

SENIOR & SENS

FOOD & RETIREMENT

In France, retirement is definitively a hot topic in December 2019. By the way, what do we know about the impact of retirement on food diet? Are our food choices becoming constrained by a drop in income? On the contrary, are we taking more time to eat better? Here a quick overview of what research reveals...

Anni Helldán and her Finnish colleagues are among the few researchers that have conducted a longitudinal study on retirement, namely that have compared food habits before and after retirement. In this study, more than 2,000 participants completed a food questionnaire when they were 55-60 years old. Five years later, the same participants filled out the questionnaire again. In the meantime, half of the participants had retired while the other half still worked. Results showed an increase of healthy food habits in women when they get older, and this increase was higher in retired employees compared to their continuously employed counterparts. However, little changes has been observed in men, whether they get retired or not...



Crédits photo : iStock©

More recently, Olivier Allais and his collaborators observed that the retirement of the household head is associated with significant drops in annual food expenditures and quantities purchased (-10 to 14%). Similar results were observed in Italy, Spain, UK, Australia and China. The consequence on health are contrasted, with positive health effects attributable to decrease in the consumption of sugary- and salty-fat foods, but also potentially negative health consequences due to lower intake of meat and fish which may impair the nutritional status of elderly people.

In summary, retirement is a major transition stage in one's life, which is definitively not without consequences on our diet... but research is far from having explored all its facets!

By Claire Sulmont-Rossé, claire.sulmont-rosse@inra.fr

To know more

Allais, O., Leroy, P., & Mink, J. (2018). Changes in diet at retirement and consequences on health in France. France Silvereco.

Helldán, A., Lallukka, T., Rahkonen, O., & Lahelma, E. (2011). Changes in healthy food habits after transition to old age retirement. European Journal of Public Health, 22, 582-586.