



How Often Do Americans Eat Vegetarian Meals? And How Many Adults in the U.S. Are Vegetarian?

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The Vegetarian Resource Group asks in a 2015 National Survey Conducted by Harris Poll.

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Food companies, marketers, researchers, students, and media for years have been asking The Vegetarian Resource Group about the number of vegetarians. To again help answer this question, VRG commissioned Harris Poll to conduct a nationally representative online poll of 2,017 adults aged 18 and over. We asked:

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

(Just select one choice.)

- 1) I never eat meat, fish, seafood, or poultry.
- 2) I never eat meat, fish, seafood, poultry, dairy, or eggs.
- 3) I don't eat meat, fish, seafood, or poultry at one meal per week.
- 4) I don't eat meat, fish, seafood, or poultry one full day per week.
- 5) I don't eat meat, fish, seafood, or poultry at many of my meals, but less than half the time.
- 6) I don't eat meat, fish, seafood, or poultry at more than half of my meals, but not all the time.
- 7) 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. We did not ask about honey.

Thirty six percent of the country eats at least one vegetarian meal per week. This has strong implications for food companies and restaurants.

There is incentive for producing vegetarian products as there is demand from over one third of the population on at least a weekly basis, plus others who may eat vegetarian meals, but not as consistently.

However, based on our other research outside this poll, it's not enough just to produce meatless items, but businesses have to cater to various needs, which may include price, health, convenience, source of ingredients, taste, religious requirements, etc. And since there are large segments which did not say they consume vegetarian meals, marketing is more complex because of such different audiences.

METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted online within the United States between April 29-May 1, 2015 among 2,000+ adults ages 18 and older by Harris Poll on behalf of VRG via Harris' Quick Query omnibus product. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Therefore, the words "margin of error" are avoided as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the online panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About The Harris Poll

Over the last 5 decades, Harris Polls have become media staples. With comprehensive experience and precise technique in public opinion polling, along with a proven track record of uncovering consumers' motivations and behaviors, The Harris Poll has gained strong brand recognition around the world. The Harris Poll offers a diverse portfolio of proprietary client solutions to transform relevant insights into actionable foresight for a wide range of industries including health care, technology, public affairs, energy, telecommunications, financial services, insurance, media, retail, restaurant, and consumer packaged goods.

With U.S. adults 18 and over numbering about 240 million, we can estimate the number of vegetarians in the U.S. adult population, based on this poll, to be approximately eight million adults. Vegans included in

the vegetarian figure would be around one million people. Two of the highest subcategories for vegetarians were 18-34 year olds at six percent; and those households earning under \$50,000 at 7%. Polls can't really be compared, but in 2009, 3.4% of the adult population in our Harris poll was vegetarian and in this current poll 3.4% of the population is vegetarian. Though anecdotally, some people have told us in presentations they are eating animal products because of promotion of labeling of "humanely" raised animals and/or promotion of high protein diets, we do not know if there would have been more or less growth of the number of vegetarians if those factors did not exist.

The numbers could indicate that lower income people are more likely to be vegetarian, but maybe younger people and students are more likely to be vegetarian, and they just happen to be lower income. We don't really know if young people are at a higher rate of being vegetarian because of income, or because of beliefs, or a combination of both.

HOW OFTEN DO AMERICAN ADULTS EAT VEGETARIAN MEALS?

(Don't Eat Meat, Fish, Seafood, or Poultry)

8% One meal per week

5% One day per week

10% Many of my meals, but less than half the time

10% More than half my meals, but not all the time

3.4% Always (Vegetarian including vegans. Never eat meat, fish, or poultry)

36% Estimated population who eats vegetarian meals

**Close to 15% of vegetarians were vegan; Never eat meat, fish, poultry, dairy, or eggs.

According to our other research, the needs of the individuals interested in vegetarian meals can be different. For example, food companies and restaurants should note that consumers may be looking for vegan, low-sodium, gluten-free, locally grown, organic, gourmet, kosher, or other selections. If developing a vegetarian product or offering vegetarian meals, they will need to do more research on their customers' food preferences. In addition, when considering products and marketing strategies, businesses should consider the special needs of vegetarians versus those interested in vegetarian meals.

PEOPLE WHO NEVER EAT MEAT, FISH, OR POULTRY (Total Number of vegetarians, including vegans)

3.4% Total

3% male

3.7% female

6% 18-34
3% 35-44
3% 45-54
2% 55-64
2% 65 plus
5% Northeast*
3% Midwest
3% South
3 % West
3% Hispanic
8% Black
7% Below \$50,000 household income
2% \$50,000 – \$75,000 family income
1% \$75,000 – \$100,000 family income
2% Over \$100,000 family income.

PEOPLE WHO EAT ONE OR MORE VEGETARIAN MEALS PER WEEK

(Including vegetarians and vegans)

36% Total

33% male
39% female
47% 18-34
37% 35-44
27% 45-54
26% 55-64
36% 65 plus
39% Northeast
34% Midwest
33% South
40% West
53% A student 18 or over

* The Northeast Includes CT, DE, DC, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, and WV. The Midwest includes IL, IN, LA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, and WI. The South includes AL, AR, FL, GA, KY,

LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, and VA. The West includes AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WY, and WA.