

Oldest Americans most focused on reducing food waste

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

FOOD LITERACY & ENGAGEMENT POLL

The vast majority of Americans are paying attention to reducing food waste with the oldest being the most cognizant, according to the latest Michigan State University (MSU) Food Literacy and Engagement Poll. Credit: © MSU AgBioResearch

The vast majority of Americans are paying attention to reducing food waste with the oldest being the most cognizant, according to the [latest Michigan State University \(MSU\) Food Literacy and Engagement Poll](#).

The fourth wave of this [poll](#), conducted Jan. 15-21, 2019, surveyed 2,090 Americans on their attitudes and knowledge of [food](#) issues. The results were released today at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting.

The majority of all Americans (88 percent) say they take steps to reduce [food waste](#) at home. This includes 94 percent of consumers age 55 and older and 81 percent of those under 30 years old.

Among respondents who make efforts to reduce food [waste](#):

- Seventy-one percent said they try not to purchase excess food.
- Seventy-one percent said they often consume food before it spoils.
- Thirty-four percent share excess food when possible.

Of the 12 percent of Americans who say they do not take steps to reduce food waste at home:

- Thirty-one percent say they do not waste food.
- Twenty-three percent are not familiar with the term "food waste."
- Twenty-one percent do not know how to reduce food waste.

- Twenty percent are not concerned about it.
- Eighteen percent do not have the time.

This fourth wave of the survey revealed that 41 percent of Americans correctly recognize that 31-50 percent of the food annually produced in the United States goes to waste, including 44 percent of those age 55 and older and 36 percent of those under 30 years old.

"Older Americans pay the closest attention to limiting food waste compared to their peers," said [Sheril Kirshenbaum](#), co-director of the MSU Food Literacy and Engagement Poll. "Previous waves of the survey have revealed this group also performs best on general food literacy questions."

Additional survey highlights include:

- Forty-eight percent of Americans say they never, rarely, or aren't sure how often they consume genetically modified organisms, often called GMOs.
- Forty-nine percent say they never or rarely seek information about where their food was grown or how it was produced, with an additional 15 percent responding once a month.
- Forty-one percent would be willing to buy a GMO-derived fruit or vegetable that stayed fresh longer than currently available produce.

"These findings continue to expand our insights into the attitudes and behaviors of consumers," said poll co-director [Doug Buhler](#), director of [MSU AgBioResearch](#). "Given the challenges ahead in feeding more people while preserving our natural resources and protecting our climate, getting a handle on the causes and remedies of food waste is key to meeting global food demand. It takes months to produce food, but we can waste it in an instant."

For more information about the MSU Food Literacy and Engagement Poll, visit food.msu.edu/poll.

Data from the MSU Food Literacy and Engagement Poll were weighted using U.S. Census Bureau figures, to ensure the sample's composition reflects the actual U.S. population. Launched in 2017, the poll was developed by [Food@MSU](#) and is supported by MSU AgBioResearch. The survey, conducted twice per year, is intended to provide an objective, authoritative look at consumer attitudes and perspectives on key food issues, and is designed to help inform national discussion, business planning and policy development.

Provided by Michigan State University College of Agriculture & Natural Resources

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