

STAYING VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN

2025 VRG Poll Results

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In 2006, readers of The Vegetarian Resource Group magazine responded to a survey. We followed up with them six years later in 2012. In 2012, of those who were vegans in 2006, 81% were still vegan, 16% were now vegetarian, and 3% were not vegetarian. In 2012, of those who were vegetarians (not including vegans) in 2006, 74% were still vegetarian, 22% were now vegan, and 4% were not vegetarian. We thought vegans would have been most likely to stay vegetarian or vegan, and that whether you were vegan or vegetarian because of health, ethical, or environmental reasons would have impact. But those factors didn't matter that much. Either way, about 96-97% were still vegetarian or vegan six years after the initial survey. Seemed pretty impressive for retention. Think how often people tell you they are going on a diet and then they are off it. Our results were interesting, but since this was just a survey of our members, it could not be applied to the general public.

In 2025, we commissioned YouGov to run a national poll, which would be representative of the American population. One of our questions was:

Which one, if any, of the following best describes your eating habits? Please select the one that best applies.

- I did not eat meat, fish, poultry, or seafood during a period of 1-2 years in my life, but now eat one or more of those products.
- I did not eat meat, fish, poultry, or seafood during a period of 3-9 years in my life, but now eat one or more of those products.
- I did not eat meat, fish, poultry, or seafood during a period of 10 or more years in my life, but now eat one or more of those products.
- I did not eat meat, fish, poultry, seafood, dairy, or eggs during a period of 1-2 years in my life, but now eat one or more of those products.
- I did not eat meat, fish, poultry, seafood, dairy, or eggs during a period of 3-9 years in my life, but now eat one or more of those products.
- I did not eat meat, fish, poultry, seafood, dairy, or eggs during a period of 10 years or more in my life, but now eat one or more of those products.
- I currently don't eat meat, fish, poultry, or seafood.
- I currently don't eat meat, fish, poultry, seafood, dairy, or eggs.
- I currently don't use meat, fish, poultry, seafood, dairy, eggs, or other animal products such as leather.
- I've always eaten one or more of these foods: meat, fish, poultry, or seafood.

We found:

- 2% currently don't eat meat, fish, poultry, or seafood.
- 1% currently don't eat meat, fish, poultry, seafood, dairy, or eggs.
- 1% currently don't use meat, fish, poultry, seafood, dairy, eggs, or other animal products such as leather.
- 2% total vegan (2% of males, 2% of females; 2% of blacks, 2% of whites, 2% of Hispanics/Latinos)
- 4% vegetarian including vegan.
- 5% were vegetarian three or more years in their life, but are not now vegetarian (or vegan).
(If the 5% had stayed vegetarian, and then was added to the 2% currently vegetarian, taking into account rounding, 8% would have been vegetarian currently not including vegans.) (3.2% three to nine years, plus 2.29% 10 plus years, plus 2.43% current.)
- 1.37% were vegan three or more years in their life, but are now not vegetarian (or vegan).
(If this 1.37% had stayed vegan, and then were added to the 2% currently vegan, 3% would have been currently vegan. 11% would have been vegetarian, including vegan; using 8% would have been vegetarian plus 3% would have been vegan.)

Note: From a separate question in this poll, using decimal points when adding, 36% of respondents always, sometimes, or usually eat vegan. (35% if didn't use the decimal points.) In VRG's 2022 YouGov Poll, 29% always, sometimes, or usually eat vegan meals. This market for vegan foods is different than the one for only strict vegans, though there is overlap.

So, what are some attributes that might cause people to stay or become vegan? We asked of everybody, not just vegetarians: **Which THREE, if any, of the following, would cause you to NOT eat meat, fish, poultry, seafood, dairy, or eggs? Please select up to three options. (We included answers below.)**

- 17% I could stay healthy without eating these products
- 16% Alternative products tasted better
- 13% Alternative products cost less
- 13% I had more information about what else to eat or why not to eat those foods
- 13% It is less expensive than eating animal products
- 10% Alternative products had the same texture as what they were replacing
- 10% I don't have to buy special or unusual foods
- 9% Organic, humanely raised, or free-range animal products were not available
- 7% My friends and/or family didn't eat these products
- 52% Not applicable—I will always eat meat, fish, poultry, seafood, dairy, or eggs

Interestingly, 66% of Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) said they would always eat these animal products, but only 45% of Gen Z (born 1997-2012) said this.

Are there any lessons here for vegan activists or food companies? Perhaps rather than being a pest to hardcore meat eaters, focus on the almost half of the population who are interested. With all the veggie information out there, people still want more. Make sure that events like VegFests aren't only about food, but have groups there giving out vegan information. People do care about costs and not everyone wants to buy special or unusual foods. Make sure to share information about common and inexpensive vegan foods like bean tacos, vegetables and pasta of all kinds, hummus which is in most supermarkets, lentil soups, and so on. Though appropriate sometimes, you don't need to always push fake meats. We noted that 9% said they would eat vegan if organic, humanely raised, or free-range products were not available. We wonder if groups didn't promote these items, would up to 9% more people become vegan. What do you think?

We also asked: **Which TWO, if any, of the following is most important to you when making food choices? Please select up to two options.**

- 58% Taste
- 47% Cost
- 32% Personal health
- 11% Similar to foods I grew up with
- 10% Convenience
- 7% The environment
- 7% Animal welfare
- 5% Ethics
- 5% Texture
- 4% Religious beliefs
- 4% None of these

So here, not surprisingly, the biggies are taste, cost, and personal health, followed up by similar to foods I grew up with and convenience. Of course there are some contradictions here, and you have to figure out each person. Healthful foods can taste good, but people are used to foods they grew up, which may not be so healthy. Cutting up veggies after work isn't always convenient, so you may buy cut-up veggies in the store, which can be more expensive. You have to figure out what works for you. And of course some do care about the ethics, animal welfare, and the environment. But even for those folks, keep in mind taste and costs. You can find some of The Vegetarian Resource Group low cost meal plans at www.vrg.org/nutrition/#nutrition-meal-plans

GO VEGAN!

An additional question we asked was: **Which, if any, of the following items might you purchase? Please select all that apply.**

- 27% A plant-based dairy beverage like soymilk, oat milk, or almond milk.
- 27% A freshly prepared or packaged vegetarian or vegan meal containing leafy greens, such as broccoli, kale, or collards, that just has to be heated to be served (or eaten as purchased).
- 27% A freshly prepared or packaged vegetarian or vegan meal containing whole foods, such as lentils, chickpeas, or rice, that just has to be heated to be served (or eaten as purchased).
- 27% Ingredients to cook a vegetarian or vegan dish containing leafy greens, such as broccoli, kale, or collards.
- 27% Ingredients to cook a vegetarian or vegan dish containing whole foods, such as lentils, chickpeas, or rice.
- 21% A plant-based burger.
- 20% A veggie burger that costs the same or less than meat.
- 19% A vegetarian burger.
- 16% A vegan burger.
- 11% A meat alternative grown from animal cell DNA obtained 10 years ago, which does not currently involve the raising of animals.
- 40% Not applicable—I would not purchase any of the items.

Restaurants, food companies, and others should take notice that 60% of the population is a potential market for these plant-based foods. However, note that consumers are more interested in plant-based whole foods, rather than just analogs such as burgers. So think flavorful leafy greens, whole grains, and legumes like lentils and chickpeas.

In addition, we queried of everybody: **In which, if any, of the following is ethics at least one consideration when making decisions? Please select all that apply.**

- 45% Medical Treatments
- 45% Politics
- 43% Food
- 43% Finances
- 42% Relationships (e.g. family, friends)
- 41% Jobs/Career
- 40% Education
- 29% Shopping
- 25% Travel
- 22% Recreation (e.g. hobbies, sports)
- 13% None of these

Many people involved in groups or activists have strong opinions. There are certainly segments of a target audience that can be reached with your ethics. But worth noting is that less than half the population takes ethics into consideration when thinking about food, or other areas of their life. And of course those who do don't necessarily have the same beliefs. So marketers and activists should consider their various target audiences when making decisions on how to reach them.

GROCERY LIST

- BROCCOLI
- CHICKPEAS
- LENTILS
- KALE

AND MILK
BURGERS

Some companies hope to reach consumers by producing/creating/making food not using animal products, but based on DNA or cells from animals. We asked: **There are types of meat and dairy alternatives that are made using NO animals (or animal products) but are based on animal cells or DNA extracted years ago from a live animal. In your opinion, should (they): Include a statement on the package that informs consumers that the product uses animal cell DNA or is animal gene-derived?** 72% said yes, 10% said no, and 18% didn't know. Less than half thought that products based on animal cells or DNA extracted years ago from a live animal should be labeled vegan (41%), animal-free (48%), or plant-based (46%).

Separately, we will be doing a deeper dive into information concerning those consuming vegan foods. We define a vegetarian as someone who never/does not consume meat, fish, poultry, or seafood. We define a vegan as a vegetarian who doesn't/never eats meat, fish, seafood, poultry, dairy, or eggs. This survey was conducted by YouGov. All figures, unless stated otherwise, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,769 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between February 6-10, 2025 online in the United States. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all U.S. adults aged 18 and over. Results are based on a sample and are subject to statistical errors normally associated with sample-based information.

For the above questions, we can have a 95% confidence level that VRG's numbers from YouGov are plus or minus 1% (margin of error). The ethics question would be 2% margin of error. Be careful when comparing poll numbers to other polls or countries, as questions and definitions of vegetarian and vegan are often different. That is why we name foods, rather than just asking if you are vegetarian or vegan. You can see other Vegetarian Resource Group polls at vrg.org/nutshell/faq.htm#poll

