Vegetarianism. A blossoming field of study

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Abstract

Vegetarianism, the practice of abstaining from eating meat, has a recorded history dating back to ancient Greece. Despite this, it is only in recent years that researchers have begun conducting empirical investigations of the practices and beliefs associated with vegetarianism. The present article reviews the extant literature, exploring variants of and motivations for vegetarianism, differences in attitudes, values and worldviews between omnivores and vegetarians, as well as the pronounced gender differences in meat consumption and vegetarianism. Furthermore, the review highlights the extremely limited cultural scope of the present data, and calls for a broader investigation across non-Western cultures.

Highlights

► Review of the extant literature on vegetarianism.
► Vegetarianism associated with concern for environment, equality, and social justice.
► Health vegetarians concerned primarily with personal well-being; ethical vegetarians with welfare of others.
► Women more likely to be vegetarian, express greater concern for animal welfare.
► Calls for a broader investigation of vegetarianism across non-Western cultures.

Keywords: Animal welfare; Attitudes; Culture; Gender; Health; Meat; Motivations; Veganism; Vegetarianism

Article Outline

Introduction
Definitions and motivations
Health-oriented and ethically-motivated vegetarians
Attitudes toward meat
Values and worldviews
Differences in well-being
Perceptions of vegetarians and omnivores
Vegetarianism and gender
Discussion
Conclusion
Uncited reference
References

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