

Cost of Living Omnibus Survey Wave 1

September 2022

Food
Standards
Scotland

jrs the
research
consortium





1. Introduction

- Food Standards Scotland wanted to gain an understanding of the impacts of increases in the cost of living, on the food environment.
- Questions were developed by Food Standards Scotland and JRS
- JRS subcontracted the omnibus fieldwork to Scotpulse, a Scottish online omnibus provider with more than 30,000 panel members.
- Data was gathered via an online self-completion omnibus survey.
- Data was weighted on gender and age to match Scottish population demographic breakdown.
- All research was undertaken in strict accordance with MRS Code of Conduct and GDPR legislation.
- Differences between subgroups were tested for statistical significance at the 95% confidence interval, and are highlighted where appropriate.
- Weighted bases are shown.

2. Methodology



Online omnibus survey



Representative sample of 1,085 adults in Scotland



15 questions



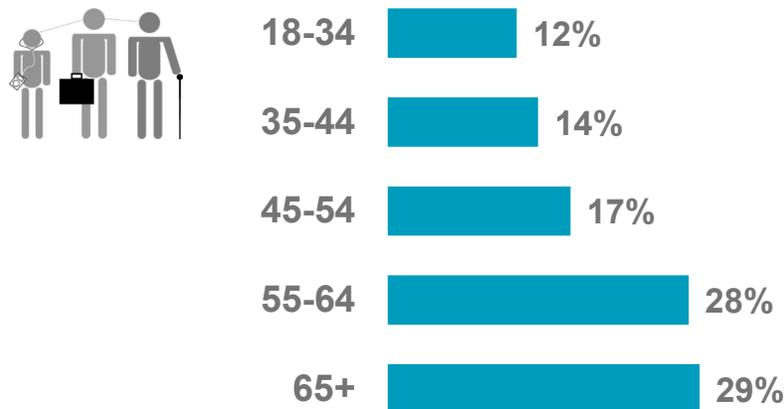
22nd – 28th September 2022

Sample was weighted on age, gender and socio-economic group, to be representative of the adult population in Scotland.

Gender



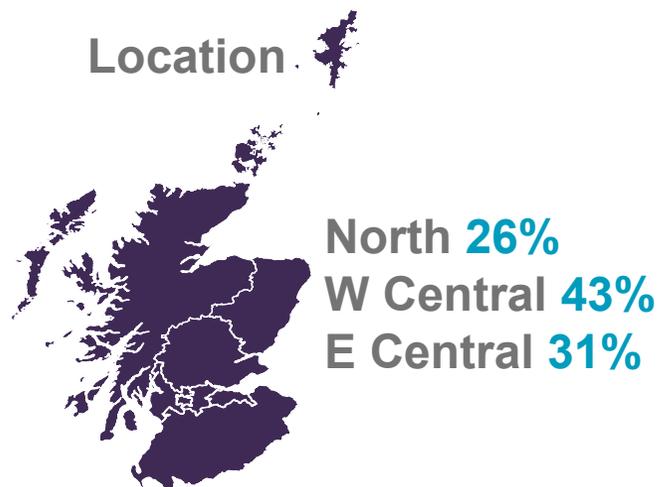
Age



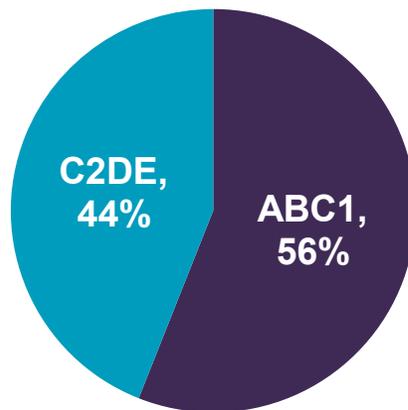
Household composition



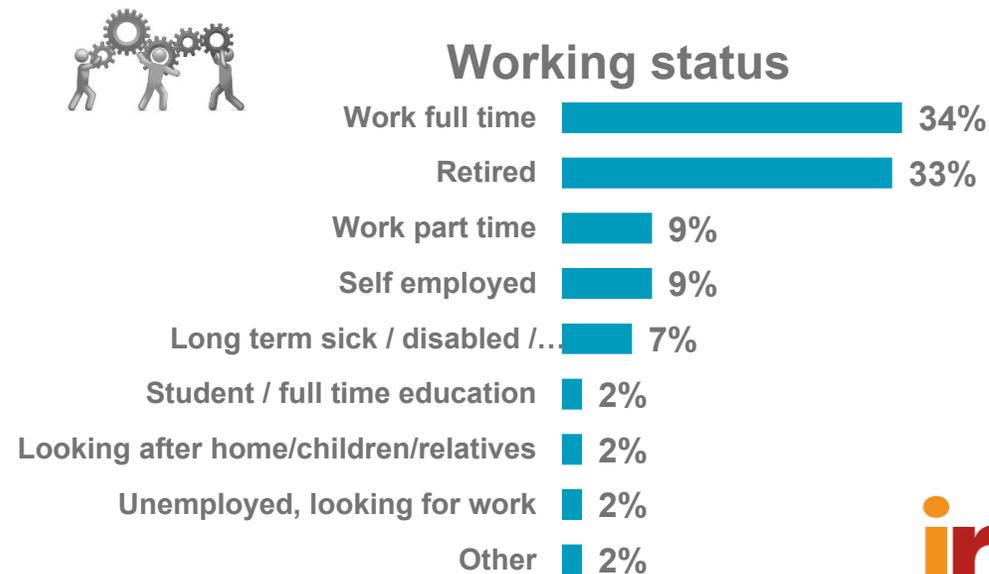
Location



SEG

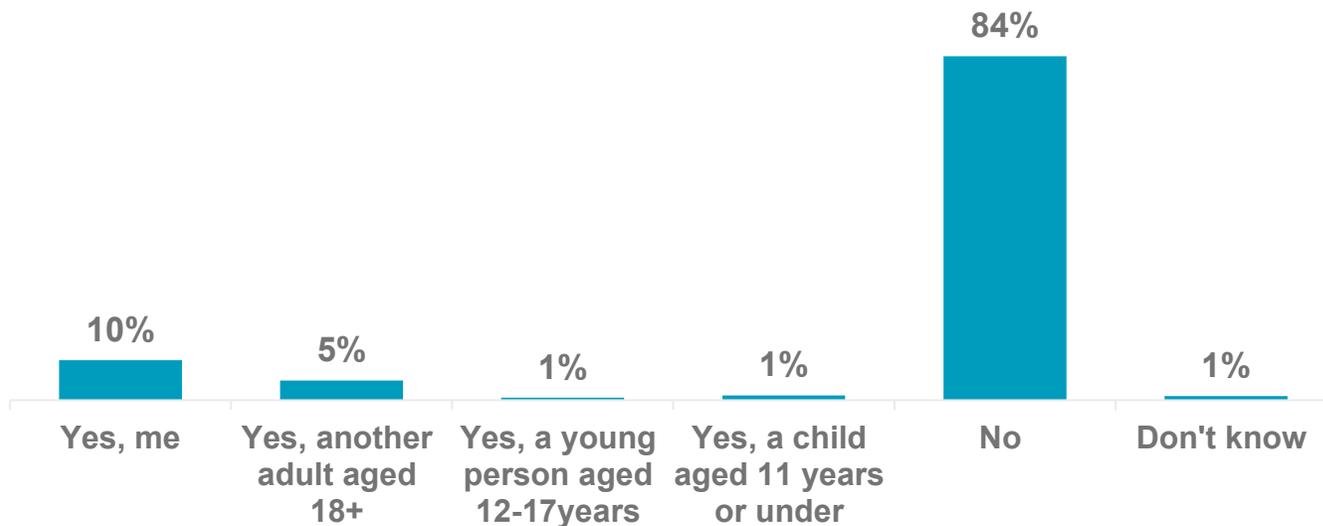


Working status

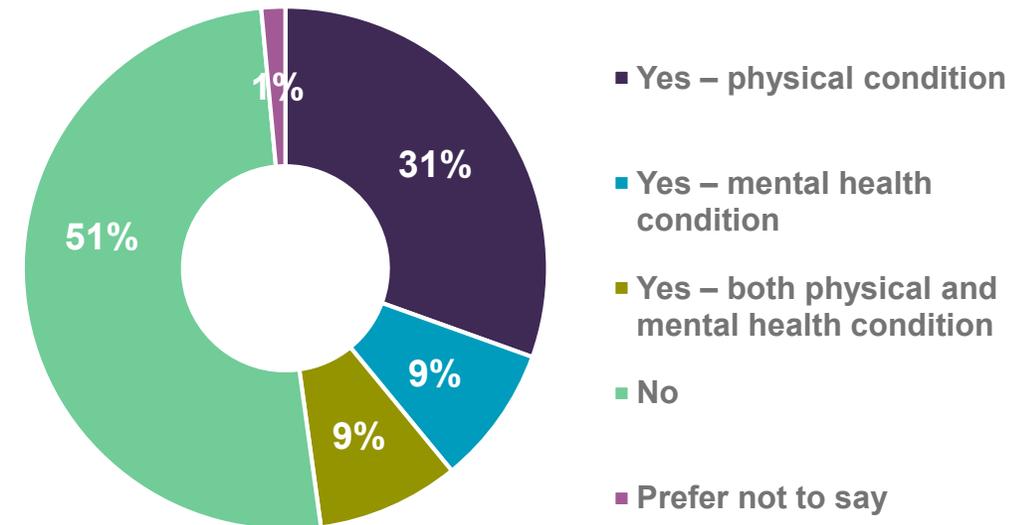


Additional profiling questions, mainly used for analysis purposes, showed 15% had a food allergy in their household and almost half of the sample said they had a long-term physical or mental health condition.

Food Allergy in Household



Health Conditions



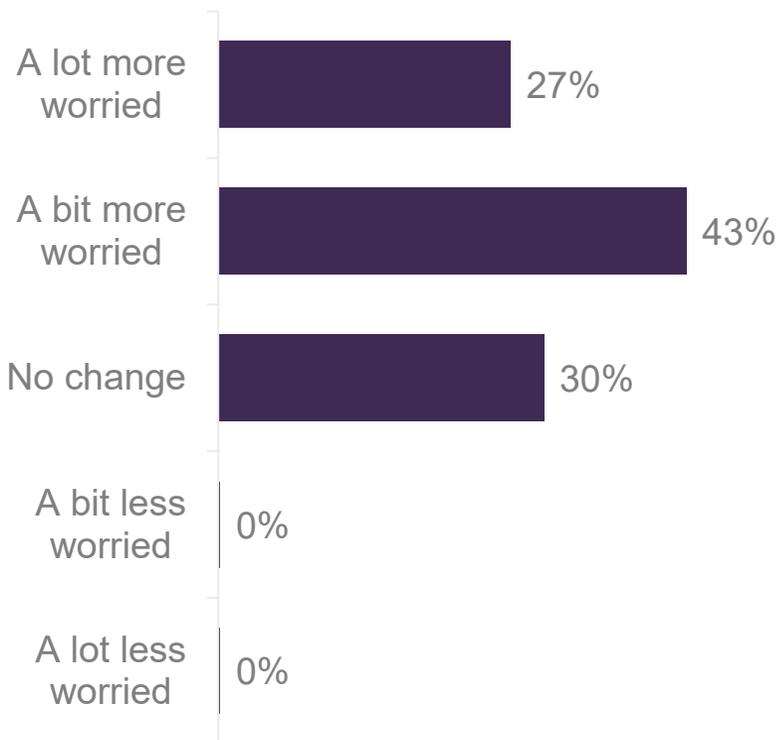
- Yes – physical condition
- Yes – mental health condition
- Yes – both physical and mental health condition
- No
- Prefer not to say

3. Key Findings



Concern about affordability of food is evident with 70% of adults saying they have been more worried about being able to afford food since April this year, and no-one less worried.

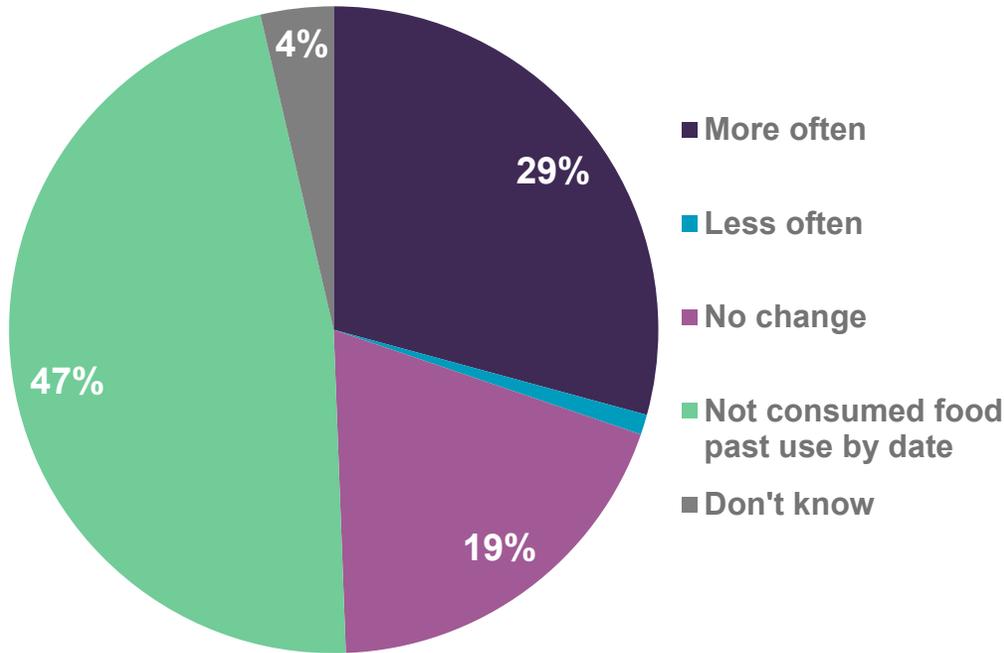
Level of concern about affording food (since April)



- Subgroups most likely to say they have been 'a lot' more worried are:
 - Females (30%)
 - C2DE socio-economic groups (33%)
 - Those with mental health conditions (38%)
- In contrast, those in 65+ age group (40%); ABC1s (33%) and those with no children at home (32%) were more likely than other groups to say their level of concern had not changed.

Almost half have consumed food products past their use by date in order to save money. For 29% of all adults in Scotland, this has been a more frequent occurrence since April.

Consumed food past use by date

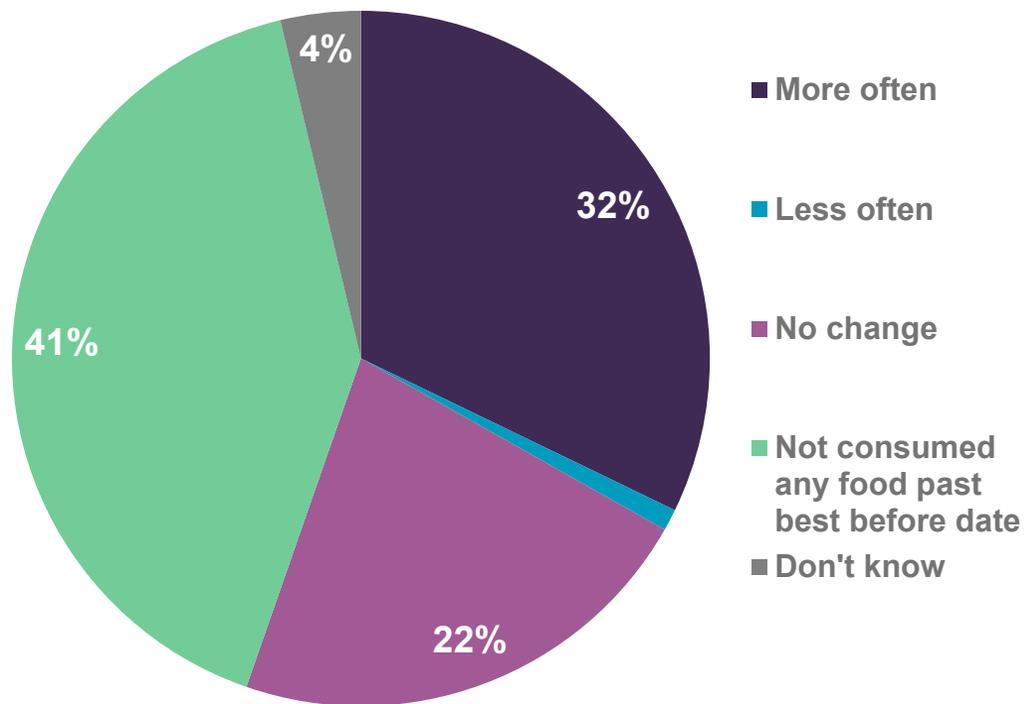


Those most likely to have consumed food past its use by date more often since April were:

- Lower socio-economic groups (C2DE 34%)
- Those living in larger households (4+ persons 36%)
- People with children at home (38%)
- Those with a health condition (38%)
- In contrast, almost 6 in 10 over 65s had not consumed any food past its use by date (57%).

Over half of adults in Scotland have consumed food products past their best before date, in order to save money. Almost a third say they have done so more often since April.

Consumed food past best before date



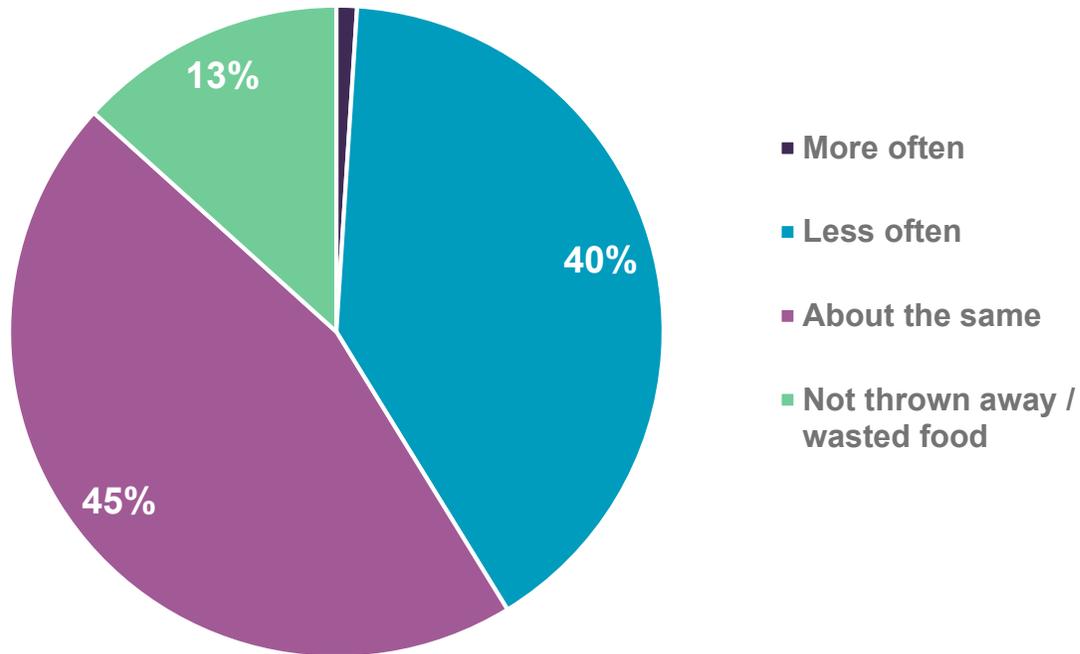
Those most likely to have consumed foods past the best before date more often were:

- Those with children at home (42%)
- Under 55yrs old (39%)
- C2DE socio-economic groups (37%)
- Those in larger households with 3+ persons (38%)
- People with physical or mental health conditions (39%)

• Males (50%), 65+yr olds (50%) and ABC1s (48%) were the groups most likely to say they had not consumed food past the best before date since April.

4 in 10 have thrown away or wasted food less often in an attempt to save money since April.

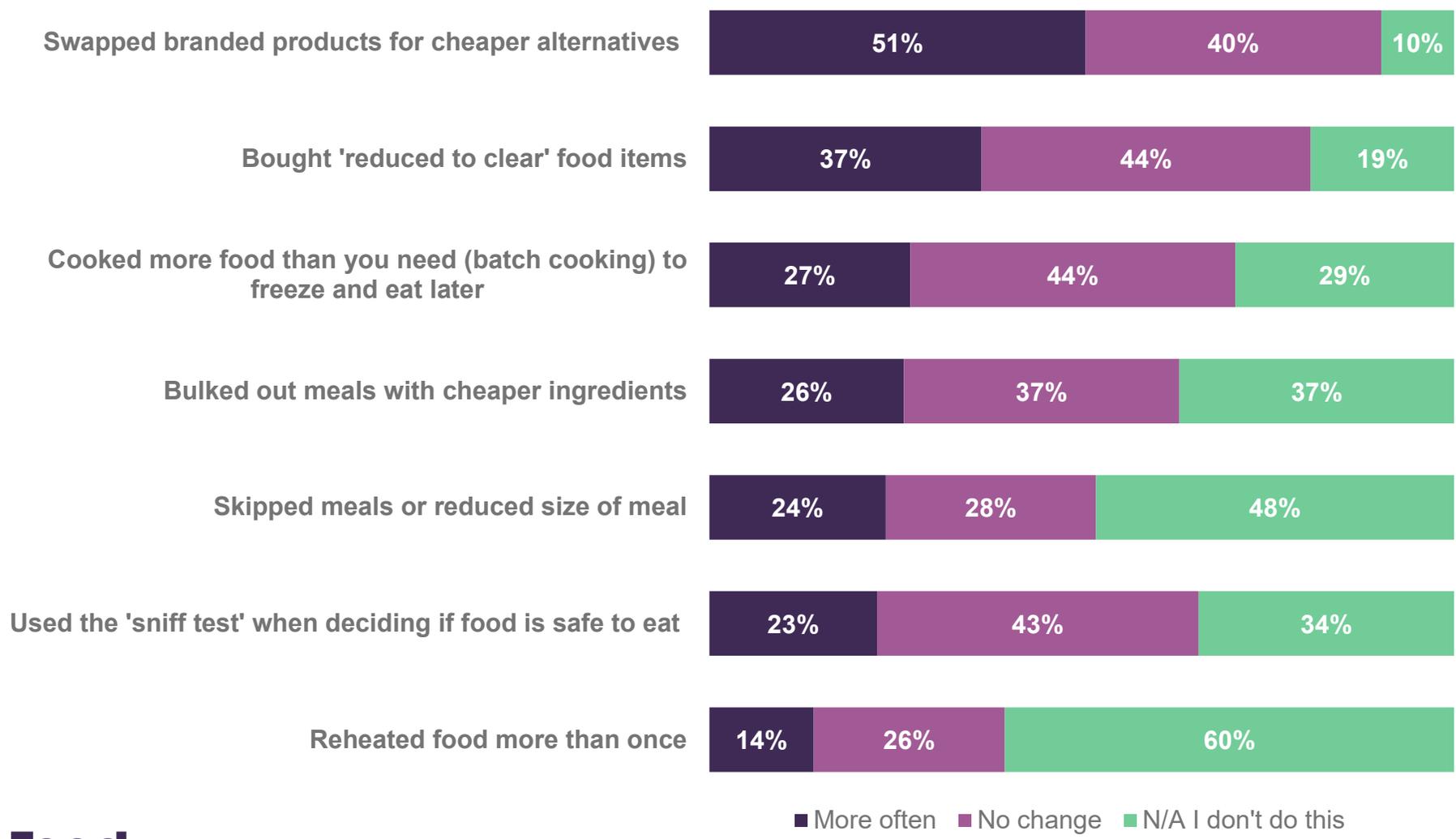
Thrown away / wasted food



Those saying they were throwing food away less often were most likely to be:

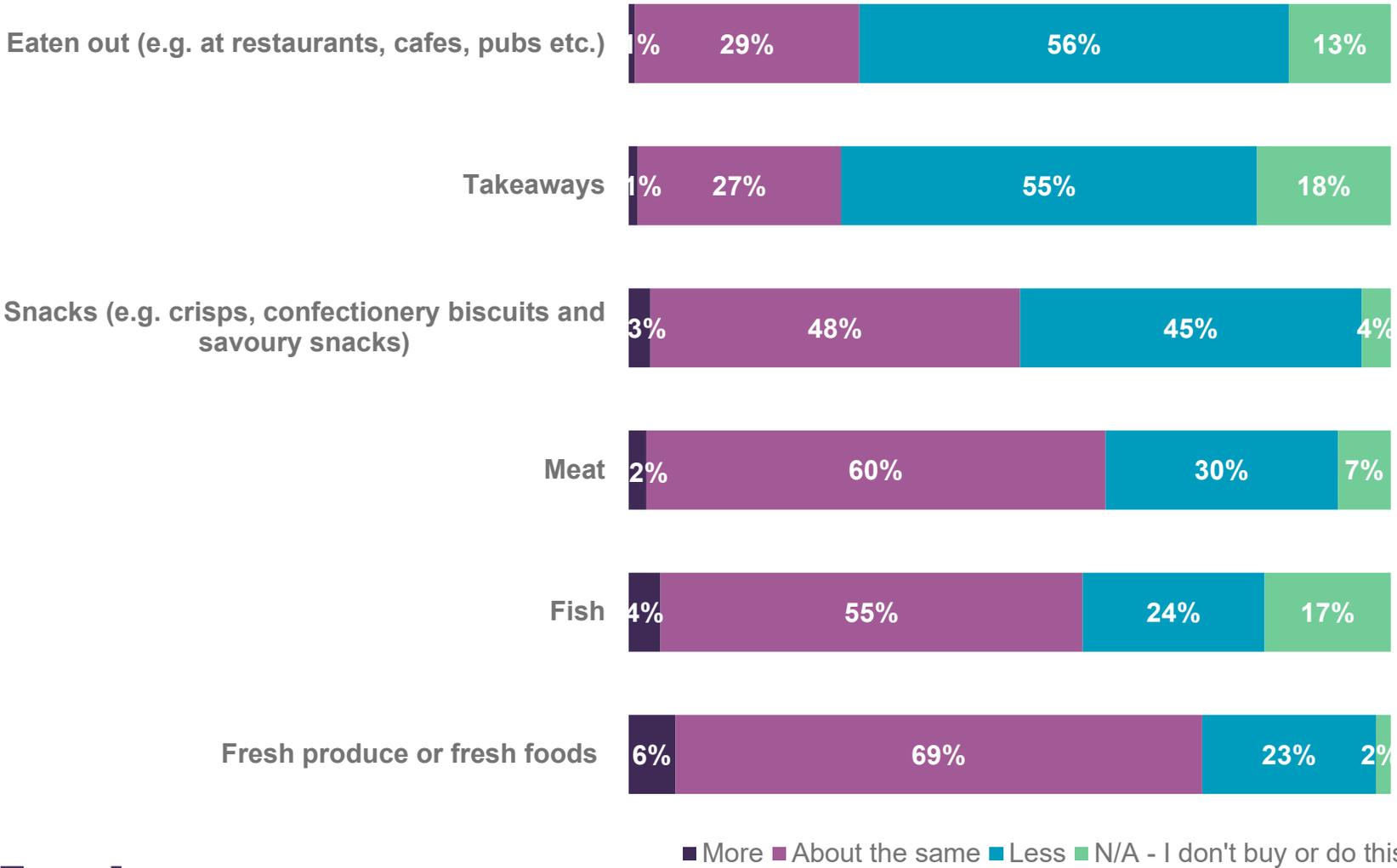
- Females (46%)
- Those with children at home (50%)
- People in households with 4+ persons (50%)

Consumers have undertaken a range of actions more often since April, to save money. The most common behaviours are purchasing cheaper brands or clearance foods; however a quarter have skipped meals or reduced portion sizes; and a similar number have used the sniff test to decide if food is safe.



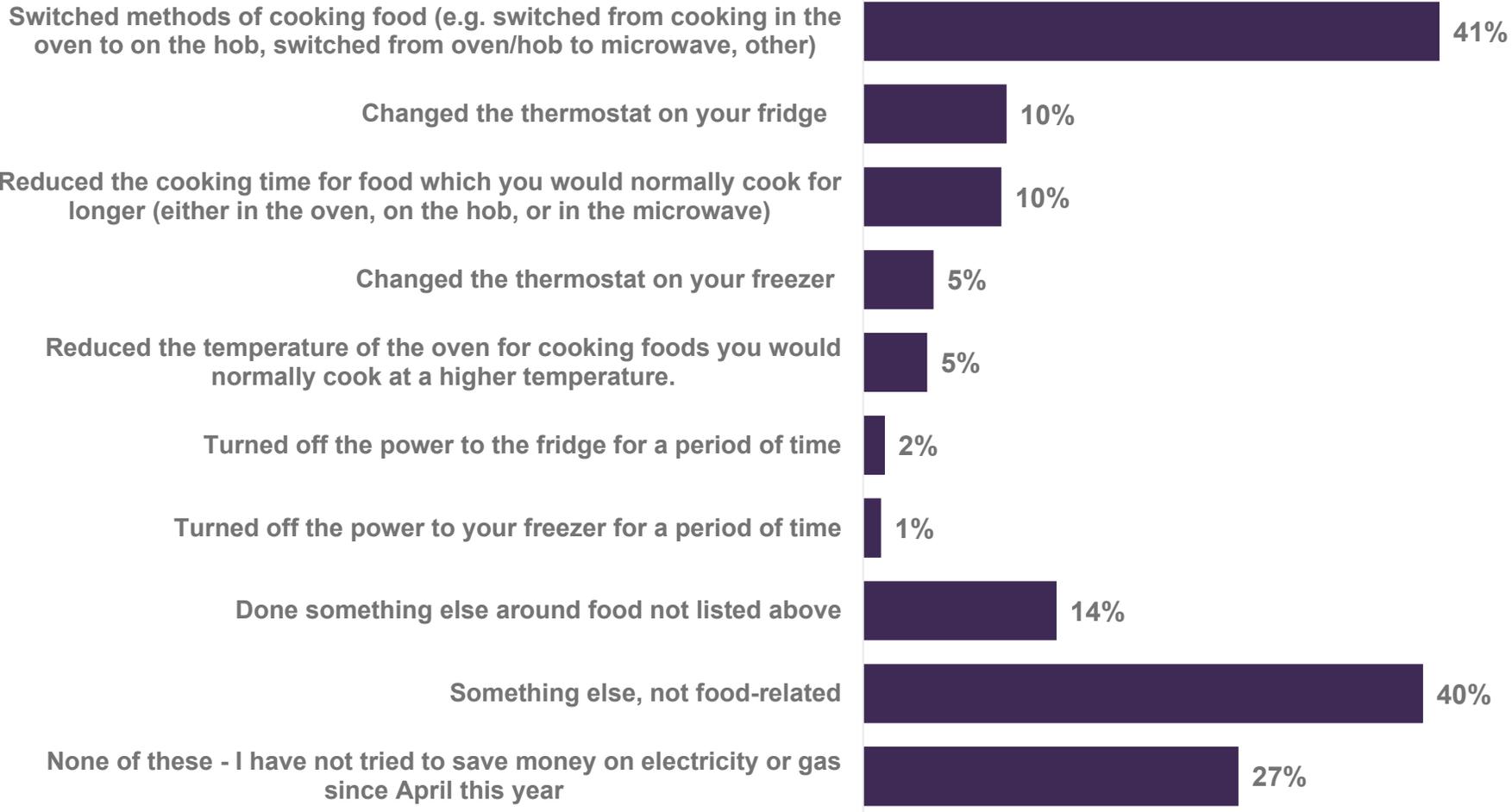
- Females were more likely to have done all of these more often than males, except reheating food more than once.
- Those in older age groups (55+yrs) were more likely to not have changed their behaviour.
- 35% of those with children at home said they had skipped meals or reduced portion sizes more often.
- 31% of those with children had used the 'sniff test' more often.

More than half of adults say they've eaten out / had takeaways less often since April, in order to save money. 4 in 10 have bought fewer snacks, almost a third have bought less meat and around a quarter have purchased less fish or fresh foods.



- Females were more likely than males to report doing / buying all of these less often – with the exception of snacks.
- Those with children at home were buying fresh foods and fish less often
- Those with children at home were also eating out less and getting fewer takeaways

Almost three-quarters have taken action to save money on electricity / gas since April this year. Switching cooking methods is the most common food-related change.

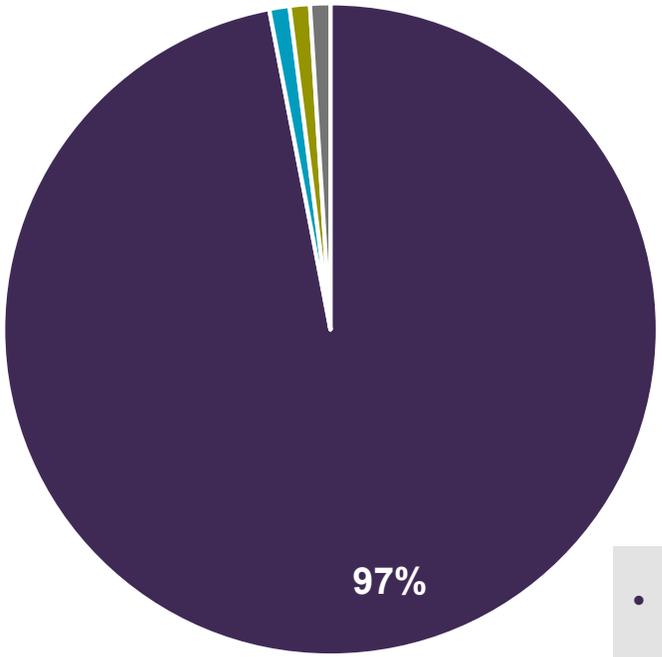


Subgroup analysis shows that:

- Females were more likely than males to have switched cooking methods
- While males were more likely than females to have reduced the oven temperature or changed their freezer thermostat
- 18-34 year olds were more likely than other age groups to have reduced cooking time of foods or taken other, non food related actions
- Those with health conditions (physical or mental) were more likely than those without to have switched cooking methods or reduced cooking time, and to have changed the thermostat on fridge or freezer.

Two percent of respondents had received a free food parcel from a food bank or emergency food provider since April. For half of them, it was for the first time, and most had received between one and three food parcels since April.

Received free food parcel



- No
- Yes, for the first time
- Yes, and have in the past
- Prefer not to answer

Of the 20 respondents who had received a free food parcel since April:

- 8 (40%) had received a food parcel once
- 6 (30%) had received a food parcel 2-3 times
- 3 (15%) had received a food parcel 4-5 times
- 1 person had received a food parcel more than 5 times
- 1 person was unsure; and 1 person declined to answer

- Those in older age groups (65+yrs); higher socio-economic groups (ABC1) and those with no children at home were LEAST likely to have received a food parcel.

Conclusions

- Significant levels of concern exist amongst adults in Scotland regarding the affordability of food, having increased since April this year
- And only a quarter have not taken any action to reduce energy consumption at home
- Cost of living increases have resulted in a number of actions being taken with implications for food safety, including:
 - An increased tendency to eat food past best before and use by dates, and use of the 'sniff test' by between a quarter and a third
 - Some instances of cooking food for less time or at lower temperatures
- Actions being taken by adults in Scotland also have an impact on diet and nutrition, with around a quarter reducing their intake of fresh foods and fish and a similar proportion saying they have skipped meals or reduced portion sizes
- Some more positive outcomes are evident, with fewer wasting food, and fewer takeaways and snacks being consumed.



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