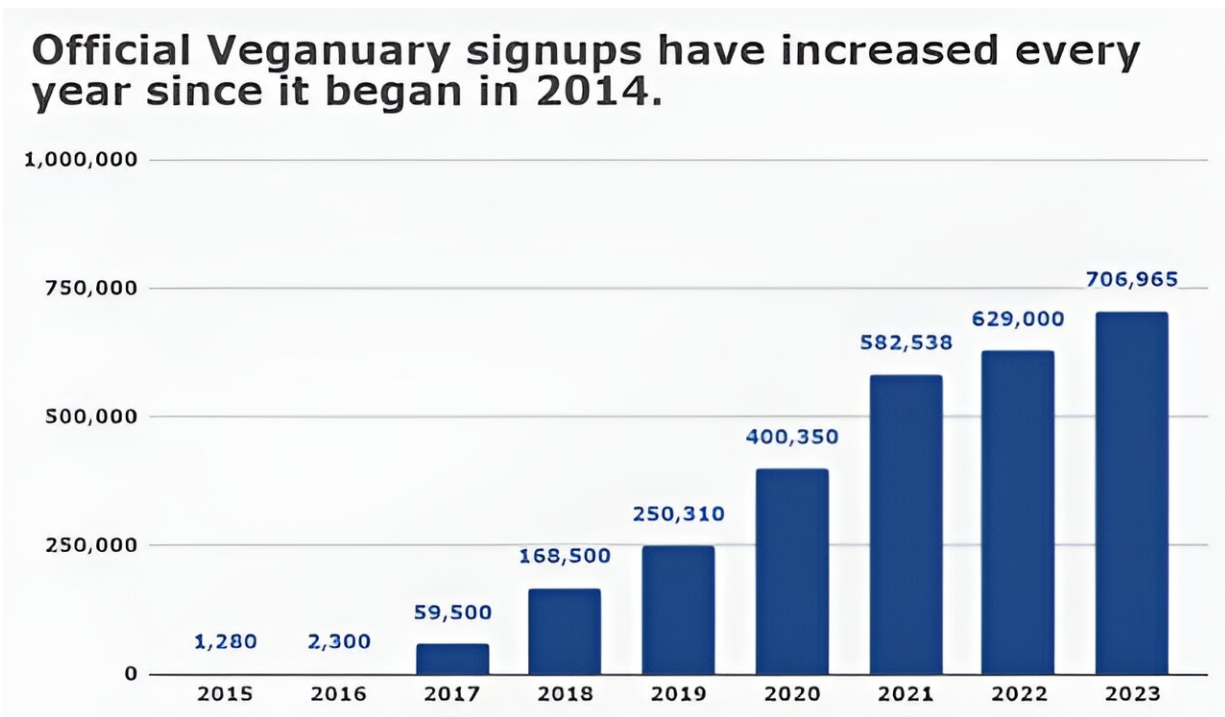


Veganuary's impact has been huge: Here are the stats to prove it

January 24 2024, by Chris Bryant



Official Veganuary signups have increased every year since it began in 2014.

Since launching in 2014, Veganuary has [boasted increasing sign-ups](#) year on year. But what's the evidence that the campaign that encourages people to adopt a vegan diet during January is really taking a bite out of the meat market?

More than 700,000 people signed up in 2023, and it's likely that these figures—which only account for people who officially signed up on the Veganuary website—represent just a fraction of all those who took part without signing up.

Veganuary is a campaign which encourages people to try veganism in January. The Veganuary charity, a UK-based non-profit behind the campaign, counts Deborah Meaden, Joaquin Phoenix and Chris Packham among its ambassadors.

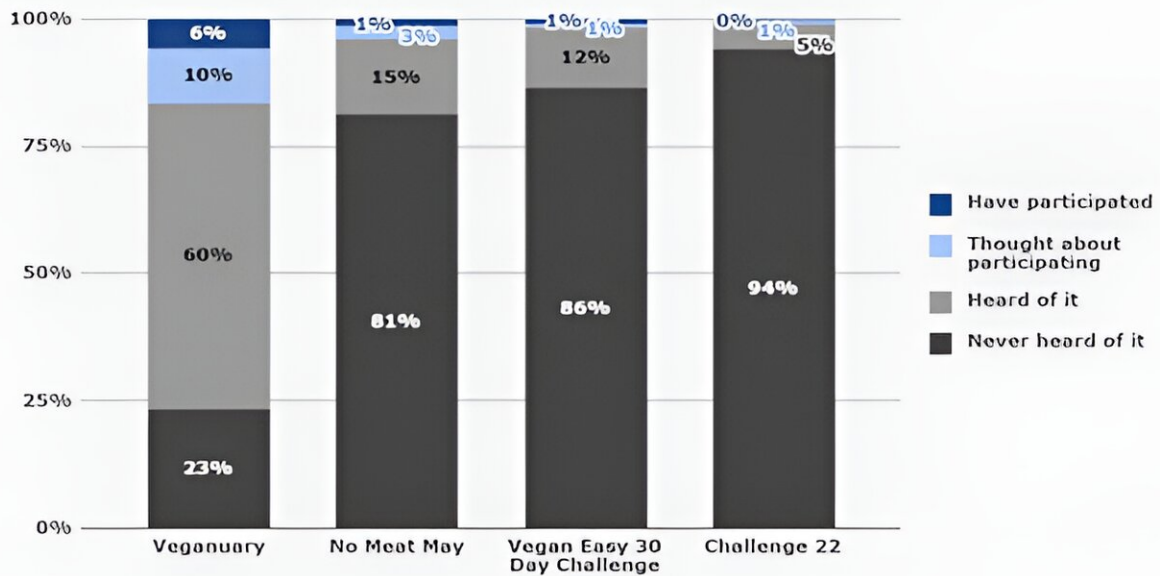
In a paper we [published last year](#), we highlighted Veganuary as the most well-known and participated-in meat-free challenge. More than three quarters of British people have heard of Veganuary.

One in 10 have considered taking part, and 6% claim to have taken part. That equates to around four million people—significantly more than the official participation numbers.

So why has Veganuary succeeded where so many other efforts to curb our problematic meat consumption have failed? There are two reasons, as outlined in our [recent study](#).

First, Veganuary invites people to try a [vegan diet](#) at a time of year when people are often open to trying healthy new habits. Capitalizing on an annual time of change can help to overcome any inertia that normally prevents people trying [vegan](#) diets.

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Second, Veganuary is a social experience. People can connect with others attempting the same challenge. The sense of camaraderie and community is something that Veganuary participants frequently comment on having enjoyed.

Encouragingly, Veganuary's survey of participants indicates that 98% would recommend the experience to a friend. Moreover, 78% of participants intended to cut their previous animal product consumption at least in half beyond the end of January, and 25% said they intend to stay vegan.

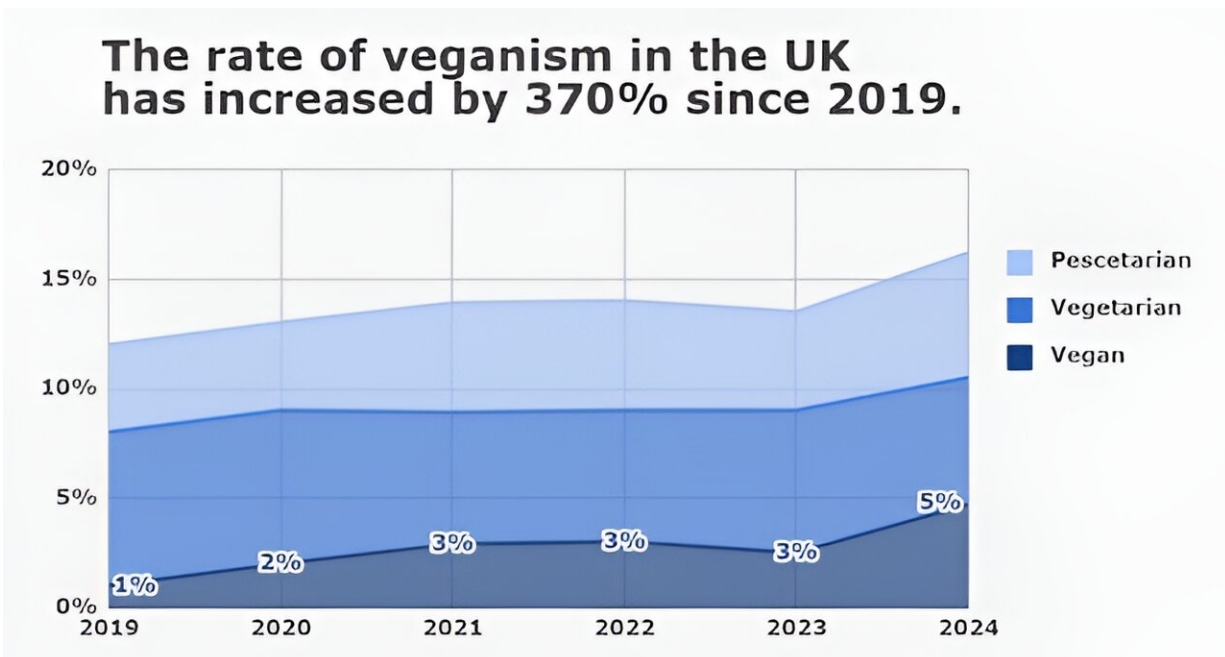
So, Veganuary makes sense in terms of social psychology. Lots of people

have taken part, and plenty say they'll cut down on meat in the longer term. But what evidence is there that Veganuary has made a real impact on dietary habits?

Veganuary's rapid rise has been concurrent with a broader trend towards veganism and meat reduction in the UK. Total per capita meat consumption [fell 17% from 2008 to 2019](#), at the same time as [sales of vegetarian food increased significantly](#).

The recent increase in the number of people embracing meat-free diets in the UK is shown in the graph below—in particular, the number of vegans has [increased 370%](#) in the past five years.

So Veganuary came to exist and grew rapidly during a time of increasing UK interest in veganism. Could that have been a simple coincidence?



The rate of veganism in the UK has increased by 370% since 2019.

Researchers at the London School of Economics looked at [more than 2 million meals](#) sold in workplace cafeterias between 2016 and 2022. Crucially, the workplaces began their Veganuary campaigns halfway through this period, in 2019. The researchers estimated that Veganuary increased sales of vegan products by 86–113% in the the 2019-2022 campaigns, and had a lasting impact on sales of vegan products

Sales data from [200 UK supermarkets](#) indicate that, during Veganuary 2023, sales increased for plant-based foods which were on promotion, but not for those which were not on promotion, according to a University of Oxford study.

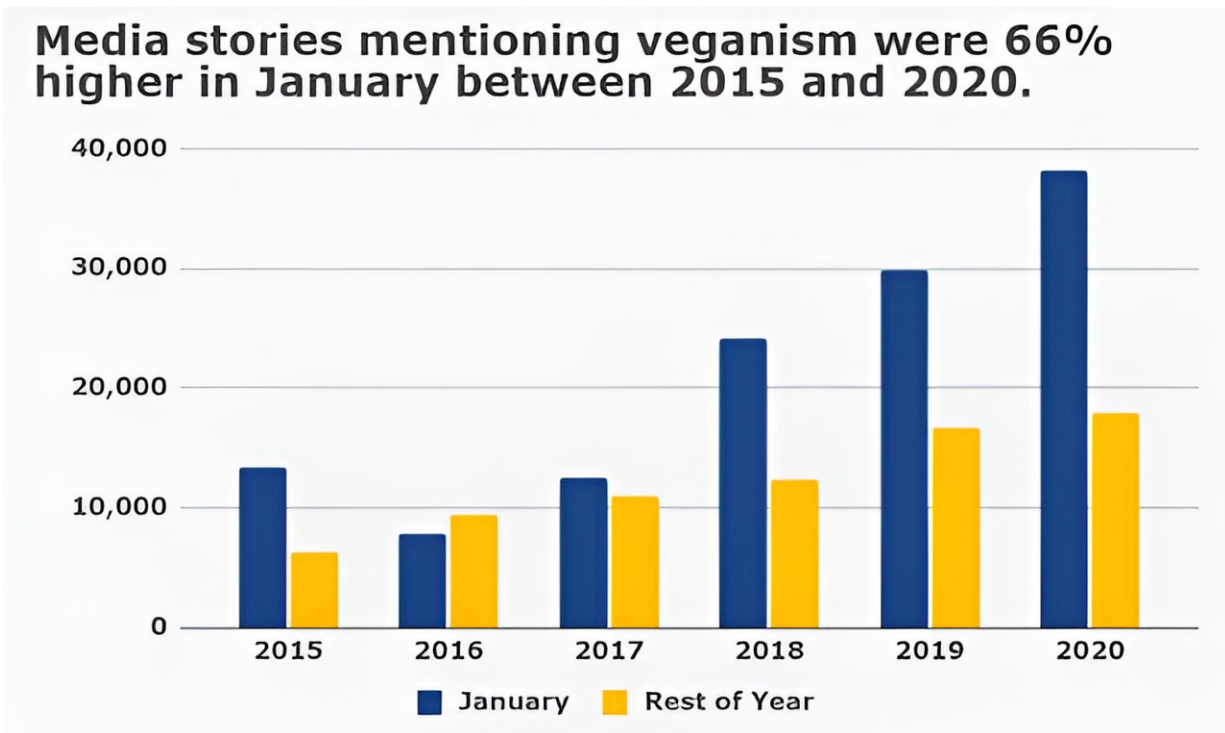
Veganuary has also increased sales of plant-based products at UK grocery stores. A team at the University of Surrey studied [sales of plant-based and animal products](#) at 154 UK grocery stores from November 2020 until March 2021 and found that Veganuary increased sales of plant-based products by a huge 57% during January.

Sales also remained 15% higher after Veganuary compared to before the month-long campaign. That said, there was no significant change in meat consumption observed during the same period.

Curious about Veganuary's far-reaching impact, I searched Google News to estimate the number of published news stories about veganism during January compared to the rest of the year. In January, there was an average 66% increase in the number of media articles about veganism compared to other months between 2015 and 2020—evidence that Veganuary increases public attention on veganism-related issues.

Next, I used Google Trends to investigate seasonal trends in the number of people actively seeking out information on veganism. The data in the

graph shows some of the clearest evidence yet for the Veganuary effect, with clear spikes in search activity every January. Moreover, interest appears to begin rising right around the time that Veganuary began in 2014.



Media stories mentioning veganism were 66% higher in January between 2015 and 2020.

Finally, I tracked down the dataset from an unpublished [survey of vegans conducted in 2019](#), because I knew it contained data on a very specific question. The survey, which the researcher kindly shared with me, asked more than 2,000 vegans when they changed their diet, to the nearest three-month period.

Using this data, I created this graph, which shows clear spikes, with more people turning vegan in the first quarter of the year, and an increase starting around (or slightly before) Veganuary began in 2014.

One piece of data stands out most of all. When Veganuary asked participants about their number one motivation for taking part, 18% said the environment, and 21% said their health—but 40% said animal welfare.

Indeed, the data indicates that the messages inspiring the most dietary change are not about carbon emissions, but [about animal cruelty](#). Almost nobody in the UK views common animal farming practices [as acceptable](#), yet while cow burps are within the range of acceptable dinner party conversation, knives in throats typically are not.

Meat consumption largely remains a [social norm](#) but that may well be about to shift. The [social tipping point](#) whereby enough people adopt a new norm for it to catch on is estimated to be around 25%. In the UK, the number of people consuming meat-free diets is now [up to 14%](#). Veganuary could soon nudge us towards a vital cultural tipping point.

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