Public attitudes survey 2025

Eating Better

The Food Foundation

Setting the scene

Eating Better publishes our 2025 Public Attitudes Survey findings, this year in partnership with the <u>Food Foundation</u>. The Eating Better alliance is <u>70 organisations</u> from the farming, environment, health, education, animal welfare and social justice sectors, united in our shared vision on more plants, and less and better meat and dairy.

Momentum is building across the <u>Better by Half Roadmap</u>. Progress is visible across all its pillars, with government, food retailers, food service, producers, and investors each playing a role in shaping the food environment.

In terms of policy, understanding public opinion is essential, providing the evidence to encourage policy makers to make even more progress building on actions taken so far in 2025. Across England and the devolved nations, the UK Labour Government's Good Food Cycle has set out a vision for the National Food Strategy, the Scottish Government's Good Food Nation plan is moving through Parliament, and there are parliamentary elections in Scotland and Wales in May. Policymakers have an opportunity to deliver for citizens, and create the conditions for healthier, more sustainable diets.

This is a nationally representative survey of 1733 people commissioned by Eating Better and Food Foundation and carried out by Savanta. The findings in this document highlight how the attitudes of UK citizens are shifting towards eating more plants, and less and better meat and dairy. This year's survey combined our five core questions, asked consistently over the <u>past decade</u>, with new questions on beans, pulses, and legumes.

Summary

Public willingness to reduce meat consumption is growing, but misconceptions persist.

Animal welfare, affordability, and provenance outweigh climate and health as drivers of change.

Beans and pulses present a major untapped opportunity.

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66% are open to the idea of reducing their meat consumption*

This is an **increase from 61% last year**, showing a clear public willingness to reduce meat consumption.

There is a **clear gap between people's own willingness to reduce meat and how willing they believe others are**. The majority of people **think that less than 40% of the population** are open to the idea of reducing their meat consumption.
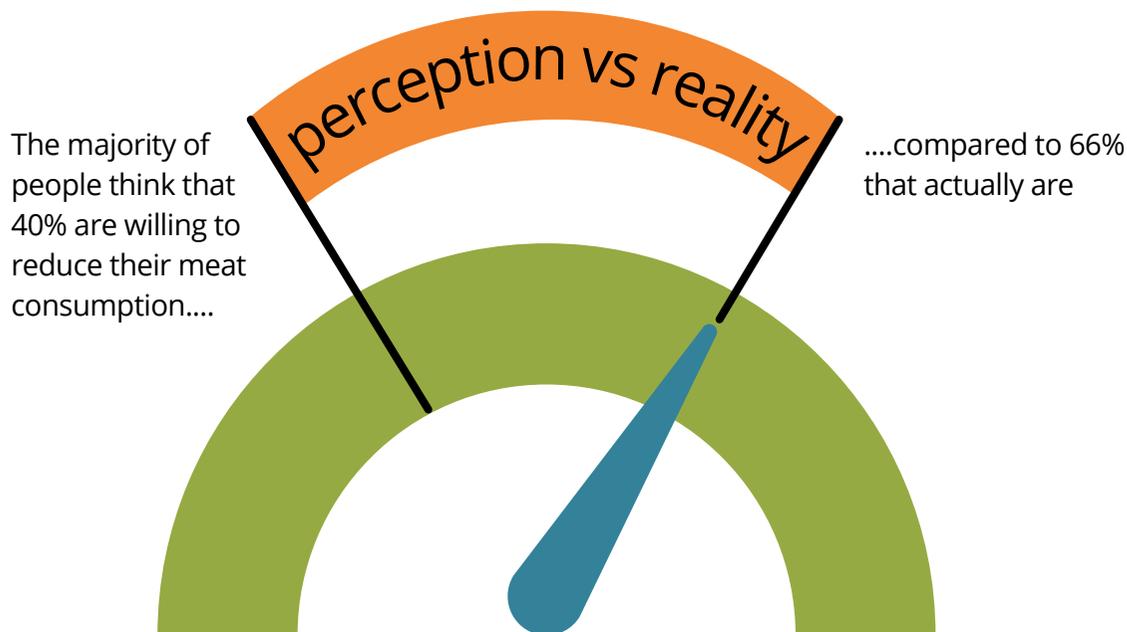
The type of meat reduced by the most people (30%) was lamb, closely followed by processed meat at 29%. Fresh chicken saw the most notable rise, with 26% reporting to have increased how much they eat over the past year.

30% reduced lamb

29% reduced processed meat

26% increased fresh chicken

perception vs reality

The majority of people think that 40% are willing to reduce their meat consumption....

....compared to 66% that actually are

*39% Yes, 27% Maybe

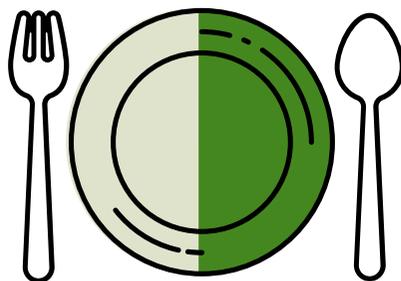**Eating Better**   **The Food Foundation**

Meat consumption

Public attitudes towards meat are shifting, with trends showing continued appetite for change:

22% of people are eating less meat than they were a year ago

Just 10% of the population have increased their meat consumption over the past year

Almost 50% of people eat meat less than 4 times a week

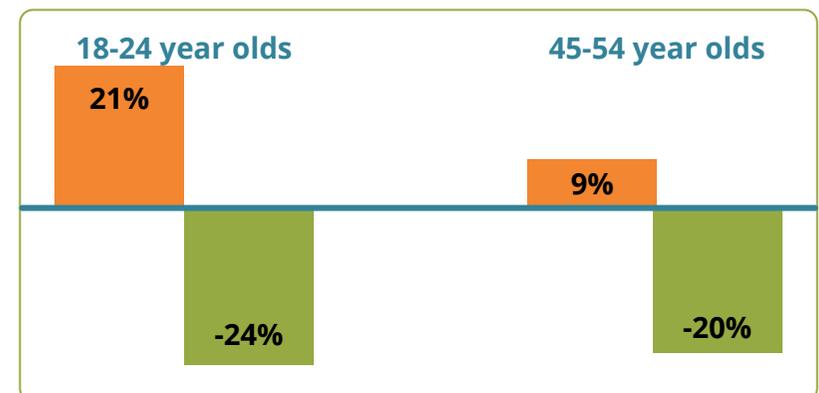## Habits around eating more or less meat differ between:

Income groups:
- Lower income*: 9% eating more, 26% eating less
- Higher income*: 15% eating more, 15% eating less

Lower income	Higher income
9%	15%
-26%	-15%

Age groups:
- 18-24 year olds: 21% eating more, 24% eating less
- 45-54 year olds: 9% eating more, 20% eating less
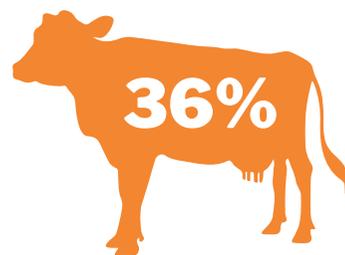
18-24 year olds	45-54 year olds
21%	9%
-24%	-20%

*Lower income is a household earning less than £30,000. Higher income is a household earning more than £60,000 per year.

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Animal welfare, money and origin of animal products are the top three motivators behind reducing meat consumption

36%

Listed the conditions in which animals are reared as a top motivator

31%

Listed money saving potential as a top motivator

30%

Listed concerns over where meat comes from as a top motivator

Households earning **under £60,000 are more likely to list money saving as a top motivator**. A greater share of these households have already reduced their meat consumption, suggesting cost may have played a role – though we can't say for certain.

For the first time, the high carbon footprint of meat did not appear among the top three reasons for reducing consumption. **Health also saw a sharp decline, just 19% of people listed it as a motivator this year compared with 35% in 2024.**

Meat and health: High levels of meat consumption can harm public health and contribute to rising rates of preventable disease. Industrial livestock production increases the risk of zoonotic disease transmission, and diets high in meat are linked with obesity and non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers (Salter, 2018).

Protein and health

Among meat eaters, more people believe reducing meat would harm their health (30%) than benefit it (26%), while 44% think it would make no difference. This points to ingrained misconceptions and a lack of concensus around the health impacts of reducing the amount of meat that we eat. Messaging around health has become increasingly polarised over the past few years, adding to this confusion.

As with meat reduction, there is a perception gap around protein. Meat consumption and protein intake is more of a worry for meat eaters than it is for those who follow plant based diets. 45% of meat eaters reported that they'd be worried about their protein intake if they were to reduce, while just 12% of non-meat eaters reported that protein was a concern for them. There is huge potential for plant based protein to become more normalised to alleviate these fears.

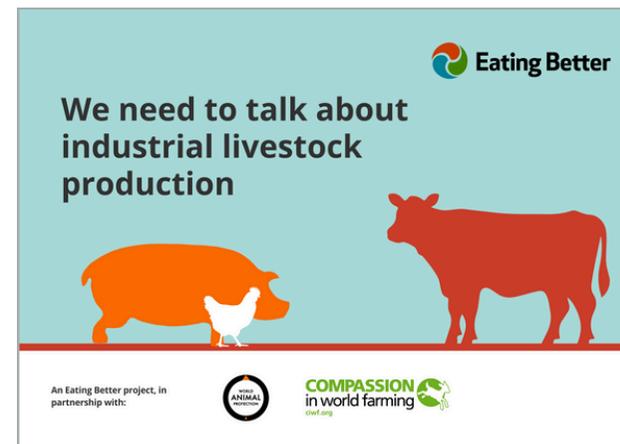## Animal welfare remains the top motivator when it comes to meat consumption

For the 11th year in a row, the public ranks animal welfare as a top deciding factor around their meat consumption habits.
Our 2024 survey found that 45% of people are influenced by animal welfare when deciding what products to buy. Yet many face barriers when it comes to choosing higher-welfare options. This underlines the need to grow the market for 'better' meat and dairy as part of the shift towards less and better production and consumption.

One in three recognise the harms of industrial livestock production

36% of people believe industrial livestock production has a negative impact on both animal welfare and the environment, rising to nearly half of 18–24 year olds (50% for animal welfare and 47% for the environment). This provides a strong base of public awareness about the need for alternatives, but there is clear scope to build wider understanding of the full extent of its impacts and to strengthen support for higher-welfare, 'better' meat and dairy.

For more information about animal welfare and the importance of working towards higher standards, check out our **We need to talk about industrial livestock production** resource.

We need to talk about industrial livestock production

An Eating Better project, in partnership with: WORLD ANIMAL PROTECTION · COMPASSION in world farming ciwf.org
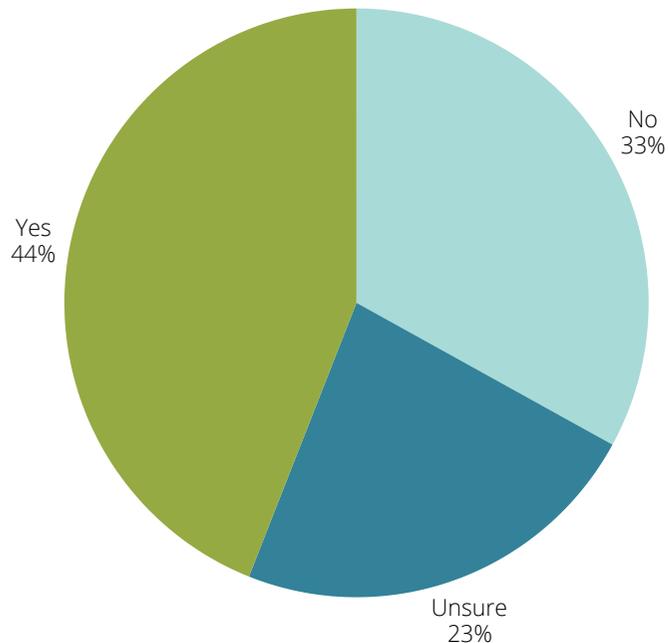
Beans and pulses

Beans and pulses are increasingly recognised in research and food system debates for their wide-ranging benefits to public health and the environment. But **how willing are the public to eat more of them – and are there barriers?**
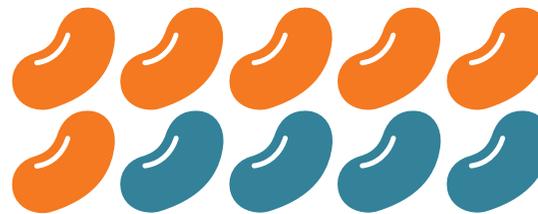
People want to eat more beans and pulses:

44% of people said that they wanted to eat more beans, compared to just 33% who said they did not.

No
33%

Yes
44%

Unsure
23%

Would you like to eat more beans, legumes and pulses?

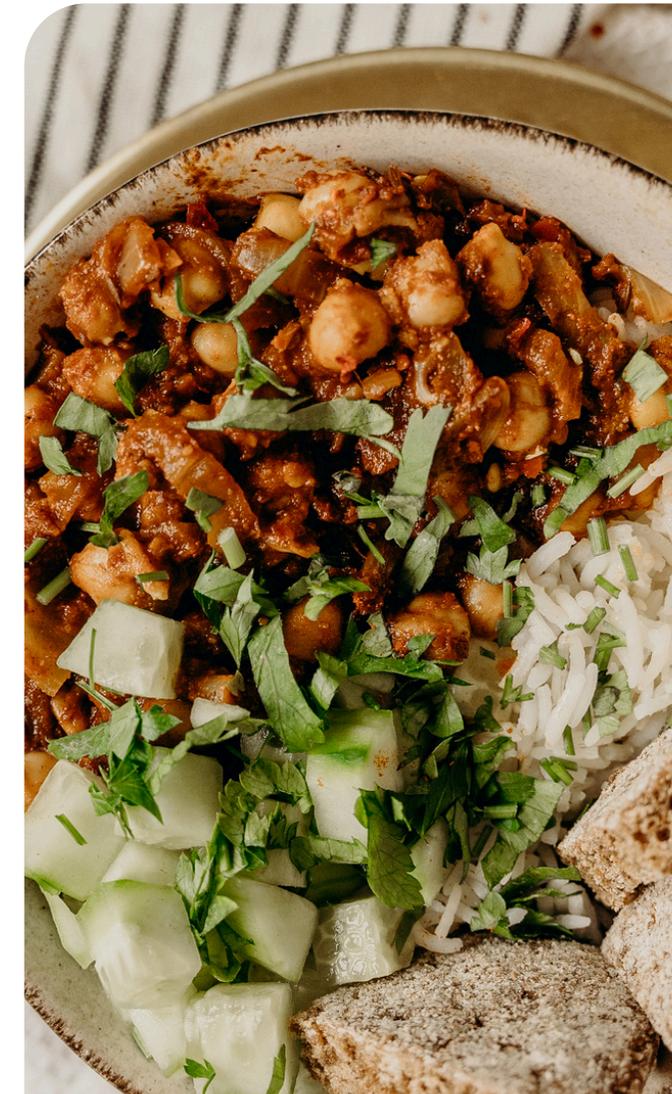## There is a strong appetite for beans:

60% enjoy eating beans

62% agree that beans are tasty

66% agreed that beans are easy to prepare and cook

The survey excluded tinned baked beans and long green beans. This is consistent with The Food Foundation's previous surveys.

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People want to eat more beans and pulses:

**73% agree that beans
are good for you**

**53% think they're a good replacement
for meat because they save money**

**50% think they're a good replacement for meat
because they're better for the environment**

**Despite strong interest in eating more
beans, people are less confident cooking
with beans and pulses than with other
types of food:**

"I am confident cooking with":
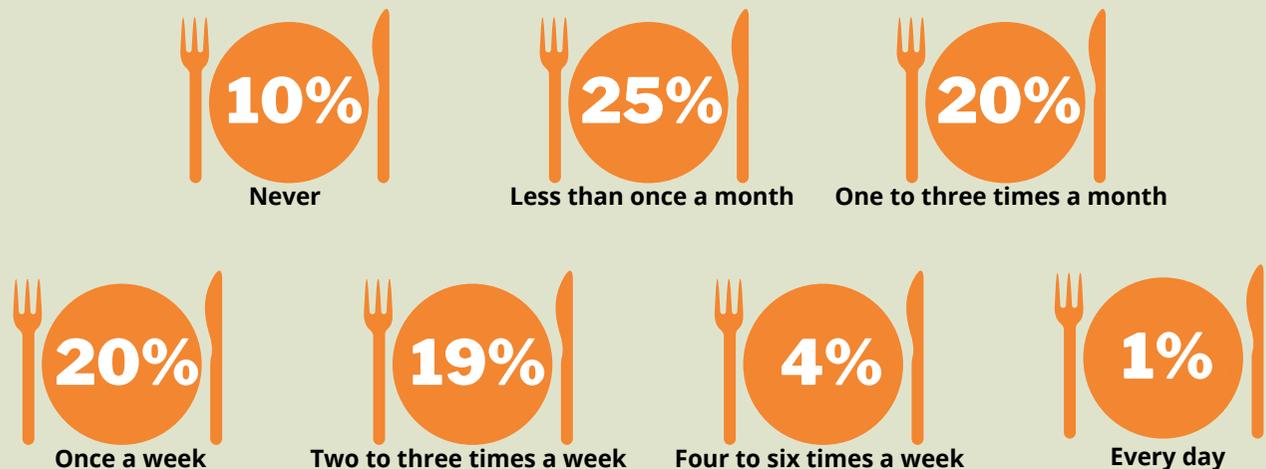
Beans and pulses: 42%

Meat or meat products: 68%

Cooking in general: 69%

There is an opportunity to increase bean consumption:

The majority of people only eat beans at most once a month, while still only 24% are eating beans 2 or more times a week. There is huge potential for beans and pulses to form a more prominent part of UK diets.

10%
Never

25%
Less than once a month

20%
One to three times a month

20%
Once a week

19%
Two to three times a week

4%
Four to six times a week

1%
Every day

Making it happen

Action is needed to stimulate an enabling environment to drive the necessary transformation in eating habits. The Better by Half Roadmap lays out these action areas:

Government

- Deliver a cross-departmental food and farming strategy
- Sustainable and healthy dietary guidelines underpin all policy development
- Normalise sustainable diets through public procurement
- Mainstream progress in school food
- Rebalance agricultural policy towards better meat and dairy and plant production
- Develop an integrated land-use plan
- Local authorities improve access to fruit and vegetables
- Make vegetables and better fruit more affordable
- Assess future trade deals for their impact on human health and the environment
- Develop and implement a strategy to facilitate a just transition for agriculture

Producers

- Harness opportunities for more plant production
- Switch to better meat and dairy production
- Harness the profitability of environmental services

Food service

- Put more plants on plates and menus
- Make plant dishes appealing
- Set targets for more plants and less and better meat and evaluate progress
- Provide exciting plant-based training and development for chefs
- Develop a sourcing policy that delivers 'better'

Retail

- Label origin and method of production for all meat and dairy
- Encourage sales of plant foods
- Set targets for more plants in the basket and evaluate progress
- Embed a sustainable diets strategy across the business
- Develop a sourcing policy that delivers 'better'

Investors

- Evaluate risks and opportunities of companies in meat and dairy production and sales
- Engage to promote healthy and sustainable production

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Key messages

1. Public willingness to reduce meat consumption is growing, but misconceptions persist.
Two-thirds of people are now open to eating less meat, however many still underestimate how widespread this willingness is among others. This perception gap, coupled with health misconceptions, highlights the importance of clearer messaging and supportive food environments.

2. Animal welfare, affordability, and provenance outweigh climate and health as drivers of change.
For the first time, the carbon footprint of meat dropped out of the top three motivators for eating less, and health fell sharply as a motivator. Instead, conditions in which animals are reared, saving money, and where meat comes from lead the way in shaping shopping habits. This shows a shift in what resonates most strongly with the public.

3. Beans and pulses present a major untapped opportunity.
While the majority of people enjoy beans and want to eat more, very few currently eat them more than twice a week, and less than half feel confident cooking with them. With strong recognition of their health, affordability, and environmental benefits, we need to see investment into better supporting growers and developing bean supply chains, more businesses making beans more available and appealing, and better promotion and marketing of beans to boost the role of beans in diets.

Next steps

Eating Better will continue to build on these findings, carrying out deeper dives into specific themes to enable our understanding and put forward a stronger case for action.

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Acknowledgements

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Thank you to:

Andrew Stark - Senior Research and Policy Manager, Eating Better

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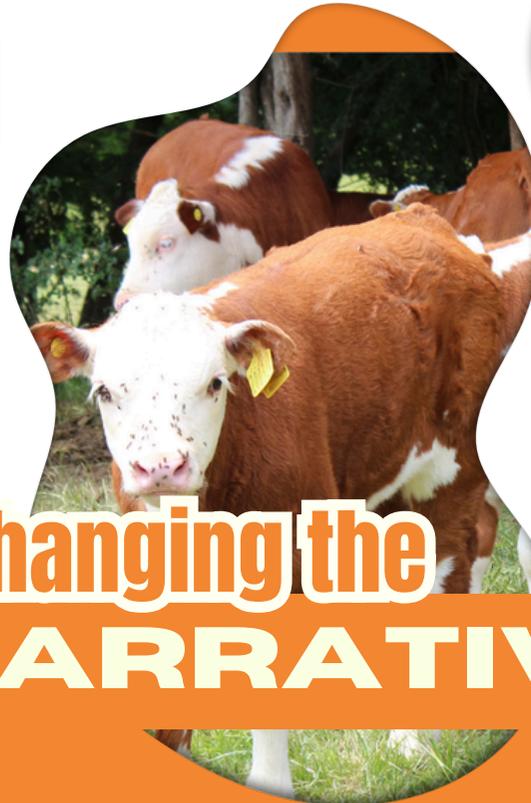Charlotte Jones - Communications Lead, Eating Better

Rebecca Tobi - Senior Business and Investor Engagement Manager, The Food Foundation

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at <u>comms@eating-better.org</u>

Methods

Online Omnibus. All figures unless stated otherwise were collected and supplied by Savanta. Total sample size was 1733 adults (N= 563 England, N= 531 Scotland, N= 459 Wales, N= 180 Northern Ireland). Fieldwork was undertaken in August 2025.

NOURISHING JUSTICE

We need to talk about industrial livestock production

Changing the NARRATIVE