

STUDENT EATS!



Student Eats Evaluation

Baseline survey | Student summary report



Introduction

Student Eats is a project led by the NUS, and funded by the Big Lottery Local Food Fund, supporting 18 institutions across the UK in cultivating their own student-led growing sites for fruit and vegetables.

The project has the following aims and objectives:

- To turn areas of campuses into versatile growing areas by installing a range of gardening equipment, infrastructure and horticultural expertise.
- To develop growing sites that are used to grow produce for the team of dedicated students, staff and members of the local community that volunteer in the project. Surplus produce will be sold to the wider student population, at an affordable price to include students with low income backgrounds, and even to the campus catering service.
- To give students (and other volunteers) the chance to learn about the ethical and environmental impact of their food choices, taking into account ethnic and exotic crops reflecting the often broad demographic of the student population in each participating institution.
- To strengthen links with the local community through involvement in the growing projects, with each project aiming to partner with an off-campus community group by offering food growing demonstration sessions, volunteering opportunities and cookery events.

The institutions taking part in Student Eats in 2012-13 are:

[Bradford College and Students' Union](#)

[University of Cumbria and Students' Union](#)

[University of East London and Students' Union](#)

[Edge Hill University and Students' Union](#)

[University of Exeter and Students' Guild](#)

[University of Greenwich and Students' Union](#)

[Keele University and Students' Union](#)

[Lancaster University and Students' Union](#)

[Leeds City College and Students' Union](#)

[Newcastle University and Students' Union](#)

[Reading University and Students' Union](#)

[University of Sheffield and Union of Students](#)

[Staffordshire University and Students' Union](#)

[University of Sussex and Students' Union](#)

[Walsall College and Students' Union](#)

[University of Warwick and Students' Union](#)

[Warwickshire College and Students' Association](#)

[University of Wolverhampton and Students' Union](#)

To monitor and evaluate the impact of the Student Eats project we are carrying out a number of surveys throughout the course of the project. These surveys will also help us make sure each project is tailored to the needs of the students (and staff) at their institution by assessing the attitudes and behaviours towards food at the start and the end of each project year. The results presented here are the student responses to the baseline survey carried out in October 2012. The surveys were distributed online by the participating institutions and in selected cases through the NUS Extra database.



Survey demographics

Respondents to the Student Eats survey are, in general, from the UK (69.0%, n=2357). There was a spread of data over the various years of university study (first year, 31.9% (n=1002), second year 20.0% (n=628), third/fourth (final year) 23.1% (n=728). 25.0% (n=3145) of respondents were Postgraduate students, studying for Masters (15.9%, n=500) and Doctorates (9.1%, n=287), respectively, and 62.9% are white British (n=1616).

A large proportion of respondents (45.3%, n=2588) attend University of Sheffield (Figure 1); the results have therefore been weighted to normalise responses for the rest of the results. Respondents generally studied a wide range of subject courses and degrees.

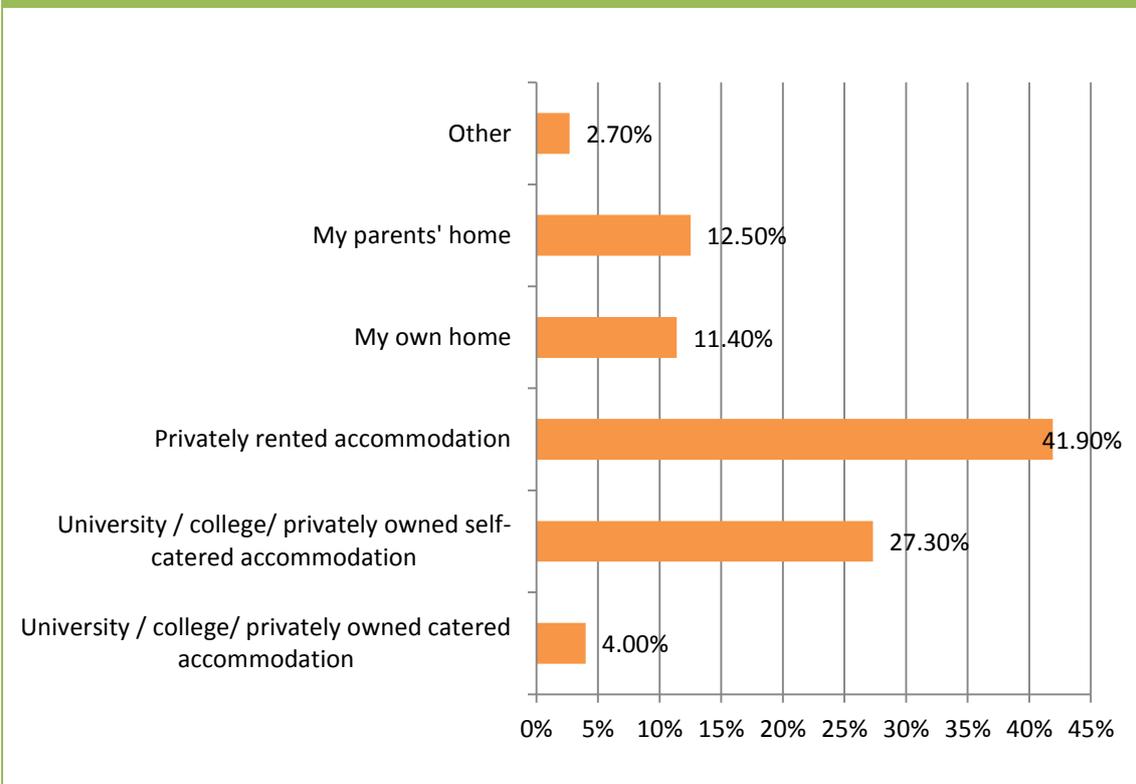
Figure 1: Respondents by university (n=2588)

University	Respondents
Bradford College	0.4%
University of Cumbria	1.5%
University of East London	0.3%
Edge Hill University	1.2%
University of Exeter	12.0%

University of Greenwich	1.9%
Keele University	17.2%
Lancaster University	1.6%
Leeds City College	0.2%
Newcastle University	4.0%
Reading University	5.4%
University of Sheffield	45.3%
Staffordshire University	2.6%
University of Sussex	2.3%
Walsall College	0.9%
University of Warwick	2.7%
Warwickshire College	0.1%
University of Wolverhampton	0.5%

71.5% of the survey respondents are female (n=2560) and 69.2% are between 16 and 24 years of age (n=2567). As female students are over-represented (56%¹ of students, undergraduate and postgraduate, in the UK are female) and significant differences between male and female responses has been highlighted throughout the report. During term time, just under half of respondents (41.9%, n=2581) live in privately rented accommodation (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Living arrangements during term time (n=2581)



¹ <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1897/239/>



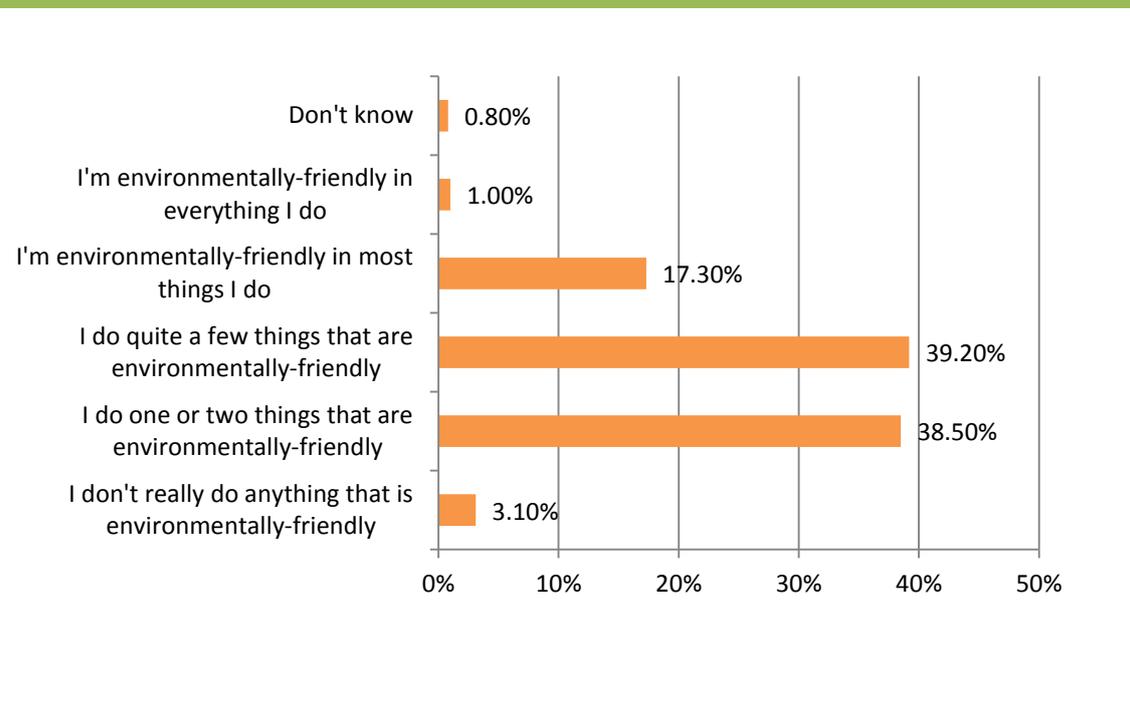
Results

Lifestyles and influences

The vast majority of student respondents report conducting a number of environmental behaviours (Figure 3). 39.2% (n=1011) state that they do a few things that are environmentally friendly, and 38.5% (n=993) say that they do one or two things that are environmentally friendly. Only 3.1% (n=81) of respondents say that they don't really do anything that is environmentally friendly.

It was also found that female respondents are significantly more likely than males to conduct one or two things that are environmentally friendly (41% (n=749) compared to 32.7 (n=229)).

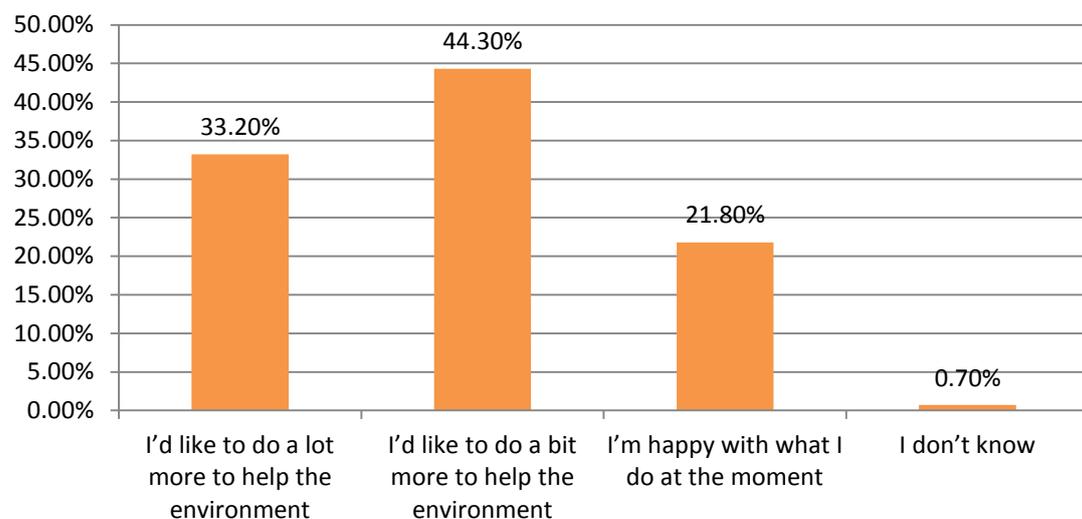
Figure 3: Which of these statements would you say best describes your current lifestyle? (n=2577)



Almost half of respondents (44.3%, n=1145) feel that they would like to do a bit more to help the environment and 33.2% (n=858) feel that they would like to do a *lot* more to help the environment (Figure 4). This gives a great opportunity to promote behaviour change and support these desires.

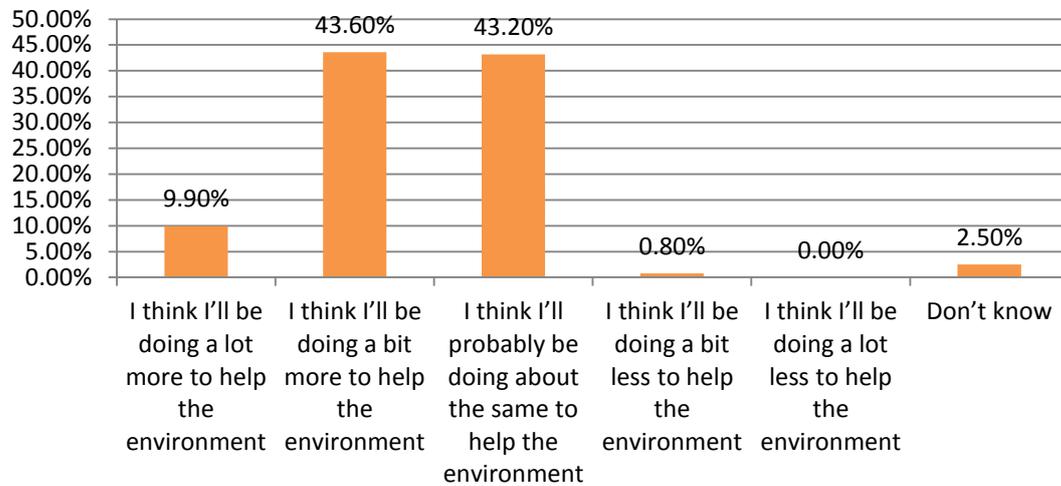
Female respondents are significantly more likely to want to do more to help the environment than male respondents (35.8%, n=653 compared to 27.1%, n=192) and male respondents are significantly more likely to be happy with what they do for the environment at the moment than female respondents (27.7%, n=196 compared to 19.1%, n=347).

Figure 4: Which of these statements best describes how you feel about your current lifestyle and the environment? (n=2582)



Following on from this, over half of respondents (53.5%, n=1383) envisage doing more to help the environment in the future (Figure 5), again indicating an opportunity for interventions to promote behaviour change and support these intentions.

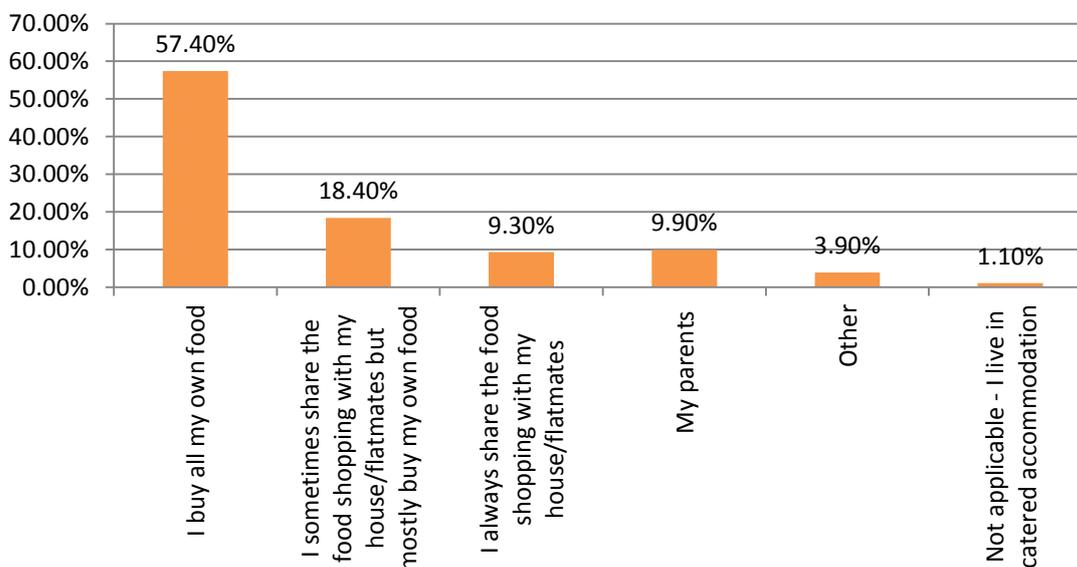
Figure 5: Which of these statements best describes how you think you will be living in a year's time? (n=2585)



Purchasing food

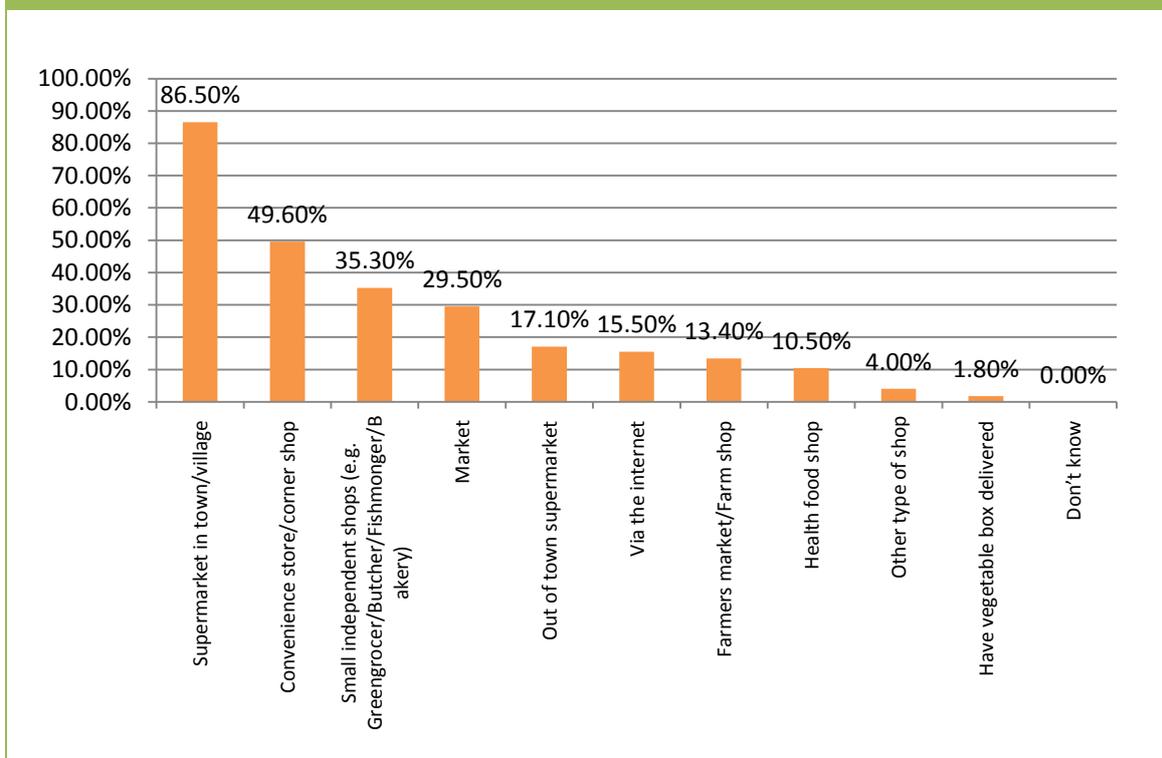
Figure 6 shows that over half (57.4%, n=1485) of respondents are responsible for buying all of their own food, only 9.9% (n=255) reporting no responsibility for food shopping. This confirms that students are the right audience to target to encourage a shift in purchasing behaviour surrounding food towards locally grown produce at their institution through Student Eats.

Figure 6: Who is responsible for doing the main food shopping where you live? (n=2587)



Perhaps unsurprisingly, supermarkets are the key location for food shopping amongst the respondent population. Figure 7 demonstrates that the majority of respondents (86.5%, n=2235) shop at supermarkets in their town/village at least once a month. 35.3% (n=910) of respondents shop at least once a month at small independent shops and female respondents are significantly more likely to do this than male respondents (37.4%, n=682 compared to 27.5%, n=192).

Figure 7: At which of these types of shop do you do food shopping at least once a month? (n=2582)



In terms of where the majority of respondents carry out most of their food shopping, Figure 8 shows that this was again supermarkets in their town/village (71.60%, n=1833) and out of town supermarkets (11.4%, n=291). All other options received a response rate of less than 5%.

Figure 8: Where do you do most of your food shopping? (n=2560)

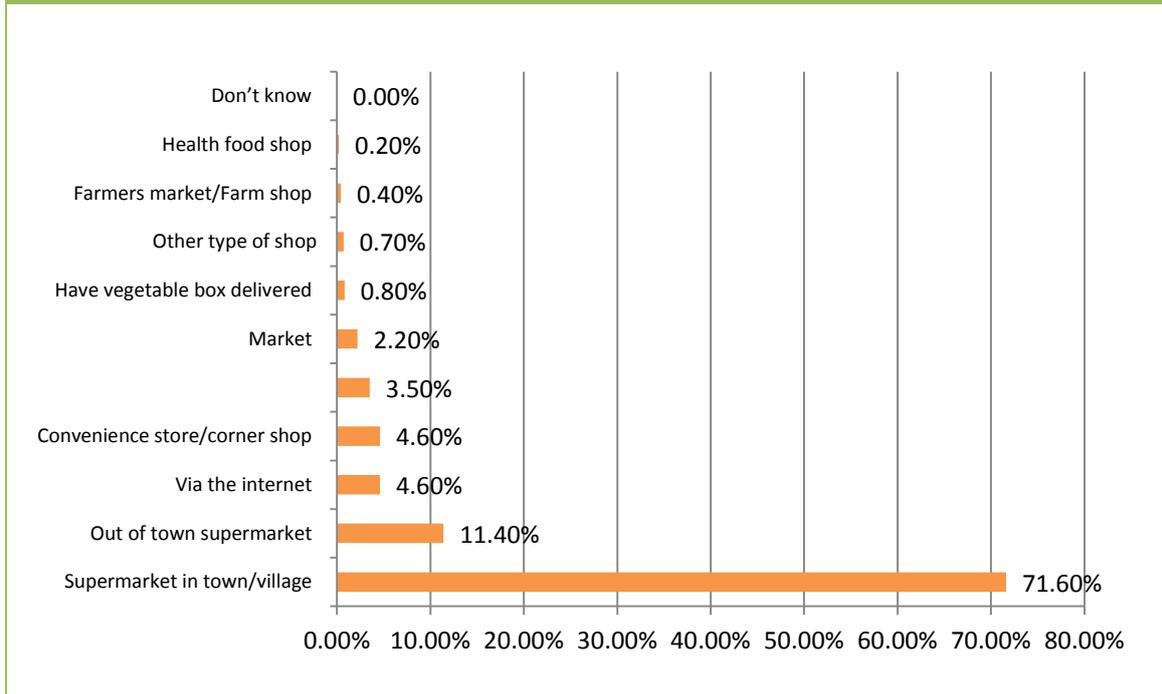
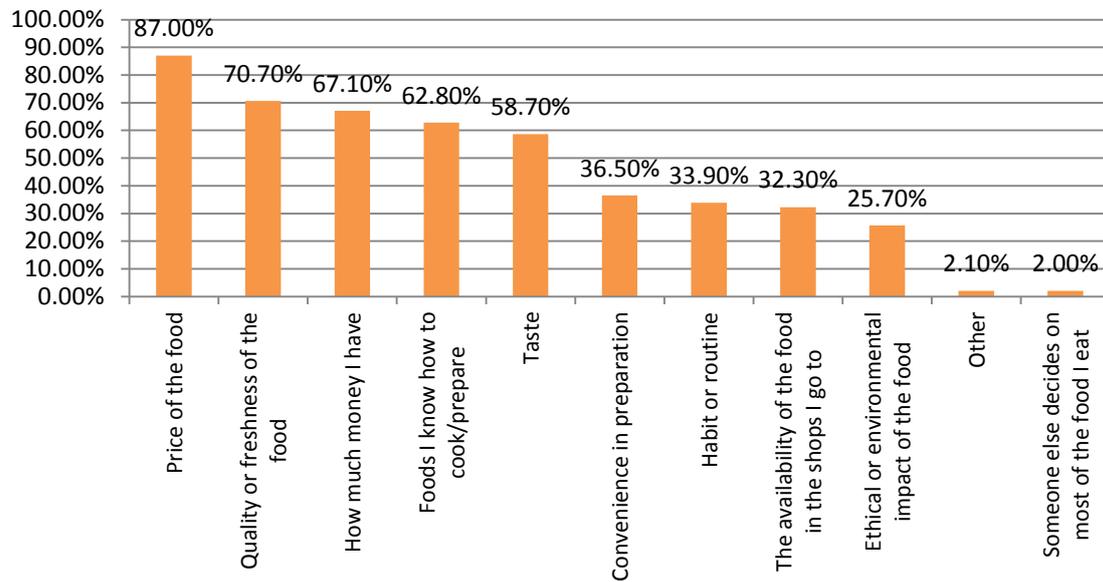


Figure 9 demonstrates that the main consideration for respondents, when purchasing food is price (87%, n=2238). This is closely followed by quality and freshness, finances, knowledge of how to cook/prepare the food and taste. Currently the ethical and environmental impact of food is taken into account by a quarter of respondents (25.7%, n=662).

Female respondents are significantly more likely to consider foods they know how to prepare/cook than male respondents when making purchases (65% (n=1188) compared to 58% (n=411)). They are also significantly more likely to consider how much money they have than male respondents when making purchases (68.9% (n=1259) compared to 62% (n=439)).

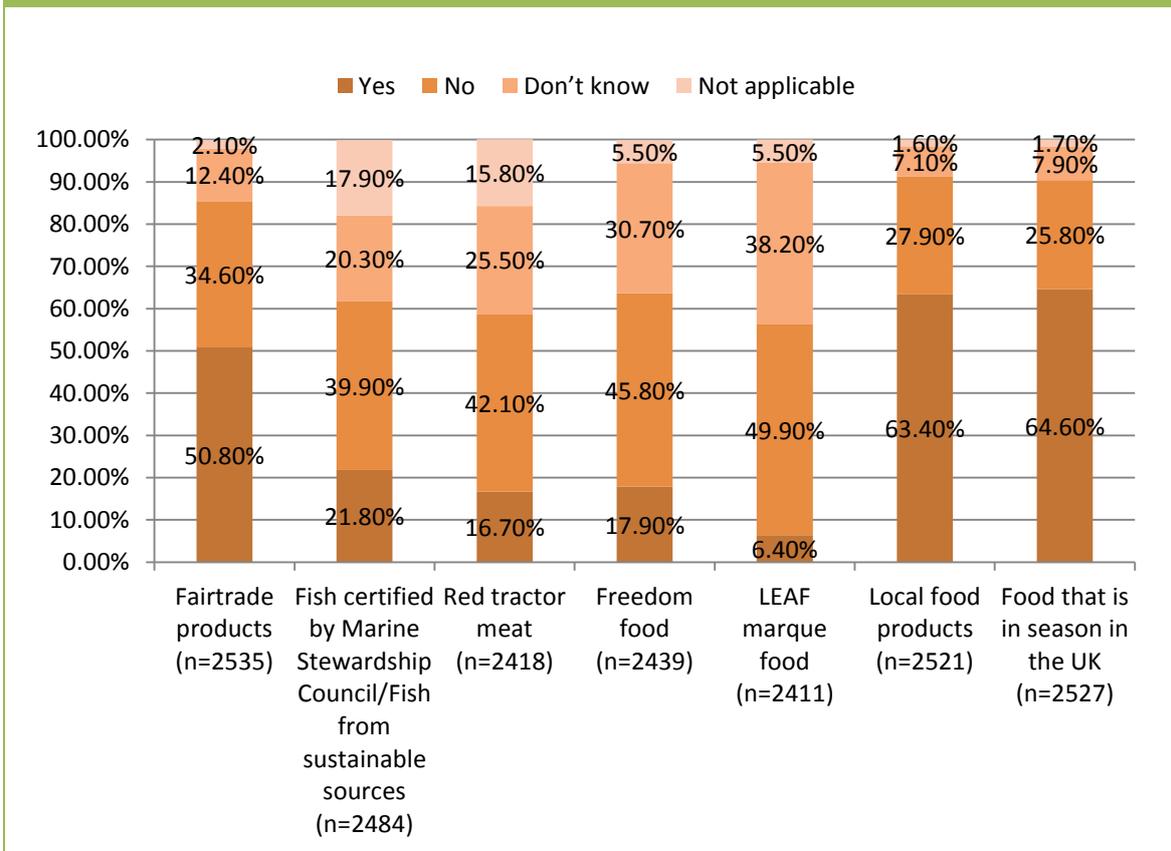
Figure 9: What factors do you take into consideration when buying food? (n=2573)



A number of respondents said that they make a conscious effort to buy food that has ethical and environmental credentials. For example, two thirds (64.6%, n=1597) report that they make a conscious effort to purchase food that is in season in the UK (n=1633). A similar proportion say they try to buy local food products (63.4%, n=1597) and half of respondents report buying Fairtrade products (50.8%, n=1289) (Figure 10).

Further analysis showed that female respondents are significantly more likely to make a conscious effort to buy food that is in season in the UK (68.2% (n=1228) compared to 53.8% (n=372) and local food products (64.9% (n=1167) compared to 58.1% (n=400) than male respondents.

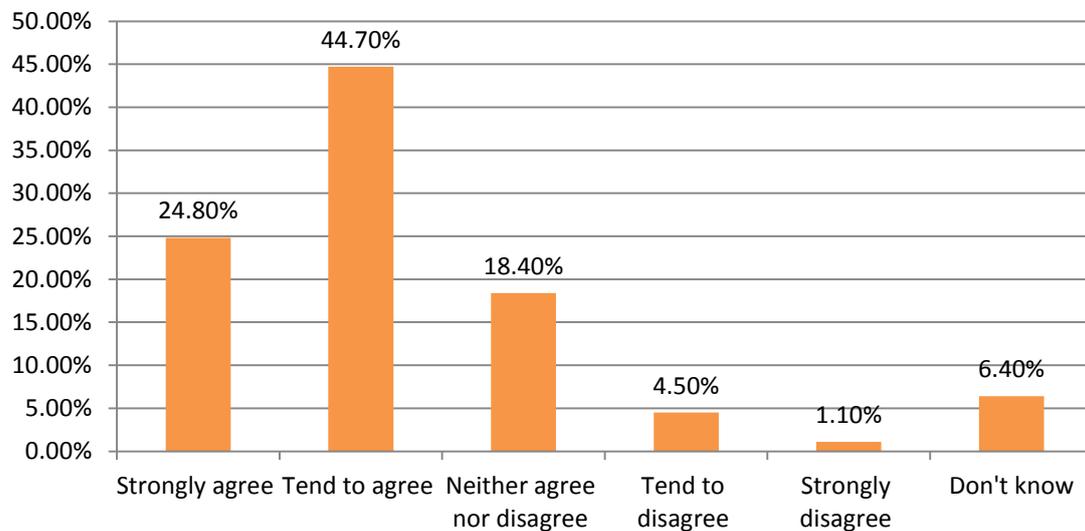
Figure 10: Which, if any, of these do you make a conscious effort to buy?



Food and the environment

The understanding of the link between food and climate change amongst respondents is relatively good. Figure 11 demonstrates that more than two thirds of respondents (69.5%, n=1786) agree that food production contributes to climate change. Closer analysis revealed that significantly more female respondents tended to agree that food production contributes to climate change than male respondents (49.1% (n=895) compared to 33.4% (n=236)).

Figure 11: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Food production contributes to climate change (n=2570)



Over half of respondents (53.3%, n=1371) said that if they had a better understanding of the environmental impacts of how food is produced, they would be willing to make changes to the food they buy to reduce this impact (Figure 12). This shows a real opportunity for Student Eats to improve understanding and achieve behaviour change amongst these respondents.

Male respondents are significantly more likely to 'still buy the food they usually buy' (24.3%, n=172 compared to 13.2%, n=241) and are significantly less likely to 'be willing to make changes to the food they buy' (45.9%, n=325 compared to 56.4%, n=1030), if they had a better understanding of how food is produced, than female respondents suggesting that Student Eats projects will have to think carefully about how to involve this section of their community.

Figure 12: Which of the options best applies to you. If I had a better understanding of the environmental impacts of how food is produced... (n=2570)

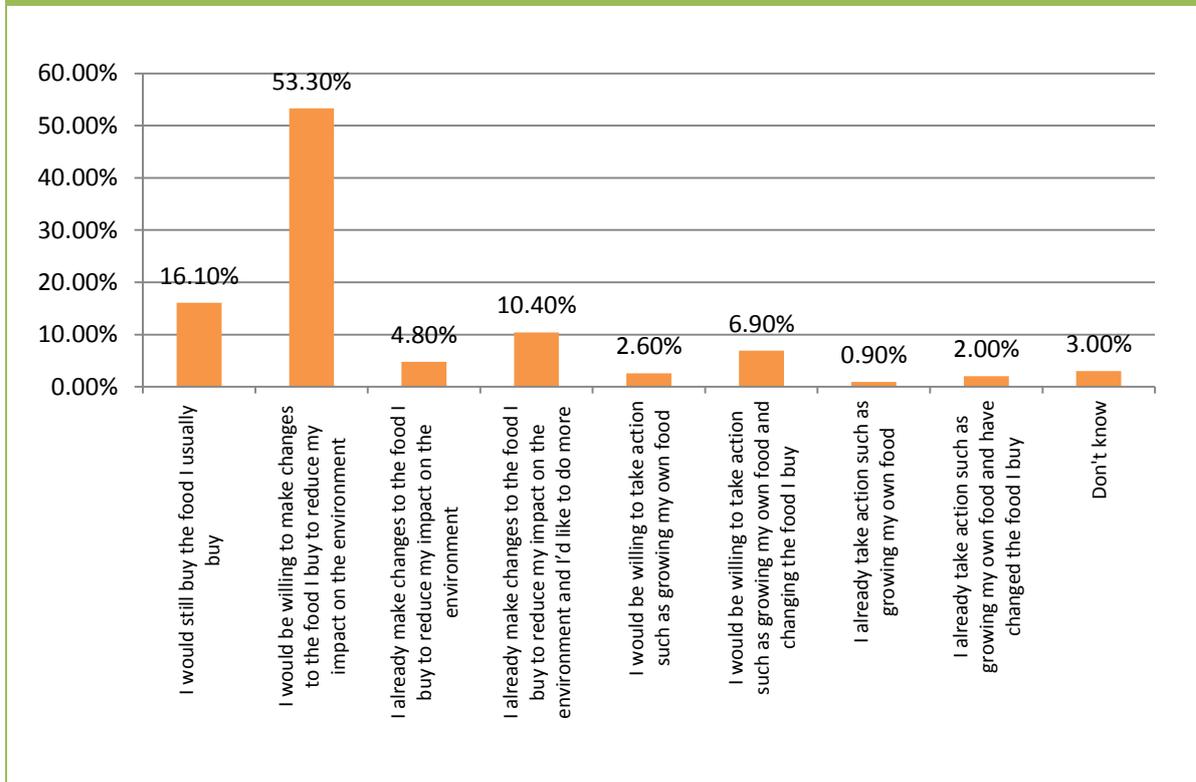


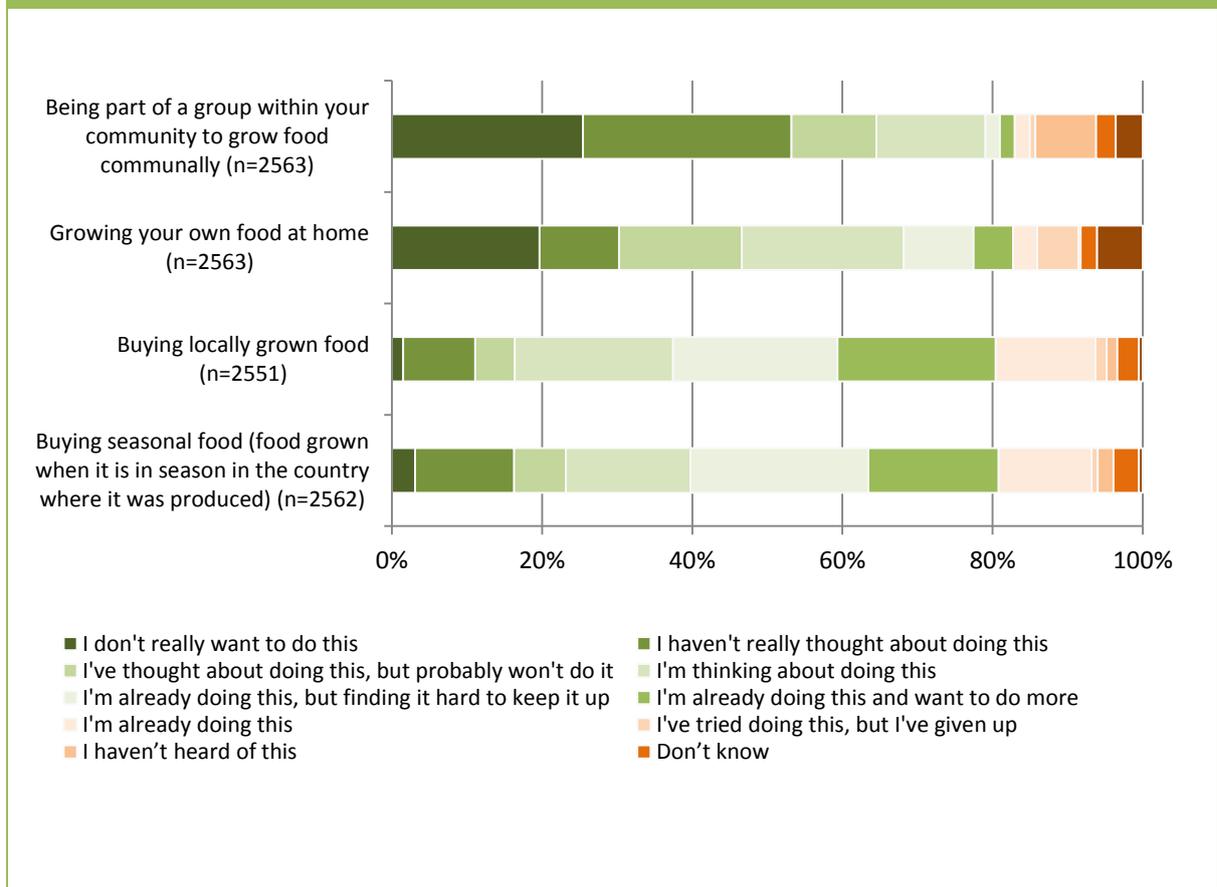
Figure 13 demonstrates that over a quarter of respondents (27.7%, n=710) hadn't really thought about being part of a group within their community to grow food communally but only 25.4% (of all respondents to this question, n=652) said that this was something that they didn't really want to do, with males being significantly more likely to not want to be part of a group growing food communally.

Male respondents are also significantly more likely to not want to try growing their own food at home (33.2%, n=232 say they don't want to do this compared to 14.9%, n=237) however 21.6% (n=552) of all respondents said that they are thinking about growing their own food at home, and 21.1% (n=539) said that they are thinking about buying locally grown food. Buying locally grown food seemed to be an area of interest for a lot of respondents, with 21.1% (n=537) already doing it and wanting to do more. However a further 21.9% (n=559) are already doing this, but finding it hard to keep it up. The Student Eats projects

should address this situation by providing a readily available source of local produce, at affordable prices at each institution.

Buying seasonal food was another area of interest for respondents but again one that is in need of some support, with 23.7% (n=608) saying that they are already doing this but finding it hard to keep up (females were also significantly more likely to say this 27.0% n=494 compared to 16.1%, n=112). Overall, this encouragingly amounts to 70.1% (n=1797) of respondents who have shown at least some interest in buying seasonal food or who already do it. The task for Student Eats projects will be to convert those currently only interested in these behaviours into taking action.

Figure 13: Which of these best describes how you currently feel about...



Food growing

Figure 14 shows that most respondents don't currently grow any of their own food (78.6%, n=2023). Of the 21.2% (n=545) of respondents that said they do currently grow some of their own food, the main reason for doing so is that they enjoy gardening/being outdoors (65.9%, n=358) (Figure 15). Saving money

(31.8%, n=173) and concerns over food production and supply practices are also reasons why respondents have chosen to grow their own food (for example, to ensure that the fruit and vegetables they eat are as fresh as possible (30.5%, n=166); and to avoid pesticide/chemicals used in commercial farming (27.1%, n=147).

Figure 14: Do you currently grow any of your own food? (n=2574)

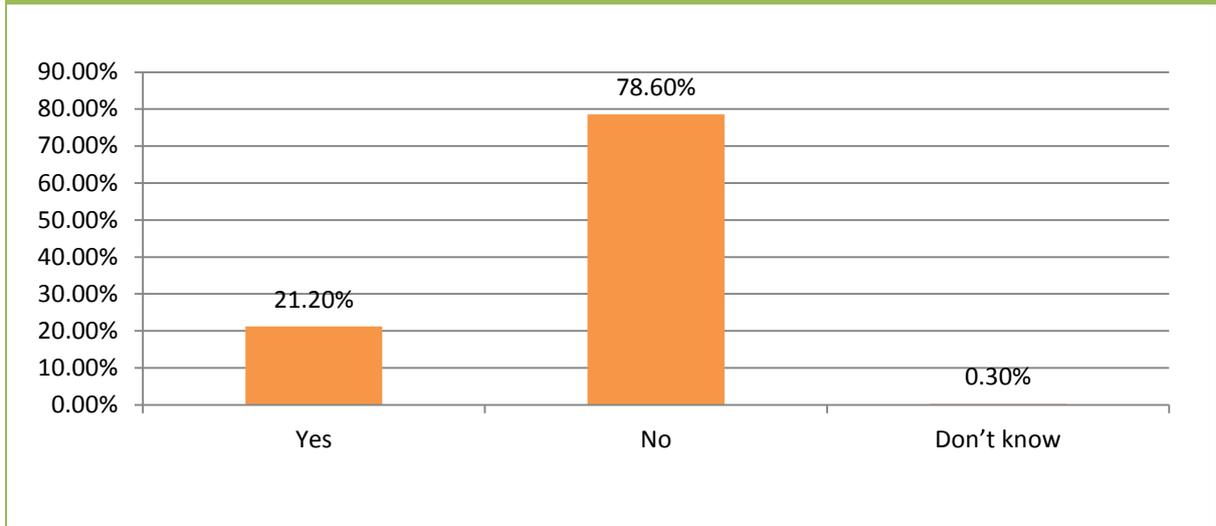
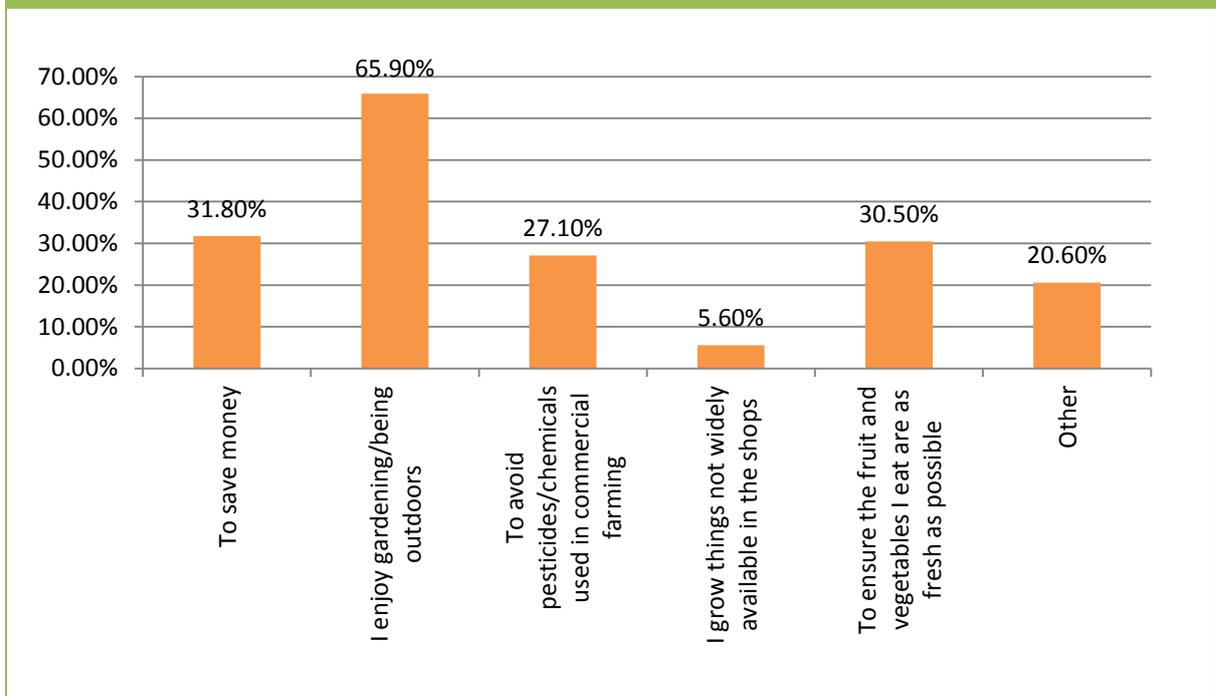


Figure 15: If yes, why do you choose to grow your own food? (n=544)



The main location for growing food given by respondents was in their garden/outdoor space in beds (61.6%, n=335) (Figure 16). Containers were also popular with 39.7% (n=215) saying that they use their garden/outdoor space with containers for growing food. A third of respondents currently growing their own food (33.3%, n=179) reported using their windowsills as a space to plant crops.

Figure 16: Where do you grow your food? (n=543)

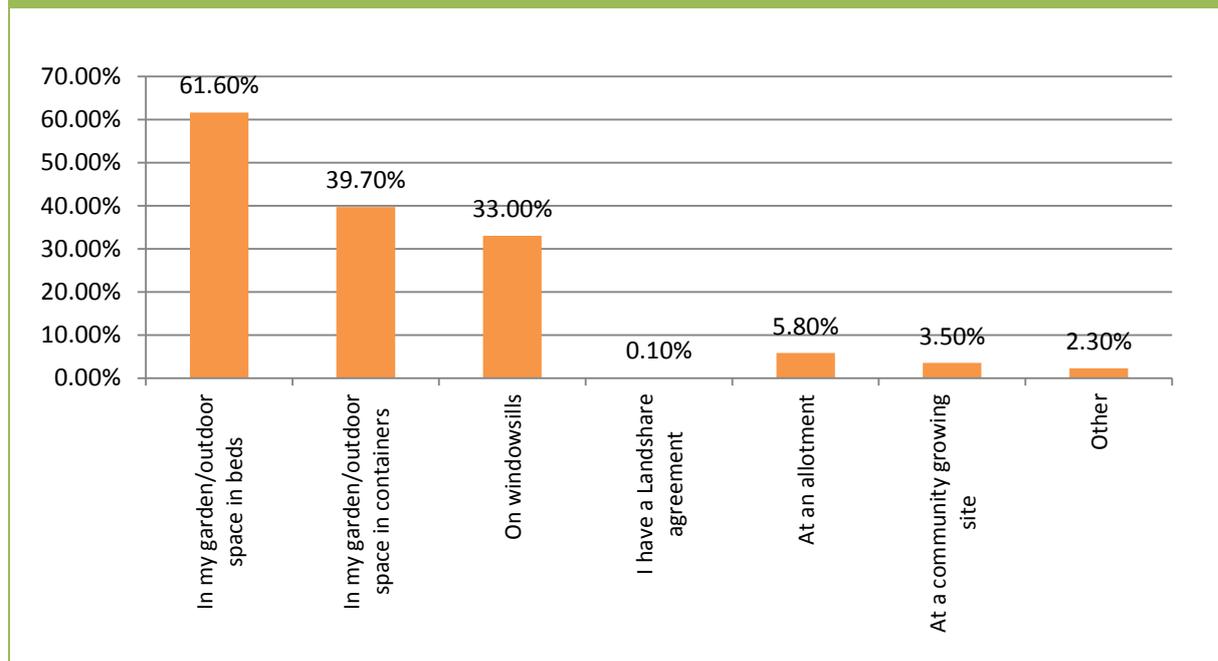
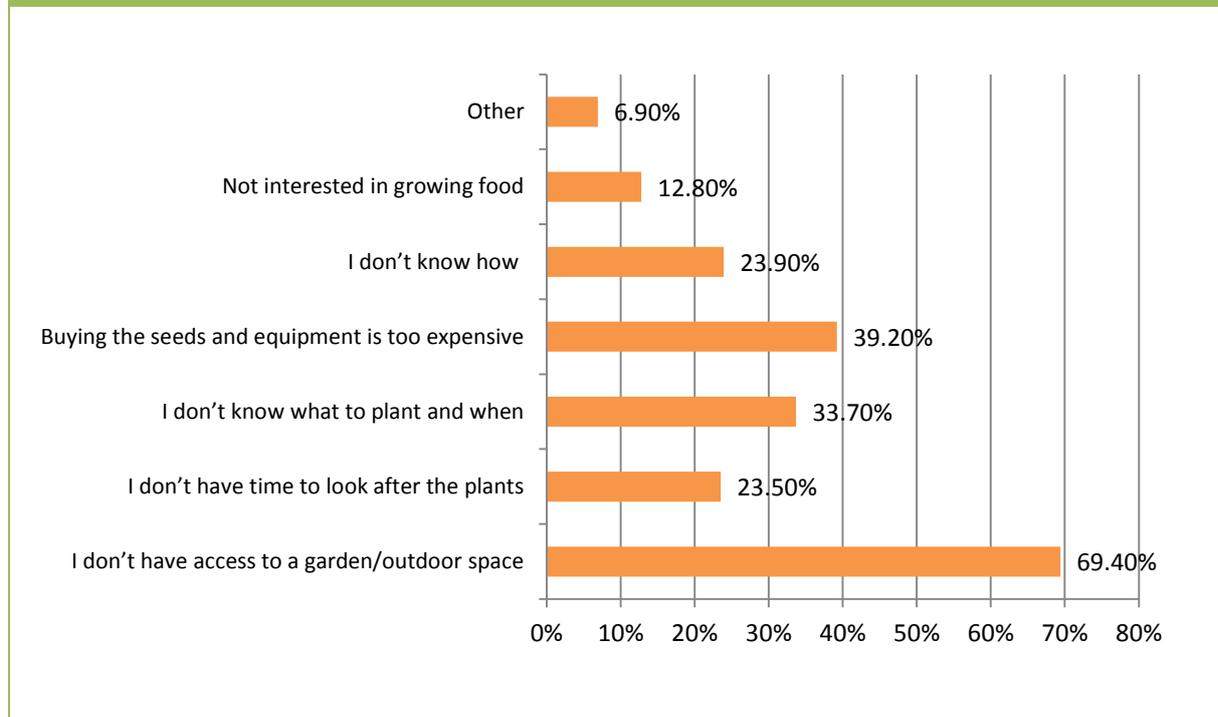


Figure 17 shows that of those who do not currently grow their own food, the main barrier stopping respondents from growing their own food is the lack of access to a garden/outdoor space (69.4%, n=1491). Other barriers to growing food include the (perceived) expense of seeds and equipment (39.2%, n=843) and the knowledge of what to plant and when (33.7%, n=723). The survey results revealed that female respondents were significantly more likely to cite a lack of knowledge as a barrier to growing their own food (25.4%, n=372 compared to 19.5%, n=130). Male respondents were significantly more likely to see a lack of time and a lack of interest as a barrier (42.9%, n=285 compared to 37.7%, n=553 and 18.4%, n=122 compared to 10.4%, n=153 respectively).

Student Eats aims to dismantle these barriers of access to space and information by reclaiming underutilised land on campuses, and sharing horticultural expertise. It also aims to reduce the cost of growing food as there is no monetary requirement for joining the Student Eats groups. Similarly, time barriers should

be addressed by the development of a rota system for group members participating in the projects. Students may also find that participating in the group can be a social activity as well as a practical food growing exercise.

Figure 17: If no, what is stopping you from growing your own food? (n=2148)



Fruit and vegetable preferences

The research also sought to ascertain what fruit and vegetables are most used amongst the student population in order to ensure produce grown by the projects is in demand. The most frequently eaten vegetables are the staples of potatoes (62.5%, n=1609), onions (50.1%, n=1290) and tomatoes (49.6%, n=1276) (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Please select the top three vegetables from this list you eat most often? (n=2574)

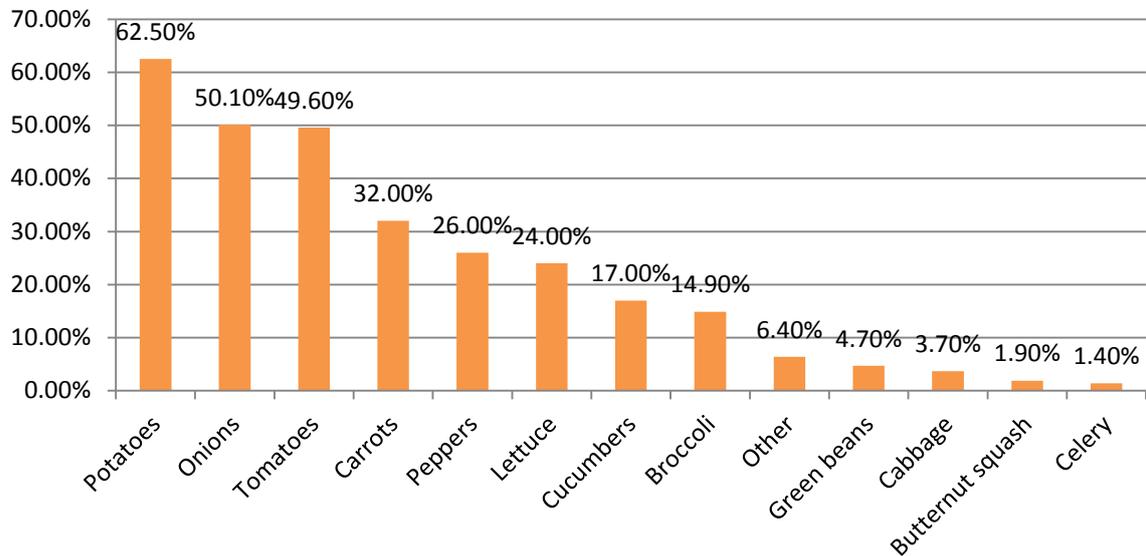
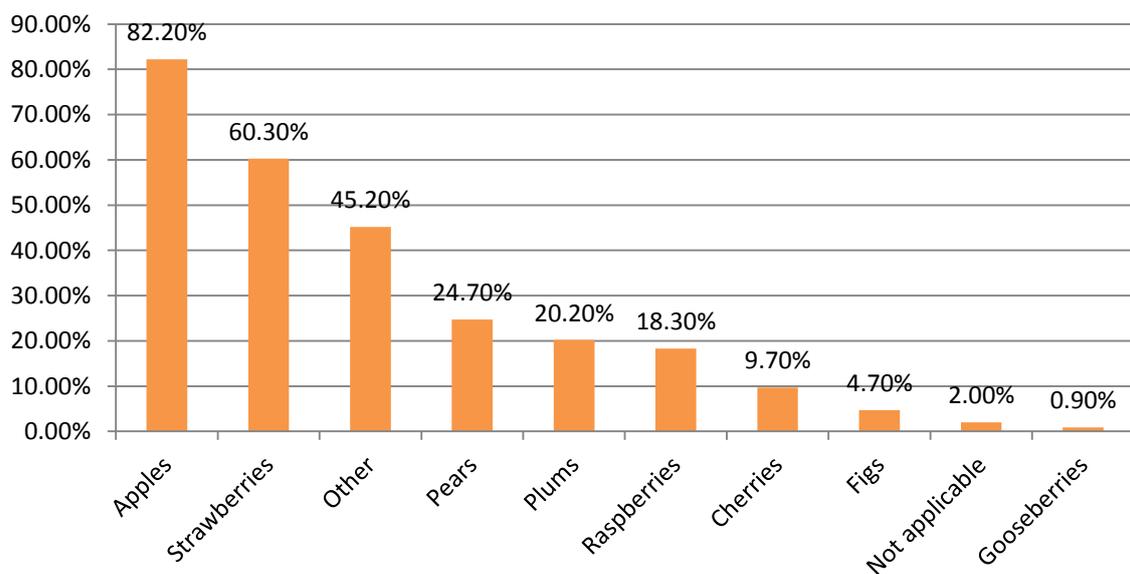


Figure 19 shows that apples (82.2%, n=2113) and strawberries (60.3%, n=1551) are the most frequently eaten fruits. The other category included mainly 'exotic' fruits which cannot be easily grown in the UK climate such as bananas, oranges and melons.

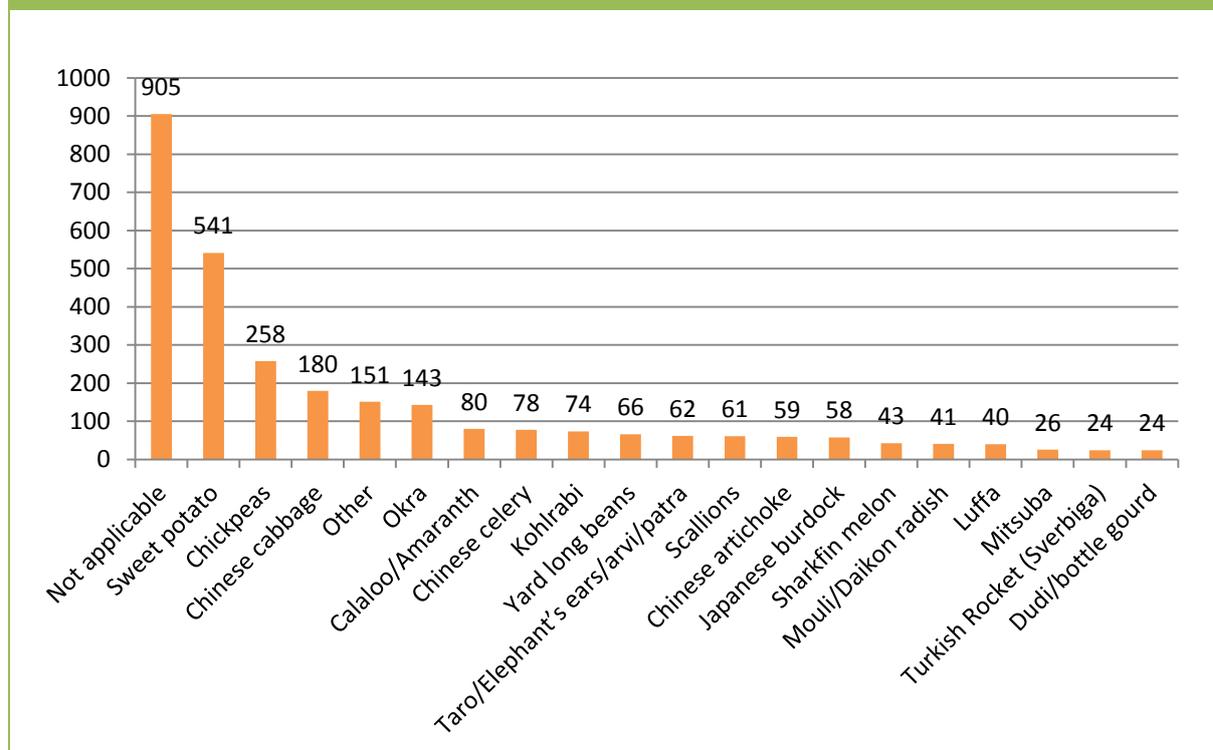
Figure 19: Please select the top three fruits from this list you eat most often? (n=2571)



One of the aims of the project is to increase the awareness amongst students at participating universities and colleges of the environmental and ethical implications of the food they eat. Part of this will be to consider the exotic fruits and vegetables that reflect the broad demographic of the UK student population.

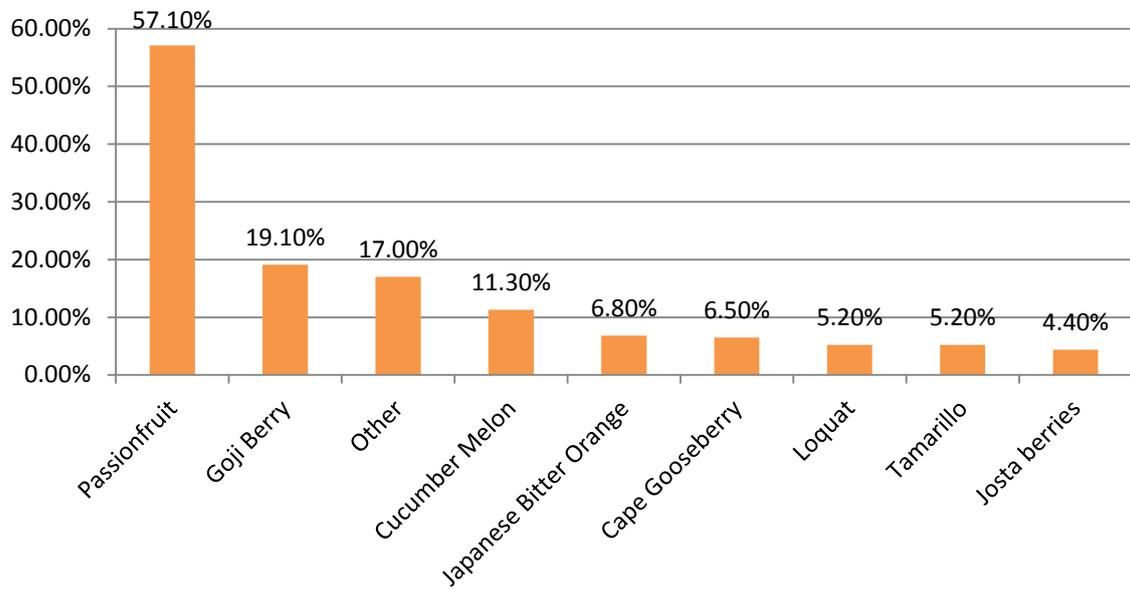
Figure 20 shows that almost half of respondents (45%, n=905) reported that they had no trouble sourcing vegetables they like to eat in their local shops. However it will be important for the individual participating projects it look in further detail at the numbers of respondents from their institution reporting difficulty finding exotic vegetables to ascertain whether they are a potential crop.

Figure 20: Are there any vegetables you like to eat but can't find in local shops? (n=2011)



Passionfruits (57.1%, n=713) and goji berries (19.1%, n=239) are the most popular unavailable fruits amongst respondents however again it will be important for each institution to assess the responses individual to them to ascertain whether they represent a viable crop. The responses to 'other' included fruits such as guavas, mangoes and durian fruits which cannot be easily grown in the UK.

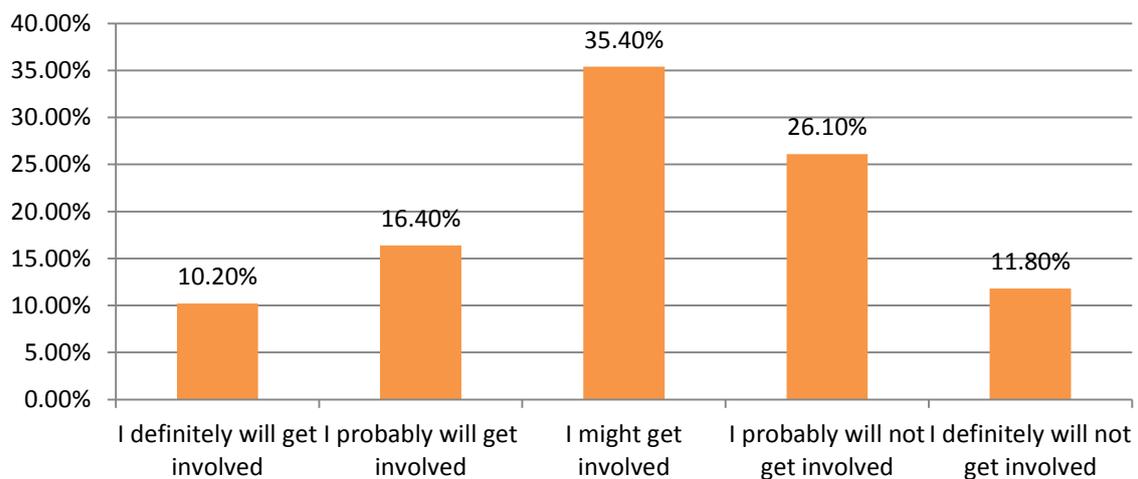
Figure 21: Are there any fruits you like to eat but can't find in local shops? (n=1249)



Future involvement in the Student Eats project

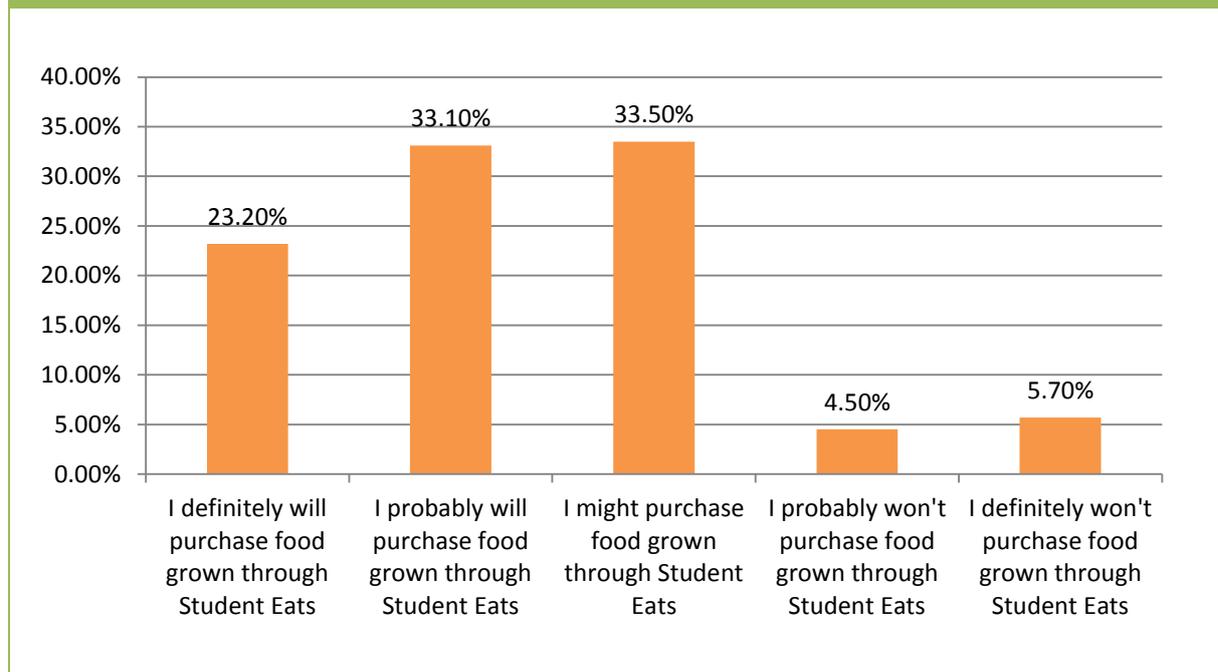
There was a relatively high level of interest in the Student Eats project amongst respondents, especially with regards to purchasing food grown through the project. 35.4% (n=2568) of respondents said that they might get involved in growing food at their university/college through the project and 26.6% said they probably, or definitely will get involved (Figure 22).

Figure 22: How likely are you to get involved in growing food at your university/college through the Student Eats project? (n=2568)



Over half of respondents (56.3%, n=2568) exhibited a positive response to purchasing food through the Student Eats project, saying that they would probably (33.1%) or definitely (23.2%) do this (Figure 23). 33.5% of respondents also showed an interest, saying that they might purchase food grown through Student Eats.

Figure 23: How likely are you to purchase food from grown through the Student Eats project at your university/college? (n=2568)



Recommendations for projects

- Over half of respondents indicated that they would change their food purchasing habits if they knew more about how the food they buy affects the environment. This demonstrates that there is a ready audience for communications and participants in the Student Eats projects.
- Access to outside space is the main reason why students aren't currently growing their own food. The opportunity to have access to growing space through the Student Eats projects should therefore be highlighted to help students overcome this barrier. Figure 13 showed that being part of a community growing groups is slightly less appealing than being able to grow food at home. As a result, groups should aim to clearly communicate the benefits of growing communally – for example shared tasks and responsibilities, less time commitment, access to expertise, tools and seeds.
- Student Eats projects should think creatively about how to convert those who said they 'probably will' or 'might' get involved in growing food or

purchasing food from their campus to those that definitely will in order to ensure a ready supply of volunteers and a market for the produce grown. Using the data provided by this survey research on what produce students at their institutions use most frequently, along with items they look to buy but are not readily available locally should ensure a market for the projects. Providing a range of different volunteer opportunities and activities should help to target and involve a range of different audiences in the running of each project.

- Potential angles for volunteer recruitment include the additional benefits of involvement beyond food provision. The majority of students already gardening did so for the enjoyment of gardening or being outdoors. The psychological and health benefits associated with outdoor activities could be promoted.