



Cleanaway Recycling Behaviours Research 2022

PREPARED FOR:

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empirica
RESEARCH



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BACKGROUND

In March 2020, government restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic directed the nation to limit their movements and stay at home where possible. Many Australians had to make significant lifestyle changes to adapt to working and educating from home during this time. Whereas some of us increased our time spent watching TV and movies, others learnt new skills such as baking or crafting.¹

Australians also developed both positive and negative sustainable habits and mindsets as a result of the pandemic. On the one hand, Australians reportedly participated more in activities like starting a vegetable patch or repairing their own clothes to reduce their environmental footprint.^{2,3} On the other hand, our uptake of single-use items including disposable face masks, gloves and takeaway packaging increased significantly.⁴

As Australia's leading waste management service, Cleanaway is ideally placed to engage with and educate the community about sustainability and waste management. In December 2020, Cleanaway worked with Alt/Shift and Empirica Research to explore 'the State of Australian Recycling' with respect to knowledge and attitudes. These findings were used to provide context for promotional media and demonstrate a need for Cleanaway's Greenius service. Empirica Research was commissioned again in January 2022 to explore changes to these attitudes and behaviours off the back of the pandemic.

This report summarises the findings of this research.



¹Baxter, J., Budinski, M., Carroll, M., & Hand, K. (2020). *Families in Australia Survey: Life during COVID-19 Report no. 5: What we did during lockdown*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

²Jolly, W. (2020, June 17) *COVID-19 causes more Aussies to save on energy, home improvements and food wastage*. <https://www.savings.com.au/savings-accounts/covid-19-causes-more-aussies-to-save-on-energy-home-improvements-and-food-wastage>

³Johnson, M. (2020, June 24) *Coronavirus inspires Australians to adopt eco-friendly savings habits*. <https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/your-budget/2020/06/24/eco-friendly-savings-habits/>

⁴Perkins, M. (2022, February 8) *WHO warns of strain from spike in plastic waste during pandemic*. <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/who-warns-of-strain-from-spike-in-plastic-waste-during-pandemic-20220208-p59uow.html>

METHODOLOGY



- An online survey was conducted with 1,000 Australians
- The survey was conducted between Wednesday, 19 January 2022 and Thursday, 27 January 2022
- Average survey length was 19 minutes, with a median survey length of 17 minutes
- Note that due to rounding, percentages in charts and tables may not sum to 100%
- The structure of the survey was as follows:
 1. Demographics
 2. Attitudes towards sustainability and recycling
 3. Everyday recycling behaviours
 4. Knowledge about recycling and sorting task
 5. Knowledge and attitudes towards a circular economy
 6. The impact of COVID-19 on sustainability and recycling behaviours

1,000 AUSTRALIANS

		n	%
Gender	Male	461	46%
	Female	538	54%
	Don't identify as male or female	1	<1%
Age	18-34	307	31%
	35-54	347	35%
	55+	346	35%
State	NSW	323	32%
	VIC	266	27%
	QLD	179	18%
	WA	112	11%
	SA	80	8%
	TAS	20	2%
	ACT	18	2%
	NT	2	<1%
Region	State capital	683	68%
	Large city or town	198	20%
	Regional or remote area	119	12%





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUSTRALIAN RECYCLING AND SUSTAINABILITY BEHAVIOURS

78% of Australians describe themselves as good or very good recyclers, with 76% saying they separate product components for appropriate recycling most or every time, 73% emptying or rinsing recyclable containers before putting them in the recycling bin most or every time, and 72% checking packaging recycling labels before disposal most or every time.

- Specific types of product component separation are much less well-adhered to, with only 66% separating soft plastic and film from hard plastic before recycling at least most of the time, and only 65% removing lids from bottles and jars before recycling most or every time.

When it comes to separating product components into appropriate bins, 90% of Australians say they do this most or every time when at home, but are less diligent in other locations. 73% and 72%, respectively, separate product components most or every time when out in public or on holidays, and 68% and 67%, respectively, do so at work or at someone else's home.

Many Australians are also participating in sustainable behaviours, with 86% doing their best to minimise use of single-use plastics, 77% shopping locally and seeking out Australian-made products, and 77% also avoiding fast-fashion and focusing on quality and long-lasting pieces. Further, 60% use a reusable coffee cup (something that 23% found hard to do while under COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions), and seek out sustainable brands, while 58% make use of out-of-home recycling schemes like REDcycle and mobile muster.

RECYCLING KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

As was the case in 2021, Australians exhibit high levels of recycling literacy in most areas:

- 69% recognise the Australasian Recycling Label
- 67% know that recycling is sorted at facilities in Australia
- 73% know that recycling in Australia is sorted by a mix of people and machines
- 89% know that containers need to be rinsed before being recycled
- 88% know that batteries do not go in the recycling
- 84% know that leftover food or liquid can contaminate an entire load of recycling
- 82% know not to seal up their recycling pieces before putting it in the recycling bin

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHY DO AUSTRALIANS RECYCLE, AND HOW CAN THEY BE HELPED TO DO MORE?

Australians are most motivated to recycle to help the environment (79%) and to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill (76%). Simply being the right thing to do was also listed as a motivation for 76% of Australians. However, there is consistent agreement that the process of recycling could be simpler.

Although most respondents admitted to not recycling at every opportunity, an overwhelming majority (92%) agreed that recycling is important, with only 5% saying that there is no point to recycling. Despite agreement on its importance, however:

- Over a third of Australians say it is hard to find clear instructions about how to recycle (38%) and that recycling is confusing (34%).
 - Across all generations, Australians find unclear product labelling (56%) and unclear and inconsistent information (54%) to be the most prominent barriers to recycling more, with a secondary barrier being a lack of knowledge or understanding of the process (where recycling goes and what happens to it; 46%).
 - It is also important to note that over a quarter of Australians (27%) admit to just putting items in the general waste bin if they are unsure as to whether or not it can be recycled – uncertainty leads directly to landfill.
- Over a third of Australians (36%) don't trust that their waste is being properly recycled (15% think it all just goes to landfill).

PACKAGING – THE NEXT SUSTAINABILITY FRONTIER

The impact of packaging on reducing waste is an area where Australians stand to improve:

When physically shopping, 90% say they use reusable shopping bags most/every time they are physically shopping, and 76% try to avoid buying things they don't need; however:

- Only 53% seek out products with minimal packaging most/every time,
- Only 52% take note of recycling symbols on the packaging, and
- Only 42% seek out products made from/packaged with compostable/recyclable/reusable materials.

The same pattern is observable with online shopping: 74% avoid buying things they don't need most/every time, but only 39% seek out products with minimal packaging, and only 33% seek out products made from/packaged with compostable/recyclable/reusable materials. With online shopping having become an even larger fabric of Australian life during the COVID-19 pandemic, improved packaging practices in this space have the potential to make a big difference in waste generation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 ON AUSTRALIAN SUSTAINABILITY

41% of Australians said that the COVID-19 pandemic made them more concerned about the environment, with the level of concern unchanged for 55%. Similar proportions reported corresponding impacts of the pandemic on their attitudes to sustainability: 44% agreed that the pandemic allowed them to implement more sustainable practices in their life and 42% said that the pandemic made them conscious of the amount of waste their household generates.

Relating specifically to recycling, 32% of Australians said that the pandemic made them re-evaluate their approach to recycling. For a small proportion, this meant a negative evaluation: 17% of Australians felt that the impacts of the pandemic made recycling seem less important.

As many Australians reported generating less waste while under pandemic restrictions as reported generating more; for both groups, more time spent at home was a prominent factor in this change (69% and 68%, respectively). Those who generated less waste during the pandemic most commonly attributed this to making fewer purchases (69%) and preparing more meals at home (60%). In contrast, those who generated more most often cited hygiene factors such as disposable masks and wipes (53%) or packaging due to online shopping (50%).

THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY – RESPONSIBILITY AND CAPABILITY

Consistent with results reported in December 2020, few Australians are familiar with the concept of a “circular economy” (while 38% in total have heard the term, only 22% say they have any idea what it means). Once described, however, the majority of Australians (80%) say that it is very or extremely important to build such an economy in Australia.

Having decided it is important, who should it fall to, to build Australia’s circular economy? Australians believe that it should be a shared responsibility, assigning close to a third of the responsibility to companies and manufacturers (average responsibility share of 36%), Government (average responsibility share of 34%), and the Australian public (average responsibility share of 30%).

Within the range of materials that need to be recycled appropriately to facilitate a circular economy, Australians are more focused on inorganic than organic waste. 88% say the correct recycling of single-use plastic is extremely or very important to the transition, 85% for batteries, and 84% for e-waste. In contrast, only 71% say that the correct disposal of food waste is extremely or very important to the transition.

Despite assigning equivalent levels of responsibility for a circular economy transition to Australian public as to Government and business, when it comes to the process of correctly recycling these materials, the most commonly perceived barrier is Australian consumers. This far outstrips perceptions of financial costs, or lack of technology, as barriers.



DETAILED
RESULTS





ENGAGEMENT IN
SUSTAINABLE
BEHAVIOURS



ENGAGEMENT IN SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS

Most Australians engage in sustainable behaviours

Overall, 99% of respondents said that they engaged in at least one of the sustainable behaviours listed. The most common sustainable behaviours were using council bins properly to avoid contamination (94%), trying to minimise consumption of single-use plastic (86%), limiting fast fashion purchases and trying to buy pieces that will last (77%), and shopping locally for Australian-made products (77%).

These behaviours were generally consistent across the age groups. However, the oldest Australians (55+ years) reported shopping locally and seeking out Australian-made products more frequently than their younger counterparts (87% vs. 67% of 18-34 year olds and 76% of 35-54 year olds).



94% of Australians use their **council bin services** as best they can to avoid contamination



58% of Australians **participate in recycling programs** outside the house (e.g., cash for cans, REDcycle, Mobile Muster)



86% of Australians try to **minimise** their consumption of **single-use plastic**



57% of Australians pick up and **dispose of litter that is not their own**



77% of Australians shop locally and seek out Australian-made products



55% of Australians **recycle food waste in their council service or home compost**



77% of Australians limit fast fashion purchases and try to **buy quality pieces that will last**



37% of Australians **grow their own vegetables**



60% of Australians use a **reusable coffee cup**

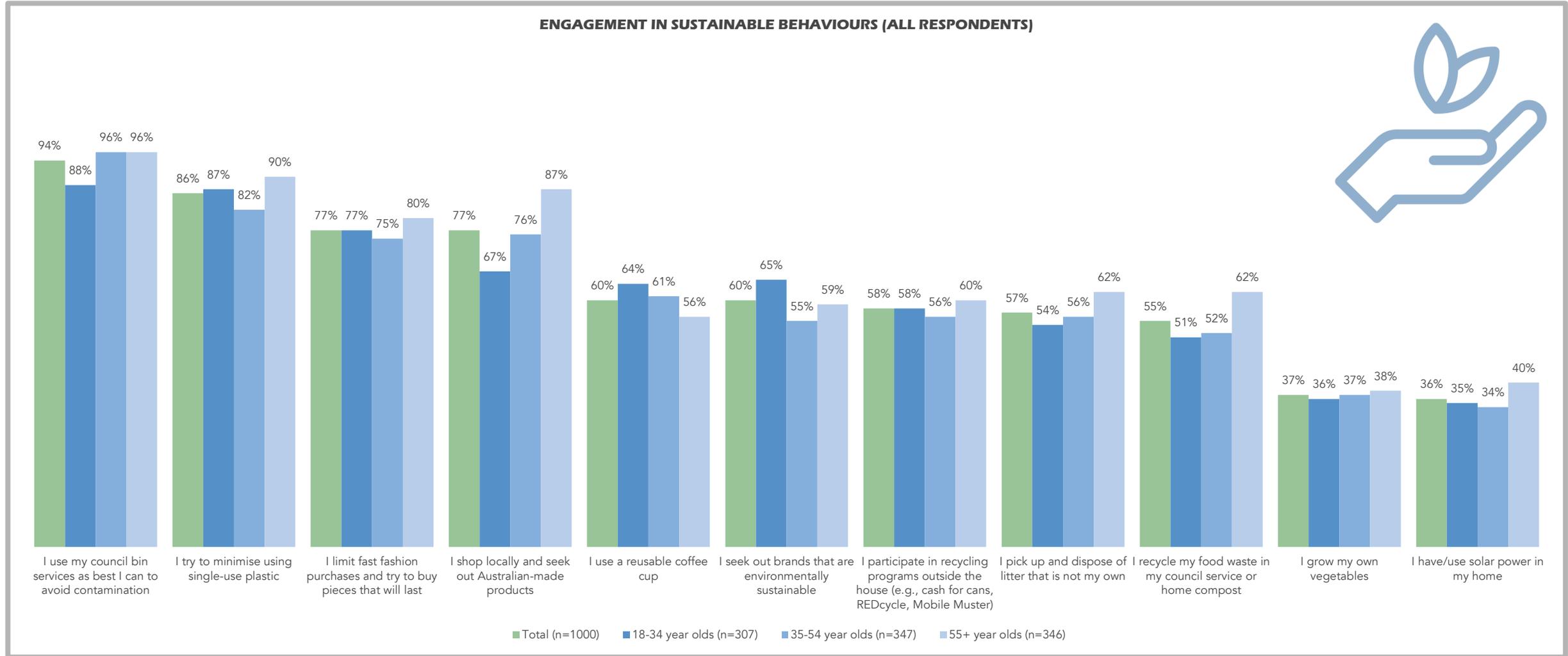


36% of Australians **have/use solar panels** in their home



60% of Australians **seek out brands that are environmentally sustainable**

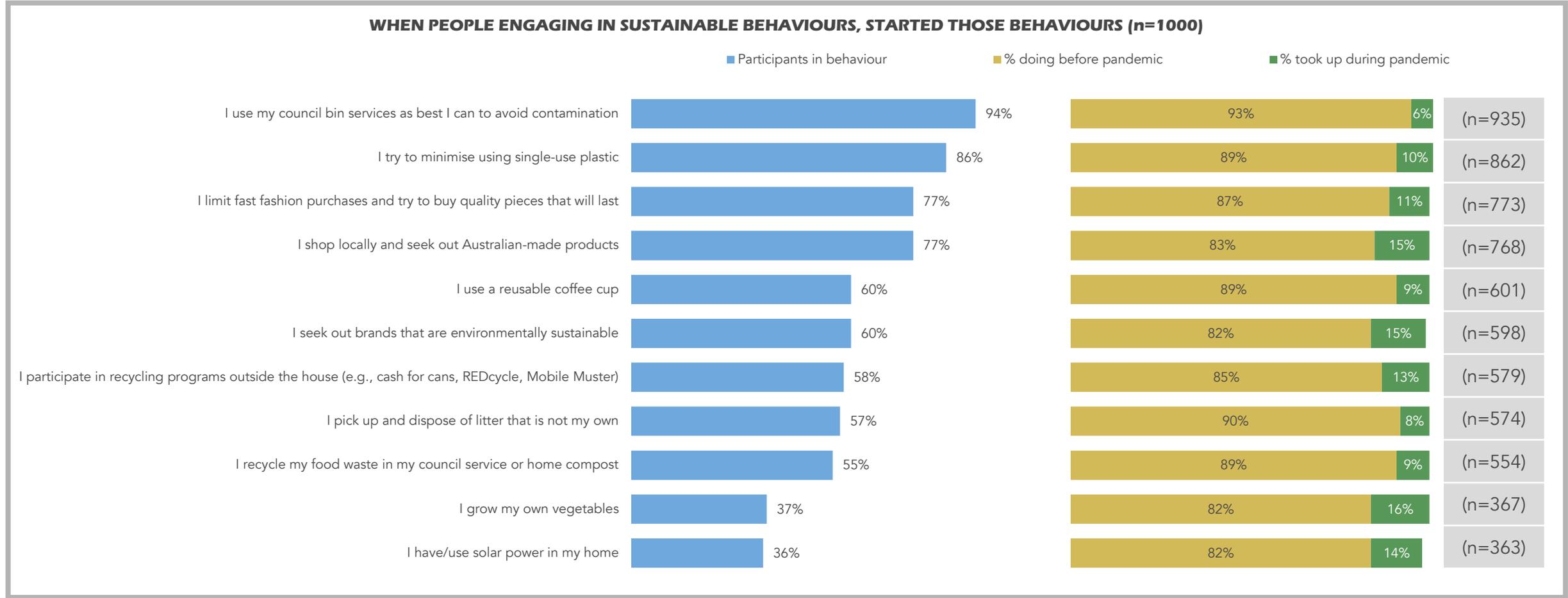
ENGAGEMENT IN SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS (CONTINUED)



TAKEUP OF SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS

The vast majority of people participating in sustainable behaviours were already doing so prior to the pandemic.

WHEN PEOPLE ENGAGING IN SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS, STARTED THOSE BEHAVIOURS (n=1000)



Q2.1 Which of the following are things that you do?
 Q2.1b And were any of these things you started doing during the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions?

WHAT ELSE TO AUSTRALIANS DO TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY?

Any water I don't drink or use I collect and water my plants with it. I collect soft plastics and leave in the bin at the supermarket. I leave unwanted items and clothing in the charity bins. I give away outgrown toys to other kids in the neighbourhood. I donate books to the street libraries in my local suburbs - 70+ year old Female, other QLD

Avoid plastic as much as possible, buy fruit and veg from local growers, butcher my own meat and use nose to tail consumption - 70+ year old Male, other NSW

Buy clothing only that I need, wearing clothes that normally I would not, because really there is nothing wrong with them, apart from getting aged. Don't use disposable plastics like when having a BBQ, so use delph & my dishwasher more - 60-64 year old Female, Perth

Buy products that last for years, minimise purchases of clothes, furniture and white goods, or repair them - 70+ year old Male, Sydney

Cycle commute, use car-sharing (no car) & PT, offset transport with Greenfleet, use green power, harvest water from kitchen/showers, share excess fruit with neighbours, bottle and pickle seasonal vegies for later use, avoid pesticides in garden - 40-44 year old Male, Melbourne

Buy second hand items to stop waste, donate items to stop waste, use soap, shampoo and conditioner bars that reduce packing and are made from more environmentally friendly products, plant based products, plant based cleaning products etc, reusable drink bottles, steel pegs, reusable food covers, plant based or recycled ocean plastic bin bags, plant based sandwich bags - 30-34 year old Female, other VIC

Compost, water tank, solar panels and grow own veggies at home - 35-39 year old Male, other VIC

Consolidate errands to fall on the same day so car is utilised when it's already out and about, try to only run washing machine, dishwasher etc when full and sun is up and solar panels in operation, use mixer tap in shower to turn water off whilst lathering up and washing body brushing teeth 5min shower 40sec water use, changed bills over from snail mail to email - 50-54 year old Male, Sydney

Do trades or swaps with anything of use to other people. So it gets reused or fixed instead of thrown out - 30-34 year old Female, other QLD

Drive and ev; buy needed items second hand where possible; offer usable 'waste' items to others on gumtree for free, e.g. Good quality cardboard boxes, egg cartons, glass jars); give excess garden produce to neighbours - 50-54 year old Female, Hobart

Having kids we have a lot of food waste, we own chickens to remove this issue and also farm our own chickens for meat to eat on our own dinner table. We recycle our water and use it on our garden and have rain water tanks to also use instead of town water. We have a solar battery that keeps our home powered for a few hours after the sun has gone down - 25-29 year old Female, other NSW

I always research ways to recycle all products if possible. If it can't be recycled, I'll normally store it until there is an option. We also purchase Teracycle Zero Waste boxes to recycle items that can't be recycled in other ways - 30-34 year old Male, other VIC

I am an avid reader and was running out of room for books. I disposed of my books that I would not read again and bought a tablet and now buy e books. Saves paper and the environment, also space in my home. I also knit and sew, no fast fashion for me - 70+ year old Female, Brisbane

I eat a whole foods vegan diet and any food scraps get composted or regrown. 95% of my wardrobe is second hand. I have basin washes instead if using the shower every day. I try to avoid overly packaged goods - 35-39 year old Male, Melbourne

I go to the tip and take out building materials and odds and ends that I can reuse around the place. I go to opp shops to buy clothes and other things. I grow vegetables inside - 50-54 year old Female, other VIC

I have a half acre property with a large garden. I have 22,000 lts of rainwater tanks to reduce my water usage. These are also connected to toilets and laundry - 65-69 year old Male, Melbourne

I have installed a Solar Hot Water System on the roof. I have installed Solar Panels on the roof and updated them to gain maximum effect. I saved up for an Invertor and Solar Battery and purchased one through AGL to reduce my carbon footprint - 50-54 year old Female, Adelaide

WHAT ELSE TO AUSTRALIANS DO TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY? (CONTINUED)

I participate in a program called Curby which recycles the soft plastics which I use each fortnight - 40-44 year old Female, other NSW

I plant trees on a small country block I own - 70+ year old Male, Perth

I try to use less energy at home and only use it when absolutely essential and try not to run the washer during peak hours and never use hot water in summer try not to waste water and use less water if possible have a separate bag for recycle waste so can be put straight into yellow bins - 30-34 year old Female, Sydney

I walk and catch buses (don't own a car). I buy second hand furniture, not new flat packs. I buy clothes that last a few years (often seconds or returns etc.), not fast throw away fashion. I buy many other items second hand as well (I work in an op-shop) - 65-69 year old Male, Adelaide

Rainwater bladders under home , house plumbed for it. Never water lawn just use separate rainwater tanks if we need to water plants or clean outside of house - 60-64 year old Male, Brisbane

I recycle all xmas ribbon, wrapping paper in good condition next xmas , my old clothes I give to Vinnie's ,boxes and filling I receive I keep for when I next send a parcel to my children who live out of WA Newspapers I use in compost shredded also shredded waste paper I re use plastic pots I get with plants that I buy from Bunnings I give away fruit off my trees I also make as much Jam chutneys I can from my garden fruits I boil cooked chicken carcasses to make stock and freeze it lemon skins I cut and freeze to use in cold drinks I recycle my cans and bottles at the local recycling station (well the ones that are accepted should be all glass bottles milk containers but that's not so YET!!)I Try to keep all electric switches off - 70+ year old Female, Perth

Sharing produce with neighbours/passers by, buy from op shops and donate to op shops, part of a hard rubbish reduction community (trying to find homes for items rather than putting on the kerb, previously tried modern cloth nappies (didn't work for my family), use reusable bags and own produce bags - 30-34 year old Female, Melbourne

I run a permaculture farm (smallish scale). The animals provide us with fleece to spin and make into clothing. The manure goes onto the garden where vegetables and fruit are grown. Eggs are sold at the farm gate. Vegies and fruit and also seedlings are sold at the farm gate as well as manures. Waste fruit and vegies are also fed to the animals. The remainder is composted which then gets put into the food gardens. The system is a complete and closed system and quite sustainable except in summer when the pasture dries out and we must purchase in feed as the land is not large enough to harvest grass for hay - 55-59 year old Female, other VIC

Limit water use as much as possible. Encourage others to recycle and be more sustainable. Buy art made from discarded materials - 55-59 year old Male, Sydney

Live a minimalist life. Keep power consumption low by avoiding heating and cooling unless temperatures are at extremes. Hot water tank is permanently disabled. Water usage limited with short showers, and full loads in a dishwasher or washing machine. Food purchased in large bulk orders to reduce delivery frequency and excess packaging from smaller quantities - 25-29 year old Male, Sydney

Recycle my glasses to Fred Hollows, mobiles to Gorilla's, compost my vegies peelings, take my own bag to supermarket for vegies - 65-69 year old Female, Melbourne

Reused paper, i.e. the pizza package I would use to cut the pizza and to eat from when I'm along, green waste etc in the compost, repurpose contained for a different use. I.e. my pill bottle I place hair conditioning in to take to the gym - 65-69 year old Female, Sydney

Try to buy quality products, try to fix things rather than buy new, try to buy things second hand first, buy from bull food stores and markets, buy ethically made clothes, change finance options to ethical investments (super, shares), support companies with zero waste and refill options - 35-39 year old Female, other QLD

Use bees wax wraps instead of plastic. Make my own clothing from thrifted clothing and materials.

Make our own body products. Walk most places instead of driving - 18-24 year old Female, other VIC

WHAT ELSE TO AUSTRALIANS DO TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY? (CONTINUED)

Try to use all household tap water twice over-use talk water for garden laundry and toilets.

Don't buy new if I can avoid it-shop at op shops [but not during COVID, unfortunately]-clothing, kitchenware, furniture, etc. Offer anything still good and surplus to needs for free on Facebook Marketplace, or Freecycle website - 70+ year old Female, other VIC

Use a reusable water bottle. Try and buy soap rather than bottles of shower gel, minimize water usage, upgraded my home to be more energy efficient e.g. double glazing, roof insulation, installed powerpal monitor to reduce electricity usage - 40-44 year old Female, Melbourne

Use low wattage bulbs and keep night lights low to conserve and not use too much power. Keep a recycle bin in our kitchen for plastic cardboard and glass bottles. Also purchased electric fans which have a usage timer that can be set for one two or three hours then the device switches itself off.

Use a special shower rose that minimalizes water usage. Plus we attempt to use minimum time in the shower to also save water. Inform BCC council if any sewer pipe leaks are spotted in the main road and side streets - 65-69 year old Male, Brisbane

Use my own coffee cup. Do not use coffee pods. Use paper bags when possible for grocery deliveries and reusable bags for in store. Recycle as much as possible in the council bins. Buy smaller quantities of perishable food I intend to use. Use eco friendly cleaning products - 60-64 year old Female, Sydney

Use the BANISH recycling programme for many items that I cannot easily recycle elsewhere:
<https://banish.com.au/pages/recycling-program> - 65-69 year old Female, Brisbane

Very short showers. Walk whenever possible. Use public transport whenever feasible. Re-use plastic bags from supermarkets. Donate clothing. Rarely use air conditioning in summer. Use wood from the garden for winter heating. Buy clothes when needed not when fashionable - 70+ year old Male, Melbourne

Volunteering with an environmental group by doing beach clean-ups etc - 18-24 year old Male, Melbourne

When not having to go anywhere I have wash with a face washer using my bathroom sink. I only shower if I go outside my house - 60-64 year old Female, other VIC

If there is an option that is non-plastic, I use it. I bring my own textile bags and cotton nets for fruits and vegetables to the grocery store. I buy most of my produce, cheese, and meat from a farmers market. I only consume land-based meat once a week and fish once a week. I only eat fish that is not (yet) threatened by overfishing (e.g. Sardines, anchovies, herring). I do not eat beef (due to their bad meat-to-water ratio) or exotic animals.

My dairy is either goat milk, sheep milk, or from Paris Creek Farm (bobby calves and cow impregnation are managed better than other milk cow farms). I try to only buy new clothing when absolutely necessary and then, with renewable and compostable fabrics (silk, hemp, linen, wool, organic cotton).

I do not use sunscreen in the ocean or in lakes (to prevent negative effects on sea life), I use covering swimwear instead. I make textile dolls and 99% of the material is from second-hand shops (including thread, needles & co).

My kitchen utensils (for cooking and baking) are either wood, glass, or metal - the few plastic items I own, have already been in the rental and I use them until they are broken and then replace with better alternatives. I bring oils, paints (also lacquers, etc.), white goods, expired medications, and batteries to purpose-built recycling facilities.

I limit my skincare products to organic, animal-friendly options (for makeup) and homemade versions for skincare (pure rosehip oil, apple cider vinegar as toner, simple scrub from EVOO, honey, and sugar, honey for a lip mask, etc.).

Walking is my primary mode of transportation during the workweek. (Between 7km - 12km a day). I do not litter or use public rubbish bins.

I keep a paper bag in my backpack and car for rubbish, which I then recycle in the right bins at home. I wash and re-use glass containers (e.g. From mustard and jam jars). If I order groceries (such as during the lockdown), I request no plastic bags, but paper instead and instruct the worker to not put produce in plastic bags either.

I repair clothing where possible (including socks and shoes). I try not to waste food by using the "extras" too. E.g. Celery greens make a great soup, most greens of root vegetables can be eaten like spinach, chicken carcasses are great for making stock, fruit that is getting slightly too soft to be fun to eat, become a single portion jam or chunky sauce on top of oats or yogurt etc.....



WHAT ELSE TO AUSTRALIANS DO TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY? (CONTINUED)

... If I cook or bake too much, I give it away. I request mostly consumables or things I will use for a long time for gift-giving events. I decorate with things I already have at home and natural items for holidays. I also do not use a plastic Christmas tree. I have been using a large, many-branched branch instead (it lives in my garden for the rest of the year).

I do not use gift bags or gift wrapping. I use paper bags instead (usually decorated with e.g. A pine twig or a rose, etc., and jute twine).

I grow plants beneficial to native (and honey) bees, such as Borage.

I do not use herbicides or other chemicals in my garden. My fertilisers are (chicken) manure or seaweed.

I turn off electrical sockets when I'm not using them.

I try to choose electrics and white goods that are energy-friendly.

I don't buy knickknacks (if I want to decorate, I find something pretty from nature).

I recycle bottles for family members who otherwise wouldn't.

I am careful with my water usage. I do not water garden and front yard indiscriminatory, but by season, weather, and need.

In late spring, summer, and early autumn, I shower cold.

I wash clothing in cold water only (unless someone is sick).

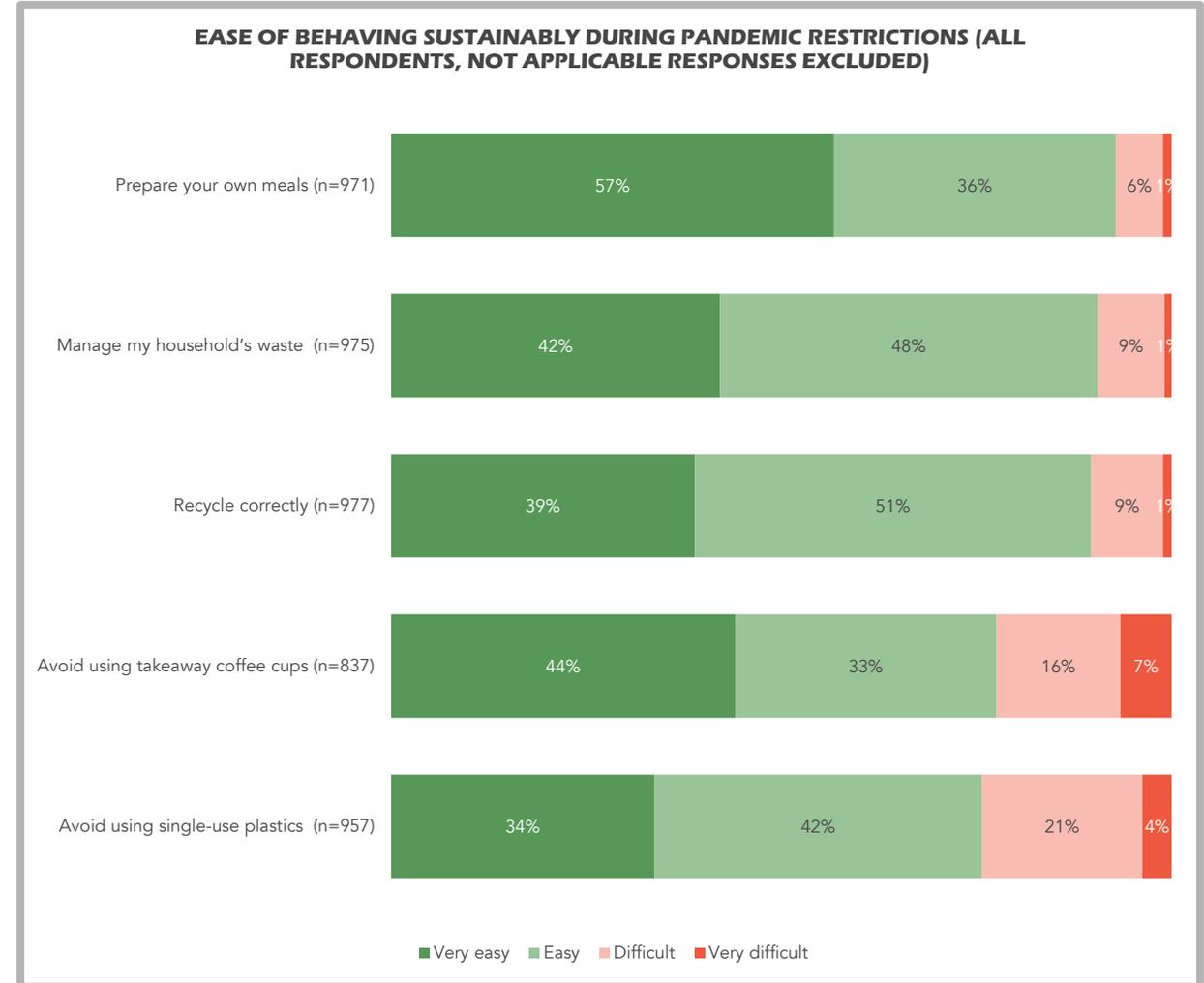
I use vinegar and lemon for a lot of cleaning purposes- 35-39 year old Female, Adelaide



TAKEUP OF SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS

During pandemic restrictions, Australians found it easy to prepare their own meals (93%), manage their household waste (90%), and recycle correctly (also 90%). What was more difficult was avoiding single-use items such as plastics (only 76% found this easy, 24% found it difficult), and takeaway coffee cups (78% found this easy, 22% difficult). Australians aged 55 and older found each of these things easier than did younger Australians.

Despite the fact that pandemic restrictions were, in general, more severe in Victoria and NSW in 2021/22, there were no differences in the ease of engaging in these behaviours between states.



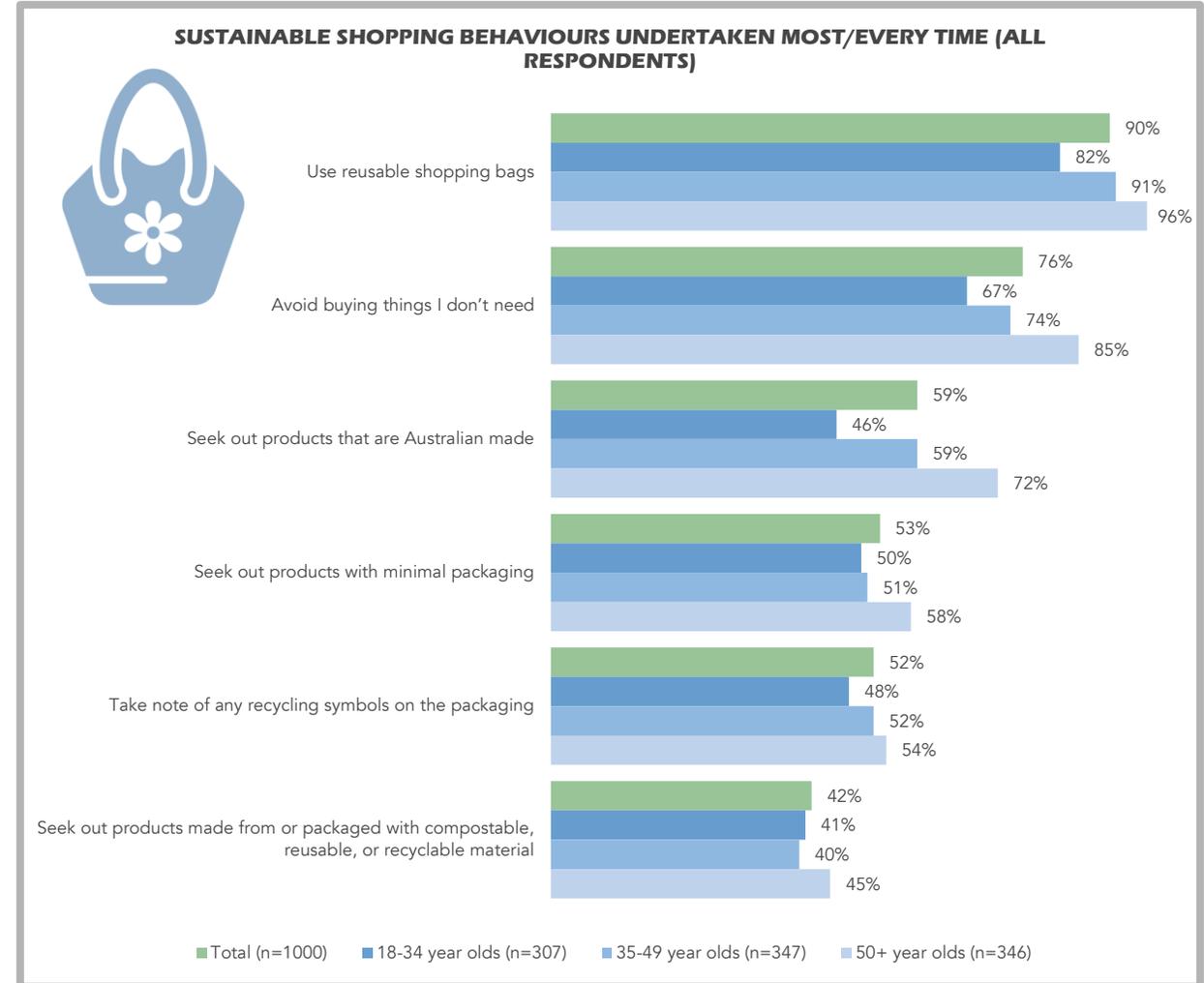
SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS WHEN SHOPPING IN PERSON

Most Australians engage in at least one sustainable behaviour when shopping

Engagement in sustainable shopping behaviours was almost unanimous with only 3% of respondents saying that they *never* engaged in any of the listed behaviours.

Using reusable shopping bags and not buying items that are not needed were the most common sustainable behaviours – 90% and 76% of respondents said that they did these most if not every time, respectively. Although these behaviours were frequently reported across the board, the high proportion appears to be driven by those aged 55+ years who engage in these behaviours significantly more than their younger counterparts (96% of 55+ year olds use reusable shopping bags most or every time compared to 82% of 18-34 year olds; 85% of 55+ year olds avoid buying things that they don't need vs. 67% of 18-34 year olds).

Seeking out products with minimal packaging (53%), taking note of recycling symbols on packaging (52%) and seeking out products made from or packaged with compostable, reusable, or recyclable material (42%) were comparatively less common behaviours. This suggests that a focus on attention to packaging when shopping could yield benefits in Australians' sustainable behaviour toolbox.



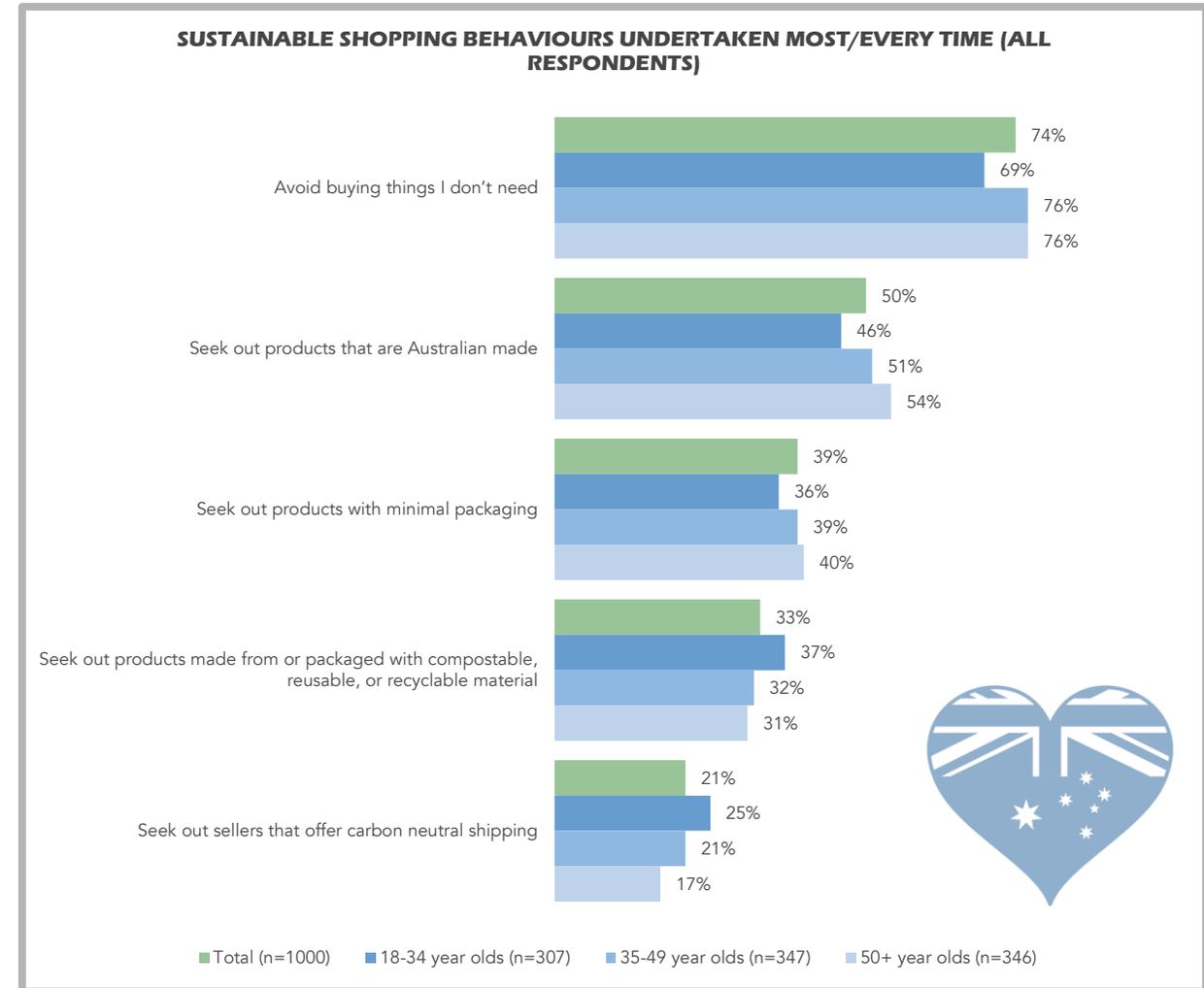
SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS WHEN SHOPPING ONLINE

Sustainable practices are less strong when buying online than in person

Engagement in sustainable online shopping behaviours was less strong than in person – 16% of respondents said they never engaged in any of the listed behaviours compared to 3% who said the same about in person shopping.

Avoiding buying items that are not needed and seeking out Australian made products were the most common sustainable behaviours when shopping online – 74% and 50% of respondents said that they did these most if not every time, respectively. Unlike in person shopping, there was little difference between generations in these practices.

As with in person shopping, respondents showed low focus on packaging as an element of sustainable online shopping – only 33% said they seek out products made from or packaged with compostable, reusable, or recyclable material most or every time. Seeking sellers that offer carbon neutral shipping was even less of a priority, with only 21% stating that they do this most or every time. However, this was significantly more common for younger Australians than older Australians (25% of 18-34 year olds vs. 17% of 50+ year olds and 21% of 35-49 year olds).

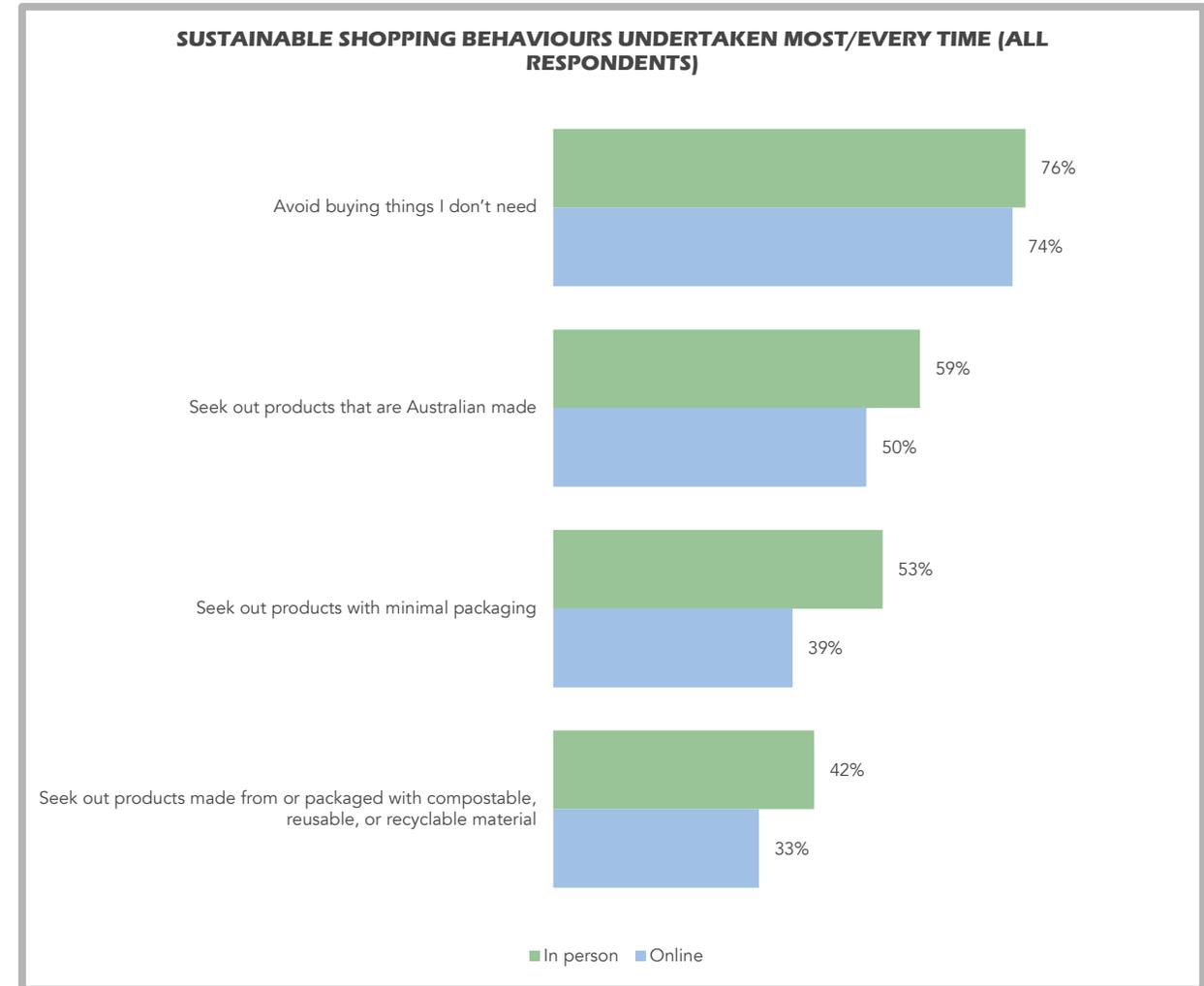


SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS WHEN SHOPPING: IN-PERSON VS ONLINE

Australians shop less diligently when they shop online

While around three-quarters of Australians avoid unnecessary purchases in person and online, they are less conscious of other matters online:

- Only 50% say they seek out Australian-made products most/every time they shop online compared to 59% who do so when shopping in person
- Only 39% look for minimal packaging most/every time they shop online compared to 53% who do so when shopping in person
- Only 33% look for products with sustainable packaging most/every time when shopping online compared to 42% who do so when they shop in person



BEHAVIOURS WHEN DISPOSING OF RUBBISH

Most Australians separate components from a single product when disposing of it

Around three-quarters of Australians separate product components for correct recycling (76%), empty or rinse recyclable containers before putting them in the bin (73%), and check the recycling symbols for appropriate disposal (72%), most or every time. Slightly fewer are as diligent about separating soft plastics and film from hard plastic before recycling (66%) or taking the lids off bottles before recycling them (65%).

Checking the local recycling rules when uncertain about where an item should be disposed was less common – 25% of respondents said that they did this every time and 31% said that they did this most times.

Only 1% of respondents reported never engaging in any of these six behaviours.

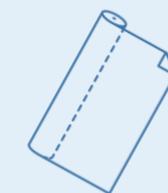
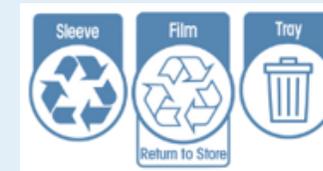
76% of Australians **separate the components of a single product to recycle or dispose of in the appropriate bin most or every time**



73% of Australians **empty or rinse recyclable containers**

before putting them in the recycling bin most or every time

72% of Australians **check for the recycling symbols to see where an item should be recycled before disposing of it most or every time**



66% of Australians **separate soft plastic and film from hard plastic before recycling most or every time**

65% of Australians **take the lids off glass and plastic bottles before putting them in the recycling most or every time**

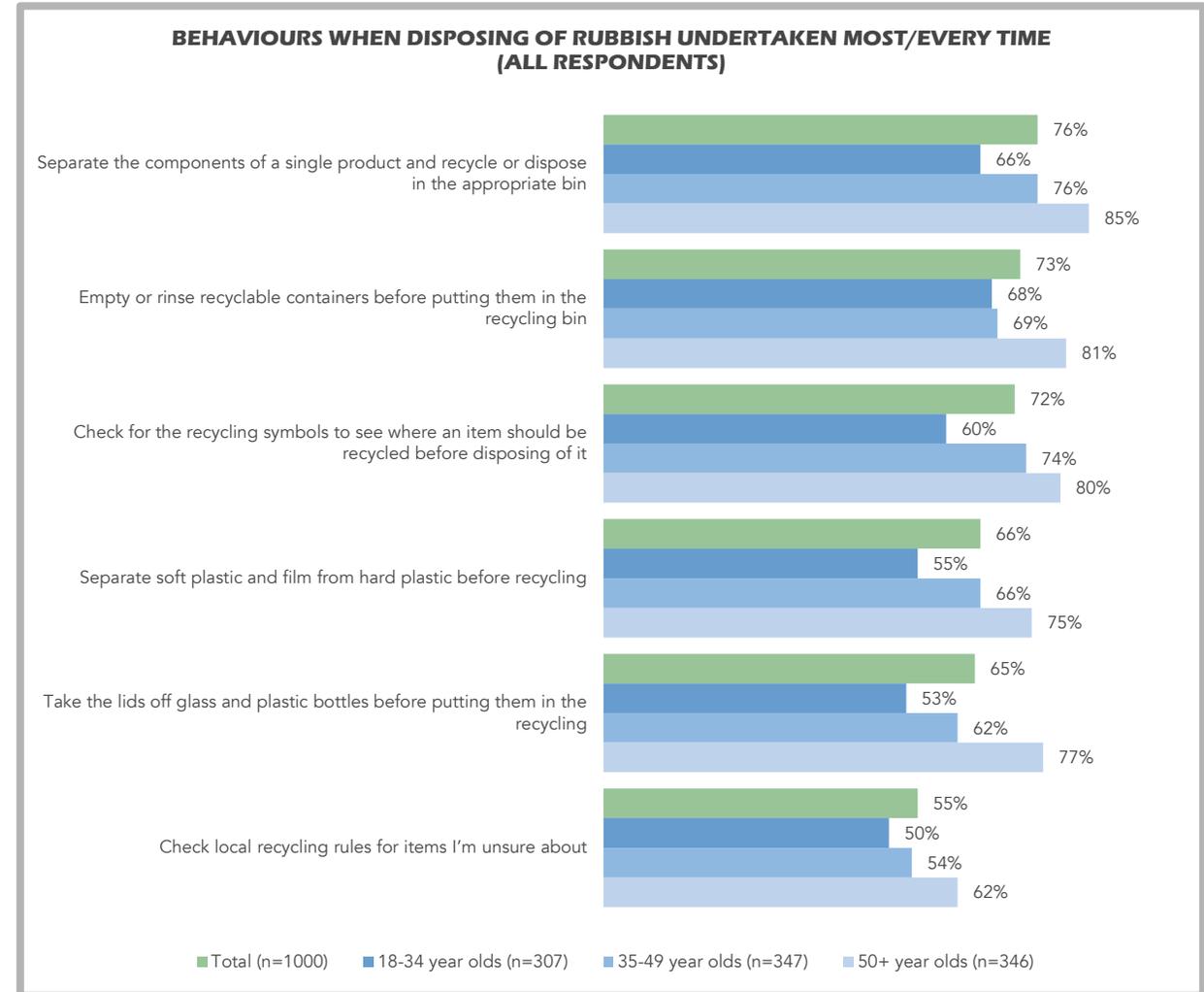


55% of Australians **check local recycling rules for items they're unsure about most or every time**

BEHAVIOURS WHEN DISPOSING OF RUBBISH (CONTINUED)

Older Australians appear more diligent about recycling than their younger counterparts

Overall, older Australians reported engaging in the listed behaviours when disposing of rubbish considerably more reliably than their younger counterparts.

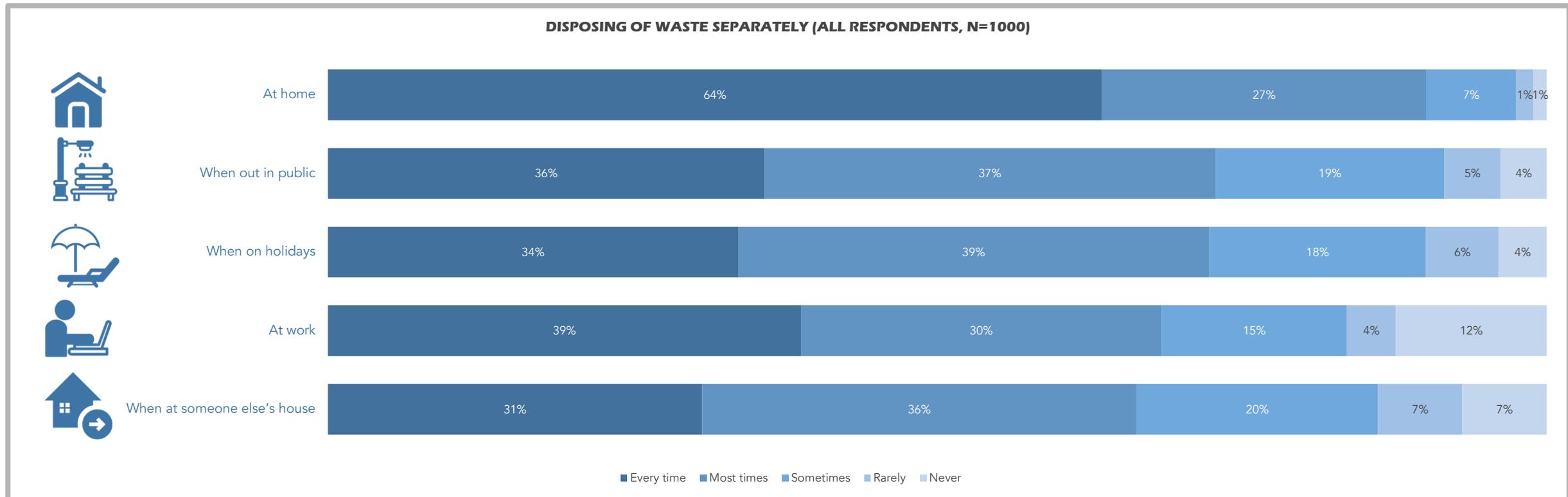


SEPARATING RUBBISH

Australians separate their rubbish at home more often than when they are at work or out in public

In general, most Australians separate their rubbish separately most or every time. However, this particular recycling behaviour is most consistent when at home (90% every/most times) compared to when out (73% and 72% consistently separate waste when out in public and on holidays, respectively), and least consistent when in a location belonging to someone else (68% and 67% reliably separate waste when at work or at someone else's home, respectively).

On average, the oldest Australians reported participating in this behaviour significantly more than younger Australians when at home (97% of 55+ year olds vs. 81% of 18-34 year olds and 92% of 35-54 year olds), while on holidays (83% of 55+ year olds vs. 63% of 18-34 year olds and 70% of 35-54 year olds) and out in public (82% of 55+ year olds vs. 64% of 18-34 year olds and 71% of 35-54 year olds).



SEPARATING RUBBISH (CONTINUED)

SEPARATING WASTE EVERY TIME WHEN DISPOSING OF IT (ALL RESPONDENTS)						
	Total (n=1000)	18-34 year olds (n=307)	35-54 year olds (n=347)	55+ year olds (n=346)	Male (n=461)	Female (n=538)
 At home	64%	45%	65%	78%	62%	65%
 At work	39%	31%	41%	44%	39%	39%
 Out in public	36%	26%	36%	45%	33%	39%
 at someone else's house	31%	25%	32%	35%	28%	33%
 on holidays	34%	23%	34%	42%	33%	35%

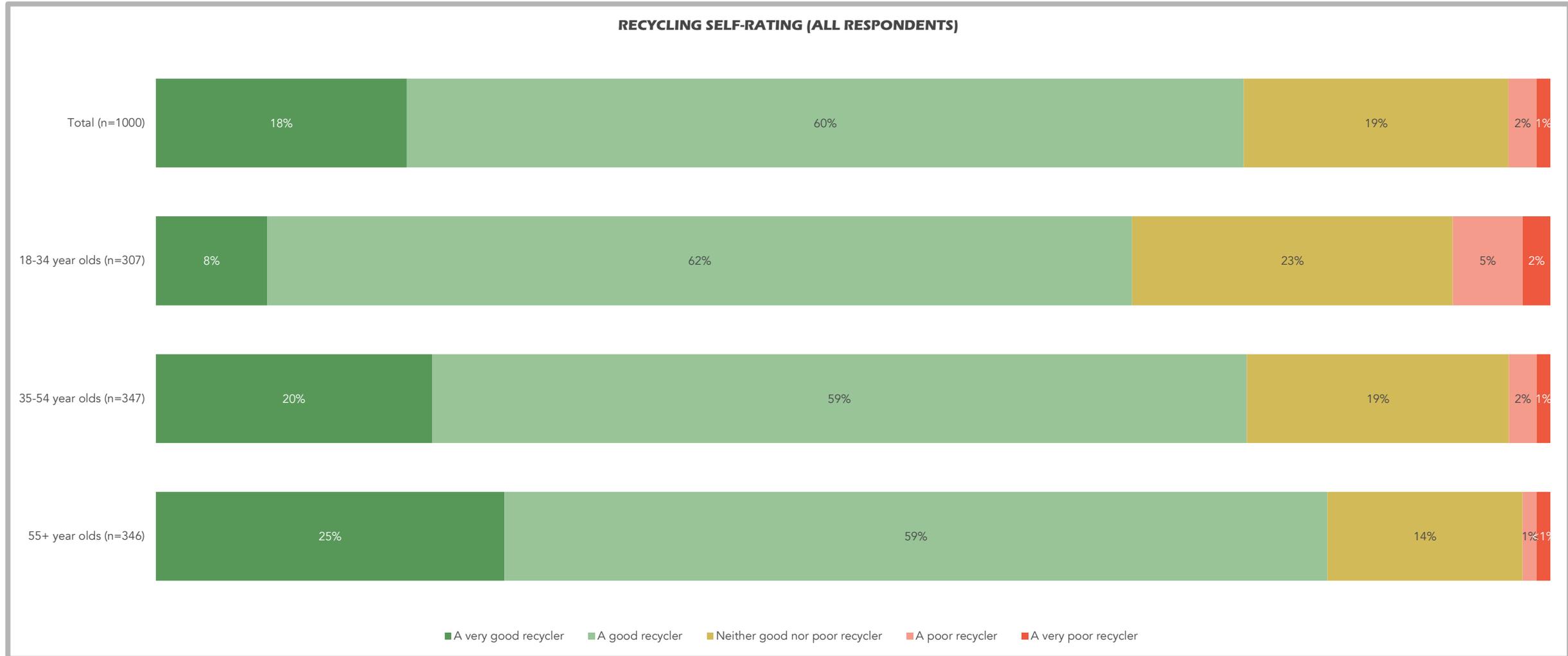
RECYCLING SELF-RATING

Being good at recycling increases with age

Overall, 78% of Australians said that they are good or very good at recycling, with reported recycling habits improving with age.



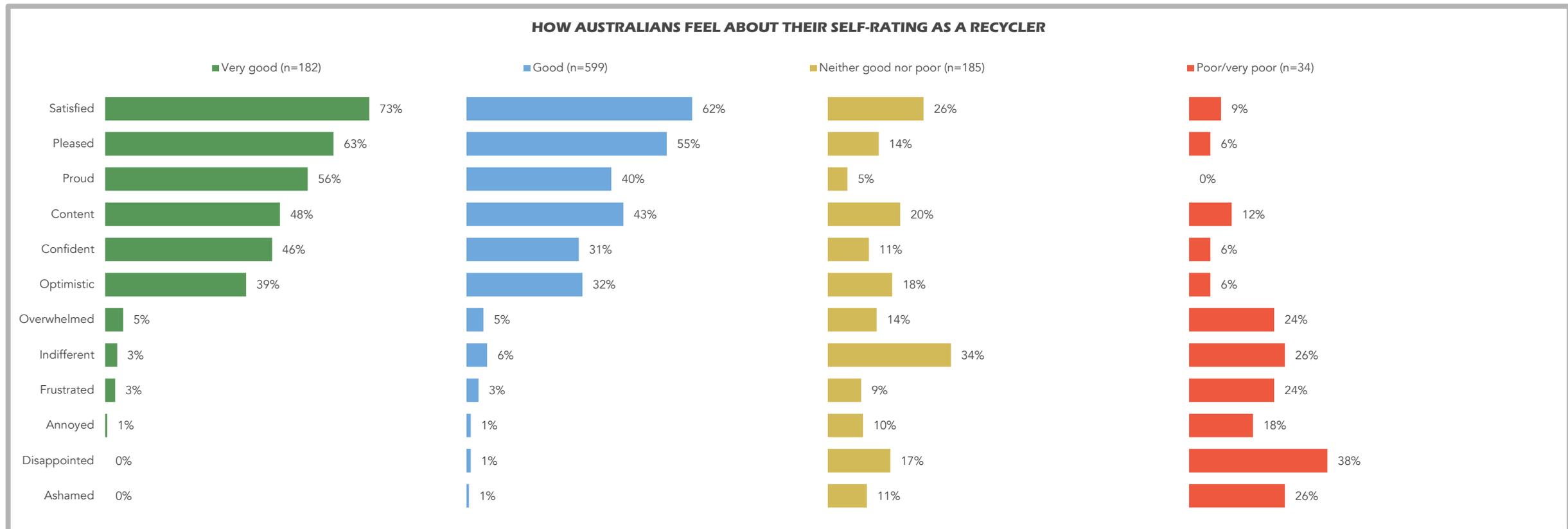
RECYCLING SELF-RATING (CONTINUED)



HOW DO GOOD RECYCLERS FEEL?

It feels good to be good at recycling

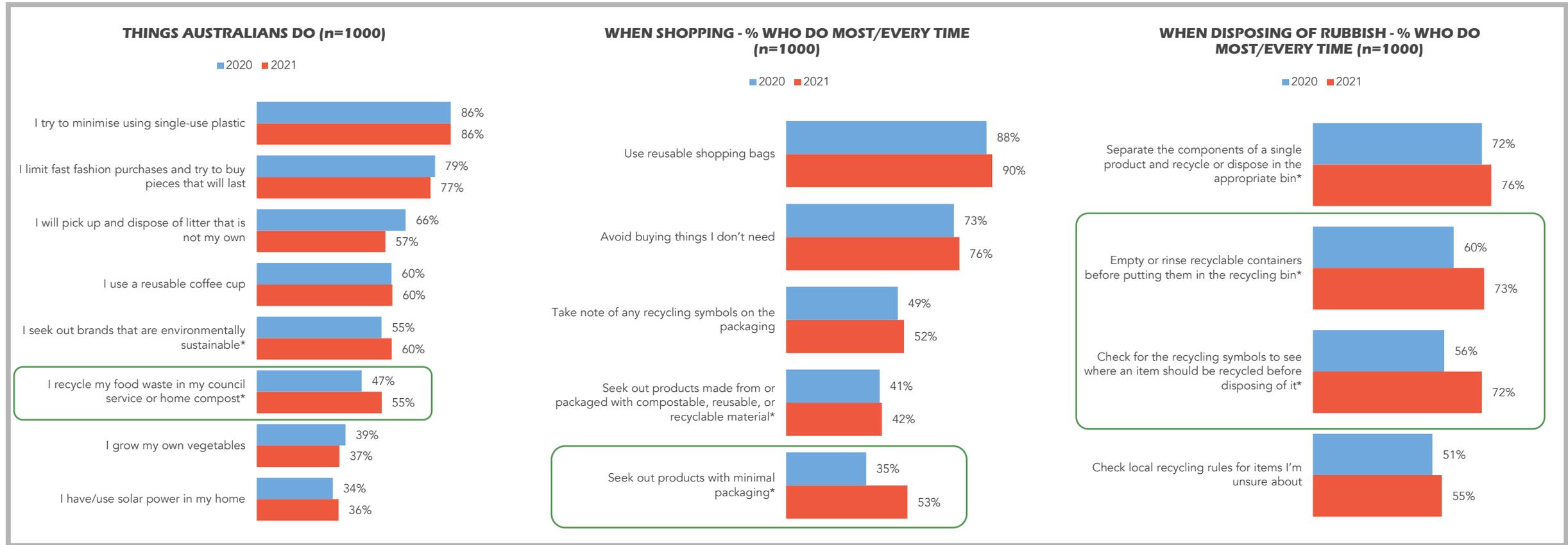
The emotions felt by good recyclers in relation to their recycling habits were overwhelmingly positive – 73% said that being a very good recycler made them feel **satisfied**, 63% said that it made them feel **pleased**, and 56% said that it made them feel **proud**. Conversely, poor recyclers tended to experience a range of negative emotions such as disappointment (38%), shame (26%), frustration (24%) and feelings of overwhelm (24%).



ENGAGING IN SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS – 2020 VS 2021/22

Overall, Australians' recycling behaviours are largely unchanged from the previous year.

While a few notable differences exist, these are attributable to amended wording (denoted by *) to better reflect the behaviours of interest. Differences in response to these between years suggest some interesting nuances in the way Australians approach recycling. These are discussed on the following page.



Q2.1 Which of the following are things that you do?
 Q2.3 When you are shopping, how often do you do the following?
 Q2.4a When you are disposing of rubbish, how often do you do the following?

ENGAGING IN SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS – 2020 VS 2021/22

2020 WORDING	2020 %		2021/22 WORDING	2021/22 %		IMPLICATION
I compost my food scraps	47%	▶	I recycle my food waste in my council service or home compost	55%	▶	New wording encompasses more options to participate in behaviour
Choose an alternative product to reduce excess packaging	35%	▶	Seek out products with minimal packaging	53%	▶	New wording encompasses an easier-to-do behaviour (looking for rather than choosing to purchase)
Rinse recyclable containers before putting them in the recycling bin	60%	▶	Empty or rinse recyclable containers before putting them in the recycling bin	73%	▶	Suggests that the rinsing specifically is the harder part to get people to do consistently
Check for the Australasian Recycling Label to see where an item should be recycled before disposing of it	56%	▶	Check for the recycling symbols to see where an item should be recycled before disposing of it	72%	▶	Suggests that Australians are willing to use the information available on packaging; they just don't know that it's called the Australasian Recycling Label



BELIEFS ABOUT RECYCLING

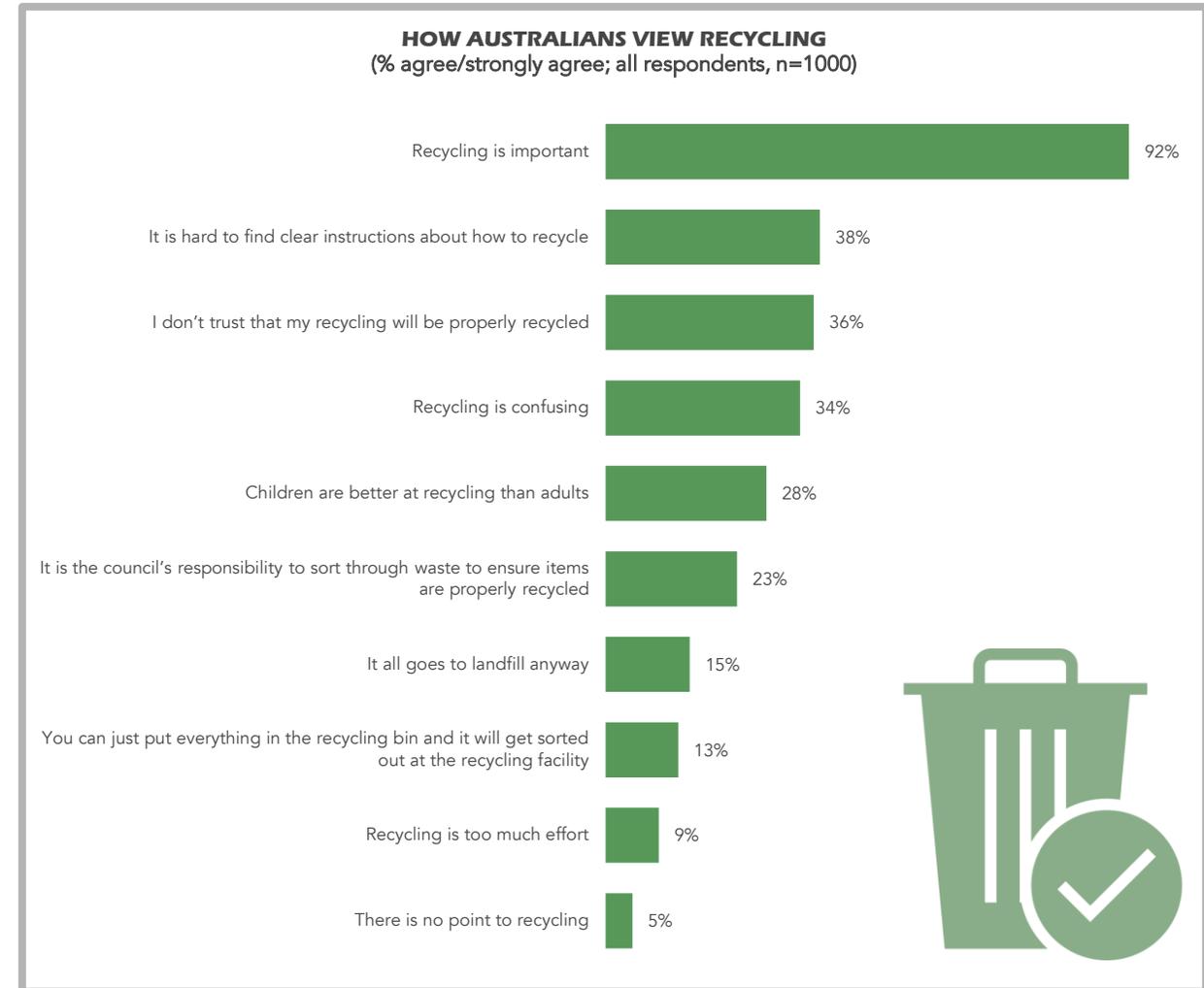


HOW DO AUSTRALIANS VIEW RECYCLING?

Recycling is important, but it could be easier

Although most respondents admitted to not recycling at every opportunity, an overwhelming majority (92%) agreed that recycling is important, with only 5% saying that there is no point to recycling. Despite agreement on its importance, however:

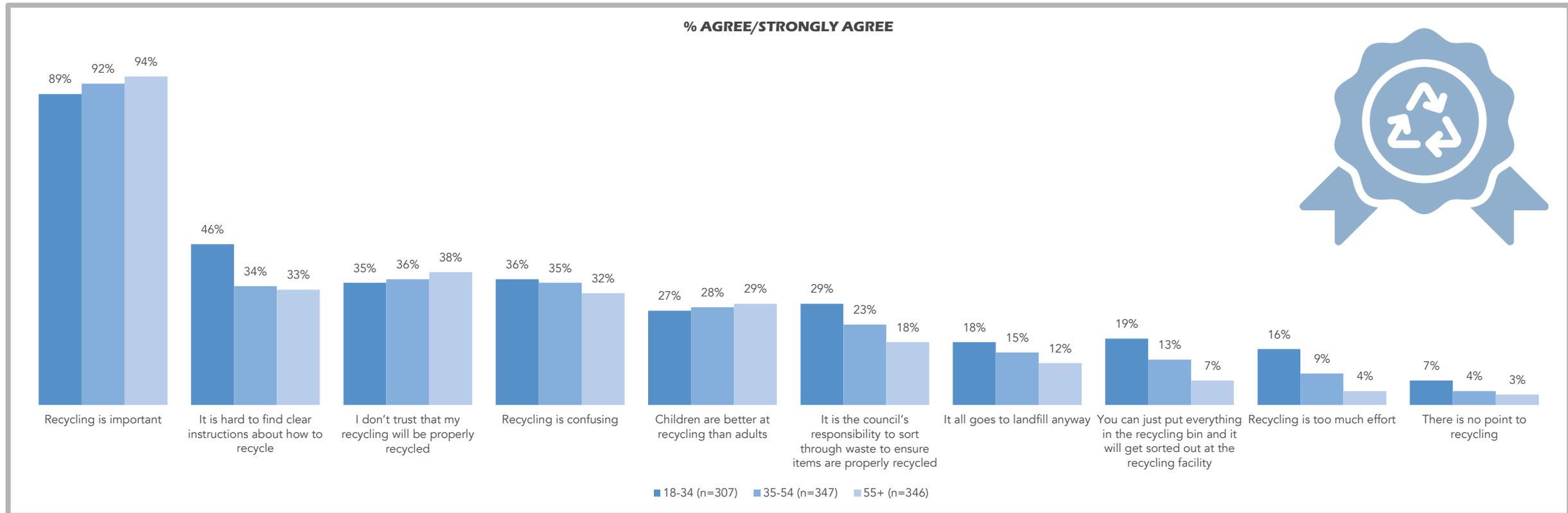
- Over a third of Australians say it is hard to find clear instructions about how to recycle (38%) and that recycling is confusing (34%)
- Over a third of Australians (36%) don't trust that their waste is being properly recycled (15% think it all just goes to landfill)



HOW DO AUSTRALIANS VIEW RECYCLING? (CONTINUED)

Older Australians place greater importance on recycling than younger Australians

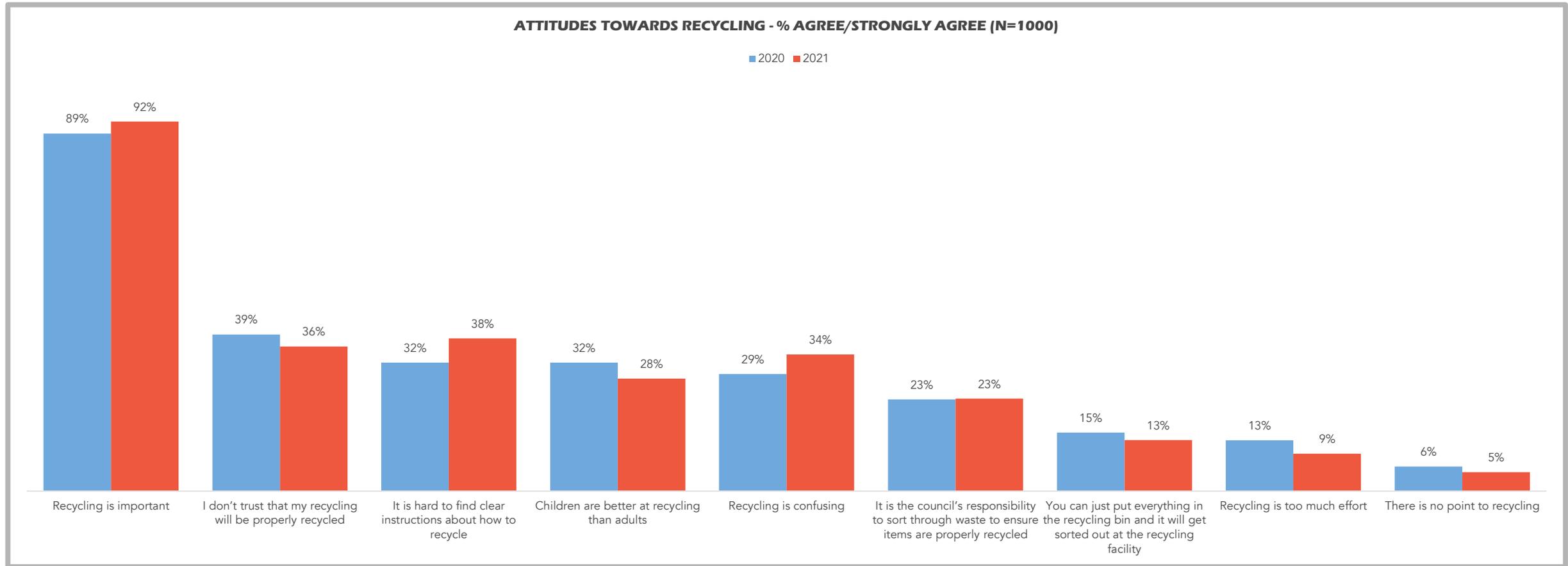
Overall, the importance placed on recycling increases with age. The oldest group of Australians viewed recycling as more important than the youngest group of Australian adults (94% vs. 89% agreement). Correspondingly, a significantly higher proportion of Australians aged 18-34 years reported finding recycling confusing and effortful than those aged over 35. Moreover, compared to the oldest group of Australians, the 18-54 year old group also place greater responsibility on the council and recycling facilities to recycle properly.



ATTITUDES TOWARDS RECYCLING – 2020 VS 2021/22

Australians feel the same about recycling as they did in 2020, with the majority agreeing that recycling is important, and disagreeing that there is no point to recycling.

Despite understanding its importance, however, the same barriers are perceived: 34% find it confusing, 38% say it is hard to find clear instructions about how to recycle, and 36% don't trust in the process.



WHY THERE IS NO POINT TO RECYCLING

Very few respondents (6%) felt that there was no point in recycling. For this group, the most common reasons behind this sentiment were either believing that recycling was not 'really recycled', or being pessimistic about the good it would do (i.e., that the world is too far gone already, or doubting that an individual's actions can make a difference).

Because China is not taking our rubbish anymore and most of it is not going to get recycled now. Australia doesn't have the capacity to recycle ALL the waste produced - 40-44 year old Male, Melbourne

Because if others don't use the bins correctly it all goes to landfill - 30-34 year old Female, Perth

I feel like it all goes to landfill - 30-34 year old Female, Melbourne

I have heard Australia doesn't have the facilities to properly recycle all the products we put into recycling - 25-29 year old Female, other VIC

I have seen the bins being collected and all put into the same truck despite one being only for recycling and the other for waste - so why bother! - 50-54 year old Female, Melbourne

I have the belief that much of what we perceive to be recycled, ends up in landfill. The ABC looked into this with 'war on waste'. But I'll keep doing what I've always done. Ideally I'd like more green bins though. - 60-64 year old Female, Adelaide

I've heard that our council doesn't do any different with the recycled materials than it does with our normal trash items - 30-34 year old Female, Perth

It is not so much I think recycling is pointless. I just feel that we do not know where the recyclable materials are going and if these materials are being reused for production and manufacturing of new products. Some companies boast they their product are from 100% recycled materials but there is no way to confirm if that is true, and it is not just a marketing tactic they use to get people to buy their products. - 40-44 year old Male, Sydney

It is only effective if everyone does it. No point if I am the only one doing it - 50-54 year old Female, Sydney

It just ends up in landfill, except for aluminium - 60-64 year old Male, Sydney

Most goes to landfills. - 50-54 year old Female, other NSW

Most recycled items end up in landfill - 18-24 year old Male, Sydney

My change won't impact the world. - 30-34 year old Female, Brisbane

Others are not doing sometimes - 35-39 year old Female, Brisbane

Stories about shipping waste to Third World countries. Never ever see media stories about active recycling plants in this country - 50-54 year old Male, Sydney

The world is too far damaged, it won't actually make a difference at this point - 18-24 year old Female, Melbourne

There is little or no infrastructure or industry that actually conducts recycling - 25-29 year old Male, Sydney

There is no market for it - 55-59 year old Male, Melbourne

Too many people creating more waste - 40-44 year old Male, Adelaide

Too much effort. What's the point - 30-34 year old Female, other NSW

What ever is too recycle goes to land fill anyway - 60-64 year old Female, Sydney

When the truck picks it up that it all goes in the same hole - 18-24 year old Male, Brisbane

All go to land full anyway, sustainability and climate change is a fraud - 55-59 year old Female, other QLD

Because of where it goes and wat happens to it - 18-24 year old Male, other NSW

It all goes into landfill anyway - 50-54 year old Male, Sydney

It all goes to same place - 25-29 year old Male, Perth

It gets put together in one truck - 30-34 year old Male, Sydney

Just a little percent of the entire waste get recycled properly - 25-29 year old Male, Sydney

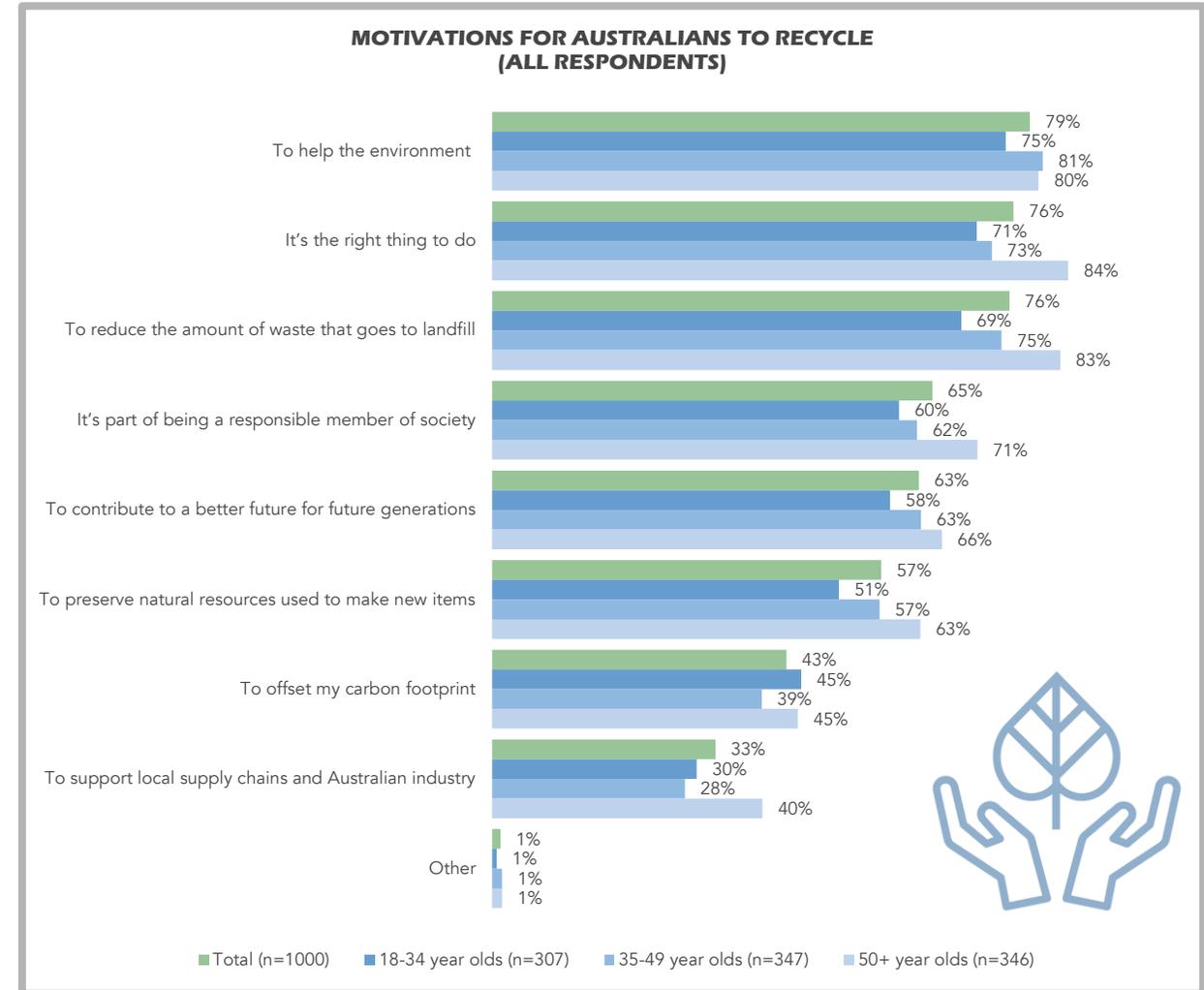


MOTIVATIONS TO RECYCLE

Australians are most motivated to recycle to help the environment (79%) and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill (76%), as well as it simply being the right thing to do (76%).

Higher proportions of older than younger Australians are motivated by feelings of social responsibility:

- 84% of those 55 and older are motivated by it being the **right thing to do** compared to 71% of those 18-34 and 73% of those 35-54
- 71% of those 55 and older are motivated by playing their part as a **responsible member of society** compared to 60% of those 18-34 and 62% of those 35-54
- 40% of those 55 and older are motivated by **supporting local supply chains and Australian industry** compared to 30% of those 18-34 and 28% of those 35-54

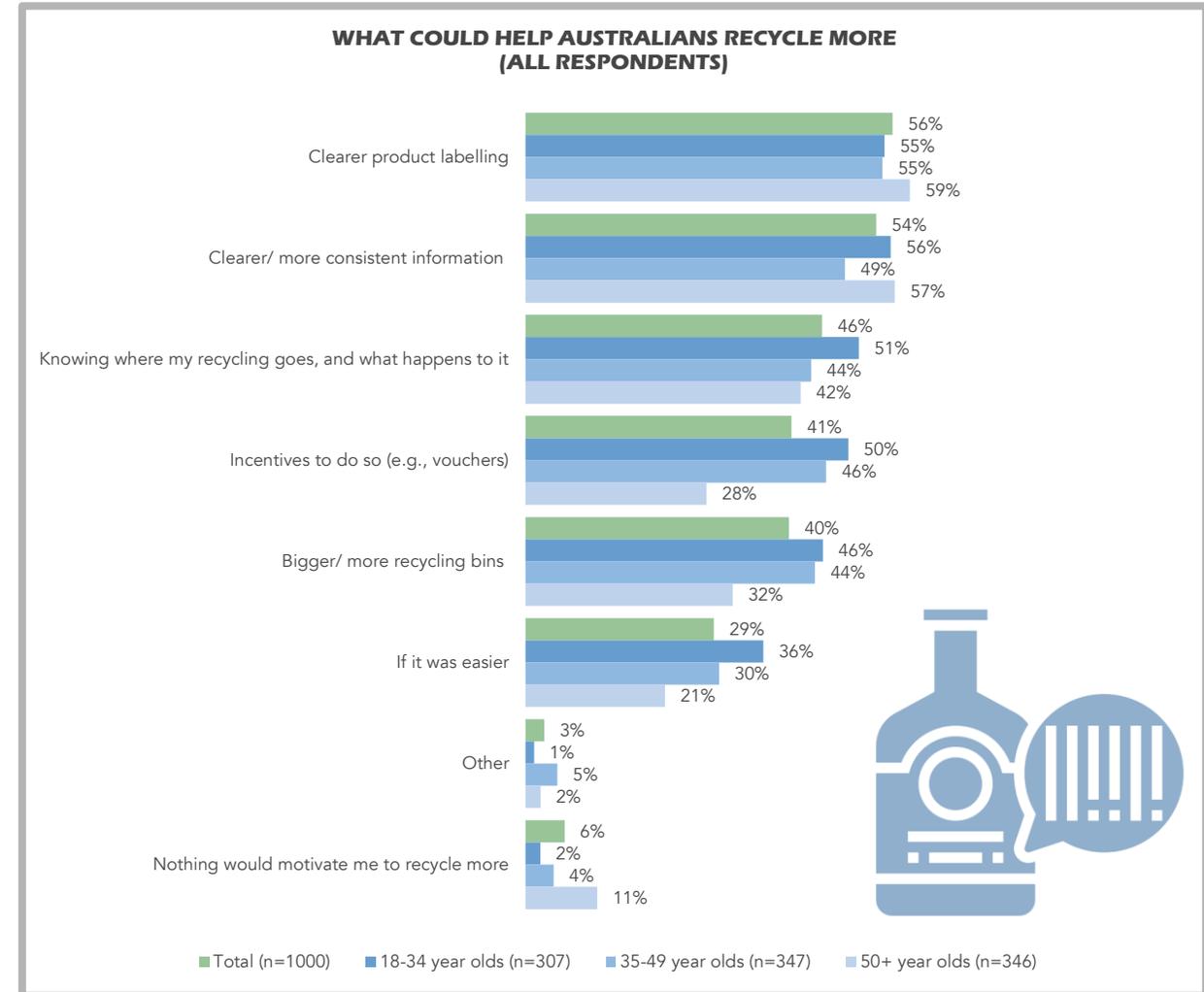


BARRIERS TO RECYCLING

Across all generations, Australians find unclear product labelling (56%) and unclear and inconsistent information (54%) to be the most prominent barriers to recycling more, with a secondary barrier being a lack of knowledge or understanding of the process (where recycling goes, and what happens to it, 46%).

Compared to older Australians, younger Australians are looking for the process to be easier (36% of 18-34 year olds compared to 21% of those 55 and older):

- 46% of 18-34 year olds and 44% of 35-54 year olds say **more or bigger recycling bins** would help them to recycle more compared to only 32% of those aged 55 and older
- 50% of 18-34 year olds and 46% of 35-54 year olds say **incentives** would help them to recycle more compared to only 28% of those aged 55 and older



HOW AUSTRALIANS DISPOSE OF ITEMS WHEN CLEANING UP

Respondents were given a set of waste items and asked to report how they would dispose of each one – into landfill, commingled recycling, compost or specialised recycling. Overall, most respondents reported disposing of these items correctly. Items causing the most confusion were electronics (only 37% of Australians correctly identified that a broken kettle needs specialised recycling), aerosol cans (only 32% correctly assigning this item to specialised recycling) and soft plastics (only 29% utilising specialised recycling).

Landfill	
 <p>92% of Australians correctly dispose of used nappies in landfill</p>	 <p>40% of Australians incorrectly dispose of broken kettles in landfill compared to 37% who correctly dispose of these in specialised recycling</p>
 <p>82% of Australians correctly dispose of disposable face masks in landfill</p>	 <p>36% and 31% of Australians incorrectly dispose of aerosol cans in commingled recycling and landfill, respectively; only 32% know to dispose of these in specialised recycling</p>
 <p>58% of Australians correctly dispose of polystyrene and styrofoam in landfill</p>	 <p>38% and 31% of Australians incorrectly dispose of soft plastic food packaging in landfill or commingled recycling, respectively; but 29% correctly dispose of these in specialised recycling</p>
 <p>54% of Australians correctly dispose of bubble wrap in landfill</p>	
Specialised recycling such as council or drop-off	Organic/garden waste
 <p>74% of Australians correctly dispose of batteries in specialised recycling</p>	 <p>74% of Australians correctly dispose of coffee grounds in an organic/garden waste bin</p>
 <p>61% of Australians correctly dispose of paint cans in specialised recycling</p>	 <p>86% of Australians correctly dispose of small garden branches in an organic/garden waste bin</p>
 <p>49% of Australians correctly dispose of old clothes in specialised recycling; 29% also equally correctly dispose of these in landfill</p>	 <p>76% of Australians correctly dispose of eggshells in an organic/garden waste bin</p>



LEARNING ABOUT
RECYCLING



FINDING OUT WHERE TO RECYCLE

Australians are most likely to find information about recycling through an online search or through their council; however, over a quarter (27%) would just put something they are unsure of into the general waste bin.

When wanting to find out whether or not an item can be recycled...



42% of Australians would do an **online search**

18-34 and 35-54 year olds are more likely than 55+ year olds to do this (52% and 45% vs. 29%)



24% of Australians would look at a **pamphlet** provided by the council

55+ year olds are more likely than 18-34 and 35-54 year olds to do this (36% vs. 13% and 22%)



16% of Australians would contact their **local council** or visit their council website



16% of Australians would **ask someone else**



27% of Australians would just put it in the **general waste bin**



10% of Australians would just put it in the **recycling bin**



52% of all Australians say they have used the **Australasian Recycling Label** to help them work out what and how to recycle

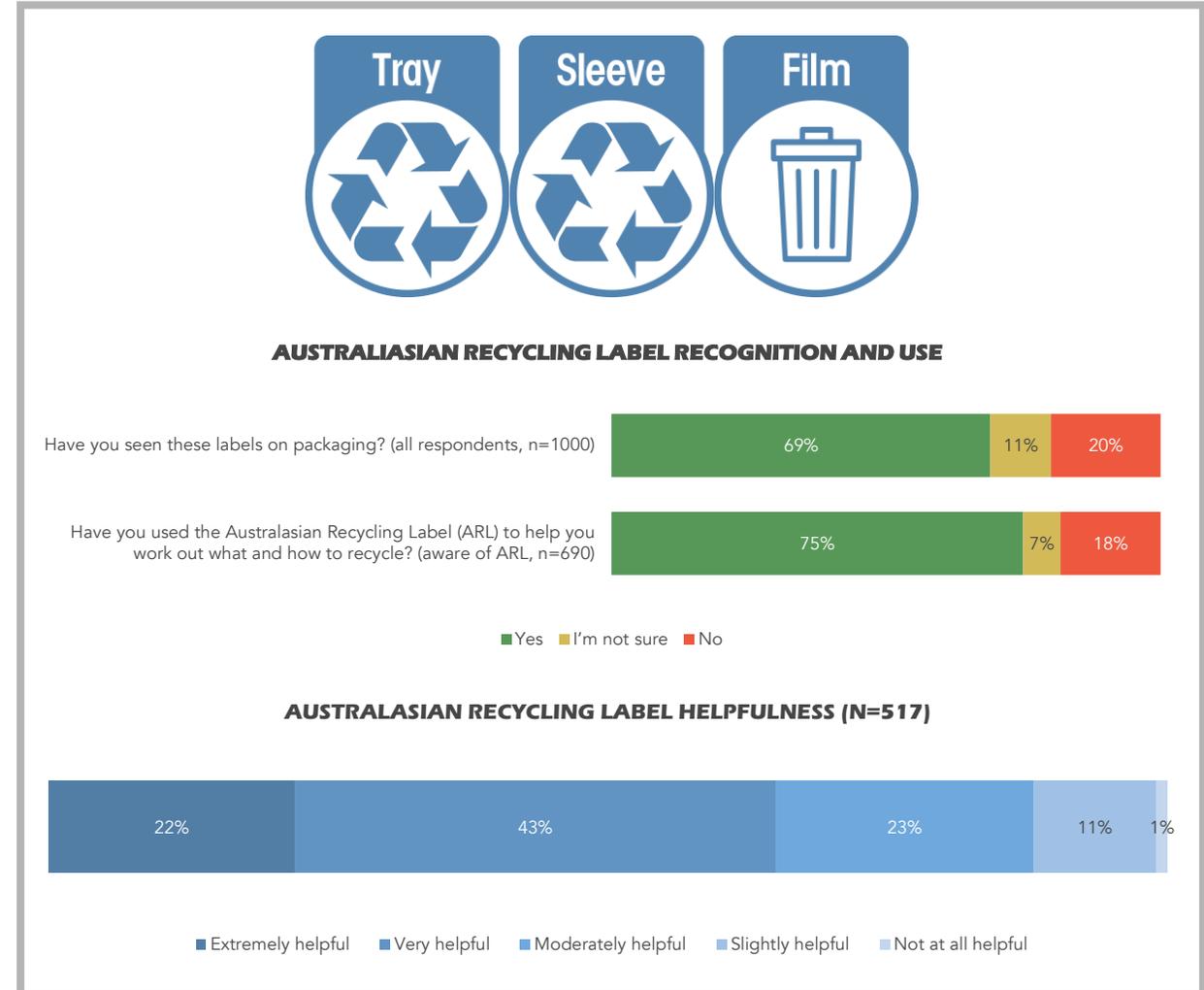
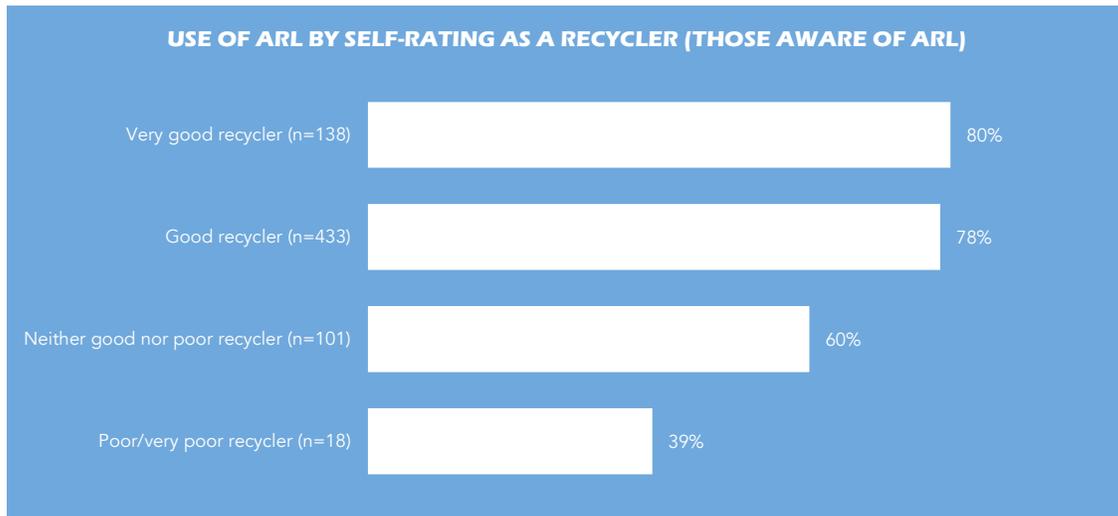
THE AUSTRALASIAN RECYCLING LABEL

Two-thirds of Australians recognise the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL)

Overall, 69% of respondents reported having seen the ARL on packaging, with 20% reporting that they had not seen the label and 11% unsure. Familiarity with the label was significantly stronger among younger Australians (87% for the 18-34 age group), dropping to 56% among those aged 55 and older.

Of the respondents who were familiar with the ARL, most (75%) said that they had used the ARL to help them work out what and how to recycle, with nearly unanimous agreement that the label was at least slightly helpful to them. More specifically, 22% said that they found the ARL to be extremely helpful and 43% said that it was very helpful.

Use of the ARL by those aware was significantly greater among those considering themselves to be good or very good recyclers, compared to indifferent or poor recyclers.

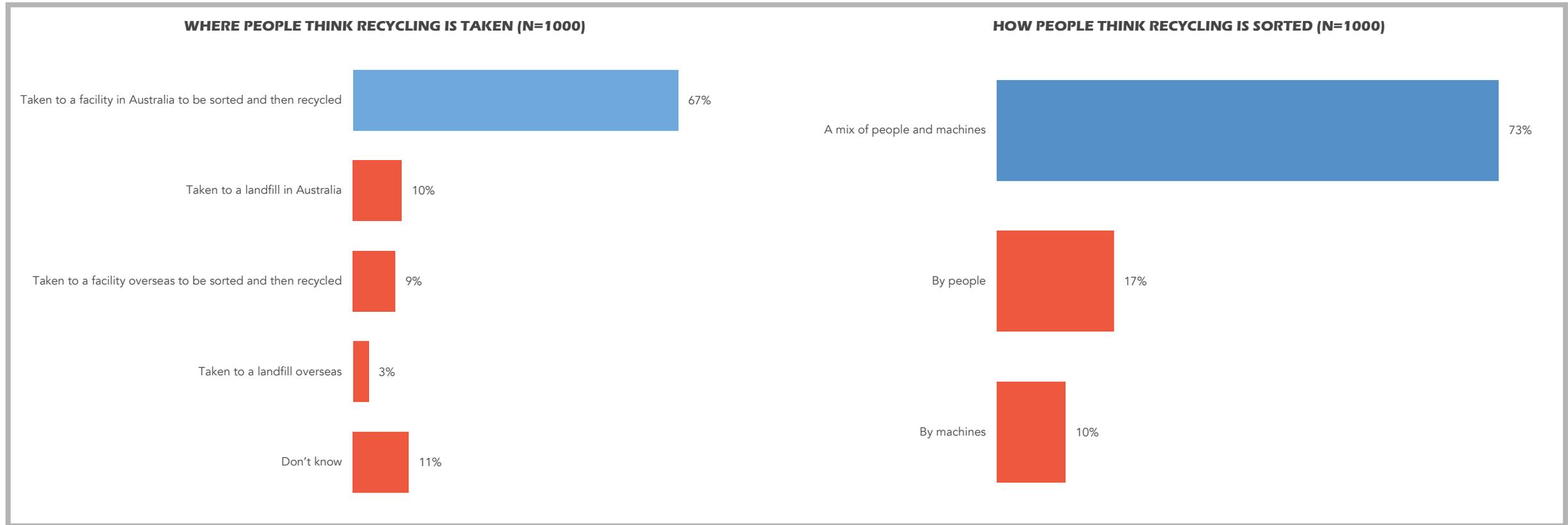


Q2.9a Have you seen these labels on packaging?
 Q2.10 Have you used the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) to help you work out what and how to recycle?
 Q2.11 How helpful are the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) symbols to you?

RECYCLING KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge about how and where recycling occurs is high

Overall, two-thirds of Australians correctly stated that items in kerbside recycling bins are taken to a facility in Australia to be sorted and then recycled. Knowledge of *how* recycling is sorted was also high, with nearly three-quarters aware that this is done by a mix of people and machines.



Q4.1 What do you think is done with items in the kerbside recycling bin after they are collected by the council?
Q4.2 How do you think recycling is sorted?

RECYCLING KNOWLEDGE (CONTINUED)

True or false?

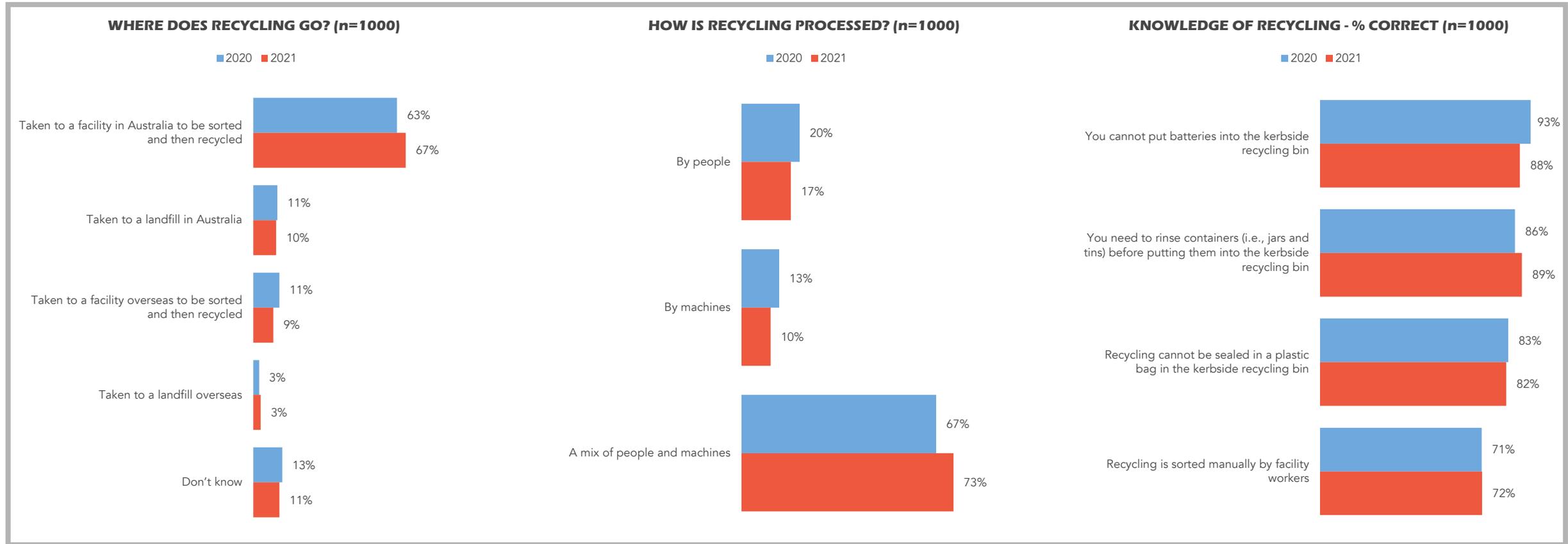
Overall, respondents indicated strong levels of knowledge around the need to rinse containers before recycling them, not putting batteries in the recycling, that containers with leftover food and liquid can contaminate recycling, and that recycling needs to be put into the recycling bin loose rather than sealed. The area with the weakest knowledge was envelope recycling, with almost two thirds believing that plastic windows need to be removed prior to recycling.



HOW RECYCLING WORKS – 2020 VS 2021/22

Australians knowledge of recycling has remained consistent in 2021/22, with the majority of respondents agreeing that recycling is sorted and recycled within Australia (67%) and done with a combination of people and machines (73%).

Australians’ knowledge of how and what to recycle also remained consistent with no notable differences from 2020.



Q4.1 What do you think is done with items in the kerbside recycling bin after they are collected by the council?
 Q4.2 How do you think recycling is sorted?
 Q4.3 Are the following statements about kerbside recycling true or false?

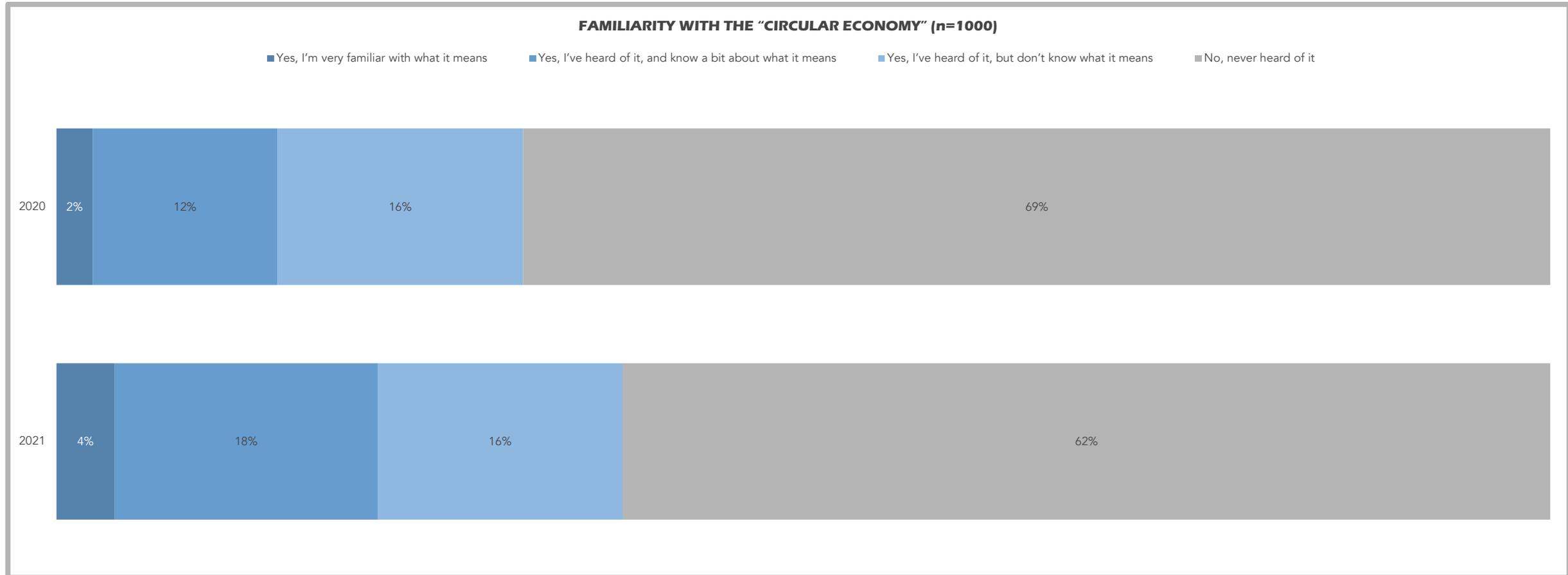


THE CIRCULAR
ECONOMY



CIRCULAR ECONOMY – 2020 VS 2021/22

Respondents were asked if they had heard of the concept of a circular economy; this concept showed moderate recognition with only 38% of respondents advising that they were in any way familiar with the concept, compared to 31% in 2020.



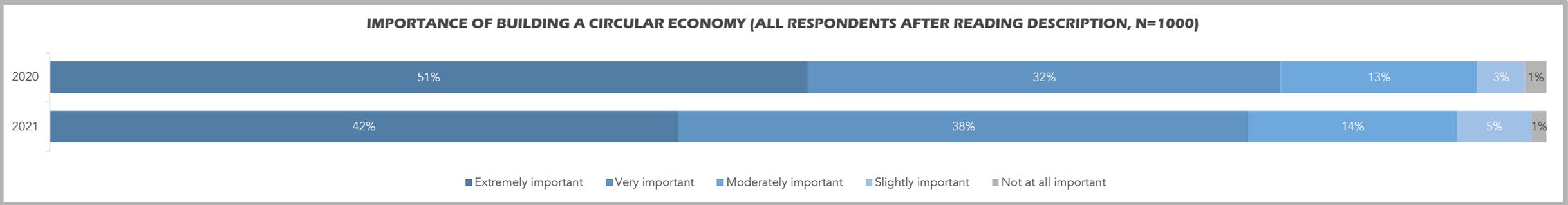
Q5.2 Have you heard of the concept of a "circular economy"?

Q5.3 Based on the above description of a circular economy, how important do you think it is to build a circular economy in Australia?

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

When provided with a definition of a circular economy, respondents nearly unanimously (99%) decided that it was at least slightly important; 80% said that it was very or extremely important. Overall, however, there was a slight decrease in the strength of importance in 2021/22 compared to 2020.

A circular economy is about changing the way we produce, assemble, package, sell and use products to minimise waste and increase the collection and use of recycled material in manufacturing new products, as opposed to a linear economy or “take-make-dispose” model whereby raw materials are used to make products that are then disposed of in landfill after short-term use. A circular economy of recycling creates environmental, economic and social benefits through litter and emissions reduction, job creation and industry growth, and by increasing efficient use of natural resources (including energy, water, trees and oil).



HOW DO AUSTRALIANS CONTRIBUTE TO THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

All food , veg and vegetation waste are put in our compost bins at home , reuse bags used for shopping , old clothes etc recycled by taking to Vinnies , Salvo's etc , cans / bottles are returned to collection points - 70+ year old Male, Sydney

Always recycle in the bins as long as the instructions on the packaging is clear. Always recycle batteries by taking them to recycling points in many supermarkets. Use worm farms to reuse waste vegetable matter other than hard wood - 70+ year old Male, Melbourne

Avoid buying single use plastics. Compost of food items. Shop & buy products that are environmentally friendly. Use solar energy & rainwater tanks - 60-64 year old Female, other VIC

Buy 2nd hand when possible, recycle as much of my waste as possible, dispose of waste items responsibly and research when I'm not sure what can be recycled - 55-59 year old Female, other VIC

Buy and consume only what I need and replace items only when they break (not when there is a new trend). Recycle everything that I can or offer to charity shops - 50-54 year old Female, Sydney

Buy better quality items that last, repair before replacing and recycle when I can - 55-59 year old Female, Melbourne

Buy pre-loved items instead of new ones. Re-purpose, donate or recycle whenever possible. Buy unpackaged fruit and vegetables - 65-69 year old Female, Brisbane

Buy products which have been made from recyclable materials which can then be recycled and reused - 25-29 year old Female, other VIC

Buy second hand/recycled/upcycled products where I can to minimise buying new Repurposing old items - 25-29 year old Female, other NSW

Buying products/packaging that are made of recycled materials and dispose of them correctly after use - 35-39 year old Male, Sydney

By donating usable goods for re-use, as well as repurposing and reusing products wherever possible. Try to buy goods made from recycled materials - 55-59 year old Female, Canberra

Collect drinks cans from family for the Cash 4 Cans program; use leftovers for additional meals & any food waste into my compost bin; re-use any items that I can - 65-69 year old Female, Perth

Collect plastic bread tags to donate to overseas to build wheelchairs re-use/re-cycle as much as possible - 50-54 year old Female, Adelaide

I always try and think of ways to reuse something before throwing it out, and I never replace anything e.g. A phone, clothes etc. Until it is completely not functioning - 30-34 year old Female, other NSW

I collect ring pulls from cans and donate/ recycle to a charity that creates limbs mobility for the disabled - 25-29 year old Female, Brisbane

I do all the recycling I need to do . In my home I recycle every thing if a piece of furniture is good I either give it away or I painted to give it a new look,. I do remodel my clothes in winter and in summer to give them a fresh new look! I grew up doing it as we never had enough money to buy new things! By recycling as much we could afford to have money for a holiday every summer - 70+ year old Female, other NSW

I do not buy aerosols and try to buy items I can continue to use not buy once and throw away. We put as much back to the gardens and feed to the chickens as we can and grow veggies - 25-29 year old Female, other NSW

I follow with attempts to understand why and what people really need in a circular economy from what is outside of the circle and based on greed selfishness or product misuse. To give some opinion to influence what we really need as a collective and cultural group and in some small way help guide our choices of manufacture and use to improve our health and well being in a modern environmental way - 65-69 year old Male, Brisbane

I get things from the tip to recycle, I do not wash jars cans as on tank water. I buy from opp shops, I reuse a lot of packaging in my crafts. I reuse polystyrene boxes that I get them to keep me from the veggie shop , so I can store things in and mice do not get in them. I like to find different uses for pallets I get off the side of the rd - 50-54 year old Female, other VIC

I recycle. I buy things that can easily be recycled. I buy second hand clothes and things I need from charity shops as much as possible. I compost all the scraps of my fruit and vegetables, and place it back into my garden soil to grow my home plants. I support businesses using recycled packaging and innovating energy saving methods - 30-34 year old Female, other VIC



HOW DO AUSTRALIANS CONTRIBUTE TO THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY? (CONTINUED)

I re-use containers as much as possible. I sell second hand goods on Gumtree rather than throwing them out. I take my cans and bottles to the recycling depo - 50-54 year old Female, Adelaide

I try and recycle as much as I can. Our church has many, cases and cases, of outdated manuals that I was taking to recycle centres, but had to pay for the privilege. As a result I started placing them in the recycle bin. Why should an individual have to pay to have paper products recycled, This just doesn't make any sense to me - 70+ year old Male, Adelaide

I try to buy unpackaged items and always recycle responsibly and donate items not wanted or needed anymore and also shop second hand regularly - 65-69 year old Female, other TAS

I try to recycle as much as possible, hoping what I recycle doesn't end up in landfill and is repurposed where possible. I try to consider what I buy so items don't need to be updated regularly - 50-54 year old Female, Adelaide

Recycle as much as possible. Try to buy where packaging is recyclable. Purchase Australian made or grown - 65-69 year old Female, other NSW

I try to recycle correctly and help family members to do so (who can't or won't otherwise). I choose to use less, so I mustn't recycle as much. I recycle my own things (repair them) if possible. I choose products that appear to have the longest lifespan (by being durable and/or multi-use) - 35-39 year old Female, Adelaide

I try to reuse or repair things before disposing it off and also recycle things by looking at what it says about on the product packaging - 30-34 year old Female, Sydney

I use a company called Upparel to recycle my clothes, donate and buy from op shops, buy things made out of recycled materials - 45-49 year old Female, Melbourne

I use circular economy products where I can e.g. Zeroco - 30-34 year old Male, Melbourne

I was born in the 1930's, hardly anything was ever thrown away, that generation and all the ones prior had a circular economies - that is not new! - 70+ year old Female, Brisbane

It is a logical alternative to a linear economy. So, I help preserving the natural resources by retaining the quality and value of products and their parts and the materials - 40-44 year old Male, Perth

It's hard. Because so much stuff comes with so much packaging, like excessively so, companies need to cut way back on this, charge extra for packaging & then we will see much more people changing when it hits their hip pocket. Take perfume & aftershave, why can we not buy it in a dark bottle, with no other packaging. How can we do the right thing, when it's just not available, companies need to think outside the square - 60-64 year old Female, Perth

Keep amount sent to landfill to a minimum. Heavily compost at home and use this to grow vegetables and fruit Send used clothing to companies that recycle the material - 65-69 year old Male, Melbourne

Minimise buying plastic products, stop buying single use plastic products, recycle organic waste to garden compost, try to buy direct from wholesale shops to lessen packaging waste - 65-69 year old Male, other SA

Offer 'waste' products that are still useful for free on gumtree (cardboard boxes, glass jars, egg cartons, etc); always look to buy needed items second hand before buying new; compost food scraps and garden waste - 50-54 year old Female, Hobart

Recycle everything I legally can, compost everything I possibly can, take to specialised drop off points (e.g. Hazardous waste drop off, aerosol drop off, donate used items to charity, Recycle, containers for change, batteries, ink cartridges etc) as much as I possibly can - 50-54 year old Female, Perth

Recycle items. Shop at second hand markets. Shop at op shops. Don't buy new. Buy used stuff off marketplace. Borrow things from friends (like tools and machinery) - 18-24 year old Female, other QLD

Recycle whatever I can from household waste, recycle soft plastics using redcycle. Take ewaste to an ewaste drop off point, donate old clothing or give away items no longer needed on Facebook good karma networks or community pages - 35-39 year old Female, Melbourne

Recycling, donating, composting, using specific recycling (such as for batteries, mobile phones, etc), sending old spectacles to charities that provide them to those who can't access them any other way - 70+ year old Female, Sydney

HOW DO AUSTRALIANS CONTRIBUTE TO THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY? (CONTINUED)

Separate all rubbish into appropriate bins to aid dispersal Grow my own vegetables and fruit Minimise electricity usage Encourage others to do likewise. Solar panels Solar hot water Batteries and Invertor in Home - 50-54 year old Female, Adelaide

Sorting of waste and purchasing recycled products. Investing in recycling and re-using waste and also having tax payer money invested in the circular economy - 40-44 year old Male, Melbourne

Try and buy things with packaging made from recycled products, curbside recycling and soft plastics recycling. Thinking twice about whether to just throw out items or if they can be donated/used for a different purpose - 25-29 year old Female, Darwin

Try and reduce single use plastic, try and choose products I can reuse, try and donate or sell unwanted items - 35-39 year old Female, other NSW

Try buy second hand always first. Minimise our home. Stick to budgets. Fix things that are broken, not just buy new straight away - 25-29 year old Female, other WA

Try my best to recycle everything correctly, try to limit my consumption of things that end up in landfill. Never throw my recycling in the bin sealed in plastic bags. Try to limit my consumption in general and reuse things as often as I can - 25-29 year old Female, Sydney

Upcycling lots of things, have a compost bin, try not to waste food, don't throw out good stuff just because it isn't in fashion or old - 70+ year old Female, other NSW

Use buy nothing groups and marketplace on Facebook. Ask to borrow items before looking to purchase. Use second hand stores - 30-34 year old Female, other WA

Use drop off bins for recycling printer cartridges and batteries provided by local retailers through organizations like Planet Ark. - 65-69 year old Female, other VIC

Vegetable scrap goes into my garden compost which then I use to grow other vegetables. Clothes are worn year after year, by making sure I look after them. Old bed linen is taken to the RSPCA to be used by their dogs/cats. Batteries are taken to the Library to be recycled. Other electrical goods are taken to Bunnings for recycling. - 60-64 year old Female, Adelaide

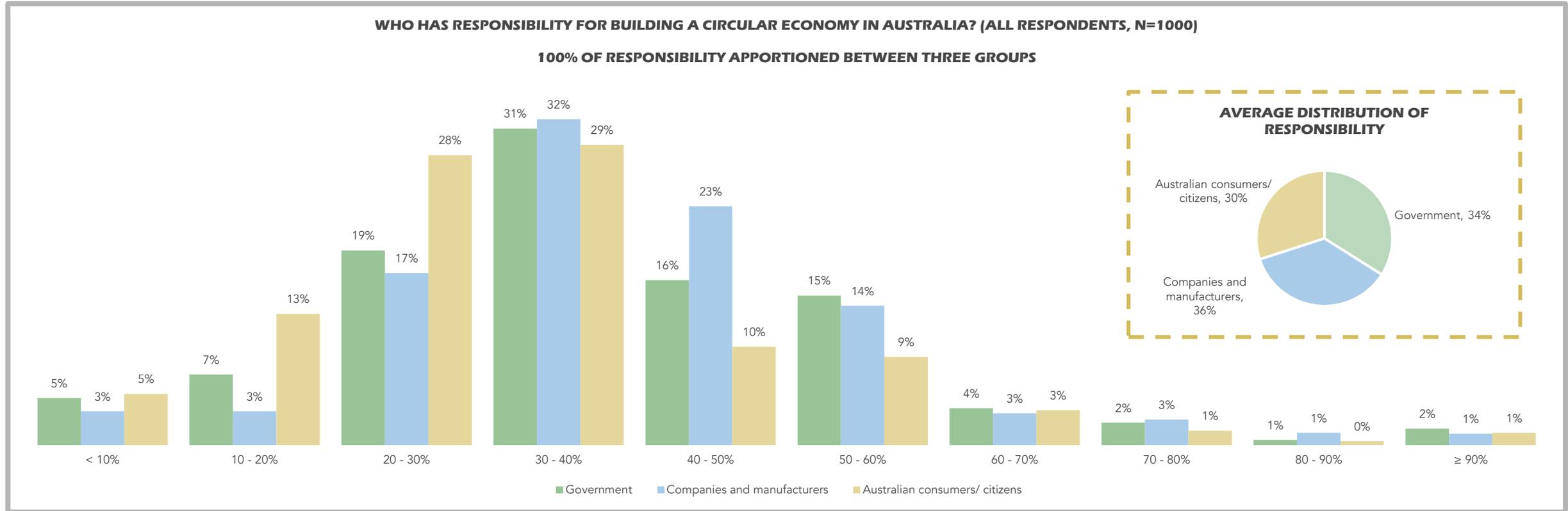
Where I live we run it on a circular (permaculture) ideal. My parents and grandparents lived in a circular economy - due to the great depression of the 1930s. It's not a new thing and I learnt from them. I dislike over packaging (what Aldi do!), everything I purchase nowadays must be long lasting and reusable - 55-59 year old Female, other VIC



RESPONSIBILITY FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Australians think the responsibility for building a circular economy is spread evenly between Government, business, and the public

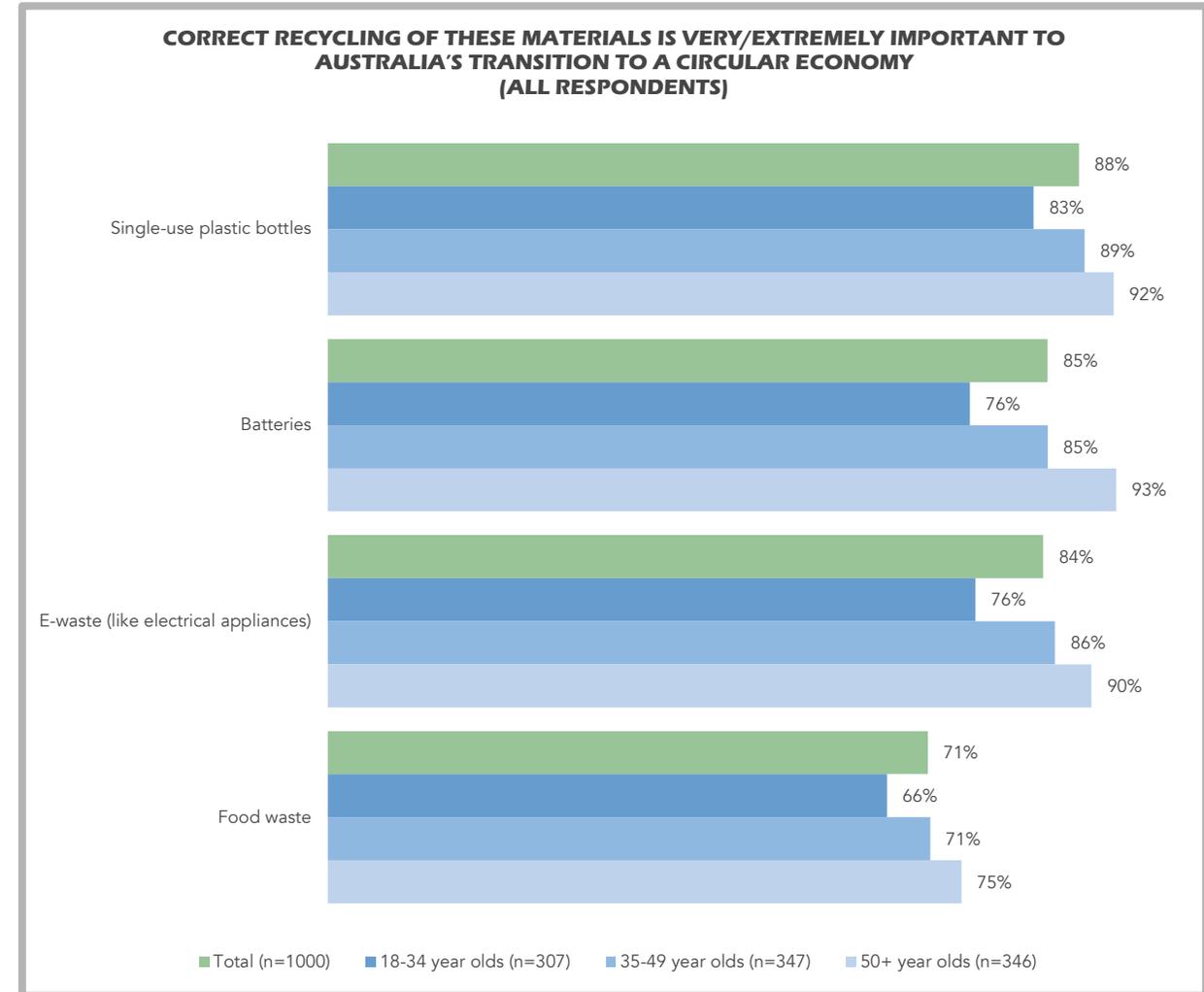
On average, Australians assigned 36% of the responsibility for building Australia’s circular economy to companies and manufacturers, 34% to Government, and the remaining 30% to the public. Younger Australians were more inclined than older to place the responsibility with Government (37% of 18-34 year olds compared to 32% of those 55 and older), while older Australians were more inclined than younger to place it with business (37% of those 35 and older compared to 34% of those 18-34).



BUILDING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

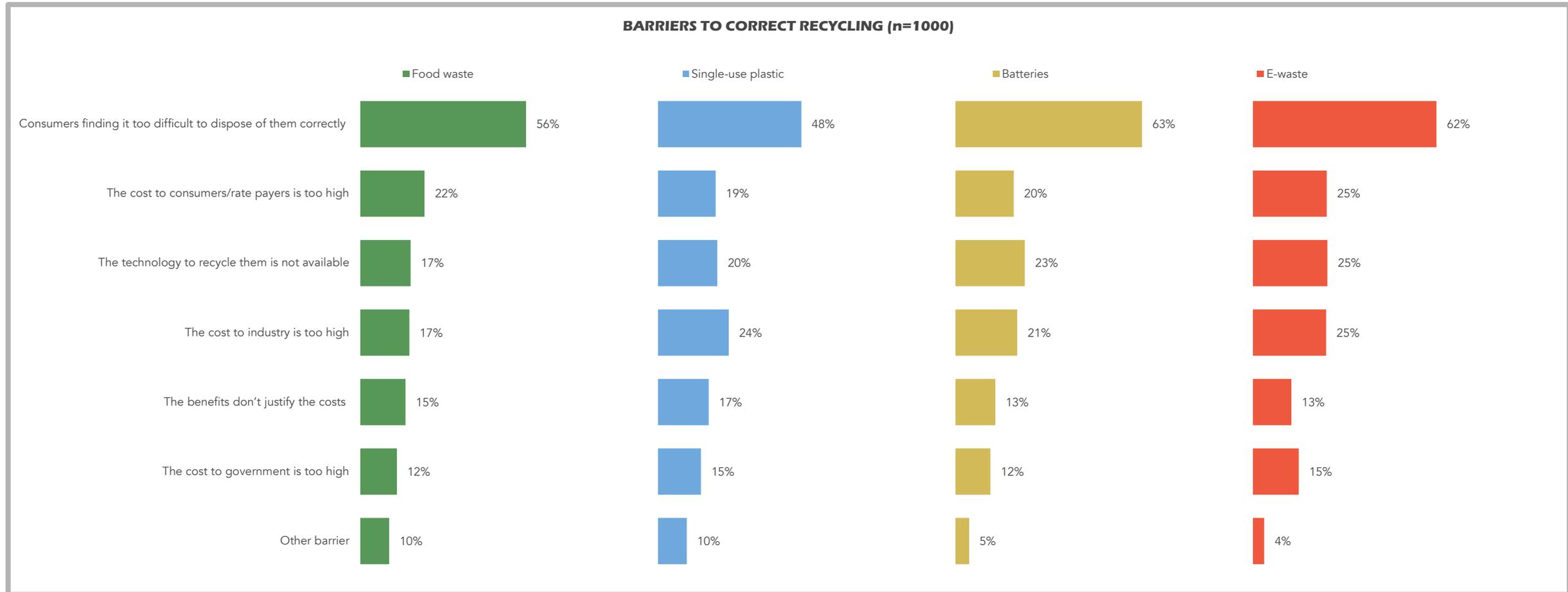
Australians rate single-use plastic bottles, batteries, and e-waste (88%, 85% and 84% respectively) as slightly more important than food waste (71%) as materials that need to be recycled correctly in the transition to a circular economy.

Interestingly, the youngest generation (18-34) placed significantly less importance on batteries and e-waste than did older Australians.



BARRIERS TO RESOURCE RECOVERY FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Asked their opinion on the barriers to the correct recycling of each material, Australians saw consumer effort/attitude as the primary issue.



SOLUTIONS TO MANAGING WASTE

Respondents were provided with five different solutions for managing waste; each differed in their level of sustainability with 'avoid buying unnecessary or single-use items' being the most sustainable and 'dispose of waste into landfill's being least sustainable.

A high proportion of Australians (77%) correctly said that disposing of waste into landfills was the worst of the presented solutions. The ranking for the best solution was more contentious – 'avoid buying unnecessary or single-use items' and 'recycle materials in the correct bins to ensure they can be made into something new' were equally ranked as the best solutions (both 34%).

CORRECT ORDER	1	2	3	4	5
1. Avoid buying unnecessary or single-use items	34%	18%	16%	25%	8%
2. Reuse materials by donating them, upcycling or repurposing	14%	27%	30%	24%	6%
3. Buy products that use recycled packaging or materials	15%	28%	28%	23%	7%
4. Recycle materials in the correct bins to ensure they can be made into something new	34%	23%	20%	20%	3%
5. Dispose of waste into landfills	4%	5%	6%	9%	77%



CHILDREN AND RECYCLING

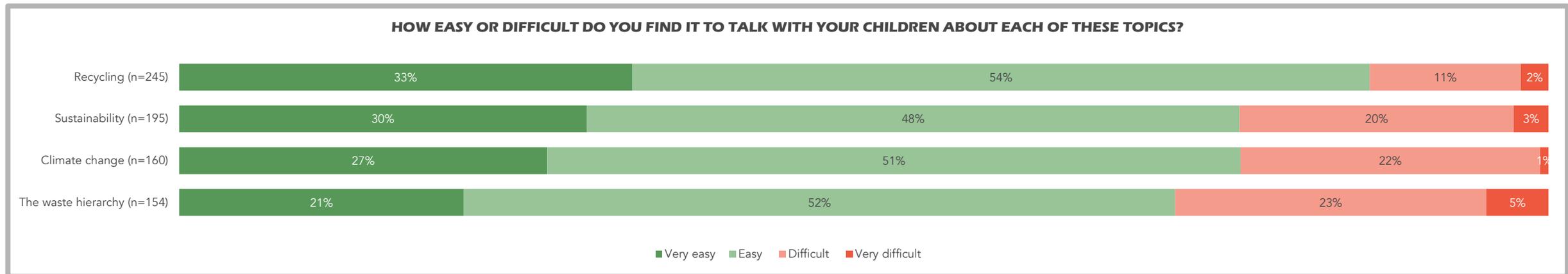
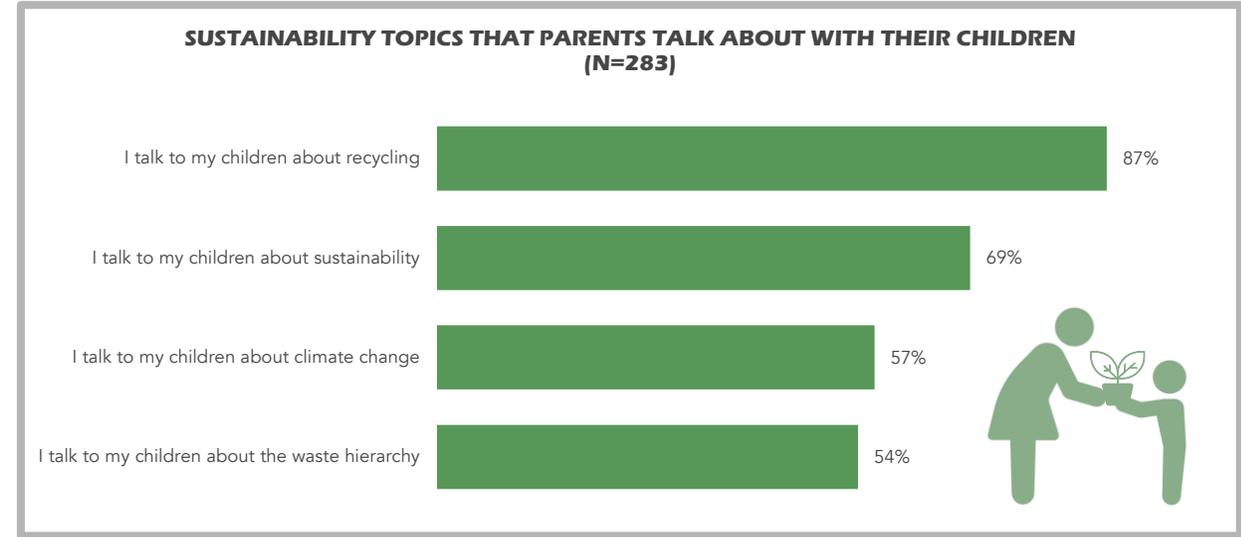


TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS

Most parents talk to their children about recycling, however some find it difficult to do so

Overall, 88% of parents said that they spoke to their children about at least one of the presented sustainability topics. Recycling was the most commonly discussed topic (87%), and the one those who discussed found easiest to speak about. Sustainability was next most discussed (69%), but something almost a quarter (23%) of those parents found difficult to talk about with their children.

Climate change and the waste hierarchy were only talked about with children by 57% and 54% of parents, respectively.





COVID-19 PANDEMIC
IMPACTS ON
SUSTAINABILITY

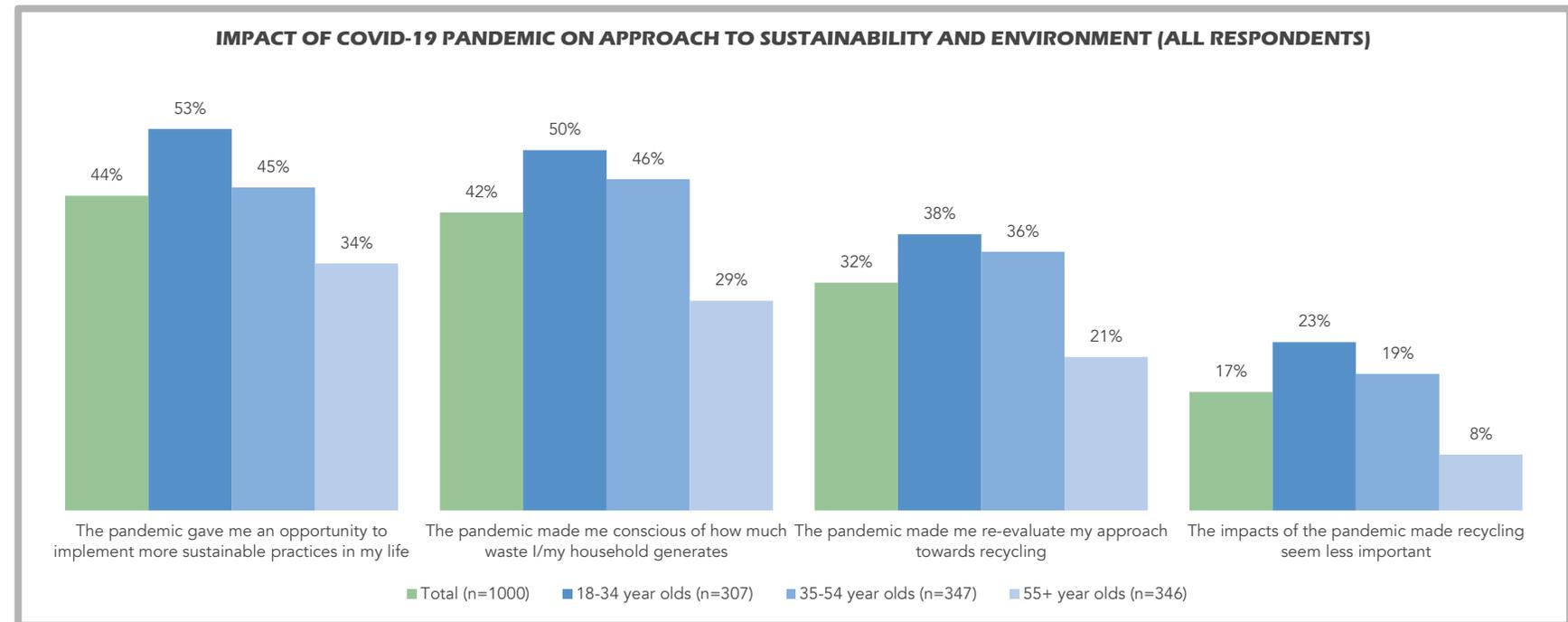
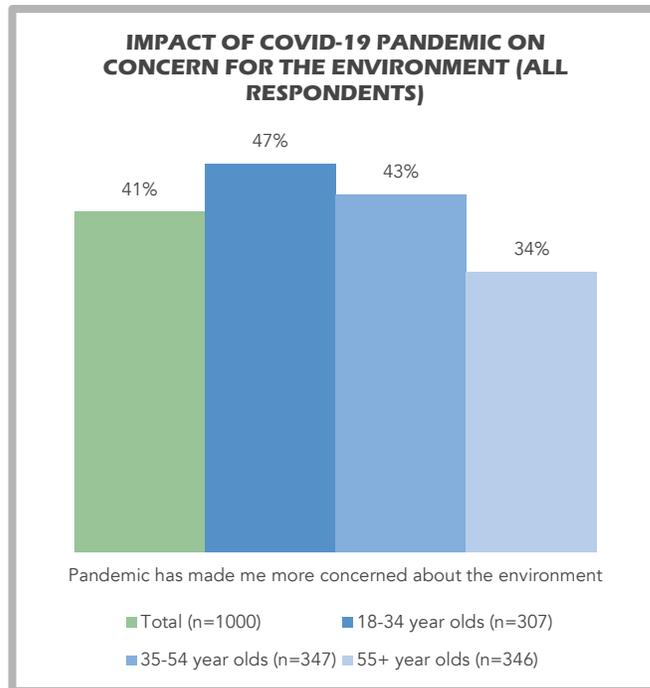


IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH

The pandemic had more impact on younger than older Australians' perspectives on the environment and sustainability

Almost half of Australians aged 18-34 said that the COVID-19 pandemic made them more concerned about the environment, compared to only a third of those aged 55 and older. Younger Australians reported correspondingly stronger impacts of the pandemic on their attitudes to sustainability: 53% of those aged 18-34 agreed that they pandemic allowed them to implement more sustainable practices in their life, and 50% said that the pandemic made them conscious of the amount of waste their household generates.

Relating specifically to recycling, 32% of Australians said that the pandemic made them re-evaluate their approach to recycling. For a small proportion, this meant a negative evaluation: 17% of Australians felt that the impacts of the pandemic made recycling seem less important.



Q6.0 How has the pandemic impacted your feelings about the environment?

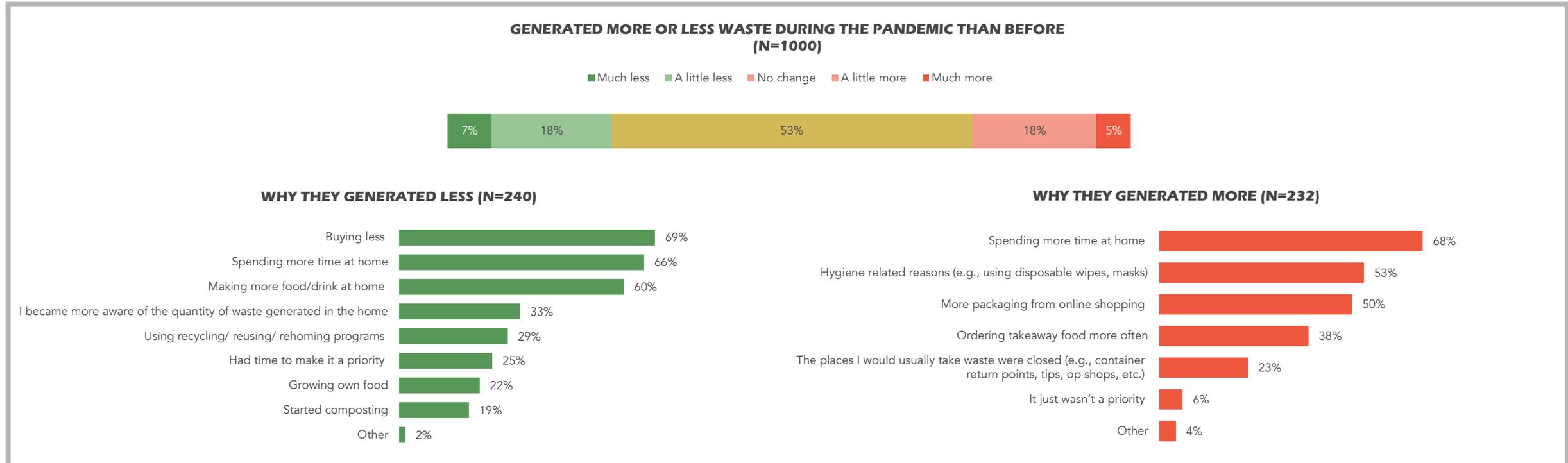
Q6.1 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on your attitudes and behaviours towards sustainability and recycling?

IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH (CONTINUED)

More time at home meant less waste generation for some, more for others

24% of respondents reported generating less waste over the pandemic period than prior, while as many (23%) reported generating more. Increased waste generation was more common among younger (under 55) Australians than those 55 and older.

For both those who generated less waste and those who generated more, more time spent at home was a primary driver. Other common factors allowing people to generate less waste during the pandemic were buying less (69%), and preparing more food and drink at home (60%). In comparison, those who generated more cited hygiene-related waste (53%) and packaging from online shopping (50%).



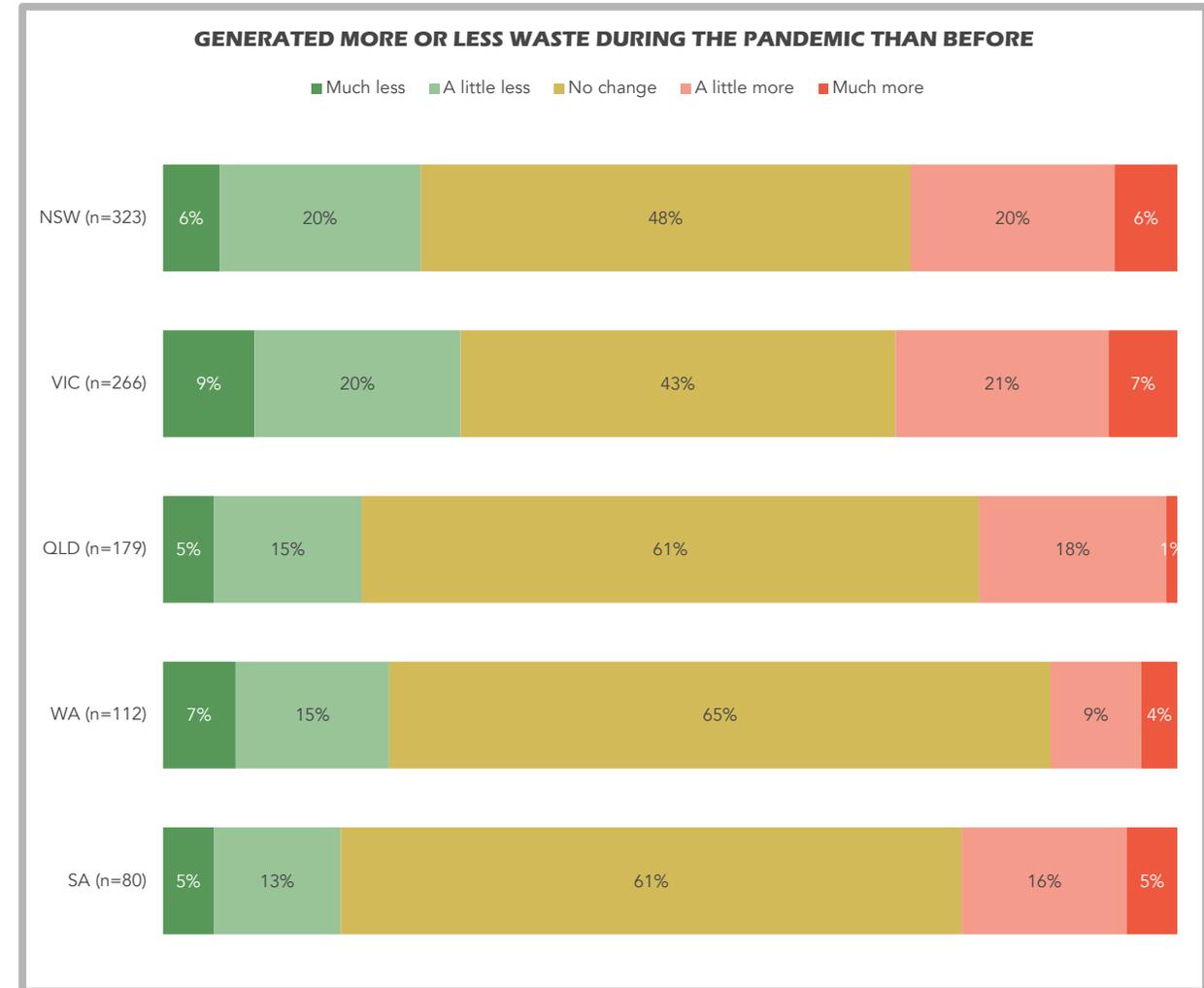
Q6.3 Do you feel like you generated more or less waste during the pandemic and associated restrictions, compared to before the pandemic?

Q6.4a Which of the following factors explain why you generated more waste during pandemic restrictions than before the pandemic? Please select as many as apply.

Q6.4b Which of the following explain why you generated less waste during pandemic restrictions than before the pandemic? Please select as many as apply.

IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH (CONTINUED)

Victoria and NSW, the states most impacted by restrictions during the pandemic, had higher proportions of residents reporting changes to their waste generation patterns compared to other states.



Q6.3 Do you feel like you generated more or less waste during the pandemic and associated restrictions, compared to before the pandemic?

Q6.4a Which of the following factors explain why you generated more waste during pandemic restrictions than before the pandemic? Please select as many as apply.

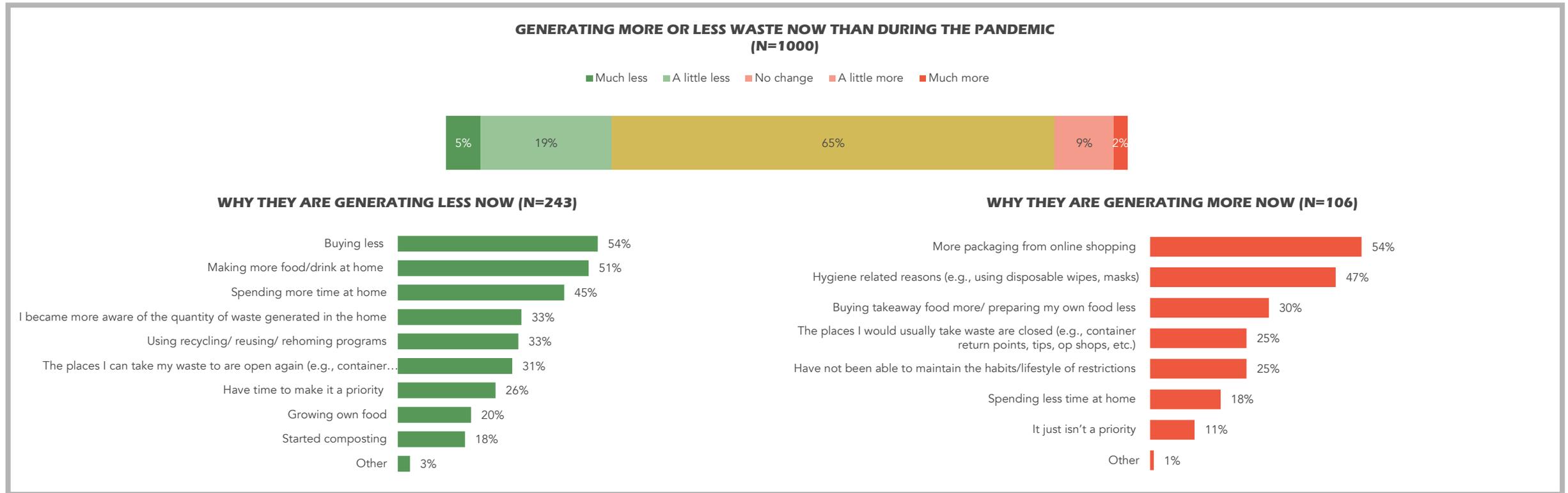
Q6.4b Which of the following explain why you generated less waste during pandemic restrictions than before the pandemic? Please select as many as apply.

IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH (CONTINUED)

Easing restrictions has more good news than bad for waste generation

With pandemic restrictions easing, a quarter (24%) of Australians say they are now producing less waste than during the pandemic, citing buying less (54%), preparing more food/drink at home (51%), and still spending more time at home (45%) as the major drivers.

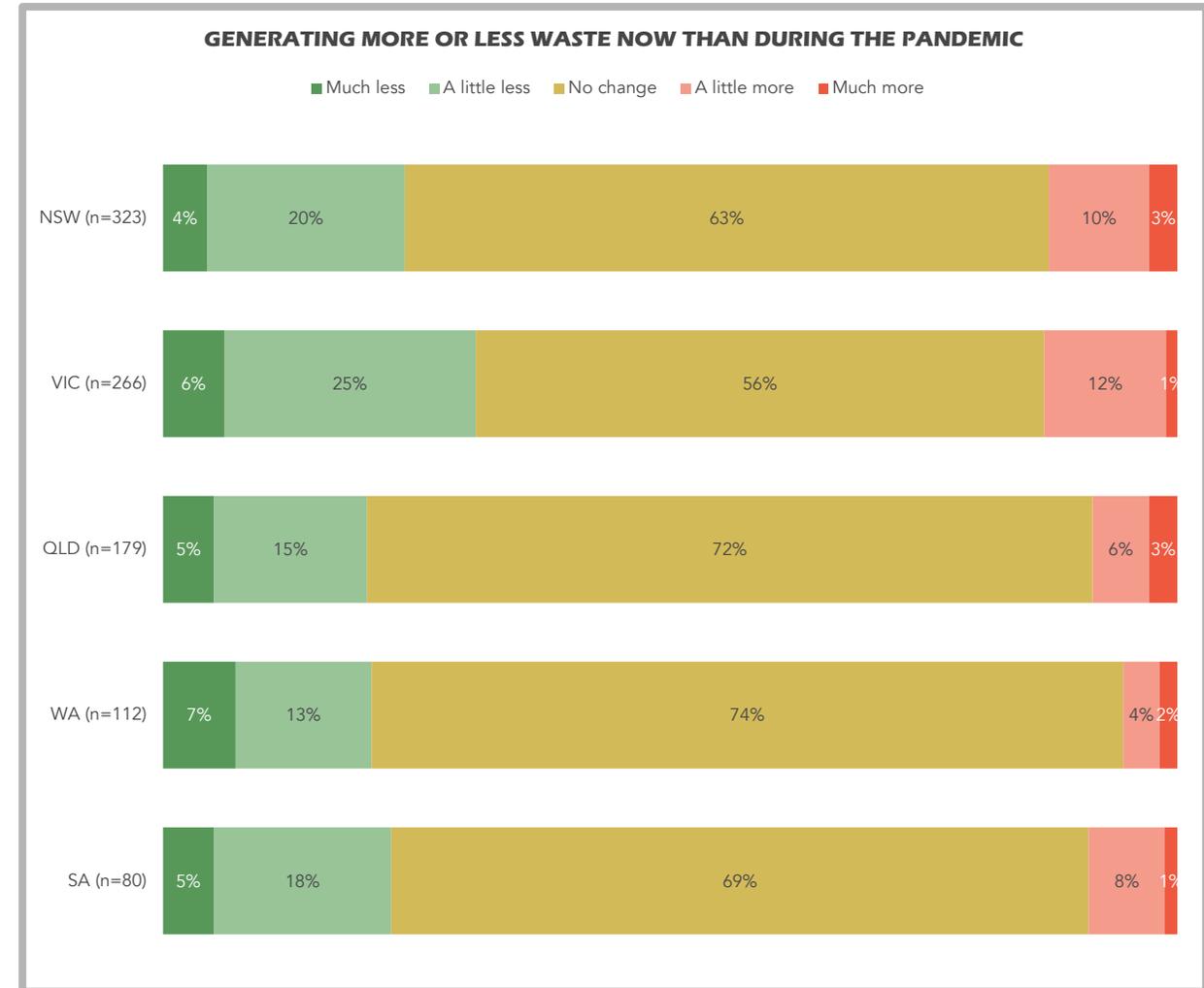
For the 11% who are now generating more, the reasons are consistent with what elevated Australians' waste generation during the pandemic: packaging from online shopping (54%) and hygiene related reasons (47%).



Q6.5 And do you feel like you are now generating more or less waste than you were during the pandemic and associated restrictions?
 Q6.6a Are any of these factors in why you are generating more waste now than you were during pandemic restrictions? Please select as many as apply.
 Q6.6b Are any of these factors in why you are generating less waste now than you were during pandemic restrictions? Please select as many as apply.

IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH (CONTINUED)

Again reflecting their different experiences of pandemic restrictions, higher proportions of Victorians than those in other states reported having reduced their waste generation since the easing of pandemic restrictions.



- Q6.5 And do you feel like you are now generating more or less waste than you were during the pandemic and associated restrictions?
 Q6.6a Are any of these factors in why you are generating more waste now than you were during pandemic restrictions? Please select as many as apply.
 Q6.6b Are any of these factors in why you are generating less waste now than you were during pandemic restrictions? Please select as many as apply.

IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH (CONTINUED)

Looking ahead, about half (51%) of the respondents said that they were extremely or very motivated to maintain their new sustainability and recycling habits in the coming year. On average, the level of motivation to maintain these habits increased significantly with age (61% of 55+ year olds vs. 42% of 18-34 year olds and 48% of 35-54 year olds were extremely or very motivated to maintain these habits).

