

Food Waste Avoidance Benchmark Study 2009

At a glance



Households spend an average of \$1,036 per year on food that is wasted; across NSW this totals \$2.5 billion.



Food is wasted when we:

- **buy** more than needed
- **cook** too much
- **store** food incorrectly
- throw away leftovers.

The people who waste the most food are:

- **young consumers** (aged 18–24)
- **households with incomes more than \$100,000 per year**
- **families with children.**

Background

To better understand community knowledge, attitudes and behaviours about household food waste 1,200 NSW households were surveyed as part of the *Food Waste Avoidance Benchmark Study 2009*.

The survey was delivered online in December 2009 and was completed by NSW residents, aged 16 and older, who were mainly or equally responsible for buying and managing food in their household. The *Food Waste Avoidance Benchmark Study 2009* represents the most comprehensive and up to date analysis of community knowledge, attitudes and behaviours conducted about food waste in NSW.

The research findings have been used to develop the NSW *Love Food Hate Waste* program which aims to minimise food wastage in the home. This research is the first of a series of analyses that will monitor the food waste-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of the NSW community from 2009 to 2012.

NSW households waste more than \$1,036 worth of food per year

Survey participants were asked to estimate the cost of food their household throws away each week.

Average weekly household food waste in NSW (\$ dollars)



On average, this adds up to \$1,036 per household per year, or \$2.5 billion across NSW.



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Waste less food, save money and our environment

People waste food because they buy and cook too much, and don't store food correctly

When we asked people why they wasted food, participants gave a number of reasons under the broad food-related categories of buying, cooking and storing. Some of the most popular responses within each category are in the table below.

	Behaviour	% of respondents
Buying	I think I need more than I actually do	61
	I'm tempted by special offers	44
Cooking	I prefer to serve too much rather than not enough	48
	I find it hard to estimate how much to cook per person	32
Storing	I'm unsure about the best way to store different types of food	60
	I forget about leftovers	63

Who wastes the most food?

While we all waste some food, the top three food wasting groups in NSW are young consumers (aged 18–24), higher income households (incomes more than \$100,000 per year) and families with children. On average these groups waste \$24.90–\$26 worth of food per week.

Young consumers are:

- more likely to feel that a busy lifestyle makes it hard to avoid wasting food
- more likely to throw away food that has passed its 'best before' date (regardless of quality)
- less likely to consider whether food will be eaten (at time of purchase)
- less likely to shop to a set budget.

Households with incomes more than \$100,000 per year are:

- more likely to make extra just in case
- more likely to use leftover food for other meals
- less likely to have members of the household eat the same meal
- less likely to consider portion sizes when cooking.

Families with children are:

- more likely to do one large shop
- more likely to buy items on special and in bulk
- less likely to check 'best before' and 'use by' dates when shopping
- less likely to make meals from assorted ingredients that need using up.

People are prepared to take steps to reduce food waste

Respondents were asked which actions they would be willing to take to reduce food wastage in their household.

Respondents acknowledged that they are:

- willing to **buy** only what they need
- **cook** only what they need
- change the way they **store** food
- **write a shopping list** based on a menu plan.

Actions that respondents are willing to take



Love Food Hate Waste

To tackle household food waste, the NSW Government has developed the *Love Food Hate Waste* program. The program aims to raise awareness about the environmental and financial impacts of food waste in NSW and to reduce the amount of 'good' food being sent to landfill. By promoting easy and practical solutions for buying, cooking and storing food, *Love Food Hate Waste* will help the NSW community to prevent food waste, save time and money, and reduce our impact on the environment.

For more information, please visit lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au

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