

Has the pandemic affected how college students eat breakfast?

Research Study by:

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What is breakfast and why is it important?

break·fast

/ˈbrekfəst/
noun

“the first meal of the day
especially when taken
in the morning”

Merriam-Webster

“What we consume first thing in the morning is as much about **mental alertness** as it is about providing **fuel** for the body.”

Spence, 2017



Why is it important for college students to eat breakfast regularly?

“The failure to eat (a well-balanced) breakfast has been documented to have deleterious **impact on cognitive and academic performance.**”

Trockel, Barnes, & Egget, 2010

“Breakfast skipping is common among young adults in colleges and universities. **Breakfast skipping** may be associated with the skipping of other meals, snacking and the consumption of fast foods of poor nutritional value.”

Ackuaku-Dogbe & Abaidoo, 2014

Has the pandemic affected students' breakfast habits?



Guiding Questions:

- What factors contribute to student's breakfast habits?
- How do students define breakfast?
- What do students eat for breakfast?
- What role does routine play in breakfast habits?
- How do students feel about breakfast?
- How and where do students eat breakfast?
- What are students' snacking habits?
- Are there advantages to remote learning as it relates to having more time to make meals?

Survey

College Students' Breakfast Habits

The purpose of this survey is to identify any changes in college students' breakfast habits since the beginning of the pandemic. This survey will take approximately 8-10 minutes to complete. We appreciate your help.

* Required

BREAKFAST HABITS BEFORE THE PANDEMIC (SPRING 2020)

All of the following questions in this section are related to your situation and breakfast habits during the Spring 2020 semester.

The survey helped us collect general information about a larger group of students (69), which lead to more in-depth questions asked during the interviews.

Method


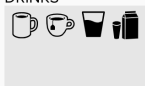
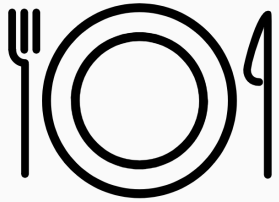



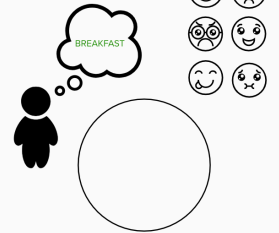
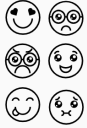
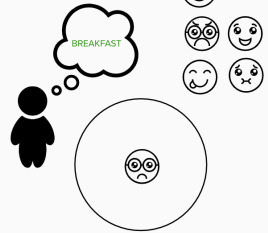

Interviews



Interviewees were asked questions that prompted them to tell stories and share their feelings about breakfast.

Method

Interview Stimulus

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Students were asked to create their typical breakfast plate by dragging fixed food items onto the plate. We also asked them to choose emojis that describe how they feel about breakfast and prompted them to explain their choice. The interviewees used check marks to tell us how and where they usually eat breakfast.

Method

What is breakfast & why is it important?

break·fast

/ˈbrekfəst/
noun

Anonymous –

“A meal that takes place **in the morning** time generally consisting of some **protein**”

Anonymous –

“When you break your fast and **fuel** up for the morning”

“**Healthy** meal to start the day”

– *Anonymous*

“**Something** to get me to lunch”

– *Anonymous*



A photograph of a yellow and orange protein bar wrapper. The wrapper features a nutrition label with the following text: Total Sugars 10g, Includes 8g Added Sugars 16%, Protein 10g 13%, Vitamin D 0mcg 0%, Calcium 40mg 2%, Iron 1.6mg 8%, Potassium 370mg 8%, Phosphorus 10%, Magnesium 15%, and Zinc. Below this is a smaller label with the heading 'Nutrition Facts' and 'Serving size 1 bar (60g)'. The smaller label lists: Calories 200, Sodium 2000mg, Cholesterol 5mg, Total Fat 9g, and Sat. Fat 3g. The wrapper also has 'WEST' and 'CON WHEA' visible on the side.

Total Sugars	10g	
Includes 8g Added Sugars		16%
Protein	10g	13%
Vitamin D	0mcg	0%
Calcium	40mg	2%
Iron	1.6mg	8%
Potassium	370mg	8%
Phosphorus		10%
Magnesium		15%
Zinc		

* The % Daily Value is based on a diet of...

Common Foods



What do students eat for breakfast?

“A full breakfast to me includes having most of the **MyPlate food groups**. Such as **fruit or vegetables**, **protein** (egg), and **grain** (toast, tortilla, etc)”

— *Anonymous*

What are students' criteria for defining breakfast?

Breakfast should also:

provide energy & fuel

contain protein

Breakfast should be:

light

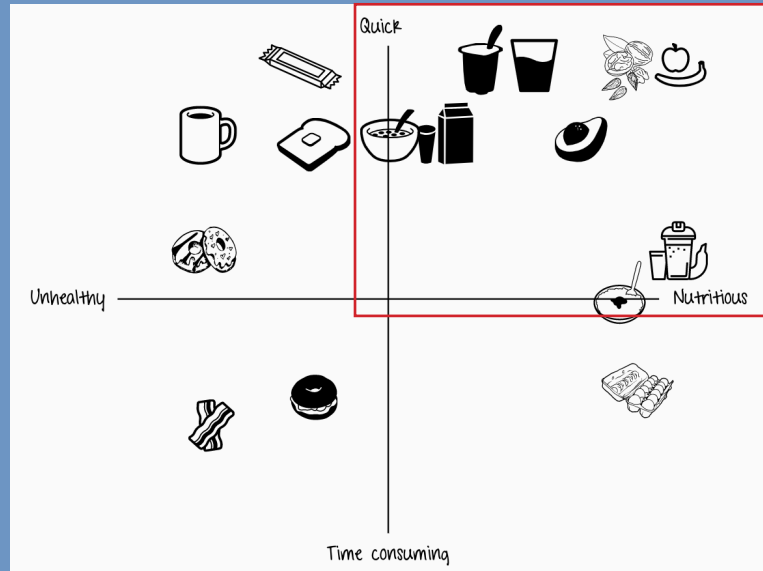
fast

filling

healthy

consumed before 12 p.m.

Matrix



Conclusion

Students tend to choose quick and nutritious breakfast options that will get their day started but won't take too much effort.

Analysis

What role does routine play in breakfast habits?

Early time commitments like work or school affect whether or not students are hungry enough to eat breakfast.

“I wake up at **7:45**
in the morning”

– Alondra O., 20

“I wake up at like **4:50 a.m.**”

– Alondra E., 20

Elaine, 21 –

“I usually work
around **6 or 7 a.m.**”



How do time commitments affect students' breakfast habits?

“If I don't have class in the morning and I have **time**, then maybe I will **eat** something more.”

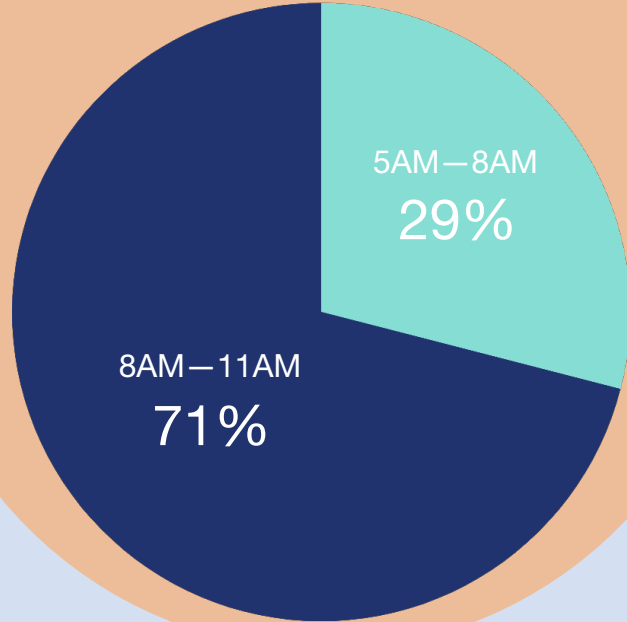
— Louise, 21

“If I am **working** at Starbucks, I am an opener, so I will open as early as **4:30** in the morning. On those days I will eat breakfast on my break at Starbucks, anywhere between **8-10 a.m.**”

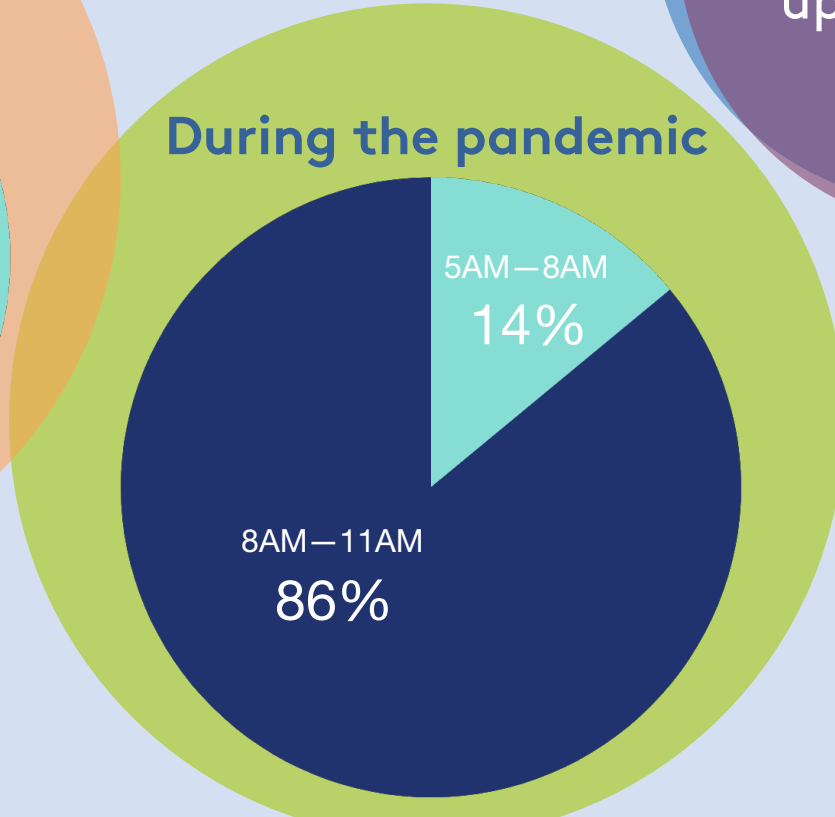
— Sasha, 24

What time do students wake up for school?

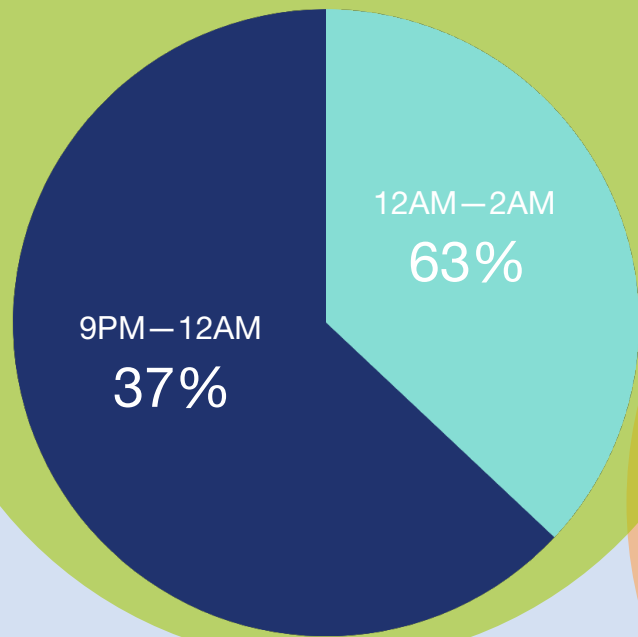
Before the pandemic



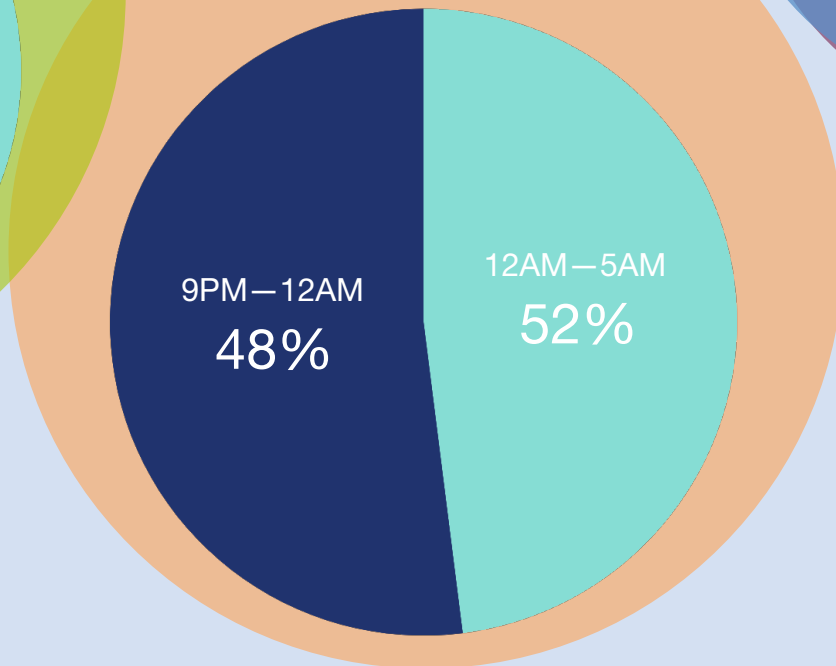
During the pandemic



Before the pandemic



During the pandemic



What time do students go to sleep on a school night?

Conclusion

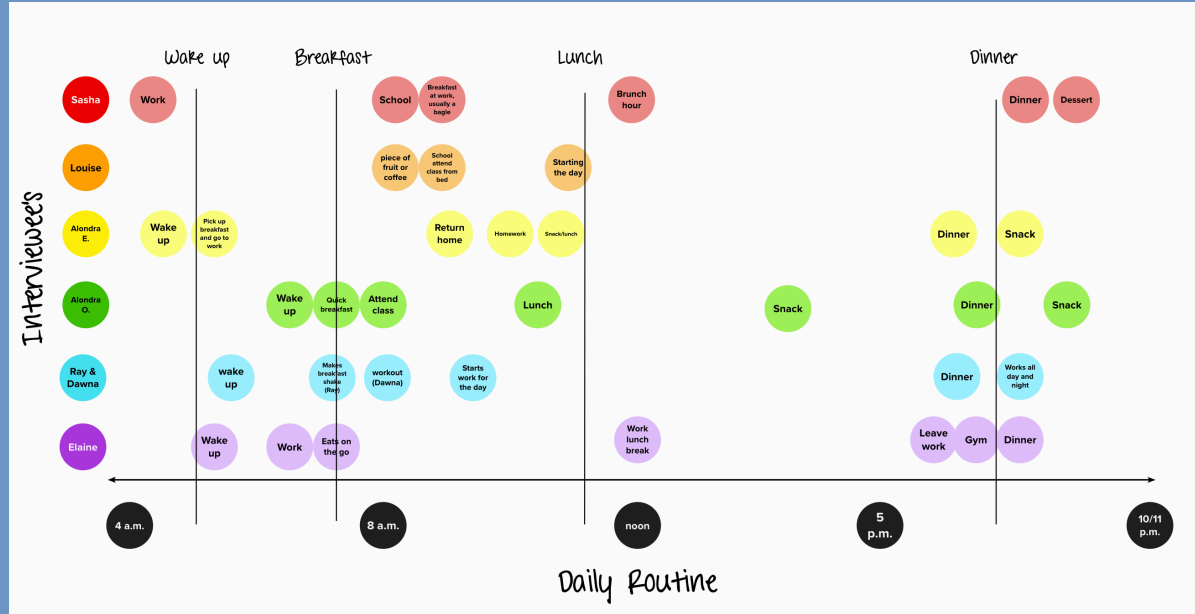
Students wake up early and wait till they are hungry to eat breakfast.

Students who had to commute to school before the pandemic wake up later now because classes are online. Some students attend class from bed.

More students go to sleep after 12 a.m. or even later during the pandemic.

Analysis

Mapping out Daily Routines



Conclusion

Students either eat in a rush before work/school or wait to eat when they have time.

Students eat dinner and snack as late as 9-10 p.m.

Analysis

How do students feel about breakfast?

Students have mixed feelings about breakfast.

Students don't feel hungry when they wake up.

“I **love** breakfast food,
I **love** making breakfast.”

– *Sasha, 24*

“I **love** it but **hate** it sometimes”

– *Alondra O., 20*



How do
students
feel about
breakfast?

“I **like** breakfast but I’m usually
getting up early and don’t want to eat
breakfast but I **have to**”

– *Elaine, 21*

“I just don’t get hungry in the
morning so when I think
about breakfast, I **get sick**. I don’t
like to wake up and eat as
soon as I get up, I feel like I have to
do something first.”

– *Louise, 21*

How and where do students eat breakfast?

Students eat alone or on the run because of time commitments like going to school or to work.

“At the **table**, at **home**,
on the run, in the **car**”
– *Alondra E., 20*

“I eat **alone... standing**
in the kitchen.”
– *Elaine, 21*



How & where
do students eat
breakfast?

“Usually I eat breakfast **alone**,
at my **desk** or at the **table**.”

– *Sasha, 24*

“More so **alone** but sometimes
with family.”

– *Louise, 21*

“I eat **alone**, **with family**,
in bed, at the **table** and **desk**,
and **on the run**.”

– *Alondra O., 20*

Stimulus Answers

How do you eat breakfast?	
ALONE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
WITH FRIENDS /FAMILY	<input type="checkbox"/>
IN BED	<input type="checkbox"/>
AT THE DESK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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FAST FOOD /RESTAURANT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

— *Sasha, 24*

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— *Louise, 21*

Conclusion

The interview stimulus answers helped us determine that:

50% of interviewed students eat **alone**

57% of students eat **at the desk**

57% of students eat **on the run**

71% of students eat **at home**

Analysis

“My **mom cooks** everything.”

— *Alondra E., 20*

“I usually eat **whatever they make** because if I don’t, they’ll yell at me, but I eat it eventually. Not always for breakfast.”

— *Louise, 21*

How do roommates or family members affect students’ breakfast habits?

“Most of the **inspiration** that I take for making meals has been what I have been **taught** to make since I was a kid.”

— *Sasha, 24*

What are students' snacking habits?

Snacking and later dinners affect students' breakfast habits more than they realize.

Students tend to snack more during the day now that they are at home and food is always there.

“After dinner I’ll have a snack
and that’s around like **9 p.m.**”

– *Alondra E., 20*

Alondra O., 20 –

“String cheese, peanut butter
crackers are my **go to.**”



How often
do students
snack during
the pandemic?

“I snack **throughout the day.**”

“Sometimes I snack **2** times to
3 times a day.”

— *Alondra E., 20*

“I’ll have a candy bar or some
chips **throughout the day.**”

— *Alondra O., 20*

The Silver Lining

Students are eating breakfast more now because they have more time!

Learning from home during the pandemic has a positive impact on students' ability to make meals.

“**In-person**, I didn't eat as much as I do now.”

– *Alondra E., 20*

Elaine, 21 –

“I ate breakfast more when I had **online** classes.”



The Silver Lining

“I eat breakfast **more now** than I did before because before I would wake up and have to go to class right away.”

– Louise, 21

“It’s actually **easier** to make meals at home, so you can put a little **more thought** into it.”

– Sasha, 24

Resources

Ackuaku-Dogbe, E. M., & Abaidoo, B. (2014, June). Breakfast Eating Habits Among Medical Students. *Ghana Medical Journal*, 48(2), 66-70.

Spence, C. (2017). Breakfast: The most important meal of the day? *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*, 8, 1-6.

Trockel, M. T., Barnes, M. D., & Egget, D. L. (2010, March 24). Health-Related Variables and Academic Performance Among First-Year College Students: Implications for Sleep and Other Behaviors. *Journal of American College Health*, 49(3), 125-131.

Thank you