

## WHAT VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN PRODUCTS WILL AMERICAN ADULTS PURCHASE?

### QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE VEGETARIAN RESOURCE GROUP IN A NATIONAL POLL

VRG asked the following in a national Harris Poll. See: [vrg.org/blog/2020/08/07/how-many-adults-in-the-u-s-are-vegan-how-many-adults-eat-vegetarian-when-eating-out-asks-the-vegetarian-resource-group-in-a-national-poll/](http://vrg.org/blog/2020/08/07/how-many-adults-in-the-u-s-are-vegan-how-many-adults-eat-vegetarian-when-eating-out-asks-the-vegetarian-resource-group-in-a-national-poll/)

Which of the following, if any, best describes your eating behavior?

I never eat meat, fish, seafood, poultry, dairy, or eggs.

I never eat meat, fish, seafood, or poultry.

I never eat meat, fish, seafood, poultry, dairy, or eggs when eating out or getting takeout, but eat one or more of these foods at home.

I never eat meat, fish, seafood, or poultry when eating out or getting takeout, but eat one or more of these foods at home.

When eating out or getting takeout, I sometimes eat meals without meat, fish, poultry, dairy, or eggs.

When eating out or getting takeout, I sometimes eat meals without meat, fish, or poultry.

None of these.

We considered those that never eat meat, fish, seafood, or poultry; plus those that never eat meat, fish, seafood, poultry, dairy, or eggs, as vegetarian. We classified that second category of vegetarians who don't eat dairy or eggs also as vegan. Because we use the word "never" and don't just ask if a person considers him/herself vegetarian, our numbers may be lower than others. Be wary of comparing to polls in other countries that ask if you are vegetarian or vegan, since people may self define differently. We did not ask about honey.

More than half of the U.S. adult population (54%) always or sometimes eats vegetarian (including vegan) meals when eating out. One fourth (25%) of U.S. adults always or sometimes eats vegan meals when eating out. Six percent of American adults are vegetarian (including vegans) all the time, and half of the vegetarians are also vegan (three percent of American adults).

We asked the following additional question, which may be of interest to food companies, food services, restaurants, marketers, researchers, students, and media.

**If you're looking to buy a vegetarian product, which of the following would you purchase?**  
(Please select all that apply.)

Your favorite veggie burger cooked on the same grill where meat is cooked, if the grill is cleaned first.

A vegan burger at a fast food restaurant (e.g. Burger King, Subway, Hardee's).

Your favorite dessert containing sugar, if the source of sugar isn't specified.

A vegetarian dish containing leafy greens such as broccoli, kale, or collards.

A vegetarian dish containing whole foods such as lentils, chickpeas, or rice.

A meat alternative grown from animal cell DNA obtained ten years ago, which does not currently involve the raising of animals.

Your favorite dessert containing sugar whitened through a bone char filter, if bone char is not in the sugar.

None of these.

## RESULTS

### **WOULD PURCHASE A VEGETARIAN DISH CONTAINING LEAFY GREENS SUCH AS BROCCOLI, KALE, OR COLLARDS**

33% Total  
43% Vegetarians including vegans  
39% Those that sometimes or always eat vegan meals when eating out  
40% Those that sometimes or always eat vegetarian, including vegan, meals when eating out  
26% Presumably never eats vegetarian or vegan meals  
28% ages 18-34  
29% male  
37% female  
36% urban  
31% suburban  
36% rural  
32% Black  
27% Latino  
42% Asian

Of note is that about 2 in 5 of those that eat vegetarian, including vegan, meals sometimes or always when eating out (43%), would purchase a vegetarian dish containing leafy greens such as broccoli, kale, or collards if they were looking to buy a vegetarian product, as your favorite dietitian and mom/dad may have suggested. For restaurants, foodservices, and companies, that are only thinking meat analogs, producing items with green vegetables should seriously be taken into consideration.

On the other hand, since over one half of all adults are not saying they would purchase leafy green dishes, it should not be assumed that a vegetarian or someone eating vegetarian meals (or not eating vegetarian meals) is automatically meeting suggestions by the USDA/USDHHS Dietary Guidelines for Americans that a healthy eating pattern includes a variety of vegetables from all of the subgroups, which includes dark green vegetables. When evaluating a vegetarian (or non vegetarian) client's diet, a dietitian or other medical professional would specifically have to ask what is being consumed in order to know if all the subgroups are being included.

### **WOULD PURCHASE A VEGETARIAN DISH CONTAINING WHOLE FOODS SUCH AS LENTILS, CHICKPEAS, OR RICE**

33% Total  
49% Vegetarians including vegans  
43% Those that sometimes or always eat vegan meals when eating out  
41% Those that sometimes or always eat vegetarian, including vegan, meals when eating out  
23% Presumably never eats vegetarian or vegan meals  
33% ages 18-34  
30% male  
35% female  
34% urban  
33% suburban  
30% rural  
27% Black  
30% Latino

43% Asian

One in 3 American adults and nearly half of vegetarians including vegans (49%) would purchase a vegetarian dish containing whole foods such as lentils, chickpeas or rice if they were looking to purchase a vegetarian product. The USDA/USDHHS Dietary Guidelines for Americans said that a healthy eating pattern includes legumes (beans and peas).

#### **WOULD PURCHASE A VEGAN BURGER AT A FAST FOOD RESTAURANT**

25% Total  
34% Vegetarians including vegans  
34% Those that sometimes or always eat vegan meals when eating out  
32% Those that sometimes or always eat vegetarian, including vegan, meals when eating out  
17% Presumably never eats vegetarian or vegan meals  
26% ages 18-34  
26% male  
24% female  
32% urban  
22% suburban  
21% rural  
25% Black  
28% Latino  
31% Asian  
22% each – high school education or some college  
30% college grad or more  
24% Annual household income less than \$50,000  
28% Annual household income over \$100,000

Many chains and restaurants have added vegan burgers to their menus, and a quarter of Americans (25%) say if they were looking to buy a vegetarian product they would purchase a vegan burger at a fast food restaurant, and about one third of those that live in urban areas (32%) say the same. Though more Americans say if they were looking to buy a vegetarian product, they would purchase a vegetarian dish containing leafy greens such as broccoli, kale, or collards (33%) or vegetarian dishes containing whole foods such as lentils, chickpeas, or rice (33%) than a vegan burger at a fast food restaurant (25%).

#### **WOULD PURCHASE YOUR FAVORITE VEGGIE BURGER COOKED ON THE SAME GRILL WHERE MEAT IS COOKED, IF THE GRILL IS CLEANED FIRST**

23% Total  
25% Vegetarians including vegans  
30% Those that sometimes or always eat vegan meals when eating out  
31% Those that sometimes or always eat vegetarian, including vegan, meals when eating out  
13% Presumably never eats vegetarian or vegan meals  
30% ages 18-34  
25% male  
21% female  
28% urban  
22% suburban  
17% rural

23% Black  
26% Latino  
27% Asian

**WOULD PURCHASE YOUR FAVORITE DESSERT CONTAINING SUGAR, IF THE SOURCE OF THE SUGAR ISN'T SPECIFIED**

19% Total  
23% Vegetarians including vegans  
23% Those that sometimes or always eat vegan meals when eating out  
24% Those that sometimes or always eat vegetarian, including vegan, meals when eating out  
14% Presumably never eats vegetarian or vegan meals  
23% ages 18-34  
21% male  
18% female  
20% urban  
21% suburban  
12% rural  
19% Black  
21% Latino  
22% Asian

**WOULD PURCHASE YOUR FAVORITE DESSERT CONTAINING SUGAR WHITENED THROUGH A BONE CHAR FILTER, IF BONE CHAR IS NOT IN THE SUGAR**

10% Total  
13% Vegetarians including vegans  
16% Those that sometimes or always eat vegan meals when eating out  
15% Those that sometimes or always eat vegetarian, including vegan, meals when eating out  
5% Presumably never eats vegetarian or vegan meals  
15% ages 18-34  
13% male  
7% female  
15% urban  
8% suburban  
6% rural  
11% Black  
12% Latino  
9% Asian

We were surprised that among individuals who presumably never eat vegetarian or vegan meals, nearly three times as many say if they were looking for a vegetarian product they would purchase their favorite dessert containing sugar if the source isn't specified than would purchase their favorite dessert with sugar whitened through bone char filter, if bone char is not in the sugar (14% vs. 5%). Since they already eat meat, why would they care? Meanwhile, vegetarians including vegans are more likely to say if they were looking for a vegetarian product they would purchase their favorite dessert containing sugar if they didn't know the source of the sugar than would purchase their favorite dessert containing sugar processed through bone char filter, if bone char is not in the sugar (23% vs. 13%). To meet the needs of all consumers, companies should be labeling the sources of their ingredients so customers can make their own decisions.

**WOULD PURCHASE A MEAT ALTERNATIVE GROWN FROM ANIMAL CELL DNA OBTAINED TEN YEARS AGO, WHICH DOES NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVE THE RAISING OF ANIMALS**

- 12% Total
- 19% Vegetarians including vegans
- 19% Those that sometimes or always eat vegan meals when eating out
- 18% Those that sometimes or always eat vegetarian, including vegan, meals when eating out
- 5% Presumably never eats vegetarian or vegan meals
- 20% ages 18-34
- 14% male
- 10% female
- 17% urban
- 10% suburban
- 6% rural
- 16% Black
- 16% Latino
- 15% Asian

Will consumers buy a meat alternative grown from animal cell DNA? As of now, those that don't eat vegetarian or vegan meals, don't seem to be ready for this. About five times as many of those that presumably don't eat vegetarian or vegan meals say if they were looking for a vegetarian product, they would purchase a vegetarian dish with leafy greens such as broccoli, kale, or collards (26%) or a vegetarian dish containing whole foods such as lentils, chickpeas, or rice (23%) than a meat alternative grown from animal cell DNA obtained ten years ago, which does not currently involve the raising of animals (5%).

**REASONS FOR FOOD CHOICES**

The survey also asked, "Which of the following is most important to you when making food choices? Please select up to two choices."

	TOTAL	VEGETARIANS INCLUDING VEGANS WHEN EATING OUT	EATS VEGETARIAN MEALS ALWAYS OR SOMETIMES WHEN EATING OUT (includes vegan meals)	EATS VEGAN MEALS ALWAYS OR SOMETIMES
Taste	57%	27%	48%	46%
Cost	38%	24%	31%	29%
Personal Health	36%	39%	42%	45%
Convenience	10%	10%	10%	9%
The Environment	10%	16%	14%	16%
Animal Welfare	10%	31%	13%	15%
Ethics	8%	17%	12%	11%
Religious Beliefs	5%	7%	7%	8%

For those who always or sometimes eat vegetarian meals when eating out taste (48%), personal health (42%), and cost (31%) top the list of what is most important to them when making food choices. Similarly, among those who always or sometimes eat vegan meals when eating out taste (46%) tops the list of what is most important to them when making food choices, followed by personal health (45%) and cost (29%). For vegetarians (including vegans) personal health (39%) tops the list of most important to them when making food choices followed by animal welfare (31%), taste (27%), cost (24%), ethics (17%) and the environment (16%). While all groups find importance for personal health, taste and cost, vegetarians (including vegans) are more likely to say animal welfare is important to them than taste or cost. To expand the market beyond current consumers, businesses may want to pay attention to the cost of their products or meals.

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of **The Vegetarian Resource Group** from June 22-24, 2020 among 2,074 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact [vrg@vrg.org](mailto:vrg@vrg.org). Please note that this poll was taken during the Covid-19 pandemic. We do not know what influence, if any, that may have had on the survey answers. See: [vrg.org/nutshell/faq.htm#poll](http://vrg.org/nutshell/faq.htm#poll) for more poll information.