

Gabrielle Berg, Esther Ha, Sarah Novakowski, and Maya Phillips

INTRODUCTION

- Canada's Food Guide describes mindful eating as "being aware of: how you eat, why you eat, what you eat, when you eat, where you eat, and how much you eat". Canada's Food Guide also states that mindful eating can help individuals make healthier choices and improve eating behaviours [1].
- Mindful eating is also a term used to describe a nonjudgmental awareness of physical and emotional sensations while eating or in a food-related environment. It is a learned skill that has been linked to several positive health outcomes, including increased immune function, and decreased anxiety and chronic pain [2].
- Research suggests that mindful eating is positively linked with healthy weight and higher self-reported health [3].
- University of Saskatchewan community members live fast-paced and busy lives which may create challenges in prioritizing mindful eating habits.
- The survey questions were created to understand whether the University of Saskatchewan community knows what mindful eating is and whether they practice mindful eating on a typical weekday.

OBJECTIVE

- To explore whether the USask (University of Saskatchewan) community is familiar with the concepts of mindful eating as well as if they practice it.

METHODS

- This First Year Research Experience (FYRE) project utilized an Open Science Framework (OSF). The corresponding OSF project page included this project's research question, survey questions, data dictionary, methodology, and data analysis plan [4].
- This project has received ethics approval from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BEH 291).
- The survey study included nine survey questions; five questions captured demographic information and four questions focused on mindful eating. Question types included text box, multiple choice and choose all that apply.
- The survey questions were based on the Canada's Food Guide's definition of mindful eating and description of mindful eating habits [1]. The questions allowed participants to self-report their engagement in habits related to mindful eating on a typical weekday.
- The survey was mounted on SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey.com).
- Participants were recruited to complete the survey through different channels:
 - University of Saskatchewan's PAWS System
 - Email
 - Text Message
 - Social Media Posts
 - Paper
- The survey was open on SurveyMonkey from October 20th, 2022 and was available until November 2nd, 2022.
- Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics (mean, counts, percentages) and summary values were used to describe the data. Data comparisons of two different variables were conducted using pivot tables.

RESULTS

- The number of participants that entered the survey was n=204; however, only n=194 provided consent and were eligible. After removing the participants who did not respond to at least one of the mindful eating survey questions, n=165 participants remained for analysis.

Table 1. Participant demographic data from survey

Gender	n(%)*
Man	34 (20.6)
Woman	125 (75.8)
Other (Non-Binary, Gender Fluid, Two-Spirit, Trans Man, Trans Woman, Prefer not to disclose)	6 (3.6)

Position at Usask	n(%)
Undergraduate student	104 (63.0)
Graduate student	15 (9.1)
Faculty/Staff member	43 (26.1)
Other (please specify)	1 (0.6)

Age (years)	n(%)
≤19	36 (21.8)
20-24	59 (35.8)
≥25	70 (42.4)

I was well educated on nutrition in my primary and secondary education:	n(%)
Strongly Disagree	14 (8.5)
Disagree	56 (33.9)
Neither agree nor disagree	32 (19.4)
Agree	55 (33.3)
Strongly Agree	8 (4.8)

Are you a member of a health science college?	n(%)
No	108 (65.5)
Yes	57 (34.5)

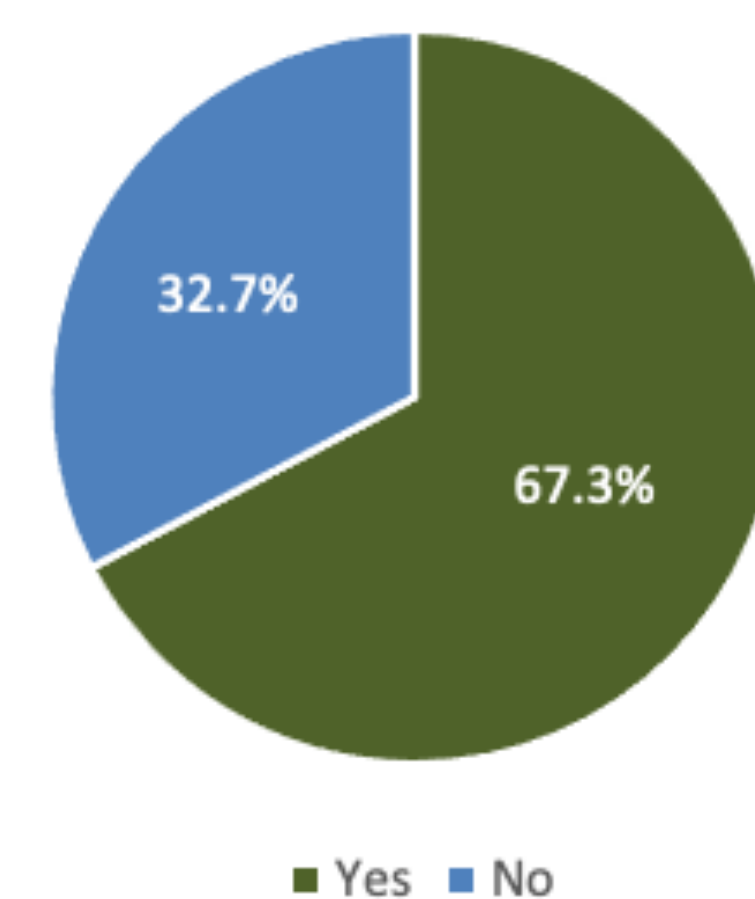


Figure 1. Percent of participants that reported "yes" or "no" to if they know what mindful eating is

- From Figure 1, 67.3% of respondents reported that they knew what mindful eating is, while 32.7% indicated that they did not.

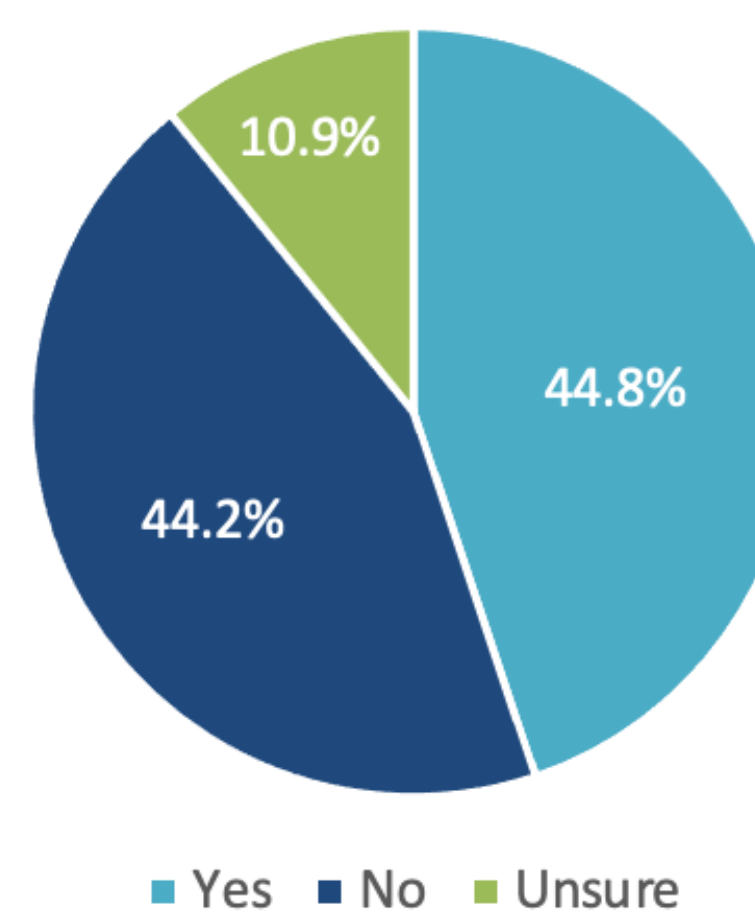


Figure 2. Percent of participant responses to the following question: "Since the beginning of the Fall 2022 term, on a typical day, do you think you practice mindful eating?"

- Participants were asked if they practice mindful eating based on the definition from Canada's food guide [1]: 44.8% said yes, 44.2% said no, and 10.9% said they were not sure.
- When gender and mindful eating were compared, 45.6% of women and 47.1% of men reported that they practiced mindful eating.

RESULTS

- Responses from Figure 2 were compared to the demographic question that asked if the participant was a member of a health science college (Table 1):
 - 49.1% of members from a health science college reported they eat mindfully, while 42.6% of those who were not part of a health science college reported that they eat mindfully.

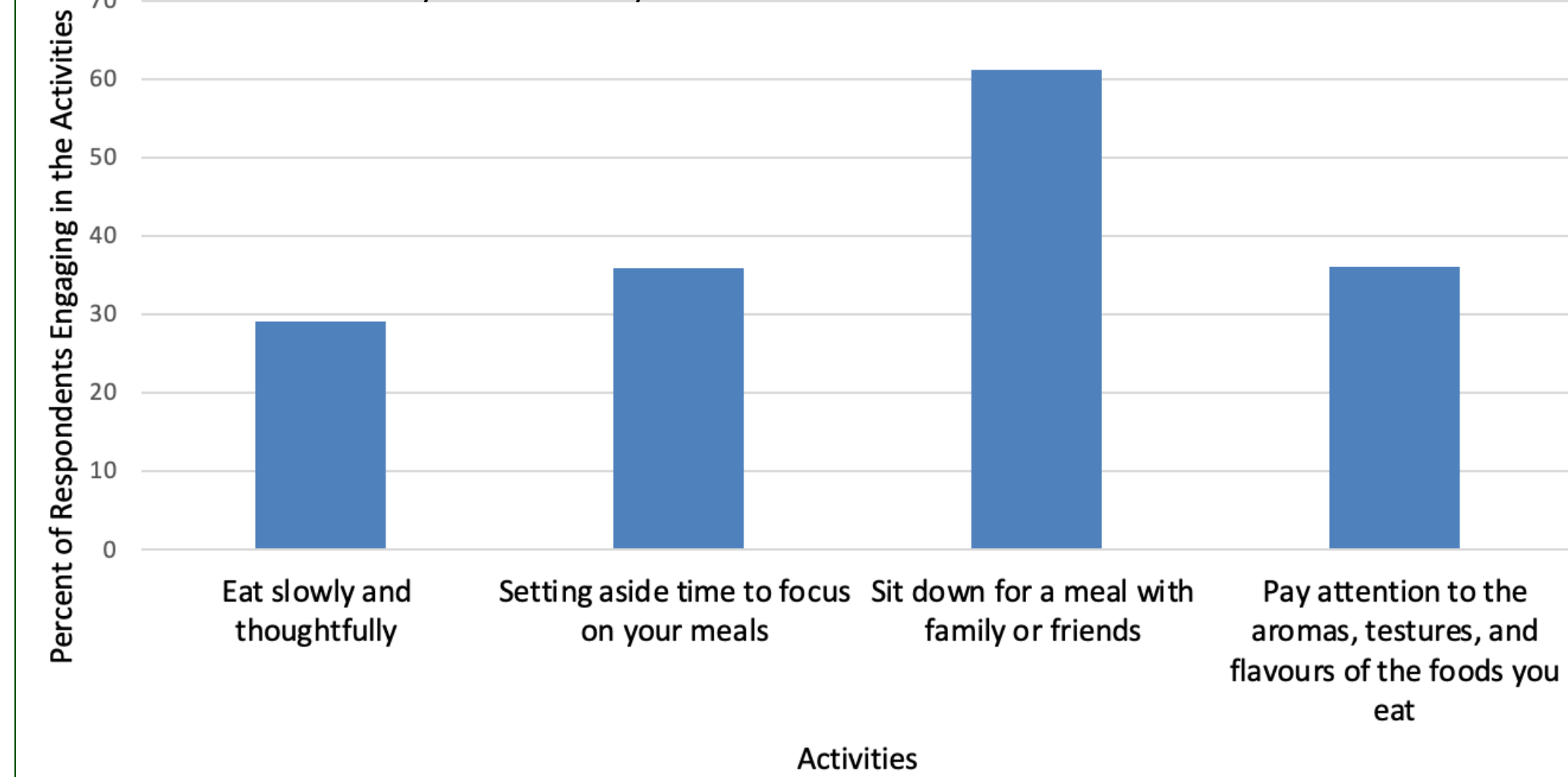


Figure 3. Graph displaying the percent of respondents from the survey who engage in the defined activities on a typical weekday.

- Each survey participant reported engaging in at least one behaviour related to mindful eating on a typical weekday: 36.0% of the respondents pay attention to the aromas, textures, and flavours of the foods they eat, 61.2% sit down for a meal with family/friends, 35.8% set aside time to focus on meals, 29.1% eat slowly and thoughtfully.

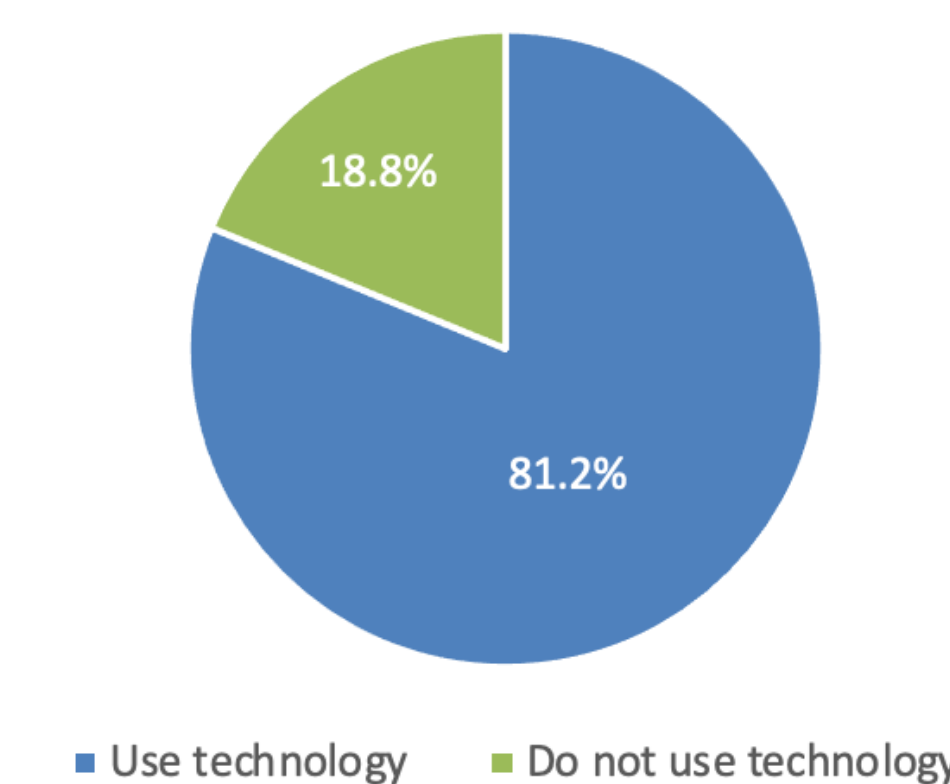


Figure 4. Percent of respondents from the survey that have or have not engaged in the activity of using technology while eating since the beginning of the Fall 2022 term.

- Respondents reported that they were more likely to use technology while eating (81.2%), than they were to engage in any of the mindful eating behaviours displayed in Figure 3.

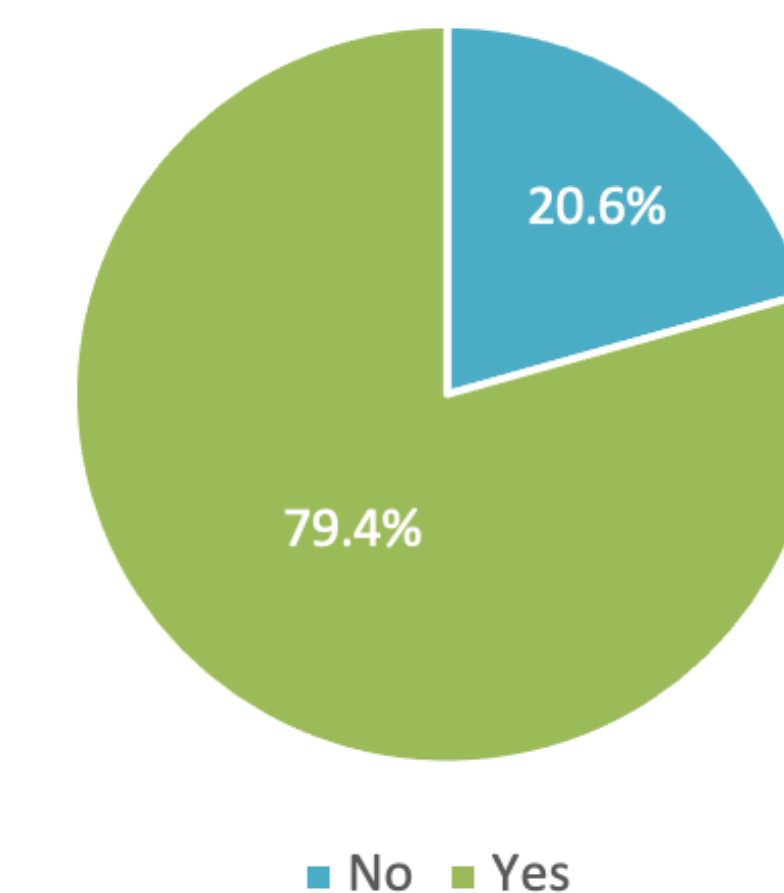


Figure 5. Percent of participants responses to the following question: "Since the beginning of the Fall 2022 term, on a typical day, do you have a meal (e.g., breakfast, lunch, or dinner) that takes less than 10 minutes to eat?"

- Figure 5 displayed that on a typical day, majority of respondents (79.4%) had a meal that took less than 10 minutes to eat, while only 20.6% responded that they had not.
- The frequency of participants who had a meal in less than 10 minutes increased as the age category increased. Since the beginning of the Fall 2022 term, it was reported that:
 - 69.4% of participants ≤19 (19 years and under) had a meal that took less than 10 minutes to eat
 - 78.0% of participants from ages 20-24 years had a meal that took less than 10 minutes to eat
 - 85.7% of participants ≥25 (25 years and up) had a meal that took less than 10 minutes to eat

CONCLUSIONS

- The survey findings showed that 67.3% (Figure 1) of USask community members knew what mindful eating is and 44.8% (Figure 2) engage in the practice of mindful eating.
- Although respondents knew what mindful eating is, many did not practice mindful eating. This suggests that USask members may experience barriers that prevent them from eating mindfully. Future studies could examine potential barriers and develop strategies to combat them.
- A large percent of respondents (81.2%) reported using technology while eating on a typical weekday. This finding suggests that technology use may negatively impact mindful eating among USask members.
- A study using MEQ (Mindful Eating Questionnaire) analyzed 427 college students who were enrolled in lower-level nutrition courses. Results from the study showed that females were significantly more mindful in their eating compared to males [5]. However, in the USask survey, the responses related to mindful eating were about the same regardless of gender.
- A study examining the relationship between mindful eating, weight, and quality of life in undergraduate students found that mindful eating was slightly higher in students with a health major or minor [6]. Our results are similar to this study; participants in health sciences colleges were more likely to report practising mindful eating compared to those not in health sciences colleges. One of the limitations of this study is the uneven ratio of women to men who participated in the survey (Table 1).
- A question that asks participants to rate their level of overall health based on a quantitative scale could have been added to the study. This would have allowed for analysis of the relationships between mindful eating and higher ratings of health.
- As the age category of the participants increased, the frequency to have a meal in less than 10 minutes also increased. It is possible that with increased age comes more responsibilities, leading to busier lifestyles that do not allow for proper mealtimes.

REFERENCES

- Be mindful of your eating habits. (2020, October 14). Canada Food Guide. <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/be-mindful-of-your-eating-habits/>
- Framson, C., Kristal, A., Schenk, J., Littman, A., Zeliat, S., & Benite, D. (2009). Development and validation of the mindful eating questionnaire. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109, 1439-1444.
- Adewumi, O., Brantley, C., & Knol, L. (2020). P14 Mindful Eating Scores Differ by Body Mass Index and Self-Reported Health Status Among College Students. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 52(7), S22-S22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2020.04.059>
- Phillips, M. L., Berg, G., Novakowski, S., & Ha, E. (2022, November 21). Mindful Eating Among the University of Saskatchewan Community. Retrieved from osf.io/azbue
- Berdal, L. M. (2012). *Mindful Eating: Is There a Relationship Between Gender, Age, Physical Activity, Grade Level* [Master's thesis]. <https://library.ndsu.edu/ir/handle/10365/26536>
- Davis, Laura, MFN, RD, Anderson, D., PhD, & Pobocik, R., PhD, RD. (2014). The Relationships Between Mindful Eating, Weight, and Quality of Life in College Students. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 46(4), S171-S172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2014.04.246>