

**Executive Summary Report**

**January 4, 2017**

The following information provides insights into American’s knowledge about recycling and how to find information regarding it.

**Key Findings**

Recycling is very important and has a myriad of benefits, possibly one of the most important being reduction of pollution. However, when Americans were presented with a list of statements, 4 true and 4 false, and asked to select those they believe to be true, less than half were able to identify those which were actually true.

This may be because there is a lack of readily available information about recycling. Over 2 in 5 Americans (44%) say detailed information about recycling is not readily available and that they have to seek it out.

Among those who say information about recycling is not readily available, over half (52%) cite an Internet search as a top resource to find information about recycling (i.e., what can and can't be recycled, the recycling process, etc.).

It seems that a strong majority of the population would benefit with more easily accessible information about recycling provided to them, which in turn could increase recycling efforts and help protect the natural environment and us.

**Detailed Findings**

***1 Which of the following statements about recycling do you believe are true? (U.S. adults, n=2,088)***

When presented with 8 statements and asked to identify which ones they believed to be true, over half of Americans failed to identify those which were true. The statement that was believed to be true by the most Americans was: ‘Recycling reduces greenhouse gas emissions’ which was identified by 49% of them.

The true statements were:

* Recycling reduces greenhouse gas emissions - identified by 49% of Americans
* The U.S. recycling industry is highly technical and sophisticated – identified by 28% of Americans
* There are enough materials recycled in the U.S. to meet the production needs of domestic manufacturers (e.g., enough steel to make cars, enough aluminum to make soda cans, enough materials for building construction) – identified by 27% of Americans
* The history of recycling dates back as early as the cave man – identified by 19% of Americans

 The false statements were:

* Recyclable material placed in a residential recycling bin is just mixed with trash later anyway - 11% of Americans say this is true
* A product made of recycled material is of a lesser quality than one made from new, raw materials - 8% of Americans say this is true
* There are no/little economic benefits to recycling - 7% of Americans say this is true
* Recycling does not save energy or conserve natural resources - 5% said of Americans say this is true

***Age and Gender Differences***

* Adults ages 35-44 are more than twice as likely as adults ages 55+ to say the myth “A product made of recycled material is of a lesser quality than one made from new, raw materials” is a true statement (12% vs. 5%)
* Millennials (ages 18-34) are almost twice as likely as adults ages 65+ to believe the myth “Recyclable material placed in a residential recycling bin is just mixed with trash later anyway” is a true statement (15% vs. 8%)
* Men are more likely than women to say that “the U.S. recycling industry is highly technical and sophisticated” is a true statement (32% vs. 24%)
* Men are more likely than women to say that “there are no/little economic benefits to recycling” is a true statement (9% vs. 5%)

***2 Is detailed information about recycling (i.e., what can and can't be recycled, the recycling process, etc.) readily available/provided to you or do you have to seek it out? By “detailed information” we mean pamphlets, flyers, or websites/social media accounts and not just the labels/signs on recycling bins. (U.S. adults, n=2,088)***

Just over half of the Americans (56%) say that detailed information about recycling is readily available/ provided to them, while over 2 in 5 Americans (44%) say it’s not readily available - they have to seek it out.

***Age and Gender Differences***

Those ages 65+ are more likely than those ages 45-54 to say that the information is readily available/provided to them (61% vs. 51%). Additionally, men are more likely than women to say that information about recycling is readily available to them (60% vs. 52%).

***HHI Differences***

Americans earning less than $100K per year are more likely to say information related to recycling is not readily available to them compared to those earning $100K or more (47% vs. 36%).

***3 Which of the following resources provides you with/do you use to seek out detailed information about recycling (i.e., what can and can't be recycled, the recycling process, etc.)? (U.S. adults, n=2,088)***

Overall, the top resource that provides information/is used to seek out information about recycling is an Internet search (39%) followed closely by local government (36%). Nearly 1in 5 Americans cite their garbage man (18%) or friends/family (17%) as a source for recycling information. Some of the less mentioned resources are news media online/on TV (16%), nonprofits (14%), state government (12%), community organizations (11%), employers (7%), and local schools (6%).

***Regional differences***

Those residing in the Northeast are more likely to say they are provided with/seek out this information from their local government than those residing in South, Midwest, and West (47% vs. 34%, 35%, and 32%, respectively).

When it comes to Internet searches as a source for recycling information, those living in the West seem to be more inclined to take this computer-savvy approach than the rest of the US, as they are most likely to say they are provided with/seek out detailed information about recycling through an internet search (48% of those in the West vs. 32% in the Northwest, 39% in the South, and 36% in the Midwest).

***Age Differences***

Adults ages 55+ are more likely than adults ages 18-44 to use their garbage man as a resource for information (23% vs. 13%). Younger adults seem to be more comfortable using people they know as information sources; adults ages 18-44 are more than twice as likely as those ages 55+ to say friends/family provide recycling information (24% vs. 10%)

***HHI differences***

Americans with a household income of $75k or more are more likely to say their local government provides them with this information than those with a household income of less than $50k (42% vs. 31%).

***3 Which of the following resources provides you with/do you use to seek out detailed information about recycling (i.e., what can and can't be recycled, the recycling process, etc.)? (US Adults Who Say Information Is Readily Available To Them, n=1,152)***

Among Americans who say information on recycling is readily available to them, almost 1 in 2 (49%) say they receive/seek this information from the local government followed by an internet search (30%). Nearly one quarter of them (24%) cited their garbage man as a resource and about 1 in 6 listed nonprofits (17%), news media online/on TV (17%), friends/family (17%), and state government (16%).

***Age Differences***

A generation gap is clearly visible as the younger adults, ages 18-44, are more inclined than older adults (ages 45+) to say they are provided with information through internet searches while those ages 45 and above are more likely than younger adults to receive this information from the local government.

* Nearly 3 in 5 older adults ages 45+ (59%) say they receive information from the local government compared to only 35% of those ages 18-44
* Younger adults, ages 18-44, are more than twice as likely as older adults, ages 55+, to say they receive this information through an Internet search (42% vs. 19%)

***3 Which of the following resources provides you with/do you use to seek out detailed information about recycling (i.e., what can and can't be recycled, the recycling process, etc.)? (US Adults Who Say Recycling Information Is Not Readily Available To Them, n=936)***

Among those who say recycling information is not readily available to them, an Internet search is the top resource to seek out information (52%). Only about 1 in 5 cited local government (21%) and family/friends (18%) as a resource and far fewer listed news media online/on TV (14%), nonprofits (11%), their local garbage man (11%), and state government (8%).

***Age Differences***

Age differences regarding sources remain consistent. Even among this group, younger adults ages 18-34 are more likely to use an Internet search for information on recycling than the older adults, ages 55+ (59% vs. 44%).

Adults ages 18-34 are just as likely as adults ages 65+ to rely on news media online/on TV for this information (19% each), and both are more likely to cite this resources than those ages 45-64 (8%).

***Regional differences***

Those residing in the West are more likely to cite an Internet search for information related to recycling than those residing in the Northeast (61% vs. 46%). They are also more likely to turn to the news media online/on TV for information than the rest of the US (24% of those in the West vs. 11% in the Northeast, 11% in the South, and 9% in the Midwest).

**Topline Data**

**BASE: U.S. RESPONDENTS**

**Q1** Which of the following statements about recycling do you believe are true? Please select all that apply.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Total** |
| *n=* | 2,088 |
| **True (NET)** | **73%** |
| Recycling reduces greenhouse gas emissions. | 49% |
| The U.S. recycling industry is highly technical and sophisticated. | 28% |
| There are enough materials recycled in the U.S. to meet the production needs of domestic manufacturers (e.g., enough steel to make cars, enough aluminum to make soda cans, enough materials for building construction). | 27% |
| The history of recycling dates back as early as the cave man. | 19% |
| **Myth (NET)** | **22%** |
| Recyclable material placed in a residential recycling bin is just mixed with trash later anyway. | 11% |
| A product made of recycled material is of a lesser quality than one made from new, raw materials. | 8% |
| There are no/little economic benefits to recycling. | 7% |
| Recycling does not save energy or conserve natural resources. | 5% |
| None of these | 18% |

**BASE: U.S. RESPONDENTS**

**Q2** Is detailed information about recycling (i.e., what can and can't be recycled, the recycling process, etc.) readily available/provided to you or do you have to seek it out? By ''detailed information'' we mean pamphlets, flyers, or websites/social media accounts and not just the labels/signs on recycling bins.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Total** |
| *n=* | 2,088 |
| Yes it's readily available - it's provided to me. | 56% |
| No it's not readily available to me - I have to seek it out. | 44% |

**BASE: U.S. RESPONDENTS**

**Q3** Which of the following resources provides you with/do you use to seek out detailed information about recycling (i.e., what can and can't be recycled, the recycling process, etc.)? Please select all that apply.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Total** |
| *n=* | 2,088 |
| **Government (NET)** | **40%** |
| Local government (e.g., Mayor's office, County/Township Department of Environmental services, local recycling collection) | 36% |
| State government (e.g., Governor's office, State Department of Environmental Quality, State Legislator's office) | 12% |
| An Internet search | 39% |
| My local garbage man | 18% |
| Family/Friends | 17% |
| News media online/on TV | 16% |
| Nonprofit organizations (e.g., Keep America Beautiful (KAB), National Recycling Coalition (NRC), Recycle-A-Bicycle) | 14% |
| Community organizations (e.g., Girl/Boy Scouts of America, Local Chambers of Commerce, Lions Club, VFW (The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US)) | 11% |
| My employer | 7% |
| Local school | 6% |
| Other | 16% |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Adults Who Say Detailed Information About Recycling Is Readily Available To Them** |
| *n=* | 1,152 |
| **Government (NET)** | **53%** |
| Local government (e.g., Mayor's office, County/Township Department of Environmental services, local recycling collection) | 49% |
| State government (e.g., Governor's office, State Department of Environmental Quality, State Legislator's office) | 16% |
| An Internet search | 30% |
| My local garbage man | 24% |
| Nonprofit organizations (e.g., Keep America Beautiful (KAB), National Recycling Coalition (NRC), Recycle-A-Bicycle) | 17% |
| News media online/on TV | 17% |
| Family/Friends | 17% |
| Community organizations (e.g., Girl/Boy Scouts of America, Local Chambers of Commerce, Lions Club, VFW (The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US)) | 15% |
| My employer | 9% |
| Local school | 8% |
| Other | 13% |
|  | **Adults Who Say Detailed Information About Recycling Is Not Readily Available - They Have To Seek It Out** |
| *n=* | 936 |
| An Internet search | 52% |
| **Government (Net)** | **24%** |
| Local government (e.g., Mayor's office, County/Township Department of Environmental services, local recycling collection) | 21% |
| State government (e.g., Governor's office, State Department of Environmental Quality, State Legislator's office) | 8% |
| Family/Friends | 18% |
| News media online/on TV | 14% |
| Nonprofit organizations (e.g., Keep America Beautiful (KAB), National Recycling Coalition (NRC), Recycle-A-Bicycle) | 11% |
| My local garbage man | 11% |
| Community organizations (e.g., Girl/Boy Scouts of America, Local Chambers of Commerce, Lions Club, VFW (The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US)) | 7% |
| My employer | 4% |
| Local school | 4% |
| Other | 20% |