



DEPARTMENT OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Quantitative and qualitative
descriptors in assessing
population's perception regarding
food waste in Romania**

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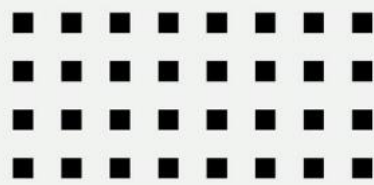
Department of Sustainable Development

The level of food waste in the households of Romanian urban areas has a **downward trend by aprox. 4 percentage points since 2016**. The phenomenon indicates an increased accountability of Romanian population towards food consumption, **despite the net purchasing power that increased by about 30%, between 2016 and 2020** (National Institute of Statistics).

A certain influence of 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, that might have been accentuating the trend of moderating food purchases among the population, cannot be ruled out, the impact should not be exaggerated, given the fact that agri-food sector has proved to be one of the most resilient in this period.

Data from 2016 as well as 2020 indicate that **bakery products and home-cooked food are products with the highest risk of waste**. However, the trend of food waste decreased in 2020, compared to 2016, for all product categories, with significant percentages for **bakery products (down 63.8% compared to 2016)** as well as for **home-cooked food (down 61.11% compared to 2016)**.





UNEP FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT 2021

129 kg /pers./year (2016) to **70kg** /pers./year (2021)



2016 – 10,43%

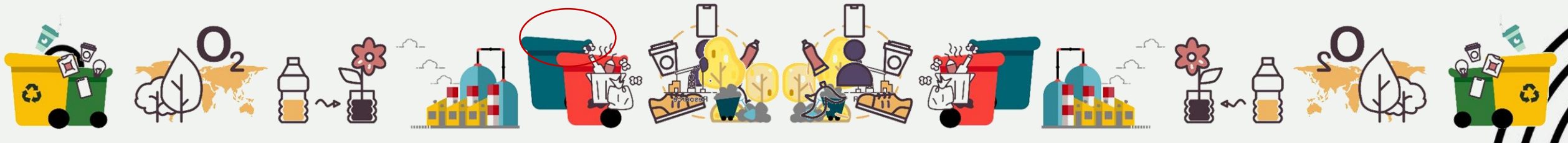
2020 – **6,5%**

2024 – 4,05% (forecast)

2028 – 2,52 % (forecast)

2030 – 2,05% (forecast)

The trend for the next period indicates a projected decrease in food waste of about 2%.



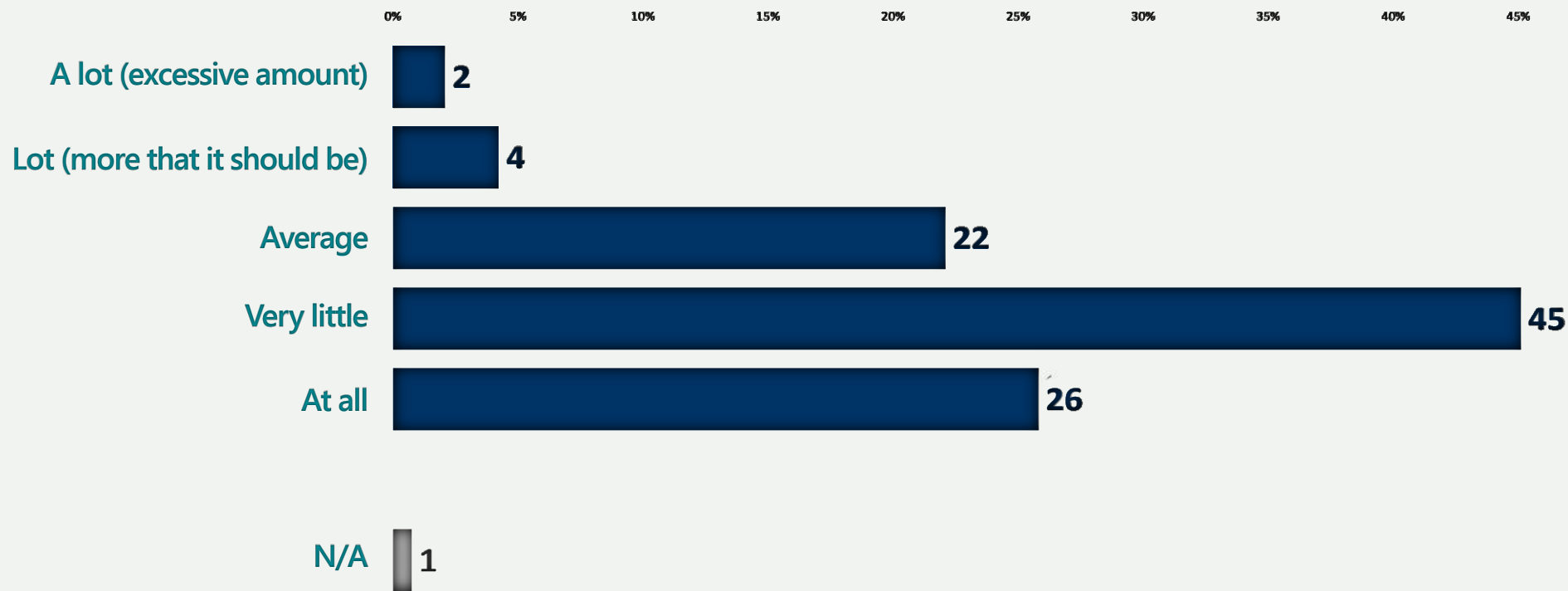
Regarding food waste, Romanians have a fair **perception and behavior** (study conducted by DDD, the spring, 2021), avoiding food disposal.

This behavior is a consequence of keeping **a conservative-traditional** model in the Romanian family

The thoughtful behavior of food management is, however, also a consequence of **a low incomes in Romanian society** and **a relatively high food prices**.



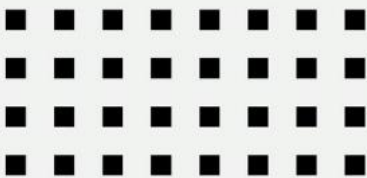
Q4 what do you think that is the average of food amount that thrown away weekly in your household (no vegetable peels, waste from cooking or non-eatable parts as bones, eggs shells etc)



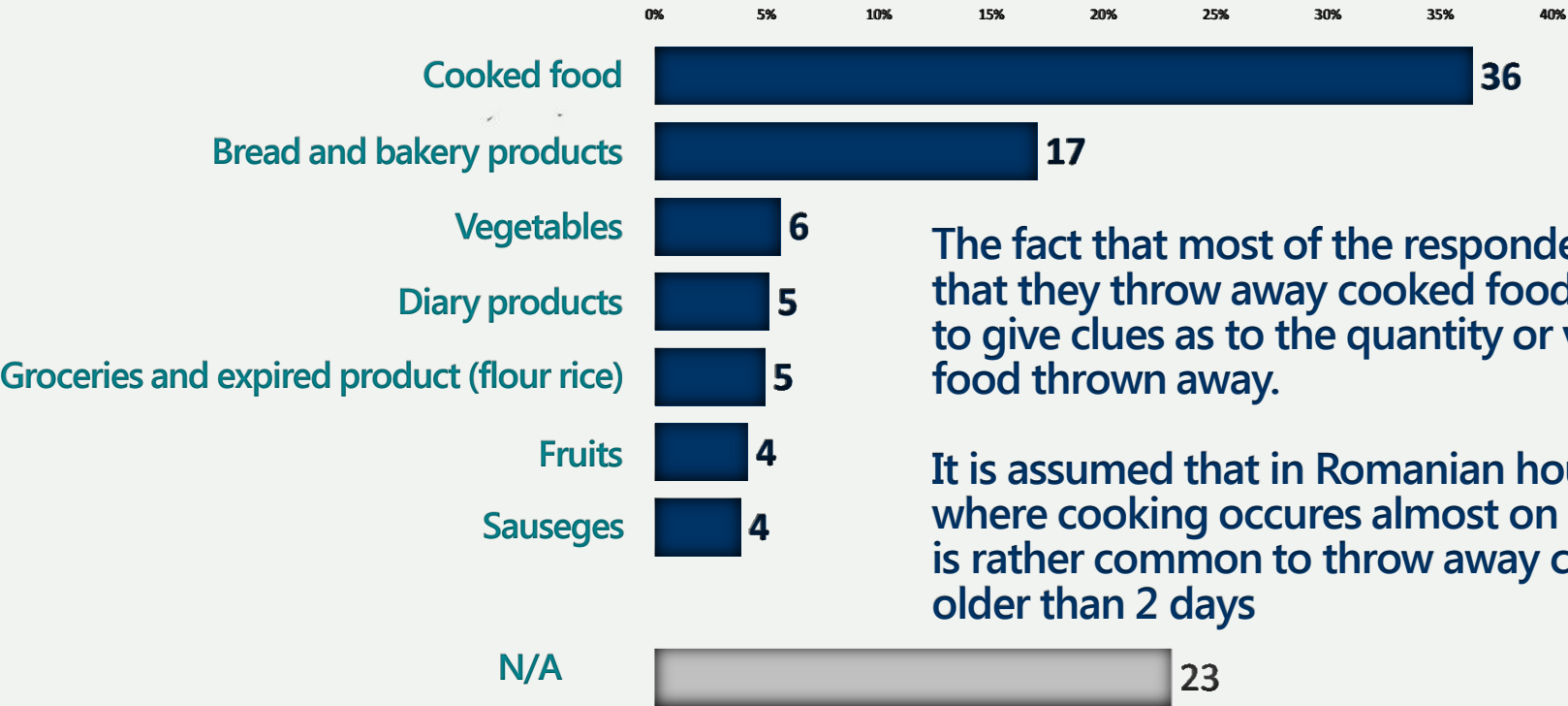
71% (26 + 45) of the respondents consider that they do not throw "at all", or they throw "very little" amount of food. About a quarter of respondents consider that they throw away a moderate / reasonable amount of food and only 6% (4 + 2) admit that they throw away more that it should be or an excessive amount of food.

Compared to the current statistics in rich countries, the Romanian model is conservative. One explanation could be the general lower level of income in Romania, which makes food proportionally more expensive, as well as a cultural model that gives food a symbolic value, as we will see in the following answers.

The category of food throw away most frequently is home cooked food (36%), followed, at a great distance, by bread and bakery products (17%), succeeded by the sum of processed foods and food that can be directly consumed. This amount reaches only 14% (5% dairy, 5% expired groceries and preserves and 4% sausages). Vegetables (6%) and fruits (4%) are the least discarded. The percentage of invalid responses is relatively high (23%), which would correspond to the percentage of 26% of those who say they do not throw away food.



Q05 What is the category of food which you throw away most often?

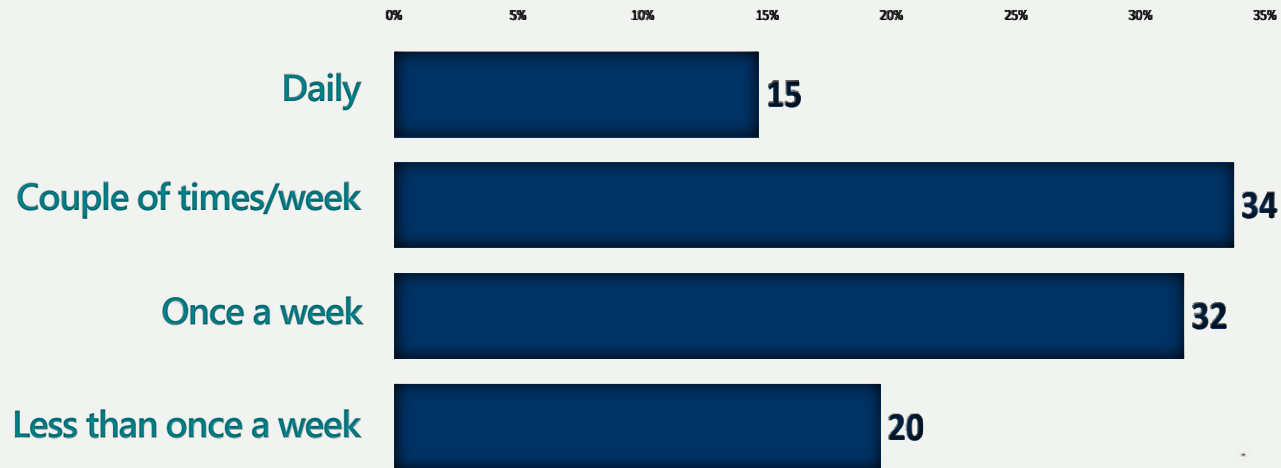


The fact that most of the respondents state that they throw away cooked food is not likely to give clues as to the quantity or value of the food thrown away.

It is assumed that in Romanian household where cooking occurs almost on daily basis, it is rather common to throw away cooked food older than 2 days



Q06 How often do you buy food?



N/A | 0



It could be estimated that the subsistence rural area is somewhere below 20%, the traditional urban area is around 50-60%, and the modern urban area, around 30%.

32% of respondents say that they buy food once a week. "Weekly" shopping is a hallmark of the modern urban model.

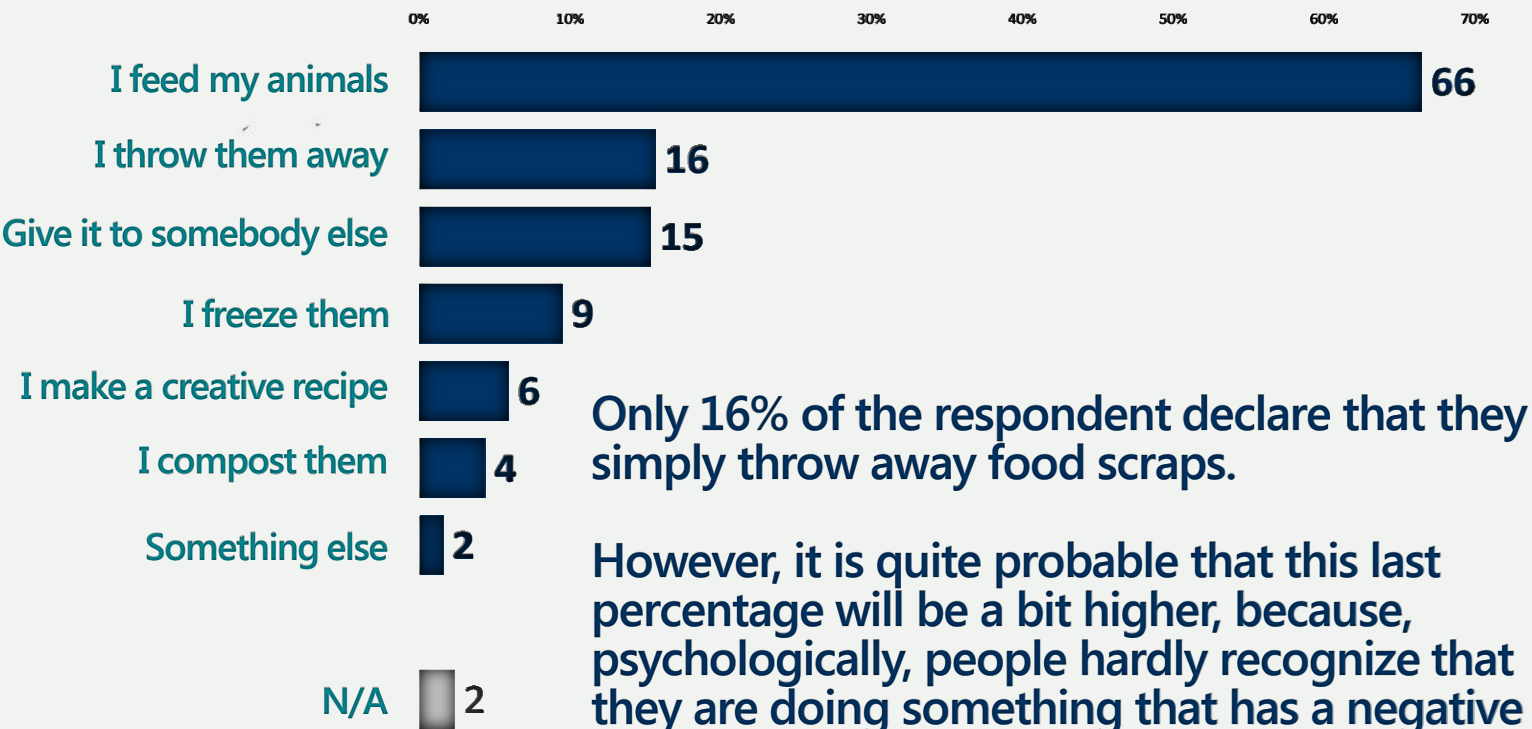
Those who say that they go "daily" to buy food (15%), along with those who go "several times a week", represent the traditional urban model (including the communist period).

People doing grocery shopping "less than once a week" (20%) would correspond to the deep rural area, where food comes, for the most part, from their own household.

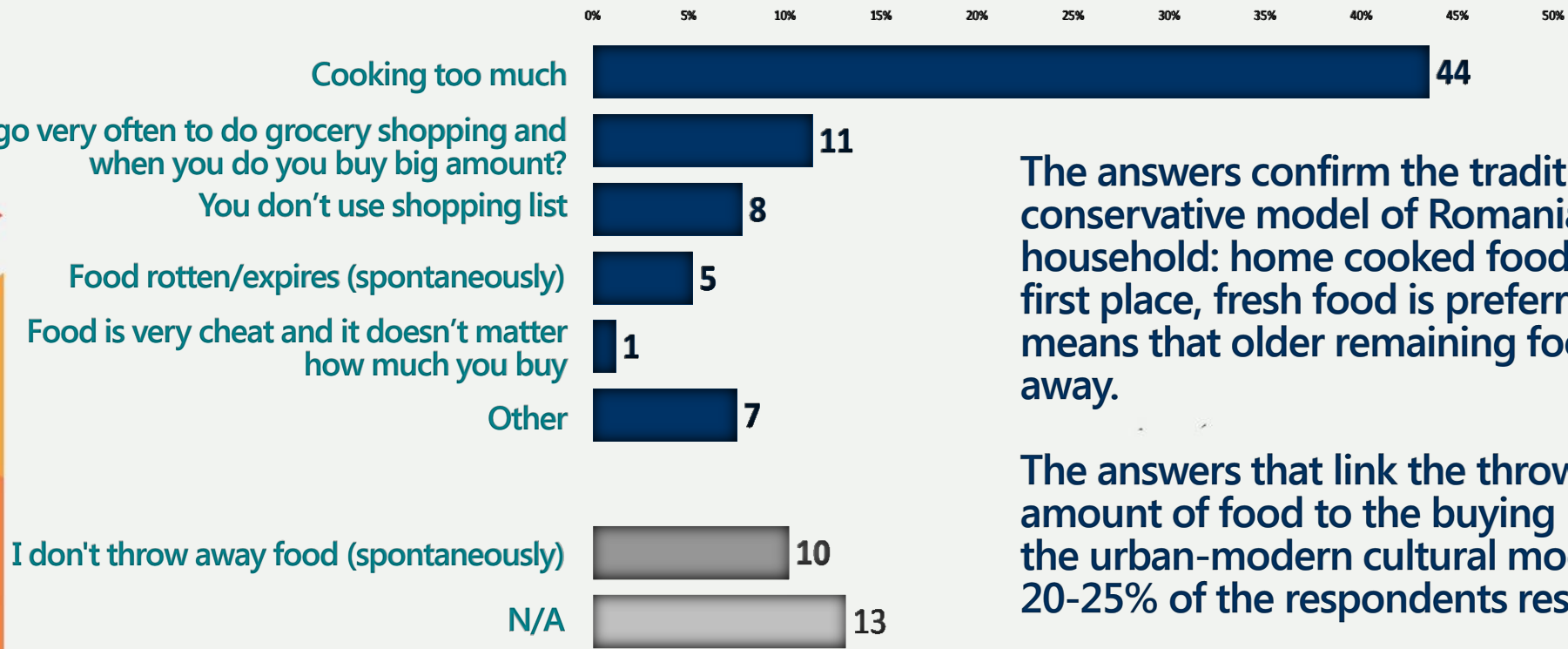
66% of respondents state that food waste is used for animal feed. If we add the percentage of 4% of those who declare that they compost the waste, it results that 70% of Romanians practically recycle food waste.

Also in the category of recovery, the answers "I offer them to other people" (15%), "I freeze them" (9%) and "I make a creative recipe" (6%) can be included.

Q07 When you have food scraps what do you do with them?



Q08. Which is the main reason for throwing away food?



The answers confirm the traditional-conservative model of Romanian household: home cooked food comes on first place, fresh food is preferred, which means that older remaining food is thrown away.

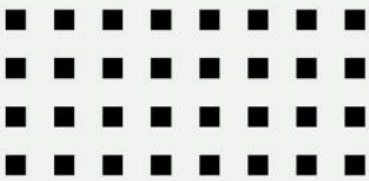
The answers that link the thrown away amount of food to the buying behavior, the urban-modern cultural model, gives a 20-25% of the respondents result.



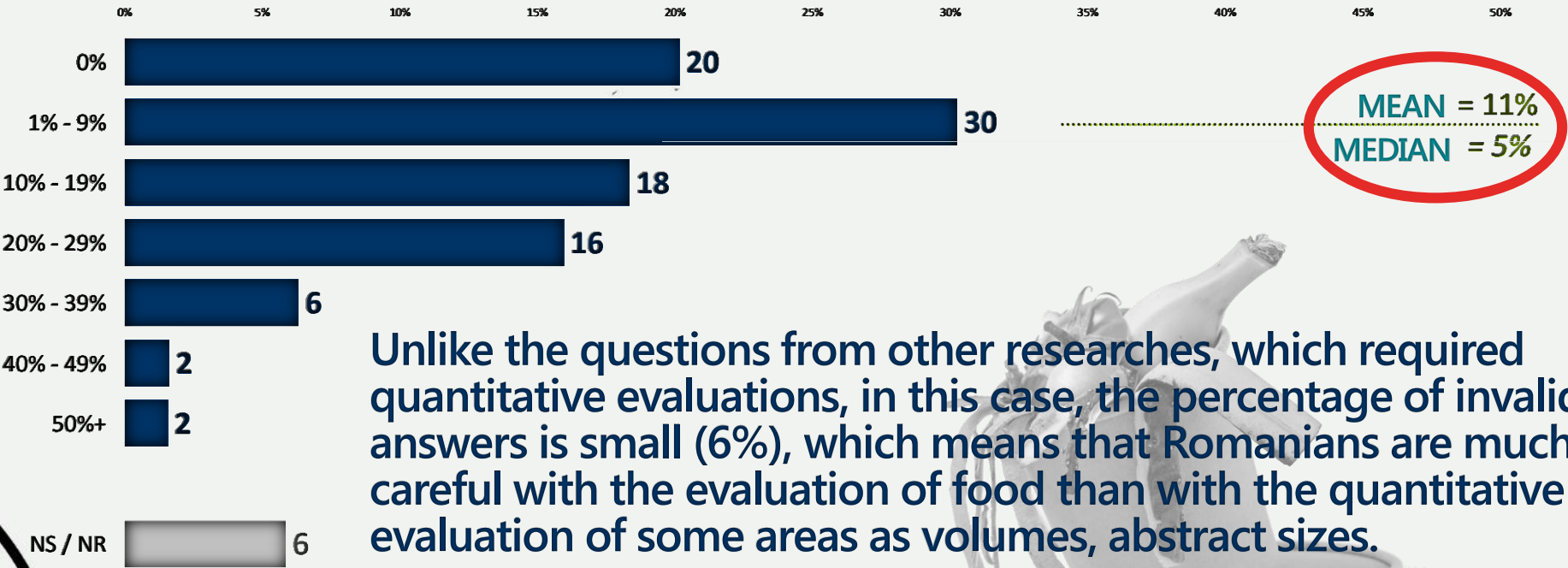
The main reason for throwing away food is "cooking too much" (44%). It is important to emphasize the very small percentage (1%) of those who appreciate that "food is very cheap and does not matter how much you buy." Moderate percentages, 11% and 8% respectively, are recorded for the answers "I rarely go shopping and buy large quantities" and "I do not make a shopping list". The cumulative percentage of NS / NR (13%) and of those who declare, spontaneously, that they do not throw away food (10%) are correlated with similar answers from Q04 and Q05. (are consistent with answers on related questions as zice eu, fara nr intrebarii)

The distribution of answers shows that 50% of respondents throw away less than 10% of the food they buy, while only 10% say they throw away more than 30% of the food they buy.

The median of the responses (closest to the average behavior) is 5%.



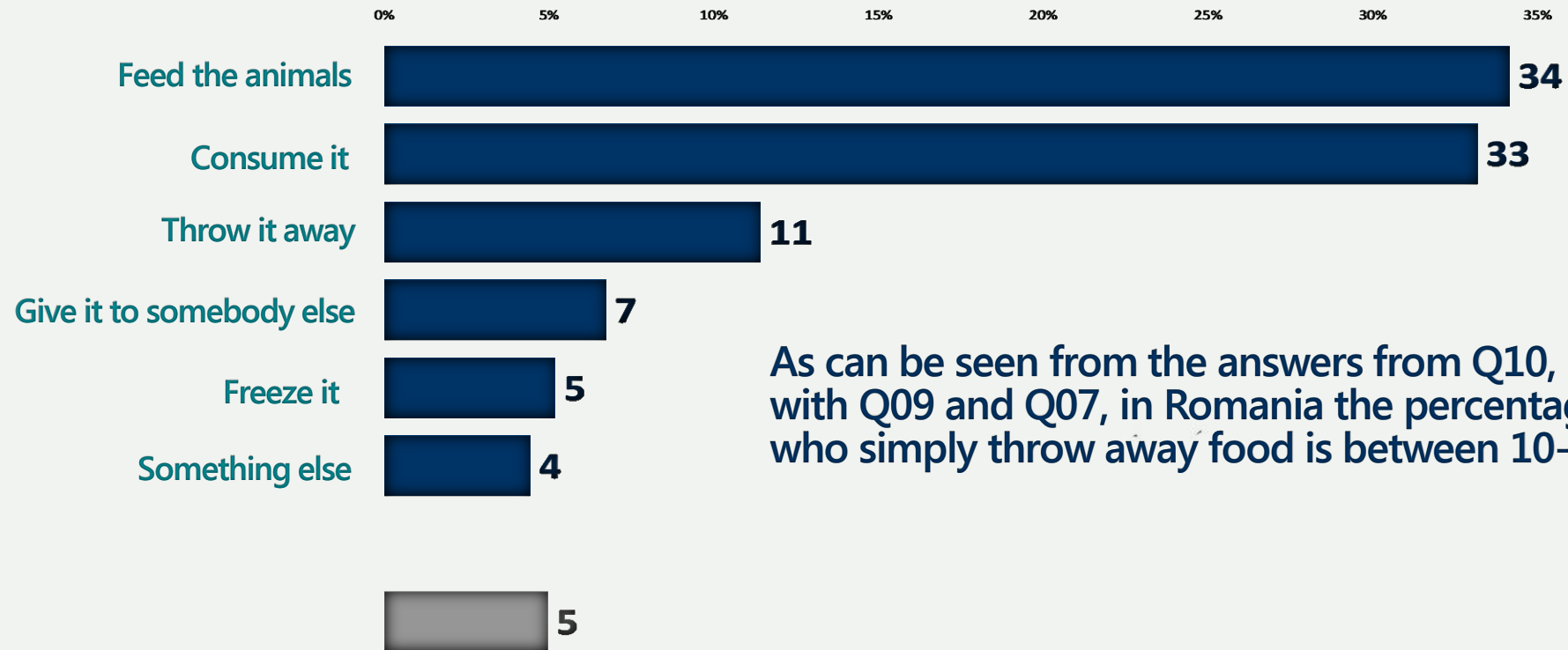
Q09. What is the percentage of the total purchased food that is thrown away into your household?



Unlike the questions from other researches, which required quantitative evaluations, in this case, the percentage of invalid answers is small (6%), which means that Romanians are much more careful with the evaluation of food than with the quantitative evaluation of some areas as volumes, abstract sizes.



Q10. What do you do with the food that is approaching the expiration date?



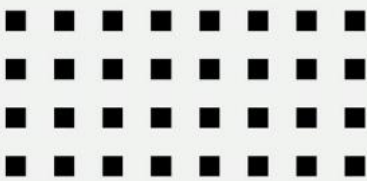
As can be seen from the answers from Q10, correlated with Q09 and Q07, in Romania the percentage of those who simply throw away food is between 10-15%.

Only 11% of those surveyed declare that they throw it away.

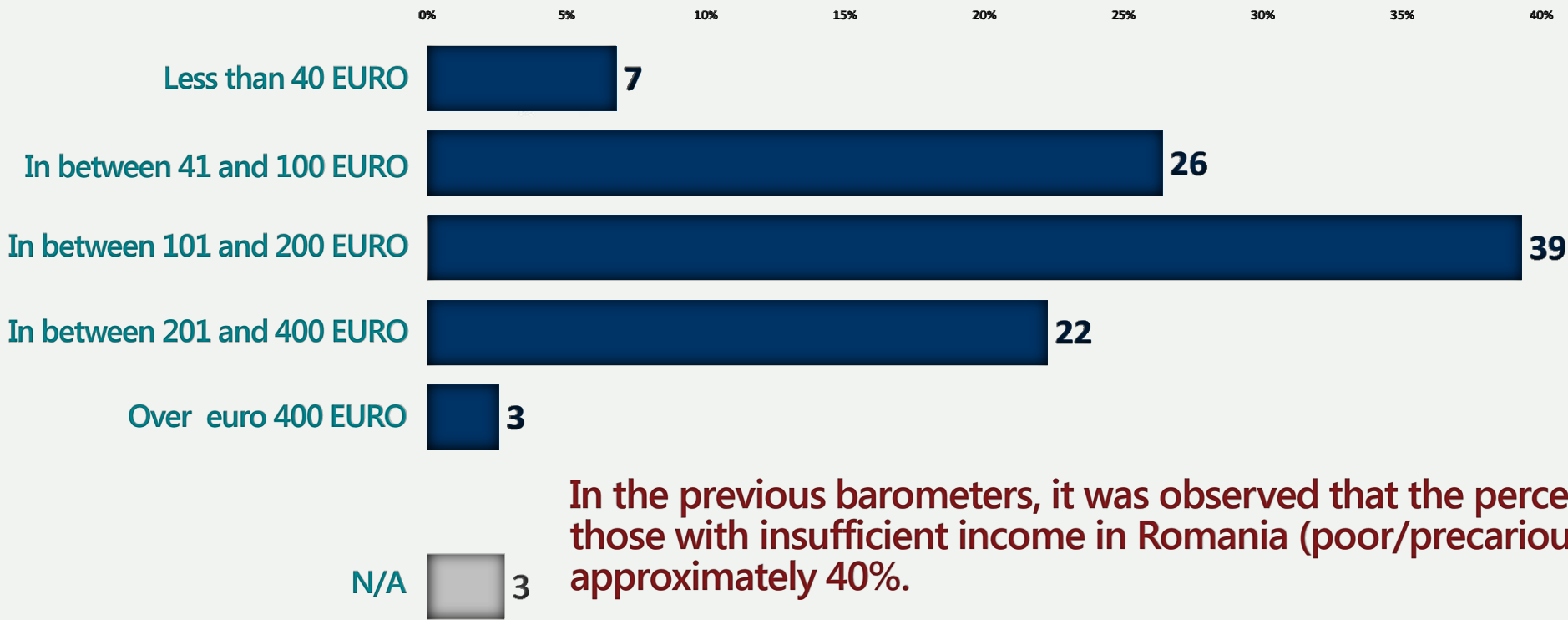
Interestingly, 34% of respondents tick the answer "give it to animals", which involves a rural household.

A cumulative percentage of 45% is of those who say that the food is consumed in one way or another : 33% say that they "consume it" (personally), 7% that they "give it to other people" and 5% say that they "freeze it".

In Romania, food is expensive compared to the income. Almost 40% of the respondents state that, on average, they spend between 500 and 1000 lei per month for food. 26% estimate their monthly expenses for food between 200-500 lei, 22% spend between 1000 and 2000 lei, 7% less than 200 lei and only 3% over 2000 lei.
(1 EURO = 5 LEI)



Q11. What is the average amount of money you spend per month on grocery shopping?



In the previous barometers, it was observed that the percentage of those with insufficient income in Romania (poor/precarious) goes to approximately 40%.



CONCLUSIONS

1. The Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG 12) aims to halve food waste at retail and consumer level and to reduce food losses in supply chains.
2. In order to comprehend the size of food waste we need good data in terms of collection, analysis and modeling of food waste data, generating therefore a new estimate of global food waste based on food waste data at country level.
3. The Department for Sustainable Development acts as a catalyst to guide a national food waste prevention strategy, food waste estimates that are sensitive enough to take on food waste changes every two to four years and that allow for meaningful comparisons between countries at European and global level.
4. In addition to the Food Loss Index, developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Food Waste Index covers the later stages of the food journey - food waste - that take place at the household, food and retail levels.
5. In Romania,. There is growing evidence of success in reducing food waste - though not on the scale private sector actors have already taken the initiative of commitment towards the SDG 12 needed to achieve the goal. Much more can be done.
6. Food waste burdens waste management systems, exacerbating food insecurity, with waste becoming a major contributor to the three global crises of (I) climate change, (II) loss of nature and biodiversity and (III) pollution and waste.

CONCLUSIONS

7. We all have **to buy carefully, cook creatively** and make **food waste unacceptable** anywhere socially possible, while striving to provide everyone with healthy and sustainable diets.
8. Reducing food waste **provides multiple benefits for people and planet by improving food security, tackling climate change, saving resources and reducing pressures on soil, water, biodiversity and waste management systems.**
9. The problem of food waste is related **to all aspects of life:** equally to the economy, the environment, but also to education.
10. Up to **50% of all food waste is produced by individual consumers in cities.**
11. We spend **40% of our income on food, and 33% - 50% of it goes directly to the trash.**
12. Most of the time, the amount of food thrown in a day by a person is a complete meal, about half a kilogram.



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Thank you!

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