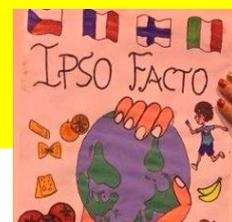


# Dietary habits in Europe



## Survey report By High school partners of IPSO FACTO

Eating habits are a factor that can influence health in a positive or negative way. Are our habits also favorable to good health, according to whether one is Italian, French, Czech or Finnish? Can we eat better?

To answer these questions, students from four different countries carried out a quantitative survey from January to February 2018. "We believe that girls pay more attention to their weight than boys" or "Less than a quarter of the population read food labels" are examples of hypotheses students wanted to check. Many questions made young investigators aware that the culture, gender or age of the people were determinants of eating habits.

Each country partner of the IPSO FACTO project took over one part of the questionnaire. French students worked on questions about family habits during the meal and the consumption of alcohol. Czech students wrote questions about food choices. The Finns formulated questions about eating habits outside the family. Finally, the Italian partners prepared the questions on sports practices and food.

More than 100 students took part in this study on food habits. They exploited the data collected. They built graphs and commented on the results of the questionnaire. Here is a summary of their collaborative survey.

### It is important to be able to cook, whatever the nationality

Knowing how to cook helps to make balanced meals. Whoever does not know how to cook tends to choose fast-food and prepared dishes that contain a lot of sodium, fat, carbohydrates. These substances are necessary for the good functioning of the organism but when they are brought in too large quantity, can be at the origin of diabetes, obesity, hypertension etc ..

Italy is the first country to judge very important cooking (63%), followed by the Czech Republic (58%), the French (56%), Finland (54%), and "Other" nationalities (52%).

### For the Italians and the French, it is more important to know how to make a menu

A person who knows how to make menus knows how to choose his products and select them. He knows what he eats and what is on his plate so he can eat

healthy and balanced. Whereas, on the other hand, a person who does not compose his menus is not necessarily aware of what he eats and therefore does not eat healthily. The Czechs (30%) are the most likely to think that knowing how to compose a menu is not important. Still, the majority of respondents think that knowing how to compose a menu is rather important. However, the French (33%) and Italians (35%) stand out and think that knowing how to make a menu is very important.

### The Italians pay more attention to their weight

On average, 36% think it is very important to pay attention to their weight. 13% think it's not important. Italians are clearly different from other countries, as more of them (69%) attach great importance to their weight. Conversely, Finns are 20% to consider that paying attention to its weight is not an important thing.

Paying attention to weight, seems to be a more feminine concern. 41% of women think it's very

important compared to 28% for men.

### The Czechs, least likely to read food labels and to know how to purchase food

The advantage of knowing how to read labels will allow people suffering from diabetes or cholesterol to pay attention to their diet and know the composition of food (carbohydrates, fats, proteins). It also allows to know the geographical origin of the products and to be able to choose food produced locally. For 59% of Italians it is very important to know how to read labels, followed by Finns (57%) and French (55%). Finally, in the Czech Republic, a majority think that this is rather important or not at all (58%).

A person who knows how to purchase food knows how to choose his/her products in a healthy way. It can thus promote diet, health and well-being.

## Investigation process

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| <b>Object</b>                                 | Dietary habits in four European countries  |
| <b>Goal</b>                                   | Better knowledge and comparison of eating habits in France, Italy, the Czech Republic and Finland  |
| <b>Context</b>                                | Food has become a public health issue for about ten years. We know that nutrition and physical activity are factors of prevention or risk of diseases (cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity)        |
| <b>Date of the survey</b>                     | From January to February 2018  |
| <b>Assumptions to check</b>                   | There are differences between individuals in their eating habits according to: age, nationality, socio-professional category and sex   |
| <b>Targeted population</b>                    | High school students and their parents, teachers.  |
| <b>Method used to form the sample</b>         | Randomly: respondents were randomly selected from high school students, varying age categories, volunteer teachers, parents of students in the project classes, and voluntary administrative and technical staff |
| <b>Size and characteristics of the sample</b> | 785 people were interviewed. The sample is not very representative because girls are twice as numerous as boys   |
| <b>Way to collect data</b>                    | By questionnaire according to 2 methods: manual entry of paper questionnaire or online entry on Niort high school website  |
| <b>Variables</b>                              | Nationality, Age, Gender and socio-professional category   |
| <b>Field</b>                                  | Persons living in Niort (France), Catanzaro (Italy), Havlickuv Brod (CR), Mäntäslä (Finland) and their surroundings  |

A person who does not know how to shop tends to order industrial prepared meals (pizzas, or other ...). This food is neither balanced nor varied if the person in question consumes it daily. This eating habit can be the cause of various pathologies. The Czechs (11%) are the most likely to think that shopping is not important, while a majority of Italians (59%), Finns (57%) and French (55%) think that Knowing how to shop is very important.

### The French share the same menu

French students think it's better

to have the same menu because it is strongly rooted. In a family or with friends, a person does not follow the same menu when following a diet. For the French, 81% of those questioned often or always have the same menu. Then come "the other nationalities (79%), the Czechs (72%), the Finns (69%). In contrast, 39% of Italians say never or only occasionally have the same menu for everyone. It should be noted that Italian students do not have school canteens and eat more often at home, unlike other countries.

### Finns don't eat at regular time : they can easily choose their meal time

Eating at regular times is good for your health. It also avoids nibbling between meals. Not following one's internal clock makes us more vulnerable to diabetes and overweight. Eating at regular hours allows the body to be regulated and thus to have a good digestion. Finns are least likely to eat at regular hours. 43% of them never do so or from time to time against 26% of "other nationalities", 31% of Italians 38% of French and 36% of Czechs.

The French are the most likely to say they never choose their meal time alone (64%). In contrast, 92% of Finns choose their meal time alone. We notice that Finns often help themselves in the fridge (71%). It's part of their eating habits. From time to time, the Italians go to the fridge for a snack (42%). On the other hand, the French hardly ever help themselves in the fridge (24%). They consider it as a bad eating habit, ie nibbling.

### The Czechs, least likely to eat while watching TV

Eating while watching television can cause problems for our health. If we eat while watching television, we do not realize the quantities we eat. We risk eating more. We note that the Italians mostly eat while watching TV (89%). 41% of Finns still report eating while watching TV. The Czechs are the ones who eat the least while watching TV, as 56% say they never eat in front of the TV or from time to time.

## The French are more numerous not using their smartphone while eating

Finns are the largest users of smartphone during the meal : 73% use it sometimes, often or always, followed by "other nationalities" (65%). 56% of French people say they do not use their phone while eating, followed by Italians (42%) and Czechs (39%).

## French students are more often in the habit of drinking alcohol ...

To analyze the results of this question, we targeted 15-19 year old students. We can see that young people who do not drink alcohol at all come from other nationalities (65%), followed by Italians (50%), Finns (45%), Czechs (40%) and finally French (29%). We can conclude that French students are more often in the habit of drinking regularly compared to other countries. France is a producer of wine and strong alcohol as well as Italy. The French have habits to consume a dose of wine during the meal. However, it affects public health when consumption becomes excessive.

Most Italians and other nationalities have never been drunk, unlike the Finns, who say they have mostly been drunk at least 10 times.

## ... and French and Finn female students more often report having been drunk

Finnish, French and Czech male students have been the most drunk (at least ten times) in the last twelve months. French and Finnish female students more often report having been drunk at least 10 times in the last 12

months. These figures are alarming. The risk of becoming alcoholic in adulthood is higher if alcohol consumption begins excessively in adolescence.

Drinking at least 5 glasses of alcohol on one occasion is considered as "binge drinking". This has an impact on our health. The excessive and regular consumption of alcohol from adolescence increases the risk of dependence in adulthood. This can destroy the liver and other chronic diseases.

The French and Finns are the two nationalities where more than 40% of the population drank at least 5 glasses of alcohol or during the last 30 days on one occasion, while the Italians (19% for boys, 11% for girls) and the Czech girls (15%) are few in number having drunk at least 5 glasses of alcohol in the last 30 days on one occasion. These figures are more worrying for the French and Finnish populations.

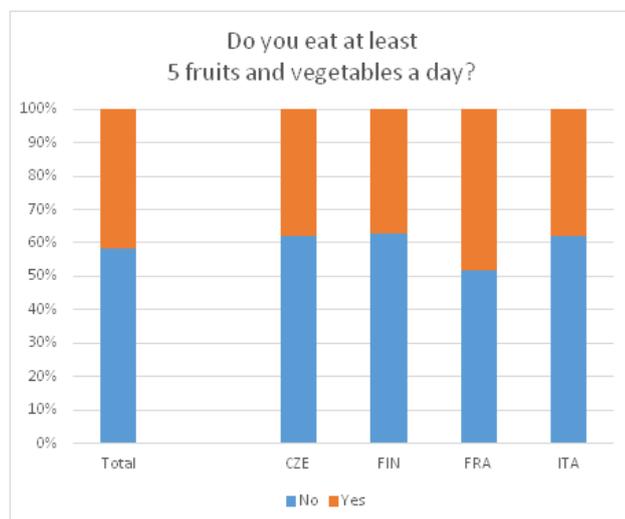
## 58% of students don't eat more than 5 fruits and vegetables a day

Most of the respondents (70%) declared that they eat convenience food not very often. Only people from France have higher share of this kind of food than the other nationalities.

Next question concerns eating of fatty, salty and sweet food between meals. This kind of unhealthy food is least popular in Finland, Czech have a bit higher numbers. Meanwhile French and Italians have much higher representation of this kind of food

One third of respondents said

month, one third once a week and the rest more often (10% said that they eat sweets every day). The results show that French eat least sweets among surveyed nationalities. On the other side of the spectrum are Czechs (40% of them eat sweet once a day).



*This Graph shows that more than half of surveyed people don't eat more than 5 fruits and vegetables a day. All nations have basically the same results, best stats show French.*

## The French spend more money in restaurants...

People eat outside in a restaurant once or twice a month in every country. People in Czech Republic eat in a restaurant at least once or twice a year. Italian people eat outside the most often. Finnish people eat outside the least.

French people use a lot of money in restaurants. Czech people don't use much money in restaurants. Many of them use only 1-10€ in restaurants for their meals. We assumed that restaurants in Czech Republic would have been more expensive.

## ... and eat the least fast food

Italian people eat fast food daily the most. French people eat the least fast food. Finnish people eat the most fast food in a month. French and Italian people do not eat as much fast food as Czech and Finnish people when their friends do. We were surprised about the fact that most people answered that they prefer healthy food. Every country prefers proper meals over fast food. It is surprising because usually healthy food is more expensive, and we assumed that especially teenagers would rather choose cheap food.

We assumed that there wouldn't be over 10 restaurants/cafes in many towns. The quantity of the restaurants will affect to that how many times people eat outside: if there are not any restaurants/cafes in their home towns, they probably eat rarely outside. We are surprised about that fact that there are towns in Czech and French which don't have any restaurants/cafes.

## Students prefer eating with their friends

According to the survey, French people eat with their families more than Finns, Czechs or Italians people. On the other hand, the Finns prefer eating with their friends the most. It was a surprise that so many Italians prefer to eat

with their friends rather than their families, because it is a typical assumption that Italian people enjoy big family dinners. The results of the Czechs and the Italians are quite similar.

## Finnish students are the sportiest

The majority of French students practice sport once or twice a week. The majority of Italian students practice sport three times a week as well as Czechs students.

Finnish students are the sportiest, in fact they practice sport more than three times a week. The majority of Czechs parents practice sport once a week as well as French parents. Finnish parents practice sport three times a week. The majority of Italian parents practice sport more than three times a week.

## Italian students know more about the relation between food and sport

A lot of Italian, French and Czechs students think that it is important to have breakfast for an athlete. Instead, the majority of Finnish students think that it is not important. The majority of French and Czechs students believe that an excessive use of dietary supplement (not under medical control) cannot be dangerous for an athlete... Instead, Italian students think that it can be very dangerous, while Finnish students do not know it. The majority of Czechs

as well as French and also Finnish students think that it is not necessary, after any physical activity, to replace the glycogen consumed...Italian students, instead, think that it is necessary.

The majority of students (independently of nationality) believe that people who practice physical/sport activities should spread meals over five times during the day. French students think that practicing water sports doesn't help the athlete to maintain his thermal balance while Finnish students think the opposite. French students think that the daily calorie intake of an athlete does not vary according to the sex, age and other factors, whereas the Czechs believe the opposite. Italian students believe that coffee does not help to improve performance in sports. Other students believe the opposite. The Czechs believe that it is useful to consume fats after heavy training. The French do not consider it useful. French and Czechs students believe that half of our daily intake of food should not be composed of carbohydrates, unlike the Italians who think the opposite. Finnish students do not know. French and Italian students believe that it is advisable to vary the choice of food as much as possible, in order to have a balanced diet...while the Czechs believe the opposite.