Attitudes to waste and recycling in Great Britain, 2011
Executive Summary

This report focuses on attitudes towards waste and recycling in Great Britain. Are households happy with their waste services? How do they feel about the trend towards Alternate Weekly Collections (AWC), or the introduction of food waste collections? Set against a backdrop of heated debate, with a string of vocal commentators ready to lambast any local authority judged to be failing residents on this fundamental service, what do the public really think?

Methodology

The results are based on an online survey of 2,019 adults in Great Britain aged 18+. The survey was designed and commissioned by Icaro Consulting, with survey fieldwork undertaken by ICM Research from 2nd – 4th September 2011. Quotas were set (by gender, age, region and working status) to ensure a representative spread of respondents that matches the known profile of the population.

Key findings

1 Waste services and collection frequencies

The survey demonstrates that almost half (46%) of all households now have a fortnightly collection of rubbish, close to three in five (59%) have a fortnightly collection of recycling, and half (50%) have a food waste collection. The most common ‘collection combination’ is fortnightly rubbish, fortnightly recycling and a food waste collection (serving 19% of households), closely followed by fortnightly rubbish/recycling but with no food collection (16%).

2 Overall satisfaction

Almost eight in 10 households (78%) are satisfied with their waste collections, comprising one in three (33%) who are ‘very satisfied’ and 45% who are ‘fairly satisfied’.

Fortnightly rubbish collections appear to have a small impact on levels of satisfaction, with 74% of households with a fortnightly collection satisfied, compared to 83% with a weekly collection. However, two other factors – living in a flat and social/private renting – have a more pronounced impact, with satisfaction falling to 69% among both groups. Levels of satisfaction are, by contrast, not influenced by food waste collections.
3 Problems experienced

A minority of households report a ‘serious problem’ as a result of their waste collections. Most frequently identified – by 14% of households – is rubbish dumping / fly tipping, followed by a lack of bin capacity (13%), flies (11%) and smells (10%). Problems with vermin (e.g. rats, foxes) or the council refusing to take rubbish/recycling away are reported by fewer households (6% and 8%, respectively).

Looking beneath the headline results in terms of which households are reporting serious problems (and, in particular, whether they are more likely to have AWC), the survey finds that – for most of the common problems – there appears to be no link with collection frequency. For example, households with fortnightly rubbish collections are no more likely than their weekly counterparts to report a ‘serious problem’ with vermin, fly tipping, lack of bin capacity or the council refusing to take rubbish away. These problems are actually more closely associated with other factors, namely high concentrations of flats and areas with higher levels of social and private renting.

However, there are two notable exceptions – smells and flies – which are associated with fortnightly waste collections. For example, 14% of those with a fortnightly rubbish collection cite smells as a serious problem compared to 6% with weekly collections. Likewise, a similar proportion with a fortnightly rubbish collection (13%) say that flies are a serious problem, compared to 7% with a weekly collection. The presence or absence of food waste collections – and in particular the frequency of these collections – appears to also play a role. Fortnightly food waste collections potentially exacerbate the problem of smells and flies for some households, which is not true of weekly food waste collections.

Focusing on scheme design in relation to flats (and social/private rented accommodation more broadly), as well as ensuring that food waste collections are working in such a way as to reduce problems (rather than accentuate them), would therefore both appear more pressing priorities than a focus solely on the frequency of rubbish collections.

4 Measuring performance: A Scorecard approach

In asking residents to give their recycling and food waste collections a ‘mark out of 10’, the survey establishes a Performance Scorecard that can be used to pinpoint, track and compare which aspects of these services are performing well or poorly. For example:

- Households give their recycling service, overall, an average score of 7.4 out of 10.
- Specific aspects of the service are performing well, such as the reliability of collections (7.9 out of 10), making recycling simple and easy (7.1) and leaving the street clean after collections (7.1). In contrast, two aspects are performing poorly – feedback to residents (4.4), and providing information on where to buy recycled products (3.9).
- Contrary to their ‘slop bucket’ tag, households award their food waste collection, overall, a score of 7.5 out of 10.
- Three aspects stand out for their high performance – the reliability of collections (7.8), leaving the street clean after collections (7.3), and the frequency of collection (7.2). However, there are areas that some councils need to work harder at – with the in-home food caddy (6.6), cleanliness of the outside bin after collection (5.9) and the availability of biodegradable bags (5.8) all receiving lower scores. The lowest performing aspect, once again, is feedback to residents (4.4).

The survey finds that scores for recycling do not vary according to collection frequency (i.e. those with fortnightly recycling collections rate their service just as highly as those with weekly
collections). However, collection frequency is a more critical factor for food waste collections. Weekly collections achieve a higher overall score than fortnightly collections (7.9/10 vs. 6.9/10), while separate collections also typically achieve higher ratings than mixed food and garden waste collections.

5 Reactions to policy ideas

- Two in three (67%) agree with the statement “the Government should mandate that all local authorities must provide residents with a weekly collection of rubbish”, and support for this stance is highest among those who still have a weekly service. Therefore, while the survey suggests that fortnightly rubbish collections are not causing serious problems for households, it nonetheless also demonstrates that – when asked outright – weekly is the frequency of choice for many.

- The rationale that AWC encourages more recycling is far from universally accepted by the public. While close to two in five (39%) agree with the statement “fortnightly rubbish collections benefit the environment by encouraging greater recycling”, a similar proportion (34%) disagree.

- A Pay As You Throw (PAYT) approach to waste collection divides the public – with a large proportion (40%) in agreement with the principle, in contrast to a similar proportion (37%) who disagree.

- Almost two in three (63%) agree that financial rewards for recycling are a good idea. However, around one in six (17%) disagree and a further one in five (20%) neither agree nor disagree.

Views towards the four policies vary little according to political affiliation, with intending voters of each of the main political parties adopting largely similar positions on these issues.

6 Attitudes to new waste treatment facilities

A strong majority consider a range of waste treatment options to be acceptable, including Anaerobic Digestion (87%), Mechanical Treatment (80%) and Energy from Waste (75%). Only for the latter option does the survey detect a notable level of opposition (15%).

Almost three quarters (72%) agree that communities that have new waste facilities should receive some form of recognition, with a strong preference for personal benefits such as discounts on Council Tax and energy bills.
Introduction

Have waste collections always been this controversial? Somewhere along the line the relatively simple act of collecting unwanted ‘stuff’ turned into political dynamite, led by a range of vocal commentators. Whether the focus has been on ‘slop buckets’, microchips in bins or council ‘bin spies’, the topic of waste has occupied an unusually large number of media column inches. As a result, Doretta Cocks, of the Campaign for Weekly Waste Collection, is probably the most quoted individual in the country on this particular subject.

There can be little doubt that waste collections have changed over the past 10 years, with impressive increases in recycling rates and a major shift towards ‘Alternate Weekly Collections’ (AWC). According to the Local Government Group, of the 348 waste collection authorities in England and Wales a total of 195 operate some form of AWC, while 153 continue to operate a weekly collection of residual waste. Recycling targets and financial considerations have played a large role in driving this shift. AWC appears to boost levels of recycling, with nine of the top 10 recycling councils in the country operating AWC (and the 10th offering fortnightly residual waste collection with a weekly food collection). Diverting waste from landfill in turn saves money since it currently costs councils £56 per tonne to send waste to landfill (a figure that will rise to £80 per tonne by 2014/15).

Another major change to services has been the introduction of food waste collections. While they are a key plank in policies designed to divert biodegradable waste from landfill and provide a source of renewable energy, they have been characterised in certain quarters as the ‘slop bucket’ service.

With the election of the new Coalition Government, hopes were high among advocates of weekly collections that Eric Pickles, one of the most outspoken Coalition ministers on the subject, would resurrect the weekly rubbish collection. Even though Defra’s Review of the Waste Strategy provided something of a setback by leaving collection frequency to the discretion of local authorities, DCLG’s recent announcement of a £250 million ‘Weekly Collections Support Scheme’ makes a clear statement of intent.

Amongst all of this heated and politically charged debate, what do the public think about all of this? Are AWC systems reviled or acceptable? Does the oft-cited counter argument, that it is all about the quality of the service not the frequency, really ring true? And, on food waste collections, is it true – as recent research has suggested – that the overwhelming majority of people who have food waste bins value this addition? The views of households in Great Britain towards these issues (and others) is the subject of this report.

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1 A term that covers a wide range of collection combinations, with a common thread of a fortnightly collection of rubbish
2 Briefing on proposals for new financial incentives for weekly bin collections, Local Government Group, September 2011
4 Storm in a Slop Bucket? What people really think about food waste collections. Friends of the Earth, September 2011
Methodology

The results in this report are based on an online survey of 2,019 adults in Great Britain aged 18+. The survey was designed and commissioned by Icaro Consulting, with survey fieldwork undertaken by ICM Research from 2nd – 4th September 2011. Quotas were set (by gender, age, region and working status) to ensure a representative spread of respondents that matches the known profile of the GB population. Data weighting was also applied, post-survey, to correct for any small variations in the quotas sampled.

Some questions were answered by the full sample, others by specific groups of respondents (e.g. those with a food waste collection). The base sizes for each question are stated in the supporting graphs and tables. Where percentages do not add to 100% this is due to computer rounding of the raw data or multiple response questions. An asterisk (*) in the data denotes a value greater than zero but less than one per cent.

Further information

Please visit www.icaro-consulting.co.uk or contact phil.downing@icaro-consulting.co.uk

Additional commentary is available from our partners, the environmental communications specialists at Sauce Consultancy – www.sauceconsultancy.co.uk
The report is divided into seven main sections, each looking at a different aspect of waste collections:

- Service provision & collection frequency
- Overall satisfaction with waste services
- Reported problems
- Improvements to waste services
- Measuring performance: A recycling and food waste ‘Scorecard’
- Reactions to waste policy ideas
- Attitudes to new waste treatment facilities
1 Service provision and collection frequency

Starting with first principles, and establishing the current provision of waste, recycling and food collections in Great Britain, the survey finds the following:

- Almost half (46%) of households now have a fortnightly collection of rubbish, and almost half (49%) retain a weekly collection (Figure 1);
- Close to three in five (59%) households have a fortnightly collection of recycling, compared to 31% who have a weekly collection (Figure 2);
- Half (50%) of households have a collection of food waste (Figure 3), although there is diversity in how this is provided – with variations by frequency (i.e. some collections are weekly, others fortnightly), and whether it is collected separately or mixed alongside garden waste.

When these three individual collections are combined together, a range of different approaches to waste collection are evident across the country (Figure 4). Seven main ‘collection typologies’ emerge, the most frequent of which is fortnightly rubbish/fortnightly recycling/food waste (serving 19% of households), followed by fortnightly rubbish/fortnightly recycling/no food waste (16%).

**Figure 1 – Frequency of rubbish collection**

**Question:** How frequent is your main collection of household rubbish?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011
**Figure 2 – Frequency of recycling collection**

*Question:* How frequent is your main household collection of recycling?

*Base:* 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

- More than once a week: 1%
- Once a week: 31%
- Once a fortnight: 59%
- Other: 3%
- Do not have a household recycling collection: 2%
- Don’t know: 3%

**Figure 3 – Food waste collections**

*Question:* Which of the following statements about food waste collections applies to your household?

*Base:* 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

- Do not have a collection of food waste: 46%
- Have a mixed collection of food and garden waste - weekly: 11%
- Have a mixed collection of food and garden waste - fortnightly: 14%
- Have a separate collection of food waste - weekly: 16%
- Have a separate collection of food waste - fortnightly: 7%
- Other: 2%
- Don’t know: 6%

**Figure 4 – Waste collection typologies**

*Base:* 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

- Fortnightly rubbish – Fortnightly recycling – food waste collection: 19%
- Fortnightly rubbish – fortnightly recycling – no food waste collection: 16%
- Fortnightly rubbish – weekly recycling – food waste collection: 6%
- Weekly rubbish – weekly recycling – food waste collection: 11%
- Weekly rubbish – weekly recycling – No food waste collection: 9%
- Weekly rubbish – fortnightly recycling – food waste collection: 8%
- Weekly rubbish – fortnightly recycling – No food waste collection: 13%
Almost eight in 10 households (78%) say that they are satisfied with their waste collections, comprising one in three (33%) who are ‘very satisfied’ and 45% who are ‘fairly satisfied’ (Figure 5). A minority of around one in ten (12%) are dissatisfied, while a similar proportion (11%) are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Levels of satisfaction are not influenced by the presence of a food waste collection. 79% of households with a food waste collection are satisfied with their waste collections, exactly the same proportion as those without a food collection.

Having a fortnightly rubbish collection does have a small impact on satisfaction – with 74% of households satisfied compared to 83% with a weekly collection.

However, the two factors with the most significant impact on satisfaction are living in a flat and social renting – with satisfaction falling to 69% among those living in a flat (compared to 86% in detached houses); and likewise to 69% among social renters (compared to 83% of home owners).
Figure 5 – Overall satisfaction

**Question:** First of all, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you – overall – with your rubbish and recycling collections?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011
3 Reported problems

The survey demonstrates that, for each of six ‘common problems’ asked about, a small minority consistently report a ‘serious problem’ (Figure 6). Most frequently identified – by 14% of households – is rubbish dumping / fly tipping, followed by a lack of bin capacity (13%), flies (11%) and smells (10%). Serious problems with vermin (e.g. rats, foxes) or the council refusing to take the rubbish/recycling away are reported by fewer households (6% and 8%, respectively).

A key consideration is which households are reporting serious problems and, in particular, whether they are more or less likely to have AWC and/or a food waste collection. The survey demonstrates that – for many of the issues – there in fact appears to be no link with collection frequency. This is true for rubbish dumping/fly tipping, a lack of bin capacity (Figure 7), vermin and the council refusing to take rubbish/recycling away. In fact, a greater proportion of households with a weekly rubbish collection (8%) cite a ‘serious problem’ with vermin than their counterparts with fortnightly collections (4%). Instead, each of these problems is more closely associated with other factors, namely high concentrations of flats and areas with higher levels of social and private renting.

However, there are two notable exceptions – smells and flies – which do seem to be more frequently associated with fortnightly collections of rubbish. For example, 14% of households with fortnightly collections cite smells as ‘a serious problem’, compared to 6% with a weekly collection (Figure 8); and a similar proportion (13%) say that flies are a serious problem (compared to 7% with a weekly collection). The presence of food waste collections – and in particular the frequency of these collections – also plays a role. For example, fortnightly food waste collections potentially exacerbate the problem of flies (i.e. 15% with a fortnightly food collection report a ‘serious problem’ with flies), which is not true of weekly collections.
Figure 6 – Problems reported

**Question:** To what extent, if at all, do you experience any of the following problems as a result of your rubbish and recycling collections?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>% Not a problem</th>
<th>% Minor problem</th>
<th>% Serious problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People dumping rubbish / fly tipping</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough bin space/capacity</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flies</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smells</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council refusing to take rubbish away</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermin, e.g. Rats and foxes</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7 – Reported problems by subgroup – People dumping rubbish/ fly tipping

**Question:** To what extent, if at all, do you experience any of the following problems as a result of your rubbish and recycling collections?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

Figure 8 – Reported problems by subgroup – Flies

**Question:** To what extent, if at all, do you experience any of the following problems as a result of your rubbish and recycling collections?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011
4 Improvements to waste services

Survey respondents were given the opportunity – in an unprompted and open-ended question – to identify two or three changes that they would like to see to their waste services. This elicited a wide range of suggestions, the most frequently cited of which are summarised in Figure 9. This also shows that the most frequent response, accounting for 40% of respondents, is ‘nothing’.

A key theme relates to collection frequency, which collectively accounts for 24% of responses. For example, 12% cite more frequent collections/return to weekly collections (in general terms, without specifying the rubbish collection, recycling collection or both). Furthermore, 4% specifically cite a return to weekly rubbish collections while 3% specifically mention a return to weekly recycling collections.

The range of materials collected for recycling also emerges strongly (14%), with a general desire for more materials collected for recycling supplemented with specific requests for collections of glass and plastic (or, more commonly, for a greater range of plastics to be collected). A demand for greater bin capacity – whether in relation to rubbish or recycling – is collectively the subject of 13% of the responses. Finally, some households ask for the introduction of a food waste collection (4%).
Figure 9 – Improvements

**Question:** What two or three changes to your waste and recycling collection, if any, would you like to see? These changes can be anything you like, whether small or large strategic changes

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011
5 Measuring performance: A recycling and food waste ‘Scorecard’

The Performance Scorecard for recycling and food waste collections is a simple, accessible and cost effective means of pinpointing areas of particular strength and weakness in each service. Residents are asked to rate each aspect of their service out of 10, and the results are then graded according to (a) how many rate an aspect positively, and (b) the mean average score.

The Scorecard approach is particularly well suited to measuring performance in individual local authorities and comparing this against the national average and/or the results of peer authorities.

Taking recycling first, the survey establishes that a substantial proportion of households rate their service highly (Figure 10). For example, just over one in four (27%) award their service a score of nine or 10 out of 10, while almost half (46%) score it seven or eight out of 10. In contrast, almost one in five (18%) rate their service ‘average’ (i.e. five or six out of 10) and 7% rate it ‘poor’ (i.e. four or less out of 10). This equates to a mean average score of 7.4 out of 10.

Turning to specific aspects of the recycling service (and drawing heavily on WRAP’s Waste Collection Commitment4), the results demonstrate a number of areas where recycling services are performing well, as well as others where there is room for improvement (Figure 11). For example:

- The reliability of collections is the most highly performing aspect of recycling services across the country, with an average score of 7.9 out of 10.
- There is a mixed performance in some aspects of the service. Using making recycling simple and easy as an example, while two in three (66%) rate their service as ‘good’ in this respect, 13% rate it ‘poor’ and 21% ‘average’.
- Two aspects stand out for poor performance – feedback to residents (only 26% rate their council ‘good’ in this respect) and providing information on where to buy recycled products (only 16% rate this as good). In both cases, a large proportion of households rate their service ‘poor’ (47% and 55%, respectively).

http://www.wrap.org.uk/local_authorities/waste_commitment.html
Turning to food waste collections, the results show that a substantial proportion of households rate their food waste collection very highly (Figure 12). For example, one in three (33%) award their service a score of nine or 10 out of 10, and a similar proportion (36%) score it seven or eight out of 10. In contrast, around one in six (16%) rate their service ‘average’ and 8% ‘poor’.

Turning to specific aspects of the service (Figure 13), three stand out for their high performance – the reliability of collections (7.8/10), leaving the street clean after collections (7.3/10) and the frequency of collection (7.2/10).

Performance is mixed for some aspects of the service. Key issues include information on what food items can and can’t be recycled (24% rate this as poor), leaving the bin clean after collections (27%) and the availability of biodegradable bags (33%). The aspect with the lowest rating, as with recycling, is feedback to residents (e.g. what happens to the food, how successful the scheme is).

The survey also demonstrates that frequency of collection is an important consideration for food waste collections. For example, 12% of households with a fortnightly collection rate their service poor and a further 21% average, compared to only 5% and 12%, respectively, among those with a weekly collection. The data also suggests that satisfaction is higher when food waste is collected separately, rather than mixed together with garden waste.
Figure 10 – Overall rating of the recycling service

**Question:** Giving a mark out of 10 (where 0 = extremely poor; 5 = average and 10 = excellent), how would you rate the quality of your recycling service overall?

**Base:** 1,885 with a recycling service, GB, 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

Figure 11 – Recycling Scorecard

**Question:** And using the same scale (0 = extremely poor; 5 = average and 10 = excellent), how would you rate each of the following aspects of your recycling service?

**Base:** 1,839 with recycling collection service, GB adults aged 18+, online, Sept 2011, ICM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>% Poor (i.e. 0-4/10)</th>
<th>% Good (i.e. 7-10/10)</th>
<th>Mean Average (mark out of 10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The reliability of collections (e.g. no missed collections; collecting on the right day, etc.)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The recycling box/bag/wheelie bin that you are provided with</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making recycling simple and easy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving the street clean after collections</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The frequency of collection</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing clear information on what can and can’t be recycled</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The range of materials that can be recycled</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How easy it is to get in touch with the council to report a problem</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness/helpfulness of the recycling crew</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback to residents e.g. what happens to the materials; how successful the scheme is</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing information on where to buy products that are made from recycled materials</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 12 – Overall rating of the food waste collection

**Question:** Giving a mark out of 10 (where 0 = extremely poor; 5 = average and 10 = excellent), how would you rate the quality of your food waste collection overall?

**Base:** 939 with a food waste service, GB, 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

![Pie chart showing overall rating of food waste collection]

Figure 13 – Food waste Scorecard

**Question:** And using the same scale (0 = extremely poor; 5 = average and 10 = excellent), how would you rate each of the following aspects of your food waste collection service?

**Base:** 877 with a food waste service, GB, 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>% Poor (i.e. 0-4/10)</th>
<th>% Good (i.e. 7-10/10)</th>
<th>Mean Average (mark out of 10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The reliability of collections (e.g. no missed collections; collecting on the right day, etc.)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving the street clean after collections</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The frequency of collections</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The outside food waste bin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The in-home food waste caddy</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How easy it is to report a problem</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information of what food items can and can’t be recycled</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the process clean and hygienic</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving the bin clean after collections</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of biodegradable bags</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback to residents (e.g. what happens to the food; how successful the scheme is)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Reactions to waste policy ideas

The survey focused on the public’s reaction to four policy ideas (Figure 14). This demonstrates the following:

- There is strong backing for a policy of Government mandating weekly collections of rubbish, with two in three (67%) in agreement with the statement “the Government should mandate that all local authorities must provide residents with a weekly collection of rubbish”. Support is highest among those who still have a weekly service (78% agree; 6% disagree) and lowest among those who already have a fortnightly collection (53% agree; 19% disagree).

- The results also demonstrate that the environmental rationale behind AWC (i.e. that it encourages more recycling) is far from universally accepted by the public. While close to two in five (39%) agree with the statement “fortnightly rubbish collections benefit the environment by encouraging greater recycling”, a similar proportion (34%) disagree. Disagreement is notably higher, once again, among those who retain a weekly collection of rubbish.

- A policy of varying waste charges according to how much rubbish people throw away – otherwise known as Pay As You Throw (PAYT) – divides the public. While a significant proportion (40%) agree with the statement “Rather than charge everyone the same it would be fairer to charge according to how much rubbish they produce (i.e. those who produce more rubbish pay more council tax; those who produce less rubbish pay less council tax)”, a similar proportion (37%) disagree.

- Approaching two in three (63%) agree with the statement “offering financial rewards to encourage people to recycle is a good idea”. However, close to one in six (17%) disagree and a further one in five (20%) say that they neither agree nor disagree.

While some of these policy ideas might appear to divide along political lines, at least in the media, the survey suggests no such division among the public (Figure 15). Instead, levels of agreement/disagreement among intending voters of the three main political parties are, broadly speaking, the same. This is particularly the case with intending Conservative and Labour voters. For example, 67% of Conservative voters agree that weekly rubbish collections should be mandated (as do 68% of Labour voters), while 40% agree with a PAYT approach (as do 43% of Labour voters).

There are, however, some variations of note. Intending Liberal Democrat voters are less likely to agree that weekly rubbish collections should be mandated (as do 68% of Labour voters), while 40% agree with a PAYT approach (as do 43% of Labour voters).
Figure 14 – Reactions to policy ideas

**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

- The Government should mandate that all local authorities must provide residents with a weekly collection of rubbish
  
  - % Agree: 67
  - % Neither agree nor disagree: 22
  - % Disagree: 12

- Fortnightly rubbish collections benefit the environment by encouraging recycling
  
  - % Agree: 39
  - % Neither agree nor disagree: 26
  - % Disagree: 34

- Rather than charge everyone the same it would be fairer to charge according to how much rubbish they produce (i.e. Those who produce more rubbish pay more council tax; those who produce less rubbish pay less council tax)
  
  - % Agree: 40
  - % Neither agree nor disagree: 22
  - % Disagree: 37

- Offering financial rewards to encourage people to recycle is a good idea
  
  - % Agree: 63
  - % Neither agree nor disagree: 20
  - % Disagree: 17

Figure 15 – Reactions to policy ideas

**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Idea</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Lib Dem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Government should mandate that all local authorities must provide residents with a weekly collection of rubbish</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortnightly rubbish collections benefit the environment by encouraging greater recycling</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather than charge everyone the same, it would be fairer to charge according to how much rubbish is produced (i.e. those who produce more rubbish pay more council tax; those who produce less waste pay less council tax)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering financial rewards to encourage people to recycle is a good idea</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Attitudes to new waste infrastructure

Turning to how the country deals with residual waste, the survey asked about the in principle acceptability of three types of waste treatment facilities – Anaerobic Digestion (AD), Mechanical Treatment, and Energy from Waste (EfW).

A majority consider each of the treatment options to be acceptable, particularly AD (87% consider it either ‘very’ or ‘broadly’ acceptable). Only in the case of EfW does the survey detect a level of opposition, with around one in seven (15%) considering it unacceptable (Figure 16).

The survey results also concur with recent research by SITA\(^5\) which found that community buy-in models encourage greater acceptance of new waste treatment technologies. Over seven in ten (72%) agree with the statement ‘local communities that have new waste facilities, like Anaerobic Digestion or Energy from Waste, should receive some form of recognition, for example a community fund or discounted energy bills’ (Figure 17). Turning to the specific form of recognition that households would prefer, there is a strong preference for personal benefits – in the form of discounts on Council Tax and energy bills (Figure 18).

Recognition models aimed at community-level improvements (e.g. new parks and play areas) are less popular.

Figure 16 – Acceptability of waste infrastructure

**Question:** After reducing and recycling, to what extent do you think the following treatment options are acceptable or unacceptable for the UK?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>% Very acceptable</th>
<th>% Broadly acceptable</th>
<th>% Not very acceptable</th>
<th>% Not at all acceptable</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A facility which converts organic waste like food into a source of energy, as well as a compost – this is called an “Anaerobic Digestion” plant</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A facility which takes residual waste and separates it into dry and organic material – this is called a “Mechanical Treatment” plant</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A facility where waste is burned to produce energy – this is called an “Energy from Waste” plant, and sometimes referred to as “Incineration”</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 17 – Recognition for the community

**Question:** It has been suggested that local communities that have new waste facilities, like Anaerobic Digestion or Energy from Waste, should receive some form of recognition, for example a community fund or discounted energy bills. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this suggestion?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

![Pie chart showing responses to the recognition question.]

Figure 18 – What kind of recognition?

**Question:** And thinking about what this recognition for communities could be, which one or two of the following, if any, would you prefer?

**Base:** 2,019 GB adults aged 18+, interviewed online, ICM, 2nd – 4th September 2011

- **Discount on council tax**: 67%
- **Discount on energy bill**: 54%
- **Improvements to/new parks and play areas**: 11%
- **New facilities for schools**: 9%
- **Local residents owning shares in the facility**: 9%
- **Subsidised new bus routes**: 7%
- **Better library facilities**: 7%
- **Don’t know**: 6%
- **None of these**: 2%

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5 Public attitudes to community buy-in for waste and resource infrastructure, prepared by Ray Georgeson Resources/GfK NOP on behalf of SITA UK, June 2011.