

# Does diet matter for survival in long-lived cultures?

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## **Reference:**

### **Key Words:**

food, nutrition, cross cultural study, mediterranean diet, survival predictors, Greek

### **Research aim:**

a cross-cultural study to determine to what extent health, social and lifestyle variables, especially food intake, collectively predict survival amongst long-lived cultures. (In 1987, the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) subcommittee on Nutrition and Ageing, in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO) global program for the elderly, embarked on the 'Food Habits in Later Life' (FHILL) study.

### **Results/Conclusion:**

1) it was found that being an elderly Greek in Australia conferred the lowest mortality risk and being an elderly Greek in Greece conferred the highest mortality risk. 2) the memory score, the Mediterranean diet score, Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and general health status scores showed the greatest effects in significantly reducing mortality hazard ratios. Of the lifestyle (modifiable) variables entered in the multivariate model, exercise and social activity were not significant predictors of survival suggesting that diet is a more important predictor of survival than these variables. 3) Diet, particularly the Mediterranean Diet, operates irrespective and together with other factors as an appreciable contributor to survival, with a strength comparable to or greater than all other measured variables.

### **Implications:**

### **Cultural Group(s):**

International including Greeks in Australia, Anglo-Celts in Australia

### **Location of study:**

International

### **Age group:**

70+

### **Number included in study:**

818

### **Type of participants:**

Aged 70+ recruited from International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) centres

### **Research approach:**

Quantitative

### **Type of data:**

Primary

### **Secondary data sources used:**

### **Specific scales or analytical techniques used:**

Cox Proportional Hazard model

### **Implications/ Recommendations:**

### **Notes:**

Interesting study as it includes older Greeks in Australia and older Greeks in Greece for comparison