

More than half of university students surveyed have tried a meat alternative

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Fifty-five percent of Midwest university students had tried a plant-based meat alternative and attributed this choice to the enjoyment of new food, curiosity about the products, and environmental concern, according to a

new study in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*.

For several decades, there has been a steady growth in consumer concerns about the environmental sustainability of the global food supply, animal welfare ethics, and human health consequences of red meat intakes. To assess the prevalence of plant-based alternatives to [meat consumption](#) in students; describe associations between demographics, environmental concern attitudes, and consumption; and determine variables statistically associated with trying the plant-based alternatives, researchers studied enrolled students aged 18-30 at Iowa State University.

"Among the 1,400 students surveyed, we found about 55 percent had tried a plant-based alternative to meat. Individuals who ate plant-based products were more environmentally conscious, more likely to be vegetarian, and more likely to be out-of-state students—so not from Iowa," said lead author Elizabeth Davitt, MS, Food Science and Human Nutrition, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College of Human Sciences, Iowa State University, Ames, IA.

When evaluating why there is a correlation between out-of-state students and willingness to try plant-based alternatives to meat, Davitt suggests considering where the study is conducted. "This university in-state is well known for its agriculture degree programs. Iowa is also a top producer of hogs and chickens as well as a top grower for livestock feed. So, that could add some nuance to that result."

Respondents' motivation for trying plant-based alternatives to meat also included enjoying and trying new foods, being curious about these products, thinking they would taste good, and receiving encouragement from family and friends. Individuals who did not consume plant-based alternatives to meat had a less favorable view of meatless meals.

"There are many reasons people chose the foods they eat, but we did find that having a more [positive attitude](#) about the environment was associated with having tried a plant-based [meat](#) alternative in college students," Davitt said.

More information: Elizabeth D. Davitt et al, Predictors of Plant-Based Alternatives to Meat Consumption in Midwest University Students, *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jneb.2021.04.459](#)

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