

# MODERN LIFE IS RUBBISH

LIFTING THE LID ON FOOD WASTE HABITS IN BRITAIN TODAY



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## Introduction: The rotten truth

When it comes to household food waste, the facts are clear: each year British households throw away a staggering *7 million tonnes of food*.

While not all of this food could be saved, over 4.2 million tonnes of this waste is perfectly avoidable, occurring for simple reasons such as lack of planning which includes overbuying, not using it before it goes off or just poor portion control.

What hasn't been as clear until now, however, is exactly what makes us throw food away, which is why Sainsbury's has commissioned this new research to get a real insight into why households are binning perfectly usable food every day. This in turn will help us help our customers tackle food waste in their own homes.

We surveyed over 5,000 people up and down the country, who gave a frank account of their attitudes to waste, food and finances with some startling results.



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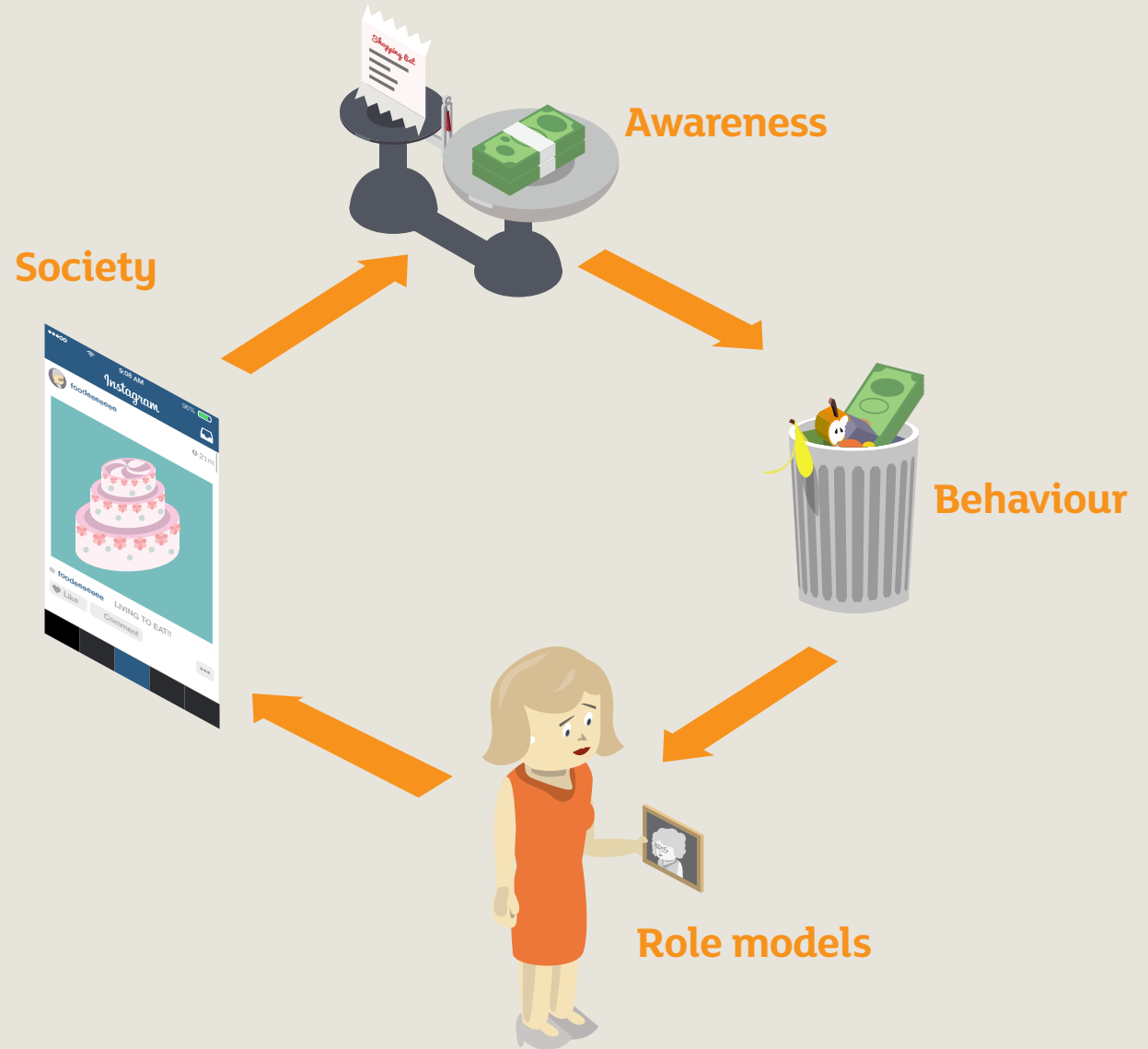
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## Waste behaviour: bin-fluences

In short, the report has lifted the lid on four influences (bin-fluences) contributing to Britain's food waste cycle. On their own, each bin-fluence can cause food waste. However, combined, they create a culture whereby food waste has been normalised, resulting in people not even noticing they are throwing away good food.

So despite the increasing public scrutiny being placed on food waste, the research has uncovered that **only 3% of people feel there's a social stigma attached to wasting food.**



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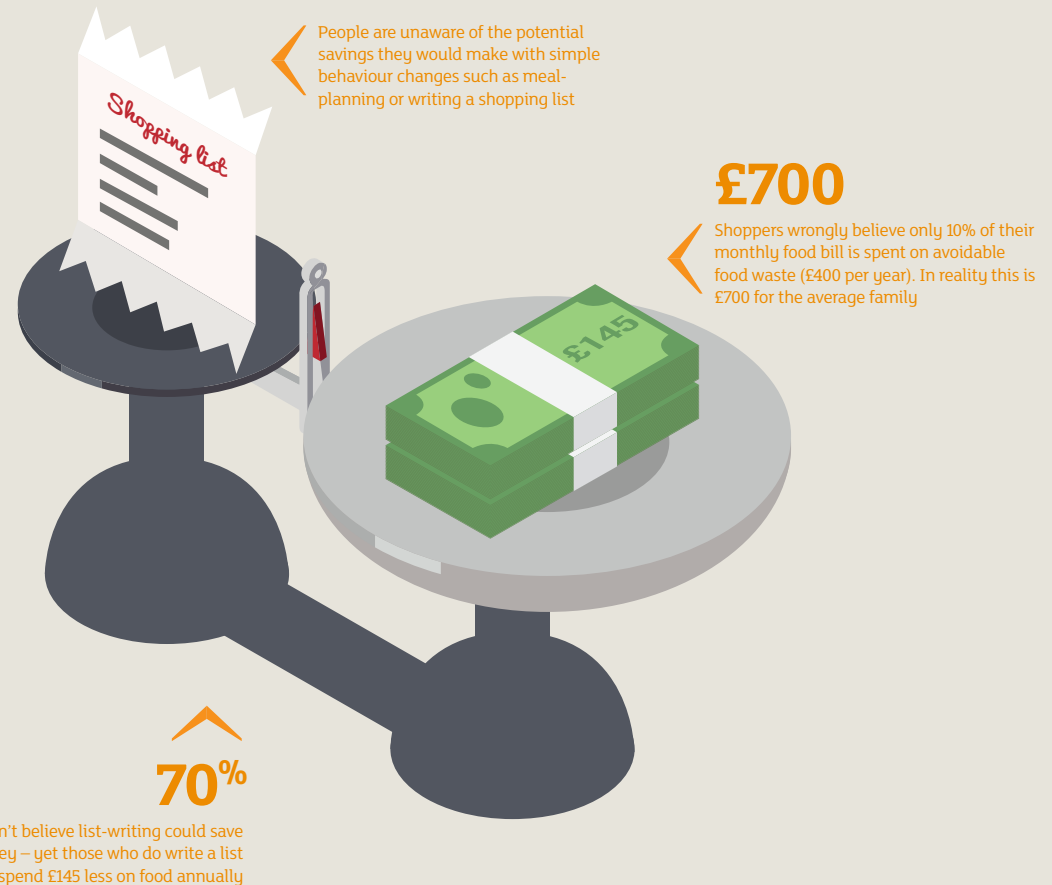
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## Awareness

There is a stark need for education around food waste, with people failing to see the financial (not to mention environmental) significance, despite it costing families **£700 a year**.

While 70% of us don't think list-writing could save money, those who do write lists spend **£145 less on household food annually**.

Previous research from Sainsbury's also revealed a 'waste gap', with families throwing away nearly double what they thought they threw away.



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## Behaviour

Even when we are aware of the facts, there's still a disconnect between our knowledge and our behaviour. While three quarters of people say they're confident cooking meals from leftovers, nearly two fifths (37%) **still don't bother to use them.**



37%

of people never reuse leftovers, despite the £260 saving gained by those do

95%

of people claim to be confident in freezing food

Vs



74%

of people turn the lights off when they leave a room - a potential saving of just £15 per year

1/3

A third of us have changed energy supplier - saving an average of £200 a year - this is three and half times less than the annual cost of a family binning food

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## Role models

Many of us simply don't know where or who to turn to for advice and information on how to reduce food waste in our homes, highlighting the need for a leading voice in the field.

What's more concerning, however, is this figure increases sharply when it comes to the younger generation, with **nearly half of those aged 18-24 unsure of what to do**, compared to just 12% of over 65s.

40%

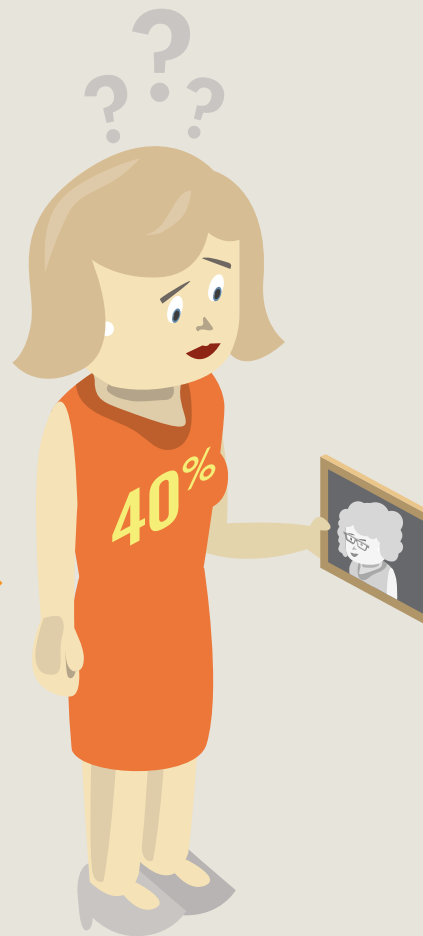
of people admitted they do not know who to look to for guidance on how to reduce their food waste

This figure grows steadily as it moves to younger generations, with nearly half (47%) of 18-24s admitting a lack of knowledge in the kitchen



12%

of over 65s wish they knew more about managing and cooking food



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## Society

We are increasingly becoming a nation who *'live to eat'*, with those under 35 most likely to identify with this.

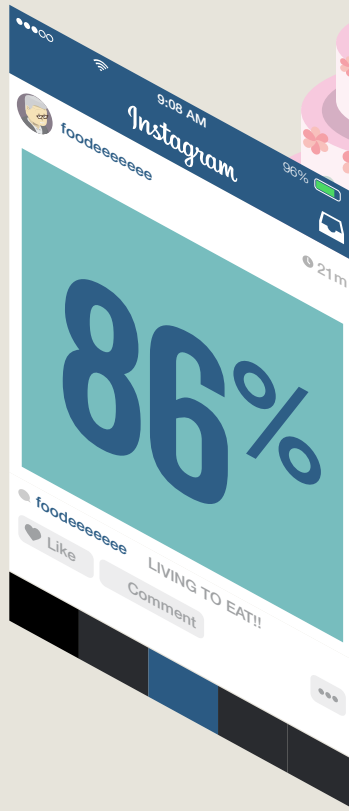
While this desire for exciting foods might benefit the palate, as well as look great on our Instagram feed, it's also creating a **significant amount of waste** as people purchase exotic and unusual ingredients without knowing how to use them up.

55%

of Millennials identified as 'living-to-eat' rather than 'eating-to-live'

33%

This falls to a third amongst those over 35



86%

Desire to explore the latest foodie trends is contributing to food waste with 86% of us admit to buying ingredients for one specific recipe, knowing we will struggle to use it again

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## Bin-fluence: lifting the lid on the four behaviours

### Bin-fluence I: Awareness

In short, people still don't know enough about food waste and the potential savings it could deliver. When asked in the study, the majority of Britain's shoppers believe that only 10% of their monthly food budget will be spent on avoidable food waste, which equates to £400 per year. However, in reality this figure is £700 for the average family.

When it comes to saving money, a whopping three quarters of the public switch off lights when leaving the room, a figure that remains widely consistent across age and gender. But in reality this demonstrates a saving of just £15 per year.

In contrast, writing a list saved respondents a reported £145 annually, but only half of us (56%) actually consider it as a cost saving measure. What's more, this figure decreases when tracked against youth, falling steadily from the 60% of 65s and overs asked, through to 49% of 18-24s. This shift towards a lack of planning ties in with findings that those under 35 are most likely to feel time poor in their day-to-day lives. Interestingly, over 60% of women say they consider writing shopping lists to save money, compared to just half of men, a trend which emerges throughout money saving techniques related to food saving.

The overall uptake of meal planning as a budgetary measure is also small with less than one in five (17%) considering the option. Again we can note a difference between genders here, with 21% of women agreeing to use the practice, but only 13% of men.

Looking at other methods of saving, not related to domestic food waste, the gender split is less apparent. 54% of men say they would eat out less, compared to 58% of women, while 34% and 31% respectively have switched energy suppliers to save money.

### Bin-fluence 2: Behaviour

Even in instances where we do have an understanding of food waste, there are still distinct times where our behaviour doesn't reflect this. Almost all (95%) respondents claimed to be confident in freezing food to prevent waste, while 74% believe they are confident cooking meals from leftovers. And yet, nearly two fifths (37%) of people admit to not using their leftovers, despite those who do saving an estimated £260 per year.

With 65% of the population identifying as 'savers' rather than 'spenders', the appetite for budgeting is clear. Only one in five of individuals allocates themselves a food budget to help guide



their shopping, and 30% of us even admit to going shopping without checking what's already in the fridge. Previous research from Sainsbury's has found that the resulting 'double buying' costs British households £1.5 billion, with a quarter of homes spending £235 a year on duplicate purchases.

Meanwhile, in our quest to cut household spending, other money-saving habits have become the norm, with 74% of people turning the lights off when they leave a room, promising a potential saving of just £15 per year. A third of us have even changed energy supplier, saving an average of £200 a year, which is three and half times less than the annual cost of a family binning food.

We also identify as a nation of planners, with three in four agreeing that we prefer to think ahead. However a third of us still say that we're more likely to go shopping without making a list. Meanwhile, looking at our understanding of responsibility, over half of people agree that they are responsible for managing food waste, and yet 20% say they simply cannot be bothered to reuse leftovers.

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## Bin-fluence: lifting the lid on the four behaviours

### Bin-fluence 3: Role models

Despite living in an age where information is at our fingertips, four in ten (40%) people admitted they don't know who to look to for guidance on how to reduce their food waste. Four in ten (40%) people admitted they do not know who to look to for guidance on how to reduce their food waste. What's more, this figure grows steadily as it moves to younger generations; while only 12% of over 65s wish they knew more about managing and cooking food, nearly half (47%) of those aged 18-24 admit a lack of knowledge in the kitchen, demonstrating a need to inspire younger people when it comes to reducing food waste.

When looking at the sources people do turn to for inspiration, family and food websites come top of the list, with one in five (18%) turning to them. Supermarkets come third on the list, demonstrating the potential for schemes like Waste less, Save more. Meanwhile 8% turn to friends or the government for help. Interesting celebrity chefs score low on the list of influences, with just 5% of people looking to them for information on food waste.

While half of the population (52%) acknowledge that food waste is a problem they can play a part in tackling, others feel that supermarkets should play a role by reducing portion sizes and multi-buy offers (55%), and a third (31%) feel schools should lead the conversation, teaching students the importance of food waste from a young age.

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### Bin-fluence 4: Society

We now live in a world where food from around the world can be delivered to our doorstep at the touch of a button. Food trends now move as quickly as fashion trends and being seen to eat the latest thing is increasingly important. This is in stark contrast to previous generations, in particular the austere post-war years, where food was scarce and we were grateful for what we were given. This cultural shift is much more prominent in those under 35, with more than half (55%) of Millennials identified as 'living-to-eat' rather than 'eating-to-live'. This falls to a third (33%) amongst those over 35.

But desire to explore the latest foodie trends is also contributing to food waste, with 86% of us admitting to buying ingredients for one specific recipe, knowing we will struggle to use it elsewhere. Again, this desire to try new and exciting foods is prevalent amongst the younger age group, with 47% of over 65s rarely or never buying new or unusual ingredients and 64% of those aged 25 - 34 year olds daring to be different in the ingredient stakes.

The over 65s blame schools for not teaching the younger generation to reuse leftovers, compared to only a quarter (26%) of 18 – 24 year olds. However, the younger generation do blame the government, with over a quarter (28%) of 18 – 24 year olds feeling they don't provide enough advice or regular food waste collections to help stop the rot compared to just 13% of those 65 and over.



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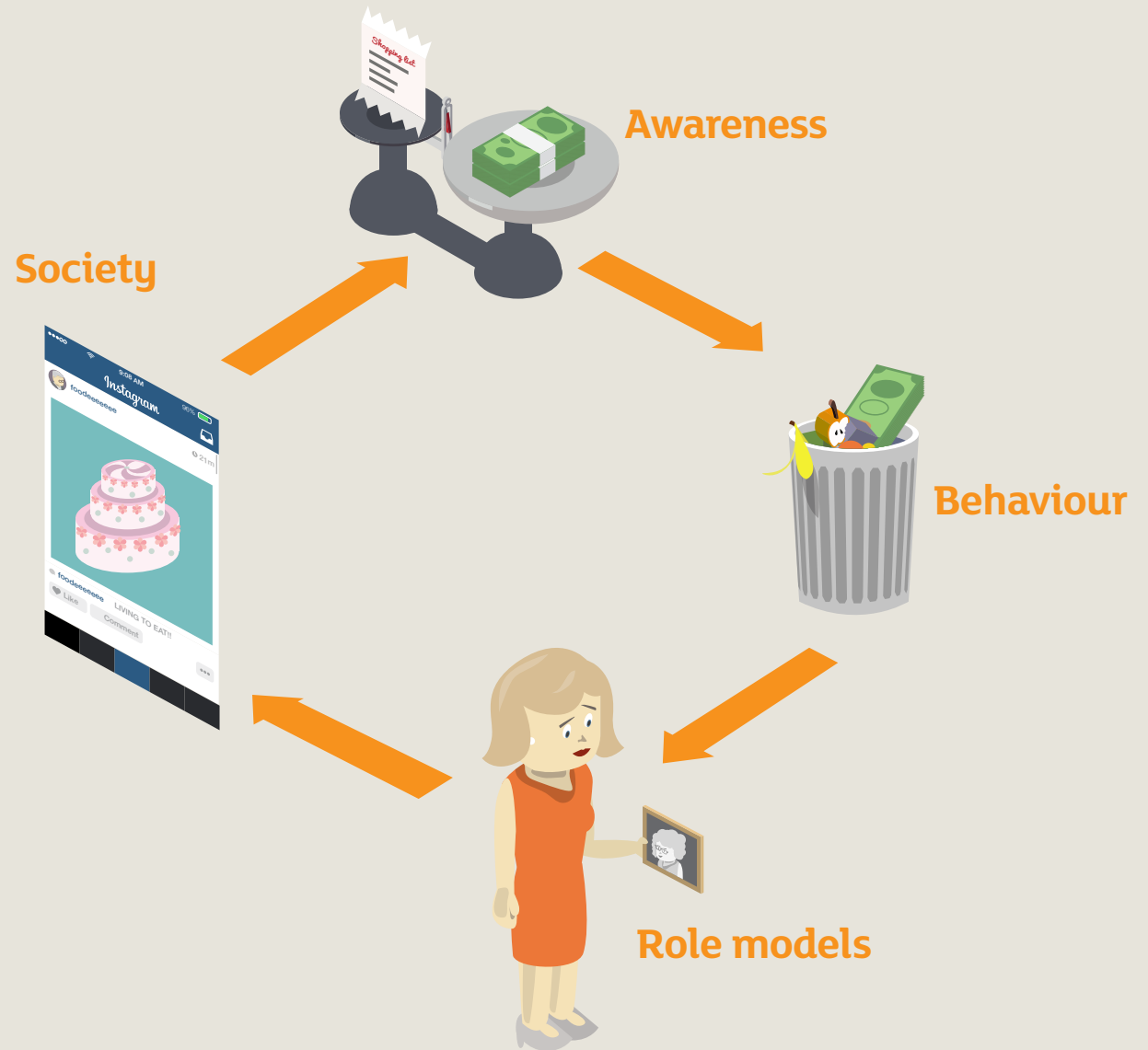
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## What does this mean for the future?

The four factors highlighted provide us with a unique insight into the multi-faceted layers behind what is driving food waste in Britain today. Some of them are out of our individual control, and we need to look beyond our doorsteps to lobby for change. However, many of them are perfectly achievable with very little time and effort – despite many people believing otherwise! One thing that we do know, is that we all have a responsibility to drive the change, whether we are householders, producers or retailers, and it is only if we all pull together that we will truly succeed.

By understanding these four key drivers for waste, at Sainsbury's we can continue to tailor our approach to help not just our customers, but wider communities across the UK too.

Already we've seen a great success in the trial of Waste less, Save more – a £10 million investment from Sainsbury's to help our customers do exactly that: waste less food and save more money – and we are confident that by working together, we can continue to make a real difference on a national scale.



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## Food waste in Britain today

There's no doubting that food plays an integral role in British society. It provides not just sustenance but jobs, industries and livelihoods, alongside identity and increasingly, entertainment and enjoyment. At the same time, however, Britons are wasting a staggering amount of food.

Each year British households bin over 7 million tonnes of food. From this, the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) concludes that 4.2 million tonnes of waste is avoidable, thrown away for reasons such as food passing its expiry date or being spoilt whilst cooking .

Not only does such waste impact upon our environment, but also our finances, with households throwing and replacing items which could otherwise be used. WRAP figures estimate that the average household will spend £700 on wasted food , which could easily be spent elsewhere. What's more, previous research from Sainsbury's has identified a 'food waste gap', with people seriously underestimating the amount of food they throw away. While 93% of Britons believed they wasted less than 5 meals a month, on average they binned over 10.

**Despite the increased prominence of food waste as an issue, only 3% of us feel there's a stigma attached to binning food.**

**Here's how it breaks down across the UK:**



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Launched in 2015, Waste less, Save more; is a pioneering five year plan to help cut customers to cut food waste in their homes. The project has kicked off with a 12 month trial in Swadlincote, South Derbyshire, where we're testing a range of initiatives with the ambitious target of helping the town cut its food waste by 50% in one year. Though the trial is still underway, it's already proved really successful and we're now rolling out our initial learnings to the nation, including the distribution of over one million fridge thermometers. Storing food at the right temperature can make a significant impact by helping fresh food keep for longer. Originally trialled with over 10,000 thermometers given out in Swadlincote the trial had hugely positive feedback, with 74% of those surveyed changing the temperature of their fridge, and 78% agreeing it was a useful tool.

Other initiatives in the town include the first domestic trial of Winnow, an app that allows users to weigh and log their food waste, before providing them with a full report of what's been thrown away, why, and the value. Between the six families that trialled the app, food waste fell by an average of 68%, equating to an average saving of £268 a year. Elsewhere, we've partnered with Bosch to roll out 20 smart fridges fitted with cameras, allowing users to check contents on the go to avoid doubling up on purchases.

Of course, it's not just about technology, and we're also seeing real successes in the form of our community engagement programmes. A team of Food Saver Champions have been recruited within the town, who travel to local community events hosting interactive games and cookery sessions to highlight food waste and how leftovers can be put to better use. We've also seen success from our 'Fabulous Food' school engagement programme. By working with local schools,

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*Save more*

*Waste less*  
*Save more*

the team have created bespoke learning materials and practices that educate pupils in food waste, what it is, and how we can prevent it. So far we have worked with 1,750 children from five schools in the area, and initial results from the Eureka Primary School, the first to trial this programme, showed a waste reduction of 37%.

The ethos of Waste less, Save more is about collaboration and learning, which is why we'll be publicly sharing our results so that communities across the UK, as well as other retailers, businesses and public bodies, can also benefit from the results. We've already in conversations with more than 100 more 'Discovery Towns', who'll help us roll out key learnings from Swadlincote as we aim to take our findings nationwide.

***For more details on Waste less,  
Save more visit: [sainsburys.co.uk/waste](https://sainsburys.co.uk/waste)***



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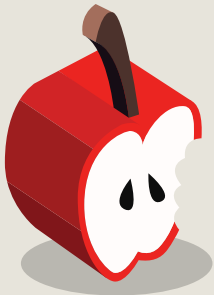
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*Research conducted amongst 5,050 consumers by Populus, August 2016*

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