

Abstract Title

Views of Ottawa residents on purchasing fresh vegetables and fruit in neighbourhood corner stores
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Abstract

Introduction: Healthier corner store (CS) initiatives are an approach to improve access to nutritious food, particularly fresh vegetables and fruit (VF). Understanding attitudes of shoppers is essential before changing inventory in retail environments.

Objectives: The objectives of this study were to: 1) understand perceptions among Ottawa residents about buying fresh VF in CS; and 2) inform the development of Ottawa's Good Food Corner Store Initiative.

Methods: A telephone survey of 603 residents of the City of Ottawa, 18+ years of age, was conducted in December 2016. Participants were randomly recruited using live agents and random digit dialing.

Results: On average, respondents shop for food at supermarkets twice per week (7.6x/month) and CS 1x/month. More than half of respondents (54%) do not shop at CS for food. Younger respondents (18-29 years) shop at CS more often (1.8x/month) than older respondents (60+ years, 0.4x/month). Respondents also shop for food at pharmacies 2x/month and speciality stores 1x/month. Proximity to home (14%) and convenience (11%) are top reasons to shop at CS. Half of respondents buy dairy products (51%), beverages (48%) and snacks (50%) regularly or occasionally from CS. Almost half (43%) of respondents consider the availability of VF at CS either poor or very poor. When asked what would encourage buying VF from CS, local produce and comparable prices to supermarkets were top cited ideas. Almost one fifth (17%) said nothing would encourage them to purchase VF from CS.

Conclusions: Interventions to improve access to VF in CS may be viable as consumers occasionally shop for food in CS. Strategies, such as price matching and sourcing local food, should be considered to increase acceptance and demand for VF in CS.

Significance to the field of dietetics: Retail food environments affect food choices and population health. This study contributes evidence of consumers' food shopping habits and their perceptions of shopping for food in CS.