



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN SURVEY

Preliminary Findings

In 2008 we asked vegetarians and vegans to fill out a survey, asking them about a range of attitudes, their health and eating behaviour, and what developments they would like to see in veg*n groups to which they belonged. Over 700 veg*ns responded and we present some preliminary findings in the document below.



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VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN SURVEY

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SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

WHO RESPONDED?

The people who responded were mostly female (578; 76% of sample), however a large number of male veg*ns responded too (160; 21% of sample). A smaller number of transgendered individuals responded, as well as a few who chose not to state their gender.

The youngest person to fill out the survey was 11, and the oldest was 82! The average age of participants was 35.

Of those who responded, most were vegan (417; 55% of sample) and vegetarian (268; 35% of sample), with a smaller number of piscetarians (47; 6% of sample) and omnivores (11; 1.5% of sample) also completing the survey. In their comments some participants indicated that they were vegetarian, but abstained from eating either (but not both) eggs or dairy, and would have liked categories for both these eating choices.

On average, vegetarians who completed the survey had been vegetarian for 14 years – although it ranged from a month to 75 years.

As for vegans, most started as vegetarian before becoming vegan. The average time that vegans who completed the survey had been vegan was about 6 years (although again, this ranged from a week to 40 years!).

WHY DO PEOPLE CHOOSE A VEGETARIAN OR VEGAN LIFESTYLE?

For both vegans and vegetarians, their choice to adopt a meat free lifestyle was primarily motivated by their concern for the welfare of animals. Next important were concerns for the negative environmental impact of meat eating. Following this, both vegetarians and vegans also were influenced by health concerns. Spiritual reasons and concerns about taste were on average not as important factors in their conversion to a veg*n lifestyle.

“I believe that it is most important to promote veganism as a way of boycotting animal cruelty. This is the most compelling reason to become a vegan.”

EATING VEG*N

HOW HEALTHY DID PARTICIPANTS FEEL ON A VEG*N DIET?

Both vegetarians and vegans felt extremely healthy. Participants were asked to rate their current health on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 indicating that they felt “terrible” and 7 indicating that their health was “excellent”. Both vegans and vegetarians scored on average around a 6, indicating that they rated their health as “very good”. Vegans rated their health slightly better than did vegetarians.

WHAT SORT OF FOODS DOES THE AVERAGE VEGETARIAN EAT?

For both vegetarians and vegans we have broken down the average servings per day of a variety of foods in tables. As you will see, because our participants primarily did not eat any meat, meat, poultry and fish were not included in these tables.

Food Type	Serves Per Day
Fruit	2
Vegetables	4-5
Raw Plant Based Food	2-3
Breads, Cereals or Pasta	2-3
Rice	A few times a week
Eggs	A few times a week
Dairy Products	2
Tofu	A few times a week
Tempeh	At least monthly
Seitan	Most did not eat seitan regularly
Honey	At least monthly

“Although I sympathised with the vegetarian cause for a long time, it was living with an excellent vegetarian cook that convinced me that it could be feasible and enjoyable for me. I've since become a keen vegetarian cook myself, often preparing food for non-vegetarian friends and family. I even have a food blog (website), where I write about meals that I've cooked and review restaurants I've visited.”

WHAT SORT OF FOODS DOES THE AVERAGE VEGAN EAT?

As you can see, servings of fruit and vegetables were pretty similar for vegans and vegetarians. Vegans indicated that they ate more tofu, tempeh and seitan than did vegetarians, whilst predominantly not eating eggs, dairy and honey.

Food Type	Serves Per Day
Fruit	2
Vegetables	4-5
Raw Plant Based Food	2-3
Breads, Cereals or Pasta	2-3
Rice	A few times a week
Eggs	Most never ate eggs
Dairy Products	Most never ate dairy
Tofu	A few times a week
Tempeh	About once a week
Seitan	Many did not eat seitan regularly, and of those that did it was about once a month
Honey	Most did not eat honey

VITAMINS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Both vegetarians and vegans reported on the vitamins and minerals they took to supplement their diet. Around 40% of the sample took vegetarian b12, a vitamin often found in meat products, and around 24% took iron supplements. Thirty-three percent of the sample took a daily multivitamin, with 11% taking minerals. Only 4% of the sample took omega 3 derived from fish oil, with 31% taking a vegetarian omega 3 supplement. Around 25% of the sample also took other vitamins and supplements, including various B vitamins, magnesium, iodine, calcium, zinc, vitamin C, olive-leaf extract, vitamin E, horseradish and garlic tablets, and Chinese herbs.

“I became vegetarian 16 years ago for animal welfare reasons but over the years have also appreciated the health benefits.”

DRESSING VEG*N

WHAT DO VEG*NS WEAR?

The table below presents the percentages of vegans and vegetarians who wear or use the following products. Please note that not all rows will add up to 100%, as some participants were “not sure”, or did not answer the question. It should be noted that a number of vegans and vegetarians wished to indicate that any leather that they wore was purchased before they became veg*n.

Clothing	Percentage of Vegetarians			Percentage of Vegans		
	Yes	No	Trying to Stop	Yes	No	Trying to Stop
<i>Do you wear or use...?</i>						
Leather	31	31	35	7	72	21
Wool	61	23	11	14	67	18
Silk	34	58	3	10	80	9
Products tested on animals	1	70	16	3	81	10
Cleaning, beauty, or other products with animal derived ingredients	3	71	12	2	81	10

“In the section asking if you use any of these products it would be worth asking if you use, but do not buy new leather, wool, silk, as this is a determining factor for vegans in conversion.”

ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISM

WHAT SORT OF ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISM HAD PARTICIPANTS BEEN INVOLVED IN?

We asked vegetarian and vegan survey participants to tell us what recent animal rights activities they had been involved in. We list the results in a table below.

In the past 12 months had participants...?

	YES	NO
Attended a dinner organised by a vegetarian/vegan group?	197 (25%)	586 (75%)
Attended a festival or Expo organised by a vegetarian/vegan group?	324 (41%)	459 (59%)
Attended another event organised by a vegetarian/vegan group?	179 (23%)	604 (77%)
Bought books/DVDs from a vegetarian/vegan group?	276 (35%)	507 (65%)
Helped out with a rally or stall organised by a vegetarian/vegan group?	141 (18%)	642 (82%)
Been involved in animal rights activism with a vegetarian/vegan group (in any way)?	250 (32%)	533 (68%)
Asked people to sign a petition in support of an animal rights issue?	230 (29%)	553 (71%)
Talked to people about the importance of converting to vegetarianism/veganism?	457 (58%)	326 (42%)

“I feel it’s very important that Vegetarian and Vegan groups work together in a positive way.”

Overall, 79% of participants had participated in at least one of the activities listed above. Around 44% of the sample participated in 3 or more of the above activities, with most participating in between 1 and 4 of them.

VEG*N GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

WHAT GROUPS DID PARTICIPANTS BELONG TO?

Many of the participants who responded were from Australia, as this was an Australian based survey. As such, participants were given space to indicate whether they belonged to a number of Australian based veg*n societies listed, or they could write the name of the society/ies to which they belonged.

The sample comprised over 700 vegetarians and vegans. Of these, 124 participants belonged to the Vegan Society of New South Wales, 74 were members of Vegetarian Network Victoria, 49 were member of the Vegetarian Society of the Australian Capital Territory, 44 belonged to the Vegetarian and Vegan Society of Queensland, 21 to the Vegetarian Society of South Australia, and 7 to Vegetarian Tasmania. Thirty-eight members of VegansUnite! (Melbourne, Sydney and Perth branches) participated, 24 members of the Australian Vegan Society, 7 members of Vegetarian Action, 1 member of the Vegan Society of South Australia, and 20 members of ClubVeg Perth also participated. Twenty five were members of the Australian Vegetarian Society.

Of those who participated, 253 did not belong to any of the groups listed, with 122 belonging to other groups to those listed, including Animal Liberation (NSW and ACT branches), VegPeople, the Townsville Animal Alliance, PETA, Viva!, Care2, Facebook based groups and various non-Australian organization such as UK and US based vegetarian and vegan organizations.

WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS THINK WAS IMPORTANT FOR VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN SOCIETIES TO CONCENTRATE THEIR EFFORTS ON?

Overall, participants thought that the most important issue for their societies to put more effort into was promoting veganism and vegetarianism through the media. Most participants rated this as “important” or “very important”. Second to this, participants thought that their societies should make efforts to promote veg*nism through schools. This was followed by promoting veganism through lobbying organizations and the government, and using stalls at markets and festivals to further the veg*n cause. Finally, whilst least important of the options given, participants still generally supported more regular newsletters and information about what their society was up to, as well as holding vegan and vegetarian social events.

“Being vegan still has a negative stigma attached. It is so much easier to tell someone that you are vegetarian with lactose intolerance than to use the ‘v word’.”

WHAT WOULD PARTICIPANTS BE WILLING TO DO TO HELP THEIR SOCIETIES AND THE VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN CAUSE?



Participants were asked to indicate what areas they would be interested in becoming involved in, as regards helping out their vegetarian and vegan societies. Below are results presented in a table.

Were participants interested in becoming involved in?

	YES	NO
Helping out at stalls at festivals, markets etc...	289 (37%)	494 (63%)
Helping organise the next VeganExpo.	156 (20%)	627 (80%)
Helping organise other vegetarian/vegan events.	214 (27%)	569 (73%)
Organising or hosting social events for the society.	140 (18%)	643 (82%)

About 18% of the sample (140) indicated that they were willing to help out in other ways, including doing surveys and computer work, writing letters, maintaining websites, dealing with the media, leafleting, providing pamphlets to friends and relatives, organizing and participating in walks, marches parades, sit-ins and demonstrations, and promoting vegetarianism and veganism through children's workshops and groups.

I believe that education is very important and gentle encouragement is the way to encourage people to eat less

OPEN ENDED COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

At the end of the survey people were given a chance to write a comment. Participants wrote about all sorts of topics, from things that they liked about the survey and things they didn't, to stories about how they became vegan and vegetarian, and what sort of barriers they faced to their lifestyle. We include a small number of excerpts of comments throughout this summary, however participants gave so much varied and valued information that it cannot be comprehensively summarized here. This useful and rich information will be used in the future, to aid with the design of studies and to inform the researchers and vegetarian and vegan groups.

“This was a great, thorough survey. Thanks!”

OVERALL SUMMARY

This survey revealed lots of interesting and informative information about vegetarians and vegans. It gave details about the average veg*n diet, wardrobe and vitamin regime. From veg*ns remembering and reporting factors important in their own conversion to a veg*n lifestyle (primarily ethical concern for the wellbeing of animals, followed by environmental concerns) veg*n groups can get an idea of what areas to target when promoting veg*nism. Participants also indicated which areas they would most like to see their veg*n groups become more active in (primarily lobbying for veg*nism through the media, followed by education in schools), and where they would be more willing to help out (mainly helping out at stalls, festivals or other veg*n events). We believe this survey provides a fascinating snapshot of the veg*n community, and most of all, from the participation of veg*ns and their detailed answers, provides assurance that we have a wonderful veg*n community in Australia.

Thanks to all the amazing people who participated in the survey! This research suggests that there is a vibrant, active vegan and vegetarian community in Australia. Keep up the good work!