

Nationwide Food Consumption Survey 1977-78  
Preliminary Report No. 1

**MONEY VALUE OF FOOD  
USED BY HOUSEHOLDS  
IN THE UNITED STATES, SPRING 1977**

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
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## ABSTRACT

This report presents findings on the money value of food used at home and the expenditures for food eaten away from home from a sample of about 3,500 households surveyed in the 48 conterminous States in the spring of 1977 (April-June). Also included are data on the number and average cost of meals eaten at home and away from home and the nutrient return per dollar's worth of food used at home. Findings are given for households classified by region, urbanization, income, and size.

**KEYWORDS:** Expenditures, family food, food away from home, food cost, household food, meals at home, meals away, nutrient economy.

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MONEY VALUE OF FOOD  
USED BY HOUSEHOLDS  
IN THE UNITED STATES, SPRING 1977<sup>1</sup>

SUMMARY

The food consumption survey of about 3,500 housekeeping households in the 48 conterminous States in the spring of 1977 shows that--

- o U.S. housekeeping households averaged 3.1 household members and used food with a money value (value of food used at home plus expense for food eaten away from home) of \$61 per week. Food at home accounted for \$46 (76 percent), and food bought and eaten away from home accounted for \$14 per week (24 percent). Meals bought and eaten away from home averaged \$11 and snacks \$3 per week. The value of food received away from home by household members as guests or in payment for services is not available from this survey.
- o Households in the Northeast used food with the highest money value (\$69 per week), and those in the South used food with the lowest value (\$56).
- o Suburban households were larger and used food with higher money value on the average, both at home and away from home, than households in the central city and nonmetropolitan areas.
- o As the income of households increased, the money value of food used at home and the expense for food eaten away from home increased. As income increased, the percentage of dollars for food eaten away from home increased--from 14 percent for households with incomes below \$5,000 to 29 percent for households with incomes of \$20,000 or more.
- o As household size increased, money value of food per household increased, but money value per household member decreased. One-member households used food valued at \$26 and households of six or more members used food valued at \$16 per household member in a week.

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<sup>1</sup>Prepared by Consumer and Food Economics Institute, Human Nutrition Center, Science and Education Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

- o Averages conceal the great variation among households in money value of food used. For example, the value of food used at home varied among households from less than \$8 to more than \$30 per person per week, even after adjustments were made for meals eaten away from home.
- o The average money value of food used at home per person (adjusted for meals eaten away from home) was about 90 percent higher for households surveyed in the spring of 1977 than for households in a similar survey in the spring of 1965. During the same period the Consumer Price Index for food used at home rose 100 percent.
- o About 85 percent of the meals eaten by household members were from home food supplies, 11 percent were bought and eaten away from home, and 4 percent were eaten away from home without direct expense--as guest meals, free school meals, or payment for services.
- o The average cost of a home "meal unit," including snacks, was \$0.78. A meal unit bought and eaten away from home, including snacks, averaged \$2.04, or 2.6 times as much as a meal unit at home.
- o Generally the groups of households using food at home with the lowest money value received the most nutrient return per dollar spent. They were the southern, nonmetropolitan, low-income, and large households.

#### SCOPE OF 1977-78 SURVEY

The National Food Consumption Survey (NFCS) 1977-78 is the sixth conducted by the Department of Agriculture since 1936. It is the second survey to include households in all four seasons of the year and to obtain information nationwide on diets of selected individual household members as well as food consumption for the total household. The last survey was conducted in 1965-66.

This survey will provide detailed information on food consumption of households (at home) and food intake of individuals (at home and away from home), from which the nutritional quality of household food supplies and individual intakes can be appraised. It will provide data on home production and preservation of food, household income, participation in food programs, education and employment of household heads, and other factors that might affect food consumption. The survey will provide information on selected practices of households in the purchase and use of specific foods. Also, it will provide information on eating habits of individuals, such as the time of day foods were eaten, how many times individuals ate per day, and where meals and snacks were obtained.

From April 1977 to March 1978, a stratified probability sample of households was surveyed. Information was obtained from approximately 15,000 households in the 48 conterminous States and approximately 34,000 individuals from these households. In addition, 5 supplemental surveys were conducted yielding information for about 5,000 households in which at least 1 member was over 65 years of age, 4,900 households with members participating or eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program, 3,100 households in Puerto Rico, 1,100 urban households in Alaska, and 1,250 households in Hawaii. All the supplemental surveys will provide data on household food consumption and individual food intake.

## DATA COLLECTION

Information on food used in a surveyed household was obtained through an interview with the person identified as most responsible for food planning and preparation. Trained interviewers used an aided recall schedule to obtain the kind (ground beef, skim milk, etc.), the form (canned, frozen, etc.), the quantity, and the cost, if purchased, of each food or beverage used in the household during 7 days prior to the interview. Households were contacted at least 7 days prior to the interview and asked to keep informal notes, such as shopping lists, menus, and prices of foods used, to assist them in recalling the food used during the 7-day period.

In addition to information on food used, respondents reported the number of meals eaten from home food supplies during the week by household members and others. They also provided information needed to classify households by income, size, and other family characteristics.

The methodology used to obtain household food consumption data in the 1977-78 NFCS was the same as that used in the 1965-66 survey with a few exceptions. One change may affect slightly the data on money value of food. In 1965-66, households were interviewed at the time of the first contact. In 1977-78, the type of information needed was described to each household in a contact made at least 7 days prior to the interview. The impact of this change will be measured using data from a bridging sample of 1,300 households interviewed without prior contact during the spring of 1977.

## RESULTS

U.S. housekeeping households<sup>2</sup> surveyed in the spring of 1977 averaged 3.1 members and used food with a money value (value of food used at home plus expense for food eaten away from home) of \$61 per week. (See table 1 for unrounded values.) Of this amount, \$46 was the money value of food used at home<sup>3</sup> and \$14 was the expense for meals and snacks eaten away from home.<sup>4</sup> Meals eaten away accounted for \$11 and snacks for \$3. Money value reported in this study does not cover guest meals and refreshments nor meals received as pay by household members outside the home. The average money value of food per

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<sup>2</sup>Housekeeping households are those with at least 1 person having 10 or more meals from household food supply during 7 days preceding interview. Ninety-three percent of all reporting households met this criterion.

<sup>3</sup>Includes value of food used at home by household members, roomers, boarders, employees, and guests that was bought, home produced, or received as gift or pay. Value of food received without direct expense by a household is based on the average price per pound paid for that food by survey households in the same region.

<sup>4</sup>When nonhousekeeping households, for which data were collected but are not reported here, were also included, average expenditure for food away from home was \$15.77 per household and the proportion of total money value of food for food away was 26 percent.

TABLE 1.--Money value of food used in a week by housekeeping households,<sup>1</sup> spring 1977

Region, urbanization, income, and number of people in household	People living in household <sup>2</sup> Number	Money value per household <sup>3</sup>					Money value per household member <sup>3</sup>				
		At home <sup>4</sup>		Bought away from home			At home <sup>4</sup>		Bought away from home		
		Total	At home <sup>4</sup>	Total	Snacks	Meals	Total	At home <sup>4</sup>	Total	Snacks	Meals
		Dol	Dol	Dol	Dol	Dol	Dol	Dol	Dol	Dol	Dol
All households.....	3.06	60.93	46.43	14.50	3.10	11.40	19.91	15.17	4.74	1.01	3.73
Region:											
Northeast.....	3.04	68.58	50.97	17.61	3.39	14.22	22.56	16.77	5.79	1.11	4.68
North Central.....	3.10	59.49	45.29	14.20	2.89	11.31	19.19	14.61	4.58	.93	3.65
South.....	3.06	56.29	44.24	12.05	3.12	8.93	18.40	14.46	3.94	1.02	2.92
West.....	3.02	60.36	45.54	14.82	2.94	11.88	19.99	15.08	4.91	.97	3.93
Urbanization:											
Central city.....	2.81	58.13	44.25	13.88	3.60	10.28	20.69	15.75	4.94	1.28	3.66
Suburban.....	3.27	68.39	50.80	17.59	3.18	14.41	20.91	15.54	5.38	.97	4.41
Nonmetropolitan.....	3.05	55.41	43.69	11.72	2.54	9.18	18.17	14.32	3.84	.83	3.01
Income (1976) before taxes: <sup>5</sup>											
Under \$5,000.....	2.02	35.38	30.28	5.10	1.52	3.58	17.51	14.99	2.52	.75	1.77
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	2.72	46.95	38.63	8.32	2.67	5.65	17.26	14.20	3.06	.98	2.08
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	3.21	59.40	45.43	13.97	3.21	10.76	18.50	14.15	4.35	1.00	3.35
\$15,000-\$19,999.....	3.53	70.55	52.92	17.63	3.71	13.92	19.99	14.99	4.99	1.05	3.94
\$20,000 or more.....	3.67	85.10	60.04	25.06	4.30	20.76	23.19	16.36	6.83	1.17	5.66
People living in household: <sup>2</sup>											
1.....	1.00	26.34	20.81	5.53	1.16	4.37	26.34	20.81	5.53	1.16	4.37
2.....	2.00	48.57	36.71	11.86	2.00	9.85	24.28	18.36	5.93	1.00	4.93
3.....	3.00	62.39	46.23	16.16	3.32	12.84	20.80	15.41	5.39	1.11	4.28
4.....	4.00	75.51	56.86	18.65	4.37	14.28	18.88	14.22	4.66	1.09	3.57
5.....	5.00	90.33	68.98	21.35	4.74	16.61	18.07	13.80	4.27	.95	3.32
6 or more.....	6.77	105.08	83.65	21.43	5.78	15.65	15.52	12.36	3.17	.85	2.31

<sup>1</sup> Household with at least 1 person having 10 or more meals from household food supply during 7 days preceding interview. See table 2 for count of households.

<sup>2</sup> Excludes roomers, boarders, and employees. Average value per household member calculated using population ratio procedure--aggregate value for all households divided by aggregate number of members in all households.

<sup>3</sup> Parts may not total to the whole because of rounding.

<sup>4</sup> Includes value of food used by household members and guests that was bought, home produced, or received as gift or pay. Value of food received without direct expense by a household is based on average price per pound paid for that food by survey households in the same region.

<sup>5</sup> Includes only households providing income information.

Source: USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey 1977-78, 48 conterminous States, spring 1977 (preliminary).

household member<sup>5</sup> was about \$20 per week--\$15 for food used at home and \$5 for food bought and eaten away from home.

Of the money value of all food, 76 percent was for food used at home and 24 percent for food bought and eaten away from home. Of the expense for food away from home, meals accounted for 79 percent and snacks for 21 percent.

#### Differences by Region<sup>6</sup>

The average money value of food used per household was highest in the Northeast (\$69 per week) and lowest in the South (\$56) (fig. 1). Households in the North Central region and the West used food valued at \$59 and \$60, respectively. Both the money value of food used at home and the expense for food eaten away from home were highest in the Northeast and lowest in the South. The average money value of all food per household member was \$18 in the South, \$23 in the Northeast, \$20 in the West, and \$19 in the North Central region.

Food used at home accounted for 79 percent of the money value of all food in the South and 74-76 percent in the other regions. Snacks accounted for 26 percent of the expense for food eaten away from home in the South and 20 percent or less in the other regions.

#### Differences by Urbanization<sup>7</sup>

Suburban households used food in a week valued at \$68. This was more than for households either in the central city (\$58) or in nonmetropolitan areas (\$55). Both the money value of food used at home and the expense for food eaten away from home by suburban households were higher than for the other two urbanization classes (fig. 2). Expense for food eaten away from

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<sup>5</sup>Average values per household member (table 1) and per 21-meal-at-home-equivalent person (table 2) were calculated using a population ratio procedure --aggregate value for all households divided by aggregate number of household members or 21-meal-equivalent persons in all households.

<sup>6</sup>Northeast--Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont; North Central--Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin; South--Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia; and West--Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming. (Alaska and Hawaii were surveyed separately.)

<sup>7</sup>Central city--has a population of 50,000 or more and is the main or core city within a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA); suburban--generally those areas within boundaries of SMSA but not within legal limits of central city of SMSA; and nonmetropolitan--all U.S. areas not within SMSA.

home in a week was one-half higher for suburbanites (\$18) than for nonmetropolitan area dwellers (\$12).

The average value of food used per household member at home and away from home was \$21 per week in suburban and central city households and \$18 in nonmetropolitan households. The average number of members per household was 3.3 in suburban, 2.8 in central city, and 3.0 in nonmetropolitan areas.

Of the money value of all food used by suburban households, 74 percent was for food used at home and 26 percent for food bought and eaten away from home. In the nonmetropolitan area only 21 percent of the value of all food was expense for food eaten away from home. Snacks accounted for only 18 percent of expense for food eaten away from home in suburban households and 26 percent in the central city.

#### Differences by Income

Households at higher levels of income (1976 income before taxes) contained more people and had higher average money value of all food, higher average money value for food used at home, and higher average expense for food eaten away from home (fig. 3). Households with incomes of \$20,000 or more used food at home worth \$60, twice as much as households with incomes below \$5,000 (\$30). Compared with money value of food at home, expense for food away from home increased more sharply with income. Households with incomes of \$20,000 or more spent \$25 for food away--five times as much for food away from home as households with incomes below \$5,000 (\$5).

A part of the higher food cost in households with higher incomes is accounted for by the fact that households with higher incomes have more people. The average number of people ranged from 2.0 in households with incomes below \$5,000 to 3.7 in households with incomes of \$20,000 or more. Per household member, the money value of all food (at home and away) for households with incomes of \$20,000 or more (\$23) was only one-third higher than for households with incomes below \$5,000 (\$18).

Food used at home accounted for a smaller percentage of total money value of food at higher levels of income--from 86 percent for households with incomes below \$5,000 to 71 percent for households with incomes of \$20,000 or more. Low-income households spent less for snacks away from home than households with higher incomes. However, snacks accounted for about 30 percent of the expense for food away from home for households with incomes below \$10,000 and about 20 percent for households with incomes over \$15,000 (fig. 4).

#### Differences by Number of People Living in Household

As would be expected, money value of food used at home and expense for food eaten away from home were highest in households with most members. Total food (at home and away) used by one-member households was valued at \$26, whereas households of six or more members used food valued at \$105 (fig. 5). Food used at home had a value of \$21 in one-member households and \$84 for households of six or more members. Expense for food eaten away from home was \$6 for one-member households and \$21 for households of six or more.

As in previous USDA studies, the money value of food per household member decreased as the number of people living in the household increased. The money value of all food per household member in households of six or more members was \$16--substantially less than in one-member households (\$26).

#### Distribution of Households by Money Value of Food at Home

The value of food used per week at home by households surveyed varied from less than \$8 to more than \$30 per "equivalent person" (table 2, figs. 6 and 7). An equivalent person is counted as 21 meals at home in a week. The average money value of food used at home per equivalent person was \$16.60. This was somewhat higher than the \$15.17 for food at home per household member, but lower than the \$19.91 total money value of food at home and away per household member (table 1).

The equivalent person (based on three meals a day for a week) is used to attempt to adjust for variation among households in the number of meals eaten from home food supplies. Household size in terms of equivalent persons was determined as follows: Total the number of (1) meals reported as eaten at home (adjusted proportionately with meals eaten away from home to total 21 meals in a week--3 meals for each of 7 days--to account for skipped meals and snacks that might substitute for or supplement meals), (2) meals eaten from household supplies by guests, boarders, roomers, and employees, and (3) meal equivalents of refreshments served to guests (one or two foods = one-fourth meal; over two foods = one-half meal). Then divide the total meals by 21 to obtain the household size in 21-meal-at-home-equivalent persons.

#### Comparison With Results From USDA's 1965 Survey

USDA made a similar nationwide food consumption survey in the spring of 1965.<sup>8</sup> The average money value of food at home for housekeeping households per equivalent person was \$8.78 per week in 1965 and \$16.61 in the spring of 1977, an increase of 89 percent. During the same period, prices for food used at home rose 100 percent, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.<sup>9</sup> Figure 7 shows households distributed by money value of food used per person in the spring of 1977 and in the spring of 1965 adjusted to spring 1977 dollars using the change in the CPI.

The change in money value of food used at home between the surveys appears to reflect both increases in food prices and change in the kinds and amounts of foods used by households. The fact that less food was used per person in 1977 than in 1965 is substantiated by preliminary data showing lower food energy (calories) from food used in 1977. Food available from household food supplies, measured in terms of calories, declined from 3,200 calories per person

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<sup>8</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. Household food consumption survey 1965-66 report No. 1. Food consumption of households in the United States, spring 1965. 212 pp. 1968.

<sup>9</sup>The CPI for food at home increased 20 percent between the spring of 1977 and February 1979, when this report was prepared.

TABLE 2.--Housekeeping households<sup>1</sup> by money value of food used at home<sup>2</sup> in a week per person,<sup>3</sup> spring 1977

Region, urbanization, income, and number of people in household	Money value per person <sup>3</sup>	Total households <sup>4</sup>	Households using food worth--					
			Under \$8.00	\$8.00-\$11.99	\$12.00-\$15.99	\$16.00-\$19.99	\$20.00-\$29.99	\$30.00 or more
			Pct	Pct	Pct	Pct	Pct	Pct
All households.....	16.61	3,474	6	17	25	22	22	8
Region:								
Northeast.....	18.29	867	4	11	22	23	28	12
North Central.....	16.07	929	4	18	28	23	21	5
South.....	15.52	1,070	10	19	24	20	20	7
West.....	16.05	607	5	17	29	21	19	9
Urbanization:								
Central city.....	17.05	1,054	7	15	22	20	25	11
Suburban.....	17.10	1,255	4	15	25	24	24	8
Nonmetropolitan....	15.21	1,164	8	19	29	22	18	5
Income (1976) before taxes: <sup>5</sup>								
Under \$5,000.....	15.42	481	9	22	24	18	20	6
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	15.17	617	9	18	25	24	18	6
\$10,000-\$14,999....	15.39	544	6	20	26	21	20	7
\$15,000-\$19,999....	16.04	438	6	17	28	22	22	7
\$20,000 or more....	18.46	696	2	8	25	24	29	12
People living in household: <sup>6</sup>								
1.....	19.60	562	5	14	21	21	24	15
2.....	18.76	1,070	4	14	22	22	28	11
3.....	16.96	615	7	16	25	24	22	6
4.....	15.75	591	5	19	31	24	18	3
5.....	15.27	336	8	23	29	19	19	2
6 or more.....	14.01	300	13	24	31	17	13	2

<sup>1</sup>Household with at least 1 person having 10 or more meals from household food supply during 7 days preceding interview.

<sup>2</sup>Includes value of food used by household members and guests that was bought, home produced, or received as gift or pay. Value of food received without direct expense by household is based on average price per pound paid for that food by survey households in the same region.

<sup>3</sup>A person equal to 21 meals at home during past 7 days (based on 3 meals a day for 7 days for 1 person) is used to adjust for variation among households in

proportion of meals eaten from home food supplies. Average money value per person calculated using population ratio procedure--aggregate value for all households divided by aggregate number of persons in all households.

<sup>4</sup>Counts weighted to allow for different response rates among seasons of the year, regions, and urbanizations. Parts may not total to the whole because of rounding.

<sup>5</sup>Includes only households providing income information.

<sup>6</sup>Excludes roomers, boarders, and employees.

Source: USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey 1977-78, 48 conterminous States, spring 1977 (preliminary).

per day by households surveyed in the spring of 1965 to 2,900 calories in the spring of 1977.

Food used at home accounted for 83 percent of money value of all food in the spring of 1965 and 76 percent in the spring of 1977 (fig. 8). Meals bought away from home accounted for 13 percent of total money value of food in 1965 and 19 percent in 1977; and snacks bought away from home accounted for 4 and 5 percent, respectively.

#### Meals at Home and Away From Home

Eighty-five percent of meals eaten by household members (excluding meals eaten by guests, boarders, roomers, and employees) in the housekeeping households studied were from home food supplies (table 3). That is, 85 percent of meals were eaten at home or carried from home as packed lunches, picnic meals, and the like. Eleven percent of the meals were purchased and eaten away from home--at restaurants or at school, for example. Four percent were meals eaten away from home without direct expenses--as guest meals, free school meals, or meals received as pay.<sup>10</sup>

There is considerable interest in the relative cost of meals at home and away from home. In such comparisons difficulties arise in defining "a meal" and isolating its cost from the cost of other food used. However, costs per "meal unit" at home and away have been estimated based on available information from the survey data using the following procedures.

Cost of food at home could not be subdivided into costs of food that was eaten as meals and as snacks and that was eaten by household members and by guests, roomers, boarders, and employees. Therefore, the money value of all food at home was divided by the number of meals eaten by household members and others plus the meal equivalent of refreshments served to guests to determine the cost per meal unit at home. Meal units at home (meals and meal equivalent of snacks eaten) were counted as meals were counted in determining the household size in equivalent persons (p. 7).

The cost per meal unit away from home that could be derived from these survey data and is most comparable to the cost per meal unit at home was calculated as follows: The expense for meals and snacks away from home by household members was divided by the number of bought meals they reported as eaten away from home, adjusted to account for skipped meals and snacks that might substitute for or supplement meals.

Based on these procedures, the average cost per meal unit at home was \$0.78 and the average cost per meal unit purchased and eaten away from home was \$2.04, or 2.6 times as much as the meal unit at home (table 3). A meal unit away from home cost more in the Northeast and West than in the North

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<sup>10</sup> If nonhousekeeping households, for which data were collected but not reported here, were included, the proportion of meals eaten at home would be lower--about 83 percent compared with 85 percent for housekeeping households only.

TABLE 3.--Meals at home and away from home by housekeeping households,<sup>1</sup> spring 1977

Region, urbanization, income, and number of people in household	Meals eaten by household members			Cost per "meal unit"	
	From home food supplies	Away from home		From home food supplies <sup>2</sup>	Purchased and eaten away from home <sup>3</sup>
		Purchased	As a gift or pay		
	Pct	Pct	Pct		
All households.....	85	11	4	0.78	2.04
Region:					
Northeast.....	83	12	5	.87	2.33
North Central.....	84	12	4	.77	1.82
South.....	85	10	5	.74	1.87
West.....	85	11	4	.76	2.22
Urbanization:					
Central city.....	85	11	4	.81	2.15
Suburban.....	84	12	4	.81	2.13
Nonmetropolitan.....	86	10	4	.72	1.81
Income (1976) before taxes: <sup>4</sup>					
Under \$5,000.....	90	5	5	.73	2.10
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	87	8	5	.72	1.90
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	85	11	4	.73	1.85
\$15,000-\$19,999.....	84	12	4	.76	1.99
\$20,000 or more.....	81	15	4	.88	2.19
People living in household: <sup>5</sup>					
1.....	87	9	4	.93	3.09
2.....	87	10	3	.89	2.97
3.....	81	13	6	.81	1.98
4.....	84	12	4	.75	1.90
5.....	84	12	4	.73	1.68
6 or more.....	86	10	4	.67	1.48

<sup>1</sup> Household with at least 1 person having 10 or more meals from household food supply during 7 days preceding interview. See table 2 for count of households.

<sup>2</sup> Money value of all food used in a week divided by number of meals from home food supplies eaten by household members (adjusted to include skipped meals) and by roomers, boarders, employees, and guests.

<sup>3</sup> Expense for all food bought and eaten away from home by household members divided by number of meals they bought and ate away from home (adjusted to include skipped meals).

<sup>4</sup> Includes only households providing income information.

<sup>5</sup> Excludes roomers, boarders, and employees.

Source: USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey 1977-78, 48 conterminous States, spring 1977 (preliminary).

Central region and the South, more in metropolitan than nonmetropolitan areas, and more in small than in large households.

#### Nutrients per Dollar's Worth of Food

Generally the groups of households that used food with the lowest money value received the most nutrient return per dollar (table 4). Southern households had highest nutrient returns per dollar or shared highest returns with households in another region in calories and in 8 out of 12 nutrients. Of the three urbanization classes, the nonmetropolitan households had greatest returns in the same eight nutrients and in calcium also. Exceptions were in vitamin A value, vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, and ascorbic acid. Households in the 2 lowest income classes had greater average returns in calories and in all 12 nutrients than those in the 2 highest income classes. Large households generally had greater nutrient returns per dollar than small households.

A higher average return in nutrients per food dollar does not mean necessarily that households consciously choose more nutritious foods. Diets that are low in cost usually include some relatively inexpensive foods in large quantities. Some of these foods, such as enriched and whole-grain flour and bread, some cereals, dry beans, and potatoes, furnish substantial amounts of a number of nutrients.

TABLE 4.--Nutrients per dollar's worth of food used at home<sup>1</sup> by housekeeping households,<sup>2</sup> spring 1977

Region, urbanization, income, and number of people in household	Food energy	Pro- tein	Cal- cium	Iron	Mag- nes- ium	Phos- phorus	Vitamin A value	Thia- min	Ribo- flavin	Niacin	Vitamin B <sub>6</sub>	Vitamin B <sub>12</sub>	Ascor- bic acid
	<u>Cal</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>Mg</u>	<u>Mg</u>	<u>Mg</u>	<u>Mg</u>	<u>IU</u>	<u>Mg</u>	<u>Mg</u>	<u>Mg</u>	<u>Mg</u>	<u>Mcg</u>	<u>Mg</u>
All households.....	1,220	43	450	8.4	167	740	3,170	0.79	1.08	11	0.91	2.6	58
Region:													
Northeast.....	1,080	40	400	7.4	150	650	2,930	.69	.97	10	.84	2.5	59
North Central.....	1,270	45	480	8.7	170	760	3,270	.82	1.15	12	.96	2.8	58
South.....	1,350	45	470	9.2	180	800	3,290	.88	1.15	12	.97	2.5	58
West.....	1,210	44	490	8.5	170	760	3,360	.79	1.09	11	.91	2.6	58
Urbanization:													
Central city.....	1,180	42	430	8.3	160	710	3,460	.77	1.04	11	.92	2.7	61
Suburban.....	1,190	42	450	8.1	160	730	3,060	.76	1.07	11	.89	2.6	58
Nonmetropolitan.....	1,330	45	480	9.0	180	790	3,130	.86	1.16	12	.96	2.5	56
Income (1976) before taxes: <sup>3</sup>													
Under \$5,000.....	1,280	45	470	9.1	170	780	3,720	.89	1.16	12	.97	3.0	61
\$5,000-\$9,999.....	1,310	45	460	9.1	180	770	3,630	.86	1.14	12	.98	2.8	62
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	1,300	45	480	9.1	180	780	3,200	.86	1.14	12	.96	2.7	59
\$15,000-\$19,999.....	1,220	42	450	8.1	160	730	2,860	.75	1.06	11	.89	2.5	55
\$20,000 or more.....	1,140	41	440	7.7	160	700	2,930	.72	1.03	11	.87	2.4	56
People living in household: <sup>4</sup>													
1.....	1,040	38	400	7.5	150	660	3,620	.69	.96	10	.81	2.8	64
2.....	1,130	40	390	7.8	160	680	3,260	.71	.97	11	.85	2.5	57
3.....	1,240	43	440	8.4	170	730	3,110	.77	1.04	11	.90	2.4	57
4.....	1,240	43	470	8.4	170	750	3,060	.80	1.10	11	.92	2.5	58
5.....	1,290	45	490	8.7	170	780	3,080	.85	1.18	12	.98	2.7	58
6 or more.....	1,400	49	550	9.7	180	840	3,310	.95	1.29	13	1.03	2.8	59

<sup>1</sup>Includes value of food used by household members and guests that was bought, home produced, or received as gift or pay. Value of food received without direct expense by a household is based on average price per pound paid for that food by survey households in the same region.

<sup>2</sup>Household with at least 1 person having 10 or more meals from household food supply during 7 days preceding interview. See table 2 for count of households.

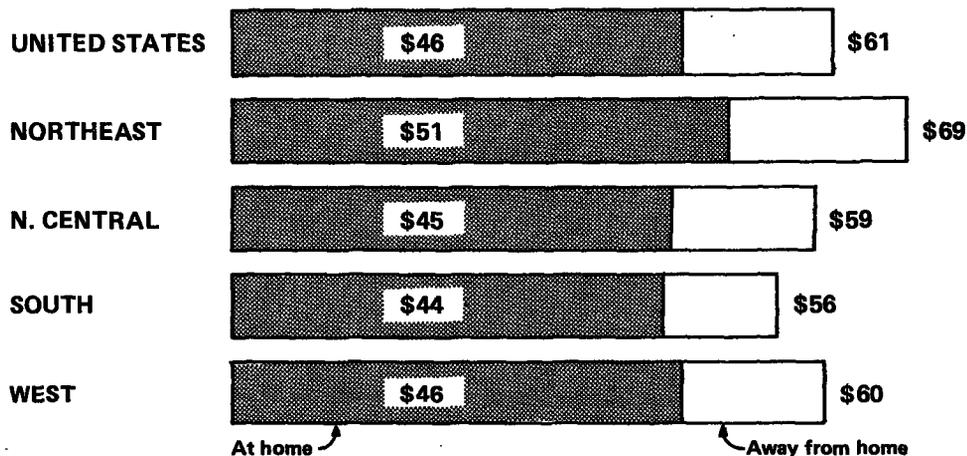
Source: USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey 1977-78, 48 conterminous States, spring 1977 (preliminary).

<sup>3</sup>Includes only households providing income information.

<sup>4</sup>Excludes roomers, boarders, and employees.

### REGION and FOOD at HOME and AWAY

Value per Household per Week, Spring 1977



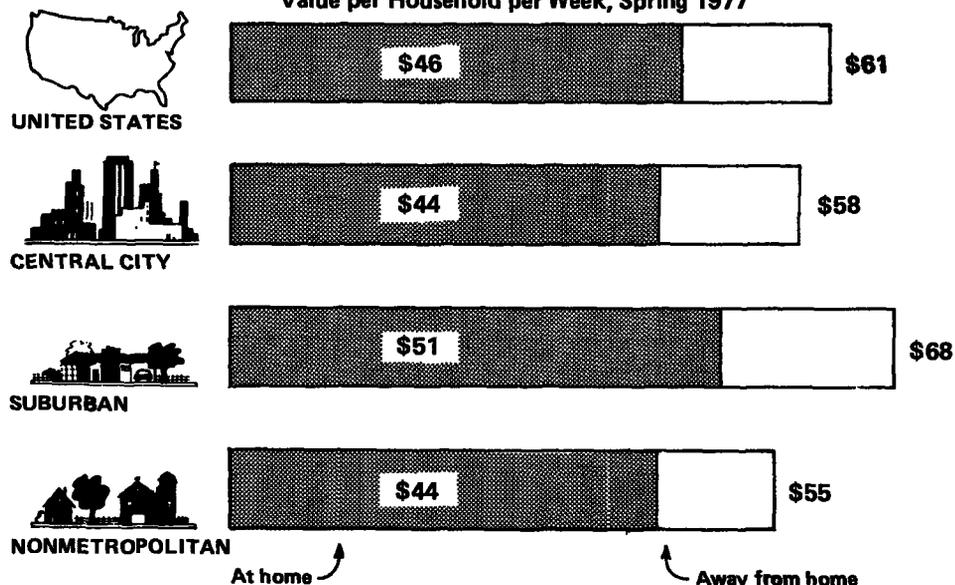
USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey, 48 States, Spring 1977 (Preliminary)

SEA 6172-79(5)

Figure 1

### URBANIZATION and FOOD at HOME and AWAY

Value per Household per Week, Spring 1977

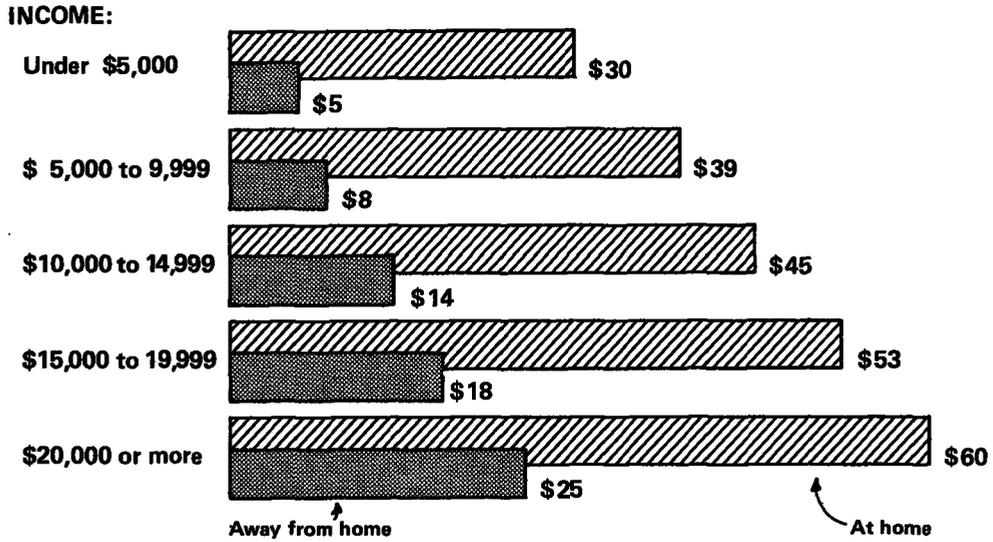


USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey, 48 States, Spring 1977 (Preliminary)

SEA 6173-79(5)

Figure 2

**INCOME and FOOD at HOME and AWAY**  
Value per Household per Week, Spring 1977

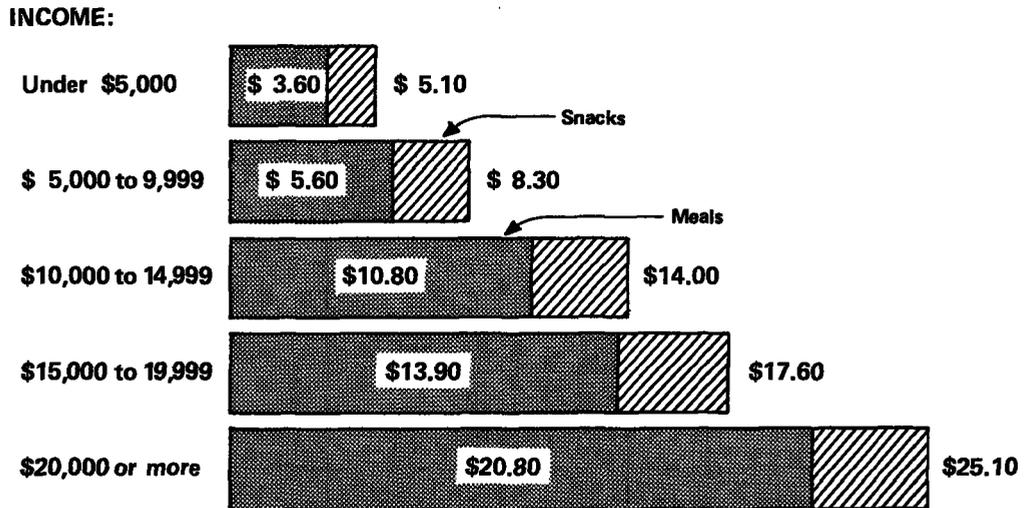


USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey, 48 States, Spring 1977 (Preliminary)

SEA 6174-79(5)

Figure 3

**INCOME and EXPENSE for FOOD AWAY FROM HOME, Spring 1977**

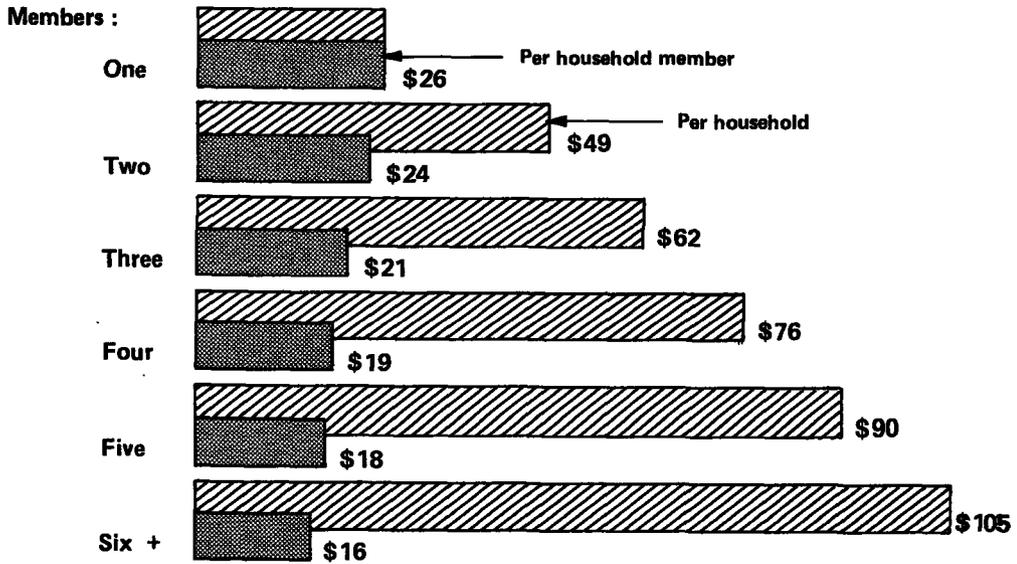


USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey, 48 States, Spring 1977 (Preliminary)

SEA 6175-79(5)

Figure 4

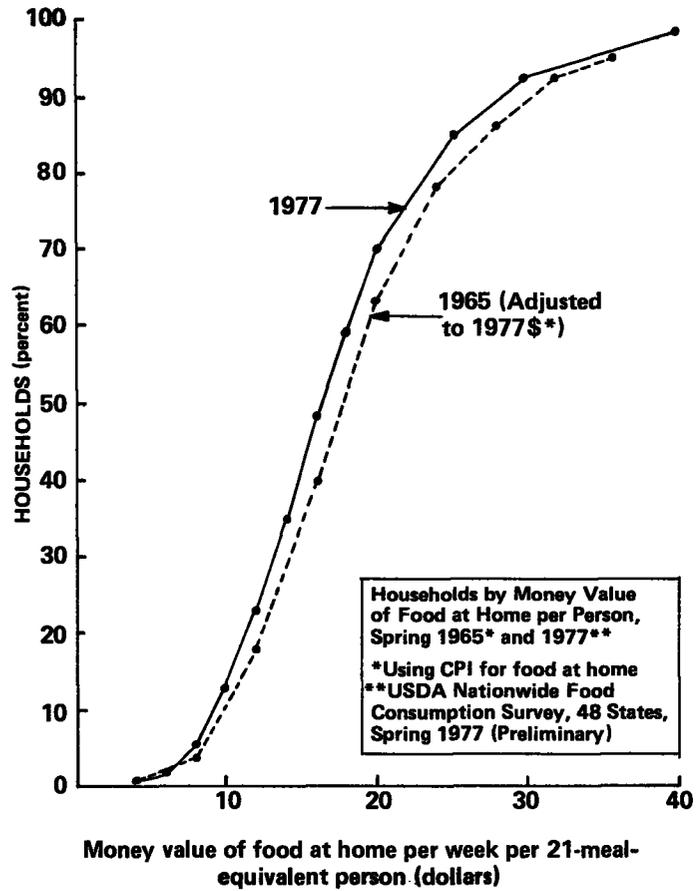
### HOUSEHOLD SIZE and VALUE of FOOD per WEEK, Spring 1977



USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey, 48 States, Spring 1977 (Preliminary)

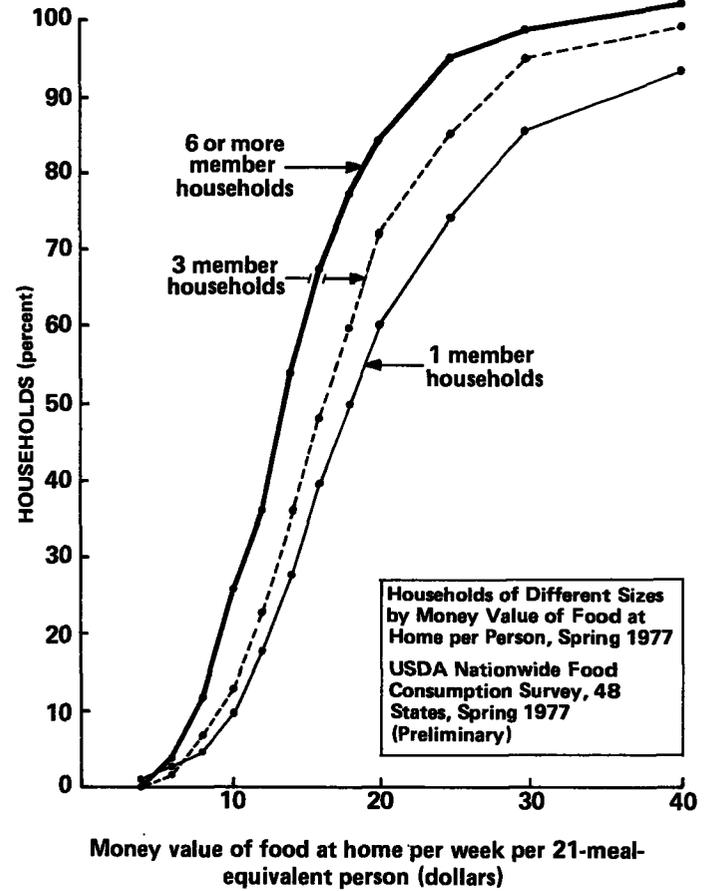
SEA 6176-79(5)

Figure 5



SEA6178-79(5)

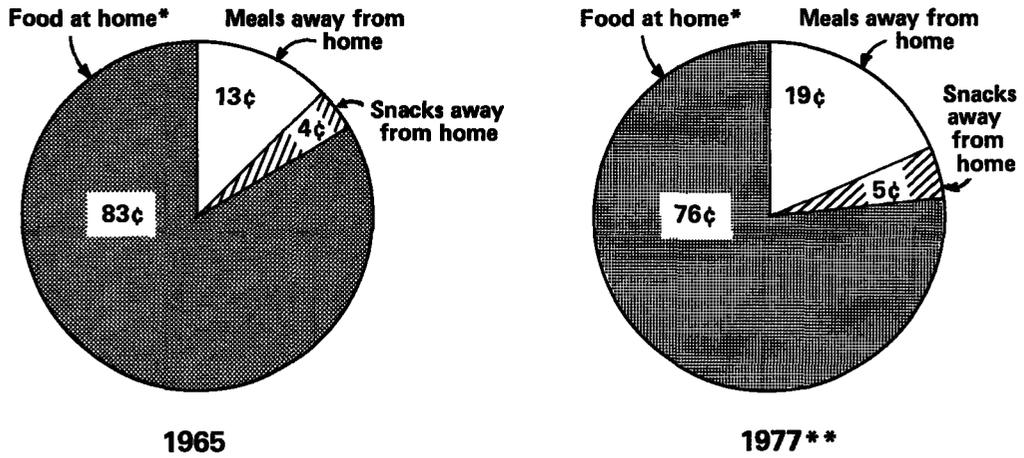
Figure 6



SEA 6177-79(5)

Figure 7

# THE HOUSEHOLD FOOD DOLLAR, Spring 1965 and 1977



\* Value of all food used at home

\*\* USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey, 48 States, Spring 1977 (Preliminary)

SEA 6179-79(5)

Figure 8

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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