

cial trends



e change in
ish eating habits

widely-held view of the British diet is we were all well fed, nutritionally ing in the second world war. That he sixties rising incomes led us into sweet and fatty eating—just more g—which promoted heart disease, bowel r, and other diseases of affluence. And in the seventies a combination of low th and ecological awareness has made ore concerned about the constituents of ood and more alert to imbalances. ow much have our eating habits really ed? In fact, there has been only a shift in the broad balance of foods in diet from before the war to the seventies (hart).

e figures, taken from the Ministry of ulture, Fisheries and Food's Consump- Levels Enquiry, should be handled caution. They do not represent the ity of food that any particular indi- eats, but are national averages based applies entering the food distribution s in the United Kingdom from farms mports. They take no account of food eed by individual households. They no indication of how different social s are eating. However, a rough pic- of eating habits can be drawn.

broad balance of foods

umption of meat and poultry was low g the rationing years of the war but rapidly after the war to 60 kilograms d in 1970. During the seventies meat d dropped back slightly, reflecting the n living standards brought by the ion. The popularity of fish meanwhile ed steadily and by 1977 was two of the prewar level. Fish is no a cheap source of protein and the er of local fresh fish shops has fallen tically. The rise of frozen, processed has not been sufficient to counter- ce the fall of fresh fish. re has been a slight decline in the mption of oils and fats from the peak e early seventies, and the average is bout the same as before the war. The mption of milk, cream, cheese and is now above the prewar and war though it has dropped slightly in the w years.

biggest change has been the decline ain products. But their popularity ecently taken a slight upturn, again fly reflecting the recession. Potato is above prewar levels, though it has ed since the high peak of the war. vegetables have grown steadily in

popularity during the last 40 years. Fruit eating has remained static.

The rise of chicken and peas

However, within each of these broad groups of food some striking changes in British eating habits show up. Often these changes reflect price changes. While the pattern of household spending on the different groups of foods has remained fairly constant, the purchasing of specific foods is sensitive to price. These changes also reflect the spread of fridges and freezers: nine in ten households had a fridge by 1976 and over a third had a deep freeze by 1977.

The eating of lamb is down from over 11 kilograms a head a year before and during the war to 7.2 kilograms in 1977. Younger housewives purchase noticeably less lamb. The popularity of pork, on the other hand, has jumped from 5.6 kilograms a head a year before the war to 11.3 kilograms in 1977. This growth has been favoured by the spread of fridges and freezers which has overcome the tradition of restricting pork eating to months containing the letter R. Bacon has not shared in this rise, reflecting the demise of the traditional British cooked breakfast. The most dramatic rise has been in the consumption of poultry, up from 2.3 kilograms a head a year before the war to 11.6 kilograms in 1977. The introduction of mass broiler chicken farming has brought down the cost. Throughout, beef has been the most popular meat, with over 20 kilograms per person a year eaten.

Within the oils and fat group, butter consumption has been falling since the postwar peak during the 1960s. Conversely, the consumption of margarine has been rising slightly since the postwar low during the sixties. These trends have largely reflected price changes, though the health warnings against animal fats have played a part.

The type of vegetables eaten has also changed. Cabbage and greens are far less popular while the consumption of legumes (mainly peas) is up, owing to quick-freezing and other preservation techniques.

The health implications

What are the nutritional and health implications when these changes in eating habits are added together? Energy intake per head, excluding the contribution from alcohol and sweets, has fallen from an average of 3,050 kilocalories a head a day prewar to 2,930 kilocalories in 1977. This reflects the decline in physical activity and the higher proportion of older people in the population.

Fats have been making an increasing contribution to energy intakes, while the importance of carbohydrates has been decreasing. Dairy products (excluding butter) account for a fifth of the total dietary fat, meat and meat products over a quarter and visible fats—like butter, margarine and cooking fats—well over a third. Increasing fat consumption is closely tied to rising personal incomes. The death rate from coronary disease has been increasing until recently, so that about one in three men now have a heart attack or stroke during their working life. There is a high (0.84) correlation between saturated fats in the diet and such heart disease.

Consumption of dietary fibre has fallen to about 20 grams per person per day. This has been caused by the drop in the eating of bread and starchy root vegetables. Although some experts consider the national diet contains sufficient dietary fibre, the majority view is that inadequate fibre is linked to a range of diseases.

Families with four or more children in the lower income groups have actually suffered a decline in their daily intake of some nutrients over the last decade or so. Comparing intakes of such families in 1966 with their successors in 1977 total protein intake fell from 58.3 grams a head each day to 56 grams; iron dropped from 10.8 milligrams to 8.9 milligrams and vitamin D fell from 2.65 units to 2.24.

Do these declines matter? By 1977 the intakes of iron and vitamin D for certain groups in the population were substantially below the levels recommended by the Department of Health and Social Security. But the figures are uncertain. In the case of vitamin D, the dietary deficiency is quite probably compensated for by the input from sunlight, at least in summer.

But the averages do not reveal how many families within each social group are eating dangerously less than recommended. Poverty remains the greatest cause of malnutrition.

Findings



Family and kinship
in Bristol

What are the main factors determining the patterns of housing tenure among Asians and West Indians in this country? Many argue that government policy, racial discrimination and housing supply itself are crucial. But Bernard Ineichen argues that the characteristics of the groups themselves are of very great importance (*Plural Societies*, vol 9, No. 4, page 23).

The author points out that by 1971 families of New Commonwealth origin had already equalled the national average of 50 per cent owner-occupiers, while only half the national percentage were in council housing.

In fact, an even higher proportion of Asians were owner-occupiers. Surprisingly, the likelihood of an Asian being an owner-occupier was in inverse relation to his occupational class position. West Indians were about on the national average which, again, is surprising when one considers their average class position. But minority groups generally have poorer housing than the population as a whole, partly because a higher proportion are in private accommodation and partly because of the official definition of "overcrowding."

Ineichen looked at ethnic variations in the housing decisions of young married couples in Bristol, a typical city in terms of tenancy and ethnicity. He questioned 179 native couples and 20 minority group ones, all married in 1973-4. All of the former had expressed a wish to have their own home, but a few years later just under a quarter had, or were on the verge of getting, a council home.

Whereas the native couples went into council tenancies because of early conception and the impossibility of getting a mortgage, the West Indian skilled employees used council housing only as a temporary measure. Like the former, they used the same methods of pregnancy and "making a fuss" to jump the queue. The semi-skilled West Indians appeared to remain longer in council housing.

Of the eleven Asian couples, only one lived in council accommodation. The others lived with relatives until they could buy their own house. In all, 13 out of the 20 minority couples had shared a house with relatives at some stage (compared with only a third of the native sample). In fact, only three of the minority couples had no housing involvement with relatives—and they had no relatives in Britain! Couples gained priority in the queue for local authority housing if they went in with relatives for a

while and hence were categorised as over-crowded.

Native couples did not seem to have this particular option open to them, although they were prepared to use other methods of queue jumping. All of the minority couples preferred to seek funds from relatives first and only next from institutional sources. The native couples, on the other hand, said that they "preferred to stand on their own feet," and did not find this incompatible with borrowing thousands of pounds from building societies.

The researcher was surprised not so much by the readiness of Asians and West Indians to obtain support from the extended family at a crucial time, but more by the reluctance of the native sample to follow such a course. He felt that the refusal of the latter to be dependent on any except impersonal sources indicated a wish for emotional rather than financial independence. It was ultimately a refusal to accept responsibility in the future for the care of the elderly. He quotes Pakistani informants to the effect that British parents do not give their children a good start in life and similarly in old age children they do not care for their parents.

Education variation

Attainment and success in education are generally accepted to be dependent on three factors—inherent intelligence, the quality of educational facilities, and the interest in scholastic achievement shown by family and friends.

Assuming that inherent intelligence varies little spatially, any variations in pupils' attainment among the counties of England and Wales can be ascribed to differences in their home and school environments. W. A. Charlton, E. M. Rawstron and Fiona Rees have used two measures of the educational attainment of six formers to assess whether where a pupil lives affects his life chances (*Geography*, vol 64, No. 1, page 26).

The measures of attainment were calculated from the results of the summer A level examinations in 1972 and 1973. They related to the old counties; but the outer London and inner London areas were distinguished.

For each of the areas, the number of candidates taking two or more A levels and the number attaining two or more A grades, were expressed as a percentage of the 18 year old population. Candidates at boarding schools were excluded from the survey. The counties were then classified into three categories—well above average, average, well below average—for mapping purposes.

The maps of the two measures of attainment were found to be very similar. There was a belt of counties in south east England from Cambridge to East and West Sussex with high attainment scores. Cheshire and Worcestershire were high scoring outliers in England, while Caernarvon, Cardigan and Camarthen were in Wales.

Altogether there were two major belts

of low scoring counties: one of these was along the east coast from Durham through the north and east ridings of Yorkshire to Norfolk and east and west Suffolk, the other from Lindsey through Nottingham, Derby and Stafford to Shropshire. A third extended from Brecon through Monmouth and Gloucester to Wiltshire.

The authors examined four possible causes of these regional variations. There was little evidence that high and low local authority expenditure on education was associated with high and low A level indices.

The socio-economic status and income variations between the counties were more associated with attainment, but anomalies, particularly in Wales and the midlands, remained unexplained. An attempt was made to measure the importance that parents place on education and the encouragement they give by using the terminal age of education as an indicator variable. This went some way towards accounting for the various anomalies in Wales, but not elsewhere.

The authors concluded that the county by county variations were of such a magnitude that they probably implied a loss of educational opportunity for a great many children. But further analysis was necessary at the local level before firmer statements could be made.

American ideology

Is America going socialist? That would seem most unlikely because socialist ideology, along with all ideologies, hardly exist in America—at least not in an explicit form. But while one would be hard put to find differences on basic issues between rank and file Democrats and Republicans, there is evidence, says Herbert M. Kritzer, that members of American political elites do operate in ideological ways (*Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol 42, No. 4, page 484).

The author analysed the answers given by political elite members (office holders, convention delegates) to specific questions in Survey Research Centre surveys conducted in the period 1958 to 1972. Less structured attitude surveys carried out between 1970 and 1974 among elite members and ordinary electors were also examined. The areas covered included foreign policy, the military, class conflict, civil rights, women, law and order, welfare and nonconformity. He also looked at the actual behaviour of members of the US Congress in supporting certain organised interest groups.

The author found that when elite members were asked specific questions, there was little evidence of structuring in their responses. But when he examined the attitude scales, there was clear evidence of structuring in elite attitudes, a sign that they did have an underlying if poorly-articulated ideology. Their actions were consistent, too. In marked contrast, the ordinary electors did not exhibit structured belief systems. Alas for Marx, it seems that in North America as well as Europe the ruling class are more class-conscious than the masses.

