



Curbside Waste Diversion Options

What We Learned Report

November 2021



Solid Waste Master Plan

Plan directeur des déchets solides

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1 Executive Summary

The City of Ottawa is changing the way garbage is collected in the city. There are three options being considered, including a Partial Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) approach, where households would be allowed to set out a certain number of garbage items every two weeks and purchase “tags” for additional items; Firm Item Limit, where households would be allowed to set out a certain number of garbage items every two weeks and items above the limit would not be collected; and, Clear Garbage Bags with Recycling and Organics Bans, where households would be required to use clear bags for their garbage and residents would not be able to put recyclables or food and organic waste into the clear garbage bags. Material bans and Firm Item Limit were also presented as an option that could be layered with PAYT. The City was also looking for feedback on changes to the current bag limit, the average households sets out 2.9 garbage items bi-weekly and having a limit above that does not help with reaching the City’s diversion and landfill life goals. Residents were asked if they what their preferred item limit was, the options were from 5 items to 1 item and everything in between.



To collect feedback on the three options, the City embarked on an extensive engagement effort with residents and stakeholders. Engagement included a public facing survey completed by over 20,000 respondents (referred to as “Public survey”); a representative sample survey with 1,000 residents (referred to as “panel”); a series of online dialogue sessions; focus groups with key equity deserving organizations; and email, phone, and staff input.

Overall, respondents did not uniformly support one option. Public survey respondents most often (26%) selected a partial PAYT approach, while 21% of the panel selected clear garbage bags (with a material ban) and dialogue session participants a partial PAYT approach with recycling and organics bans. However, the preference for each option depends on the part of the city participants live in, the number of people living in their household or their previous use of recycling and organics programs. Generally, larger households, people who live in rural parts of the city and those who don’t use recycling and organics programs were less favourable about any of the options presented. While residents who live in urban or suburban areas, have smaller households, or use existing recycling and organics programs tend to favour a partial PAYT or clear garbage bag with recycling and organics bans approach.

Respondents did provide extensive feedback on each of the three proposed approaches and changes to garbage item limits.

1.1 Key themes

The following list is some of the common themes we heard from respondents for all the options, these will be addressed when the City begins implementation planning:

- Equity for low-income households;
- Considerations for larger households;
- Accommodations for those with complex medical needs;
- The possibility of an increase in illegal dumping, especially in more rural areas;
- Increase in vermin and rodents getting into left behind waste; and,
- Accessibility issues.

1.2 Partial PAYT

Many participants acknowledged that a partial PAYT approach has the potential to change the behaviour of people to encourage more waste diversion and can have a positive impact on the environment. Participants also felt that this approach was generally easy to understand, and is



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flexible (i.e., in cases where you have more garbage, you simply purchase more tags to set out the additional garbage). Several people said PAYT would make residents more aware about what they throw away and promote a “zero waste” lifestyle. However, there were a number of concerns raised with the partial PAYT approach. Namely, participants were worried that this approach could be inequitable for larger and/or low-income households who could have difficulty affording to purchase the garbage tags.

1.3 Firm Item Limit

A reduced firm item limit was lauded by many participants as being easy to use and the fairest option under consideration. This is largely due to the fact that this approach builds on the current curbside garbage program already in place. This approach was also supported by participants for its ability to have a positive impact on the environment by encouraging residents to reduce the amount of waste through recycling or organics programs. Still, there were concerns that this approach could be unfair to larger households, who generate more waste, or low-income residents, who are unable to dispose of their waste any other way.

1.4 Clear garbage bags with recycling and organics bans

According to participants, a clear garbage bag approach with recycling and organics bans could have the potential to motivate people to divert more of their waste through recycling or organics programs since collection staff wouldn’t collect garbage with recycling and organics content. Accordingly, many people thought that this approach could have a positive impact on the environment while also being fair to all households as everyone would have the same item limit. Privacy, confusion, and increased burden on collection staff, however, were flagged as potential drawbacks to this approach. Fifty-five per cent of respondents were concerned about the lack of privacy with this approach, even with a designated privacy bag. Participants also questioned the role of waste collection staff who would be responsible for enforcing the material bans, saying this could add an additional burden to their workload and could be unfair to staff. For many rural respondents, there was additional concern that the use of clear bags, in lieu of bins, could lead to increased vermin or animals on collection days.

2 Methodology

The City of Ottawa and Hill+Knowlton Strategies carried out an extensive public engagement process to gather input from as many residents as possible surrounding the changes to Curbside Garbage Collection Services, as part of the Solid Waste Master Plan. This included a deliberative, Choicebook™ survey available via the [Engage Ottawa](#) website and open to all residents (“public survey”), a supplemental representative public opinion research sample (“panel survey”) of Ottawa residents, four online dialogue sessions, and five focus groups with

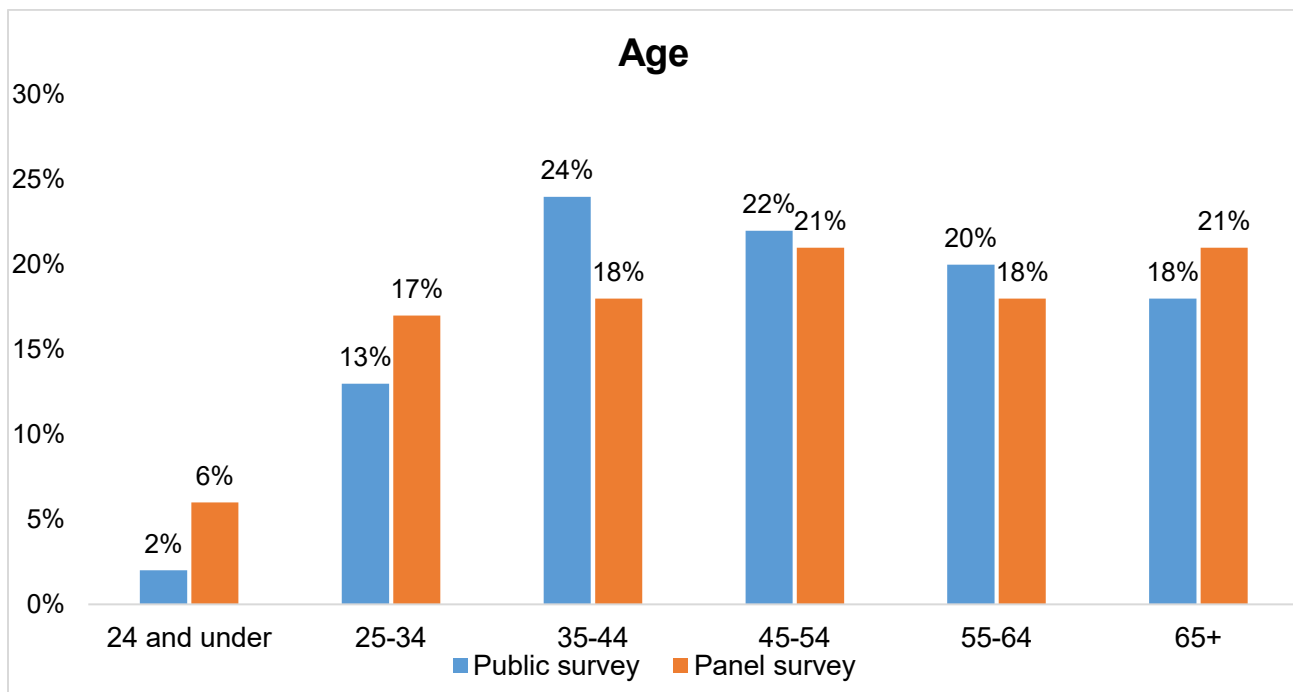


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equity-deserving groups, including persons with disabilities, women, newcomers to Canada and youth. Residents could also provide additional input through the City’s [Engage Ottawa](#) website, via e-mail and by telephone.

The public survey was open to all residents of Ottawa from August 6 to September 12, 2021 and generated 20,029 responses. Just under 60% of respondents completed the full survey, which is above industry expectations of 50%¹. This “opt-in” approach is in keeping with the spirit of engagement and typical of public and stakeholder consultations. The primary limitation of this approach is that the public survey results cannot be generalized to a target population, (in this case, the residents of Ottawa), even though close to 12,000 survey questionnaires were fully completed. Thus, later in this report when we say that 75% of public survey respondents preferred a particular option, it is important to remember that this does not mean that 75% of Ottawa residents preferred that option. For demographic results of the public survey, please refer to Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 Demographic results (public and panel surveys)

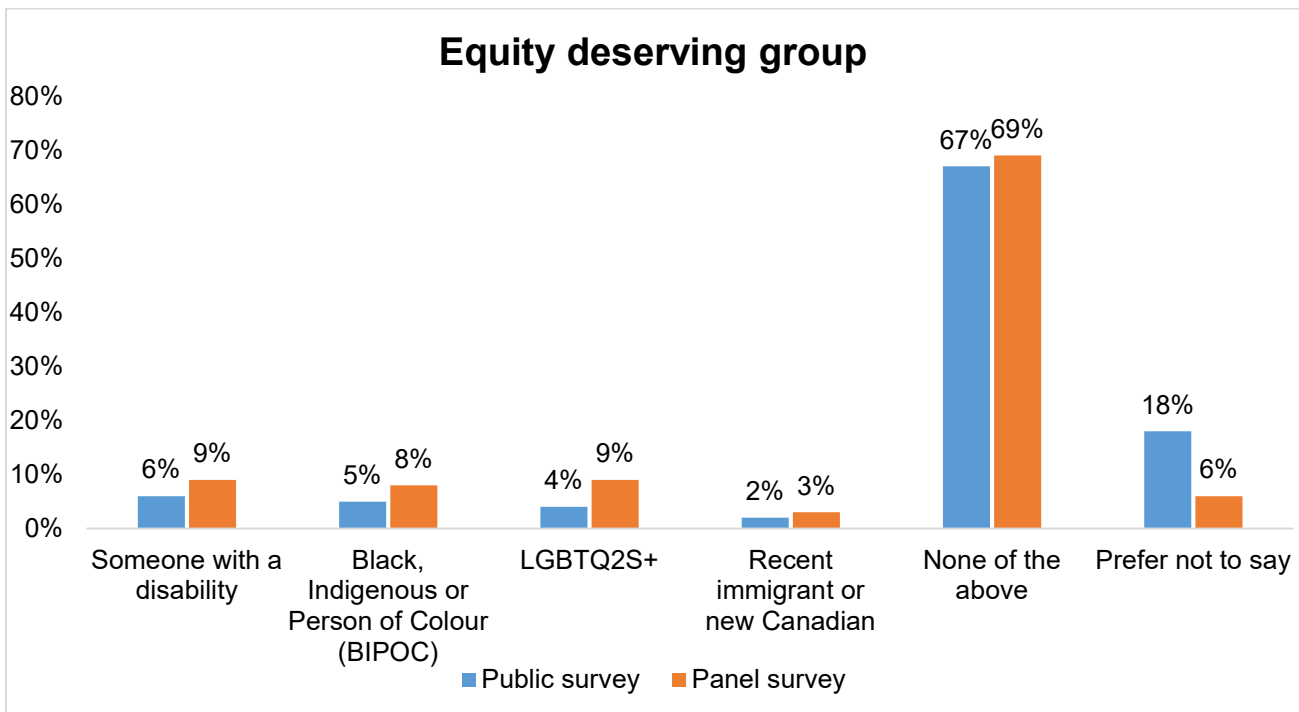
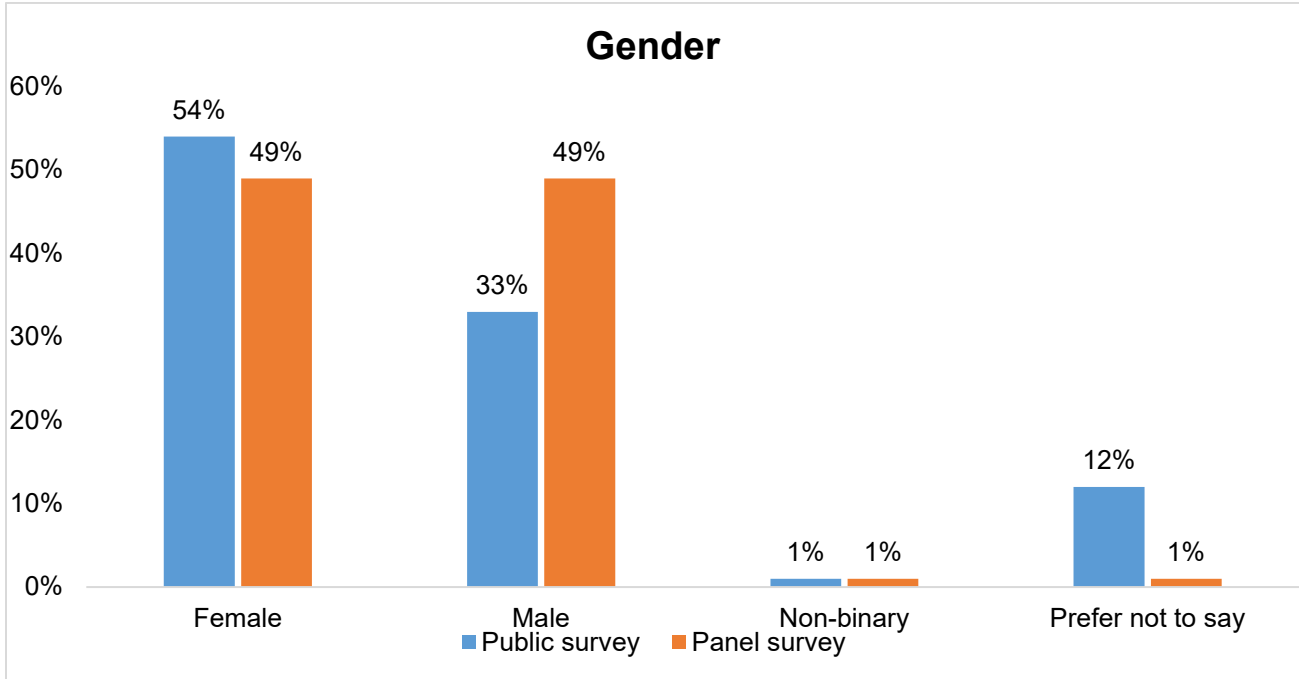


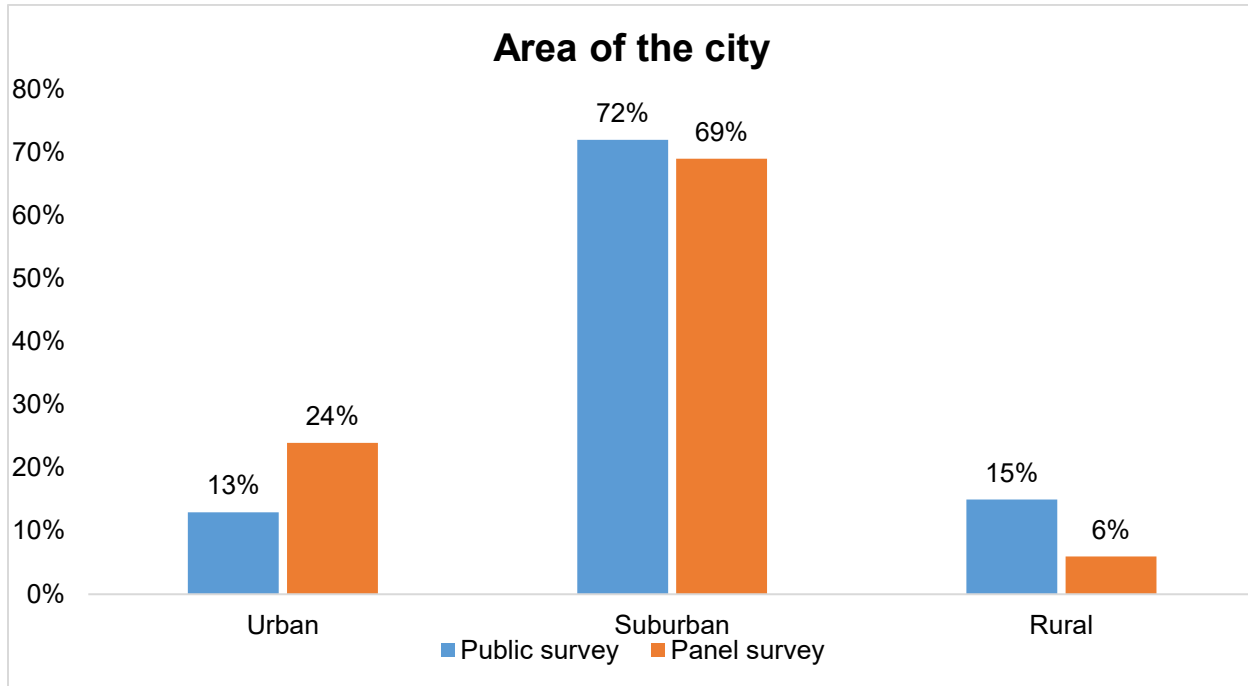
¹ As per Hill and Knowlton Strategies, May 2022.



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Panel survey responses to the survey were collected from August 9 to 29, 2021, with 1,000 respondents who responded to the exact same version of the survey as public survey respondents. The representative sample was solicited through Leger, a market research firm. Respondents were selected along region of the city they reside in, age and gender. The margin of error for the research was $\pm 3\%$. This panel survey was done in order to compare and contrast the results from the public survey with a representative sample of people who live in Ottawa.

The online dialogue sessions were held on August 31, September 2, 8 and 9, 2021, and attended by 88 participants from 22 of the City’s 23 Wards. Three-quarters of participants came from suburban Wards, 19% from urban Wards and 6% came from rural Wards. Residents were invited to participate in both the survey and the dialogue sessions through a variety of promotional efforts, including direct outreach to interested residents and key stakeholders by email, social media, advertising, and media relations.

The five focus groups held with equity deserving groups engaged over 25 members of the City for All Women Initiative, Immigrant Women Services Ottawa, Junior Achievement & Youth Ottawa, Canadian Council for the Blind (CCB) and Able2.

In addition to the above, over 70 emails and phone calls were received as part of the consultation process. City staff were also invited to share their thoughts on the waste collection options.



3 Introduction

3.1 The need for new Curbside Garbage Collection Options

The City of Ottawa provides waste collection to 297,000 households across the City under the curbside collection contract. Currently, households are permitted to set out up to six items for bi-weekly garbage collection. The same limit has been in place since 2007, and the focus has been on educating residents to encourage participation in waste diversion programs. While the average household garbage set-out is 4.18 items, the City's 2018-2019 Curbside Waste Audit Study found that 58% of material in the garbage could have been diverted through the City's curbside diversion programs. Given that the average household set-out is lower than Ottawa's current curbside garbage limit, the limit alone does not incentivize residents to start or increase participation in curbside diversion programs and will have little to no impact on the City's curbside diversion rate.

To put this into perspective, the City of Ottawa's 2018-2019 Curbside Waste Audit Study found that only 44% of food and organic waste (excluding leaf and yard waste), 75% of glass, metal, and plastic recyclables, and 79% of paper products are currently being diverted. Improvements in reducing waste to landfill and increasing diversion will be essential in complying with Provincial legislation and regulations. The Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement issued under the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act* mandates municipalities to achieve a 70% reduction and recovery of food and organic waste from curbside households by 2023. The Province-wide transition of the Blue Box program to producers of products and packaging (known as Individual Producer Responsibility) will be accompanied by increased curbside recycling targets. Recent landfill monitoring projects the City-owned landfill has approximately 30% remaining capacity. Staff has determined that if the City remains status quo with regards to waste reduction and diversion, the Trail Waste Facility Landfill is expected to reach capacity between 2036 and 2038.

The intention of the three Curbside Garbage Collection Options explored through this engagement process was to encourage residents to reflect on their own waste disposal habits and to explore the advantages, drawbacks and potential mitigative measures for each service option if implemented, to support increasing the City of Ottawa's waste diversion rate, to align with Provincial policy direction, help extend the life of the Trail Waste Landfill Facility landfill, help reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the presence of organics at the landfill, and turn more waste into new products and resources. The current bag limit has been in place since 2007 and the focus has been on educating residents to encourage participation in waste diversion programs. The City considered further lowering the item limit, introducing clear bag garbage collection, and implementing a partial pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) program as part of the Solid Waste Services 2011 Service Level Review. These options were not carried forward



to allow time for residents to uptake participation in the newly implemented, City-wide Green Bin program. At this time, the City was also undergoing the most significant service change to date with the transition to bi-weekly garbage collection.

3.2 Alignment with the Solid Waste Master Plan

The Solid Waste Master Plan (SWMP) will put forward recommendations for a waste management system that aligns with the Council approved vision, guiding principles, goals, objectives, and targets. The development of the SWMP has identified the need for tools to be in place to facilitate the prevention of waste, improve sorting practices, and increase participation rates in waste diversion programs. Each of the options being explored through this project were identified through the [Solid Waste Master Plan's Long-Term Waste Management Needs](#) exercise and through the project's [evaluation process](#) were deemed to be viable options to support the City in achieving the vision, guiding principles, goals, objectives and targets of the SWMP.

Public engagement was conducted in June and July 2020 to solicit feedback on the current waste management system and the community's ideas for a future integrated waste management system. Residents and community stakeholders expressed interest and a desire to see the future waste management system encourage waste diversion through bag limits or fines for exceeding garbage allotment and consider penalties for not recycling or composting.

Reviewing options for curbside garbage collection also presents an opportunity to align municipal solid waste services with various other strategic priorities, including the City of Ottawa's Strategic Plan, the Official Plan and the Climate Change Master Plan and Energy Evolution.

3.2.1 Current Services

1. Access to **unlimited weekly recycling** (blue and black bins) and **weekly food waste and organics recycling**.
2. Households can set out up to **six garbage items** every two weeks.

Special consideration waste collection programs (for diapers and incontinence products) on weeks without garbage collection.

3.2.2 Proposed New Service Options

1. **Partial Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)**: Each household would be allowed to set out a certain number of garbage items every two weeks. Residents with more than this limit would be able to purchase garbage tags for each additional item.



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2. **Firm Item Limits:** Each household would be allowed to set out a certain number of garbage items every two weeks. Garbage items above the allowable limit would not be collected.
3. **Clear Bags with Recycling and Organics Bans:** Households would use clear bags for their garbage and residents would not be able to put recyclables or food and organic waste into the clear garbage bags.

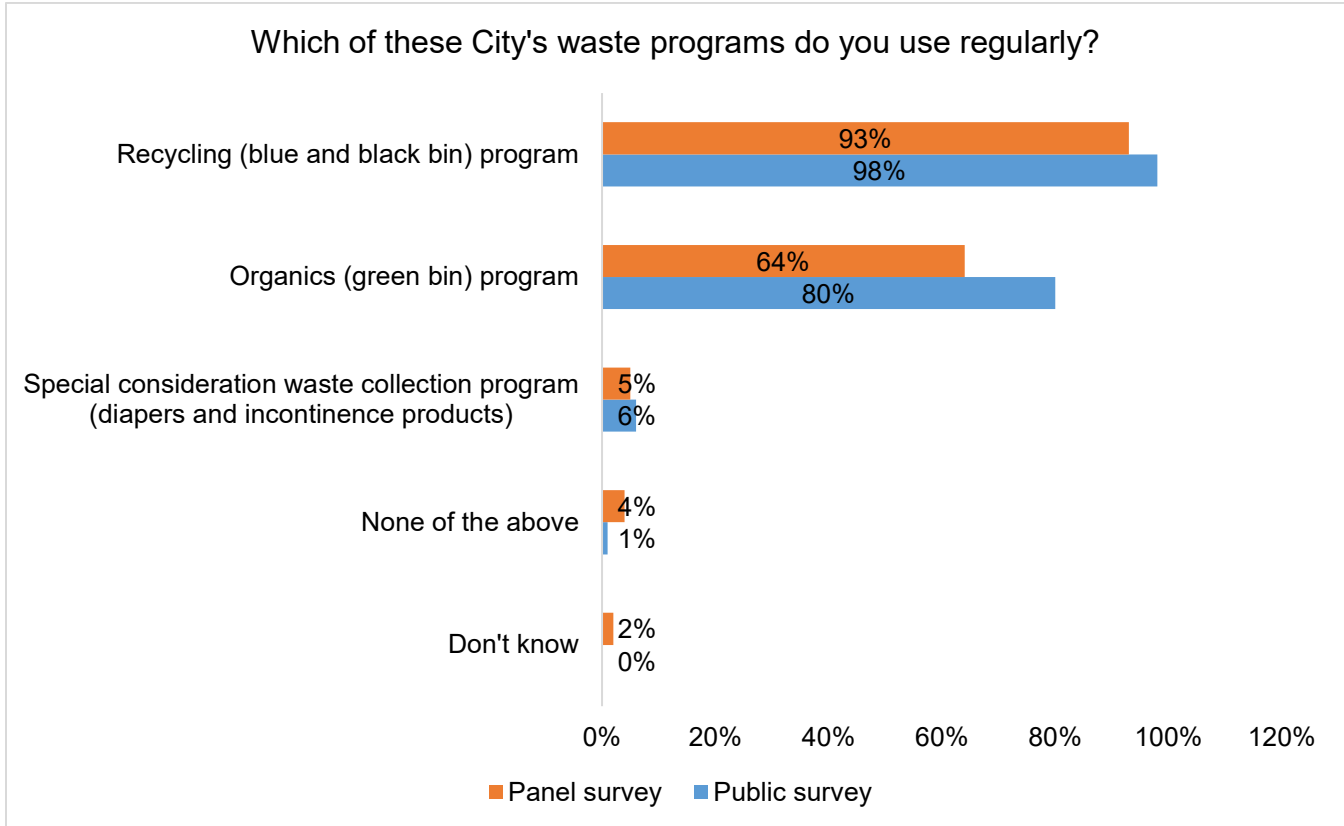
The City is also considering reducing the current garbage set out limit for households. If approved by City Council, implementation planning will include a detailed approach on how best to educate and enforce any future changes to waste collection and support resident behaviour change. The average curbside household set-out is 4.18 garbage items bi-weekly and has remained fairly stable since the last major service change to waste collection in 2012. While this is below the six-item limit set in the by-law, the City's 2018-2019 Curbside Waste Audit Study found that 58 per cent of material in the garbage can be diverted from landfill through the recycling and Green Bin programs. Given that the average household set-out is lower than Ottawa's current curbside garbage limit, it alone does not incentivize residents to start or increase participation in curbside diversion programs and will have little to no impact on the City's curbside diversion rate.

4 What We Learned

4.1 Current Behaviours

4.1.1 Participation in Solid Waste Programs

Figure 2: Which of the City's waste programs do you use regularly



Number of garbage items put out every two weeks: Nearly two-thirds of respondents in both the public and panel surveys said they put out 2 garbage items or less bi-weekly for garbage collection (64% of public survey respondents and 67% of panel respondents).. One-quarter of respondents say they put out 3-4 items every two weeks: 15% of public survey respondents and 17% of panel respondents say they usually put out three items every two weeks, while 10% (public survey) and 8% (panel) put out four. Only 7% of public survey respondents and 5% of panel respondents say they put out five or more items.

Recycling (blue and black bin) program: Survey respondents almost universally use the City's recycling program, with 98% of public survey respondents and 93% of panel respondents saying they do. Among survey respondents, participation is the same in suburban, urban, and rural areas (98%). There was little to no difference in participation rates across the various housing types identified (homeowners, renters, those living in duplexes and triplexes, single family homes, and townhomes). Participation is also fairly uniform across all age groups and income levels, regardless of how many garbage items respondents say they put out every two weeks, with the exception of those who put out six or more bags (92%), only 7% do not participate in diversion programs.



Organics (green bin) program: Participation in the City’s organics program is lower than the recycling program, with about two-thirds (64%) of panel respondents and 80% of public survey respondents saying they use it regularly. Unlike the recycling program, participation² in the organics program is lower in rural (70%) areas compared to suburban and urban areas (81% and 82% respectively). People living in single-family homes (85%), and those living in duplexes and triplexes (86%) report using the program the most. Similarly, homeowners (with or without a mortgage) (84%) report using the program more than renters (71%). Respondents aged 35-44 (83%) and 45-54 (83%) report slightly higher use of the program, as do households earning \$120,000 a year or more (87%).

“Most seniors I know use the green bin only during the good months. From December to March, the bins are parked due to hazards from icy falls, snowdrifts, etc. I, too, will not risk a dangerous fall.”
– *Survey Respondent*

Special consideration waste collection program (diapers, incontinence products): There is fairly consistent usage of the special consideration program across all demographics. Overall, 6% of public survey respondents and 5% of panel respondents say they use this program, with usage highest among those aged 25-44 (69% public survey, 61% panel). Among public survey respondents, only 14% living in rural areas and 7% of people aged 65 or older say they use the program.

None: Given the almost universal usage of at least one of the City’s waste collection programs, very few people reported not using a City based organics or recycling program. Among public survey respondents, non-participation was highest for people living in apartments (6%). Similarly, among panel respondents, non-participation was highest for amongst renters (7%) and rural respondents (7%).

Unavoidable waste: Most respondents (59% public, 70% panel) said they do not produce any type of unavoidable waste that would make it difficult to comply with any of the proposed service options. About one-quarter (23%) of public survey respondents and one in seven (15%) panel respondents say they do. Fewer than one in five (18% public survey, 15% panel) say they don’t know if they have unavoidable waste. Amongst public and survey respondents some commonly identified unavoidable waste was:

- Styrofoam from packaging and food containers;

² Among public survey respondents



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- Other forms of packaging that are not recyclable (e.g., plastic wrap);
- Pet waste;
- Personal waste (e.g., menstrual products or diapers);
- Large bulky items, like used furniture; and,
- Construction waste.

4.2 Number of Garbage Items People Think Others Put Out Every Two Weeks

Only 6% of public survey respondents and 8% of panel respondents think others set out one garbage item every two weeks for collection (for comparison, 36% of public survey respondents and 35% of panel respondents say they set out one garbage item every two weeks). Even though almost two-thirds of people reported putting out 2 items or less every two weeks, only about one-third (30% public survey, 33% panel) think others do the same. More than half (58% public survey; 60% panel) think others put out 3 items of garbage every two weeks, and about one-third (36% public survey, 33% panel) think the number is four items or more. These figures are relatively consistent across all demographics and regardless of whether someone owns or rents, or lives in an urban, suburban, or rural area.

4.3 Options

4.3.1 Considerations

Before discussing the three new service options being proposed (Partial Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT), Reduced Firm Item Limits, Clear Bags with Recycling and Organics Bans), survey respondents were asked to identify from the following list the most important factors that should be considered when choosing a preferred option (respondents could choose up to two factors):

- Cost to the Homeowner
- Easy to Use
- Fairness to All Households
- Motivates People to Change Behaviour
- Positive Impact on the Environment

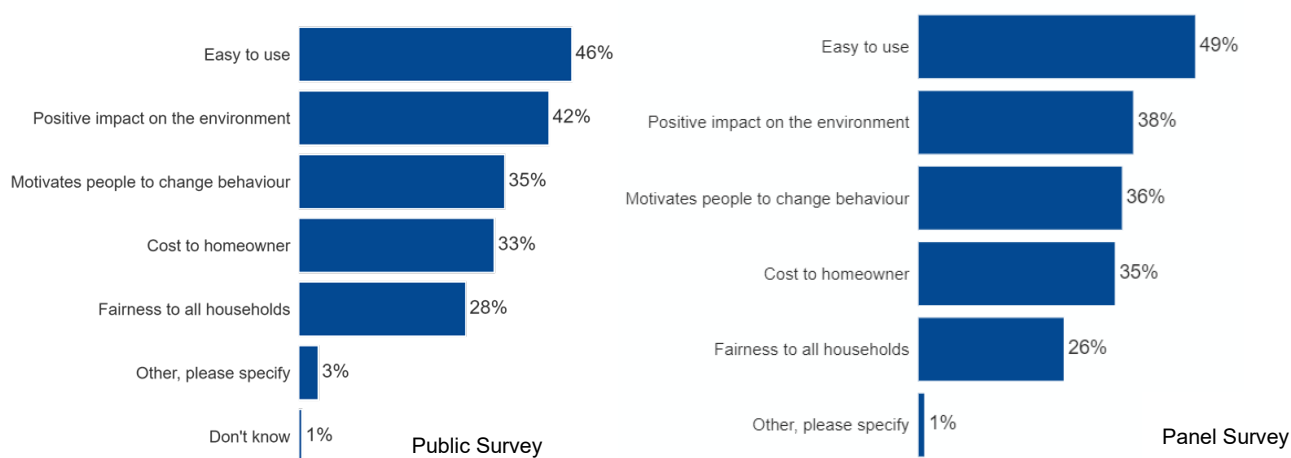


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Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of these considerations when assessing each of the proposed service options, the results of which are included as part of the summary of findings for each option.

Figure 2 What do you think is most important to consider when deciding on service options? (Choose up to 2)



The top consideration overall among almost all respondents was that it should be **easy to use**, with about half (46% public survey, 49% panel) choosing it as one of the two top considerations and almost no variation among demographics. Those under 25 years of age cited a **positive impact on the environment** as their top consideration (53% public survey, 66% panel), this was also the second-highest consideration for almost all other demographics overall (42% public survey, 38% panel). The ability to **motivate people to change behaviour** was the third-most important consideration overall (35% public survey, 36% panel), followed closely by the **cost to the homeowner** (33% public survey, 35% panel). The **fairness to all households** was the lowest-priority consideration overall (28% public survey, 26% panel).

“Household waste is also a function of how people buy/shop and packaging that comes with it (e.g., boxed cereal with plastic bags inside, granola bars individually wrapped and boxed in groups). As long as these kinds of packaged foods are available, their wrappings will be garbage. And the work of sorting, etc., is something that many can’t be bothered to do.”
– Survey Respondent

Some other considerations cited by respondents in this engagement process included:



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- Health and safety concerns, such as an increase in insects and rodents if waste removal is reduced or spread out over a longer period;
- Avoiding discriminating against people – including those with disabilities – who cannot access a dump to dispose of their excess waste;
- Protecting the privacy of individuals;
- Accounting for the different needs of urban and rural residents, including possible agricultural exemptions;
- Ensuring businesses and manufacturers also comply, particularly in reducing the amount of waste in packaging and delivery;
- Consider the use of recycling or composting facilities in public parks and facilities;
- The need for a change to the status quo of how the City collects garbage (i.e., something needs to change);
- Ensuring there is still an ability to set out, or dispose of, large items, as required; and,
- Illegal dumping was mentioned as a possibility with all options.

“I wonder how this would go for low-income families, residents with language barriers and residents who just don’t care?”
– Survey Respondent

5 Partial Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)

This option would allow each household to set out a certain number of garbage items every two weeks, and residents with more than this limit can purchase garbage tags for each additional item. Respondents were presented with the benefits and challenges of this option – which provides flexibility for residents to dispose of excess garbage but that purchasing tags could be challenging for lower-income households or people who produce unavoidable waste.

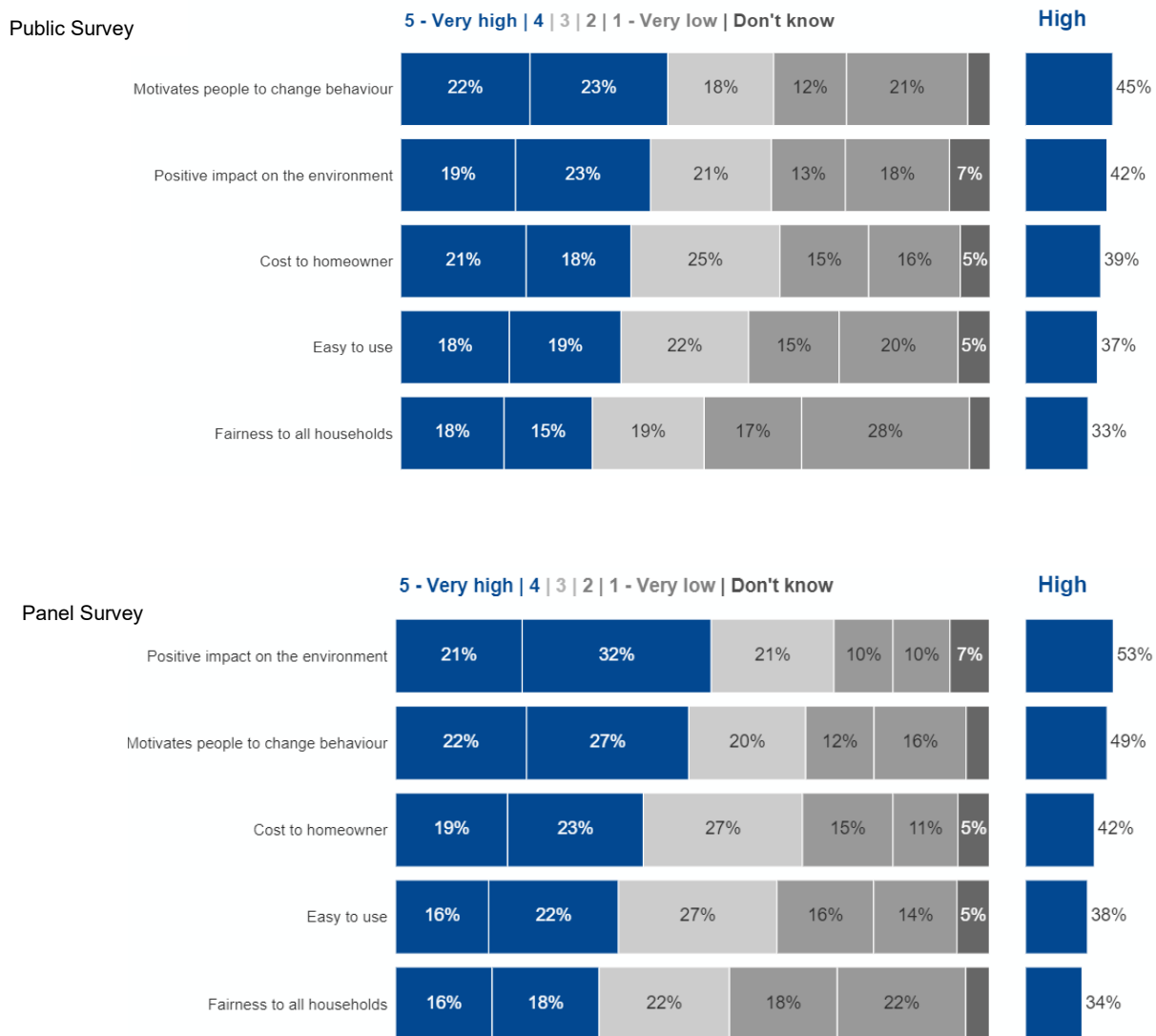


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5.1 Rating the Considerations

Figure 3 When considering a partial PAYT system, how would you rate it across the following categories



Nearly half of all survey respondents (45% public survey, 49% panel) rated this service option highly for its ability to **motivate people to change their behaviour**. Public survey respondents living in urban areas (51%) and people under 25 years of age (51%) were even more likely to rate this option highly for its impact on motivating behaviour. There was little difference in rating between homeowners and those who rent, or those who are living in single-family



homes versus those living in multi-unit dwellings. The rating level tended to decline, however, with more garbage items respondents put out every two weeks.

More than half of panel respondents (53%) rated a Partial PAYT program as having a high opportunity to have a **positive impact on the environment**, quite higher than the public survey respondents (42%). Public survey respondents who rent or own gave this impact the same rating (45%). Once again, the rating level tended to decline the more items respondents put out.

The **cost to the homeowner** was rated high among 39% of public survey respondents and 42% of panel respondents. People in rural areas (42% public survey, 47% panel) and households with five or more people (45% public survey, 47% panel) gave it a higher rating than the overall survey results. Unlike the previous two considerations, the rating for the cost to the homeowner of PAYT increased the more items respondents put out.

Just over one-third of respondents in the public survey (37%) and panel survey (38%) gave a high rating for PAYT being **easy to use**. The rating was higher among public survey respondents aged 65 or older (42%) and those putting out one waste item every two weeks (44%) and lower for those aged 25 and under (27%) and those living in households with five or more residents (31%). The rating level decline the more items respondents put out.

The lowest rating was given to PAYT's **fairness to all households**, with one-third of respondents (33% public survey, 34% panel) giving this a rating of "very high" or "high" compared to 45% of public survey respondents and 40% of panel respondents who rated it "low" or "very low." The rating was mostly consistent across income levels, increased with the age of the respondent and decreased the more items people put out.

5.2 Should people pay to put out excess garbage items?

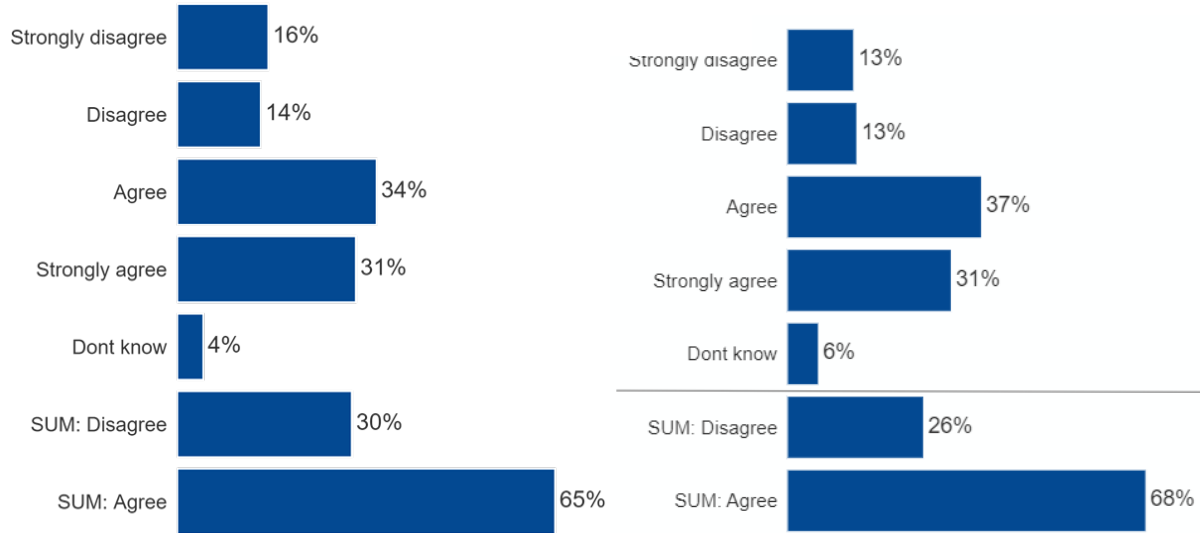
About two-thirds of respondents (65% public survey, 68% panel) agree that people who set out excess garbage items should pay to have those items collected. People living in households with five or more people and those putting out four or more items every two weeks are the least likely to support households paying for excess garbage set-out (50% and 39% respectively from the public survey). Support is mostly consistent across all age groups and income levels, although respondents aged 65 and older and those earning \$120,000 a year or more are slightly more supportive. There is no difference in support between people who own their home and those who rent, or those who live in single-family homes, townhomes, or duplexes.



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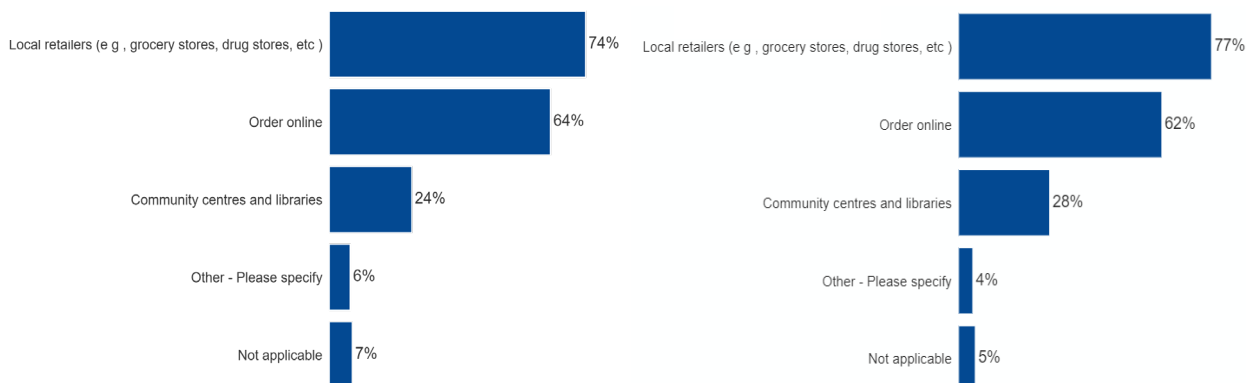
Figure 4 Should people who set out excess garbage items have to pay?



5.3 Where to purchase tags

Survey respondents were asked to identify where, if they were required to buy garbage tags for excess waste items, those tags should be available for purchase. Participants were permitted to choose all options they supported.

Figure 5 If you had to purchase garbage tags, where would you want to have these tags available for purchase?





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About three-quarters (74% public survey, 77% panel) say they should be able to buy garbage tags at **local retailers** such as grocery stores and drug stores. This option was the most popular among urban, suburban, and rural residents across the City.

Just under two-thirds (64% public survey, 62% panel) would like to be able to order tags **online**. Support for this option among survey respondents was highest for people between the ages of 25 to 34 (78%), those aged 35-44 (75%), households earning more than \$120,000 a year (76%) and people living in urban areas (67%). Support for online ordering is lowest among survey respondents aged 65 or older (44%) and people living in rural areas (60%).

Roughly one-quarter (24% public survey, 28% panel) of respondents say garbage tags should be available for purchase at **community centres and libraries**. This is a particularly popular location for respondents under the age of 25 (37% public survey, 49% panel), those living in urban areas (33% public survey, 37% panel) and renters (34% public survey, 33% panel), but is least popular with people aged 65 or older (16% public survey, 18% panel).

Other suggestions from respondents included the ability to buy tags at hardware stores, gas stations, City facilities, convenience stores or large retailers (e.g., Costco).

5.4 Advantages

“It could encourage people to consider what is going in their trash and instead turn to options like recycling, green bins and composting. All of those things would impact the environment in a positive way, and we all benefit from that.”
– *Survey Respondent*

Most commonly, survey respondents indicated that the partial PAYT option was easy to understand and created equality among all households by requiring those who generate excess waste to pay for its removal. As some respondents noted, a “user pay” system creates a financial incentive for people to change their behaviour and signals that waste reduction is a priority. It could even change people’s shopping habits, encouraging them to avoid products with excess packaging.

PAYT also provides flexibility as residents can purchase extra tags when needed to get rid of excess garbage but does not cost more if they do not have a lot a waste. It could also recover costs of garbage collection through the sale of garbage tags.

“I LOVE the incentive for people to reduce waste and garbage. I think we absolutely need to divert all the waste from the landfills, and hopefully



this could motivate more residents to use the green bin and to compost.”
– Survey Respondent

5.5 Drawbacks

The most identified drawbacks identified by survey respondents were related to concerns that tags could be stolen or that a partial PAYT program would be easy to circumvent by residents putting extra bags at the house of a neighbour with fewer items or putting some of their waste in a neighbour’s garbage bin to avoid paying extra. There was also considerable concern a partial PAYT program would encourage illegal dumping anywhere someone could get rid of excess waste for free, whether at the end of a laneway or at shopping centres, parks, business locations or unattended properties. Others said they were worried residents might store their excess waste to avoid paying extra fees, or that untagged bags that were not collected would remain at the curbside, creating sanitary issues as the garbage could attract more insects, rodents, or animals.

“Excess garbage items will be just left on the street or dumped at commercial dumpsters. This scheme will definitely provide an additional revenue stream for the municipality but will not significantly change people’s behaviour, unless it will be strictly enforced, and loopholes are removed.”
– Survey Respondent

Several survey respondents and City staffed called for a partial PAYT system to consider the situation of larger households such as multigenerational homes and those of big families and people who choose to live together because of the high cost of housing. Others said PAYT should consider the needs of people with disabilities or medical needs that generate a large amount of waste, with at least one person calling for any special exemption for such households not to require a form signed by a doctor as this would be yet another cost for those households. PAYT was seen by some participants as penalizing households that normally do not generate a lot of waste but that might go over the bi-weekly limit sometimes (e.g., when downsizing or renovating, or at holiday times).

“This option would certainly pose a financial barrier to individuals from low-income households. ... Furthermore, this option may not actually lead to a reduction in waste generation or change in behaviour as individuals who can afford the fee will continue to generate excess waste and pay as needed.”
– Survey Respondent

There was concern a tag system would encourage the use of plastic bags (and plastic tags) by people currently using garbage bins without bags. Several participants in the online dialogue



session said it seemed counterintuitive to wrap garbage in additional plastic and affix plastic tags to it when the goal is to try to keep plastic out of landfills.

5.6 Possible Ways to Reduce Drawbacks

Many respondents stressed the need to better educate residents on how to reduce and further divert waste. There were suggestions information could be provided to children at school who would then bring it home to their parents and encourage them to be good role models, and that any information resources be available in multiple languages.

5.7 Additional Questions

The dialogue sessions generated some questions about partial PAYT that were not discussed but which respondents felt needed to be answered before this option is adopted. Answers to these questions and others can be found in the accompanying document on EngageOttawa:

- Will the tags expire? What happens if you don't use all your tags in one year?
- How much will the tags cost, and how will that cost be determined?
- Where will the money go?
- Will there be different rates for different family situations/household sizes?
- Will there be a fee if someone uses another person's curb to throw out items without a tag?
- How do you deal with tenants who don't follow the rules and create additional costs for a landlord?
- What is the plan for diapers?
- Is the City considering any options to increase what is recyclable to help increase diversion rates?
- Is there anything the City can do to encourage companies to reduce the amount of packaging produced?
- How will this option be enforced, especially in places with communal dumping sites such as apartments and condos?
- Who will be responsible for enforcement?



- Who will be responsible for disposing of illegally dumped garbage?

5.8 Results from the focus groups and dialogue sessions

Participants from the focus groups and online dialogue sessions expressed concerns about the potential for a partial PAYT approach to lead to conflict between neighbours through increased dumping on neighbour's curbside or garbage which was uncollected for not having a tag attached could lead to arguments among neighbours and with waste collectors or bylaw enforcement officers. This was echoed by focus group participants, who added it may be difficult for waste collection staff to discern who is responsible for what garbage.

Online dialogue session participants called on the City to keep solid waste management at the forefront of residents' minds by celebrating successes and talking about the risks solid waste represents for the planet and for human health. One person suggested piloting the option in areas of the city that produce the most waste and taking the learnings to other areas. Another said problem areas should be targeted first to educate residents there.

Several dialogue session participants said a partial PAYT would be unfair to low-income families by creating an additional financial barrier for people who might not have disposable income to spend on extra waste removal. Several participants voiced the opinion that the partial PAYT approach could be a "tax" on low-income households while another expressed concern the fees could increase every year. Some survey participants said existing taxes should be enough to cover the costs of waste collection or that property taxes should be reduced if PAYT is introduced. Some dialogue session participants said there should be more clarity about how any fees collected by PAYT would be used and that the money should stay in the waste collection system.

Many people in the online dialogue sessions said it should be easy to get tags and that there should be help for people who cannot afford to purchase extra tags. There was a lot of support for a suggestion that people be provided with 6-8 extra tags for free they could use whenever they need them during the year to avoid annoying people already doing the right thing by reducing the amount of waste, they generate but who occasionally have excess items for pick up. Other suggestions included allowing residents to roll over their tags (so if they only put out a single item one week, they could put out three another week) and giving people a tax rebate for any unused tags at the end of the year.

Participants from the focus group with the CCB noted that any tags should integrate accessible features, such as a braille or large print in order to make them usable for people who are blind or who have low vision.



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There were also calls for tags to be identifiable to a particular address to prevent them being stolen, high penalties for illegal dumping and incentives for companies to take reusable furniture or bulky items.

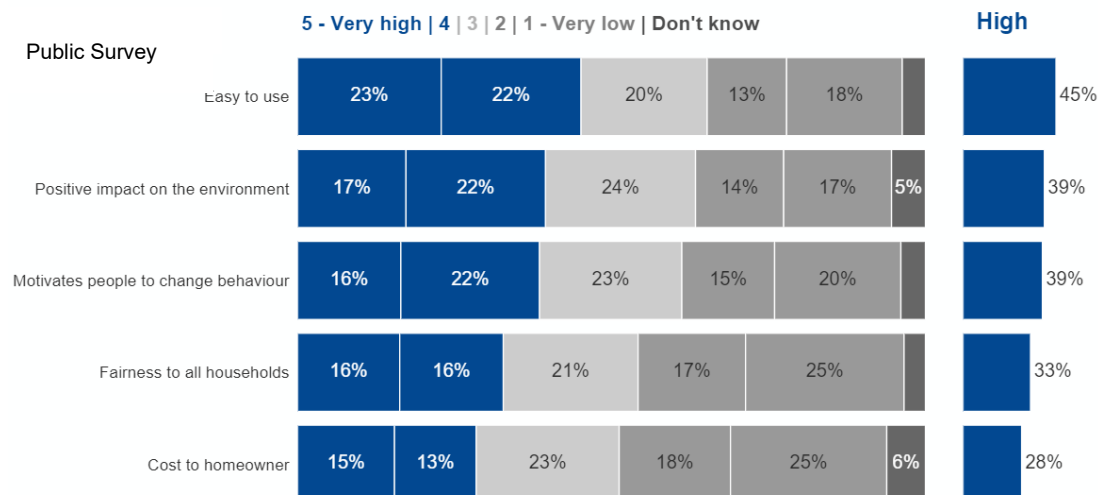
When discussing the potential impact of a partial PAYT approach, some participants said PAYT would not encourage behavioural changes as there would be no incentive for people who can afford to pay extra to divert their waste. People in affluent neighbourhoods would be able to throw away as much garbage as they wanted to because they would not be deterred by \$3/tag price, prompting some to call for the tag price to take into account the income of specific households. Others suggested the price should be higher for every household regardless of income to better promote behavioural change, with one dialogue session participant saying cost should be a minor factor because the main goal should be to protect the environment and reduce garbage.

6 Firm Item Limits

This option would reduce the number of garbage items residents would be allowed to set out at the curb, with any garbage items above the allowable limit not being collected. Respondents were told this option builds upon the City’s existing policy by reducing the current limit of six items every collection cycle, but that it could create difficulties for some residents to deal with excess garbage that cannot be avoided, donated for reuse, or diverted.

6.1 Rating the Considerations

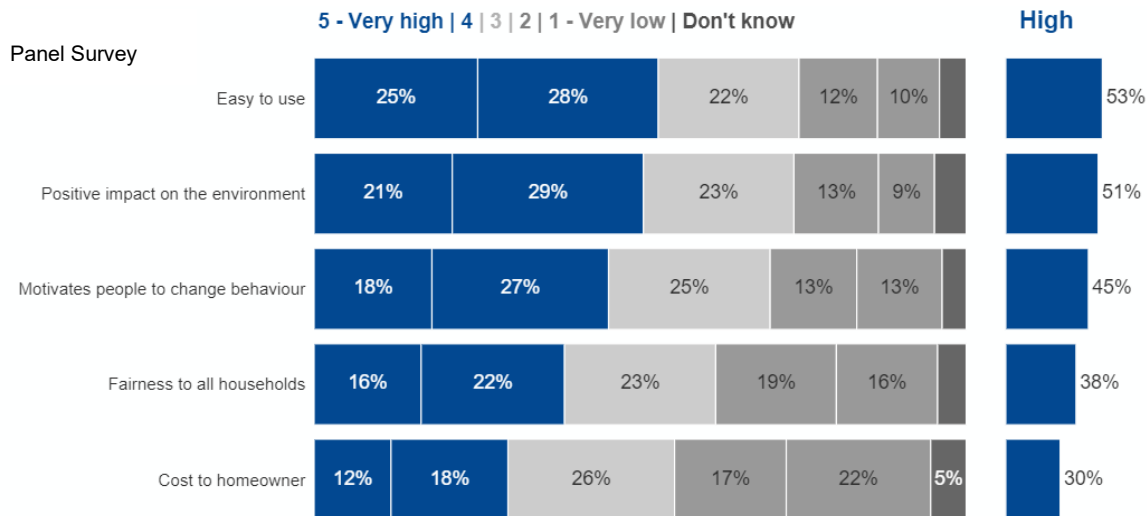
Figure 6 When considering reduced garbage limits, how would you rate it across the following categories





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About half of survey respondents (45% public survey, 53% panel) rated this option highly for being **easy to use**. While responses were generally consistent across all demographics, the rating increased for those households with higher annual incomes and decreased as respondents put out more items every two weeks. Ease of use was also rated more highly by those under 25 years of age and, among panel respondents, by people living in single-family homes and large households.

Just over half of panel respondents (51%) also rated highly this option's **positive impact on the environment**, but only 39% of public survey respondents gave it a high rating. Once again, ratings were generally consistent across all demographics but increased to 43% among survey respondents under the age of 25 and those 65 years and older. Unlike the ratings for ease of use, there was no significant difference in ratings based on household income levels.

About two in five public survey respondents (39%) rated reduced firm item limits highly for its ability to **motivate people to change their behaviour** (the same level of rating they gave for its positive impact on the environment), particularly those aged 25-34 (42%), people living in group homes (57%) and those living in urban areas (42%). Panel respondents gave it a slightly higher positive rating (45%), particularly those under the age of 25 (55%) and people living in urban areas (54%) and in apartments (51%). Panel respondents living in rural areas (37%) and those aged 65 or older (40%) gave it a slightly lower positive rating.

Roughly one-third of respondents (33% public survey, 38% panel) gave a high rating to this option's **fairness to all households**. Among public survey respondents, people living in rooming houses (36%) and apartments (36%) gave it a higher rating than the rating given by group homes (8%). Homeowners (34%) and renters (33%) were fairly uniform in their ratings. Among panel respondents, people living in single-family homes (42%) and homeowners (41%)



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gave it a higher rating than the rating given by renters (32%). The rating of fairness declined the more items a respondent put out every two weeks for both public survey and panel respondents.

More respondents in both the public survey and panel surveys gave a lower rating to the **cost to the homeowner** than gave it a higher rating: 39% of panel respondents rated it low versus 30% who rated it high, while for survey respondents the ratings were 43% versus 28%. This was particularly pronounced among survey respondents under the age of 25 (54% versus 21%) and people living in households with three people (46% versus 26%). There was no significant difference in ranking cost to the homeowner based on household income or ownership status.

6.2 Advantages

Respondents felt this was the most easily explained option and offered equality to everyone, so no one would be able to “buy their way out.” It also imposed no additional costs on residents, making it a fair option for people on low incomes and was easier to implement because residents did not need to get or use tags.

“This is a fairer option because there is no cost to anyone.”
– **Survey Respondent**

Firm item limits was seen as a way to encourage more recycling and composting, as residents would need to consider what they throw out in the regular garbage and what could be diverted, including through donating items or refurbishing them. It would also provide incentives for people to purchase items with less packaging which, in turn, would generate less waste and send fewer items to the landfill.

Other advantages included making it easier for the City to plan waste collection as the volume of garbage would be more predictable and there would not be a need to deal with as many bulky items such as couches and mattresses.

6.3 Drawbacks

. One survey respondent noted there would be no significant benefits if the number of items permitted was too high while another survey respondent said it would not reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste.

“Nothing will stop people ... putting their excess garbage next to their neighbour’s containers, unfairly impacting them. Do we need neighbourhood garbage wars?”
– **Survey Respondent**



Other respondents said the limits would be too easy to circumvent as residents could ask neighbours with fewer items to let them put extra items at their curbside or simply dump their extra items at a neighbour's curb or in parks, at shopping centres or in laneways or ditches. Rural respondents were especially concerned about illegal dumping because of the adverse effects it could have on agriculture and wildlife.

“You would have people driving around at night and dumping garbage everywhere.”
– *Dialogue session Participant*

Some survey respondents said reducing the item limits would be unfair to large households and those with guests as they would be generating more than the average amount of garbage. Others said it would be inequitable for residents who do not have transport to take items to the Trail Waste Facility Landfill and disproportionately affect low-income residents who cannot afford to rent a vehicle to do that. A survey respondent said the biggest impacts would be on the most vulnerable households, including those with lower incomes and people with medical conditions that result in a lot of waste being generated. This sentiment was echoed by several email and phone submissions which called out the impacts of this approach on households where this more than just one family.

“Finally, these options seem to assume one household/family per house. This is not always the case. Ppl rent rooms in houses together (for example students), host extended guests, have elderly family move in, rent out their basement. Any fixed limit would be complicated in these situations as ppl manage their own waste when they are cohabitating, and it wouldn't be fair to make roommates responsible for someone else's waste.”
–*Email submission*

Respondents also expressed concern there would be increased costs with this option as additional intervention by bylaw enforcement officers will be needed. Other respondents believe residents will try to use larger bags to keep their number of items within the allowed limit and that uncollected excess items will either be left at the curb or stored for the next collection cycle, leading to problems with insects, rodents, and animals, particularly in rural areas.

6.4 Possible Ways to Reduce Drawbacks

As with the partial PAYT option, many respondents said it would be important to educate residents on how to reduce, reuse and recycle or repurpose items that would otherwise be discarded as waste. dialogue session while a survey respondent said enforcement should be a key consideration, as many residents are not respecting the current item limits and are not being penalized for that.



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Respondents called for a multifaceted education program to inform people about recycling and not-for-profits in Ottawa that can divert furniture and other items to give them a second life. They suggested having one or two days a year when people could put out extra items for collection, such as during spring cleaning, and a return of special collection days for bulky items. Other suggestions included having “giveaway days” during the year and giving special exemption to households undergoing renovations or which had suffered flooding.

“While we continue to promote urbanization, very few apartments/condos have green bin programs and/or recycle properly. Focusing on solutions for these issues as well would go a long way to reducing waste.”
– Survey Respondent

Several respondents said reduced firm item limits, if selected, should be introduced gradually with a phased reduction in item limits. One person suggested setting item limits at the neighbourhood level based on the average amount of waste collected in those neighbourhoods. Another said there should be more focus on getting corporations to reduce the amount of waste they produce.

6.5 Additional Questions

- What is an “item”?
- What do you do when you have more garbage (e.g., from renovations)?
- How would this option be enforced in multi-family dwellings (e.g., condos)?
- What would happen with excess items that are not collected when it is not clear whose garbage it is (i.e., in townhomes or condominiums)?
- Will there be larger bins for recycling?

6.6 Results from the focus groups and online dialogue sessions

Dialogue session participants said reduced firm item limits would be the most inflexible option and too punitive on residents by imposing hard garbage limits. Similarly, several focus group participants added that this approach could impose the most challenges for residents who cannot access the Trail Waste Facility Landfill to dispose of extra garbage (e.g., because they don’t have a car or are unable to afford the tipping fees).

Conversely, several online dialogue session participants preferred this option as they indicated this option would not encourage a change of behaviour or increased diversion of waste by people who put out fewer items every two weeks. Some dialogue session participants said



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there would be better aesthetics and increased mobility on collection days as the streets would be tidier with fewer items on sidewalks and at the curbside.

One dialogue session participant said the City should “educate, engage and enforce, in that order” when considering implementing this option. Similarly, focus group participants were unclear about how this option could be enforced in for multi unit residences, where people often pile their garbage together.

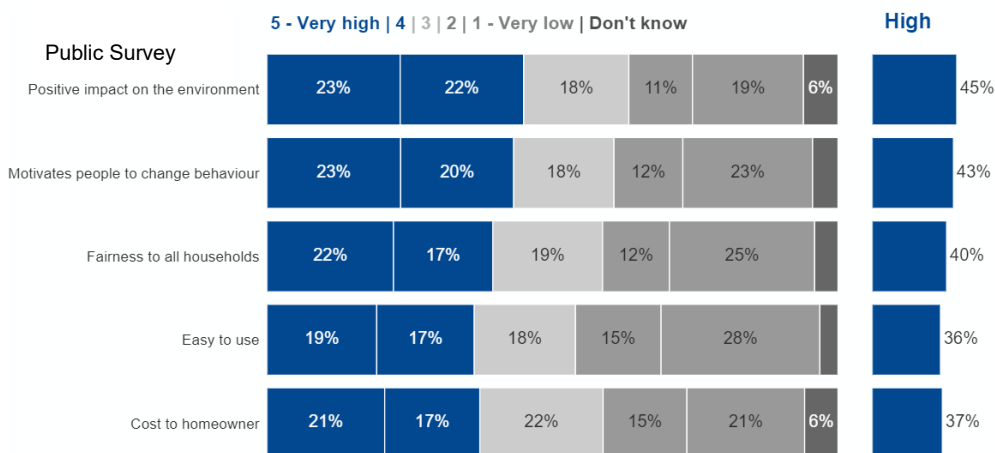
While participants were concerned about the potential for illegal dumping with this option, at least one dialogue session participant was skeptical, however, about how much illegal dumping there would be, noting that while people might say they would dump their excess garbage somewhere else, most people would not actually do that.)

7 Clear Garbage Bags with Recycling and Organics Bans

With this option, households would use clear bags for their garbage and would not be able to put recyclables, food, or organic waste in those bags. Respondents were told this option strongly encourages proper sorting of waste because waste collectors would be able to see the contents of the clear bags but that there could be privacy implications if a household’s garbage is visible to others.

7.1 Rating the Considerations

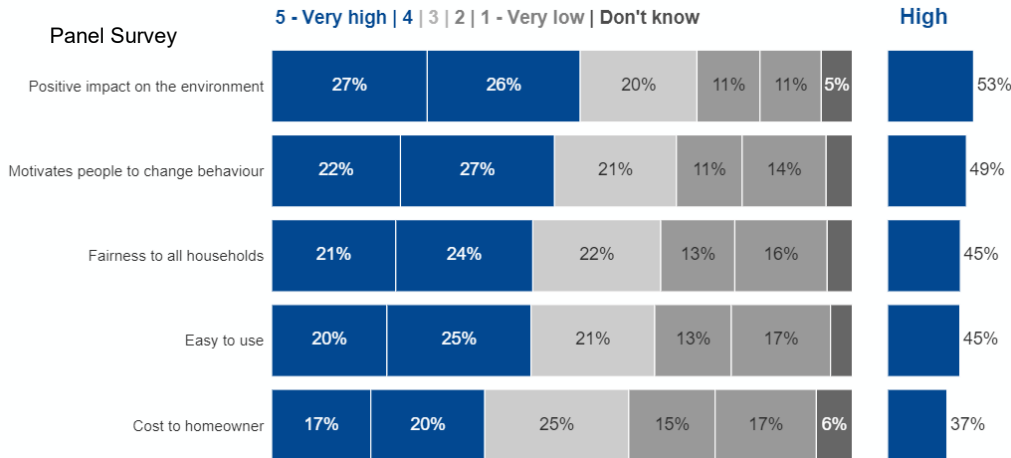
Figure 7 When considering clear garbage bags with material bans on recycling and organics, how would you rate it across the following categories





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Roughly half of survey respondents (45% public survey, 53% panel) rated highly this option’s **positive impact on the environment**. In both surveys, about two-thirds of renters (59% public survey, 65% panel) and those respondents under the age of 25 (65% public survey, 62% panel) gave this consideration a “very high” or “high” rating. In contrast, only about one-third (37%) of rural and 41% of urban respondents in each survey did the same.

This option’s ability to **motivate people to change their behaviour** was the next highest rated consideration in both surveys, with 43% of public survey respondents and 49% of panel respondents rating it “very high” or “high.” Among panel respondents, this was most highly rated by those under the age of 25 (58%) and those living in urban areas (56%) and was least highly rated by rural respondents (37%).

Two in five (40%) of public survey respondents and slightly more (45%) panel respondents rated highly the **fairness to all households** of clear bags with recycling and organics bans. Respondents under the age of 25 (56% public survey, 55% panel) were more likely to rate this consideration highly, with the rating tending to decline the older respondents were. Only 30% of public survey respondents with a disability gave this consideration a high rating while 48% gave it a low one.

Just over one-third (36%) of public survey respondents gave a high rating to how **easy to use** clear bags with recycling and organics bans would be, below the 45% of panel respondents who highly rated this consideration. Those under the age of 25 (58% public survey, 52% panel) and renters (47% public survey, 51% panel) gave this consideration a higher positive rating than the overall figure, while almost half (47%) of panel respondents and half of survey respondents (50%) in rural areas gave it a “low” or “very low” rating.



Just over one-third (37%) of public survey and panel respondents said the **cost to the homeowner** of this option was an important consideration. This rating was fairly consistent across demographics, although it was slightly more likely among panel respondents aged 25-44 (42%) and those living in rural areas (40%), and among public survey respondents with a disability (41%).

7.2 Privacy

Slightly more than half (55%) of public survey respondents and just under half (48%) of panel respondents said they were “very concerned” or “concerned” about the privacy implications of using clear garbage bags, while one-third (32% public survey, 33% panel) said they were “not very concerned” or “not concerned.” These figures were fairly consistent across all demographics, including between men and women, although respondents under the age of 25 (37% public survey, 40% panel) renters (44% public survey, 42% panel) were less likely to say they had privacy concerns with this option.

“I don’t really see the (privacy) concerns. ... I would anticipate that the bag could still be in a bin so less concern with privacy except by contractors. ... As for private content... shred it, put it in an opaque bag that you already have in your garbage bag.”
– Survey Respondent

More than half of respondents (54% public survey, 51% panel) believe residents should be allowed one privacy bag³, but about one-quarter (24% public survey, 29% panel) do not support the use of a privacy bag and about one in five (22% public survey, 21% panel) say they don’t know if a privacy bag should be allowed. Women were more likely to support allowing a privacy bag (57% public survey, 54% panel) than men (50% public survey, 48% panel). Among survey respondents, support for a privacy bag was highest from households with five or more residents (57% public survey, 58% panel) and lowest from residents in urban areas (51.69%). Among panel respondents, support for a privacy bag was highest from households with five or more residents (58%) and lowest from residents in rural areas (41%). Respondents outlined certain types of waste and products (e.g., personal documents, incontinence products) which raise particular concerns as it pertains to privacy. However, some respondents acknowledged there could be ways of mitigating privacy concerns, such as using their existing garbage bins.

³ Either a small opaque bag inside the clear garbage bag or a standalone small black bag



“Do the clear bags still go into garbage cans? That would reduce the privacy concerns.”

-Survey respondent

7.3 Advantages

Respondents said this option is the only one that will make sure there is a full sort of waste as collectors will be able to see what is in the garbage bags. They felt this would strongly encourage recycling and composting, diverting the most recyclables and organics and be better for the environment. It would also add safety for waste collectors who would be able to see if dangerous items are in the clear bag.

“I would say this is a must simply for the safety of the garbage collectors.”

– Survey respondent

They also saw it as the fairest and most affordable option and better for low-income families as there would be no personal cost if waste was not properly sorted other than the bag not being collected.

7.4 Drawbacks

Many respondents identified privacy as the major drawback of this option. Some called it an invasion of privacy while others were concerned about people seeing personal items such as menstrual products and medical waste being thrown out. One person thought a small privacy bag might not be enough for some households, particularly those with more residents and those with special needs.

“I think the privacy issue would make people not want to use this (option).

People may feel self-conscious putting their garbage out for their neighbours to see what is in (it).”

– Survey Respondent

Several respondents said this option adds more single-use plastics, particularly for people who currently put their garbage in a bin instead of a plastic bag. A survey respondent said bins were better than plastic bags because they helped to keep animals out of the garbage. Others were concerned about the cost of buying even more plastic garbage bags and whether low-income households would be able to afford them. This option could also waste black garbage bags people had already bought.

A survey respondent said clear bags are preferable for recycling, not garbage.



“Please no “clear garbage bags” – isn’t the whole point to eliminate garbage?! Not go out and buy more plastic garbage?”

– Email submission

Respondents thought this option was the most complicated one, as it is difficult for people to know exactly what goes in the garbage and what can be recycled or composted. It was noted that some items are paper, plastic and garbage combined, or there can be food or paint contamination of otherwise recyclable material, but that might not be obvious if the item is put in the clear bag, meaning the bag would not be collected. Some people said this option puts too much work on waste collectors who already have a difficult job. As one person said, waste collectors can have as many as 1,400 households on a route, and their main objective is to get the job done, so if you make each collector inspect the garbage at every household, it will either take longer to complete the route or the job will not get done well. Another wondered whether decisions made by waste collectors would be consistent or vary from one to another. Similarly, this point was brought up by City workers who highlighted that this approach could create much more work for waste collection staff.

“How do garbage operators have time to properly assess a bag’s contents? If one ‘banned’ item mistakenly gets put in the bag and the bag is not picked up, what is the homeowner supposed to do with the rest of the smelly garbage for two weeks? This is a terrible option.”

– Survey Respondent

Some people said the purpose of this option seemed to be to shame people into doing the right thing but wondered if peer pressure would accomplish that goal. Others said people will hide whatever they want in the middle of the clear bag or put recyclables or organics in the privacy bag, defeating the purpose of this option. There was also concern that, if sharp objects were hidden in the middle of the clear bag, there would still be safety concerns for waste collectors. One person said this option would not promote good neighbourliness.

“This shouldn’t be the first step – it’s too radical.”

– Dialogue session Participant

7.5 Possible Ways to Reduce Drawbacks

As with the previous two options, respondents said there would need to be a concerted education campaign to inform residents about what to do and what is permitted in each bag, as well as clearly communicating the advantages of clear garbage bags to make this option more appealing. Residents also need to know why a clear bag was not collected so they can learn what not to put in the garbage in future, along with more education about how to divert waste.



One person suggested adding such information to bills for property taxes and other City services.

There were also calls for the price of clear bags not to exceed what people are willing or able to pay and for the bags to be strong enough to prevent rodents and other animals getting into them. A survey respondent suggested increasing the frequency of recycling collection as more items are diverted into that stream.

7.6 Additional Questions

- Will there be a limit on the number of clear bags?
- Will it be a particular type of clear bag?
- Can a biodegradable clear bag be developed?
- How big would the clear bags be?
- How big would a privacy bag be?
- Will residents have to buy the bags from the City?
- Could the City provide bags at the beginning to help phase in this option? (6)
- Would residents have to stop using small plastic bags in household bins and dump all their garbage in the clear bag?
- How will people know which item(s) in their bag was unacceptable? Will there be notifications on the bag?
- What will be the penalties for non-compliance?
- How will this be enforced in places with communal dumping areas, such as apartments and condos?
- How did other municipalities handle the transition? (e.g., Markham and Halifax did gradual implementation)
- What challenges did other municipalities have with a clear bag program, and how did they overcome them?



7.7 Results from the focus groups and online dialogue sessions

Participants in the focus groups and online dialogue sessions outlined a number of challenges with a clear bag approach.

A dialogue session participant thought this option would create less of an incentive to divert waste as collectors will need to have the time to properly inspect bags and take them away, and another thought the City would need to hire more collectors, the cost of which would be passed on to residents.

A dialogue session participant said there could also be security concerns and gave the example of someone being able to see from your garbage that you were planning to go on holiday and when you would be away. Other participants expressed concern that clear garbage bags would encourage “garbage picking” and could be torn open if people tried to take things from them.

The aesthetics of this option was also much discussed, with several dialogue session participants saying clear bags will look “messy” on the street and that they do not want to have to look at other people’s trash.

Some people said this option puts too much work on waste collectors who already have a difficult job. Similarly, several focus group participants mentioned that a clear bag approach could make it difficult for people who have difficulty sorting their waste. Furthermore, some participants were very unclear about how waste collection staff will have the time or training to identify items that are not allowed.

8 Material Bans with PAYT and Reduced Garbage Limit

Survey respondents⁴ were then asked to consider a combination of the options that would see recyclables and organics banned from the garbage stream along with the partial Pay-as-You-Throw system and reduced firm item limits.

Support for this combination was not as high overall as for any of the previous three options. Just over one-third of survey respondents (36% public survey, 40% panel) said “yes” or “definitely yes” when asked if they supported the combination, compared with 45% of public survey respondents and roughly half of panel respondents who supported each of the previous

⁴ This combined option was not discussed in the Dialogue Sessions.



single options.⁵ Support was highest among people under the age of 25 (46% public survey, 49% panel), renters (46% public survey, 45% panel) and urban respondents (45% public survey, 47% panel), while opposition was highest among people with a disability (29% public survey) and respondents in rural areas (51% public survey, 44% panel). Support increased the more people earned but decreased the older they were and the more items they said they put out every two weeks.

8.1 Advantages

A survey respondent said this combination was the most flexible system, a view echoed by survey respondents who welcomed the blended approach to reduce waste, including the partial PAYT aspect so people can occasionally throw out more garbage than usual. Other survey respondents said this option would be better for the environment as it may motivate people to consume less, reduce the amount of waste they produce and recycle more. The lack of clear garbage bags in this option was also welcomed as a way to maintain privacy.

“Attaching a cost to the garbage we produce is a great idea. I think some of the responsibility needs to rest with the manufacturing sector as well. Business should pay a fee if they are using packaging that can’t be recycled or composted. ...If people keep buying stuff that isn’t eco-friendly, it doesn’t matter how much diversion the city does.”
– Survey Respondent

8.2 Drawbacks

Several respondents said this combination of options was too complicated and confusing, making it harder for residents to understand as many people still do not know what is recyclable or compostable. Others thought this option would be too difficult to enforce, particularly if clear garbage bags are not used.

“I try to be very responsible with garbage disposal. I recycle, compost both city and personal. I don’t use single-use items as a rule. However, there are certain times when you just have to throw it all out. I’d still like that option. I truly believe most people really don’t know what can and cannot be recycled. It all becomes way to complicated.”
– Survey Respondent

⁵ 49% of panel respondents said they supported the Partial PAYT option, and 53% supported each of the Reduced Firm Item Limits and Clear Bags with Material Bans options.



Several of the drawbacks identified for the three separate options were also cited for this combined option, including the increased risk of illegal dumping, the additional costs for low-income households and the extra work (and time required) for waste collectors to inspect people's garbage before deciding whether it should be collected.

“Unless the City engages in a robust education campaign, in multi-languages, many residents will not understand what is and isn't banned.”
– *Panel Respondent*

8.3 Possible Ways to Reduce Drawbacks

Once again, respondents said there would need to be significant and ongoing education of residents for this combined option to work. There would also need to be an easier way for residents to dispose of banned items, such as lightbulbs and batteries, and more frequent recycling and organic collection as more items are diverted from the waste stream.

“If you want people to sort their garbage better, introduce little bonuses for smaller number of garbage bags and higher amounts of recycling! Positive reinforcements work WAY BETTER!”
– *Survey Respondent*

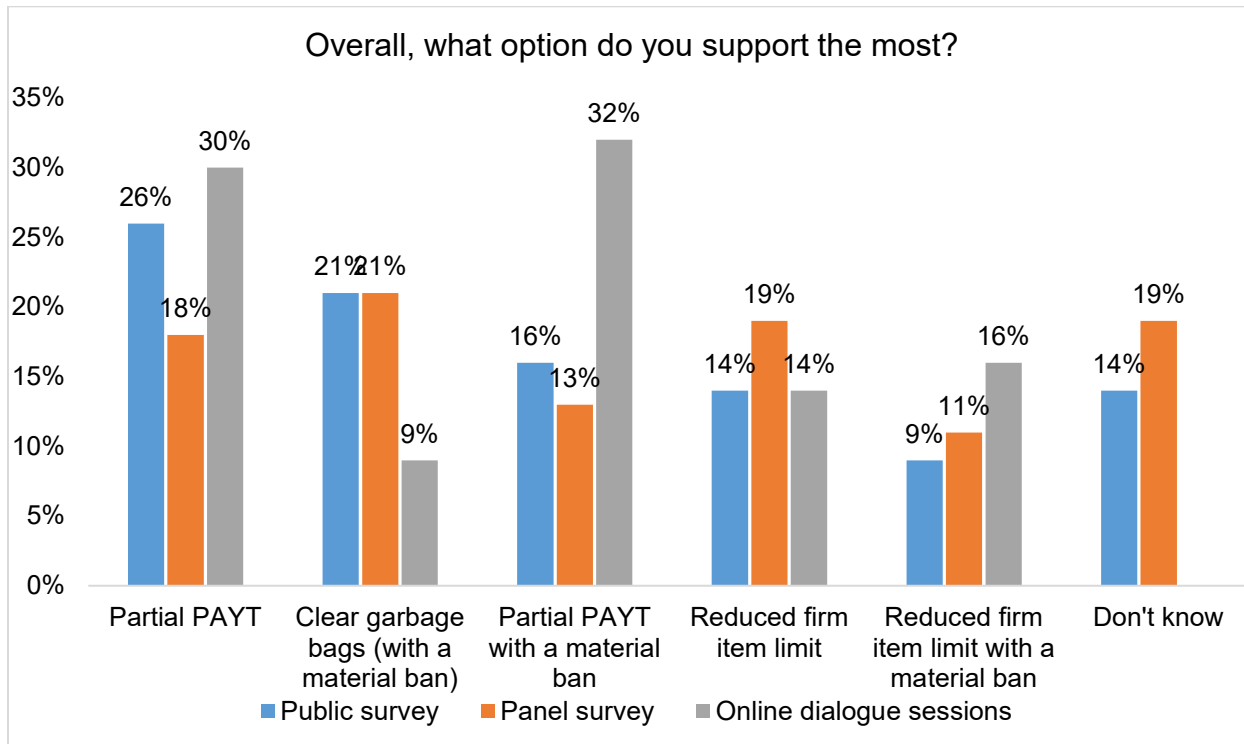
9 Overall Selection

After discussing each of the proposed new service options, survey and dialogue session respondents were asked to identify the one they supported the most and what level of solid waste collection service the City should provide.



9.1 Preferred Option

Figure 8 Overall, what option do you support the most?



Overall, the most preferred option among public survey respondents was a Partial PAYT approach (26%), but this was the third-favourite option for panel respondents (18%) and the second-favourite one for those attending the dialogue sessions (30%). This was also the preferred option for rural respondents (29% public survey, 21% panel⁶), people living in townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes (24% public survey, 21% panel⁷), those aged between 25 and 44 (24% public survey, 21% panel) and households earning between \$70,000 and \$119,999 a year (26% public survey, 21% panel).

Among survey respondents who indicate they don't regularly use a City organics or recycling program, the preferred approach differed between public and panel responses. Clear garbage bags was the preference among panel respondents not using diversion programs (30% of respondents) while Partial PAYT was preferred among public respondents (22% of

⁶ Tied with Reduced Firm Item Limit

⁷ Tied with Reduced Firm Item Limit



respondents not using recycling or green bin programs). Twenty-eight per cent of panel respondents and 48% of public respondents said they didn't know what option they support the most.

For panel respondents, 21% preferred the **Clear Garbage Bags (with a material ban)** option over the other four. This was the second-favourite option for public survey respondents (20%) and the least-favourite one for dialogue session participants (9%). This was also the preferred option for renters (31% public survey, 30% panel) and those in urban areas (25% public survey, 24% panel).

“I think clear bags are the most effective way to change behaviour to encourage residents to use the green bin and recycling bins.”

– Survey Respondent

For dialogue session participants, 32% put **Partial PAYT (with a material ban)** at the top of their list, but this was the third-favourite option for public survey respondents (14%) and the fourth-favourite one for panel respondents (13%).

“PAYT provides an option for households to take better account as to the amount of garbage they are producing and consider other options (or pay).”

– Survey Respondent

The **Reduced Firm Item Limit** was the second-favourite option among panel respondents (19%) but the fourth-favourite one for public survey respondents (14%) and dialogue session participants (14%).

“Reduced firm item limit with material ban and use of clear bag would be my choice to have the most environmental impact.”

– Survey Respondent

The least-favourite option among both public survey respondents (8%) and survey respondents (11%) was a **Reduced Firm Item Limit (with a material ban)**, although this was the third-favourite choice for those at the dialogue sessions (18%). Almost all demographics in the two surveys ranked this option last among the presented options.

About one in five survey respondents (18% public survey, 19% panel) said they did not know which option they preferred, with uncertainty highest among rural respondents (23% public survey, 27% panel) and those aged 65 or older (23% public survey, 25% panel) and lowest among people under the age of 25 (8% public survey, 10% panel). For respondents who live in



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large households (5 or more people), “don’t know” was also the largest response at 24% (followed by Partial PAYT and clear garbage bags (with a material ban)).

Many of the survey respondents who selected “don’t know” did so because they did not support any of the options presented:

“None. I want more options as these are all wrong and citizens do now want to pay more.”

– Survey Respondent

Some respondents felt that the City was not considering the needs of large families, rural residents or low-income households in its choice of options:

“All of these options will lead to increased rural dumping. Where does the city think garbage will go when a resident on fixed incomes cannot pay, or refuses to pay?”

– Survey Respondent

Almost all demographics in the two surveys cited either the **positive impact on the environment** or **ease of use** as the most important factor influencing their choice of a preferred option, while the **cost to the homeowner** was the least important factor.

“Most likely to change behaviour but I remain concerned about encouraging use of plastic to deal with our garbage. The bags need to be easy to buy and the same price as equivalent opaque bags. Oversized items and some smaller loose items shouldn’t need to be bagged as long as they are all neatly contained in the garbage bin, or neatly at curb for pickup.”

– Survey Respondent

9.2 Preferred Garbage Set-Out Limit

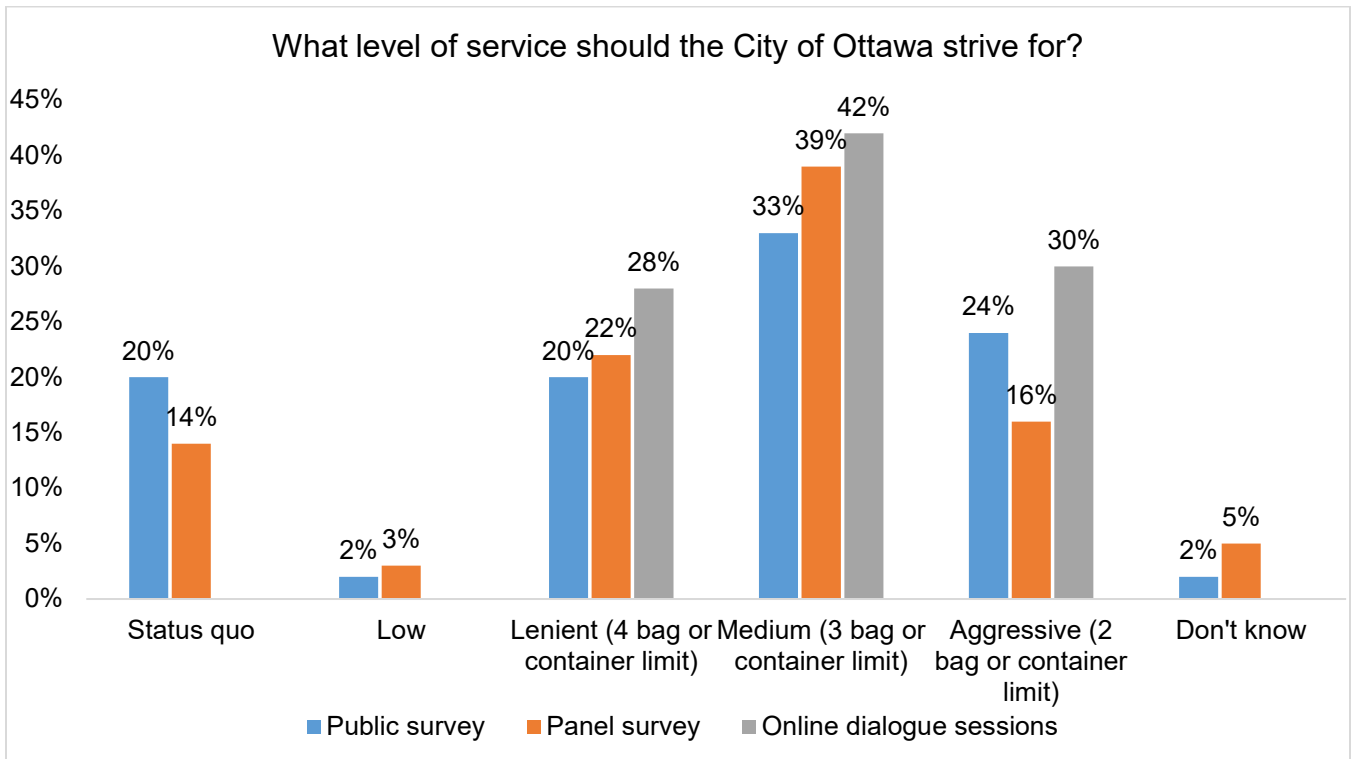
Respondents were asked to choose from five options for whether or how curbside garbage set-out limits should change:

- Status Quo (6 items every collection period);
- Low;
- Lenient (4 items every collection period);
- Moderate (3 items every collection period); and,



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- Aggressive (2 items every collection period).



“A bag limit will only be effective if there is accessibility to eco-friendly disposal options AND material bans. If these are all set in motion together, I believe the outcome will be positive.”
– Survey Respondent

Overall, most survey respondents (79%) favoured a change in the current level of service (from the current 6 bag or container limit).

The first choice of survey respondents and dialogue session participants overall was for a **moderate** change in service levels, reducing the item count from six garbage items to three every collection period. This was the top choice of one-third (33%) of public survey respondents and about two in five panel respondents (39%) and dialogue session participants (42%). This was also the top choice for rural and suburban respondents, and those who live in households with three or fewer people, across the public and panel surveys.

An **aggressive** change in service levels (from six garbage items to two every collection period) was the second choice overall of public survey respondents (24%) and dialogue session participants (30%) and the third choice of panel respondents (16%). People putting out one



item every two weeks were the most likely to choose this service level option (43% public survey, 30% panel), while people living in households with five or more residents (16% public survey, 10% panel) and those putting out three items (9% public survey, 7% panel) or four items (4% public survey, 5% panel) every two weeks were least likely to prefer this service level change. For urban respondents who completed the public survey, this was almost the top choice (33%).

Panel survey respondents chose a **lenient** change in service levels (from six items to four every collection period) as their second-most preferred option, but this was the third-most preferred option for public survey respondents (20%⁸) and dialogue session participants (28%).

Maintaining the **status quo** of six items every collection period was third-most preferred option for public survey respondents (20%⁹) but only the fourth-most preferred for panel respondents (14%). No dialogue session participants chose this as their preferred option. A **low** change to service levels was the least-preferred option across all demographics in both surveys and was not a preferred option of any dialogue session participants. However, almost half (49%) of public survey respondents indicated this as their preferred option. This was also the preferred option for households of five or more (29%).

**“I think if you go too aggressive too fast you will run into problems.
People need time to adjust their habits. They need time to learn
how to be more thoughtful with their waste disposal.
I think it could start out as a three-bag limit and eventually go down
to two once people become more comfortable with the system.”
– Survey Respondent**

As might be expected, survey respondents tended to favour higher item limits the more items they said they put out every two weeks. More than half of public survey respondents who put out five or six items every two weeks preferred maintaining the status quo of a six-item limit.¹⁰ Those who put out six (88%) every two weeks preferred an item limit of between four and six items, as did three-quarters (74%) of respondents who put out four items. Conversely, 78% of public survey respondents and 60% of panel respondents who put out one item every two

⁸ Tied with those who preferred maintaining the Status Quo (six items every collection period)

⁹ Tied with those who preferred a Lenient change in service levels (from six items to four every collection period)



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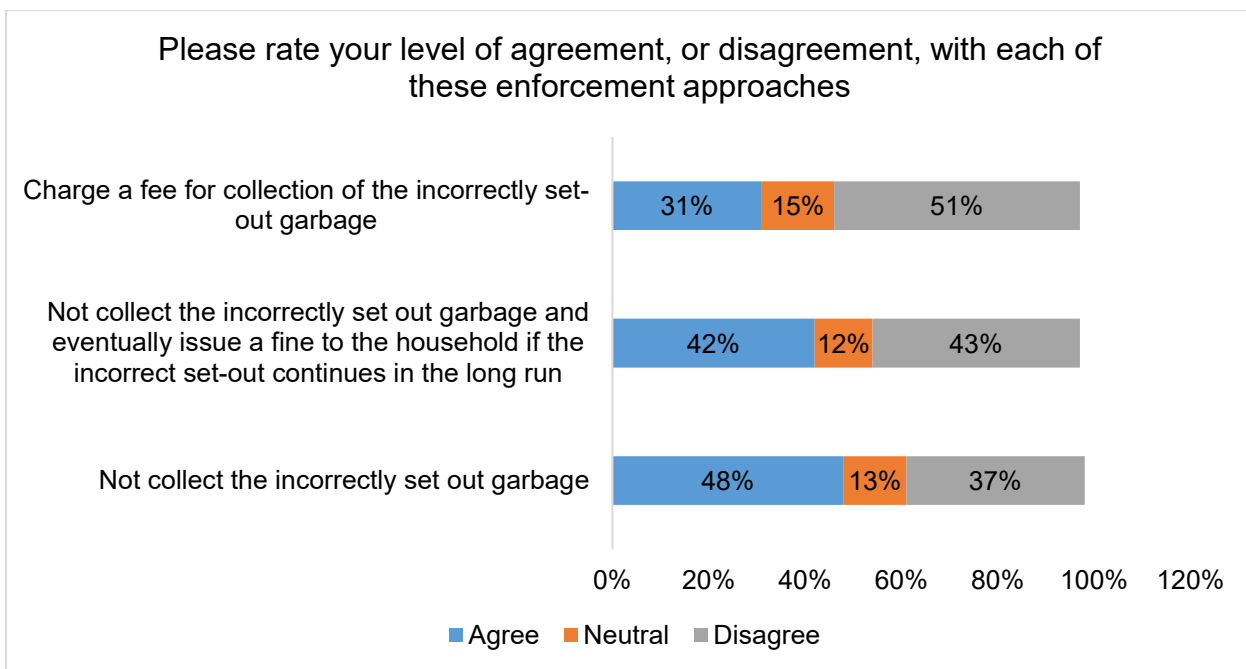
weeks and 62% of public survey respondents and 60% of panel respondents who put out two items every collection period preferred reducing the limit to two or three items.

“I think the limits should also take into account the number of people in a household. One or two people should be limited to one bag, three to four to two bags, five to six to three bags, seven or more to four bags.”
– Survey Respondent

10 Enforcement

After discussing the proposed new service options and their preferred level of service, respondents were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed with three enforcement measures that could be taken against households that continue to put out garbage incorrectly.

Figure 9 Please rate your level of agreement, or disagreement, with each of these enforcement approaches should a household continue to place out garbage incorrectly



Roughly half respondents to both surveys (48% public survey, 51% panel) agreed the City should **not collect incorrectly set out garbage**. Despite having the highest level of support from both public survey and panel respondents, about one-third (37% public survey, 30% panel) disagreed. Agreement was highest among those aged under 25 (55% public survey, 62% panel) and lowest among those aged 65 or older (42% public survey, 44% panel). The level of agreement with this enforcement measure increased the more someone earned and



decreased as people put out more items every two weeks. Among panel respondents, there was no significant difference between homeowners and renters or among residents of urban, suburban, or rural areas.

There was slight less agreement (42% public survey, 46% panel) that the City should **not collect incorrectly set out garbage and eventually issue a fine if the abuse continues in the long run**. Disagreement with this enforcement measure was slightly higher (43% public survey, 33% panel) than the previous one. Agreement was highest among urban respondents (49% public survey, 53% panel) and lowest among rural respondents (35%, public survey and panel) and people living in households with five or more residents (36%, public survey and panel). Once again, there was no significant difference between panel respondents who were homeowners or renters, but agreement with this measure decreased as survey respondents put out more items every two weeks.

“Make sure the cost of tags is very reasonable. Fines for non-compliance should be on a sliding scale based on the number of extra bags and number of times a household has exceeded the acceptable limit.”
– *Survey Respondent*

Fewer than two in five respondents (31% public survey, 38% panel) agreed that the City should **charge a fee for the collection of incorrectly set-out garbage**. More than half (51%) of public survey respondents and about two in five (38%) panel respondents disagreed with this enforcement measure. The level of agreement was highest for people living in apartments (44% public survey, 40% panel) and urban areas (36% public survey, 42% panel) and lowest for rural respondents (24% public survey, 30% panel). Among panel respondents, renters were slightly more in agreement with this measure (41%) than homeowners (37%). The level of agreement with this measure decreased as survey respondents put out more items every two weeks.

“Education is more effective than enforcement, so an education campaign should be developed to help residents appreciate the issues. Residents who do not comply should get warnings and then the visit of an officer before moving to charges.”
– *Survey Respondent*

Other approaches to education and enforcement mentioned by survey respondents include:

- Educational tags or materials when garbage is not collected or refused;
- An extended educational and awareness campaign about the option(s);



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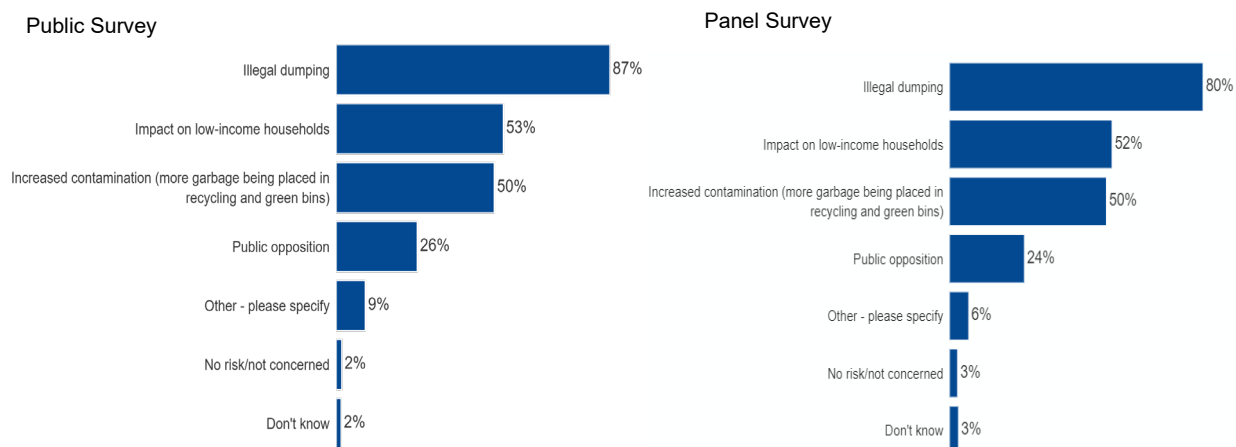
- Increased education and awareness about the impact of garbage and waste on the natural environment, including the use of multi-lingual and accessible materials;
- Improvement to existing City resources (e.g., waste explorer);
- Targeted outreach to children and youth;
- A two or three “strike” policy where households would not have their waste collected is incorrectly set out continuously;
- Reward or celebrate households who put out less waste; and,
- Provide a grace period so that residents become used to the new policy.

11 Implications and Risks

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked about the risks they were most concerned about if the proposed changes were made to the City’s diversion service.

11.1 Risks

Figure 10 With any policy or service level change we must consider the implications and risks. Some of the risks associated with the propose curbside diversion options are outlined below. Which ones are you concerned the most about?



The top risk identified by at least four in five respondents (87% public survey, 80% panel) was **illegal dumping**. This risk was particularly identified by rural respondents (91% public survey, 87% panel), people aged 65 and older (90% public survey, 87% panel) and those between 45



and 64 years old (90% public survey, 85% panel). Owners (88% public survey, 83% panel) were more likely to identify this risk than renters (80% public survey, 75% panel), but there was no significant difference based on the number of items respondents put out every two weeks.

The next most identified risk of the proposed changes was the **impact on low-income households** (53% public survey, 52% panel). Identification of this as a risk was higher among people earning less than \$20,000 a year (77% public survey), people under the age of 25 (71% public survey, 73% panel), renters (69% public survey, 60% panel) and people living in apartments (66% public survey, 63% panel). Identification of this as a risk increased the more items respondents put out every two weeks.

Close behind the impact on low-income households was the risk of **increased contamination** (i.e., more garbage placed in recycling and green bins), identified by half of all respondents (50% public survey, 50% panel). This percentage was basically consistent across all demographics and regardless of how many items a respondent put out every two weeks, but slightly lower among rural respondents (44% public survey, 45% panel).

Public opposition to the proposed changes was identified as a potential risk by about one-quarter of respondents (26% public survey, 24% panel). This percentage was essentially the same across all demographics but increased the more items respondents said they put out every two weeks.

Some of the other risks identified by survey respondents include the risk of rodent infestation, impact on agricultural land, cost to homeowners, impact on larger families and households, and the potential for negative impact on people with disabilities and elderly people.

Almost no one (2% public survey, 3% panel) said they were unconcerned about any risks from the proposed changes or did not know what the risks might be (2% public survey, 3% panel).

11.2 What could be done to prevent some of these risks happening?

In addition to the many suggestions already provided when discussing the proposed service options, survey respondents also offered some more general ideas about what steps might prevent potential risks arising from service changes, starting with a strong education and awareness campaign to inform residents about the changes and why they are being made.

“Landlords need to be educated and provided incentives to ensure that their tenants are informed and able to participate.”
– Survey Respondent

Other suggestions included:



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- Making the new program easy to use with a long transition period.
- Taking into account household size when determining item limits.
- Providing people with City-issued garbage bins instead of requiring them to use plastic bags.
- Providing larger recycling and composting bins.
- Subsidizing the cost for low-income households.
- Offering incentives such as tax credits for households that reduce their waste.
- Expanding the recycling program to accept more items.
- Offering curbside collection of small appliances and scrap metal.
- Making it easier to dispose of hazardous waste.
- Discouraging businesses and corporations from using single-use plastics or excessive packaging.
- Learning from municipalities who have employed similar waste collection programs before.
- Provide more opportunities to dispose of large, bulk items.
- Make an exception for rural residents and farmers.
- Consider the environmental impact of what ever option is chosen.
- Make sure people are educated and aware of the option before it's rolled out.
- Consider unique situations (e.g., moving, Christmas) where people generate more waste.
- Hold companies and commercial establishments accountable for the waste they produce.
- Consider the impact of COVID-19 on households and recycling or waste habits.
- Monitor common areas where waste may be dumped illegally.



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A considerable amount of feedback on the Solid Waste Master Plan and other waste programs was received through this engagement, including interest in:

- Exploring options including incineration;
- Returning to weekly garbage collection;
- Making Green Bin available at Multi-residential properties;
- Requiring producers and manufacturers to changes in product design and packaging to reduce waste;
- Focusing efforts on businesses to divert more waste and purchase products that are recyclable; and,

All of the feedback has been documented. Some of this feedback will be discussed further in the SWMP's Engagement Series 2, set to take place early 2022.

11.3 Engagement with Property Managers and Landlords

Rental properties and a few multi-residential properties receiving curbside garbage collection will be impacted by the policy change. Over 60 property managers and potentially effected properties were contacted via email, of those four groups provided feedback via email and two groups provided feedback via phone calls. Majority of respondents were concerned about having to manage tenants and how leftover waste may be dealt with. There were also concerns about educating tenants and how enforcement occur with common pad locations. If the bag limit were to change there was also mention of the potential for neighbours to illegal drop their waste at these common pads/collection points. There was no definitive option selected amongst the groups who provided feedback.

11.4 Feedback from the Solid Waste Master Plan's Stakeholder Sounding Board

The City of Ottawa's SWMP has a stakeholder sounding board (SSB) made up of residents and stakeholders who by invitation will represent the community, build partnerships, reflect concerns, be subject matter experts/ help in knowledge sharing and understanding of different demographics. All members of the SSB were encouraged to participate in the public survey and online dialogue sessions. Initial feedback from these tactics were shared with the SSB to understand if any key considerations for each of the options was missing. Additional feedback was received from:

- Eastern Ontario Landlord's Organization (EOLo)



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- Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES)
- EnviroCentre
- Ottawa Community Housing

Extensive feedback was received from EOLO advocating for the City to continue working with landlords in the City that may be subject to a new curbside garbage collection policy to see if there are solutions to reduce the burden on landlords for non-complying tenants. Ottawa Community Housing presented concerns on the financial implications all options could have on its tenants that would be subject to the policy option. CAFES and Envirocentre both discussed issues of equity amongst lower income families when considering a partial PAYT system, and encouraged that the recommended option consider public feedback as well as the data on the estimated impact on garbage disposal, waste diversion rate, and life of Trail Waste Facility Landfill. The importance of educational information being presented in languages outside of English and French was shared with the City to encourage greater participation among new Canadians and those whose first language is not English or French. CAFES expressed concern that a 3-item garbage limit will not allow the City to move fast enough to achieve the vision of the Solid Waste Master Plan due to the fact that 81% of respondents already put out 3 items or less bi-weekly. It was also noted that the proposed options will require behaviour change in consumption and waste sorting to reduce and divert waste.

11.5 Feedback from Solid Waste Services Staff

Solid Waste Services staff were asked to provide operational feedback on the options that were being considered. Feedback was gathered through paper surveys, online dialogue sessions, one-on-one conversations and e-mail. If the City were to recommend a Partial PAYT program, staff recommended all bags be tagged, with households receiving a designated number of free tags each year and purchase tags for any garbage items that exceed their allotted set out. This would help collection staff identify what should be collected, especially from properties with secondary units. The Firm Item Limit option was stated to be closest to how the system works today but it was noted that this option would be hard for collection from common pad locations. Similar to feedback received from the public, staff acknowledged this option may also propose challenges for those who have unavoidable waste and lack transportation to drop off excess waste at Trail Waste Facility Landfill. Clear Garbage Bags with Recycling and Organics Bans could help to divert the most waste as banned material would be hard to hide in the clear bags, though it would propose operational challenges because Waste Collection Staff would now be required to inspect garbage prior to collecting. A Clear Garbage Bag program would increase collector safety as they would be able to see potential hazards in the bags. Staff were also asked about what they believe the bag limit



should be set to, most staff polled selected 3 items biweekly, followed 4 items and third at 2 items biweekly. Many City staff members acknowledged that a gradual reduction in the bag limit may be favourable to reduce collection challenges and support resident behaviour change.

12 Conclusion

Results from the public and panel surveys, and dialogue sessions, suggest there is no clear preference expressed by respondents for any of the three proposed service options. For public survey respondents, the most selected option was partial PAYT (26%), while panel survey respondents most often selected clear garbage bags (21%) and dialogue session participants a partial PAYT approach with recycling and organic bans.

Despite the lack of a clear consensus, a few key considerations did emerge:

- Respondents told us they want a system that is easy to use (and understand), and which will have a positive impact on the environment.
- Most people want a system in which households that set out excess garbage should pay to have those items collected, but they also want to make sure this does not create financial hardship for low-income households or unfairly penalize larger ones.
- There was a general preference that, if the current bi-weekly six-item garbage limit is reduced, the new limit should be either three or four items every cycle.
- Protecting privacy will be a significant priority for most participants if the City opts for a program that requires residents to use clear garbage bags.
- Among half of the respondents who don't use the organics or recycling program regularly, there was a clear indication that they don't know or do not support any of the options presented.
- Participants made it clear that preventing illegal dumping should also be a priority for any option the City recommends.
- Finally, there is strong support for a comprehensive and multifaceted education program to help residents understand the importance of reducing waste and increasing diversion through the City's recycling and organic waste programs.



13 Next Steps

The City of Ottawa would like to thank the thousands of Ottawa respondents who have shared their views and concerns about the Curbside Garbage Collection Options being considered as part of the Solid Waste Master Plan. This is extremely valuable input that will help the City develop a revised garbage collection program that will, reduce waste, support achieving Provincially mandated diversion targets, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increase curbside waste diversion, and help extend the life of the City's Trail Waste Facility Landfill. A recommendation will be presented to Ottawa City Council for consideration as a part of the draft Solid Waste Master Plan in 2023.