

# Child TRENDS FACT SHEET

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## THE MORE WE EAT TOGETHER: STATE DATA ON FREQUENCY OF FAMILY MEALS

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This fact sheet summarizes the latest state-by-state data on family meals, as reported by parents of children within three age-groups: birth to five years, six to 11 years, and 12 to 17 years.

### YOUNG CHILDREN (ages birth to 5 years)

- Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) eat meals with their families six or seven days per week, according to their parents.
- About one in five (17 percent) eat meals with their families three or fewer days per week.
- By state, the proportion of young children sharing family meals six or seven days per week varies from more than three-quarters (76 percent), in Idaho, to just over half (53 percent), in Massachusetts.

### CHILDREN (ages 6 through 11)

- On average about half (53 percent) eat family meals together six or seven days per week, and one in five share no more than three such meals weekly.
- By state, these percentages vary less than they do for the youngest children. Ohio shows the smallest percentage in this age group (44 percent) who eat six or seven meals weekly with their families, while Montana has the greatest percentage (63 percent).

### ADOLESCENTS (ages 12 through 17)

- Parents report that fewer adolescents are sharing family meals frequently, compared with younger age groups: nearly a third (31 percent) of adolescents share three or fewer such meals.
- However, the single highest proportion of adolescents (37 percent) has six or seven meals weekly with their families.
- By state, New Mexico's adolescents are most likely to have a shared family meal nearly every day of the week (46 percent), while those in Minnesota are least likely (32 percent).

### IMPLICATIONS

These data can form the basis for a number of interesting state-by-state discussions among families and those institutions that support them, about the factors that influence families' taking meals together, and what steps could be taken to increase opportunities for families to experience the benefits of shared mealtimes. It is likely that a number of factors—cultural traditions, work and commuting patterns, and participation in after-school or after-work activities, for example—account for state-level variations on this indicator. A cursory look suggests that children in the western U.S. (and Vermont) may be more likely, on average, to share frequent family meals; but few other patterns are obvious.

**Table 1. Number of days families eat meals together: Percentages for children ages 0 to 5**

State	3 or fewer days per week	4-5 days per week	6-7 days per week
United States	16.8	20.3	63.0
Alaska	11.8	17.0	71.3
Alabama	17.6	20.6	61.8
Arkansas	15.6	20.4	64.0
Arizona	15.2	20.9	64.0
California	17.2	18.1	64.7
Colorado	13.9	20.7	65.4
Connecticut	19.5	19.8	60.7
District of Columbia	23.9	19.2	56.9
Delaware	20.0	22.5	57.5
Florida	22.9	19.7	57.4
Georgia	19.1	21.3	59.7
Hawaii	16.6	17.5	66.0
Iowa	13.0	22.3	64.7
Idaho	10.3	13.7	76.1
Illinois	21.5	22.8	55.7
Indiana	19.0	20.3	60.7
Kansas	15.9	20.9	63.3
Kentucky	15.7	26.2	58.1
Louisiana	17.8	21.0	61.2
Massachusetts	23.0	24.2	52.8
Maryland	20.8	19.4	59.8
Maine	13.6	22.9	63.4
Michigan	17.9	21.2	60.9
Minnesota	15.1	20.5	64.4
Missouri	18.8	23.8	57.4
Mississippi	18.5	23.4	58.1
Montana	9.9	17.7	72.4
North Carolina	16.5	18.2	65.3
North Dakota	14.1	18.5	67.5
Nebraska	10.7	23.0	66.3
New Hampshire	14.5	22.4	63.1
New Jersey	24.3	21.2	54.6

State	3 or fewer days per week	4-5 days per week	6-7 days per week
New Mexico	11.2	17.3	71.5
Nevada	20.5	14.7	64.8
New York	25.1	15.6	59.3
Ohio	18.5	24.7	56.9
Oklahoma	16.8	18.0	65.2
Oregon	14.2	19.7	66.1
Pennsylvania	20.7	21.0	58.3
Rhode Island	15.6	21.1	63.4
South Carolina	16.6	21.6	61.8
South Dakota	11.3	21.8	66.9
Tennessee	15.4	25.4	59.2
Texas	21.8	18.0	60.2
Utah	13.1	16.9	70.0
Virginia	16.5	22.5	61.0
Vermont	11.2	19.4	69.4
Washington	14.4	16.6	69.0
Wisconsin	15.8	23.8	60.4
West Virginia	16.4	20.5	63.1
Wyoming	9.8	17.4	72.8

Source: Child Trends' analysis of data from the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health

**Table 2. Number of days families eat meals together: Percentages for children ages 6 to 11**

State	3 or fewer days per week	4-5 days per week	6-7 days per week
United States	19.5	27.3	53.2
Alaska	15.5	22.2	62.3
Alabama	21.2	27.8	51.1
Arkansas	20.3	24.8	54.9
Arizona	16.0	24.4	59.7
California	16.8	24.0	59.3
Colorado	16.0	28.2	55.7
Connecticut	22.6	27.6	49.7
District of Columbia	21.7	25.3	53.0
Delaware	20.6	26.5	52.9
Florida	23.9	24.2	52.0
Georgia	21.0	26.2	52.8
Hawaii	16.2	26.9	56.9
Iowa	20.7	24.7	54.7
Idaho	15.6	23.9	60.6
Illinois	25.0	28.6	46.5
Indiana	20.4	31.5	48.1
Kansas	15.9	32.2	51.9
Kentucky	20.7	29.8	49.6
Louisiana	23.6	29.3	47.1
Massachusetts	20.7	27.5	51.8
Maryland	24.2	26.4	49.4
Maine	15.4	27.4	57.1
Michigan	21.1	24.2	54.7
Minnesota	19.5	28.9	51.7
Missouri	18.3	25.0	56.8
Mississippi	24.0	26.8	49.3
Montana	12.7	24.2	63.2
North Carolina	19.1	27.0	53.9
North Dakota	16.4	25.8	57.8
Nebraska	16.1	32.1	51.8
New Hampshire	20.9	32.2	46.9
New Jersey	24.7	26.5	48.8

State	3 or fewer days per week	4-5 days per week	6-7 days per week
New Mexico	13.0	25.0	62.0
Nevada	19.8	26.6	53.6
New York	23.7	24.3	52.1
Ohio	27.3	28.8	44.0
Oklahoma	17.2	30.4	52.4
Oregon	15.8	27.1	57.1
Pennsylvania	24.2	26.9	48.9
Rhode Island	22.7	32.4	44.9
South Carolina	22.8	27.4	49.8
South Dakota	16.6	29.8	53.6
Tennessee	22.5	29.1	48.4
Texas	19.7	23.8	56.5
Utah	16.0	28.5	55.5
Virginia	21.3	26.4	52.4
Vermont	16.9	24.7	58.4
Washington	16.8	27.2	56.0
Wisconsin	20.0	29.6	50.4
West Virginia	16.2	30.2	53.6
Wyoming	14.1	29.4	56.5

Source: Child Trends' analysis of data from the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health

**Table 3. Number of days families eat meals together: Percentages for children ages 12 to 17**

State	3 or fewer days per week	4-5 days per week	6-7 days per week
United States	31.3	31.6	37.1
Alaska	30.2	30.2	39.6
Alabama	36.2	29.5	34.3
Arkansas	31.5	30.6	38.0
Arizona	28.2	29.4	42.3
California	27.7	31.0	41.4
Colorado	27.3	36.3	36.4
Connecticut	32.8	32.0	35.2
District of Columbia	37.5	25.1	37.5
Delaware	33.8	34.5	31.7
Florida	30.9	28.7	40.4
Georgia	30.6	34.1	35.3
Hawaii	26.7	28.6	44.7
Iowa	31.3	33.7	35.1
Idaho	27.3	29.6	43.1
Illinois	37.9	27.4	34.7
Indiana	36.1	31.1	32.8
Kansas	33.5	32.4	34.1
Kentucky	32.2	32.6	35.2
Louisiana	35.2	29.2	35.6
Massachusetts	30.5	34.3	35.2
Maryland	35.0	32.8	32.2
Maine	30.8	32.3	36.9
Michigan	33.6	31.2	35.2
Minnesota	35.2	33.2	31.5
Missouri	31.5	32.1	36.4
Mississippi	33.7	28.8	37.5
Montana	28.3	33.2	38.6
North Carolina	28.3	33.3	38.5
North Dakota	28.9	36.6	34.6
Nebraska	33.6	31.0	35.4
New Hampshire	28.6	37.1	34.3
New Jersey	32.6	30.5	37.0

State	3 or fewer days per week	4-5 days per week	6-7 days per week
New Mexico	25.1	28.6	46.4
Nevada	27.1	30.8	42.1
New York	32.1	28.5	39.5
Ohio	32.2	32.3	35.5
Oklahoma	28.8	33.9	37.2
Oregon	30.6	30.8	38.6
Pennsylvania	33.5	30.8	35.7
Rhode Island	30.4	37.0	32.6
South Carolina	33.1	29.6	37.3
South Dakota	32.5	33.9	33.6
Tennessee	35.7	28.9	35.4
Texas	31.7	25.3	43.0
Utah	24.7	38.4	36.9
Virginia	33.9	28.9	37.2
Vermont	26.0	31.3	42.8
Washington	27.6	30.6	41.9
Wisconsin	36.1	31.9	32.1
West Virginia	29.2	32.7	38.1
Wyoming	27.1	31.4	41.5
United States	31.3	31.6	37.1

Source: Child Trends' analysis of data from the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health