



Food Waste Attitudes & Behaviours in Ireland National Survey 2024

EPA Circular Economy Programme and Ipsos B&A

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Overview of Survey

Behavioural insight is a foundation of the EPA's Circular Economy Programme, providing evidence to inform policy, behavioural change interventions and awareness campaigns.

The EPA contracted Ipsos B&A to carry out this quantitative research which is a nationally representative survey on Irish citizens' attitudes, awareness and behaviours relating to food waste.

The fieldwork for the online survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,002 adults aged 16+ was carried out in September-October 2024. When relevant, results from the previous food waste national surveys are included as benchmark.

The sections of the report are as follows:

1. Food waste at home
2. Attitudes towards food waste
3. Food management competencies
4. Food waste behaviour changes and future intentions



Section 1: FOOD WASTE AT HOME



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FOOD WASTE AT HOME: *Infographic*



92%

of people waste at least a 'small' amount of food.



29%

of people waste a 'moderate' or a 'large' amount of food.



79%

of people report that dinner is the meal at which food is wasted the most.



48%

of people say that bread is the food they throw out most often.



53%

of people mention 'plans changing' as one of the main reasons they waste food.



51%

of people report not using leftovers in time as one of the main reasons for food waste.



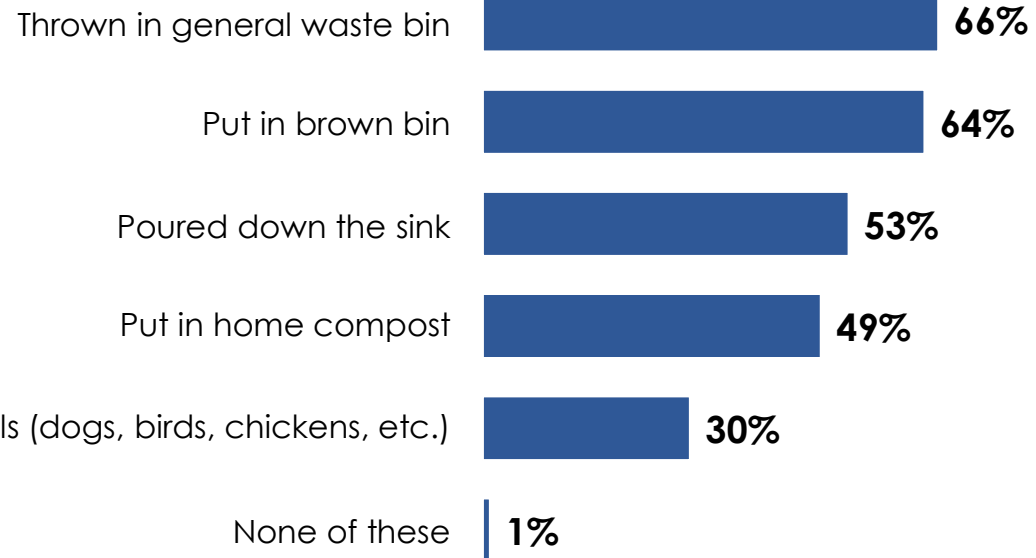
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Food Waste: Understanding



**“What do you think of
as ‘food waste’?”**



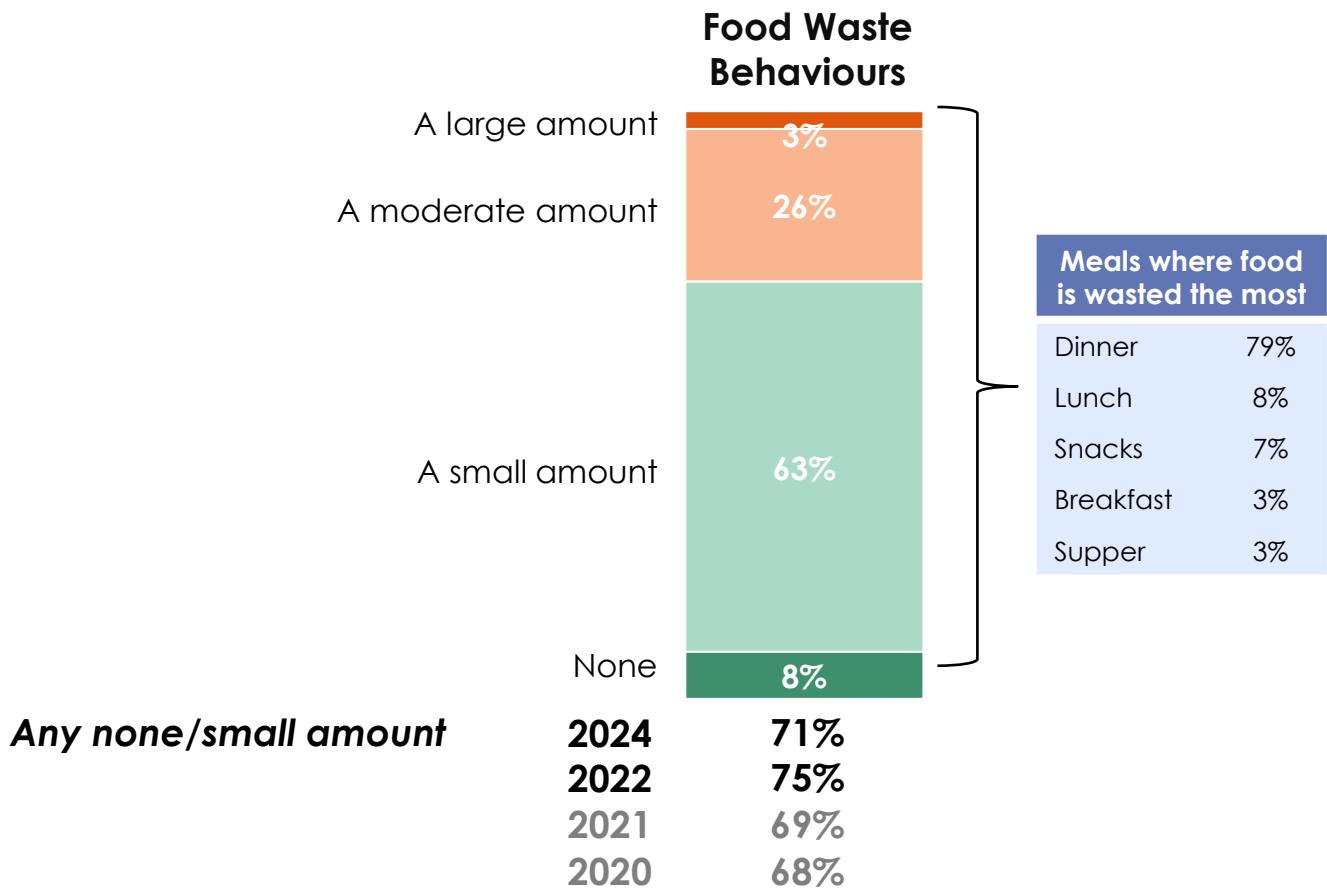
People have different understanding of what food waste is.

Public education is needed to clarify that food waste is any food that could have been eaten that is thrown away.

Q.2b Which, if any, of the following do you think of as 'Food Waste'?
Base: All Adults N - 1,002



Food Waste: Self-Evaluation



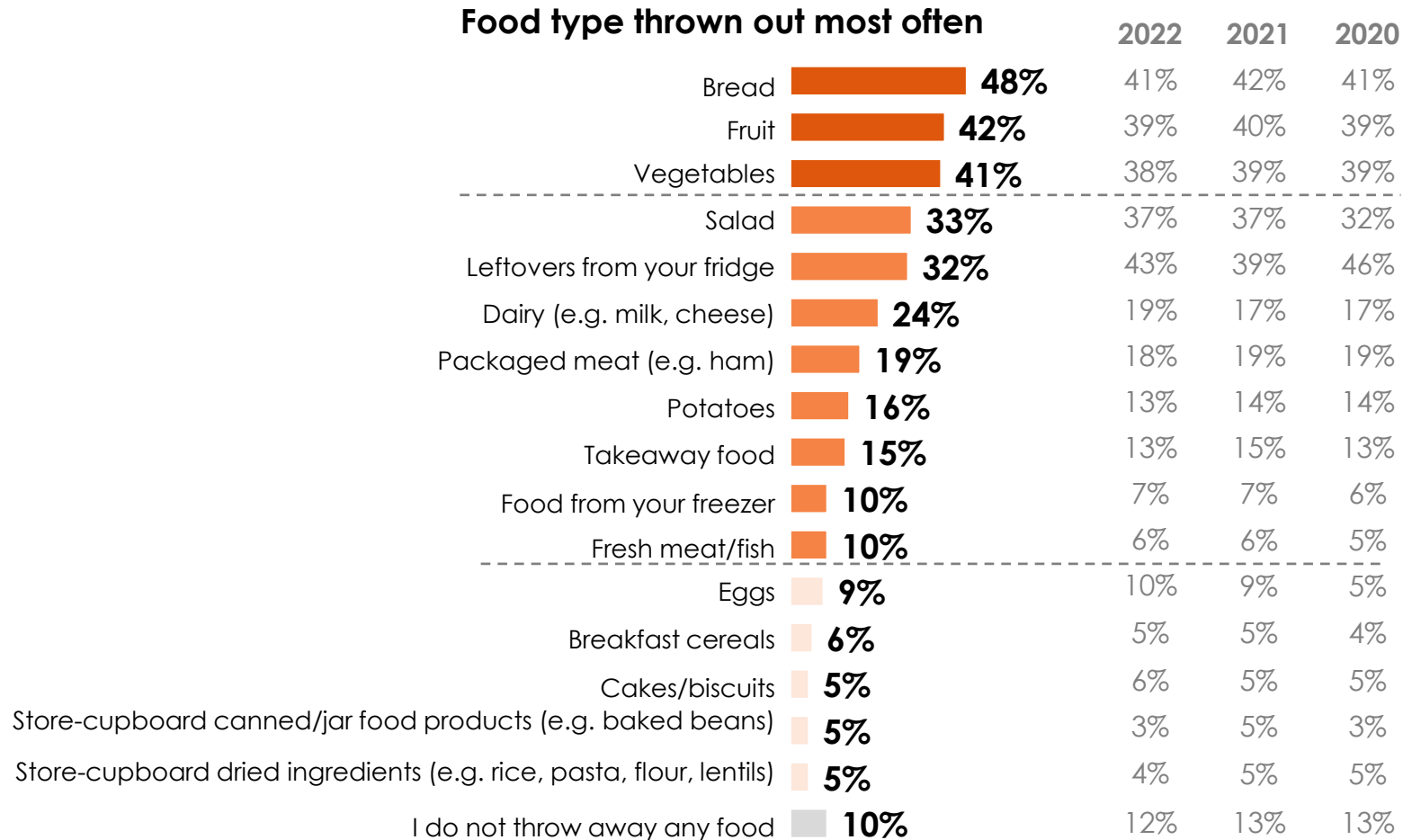
Almost all (92%) report wasting at least 'a small amount' of food.

- 29% of adults report they waste a 'moderate' or 'large amount' of food.
- 79% of people report that dinner is the meal at which food is wasted the most.

Q.2c Realistically, how much food do you think you waste/ throw away uneaten
Q.2d At which meal occasion do you typically waste / throw away most often uneaten food?
Base: All Adults N - 1,002



Types of Food Wasted in the Home



Bread, fruit, and vegetables are the top three food types that are wasted most often. The amount of people saying leftovers from the fridge is one of the food types they throw out 'most often' has decreased by 11% since 2022.

- **48%** of people report bread as the food they waste most often.
- Slightly more than **40%** of people report fruit and vegetables as the food types they waste the most.
- **32%** of adults report leftovers as the food type they waste the most. This is a decline in comparison to 2020 (when this incidence was 43%).

Q.6 What types of food do you throw out in your household most often?

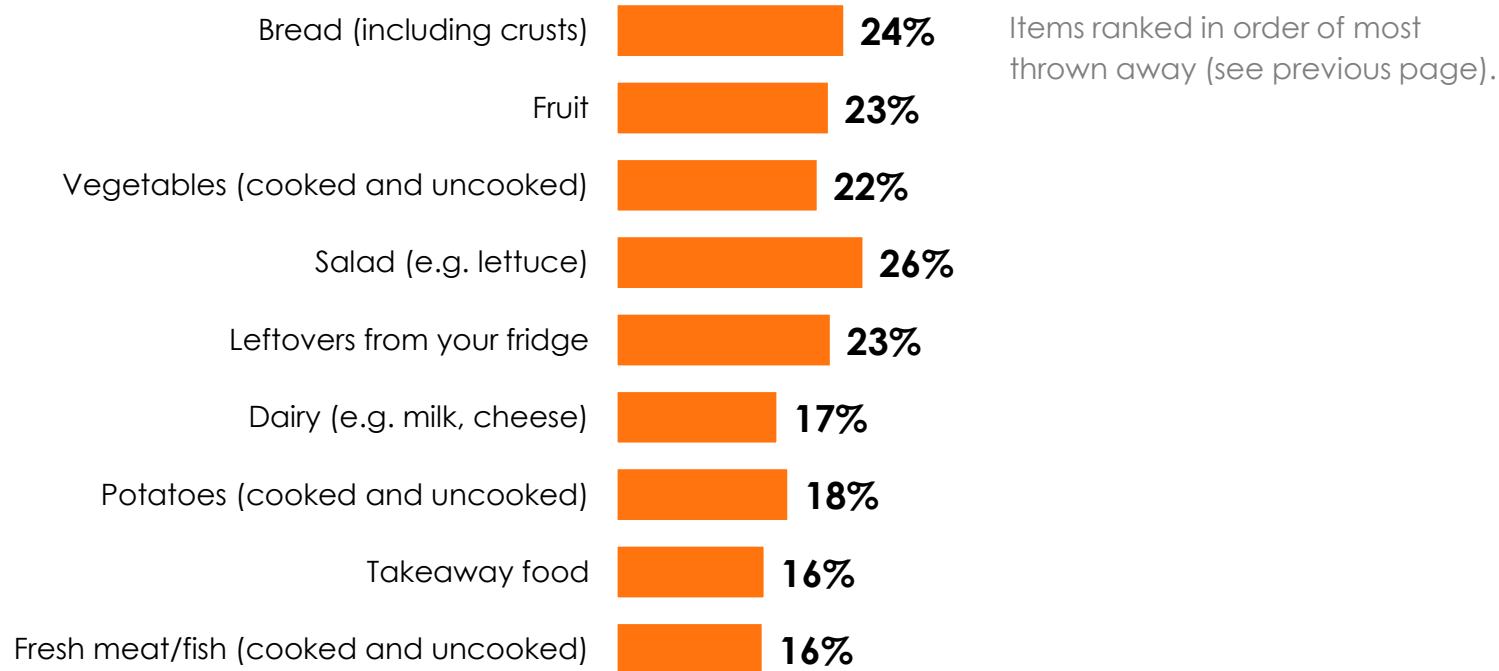
Base: All Adults: 1,002



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Proportion of Food Wasted (Last Time it Was Bought)

Proportion that went uneaten and thrown away

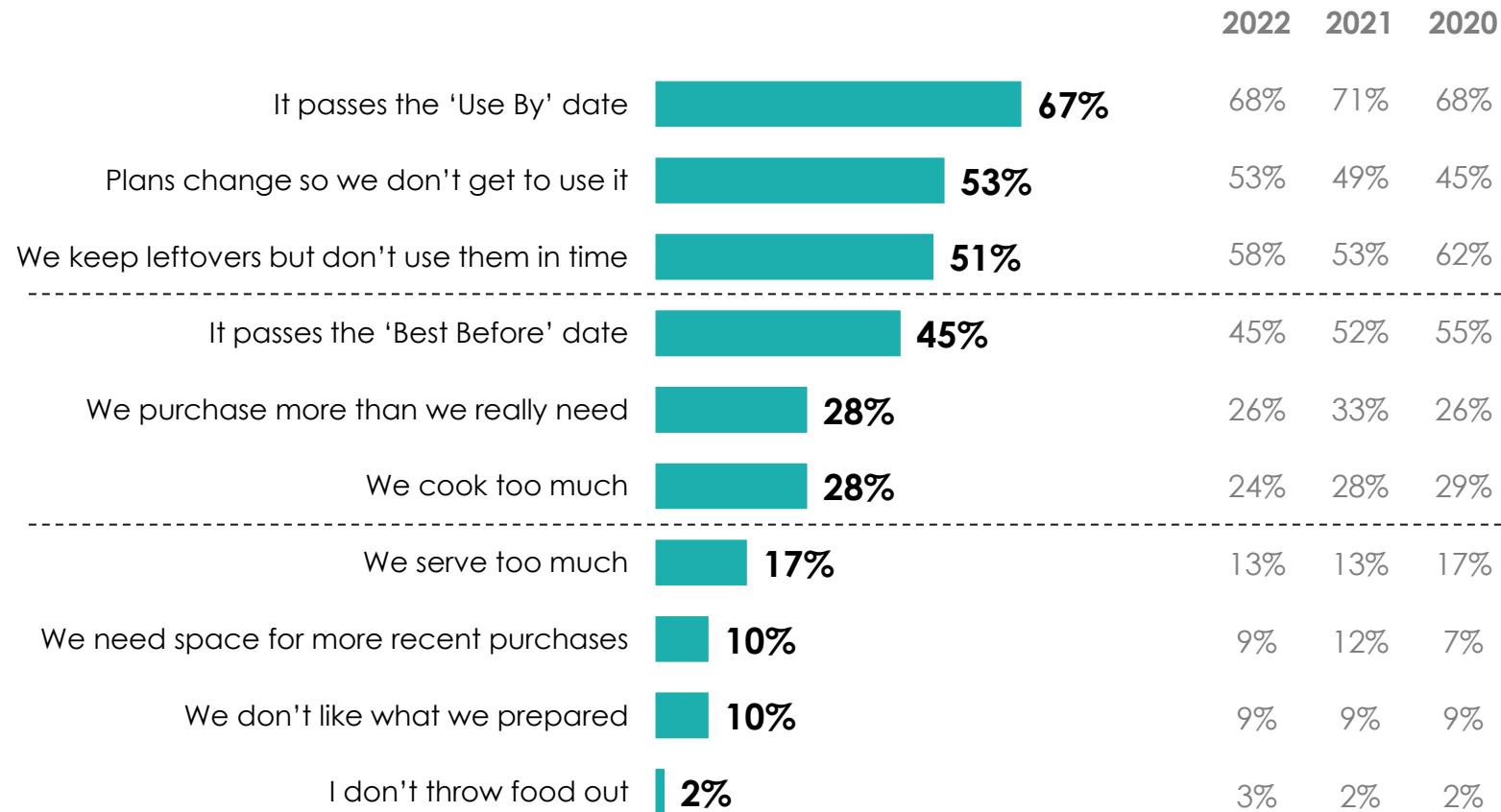


Salad is the food type that people said they wasted the largest proportion of the last time it was bought.

- **26%** of salad was uneaten and discarded the last time it was purchased.
- **24%** of bread (which is the food type wasted the most) was uneaten and discarded the last time it was purchased.
- Slightly more than **20%** of fruit and vegetables were uneaten and discarded the last time they were purchased.

Q.8 Thinking about the last time you bought the following food, approximately what percentage ended up being uneaten and thrown away?
Base: All Adults: 1,002

Main Reasons for Food Waste in the Household



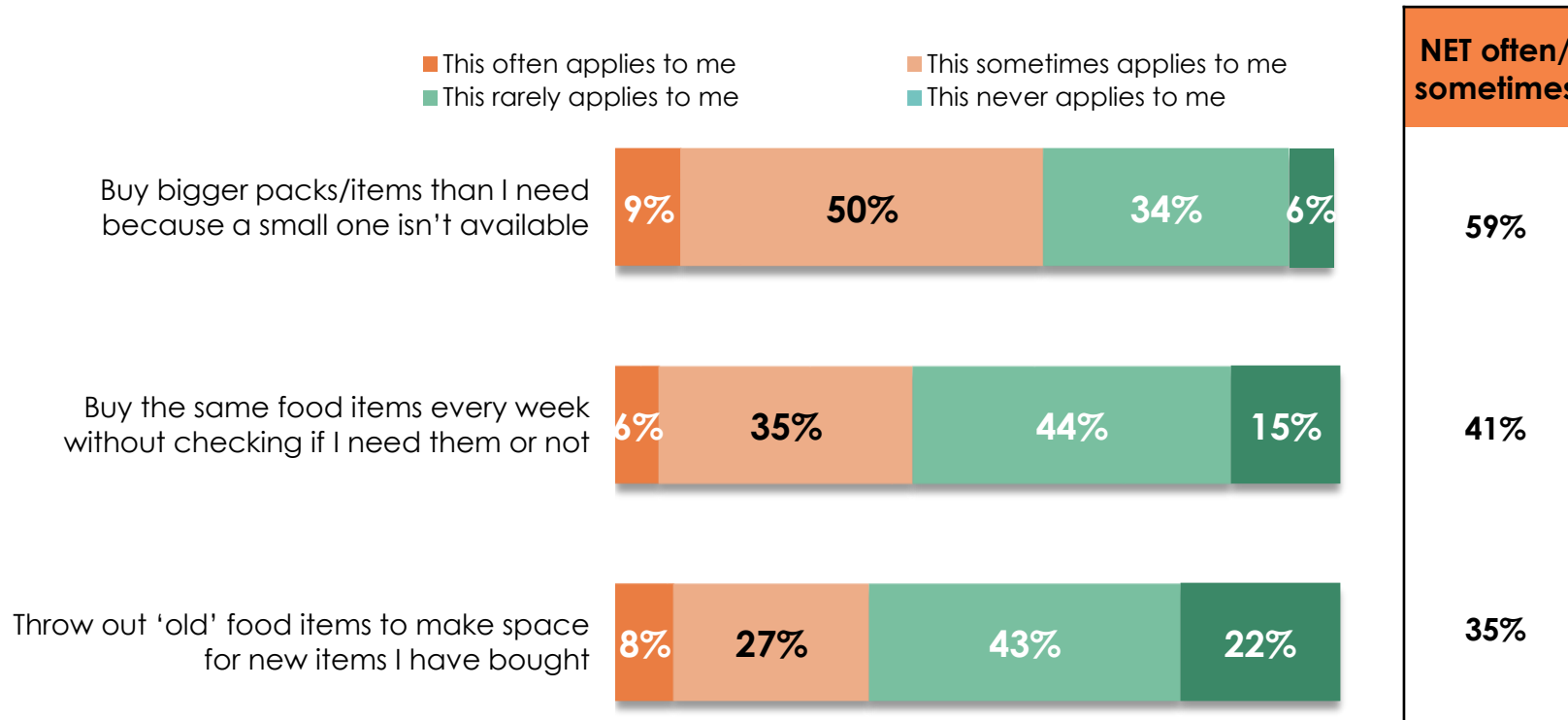
Food passing its use-by date continues to be one of the main reasons people throw away food, followed by plans changing. Not using leftovers in time remains a prominent reason, although decreasing in significance since 2022.

- **67%** of people report food passing its 'use-by' date as one of the main reasons for food waste.
- **53%** of people report wasting food because plans change, and they don't get to use it.
- **51%** of people say that the main reason for wasting food is not using the leftovers they kept in time. This is a decline in comparison to 2022 (58%).

Q.7 For the list below, what are the main reasons you throw out food in your household? Please list your top 4.
Base: All those who throw away food: 905



Food Waste & Shopping Behaviour



Key shopping behaviours that contribute to food waste include bulk purchasing and buying things out of habit without needing them.

- **59%** of people say they buy bigger packs or items than they need because a small one isn't available.
- **41%** of people buy the same food items every week without checking if they need them or not.
- **35%** of people throw out 'old' food items to make space for new ones when they do their food shopping.

Q.5 When you do your food shopping, how frequently does the following apply to you?

Base: All Adults N = 1,002



Section 2: ATTITUDES TOWARDS FOOD WASTE



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ATTITUDES TOWARDS FOOD WASTE: *Infographic*



57%

of people think about food waste at least regularly; a slight rise since the 2022 survey.



75%

of people claim they 'want to save money by reducing the amount of food they waste'.



84%

of people agree that 'everyone has a responsibility to minimise the food they throw away'.



75%

of people report the price of food as the most concerning food issue to them.



85%

of people see a link between recycling food waste and climate change.



81%

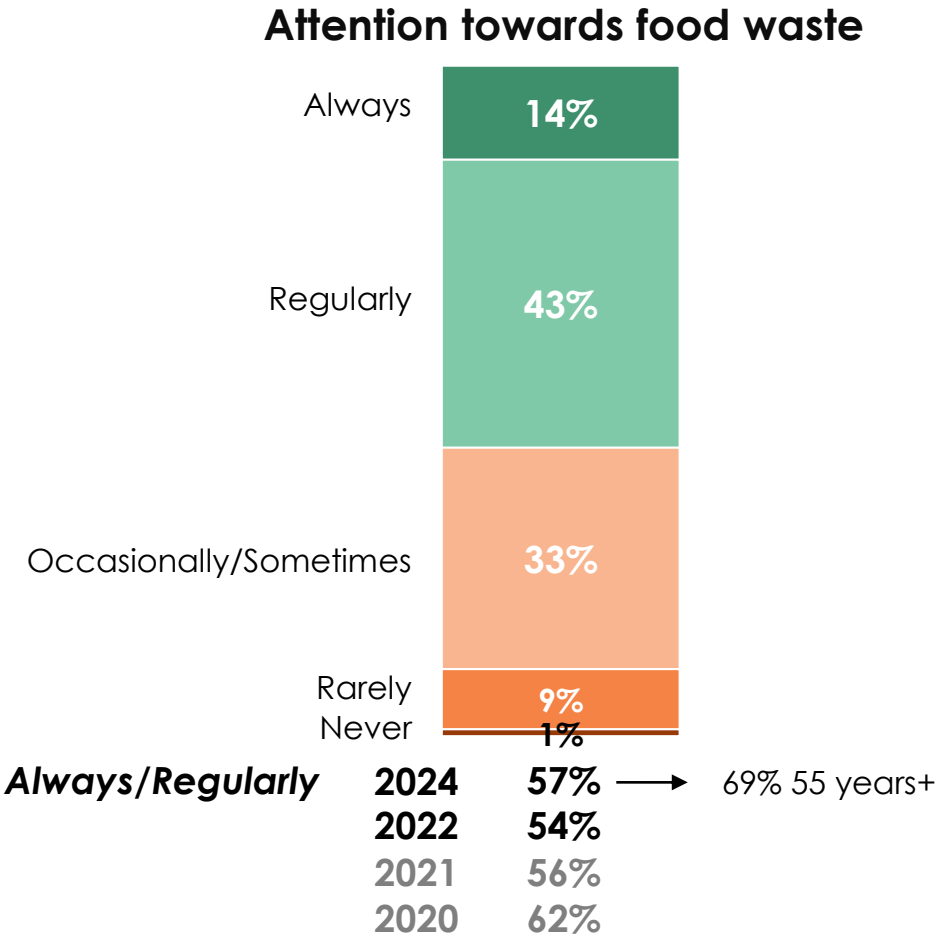
of people see a link between 'throwing away food that could have been eaten' and climate change.



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Attention Towards Food Waste



57% of people think about food waste at least regularly.

- This is a marginal increase in comparison to 2022 (54%).
- People aged 55+ are more likely to think about food waste always or regularly (69%).
- 10% of people rarely or never think about food waste.

Q.2a To what extent had you thought about food waste before today?
Base: All Adults N - 1,002



National Attitudes towards Food Waste

	Net agree			Net agree	
	2024	2022		2024	2022
Everyone, including me, has a responsibility to minimise the food they throw away	84%	88%	I am interested in food waste as an issue	60%	65%
Throwing away uneaten food is the same as throwing money in the bin	81%	86%	I am concerned about the cost of the food that goes to waste in my home.	58%	58%
I want to save money by reducing the amount of food I waste	75%	81%	When I think about it I probably waste more food than I should	46%	47%
Food waste is an important national issue	73%	78%	I would pay more for food that is sustainably produced	34%	39%
I have been making more of an effort lately to reduce my food waste	71%	74%	I talk to friends/colleagues/family about food waste	33%	34%
I feel changing how I manage my food will have a real impact on the waste at home	69%	71%	I feel my actions will not have any real impact on food waste	21%	27%
Minimising food waste should be one of the top priorities for Ireland	67%	73%	I would like to reduce my food waste but I don't know how	21%	25%
Food waste is a serious environmental issue like climate change	67%	73%	I read tweets/blogs on food waste	17%	16%
I believe that reducing the amount of food I waste is an action I can take to reduce greenhouse gases and climate change	67%	69%	It is not possible for me to reduce the amount of food that I waste	16%	17%
Minimising my food waste is one of my top priorities	67%	73%	I have commented or shared my views on food waste online via social media/blogs	14%	13%
I believe it will make a real difference if I reduce the amount of food that I waste	63%	67%	I'm too busy to worry about food waste	13%	14%

People acknowledge a shared responsibility to minimise food waste.

- **84%** of people agree that 'everyone, including me' has a responsibility to minimise the food they throw away.
- **75%** of people agree that minimising food waste is one of their top priorities.
- People aged 55+ and women tend to have more positive attitudes towards reducing food waste.
- Younger age groups are more likely to hold negative attitudes, e.g. 'I feel my actions will not have any real impact on food waste'
- While the ranking of importance of the statements remains largely stable, the strength of agreement has declined across multiple criteria between 2022 and 2024.

Q.9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All Adults: 1,002



National Attitudes towards Food Waste: Key Themes

These statements collectively underscore the personal, financial, and societal dimensions of food waste, as well as the value of taking proactive steps to address it.

1. Personal Responsibility and Awareness

An acknowledgment of individual accountability: the idea that everyone has a responsibility to minimize food waste

45% of people strongly agree that "Everyone, including me has a responsibility..." & "I have been making more of an effort..."

2. Financial Implications

Food waste is directly tied to monetary loss; a desire to save money by reducing food waste highlights the financial benefit of minimizing waste

39% of people strongly agree "Throwing away uneaten food is the same as throwing money in the bin."

3. National and Global Significance

Food waste is framed as a broader societal issue, indicating its relevance beyond the personal sphere.

32% of people strongly agree "Food waste is an important national issue."

4. Proactive Change and Impact

The idea of taking action to reduce food waste is highlighted with a sense of optimism about the effectiveness of personal changes.

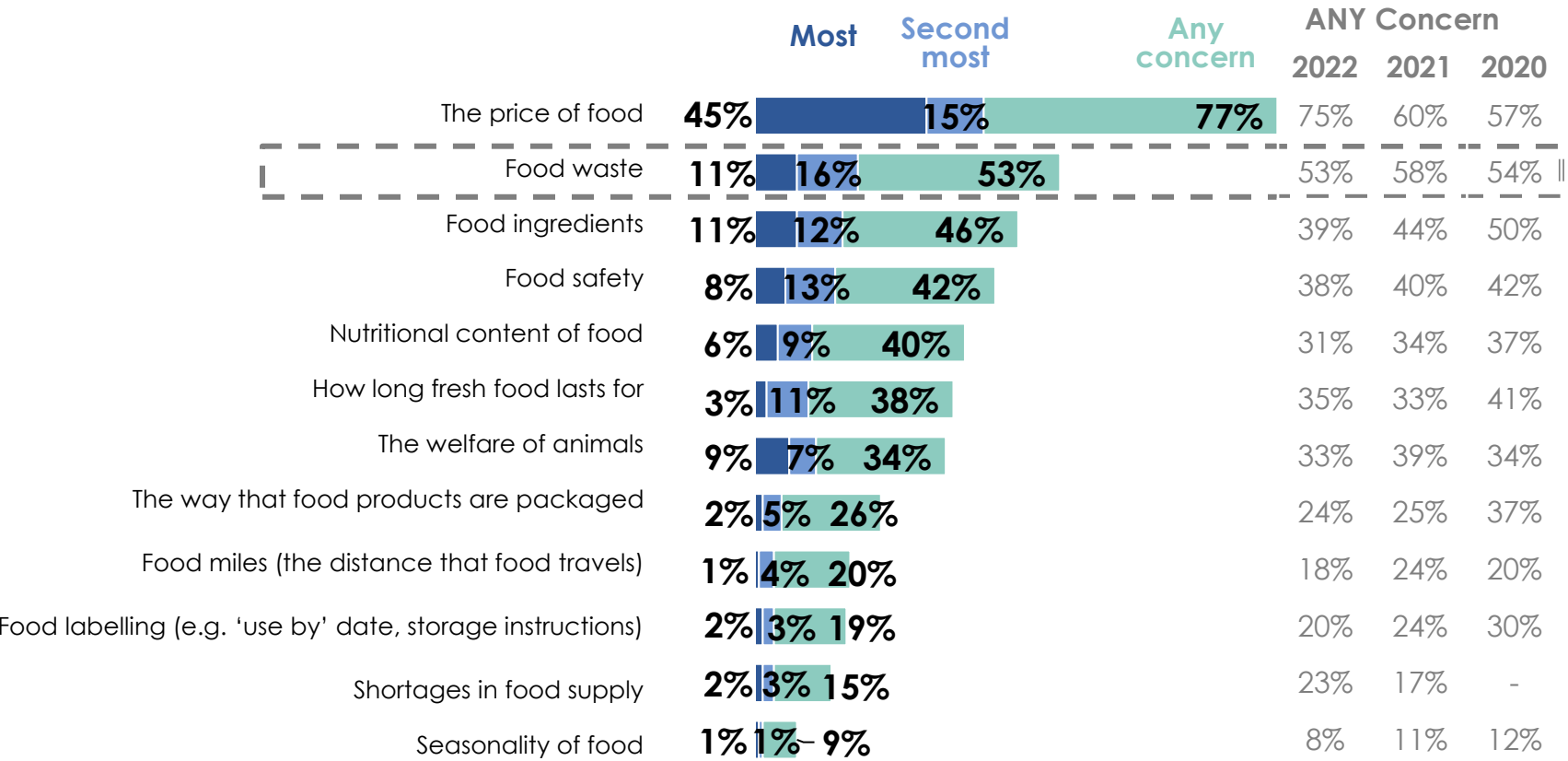
28% of people strongly agree "I have been making more of an effort lately" & "Changing how I manage my food will have a real impact."

5. Practical and Emotional Engagement

Statements reflect both practical motivations (saving money, reducing waste) and emotional or ethical concerns (responsibility, impact on society).



Concerns About Food Issues



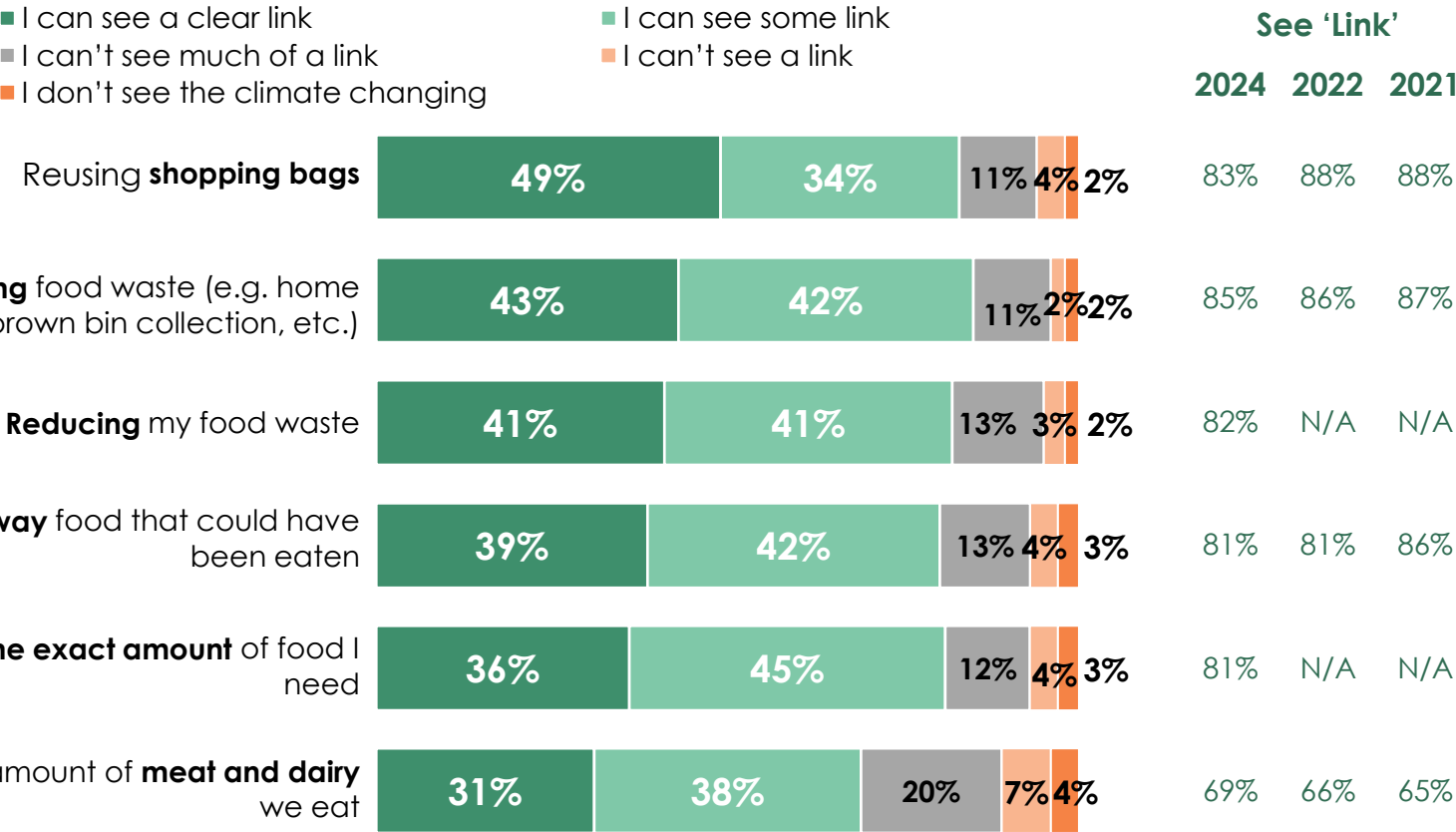
The price of food remains the biggest 'food issue' for people.

- 77% of people report being concerned about the price of food.
- Slightly more than half (53%) of people claim to be concerned about food waste - making this the second most common concern about food issues.
- The incidence of people saying they are concerned about food waste is stable in comparison to 2022, but this has declined in comparison to previous years.

Q.1a Which if any of the following food issues most concern you? CHOOSE UP TO 5 OPTIONS.
Q.1b And which one is of MOST concern to you?
Q.1c And which is second most concerning to you?
Base: All Adults: 1,002



Link Between Key Behaviours and Climate Change



The majority of people see a link between food waste behaviours and climate change.

- 81% of people see a link between 'throwing away food that could have been eaten' and climate change; while this is a very high national incidence there has been a relative decline of those who see this link since 2021.
- 85% of adults see a link between 'recycling food waste' and climate change.
- 82% of people see a link between 'reducing their food waste' and climate change.

Q.10b To what extent do you see the link with climate change?
Base: All adults 1,002

N/A means that the statement was added in 2024 so no previous data to trend.



Facts Around Food Waste

	Important/big impression		Any Rank 1st/2nd	
	Ranked 1 st	Ranked 2 nd	2024	2022
More than one quarter of all food produced in the world is wasted	43%	26%	69%	73%
€700 worth of food is wasted each year (or €60 a month) by the average Irish household	30%	27%	57%	53%
Greenhouse gases produced through food waste (growing, processing and disposal of uneaten food) contribute to climate change	15%	19%	34%	44%
Food waste produces up to 10 % of all global greenhouse gas emissions	12%	28%	40%	30%

‘More than one quarter of all food produced is wasted’ makes the biggest impression on people, followed by the monetary value of food wasted by an average Irish household per year.

- **69%** of people say that the amount of food that is wasted makes the biggest impression on them, but this is a small decline compared to 2022.
- **57%** of people say that the economic value of food waste makes the biggest impression to them and this is a small increase in comparison to 2022.
- Just **34%** of people are impressed the most by the contribution to climate change of greenhouse gases produced through food waste.

Q.11 Rank in order of how important and/ or how big an impression they make on you – 1st important/2nd Important
Base: All Adults N - 1,002



Section 3: FOOD MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES



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FOOD MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES: *Infographic*



30%

of people rate themselves as 'very good' at food management skills before they go shopping.



22%

of people rate themselves as 'very good' at food management skills when using food.



39%

of people rate themselves as 'very good' at making a list of the food they need to buy, and this is especially the case among women and people aged 55+.



41%

of people rate themselves as 'very good' at checking food product labels for use-by / best before dates before buying.



15%

of people rate themselves as 'very good' at measuring out ingredients for each person when preparing meals.



10%

of people rate themselves as 'very good' at keeping a list of food they put in and take out of the freezer.



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Food Management Competencies: Introduction

The research investigated food management competencies grouped into the following four areas:

1. Before Shopping
2. When Shopping
3. Storing Food
4. Using Food.

The full list of competencies tested are listed in the four side tables.

1. Before shopping

- Check what food I already have (fridge, freezer, cupboards) and need to buy before going shopping
- Make a list of the food I need to buy e.g. on paper, phone or other device
- Plan meals by including food I have already at home
- Plan any meals for the week

2. When shopping

- Stick to a shopping list (not buy extra)
- Make a conscious effort to only buy exactly what I need
- Buy foods I will get several meals from e.g. use spinach in curry for dinner and in salad for lunch
- Check food product labels for use-by / best before dates before buying
- Buy frozen fruit and veg instead of fresh food
- Buy 'long life' food (tins, packets etc) in place of fresh food

3. Storing food

- Check the fridge temperature is between 0°C and 5°C
- Organise food in my fridge so I can see what I should eat first (e.g. First In First Out)
- Organise food in my cupboards so I can see what food I should eat first (e.g. First In First Out)
- Keep a list of food I put in and take out of the freezer
- Freeze food right up to its use-by date
- Think about where is best to store fresh fruit and vegetables (to keep them fresher for longer)
- Check use-by dates to see what needs to be eaten soon

4. Using food

- Plan what I'm going to eat by including food I already have at home
- Eat food before use-by date expires
- Prepare meals made from same ingredients e.g. spinach in a curry for dinner and in a salad for lunch
- Check serving/portion size guidance on food packs (e.g. serves 2)
- Measure out ingredients for each person when preparing meals (e.g. number of potatoes, cup of uncooked pasta per person etc)
- Label products to show the date it was opened
- Batch cook and freeze dinners for another time
- Use up food I already have in the fridge to make meals
- Use up food I have in the freezer to make meals
- Save leftovers in the fridge to eat later or next day
- Remember to eat leftovers from my fridge
- Keep a running tally of food as it runs out (e.g. on phone, list on fridge etc)

Q.4 How good or not would you say you/your household are at each of the following?

Food Management Competencies: Summary 'Very Good' (net scores 9-10)

Before Shopping



When Shopping



Storing Food



Using Food



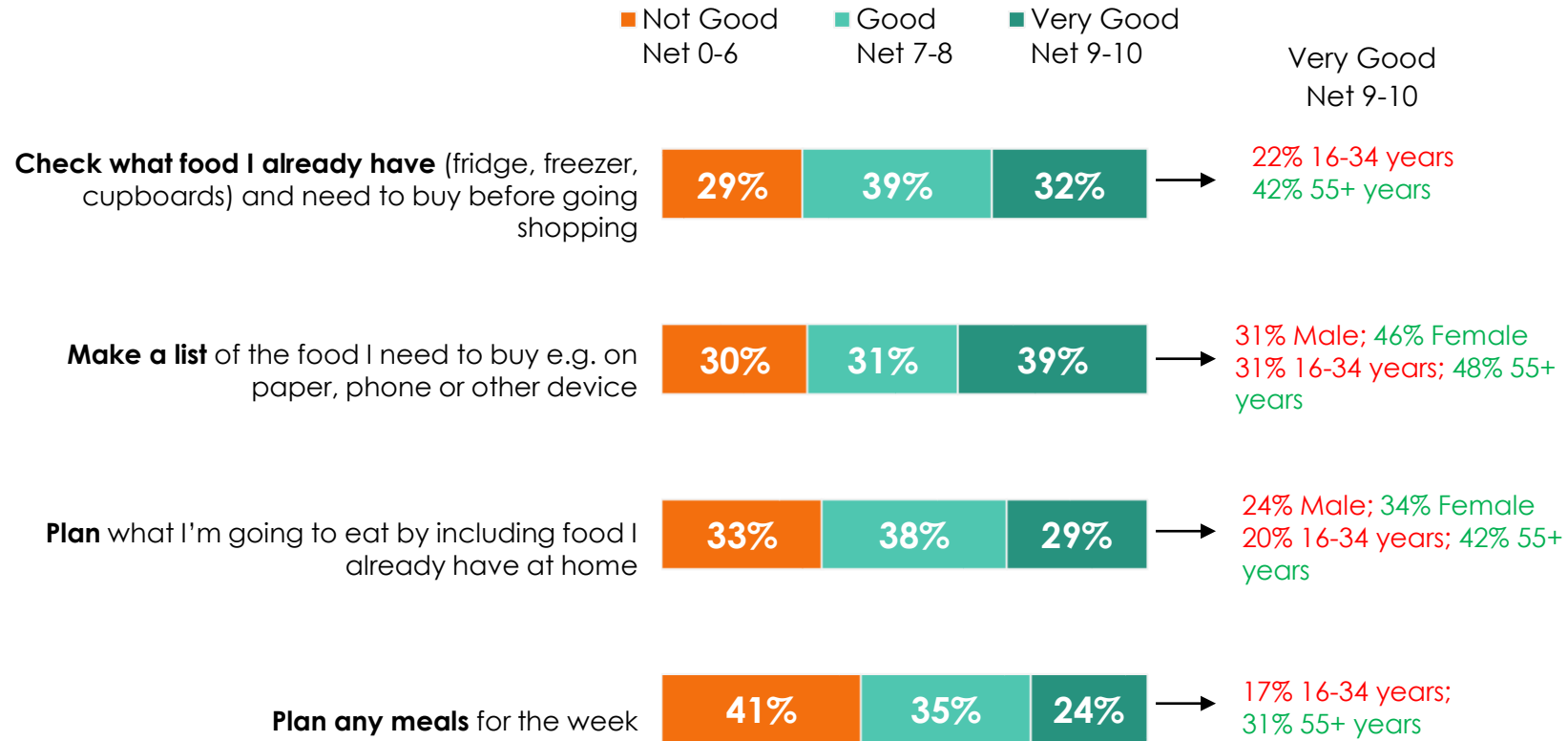
16-24 years	17%	14%	14%	16%
25-34 years	28%	21%	19%	18%
35-44 years	28%	23%	24%	21%
45-54 years	28%	20%	23%	20%
55-64 years	39%	29%	31%	29%
65 years +	42%	28%	29%	30%

While people rate themselves best at food management skills before they go shopping, national food management skills in all areas need development.

- **1 in 3** adults rate themselves or their household as 'very good' in food management skills before they go shopping.
- Slightly less than **1 in 4** adults rate the other food management competency areas as 'very good'.
- National food skills are typically correlated to age, improving as people get older.
- Older adults, especially aged 65+ rate themselves better in food management skills.
- Storing food is a particular development area for young adults.

Q.4 How good or not would you say you/your household are at each of the following?
Base: All Adults: 1,002

Food Management Competencies in Detail: Before Shopping



Among the 'Before Shopping' food management skills, people rate themselves best at making a list of the food they need to buy.

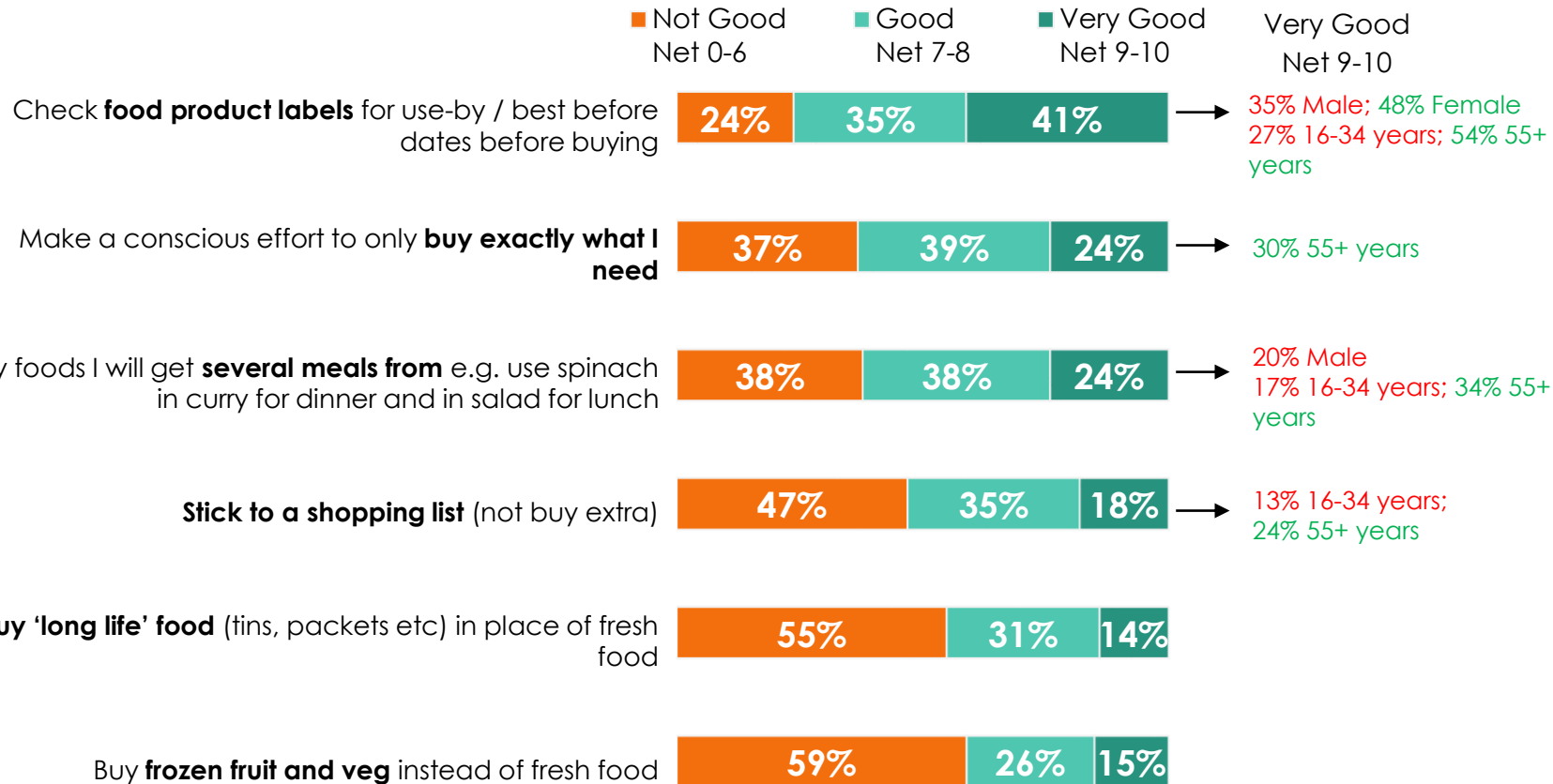
- **39%** of people rate themselves as 'very good' in making a list of the food to buy.
- Just **24%** of people rate themselves as 'very good' at planning meals for the week and this incidence is lower among adults under 35 years of age.
- Adults aged 55+ and women tend to rate themselves better in their 'Before Shopping' food management skills.

Stat lower than national average
Stat higher than national average

Q.4 How good or not would you say you/your household are at each of the following?
Base: All Adults: 1,002



Food Management Competencies in Detail: When Shopping



While shopping, the food management activity people feel they do best is to check for dates on food product labels.

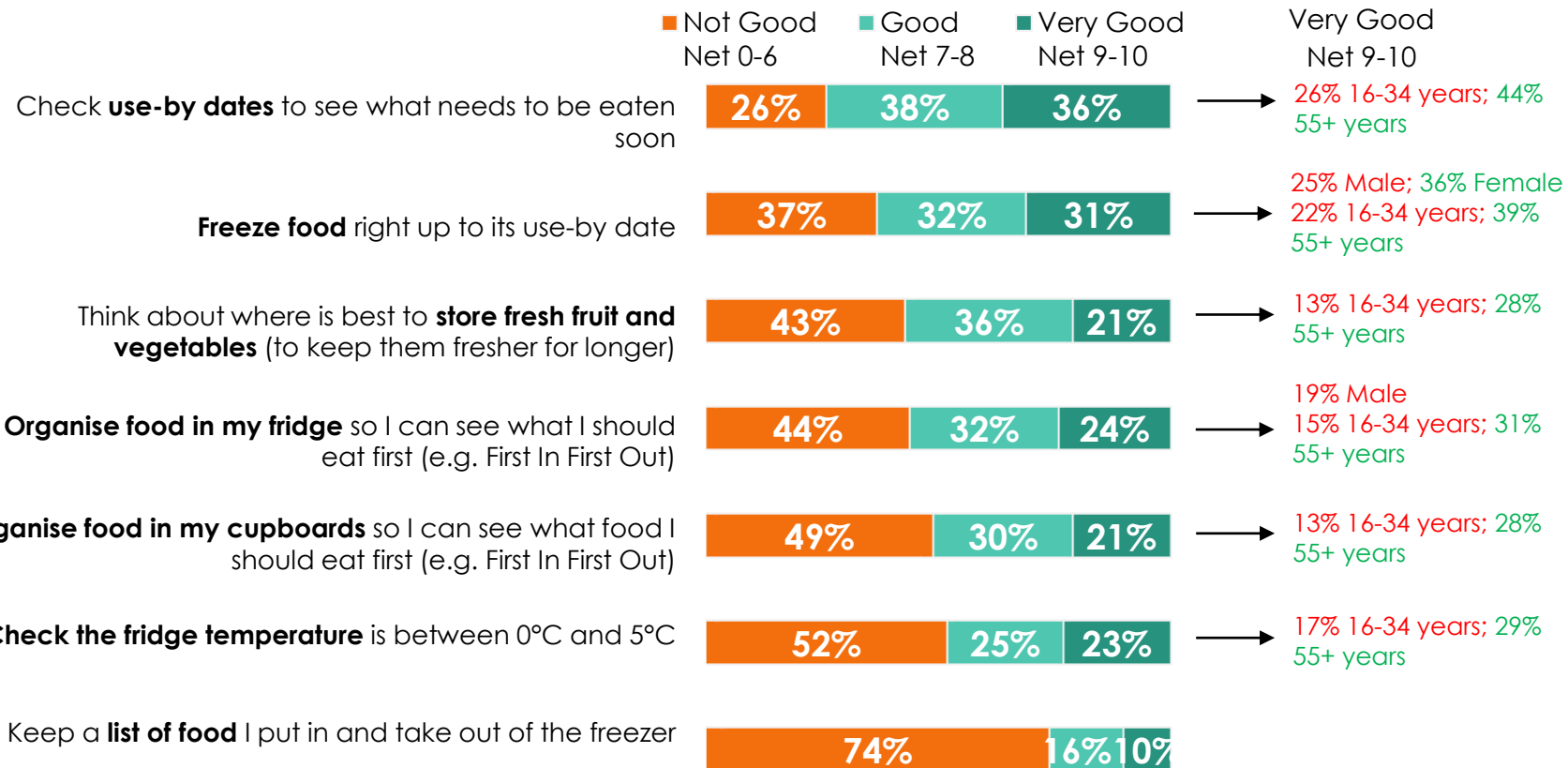
- **41%** of people feel they are 'very good' at checking food product labels for use-by/best before dates before buying and this is especially the case among women and older adults.
- Just **18%** of people report they are 'very good' at sticking to a shopping list when shopping and this is less among adults under 35 years.
- Just **15%** of people rate themselves as 'very good' at buying frozen fruit and veg instead of fresh food.

- Stat lower than national average
- Stat higher than national average

Q.4 How good or not would you say you/your household are at each of the following?
Base: All Adults: 1,002





Food Management Competencies in Detail: Storing Food



When storing food, people rate themselves best at checking use-by dates to see what needs to be eaten soon.

- **36%** of people rate themselves as 'very good' at checking use-by dates to see what needs to be eaten soon and this is especially the case among adults aged 55+.
- **24%** of people feel they are 'very good' at organising food in their fridge and this is lower among men and adults under 35 years.
- Just **10%** of people report they are very good at keeping a list of food they put in and take out of the freezer.
- **31%** of people rate themselves as 'very good' at freezing food right up to its use-by date.

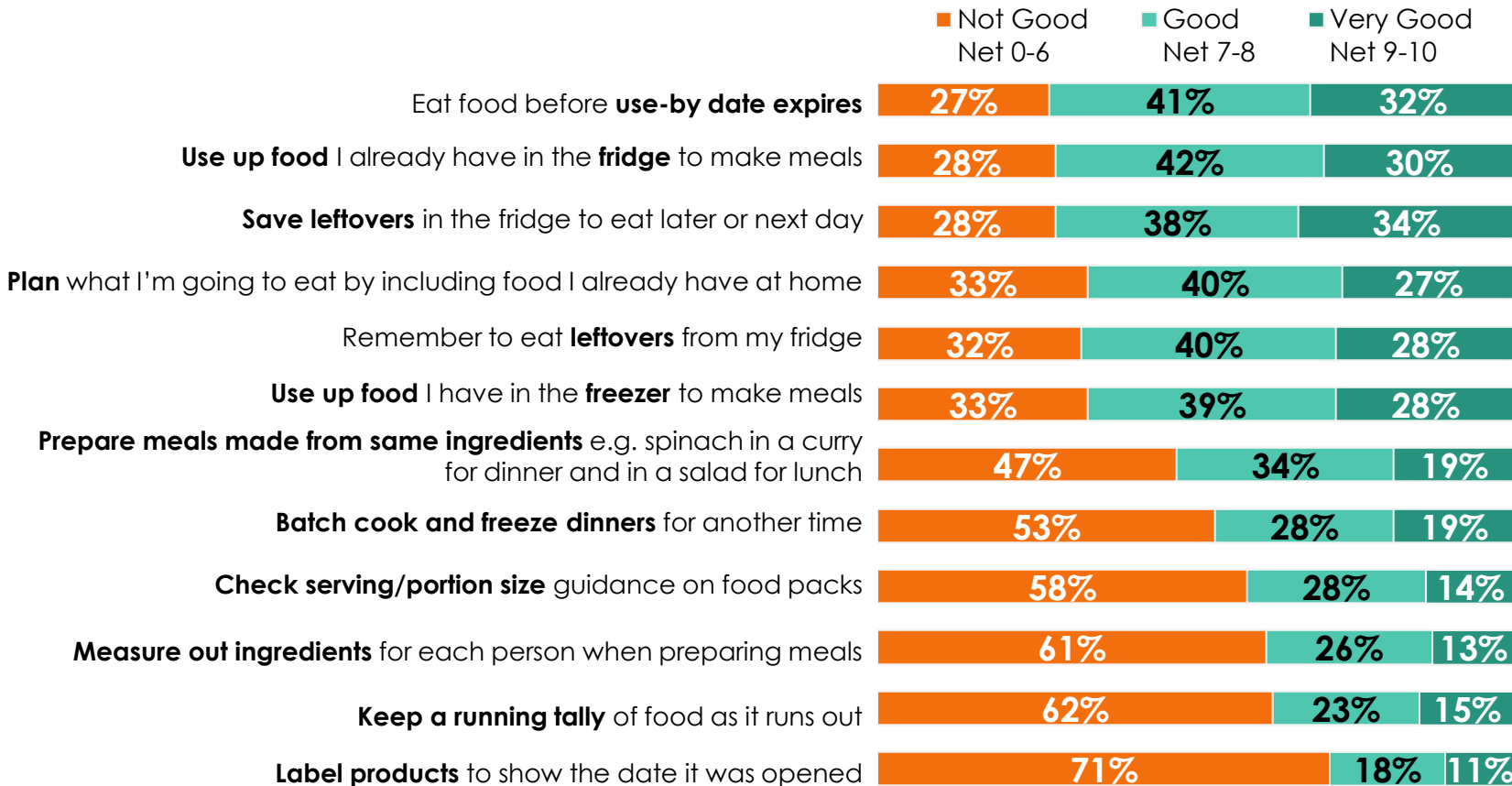
 Stat lower than national average
 Stat higher than national average

Q.4 How good or not would you say you/your household are at each of the following?
Base: All Adults: 1,002



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Food Management Competencies in Detail: Using Food



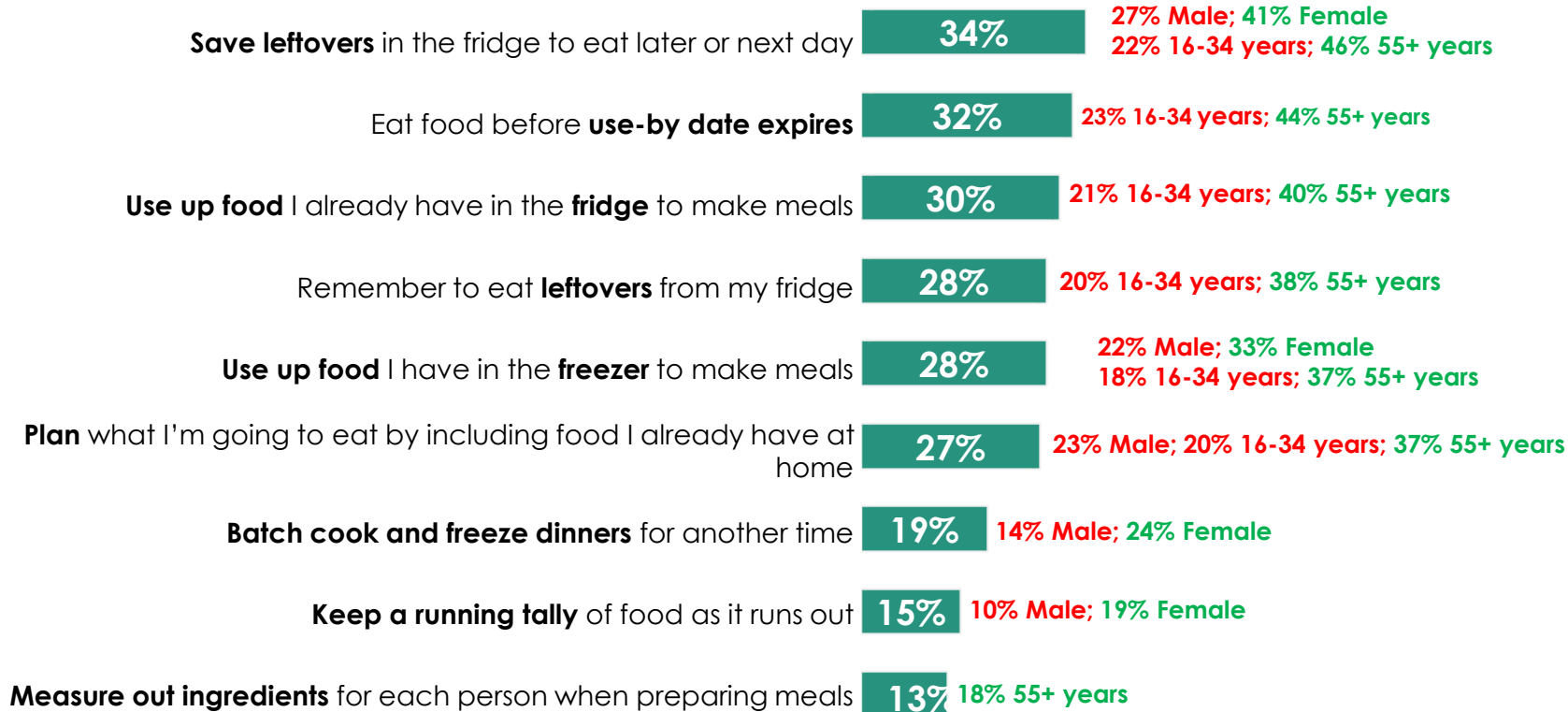
For skills related to using food, people feel they are best at saving leftovers to eat another time.

- **34%** of people rate themselves as 'very good' at saving leftovers to eat later or the next day.
- **32%** of people rate themselves as 'very good' at eating food before the use-by date expires.
- Just **11%** of people rate themselves as 'very good' at labelling products to show the date it was opened.

Q.4 How good or not would you say you/your household are at each of the following?
Base: All Adults: 1,002



Food Management Competencies in Detail: Using Food Summary 'Very Good' (Net scores 9-10)



For food management skills related to using food, younger age groups and males tend to rate themselves lower.

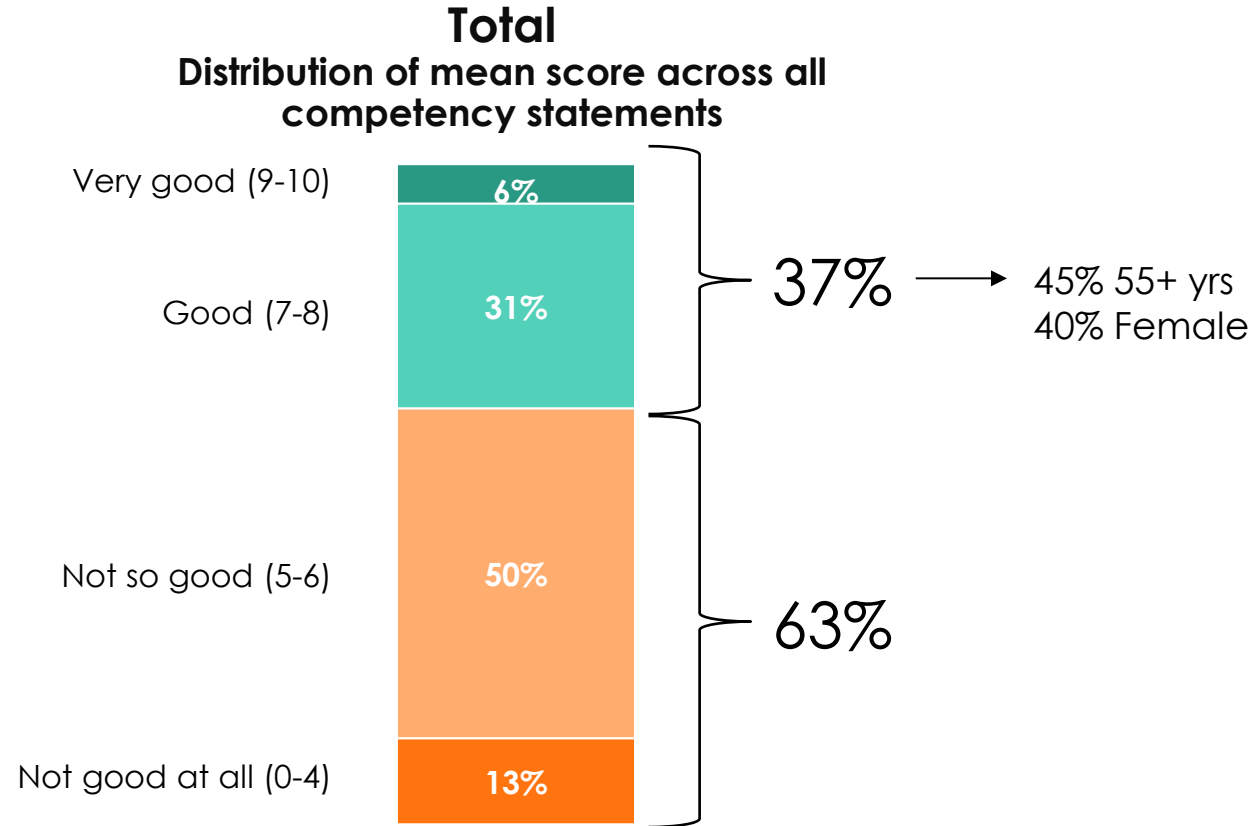
- 34% of people rate themselves as 'very good' at saving leftovers to eat later or next day this is highest among people over 55 (46%) and lowest among people aged 16-34 (22%).
- 27% of people rate themselves as very good at planning what they are going to eat by including food already in the home, this is highest among people over 55 (37%).
- 19% of people rate themselves as 'very good' at batch cooking and freezing dinners for another time, notable difference can be seen for males (14%) and females (24%)

- Stat lower than national average
- Stat higher than national average

Q.4 How good or not would you say you/your household are at each of the following?
Base: All Adults: 1,002



Food Management Competencies: National Overview



When reviewing the ratings for all the food management skills, 37% of people have an average competency rating of 'good' or 'very good'.

- 45% of Adults aged 55+ have an average competency rating of good or very good
- 50% of people have an average competency rating that is 'not so good' (5-6).
- 13% of people have an average rating that can be defined as 'not good at all' (0-4).

Q.4 How good or not would you say you/your household are at each of the following? For each, please use a scale of 0 - 10 where 0=not at all good at this, 10=very good at this
Base: All Adults N - 1,002

Section 4: FOOD WASTE BEHAVIOUR CHANGES AND FUTURE INTENTIONS



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FOOD WASTE BEHAVIOUR CHANGES AND FUTURE INTENTIONS : *Infographic*



66%

of people have been checking what food they have at home before going shopping more often in the past 12 months.



60%

of people are planning meals by including food they already have at home more often in the past 12 months.



84%

of people are willing to do a 'quick check' of what food they have at home before going shopping.



81%

of people are willing to make small changes to how they manage food they waste the most.



80%

of people are willing to use a shopping list in a way that suits them to help them only buy the food they need.



72%

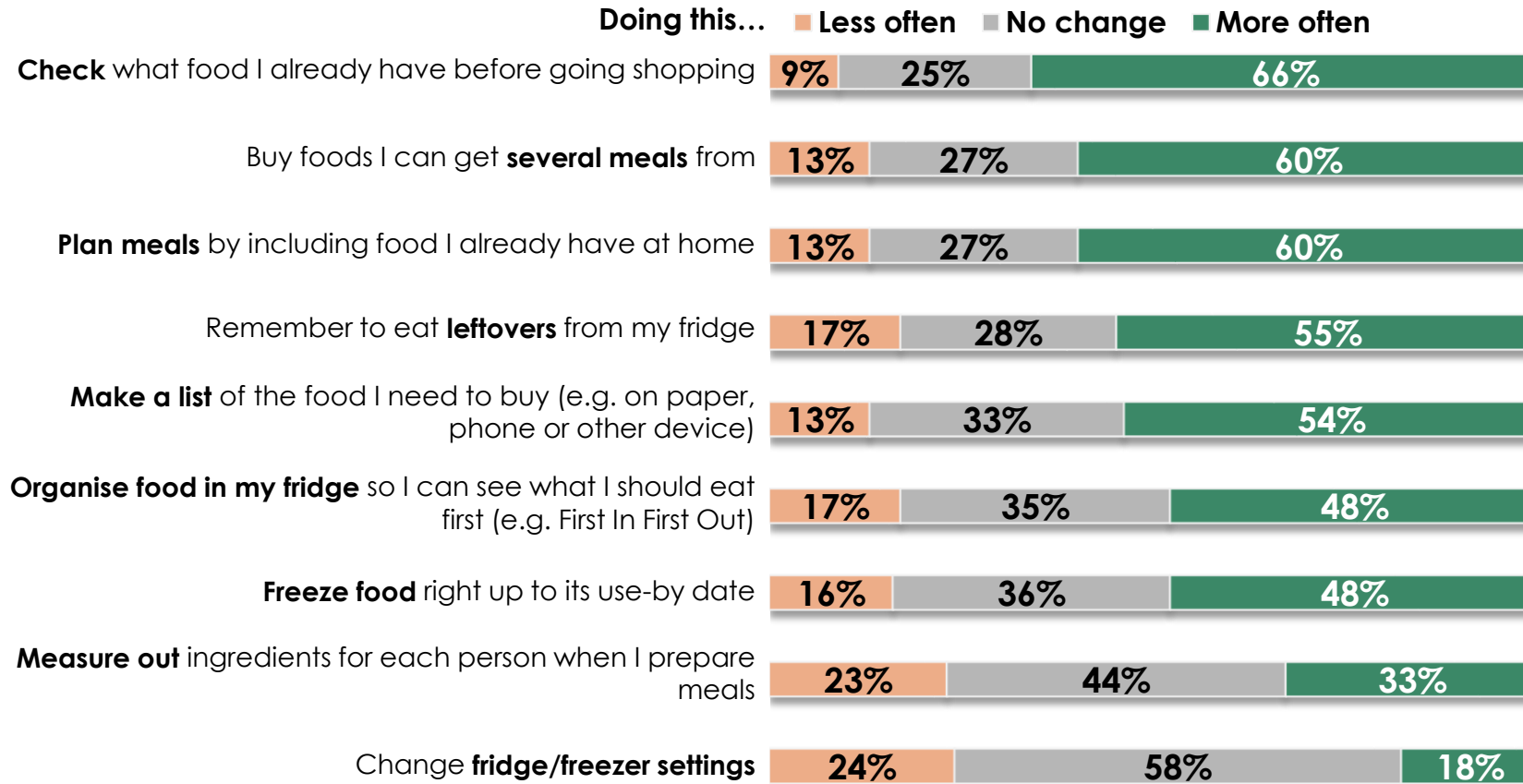
of people are willing to reduce their food waste as an action to help fight climate change.



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Food Management Behaviour: Changes Past 12 Months



People say they are undertaking behaviours relating to planning more often in the last 12 months and remembering to eat leftovers more often.

- **2 in 3** people have been 'checking what food they have before going shopping' more often over the past 12 months.
- **60%** of people have been 'buying foods they can't get several meals from' more often over the past 12 months.
- **60%** of people say that they are more often planning meals by including food they already have at home over the past 12 months.

Q.3 (a) Please think about how you buy, store, manage or use food at home. Please tell us if you have done each of the following more often, less often, or no change/difference over the past 12 months. Base: All Adults N = 1,002



Future Intentions for Food Management – Summary (Any Agree*)

I am willing to do a 'quick check' of what food I have at home (fridge, freezer, cupboards) before I go shopping	84%	I am willing to reduce my food waste as an action to help fight Climate Change	72%
I am willing to make small changes to how I manage the foods I waste the most e.g. freeze bread so available when I need it	81%	I am willing to keep track of the food I waste over a week so I can identify the types of food I waste the most and the reasons why	67%
I am willing to use a shopping list in a way that suits me (on phone, paper or shopping app, etc.) to help me only buy the food I need	80%	I would like to be more organised and am willing to plan meals ahead in a way that suits my lifestyle, e.g. 1 day, 2 days...	67%
I am willing to have a plan for my leftovers so they are eaten and not forgotten, e.g. for lunch tomorrow	79%	I am willing to use measuring devices so I cook the right amount of food (e.g. a cup of uncooked pasta per person)	62%
I like the idea of buying foods I can plan several meals from , e.g. include spinach in a curry for dinner and in a salad for lunch	77%	I would like to learn how to manage my food better (plan, buy, store, use up) to help me reduce my food waste	59%

Small and quick changes are more likely to be considered for positive food management.

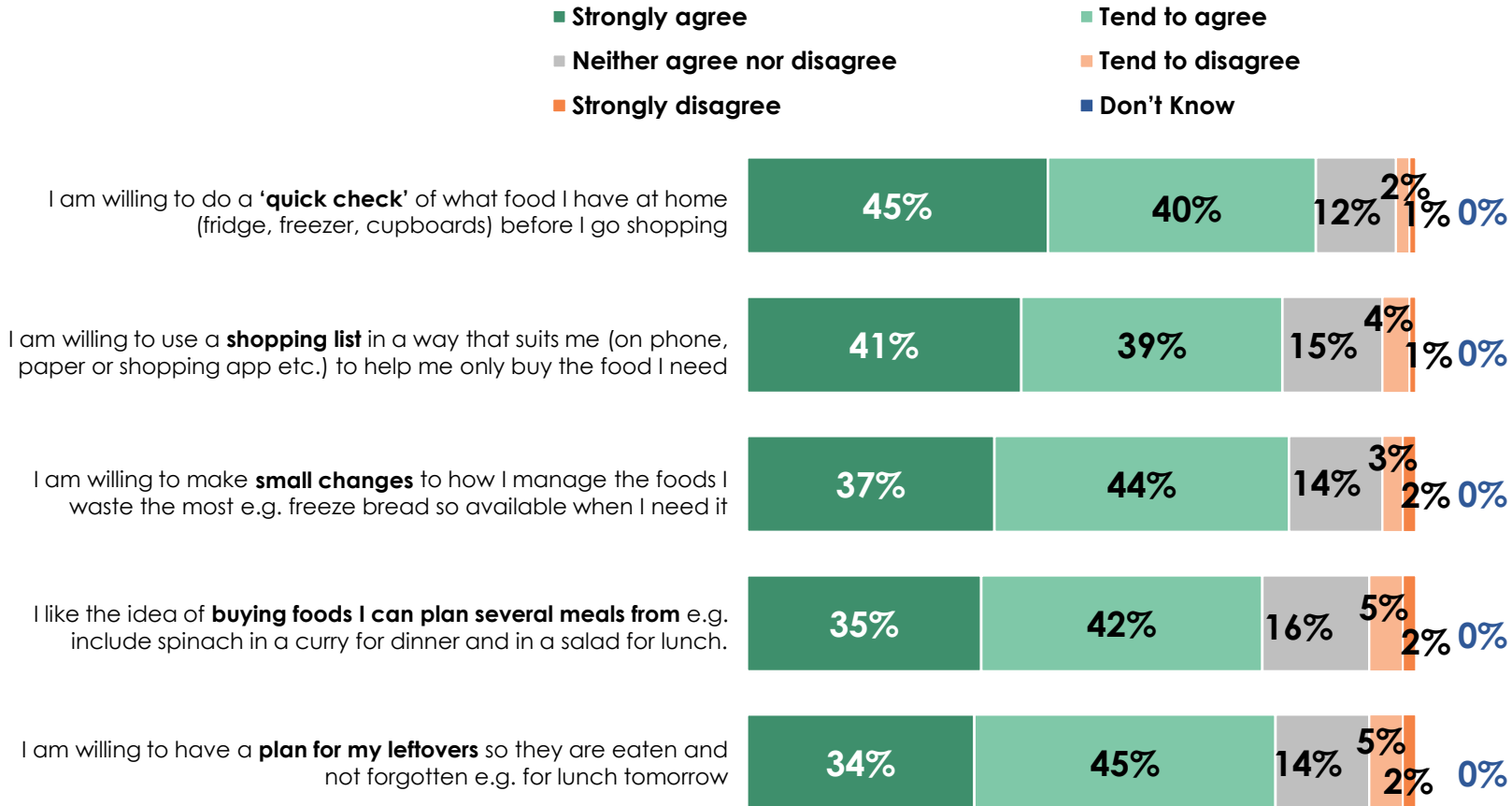
- **84%** of people are willing to do a 'quick check' of what food they have before shopping and **81%** of people are willing to make small changes to how they manage the food they waste the most.
- Similarly, **80%** of people are willing to use a shopping list.
- Women and particularly adults aged 55+ are more likely to engage in positive food management behaviours.

Q.12 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All Adults N - 1,002

*Any Agree = 'agree' + 'strongly agree'



Future Intentions for Food Management – in focus



The survey reveals a strong public commitment to reducing food waste, especially among those who "strongly agree" with making changes. This highly motivated group represents a significant portion of the population, indicating a readiness for action.

- A notable **45%** of people strongly agree they are willing to check 'what they have at home' before shopping.
- Furthermore, over a third show strong commitment to specific behaviours: **37%** of people will make small changes to manage the foods they waste most, **35%** of people will buy versatile foods for multiple meals, and **34%** of people will plan their leftovers.
- These figures signal that a substantial and motivated base of the population is primed to adopt small, manageable changes to their daily routines highlighting a clear opportunity for targeted behavioural interventions.

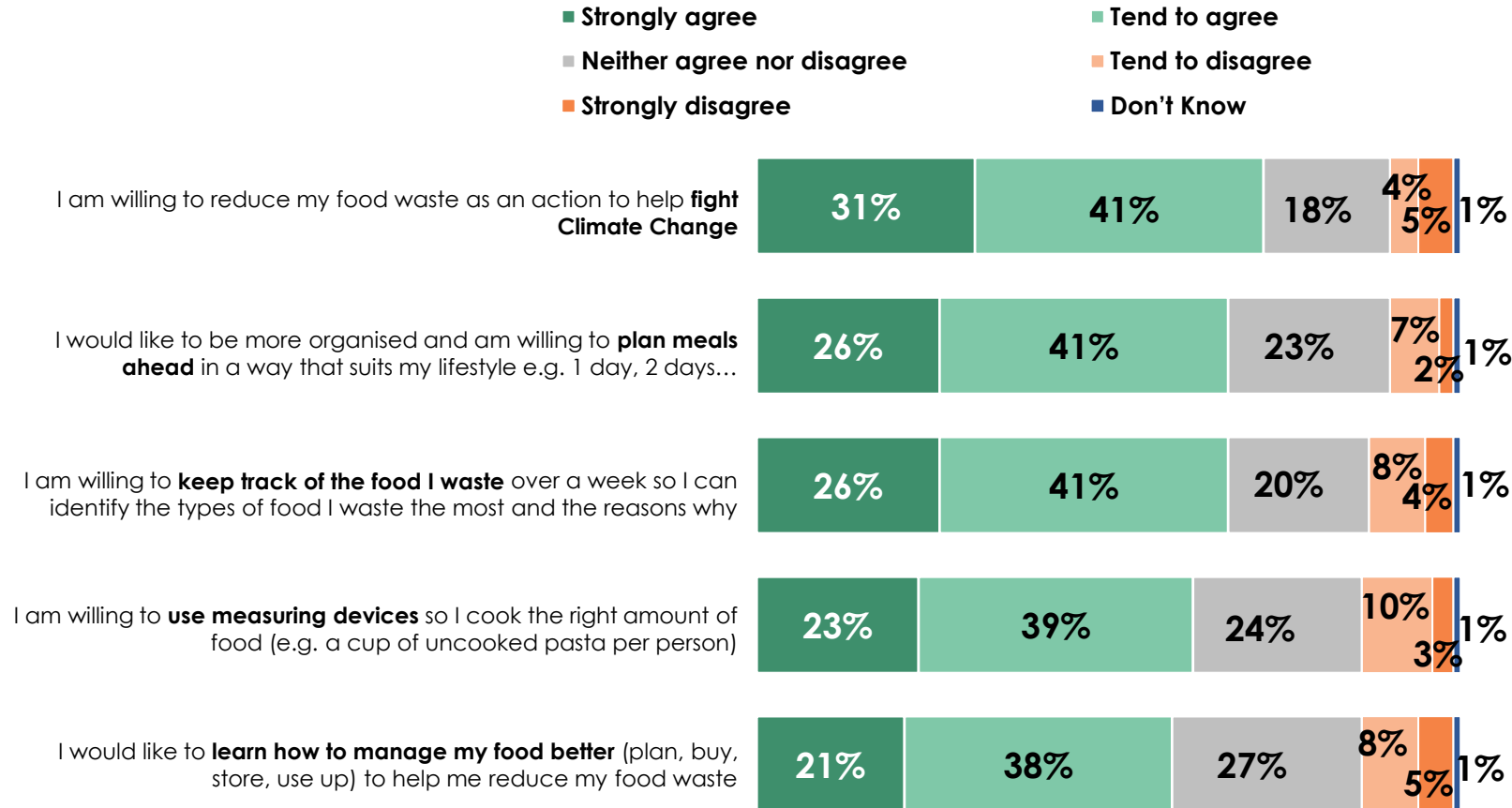
Q.12 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All Adults N - 1,002



CIRCULAR ECONOMY PROGRAMME
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Future Intentions for Food Management – in focus



Willingness to undertake actions that require more effort and planning is not as strong.

- While there is still broad agreement for these more involved behaviours, the level of 'strongly agree' is lower for actions that require more sustained effort.
- 21%** of people 'strongly agree' they would like to learn to manage food better, and **26%** 'strongly agree' that they would be willing to track food waste over a week.
- 31%** of people 'strongly agree' that fighting climate change would encourage them to reduce their food waste.
- 26%** of people 'strongly agree' that they would like to be more organised and plan meals ahead.

Q.12 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All Adults N - 1,002



Future Intentions for Food Management

- ▶ Future intentions regarding food **management** stress both immediate actions (checking food, freezing items) and forward-thinking strategies (meal planning, multi-use ingredients).

The primary emphasis needs to be on developing better food management skills through **small, impactful changes** in behaviour.



Food management skills for maximum impact

- The importance of planning is central, highlighted by:
 - "Quick check" of food at home before shopping.
 - Using a shopping list to buy only necessary items.
 - Having a purpose to use leftovers and not forget them.
 - Selecting foods that can be used in multiple meals.



Small, Practical Adjustments

- A focus is on small, manageable changes, such as:
 - Freezing bread to avoid wastage.
 - Using leftovers intentionally.
 - Making flexible use of lists (phone, paper, apps).



Food Waste Attitudes & Behaviours in Ireland National Survey 2024

TO FIND OUT MORE:

[Download Survey Excel data here.](#)

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