

## **A Cross Sectional Online Survey of the South African Population in the Age Group 18-64 Years to Evaluate Dietary Behaviour Around Breakfast and Whole Grain Awareness**

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### **Abstract**

Breakfast is widely regarded as the most important meal of the day because of its contribution to nutrition and physical energy. Whole-grain (WG) foods, including many commonly consumed breakfast foods, are higher in nutrients such as protein, dietary fibre, micronutrients and bioactives than their refined counterparts. There is evidence that significant consumption of WG foods reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes and some cancers. According to the Global Burden of Disease study, among 15 dietary risks, sub-optimal WG consumption is the third leading cause of disability in South Africa. Increasing WG consumption in South Africa is likely to considerably benefit population health.

There is, however, limited information on factors influencing breakfast food choices among South Africans and their knowledge about WG foods. To address this, an online cross-sectional survey was performed of 1000 South African consumers of Living Standard Measure ranges 5-7 and 8-10 and representative of the country's population, gender and age groups.

Some highlights are that the most consumed breakfast foods are cereal grains, with bread products, ready-to-eat cereals and high-fibre cereals being the most commonly consumed. Consumer satisfaction concerning bread and ready-to-eat cereals is, however, relatively low, but much higher for other foods, including high-fibre cereals, muesli, cooked oats, yoghurt and cooked English breakfast. Breakfast food choice was partially dictated by convenience, with rusks/breakfast biscuits and drinking yoghurt being the most out-of-home consumed breakfast foods.

Sixty-four percent of respondents were confident in their WG knowledge, but only 43% of these provided the correct definition. Regarding identifying specific foods as being WG; 65%, 53% and 34% identified oats, brown rice and sorghum. Further, many misclassified legumes and nuts/seeds as WG (e.g., 29% identified sunflower/pumpkin seeds as WG). Sixty-seven percent indicated that they were consuming enough or almost enough WG, but most underestimated the recommended amount. Respondent knowledge about the health benefits of WG foods was also poor (e.g., only 27% reported that whole grains reduced diabetes risk).

This presentation communicates and provisionally evaluates the survey's major findings and concludes with suggestions to help change dietary breakfast habits and increase WG consumption.

## **PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY: YULIA BEREZHNYAYA**

Yulia Berezhnaya is Senior Principal Scientist for Life Sciences function in PepsiCo Sub Saharan Africa, guiding the nutrition strategy fueling PepsiCo's innovation pipeline and portfolio transformation journey. Yulia collaborates with cross functional teams to grow PepsiCo's nutritious offerings, increasing nutrients of need such as fiber, while reducing nutrients to limit such as saturated fats and added sugars. In addition, she is responsible for advancing research program. Yulia joined PepsiCo in 2011 and before that was working for Nestle as Nutrition scientist. She started her career in Moscow Russia and relocated to Cape Town in 2021 to support Sub-Saharan Africa region. Yulia holds a PhD in animal and human physiology from Moscow State University is a co-author of many publications and book chapters.