Diet Change and Demographic Characteristics of Vegans, Vegetarians, Semi-Vegetarians, and Omnivores

Humane League Labs
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www.HumaneLeagueLabs.com
www.TheHumaneLeague.com
Methodology
Surveys were collected online from anonymous respondents (although most respondents provided an email address). Respondents were reached primarily through notices posted on several Facebook pages relating to vegetarian eating, vegetarian meat products, and sociological research.

A total of 3,300 respondents took the survey, with approximately 2,700 completing all 53 questions. The majority of respondents were from the U.S., though a small number were from other nations. To arrive at the data displayed on the following pages, we removed all respondents who were animal activists or vegetarian activists. Respondents were considered to be activists if they answered yes when asked if they were involved with a vegetarian or animal advocacy organization beyond simply donating money to such organizations. Activists were removed so that the data would most accurately reflect vegans, vegetarians, semi-vegetarians, and other groups as a whole, rather than the members of each group who are also motivated enough to be activists for animal protection or vegetarian eating causes.

Removing individuals involved with vegetarian or animal advocacy organizations left us with 1,733 respondents. Of these, 614 were classified as vegan, 377 as vegetarian, 417 as semi-vegetarian, and 325 as omnivores. Classifications were made by us based on respondents’ self-reports of how often they ate various animal products. They were classified as follows:

- **Omnivore**: Those who eat chicken at least every other day, regardless of their consumption of other animal products
- **Semi-Vegetarian**: Those who eat chicken, pork, beef, and fish/seafood no more than once per week (once per week per category; so someone may eat beef once a week and chicken once a week and still be classified as a semi-vegetarian)
- **Vegetarian**: Those who do not consume beef, pork, or fish/seafood
- **Vegan**: Those who do not consume beef, pork, fish/seafood, eggs, or dairy

Additional classifications used in certain parts of the report are as follows:

- **Future Reducer**: Those who intend to reduce their consumption of animal products in the future, regardless of current diet
- **Meat Reducer**: Those who still eat all types of meat, but who are eating less meat than they used to
- **Red Meat Avoider**: Those who consume no red meat
- **Pescatarian**: Those who consume no red meat or poultry, but do consume fish

The results of the survey are detailed on the following pages. The full data set with all respondents was retained and is available for download on the Humane League Labs website, http://www.HumaneLeagueLabs.com, as are additional sets of data, the original questionnaire, and other items related to the study.

Special thanks is owed to Amit Steinberg, Gary Shapiro, and Shelley Hurwitz of Statistics Without Borders for their incredibly generous donation of time and expertise to analyze all of the data in the study. This study would not have been possible without their work and support.
Results
1. How frequently do people of different diets consume animal products?

Extra definitions for this question:

**Standard Eaters**: Those who eat beef or pork more than once per week

**Low Red Meat Eaters**: Those who do not eat beef or pork more than once per week, but who do eat beef and/or pork.
**Egg Consumption**
(average number of days per month eggs are consumed)

- Standard Eaters: 12
- Low Red Meat Eaters: 10
- Red Meat Avoiders: 8
- Pescatarians: 7
- Vegetarians: 6
- Vegans: 0

**Dairy Consumption**
(average number of days per month dairy is consumed)

- Standard Eaters: 23
- Low Red Meat Eaters: 19
- Red Meat Avoiders: 14
- Pescatarians: 14
- Vegetarians: 13
- Vegans: 0
2. How often do people consume vegan products?

Which do you eat every 1-2 Days? (Vegans)

- Non-Dairy Milk: 27%
- Seitan: 9%
- Tempeh: 7%
- Tofu: 32%
- Vegetarian Meat: 29%

Which do you eat every 1-2 Days? (Vegetarians)

- Non-Dairy Milk: 33%
- Seitan: 4%
- Tempeh: 4%
- Tofu: 26%
- Vegetarian Meat: 32%

Which do you eat every 1-2 Days? (Semi-Vegetarians)

- Non-Dairy Milk: 30%
- Seitan: 2%
- Tempeh: 2%
- Tofu: 12%
- Vegetarian Meat: 18%
Additional Notes

- Men and women reported eating vegan products in about equal amounts (even though men were more likely to be omnivores).

- People who want to reduce their animal consumption and feel they know how to do so, and people who want to reduce their animal consumption but don’t feel they know how to do so, report eating about the same amount of vegan products.
3. Among respondents who have seen videos or printed material about cruelty to farm animals, what percentage of each group reduced their consumption of animal products after viewing those materials?

(The above is a zoomed-in view that reflects the slight difference between each medium. See the graph below for an overview of how each medium fared.)
Additional Notes

- The likelihood that respondents said they were persuaded by viewing videos or printed material went down moderately as their education level went up.

- The likelihood that respondents said they were persuaded by viewing videos or printed material went down slightly as income levels and socioeconomic background went up.
7. How willing are people to reduce their consumption of animal products? And – among those who want to reduce – what percentage feel they know how to start?
Additional Notes

- The higher respondents’ income level, the more likely people who wanted to reduce their meat consumption were to feel they knew how to make the change.
8. Among those who want to go vegetarian or vegan but haven’t, why haven’t they? (Answers coded and tabulated from free-form answers)
9. For those respondents who don’t want to go vegetarian or vegan, why don’t they? (Answers coded and tabulated from free-form answers.)

For those who don’t want to go vegetarian or vegan, why don’t they - all respondents

For those who don’t want to go vegetarian or vegan, why don’t they - students
10. Among those who have reduced or eliminated their consumption of animal products (the majority of whom are vegetarian or vegan), which of the following motivations played a large part in their initial decision to do so?
11. Among those who have reduced or eliminated their consumption of animal products, what was their single biggest reason for doing so?
Additional Notes

- Respondents who live in rural areas were less likely to cite animal welfare reasons and more likely to cite health reasons as their primary reason for reducing their consumption of animal products.

- Compared to heterosexual respondents, LGBT respondents were slightly more likely to cite animal welfare reasons as their primary reason for reducing their consumption of animal products.

- Christians were less likely to cite animal welfare reasons as their primary reason for reducing their consumption of animal products.

- Respondents who reduced their consumption of animal products were more likely to cite health as their primary concern, and less likely to cite animal welfare as their primary concern, as education level increased.
Respondents who currently live in wealthier households were less likely to cite animal welfare as their primary concern, but respondents who were raised in wealthier households were more likely to cite animal welfare as their primary concern.
12. Among those who reduced or eliminated their consumption of animal products primarily out of a concern for animal welfare, which of the following three factors influenced them the most?
For those who reduced or eliminated animal products out of concern for animals, what influenced them most - by gender

- Killing
- Cruel Conditions On Farm
- Farm Animals Have Intelligence/Emotions

Women: 23% Killing, 9% Cruel Conditions On Farm, 12% Farm Animals Have Intelligence/Emotions

Men: 25% Killing, 24% Cruel Conditions On Farm, 12% Farm Animals Have Intelligence/Emotions
13. Among those who reduced or eliminated their consumption of animal products primarily out of a concern for health, which of the following four factors influenced them the most?
14. For those who are continuing to avoid some or all animal products in their diet, which of the following three concerns play a large part in their reasons for continuing to do so?

**Which of these are large reasons for continuing to avoid or reduce animal product consumption - by current diet**

- Vegans: 86% Animals, 60% Health, 59% Environment
- Vegetarians: 79% Animals, 56% Health, 40% Environment
- Semi-vegetarians: 66% Animals, 52% Health, 44% Environment
- Omnivores: 37% Animals, 32% Health, 32% Environment

**Which of these are large reasons for continuing to avoid or reduce animal product consumption - by age**

- College: 77% Animals, 50% Health, 54% Environment
- Twenties: 71% Animals, 52% Health, 54% Environment
- All Ages: 73% Animals, 60% Health, 51% Environment
15. Which three of the following resources or events were most influential in leading people (most of whom are vegan or vegetarian) to initially reduce or eliminate their consumption of animal products?
Which three resources/events were most influential in leading respondents to initially reduce or eliminate animal product consumption - omnivores

Which three resources/events were most influential in leading respondents to initially reduce or eliminate animal product consumption - college (mostly vegetarian or vegan)
Which three resources/events were most influential in leading respondents to initially reduce or eliminate animal product consumption - twenties (mostly vegetarian or vegan)

Which three resources/events were most influential in leading respondents to initially reduce or eliminate animal product consumption - all ages (mostly vegetarian or vegan)
16. For people who are continuing to avoid some or all animal products (most of whom are vegan or vegetarian), which three events or resources are most helpful for keeping them motivated?

Which three resources/events are most helpful for keeping you motivated to remove animal products from your diet - vegans and vegetarians

Which three resources/events are most helpful for keeping you motivated to remove animal products from your diet - semi-vegetarians
Which three resources/events are most helpful for keeping you motivated to remove animal products from your diet - all ages (mostly vegetarian or vegan)
17. Which two of these resources or events were most helpful for learning how to reduce or eliminate animal products from their diet?

Additional Notes

- Men are more likely than women to turn to friends and family to learn how to change their diet
- Use of books goes up, and use of leaflets, online video, and organized groups goes down as education level goes up
- Use of books goes up and use of websites goes down as income level or socioeconomic background goes up
18. In the first few months after they started to reduce or eliminate animal products from their diet, which of the following did people use to a large extent to replace meat in their diet?

**In the first few months after reducing or eliminating animal products, what did they use (to a large extent) to replace meat in their diet - by current diet**

**In the first few months after reducing or eliminating animal products, what did they use (to a large extent) to replace meat in their diet - by age**

**Additional Notes**

- Respondents in the U.S. were twice as likely to use vegetarian meats and tofu as those from other countries.
- Use of beans and vegetables went up, and use of vegetarian meat went down, as age increased.
• Women used beans and vegetables more often than men.

• Use of everything on the list except tofu dropped as education level increased, especially the use of vegetarian meat.
19. What percentage of respondents (most of whom are vegan or vegetarian) thought it was very or moderately difficult to eliminate each type of animal product from their diet?
Additional Notes

- The percentage of respondents who found it difficult to remove chicken dropped as age increased.
- Women found it harder to give up dairy and eggs, and easier to give up chicken, than men.
- Atheists and agnostics found it easier to give up all products than Jews and Christians.
- There was no clear correlation between education, income, and socioeconomic background and how difficult people found it to give up animal products.
20. Which of the following issues made eating meat-free meals difficult to a moderate or large extent?

![Bar chart showing percentage of vegans/vegetarians, semi-vegetarians, and omnivores who found eating meat-free meals difficult.]

- Lack of Options When Eating Out
- People Around Me Still Eat Meat
- Loss of Initial Motivation
- Lack of Food at Grocery Store
- Lack of Support from Friends/Family
- Health Concerns

![Bar chart showing percentage of different age groups who found it difficult to reduce or eliminate certain products from their diet.]

- Lack of Options When Eating Out
- Lack of Support from Friends/Family
- Lack of Food at Grocery Store
- People Around Me Still Eat Meat
- Loss of Initial Motivation
- Health Concerns
30. How do people move from one diet to another over time?

**Transition Matrix – All Respondents**

This matrix shows the likelihood that a person of one particular diet will change to another diet or remain in their current diet over the course of one year. Note that this matrix reflects all respondents in the survey – the majority of whom are vegetarian or vegan. Therefore, it is demonstrative of how vegetarians, vegans, and semi-vegetarians move around the range of diets. It is not demonstrative of how the public as a whole (most of whom are omnivores) moves around the range of diets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Omnivore</th>
<th>Meat Reducer</th>
<th>Red Meat Avoider</th>
<th>Pescatarian</th>
<th>Vegetarian</th>
<th>Vegan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omnivore</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat Reducer</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>91.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Meat Avoider</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pescatarian</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegan</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transition Matrix – Adjusted To Be Representative Of The U.S. Population**

In the matrix below, the respondents included were chosen to be representative of the general U.S. population in terms of diet choice. In other words, the percentage of omnivores in this sample is equivalent to the percentage of omnivores in the general population; the percentage of semi-vegetarians in the sample is equivalent to the percentage of semi-vegetarians in the general population; etc.

While this matrix does not perfectly reflect the U.S. public – there are likely more individuals who tried vegetarian, vegan, or semi-vegetarian diets at some point prior to going back to omnivorous diets in this group of respondents than there are in the general population, and therefore there are likely higher rates of change shown here than there is in the general population – it is much more representative of the general population than the matrix above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Omnivore</th>
<th>Meat Reducer</th>
<th>Red Meat Avoider</th>
<th>Pescatarian</th>
<th>Vegetarian</th>
<th>Vegan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omnivore</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat Reducer</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>94.1%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Meat Avoider</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pescatarian</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetarian</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegan</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents' Diet Changes Over Time – All Respondents

This chart reflects trend lines in the number of respondents who adopted each diet at each age. It does not reflect the number or percentage of respondents who hold a particular diet at any given time. The declining number of changes over time is due to the fact that only a small number of respondents are 65 or over. The chart is included to give some indication of at what age people are more likely to make certain diet changes.
Respondents’ Diet Changes Over Time – Respondents Age 28-32

This chart reflects trend lines in the number of respondents who adopted each diet at each age level. It does not reflect the number or percentage of respondents who hold a particular diet at any given time. The only respondents included are those age 28-32 at the time of taking the survey, to give a better representation than the chart above of at what age diet change is most likely to occur.)
31. What percentage of respondents in this survey intends to further reduce their consumption of animal products?
38. Does marital status correlate to consumption of animal products?

Additional Notes

- Married respondents were more likely to say they intend to reduce meat consumption in the future, and were more likely to feel they know how to make the change in the future.

- These results stand in contrast to several other previously conducted studies. This may be a result of the fact that in this study young respondents were less likely to be vegetarian than older respondents, whereas in society overall young people are more likely to be vegetarian.
39. Is sexual orientation correlated to animal product consumption?

What percentage of this group of respondents have reduced or intend to reduce animal product consumption - by sexual orientation

- Vegan or Vegetarian: 60% Heterosexual, 56% LGBT
- Semi-Vegetarian: 24% Heterosexual, 22% LGBT
- Omnivore: 19% Heterosexual, 18% LGBT
- Intend to Reduce: 35% Heterosexual, 35% LGBT
40. Is religious belief correlated to animal product consumption?

![Chart showing the percentage of respondents who have reduced or intend to reduce animal product consumption by religion.](chart-image-url)
41. Is political belief correlated with animal product consumption?

What percentage of this group of respondents have reduced or intend to reduce animal product consumption - by political affiliation

- Green Party
  - Vegans and vegetarians: 71%
  - Semi-vegetarians: 12%
  - Omnivores: 9%
  - Future reducers: 7%
- Democrat
  - Vegans and vegetarians: 56%
  - Semi-vegetarians: 25%
  - Omnivores: 19%
  - Future reducers: 5%
- Independent
  - Vegans and vegetarians: 53%
  - Semi-vegetarians: 23%
  - Omnivores: 22%
  - Future reducers: 22%
- Libertarian/Republican
  - Vegans and vegetarians: 50%
  - Semi-vegetarians: 12%
  - Omnivores: 28%
  - Future reducers: 32%
42. Is education level correlated to animal product consumption?

**Additional Notes**

- Those with a high school, GED, or lower educational level were far less likely than other education groups to feel they knew how to reduce animal product consumption.
43. Is student status correlated with animal product consumption?

The results to this question, as shown below, are not consistent with and not representative of the diet habits of the real world population. In general students are more likely to be vegetarian and vegan than non-students. We believe that because of where this survey was promoted, young people were more likely to fill out the survey whether or not they were vegetarian/vegan, whereas older individuals who saw the survey and filled it out were more likely to be current vegetarians/vegans. As a result, the relative percentages of vegetarians/vegans in each population group have been skewed. We report the results of this question here not because they represent accurate information, but for purposes of study transparency.
44. Among students, does the current level of study correlate with animal product consumption?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of student respondents who have reduced or intend to reduce animal product consumption by current grade level.]

What percentage of this group of student respondents have reduced or intend to reduce animal product consumption - by current grade level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Vegan or Vegetarian</th>
<th>Semi-Vegetarian</th>
<th>Omnivore</th>
<th>Future Reducer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad School</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Grad</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Notes

- Respondents in grad school or doing post-grad studies were also more likely to feel they knew how to reduce animal product consumption.
45. Is having children correlated with animal product consumption?

What percentage of this group of respondents have reduced or intend to reduce animal product consumption - by number of children

![Bar chart showing percentage of respondents by number of children and dietary preferences.](chart.png)
46. Is household income correlated with animal product consumption?

**Additional Notes**

- Those making less than $25,000 a year were significantly less likely to feel they knew how to reduce animal product consumption.
48. Is socioeconomic background correlated with animal product consumption?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socioeconomic Background</th>
<th>Vegan or Vegetarian</th>
<th>Semi-vegetarian</th>
<th>Omnivore</th>
<th>Future Reducer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $25,000</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25-50,000</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50-100,000</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100-250,000</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $250,000</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
49. Does having companion animals correlate with animal product consumption?
50. Is philanthropic support for various social causes correlated to animal product consumption?

What percentage of this group of respondents have reduced or intend to reduce animal product consumption - by social causes they donate to

- Animal Protection
- Anti-Poverty
- None of the Above
- Human Rights
- Medical Relief
- Environment
- LGBT
- Religious Organization
- School

- Vegan or Vegetarian
- Semi-Vegetarian
- Omnivore
- Future Reducer
52. Does involvement in creative arts correlate with animal product consumption?
53. Is there a correlation between engaging in various sports and animal product consumption?

What percentage of this group of respondents have reduced or intend to reduce animal product consumption - by sports engaged in

- Vegan and Vegetarian
- Semi-Vegetarian
- Omnivore
- Future Reducer

[Bar chart showing percentage reduction or intention to reduce animal product consumption across different sports.]
54. Is there a correlation between other personal hobbies and animal product consumption?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who have reduced or intend to reduce animal product consumption by hobbies, categorized into Vegan and Vegetarian and Semi-Vegetarian.](chart.png)
54. Is there a correlation between favorite television shows and animal product consumption?

Additional Notes

- Vegetarians and vegans were less likely than non-vegetarians to have any favorite type of television program
56. Does favorite type of movie correlate with animal product consumption?

Additional Notes

- Omnivores indicated more interest in all types of movies than vegans and vegetarians, with the exception of indie films
57. Is favorite type of music correlated with animal product consumption?

Additional Notes

- Although vegetarian and vegan eating is highest among fans of punk/emo music, fans of punk/emo music are also least likely to feel they know how to reduce animal product consumption.