

## **The virtues and challenges of being a vegan in Malta.**

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## Abstract

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<b>Research/Project Title</b> The virtues and challenges of being a vegan in Malta		<b>Number of words excluding abstract, references and appendices: 5700</b>
<p>In a survey conducted in 2018 (Ipsos Mori) concluded that 3 per cent of the world population is vegan, in 2021 it is estimated that there are 79 million vegans globally which accounts to 8 per cent of the world's population. Veganism can be attributed to factors of being ethically conscious, religious beliefs, or health or medical conditions. Following a plant-based diet can also be attributed to low-income earners, especially in certain African and Asian regions, where meat is an expensive commodity.</p> <p>Climate change is an issue of global concern. According to the United Nation (2019) food production aggregate to 35 per cent of all man-made greenhouse gases emissions, with 60 per cent of these emissions are generated through the production of meat. If we as humans want to save the planet for future generations, there need to be a shift to a more plant base eating culture which is far less detrimental to the environment.</p> <p>The Maltese eating culture is predominantly based on a carnivore diet; now this phenomenon is very slowly changing, shifting towards a plant-based diet. This factor can be justified by the social media followings of two prominent Vegan Facebook pages which have up to 16,500 followers, signalling a modest, yet growing interest in veganism amongst the Maltese population. Partaken in the vegan lifestyle in Malta has its challenges and constraints, from sourcing a more varied source of vegan food produce to finding vegan friendly dining options, owing that veganism awareness is still in its infancy in Malta.</p> <p>The data collected will support the research in depiction of profiling the Maltese Identity. This data will be collected by surveys, interviews and qualitative methods.</p>		
<b>Keywords</b> vegan, culture, challenges, dine-out, plant-based, diet		

## Declaration of Authenticity



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**Programme** : Bachelor's In Culinary Arts 1st Year

**Research Title** : The virtues and challenges of being a vegan in Malta

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### Declaration:

I hereby declare that this research study is based on the outcome of my own research. I, as the author, declare that this research study is my own composition which has not been previously produced for any other qualification.

The research study was conducted under the supervision of Mr. James Attard

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Date

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Student's Signature

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## **1. Introduction**

Veganism is defined as the abstinence of animal products and by-products from one's lifestyle. Individuals following a vegan lifestyle believe that using animal as a commodity is ethically wrong for various reasons. This can be attributed to religious convictions, ethical beliefs, or health reasons.

### **1.1 Religious Beliefs**

Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Rastafarian are religions that follow the vegetarian and vegan diet. These religions believe in the kindness towards animals and all living things. (Tesfamariam, 2020)

#### **1.1.1 Hinduism**

Most of the Hindu population which accounts to circa of 1.2 billion worldwide (Hindu Countries 2022, 2022) are vegetarians. Although Hinduism does not impose on its followers to be vegetarians or vegan, the religion teaches a lot about kindness towards all living things as per the believing concept of Ahimsa. This religion is deeply rooted to a plant based diet with looking upon the cuisine where this religion is deeply practiced; one can notice that most of the traditional dishes are in fact vegan friendly.

#### **1.1.2 Buddhism**

Although this religion does not have any specific dietary laws most of the followers opt for a vegetarian or vegan diet, as to the beliefs of no violence and suffering towards animal. In Tibet due to the limitation of vegetation the consumption of meat is permitted, and is believed that the killing of red meat is a better practice because of the bigger size of the animal , as there is only one life taken away to feed many others. (Nash, 2022)



### 1.1.3 Jainism

This is one of the oldest religions, with its roots in India dating back to about 2,500 years ago. The main goal of this religion was to break the cycle of reincarnation beliefs. The beliefs of following this religion are very similar to those of Hinduism as they believe as well in the concept of Ahimsa, to lead a nonviolent lifestyle, with no possible negative consequences on other forms of creatures. Ninety two per cent of Indian Jains identify themselves as either vegan or Vegetarian. And from the ninety two per cent, two-thirds of Jains which comes to sixty seven per cent abstain from root vegetables as this is seen as a sort of violence to consume the root due to destroying the plant. (Starr, 2021)

### 1.1.4 Rastafari

Rastafari is a religious and political movement that originated in Jamaica in the 1930s and has since been accepted by many groups around the world. It combines Protestant Christianity, mysticism, and a pan-African political consciousness (McAlister, 2021). Rastafarians have some restrictive food laws such as no salt, no chemicals, no flesh and no blood. It is generally a taboo to eat flesh and blood, especially if you eat pork as this is considered very dirty. Shell fish and other meat are usually rejected as well as they believe that their body is a temple and not a cemetery for dead animals (Brady, 2022). Rastafarians are total vegans by religion although they are still permitted to consume fish which is not longer than twelve- inch and no scales.

## 1.2 Ethics

“Ethics” is the analysis of the reasons on how an individual should act in a certain manner and not other. There are various ethical theories which vary in accordance to the way that are needed to an individual to act and the arguments to support the matter. Ethics are far different from morals; in fact it is the evaluative reflection of morals. What is right to one theory might be wrong to the other. (Ethics, n.d.).

Ethical beliefs come way back from the Pythagoreans and later the Epicureans societies in ancient Greece who also abstained from meat, and did not accept the sacrifices and violence made to the animal. In the mid twentieth century philosophers Tom Reagan, Richard Ryder and Peter Singer explained the difference of ethical attitude to veganism and the animal protection. Reagan, Ryder and Singer also differentiate and give character to the concepts of 'Speciesism' and 'Sentience' in the vegan philosophical beliefs. In 2020 'Ethical Veganism' has been legally recognized and protected by law as a philosophical belief in Great Britain, owing to a two year litigation initiated by Jordi Casamitjana which in his book '*Ethical Vegan*' he writes about it in detail. (Casamitjana, 2020).

### **1.3 Health Reasons**

According to 'The Vegan Society' the amount of vegans in the UK has increased by four times more in 2018 from 2006. The vegan diet is considered to be one of the healthiest diets for its benefits of being high in fibre and low in cholesterol and sodium. Although it is scientifically proven to be a better diet than the omnivore diet the concerns of eliminating meat from one's diet still remain (Brown, 2020).

#### **1.3.1 Benefits of the vegan diet**

Research at Rush University Medical Centre in 2019 has shown that a vegan diet helps to promote weight loss, lowering cholesterol levels therefore also decreasing the risk of related heart disease and reducing the risk of getting a specific type of cancer such as colon cancer. Although vegan diet does not guarantee a better health, it always depends on the individual to make healthy choices (Soble, 2021).

#### **1.3.2 Concerns of a vegan diet**

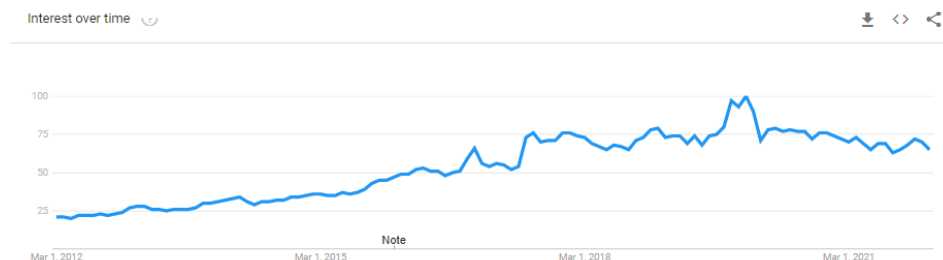
This diet brings along with it a lot of health concerns and questions. One of the most commonly asked question is, if the individuals practicing this diet are consuming enough vitamin B12 which is naturally found in all dairy, fish and meat. According to Janet Cade from Nutritional Epidemiology Group, School of Food Science and Nutrition,

*“A B12 deficiency can lead to neurological symptoms such as numbness, and it’s irreversible if the deficiency is present for too long,”*

#### **1.4 Veganism on a global basis**

In 2017 Nestle which is the largest global food manufacturing company, predicted a growth in the plant based food trend. Moving forward to 2020 the plant based dairy and meat industry sales were over twenty-nine (29) billion dollars with a projection increase of one hundred, sixty-two (162) billion dollars by 2030. In 2020 this industry was accountable for nearly eight per cent (8%) of the ‘protein foods’ sector (Minassian, 2022).

Although there is no precise data for the growth of global veganism, Google trends report for the past ten years has shown an increase in searches when it comes to veganism, with the top five (5) countries being Israel, Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Germany respectively (Google Trends, 2022).



**Figure 1: 10 year timeline of Google trends on veganism**

This timeline reflects the rise in popularity of plant-based diets and vegan lifestyle around the globe. The risen popularity in veganism also impacted global fast food companies like Greggs, McDonalds, Burger King and KFC having introduced vegan options in the United Kingdom. Recently Burger King in Malta have also launched a burger for vegans when the ‘Plant Based Whopper’ was introduced; although as stated on the official website it is

cooked on the same broiler as their original Whopper, which for vegans it is still considered as not a big step that this company is trying to market.

### **1.5 Maltese Demographics**

The Maltese eating culture is predominantly based on a carnivore diet; now this phenomenon is very slowly changing, shifting towards a plant-based diet. This factor can be justified by the social media followings of two prominent Vegan Facebook pages which have up to sixteen thousand, five hundred (16,500) followers (Tabone, 2021), signalling a modest, yet growing interest in veganism amongst the Maltese population. Partaken in the vegan lifestyle in Malta has its challenges and constraints, from sourcing a more varied source of vegan food produce to finding vegan friendly dining options, owing that veganism awareness is still in its infancy in Malta.

### **1.6 Research Question**

In this research, an observation will be undertaken to establish what are the fundamental principles attributing to Maltese veganism. In conjunction to this observation, the researcher will identify challenges and elements that obstruct vegans living in Malta in partake to this diet and lifestyle. The objective of this research is to identify the principles that accredit to this lifestyle change, the challenges that individual partaking in a vegan lifestyle encounter heightens the factors that hinder the Maltese in partaking to this diet and lifestyle.

The following research questions have been established to aid in addressing these factors:

- What are the fundamental principles that are attributing to Maltese Vegan?
- What are the challenges and elements that hinder the Maltese to partake the plant Based diet?

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Rise in popularity of Veganism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Although veganism may appear to be a recent trend, it has come a long way. Veganism has been around for centuries due to religious practices, but it only became popular in the mid-twentieth century in the United Kingdom and then globally. This was the result of introducing 'The Vegan Society.'

#### **2.1.1 The Vegan Society**

Donald Watson, along with five other non-dairy vegetarians, coined the term Vegan in 1944 in order to distinguish themselves from other vegetarians who consumed dairy. This was the beginning of the movement known as 'The Vegan Society.' Donald Watson defined vegan as containing the first three letters and the last two letters of the word vegetarian. In other words it signified *“the beginning and end of vegetarian”* (The Vegan Society, 2019). Despite the fact that the movement was founded in 1944, the vegan diet was not defined until 1949. Leslie J Cross observed that society lacked a definition of veganism and proposed

*“[t]he principle of the emancipation of animals from exploitation by man” this being clarified as “to seek an end to the use of animals by man for food, commodities, work, hunting, vivisection, and by all other uses involving exploitation of animal life by man”* (The Vegan Society, 2019).

The society was registered as a charity in 1964 with its assets being transferred later in 1979 when it became a limited company.

### **2.2 The growth of Veganism**

The Veganuary campaign has had a significant impact on the global growth of veganism. This campaign encourages and challenges people to go vegan for a month, both in terms of diet and in terms of everyday products. Consumer trends are changing dramatically,

according to a global survey report published in 2022 by the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF). According to NSF, trends are constantly changing. Plant-based foods are clearly becoming more popular, and people are becoming more health conscious. In this report, NSF also stated that while people are gravitating toward a plant-based diet, it is also important to be a sustainable diet; for example, NSF stated that when it comes to a plant-based diet, people prefer oat milk over almond milk to be more sustainable (NSF International, 2022).

### 2.2.1 Gaining popularity

The term "vegan" first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1986, with a definition of "[a] person who, on principle, abstains from all food of animal origin: a strict vegetarian." Despite the fact that it was a simple definition, it demonstrates that veganism was becoming more prevalent in society. (Mercieca, 2020)

In 2017, Portuguese Law No.11 2017 made it illegal for an organization to not provide vegetarian and vegan options on its menu. This makes Portugal the first country to make it illegal to not provide such options. Although, for the time being, this only applies to public buildings such as schools, hospitals, and prisons (Visit Portugal, 2021).

This rise in vegan diet popularity has also had an impact on the food market, with the introduction of manufactured plant-based food, which had a market value of sixteen (16) billion US dollars in 2021, which is now expected to grow to twenty-two (22) billion US dollars by 2025. This also reflects the baby food market for vegan alternatives, which grew by about ten per cent (10%) between 2016 and 2021 (Wunsch, 2021).

## 2.3 Generation Z ethical considerations

Gen Z (born in 1995 – 2010) is becoming more concerned about the environment, climate change, and sustainability; specifically, the negative effects of the meat farming and processing industry, which is having a detrimental effect on the planet's ecosystem.

One of the most egregious examples is the large-scale appropriation of land for the animal feed industry, which is thought to be one of the factors contributing to biodiversity loss. Further to the repercussions, the consumption of animal-derived products is more closely associated with an increase in greenhouse gas emissions (Bogueva and Marinova, 2020).

When it comes to raising awareness about the environment and climate change, Gen Z is not a newcomer. Gretha Thunberg, who was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 2003, is an environmental activist. Thunberg advocates for the environment, stating that if the world does not shift to a plant-based diet, wild plants and animals will be destroyed and extinct (Beresford, 2021).

Gen Z celebrity that also follows a Vegan lifestyle and are advocates for animal rights, is Billie Eilish. Orlando Bloom asked Eilish about her decision to become a vegan in an interview for British Vogue magazine, she stated that after learning more about the atrocities committed in the dairy and meat industries, she found it more difficult to return to the omnivorous diet (Nakamura, 2021).

Climate change, environmental issues, and sustainability are all on the minds of Generation Z. This generation is more likely to become vegan in order to reduce the emissions caused by animal farming. When it comes to purchasing a product, Gen Z is more likely to consider sourcing food commodities which have a less detrimental on the environment (Lee, 2021).

## **2.4 Veganism in Malta**

According to a recent data collection by the vegan website 'Veggy Malta,' more people are adopting a vegan lifestyle and eating plant-based diets. During a National Vegan Week, this platform has created a challenge called the 'Malta Meat Free Week Challenge' to encourage more Maltese people to adopt this diet. In 2020, twenty-five (25) per cent of those taking the challenge say they switched to a vegan diet due to environmental concerns, an increase from the previous year, when 18.5 percent of those taking the challenge did so for the same reason.

#### 2.4.1 Vegan for the environment

According to Darryl Grima, Co-Founder of Veggy Malta, in an interview with the Times of Malta, the younger generation, Gen Z, is joining this challenge as they are more environmentally conscious and constantly learning about the negative impact that livestock has on the environment. According to a study conducted this year by BBC Future in collaboration with Sarah Bridle, professor of food, climate, and society at the University of York, and freelance sustainability researcher Rebecca Lait;

*“Vegan CO2e emissions per week: 9.9kg*

*Vegetarian CO2e emissions per week: 16.9kg*

*Omnivore CO2e emissions per week: 48.9kg” (Gorvett, 2022)*

#### 2.4.2 Who is going Vegan?

As Grima stated, whom has been following a vegan lifestyle for over thirty (30) years, reaffirms, that The Vegan challenge is dominated by the female gender, although there has been an increase in male participation in recent years. This challenge depicts the various ages, as well as their priorities and reasons. Those aged twenty-one (21) to twenty-nine (29) are participating in this challenge to help the environment, while those aged thirty (30) to thirty-nine (39) are participating to improve their health and become more health conscious. (Magri, 2021)

### 2.5 Vegan products on the Maltese Islands

Those who believe that following a vegan diet is expensive and not accessible to people of all income levels may be proven wrong (Mad Rabbits, 2016). Although some products may be more expensive than other commodities of an omnivorous diet, some are still affordable with any income, especially when using local produce. There is no requirement to include exotic and extravagant ingredients in order to follow this diet, and many commodities can be grown in-house, making it more sustainable and less expensive to follow this diet.



### 2.5.1 Maltese Food Favourites Turned Vegan

Even among vegans, the 'fast food' traditional cuisine remains a favourite as a comfort food. The 'Ħobż biż – Żejt' is a popular Maltese traditional fast food that is traditionally made with the addition of tuna; vegan diet followers simply remove the tuna to make it vegan. Another hearty dish is widow's soup, also known as 'Soppa Tal-Armla' in Maltese. This soup is typically made with chicken broth, a poached egg, and 'ġbejna,' which is a Maltese cheeselet. For a vegan version of this soup, replace the chicken broth with vegetable broth and leave out the egg. For the replacement of the traditional 'Ġbejna' now there is the alternative of a similar one made out of almond milk, apple cider vinegar and nutritional yeast. Although, due to the belief that yeast is a living organism, this option may not be suitable for the most ardent vegan. (Jo's Delights, 2022)



Figure 2: Local Vegan Ġbejna

## 2.6 The dining scene in Malta

When it comes to the dining scene in Malta, vegan dishes may still be more expensive than others. A simple vegan salad made entirely of vegetables, for example, will almost certainly cost the same as a main course containing meat, fish, or dairy products (Tabone, 2021). This is one of the many reasons why vegans chose home-cooked food. The price difference may also discourage those following an omnivorous diet from ordering a vegan dish.

### 2.6.1 Vegan eateries in Malta

In June 2021, Michelin-starred Chef Alex Gauthier reopens his brasserie 'Gauthier Soho' situated in central London with an entirely plant-based menu. As he stated in one of his interviews, "I'm vegan myself; it would be unethical for me to profit from selling dead animals." (Gilliver, 2021)

If one looks at restaurants that offer a vegan menu in the last few years, a lot has changed; the options available are more diverse, though, as previously stated, pricing is still unfair when compared to other non-vegan dishes.

Nowadays, more restaurants provide a balanced menu that includes a variety of omnivorous dishes, gluten-free options, and vegetarian and vegan options. Although a precise data of all-vegan eateries is not available, which shows a clear example of lack of research in this field; according to the website Happy Cow (An aid to travellers and other individuals looking for a vegan eatery or a restaurant that offers a good vegan menu), there are currently only three all-vegan eateries in Malta. One of them opened in 2018 which goes by the name Balance Bowl; the second opened in 2020 that goes by the name Green sushi and the third opened in 2021 goes by the name Josephine's Coffee shop (data gathered from their respective websites).

There are currently only two hotels in Malta that offer an all-vegan dining experience, both of which are located in the island's north. However, one of the hotels will reopen in June 2022 after undergoing renovations (Ramla Bay Resort, 2022). The other hotel, located in the heart of Attard, provides an all-vegan dining experience that ranges from breakfast to early dinners. Because people are becoming more environmentally conscious, the hotel's website claims that all food served is vegan and sustainable. Josephine's Coffee Shop is the same establishment mentioned previously (Corinthia, 2021).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

The more people who follow a plant-based diet, the more it is labelled "Trend Culture," which is not entirely incorrect. Nowadays, social media is inundated with headlines about this topic (UM, Think Mag., 2019). Following this diet and lifestyle is becoming more popular among the younger generation, Gen Z, who are more technologically predisposed (Britain Thinks, 2022). Even though there is no particular database of the number percentage of vegan population in Malta, the two most prominent Maltese vegan Facebook groups have approximately seventeen thousand, three hundred (17,300) members (last recorded beginning of May 2022). The vegan scenario is still evolving on the Maltese Islands but every day there is still some progression and improvement whether it the dining scene or the mentality of individuals (Arena, 2019).

### **3. Methodology**

*“This is the philosophy or the general principle which will guide your research. It is the overall approach to studying your topic and includes issues you need to think about such as the constraints, dilemmas and ethical choices within your research”. (Dawson, 2009)*

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The aims of this work, which will demonstrate fundamental results, are to use the appropriate research methodology. This essay will employ mixed methodology because it will combine primary and secondary data investigations. This method is most appropriate because it allows for a variety of perspectives, which aids in considering and discussing various points of view.

#### **3.2 Research Method**

The purpose of this study is to identify the fundamental principles that entice Maltese people to adopt a vegan diet and lifestyle. This study will also look into the obstacles and factors that prevent people who eat an omnivorous diet from switching to a vegan diet. Data for this essay will be gathered through quantitative and qualitative research.

Through ‘qualitative’ data that reflects the first part of this study, a group of ten (10) individuals have been chosen to clarify what are the fundamental principles attributing to this lifestyle. The interview is made up of ten (10) open-ended questions.

The second line of research will be conducted as ‘quantitative’ mode which will aid to identify the obstacles that prevent Maltese from partaken to a vegan diet. This will be accomplished through a questionnaire consisting of twenty-four (24) questions that will be distributed online through social media and other platforms aimed at the Maltese public to gain a better understanding of what is preventing other omnivores from adopting this plant-based diet. The desired sample size of this on-line survey is to exceed 300 respondents

which attributes to approximately 0.082 % ( world population review, 2022) of the Maltese adult population, which will yield a better and stronger statement.

### **3.3 Research Findings Presentation**

The research findings will be analysed and discussed throughout the essay. Where the data will then be presented both summarised and graphically.

### **3.4 Research limitations**

Since this subject is still evolving and attracting new interest, the academic data available was very restricted, so the majority of the data was obtained from Maltese vegan society affiliates. This reflects the concept's growing popularity yet still in its infant stages.

Through the Veganuary Campaign, which runs for the entire month of January, global input and collaborations with Maltese non-profit organisations promote veganism more. This significantly contributes to the growth and popularity of veganism in Malta.

Since the second part of this study is relatively new to the research field, there is no existing data. As a result, all primary data must be collected and analysed.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

All data gathered will be used specifically for the purpose of this study and will be handled with the utmost confidentiality in accordance with 'The General Data Protection Regulation' (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and the Maltese 'Data Protection Act' (CAP 586).

Participation in interviews and questionnaires will be entirely voluntary. Before the interview begins, a week in advance, all participants will receive the questions asked; individuals participating are free to leave the interview at any time during the course of the questions asked. Also, prior to the start of the interview, all participants will be informed

that if a question is deemed personal or of a sensitive nature, they have the right to refuse to answer and all data will be disclosed. Participants will also be given a disclaimer form to sign ahead of time.

## **4. Analysis of results and Research**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to find out what are the challenges that hinder the Maltese from changing their omnivorous diet and partake the vegan diet.

For this research, social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram played a crucial role to distribute the survey questions. The targeted audience for this questionnaire were 300 adults which is roughly 0.082% of the Maltese adult population (world population review, 2022).

On the other hand for the interviews a selection of ten (10) individuals was made based on how long they have been following the vegan lifestyle. From the ten (10) individuals invited to take part in this interview, all invites were accepted with a sign of consent.

## 4.2 Research Analysis of Online Survey

### Question1

This online survey received 301 responses. The participants were Mostly female 193 (64.12%), 103 male (34.22%), 4 non-binary (1.33%) and 1 that preferred not to say (0.33%).

#### 1. What is your gender ?

Female	193
Male	103
Non-binary	4
Prefer not to say	1



Figure 3: Gender

### Question 2

The average age of the respondents was in the group of age of 25 – 35 with 92 (30.56%) responses. This was followed by the age group of 36 – 46 which add up to 65 (21.59%) respondents. The age group of 18 – 24 adds up to 57 (18.94%), followed by the group aged 47 – 57 with 49 responses (16.28%), the group of 58+ had 26 respondents (8.64%) and the under 18 having 12 (3.99%) responses.

#### 2. What is your age?

Under 18	12
18 – 24	57
25 – 35	92
36 – 46	65
47 – 57	49
58 +	26

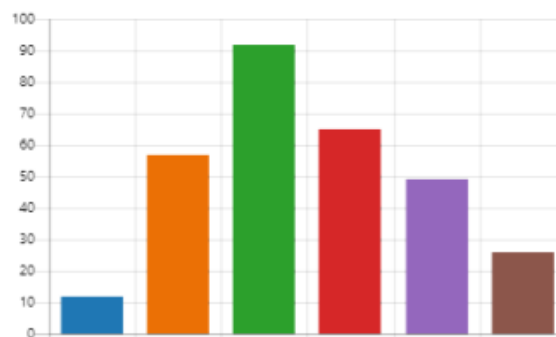
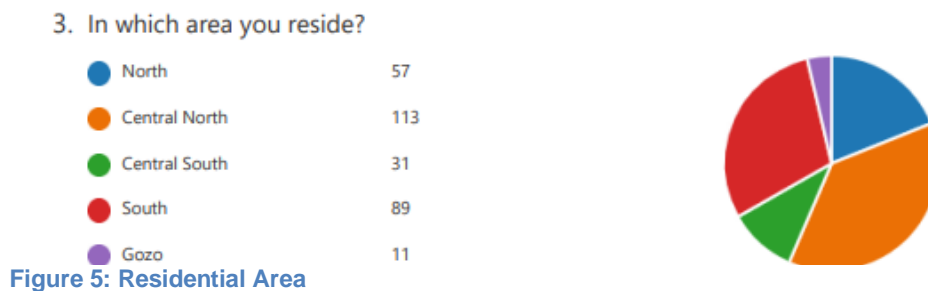


Figure 4: Age Groups



### Question 3

As it is clearly evident in figure 5, the majority of respondents which are 113 (37.54%) reside in Central North, followed by 89 (29.57%) respondents living in south of the Maltese Islands. Having 57 (18.94%) individuals from the North, followed by 31 (10.03%) respondents from Central South. From the sister Island of Gozo this survey had 11 (3.65%) respondents.



### Question 4

Question 4 reflects the level of education of the respondents which is a crucial factor of this survey in order to identify the most likely cohort will to partake in this diet. 163 (54.15%) respondents said to have tertiary education, followed by post-secondary which had 82 (27.24%) responses. 36 (11.96%) respondents said to have secondary level education and 20(6.65%) individuals answered to have other type of education, stating:

*“Master’s Degree” “ITS” “No school”*



### Question 5

For this question the respondents were asked how many times a week they consume meat. 141 (46.84%) stated that they consume white/red meat and poultry 3 time or more weekly. 66 (21.93%) consume it twice a week, followed by never that is 37 (12.29%). Respondents that consume meat once a week adds up to 35 (11.96%). And those who rarely consume it adds up to 21 (6.98%).

#### 5. How many times a week do you consume white/red meat and poultry?

Once a week	36
Twice a week	66
3 times or more	141
Rarely	21
Never	37



Figure 7: Meat Consumption

### Question 6

Underneath are the results for question 6 which was a branching for who answered rarely or never in question 5 stating 'How many times a week do you consume white/red meat and poultry?' Responses that were written in the option 'other', a lot said *"injected meat"* and *"I am trying a plant-based diet"*.

#### 6. Tick the answers that apply to you

It is expensive	1
I do not like it	16
Due to health reasons	12
Other	33



Figure 8: Branch of Q5

### Question 7

For this question, respondents were asked how many times per week they consume fish. 107 (35.55%) answered that they consume fish once a week. 91 (30.23%) said that they rarely consume fish, followed by never that is 49 (16.28%). Respondents that consume fish twice a week add up to 38 (12.62%). And those who consume 3 times a week it adds up to 16 (5.32%).

#### 7. How many times a week do you consume fish?

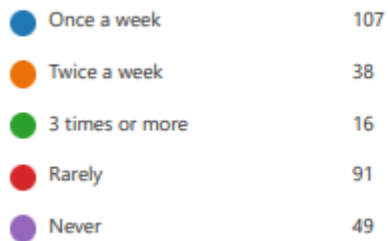


Figure 9: Fish Consumption

### Question 8

Underneath are the results for question 8 which was a branching for who answered rarely or never in question 7 stating 'How many times a week do you consume fish?' Responses that were written in the option 'other', a lot said because either *"allergic to seafood"* or *"I don't know how to cook fish"*

#### 8. Tick the answers that apply to you

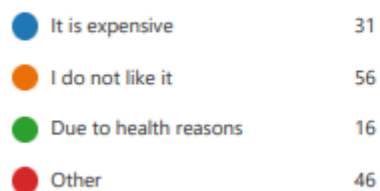


Figure 10: Branch of Q7

### Question 9

For this question the respondents were asked how many times a week they consume legumes, beans and rice. 121 (47.18%) stated that they consume 3 times or more weekly. 72 (23.92%) consume it twice a week, followed by once weekly that is 53 (17.60%). Respondents that rarely consume add up to 29 (9.64%). And never consume, add up to 5 (1.66%).

#### 9. How many times a week you consume legumes, beans and rice?

Once a week	53
Twice a week	72
3 times or more	142
Rarely	29
Never	5



Figure 11: Vegetable consumption

### Question 10

Underneath are the results for question 10 which was a branching for who answered rarely or never in question 9 stating 'How many times a week you consume legumes, beans and rice?' Responses that were written in the option 'other', *"Not regularly bought"*, *"Time consuming to prepare"*.

#### 10. Tick the answers that apply to you

It is expensive	2
I do not like it	21
Due to health reasons	3
Other	8



Figure 12: Branch of Q9

## Question 11

Respondents were asked how many times per week they consume vegetables for this question. 136 (45.18%) consume every day. 112 (37.21%) consume it 3-5 times a week, followed by twice weekly that is 41 (13.62%). Respondents that rarely consume add up to 10 (3.33%). And never consume, add up to 2 (0.66%).

### 11. How many times a week do you consume vegetables?

2 times a week	41
3 – 5 times a week	112
Everyday	136
Rarely	10
Never	2



Figure 13: Vegetable Consumption

## Question 12

### 12. Tick the answers that apply to you

It is expensive	5
I do not like it	10
Due to health reasons	4
Other	11



Figure 14: branch for Q11

### Question 13

Respondents were asked if they know what the vegan lifestyle is. 260 (86.39%) said yes, 27 (8.97%) said not sure and 13 (4.32%) responses were no.

#### 13. Do you know what a vegan lifestyle is ?

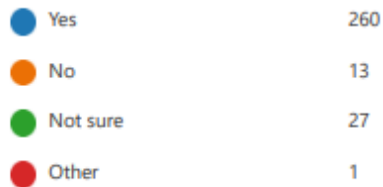


Figure 15: Vegan Lifestyle

### Question 14

For this question the respondents were asked to which level they would change their diet. 56.48% (170 respondents) said that they would go for a Flexitarian diet, which allows you to have meat or animal derived products occasionally, therefore following a more plant based diet.

#### 14. If you had to change your diet to what level would you change your diet?

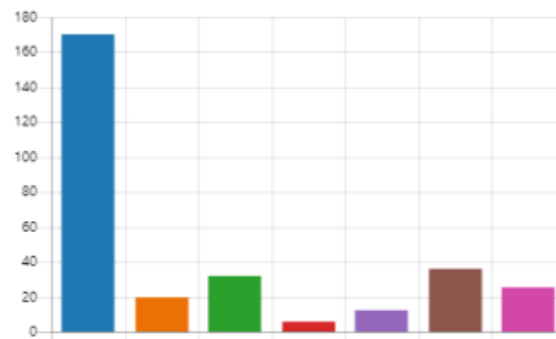
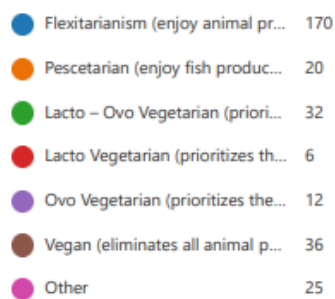


Figure 16: Change of diet

### Question 15

For this question 49.8% said that it was very unlikely for them to switch to a vegan diet. 16.3% said it was somewhat unlikely, followed by 12.6% which were neutral about it. 11.6% said it was very likely to turn vegan, and 9.6% said it was somewhat likely to switch to this diet.

#### 15. How likely is it for you to

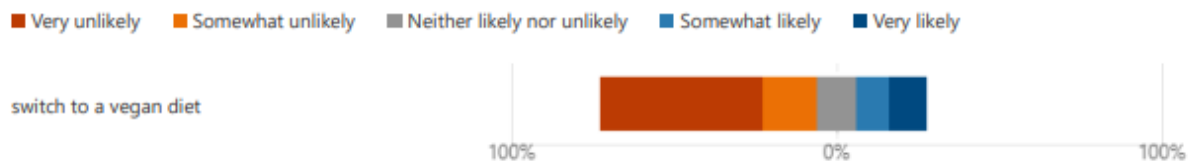


Figure 17: Likeliness

### Question 16

For this the respondents were asked to explain their answer to the previous question (Q15). These are some of the responses;

*"I am still a bit sceptical about this diet"*

*"Can't imagine myself having to change my eating habits to persuade a vegans belief"*

*"I just think, it would not suit my lifestyle, vegan products are also way more expensive then normal products"*

*"Unless a person suffers from dietary conditions or intolerances I see no point in restricting what food we eat. In my opinion an all balanced healthy diet will always be better than a focused and limited diet."*

*"In my opinion as a family doctor one should follow a flexi diet. This is because of the vegetables included in this diet and good nutrients transmitted from veg. But also one should keep in mind that meat and fish are still a good source of protein especially when in come to nutrients like B12. A balanced diet includes a good amount of veg and the occasionally once every 2 weeks serving of meat and fish."*

### Question 17

For this question 120 (40%) respondents said yes, followed by 92 (31%) saying no. 74 (25%) answered 'I don't know' and 15 (5%) answered other, which comments were *"It's extreme"*, *"Yes and no, because you eliminate certain nutrients"* and *"Vegan does not necessarily mean healthier"*.

#### 17. Do you think a vegan diet will be healthier for you

● Yes	120
● No	92
● I don't know	74
● Other	15



Figure 18: Healthy?

### Question 18

For this question 183 (61%) answered yes, and 84 (28%) said no. this was followed by 30 (10%) who said maybe and 4 (1%) in the other section, someone stated *"Sometimes yes but more out of curiosity to check if the restaurant offers this option"*.

#### 18. Have you ever looked at the vegan menu when dining out in a normal restaurant?

● Yes	183
● No	84
● Maybe	30
● Other	4



Figure 19: vegan menu



### Question 19

This question 114(61%) said that the pricing is quite expensive, 53 (28%) said it is reasonable. 17 (7%) said other and stated *“Sometimes the prices are inflated for what you get, only because of the niche market of veganism”*. This was followed by 6 (3%) who said it is not.

#### 19. Do you think that the pricing is expensive?

● Yes it is	114
● No it is not	6
● It is reasonable	53
● Other	14



Figure 20: expensive pricing

## Question 20

	Very unlikely	Somewhat likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat likely	Very likely
Go dine in an all-vegan restaurant?	13.9%	12.8%	13.4%	27.8%	32.1%
Consider ordering a vegan dish from a normal restaurant?	10.2%	5.9%	13.9%	33.2%	36.9%
Actually, order a vegan dish from a normal restaurant?	14.4%	7.5%	16%	29.4%	32.6%
Order from a vegan takeout?	18.2%	9.1%	17.1%	25.7%	29.9%

## 20. How likely to

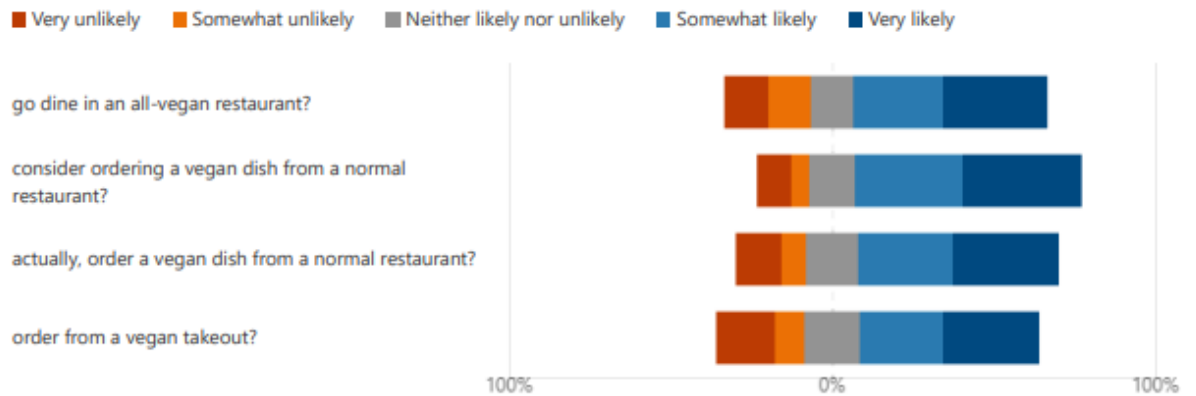


Figure 21: likeliness to look at a vegan menu

## Question 21

For this question 228 (76%) said yes, followed by 54 (18%) 'I don't know'. 13 (4%) said no followed by 6 (5%) responses 'other' stating *"Yes in my opinion it should be by law"*.

21. Do you think there should be more options for vegan menus?

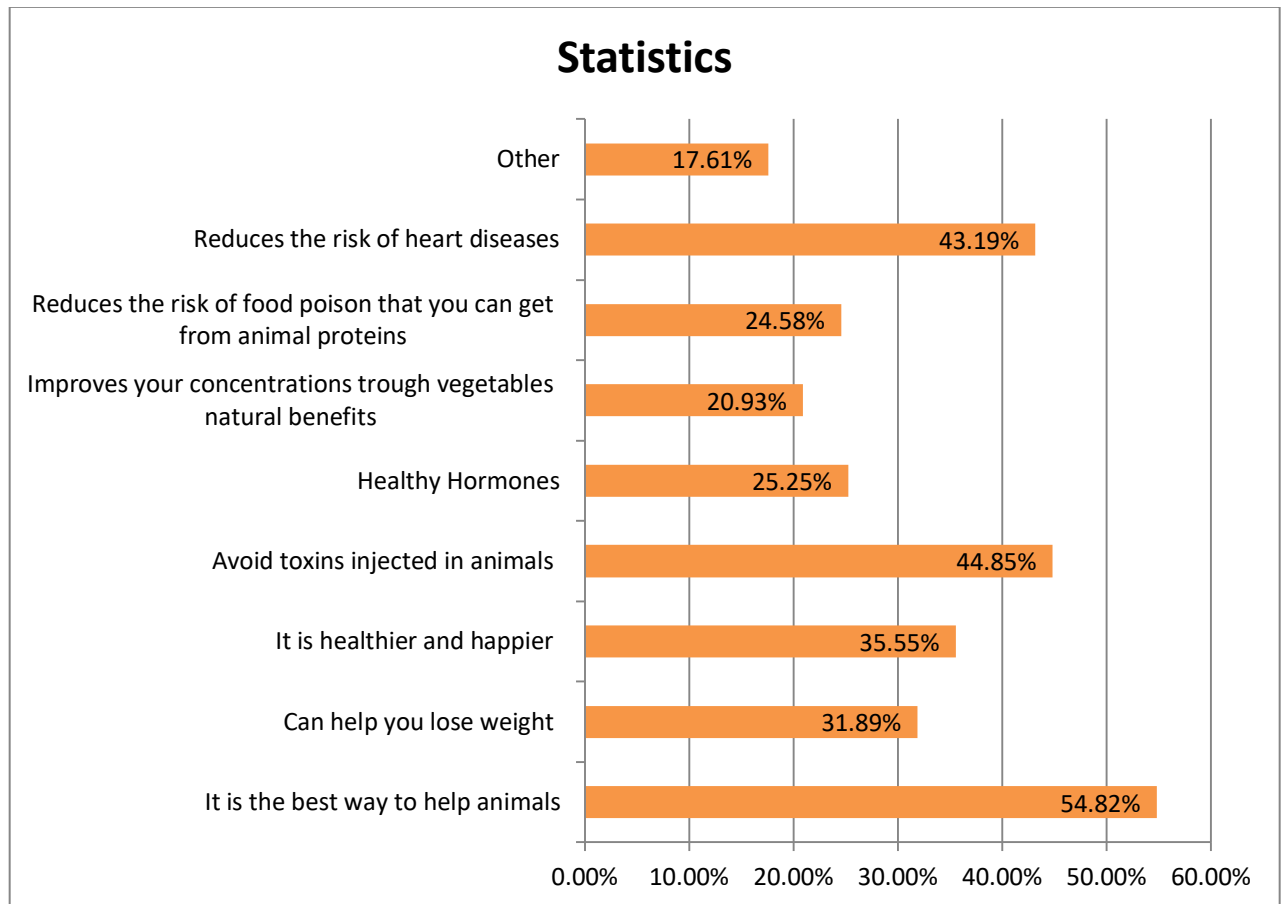
Yes	228
No	13
I don't know	54
Other	6



Figure 22: Vegan Options

## Question 22

Why do you think someone should go vegan?



22. Why do you think someone should go vegan? (tick all the answers that apply to you)

It is the best way to help anim...	165
Can help you lose weight	96
It is healthier and happier	107
Avoid toxins injected in animals	135
Healthy Hormones	76
Improves your concentrations ...	63
Reduces the risk of food poiso...	74
Reduces the risk of heart disea...	130
Other	53

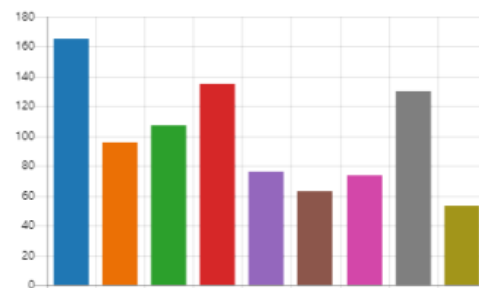
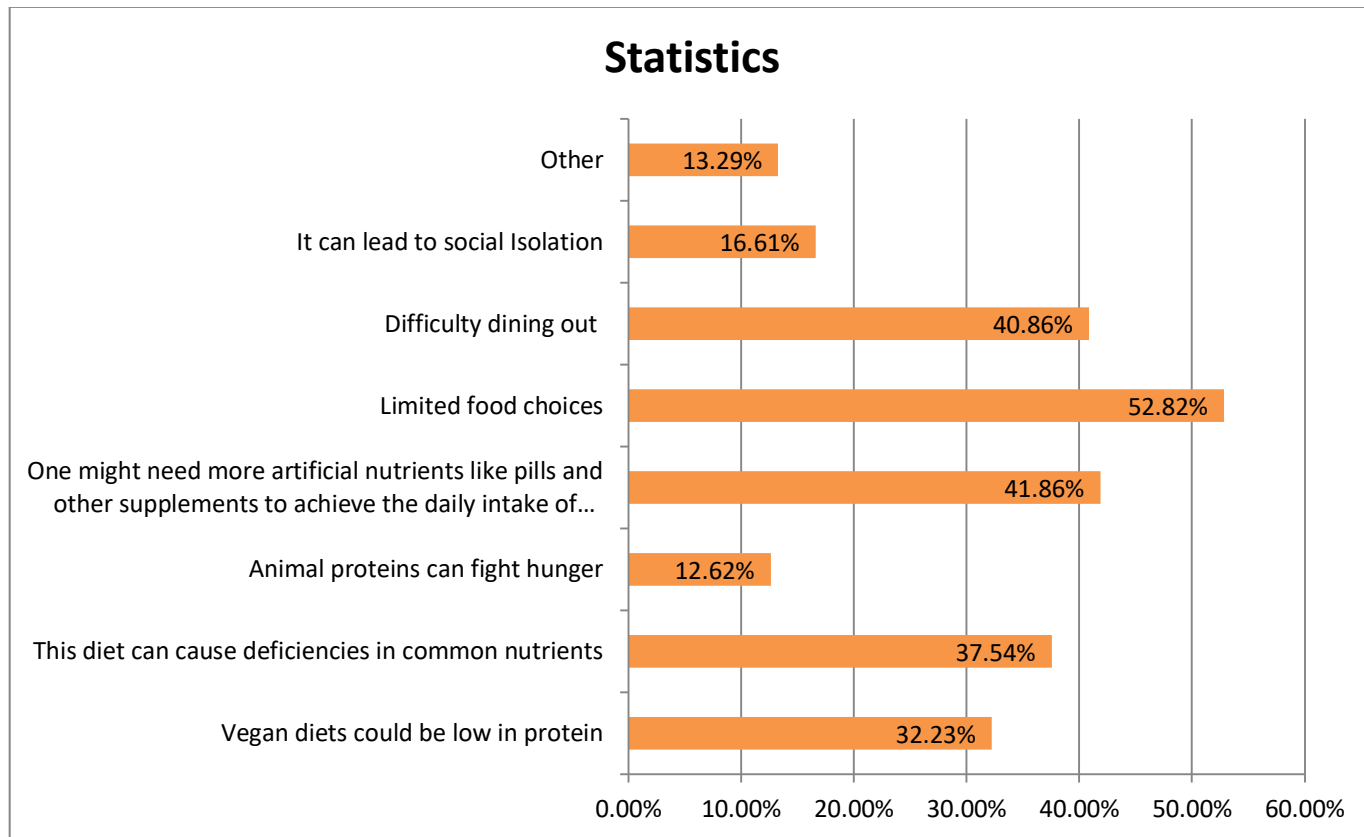


Figure 23: Why go Vegan?

### Question 23

Why do you think someone should not go vegan?



23. Why do you think someone should not go vegan? (tick all the answers that apply for you)

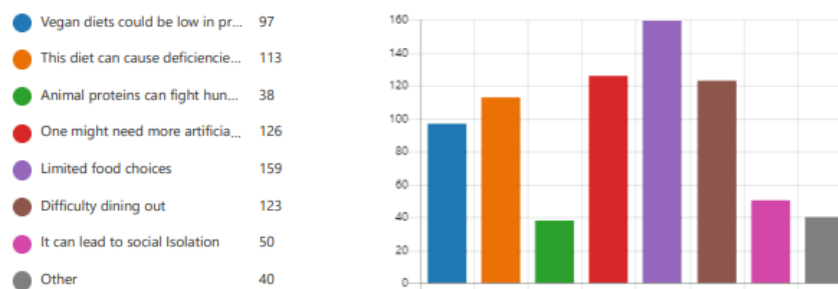


Figure 24: why not go vegan?

#### Question 24

For this the respondents were asked if they have any other comments.

These are some of the comments by the respondents which add up to 45(14.95%) responses:

*"I think that plant based or vegan diet helps people more as most ingredients are natural. Gives you more energy during the day and keeps you light and healthy as a lifestyle."*

*"The only problem I see is that when dining in a normal restaurant the pricing on a vegan menu sometimes is higher than a main dish that has meat in it. I do not find it fair as there is only veggie in a vegan salad or meal. Why so expensive?"*

*"One should always consult with a medical consultant before embarking on a new diet. As it is a radical change from a normal diet to change to a vegan diet."*

*"Always important to find a balance in your diet. Extreme veganism is not healthy and unfortunately sheds a bad light on going meat free and the benefits of such diets."*

### **4.3 Research Analysis for the Interviews**

Ten (10) Vegan lifestyle (diet) devotees were asked to take part in this interview. All ten (10) agreed to participate and were all sent the same questions beforehand to guide them through the interview. A copy can be found in the appendix section.

When the interviewees were asked about what is it like to be a vegan in Malta, mostly replied that it is quite hard due to lack of awareness on this diet. The majority stated that it is really expensive to dine out. One person said that *“you can do this diet for the animal but you are not doing it for the environment since Malta is a small country and everything is imported”*

When asked why they became vegan, they all stated that it is healthier and avoids animal cruelty. Others then stated that they follow this lifestyle because of their religion or because they believe it helps them perform better in sports. Those who claimed it was for the environment were asked a few more questions to back up their claim. A clear example of whether or not they consume imported goods. Although the participants stated that they avoid using imported products, some stated that due to Malta's geographical location, this cannot be avoided entirely.

The interviewees were asked why they chose animal cruelty, what led them to become vegan, and what they thought about Maltese authorities enacting a consumption control law on all animal-derived foods. Some people claimed that documentaries such as 'Cowspiracy' and 'The Milk System' influenced them to become vegans for the sake of the animals. Yes, they believe Maltese should limit their consumption of animal-derived foods, as this will aid in the fight against obesity, which is a major concern in Malta. Ranking as the first country in Europe is a red flag.

During these interviews health was also emphasised, as this diet was thought to be extremely healthy due to the nutrients and fibres transmitted by plant-based foods. According to the interviewees, if one follows a balanced diet, there will be no nutrient imbalances. The majority of interviewees stated that you can follow this diet without taking any supplements. One of the interviewees, a bodybuilder, stated that this was an experiment at first, but turned into a lifestyle. There was only one response to the religious

question because the interviewee is a Rastafari, and according to this religious practice, the body is a temple, not a cemetery for dead animals.

When asked what pushed them to adopt this lifestyle, they emphasised environmental and animal welfare concerns; In addition to the health benefits of this diet. When asked if veganism is still stigmatised in Malta, most people said yes and went on to explain that the Maltese mentality is still based on the idea that in order to be healthy, one must consume animal based food products, which they categorically reaffirm is completely false. One person stated that they have been vegan for 35 years and that things are only recently changing in Malta as people are becoming more aware and conscious of this lifestyle.



## **5. Final Arguments**

### **5.1 Discussion**

Malta has always been open to adapting different cultures, which has allowed the Maltese people to create the traditions and identity that we know today. The Maltese eating culture is primarily based on a carnivore diet; however, this phenomenon is slowly changing, and people are gradually shifting to a plant-based diet.

As previously stated, there is limited information available on veganism in Malta. This study's findings were used to support the general idea of why Maltese people choose this lifestyle. In addition, the primary data collected from questionnaires provided a clearer picture of what prevents Maltese from adopting a vegan lifestyle. Further to the results of the questionnaire, it is clear that the most common outcomes are:

- The prices of vegan food being very expensive due to importation fees.
- The lack of awareness towards this diet and it is clear that people want to know more about this lifestyle.
- The Maltese traditional food that revolves around an omnivorous diet which might cannot become a Vegan option.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations and suggestions have been identified to aid the growth and progress of veganism in Malta based on research, analysis, and observation of data obtained from questionnaires and interviews:

- The need for awareness is felt by the general public as well as those who have chosen the vegan lifestyle. This can be accomplished through the formation of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the assistance of Maltese governments in publicising this way of life. This can be proactive as with the rate of obesity come health issues which cost the government millions of euro in healthcare
- Despite having good local produce, the government should provide more incentives to promote "To Buy Local" which will aid to reduce the carbon footprint. As a result of this, local farmers' prices will be reduced even with the help from government and EU incentives.
- Most vegan food is expensive, which is one of the many reasons why Maltese people do not follow this diet. Because tofu and tempeh are imported, their prices are exorbitant. As a result, more awareness must be raised to demonstrate that such a diet can be prepared using local ingredients.
- The government, with the help of EU funds, should create incentives for local food producers to begin producing vegan food locally, and because consumption is currently low, these products can be produced by artisanal food producers always keeping the prices to a minimum.
- The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), Malta's leading culinary institute, should include as part of its curriculum modules on how to prepare vegetarian and vegan dishes. This aspect will aid to reduce the skill gap which exists in the restaurant industry in offering quality and innovative dining options attaining to these cuisines.
- Another aspect which ITS should undertake to educate and promote this cuisine is by conducting short course or master classes to the public. This should be applicable to other culinary institutes on the Maltese Island as well.

- Local media and TV stations can offer exposure through programmes or slots to this cuisine, by inviting guest speaker and chefs, giving an insight into the lifestyle stating the environmental and health benefits.

## **6. Conclusion**

To assess the study's reliability, the survey is typically repeated two(2) times or more, even with a larger audience at different points in time, and is considered as reliable if comparable data is achieved. Because this subject is still evolving in Malta, this study will change over time, so repeating it in three (3) years will generate different outcomes. The goal of this study was to investigate the current situation in Malta.

To better educate the Maltese population, NGOs and government entities officials must work together to make a larger collective effort. Primary and secondary schools should introduce educational programmes to raise awareness in order to culture future adults into this lifestyle, which may also be imposed due to the lack of sustainability in meat farming and global warming and climate change.

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## Appendices

### 1. Online survey Questions

# The virtues and challenges of being a vegan in Malta.

My name is Dorika-Maria Busuttil and I am an undergraduate student at the Institute of Tourism Studies Malta (ITS), reading for a degree in culinary arts. As part of my studies, I have to compile an essay titled: **The virtues and challenges of being a vegan in Malta**. The scope of this research is to find out what are the principles of becoming a Vegan and to also identify any issues that one might encounter in following this lifestyle in Malta. The aim of this survey is to identify what are the opinions of those following a carnivore or flexitarian diet is about the Vegan lifestyle (diet).

\* Required

## Demographics

1. What is your gender ? \*

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. What is your age?

\*

☐ Under 18

☐ 18 – 24

☐ 25 – 35

☐ 36 – 46

☐ 47 – 57

☐ 58 +

3. In which area you reside? \*

☐ North

☐ Central North

☐ Central South

☐ South

☐ Gozo

4. Level of education \*

☐ Secondary Level

☐ Post-Secondary

☐ Tertiary Education

☐

Other

## Consumption

5. How many times a week do you consume white/red meat and poultry? \*

- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Twice a week
- ☐ 3 times or more
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

6. Tick the answers that apply to you \*

- ☐ It is expensive
- ☐ I do not like it
- ☐ Due to health reasons

☐

Other

7. How many times a week do you consume fish? \*

- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Twice a week
- ☐ 3 times or more
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

8. Tick the answers that apply to you \*

☐ It is expensive

☐ I do not like it

☐ Due to health reasons

☐

Other

9. How many times a week you consume legumes, beans and rice? \*

☐ Once a week

☐ Twice a week

☐ 3 times or more

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

10. Tick the answers that apply to you \*

☐ It is expensive

☐ I do not like it

☐ Due to health reasons

☐

Other

11. How many times a week do you consume vegetables? \*

- ☐ 2 times a week
- ☐ 3 – 5 times a week
- ☐ Everyday
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

12. Tick the answers that apply to you \*

- ☐ It is expensive
- ☐ I do not like it
- ☐ Due to health reasons

☐

Other

## Vegan Lifestyle

13. Do you know what a vegan lifestyle is ? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

☐

Other

14. If you had to change your diet to what level would you change your diet? \*

☐ Flexitarianism (enjoy animal products occasionally only)

☐ Pescetarian (enjoy fish products only)

☐ Lacto – Ovo Vegetarian (prioritizes the consumption of beans and legumes, with the addition of eggs and dairy)

☐ Lacto Vegetarian (prioritizes the consumption of beans and legumes, with the addition of dairy)

☐ Ovo Vegetarian (prioritizes the consumption of beans and legumes, with the addition of eggs)

☐ Vegan (eliminates all animal products and by-products)

☐

Other

15. How likely is it for you to \*

	Very unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat likely	Very likely
switch to a vegan diet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



16. Explain your answer to the previous question \*

17. Do you think a vegan diet will be healthier for you \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

☐

Other

18. Have you ever looked at the vegan menu when dining out in a normal restaurant? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe

☐

Other

19. Do you think that the pricing is expensive? \*

☐ Yes it is

☐ No it is not

☐ It is reasonable

☐

Other

20. How likely to \*

	Very unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat likely	Very likely
go dine in an all-vegan restaurant?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
consider ordering a vegan dish from a normal restaurant?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
actually, order a vegan dish from a normal restaurant?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
order from a vegan takeout?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Do you think there should be more options for vegan menus? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

☐

Other

22. Why do you think someone should go vegan? (tick all the answers that apply to you)  
\*

- ☐ It is the best way to help animals
  - ☐ Can help you lose weight
  - ☐ It is healthier and happier
  - ☐ Avoid toxins injected in animals
  - ☐ Healthy Hormones
  - ☐ Improves your concentrations through vegetables natural benefits
  - ☐ Reduces the risk of food poison that you can get from animal proteins
  - ☐ Reduces the risk of heart diseases
  - ☐
- Other

23. Why do you think someone should not go vegan? (tick all the answers that apply for you) \*

- ☐ Vegan diets could be low in protein
  - ☐ This diet can cause deficiencies in common nutrients
  - ☐ Animal proteins can fight hunger
  - ☐ One might need more artificial nutrients like pills and other supplements to achieve the daily intake of protein.
  - ☐ Limited food choices
  - ☐ Difficulty dining out
  - ☐ It can lead to social isolation
  - ☐
- Other

24. Please if you have other comments leave them in the box below. Thanks

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Microsoft Forms

## 2. Interview questions

### The virtues and challenges of being a vegan in Malta.

My name is Dorika-Maria Busuttil and I am an undergraduate student at the Institute of Tourism Studies Malta (ITS), reading for a degree in culinary arts. As part of my studies, I have to compile an essay titled: The virtues and challenges of being a vegan in Malta. The scope of this research is to find out what are the principles of becoming a Vegan and to also identify any issues that one might encounter in following this lifestyle in Malta. The aim of this interview is to identify what are the fundamentals to follow the vegan lifestyle (diet).

#### Section 1: Demographics

##### 1. Gender

	Female
	Male
	Non-Binary
	Other

##### 2. Age

	18 – 25
	26 – 40
	41 – 56
	57+

##### 3. Residential area

	North
	Central North
	South
	Central south
	Gozo

#### 4. Education

	Secondary level
	Post-secondary
	Tertiary Education
	Other

### Section 2: General

#### 5. How long have you been following a vegan diet?

	Less than a year
	1 – 2 years
	3 – 4 years
	5+ years

#### 6. What is it like to be a vegan in Malta?

#### 7. What made you go vegan?

	Animal Cruelty
	Environmental issues
	Health / healthier
	Religion
	Other

##### a. If environment is chosen :

- Do you consume imported products?
- Do you consume fast vegan food like beyond meat?
- If you buy beauty products, toiletries, detergents, clothing, etc. do you check where they are coming from and if they can be found locally?

##### b. If Animal Cruelty is chosen:

- What made you go vegan for the animals?
- Before buying certain cosmetics do you scrutinize the company you are buying from?
- Do you think Maltese authorities should control animal derived food?
- Why?

c. If Health / healthier is chosen:

- Why do you think it is healthier?
- Do you think you might not be taking the required nutrients causing imbalance in nutrients?
- To meet the daily nutrient requirements should a supplement be taken?  
If : NO (this question stops here)

If: YES > Do you think this is ethical because of the carbon footprint left due to supplements being imported? (This will be asked to who answered environment in Q7)

d. If religion is chosen:

- Based on what principles does your religion direct its followers to lead a vegan diet?
- Is it just a diet or also a lifestyle?

e. If other is chosen:

- Conversation will continue according to the answer

8. Do you consume ready-made food?

- If NO (this question stops here)
- If YES: Do you think that some of the preservatives are harmful?

9. What was your tipping point for becoming vegan?

10. Would you say that veganism in Malta is still stigmatized?

- If NO (this question stops here)
- If YES > How and why do you think so?