

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic changed daily life for many different patient groups. Food allergy patients and their families face unique challenges that other patient groups may never have to contend with. This study utilized a survey that aimed to help us better understand how the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is affecting the lives of people in the broader food allergy community.

PURPOSE

- To understand the challenges food allergy families face during the COVID-19 pandemic, including physical, emotional, and mental health issues.
- To identify changes to activities of daily living, i.e. access to friends and family and changes in household interactions for food allergy families during the pandemic.
- To determine any limitations on access to appropriate foods for food allergy families during the pandemic.

METHODS

An online survey was created by adapting "The Johns Hopkins University Community Response Survey" and the validated survey "The Chicago Food Allergy Research Surveys for Parents of Children with Food Allergy." Data for this study was collected from September 25, 2020 to January 15, 2021 by recruiting adult caregivers of at least one food allergic child to complete an online RedCap® survey regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their family. This was our only inclusion criteria. Survey links were distributed via email to food allergy caregivers in the Food Allergy Research and Education® (F.A.R.E.) network and the Texas Children's Hospital (TCH) Family Network and completed through RedCap®. Flyers containing a QR code to the survey were also posted in our clinics. Exclusions: Under 18 years old and/or not the caregiver of at least 1 food allergic child.

Since March 1, 2020, Due to the pandemic:

- Experienced increased stress
- Decreased access to friends and family
- Increased stress or discord within the home
- Decreased access to medical care
- Eating more food or more processed foods
- Decrease in household income
- Decreased access to allergen-free food
- Decrease in access to all food

Fig 1: Legend for affirmative survey responses

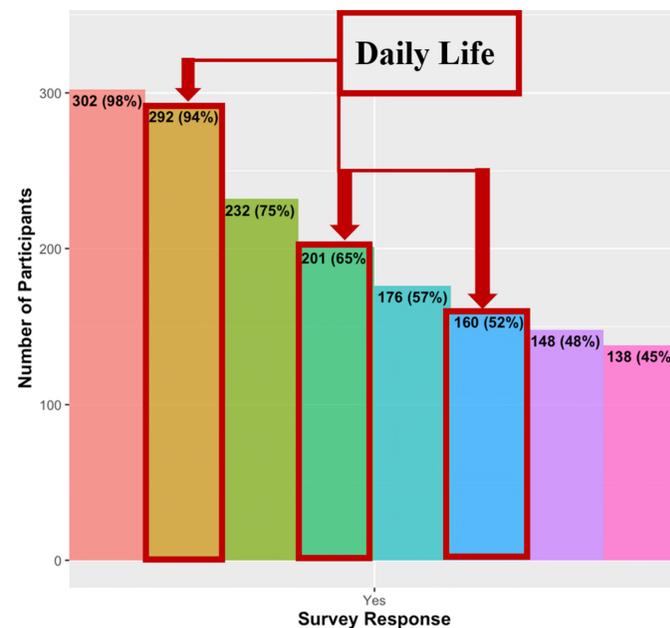


Fig 3: Affirmative survey responses related to activities of daily living during the pandemic

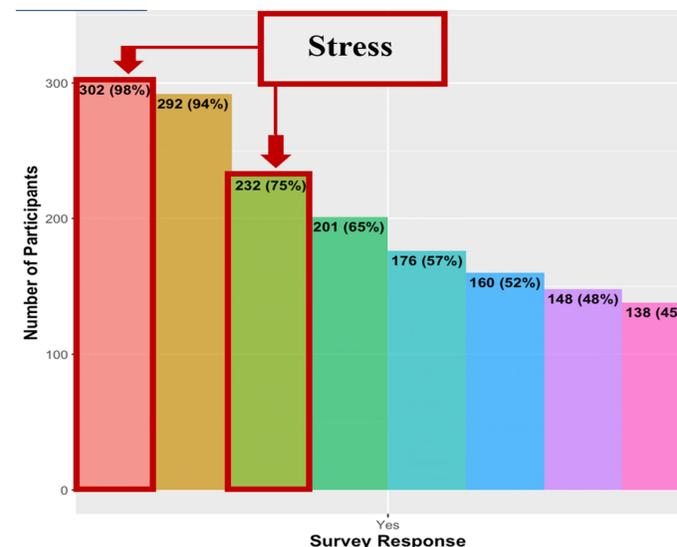


Fig 2: Affirmative survey responses related to stress during the pandemic

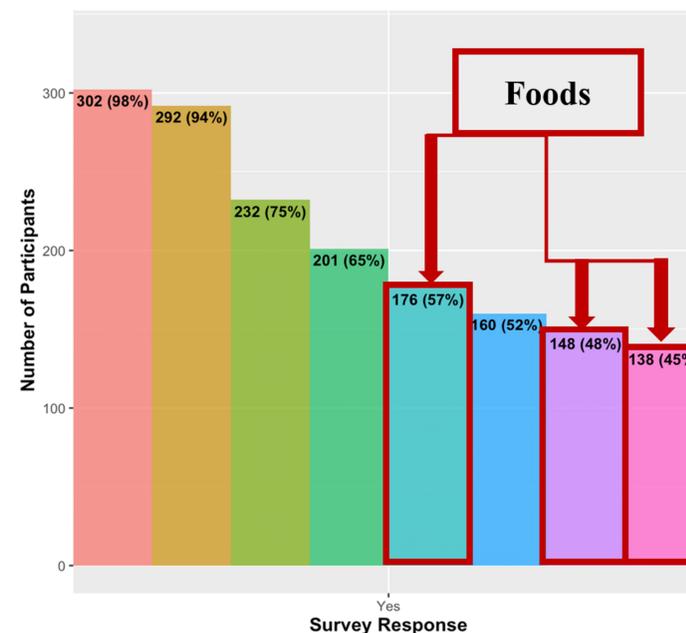


Fig 4: Affirmative responses related to food during the pandemic

n=313, Self-report: 96% female gender, 75% Non-Hispanic white, 8% Hispanic, 7% Asian, 6% African American, 3% Other, and 1% chose not to answer the question.

RESULTS

Since March 1, 2020, due to the pandemic:

Stress

- 98% experienced increased stress
- 75% experienced increased stress or discord within the home

Activities of Daily Life

- 94% experienced decreased access to friends and family
- 65% experienced decreased access to medical care
- 52% reported decreased household income

Food

- 48% experienced decreased access to allergen-free food
- 57% reported eating more food or more processed foods
- 45% experienced decreased access to all foods

CONCLUSION

New challenges for food allergy families

- Challenges in food security, medical care, family dynamics, stress, and a lack of a support network

Changes to activities of daily living, access to friends and family, and changes in household interactions

- Activities of daily living became more difficult
- Routine medical care became more difficult to access while household incomes decreased
- Traditional support networks became inaccessible and overall stress increased

Limitations on access to appropriate foods

- Access to allergen-appropriate food became more difficult
- Increased consumption of processed food

REFERENCES

- Gupta, R.S., et al. Development of the Chicago Food Allergy Research Surveys: assessing knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of parents, physicians, and the general public. *BMC Health Serv Res* 9, 142 (2009)
- Mehta, S. (2019). JHU COVID-19 Community Response Survey. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. https://www.nlm.nih.gov/dr2/JHU_COVID-19_Community_Response_Survey_v1.3.pdf.