
The third in a series of reports detailing how UK citizens’ food habits, behaviours and attitudes have changed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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WRAP’s vision is a world in which resources are used sustainably.

Our mission is to accelerate the move to a sustainable resource-efficient economy through re-inventing how we design, produce and sell products; re-thinking how we use and consume products; and re-defining what is possible through re-use and recycling.

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Executive Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic is having a profound effect on citizens’ daily lives, including several significant and wide-reaching impacts on food behaviours. WRAP has undertaken a comprehensive series of surveys – in April, May and September 2020 – to understand how behaviours are changing across the year. This has demonstrated that:

- UK citizens responded to the Covid-19 lockdown with a wide range of positive food management strategies (6.7 behaviours on average), with uptake highest among younger citizens (18-34s and 35-44s), those with children at home, and those whose work was impacted by Covid-19 (e.g. furloughed, reduced hours, switched to working from home). By June, these behaviours were enduring – and in some cases extending – with 70% of UK citizens aspiring to continue the behaviours post-lockdown.

- Levels of self-reported food waste fell by 43% in early lockdown in April, before rebounding to some degree in June when lockdown eased and citizens returned to work and some children returned to school.

WRAP undertook this latest research to track the impact that relaxing lockdown restrictions (at least in much of the UK) had on household food waste and in particular how the lifting of restrictions might have affected the way citizens plan, buy, store and waste food; in particular whether the aspiration among UK citizens to maintain these positive food management behaviours had resulted in continued efforts to reduce food waste.

The survey was undertaken online from 11-16 September 2020 with a representative sample of 4,119 UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility for food shopping and/or preparation.

Key findings

The evolving context of Covid-19

At the time of the research fieldwork (mid-September) lifestyles and routines remained in a state of flux for UK citizens, with some groups experiencing the pandemic very differently to others. For example, around half of those whose work was affected by Covid-19 had come off furlough and/or had returned to work as normal, whereas 28% still had their working life affected by Covid-19. For those with children, 72% reported that their child(ren) had returned to school full time and a further 13% part-time/on a staggered timetable.

The amount of time pressure felt in day-to-day life compared to before Covid-19 also varied depending on people’s circumstances, with 23% feeling under more pressure, 31% the same amount of pressure and 22% less pressure.

Food management behaviours: 5 months on

The behaviours that UK citizens adopted during early lockdown are continuing (and even extending further in some cases). For example, just over nine in ten (91%) who checked date labelling more often during lockdown continue to do so now, including 22% who say they are doing this even more than during the main lockdown. A similar pattern is true across all behaviours, particularly so for using up leftovers, freezing, checking the fridge before shopping and checking labelling for storage advice.
However, food preparation behaviours are under more pressure. While the majority (74%) of those UK citizens who cooked creatively during lockdown currently still do this, over one in five (22%) say they are finding it more difficult and four percent have already stopped. The same is true of making a meal by combining random ingredients and batch cooking.

Motivations and barriers

In the previous surveys, UK citizens cited a range of reasons why they adopted more food management behaviours during lockdown - most commonly relating to lockdown unease (i.e. wanting to avoid going to the shops or being concerned about running out of food). This survey demonstrates a shift in motivations towards cost savings (66% compared to 53% in June): avoiding waste of good food/ingredients (66% vs 35%), to be healthier/eat better (38% vs. 30%) and ‘doing my bit for the environment’ (32% vs. 22%).

Turning to barriers, among those who have already dropped a behaviour or can’t see themselves continuing with it post Covid-19, close to two in three (68%) cite less concern about running out of food or going food shopping (compared to 49% in June), while 44% cite a lack of time (compared to 33% in June).

The impact on levels of food waste

Levels of reported food waste have stabilised since June, with the average level of waste across four key products (bread, milk, potatoes and chicken) at 17.5%. This is up from the historic low of 13.7% in April, but significantly below the November 2019 (24.1%). Overall, it represents a decrease of 27% between November 2019 and September 2020.

Just over one in four UK citizens (27%) classify as having higher levels of food waste, in line with the results from June (also 27%). This is a significant increase from April (20%) but still well below pre-lockdown levels (34% in 2019). Those returning to ‘normal’ (e.g. children back to school, those furloughed but now returned to work), and those feeling under more time pressure now than before lockdown, are significantly more likely to report higher levels of food waste compared to the UK average.

There is also a strong association between food waste and eating more food prepared outside the home - half (50%) of those who have eaten food prepared away from home 10+ times in the past month classify as having higher levels of food waste (compared to 18% of those who have eaten food prepared outside the home less than five times).

Food waste communications

Given recent events that include Brexit, a General Election and Covid-19, there has been a marked decrease in citizens hearing/seeing something about *the amount of food that is thrown away* (37%, down from 69% in 2019) and *how to plan, buy, store or prepare food to help reduce the amount that gets thrown away* (22%, down from 49% in 2019).

In contrast, recall of specific logos and campaigns has either been maintained or increased. For example, three in ten (30%) recall the Love Food Hate Waste logo, in line with April (31% - the highest level on record). Recognition of specific Love Food Hate Waste campaigns has also increased in recent months, including ‘Make Toast Not Waste’ (14%), ‘Chill the Fridge Out’ (8%) and the ‘A-Z of storage guidance’ (6%). Furthermore, recognition of the recently launched ‘Keep Crushing it’ campaign is at 6%. Collectively, almost one in five (18%) UK citizens have seen at least one Love Food Hate Waste campaign.
There has also been an increase in levels of recognition of the ‘suitable for home freezing’ logo which – at 88% – is one of the highest levels of recognition on record. Recognition of the ‘fridge temperature below 5 degrees’ logo has also increased throughout lockdown, from 9% in November 2019 to 22% now.

The June research demonstrated that more than nine in ten (92%) have found the Love Food Hate Waste campaigns useful when they are seen. Moreover, this survey demonstrates that two in three (67%) say they have done something differently as a result. This equates to 4.4 million UK citizens aged 18+.

**Linking the wasting of food to climate change**

WRAP’s research continues to point to a key opportunity to raise awareness of the contribution wasted food makes to climate change. The June survey established that close to four in five (81%) UK citizens are concerned about climate change. However, significantly fewer - three in ten (30%) - say they see a clear link between wasted food and climate change. This is notably lower than the proportion who see a clear link between climate change and aviation (57%), recycling (53%) and making less trips by car (50%).

Among those who do see a clear link, levels of understanding of the link are sophisticated, covering the embedded resources and land use required by food production alongside the gases that are released by food waste disposed of in landfill. For those who cannot see a link, one in four (25%) cite a view that food waste can be recycled/used as a resource, while 11% think it biodegrades harmlessly.

**Conclusions**

The latest survey finds that:

- Lifestyles and routines remain in a state of flux and lockdown has – and continues to be – experienced differently across the population.
- Self-reported food waste has stabilised at June levels, well below pre-lockdown levels.
- Levels of food waste are higher among those returning to ‘normal’ (e.g. children returned to school, those furloughed but now returned to work) and those feeling under more time pressure now than before lockdown. This highlights the need to support these behaviours as lockdown restrictions ease (at least in some parts of the UK) or risk a rapid return to pre-lockdown levels of food waste. There is also a strong association between levels of self-reported food waste and eating out.
- Lockdown food management behaviours are enduring, with the vast majority either continuing the behaviour the same as during lockdown or even more. This is particularly true of checking date labels and on-pack storage guidance, using up leftovers, freezing items and checking the fridge before shopping. However, food preparation behaviours – such as cooking creatively, making a meal by combining random ingredients and batch cooking – appear to be under more pressure.
- Information and guidance from Love Food Hate Waste is playing a key role. Almost one in five UK citizens (18%) have seen at least one Love Food Hate Waste campaign or source of information. Of these, 92% say they found the information useful and 67% say they did something differently as a result. This currently equates to 4.4 million UK citizens aged 18+. The impact of these campaigns and resources would be more pronounced with greater reach.
• Food waste prevention motivations and barriers are starting to evolve. As lockdown unease began to decline and citizens had less time to manage and prepare food, other motivations such as saving money, valuing food, eating healthily and the environment increased in prominence.

• There is a key opportunity to raise awareness of the contribution food waste makes to climate change with only 30% saying they can see a clear link.

Since the research was carried out levels of infections have risen steeply, necessitating the (re)‐introduction of measures to mitigate against the impact of this. However, the insights from this research remain valid for those areas less impacted by restrictions, and in the medium‐term for the UK as a whole as restrictions eased.

**Wasting Food: It’s Out of Date**¹

This research clearly shows that not enough people in the UK are making the connection between the food they throw away, and the damage this causes to our planet. This is a hard connection to make, and it is why WRAP saw the need to introduce a new voice.

WRAP has launched a fresh new brand aimed at informing the public about the huge impact wasted food has on climate change and the environment. Called **Wasting Food: It’s Out of Date**, the new brand has been created to raise awareness of the need to tackle wasted food by showing the impact this has on the planet.

**Wasting Food: It’s Out of Date** has been created to reach those people in the UK who are not already aware that reducing the amount of food we waste is a way we can all help to reduce the UK’s CO₂ emissions. The brand will call on UK citizens to realise the urgency of the situation where precious resources like water, agricultural land, and energy are wasted as a result of the food we throw away.

Dynamic videos and infographics will deliver these messages across Instagram and Twitter. There is also a dedicated website to bring to life the devastating environmental cost of wasting food – and a quiz to help people realise how much food they waste at home.

It is critical that a wide range of businesses, local authorities, NGOs and other influencers get behind this initiative to ensure the greatest possible reach. It is also important to focus on avoiding the waste of food wherever this occurs, within the home or out of home.

¹ [https://www.outofdate.org.uk/](https://www.outofdate.org.uk/)
Introduction

Globally, 25–30% of total food produced is lost or wasted, and food waste is estimated to contribute 8-10% of total man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Producing food requires significant resources including land, energy and water, with the global food system generating 25-30% of total GHG emissions, and agricultural supply chains use 70% of global freshwater resources.

Wasting food wastes all of the resources that have gone in to producing it, and if this food ends up in landfill it also produces methane, a powerful GHG. Even if the food waste is collected separately and recycled, the resources used to produce the food are still wasted (although the additional GHG emissions from landfill are avoided).

Reducing food waste is a financial and environmental imperative, and 70% of UK food waste (post-farm gate) comes from households, having a value of over £14 billion a year and associated with more than 20 million tonnes of GHG emissions. It is these stark facts that drive much of WRAP’s work in food and drink, and it’s why, as an evidence-based organisation, we seek to understand UK citizens’ attitudes and habits towards food.

It is also important to understand exactly how the response to Covid-19 is affecting citizens’ habits, behaviours and attitudes relating to food. The lockdown is having a profound effect on citizens’ daily lives, including several significant and wide-reaching impacts on food behaviours.

This survey is the third conducted by WRAP during 2020, with previous research undertaken in April under full lockdown, and June as the UK entered a phased lifting of restrictions. WRAP found that during the initial phase of lockdown, the foundations for stronger food management behaviours emerged with self-reported levels of food waste falling by 43% (between November 2019 and April 2020). Then as lockdown began to ease WRAP found that there was a strong aspiration among UK citizens to maintain these positive food management behaviours - with 70% wanting to maintain them post-lockdown. However, citizens were predominantly motivated to adopt new positive food behaviours by “lockdown concerns” and with lockdown easing, citizens returning to work and some children returning to school, a lack of time became a barrier to food waste management behaviours. As a result, WRAP found that levels of reported food waste had begun to ‘bounce back’ - there had been a 31% increase in reported food waste when compared to ‘full lockdown’, although this was still below ‘normal’ pre-lockdown levels.

A lot of change has occurred in the months following WRAP’s previous research. In the UK, the Covid-19 situation is evolving rapidly. These changes have the potential to impact on the way citizens live their lives, their attitudes to food waste, household food management behaviours and the levels of food waste generated. When the research was conducted:

- More workers unable to work from home had returned to the workplace;
- The UK government had encouraged citizens to eat out more through the ‘Eat Out to Help Out’ initiative;
- Schools in England re-opened to a much greater extent;
- Overseas travel became more available; and
- Local councils were given the powers to introduce local lockdowns.
Since the research was carried out levels of infections have risen steeply, necessitating the (re)-introduction of measures to mitigate against the impact of this. However, the insights from this research remain valid for those areas less impacted by restrictions, and in the medium-term for the UK as a whole as restrictions ease.

Objectives

WRAP normally undertakes an annual citizen survey that tracks key aspects of knowledge attitudes and behaviours relevant to household food management and waste. In this unprecedented period of change additional surveys will be carried out to ensure timely insights can be obtained and used to inform WRAP and partner activity to effectively support citizens. This survey represents the latest insights and was undertaken to track the impact of Covid-19 lockdown on household food waste and in particular how the phased lifting of restrictions might be affecting the way citizens plan, buy, store and waste food; and in particular whether the aspiration among UK citizens to maintain these positive food management behaviours had resulted in continued efforts to reduce food waste.

Insights from this research will enable WRAP to understand how citizen behaviours have changed since the lockdown began and develop maintenance strategies to support a further reduction in household food waste.

Methodology

Fieldwork was undertaken online from 11-16 September 2020. A total of 4,119 interviews were undertaken with UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility in their home for grocery shopping and/or food preparation. The sample profile was controlled to be in line with the known population profile of the UK, with quota targets set on UK nation, English region, social grade, age and gender.

Statistical significance

Statistical tests have been performed to assess whether an apparent difference in the survey data (i.e. across years or between sub-groups) is statistically significant or not. These tests have been undertaken to the ‘99% confidence’ level (i.e. 99 times out of 100 the observed difference will be real compared to 1 time out of 100 it will have happened by chance). This provides a greater level of surety in the findings than the more commonly used ‘95% confidence’ level.

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2 UK household food waste (excluding inedible parts) reduced by 30% per capita between 2007 and 2018; https://wrap.org.uk/content/uk-progress-against-courtauld-2025-targets-and-un-sustainable-development-goal-123

3 Statistical tests are only valid when the survey method has used random probability sampling. While the market research industry routinely applies the same logic to non-probability samples, this must be done with appropriate caveats. For example, if the data reported throughout this report was generated from a random probability sample then the confidence intervals discussed in the report would apply. However, as the data were generated from a quota sample, confidence intervals are – strictly speaking – not possible to calculate.
Given that a sample of households has completed the survey (rather than a census), the results are subject to statistical margins of error. For the results as a whole, the maximum margin of error in the results is plus or minus 2.2% (i.e. if the survey gives a result of 50% then the real result, if all households in the country were interviewed, would be somewhere in the range 47.8% - 52.2%).

When comparing results across time, for example to the June or April surveys, the maximum margin of error is plus or minus 2.7% (i.e. an increase from 50% in April to 53% in September would be statistically significant, whereas a result of 52% would not be).

**Analysis by different audiences and groups within the population**

In addition to the results for the UK as a whole, analyses have also been undertaken according to a range of socio-demographic variables (e.g. age, gender, children in the household) and food value outlooks (e.g. enjoy cooking; feel under pressure in their lives).

**Structure of the report**

The key findings outlined in this report are structured into six sections:

(1) The evolving context of Covid-19
(2) Food management behaviours
(3) Levels of food waste
(4) Communications about food waste
(5) Links to climate change
(6) Final reflections
1. The evolving context

This section sets the context for the survey results by outlining the impact of Covid-19 - at the time of the research fieldwork period (11-16 September) - on working patterns, children returning to school, eating food out of home and levels of feeling under time pressure. It highlights a mixed pattern with some groups of citizens experiencing lockdown (and the subsequent easing over the summer) very differently to others. For example:

- The vast majority (85%) of households with children aged 0-18 living at home said their child(ren) had returned to nursery or school – either full time (72%) or on a staggered/split timetable (13%).

- Over one in four (26%) reported that they or someone in the home had changed working patterns during lockdown (e.g. worked from home/been furloughed/on reduced hours) but had since returned to working as they were before lockdown. This contrasts with almost the same proportion (28%) who experienced a change in working patterns that had not returned to normal.

- Almost one in four (23%) reported feeling under more pressure than before Covid-19, compared to 22% who felt less pressure and 31% the same amount of pressure as they did before the lockdown (Figure 1).

- Over four in five (82%) reported they had eaten food prepared outside the home in the past month, including an average of 1.5 takeaways, 1.1 meals in a sit down restaurant and 0.8 meals eaten on the go. There was a wide variation between those who consumed no meals prepared outside the home (18%) through to those doing so 10 times or more (15%).

Figure 1 – Lifestyles in flux: time pressure in day to day life

Q. Do you feel under more, less or the same amount of time pressure in your day-to-day life compared to before the Covid-19 lockdown (i.e. your previously ‘normal’ level of time pressure)

Base: 4,091 UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility for food shopping/preparation. September 2020

- More pressure: 23%
- Same pressure: 31%
- Less pressure: 22%
2. The impact on food management behaviours

This section explores the impact of Covid-19 on food management behaviours – first on the changes that occurred during lockdown; and then the extent to which these behaviours are enduring over time as children return to school, working patterns edge back towards normality and eating out is possible once again.

2.1 Changes in food management during lockdown

The previous two lockdown surveys collectively demonstrated that UK citizens undertook more food management behaviours during lockdown (Figure 2). This included more **pre-shop planning** (e.g. checking cupboards and the fridge pre-shop, making a list), **better in-home food storage** (e.g. keeping on top of the fridge; freezing more) and **creative approaches to cooking/prep** (e.g. batch cooking and using up leftovers). UK citizens adopted, on average, 6.7 more food management behaviours.

![Figure 2 – In-home food management behaviours](image)

There was a clear divide in food management behaviours across different groups:

- **Age**: 18-24s, 25-34s and 35-44s adopted more food management behaviours during lockdown (8.4, 9.1 and 7.4 behaviours, respectively) compared to those aged 65+ (4.4).
• **Covid-19 disruption to work**: those who were impacted by Covid-19 in their job adopted more food management behaviours, including those who worked reduced hours (9.4 behaviours), lost a job (9.0) or were furloughed (8.7). This compares to 6.3 behaviours among those who worked as usual throughout lockdown.

• **Children at home**: those with children aged 0-17 at home adopted more food management behaviours during lockdown (8.8) vs. those with none at home (5.9).

### 2.2 How lockdown behaviours are enduring over time

Lockdown food management behaviours continue to endure. For example, just over nine in ten (91%) who checked date labelling more often during lockdown continue to do so, including 22% who say they are doing this even more than during lockdown (Figure 3). A similar pattern is true across all of the behaviours, particularly so for using up leftovers, freezing, checking the fridge before shopping and checking labelling for storage advice.

However, food preparation behaviours appear to be under more pressure. While the majority of those who cooked creatively during lockdown currently still do this (74%), over one in five (22%) say they are finding it more difficult and 4% have already stopped. The same is true of making a meal by combining random ingredients – 22% who undertook this behaviour during lockdown are finding it difficult and 7% have already stopped.

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**Figure 3** – How food management behaviours have endured

*Q. For each of the things that you did more often during the main lockdown, which of the following best describes what you have done more recently in the past few months?*

**Base**: UK adults aged 18+ who undertook each behaviour more during lockdown. September 2020
A degree of ‘behavioural rebound’ is evident when respondents are asked how their current food shopping and preparation behaviours overall compare to pre-lockdown (Figure 4). Almost one in ten (9%) say their behaviours have gone back to how they were before lockdown, while a further 18% say they have kept one or two of their lockdown behaviours but otherwise have gone back to how they were before. In contrast, approaching half (45%) have kept a lot of their lockdown behaviours, while almost three in ten (29%) say their food shopping and preparation behaviours didn’t change during lockdown.

**Figure 4 – Food shopping and preparation behaviours: pre-lockdown vs. now**

Q. Thinking about how your food shopping and preparation habits have changed now compared to the main lockdown, which of the following best applies?

Base: 4,119 UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility for food shopping and/or prep. September 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rebounded: went back to before lockdown</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintained: one or two lockdown habits</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintained: a fair amount of lockdown habits</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintained: all or most of lockdown habits</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t change: didn’t change during lockdown</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.3 Motivations and barriers**

In the previous surveys, UK citizens cited a range of reasons why they adopted more food management behaviours during lockdown - most commonly relating to lockdown unease (i.e. wanting to avoid going to the shops or being concerned about running out of food). This latest survey demonstrates a shift in motivations (Figure 5). A greater proportion cite cost savings (66% compared to 53% in June): avoiding waste of good food/ingredients (66% vs 35%), to be healthier/eat better (38% vs. 30%) and the environment (32% vs. 22%).
You said that you will continue doing some of these things beyond Covid-19. Which of the following are your main motivation(s) to keep doing them?

Base: 3,009 UK adults 18+ who did 1+ behaviour differently and have continued this. September 2020

- Lockdown unease (e.g. avoid trips to supermarket; have a stock of food)
  - June: 66%
  - September: 61%
- To save/not waste money
  - June: 53%
  - September: 66%
- More spare time
  - June: 37%
  - September: 14%
- The lockdown has made me think more about the value of food / the importance of not wasting it
  - June: 33%
  - September: 36%
- It's a waste of good food / ingredients
  - June: 35%
  - September: 66%
- To be more organized/in control of food in the home
  - June: 32%
  - September: 42%
- To be healthier/eat better
  - June: 38%
  - September: 30%
- To do my bit for the environment
  - June: 32%
  - September: 22%
- More people at home eating meals/to cook for
  - June: 18%
  - September: 15%
- Unfair to people who can’t afford to eat
  - June: 18%
  - September: 15%

The barriers to continuing with lockdown food management behaviours remain the same as those identified in the June survey, but they are now increasing in prominence (Figure 6). For example, among those who have already dropped a behaviour or can’t see themselves continuing with it post Covid-19, just over two in three (68%) now cite less concern about running out of food or going food shopping (compared to 49% in June). Similarly, 44% cite a lack of time compared to 33% in June.

You said that you have stopped some of the behaviours or are unlikely to carry them on beyond Covid-19. Which of the following are the main reasons why?

Base: 1,443 UK adults 18+ who aren’t/can’t see themselves carrying on with 1+ food management behaviours they adopted during lockdown. September 2020

- Lockdown unease reducing (e.g. not worried about running out of food; easier to go to shops)
  - June: 49%
  - September: 68%
- Don’t have the time / too much hassle
  - June: 33%
  - September: 44%
- Less meals to prepare
  - June: 17%
  - September: 13%
- Didn’t find it very useful / it didn’t help
  - June: 9%
  - September: 10%
- Less concerned about job security
  - June: 6%
  - September: 5%
3. Impact on levels of food waste

The survey calculates levels of food waste by focusing on four key products\(^4\) (bread, chicken, milk and potatoes) and asking respondents to estimate – for the last time they purchased each – the percentage thrown away uneaten. The results estimate that, on average, around one in five (19.5%) potatoes are thrown away uneaten, followed by bread (19.0%), chicken (15.8%) and milk (15.6%). The average across the four is 17.5\% (Figure 7).

This represents a stabilisation of the June results, and means that self-reported levels of food waste are currently **27\% below pre-lockdown levels**.

**Figure 7** – Levels of food waste: by product

Q. Thinking about the last time you bought [food type], approximately what percentage ended up being uneaten and thrown away (whether in a compost bin, ordinary bin, council food waste collection, or down the sink)?

Base: 4,119 UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility for food shopping and/or prep. September 2020

Furthermore, and based on these estimates, **just over one in four UK citizens (27\%)** classify as having higher levels of food waste. This is in line with June 2020 (also 27\%) and represents a significant increase from April (20\%) but still well below November 2019 (34\%).

Age is a key predictive variable, with around two in five (39\%) 18-34s reporting higher levels of food waste, compared to 15\% of those aged 55+.\(^5\) The other stand out variable at this survey wave is **key moments of change that represent a return to “normal”**. This includes:

- **Time pressure** – those who feel under more time pressure now than pre Covid-19 classify as having higher levels of food waste (35\%), compared to one in five (20\%) who say they do not feel under time pressure in their day to day life (neither now or pre lockdown).
- **Food shopping frequency** – levels of food waste are notably higher among those who say their food shopping and preparation behaviours have returned to normal (34\%) compared to those who say they have kept a lot of their lockdown behaviours (25\%).

\(^4\) WRAP estimates that these four products are some of the most significant products in terms of household food waste.

\(^5\) This is not saying that all younger citizens have high levels of food waste while none of those aged 55+ do. There are older citizens (around one in ten) who report higher levels of food waste, and younger citizens who do not (around half). The results simply indicate that, on balance, older age groups are much less likely to report high levels of food waste.
• **Working patterns** – levels of food waste are somewhat higher among those who had a change in circumstances (e.g. furloughed, reduced hours, working from home) and have now returned to normal (31% classify as having higher levels of food waste). The same is true for those who worked from home during lockdown, or were furloughed during lockdown, and have now returned to normal (53% and 40%, respectively). By contrast, the same groups (i.e. furloughed/worked reduced hours) but who have not yet returned to normal report levels of food waste in line with the population average.

• **Children at home** – having children aged 0-10 and 11-15 at home is associated with classifying as having higher levels of food waste (41% and 35%, respectively, compared to 23% among those with no children at home). Furthermore, it is especially pronounced for those who say their children have returned to school on a split/staggered timetable (55% of this cohort classify as having higher levels of food waste).

• **Frequency of eating out** – there is a strong association between levels of self-reported food waste and eating out. Half (50%) of those who have eaten out 10+ times in the past month (including both sit down meals as well as takeaways and food on the go) classify as having higher levels of food waste compared to 18% of those who have eaten out less than five times.
4. Communications about food waste

Just over two in five (41%) UK citizens have seen or heard information about food waste in the past year – either about the amount of food that is thrown away/wasted (37%) or about how to plan, buy, store or prepare food to help reduce food waste (22%).

Recall of information about the amount of food thrown away has declined from 69% in May 2019 (the highest level on record) and is back in line with the period 2011-2016 (Figure 8). Recall of specific food waste avoidance strategies follows a similar trend. The observed declines in recall have taken place across a period of time that included the UK leaving the European Union, a General Election and, most recently, the Covid-19 pandemic.

In contrast to the general level of recognition of food waste, recall of specific logos and campaigns has either been maintained or increased compared to pre Covid-19 (Figure 8). For example, three in ten (30%) recall the Love Food Hate Waste logo, in line with early lockdown (31% - the highest level on record). Recognition of specific Love Food Hate Waste campaigns has also increased in recent months, including ‘Make Toast Not Waste’ (14%), ‘Chill the Fridge Out’ (8%) and the ‘A-Z of storage guidance’ (6%). Furthermore, recognition of the recently launched ‘Keep Crushing It’ campaign is at 6%. Collectively, almost one in five (18%) UK citizens have seen a specific Love Food Hate Waste campaign.

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6 Love Food Hate Waste aims to raise awareness of the need to reduce food waste and help us take action: [https://lovefoodhatewaste.com](https://lovefoodhatewaste.com)
7 Toast bread straight from the freezer: [https://lovefoodhatewaste.com/toast](https://lovefoodhatewaste.com/toast)
8 Set your fridge to the right temperature so that your milk and other food items can last longer: [https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/article/chill-fridge-out](https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/article/chill-fridge-out)
9 A-Z of food storage: [https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/article/food-storage-a-z](https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/article/food-storage-a-z)
10 Keep Crushing It [https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/keepcrushingit](https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/keepcrushingit)
There has also been an increase in levels of recognition of the ‘suitable for home freezing’ logo which - at 88% – is one of the highest levels of recognition on record. Recognition of the ‘fridge temperature below 5 degrees’ logo has also increased throughout lockdown, from 9% in November 2019 to 22% now.

**Figure 9 – Recognition of food management logos / campaigns**

**Q. Have you seen any of these in the past year?**
Base: 4,119 UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility for food shopping/preparation. September 2020

![Recognition of food management logos / campaigns chart](image)

The June research demonstrated that - when Love Food Hate Waste campaigns are seen - they are considered highly useful (by 92%). This survey demonstrates that two in three (67%) who have seen at least one Love Food Hate Waste campaign say they have done something differently as a result (Figure 10). This is as high as almost four in five (79%) for Keep Crushing It.
5. Links to climate change

The June survey established that close to four in five (81%) UK citizens are concerned about climate change. This survey finds that significantly fewer - three in ten (30%) - say they see a clear link between wasted food and climate change (Figure 11). This is notably lower than the proportion who see a clear link to aviation (57%), recycling (53%) and less trips by car (50%). It is in line with the proportion who see a clear link to eating less meat/dairy (31%).

A further 38% say they can see ‘some’ link between wasted food and climate change, while just over one in four (27%) say they can’t see much or any link. A small minority of one in seventeen (6%) say they do not think the climate is changing.
Among those who do see a clear link, levels of understanding are sophisticated. Over one in three (36%) cite the embedded resources required by food production, 27% the need for more/over production and 16% the release of climate-forcing gases as food decomposes.

Among those who do not see a link between wasted food and climate change, one in four (25%) say this is because food waste can be composted and used as a resource, while 11% say it decomposes naturally/harmlessly. A similar proportion (11%) say the impact of wasted food on climate change is/must be minimal compared to other contributors.
6. Key reflections

The survey demonstrates the following:

- Lifestyles and routines remain in a state of flux and lockdown has – and continues to be – experienced differently across the population.

- Self-reported food waste has stabilised at June levels, well below pre-lockdown levels.

- Levels of food waste are higher among those returning to ‘normal’ (e.g. children returned to school, those furloughed but now returned to work) and those feeling under more time pressure now than before lockdown. This highlights the need to support these behaviours as lockdown restrictions ease (at least in some parts of the UK) or risk a rapid return to pre-lockdown levels of food waste. There is also a strong association between levels of self-reported food waste and eating out.

- Lockdown food management behaviours are enduring, with the vast majority either continuing the behaviour the same as during lockdown or even more. This is particularly true of checking date labels and on-pack storage guidance, using up leftovers, freezing items and checking the fridge before shopping. However, food preparation behaviours – such as cooking creatively, making a meal by combining random ingredients and batch cooking – appear to be under more pressure.

- Information and guidance from Love Food Hate Waste is playing a key role. Almost one in five UK citizens (18%) have seen at least one campaign/source of information from Love Food Hate Waste. Of these, 92% say they found the information useful and 67% say they did something differently as a result. This currently equates to 4.4 million UK citizens aged 18+. The impact of these campaigns and resources would be more pronounced with greater reach.

- Food waste prevention motivations and barriers are starting to evolve. As lockdown unease began to decline and citizens had less time to manage and prepare food, other motivations such as saving money, valuing food, eating healthily and the environment increased in prominence.

- There is a key opportunity to raise awareness of the contribution food waste makes to climate change with only 30% saying they can see a clear link.

Wasting Food: It’s Out of Date

This research clearly shows that in the UK not enough people are making the link between the food they throw away and the damage this causes to our planet. This is a hard connection to make, and it is why WRAP has launched a fresh new brand aimed at informing the public about the huge impact wasted food has on climate change and the environment.

Called Wasting Food: It’s Out of Date, the new brand will raise awareness of the need to tackle wasted food by showing the impact this has on the planet. It will reach and engage the 70% of UK citizens who don’t see a clear link between the food we throw away and climate change. The brand will call on UK citizens to realise the urgency of the situation where precious resources like water, agricultural land, and energy are wasted as a result of the food we throw away.
Dynamic videos and infographics will deliver these messages across Instagram and Twitter. There is also a dedicated website to bring to life the devastating environmental cost of wasting food – and a quiz to help people realise exactly how much food they waste at home.

It is critical that a wide range of businesses, local authorities, NGOs and other influencers get behind this initiative to ensure the greatest possible reach. It is also important to focus on avoiding the waste of food wherever this occurs, within the home or out of home.