




Abstract

The Prevalence of Vegetarians, Vegans and Other Dietary Patterns That Exclude Some Animal-Sourced Foods in a Representative Sample of New Zealand Adults [†]

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Abstract: Previous estimates of the prevalence of vegetarians in New Zealand are unreliable. This study aimed to estimate the prevalence of vegetarians, vegans and other dietary patterns that exclude some animal-sourced foods in a large representative sample of New Zealand adults. We also examined sociodemographic and lifestyle correlates of these dietary patterns. The New Zealand Health Survey is a rolling representative survey of New Zealanders aged 15 years and older. Data from the 2018/19 and 2019/20 waves (in total, $n = 23,292$) were used for this analysis. Participants were asked if they completely excluded red meat, poultry, fish/shellfish, eggs or dairy from their diets. The rates of prevalence of red meat excluders (2.89%, 95% CI: 2.56–3.22), pescatarians (1.40%, 95% CI: 1.16–1.64), vegetarians (2.04%, 95% CI: 1.77–2.32) and vegans (0.74%, 95% CI: 0.57–0.91) were low. After adjustment for sociodemographic and lifestyle factors, women (Odds Ratio (OR) = 1.54, 95% CI: 1.22–1.95), Asian people (OR = 2.56, 95% CI: 1.96–4.45), people with tertiary education (OR = 1.71, 95% CI: 1.18–2.48) and physically active people (OR = 1.36, 95% CI: 1.04–1.76) were found to be more likely to be vegetarian/vegan. Those aged ≥ 75 years (OR = 0.28, 95% CI: 0.14–0.53), those with a higher BMI (OR for every 1 unit increase in BMI = 0.96, 95% CI: 0.94–0.98) and current smokers (OR = 0.42, 95% CI: 0.23–0.76) were less likely to be vegetarian/vegan. Similar associations were observed between sociodemographic and lifestyle factors and the odds of being a red meat excluder/pescatarian. Approximately 93% of New Zealand adults eat red meat, and a very small number exclude all animal-sourced foods from their diets. The New Zealand Eating and Activity Guidelines recommend a largely plant-based diet, with moderate amounts of animal-sourced foods. A comprehensive national nutrition survey would provide detailed information on the amount of red meat and other animal-sourced foods currently consumed by the New Zealand population.

Keywords: dietary patterns; prevalence; New Zealand; vegetarian; vegan; pescatarian; red meat

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Restrictions apply to the availability of these data. Data are available from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/apply-to-use-microdata-for-research/confidentialised-unit-record-files-curfs/#Available-CURFS-list> (accessed on 9 March 2023) with the permission of StatsNZ.

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