

## ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to determine the stages of readiness of adults for increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables and for adopting regular physical activity. Differences in psychosocial factors between the stages of change by BMI status were also examined. Data were collected in 2000-2001 in four Caribbean countries (St. Kitts/Nevis, Trinidad/Tobago, Belize, Jamaica), using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Focus group discussions were conducted in each country followed by a cross-sectional study. A structured questionnaire was administered to the total sample of 4364 adults. In the overall sample, 39% of respondents were classified as being in the action/maintenance stage of change for fruit and vegetable consumption and 33% for exercise. The staging classifications varied by country. Jamaica had the highest proportion of persons in action/maintenance for fruit and vegetable consumption and Belize the lowest. While for exercise participation, more persons in Jamaica and Belize were precontemplators, and less in the maintenance stage compared to Trinidad and St. Kitts. BMI status had little influence on staging patterns for either behavior except for exercise participation among males in Belize. Gender differences in the staging pattern were only seen for exercise participation; in all countries, males were more likely to be in maintenance than females. Significant differences in psychosocial factors were found between subjects in different stages of change for both behaviors in all countries. These findings suggest that intervention strategies should incorporate context specific approaches that match the target group's motivational readiness to change the specific health behavior.

Key Words: Stages of change, fruit and vegetables, exercise