

# Waste into Wellbeing Report on Social Impact

## Quarter 1 2022

MAY 2022

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**waste into wellbeing**

KENDAL PEOPLE'S CAFE  
THE HUB@155

## HIGHLIGHTS



**2 FOOD SHARE LOCATIONS  
IN KENDAL**

**36% of customers are new  
during last 3 months**

**76% reported changes in  
dietary habits due to  
using the food share**



**Most households save upto  
£40.00 per week on groceries**

**44% of customers support  
the Food Share financially**

**80% of customers are more careful in  
avoiding food waste at home, or think  
more carefully about what they buy**

**FOOD  
WASTE**

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## INTRODUCTION

Waste into Wellbeing is a social project that turns surplus food and food waste to improve societal wellbeing. Starting in 2017 as Kendal People's Café, Waste into Wellbeing has evolved during the Covid pandemic to offer meal deliveries and a food share. Our objectives are to:

1. Reduce Food Waste in Kendal. By reducing food waste, we will reduce: GHG emissions; and other negative land use impacts.
2. Reduce Food Poverty in Kendal. By using this food productively, complemented by surplus food, we provide fresh, nutritious food and meals to those in Kendal in need.
3. Improve Wellbeing and Community Cohesion in Kendal. We operate in a way that helps develop a social community around food and develops an appreciation of good nutrition, as well as building friendships and the community in Kendal. In this way we improve the quality of life, and life chances of those individuals participating.

Our regular food shares have been held since 2020 at Stricklandgate House and Hallgarth Community Centre. Since their inception the quantity of food collected and distributed has continued to grow, as have the numbers of customers.

Although saving food from landfill (and therefore preventing GHG emissions) is an important motivation for Waste into Wellbeing's activities; social benefits including enhancing knowledge, supporting healthier diet habits, and improving financial situation of households have become an increasingly important ambition for us.

The purpose of this survey is therefore to determine the key factors that influence customers of regular participation in the Food Shares and to gather insights that will allow us to measure the social impact that our activities have on the local community. A second survey of volunteers will complement this survey and allow us to create a fuller picture of the social impact that we are creating. Taken together, they will allow us to improve the way we operate and better support customers, volunteers and the broader community.

Waste into Wellbeing is part of South Lakes Action on Climate Change. More information about us can be found on the SLACC website at <https://slacc.org.uk/wiw/>

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## Objectives of the survey

The main objectives of this survey are:

- To develop a better understanding of our customer base, their situation, motivations, and approach to food waste.
- To explore and quantify the potential benefits that the operation of Waste into Wellbeing is delivering at the family and community levels in Kendal.
- Identify how we can improve the way WiW operates and improve the way we can monitor and report upon our impact.

This report presents findings of the survey. Working with continuous and discrete variables we used basic statistical methods of data analysis, as absolute and relative frequency, and arithmetical mean. Although all questions were voluntary and participants could skip any of them, the survey results indicate that all questions were completed. The questionnaire survey collected mostly quantitative data. However, open ended questions provided insights on opinions and recommendations of food share customers. Some of these opinions are presented in this report in green squares.

The findings are organized into **five main sections**:

1. General information about survey participants
2. Benefits as perceived by the customers
3. What food types do customers value
4. Dietary habits
5. Improving household finances
6. Tackling food waste in the home

## Ethical issues

As part of SLACC, Waste into Wellbeing is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, color, national origin, age, disability (physical or mental), sexual orientation, gender identity, parental status, marital status, and political affiliation as well as gender expression, mental illness, socioeconomic status or background, neuro(a)typicality, or physical appearance.

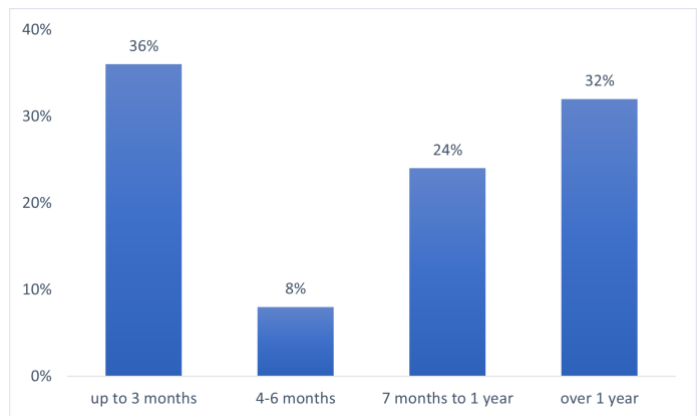
We are also aware of the importance of privacy of our customers; therefore, the data for this survey was collected anonymously and used for the purpose of this survey only.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Who Are Our Customers?

#### Findings

More than a half of our customers have been visiting food share in at least one of the locations for more than 6 months. 36% of customers discovered or started to use the food share during last 3 months.

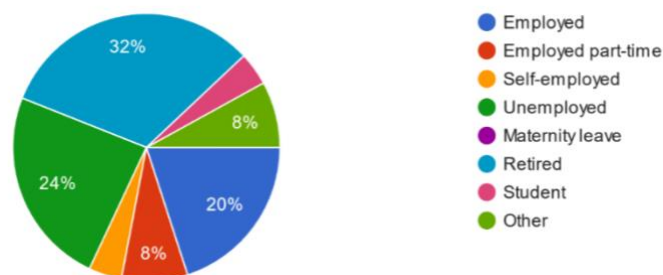


Word of mouth and social media are the main ways in which people hear about the Food Share.

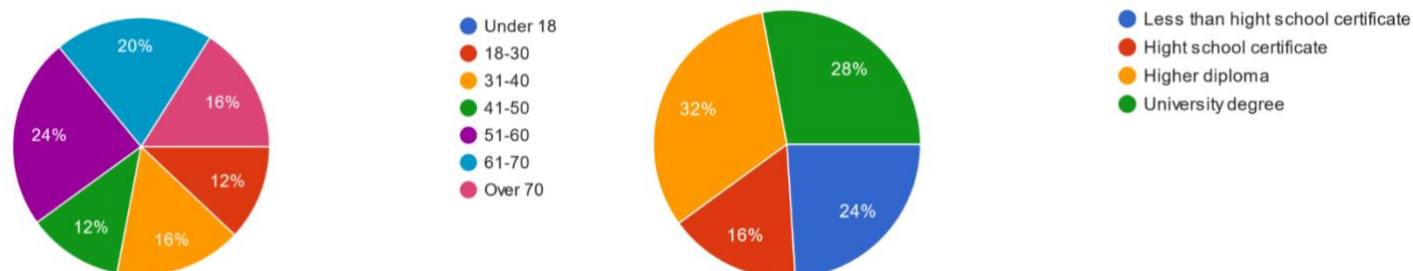


***"The staff is great; I like the atmosphere here."***

Over half of our customers are either retired or unemployed. Their age range reflects this with over 60% aged over 60. Only 12% are under 30 years of age. Our customers have a wide range of education and skill levels.



## Age Range



## Observations & Context

Observations over the last two years has highlighted a core group of customers that have been regularly attending the food shares since the start. There has also been a regular turnover of customers who only use the food share for a period of time - sometimes for just a few weeks. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they have recently lost their job and are taking time to get back onto their feet. These people often perceive a social stigma of using the food share, even though we are quick to indicate that we are distributing surplus food. The food share therefore appears to provide an important service - providing resilience to allow people to get back on their feet.

The predominance of attendance by retirees or unemployed is clearly a function of the timing of the food shares which are during working hours.

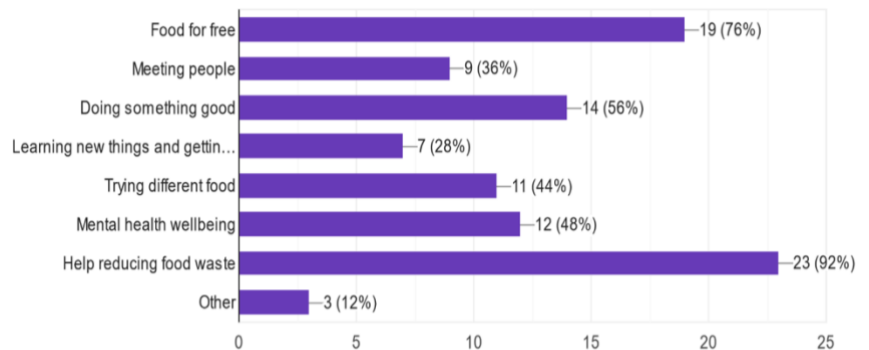
## Recommendations

Communicating with customers (eg about changing times, late cancellations) is not easy, when word of mouth is a key means, and when not all have access to social media. We need to reflect upon how we can improve communications across the various channels that customers hear about us. Similarly recruiting new customers is not something we have made a determined effort on. Once food volumes increase, how would we communicate effectively to recruit more customers? Other food groups have become significant off-takers of our surplus food. We have little information about their customers – who they are, how many etc etc. A future survey could research this group to help us understand better our reach and impact.

## Benefits as Perceived by Customers

### Findings

Whilst customers have embraced the objective to reduce food waste and 'do something good', meeting people and mental health wellbeing are important consequences of the food shares. As is trying different food (see below also).

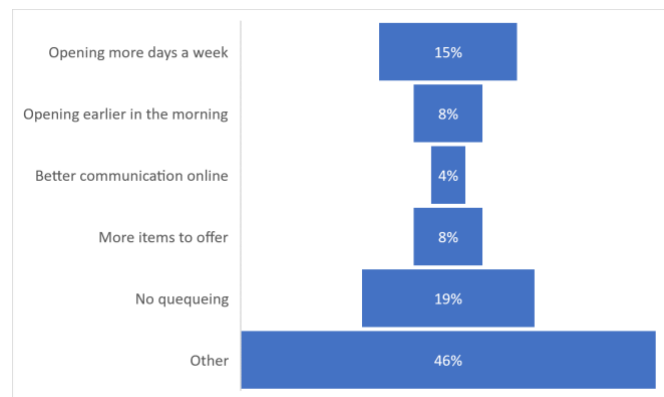


***“Being able to choose what we want. It saves wasting things we don’t eat. Thank you to all the volunteers who make this work. We are very grateful.”***

When asked “what could work better at food share”, most mentioned the long queues, lack of places to sit whilst waiting, and staying outside in bad weather.

In other cases disability and other health problems (e.g. anxiety) makes their regular food share attendance difficult.

There is some support for opening more frequently. After the survey period we did shift to more frequent openings



***“Sometimes there is not enough of what I need when I come later.”***

### Observations & Context

Despite repeated requests to turn up just before opening time, some customers turn up over two hours early. Whilst there is an element of ‘fear of missing out’ (not enough choice if arrive

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later), it also reflects the real benefits of doing so – meeting people and having social contacts. Several customers have suggested the ability to have a tea/coffee whilst waiting.

## Recommendations

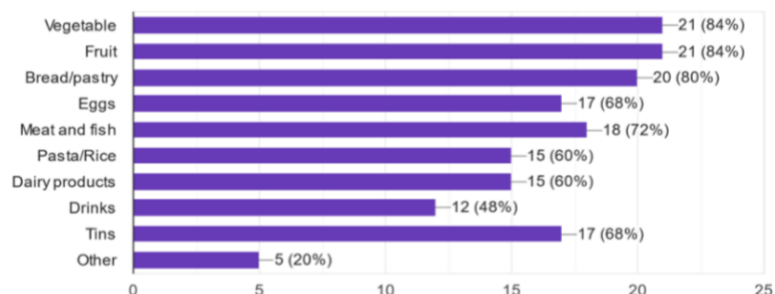
Our location did not have the facility to formally encourage this (seating, ability to have a tea/coffee whilst waiting). The new schedule (from April 2022 onwards) combines one of our larders with the People's Café, which allows the social gathering. We should investigate the provision of informal tea/coffee at the Coach House for the other larders to make waiting more sociable and encourage socialising.

***“...lovely helpers, opens on time, food is still in usable condition. The food share is great! Keep up the great work. Let's remove the stigma that it is only for the poor. Everyone can help reduce food waste.”***

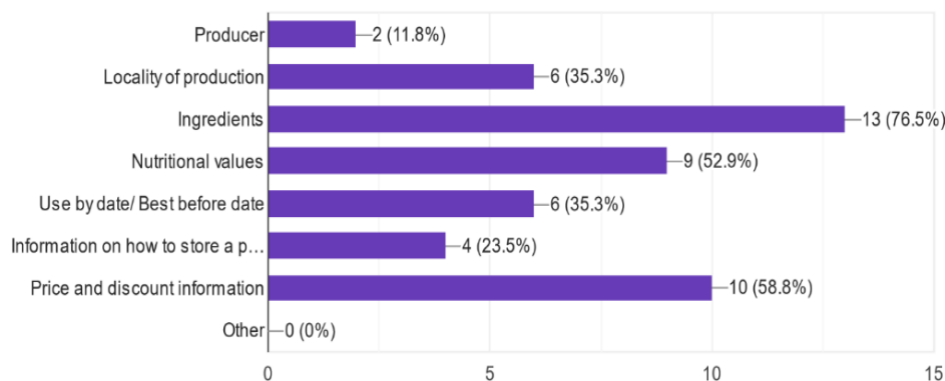
# What Food Types do Customers Value

## Findings

Food share customers are mostly interested in fresh fruit, vegetables and bread. Eggs, meat/fish and various food tins, which can be stored for later, are also valued.



We wanted to understand the importance of information on food packaging. 68% of food share customers reported to read labels on food packaging, most notably ingredients and price information (note as we have no prices on food, these answers apply to supermarket shopping). The ingredient information corresponds to various dietary habits and food intolerances/allergies. Nutritional values are important to half of customers.



Although the lack of knowledge on how to store a product and the meaning of use by date/best before may contribute to food wasting, this information is less important to our customers.

## Observations & Context

The insights on the types of food valued by Food share customers may be skewed by what we have available. We repeatedly noted that the Food share customers would like to have more meat and fish, whilst tins of food (soups, beans, vegetables and meat or fish), and cereals are all readily taken. However, the philosophy of the Food share is redistribution of any potential food waste rather than providing food items that are on demand, and this is accepted.

Surplus food from local suppliers tends to be concentrated on fruit, vegetables and bread. The quantities of the latter can be excessive at times, and we often turn down significant quantities. Whilst fruit is generally readily taken by customers, not all vegetables are taken and we are

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often left with large quantities. In part this is due to lack of familiarity on how to prepare and cook them.

## Recommendations

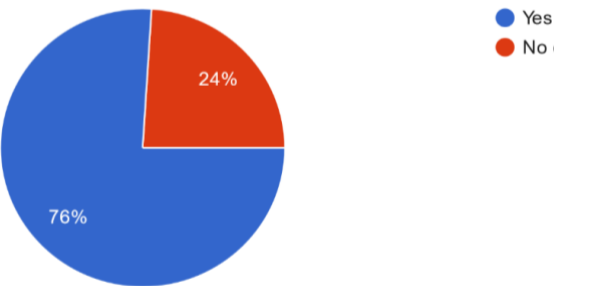
A future survey could investigate attitudes to different bread. For example, we could accept more bread from a local artisanal bakery in preference to commercial supermarket bread. This would have nutritional benefits for users.

The provision of recipe cards for different vegetables would help to encourage customers to be more adventurous (see also below).

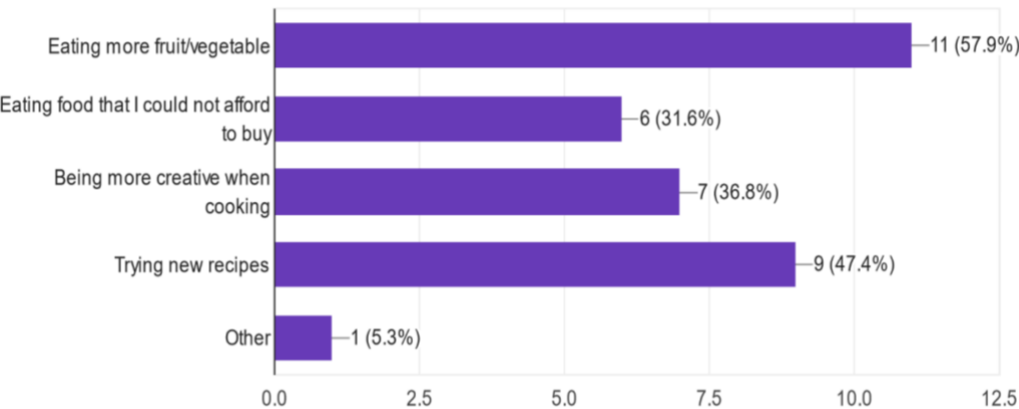
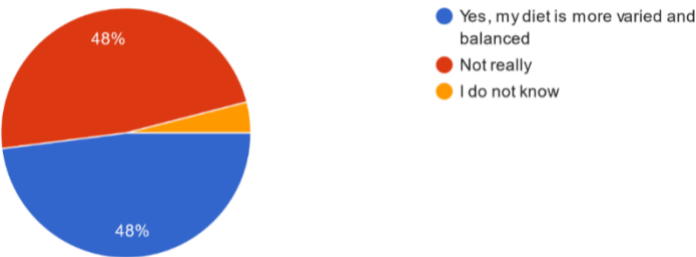
# Dietary Habits

## Findings

76% of customers' state that their dietary habits have changed due to using the food share.



Nearly half of our customers (48%) reported a more varied and balanced diet since they started to use the Food share: they eat more fruit and vegetable, items that are not affordable for many of them on an everyday basis.



The survey also reveals that our customers started being more creative when cooking, and trying new recipes.

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## Observations & Context

An essential feature of the Food Share is the positive impact on healthy eating habits. Unlike usual shopping when customers use shopping lists or at least have an idea what to buy to cook a specific meal, the range of food provided at food share is unpredictable and supports creativity.

Often food received from FareShare undermines this trend, with its provision of highly processed food.

As the variety of food consumed by our customer has changed, they are also more interested in trying and sharing of new recipes. They often communicate back to volunteers their success during meal preparation and recommend the way they processed different items. This can often be an inspiration for others to try those food items for the first time.

## Recommendations

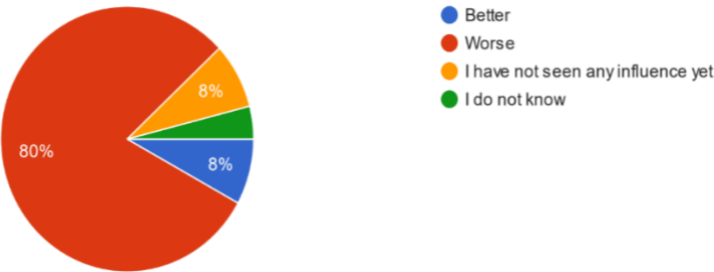
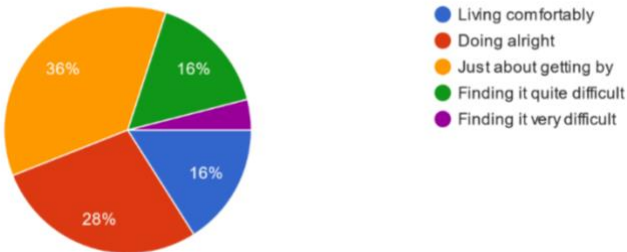
Whilst it might be difficult, we could try to quantify the health benefits of more varied diets. Cooking courses may also be something we can offer.

# Improving Finances

*“This allows some spare money to take a trip on the bus to somewhere.”*

## Findings

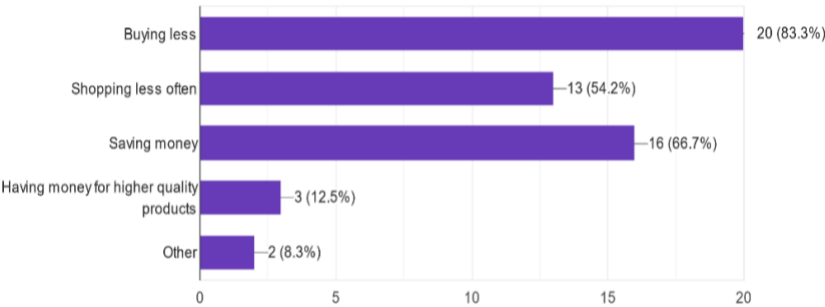
Even though most customers do not find their financial situation difficult, 88% of customers report that using food share has helped improve their financial situation in general.



Due to a recent inflation, 80% of food share customers consider their financial situation to be getting worse.

Our customers report that using food share results in them buying less and saving money for other household expenses or (in some cases) buying higher quality products when they do shop.

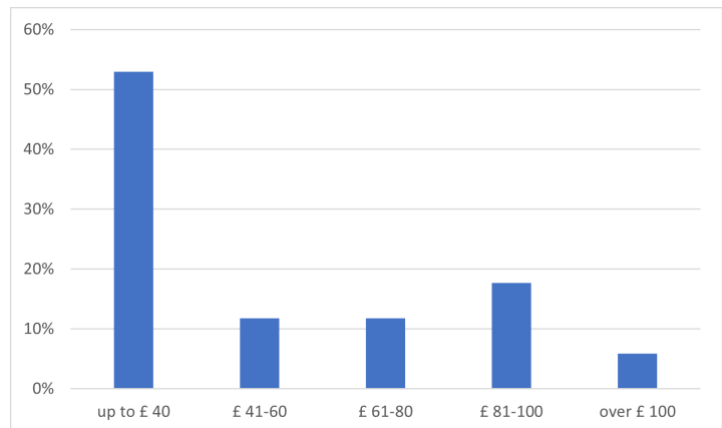
There is an implied negative impact on local shops as customers are shopping less.



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Most Food share customers estimate that they save up to £ 40 a month for food. This amount reflects one and two-member households. The bigger the household, the more money saved, some claiming over £100.

In terms of supporting the food share financially via cash donation, 44% of our customers contribute financially, 73% of them donate weekly, usually £ 1.50.



***“Financially it is very good for me using food share.”***

## Observations & Context

The financial benefit for customers using the food share is substantial. We have informally suggested that customers take one bag of food per household and a substantial number indicate that they are collecting for two households. The financial savings suggest that this may not be the case, or they are participating at the two weekly food shares.

## Recommendations

These findings do suggest that there is scope to implement a charge per bag on a pay as you can basis.

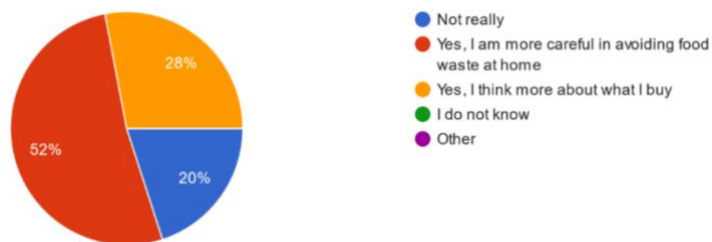
The negative impact on local shops, through reduced spending, is something that could be further investigated. For example, are these the same shops that are providing us with surplus food, or is the reduced spend at local shops?

## Tackling Food Waste in the home

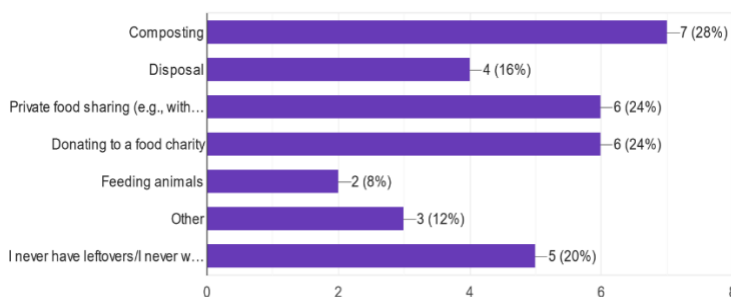
### Findings

As one of the objectives of WiW is reducing of food waste in Kendal, our customers were asked about their own approach to food waste at home.

The survey reveals that as a result of the increased awareness of food waste due to the food share, 52% are more careful in avoiding food waste at home. In the long term this fact may contribute to lower food waste in households.



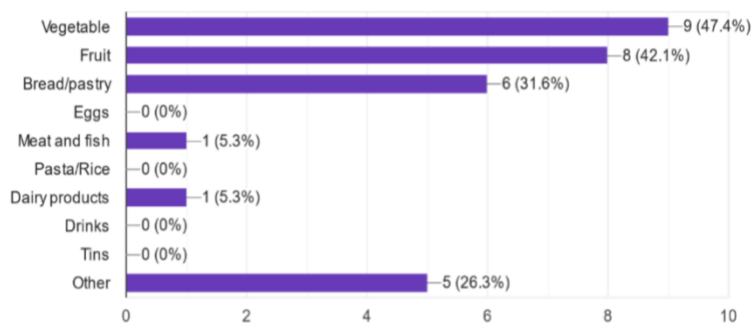
Most Food share customers report that the amount of food waste at their households is “very little”. If our customers sometimes have leftovers, they report composting and food sharing or donation to be most often ways to deal with potential food waste. 20% also reported no leftovers at all.



***“I have health problems with my stomach and sometimes food gets wasted as I cannot eat.”***

Vegetable and fruit are the most usual food waste at the household level. Bread & pastry, and cooked meals (group “other”) are also often discarded.

These items mentioned by our customers are to be expected - it is loss of freshness and/or spoilage of fruit and vegetables that influence food wasting. Much of the food we distribute is close to its best before/use-by date.



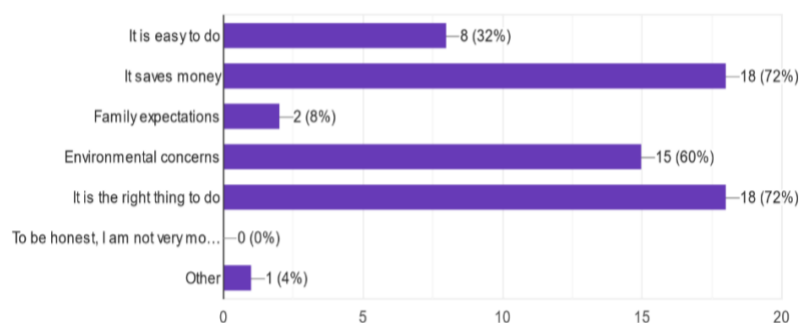
***“Always eat what I cook, sometimes I have the same meal for a few days, but it is ok.”***

However, when food is wasted, the two main reasons are “some household members do not always finish their meals” and “food is left too long in the fridge or freezer”, each category having a frequency of 15%.

Some household members do not always finish their meals	15 %
Food is left too long in the fridge or freezer	15 %
Food goes off before the “use by” or “best before” dates	10 %
We do not check the fridge or freezer or cupboards before going shopping	10 %
We like to eat the freshest food possible	5 %
We cannot store food properly	5 %
We buy too much food	5 %
We buy food that is offered in multipacks and end up having to throw it away	5 %
We tend not to plan meals in advance	5 %
We do not tend to use leftover ingredients in other meals	5 %

***“Personally, I find food management tricky.”***

Customers usually find avoiding food waste as “the right thing to do” (18%) and “it saves money” (18%) but some of them find it difficult to manage food at home, especially when there are kids in the household or when they have some food intolerances and health problems.



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Those customers, who report they actively avoid creating of food waste, describe various methods to do so, such as putting cooked food in the freezer or using leftovers as a new meal.

***“Freezing, portion sizing, meal planning, leftovers for days after a meal.”***

## Observations & Context

We have generally not formally carried out awareness raising activities on food waste in the home, so these findings give us new insights.

## Recommendations

The above insights can provide us with ideas for further awareness raising both with our customers and more broadly as a Kendal wide campaign, as part of the implementation of the recommendations of the Kendal Climate Jury.

## ANNEX

### METHODOLOGY

#### Target population and research sample

The survey was conducted during February and March 2022 in both food share locations in Kendal, Strickland gate house (SGH) and Hallgarth (HG).

The **target population** was any food share customer at both locations regardless their frequency of attending food share or if they are new customers.

We used **structured questionnaire** containing 40 questions. Participants were instructed how to complete the survey. Most questions were **close ended**, some were **open-ended, multiple-choice** questions and we also used **scales** to discover participants' opinions.

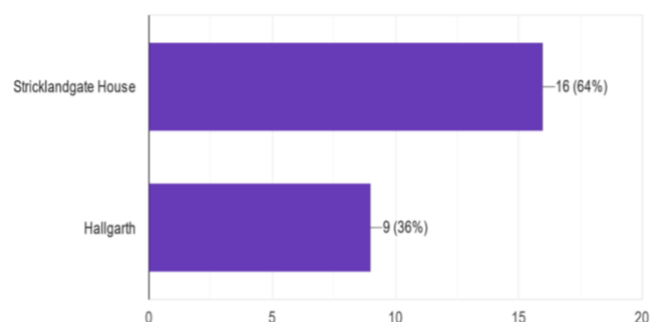
Questions concentrated not only on customers' experience with food share and its organizing, their reasons of participation and food preference but also on impact the food share has in customers' daily lives.

**Voluntary response sampling** where participants voluntarily chose to be part of the survey, either online, or in paper form. Questionnaires were offered during food share and customers' participation was influenced by their willingness and attendance on the days of distribution. Also, we used chain referral method, **snowball sampling**, where participants are recruited by other participants.

#### Data collection

In total, we distributed 55 paper questionnaires, 30 at HallGarth food share, 25 at Stricklandgate House. Some food share customers preferred the online version of questionnaire that was available on the website of WIW.

25 questionnaires were completed, 16 by customers at SGH (5 online), 9 by HG food share customers (1 online).



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3 participants agreed to complete their questionnaires personally face-to-face at SGH food share, other participants preferred to complete the questionnaires in a quiet and private environment (home).

	SGH	HG
Distributed paper questionnaires	25	30
Completed paper questionnaires	11	8
Completed online questionnaires	5	1

Most of the participants of the survey were women which was also caused by the fact that women attend the food share more often than men.

