

# A Survey of Consumer Behaviors and Perceptions of Food Waste

**IFIC FOUNDATION  
SEPTEMBER 2019**



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# BACKGROUND

## Survey Methodology

One thousand interviews were conducted among adults ages 18+ from August 13 to August 14, 2019 and were weighted to ensure proportional results.

The Bayesian confidence level for 1,000 interviews is 3.5, which is roughly equivalent to a margin of error  $\pm 3.1$  at the 95% confidence level.

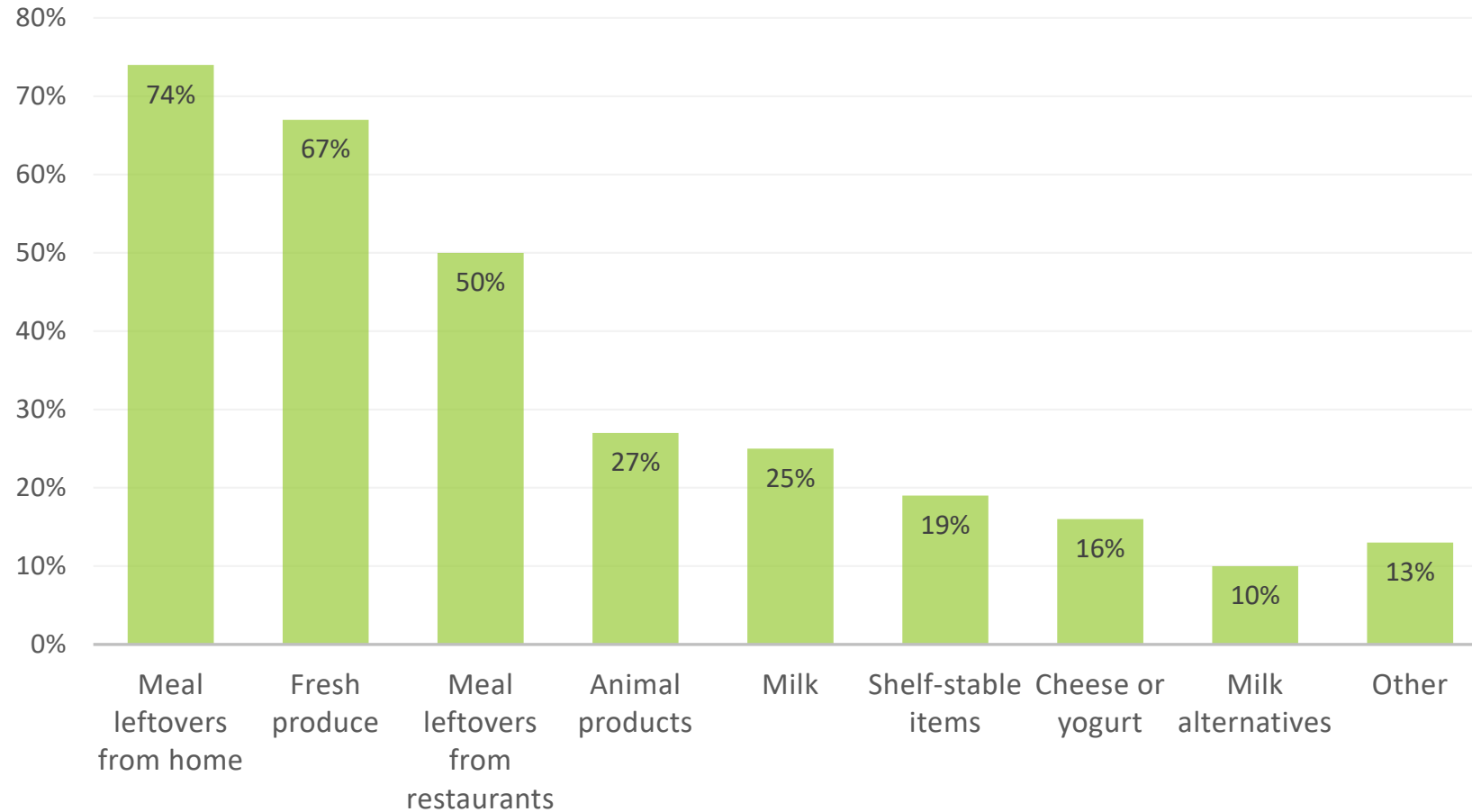
## Statistical Significance

Something is statistically significant if the result cannot be attributed to random chance. Statistical significance in this presentation should be compared within each demographic (e.g. age, race, gender, etc.).

For example, if the responses from female respondents is considered to be significant, it is in relation to male respondents and not necessarily other demographic groups.

# A Survey of Consumer Behaviors and Perceptions of Food Waste

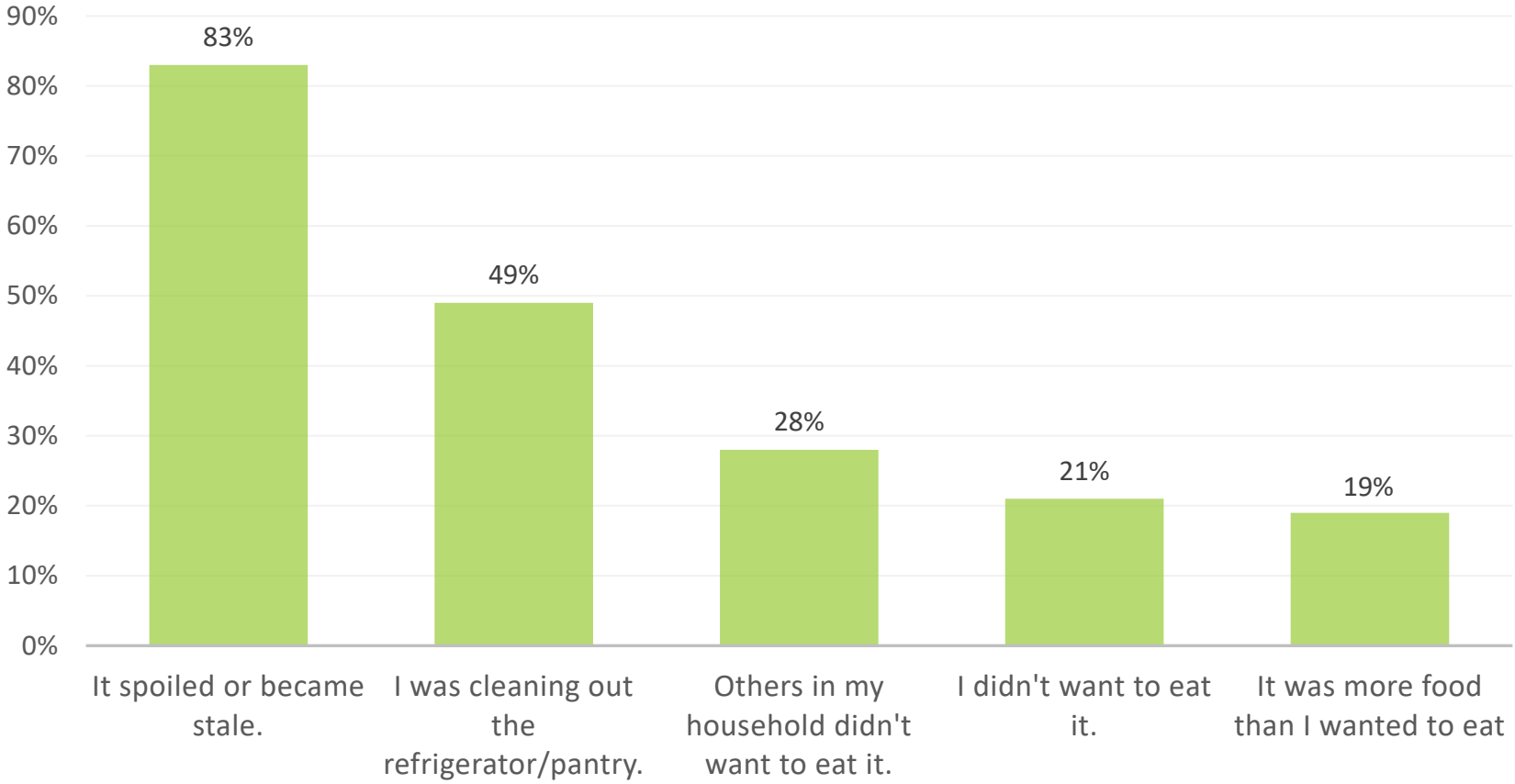
# LEFTOVERS AND FRESH PRODUCE ARE MOST LIKELY TO END UP IN GARBAGE AT HOME



**Q1.** Thinking back over the last month, what types of foods most often end up in your garbage at home?

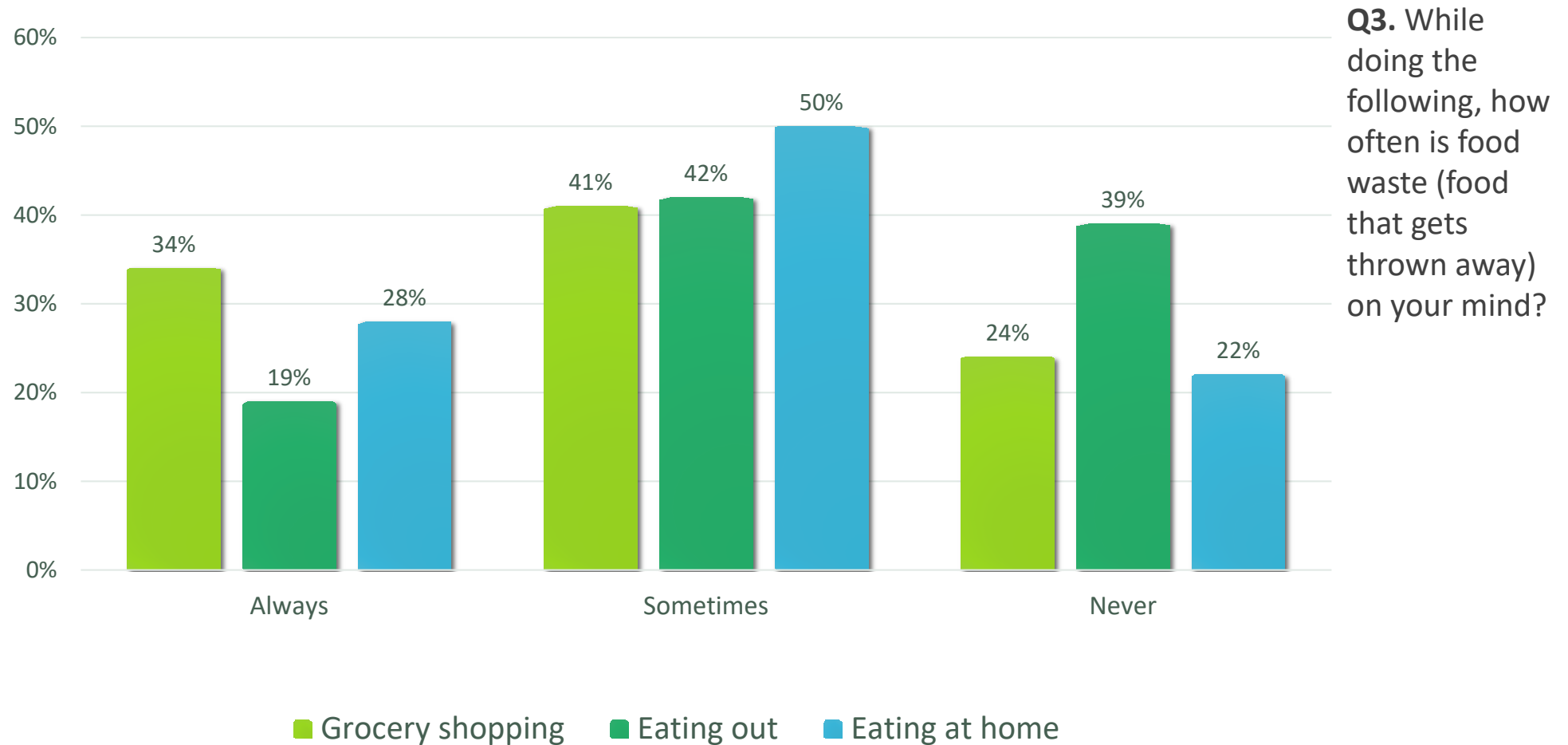
% ranked 1, 2, or 3

# SPOILED OR STALE FOOD IS THE TOP REASON FOODS END UP IN GARBAGE

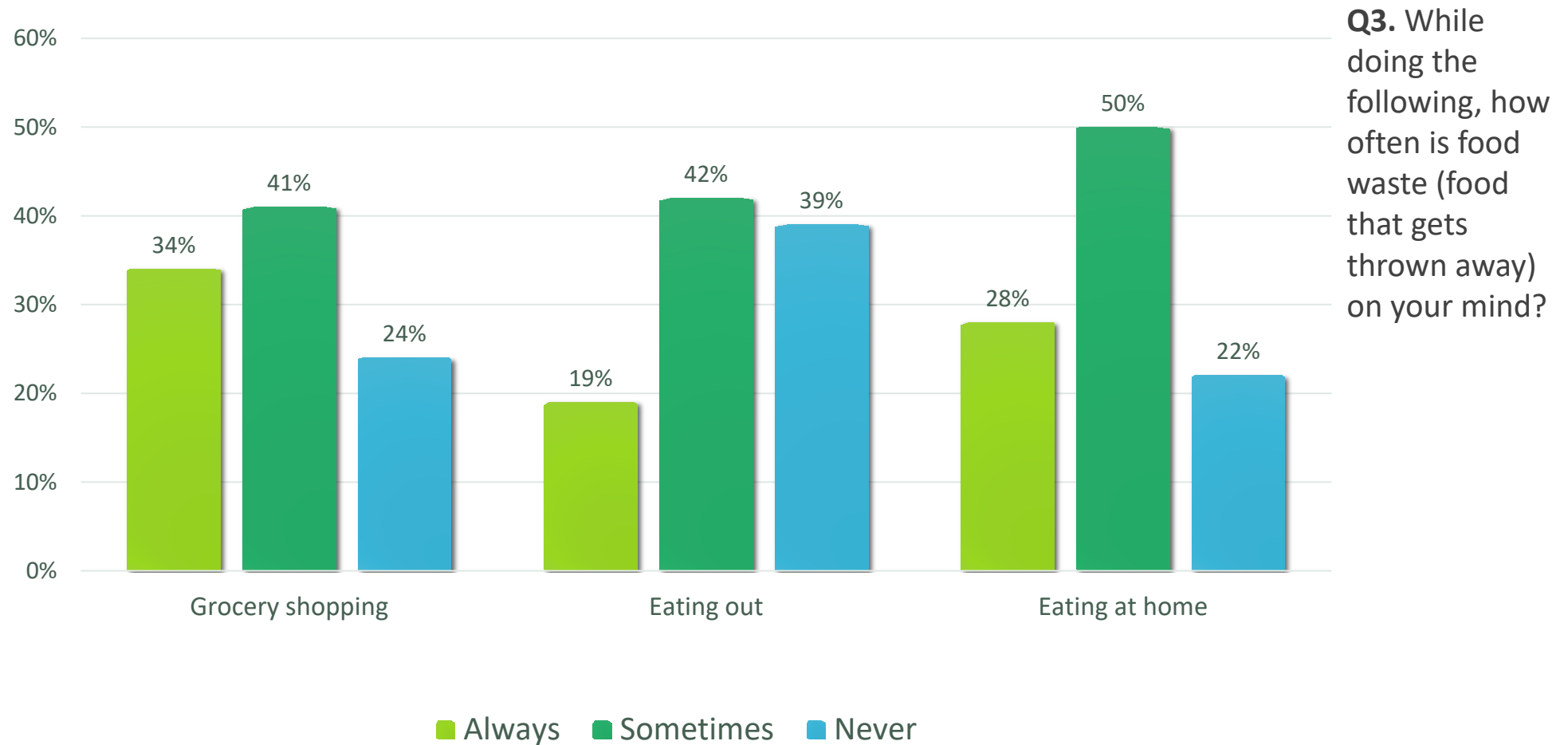


**Q2.** Why do these foods end up in your garbage? Please select your top two reasons.

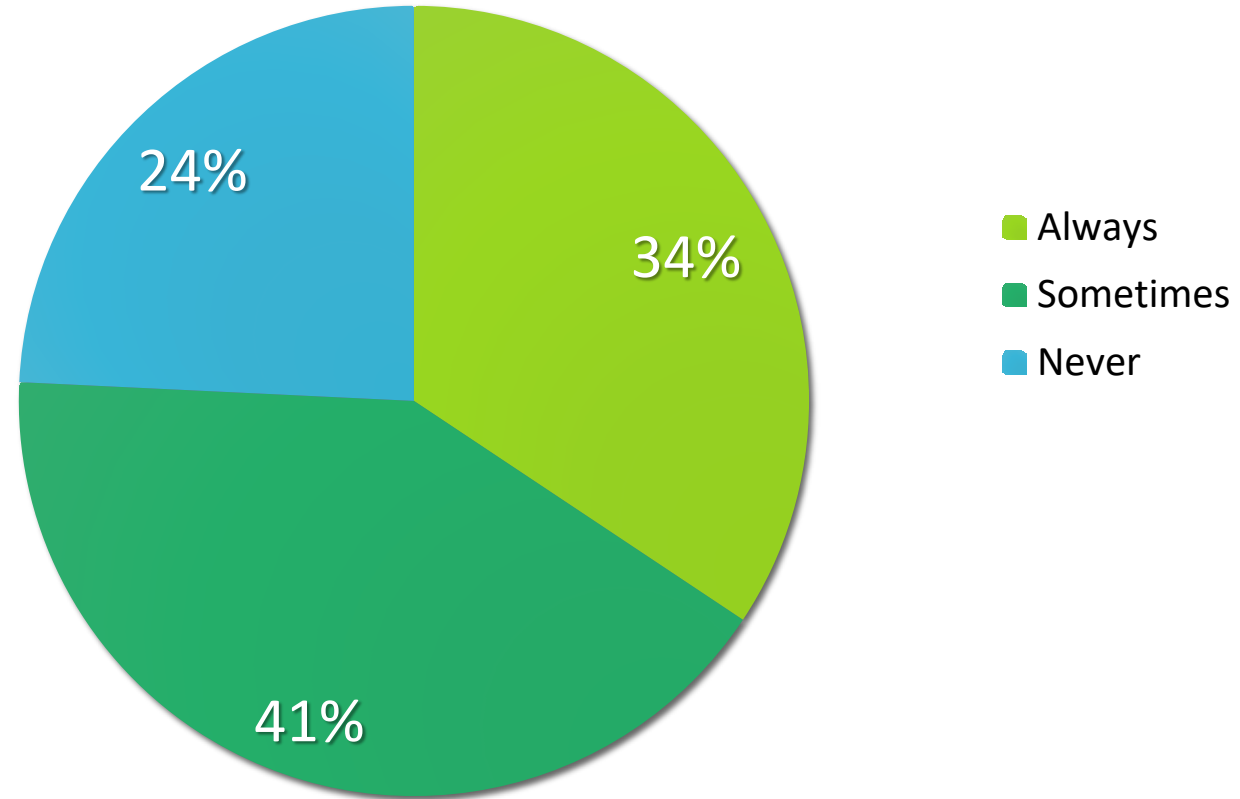
# WHEN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT FOOD, MOST PEOPLE CONSIDER FOOD WASTE AT LEAST SOME OF THE TIME



# FOOD WASTE IS TOP-OF-MIND WHEN GROCERY SHOPPING OR EATING AT HOME, LEAST WHEN EATING OUT

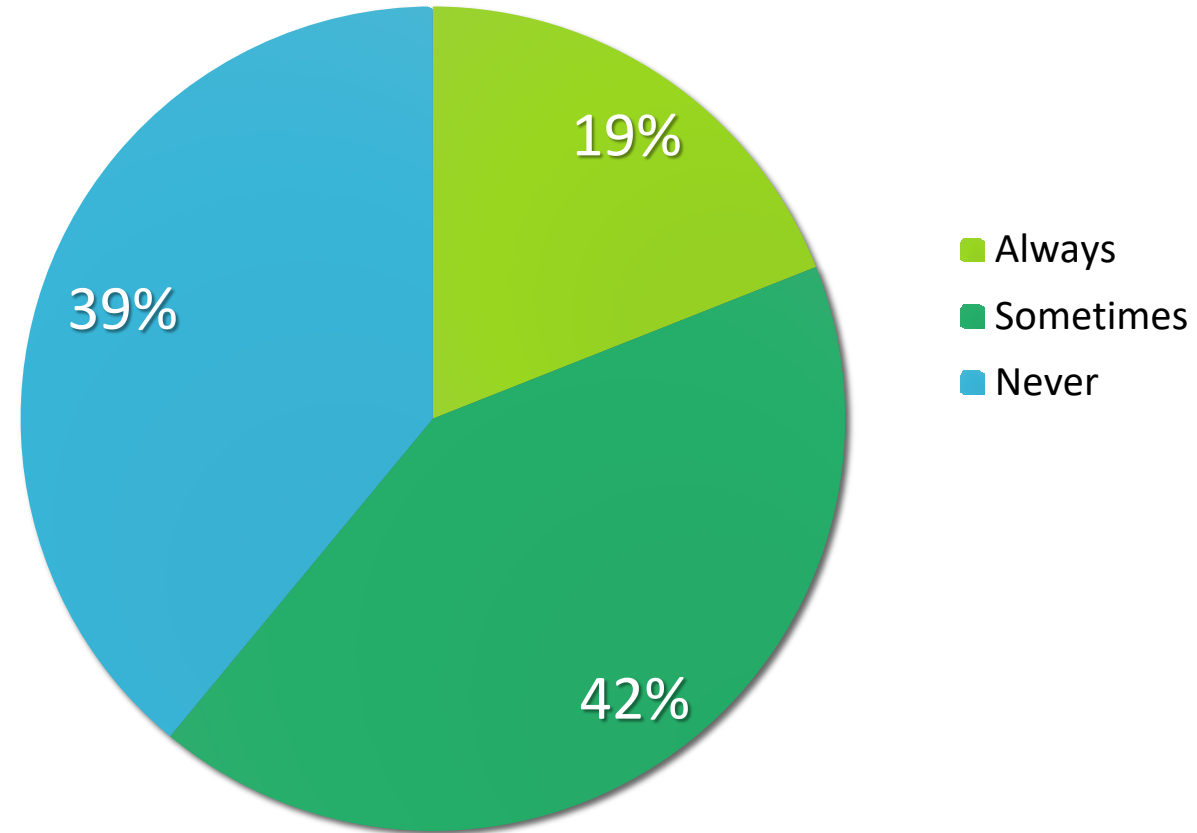


# WHEN GROCERY SHOPPING, THREE OUT OF FOUR CONSIDER FOOD WASTE AT LEAST SOMETIMES



**Q3.** While grocery shopping, how often is food waste (food that gets thrown away) on your mind?

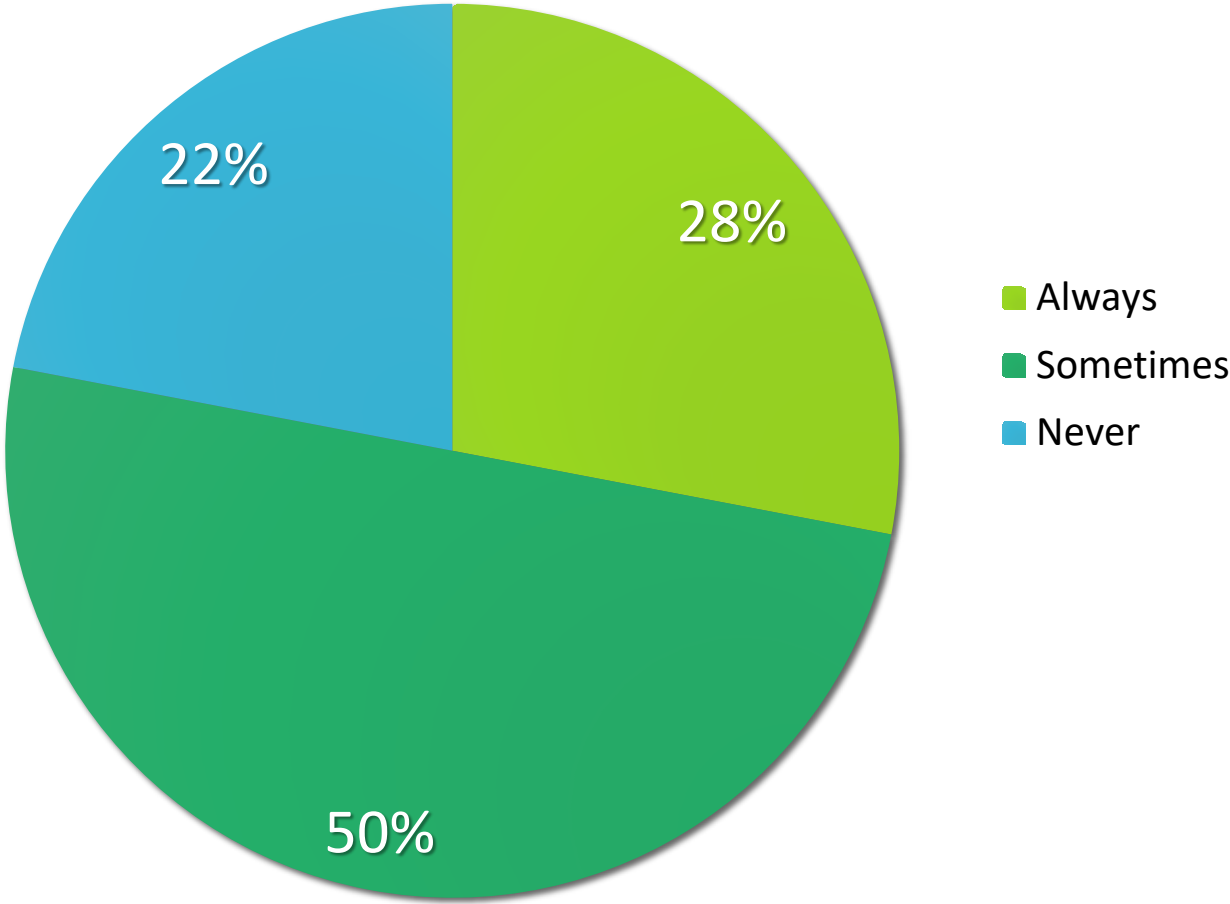
## TWO IN FIVE NEVER THINK ABOUT FOOD WASTE WHEN EATING OUT



**Q4.** While eating out, how often is food waste (food that gets thrown away) on your mind?

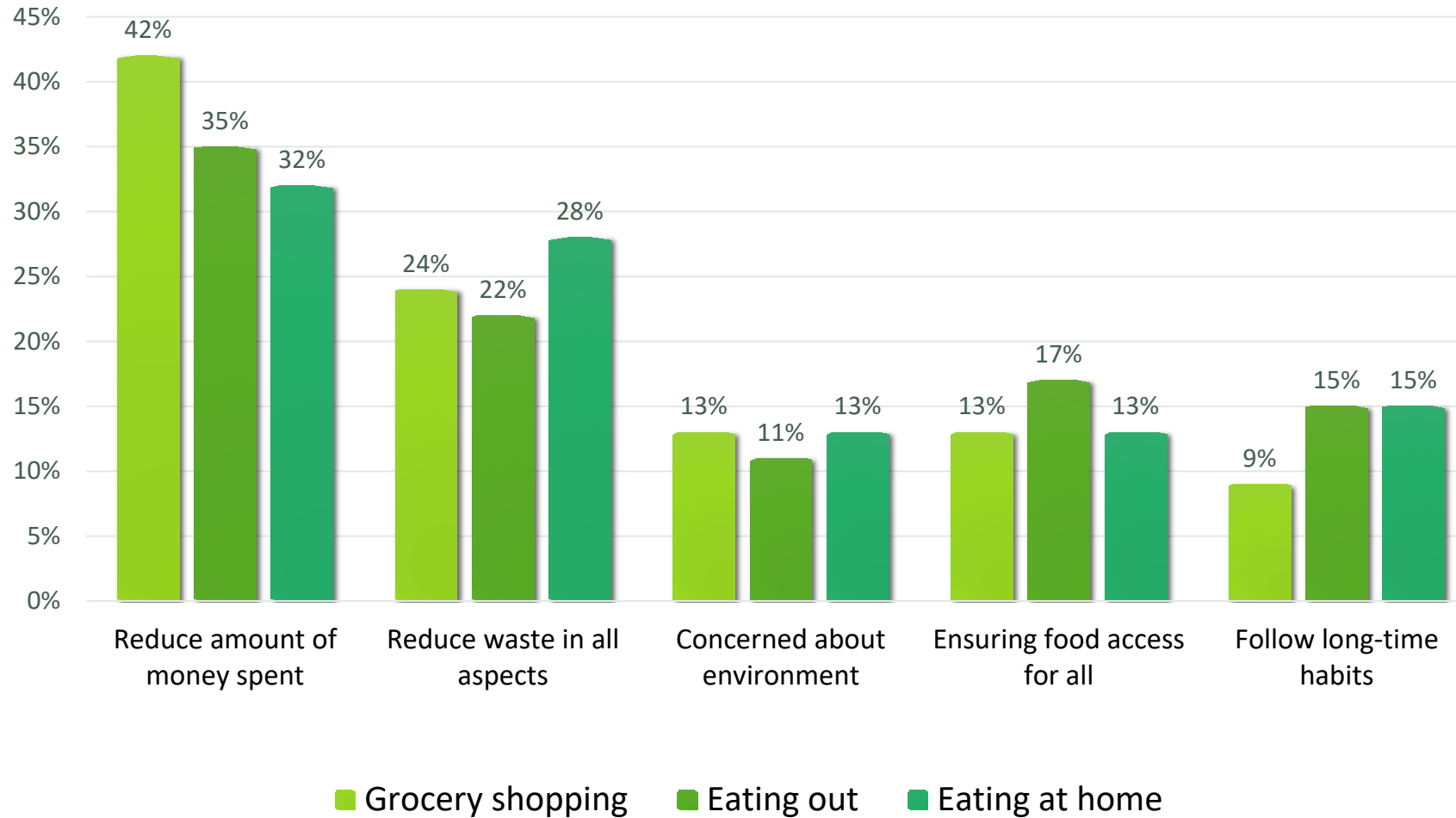


# CONSUMERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO THINK ABOUT FOOD WASTE WHEN EATING AT HOME



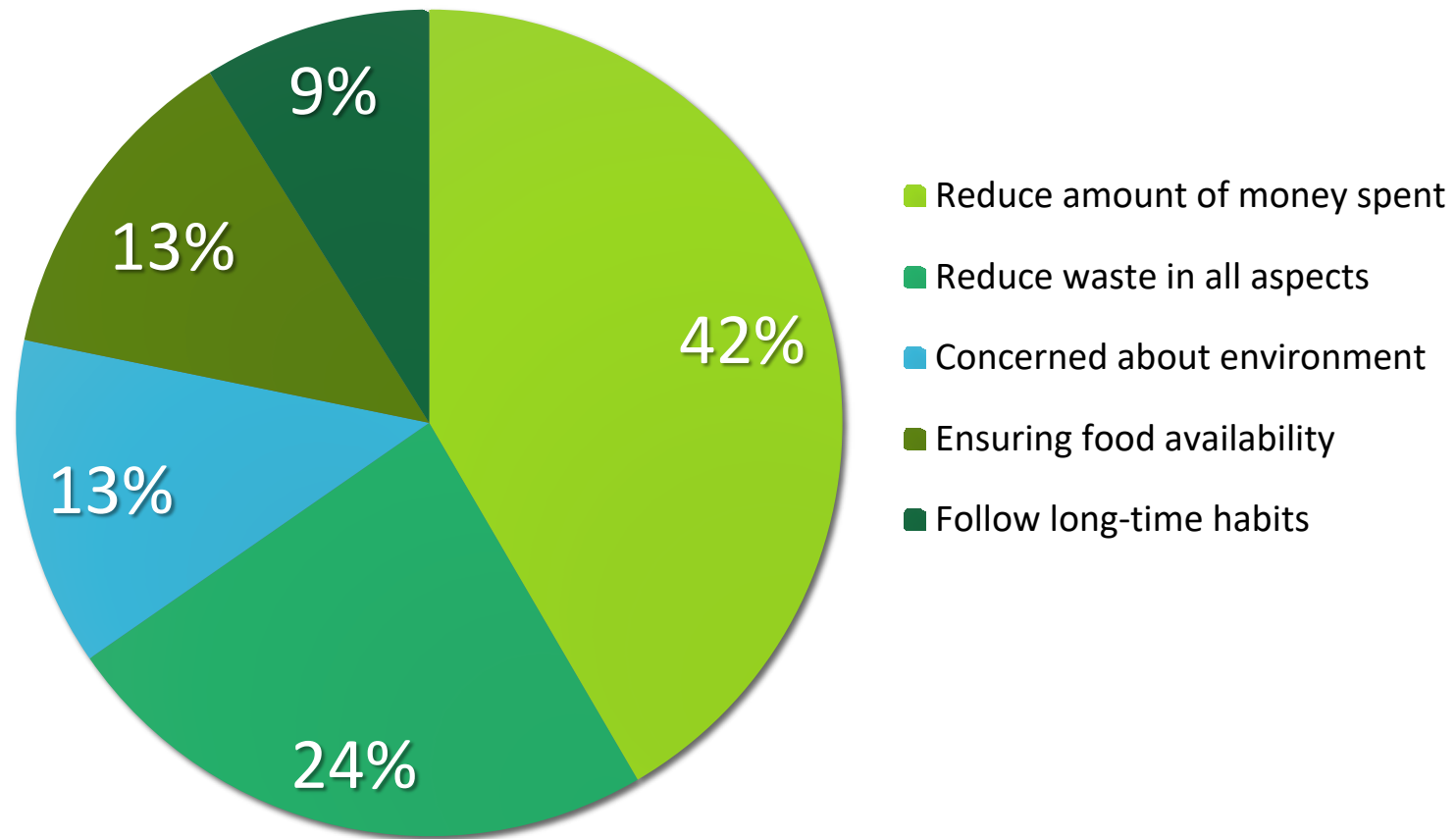
Q5. While eating at home, how often is food waste (food that gets thrown away) on your mind?

# A DESIRE TO REDUCE COST AND WASTE IN GENERAL ARE TOP REASONS CONSUMERS THINK ABOUT FOOD WASTE



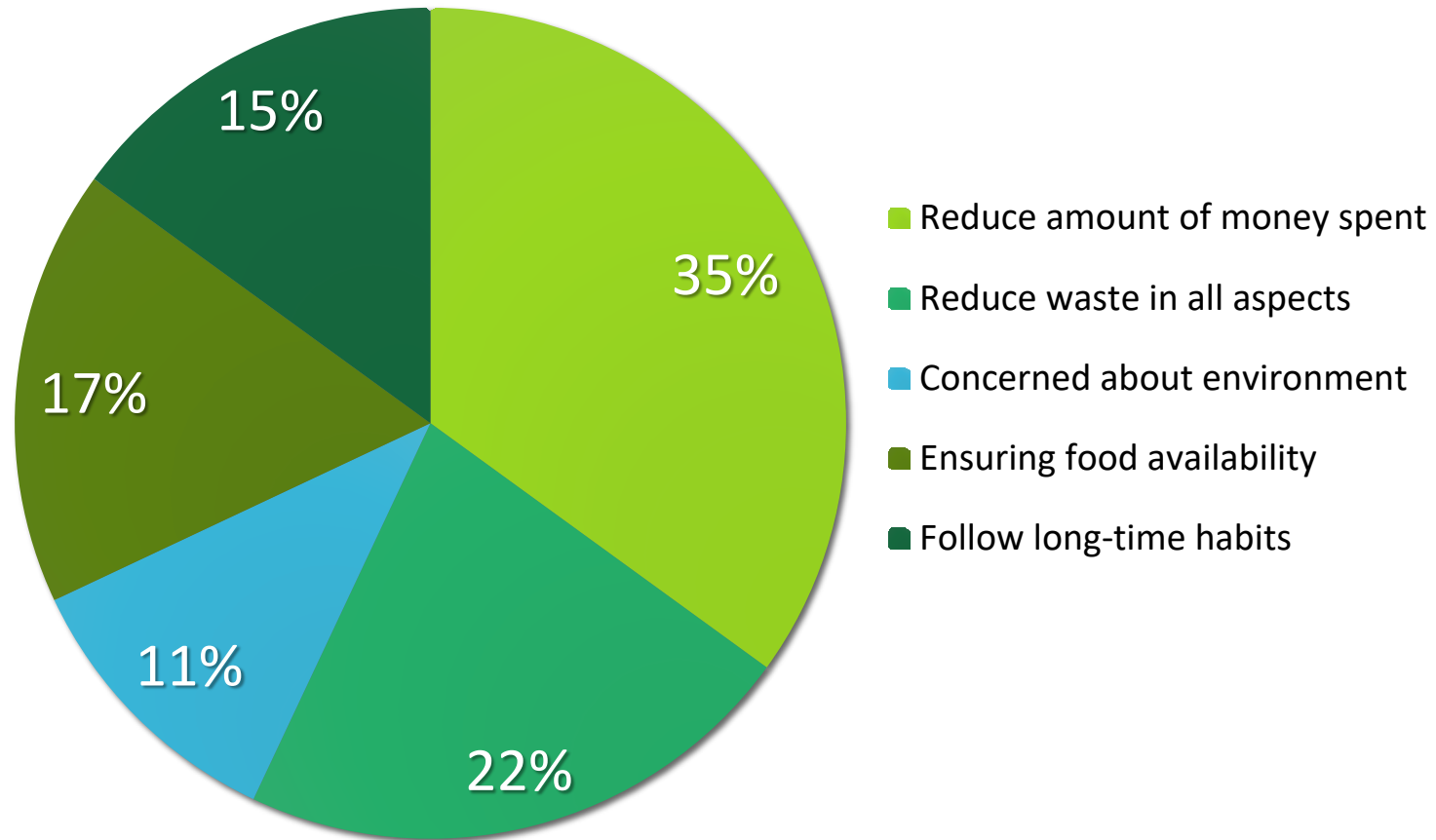
**Q6.** What is the top reason food waste is on your mind while doing the following?

# TWO IN FIVE THINK ABOUT FOOD WASTE WHILE FOOD SHOPPING TO REDUCE COST



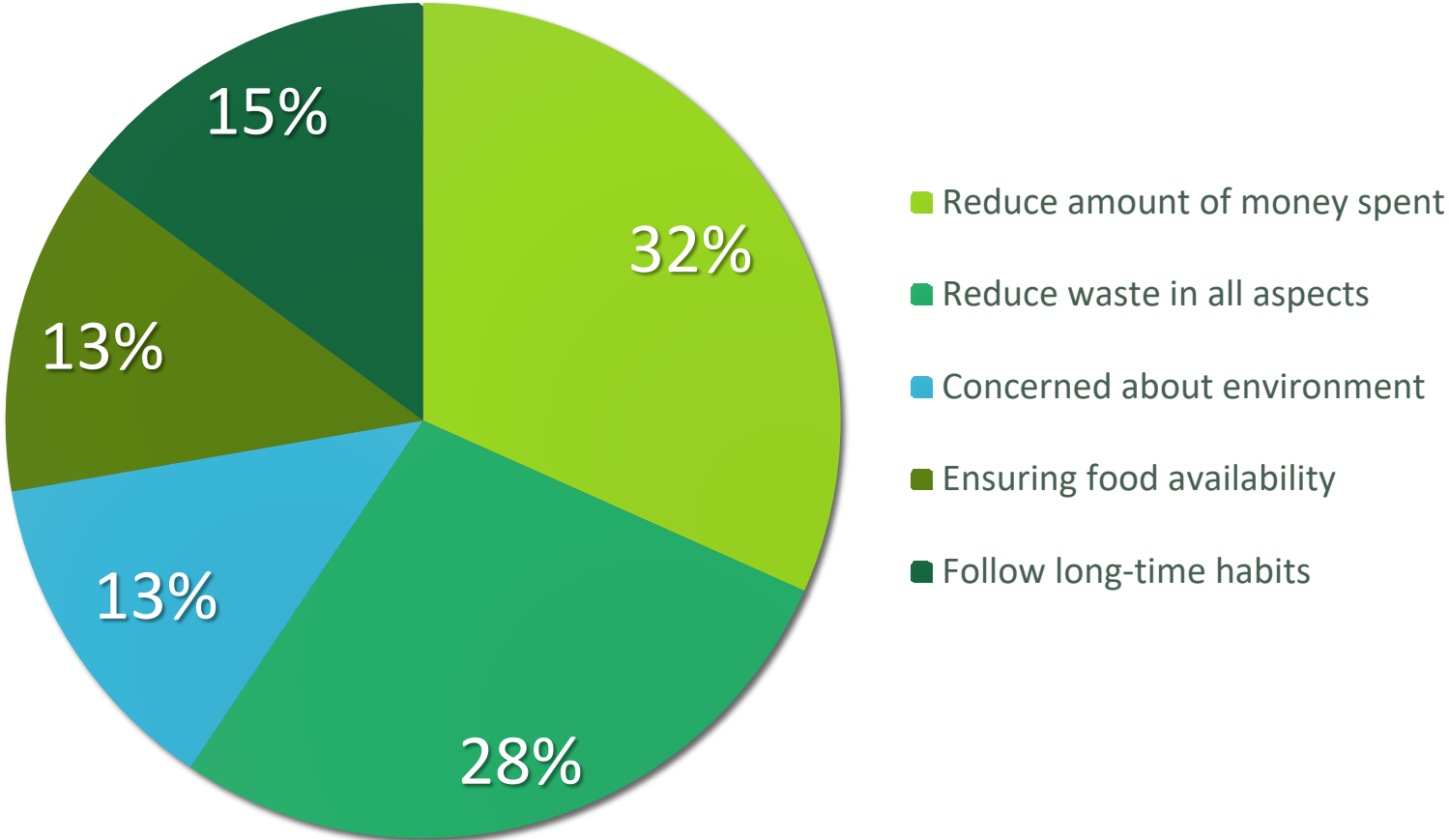
Q6. What is the top reason food waste is on your mind while grocery shopping?

# ROUGHLY ONE-THIRD OF CONSUMERS THINK ABOUT FOOD WASTE WHILE EATING OUT TO REDUCE COST



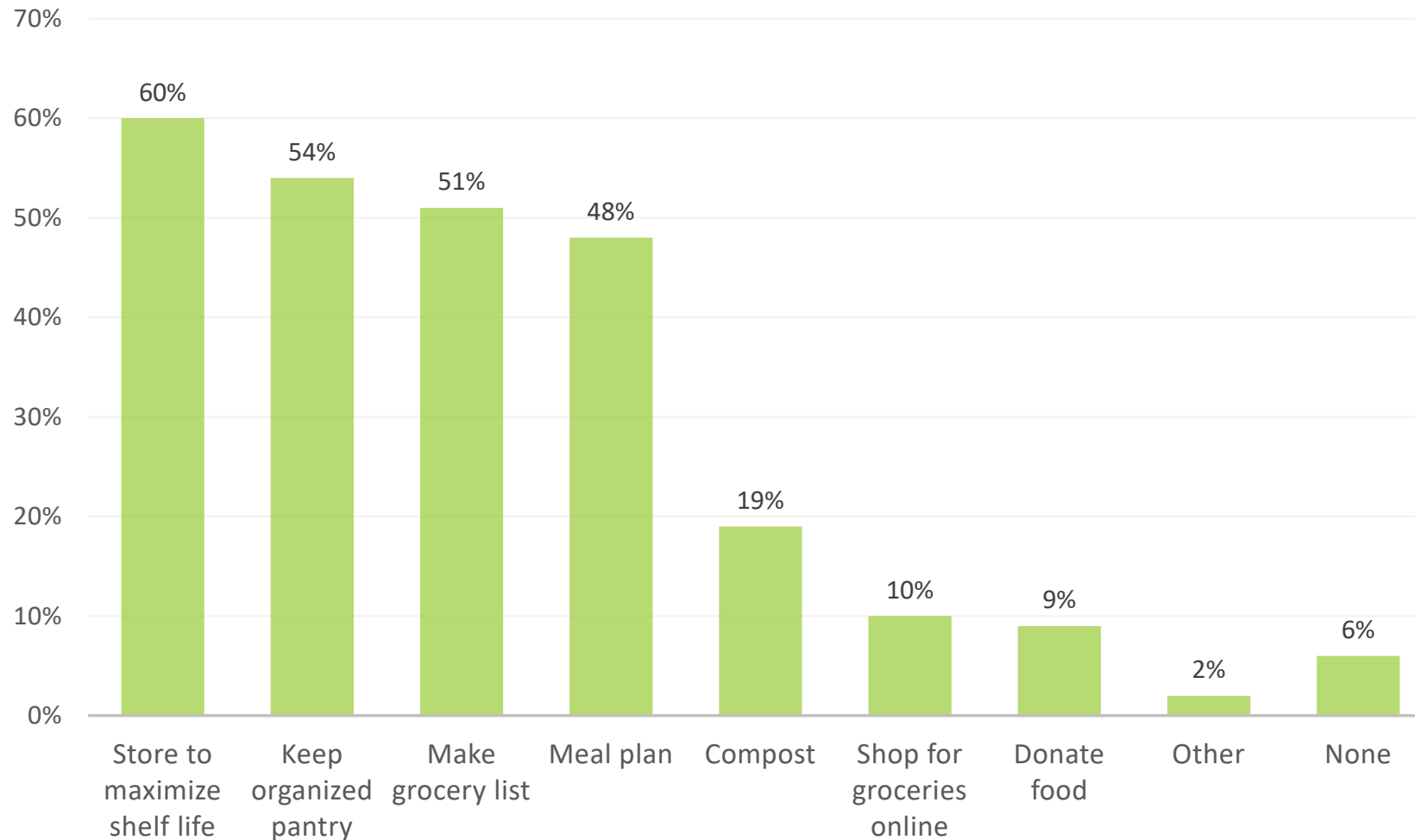
Q7. What is the top reason food waste is on your mind while eating out?

# COST AND DESIRE TO REDUCE WASTE IN GENERAL ARE REASONS FOOD WASTE IS TOP-OF-MIND AT HOME



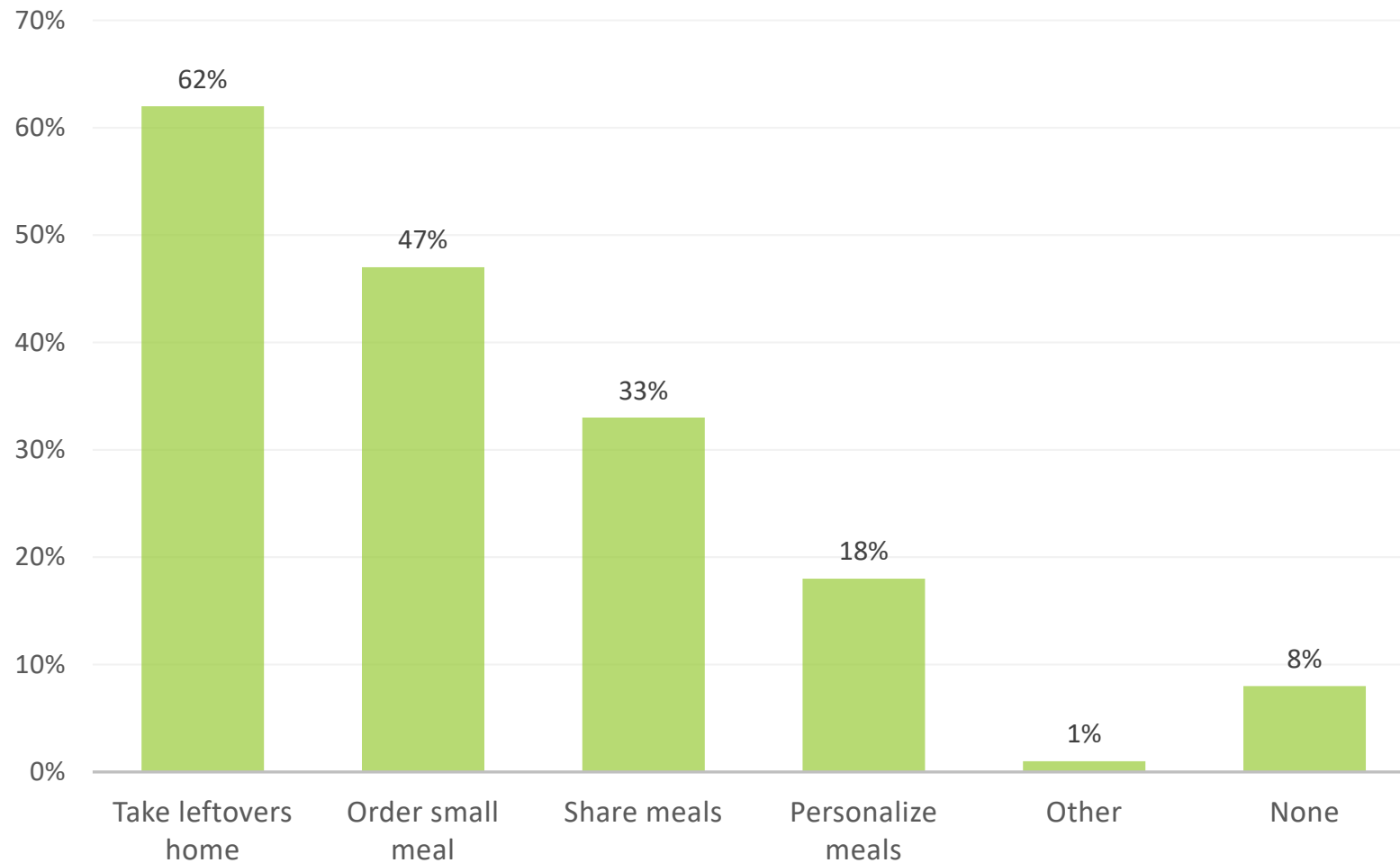
Q8. What is the top reason food waste is on your mind while eating at home?

# CONSUMERS TRY TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE IN A VARIETY OF WAYS



**Q9.** In what ways do you try to reduce the amount of food waste in your home? Please select all that apply.

# TAKING LEFTOVERS HOME IS TOP WAY CONSUMERS TRY TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE WHILE EATING OUT



**Q10.** In what ways do you try to reduce food waste while eating out? Please select all that apply.

# APPENDICES



# BREAKOUT: WHAT FOODS END UP IN YOUR GARBAGE?

	Meal leftovers from home	Fresh produce	Meal leftovers from restaurants	Animal products	Milk	Shelf-stable items	Cheese or yogurt	Milk alternatives	Other
Total	74%	67%	50%	27%	25%	19%	16%	10%	13%
Men	68% ↓	65%	52%	29%	25%	18%	18%	10%	15%
Women	78% ↑	68%	49%	26%	25%	19%	14%	9%	11%
White	76%	70%	48%	27%	24%	18%	15%	8%	14%
African American	63%	52% ↓	56%	30%	32%	23%	23%	13%	8%
Hispanic/Latinx	71%	72%	60%	21%	27%	15%	13%	8%	11%
Northeast	74%	62%	52%	28%	31%	19%	15%	8%	10%
Midwest	76%	66%	51%	26%	27%	15%	17%	10%	12%
South	70%	66%	55%	26%	24%	21%	14%	11%	13%
West	73%	71%	45%	30%	19%	20%	17%	10%	15%
Under 45	74%	64%	61% ↑	24%	26%	17%	16%	11%	8% ↓
45–64	74%	70%	41% ↓	31%	23%	19%	16%	9%	17% ↑
65 and over	69%	67%	41%	30%	28%	23%	15%	8%	19%
Non-college	76%	66%	50%	25%	28%	20%	16%	8%	11%
College	69%	68%	50%	31%	21%	16%	16%	12%	16%

Q1. Thinking back over the last month, what types of foods most often end up in your garbage at home?

% ranked 1, 2, or 3

# BREAKOUT: WHY ARE THESE FOODS IN YOUR GARBAGE?

	It spoiled or became stale.	I was cleaning.	Others didn't want to eat it.	I didn't want to eat it.	More food than wanted to eat
Total	83%	49%	28%	21%	19%
Men	82%	44%	27%	24%	22%
Women	84%	53%	28%	19%	16%
White	84%	53%	25%	19%	19%
African American	84%	44%	29%	29%	14%
Hispanic/Latinx	76%	37%	37%	26%	25%
Northeast	84%	46%	29%	22%	18%
Midwest	85%	52%	20%	25%	18%
South	82%	47%	28%	22%	20%
West	80%	49%	33%	16%	21%
Under 45	81%	43% ↓	34% ↑	22%	20%
45–64	84%	54%	25%	20%	17%
65 and over	86%	55%	18%	21%	20%
Non-college	82%	49%	30%	21%	18%
College	84%	49%	24%	22%	21%

**Q2.** Why do these foods end up in your garbage?

**Statistical significance:** In this instance, answers for “I was cleaning” from those under 45 is statistically different compared with other age groups. The red down-facing arrow means that those under 45 were significantly less likely to chose “I was cleaning” than those over 45, while the blue upward-facing arrow means the same age group is significantly more likely to say “others didn’t want to eat it.”

# BREAKOUT: THINKING ABOUT FOOD WASTE: GROCERY SHOPPING

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Total	34%	41%	24%
Men	33%	39%	28%
Women	36%	43%	22%
White	32%	40%	28% ↑
African American	30%	53%	16%
Hispanic/Latinx	47% ↑	35%	17%
Northeast	44% ↑	39%	16% ↓
Midwest	27% ↓	47%	26%
South	35%	41%	25%
West	33%	38%	29%
Under 45	45% ↑	42%	13% ↓
45–64	27% ↓	41%	32% ↑
65 and over	19% ↓	39%	42% ↑
Non-college	32%	42%	25%
College	38%	39%	23%

**Q3.** While grocery shopping, how often is food waste (food that gets thrown away) on your mind?

# BREAKOUT: THINKING ABOUT FOOD WASTE: EATING OUT

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Total	19%	42%	39%
Men	19%	43%	39%
Women	20%	41%	39%
White	16% ↓	42%	43% ↑
African American	21%	44%	35%
Hispanic/Latinx	34% ↑	36%	30%
Northeast	24%	39%	37%
Midwest	18%	41%	41%
South	19%	45%	36%
West	16%	42%	42%
Under 45	27% ↑	46%	27% ↓
45–64	15%	40%	46% ↑
65 and over	8% ↓	34%	57% ↑
Non-college	16%	43%	41%
College	24%	40%	36%

**Q4.** While eating out, how often is food waste (food that gets thrown away) on your mind?

# BREAKOUT: THINKING ABOUT FOOD WASTE: EATING AT HOME

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Total	28%	50%	22%
Men	29%	48%	23%
Women	27%	52%	20%
White	24% ↓	52%	24%
African American	27%	53%	20%
Hispanic/Latinx	50% ↑	25% ↓	25%
Northeast	31%	47%	22%
Midwest	25%	54%	21%
South	30%	47%	23%
West	28%	51%	21%
Under 45	37% ↑	50%	13% ↓
45–64	22% ↓	49%	29% ↑
65 and over	15% ↓	52%	33% ↑
Non-college	27%	51%	21%
College	30%	48%	23%

**Q5.** While eating at home, how often is food waste (food that gets thrown away) on your mind?

# BREAKOUT: WHY THINKING ABOUT FOOD WASTE: GROCERY SHOPPING

	Reduce amount of money spent	Reduce waste in all aspects	Concerned about environment	Ensuring food availability	Follow long-time habits
Total	42%	24%	13%	13%	9%
Men	37%	21%	14%	19% ↑	9%
Women	46%	27%	12%	7% ↓	8%
White	44%	27%	10%	11%	7%
African American	35%	30%	10%	10%	15%
Hispanic/Latinx	46%	11%	21%	17%	5%
Northeast	44%	23%	12%	16%	5%
Midwest	46%	19%	16%	9%	9%
South	41%	25%	11%	12%	11%
West	35%	31%	11%	14%	9%
Under 45	45%	16% ↓	17% ↑	16%	6%
45–64	39%	30%	9%	11%	11%
65 and over	32%	48% ↑	4%	4%	12%
Non-college	44%	27%	8% ↓	12%	10%
College	39%	21%	20% ↑	14%	7%

Q6. What is the top reason food waste is on your mind while grocery shopping?

# BREAKOUT: WHY THINKING ABOUT FOOD WASTE: EATING OUT

	Reduce amount of money spent	Reduce waste in all aspects	Concerned about environment	Ensuring food availability	Follow long-time habits
Total	35%	22%	11%	17%	15%
Men	32%	19%	14%	21%	15%
Women	38%	25%	8%	13%	16%
White	35%	26%	10%	13%	15%
African American	28%	21%	14%	17%	19%
Hispanic/Latinx	34%	15%	15%	22%	14%
Northeast	38%	22%	12%	20%	8%
Midwest	38%	15%	8%	17%	22%
South	33%	28%	12%	13%	13%
West	31%	23%	11%	17%	17%
Under 45	40%	14% ↓	13%	20%	13%
45–64	28%	32% ↑	10%	14%	16%
65 and over	32%	34%	2%	8%	24%
Non-college	36%	24%	9%	15%	17%
College	34%	19%	14%	20%	13%

Q7. What is the top reason food waste is on your mind while eating out?

# BREAKOUT: WHY THINKING ABOUT FOOD WASTE: EATING AT HOME

	Reduce amount of money spent	Reduce waste in all aspects	Concerned about environment	Ensuring food availability	Follow long-time habits
Total	32%	28%	13%	13%	15%
Men	30%	23%	17% ↑	16%	14%
Women	34%	32%	9% ↓	10%	15%
White	35%	32% ↑	9% ↓	10%	13%
African American	27%	23%	17%	11%	22%
Hispanic/Latinx	25%	19%	27% ↑	18%	12%
Northeast	34%	29%	15%	14%	8%
Midwest	36%	21%	13%	11%	18%
South	32%	26%	12%	13%	17%
West	27%	35%	12%	13%	14%
Under 45	34%	18% ↓	19% ↑	16%	13%
45–64	35%	33%	7% ↓	9%	15%
65 and over	19% ↓	50% ↑	3% ↓	9%	19%
Non-college	34%	30%	9% ↓	11%	17%
College	30%	25%	19% ↑	16%	11%

Q8. What is the top reason food waste is on your mind while eating at home?



# BREAKOUT: HOW DO YOU REDUCE FOOD WASTE AT HOME?

	Store to maximize shelf life	Keep organized pantry	Make grocery list	Meal plan	Compost	Shop for groceries online	Donate food	Other	None
Total	60%	54%	51%	48%	19%	10%	9%	2%	6%
Men	58%	54%	43% ↓	45%	20%	13%	6%	2%	6%
Women	63%	54%	58% ↑	50%	18%	8%	10%	2%	6%
White	64%	55%	54%	49%	18%	10%	9%	3%	5%
African American	50%	51%	44%	49%	12%	9%	8%	0%	10%
Hispanic/Latinx	56%	52%	50%	44%	25%	12%	12%	1%	3%
Northeast	61%	56%	51%	49%	21%	14%	9%	2%	4%
Midwest	64%	52%	51%	45%	16%	8%	7%	1%	9%
South	62%	56%	52%	53%	17%	11%	11%	2%	4%
West	56%	52%	51%	45%	20%	8%	8%	3%	6%
Under 45	55%	54%	45% ↓	47%	21%	13%	10%	0%	6%
45–64	64%	55%	56%	52%	15%	7%	7%	3%	6%
65 and over	71%	50%	61%	41%	20%	7%	9%	4%	5%
Non-college	61%	55%	53%	49%	16%	7%	9%	2%	6%
College	60%	53%	48%	46%	23%	14%	9%	2%	6%

**Q9.** In what ways do you try to reduce the amount of food waste in your home?

# BREAKOUT: HOW DO YOU REDUCE FOOD WASTE WHILE EATING OUT?

	Take leftovers home	Order small meals	Share meals	Personalize meals	Other	None
Total	62%	47%	33%	18%	1%	8%
Men	59%	49%	30%	20%	2%	10%
Women	66%	45%	36%	16%	1%	5%
White	65%	46%	32%	16%	1%	7%
African American	53%	48%	25%	27%	2%	11%
Hispanic/Latinx	61%	47%	34%	21%	1%	6%
Northeast	55%	56%	31%	17%	1%	5%
Midwest	66%	41%	26%	15%	1%	9%
South	66%	45%	38%	25%	4%	7%
West	62%	45%	36%	14%	0%	10%
Under 45	59%	46%	36%	23% ↑	2%	7%
45–64	65%	50%	33%	9% ↓	1%	10%
65 and over	72%	44%	18%	15%	0%	8%
Non-college	63%	45%	33%	16%	1%	8%
College	62%	50%	32%	20%	1%	8%

**Q10.** In what ways do you try to reduce food waste while eating out? Please select all that apply.

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