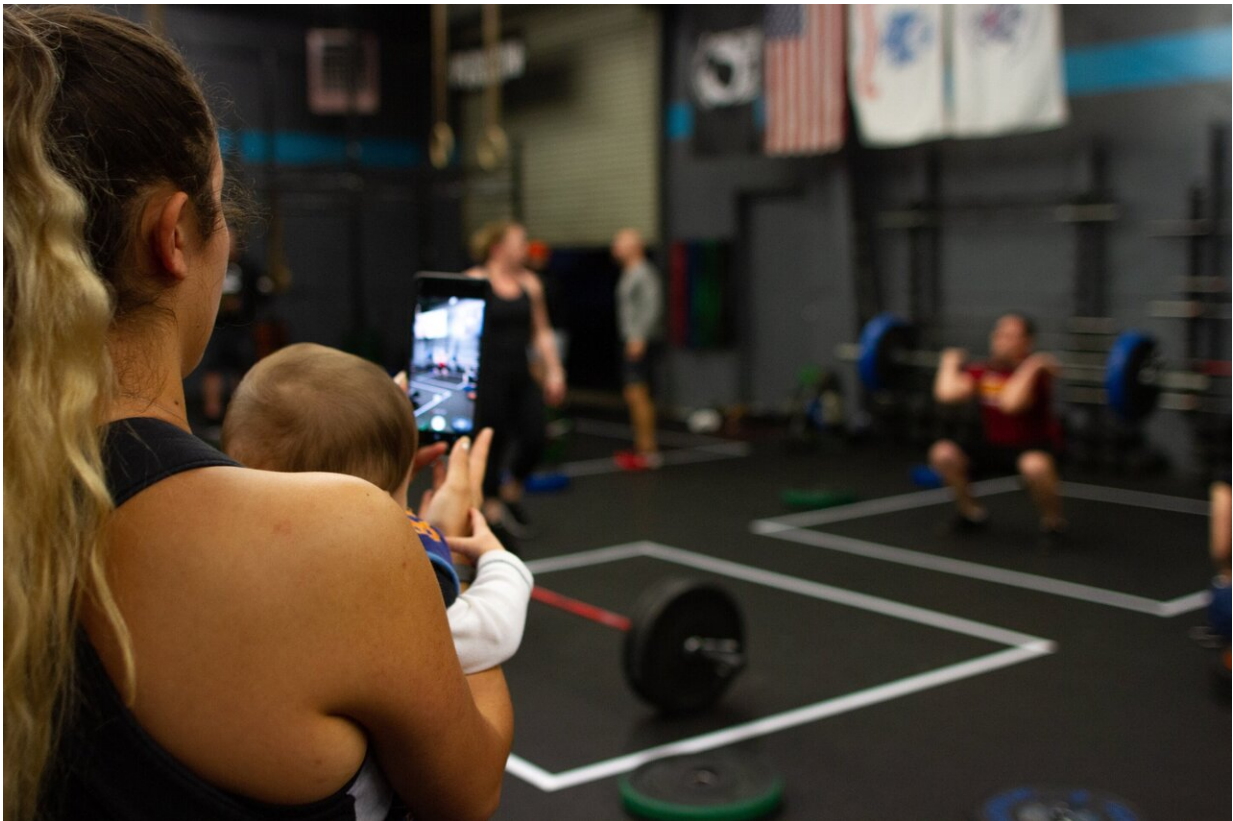


Food FOMO contributing to Gen Z food waste

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Young people want to make spontaneous and diverse food choices, which is driving up food waste in 'Gen Z' homes according to a new research project.

The EIT Food-funded project, Cook Clever, surveyed 18-25 year olds about their [food habits](#) and found that many of the participants said that they experienced fear of missing out (FOMO), impulsive [food](#) cravings and a feeling that they need to be regularly eating new and different meals.

The researchers also found that [young people](#) were put off from eating leftovers and having a strict meal plan, which contribute to the potential for food waste.

Dr. Natalie Masento, an applied psychologist and lead researcher on the project from the University of Reading said:

"We've known for some time that household food waste needs to be reduced, in recent years we've seen growing number of initiatives such as community fridges and food sharing apps to try and tackle the issue which is a good first step, however these initiatives are not taking into account different age groups and their specific challenges when it comes to food.

"What we've found from our studies with generation Z is that they have specific drives and habits when it comes to food, they want new and exciting meals and are very opposed to suggestions of being more resourceful with leftovers. This has implications when we are thinking about how to get them to engage in less wasteful behaviour.

"Traditionally there has been a focus on planning food and using up ingredients and leftovers, but this approach may not be the best way to encourage generation z to reduce their food waste if they want something impulsive and new for every meal. With this in mind when we are working on initiatives and solutions to reduce food waste we can consider a more specialised approach for this age group, and we hope in the next phase of our project we can do just that."

Young adults also highlighted that their current lifestyle with shared kitchens whilst at university, limited access to big supermarkets without a car and demanding schedules, also made cooking and regular food routines more difficult which is why convenient options such as deliveries or impulsive dinner purchases were more appealing.

Cook Clever brings together psychologists, consumer scientists, food industry representatives and app developers across Europe to try and tackle the growing problem of household food waste.

Currently, one third of all food produced globally is wasted, contributing 8% of man-made greenhouse gases, more even than the entire air transport industry in 2019. In the UK alone over 7million tonnes of food are wasted within consumer homes. Identifying the causes of waste and how we can engage the public to reduce their waste levels is of growing importance.

Dr. Lilly Da Gama, a food waste specialist and researcher on the project from the University of Reading, said:

"With Gen Z being framed as the sustainability generation we might have expected to see a greater level of engagement with in-home activism, such as trying to reduce food [waste](#).

"We can see from the discussions that there is some level of consciousness towards minimising [food waste](#), however these results suggest that a host of personal desires, preferences and day-to-day issues are preventing a greater level of engagement with the issue."

Provided by University of Reading

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