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Study reveals that immigrant teenagers eat better than Spanish teenagers

This release is also available in [Spanish](#).

According to a study carried out at the [Department of Experimental Sciences](#) of the University of Granada immigrant teenagers eat better than Spanish teenagers. For this reason, immigrant teenagers have a lower probability of suffering from obesity, diabetes and other cardiovascular diseases caused by bad eating habits. The study has not only analysed for the first time the habits and attitudes of immigrants towards nutrition, but it also has pointed out that interculturality applied to the eating field improves teenagers' health.

Lorena Ramos Chamorro is the author of this study, which has been directed by professors José Antonio Naranjo Rodríguez and Francisco González García. Lorena Ramos Chamorro has carried out more than 800 surveys among Spanish and immigrant teenagers in the Basque Country and Castille and Leon. Results of her research have shown that the eating habits of immigrants are much better than those of the Spanish, since they eat more fruit, vegetables, cereals and natural juice than Spanish teenagers. The research also concludes that immigrants eat fewer snacks and sweets. On the other hand, Spanish teenagers drink a higher amount of milk and are more aware of the importance of having breakfast, since 75% of them eat before going to school, although those immigrants that do eat breakfast eat a more complete one and devote more time to it.

For their part, Spanish girls show the highest level of knowledge about issues related to nutrition. However, paradoxically, if compared to the rest of people analyzed in this research, Spanish girls consume the highest percentage of sweets.

More proteins

The above-mentioned analysis of eating habits has shown that immigrant teenagers studying in Spain – most of them from South America, the Arab Countries, the Baltic Countries and China – eat more proteins than Spanish teenagers. These proteins are contained in food such as quinoa, amaranth, millet, soya or yucca, and sweet potato. Lorena Ramos Chamorro points out that immigrants are more likely to try new foods and to eat something they do not know than Spanish people.

Within the framework of this study, Lorena Ramos Chamorro has designed and implemented a multicultural educational programme based on food and nutrition. This programme has been applied to students of the third year of Compulsory Secondary Education in the IES Cartuja school in Granada. Under the title Alimentación Intercultural. Comer mejor es posible (Intercultural Alimentation, Eating better is possible), "respect and acceptance of differences based on food have been fostered, this fact being the best example of cultural diversity". In this way, through this initiative students have tasted food and flavours from the countries of origin of their immigrant classmates. Furthermore, "students have shared traditions and customs, allowing immigrants to maintain their identity in spite of cultural differences". Finally, and according to Lorena Ramos Chamorro, this project "has improved, practically by 100%, students' eating habits". She also states that her study has shown that "it is possible to improve coexistence among students and create an educational atmosphere based on equal rights and interculturality".

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