

Lower prices can make more people eat vegetarian

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More meat eaters would choose a vegetarian burger if it was cheaper than a meat burger. But it takes a large price difference—even if the price was reduced by 30%, only a third of those who normally choose meat burgers would choose vegetarian. These are the results in an economics study from the University of Gothenburg, examining the

driving forces and obstacles to replacing meat with green alternatives.

"Despite the increasing number of [meat](#) substitutes, [meat consumption](#) is still at a high level. The question we asked ourselves in this study was whether it would be possible to use lower prices to get more people to choose vegetarian alternatives to meat," says Mitesh Kataria, associate professor of economics at the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg.

In addition to transport and housing, food (and in particular meat consumption) is one of households' major sources of [greenhouse gas emissions](#). In this study, the researchers asked Swedes who usually eat meat what they would be willing to pay for an alternative to meat burgers at a restaurant. The participants were presented with three varieties: a classic vegetable [burger](#), a meat-like vegetarian burger and a burger made from lab-made meat.

"What we saw is that extensive price differences are required for people to choose the vegetarian burger," says Mitesh Kataria.

Familiarity with alternatives an important factor

Approximately every third participant in the survey would consider switching to a vegetarian burger if the price was lower than two thirds of the price of a meat burger, that is a SEK 100 compared to SEK 150. However, there was a substantial difference between those who had previously tried vegetarian burgers and those who had not. Between 30 and 40 percent did not know how the meat substitutes tasted, smelled, looked like or what they cost and chose them to a lesser extent. Taste was most often cited as a determining factor in choosing meat.

"Even though people are aware of the climate issue, the cultural norms are strong. For many, changing their [eating habits](#) is simply a big deal. It

is evident that much more than just changing prices is needed to reduce meat consumption. New vegetarian products emerge all the time and could contribute to less greenhouse gases, but it is still not a given that people will be enthusiastic about them," says Mitesh Kataria.

Younger people and women were more positive

Those who were less likely to replace the meat were mainly men over the age of 30 without a university education, and [older people](#). Younger people and women had to a greater extent encountered meat alternatives before and chose it more often.

"There is a clear connection between eating habits as a child and what you consume when you get older. I think it is a good idea to try to reach young people and affect their eating habits, partly because they get used to and continue to eat less meat, partly because they can teach their parents by, for example, wanting vegetarian food at home," says Mitesh Kataria.

"How much does it take? Willingness to switch to meat substitutes," by Fredrik Carlsson, Mitesh Kataria and Elina Lampi, is published in *Ecological Economics* (March 2022).

More information: Fredrik Carlsson et al, How much does it take? Willingness to switch to meat substitutes, *Ecological Economics* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ecolecon.2021.107329](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2021.107329)

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