INTRODUCTION: Out-of-home eating has been considered to have an influence on the increasing rates of overweight and obesity in Brazil, but at present, there has been no direct evidence supporting this assertion. Considering the above, the objective of this study was to identify the food groups eaten away from home.

METHODS: A population-based survey comprising 209 teenagers (12–19 years of age), 327 adults (20–59 years of age) and 298 elderly (60 years of age or more) of both sexes. The food intake was measured by 24-h dietary recall applied by telephone using the Automated Multiple-Pass. The food items consumed during the lunch were grouped into thirty-four predefined food groups based on the similarity of nutrient profiles or culinary usage. For the current analysis, the out-of-home eating was defined as those food groups reported as consumed away from home, irrespective of place of production. The association between the meal place of consumption and the food groups was assessed by an age- and sex- adjusted logistic regression analysis.

RESULTS: Overall, 20% of respondents reported to have made lunch away from home, of which 27% were teenagers, 38% were adults and 35% were elderly. Meals consumed away from home had a higher odds for sandwiches ($\beta = 0.021; 95\% \text{ CI } 0.002$–$0.039$) and desserts ($\beta = 0.036; 95\% \text{ CI } 0.001$–$0.071$), and a lesser odds to beans ($\beta = -0.046; 95\% \text{ CI } -0.073$ to $-0.019$), processed meats ($\beta = -0.051; 95\% \text{ CI } -0.102$ to $-0.002$) and fruits ($\beta = -0.042; 95\% \text{ CI } -0.078$ to $-0.007$).

CONCLUSIONS: Lunch consumed away from home was associated with food groups considered unhealthy and might increase the risk for obesity.