

# Food Waste Research

Summary report of research  
conducted in June 2022 by  
The Planning Exchange for  
Green Industries SA



**Government of South Australia**

Green Industries SA



# Approach



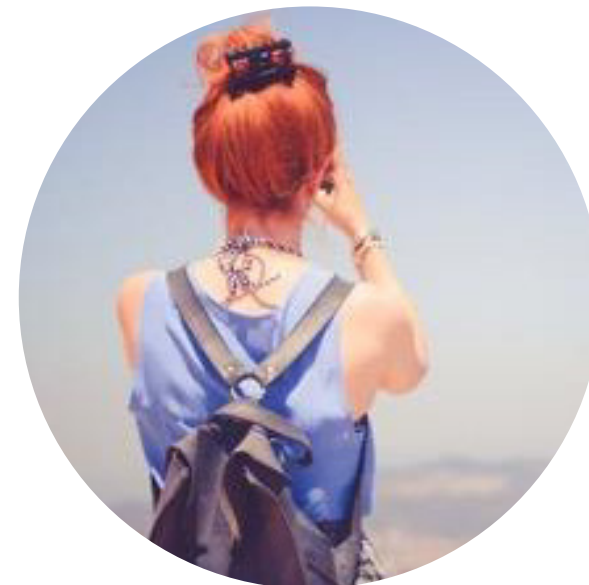
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## Methodology

16 min online quantitative survey

Participants recruited via accredited consumer research panel

Conducted in June 2022



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## Sample

N=500 participants

South Australians 18+

Have access to a kerbside organic waste bin

*Data weighted to match ABS gender and age statistics for South Australia*



# Knowledge, attitudes, actions & caddies

## SECTION 01

**Bin use knowledge  
and attitudes**

## SECTION 02

**Actions**

## SECTION 03

**Kitchen caddy**

SECTION 01

# Bin use knowledge and attitudes

What are the current food waste  
recycling habits?



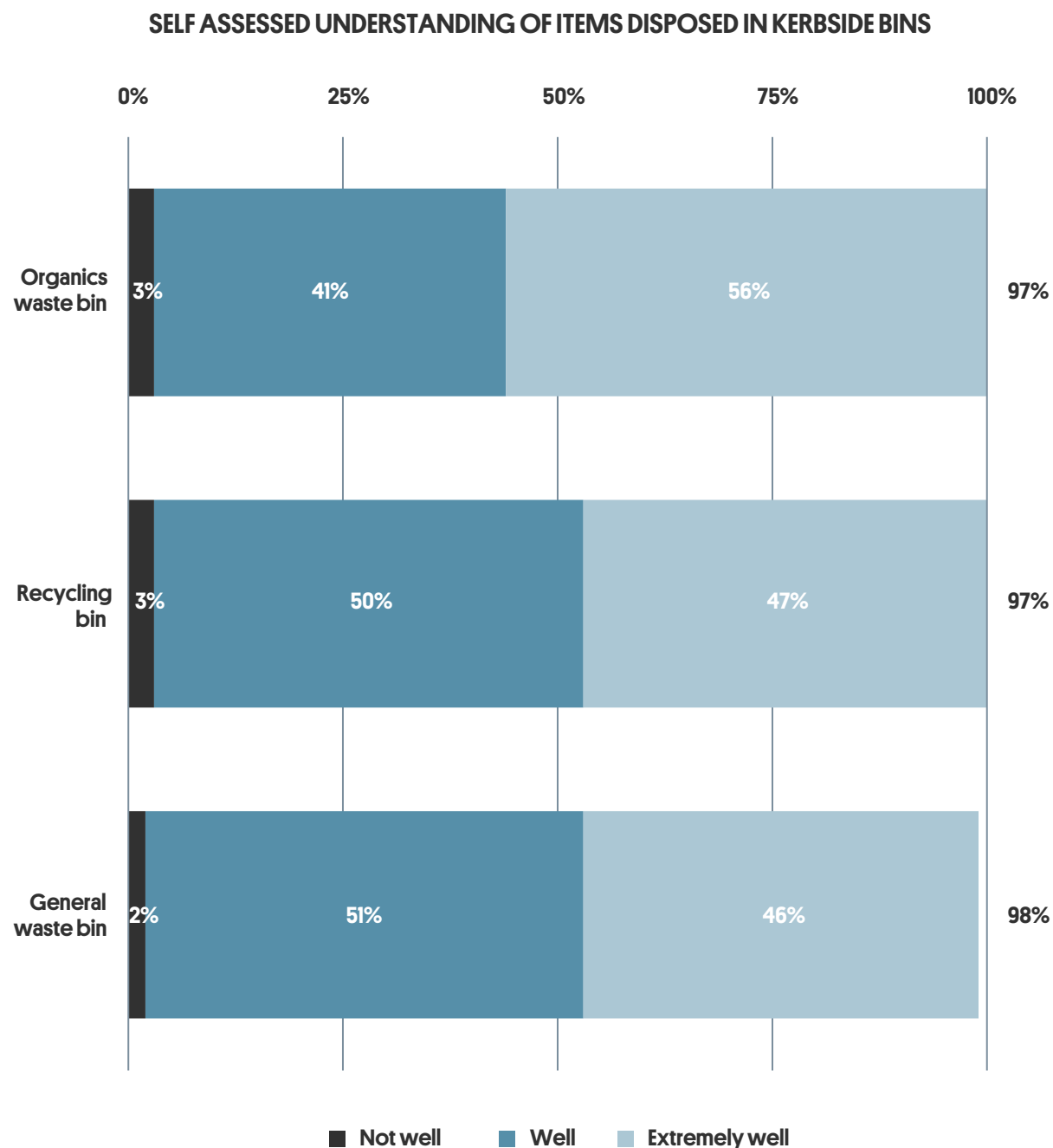
## Self assessments of knowing which items can be disposed in kerbside bins are very high

### Statistical details:

- Males claim slightly higher knowledge than women [59% vs. 53% Extremely well]
- Understanding increases with age. Extremely well [organics waste bin] increased from 50% for 18 to 45 years, to 55% for 45 to 54 and to more than 65% for 55+ years

**Q1** How well do you understand what items should be placed into each of your kerbside bins?

Base [Total] n=500



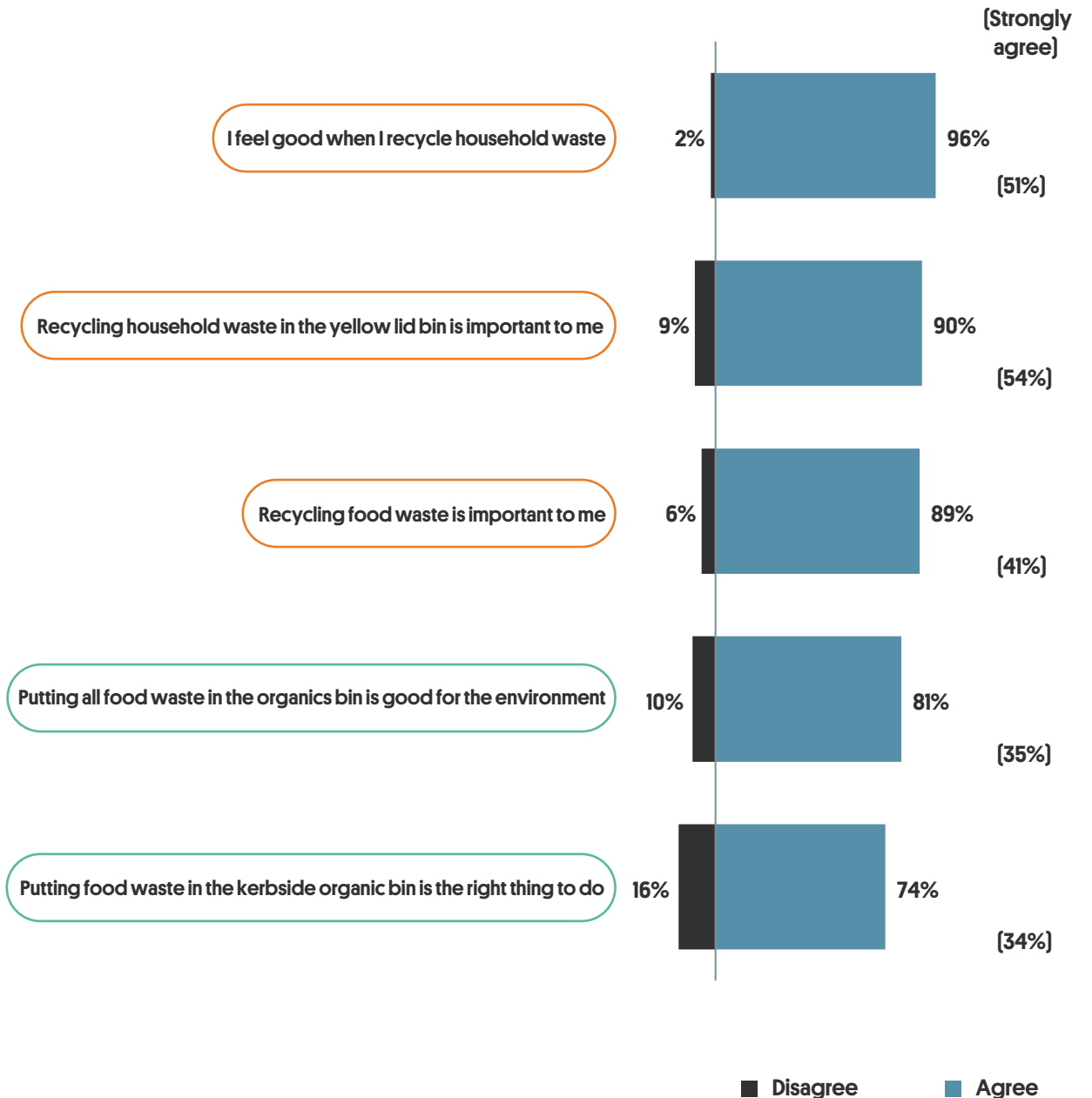
## Recycling (including food waste) is seen as important and rewarding at a personal and an environmental level

The importance of recycling via the yellow lid bin is stronger than for food waste.

There is lower certainty surrounding food waste behaviour/attitudes.

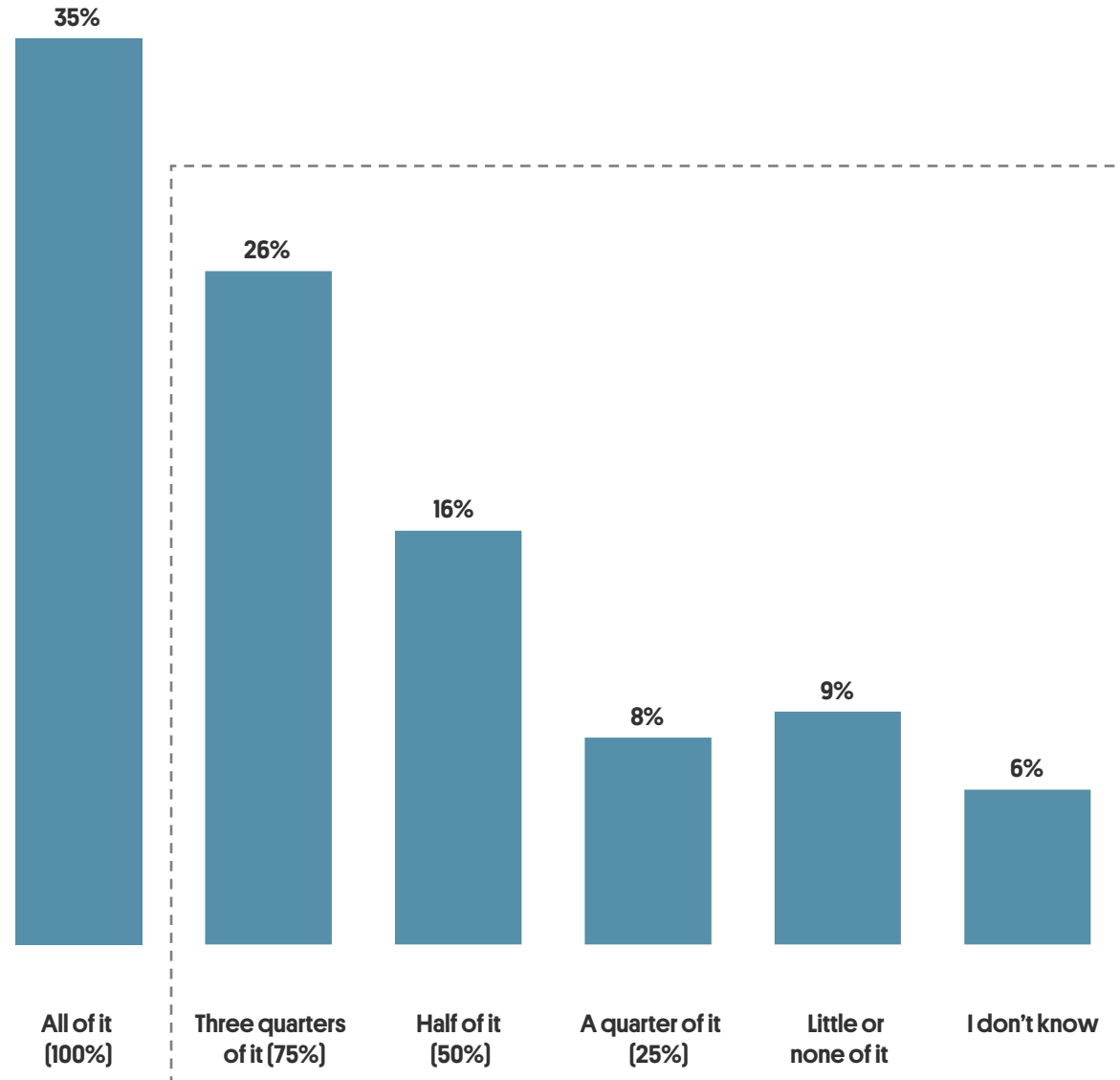
**Q3** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base [Total] n=500

### AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS REGARDING DISPOSING WASTE



Despite the positive intentions and claimed understanding, only 1 in 3 recycle all of their household food waste

PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLD FOOD WASTE RECYCLED



**Q4** Approximately how much of your household's food waste is recycled, e.g. goes into your kerbside organics bin (green lid), home compost, worm farm, fed to animals/chickens Base [Total] n=500

**This is being driven by a lack of knowledge and is paired with perceived inconvenience and the powerful force of habits**

**Q5** What is the main reason that you/ your household do not currently recycle all of your food waste?  
Base [Don't recycle all their food waste] n=323

## REASONS FOR NOT RECYCLING FOOD WASTE

**FORCE OF HABIT (23%):** Self-confessed laziness, force of habit, not having all family members on board



Honestly I am too **lazy** and forget



Sometimes the **kids** put things in the wrong bins

**INCONVENIENCE (20%):** Difficult to separate, too much effort needed, lack of time, not at hand, too expensive, discomfort



Sometimes **can't separate** it.



Too much **effort** and freezing outside

**LACK OF KNOWLEDGE (17%):** Around either the **details of recycling**: not sure what is allowed, what can go into compost, how to do it, some of the food waste cannot be recycled

Some simply **did not know about the option** of recycling food waste



We just sometimes **don't know** if it's able to be recycled, so we just put it in the general waste bin



I **didn't think** you could recycle the food waste or place it in the green bin

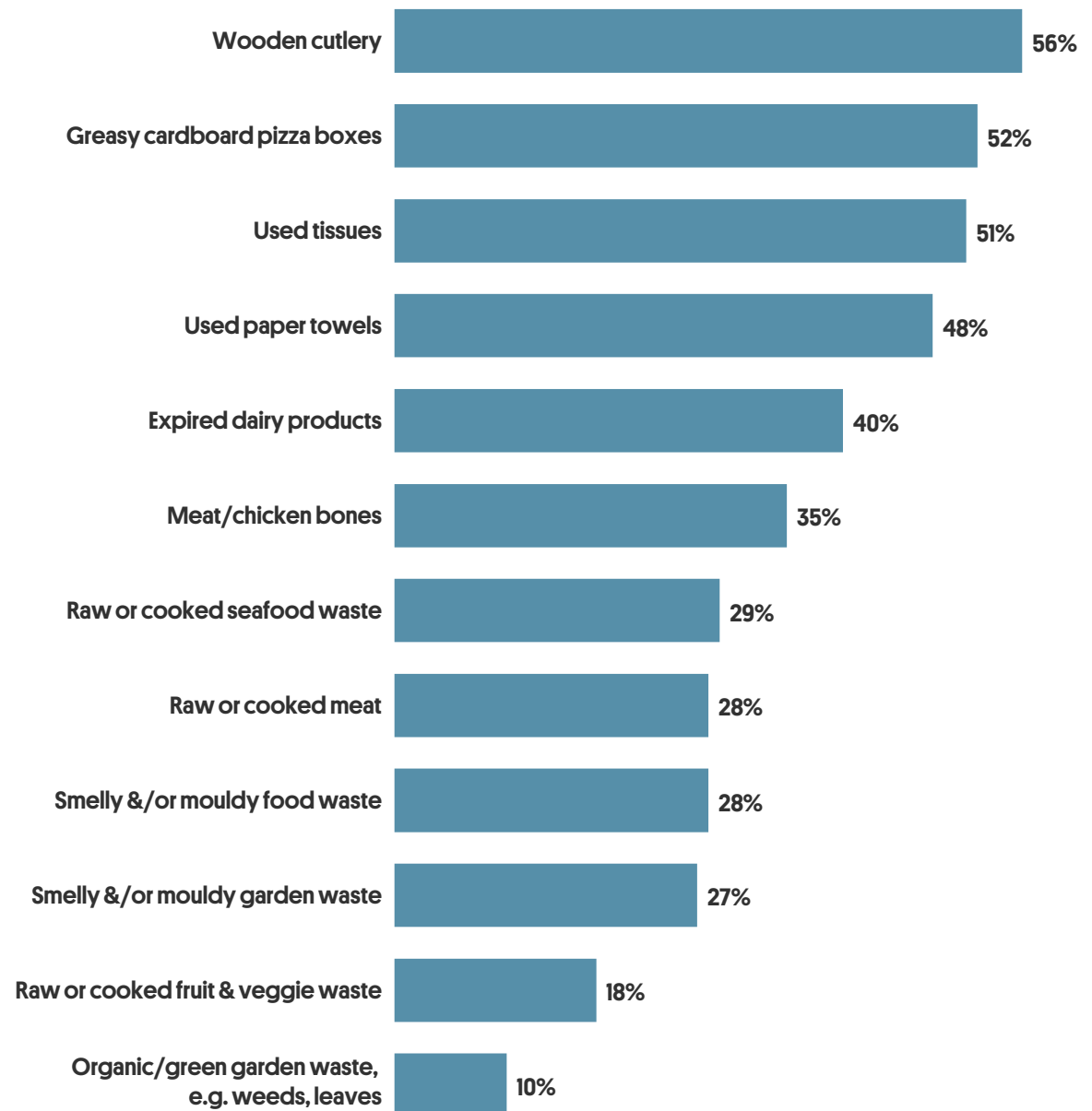


## Many people are not aware of what can go into their green bin

It's the most frequently cited reason for incorrect disposal of organic items and this is particularly evident for the non-food category.

**Q12b** Why don't you/your household put each of the following in the kerbside organics waste bin?  
Base [Didn't correctly dispose of all items] n=451

ITEMS PEOPLE COMMONLY DID NOT KNOW COULD GO IN THE GREEN BIN

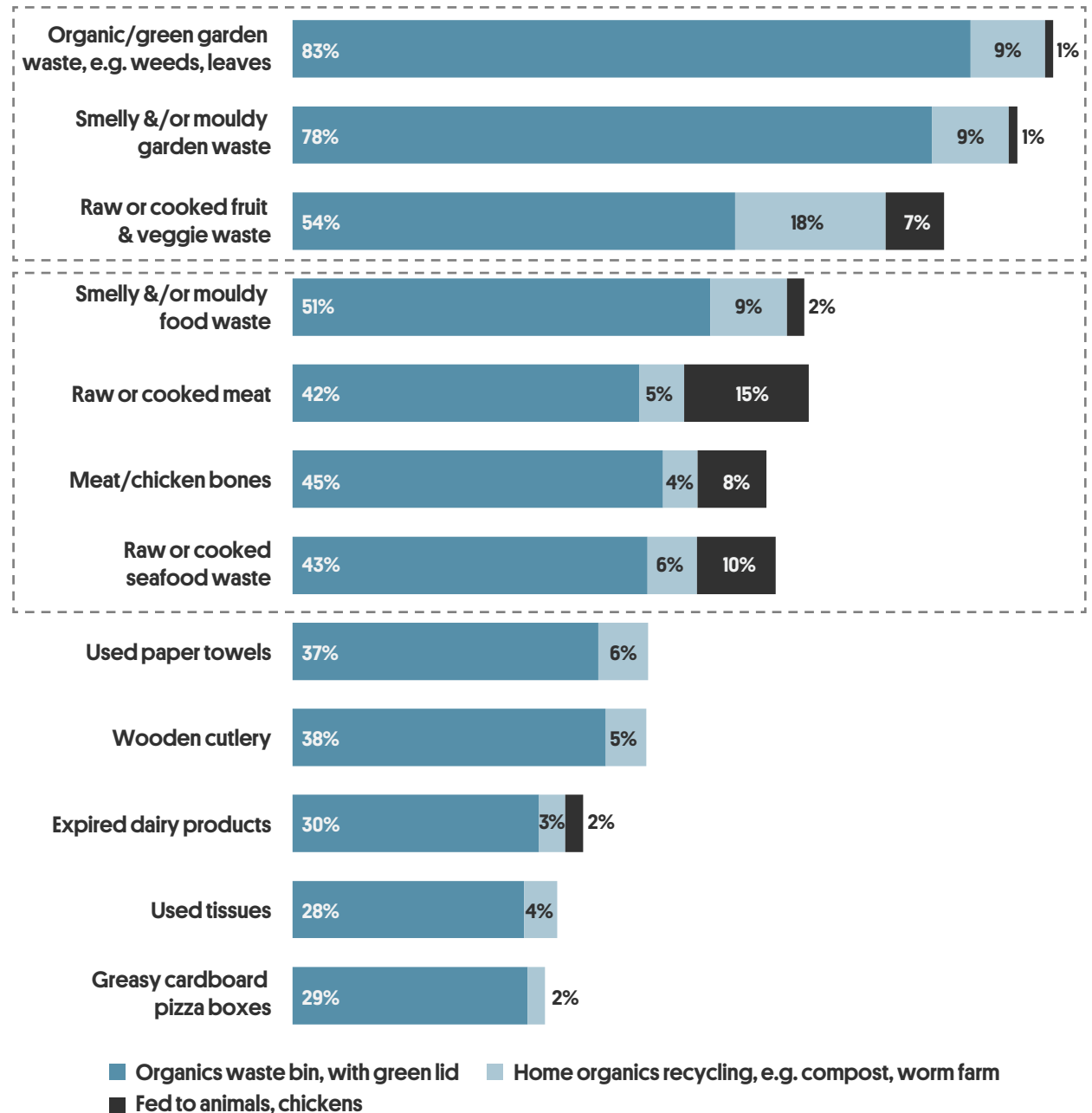


## Most garden, fruit and veg waste is being disposed of in the organics bin or home composting

The behaviour for garden waste appears compliant/correct but it falls away significantly when food and other compostable waste is addressed.

**Q12** Why do you/your household put the following into the kerbside organics bin?  
Base [Total] n=500. The results were renormed to exclude the option "Doesn't apply to my household"

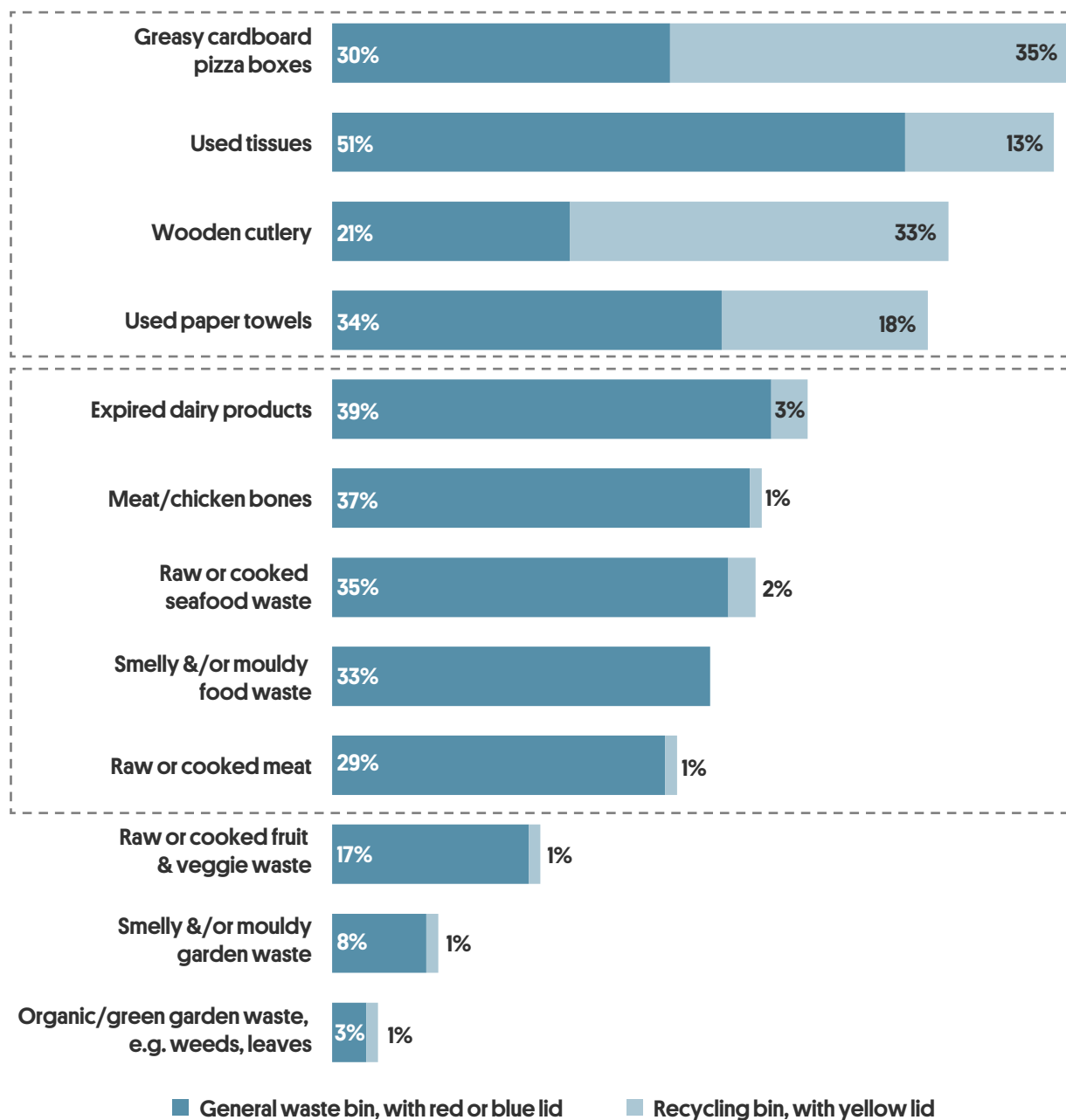
### ITEMS CORRECTLY DISPOSED



## There is confusion around where to dispose of a variety of items

High proportions of compostable items are habitually being disposed of via the general waste or recycling bins.

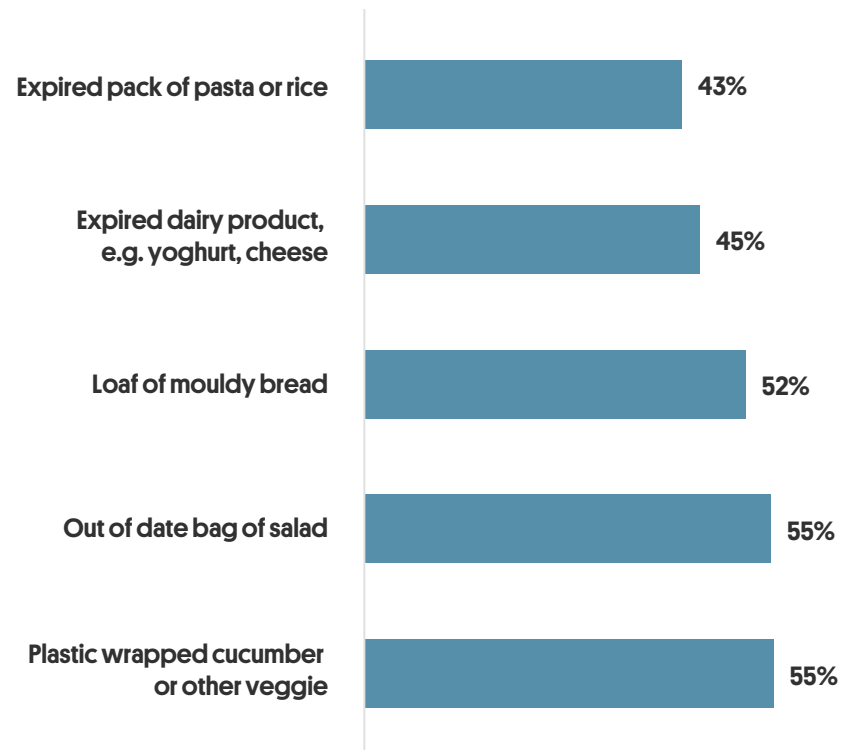
PROPORTION OF ITEMS DISPOSED OF BY GENERAL WASTE BIN OR RECYCLING BIN



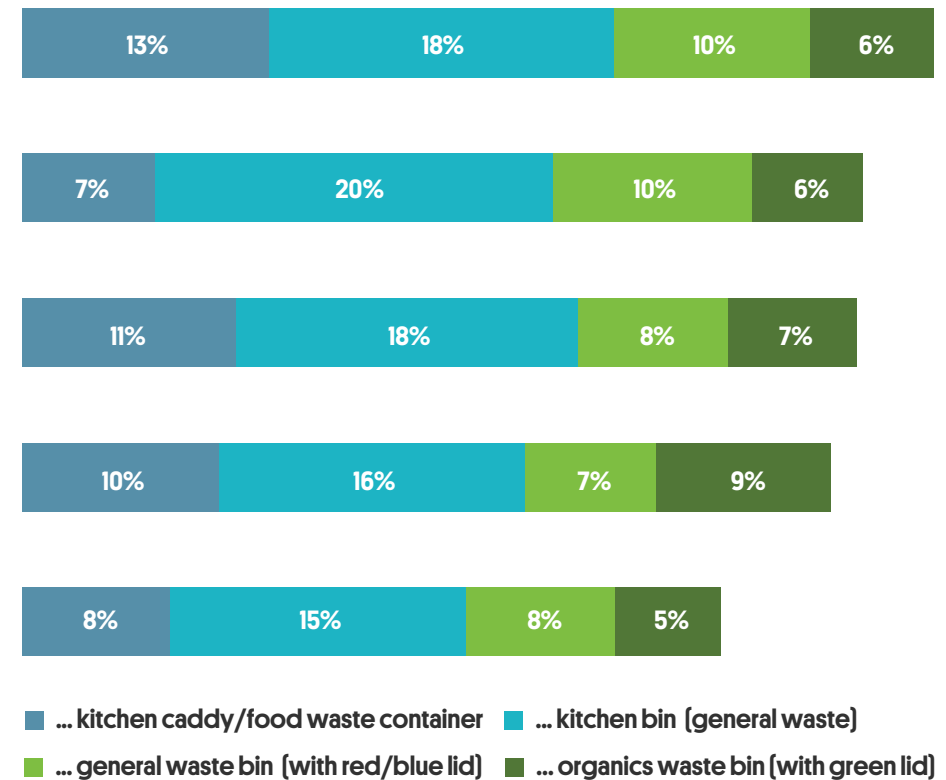
**Q12** How do you/your household usually dispose of the following items?  
Base [Total] n=500. The results were renormed to exclude the option "Doesn't apply to my household"

## Confusion is also evident in the variety of incorrect disposal methods for expired, mouldy and/or out of date food

### CORRECT DISPOSAL OF VARIOUS ITEMS - SEPARATE FOOD FROM PACKAGE ...then into green bin



### INCORRECT DISPOSAL – PLACE FOOD AND PACKET INTO ... the wrong place



**Q25** How do you/your household usually dispose of out of the following items when out of date/expired/mouldy?  
Base [Total] n=500 The results were renormed to exclude the option "Doesn't apply to my household"

## Those who do correctly dispose of their food waste are following council instructions or acknowledge it is good for the environment

For some items their council's advice is more evident, e.g. greasy cardboard pizza boxes [61%], used tissues [54%], garden waste [54%], used paper towels [53%].

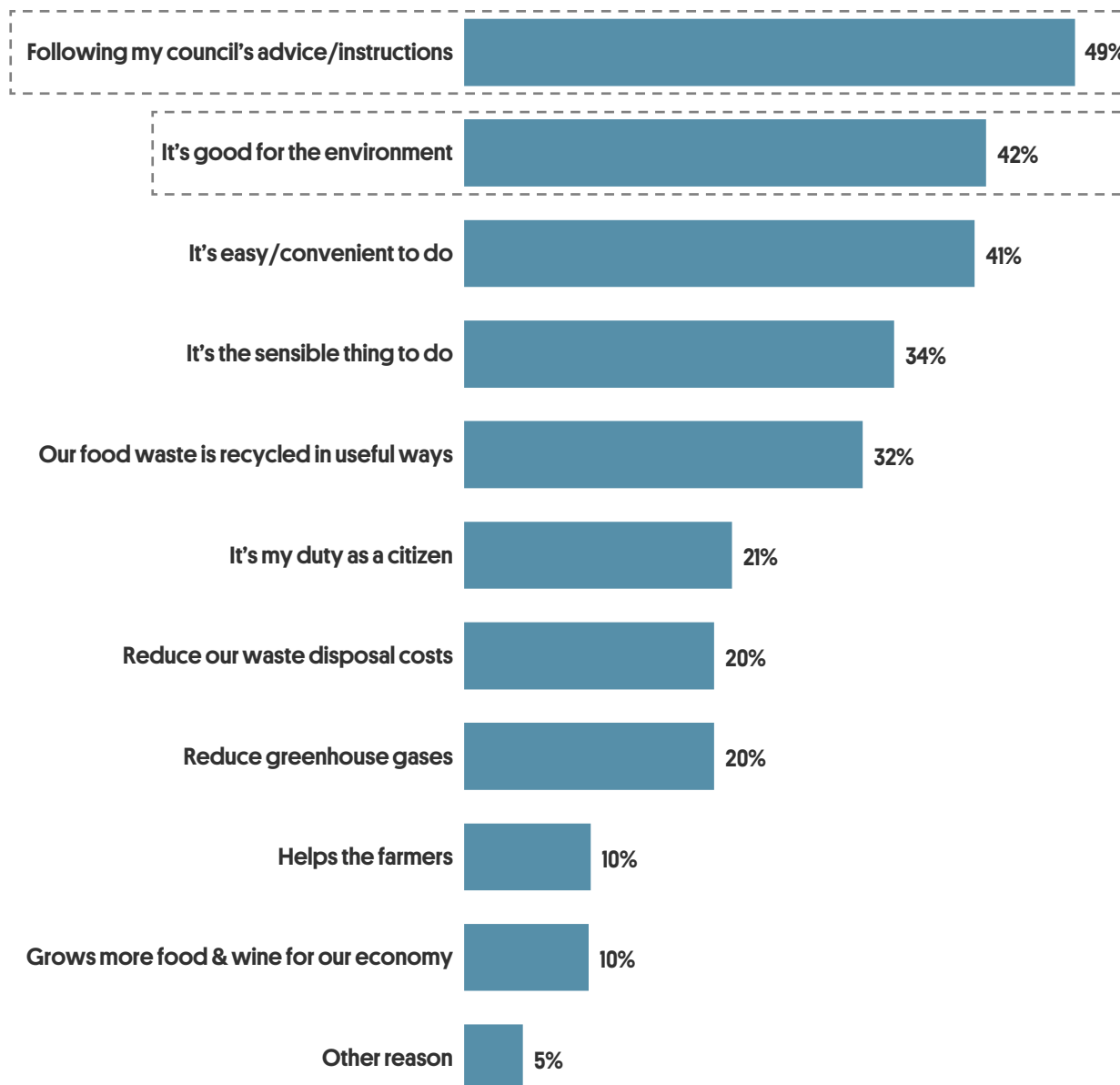
In other categories, this is lacking or less convincing, e.g. meats & fruit/veggie waste [43%], bones [44%], mouldy food waste or wooden cutlery [45%].

There are also people who are less certain [yet to be convinced] that some categories of food waste are good for the environment, e.g. meat 30%, mouldy food or garden waste 35%.

**Q13** Why do you/your household put the following into the kerbside organics bin?

Base: Dispose of at least one food item correctly n=466

### REASONS FOR DISPOSING ITEMS INTO ORGANICS BIN (AVERAGE)

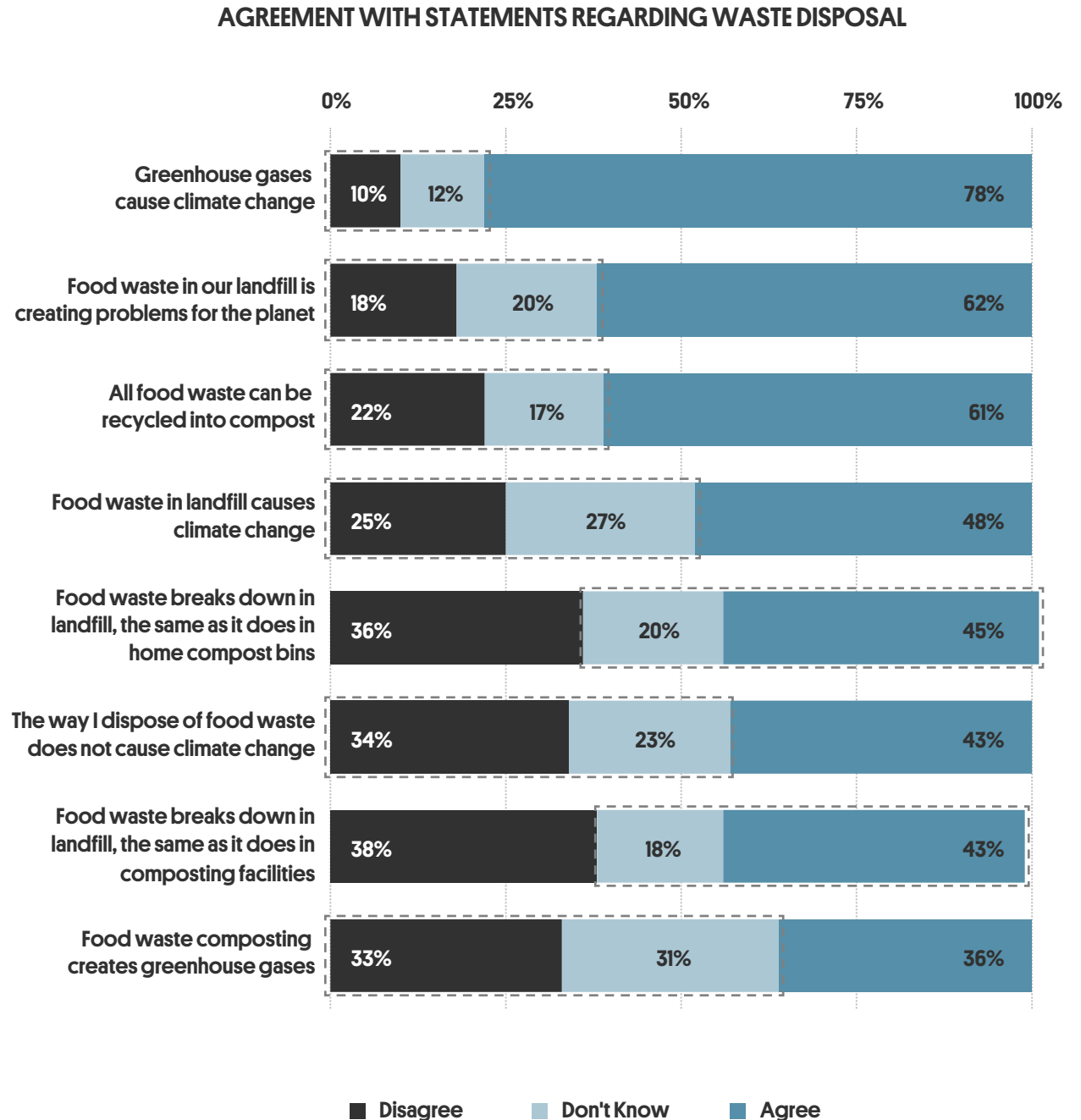


## Though many are unsure about **why** it is good for the environment

Males show higher agreement with all statements than females, except for **Food waste in our landfill is creating problems for the planet** which attracted the same agreement levels as the females.

In comparison to the males, females are more aware that food waste breaks down differently in landfill vs. compost bins and facilities.

**Q3** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base [Total] n=500



# Bin use knowledge and attitudes summary

## Self-assessments are high

Almost everyone with access to an organics waste bin thinks they understand what can be disposed of in their organics waste bin.

## Intentions are positive

Recycling food waste is seen as something that is important at both an individual and collective/ environmental level.

Despite acknowledging that it is good for the environment, many aren't aware of **why** it is good for the environment.

## Reality tells a different story

These self-assessments/positive intentions are not reflected in the amount of food waste being disposed of correctly.

Many cite inconvenience, the force of habit and a lack of knowledge as the main reasons for not disposing of food waste correctly.

SECTION 02

# Actions

How do we address the lack of knowledge and perceived inconvenience around proper food waste disposal?





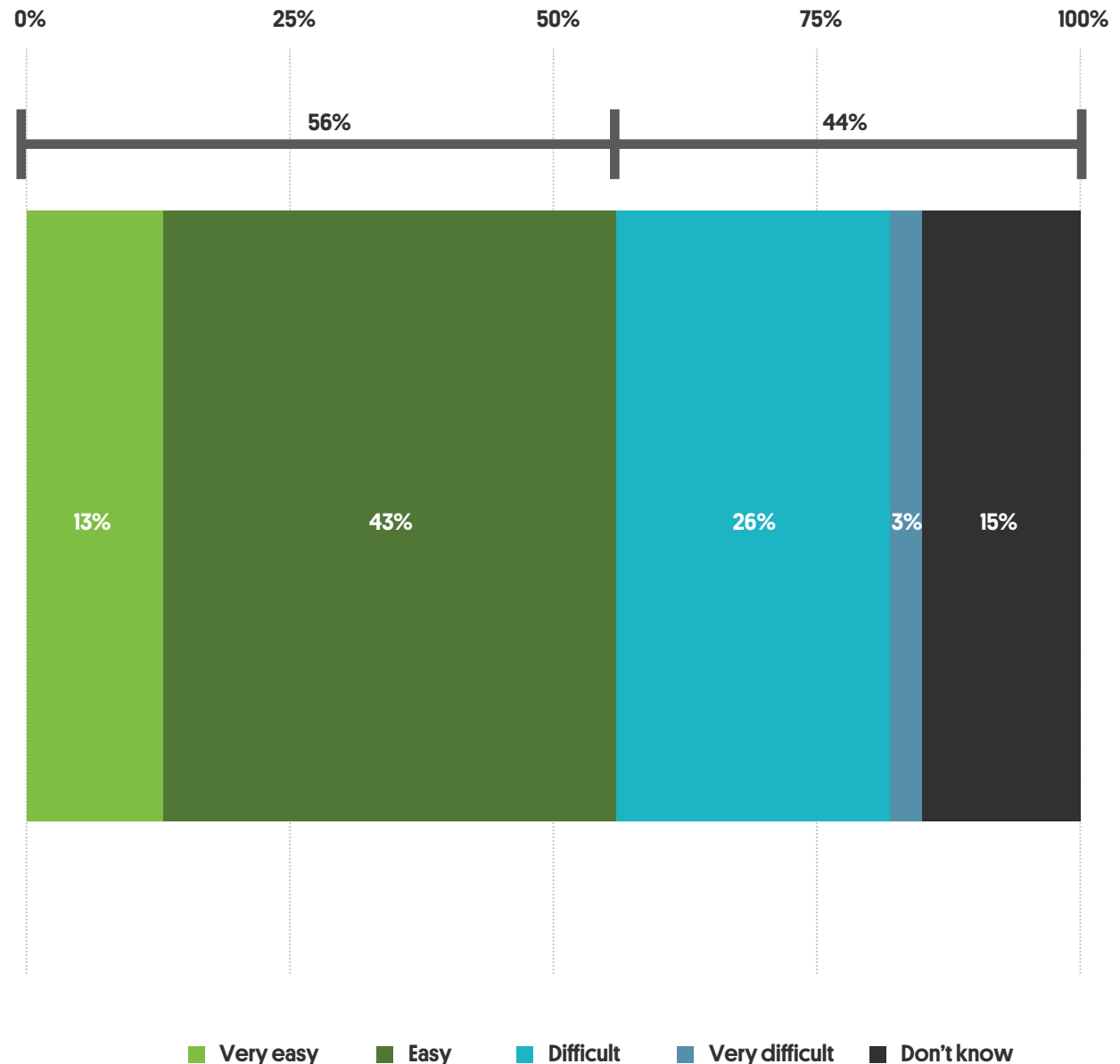
## Many believe that increasing their food waste recycling would not be easy

Those who already claim to recycle 75% or more of their food waste believe it will be easier to increase this than those who do not possess this existing habit/ behaviour.

Younger people (18 to 35 years) felt it would be harder for them to increase than those older.

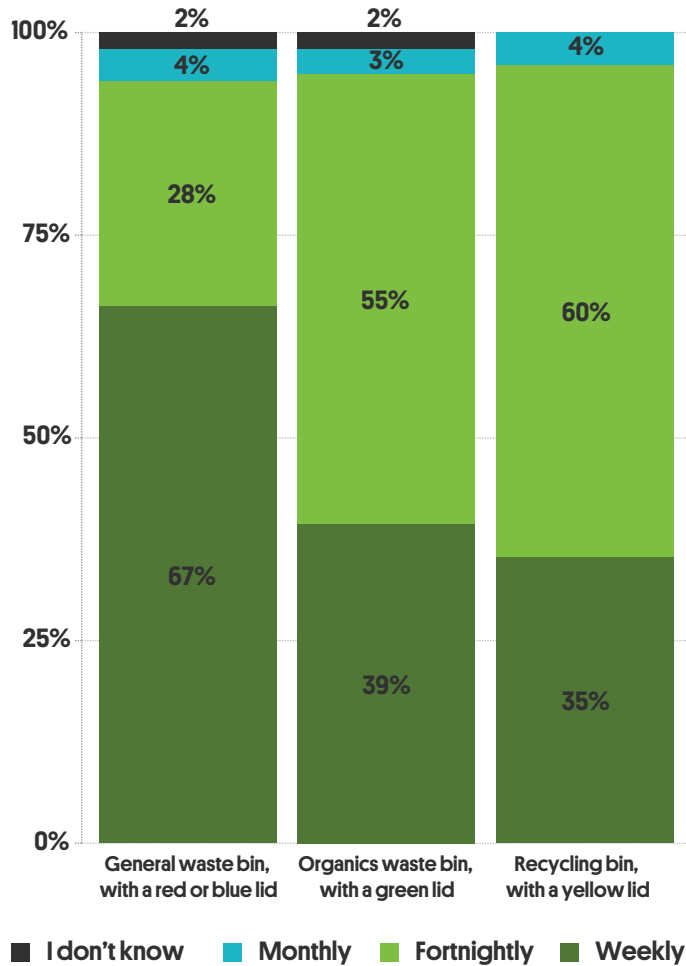
**Q8** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Increasing food waste recycling in my household would be difficult"? Base [Don't recycle all their food waste] n=323

PERCEIVED DIFFICULTY OF INCREASING FOOD WASTE RECYCLING

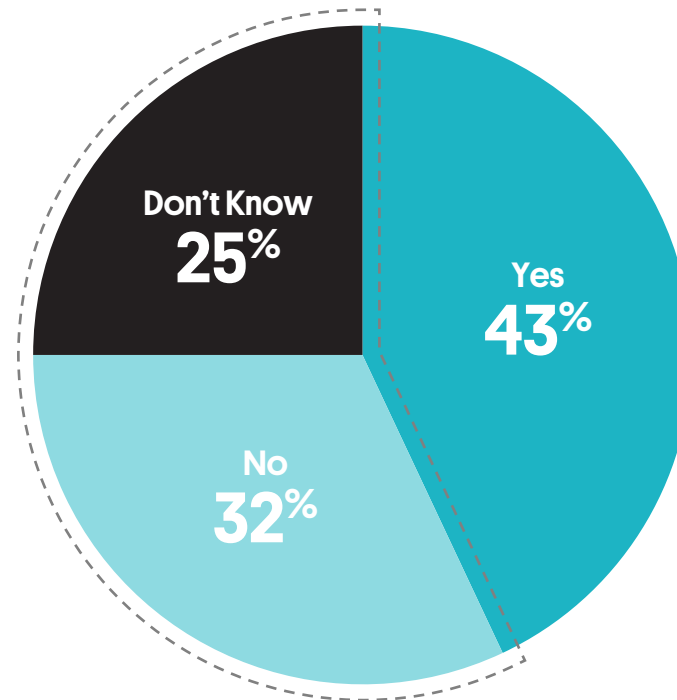


# Most believe the **current fortnightly collection for organic waste bins is ideal**. The majority do not support a change to current collection frequencies

IDEAL FREQUENCY OF HOUSEHOLD BIN COLLECTION



I WOULD RECYCLE MORE FOOD WASTE IF ORGANICS BIN WAS COLLECTED WEEKLY



**43% of people (who do not recycle all their organics) believe they will recycle more food waste if their **green organics bin** was collected weekly**

**Q11** Ideally, how frequently would you like your household bins collected? Base [Total] n=500

**Q7** If your general waste bin (red or blue lid) was collected fortnightly and your organics bin (green lid) was collected weekly, would you recycle more food waste? Base [Don't recycle all their food waste] n=323

# Statistical details

Those aged below 55 years were more likely to prefer more frequent collections for their green bins (50% would prefer weekly collections) than those aged above 55 years (where only 30% would prefer weekly).

There were no significant differences between the genders or different household types.

There was some evidence that those who already recycle 100% of their food waste do not support a change to organics bin collection frequency but higher proportions of those who recycle 75% or less of their food waste **would** support weekly green bin collections.

## Informing households on what can be recycled is key to assisting households to recycling more food waste

These requests for more information comprised 30% of the written suggestions for assisting households to recycle more food waste.

**Q6** What would assist you/your household to recycle all or more of your food waste? Base [don't recycle all of their food waste] n=323

### WHAT WOULD ASSIST YOU/YOUR HOUSEHOLD TO RECYCLE MORE FOOD WASTE?

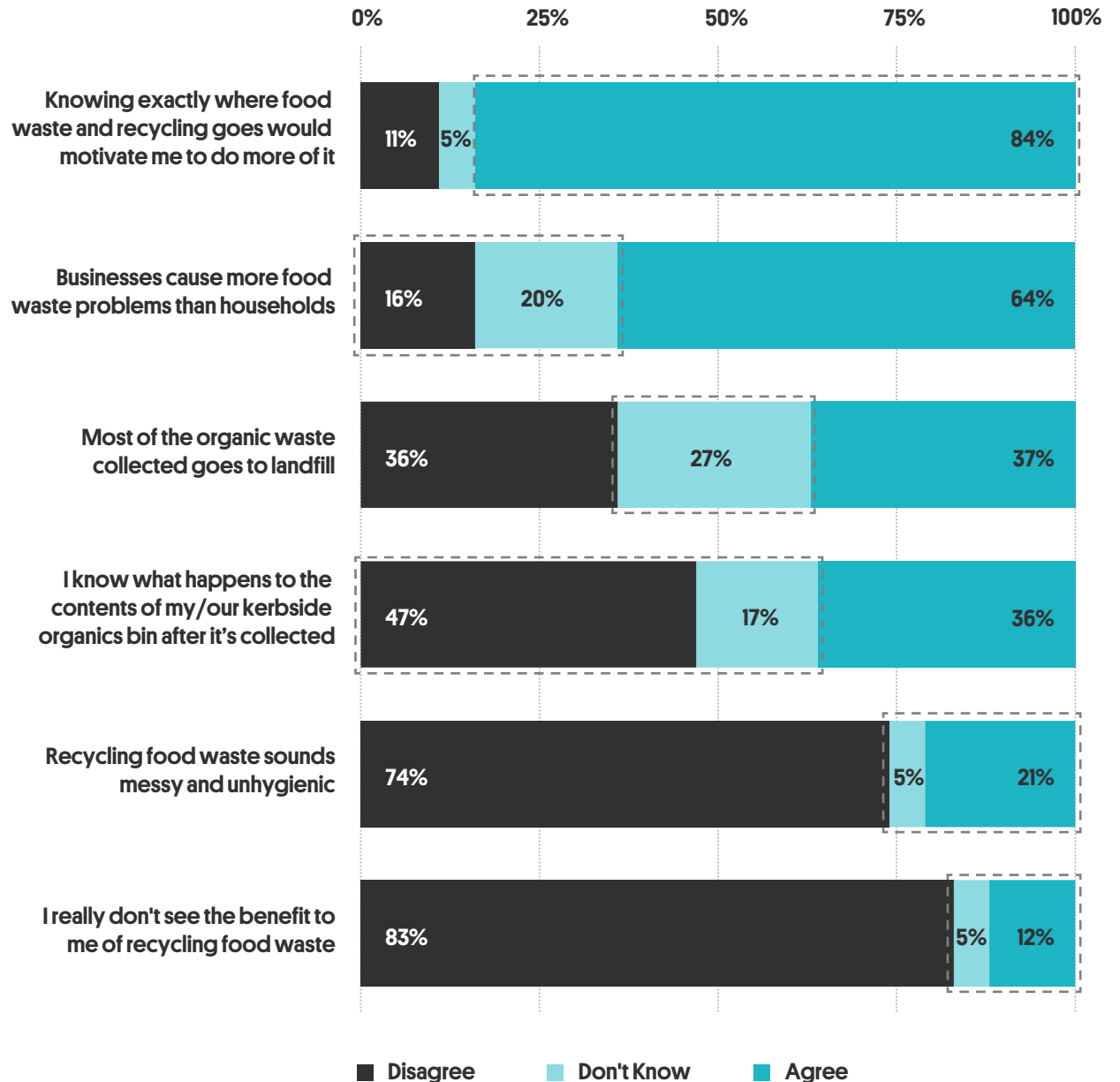
- “ Better **knowledge** of what can be recycled
- “ More **information** and support on how to be kinder to the planet and recycle or ethically dispose food waste
- “ **Knowledge**, and bio bags to place the waste in before putting into the green bin
- “ More **information** about what can be recycled, where it goes and what happens to it
- “ More updated **information**. Posters/magnets etc. of info. Pics of what goes where..... especially in teaching our children
- “ More **information** from my local council about recycling food waste efficiently and cost-effectively, may help
- “ **Knowing where it goes** and what happens to it.
- “ A complete list of **what goes where**.

## Information on the recycling process and its benefits would provide motivation for households to recycle

There is opportunity for reminding householders that they are **part of the problem** and their actions are important too.

**Q3** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base [Total] n=500

AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS REGARDING DISPOSING WASTE

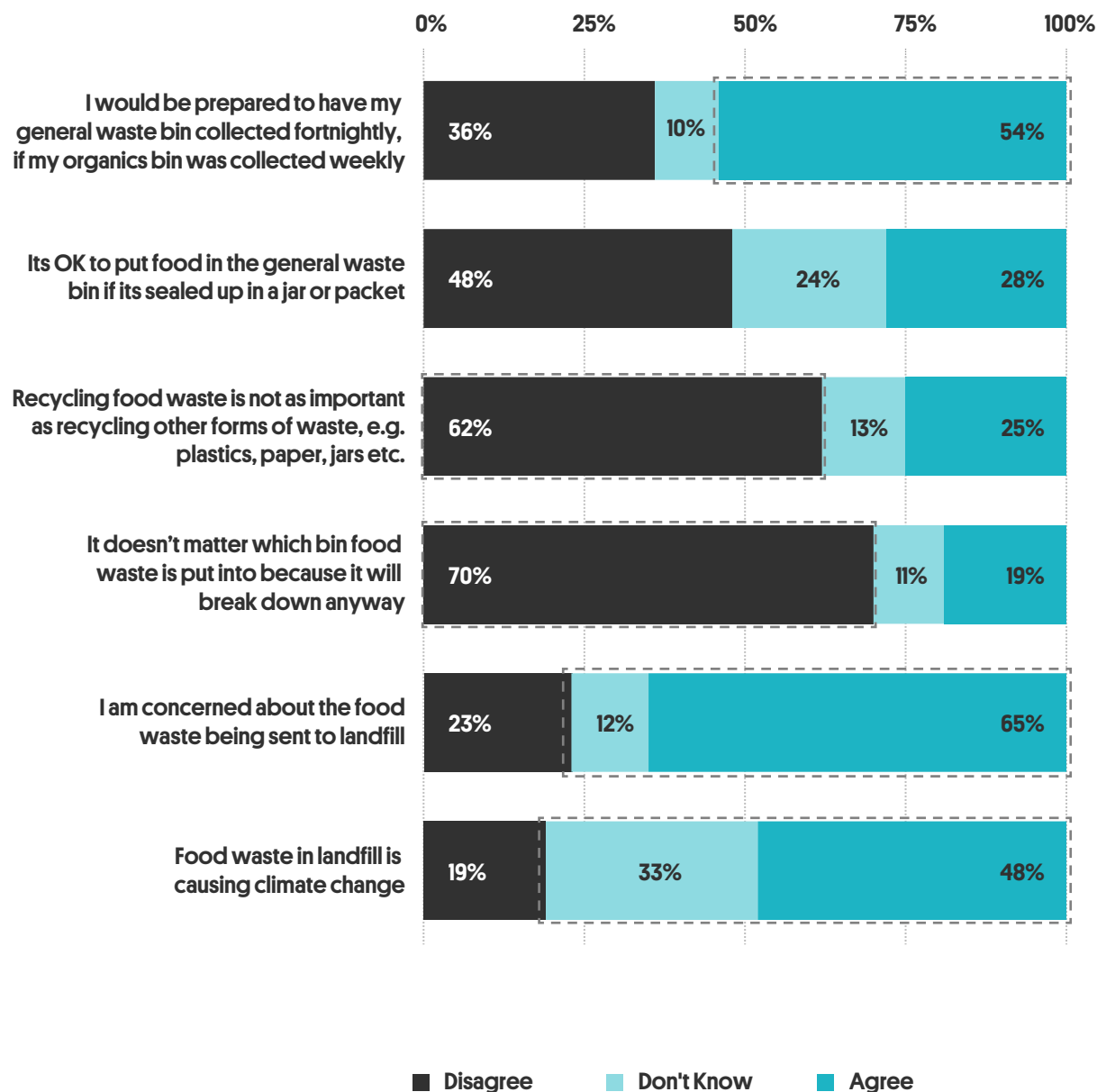


## Still quite a range of different opinions about these statements

The majority agrees that recycling food waste is as important as other forms of waste, that it matters how food waste is disposed, that there is cause for concern around food waste in landfill and it is causing climate change.

There is clear division on the topic of bin collection frequencies.

### AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS REGARDING ORGANIC BIN CONTAMINANTS



**Q27** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base [Total] n=500

# Actions summary

## Increasing food waste recycling won't be easy

Inconvenience (specifically a **lack of time and laziness**) is referred to as the biggest barrier for households to increase their amount of food waste recycling.

## Increasing collection frequency isn't the entire solution

**Lack of information** is an underlying issue that should be prioritised, with the possibility of an increase in collection frequency once this is addressed.

## What sort of info?

Information around **what sort of food waste items** (specifically meat/dairy and paper/wooden utensil products) **can be recycled** and **how to properly dispose of food waste** items is key to addressing the lack of knowledge in these areas.

Information around the **environmental benefits and the food waste recycling process** (including **how easy and important it is to do our part**) will provide motivation for households and this is **not new information** for the majority.



SECTION 03

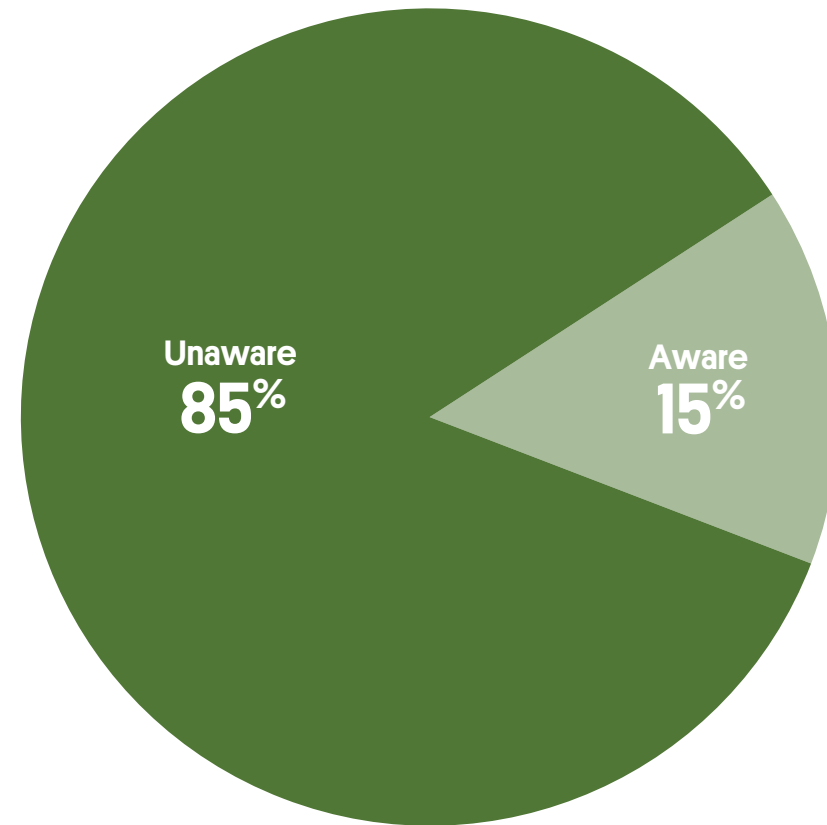
# Kitchen caddies

Are they being used? If not, why?

## Awareness of the term 'FOGO' is low

While low across all age groups, this increased as age decreased, e.g. 25% among those aged 18 to 35 and 8% or lower among those aged 65+.

AWARENESS OF THE TERM 'FOGO'



**S5** Have you heard of the term  
'FOGO' before? Base [Total] n=500



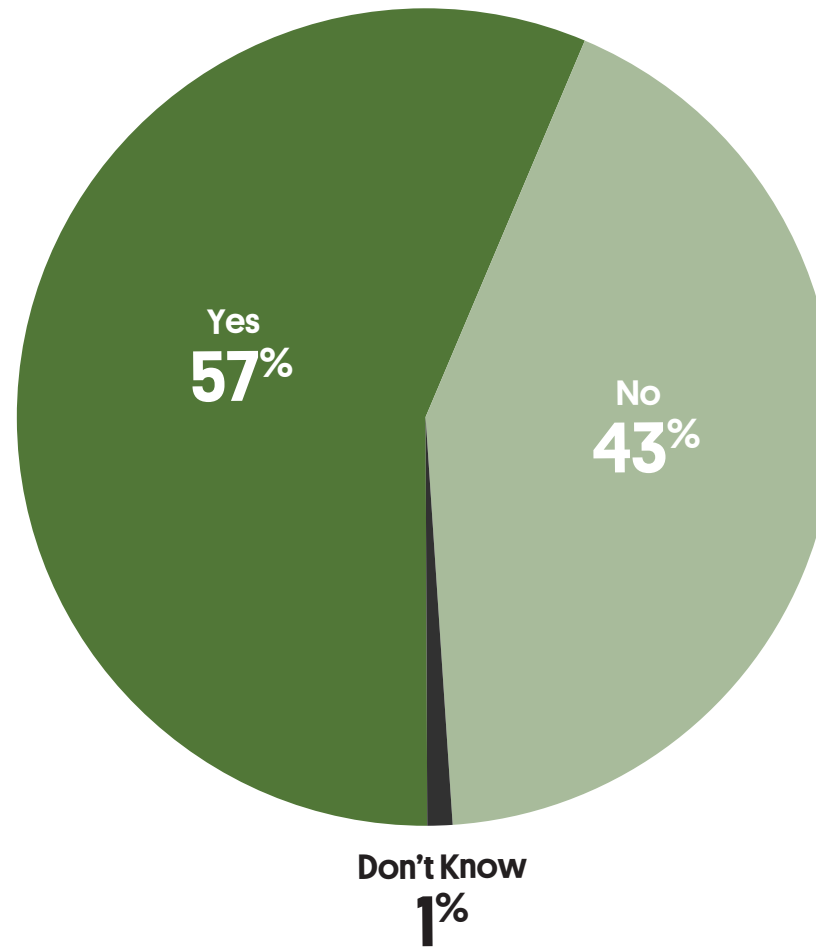
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## 3 out of 5 households have a kitchen caddy

Highest ownership was found among those aged 65+ [70%] and the lowest was in the 35 to 45 age group [50%].

Men claimed higher ownership [61%] than women [53%].

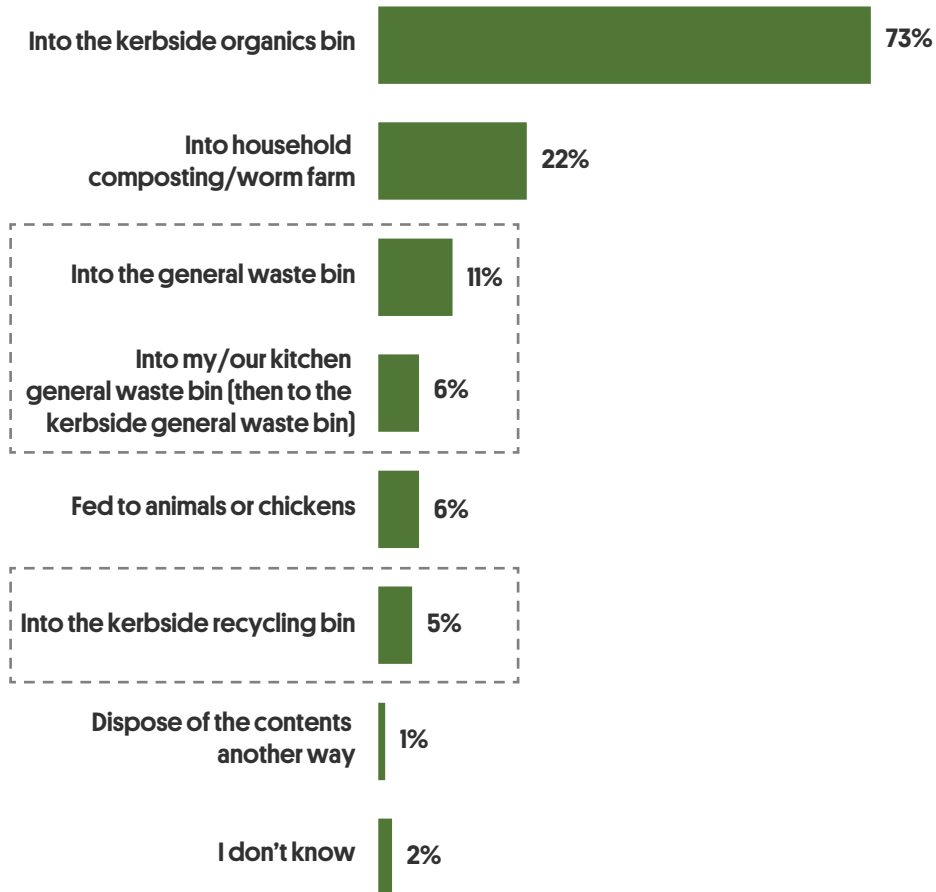
KITCHEN CADDY OWNERSHIP



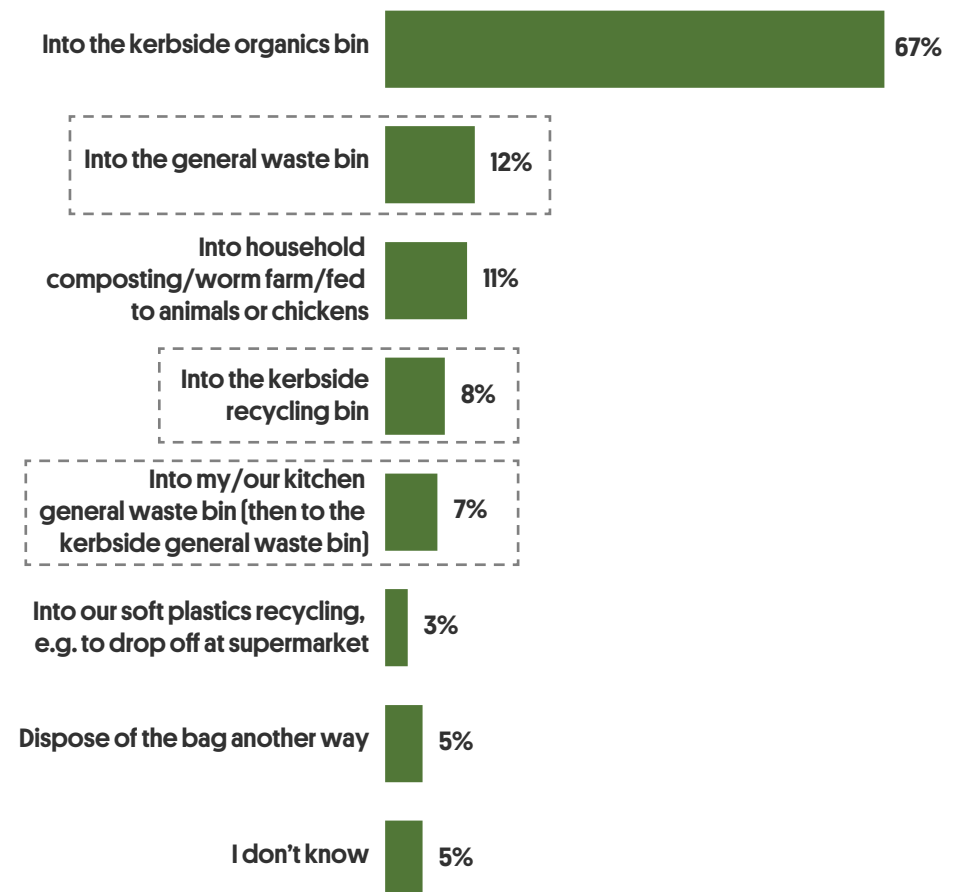
**Q14** Does your household use a kitchen caddy for food waste?'FOGO' before?  
Base [Total] n=500

# The majority of caddy users are disposing of their contents in the **organics bin or composting**, although some are still putting them in general waste & recycling bins

WHERE KITCHEN CADDY CONTENTS ARE DISPOSED



WHERE KITCHEN CADDY BAGS ARE DISPOSED

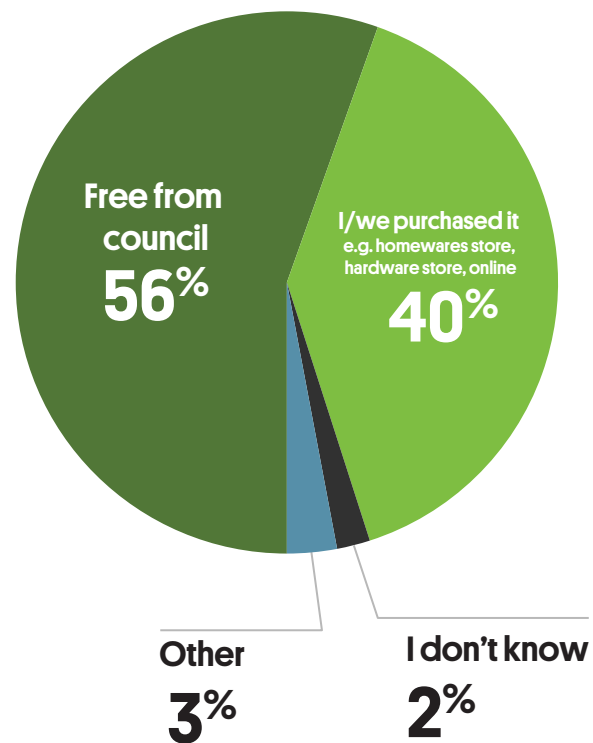


**Q20** Where do you/your household dispose of the contents [food waste] of your kitchen caddy?

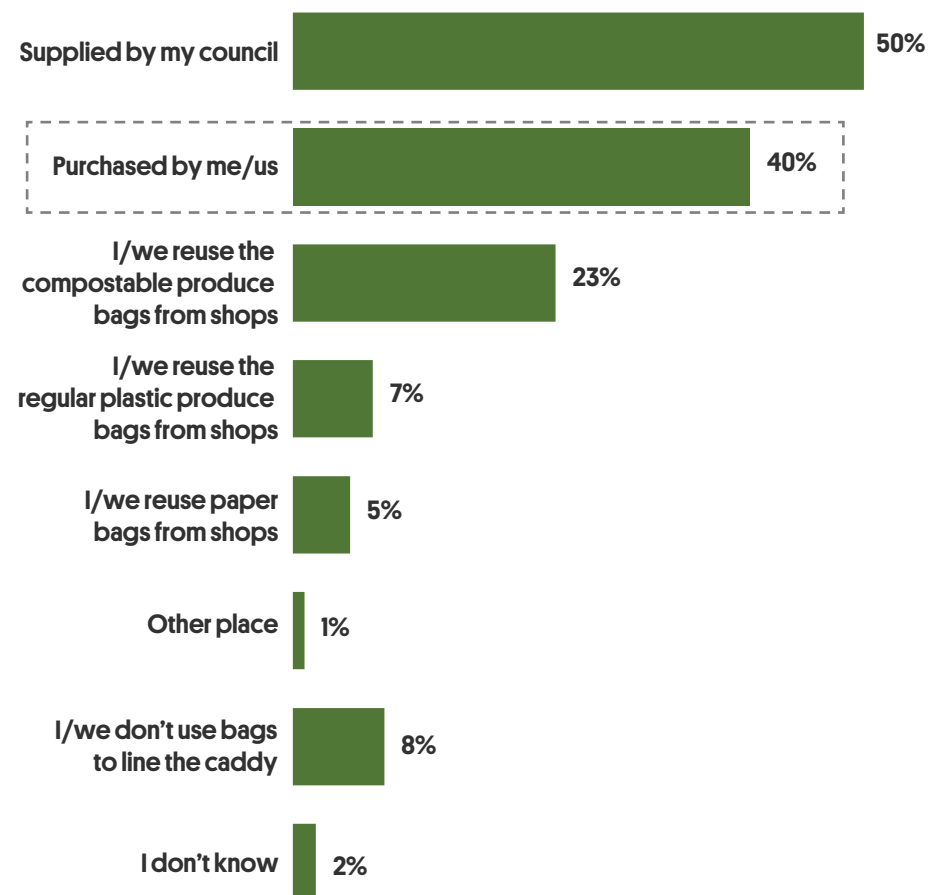
**Q21** Where do you/your household dispose of the bag inside your kitchen caddy? Base [Own a kitchen caddy] n=283

## Many kitchen caddy owners are purchasing their own kitchen caddies and bags

### WHERE KITCHEN CADDIES ARE SOURCED



### WHERE KITCHEN CADDY BAGS ARE SOURCED



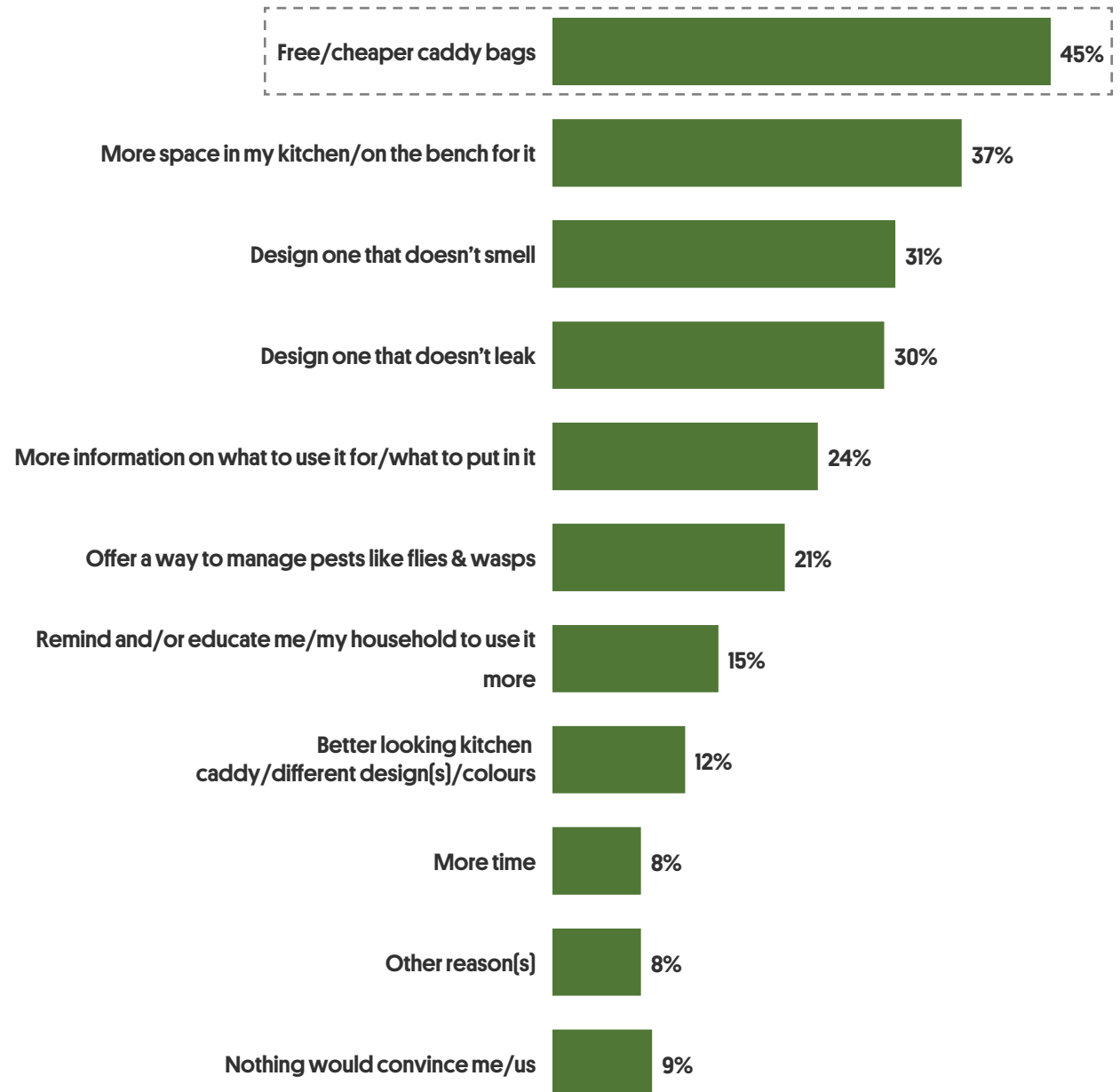
**Q15** Where did you/your household get your kitchen caddy?

**Q19** Where do you/your household get the kitchen caddy bags from? Base [Own a kitchen caddy] n=283

**Free caddy bags would entice existing caddy owners to use them more, along with more space, less odour and leaks**

**Q17** What would convince you/your household to put more of your food waste in the kitchen caddy?  
Base [Don't dispose of all food waste in kitchen caddy] n=149

#### WHAT WOULD CONVINCe HOUSEHOLDS TO PUT MORE WASTE IN KITCHEN CADDY



# Kitchen caddy summary

## Ownership and habits

A little over half possess a kitchen caddy. Many households are **sourcing their own** kitchen caddies, organic waste bins and compostable bags.

A minority of caddy owners are using the wrong waste bins for disposing their caddy contents and/or bags.

## Enticement

Being provided free **caddy/compostable bags** would not only convince caddy owners to recycle more but also entice non-owners to adopt kitchen caddies.

Making households **aware of free compostable bags** from their council and from their **supermarket** is important, along with **communications overcoming fears** associated with the use of caddies, e.g. odour, leakages, pests etc..

## Education

There is an opportunity to **educate** rejectors and current owners **on the benefits** (both personal and environmental) of food waste disposal through kitchen caddies.

This would help entice rejectors to use a kitchen caddy and also help address the improper disposal of contents and bags by caddy owners.

# Focus groups

N=32 participants

Two behaviours:

- No food waste diversion (all food waste into general waste bin)
- Part food waste recyclers (divert 25% to 75% of food waste)

## Summary of focus group findings

There are significant differences between the knowledge and behaviours of people who do, and who do not, recycle their food waste.

People who do not recycle any food waste [i.e. it goes straight into their general waste bins] are unaware of many of the facts surrounding food waste, climate change, threats to food availability, the waste management journey, costs of waste management etc.

The issue of food waste in landfill is not at the forefront of people's minds but when they do focus on it, receive thought-provoking information and understand the consequences of their waste-related actions, they are motivated to change.

People who recycle part of their food waste are more informed, or peripherally aware of these facts but have not considered their role in creating problems or their part in avoiding/remediating future issues.

Both types of people [with exceptions among individuals] are willing to change their behaviour based on new knowledge

surrounding this topic and the demonstration of the link between their actions today and consequences in the future.

In discussing the process of generating food waste, it was apparent that education is needed around what this constitutes, i.e. explain that it involves any organics not consumed, from the beginning to the end of the meal routine.

There are opportunities to work with food retailers to reduce food waste, e.g. longer use by dates on online purchases, smaller pack/portion sizes.

There are opportunities to work with food manufacturers and packaging developers, i.e. disposal instructions, using all the food contained in packs.

It was obvious that many people did not possess knowledge of the green bin/general waste to landfill journey, beyond their kerbside. When aspects of these were explained, the information motivated them to re-think their current behaviour and determination to change current actions.



“

I put all those waste into a small bin which I keep on the kitchen countertop. Later, all that just goes into the red bin .... outside

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“

We had no food waste. It was just the peels from the veggies I peeled

---

“

Food scraps etc. are buried under the soil then compacted down. I believe this is then broken down in the soil

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“

Peelings in our compost, meat trimmings wrapped and into the bin, **there are no food scraps...** we only prepare what we're going to eat

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“

It is the **BUSINESSES** who create food waste en masse in large amounts who should be more proactive about either donating that to charity first, or having specific skip bins for it

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**Government  
of South Australia**

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