Marian Bechtel sits at West Palm Beach’s Bar Louie counter by herself, quietly reading her e-book as she waits for her salad. What is she reading? None of your business! Lunch is Bechtel’s "me" time. And like more Americans, she’s not alone.

A new report found 46 percent of meals are eaten alone in America. More than half（53 percent）have breakfast alone and nearly half（46 percent）have lunch by themselves. Only at dinnertime are we eating together anymore, 74 percent, according to statistics from the report.

"I prefer to go out and be out. Alone, but together, you know?" Bechtel said, looking up from her book. Bechtel, who works in downtown West Palm Beach, has lunch with coworkers sometimes, but like many of us, too often works through lunch at her desk. A lunchtime escape allows her to keep a boss from tapping her on the shoulder. She returns to work feeling energized. "Today, I just wanted some time to myself," she said.

Just two seats over, Andrew Mazoleny, a local videographer, is finishing his lunch at the bar. He likes that he can sit and check his phone in peace or chat up the barkeeper with whom he's on a first-name basis if he wants to have a little interaction（交流）. "I reflect on how my day's gone and think about the rest of the week," he said. "It's a chance for self-reflection, You return to work recharged and with a plan."

That freedom to choose is one reason more people like to eat alone. There was a time when people may have felt awkward about asking for a table for one, but those days are over. Now, we have our smartphones to keep us company at the table. "It doesn't feel as alone as it may have before all the advances in technology," said Laurie Demeritt, whose company provided the statistics for the report.