

GO VEGAN

RESEARCH

VEGAN SURVEY (NZ):

Attitudes, Behaviours and Demographics 2013

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Supporting
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Contents

Summary	4
Demographics	5
What gender do you identify with?.....	5
How old are you?	5
Which ethnic group(s) do you identify with?.....	6
Which region do you live in?	6
What is your annual income?.....	7
Discussion.....	7
Vegan History.....	8
How long have you been vegan?.....	8
What age were you when you became vegan?.....	8
Were you vegan before becoming vegetarian?	9
How long were you a vegetarian before becoming vegan?	9
Have you been vegan more than once in your life (with periods of being non-vegan between)?	9
What age were you when you became vegan for the first time?	10
What were the reasons you stopped being vegan?.....	10
Discussion.....	11
Motivations	12
For what reasons did you become vegan?.....	12
What was the most important reason you became vegan?	12
What are your reasons for staying vegan now?	13
Discussion.....	13
Social	14
Do you know any other vegans living in your area?.....	14
Is your partner vegan?	14
Are you raising your children vegan?.....	14
Discussion.....	15
Activism	16
How effective do you think welfare reform and abolition approaches are at achieving rights for animals? ..	16
What vegan or animal rights based activism have you carried out in the past year?	16
If there was an animal rights based party in the 2014 national election, would you vote for them?.....	17
Discussion.....	17
Difficulties	18
What do you find difficult about being vegan?	18
What do you find most difficult about being vegan?	19
Discussion.....	19
Conclusions	20

Summary

A total of 376 people responded to the survey. Of these, 41 people did not complete the survey, and a further 23 were either not vegan, not living in New Zealand, or both. A total of 312 responses are used in this report.

The survey consisted of a maximum of 28 questions, with some questions being excluded for participants based on previous answers. For questions where only some participants answered results reflect only those who were given the option of answering that question.

Some results that were found include:

- There is a large skew in the gender ratio of New Zealand vegans, with 73.7% of respondents identifying as female.
- Most vegans are between 21 and 50 years of age.
- NZ Europeans are over represented in the vegan community, while Maori are underrepresented.
- 83.7% of vegans were vegetarian before adopting a vegan lifestyle.
- Most vegans quote animal rights (93.3%), environmental (62.5%) and health (55.5%) reasons for becoming vegan.
- Almost a quarter of vegans don't know any other vegans living in their area.
- Over half of vegans with children are raising their children vegan.
- 67.6% of vegans would vote for an animal rights based party in the 2014 national election.
- The most quoted difficulty with being vegan is having limited options when eating in public.

The survey was shared mostly over Facebook, and through a few email groups. This will introduce a bias favouring those demographics that are more likely to use Facebook. This should be kept in mind while reading the results.

This report has been written to be read by as wide an audience as possible; as such, in depth statistical analyses have been excluded and a margin of error of 6% is used (based on 312 responses and vegans making up 1-2% of the population). For more in-depth statistical information, email the author at mhitchcock@hotmail.co.nz.

Demographics

What gender do you identify with?

There is an overwhelming disproportion of females to males, with 73.7% of respondents identifying as female, and only 25.6% as male. This is a stark difference to the expected 50-50 ratio of gender distribution in New Zealand.

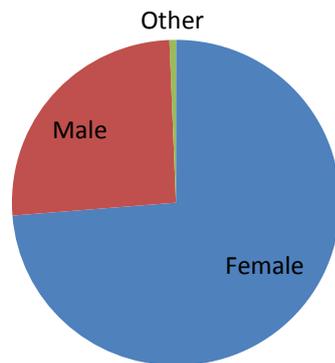


Figure 1. Distribution of gender in the New Zealand vegan community.

How old are you?

The large majority of vegans (79%) are between the ages of 21 to 50. Compared to the general population, these age groups are overrepresented, while the age groups below 15 and above 51 are underrepresented. These figures could be confounded by the fact that these overrepresented age groups are more likely to use Facebook (and so have seen the survey more readily).

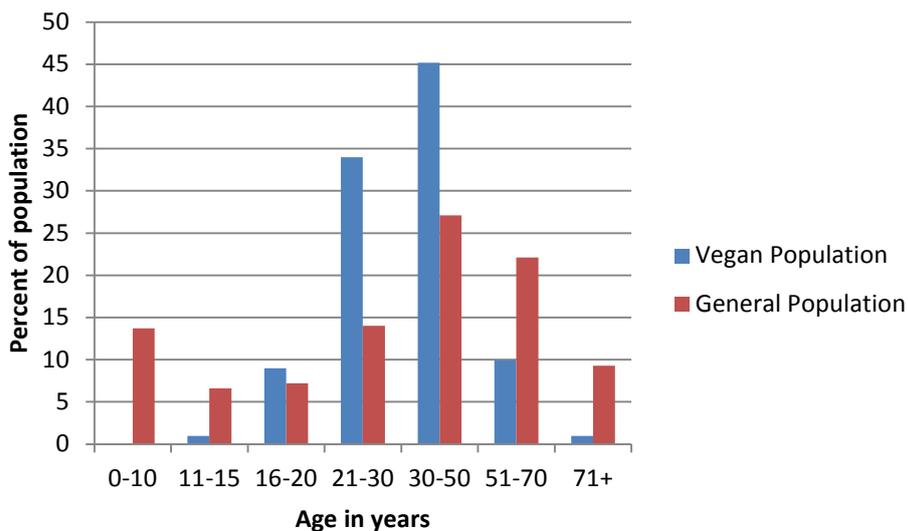


Figure 2. Comparison of age groups between the vegan and general population of New Zealand.

Which ethnic group(s) do you identify with?

77.3% of respondents identified as NZ European, compared to only 52.9% of the general population identifying as NZ European. Only 4.8% identified as Maori (short of 12.6% of the general population). Samoan, Cook Island Maori, Tongan, and Chinese ethnicities were also underrepresented, but these are not significant given the surveys margin of error.

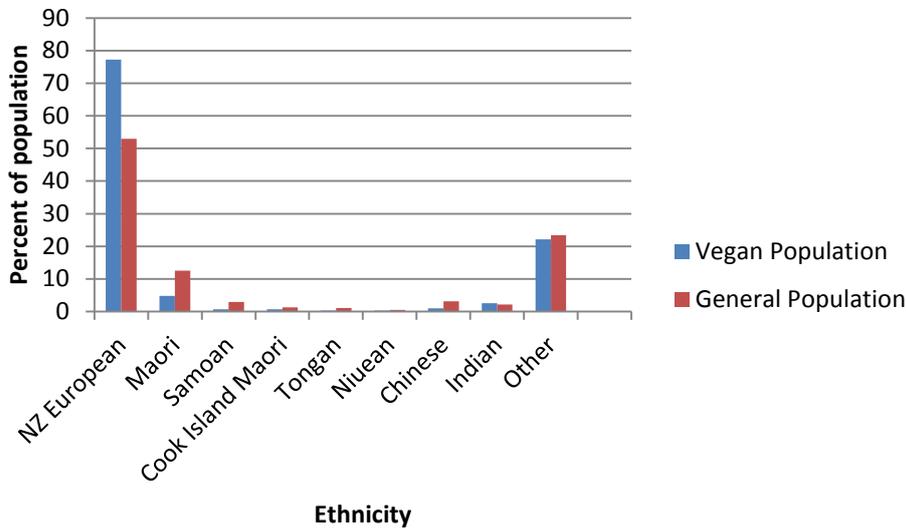


Figure 3. Ethnic identities of New Zealand vegans compare to the general population. Note that the values may not add up to 100% as respondents can select more than one ethnicity.

Which region do you live in?

The regions with the highest number of vegans are Auckland (36.2%), Wellington (19.6%) and Canterbury (16%). This is reflected in these regions having the most active vegan communities. Wellington stands out as being the only city in which vegans are overrepresented (19.6% compared to 11%), while all other regions fall within the expected margin of error.

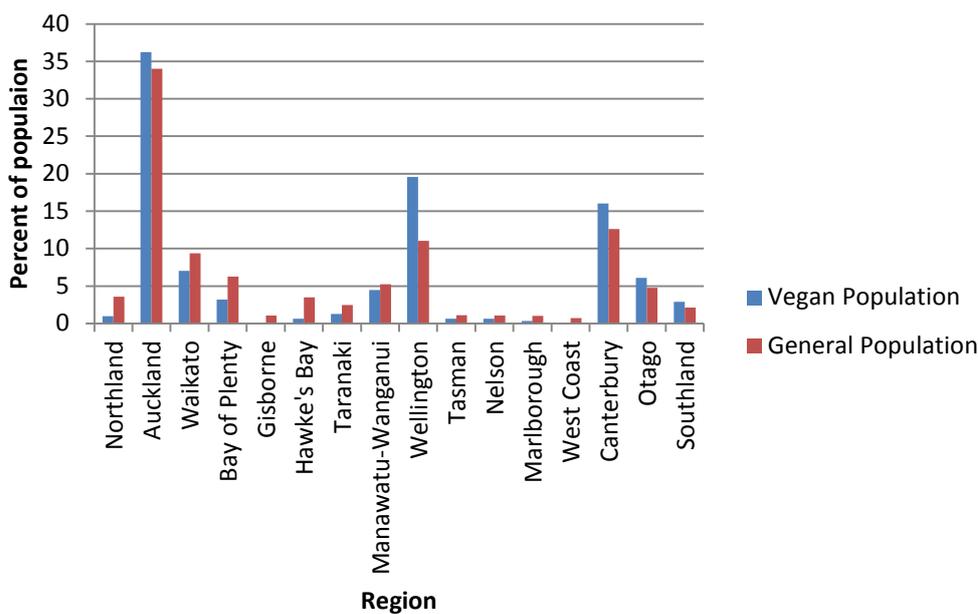


Figure 5. Regions in which vegans live in compared to the general population of New Zealand.

What is your annual income?

Over three quarters of vegans have an annual income of below \$50,000. Only 3.2% have an income above \$100,000. The distribution of income among the vegan population is representative of the general population's income distribution.

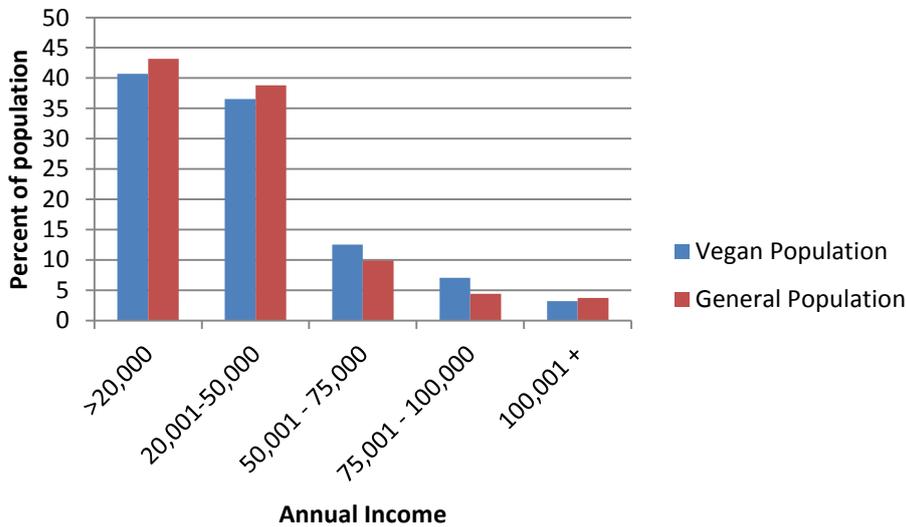


Figure 6. Distribution of income in the vegan and general population of New Zealand.

Discussion

There is an obvious overrepresentation of females, NZ Europeans, and those in the age-group of 21-50 in the New Zealand vegan movement. This leads to one obvious conclusion: that people who identify as female and NZ European are an identified target audience for vegan advocacy. They are the people who will be easiest to convert to a vegan lifestyle.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from this is that special attention has to be paid in promoting veganism to those who identify as male or those from other ethnicities. There needs to be focus on advocating veganism as a lifestyle suitable for everyone regardless of gender, ethnicity or age.

As vegan populations per region typically reflect the distribution of the general population, there doesn't need to be specific focus in any region. If vegan advocacy is controlled at the regional/local level, then then advocacy efforts should be representative across the country to the population in that region.

Vegan History

How long have you been vegan?

51% of vegans have been vegan for 1 to 5 years. Only 28.8% have been vegan for more than 5 years, and 20.2% have been vegan for less than a year. It is commonly accepted that the vegan population (worldwide) is not increasing, so from these numbers we can determine that many people are adopting a vegan lifestyle, but give it up at some point in their life.

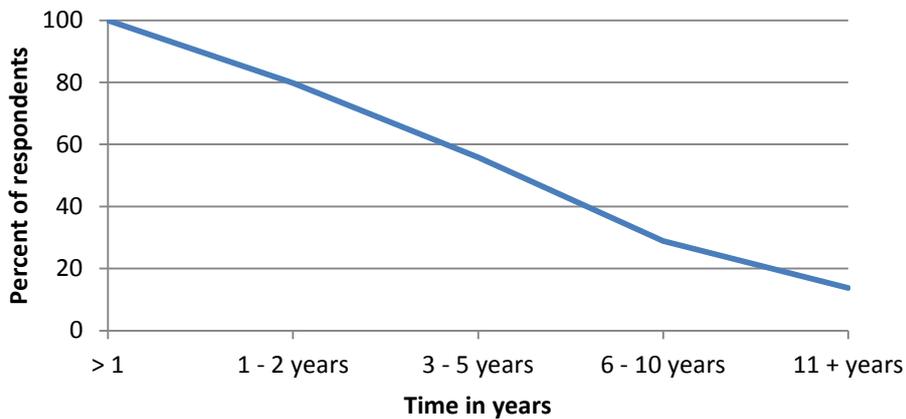


Figure 7. Cumulative graph showing the percentage of vegans who have been vegan for that at least that long.

What age were you when you became vegan?

The most common age group at which people transitioned to their current vegan diet is 21-30 (34.6%), followed by 31-50 (31.8%), and 15-20 (22.1%). Higher age groups may be underrepresented here due to them not being as likely to access Facebook and the survey. While people under 15 are also less likely to have this access, this should not bias the results due to the historical nature of the question (assuming that the proportion who adopted their diet in each age group has remained steady over time).

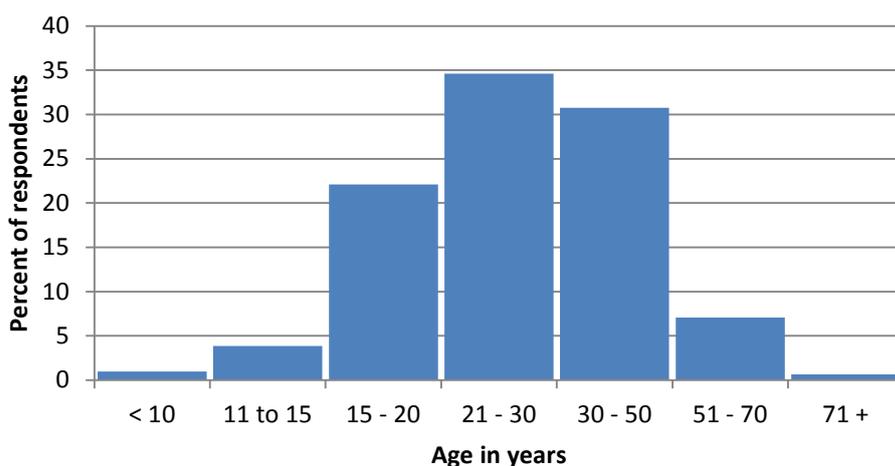


Figure 8. Ages at which people adopted their current vegan lifestyle.

Were you vegetarian before becoming vegan?

83.7% of vegans were vegetarian before transitioning to their vegan lifestyle, only 16.3% made an immediate shift to veganism.

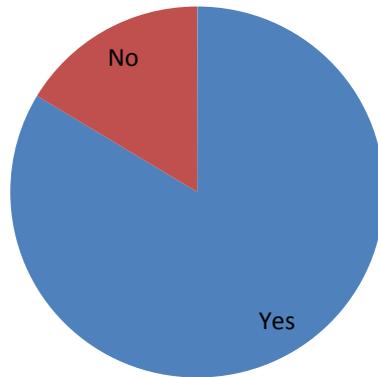


Figure 9. Proportion of vegans who were vegetarian before transitioning to a vegan lifestyle.

How long were you a vegetarian before becoming vegan?

Over a third of vegans (34.1%) were vegetarian for more than 10 years before becoming vegan. Only 16.5% of vegans were vegetarian for less than a year before advancing to a vegan lifestyle.

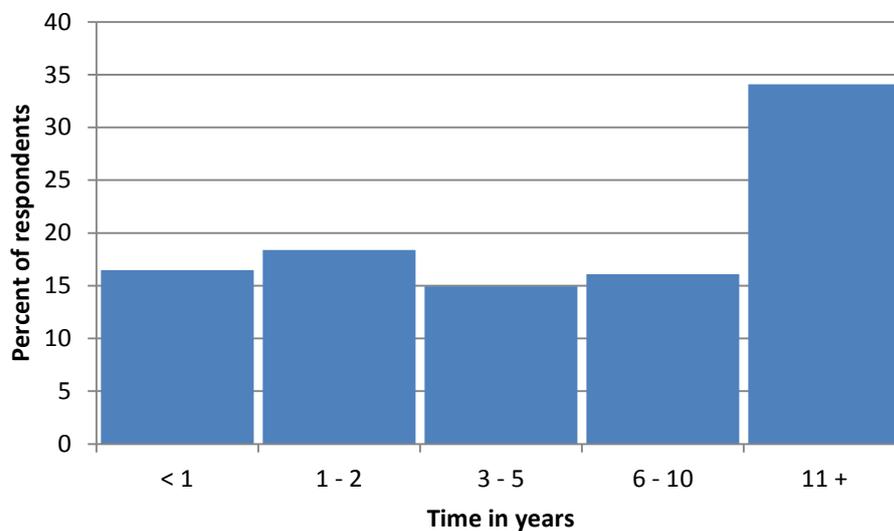


Figure 10. Number of years spent as a vegetarian before adopting a vegan lifestyle.

Have you been vegan more than once in your life (with periods of being non-vegan between)?

19.6% of people who are currently vegan have been vegan more than once in their life. (Note that this does not suggest 20% of people who become vegan will stop being vegan, as it does not count

the number of people who were vegan, then stopped and haven't since returned to a vegan lifestyle).

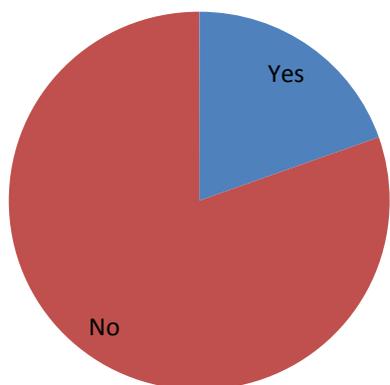


Figure 11. The number of vegans who have been vegan for multiple periods of their life.

What age were you when you became vegan for the first time?

There is a striking difference in the distribution of age groups between when people went vegan for the first time in their life and when they went vegan this current time. The most common age group is still 21-30, but is increased from 34.6% to 42.6%. The second most common group is now 15-20, 37.7% up from 22.1%. The age group 31-50 has greatly dropped from 30.8% to 6.6%. We also see an increase in age groups below 15 and a decrease in age groups above 50.

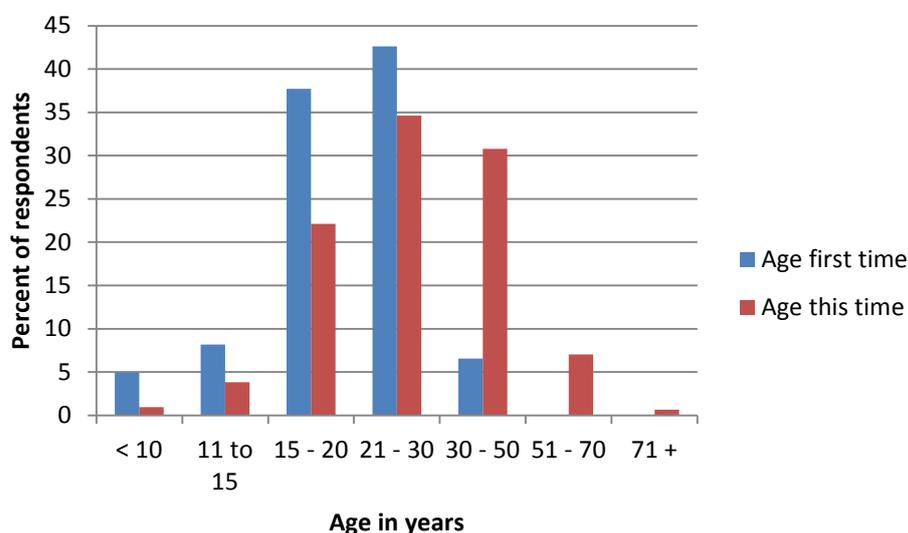


Figure 12. Comparison of the ages at which people adopted a vegan lifestyle for the first time in their life and the current time.

What were the reasons you stopped being vegan?

The most commonly cited reasons for people stopping being vegan were difficulty socialising with friends or at events (41%) and limited options when eating in public (41%), followed by craving non-vegan food (32.8%).

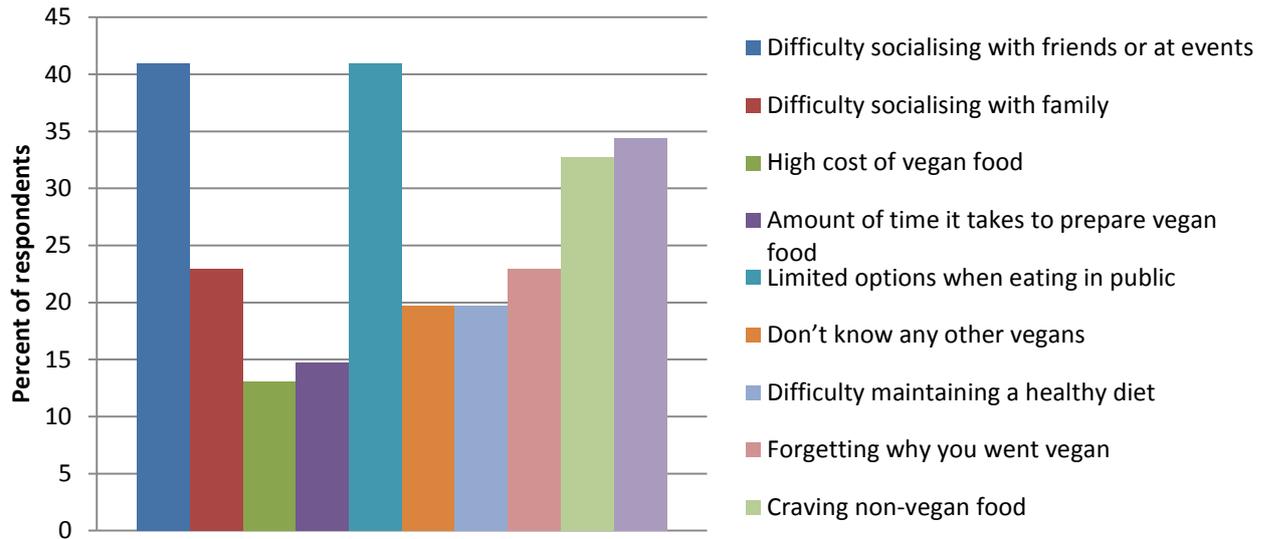


Figure 13. Reasons why people stopped being vegan.

Discussion

People between the age group of 21-50 are the most likely to adopt a vegan lifestyle - this should be kept in mind while designing mainstream vegan literature. The converse is that work needs to be done to open up the vegan lifestyle as an option to those outside of this age range.

The great majority of vegans were vegetarian before adopting their current lifestyle. This suggests that a large number of vegetarians should be considered 'vegan in waiting' and opportunities should be made to push these vegetarians to take the next step. While it would be senseless to advocate for vegetarianism as a step towards veganism, it is nevertheless important to foster positive attitudes to vegetarians so as to encourage them to adopt a vegan lifestyle.

It is often quoted that the vegan population (of the world) is not increasing, and this taken with the distribution of how long people have been vegan suggests that many people may stop being vegan within 10 years of adopting their vegan lifestyle. While it is important to focus on bringing people to veganism, it is equally important to support those who are already vegan to remain so.

When comparing the ages at which people became vegan for the first time and when they became vegan this current time, we see an increase in the number of people who became vegan below the age of 20. This suggests that people are either raised vegan, or chose to become vegan as a teenager (or younger), and then at some point stop being vegan and return to it later in life.

The most quoted reasons for stopping being vegan are difficulty socialising with friends and at events, and limited options when eating in public. Especially as a young person, social pressure can be quite difficult, so it is important to provide safe spaces for young vegans to mingle with like-minded people their age. There also needs to be a push to make vegan food more accessible in restaurants and cafes.

Motivations

For what reasons did you become vegan?

Most vegans quote animal rights (94.6%), environmental impact (77.2%) and health (70.51%) as reasons for becoming vegan. Over a quarter (26.2%) also quoted spiritual reasons, while only 3.5% quote religious reasons.

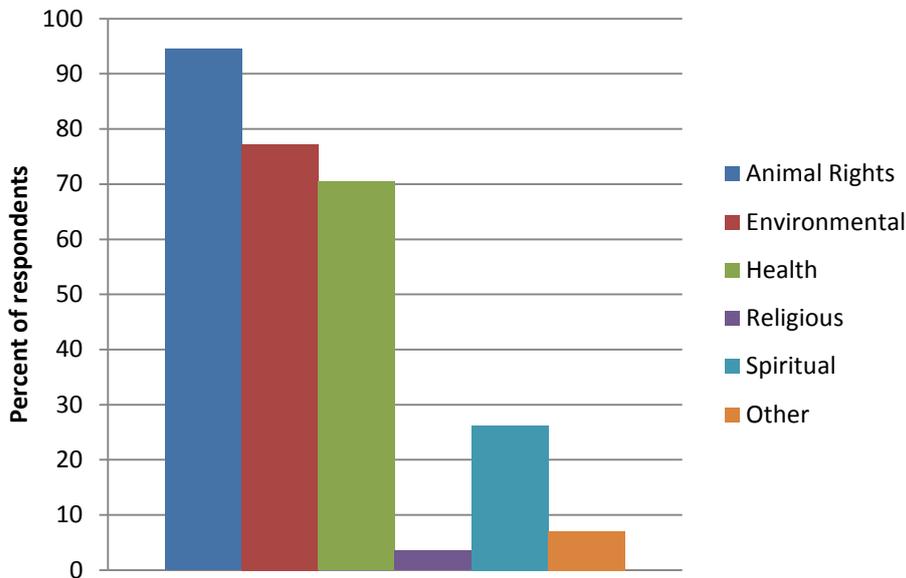


Figure 14. Reasons why people adopted a vegan lifestyle.

What was the most important reason you became vegan?

Nearly three quarters of vegans (73.7%) listed animal rights as the main reason they adopted a vegan lifestyle. Only 13.5% list health and 5.8% list environmental impacts as their main reason.

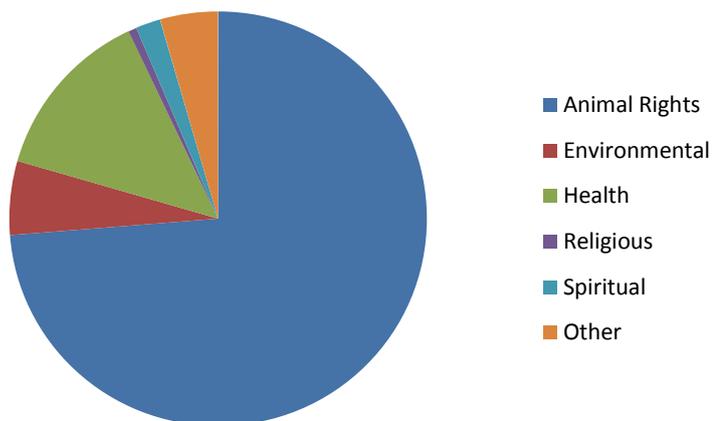


Figure 15. The most important reason people adopted a vegan lifestyle.

What are your reasons for staying vegan now?

While only 62.5% of vegans adopted their lifestyle for environmental reasons, 77.3% remain vegan because of them. Health and spiritual reasons also increase; respectively, 55.5% to 70.5% and 19.6% to 28.2%. There is no identifiable change for animal rights or religious reasons.

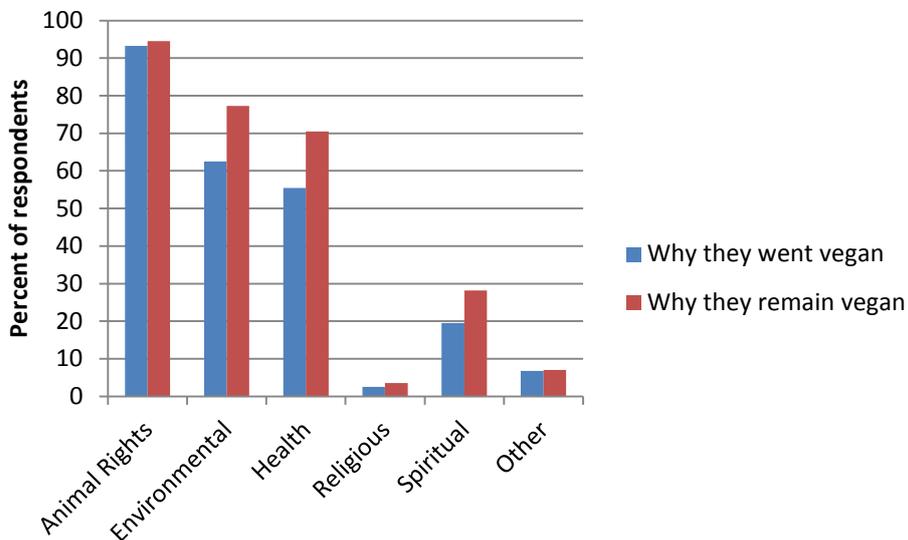


Figure 16. Change in reasons for a vegan lifestyle from when they went vegan to the current time.

Discussion

The current three-pronged promotion of veganism - animal rights, environmental and health - that is seen in vegan advocacy across all of New Zealand's main animal rights and vegan organisations accurately portrays the motivation of vegans across New Zealand. These three reasons should be continued to be used as they are now. In certain outreach contexts it would also be worth including spirituality as a reason to adopt a vegan lifestyle.

The single most important reason people adopt a vegan lifestyle is because of animal rights. It is important to keep this in mind while preparing literature - while health and environmental impacts are also important, it is animal rights that is usually the seller.

Social

Do you know any other vegans living in your area?

Only 77.9% of vegans know other vegans living in their area. This means that almost a quarter of vegans are living in immediate isolation.

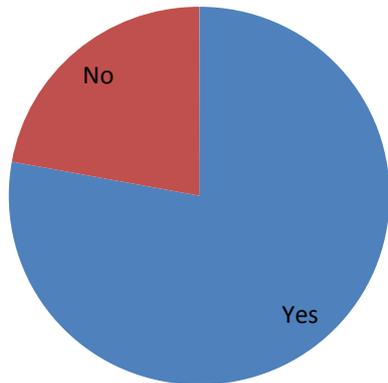


Figure 17. Proportion of vegans who know other vegans living in their area.

Is your partner vegan?

Of those vegans who are in relationships, 48.1% are in a relationship with other vegans. 15.1% are in relationships with vegetarians, and 36.8% are in relationships with non-vegan/vegetarians.

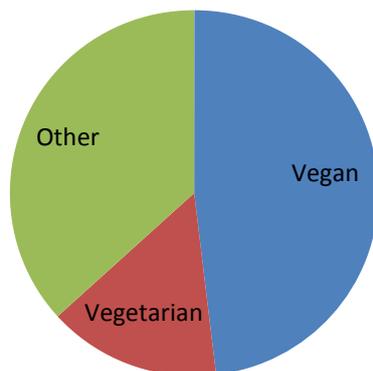


Figure 18. Proportion of vegans who are in relationships with vegans or non-vegans.

Are you raising your children vegan?

Of the vegans who have children, 53.2% are raising their children vegan. A further 27.9% are raising their children vegetarian, and 6.3% are raising some of their children vegan.

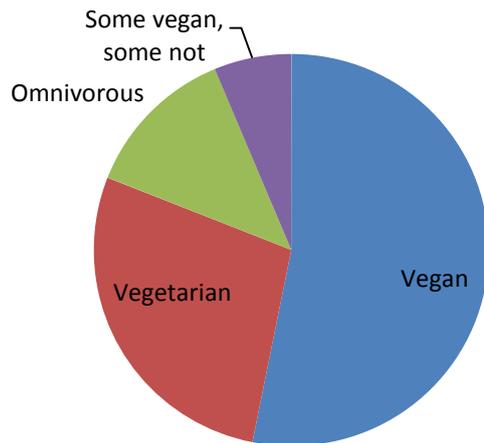


Figure 19. Proportion of vegans who are raising their children vegan or non-vegan.

Discussion

A large proportion of vegans do not know any other vegans living in their area. For some, this may not pose a problem, but for others this may lead to their feeling isolated. It is important that there are multiple online groups (both social and political) to provide support for these people, as well as resources to facilitate them meeting other vegans in their area.

Vegans seem to prefer being in relationships with other vegans (which makes sense, who doesn't want to be in a relationship with someone who thinks along the same lines as them). These results could also be due from people adopting a vegan lifestyle as a couple. This leads to the suggestion that veganism shouldn't just be advocated for as something to do alone, but something that you can do with your partner (or with family and friends).

Vegans who have children appear to want to raise their children vegan, or vegetarian at the very least. It is vitally important that proper medical and nutritional information is provided to parents throughout their pregnancy and during their child's life. Beef + Lamb sponsor many nutrition brochures aimed at pregnant and lactating women, as well as families, there needs to be equal information provided to vegans.

Activism

How effective do you think welfare reform and abolition approaches are at achieving rights for animals?

Nearly half of the respondents (47.1%) think that welfare reform approaches are effective or very effective, and another quarter (26.9%) think that they are neutral. Only a 27.6% of respondents think that abolition approaches are effective or very effective, and 41% think that abolitionist approaches are ineffective or very ineffective. Abolition approaches had more responses at both extremes (very effective and very ineffective) than did welfare reform.

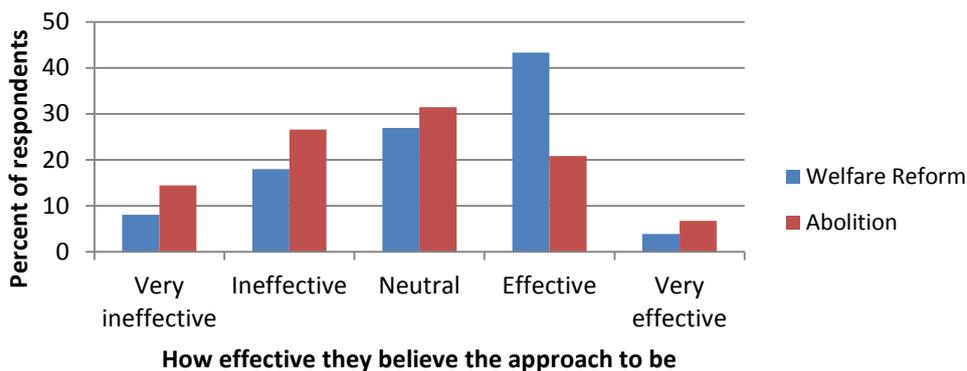


Figure 20. Opinions on the effectiveness of welfare reform and abolition approaches.

What vegan or animal rights based activism have you carried out in the past year?

The majority of vegans have discussed veganism with family (82.1%) and friends (91.4%), as well as shared vegan or animal rights based posts or photos on Facebook (69.9%). Other common activities include writing about veganism or animal rights in other forms of media (31.1%), helping out at stalls (31.5%), and organising events aimed at vegans (20.2%).

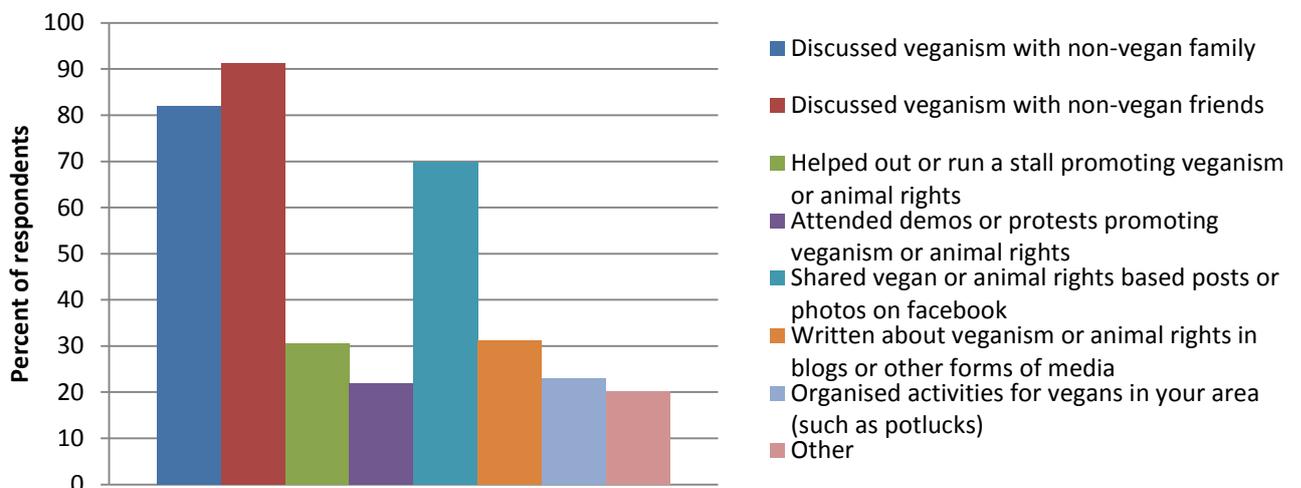


Figure 21. Proportion of vegans who have participated in each kind of activity in the past year.

If there was an animal rights based party in the 2014 national election, would you vote for them?

Two thirds of vegans (67.6%) said that they would vote for an animal rights based party in the 2014 national election.

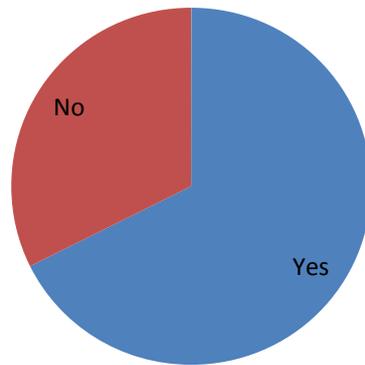


Figure 22. Proportion of vegans who would vote for an animal rights based party in the 2014 national election.

Discussion

Welfare reform versus abolition approaches are one of the more divisive issues within the animal rights movement. The results of this survey do not intend to suggest that one approach is better than the other, and indeed, increased debate of the issue would be wholly recommended, such that people can get a more informed view of both approaches. The results do seem to suggest that vegans think welfare reform approaches would be more effective, and so it follows that welfare reform campaigns would likely get more support. This would be something for campaigners to keep in mind when choosing their objectives.

The most common activist activities carried out by vegans are talking about veganism with friends and family, and sharing information about veganism or animal rights on the internet. These are some of the most important forms of activism, as they bring veganism into the mainstream, day to day lives of the public, which they can better identify with. There needs to be recognition from animal rights and vegan organisations, as well as prominent activists, that these are important activities, and that by partaking in them, individuals are making their contribution to the movement.

One of the most common comments on the survey was about the political party question, with people responding that they would consider voting for an animal rights based party depending on other party policies. This could be assumed for many people, and the question was phrased in a black and white way to obtain a simple estimate at the demand for an animal rights based party.

Due to the low number of vegans living in New Zealand, it is not very likely that an animal rights based party would get the 5% of votes needed for a seat in parliament. With voting contributions of non-vegan animal rights and environmental advocates, there is still the chance that a seat could be won. Regardless of whether the party won a seat, having a party in the election would allow vegans to vote for issues they deem important, as well as demonstrate to the public that animal rights is indeed a serious issue to be considered.

Difficulties

What do you find difficult about being vegan?

The most commonly cited difficulty with veganism is limited options when eating in public, with 73.1% of vegans citing this difficulty. This is followed by difficulty socialising with friends or at events (46.5%), and the high costs of vegan food (25%).

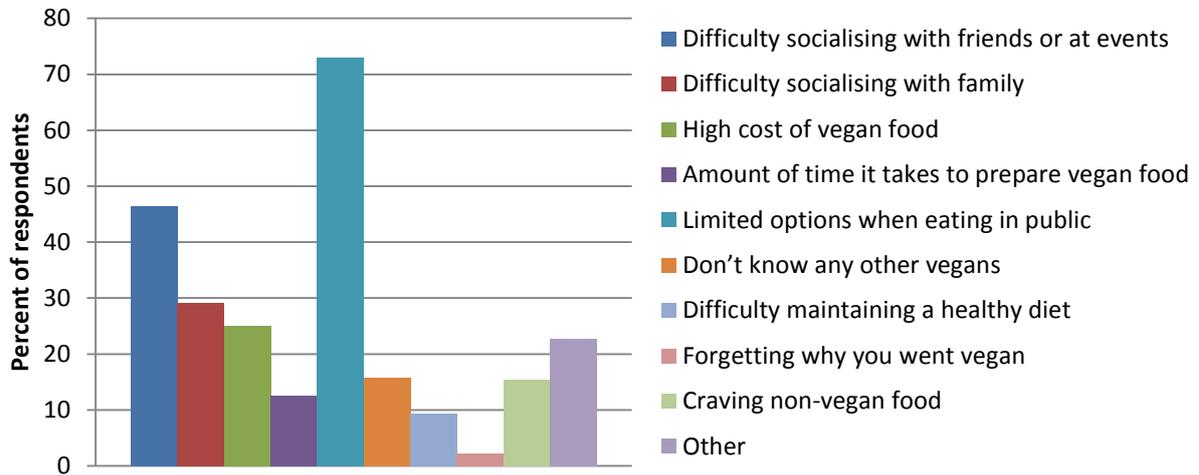


Figure 22. Proportion of vegans who find things difficult about being vegan.

When these difficulties are compared against reasons why people have stopped being vegan in the past, there is no correlation seen between what is difficult and what stopped people being vegan. For example, while 73.1% of people find it difficult eating out in public, only 41.0% of those who have stopped being vegan listed it as one of their reasons they stopped.

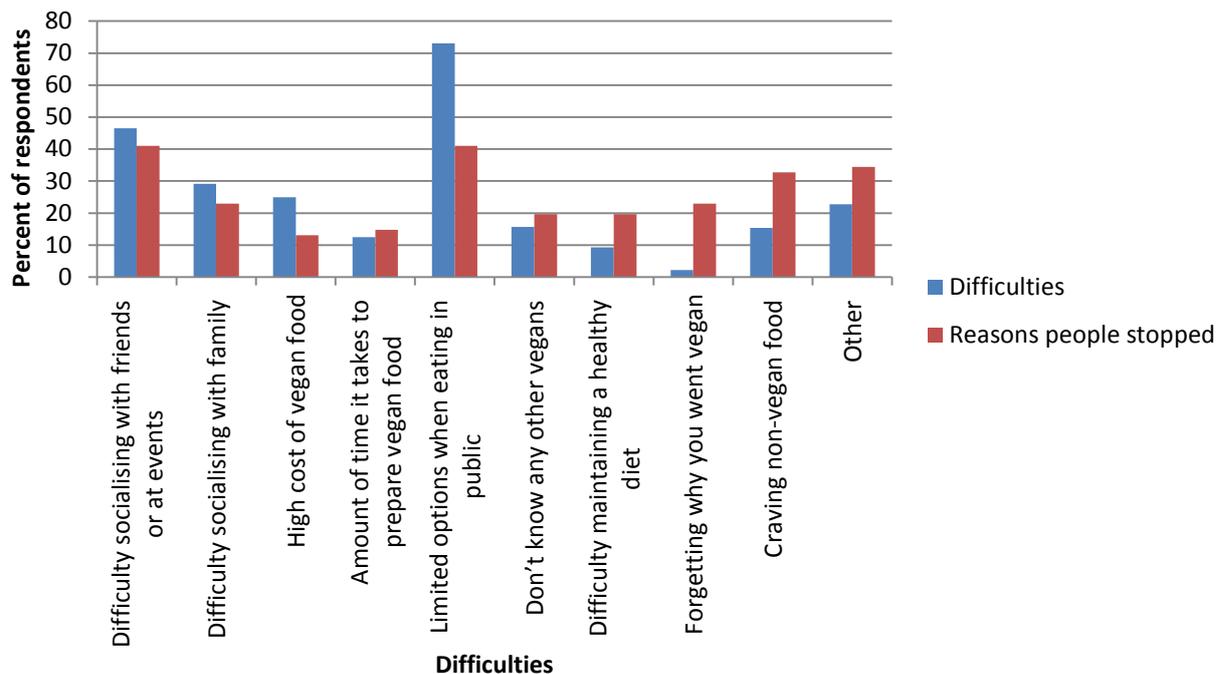


Figure 23. Comparison between difficulties of being vegan, and reasons why people have stopped being vegan in the past.

What do you find most difficult about being vegan?

The single hardest thing about being vegan is having limited options when eating in public (42.0%), followed by difficulty socialising with friends or at events (15.1%).

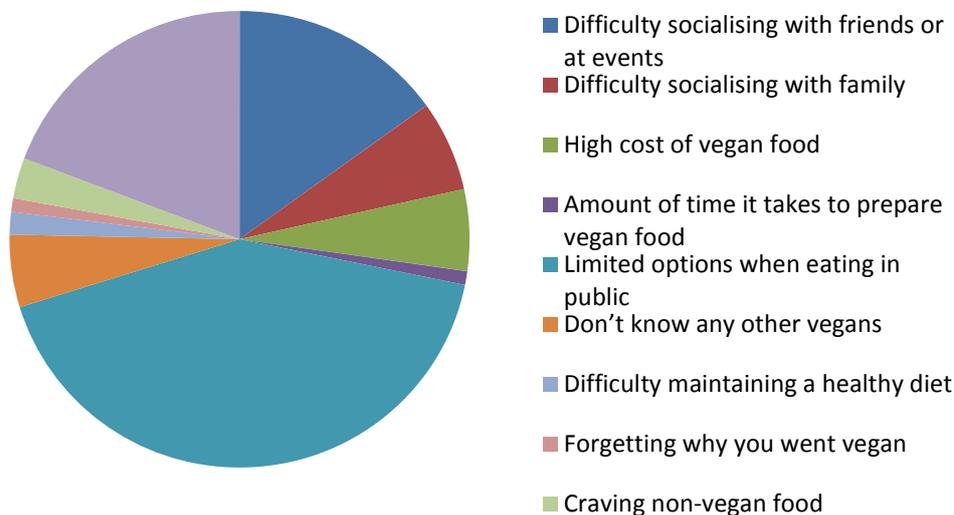


Figure 24. The most difficult thing about being vegan.

Discussion

The most difficult thing about being vegan seems to be limited options when eating out in public. This is something that can be remedied over time, especially as veganism grows more mainstream and places start to offer more vegan options. To help make vegan food mainstream, a campaign such as Speak Up For Animals V sticker campaign should be emphasised. This should focus on getting more food places to list vegan meals on their menu, and to make it easier for vegans to locate these places selling vegan food.

There is also an apparent level of difficulty in socialising with non-vegans, whether this is family or friends. This could be especially apparent in younger people, where pressure to conform is higher. It is important to make sure that there are plenty of options for vegans to socialise with likeminded people. As veganism is more normalised, these difficulties should subside.

It is good to note that most vegans don't find it hard to maintain a healthy diet, nor is vegan food generally more expensive or takes more time to prepare. These are important to keep in mind while advocating for veganism, to show that it isn't as difficult or expensive as many believe it to be.

When comparing the difficulties people have with reasons people have given up veganism in the past, we see a stark difference. What makes veganism difficult is clearly different to what makes people decide to give it up. This allows us to focus our efforts on the more important difficulties, even if they are less common. It is those who find they cannot maintain a healthy diet, crave non-vegan foods or lose sight of their motivations for going vegan that need the most support.

Conclusions

There appear to be certain types of people that are more inclined to adopt a vegan lifestyle - these include females, NZ Europeans, and vegetarians. These people would be the best target for standard outreach efforts.

Males and those of other non NZ European ethnicities are underrepresented in the vegan population. Special efforts need to be made to open up veganism to these groups, and to advocate veganism as something for everyone.

Advocating for veganism as a response to animal rights, environmental impact and health appears to be the best method, yet the largest focus should still be on animal rights. In certain contexts, spirituality should also be included.

It must be ensured that there are lots of online groups for those who don't know other vegans in their area to socialise, and to facilitate them meeting others in their area.

Parents need to have full access to the information they need to ensure that their pregnancy and family are as healthy as possible, with no need to compromise their lifestyle.

Campaigns with a focus on welfare reform are more likely to gather support, as people view these as more likely to succeed.

An animal rights based party should stand in the 2014 national election.

The most difficult thing about being vegan is limited choices while eating out in public. An emphasis on Speak Up For Animals V sticker campaign is suggested to remedy this.

People don't tend to think vegan food is expensive or takes a large amount of time to prepare. Nor do they find it hard to maintain a healthy diet. These results should be emphasised to make a vegan lifestyle sound more palatable.

Those who find it difficult to maintain a healthy diet, or crave non-vegan foods, are the most likely to stop being vegan. These are the people who need the most support.

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