

Alameda County Residential Food Scraps Survey

Survey Interviews Conducted:
June 3-18, 2015

320-653

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PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH & STRATEGY

Methodology

- ❖ FM3 completed 600 telephone interviews with Alameda county residents who live in single family homes and multi-unit buildings (2-4 units) with green curbside compost bins
 - Interviews conducted between June 3 and 18, 2015
 - Interviews on landline and wireless phones
 - Interviews conducted in English, Spanish, and Chinese
- ❖ Margin of sampling error of +/- 4.0% at the 95% confidence interval
- ❖ Some percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding
- ❖ Comparisons to previous studies noted throughout

The surveyed focused on how residents dispose of six categories of items.



Food-soiled paper products, such as used paper coffee cups, and paper towels, plates or napkins



Pizza boxes



Uneaten food at the end of a meal



Vegetable and fruit scraps from meal preparation



Bones and meat scraps from meal preparation



Spoiled food, such as wilted lettuce and old dairy products

Specific Goals

- ❖ Assess awareness of “Ready, Set, Recycle” campaign
- ❖ Assess whether residents know these items should be put in their green bins.
- ❖ Determine whether residents are actually putting these items in their green bins.
- ❖ Identify barriers to properly disposing of these items.
- ❖ Identify the most compelling message themes persuading residents to properly dispose of these items.
- ❖ Learn about how residents transport and temporarily store food scraps before putting them in their green bins.
- ❖ Determine whether the current drought may explain some level of decreased green bin disposal.

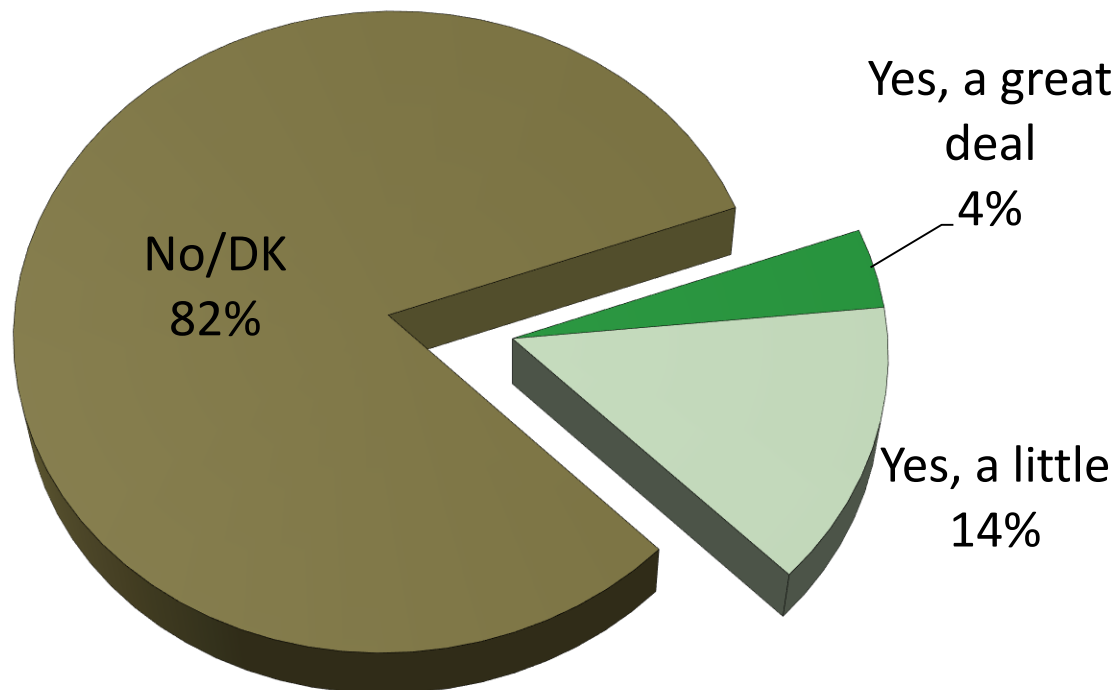
Key Findings

- ❖ “Ready, Set, Recycle” awareness remains low (18%), but has doubled since 2013.
- ❖ 26% of residents couldn’t correctly identify any of the six key waste items as belonging in their green bins.
- ❖ 42% are not correctly disposing of any of the six waste items.
- ❖ About half of those putting items in their green bins are not using reusable kitchen pails.
- ❖ The biggest barriers appear to be ignorance that these items belong in their green bins, as well as the “ick factor” and being in a rush.
- ❖ Comparing composting to recycling (“it’s just the right thing to do”), creating compost, and particularly reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills were the most compelling messages.

Ready Set Recycle Awareness and Current Practices

A little less than one in five have heard anything about “Ready, Set, Recycle.”

Have you seen, heard or read anything about the “Ready, Set, Recycle” campaign?



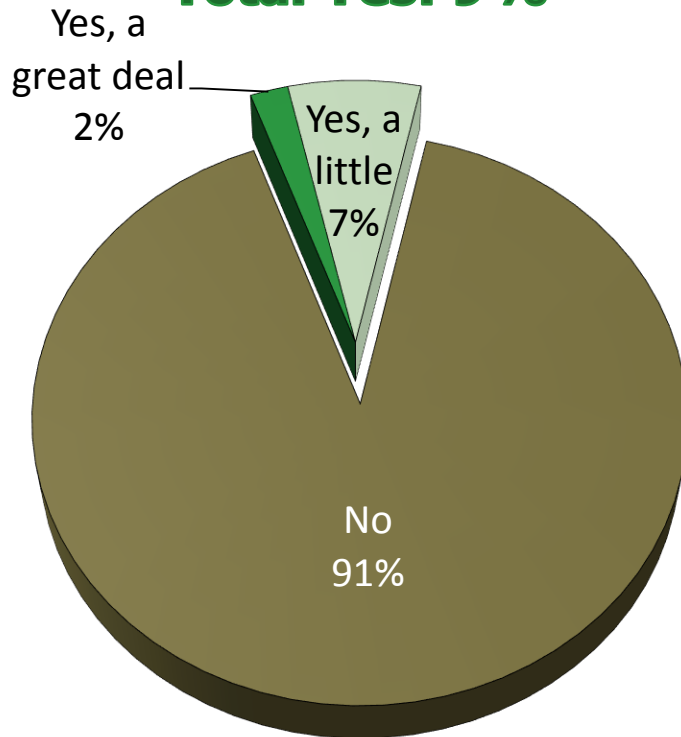
**Total
Yes
18%**

However, that's double the awareness level observed in 2013.

Have you seen, heard or read anything about the "Ready, Set, Recycle" campaign?

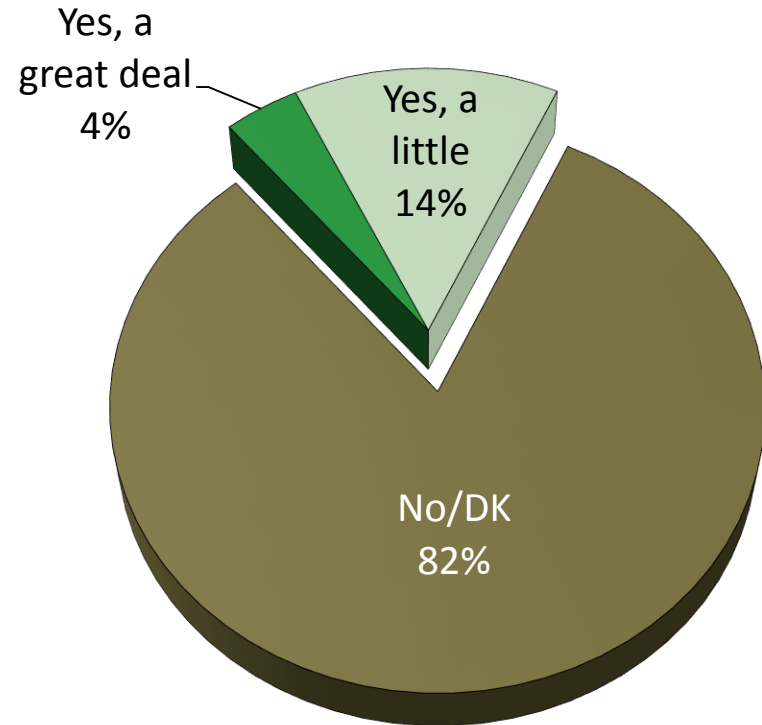
2013

Total Yes: 9%



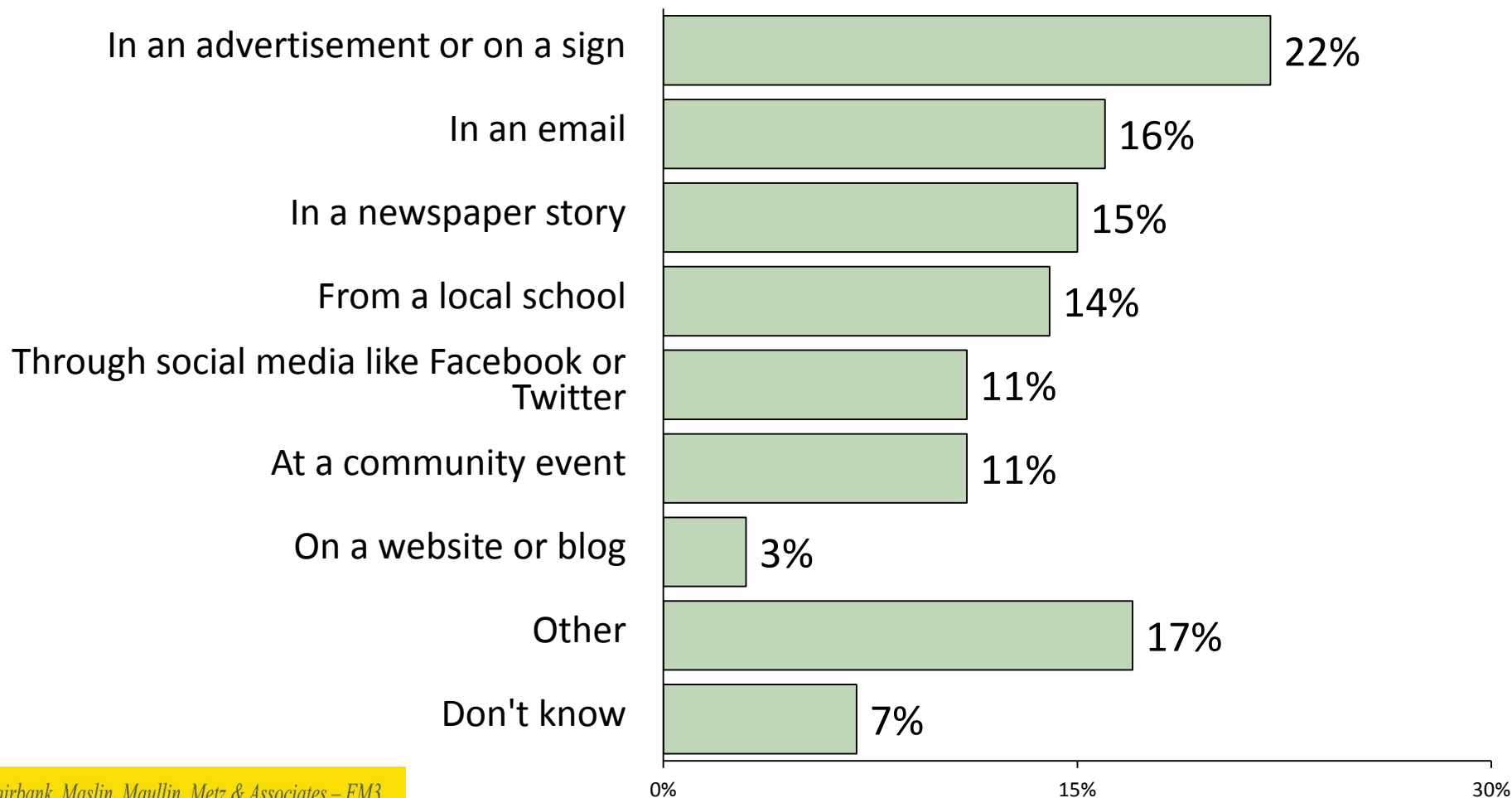
2015

Total Yes: 18%



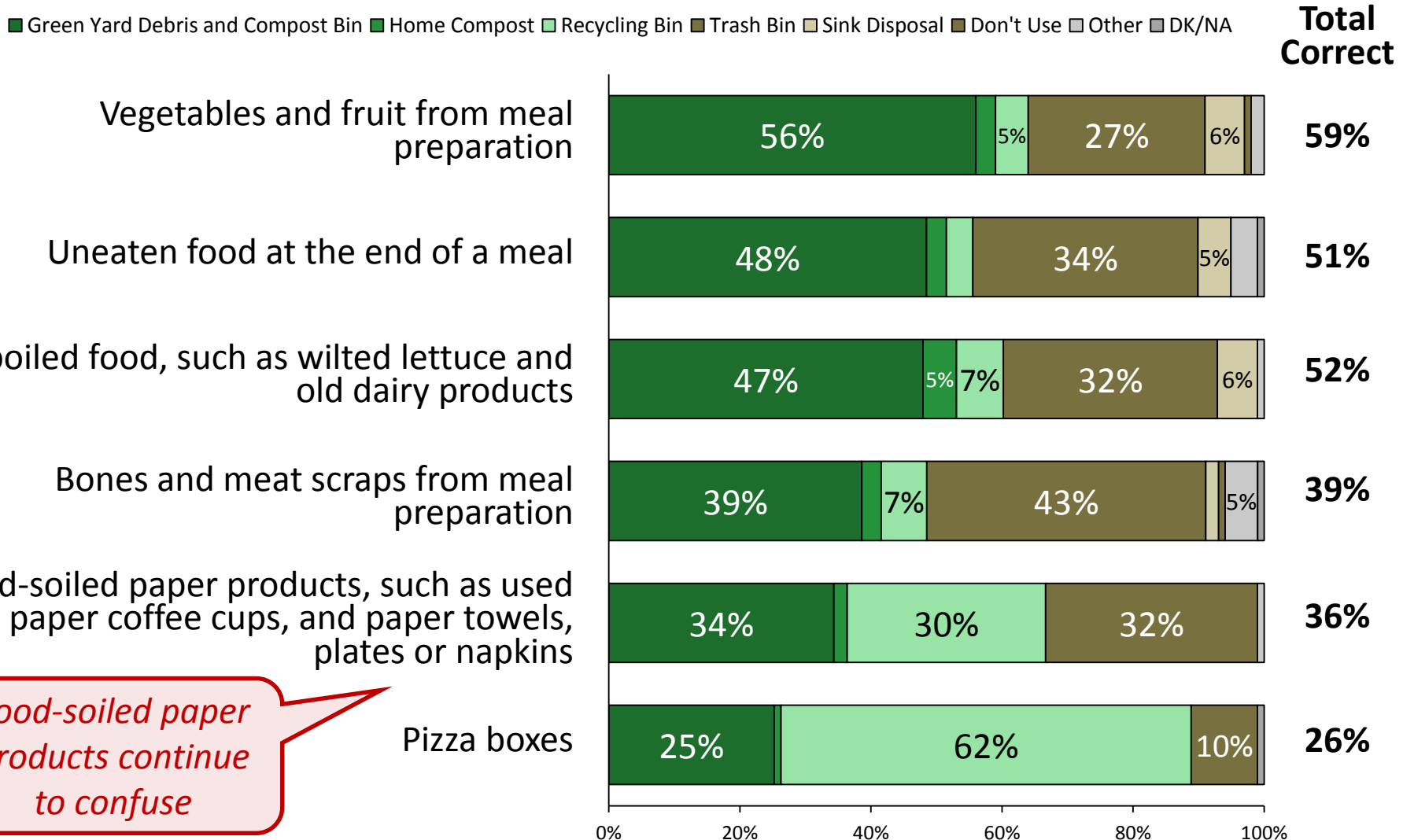
No one media channel appears to be driving RSR awareness.

Where have you heard, seen or read about [Ready Set Recycle]...?



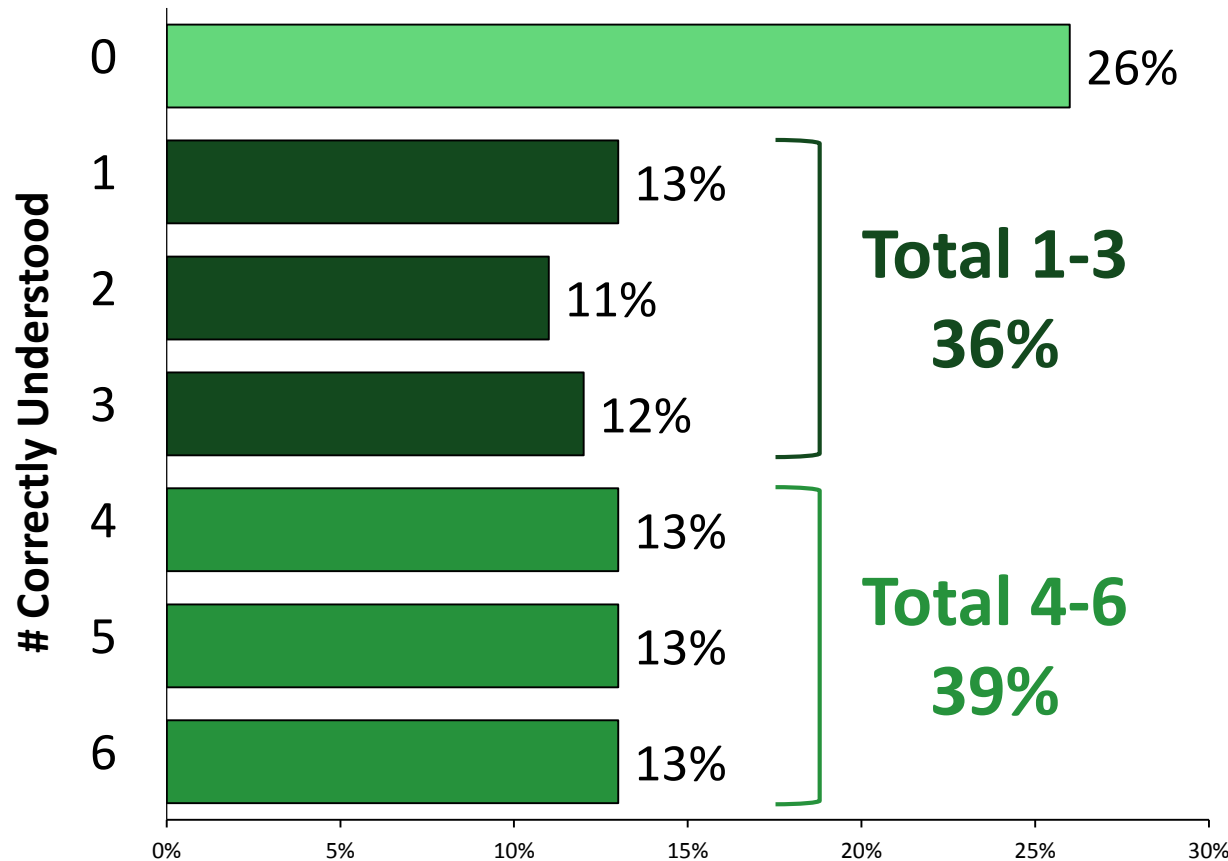
- ❖ *Next, we read survey respondents a list of items they may dispose of at home and asked them to tell us how they are supposed to dispose of each item.*
 - *Note: we included “plastic bottles,” “cereal boxes” and “junk mail” so that all of the items weren’t green bin items.*
- ❖ *For each compostable item answered correctly, we asked respondents to indicate how frequently they put that item in their green bins.*
- ❖ *This provided us with measures of knowledge and behavior.*

Proper disposal knowledge is highest for vegetables/fruit; lowest for pizza boxes.



Food-soiled paper products continue to confuse

One-quarter of residents incorrectly identified the proper disposal for all six items.



For each respondent, we tallied how many of the six food scrap/food-soiled paper products they correctly understood how to dispose of.

Proper disposal understanding is highest among older, wealthier and better-educated residents.

0 Correctly Understood	1-3 Correctly Understood	4-6 Correctly Understood
<i>26% of the Sample</i>	<i>36% of the Sample</i>	<i>38% of the Sample</i>
African-Americans	Single Household	HH Income \$100,000+
HH Income \$0-\$50,000	Lives in Multi-unit/Complex	Post-Graduate Educated
Men Ages 18-49	Ages 18-29	White Women
Ages 40-49	Asians/Pacific Islanders	Interviewed in Spanish
South County Region	Ages 30-39	Women Ages 50+
Men of Color	Women Ages 18-49	Whites
College-Educated Men	Ages 18-49	Women No Kids
Non-College Educated Women	HH Income \$50,000-\$100,000	Ages 65+
Men No Kids	Non-College Educated Men	Ages 65-74
Fremont	People of Color	Ages 50+
Berkeley	Men of Color	2 Person Household

Of those who correctly understand how to dispose of these items, most are doing the right thing.

■ All of the Time ■ Most of the Time ■ Occasionally ■ Rarely ■ Never

All/Most of the Time

Vegetable and fruit from meal preparation



81%

Spoiled food, such as wilted lettuce and old dairy products



81%

Uneaten food at the end of a meal



80%

Bones and meat scraps from meal preparation



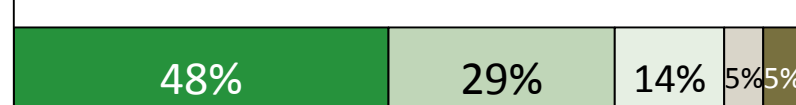
78%

Pizza boxes



77%

Food-soiled paper products, such as used paper coffee cups, and paper towels, plates or napkins



77%

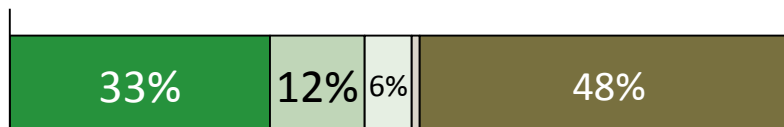
0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

However, among all residents, majorities are not properly disposing of these items.

■ All of the Time ■ Most of the Time ■ Occasionally ■ Rarely ■ Never

All/Most of the Time

Vegetable and fruit from meal preparation



45%

Uneaten food at the end of a meal



38%

Spoiled food, such as wilted lettuce and old dairy products



38%

Bones and meat scraps from meal preparation



30%

Food-soiled paper products, such as used paper coffee cups, and paper towels, plates or napkins



26%

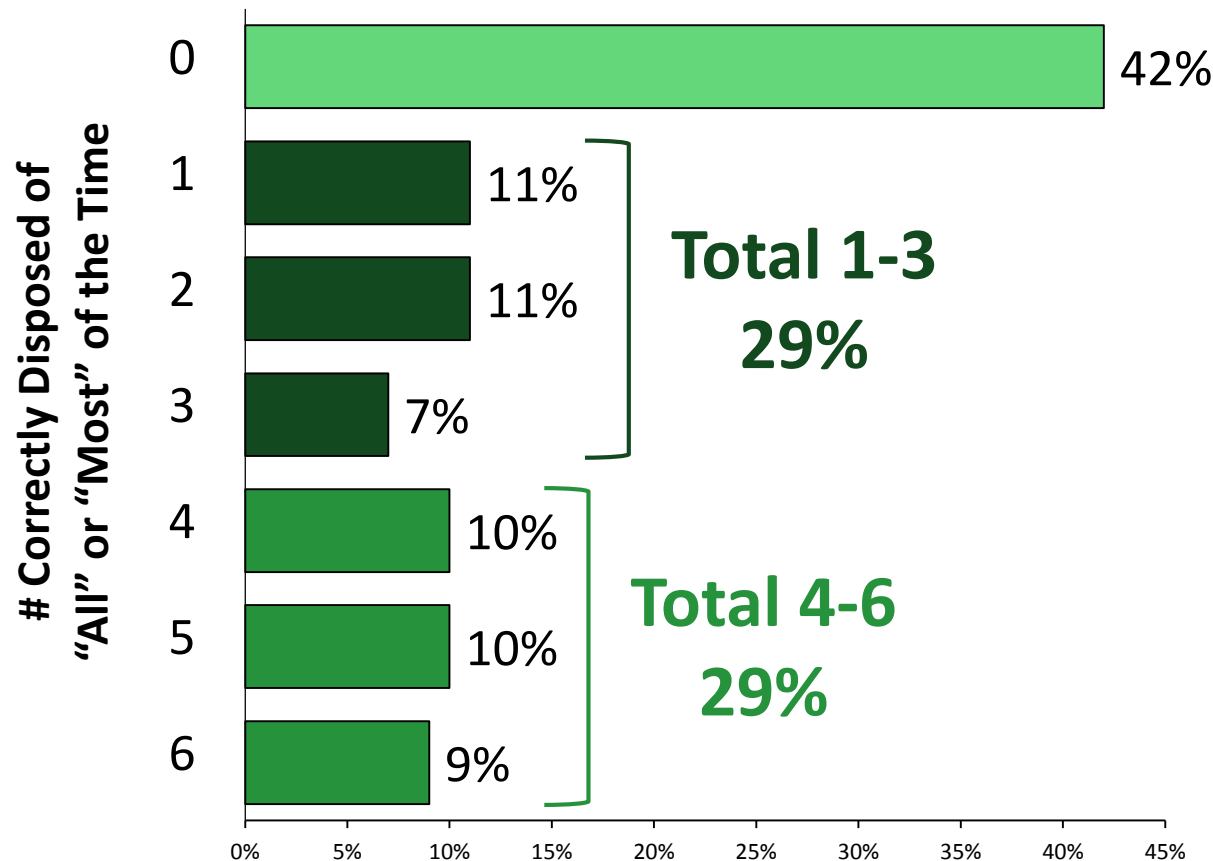
Pizza boxes



19%

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

Two in five residents are highly unlikely to dispose of any of these items correctly.



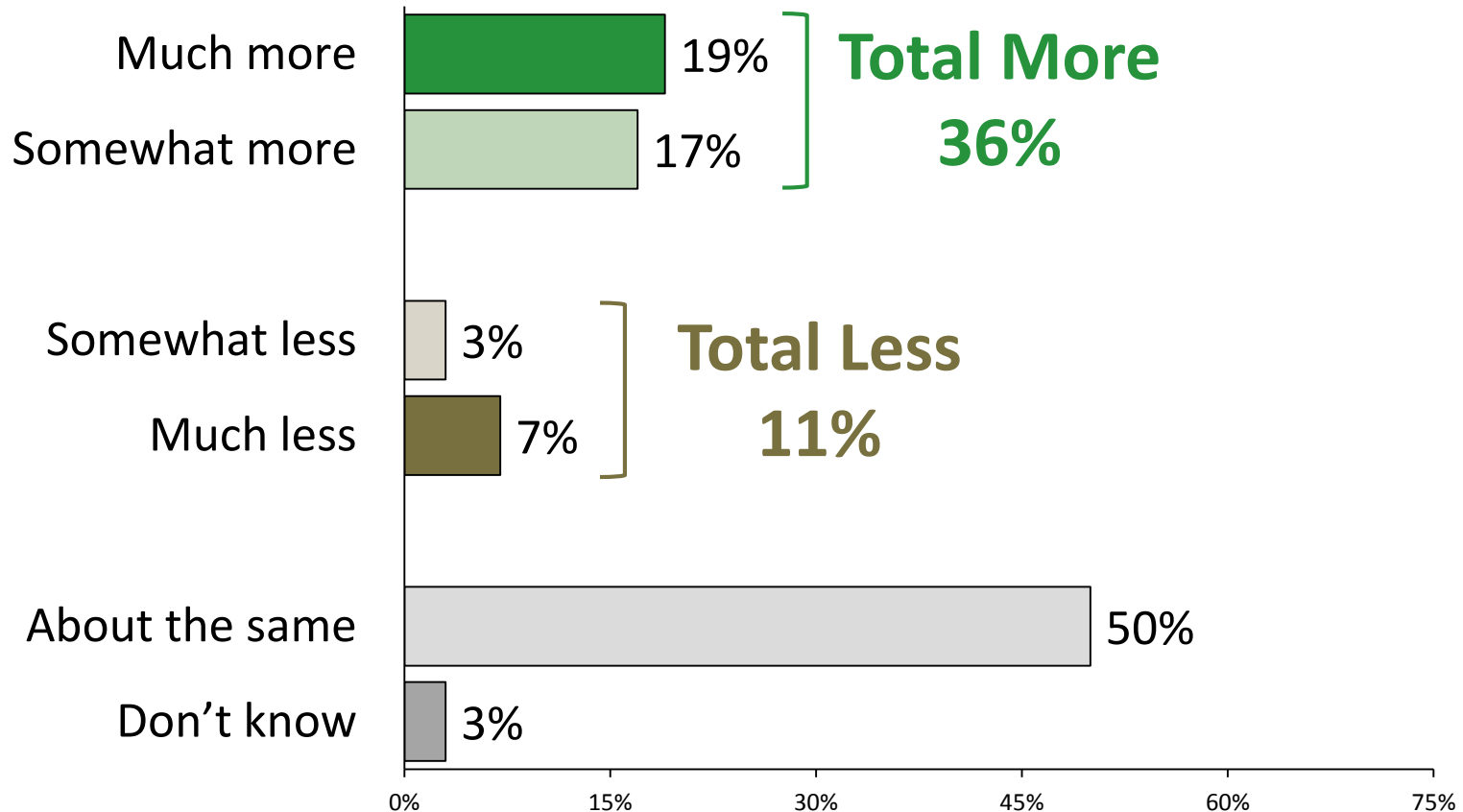
For each respondent, we tallied how many of the six food scrap/food-soiled paper products they correctly disposed of "all" or "most" of the time.

Behaviors follow similar demographic patterns as understanding levels.

0	1-3	4-6
<i>42% of the Electorate</i>	<i>30% of the Electorate</i>	<i>29% of the Electorate</i>
African-Americans	Single Household	Post-Graduate Educated
HH Income \$0-\$50,000	Lives in Multi-unit/Complex	HH Income \$100,000+
Men Ages 18-49	Hayward	Ages 65+
Ages 18-29	Latinos	Ages 65-74
Men No Kids	Women of Color	Retired
Men of Color	Ages 30-39	2 Person Household
Ages 18-49	Asians/Pacific Islanders	Women No Kids
3 Person Household	Some College Education	White Women
Ages 40-49	Non-College Educated Women	Whites
Interviewed in Chinese		Ages 50+
People of Color		College-Educated Women

Few admit to putting less of their compostable items in their green bins over the past year.

Over the past year or so, would you say you have been putting more, about the same, or less of your food-soiled paper products and food scraps in your curbside green bin?

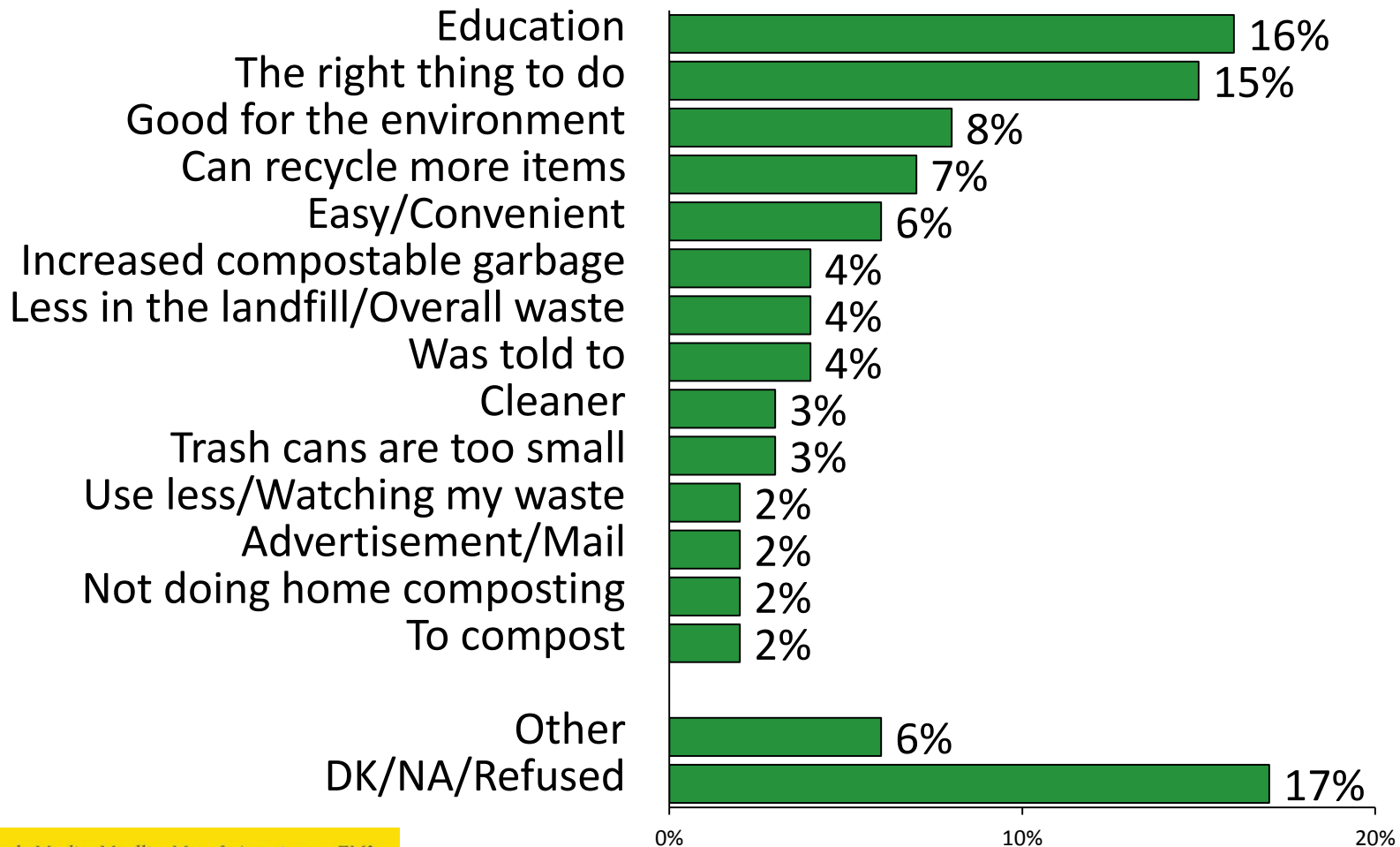


Groups disproportionately likely to have put more or less in their bins over the past year.

Total More	Total Less
<i>36% of the Sample</i>	<i>11% of the Sample</i>
Fremont	African-Americans
Ages 50-64	Livermore
Women Ages 50+	Ages 18-29
White Men	Non-College Educated Men
Whites	4+ Person Household
3 Person Household	Valley Region
Interviewed in Spanish	
Ages 50+	
White Women	
Post-Graduate Educated	
Women No Kids	
Berkeley	
HH Income \$100,000+	
College-Educated Men	
Men Ages 50+	
Latinos	

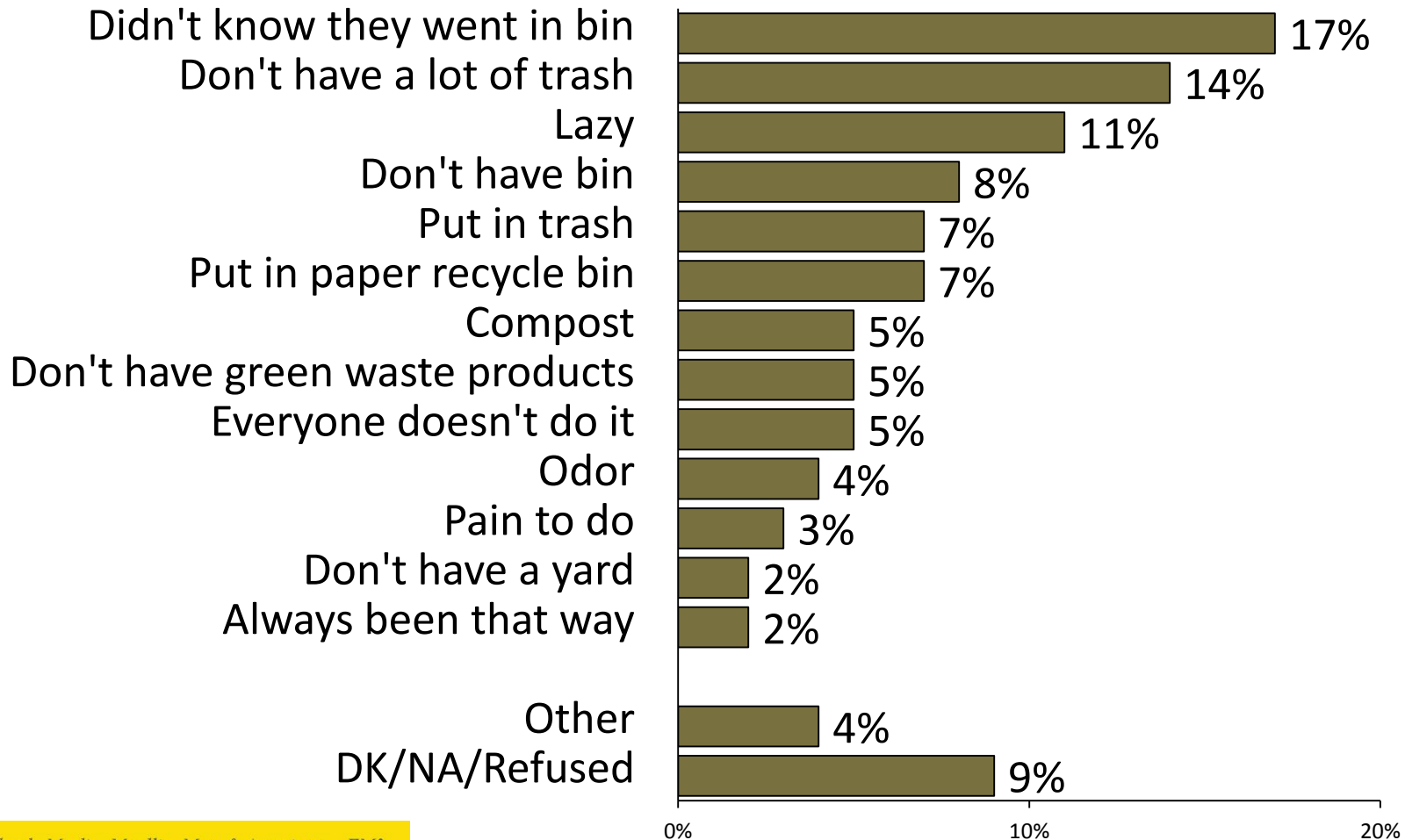
Education and “the right thing to do” are the top reasons putting more in green bins.

*Why have you been putting **MORE** of your food-soiled paper products or food scraps in your curbside green bin?*



Confusion and lack of effort/garbage volume the top reasons for putting less in green bins.

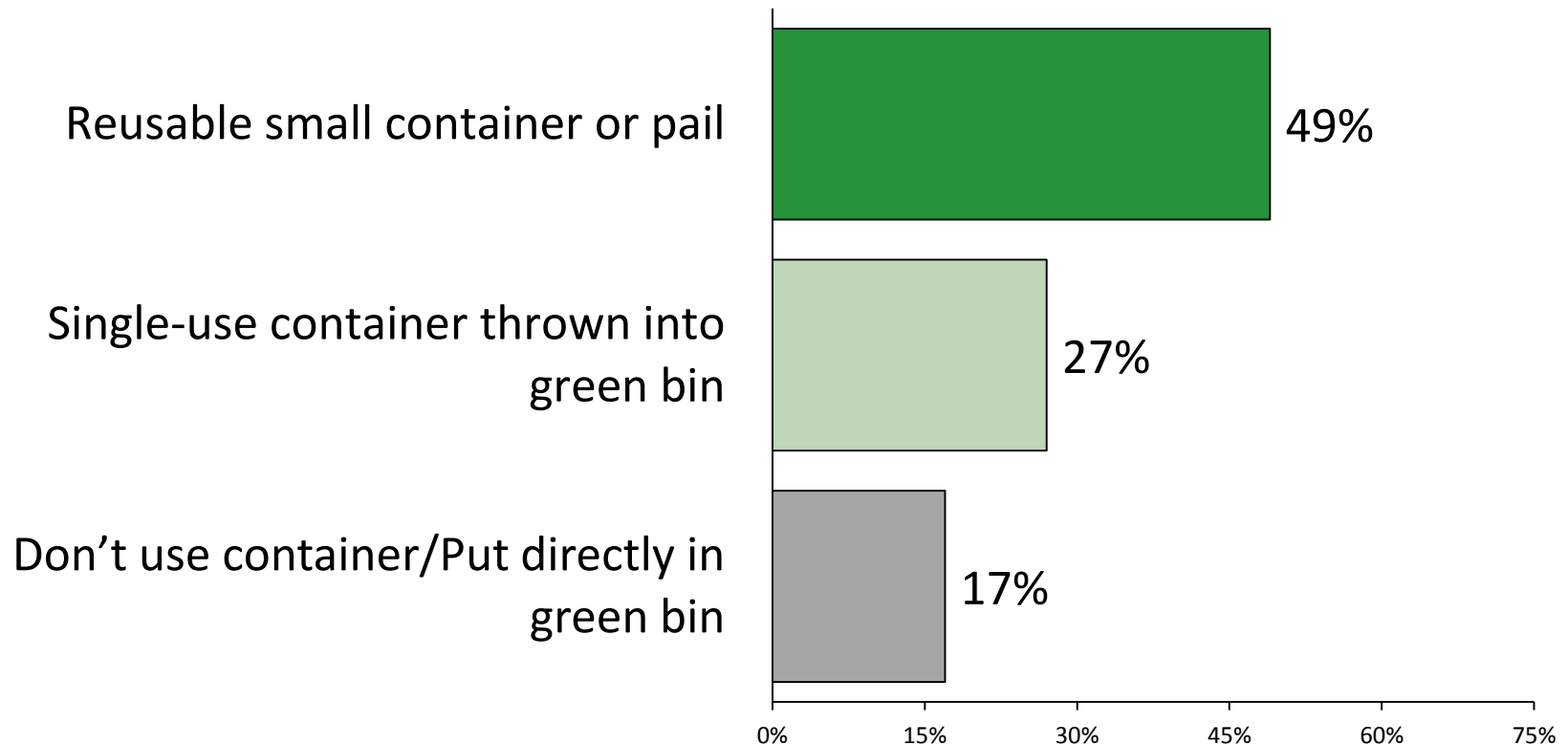
*Why have you been putting **LESS** of your food-soiled paper products or food scraps in your curbside green bin?*



Kitchen Container Use

Half of those who put items in their green bins use reusable containers.

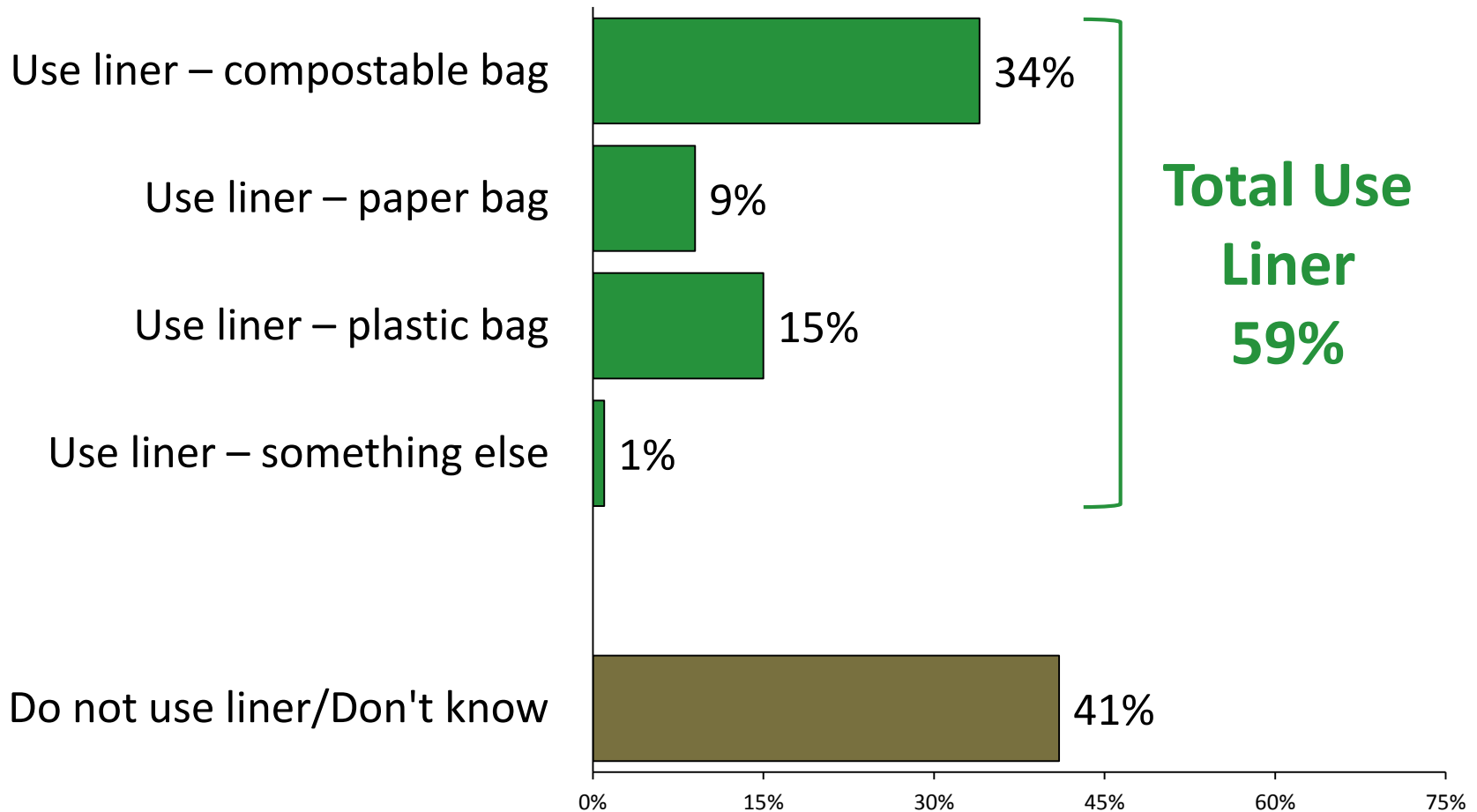
Do you typically put your food-soiled paper products or food scraps in a smaller container or pail that you reuse, or something that you use once and throw entirely into the curbside green bin?



Groups disproportionately likely to use each green bin disposal process.

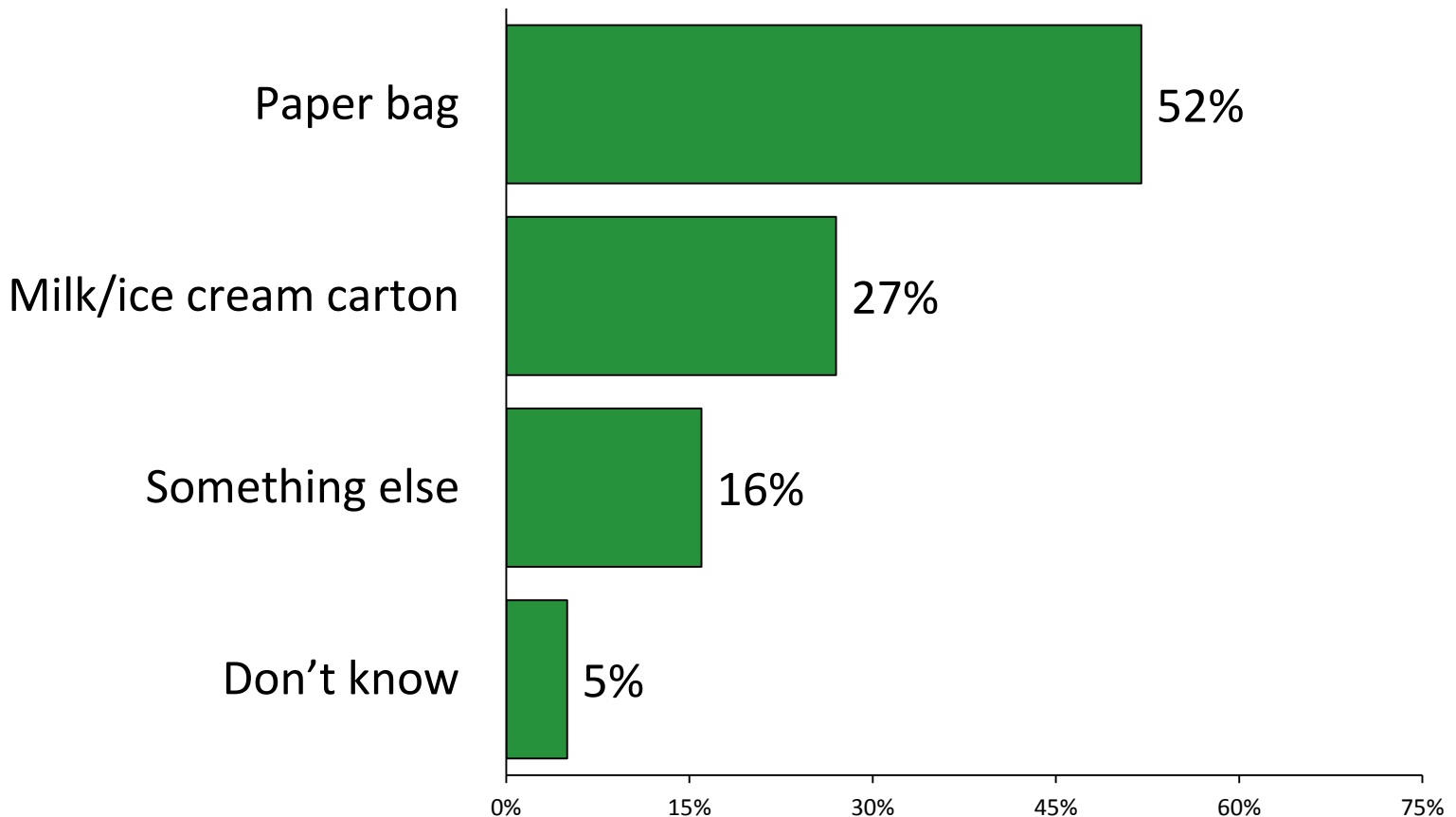
Reusable Container	Single-use Container	Don't Use Container
49% of the Sample	27% of the Sample	17% of the Sample
Interviewed in Spanish	Ages 30-39	All Other Cities
Berkeley	Asians/Pacific Islanders	Ages 65-74
Ages 40-49	All Other Cities	3 Person Household
Livermore	College-Educated Men	College-Educated Women
Post-Graduate Educated	Ages 65-74	Ages 50-64
HH Income \$100,000+	Have Adult Children	Women of Color
Interviewed in Non-English	Men Ages 50+	Asians/Pacific Islanders
Latinos	Ages 65+	Fremont
Non-College Educated Women	Four-year College Graduates	Ages 50+
White Women	Men of Color	No Children
Moms	Single Household	Four-year College Graduates
Valley Region	Four-year College or More	South County Region
Women	Men	Men Ages 50+
North County Region	Dads	Women Ages 50+
High School Educated	2 Person Household	Women No Kids
Employment: Other	Men No Kids	Men No Kids

Three in five who use a smaller container or pail use some sort of liner.



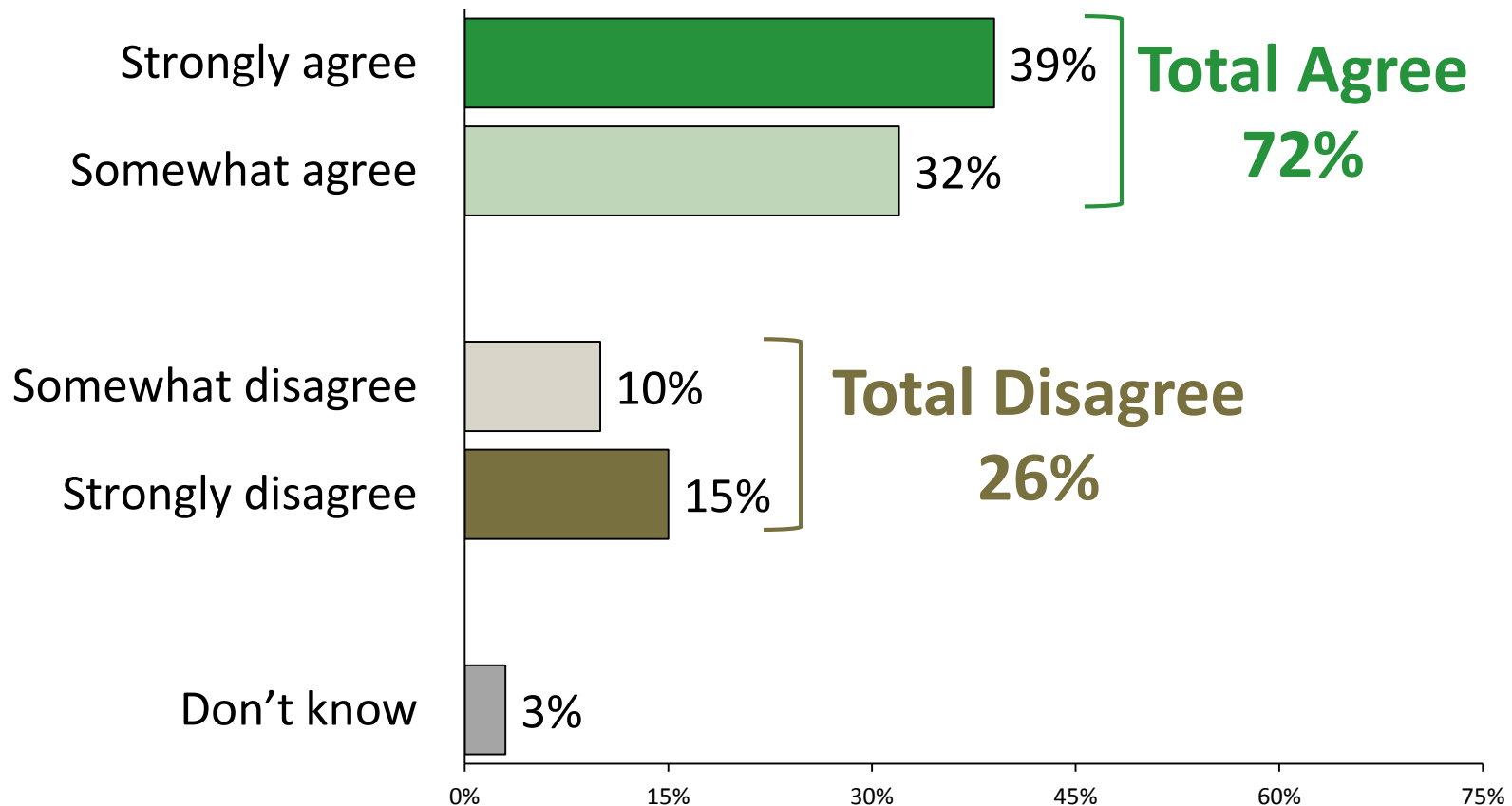
Paper bags are the most common single-use containers.

Is that container a paper bag, a milk or ice cream carton, or something else?



Seven in ten are keen on the concept of using compostable bags.

I would feel much more comfortable keeping food-soiled paper products or food scraps in my home if I could keep them in a compostable bag that can be thrown in my green bin



Convincing Residents to Use their Green Bins

Survey respondents were told the following:

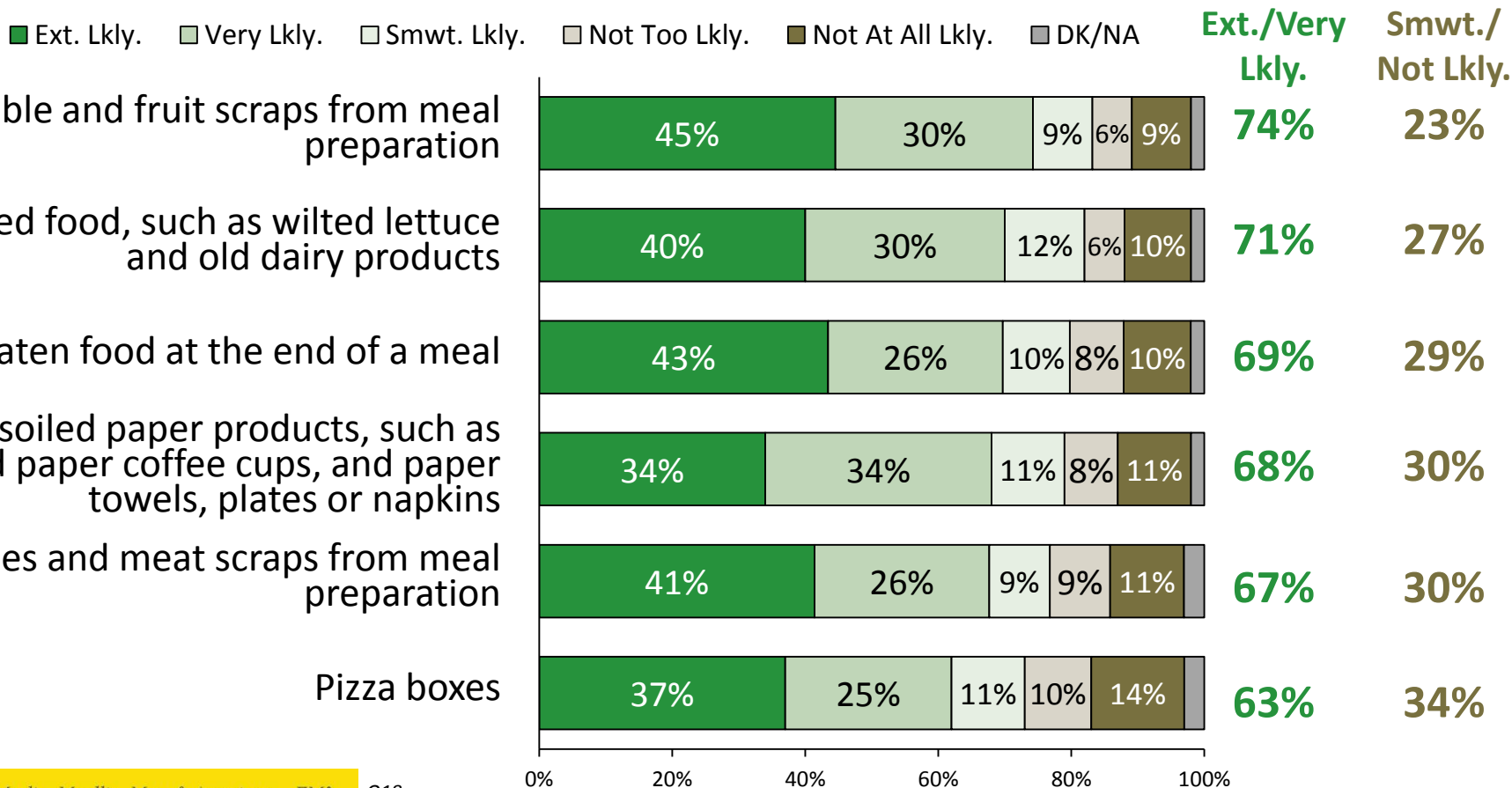
“As you may or may not have known, food-soiled paper products and food scraps should be put in your curbside green bin, and should not be put in your garbage or recycling bins. In fact, as a general rule, anything that was ever alive should be put in your green bin.”



- ❖ *They were then asked “how likely” they would be to put each of the six items in their green bins.*
- ❖ *If someone already indicated that they put an item in their green bin “all of the time,” they were automatically coded as “extremely likely.”*

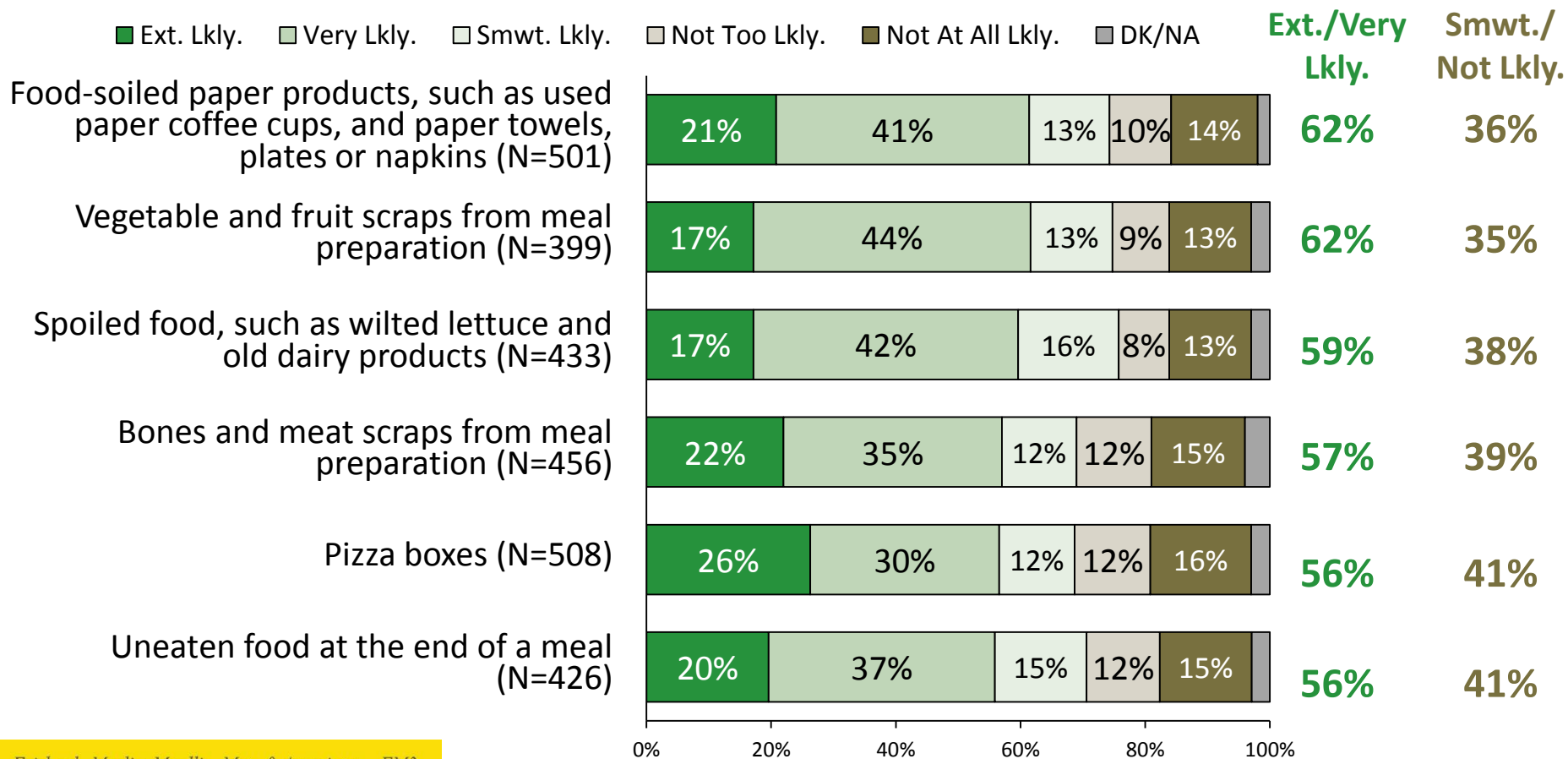
Residents are most likely to put vegetable and fruit meal prep scraps in their green bins.

Given this, I am going to read you some of the same items again. However, this time please tell me how likely you are to put that item in your curbside green bin: extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely.



Excluding self-reported proper disposers, there appears to be slightly more intensity around pizza boxes.

Given this, I am going to read you some of the same items again. However, this time please tell me how likely you are to put that item in your curbside green bin: extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely.



- ❖ *After hearing a series of messages encouraging green bin disposal, and potential barriers to doing so, respondents were asked one last time “how likely” they would be to put each of the six items in their green bins.*
- ❖ *This allowed us to determine if the messaging moved anyone and made them more likely to put each item in their green bins.*
- ❖ *We initially thought we would look at three target groups:*
 - *Those who moved to be “extremely” likely to put an item in their green bin.*
 - *Those who moved to be “extremely” or “very” likely to put an item in their green bin.*
 - *Those whose likelihood to put an item in a green bin was improved at all (“intensity movers”)*

Movement in those “extremely likely” to use their green bins was modest (though highest for spoiled food), so...

(% Extremely Likely)

Items	Initial	After Messages	Difference
Spoiled food, such as wilted lettuce and old dairy products	40%	47%	+7%
Pizza boxes	37%	41%	+4%
Food-soiled paper products, such as used paper coffee cups, and paper towels, plates or napkins	34%	38%	+4%
Bones and meat scraps from meal preparation	41%	44%	+3%
Uneaten food at the end of a meal	43%	45%	+2%
Vegetable and fruit scraps from meal preparation	45%	47%	+2%

...we decided to focus on those who moved to be “extremely” or “very” likely to put items in their green bins, or expressed any movement in the positive direction (“intensity movers”).

Items	% Extremely/Very Likely Movers	% Intensity Movers
Food-soiled paper products, such as used paper coffee cups, and paper towels, plates or napkins	13%	23%
Pizza boxes	15%	24%
Uneaten food at the end of a meal	13%	25%
Vegetable and fruit scraps from meal preparation	13%	21%
Bones and meat scraps from meal preparation	16%	27%
Spoiled food, such as wilted lettuce and old dairy products	15%	29%

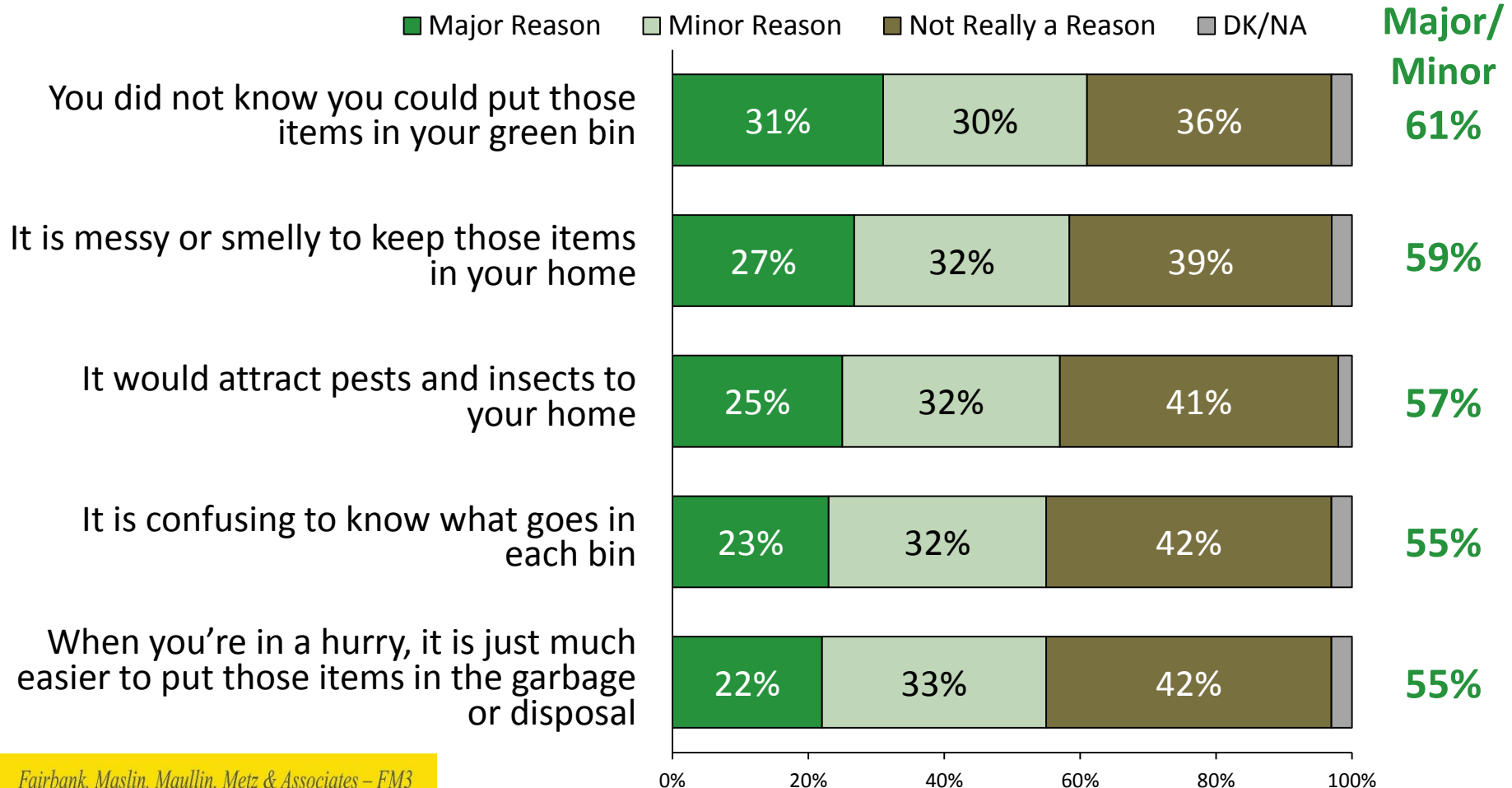
Positive movers were disproportionately younger, lower-income, living without kids, and people of color.

Extremely/Very Likely Movers <i>33% of the Sample</i>	Intensity Movers <i>47% of the Sample</i>
Ages 18-29	Ages 18-29
African-Americans	HH Income \$0-\$50,000
HH Income \$0-\$50,000	Asians/Pacific Islanders
No Children	Men No Kids
Women Ages 18-49	Men Ages 18-49
Men No Kids	Ages 18-49
Lives in Multi-unit/Complex	Fremont
Ages 18-49	No Children
Women No Kids	Men of Color
Asians/Pacific Islanders	Non-College Educated Men
People of Color	African-Americans
Four-year College Graduates	Interviewed in Chinese
Men of Color	People of Color
Men Ages 18-49	Women Ages 18-49
All Other Cities	Women of Color
3 Person Household	All Other Cities
Interviewed in Chinese	South County Region
HH Income \$50,000-\$100,000	3 Person Household

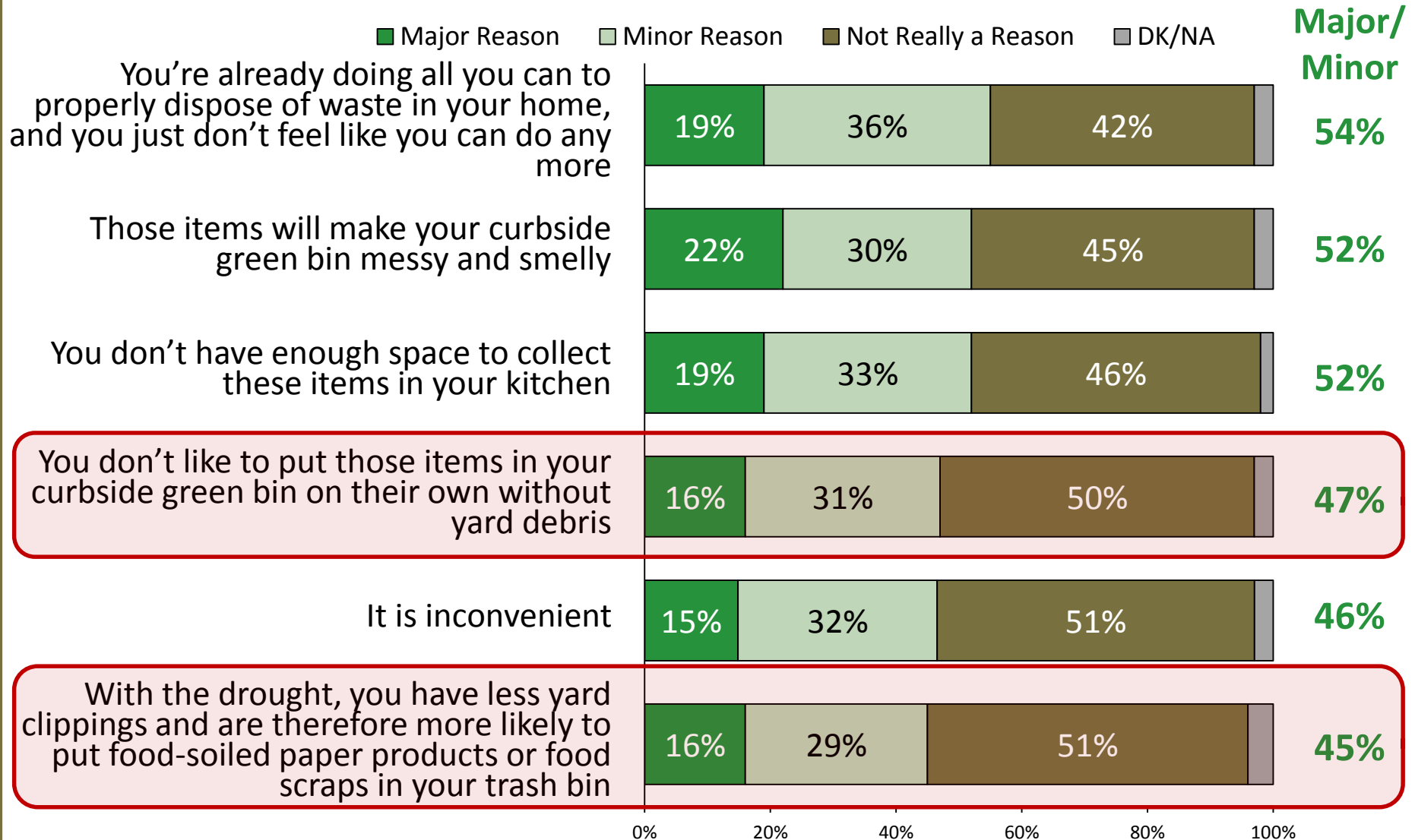
Overcoming Barriers

Many cited ignorance as the top barrier, but also the “ick factor” and being in a rush.

I'm going to read you a list of reasons why you may not put more of your food-soiled paper products or food scraps in your curbside green bin. Please tell me whether each is a major reason, a minor reason, or not really a reason why you may not put more of these items in your green bin.



Overall inconvenience was a lesser barrier.



Ignorance and the “ick factor” are top barriers among persuadables.

(% Major/Minor Reason)

Barriers	All Residents	Extremely/Very Movers	Intensity Movers
You did not know you could put those items in your green bin	61%	72%	71%
It is messy or smelly to keep those items in your home	59%	71%	69%
It would attract pests and insects to your home	57%	67%	64%
It is confusing to know what goes in each bin	55%	63%	63%
When you're in a hurry, it is just much easier to put those items in the garbage or disposal	55%	64%	65%
You're already doing all you can to properly dispose of waste in your home, and you just don't feel like you can do any more	54%	67%	61%
Those items will make your curbside green bin messy and smelly	52%	67%	65%
You don't have enough space to collect these items in your kitchen	52%	65%	63%
You don't like to put those items in your curbside green bin on their own without yard debris	47%	60%	58%
It is inconvenient	46%	56%	56%
With the drought, you have less yard clippings and are therefore more likely to put food-soiled paper products or food scraps in your trash bin	45%	56%	56%

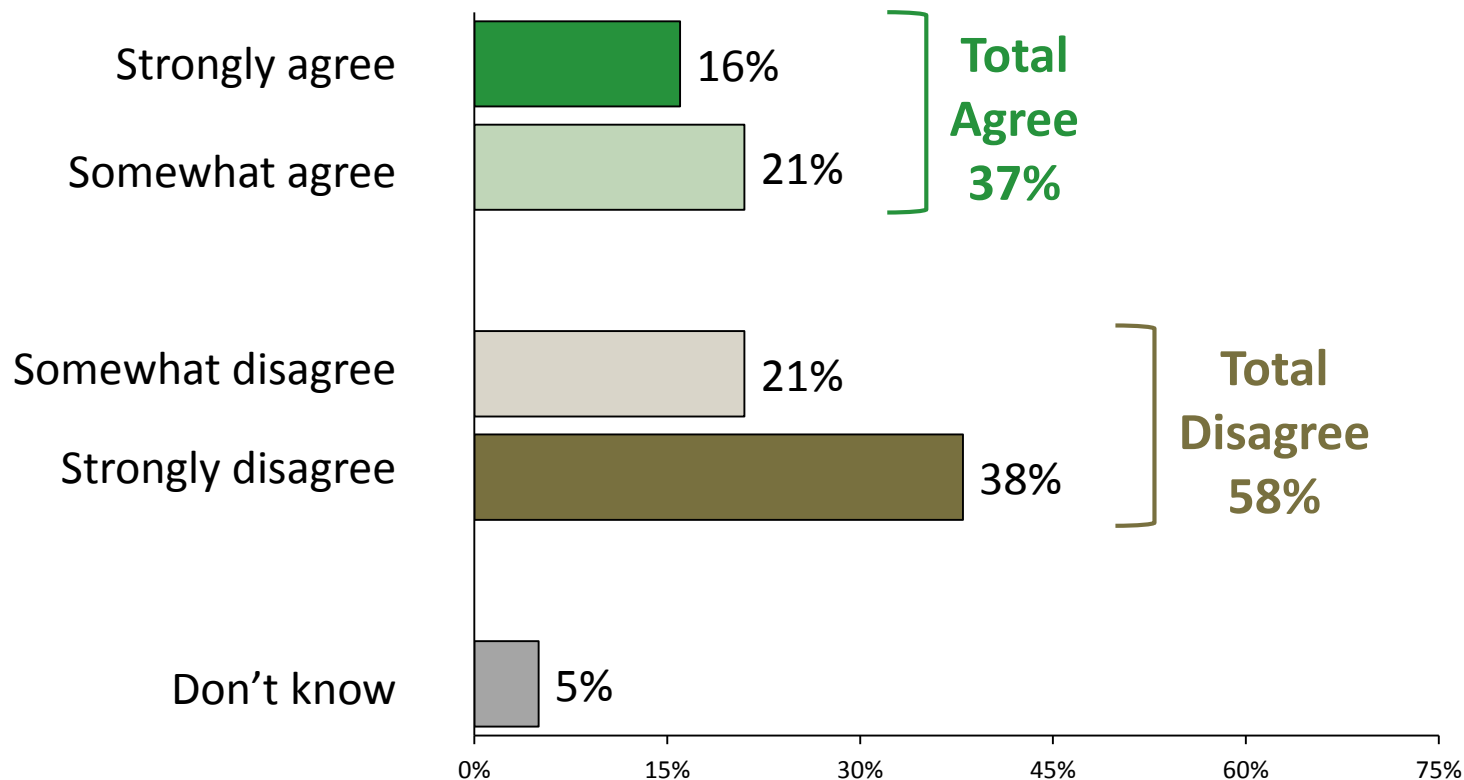
Ignorance is the top barrier throughout the County.

(% Major/Minor Reason)

Barriers	All Residents	North County	South County	Valley
You did not know you could put those items in your green bin	61%	58%	63%	61%
It is messy or smelly to keep those items in your home	59%	58%	63%	49%
It would attract pests and insects to your home	57%	61%	55%	47%
It is confusing to know what goes in each bin	55%	57%	56%	51%
When you're in a hurry, it is just much easier to put those items in the garbage or disposal	55%	54%	59%	49%
You're already doing all you can to properly dispose of waste in your home, and you just don't feel like you can do any more	54%	56%	52%	55%
Those items will make your curbside green bin messy and smelly	52%	53%	53%	47%
You don't have enough space to collect these items in your kitchen	52%	54%	53%	46%
You don't like to put those items in your curbside green bin on their own without yard debris	47%	47%	46%	45%
It is inconvenient	46%	51%	44%	38%
With the drought, you have less yard clippings and are therefore more likely to put food-soiled paper products or food scraps in your trash bin	45%	44%	50%	35%

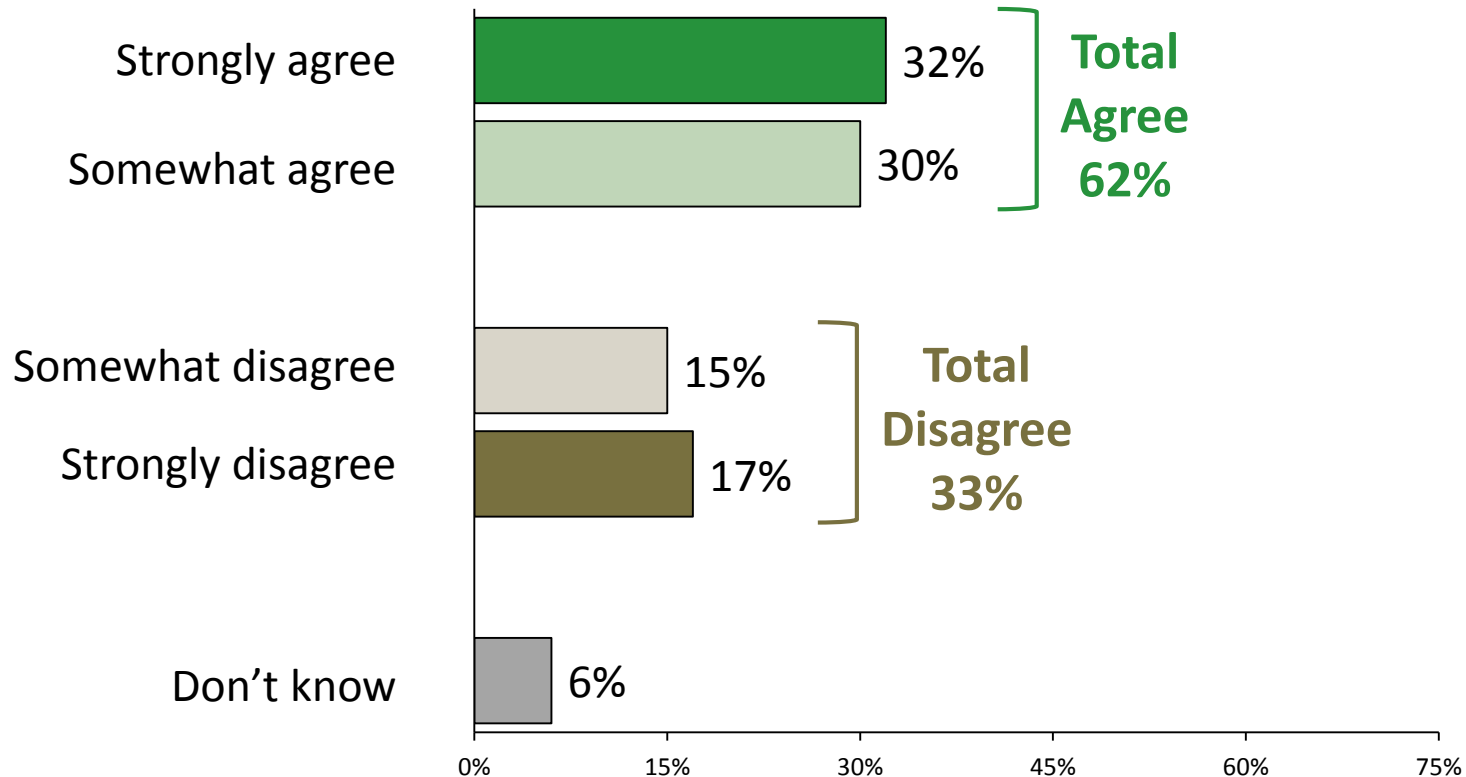
More than one-third of residents say out of convenience, they may put compostables in their garbage bins.

If my curbside green bin is basically empty, I'm more likely to put food-soiled paper products or food scraps in the curbside garbage bin so I don't have to wheel both bins to the curb



Additionally, a majority say they have fewer yard clippings due to the drought.

Given our current drought, I typically have fewer yard clippings to put in my green bin



These residents look demographically similar...

(% Total Agree)

If my curbside green bin is basically empty, I'm more likely to put food-soiled paper products or food scraps in the curbside garbage bin so I don't have to wheel both bins to the curb

Given our current drought, I typically have fewer yard clippings to put in my green bin

37% of the Electorate

Ages 18-29
HH Income \$0-\$50,000
High School Educated
Men No Kids
Lives in Multi-unit/Complex
Ages 18-49
Men Ages 18-49
Women of Color
No Children
Women Ages 18-49
Asians/Pacific Islanders
Ages 30-39
North County Region
African-Americans

62% of the Electorate

Non-College Educated Women
Ages 18-29
HH Income \$0-\$50,000
Some College or Less
Some College Education
High School Educated
3 Person Household
African-Americans
Women Ages 18-49
Non-College Educated Men
Ages 18-49
Men Ages 18-49
Ages 30-39
Interviewed in English Language

...meaning nearly one-third of residents are putting less yard clippings in their green bins and don't like taking empty green bins to the curb.

Don't like Empty Green Bins/Putting Less in Green Bins Due to Drought

31% of the Sample

Ages 18-29
High School Educated
Women of Color
Women Ages 18-49
HH Income \$0-\$50,000
Ages 18-49
Asians/Pacific Islanders
Men No Kids
Non-College Educated Women
Lives in Multi-unit/Complex
Men Ages 18-49
No Children
African-Americans
Ages 30-39
City of Berkeley
People of Color
North County
Latinos

Messages Tested

(RIGHT THING) Recycling is just the right thing to do, and putting food-soiled paper products and food scraps in your green bin is just like another form of recycling.

(LANDFILL) Putting food-soiled paper products and food scraps in your green bin reduces the amount of trash in our landfills.

(AGRICULTURE) Food-soiled paper products and food scraps collected from homes are turned into compost. This rich compost is then used by farmers and used to grow California crops, so that everyone benefits.

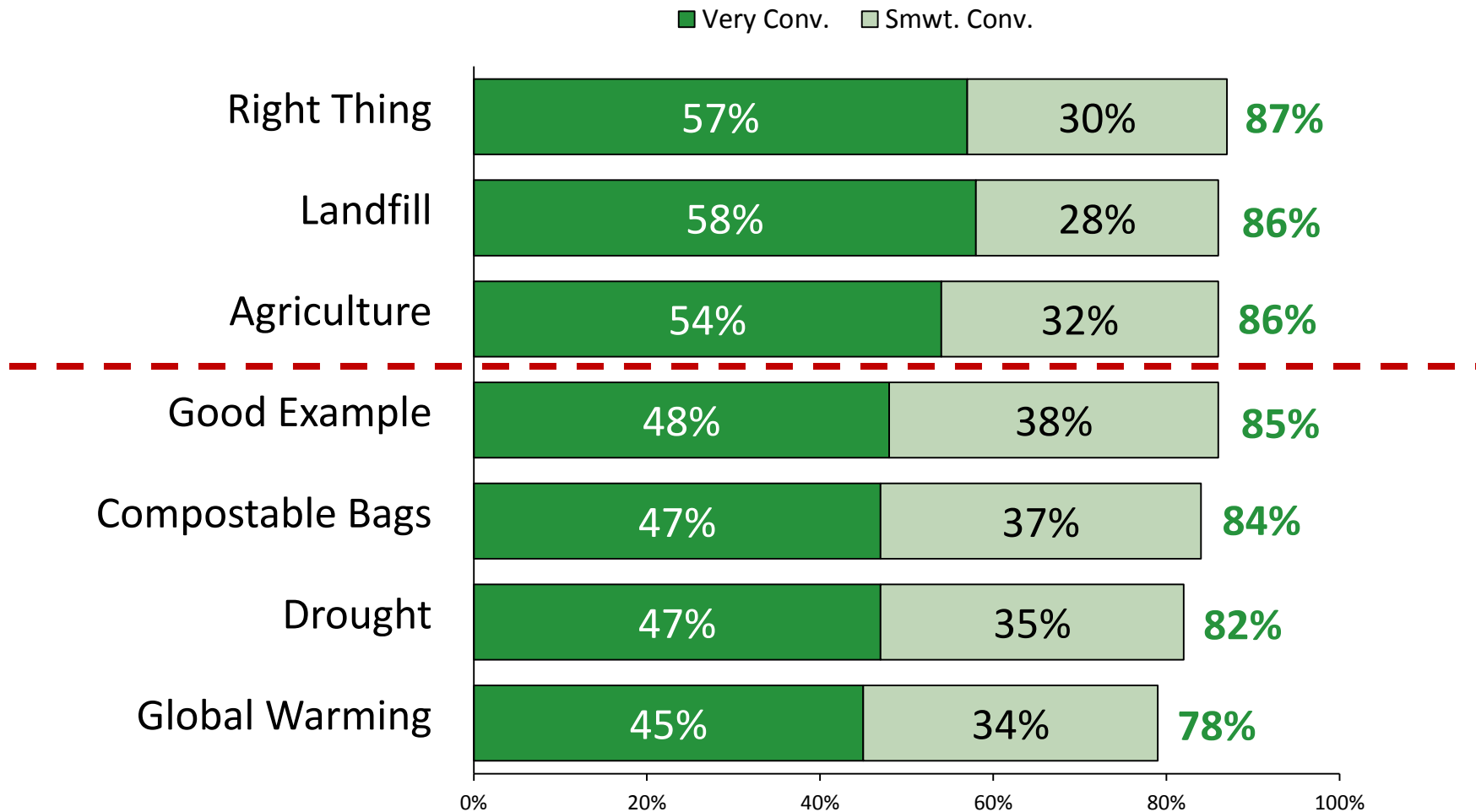
(GOOD EXAMPLE) We're all in this together. Let's put our food-soiled paper products and food scraps in our green bins because it sets a good example for our families and our neighbors.

(COMPOSTABLE BAGS) With compostable bags, it can be clean and easy to keep food-soiled paper products and food scraps in your kitchen. Compostable bags keep kitchen containers clean and can be thrown into your green bin, just like how you throw garbage bags into your garbage bin.

(DROUGHT) Given our current drought and ongoing water shortages, we should be doing everything we can to conserve water. Turning your food-soiled paper products and food scraps into compost usable by farmers and home gardeners, allows them to use less water.

(GLOBAL WARMING) Putting food-soiled paper products and food scraps in your green bin can help fight global warming. When left to decompose in landfills, these products generate significant amounts of methane, a potent gas that contributes to global warming.

Comparing composting to recycling (it's just the right thing to do), reducing landfill and creating compost were the most compelling messages.



Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills was most compelling among key target groups.

(% Very Convincing)

Message	All Residents	Movers		Region		
		Extremely/Very	Intensity	North County	South County	Valley
Landfill	58%	57%	55%	57%	56%	66%
Right Thing	57%	51%	48%	52%	58%	68%
Agriculture	54%	46%	46%	52%	53%	62%
Good Example	48%	40%	41%	44%	48%	57%
Compostable Bags	47%	41%	40%	42%	46%	64%
Drought	47%	41%	40%	48%	45%	50%
Global Warming	45%	38%	37%	45%	42%	51%

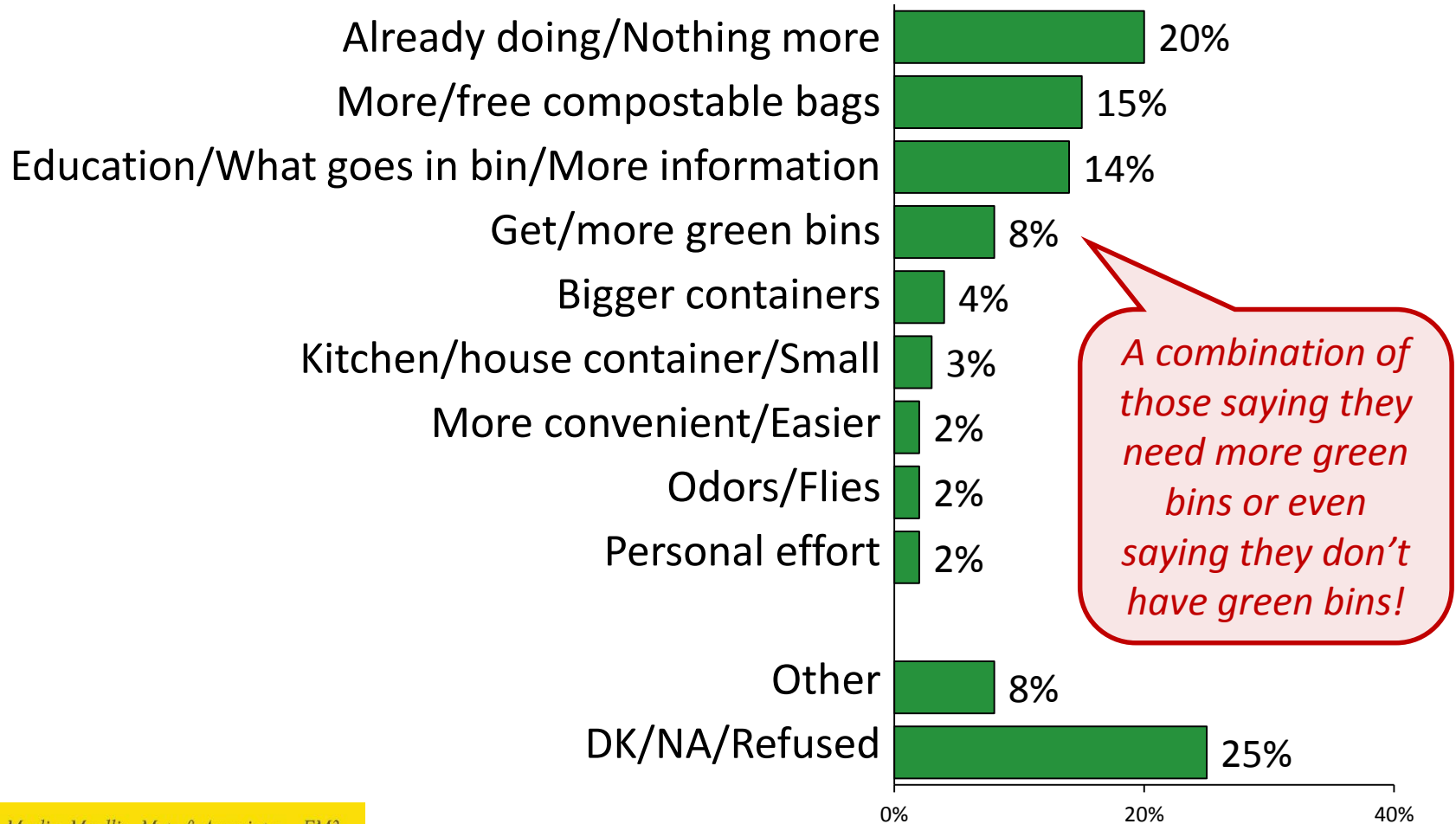
The agriculture compost message might do better among those more likely to be putting items in their green bins.

(% Very Convincing)

Message	All Residents	Correctly Understood			Correctly Disposed		
		0	1-3	4-6	0	1-3	4-6
Landfill	58%	55%	54%	64%	57%	55%	62%
Right Thing	57%	59%	48%	63%	59%	47%	64%
Agriculture	54%	53%	43%	65%	52%	47%	65%
Good Example	48%	47%	39%	57%	45%	40%	59%
Compostable Bags	47%	44%	43%	53%	44%	45%	54%
Drought	47%	48%	39%	54%	46%	41%	54%
Global Warming	45%	41%	38%	52%	41%	40%	54%

Free compostable bags and education are reported as the most likely motivators for curbside green bin use

Given everything we have discussed, what's the one thing that can be done to make you more likely to put more of your food-soiled paper products or food scraps in your green bin?



Conclusions

Conclusions and Recommendations

- ❖ A lack of understanding as to what kinds of items can go in the green bin appears to be the most significant barrier, as those aware tend to do the right thing.
- ❖ Additionally, explaining that these items can be put in green bins results in large majorities saying they are likely to follow through and do so.
- ❖ However, consistent with past research, the “ick factor” continues to be a problem, as well, something compostable bags could help address.
- ❖ The drought may be indirectly contributing to some residents putting less food scraps in their green bins, though this is not likely an issue for most.
- ❖ Key target groups currently less likely to know these items can be put in their green bins and persuadable after additional information and messaging tend to be younger, lower-income, people of color, and South County residents.
- ❖ Messages should focus on education, as well as appeals to reduce landfill waste, comparisons to other recycling, and agricultural benefits.

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