

New Study Underscores Nationwide Prevalence of Poor Diet Quality, Urgent Need for Federal Nutrition Programs

Researchers Provide First Diet Quality Monitoring Categories Aligned with Sociodemographic Characteristics and Eating Habits

BETHESDA, MD, UNITED STATES, June 24, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new study of nationwide food and nutrition data shows the striking relationship between poor diet quality and the health of nearly every American. Findings indicate that more than 86% of people have low diet quality and over half of the nation has very low diet quality.

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Our analysis of recent national data substantiates the striking nationwide prevalence of poor diet quality and the urgent need to tackle this health crises with science-based policies and programs.”

Jerold R. Mande, MPH, CEO of Nourish Science

Given this [alarming national diet quality crisis](#), nutrition experts at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, University of California San Francisco School of Medicine, and the non-governmental organization Nourish Science, suggest the first set of data-driven diet quality measurement categories health leaders and policy makers can use to track changes to the well-being of the U.S.

population and provide science-backed data to inform the types of interventions to be implemented.

“Despite growing concern about diet-related chronic disease in the U.S., national monitoring of diet quality by meaningful categories has largely been missing,” said Elise Sheinberg, RD, doctoral student at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the study’s lead author. “These new data provide nationally representative evidence for using diet quality categories to set goals for reducing the number of Americans with very low diet quality and reduce chronic disease nationwide.”

The study, available in a [medRxiv pre-print](#), outlines a novel set of nationally representative diet quality categories, or “cut points,” which correspond with sociodemographic characteristics, foods and nutrients, and cardiometabolic risk factors. The evidence-based categories of “high,” “marginal,” “low” and “very low” diet quality can serve as tool to monitor the effectiveness of

Federally funded diet quality programming and policies over time.

Researchers analyzed recent and widespread diet quality data available in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey using the Health Eating Index-2020. In addition to finding that nearly all U.S. adults have low or very low diet quality, the study indicates that most of the population has high intakes of ultra-processed foods, refined grains and processed meats and cardiometabolic profiles that elevate risk for chronic disease.

“The recently released Make American Healthy Again Commission Report assessment discusses the impact the current state of U.S. diet quality, including consumption of ultra-processed foods, is having on the health of our nation and its youth. However, scientific backing for this assessment has recently come into question,” said Jerold R. Mande, MPH, Adjunct Professor of Nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Chief Executive Officer of Nourish Science.

“Our study provides the missing link – the first analysis of recent national data that substantiates the striking nationwide prevalence of poor diet quality, regardless of sociodemographic status, and the urgent need to tackle this health crises with science-based policies and programs.”

The study also found that only 2.4% of adults from households with low or very low food security have high diet quality. These results exemplify how important it is for Congress to make diet quality a core SNAP objective and uphold the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s SNAP Education (SNAP-Ed) program – the nation’s principal mechanism to prevent obesity, improve diet quality and reduce chronic disease among low-income Americans.

“Unfortunately, the critical SNAP-Ed program may be repealed under the ‘Big Beautiful Bill,’ which will move the U.S. farther away from improving diet quality and meeting the goals of the MAHA movement by excluding low-income people who are at high risk for developing nutrition-related chronic disease,” Mande added.

This research underscores the critical need to maintain and expand government diet quality programming like SNAP-Ed. Implementing practical and measurable metrics can hold Federal agencies accountable for achieving set benchmarks and help make meaningful progress towards



America has made progress on food security, but diet quality is poor.



Diet quality in America is poor resulting in shorter lifespans and children with chronic disease.



becoming a healthier nation.

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About Nourish Science

Nourish Science is a new non-governmental organization that is focused on solving the country's current nutrition crisis by investing in science, rejuvenating FDA nutrition regulation, and leveraging USDA's nutrition programs to ensure every child reaches age 18 at a healthy weight and in good metabolic health. To learn more about Nourish Science, visit <https://nourishscience.org>. Follow us on X @Nourish_Science and on [LinkedIn](#).

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