

One-Quarter Of Americans Do Not Recycle In Their Own Home

Majorities, However, Do Recycle Aluminum, Paper, Plastic And Glass

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – July 11, 2007 – While an impressive three-quarters (77%) of American adults recycle something in their own home, one-quarter (23%) still recycle nothing at all. One may think that the younger generation is the one most likely to recycle, but this is not the case. Three in ten (30%) Echo Boomers (those aged 18 to 30) recycle nothing, compared to 19 percent of Matures (those aged 62 and older).

There is also a regional difference in who recycles and who does not. Those in the East and West are more likely to recycle (88% and 86% respectively). One-third (32%) of those in the South as well as three in ten (30%) of those in the Midwest, however, say they recycle nothing.

These are some of the results of a Harris Poll of 2,372 adults surveyed online between June 5 and 11, 2007 by Harris Interactive®. This survey was conceived and developed by Harris Interactive and was not commissioned by any organization; however, we sought and received valuable input from the Food Marketing Institute.

What Is Recycled?

When it comes to recycling, two-thirds of adults (67%) say they recycle aluminum or metal cans, while three in five (59%) recycle paper and 57 percent recycle plastic. Just over half of adults (54%) recycle glass. While those in the South are recycling less than the other regions in general, this is especially true with regard to some of these items. Just half (50%) of Southerners are recycling paper while under half (46%) of Southerners recycle plastic and just 39 percent recycle glass.

Why Don't They Recycle?

Among those who do not recycle, the reasons are very varied. One in six (15%) say they do not recycle because it is not available in their area while 12 percent each say it takes too much effort and it costs more to recycle where they live. Just one in ten (11%) say they do not recycle because they don't believe it makes a difference while six percent say they are too busy and five percent say it is too difficult.

Southerners might be more inclined to recycle if it was cheaper and actually available. One in five (20%) of those who live in the South do not recycle because it isn't available in their area, while an additional 14 percent say it is because it costs more where they live. For those in the East who do not recycle, laziness may be the reason. One-quarter of Easterners (26%) say they do not recycle because it takes too much effort.

**TABLE 1
WHAT IS RECYCLED?**

“In your own home, do you separate and recycle any of the following?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Generation			
		Echo Boomers (18-30)	Gen X (31-42)	Baby Boomers (43-61)	Matures (62+)
		%	%	%	%
RECYCLE (NET)	77	70	80	77	81
Aluminum or metal cans	67	60	70	68	70
Paper	59	50	58	60	68
Plastic	57	51	57	61	60
Glass (bottles)	54	50	55	54	57
Cardboard	3	5	3	3	2
Batteries, motor oil and other hazardous materials	2	1	2	2	2
Organic materials	2	1	1	2	2
Metal	1	*	1	1	3
Electronics	1	1	1	*	1
Something else	2	2	1	2	3
Nothing	23	30	20	23	19

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

Note Multiple Response question

Note: * = less than 0.5%

**TABLE 2
WHAT IS RECYCLED? – BY REGION**

“In your own home, do you separate and recycle any of the following?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Region			
		East	Midwest	South	West
		%	%	%	%
RECYCLE (NET)	77	88	70	68	86
Aluminum or metal cans	67	79	62	58	75
Paper	59	71	52	50	68
Plastic	57	74	51	46	65
Glass (bottles)	54	75	49	39	60
Cardboard	3	3	4	2	4
Batteries, motor oil and other hazardous materials	2	3	2	*	2
Organic materials	2	1	*	*	5
Metal	1	1	1	1	1
Electronics	1	1	*	1	1
Something else	2	2	1	1	3
Nothing	23	12	30	32	14

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

Note Multiple Response question

Note: * = less than 0.5%

TABLE 3
REASONS FOR NOT RECYCLING
 “What is your main barrier for not recycling?”

Base: Those who do not recycle

	Total	Region			
		East	Midwest	South	West
	%	%	%	%	%
Not available in our area	15	13	10	20	7
It takes too much effort	12	26	10	12	8
It costs more to recycle where I live	12	5	10	14	12
I don't believe it makes an impact or difference	11	7	8	13	12
I am too busy	6	8	5	6	5
It is too difficult	5	6	9	2	9
No recycling center/drop off locations near	5	2	4	4	10
No pickup in area	4	8	4	5	3
Live in an apartment/facility that does not provide separate bins	4	3	1	2	13
Don't know how/lack if information	2	-	6	1	*
Not mandatory	2	1	5	*	2
Other	6	8	5	8	5
Not sure	17	14	23	15	15

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

Note: * = less than 0.5%

Note: - = no response

Methodology

This Harris Poll® was conducted online within the United States between June 5 and 11, 2007 among 2,372 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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