



Food Waste: National attitudes and behaviours in Ireland 2020



NATIONAL WASTE PREVENTION PROGRAMME
Preventing Waste, Driving the Circular Economy



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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Foreword

In 2020, the EPA commissioned Behaviour & Attitudes Limited to conduct a nationally representative survey on attitudes to food waste and the level of consciousness of any positive actions being taken to reduce it. This report presents the findings from this first nationally representative survey conducted at the end of 2020 and the context for the study is presented the following paragraphs.

Through the National Waste Prevention Programme, the EPA leads a major programme to drive awareness and action on food waste prevention to householders as an immediate, low-cost and effective personal climate action; and to businesses as a significant source of cost-savings along with being a response to sustainability ambitions. The programme undertakes campaigns and develops supports leading to measured reduction in food waste in households and businesses.

For a successful food waste prevention programme, there is an important role for awareness raising and communication activities that have a large population reach and that maintain an ongoing presence in the public consciousness. An important finding of the survey was that some of the 'good' food organisation behaviours, such as checking the fridge before shopping and making a list, are followed by those who are more conscious of food waste on a day-to-day basis, highlighting the need to make people aware of how much food waste they are producing, and how they can take actions in their day-to-day life to reduce the food they waste.

The national Stop Food Waste programme is focused on awareness raising and the application of behavioural insights to lead to a measured reduction in food waste and an increase in public engagement on the topic of food waste, and a widespread public awareness of the issue and solutions to help reduce it.

The main approach to achieve these goals will be through awareness raising and intervention activities linked to priority food waste types & audiences. These are being implemented through an evidence-based communications plan and working with others to amplify the message and reach.

This 2020 survey will establish the baseline for information on the behaviours and attitudes of target population groups for household food waste prevention. A key finding of this baseline survey is:

“that although the large majority of the population are aware of the challenges of food waste and agree that it is an important national issue, for most it is not top of mind during their day-to-day and the large majority of the population also feel that they are not the ones contributing most towards the problem. This highlights a significant challenge in terms of behavioural change.”

The survey will be repeated at regular intervals to monitor the changes in engagement, help identify target audiences and key messages for the Stop Food Waste campaign, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme activities. Reduction in reported food waste will be measured through regular waste characterisation studies to track changes in household food waste.

This will provide a trend to monitor factors that influence food waste and track Irish citizens' behaviour changes towards food through a comparison with past surveys. In the longer term, this data will allow measurement of the effectiveness of the programme in terms of waste prevented, behaviour changes and public awareness of the food waste issue.

Key findings



About **three in five people actively think about food waste**, with highest active consideration amongst the 65+ age cohort (74%) and lowest amongst the 16-24 age group.



People show a high concern for all food waste issues and 85% agree that food waste is an important national issue. However, **only 1 in 10 people (12%) see food waste as the most concerning food issue** among a range of issues, such as price, safety, ingredients and nutritional content.



Overall, the price of food is the most concerning issue to the Irish population, with 57% of people including the price of food in their top 5 food waste issues, with the strongest concern expressed for **financial loss -and remorse, e.g. people go hungry'**.



3 in 5 people (63%) believe they only waste a small amount of food. Getting people to adopt good food reduction behaviours will be challenging as many do not acknowledge they are contributing to the problem.



Television is the primary medium in which people have seen or heard about food reduction (41%). However, for younger age groups social media also has a prominent role for food waste information. **A multi-channel media strategy is needed to reach all cohorts in society.**



There is strong understanding that many different stakeholders along the food supply chain have a role to play in preventing food waste. 9 in 10 people (89%) believe consumers themselves have a responsibility in preventing food waste.



Empty nesters claim to throw away the least amount of food overall with 22% claiming that they throw away no food at all. **The 25-34 age cohort throw out the most food (in particular, fruit, vegetables, dairy, potatoes and meat).**



The 16-24 and 25-34 age cohorts appear to have a lack of knowledge of how to reduce their food waste. **2 in 5 of younger age groups say they would like to reduce food waste but they don't know how.**



High numbers of people are checking their fridge (81%) and making a list (70%) before doing a shop. Those who actively think about food waste are more likely to check their fridge and are more likely to make a shopping list.



During the first national Covid-19 lockdown (March – July 2020), there appears to have been some impacts on people's shopping and food waste behaviour:

- 29% of the population reported reducing their food waste.
- 15% of the population claimed they checked food labels for 'use by' and 'best before' dates more often.
- Increases reported in checking information on food packs more often to find out how best to store items (+15%) and in freezing food items more often (+15%).

However, the increases in these behaviours levelled off with limited significant net differences noted post lockdown.



Price promotions strongly influences the purchasing of more products. However, the people who claim to be wasting a 'moderate/large amount' of food are **more likely to purchase items due to impulse (74%), pester power (73%) and lack of product availability (72%)**. They also appear to be less organised with nearly 7 in 10 (67%) often/sometimes buying items before checking if they are needed.



A high adherence is evident in checking food dates on products when both shopping for food (86% always/often) and preparing meals (81% always/often). However, this behaviour is more common amongst females and amongst the older age cohorts. **About 9 in 10 understand what 'best before' means and 3 in 4 understand what 'use-by' means.**

Methodology

Fieldwork for this first national representative survey was conducted in September 2020. The 23-question online survey was conducted through the B&A online research panel (nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults aged 16+ and quota controlled in terms of gender, age, socio-economic status, region and area).

The survey covered the following areas:

- Concerns for food waste
- Responsibilities for food waste
- Managing food in the home
- Food waste and Covid-19
- Food dates and storage advice
- Attitudes to food waste

This first survey provides a baseline understanding of the current situation in terms of Irish citizens' attitudes, awareness and behaviours relating to food waste. The survey will be repeated at regular intervals to monitor the changes and to track Irish citizens' behaviour changes towards managing food. The research has provided evidence and insights to direct national communications and interventions on household food waste prevention. This research also provided data for demographic segmentation of the Irish population to help direct and target food waste communications and interventions.

Answers are expressed as statistically significant when the difference between cohorts cannot be explained by a standard 2-3% margin of error. When comparing data from one year to the next, for example comparing answers to a question asked in 2020 with answers from the same question repeated in 2021, a change greater than the margin of error of the sample is considered statistically significant.

Sampling

The sample was drawn using a similar approach to face-to-face interviewing. Quota controls were used in line with the population as defined by the Central Statistics Office as set out below.

Gender	
Male	49%
Female	51%
Age	
-35	32%
36-64	51%
65+	17%
Region	
Dublin	29%

Rest of Leinster	26%
Munster	27%
Connaught/Ulster	18%

Sample selection was controlled by the panel management team. When extracting samples, individuals were randomly selected within the survey target groupings. All samples were randomised prior to deployment. Samples can be deployed in terms of demographic batches or regionally.

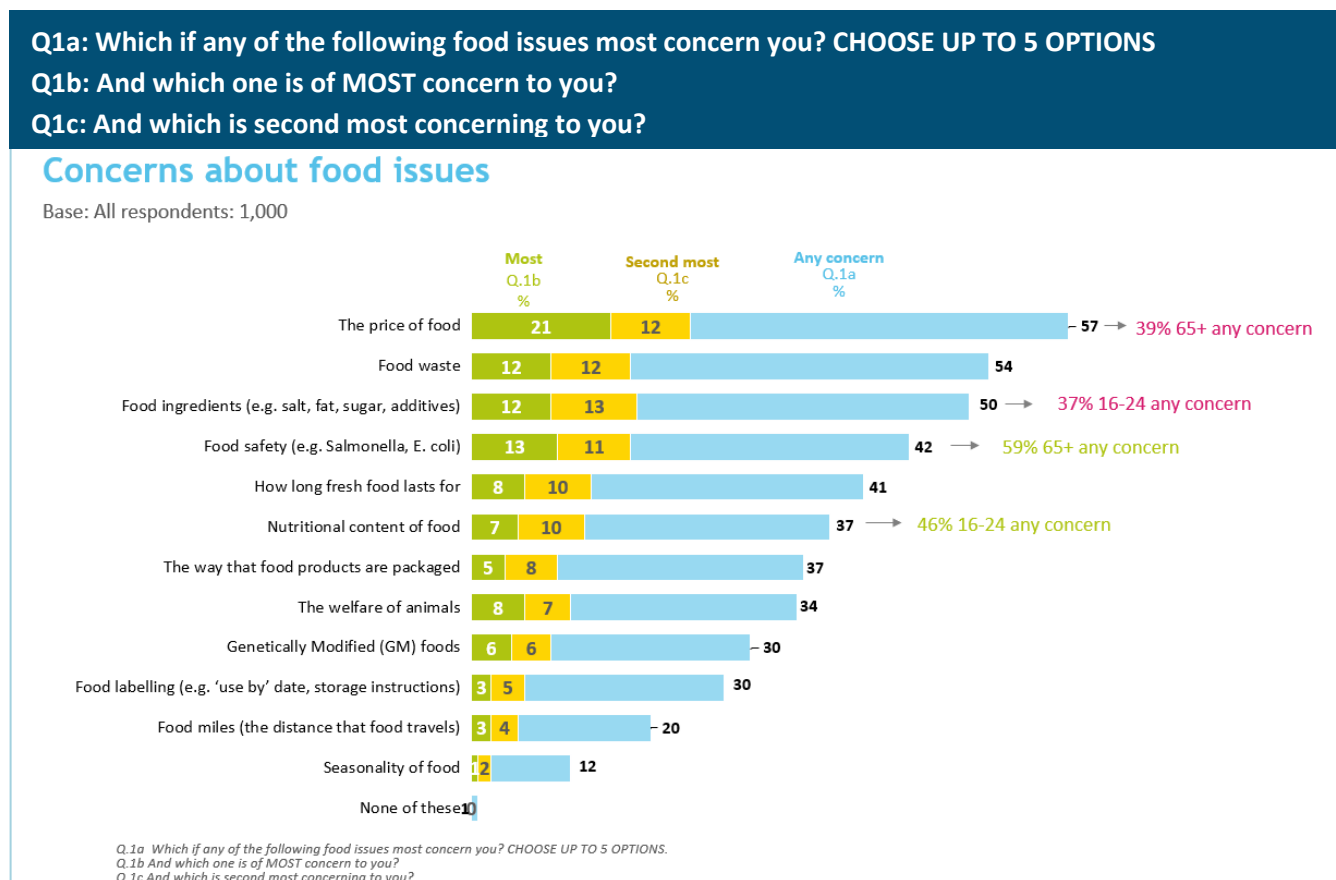
Surveying was also spread over weekdays and weekends to ensure that qualitatively a very broad selection of adults were included from all walks of life. Information was collected on their work and family status so each respondent could be allocated to a life stage. Standard demographics were also captured so that differences could be identified in terms of gender, age, social class, region and area.

Data processing was conducted in house by B&A including the coding of open-ended questions. The data was weighted to population (CSO) to allow population estimates to be reported.

1. Attention, concern and responsibility for food waste

1.1 Concern about food waste

Food waste is the second most concerning food issue amongst the Irish population, with 54% of people including it in their top five food issues. However, only 12% see food waste as the most concerning food issue for them. Any¹ concern for food waste is high across all age groups, peaking with Empty Nesters, although this is not statistically significant. Overall, the price of food is the most concerning issue to the Irish population, with 57% of people including the price of food in their top 5 food waste issues. 21% of people see the price of food as the most concerning issue for them.



Empty Nesters are less concerned about price (39% 65+ any concern) and are more concerned with food safety (59% 65+ any concern). The younger age group (16-24 in particular) over index on the nutritional content (46%

¹ Where appropriate an 'any' score was calculated by merging the scores of two points on the Likert scale. For example, in Q1, an 'any concern' score is obtained by adding the percentage of individuals who answer 'extremely concerned' with the individuals who answer 'concerned'. This approach is used to add an additional layer of understanding to the research findings.

16-24 any concern) and under index² (37% 16-24 any concern) in their concern for food ingredients (e.g. salt, fat, sugar, additives).

Those who have higher attention to food waste (those who always or regularly think about food waste) over index³ in their concern for;

- Food waste (64% any concern)
- The way products are packaged (42% any concern)
- The welfare of animals (39% any concern)
- And the amount of food miles (26% any concern)

Concerns for those with limited/no attention to food waste (those who never or rarely think about food waste) are lower across all these metrics with only 37% of people with limited/no attention to food waste having any concern for food waste.

However, they over index in their concern for;

- The price of food (66% any concern)
- How long fresh food lasts for (49% any concern)

These results suggest that more ‘environmentally minded consumers’ (e.g. packaging, animal welfare, food miles) are likely to also be more concerned about food waste. Thus, potentially two different communication approaches are required to target these different starting points.

1.2 Attention and food waste behaviour

About 3 in 5 (62%) actively think about food waste. With the highest attention to food waste amongst the 65+ age cohort, with 74% claiming that they always or regularly think about food waste.

However, a large proportion of the population believe that they only waste a small amount of food (63%). This suggests that many may feel that they are not the ones who are contributing most towards the problem. In fact, many could rationalise and justify this ‘small amount’ of food that they waste. Despite this, nearly one in three (28%) believe that they waste a moderate amount of food, with a further 2% saying they waste a large amount. 7% claim to waste no food at all.

The largest amount of claimed food waste is occurring amongst the 16-24 year old cohort (any large/moderate 34%)⁴, and the 24-34 age cohort (any large/moderate 37%). 65+ are the most engaged with food waste and the least likely to say that they waste any food, with only 19% of this age cohort saying that they waste any large/moderate amounts of food.

² When a group ‘under-index’, it means that there is a statistically significant lower difference in terms of the attitudes or behaviours compared to the average of the population.

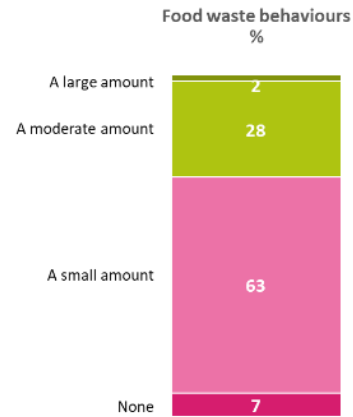
³ When a group ‘over-index’, it means that there is a statistically significant higher difference in terms of the attitudes or behaviours compared to the average of the population.

⁴ Any large/moderate refers to percentage of individuals who answer ‘a large amount’ and individuals who answer ‘a moderate amount’ to Q2c

Q2b: To what extent had you thought about food waste before today?
Q2c: Realistically, how much food do you waste?

Attention and food waste behaviour

Base: All respondents: 1,000



ANY LARGE/MODERATE 30%

About 3 in 5 actively think about food waste. Highest attention to food waste amongst the 65+ age cohort (74% any always/regularly).

The large majority of people feel that they only waste a small amount of food.

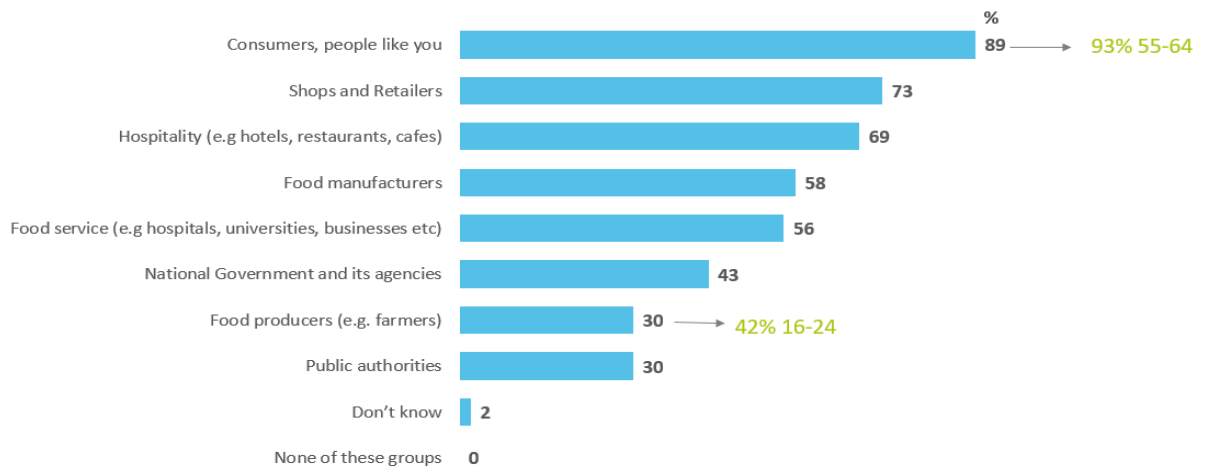
Q.2b To what extent had you thought about food waste before today?

Q.2c Realistically, how much food do you think you waste?

Q3: Ireland generates in the order of 1 million tonnes of food waste per year. Which of the following, if any, do you think have a role to play in preventing food waste?

Understanding of responsibility

Base: All respondents: 1,000



Q.3 Ireland generates in the order of 1 million tonnes of food waste per year. Which of the following, if any, do you think have a role to play in preventing food waste?

1.3 Understanding of responsibility

Widespread understanding exists that multiple stakeholders have a role to play in preventing food waste. However, this research clearly highlights that responsibility seems to be directed more towards the end of the value chain rather than the beginning of it (i.e. consumers, people like you, shops and retailers).

The 55-64 age cohort are most likely to feel that 'consumers, people like you' have a responsibility for playing a role in preventing food waste (93%). Only 58% of people see food manufacturers as having a role to play and 3 in 10 believe that food producers have a role to play.

Amongst those with concern for food waste (those who name it in their top 5 food issues), they tend to;

- Agree more strongly that multiple stakeholders have a role to play in preventing food waste.
- Believe that national governments and its agencies have a bigger role to play (49%) compared to those with no concern for food waste (37%).

1.4 Promotion of food waste reduction

Television is the primary medium by which people have seen or heard about food waste reduction (41%). However, just under 1 in 4 (23%) have not seen or heard anything on the concept of food waste reduction through any of the mediums.

The 55-64 and 65+ age cohorts have predominately heard of waste reduction through TV and newspaper (physical or online). For younger age groups social media (37% for 16-24) and internet sites (30% for 16-24) have a more prominent role for food waste information.

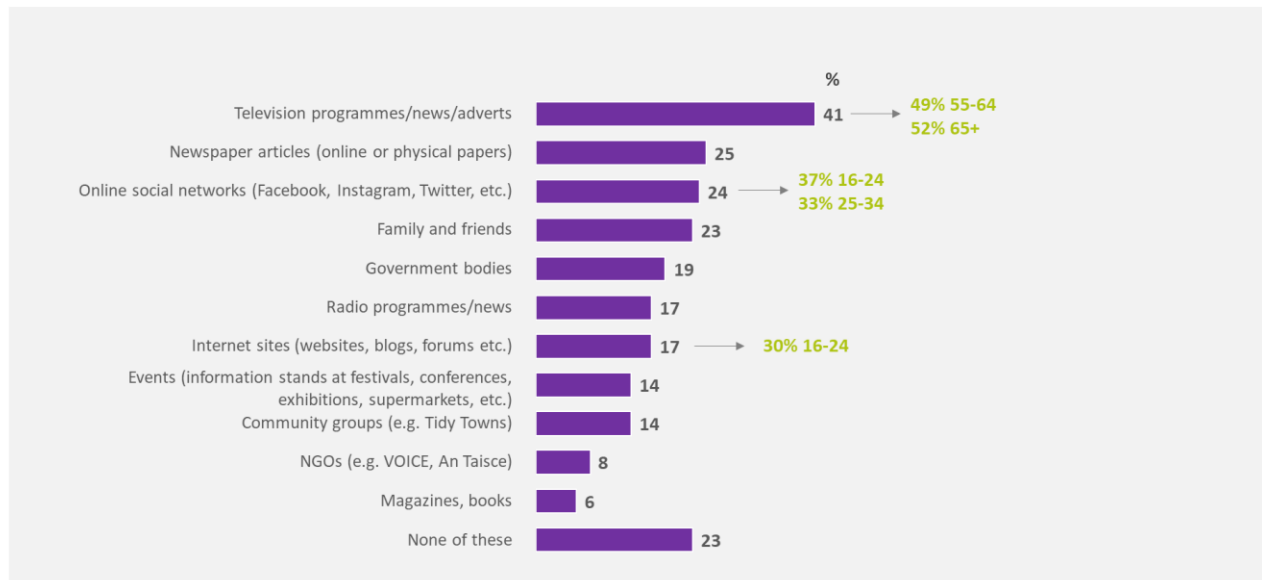
Grow It Yourself (28%), Stopfoodwaste.ie (27%), and Tidy Towns (24%) are the primary sources with any notice. Of the 25-34 year old age cohort, one in three (31%) claim that StopFoodWaste.ie is the main source where they have heard information about the promotion of food waste reduction. Across all the age cohorts, one in five (21%) have noticed the EPA highlighting or promoting the concept of food waste with one in ten (9%) claiming that the EPA is where they have heard the most amount of communications about the concept of food waste reduction. The 65+ age cohort over index in terms of the EPA being the most noticed food waste reduction source (17%).

Those who have higher concern for food waste (those who name it in their top five food issues) are more likely to have heard any information about food waste reduction compared to those with no concern for food waste (75% versus 63%).

Q4: Below is a list of general media and local information sources. Which if any have you seen or heard highlighting and or promoting the concept of food waste reduction?

Promotion of food waste reduction

Base: All respondents: 1,000



Q.4 Below is a list of general media and local information sources. Which if any have you seen or heard highlighting and or promoting the concept of food waste reduction?

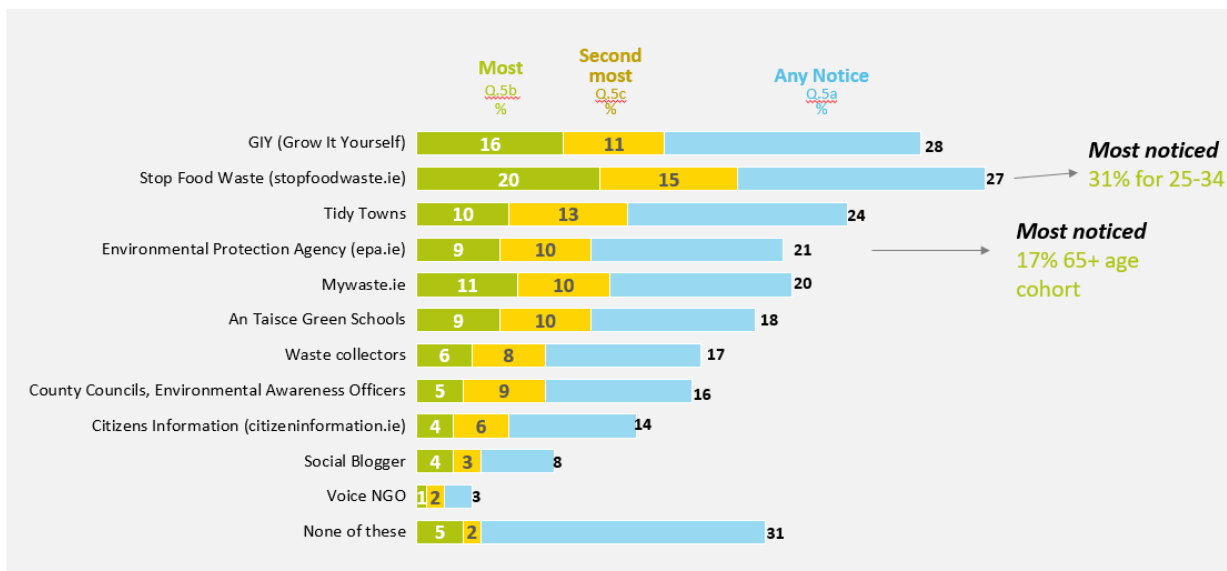
Q5a: Below is a list of public bodies, community groups and online/social media platforms. Which if any, have you seen or heard highlighting and or promoting the concept of food waste reduction?

Q5b: And which one is most NOTICEABLE in doing this?

Q5c: And which is second most noticeable?

Promotion of food waste reduction

Base: All respondents: 1,000



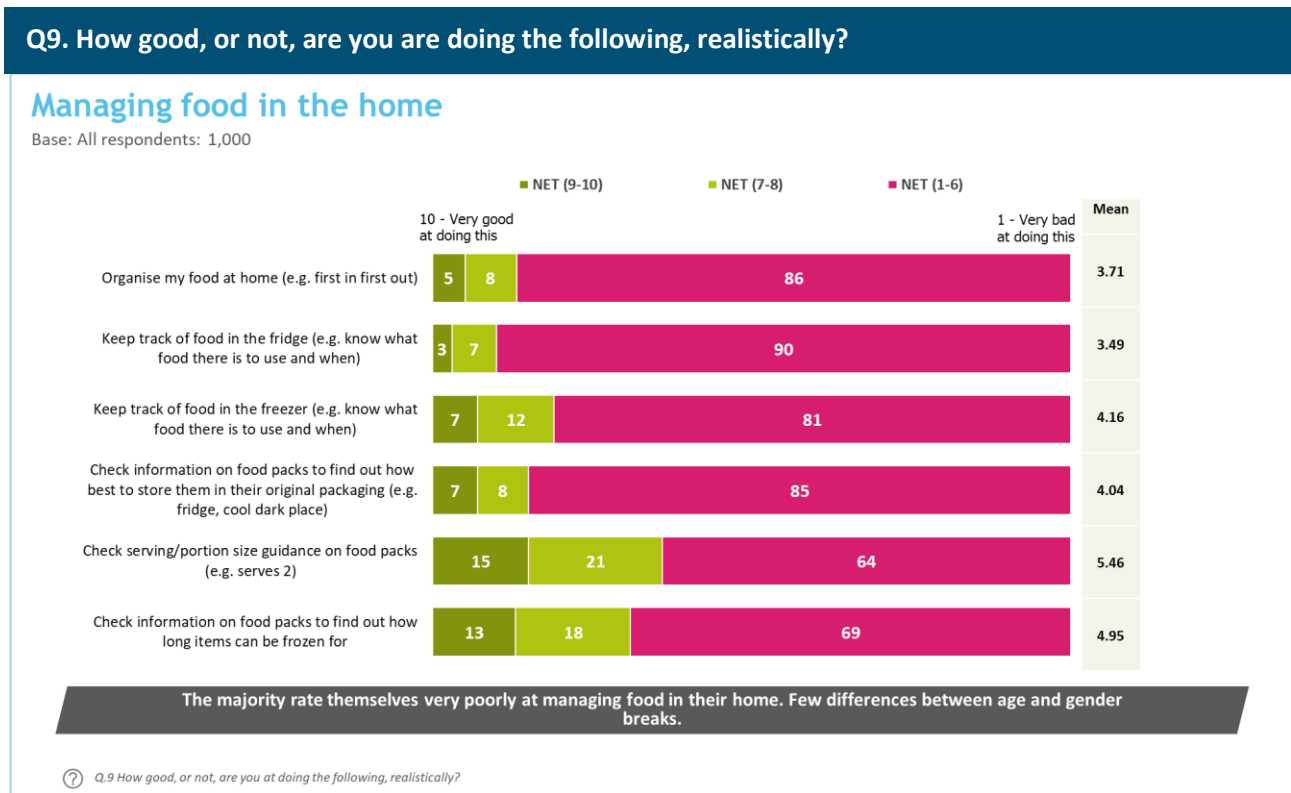
Q.5a Below is a list of public bodies, community groups and online/social media platforms. Which if any, have you seen or heard highlighting and or promoting the concept of food waste reduction?
 Q.5b And which one is most NOTICEABLE in doing this?
 Q.5c And which is second most noticeable?

2. Managing food at home

2.1 Food management in the home

When asked to consider ‘how good’ or ‘not’ they are at specific food management behaviours in the home, the majority rate themselves very poorly at managing food in their home, with few differences emerging between age and gender breaks.

Only 1 in 3 (36%) rate themselves good at checking serving/portion size guidance on food packs and 31% rate themselves as good at ‘checking information on food packs to find out how long items can be frozen for’. Only 13% of people rate themselves as being good at ‘organising food at home (e.g. first in first out)’ and only 10% of people rate themselves as good at keeping track of food in the fridge (e.g. know what food there is to use and when).



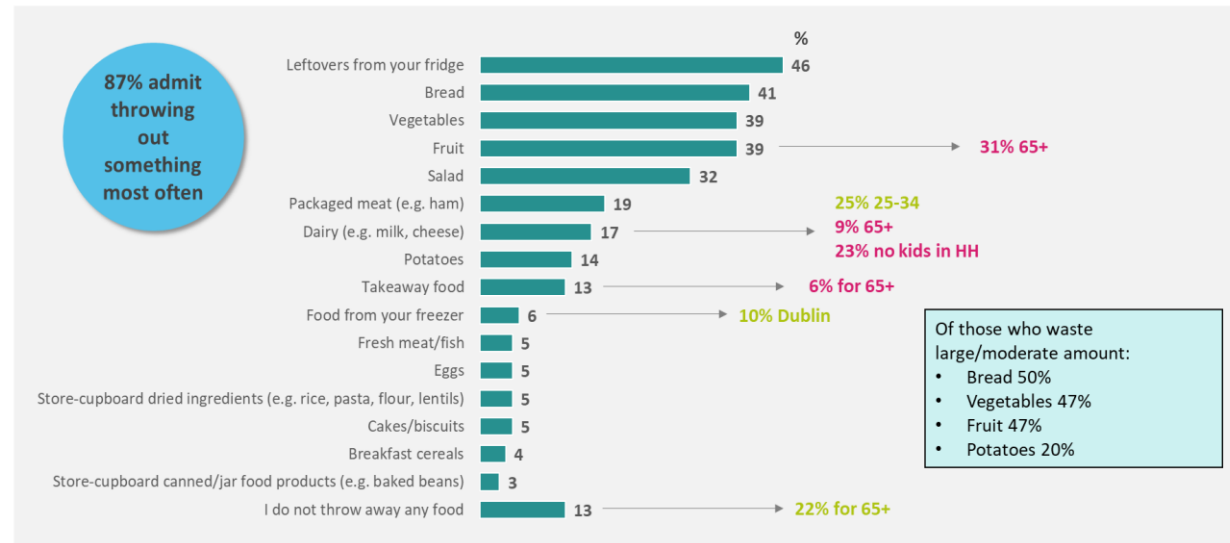
Leftovers from the fridge (46%), bread (41%), vegetables (39%) and fruit (39%) are the most common types of food that are thrown out in the home. Of those who waste large/moderate amounts of food, they over-index predominantly on bread (50%), vegetables (47%), fruit (47%) and potatoes (27%). This insight highlights some key problem areas in terms of which foods are thrown away more frequently amongst heavier food wasters. The 25-34 age cohort throw away the most amount of food overall and over-index in throwing out dairy (25%), whereas the 65+ age cohort under-index in throwing out of dairy (9%). In fact, 22% of the 65+ age cohort claim that they do not throw away any food at all. For empty nesters not using their leftovers in time is the primary reason for throwing food out (81%). The 35-44 year cohort are the least likely to have plans change during the week, potentially highlighting more structured meals and planning (young families). Passing the ‘best before date’ is most frequent amongst the 45-54 age cohort. The high numbers throwing out food due to ‘use by’

(68%) and ‘best before’ (55%) highlights the requirement for an education piece on meal planning. Additionally, the weak associations between food preparation (e.g. cooking too much 29%, serving too much 17%) and food waste highlights the need to communicate how these behaviours ultimately lead to food waste in the home.

Q10. What types of food do you throw out in your household most often?

Types of food wasted in the home

Base: All respondents: 1,000



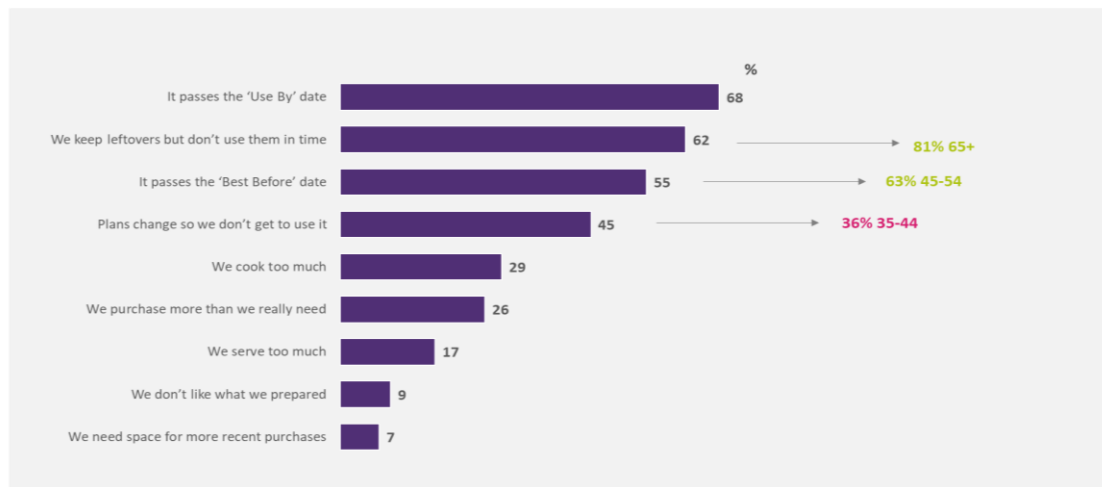
Leftovers from the fridge, bread, vegetables and fruit are the most common types of food that are thrown out in the home. Of those who waste large/moderate amount, they over index predominately in bread, vegetables, fruit and potatoes.

Q.10 What types of food do you throw out in your household most often?

Q11. From the list below, what are the main reason you throw out food in your household?

Reasons for food waste

Base: Of those who throw away food: 882



Q.11 From the list below, what are the main reasons you throw out food in your household?

2.2 Food waste and shopping behaviours

The large majority of the population are carrying out some positive food waste reduction behaviours. 4 in 5 (81%) claim to check what is in the fridge before shopping to see what they needed to buy, and 3 in 4 (74%) check their cupboards before doing a food shop. However, planning appears to be a challenge, with only 1 in 2 (49%) stating that they *‘planned most of the meals I/we wanted to cook’* and only 2 in 5 (41%) claiming that they *‘checked which days I/we needed to cook meals for’*.

Unsurprisingly, those who actively think about food waste are more likely to check their fridge and are considerably more likely to make a list. This highlights some of the ‘good behaviours’ that are followed by those who are more conscious of food waste on a day-to-day basis.

- *‘Checked what was already in the fridge to see what I needed to buy’*:
 - 85% for those who actively think about food waste.
 - 76% for those that don’t.
- *‘Made a list of the food I needed to buy (e.g. on paper, phone or other device)’*:
 - 75% for those who actively think about food waste.
 - 62% for those that don’t.

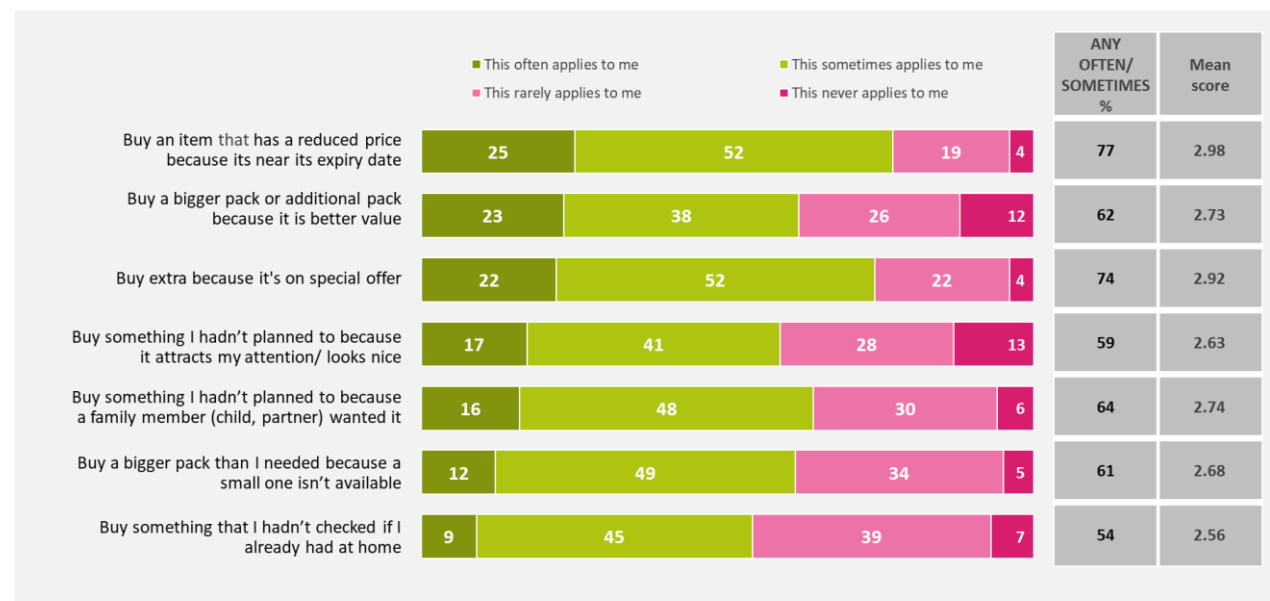


The majority are buying additional products due to reduced prices (77%), better value (62%) and special offers (74%). In addition to these price promotions, many are buying additional products due to impulse (59%), pester power (64%), unavailability of smaller formats in the store (61%) and due to poor planning (54%).

Q8: How frequently does the following apply to you?

Food waste and shopping behaviours

Base: All respondents: 1,000



Q.8 How frequently does the following apply to you?

The people who claim to be wasting a 'moderate/large amount' of food are more likely to purchase items due to impulse (74%), pester power (73%) and unavailability of smaller formats in the store (72%). They also appear to be less organised with nearly 7 in 10 (67%) buying items before checking if they are needed. This insight potentially highlight some of the 'bad' food shopping behaviours that are driving food waste in the household.

3. Response to Covid-19 restrictions

3.1 The First Covid-19 Lockdown (March to July 2020)

During the first national Covid-19 Lockdown (March to July 2020), there was a reported decrease in the volume of food waste in the home. During the lockdown (March to July 2020), 29% of the population claimed to have thrown away less food compared to before the restrictions were put in place. This is potentially due to an increase in food planning, in which 20% of people claimed that they prepared a shopping list more often than before restrictions. However, about 1 in 4 never prepare a shopping list in the past and this does not seem to have been impacted by Covid-19.

There was also a substantial increase to doing a main shop during the first Covid-19 lockdown and a decrease in number of smaller shops completed. There was a net difference* increase of +12 in the number of people completing a 'large main shop' about once a week. More significantly, 1 in 2 (51%) of people stated that they did less 'smaller trips' to the grocery store compared to when restrictions were in place. There was also a net difference increase of +15 in the number of people 'buying local' during Covid-19.

There were also increases reported in food planning behaviour during Covid-19. During the first national lockdown, 19% of the population stated that they checked more often what they had in the cupboard before shopping, and 19% claimed that they checked their fridge more often before shopping. Additionally, 18% of the population claimed to be making a meal plan for the week ahead more often compared to before the lockdown restrictions were in place.

There was also some modest increases in the number of people checking food labels for 'use by' and 'best before' dates, with 15% of the population claiming they did it more often. Additionally, 13% stated that they checked information on food packs more often to find out how best to store items in its original packaging (e.g. fridge, cool dark place). 20% stated that they started freezing food items more often during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Strong increases were also noted in terms of cooking creatively at home, with 31% of the population claiming that they had done this more often.

3.2 Post First National Covid-19 Lockdown (July to Sept 2020)

Post the first national lockdown (July to September 2020) there was a movement back towards completing more 'smaller trips' to the grocery store. Additionally, the increases in positive food waste reduction behaviours such as checking food labels for 'use by' and 'best before' dates, checking cupboards and fridges and making a meal plan levelled off with limited significant positive net differences noted post lockdown.

However, the data suggests that some of the improved food waste reduction behaviours continued beyond July 2020 and up to September 2020 (when this piece of research was conducted by B&A). There was a -13 net decrease in the food thrown away, and a 5+ net increase in the amount of people buying local post first national Covid-19 lockdown. These results are encouraging as they hint that some behavioural changes during the Covid-19 lockdown could potentially have longer lasting effects. However, it is likely that without

continued communication and encouragement to reduce food waste, the large majority will revert back to prior lockdown behaviour over the longer term.

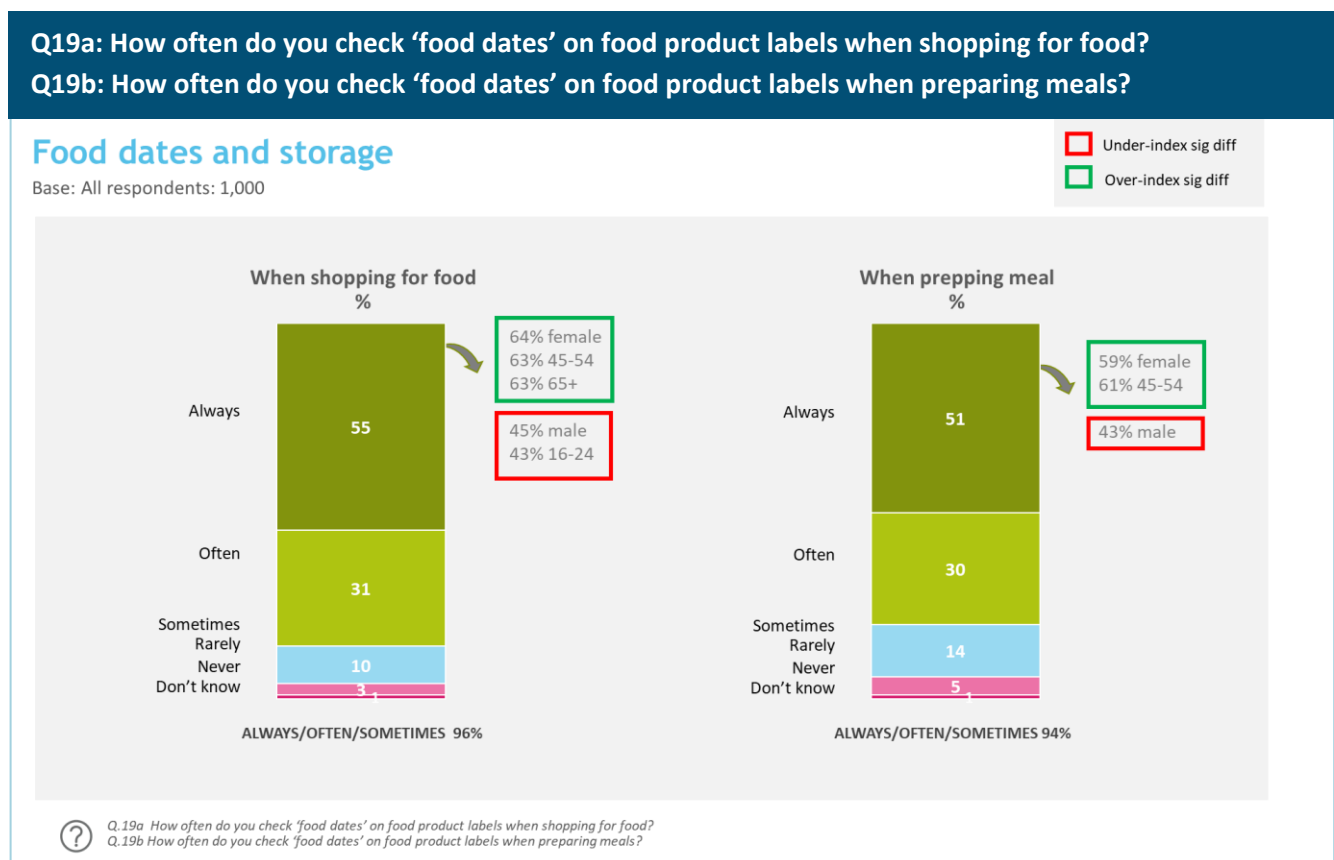
** The Net Difference is calculated by taking the percentage increase of the number of people doing a behaviour and then subtracting the percentage of people who are doing less of that same behaviour.*

4. Food Dates & Storage Advice

4.1 Checking food dates

There is high adherence to checking food dates on products when both shopping for food (55% always do this) and when preparing meals (51% always do this). Females are more likely to engage in this behaviour with 64% claiming that they always check dates on food products when shopping for food, and 59% of females claiming that they always check food and dates on products when they are preparing a meal. This compares to only 45% of males who check when shopping for food and 43% of males when they are preparing a meal.

This behaviour is also more common amongst the 45-54 age cohort, with 63% of 45-54 year olds always checking label food dates when shopping for food and 61% of 45-54 year olds always checking food dates when they are preparing a meal.



4.2 'Use by' and 'Best before'

Some confusion still exists distinguishing the differences between 'use by' and 'best before' food dates, with about 1 in 5 (19%) not knowing the difference between them.

However, when viewed in isolation, about 9 in 10 understand what 'best before' means. 87% of people correctly answered the question 'The best before date on food means that it can be eaten after this date but it may no longer be of the best quality'. However, some confusion exists about what 'best before' means with

21% incorrectly answering ‘The best before date on food means that it can be eaten up to this date but should not be eaten past this date’.

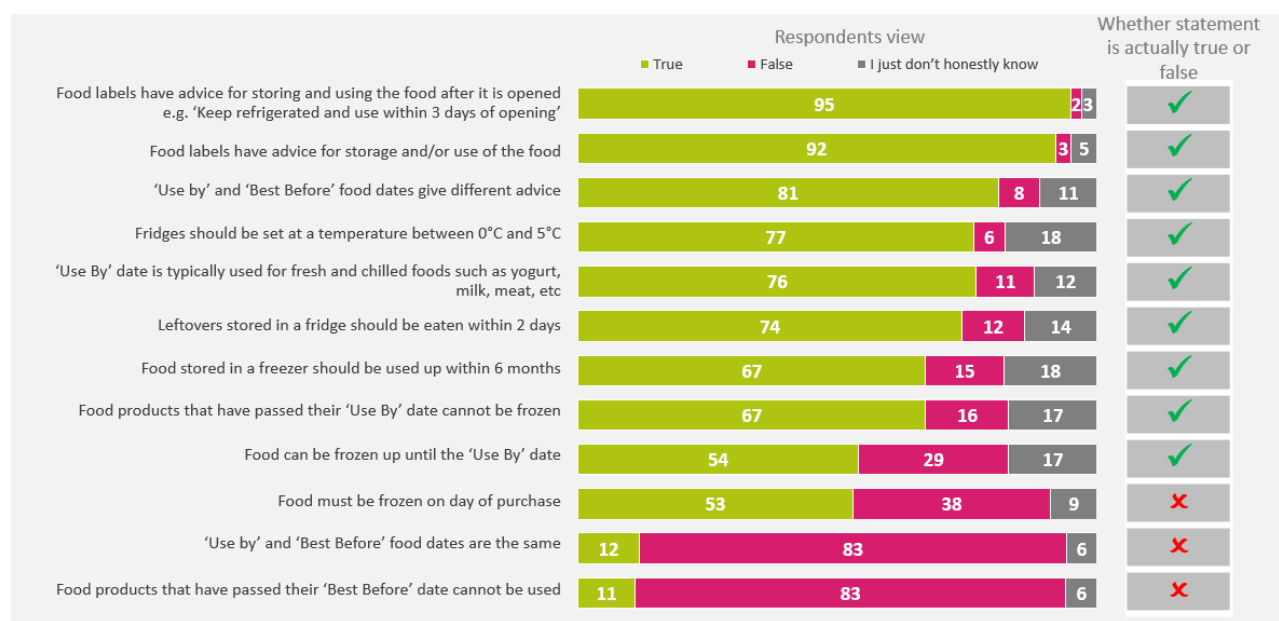
About three in four understand what ‘Use by’ means. 75% of people correctly answered the ‘use by date’ on food means that ‘It would be safe to be eaten up to this date, but should not be eaten past this date’. However, 33% incorrectly answered that the ‘use by’ date on food means that ‘It can be eaten after this date but it may no longer be at its best quality’.

There is widespread knowledge on the purpose of food labels, with 95% of people correctly answering that ‘food labels have advice for storing and using the food after it is opened’. However, there is lower knowledge of the correct temperature of the fridge with only 3 in 4 (77%) of the population correctly answering that it should be between 0°C and 5°C. The highest amount of confusion exists amongst how to freeze items with 53% of the population incorrectly believing that food must be frozen on the day of purchase.

Q22: For each of the following statements tell us if it is true, or false or whether you just don’t know?

Dates on food: use by versus best before

Base: All respondents: 1,000



Q.22 For each of the following statements tell us if it is true, or false or whether you just don't know?

5. Attitudes to food waste

The large majority see food waste as an important issue that needs to be tackled:

- 84% agree that *food waste is an important national issue*
- 93% agree that *everyone has a responsibility to minimise the food they throw away*
- 80% agree that *food waste is an important environmental issue like climate change*
- 80% agree that *food waste should be one of Ireland’s top priorities*.

However, despite strong recognition of food waste as an important issue, only 69% agree that they are ‘interested in food waste as an issue’ and ‘minimising food waste’ is not a top priority for many (only 62% agree). Furthermore, almost 1 in 4 (23%) of 16-24 year olds actively disagree that ‘minimising food waste is one of their top priorities’, with a large proportion neither disagreeing nor agreeing amongst this age cohort.

Interestingly, 27% of the population agree that they ‘would like to reduce their food waste but don’t know how’. This is heightened amongst the 25-34 age cohort with 40% agreeing and 39% of 16-24 year olds agreeing. This highlights that motivation and intention to reduce food waste exists but that there is a potential educational gap in terms of knowing how to reduce food waste for the 16-34 year old cohort in particular.



Food waste is not a commonly discussed or shared topic of discussion, with 3 in 5 (60%) disagreeing with the statement that they ‘read blogs on food waste, have commented or shared their views on blogs or media’. Only

35% of people agree that they talk to friends and family about food waste, with only 8% of people strongly agreeing that they talk about food waste with friends/colleagues and family.

Encouragingly, most feel that the actions that they take can contribute to solving the bigger problem (73%). However, a key issue is that only 1 in 4 (26%) strongly agree that they have been making more of an effort lately to reduce food waste and only 1 in 4 (23%) strongly agree that minimizing food waste is one of their top priorities. In addition to this, as noted earlier 63% of the population believe that they only waste a small amount of food.

6. Key reflections

- Despite seeing food waste as an important national issue, the majority of people (63%) feel that they only waste a small amount of food. This presents a challenge as most feel they are not the ones in society who are contributing most towards the problem. There is a need to make people aware of how much food waste they are producing and how they can take actions in their day-to-day life to reduce the food they waste.
- The younger age groups (25-34 age group in particular) are not as engaged with food waste issues and claim to have poor understanding of how to reduce it. This is contradictory to their attitudes and behaviours towards other environmental related issues such as climate change and reducing plastic usage. There is a need to give this receptive audience a clear reason to get behind food waste reduction.
- Some positive food waste reduction behaviours emerged during the first national Covid-19 lockdown (March -July 2020). However, as life goes back to normal, it is highly likely that people will slip back towards prior behaviour unless otherwise encouraged. There is a need to quickly leverage the changes that people have made and encourage them to make future smaller changes to their behaviour.
- The large majority of the population are carrying out some positive food waste reduction behaviours (e.g. 4 in 5 (81%) claim to *'check what is in the fridge before shopping to see what they needed to buy'*). An opportunity exists to use social norming by highlighting the volume of people who are engaging in this and other good food waste behaviours.
- The 55-64 and 65+ age cohorts have predominately heard of waste reduction through TV and newspaper (physical or online). Younger age groups are more likely to have heard through social media (37% for 16-24 year olds) and internet sites (30% for 16-24 year olds). A multi-channel approach is required to reach the diverse audiences.
- A variety of specific communication 'hooks' are identified that can be leveraged to connect with the different cohorts. Empty Nesters are more concerned with food safety (59% 65+ any concern) whereas the younger age group (16-24 in particular) are interested in nutritional content (46% 16-24 any concern). However, overall, the price of food is the most concerning issue to the Irish population, with 57% of people including the price of food in their top 5 food waste issues. 21% of people see the price of food as the most concerning issue for them. As such, despite a targeted approach with specific 'hooks' in some incidences, messaging the links food waste and the price of food should not be overlooked as it is likely to have a strong impact.