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The effects of level of support for animal protection organisations on attitudes to the use of animals and other social issues

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Abstract

Animal protection issues are being advanced increasingly by Non-Government Organisations, yet the views of their supporters are little understood. We surveyed attitudes towards animals and other social issues in 3,462 university students from over 103 universities in eleven European and Asian countries. The extent to which those respondents that supported animal protection organisations had more concern for animals than those who did not support such organisations was investigated, and whether this concern was generalised to other world social issues. Of the respondents, 36% sometimes and 6% very often supported animal protection organisations and 2% identified themselves as key members. Supporters and key members had increased scores on indices that measured their concerns for animal welfare (+ 6%), animals in experimentation (+ 7%), and other major social issues (+ 5%), compared with non-supporters. Supporters were also likely to have lived with pets for longer, suggesting that this was one of the drivers for their increased concern for animals. Key members of the organisations rated the sentience of humans lower (−9%) than other students rated them, and nearer to that of animals. The level of support for the organisations was directly related to avoidance of poultry, pork and beef meat. It is concluded that support for animal protection organisations is an indicator of attitudes towards animals and other social issues, and food consumption habits.

Keywords: *animal ethics, animal protection organisations, animal welfare, Non-Government Organisations, social issues, student attitudes*