



"WE EAT A LOT MORE KALE NOW"

Analysing the results of the 2020 Social Impact Survey

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Introduction

Developed in partnership with the Real Farming Trust and the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience at Coventry University, this survey and the subsequent analysis forms part of a project exploring the social, environmental and economic impacts of the work of Locavore, in particular against its mission objectives as a Community Interest Company working to bring about change in the Food System. The survey was designed collaboratively at the start of 2020, and was launched in early March, running for 17 weeks.

It was primarily promoted through the Locavore Facebook pages (one general business page and one closed group for veg box subscription customers) and the Locavore twitter feed; In addition, a link to the survey was included in the newsletter sent each week to veg box subscribers.

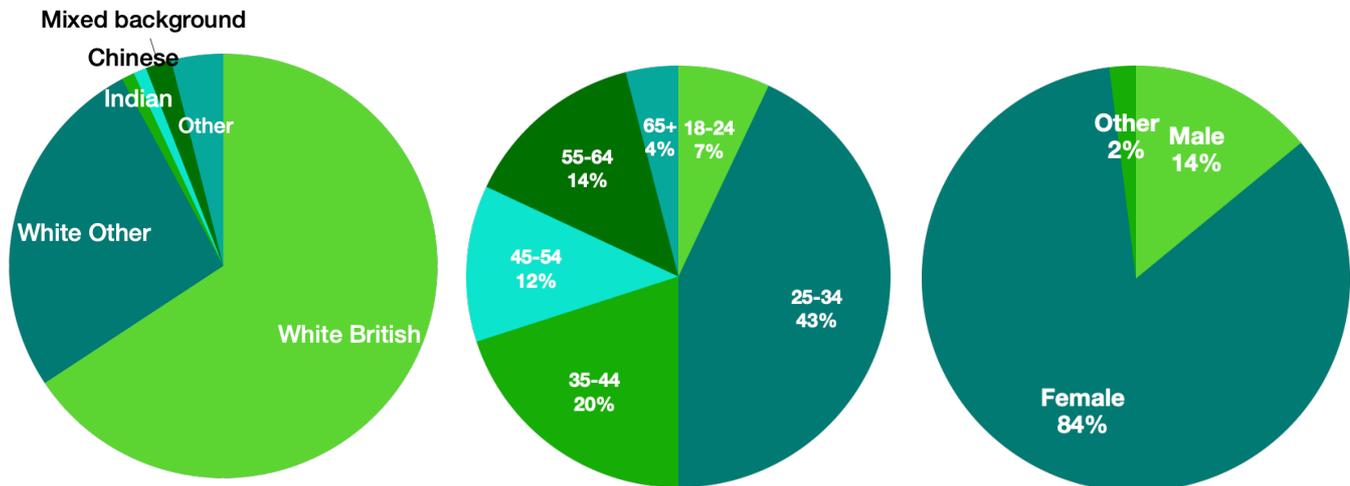
The survey was open for existing customers/volunteers/staff/trainees, and questions explored the motivations for supporting Locavore as well as the impact of the relationship. In total, 212 people completed the survey.

Executive Summary

- Customers show a strong desire to support local business, but the strongest competition to Locavore is mainstream supermarkets.
- Perceptions of an alignment in values and ethics are a core driver for customers choosing Locavore.
- Asked for the most important reasons to choose Locavore, locality of produce and producers came top with the strongest positives (utmost or very important).
- Customers identify packaging and food miles as key environmental benefits, but the importance of organic production scored weakly against other factors.
- 90% of Respondents indicated making some dietary changes as a result of shopping with Locavore, but primarily Locavore appears to support rather than drive dietary change.
- Many respondents show signs of supporting Locavore as a political or environmental mission and a higher level of engagement with the cause than simply being customers.
- 92% of respondents felt that shopping with Locavore was worthwhile
- 79% of respondents felt their involvement with Locavore helped them feel more connected to the origins of food; 63% felt more connected to social/environmental movements or food politics.
- Customers reported wasting less of the produce from Locavore than from other sources, with 45% saying no Locavore produce is wasted, compared to only 34% from other sources.
- 81% of respondents felt they seek out food with less packaging as a result of engaging with Locavore.
- 55% of respondents felt they waste less food than before.

Section 1: Respondent Profile

1.1 Respondent demographics



Age, Gender, Race

The demographic information asked for was age range in spans of ten years, gender, and ethnic origin or background. The gender mix of participants was overwhelmingly female, reflecting the profile of Locavore’s followers on Facebook, and predominantly under 44, again reflecting the method of recruitment.

2011 [census data](#) showed Scotland’s population to be 84% White Scottish, 8% White Other British, and 4% Other White, a total of 96%. 94% of the sample (excluding 8 who answered “other”) identified as White, with 4 respondents answering Mixed Background, 1 as Chinese, and one as Indian.

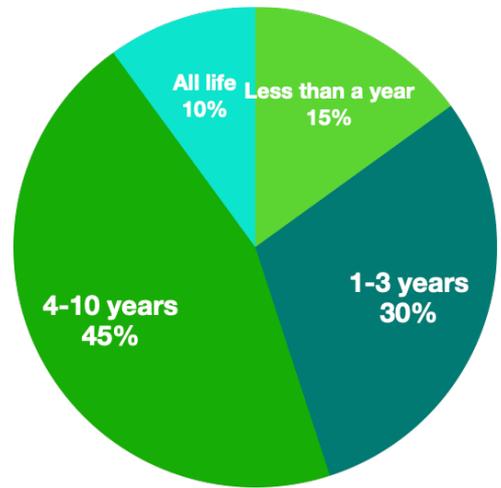
Length of time living in the area

Less than a year: 15%

1-3 years: 30%

4-10 years: 45%

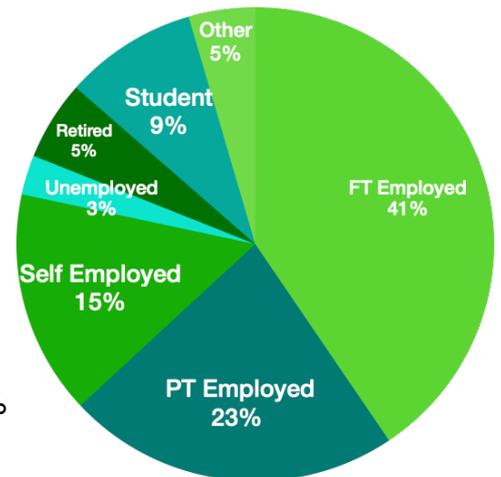
All life: 10%



Employment Status

Overall, respondents were slightly above the Scottish average for employment, with 79% employed full or part time or self-employed, compared to the [Scottish government Labour Market Briefing April 2020](#)

showing 75% overall employment rate in Scotland, and 4% unemployment (4.6% for Glasgow), compared to 3% of this sample.



Gross Household Income

0- £15k: 18%

£15,001 - £24k: 12%

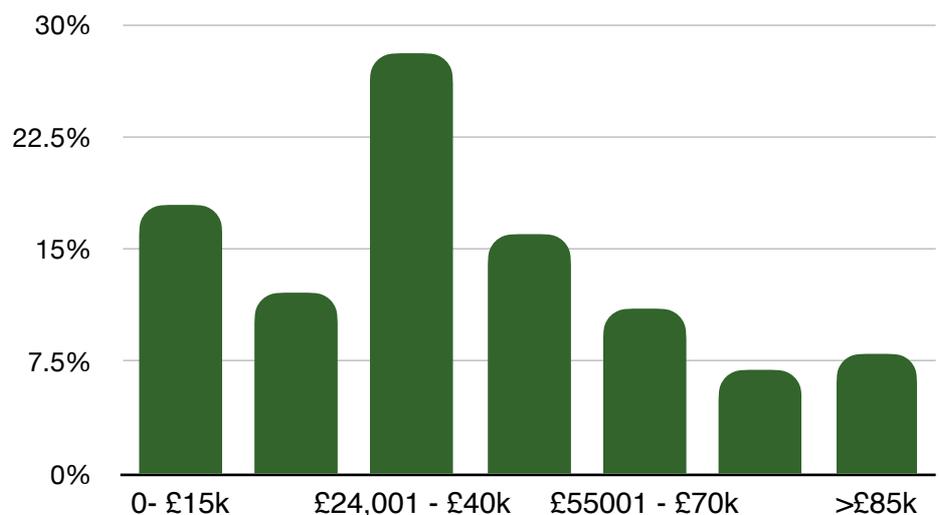
£24,001 - £40k: 28%

£40,001 - £55k: 16%

£55,001 - £70k: 11%

£70,001 - £85k: 7%

£85,001+ : 8%

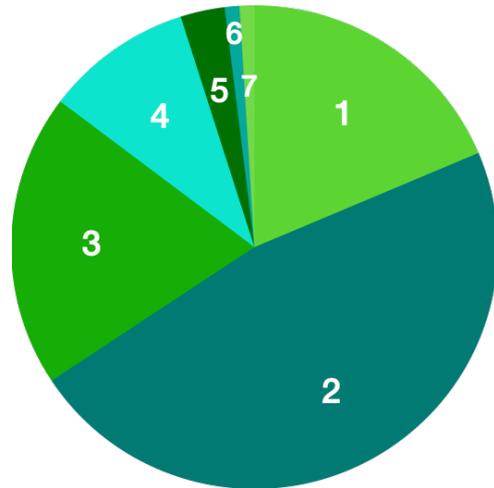


Asked about household

finances, 42% of respondents reported a gross household income above £40,000, compared to the [Scottish median](#) household income of £25,220.

Household Size

- 1: 19%
- 2: 48%
- 3: 20%
- 4: 10%
- 5: 3%
- 6: 1%
- 7: 1%



These figures appear to be in line with the [Scottish average](#) of 2.15, and a Glasgow average of 2.09.

1.2 Relationship with Locavore

Although the survey was circulated to staff and open to anyone with a connection to Locavore, respondents were primarily customers. As well as the recruitment process, this can also be explained by the running of a Staff Experience survey during part of this time, and the impact of COVID-19 with the subsequent decision to not go ahead with reuniting volunteers to the 2020 intake of the Growing the Growers programme.

- **70%** of respondents identified as Veg Box Customers
- **69%** as Shop Customers
- **24%** as followers of Locavore Social media channels
- **3%** as Locavore staff
- **2%** as Loan Stock Holders

Section 2: Why Locavore?

2.1 Market Share

Asked to compare the amount of fresh fruit and veg they buy from Locavore with the amount bought from supermarkets, direct from growers or producers, or from local shops and markets:

- **56%** buy more than half their produce from Locavore; **23%** between a quarter and half.
- **60%** are buying more than a quarter of their produce from supermarkets, and for **15%** more than half their produce comes from supermarkets.
- **73%** buy less than 25% or none of their fresh produce from local shops or markets; **26%** buy more than a quarter
- **81%** buy none of their fruit or veg direct from producers or growers.

These results can be interpreted alongside the results of an earlier survey about customer journeys, which found that **58%** of respondents used Locavore to buy particular items or to top-up, compared to **14%** who routinely choose Locavore for their main shopping.

Rather than being asked why they chose to shop elsewhere, this survey asked what would increase the amount of shopping done with Locavore, and responses included proximity to a store (**55%**), price (**34%**) and range of stock (**25%**).

“Considering that it is organic and the labour that goes into growing it, yes [it is affordable]. However, I need to subsidise the cost of the veg box by buying nearly everything else in Lidl”.

2.2 Motivations for choosing Locavore

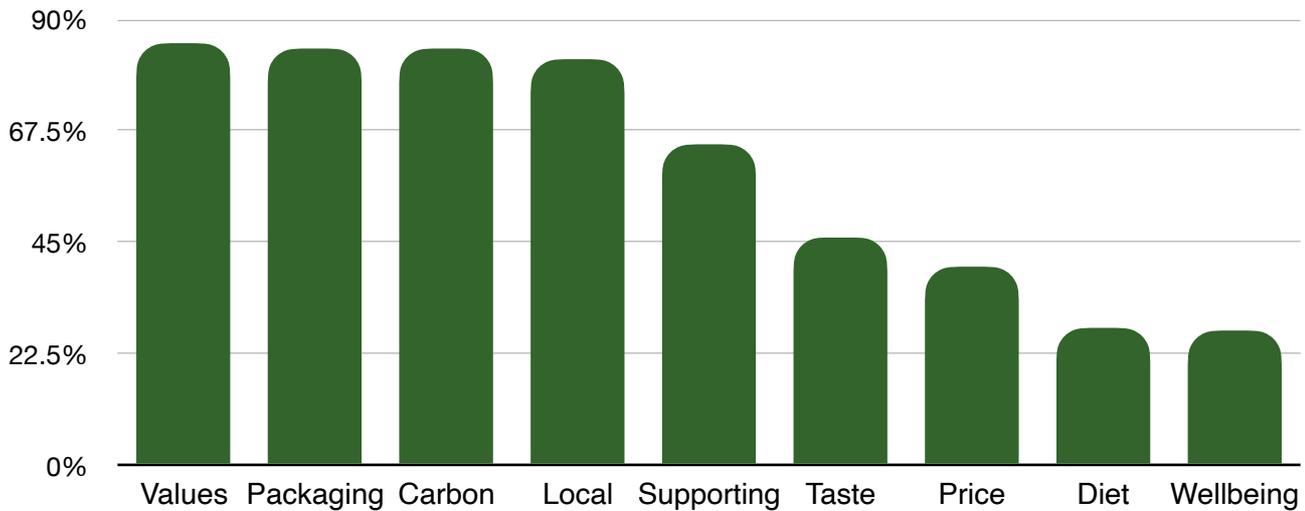


Chart: Most important reasons for choosing Locavore.

Asked to choose all the most important reasons for becoming involved with Locavore, the top choices were connected to supporting the mission and values, and reducing environmental impact. Options relating to wellbeing, diet, connectedness or employment scored lowest. Answers given as “Other” included a desire to buy organic food (6 respondents).

- **85%** Values and Ethics
- **84%** Less packaging
- **84%** Reducing carbon footprint
- **82%** Supporting local business
- **65%** Want to support Locavore’s work
- **46%** Like the taste of their food
- **40%** To pay a fair price
- **28%** To improve diet
- **27%** Improve sense of wellbeing

Below 10%: **8%** To learn new skills; **5%** To save money; **3%** To meet people in community; **1%** Increased social networks.

2.3 Perceived benefits of choosing Locavore

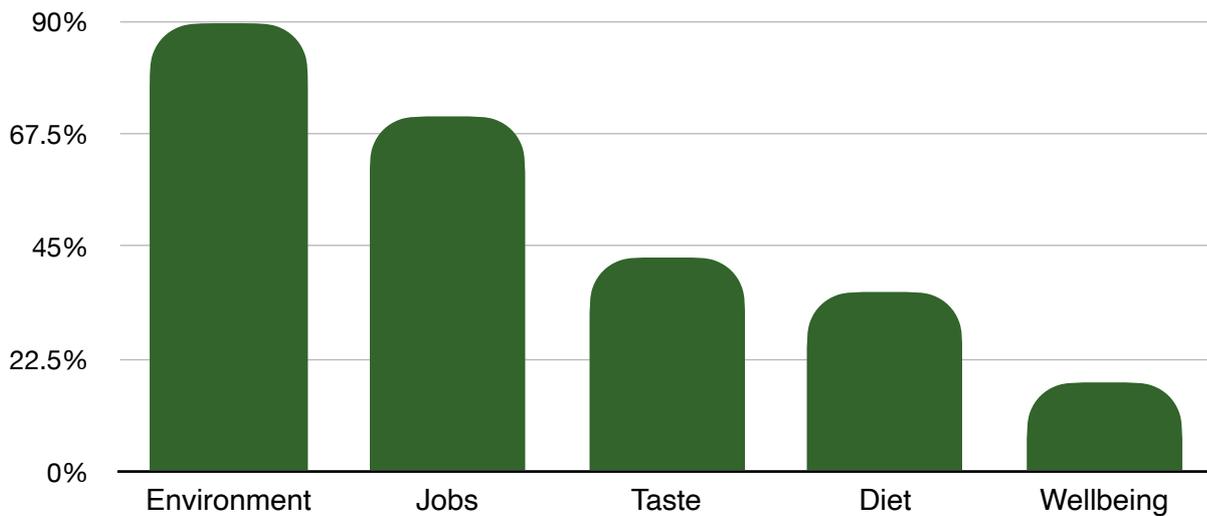


Chart: Top 5 benefits of supporting Locavore

Having looked at what drivers existed for people to shop with Locavore, respondents were asked to identify all options which were felt to be important benefits of supporting Locavore. Respondents predominantly chose environmental factors and a desire to support local businesses.

- **90%** Environmental benefits
- **71%** Contributing to local jobs / livelihoods
- **43%** Access to food that tastes good
- **36%** Better diet
- **18%** Improved sense of wellbeing

Below 10%: **9%** Reduced cost / better value; **7%** Improved community relations; **2%** A form of income; **1%** Increased social networks / friends; **1%** Learning new skills / training **1%**.

Respondents were then asked to score different aspects of the Locavore offering on a scale from “Of the utmost importance” through to “No importance at all”. These have been listed below in order of value based on the combined scores for Utmost and Very Important.

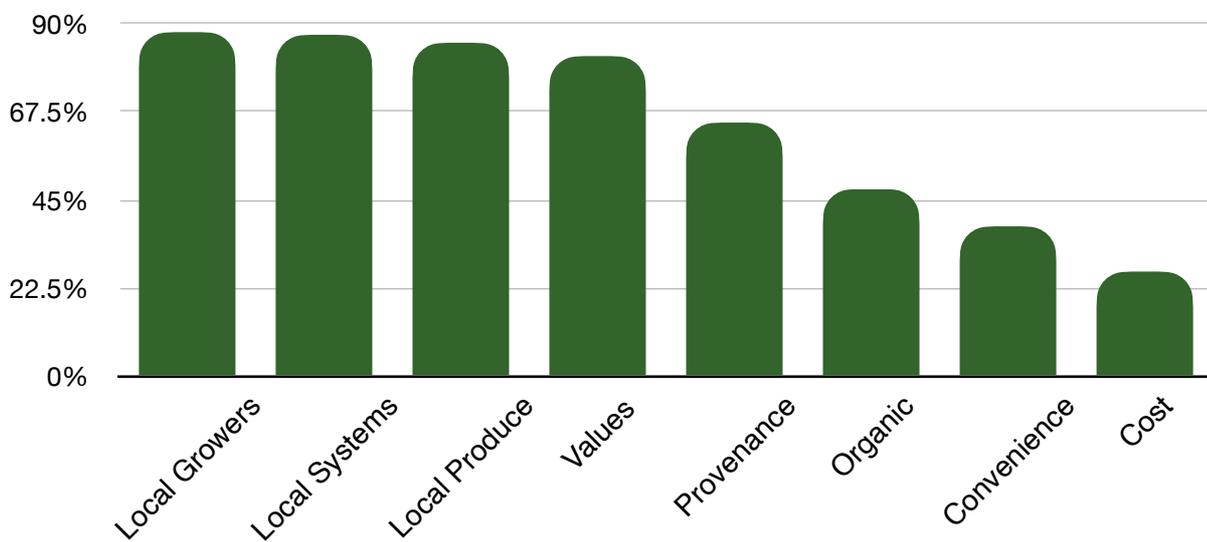


Chart: Most important benefits of choosing Locavore

Supporting Local Growers:

44% Utmost, 44% Very, 10% Quite, 1% Neutral

88% strong positive **1%** neutral or unimportant

Supporting Local Food Systems:

41% Utmost, 46% Very, 12% Quite 1% Neutral / Little

87% strong positive, **1%** neutral or unimportant

Receiving local produce:

28% Utmost, 57% Very, 15% Quite

85% strong positive, no neutral or unimportant

Values & ethics:

40% Utmost, 42% Very, 14% Quite, 3% Neutral, 1.5% Little / No

82% strong positive, **4.5%** neutral / unimportant

Knowing where food is from (provenance):

25% Utmost, 40% Very, 25% Quite, 11% Neutral, 1% Little

65% strong positive, **12%** neutral / unimportant

Organic Produce:

17% Utmost, 31% Very, 35% Quite, 13% Neutral, 3% Little, 1% None

48% strong positive, **17%** neutral or unimportant

Convenience:

10% Utmost, 28% Very, 40% Quite, 18% Neutral, 2% Little, 2% None

38% strong positive, **22%** neutral / unimportant

Cost:

3% Utmost, 24% Very, 41% Quite, 26% Neutral, 6% Little, <1% None

27% strong positive, **32%** neutral / unimportant

Grouping scores to show where there are strong positives (Utmost +Very) shows the strongest positive associations are linked to locality - Supporting Local Growers, Supporting Local Food Systems, and Receiving Local Produce - and to the Ethics and Values of the business.

Under this ranking, the least important aspects were cost and convenience. Perhaps most surprisingly, given the importance of Environmental factors for choosing Locavore, Organic as a factor scored relatively weakly.

Asked to identify any other aspects of importance which weren't included in these options, 20 responses (10% of sample) identified a reduction in packaging and waste as a priority, 7 mentioned specific products or types of food Locavore supply, 6 referenced seasonality, 5 referenced the Community Interest Company structure and activities such as the Good Food Fund, and 4 made points about the mission and the need to rebalance the Food System in favour of increased food sovereignty.

2.4 Customer Satisfaction

Asked if their involvement with Locavore had lived up to expectations, **90%** of respondents said yes, and **10%** partly. Reasons given for answering "partly" showed the primary concerns were linked to the contents of veg boxes (mostly about limited choice, but in one case that some products were out of season).

2.5 Affordability

82% of customers felt that the food they buy from Locavore is definitely (16%) or generally (66%) affordable. 9% were unsure.

8% felt it was generally unaffordable.

The explanations given for these scores came with a large number of caveats - reflecting the generally high household incomes of respondents, many comments reflected on a theme of “I’m lucky to be able to afford it, but I know many others can’t”. These perceptions included a number of comparisons between the cost of organic / non-organic food:

“The main problem for me is the fact that you supply so much organic. I wouldn’t be buying organic in the supermarket, so my Locavore shop is always more expensive where you don’t provide a non-organic option”.

“It would be nice to have some ethically sourced but non-organic food for people on low incomes”.

Many of the comments related to organic food underlined a seemingly widespread assumption that organic will automatically be more expensive than non-organic. Many respondents also linked the perceived difference in price compared to supermarkets with the dynamics of the system supporting lower prices:

“I believe in [a] fair price, therefore, even if the food is more expensive than in supermarkets, I don’t really mind. I think it is time people remember that good food means good work, and good work deserves to be properly remunerated”

“I’d prefer to pay more for locally grown food and support the local economy. Down with mass farming and distribution!”

“I feel Locavore veg box is what food should cost, but food systems that ignore environmental and social impact artificially lower prices”

Building on this, higher prices were linked by many respondents to be a sign of the values and ethics that led them to choose Locavore. *“It is more expensive than other supermarkets, but that is justified because Locavore are a living wage employer, a local business, and has values that align with my own”.*

One customer reflected that they felt their shopping cost two to three times as much as from a supermarket, *“but I just accept that’s what you’ve got to pay to go local / ethical”*.

Comments also indicated that for some respondents on lower incomes, choices were being made based on the areas of shopping and consumption that respondents felt made the best impact on their area of concern.

“I couldn’t afford to do a full food shop from Locavore, but the price for the veg box and eggs feels like good value and I find their prices for locally produced meat affordable while still being good quality / ethically produced”.

“I am on a low income and have to be careful with my budget. I love that I can buy my dried goods by weight without plastic. Can’t often afford the veg and fruit”.

“I have to really stretch my budget to afford much at Locavore, but in my opinion it’s worth it”.

Judgements sometimes come through these answers, maybe inadvertently, that people who find the food expensive or unaffordable are either shopping unwisely or have been used to buying the wrong food:

“The cost does seem to be more, but we prioritise quality food over other spending”.

“I prioritise food shopping in my household budget so I can buy good quality organic produce and am not struggling financially so affordability isn’t a massive issue. I think we should all pay more for our food in society”.

2.6 Perceptions of Quality

92% of respondents compare the quality of the food from Locavore favourably with that from supermarkets.

When answering what indicated quality in fresh produce, taste and freshness featured in the majority of free text answers, having been used as examples in the question. In addition respondents included seasonality, origin, and full flavour. There was also a strong connection between locality and perceptions of quality linked to freshness:

“I probably think my understanding of quality comes less from taste, but knowing a food is organic and local”.

“Knowing that my veg has been recently picked and hasn’t travelled thousands of miles to get to me. This will in turn result in better nutritional content which is important to me”.

Whereas supermarkets are starting to promote “wonky” veg as something they charge less for, some Locavore customers highlighted this irregularity as a quality they seek out:

“For some vegetables and fruit it can be the look and feel in terms of authenticity eg not photographically perfect looking in shape and size contributes to the feel of home grown and that also can add to the quality”.

Asked for further comments on quality indicators, authenticity was a recurring theme.

“They feel ‘Authentic’”; “The appearance - authentic veg that doesn't hide it comes from the earth. The taste is noticeably more rich and tastier”.

“I don’t mind if it has a funny shape or dirt on it! Sometimes the winter veg was a bit soft but I understand why and that’s part of supporting farmers during that time of the year”;
“I’m fine with it. If it’s all perfect then that means there are other parts of the process that are less than pretty”.

“My expectations were just to buy stuff, but I’ve learned so much on top of the buying. It also helps to reset my expectations on the cosmetic standards of fresh produce and what foods can be grown locally and in what season”.

Section 3: Impacts on Consumption Behaviours

3.1 Eating Habits

90% report some changes to diet since engaging with Locavore;

8% report a complete change of diet eg becoming vegetarian.

41% eat 5 portions of fruit & veg a day.

40% eat more than 5 portions a day.

57% felt they consumed more locally produced foods.

When asked to give more details on the changes that have happened in people's eating habits, many respondents suggested they had moved towards more plant based meals, often linking this to a wider awareness of environmental impacts that had caused them to start shopping with Locavore in the first place.

"I have switched to a plant based diet. This was not necessarily caused by Locavore but rather a deeper awareness of the need to cut animal products from our diets".

Many of the comments describing dietary change linked it to the desire to eat more food that aligned with the respondent's values or ethics, although sometimes linked to the increased cost making ethical products more expensive:

"We now eat less pre-prepared foods. We also eat more vegetarian meals and have meat less often. The meat we buy from Locavore is more expensive than the meat we bought in supermarkets so we have it less often. We enjoy eating vegetables more and have discovered tofu!"

Although Locavore is not a vegetarian or vegan store, **37%** of respondents told us they are vegetarian or vegan, compared to a 2019 customer survey in which **31%** identified in this way.

Many of these customers identified in comments that the range of products supplied by Locavore supported this diet. *"I've been vegan since before discovering Locavore, but now shopping here with the bulk bins, I have access to more different foods that I ever had tried before. Everything is so cheap, that I'm now always stocked up on different seeds and grains to put in my meals, rather than having the same stuff all the time"*.

Remembering that convenience foods aren't just for meat eaters, one vegetarian reflected *"I'm eating more varied vegetables now. Before I was mostly buying whatever veg was not packaged in the supermarket so it was mostly broccoli. I'm also now cooking more and eating fewer shop-bought bean burgers. I've also started eating fruit"*.

For many respondents, handing over the choice of what to buy by subscribing to a box scheme was a driver for this more varied diet. *"I eat more fresh veg overall, more cabbage, far more root veg and more potatoes. I eat less rice and pasta, less broccoli, and fewer mushrooms, peppers and fresh tomatoes. This is because I used to buy the same vegetables very frequently, and now my cooking is led by what comes in the box"*.

Reflecting earlier answers about the variety of produce and perceived repetition of some staples such as kale, some respondents identified dietary changes had been driven by the need to find new ways of using produce: *"I eat greens for breakfast now and try recipes based on what I have, I eat new foods never tried before"*.

Other products available in the store or as add-ons to veg box deliveries feature strongly in the changes people have made to their diets, with examples including more sourdough, supplied by another CIC, milk from Mossgiel. *"I eat less meat, more varieties of vegetables and more whole grains. Tasted Scottish cheese I'd never tried before"*.

Underlining the high level of importance given to the Locavore values and ethos, one respondent described the benefit of knowing research has already been done for them - *"We used to never eat meat at home, due to lack of access and knowledge about how to find affordable, locally produced meat. Since the Locavore supermarket opened we occasionally buy meat there to cook at home, I trust that anything they stock has been ethically produced and is sustainable"*.

This trust also impacts on shopping behaviour outside of the Locavore environment - *"Seeing the brands you stock makes me more likely to choose those brands when I shop elsewhere"*.

3.2 Cooking Habits & Skills

54% report cooking from scratch more often since engaging with Locavore

75% report having used Locavore social media to find new recipes

45% have used new recipes that they found in this way

42% report having shared these recipes or cooking skills / techniques with other people

Overall, comments and responses to questions about cooking suggest customers choosing Locavore are already likely to be confident in cooking fresh produce - 45% said this was something they already did, and although 54% reported some increase, for 22% of respondents this was only a minor increase.

Comments in open questions indicated that for many people, subscription to the Locavore veg box scheme had helped them feel more connected to the food they were producing, with comments around the thought that has to go into preparing meals from a pre-selected box:

“I think that because of the boxes I’m more ‘engaged’ with the food now so I look forward to cooking and eating it”.

“I put more effort into making and cooking food as it’s mostly based around the vegetables from the box, so I spend more time preparing proper meals”.

Respondents also discussed the wanting to use everything in the box, to avoid waste:

“I make a lot more recipes that use up the veg box staples, ie carrots”

“Since starting a family and going back to work we have had to start meal planning and this helps with using up the box and knowing what veg we have in advance has also helped us and reduces food waste”.

Again, the lack of choice that arises from the box scheme was a driver for many respondents to flex their cooking skills more:

“I’m much more confident with cooking, and am eating far more seasonally now. I feel I am more confident with cooking because I don’t shop to find particular produce as much, and have had to learn to cook new ingredients as they have arrived in the veg box”.

Less clear is any link to an increased consumption of organic foods, reflecting the low priority given to organic as a reason for choosing Locavore. Asked whether engagement with Locavore has encouraged more consumption of organic foods, **48%** said no, and **15%** were unsure.

3.3 Attitudes to Waste

I seek food with less packaging now - 81% agreement

56% definite agree, 25% agree, 12% neutral, 3% disagree, 2% definite disagree

I am more resourceful with food now - 64% agreement

37% definite agree, 37% agree, 18% neutral, 4% disagree, 3% definite disagree

I waste less food than before - 55% agreement

28% definite agree, 27% agree, 27% neutral, 13% disagree, 3% definite disagree

I am more aware of food waste - 54% agreement

32% definite agree, 22% agree, 31% neutral, 13% disagree, 3% definite disagree

Overall, Locavore appears to support choices already being made rather than triggering change. When asked to score the strength of agreement / disagreement with statements regarding food waste and packaging, results seem to underline that for many customers, a wish to reduce use of plastics and packaging in general was a reason to choose Locavore, and that as a result they continue to choose food with less packaging.

As identified in answers about cooking, the drive to use the contents of the veg box helps customers think more creatively about how to use everything, and shopping with Locavore appears to help customers feel more positively about their ability to reduce food waste.

Respondents were asked how much of the fresh veg they bought each week was wasted, not because of peelings etc. but because it had gone bad or because it was not eaten for other reasons, and showed much less waste of Locavore produce.

% Wasted	All Sources	Locavore
25-50	1%	2%
<25%	62%	47%
None	34%	45%

Explanations for this difference may include the amount spent, the more limited choice giving an aspect of challenge, or a more general urge to reduce waste. As one respondent noted, *“I eat more vegetables because there’s the pressure to use up the veg box and not waste anything! (I see this as a positive)”*.

Section 4: Impacts on Individuals

4.1 Connectedness Indicators

Asked whether engagement with Locavore has led to increased feelings of connectedness to different factors, the strongest associations were again those linked to locality and provenance, seasonality, and the Locavore mission.

Origins of food (eg where your food comes from and by what means) - 79% agreement

29% definite yes, 50% qualified yes, 18% no change, 4% qualified no

Social/Environmental movements / food politics - 63% agreement

19% definite yes, 44% qualified yes, 29% no change, 7% qualified no, 1% definite no

Nature (for example, seasons) - 56% agreement

19% definite yes, 36% qualified yes, 37% no change, 7% qualified no, 1% definite no

People, eg Locavore community, local community - 45% agreement

8% definite yes, 37% qualified yes, 38% no change, 14% qualified no, 3% definite no

It should also be noted that the high level of qualified agreements relates to the high starting point for many customers, with many comments indicating that Locavore helps to reinforce rather than change attitudes.

Explanatory comments indicated that the changing contents of veg boxes, an awareness of things such as the Hunger Gap, and seasonal gluts, backed up by communication through the newsletter and social media pages helped strengthen and reinforce an understanding of the basics of food production. *“I spend (a lot) more time thinking about vegetables and how great they are, so I eat more vegetables. I spend more time around people who care deeply about the ethical production of their food, which normalises caring about that, which makes me care more”.*

“I finally know what is in season!”

4.2 Wellbeing Indicators

92% agreed strongly that being involved with Locavore feels worthwhile

70% felt being involved with Locavore made them feel happier

68% felt positively that Locavore has influenced their satisfaction with life

Respondents were asked to score the impact of Locavore on standard wellbeing measures, with 0 indicating not at all, and 10 being completely. Ranked to combine those with highest percentages scoring 6 and above, the strongest agreement was that involvement with Locavore felt worthwhile. Comments suggest shopping with Locavore might support feelings of wellbeing, but isn't seen as directly changing them. Answers about privilege might indicate a degree of guilt about being able to choose to shop with Locavore.

Does being involved in Locavore feel worthwhile?

Overall positive (Scoring 6-10) **92%**

1.5% 0 - 2 3% 3-4 7% 5 **24% 6-7** **68% 8-10**

Has being involved with Locavore made you feel happier?

Overall positive (Scoring 6-10) **70%**

13% 0 - 2 5% 3-4 12% 5 **33% 6-7** **37% 8-10**

To what extent do you think involvement with Locavore has influenced your satisfaction with life?

Overall positive (Scoring 6-10) **68%**

15% 0 - 2 5% 3-4 13% 5 **37% 6-7** **31% 8-10**

Has being involved with Locavore had a positive impact on your levels of anxiety?

Overall positive (Scoring 6-10) **39%**

29% 0 - 2 14% 3-4 19% 5 **21% 6-7** **18% 8-10**

“When your Saturday short stroll to the shop becomes one of the key aspects of your life, you know they got it right”

Section 5: Emerging Themes

A number of the explanatory comments touch on findings from other Locavore surveys, and raise some potential themes for further investigation.

5.1 Perceptions of Locality

As well as the benefits of a high level of connectedness and support for the mission, the flipside can be customers holding the business to high individual standards, based on their own expectations and interpretation of the parts of the mission that they feel should be prioritised.

Within general marketing materials, Locavore are clear that locality is applied in the broadest sense - produce is sourced as locally as possible, without air freighting, but also within the constraints of being a business seeking to meet consumer demand. The following comments illustrate a range of attitudes towards the perception of locality:

“Excellent local produce, I feel more connected to seasonality and Scottish growers. It is great to contribute and pay towards a growing local food economy and doing things better at every level.”

“Happy with the veg box produce and how it has increased the variety of food we eat, some of the produce seems to come from further away than I expected but appreciate the limitations”.

“Locavore is a great shop, but I think as an organisation willing to promote organic and local food, too many of your products arrive by importation and are completely out of season”.

5.2 Privilege and Social Impact

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the relative affluence of the sample, there are many comments reflecting the common criticism that despite having a mission to change the system, Locavore serves a middle class audience that has sufficient access to forms of capital that allow choices unavailable to others, and which would still be there without Locavore existing. Many respondents demonstrated a sensitivity to these criticisms, and highlighted both the positive benefits they felt their choices were supporting, and the desire to broaden access to other sectors of the community.

“I appreciate all that it has done to show the possibility of how we can obtain food more justly. I hope it won’t keep growing for growth’s sake but maybe enable others to do the same where they are... I also hope that people in poverty will feel able to shop there locally and not feel that it’s a place for hipsters”.

“I’ve been delighted to see Locavore flourish and grow. I occasionally worry that it gets too big and I look forward to the days when it really is accessible to all”.

“I feel like they really care about good ethical organic food and thriving social community, and have made the critical step of combining these two impulses in an engaged and meaningful way”.

“I know they are supporting local jobs, local growers”.

There is also a link to discussions around the physical presence of Locavore in Govanhill and the role it plays in the changing face of the neighbourhood. *“I’m extremely disappointed by the costs, because I know they’re driving up prices in the area and directly contributing to gentrification. Locavore is not doing enough to support poor people in Govanhill or make their store accessible to them”.*

In contrast, when the plan to open a new store in Partick was announced, comments were received on Twitter about why it was being opened in an area the commented viewed as middle class, and not in a lower income area.

5.3 Customer, or Supporter?

Linked to discussions around privilege and capital, many comments highlighted the pull of the values of the organisation, showing not just the potential tension between business and mission, but also a level of engagement which raises questions about whether respondents would see themselves as customers of a business, or supporters of a cause.

“The fact that it’s a values-driven social enterprise is really important to me. I feel I can trust Locavore to make good decisions based on the values we share, and that I can trust that the prices are fair”.

In some cases, this degree of connection to a mission emerges in a willingness from some customers to compromise on factors that would normally influence their shopping choices, and the language used is more like that of people discussing a charity they support rather than a brand:

“I appreciate supporting Locavore monetarily for the great cause they do. Apart from one small issue which was rectified, their service, ethics and demeanour have been outstanding. The food is great, it helps feed my family and essentially helps feed the next generation healthy sustainable food”.

Nonetheless, the identity of Locavore clearly functions in the same way as any other brand, trusted by their customers and used as a shorthand for a system of values and a reassurance of doing the right thing:

“I know I can rely on Locavore to deliver quality organic produce and trust that their ethics and values mean suppliers further down the chain are getting a fair deal”.

“I need a place where my green values are echoed and enhanced”.

“We eat better, and feel we are doing the right thing”.

“Locavore’s values and practices allows me to put into practice my own awakening to my need to live as sustainable, low impact, less waste lifestyle as I can, and as mindfully too”.

“The produce tastes so much better than what you buy in a supermarket and is in line with my own morals about consumption and sustainability”.

This discussion also runs through the findings of a full staff survey, where staff members showed a similar level of connection to the mission, and a readiness to hold business decisions up to scrutiny against their personal interpretations of the mission.

“I feel the staff are very committed to the values they represent”.

5.4 Individual Food Security

“[Shopping with Locavore] minimises having to visit the dreaded supermarkets. Since I started shopping at Locavore the business seems to be growing strength to strength and has respond impressively to the challenge of COVID 19”.

With the survey running from just before the start of the national lockdown, a number of comments reflect on the importance and value people place on the delivery scheme, a subject explored more in a separate customer survey exploring the response of Locavore to Covid-19.

Perhaps more surprisingly, given the relatively high level of understanding of food systems and mentions of food politics and food sovereignty, only two comments were made referencing the potential impact of Brexit and linking this to the impacts of lockdown, with one respondents writing that they were *“Reassured to have access to good produce even in case of hard Brexit”.*

With the outcome of trade talks due imminently, the response of customers and the potential for a further surge in demand such as that seen by the massive increase in veg-box sign-ups may provide further detail on the comparative resilience of local food networks and their attraction to customers less motivated by values and ethics.

Section 6: Conclusions & Questions

Based as this is on work from a partnership between a food based CIC, a research unit, and a charity whose scope covers the full range of the food system, the results, their interpretation, and the implications for future work will vary by viewpoint. As with any study, there are limitations and health warnings to be added into the mix before any conclusions are drawn.

Firstly, the study was recruited through primarily through social media, and mostly through the Newsletter and Facebook group attached to the Veg Box scheme. The number of respondents closely matches the response rate for other surveys, and it is likely that there is a cohort of well informed and motivated customers who regularly participate, which fits well with the discussion of business v. cause.

The scope of the questions was something which was largely developed at the funding proposal stage of the project, and the content of the survey was largely agreed before other smaller surveys were conducted once the lead post for the project had been recruited. This, combined with the power of retrospect, means a similar survey developed now would have slightly different sets of questions, exploring more of the themes raised in section 5.

Possibly the most significant impact was that of COVID-19 and lockdown, which impacted on the original plans for focus groups to explore these themes further; However, it also ultimately provided more opportunity to explore the role of the organisation in in customer's lives during a difficult period with direct impacts on food availability.

6.1 Key points for Locavore

The results of this survey have many positives for Locavore to hold onto and be proud of. The message of providing an alternative to supermarkets and an opportunity to reshape and re-balance the food system clearly resonates, and appears to have helped build a customer base who will continue to support and promote both the business and the mission. Points to address in policy or practice arising from this project, which many within the organisation will already be aware of, include:

- A continuing need to confront perceptions of organic produce as expensive or niche, and organic retail as serving a privileged minority, as well as to highlight the environmental and welfare benefits from organic production methods.
- There appears to be scope to further develop the community engagement / educational / campaigning activities of the organisation. The keen interest shown in food democracy and the politics of production imply there is an appetite for businesses such as Locavore to build on activity and educational activities.
- The demographics of the survey respondents indicate a positive trend towards younger, less affluent consumers, but pricing and perceived pricing continues to be a barrier to increased uptake. There is also a potential risk of exclusion based on perception of Locavore as a hipster brand.
- Customer support for the Good Food Fund appears to be linked strongly to the perception of Locavore's values, and alongside other activities under the New Initiatives fund forms a core part of the customer offering.

- At a time of substantive growth and expansion, the results highlight the tension that can exist between what might be termed as ‘deep green’ consumers for whom the environmental mission is core, and those who use Locavore as a retailer alongside many others. The challenge in growing this will lie in maintaining sufficient authenticity and adherence to mission to keep the deeply committed customers on board, whilst building in flexibility to appeal to new or potential customers who may arrive with different expectations.
- Continuing to find the balance between commercial pressures of running a successful business and the wider aims of the CIC.

6.2 Key points for the Sector

Those within sectoral bodies will be better placed to highlight these, but these results clearly point to a range of benefits from interacting with organisations such as Locavore which would hopefully be replicated elsewhere. Questions which arise that would be best addressed from a sectoral viewpoint include:

- The low priority given to organic production compared to packaging and distribution shows that individual community food businesses and the sector as a whole have a continuing role to educate and inform the public that agriculture is the greatest contributor to GHG within the food chain.
- How best to support organisations looking to change a system that they are also a part of, and how they can demonstrate the impacts they are having with minimal resources, or to encourage organisations to see the benefit of allocating resources to demonstrate their impact.
- How to support organisations which have commercial drives to grow and expand whilst also supporting the wider social, environmental, economic goals of their individual missions and their ‘baked -in’ supporters / customers.
- Supporting organisations to have their voices and experiences included in local and national policy discussions, for example the development of local Food Plans which often focus on food initiatives through a problematising lens and can miss opportunities to identify food production and producers as solutions, for example as pathways out of food poverty.

6.3 Future Research Questions

The results and themes emerging from the survey will touch on many areas already being explored by contemporary food researchers, and in the case of COVID-19 and Brexit impacts there are ongoing opportunities to further explore the role of organisations such as Locavore in individual and community responses, and also to further test the resilience of short food chains.

Having apparently identified a large cohort of customers who shop with Locavore because of mission and an alignment with their personal values, but who shop with supermarket chains because of factors such as cost or convenience, there may be more to explore around the factors which influence those choices and the individual impacts and processes behind those choices, for example the brand perceptions or beliefs which make one chain more palatable than another.

Similarly, engagement with the less regular or 'committed' Locavore customers may provide opportunities to explore the barriers about connecting more with Locavore - responses here indicate this may be largely about price or convenience, but there may also be factors around perceptions of exclusivity or the mission being a barrier as it takes the business too far out of the mainstream and turning it into something for 'others'.

A third, potentially still more difficult group to engage with, would be those who never shop with Locavore, or who tried it once then never returned. For any customer focussed business, this is a natural area of interest, but for CIC working to an ambitious and system-changing mission, this group may be particularly important. From a research viewpoint, the class undercurrent in comments about price and accessibility is made more explicit in a comment about the Locavore store being a (negative) driver for gentrification; coupled with the recently completed LM3 exercise there may be rich ground to explore the neighbourhood level impacts in terms of changes to other businesses and the attitudes and reactions of local communities.

There will already be a large amount of research underway about the policy and practice necessary to provide appropriate support to individuals affected by food poverty, but as highlighted by some of the comments in these responses, Locavore risks being caught in supporting a system it is trying to change. Whilst currently supporting an enlarged network of projects supported by the Good Food Fund, and facing challenges on how to shape this support in a way which will fit principles of food justice and food sovereignty, it is well positioned as a base for further research into appropriate and innovative responses to supporting individuals and organisations.

Appendix 1: Visual Summary

WHY CHOOSE LOCAVORE?

We ran a survey of **212** people asking about their experiences as Locavore customers - why they chose us, and what they get from it - these are some of the things they told us.

Top reasons for choosing to shop with Locavore:

- 88%** to support growers and producers and know they get a good deal.
- 87%** to support local food systems.
- 84%** to buy food which uses less packaging.
- 84%** to reduce carbon footprint.
- 82%** to support local business.

56% get more than half of their fresh produce from Locavore

54% cook more from scratch now

92% say Locavore produce is of good quality compared to that from supermarkets.

90% of customers agreed their experience with Locavore met their expectations.

90% of customers have made some change to their diet as a result of their engagement with Locavore.

“I’m eating more seasonally now... I feel more confident with cooking because I learn to cook with new ingredients as they arrive”

Locavore customers waste less food:

- 55%** of customers said they waste less food as a result of shopping with Locavore.
- 45%** of customers said none of their Locavore produce is wasted, compared to **34%** of produce from other sources.

57% consume more locally produced foods.

85% choose us because they support our values.

“Because of the veg boxes I’m more engaged with the food now, so I look forward to cooking and eating it”

Differences customers have noticed as a result of shopping with us:

- 81%** now look for foods with less packaging.
- 79%** say they feel more connected to the origins of their food.
- 70%** said shopping with Locavore makes them feel happier.

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Appendix 2: Visual Summary, COVID-19 Survey

