Preferences and attitudes regarding food choices and meal patterns among older adults – a cross-sectional survey

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Method
Cross-sectional survey carried out through questionnaires distributed and gathered by postal service. 164 community-dwelling 87-100 year-olds, 73 % women answered. BMI calculated from self-reported weight and height.

Figure: Flow chart portraying participants

![Flow chart](image)

Results
The majority reported no medical difficulties (♀71, ∂31). Preferred way of heating food was microwave (♀84, ∂36), stove (♀54, ∂22) and oven (♀41, ∂16). More women cooked alone (p<0.01) (♀101, ∂23). Only one man and seven women received convenience meals, 103 would not consider convenience meals home delivered (♀75, ∂28). The majority were not willing to buy groceries online (♀108, ∂40), of which 85 % answered the reason to be not owning nor trusting a computer, and 10 % regarded the store to be a joyous trip. 122 responded on a question about important practical issues when buying or receiving convenience meals, top three most important issues were that the packaging was easy to open (♀64, ∂23), easy to get food out (♀34 ∂13) and easy to read (♀31 ∂16). 89 considered food choices important (♀63, ∂26) and 83 enjoyed trying new flavors (♀63, ∂20).

Conclusion
This population of very old individuals show good health evident by nutritional status and regular meal patterns. Distinct gender differences were apparent according to planning and preparation of food with women taking a greater responsibility.

Discussion
Response rate was high and subjects seems to be healthy and independent despite advanced age. Distinct gender differences were apparent with women taking a greater responsibility in planning and preparing food. Mean BMI indicated good nutritional status and a majority were pleased with current weight. Most of the women lived alone while a majority of men still lived with spouse or partner, which may affect the gender differences with regard to activities in the household such as acquiring or preparing food. The interest for buying groceries online was low, with a majority reasoning they did not trust the computer, indicating a resistance to technology.

References