

# ITC INSIGHTS: SUPPLEMENT CONSUMER SURVEY 2020

**VITAMIN K CATEGORY**  
Executive Summary

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## What is the ITC 2020 Survey?

Ingredient Transparency Center recently concluded its third annual consumer survey, involving 2000 consumers from the US, UK and Germany. Our multi-category insights drive understanding of supplement purchasing behaviors and decisions with an intense focus on emerging and important categories, placed into context by comparing these against more established and broader categories like probiotics, omega-3s, vitamin D and protein.

The emerging categories explored include astaxanthin, coenzyme Q10, collagen, curcumin/turmeric, glucosamine, prebiotics and vitamin K.

This is the first year that multiple countries have been included in our survey, allowing ITC to present comparisons across the US, UK and Germany in all these categories. We've also looked at year over year data in the US though some findings have been impacted by COVID which are noted.

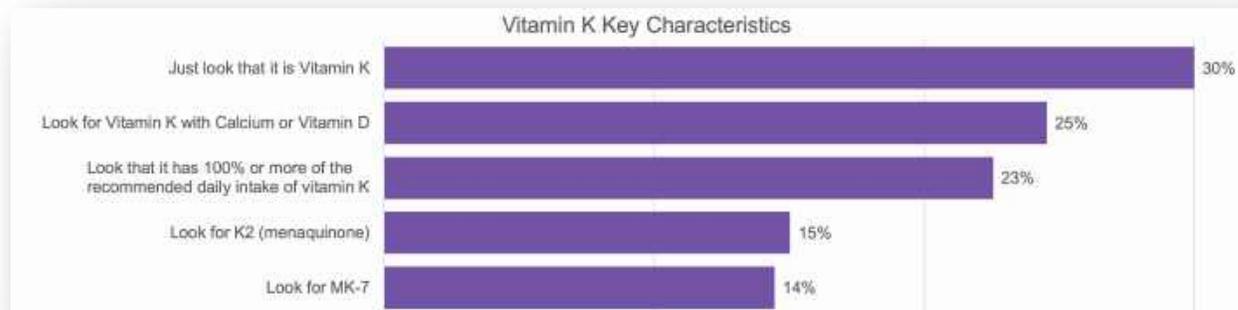


## Digging into Vitamin K:

The Ingredient Transparency Center has been tracking the K-2 market for 3 years, engaging in repeated dialogue with key sector stakeholders. With 3 years of knowledge, and ITC having expanded the scope of the 2020 insights to include the UK and Germany, some crucial observations and insights come to the surface.

This essential, fat-soluble vitamin exists as Phylloquinone (K1) in plants, menaquinone (K2) in animals, and a fermented soybean product known as *natto*. K2 is involved in the production of osteocalcin, which strengthens bones, as well as in the production of matrix GLA protein, which is involved in the prevention of vascular calcification by repairing smooth muscle. It is garnering increasing attention in a variety of additional processes such as clotting, insulin sensitivity, kidney function and both bone and joint health. It is therefore no surprise that K2 has been enjoying increasing recognition and support in the healthcare practitioner world with doctor recommendations increasing and being influential in the significant uptick in consumer usage.

While leafy greens and fermented and animal food products (small amounts) are food sources of K1 and K2 respectively, research continues to emerge supporting supplementation, especially with K2 for a variety of health issues and concerns. This has led to the emergence of a strong, although niche supplement sector globally, with primary research supporting bone and joint health, followed by cardiovascular health and emerging information impacting immune health as well as sports and active nutrition.



The bone/joint health and anti-blood clotting functionalities – and to a lesser degree cognitive and immune health – linked with vitamin K2 are well aligned with primary American health concerns of joint and pain relief, anxiety and high cholesterol and blood pressure. While not often formulated as a sole active ingredient, vitamin K is usually found in other supplement formulations like multivitamins or bone health-focused vitamin D, or employed for its antioxidant function and concerns about bone, brain and heart health.

In the United States, there is no RDA for K. The Institute of Medicine has suggested an adequate intake of 90 mcg for women and 120mcg for men, based on K1, but there is no government intake recommendation thus far for K2, even though medical advocates suggest the same amount of K2 as K1 would be good for healthy adults, while for those looking for health benefits above ‘adequacy’, higher amounts may be required. Generic health claims linking vitamin K and blood coagulation and bone health exist in the European Union, but vitamin K2 claims have been rejected there and no FDA-approved claims exist in the US. Some sector players are calling for government intake levels to demarcate vitamin K1 and vitamin K2 and raise the profile of K2.

Consumers, at this point, though, in all three countries surveyed, are increasingly knowledgeable and discerning – illustrated by what they look for when buying vitamin K products. There is still significant education to be done across multiple stakeholder groups so that the science meets the market where it’s at, and also so that consumers can be more discerning in what they look for on label.

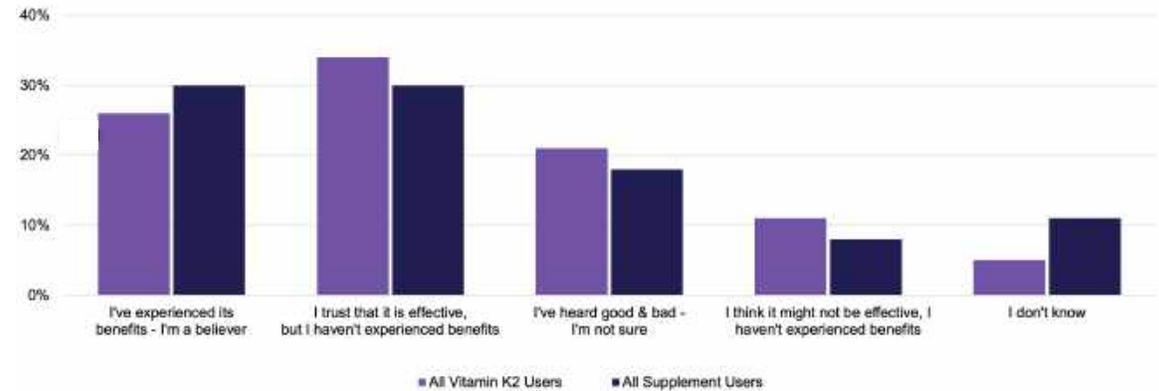
## The growing market opportunity

The global market for K2 is growing at about 8% annually. On the supply side of this market, companies such as Nattopharma, Kappa Biosciences and Gnosis (Lessafre), supply differentiated, branded ingredients with levels of scientific support. Much of the balance of the marketplace is composed of largely commoditized, poorly characterized products. An average of analyst projections sizes the global vitamin K2 finished product market at around \$200m in 2020.

## A growing value proposition

Compared to other categories monitored by ITC Insights, the difference in monthly spend between regular and irregular supplement users was greatest in vitamin K2 out of all the categories in the ITC survey: regular US users spent about \$20/month compared to just \$11.82 for irregular users. Vitamin K users also pay significant attention to labels, seeking signals of trust and identifiers of transparency. Branded ingredients also impact the buying behaviors of these supplement consumers, with a strong recognition and appreciation of branded ingredients in the vitamin K space.

Only 11% of US consumers are ‘believers’ in Vitamin K’s health benefits compared to Vitamin D which had the most believers with 39%, followed by probiotics (27%) and fish oils (26%). Suppliers and manufacturers have engaged in education campaigns built on vitamin K’s science-backed health benefits but the above-mentioned low level of benefit ‘believers’ points to further education opportunities.



Future drivers of the category are expected to include broad education, learned from categories such as omega-3’s, probiotics and to a certain extent, vitamin D, especially amongst practitioners. Meanwhile, the continued rise of apps and ‘personalization’ all support ongoing category potential, as does the practitioner channel of sale.