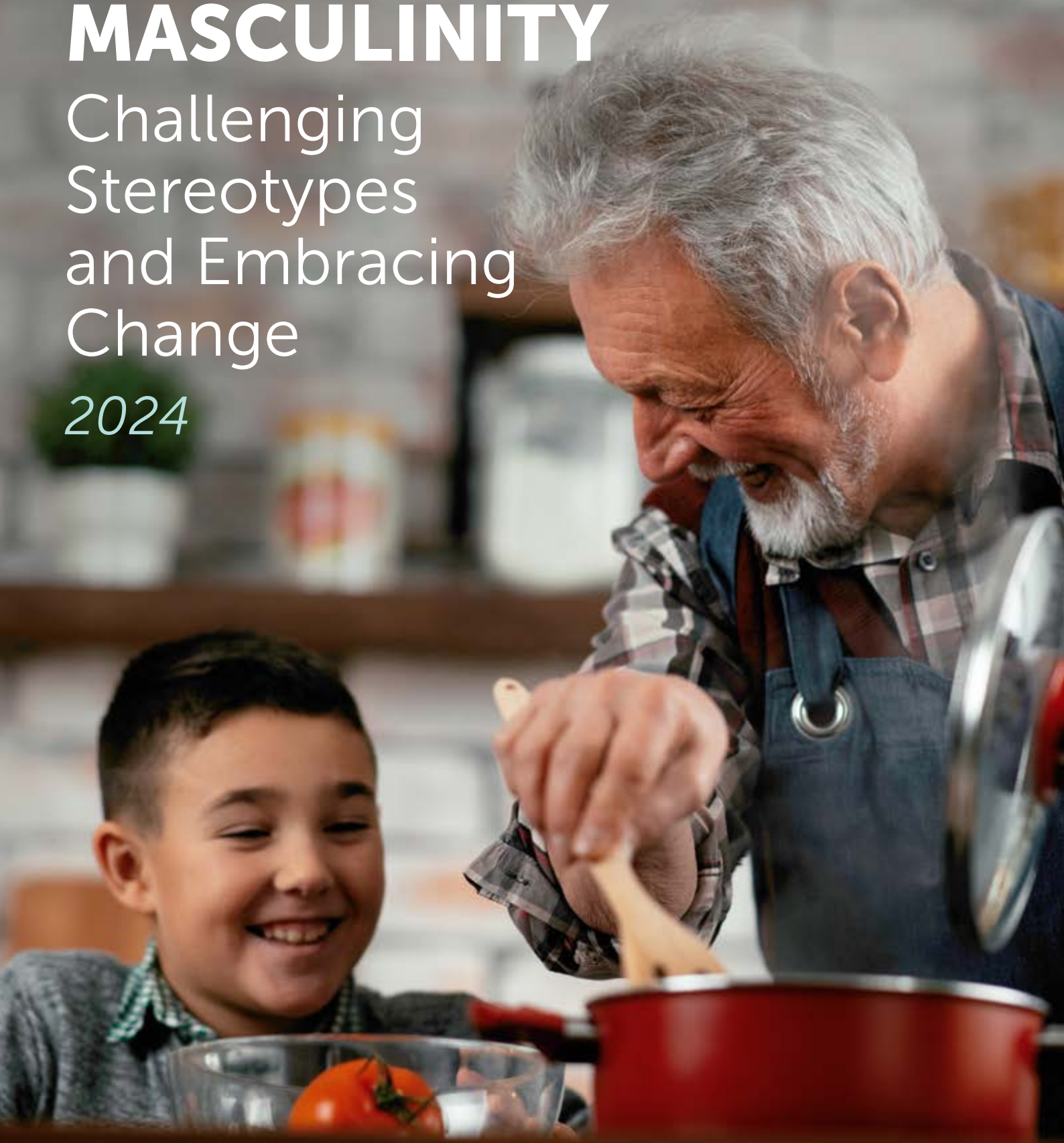




VEGANISM AND MASCULINITY

Challenging
Stereotypes
and Embracing
Change

2024



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	4
Methodology	5
Quantitative research findings	6
Quantitative research discussion	17
Qualitative research findings	19
Qualitative research discussion	31
Supportive Statement	33
Conclusion and recommendations for professional practice	34

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To encourage more men to go vegan, we must understand what is currently preventing many from doing so. This report delves deeply into the topic of veganism and masculinity, unpacking the views of both vegan and non-vegan men. The purpose of this report is to understand what's

stopping non-vegan men from going vegan, identify what kind of support would be useful for these men, learn what the vegan journey was like for current vegan men and develop new supportive strategies.

FIVE KEY FINDINGS

1

41% of non-vegan men are either planning to go vegan or have some interest in going vegan.

2

Taste, health and nutrition concerns are the most significant barriers that non-vegan men in the UK identify when considering going vegan.

3

There is a need for more male vegan role models, greater institutional support, and more public challenges to vegan stereotypes.

4

Many participants were willing to challenge the behavioural expectations of mainstream masculinity and develop a healthier understanding of a masculinity rooted in compassion.

5

Men experience gender-specific barriers to going vegan and vegan men may experience difficulties with friends and family due to their morally informed behavioural change.

THREE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1

With consideration to the results from our quantitative and qualitative research project, there appears to be a need to produce further supportive resources for non-vegan men. In particular, factual information on nutrition, recipe ideas, the evidence supporting veganism and advice on communicating with non-vegans. Developing a resource for vegans to use on how to communicate with non-vegans about veganism could address some of the points raised from this research.

2

Our research suggests that there are more non-vegan men open to the idea of going vegan than previously thought. Given the importance of this finding, The Vegan Society and other vegan organisations and campaigns should continue to encourage men, specifically, to go vegan. This should involve the continued featuring of a diverse range of positive male role models as part of The Vegan Society's Vegan and Thriving campaign, promoting inclusion within different institutions and challenging stereotypes.

3

Our research shows that a significant number of non-vegan men are concerned that their friends or family would be unsupportive of their decision to go vegan. We also found that many vegan men had an easier time going vegan when done with partners or with the help of supportive vegans and non-vegans. We therefore believe that there needs to be more opportunities for transitioning vegans to make new connections and find supportive social circles. This could take many forms, including establishing a 'vegan buddy system', or directing new vegans towards established vegan social groups. The Vegan Society's Community Network provides a brilliant volunteering and social opportunity for new vegans to connect with other vegans. It's important that we emphasise the potential of this network as a place to connect with like-minded individuals and find fulfilling volunteering opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from a mixed-methods research project on the topic of veganism and masculinity. In 2023, we at The Vegan Society published our first [Research Briefing](#) which provided a succinct overview on the topic of veganism and masculinity, exploring the multifaceted reasons for the gender imbalance within the vegan community. This was an analysis of the existing literature on the topic, which found that men are significantly less likely to go vegan than women, and that expectations to conform to masculine behaviours present a very real barrier to more men going vegan.

This research project supports our [Vegan and Thriving](#) campaign which shows that veganism is for everyone and that anyone can thrive as a vegan. The aim of this work is to show that there is no one typical “type” of vegan individual. Part of that effort involves identifying potential barriers to veganism and developing strategies and resources to break down those barriers. Encouraging more men to go vegan is just one aspect of our Vegan and Thriving campaign.

Our Research Briefing raised several questions for us to consider – how many non-vegan men are interested in going vegan? What is stopping these men from making the change? What barriers did vegan men first experience when going vegan and what advice would they have for others? We decided to carry out our own research

to help answer these questions.

Following our initial review of the literature, we conducted our own primary research to acquire new data into why more men aren’t going vegan, which was the quantitative aspect of this research project. We then followed this up with a piece of qualitative research which involved gathering extensive feedback from vegan men to better understand what barriers they faced to going vegan and what they did to overcome these barriers. As such, this report includes the full findings from all our primary research into veganism and masculinity and makes recommendations for professional practice.

In this report we begin by outlining the methodology adopted for our mixed-methods research project. We then present the data and analysis from our quantitative study and summarise the findings in a short discussion chapter. Following this, we present a summarised version of the data from our qualitative research study and another short discussion chapter. We conclude this report with a brief conclusion and recommendations for professional practice.

*The aim of this work is to show that **there is no one typical “type” of vegan individual.***



METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research consisted of a survey sent to 1000 non-vegan men using our consumer insights partner, Attest. The survey was sent to a working age nationally representative audience, achieving a representative sample across age, region and ethnicity. The survey was designed to better understand how many non-vegan men are interested in or planning to go vegan and what is currently preventing non-vegan men from making the transition. The survey was open from 22 August 2023 to 6 September 2023.

The survey consisted of seven questions, including two demographic questions on ethnicity and diet. Four questions were single-choice, closed questions and three were open text. An inductive thematic analysis of the open text responses was conducted. This thematic analysis was carried out according to the methodological framework described by [Braun and Clarke \(2008\)](#). This multi-staged analysis involved an initial familiarising with the data, coding of the data, identifying themes, reviewing these themes against the data, defining the themes and presenting the findings in this report. In our write-up of the results we explain the themes and include extracts from the data in the form of short quotes. The frequency of the themes has been quantified and displayed as graphs.

A methodological issue with thematic analysis is that the process will always to a certain, unavoidable degree, be subjective to

the researcher, which exposes any research employing this methodological approach to potential bias and flawed analysis. This thematic analysis was conducted thoroughly, and great efforts were made to capture and present all the relevant themes in a coherent manner.

Our qualitative research consisted of a questionnaire designed to gather data on the experiences of vegan men. Participants were recruited via a call for participation on The Vegan Society social media channels. Participants had to identify as vegan men and were supplied with an information sheet and consent form. We received 103 consent forms and a total of 94 vegan men participated in the research. Participants were supplied with a nine-question questionnaire. Four of these questions were demographic questions and 5 were questions designed to gather data on personal experiences. We received all 94 completed questionnaires between 28th August and 3rd October 2023. We used text analysis software on the Relative Insight platform to sort and analyse the responses. This software allowed us to see the frequency of certain topics and themes that emerged across the various questions. The software was also used to extract insightful quotes from the responses and organise them thematically. The statistics and quotes were downloaded from the Relative Insights platform and summarised by one of our skilled Vegan Society research volunteers.



*The survey
was designed to
**better understand
how many non-vegan
men are interested in
or planning to go
vegan.***

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

AUDIENCE

Using our consumer insights partner, Attest, we surveyed a UK working age nationally representative sample of 1000 non-vegan men. The demographic breakdown of the audience was as follows:

Age: 18 – 24 (19%), 25 – 34 (21%), 35 – 44 (20%), 45 – 54 (22%), 55 – 64 (18%).

Region: East Midlands (7%), East of England (9%), London (14%), North East (4%), North West (12%), Scotland (9%), South East (14%), South West (8%), Wales (5%), West Midlands (9%), Yorkshire & Humber (9%).

Diet: Meat eater: 69.5% (761), Flexitarian: 13.7% (150), Vegan*: 8.7% (95), Vegetarian: 5.2% (57), Other: 1.8% (20), Pescatarian: 1.1% (12)

Ethnicity: White (74%), Prefer not to say (9%), Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (8%), Asian or Asian British (4%), Black, Black British, Caribbean or African (3%), Other ethnic group (2%).

*Vegans were part of the exclusion criteria for this survey as we were only interested in gathering data on non-vegan men for this research.

Please select the statement which best describes you.

- I have no interest in adopting a vegan diet: 59% (590)
- I have some interest in adopting a vegan diet, but I have concerns: 33.8% (338)
- I am planning to go vegan in the future: 7.2% (72)

This is a very encouraging finding from this survey. Our data shows that 41% of non-vegan men are either planning to go vegan or have some interest in going vegan. This suggests that right now a large proportion of non-vegan men, with some further encouragement and support, could make the positive behavioural change and go vegan. This data is incredibly useful for vegan campaigns as it reveals a large audience who are at least receptive to vegan campaign messaging. Even if just the 7.2% of these men who say they are planning to go vegan followed through on this, the overall vegan population in the UK would grow considerably.

Those aged 25-34 were less likely to say they

have no interest in adopting a vegan diet (51.4%) and were more likely to say they have some interest in adopting a vegan diet (41.4%).

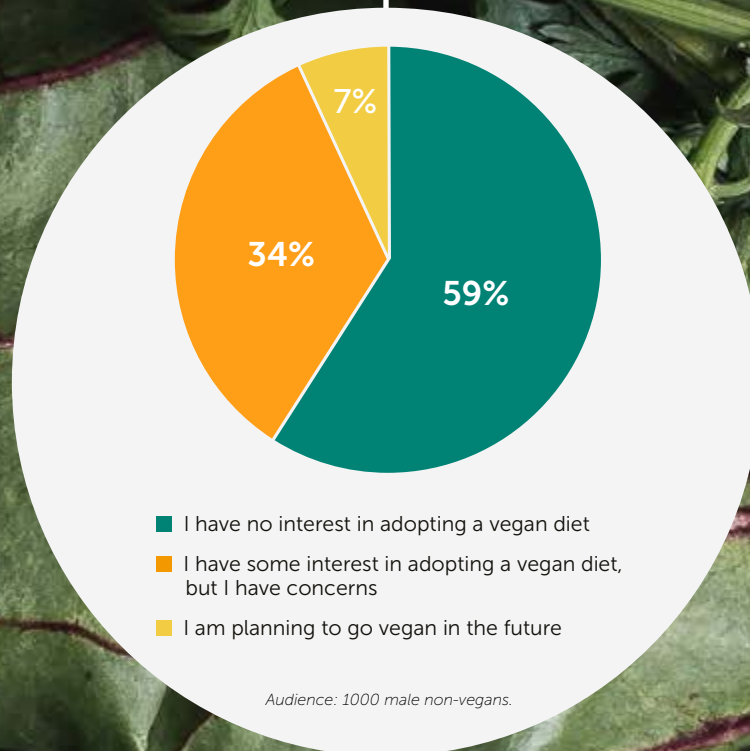
Those aged 55-64 were more likely to say they have no interest in adopting a vegan diet (69.4%) and were less likely to say they have some interest in adopting a vegan diet (25%).

Meat eaters were more likely to say they have no interest in adopting a vegan diet – 65.2% chose this answer. They were also less likely to say they plan to go vegan in the future with only 4.1% responding this way.

Vegetarians were significantly more likely to say they have some interest in adopting a vegan diet but have concerns, with 49.1% answering this way. They were also significantly more likely to say they plan to go vegan in the future, with 31.6% answering this way. Vegetarians were also less likely to say they have no interest in going vegan, with only 19.3% responding this way.

Flexitarians were also significantly less likely to say they have no interest in going vegan, with 47.3% saying this. They were also more likely to say they're planning to go vegan, with 12.7% saying this.

**Please select
the statement
which best
describes you.**



41%
*of non-vegan men are
either planning to go
vegan or have some
interest in going
vegan.*

What do you personally consider to be the main barrier to going vegan? (open text)

Those who answered that they are planning to go vegan or have some interest in going vegan were routed to this question. Thirty-four themes were initially identified from this question. After a process of coding related responses together, it was found that answers fell under nine broad categories. The categories, and the percentage of respondents who mentioned them as a main barrier, are as follows:

- Taste: 38% (155)
- Health and Nutrition: 30% (124)
- Cost: 14% (56)
- Limited choices: 12% (48)
- Protein: 10% (39)
- Education: 7% (28)
- Social: 2% (9)
- Other: 5% (22)
- None, don't know, N/A: 9% (36)

Taste

Answers which mention the appeal of animal products or the perception of unappealing vegan food as a barrier to going vegan.

Taste was the most common response to this question with a significant number of respondents mentioning that vegan alternatives do not taste as good, or that animal products taste too good to give up. The perception that taste is sacrificed when going vegan seems to be strong among non-vegan men, for example,

“*The foods are not interesting enough*”

Health and Nutrition

Answers which highlight health or nutritional concerns such as deficiencies, decreased energy

or weight loss as a barrier.

The next most common answer was Health and Nutrition with respondents expressing concern that they won't be as fit or healthy on a vegan diet. Specific concerns were raised about nutritional deficiencies, lack of energy, or impact on long-term health. For example,

“*If it will be sustainable. Read articles of a pure vegan diet causing organ failure and Whether I will get the vitamins and minerals I need.*”

Cost

Answers which mention the perceived financial costs associated with going vegan as a barrier.

Some respondents mentioned that it is more expensive to be vegan than to continue eating animal products. This is a commonly heard perception of veganism. For example,

“*Too costly and Not getting enough protein and the cost of products to be vegan.*”

Limited choices

Answers which mention the reduction in meal choices as a barrier. For example,

“*Limited access to affordable vegan products.*”

Protein

Answers which explicitly mention protein, such as concerns about protein deficiency as a barrier.

This could also fall within the Health and Nutrition answer category, but enough respondents explicitly mentioned protein to

warrant its inclusion as a separate category. For example,

“ **Not getting it right and not getting enough of everything I need like protein.**

mean making 2 different meals and It might be difficult to maintain a vegan lifestyle if you don't have a support network or a community of like-minded people.

Education

Answers which express a lack of understanding about veganism, meal planning or knowledge of the issues as a barrier to going vegan. For example,

“ **I lack the cooking skills and Just really the benefits and the negatives, the research behind it, I haven't had the time to really dive in to change anything drastically.**

Social

Answers which mention the impact that going vegan may have on others or on their social life as a barrier. For example,

“ **I live with someone who would not consider the move so would**

Other

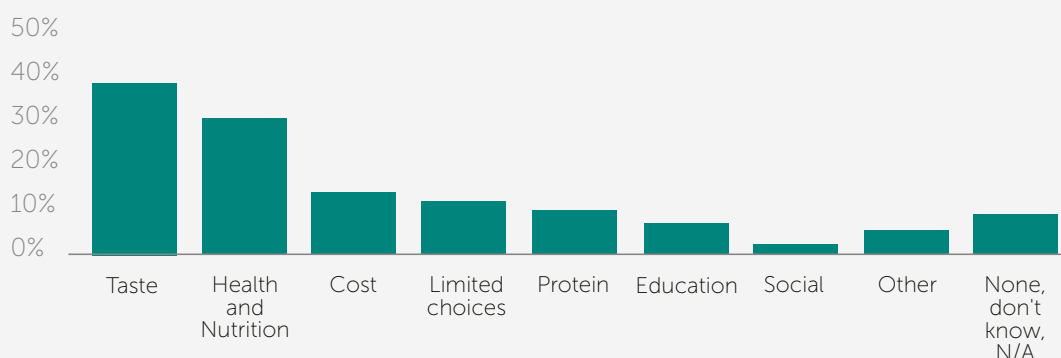
Answers which did not fall into the above categories such as vegan food being “boring” or the perceived negative impact of veganism on the environment as a barrier to going vegan.

None, don't know, N/A

Answers where the respondent said “no barriers” or “not sure” or provided answers which made no sense or where the respondent clearly misunderstood the question.

Several barriers were identified from this data but chief amongst them were taste, health and financial concerns – these are typical barriers to veganism that are not gender specific and have been explored widely in the [past](#). From this question, we found little indication that non-vegan men related their barriers to going vegan with their gender.

What do you personally consider to be the main barrier to going vegan?



Audience: 408 male non-vegans who are either planning to go vegan or have some interest in adopting a vegan diet but have concerns. Skips: 2

What kind of support would you find useful in order to go vegan?

(open text)

Twenty-six answer themes were initially identified. After a process of coding related responses together, it was found that answers fell under ten broad categories. The categories, and the percentage of respondents who mentioned them as a main barrier, are as follows:

- None, don't know, N/A: 19% (74)
- Health: 16% (63)
- Recipes: 16% (61)
- Education: 15% (56)
- Options: 13% (49)
- Financial: 12% (47)
- Social: 11% (44)
- Resources: 6% (22)
- Taste: 4% (17)
- Other: 1% (5)

None, don't know, N/A

Answers where the respondent said "nothing" or "not sure" or provided answers which made no sense or where the respondent clearly misunderstood the question. Those who selected "N/A" also fell into this category.

Health

Answers which mention wanting more information or support on the effects of a vegan diet on their health or physical fitness.

One of the most common responses was wanting more health and nutritional advice. For example,

“ **Diet plan** and **Advice from certified dietitians.** ”

Recipes

Answers which mention needing recipe ideas or meal-planning advice. For example,

“ **More recipes** and **A good supply of reliable, tasty recipes.** ”

Education

Answers which mention the need for more evidence that supports veganism as a good diet or lifestyle.

These kind of answers indicated the respondents were essentially on the fence about whether they're convinced by veganism's arguments regarding animal ethics and the environment or on health. For example,

“ **Research and facts etc** and **Scientific evidence.** ”

Options

Answers which mention wanting a wider variety of options at restaurants and supermarkets or improved vegan alternatives. For example,

“ **A wider range of products** and **More vegan products available in supermarkets which are affordable.** ”

Financial

Answers which mention wanting greater financial support to be able to afford a vegan diet, or a reduction in the cost of vegan alternatives. For example,

“ **Lower prices** and **Cheaper vegan produce.** ”

Social

Answers which mention the need for more support from friends and family or wanting to find a community of vegans who can support their vegan lifestyle. For example,

“*Maybe someone who is a vegan and maybe a social med[i]a group, w[h]ere you can chat with people and I have no idea what support system is out there.*

Resources

Answers which mention the need for resources to help support them such as apps, leaflets or other online resources.

This could be combined with 'Recipes', as recipes would also constitute a resource. But some people wanted more informational resources about how to go vegan or where to get nutritional advice.

“*Some kind of help guide with facts and tips etc. and More resources about ensuring I can get enough of the right micro and macro nutrients.*

Taste

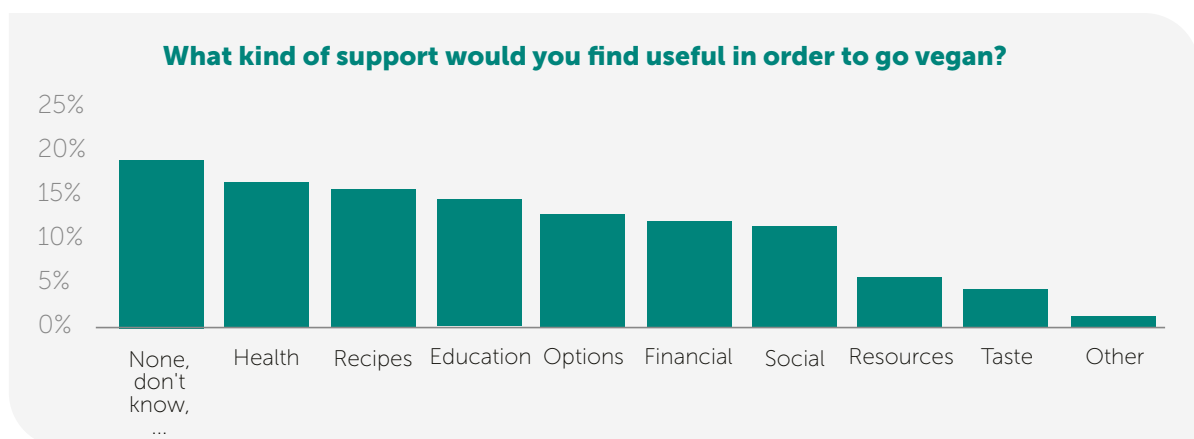
Answers which mention wanting vegan food to taste better or advice on how to make tasty vegan food. For example

“*Better tasting meat alternatives and vegan products being cheaper than the alternatives and also tasting better.*


Other

Answers which did not fall into any of the above categories.

Responses to this question were varied and no one category dominated. Some respondents were quite specific with their answers, detailing how they required greater nutritional guidance or needed better social support. Other respondents kept their answers vague or simply said they did not know what kind of support would help. A significant proportion of respondents are open to the idea of going vegan or are planning to go vegan but feel that they do not require further support or don't know what kind of additional support would help them to make the transition. The answers to this question paint a mixed picture but, overall, it seems that resources, factual information, nutrition and meal guidance are important and sought-after forms of support.



Audience: 386 male non-vegans who are either planning to go vegan or have some interest in adopting a vegan diet but have concerns. Skips: 24



**I'm
concerned that
others (e.g. friends
and family) would be
unsupportive of my
decision if I went
vegan.**

47%
of respondents
either strongly
agree or agree.

53%
of respondents
either strongly
disagree or
disagree.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: I'm concerned that others (e.g. friends and family) would be unsupportive of my decision if I went vegan.

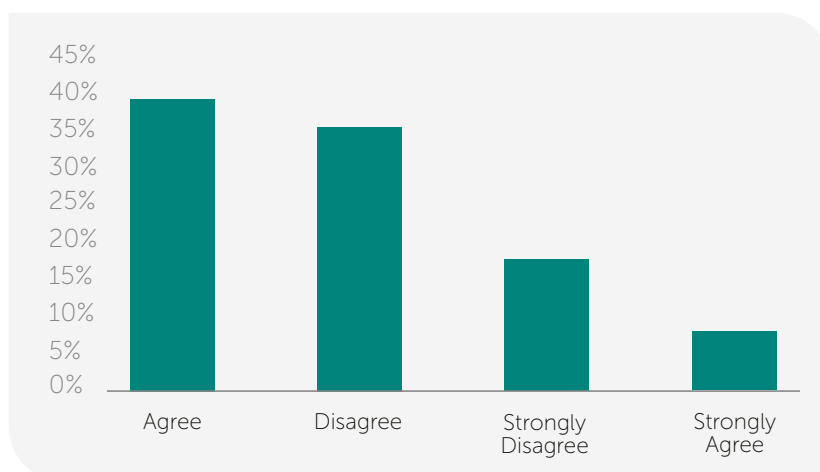
- Agree: 39.2% (160)
- Disagree: 35.5% (145)
- Strongly Disagree: 17.4% (71)
- Strongly Agree: 7.8% (32)

53% of respondents either strongly disagree or disagree, whilst 47% of respondents either strongly agree or agree. A slight majority of non-vegan men who are either planning to go vegan or have some interest in adopting a vegan diet

are not concerned about unsupportive friends or family.

This data reveals an interesting split within these non-vegan men. Most are not concerned about unsupportive friends or family, which could either be because they feel reassured that their friends or family will support them, or they don't consider unsupportive friends or family to be a cause for concern. Either way, social pressures may not be a significant issue for these men, or at least, not as significant a barrier as other factors.

However, almost half of non-vegan men, who have some interest in going vegan, agree with the statement which may be acting as one of their barriers to going vegan. These men may benefit from greater external support from those who are already vegan.



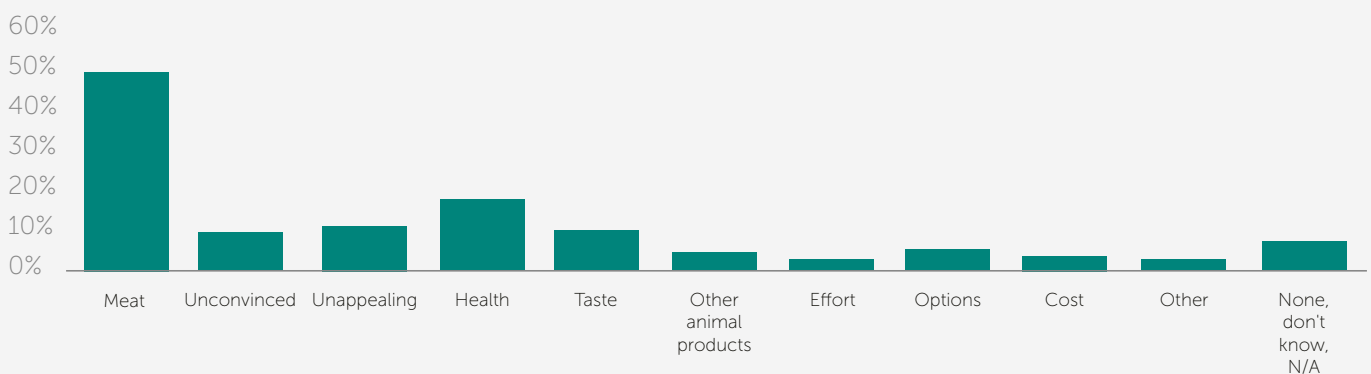
Audience: 408 male non-vegans who are either planning to go vegan or have some interest in adopting a vegan diet but have concerns. Skips: 2

Almost half of non-vegan men, who have some interest in going vegan, agree with the statement which may be acting as one of their barriers to going vegan.

**What
is the main
reason you
have no interest
in adopting a
vegan diet?**

Meat
was by far the
most common answer
with almost half of
respondents providing
a response which
mentions meat in
some way.

49%
of respondents
mentioned meat.



Audience: 561 non-vegan men who said they do not plan to go vegan. 29 skipped.

What is the main reason you have no interest in adopting a vegan diet?

Those who said they have no interest in going vegan were routed to this follow-up question. Fifteen answer themes were initially identified. After a process of coding related responses together, it was found that answers fell under 11 broad categories. The categories, and the percentage of respondents who mentioned them as a main barrier, are as follows:

- Meat: 49% (276)
- Unconvinced: 9% (49)
- Unappealing: 11% (62)
- Health: 17% (97)
- Taste: 9% (53)
- Other animal products: 4% (23)
- Effort: 2% (12)
- Options: 5% (29)
- Cost: 3% (17)
- Other: 2% (13)
- None, don't know, N/A: 7% (40)

Meat

Answers which mention liking the taste of meat too much to give it up or a related answer. For example,

“ I like meat too much and Because I like steak too much and I'm not listening to Bill Gates.

This was by far the most common answer with almost half of respondents providing a response which mentions meat in some way, most commonly, not wanting to give up eating meat. This provides some supportive evidence for the meat-masculinity link which claims that meat eating is a specific way that masculinity is performed.

Unconvinced

Answers which mention not being convinced by the arguments in favour of veganism (e.g. environmental, ethical, or health reasons).

These responses essentially refute veganism as a moral philosophy and claim that they're unconvinced by the arguments. For example,

“ Belief that animal products can still be consumed sustainably without going entirely vegan and It's not a natural nor optimal diet for a human being.

Unappealing

Answers which mention not finding the idea of being vegan appealing or they don't like the idea.

Similar to the Unconvinced category, but these responses didn't contain explicit objections to the ideas of veganism, but they didn't have any interest in changing or didn't see the point. For example,

“ I don't like the idea of it and its not for me and i have no interest. i like meat.

Health

Answers which mention concerns about their health or ability to get the right nutrients on a vegan diet.

These answers were fairly common, which mentioned that they would experience health problems if they went vegan.

“ you need a mix of all food groups to maintain a healthy body and like meat plus i need vitamins, protein etc.

Taste

Answers which mention vegan foods, including vegetables, as tasting bad or having no taste as a reason to not go vegan. For example,

“ *I have tried various different vegan products and the taste is awful* and *I couldn't give up eating meat and the vegan option is bland.*

Other animal products

Answers which mention liking the taste of animal products (e.g. milk/eggs) too much to give them up (excluding meat). For example,

“ *I would struggle to cut out dairy and in particular fish* and *I love cheese.*

Effort

Answers which mention the time or effort it takes to go vegan as a reason to not go vegan. For example,

“ *I'm too old and don't know enough to make it work* and *I like meat too much and would find it difficult to stop completely.*

Options

Answers which mention the lack of variety of food in a vegan diet or good vegan options in supermarkets or at restaurants. For example,

“ *Vegan diet [is] inconvenient to follow due to limited availability*

of plant-based options, especially in certain regions or when dining out.

Cost

Answers which mention the perceived cost or financial burden of going vegan. For example,

“ *Too expensive.*

Other

Answers which did not fall into any of the above categories.

None, don't know, N/A

Answers where the respondent said “nothing” or “not sure” or provided answers which made no sense or where the respondent clearly misunderstood the question. Those who selected “N/A” also fell into this category.

Those answering this question had no interest in going vegan and the data from this question gives us some insight into what these non-vegan men think about veganism. Various themes were identified in this final question, including health concerns and general opposition to vegan principles. However, meat was central in half the answers to this question. It has been theorised that there exists a ‘meat-masculinity’ link, in which the consumption of non-human animal meat is a means by which masculinity is ‘performed’. As described in our Veganism and Masculinity Research Briefing, “Meat has come to be associated with strength, high performance, and dominance over other species – traits that are valued highly within hegemonic masculinity”.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH DISCUSSION

One of the most significant findings from this survey is how many non-vegan men in the UK are planning on, or have some interest in going vegan. With 41% of respondents answering this way, it's an encouraging finding and shows that in the future, more men could be making the change to go vegan. For organisations like The Vegan Society, our task is to consider the concerns that many of these men expressed and develop effective strategies and resources so that they can take the next step to going vegan and staying vegan.

The results from the survey demonstrated that taste, health and nutrition concerns are the most significant barriers that non-vegan men in the UK face when considering going vegan. One of the biggest obstacles that vegan food brands face is a long-held perception that vegan alternatives simply do not taste as good as animal products and that taste preferences are preventing people from going vegan. Concerns about taste, health and nutrition are not gender specific – these are concerns that are commonly expressed regardless of gender.

It's understandable for people to have concerns about their health and nutrition when making changes to their diet or lifestyle. This is something The Vegan Society can and does address. We have a Nutrition Team that are dedicated to promoting information on effective nutritional planning and we provide resources for those planning on going vegan.

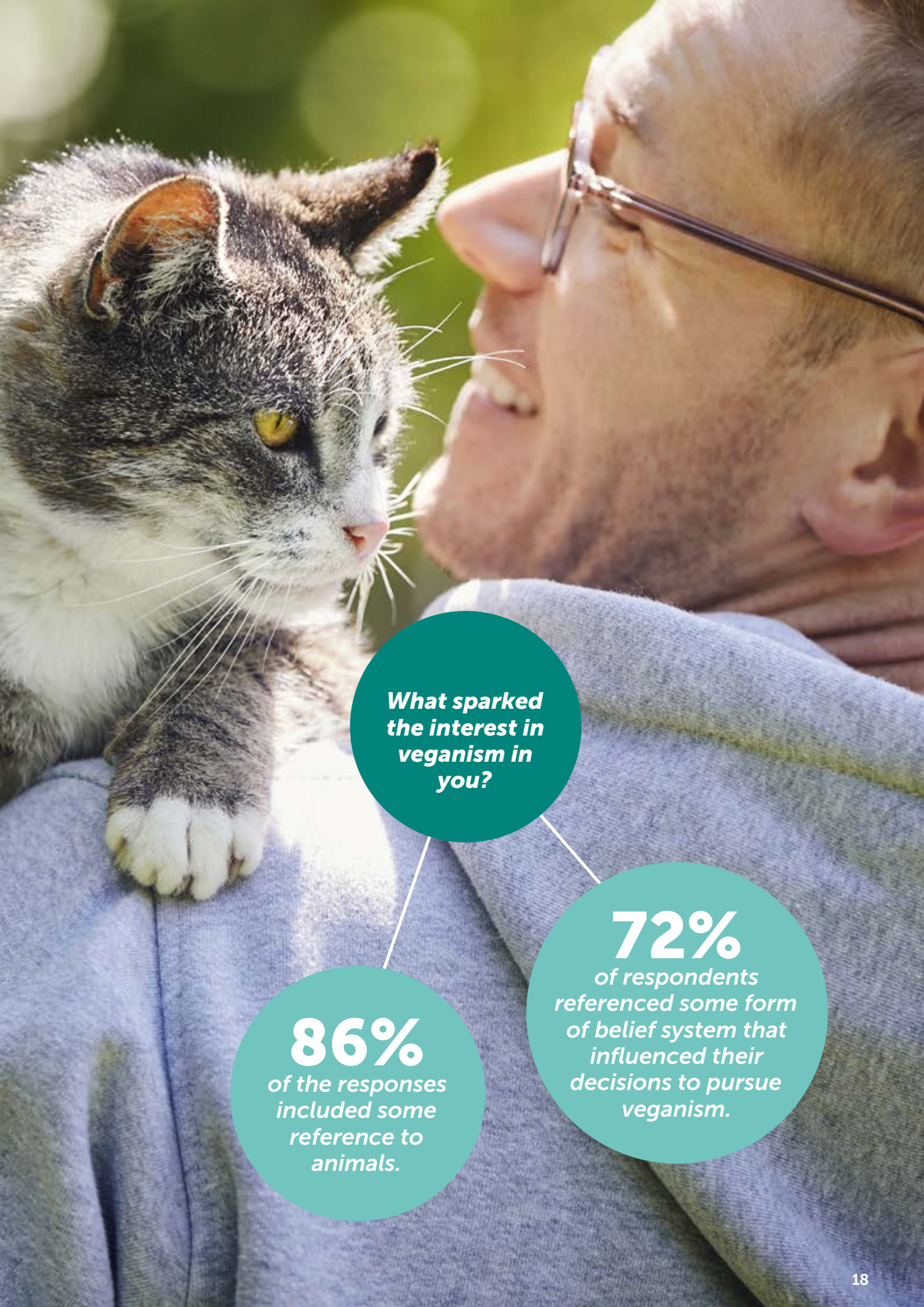
When asked what kind of support would they find useful in order to go vegan, respondents provided a variety of feedback, including the need for more recipes, resources, and information on health and access to evidence supporting veganism. While answers to this question were varied, the overwhelming message from this data is that vegan-curious men require greater access to information. With more resources on health and wellbeing and a greater emphasis on the facts

relating to the ethical and environmental case for veganism, non-vegan men should hopefully be better equipped to plan their journey towards veganism and have confidence in their decision.

The Vegan Society already has a range of resources for new vegans to use to help them navigate veganism, including recipe ideas and nutritional guidance. We also regularly promote emerging evidence-based claims that show veganism is an ethical, healthy and environmentally responsible choice. But perhaps the challenge isn't developing these resources or supplying the evidence, but in promoting our message and getting these resources in the right places to the right people. Whilst we can and will continue to build up an evidence base for veganism and release more resources, communication of this knowledge remains key.

There appears to be a societal expectation on men to consume meat, and breaking from this expectation can constitute a gender-role violation. Therefore, it came as little surprise that of the non-vegan men who reported having no interest in going vegan, 50% of them mentioned "meat" when asked why they have no interest in going vegan. Whilst some other reasons were given in answer to this final question, answers which mentioned the desirability, tastiness and naturalness of eating meat dominated.

Overall, this survey provides an insight into current attitudes and feelings from non-vegan men on the topic of transitioning to veganism. Most non-vegan men have no plans to go vegan and yet a sizable minority are at least open to the idea of going vegan in the future. Encouragingly, concerns about social stigma and judgement from others were not as prevalent as we initially imagined they would be. However, it's important that the non-vegan men who do consider judgement from others to be a concern are given the knowledge and support to overcome this barrier.



**What sparked
the interest in
veganism in
you?**

86%
of the responses
included some
reference to
animals.

72%
of respondents
referenced some form
of belief system that
influenced their
decisions to pursue
veganism.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

QUESTION 1

We'd like to begin by understanding your individual journey to veganism. People come to veganism for different reasons, and everyone's path is different. Some come to veganism for the animals or ethics, others for the environment or for their own health – or perhaps a combination of these and other reasons. We'd therefore like you to use this space to tell us about your

unique vegan journey. What sparked the interest in veganism in you? Please explain as thoroughly as possible. (In the second question you'll have the opportunity to tell us more about the actual process of transitioning to becoming vegan, but for this current question please focus on why you became vegan and what sparked your interest.)

In this question, there were six key themes which emerged regarding the reasons for respondents pursuing a vegan diet. These six themes were, in order of most frequently referenced, 1) Animals, 2) Beliefs, 3) Family, 4) Environmentalism, 5) Public Health and 6) Ethics. Many of the responses overlapped several of these themes.

1 Animals

Eighty-six percent of the responses included some reference to animals. Universally, the respondents believed that veganism was a way in which to avoid exploiting non-human animals for the benefit of humanity. Respondents, when considering the use or exploitation of non-human animals often used terms such as "distressing", "deeply uncomfortable", "heartbreaking", "ugly suffering", "atrocities", "murder" and other similar terminology to describe their feelings on animal agriculture. This overall sentiment was possibly best captured by the following response:

“...I don't think it's acceptable for an animal to be deliberately bred, persecuted and killed just so that I can eat cheese or have milk in my coffee.

For many respondents, a particular life event acted as the catalyst or 'spark' which ignited their pursuit of veganism. These events were varied and included the watching of vegan documentaries such as *Earthlings*, witnessing animal use on farms, the rescue or death of a companion animal, seeing farmed animals in transit whilst driving, online videos and reading vegan literature. Regarding animal companions, one participant summarised his conclusion following the adoption of their first cat.

“...my feelings towards animals moved to a very different level after I had my first pet cat, I started to realize that when I am eating a cow, a sheep, a chicken, or a fish I am causing a long and ugly suffering and eventually a murder of an individual who [is] no different from my cat or even myself...

2 Beliefs

Seventy-two percent of respondents referenced some form of belief system that influenced their decisions to pursue veganism. These respondents

mentioned how they came to veganism by acting on their thoughts, feelings or through a sense of realisation. This belief was usually related to one of the other themes surmised here such as the belief that it is wrong to use animals or the belief that veganism, and the plant-based diet that comes with it, was a healthier lifestyle choice. One participant stated that he was the "master" of his world and that it was therefore his responsibility to act in alignment with his beliefs. Another felt that it was wrong to have "...people doing vile and violent jobs in slaughterhouses..." doing something that he "couldn't face doing" himself.

3 Family

Fifty-one percent of respondents mentioned that family ties had some influence on them such as spouses, parents and/or siblings. A number of them had grown up in a vegetarian household or had a spouse who was vegetarian or vegan. Indeed, 31% mentioned their wives having an effect on the respondents turning vegan. Often, they did it in tandem with their partners or shortly afterwards. In one case, a respondent held a family meeting with himself, his wife and two sons who decided they would all turn vegan together. This suggests pursuing veganism alongside relatives makes the journey easier, possibly due to the social support and solidarity that comes with the family unit. This was not universal however; some participants reported strained family relationships due to their beliefs and choice to go vegan. One participant grew up in the countryside where "exploitation of animals for our benefit was the de-facto standard" and that pressures from family made him give up being vegetarian at one point. Despite "familial pressures", this participant ended up going vegan regardless.

4 Environmental

Forty-seven percent of respondents referenced

the environment as a motivating factor in going vegan. As with animals, there was often a catalyst for this such as watching documentaries like Cowspiracy or reading academic articles on the subject. The importance of environmentalism differed between respondents. For some it was the main factor for going vegan, as one respondent surmised:

"...I discovered the environmental impacts of intensive farming, fast fashion etc. I then thought about what I can do about it. particularly in the context of the climate emergency. The highest impact change I could make to my lifestyle was to stop eating meat and dairy..."

For some the environment was the initial reason for going vegan but then they caught on to the ethical reasons:

"...the environmental reason was the first to push me towards a more sustainable diet. As I delved deeper into vegan philosophy, I understood that the ethical reason would move me as much as the environmental one."

For others, the environment was the least important reason, although still a reason nonetheless:

"I tell people I'm vegan 90% for my health and 10% for animals/ the environment."

This suggests that the environmental reasons for going vegan are important, or key considerations for many vegan men. But it's not often the main reason and may be something of an 'added bonus' rather than the true reason.

5 Health

Thirty-nine percent of participants mentioned health in their response. Most of the respondents appeared to want to better their general health but, in some cases, respondents were dealing with an active health condition and tried veganism as a means to achieve health and fitness goals:

“ Having been overweight and unfit for longer than I realised, I took up running (aged 47). as my interest in running (and general fitness) increased so did my attention to diet. many running books advocate a vegan diet and make many links to increased performance and improved recovery times. with this in mind I initially became vegetarian (aged 51) then vegan (aged 53). my personal experience backs what the research told me (in particular about improved recovery times after long runs) and I have never looked back.

*A sub-theme was related to **veganism and fitness**, especially where gym/sports were concerned, such as “improved recovery times after long runs”.*

In one case, “health anxiety” turned one “protein, meat-obsessed gym-goer” into trying veganism who then found it to be a “credible alternative”. Health was usually a reason to turn vegan, concurrent with animal reasons and/or the environment. As one physician concluded “the initial spark was compassion and ethics, but health helped to consolidate the intention.” Indeed, health appeared to be split into two sub-themes. The first was an avoidance of the unhealthy aspects of meat such as the “cancer-causing properties of red meat and eggs” and an embracing of the general benefits of a vegan diet. The second sub-theme was related to veganism and fitness, especially where gym/sports were concerned, such as “improved recovery times after long runs”. As with the animals and the environment, interaction with various vegan sources such as documentaries like Vegucated and The Game Changers, or health literature, initiated this change.



QUESTION 2

Now that you've told us about why you became interested in veganism, we'd like to understand more about what it was like for you on a practical and personal level when you actually made the change to go vegan. What was the transition process like for you? Was it a gradual change or did you make the change quickly, from one day

to the next? How did you feel during this transition process? You'll have an opportunity in question 3 to talk about any barriers you faced when you became vegan, so for this current question please focus more on what the transition process looked like for you personally and how you went about trying to make this change.

In this question, there were four key themes which emerged concerning the personal and practical effects of transitioning to a vegan diet. These four themes were, in order of most frequently referenced, 1) Food, 2) Change, 3) Belief and 4) Animals. Many of the responses overlapped several of these themes. These will now be summarised.

surmised "there was no 'but cheese' moments for me". Many respondents consulted sources such as recipe books and online communities for food information. One respondent mentioned physiological changes in how they reacted to certain non-vegan products "now I feel uncomfortable when I smell any animal products, especially meat and eggs".

1 Food

Eighty-nine percent of respondents mentioned food in some way in their answers. One theme that emerged from these responses was that giving up non-vegan foods, such as meat, wasn't too difficult, primarily because the morality behind their choices outweighed the physical sensation of eating meat. As one participant

2 Change

Seventy-seven percent of participants mentioned the topic of change in their answers. Some of the key words that came up in this category were "transition", "change" and "becoming". One key insight from these responses was that for many respondents, the transition was not a drawn-out affair but often happened "overnight" or was



89%
*of respondents
mentioned food in
some way in their
answers.*

77%
*of participants
mentioned the
topic of change in
their answers.*

“easy”. Some said it was a more “gradual” process taking a few months or removing products “one by one”. Many respondents were already vegetarian or pescatarian prior to going vegan, which they said made the transition easier. Some participants did talk about difficulties such as “living in a country where it is very hard to find someone to help us and the vegan products and options were very limited” or “finding a good plant-based milk replacement was a challenge”. One respondent mentioned the difficulties of going vegan, but that this process was ultimately worth it:

“...I was very determined to make this change and the animals were the driving factor. I felt much less guilty about my food after going vegan but a little overwhelmed by how much attention you had to pay to things with all the things you’d never consider normally. it was a fairly difficult transition but my motivation was very important to me so that made it doable.”

3 Belief

Sixty-eight percent of respondents gave answers relating to their beliefs. These responses mentioned key words such as “think”, “feel” and “remembered”. An array of various terms was used to describe the emotions they felt after going vegan with phrases such as “**enlightened**”, “**proud**”, “**joy**”, “**great**” and “**more at peace**”. One participant said it felt “liberating” after no longer being “part of the murder machine”. Some participants also gave details on the negative emotions they felt after going vegan, brought on largely through feelings of guilt. One respondent felt “embarrassed” about being “ridiculously ignorant” before going vegan. Another was “shocked” and felt “emotionally raw” for some weeks after learning about animal agriculture.

Others reported difficulties in social situations, with one saying he was regarded as a “mid-life crisis candidate” or having “frustration” when others did not share the same values. Other participants reported feeling quite neutral or unemotional:

“I felt good, but I must admit I didn’t feel the great awakening or a sudden gain in energy- I was good before, too.”

4 Animals

Sixty-three percent of respondents mentioned animals or animal products in their answers in some way. Some key words under this category included “animal”, “eggs”, “fish” and “cows”. Almost universally this was in relation to them ‘giving up’ certain products. Although it was not uncommon for respondents to remove meat first by going vegetarian and then vegan, the order in which products were removed post-vegetarianism appeared somewhat random. Milk was a common first product removed. One participant said he and his sister found cheese difficult to remove from their diets. Interestingly, one respondent said he continued to eat local organic duck eggs to help boost his testosterone which he recalled had “no effect in hindsight”. Some participants also mentioned the importance of giving up other non-food related animal products/services such as clothes, zoo memberships, cosmetics, and toiletries:

“...food isn’t the only reason for which animals are oppressed. Not long after the dietary transition, I began learning about other forms of animal use and why they were morally wrong. I vowed never to visit another zoo, or to buy leather shoes.”

QUESTION 3

We understand that the vegan journey isn't always an easy one. There are barriers and obstacles in the path and sometimes it can be difficult to make our way around them. We want to really understand what types of barriers vegan men like yourself have encountered, and the impact these have had. These barriers may be societal, cultural, or economic, for example. They may have

affected your wellbeing in varying ways. They may have prevented you from going vegan sooner. We want to really understand these barriers, and how they made you feel, so please give as much detail as possible in your answer. (You will have the opportunity to talk about how you overcame these barriers, and how you have successfully continued to be vegan, in the next question.)

In this question, there were four key themes concerning the barriers which may add difficulties to going vegan. These four themes were, in order of most frequently referenced, 1) Belief, 2) Objects, 3) People and 4) Family. Many of the responses overlapped several of these themes.

1 Belief

Eighty percent of respondents gave answers relating to beliefs. Certain key words that appeared in this category included "feel", "think" and "know". Some respondents spoke of their conflict of beliefs which arose between themselves and friends or family. Social difficulties were the most common barrier where this was concerned. Many respondents found speaking with non-vegans to be "difficult", "exhausting", "insensitive" and that they felt "isolated". Some respondents mentioned how they had been the butt of jokes from friends or had their nutritional intake questioned at sporting events (such as marathons or the gym). This was not always the case though. One respondent, for example, told how they experienced "no pressure" from the creative people they worked alongside and that with their family they had an agreement whereby he ignored their "conservative advice". One participant explained that opposition to his beliefs did not seriously bother him:

“

...no one who I really care about, or who cares about me has

ever presented a serious obstacle or resistance to my decision...

2 Objects

'Objects' was a topic mentioned in 78% of responses – these included the key topic of "barriers". Where practical reasons were concerned, access to information was found to be a common difficulty. One respondent told how they "had no idea where to look for information". Another participant told how because of difficulties finding information they did not "dare start a conversation because I feared having to defend my decision". The expectation that their morally informed behavioural change would be questioned presented a challenge. Access to vegan products was found to be another difficulty in that they were found to be more expensive or that places did not cater for vegans. Where the catering was concerned, however, this was almost always a problem when respondents were dining out with non-vegan friends or colleagues. This was perhaps best summarised by the following quotation:

“

...It alienates you from people. Food and drink is at the centre of almost all social events, celebrations, festivities, traditions, ceremonies, hangouts, get-togethers, and more...

At the same time, two respondents told how they had little to no barriers. The first spoke of how he didn't "feel like I had many barriers really, everything felt very achievable" with the second saying "I cannot think of any particular barriers to me becoming a vegan sooner, other than my own ignorance".

There were also some respondents who explicitly discussed the expectation to conform to masculine norms and behaviours as a barrier. This is best described in the following quotes:

“ ...one of the main barriers was cultural: The macho ideal of a man eating meat is alive and well in some circles. it was hard to try and explain to friends that whilst my favourite food used to be meat, I was no longer happy inflicting pain on animals for personal satisfaction... Also,

“ ...there is also the “tough-guy” attituded that we carry on our shoulders. something that I have always struggled with; being a manly-man. the reality of the matter is I found my true-self. changing to a plant-based lifestyle has made me more comfortable to be my true self...

In this person's case, not only did they identify masculine expectations as a barrier, but that going vegan gave this individual the impetus to be their "true self". This supports the findings in our Research Briefing on Veganism and Masculinity which argues that veganism can be a potential emancipatory pathway for men to break away from toxic masculinity and towards a greater sense of wellbeing.

3 People

Sixty-two percent of respondents mentioned 'people' in their answer. Many cited their masculinity being called into question by others.

Veganism seemed to be something which came into contradiction with "the "tough-guy" attitude" or "the macho ideal of a man eating meat". Whilst some reported this as a problem, others found it to be a welcome challenge, such as when one respondent told how "another barrier that I'm proud to keep shattering is a perception that you need to eat meat to be manly". Another simply did not care for the opinions of others: "I didn't care what anyone said. I knew I was doing the right thing". At the extreme end of things, one participant told how people stopped talking to him completely and of being subject to public humiliation by his father. However, these problems did not affect him too much or for too long:

“ People I knew did stop talking to me at first, but I didn't really care, that's their problem. My dad was incredibly embarrassing, we would walk into a cafe or restaurant, and he would loudly proclaim “he's vegan” while pointing at me, but he grew out of that quickly....

4 Family

Whilst 'people' was a commonly given answer, more specifically, 58% of people referred to the family in some way, which included mentions of "parents", "wife", "mum" and "dad". However, these answers varied from positive to negative. Some of the more negative reactions from family included a "big fall-out...even at 42!" due to veganism being seen as an "attack on their upbringing", a "lecture" from a father about supplements being needed for the rest of his son's life and being "mocked" for an hour by his mother. Other participants, however, found their families to be "supportive", although this sometimes took some time. Indeed, some participants told how family members followed in their footsteps and became vegan themselves or took up "a mostly plant-based diet".

QUESTION 4

Have you developed any strategies or techniques for overcoming barriers to becoming and staying vegan in the society we live in? What works well for you? What, perhaps, have you tried and doesn't work as well? Do you have any advice for men who are curious about veganism but are worried about the barriers they may find in society? These strategies may be practical, such as

handy tips and hints specific to men. Or, they could be more philosophical, about how you've thought about veganism and how thinking differently has helped you negotiate the barriers you've faced. We'd like to understand what could help men on their vegan journey so please do give as much detail as possible in your answer.

In this question, there were five key themes which emerged regarding the strategies and techniques used by participants to overcome any barriers they may face. These five themes were, in order of most frequently referenced: 1) Belief, 2) Communication, 3) Animals, 4) People and 5) Men. Many of the responses overlapped several of these themes.

1 Belief

Eighty-four percent of participants gave answers relating to beliefs. Words in this theme include "think", "know" and "feel". One of the key themes to emerge from this question was the importance of keeping the reasons for being vegan salient in their minds by "educating yourself", "learning more" and "stick[ing] to your beliefs". Participants often gave answers like going vegan is the "right thing to do" or that they had a "sense of justice". Many participants mentioned that learning more

about veganism and a plant-based diet also strengthened their commitment to veganism and made them better equipped to be vegan such as knowing what to eat and recipe ideas.

The ability to stick to their principles as vegans, and letting those deeply held beliefs see them through these societal or practical barriers, can be a powerful way to fight off external pressures. Some respondents even discussed adopting alternative understandings of masculinity as a useful way to overcome these barriers:

"...I've found thinking about masculinity as something that goes against the status quo in order to minimise harm as a useful philosophy."

2 Communication

Seventy percent mentioned communication in

84%
of participants
gave answers
relating to
beliefs.

70%
mentioned
communication
in some way.

some way. One theme that emerged from several participants was that they thought a transitional period towards veganism was a good strategy. This was not always the case though, with one participant saying he went “all-in” when he went vegan. Learning about veganism also enabled them to explain veganism to others more easily. There were mixed opinions as to whether to tell people about veganism or to wait until it came up naturally. One gave the following advice:

“ ...don't make a big point of telling people you are vegan. People don't like to be told; they like to find out. I don't say anything unless somebody specifically asks me and then often, they are quite interested and ask me to tell them more...

Another tried to avoid the words “vegan” or “veggie” entirely and preferred phrases such as “I don't eat meat or dairy” to avoid the negative connotations of veganism. Another avoided certain topics such as “philosophical discussions (the usual ones about desert islands, animals being killed in harvest etc.)” or online arguments. Another said:

“ [vegan men] should be braver and talk about it to friends/family because perhaps they are more open and understanding than they believe.

It was generally agreed upon though that if the questioner was genuinely interested, participants were happy to answer any questions they had.

3 Animals

Sixty-two percent of participants mentioned animals in some way, and these were always linked to the belief that animal cruelty was wrong and veganism was a way to avoid this.

62%
of participants
mentioned
animals in
some way.

Two participants said it made them proud to be vegan for this reason. One participant told how their ‘idea of strong men are those that are compassionate to animals and their environment’. Another participant felt strongly that anyone who has compassion for animals should be vegan:

“ I think that for men there is stigma about being soft hearted in relation to animals. for me the message is simple, if you disagree with animal abuse you ought be nothing but vegan. if you are not vegan then your weakness is expressed in your inability to think and act in accordance with your conscience.”

Other participants mentioned the importance of researching properly as making mistakes can be quite upsetting when first going vegan:

“ ...it can be frustrating making mistakes buying leather shoes for example because although you don't eat meat etc it's easy to forget the full extent if a vegan lifestyle that plays no part in animal cruelty.

4 People

61% of participants mentioned people in some way which was closely linked to ‘communication’. It was widely accepted that having a good knowledge of veganism was beneficial when talking to others and remaining “calm”, “sensible” and engaging in a “good healthy debate”. The best

way to interact with others was probably best surmised by the following quote:

“ ...there’s been moments when losing one’s temper at ignorant people could have been easy, but it really doesn’t help either yourself or the situation. A calm retort with a memorable and powerful fact is considerably more effective. Moreover, demonstrating that I am comfortable with my life choices sends another powerful message...

Another participant spoke of how being patient with non-vegans made communicating with people easier, and sometimes with positive outcomes:

“ I’ve helped many people make the transition to veganism, and generally advise against making too big a change too soon, because I recognise not everyone is as stubborn as me!...

An overarching theme from these responses was that patience and openness was a far better technique to dealing with non-vegans than being confrontational or defensive.

5 Men

Sixty percent mentioned men or masculinity in their answers. It was often emphasised that actions such as not “bowing to pressure” or “not

backing down to ridicule” were more masculine or “tougher” ways to conduct oneself. Not abusing animals was also seen to be masculine. As one participant surmised, offering to “protect the vulnerable, rather than abusing and killing them” was the “most manly thing” that could be done. On this topic, one participant said the following:

“ ...when thinking about this with an open mind, it should be clear to someone that taking part in and normalising violence towards innocent beings is cowardly. The masculine response is to stand up against this injustice in solidarity with the victims.

This theme of promoting alternative understandings of masculinity has featured prominently throughout this study in different responses.

Finding masculine vegan figures as a reference was also a common strategy such as “Mike Tyson” or other “vegan athletes/bodybuilders” which, when referenced, “worked well to quieten” any interlocutor. It was often said that the idea of veganism not being masculine was a “ridiculous notion” or “nothing but a (highly successful) marketing ploy”.

60%
mentioned men
or masculinity in
their answers.



QUESTION 5

Finally, we'd like to offer more targeted help and support to men who are interested in veganism. In your opinion, and from your own experience, what do you feel needs to be done to help more men become vegan? What should organisations, workplaces, the media,

etc., be doing to help vegan-curious men and existing male vegans on their vegan journey? We'd really like to offer more specific support – so please do answer this question as fully as you can.

In this question, respondents were asked about the best ways in which new vegans can be supported in their transitions to veganism. Three themes emerged from the answers, in order of most frequently referenced: 1) Belief, 2) Men and 3) Groups. Many of the responses overlapped several of these themes.

1 Belief

Eighty-six percent of participants referred to beliefs in their answers. A common response concerned turning the "meat = manly ideology on its head". The main way in which this could be done, according to some participants, was having more male vegan role models such as "Lewis Hamilton" as well as portrayals of "normal" vegan men in the media. Indeed, many participants said how it was important to have a variety of vegan men in the media "from all walks of life- different socioeconomic backgrounds/ races/ religions/ body shapes" and more "gym-based vegans, dad vegans not the classic vegan men, pictures

used of twenty something hippies at festivals or animal rights marches, real honest vegan men being pictured doing normal stuff". Others felt that vegans needed to target organisations such as "retailers", "eating establishments", "big corporations" and "politicians" to make changes at the structural level. One participant told how they should also target "red tractor" and "RSPCA assured" campaigns by exposing their welfare standards".

These findings are very useful for organisations like The Vegan Society, and validate the existence of campaigns like Vegan and Thriving which works to challenge stereotypes and show that there is no one typical kind of vegan.

2 Men

Eighty-four percent of participants mentioned 'men' in some way in their responses. These responses generally regarded two sub-themes, nutrition and caring for animals. Many participants said an emphasis on the nutritional and/or health

86%
*of participants
referred to
beliefs in their
answers.*





68%

*of respondents
mentioned
groups in some
way.*

benefits of veganism would be attractive to men, especially in relation to the gym/muscle-building and the avoidance of illnesses such as “prostate cancer”. Second, by addressing the issue that caring for animals was not manly and reframing this, as “it takes strength to stand up against the crowd”. Once again, the respondents emphasised the value of addressing dominant understandings of masculinity head on.

Another participant said a switch to using the term ‘plant-based’ instead of ‘vegan’ on menus would be a good strategy because “the societal stigmas associated with the ‘v’ word might well be insurmountable to some men”.

3 Groups

Sixty-eight percent of respondents mentioned groups in some way. Words in this theme include “organisations”, “society”, “social” and “groups”. Overwhelmingly, participants spoke of how organisations, including the workplace and at school, should be encouraged to make veganism “normalised” and “inclusive” by adding

vegan options to the menu in the cafeteria or at work/social events. One participant told how organisations should treat veganism as a “protected characteristic”. Another participant mentioned that it would be beneficial to have more spaces for vegans to meet such as a “vegan buddy program” and “online vegan chats/forums”. The overarching theme in these answers was that individual change is best encouraged when wider society and authoritative organisations make the effort to support veganism. One participant emphasised this point, and added that words need to be backed up with action:

“...generally people do not respond well to being told what to do and therefore companies and the media cannot just say words. I suppose what could happen is that there could be more encouragement to be more inclusive in organisations and workplaces to ensure that vegan men are not left out and isolated...”


QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DISCUSSION

We conducted our questionnaire study with the intention to find answers to key questions and address current knowledge gaps. We sought to understand what kind of barriers vegan men reported facing when going vegan, and if these barriers matched those cited in the literature, as outlined in our [Research Briefing on Veganism and Masculinity](#). In addition, we aimed to understand how these vegan men overcame the barriers identified when going vegan, and how they managed to remain vegan despite these barriers. Further to this, we also wanted to know what organisations like The Vegan Society can do to encourage more men to go vegan. The data we have presented in this report therefore seeks to respond to these questions and begin to fill some of the knowledge gaps that currently prevail in this area.

We found that while most men had multifaceted motivations for going vegan, the overwhelming majority went vegan for the animals, having decided to align their behaviour with their compassionate principles. The participants in this study regularly mentioned, throughout the various questions, the importance of doing the right thing for non-human animals. The findings underlined that although environmental and health concerns factored into most participants reasoning for going vegan, the decision to go vegan was overwhelmingly ethically motivated behavioural change.

A regularly occurring theme throughout this study was the willingness of participants to challenge the behavioural expectations of mainstream, or hegemonic masculinity. Many participants reported experiencing some kind of conflict with friends, family or society more generally, which put pressure on these vegan men to abandon their veganism. However, by subscribing to alternative understandings of masculinity, they were able to not only defend themselves, but develop a healthier understanding

of a masculinity rooted in compassion. This supports the findings from our initial report on veganism and masculinity which stated

 ***...not only may a more dynamic, contested and plural understanding of masculinity make vegan practice more likely, but it also offers a much broader emancipatory pathway for men in other parts of their lives.***

As social beings we will inevitably communicate with a variety of people, some of whom may be curious about, or even hostile toward veganism. As such, participants in this study discussed the need to develop good communication techniques so that reasonable discussions don't spill over into argumentative confrontations. There was a mix of respondents who felt that the best thing was not to bring up being vegan, or even avoid words like 'vegan'. The opposite was also found to be evident however, with some respondents emphasising the need to speak up and actively engage friends and family. Knowing how to communicate with non-vegans about veganism can be difficult and even a source of anxiety. The frequency with which communication with others came up in this study indicates that there is indeed scope for vegan organisations to develop resources on how to speak with non-vegans about veganism.

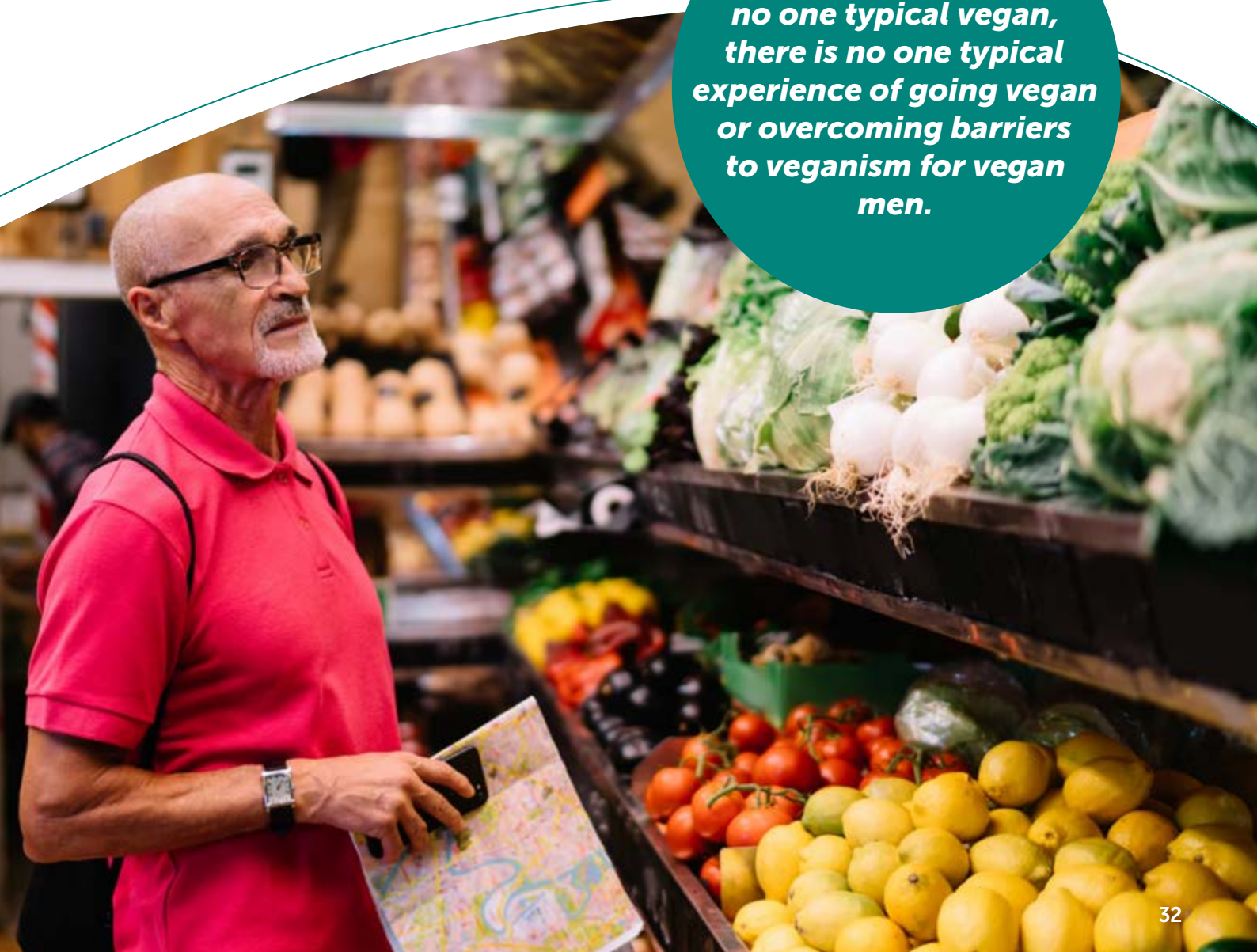
One of the aims of this research was to better understand how vegan men stay vegan despite social pressures. One theme that emerged from the findings was the advice from some participants to stay focused on why they went vegan in the first place. It is important, they felt, to ground oneself in one's core principles, and that no matter what anyone says, to remember their belief in their conviction that they are doing the right thing. Fundamentally, veganism concerns

aligning our core beliefs regarding compassion to non-human animals with our actions. As previously mentioned, most participants went vegan for ethical reasons. For many participants, external pressures to conform to mainstream masculinity had no effect because these ethical beliefs were deeply held and unshakable.

When asked what more can be done to support non-vegan men to go vegan, the study participants had several suggestions: There is a clear need for more male vegan role models, greater institutional support, and more public challenges to vegan stereotypes. The Vegan and Thriving campaign, which this research supports, has already acted on these points. It is, in turn, hoped that the data from this study will be useful for the future development of resources aimed at non-vegan men.

Overall, our qualitative research data revealed a spectrum of experiences. Just as there is no one typical vegan, there is no one typical experience of going vegan or overcoming barriers to veganism for vegan men. The results from this study support our initial research into the topic of veganism and masculinity – that vegan men experience gender-specific barriers to going vegan and that vegan men may experience difficulties with friends and family due to their morally informed behavioural change. The study demonstrates the need to do more to support vegan-curious men to face and overcome any perceived barriers to veganism.

***Just as there is
no one typical vegan,
there is no one typical
experience of going vegan
or overcoming barriers
to veganism for vegan
men.***



SUPPORTIVE STATEMENT

This research and report builds, in important ways, on the *Research Briefing on Masculinity and Veganism* produced by The Vegan Society in 2023. Many of us know anecdotally that a diverse range of men are becoming vegan. Increasingly, vegan men represent the diversity of the wider population, for example, existing across occupations, ages, ethnicities, sexualities, body types and so on. In academic research, we have noted for decades the varied gendering of animal consumption, care and veganism but it is mainly in the last ten years that a larger body of research data has started to be gathered.

This research, conducted by The Vegan Society, adds findings of interest. Segmenting their questionnaire sample of 1000 non-vegan men into those with no interest in becoming vegan, some interest, and planning to go vegan soon was helpful and illuminating. I think almost every vegan man would have at some point placed themselves in the first category, so it would be wrong to consider that apparent hardline faithfulness to animal consumption as immutable. Moreover, people will read as positive that the cumulative total of those 'with interest to' and 'planning to' become vegan comprised 41% of the entire questionnaire sample.

The research is a useful addition to the earlier Vegan Society funded *Pathways to Veganism* report (Parkinson, Twine and Griffin 2019) which also focused on how non-vegans understood the meanings of veganism. In this new research, the perceived disincentives of adopting vegan practice in the main were found to revolve around taste, health and nutrition, cost, limited choices and protein. For vegans, this list will appear as very surmountable. Perhaps the only one which might be specific to men are fears over protein which might imply links between food, health and body image concerns. The ongoing false conflation of protein with meat continues to inform food understandings. The research also

usefully delves into the issue of how non-vegan men would perceive reaction within their social circle.

The second part of the research focused on vegan men and comprised an open answer questionnaire with 94 men. This engaged with personal narratives of transition asking, for example, what 'sparked the interest?', 'what was the process?', 'what were the practical aspects?', 'what made it difficult?', 'what are your personal strategies for staying vegan?' and 'how can other men be helped?'. What emerges is a rich set of responses and a sense that for some men the transformational quality of 'becoming vegan' is a very significant life experience that may also include a realisation that particular gender norms no longer need to constrain one's sense of who one wants to be.

The report will be useful for informing the creation of resources for men and for different kinds of men. It can also inform campaigns and narrative strategies across the animal advocacy movement and also be interesting reading for a far broader social policy environment interested in the diverse life experiences and well-being of men.

Understanding vegan masculinities better is an exercise in learning about the pitfalls and potential in men becoming more caring citizens. A society that listens to everyday men, that demonstrates care for men may be in a better place to produce more caring men.

Dr Richard Twine

Reader in Sociology, & Co-Director, Centre for Human-Animal Studies (CfHAS), Edge Hill University

Chair, Research Advisory Committee of The Vegan Society

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

This report is a comprehensive summary of both our quantitative and qualitative research into veganism and masculinity. The findings from our primary and secondary research are a much-needed addition to the evidence base on this topic, underlining how The Vegan Society continues to be the go-to resource for providing quality information on vegan issues. In addition to providing evidence to support further work in the area of veganism and masculinity, this report concludes with the following recommendations for communities of professional practice:

- With consideration to the results from our quantitative and qualitative research project, there appears to be a need to produce further supportive resources for non-vegan men. In particular, factual information on nutrition, recipe ideas, the evidence supporting veganism and advice on communicating with non-vegans. Developing a resource for vegans to use on how to communicate with non-vegans about veganism could address some of the points raised from this research.
- Our research suggests that there are more non-vegan men open to the idea of going vegan than previously thought. Given the importance of this finding, The Vegan Society and other vegan organisations and campaigns should continue to encourage men, specifically, to go vegan. This should involve the continued featuring of a diverse range of positive male role models as part

of the Vegan and Thriving campaign, promoting inclusion within different institutions and challenging stereotypes.

- Our research shows that a significant number of non-vegan men are concerned that their friends or family would be unsupportive of their decision to go vegan. We also found that many vegan men had an easier time going vegan when done with partners or with the help of supportive vegans and non-vegans. We therefore believe that there needs to be more opportunities for transitioning vegans to make new connections and find supportive social circles. This could take many forms, including establishing a 'vegan buddy system', or directing new vegans towards established vegan social groups. The Vegan Society's Community Network provides a brilliant volunteering and social opportunity for new vegans to connect with other vegans. It's important that we emphasise the potential of this network as a place to connect with like-minded individuals and find fulfilling volunteering opportunities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Jake Pointer who volunteered to help us summarise the results of our questionnaire data. Thank you to Audrey Anderson for proofreading this report.

A photograph of two men with beards standing in a fruit market. They are looking at a display of fruit, including oranges, grapes, and pomegranates. The man on the left is wearing a patterned shirt and the man on the right is wearing a blue patterned shirt. A large teal circle is overlaid on the image, containing text.

There appears to be a need to produce further supportive resources for non-vegan men. In particular, factual information on nutrition, recipe ideas, the evidence supporting veganism and advice on communicating with non-vegans.

Our research suggests that there are more non-vegan men open to the idea of going vegan than previously thought.

Our research shows that a significant number of non-vegan men are concerned that their friends or family would be unsupportive of their decision to go vegan. We also found that many vegan men had an easier time going vegan when done with partners or with the help of supportive vegans and non-vegans.



**The Vegan Society,
Donald Watson House,
21 Hylton Street,
Birmingham, B18 6HJ**

+44 (0)121 523 1730
info@vegansociety.com
vegansociety.com