



# Public Attitudes Toward Food Scrap and Curbside Recycling

## *Results of Public Opinion Surveys for Stopwaste.org.*

*Surveys Conducted:  
October 30 – November 12, 2007*

320-310A/B

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# Methodology

- **CURBSIDE:** Telephone interviews with 601 Alameda County residents, conducted October 30 – November 4, 2007, with a margin of sampling error of +/- 4.0%
- Comparisons to baseline survey of 804 County residents conducted In November 2002
- **FOOD WASTE:** Telephone interviews with 603 residents of communities with food scrap recycling who have individual trash and recycling service, conducted November 6-12, 2007, with a margin of sampling error of +/- 4.0%
- Comparisons to baseline survey of 817 residents of Alameda, Castro Valley, Fremont and San Leandro conducted in May 2004

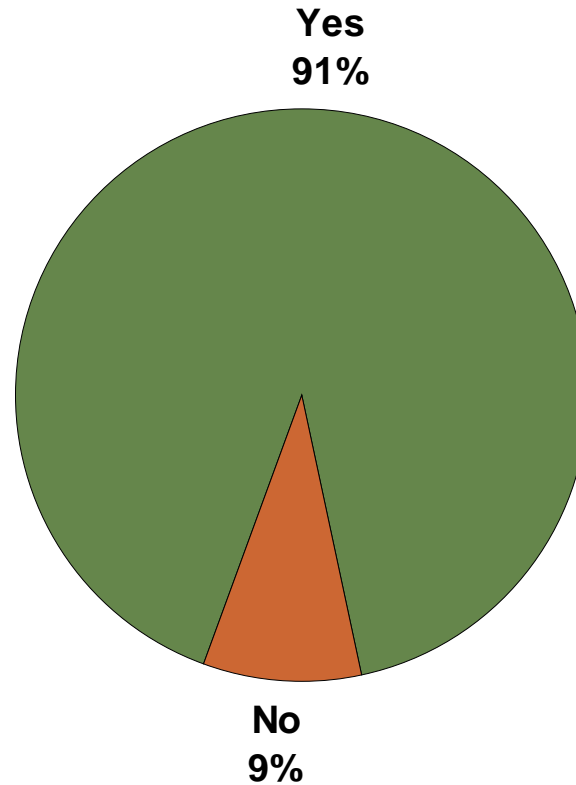
# Curbside Recycling

# Key Findings on Curbside Recycling

- **Over nine in ten local residents say they recycle, with most recycling the majority of a variety of recyclable materials in their homes.**
- **Residents see recycling as easy and “the right thing to do.”**
- **Residents of multi-family buildings recycle less than others, and see a number of obstacles to recycling, with one-third saying there is no on-site recycling in their building.**
- **Three-quarters of residents remember seeing ads or messages urging them to recycle, and the vast majority (including residents of multi-family buildings) feel well-informed about their recycling options.**
- **At the same time, almost half (42%) throw items away if they are unsure whether they can be recycled.**
- **Messages describing recyclables as a valuable resource that should not be wasted seem to hold broad appeal for Alameda County residents.**

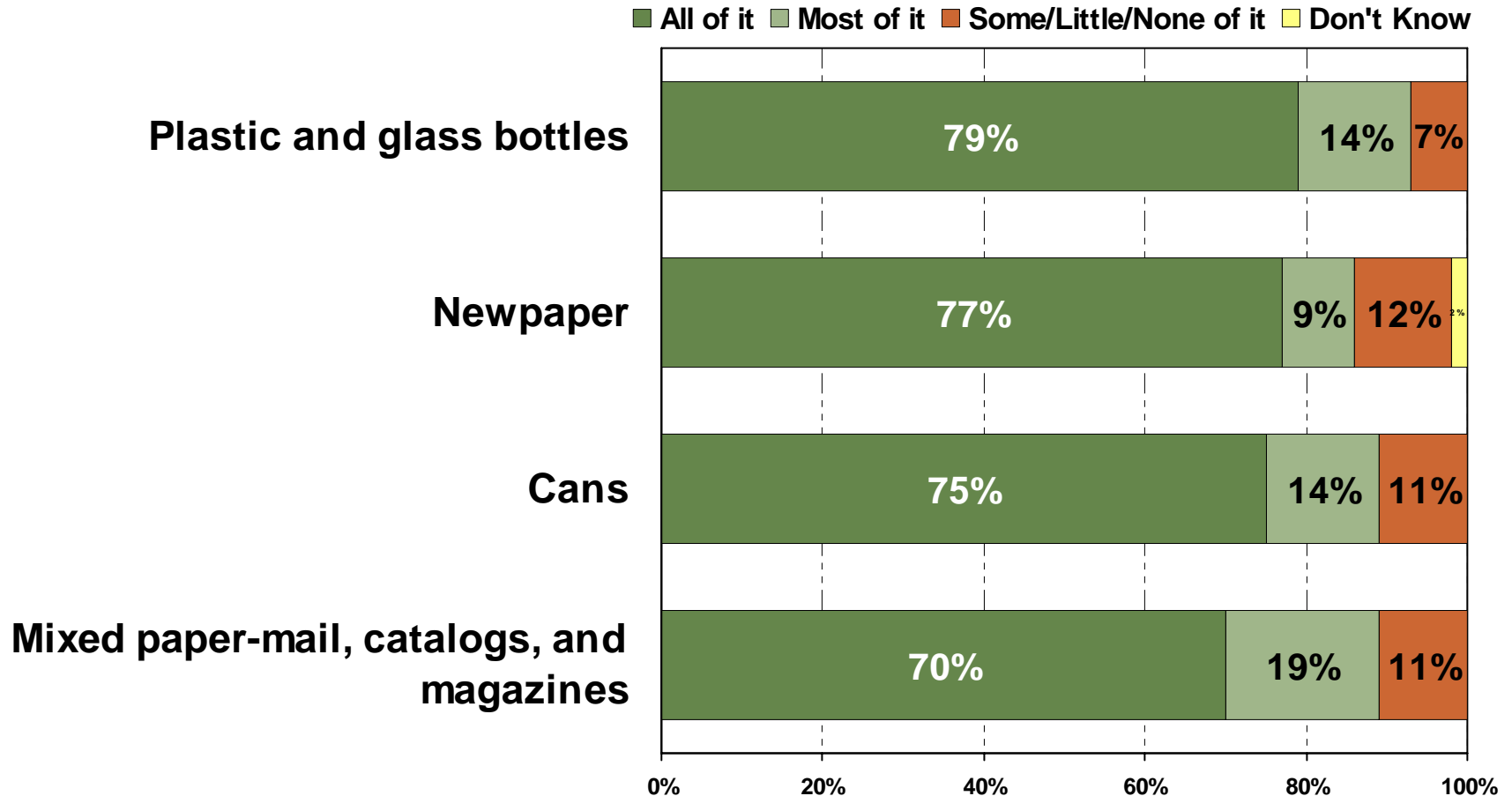
# More than nine out of ten residents say they recycle.

*Do you recycle paper, bottles and cans in a recycling bin, or not?*



# Three out of four residents recycle all of a variety of materials.

(Asked only of 91% who recycle)



# Most residents see recycling as easy and “the right thing to do.”

Recycling is just the right thing to do.

Recycling cans, bottles and paper is very easy.

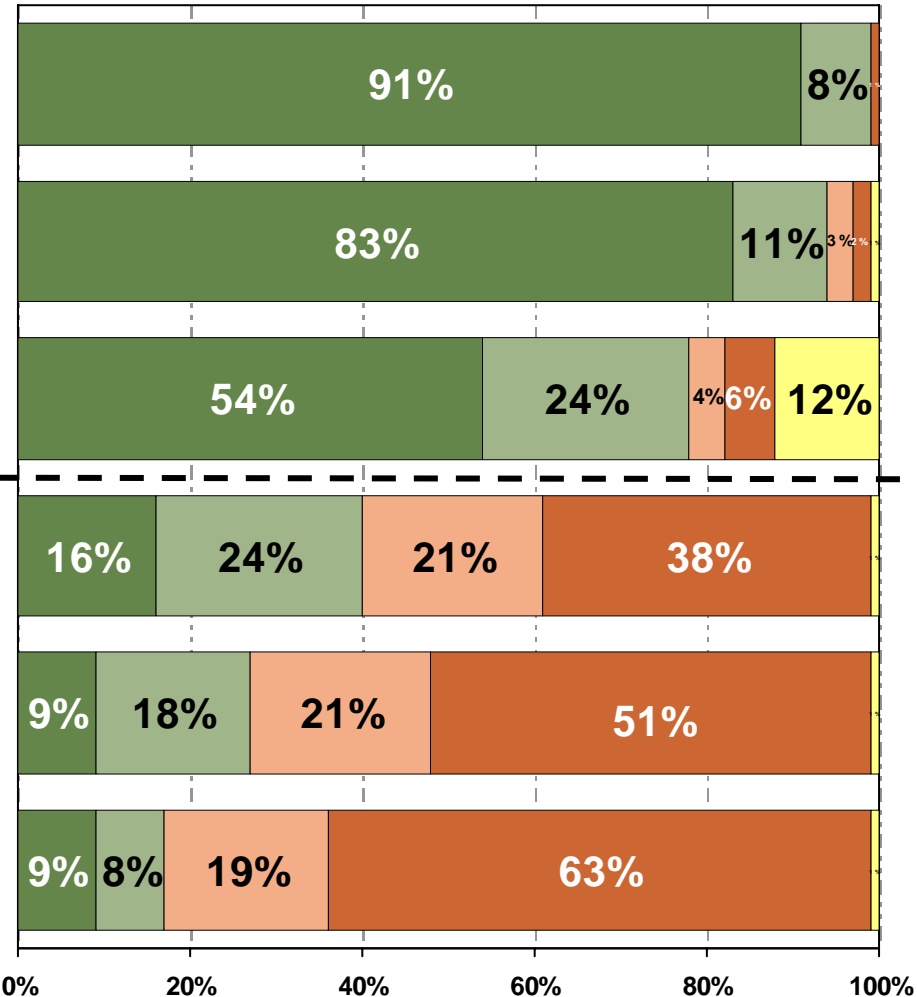
Most of my friends and neighbors recycle.

I often throw away some items that I could recycle.

I feel confused about which materials I can and can't recycle.

Recycling is just not convenient for me most of the time.

■ Strng. Agr. ■ S.W. Agr. ■ S.W. Disagr. ■ Strng. Disagr. ■ No/DK/NA



# Demographic Profile of Non-Recyclers

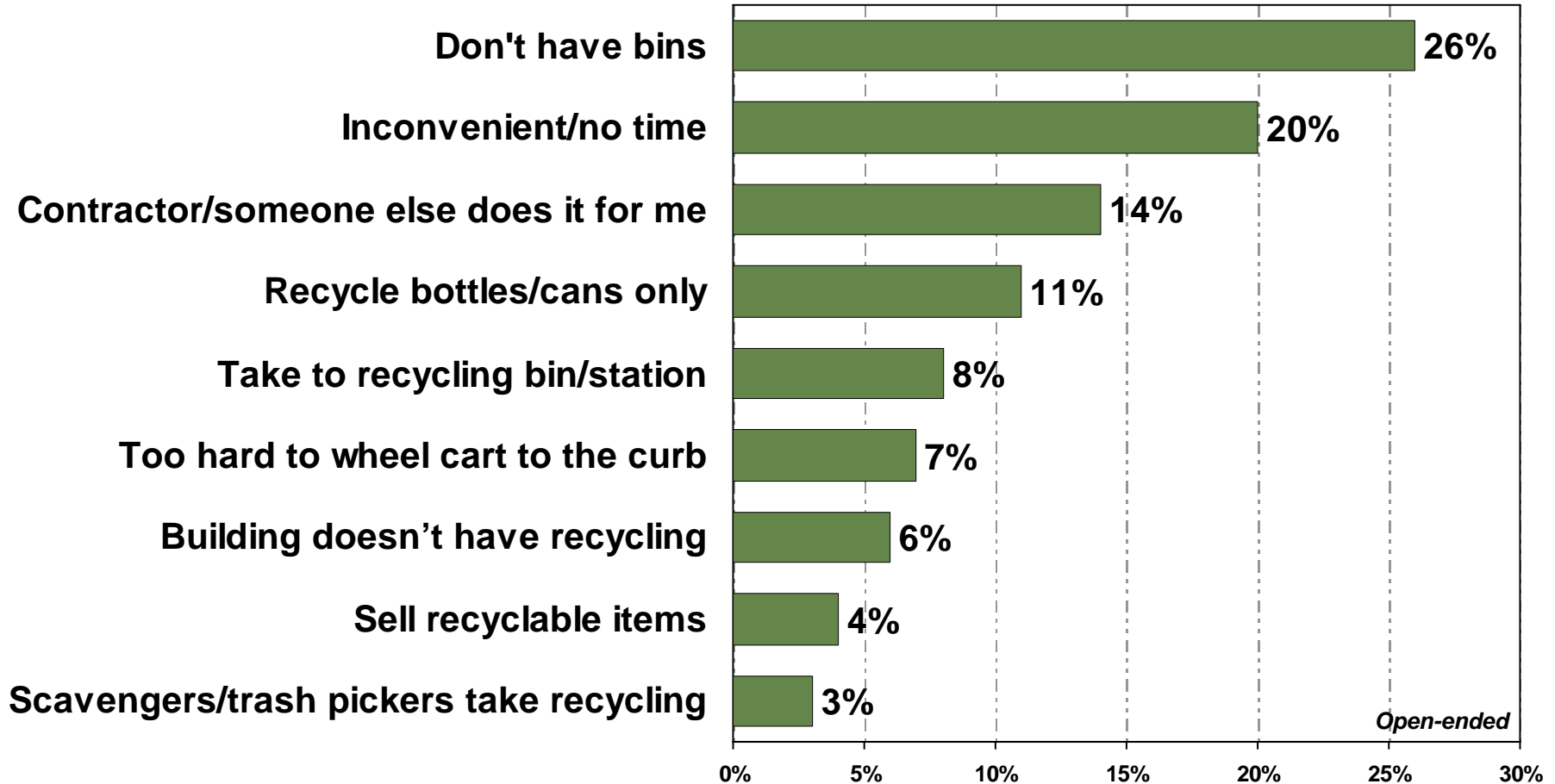
- Recycling is prevalent among all subgroups of the Alameda County population; at least 70% respondents in all major demographic and geographic subgroups say they recycle.
- 17% of residents of multi-unit buildings don't recycle, compared to 4% of those in single-family homes.
- Those with a high school education or less are twice as likely as other residents not to recycle.
- 26% of African-American residents report not recycling, a far higher rate than among other ethnic groups.
- 20% of residents over age 75 do not recycle, more than twice the rate of other age groups.
- Lower-income residents and women are also somewhat less likely to say that they recycle.



# Respondents who do not recycle offer a variety of reasons.

*(Asked only of 9% who do not recycle)*

*Why don't you recycle paper, bottles or cans?*

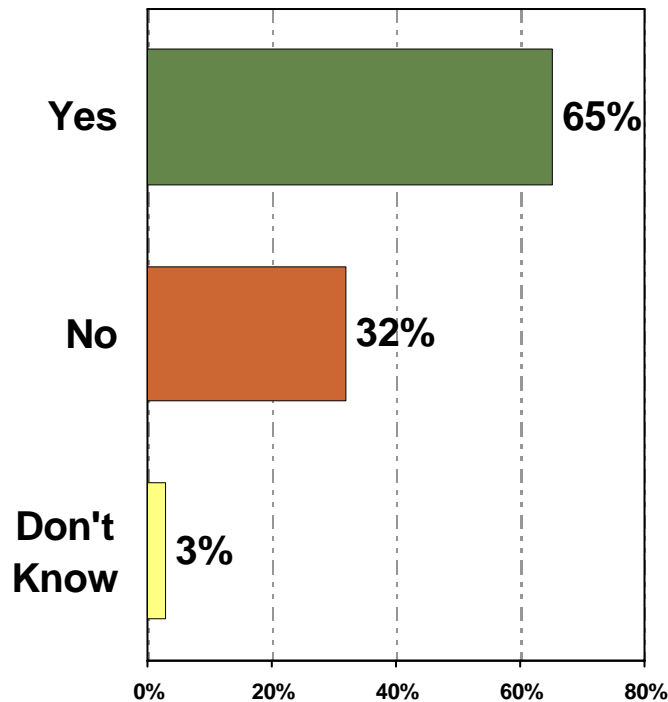


Open-ended

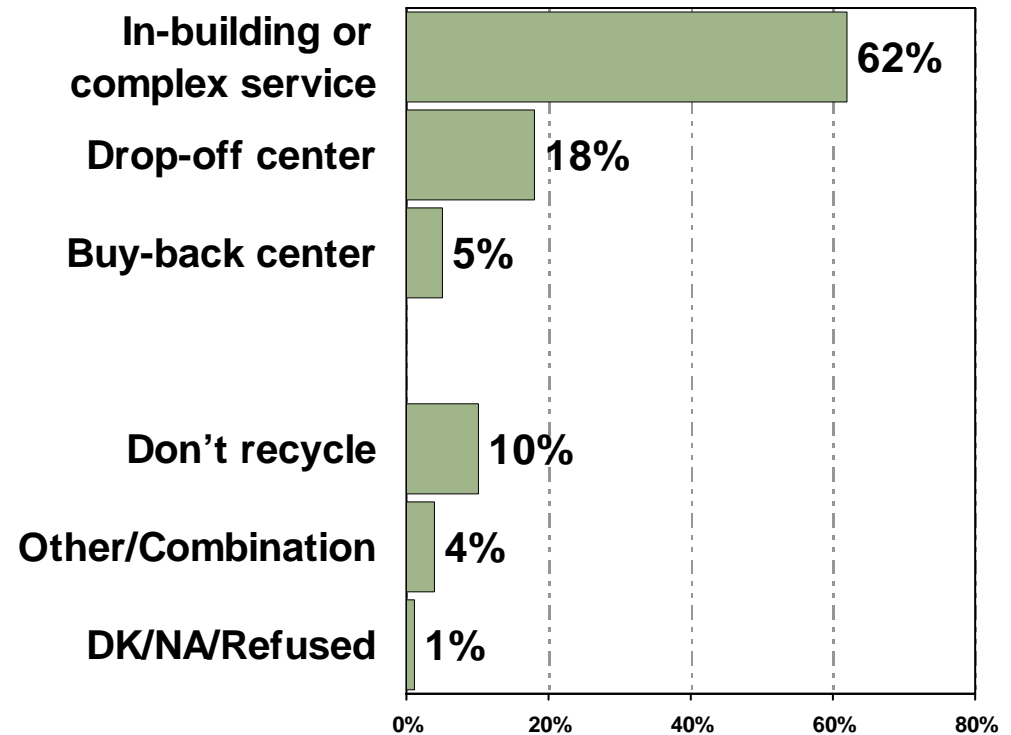
# About two-thirds of multi-family residents have on-site recycling, and most use those facilities.

*(Asked only of 26% with shared multi-family recycling service)*

## Have Recycling On-Site



## Recycling Facility Used



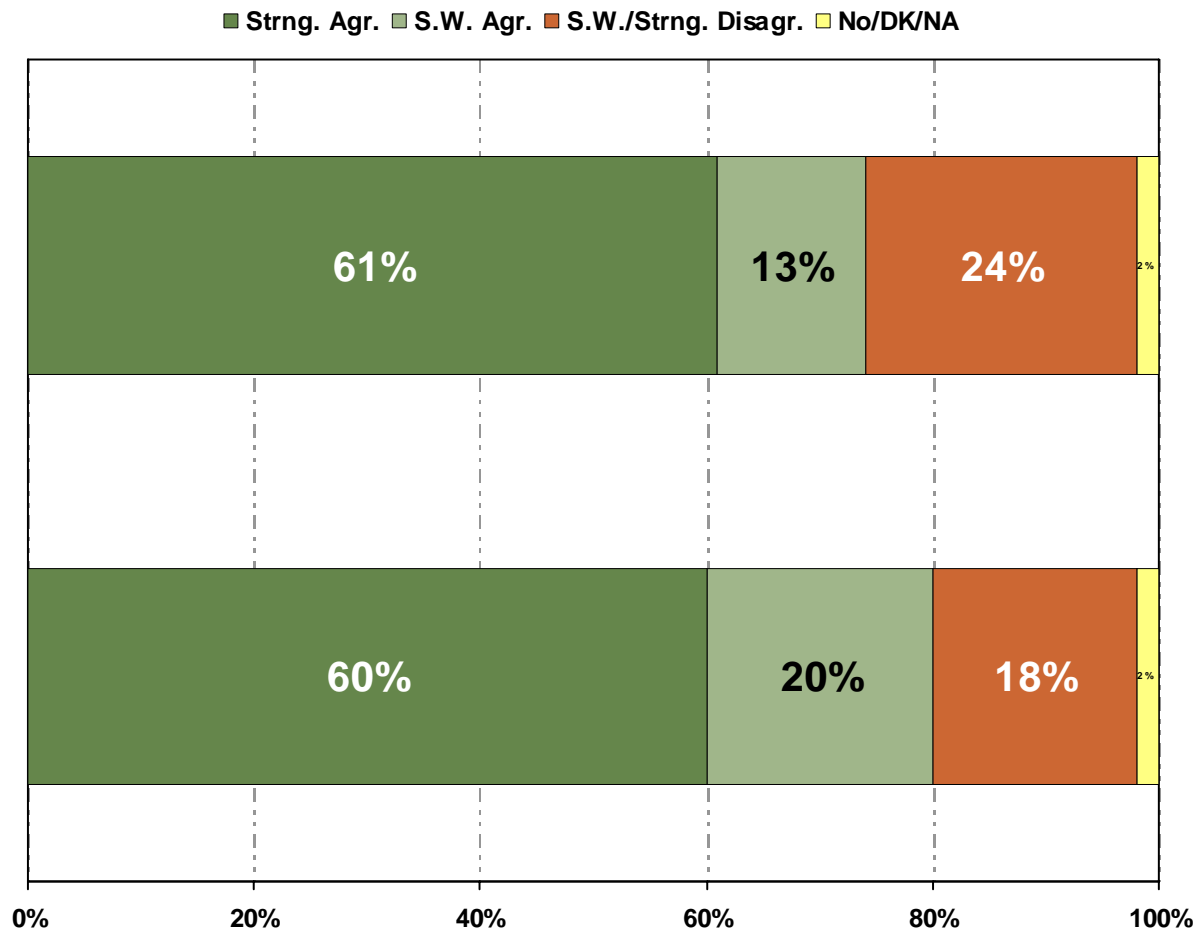
13. Does your building or complex provide residents with a way to recycle your bottles, cans and paper, or not?

14. When you recycle bottles, cans, and paper, do you usually utilize the service offered in your building or complex, take your recycling to a drop-off center, take your recycling to a buy-back center, or something else, or do you not recycle?

# Multi-family residents feel satisfied and well-informed about recycling options.

**I am satisfied with the recycling system setup in my building or complex.**

**I have enough information about how to recycle in my building or complex.**



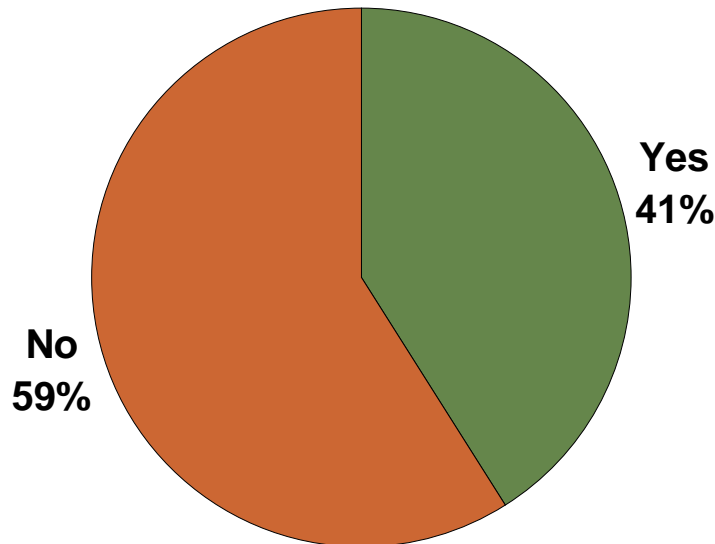
# **Profile of Multi-Family Residents With Recycling on Site**

- **17% of all County residents**
- **Two-thirds have a large wheeled bin, while one in five have a small plastic open-top bin and a similar number have a dumpster**
- **87% say the garbage and recycling are in the same area**
- **62% say the building pays for recycling, while 18% pay as part of their garbage bill and 11% pay another way**
- **Since 2002, there have been modest increases in the proportions who say they have a large wheeled bin and recycling in the same area as garbage**

# Most multi-family residents *without* recycling have not considered asking for it, but would use it.

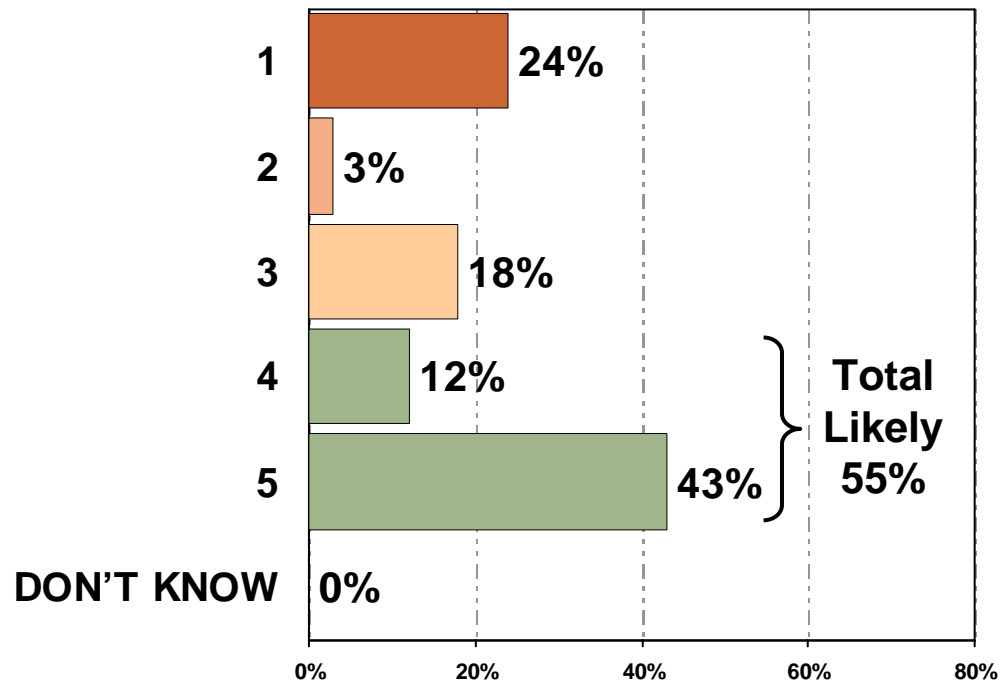
*(Asked only of 8% of residents in multi-family buildings without recycling)*

## Have/Would Consider Requesting Recycling



## Likelihood of Using It

Scale from 1-5, where 1 means you would *be very unlikely* to use it and 5 means you would *be very likely* to use it.

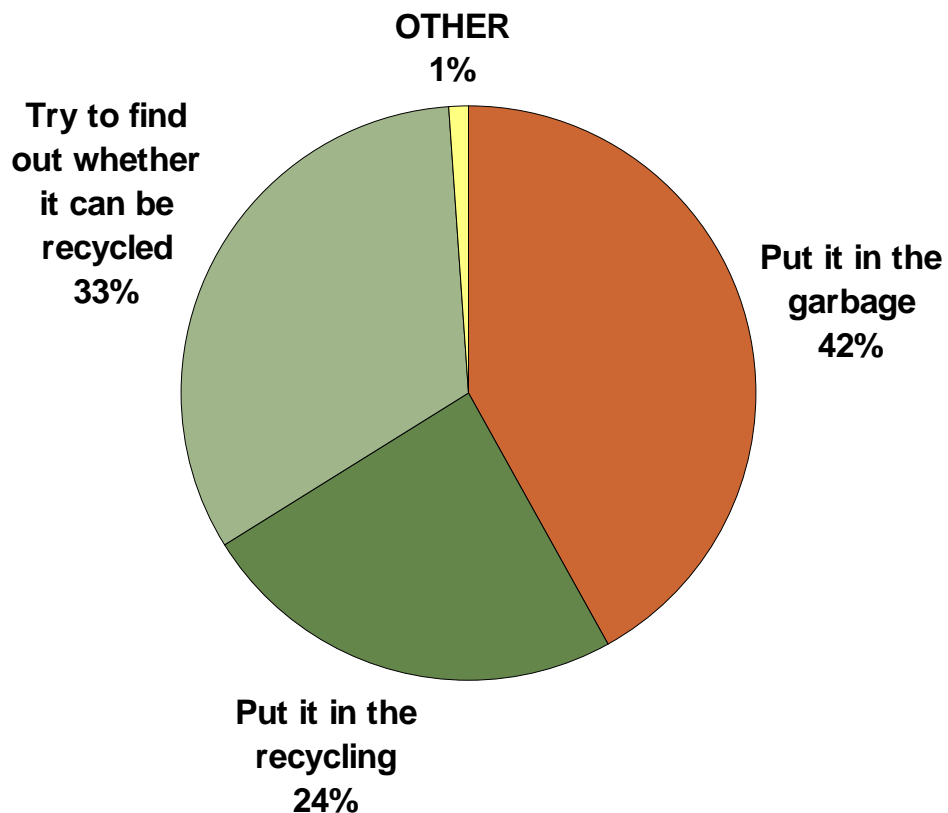


19. Have you ever requested or would you consider requesting that your building or complex provide a way for residents to recycle, or not?

20. If your building or complex provided residents with a way to recycle bottles, cans and paper, how likely do you think you would be to use it?

# A plurality of residents throw items away if they aren't sure they can be recycled.

*If you don't know whether an item can be recycled, do you usually:*

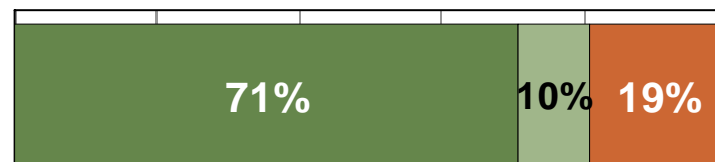


# Financial incentives are most likely to increase recycling.

(Asked only of 52% of residents who do not recycle all their newspaper, mixed paper, bottle and cans.)

■ Much More Lik. ■ S.W. More Lik. ■ Less Lik./No Diff./DK/NA

**Getting a discount on your garbage bills if the City meets recycling goals**



**Learning that recycling is one thing you can do to help reduce effects of global warming**



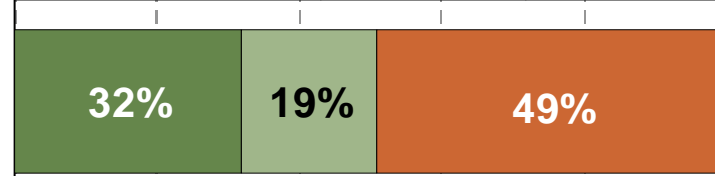
**Getting bins and other equipment that make it more convenient for you to recycle**



**Getting more information and education about recycling from your hauler or City**

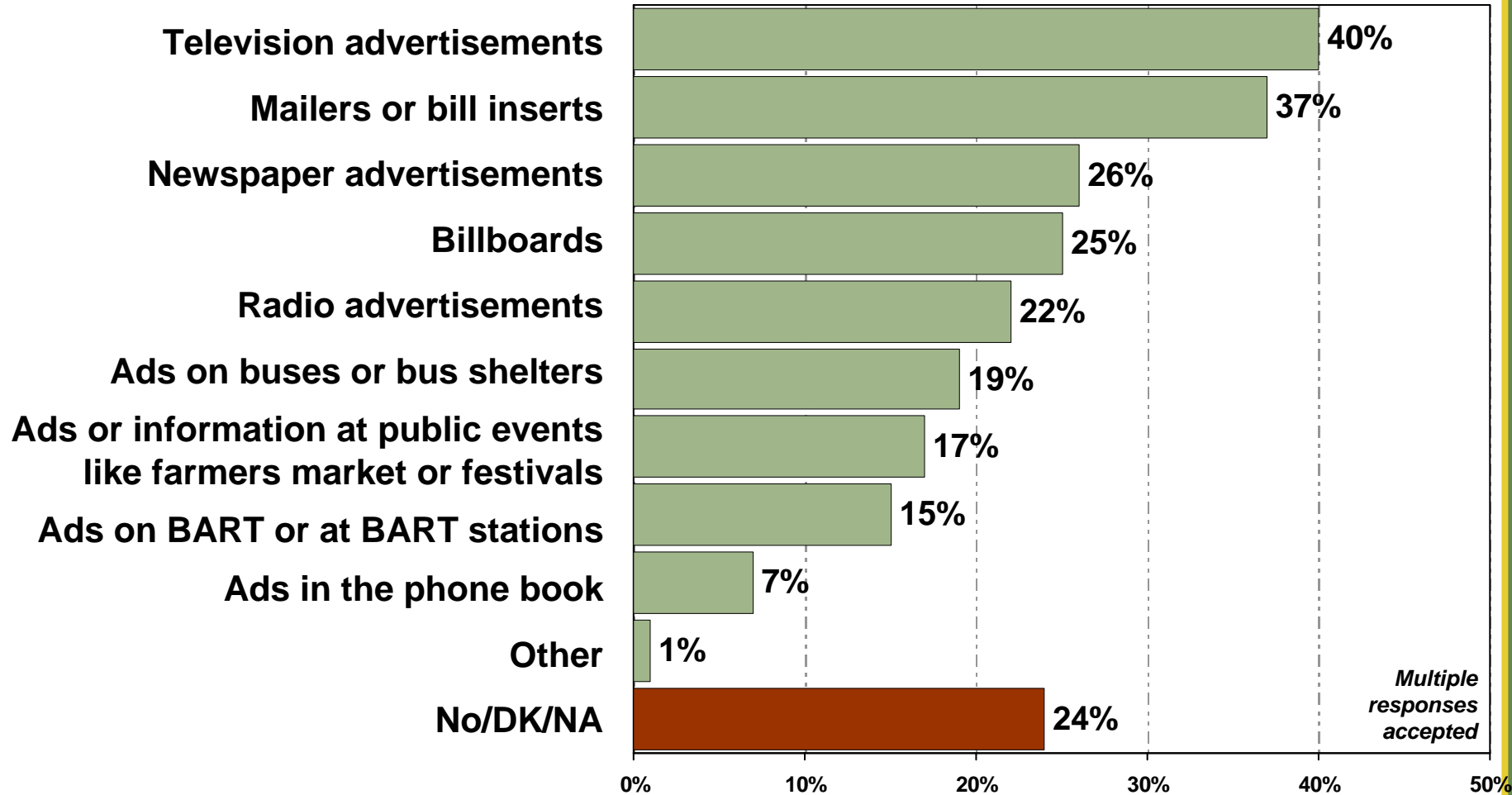


**Getting smaller garbage bins and larger recycling bins**



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

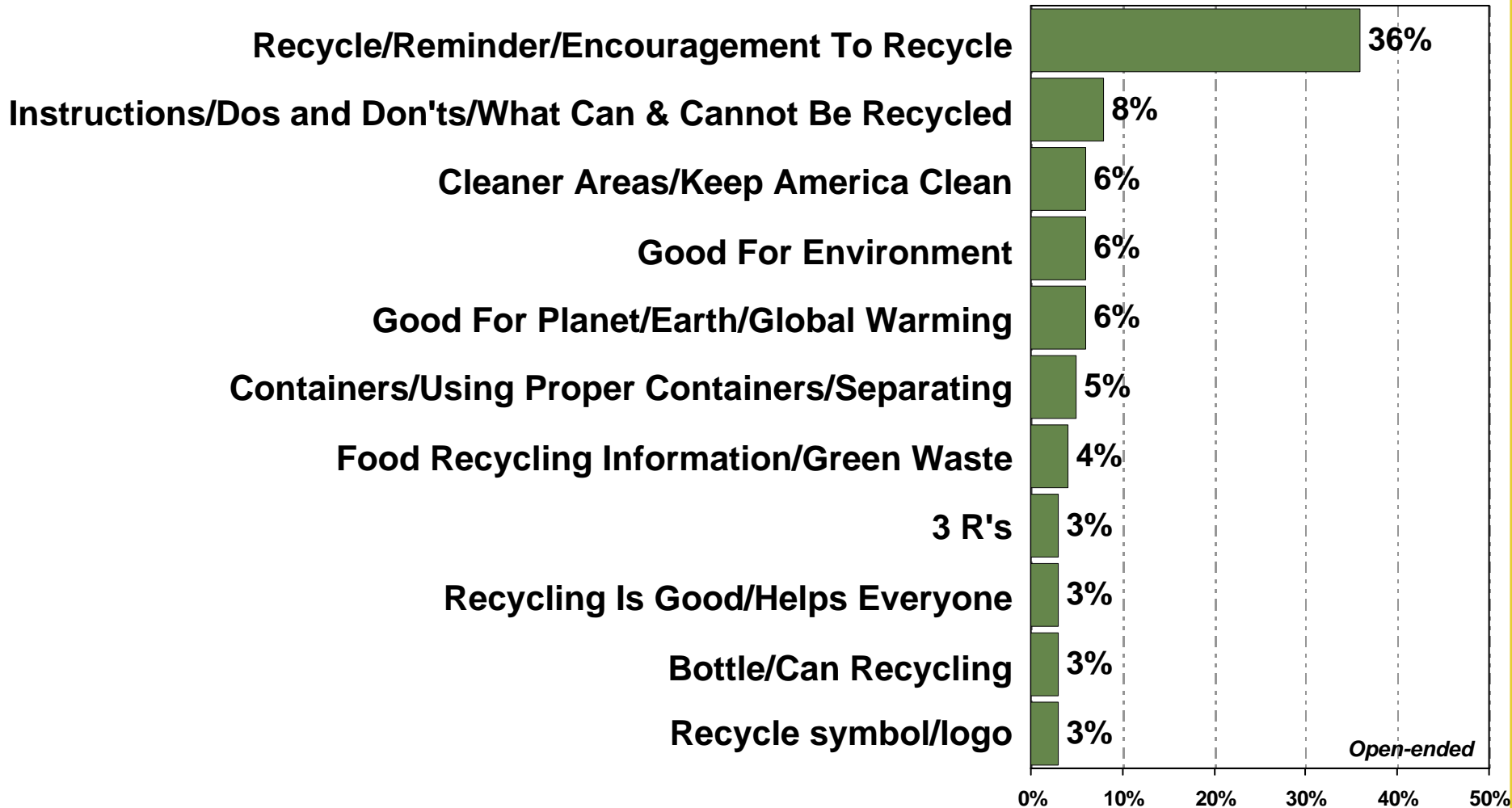
# Most residents recall seeing messages urging them to recycle.





# Types of Messages Recalled

(Asked only of 78% who recalled messages, top responses, responses grouped)



# A number of messages offer persuasive reasons to increase recycling.

Paper, cans and bottles are a **valuable resource**, not trash. Instead of taking up space in the landfill, they can be re-used to make new products.

We all have a shared responsibility to **care for the health of our planet**. Recycling is a small step we all can take to help.

Recycling paper, cans and bottles is **easy**. All you have to do is place them in your recycling bin.

When we recycle paper, cans and bottles, we help **teach our children** about the importance of reducing waste and protecting the environment.

Recycling paper, cans and bottles reduces the energy used to make new products, and it is one more small thing we can all do to **fight global warming**.

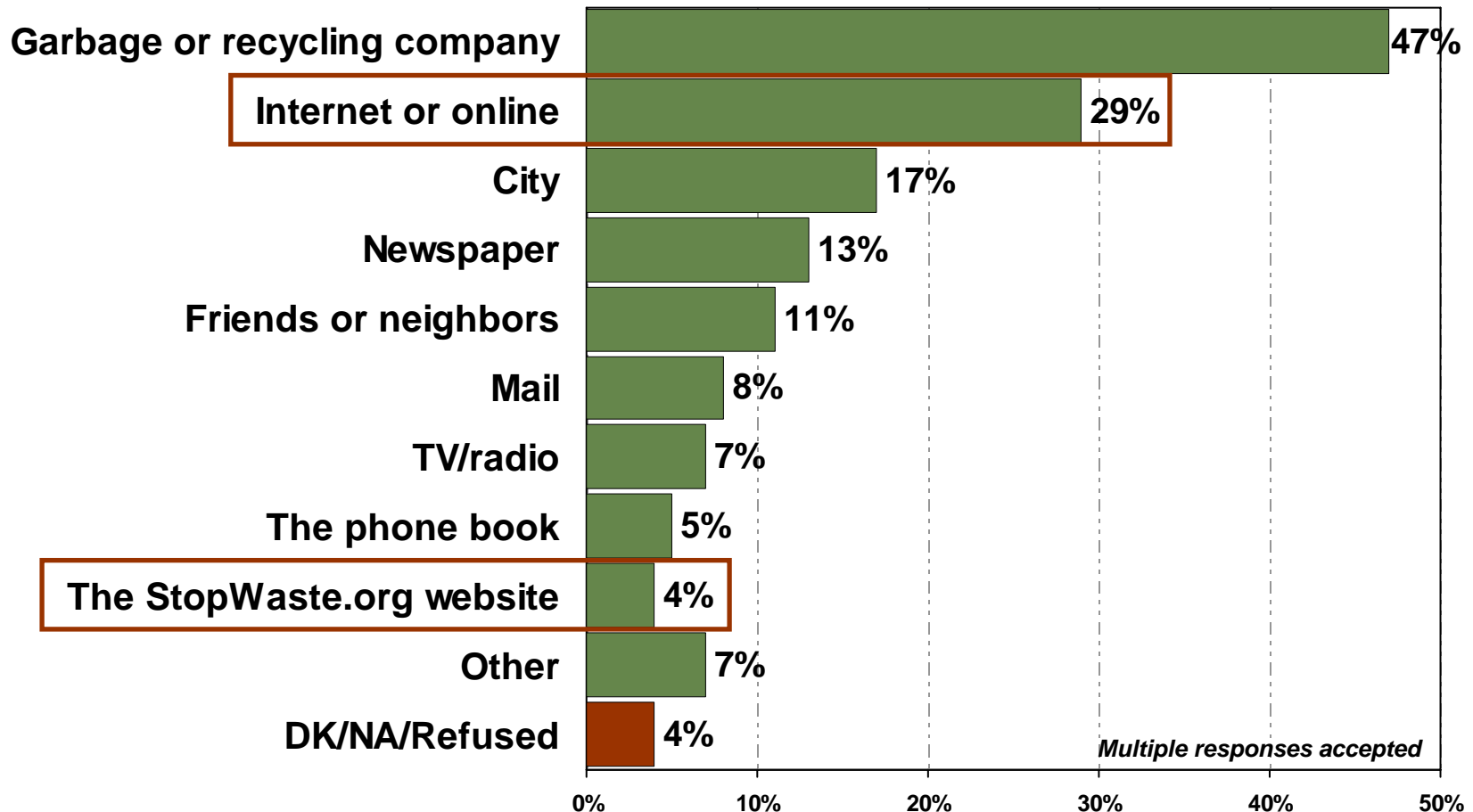


# Messages Among Targeted Subgroups

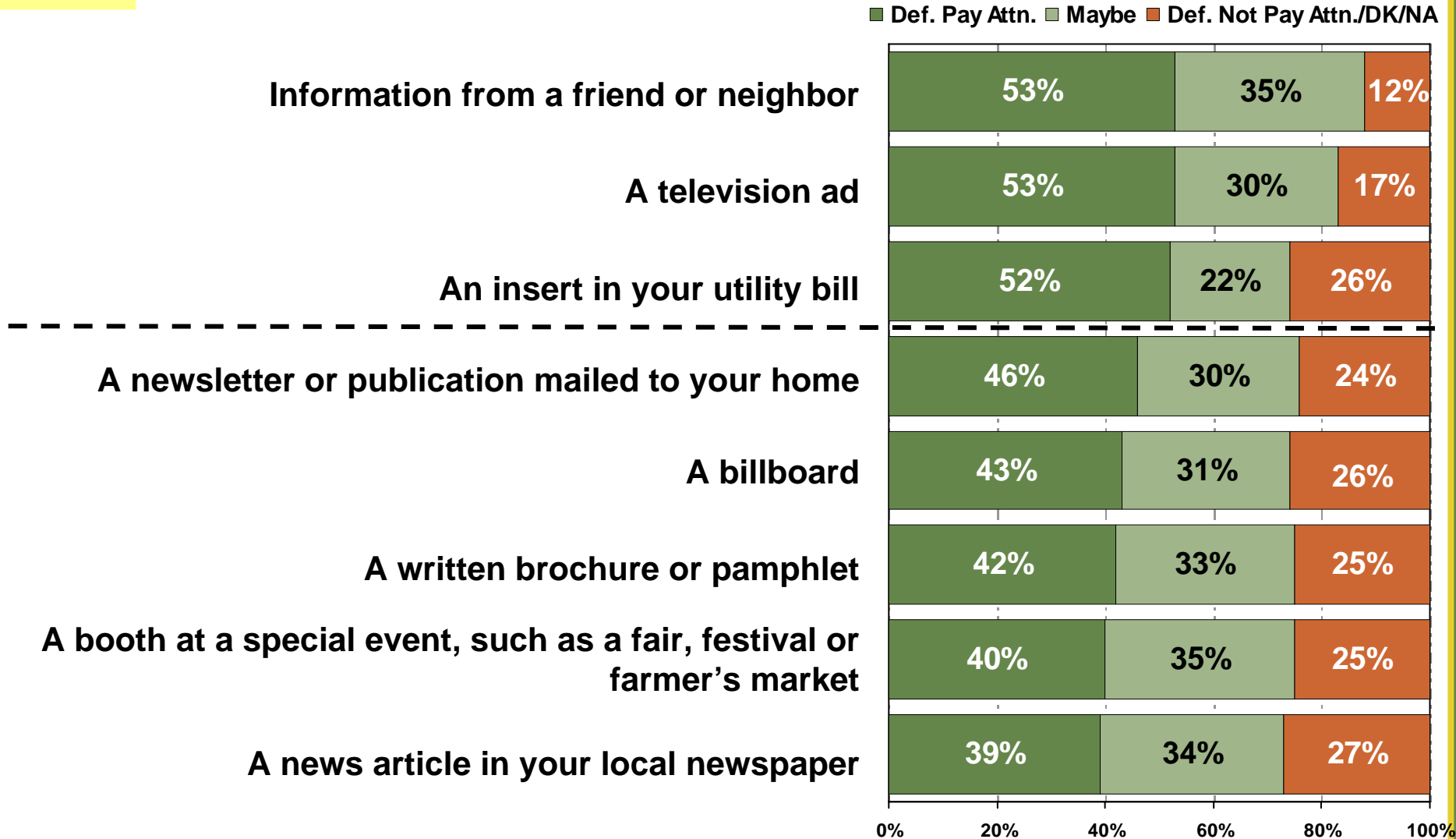
- **Two messages stand out among those who do not currently recycle: that we have a shared responsibility to care for the planet (73% “very convincing”) and that recyclable materials are a valuable resource (71% “very convincing”).**
- **Among those who throw materials away when they are unsure if they can be recycled, the “valuable resource” message has a slight edge and the global warming message is clearly least persuasive.**
- **Among those who do not have recycling in their multi-unit building, the two strongest messages focus on recyclables as a valuable resource (75% “very convincing”) and teaching children proper behavior (71% “very convincing”).**

# Most residents would turn to their garbage or recycling company if seeing information.

*Where do you look when you need information about recycling and waste disposal?*



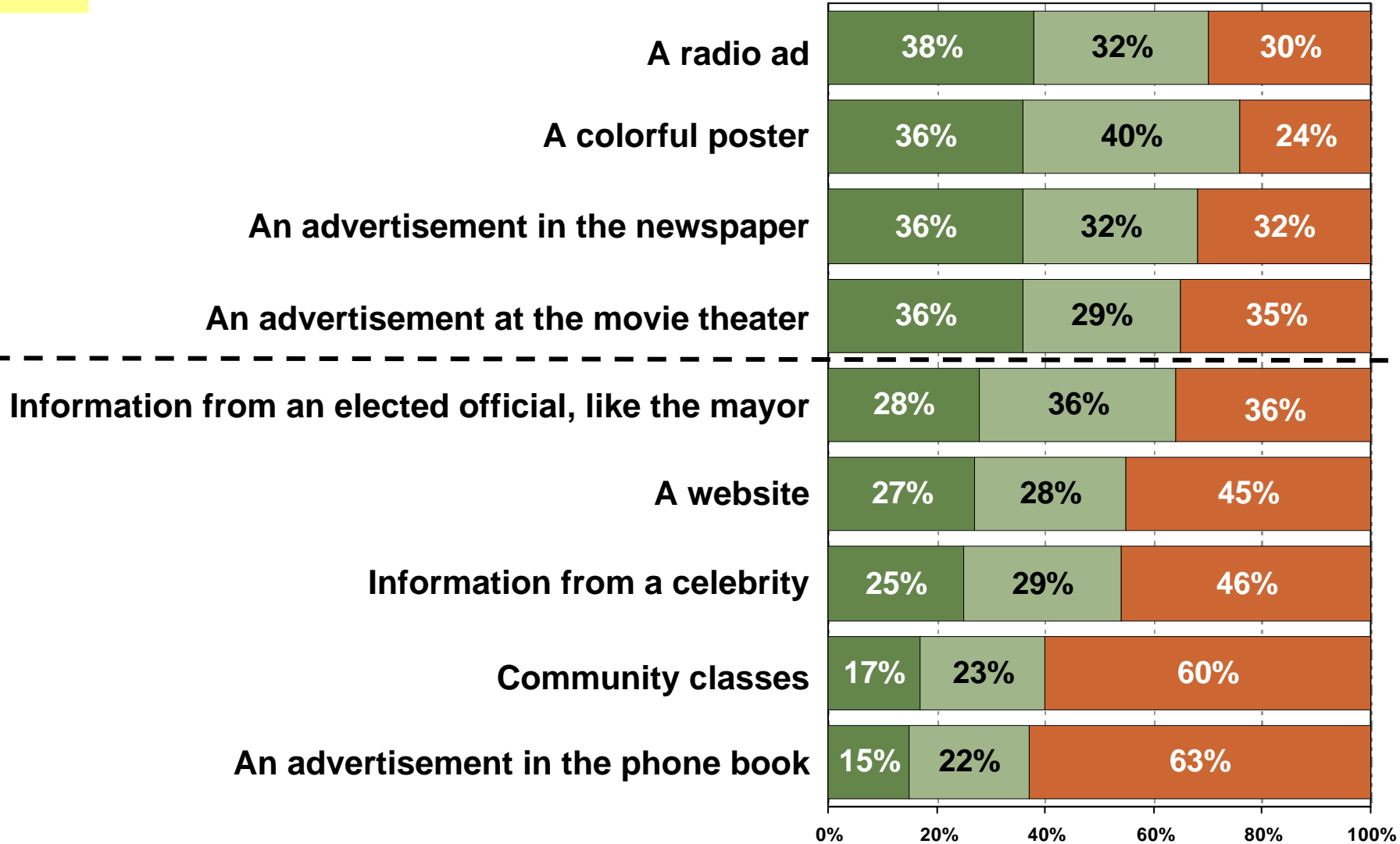
# Peers, TV ads or utility bill inserts are the best ways to reach people.



27. Next, I am going to read you a list of ways to present information about recycling to the public. For each one I mention, please tell me whether you would definitely pay attention, maybe pay attention, or definitely not pay attention to information about recycling if it were presented to you in that way.

# Continued

■ Def. Pay Attn. ■ Maybe ■ Def. Not Pay Attn./DK/NA



27. Next, I am going to read you a list of ways to present information about recycling to the public. For each one I mention, please tell me whether you would definitely pay attention, maybe pay attention, or definitely not pay attention to information about recycling if it were presented to you in that way.

# **Impact of School-Based Programs on Distributing Information About Recycling**

- **30% of County residents report having children who are enrolled in school, while another 8% have children who are not enrolled in school.**
- **Nearly nine out of ten (88%) are enrolled in a public school.**
- **Nearly nine out of ten (86%) have learned something about recycling in school.**
- **Among all parents, a 52% majority say their kids have had a “major influence” on their family’s recycling habits, while an additional 28% say they have had at least a “minor influence.”**

# Conclusions and Recommendations: Curbside Recycling

- **The population that does not use curbside recycling is small and relatively distinct; it includes more residents with low levels of education or income, older residents, and African-Americans.**
- **Residents of multi-family buildings are another key target.**
- **Making recycling convenient – rather than persuading residents of its importance – seems to be the main challenge.**
- **School-based programs seem to be a promising method of outreach.**



**For more information, contact:**

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