

**\*\* PRESS RELEASE FROM MARRIAGE FOUNDATION / RHODA HARDIE PR \*\***

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## **Only 1 in 3 couples regularly eat together – but couples that do eat together and keep away from their phones enjoy their meal more.**

- **Only 1 in 3 couples eat together all or most of the time, while 1 in 4 couples eat together rarely or not at all.**
- **Couples who ate together were more likely to be very happy in their relationship and more likely to enjoy their meal a lot.**
- **Couples were also more likely to enjoy their meals if they stayed away from their phones.**
- **The results suggest a clear link between eating together, meal satisfaction and relationship satisfaction.**

The decline in family mealtimes over recent years has led to concerns that this important regular occasion for families to catch up and relax together is becoming a thing of the past in many households. Now a new report released by Marriage Foundation, as part of **National Marriage Week (13-19 May)**, highlights that this trend is affecting couples too – with only around a third of British couples eating together all or most of the time, and around a quarter of couples eating together rarely or not at all. However, couples who do make the decision to eat together consistently reported a higher enjoyment of their meal. The survey results also suggest that couples who eat together may have happier relationships, as 67% of married couples who ate together were very happy with their relationship, compared to 58% of those who ate apart (see graph below). This links in with previous research that shows that occasional ‘date nights’ – intentionally setting time aside to spend together - considerably reduces the risk of divorce for couples.

The United Kingdom Time Use Survey 2014-15 looked at eating habits on one weekday and one weekend day among more than 7,600 people in over 4,000 households. They found that 35% of married couples and 28% of cohabiting couples ate together often (more than 80% of the time – see graph below), while 22% of married couples and 27% of cohabiting couples ate together rarely (less than 40% of the time). The survey also found that only 12% of parents with children aged 0-7 ate with their children.

Encouragingly, the report suggested that ‘device free’ meals are on the increase, with only 14% of people reporting using their phones while eating. Results showed that couples were 8% more likely to enjoy their meal if they didn’t use a phone while eating.

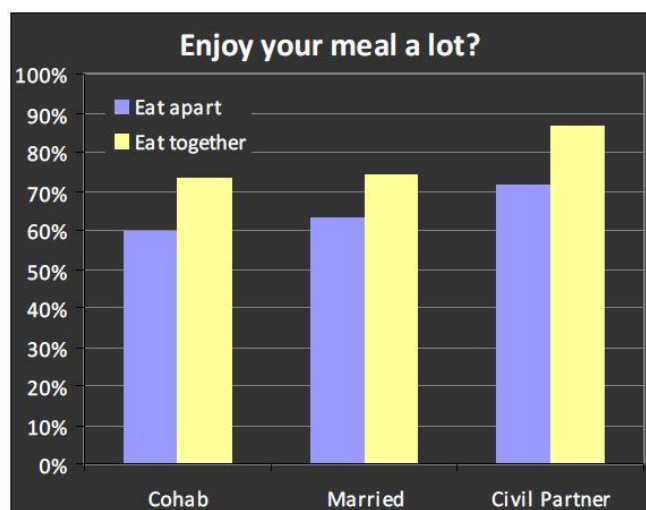
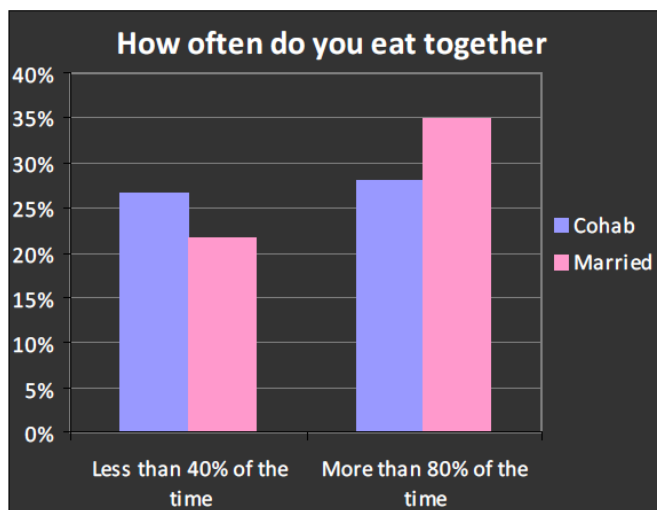
While it is difficult to tell whether eating together improves relationships in itself or whether couples who have good relationships are more likely to eat together, it seems fair to conclude that couples who make the effort to eat together – especially without being distracted by a phone - are overall happier and enjoy their meal more as a result.

Harry Benson, Research Director for Marriage Foundation, commented: *‘We think this is the first UK study to look at the link between eating together and a couple’s relationship quality. Although a snapshot like this can’t tell us for sure whether eating together as a couple is good for relationships or whether it’s just that happy couples tend to eat together, the link with enjoyment of the meal suggests it does make a difference.’*

Sir Paul Coleridge, founder of Marriage Foundation and former high court judge, added: *'Previous research by Marriage Foundation has emphasised two important factors relating to relationship quality and longevity. Firstly, the biggest killer of relationships is neglect and boredom. Secondly, those who invest in their relationships - especially by taking occasional nights out - have a better success rate than those who don't. Surely taking time to eat together regularly is fundamental to ensuring at least that minimum investment and so avoiding neglect. It is vital to ensuring time to communicate properly (undistracted by screens) and surely every bit as important as sex.'*

Full report available at <http://marriagefoundation.org.uk/> or from Harry Benson (07515 699187 / [harry.benson@virgin.net](mailto:harry.benson@virgin.net)) or Rhoda Hardie (0781 542 7111 / [Rhoda.hardie.pr@gmail.com](mailto:Rhoda.hardie.pr@gmail.com)).

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#### Notes to editors

To discuss interviews, please contact Harry Benson on 07515 699187 / [harry.benson@virgin.net](mailto:harry.benson@virgin.net) or Rhoda Hardie on 0781 542 7111 / [Rhoda.hardie.pr@gmail.com](mailto:Rhoda.hardie.pr@gmail.com).

#### **About Marriage Foundation**

Marriage Foundation was founded in 2012 by Sir Paul Coleridge, a High Court judge who was moved by his personal experience in 40 years as a barrister and judge specialising in family law. The think tank seeks to improve public understanding of marriage and to reduce the numbers of people drawn into the family justice system – some 500,000 children and adults each year. It has established itself as a leading voice on marriage issues in the UK.

A source of statistics on marriage, cohabitation, commitment, divorce and family breakdown can be found on the Marriage Foundation website: <http://marriagefoundation.org.uk/>