Student Opinion | Eat less meat

Student opinions on eating meat
Methodology

Each month NUS conducts a Student Opinion survey to canvass the views of students on a number of topical issues. In July a section on eating habits and attitudes towards eating less meat was included.

A total of 2559 responses were received. The data has been weighted by gender according to statistics gathered nationally by the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Whilst the data also includes respondents studying in further education, no statistics are available nationally which describe the demographic characteristics of the UK’s further education student population so in the absence of this data, HE equivalent data has been applied.

Statistically significant differences according to different demographics are highlighted throughout the report.
3 in 4 respondents (73%) said that they eat everything. 1 in 10 (11%) claim to be flexitarian (they have already reduced the amount of meat in their diet). 8% are vegetarians and 3% are either vegan or pescatarian.

Thinking about the food you eat, which of the following statements apply to you?

**Base:** 2559  **Balance:** No response
A third of respondents who eat meat (32%) say they do so every day, 4 in 10 (40%) eat meat most days and 2 in 10 (20%) eat meat 2 or 3 times a week. 8% do so once a week or less often.

- UK students most likely to say this compared to EU and beyond EU
- Male respondents most likely to say this

Thinking about the meals you eat throughout the day, which of the following best describes how often you eat meat?
Base: 2203 Balance: Those who don’t eat meat, no response
Overall, respondents are most motivated to eat less meat by the associated health benefits (53%). For vegans and vegetarians, the strongest motivations are linked to concerns about animal welfare (73% vegetarians) and the environmental impact of meat production (62% vegetarians). Those that currently eat meat and have not reduced their consumption so far would be motivated by health benefits of reduced consumption (50%), however 18% said they would not be willing to change at all.

Which of the following reasons would motivate you to eat less meat or at least make you consider doing so? If you have already made a change to eat less or no meat, please tell us what motivated you to do so.

Base: (in brackets) Balance: No response

- Health benefits associated with eating less meat / meat products
- Concern about the conditions in which animals are reared
- Concern about the impact of meat production on climate change and the environment
- Concern about the quality or safety of meat products
- To save money
- None of these – I wouldn’t be willing to change at all
- Religious reasons / preferences
- Other

"A better range of nonmeat. I often prefer nonmeat varieties of snack foods when the choice is there!"
"I don’t like the taste of meat."
"I don’t enjoy eating meat too much so I’ve just cut it out plus, meat is disgusting to prepare!!!!!!"
"My mum raised me as a vegetarian, and it’s just her and me so it was easier."
Offering a greater range of meat-free options every day in catering outlets is seen as the best way of encouraging those who eat everything (46%) as well as those who have tried to cut back on meat already (72%) to pick meat-free meals. Making sure meat-free options are offered at a lower price than meat alternatives would also encourage respondents who eat meat to make the switch to meat-free (38% those who eat everything, 54% flexitarian).

Imagine you were buying a meal in a catering outlet at your university or students’ union. Which of the following options do you think would most encourage you to pick a meal that contained no meat over one that did?

**Base: 2205 Balance: Vegans, Vegetarians, Pescatarians and No response**
Amongst those not willing to change their diet to eat less meat, half (52%) say they have always eaten meat and don’t want to change. 45% prefer the taste of meat and don’t enjoy the taste of meat-free meals. 2 in 10 (20%) are concerned that a meat-free diet would not provide them with enough protein.
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