



HELPING CLIENTS NAVIGATE CHANGE

VEGETARIANISM IN ROMANIA

2022

ABOUT THE STUDY

As we all know, the act of eating is not just about getting what the body needs, but also about what the soul needs, by enjoying ourselves with the ones we share the meal with and by feeling comfortable with what the meal is composed of.

Foods in general are more than simply a source of energy, minerals, and vitamins; they also have an emotional and symbolic payload. As a result, what we eat is influenced not just by the foods that are easily available to us, but also by our beliefs and attitudes.

Meat is a fundamental energy and protein-producing meal all across the world, but it can also be a controversial subject. Some people avoid only particular types of meat, while others avoid all meat.

Meat avoiding sporadic diets, most likely in a ritualic context, have probably existed since the dawn of times. From the first millennium B.C. we already have recorded evidence of advocacy for a regular meatless, plant-based diet – in India, in the Far East, respectively Greece in the European area. The main motivation behind this push for giving up meat was ethical, driven by religious or philosophical reasons.

In modern times, particularly in the last few years, there has been a growing tendency throughout the world, including in Europe, of adopting a plant-based diet, eliminating meat and other animal-derived foods either partially or totally. People are now opting for such diets for ethical reasons (animal and environmental welfare), health reasons, peer pressure, or, in some cases, just because they dislike meat.

There is a wide variety of such diets and the definitions ranges on a continuum from

no other animal origin food whatsoever to various degrees of accepting animal-based food, such as:

- Veganism which calls for a diet which avoids any animal derived food – including gelatin, collagen, and sometimes even honey and white sugar.
- “Traditional” vegetarians – no meat whatsoever, but they are eating dairy and/or eggs and maybe other animal derived products such as gelatin, collagen and honey.
- The relaxed vegetarians also known as “pescatarians” – they are eating fish, seafood and derived products, may or may not also eat dairy or eggs.
- Flexitarians – are eating mostly vegetal based food but who are willing to eat animal products sometimes.

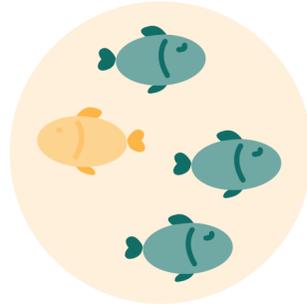
The problem is clearly complex, and people’s perceptions may differ from “the book” definitions. As we will see a little later, some Romanians consider pescatarians and even people who avoid solely red meat but not poultry to be vegetarians.

This study is intended to shed a bit of light on the vegetarians (including vegans) in urban Romania – how many people consider themselves to be vegetarians / vegans and how vegetarians / vegans are perceived from both inside and outside.

Liviu Micu,
Senior Researcher



SUMMARY



There are quite a lot Romanians identifying as Vegetarians or Vegans. Their image of Vegetarians is quite fluid, in addition to the usual Vegetarian definition (eggs & dairy and/or fish & seafood, besides plant-based food), poultry consumption is also accepted. There are also quite a few who could be defined as Flexitarians (still eating red meat, but significantly more seldom).



Age is the differentiating factor in Vegetarian / Vegan lifestyle adoption, which grew steadily in urban areas during the last decades, mirroring worldwide trends. Other demographic factors do not seem to play a part in this.



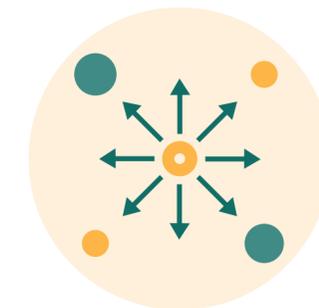
Vegetarians & Vegans are more preoccupied by “healthy” eating – place more value on bio / eco & “healthy” food and on raw vegetables. In general, they feel themselves more healthy than Non-Vegetarians



There is a general agreement Vegetarians & Vegans are trying to convince others to follow their example, but this is not seen as bothersome. Vegetarians & Vegans see themselves as more altruistic (more concerned about animal, planet and humankind welfare), however the implicit moral superiority of reduced meat consumption does not yet lead to major tensions.



Health is clearly the main reason for adopting a Vegetarian or Vegan diet & lifestyle, followed by 2 altruistic reasons (the sake of the environment & animal rights).



There's not doubt the Vegetarians and Vegans numbers will grow; even Non-Vegetarians mostly agree on that. It will be interesting to see the reaction of the majority as the Vegetarians and Vegans will probably be more vocal too as they will gain momentum

METHODOLOGY

TARGET

Urban population,
18-65 years old



SAMPLE SIZE AND STRUCTURE

900 Respondents – national representative for Romania by age, gender and regions (controlled with quotas & weighting).



DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Online interviews



QUESTIONNAIRE LENGTH

5 minutes

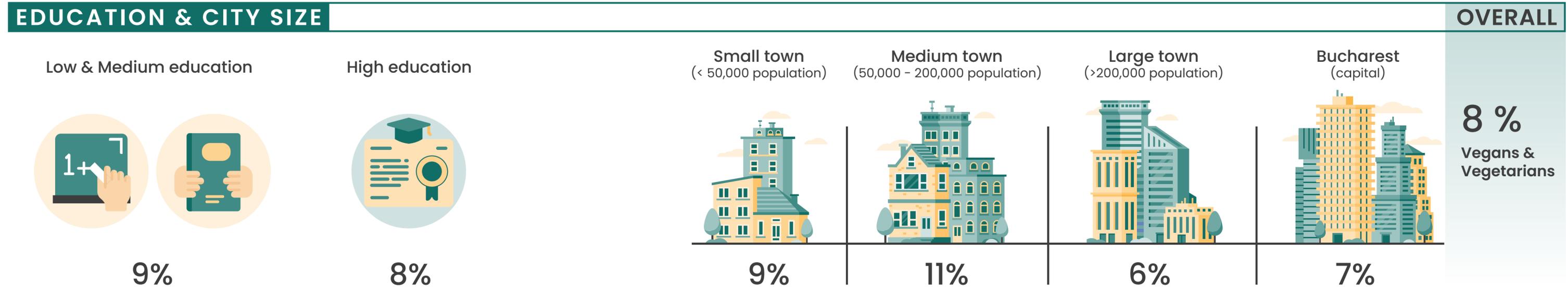
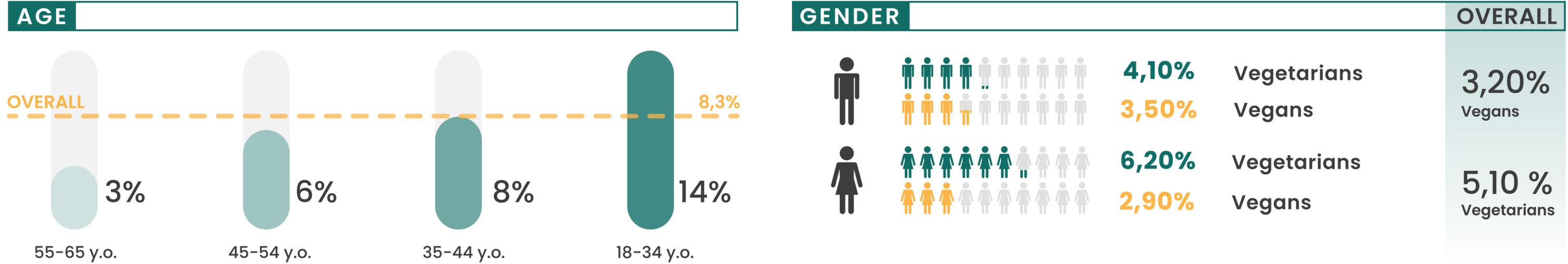


FIELDWORK PERIOD

November 29th
|
December 14th, 2021



Vegans & Vegetarians distribution by...



In the past decades there has been an increasing shift towards reducing or eliminating meat consumption – the younger the people are, the higher the Vegetarians & Vegans percentage. Otherwise, Vegetarians & Vegans are spread quite even among the urban population. Apparently, there are some variations depending on the size of the city, but the differences are not significant.



How would you describe Vegetarians, when it comes to eating animal-based foods?



Interestingly, the Vegetarians & Vegans have a bit more nuanced view about vegetarianism. Non-Vegetarians see vegetarianism in a more polarized light – significantly more of them think Vegetarians are either not eating animal-based food at all or allow a more varied diet with fish or poultry, besides dairy and eggs, while visibly fewer of them are choosing the middle ground option (lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet)



Now we are going to present you a series of nutrition related statements.
Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with each of them

Nutrition related attitudes



Scale from **5 - Fully Agree** to **1 - Fully disagree**



Vegetarians & Vegans look more preoccupied by healthy eating – bio /eco, “healthy” food, raw vegetables. On the other hand, they seem more relaxed toward excesses of sweets & fat and toward controlling what they eat – most likely because, in order to give up various kind of meat and animal related food, they are already exercising more control over they diet and they don't indulge as much as Non-Vegetarians.



How often do you eat each of the following types of food? (Vegans not asked)

1. Daily

2. At least 3-4 times a week

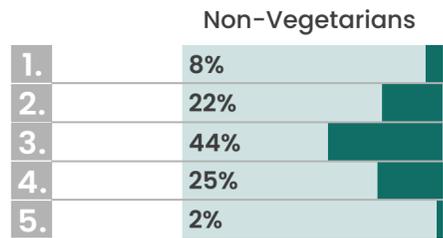
3. About 1-2 times a week

4. Less than once a week

5. Never



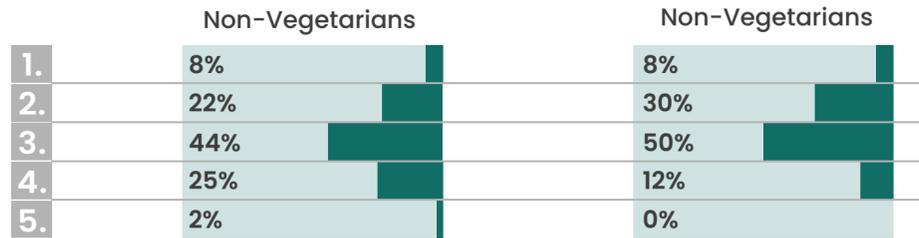
Red Meat



Red meat (e.g., pork, beef, sheep) and any products derived from it



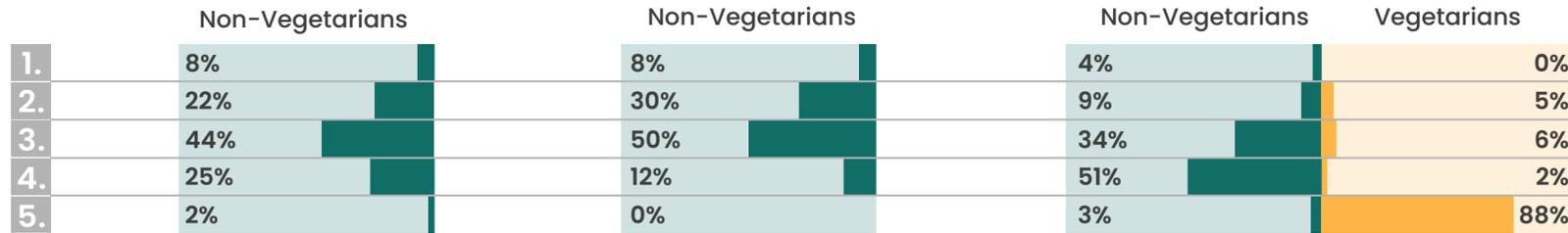
Poultry



Poultry (e.g., chicken, turkey, duck) and any products derived from it



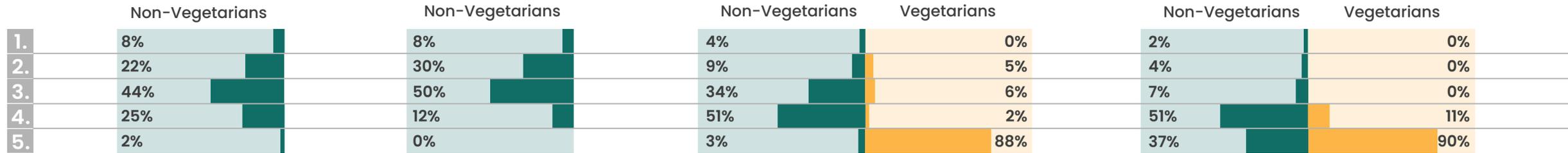
Fish



Fish, roe and any products derived from it (e.g., fish oils)



Seafood



Seafood - such as shellfish, crayfish, shrimp, squid, octopus and any products derived from it

How would you describe your state of health?

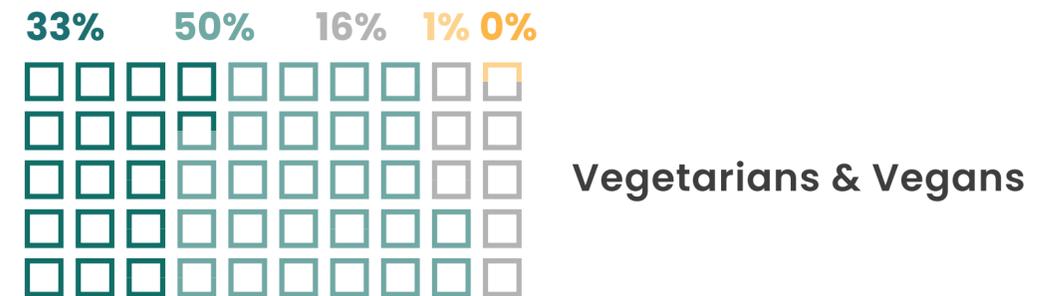
Very Good

Quite Good

So and So

Quite Bad

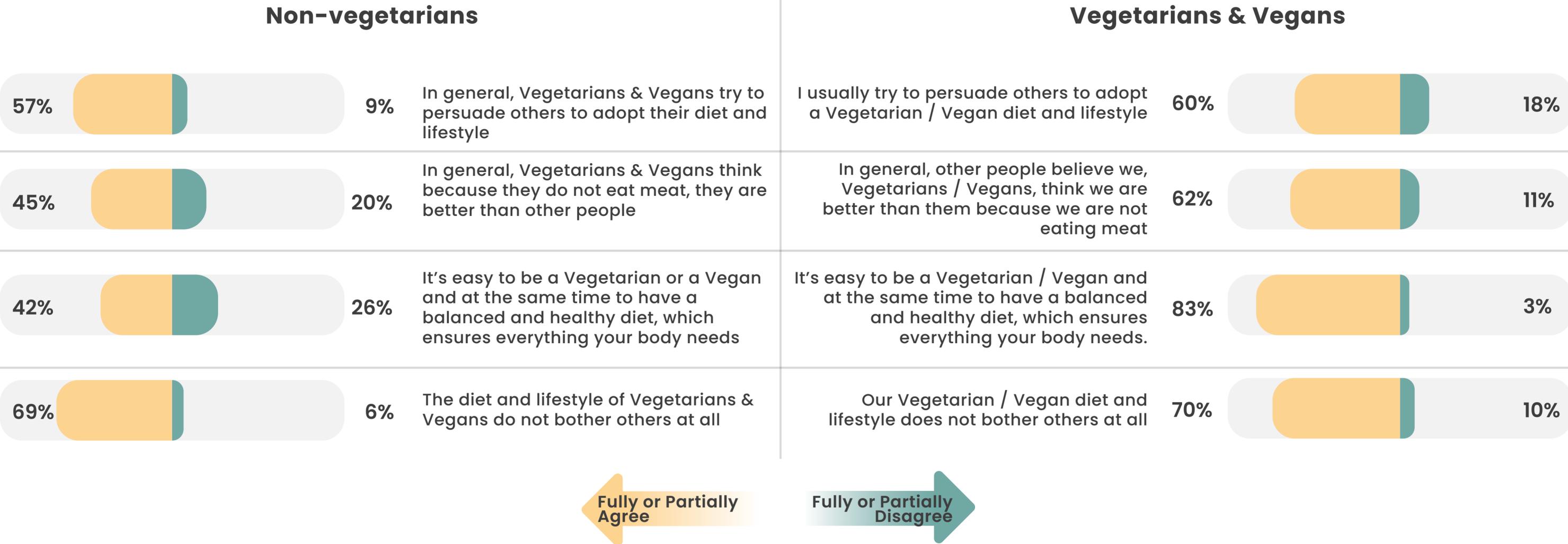
Very Bad



Vegetarians feel they are a bit healthier, in general. As for each type of meat consumption (including fish), there's a sweet spot of 1-2 times a week or less often for Non-Vegetarians, suggesting they like to alternate the type of meat they eat. On the other hand, fish eating Vegetarians have higher consumption frequency, since they have far fewer choices than Non-Vegetarians. There is a common trait - seafood, excepting fish, has the most sporadic consumption among both groups - clearly is not as popular in Romania as in other countries. In this study we measured just the consumption frequency, without the amount consumed.



Vegetarians & Vegans related attitudes(1)



Scale from **5 - Fully Agree** to **1 - Fully disagree**



There is a general agreement Vegetarians & Vegans are trying to „convert” others, but seemingly in a gentle manner – all parts agree their lifestyle is not bothersome for rest of the people. However, there are some potential tension sources – Vegetarians & Vegans also feel to a higher degree that Non-Vegetarians believe they consider themselves better than others because of the implicit moral superiority of reduced meat consumption. We also notice a potential barrier for Non-Vegetarians – the belief that, relatively speaking, is hard to have a nutritious Vegetarian or Vegan diet.

Vegetarians & Vegans related attitudes(2)

Non-vegetarians



The vast majority of Vegetarians & Vegans are animal lovers



The vast majority of Vegetarians & Vegans are concerned about the future of the planet



The vast majority of Vegetarians & Vegans are concerned about the well-being of all people

Vegetarians & Vegans



The vast majority of Vegetarians & Vegans are animal lovers



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The vast majority of Vegetarians & Vegans are concerned about the well-being of all people



Scale from **5 - Fully Agree** to **1 - Fully disagree**



We have the most likely cause of the self-righteousness perception differences - Vegetarians & Vegans see themselves as more altruistic than they are perceived by the Non-Vegetarians, more concerned about animal, planet and humankind welfare. These factors are driving the moral superiority position of reduced meat consumption, position which can fuel conflicts with inveterate meat eaters; fortunately that's not the case in Romania, at least not yet



Interactions

1. Have you had a tense discussion with a Vegetarian or a Vegan about his diet / lifestyle?

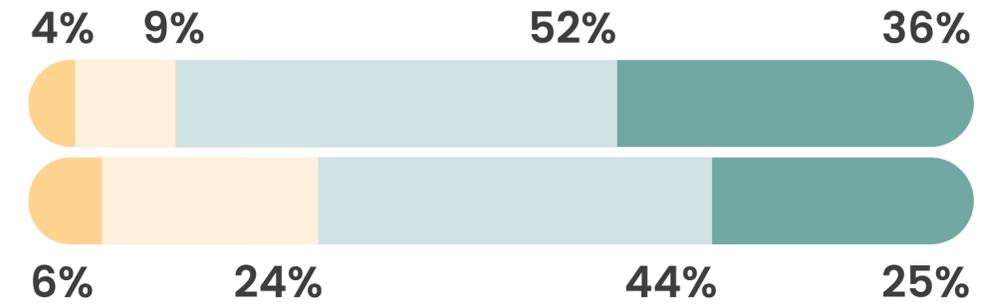
2. How often do you make jokes about the diet / lifestyle of Vegetarians or Vegans, when are Vegetarians or Vegans around?



Non-vegetarians

1. Have you had a tense discussion with a Non-Vegetarian about your diet / lifestyle as a Vegetarian / Vegan?

2. Do other people make jokes about your diet / lifestyle as a Vegetarian / Vegan, when you are around?



Vegetarians & Vegans



Scale from 1 - Very Often to 4 - Very seldom / Never



It's clear that Vegetarians & Vegans are more sensible about interactions related to their lifestyle. On the other hand, like in most majority - minority interactions, is not surprising that Non-Vegetarians are not paying too much attention to this subject and see it as more benign.

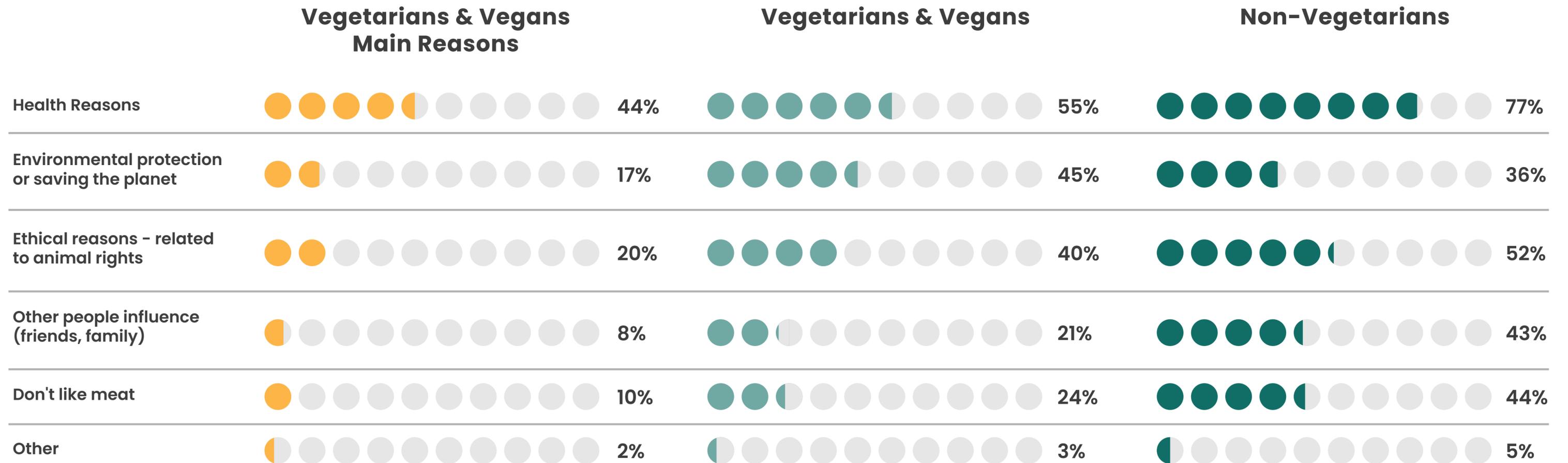


Vegetarians & Vegans Reasons

For Non-Vegetarians: Why do you think some people choose to give up meat eating altogether (including fish, seafood, and other animal products) in some cases?

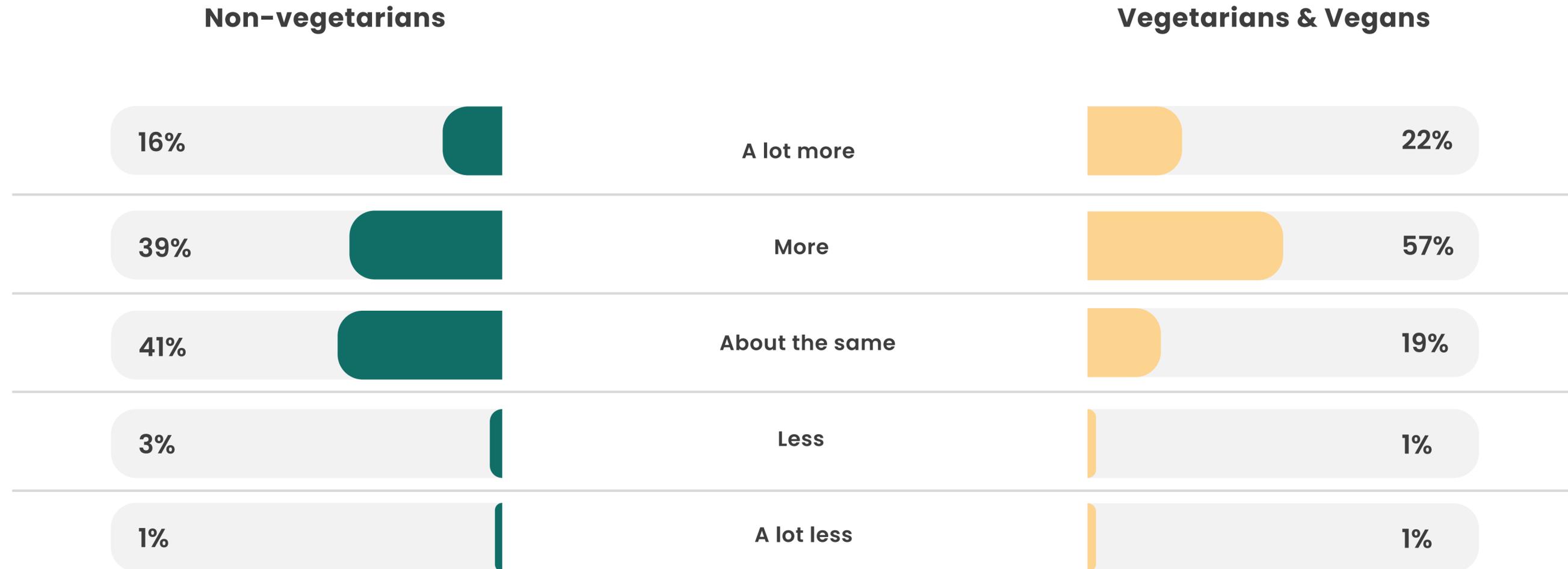
For Vegetarians: Why did you choose to give up meat eating (including fish, seafood and other animal products, if applicable)?

For Vegans: Why did you choose to give up meat eating and all other animal-related foods?



Non-Vegetarians have guessed the top reason for Vegetarians & Vegans to reduce or give up meat and animal-related food consumption, but they usually overestimate the reasons' importance, excepting Environmental protection / saving the planet reason. Anyway, *health* is clearly the main reason triggering such a change in diet & lifestyle, followed by 2 altruistic reasons (environmental protection & animal rights).

Do you think that in the future there will be more or less people who will adopt a Vegetarian or Vegan diet / lifestyle?



No matter what, it's clear Vegetarians & Vegans are here to stay and not just that – everybody agrees on this. Naturally, Vegetarians & Vegans are more optimistic about their ranks growth.





Thank you for going through our study regarding:

VEGETARIANISM IN ROMANIA

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