

IDENTIFYING THE RESEARCH NEEDS OF THE VEGAN AND ANIMAL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Workshop Summary



On 30 March 2025, The Vegan Society hosted a workshop at the Vegan and Animal Rights Conference. This workshop brought together representatives from various vegan and animal rights organisations, researchers and funders to brainstorm ideas for new research to support the work of the movement.

Introduction

The purpose of this workshop was to identify new research projects that would benefit the whole vegan and animal rights movement and to encourage greater strategic thinking and collaboration. The Vegan Society has been working to further the vegan cause for 80 years, during which time we've developed a thriving research community making us well suited to facilitate such workshops.

The ideas brought forward during the workshop were wide ranging. We hope this summary of the workshop will be useful for organisations and individuals in planning impactful research projects. We summarise here some of the ideas that were considered by attendees to be the top priorities in research.

Strategies for the movement

Taking a step back from identifying specific research projects, there was a lot of good discussion about the need to bring together the various stakeholders in the vegan and animal rights world to develop a more coordinated movement. There are lots of different NGOs operating in this space, all providing valuable contributions, but the result is a complex web of organisations working independently of one another. More work is needed to encourage collaboration and the pooling of resources, as well as wider agreement about the end goals of future research and activism.

Effectiveness of activism

Research is needed on the effectiveness of different forms of activism within the animal rights and vegan movement. Activism in the movement happens on many levels, from social media to grassroots protest and lobbying policy-makers. The most useful areas for research include: what kinds of activism have had the most success; who within the movement has had the most reach and positive influence on societal change; and what has been less successful and why? These are all questions that need answering so that future advocacy work is successful.

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How does veganism spread?

We've witnessed significant growth in the number of vegans over the past decade, but how does veganism spread? Answering this question will help vegan advocates become more strategic in their messaging and targeting. More research is needed to understand how veganism spreads through complex social connections. We discussed how vegans are part of vegan social groups such as online vegan communities, activist or volunteer groups, or simply knowing and connecting with other vegans. Vegans also belong to a myriad of other social groups. We need to understand how veganism has the potential to spread through and between these groups.



We want to build a strong movement that continues to grow year after year, so further research is needed to understand why former vegans decide to give up veganism.

Why don't people stay vegan?

According to our most recent [How Many Vegans](#) data, 1% of the UK population now identify as vegan, while a further 2% identify as following a plant-based diet. We also know that many people who go vegan return to consuming animal products. There have been some high-profile examples of well-known vegan celebrities doing so in recent years. We want to build a strong movement that continues to grow year after year, so further research is needed to understand why former vegans decide to give up veganism. To do this, we will need to speak directly with former vegans and use our findings to develop more effective strategies to make it easier for people to stay vegan.

Economic benefits

Research is needed to fully understand the positive impact that transitioning away from animal agriculture would have on jobs as well as what kinds of wider economic arguments we can make at a policy level such as cost savings for healthcare systems. Recent research from the USA has shown that there is potential for job creation from such a transition, but more research is needed to fully understand the economic opportunities of this. The political landscape in the UK at the moment means that vegans must look beyond the usual vegan arguments – ethics, the environment, health – and demonstrate that veganism comes with its own economic benefits. A global approach is needed to research the creation or loss of jobs and the wider economic impacts of a plant-based transition.

These are just a few of the main priority ideas identified during the workshop. Other ideas proposed for

further research included:

- How do the attitudes of health professionals towards veganism and plant-based diets impact public health?
- How much could the NHS save per year in Scotland if everyone were to go vegan?
- How can we, as a movement, stay updated on emerging data to support our claims?
- How do we build a coordinated coalition of groups to combat the animal-industrial complex and what would that look like?
- What kind of language is the most effective in communicating our messages?
- How can we tackle misinformation online?

Next steps

This workshop was the first of what will be many similar events in the future. There is a clear need for more opportunities for those working in the vegan and animal rights space to get together to brainstorm new strategic ideas for the movement and establish working relationships. We will be organising further opportunities to generate ideas and form collaborative partnerships. Future workshops will focus on specific research areas and also on the kinds of audience we aim to reach.

We encourage anyone who is currently working in this space or has a professional interest in the ideas listed here to get involved by reaching out to the research team at research@vegansociety.com.

To learn more about the research work being done at The Vegan Society, please go to the research section of our website at vegansociety.com/research.