

60 PER CENT OF SINGAPOREAN HOUSEHOLDS RECYCLE REGULARLY

MEWR and NEA Household Recycling Surveys found that convenience is key to recycling behaviour, and there is room for more residents to recycle right

Singapore, 29 April 2019 – Two recent household recycling surveys conducted by the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) and the National Environment Agency (NEA) found that around 60 per cent of Singapore households are recycling regularly. The most common channel used for recycling was the blue recycling bins, with 56 per cent of those recycling regularly using the blue bins at least once a week. Convenience was an important enabling factor for recycling. Respondents were generally capable of identifying recyclable items, but had difficulty identifying contaminants and non-recyclables.

2 The two surveys conducted between June 2018 and February 2019 covered different aspects of household recycling. NEA's *Customer Satisfaction Survey on Public Waste Collection Scheme 2018* is a biennial survey, and focuses more broadly on households' experiences with the recycling collection services and infrastructure at their homes. MEWR's *Survey on Household Recycling Behaviours, Attitudes and Knowledge* was commissioned specially for the Year Towards Zero Waste, and complements NEA's survey by delving deeper into specific areas of interest. MEWR and NEA surveyed 2,003 and 3,445 randomly selected Singapore households respectively, via face-to-face interviews.

Highlights of survey findings

National Archives of Singapore

3 The key results are attached in the **Annexes**. The topline findings are as follows:

- a. **6 in 10 Singaporean households recycle regularly** — Within this group of regular recyclers, the top items recycled were paper materials such as newspapers, magazines, junk mail, brochures and writing paper. It is worth noting that while these items are suitable for the blue recycling bin, they are vulnerable to contamination by food and liquids. It is therefore important to remind Singaporeans to ensure their recyclables are clean and free of food and liquids before depositing them in the blue recycling bins.

Another category of top items which were regularly recycled are clothes, shoes and bags. These are actually not suitable for the blue recycling bins [see para 3c].

Yet another category of top items which were regularly recycled are plastic drink bottles, aluminium cans and glass beer/wine bottles. While these items can be recycled, they should be emptied and rinsed clean wherever possible. (The percentages of the top items recycled by households can be found in **Annex A**).

- b. **Convenience was the most common reason for recycling regularly** — MEWR's survey found that convenience was one of the most commonly cited reasons by Singaporeans for recycling regularly. In addition, encouragement by the Government, concerns about being "wasteful", and the feeling that one should match others' recycling efforts were also important motivators of recycling. NEA's survey found that recycling was "second nature" to households which recycled regularly and came more naturally as part of their daily routine.

The most common reason for not recycling cited by respondents was that they had too few items to recycle. Other common reasons given were being too busy or tired, and not having enough space to accumulate recyclables in the home. Most of these reasons are also related to the convenience factor. Yet another reason given was a lack of consideration about recycling^[1].

Barriers cited by households who did not recycle regularly suggest that recycling was perceived as inconvenient and secondary in their daily routine. Hence, helping Singaporeans to see that recycling is easy and helping with habit formation are important in improving Singapore's household recycling rate.

- c. **Recycling knowledge can be improved** — Both surveys found that Singaporeans were generally capable of identifying recyclable items. They were able to correctly classify an average of 7 out of 10 surveyed items as recyclables or non-recyclables.

However, a significant proportion mistakenly classified as recyclables, items which should either be disposed of or be treated as reusables. These include contaminants such as soiled paper food packaging, tissue paper and Styrofoam which should be disposed of as general waste; as well as soft toys, bags and shoes which are reusables and not suitable for recycling. The

latter should be donated, if in good condition, instead of being recycled. These wrongly recycled items contribute to the high contamination rate of the recyclables collected from the blue recycling bins. (The percentages for each of the items surveyed can be found in **Annexes B and C**).

In addition, the surveys found that around 60 per cent of Singaporeans mistakenly thought that recyclables had to be sorted by type before being deposited into the blue recycling bins or recycling chutes. This correlates with another finding that 43 per cent of Singaporeans were also unaware that recyclables deposited into the blue recycling bins were sorted at Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) after being collected. There is no need to pre-sort items that are deposited into the blue recycling bins, because the contents of the blue recycling bins will be transported to the MRF where the sorting takes place.

Efforts to get everyone to recycle more and recycle right

4 MEWR and NEA are committed to encourage and make recycling more convenient for Singapore households. To further enhance recycling infrastructure, all new public housing developments launched since 2014 have been fitted with dual chutes for refuse and recyclables respectively. This requirement has also been extended to buildings taller than four storeys in all new non-landed private residential developments since 1 April 2018. The recycling chutes will make recycling as accessible as general waste disposal for apartment dwellers, and as convenient as for those living in landed homes.

5 Pilot trials to facilitate more in-home recycling in residential households are also in the pipeline, to ease recycling into Singaporeans' daily routine and help cultivate stronger habits of recycling. We are also refreshing the design of the blue recycling bin labels to improve the presentation of information on recycling, to help more people recycle right.

6 To increase awareness on recycling, NEA also provides information on how and what to recycle, as well as the locations of the nearest recycling bins and recyclables collection points, through its website, social media and the myENV mobile app.

7 In conjunction with the #RecycleRight movement which was launched early this year, MEWR and NEA will continue to work with partners to educate the public on how to recycle in the right way. The #RecycleRight movement seeks to improve awareness of:

(i) what can go into the blue recycling bin; and (ii) the need to ensure that recyclables are dry, and free of food and liquids. A 'Towards Zero Waste Grant' has been set up to support ground-up initiatives that drive waste reduction and recycling, or encourage households to recycle more and/or recycle right. The grant is open to individuals, interest groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), grassroots organisations and corporations. More information is available under the Grants and Awards section of the NEA website: www.nea.gov.sg.

- End -

[1] Respondents who chose this option were either unaware of recycling in general, or did not pay much attention to recycling in their daily routines (even if they were aware of recycling).

ANNEX A








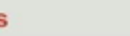
National Archives of Singapore

MEWR Household Recycling Survey

Top misconceptions on what can be recycled

Not recyclable 		% who thought these can be recycled
 Soiled paper food packaging 		67%
 Glass Cookware or Porcelain/Ceramics		62%
 Plastic Toys 		56%
 Tissue paper 		49%
 Styrofoam 		36%

Top items recycled by households

Items	% who regularly recycled these items	To note
 Newspapers, magazines, junk mail, brochures	60%	 Can be placed in blue recycling bins or recycling chutes.
 Paper stationery e.g. A4 paper, writing paper	42%	
 Cardboard	39%	
 Clothes	56%	DO NOT PLACE IN BLUE RECYCLING BINS OR RECYCLING CHUTES. Donate if in good condition. Otherwise, throw in trash bin.
 Shoes and bags	50%	 Ensure these are DRY AND FREE OF FOOD AND LIQUIDS. EMPTY AND RINSE if necessary.
 Plastic drink bottles	50%	
 Plastic food containers	39%	
 Aluminium drink can	38%	
 Glass beer/wine bottles	30%	

ANNEX B

Percentage of Singaporeans Who Correctly Identified Recyclable Items and Non-
Recyclable Items

Recyclable Items

No.	Item	Percentage of respondents who CORRECTLY believe that item is recyclable
1. 2.	Newspapers, magazines, junk mail, or brochures	95%
1. 2.	Plastic drink bottles	91%
1. 2.	Paper stationery (e.g. A4 paper, writing paper)	89%
1. 2.	Aluminium drink cans	89%
1. 2.	Other kinds of cardboard	84%
1. 2.	Beer/wine bottles	83%
1. 2.	Plastic food containers	79%
1. 2.	Steel/tin cans	79%
1. 2.	Glass containers (e.g. sauce/oil bottles, jam jars)	78%
1. 2.	Plastic bags (disposable or reusable)	77%
1. 2.	Plastic containers (e.g. shampoo, detergent)	74%

1. 2.	Used beverage cartons (e.g. milk/drink cartons)	74%
1. 2.	Plastic wrapping for groceries	70%
1. 2.	Metal pots or pans	64%
1. 2.	Plastic cartons (e.g. egg container)	62%

Non-Recyclable Items

No.	Item	Percentage of respondents who CORRECTLY believe that item is NOT recyclable
1. 2.	Styrofoam	64%
1. 2.	Melamine food utensils	51%
1. 2.	Tissue paper (used or unused)	51%
1. 2.	Plastic toys	44%
1. 2.	Glass cookware or porcelain/ceramics	38%
1. 2.	Soiled paper food packaging	33%
1. 2.	Shoes and bags	18%
1. 2.	Clothing	13%

Source: MEWR's Survey on Household Recycling Behaviours, Attitudes and Knowledge 2018

ANNEX C

Percentage of Singaporeans Who Correctly Identified Items for the Blue Recycling Bins

Items that CAN be Deposited in the Blue Recycling Bins

No.	Item	Percentage of respondents who CORRECTLY identified that item CAN be deposited in the blue recycling bins
1. 2.	Empty mineral water container	94%
1. 2.	Rinsed beverage carton (e.g. milk carton)	80%
1. 2.	Glass wine bottle	64%

Items that SHOULD NOT be Deposited in the Blue Recycling Bins

No.	Item	Percentage of respondents who CORRECTLY believe that item SHOULD NOT be deposited in the blue recycling bins
1. 2.	Plastic food container with leftover food	84%
1. 2.	*Lightbulb	70%
1. 2.	**Standing fan	69%
1. 2.	Used tissue paper	67%
1. 2.	Porcelain/ Ceramic plate	66%
1. 2.	Styrofoam disposables	53%

Source: NEA's Customer Satisfaction Survey on Public Waste Collection Scheme (2018)

*For light bulbs, public can dispose them via the IKEA Light Bulb Recycling Programme at IKEA's Alexandra and Tampines stores, and the Threecubes Voluntary Lamp Recycling Programme, located at Siglap Centre. More information can be found at this link: <https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/waste-management/3r-programmes-and-resources/e-waste-management/where-to-recycle-e-waste>.

**Standing fans are considered bulky items. For the removal of bulky item(s), HDB residents may contact their Town Council for more details. For private housing estate residents, please contact the public waste collector (PWCs) serving your estate. More information can be found at this link: <https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/waste-management/waste-disposal/bulk-item-disposal-disposal-of-garden-wastes-and-dead-pets>.