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# Are we eating less meat?

A British Social Attitudes  
report



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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1	British Social Attitudes .....	4
1.2	Objectives of this report .....	4
1.3	The Vegetarian Society.....	5
<b>2</b>	<b>Our eating habits .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	Who are the meat-eaters? .....	6
2.2	Impact of religious and political identification on meat-eating .....	6
2.3	Types of animal product consumed and by whom .....	7
<b>3</b>	<b>Meat and changing eating habits .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1	Which groups are more likely to reduce meat intake .....	8
3.2	Why people reduce meat intake.....	9
<b>4</b>	<b>Recognition of key messages: health, animal welfare, environment .....</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1	People who agree with common arguments for reducing meat consumption are more likely to have reduced meat intake .....	11
<b>5</b>	<b>Wider attitudes .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Wider environmental attitudes and behaviours .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>19</b>
7.1	Women and older people more likely to have reduced meat-eating .....	19
7.2	Health considerations the most important factor in reducing meat consumption.....	19
7.3	Other reasons for reducing meat consumption .....	20
<b>8</b>	<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>21</b>

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# Summary

This report explores meat-eating behaviour among the general population. It asks which groups are more or less amenable to reducing their meat intake, what the characteristics of these groups might be, and how these behaviours align with attitudes and behaviours in other aspects of life.

In 2014 the Vegetarian Society commissioned a module of new questions about meat-eating habits to be asked in the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey. Surveys were carried out face-to-face with respondents aged 18 or over, living in households in Great Britain, between June and November 2014. 2,878 interviews were conducted as part of the 2014 British Social Attitudes survey. More information about BSA can be found in the Introduction to this report.

## Meat-eating habits

We found around 2-3%<sup>1</sup> of people are vegetarian or vegan. This is broadly in line with the most up to date figures from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS): the 2012 NDNS put the UK figure at 2% and the recently published NDNS update for Wales put the figure at 3%.<sup>2</sup>

Approaching one-third of people (29%) reported reducing their meat intake in the last year and nearly half (44%) either do not eat meat, have reduced their meat intake in the last year or were considering reducing the amount of meat they eat.

Women (34%) are more likely to have reduced their meat intake but nearly a quarter (23%) of men also reduced the amount of meat they ate. Older people were also more likely to have done so than younger people. The latter is perhaps not too surprising given that the most important driver for reducing meat consumption, or considering reducing meat consumption, was concern about health, with 58% noting health as a reason. Reducing meat consumption because of concerns over animal welfare, food safety and in order to save money were all reasons given by about one in five people.

## Attitudes towards eating meat

The Vegetarian Society believes that there are three key attitudinal drivers that encourage reduced meat consumption: animal welfare, health and the environment.

Close to half (45%) of people believed that eating no meat or less meat is better for animal welfare. Two in five people (40%) agreed that eating no meat or less meat is

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<sup>1</sup> The figure in BSA 2014 was 2.69%

<sup>2</sup> Three per cent of adults and 1% of children reported that they were vegetarian; and less than 1% of participants reported following a vegan diet. (<http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151209-national-diet-nutrition-survey-rolling-programme-years-2-5-en.pdf>)

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healthier and around one third (31%) agreed that eating no meat or less meat is better for the environment.

People who agreed that meat consumption had an impact in these three areas were more likely to have reduced their meat intake or considering it, than those who disagreed with the statements.

Attitudes towards eating meat among those with differing wider social and environmental attitudes

People who have libertarian, pro-welfare state and left-wing views are more likely to not eat meat or have reduced their meat intake than those with authoritarian, anti-welfare state and right-wing views.

Attitudes towards climate change are also linked with meat consumption habits. People who believe that climate change is taking place due to human actions were more likely to have reduced their meat intake than those who do not believe this to be the case.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 British Social Attitudes

For 32 years the British Social Attitudes survey has been one of the most authoritative sources of trend data on the views of the British public. It has been carried out annually since 1983.<sup>3</sup> A variety of funders, including major government departments, grant-giving bodies such as the Economic and Social Research Council and other foundations and universities support the survey, enabling it to cover a wide range of social, economic, political and moral issues – which can then be utilised for analysis against any particular funder’s questions, as this report demonstrates. Questions are designed to be relevant to policy debates or research agendas, but also to be repeated at regular intervals. The British Social Attitudes team has final say over the content of the questionnaires and the reporting of the data, thus enabling the survey series to maintain its independence.

The survey uses a random probability sample, and, in 2014, the achieved sample size for the Vegetarian Society was 2,878 respondents.

Fieldwork involves computer-assisted interviews carried out face-to-face with respondents aged 18 or over, living in private households in Great Britain. It takes place in the summer and autumn each year.

The data is weighted to account for non-response bias and calibrated to match the population on the basis of age, sex and region.

The results of the survey are disseminated widely and, since 2012, our reports have been freely available online ([www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk)). The most recent report was published in March 2015.<sup>4</sup> Once the results are in the public domain, the survey dataset is deposited with full documentation in the Data Archive at the University of Essex, free to be used by students, academics and other interested parties.

## 1.2 Objectives of this report

This report explores attitudes to meat-eating amongst different groups in society and which types of people are more or less likely to be amenable to reducing their meat intake in the future. We examine why these groups might be inclined to be concerned about meat, and whether or not the characteristics of these groups match commonly held beliefs about what sorts of people might think this way – that is, the ‘left-leaning, green, middle class’. We look at the British people as a whole to examine how closely people agree with what the Vegetarian Society regards as the most widely acknowledged drivers for reduced meat consumption: animal welfare, population health and environment. And if they do agree, have they put their beliefs into practice and changed their behaviour towards meat-eating?

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<sup>3</sup> Apart from in 1988 and 1992 when its core funding was used to fund the British Election Study series

<sup>4</sup> Ormston, R. and Curtice, J. (eds.) (2015). *British Social Attitudes: the 32<sup>nd</sup> Report*. London: NatCen Social Research

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## 1.3 The Vegetarian Society

The Vegetarian Society is a national charity that influences, inspires and supports people to embrace and maintain a vegetarian lifestyle – a choice that the Vegetarian Society believes is kinder to animals, to people, and to our living planet. Established in 1847, the Vegetarian Society is the oldest vegetarian organisation in the world. As a charity that receives no government funding, the Vegetarian Society relies on membership fees, donations, and the support of businesses to carry out its work. The Vegetarian Society's activities include:

- Offering free advice and support to families, individuals and businesses
- Working closely with a wide range of organisations to improve understanding of vegetarian provision
- Running campaigns and events such as National Vegetarian Week
- Running the Vegetarian Society Cookery School, which teaches both professional chefs and members of the public how to cook great vegetarian food
- Licensing the Vegetarian Society Approved trademark, currently displayed on over 15,000 products, as well as by many restaurants and cafés
- Publishing a quarterly membership magazine: The Vegetarian

The Vegetarian Society commissioned the British Social Attitudes survey to investigate contemporary attitudes to meat-eating and to explore public perceptions of dietary choice as it relates to health, animal welfare and environmental issues.

The Vegetarian Society believes that raising public awareness of the issues surrounding consumption of meat and changing people's food choices is something that will continue to be of key importance in tackling issues such as rising rates of obesity and climate change. The Vegetarian Society believes that the urgency of these issues puts the question of dietary choice at the centre of policy debate. Increasingly, a number of organisations and policy makers are turning attention to the important question of dietary change at a societal level.

## 2 Our eating habits

### 2.1 Who are the meat-eaters?

In order to group respondents we asked about which foods they would currently eat from a list which included: red meat (such as beef, pork, venison, lamb), white meat or poultry (such as chicken, turkey), game (such as pheasant, partridge, duck), fish, shellfish, eggs, milk/milk products (butter, yoghurt, ice cream, ghee), cheese, honey, or none of these.

This gave us the following categories: Meat-eater, Pescetarian, Vegetarian and Vegan. On closer inspection a small number (six) of Vegans identified mentioned they ate honey and so have been combined with the Vegetarian group for the purposes of this analysis.

<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Meat-eater	95	2732	2730
Pescetarian	2	67	69
Vegetarian (including Vegan)	3	77	75
<i>Total</i>		2878	2878

### 2.2 Impact of religious and political identification on meat-eating

Given the majority of people are meat-eaters, there were few distinct differences when we looked at social and demographic characteristics of this group compared with others. However, we did find the following patterns:

- Religious affiliation was linked with meat-eating habits. Non-Christian religious people were the least likely to eat meat (88%). [Appendix table A.1]. In line with this, Asian people (86%) were less likely to eat meat than those of other ethnicities.
- Conservative and UKIP supporters are more likely to be meat-eaters (98% each), than Labour and Liberal Democrat supporters (93% each). Green Party supporters are the least likely to be meat-eaters (86%), and the party also has the highest proportion of Vegetarians / Vegans (8%) and Pescetarians (6%) among its supporters. [Appendix table A.2]

## 2.3 Types of animal product consumed and by whom

Table 2.2 Animal products consumed			
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Milk/milk products	96	2878	2878
Eggs	93	2878	2878
White meat or poultry	92	2878	2878
Cheese	92	2878	2878
Fish	87	2878	2878
Red meat	85	2878	2878
Honey	64	2878	2878
Shellfish	48	2878	2878
Game	38	2878	2878
None of these	0	2878	2878

- The **most common animal product** consumed was milk or milk products, nearly everyone (96%) mentioned these. Also widely consumed are eggs (93%), white meat or poultry and cheese (both 92%), fish (87%) and red meat (85%). [Table 2.2]

We then looked more closely at the socio-demographic characteristics of who was more or less likely to be eating these animal products.

- Red meat was more likely to be consumed by **men than women** (89% compared with 81%), as was game (44% and 32% respectively).
- Personal **finances** clearly affect food choices. Game was largely the preserve of those on higher incomes (52% of those in the top income quartile, compared with 28% of those in the bottom income quartile). Similarly for shellfish (63% of the top quartile, compared with 35% of the bottom). Honey was also more popular among the better off (73% compared with 56% of those on the lowest incomes).

### 3 Meat and changing eating habits

This section looks at people’s meat-eating habits: whether or not they have considered stopping or reducing the amount of meat they eat and, if so, why.

Table 3.1 Meat-eating habits	
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>
	%
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	1
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	29
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	9
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	55
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2878</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2878</i>

The most popular response (found among just over half of the population) is that of sticking with the *status quo*, which is eating the same or more meat than a year ago and having no intention of reducing the amount or stopping. However, a sizable portion (29%) said they eat meat but have reduced the amount in the last year. A further 9% said they were considering reducing their intake or stopping. A minority (the Vegetarians, Vegans and Pescetarians) stopped eating meat more than a year ago (5%) or in the last year (1%). [Table 3.1]

#### 3.1 Which groups are more likely to reduce meat intake?

- **Women** were more likely than men to have either stopped eating meat, reduced their meat intake or to be considering reducing their meat intake (50% of women compared with 38% of men). [Appendix Table A.3]
- **Age** was also related to reducing meat consumption: 39% of 65-79 year olds did so in the last year, compared with 19% of 18-24 year olds. [Appendix Table A.4]
- Those on the **lowest incomes** were slightly more likely to say they had reduced the amount of meat they had eaten in the past year (33% compared with 26% of those in the highest incomes group), though this group were more likely to say they were considering cutting back (12% compared with 8% in the poorest group). [Appendix Table A.5]
- The **non-religious** were most likely to say they had no intention of cutting back on meat (59% compared with an average of 55%), while 25% had reduced their intake in the last year (compared with 29% on average). As mentioned in Section 2, religious non-Christians are most likely not to eat meat (16% compared with 5% on average) and, of the remainder who did eat meat, 38% said they would not cut back (compared with 55% on average). [Appendix Table A.6]

There are a variety of reasons why people may have changed their meat-eating habits. For example, we would expect food scares such as the epidemic of BSE in British cattle from the late 1980s or, more recently, the food adulteration scandal in Europe in

2013 (where foods advertised as containing beef were found to contain undeclared or improperly declared horse meat) might impact on what types of meat, and how much meat, people consume. Or, people might cut back on meat consumption for their health: The World Health Organisation has since classified red and processed meat as carcinogenic<sup>5</sup> and current NHS guidelines are that too much (90g) of red and processed meat can increase the likelihood of bowel cancer, while the NHS Change for Life Live Well campaign recommends reducing fat in your meat (such as from bacon or in sausages).<sup>6</sup>

## 3.2 Why people reduce meat intake

To explore this we asked people who had given up meat, reduced their intake or were thinking about doing so, what had influenced their decision. Over half of this group (58%) cited health reasons. Concerns over animal welfare or food safety were cited as reasons for consuming less meat by about one-fifth of people, as was the desire to save money. [Table 3.2]

Table 3.2 Reasons for consuming less meat			
<i>Base: people who had given up, reduced or were considering reducing meat consumption</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
% mentioning...		<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
For health reasons	58	1271	1322
To save money	21	1271	1322
Concerns over animal welfare	20	1271	1322
Concerns around food safety associated with meat	19	1271	1322
Environmental concerns	11	1271	1322
Other	11	1271	1322
Because of religious or spiritual beliefs	4	1271	1322

Respondents could give more than one answer and so percentages may not sum to 100

Over half of people mentioned health as a key factor in either reducing their intake or considering doing so.

- **Men** were more likely than women to mention their health as a reason for changing their meat-eating habits (63% and 54% respectively). People approaching retirement (55-64 years old) were the most likely to mention health as a factor (68%) and, in general, older people over 35 are more likely to mention health as a factor than people under 35. [Appendix Table A.7]
- Those with the highest incomes were more likely to mention health as a factor than those with the lowest incomes (64% and 50% respectively) [Appendix Table A.8], as were the **better educated** (60% of those with degrees, compared with 48% of those without qualifications). [Appendix Table A.9]

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.who.int/features/qa/cancer-red-meat/en/>

<sup>6</sup> [www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/cut-back-on-fat.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/cut-back-on-fat.aspx) (accessed 27th May 2015)

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- **Employers** and those in positions of **senior management** – possibly because their roles are more sedentary, but more likely because these people tend to be older and more wealthy than others – were more likely to mention health than those in routine occupations (77% and 46% respectively).

We also found:

- Those on the lowest incomes are twice as likely as the most wealthy to mention **saving money** as a factor (32% and 16% respectively). [Appendix Table A.10]
- **Animal welfare** was most likely to be mentioned by the better educated (26% of those with a degree compared with 13% of those with no qualifications) [Appendix Table A.11], those with no religion (26% compared with, for example, 10% of non-Christians) [Appendix Table A.12], and women (23% compared with 16% of men).
- As with animal welfare concerns, worries around the impact of meat production on the **environment** was an issue more widely identified by the the better educated (24% of those with degrees compared with 3% of those with no qualifications) [Appendix Table A.13] and the non-religious (16% compared with, for example, 5% of non-Christians). [Appendix Table A.14]

## 4 Recognition of key messages: health, animal welfare, environment

This section looks at what the Vegetarian Society regards as the most widely acknowledged drivers of the reduction in meat consumption: health, animal welfare and the environment. All respondents – regardless of whether they currently ate meat or were considering reducing their intake – were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with three statements. Table 4.1 shows that of the three drivers for reducing meat consumption, the most popular was in relation to animal welfare, with close to half of people (45%) agreeing that eating no meat or less meat is better for animal welfare. Two in five people (40%) agreed that eating no meat or less meat is healthier. Finally, around a third agreed that meat consumption affected the environment. In all three cases a significant minority answered ‘neither agree nor disagree’, suggesting either lack of awareness around these issues, or perhaps a feeling of not wanting to engage with them.

Table 4.1 Attitudes towards meat-eating			
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
% agreeing...		<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
...eating no meat or less meat is better for animal welfare	45	2878	2878
...eating no meat or less meat is healthier	40	2878	2878
...eating no meat or less meat is better for the environment	31	2878	2878

### 4.1 People who agree with common arguments for reducing meat consumption are more likely to have reduced meat intake

As expected, we find significant differences in people’s attitudes to these three statements according to their meat-eating habits. People who agreed that meat consumption impacted each of these three areas were more likely to have reduced their meat intake (35%-46%) than those who disagreed with the statements (16%-20%). Conversely, those who disagreed with each statement were more likely to indicate they had no intention of reducing their levels of meat consumption (70%-75%). This group would need some persuading that meat consumption impacts on the environment, animal welfare and human health, and that they should change their meat-eating habits accordingly. Finally, a sizeable proportion of those agreeing with each statement (31%-44%) had no intention of reducing their intake or stopping. This indicates that agreeing with these statements around meat consumption is not sufficient in itself to cause people to reduce their level of meat consumption . [Table 4.2]

Table 4.2

<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
Meat-eating habit	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
	...eating no meat or less meat is better for animal welfare		
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	1	1	0
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	35	28	20
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	11	9	7
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	44	59	71
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	9	3	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	1303	727	803
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1262	753	819
	...eating no meat or less meat is healthier		
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	1	0	0
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	46	22	16
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	12	8	7
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	31	65	75
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	10	5	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	1141	628	1085
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1178	629	1047
	...eating no meat or less meat is better for the environment		
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	1	1	1
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	42	28	19
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	11	8	9
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	35	59	70
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	11	5	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	882	911	1039
<i>Unweighted base</i>	860	938	1029

[‘Don’t knows’ and ‘Not answered’ are not presented and so percentages may not sum to 100]

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## 5 Wider attitudes

Turning to the question of whether these habits in meat-eating coincide, if at all, with three attitudinal scales included on British Social Attitudes. These scales aim to measure where respondents stand on certain underlying value dimensions: left-right, libertarian-authoritarian, and on welfarism. The scales are based on a series of questions, from which we assign a score for each respondent and then group them under one of the headings seen in the table. For example, if someone agreed that the government should redistribute wealth and that workers lose out at the hands of big business, we would class them as left-wing. Someone who, for example, believed in censorship and the death penalty, would be classed as authoritarian. Finally, a person who thought the welfare state stops people from standing on their own two feet, and that most benefit recipients are cheating the system, would be classed as anti-welfare.<sup>7</sup>

We can now further explore how far the stereotype of vegetarians as ‘left-wing, green, middle class’ types holds true.

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<sup>7</sup> Since 1986, the *British Social Attitudes* surveys have included two attitude scales, which aim to measure where respondents stand on certain underlying value dimensions: left–right and libertarian–authoritarian. Since 1987 (except 1990), a similar scale on ‘welfarism’ has been asked. Some of the items in the welfarism scale were changed in 2000–2001. The current version of the scale is listed below. A useful way of summarising the information from a number of questions of this sort is to construct an additive index (Spector, 1992; DeVellis, 2003). This approach rests on the assumption that there is an underlying – ‘latent’ – attitudinal dimension which characterises the answers to all the questions within each scale. If so, scores on the index are likely to be a more reliable indication of the underlying attitude than the answers to any one question. Each of these scales consists of a number of statements to which the respondent is invited to “agree strongly”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” or “disagree strongly”. The items are:

### *Left–right scale*

- Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off.
- Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers.
- Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation’s wealth.
- There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.
- Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance.

### *Libertarian–authoritarian scale*

- Young people today don’t have enough respect for traditional British values.
- People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences.
- For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence.
- Schools should teach children to obey authority.
- The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong.
- Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards.

### *Welfarism scale*

- The welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other.
- The government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes.
- Around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one.
- Many people who get social security don’t really deserve any help.
- Most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another.
- If welfare benefits weren’t so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet.
- Cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people’s lives.
- The creation of the welfare state is one of Britain’s proudest achievements.

The indices for the three scales are formed by scoring the leftmost, most libertarian or most pro-welfare position as 1, and the rightmost, most authoritarian or most anti-welfarist position, as 5. The “neither agree nor disagree” option is scored as 3. The scores to all the questions in each scale are added and then divided by the number of items in the scale, giving indices ranging from 1 (leftmost, most libertarian, most pro-welfare) to 5 (rightmost, most authoritarian, most anti-welfare).

Table 5.1 shows us that two in five (40%) people classed as ‘libertarian’ either don’t eat meat or have reduced the amount they consumed in the last year, compared with 30% of those labelled ‘authoritarian’. At the same time, libertarians are slightly less likely to say they have no intention of cutting back their meat intake than are authoritarians, though this is still the majority view among libertarians.

Similarly, people who are classed as ‘pro-welfare’ are more likely to eat less meat than those classed as ‘anti-welfare’ (40% and 31% respectively). Again, the same pattern is seen in attitudes to cutting back on meat.

Finally, 38% of those with more left wing views eat no meat or have reduced their intake, compared with 32% of those with more right wing views, and there is little difference between these groups when it comes to reducing intake in the future.

Table 5.1 Meat-eating habits by wider attitudes			
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
Meat-eating habit			
	Libertarian-Authoritarian scale		
	Libertarian (%)	Centre (%)	Authoritarian (%)
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	1	1	0
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	32	30	27
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	8	8	10
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	51	58	59
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	8	3	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>847</i>	<i>696</i>	<i>782</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>810</i>	<i>701</i>	<i>841</i>
	Welfarism scale		
	Pro-welfare (%)	Centre (%)	Anti-welfare (%)
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	0	1	0
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	32	27	28
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	9	10	7
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	51	57	61
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	7	4	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>808</i>	<i>725</i>	<i>787</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>852</i>	<i>725</i>	<i>762</i>
	Left-Right scale		
	Left (%)	Centre (%)	Right (%)

I have stopped eating meat in the last year		1	
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	31	30	28
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	9	8	10
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	54	56	58
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	6	5	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>652</i>	<i>958</i>	<i>706</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>680</i>	<i>959</i>	<i>702</i>

## 6 Wider environmental attitudes and behaviours

One benefit of asking questions on British Social Attitudes is the breadth of topics covered each year and the ability of funders to draw on questions other than their own. For many years we have asked questions on attitudes towards climate change and transport. Having looked at how meat consumption relates to wider views on society, we now consider what, if any, relationship might exist with attitudes and behaviours towards climate change and taking action to reduce one's carbon footprint through the mode of transport people use.

- People who believed that **climate change** is taking place, at least partly as a result of human actions, were more likely to have stopped eating meat more than a year ago, or to have reduced their meat intake in the past year, and less likely to be resistant to cutting back on meat than those who do not believe climate change is taking place.

Table 6.1 Meat-eating habits by wider attitudes				
Base: all respondents	British Social Attitudes 2014			
Meat-eating habit	% View on climate change and causes			
	...I don't believe that climate change is taking place	I believe that climate change is taking place but not as a result of human actions	I believe that climate change is taking place and is at least partly a result of human actions	Don't know
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	2	0	1	-
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	22	27	30	22
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	11	11	9	11
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	62	59	54	59
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	2	3	6	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>408</i>	<i>2269</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>159</i>	<i>399</i>	<i>2273</i>	<i>46</i>

We can also look at people's beliefs in the causes of climate change, so far as vehicles may be contributing to it.

- There was a significant difference between people who thought that **planes** contributed to climate change and those who didn't in their attitudes towards meat consumption. Of the people who believed planes have an overall impact on climate change, 32% had reduced their meat consumption in the past year, compared with 26% who had done this but did not believe air travel contributed towards climate change. People who believed planes contributed towards climate change were slightly less likely to say they had no intention of reducing their meat intake (52%) than those who did not think planes contributed (59%).

Table 6.2 Meat-eating habits by wider attitudes							
Base: all respondents				British Social Attitudes 2014			
	% mentioning as contributing to climate change...						
Meat-eating habit	Car	Buses and coaches	Vans and lorries	Plane	Train	Ships and ferries	Motorbike
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	1	1	1	1	1	-	0
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	28	29	29	32	26	32	30
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	10	9	9	9	13	11	9
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	55	57	55	52	57	54	55
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	6	4	5	6	2	2	5
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1936	1350	2191	1500	153	231	270
<i>Weighted base</i>	1983	1312	2181	1515	160	269	253

'Don't know' and 'Not answered' are not shown here, so columns may not sum to 100. Categories 'None on list - have overall impact on climate change' and 'Don't believe in climate change/believe climate change will happen anyway' are also omitted due to small base sizes.

Finally, we can look at current and future behaviour, firstly in terms of bike riding, and secondly in a person's willingness to make changes to their car or air travel in the future for the sake of reducing the impact of such travel on climate change.

- We asked people whether, when they next bought a car, they would be willing to buy a car with lower carbon dioxide emissions. Here we do see some significant differences. People who agree they would be willing to buy such a car are more likely to have reduced the amount of meat they eat in the past year (31%) than those who would not be willing (20%) or were unsure (22%). In line with this,

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slightly fewer of those who would buy a lower emissions car (52%) said they would not reduce their meat intake than those who would not buy such a car (71%) or were unsure (66%).

- People who agreed that 'I am willing to reduce the amount I travel by car (to help reduce the impact of climate change)' were more likely to have reduced their meat intake in the past year (36%) than those who were not willing to reduce car travel (24%) or were unsure (25%). And those who were unwilling to reduce car travel were more likely to say they had no intention of reducing the amount of meat they eat (65%) than those who were willing to make changes to their travel behaviour (45%).
- As per travel by car, a similar pattern was found for plane travel. When asked whether they would be willing to reduce the amount they travel by plane (to help reduce the impact of climate change), people who said they would be willing were also more likely to have reduced their intake of meat in the past year (32% compared with 26% not willing). In fact the group most likely to have reduced their meat intake were those who had already reduced their air travel for the sake of the environment (38%). Again, those not willing to reduce their air travel were less keen to reduce their meat intake (61% compared with 47% of those willing).

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## 7 Conclusions

Close to half of people (44%) either do not eat meat, reduced the amount of meat they ate in the last year or are considering reducing the amount of meat they ate. The largest group among these people are those that reduced the amount of meat they ate in the last year, nearly two-fifths of all people (29%).

Given that only 1% of people stopped eating meat altogether in the last year, it may be of more interest to focus on the 44% of people who have reduced the amount of meat they ate in the last year or who are considering reducing the amount of meat that they eat. Who are these people and why have they decided to eat less meat or are considering doing so?

### 7.1 Women and older people more likely to have reduced meat eating or be considering doing so

Women appear more likely to be open to the Vegetarian Society's messages around reducing meat consumption, than men. While 62% of men have no intention of stopping eating meat, or reducing the amount of meat that they eat, less than half of women (49%) feel the same way. In contrast, women are more likely to have reduced the amount of meat they eat in the last year. Compared with nearly a quarter (23%) of men and over one-third of women (34%) have reduced their meat intake.

Age is the other key demographic where differences in attitudes and behaviour towards reducing meat consumption is in evidence. Older age groups are more likely to have stopped eating meat, reduced their meat intake or be considering reducing the amount of meat they eat. For example, 36% of 18-24 year olds and 35% of 25-34 year olds have either stopped eating meat, reduced the amount of meat that they eat, or are considering doing reducing the amount of meat they eat, compared to 53% of 65-79 year olds and 50% of those aged 80 and over.

### 7.2 Health considerations the most important factor in reducing meat consumption

The most popular reason given for reducing meat consumption or considering doing so, is for health reasons, with 58% of people citing this. It is the most popular reason given by both men and women and among all age groups. However, there are differences between the sexes and among age groups in the extent to which this reason is attributed to a change, or possible change, in behaviour. Despite being less likely to reduce meat consumption or consider doing so than women, those men that have done so are more likely to cite health as a reason for doing so, than women, by 63% to 54%.

Having established that older people are more likely than younger people to have reduced meat consumption or to be considering doing so, it is also clear that older people are more likely to cite health as a reason for the change in their behaviour, than younger people are. For example, 68% of 55-64 year olds and 64% of 65-79 year olds

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cited health reasons as a reason for a reduction, or possible reduction, in their meat consumption compared with 35% of 18-24 year olds and 49% of 25-34 year olds.

## 7.3 Other reasons for reducing meat consumption

All of the other possible reasons for reducing, or considering reducing, meat consumption are a lot less widespread than for reasons of health. The next most popular reasons are to save money (mentioned by 21% of people), concerns over animal welfare (20%) and concerns around food safety associated with meat (19%), however only around one-fifth of people cited these as reasons, compared to over half of people who mentioned health as a reason.

Men and women are equally likely to mention saving money as a reason for reducing meat consumption and there is little difference among people of different ages.

When it comes to concerns over animal welfare as a reason for reducing meat consumption, there is again little variation in views among people of different ages. However, women are more likely to cite animal welfare concerns as a reason for reducing meat consumption, with nearly one-quarter (23%) mentioning this compared to 16% of men.

There is little variation between men and women or people of different ages when it comes to citing concerns around food safety as a reason for reducing meat consumption.

Concerns about the environment as a reason for reducing meat consumption are mentioned by only 11% of people, with no difference between the proportion of men and women who mention this reason. However, there is a difference in evidence in terms of education levels, where people with degrees are a lot more likely to cite environmental concerns as a reason for having reduced meat consumption than those with no qualifications.

## 8 Appendix

Table A.1 Type of food eater, by religion					
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>				
Type of food eater					
	Religion				
	Church of England / Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Other Christian (%)	Non-Christian (%)	No religion (%)
Meat-eater	98	97	96	88	95
Pescetarian	1	2	3	4	2
Vegetarian / vegan	1	1	2	8	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>503</i>	<i>239</i>	<i>477</i>	<i>229</i>	<i>1409</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>575</i>	<i>258</i>	<i>508</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>1357</i>

**Table A.2 Type of food eater, by political party identification**

<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>				
Type of food eater	Party identification				
	Conservative (%)	Labour (%)	Liberal Democrat (%)	UKIP (%)	Green Party (%)
Meat-eater	98	93	93	98	86
Pescetarian	1	4	3	1	6
Vegetarian / vegan	1	3	3	1	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>730</i>	<i>846</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>242</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>760</i>	<i>838</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>268</i>	<i>65</i>

**Table A.3 Meat eating, by gender**

<i>Base: all respondents</i>		<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>			
Type of meat-eater			Gender		
	Male (%)	Female (%)			
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	1	1			
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	23	34			
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	10	9			
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	62	49			
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	4	6			
Don't know	1	*			
Refused	0	0			
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1400</i>	<i>846</i>			
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1255</i>	<i>838</i>			

Table A.4 Meat eating, by age

<i>Base: all respondents</i>							
<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>							
Type of meat-eater	Age						
	18-24 (%)	25-34 (%)	35-44 (%)	45-54 (%)	55-64 (%)	65-79 (%)	80+ (%)
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	*	1	0	1	0	1	2
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	19	21	27	29	34	39	35
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	11	7	10	10	10	9	9
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	64	65	55	53	51	47	50
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	5	5	7	6	4	4	4
Don't know	1	*	0	1	0	0	0
Refused	*	0	0	*	0	0	
<i>Weighted base</i>	336	494	482	514	416	511	121
<i>Unweighted base</i>	167	376	490	530	475	646	187

**Table A.5 Meat eating, by household income**

<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>				
Type of meat-eater	Household income quartiles (per month)				
	Less than £1,200 (%)	£1,201-£2,200 (%)	£2,201-£3,700 (%)	£3,701 or more (%)	Don't know / Refusal (%)
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	1	1	0	1	0
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	33	30	28	26	28
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	8	8	8	12	10
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	51	58	58	56	52
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	6	3	5	5	9
Don't know	1	*	1	0	1
Refused	0	0	*	0	*
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>522</i>	<i>568</i>	<i>674</i>	<i>309</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>688</i>	<i>563</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>585</i>	<i>307</i>

**Table A.6 Meat eating, by religion**

Type of meat-eater	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>				
	Religion				
	Church of England / Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Other Christian (%)	Non-Christian (%)	No religion (%)
I have stopped eating meat in the last year	1	1	1	1	0
Eat meat but reduced amount of meat in last year	32	35	32	33	25
Eat same amount or more meat than a year ago but considering stopping/reducing	10	7	8	9	10
Eat same or more meat than a year ago - no intention of reducing/stopping	55	54	54	38	59
Do not eat meat - stopped eating meat more than 1 year ago	2	4	4	16	5
Don't know	0	0	*	2	0
Refused	*	*	*	1	0
<i>Unweighted base</i>	503	239	477	229	1409
<i>Unweighted base</i>	575	258	508	162	1357

**Table A.7** Stopped eating meat, reduced eating meat or considering reducing eating meat for health reasons, by age

<i>Base: all saying they have stopped eating meat, have reduced the amount of meat eating or are considering reducing the amount of meat eaten</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
18-24	35	117	55
25-34	49	173	138
35-44	59	215	219
45-54	60	235	244
55-64	68	200	228
65-79	64	269	342
80+	58	60	94
<i>Total</i>		1269	1320

**Table A.8** Stopped eating meat, reduced eating meat or considering reducing eating meat for health reasons, by income

<i>Base: all saying they have stopped eating meat, have reduced the amount of meat eating or are considering reducing the amount of meat eaten</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Less than £1,200 per month	50	265	340
£1,201-£2,200 per month	56	217	242
£2,201-£3,700 per month	60	234	230
£3,701 or more per month	64	293	268
<i>Total</i>		1009	1080

**Table A.9** Stopped eating meat, reduced eating meat or considering reducing eating meat for health reasons, by education

<i>Base: all saying they have stopped eating meat, have reduced the amount of meat eating or are considering reducing the amount of meat eaten</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Degree	60	337	319
Higher education below degree / A level	58	355	347
O level / GCSE / CSE	61	290	313
No qualification	48	253	313
<i>Total</i>		<i>1269</i>	<i>1292</i>

**Table A.10** Stopped eating meat, reduced eating meat or considering reducing eating meat to save money, by income

<i>Base: all saying they have stopped eating meat, have reduced the amount of meat eating or are considering reducing the amount of meat eaten</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Less than £1,200 per month	32	265	340
£1,201-£2,200 per month	24	217	242
£2,201-£3,700 per month	18	234	230
£3,701 or more per month	16	293	268
<i>Total</i>		<i>1009</i>	<i>1080</i>

**Table A.11 Stopped eating meat, reduced eating meat or considering reducing eating meat because of concerns over animal welfare, by education**

<i>Base: all saying they have stopped eating meat, have reduced the amount of meat eating or are considering reducing the amount of meat eaten</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Degree	26	337	319
Higher education below degree / A level	23	355	347
O level / GCSE / CSE	16	290	313
No qualification	13	253	313
<i>Total</i>		1269	1292

**Table A.12 Stopped eating meat, reduced eating meat or considering reducing eating meat because of concerns over animal welfare, by religion**

<i>Base: all saying they have stopped eating meat, have reduced the amount of meat eating or are considering reducing the amount of meat eaten</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Church of England / Anglican	19	223	255
Roman Catholic	14	110	127
Other Christian	14	217	252
Non-Christian	10	137	102
No religion	26	573	578
<i>Total</i>		1260	1314

**Table A.13 Stopped eating meat, reduced eating meat or considering reducing eating meat because of environmental concerns, by education**

<i>Base: all saying they have stopped eating meat, have reduced the amount of meat eating or are considering reducing the amount of meat eaten</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Degree	24	337	319
Higher education below degree / A level	12	355	347
O level / GCSE / CSE	5	290	313
No qualification	3	253	313
<i>Total</i>		1269	1292

**Table A.14 Stopped eating meat, reduced eating meat or considering reducing eating meat because of environmental concerns, by religion**

<i>Base: all saying they have stopped eating meat, have reduced the amount of meat eating or are considering reducing the amount of meat eaten</i>	<i>British Social Attitudes 2014</i>		
	<i>%</i>	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Church of England / Anglican	6	223	255
Roman Catholic	8	110	127
Other Christian	11	217	252
Non-Christian	5	137	102
No religion	16	573	578
<i>Total</i>		1260	1314

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