

## Executive Summary - Citizen Plastics Recycling Behaviours Insights Study 2021

RECOUNP's Pledge2Recycle Plastics brand launched the Citizen Plastics Recycling Behaviours Insights Survey in October 2020. The survey took the form of an informal questionnaire with images alongside questions on recycling behaviours of key items of plastics packaging such as bottles, pots, tubs, and trays and films and flexibles.

Responses were driven through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram); Local Authority websites; e-mails; web searches and a link on the Ocado Retail website.

These results concentrate on the 6534 responses received up until 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021 from across the whole of the UK.



95% of citizens claim to be recycling plastic drinks bottles every time whilst this drops to 80% of responses for plastic cleaning bottles and sauce bottles.

The key barrier cited for not recycling cleaning products, sauce or shampoo bottles appears to be confusion around recyclability.

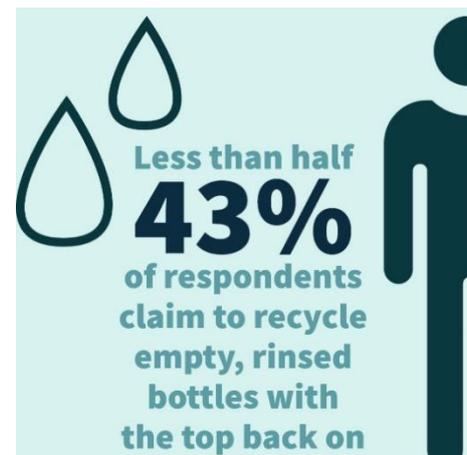


Only 52% of citizens claim to recycle cooked food and ready meal trays with 62% claiming to recycle fresh meat trays every time. The highest claimed recycling rate in the pot, tub and tray fraction was for vegetable and fruit trays at 73%.



Cooked or ready meal trays and films, flexibles seemed to cause the most confusion on recyclability with 13% and 11% respectively.

The more complicated an item of packaging and then the less intuitive it is for citizens to know what to do with the pack. This resulting confusion therefore creates barriers to recycling. Even with the simplest form of plastic packaging, (the drinks bottle), citizens are still unsure how to prepare the bottle and consequently potential recycle is being lost. Less than half of responses claimed to empty, rinse, and replace the lid before recycling.



Older citizens were more likely to say they recycle every time. However, what is not certain is whether their desire to recycle is leading to unintended contamination by placing non 'target' plastic items in their recycling collections despite local advice.

Pack labelling and instructions can also conflict with current collection, sorting and reprocessing capabilities. If plastics packaging is to improve its reputation to citizens of its circular credentials, then pack claims need to be able to be upheld and supported by the value chain. Technical advances in pack design to render packs more recyclable need to match progress in sorting, reprocessing and end markets.

Overall, attitudes have remained stagnant over time with no indications of any sustained behaviour change or changes in declared recycling from October 2020 to November 2021. Work is needed to consider the most effective way to engage, educate, and stimulate the desire to recycle plastics packaging by citizens of all ages. Uppermost in the minds of individuals is convenience and ease of decision making. Recycling should be intuitive with as little fuss and action required by individuals as possible.

Most citizens already have a base understanding of plastics packaging are likely to follow their objective knowledge, whether it is factually correct or not. Citizens are therefore less likely to be open and willing to accept new information. This represents a challenge for communications when involving a call to action, particularly if existing knowledge is to be adjusted to reflect new and evolving plastics recycling instructions.