

Changing student behaviours to prevent food waste

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Background

- 600,000 tonnes of food wasted in Scotland each year – 60% of this could have been eaten
- 18-34 year-olds waste proportionally more food than other age groups
- There's currently a lack of research into the student perspective

Zero Waste Scotland's research project

- How much is food waste costing students?
- What kinds of food are wasted?
- Why does food get wasted when it could have been eaten?
- What would help students waste less food?



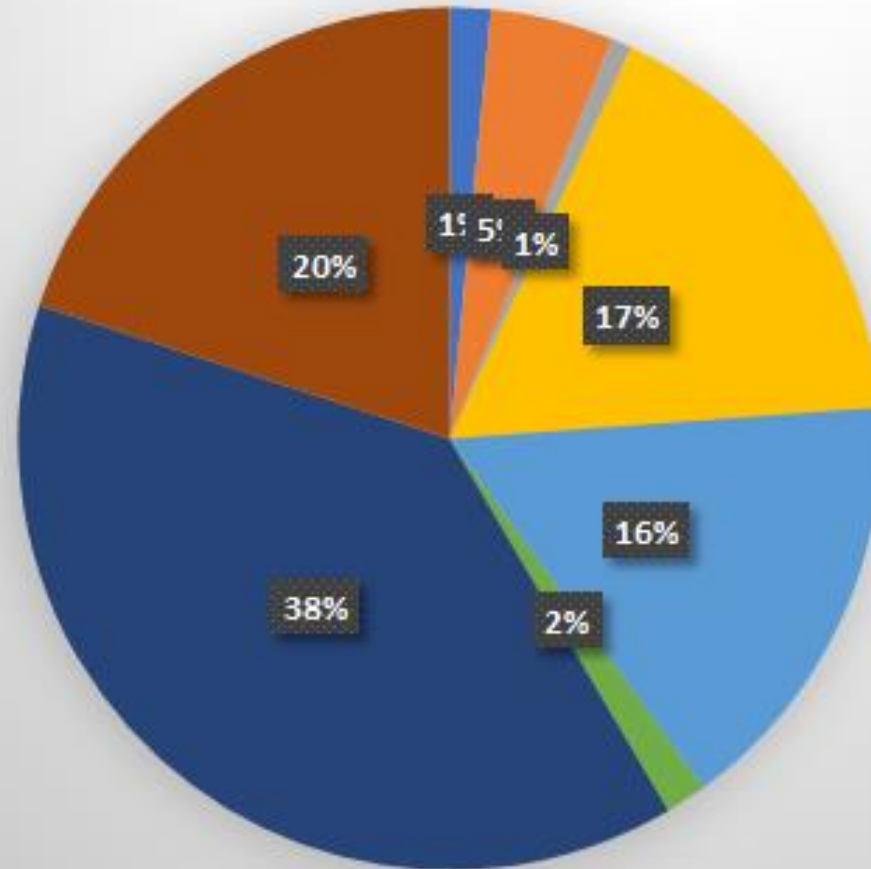
St Andrews study

- 7-day food waste diary and accompanying survey
- Part of assessment for Level 1 Sustainability module



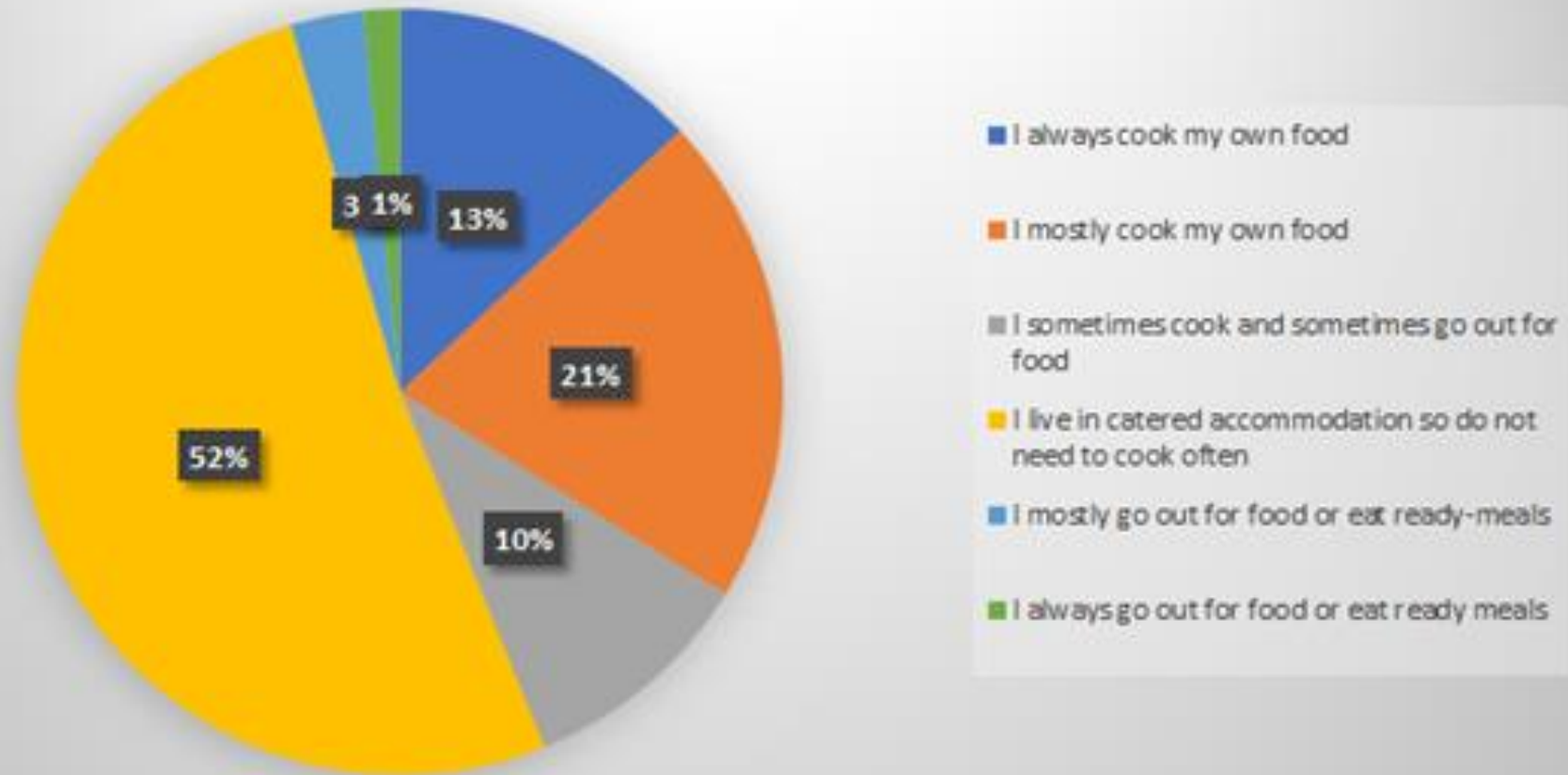
- 155 diaries were completed (130 also completed the survey)
- 81% female, 18% male, 1% not specified
- All in Year 1 or Year 2 of study
- Almost all in the 16-25 age group
- All full time students, though 18% also had a part-time job

NATIONALITY



- International (Africa)
- International (Asia)
- International (Australasia)
- International (Europe)
- International (N. America)
- International (S. America)
- Scottish
- Rest of UK

How often do you cook your own food?



52% of the sample had meals provided by catered halls of residence

78% described their cooking ability as "good" or "average", but only 34% said they "always" or "mostly" cooked their own food

Key findings

- Average purchase cost of avoidable food waste per student per week:
£5.25
- **£273** per year! (Single adults: £200. Households: £460.)

Most commonly wasted types of food

Leftover meals	18%
Fresh veg	17%
Fresh fruit	10%
Potato products ⁴	7%
Eggs & Dairy	6%
Bread	6%
Beverages	5%
Meat	5%
Other	5%
Store cupboard foods ⁵	4%
Baking	4%
Milk ⁶	4%
Rice & grains	3%
Pasta & noodles	2%
Cereals & oats	2%
Fish	1%

Table 1. Type of food wasted

Why was it wasted?



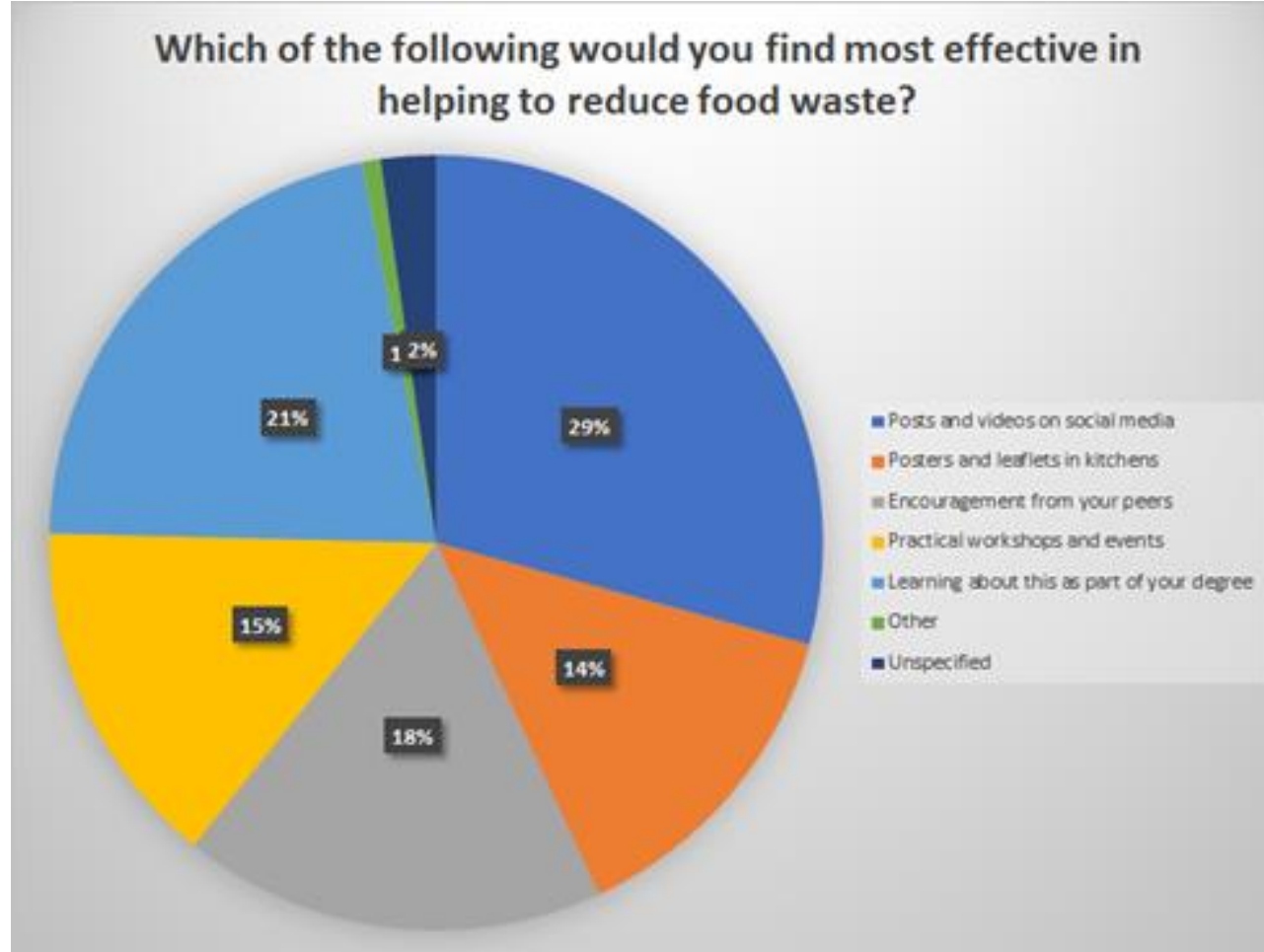
- Most students shop & cook only for themselves – surplus food wasted
- Lack of knowledge of how to use up leftovers (or unwillingness to do so)
- 45% said they did not have adequate facilities for storing food
- Discarding food due to it being disliked – perception of food value and quality?

Food waste in Halls of Residence

- Over-piling plates: desire to “get your money’s worth”
- Perception that food can be wasted without consequence because there will always be more of it
- Anxieties over food quality and perception that food is low in value



What would help students waste less food?



Recommendations

- Combination of increasing food skills, using nudge techniques, and challenging perceptions of food value
- Separate approaches needed for catered and non-catered student accommodation



- Guidance on managing food effectively, from planning and purchase decisions, to storing and using up leftovers
- Combine social media with face-to-face engagement. Embed sustainable food education into curriculum?
- Effective nudge: removing trays from Halls of Residence canteens
- Personalise the issue: publicise food waste data from each Hall, and / or organise food waste reduction competitions between Halls

Thanks!

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