

HALF EATEN



Australian Household Food Waste Research 2025



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KEY FINDINGS

The Scale of the Problem

Australian households are wasting substantial amounts of food every year, with a considerable economic and environmental burden. Key findings of the research showed:

YOUNG HOUSEHOLDS DRIVE FOOD WASTE

Households with under 35's emerge as the highest wasters, discarding 113kg of food annually - 71% more than low-wasting households (66kg). This demographic also faces the steepest financial impact, losing \$1,503 worth of food each year compared to \$898 in low-wasting households.

THE \$500+ LEFTOVER PROBLEM

Nearly half of all households waste vegetables, herbs, and leftovers, which can cost over \$500 annually per household. Uneaten leftovers represent both the most frequently wasted category and have the highest price tag.

DATE LABEL CONFUSION DRIVES WASTE

Food labelling significantly influences food waste behaviour. 58% of high-wasting households discard food based on use-by or best-before dates, suggesting widespread confusion about food safety versus quality indicators and unnecessary wastage of perfectly edible food.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDFILL IMPACT

Over half of household food waste (51%) ends up in general waste bins destined for landfill, with fewer than 10% of Australians utilising Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection systems. This behaviour compounds the environmental and landfill impact through increased methane emissions and lost composting opportunities.



OBJECTIVE & METHODOLOGY

In Australia, our annual food waste is 7.6 million tonnes, costing our economy \$36.6 billionⁱ. Food waste is generated at every stage of the supply chain; however, households are a significant source of food waste, creating over 2.5 million tonnes of food waste every year, of which 70% is perfectly edibleⁱⁱ.

Reducing food waste at home is one of the most impactful ways individuals can take climate actionⁱⁱⁱ. With a national target to halve food waste by 2030 (in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals), change is required at all levels of society, but household kitchens play a crucial role.

OzHarvest identified a gap in the market for updated household food waste research. This research captures the latest behaviours, volume and costs associated with household food waste. The report can provide organisations, industry and government with the latest research insights to develop food waste reduction strategies as well as highlight key actions for individuals.



THE APPROACH

Capturing everyday behaviour

The research was conducted through a detailed digital two-part survey. The initial survey vetted respondents to ensure an accurate representation of Australia's demographic and invited participants to track and measure their household's food waste. A clear definition of what constitutes food waste was provided:



Food waste is any food that was once able to be eaten but was instead disposed of. This includes food that was half eaten, leftovers forgotten in the fridge, food that passed its expiry date or food that's gone off, like soggy salad leaves or mouldy bread. It doesn't include non-edible things like eggshells, banana peels and meat bones.



Selected participants then completed a detailed survey recording their household food waste, including questions about purchasing, eating habits, and food disposal behaviours to identify the most commonly wasted foods and understand underlying attitudes and behaviours that lead to wasting food.

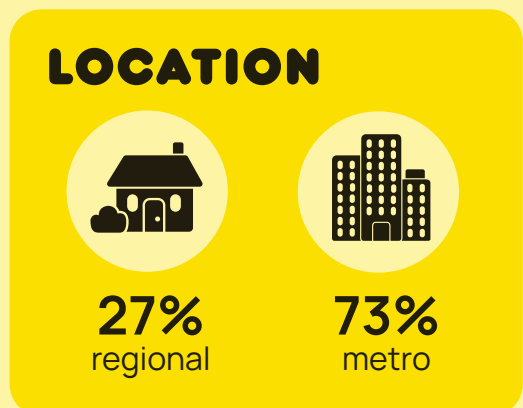
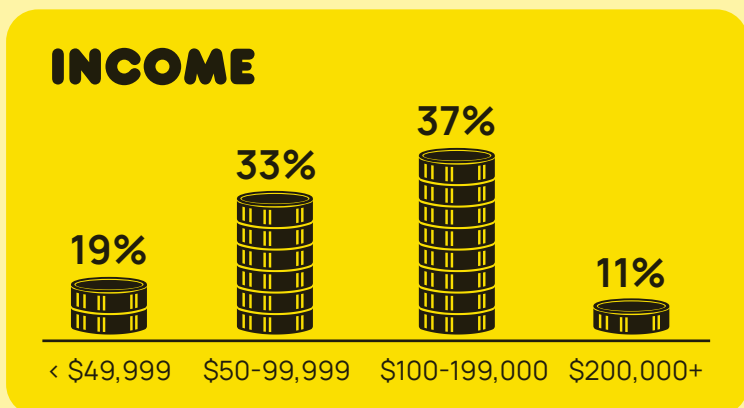
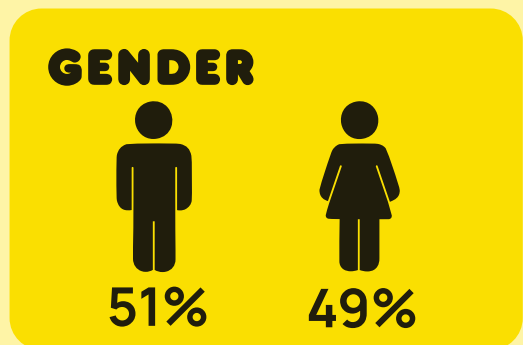
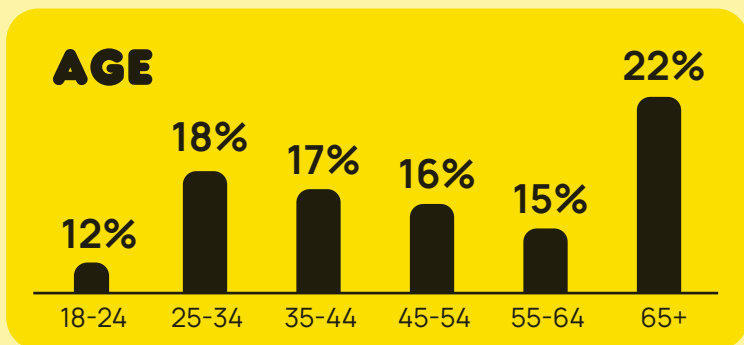
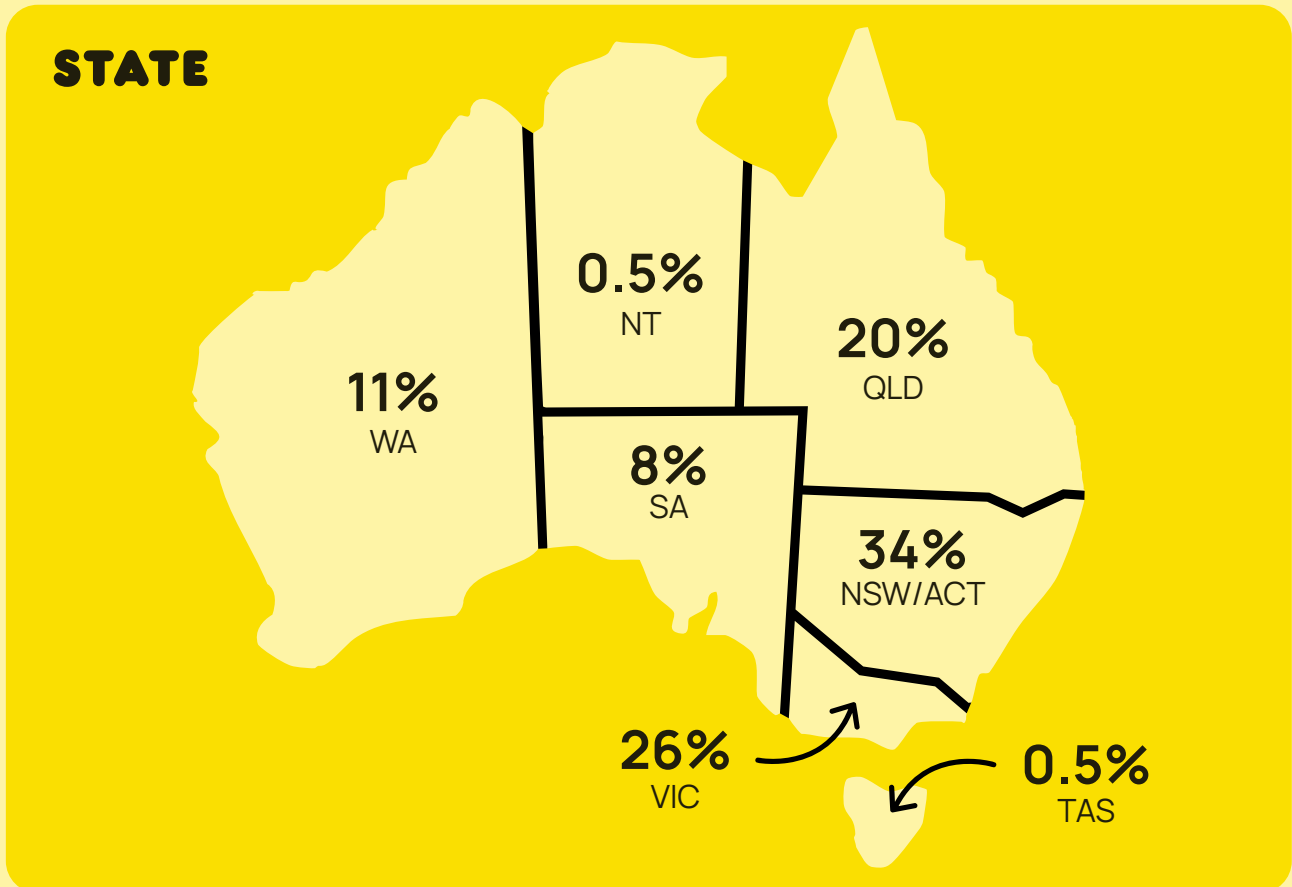
Survey data was collected from November 2024 to late February 2025, with a break in sampling over the festive holiday period to ensure behaviours reflected standard household behaviour.



- 1** Complete a log/monitor prior to filling out questionnaire
- 2** Photographic evidence of food thrown out
- 3** Clear definition of what wastage is
- 4** A dual layer of food types built into the survey to help people be as accurate as possible
- 5** Minimising possible recency effect using the last 24 hours
- 6** Simple approach to 'measurement' e.g. # of whole items, # of bags

THE SAMPLE





Over 3,000 households completed the survey, from different income levels, demographic backgrounds, and geographic locations. Respondents included a range of households: single-person, couples, families with children, and shared households.



WEIGHT CALCULATION

Survey participants reported their household food waste using easy-to-report units such as whole/half items, bags, servings, and grams across 110 foods. These consumer-friendly volume measurements were collected and converted to calculate food waste quantities in kilograms across all categories, then weekly totals were converted to annual figures. This process determined the average annual food waste volume per household. The Australian Dietary Guidelines^{iv} were referenced to establish standard serving size weights as the benchmark. For takeaway foods, chain restaurant product specifications were used to estimate weights.





Example weight calculations

	FOOD WASTE CATEGORY	WEIGHT OF CATEGORY	WEEKLY VOLUME	ANNUAL VOLUME
	200 grams of beef	1g	$200 * 1g = 200g$	$200 * 52 / 1000 = 10.4kg$
	1 1/2 whole items of tomato	110g per whole item	$1.5 * 110g = 165g$	$165g * 52 / 1000 = 8.58kg$
	1/2 apple	160g per whole item	$0.5 * 160g = 80g$	$80g * 52 / 1000 = 4.16kg$
	1 takeaway container	500ml per container	$1 * 500ml = 500g$	$500 * 52 / 1000 = 26kg$

COST CALCULATION

To understand the cost, food waste was calculated by multiplying the volume of food wasted by the average major supermarket product price at the time of the survey. Prices were collected from major Australian supermarket chains for all food items at the start of the survey period. Chain restaurant prices were used to price the value of takeaway food, and secondary price research^v was used to benchmark the value of home-cooked leftovers. The reported costs were converted to annual figures to calculate the average annual cost of food waste.

Example cost calculations

	FOOD WASTE CATEGORY	COST OF CATEGORY	WEEKLY COST	ANNUAL COST
	1 1/2 tomatoes	83c per whole item	$1.5 * \$0.83 = \1.25	$\$1.25 * 52 = \64.7
	1/2 apple	88c per whole item	$0.5 * 88c = 44c$	$44c * 52 = \$22.8$
	1 home-cooked meal	\$8.5 per serving	$1 * \$8.5 = \8.5	$\$8.5 * 52 = \442
	200 grams of beef	2.4c per gram	$200 * \$0.024 = \4.8	$\$4.8 * 52 = \249.6

HOUSEHOLDS

Who wastes the most?

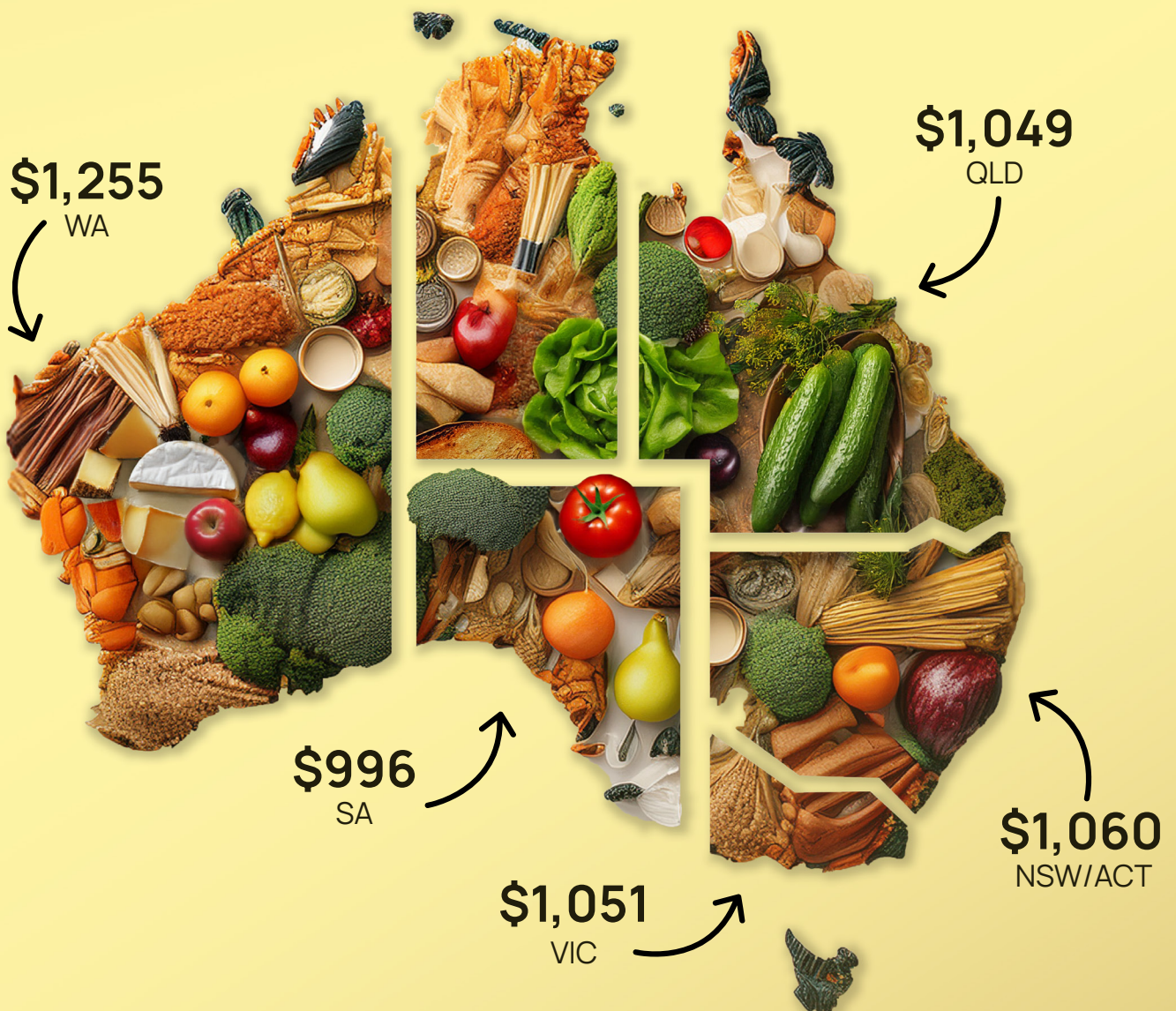
Households with under 35s generate approximately \$1,503 in annual food waste (equalling to 113 kg of food), 71% more than households aged 35-65+, who average \$898 (66 kg) in wasted food annually.

High-wasting households are predominantly urban-dwelling, affluent households, with 43% reporting annual household incomes between \$100,000-\$200,000+. They are typically comprised of younger adults living alone, with partners, or in a share house.



KEY INSIGHT

Households with under 35s emerge as the highest wasters



* NT and TAS sample not statistically significant to be included



HIGH WASTE HOUSEHOLDS

GENDER



50% male



50% female

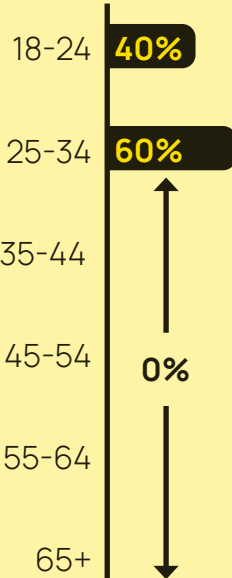


78% metro



22% regional

AGE



LOW WASTE HOUSEHOLDS

GENDER



51% male



49% female

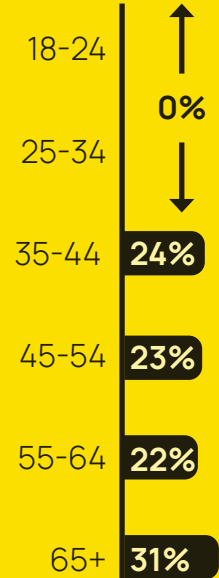


71% metro



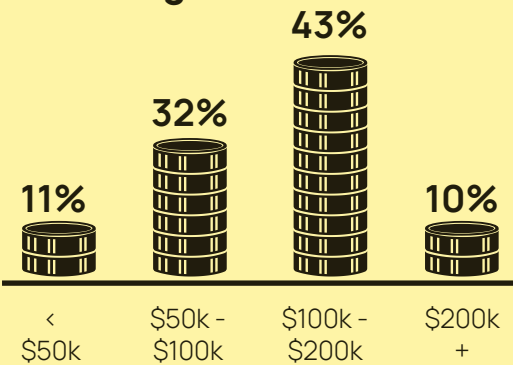
29% regional

AGE



INCOME*

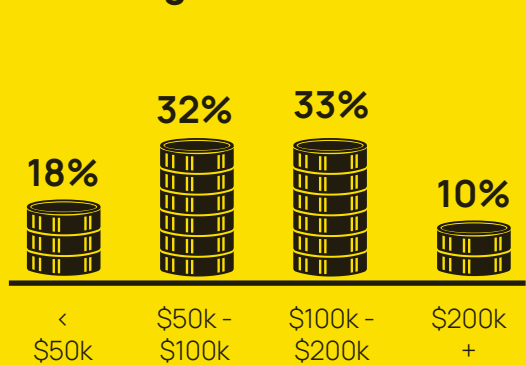
\$121k avg.



* Remaining 4% opted not to disclose

INCOME*

\$111k avg.



* Remaining 7% opted not to disclose

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



HIGH WASTE

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Avg. \$ waste	\$1,611	\$1,526	\$1,518	\$1,266	\$1,637	\$1,770
Avg. People in house	4	3	1	2	3.7	2
\$ Per person	\$403	\$509	\$1,518	\$633	\$442	\$885
	23%	13%	13%	24%	26%	0.1%
	2%	4%	17%	23%	41%	10%
	Living with parents	Living with housemates or boarders	Living on my own	Living with a partner or spouse	Parent or guardian, with children at home	Single or couple with all children not living at home
Avg. \$ waste	\$1,005	\$1,321	\$805	\$805	\$1,031	\$530
Avg. People in house	2.5	2.7	1	2	3.6	2.0
\$ Per person	\$402	\$489	\$805	\$403	\$286	\$265



LOW WASTE

Household Composition: S1. What is your age? S2. What gender do you identify as? S3. Where best describes where you live? D1 - Which of the following best describes your current living arrangements? D3 - Which of the following best describes your household income before tax?

BEHAVIOUR

Why, when and where food gets wasted

58% of high-wasting households cited food reaching either best before or use by date as the most common reason why they disposed of food, followed by food starting to go mouldy. These households often disposed of food before a grocery shop to make room in their fridge, or because they had forgotten about food that had expired.



KEY INSIGHT

Food labelling significantly influences food wastage



WHY DOES FOOD GO TO WASTE?

Reasons:



Why does food go to waste?: A2 - Was there any particular reason why you were disposing of food waste on the day of recording?
 S7 - What day do you typically dispose of your uneaten or unused food in your household?
 S6 - How do you typically dispose of any uneaten or unused food in your household?



KEY INSIGHT

Shopping without a list, not checking what food you have, and a lack of meal planning lead to more food waste

Attitudes:



High-wasting households are less likely to prepare meal plans or shopping lists, resulting in more impulsive purchasing decisions, which leads to spending more and overbuying. Compared to low-wasting households, who check what they have in their kitchen first (81%), write a shopping list (72%), which results in only buying the food they need (75%).

What behaviours create the most waste?: B6 - To what extent do you agree/ disagree with the following statements?

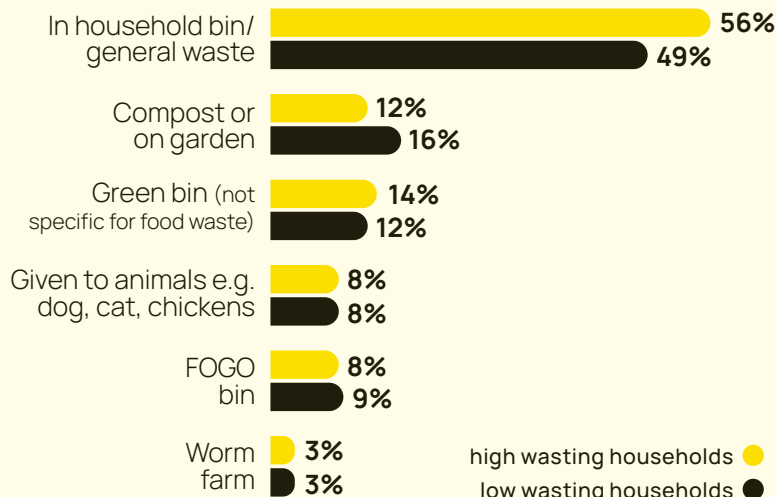
WHERE DOES FOOD WASTE END UP?



KEY INSIGHT

Half of all household food waste ends up in landfill

Where:



Over half of households surveyed dispose of food waste directly into their red (general) bin, with less than 10% of Australians using a Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) green bin. Food waste in landfills has a significant environmental consequence as it generates methane, a greenhouse gas 28 times more potent than carbon dioxide^{vi}. High-wasting households are even less likely to compost their food waste than other households.

Where does food waste end up?: A7 - Where do you place the majority of food that's discarded?

WHEN DOES FOOD GO TO WASTE?

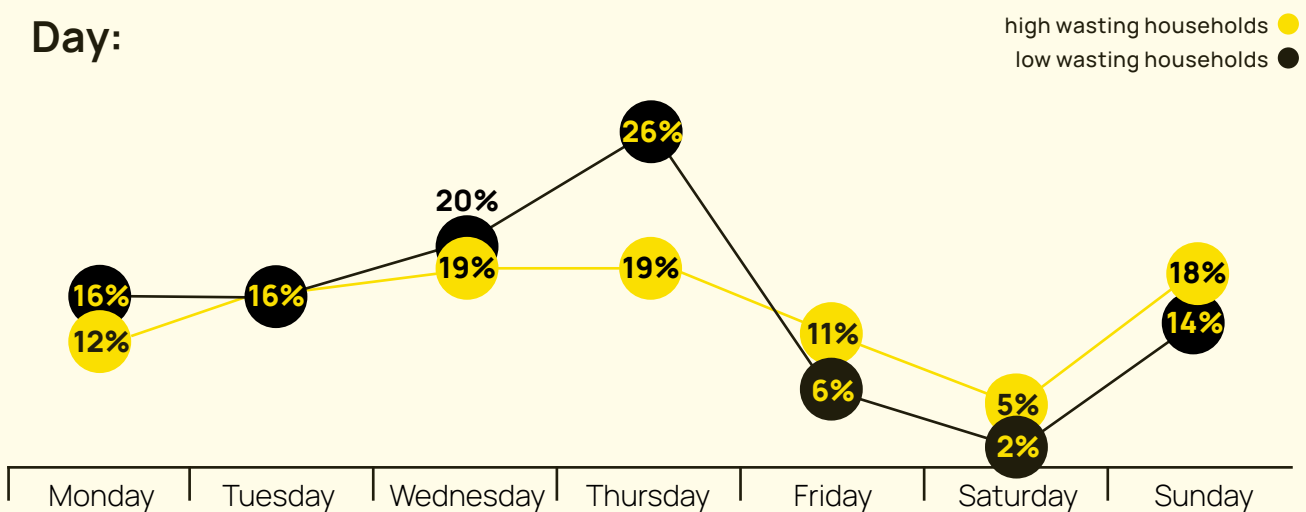


KEY INSIGHT

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays are peak days for food waste disposal

This data could help inform communications for food waste avoidance campaigns.

Day:



When does food go to waste?: A2 - Was there any particular reason why you were disposing of food waste on the day of recording?
S7 - What day do you typically dispose of your uneaten or unused food in your household?

VOLUME & VALUE


What food gets wasted the most?

Across all households, fresh produce and uneaten leftovers are wasted the most – vegetables & herbs (47%), uneaten leftovers (45%) and fruit (37%). Uneaten leftovers add up to the highest individual cost component of household food waste.



KEY INSIGHT

Nearly half of all Australian households waste vegetables, herbs and leftovers, which can cost over \$500 annually

CATEGORY	AVERAGE COST ANNUALLY	% OF TOTAL FOOD WASTE COST	% OF PEOPLE WHO WASTED THIS CATEGORY	AVERAGE KILOGRAMS ANNUALLY
 Leftovers	\$367.50	34	45	27.2
 Veg & Herbs	\$205.39	19	47	15.2
 Fruit	\$118.91	11	37	8.8
 Frozen Meats	\$97.28	9	10	7.2
 Dairy Products	\$86.48	8	21	6.4
 Frozen fruit & Veg	\$64.86	6	8	4.8
 Meat, seafood & eggs	\$43.24	4	15	3.2
 Frozen meals & desserts	\$43.24	4	6	3.2
 Bakery items	\$21.62	2	35	1.6
 Pantry staples	\$21.62	2	11	1.6
 Condiments & spreads	\$10.81	1	9	0.8



VEGETABLES



KEY INSIGHT

Almost half of households reported throwing out vegetables, primarily tomatoes, carrots, broccoli and leafy greens

\$205

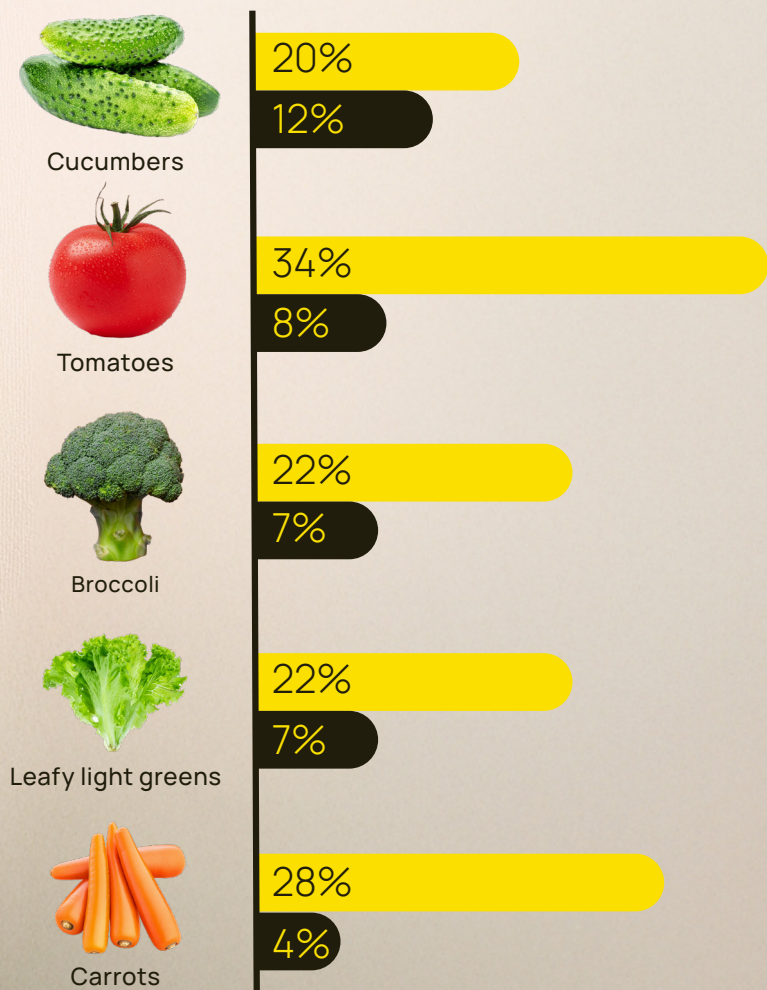
The average cost of vegetables thrown out annually.



The average weight of vegetables thrown out annually.

FOOD VOLUME VS COST

- Percentage of people that reported discarding this food
- Percentage of the total vegetables food waste cost



Vegetables: A5. Within the Fresh vegetables and herbs category, what type/s of food items specifically were discarded or thrown out? A6. For this type of food (Fresh vegetables and herbs), how much was discarded?

LEFTOVERS



KEY INSIGHT

Nearly half of households reported wasting leftovers, with the majority wasting homemade leftovers, more than takeaway



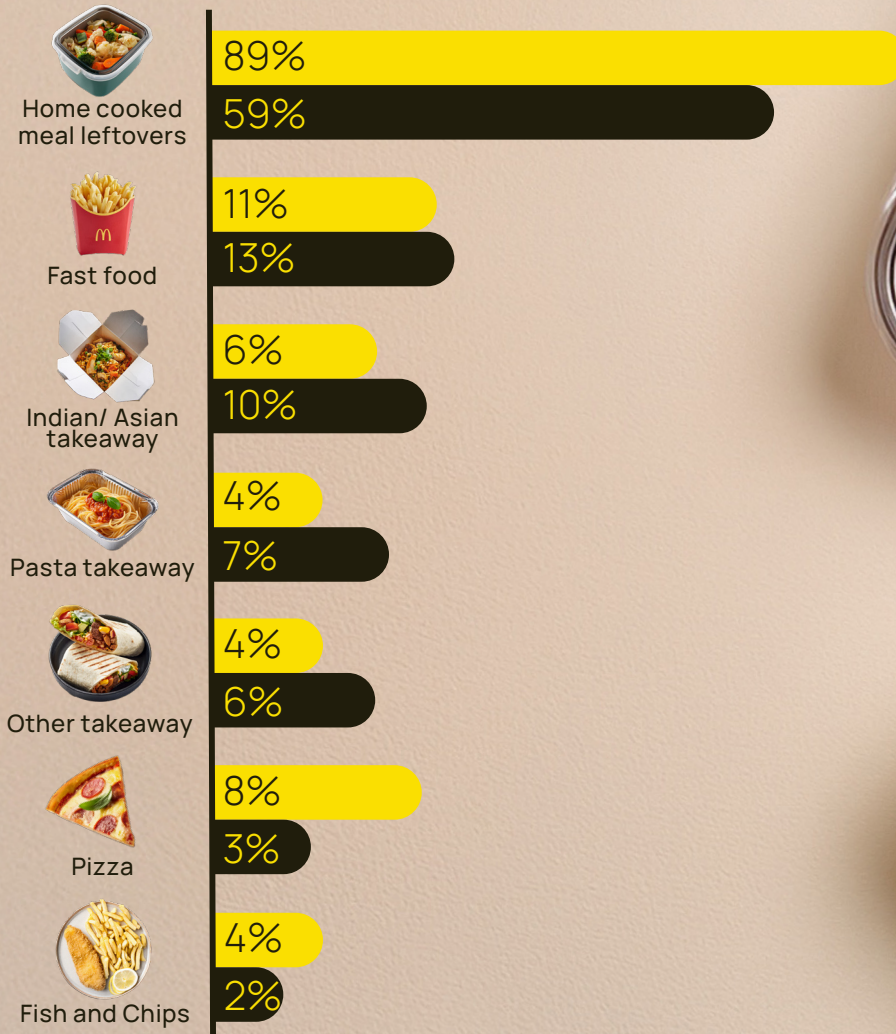
The average cost of leftovers thrown out annually.



The average weight of leftovers thrown out annually.

FOOD VOLUME VS COST

- Percentage of people that reported discarding this food
- Percentage of all leftovers food waste cost



Leftovers: A5. Within the Leftovers category, what type/s of food items specifically were discarded or thrown out? A6. For this type of food (Leftovers), how much was discarded?

FRUIT



KEY INSIGHT

Strawberries account for the highest cost of food waste within households that waste fruit, but bananas and apples are wasted the most

\$118

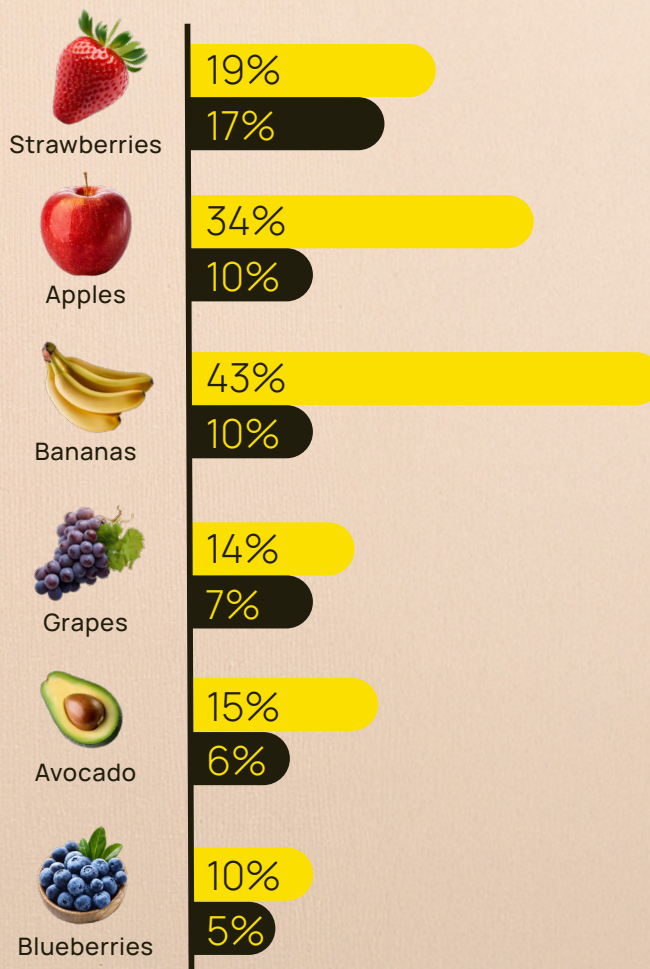
The average cost of fruit thrown out annually.



The average weight of fruit thrown out annually.

FOOD VOLUME VS COST

- Percentage of people that reported discarding this food
- Percentage of total fruit food waste cost



Fruit: A5. Within the Fruit category, what type/s of food items specifically were discarded or thrown out? A6. For this type of food (Fruit), how much was discarded?

BAKERY



KEY INSIGHT

Bread was the most commonly wasted bakery item, with over a third of households wasting bakery items

\$21

The average cost of bakery items thrown out annually.



The average weight of bakery items thrown out annually.

FOOD VOLUME VS COST

- Percentage of people that reported discarding this food
- Percentage of total bakery food waste costs



Bread

81%

46%



Bread rolls

21%

23%



Wraps

11%

14%

Bakery: A5. Within the Bakery items category, what type/s of food items specifically were discarded or thrown out? (n=1146) A6. For this type of food (Bakery items), how much was discarded? Nat rep weighting applied.

DAIRY



KEY INSIGHT

Almost half of households waste dairy products, with yogurt most frequently wasted (46%)



The average cost of dairy thrown out annually.



The average weight of dairy thrown out annually.

FOOD VOLUME VS COST

- Percentage of people that reported discarding this food
- Percentage of total dairy food waste cost



Yogurt

46%

33%



Cream

31%

16%



Cheese (speciality)

13%

12%



Cheese (everyday)

25%

11%



Other dairy products

24%

5%

Dairy: A5. Within the Fruit category, what type/s of food items specifically were discarded or thrown out? A6. For this type of food (Fruit), how much was discarded?

MEAT AND SEAFOOD



KEY INSIGHT

Chicken was the most wasted meat, followed by beef, seafood and pork

\$43

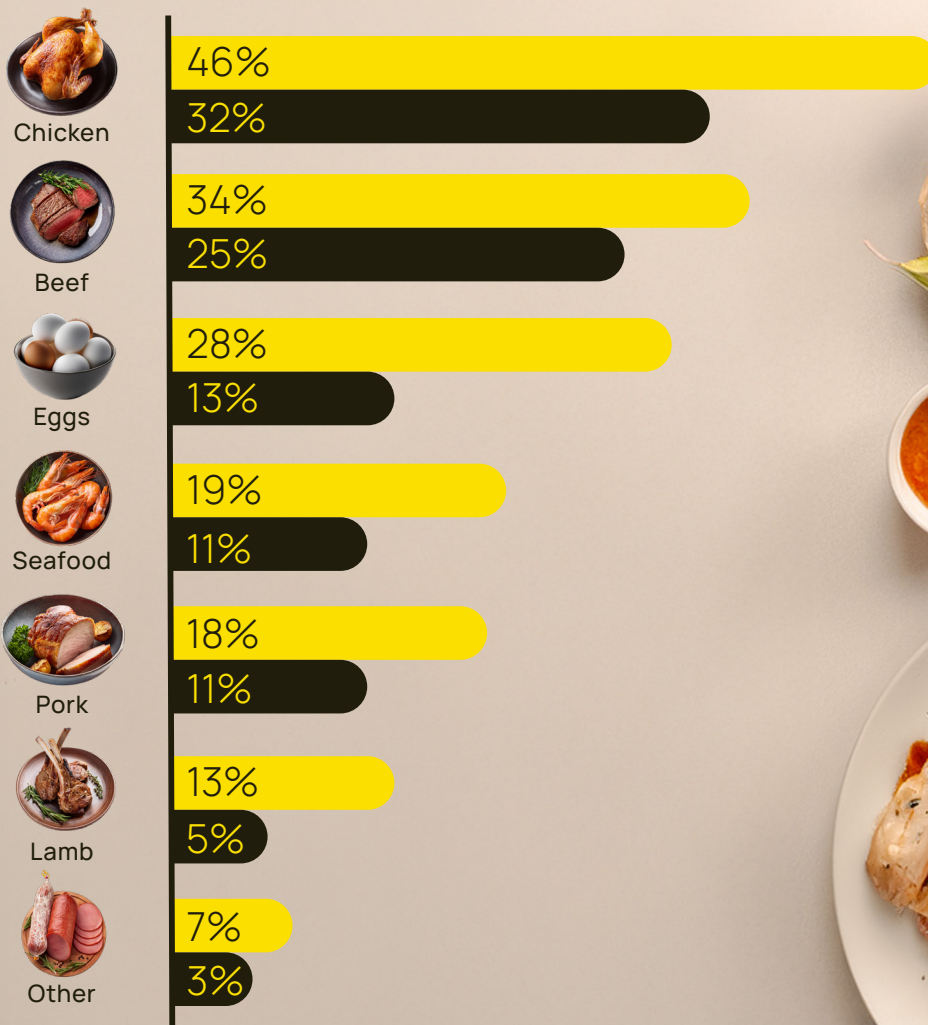
The average cost of meat & seafood thrown out annually.



The average weight of meat & seafood thrown out annually.

FOOD VOLUME VS COST

- Percentage of people that reported discarding this food
- Percentage of the total meat & seafood food waste cost



Meat and Seafood: A5. Within the Meat, seafood and eggs category, what type/s of food items specifically were discarded or thrown out? A6. For this type of food (Meat, Seafood and eggs), how much was discarded?

SUMMARY & SOLUTIONS

Food waste is an alarming issue in Australia, with high-wasting households throwing away an average of 113kg of food annually, costing \$1,503. This report identifies critical patterns and offers practical strategies to combat food waste effectively.

Uneaten leftovers and fresh produce dominate household waste, with tomatoes, carrots, broccoli, bananas, apples, and yogurt being the most frequently discarded. Bread and strawberries are notable for their high costs and home-cooked leftovers that go uneaten account for a significant portion of the waste and are among the highest contributors to household costs.

High-wasting households exhibit three key behaviours: limited use of meal planning or shopping lists, disposing of food as it nears best-before or use-by dates, and failing to utilise composting or food recycling programs. These gaps identify great opportunities to reduce wastage by making simple changes to habits.



PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO DRASTICALLY REDUCE WASTE

PLAN MEALS AND SHOP SMART

Create a weekly meal plan and detailed shopping list before heading to the shops. Stick to your list to avoid impulse purchases and ensure you only buy what you'll realistically consume. Regularly check your fridge to prevent forgotten items from going off.

MASTER THE ART OF LEFTOVERS

Transform yesterday's dinner into tomorrow's lunch by repurposing leftovers creatively. Alternatively, freeze portions immediately for convenient meals during busy weeks when you'd typically order takeaway.

IMPLEMENT A USE IT UP SHELF

Designate a specific fridge shelf or pantry area for items that need to be used up. Regularly check your fridge, noting best-before and use-by dates and move these items to the Use It Up shelf. Don't forget to cook a meal from these items once a week!

OzHarvest's Use It Up Tape® is proven to reduce food waste by 40%. It can be used to mark a shelf in your fridge or pantry, or on food items/containers that need using up. It's a visual reminder for the whole household.

UNDERSTAND DATE LABELS

Understand the difference between Use By and Best Before to avoid throwing food away too soon. Best Before dates refer to food quality, indicating when food is at its very best, but can still be perfectly safe to eat long after this date. Use By means the food should be eaten or frozen by the end of this date – after that, it could be unsafe to eat but use your senses before throwing it away!

This report highlights the urgency for households to adopt good kitchen habits and practical solutions, resulting in saving food, saving money and reducing environmental impact.



APPENDIX

- i. FIAL (2021). National Food Waste Strategy Feasibility Study
- ii. FIAL (2021). National Food Waste Strategy Feasibility Study
- iii. Table of Solutions I Project Drawdown
- iv. The Australian dietary guidelines
- v. Priceconomics (2018) How Much Money Do You Save by Cooking at Home?
- vi. IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land



HALF EATEN

Australian Household Food Waste Research

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