

# Prevalence and Patterns of Cooking Dinner at Home in the USA: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 2007-2008

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**OBJECTIVE:** To measure the prevalence of cooking dinner at home in the USA and test whether home dinner preparation habits are associated with socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, country of birth and family structure.

**DESIGN:** Cross-sectional analysis. The primary outcome, self-reported frequency of cooking dinner at home, was divided into three categories: 0-1 dinners cooked per week ('never'), 2-5 ('sometimes') and 6-7 ('always'). We used bivariable and multivariable regression analyses to test for associations between frequency of cooking dinner at home and factors of interest.

**SETTING:** The 2007-2008 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

**SUBJECTS:** The sample consisted of 10 149 participants.

**RESULTS:** Americans reported cooking an average of five dinners per week; 8 % never, 43 % sometimes and 49 % always cooked dinner at home. Lower household wealth and educational attainment were associated with a higher likelihood of either always or never cooking dinner at home, whereas wealthier, more educated households were more likely to sometimes cook dinner at home ( $P < 0.05$ ). Black households cooked the fewest dinners at home (mean = 4.4, 95 % CI 4.2, 4.6). Households with foreign-born reference persons cooked more dinners at home (mean = 5.8, 95 % CI 5.7, 6.0) than households with US-born reference persons (mean = 4.9, 95 % CI 4.7, 5.1). Households with dependants cooked more dinners at home (mean = 5.2, 95 % CI 5.1, 5.4) than households without dependants (mean = 4.6, 95 % CI 4.3, 5.0).

**CONCLUSIONS:** Home dinner preparation habits varied substantially with socio-economic status and race/ethnicity, associations that likely will have implications for designing and appropriately tailoring interventions to improve home food preparation practices and promote healthy eating.

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