



From mountain to sea

# The Big Recycling Challenge Survey Results

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## 1. Executive Summary

The purpose of the Big Recycling Challenge survey was to gather information about Aberdeenshire residents' perceptions on their current use of the various waste and recycling bins and services, to gauge their views on some of the potential changes, such as landfill bin size and collection frequency, garden waste options and convenient times to use recycling centres, and to obtain an understanding on where residents obtain information on recycling services.

The survey was run for 4.5 weeks from 29 January to 28 February 2018. The survey was available online through SurveyMonkey and hard copies were available through libraries and service points. The survey was advertised through social media, local press, Arcadia and posters at libraries and service points.

3,923 responses altogether was received with a completion rate of 85%. Although some respondents dropped out at each question as the survey progressed, a larger drop out (7.4%) was experienced in Question 9 which asked respondents' preference for a smaller landfill bin, less frequent collection of it or both. Based on feedback received through the survey, social media and formal enquiries, residents felt Question 9 was unfair as it did not give them an opportunity to support the existing kerbside service or consider other alternatives.

The main findings from the survey were as follows:

1. 75% of respondents put their food waste bin out for collection weekly or every second time. 19% of respondents never use their food waste bin. The respondents who put their food waste bin out once a month or less often (including never), stated the main reason for not using their food waste bin more often was 'Don't have any or much food waste' (37%).

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Based on respondents' own perception of their food waste bin filling habits, only 28% of respondents fully use or exceed (require a second bin) their available weekly food waste recycling capacity of 23L per week.

2. 88% of respondents put their blue recycling bin out for collection every time, and another 10% every second time. The respondents who put their blue recycling bin out less often than once a month (including never), stated the main reason for not using their recycling bin more often was 'Don't have much recycling' (40%). Based on respondents' own perception of their recycling bin filling habits, 59% of the respondents already fully use or exceed (require a second bin) their available weekly recycling capacity of 120L per week.
3. 90% of respondents put their landfill bin out for every collection, and another 8% every second time. Based on respondents' own perception of their landfill bin filling habits, 50% of the respondents use 3/4 or less of their available landfill capacity of 120L per week, and 28% of respondents manage with less than half a bin (i.e. less than 60L per week). 50% require 120L or more of landfill capacity per week.
4. Respondents were unhappy about being asked to give a preference for a smaller landfill bin, less frequent landfill bin collections or both, despite being given the reasons for such a change and the question having been specifically worded as 'if they had to choose one of the options'. 7.4% of respondents felt so strongly about it that they refused to provide an answer and finished the survey at this point. Of the ones who did provide an answer (if only to be able to move to the next question), 69% preferred a smaller landfill bin, 26% preferred less frequent collections and 5% both. The preference was the same despite of the household type/size, the weekly blue recycling bin capacity used, the weekly landfill bin capacity used or the weekly food waste recycling capacity used. The only exception was respondents using 45L of their weekly landfill capacity; their most preferred option was less frequent collection of the landfill bin.
5. 82% of respondents take their glass to recycling points and centres. 13% of respondents do not recycle glass. The main reason given for not recycling glass was 'Because there is no kerbside recycling service for glass' (83%).
6. 69% of respondents recycle their garden waste using home composting, Household Waste Recycling Centres or seasonal village garden waste collection points. 17% do not recycle their garden waste. The main reason given for not recycling garden waste was 'Because there is no kerbside recycling service for garden waste' (74%).
7. 29% of respondents already compost at home whilst 25% of respondents said that home composting isn't something they would be willing to do. 29% of respondents said free home composting bins and 7% said additional information about how to home compost would encourage them to compost at home.
8. 68% of respondents preferred the currently available ways to recycle their garden waste (composting at home, taking garden waste to Household Waste Recycling Centres and seasonal village garden waste collection points). 16% of respondents preferred to reduce the



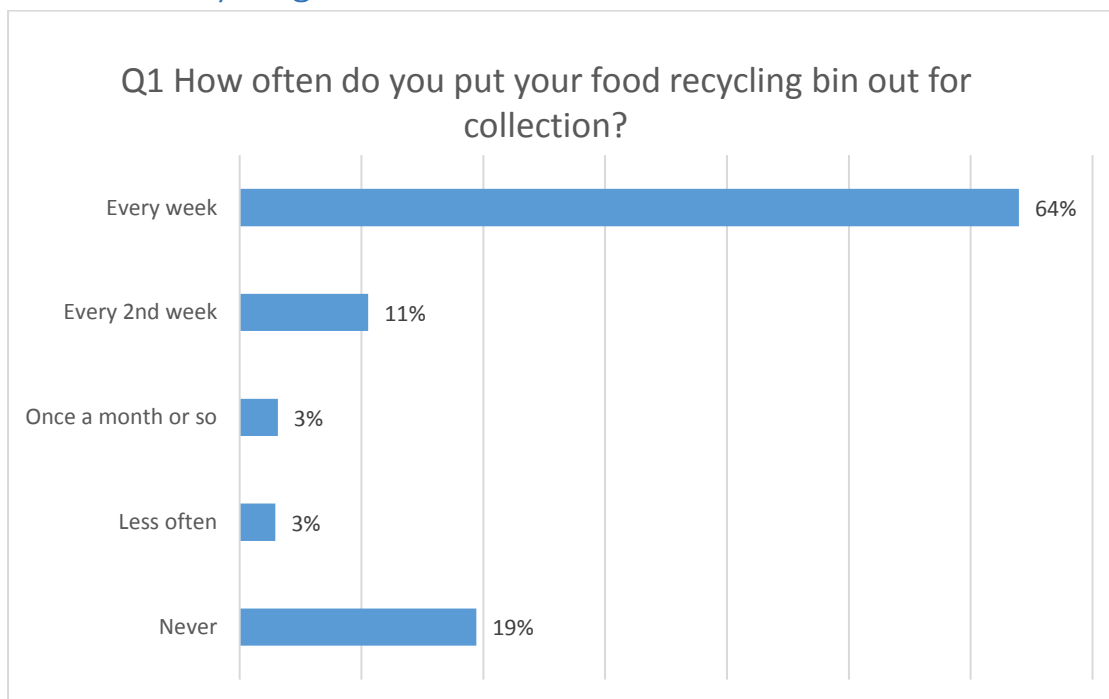
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frequency of landfill bin collection to accommodate kerbside garden waste collections using the same vehicles and 11% a chargeable opt-in kerbside collection.

9. 58% of respondents visit a HWRC weekly or monthly, whilst 5% never visit a recycling centre. Of the respondents who take their garden waste to recycling centres, 81% visit a recycling centre weekly or monthly.
10. The most convenient day to visit a recycling centre is Saturday, followed by Sunday, Friday and Monday. This finding corresponds with 2017 car counter data from Household Waste Recycling Centres. The most convenient times identified by respondents were weekday evenings after 6pm and weekends. Over 90% of those respondents who indicated a preference for visiting HWRCs in weekday evenings, also found visiting HWRCs at the weekends convenient.
11. The most popular ways to find out information about recycling services were Aberdeenshire Council website (66%), Recycling and Waste Aberdeenshire Facebook page (27%) and direct communications (postcards/flyers through the door) (12%).

The following sections provide more detailed information on the survey results.

### 2. Food Recycling Bin



The respondents who answered 'Once a month or so', 'Less often' or 'Never' were also asked to provide an explanation as to why they did not use their food waste bin more often.



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### 2 Why do you not use the food recycling bin more often (please select all that apply)

Reason	% of respondents <sup>1</sup>
Don't have much food waste	31%
Compost food waste at home	26%
Feed it to pets or birds	25%
Think it will be smelly in the house	22%
The food bin blows away in the wind	21%
Think it will attract vermin	20%
Think it will be unhygienic	16%
Too much hassle, can't be bothered	10%
Used to use it	9%
My food waste bin got lost or broken	7%
Don't have any food waste	6%
Too many recycling containers	6%
I don't have any food waste bags	5%
Not sure what food waste can be recycled	2%
Burn food waste	2%
Share a food waste recycling bin with a neighbour	1%
Other (please specify)	15%

Additional reasons for not using the food recycling bin more often, provided as open text answers under 'Other', included:

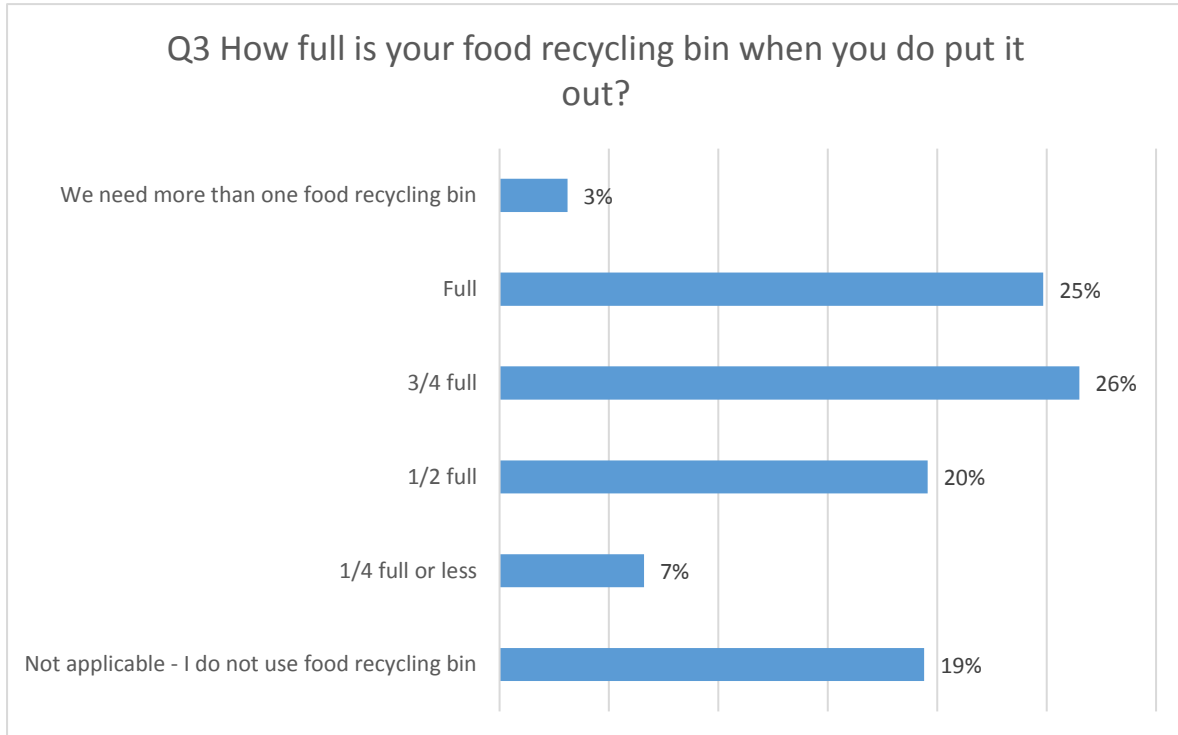
- Use a sinkerator.
- Have experienced vermin (flies, mice, rats etc.)
- Food bags leak.
- Bags are too small or difficult to tie.
- No food bin provided.
- Collection point too far from the house.
- No space in the house for a caddy.
- No space outside for a bin.
- Pets open/lick bins.
- Doubts about Council recycling food waste.

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<sup>1</sup> Of the respondents who answered Q2.



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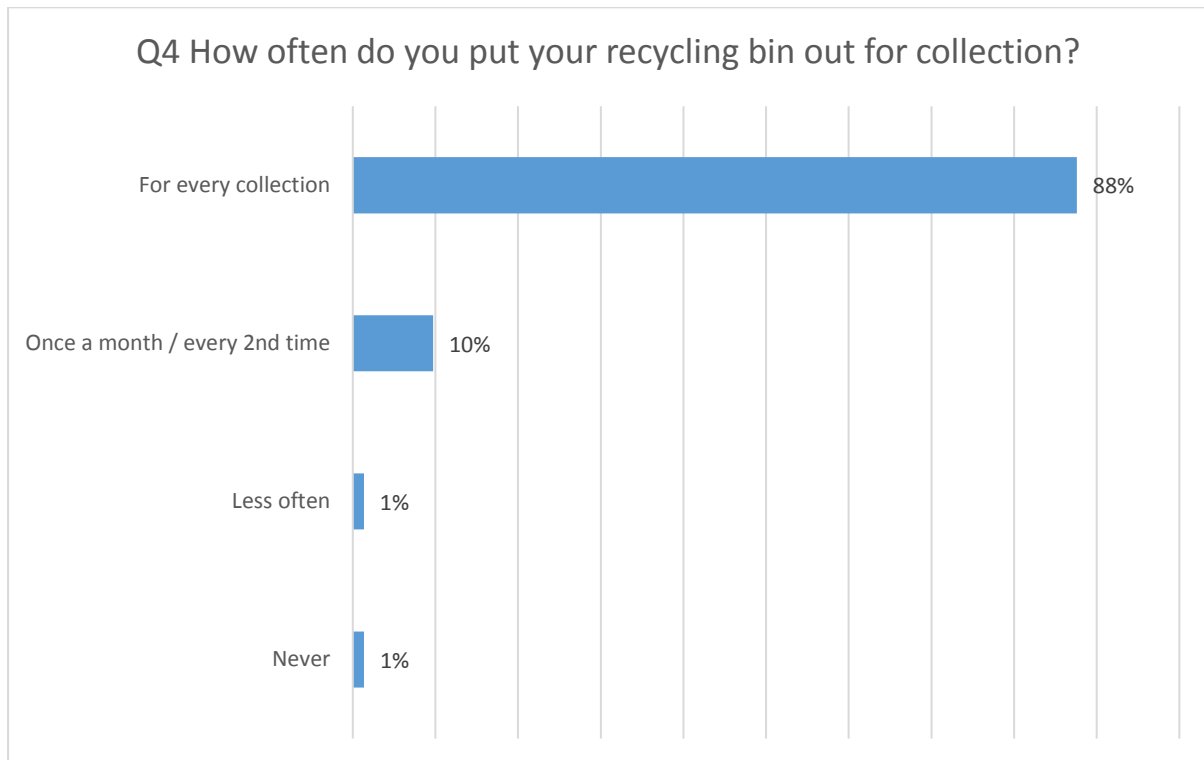
Additional analysis was carried out on existing weekly food waste recycling capacity used by respondents:

Weekly food waste capacity (bin volume) used by respondents:	
>23L	3%
23L	25%
17L (3/4 of a bin)	28%
12L (1/2 of a bin)	24%
9L (2/5 of a bin)	3%
6L or less (1/4 or less of a bin)	17%

The results show that, based on respondents' own perception, less than a third of respondents use all of their available weekly food recycling capacity.

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### 3. Blue-lidded Recycling Bin



The respondents who answered 'Less often' or 'Never' were also asked to provide an explanation as to why they do not use their blue recycling bin more often.

#### Q5 Why do you not use the recycling bin more often? (select all that apply)

Reason	% of respondents <sup>2</sup>
Don't have much recycling	40%
Prefer using household waste recycling centres	18%
Too much hassle, can't be bothered	11%
Too many recycling containers	8%
Share a recycling bin with a neighbour	7%
Not sure what can be recycled	7%
Other (please specify)	33%

Additional reasons for not using the blue-lidded recycling bin more often, provided as open text answers under 'Other', included:

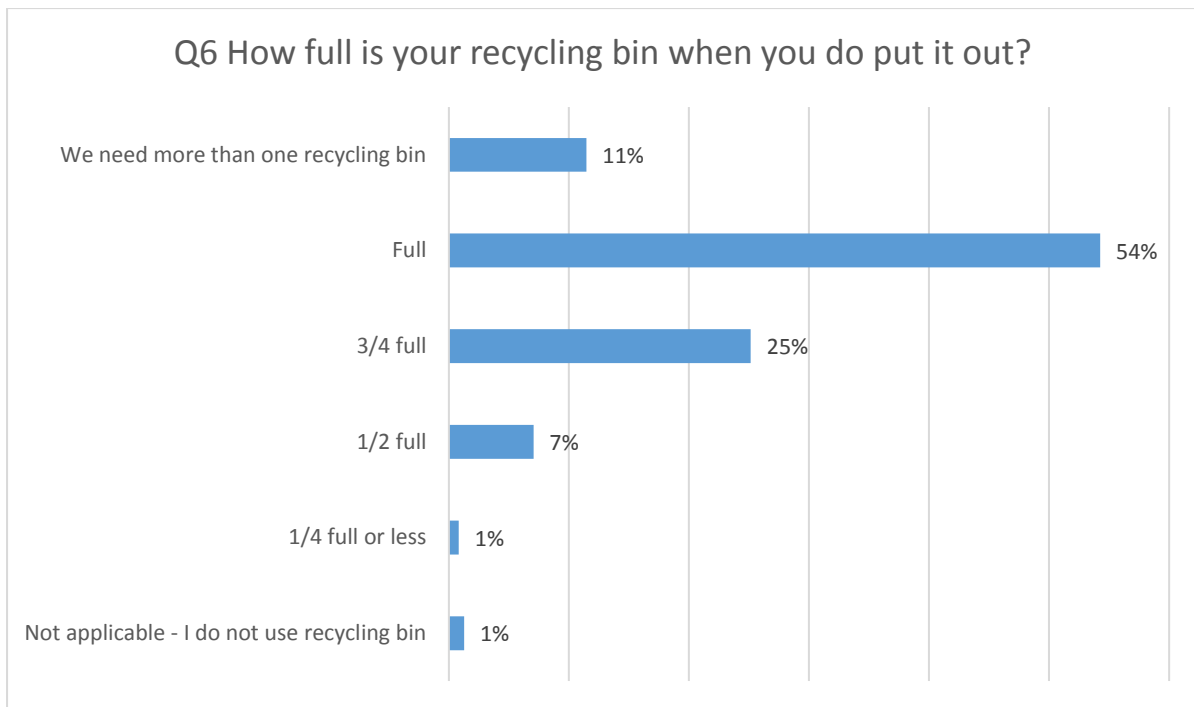
- Recycling bin blows over in the wind.
- Collection point too far away from the house.
- No space for all bins at road end.

<sup>2</sup> Of the respondents who answered Q5.



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- Preferred to use local recycling points.
- No recycling bin provided.
- Road end recycling bins get contaminated by others.



Additional analysis was carried out on existing weekly recycling capacity used by respondents:

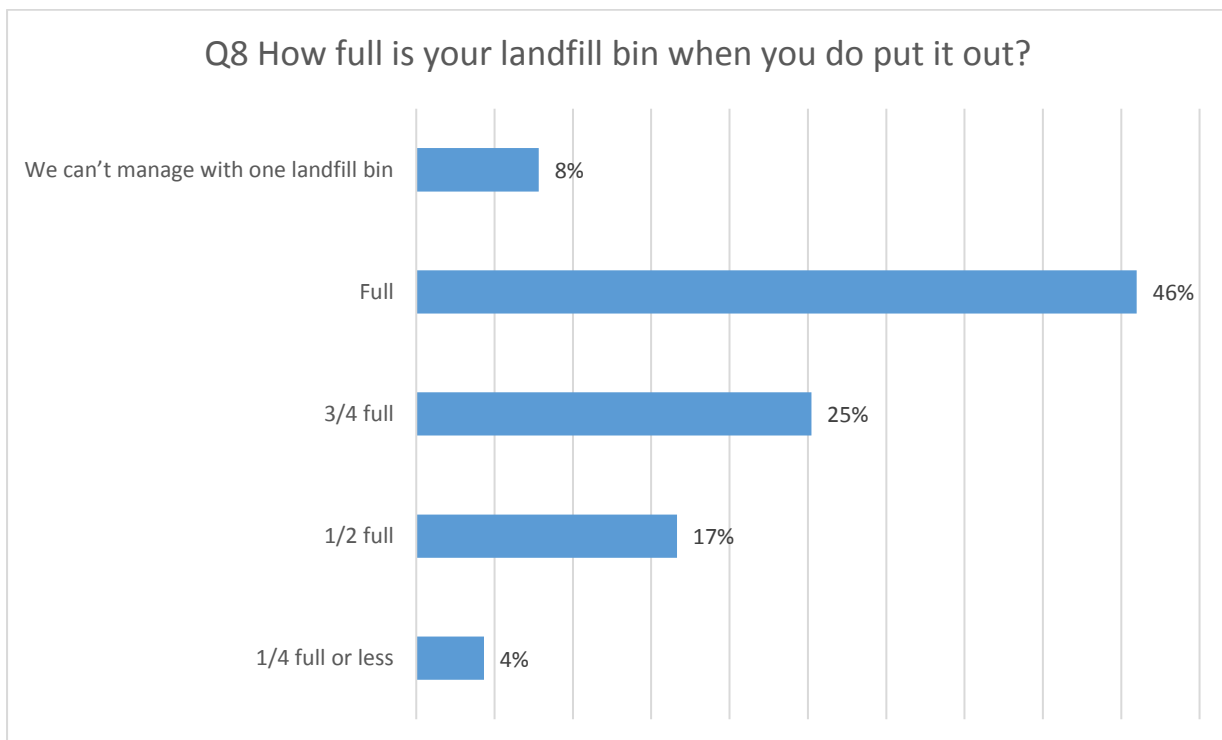
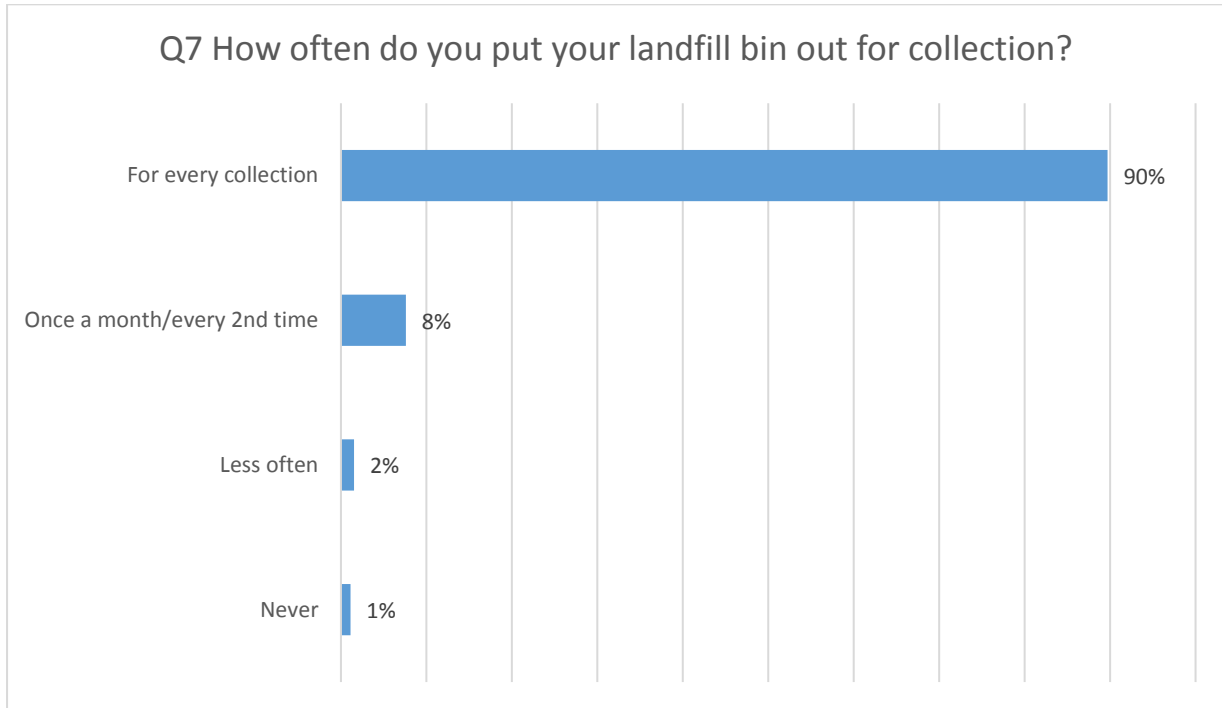
Weekly recycling capacity (bin volume) currently used by respondents	
>120L	11%
120L	48%
90L	22%
60L	11%
45L	3%
30L or less	3%

The results show that, based on respondents' own perception, over half of the respondents already use all of their available weekly recycling capacity, or more.



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### 4. Landfill Bin



Additional analysis was carried out on existing weekly landfill capacity used by respondents:

Weekly capacity currently used by respondents:	
>120L	8%



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Weekly capacity currently used by respondents:	
120L	42%
90L	22%
60L	17%
45L	2%
30L or less	9%

The results show that, based on respondents' own perception, half of the respondents use three quarters (90L) or less of their available landfill capacity of 120L per week, and 28% of respondents manage with less than half a bin (i.e. less than 60L per week).

### 5. Preference for Landfill Bin Options

The following information was provided to respondents before their preference for landfill bin options was asked:

*Based on extensive analysis of waste put into landfill bins by residents in Aberdeenshire, we know that well over half of that waste is actually recyclable through existing kerbside recycling services, Household Waste Recycling Centres and glass and textile collection points.*

*The research shows that if all households used existing recycling services effectively, Aberdeenshire's recycling rate could be around 70% instead of the current 44%.*

*We know from research across the UK that one of the most effective ways to encourage households to use the recycling services available to them is to reduce the quantity of landfill waste collected from households. There should be less landfill waste if recycling services are being used.*

*Over a third of Scottish local authorities are already taking measures to reduce the amount of landfill waste collected from households, either by reducing the size of the landfill bin, collecting it less frequently, or both. Some of these councils have reached the recycling target set by the Scottish Government (60% of waste recycled by 2020) ahead of time.*

*Aberdeenshire Council is considering similar measures to encourage residents to recycle more - either reducing the size of the landfill bin, collecting the landfill bin less frequently, or both.*

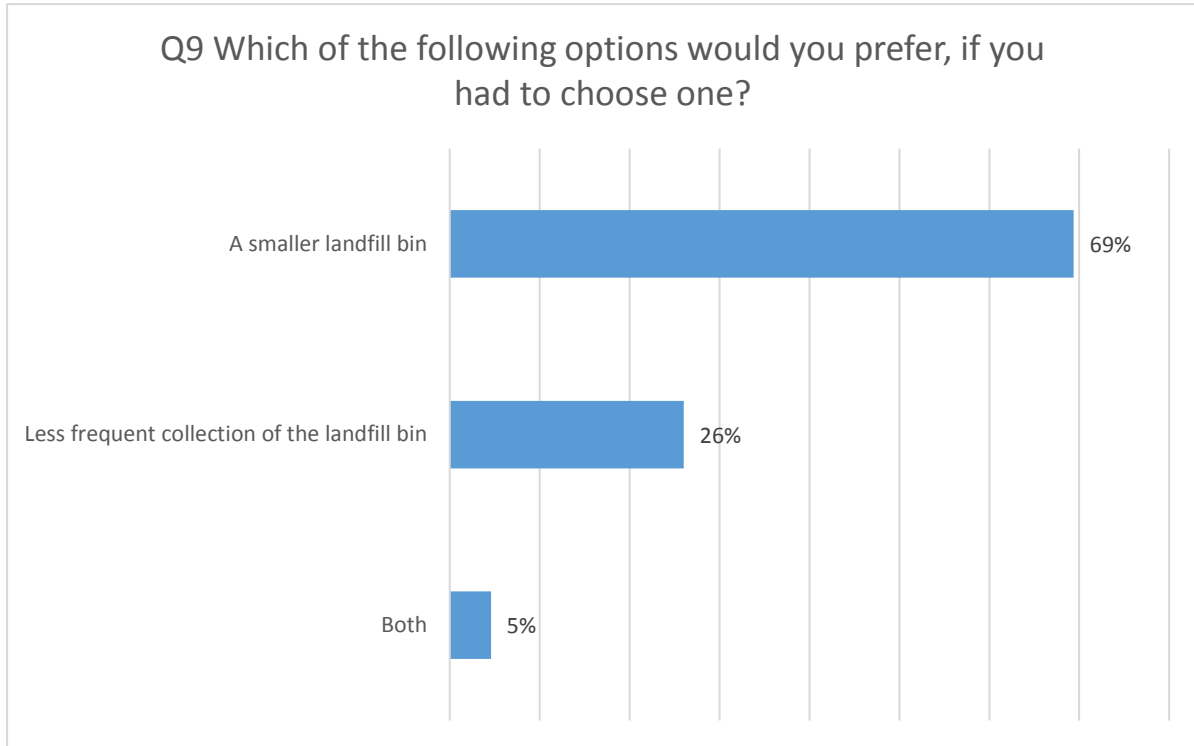
*These restrictions would only apply to the landfill bin - the Council would continue to provide additional food waste and recycling bins free of charge to households in need of them.*

*Similarly, residents requiring more landfill waste capacity, for example due to medical needs, may be entitled to an additional landfill bin following an assessment.*

Respondents were unhappy about being asked to give a preference for a smaller landfill bin, less frequent landfill bin collections or both, despite being given the reasons for such a change and the question having been specifically worded as 'if they had to choose one of the options'. 7.4% of respondents felt so strongly about it that they refused to provide an answer and finished the survey at this point.



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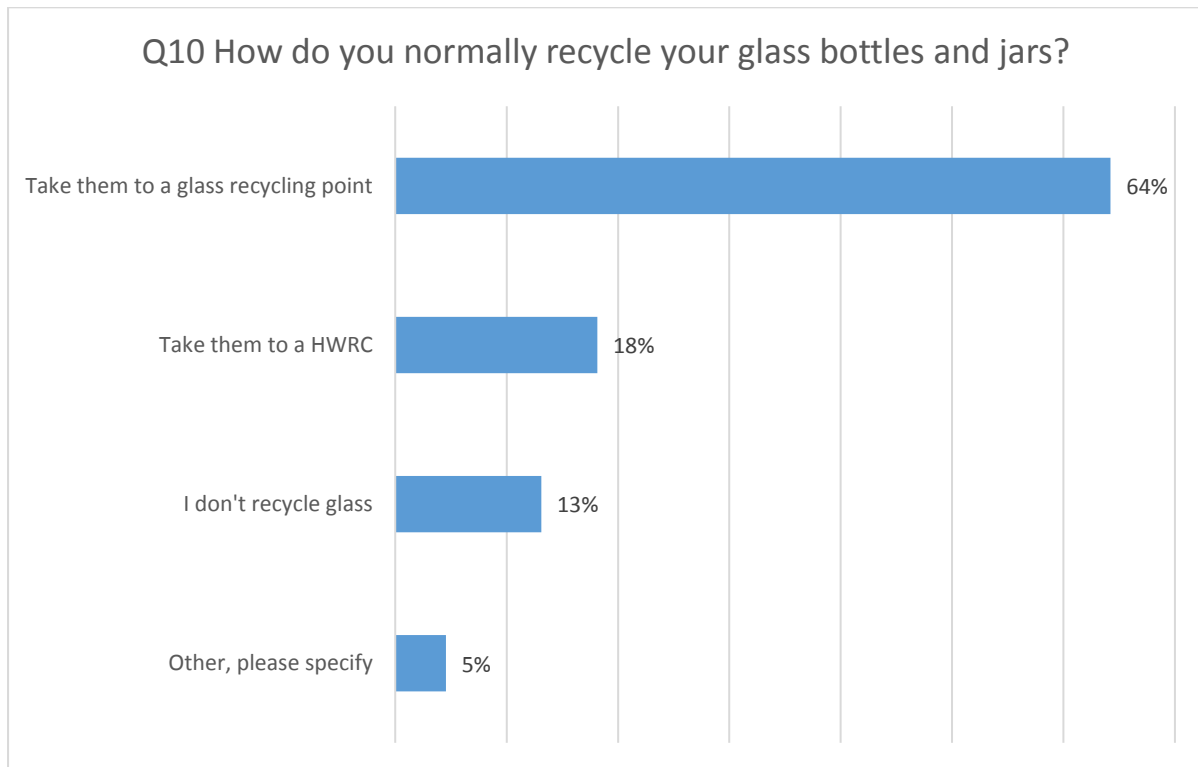


The preference was for the smaller landfill bin despite of the household type/size, the weekly blue recycling bin capacity used, the landfill bin capacity used or the food waste recycling capacity used. The only exception was respondents using 45L of their weekly landfill capacity; their most preferred option (49%) was less frequent collection of the landfill bin.



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### 6. Glass Recycling



Additional ways to recycle glass, provided as open text answers under 'Other', included:

- Reuse glass containers.
- Don't buy glass containers.
- Somebody else recycles them on my behalf.

The respondents who answered 'I don't recycle glass' were also asked to provide an explanation.

#### Q11 Why do you not recycle glass? (Please select all that apply)

Reason	% of respondents <sup>3</sup>
Because there is no kerbside recycling service for glass	83%
Unable to carry glass to a glass recycling point	21%
Don't have a car to transport glass to a glass recycling point	18%
Too much hassle, can't be bothered	16%
Don't have any glass to recycle	5%
Too many recycling containers	3%
Not sure what can be recycled	3%
Other (please specify)	7%

<sup>3</sup> Of the respondents who answered Q11.

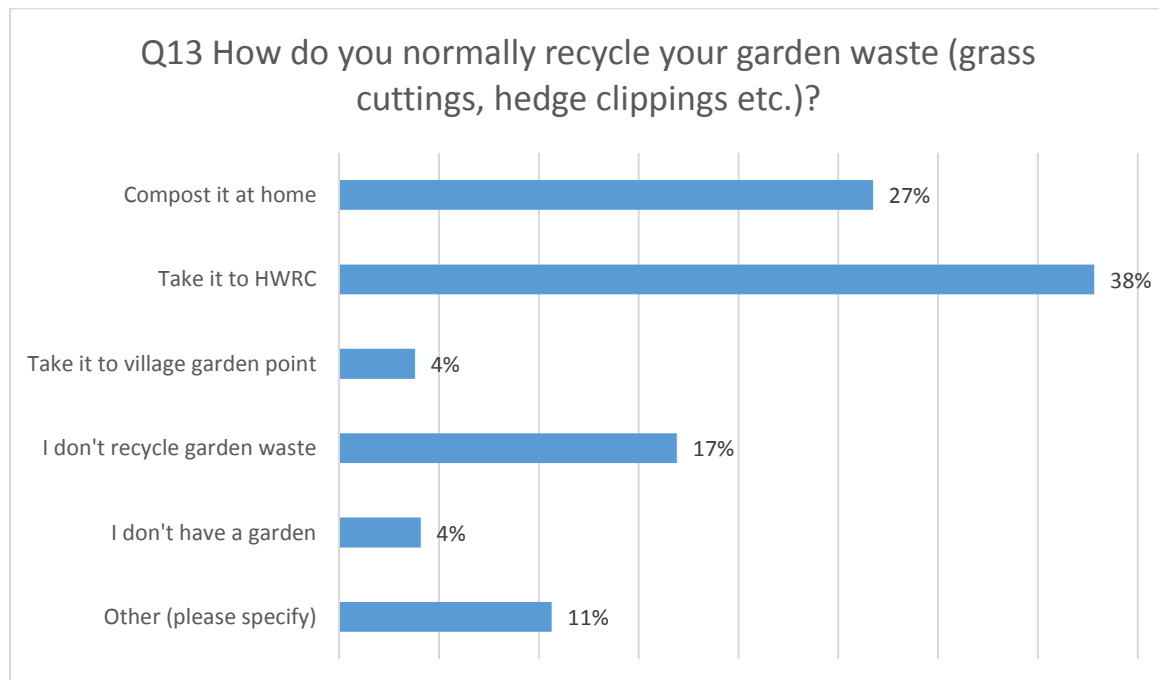
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Additional reasons for not recycling glass, provided as open text answers under 'Other', included:

- Unable to access glass recycling points (disabled).
- Not much glass to recycle.
- No storage space for glass at home.
- No safe storage for glass at home (to keep away from children).
- Glass recycling point often overflowing.
- Glass recycling point too far away to justify the trip for a few items.

1,718 suggestions were received for local glass recycling points. The suggestions are being analysed and will be followed up by Community Waste Officers as appropriate.

## 7. Garden Waste



Additional ways to recycle garden waste, provided as open text answers under 'Other', included:

- Combination of a couple of the options above, depending on the type of garden waste.
- Put into landfill bin.
- Burn it.
- Gardener takes garden waste away.
- Use a community compost scheme (Tarland, Johnshaven).
- Dump it in a field / put it over the fence.
- Dump it in local lay-by bin / disused railway line / scrubland.
- Use a mulching mower.
- An area in the garden left for garden waste to decompose.
- Pay somebody to take it to HWRC.
- Use grass clippings for mulching.



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- Gravel / slab / artificial grass garden, no garden waste.
- Keep a wild garden, no garden waste.
- Feed to animals.
- Compost at the farm.
- Somebody else recycles my garden waste on my behalf.

The respondents who answered 'I don't recycle garden waste' were also asked to provide an explanation.

### Q14 Why do you not recycle garden waste? (Please select all that apply)

Reason	% of respondents <sup>4</sup>
Because there is no kerbside recycling service for garden waste	74%
Easier to put it in the landfill bin	33%
Don't have any garden waste to recycle	9%
Don't want to compost at home	9%
Too much hassle, can't be bothered	7%
Other (please specify)	9%

Additional reasons for not recycling garden waste, provided as open text answers under 'Other', included:

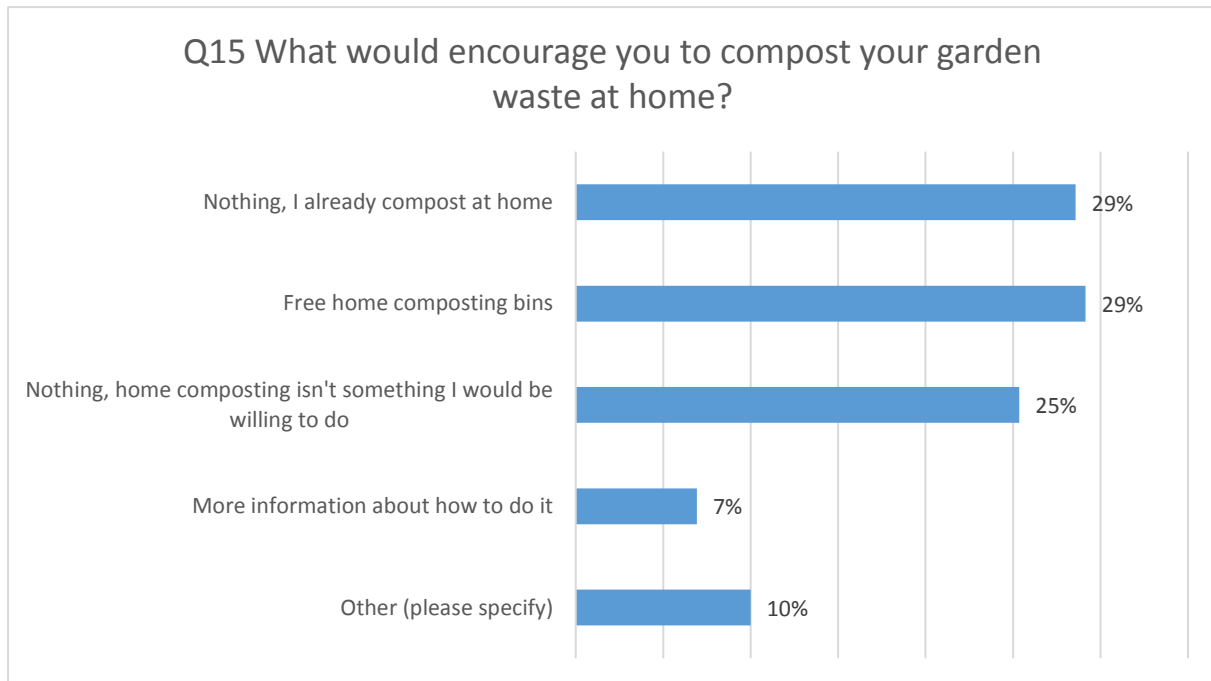
- Gardener takes garden waste away.
- Dump it in a field / put it over the fence.
- No local garden waste recycling point.
- No space for an additional bin.
- Home composting attracted mice.
- Don't have a car to take garden waste to HWRC.
- Cannot carry / lift bags of garden waste.
- Not much garden waste produced.
- Local HWRC only open two days a week.
- Use as mulch.
- HWRC too far away.
- Burn it.
- Garden waste too messy to put in the car.
- Not enough space to compost at home.
- Unable to empty compost bin when full.

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<sup>4</sup> Of the respondents who answered Q14.



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Additional ways to encourage home composting at home, provided as open text answers under 'Other', included:

- Combination of the options above.
- More space required in the garden to for a composting / to have enough compost bins to cope with all the garden waste produced.
- More uses for the compost produced.
- Community composting facilities.
- Heavier compost bin that doesn't blow away.
- Getting paid / a discount in Council tax for those composting at home.
- Using compost produced for village planters.
- Nothing, have tried and failed (various reasons).
- Nothing, only have grass cuttings which do not compost on their own.
- Shredding service to prepare large / woody garden waste for home composting.
- Free dog waste composting bins.
- Something to make the composting process faster.

The following information was provided to respondents before their preference for recycling garden waste was asked:

*A lot of garden waste is currently put into landfill bins instead of being composted at home, or taken to household waste recycling centres or village garden waste collection points for recycling.*

*Landfilling garden waste costs the taxpayer more than three times what it does for a local contractor to compost it. That compost is then used by local farmers as a soil improver, reducing the use of chemical fertilisers, bringing further benefits for the area.*



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Aberdeenshire Council is looking into the following options to increase recycling of garden waste:

**1. Encouraging home composting**

The most cost-effective and best environmental option is to compost garden waste at home. The Council already sells home composting bins at discounted prices.

**2. Increasing the number of village garden waste collection points**

Another option would be to increase the number of seasonal village garden waste collection points. This option would come at some additional cost to the taxpayer, but would be significantly cheaper than providing a kerbside collection service.

**3. Introducing a kerbside collection service for garden waste**

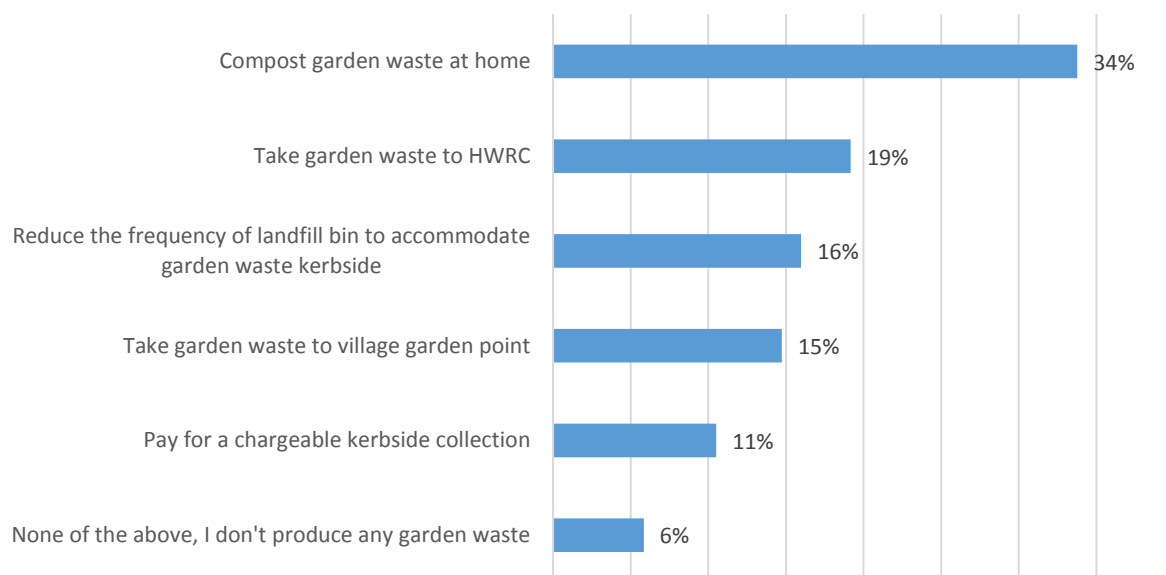
Introducing a separate kerbside collection for garden waste would be costly and in most cases would increase carbon emissions due to the need for additional collection lorries.

It might be feasible to provide a kerbside garden waste collection service if either:

- a. Residents were willing to pay for the new service.
- b. Residents were willing to reduce the collection frequency of their landfill bin from every 2 weeks to every 3 or 4 weeks, to allow the same collection vehicles to be used for the collection of garden waste every 3 or 4 weeks.

We are keen to find out householders' thoughts on these options.

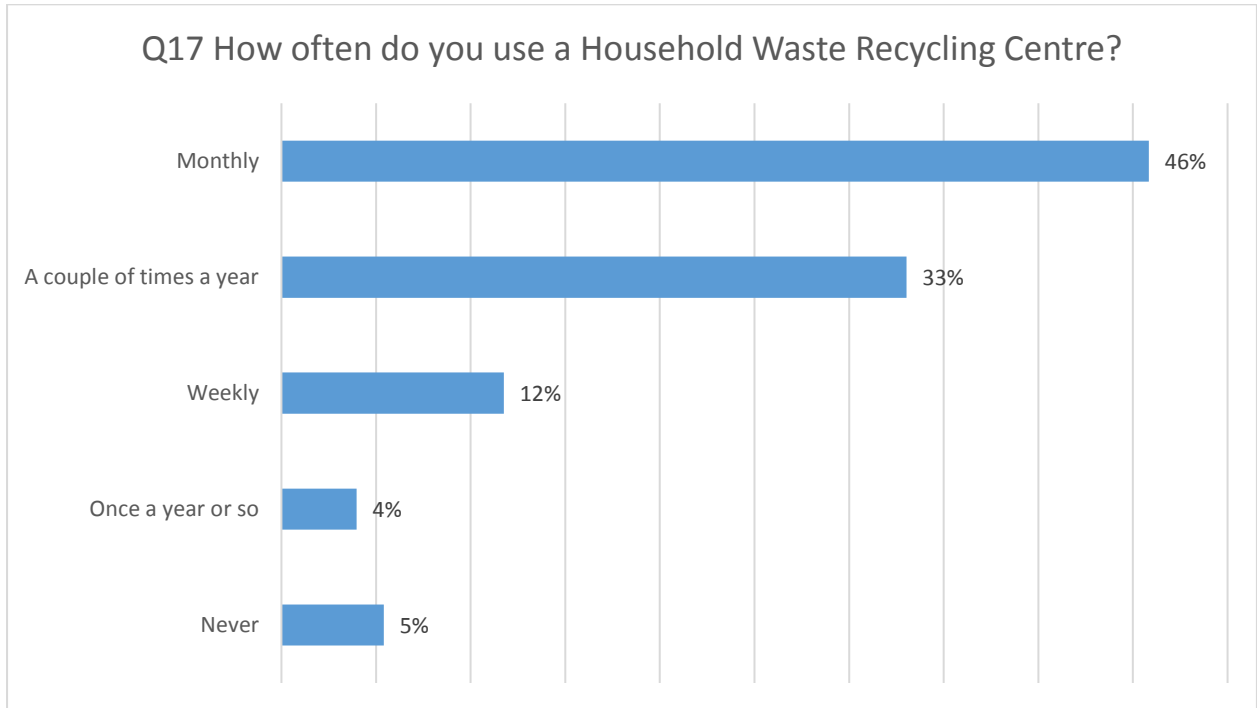
### Q16 Which of the following options would you prefer to recycle your garden waste?





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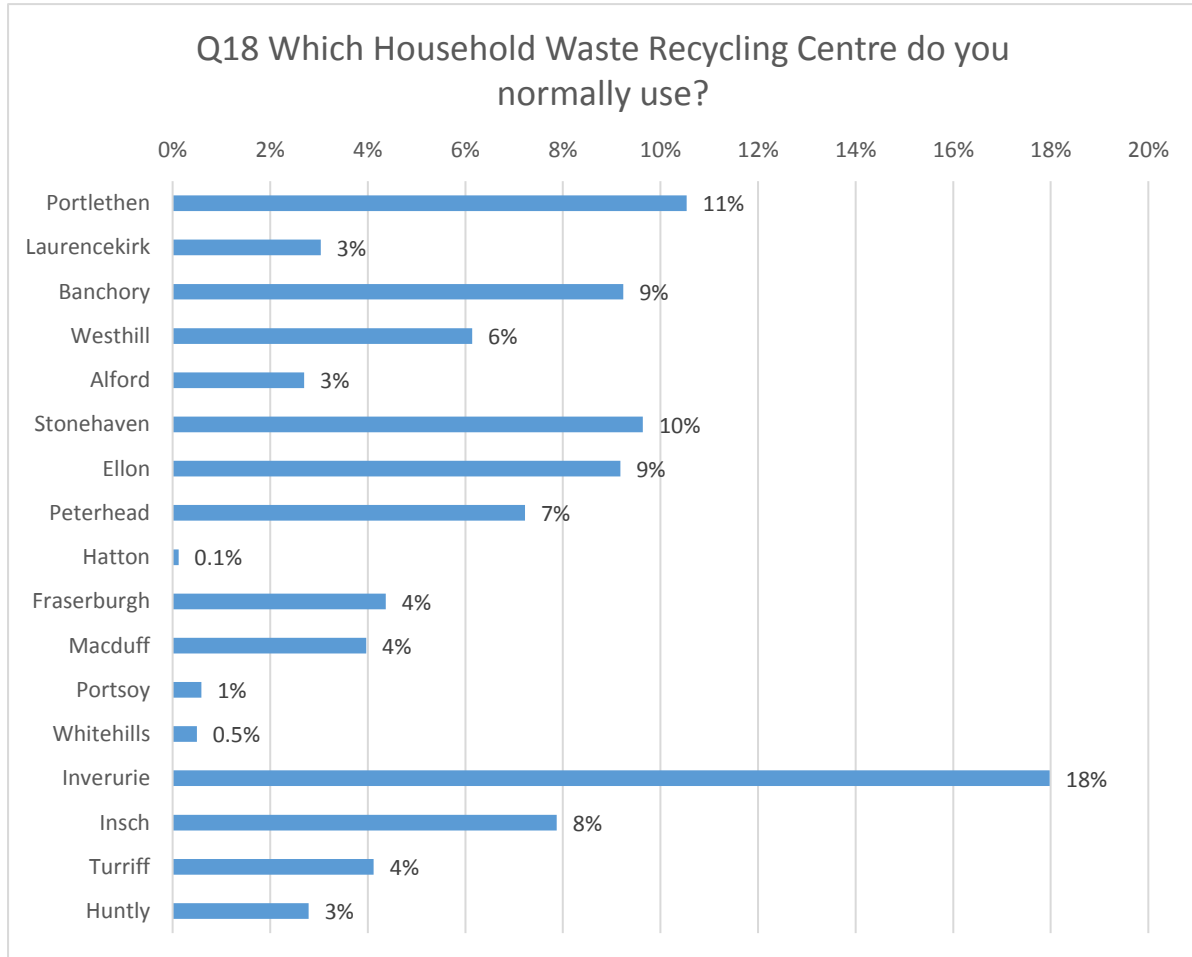
### 8. Household Waste Recycling Centres







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The answers to Q18 appear to be a reflection of where survey respondents live and/or work, and no conclusions should be drawn on the sites' usage.

### **Q19 When is the most convenient time for you to visit a Household Waste Recycling Centre?**

Responses to Q19 were analysed with regards to the respondents' preferred day and their preferred day & time combination.

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### Preferred day:

Day of the week	% of respondents finding (at some time in this) day convenient
Monday	64.7%
Tuesday	62.5%
Wednesday	63.0%
Thursday	62.9%
Friday	66.0%
Saturday	89%
Sunday	84%

The most convenient day was Saturday, followed by Sunday, Friday and Monday. This finding corresponds with 2017 car counter data from Household Waste Recycling Centres which show the number of hourly visits made to the sites each day.

### Preferred day & time combination:

Day of the week	Before work (8am-9am)	Morning (9am-1pm)	Afternoon (1pm-5pm)	After work (5pm-6pm)	Evening (after 6pm)
Monday	4%	17%	20%	14%	37.0%
Tuesday	4%	16%	19%	13%	37.5%
Wednesday	4%	16%	19%	14%	37.7%
Thursday	4%	17%	19%	14%	37.7%
Friday	4%	17%	20%	14%	36.3%
Saturday	10%	60%	67%	20%	17%
Sunday	9%	55%	66%	19%	16%

The most convenient times were weekday evenings after 6pm and weekends.

The findings were compared to data from car counters. Whilst most HWRCs are open on Tuesday evenings in summertime, based on the car counter data, Tuesday evening opening hours account for about 15% of Tuesday traffic in summertime, however only for about 2% of all site traffic. This suggests that whilst the evening opening make Tuesdays busier than they would be otherwise, the Tuesday evening opening does not have much of an impact on the total number of visits to HWRCs.

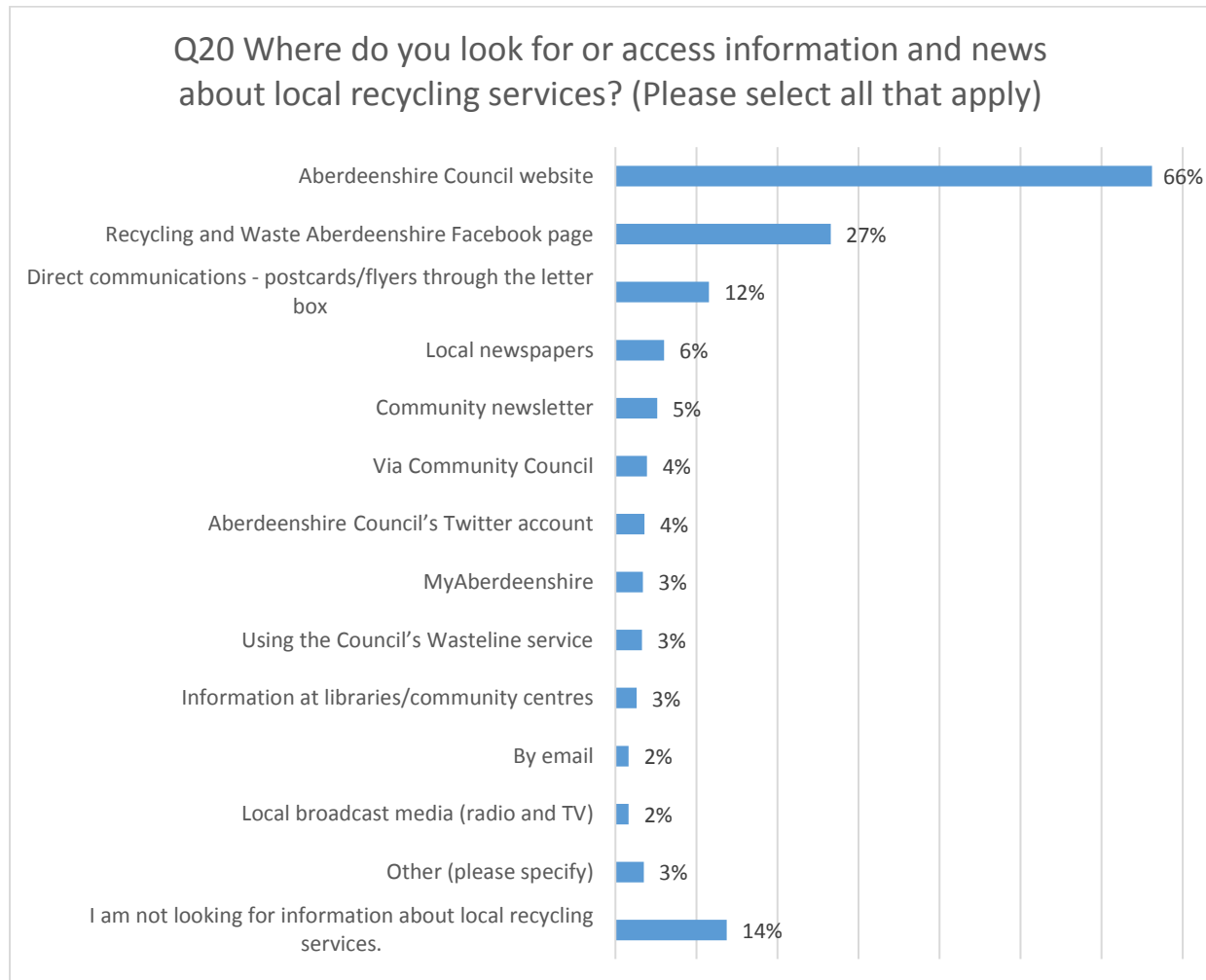
Further analysis was hence carried out on the survey data to find out whether respondents finding weekday evenings convenient would also be able to visit recycling centres over the weekend. The data showed that over 90% of respondents who indicated preference for



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visiting HWRCs in weekday evenings, also found visiting HWRCs at the weekends convenient.

### 9. Communications



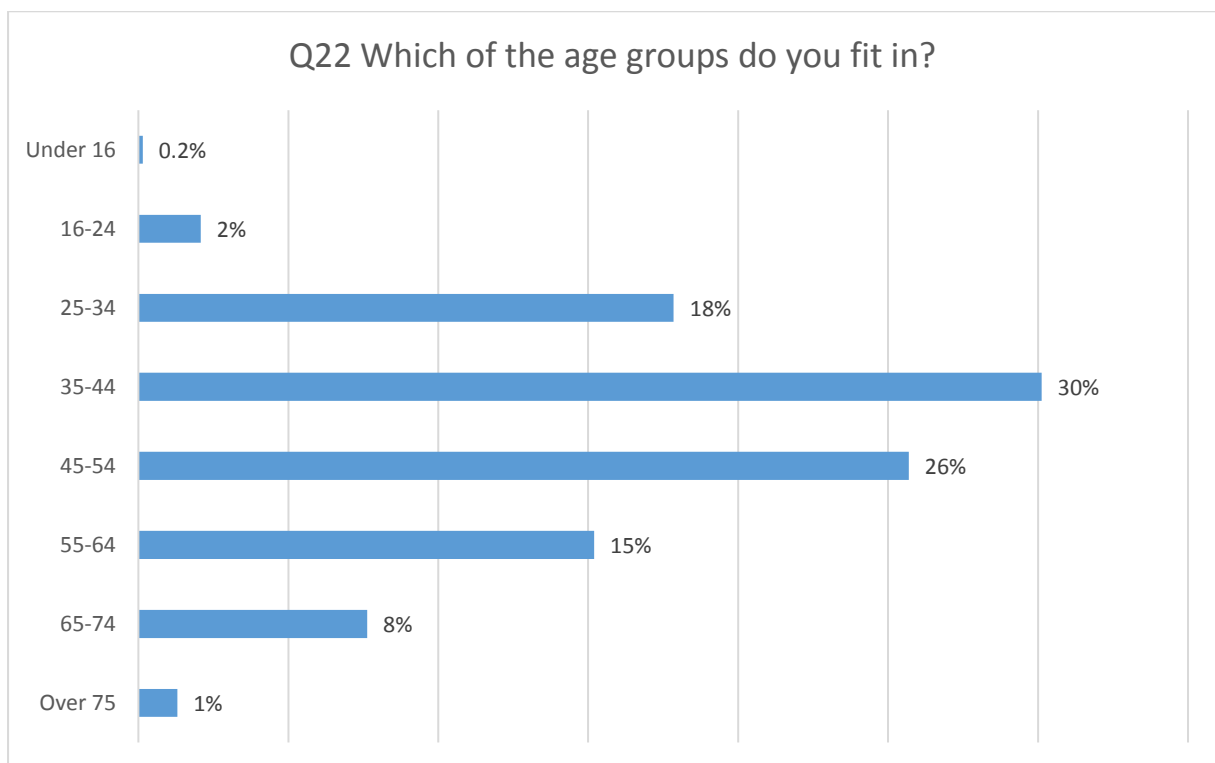
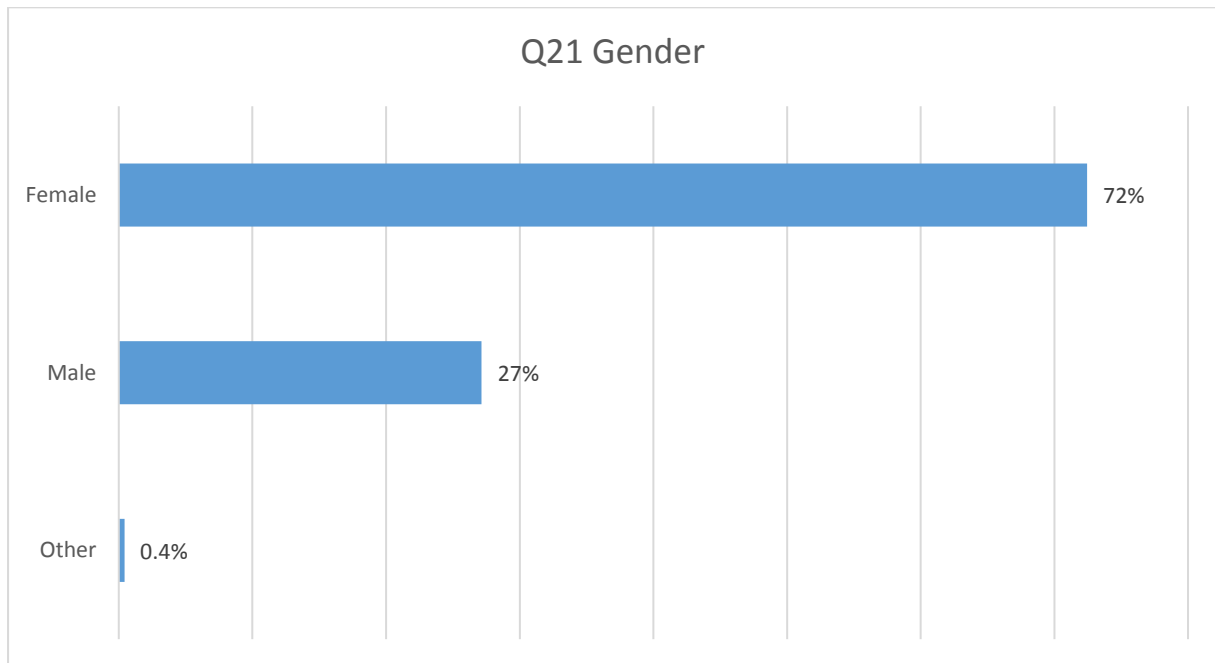
Additional sources of information used, provided as open text answers under 'Other', included:

- Local councillors and their Facebook pages
- Google
- Community Facebook
- Signage at local recycling centre
- Village and shop notice boards
- Family / friends / colleagues / neighbours
- Staff at recycling centres.

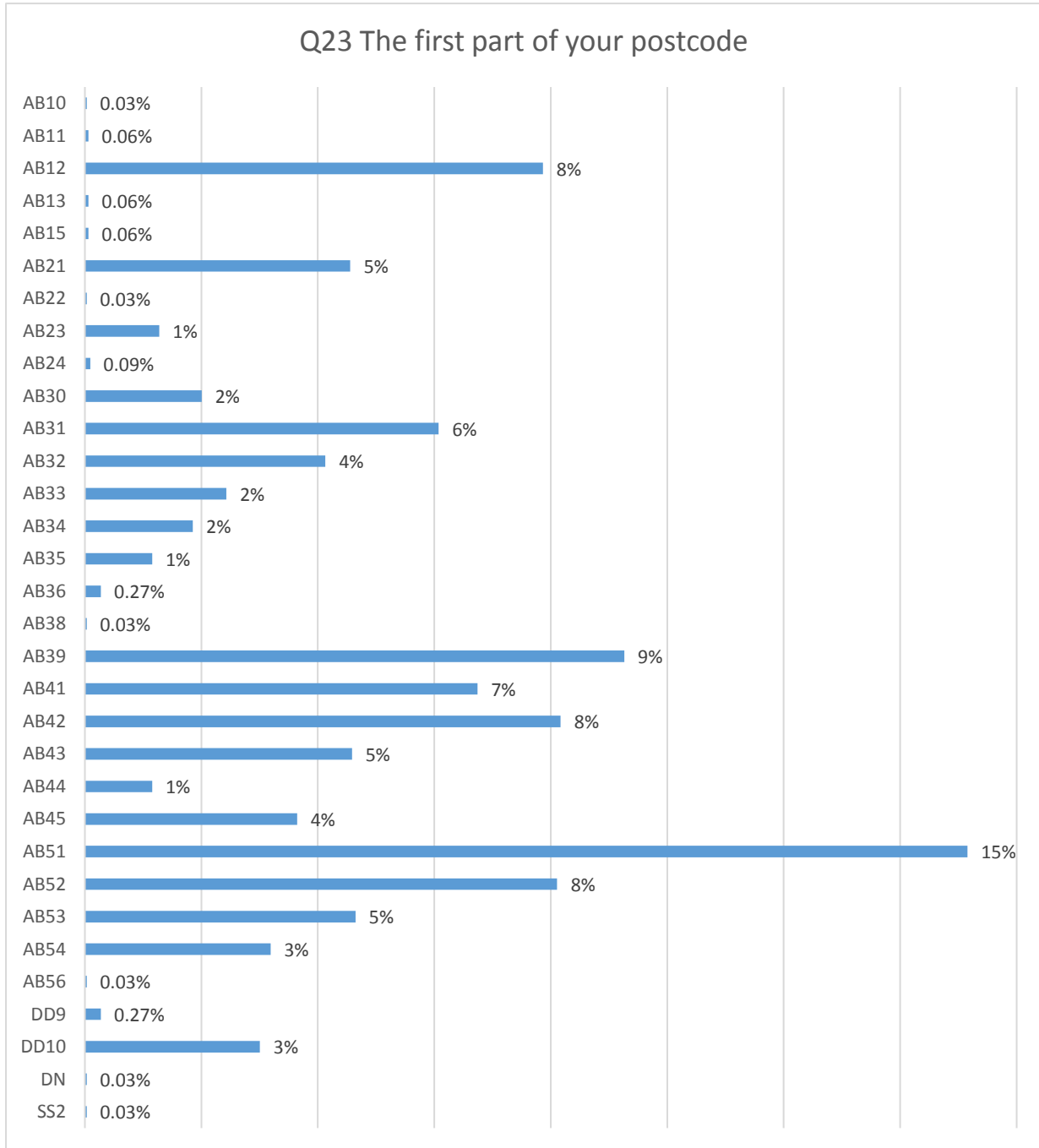


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### 10. Demographics



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## Q24 Number of people at your home

Type of household	% of respondents	Definition
1 person household	9%	
2 adult household	31%	

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Type of household	% of respondents	Definition
Small family	16%	Households containing 2-3 people which include under 18s
Medium family	24%	Households containing 4 people which include under 18s
Large family	10%	Households with 5 or more people which include under 18s
3-6 adult household	9%	

**Q25 And finally, if you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the recycling service, please provide them here.**

1,557 comments and suggestions were received. These are in the process of being analysed and will be followed up as appropriate.