

Problems with diets in the UK

This document summarizes what we have found in literature about eating habits in the UK. This includes data about food intake, illnesses related to particular diets, and possible explanations of what has been happening and is happening in the UK currently.

Introduction:

The number of obese adults in the UK has doubled since 1990. Britain officially has the worst diet in Europe. Citizens of the UK consume a lot of ultra-processed foods (i.e., sodas, candy....), about four times more than in France, Italy, or Greece. They also consume a lot of very sugary foods and drinks, and eat very few fruits, vegetables, or fresh unprocessed food. In addition to that, they do very little physical activity, and British children are particularly less active than other children in Europe. These dietary habits have consequences: 64 % of British adults are now overweight, having a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or more. This includes around 28 % who are obese (with a BMI of 30 or more), and in particular 10 % with a BMI of 35 or more.

Illnesses caused by these habits:

Obesity favors the emergences of cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses, diabetes, certain types of cancer (endometrial cancer for example), and depression. Eating an excess of ultra-processed foods can cause heart attacks and strokes.

A vitamin D deficiency can lead to cardiovascular problems, diabetes, and sometimes multiple sclerosis.

Analysis of particular food intakes:

Ultra-processed foods are full of saturated fats, sugars, and salt. We suppose these intakes increase with time in our data.

The British are said to have a vitamin D deficiency, so we expect vitamin D to decrease or stay low in our data.

The British are said to lack fibers (from fruits and vegetables) as well as fatty acids from fish.

Possible explanations to these food habits:

The first explanation of the obesity problem in the UK is the choice of food quantity and quality. As previously mentioned, the British prefer consuming a lot of junk food, and very little fresh food, like

fruits or vegetables. Their usual breakfasts are bigger and greasier than in a lot of other countries: bacon, eggs, toast, tomatoes, mushrooms, black pudding, porridge, marmalade...

Another explanation is the mass popularization of electronic products, the internet and TV shows around the year 2000. These elements push populations to stay inactive and indoors.

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