

More educated people snack more frequently, new research says

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Better educated parents spend more time eating, have meals more often with their families and snack more frequently, new research says.

Dr Ewa Jarosz, of the Department of Sociology at the University of Oxford, analysed survey responses about eating habits from 1,968 UK parents with children aged 17 and under.

She told the BSA Food & Society conference at the University of Westminster today [Monday 26 June] that professionals and [managers](#) spent around 84 minutes a day eating [meals](#) on average, compared with 76 minutes for [people](#) in routine and manual jobs.

Professionals and managers spent around 60 of the 84 minutes a day eating with their families on average, and people in routine and manual jobs spent 48 minutes out of 76.

On average, professionals and managers ate almost 2.6 meals a day, 1.8 of them with their families, while people in routine and manual jobs ate just over 2.4 meals a day, 1.6 of them with their families.

As well as meals, professionals and managers also spent around 24 minutes a day snacking, compared with 16 minutes for people in routine and manual jobs, she said.

In the first research of its kind, Dr Jarosz then analysed the survey results and found:

- People's education was very important – the higher their educational level, the more time they spent eating, and the more time spent eating with their families. More educated people tend to occupy higher-paid managerial roles, and it was this that accounted for the survey results that showed that managers ate more often. More educated people were also more likely to eat breakfast.
- Other factors that were also important were being a single parent and working long hours, which both reduced the amount of time

spent eating with families.

- Overall, people with children aged 17 and under spent less time eating than the population average, by around three minutes for [professionals](#) and managers and over 10 minutes for people in routine and manual jobs.

Dr Jarosz said: "The level of education plays an important role in the frequency of eating meals – more educated respondents ate with their household members more often, and the difference grew with each level of education analysed. People with a degree spent significantly more time eating than individuals in the lowest educational category.

"This applied to snacking as well – the least time spent snacking was by people in the routine and manual classes, significantly lower than the duration of snacking reported by people in managerial and professional occupations.

"Overall, adults living with children aged 17 and under have fewer meals per day and spend less time eating than the population average, which might reflect the fact that this category is often time-poor. This is especially prominent in the case of single parents."

More information: Ewa Jarosz. Class and eating: Family meals in Britain, *Appetite* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.appet.2017.05.047](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2017.05.047)

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