

Global Food Waste: A Concern of Today

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0.1 The Problem and Global Significance

Food waste is the disposal of any form of edible food



<-- Amount of food waste directly tied to retail and consumer waste in the U.S.

- Landfills created by rotting food impact the environment by releasing greenhouse gasses such as methane into the soil and atmosphere. Methane is around 20x stronger than the average CO2 gas being released. (Walia and Sanders 2017).
- People are still suffering greatly from malnourishment, while an impressive percent of edible food is being wasted. Food waste impacts more issues than food insecurity (Steiner et. al 2019).

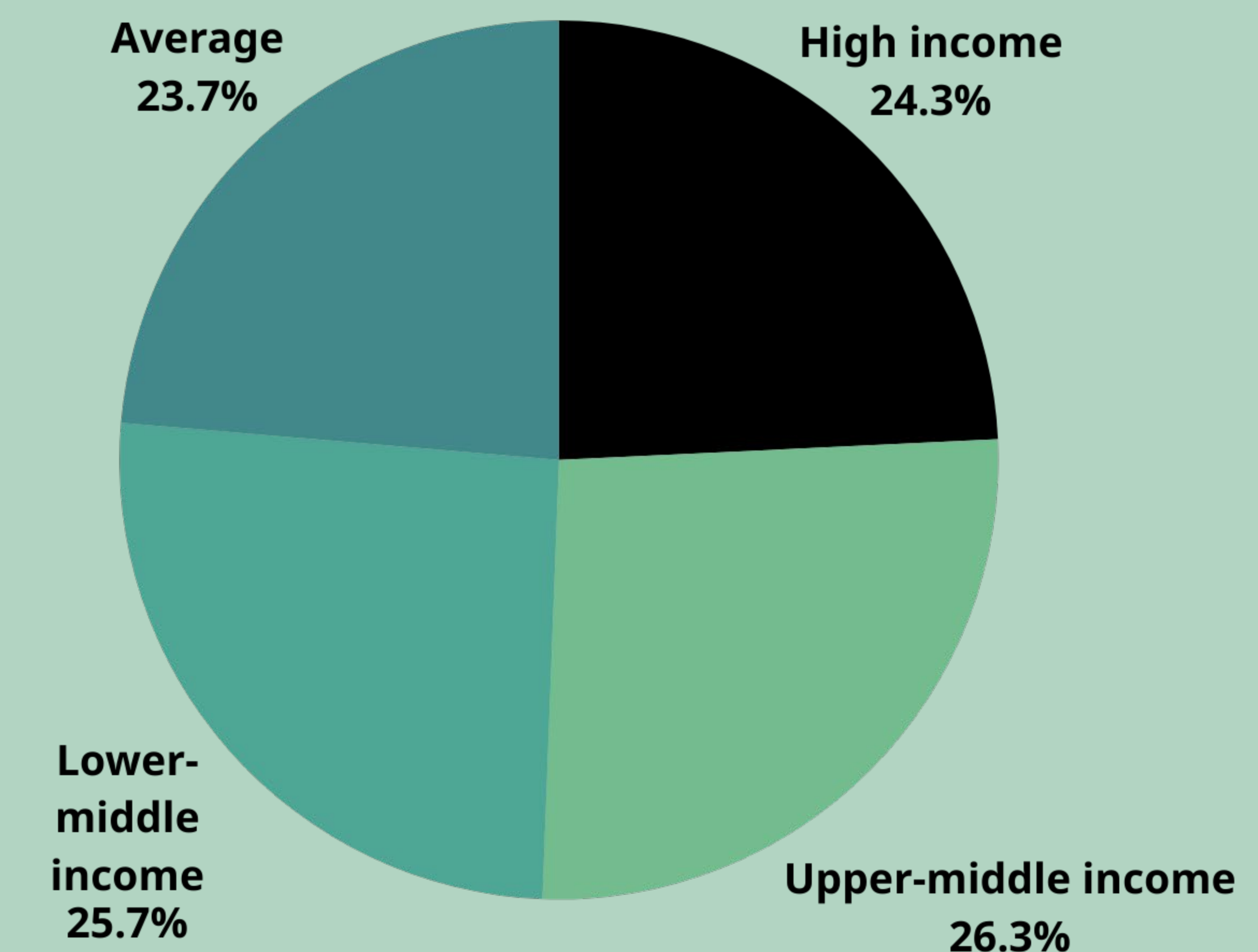


0.3 Cultural Perspective

Consumer households = one of the main sources of food waste, specifically middle - upper income countries

- The consumers perception of “suboptimal food” : cultural norms around what is considered “food,” “waste” or “edible” (Aschemann-Witzel et. al 2015).
- Two Routes: Intentional route catering toward the norms or intentions around throwing away food & Routinized route of everyday habits and household practices (stronger influence).
- Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) : how norms, perceived behaviors, and attitudes influence intentions behind food waste paired with routine theory to expand on the subconscious pattern of consistent habitual routines in their daily life (Stancu et. al 2016).

Household Food Waste by income group (in kg per person/year)



Source: As of 2022/2023 FAO, UNEP
1/3 of food is globally wasted annually

Journey From **0.2 Social Construction**



- Waste is not just unwanted or discarded food. It is socially constructed by challenging how society decides what is considered “food” and “waste” shaped by culture, the capitalist power, and is economically embedded (Cooks 2018).
- Lack of awareness of environmental harm or lack of concern - little knowledge around the larger phenomenon of food waste.

0.4 Political Ecology

- Industrial agriculture ---> cheap calories ---> overproduction
- Capitalist food producers, marketing, global economies, and suppliers create social and capital inequalities by sculpting what is considered “waste.”
- Food waste is positioned within a power structure manipulated by political decisions and governance that inevitably produce environmental harms and lack of food accessibility.
- Corporations create inequality of land use, governmental policies shape worldwide diets, and industrial agriculture kills ecosystems from toxic products.

0.5 Environmental Policy and Redirection

- Landfill --> Anaerobic Decomposition --> Methane --> Atmosphere --> Warming
- Harmful landfills strain fresh water, land, and energy
- The EPA’s “Feed It Onward” initiative is a voluntary program. It enables partnerships between federal corporations, businesses, and communities to redirect excess, edible food to reduce food insecurity and support local communities and military families
- Redirection of 15% edible food waste it could reduce hunger of +/- 18.4 million people & 35% of caloric needs met in Americans suffering food insecurity.
- Help from anaerobic digestion programs and organizations (ie. Feeding America).