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Blue Cart Recycling Survey

Final Report



Prepared for The City of Calgary by:



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Background and Objectives

- ◆ In 2009, The City of Calgary rolled out the Blue Cart recycling program to single family homes (up to and including four units).
- ◆ Since the Blue Cart program began and Community Recycling Depots switched to no-sort recycling, Calgarians have increased recycling by about 70 percent.
- ◆ Still, there are opportunities among Blue Cart households to increase their overall volume of recyclables as well as ensure that the right items are being placed in the carts.
- ◆ Thus, The City of Calgary’s Waste & Recycling Services (WRS) business unit wished to conduct research with residents who currently have Blue Cart recycling collection from The City.
- ◆ Key research objectives included assessing:
 - ❖ Current Blue Cart usage and behaviours;
 - ❖ Items placed in the Blue Cart including unacceptable materials;
 - ❖ Barriers to participation in the program and/or properly using the Blue Cart;
 - ❖ Communication and messaging, including awareness of the “What Goes Where” tool; and,
 - ❖ Satisfaction with the Blue Cart program.

Methodology

- ◆ Ipsos Reid conducted a telephone survey with 600 residents of Calgary aged 18 years or who currently have Blue Cart recycling collection from The City.
 - ❖ Both landline and cell phone sample were used.
 - ❖ Interviews were conducted between July 13th and 19th, 2015.
 - ❖ The average interview length was 12 minutes.
- ◆ The final data were weighted to ensure the overall sample's quadrant and age/gender composition reflects that of the actual Calgary population aged 18 or older who currently have Blue Cart collection.
 - ❖ This survey was done in conjunction with a multi-family recycling survey. The overall sample of n=775 was weighted to ensure the quadrant and age/gender composition reflects that of the actual Calgary population aged 18 or older according to 2011 Federal Census data. The single-family sample of n=600 is a subset of this representative sample.
- ◆ With a sample of 600, results are considered accurate to within ± 4.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population of adult single-family residents in Calgary been surveyed.
 - ❖ The margin of error is larger within quadrants and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.



KEY FINDINGS

Key Findings

① Satisfaction with the Blue Cart program is extremely high

- ❖ Overall satisfaction is near universal, with more than half saying they are ‘very satisfied’

② The Blue Cart program is well utilized

- ❖ More than nine-in-ten households set out their Blue Cart weekly or bi-weekly
- ❖ Of these, six-in-ten say their cart is usually full when they put it out for collection

③ Placement of unacceptable items in Blue Carts is widespread

- ❖ Seven-in-ten households have placed unacceptable items in their cart in the past 12 months
- ❖ The most common culprits are recyclables in plastic bags (i.e. other than shredded paper or bagged plastic bags) and foam containers

④ Lack of awareness of unacceptable materials is a key factor contributing to improper use

- ❖ Roughly four-in-ten were not aware that recyclables in plastic bags cannot go in the Blue Cart and seven-in-ten were not aware that foam containers cannot go in the Blue Cart

⑤ Yet, the majority feel they have enough information about the program

- ❖ Seven-in-ten – *including those who have placed unacceptable items in their cart* – say their household has enough information about the Blue Cart program



DETAILED FINDINGS



The City and the Environment

The City and the Environment

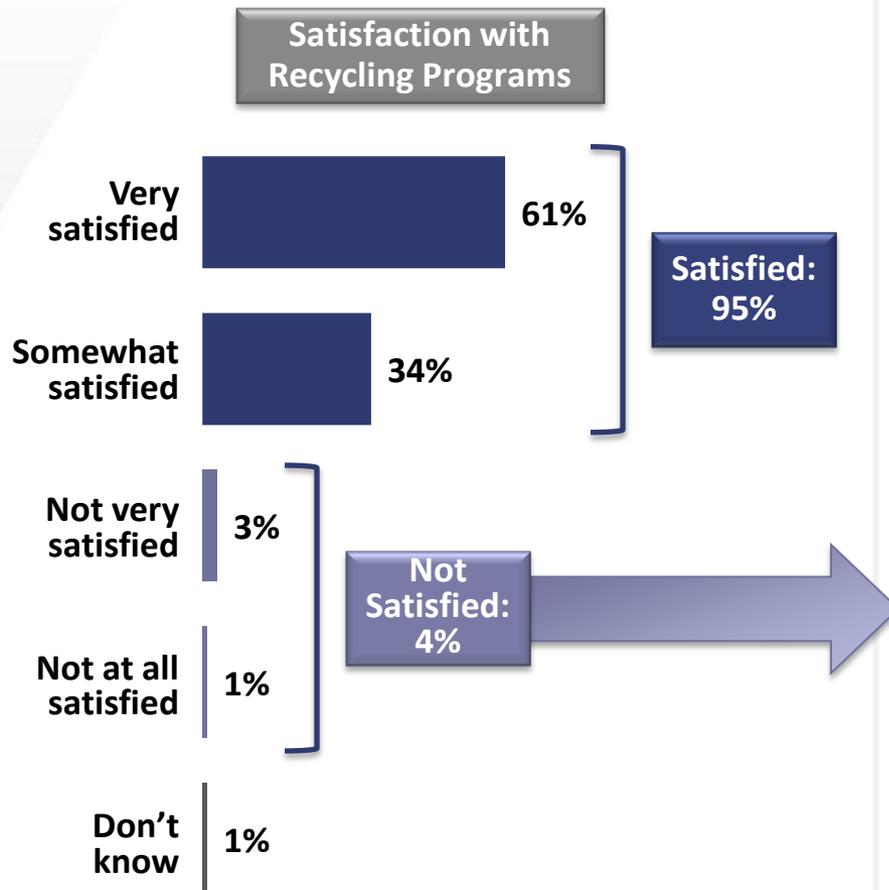
Satisfaction with current recycling programs is near universal

- ◆ Overall, 95% of Calgarians with Blue Cart service are satisfied with the recycling programs provided by The City of Calgary – further, more than six-in-ten (61%) are ‘very satisfied’.
- ◆ Just 4% say they are not satisfied, while 1% ‘don’t know’.
 - ❖ Among the small base who are not satisfied, cost is the most frequent reason given for dissatisfaction.

Perceived value of municipal property tax dollars is moderate while value of waste and recycling taxes and fees is higher.

- ◆ Just under six-in-ten (57%) Blue Cart residents give The City a ‘good value’ rating for the value of their property tax dollars.
- ◆ This goes up to 68% with regard to taxes and fees paid for The City’s waste and recycling services.
 - ❖ ‘Good value’ ratings are significantly higher among those living in Southwest Calgary (77%) compared to their counterparts in the Southeast (63%), but statistically consistent with the Northeast (65%) and Northwest (69%).
- ◆ It is notable that there is a relationship between perceived value of property tax dollars and value of waste and recycling taxes and fees.
 - ❖ Among those who offer a ‘good value’ rating for property taxes, 86% give a ‘good value’ rating for waste and recycling taxes and fees, whereas among those who offer a ‘neutral’ or ‘poor value’ rating for property taxes, just 43% give a ‘good value’ rating for waste and recycling taxes and fees.

Satisfaction with Recycling Programs Provided by The City



SF1. Overall, how satisfied are you with the recycling programs provided by The City of Calgary? (Base: All respondents, n=600)

Reasons for Dissatisfaction

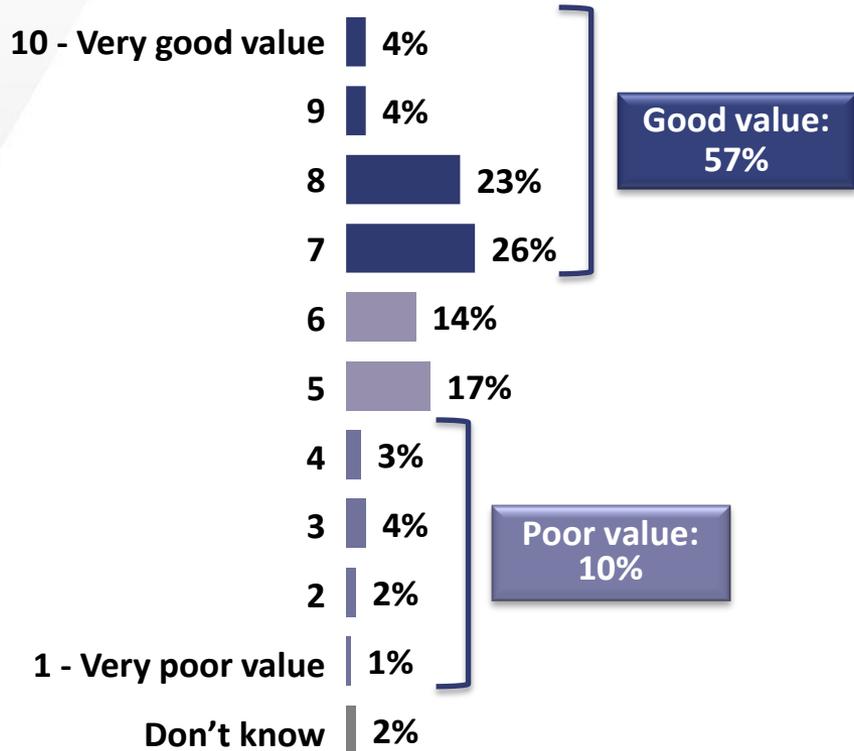
- ❖ Dislike fee/ costs too much/ waste of money (n=8)
- ❖ All materials not accepted (e.g. batteries, compost, materials in plastic bags) (n=6)
- ❖ Not picked up/ on time/ on schedule (n=5)
- ❖ It is mandatory (n=5)
- ❖ One bin is not enough/ large enough (n=2)
- ❖ Don't want home service/ prefer to take it to recycling centres (n=2)
- ❖ Don't have enough to recycle/ fill the cart (n=2)

**Caution: Very small base size*

SF2. Why are you **dissatisfied** with the recycling programs provided by The City of Calgary? (Base: Not satisfied, n=26*)

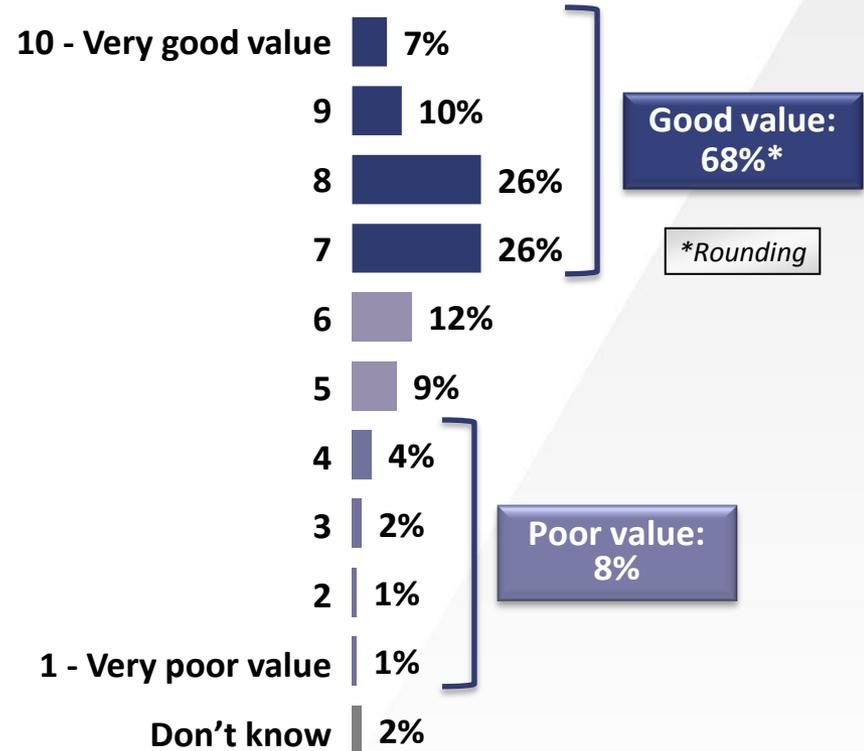
Perceived Value for Tax Dollars and Fees

Overall



SF2. Your property tax dollars are divided between The City and the Province. In Calgary, approximately half of your property tax bill goes to The City to fund municipal services. Considering the services provided by The City, please rate the value you feel you receive from your municipal property tax dollars. (Base: Own current residence, n=517)

Waste and Recycling Services



SF3. Thinking specifically about The City's **waste and recycling** services only, please rate the value you feel you receive for what you pay – including taxes and fees. (Base: Own current residence, n=517)



Overall Assessment of the Blue Cart Program

Overall Assessment of the Blue Cart Program

Perceived value of the Blue Cart fee continues to be strong

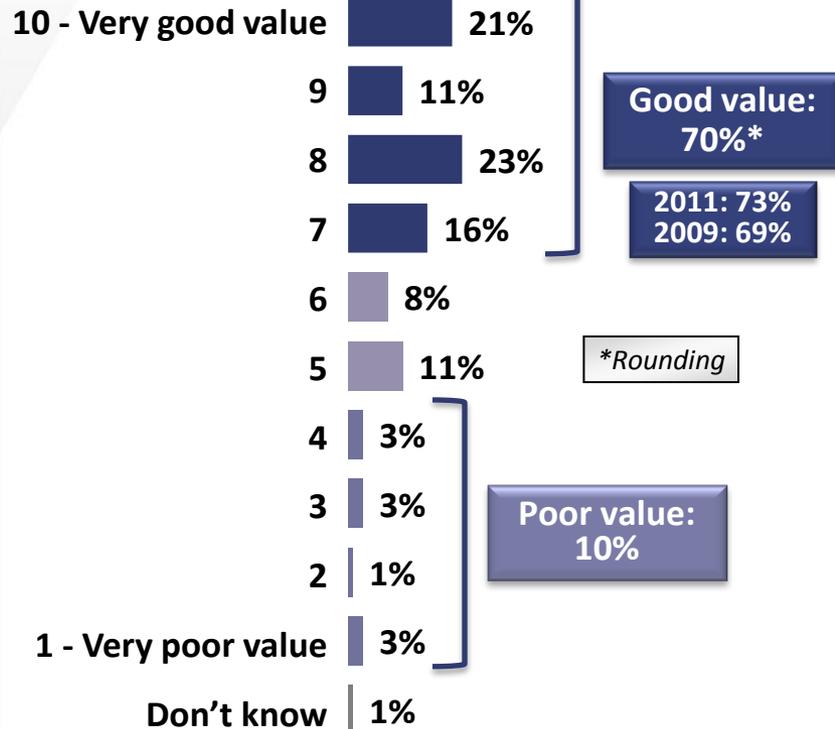
- ◆ Seven-in-ten (70%) Calgarians with Blue Cart service say they receive good value for the \$7.90 per month Blue Cart recycling fee – in fact, one-in-five (21%) give a rating of 10 (very good value) on a 10-point scale.
- ◆ Just 10% say they receive poor value
- ◆ Good value ratings are significantly higher among:
 - ❖ Those who feel they receive good value for property taxes (79% vs. 57% neutral or poor value);
 - ❖ Those who feel they receive good value for waste and recycling taxes and fees (83% vs. 39% neutral or poor value); and,
 - ❖ Residents aged 18 to 34 years (79%) and 35 to 54 years (74%) compared to those aged 55 years or older (58%).

Satisfaction with the Blue Cart program is extremely high

- ◆ Overall, 95% of Blue Cart recipients are satisfied with the Blue Cart program, with more than half (54%) saying they are ‘very satisfied’ – dissatisfaction is limited to 5%.
 - ❖ Key reasons for satisfaction are environmental benefits – “able to recycle/recycling is good” (44%), “less things in the landfill/reduces waste” (20%) and “environmentally friendly/saves our planet” (7%) – and the convenience and ease of the program (44%).
 - ❖ Among the small minority dissatisfied, cost is the primary reason for dissatisfaction – “price/expensive” and “waste of money/no value.”

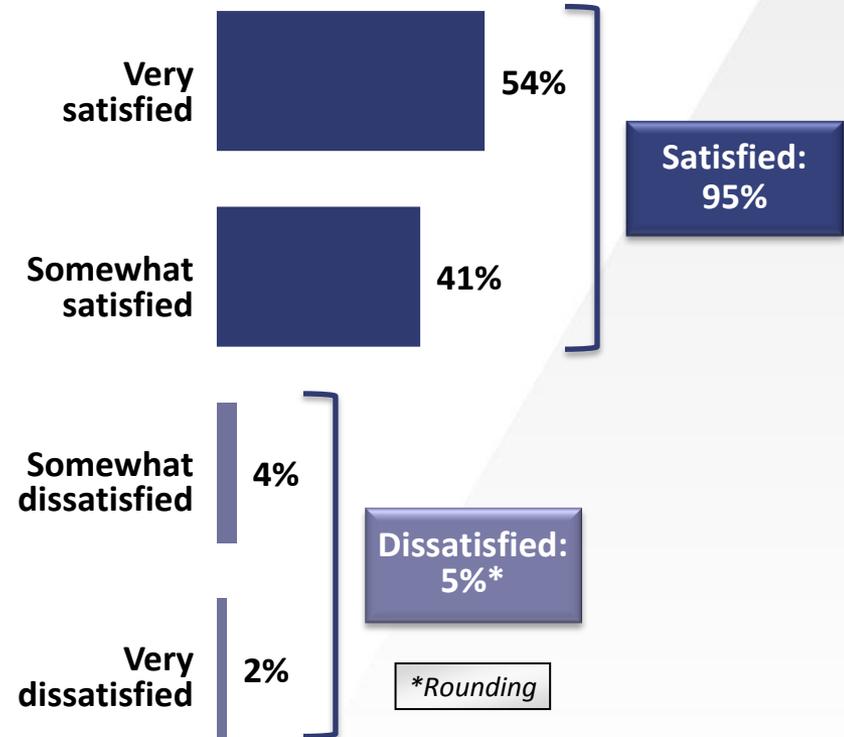
Value for Blue Cart Fee and Overall Satisfaction

Value for Blue Cart Fee



SF11. As you may know, households receiving Blue Cart service are charged a fee of \$7.90 per month. In your opinion, how much value do households receive for this \$7.90 per month per household Blue Cart recycling fee?
(Base: All respondents, n=600)

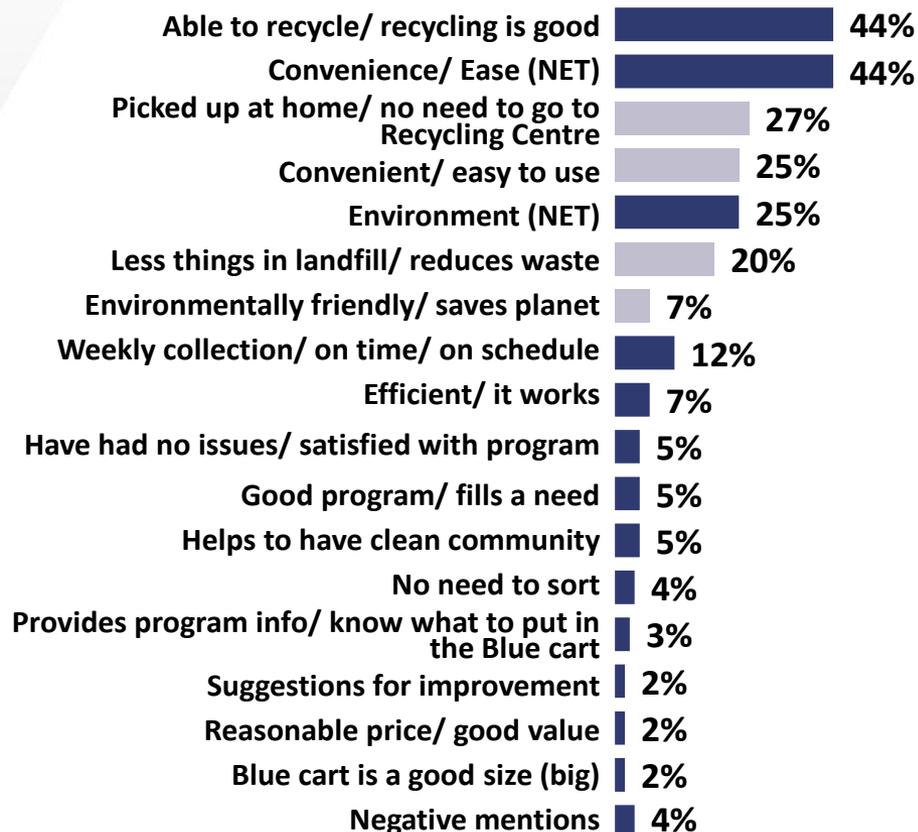
Satisfaction with Blue Cart Program



SF16. Overall, how satisfied are you with the Blue Cart program?
(Base: All respondents, n=600)

Reasons for Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with the Blue Cart Program

Reasons for Satisfaction



SF16A. What is the **main** reason you are **satisfied** with the program? (Base: Satisfied with the program, n=567)

Multiple Responses

Reasons for Dissatisfaction

- ❖ Price/ expensive (n=8)
- ❖ Not enough items to recycle/ to take advantage of the program (n=6)
- ❖ Not enough info available/ about the program (n=5)
- ❖ Waste of money/ no value (n=4)
- ❖ Not familiar with the program/ haven't heard about it (n=4)
- ❖ It's mandatory (n=3)
- ❖ No need for the program/ can take it to recycling centres (n=3)
- ❖ Not clear what to recycle (n=2)
- ❖ Not effective/ doesn't work (n=2)
- ❖ Other (n=8)
- ❖ Don't know (n=2)

**Caution: Very small base size*

SF16B. What is the **main** reason you are **dissatisfied** with the program? (Base: Dissatisfied with the program, n=33*)



Blue Cart Recycling Behaviours

Blue Cart Recycling Behaviours

Blue Cart recycling is well utilized.

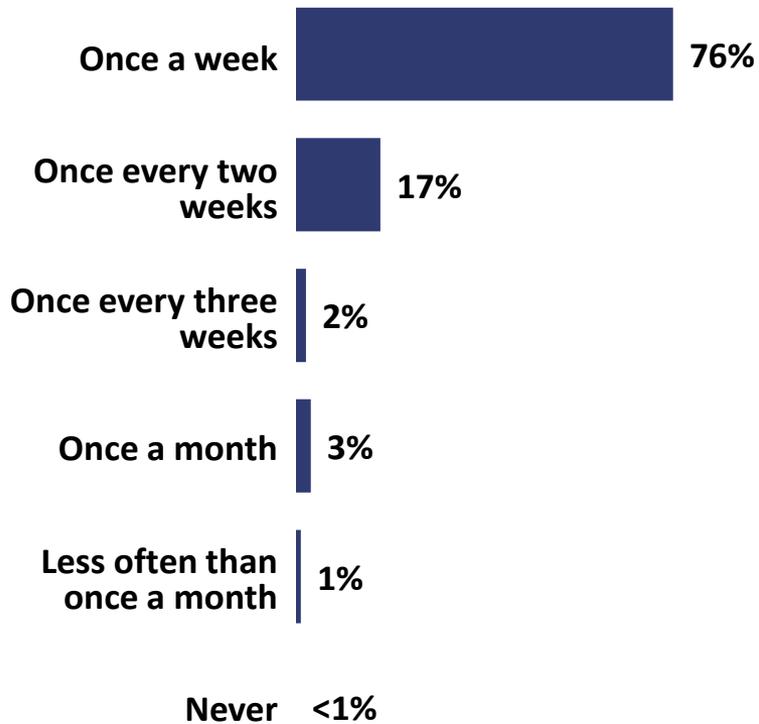
- ◆ More than nine-in-ten Blue Cart households set out their cart weekly (76%) or once every two weeks (17%); just 4% set their cart out once a month or less.
 - ❖ Incidence of setting out their cart weekly is significantly higher among residents aged 18 to 34 years (82%) and 35 to 54 years (79%) versus those aged 55 years or older (67%).
- ◆ Six-in-ten (58%) say their cart is full when they put it out for collection while 41% say it is half full.
- ◆ It is notable that those who set out their cart weekly and those whose carts are full, are more satisfied with the Blue Cart program and offer higher value ratings for the Blue Cart fee.

The frequency of having more recyclables than the cart can hold is limited.

- ◆ Among households who typically set out a full or half full cart, two-in-ten say they have more recyclables than the Blue cart can hold once a week (9%) or once every two weeks (9%); whereas half have extra recyclables once a month (20%) or less often than once a month (29%), and 27% never do.
 - ❖ Incidence of never having extra recyclables is significantly higher among residents aged 55 years or older (43%) compared to those aged 35 to 54 years (24%) and 18 to 34 years (16%).
- ◆ The main culprits that cause an excess of recyclables are 'cardboard or boxes' (84%).
- ◆ The most common means of dealing with extra recyclables are keeping them until the next collection day (69%) or dropping them off at a Community Recycling depot (20%).

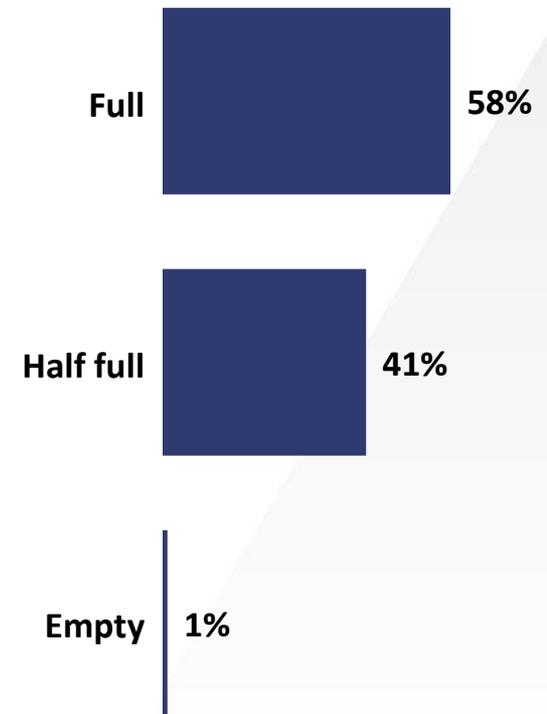
Frequency of Use and Fullness of Blue Cart

Frequency of Cart being Set Out for Collection



SF4. How often do you usually set your Blue Cart out for The City to collect your recyclables? (Base: All respondents, n=600)

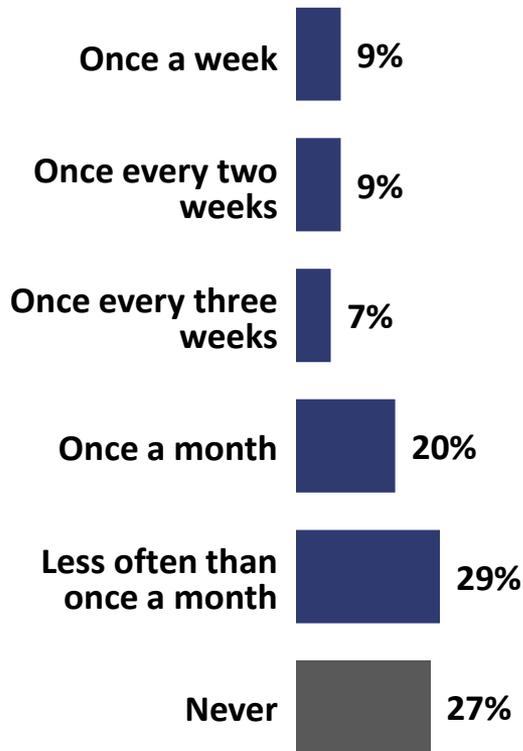
Fullness of Cart when Set Out for Collection



SF5. Typically, is your Blue Cart full, half full, or empty when you put it out for collection? (Base: Set out Blue Cart at least once a month, n=599)

Having More Recyclables than the Blue Cart Can Hold

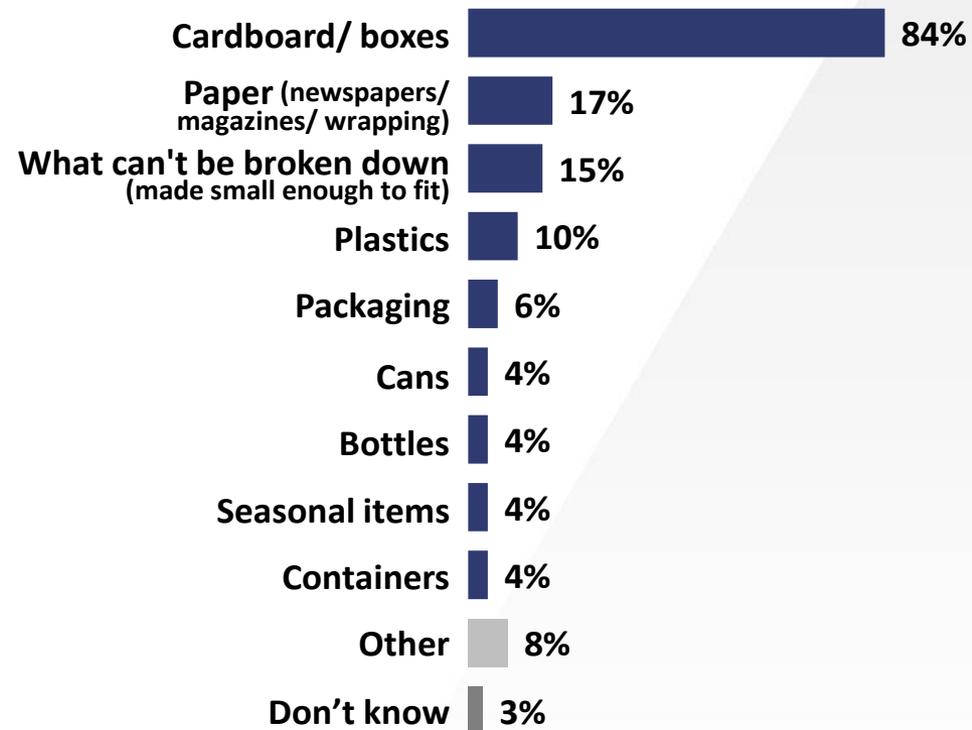
Frequency of Having More Recyclables than the Cart Can Hold



SF6. How often do you have more recyclables than the Blue Cart can hold? (Base: Blue cart is full or half full, n=591)

Types of Recyclables Causing one to Have More than the Cart Can Hold

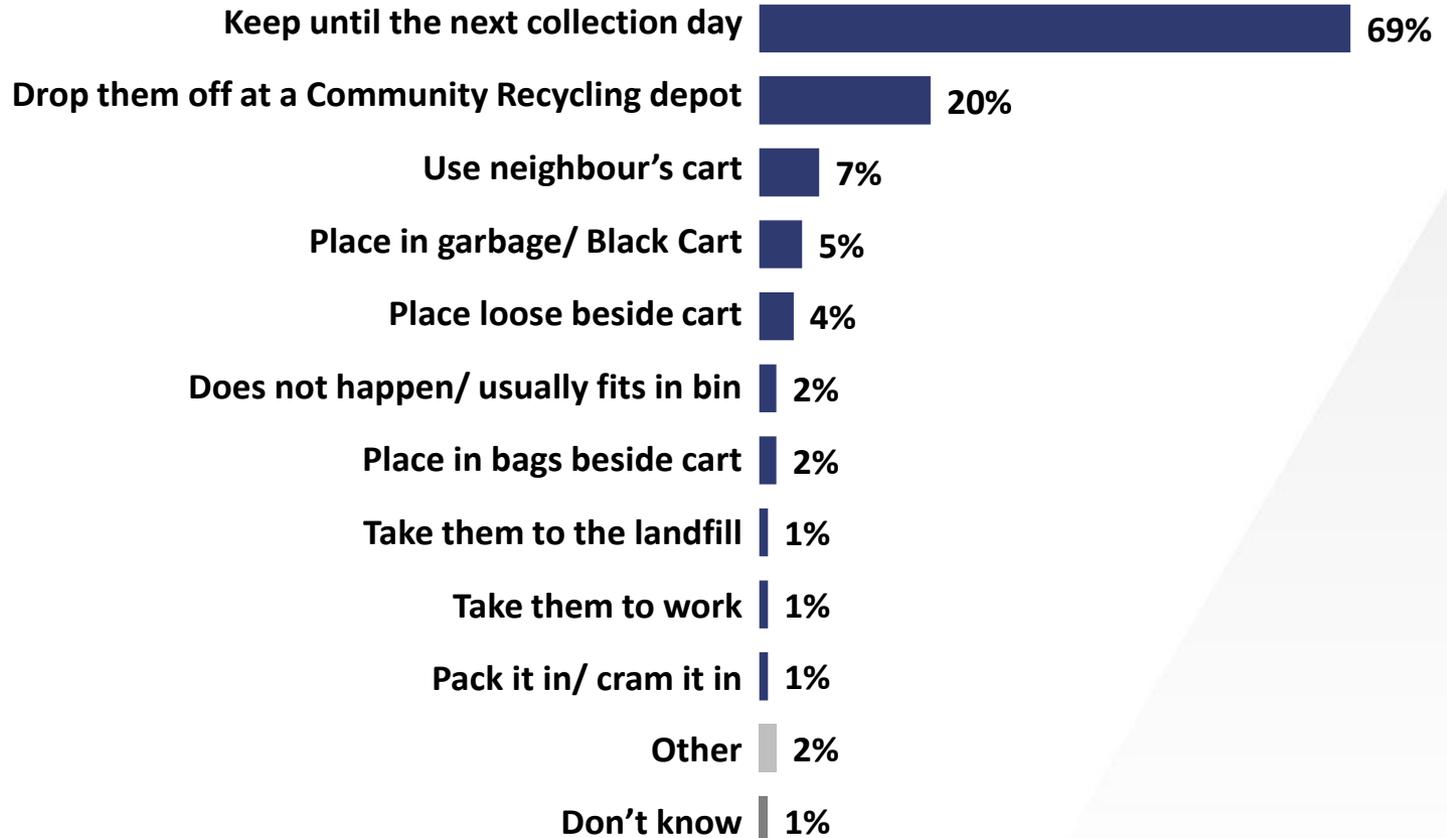
Multiple Responses



SF6A. What specific type or types of recyclables cause you to have more than the Blue Cart can hold? (Base: Have more recyclables than cart can hold, n=412)

Actions Taken with Extra Recyclables

Multiple Responses



SF6B. What do you do with your extra recyclables when you have more than the Blue Cart can hold?
(Base: Have more recyclables than cart can hold, n=412)



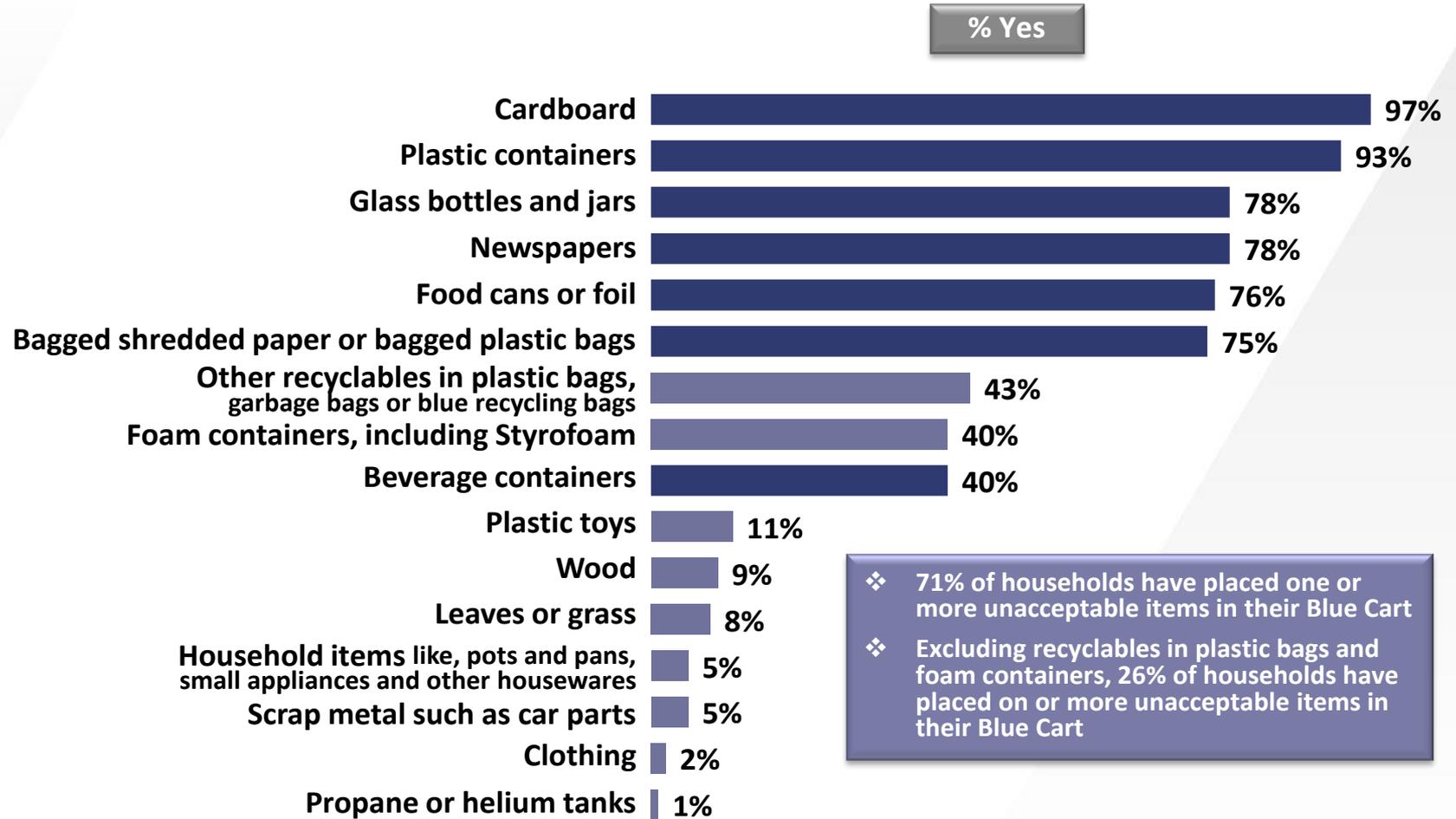
Proper Use of Blue Carts

Incidence of Placing Unacceptable Items in Blue Carts

The majority of households have placed unacceptable items in their Blue Cart.

- ◆ Overall, 71% of households have placed one or more unacceptable items in their Blue Cart in the past 12 months.
- ◆ The most common unacceptable materials are recyclables in plastic bags (i.e. other than shredded paper or bagged plastic bags) (43%) and foam containers, including Styrofoam (40%).
- ◆ Less common are plastic toys (11%), wood (9%), leaves or grass (8%), household items (5%), scrap metal (5%), clothing (2%) and propane or helium tanks (1%).
 - ❖ Still, one-quarter (26%) of households have placed one or more of these items in their Blue Cart in the past 12 months.
- ◆ Reported placement of unacceptable items in the Blue Cart is significantly higher among residents of the Northwest (80%) quadrant than the Southwest (64%) or Northeast (63%).

Items Placed in Blue Carts in Past 12 Months



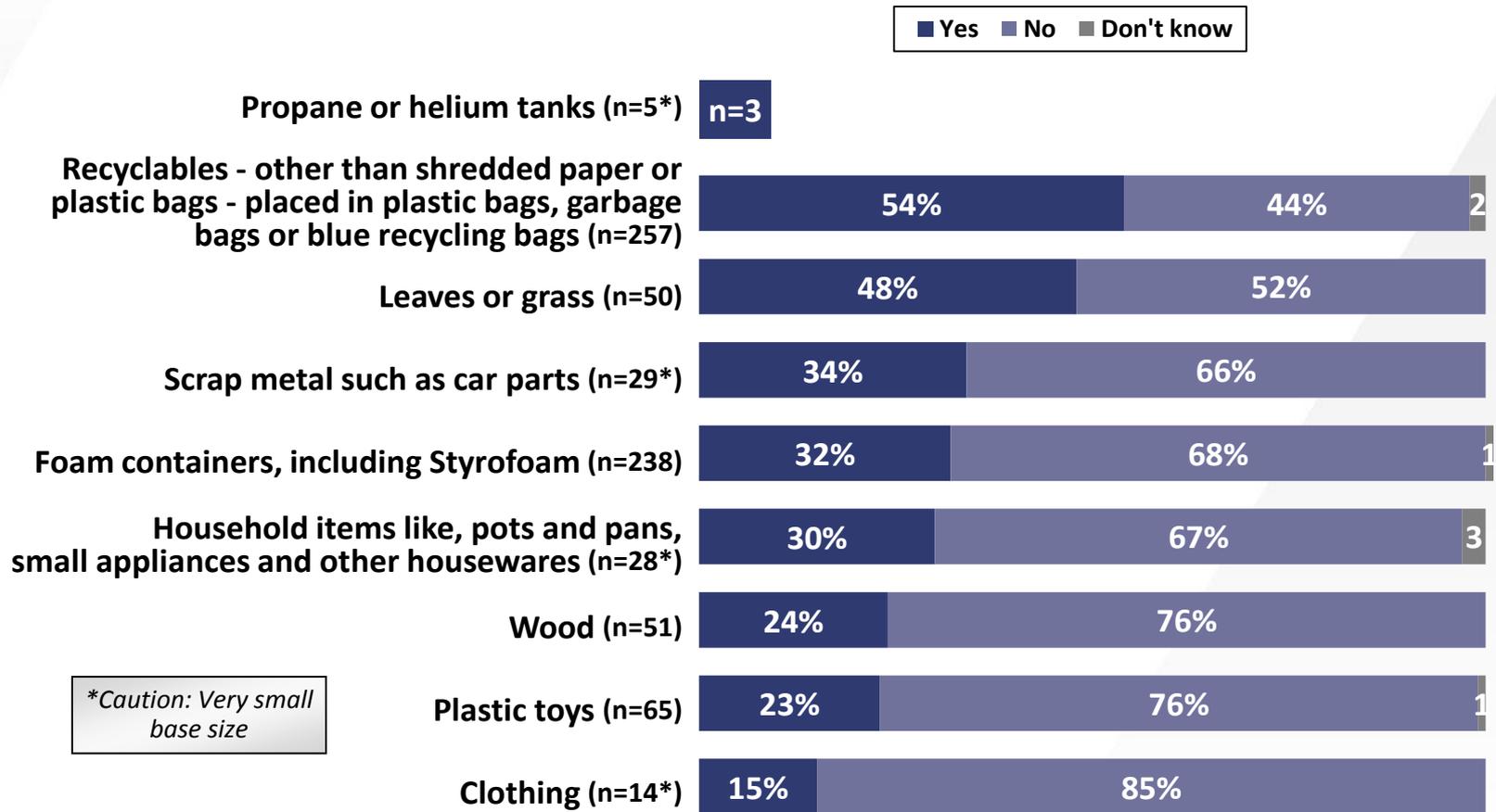
SF7. In the past 12 months, has your household placed any of the following in your Blue Cart ?
 (Base: Set out Blue Cart at least once a month, n=599)

Awareness of Unacceptable Materials

Lack of awareness of unacceptable materials is a key factor contributing to improper use.

- ◆ Respondents who placed each type of unacceptable item in their Blue Cart, were asked if they were aware that the item could not be put in their Blue Cart.
- ◆ Just over half (54%) were aware that recyclables in plastic bags cannot go in their Blue Cart (44% not aware), while roughly half (48%) were aware that leaves or grass cannot go in their Blue Cart (52% not aware).
- ◆ For other unacceptable materials, two-thirds or more were not aware that the items cannot go in their Blue Cart.
 - ❖ This is particularly notable for foam containers, including Styrofoam (68% not aware) given that a sizeable minority (40%) of households have placed this item in their Blue Cart.
- ◆ Still, a notable percentage of residents do place items in their Blue Cart even though they know they are unacceptable.

Awareness that Items Placed in Blue Cart are Unacceptable



**Caution: Very small base size*

SF8. Prior to now, were you aware that the following items cannot go in your Blue Cart?
 (Base: Have placed unacceptable items in Blue Cart)

Barriers to Properly Using Blue Carts

Lack of awareness, lack of perceived negative impact and effort needed emerge as barriers to properly using Blue Carts.

- ◆ A sizable minority of Calgarians with Blue Cart recycling agree:
 - ❖ ‘Sometimes my household puts items in the Blue Cart even if we're not sure if they can be recycled’ (43%).
 - Significantly higher among those who have placed unacceptable materials in their Blue Cart (53% vs. 21% have not) and those aged 18 to 34 years (51%).
 - ❖ ‘It’s okay if some unacceptable items are put in the Blue Cart as they are sorted and end up in the right place’ (36%).
 - Significantly higher among those aged 18 to 34 years (43%) and those with high school or less education (48%).
 - ❖ ‘It’s too much work to figure out exactly what items can and can't be recycled in the Blue Cart’ (25%).
 - Significantly higher among those who have placed unacceptable materials in their Blue Cart (29% vs. 16% have not).
- ◆ Further, just over half (52%) agree ‘my household probably doesn't recycle all the items that we could’.

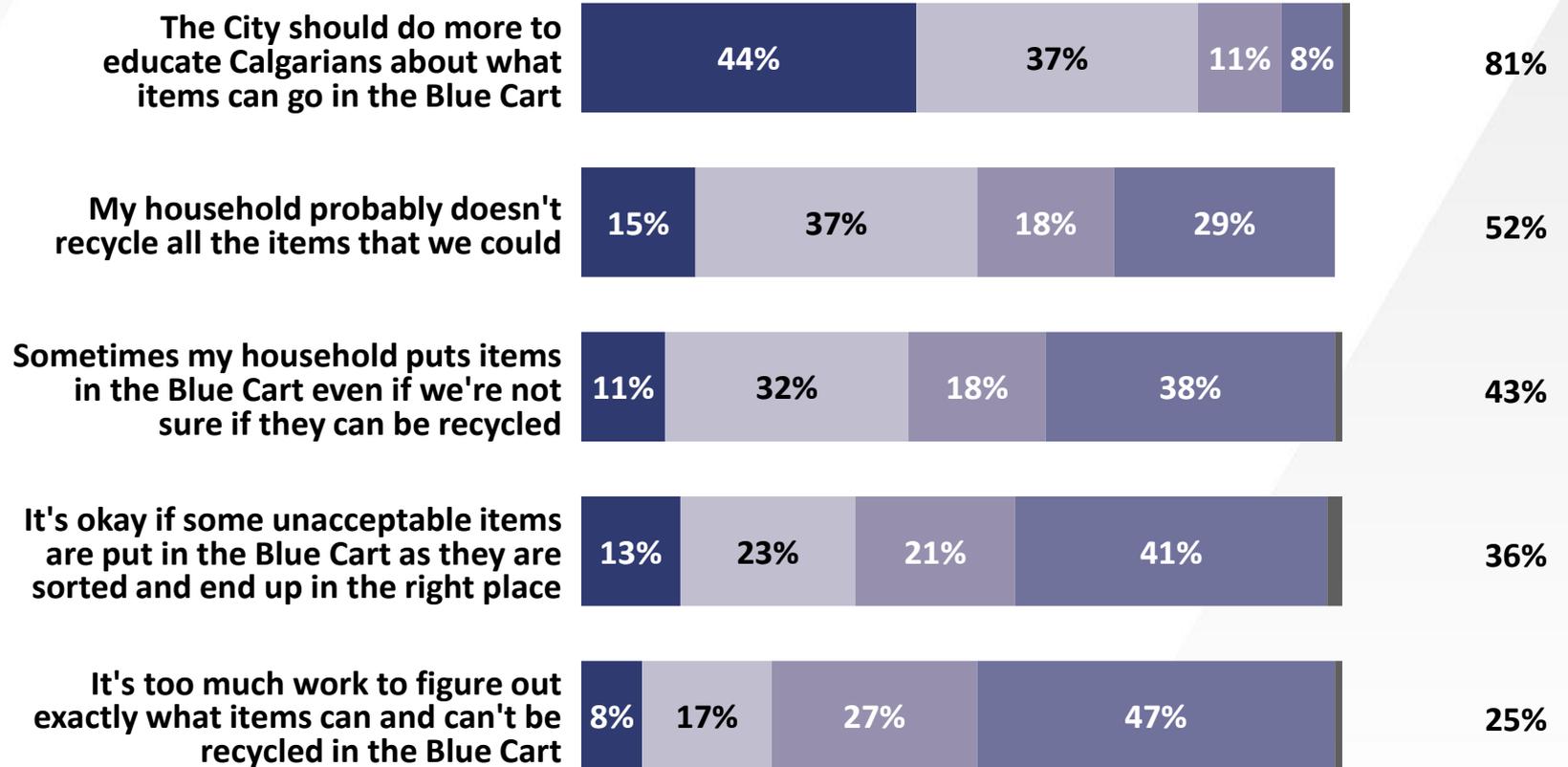
There is strong consensus that more education is needed.

- ◆ Eight-in-ten (81%) agree that ‘The City should do more to educate Calgarians about what items can go in the Blue Cart’.

Barriers to Properly Using Blue Carts

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Don't know

% Agree



SF9. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
 (Base: Base: Set out Blue Cart at least once a month, n=599)



Blue Cart Communications

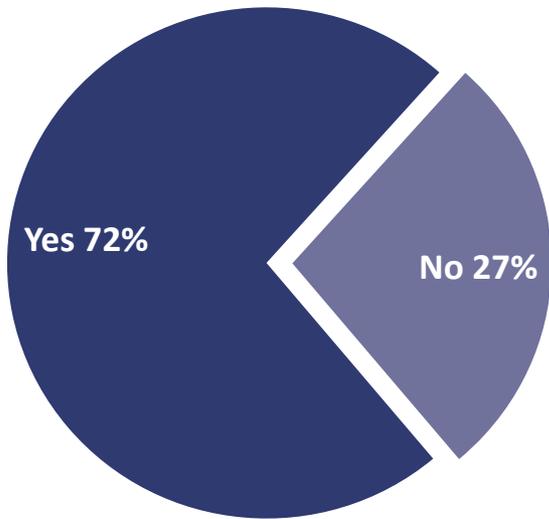
Information Needs

The majority of Calgarians with Blue Cart recycling feel they have enough information about the program.

- ◆ Roughly seven-in-ten (72%) say they and their household have enough information about the Blue Cart program, while one-quarter (27%) say they do not.
 - ❖ Among those who have placed unacceptable items in their Blue Carts, 70% say they have enough information.
- ◆ Among those who say they do not have enough information, by far the most frequently mentioned need is information about “acceptable/unacceptable materials” (81%).
 - ❖ One should note that the previous questions about unacceptable items may have influenced these ‘top-of-mind’ responses.
- ◆ It is notable that among those dissatisfied with the Blue Cart program, 51% say they do not have enough information, and among those who rate the value of the Blue Cart fee as neutral or poor, 40% say they do not have enough information.

Blue Cart Program Information Needs

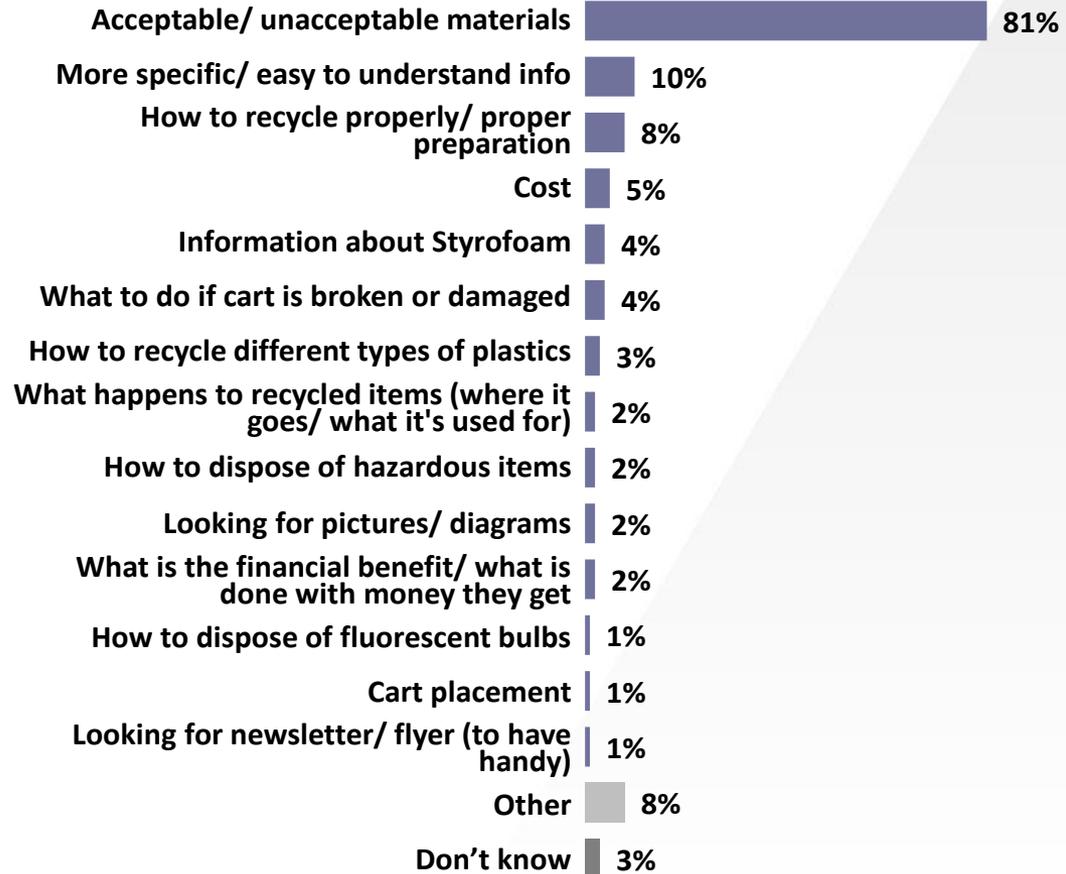
Enough Information about the Program



SF12. Would you say that you and your household have **enough information** about the Blue Cart program?
(Base: All respondents, n=600)

Information Sought

Multiple Responses



SF12A. What information are you looking for specifically? (Base: Do not have enough info, n=157)

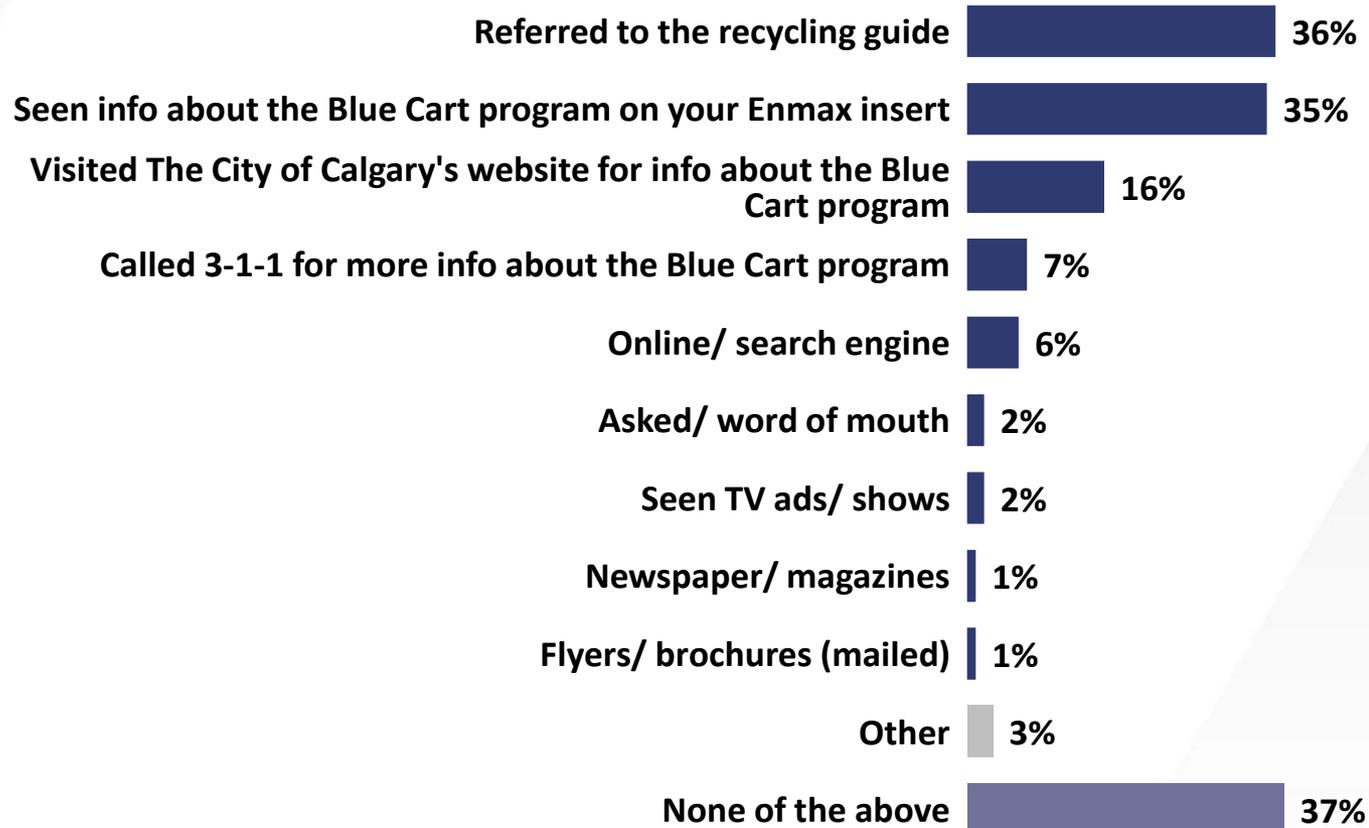
Incidence of Looking for or Seeing Information on the Program

More than six-in-ten Blue Cart residents have looked for or seen information about the program in the past 12 months.

- ◆ Overall, 63% of Calgarians with Blue Cart recycling have looked for or seen information about the program in the past 12 months (37% have not).
 - ❖ More than one-third have referred to the recycling guide (36%) and seen information on their Enmax insert (35%), while 16% have visited the City website for information (another 6% have looked elsewhere online).
 - Incidence of referring to the recycling guide is significantly higher among those aged 55 years or older (46% vs. 36% 35 to 54 years and 26% 18 to 34 years) as is incidence of seeing information on their Enmax insert (45% vs. 37% 35 to 54 years vs. 24% 18 to 34 years).
- ◆ It is notable that the incidence of looking for or seeing information about the program in the past 12 months varies by age and satisfaction with the program.
 - ❖ Just over half (53%) of those aged 18 to 34 years have looked for or seen information in the past 12 months (versus 64% of those aged 35 to 54 years and 72% of those aged 55 years or older).
 - ❖ While less than half (48%) of those *dissatisfied* with the Blue Cart program 57% of those *somewhat satisfied* with the program have not looked for or seen information, compared to 69% of those *very satisfied* with the program.

Past 12 Months Incidence of Looking for Information on the Blue Cart Program

Multiple Responses



SF13. In the past 12 months have you...? (Base: All respondents, n=600)

The “What Goes Where” Tool and Broken or Damaged Carts

Though current awareness of “What Goes Where” is limited, perceptions are positive.

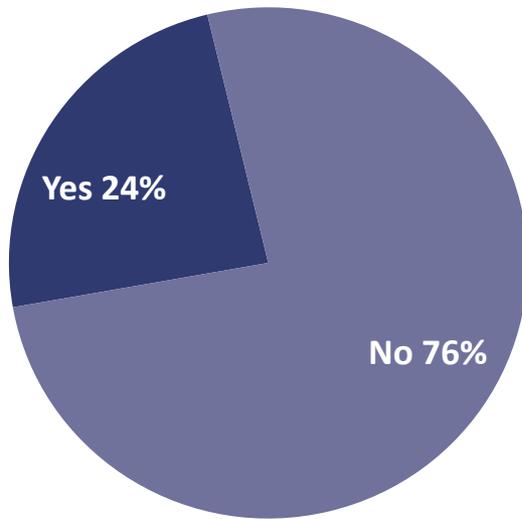
- ◆ One-quarter (24%) of Calgarians with Blue Cart recycling have read, seen or heard about “What Goes Where” in the past 12 months, while 10% have used the tool.
 - ❖ Awareness is significantly higher among those aged 55 years or older (32% vs. 19% 18 to 34 years).
- ◆ There is near universal agreement (96%) among past users that the tool was useful.
- ◆ After being read a brief description of the “What Goes Where” online search tool, 66% say they are likely to use it in the future.
 - ❖ Likelihood to use is significantly higher among those aged 35 to 54 years (74%) and 18 to 34 years (68%) compared to those aged 55 years or older (53%).
 - ❖ However, it is significantly lower among those dissatisfied with the Blue Cart program (42% vs. 64% somewhat satisfied and 69% very satisfied) as well as those who give the Blue Cart fee a neutral or poor value rating (58% vs. 70% good value).

Although incidence of broken or damaged Blue Carts is low, less than half are aware that Blue Cart repair or replacement is free.

- ◆ One-in-ten Blue Cart households say their cart is currently broken or damaged.
 - ❖ This increases to 21% among those who are dissatisfied with the Blue Cart program.
- ◆ Overall, 39% of Blue Cart residents are aware that they can call 311 and have the Blue Cart repaired or replaced free of charge.
 - ❖ Awareness drops to 27% among those who currently have a broken or damaged cart.

Awareness and Use of “What Goes Where”

Awareness of “What Goes Where”



SF14. In the past 12 months, have you read, seen or heard anything about The City of Calgary’s online recycling search tool called “What Goes Where”?
(Base: All respondents, n=600)

Past and Anticipated Use of “What Goes Where”

% Yes

Ever used “What Goes Where”

10%

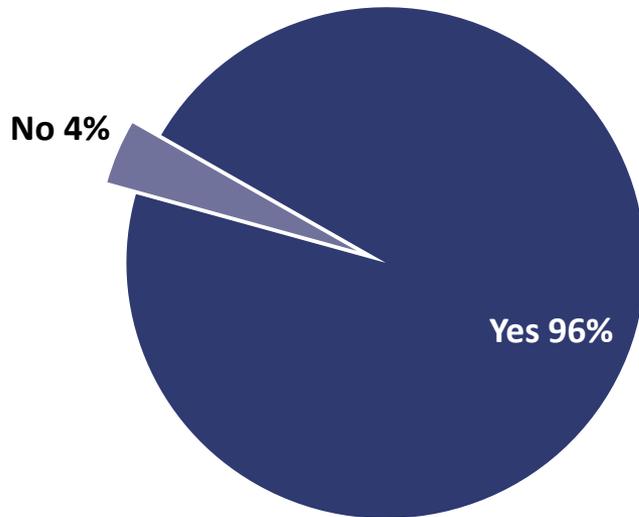
Likely to use “What Goes Where” in the

66%

SF14A. As you may know, the “What Goes Where” online search tool allows you to learn about proper recycling or disposal of specific items. Have you ever used the “What Goes Where” tool? Are you likely to use it in the future?
(Base: All respondents, n=600)

Usefulness of “What Goes Where”

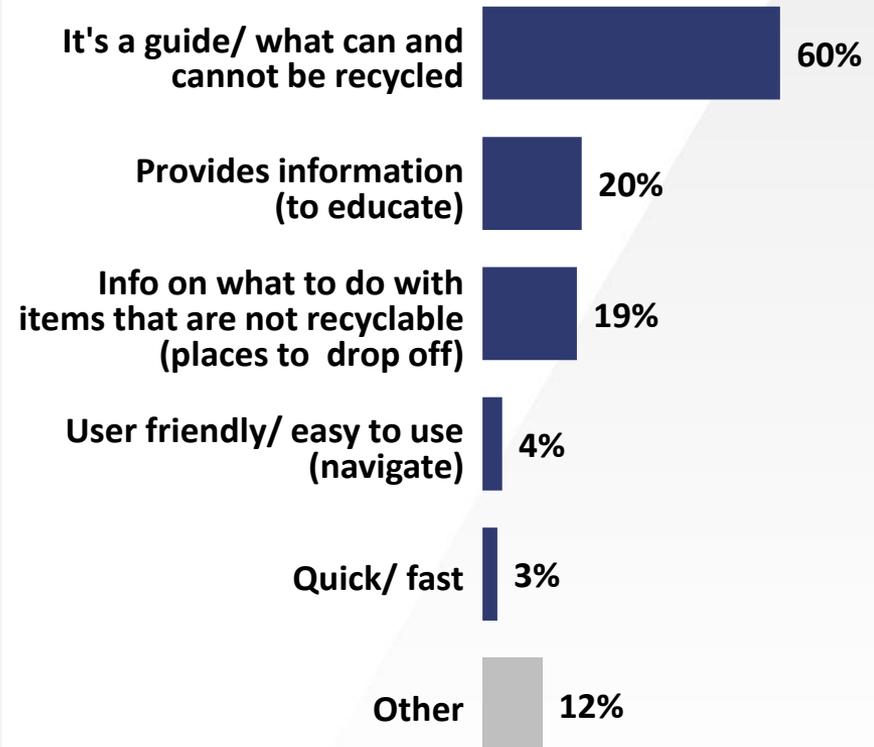
Tool Was Useful



SF15. Did you find the tool useful?
(Base: Have used “What Goes Where”, n=63)

Reasons Tool Was Useful

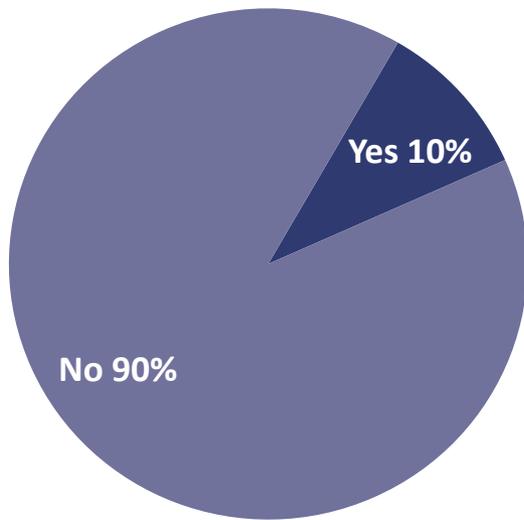
Multiple Responses



SF15A. Why did you find it useful? (Base: Tool was useful, n=61)

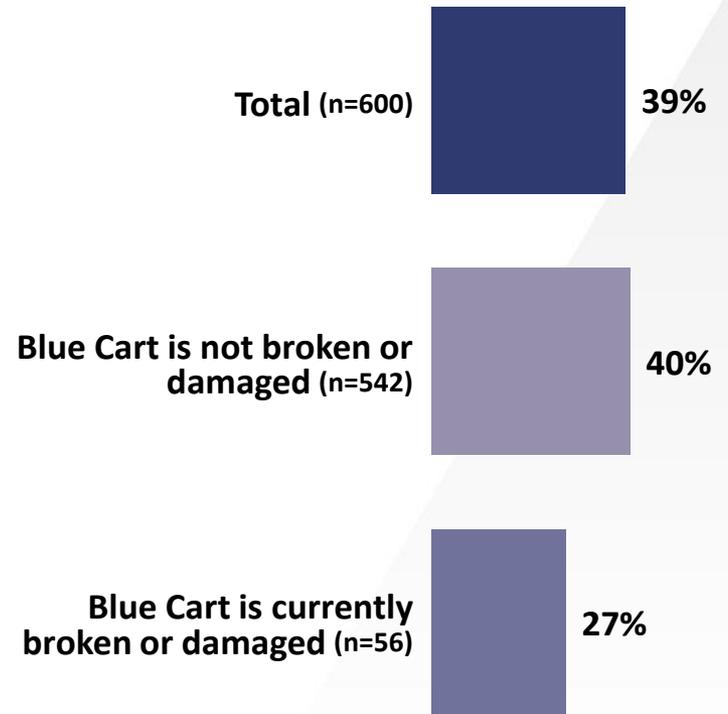
Broken or Damaged Blue Carts

Incidence of Broken or Damaged Blue Carts



SF10. Is your Blue Cart currently broken or damaged?
(Base: All respondents, n=600)

Awareness that Repair or Replacement is Free



SF10A. Were you aware you can call 311 and have the cart repaired or replaced free of charge? (Base: All respondents)



DEMOGRAPHICS

Quadrant, Type of Home and Ownership

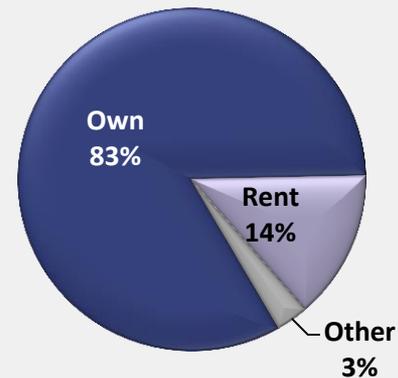
Quadrant

Southwest	26%
Southeast	23%
Northwest	30%
Northeast	21%

Type of Home

Single-detached house	86%
Duplex, triplex or fourplex	9%
Basement suite or suite in a house	2%
Townhouse	2%
Rowhouse	1%

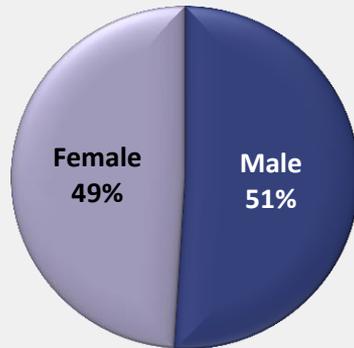
Own or Rent



Base: All respondents (n=600)

Gender, Age, Education and Income

Gender



Age

Age Group	Percentage
18 to 24	11%
25 to 34	21%
35 to 44	20%
45 to 54	19%
55 to 64	13%
65 or more	12%
No response	4%
<i>Mean</i>	<i>44 years</i>

Education

Education Level	Percentage
High school or less	19%
Some post-secondary or a college diploma	34%
University degree	45%
No response	2%

Income

Income Bracket	Percentage
<\$40,000	7%
\$40,000 to <\$60,000	11%
\$60,000 to <\$80,000	13%
\$80,000 to <\$100,000	15%
\$100,000 to <\$120,000	13%
\$120,000 to <\$140,000	7%
\$140,000 or more	22%
No response	13%

Base: All respondents (n=600)

Contact Information

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