



**KEEP
BRITAIN
TIDY.**

**A GUIDE TO IMPROVING
PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING
OF
WASTE PREVENTION
05.03.2024**



New research published



IMPROVING PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF WASTE PREVENTION

Recycling is only the third best option when it comes to reducing the environmental impact of what we buy, use and dispose of. Much bigger gains come from buying less

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Public misunderstanding of waste prevention



2023 report available at <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/recycling-waste-prevention>

SHIFTING THE PUBLIC'S FOCUS FROM RECYCLING TO WASTE PREVENTION

HOW DO WE MOVE PEOPLE UP THE WASTE HIERARCHY?

Reported by People's Postcode Lottery and Postcode Earth Lottery



A public-facing waste hierarchy?



Waste Prevention Tracker 2024

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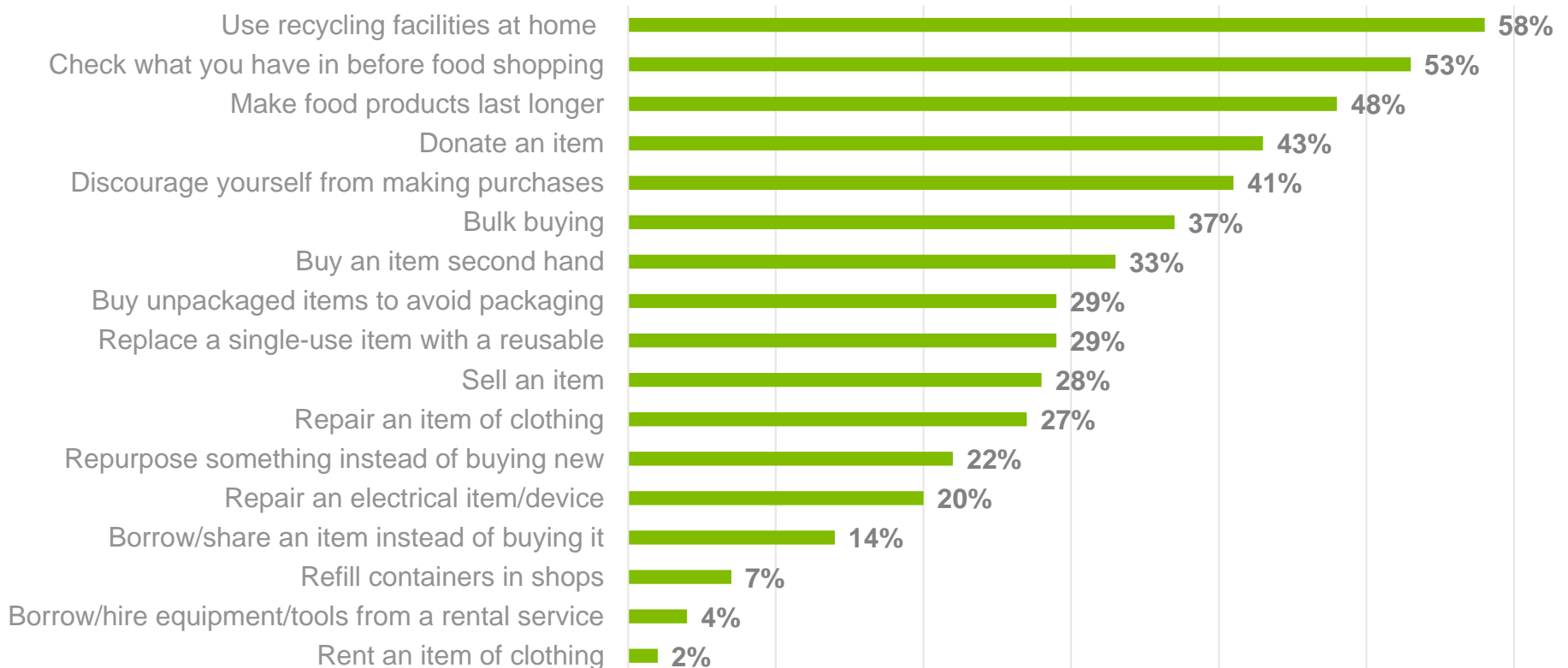
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Where is the public at with waste prevention?



Which of the following do you do regularly or as much as possible?



Where is the public at with waste prevention?



- **Women and over 55s** are more likely to engage in most waste prevention behaviours
- The biggest differences between engagement in behaviour regularly and at least once in the past 12 months are in **hiring items from a rental service** (↑ 50%) and **borrowing items from someone else** (↑ 46%)
- The smallest differences are in **taking reusable containers to the shop to refill** (22%) and **checking what food you have already before buying more** (25%)
- Perceived **accessibility of services** (e.g. to refill and rent) is much higher than engagement



Negative feelings towards consumption are on the rise



69% are concerned about living in a consumer society – up from 60%

82% agree that as a society, we are always being pressured to buy new things – up from 75%

30% think they personally buy too much stuff – up from 25%

33% feel overwhelmed by the amount of stuff they have – up from 27%

57% are concerned about having space to store everything they/their household owns – up from 47%



Misunderstanding of waste prevention & the impacts of consumption



- 68% still think that **recycling is the best thing they can do** to reduce the environmental impacts of the things they buy
- People are more concerned by the **amount of packaging** their purchases come in (78%), than **the impacts that the items have on the environment** (59%)
- 42% say that **as long as an item or it's packaging is recyclable, I don't feel bad about buying it**



Misunderstanding of waste prevention & the impacts of consumption



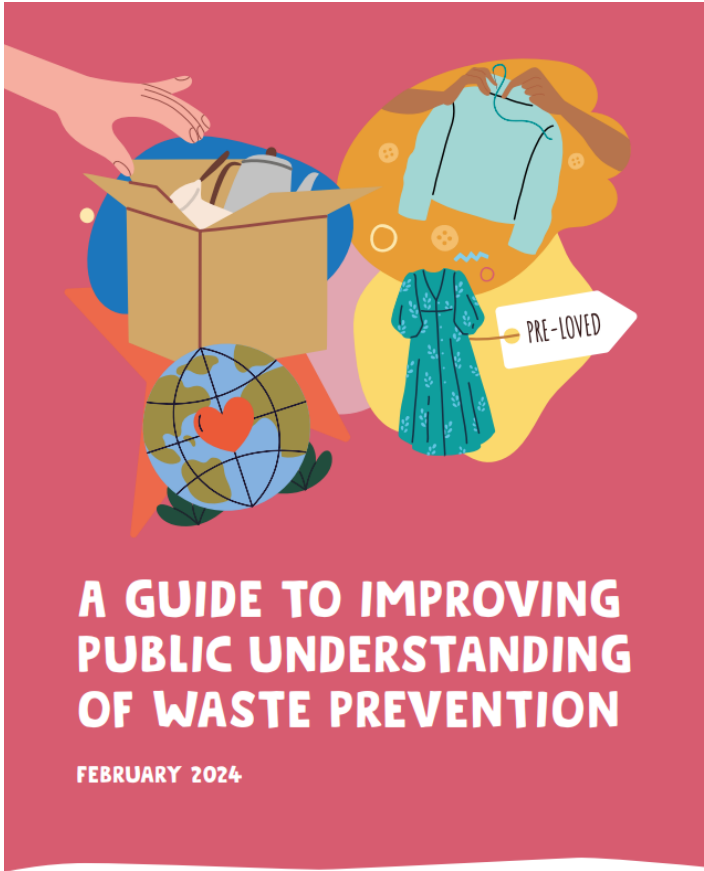
What does waste mean to you?

- 70%** Stuff you throw away in the bin
- 70%** Throwing stuff out that could still be used
- 65%** Items with too much packaging

- 54%** Buying more than I really need
- 47%** When items aren't built to last
- 26%** Stuff you throw away in your recycling



Improving the public's understanding of waste prevention



Collaborative research to identify...



- ✓ How the waste hierarchy can best be used as a communications tool
- ✓ What terminology and messages should be used to communicate waste prevention
- ✓ How to frame recycling as being the least preferable option behind reduce and reuse, without discouraging people from doing it
- ✓ How to strengthen the link people make between the climate emergency and their consumption
- ✓ What messengers should such waste prevention communications come from

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Research methodology



1. **Desk-based review**
2. **6 x in-depth focus groups**
50 participants in total, representing varied demographics
Screening for 'regular recyclers'
Conducted in Manchester, Liverpool and Somerset
3. **3 x co-design workshops**
Retaining some participants from previous stage
One workshop in each area
To co-design effective communications
4. **Nationally representative survey and qualitative interviews**
National omnibus provider, 2,190 UK adults + 50 on-street interviews
Quantifying insights and additional feedback
To test versions of the waste hierarchy



Results: the context of your communications



71% of people think there should be more information about how to make changes to the things they buy to reduce their impact on the environment – and less advertising asking them to buy things.

22% say that if they're not hearing waste prevention messages from lots of different places, it can't be that important.

32% often buy things they want but don't really need. The same proportion say they don't like buying second hand.



Results: Language & Terminology



RECYCLING

The 3 Rs

Waste

- rehome
- mend
- share
- donate
- Pre-loved
- repair
- borrow
- rethink

LANDFILL



Results: framing the message



Our waste prevention messages should:

Be framed positively.

Celebrate and normalise that people are beginning to address their waste and consumption already.

Acknowledge progress.

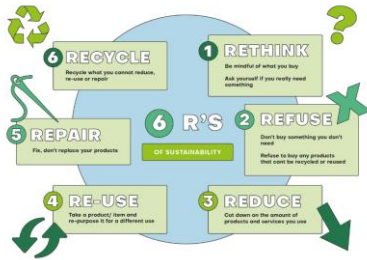
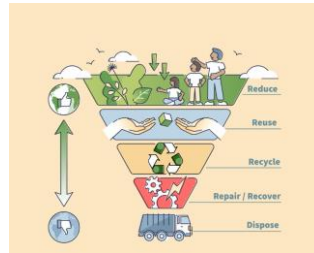
Recognise that people may already be going to efforts to prevent waste (and recycle).

Communicate the 'why'.

Tell them why they should to it – and remind them that their individual efforts are making a difference.



Results: a public-facing waste hierarchy



Results: a public-facing waste hierarchy



To be impactful and resonate with the public, it should:

- ✓ Be much more than reduce, reuse, recycle, and dispose
- ✓ Levels are grouped in a way that feels logical and relevant to them and the things they buy
- ✓ Be highly visual, using images and symbols
- ✓ Not be referred to as the waste hierarchy



Results: a public-facing waste hierarchy



- **58%** now realise there are much better ways to reduce the environmental impact of the things they buy, than using their recycling bin
- **73%** think they could do what it's asking them to do
- **51%** say it motivates them to protect the planet
- **36%** say they are going to make changes to what they buy, use and throw away



Results: a public-facing waste hierarchy



RECYCLING IS GOOD. BUT WE CAN DO BETTER...

HAVE A 'BUY LESS' MINDSET

USE STUFF AGAIN, AND AGAIN, AND AGAIN

PROTECT THE PLANET

RECYCLING IS GOOD. BUT WE CAN DO BETTER...

HAVE A 'BUY LESS' MINDSET

RECYCLING IS GOOD. BUT WE CAN DO BETTER...

SWAP THE WAY YOU SHOP

RECYCLING IS GOOD. BUT WE CAN DO BETTER...

USE IT AGAIN, AND AGAIN... AND AGAIN

RECYCLING IS GOOD. BUT WE CAN DO BETTER...

REHOME IT



What's next?

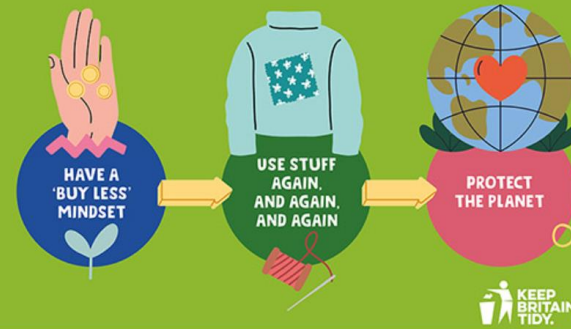


The full report and digital communication tools are free to access here...

<https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/understanding-waste-prevention>

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LEARN MORE



Thank you



Dr. Anna Scott (MCIWM)
Director of Services
Keep Britain Tidy

anna.scott@keepbritaintidy.org

Connect with me on LinkedIn @drannascott

Adam Read
Chief Sustainability & External Affairs Officer
SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK

Lee Marshall
Director of Innovation and Technical Services
CIWM

Michelle Whitfield
Head of Communications & Behaviour Change
Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Rebecca Haynes-McCoy
Strategy and Development Manager
Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority

