Food waste and Covid-19 - Survey 2: Lockdown easing

The second 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

Food thrown away by householders in the UK reduced by over 30% per person between 2007 and 2018, but whilst this is recognised as a world-leading achievement, much more remains to be done. Food waste from UK households is still around 6.6 million tonnes, 70% of which was intended to be eaten (30% being the ‘inedible’ parts). This had a value of over £14 billion a year and would be associated with more than 20 million tonnes of GHG emissions. The food that could have been eaten (4.5 million tonnes), but ends up as waste, would make the equivalent of around 10 billion meals. Globally it is estimated that up to a third of the food produced ends up being wasted, and if food waste were its own country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases¹.

Reducing food waste further is a financial and environmental imperative, and it is 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. Previous research by 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%² (between November 2019 and April 2020).

WRAP undertook this latest research to track the impact of 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 to explore the potential implications of any behavioural variations from the ‘norm’ on changes in levels of food waste.

The research was undertaken online from 17-23 June 2020 with a nationally representative sample of 4,000 UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility for food shopping and/or preparation.

Key findings

Changes in food management behaviours

UK citizens responded to the Covid-19 lockdown with a wide range of positive food management strategies. 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). A smaller proportion adopted strategies such as writing dates on products that have been opened or frozen, checking/changing the fridge temperature or doing more portion sizing than usual.

¹ UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3 on food loss and waste: 2019 Progress Report
² In the May 2020 report, Citizen responses to the Covid-19 lockdown, WRAP reported a 34% reduction in food waste, which compared a rolling average across 2018 and 2019 to the self-reported data from April 2020.
As lockdown continued these positive food management behaviours endured and, in fact, extended. On average, UK citizens undertook 6.7 food management behaviours more often across lockdown – up from 5.9 behaviours during initial lockdown in early April. The adoption of these food management behaviours was not evenly distributed across the population – around one in five (21%) did not undertake any behaviours more often (i.e. carrying on as they were pre-lockdown) compared to almost one in three (32%) who undertook as many as 10+ behaviours more often. Uptake was highest among younger groups (aged 18-34 and 35-44), those with children at home and those whose work was impacted by Covid-19 (e.g. furloughed, home working).

There was also a strong association between food management behaviours and seeing information from WRAP’s citizen-facing campaign Love Food Hate Waste. For example, those who saw the A-Z of Food Storage guidance undertook 12.4 behaviours more often. The strength of the association suggests that, as citizens were adjusting their behaviours to lockdown, these Love Food Hate Waste resources played a key role in supporting them to establish new food routines and strategies.

**Motivations to adopt new food management behaviours**

UK citizens cite a range of reasons why they adopted more food management behaviours during lockdown, most commonly: wanting to avoid going to the shops; to save money; not wanting to run out of food; and having more time. While several of these will reduce in significance as lockdown eases, citizens also cite a range of other motivations that can be tapped into – including thinking differently about food/valuing it more, wanting to be more organised and in control and trying to eat better/a healthier diet.

While only a minority attribute their lockdown behaviours to an environmental motivation, the research highlights the potential to link food waste and climate change. Close to four in five (81%) are currently concerned about climate change but only around two in five (37%) agree that food waste contributes to climate change.

**Likelihood of behaviours being maintained**

There is a strong aspiration among UK citizens to maintain their lockdown behaviours - with 70% wanting to maintain at least some of them post-lockdown. This is most evident for pre-shop planning behaviours (e.g. checking cupboards, the fridge and freezer, making a shopping list) alongside using up leftovers and freezing foods.

Nonetheless, the results also show that some drop-off is likely across all of the behaviours – for example, 16-19% cannot see themselves carrying on checking what they have in their cupboards, fridge or freezer to the same extent, and close to one in three (34%) of those who have been sticking to their list more during lockdown already cannot see themselves maintaining this post-lockdown. Key barriers cited include the ease of getting hold of food post-lockdown and, crucially, a lack of time as life returns to normal.

**The impact on levels of food waste**

Levels of reported food waste have begun to rebound, with the average level of waste across four key products (bread, milk, potatoes and chicken) currently at 17.9%, up
from 13.7% in April (an increase of 31%). However, it remains significantly below the levels seen pre-lockdown, for example 24.1% in November 2019.

Based on these estimates, just over one in four UK citizens (27%) classify as having higher levels of food waste (up from 20% in April but still below pre-lockdown levels, e.g. 34% in November 2019). Those returning to ‘normal’ (e.g. children returned to school, furloughed but now returned to work) are significantly more likely to report higher levels of food waste compared to the UK average – highlighting the pressing need to support these behaviours as lockdown eases, or risk a rapid return to pre-lockdown levels of food waste.

**Food waste communications**

Not unsurprisingly (given the recent focus on Brexit, the 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 (35%, down from 69% in May 2019).

While there has likewise been a fall in the proportion of citizens who have heard/seen something about how to plan, buy, store or prepare food to help reduce the amount that gets thrown away (28%, down from 49% in May 2019), this has increased compared to early lockdown (from 23% in April 2020). This appears to reflect the efforts of WRAP and its partners to communicate specific guidance and help during lockdown.

Recall of some key logos has increased during lockdown – for example, recognition of the Love Food Hate Waste brand is at one in four (25%). While lower than in early lockdown (31%, the highest level recorded), it remains well above pre-lockdown levels.

The same is true of the ‘suitable for home freezing’ snowflake which achieved its highest level of recognition in April (88%) and, while it has now fallen back to 73%, it remains above pre-lockdown levels. It is also considered useful by almost all (97%) of those who recall it.

Fewer have seen specific Love Food Hate Waste campaigns such as Chill the Fridge Out (3%) and the A-Z of Food Storage (2%). While both are considered useful among those who have seen them (by 90% and 91%, respectively), their impact would be more pronounced with amplification and greater reach.

**Conclusions**

The survey found that:

- As lockdown continued the increased level of positive food management behaviours (first seen in the April survey) endured, and in fact extended.
- There is 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” which may soon no longer apply.
- Now that restrictions have eased levels of reported food waste have begun to ‘bounce back’. There has been a 31% increase in reported food waste when compared to ‘full lockdown’, although this is still below ‘normal’ pre-lockdown levels.
• Those returning to ‘normal’ (children returned to school, working from home but now returned to work, furloughed and now returned to work) are significantly more likely than average to report higher levels of food waste compared to the UK average.

• As life begins to return to ‘normal’, a lack of time is the primary barrier to maintaining lockdown behaviours but there is also an opportunity to build on high levels of concern about climate change, by highlighting the contribution food waste makes.

• Food waste as an issue appears to have fallen in the public consciousness. High profile and effective campaigns and interventions must be in place at the point at which these “returning to normal” moments of change occur, otherwise there is a risk that the opportunity to encourage maintenance behaviours is missed.

• Love Food Hate Waste appears to be highly effective in supporting a shift towards positive behaviours; it now needs amplification from organisations across the UK to achieve greater reach and have more impact.

Insights from this research have allowed WRAP and Love Food Hate Waste to develop maintenance strategies to support citizens to sustain the positive food management behaviours adopted through the necessity of lockdown. Love Food Hate Waste is launching a 2020 campaign that builds on the knowledge from this research. ‘Keep Crushing It’ aims to make sure these new behaviours stick, and citizens continue to waste less food as lockdown eases further.

This could be a key moment in the fight against food waste. There is a unique opportunity to embed these good habits into a ‘new normal’ by motivating citizens to ‘keep up the good work’, supporting them not to revert back to their ‘old ways’. ‘Keep Crushing It’ will congratulate citizens on what they have done under lockdown and create a link between saving food and saving the planet. Love Food Hate Waste will provide regular tips and actions that keep the nation on track. WRAP will galvanise support from retailers, producers, manufacturers, local authorities ‘community groups and other stakeholders to support Love Food Hate Waste, and build our campaigns into their communications plans on an ongoing basis. This will help ensure these positive food waste prevention behaviours become the ‘new normal’, reducing the impact of wasting food on the planet and its resources.
Introduction

Food thrown away by householders in the UK reduced by over 30% per person between 2007 and 2018, but whilst this is recognised as a world-leading achievement, much more still remains to be done. Food waste from UK households is still around 6.6 million tonnes, 70% of which was intended to be eaten (30% being the ‘inedible parts). This had a value of over £14 billion a year and would be associated with more than 20 million tonnes of GHG emissions. The food that could have been eaten (4.5 million tonnes), but ends up as waste, would make the equivalent of around 10 billion meals.

Reducing food waste further is a financial and environmental imperative, and it is important to understand exactly how the Covid-19 lockdown is affecting citizens’ habits, behaviours and attitudes relating to food, and food waste.

This survey is the second conducted by WRAP with previous research undertaken in April 2020 under full lockdown. At the time UK citizens were encouraged to leave the house as little as possible and only for valid reasons such as; Exercise, shopping for basic necessities, any medical need, or providing care for a vulnerable person, and travel to or from work, but only when you cannot work from home. Unsurprisingly, this has had significant and wide-reaching impacts on food behaviours. The research conducted in April found that during this difficult time, the foundations for stronger food management behaviours emerged from the necessity of lockdown as the UK population became enormously resourceful.

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. In the UK restrictions have eased to varying degrees as the devolved nations set out their plans for coming out of lockdown. When the research was conducted restrictions in England have seen the greatest level of easing with:

- Workers unable to work from home returning to the workplace.
- Citizens being able to drive to outdoor locations for exercise.
- Primary schools in England re-opened in phases, beginning with reception, Year 1 and Year 6.
- Some non-essential shops re-opened.

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 to explore the potential implications of any behavioural variations from the ‘norm’ on changes in levels of 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 17-23 June 2020. A total of 4,000 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.

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 June 2020 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 the results in June 2020 compared to April 2020, the maximum margin of error is plus or minus 5% (i.e. an increase from 50% in April to 55% in June would be statistically significant, whereas a June result of 54% 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).

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3 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](https://wrap.org.uk/content/uk-progress-against-courtauld-2025-targets-and-un-sustainable-development-goal-123)

4 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.
**Structure of the report**

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

1. Food management behaviours
2. Food purchases and shopping behaviours
3. Levels of food waste
4. Communications about food waste
5. Final reflections
1. The impact of Covid-19 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 – with restrictions now easing – the likelihood that lockdown behaviours will be maintained post lockdown.

1.1 Changes in food management during lockdown

The survey confirms that UK citizens undertook more food management behaviours during lockdown (Figure 1). 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). A smaller proportion increased their use of strategies such as writing dates on products that have been opened or frozen, checking/changing the fridge temperature or portion sizing.

UK citizens adopted, on average, 6.7 more food management behaviours during lockdown, although this was not evenly distributed across the population – with around one in five (22%) not undertaking any behaviours more often vs. close to one in three (32%) who undertook 10+ behaviours more often.
This supports the findings from the April survey, which established that UK citizens were adopting a range of food management behaviours during the initial phase of lockdown. However, the latest findings show that positive food management behaviours in fact continued to spread and extend throughout lockdown (Figure 2). This is particularly evident for cooking creatively and for freezer-related behaviours – including checking the freezer pre-shop, freezing more items and managing the freezer. It is also true for shopping online (which increased throughout lockdown compared to initial lockdown), sticking to the shopping list and making a meal plan. This had the net effect of increasing the average number of food management behaviours to 6.7 compared to 5.9 in April.
There is a clear divide in food management behaviours across different groups:

- **Age**: younger groups aged 18-24, 25-34 and 35-44 adopted more food management behaviours during lockdown (an average of 8.4, 9.1 and 7.4 more behaviours, respectively) compared to those aged 65+ (4.4).

- **Covid-19 disruption to work**: those who have been impacted by Covid-19 in their job have adopted more food management behaviours, including those who have worked reduced hours (9.4 behaviours), lost a job (9.0) or been 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 report adopting more food management behaviours during lockdown (8.8) vs. those with none at home (5.9)
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1. Levels of food waste: those who classify as having above average levels of food waste have adopted more food management behaviours during lockdown (8.1 behaviours).

2. Recall of food logos and campaigns: there is a strong association between recall of a number of food logos/campaigns and more food management behaviours during lockdown – for example, those who have seen WRAP’s A-Z storage guidance undertook 12.4 behaviours more often. A similar pattern is evident for those who recall the Chill the Fridge Out logo/campaign (12.3) and the Love Food Hate Waste logo (9.3). This compares to 5.1 more behaviours among those who do not recall any logos/campaigns.

1.2 Motivations to change food management behaviours

UK citizens cite a range of reasons why they adopted more food management behaviours during lockdown (Figure 3), most commonly wanting to avoid going to the shops (mentioned by 54%), wanting to save money (52%), concerns about running out of food (44%) and having more spare time (37%). In addition to these direct responses to lockdown, citizens also cite thinking differently about food/valuing it more (36%), wanting to be more organised and in control (32%) and trying to eat better/a healthier diet (30%).

The research points to the further potential to link food waste and climate change (Figure 4). While almost two in five (37%) already acknowledge that food waste...
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contributes to climate change, this could be strengthened still further – since more than double this proportion (81%) are concerned about climate.

**Figure 4 – Concern about climate change and the link to food waste**

Base: 4,000 UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility for food shopping and/or preparation in the home.
June 2020

83% are concerned about climate change, but...

...only 37% think food waste is contributing to climate change

### 1.3 Likelihood of behaviours being maintained

The majority of UK citizens aspire to maintain their lockdown food management behaviours. Seven in ten (70%) say they hope to keep at least some of their lockdown behaviours (Figure 5) - including almost half (48%) who want to keep ‘a lot’ or ‘fair amount’ and around one in five (22%) ‘one or two things’. By contrast, around one in ten (11%) would like their food habits to return to how they were before, while one in five (20%) say their food habits didn’t change during lockdown.

When asked a follow up open-ended question about what they would like to keep about their lockdown food behaviours, the top cited reason is wasting less food (spontaneously cited by 19%), followed by cooking more from scratch/less pre-prepared meals (18%) and shopping less frequently/buying more in bulk (16%).

Turning to specific behaviours, for all food management behaviours undertaken more often during lockdown a majority say they can see themselves carrying these on as life returns to normal (i.e. give a score of 4-5 out of 5). This is most evident for pre-shop planning behaviours such as checking the cupboards before shopping (83%) as well as using up leftovers (79%) and freezing foods (75%). Nonetheless, the results suggest that a degree of drop off is likely across all behaviours – from 16% who can’t see themselves checking the fridge before shopping as much as during lockdown to 34% who can’t see themselves sticking to their shopping list as much as during lockdown.
### Figure 5 – In-home food management behaviours

**Q. Thinking about how your food shopping and preparation habits may change now that lockdown is easing, which of the following best applies?**

Now that lockdown has begun to ease, on a scale of 1-5 to what extent do you see yourself carrying on this as life returns to normal? 1 = I can’t see myself carrying on doing this; 5 = I can easily see myself carrying on doing this.

Base: 4,000 UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility for food shopping and/or preparation in the home. June 2020

#### Overall aspiration to maintain lockdown food management behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>1-2 (cannot see myself carrying on)</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 (can easily see myself carrying on)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checking what you have in the fridge before shopping</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking what you have in cupboards before shopping</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking what you have in the freezer before shopping</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving leftovers to use another day</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a shopping list</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freezing items</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking labels for use by / best before dates</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing meals at home</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a meal by combining random ingredients you happen to have</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking creatively (e.g. trying new meals/recipes)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking where to store items to keep them fresh for longer</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing the fridge (i.e. what there is/when to use by)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing the freezer (i.e. what there is/when it was frozen)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a meal plan for the week ahead</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batch cooking (e.g. making several portions to store for later)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking labels for where/ how long to store items</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labelling products to show when you put it in the freezer</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing cupboards (i.e. what there is/when to use by)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labelling products to show the date it was opened</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighing/judging portions the number you’re cooking for</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticking to your list/not buying extra</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping for food online</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking/changing the fridge temperature</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main barriers to maintaining food management behaviours relate to the ease of getting hold of food and a lack of time. For example, among those who cannot see themselves carrying on one or more behaviour they did during lockdown, 42% cite that it’s easier to get hold of food again and 26% that they don’t have the time during ‘normal’ life (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Barriers to maintaining food management behaviours

Q. Why are you less likely to see yourself carrying on some things/have already stopped them? Select all that apply
Q. And which of these is the main reason??
Base: 2,110 UK adults aged 18 who do not see themselves carrying on with 1+ of their lockdown food management behaviours, June 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>All barriers</th>
<th>Main barrier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's easier to get hold of food / go to the shops again</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer worried about running out of food</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just don't have the time during &quot;normal&quot; life</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much hassle</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less meals to prepare</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less people at home</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't find it very useful / it didn't help</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less concerned about job security</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Impact on levels of food waste

The survey calculates levels of food waste by focusing on four key products\(^5\) (bread, chicken, milk and potatoes) and asking respondents to estimate – for the last time they purchased each product – the percentage thrown away uneaten. The results (Figure 7) estimate that, on average, around one in five (20.3%) potatoes are thrown away uneaten, followed by bread (17.9%), chicken (17.2%) and milk (16.3%).

The average across the four is 17.9% which represents a significant increase (of around a third) in the level of food thrown away uneaten compared to initial lockdown in April (when it was 13.7%)\(^6\). However, the level of food waste remains significantly below the levels seen before lockdown across 2018-19, for example 24.1% in November 2019. In other words, self-reported levels of food waste in June 2020 have rebounded from the historic low observed in April 2020 but are still below the ‘normal’ level observed pre-lockdown.

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\(^5\) WRAP estimates that these four products are some of the most significant products in terms of household food waste.

\(^6\) These results draw on self-reported levels of wasted food (as a percentage of that purchased)
Furthermore, and based on these estimates, just over one in four UK citizens (27%) classify as having higher levels of food waste. This represents a significant increase from initial lockdown in April (20%) but still well below November 2019 (34%).

Table 1 sets out the groups who are more likely than average to report higher levels of food waste (left hand column) and those who are less likely (right hand column). Age is a key predictive variable, with almost half (47%) of 18-34s reporting higher levels of food waste, compared to 10% of those aged 65+\(^7\). The other stand out variable in this survey is key moments of change that represent a return to “normal”. This includes:

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\(^7\) This is not saying that all younger citizens have high levels of food waste while none of those aged 65+ 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 notably higher among those who worked fewer hours during lockdown and have now returned to normal (62% 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 lower levels of food waste in line with the population average.

• **School/nursery** – while having children 0-10 and 11-15 at home is associated with higher levels of food waste in its own right, it is especially pronounced for those households who say their children have now returned to school post lockdown, compared to those who remain at home (58% vs. 36%, respectively, classify as high food wasters).

• **Food shopping frequency** – levels of food waste are notably higher among those who report an increase in food shopping frequency compared to lockdown (39%), and even more so among those who say their food shopping frequency has returned to pre-lockdown levels (44%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More likely to have higher levels of food waste</th>
<th>Less likely to have higher levels of food waste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had reduced hours at work during lockdown, now returned to normal hours (62% report higher levels of food waste)</td>
<td>65+ (10% report higher levels of food waste)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children have returned to school (58%)</td>
<td>55-64 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male 18-34 (54%)</td>
<td>Shopping with the same frequency as during lockdown (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked from home during lockdown, now returned to working away from home (53%)</td>
<td>Homemaker (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 0-10 at home (50%)</td>
<td>Small fridge capacity (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-34 (47%)</td>
<td>Small freezer capacity (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food shopping frequency has returned to pre-lockdown levels (44%)</td>
<td>No children at home (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London (43%)</td>
<td>45-54 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 18-34 (42%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furloughed and now returned to work (40%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a veg/fruit box delivered in past month (40%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food shopping more frequently than during lockdown (39%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large fridge capacity (38%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 11-15 at home (38%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 (37%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children at home but not back to school (36%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large freezer capacity (35%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Communications about food waste

Just over two in five (43%) 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 (35%) or specifically about how to plan, buy, store or prepare food to help reduce the amount that gets thrown away (28%).

Recall of information about the amount of food thrown away has declined from 69% in May 2019 (the highest level on record) to half that level now, and back in line with the period 2011-2016 (Figure 8). Recall of specific food waste avoidance strategies does not follow the same trend. While it has likewise decreased from a peak of 49% in May 2019 it has, across lockdown as a whole, recorded a statistically significant increase since early lockdown (to 28% now, from a low of 23% in April 2020). 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 now, of course, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recognition of specific logos and campaigns has either been maintained or increased compared to pre-Covid 19 (Figure 9). For example, one in four (25%) recall the Love Food Hate Waste logo, down slightly from early lockdown (31% - the highest level on record) but nonetheless significantly above 2014-2018. Fewer have seen the specific
Love Food Hate Waste campaigns\(^8\) ‘Make Toast Not Waste’\(^9\) (8%), ‘Chill the Fridge Out’\(^10\) (3%) or the A-Z of Food Storage guidance\(^11\) (2%).

There has also been an increase in levels of recognition of the “suitable for home freezing” logo – during early lockdown this achieved the highest level of recognition on record (88%), and while that has now fallen back to 73% it remains above previous years (e.g. 62% in November 2019). Recognition of the “fridge temperature below 5 degrees” logo has also increased throughout lockdown, from 9% in November 2019 to 17% now.

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

Q. Have you seen any of these in the past year?
Base: 4,000 UK adults aged 18+ with responsibility for food shopping/preparation in the home. June 2020

When these campaigns or ‘on pack’ logos are seen they are considered widely effective (Figure 10). For example, of those who recall the suitable for home freezing logo, 97% say it is useful (including 66% who say it is ‘very useful’). Likewise, 94% say the fridge temperature below 5 degrees logo is useful (including 49% who say it is ‘very useful’). While seen by fewer citizens overall, the WRAP campaigns Chill the Fridge Out and the A-Z of Food Storage guidance are both considered useful (91% and 90%, respectively).

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\(^8\) 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)

\(^9\) Toast bread straight from the freezer: [https://lovefoodhatewaste.com/toast](https://lovefoodhatewaste.com/toast)

\(^10\) 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)

\(^11\) The A-Z of Food Storage: [https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/article/food-storage-a-z](https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/article/food-storage-a-z)
Figure 10 – Recognition of specific food management logos / campaigns

Q. You said that you’ve seen the following in the past year. On a scale of 1-5 (where 1 = not at all useful and 5 = very useful), how useful did you find the information?

Base: UK adults aged 18+ who recall each of these logos/campaigns (base sizes in brackets). June 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logo/Campaign</th>
<th>Not useful (1-2)</th>
<th>Somewhat useful (3)</th>
<th>Useful (4)</th>
<th>Very useful (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snowflake [2,208]</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little blue fridge [422]</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chill the Fridge out [194]</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The A-Z of Food Storage [250]</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Key reflections

The survey demonstrates the following:

- As lockdown has continued, positive food management behaviours (first seen in the April survey) have endured, and in fact extended. Uptake has been highest among 18-44s, those with children, those impacted by Covid-19 on their work, and those who recall food logos and campaigns.

- There is a strong aspiration among UK citizens to maintain these positive food management behaviours - with 70% wanting to maintain at least some of them post-lockdown.

- However, there will be some key barriers to maintaining these behaviours – including the fact that food is easier to get hold of again/citizens are less concerned about running out of food, and also a lack of time when life returns to ‘normal’.

- Now that restrictions have eased levels of reported food waste have begun to ‘bounce back’. There has been a 31% increase in reported food waste when compared to ‘full lockdown’. Those returning to ‘normal’ (children returned to school, working from home but now returned to work, furloughed and now returned to work) are significantly more likely than average to report higher levels of food waste compared to the UK average.

- There are opportunities for WRAP and partners to support citizens maintain their lockdown food management behaviours. For example, as life returns to ‘normal’ a lack of time is seen by citizens as the primary barrier to maintaining lockdown behaviours. Key motivations that WRAP and partners can tap into as lockdown concerns ease include thinking more about the value of food, healthy lifestyles and wanting to be more organized/in control. There is also an opportunity to build on high levels of concern about climate change, although the bridge between food waste and climate change is not yet sufficiently developed.

- Food waste as an issue appears to have fallen in the public consciousness. High profile and effective campaigns and interventions must be in place at the point at which these “returning to normal” moments of change occur, otherwise there is a risk that the opportunity to encourage maintenance behaviours is missed.

- Love Food Hate Waste appears to be highly effective in supporting a shift towards positive behaviours; it now needs amplification from organisations across the UK to achieve greater reach and have more impact.