

Dietary patterns exist among US adults based on demographics

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Scientists say they have identified five eating patterns for U.S. adults that are strongly influenced by age, race, region, gender, income and education.

Presenting their findings at the American Heart Association's [Epidemiology](#) and Prevention/Nutrition, [Physical Activity](#) and [Metabolism](#) 2012 Scientific Sessions, the scientists said the five [dietary patterns](#) are:

- Southern — fried, processed meats, and sugar sweetened beverages
- Traditional — Chinese and Mexican food, pasta dishes, pizza, soup and other mixed dishes including frozen or take-out meals
- Healthy — mostly fruits, vegetables and grains
- Sweets — large amounts of sweet snacks and desserts
- Alcohol — proteins, alcohol and salads

They based the patterns on results of food frequency questionnaires of 21,636 black and white adults ages 45 and older. This 110-food-item questionnaire was designed to estimate the usual and customary intake of a wide array of nutrients and food groups.

"We believe focusing research on dietary patterns better represents how people eat, compared to single foods or nutrients," said Suzanne Judd, Ph.D., study author and assistant professor of biostatistics at the

University of Alabama-Birmingham.

The researchers also found clear differences in dietary patterns across demographic and socioeconomic groups:

- Blacks were more likely than whites to eat a Southern dietary pattern.
- Men, people making less than \$35,000 a year and those who weren't college graduates were more likely to follow the Southern pattern of eating than women, those who made more money, or those who were more educated.
- Blacks tended to not eat the alcohol dietary pattern.
- People ages 45 to 54 tended to eat a traditional dietary pattern.
- Those 75 years and older were likely to not eat the traditional dietary pattern.
- College educated [adults](#) tended to not eat the Southern dietary pattern.

"We hope that understanding these patterns will be informative in understanding the role of diet in health and disease disparities," Judd said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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