

Kids' yoghurt and consumers

a relationship
turned sour



New research reveals British children
face an ill-health time-bomb as healthy
choice is dumped for junk foods



Executive Summary

Our children's line of nutritional defence is crumbling in the UK. Overweight and obesity soared post-pandemic¹ with the most recent statistics for England reporting that more than 1 in 5 primary children and more than 1 in 3 adolescents are overweight or obese². At the other extreme, cases of malnutrition have quadrupled since 2007/08 resulting in the hospitalisation of more than 300 children³. Experts lay the blame for both conditions on unbalanced diets devoid of certain key nutrients.

Children need nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, dairy foods, vegetables, lean meat, wholegrains, and oily fish to support their healthy growth and development. As experts observe, children who consume yoghurt on a regular basis tend to have healthier, more nutrient-dense diets.

Yet, despite the nutritional profile of yoghurt, and the fact that many children's yoghurts, including those made by Yoplait, are acknowledged as healthier options, the category is in long-term decline. The replacement, according to shopping habits research, is less healthy 'HFSS' discretionary foods. Indeed, research shows that children are now getting a significant proportion of their daily energy intake from nutrient-poor, ultra-processed foods like biscuits, cakes, confectionery, fizzy drinks, ice cream, and crisps⁴.

New data highlights the reasons behind the marked decline in consumption among children. Kids' yoghurt volume is down by 11% over the past ten years, penetration is also down, and this is against a growing GB population, in particular families⁵.

The reasons behind the decline are explored in this report but central to this is the worrying number of children swapping yoghurt for biscuits and chocolate. As younger children reduce yoghurt consumption, they begin to drop out of the category all together around 8-9 years of age. By the time

the children are teenagers, yoghurt has completely lost relevance unless it has specific benefits like added proteins or probiotics.

These unbalanced diets are taking their toll on kids' chances of a healthy future. In the past decade, calcium intakes in children have fallen significantly. At the same time, just under a fifth of 4-10-year-olds and over a third of 11-18-year-olds are clinically deficient in vitamin D. A lack of these two nutrients alone places kids' long-term bone health in jeopardy. Nutrient deficiency is also the most common cause of rickets, a disease that was largely eradicated during the 1950s, but which has now resurfaced in the UK among certain groups of children.

The switch to biscuits and chocolate is not the only reason for the decline in the consumption of nutrient-rich kids' yoghurt. Declining awareness of the benefits of dairy, the increase in dairy-free households and even certain government policies, such as the lack of a dairy target for kids in the Eatwell Guide, are all playing their part.

In particular, the drive, by policy makers and pressure groups, to rightly lower sugar content, has wrongly put kids' yoghurt in the crosshairs,

alongside fizzy drinks, biscuits, cakes, and chocolate. However, unlike yoghurts, these high sugar high calorie foods provide few nutritional benefits and cost the average family with two kids nearly £470 a year.

Parents need clear guidance on the difference between nutritious kids' yoghurts and the more indulgent yoghurt-containing desserts and snacks, and the industry can do more to help them with this. However, the constant battle seemingly being waged against the dairy industry presents an uphill struggle for kids' yoghurt manufacturers and retailers.

The data in this report are compiled from published scientific studies, Kantar Consumption Panel data and polls of more than 2000 shoppers⁴ and parents⁸ commissioned by Yoplait. The report explores views and advice from expert nutritionists explaining how we can tackle the nutritional challenges children face in the present to protect the health of future generations. If we are going to help children reach their full health potential, their relationships with food will need to be reset – and that's about much more than sugar.



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Section 1:

Bone health under attack

Childhood is a crucial window of opportunity to get bone health right for the future. Bone is a living tissue that is constantly changing throughout a lifetime, a process known as remodelling.

Bone density builds from birth until the early-to-mid-twenties. During this period, nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, protein, vitamin C, phosphorus, and magnesium work together to maximise bone mass, helping to keep bones strong throughout life.

Getting the diet wrong at this time can have serious consequences for lifelong bone health with an increased risk of rickets, osteomalacia (bone softening) and osteoporosis (bone fragility).

In the UK, for example, it's estimated that over 3.5m people have osteoporosis⁹ and one in two women and one in five men aged over 50 will have an osteoporotic fracture in their lifetime¹⁰. Deficiencies of vitamin D and calcium are the most common cause of rickets, a disease leading to bowed legs that was supposed to have been eradicated in the 1950s, but which has now resurfaced in parts of the UK.

1. Children are not little adults

Children have special requirements when it comes to nutrients. They need **4½ times more calcium⁹ and 7 times more vitamin D**, per kilogram body weight, compared with adults. Yet, evidence from UK studies¹⁰ shows:

- Calcium intakes in children have fallen by 9% over a decade, which is significant from a public health standpoint. Up to a quarter of children don't get enough of this bone health mineral in their diets.
- Vitamin D intakes in children are just 2-3 micrograms per day compared with the national recommendation of 10 micrograms.
- 19% of 4-10-year-olds and 37% of 11-18-year-olds are clinically deficient in vitamin D by the time spring comes around each year.
- Only a third of parents give their school-aged child a year-round vitamin D supplement⁶.



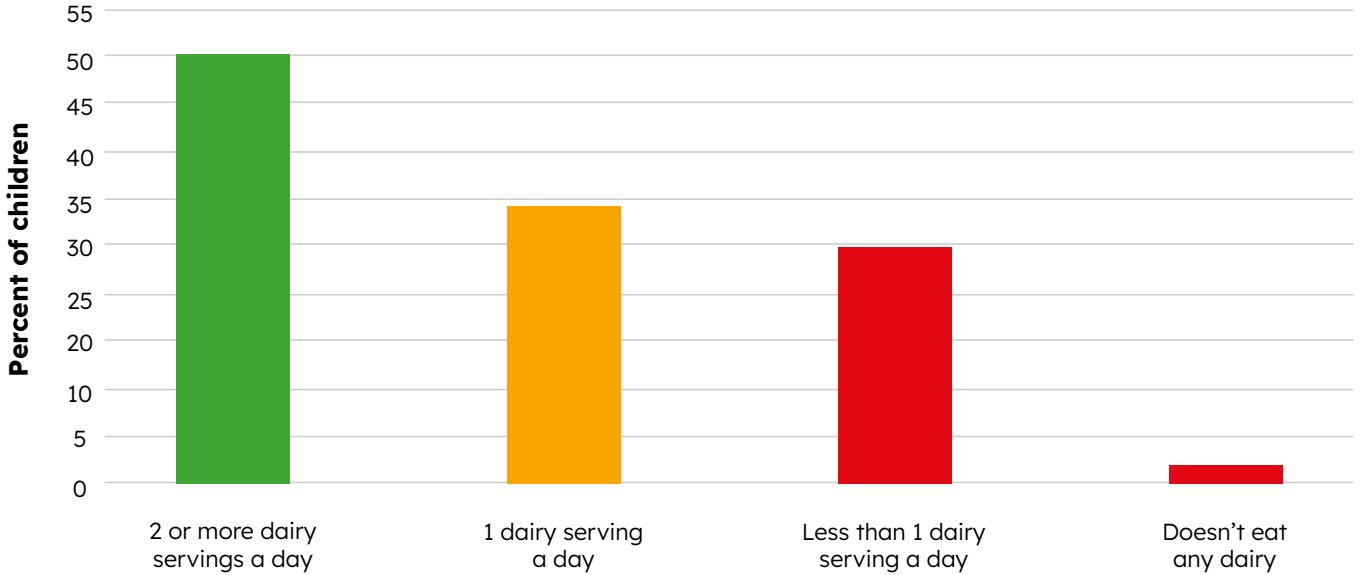


Figure 1: The dairy gap in UK children (ref. 11)

2. Dairy doldrums

Dairy foods, including **yoghurt and fromage frais, provide 30-40% of school-aged children's daily calcium intakes and make a significant contribution towards vitamin D and protein intakes.**

Yet, declining dairy intakes over the years, especially in older children, have created a gap between current intakes in the UK and the optimal two servings a day recommended in some European countries to support normal growth and development in children (Figure 1)¹¹.

The decline, in kids' yoghurt in particular, has accelerated since the pandemic. As shown in Figure 2, by comparing consumption data from January (a key month to establish healthy kids' yoghurts in shoppers' baskets) 2019 and 2020 with post-pandemic data from January 2022 and 2023, a 12% decline in the consumption of kids' yoghurts is evident⁴.

There has been a loss of -12% kids yoghurts consumption in January

Kids yoghurts consumption in January - Millions

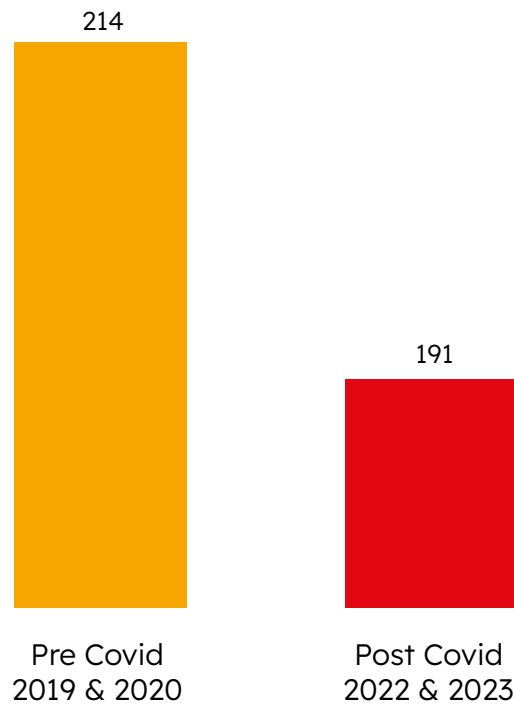


Figure 2: Decline in kids' yoghurt consumption pre- and post-Covid lockdowns (ref. 4)



Over the past ten years, the number of families in the UK has grown by around 5%¹². Yet, household penetration of kids' yoghurt has fallen by 2.6 points. Young families are a big part of this decline, but kids are also reducing consumption and are even dropping out of the category altogether when they are older (at 8-9 years of age). By the time children reach adolescence, yoghurt has mainly lost its relevance unless it offers a functional benefit such as added protein.

The statistics provide a worrying picture of long-term decline in yoghurt volumes and penetration which, given the nutritional significance of children's yoghurts, have implications for children's future nutritional status and bone health.





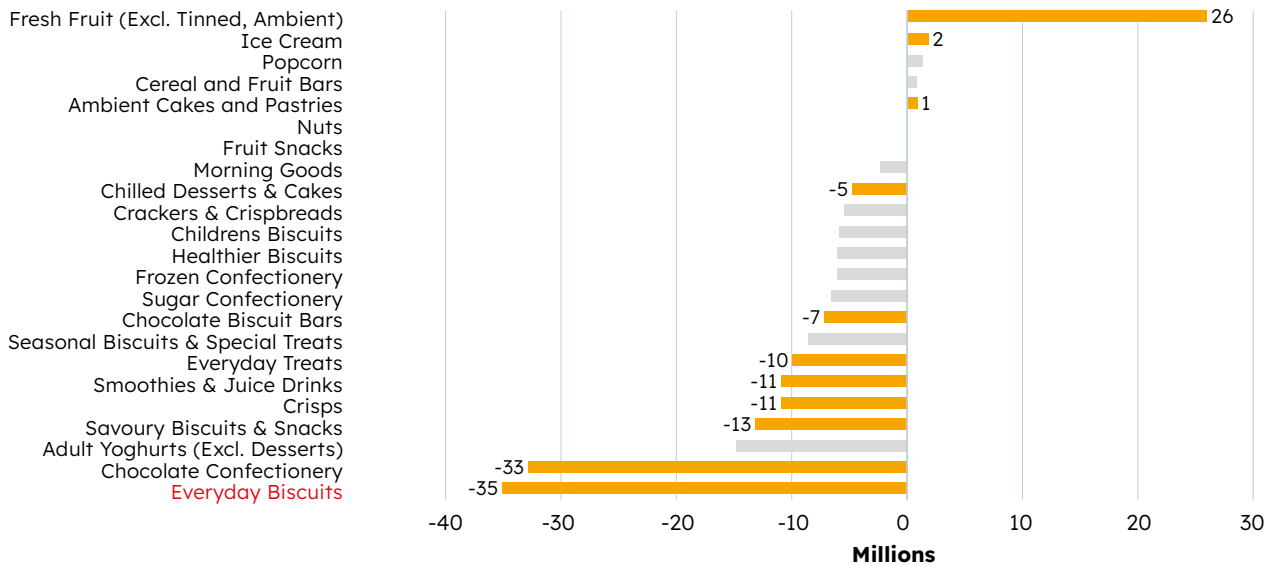
Section 2:

The drivers of decline

1. Biscuits galore

Kids' yoghurt consumption occasions are declining, and a key culprit is biscuits. Cumulative trends over the past five years, presented in Figure 3, clearly indicate that kids' yoghurt is being increasingly swapped out in favour of everyday biscuits as well as other energy-dense, low nutrient foods, like crisps and chocolate.

Kids 5 Year Cumulative Switch



Adult 5 Year Cumulative Switch

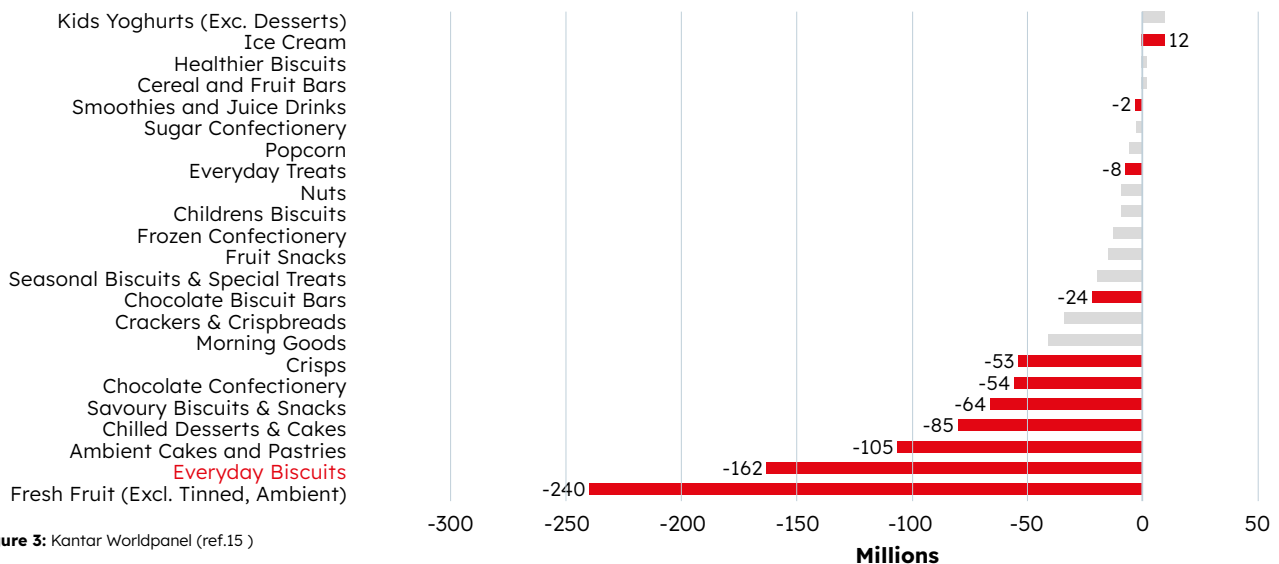


Figure 3: Kantar Worldpanel (ref.15)



When asked why their children eat yoghurt less than twice a week, the main reason given is that the child dislikes the taste or texture (Figure 4). Over the past five years, the sugar content of kids' yoghurt has

significantly declined with knock on effects to taste and mouth feel. Might this be one reason for kids switching from less sweet yoghurts to sweeter, higher calorie treats?

It's possible that an unintended consequence of the past decade's sugar reduction policies could be encouraging children to dump healthy yoghurts for junk foods.

Taste and texture, not sugar, are the main reasons why children don't eat yoghurt regularly

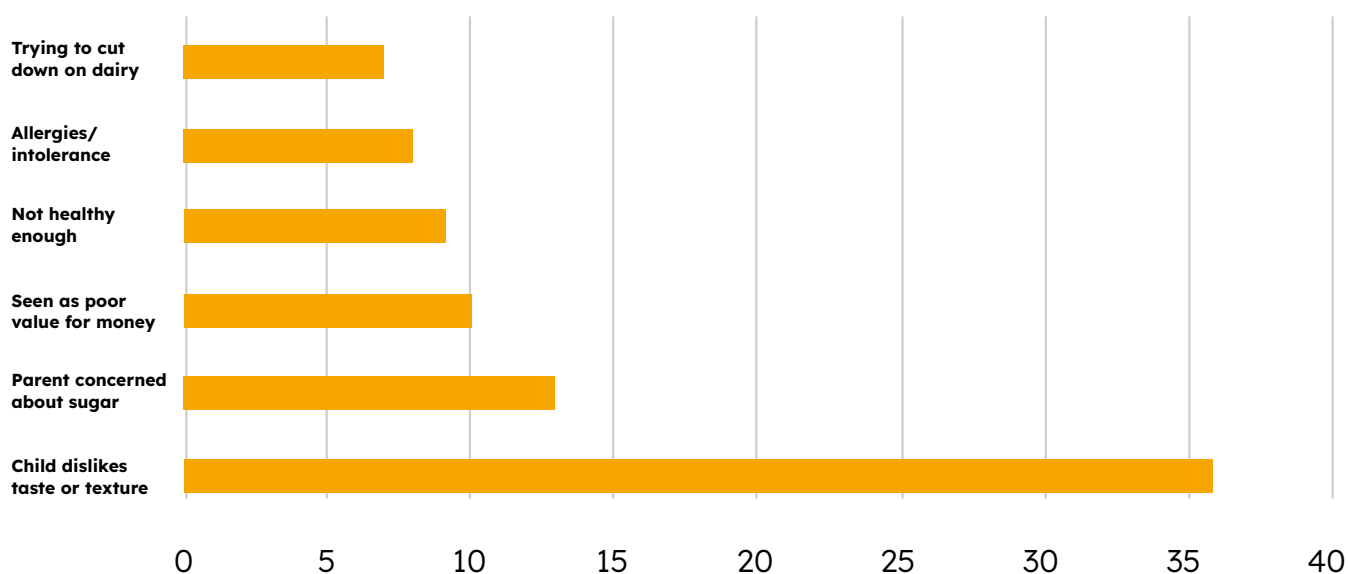


Figure 4: If your child eats yoghurt less than twice a week, why is this? (ref. 8)

2. The war on sugar has wrongly put yoghurt in the crosshairs

a. The Policy Landscape

For more than a decade, nutrition policy has been driven by obesity prevention, leading to outcomes such as the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (sugar tax) and government-sponsored campaigns to drive down sugar and calories in packaged foods and drinks. While these have reduced sugar in certain categories, the overall picture post-Covid has been one of increased sugar sales¹⁴ and until very

recently rising obesity levels¹⁵; blamed by experts on pandemic-related food and exercise behaviours¹⁶. As reported by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities², obesity rates are not

only "unacceptably high" but are the highest they've been since before the pandemic, affecting a quarter to a third of children depending on age.

Did you know?

The % sugar reduction achieved by the yoghurt category was nearly 14%, according to Public Health England.



In 2015, Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition recommended that free sugars – defined as added sugars plus natural sugars in honey and fruit juices – should make up no more than 5% of daily energy intake for everyone aged 2 years and above¹⁷. On average, this is equivalent to a maximum of:

- 19g/day – 5 sugar cubes – 4-6-year-olds
- 24g/day – 6 sugar cubes – 7-10-year-olds
- 30g/day – 7 sugar cubes – 11-year-olds and up.

However, children aged 4-10 years are consuming an average of 47g of free sugars a day, while 11-18-year-olds are

taking in 53g of free sugars a day. It's worth noting that the natural sugar in yoghurt – called lactose – is not a free sugar according to the official definition as there are no public health concerns about its consumption¹⁷.

According to the UK's National Diet and Nutrition Survey¹⁰ and presented in Figure 5, just three discretionary food groups contributed more than half of children's free sugar intake:

Did you know?
Around 4% of yoghurt by weight is naturally occurring lactose which isn't classed as a free sugar.

Average free sugar intake/day = 51g or 204kcal

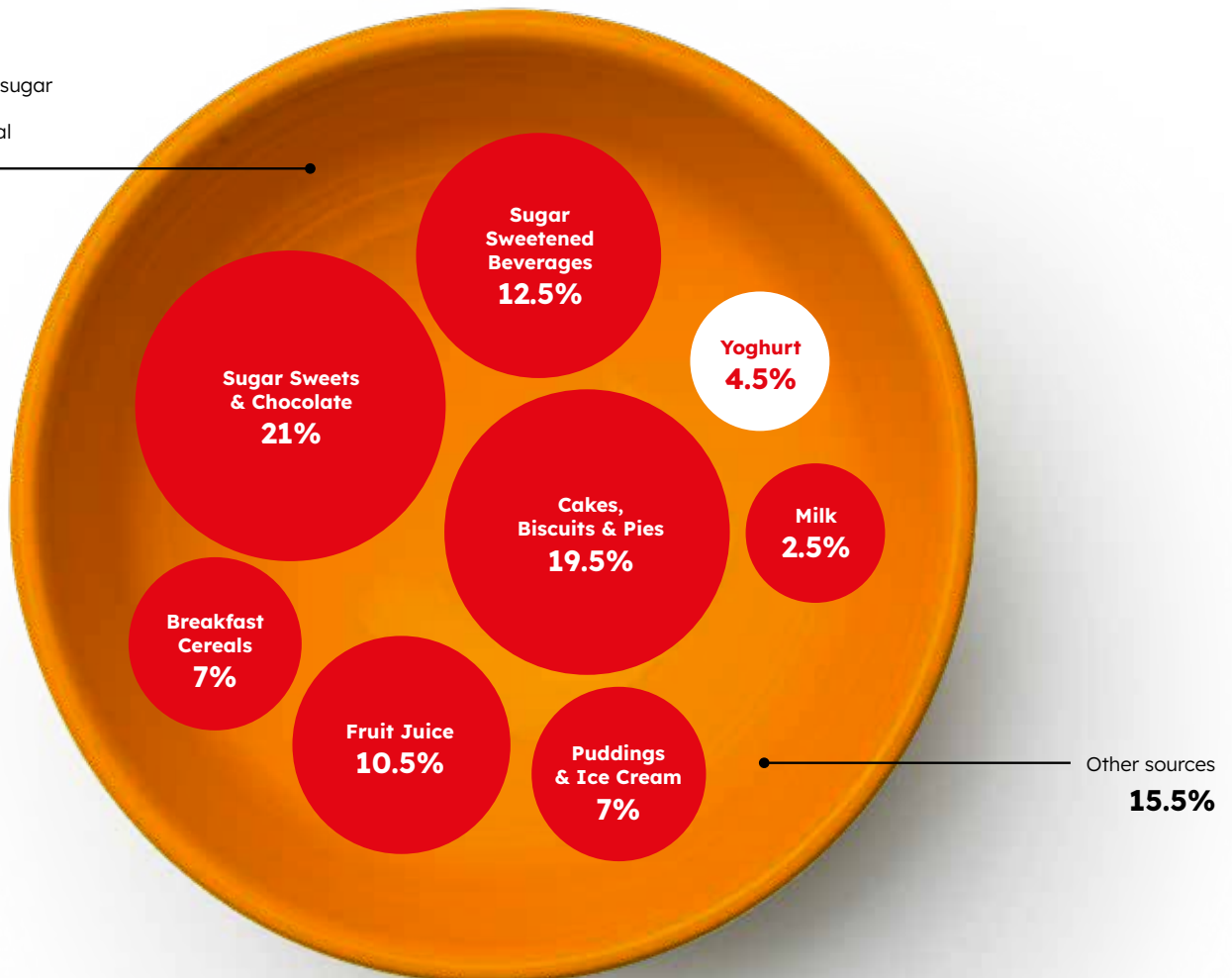


Figure 5: Contribution of different food and drink categories to average daily free sugar intakes in UK 4-18-year-olds (ref. 10)

- Sugar, sweets, and chocolate – 21%
- Cakes, biscuits, and pies – 19.5%
- Sugar-sweetened beverages – 12.5%.

In comparison¹⁰, the yoghurt and dairy dessert category made up less than 5% of the free sugar intake of 4-18-year-olds (6% of 4-10-year-olds) in 2018-19. This is likely to be lower nowadays given the category's significant progress on sugar reduction. As noted by the UK's official sugar reduction programme¹⁸, the largest sugar reductions were seen for the categories of breakfast cereals (down 15%) and yoghurts and fromage frais (down 14%) compared with the 2015 baseline.

But there remains an unequal playing field as some of the biggest contributors to kids' sugar intakes – biscuits, chocolate, sugar confectionery, and puddings – have made negligible progress on sugar reduction.

A consequence of this could be that children prefer the higher sugar options, putting compliant food categories at a disadvantage.

With the potential for a change of government after the next election, policies limiting the marketing of less healthy foods and targeting health inequalities are likely to come to the fore. These are expected to go well beyond the narrow lens of sugar reduction to include health-boosting policies to encourage fortification of diets with folic acid, fibre and vitamin D, limits to ultra-processed foods, and further initiatives to promote sustainability.





b. The parent landscape

While lowering sugar in food products is the top priority for policy holders and pressure groups, this doesn't appear to be true for parents. In new research for Yoplait, shown in Figure 6, when asked what put them off buying yoghurt, three quarters of parents (75%) voted for options unrelated to the sugar content⁵. Price was the main concern mentioned by over 30% of respondents, followed by sugar content (25%), artificial ingredients (approx. 15%) and not liking the taste (approx. 13%).

When the data were filtered to look at the different segments of kids' yoghurt purchasers, e.g. lapsed or non-buyers, the presence of artificial ingredients was as big a concern, if not bigger to certain segments, than sugar content.

When it comes to natural sugars (which make up around 4% of yoghurt by weight), 54% of adults with children living at home say they don't mind these being in their children's foods (Figure 7). Fewer than a quarter (21%) say they actively look at the sugar levels in food products.

So, while sugar in kids' yoghurt remains a concern for some parents, it's not front of mind for the majority. As presented in Figure 8, four in ten parents (41%) say 'low in sugar' is one of the health benefits they look for in kids' yoghurts, but around a third are looking for gut health benefits, natural ingredients and high calcium content. Interestingly, getting a good source of vitamin D is only chosen by a fifth of all parents (20%) when shopping for yoghurts.



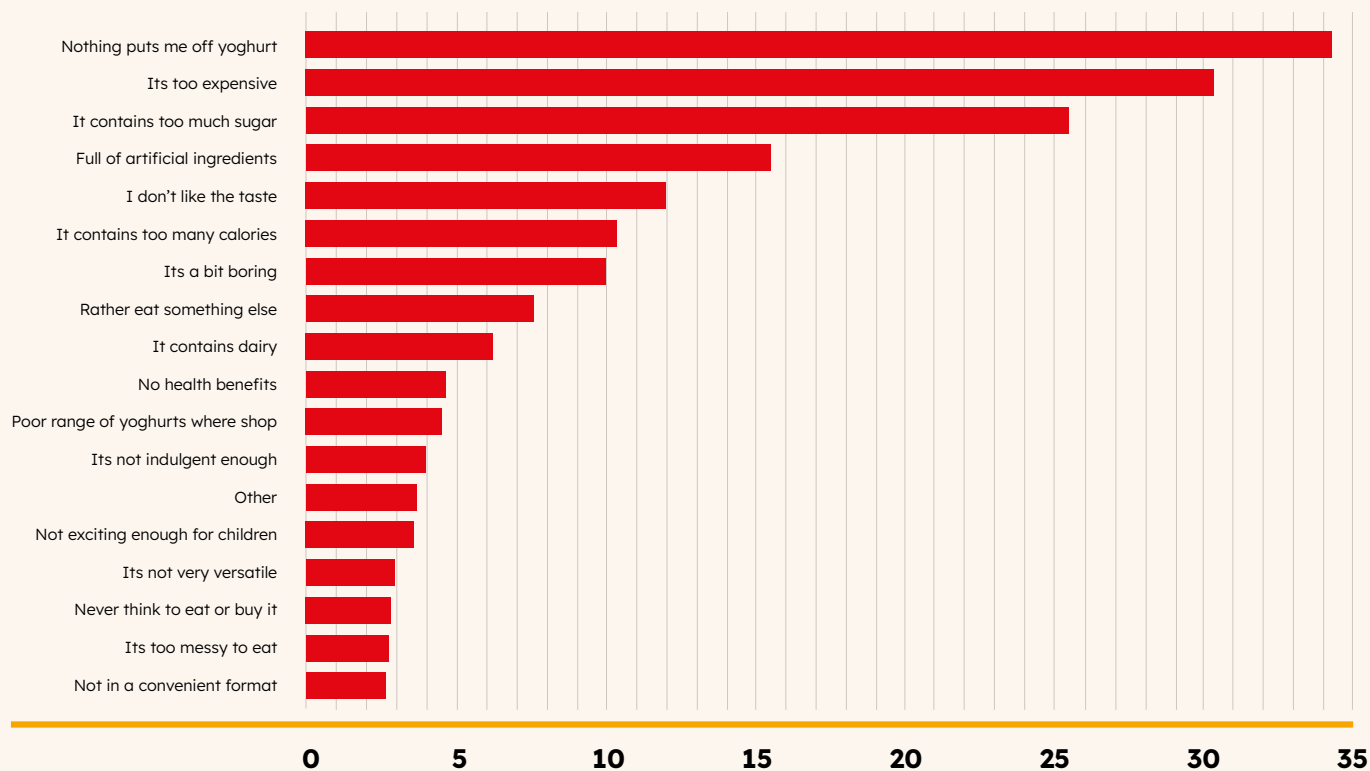


Figure 6: Which of the following, if any, puts you off yoghurt

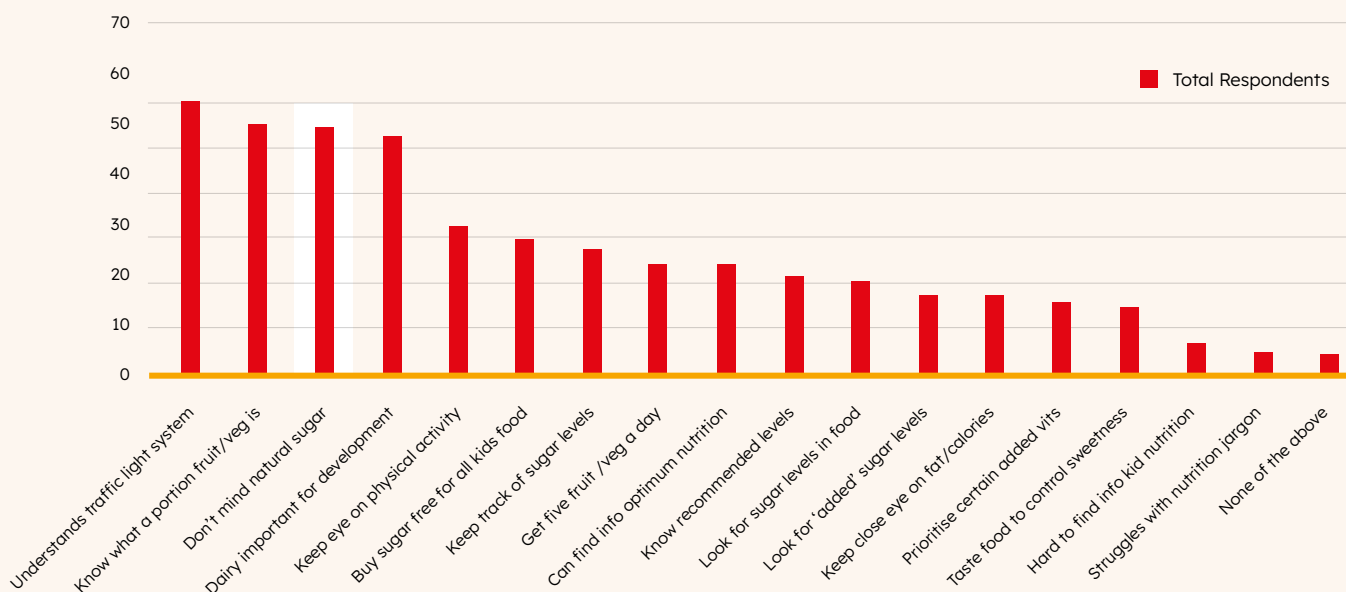


Figure 7: Which of the following apply to your thinking about your child(ren)'s health and nutrition

“ If the issue were simply all about sugar, we would see parents flooding back to yoghurt given that the category achieved the second highest sugar reduction amongst food products monitored by Public Health England. Not only this, but we would also see parents buying fewer biscuits, cakes, and sweets as the sugar dial for these barely shifted. However, this didn't happen, and parents actually bought more high sugar food categories. Instead, I think parents are looking for balanced nutrition when looking for kids' yoghurts. That's why the yoghurt products of the future should highlight their contribution to protein, vitamin D and calcium – all of which support growing children. ”

Dietitian, Dr Carrie Ruxton

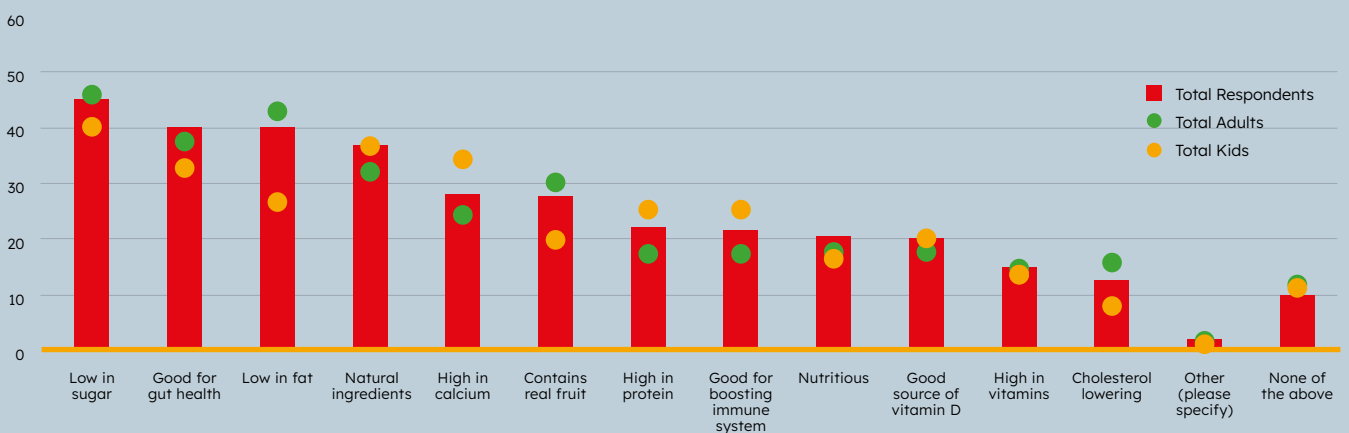


Figure 8: What health benefits, if any, do you look for in yoghurts?

3. Declining awareness of health benefits

Bombarded by health messages from an array of foods, it's no wonder that parents have lost sight of the health credentials of yoghurt – a food that has been with us for millennia.

As survey data commissioned by Yoplait reveal⁷, the single biggest reason why lost adult purchasers are put off eating yoghurt is because they believe, wrongly, there are no health

benefits (Figure 9). It is also the third highest reason given by parents who are put off buying yoghurt for their children.

Interestingly, a growing number of parents are also put off by the fact that yoghurt is a dairy food.



A recent Mintel report²⁹ states **26% of all UK households avoid dairy products** and around a quarter are using plant-based milks which could be driving interest in dairy-free options.

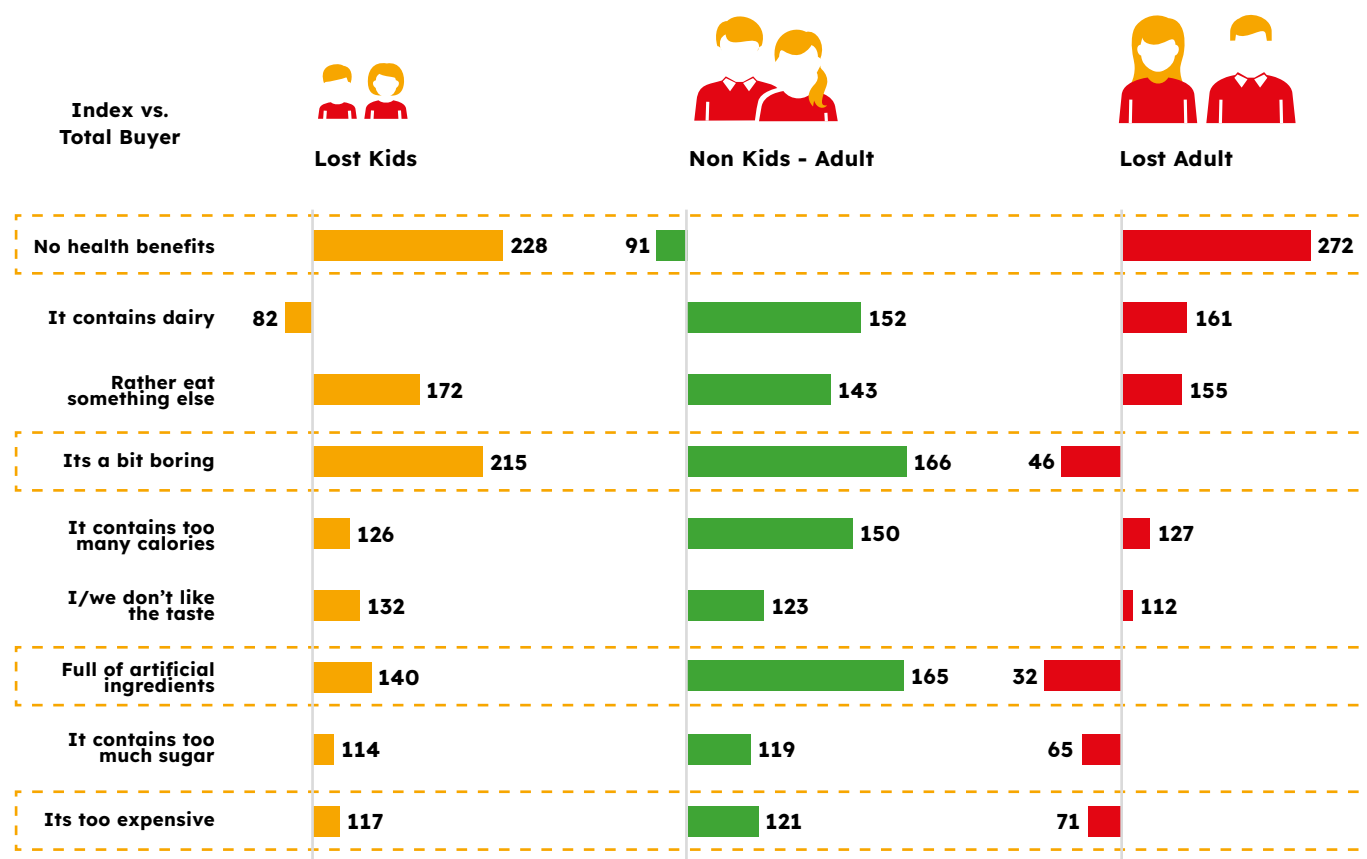


Figure 9: Which of the following, if any, puts you off yoghurt?



Section 3:

Wider dietary imbalances

The UK government’s dietary survey – the National Diet and Nutrition Survey¹⁰ – reveals a worrying imbalance in children’s nutrient intakes which could impact on more than bone health.

1. Nutrients of concern

Calcium – for bone health and growth, muscle function and healthy teeth¹⁰

Children’s calcium intakes have been in decline since 2008/9 with an average reduction of 9% in 4–10-year-olds over the subsequent decade. According to post-pandemic data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey²¹ 25% of 11-18-year-old girls are now at risk of calcium deficiency – up from 15% in 2008/9.

On average, teenage boys and girls get only 80% of the calcium that’s recommended for normal growth and development. The shift in dietary choices between primary and secondary school is a likely cause of this calcium gap and, given that girls are more affected than boys, could be influenced by breakfast skipping, plant-based diets and weight loss behaviours.

Vitamin D – for bone health, immunity and growth²⁰

Daily vitamin D intakes in the UK continue to fall well short of the updated higher recommendation of 10 micrograms¹¹, hovering at only 2-3 micrograms in children which is around a fifth of required intakes.

The trend shows a statistically significant reduction in children’s vitamin D intakes compared with pre-pandemic, particularly in teenage girls where vitamin D intakes fell by 36%.

Not only this, according to blood tests, just under a fifth of UK 4–10-year-olds and over a third of 11–18-year-olds are clinically deficient in vitamin D which puts them at direct risk of poor bone development. With no sign of improvement in recent surveys, there is clearly a crisis of vitamin D sufficiency in the UK’s children with major consequences for bone health.

Iodine – for growth (children) and cognitive function (adults)²⁰

A quarter of teenagers and 7% of primary-aged children are at risk of iodine deficiency¹⁰. Fish and seafood are natural sources of iodine, while dairy foods also contain iodine thanks to cattle diets.

Saturated fat - links with cardiovascular disease

Saturated fat frequently comes under fire for its links with raised cholesterol and cardiovascular disease risk²². Indeed, it features heavily in some of the least nutritious foods available, including cakes, pies, and biscuits which are all eaten frequently by children.

% of 11 - 18 year olds with inadequate calcium intakes

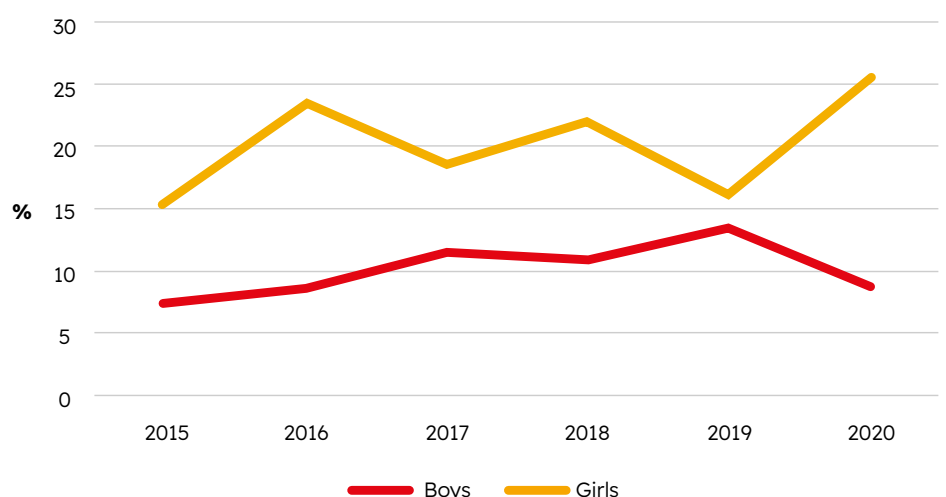


Figure 10: Percentage of UK 11-18 year-olds with inadequate calcium intakes (below the Lower Reference Intake) (ref. 20)

The National Diet and Nutrition Survey shows that all age groups are consuming more saturated fat than they need. Average intakes in children are 13% compared with recommended maximum of 10% of daily energy¹⁰. Yoghurts and dairy desserts contribute just 2-3% of children's saturated fat intakes¹⁰. Interestingly, studies show that dairy foods have positive or neutral effect on cardiovascular risk²³. This is thought to be related to the unique nutrient mix of fats and proteins found in dairy foods.

Free sugars - links with poor dental health and weight gain

Children are also eating too much sugar as previously mentioned in this report. Those aged 4-10 years are having double the recommended maximum intake while older children are 1.8 times over their limit.

Dr Ruxton comments: "Targeting the largest sources of free sugars in children's diets is the most effective way to get levels closer to recommendations. Policy work has already been done to bring down sugars in soft drinks but there appears to be little action on the other major contributors – biscuits, cakes, and confectionery".



“ Calcium, iodine and especially vitamin D should be classed as nutrients of concern as they are essential for optimal growth in children. Yet intakes have been languishing in the doldrums for years and, in the case of vitamin D, have been allowed to get to crisis point. More needs to be done to encourage families to supplement and use fortified foods, such as yoghurts and breakfast cereals, since there are so few natural sources of the vitamin and summer sunshine – another way to get vitamin D – is insufficient for preventing deficiency in all children. ”

Dietitian, Dr Carrie Ruxton



2. The economic cost

Biscuits, cakes, chocolate, crisps, fizzy drinks – it all adds up. Using National Diet and Nutrition Survey data and product information from British supermarkets, we added up the grams of discretionary foods that children consume each week to estimate the economic burden of these unhealthy dietary habits on an average family with two children (see Appendix for full analysis). The total comes to over £8 a week, or nearly £470 a year for two children – and that’s not counting what parents may eat. Given the cost-of-living crisis experienced by many families across the UK, unnecessary spending on discretionary foods represents a burden on tight family budgets.

3. The health cost

While the economic cost is worrying enough, the health costs of a poor diet are arguably greater, especially when it comes to children who are laying the foundations for their future wellbeing.

Unhealthy diets have been associated with a range of health woes, including high body fat and obesity; cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack and stroke; type 2 diabetes; certain cancers; and osteoporosis²⁴.

Studies have also revealed a significant association between unhealthy diets and poorer mental health in children and adolescents²⁵, as well as later bedtimes and higher rates of morning fatigue in 9-11-year-olds who consume less nutritious foods, like fast food or sweets, more frequently²⁶.

In contrast, the health benefits of regularly consuming yoghurt and other dairy products during childhood are well known including:

BONE HEALTH: A systematic review from 2019 found that including dairy products in children’s usual diets significantly increased bone mineral content during childhood.²⁷ Protein, calcium, and vitamin D – all found in dairy foods – are key nutrients for growth and development, and childhood is when we do most of our growing and developing.

HEALTHY WEIGHT: Dairy foods have been linked to an overall 46% lower risk of obesity, as reported by a meta-analysis which found a 16% reduction in obesity risk for every 200 ml of milk consumed per day²⁸.

LOWER RISK OF DIABETES: More frequent yoghurt consumption

has been linked to better insulin sensitivity and a lower risk of type 2 diabetes²⁹ in a study of more than 5000 US children.

CARDIOMETABOLIC HEALTH:

A UK study in 1687 children³⁰ found an association between regular yoghurt consumption and lower pulse pressure, a marker of blood vessel health, as well as a lower HbA1c concentration indicating better long-term blood sugar control.

GUT HEALTH:

A systematic review concluded that dairy foods, such as yoghurt, kefir, and milk, had a beneficial effect on the gut microbiota. Specifically, the researchers’ findings included studies showing an increase in the beneficial bacteria groups *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* and a reduction in the pathogenic bacterial strain *Bacteroides fragilis*.³¹

IMMUNE HEALTH:

Conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) is a fatty acid that can modulate immune function. It is produced naturally by ruminants and is found in cow’s milk and dairy products. Studies have shown CLA to have a protective effect against the development of allergic symptoms, like rhinitis, asthma, and eczema, in infants.³²

“ Besides these specific benefits to children’s bone, metabolic, gut, and immune health, analyses from the UK³⁰ and US²⁹ have found that children who consume yoghurt on a regular basis tend to have healthier, more nutrient-dense diets ”

Dietitian, Dr Carrie Ruxton

Did you know?

Yoghurt makes a significant contribution to children’s nutrient recommendations e.g., Calcium 10% - 19%; Riboflavin (vitamin B2) 10% - 21%; Vitamin B12 17% - 54%



Section 4:

The future of children’s snacking

The evidence presented in this report confirms that a balanced diet for kids needs to prioritise the nutrient-dense foods that are important for growth and optimal development while limiting the ‘empty calories’ of biscuits, cakes, confectionery, and salty snacks.

“Dairy foods, like yoghurt, pack a highly nutritious punch so it is important that the decline in consumption is not only stopped but reversed,” says Dr Ruxton, adding: “If children continue to replace healthy foods like yoghurt with energy dense, nutrient poor substitutes like biscuits and sweets, the toll on their future health is likely to be significant.”

Policy makers, kids’ yoghurt manufacturers and retailers, and parents can all play important roles in achieving this turnaround in kids’ yoghurt consumption.

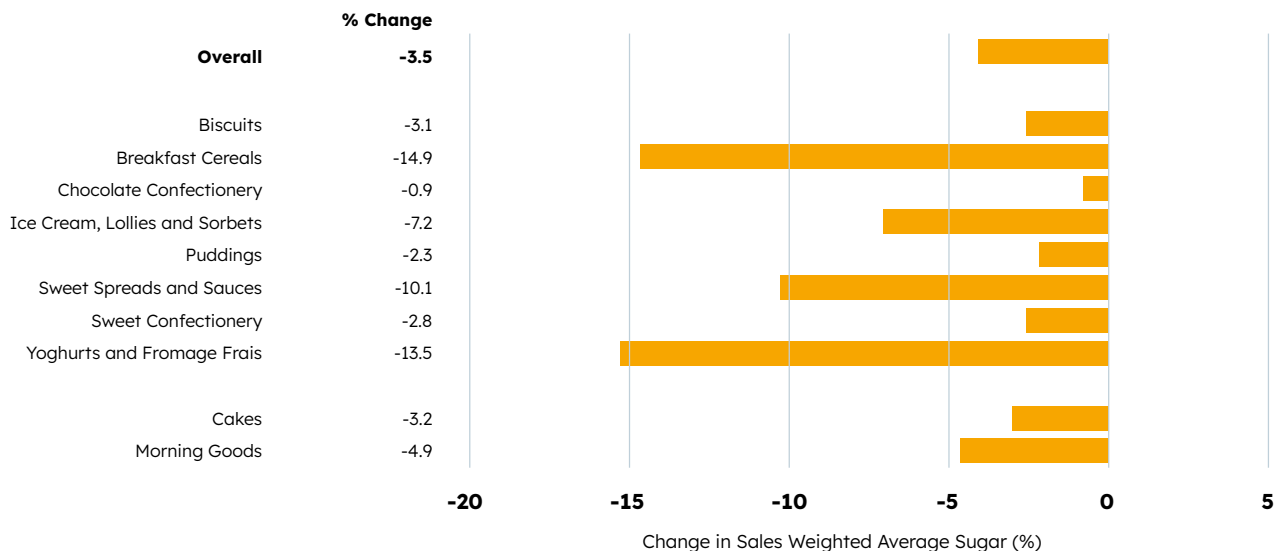
What can policy makers do?

1. Acknowledge the sugar reduction success of kids’ yoghurts.

In 2022, the UK’s sugar reduction programme reported significant reformulation in the ‘Yoghurts and Fromage Frais’ category which was one of the best performing amongst all food categories in the programme. The report noted a 13.5% drop in sales weighted average total sugars

between 2015 and 2020 among kids’ and adults’ yoghurts. In contrast, there was negligible sugar reduction in the confectionery, biscuits, and chocolate categories (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Percentage change in sales weighted average total sugar (g per 100g) by category between baseline (2015) and year 4 (2020) for retailers and manufacturer branded products) (ref. 17)



There is a risk that continued pressure on the yoghurt category to cut sugar further will widen the gap in sugar content between children's yoghurts and less healthy options, such as biscuits, confectionery, and cakes, leading to children preferring these sweeter empty calories instead of nutrient-rich yoghurt.

2. Balance the small sugar contribution of yoghurts with their significant contribution to the positive nutrients that support children's bone health and growth.

Kids' yoghurt is packed full of calcium, vitamin D, B vitamins, and protein which growing children need to develop into healthy, active adults. These nutrients can have a beneficial impact on their bone health²⁷, metabolic health³⁴, gut health³¹, and immune health³². If yoghurt doesn't taste good, it will not be eaten, and kids will miss out on these important nutrients. Adding small amounts of fruit puree and sugars help to improve palatability.

3. Target restrictive policies towards the kilos of expensive, nutrient-poor discretionary foods eaten by children every week.

A systematic review found that policies which limit children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing can help reduce household purchases of these foods, with knock on effects for public health³⁵. Getting a grip of the tide of discretionary foods purchased by families every week would not only give a boost to children's health but save a two-child family up to £470 a year which would be appreciated by many families experiencing budget constraints and rising prices.





What can the kids' yoghurt industry, including manufacturers and retailers, do?

1. Make category distinctions between kids' yoghurts and family desserts.

Kids' yoghurt might not look too different from dairy desserts but there is a world of difference between the two nutritionally. Yoplait and other manufacturers make kids' yoghurt using naturally sourced ingredients, with a limited sugar content, plus the right levels of nutrients for children's developing bodies. Family desserts and indulgent yoghurts, in comparison, might be marketed as 'yoghurt' but tend to feature additions, such as toffee, chocolate balls, confectionery or flakes, which are high in sugar and belong in the occasional treat category. Clearer signposting, in retail settings, between yoghurts that will benefit children's diets and health, and yoghurt-based desserts could help parents distinguish between the two.

2. Aim for consistent sugar reduction while maintaining taste.

The Yoplait surveys of shoppers and parents^{5,6} clearly show that taste is the main driver of yoghurt consumption in children. Part of the balancing act parents need to perfect is sourcing nutritious food that supports their child's growth and development, while at the same time making sure that the food is tasty, so that their child willingly eats it with little or no resistance. Taste is the first frontier. Without winning on this point, the child simply will not eat the product. So, the challenge for manufacturers is to gradually reduce sugar from their formulations, but too fast too soon and children will be lost from the category altogether.

3. Cater to parents' preference for clean labels.

In our shopper survey⁵, parents

expressed a preference for naturally sourced, kitchen-type ingredients and highlighted that artificial ingredients would be a concern for them. So, for manufacturers, and especially retailers, this means selling kids' yoghurts with no artificial flavours, sweeteners, colours, or bulking agents and other perceived 'nasties'.

4. Remind parents of the benefits of yoghurt.

Yoghurt has fallen by the wayside since many parents and kids have simply forgotten about the benefits or can't relate them to their situation. The Yoplait surveys^{5,6} demonstrate that kids' yoghurt ticks just about all the boxes parents have for an 'ideal snack' – nutritious, tasty, filling, and fuss-free. Yet a significant proportion of families are unaware of the health benefits, particularly in the category that have stopped buying kids' yoghurt.

What can parents and carers do?

1. Switch biscuits, sweets and cakes for healthier snacks.

Children will invariably reach for the sugary treat whenever it is offered, but that is not to say that they will refuse healthier alternatives. Besides being healthy and nutrient-dense, kids' yoghurt can double up as a treat, when the occasion demands..

2. Cater to kids' unique nutritional needs.

It is important for parents to understand that children are not little adults in terms of their nutritional needs. Children have specific dietary requirements which have been devised with their unique growth and development needs in mind. So, choosing child-appropriate products is a priority, especially those rich in vitamin D and calcium. Adult and dessert-type yoghurts tend to be higher in sugar and more energy dense and are not designed to meet the nutritional needs of children.

3. Make calories count by selecting nutrient-rich foods and snacks.

Most parents will have heard of the concept of 'empty calories' which refers to foods that are high in calories but low in essential nutrients. While these may satisfy immediate hunger pangs, they don't provide the protein, vitamins, or minerals that children's bodies need. Nutrient-rich foods like yoghurt, fresh fruit pieces, vegetable sticks, and cheese are a far better option when it comes to kids' snack time.

Conclusion

UK children are not getting the nutrients they need from their diets to support growth and protect growing bones. Healthy foods like kids' yoghurt, which is specially formulated for the unique nutritional needs of children, are being overlooked in favour of nutrient-poor, high calorie options, like biscuits, crisps, sweets, and chocolate.

Consumers need reminding of the nutritional benefits of yoghurt, not least the calcium and vitamin D it contains, which helps kids to develop strong, healthy bones for later life. That said, nutrition was an important consideration for the parents surveyed by Yoplait, along with getting value for money and overcoming the ultimate challenge: ensuring that kids like the taste.

Yoghurt manufacturers have made significant strides towards reducing the sugar content of their products. However, continuing with these efforts needs to be carefully balanced with not losing kids on this all-important taste factor by doing too much too soon.

One thing is clear, we need to steer children away from quick fix discretionary foods and get them more engaged with foods which provide essential nutrients for future growth and development, such as yoghurt. To help achieve this goal, kids' yoghurt manufacturers should sign up to a healthy framework to bring the goodness and fun back to this highly nutritious food category.

Policy makers can play their part by acknowledging that the nutritional benefits of kids' yoghurt far outweigh the small contribution it makes to sugar intakes and by targeting the real culprits contributing to poor diets in children, such as biscuits, crisps, sweets, cakes and sugar-sweetened soft drinks which together provide more than half of all sugars consumed by children and costs the average two-child family almost £470 a year.





Appendix

Calculating the economic cost of kid's unhealthy dietary habits

| | | | Based on intakes in 4 - 10 years olds (NDNS ref. 10) | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|--|------------|-----------------------------|---------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | Kcal / g | pence / g | Kcal / day | % energy | g / day | pence / day | x2 children pence | x7 days pence |
| Biscuits | ASDA | 4.88 | 0.33 | 82 | 6 | 16 | 5.55 | 11.09 | 77.63 |
| | Waitrose | 4.85 | 0.30 | 82 | 6 | 16.91 | 5.07 | 10.14 | 71.01 |
| Buns / cakes etc | ASDA | 3.12 | 0.62 | 87 | 6 | 27.88 | 17.29 | 34.58 | 242.04 |
| | Waitrose | 3.37 | 0.62 | 87 | 6 | 25.82 | 16.01 | 32.01 | 224.08 |
| Puddings | ASDA | 3.37 | 1.05 | 25 | 2 | 7.42 | 7.79 | 15.58 | 109.05 |
| | Waitrose | 3.58 | 1.29 | 25 | 2 | 6.98 | 9.01 | 18.02 | 126.12 |
| Ice cream | ASDA | 1.66 | 0.24 | 22 | 2 | 13.25 | 3.018 | 6.36 | 44.53 |
| | Waitrose | 1.41 | 0.27 | 22 | 2 | 15.60 | 4.21 | 8.43 | 58.98 |
| Savoury Snacks | ASDA | 5.30 | 0.73 | 52 | 4 | 9.81 | 7.16 | 14.32 | 100.27 |
| | Waitrose | 5.38 | 0.80 | 52 | 4 | 9.67 | 7.73 | 15.46 | 108.25 |
| Sugar, preserves and sweets | ASDA | 3.42 | 0.71 | 79 | 5 | 23.10 | 16.40 | 32.80 | 229.61 |
| | Waitrose | 3.42 | 0.74 | 79 | 5 | 23.10 | 17.09 | 34.19 | 239.31 |
| SSB | ASDA | 0.10 | 0.03 | 13 | 1 | 130.00 | 3.90 | 7.80 | 54.60 |
| | Waitrose | 0.20 | 0.07 | 13 | 1 | 65.00 | 4.55 | 9.10 | 63.70 |
| ASDA Totals | | | | 360 | 25% of 1442 kcal / d | | 61.27 | 122.54 £1.23 | 857.78 £8.58 |
| Waitrose Totals | | | | 360 | 25% of 1442 kcal / d | | 63.67 | 127.34 £1.27 | 891.38 £8.91 |

*Product table available on request; SSB=sugar sweetened beverages; kcal = kilocalories

| | | | | Based on intakes in 11 - 18 years olds (NDNS ref. 10) | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|---|-----------------------------|---------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | Kcal / g | pence / g | Kcal / day | % energy | g / day | pence / day | x2 children pence | x7 days pence |
| Biscuits | ASDA | 4.88 | 0.33 | 69 | 5 | 14.14 | 4.67 | 9.33 | 65.32 |
| | Waitrose | 4.85 | 0.30 | 69 | 5 | 14.23 | 4.27 | 8.54 | 59.75 |
| Buns / cakes etc | ASDA | 3.12 | 0.62 | 58 | 4 | 18.59 | 11.53 | 23.05 | 161.36 |
| | Waitrose | 3.37 | 0.62 | 58 | 4 | 17.21 | 10.67 | 21.34 | 149.39 |
| Puddings | ASDA | 3.37 | 1.05 | 16 | 1 | 4.75 | 4.99 | 9.97 | 69.79 |
| | Waitrose | 3.58 | 1.29 | 16 | 1 | 4.47 | 5.77 | 11.53 | 80.72 |
| Ice cream | ASDA | 1.66 | 0.24 | 16 | 1 | 9.64 | 2.31 | 4.63 | 32.39 |
| | Waitrose | 1.41 | 0.27 | 16 | 1 | 11.35 | 3.06 | 6.13 | 42.89 |
| Savoury Snacks | ASDA | 5.30 | 0.73 | 52 | 4 | 9.81 | 7.16 | 14.32 | 100.27 |
| | Waitrose | 5.38 | 0.80 | 52 | 4 | 9.67 | 7.73 | 15.46 | 108.25 |
| Sugar, preserves and sweets | ASDA | 3.42 | 0.71 | 70 | 5 | 20.47 | 14.53 | 29.06 | 203.45 |
| | Waitrose | 3.42 | 0.74 | 70 | | 20.47 | 15.15 | 30.29 | 212.05 |
| SSB | ASDA | 0.10 | 0.03 | 39 | 3 | 390 | 11.70 | 23.40 | 163.80 |
| | Waitrose | 0.20 | 0.07 | 39 | 3 | 195 | 13.65 | 27.30 | 191.10 |
| ASDA Totals | | | | 326 | 23% of 1653 kcal / d | | 56.89 | 113.78 £1.14 | 796.46 £7.96 |
| Waitrose Totals | | | | 326 | 23% of 1653 kcal / d | | 60.30 | 120.60 £1.21 | 844.20 £8.44 |

*Product table available on request; SSB=sugar sweetened beverages; kcal = kilocalories



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