

# Adapting to Change: Red Meat Trends Among Under 35s



## Shifting Consumption Amid Price Pressures

Price inflation has affected all consumers this year, with the cost of primary red meat (PRM) — particularly beef — continuing to climb. However, the impact has been felt differently. Under 35s have shown a higher sensitivity to price increases, reducing their PRM purchases to ease financial pressure. According to Worldpanel by Numerator, Under 35s accounted for 8.1% of total primary red meat volume sold in Scotland over the past 52 weeks, compared with 13.5% across Great Britain. This gap primarily reflects Scotland’s older population profile.

## Evolving Behaviours and Preferences

Despite purchasing less volume per trip (down to 0.79kg per trip), Under 35s are beginning to shop for red meat more frequently. Encouragingly, recent QMS research found that younger consumers (age 18-24) in Scotland are the most likely age group to visit butchers in the next 12 months, at 61%, signalling a growing interest in quality and provenance and the appeal of shopping locally.

In the latest 12-week period, pork has become a preferred PRM protein of choice for Under 35s, with an 8.4% increase in volume. Pork steak, mince, and belly cuts have all contributed strongly to category growth — likely due to their versatility and relative affordability compared with beef and lamb.



## Convenience, Value, and Health at the Core

Under 35s continue to favour mince, with around half of their red meat purchases made in this format. This underpins the generation’s preference for convenience, versatility, and value. Many have traded down to cheaper mince options and lower-cost proteins within the mince category, reflecting financial caution in a high-inflation environment.

Interestingly, steak purchases among Under 35s remain broadly in line with older shoppers, showing that premium occasions still have a place when value aligns with perceived quality, especially as dining in becomes an increasingly popular alternative to eating out for treats or special occasions.

It is reassuring to see that Under 35s are not switching to meat-free alternatives — partly because meat-free options remain more expensive than PRM and awareness is growing of some of these foods being ultra-processed. Instead, red meat retains relevance as these consumers increasingly view it as a natural, lighter, and lower-fat, salt, and sugar option. For this group, red meat is associated more with health-conscious meals than indulgence, often appearing in quick, assembled dinners such as pasta dishes, burgers, and meatballs.

## Key Purchase Drivers

Recent QMS research highlights that price remains the most important factor influencing Under 35s’ red meat choices. Compared with the wider adult population, younger consumers also place greater importance on convenience and sustainability. This suggests a nuanced picture: while affordability is critical, younger consumers are open to paying for value when products align with their lifestyle and ethics.

Important factors when purchasing red meat for Under 35s in Scotland %NET important



Under 35s are redefining how and why they consume meat. With clear preferences for affordability, convenience, and health, this group represents a vital audience for the future of Scottish red meat. By adapting products, pricing, and messaging to meet their evolving expectations, the industry can secure both immediate engagement and long-term loyalty among the next generation of consumers.

Source: Worldpanel by Numerator, primary red meat, GB and Scotland total coverage, 52w and 12w.e. 8th August 2025  
QMS research 2025