



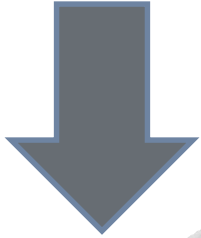
WASHINGTON RECYCLING CONTAMINATION SURVEY

Presenters: Corinne McCarthy, Market Intelligence Director + Amanda Godwin, Project Manager

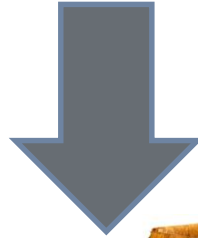


Contamination research scope

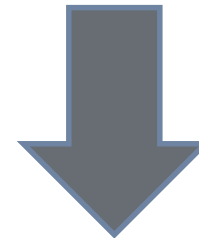
UNACCEPTED



DIRTY & WET



BAGGED UP



Research approach

- Quantitative survey of 750 Washington State residents
- Mix of age, income, employment, family status, education
- Included 100 Spanish speakers





WHY IS CONTAMINATION
HAPPENING?

Contamination behaviors

Put item that they aren't sure is accepted by recycle program in recycle bin



57%

Put item with food or beverage residue in the recycle bin



45%



44%

Put recyclables in a plastic bag prior to putting them in the curbside bin



20%

Roots of contamination problem

Good Intentions

“Recycling more makes me a better person”

Incorrect Assumptions

“I assume the recycling process will sort out non-recyclables and clean the dirty ones”

Growing Doubt

“It doesn’t matter because it may not get recycled anyway”

Confusion

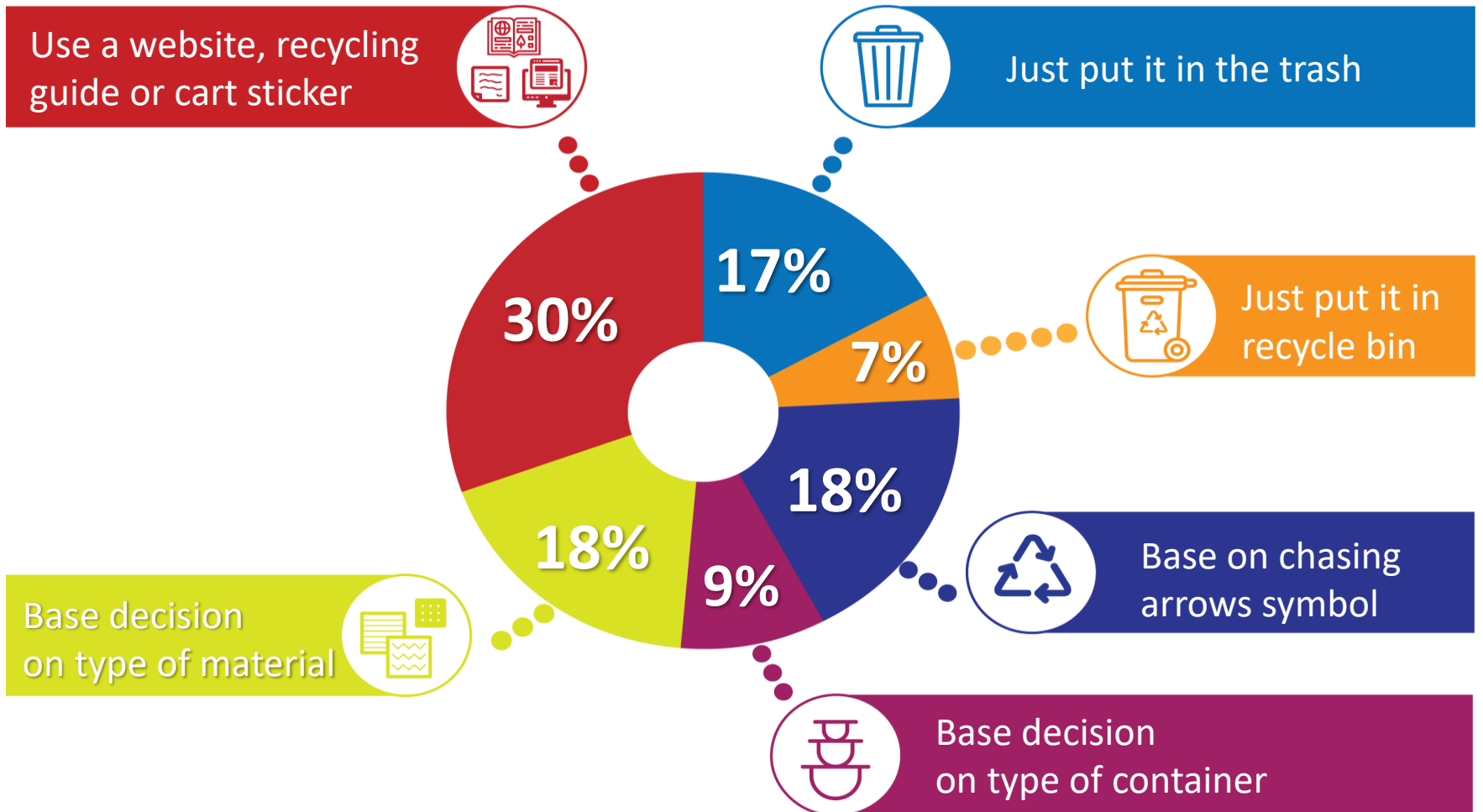
“Don’t the chasing arrows mean it’s recyclable?”





MAPPING THE RECYCLING DECISION MAKING PROCESS

When faced with an item that they are unsure is accepted, residents...



If still unsure, 27% total put it in recycling bin



Faced with an item I'm not sure is accepted in my local recycling program, I....

Put it in
recycle
bin

7%

Put it in
the trash

18%

Check a
reliable
resource

30%

Look for symbol on
item or assess
based on material
or container type

45%



If I'm still not sure it's accepted, I...

Put it in
recycle
bin

27%

Put it in
the trash

44%

Put it aside until I can figure it
out

29%

Positive association that “more recycling is better” is driving up contamination

37%

I want to make sure I'm recycling everything I possibly can

28%

I would feel bad if I put something that's recyclable into the trash

18%

I assume the recycling facility has a process to sort out non-recyclables



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FOOD, BEVERAGE & WATER RESIDUE

People believe food residue does not cause problems or will be cleaned in recycling process



22%

I want to make sure I'm recycling everything I possibly can

18%

I assume that the recycling process will eliminate residue if necessary

17%

I would feel bad if I put something recyclable in the trash bin

13%

I assume it won't have impact on the quality of the recycling

11%

I haven't really thought about the impact of residue on recycling

Water is seen as natural, clean and pure, so can't be a problem for recycling process



33%

I assume that since water is natural, clean & pure, it can't harm the recycling process

24%

I assume it won't have an impact on the quality of the recycling

22%

I assume that it would get emptied in the recycling process if necessary

21%

I haven't really thought about the impact of water on recycling

Time and effort are biggest barriers to cleaning recyclables

19%

I have so many things competing for my time and attention, that cleaning / emptying recyclable containers won't always be a priority

19%

It would be too messy or difficult to clean/empty some kinds of recyclable containers

19%

It's just too inconvenient to clean/empty every recyclable container

18%

I just won't always remember to clean/empty things before they go in the recycle bin

17%

If I clean/ empty recyclable containers I'll use more water than I want to

16%

Other people in my house probably won't clean/empty them, and the ones I make an effort to clean/empty would get contaminated anyway

13%

I'm not always sure what's recyclable, so I might waste time and effort cleaning /emptying containers that don't get recycled anyway

11%

Other households probably won't clean/empty their recyclables, and the ones I make an effort to clean/empty might get contaminated anyway





RECYCLABLE ITEMS IN PLASTIC BAGS

Plastic bags are recyclable, so it makes sense



Easier to carry to outside recycle bin



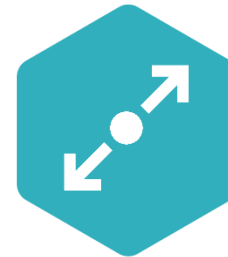
Controls bad odor



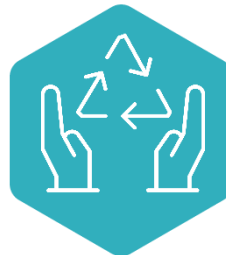
Keeps my kitchen bin clean



Helps me separate recycling from trash



Helps waste management facility separate recyclables



Challenges to not bagging recyclables

22%

Making sure everyone in my household knows not to put recyclables in plastic bags

21%

I'll have to find different way to move the recyclable products from the household bin to the curbside bin

20%

Remembering to do it differently

19%

I still want to line my recycle bin with plastic to keep it clean

19%

I'd have to find a different way to control the odor



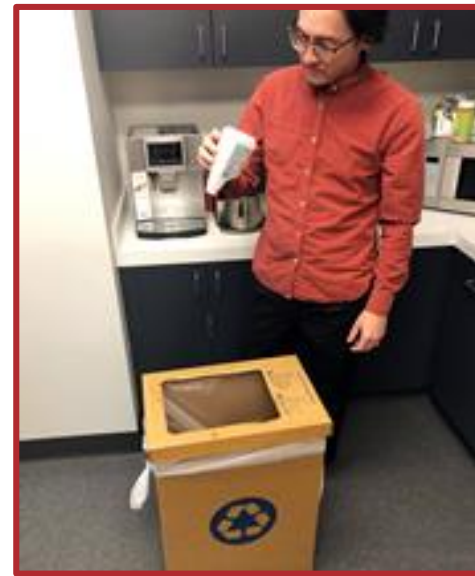
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INFORMED AND WISHFUL RECYCLERS



30% Informed
Recyclers

Makes decisions based on
reliable resources



45% Wishful
Recyclers

Makes decisions based on
unreliable judgments

Differences in demographics and recycling habits

Informed Recyclers

55+ y/o

Female

White

Retired



30%

Make decisions about what goes in recycle bin based on website, guide or cart label.



Wishful Recyclers

Spanish-speaking respondents

1 child

25 - 34 y/o



45%

Make decisions about what goes in recycle bin based on material type, container type or chasing arrows.



Informed Recyclers Want...

Better instructions on what is recyclable in my area, and even more importantly ***greater consistency from area to area***

I wish our local, state & federal governments would all take plastic pollution & clean energy & climate change more seriously & enact laws to help fight these insidious issues.

EASIER REQUIREMENTS:
PAPER HAS TO GO IN SEPARATE BIN FROM CANS/GLASS/PLASTIC TO ELIMINATE CONTAMINATION.

It would be great if [recycling] centers came out with a list like plastic # x, y, and z can be recycled, but not #a and b. It would make the whole process easier!

Clearer differentiation between recyclability of common products

Good communication from recycling company - dos and don'ts

Wishful Recyclers Want...

PROOF THAT WHAT I RECYCLE IS ACTUALLY BEING RECYCLED.

It would inspire me if I knew that all recycled material actually got recycled

If I knew I was making a difference

...info or tutorials of how to do it best.

IF IT WAS EASIER

If it were easier to recycle or less strict, such as them just cleaning the mold...

Maybe a guesstimate on how much impact my recycling has helped on a yearly basis from our waste disposal company

Knowing that the effort was not wasted by the items going to landfills

Insight into action

- Capitalize on fact that people want to recycle right
- Provide a “why” that consumers can relate to
- Focus more on Wishful Recyclers since they contribute more to the problem; but help “informed recyclers” recognize they are part of the problem too
- Give people simple information about how to recycle right; focus on one behavior at a time
- Be willing to tell people “it’s okay to put it in the trash”
- Demonstrate that recycling right really makes a difference to alleviate doubt





Questions?



C+C | ALL ABOUT THE GOOD

THANK YOU!