AHEAD OF WHAT'S NEXT.

FSA Food Safety Week Research

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Lucia Juliano
Sector Head
0161 242 1365
ljuliano@harrisinteractive.com

Georgiana Brown
Senior Research Executive
0208 263 5268
gbrown@harrisinteractive.com

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Executive Summary

- With Food Safety Week taking place in June, research was needed to provide the FSA with insight into how people shop for and use food, and to establish whether more risks were being taken in how people use food.

- Research was undertaken across the UK with a nationally representative sample of adults aged 18-64 and an additional sample boost in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in order to be able to draw regional comparisons.

- The research highlighted the following:
  - People in the UK feel the cost of a weekly food shop is considerably more than it was 3 years ago
  - Value-conscious shoppers are keen to take advantage of offers, choose cheaper brands and take more risks with food safety
  - Leftovers are turned into new meals or saved for later, with waste kept to a minimum – using leftovers saves money and fits in with people's lifestyles
  - Personal judgement is used to determine if food is safe to eat, with use by dates followed less strictly than previously

Background & Objectives

- The Food Standards Agency will be holding Food Safety Week from 11 to 17 June 2012. This year with the theme being 'food safety on a budget', Food Safety Week will focus on how people can keep their food safe at home when trying to save money.

- The overall objective was to understand people's attitudes to food safety and their shopping habits in the current economic climate, and to understand the impact the rising cost of food is having.

- The research objectives following on from this were to:
  - Understand the effect the cost of food has in people's purchasing decisions
  - Discover how people plan their food shopping and how that changes once in store
  - Measure attitudes to leftover food and the importance that people place on use by dates
  - Establish how the FSA can promote food safety in the home within the context of people's priorities.

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Methodology

- ***1,906 UK respondents aged 18-64*** completed the online survey
  - We targeted a UK nationally representative sample, but boosted Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in order to be able to compare the regions with a robust sample in each and to ensure a good level of statistical significance in the analysis.
  - The sample size allowed us to analyse the data by age, gender and social grade, in addition to region.
  - The data was weighted to be representative in terms of age, gender, region and social grade. Propensity weighting was also applied to account for any online bias.
  - In order to qualify for the survey, respondents had to be at least jointly responsible for buying food for their household.
- ***The sample breaks down as follows:***

	Gender		Age					Region			
	Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Unweighted base	881	1025	245	381	456	446	378	1304	202	200	200
Weighted %	50%	50%	18%	20%	23%	20%	18%	83%	9%	5%	3%

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Who does the shopping?

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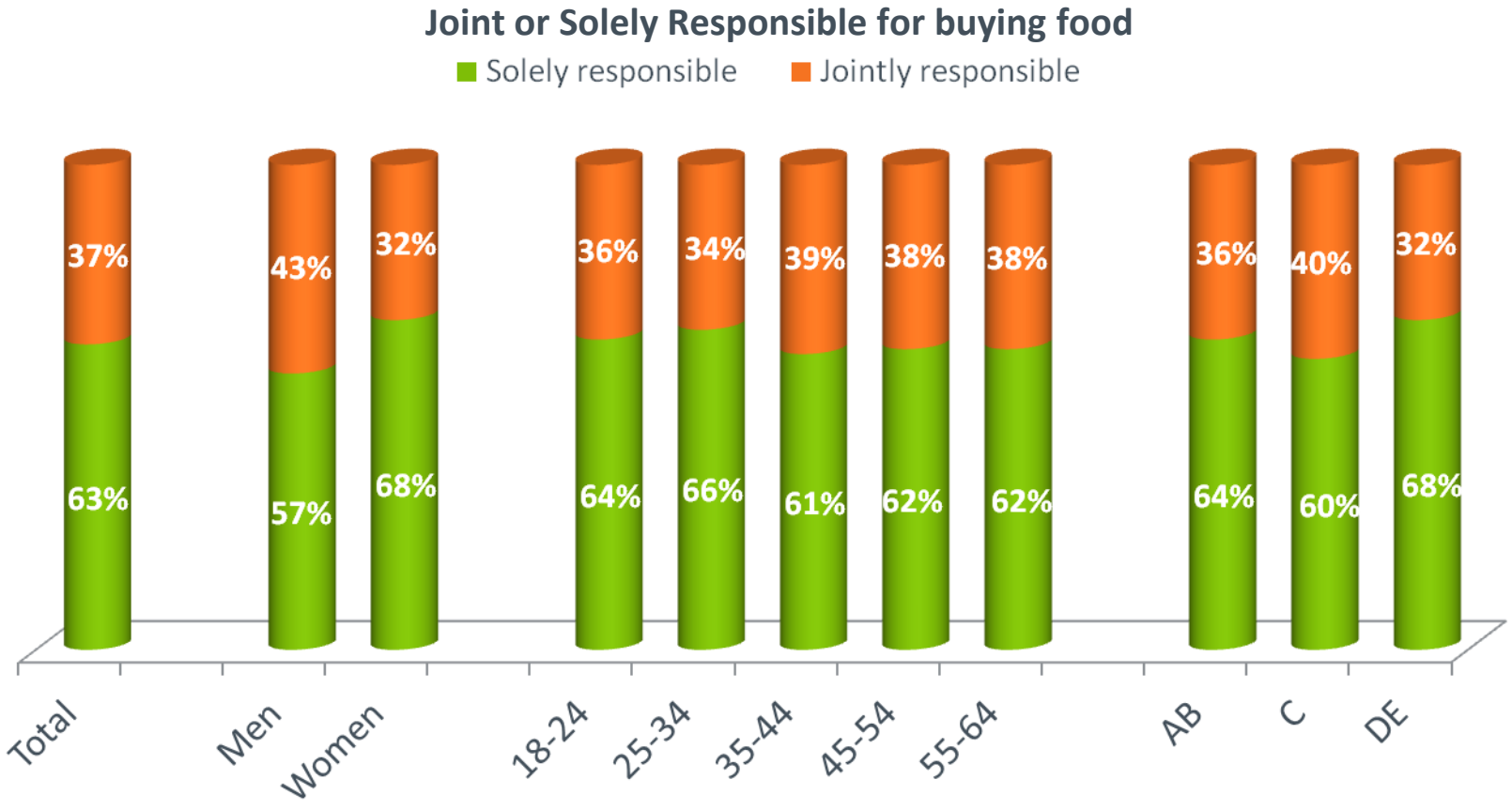
Only slight differences observed in who does the household food shopping, with women and people at social grade DE more likely to be solely responsible



QS5 Which of the following describes how involved you personally are in your household's food shopping?

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The Cost of Food

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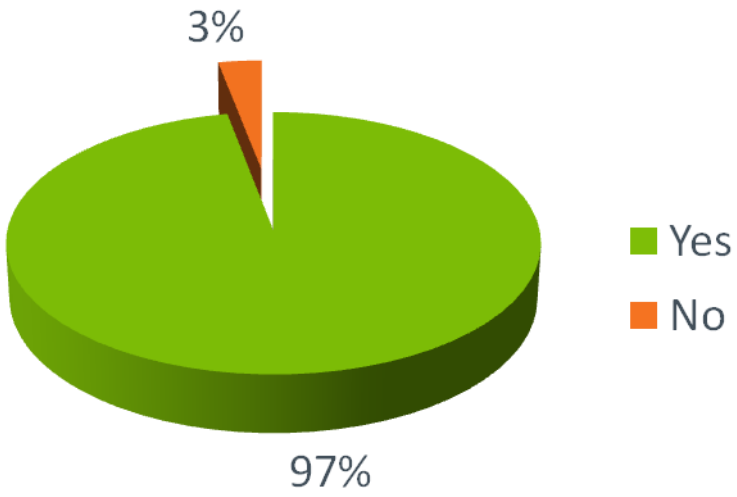
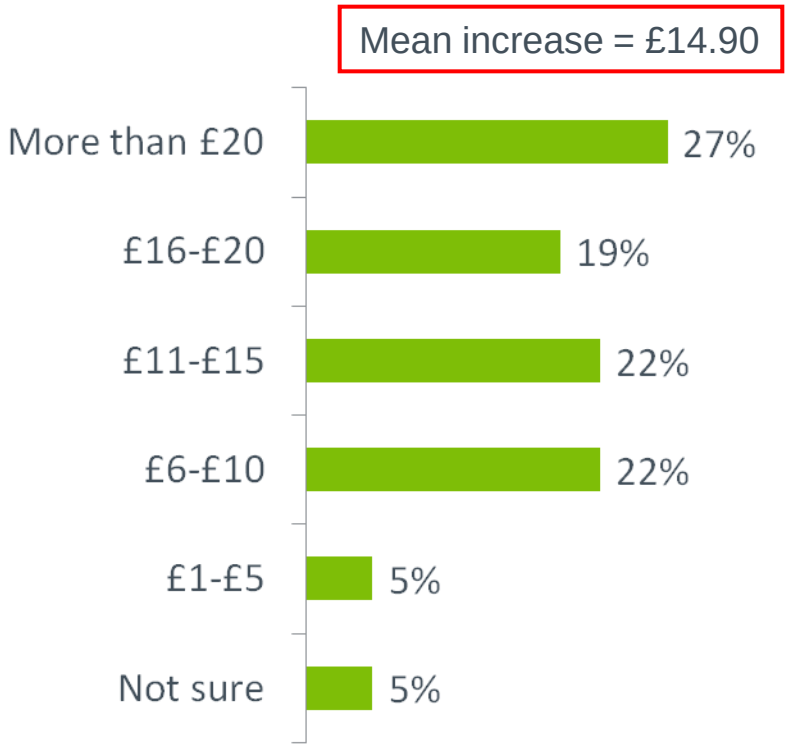
97% think the price of their typical shopping basket has gone up in the past 3 years, with an estimate that a weekly shopping bill is now about £15 more expensive

Has cost of typical shopping basket gone up in last 3 years?



How much more is weekly shopping bill now?



People in Northern Ireland have been feeling the squeeze, with everyone saying food now costs more. They also think food costs have increased by the greatest amount, estimating a weekly shop costs £2 more than people in Scotland estimate.

Q1 *In general do you feel that the cost of your typical shopping basket has gone up in the last three years?*
Q2 *How much more expensive do you think your typical weekly shopping bill is now? Base: all who think price of food has gone up*

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Three quarters get the most out of their food shopping by taking advantage of offers, with about two thirds buying cheaper brands and almost half making better use of leftovers

Other responses (less than 1%) include planning meals, shopping at wholesalers and growing your own vegetables.

People in Northern Ireland are more likely to take advantage of offers and buy cheaper brands, with those in Scotland least likely to do so (59% buy cheaper brands compared with 69% of people in Northern Ireland).

People in Northern Ireland are least likely to try to make food last longer (29% do so compared with 41% of those in England).

Q3 *What do you do to get the most out of your food shopping? Please select all that apply.*

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Going Shopping

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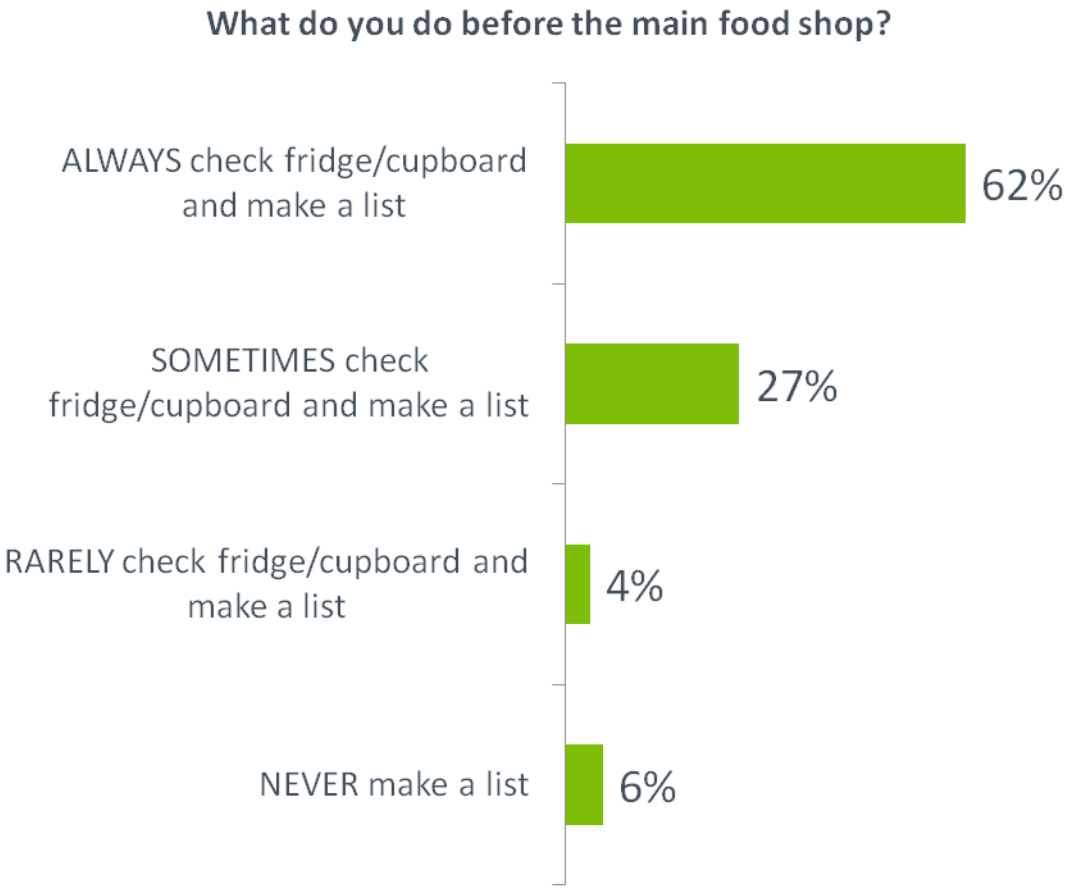
9 in 10 people (89%) always or sometimes check what is in their cupboards and make a list of what they need before doing the main food shop



63% of people in England, as opposed to just 48% of people in Northern Ireland, always check their cupboards and make a list before going out shopping.

At 11%, more of the Welsh never make a shopping list than people from other regions.

Q4 *Which of these statements best describes what you do before you do the main food shop?*

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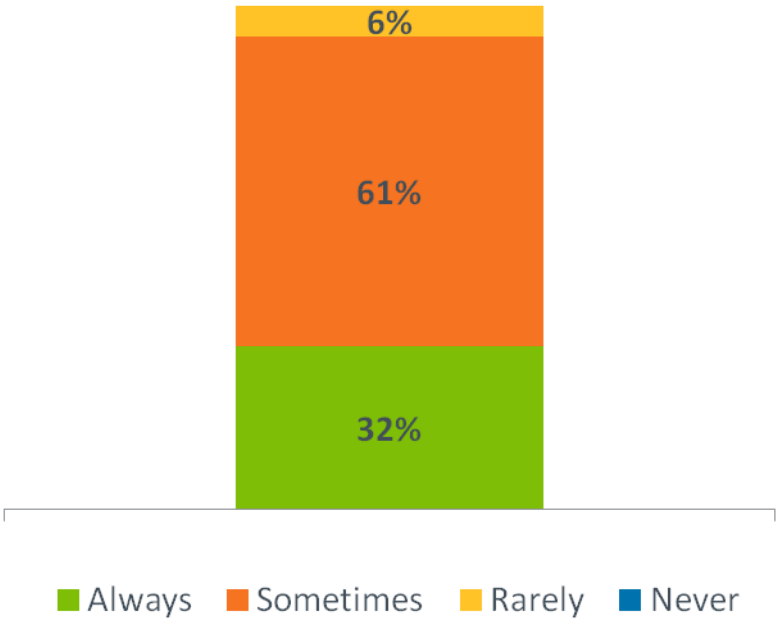
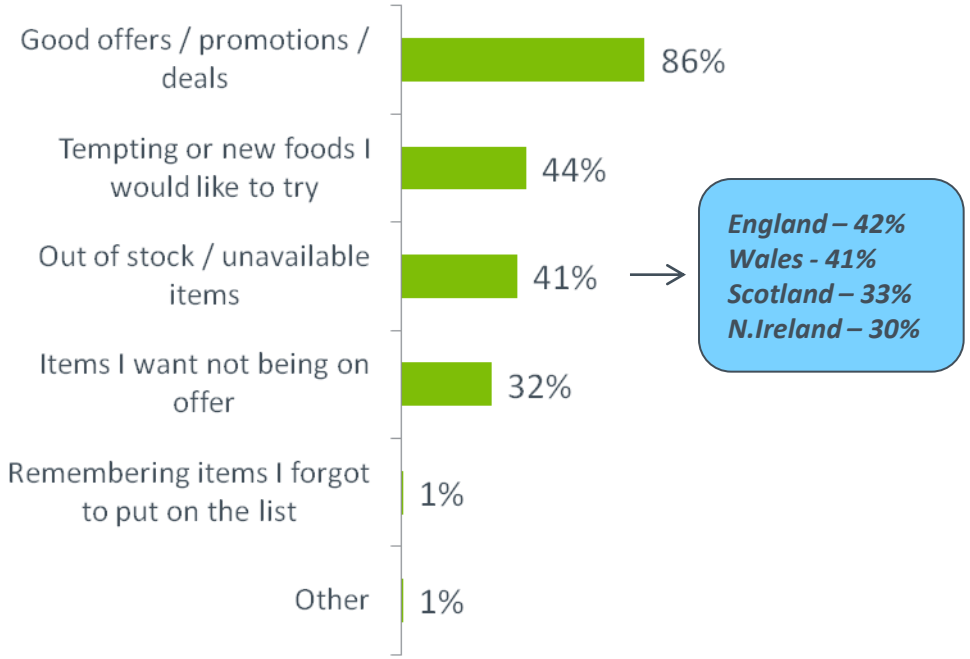
61% of those who make a shopping list sometimes stick to it. The majority of those who don't stick to their list are tempted away by good offers, promotions & deals (86%). More than 2 in 5 people are tempted by new foods (44%) or find that the items they want are out of stock (41%)

Do you tend to stick to your shopping list?



What prevents you from sticking to the list?



Q5 Do you tend to stick to the shopping list you made?
Q6 What tends to prevent you from sticking to your shopping list? (Asked of those that don't 'always' stick to the list.)

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Leftover food

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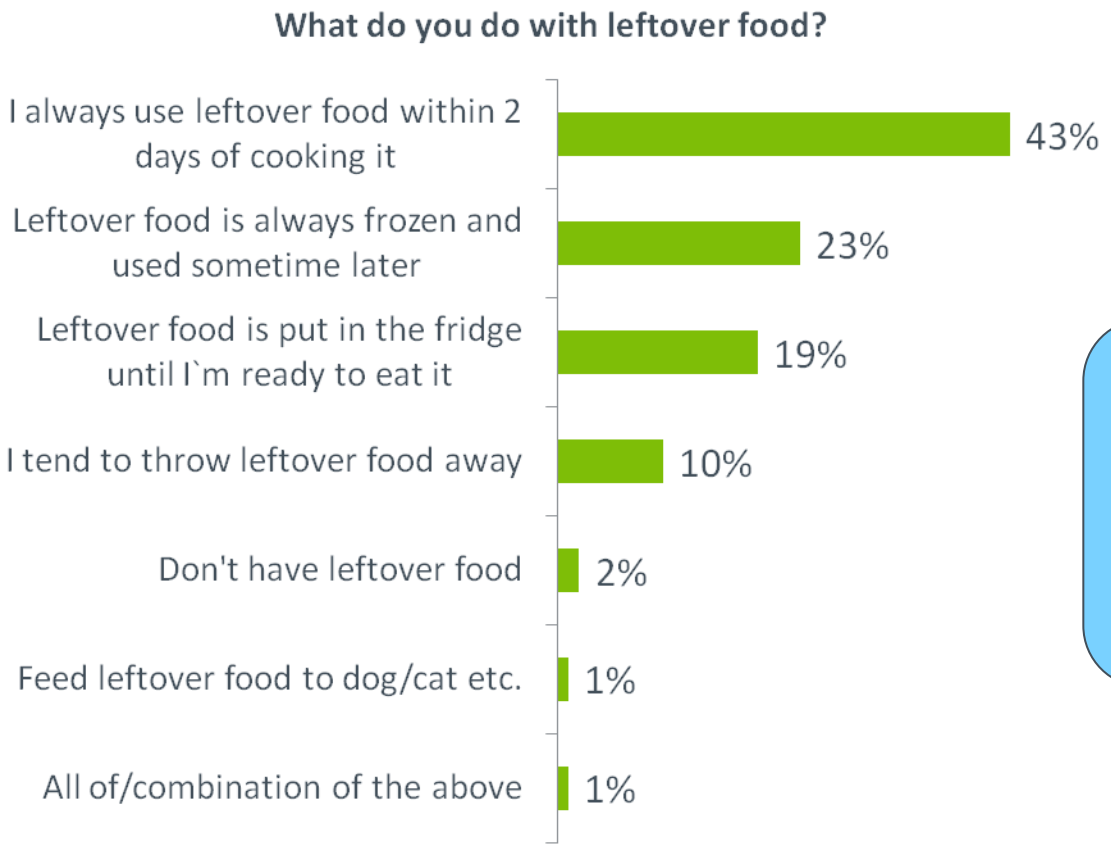
43% always use leftover food within 2 days of cooking it, whilst about a quarter freeze it and about a fifth put it in the fridge until they're ready to eat it. 10% tend to throw leftovers away.



People in Scotland are slightly less likely to use leftover food within 2 days of cooking it, but a little more likely to give it to their pet instead.

18-24s are the most wasteful, more likely to throw leftovers away than other groups.

Q7 *Which <u>one</u> of these statements best describes what you do with left-over food?*

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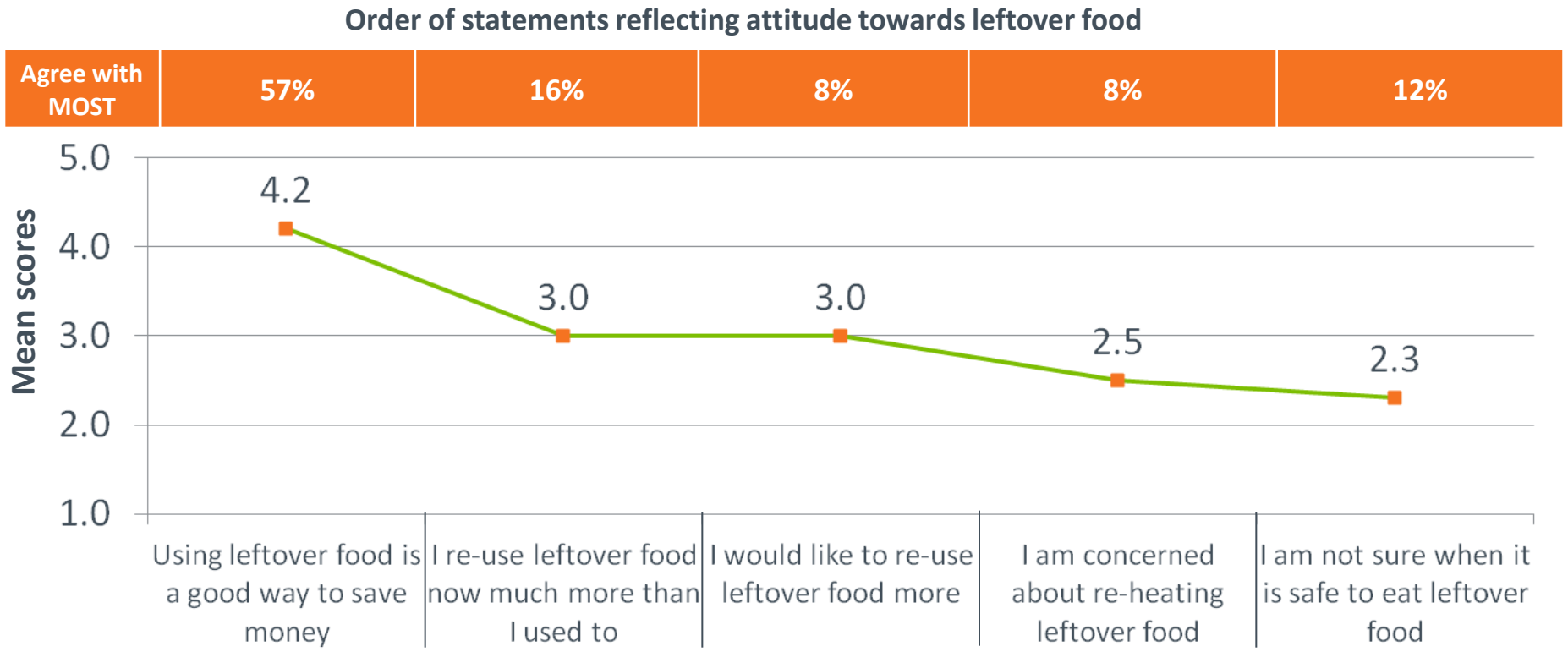
Over half (57%) think 'using leftover food is a good way to save money' best reflects their attitude to leftover food. Few say that they are concerned (8%) or unsure (12%) about using leftovers.



People in Wales agree most strongly that using leftovers is a good way to save money, with two thirds ranking this top. People in Northern Ireland are most likely to feel they are using leftovers more than they used to.

Q8 *Please put the following statements in order according to which are closest to your attitude. 5 is closest to attitude, 1 is least close to attitude*

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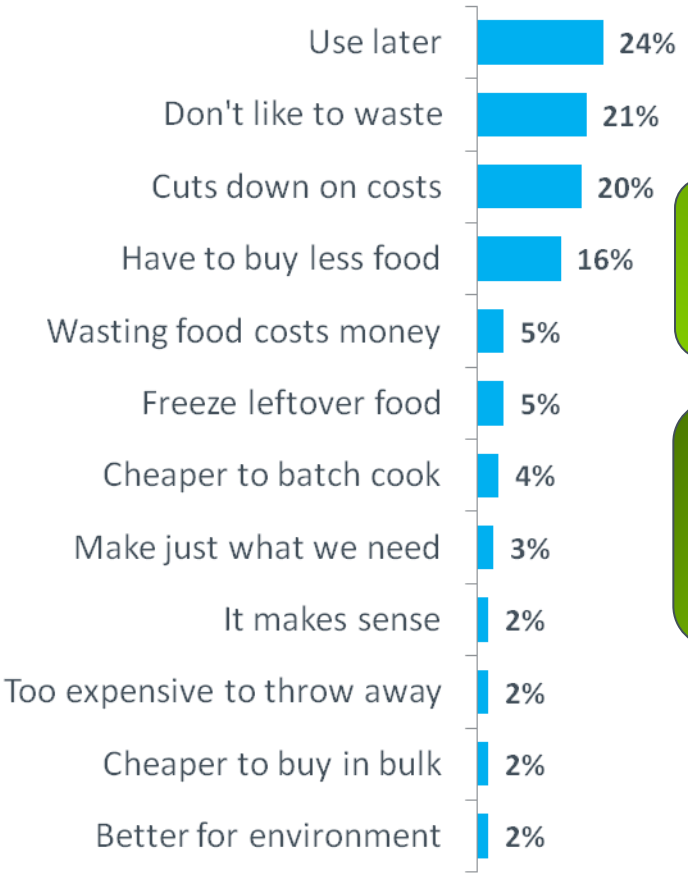
People are resourceful and using leftovers fits in with their lifestyles, saving them money, time and the hassle of cooking every night. They are wasting less, spending less and batch cooking, saving some to put in the fridge or freezer for later use.



At least 40% of my freezer is taken up with home made pies, curries, soups and stocks made from left-overs, which means my shopping costs are not as high as they would be if I bought these items from supermarkets.

Some food items make too much food for just one sitting, like for example a whole chicken... The more meals a single food item can make, the cheaper each meal becomes overall.

Left over meat is usually frozen. Left over veg. can be used to make bubble & squeak, cauliflower cheese, used in a stew, or casserole. I live alone and recipes don't always cater for the individual.

Money is so precious at the moment, we do anything that helps

Saves on cost of ingredients as well as actual cost of cooking and most importantly time.

you can save by buying in bulk or larger packs in reduced to clear section

I hate waste

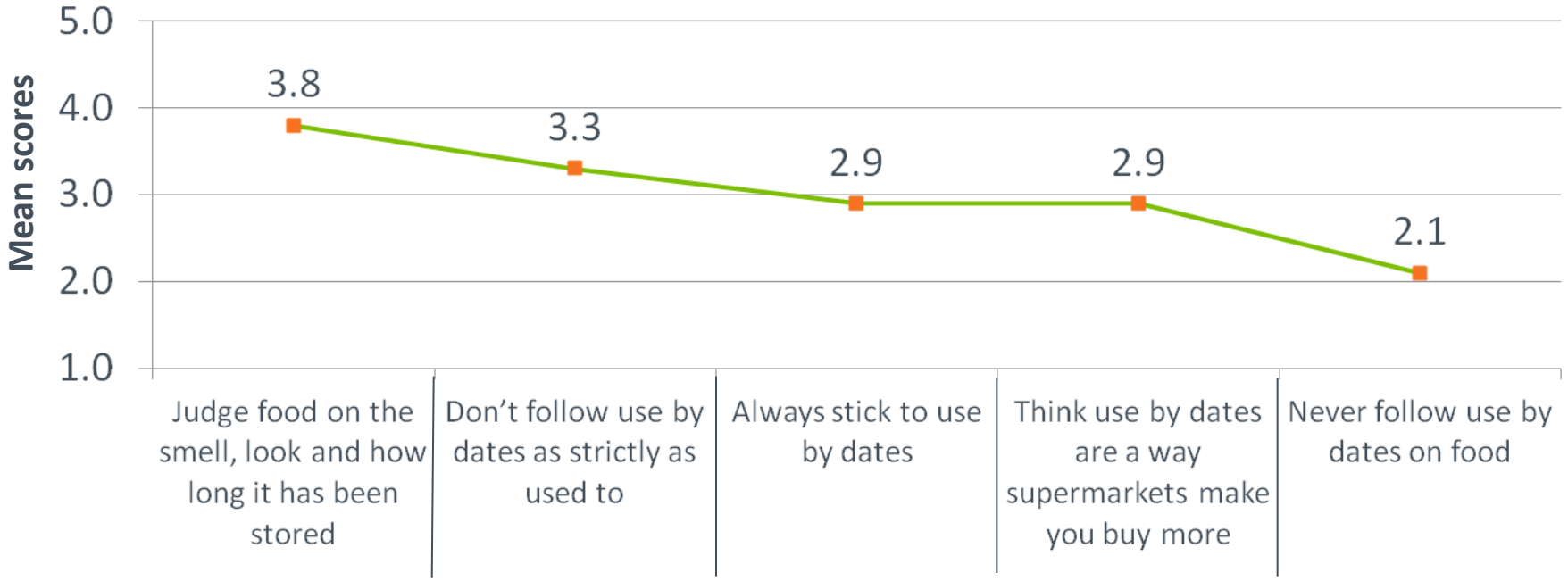
We have a meal one night and then the following day my husband takes it to work to reheat in the microwave for his lunch. This is more economical than throwing away the surplus food.

Q9 *You chose "[Using leftover food is a good way to save money]" as the statement that you agree with the most. Please tell us why you have chosen this. (Base: 1,102).* ***NB: coded data shown when >1%***

With the highest mean ranking on a 5 point scale (3.8), more people use their own judgement on the smell, look and length of time food has been stored, as opposed to strictly adhering to use by dates (2.9), which are followed less often nowadays

Order of statements reflecting attitude towards use by dates

Agree with MOST	31%	22%	29%	11%	7%



People in England and Wales agree most strongly that they use personal judgement, with people in Northern Ireland and Scotland agreeing most strongly that they always stick to use by dates. Mean scores amongst all groups were highest for using judgement.

Q10 *Please put the following statements in order of what best describes your behaviour when it comes to use by dates.*

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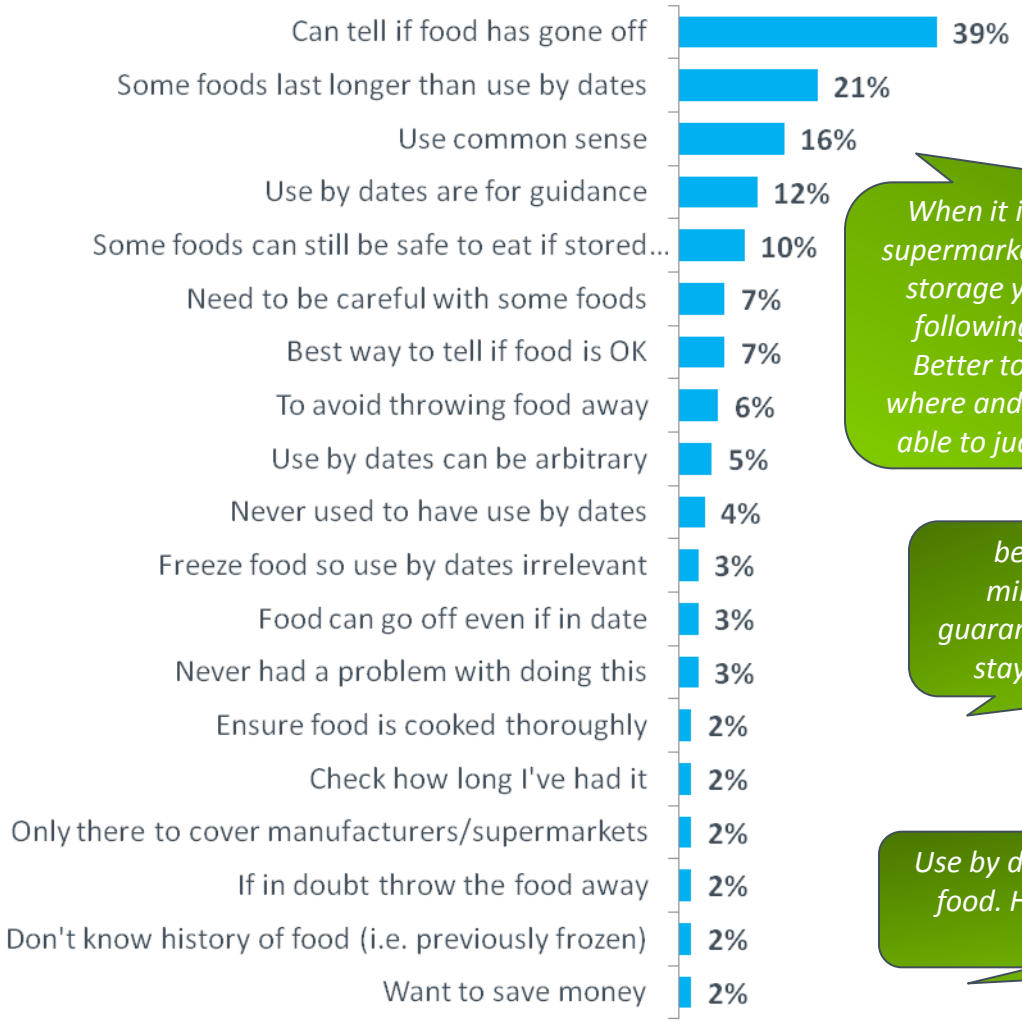
People are confident in their abilities to judge food themselves, considering the food type, along with look, smell and length of storage, whilst seeing use by dates as guidance only



the vendors have to include some leeway on the dates they give so that they can be certain an item will be alright

When it is possible to buy meat from the supermarket that is already brown from bad storage yet within it's use by date simply following dates on packs is not enough. Better to have some knowledge of how, where and how long to store food and to be able to judge its fitness to eat for yourself.

use before dates are sometimes just a guideline

if something smells fine, chances are it is fine

because the "use by" is the minimum time the producer guarantees the food to be ok, it can stay longer in good conditions

easy to tell if the food has gone off

I have a good instinct

This is the most reliable way I find

Use by dates are there for safety reasons as they are for perishable food. However, I think in some cases (such as fruit and veg), the product is ok to eat after the use by date.

Q11 *You chose "[I judge food on the smell, look and how long it has been stored]" as the statement that best describes what you do. Please can you explain why?(Base: 610)* ***NB: coded data shown when >1%***

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Planning meals

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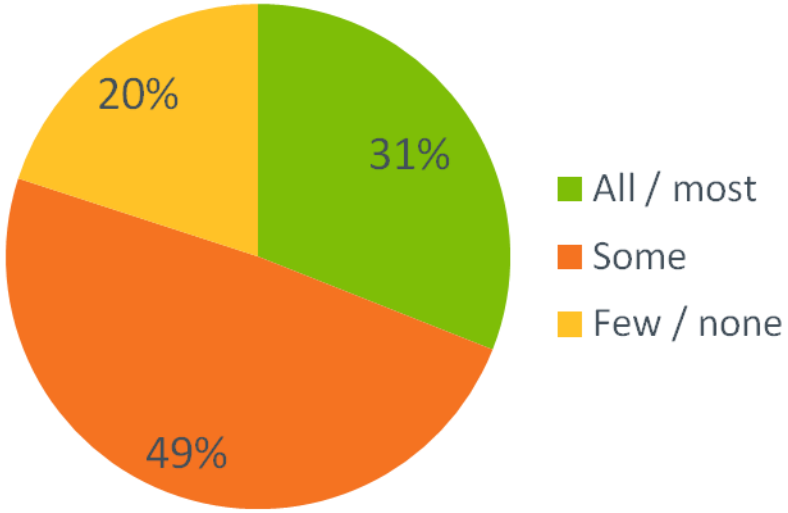
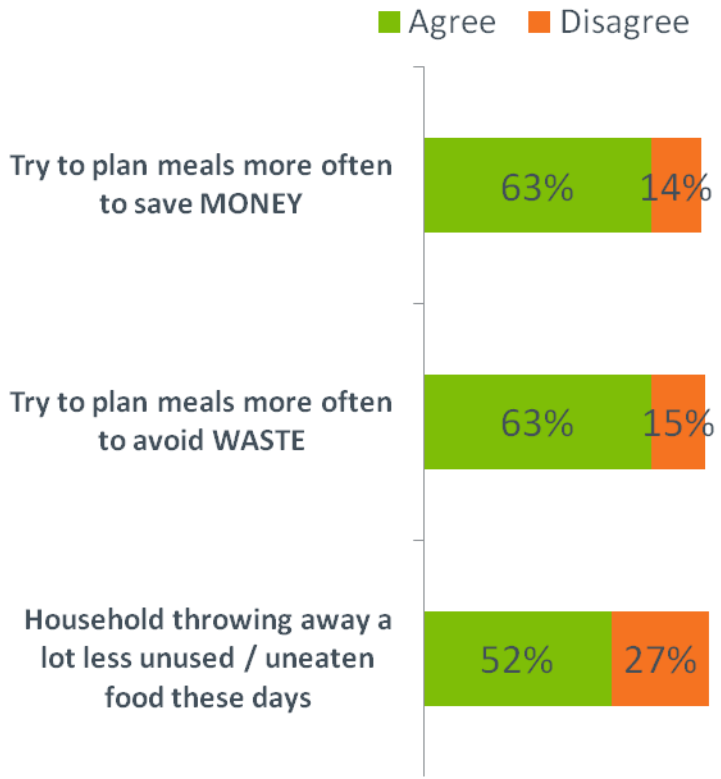
4 in 5 people (80%) plan at least some of their main meals in advance, with almost two thirds conscious of wanting to save money and avoid waste these days. Over half throw away a lot less unused food than they used to.

In a normal week at home, how many main meals are planned in advance?



Agreement / disagreement on meal planning



1 in 3 in England plan all or most main meals in advance, but this drops to just 1 in 5 people in Wales and Northern Ireland.

People in England and Northern Ireland are most conscious of planning in order to save money and reduce food wastage.

Q12 *Thinking about a normal week at home, which statement best describes how often you plan meals in advance?*
Q13 *How much do you agree with each of the statements below? 5 point agreement scale. Chart shows 'Agree' -Top 2 Box and 'Disagree' - Bottom 2 Box*

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Regional Comparison

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A note when comparing the regions – statistical significance

- Number of people interviewed in each region:
  - England – 1,304
  - Scotland – 202
  - Wales – 200
  - Northern Ireland – 200
- Figures weighted to be nationally representative of UK population

- As 83% of the UK population are in England, the views of people in England tend to be very close to the overall total. When looking at England it is therefore more useful to look at differences in the views between people in England and people in the other regions.
- When looking at Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland it is interesting to look at differences both against the overall total and between all of the regions.
- With the sample sizes in this research, of statistical significance is:
  - 7% when comparing percentages in the middle (e.g. 46% compared to 53%)
  - 5% when comparing percentages at the extremes (e.g. 3% compared to 8%)
  - 0.3 when comparing differences in mean scores on a 5 point scale (e.g. 3.3 compared to 3.6).

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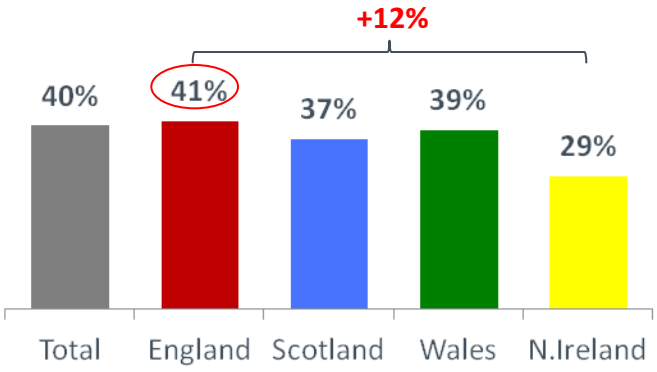
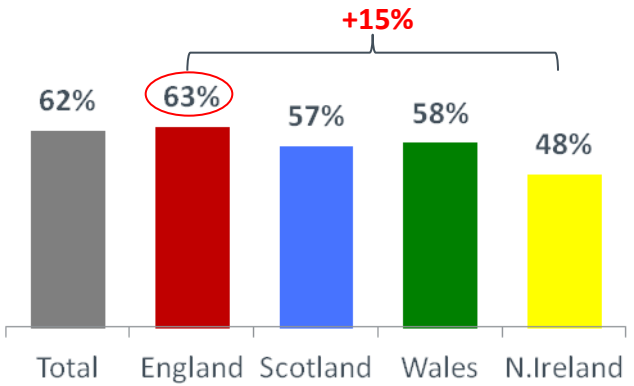
People in England hold some significantly different attitudes to food shopping compared to Northern Ireland. They are more likely to try to make food last longer and make a shopping list. They are also most likely to plan meals.

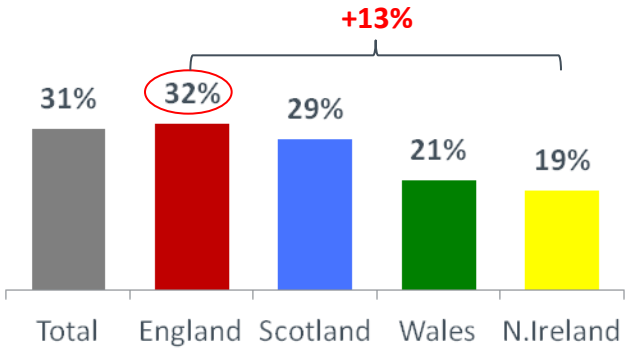
Try to make food last longer in order to get the most out of food shopping



Always check cupboards and make a list before going to do main food shop



All or most main meals for week planned in advance



NB: figures in red show the difference of people in England compared to people in the other region identified by the bracket

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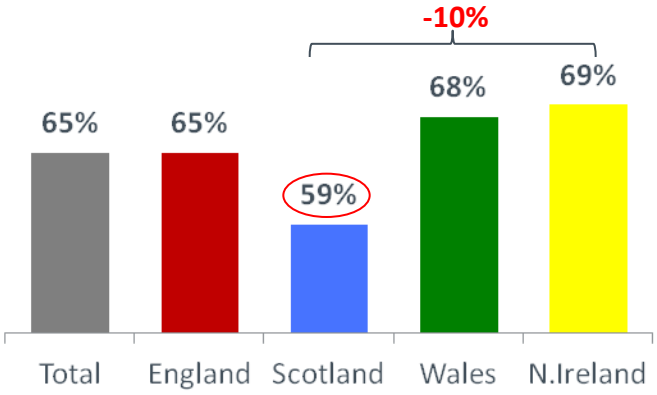
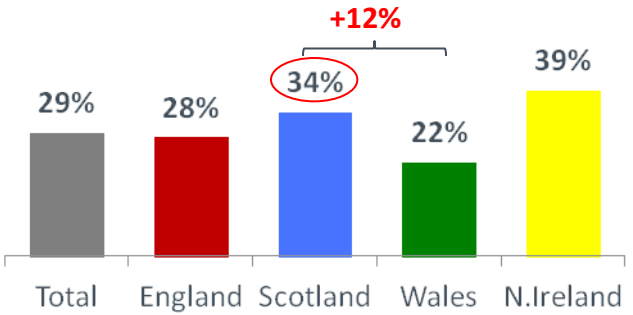
People in Scotland are least likely to compromise by choosing cheaper items/brands or by taking risks with food. They also think the cost of food has gone up by the least amount.

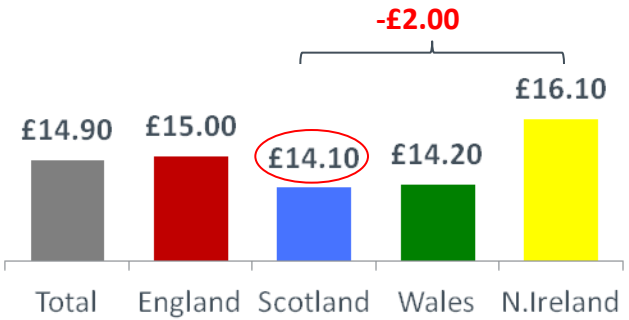
Buy cheaper items or brands in order to get the most out of food shopping



Agree MOST that 'I always stick to use by dates on food I buy'



How much more expensive do you think your typical weekly shopping bill is now?



NB: figures in red show the difference of people in Scotland compared to people in the other region identified by the bracket

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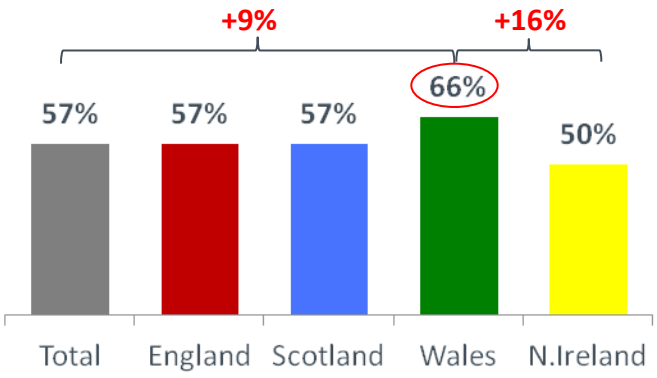
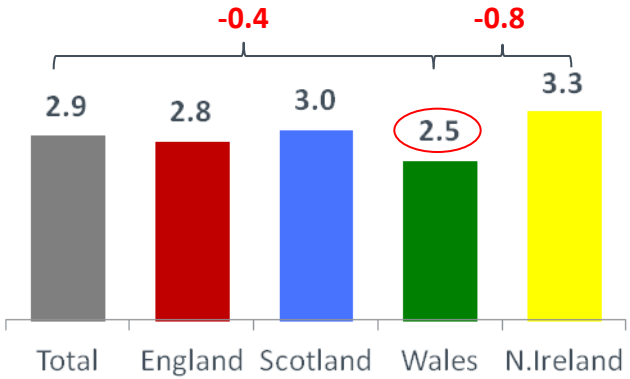
People in Wales are most relaxed about food: they are less likely to plan meals, and take more risks with food safety, especially compared to Northern Ireland. They agree most though that using leftovers is a good way to save money.

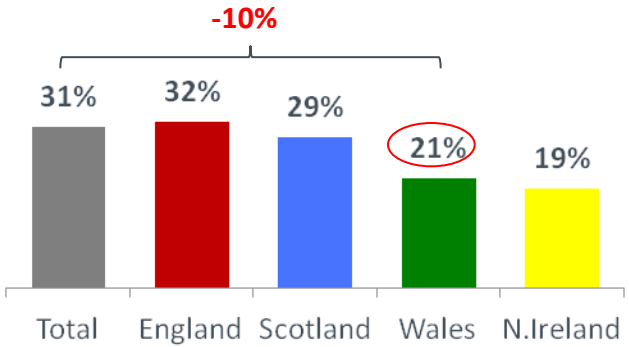
Agree MOST that 'Using leftover food is a good way to save money'



Mean agreement that 'I always stick to use by dates on food I buy'



All or most main meals for week planned in advance



NB: figures in red show the difference of people in Wales compared to people in the other region identified by the bracket

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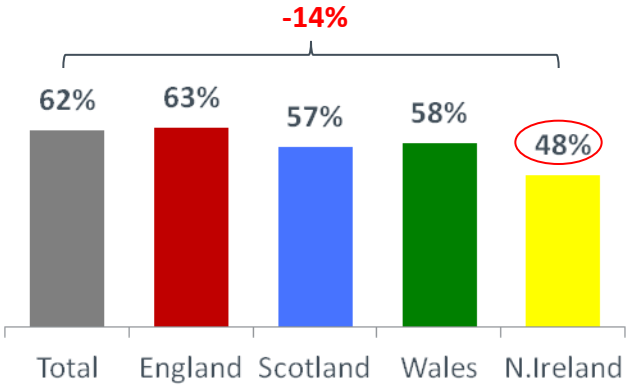
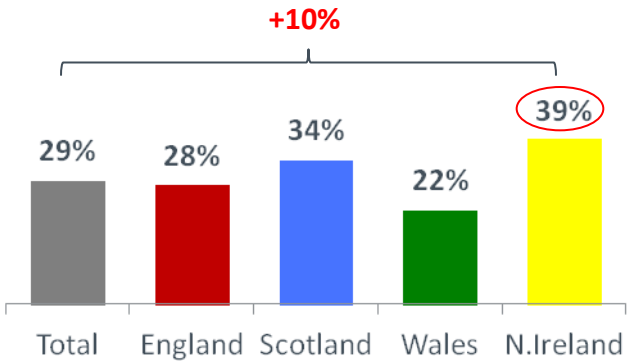
People in Northern Ireland like to save money without taking risks with food safety. They are least likely to make a shopping list, agree most that they always stick to use by dates but also agree most that they are using leftover food more than previously.

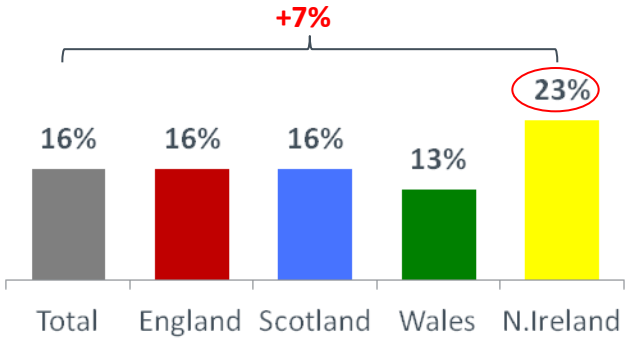
Always check cupboards and make list before going to do main food shop



Agree MOST that 'I always stick to use by dates on food I buy'



Agree MOST that 'I use leftover food much more than I used to'



NB: figures in red show the difference of people in Northern Ireland compared to the UK total

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Summary and Conclusions

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A nation trying to save money on food – we're on the look out for offers and deals, whilst taking more risks with food safety

- Almost all have been feeling the squeeze, with weekly shopping bills thought to cost £15 more than 3 years ago.
- Value-conscious shoppers take advantage of offers, choose cheaper brands, make better use of leftovers, use personal judgement i.e. by smelling food rather than looking at use by dates, plan meals in advance and deviate from shopping lists where a deal is to be had - all in a bid to spend less on food.
- Attitudes are relaxing, with use by dates followed less than in the past as people view them more as guidance.
- *In the regions*:

People in **England** try to make food last longer through organisation – most likely to plan meals in advance, check the cupboards and make a list before going out shopping.

People in **Scotland** are least likely to compromise with cheaper purchases and are more likely to stick to use by dates than people in England and Wales.

People in **Wales** are most relaxed about food safety, sticking less strictly to use by dates, and being more likely to agree that using leftovers is a good way to save money.

Those in **Northern Ireland** are least likely to make shopping lists and plan meals in advance, but are still using leftovers more than they used to.

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