

Media Contact: Heather Garlich
703-209-1829
hgarlich@fmi.org

Americans Are Staying Strong with Family Meals During the Pandemic – And Plan to Do So After

Timely Consumer Research from the FMI Foundation Underscores Proven Benefits of Family Meals

ARLINGTON, VA – September 1, 2020 – A new study conducted by the FMI Foundation shows that Americans are using family meals to stay strong – physically and emotionally – during the global pandemic; and they plan to continue this positive practice when the world returns to a new normal. As the nation observes [National Family Meals Month™](#) in September, this news underscores the proven scientific benefits of sharing meals.

“We have long known that family meals have a tremendously positive impact,” said David Fikes, executive director of the FMI Foundation, the organization that founded National Family Meals Month and which provides research grants for this and other family meals studies. “In fact, just as our nation was being impacted by the pandemic early this year, the most comprehensive study to date – published in *The Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (JNEB) – demonstrated the undeniable value of family meals. ([https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046\(19\)31154-6/fulltext](https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046(19)31154-6/fulltext)) It showed that more frequent family meals were associated with better dietary and family functioning outcomes.”

Accentuating the JNEB findings, the new survey consisted of a national sample of more than 1,000 American adults and was conducted August 14 through 17, 2020. It confirmed a variety of present-day facts related to family meals:

- To start, it demonstrated how the definition of “family” is constantly evolving. Currently, 77% of those surveyed cohabitate, which means they are sharing meals with significant others, children, other adult family members, friends and roommates.
- It revealed that as a result of the global pandemic, Americans are cooking more and having more family meals. An incredible 94% say they are cooking the same amount or more than before the pandemic. And three-quarters of Americans report they are having the same amount or more family meals – both in-person and virtually.
- It confirmed that family meals keep us connected. Seventy-one percent (71%) of people who have been eating more in-person meals (and 70% having more virtual meals) agree that “I feel more connected to my family since the pandemic has started.”
- It also showed that people appreciate the emotional benefits from breaking bread together. The preponderance of Americans – 78% -- have positive sentiments about family meals such as: “they are a high point of my day,” or “they help to make me feel calm” or “they are an important part of my household’s regular routine.”

- Notably, Americans recognize the nutrition advantages of eating together. More than one-third recognize that they eat better and 40% say that the food they eat is more balanced or healthier than the food they eat when alone.

Krystal Register, MS, RDN, LDN, director of health and well-being at FMI – The Food Industry Association noted, “This new survey echoes the findings in the *Journal of Nutrition and Behavior* study which revealed that family meals increase fruit and vegetable consumption. In light of this, it is no coincidence that September is also when we celebrate [National Fruits & Veggies Month](#).”

Fikes added that a notable 85% of Americans plan on eating family meals more often or the same amount as they did before the pandemic when things return to a new normal. He said, “Whatever our new normal will be, we need to stay physically and emotionally fit, and family meals help with both. Clearly, family meals are the foundation for a healthy nation.”

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About the FMI Foundation

Established in 1996, the FMI Foundation seeks to ensure continued quality and efficiency in the food retailing system and is operated for charitable, educational and scientific purposes. To help support the role of food retailing, the FMI Foundation focuses on research, education and resources in the area of health and well-being, which includes food safety, nutrition and social responsibility considerations. For information regarding the FMI Foundation, visit www.fmifoundation.org.

Infographic Included:

- Family Meals Are the Foundation for a Healthy Nation
https://www.dropbox.com/s/l278fhyxmhtnrnto/TGN_082820_NFMM_Infographic_2020_Consumer_4.jpg?dl=0