

# NEW FMI FOUNDATION RESEARCH: FAMILY MEALS ARE KEY TO RESPECT, CIVILITY AND NAVIGATING SENSITIVE TOPICS

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-- New data released by the [FMI Foundation](#) reveals that

family meals are a place for learning and practicing respectful behavior, addressing difficult topics, and maintaining civility. These findings – which underscore what parents and grandparents have enforced for generations – were released as part of the “Staying Strong with Family Meals” Barometer, a recurring quantitative study among a nationally representative sample of Americans.



No matter how family is defined, sharing meals offers opportunities to address sensitive topics in a safe environment. Stronger families make for stronger communities and society as a whole.”

*David Fikes, executive director  
of the FMI Foundation*

The findings reveal that the majority (76%) of those surveyed believe family meals are a great time to have and teach respectful interactions. Similarly, 70% credit family meals for creating a safe environment for talking about challenging societal issues. In addition, most (68%) agree enjoying meals together keeps conversations more civil.

“Thousands of peer reviewed studies document the physical, nutritional, and mental health [benefits of family meals](#),” said David Fikes, executive director of the FMI

Foundation. “These new data points validate an entirely new set of benefits, shining a light on Americans’ perceptions of how important family meals are to foster and maintain constructive, respectful dialogue even when discussing challenging issues.”

Seventy-five percent of those surveyed recognize that family meals improve family functioning, even while the way “family” is defined today is changing. Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed say their definition of family as it applies to family meals has changed since childhood, compared to 42% in 2022. Today’s definition of family often includes one’s significant other, related adults and children, and unrelated adults. Interestingly, 18% of Americans identify their pets as “family” when it comes to sharing family meals.

“No matter how family is defined, sharing meals offers opportunities to address sensitive topics in a safe environment,” said Fikes. “Stronger families make for stronger communities, which in turn strengthens our nation and society as a whole.”

The good news is that Americans are recognizing these benefits. National Family Meals Month™, celebrated each September for the last decade, has generated so much momentum that it is now known as the [Family Meals Movement](#). Embraced year-round, the movement raises awareness for the many benefits of family meals.

### About the FMI Foundation

Established in 1996, the FMI Foundation seeks to ensure continued quality and efficiency in the food retailing system and is operated for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes. To help support the role of food retailing, the FMI Foundation focuses on research, education, and resources in the area of health and well-being, which embraces food safety, nutrition and social responsibility concerns. For information regarding the FMI foundation, visit [www.fmifoundation.org](http://www.fmifoundation.org). #familymealsmonth; #familymealsmovement.

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**FAMILY MEALS ARE A GREAT PLACE FOR RESPECT, CIVILITY AND NAVIGATING SENSITIVE TOPICS**

**76%** believe that family meals are a great time to have and teach **respectful interactions**.

**70%** credit family meals for creating a **safe environment** for talking about challenging societal issues.

**68%** agree sitting at a meal together tends to **keep conversations more civil**.

**1/3** of survey respondents say family meals **make them feel calm**.

Join the Movement • #FamilyMealsMovement

Join the **FAMILY MEALS** Movement  
FMI Foundation

Family meals are a great place for respect, civility, and navigating sensitive topics.