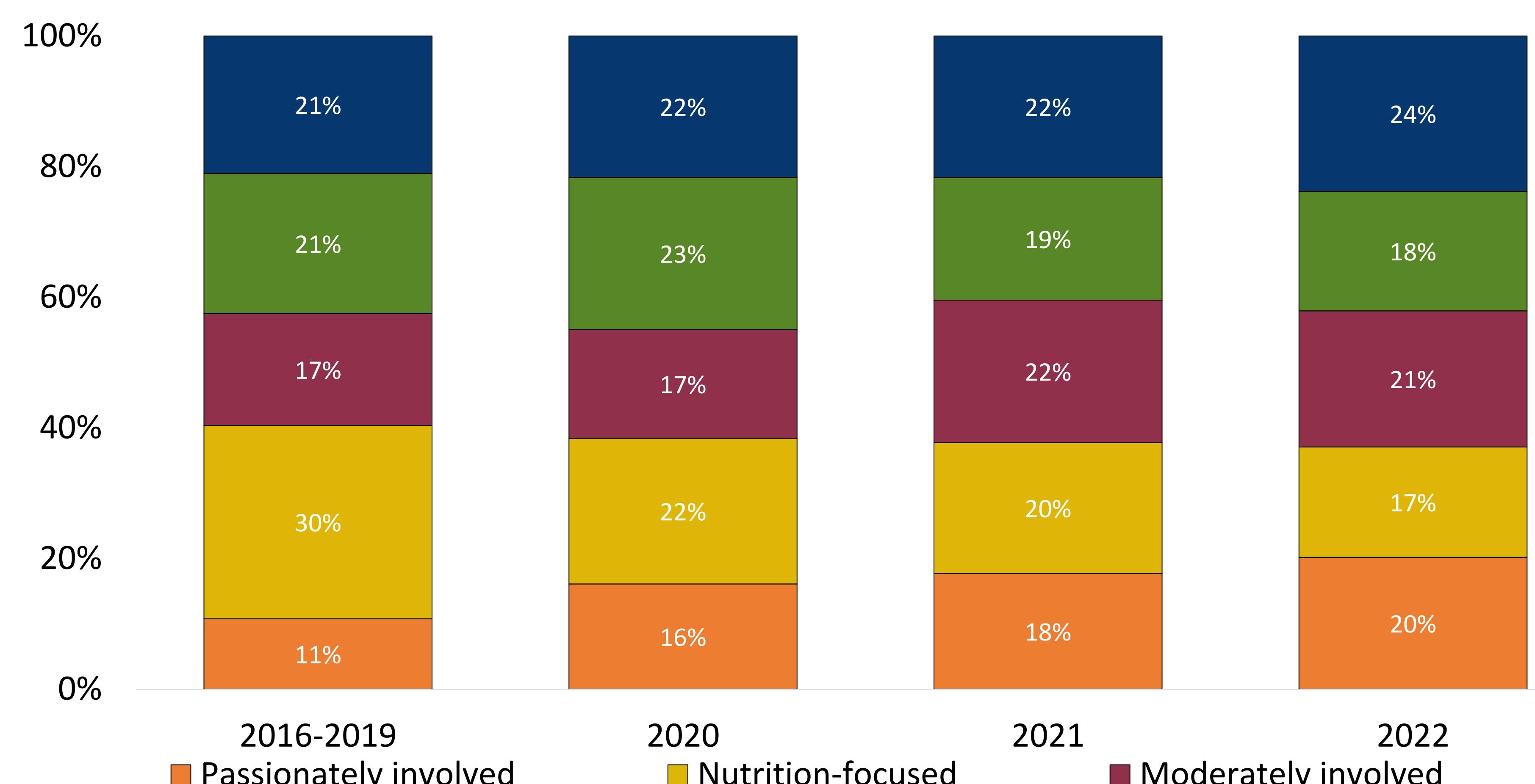
Measurement

- Food lifestyle measures utilized in Chen and House (2022), adapted from Brunsø and Grunert (1995; 1998), Nie and Zepeda (2011).
- Four main dimensions including ways of shopping, importance of quality aspects, healthy eating, and health practice.
- Four time periods of comparison: 2016-2019 (pre-pandemic), 2020 (onset of the pandemic), 2021 (vaccination rollout) and 2022 (release of antiviral medication).

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

- Latent Class Analysis to identify heterogeneous consumer food lifestyle segments through Stata/MP 16.
- 5-class solution achieved through minimum AIC/BIC, Log-likelihood and interpretability (Nylund et al., 2007).

DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD LIFESTYLE PATTERNS IN THE U.S., 2020-2022

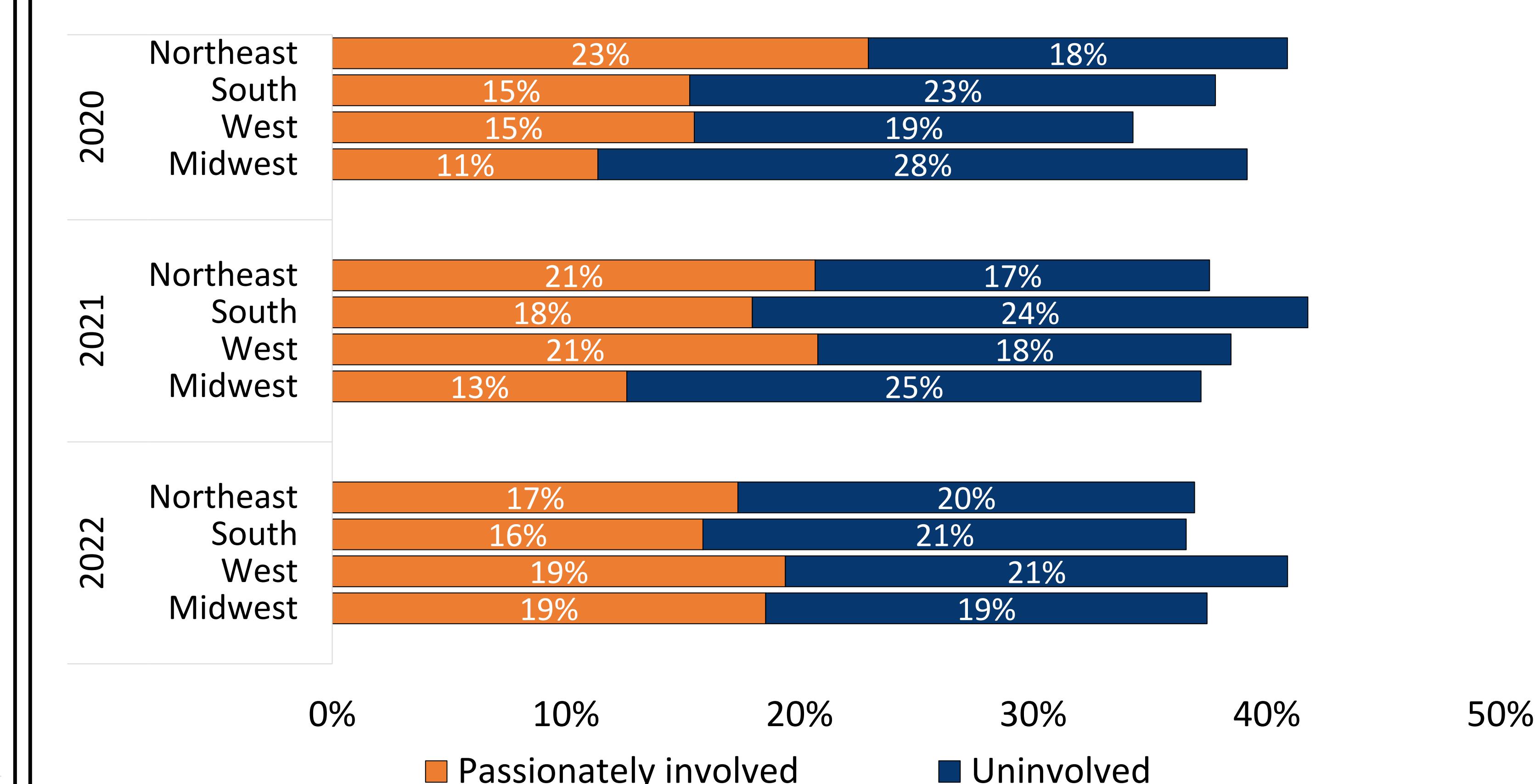


CHARACTERISTICS OF IDENTIFIED FOOD LIFESTYLE PATTERNS

	Passionately Involved	Nutrition-Focused	Moderately Involved	Convenience Oriented	Uninvolved
Ways of shopping	High diversity of food outlets and strong preference for high-end food outlets	Medium diversity of food outlets and less preference of high-end food outlets	Mild diversity of food outlets and unlikely to shop at high-end food outlets	Less diversity of food outlet and very unlikely to shop at high-end food outlets	Least diversity of food outlets and do not shop at high end food outlets
	Pay close attention to food labels	Pay close attention to food labels	Pay less attention to food labels	Pay least attention to food labels	Pay no attention to food labels
Quality aspects	Most active organic and fresh food shoppers	Active organic and fresh food shoppers	Do not seek out organic foods but seek out fresh foods actively	Highly unlikely to seek out organic and fresh food	Do not seek out organic foods and less actively seek out fresh foods
	Perceive biotechnology to be the same with conventional foods	Perceive biotechnology to be very different from conventional foods	Perceive biotechnology to be very different from conventional foods	Perceive biotechnology to be very different from conventional foods	Perceive biotechnology to be very different from conventional foods
Healthy eating	Highly aware of the importance of nutrients	Highly aware of the importance of nutrients	Highly aware of the importance of nutrients	Aware of the importance of nutrients	Least aware of the importance of nutrients
	Careless about food intake but prefer low-calorie beverages	Very cautious about food intake and prefer low-calorie beverages	Very cautious about food intake and prefer low-calorie beverages	Mildly cautious about food intake but careless about low-calorie beverages	Less cautious about food intake and careless about low-calorie beverages
Health practices	Exercise very often and eat breakfast very regularly	Exercise less often and eat breakfast less regularly	Exercise less often and eat breakfast less regularly	Exercise less often but eat breakfast very regularly	Do not exercise or eat breakfast often
	Very likely to purchase FFVs ^a	Very likely to purchase FFVs	Very likely to purchase FFVs	Likely to purchase FFVs	Less likely to purchase FFVs

Notes: ^aFresh fruits and vegetables

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD LIFESTYLE PATTERNS IN THE U.S.



PROFILES OF FOOD LIFESTYLE SEGMENTS IN 2022

	Passionately Involved	Uninvolved
Age	53±18	46±17
Gender (Female)	48%	65%
Education Attainment		
≤ High school graduate	22%	57%
College	49%	37%
Postgraduate	29%	6%
Household Income		
> \$50k	81%	49%
> \$75k	57%	24%
> \$100k	37%	12%
Household Size		
One or two	36%	59%
Three or four	52%	32%
Five or more	12%	10%

CONCLUSION

During the course of the pandemic, notable shifts were observed in the sizes of food lifestyle segments. The share of nutrition-focused consumers indicated a significant decline, whereas the shares of passionately involved and uninvolved consumers showed significant increases.

Consumers profiles differ among the five identified food lifestyle segments and food lifestyle patterns vary across the four U.S. census regions, as confirmed by Chi-square analysis.

West and Northeast regions exhibit a higher portion of passionately involved consumers, characterized by a higher socioeconomic status. Conversely, the South region has more uninvolved consumers with a lower socioeconomic status.

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