

Meatless Millennials: Younger Canadians feeding growth of plant-based meat substitutes

Majority of those aged 18-34 have tried plant-based meats, nine-in-ten (89%) enjoyed the taste

August 20, 2019 – While mock meat may be mocked in certain culinary circles, products such as the Beyond Burger have certainly performed beyond their parent company's business expectations as younger, urban consumers in Canada search for plant-based proteins to tempt their taste buds and conquer their hunger pangs.

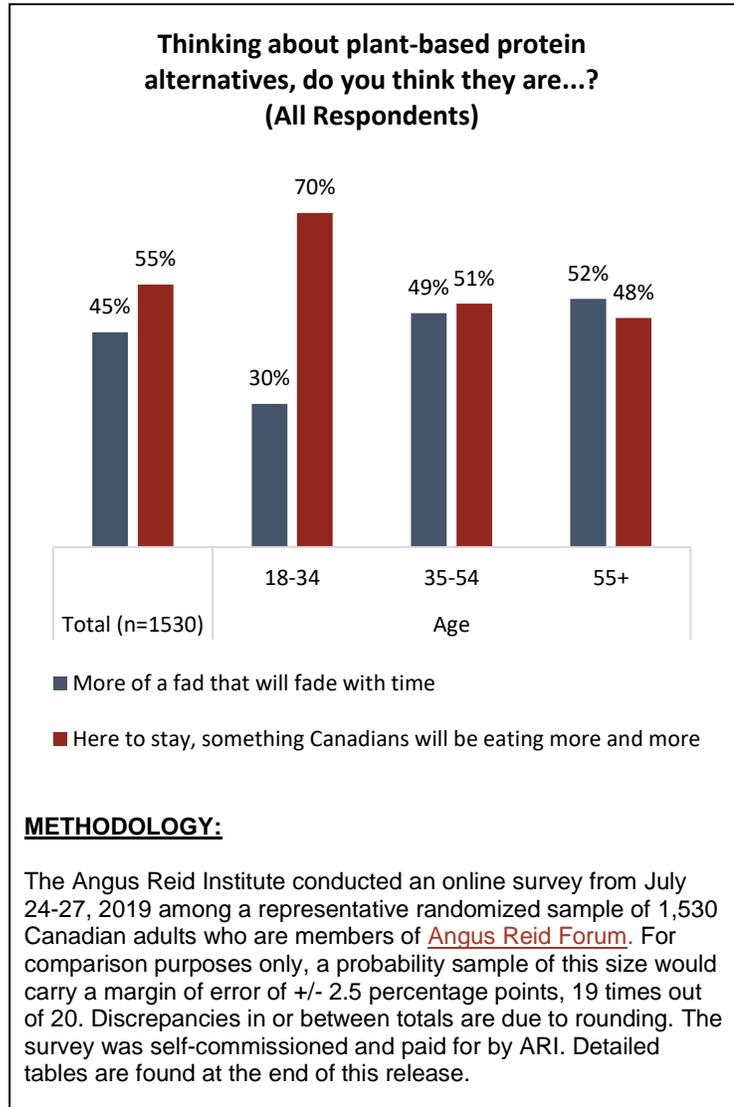
And while most Canadians have heard about such products, the majority have yet to sample them: a new study from the Angus Reid Institute finds nearly all Canadians are familiar with plant-based meat alternatives (95%), but only four-in-ten (39%) have actually tried them.

And although 45 per cent of Canadians are inclined to feel the plant-based protein trend is more of a fad than a new normal, the younger generation is embracing the presence of plant-based proteins on their plates.

Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34 are considerably more likely than their older peers to have tried these products (58% have), to say they will if they haven't already (48% plan to), and to say that the movement is here to stay (70% say this).

If this trend does indeed have staying power, will the growth in plant-based alternatives harm Canada's meat industry? Canadians are more optimistic than pessimistic about what this phenomenon will mean for the country.

One-in-three (35%) say Canada will benefit from the demand for more peas, lentils and beans – all key ingredients in vegan meat substitutes – while one-in-five (21%) say the domestic economy will be harmed due to potentially lower demand for meat. Alberta, the hub of Canada's beef industry, has the highest proportion of residents saying the impact on the country will be negative (35%), while those in Saskatchewan, the [world's largest lentil exporter](#), are divided equally (35% positive, 32% negative).



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More Key Findings:

- Among Canadians who regularly eat meat, one-in-five (22%) say they would like to reduce the amount they eat, while one-in-ten (10%) say they'd actually like to consume more meat. Most (68%) from this group say they're satisfied with their current meat intake and don't plan to change their eating habits.
- The portion of Canadians saying they would like to cut back on meat rises to four-in-ten among those between the ages of 18 and 34 (39%)
- While those who have tried plant-based meats generally say they enjoyed the taste (80% respond positively), they remain divided on whether or not such products are financially worthwhile – 41 per cent said the value for their money was poor or terrible

About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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Part 1: Four-in-ten have tried plant-based meats

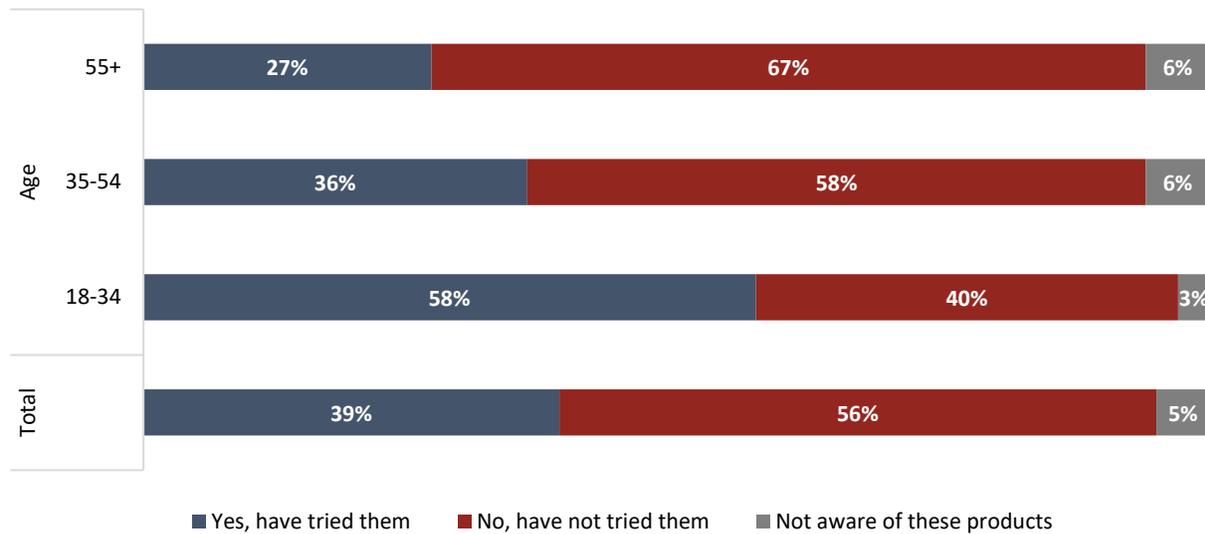
While Canadians near-unanimously say they have heard of plant-based meat products, such as the Impossible Burger and Gardein frozen foods, the upstart companies haven't quite convinced a majority of Canadians to give them a try. Four-in-ten say they have tried these products (39%), while six-in-ten have not (56% have not tried, 5% have not heard of them).

There appears to be a considerable generational divide in such products' consumer appeal: Canadians aged 18-34 are more than twice as likely as those 55-and-older to say they have tried plant-based meat substitutes.

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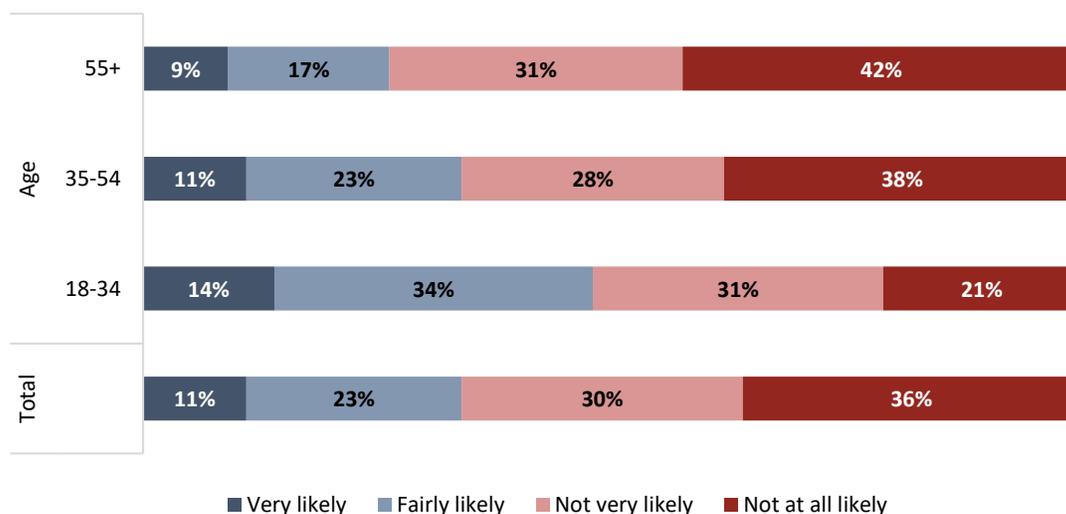
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**Have you ever tried any plant-based meat alternatives, like Beyond Meat, whether from a restaurant or grocery store?
(All Respondents, n=1530)**



Among those who have yet to try these products, just one-third say they plan to in the near future. Notably, however, among those who have not tried such products, younger respondents appear much more willing to give them a chance. Half (48%) among the 18-34 age group say they are likely to sometime in the next three months:

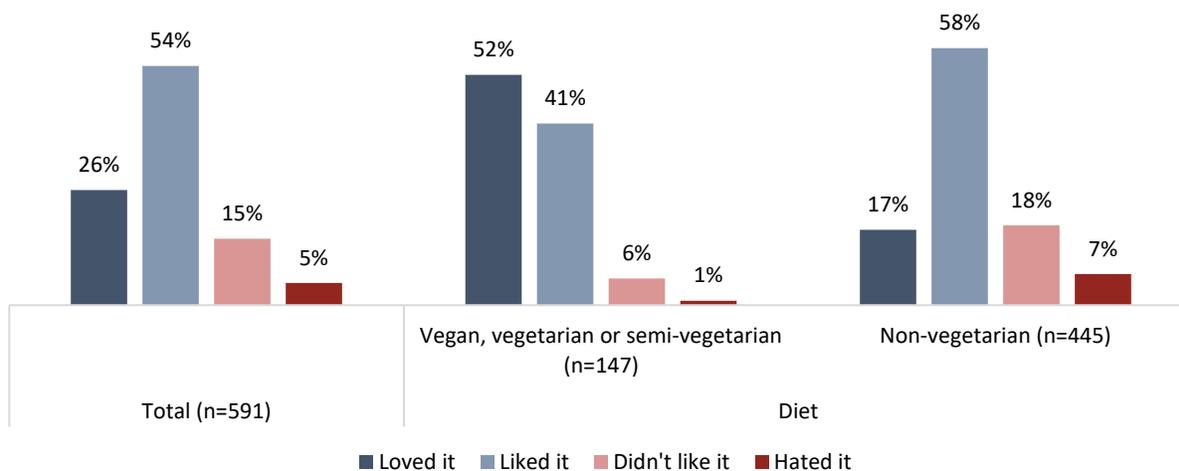
**How likely are you to try these products in the next three months?
(Have not tried plant-based meat alternatives, n=858)**



Most who have say they enjoyed it

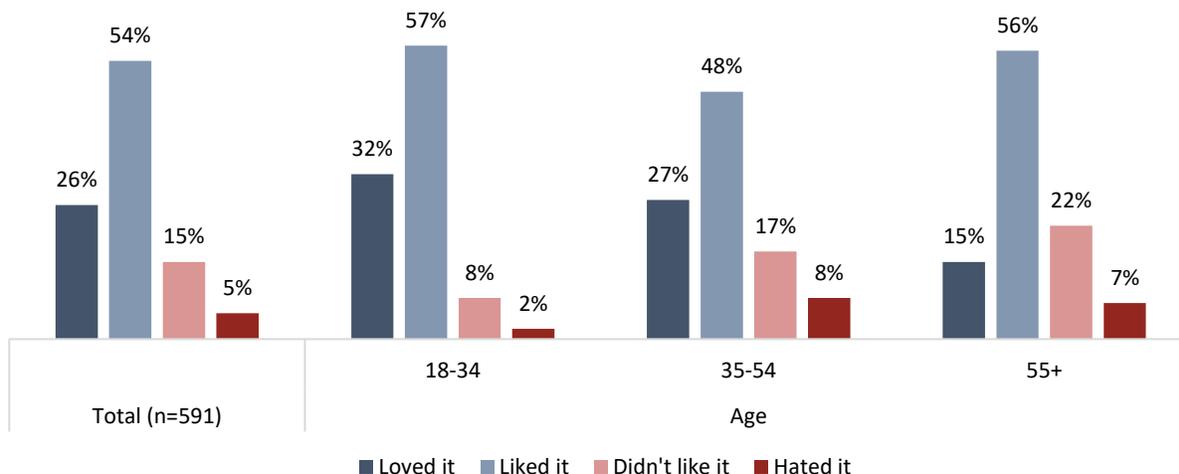
Among Canadians who *have* tried plant-based meat substitutes, four-in-five (80%) say they liked or even loved the taste, including three-in-four (75%) non-vegetarians. Those describing themselves as vegetarian, vegan or semi-vegetarian, meanwhile, are near unanimous in their praise:

**How did you feel about the taste?
(Have tried meat substitute, n=591)**



Once again here, younger Canadians appear most receptive to plant-based meat substitutes, with nine-in-ten (89%) from this age group saying they enjoyed the product(s) they tried:

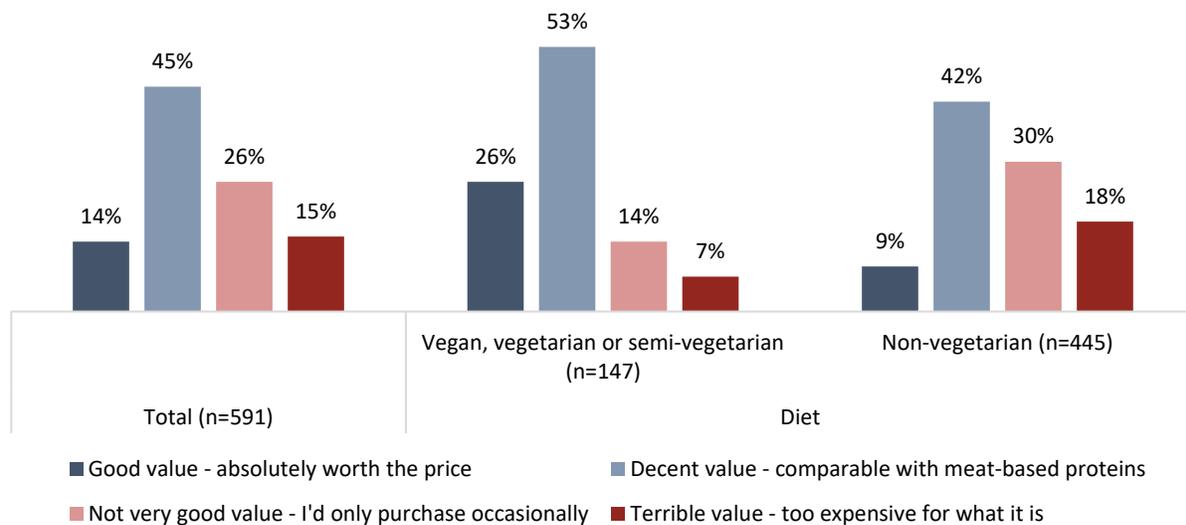
**How did you feel about the taste?
(Have tried meat substitute, n=591)**



Good value?

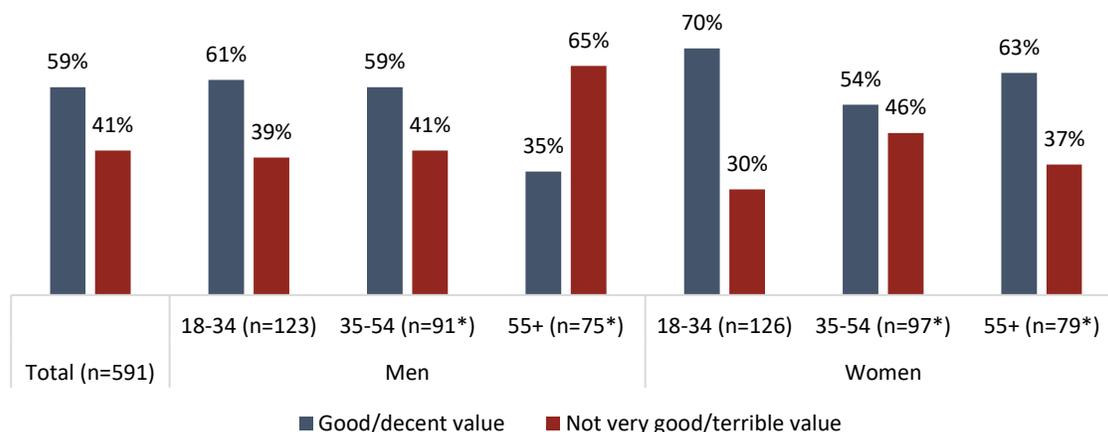
At present North American consumers typically pay considerably more for meat substitutes than they would for comparable meat products. Still, among Canadians who have tried such substitutes, six-in-ten (59%) say they were satisfied with their value for the money, although non-vegetarians appear somewhat less convinced. Indeed, vegetarians, vegans and semi-vegetarians are three times more likely than others to say meat substitutes are “absolutely worth the price.”

**Thinking about the price, would you say it was...?
(Have tried meat substitute, n=591)**



There also appears to be a significant age *and* gender divide in how Canadians assess the value of plant-based meats. Whereas more than half of respondents who have tried such products, from every other age-gender cohort, say they are at least “decent value” for the money, two-thirds (65%) of men over the age of 55 say the opposite:

**Thinking about the price, would you say it was...?
(Have tried meat substitute, n=591)**



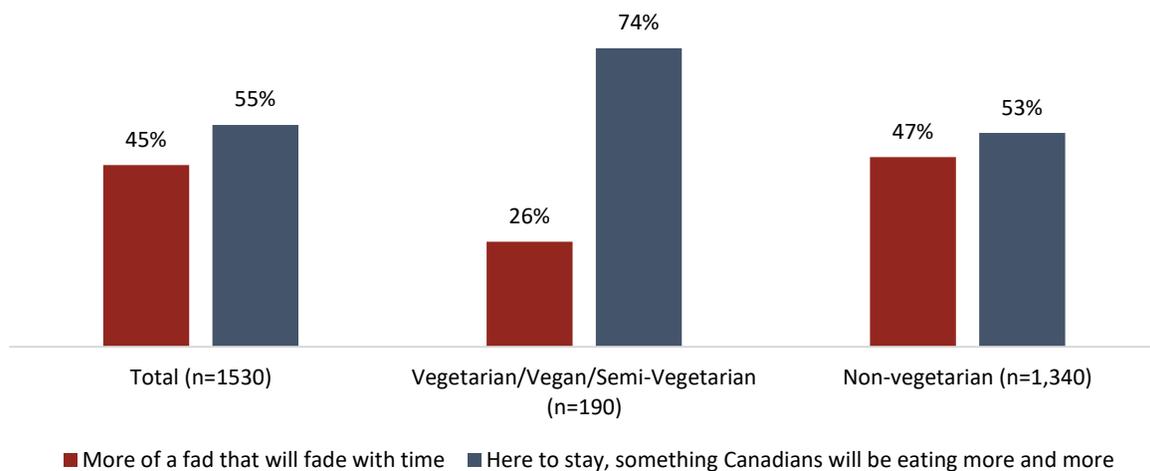
Part 2: Plant-based meat substitutes: fad or phenomenon?

The rise of plant-based proteins has been meteoric in recent years. Beyond Meat, a Los Angeles-based producer of products such as vegan burgers and sausages, has seen its revenues grow by nearly 300% in the past year after securing distribution with A&W, Tim Hortons, Whole Foods and numerous other retailers

Once niche products, these meat substitutes are now part of what Barclays claims may become a \$140 billion market over the next decade. That said, global demand for meat also continues to rise, driven by large populations gaining more access to meat that was historically difficult to afford – particularly in China and Brazil.

While a slight majority (55%) say they believe plant-based protein alternatives are here to stay and something Canadians will be eating more of in the coming years, a significant minority (45%) disagree, believing it to be a fad. That said, these opinions differ widely based on whether or not a person eats meat. Those who are either vegetarian, vegan or eat vegetarian “most of the time,” sometimes called flexitarians, are much more likely to say plant-based meat alternatives are the new normal:

And thinking about plant-based protein alternatives, do you think they are ...

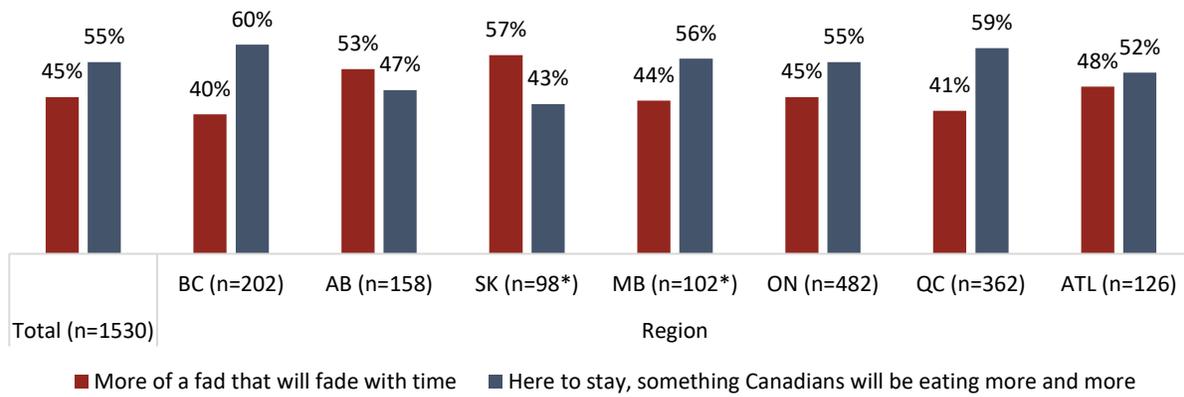


British Columbians and Quebecers are most likely to think the trend is here to stay, with six-in-ten from each of these provinces saying Canadians will be eating more plant-based protein alternatives in the future. Residents of Saskatchewan and Alberta, on the other hand, are most likely to say these meat substitutes will fade with time – a majority in each province believe this.

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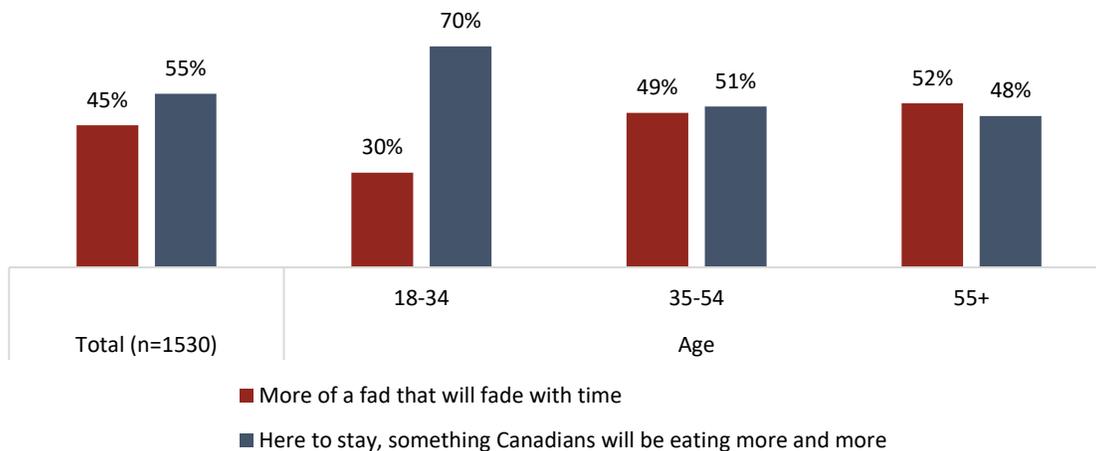
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**Thinking about plant-based protein alternatives, do you think they are...?
(All Respondents)**



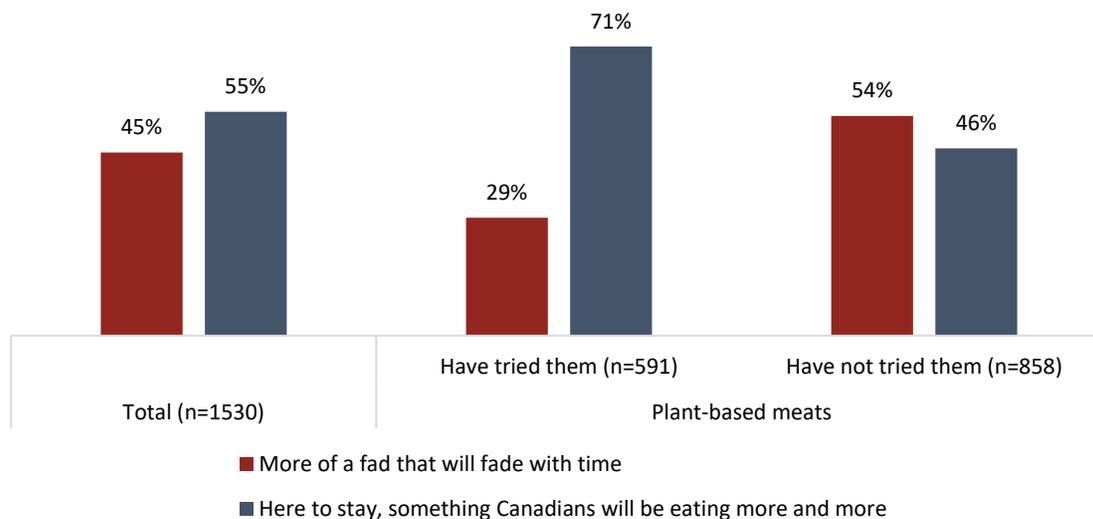
Age also appears to be a significant driver of opinion on this issue. While seven-in-ten (70%) Canadians under 35 believe plant-based protein alternatives are here to stay, those 35-and-older are more skeptical, and evenly divided:

**Thinking about plant-based protein alternatives, do you think they are...?
(All Respondents)**



Finally, there appears to be a considerable perception gap between current consumers of plant-based proteins and other Canadians: Those who have not tried these meat substitutes are nearly twice as likely as those who have (as noted in Part I, a disproportionately younger group) to say they are more of a fad that will fade with time:

**Thinking about plant-based protein alternatives, do you think they are...?
(All Respondents)**

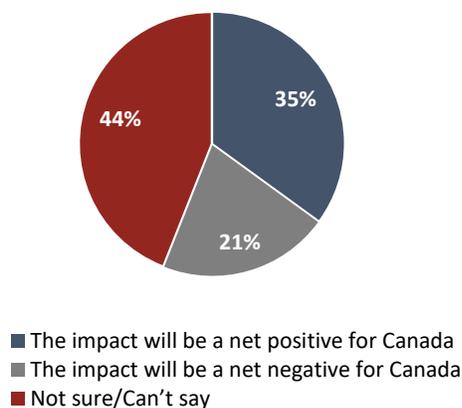


Economic impact for Canada: salad days or a bite out of the bottom line?

What does a heyday for plant-based protein sales portend for the country’s economy? This question comes amidst considerable anxiety from both producers and industry analysts about the impact that a large-scale consumer shift to plant-based proteins could have on Canada’s lucrative meat and dairy markets.

Looking to the future, about one-in-three (35%) say the net impact of consumers buying more plant-based proteins will be positive for the Canadian economy, more than those who say it will be negative (21%). The largest group, 44 per cent, say they are still unsure of what the affect will be for Canadian industry.

**Which of the following is closest to your own point of view?
(All respondents)**



Notably, in Alberta, where Canada's beef industry is primarily concentrated, pessimism about the economic impact of more plant-based proteins (35%) outpaces optimism (21%). This is the only region of the country where this is the case.

In Saskatchewan, the world's largest exporter of lentils, residents still voice considerable uncertainty about what the plant-based boom might mean for Canada. One-third say it will be positive (35%), one-third negative (32%) and one-third are unsure (33%).

Which of the following is closer to your view? (All Respondents)								
	Total (1530)	Region						
		BC (n=202)	AB (n=158)	SK (n=98*)	MB (n=102)	ON (n=482)	QC (n=362)	ATL (n=126)
The impact of consumers buying more plant-based proteins will be a net positive for Canada	35%	36%	21%	35%	38%	35%	41%	32%
The impact of consumers buying more plant-based proteins will be a net negative for Canada	21%	18%	35%	32%	28%	22%	14%	16%
Not sure/can't say	44%	46%	45%	33%	34%	43%	45%	52%

For now at least, growth in global demand for alternative protein sources has not hindered domestic meat production, as the value of Canada's beef and cattle exports reached a record \$3.7 billion in 2018.

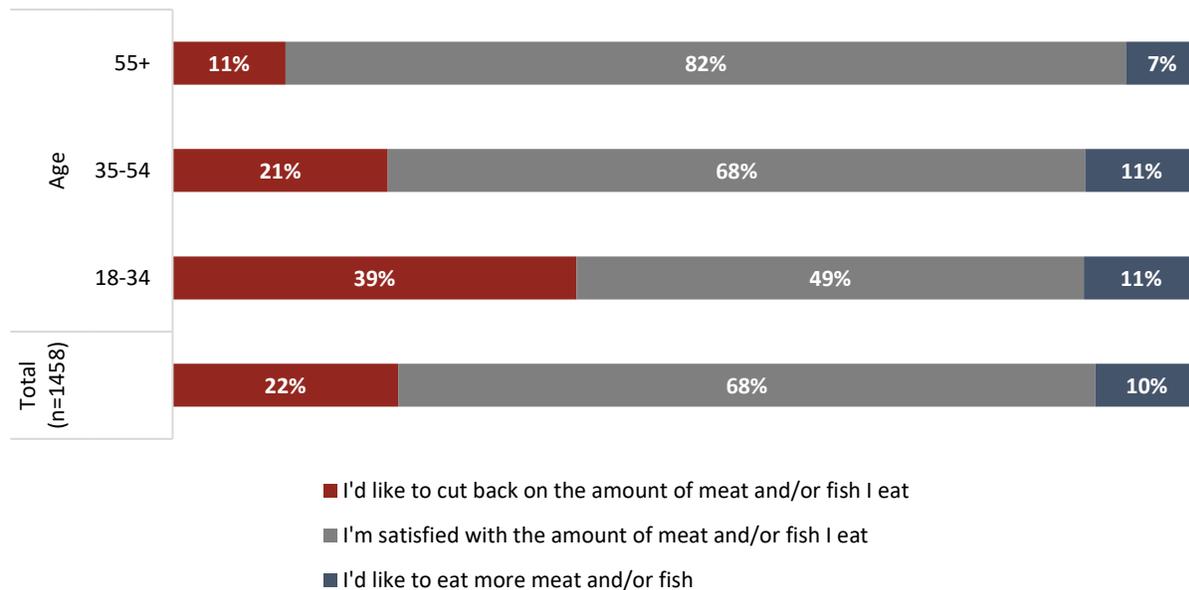
Part 3: Vegetarianism's growing appeal?

Canada may not be in the midst of a nationwide shift to vegetarianism, and plant-based meat substitutes may continue to garner mixed reviews, particularly from older generations, but a sizable minority of Canadians are still looking to incorporate more vegetarian foods into their diets.

One-in-five (22%), among those who are not already vegan or vegetarian, say they would like to cut back on the amount of meat and fish they consume. This is again driven in large part by younger Canadians, four-in-ten (39%) of whom say they would like to eat less meat and fish.

At the same time, it should be noted that the vast majority of Canadians 35-and-older are satisfied with their current level of meat consumption:

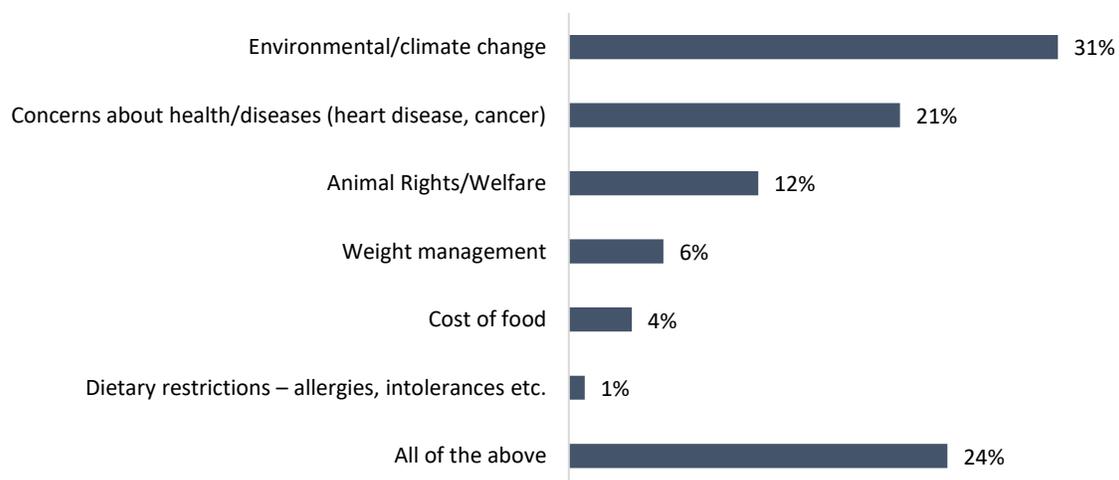
**Thinking about the amount of meat and/or fish that you eat ... which statement best describes you?
(Neither vegan nor vegetarian, n=1458)**



Environment, health most commonly cited reasons

Among those looking to cut back on meat, respondents' most commonly cited reasons for wanting to do this are environmental sustainability (31%) and health concerns (21%). For one-in-four (24%) among this group, numerous motivations appear relevant:

**What are the main reasons you have thought about eating less meat/fish?
(Want to cut back on meat consumption, n=322)**



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Many current or prospective vegetarians may also be motivated by religious or cultural dictates against eating meat. For example, Canada counts more than [half a million adherents of Hinduism](#) as well as more than [350,000 followers of Buddhism](#), both religions with significant segments that emphasize strict vegetarianism.

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, click [here](#).

For detailed results by diet, click [here](#).

[Click here to view the full questionnaire used in this survey](#)

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