

BACKGROUND

- Growing evidence links high ultra-processed food (UPF) consumption to increased risk of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD)¹
- One potentially overlooked construct is ultra-processed food addiction (UPFA), characterized by addictive-like consumption of UPFs²
- Although UPFA has an estimated prevalence of 12.4% in older adults³, its association with subjective memory complaints, a potential early marker for ADRD, has not been examined
- The present study investigated whether UPFA is associated with subjective memory complaints among older adults

METHODS

- Exploratory analyses were conducted using cross-sectional data collected in August 2025 via an online survey
- Participants were 281 healthy U.S. adults aged 50–80 who completed a variety of self-report measures:
 - Modified Yale Food Addiction Scale 2.0 (mYFAS 2.0)⁴: 13-item measure that applies the DSM-5 SUD criteria to the addictive-like consumption of UPFs
 - Memory Functioning Questionnaire⁵: 14-item measure to assess perceived difficulties with memory and frequency of forgetting
 - Demographic variables: gender, age, race/ethnicity, education level, income, perceived socioeconomic status (SES)

Analyses

- UPFA prevalence was calculated
- Correlations were conducted between demographic factors and UPFA status and subjective memory complaints
- Linear regression models tested the association between UPFA status and memory complaints unadjusted and adjusted for demographics

	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	188 (67.9)	-
Male	93 (33.1)	-
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
White	232 (82.6)	-
Non-white	49 (17.4)	-
<i>UPFA Status</i>		
Present	32 (11.4)	-
Absent	249 (88.6)	-
Age	-	59.0 (7.1)
Income	-	7.2 (3.3)
Education	-	4.9 (1.9)
Perceived SES	-	5.9 (1.7)
Subjective Memory Complaints	-	2.5 (1.0)

TABLE 1. Demographics table. Income ranges from less than \$10,000 [1] to more than \$150,000 [12]. Education ranges from less than high school [1] to doctoral degree [9]. Perceived SES ranges from 1 to 10. Subjective Memory Complaints ranges from 1 to 7.

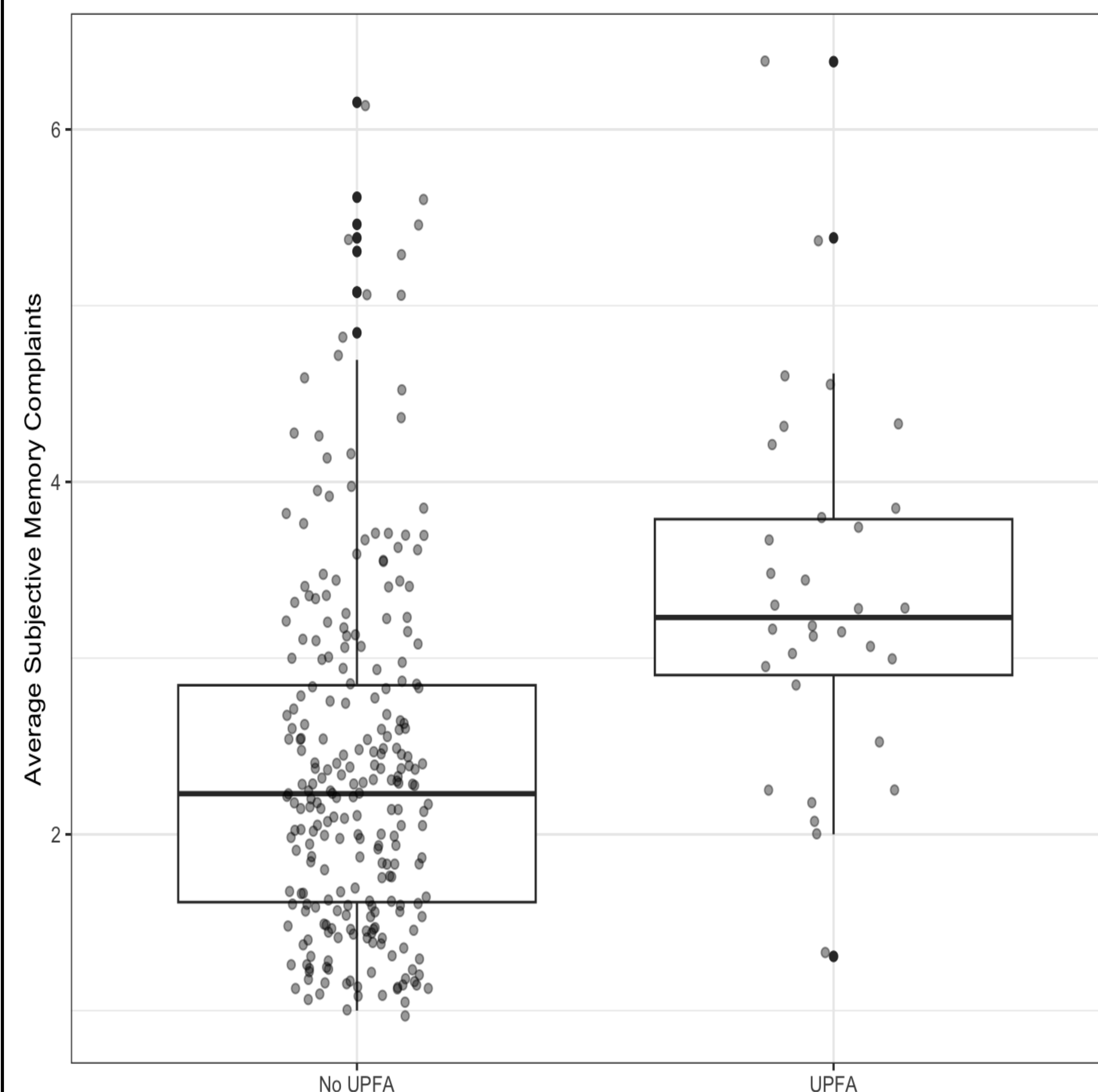


FIGURE 1. Distribution of subjective memory complaints by UPFA status. Participants meeting criteria for UPFA reported greater subjective memory complaints than those without UPFA ($p < .001$).

RESULTS

- UPFA prevalence was 11.4%.
- Perceived socioeconomic status (SES), income, and education showed trend-level associations with UPFA ($ps < .10$)
- Age ($p = .007$) and education ($p = .043$) were significantly associated with subjective memory complaints, while SES and income showed trend-level associations ($ps < .10$)
- UPFA status was associated with higher subjective memory complaints in unadjusted analyses ($b = 0.99$, $SE = 0.19$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .09$); this association remained significant after adjusting for demographics
- In the adjusted model, age was negatively associated with memory complaints ($b = -0.03$, $p = .001$), education showed a trend-level negative association ($p = .051$), and SES and income were not significant

DISCUSSION

- The prevalence of UPFA in the current sample was similar to previous findings
- UPFA was independently associated with greater subjective memory complaints in older adults
- UPFA may represent a novel and modifiable risk factor for cognitive health

Limitations & Future Directions

- This study relied on a cross-sectional design and utilized self-report measures of UPFA and memory complaints
- Replicate these findings in larger, more diverse samples using objective measures of UPF intake (e.g., 24-hour dietary recall) and objective neuropsychological assessments to measure cognition

