

<http://www.jahonline.org/article/PIIS1054139X02003440/pdf>

Purpose: To compare the lifestyle-related characteristics of low-meat consumer and omnivore adolescents in Sweden and Norway.

Methods: A total of 2041 students (578 from Umeå, Sweden; 504 from Stockholm, Sweden; and 959 from Bergen, Norway), with a mean age of 15.5 years, completed a questionnaire. Information was collected about physical characteristics, and health, family situation, social, exercise, alcohol, and tobacco habits. The response rate was 95% in Umeå, 91% in Stockholm, and 83% in Bergen. Statistical analyses included Chi-square and Mann-Whitney U tests.

Results: There was no reported difference between low-meat consumers and omnivores with respect to alcohol use, smoking, weight, or amount of exercise. Female low-meat consumers more frequently used smokeless tobacco, reported having more sick days during the last year, attached less importance to "being healthy," and had been depressed more often than female omnivores. Male low-meat consumers reported, to a greater extent than male omnivores, having been tired without reason, having often had headaches and having been depressed. Female low-meat consumers had parents with a higher average level of education than did female omnivores and more often spent time with friends after school.

Conclusions: Vegetarianism or low-meat consumption is mainly a female phenomenon among adolescents in this study. The study indicates that the lifestyle of young low-meat consumers differs from the lifestyle found in previous studies of vegetarians with respect to the respondents' exercise habits, their perception of their own health, and their use of alcohol and tobacco. Contrary to findings from other studies, adherence to a low-meat diet may not correlate with other health promotion practices among adolescents in Sweden and Norway.