



The Guide to...Snacking (November 2010)

TGI can identify the motivations and behaviours of snackers... [by snacking we mean eating food that is not part of your main mealtime]

- 83% of adults in Northern Ireland 'snack' and half admit to often eating between meals. Women are slightly more likely to snack - 85% do so compared to 81% of men - and the age group most likely to snack is 25-34 (92% do so).
- Snacking is on the rise: the proportion of adults who agree they 'don't normally eat between meals' has fallen from 32% in 2008 to 28% this year. Almost a third of adults say that, because of their busy lifestyle, they don't take care of themselves as well as they should.
- The most commonly cited reasons for snacking are hunger (46% of adults), boredom (27% of adults) and needing an energy boost (23% of adults). Women are 30% more likely to snack because they feel stressed.
- People who are underweight based on BMI (Body Mass Index) are 30% more likely to snack because they need an energy boost. In contrast, people categorised as obese are 40% more likely to snack due to boredom or stress.
- However, there is not a strong correlation between snacking and obesity. Men who have a normal BMI are 30% more likely to snack more than once a day; men classed as 'overweight' are 20% less likely to do so, while 'obese' men are no more or less likely to do so than the average. A similar pattern emerges for women.
- The majority of snacking is done at home. Almost twice as many adults admit to snacking at home (78%) compared to out of home (40%). The average person snacks about twice a day.
- 53% of adults buy snacks at a convenience store or newsagent, 36% buy snacks at Tesco, 17% at Asda and 8% from vending machines. Only 4% buy snacks at the cinema, rising to 11% of 15-24s and 14% of all heavy cinema-goers (once a month or more).
- The average snacker spends just over £5 a week on snacks. Men tend to spend more than women (£5.70 vs £4.60) and the highest spending age group is 15-24, averaging £6.50.
- At breakfast time and mid-morning the most popular snack is fruit, eaten by 9% and 15% of adults respectively. At lunchtime the most popular snack is a pack of crisps, consumed by 12% of adults in Northern Ireland.
- Eating habits become less healthy in the afternoon when 14% of adults eat chocolate and 13% eat biscuits or cake. Crisps are the most popular snack in the early evening (11%) but chocolate prevails after 8pm when 17% of adults reward themselves with some form of cocoa-based treat.