

Let's Talk Food: Survey Report

July 2024





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Foreword

This report outlines the findings of the Let's Talk Food survey, which took place over 8 weeks, from February to April 2024. The survey is part of a wider conversation about food in North Yorkshire, and it was focused on two specific topics - your experiences around accessing healthy food and food waste. These topics were chosen to help understand the behaviours and motivations of residents when it comes to food.

We have a vision to build on North Yorkshire's natural assets, strong local economy and resilient communities, to improve the way local services are delivered and support a good quality of life for all. North Yorkshire Council is the geographically largest council in the country, with a mix of rural, urban and coastal communities, all of which have common challenges but also competing and differing needs. Therefore, a strong community voice is essential. Let's Talk North Yorkshire, which launched in autumn 2022, is our continued commitment to listen and engage with you, hearing your views on key strategic decisions and empowering your voice.

Let's Talk Food is part of that commitment. We are working alongside partners, to look at the whole food system in North Yorkshire - from how we grow food, what we grow, to what we buy and eat and how much we throw away.

The Let's Talk Food survey results will be used alongside data we have gathered to understand in more depth the experiences of people at different points of the food system, for example, farmers and those experiencing food insecurity. This information will contribute to deciding the priorities for supporting our food system in North Yorkshire.

These food system priorities will recognise and work with other local strategies, including (but not exclusive to) the Economic Growth Strategy and the Climate Change Strategy. The goal is to help ensure our food system provides nutritious, accessible, affordable and sustainably produced food in North Yorkshire for North Yorkshire, for years to come.

There are six area constituency committees, whose role is to improve the quality of life for people in their area by acting as a 'critical friend' to policy makers and decision makers, enabling the voice and concerns of the public to be heard and driving improvements in public service. The results of the Let's Talk Food survey are broken down by area constituency committee within this report to give further local insight into your experiences and highlight differences and similarities across the county.*

** Since the general election on 4 July 2024, the constituency boundaries have now changed. You can find out more about the boundary review on the Parliament website: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/boundary-review-2023-which-seats-will-change/> Due to these changes, there are now seven constituencies within the North Yorkshire area: Harrogate and Knaresborough, Richmond and Northallerton, Scarborough and Whitby, Selby, Skipton and Ripon, Thirsk and Malton, Wetherby and Easingwold. The results reported in this document are based on the original six constituencies, which were in place at the time of the survey.*

We are grateful for the detailed information you have shared based on your experiences of accessing healthy food and managing food waste.

You can find a summary on page 6 and more detail on the responses and demographics of participants on the following pages.

The survey highlights some inequalities in access to healthy food and ability to manage food waste. To address these requires partners across different sectors, from farm to fork, to collaborate, be ambitious and work towards inclusivity.

We want to thank everyone who has given their time to take part in this survey. We are committed to continuing conversations with North Yorkshire residents, and we hope you will keep sharing your views to tell us what is important to you. You can do this via our digital platform, which you can subscribe to here www.northyorks.gov.uk/LetsTalk or by requesting a paper copy of live surveys by emailing LetsTalk@northyorks.gov.uk or by calling **0300 131 2 131** and saying 'Let's Talk' when prompted.



Cllr Carl Les

Leader,
North Yorkshire Council



Cllr Michael Harrison

Executive member for
Health and Adult Services,
North Yorkshire Council

1.0 Summary

Overall

- 2,053 valid responses were received to the Let's Talk Food survey.
- Responses were received from people who live and work within all Constituency Committee areas* across North Yorkshire. The percentage of response from each locality was broadly proportionate to the number of residents that live there, although people from Selby & Ainsty are underrepresented in the responses.
- Younger age groups are also underrepresented while older age groups are overrepresented in relation to the proportion of residents across North Yorkshire within such age ranges.
- 213 respondents identified as having a disability or long-term, life limiting condition. They were more likely to identify as having healthy food access issues.

Healthy food and balanced diet

- Most respondents (86%) feel they have a healthy and balanced diet. Very few feel they do not have a healthy and balanced diet.
- Most people also say they want to eat healthier food a lot (47%) or quite a bit (34%). Only 3% do not want to do this much or at all.
- Factors affecting these responses relate to different opinions on **how food is accessed** and **having the right education/skills** to identify and/or use healthy food.

Accessing healthy food

- Most people also find it very easy (35%) or easy (46%) to access healthy food. Only 5% of people find it difficult or very difficult to access this.
- People are most likely to say **lowering the cost of food** (59%), **reducing unhealthy food advertising** (53%), and **supporting local gardens or food projects** (50%) would make it easier to get healthy food.

*Six constituencies that were in place at the time of the survey, February to April 2024.

Food waste

- More than half of the people responding say they never (9%) or hardly ever (46%) throw away unused food, while around a quarter throw away unused food once a week (19%) or more often than this (7%).
- More than half the people in the survey also say they find it very easy (22%) or easy (36%) to reduce their food waste, but nearly one-in-six people find this difficult (13%) or very difficult (2%).
- The most common things making it difficult to reduce food waste are **food going off** (58% of responses) and **food being sold in larger amounts** than needed (43%).
- Having the **skills and experience** in how to repurpose food waste or manage leftovers/excess were of interest.

2.0 Introduction, background, and methodology

Our ambition for Let's Talk North Yorkshire is for it to be our biggest ever countywide conversation, to help understand how you are feeling, and use that intelligence to improve decision making and inform the council's policy development process.

Let's Talk Food was launched on 5 February 2024 and ran until 2 April 2024. The survey included questions to understand people's behaviours and motivations around dietary experiences, access to healthy food and food wastage. The survey was designed using behavioural science methods through the 'COM-B' approach. This is a method that helps us to understand why people behave the way they do.

The online survey was hosted on 'Commonplace', our digital engagement platform. The work was supported by a marketing campaign directing people to the platform, and paper surveys were available from council offices, libraries, leisure centres and on request. Easy read and large print versions of the survey were also available.

2,053 valid responses to the Let's Talk Food survey were received. Valid responses mean we removed test responses submitted during the development of the survey and any technical duplicates - which are duplicate responses submitted where respondents experienced technical glitches with the online survey.

As usual with self-completion questionnaires, some participants did not complete all questions. This may be because they did not have an opinion on the question asked, but we cannot make this assumption in full confidence. Such 'missing data' is excluded from the results unless otherwise stated. All charts indicate the number of responses received for each question.

The survey results are reported as whole numbers for percentages. As a result of this 'rounding' process there may be occasions when the figures do not add up to 100.

Free text response questions were reviewed to look for patterns and themes in what people were saying. We also used a method called natural language processing (NLP) to help identify word connections and key themes in the comments made by people. We also noted comments and potential themes offered on social media that were relevant to the survey although these were low in number and have not been included specifically in the scope of the survey.

Other engagement activities

The Let's Talk Food survey is one part of a bigger piece of work, which will also include conversations with key representatives across the food system, such as farmers, businesses, young people, food partnerships, and people with lived experience of food insecurity. 'Food system' means looking at food from how it is grown/produced, right through to how it is sold/promoted, eaten and thrown away/recycled (also called 'from farm to fork').

How the food system ties in with other strategies

The Let's Talk Food survey results, plus wider engagement activity data, will contribute to shaping priorities that transform the food system in North Yorkshire. Food system priorities will be recognised and included in other local strategies, including (but not exclusive to) the [North Yorkshire Council Economic Growth Strategy](#) and the [North Yorkshire Council Climate Change Strategy](#).

Reliability of the results

The sample of people giving their views in the survey is self-selecting and this may lead to some bias in the survey results if people with a strong interest in the subject are more likely to complete the survey. Most of the people taking part say they have a healthy and balanced diet, want to eat healthier food, produce little food waste, and want to reduce the amount they waste.

There is an over-representation of people from sub-groups such as geographical areas, genders, and age groups (compared to the population of North Yorkshire) which will also have an impact on the survey results if people from these groups have different views on issues. Apart from issues around food waste where there is a more identifiable difference, there is limited difference in response opinions. We do need to ensure that further engagement tests this, particularly in younger age range responses due to these being significantly underrepresented. Demographic group information was not consistently provided by many people taking part in the survey, so this also limits the ability to determine how truly representative the sample of responses is.

We acknowledge that there is likely to be survey error in the results, due to the over-representation of certain sub-groups in the sample. Although the survey is not exactly representative, we always assume that there will be some sampling error and/or response bias in every survey. Despite these caveats, the survey findings provide useful insights into the views of people in North Yorkshire.

We have also used other surveys and data sources to benchmark/triangulate our survey results with local pictures from national surveys or research (**OHID Fingertips, Food Foundation, WRAP**) as well as local monitoring tests on food waste. The survey results will be used alongside the results from focus groups and other engagement activities to inform the development of our local food strategy and action plan.

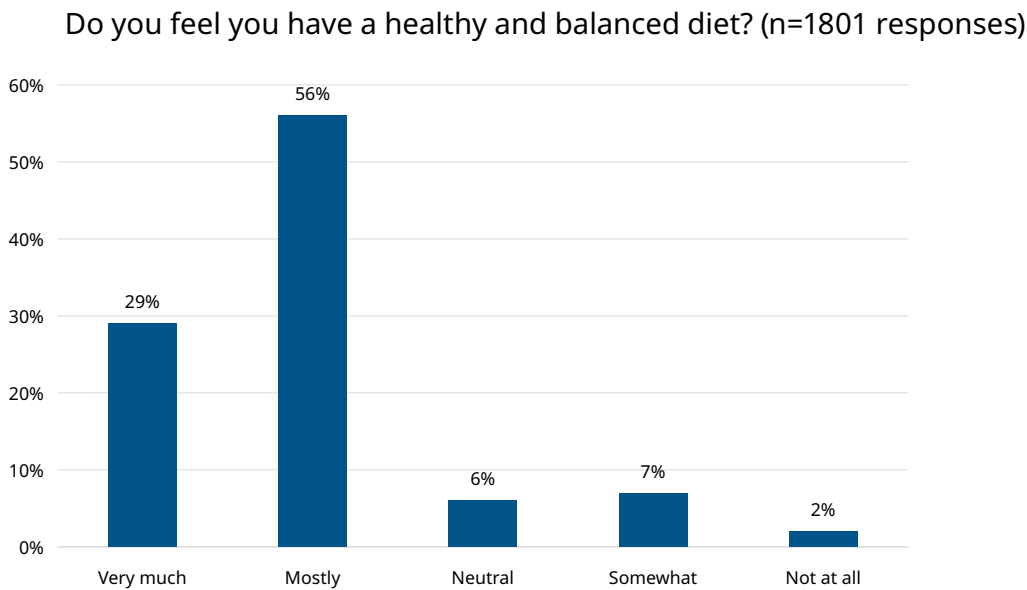
3.0 Findings

Healthy and balanced diet

Respondents were given a brief definition of the kinds of healthy food there are and how much to eat, to have a healthy and balanced diet.

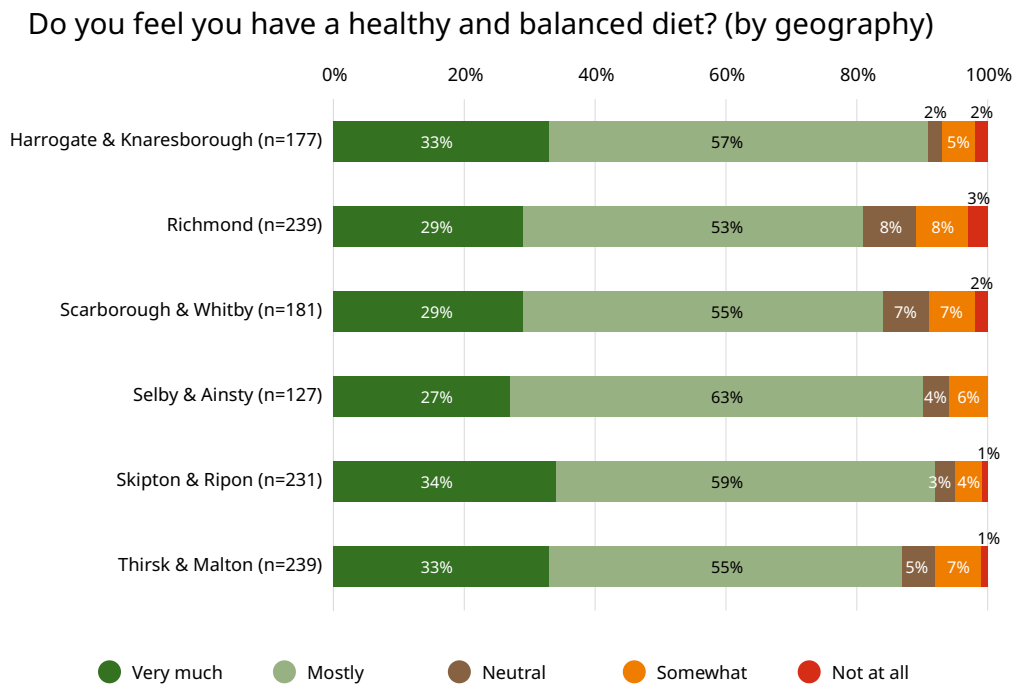
More than eight-in-ten people (86%) feel they have a healthy and balanced diet. Very few people feel they do not have a healthy and balanced diet.

Figure 1: Healthy and balanced diet



Although this is a very positive response, this is contrary to the data available via the **Office of Health Improvement and Disparities Fingertips platform**, specifically in relation to ‘the percentage of adults (aged 16 and over) meeting the recommended 5-a-day portions of fruit and vegetables. In North Yorkshire in 2021/22 only 32.5% of adults self-reported eating the recommended 5-a-day portions, which is down from the previous year of 34.9% (2020/21).

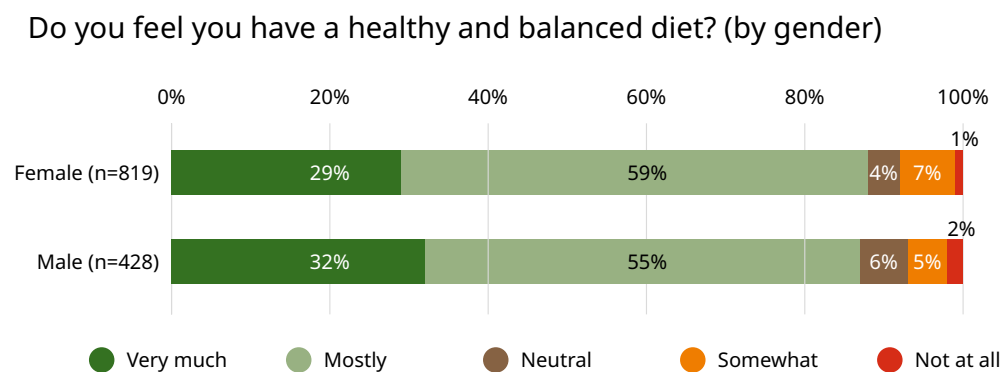
Figure 2: Healthy and balanced diet by geography



There are some slight differences in the responses from across the different Area Constituency Committees (ACCs) covering the six electoral constituencies within North Yorkshire.

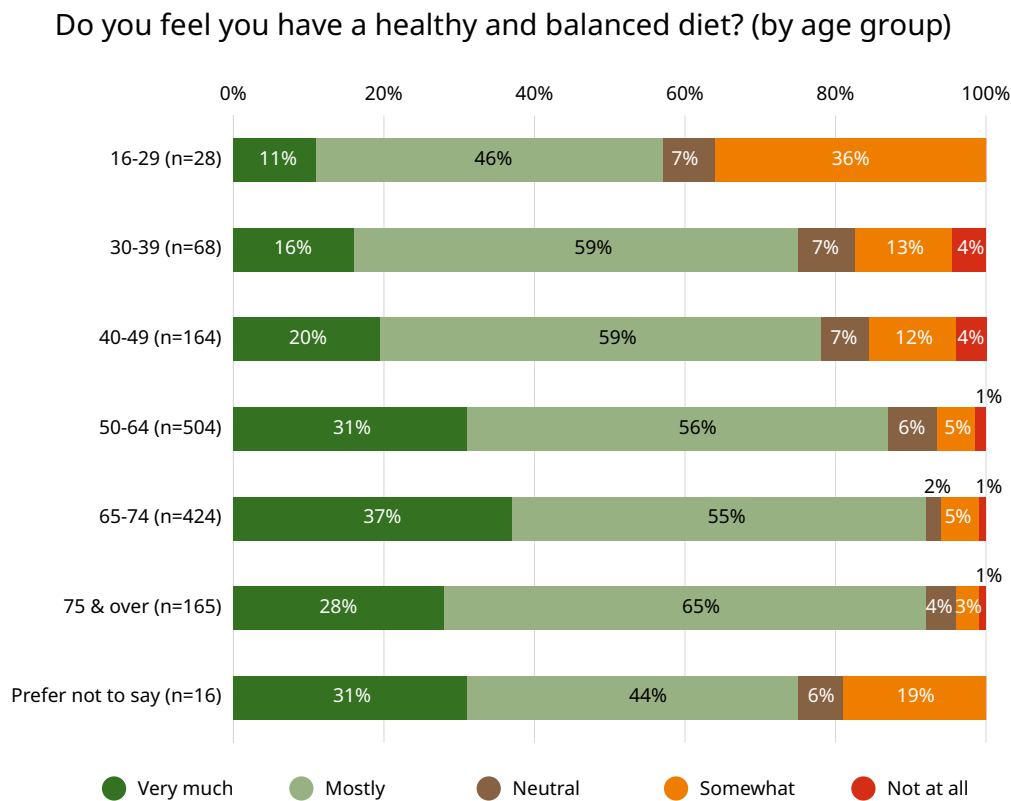
Around nine-in-ten people feel they very much or mostly have a healthy and balanced diet in Skipton & Ripon (93%), Selby & Ainsty (90%), Harrogate & Knaresborough (90%) and Thirsk & Malton (87%). Slightly fewer people say this in Richmond (82%) and Scarborough & Whitby (85%).

Figure 3: Healthy and balanced diet by gender



There is little difference in views on having a healthy and balanced diet by gender despite two-thirds of overall responses being from females: 88% of females feel they very much or mostly have this, compared to 87% of males. There are not enough responses from those who describe their gender in another way to analyse.

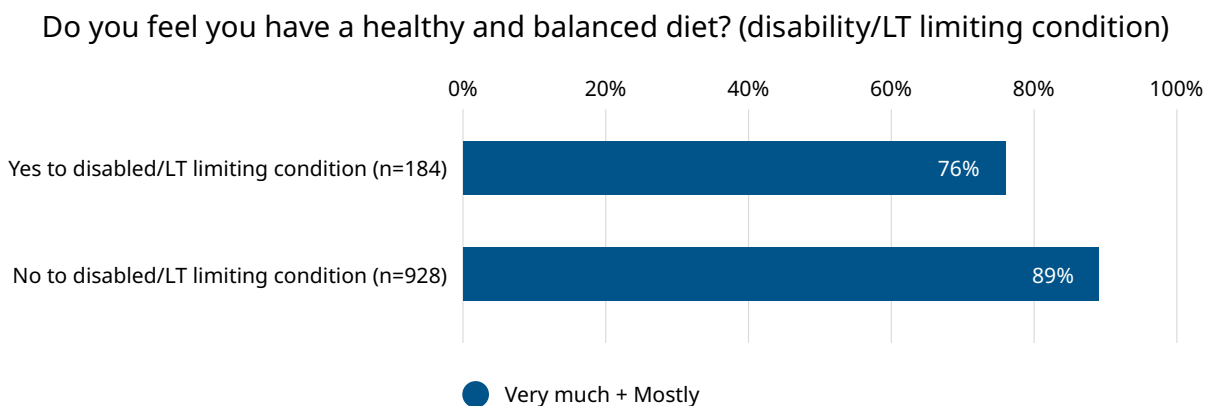
Figure 4: Healthy and balanced diet by age group



Analysis by age group suggests people in the oldest age groups are more likely to feel they have a healthy and balanced diet. More than nine-in-ten of those aged 75 and over (93%) and 65 to 74 (92%) feel this way, compared to 57% of those aged 16 to 29, 75% of 30 to 39-year-olds, and 78% of 40 to 49-year-olds.

NB: The number providing details of their age as 16 to 29 is small at only 28 people, and there are 68 people in the 30 to 39 age group.

Figure 5: Healthy and balanced diet by disability or long-term, limiting condition



The results also suggest that those people who consider themselves to be disabled or have a long-term, limiting condition are less likely to feel they have a healthy and balanced diet (76%), compared to those people without a disability or limiting condition (89%).

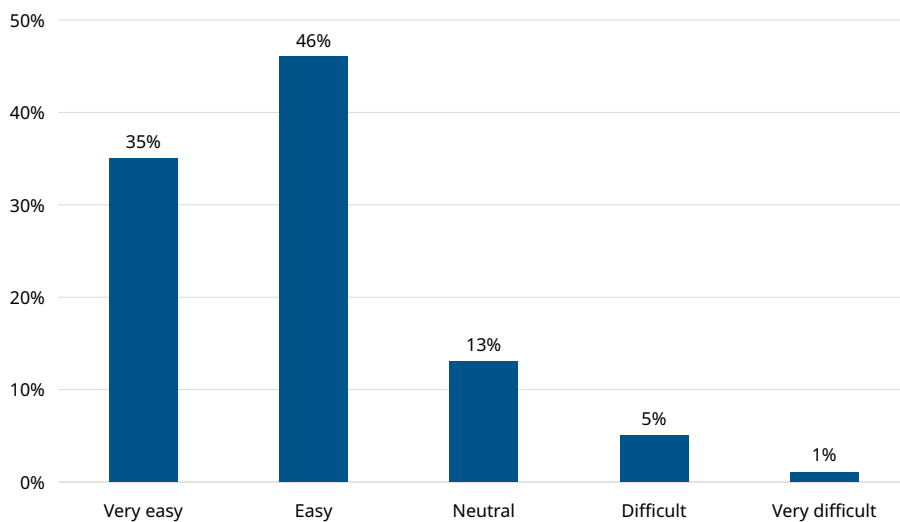
The **Food Foundation** reports inequalities in food insecurity (affordability, access, utilisation, and stability) levels are widening between households with an adult limited a lot by disability and households with an adult not limited by disability. Nationally, 38.2% of households 'limited a lot by disability' experience food insecurity, compared to 10.5% of households 'not limited by disability' (Food Foundation, December 2023).

Accessing healthy food

Respondents were given a brief explanation of what we meant by 'access' to healthy food (i.e. geography, travel, affordability, availability of healthier options i.e. in shops, community growing)

Figure 6: Access to healthy food

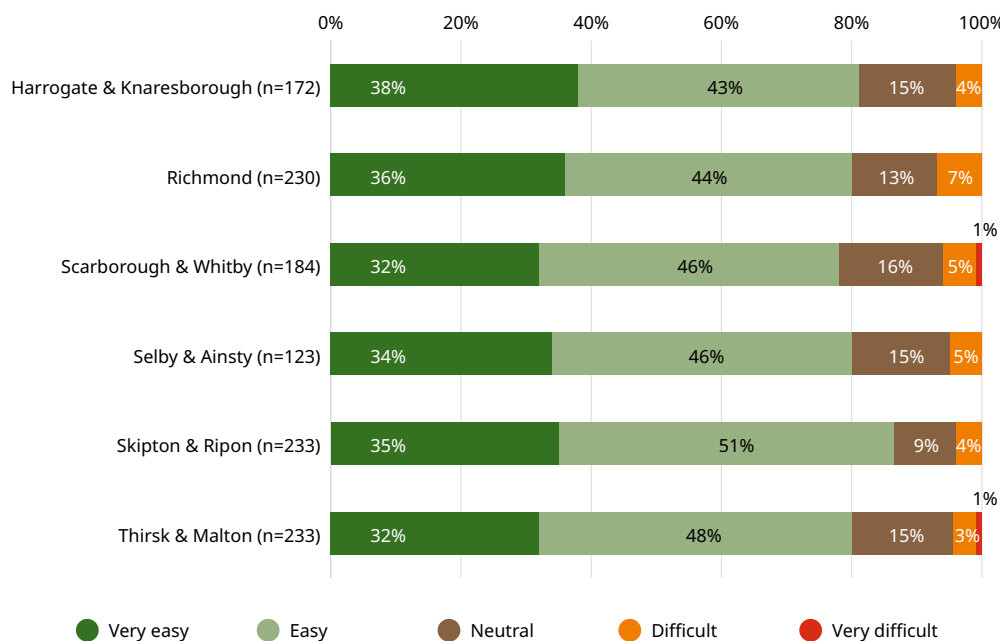
How easy or difficult is it for you to access healthy food?
(n=1770 responses)



More than eight-in-ten people find it very easy (35%) or easy (46%) to access healthy food. Only 5% of people find it difficult or very difficult to access this.

Figure 7: Access to healthy food by geography

How easy or difficult is it for you to access healthy food? (by geography)

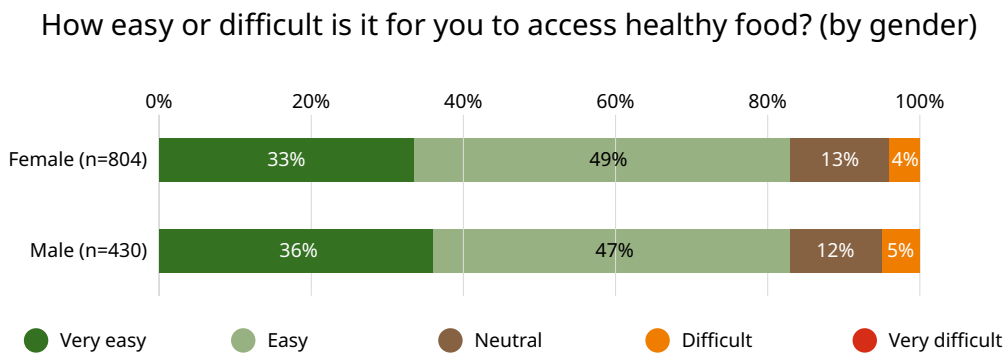


There are some differences in responses by ACC. People in Skipton & Ripon are most likely to say it is very easy or easy to access healthy food (86%) while those in Scarborough & Whitby (78%) are least likely to say this is the case.

When considering differences in ACC area responses, it is useful to note that household food security includes the ability of consumers to physically access food shops. Travel distances are higher in rural areas, which typically have a more dispersed population. Department for Transport data for 2019 shows that there are only a few areas in England where less than 90% of the population is within 30 minutes of a food shop by public transport or walking, and these areas include parts of North Yorkshire. Remote and rural areas in North Yorkshire also have the lowest levels of access to a food shop within 15 minutes by public transport or walking. This is seen throughout the county but more noticeably in areas of Thirsk and Malton, and Richmond. (Source: Department for Transport (Dft), 2019, England Only **United Kingdom Food Security Report 2021: Theme 4: Food Security at Household Level - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**)

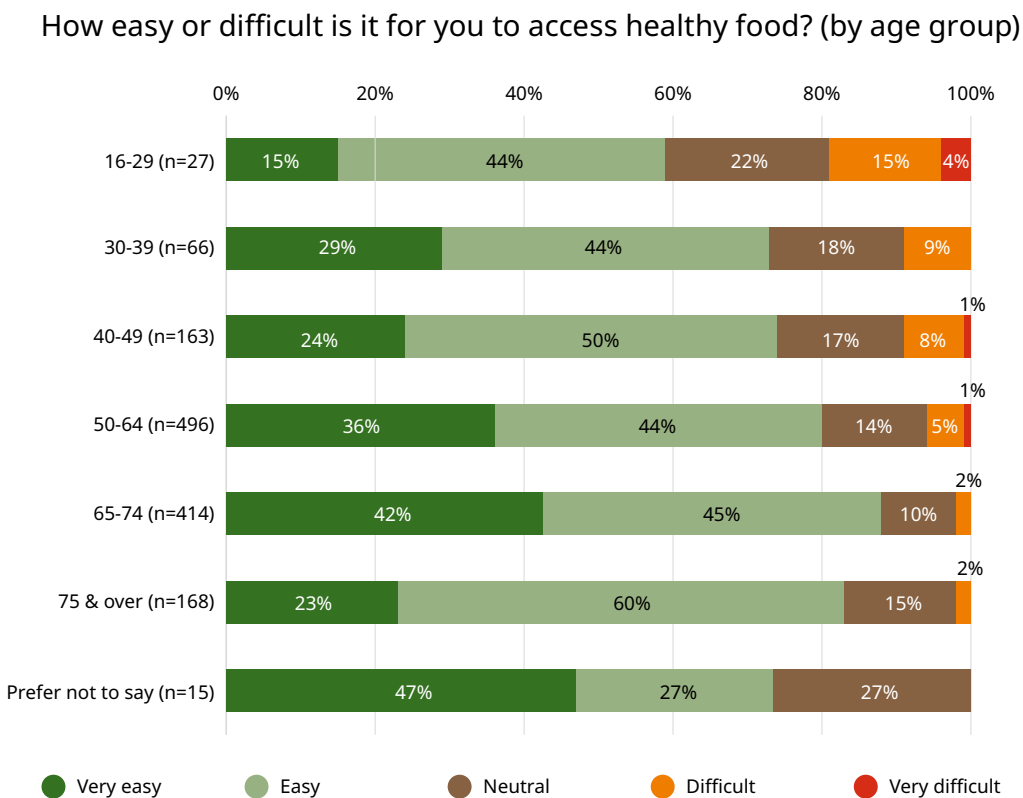
Data collected through survey open text boxes (reported in the next section of this report) highlight a correlation between the ability to access healthy food options and the reliance on car or public transport.

Figure 8: Access to healthy food by gender



There is little difference in views on being able to access healthy food by gender: 83% of males find it very easy or easy to do this, compared to 82% of females.

Figure 9: Access to healthy food by age group

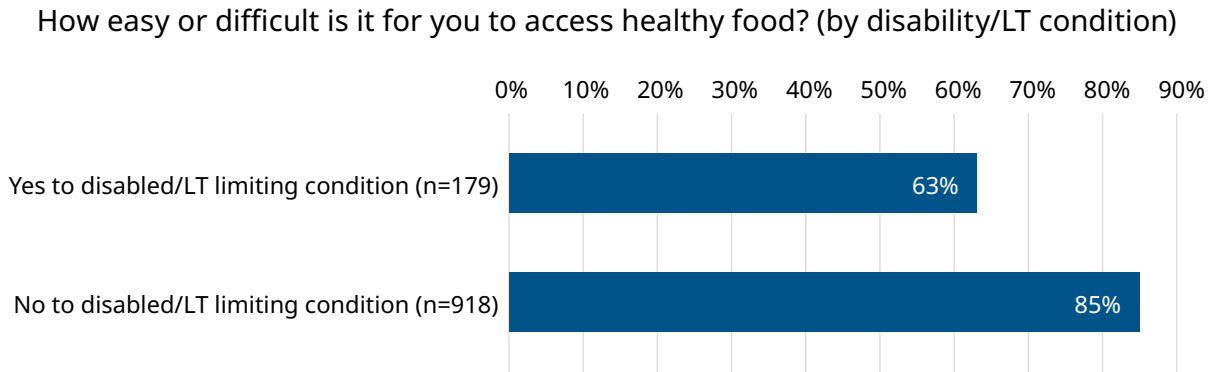


Analysis by age group suggests people in the oldest age groups are more likely to say they can access healthy food. Some 87% of those aged 65 to 74 and 83% of those aged 75 and over find it very easy or easy to do this, compared to 59% of 16 to 29-year-olds, 73% of 30 to 39-year-olds and 74% of those aged 40 to 49.

NB: The number of people providing details of their age as 16 to 29 is small at only 27, and the number in the 30 to 39 age group is also smaller than for other age groups.

A report by the **Food Foundation** finds that 20% of households with children reported experiencing food insecurity (affordability, access, utilisation, and stability) compared to 12.7% of households without children (**Food Foundation, January 2024**).

Figure 10: Access to healthy food by disability or long-term limiting health condition



The results also suggest that those people who consider themselves to be disabled or have a long-term, limiting condition are less likely to say they find it very easy or easy to access healthy food (63%), compared to those people without a disability or condition (85%).

Why do you find it easy or difficult to access healthy food?

There are 1,520 comments from people explaining why they find it easy or difficult to access healthy food. The tables below show the key words or phrases that were most relevant to people (as identified through Natural Language Processing) with examples of what people said.

Accessing Healthy Food	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Choice of food available within shops - positive	828	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Fortunate to live near a market town with proper butchers and greengrocers. Also, several farm shops in the area' • 'live close to several well-stocked shops, and of course also have the option of ordering food online.'
Cost of healthy food	223	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'A lot of the healthy options are way more expensive' • '...the availability and low cost of processed foods outweighs access to and cost of healthy food' • 'Lucky to be able to afford to buy fresh fruit and veg, meat etc. regularly through a mixture of online and in-person shopping.' • 'The cost of food is high. I rely on the food produce and pantry to feed my family.' • 'I forage for edible food and sometimes use Hambleton Community Action Food Pantry scheme. I've also used Community Works Food Bank in the past.'
Skills and knowledge - positive	198	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I have a good understanding of what is healthy and processed food etc so I find it easy to make the right decisions of what to buy in the shop' • '... I am also fairly well educated in food / nutrition which makes it easier to understand what is / isn't healthy and balanced food options and ingredients...'
Choice of food available within shops - negative	136	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Local shops in rural areas don't have some of the items I may need due to a restricted diet. Or if they do, they are at a high price.' • 'There are no close shops, the food is not good quality and it's really expensive' • 'err -'choose to buy healthy food'? Really? Ever lived on minimum wage with 3 children?'

Accessing Healthy Food	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Location and Transport	116	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Most fresh, canned and dried veg is cheap however it's a bit difficult to access cheaper stores as we live rurally and buying things from local shops is expensive. Luckily, we have a car but it costs a lot in petrol to visit cheaper supermarkets which are 30 mins away. If we had to rely on public transport, it would be impossible. However, delivery is available from major supermarkets at a cost.' • 'As I drive, I can visit different stores and farm shops. If I didn't drive, I'd only be able to pick up eggs in this village.'
Skills and knowledge – grow your own	91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I grow my own on an allotment and keep bees.' • 'We grow a lot of our own fruit and vegetables and keep hens ...'
Time to plan - negative	78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Difficult to eat healthy food when working in the office or on events, typically when I am running an event, I can't leave site to get something to eat, and due to long hours on events, it's not always practical to pick up and prepare healthy food to take with me.' • 'Time is the biggest constraint. Time to buy fresh ingredients and time to prepare food from scratch.'
Food Labelling/ Marketing	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • '...food labels are confusing and make it difficult to know what actually is healthy and what isn't - something may be marketed as healthy when actually it's full of sugar (smoothies spring to mind).'
Special consideration	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with access due to special diets
	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with access due to disability or limiting condition

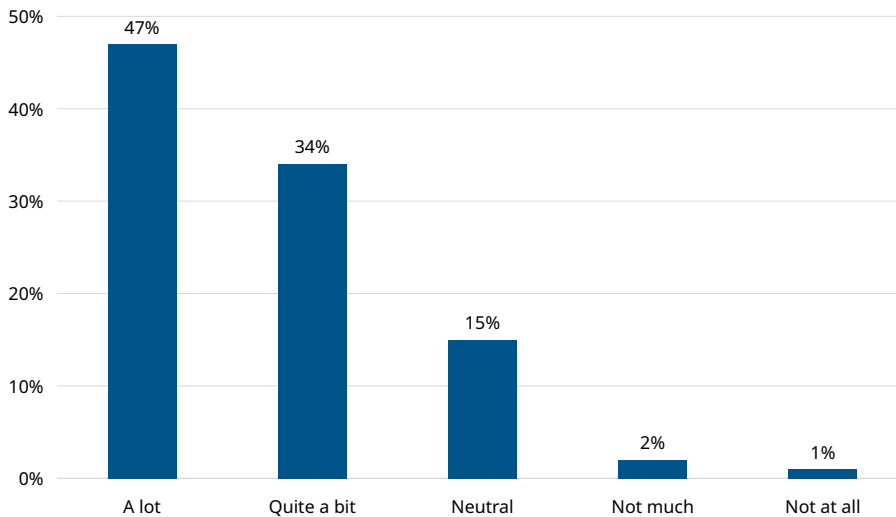
Accessing Healthy Food	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Lack of organic food locally	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Even though we live in rural area there is only one organic local veg shop & milk 'shop' and we struggle to buy unprocessed or organic food in local shops. Ideally meat & other organic / free range food should be made accessible! Veg & fruit at local Helmsley food market never comes from local farmers. And its only ultra-processed food on shelves mostly on co-op or village shops.'
Poor quality of food/limited shelf life	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Supermarkets supply too much from abroad and it goes off very quickly'
Use freezer/freeze food	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I tend to stick to the same meals so cook in bulk and freeze portions, which helps with the ease'
Reliance on catering at work/school	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Sometimes it is hard to get a healthy lunch during the day when I am working'
Support for famers	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I think independent farmers should be encouraged rather than people being paid to leave farming, we should produce more safe food that isn't sprayed with chemicals.'

Wanting to eat healthier food

More than eight-in-ten people say they want to eat healthier food a lot (47%) or quite a bit (34%). Only 3% do not want to do this much or at all.

Figure 11: Wanting to eat healthier food

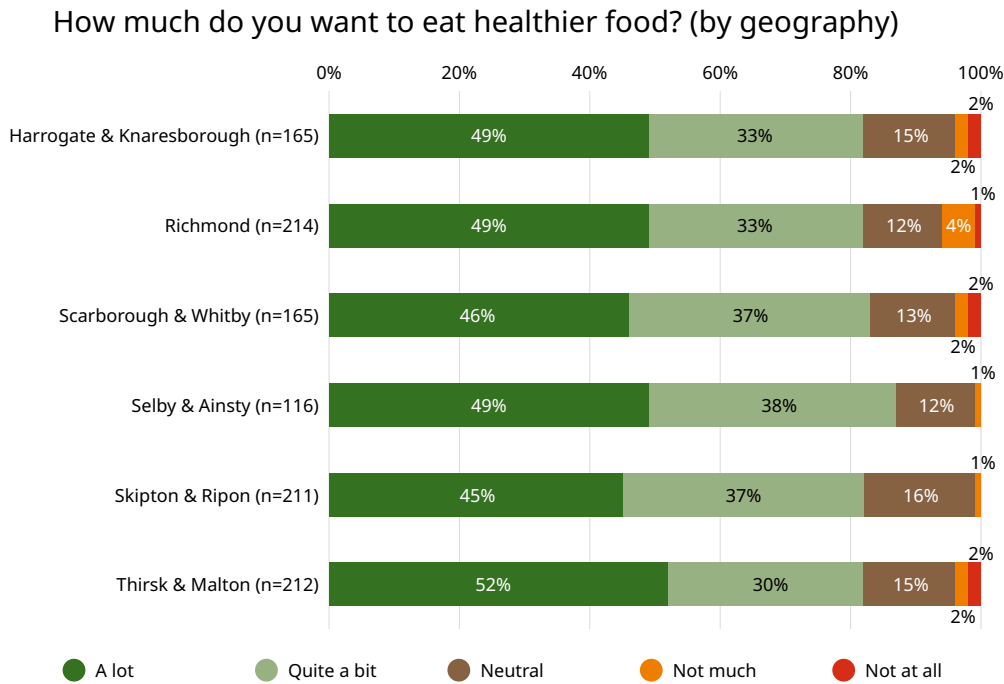
How much do you want to eat healthier food? (n=1625 responses)



- Some 86% of the people who say they want to eat healthier food a lot say they 'very much' or 'mostly' have a healthy and balanced diet (659/770 people).
- More than three-quarters (79%) of those who want to eat healthier food quite a bit say their diet is 'very much' or 'mostly' healthy and balanced (441/560 people).
- Of the people who do 'not much' or 'not at all' want to eat healthier food, more than two-thirds (70%) say they already have a healthy and balanced diet (37/53 people).

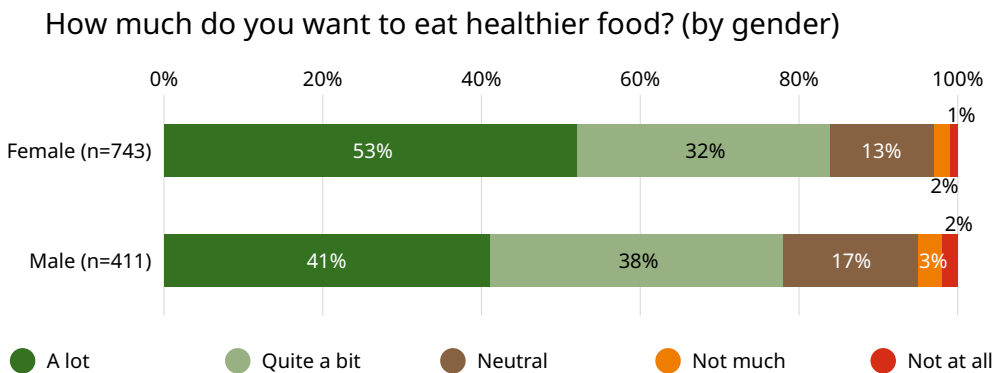
There are some differences in responses by ACC. People in Selby & Ainsty are more likely to want to eat healthier food (87%) than people in other areas.

Figure 12: Wanting to eat healthier food by geography



Female respondents are more likely to want healthier food (85% want this 'a lot' or 'quite a bit'), compared to male respondents (79%).

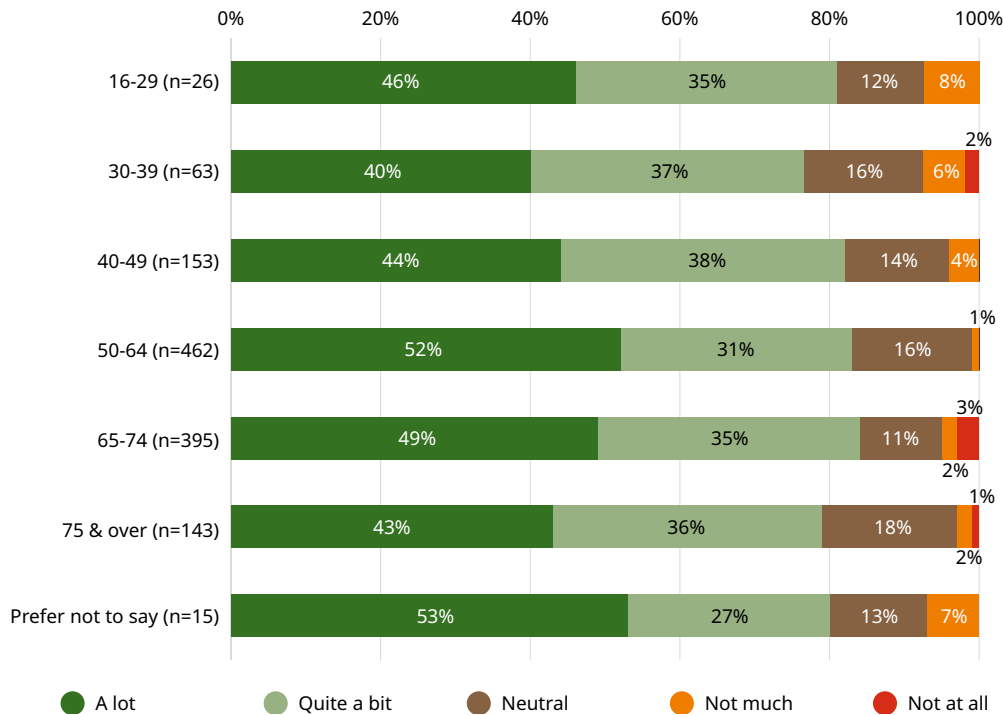
Figure 13: Wanting to eat healthier food by gender



Analysis by age group shows people aged 40-49, 50-64 and 65-74 are slightly more likely to want to eat healthier food.

Figure 14: Wanting to eat healthier food by age group

How much do you want to eat healthier food? (by age group)



NB: The number of people providing details of their age as 16 to 29 is small at only 26 and the number in the 30 to 39 age group is also smaller than for other age groups.

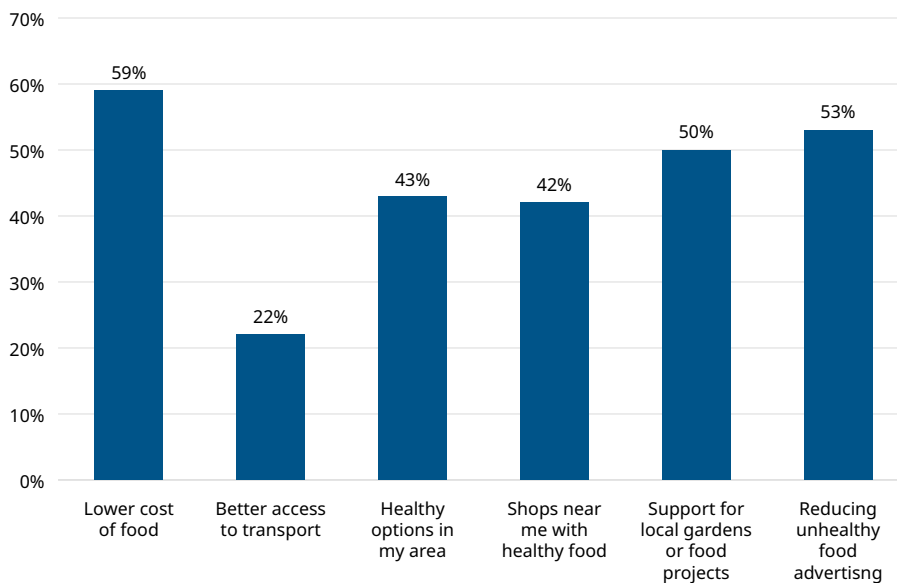
The results also suggest that those people who consider themselves to be disabled or have a long-term, limiting condition are more likely to say they want to healthier food (87%), compared to those people without a disability or condition (83%).

What would make it easier to eat healthy food?

People are most likely to say lowering the cost of food (59%), reducing unhealthy food advertising (53%), and supporting local gardens or food projects (50%) would make it easier to get healthy food.

Figure 15: Making easier to get healthy food

What would make it easier to get healthy food? (n=1562 responses)



There are some differences in the results by age group. For example, older age groups (those aged 65-74 and 75 & over) are least likely to say lower cost of food would make it easier but most likely to say better access to transport would help.

Is there anything else that would make it easier for you to get healthy food?

There are 780 comments with details of what people think would make it easier. This number includes people responding that there is nothing or not much is needed because they feel they are eating healthily or can access healthy food (184 comments).

Many of the comments duplicate the pre-set options in the survey (such as lower cost of food or better transport - as displayed in the chart above), and they provide additional details and explain the reasons for responses.

Most of the comments are from people who find it very easy (260 comments) or easy (340 comments) to access healthy food. There are fewer comments from people who are neutral on this (104 comments) or who find it difficult (38 comments) or very difficult (4 comments) to access healthy food.

What would make it easier to access healthy food?	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Lowering the cost of healthy food or general cost of living pressures	115	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'the prices for healthy food are higher than non-healthy food.' • 'Cost of food gone up a lot lately and my income has reduced. Luckily I know how to cook, but I have to look hard for bargains.'
Education/ knowledge to understand healthy food options or develop cooking skills, and discipline/ willpower to eat healthily (behavioural)	106	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I tend to cook from scratch and work from home so my food choices are easy to make healthier.' • 'A little knowledge how to eat healthy helps.'
Better selection of food available (in shops) particularly local produce	91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'One important point is that our local markets have been hijacked and are not full of local producers!' • 'I would love to be able to buy organic food, to support the farmers (we get eggs and milk from our local farm) and to have accessible prices.. I grow strawberries, salad and we have some fruit trees planted. I shared with all my neighbours and colleagues strawberry plugs and got around 200 plugs that I will share (for free) this year who whoever wants to plant some.'

What would make it easier to access healthy food?	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Better food labelling/ scientific advice about healthy food/advertising healthy/ unhealthy food options	85	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • '...advertisement of unhealthy food directed to children and young teens.' • 'It's only the rubbish stuff that's on special offer, fruit, veg and fresh meat are always full price.'
Support for farmers/farming projects/food producers	57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I think independent farmers should be encouraged rather than people being paid to leave farming, we should produce more safe food that isn't sprayed with chemicals. Little local shops should be encouraged and supported rather than big business.' • 'The cost of buying healthy food is the issue. Supermarkets should not be holding farmers to ransom and small profit but then go onto making huge profits for themselves.'
Tighter regulation of food production/ minimum food quality standards	49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Stricter laws about food production & processing as well as about simple clear & honest labelling to make it easy to accurately identify what you are buying.' • 'Tighter regulations on food production (i.e. organic, removing chemicals and looking after animals humanely and kindly).'
Access to allotments/ community gardens and ability to grow own food	42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'One idea might be drafting local policy that enables people to live off the/their land. Allowing self-build plots/ allotments/community gardens with sufficient space to be reasonably self-sufficient in food and energy for some of the year.' • 'More allotments, more polytunnels, more taps in allotments. There are HUGE waiting lists for allotment places.' • 'Encourage food growing gardeners and allotments to enter a scheme where they can sell and/or donate their surplus produce.' • 'I would love to see more community gardens across the town, nearly every street have a little green space that could be used for this.'

What would make it easier to access healthy food?	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Takeaways/ eating out	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Eating out presents less variety for healthy and low fat/ calorie options, with almost no information available from most cafes & restaurants about the nutritional/calorie/fat content of their menu choices.' • 'I would also like to see less unhealthy take aways in the area, and more healthy options in cafes, pubs and restaurants. There needs to be stricter control on unhealthy foods.'
Better transport services needed	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Better access to larger shops without having to drive.' • 'Better public transport to cheaper healthy food outside the town centre.' • 'Most of the villages don't have a village shop. We really need to travel by car to shop.' • 'Cycle lanes and more footpaths and regular bus services.'
Mobile shop/ better or more affordable local delivery services	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Delivery schemes of healthy produce.' • 'Affordable seasonal fruit & veg boxes.' • 'I live in a rural area with no services. A travelling/mobile shop would be perfect.'
Organic food availability/ organic food grown locally	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Support for local organic producers to help them keep the cost down for the consumer. Incentives for farmers to switch to organic production.' • 'More local organic lower priced food.'
Special dietary requirements	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Making gluten free and vegetarian food more accessible (more widely available and cheaper).' • 'Delivery services like the supermarkets run. Having a mobility problem makes conventional shopping tricky.'
Farmers' market/ stalls/farm shop	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Food markets which are real food markets - not just cakes/ gin/ craft and real farmers and growers selling food direct to the public.' • 'Promote and encourage town markets at times that make them accessible for folk that work. Create a distribution mechanism to allow local farmers to sell directly to public.' • 'Farmer markets are a great source of healthy food options and these should be more available across the county.'

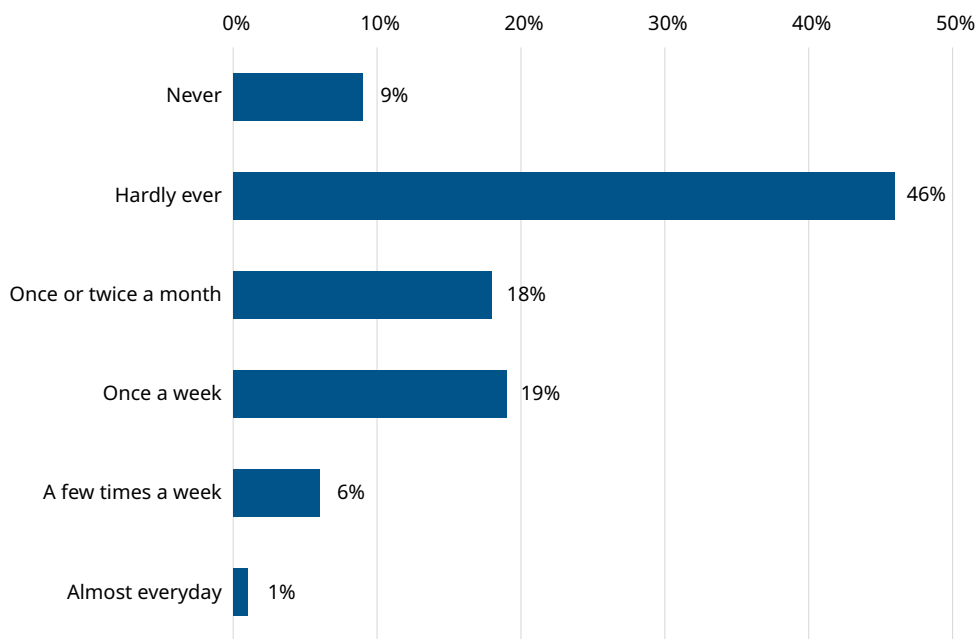
What would make it easier to access healthy food?	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Local markets	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • `Promote and encourage town markets at times that make them accessible for folk that work. Create a distribution mechanism to allow local farmers to sell directly to public.' • `More choice of fruit and veg stalls on the market in town.'
More time needed to shop or plan or cook healthy food	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • `Time! Time to cook more healthy meals. So, ready meals that are healthy - NO additives or ultra processed ingredients.'
Community fridge and other food swap/ community meal projects	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there was a community fridge placed in the town where unwanted produce could be placed instead of it going in the bin. The fridge would ensure the foodstuffs were kept safe.
Tax, or increase the cost of, unhealthy food	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make unhealthy food much more expensive by adding a tax which could be given to NHS as they will be dealing with the people who eat unhealthy food.
Reduce packaging	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in plastic packaging.
School growing/ nutrition/ cooking programmes	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • `...better understanding of food and better education at local level and school on what foods are good and bad.'
Healthier school food and food served in places such as hospitals	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting schools to be able to spend more on healthy food. At the moment low budgets drive cheap, highly processed food with low vegetable content and using cheap meat (unlikely to be from best farming practices).
Changing food buying/eating behaviours	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making better choices. • Just take your time when food shopping and cut-out impulse buying.

Food waste

More than half of the people responding say they 'never' (9%) or 'hardly ever' (46%) throw away unused food, while around a quarter throw away unused food once a week (19%) or more often than this (7%).

Figure 16: Throwing away unused food

How often do you find yourself throwing away unused food? (n=2013 responses)



The survey data doesn't correlate with national data, indicating an under-representation of food waste. From the latest WRAP (Waste Resources Action Programme) national food waste tracker survey completed in Autumn 2023, the proportion of citizens, nationally, who classify as having higher food waste is 26%. On average, self-reported levels of food waste continue to be higher in households struggling with the cost of living; yet this group is not solely responsible for the food wasted. Most food waste is still generated by those who are not struggling and have less economic motivation to reduce it.

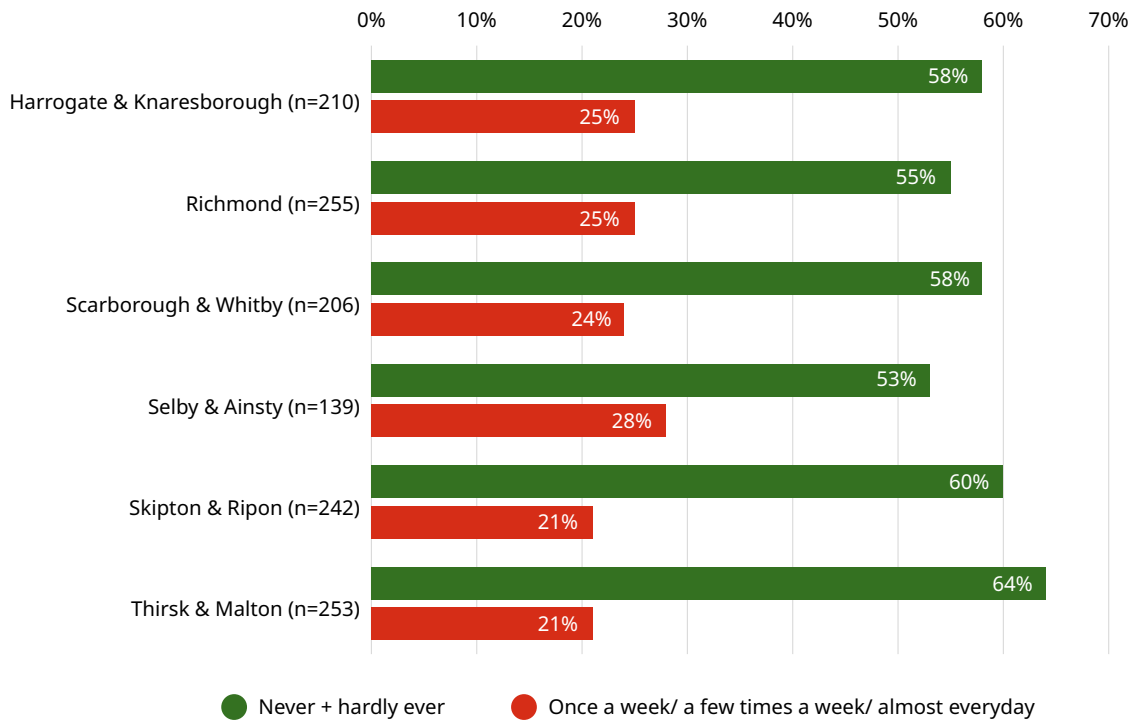
Around 4.7 million tonnes of edible food are thrown away each year by UK households. A quarter (25%) of this wasted food is as a result of people cooking, preparing or serving too much - this costs UK households £4.9 billion each year.

More locally, the latest compositional analysis of kerbside collected residual waste delivered to Allerton Waste Recovery Park in November 2023, found that kitchen food waste made up 15.6% of the sampled bins.

People in Thirsk & Malton (64%) and Skipton & Ripon (60%) are most likely to say they never or hardly ever throw away unused food. People in Selby & Ainsty (53%) and Richmond (55%) are least likely to say this.

Figure 17: Throwing away unused food by ACC

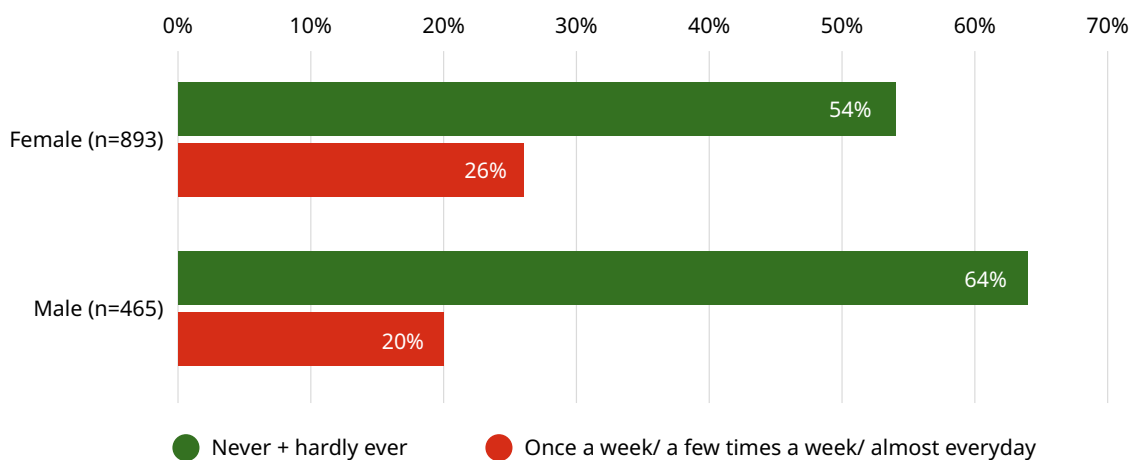
How often do you find yourself throwing away unused food? (by ACC)



Male respondents are more likely to never or hardly ever throw away food (64%) than female respondents (54%).

Figure 18: Throwing away unused food by gender

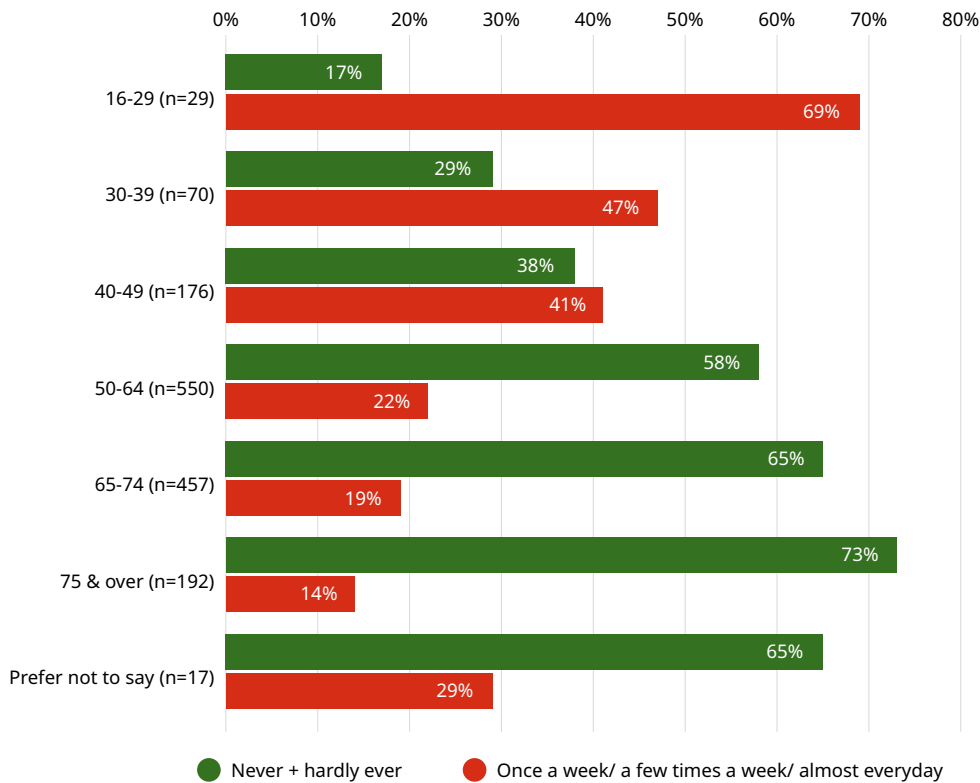
How often do you find yourself throwing away unused food? (by gender)



People in the older age groups are more likely to say they never or hardly ever throw away food.

Figure 19: Throwing away unused food by age group

How often do you find yourself throwing away unused food? (by age group)



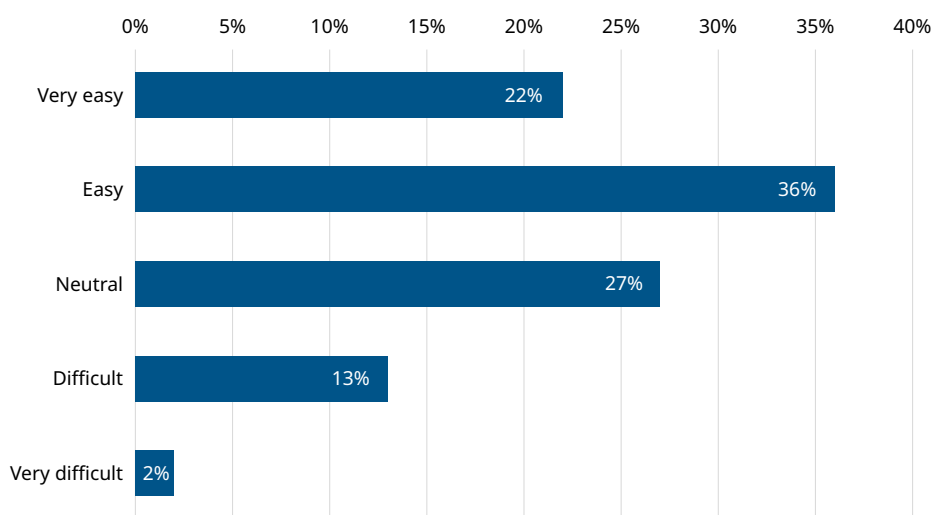
NB: The number providing details of their age as 16 to 29 is small at only 29 people.

Reducing food waste

More than half the people in the survey say they find it 'very easy' (22%) or 'easy' (36%) to reduce their food waste, but nearly one-in-six people find this 'difficult' (13%) or 'very difficult' (2%).

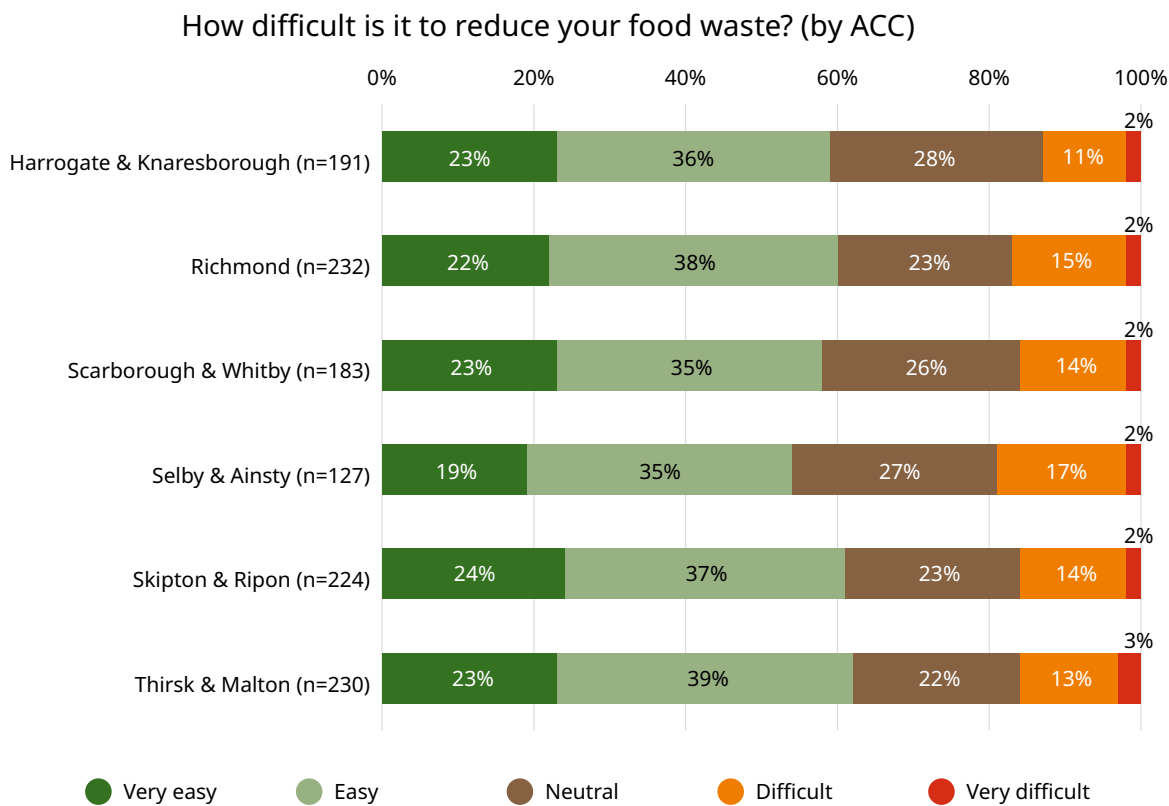
Figure 20: Reducing food waste

How difficult is it to reduce your food waste? (n+1791 responses)



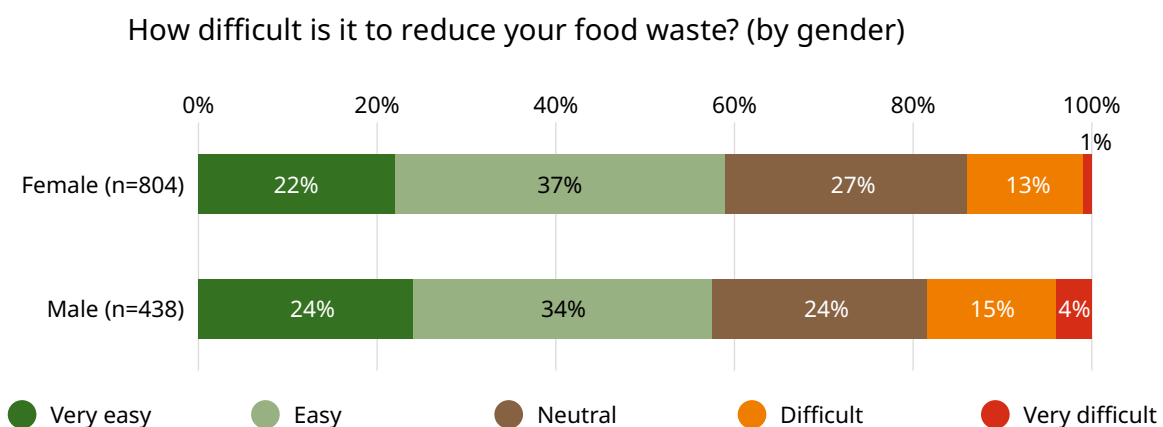
People in Skipton & Ripon and Thirsk & Malton are slightly more likely to find it 'very easy' or 'easy' to reduce their food waste (both 61%) and people in Selby & Ainsty are least likely to say this (54%).

Figure 21: Reducing food waste by ACC



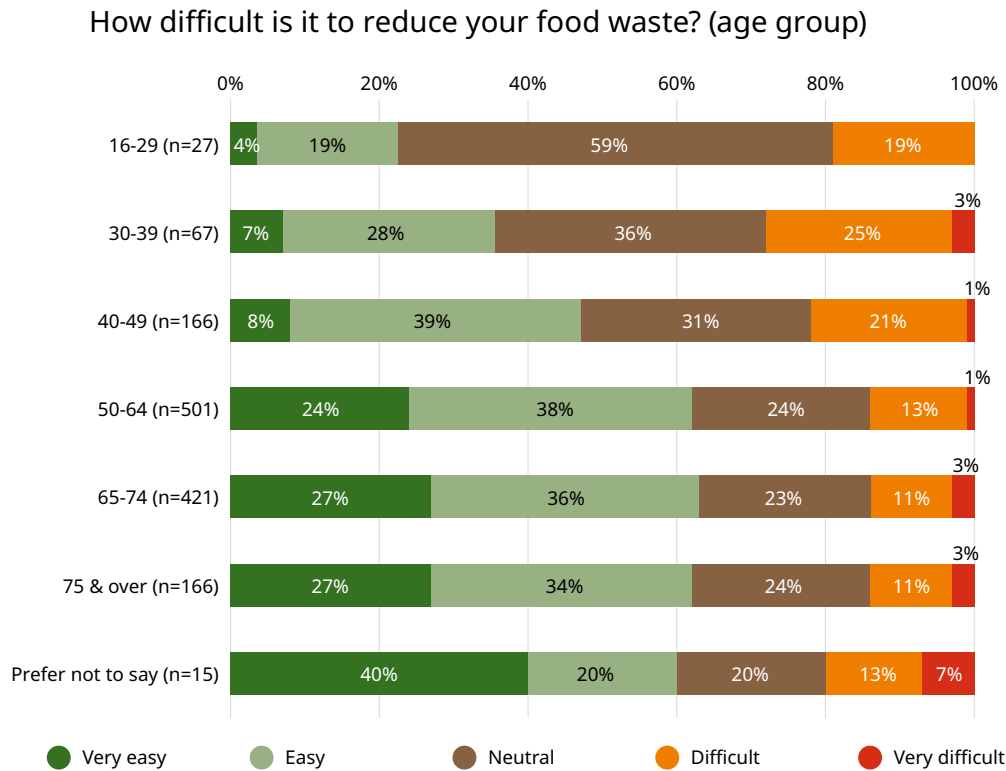
59% of female respondents find it 'very easy' or 'easy' to reduce their food waste, compared to 57% of male respondents.

Figure 22: Reducing food waste by gender



The older age groups are more likely to report finding it 'very easy' or 'easy' to reduce food waste.

Figure 23: Reducing food waste by age group

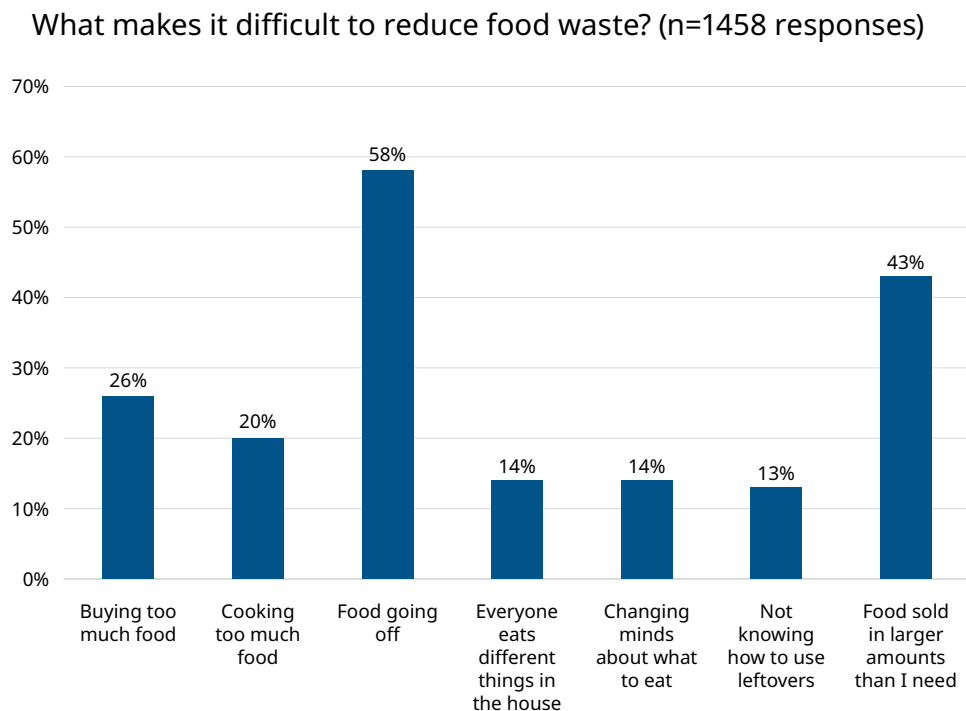


NB: The number providing details of their age as 16 to 29 is small at only 27 people.

What makes it difficult to reduce food waste?

The most common things making it difficult to reduce food waste are **food going off** (58% of responses) and food being **sold in larger amounts than needed** (43%).

Figure 24: Making it difficult to reduce food waste



What would help to reduce your food waste?

There are comments from people who say that nothing would make it easier, or they do not waste anything or waste very little (282 comments including 'not applicable'). Some of these comments provide details of the actions they have taken to reduce their food waste.

Free text comments in relation to what would make it easier for respondents to reduce food waste show the key themes or issues are:

What would help to reduce food waste?	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Smaller amounts of food/loose food should be available	294	<p>Particularly for single people or smaller households, and these smaller amounts to be reasonably priced (recognise that it is often cheaper to buy larger amounts).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'More items being sold singly.' • 'If shops sold more loose items, such as loose carrots rather than a bag of carrots.'
Meal planning and sticking to these plans	165	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'ALWAYS taking a list, and sticking to it!' • 'Eat what you have before buying more.' • 'Planning menus for every meal.'
Longer use/sell by dates for food and understanding of these	144	<p>People have differing views about the use of best before or sell by dates with some people in favour of these to help to judge the age of food and other people in favour of these being removed. There are some comments about short sell by dates for food ordered online and people having no control over this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Store bought fruit and veg not being packed in plastic which seems to reduce drastically the length of time it keeps.' • 'I feel education in the wider public e.g. understanding sell-by/use-by dates and using up leftovers would benefit many.'
Freezing food/ using frozen food	87	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I do not waste much, I freeze extras or split up larger packets and freeze half.' • 'I rarely throw out any food as I only cook what we will eat, I have a freezer and adequate fridge.'

What would help to reduce food waste?	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Composting of food waste	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'If I have food waste it's veg. So I compost it.' • 'I use a compost bin for organic food waste so it's not really a problem. These could be provided to all households free of charge to reduce food waste going to landfill.'
Using leftovers	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'More education on using up leftovers and planning meals to avoid waste.' • 'I make soup with excess vegetables. Freeze extra portions for another day. Smaller quantities can be used for lunch the next day.'
Buying less food	59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Shopping more regularly and reducing amounts purchased'. • 'Buying only what I need.'
Education around using and storing food/avoiding waste	55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I know how to make a shopping list, based upon the meals I intend to make. I also understand how to use leftovers. Finally, I understand the meaning of best before dates. Why do so many people not seem to have these skills? What are we teaching our children?'
Quality of food	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Food actually lasting as long as it says it should.' • 'I find that the quality of fruit and vegetables varies a lot and sometimes it goes off very quickly and has to be thrown away/composted.'
Family members eating the same food or being picky	38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Kids being less fussy about what they eat.' • 'My family sticking to a set menu and all eating the same foods!'
Easier access to shops/local shops or deliveries	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Living closer to shops' • 'More shops in local area so bulk buying is unnecessary.'
Promotional offers encourage over buying of food	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Supermarkets put too many offers on food, which means you end up buying larger amounts than you need.'

What would help to reduce food waste?	Free text feedback	
	Individual contributions (n)	Example feedback
Recycling and collection of food waste (including packaging)	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food recycling like they do in other authorities, so it is not just going into the bin and into landfill.'
More time needed to shop (more frequently), plan or cook	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Shopping more frequently, little and often. I live in a village with no shops, work full time, no time to shop more frequently.' 'More time to plan food going out of date in the fridge.'
Smaller portions when cooking or eating out	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Getting used to portion sizes now I am getting older and eat less.' 'Smaller portions especially in restaurants.'
Cooking less food	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Cook smaller meals.'
Special dietary requirements/ illness/disability	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My family have health problems so I might buy certain food for a meal and they are unable to eat it.

‘Smaller amounts of food/loose food should be available’

This supports national calls to provide loose food to reduce food waste. WRAP research has shown that if all apples, bananas and potatoes were sold loose, we could save 60,000 tonnes of food waste by enabling people to buy closer to their needs. The theme for WRAP’s Food Waste Action Week 2024 encouraged citizens to ‘**Choose What You’ll Use**’, highlighting the benefits of buying loose fruit and vegetables and inspiring people to do this wherever they can. WRAP will continue to deliver on this focused topic beyond the campaign.

‘Longer use/sell by dates for food and understanding of these’

There has been some progress on this issue, nationally. In November 2019 WRAP updated their guidance on food labelling: **WRAP Food Labelling Guidance Toolkit 2019** and produced a report on **Citizen insights on ‘Use By’ and ‘Best Before’ dates on dairy products**. As a result of these several dairy businesses have switched, or are considering switching, date labels from ‘Use By’ to ‘Best Before’ on milk and yogurt to help their customers to use these products safely for longer and reduce waste in the home.

WRAP Food labelling guidance_2023_UNCUT_FRESH.pdf was also produced to encourage selling fresh produce loose. With the three recommendations:

Sell loose - where possible, unless it is shown that plastic packaging reduces overall food waste.

Remove date labels - unless it can be shown that a Best Before date reduces overall food waste.

Refrigerate below 5 degrees centigrade at home - help customers understand the benefits of storing appropriate fresh produce in the fridge, set at the right temperature.

4.0 Survey respondent characteristics

People were asked for their connection to North Yorkshire and were able to choose several options. Most people completing the survey are residents of the county. Participants also included people who work, study, or represent organisations in the county.

Connection to the area

Connection to the area	No. of responses	% sample
I live here	892	92%
I work here	323	33%
I work for the local authority	116	12%
I run a business here	76	8%
I represent an organisation here	56	6%
I study here	15	2%
Number responding	968	

What is your age group?

The data available shows that responses are over representative of older age population groups

Age range	No. of responses	% sample	% population
16-29	29	2%	16%
30-39	71	5%	13%
40-49	176	12%	14%
50-64	558	37%	27%
65-74	466	31%	16%
75 and over	195	13%	14%
Prefer not to say	17		
No response	541		
Overall total	2053		

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person or to have a long-term, limiting condition?

The data available on disability and long-term limiting health conditions suggests that the survey sample is broadly representative of the wider North Yorkshire population (ONS 2021).

Disability or long term, limiting condition	No. of responses	% sample
Yes	213	17%
No	1,007	80%
Prefer not to say	41	3%
Number responding	1,261	

Gender profiles

Gender	No. of responses	% sample
Female	907	65%
Male	471	34%
I describe myself in another way	5	>1
Prefer not to say	20	1%
Total response	1,403	
No response	650	

ACC area

Selby & Ainsty is underrepresented in the responses, with 11% of the participants indicating that they live within this ACC. The proportion of responses from the other ACCs is broadly in line with their respective populations.

ACC area	No. of responses	% sample	% population
Harrogate & Knaresborough	213	16%	17%
Richmond	259	19%	18%
Scarborough & Whitby	211	16%	16%
Selby & Ainsty	142	11%	17%
Skipton & Ripon	247	19%	16%
Thirsk & Malton	259	19%	17%
	1,331		
Outside North Yorkshire	92		
Total response	1,423		
No response	630		

Employment status

Of those answering the question, half are retired, which reflects the predominant age groups of those responding.

Employment status	No. of responses	% sample
Retired	748	50%
Working full time	337	22%
Working part time	243	16%
Self-employed	132	9%
Zero-hour contract	13	1%
Student	14	1%

Employment status	No. of responses	% sample
Apprenticeship/training	4	1%
Unemployed	17	1%
Full-time carer	20	1%
Part-time carer	28	2%
Total response	1,502	
No response	551	

What is your ethnic group?

The data available on ethnic group suggests that the survey sample is representative of the wider North Yorkshire population.

Of the 1,258 responses to this question, 98% (1,239) are from people saying their ethnic group is White (all groups).

The 2021 Census data shows the population of North Yorkshire is 96.7% White, 1.4% Asian/Asian British, 1.1% Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, 0.5% other ethnic group, and 0.4% Black/Black British, Caribbean or African.

What is already happening in North Yorkshire?

Here's some examples of the things we are already doing as food system partners:

Healthy Food Access

- **Community Food Projects and Networks**
Welcome to Craven Food Partnership
- **Food Access models** evaluation and recommendations *York and North Yorkshire Covid Recovery Insight Project: Food Insecurity – Just another WordPress site (skyblue.org.uk)*
- **Rethink Project** – Selby schools based regenerative growing and behaviour change project

Food waste

- **North Yorkshire Rotters** – school and community engagement
North Yorkshire Rotters
- **Love Food Hate Waste** national campaign
Love Food Hate Waste/Preventing food waste

Systems and partnerships

- **Engagement with Fix Our Food** programme and newly formed Fix Our Food Commission to develop North Yorkshire's position on transforming the food system
Home - Fix Our Food
- **Engagement with BiteBack** – national youth advocacy
Home - Bite Back (biteback2030.com)

What's next?

The Let's Talk Food survey is a part of an ongoing series of conversations with people from across the food system and will help North Yorkshire Council and a range of partner organisations and community groups to develop a food action plan supporting accessible, sustainable and nutritious food across the county.

Next steps include:

- **Working with partners from all parts of the food system** to develop aims, objectives and actions for 'Food for the Future' – this will be our action plan for food in North Yorkshire.
- **Continuing local conversations** with (but not exclusive to) our farming community, our younger people (the next generation), local food partnerships, people who have experience of food insecurity, and small to medium sized enterprises. This will help us make sure the actions we take forward are the right ones across the food system.
- **Working with the 'Fix Our Food' programme** to strengthen North Yorkshire's voice in improving the food system. This is a multi-disciplinary research programme, anchored at the University of York, which aims to transform the Yorkshire food system to one that is regenerative – benefitting both human and planetary health. fixourfood.org/commission

Contact us

Online: northyorks.gov.uk/contactus

If you would like an alternative version of this document, please call **0300 131 2 131** and say 'Let's Talk' when prompted.

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