

**Four Decades of Household Food Purchases:  
Changes in Inequalities of Nutritional Quality in France, 1971-2010\***  
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Socioeconomic inequalities exist in all areas of consumption. In the field of food, disparities have nutritional consequences that may contribute to social inequalities in health, such as obesity or cardiovascular diseases, which seem to be increasing or remaining strong in several areas. The study of changes in food consumption and nutritional quality according to socioeconomic indicators can shed light on this trend.

### **Methodology**

Using several series of representative household survey data covering the period 1969-2010 (Insee's *Consommation alimentaire* surveys and Kantar Worldpanel panel series), we study the change in food purchases for consumption at home, their composition and nutritional quality for different levels of income (quartiles) and education (four levels of education). Nutritional quality is measured by a score of adequacy to nutritional recommendations (the MAR, Mean Adequacy Ratio).

### **Main results**

- The nutritional quality of purchases for consumption at home improved over the period 1969-2010, overall and in all income quartiles and for all four levels of education.
- By income quartile, they were moderate at the beginning of the period; they decreased but still remain in 2010.
- By education level, they were very pronounced at the beginning of the period, but seem to be on the verge of disappearing in 2010.
- However, the purchases of households in the highest income quartile or education level always have a better nutritional quality.

### **Conclusions**

Inequalities in nutritional quality of household purchases for food-at-home consumption, which were significant in the 1970s, have greatly diminished but have not disappeared, as evidenced by the better nutritional quality in 2010 of purchases by households with higher incomes. Consumers seem to be aware of the nutritional quality of their food, as shown by the growing success of digital tools. However, recent work suggests that the use of these tools reproduces social inequalities in access to information.