

## Abstract

# Why Young Adults (18–30 Years Old) Consume Dairy Foods: A Qualitative Study to Explore and Identify Reasons for Dairy Consumption in the UK and France <sup>†</sup>

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**Abstract:** Several studies have shown that consuming dairy products may have a positive impact on reducing the risk of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and helping maintain gut health, while the production of soft dairy, i.e., milk, yoghurt, and soft cheese, has been linked to lower impacts on the environment than meat. Reports show that, despite its benefits, dairy consumption around the world is lower than recommended, decreasing drastically when young individuals leave school. This study aimed to identify reasons for the consumption of dairy foods among young adults aged 18–30 years old in the UK and France and explore the potential differences and similarities between the two countries. Focus groups and individual interviews were conducted in the country's language, audio-recorded, and transcribed. Participants were asked about their reasons for consumption of a wide range of products, e.g., milk, fermented dairy, dairy desserts, cheeses, plant-based dairy alternatives. A thematic analysis was performed. The transcripts were coded; themes and sub-themes were generated from codes using an inductive approach. Forty-five young adults (UK = 22) took part in this study; four focus groups and seven individual interviews were conducted in both Bournemouth, UK, and Ecully, France. Four themes (product-related, individual-related, culture, and market offering) and sixteen sub-themes (sensory, non-sensory, composition; mode of consumption, preferences, personal reasons, knowledge, attitudes and concerns, needs or cravings; use, product categorization, social norms; alternative, packaging, value for money, availability) were found to influence participants' dairy consumption in both countries. A seventeenth sub-theme (structure of the meal) was reported only by French participants. The results of this study suggest there are no big differences in reasons for consumption between the UK and France, but due to the limited sample size, further investigations are needed. An online questionnaire was developed from the results of this study and launched in early 2023, aiming to explore reasons, contexts, and modes of consumption of dairy products among a larger sample of young adults in both the UK and France.

**Keywords:** dairy; reasons for consumption; UK; France; young adults



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