

Britons less satisfied with restaurant food and their dining companions

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Britons are less happy with restaurants' food and service, and with their dining companions, than they were 20 years ago, research says.

The British Sociological Association's annual conference in Newcastle heard today [Thursday 12 April] that ratings given by diners for restaurants' food, decor, [service](#) and value for money have all fallen.

And while people are more likely to eat out with their families, they say they are less happy with the conversation and company during the meal.

Three researchers compared ratings given in 1995 and in 2015 by 2,100 people in London, Bristol and Preston for their last meal out at a restaurant or cafe.

Professor Alan Warde, of The University of Manchester, told the conference that the proportion saying they were satisfied with the meal's value for money fell from 69 percent to 56 percent, a drop of 19 percent (13 percentage points).

Professor Warde, who worked with Dr. Jennifer Whillans, also of Manchester, and Dr. Jessica Paddock, University of Bristol, found that:

- the rate of those satisfied with the food fell from 81 percent to 72 percent, an 11 percent drop (9 percentage points)
- for the service, the rate of those satisfied fell from 65 percent to 57 percent, a drop of 12 percent (8 percentage points).
- for the decor it fell from 57 percent to 48 percent, a fall of 16 percent (9 percentage points).

The researchers also found that the rate of people dining out with just their partner fell from 23 percent to 16 percent, a fall of 30 percent (7 percentage points). The proportion eating out just with friends fell by 9 percent, from 23 percent to 21 percent (2 percentage points). Dining as a family rose by 21 percent, from 29 percent to 35 percent (6 percentage points).

During the same period, diners were less happy with their companions. The proportion who said they were satisfied with the company at the meal fell by 5 percent from 91 percent to 86 percent (5 percentage points), and the proportion happy with the conversation fell by 4 percent, from 82 percent to 79 percent (3 percentage points).

The proportion eating alone doubled, from 3 percent to 6 percent (a rise of 3 percentage points).

"The results show some important changes over 20 years in how happy people are with dining out," Professor Warde told the conference.

"We see that people are generally less satisfied with the last meal they ate in a restaurant, with lower rates of satisfaction for the food, decor, service and value for money.

"And while people are more likely to eat out with their family, and less with just their partner or just friends, the survey found that people's satisfaction with their dining companions also fell during the 20 years."

The researchers found that the most frequent styles of [food](#) eaten at the last meal out were traditional British (41 percent); Italian (13 percent); and Indian (9 percent), with other types comprising the rest.

The researchers also found that [people](#) were 23 percent more likely to eat just one course, (43 percent compared to 35 percent, an 8 percentage points rise), 11 percent less likely to eat at weekends (58 percent compared to 65 percent, a 7 percentage points fall), and 33 percent less likely to dress up for the occasion (26 percent compared to 39 percent, a 13 percentage points fall).

Provided by British Sociological Association

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