

**FROM THE MARGINS TO THE MAINSTREAM - DO
VEGANS HAVE TO MAKE A CHOICE BETWEEN
ETHICAL OR LITE?**

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ABSTRACT

Recent research and the media would suggest that veganism is experiencing a rapid growth in popularity. This growth is attributed primarily to increased corporate involvement and the expansion of vegan portfolios across big agri-food companies. However, the extent to which this mainstreaming is occurring, and the implications on veganism remain unclear.

Due to the limited geographical scholarship on veganism, this research was guided by studies on the mainstreaming of Alternative Food Networks. It was used to frame and contextualise the transition that veganism appears to be undertaking. However, it was limited in that work on AFNs have not yet considered food systems which avoid all forms of animal exploitation. It concludes that incorporating veganism as a sub-field in AFN could be invaluable.

Using survey data from 3,515 self-identifying vegans this study examined the growth, demographics and general attitudes of vegans. The data revealed a significant increase in the adoption of veganism since 2012, primarily due to increased product availability. Bivariate correlations and linear regressions were conducted to determine relationships across the survey data. These revealed positive correlations between: (1) length of time as a vegan and strictness of approach, and (2) length of time as a vegan and sense of vegan identity. A negative correlation was identified between the importance of health as a motivator and the strictness of approach. All results were significant at the 0.01 level.

Twenty-one semi-structured interviews were also conducted to offer explanations for the above relationships; and understand if mainstreaming is causing a dilution of vegan values and/or dividing the community. The discussions revealed common concerns around how corporations have co-opted the values of veganism and reframed them as individual, health orientated lifestyle choices, which are creating discord particularly between short- and long-term vegans. There was a recognition that in order to appeal to the masses, dilution was inevitable. This was more acceptable to recent adopters of veganism but was being resisted by long-term vegans.

Ultimately, this research concludes it is a 'vegan-lite', promoted by big corporate, and distanced from its founding ethics, that will continue to go mainstream.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certification of ownership	I
Abstract	II
Acknowledgements	III
Table of contents	IV
List of figures	VI
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Research Aims.....	2
2.0 Literature Review	4
2.1 History of Veganism	4
2.2 The Rise of Veganism	5
2.3 Alternative Food Networks	7
3.0 Methodology	9
3.1 Conducting a Survey	9
3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews	11
3.3 Data Analysis	12
4.0 Results and Discussions	14
4.1 To what extent has veganism entered the mainstream?	14
4.1.1 Driving factors	17
4.2 Is mainstreaming diluting veganism?	21
4.2.1 “It’s no big deal”	22
4.2.2 Plant-based “piggybacking” on veganism	23
4.3 Is mainstreaming dividing vegans?	26
4.3.1 Corporate involvement is “a double-edged sword”	28
4.3.2 More than a “fad”	29
5.0 Conclusion	32
6.0 Bibliography	34
7.0 Appendices	43

Appendix A – Interview Consent Document 43

Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet 44

Appendix C – Interview Question Guide 46

Appendix D – Table of Interview Participants 47

Appendix E – Sample Interview Transcript 48

Appendix F – Survey Questions 56

Appendix G – Ethics Form 61

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 3.1 Survey recruitment material posted in vegan Facebook groups (p. 10)
- Figure 4.1 Gender breakdown of the 3515 respondents (p.14)
- Figure 4.2 Age breakdown of the 3515 respondents (p.15)
- Figure 4.3 Histogram to show the length of time that respondents have been vegan (p.15)
- Figure 4.4 Histogram to show the relationship between age and length of time as a vegan (p 17)
- Figure 4.5 NVivo frequency word cloud to demonstrate why respondents thought it has become easier to be vegan in the last 5 years. (p.18)
- Figure 4.6 Linear regression to show the relationship between the length of time someone is vegan and the extent to which veganism is part of their identity (p.21)
- Figure 4.7 Linear regression to show the relationship between the length of time someone is vegan and the strictness of their approach. (p.25)
- Figure 4.8 Bar chart to show how important animal welfare factors were for respondents' motivation to be vegan. (p.26)
- Figure 4.9 Bar chart to show how important environmental factors were for respondents' motivation to be vegan. (p.27)
- Figure 4.10 Bar chart to show how important health factors were for respondents' motivation to be vegan. (p27)
- Figure 4.11 Bar chart depicting the importance of health as motivation compared to length of time as a vegan. (p.30)
- Figure 4.12 Linear regression to show the relationship between the health motivations and the strictness of approach (p.31)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You're never going to fight these giant massive conglomerates. I'm sorry, you're just not. So, you should support them when they try to make more conscious decisions. And I mean we all know they're not doing it out of the goodness of their own heart. They're doing it to make money. But to the people who are saying you shouldn't support KFC or McDonald's because look what they do, I want to say to them, okay, well do you shop in a supermarket? Yes? Well a supermarket has meat, it has dairy. If you buy a vegan product from a supermarket that money is also going to go towards the refurbishment of the butchery section probably. I think people just need to relax a little bit. (Emma, 6 years vegan)

Captured here is an essence of the complexities, contradictions and ambiguities of present-day veganism. Previously excluded at the margins of society, veganism is now experiencing a newfound popularity, but is it compatible with the mainstream?

Veganism has long been coupled with animal ethics and by definition it challenges the hegemonic ideals of animal-based consumption. Although, animal welfare is still a key motivator, health benefits and concern for the environment have recently joined the vegan agenda (Carmichael, 2019; Willett, et al., 2019). Accompanying these shifts in motivations is a change in general perception from 'weird', 'extreme' and 'militant' (Cole & Morgan, 2011), to being seen as aspirational and trendy (Nguyen, 2017). With the value of the vegan market expected to grow by 450% in the next eight years; it appears to have also captured the attention of the corporate world (Bloomberg Intelligence, 2021). These changes have raised philosophical issues around what veganism stands for (Wrenn, 2019), and its future standing in society. It is for these reasons I set out to gain a greater understanding of the implications of this transition, by asking the views of the very people it impacts: the vegans themselves.

1.1 Research Aims

The primary aims of this research are twofold: (1) to incorporate the perspectives of vegans themselves into the emerging debates surrounding the (partial) mainstreaming of veganism, and (2) is to contribute a large data set that represents the growth, demographics and views of the wider vegan population. I do not attempt to offer a solution to the arising challenges and tensions of contemporary veganism; rather, I hope to make a timely and relevant contribution to the ongoing discourse. Given the novelty and scarcity of geographical studies on veganism, my research uses work on the mainstreaming of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) to guide my exploration into veganism's own transition. I anticipate that my extensive survey data and interviewee insights will bridge the gap between academic debate and the lived vegan experiences, therefore helping to portray an accurate representation of present-day veganism. With these objectives in mind, I began my inquiry with the following research questions:

1. To what extent has veganism entered the mainstream?
2. Is mainstreaming **diluting** veganism?
3. Is mainstreaming **dividing** vegans?

The literature review will briefly contextualise the current understandings of veganism and the main motivations for those identifying as vegan. It will then set out the recent rise to popularity and engage with debates surrounding this shift. Finally, it will draw on relevant AFN scholarship that demonstrates how alternative foods are co-opted and appropriated by the mainstream.

This will be followed by a methodology section, where I explain how I conducted my research and reflect on various limitations to my study.

The discussion will be structured using the three research questions above. The relevant survey data and interview insights will be presented in correspondence with each other throughout the discussion. Firstly, it aims to quantify the recent increase in adoption of veganism and explain the key drivers for this change. This will be followed by an exploration into how the length of time someone has been vegan affects their sense of vegan identity and the strictness of their approach. Finally, it will investigate whether varying motivations and beliefs are causing a divide amongst the vegan communities. Overall, I seek to communicate that :1) veganism's popularity has increased significantly in the last 10 years, primarily due to increased product availability and awareness, 2) corporations have facilitated a discursive shift from 'vegan' to 'plant-based' and in turn have displaced the ethical meaning, 3) shorter term vegans were keen to dissociate themselves from negative stereotypes and veganism did not form as much of their

identity as it did for longer term vegans, 4) long term vegans were commonly stricter in their approach to veganism, and 4) generally, short and long term vegans had contrasting attitudes towards health veganism and navigating an increasingly commodified veganism.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of Veganism

Before contextualising the modern definition of veganism that will be central to this study, it is important to acknowledge that there is a rich and diverse history of people choosing to avoid animal products, long before the Vegan Society was established (Timmins, 2017). The term vegan was first conceived in 1944 by Donald Watson and the initial definition for veganism was, “the doctrine that man should live without exploiting animals” (Cross, 1954, p.9). In 1979, the definition was amended to its present-day form, which remains the most widely accepted definition of veganism. It asserts:

A philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude-as far as possible and practicable-all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment (The Vegan Society, 2022).

By definition, veganism explicitly challenges the normative way that humans relate to other beings. It follows therefore, that the vegan practice is central to critical animal geographies and critical animal studies (CAS) (Griffin, 2017; Taylor & Twine, 2014; Wright, 2015). It has been articulated that veganism seeks to unsettle the dominant “anthroparchy” (Cudworth, 2014), a social system that prioritises the human and permits the exploitation of nonhumans. Sharing similar sentiment, Joy (2011) situates veganism as the antithesis to “carnism”, a prominent ideology that conditions people to eat certain animals. It is this direct opposition to the commodification and exploitation of animals that has historically been the primary motives for vegans and has given veganism its radical identity (Doyle, 2016; Wrenn, 2019).

Identifying as a vegan is commonly equated to be a statement of one’s values, beliefs and lifestyle (Reineke, 2020). However, these values are not necessarily consistent across all vegans and therefore personal definitions and practices may differ (Frawley, 2017). An ethnographic study conducted by Cherry (2006) found that of her 24 interviewees, half strictly adhered to the Vegan Society definition while the others created “personal idiosyncratic definitions” that allowed for deviance. (Cherry, 2006 , p. 156). Greenebaum (2012) proposes a different explanation for the varying behaviours; suggesting that someone’s motivation was the

overriding factor. Her study reveals that the three main motivating factors: animal welfare, environmental and health, are value-laden within the vegan community.

The image and perception of veganism has undergone considerable change, partially due to the actions of The Vegan Society itself. A study by Corey Lee Wrenn analysed the content of the society's annual publication, *The Vegan*, between 1944-2017. Wrenn traces the "identity dilemma" faced by the organisation over the 73 years; a conflict between maintaining its radical grassroots and identity, while also attempting to reach diverse audiences (Wrenn, 2019). Across the publications she observes a gradual distancing from "heated debates and support for raucous animal protests", towards a new target audience, the "curious shopper" (2019, p. 11). Wrenn concludes that this alienated members who aligned with the society's founding anti-speciesism ethic; but ultimately facilitated the growth of The Vegan Society.

The history and diversity of veganism strikes at the very heart of the debate about 'what is veganism'. By its very nature it is open to interpretation and possible misrepresentation by individuals and organisations who wish to engage with it.

2.2 The Rise of Veganism

While animal food systems undoubtedly remain dominant, recently there has been a discernible shift in veganism away from its historical position at the fringe of society. This is partly attributed to veganism being increasingly framed as beneficial for one's health and as a solution to the environmental impacts of intensive livestock production (Godfray, et al., 2018; Pendergrast, 2016; Poore & Nemecek, 2018). Studies on the portrayal of mass media also evidence this shift in perception (Cole & Morgan, 2011; Doyle, 2016; Nguyen, 2017). Previously ridiculed, disregarded or even denigrated; the tone is now aspirational and exciting. In their analysis of online discourse about veganism, Jallinoja et al conclude that, "In the past decade... veganism has gone from an unknown vegetarian sub-movement to a publicly celebrated way of life" (2019, p. 9)

Although it can be difficult to accurately quantify the increase in popularity; retail reports, market trends and consumer tendencies are also a useful indication. A record number of 629,000 people signed up to 2022 annual Veganuary pledge and participants were from 228 different countries (Veganuary, 2022). This is a remarkable increase from 3,300 in 2014, when the challenge to try veganism for 31 days began (Faunalytics, 2014). A spokesperson for the global organisation noted, "attitudes towards veganism are changing everywhere and Veganuary's growing global popularity reflects this" (Veganuary, 2022). Although global

engagement is evident, the increasing popularity of veganism is by no means homogenous across different countries. Data based on Google Trends, reveal that growth is particularly prominent in the UK, Australia, Canada and the U. S (Vegcomonist, 2020; Sentient Media, 2021). Although difficult to determine exactly, vegans are thought to account for 1.2%, 2%, 2.4% and 2.1% of these populations, respectively (The Vegan Society, 2022)

This global acceleration in the uptake of veganism is reflected by products on the shelves too. There are now over 60,000 products registered to the Vegan Trademark, which was introduced in 1990, as a mark of authenticity. Signifying the recent explosion of growth, 82% of these have entered the market in the past 5 years (The Vegan Society, 2022). According to a report by Bloomberg Intelligence, the current plant-based food market is valued at \$29.4 billion dollars and this is projected to reach \$162 billion by 2030, or in other words a 450% increase (Bloomberg Intelligence , 2021). This report attributes the unprecedented growth to the increasing availability and diversity of products, growth in consumer awareness, price parity and the perceived health or sustainability benefits. Notably, the influence of big corporations, including but not limited to, Beyond Meat, Impossible Foods, Tyson Foods, Kellogg, Nestle, Unilever Burger King and Starbucks, have been recognised as a key catalysts for long-term consumption and market penetration of plant-based products (Bloomberg Intelligence, 2021; Good Food Institute, 2019; Michail, 2018).

This rise in popularity has been met with mixed reactions. While enthusiasts applaud corporate involvement for making veganism more appealing to the masses; others remain sceptical and voice concerns about the commodification of veganism. The overall aim of reduction in animal-based consumption, is welcomed as an antidote to the ecological impact of intensive animal agriculture (Dutkiewicz & Dickstein, 2021). Similarly, Best urges that in order to achieve any meaningful change or “revolution”, veganism must embrace populism and become less insular (Best, 2009).

In contrast, Sexton et al (2022) are key critics of recent attempts from large food companies to “veganise their offerings”, labelling it as ‘Big Veganism’ (2022). They argue that the recent acquisitions of vegan brands by non-vegan companies, is a glaring contradiction and risks neutralising the disruptive intent of veganism. The focus of ‘Big Veganism’ is to empower the consumer, provide a diversity of products and align with the ubiquitous neoliberal politics of individual food choice (Wright, 2015). To paraphrase Hodge et al, in this respect, although the products are vegan in the technical sense of containing no animal ingredients, they are far detached from the more-than-human roots of veganism (2022). White is equally critical,

articulating that veganism is being exploited as a “profitable vehicle for corporates” (2018, p 2). Both speculate the formation of a new mode or iteration of veganism; one characterised by the alliances and objectives of those developing and capitalising on the market. This resonates broadly with Stuart Hall’s (1990) insights on popular culture; which he argues is a site of constant negotiation and as Giraud adds, “certain understandings and definitions become dominant while others are subjugated” (2021, p. 152). These emerging debates reveal that there is an increasingly complex interplay between the core values of veganism and the modes of mainstreaming, yet empirical work on the topic is scarce and the absence of the perspectives of vegans themselves is notable.

2.3 Alternative Food Networks

There has been extensive geographical research on the growth and appropriation of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). This offers a useful framework to explore the implications of veganism’s own transition to the mainstream. Alternative Food Networks are commonly defined as modes of food provisioning or consumption that are regarded as different, or even oppositional to conventional food systems (Goodman & Goodman, 2009). These include but are not limited to, organic, Fair Trade, short food supply chains and farmers markets (Michel-Villarreal, et al., 2018). AFNs rose to popularity as a result of growing concern for the adverse environmental, social and health consequences of a globalised and industrialised food system (Phillipov, 2019). Typically, AFNs are understood as smaller-scale, less exploitative food economies that ‘reconnect’ the consumer with the sources and producers of their food (Goodman, 2003; Thilmany, et al., 2008; Zepeda & Deal, 2009). However, cutting across the academic literature is an ongoing debate as to the efficacy of such ‘alternative’ systems as they have become increasingly mainstreamed.

A key example of an AFN that has undergone mainstreaming is organic foods. In their infancy organic foods were a niche market, confined to ‘alternative’ supply networks such as farmers markets, food box schemes and community supported agriculture. As consumer demand grew in what has been named the ‘quality turn’ (Goodman, 2003), the sector became industrialised and widely available across conventional supermarkets. However, as influential critical work by geographer Julie Guthman exposed, in order to bring organic products to a larger audience and at a lower price, the processes became standardised and the regulations were relaxed (2014). Subsequently, the mainstreaming deducted from the intent and ambition of the organic movement; instead creating a diluted ‘organic lite’ that suited the needs of large producers and retailers (Maye & Kirwan, 2010).

Enthusiasts argue that AFNs have elicited significant industry change, reflected by the growth in markets that were once considered marginal. For scholars of ethical consumption, the choices

associated with AFNs give agency to the consumer and enable a form of political eating (Barnett, et al., 2005; Lewis & Potter, 2011). Many are more critical about the potential of AFNs, highlighting their vulnerability to mainstream capture of the globalised food system (Harris, 2009). In the process the ethical or aesthetic values associated with AFNs such as 'quality' 'natural' or 'local' are commodified (Phillipov, 2019; Tregear, 2011). This is a stance adopted by Friedmann (2005), who argues that the mainstream success of AFNs is primarily due to their co-optation by Big Food, but at the detriment of their ability to reform or disrupt the conventional agri-food systems. This appropriation is evidenced by the adoption of AFN language into the marketing and branding of major retailers and manufacturers, often in pursuit of higher profit margins (Richards, et al., 2011). This is a clear paradox of mainstreaming whereby, "The interface between alternative and conventional is becoming highly permeable" (Goodman, et al., 2012, p. 5). This raises important questions about the ability of non-conventional foods, politics and practices to resist being subsumed into the mainstream, but instead coexist and change it from within. It is here that I aim to adopt an AFN framework to guide my exploration into the consequences of mainstreaming for veganism.

To end this literature review with a reflection: geographical work on veganism is notably absent, with only one paper, (Sexton, et al., 2022), to my knowledge, published across three prominent journals in the discipline: *Progress in Human Geography*, *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* and *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. Given that veganism intersects with matters of ethical consumption, human-environment relationships, economic geographies and social movements; it is surprising that geography has not taken a more central role in empirical studies. However, this may finally be changing with the arguably overdue, release of "Vegan Geographies: Spaces Beyond Violence, Ethics Beyond Speciesism" (Hodge, et al., 2022), in March this year. Considered as the official debut of vegan geography, Hodge et al outline this new discipline as:

Vegan geography looks across space and scale, exploring the appropriateness of vegan ethics in diverse social and cultural groups and within the broader neoliberal economic and political frameworks that seek to commodify and materialize the movement. (2022, p. 10)

Although the timing is coincidental, I consider my research to make a timely and relevant contribution to this new discipline.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

My interest for this research stemmed from reflections on my own experience with veganism. Even within the three years that I have been vegan, I have been surprised by the significant changes, which prompted me to speculate what the future holds. My proximity to this topic does however prompt critical reflection on my positionality as a researcher. I found my 'insider' status (McDowell, 1992) to be an asset rather than an obstacle; giving me a unique perspective and allowing me to quickly establish trust and rapport with participants. It enabled me access into exclusively vegan social media groups and elicited more open and honest conversations with interviewees. To echo Hall, positionality is unavoidable, and it is necessary, "to say anything at all" (1990, p. 18). However, I was also acutely aware of the need to reflexively examine my positionality, in order to maintain the validity of my research. As Makyut and Morehouse remind us, it is imperative to, "be aware of how one's biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand" (1994, p. 123). To this end, I recognised my positionality as intersectional and part of a continuum (Eppley, 2006), rather than distinguishing myself as a vegan 'insider' or an academic 'outsider' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

3.1 Conducting a Survey

To begin my primary research, I conducted a pilot survey, which would be used to gain greater insight, highlight any initial limitations, and guide my interview design (Malmqvist, et al., 2019). However, something I had not anticipated was receiving 3,753 survey responses over the course of a week. This extensive sample size offered an opportunity to explore diverse perspectives, uncover multi-faceted relationships and draw substantive conclusions. Although time and word constraints posed a considerable challenge, my overall approach shifted to a multi-methods analysis (Shorten & Smith, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

I created the survey on Google Forms, as this platform did not have any restrictions on the number of responses. However, it did have limitations in terms of formatting and the type of question that could be asked. A further shortcoming was the ability for respondents to leave answer boxes blank or to give multiple answers where only one was required. This was significant as it meant 241 responses were incomplete and therefore excluded from statistical analysis. The final sample used 3,515 responses. The survey questions (see Appendix F) were guided by the existing literature surrounding the motivations, challenges and behaviours of vegans. Questions were also designed to reveal possible factors that may affect the strictness of someone's attitude to veganism. To increase engagement levels the survey was short, and questions were a mix of attribute questions, closed and open questions. An advantage of this design was that the majority of data could be easily analysed and coded, while the open

questions provided greater depth and expression of opinions (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016). At the end of the survey, I asked people to leave their contact details if they were willing to participate in a semi-structured interview. Again, the response was overwhelming, with 1527 people offering to be interviewed.

To recruit self-identifying vegan participants, I turned to social media, and Facebook in particular. I was surprised that a simple search for 'vegan' returned a considerable number of Facebook groups. These groups varied considerably in terms of their descriptions, number of members, geographical scale, privacy settings and their level of exclusivity. To obtain a diverse sample, I posted my survey in five different Facebook groups, selected based upon the highest number of members and daily posts. My recruitment post is in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1- Survey recruitment material posted in vegan Facebook groups

It is important to note the limitations of using online vegan groups as a source of data collection. Recent research has speculated that social media has significant influence on opinion formation and the decisions people make (Burbach, et al., 2020; Xong, 2014; Gabore, 2018). Information is becoming increasingly personalised and filtered based upon a user's interactions and browsing patterns (DeVito, 2017), which leads to a narrowing of the information that a user is exposed to (The Conversation, 2018). Social media users also have a tendency for homophily and therefore tend to join groups formed around a shared belief or narrative (Cinelli, et al., 2021). This repeated exposure to homogenous beliefs that reinforces one's own opinion is recognised as an echo chamber (Garrett, 2009; Garimella, 2018).

My experience of joining these vegan Facebook groups confirmed they are acting as vegan echo chambers (Casamitjana, 2022). In order to gain membership and access into the groups, I had to answer questions on my motivations for joining, how I defined veganism and whether I currently identified as vegan. My answers were reviewed by the administrators and moderators who decided if my join request was accepted or rejected. Content within the groups is also strictly monitored, with rules enforcing what can and can't be posted. All five Facebook groups I joined explicitly indicated that any 'anti-vegan', 'hate' or 'spam' posts were not welcome, and members would be removed. These online vegan environments have been recognised for their ability to effectively disseminate information and have been praised for offering a sense of 'community' or a 'safe space' (Vaughan, 2019). However, as my only site of participant recruitment this does perhaps pose several limitations for my study: (1) the recruitment post was only visible to group members, (2) the responses may therefore have been more homogeneous than from a sample across varied , (3) a pro-vegan bias may have been amplified.

Another notable reflection is that although the majority of people in these Facebook groups were enthusiastic and supportive of my research, there were multiple instances of unpleasant and critical commentary. Some members were sceptical of my research and questioned whether I had 'true vegan' intentions. This reaction is not something I had anticipated, but hints at underlying tensions within such groups. I decided the most appropriate action was not to engage with these remarks.

3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Initial analysis of survey data indicated there were differences in opinion according to the length of time someone had been vegan. To explore this, I used purposive sampling to select a range of interview participants based on the duration of their veganism. (See Appendix D for Table of Interview Participants). To ensure anonymity, all participants have been given a pseudonym. Upon selection, I emailed each prospective interviewee. I explained in more detail what an interview would entail and gave a brief description of the topics that would be covered. I also attached a consent document and Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A and B), which I asked participants to review before proceeding.

I conducted 21 semi structured interviews between January and February 2022. Interviews were conducted over Zoom and lasted between 25 to 60 minutes, with an average time of 40 minutes. Interviews were recorded with the participants permission and then later transcribed. The questions covered three main areas: (1) interviewee experiences and their motivations for

being vegan; (2) observations about recent changes and their level of acceptance of contemporary veganism; (3) their views towards vegan communities and perceptions of vegans.

To ensure the interviews maintained a flexible approach, I developed an interview guide, which included a sample of relevant questions in their tentative order (See Appendix C). For the purposes of comparability and to maintain focus, I prioritised several questions, that I asked every interviewee. I embraced an agile approach throughout the research process, whereby I made several edits to the interview guide, particularly after conducting my first interview. Adjusting questions in response to unforeseen themes, misinterpretation of questions and feedback is critical to gaining valuable insights (Galletta, 2013). In order to elicit honest and uncensored responses, I phrased potentially sensitive questions in a non-judgemental way that did not evoke a pressure to give an answer deemed socially acceptable. I used prefatory phrases such as “the media have picked up on...”, or, “some people think...”, before asking about their own opinion on the issue. The productive outcomes of this type of questioning are twofold: it helps to reduce any stigma attached to certain answers, and also indicates the researcher’s knowledge on the topic or open-minded outlook (Leech, 2003 ; Cook, 2012).

Although I assessed the level of risk as minimal, I was aware that some topics could be sensitive or triggering for certain individuals (See Appendix H for Ethics Form). Veganism can sometimes be controversial and evoke very strong opinions. I adopted a calm and non-reactive demeanour and prepared responses to diffuse any offensive or derogatory comments that may have occurred during the interviews (Adams, 2015). More often than not, interview participants asked whether I was vegan myself. I did not disclose unless asked directly. My approach appeared to put participants at ease which made them more inclined to openly share their views.

3.3 Data Analysis

Having completed my fieldwork, I compiled and reviewed my interview and survey data thoroughly. After reading my transcripts (See Appendix E for a Sample Interview Transcript) several times to familiarise myself with the data, they were entered into NVivo and coded in accordance to Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis approach (2017). This enabled me to, “identify patterns within and across the data in relations to participants” lived experience, views and perspectives, and behaviours and practices” (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297). I processed and analysed all the quantitative elements of my survey data using SPSS. In order to run several statistical tests and generate appropriate graphs required recoding the raw data into a compatible format.

It is with great frustration, that due to time restraints and project guidelines, I was unable to fully engage with the extensive and heterogenous data set I managed to obtain. There were numerous other interesting insights will endeavour to reflect upon in the future.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 To what extent has veganism entered the mainstream?

Although it is not central to my research, it is useful to first contextualise the survey data.

Respondents were from 50 different countries. The highest rates of participation were from USA (28.2%, n=991), UK (19.3%, n=678), Australia (12.1%, n=427), Canada (10.2%, n=357), South Africa (7.4%, n=260) and New Zealand (4.5%, n=159). It is noted that there is a significant bias towards anglophone countries, and therefore the data is not entirely representative of the global vegan community.

A breakdown of the respondents' gender, in Figure 4.1, reveals that the majority (83.37%) were female. This supports wider literature in that the adoption of veganism is more prominent amongst females. This is perhaps explained by the widely studied association between masculinity and meat eating (Rothgerber, 2013; Sobal, 2005; Buerkle, 2009). Although, according to Wright there is an emerging subsection of the male vegan community: the 'Hegan' (2015). An ultra-masculine and athletic depiction of a male vegan which is gaining popularity in the media. It is disrupting hegemonic masculinity and may alter the future gender balance of veganism (Greenebaum & Dexter, 2017).

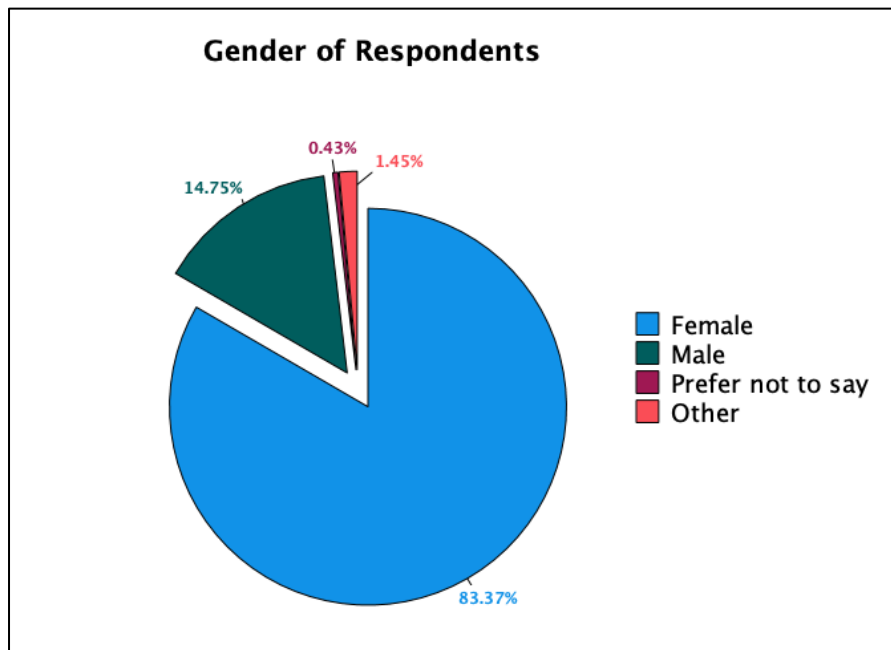


Figure 4.1 - Gender breakdown of the 3515 respondents

Figure 4.2 represents the age breakdown of the data. 65% of the respondents were under the age of 45, the significance of which will be explored later.

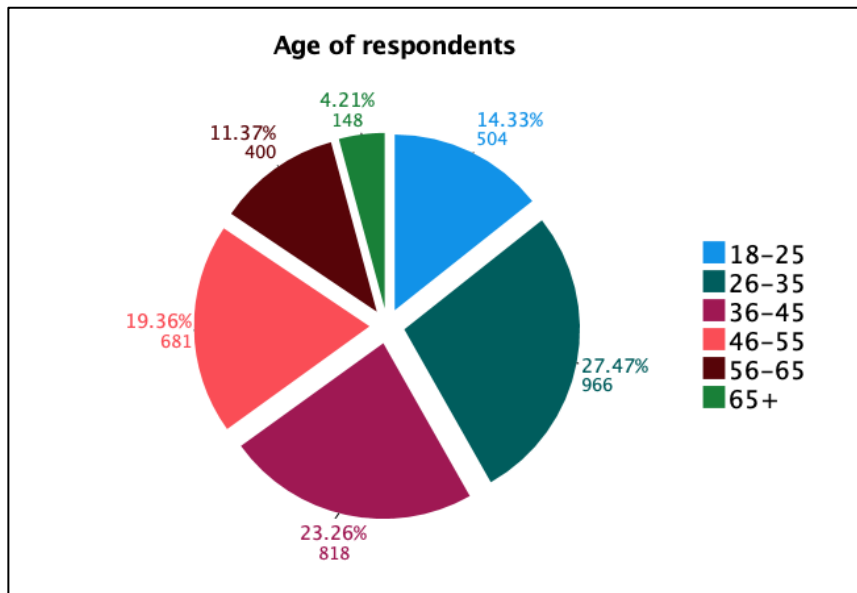


Figure 4.2 - Age breakdown of the 3515 respondents

To assess whether veganism can be considered mainstream, it is useful to determine the rate at which veganism is being adopted and the duration of time that respondents had been vegan. Given the size and heterogeneity of the survey data collected, it offers valuable insight into this.

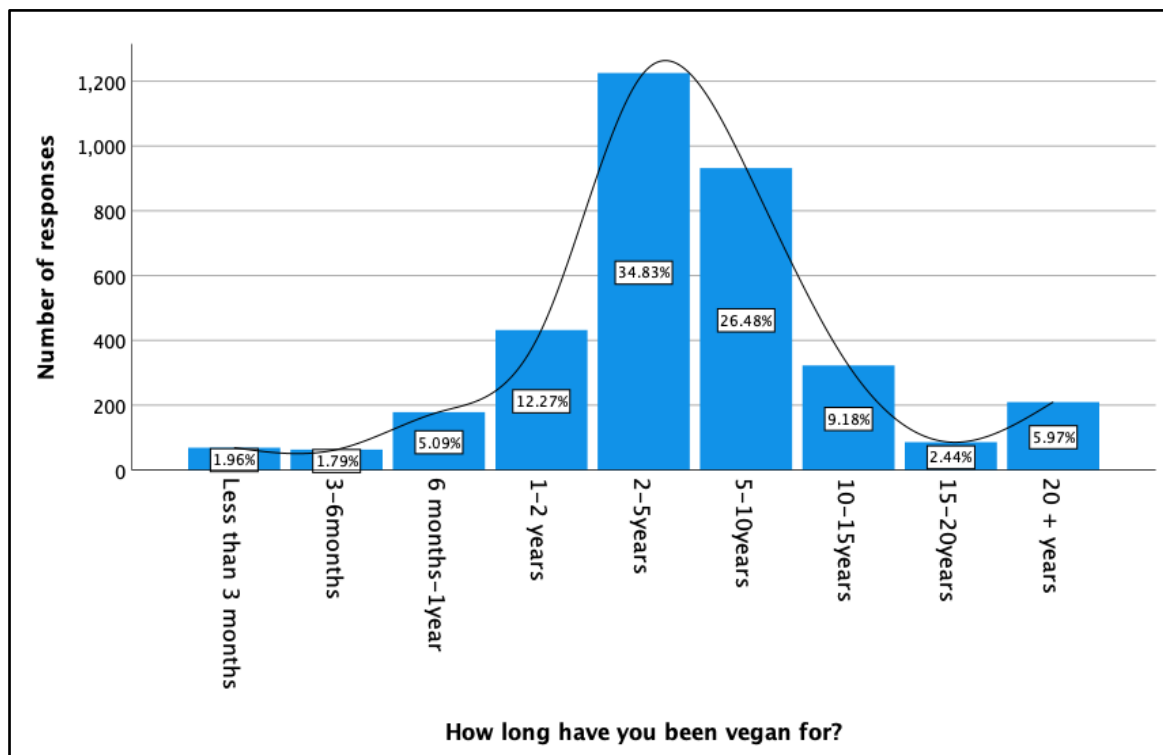


Figure 4.3 - Histogram to show the length of time that respondents have been vegan.

The length of time respondents had been vegan for is presented in Figure 4.3. Notably, those that have been vegan 2-5 years represented the largest proportion of the participants (34.83%, n=1224). This concurs with a global market trends analysis by The Economist that declared, '2019 will be the year veganism goes mainstream' (Parker, 2018). Similarly, the number of people signing up to Veganuary increased eightfold from 2017 to 2020 (The Vegan Society , 2022).

The second largest proportion of respondents have been vegan for 5-10 years (26.48%, n=931). Again, this corresponds to numerous articles published about veganism's rise across the decade of 2010. These partly attribute the increase in veganism to the influence of documentaries and celebrities, a growing concern for climate change, and an increase in product availability (Hancox, 2018; Solomon, 2017; Swann, 2021).

This data therefore indicates an increase in veganism's popularity and rate of uptake from 2012 onwards, with amplified growth in the last 5 years.

The significantly lower numbers of people who had been vegan for less than 2 years could be considered an anomalous result. It contradicts the recent media coverage and Veganuary statistics that report record growth in veganism over the last two years (Tapper, 2021; Minassian, 2022; Bourrassa, 2022; The Vegan Society , 2022). If my data had followed the reported trends, the distribution would have been positively or right skewed. This discrepancy may have been due to my experimental design and the reliance on Facebook groups as a sample site.

Another important factor in understanding the current and future trajectories of veganism is the age profile of the respondents. Figure 4.4 exhibits a diverse range of age groups across the sample. However, under 45s that have been vegan for at least 2 years account for a significant proportion of the sample. This establishes that there is a young demographic of committed vegans, which is likely to aid the sustained growth of veganism.

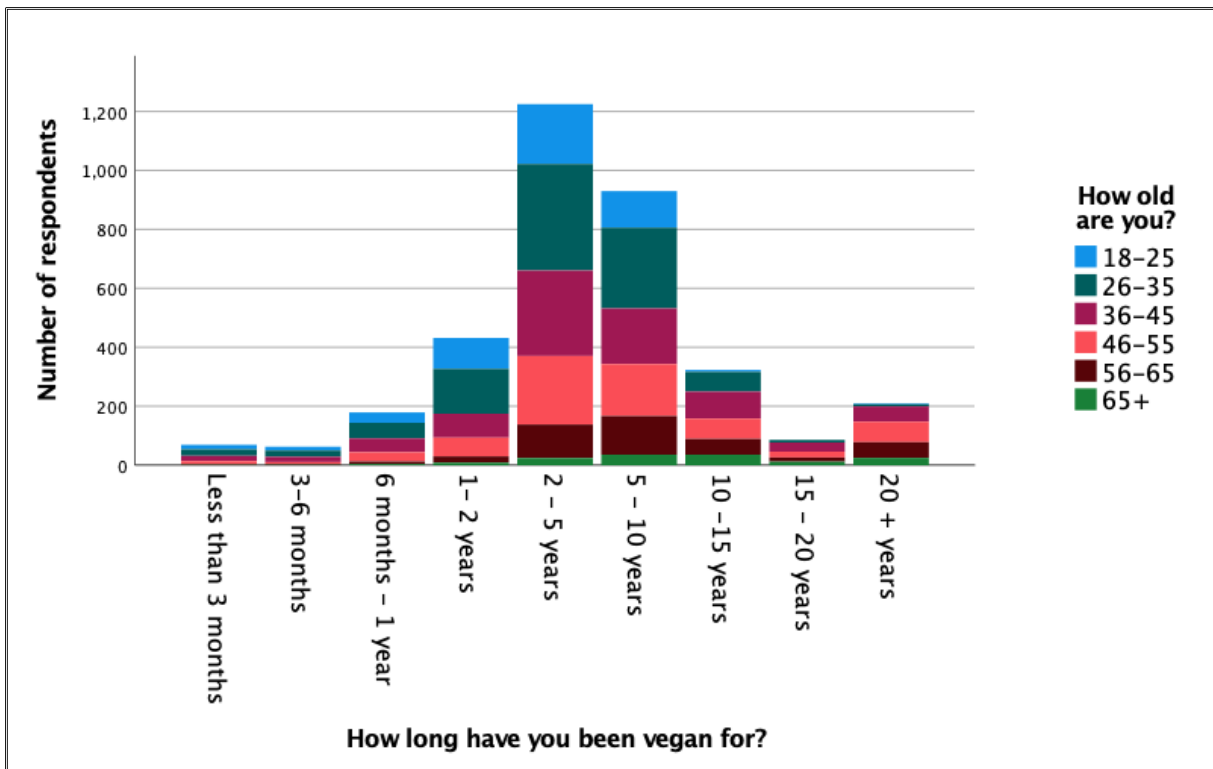


Figure 4.4- Histogram to show the relationship between age and length of time someone has been vegan.

4.1.1 Driving factors

To explore the speculated mainstreaming of veganism further, my survey asked, “Do you think it has become easier to be vegan in the last 5 years?”. Respondents were required to answer ‘Yes’, ‘No’ or ‘Don’t know’, and give a reason where possible.

The responses for this were very conclusive, with 97.16% (n=3415) of people answering yes. Although a diverse range of reasons were provided, the overriding consensus was that the increased range, quality, and accessibility of products has made it easier to be vegan. Improved awareness and changing attitudes of the population were also commonly regarded as key factors. Although not comprehensive, Figure 4.5 is a word cloud that demonstrates the frequency of words used across the responses. To draw on a few specific examples, “options”, “products” and “available” were mentioned 782, 579 and 548 times respectively. Although less prominent by frequency, “mainstream” was referenced 85 times.

Their observations highlight the increasing accessibility of vegan products as they are no longer confined to specialised or niche shops. Limited availability and inconvenience have previously been recognised as key barriers to the adoption of veganism (Asher & Cherry, 2015; Gallimore, 2015; Steele, 2013), and subsequently a barrier to mainstreaming. Therefore, the described variety and volume of products within conventional supermarkets or restaurants has likely facilitated the observed shift in veganism's popularity.

There are parallels here with the trends observed from Alternative Food Networks, as they started off in 'alternative' spaces of consumption. But in order to become more widely adopted they were incorporated/co-opted into the conventional food systems (Goodman, et al., 2012).

Two of my interviewees had been vegan for over 40 years and were hence able to share useful reflections on what they had observed over these long periods of time:

In the 80s eating out was such a challenge and it was pretty much chips and salad- and that's if you were lucky! But now there are so many options and you can eat out anywhere (Gail, 40 years vegan)

'I became vegan in 1977... it was challenging on all sorts of levels, there were barely any products, it was expensive, and no one had a clue what it was, and it was considered a weirdo, hippie thing to do. But now people are more accepting. Oh, and I remember the taste of soya milk, it was horrific... But you can get used to anything if you've got the motivation. You could never walk into a supermarket and just buy something to eat. You just couldn't do it. Whereas now you can go anywhere. So, I can't see what the problem is when people say, oh gosh, this is difficult. I mean, it just isn't. (Ivy, 45 years vegan)

These perspectives add further insight into the increasing feasibility of veganism over several decades. Both Gail and Ivy imply that when they first became vegan, a certain level of perseverance and self-sacrifice was required to maintain a vegan lifestyle. They also reflect that being vegan has become significantly easier, with Ivy expressing her disbelief that it is still considered challenging. This raises an important question of perspective, as it is these prior experiences of very limited access to vegan products that forms the basis of the opinion. Whereas someone that has recently adopted veganism may find the accompanied reduction in options to be equally as challenging.

The acceptance of limited food choices, specifically “chips and salad’ was shared by multiple interviewees, with one labelling it the “vegan special”. Notably, these references to limited food choices were also articulated by interviewees that had been vegan for a couple of years or less. This is pertinent in revealing that despite an overall increase in vegan offerings, in comparison to non-vegan options, they remain limited.

The data presented, alongside narratives from my interviewees depicts an almost unanimous agreement that veganism has at least partially entered the mainstream. The most noticeable increase in popularity appears to be in the last 10 years. This decade has seen an increase in public awareness and product availability. However, as I will investigate in the following sections, there are varying levels of acceptance towards these recent transformations, which may be creating tensions within the vegan community.

For the purposes of clarity in the next sections I will refer to those who have been vegan for 10 years or more as ‘long-term’ vegans and those who have identified as vegan for less than 10 years as ‘short term’ vegans. My use of these terms does not imply any inherent value, nor does it aim to discredit those who have been vegan for less time. I am simply using them as distinguishing terms for the length of time someone has been vegan.

4.2 Is mainstreaming diluting veganism?

This section explores whether mainstreaming is diluting the perceived values of veganism, and whether it is having an effect on the identity of individual vegans.

Using the survey data, I conducted a Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between the length of time someone had been vegan and the extent to which being vegan formed part of their identity. The result was a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.227$, $p < 0.01$). However, it is important to note that this is classified as a weak association (Laerd Statistics, 2018). This relationship is depicted in Figure 4.6, which shows a plotted linear regression.

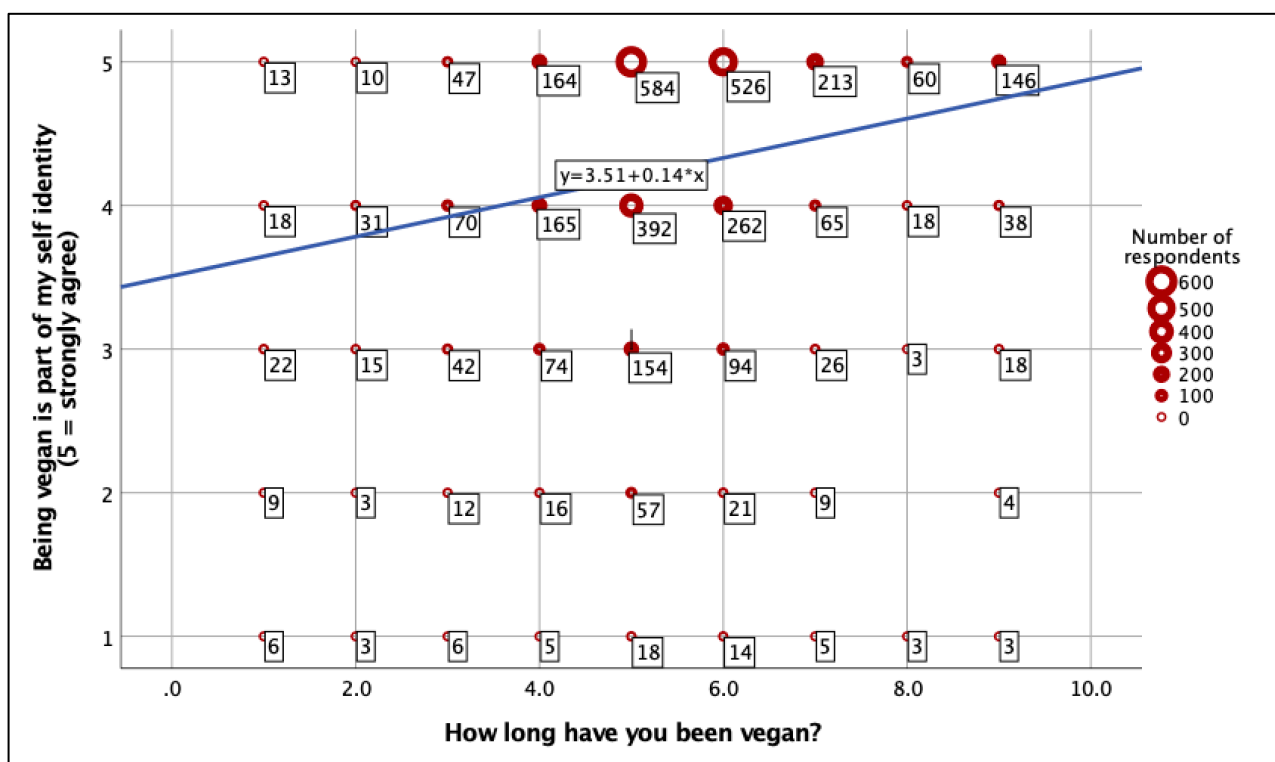


Figure 4.6 - Linear regression to show the relationship between the length of time someone is vegan and the extent to which veganism is part of their identity

The X axis are numerical codes for the corresponding length of time. These are shown below:

Numerical Code	Length of time respondent was vegan
1	Less than 3 months
2	3 - 6 months
3	6 months - 1 year
4	1 - 2 years
5	2 - 5 years
6	5 - 10 years
7	10 - 15 years
8	15 - 20 years
9	20 + years

To explore this further, questions were asked in my interviews to ascertain how these identities manifest themselves and the challenges that mainstreaming poses.

4.2.1 “It’s no big deal”

Upon asking interviewees about the reputation of veganism, it became clear that the majority were acutely aware of the negative attitudes and perceptions that are commonly circulated in the media (Cole & Morgan, 2011). Unprompted, participants listed vegan stereotypes including “angry”, “judgey”, “extreme” and “militant”. However, a notable divergence between long-term vegans and short-term vegans was the way they adjusted their behaviours in response to these stereotypes.

In the main, interviewees that had been vegan for less than 10 years, explained how they often tried to, “just keep quiet” or “not bring it up”. Concealing their vegan identities was expressed as a strategy to avoid being associated with negative stereotypes. This is pertinent as it indicates that there is a desire, particularly amongst those who have adopted veganism recently, to distance themselves from the assumed political and outspoken nature of veganism. This concurs with the statistical relationship shown by Figure 4.6.

Another common justification was not wanting to feel like an inconvenience in social situations or appear as the “difficult one” Emma (6 years vegan), noted:

I think we have a certain responsibility to look normal and to look less confrontational. If veganism appears less challenging, then people will come along for the ride. People need to see that it’s no big deal.

Here, the idea of appearing “normal” holds significance as it suggests that in order for veganism to be adopted by the masses it must first converge with social norms and expectations.

However, in many ways the ‘confrontational’ element is intrinsic to veganism, as by definition it directly challenges the engrained ideology of carnism (Joy, 2011). This echoes recent studies that suggest vegans are stigmatized for disrupting social conventions relating to food (Groeve, et al., 2021; Markowski & Roxburgh, 2019).

Several interviewees also commented that merely their presence made non-vegans feel uncomfortable or defensive, due to veganism being considered an automatic inference of moral judgement. Ava (4 years vegan) described it as “shining a light on their horrible lifestyle... but

that's not the case at all". Another interviewee, Charlie (vegan < 1 year) shared a similar sentiment, "I don't want to make other people feel uncomfortable about it. I think the judgement can deter people from veganism". This concern for being perceived as critical of others, resonates with Twine's notion of a 'Vegan Killjoy', whereby the presence of a vegan automatically destabilises the normality of animal consumption and "a shared sense of happiness" (Twine, 2014, p. 626). Interestingly, the term 'Killjoy' is first articulated in relation to the challenging nature of feminism; as Ahmed writes, "to be recognized as a feminist is to be assigned to a difficult category and category of difficulty" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 591). The interviewees' conscious decision to downplay their veganism marks an intentional divergence for some vegans from the movement's identity as oppositional or a counterculture (Cherry, 2006). In contrast, several long-term vegans expressed their desire 'to shout about it' and reflected on the importance of raising awareness wherever possible. This determination and responsibility to persuade non vegans and help them "see the light" is captured by Louise (15 years vegan):

It's so hard to not talk about it, and once you know you're having dinner and people are having little pieces at corpse on their plate, it's so hard to not strike up a conversation about it... and who knows, one conversation could be the conversation that turns someone vegan.

This reference to an everyday situation of having dinner demonstrates that for some of the interviewees it was not possible to compartmentalise their vegan beliefs. Again, this corresponds to the statistical relationship shown by Figure 4.6.

4.2.2 Plant-based "piggybacking" on veganism:

The ambiguity of the term 'plant-based' is a recurring theme. It is a term that has recently gained popularity and has been adopted by many corporations for the marketing and branding of products (Harrington, 2019). Interviewees explained that 'plant-based' is often conflated or used interchangeably with vegan, resulting in confusion and blurring of what can or can't be consumed. Similarly, geographical work on AFNs has criticised mainstream retailers for their appropriation of 'alternative' characteristics and values (Goodman, et al., 2010; Jackson, et al., 2007; Pratt, 2007) in a way that Holloway notes is, "romanticizing the radicalised 'alternative'" (Holloway, et al., 2005, p. 9). This is encapsulated by Tegan (11 years vegan) who reflected on the increasing corporate involvement:

I think it is necessary that they get involved, because if we're talking about normalising, that's the way to do it. My frustration is with the term plant based. It is getting thrown around so much it is losing its meaning like natural did a while ago. So, I have found myself almost purchasing things that had dairy in it, because that word is being used in a confusing way. It's like, wait, what, you said plant based? It is becoming more ambiguous for sure, and I would hate to see the intrinsic values of veganism get lost.

The flexibility of such a term, marks a departure from earlier depictions of veganism as extreme, rigid, and marginal. As underlined across the interviews was the depoliticizing effect of the term and that it “just focusses on food”. To echo Clay et al (2020), it is perhaps a more palatable description that emphasises consumer choice and distances itself from a more radical impetus of veganism. In this respect, as suggested by John (7 years vegan) other movements are “piggybacking” off veganism in the pursuit of profit and capturing a new market of consumers. Thereby, “losing its meaning” and the ethical connotations are potentially being displaced (Giraud, 2021). As Tegan alluded to, there is a paradox between the democratising potential of commercialised veganism and the detrimental implications for the core principles. This resonates with Guthman’s notion of “organic-lite”; a form of organic that had been undermined by processes of standardisation and the undermining influence of big corporations (2004).

This is reiterated by Jess (1.5 years vegan), while discussing if she feels comfortable eating at a restaurants or fast-food chains that are heavily associated with selling meat options:

I would get the Impossible Whopper at Burger King, but I find it hugely offensive that now they ask if you want to add bacon or cheese to your order! Also, the mayo is not vegan, so unless you change it, it’s not actually plant based at all. It’s ridiculous and a half-hearted effort from Burger King.

Since the introduction of the Impossible Whopper in 2019 (US), it has been the target of considerable backlash (Grant, 2020). Although promoted as a plant-based option and described as, “100% Whopper, 0% Beef”, Burger King revealed that the ‘meatless’ patties were prepared on the same grill as its beef products, making them unsuitable for strict vegetarians or vegans. This misleading advertisement and failure to deliver legitimate vegan options has been condemned for being lazy, ignorant and an example of big corporations trying to capitalise on

veganism, without any of the associated ethical commitments (Jones, 2020). In response to the criticism, Burger King explained that the new products were aimed at flexitarians who want to reduce their meat intake either for health or environmental reasons, rather than ethical vegetarians or vegans. A Veganuary representative, Toni Vernelli, echoed this defence: “For all the important issues that Veganuary- and most vegans- are trying to address through their food choices it makes absolutely no difference whether the plant-based patty is cooked separately or on the same grill as the meat” (Vegcomonist, 2020). This statement appears to directly contradict the definition of veganism and indicates the relaxation of the underlying principles and standards.

Upon asking my interviewees about their attitudes towards cross-contamination or accidental consumption of animal products, the reactions were varied. Gail, a long-term vegan of 40 years stated, “I won’t go to any restaurants that aren’t fully vegan, it’s not worth the risk”. In direct contrast to this, Ava a short-term vegan of 4 years was resigned to the fact that, “cross contamination is inevitable and out of my control”. My interviewees had contrasting views however a reoccurring distinction between the opinions of short and long-term vegans arose.

To evaluate if these differences in behaviours are observed across the wider vegan population, I plotted a linear regression to assess the correlation between length of time as a vegan and the strictness of approach. See Figure 4.7 below:

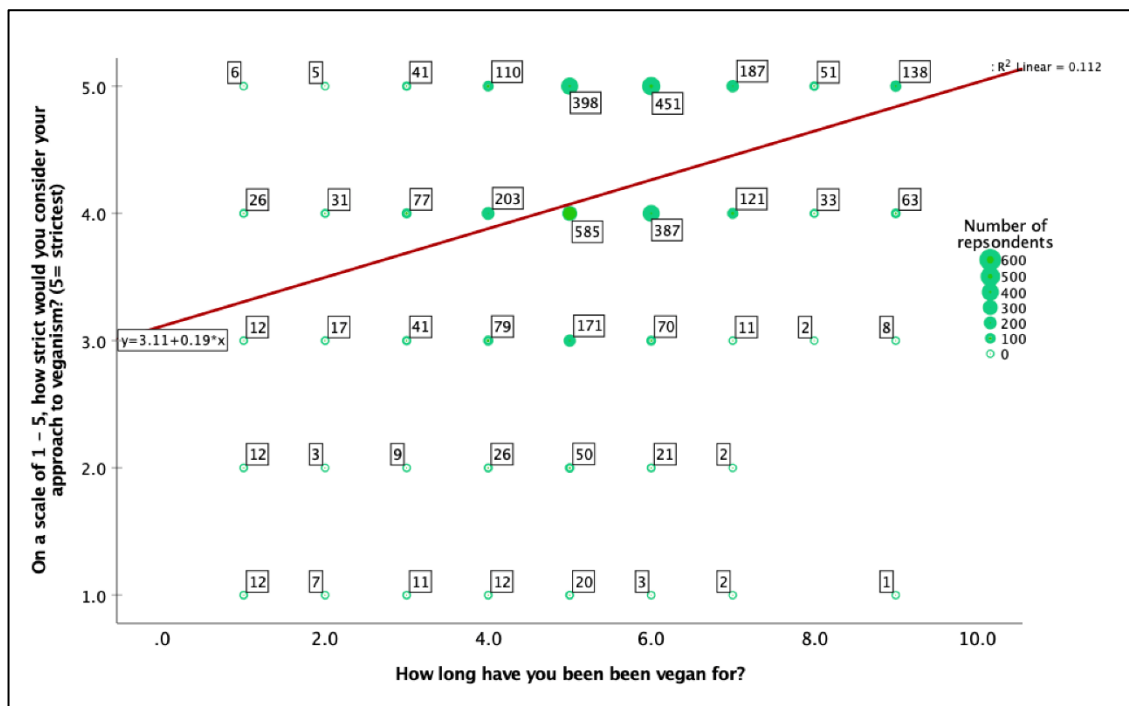


Figure 4.7 - Linear regression to show the relationship between the length of time someone is vegan and the strictness of their approach. (See Figure 4.6, page 21 for X axis codes)

A Pearson correlation coefficient of these variables reveals a moderately positive correlation between the length of time as a vegan and the strictness of approach. ($r=0.334$). It is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

The sentiments from my interviewees combined with the survey data reveal that new entrants are more lenient and less adherent to strict practices of veganism. It would appear they are more willing to compromise and are perhaps prioritising greater choice in 'plant-based' options over adhering to the rigid practices of veganism.

4.3 Is mainstreaming dividing vegans?

Previous research suggests that the main motivations for adopting veganism falls under three categories of animal welfare, environmental and health (Greenebaum, 2012 ; Christopher, et al., 2018; Parkinson, et al., 2019). Greenebaum and White take this further to suggest that motivations are value-laden within the vegan community and can be a source of tension and division (Greenebaum, 2012 ; White, 2018). This hypothesis prompted my exploration into the emerging divisions across veganism as it navigates its recent rise in popularity.

Figures 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 show that my survey respondents overwhelmingly believe these three motivating factors of animal welfare (97.5%), environment (90.83%) and health (72.36%) are 'very important' or 'somewhat important'.

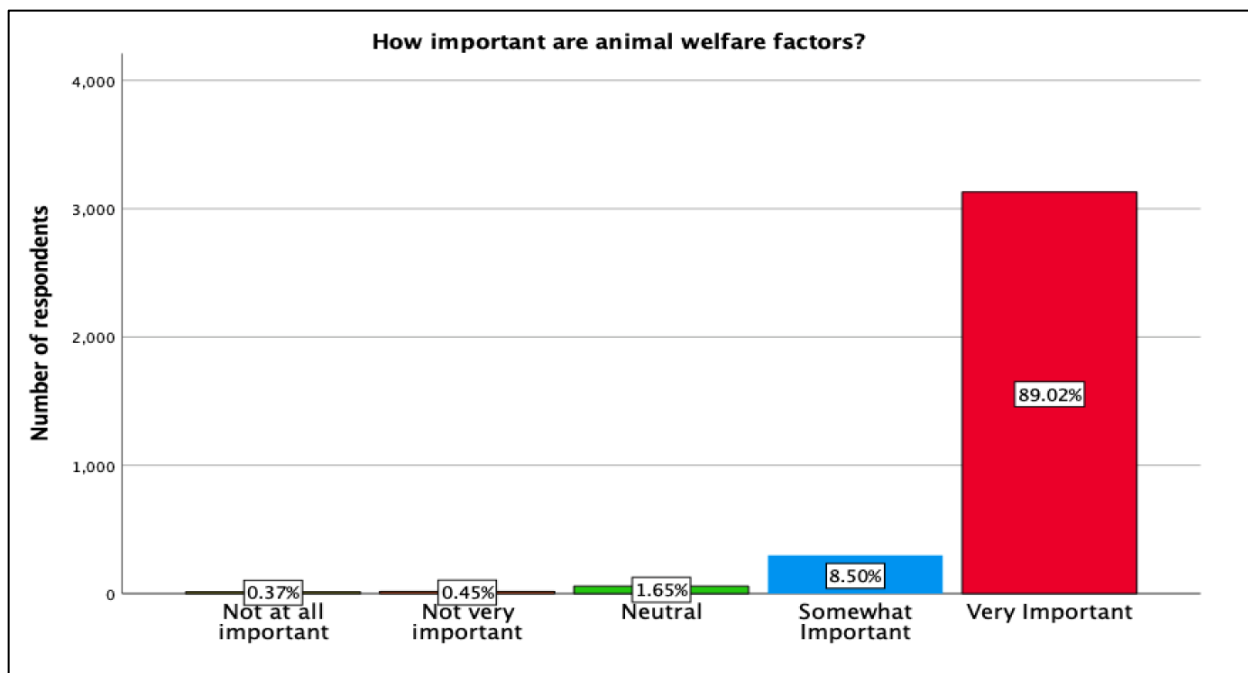


Figure 4.8 - Bar chart to show how important animal welfare factors were for respondents' motivation to be vegan.

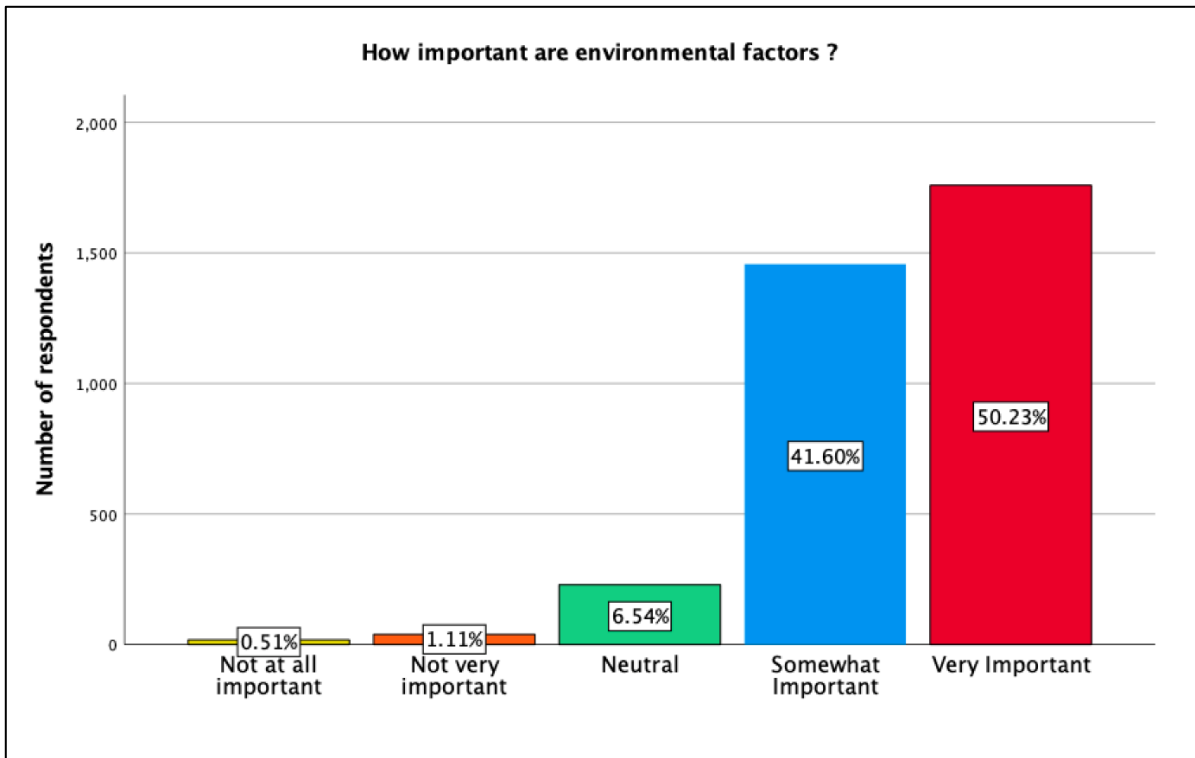


Figure 4.9 - Bar chart to show how important environmental factors were for respondents' motivation to be vegan.

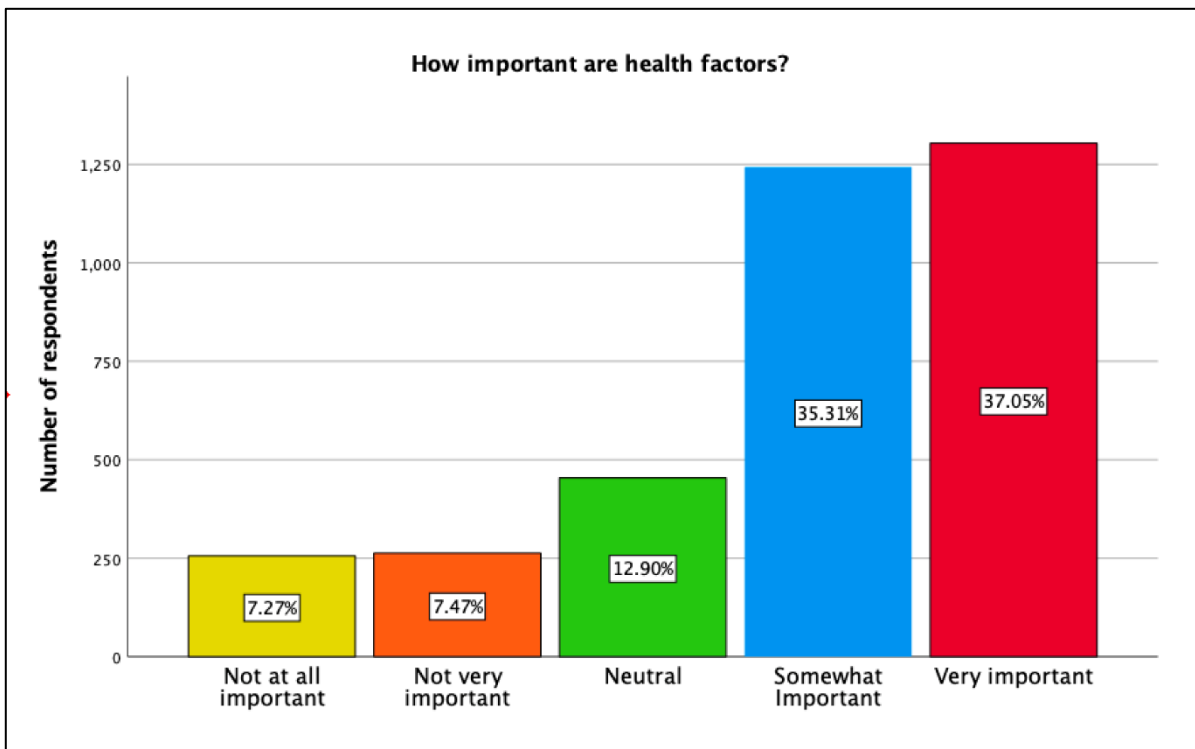


Figure 4.10 - Bar chart to show how important health factors were for respondents' motivation to be vegan.

While this data validates the importance of these motivating factors to the vegan community, due to the design of my survey, allowing respondents to rate all factors equally, it is not possible to infer from this data whether these factors were divisive. However, the in-depth interviews highlighted two key causes of division; health and corporate involvement.

4.3.1 Corporate involvement is “a double-edged sword”

The vegan market is currently valued at \$29.4 billion and is set to grow to \$162 billion dollars by 2030 (Bloomberg Intelligence , 2021). However, this direction of travel may not align with the vegan community.

The increasing commodification of veganism elicited a range of views. Common responses were nuanced, recognising the difficulties and contradictions faced in everyday life. There was a shared acknowledgement that veganism exists within wider food systems and compromises may well be required. This is encapsulated by Lily (2 years vegan):

It's a bit of a double-edged sword, in that it's getting vegan products to the masses, but the alternative is we shouldn't buy into it. You're complicit every time you enter a supermarket in world that is still majority meat eating and doesn't care about the environment. So how much do you want to personally suffer as a vegan?

This depicts the emerging ethical dilemmas faced by vegans in the wake of its recent popularity. These predicaments were a source of anguish for several of my interviewees, who expressed concerns about the current “apathy of the vegan community” and their willingness to “blindly accept” recent changes. Notably, it was the long-term vegans that were the most adverse to the recent co-option of the vegan market. Possibly signifying the growing distinctions between newer populist modes of veganism and those rooted in more radical tradition. Ivy (45 years vegan) explained her rationale behind refusing to engage with, as she puts it, “corporate veganism”:

I wouldn't step foot in McDonalds even with the new vegan options.
Just walking through the door is everything I'm against.

Here, Ivy is acknowledging that although establishments or companies are offering vegan products, they remain implicated in wider networks of non-vegan production and consumption.

As drawn on by White, this is an ethical dilemma that is accompanying the rise of corporate-endorsed veganism (2018). Importantly this concern was not exclusive to long-term vegans; Dan (2 years vegan) and Charlie (less than a year) also had strong views on the topic: “You know McDonalds is a horrid company that still kills millions of individuals. So why the hell would you put your money in that?”

This hypercritical and “militant” opinion is by no means shared by most respondents. What was forthcoming was that extreme views had a negative impact on the overall perception of the vegan movement. Across my interviews, criticisms about the exclusivity and hostile nature about the vegan community were evident:

You’re pushing people away, instead of bringing them into the cause.
(Jim, 3 years vegan)

Purists always ruin everything; you know perfection is the enemy of success. (Emma, 6 years vegan)

The vegan community can be really brutal, I don’t think this approach is the right way to get people to come around. (Jess, 1.5 years vegan)

Primarily these issues were raised by short-term vegans, possibly indicating a divergence of opinion surrounding whether the vegan community should resist the inevitable flexibility that comes with populism and corporate involvement.

4.3.2 More than a “fad”

People used to assume that all vegans were scrawny and malnourished. Now when I chat to people they go, ‘wow you must be so healthy!’ (Brian, 10 years vegan)

This encapsulates the recent promotion of veganism as healthy. This appears to be confirmed by Susie Richards, head of product development at Sainsbury’s, who states, “plant-based eating is taking the health world by storm” (Butler, 2017). When asked about the main driving forces behind veganism’s recent surge in popularity, Ben (3 years vegan) a self-proclaimed health enthusiast suggested:

I think the documentary Game Changers was a watershed moment for people. It did a really good job at syncing up how veganism can affect you individually and what it does to your body. People are inherently selfish.

Ben is referring to Game Changers, which is a pro-vegan documentary focussed on the benefits of veganism for health and athletic performance (Shoemaker, 2021). This portrayal of veganism as inherently healthier is significant in that it shifts the value away from a more-than-human outlook and towards a self-oriented practice. Unlike veganism’s core ethical principles, this healthism does not directly oppose the carnist ideology (2011) or anthropocentrism (Nocella, et al., 2015); instead, it re-places emphasis on human consumption. As alluded to by Ben, this individualistic focus is more compatible within the norms of a meat-centric society and therefore health factors may be more appealing to the wider population. To draw upon observations from the mainstreaming of AFNs, large retailers were actively involved in constructing perceptions of ‘quality’, in order to appeal to consumers and increase profits (Goodman, et al., 2012) . Seemingly the same strategy has been adopted for vegan products; framing them as ‘healthy’ and a form of ‘clean eating’.

To concur with the new framing of vegan as healthy, Figure 4.11 from my survey data, depicts that health is considered as more important by those who have turned vegan more recently.

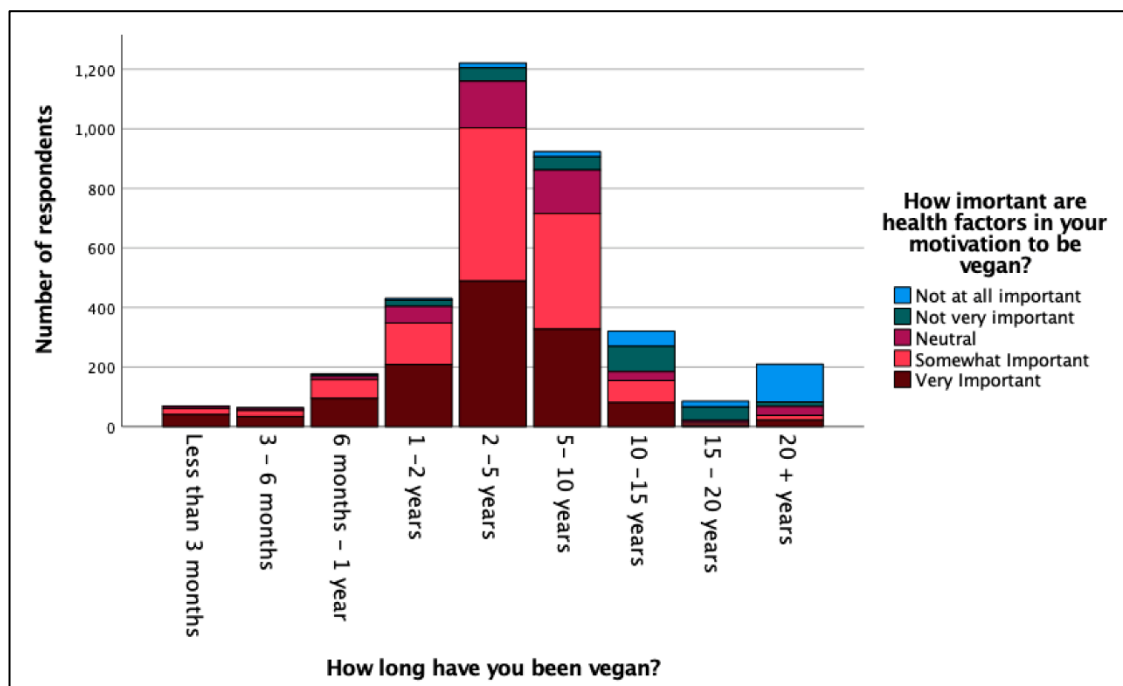


Figure 4.11 - Bar chart depicting the importance of health as motivation compared to length of time as a vegan.

The changing emphasis to health was a source of contention for several of my interviewees, particularly those who expressed strong animal welfare motivations and were involved with animal activism. During a discussion about the common misconceptions of veganism, Gail (40 years vegan) shared

I find it so frustrating when people assume it [veganism] is a fad diet or health choice. Anyone who is doing it for those reasons is not an authentic vegan, well not in my eyes anyway.

This notion of authenticity is poignant as it implies a lower value attached to veganism as a health motivation and indicates animosity between vegans (Greenebaum, 2012). Similar criticism was shared by others, who articulated “it’s giving mixed messages” and “if I were doing it for my own benefit, I would cheat all the time”. This prompted me to investigate further the correlation between health motivations and strictness across my wider survey sample. This is shown in Figure 4.12 below.

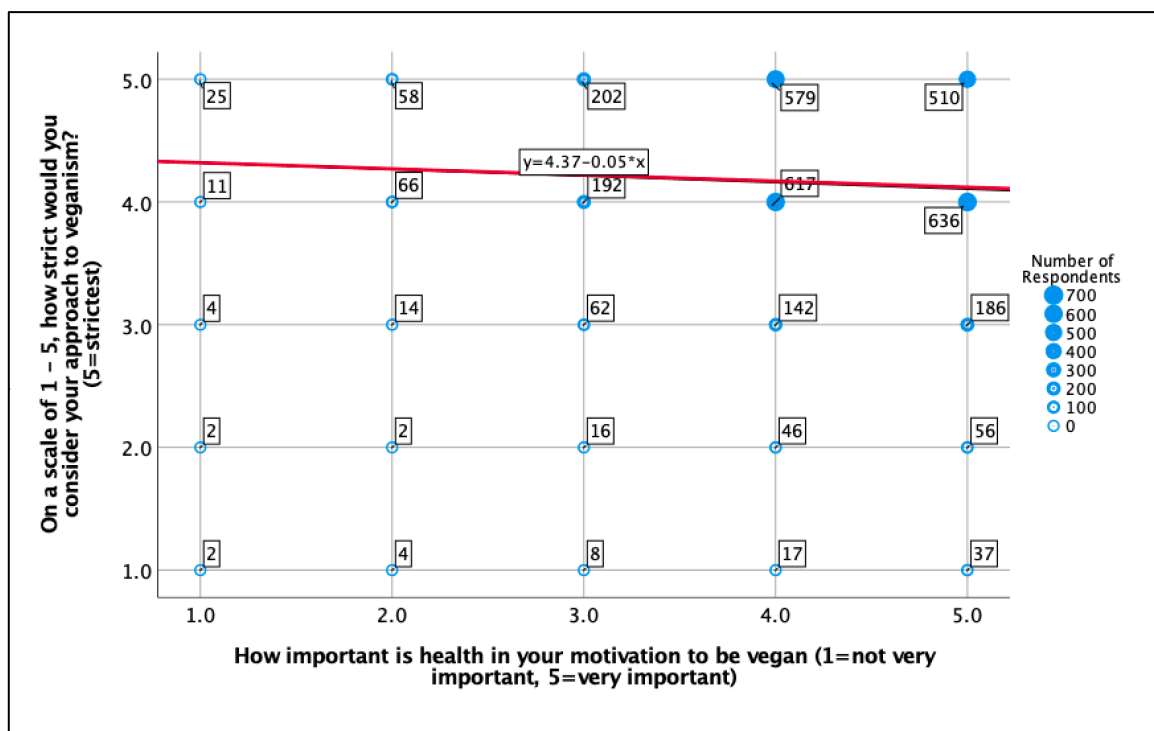


Figure 4.12 - Linear regression to show the relationship between the health motivations and the strictness of approach

A Pearson correlation coefficient for the association between health motivations and strictness only indicated a weak negative result ($r=-0.147$, $p<0.01$). Although not conclusive it indicates that in some instances, strong health motivations may lead to more lenient approaches to veganism, which is a source of discord across my interviewees.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This dissertation has contributed to the emerging debate surrounding veganism's rise to popularity by integrating survey data with a nuanced perspective. My multi method analysis was an asset to my research. The survey data set of 3,515 responses, which to my knowledge is the largest study sample in any academic work on veganism, has enabled me to identify overall trends and patterns across the wider vegan population. To complement this, my in-depth interviews gave insight into the both the opinions of vegans and underlying tensions within the community.

Before drawing conclusions, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of my research. Notably, my data had a strong bias towards anglophone countries and therefore may not be representative of the global community. Further issues raised across my interviews related to elitism and socio-economic status, however due to project constraints, I was unable to explore these further. These and other societal factors merit further research in order to understand their implications on veganism.

My research determined the extent to which veganism has entered the mainstream. The survey data depicts a clear increase in the recent adoption of veganism, with 82.42% of the respondents having been vegan for less than 10 years. The increased viability of veganism as speculated, was supported by 97% of respondents confirming it had become easier to be vegan in the last 5 years. Significantly, greater product availability and increased awareness were the key reasons provided, both typical characteristics of mainstreaming.

With regards to my second research question causes of dilution were evident. My survey data revealed the longer a person had been vegan the more they identified with veganism and the more they strictly complied with the 'rules' of veganism. Discussions in my interviews revealed that new entrants to veganism were keen to avoid associations with negative vegan stereotypes (Cole and Morgan, 2011; Doyle, 2016) and achieved this by downplaying or concealing their veganism. In contrast, long term vegans were more inclined to vocalise their beliefs and expressed a sense of duty to raise awareness for the cause. Although there were discrepancies, the interview insights and data analysis indicate a sense of dilution. Notably, my interviewees actively drew connections between the discursive shift from 'vegan' to 'plant-based' and how corporates were diluting the ethical connotations of veganism (Giraud, 2021). Their concern for the conflation of veganism with plant based signifies that the key to sustaining holistic veganism may be finding ways to resist the normalising pressures that seek to undermine it.

Finally, I explored emerging divisions within the vegan community. My survey confirmed that environmental, health and animal welfare were consistently considered important across my data set, however due to the design of the survey I could not conclude on whether these motivators were divisive. My in-depth interviews identified two divisive factors: the recent narrative of veganism as healthy and attitudes towards corporate commodification. It was evident that navigating everyday life choices was more complex than simply condemning or accepting the corporate involvement, however, the extent to which my interviewees were willing to compromise their core principles was a point of controversy. Once again, the differences of opinion were mainly between long and short-term vegans, with long term, pre the proposed mainstreaming in 2012, expressing the importance of maintaining “pure” forms of veganism. Newer entrants were critical of this rigid approach, suggesting that it was counter-productive to the overall cause. A further divergence within the community stemmed from emerging health motivations as these were considered by some to undermine the more-than-self telos of veganism. It was speculated by my interviewees that individualistic health motives may result in a more flexible adherence to veganism, which was supported by my survey data.

To bring this discussion full circle and to refer to geographical research on AFNs, vegan mainstreaming appears to be following a similar path to the commodification of organic products (Guthman, 2004). The less politicised, lifestyle form of veganism may be the one that continues to gain popularity as the identification of ‘new’ vegans as a market that can be co-opted and capitalised by ‘Big corporate’ (Sexton et al, 2022) has transformed the landscape that vegans inhabit. Perhaps it is a diluted ‘vegan-lite’ that is going mainstream, while the ‘hardcore’ veganism with radical intent is being left behind at the fringes of society.

Although the AFN approach was useful in guiding my research it was of limited benefit due to the scholarship not yet considering food systems which avoid all forms of animal exploitation. It did however identify the need to challenge the assumption that Big Corporate is necessary for mainstreaming. Instead it would be valuable to explore different routes to market that may be more aligned with the underlying motivations of vegans. Finally, due to the multi-faceted benefits of veganism in terms of animal welfare, environment and the proposed health benefits, alongside its projected growth; veganism may well be critical to the sustainability of food systems, and therefore warrants greater attention from food geographers.

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7.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Interview Consent Document

I volunteer to be interviewed as part of this dissertation research project. I understand that the research aims to collect data on people's behaviour and attitudes towards a vegan diet.

Responses and data collected in this interview will be used in an undergraduate dissertation and help expand knowledge surrounding veganism.

1. I confirm that I have been given a copy, and read, the Participant Information Sheet and fully understood the information it contained.
2. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary. I will not be paid for my involvement. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without reason. If I do withdraw, all my information will be deleted.
3. I have read and understood that all data provided will be treated in strict confidence, and that my name and personal information will be anonymised.
4. I understand that this research has been approved by the University of Bristol Ethics Committee.
5. I have read and understood the explanation of the research project provided to me. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and they have been answered to my satisfaction.

By proceeding to participate in this interview and signing below, I agree to take part in this research project and to the above statements. Any statements I have concern with I will discuss with the researcher prior to participating in the interview.

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX B - Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide if you want to take part or not, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Feel free to discuss this with others and take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. If anything is unclear or you have any questions about the study, please contact: pu18266@bristol.ac.uk

What is the purpose of this study?

Across the UK, veganism is increasing in popularity and this study aims to investigate the main implications of this mainstreaming. It will explore the motivations and challenges of those adopting a vegan lifestyle.

Why am I being asked to take part?

You have been asked to participate as you identify as a vegan. Your thoughts, views and personal experiences will therefore provide useful data and insight for this research.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form. You may withdraw from the study at any time, without any reason.

What does it involve?

It will involve participating in a semi-structured interview, which will take approximately 20 minutes. This will consist of some pre-determined questions, combined with spontaneous discussion based on your answers. The interview will cover some contextual background information, the reasons behind your dietary choices, the main challenge of your diet and your attitudes towards recent changes in the plant-based industry.

Are there any potential risks of participating?

Parts of the discussion may include personal questions surrounding your dietary and lifestyle choices. The interview may also cover some sensitive topics such as animal welfare. At any point that you feel uncomfortable, a question can be omitted, or you may stop the interview entirely.

What happens to the information?

Any information you provide will be anonymised and then used in my undergraduate research project. After moderation, it is intended that the results of this study will be published. If you take part and are interested in understanding how your contribution to this study has been used, you can request a summary of the research.

APPENDIX C - Interview Question Guide

- How old are you?
- Where do you currently live?
- How would you personally define veganism?
- When did you first turn vegan and what was the main motivation for doing so?
- What was your transition process to veganism?
- How strict would you say your overall approach is?
- Have your views changed during the time you've been vegan?
- What do you find is the most challenging thing about being vegan?
- How did those around you react when you turned vegan? Have their attitudes changed during the time you've been vegan?
- To what extent is veganism part of your identity?
- Do you feel part of a wider community by being vegan? And if so, what has your experience of this community been like?
- Do you think it is easier to be vegan now than when you first started? And why?
- What do you think is the main driving force for the recent increase in popularity of veganism?
- What role do you think corporations play in veganism becoming more mainstream?
- What are your thoughts on the increasing influence of corporations?
- It is often a point that has mixed responses but are you happy to buy vegan products owned by non-vegan companies?
- Is there anything about veganism that will have to change for veganism to become more mainstream?
- Recently the term plant-based appears to have gained popularity, what do you understand by this term?
- Do you feel comfortable eating at a restaurant known for being non-vegan?
- Is there anything about veganism that you think is misunderstood?
- Often veganism is portrayed negatively in the media, do you think veganism can sometimes carry a negative reputation/connotation?
- Do you subconsciously/consciously view non-vegans differently to vegans?
- How, if at all do you try and inform others about veganism?

APPENDIX D - Table of Interview Participants

Name	Length of time as a vegan	Age	Gender	Country
Brian	10 years	53	Male	Australia
Charlie	Less than a year	21	Male	UK
Sue	14 years	34	Female	US
Gail	40 years	62	Female	UK
Dan	2 years	23	Male	UK
Jane	5 years	58	Female	Australia
Jess	1.5 years	51	Female	US
Ivy	45 years	68	Female	UK
John	7 years	30	Male	Australia
Ava	4 years	23	Female	UK
Emma	6 years	51	Female	US
Louise	2 years	21	Female	New Zealand
Sophia	17 years	43	Female	Canada
Lily	2 years	30	Female	South Africa
Ben	22 years	49	Male	Canada
Dave	2 years	25	Male	UK
Imogen	10 years	45	Female	New Zealand
Emma	4 years	26	Female	Australia
Chloe	5 years	22	Female	UK
Sasha	5 years	51	Male	UK
Jim	11 years	36	Female	US

APPENDIX E - Sample Interview Transcript - Sasha (36 minutes)

CH: Okay, unless you have any questions we will get started?

S: No questions from me.

CH: Firstly, how old are you?

S: 22

CH: Where do you currently live?

S: I live in London.

CH: How do you personally define veganism?

S: It's an ethical stance for me personally. And it just entails not eating any kind of animal product whatsoever or wearing animal products.

CH: And when did you first turn vegan? And what was the main driving force behind this?

S: I was in lower sixth. So, I was 17, I want to say, I've been vegetarian since I was 14. And it just seemed like the next step. I didn't agree with eating animal products. But also, I never really liked them either. So it wasn't that big of an issue for me.

CH: Yeah, and would you say your motivations have evolved since you've been vegan?

S: So still, the main thing for me is that, but I also am a bit more aware about the environmental now, just because there's like a lot more awareness towards that, as I think I've managed to educate myself a bit more on veganism. In general. The health parts I don't really, really care about that much. Yeah. But it's more environmental and ethical now.

CH: And how do you go about educating yourself?

S: So, loads documentaries have come out, I try and watch most of the ones that come out. I follow a lot of Instagram, like accounts. And like I read quite a lot of articles, or at least I used to, I haven't really done that much recently. But that's what I did to educate myself.

CH: And when you decided you wanted to be vegan, how did you transition? Was it a gradual process or did you decide overnight?

S: So it was quite difficult for me to transition because my mom was so anti vegan. And obviously doing it at home, it was quite a big argument point. So it started at school and when I was out, I would be completely vegan. I would then when I was home, I would avoid eating food

myself that wasn't vegan, but my mom would still put like buttering cooking and stuff, which was kind of annoying. It was kind of like that. So it wasn't overnight. If it was my choice, it would have been overnight. Yeah. Obviously living with parents. It's quite difficult to because my parents quite strict.

CH: And could you maybe expand a bit more on your parent's attitudes, but also other people around you. How did they react when you said you were vegan?

S: My mom was literally just like, No way in hell, you're going vegan. She was super angry. But that's because my family all they eat is like meat and cheese and butter. And it's just our culture that every dish has that in it. So I think for her, it was a bit like, you're just going to be unhealthy. My grandparents still give me grief about every day. My grandma still doesn't really understand what veganism is. She'll try and feed me ham and stuff. And then I also remember at school, the cafe didn't do any vegan food. So the only thing I could eat with these little like carrot sticks they would cut me and all of the teachers, especially the PE teachers would make a lot of comments.

CH: And how did you combat those negative views?

S: I laughed it off and ignored it I never tried to justify my reasoning. Like I felt like I didn't have enough of a backbone to be like, actually stand up for myself because I knew that I would just get a lot of stick back from people. Whereas like now I justify it to other people but like I never would have done that in the past. They just kind of like laughed and then walked away.

CH: And how strict is your overall approach in terms of household products, clothing, activities?

S: So overall, would you describe it that food wise, I think I am quite strict. The only thing that I'm conflicted about is honey, okay, I don't buy it myself. I don't use it myself. But if someone makes me food with honey, I'll eat it it . Clothes. I thought I was good. But I admit that I wear North Face Yeah, I didn't buy it. I was gifted it. But it's still not very good of me. And I do wear Air Force which are leather. And I will admit to that. I feel like I'm quite a hypocrite for Air Force and the North Face.

CH: That makes sense, and do you ever worry that people would judge you for wearing those items?

S: Yeah. Because I also do think aside from those two things, I am very strict. I didn't actually know that Air Force were real leather until someone told me, which I guess is quite ignorant of me as well that I didn't actually research the things I was wearing. And the north face. I was kind of just given it for free. So I was like, Oh yeah, I'll take this. And then I realised I was like, fuck,

because I could see the feathers coming out. And I was like, I'm an awful person. But I don't know.

CH: Could you please describe a time that you found it really difficult or challenging to be vegan?

S: Nothing springs to mind, apart from, god this sounds really bad. The only time I find it challenging to be a vegan is when I'm craving food like Kinder eggs and stuff like that. Okay, like for me, they're really small things. Like social situations. If there's no vegan food, I'm happy to get chips and a side salad. Like that doesn't impact me. But it's the really stupid little things that really get me like, I crave like condensed milk, obviously, you can buy even condensed milk. I

CH: You sort of mentioned it, but do you ever feel like an inconvenience for being vegan?

S: It really stresses me out. Like, I remember going to Belgium with one of my friends. And we were staying with her family. Obviously there veganism is unheard of. None of her family knew what it was. They had to cook me my own separate meals. And I had never felt more guilty in my I life. And it kind of got to the point where like, because they would cook me my own meal, none of them would eat it. I was then eating so much food that I was so full of food, so but I felt too guilty to be like, I don't want anymore. Or like, it was, it was just so I felt awful. Yeah. And they would make comments about it as well. And it just wasn't a fun experience. And it happens quite a lot like, yeah, when I visit friends, especially that are not vegan or people have to buy specific things for me. It's an awful feeling, because I also don't like people going out of their way for me.

CH: And do you think veganism can have a bad reputation? And if so, why?

S: I think it's definitely got a bad rep. Still less of a bad rep than it used to. But I think there's sort of stigma about it being a trend. And there's a stigma for it being just for people that have a lot of money, and that are super well off. And I do see where that's coming from. Because I feel like a lot fake meats, and those types of products are really, really overpriced. And again, for it being a trend, I can see where that comes from, because you also see a lot of celebrities dropping in and out of veganism. I kind of wish I didn't have that rep, because that's what a lot of people associate when I tell them I'm a vegan as well. But I feel like hopefully as time goes on, those kind of negative connotations will fade.

CH: What are your thoughts about the vegans calling out other vegans within the community?

I do think it well, there are those militant vegans. But there are there are those people that practice veganism, so extremely. And I feel like because they're so stuck in their own minds. They're ignoring the fact that people are going vegan. And like, I don't know how to word this. I feel like a lot of vegans, it's their way or the highway. If people aren't vegan for the same reasons as them they see it as a bad, or less valid. They shouldn't, because at the end of the day, animals are suffering, regardless of the reasons. Like, if it all comes down to animal welfare for them, they should still be happy that people aren't eating them.

CH: And do you think veganism is part of your identity?

S : I would say so, partly. I think I'm happy that I've made these choices to be a vegan. And like, I think it is quite an important part of my identity. Because I feel like it says a lot about morals and stuff like that past me. I mean, I've never been the type of person to be like you're an immoral person for eating meat. But for me, it's quite a big thing that I don't eat meat, or dairy or anything like that.

CH: do you do you automatically feel part of a wider movement or community people by being vegan?

S: Personally, I don't feel like I'm part of a community. I don't know. I feel like a lot of people have their opinions about the vegan community. They're all like, Oh, we're very strong like all of this. And it's great that other people feel that but it's just a choice that I've made. It's an individual thing for me. I've never really considered myself part of a vegan community, but I've also never reached out to join any vegan societies like or anything like that. So maybe if I did do that, then I I would feel like I was part of community, but I've never made the active attempt.

CH: What do you think is the main driving force for the increase in popularity and veganism over the last few years?

S: I think there's just been a lot more education surrounding it. There's been a lot more talk about all of the documentaries that have come out like Seaspiracy, Game Changers and Earthlings. And I think because of that, there's just been an increasing awareness. I actually think the documentaries are one of the biggest impacts because it's all people do in their spare time, they just sit and watch TV. If someone's talking about one thing, you jump on the bandwagon you watch it, you see for yourself. Yeah. And I know quite a few people that have watched Game Changers, I know three people that turned vegan because of it as they wanted to be healthier.

CH: That's an interesting point about Game Changers, do you think focusing on health and fitness is an effective way to appeal to more people?

S: Yeah, I do see that. I think there is a lot of that whole, like individualistic kind of trope about it, I guess. But I also think it just gets rid of a lot of those misconceptions that you need to get protein from animals. And if you want to be strong, if you want to be fit, you need like other products from animals, I think it really breaks down a lot of those facts and makes it a lot more clear how you can still be a fit and strong individual without needing any of that.

CH: Yeah. So to build on that. Do you think there's a stereotype about what a vegan looks like? Yeah. And what how would you describe that?

S: I think there is the classic assumption about being unhealthily thin and pale. And I think for men especially as masculinity is associated with meat eater. Like, I think men get a lot more stick than I do as a women for being vegan. Like, I feel like women are a lot more like, Oh, that's great. Whereas men are like, you're not getting any protein like, yeah, strong all of this. And I think gender has a big, like a big impact in veganism.

CH: And what are your thoughts on the debate around multinational companies making vegan alternatives when their entire ethos may not be particularly ethical, or a lot of their money goes towards non vegan products? What are your thoughts on that?

S: I think that's just another part of capitalism. They're just jumping on the bandwagon and what is a trend? I guess, I don't wanna use the word trend, because I don't consider veganism a trend, but that's what they see veganism as and making money out of it. And because it's not the norm, it's not the biggest thing going around. Like it's not the majority, it's still quite a minority. Yeah, I would say they see that and they know they can exploit people for it, and they can make a lot more money out of it.

CH: And to build on that do you think it's a good thing that they're getting involved? Or do you think it would be better for veganism to be sourced by mainly vegan companies?

S: That's a really difficult question. I think it's like there's two sides of it. I think it is good that there's a lot more choice. And I feel like that has encouraged a lot more people to go vegan, because people are now seeing that there are other alternatives. But I also think it is It's not great, obviously, because these companies do still exploit animals and they don't have any kind of an ethical stance, like they just do it for money. But I think at the end of the day, that's just what happens in a capitalist society. Like you're never going to have ethics where money is

involved, in my opinion. So yeah, I guess it's quite a bad answer. But I think it is a good thing because at least more people are being vegan.

CH: And what about your personal product choices? Do you feel comfortable buying products from notoriously non vegan companies? Or what would be your preference?

S: I don't actually know that much about the companies. I mainly stick to the companies I know. I feel like a lot of the companies that I buy from are quite good with ethics, apart from Quorn. But also, it's quite expensive. So I can't really afford it anyway. So it's more of a treat myself.

CH: if a new vegan alternative comes out, would you go and buy it immediately? Or would you research the company then decide, or what's your approach when a new product comes out?

S:I don't research companies. Okay. Probably should. I also, for me, everything is based on costs. If it's on sale, I will definitely buy it. Yeah. Or if I want to treat myself, I'll buy it. But I feel like I don't actually cook with that much fake meat. A lot of my cooking nowadays is more just vegetables and beans and things like that.

CH: And, how important is this the sustainability of different food choices for you? Like what factors would you consider if any?

S: So this is also gonna sound really bad. I think my main thought process is that because I'm vegan, I'm doing quite a lot for the environment as it is. Because I do feel like it is more animal agriculture that destroys the environment. I'm very aware of all the arguments, that avocados and almonds are bad for the environment. But at the end of the day, I'm like, animal agriculture is worse for the environment.

CH: There are often varying opinions towards this one, so would you feel comfortable eating in a notoriously meaty restaurant or chain like, for instance, McDonald's?

S: I mean, I have in the past, it's not my choice, but if someone wants to go, yeah, sure, whatever. Like, people can eat meat in front of me, I don't really care. Yeah, because again, I do think veganism is a personal choice. I don't think as much I would love everyone to be vegan. I think it is unrealistic. Yeah. And it's just not going to happen in this day and age for everyone to be vegan.

CH: That's a very interesting point. And so, do you think, for it to become more mainstream, the ethos or practices of veganism would have to change?

S: I don't think it would have to change. I think people would have to be willing to hear it. Okay. And I think there is still such a stigma around veganism. I think because there's no such a stigma around veganism. It just won't happen in this day and age. I think it's one of those things that people are going to have to be raised into. Because I feel like a lot of people are stuck in their ways. They don't want to learn and they don't want to educate themselves. Just kind of hoping it's like not too late with the whole climate change thing that people will also decide to go vegan because it is like, the number one thing that could help save the planet as well.

CH: And last two questions. Is there anything about veganism that you think is misunderstood?

S: Again, that it's just a bunch of angry people trying to impose their views on everyone in society. That it's a trend?. Or that it's only for really wealthy rich people.

CH: Do you subconsciously or even consciously view non vegans differently?

S: I don't think is that I've even I think one of the main issues I have with it, I think if you try and educate yourself, that I won't see you differently, is the people that are so say, like, there are people that are quite ignorant, in the way that they won't even attempt to learn about veganism. And they will attempt to understand your views. And that's where I'm like, You're ignorant. And you're not even attempting to understand where I'm coming from. Because I've had a lot of people where straight off the bat, they're like, Oh, you're vegan, that's disgusting. Like, get a grip just eat meat. And that's when I'll judge you. And I'll be like, you're not a very nice person for not even attempting to understand where I'm coming from.

CH: So based on that, do you ever actively try and persuade or like inform others or those around you about veganism?

S: I don't try and attempt to, like, I will defend myself if I have to do now I used to not when I was younger, but I don't really stand for it anymore. I guess. I'm not like super aggressive. Like, look, this is where I'm coming from try and understand where I'm coming from in this. But I feel like I try not to be one of those people that pushes my views on other people because I don't want people that there's already such a stigma about veganism. I don't want to add to it. And it is annoying because I love to raise awareness for veganism because I do actually really believe in it.

CH: Is your worry that people will think you're judgmental?

S: They'll think I'm not taking any of their beliefs into consideration or anything. I think people will buy into the stereotypes of vegans being really aggressive and militant. I just don't want that. Because I feel like vegans have such a bad rep already. That I don't want to add to it, but it's also really disheartening.

CH: What do you think could improve that situation? What do you think could improve the rep of veganism?

S: Having like, factual evidence discussions, okay, kind of like this one. Where it's, I just feel like, where it's judgement free, where people are willing to learn. Because I do think it is when people come and they're really ignorant, and they don't even listen to what you have to say, that's where that's where I would like snap. That's where I'd lose my temper, and come across as the stereotypes and like, I don't want that.

CH: That's great, thank you so much for your time and sharing your thoughts. Is there anything at all you would like to add about your experiences, opinions?

S: Umm no I think that's covered most things, but good luck with your research and let me know how you get on.

CH: I will do, thanks again. And enjoy the rest of your day.

APPENDIX F - Survey Questions

I volunteer to take part in this research survey. The data collected in this questionnaire will be used in a University of Bristol undergraduate dissertation.

1. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary. I will not be paid for my involvement. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without reason.
2. I have read and understood that all data provided will be treated in strict confidence, and that all my data will be anonymised.
3. I understand that this research has been approved by the University of Bristol Ethics Committee.

By proceeding to take this questionnaire, I agree to take part in this research project and to the above statements. Any statements I am unsure of, I will discuss with the researcher prior to taking this questionnaire.



charlottelhanbury31@gmail.com (not shared)



[Switch account](#)

How old are you?

Choose



How would you describe your gender?

Choose



Which country do you currently live in?

Your answer

How long have you been vegan?

- Less than 3 months
- 3 - 6 months
- 6 months - 1 year
- 1 - 2 years
- 2 - 5 years
- 5 - 10 years
- 10 - 15 years
- 15 - 20 years
- 20 + years

On a scale of 1 - 5, how strict would you consider your approach to veganism?

1 2 3 4 5

Try where possible to follow a vegan diet, however with some flexibility. May sometimes eat animal derived products where they are in processed items or it is more convenient to do so (for example eating out). Other lifestyle choices may not be entirely vegan; such as leather/fur/down accessories, clothing or furnishings. May use cosmetic products that have been tested on animals.

Follow an entirely vegan diet, with no exceptions. Likely to meticulously read all ingredient lists and ensure any product or meal contains NO trace of animal products. Does not purchase or own any animal-based clothing, accessories or furnishings (nothing fur, leather, suede, wool, feathers or silk). Only uses vegan cosmetics and household items (Do not contain any animal derivatives/have not been tested on animals).

Do you think it has become easier to be vegan in the last 5 years? (Please answer 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know' , with a reason if possible)

Your answer

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (only select one per row):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"It is expensive to maintain a vegan diet"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"It is hard to go out and eat with friends/family"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"Being vegan is part of my self identity"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"In social settings, I am happy to eat non-vegan food"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"People view me differently because I am vegan"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
" It is hard to make my vegan diet healthy and balanced"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"Vegan options in supermarkets are limited"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How important are the following factors in your decision to be vegan? (please only select one per row)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Not very important	Not at all important
Social Pressure (the dietary choices of those around you)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Animal welfare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost of products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental impact of products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convenience of the food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taste of the food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious reasons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moral/ethical reasons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What was your main motivation for becoming vegan?

Your answer

What do you consider the greatest challenge you face by being vegan?

Your answer

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The next step of my research is to conduct interviews and I would really appreciate any further contribution. If you would be willing to participate in a short online interview or would like any further information, please leave your contact details below or alternatively contact me on pu18266@bristol.ac.uk. (The interview will be approximately 20-30 minutes and will be an informal conversation based on the topics in the survey. Further areas of focus will be: sustainability, accessibility and the role of big corporations in making veganism more mainstream.)

Your answer

APPENDIX G - Ethics Form



University of Bristol Research Ethics Application

Investigator information

Application Submitter Details

Title

Miss

First Name

Charlotte

Surname

Hanbury

Faculty

Faculty of Science

Department

School of Geographical Sciences

School

School of Geographical Sciences

Telephone

Email

pu18266@bristol.ac.uk

Preferred Name or Also Known As

Faculty

Science

School / Department / Centre

School of Geographical Sciences

Please select the Research Ethics Committee (REC) to review your research ethics application:

School of Geographical Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Is this a student project? (I.e. Is the ethics application submitted as part of your student qualification?)

Yes

Please declare your level of study

Undergraduate

Supervisor Contact Details

Title

Professor

First Name

Jonathan

Surname

Rigg

Department

Human Geography

Faculty

Faculty of Science

Email

jonathan.rigg@bristol.ac.uk

13 April 2022

Reference #: 2021-9287-9709

Page 2 of 12

Supervisor Details (if external to the University of Bristol)

Please provide their name, organisation details, email address and telephone number.

Please provide details of any other researchers/collaborators involved in the study.

To proceed to the next page select 'Next' in the Actions tiles.

To save your application for completion and submission at a later date please select 'Save' in the Actions tiles.

Brief study outline

Brief Project Outline (up to approximately 300 words)

The aim of the project is to investigate the motivations and challenges surrounding veganism. A plant-based diet is becoming increasingly popular and I want to explore the reasons for this – I expect people's motivations to fall under: environmental, health, animal welfare and social pressures. I will gather this information through questionnaires and interviews. These methods of data collection will also investigate the key challenges faced by participants, likely to include; cost, availability, taste and nutrition.

A key relationship I want to explore is between the length of time someone has been vegan and their attitudes/product choices, which corresponds to my theoretical framework: Roger's innovation/adoption curve. I will recruit participants that have been following a vegan diet for varying amounts of time and compare their attitudes towards recent changes in the plant-based industry. Within this I hope to address the question: As veganism becomes more mainstream, does it become less ethical/sustainable.

For example, the introduction of plant-based products by multi-national, non-vegan corporations such as Nestle, MacDonald's and Tyson Foods. These companies are capitalizing on people's motivation to eat more sustainably, yet they are criticised for being major polluters, exploiting workers and for making billions of animal products. My research will investigate the awareness of this 'greenwashing' amongst the vegan community and if it affects which products people purchase. I also want to explore participant's preference towards organic vs inorganic products and what drives this decision (sustainability, cost, taste, health)

In terms of ethical eating, I will explore participant's thoughts on plant-based products becoming increasingly similar to the animal-based counterparts, including taste, texture and smell. Is this counter-intuitive to the vegan ethos? I would like to generate in-depth discussion of this via focus groups.

To proceed to the next page select 'Next' in the Actions tiles.

To save your application for completion and submission at a later date please select 'Save' in the Actions tiles.

Checklist questions

13 April 2022

Reference #: 2021-9287-9709

Page 3 of 12

Checklist Questions Does your research involve any of the following? Tick all that apply

The following list is the standard University Checklist of common areas of ethical concern. If your research involves any of these issues you must ensure that you expand upon them in the sections that follow and if you are an inexperienced researcher (undergraduate/ taught masters) you are unlikely to receive a favourable ethical opinion.

- Participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent
 - * Examples of vulnerable participants are children, people with learning difficulties, patients, people experiencing emotional distress or mental illness, people living in care or nursing homes, and people recruited through self-help groups, participants in a dependent or unequal relationship with the researcher(s) or research supervisor.
- Participants to take part without their knowledge and consent at the time
 - * Examples include the covert observation of people or incidental recording of others.
- Actively deceiving participants
 - * Examples include deliberately falsely informing participants, withholding information from participants or misleading participants in such a way that they are likely to object or show unease when debriefed about the study.
- Discussion or collection of information on sensitive topics or considered special category status under GDPR
 - * Special Category Status under GDPR include:
 - personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin;
 - personal data revealing political opinions;
 - personal data revealing religious or philosophical beliefs;
 - personal data revealing trade union membership;
 - genetic data;
 - biometric data (where used for identification purposes);
 - data concerning health;
 - data concerning a person's sex life;
 - and data concerning a person's sexual orientation.
 - If the research is in relation to any of the sensitive topics listed then the legal issue requiring such scrutiny in such cases that 'explicit consent' must be obtained and the consenting process reviewed by the ethics committee
- Invasive procedures
 - * Invasive procedures may include:
 - Administration of drugs placebos;
 - Other substances (e.g., drinks, foods, food or drink constituents, dietary supplements) to study participants;
 - Biological samples from participants be obtained;
 - Pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study.
- Scans (e.g. MR, CT, PET) or x-rays of research participants
- Photographs, videoing, recording or similar of research participants without their consent
- Financial inducement (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time)
- The use or storage of information about living people whose personal identity could be discovered from that information
- Funds received from politically or culturally sensitive funding sources
 - *Examples include the defence sector, projects with potential environmental effects and other internationally regulated or protected industries. For more information, please follow the link to the '[Research Governance and Integrity Policy](#)'
- None of the above

To proceed to the next page select 'Next' in the Actions tiles.

To save your application for completion and submission at a later date please select 'Save' in the Actions tiles.

Study design and background

Geographical Sciences Ethics Application Form

All dissertation projects require a completed, reviewed and approved ethics application. In order for your research ethics application to be reviewed by your supervisor and Geography's Ethics Committee, you must complete all elements of the form and ensure that all relevant documentation has been uploaded.

Methods - Tick any of the methods you are proposing to carry out. Tick all that apply.

- Methods that involve human participants
- Archival methods and/or qualitative secondary data e.g. text or images
- Analysis of quantitative secondary data
- Numerical modelling
- Field and/or laboratory work

Please select the method of data collection relevant to your research. Tick all that apply

- Questionnaire / Survey method
- Interviews method
- Focus group discussion
- Other (Please specify)

Who will be recruited to participate in the questionnaire/survey?

People who consider themselves to follow a some level of plant based diet. I plan to post the questionnaire link on a vegan/vegetarian Facebook page- where it will be completely voluntary to complete. My friend and I also run a vegan food instagram page, where we share recipes and restaurant food that we have tried out. This has over a thousand followers, so I hope to share the questionnaire on here also and receive sufficient responses.

Who will be recruited to participate in the interview?

At the end of the questionnaire there will be an option for people to leave their details if they are willing to participate in an interview or focus group. I will interview Bristol University students, as they are easily accessible and there is a considerable number that choose plant based options. In order to explore the changes in veganism over time, I also want to interview non-students who have been vegan for a considerable length of time. These participants will be found through existing contacts, social media and by snowball sampling.

How many participants will be recruited to complete the questionnaire/survey? Provide justification for the sample size.

Around 80 responses- I plan to make the questionnaire simple and concise (taking under 5 minutes to complete). By making it short people will be more inclined to complete it. It will be composed of yes/no, tick box, drop down selection and ranking questions. I think with reach of social media, this is a realistic number of participants.

How many participants will be recruited to take part in an interview? Provide justification for the sample size.

Around 20 people. I think this is an appropriate number of people to interview, as it will allow for a range of responses and combined with the questionnaire responses will provide enough data.

How will the participants be identified and recruited to take part in your questionnaire/survey?

It will be voluntary participation. I will share the link on a vegan/vegetarian Facebook page and Instagram - so people are likely to already have an interest in the topic area and some will want to participate. I will also directly ask/message/email people that I know who follow plant-based diets to fill in the questionnaire.

How will the participants be identified and recruited to take part in the interviews?

An option to leave details after filling in the questionnaire, if they are willing to be interviewed. From here I can use snowball sampling. I also know quite a few Bristol uni vegan students who I can interview and again they direct me towards other people I can interview.

How will you ensure that your questionnaire/survey respondents are neither vulnerable nor under the age of 18?

Ensure I have a clear and comprehensive consent/information section before conducting any questionnaires. One of the first questions in the questionnaire will be about the participants age. Also make it clear in the post with the link on social media that it is 18+.
The information provided will also explain that the research will include personal questions about lifestyle and dietary choices. It will warn participants that topics covered could be potential triggers for those who have suffered in the past or currently struggling with eating disorders.

How will you ensure that your participants invited to interview are neither vulnerable nor under the age of 18?

Ensure I have a clear and comprehensive consent/information section before conducting any interviews. Don't ask anyone that I know would be considered vulnerable or under 18 to participate.

How will you conduct your questionnaire/survey?

Online

Online - Please provide details of the online platform(s) to be used:

SurveyMonkey/ Google Forms or equivalent

If access permission is required, upload confirmation of research permissions received to conduct your study

Documents					
Type	Document Name	File Name	Version Date	Version	Size
Letter of Access	Permissions not yet obtained	Permissions not yet obtained.docx			11.5 KB

How will you conduct your interview(s)?

Online

Online - Please provide details of the online platform and if any research permissions are required:

Zoom

Copy and paste the text of all your questionnaire/survey recruitment material here:

Hello, my name is Charlotte. I am a third year Geography student at the University of Bristol. I am conducting research on the motivations and challenges of veganism and I am inviting you to participate in this study if you consider yourself to follow some level of plant-based diet.

Participation includes taking a survey about your attitude towards veganism and will take approximately 5 minutes. If you agree to participate in a follow-up interview, this will take approximately 20 minutes. This is the link to access the survey:

If you have any questions about the research, I can be reached at:

I would really appreciate your participation and time!

Please provide any recruitment material used to recruit potential participants to take part in your questionnaire/survey.

Copy and paste the text of all your interview recruitment material here:

Hello, my name is Charlotte. I am a third year Geography student at the University of Bristol. I am conducting research on the motivations and challenges of veganism and your participation in an interview would be greatly appreciated.

Participation will take approximately 20 minutes and it will involve questions and discussion about your attitudes, experiences and personal choices. Below is the Participation Information Sheet which gives more information on the study. Any responses will be anonymised before being included in the study.

If you have any questions about the research, I can be reached at: pu18266@bristol.ac.uk

Please provide any recruitment material used to recruit potential participants to take part in your interview.

Clearly outline how informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to individuals taking part in your questionnaire/survey?

Potential participants will have time to read the information provided and have time to consider whether they want to participate. They will also have the opportunity to ask any questions about the research prior to starting.

As the first part of the survey, there will be a consenting statement for participants to tick, before they proceed with the questionnaire. It will not allow them to submit their questionnaire unless this is ticked.

Copy and paste the consenting statement(s) which participants are required to agree to before taking part in your questionnaire/survey:

I volunteer to take part in this dissertation research questionnaire. I understand that the research aims to collect data on people's behaviour and attitudes towards a vegan diet. The data collected in this questionnaire will be used in an undergraduate dissertation and help expand knowledge surrounding veganism.

1. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary. I will not be paid for my involvement. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without reason.
2. If I do withdraw from the study, all my information will be deleted.
3. I have read and understood that all data provided will be treated in strict confidence, and that my name will be anonymised.
4. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions about the study that I may have.
5. I understand that this research has been approved by the University of Bristol Ethics Committee.

By proceeding to take this questionnaire, I agree to take part in this research project and to the above statements. Any statements I am unsure of, I will discuss with the researcher prior to taking this questionnaire.

Copy and paste the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) wording for your interviews here:

Participant Information Sheet
 TAKING PART IN AN INTERVIEW – INVESTIGATING MOTIVATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF VEGANISM.

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide if you want to take part or not, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Feel free to discuss this with other and take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. If anything is unclear or you have any questions about the study, please contact: pu18266@bristol.ac.uk

What is the purpose of this study?
 Across the UK, veganism is increasing in popularity and this study aims to investigate the main motivations and challenges for those adopting the diet. It will explore the factors affecting consumer trends and product choices. It will have a particular focus on attitudes towards sustainability.

Why am I being asked to take part?
 You have been asked to participate as you have stated that you follow a plant-based diet, to some extent. Your thoughts, views and personal experiences will therefore provide useful data and insight for this research.

Do I have to take part?
 Participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form. You may withdraw from the study at any time, without any reason.

What does it involve?
 It will involve participating in a semi-structured interview, which will take approximately 20 minutes. This will consist of some pre-determined questions, combined with spontaneous discussion based on your answers. The interview will cover some contextual background information, the reasons behind your dietary choices, the main challenge of your diet and your attitudes towards recent changes in the plant-based industry.

Are there any potential risks of participating?
 Parts of the discussion may include personal questions surrounding your dietary and lifestyle choices. It is possible that topics covered may be triggering for anyone who has suffered in the past or currently struggling with an eating disorder. The interview may also cover some sensitive topics such as animal welfare. At any point that you feel uncomfortable, a question can be omitted, or you may stop the interview entirely.

What happens to the information?
 Any information you provide will be anonymised and then used in my undergraduate research project. After moderation, it is intended that the results of this study will be published. If you take part and are interested in understanding how your contribution to this study has been used, you can request a summary of the research.

Contact and Further Information:
 If you want any further information about this study please contact me on pu18266@bristol.ac.uk

Upload copies of all Participant Information Sheets (PIS) for your interviews

Type	Document Name	Documents		Version	Size
		File Name	Version Date		
Participant Information Sheet	new Participant Information Sheet	new Participant Information Sheet.docx			15.8 KB

Clearly outline how informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to individuals taking part in your interviews?

Participants will have time to read the information and ask any questions about the study before proceeding.
All participants will sign a consent form before participating an interview.

Copy and paste the consent form wording for your interviews here:

I volunteer to be interviewed as part of this dissertation research project. I understand that the research aims to collect data on people's behaviour and attitudes towards a vegan diet. Responses and data collected in this interview will be used in an undergraduate dissertation and help expand knowledge surrounding veganism.

1. I confirm that I have been given a copy, and read, the Participant Information Sheet and fully understood the information it contained.
2. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary. I will not be paid for my involvement. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without reason.
3. I have read and understood that all data provided will be treated in strict confidence, and that my name and personal information will be anonymised.
4. I understand that this research has been approved by the University of Bristol Ethics Committee.
5. I have read and understood the explanation of the research project provided to me. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and they have been answered to my satisfaction.

By proceeding to participate in this interview, I agree to take part in this research project and to the above statements. Any statements I have concern with I will discuss with the researcher prior to participating in the interview.

Upload copies the blank consent forms you will use for your interviews

Documents					
Type	Document Name	File Name	Version Date	Version	Size
Consent Form	NEW Interview consent	NEW Interview consent .docx			12.5 KB

Copy and paste the questionnaire/survey wording here:

I volunteer to take part in this dissertation research questionnaire. I understand that the research aims to collect data on people's behaviour and attitudes towards a vegan diet. The data collected in this questionnaire will be used in an undergraduate dissertation and help expand knowledge surrounding veganism.

1. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary. I will not be paid for my involvement. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without reason.
2. I have read and understood that all data provided will be treated in strict confidence, and that my name will be anonymised.
3. I have had sufficient time to read any provided information and have had the opportunity to ask any questions about the research.
3. I understand that this research has been approved by the University of Bristol Ethics Committee.

By proceeding to take this questionnaire, I agree to take part in this research project and to the above statements. Any statements I am unsure of, I will discuss with the researcher prior to taking this questionnaire.

How old are you? (18-22) (23-28)(29-35) (36-50)(51-64) (65+)
How would you describe your gender?
How would you describe your dietary choices?
On a scale of 1-10, how strict would you consider your approach to veganism?
Rank the importance of the following factors in deciding food choices? (environmental, cost, taste, health, ethics, social pressures)
How long have you followed some level of a plant-based diet?
What was your main motivation for switching to a plant-based diet?
What is the main challenge you face by following a plant-based diet?
Do you think you will continue to follow a plant-based diet for the foreseeable future?
How many other people do you know that follow a plant-based diet?
In the last 5 years, do you think following a plant-based diet has become easier?

Upload copies of formatted questionnaire/survey including the consenting statement(s) or paste the URL to access the questionnaire/survey in the free text box below.

-

Documents					
Type	Document Name	File Name	Version Date	Version	Size
Questionnaire	Draft Questionnaire Questions	Draft Questionnaire Questions.docx			12.6 KB

Is this research funded?

No

Do you or your supervisor(s) have any actual or potential conflict of interest in this study?

No

Participant and Researcher Safety

Describe potential risks to **research participants** (physical, psychological, legal, social) arising from the research:

Research participants may feel uncomfortable with questions being asked, particularly surrounding their own personal diet choices. It is also possible that certain questions may be triggering for participants that have unhealthy relationships with food, such as eating disorders. (Either in the past or currently).

Describe potential risks to the **researcher** (physical, psychological, legal, social) arising from the research:

The researcher may be criticised by participants for their study. The researcher must be cautious when handling participant data and make sure they adhere to data protection and everything in the consent forms. If any of this is breached or data is handled incorrectly, there could be legal risk associated with the research.

Data management and information security

Will your participants be anonymised?

Yes

What arrangements have been put in place to ensure confidentiality and security of data gathered in the study? Will the data be stored in hard copy or electronically, and where will it be held? Will the codes to anonymity be held in a separate location from the data?

All data collected and interview transcripts will be kept on a password encrypted file on my password protected laptop which no one else has access to.
I will also anonymise the data from participants. I will give all the participants pseudonyms and ensure not to mention any identifying characteristics of the participants. There will be a password protected file that will contain the links between the anonymized data with the interviewee personal information that no one else will have access to.
All data will be stored electronically.
If a participant withdraws from the study at any point, their data will be deleted immediately.
All data and information will be deleted after I have submitted the final version of my dissertation.

Research outputs

How will you offer participants the opportunity to be informed about the outcome of this study?

For participants who have given their contact details, after I have completed my study I will email to thank them for their contribution and ask them if they would like to be sent either a summary of the study or the final product, after it has been moderated.

How will the results of your study be disseminated?

It will be part of the University Undergraduate Dissertation Collection and be accessible online.

Please outline how you will undertake this research with good research integrity principles in place.

I will be completely transparent and honest with all participants. I will treat all participants with respect and be open-minded to all views/responses. I will comply with all ethical and legal frameworks surrounding my research. I will be aware of my own positionality to minimise bias and avoid any conflicts of interest. I will ensure I report any data accurately and not change any primary data I have collected. I will store data safely and securely.
Before including data from the interviews, I will send participants a copy of their transcript, for them to check and confirm the accuracy of their transcript. If their opinions have changed at all since their participation, I will include this in the appendix.

Supporting Information

Supporting information Please provide any additional information in relation to your study that you think may be relevant.

Any other information Please upload any other documents that you think may be relevant to your research.

To proceed to the next page select 'Next' in the Actions tiles.

To save your application for completion and submission at a later date please select 'Save' in the Actions tiles.

Signatures

Once you have completed your ethics form and uploaded all related documents ask your supervisor to review your ethics application by clicking this button.

Signed: This form was signed by Professor Jonathan Rigg (jonathan.rigg@bristol.ac.uk) on 29/11/2021 12:41