

# Waste Management Inquiry: Summary of Engagement

February 2020

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## Background

The Public Accounts Committee launched an inquiry about waste management in Wales in response to the Auditor General for Wales publishing a trilogy of reports relating to waste management in late autumn 2019.

As part of this work the Committee considered the issues relating to the recycling performance and participation of individual local authorities and looked to gather the opinions of the public with regards the state of current services across Wales and examine differences between local authorities.

The outcomes of the Committee's work will be fed in the Welsh Government's consultation on its 'Beyond Recycling A strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality', which closes in April 2020.

## Approach to Engagement

The Committee requested to hear from the public across Wales. Using the National Assembly for Wales' new online bilingual platform, Eich Cymru Chi / Your Wales. Engagement ran from 25 November 2019 to 12 January 2020. A traditional survey and interactive map was developed by the Citizen's Engagement Team. This allowed participants to choose which tool best suited them. The survey was also available in a non-digital format to ensure inclusion.

The general public were notified of the engagement through Facebook, Twitter, discussions with staff when visiting the Senedd and a link to the online engagement platform appeared on the Public Accounts Committee webpage.



To compile this engagement summary an analysis of a complete data set was conducted; all data can be sourced to individual responses and further analysis can be undertaken by reviewing the initial results. These are available on request.

Key findings and overall themes have been extracted using specific questions asked while engaging with the public.

## Eich Cymru Chi / Your Wales Engagement

The online platform attracted **3.35k** visits.

Individual visitors to the site can be broken down into three categories:

- Aware, when a visitor entered the site on the inquiry page;
- Informed, when a visitor entered the site and further click on something for example, downloaded one of the Welsh Audit Office's reports;
- And Engaged, when a visitor entered the site, further click on something and contributed to one of the tools of engagement.

**51%** of visitors were Aware, **32%** were Informed and **17%** were Engaged. Of the Engaged visitors, participants engaged from every local authority area.

## Maps of engagement

The maps presented in this summary of engagement have been divided into Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (level 3). Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics is a set of geographic coordinates, known as a geocode, for referencing the subdivisions of countries for statistical purposes.

### Question 1

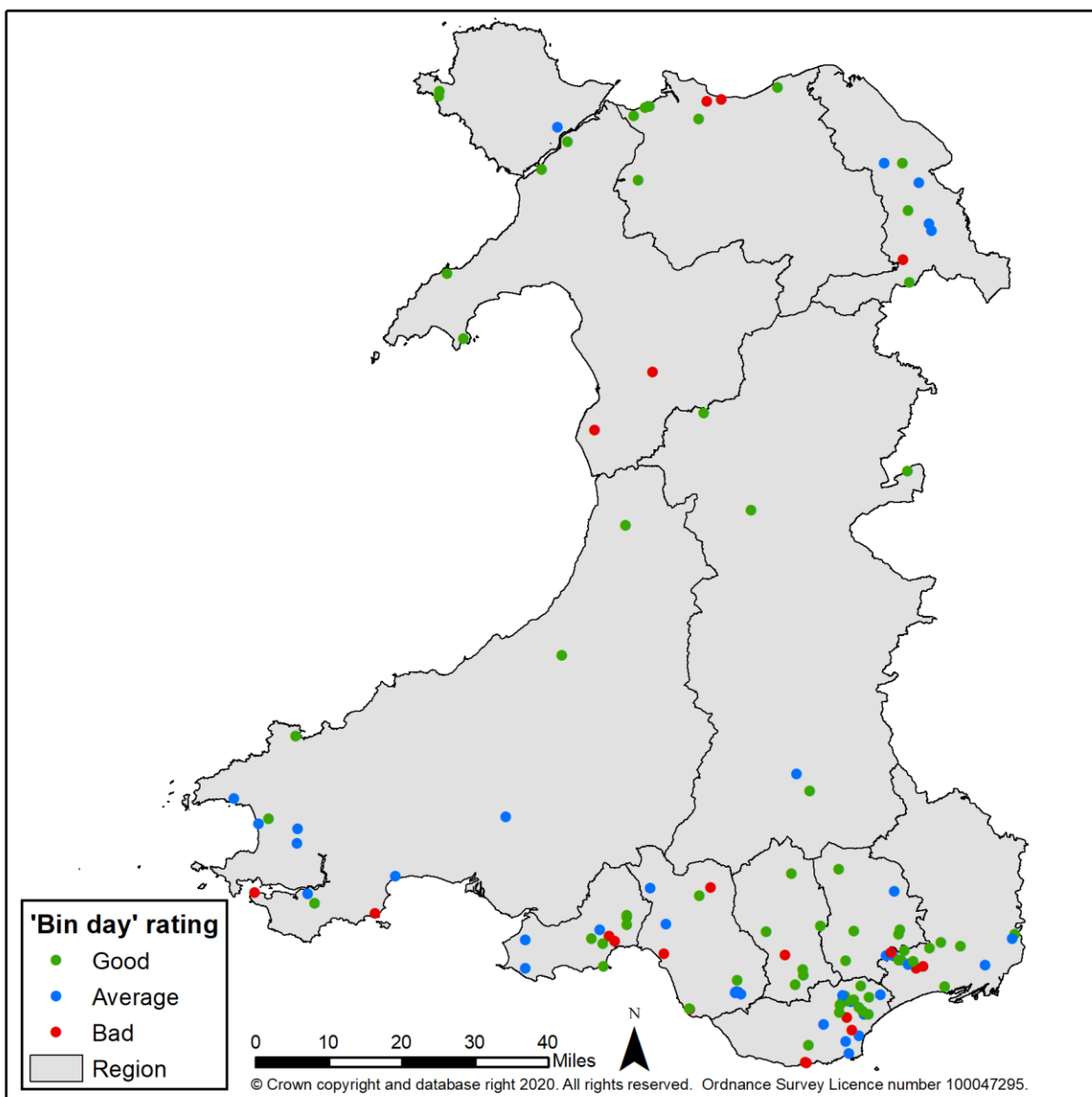
Participants were asked to tell us about their bin day by selecting a colour coded pin and placing it on the interactive map in their local area. The map below shows each pin that was put on the interactive map and as outlined in the key, those who thought their bin day was Good are marked in green, Average in blue and Bad in red.

Overall, 129 people placed a pin on the map. 68 of these said their bin day was good, 39 said it was average and 22 said it was bad.

Participants were invited to comment alongside this to give a reason for their decision. Although the overall feeling for their bin day was positive many people didn't provide a reason why it was positive. Where comments were made, they were generally negative. Comments were coded into themes.

23% of comments focused on how collection containers are not fit for purpose. 19% of comments complained about the amount of rubbish left on the street after collections. You can see a selection of comments below which have been chosen for their relevance to the themes within this section.

An interactive version of this map is available on request.



Selection of comments provided by participants:

*My biggest problem on bin day arises because I'm a wheelchair user. Bin day is awful because it makes pavements a nightmare - Participant from City of Cardiff Council*

*Rubbish collection is fine but recycling collection is disgraceful recycling is left over roads and pavements. This week broken glass was left in the road - Participant from Newport City Council*

*Recycling rubbish always gets blown everywhere due to either flimsy containers given to us by the council that blow open, or the binmen drop litter as they are putting it into the trucks and don't pick it up. The entire estate looks filthy on bin day because of this. - Participant from Bridgend County Borough Council*

*Every bin day the operator leaves litter strewn all over the streets. How do they not get prosecuted for littering like other members of the public? - Participant from Bridgend County Borough Council*

*Most properties in this area are terraced houses. Try walking down the pavement with a pram or a wheelchair and trying to navigate every houses wheelie bin, garden waste bin, 2 boxes, bag and food caddy! - Participant from City of Cardiff Council*

*The material of the recycling bags is very flimsy - we have started buying our own food waste bags to help with this. - Participant from City of Cardiff Council*

*Collection staff do not take care with returning pink sacks to correct house, I found mine dumped a few doors down - Participant from City and County of Swansea*

*They didn't collect our recycling today after all the effort put in to separate and store. Do we leave it out or bring it back in... isn't it any wonder our streets are getting full of rubbish with bad winds blowing uncollected rubbish everywhere? The Velcro on the sacks supplied doesn't cut the mustard. Once wet they attract hair and fluff! - Anonymous Participant*

*Street looks like a rubbish tip on bin day as often items are dropped and not retrieved. It's a lot of bags/boxes so storage is a bit of an issue plus when it's windy as they are flimsy can blow away plus the contents if they are not weighted down. Often the empty containers are strewn across the drive so have to park up and move them - Participant from Bridgend County Borough Council*

## Question 2

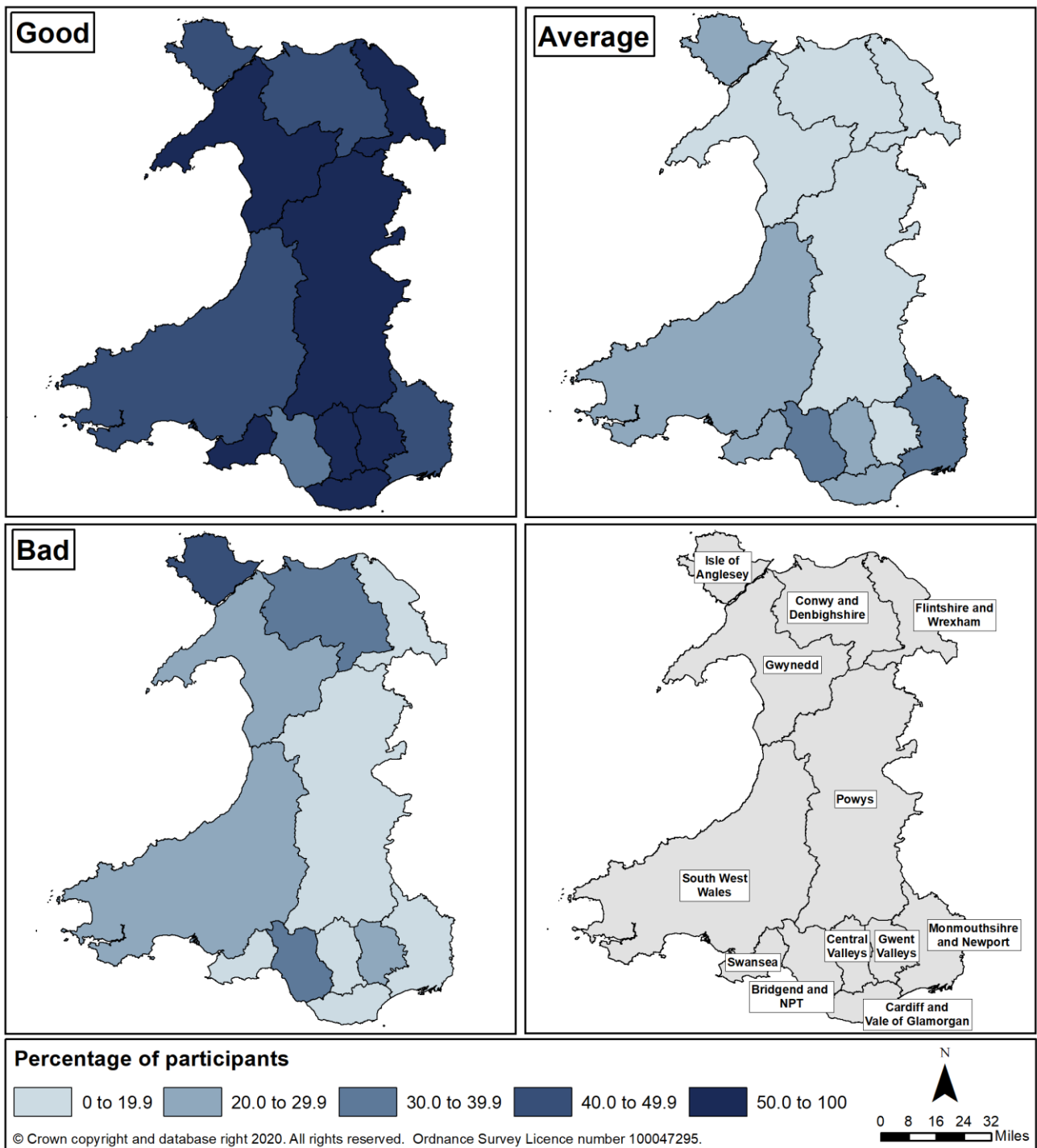
Survey participants were asked to rate the waste management services in their area as; *Very Good / Good / Average / Bad / Very Bad*.

Overall, **397** people answered this question. **51%** of participants said their bin day was *Very Good* or *Good*, **26%** said it was *Average* and **23%** said it was *Very Bad* or *Bad*.

The table and the map below groups together *Very Good* and *Good* as *Good*, and *Very Bad* and *Bad* as *Bad*.

While participants came from every local authority area in Wales, some areas only received a small amount of data. The smallest number of responses was in Isle of Anglesey (5) and the largest was in Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan (79). Please refer to the table for result values and percentages.

Region name	Number of Participant			Total number per area	Percentage		
	Good	Average	Bad		Good	Average	Bad
Gwynedd	10	3	4	17	58.8	17.6	23.5
Conwy and Denbighshire	12	5	10	28	42.9	17.9	35.7
Isle of Anglesey	2	1	2	5	40.0	20.0	40.0
South West Wales	17	10	8	35	48.6	28.6	22.9
Central Valleys	8	3	1	12	66.7	25.0	8.3
Gwent Valleys	20	6	11	37	54.1	16.2	29.7
Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot	18	19	19	56	32.1	33.9	33.9
Swansea	14	7	5	26	53.8	26.9	19.2
Monmouthshire and Newport	33	23	11	68	48.5	33.8	16.2
Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	47	19	13	79	59.5	24.1	16.5
Flintshire and Wrexham	10	3	3	16	62.5	18.8	18.8
Powys	9	3	3	16	56.3	18.8	18.8



A follow up question was asked that invited participants to explain why they'd chosen the rating above. These themes were most commonly referred to:

- 18% of comments said their bin collectors were poor however 19% of comments said the service was punctual, efficient or effective

*While the other collections are timely, the bins often seem to get left thrown all over the pavement – Participant from Neath Port Talbot Council*

*Green bags not collected on our street for the fourth time in a row, that's over 8 weeks. I report this to Swansea council every week no response – Participant from City and County of Swansea*

*Collection is haphazard. On my last collection day, the recycling collectors didn't arrive at all. When they do collect, they often leave some of the recyclables in the bags/crates which is frustrating – Participant from Newport City Council*

*Reason for this score is that the recycle team do not return the recycle bins to where they picked them up from. I have had many an argument with them and reported it to the council.. I am registered as disabled and for me to move my car I have to move the bins from in front of my car – Participant from Caerphilly County Borough Council*

*I find the normal bin collectors do a good job & leave the area as they find it, but the Recycling Waste teams are not as tidy & very often waste is left strewn across the road or pavements, I believe due to possible time constraints & mainly the way the waste has to be disposed of into individual openings on the lorry which means they manually have to lift the boxes/ bags etc into the opening thus allowing items to fall out or drop on to the floor. Frustrating householders & the collectors alike! – Participant from Newport City Council*

*Most things can be recycled and the bin collection is always on time and never missed – Participant from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council*

*Very tidy, prompt, helpful - I am disabled and have an assisted bin collection. They are helpful - rebuild the trolley of recycling bins – Participant from Isle of Anglesey County Council*

*Generally reliable collections. Mixed recycling makes everything easy. Fortnightly residual waste collections are about right – Participant from City of Cardiff Council*

*Mae gwasanaeth ailgylchu Conwy yn wych ac yn ein galluogi i ailgylchu rhan fwyaf o bethau, felly mae gael casgliad bin sbwriel unwaith y mis yn ddigon i ni – Participant from Conwy County Borough Council*

*Never have any problems. Even put extra bottles out this Christmas in a non-standard container and they took them. No complaints – Participant from Monmouthshire County Council*



- 14% of comments said they found the collections restrictive, confusing or inflexible. Also, 10% of comments said they'd had missed collections due to this inflexibility and it was causing a barrier to their aim to recycle

*My husband gets overwhelmed by what can or can't be recycled so puts 95% of our waste in the green bag because he believes it all gets manually sorted. We've had many arguments about it – Participant from City of Cardiff Council*

*They quite often miss things, for example, the week before last they didn't take my food waste and last week they didn't take my non-recyclable waste which will now stay outside my house until it's collected next week – Participant from Bridgend County Borough Council*

*System braidd yn rhy gymhleth. Angen symleiddio – Participant from Pembrokeshire County Council*

*Gwasanaeth da iawn ar y cyfan. Dim yn siwr eto am gasglu sachau duon dim ond pob tair wythnos, efallai bydd mwy o broblem dros yr haf. Braf cael casglaid gwydr o'r drws. Hefyd dim yn fodlon gyda'r opsiynau ar gyfer codi 'gwastraf swmpus' - £40 am chwech eitem! Byddai'n braf cael rhyw system o godi 'eitemau trydanol bach' naill ai o'r drws (bob 3 mis?) neu biniau mawr cyhoeddus. Dydy 'ewch â nhw i Glanyrafon' ddim yn opsiwn da. – Participant from Ceredigion County Council*

*Regular waste collections are very good but the one off collections of large items has very rigid rules. I've seen a neighbour put out a flat pack wardrobe for collection, it had been dismantled to get it out of the house. When the council came to collect it the rules say one item and so the council worker simply picked up the smallest piece of wood on the pile and walked away, "with the 1 item" I choose to pay a local waste collection firm when I have bulky items to dispose of because they are far more flexible and better value for money – Participant from Bridgend County Borough Council*

*Queues at civic amenity sites suggest collection service is not adequate with people creating more pollution by driving their cars to sites. – Participant from City and County of Swansea*

*A one sized wheelie bin system does NOT work for all, there is only so much larger families can do to cut down on waste! What is even more annoying, we already pay extra council tax for being a large family in a larger home, but get less services in return than those living alone – Participant from Newport City Council*

*No thought for different types of domestic property, flat and detached house, completely different, with all the containers needed. No thought for those with*



*mobility or capacity issues. Very confusing or difficult. No thought for extra waste for visitors or celebrations* – Participant from Bridgend County Borough Council

- A handful of comments said recent changes in the service had created an improvement however four times this number of comments described the changes in the service as problematic

*We have recently had changes which means we have to sort more of our recycling. It means my children are more involved and more aware and it has also informed our purchases when we shop as we are trying to avoid things we cannot recycle to reduce our grey bag* – Participant from Pembrokeshire County Council

*Good, reliable recycling and waste service - other than nappy recycling who still have not provided new replacement bags for months / after 3 requests* – Anonymous participant

*Regular, diverse recycling collection has allowed us to drastically reduce our black bin waste* – Participant from Conwy County Borough Council

*New recycling scheme drastically cut down household waste* – Participant from Pembrokeshire County Council

*The bin collection in Newport has changed a few times resulting in a confused amount of bins, caddies, boxes and bags, changing instructions for each bag several times. The result is that it is still very confusing to know what can be recycled and what not, specifically the examples provided are too broad and we cannot trust what the item to be recycled states. At times I am left with items in my bin as perhaps they were in the incorrect bin or perhaps they cannot be recycled, but no actual feedback is provided* – Participant from Newport City Council

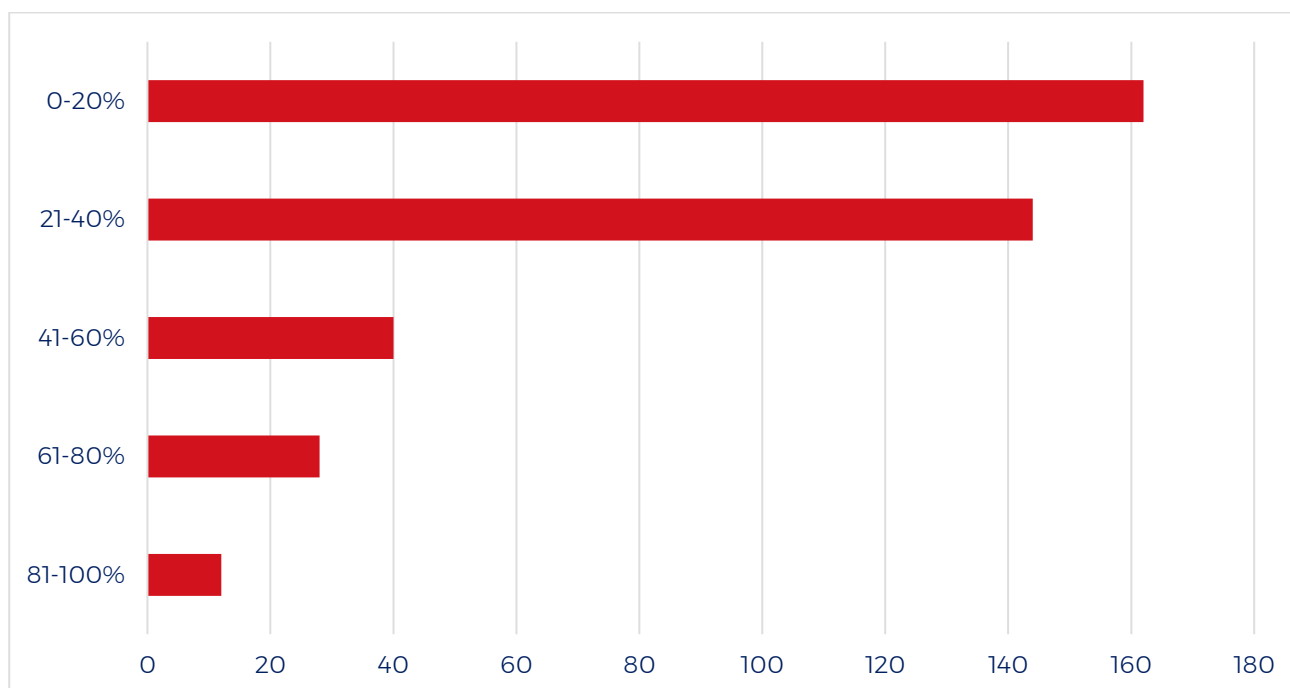
*New recycling system is time consuming* – Participant from Vale of Glamorgan Council

## Survey Results

403 surveys were submitted during the time engagement was open.

Results have been calculated from the number of respondents who answered the specific question and not the overall number of respondents to the survey.

1. Participants were asked: What percentage of your overall household waste do you think is not recycled? The table below shows the number of responses for each percentage bracket:



2. Participants were asked: What would help you recycle more? The main suggestions for improvement were;

- 35% of comments said their council should offer to collect a wider range of materials

*Llawer o'r deunydd plastig ddim yn bosib eu hailgylchu - gorfod eu rhoi yn y bin du* – Participants from Cardiff City Council

*Acceptance of more items locally to be recycled. Increased access to terracycle scheme and the items accepted via this* – Participants from Cardiff City Council

*Local recycling centre (Clyne) accepting a broader range of waste (e.g., wood, broken glass, plastic bags such as bread wrappers, crisp packets, toothpaste*

*tubes). Currently, we have to go to Llansamlet for wood and broken glass, supermarkets for 'thin' plastic waste. We're exploring Terracycle options for other items, but having to make long journeys by car to recycle at different locations is hardly environmentally friendly!* – Participant from City and County of Swansea

- 19% of comments said the containers could be better. They felt they were either impractical when it came to storage on the street or within their homes, or they mentioned that the design was poor and therefore rubbish would fall out of them or they'd get broken. Many people reported difficulties in getting replacements.

*Cael mwy o finiau ail-gylchu lleol, er enghraifft mewn canolfannau cymunedol, fel bod mwy o bobl yn ymwybodol o'r angen i ail-gylchu, ac yn medru mynd â phethau yno yn eu hamser eu hunain* – Participant from Gwynedd Council

*Practical easier to use recycle bins. Tailored to people's needs and ability to handle the bins effectively* – Participant from Gwynedd Council

*Actual bins instead of tubs. They are such a nuisance and such a faff and they are appreciated but.... Could be better in the future. Please invest in big upright recycle bins by combining cardboard and paper or something* – Participant from Isle of Anglesey County Council

*Instead of 2 huge bags where I cannot take them down the steps give us boxes with lids that can be left down the steps* – Participant from Monmouthshire County Council

*Have proper recycling bins and not the stupid stackable bins that blow away every time it gets windy, then they break and have to be repaired. The recycling bins are made of brittle plastic that evidently can't be recycled* – Participant from Conwy County Borough Council

*A separate bin for recycling. The bags provided blow away easily. I also don't have an indoor facility to store them so they get soaking and stinking prior to me putting them out on collection day* – Participant from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

*Decent fit for purpose recycling containers that don't get "lost" which then entails a complicated way of getting replacements - impossible me if you work and don't drive* – Participant from Flintshire County Council

- 16% of comments said retailers should use more eco-friendly and recyclable materials within their packaging and there should be less confusion about what can be recycled by the council

*Hefyd, angen siopau lleol i werthu cynnyrch sydd fel arfer yn dod mewn poteli plastig e.e - hylif golchi llestri, shiampw etc yn "rhydd" lle fedrwn ail-lenwi ein poteli ein hunain. Ac mae'n hen bryd i'r archfarchnadoedd i gyd roi'r gorau i lapio llysiâu a ffrwythau mewn plastig a/neu cartonau plastig - difrifol a di-angen. A gwerthu'r ffrwythau a'r llysiâu yn rhydd i'w rhoi mewn bagiau papur - fel erstmalwm! – Participant from Gwynedd Council*

*Most plastic packaging states they can be recycled but more often the reality is that the bin collectors will leave such items behind, not picking them from my bin – Participant from Newport City Council*

*There is widespread confusion with everyone I speak to about what is and is not recyclable. Also such matters as cat litter mount up and there is no clear policy as to whether this is or is not recyclable – Participant from Neath Port Talbot Council*

- There were a handful of comments about comingled recycling as opposed to separating materials. Participants as a whole seemed to favour comingled recycling for ease and reducing barriers to recycling

*I think there is a problem with terraced houses and flats, where people just don't have enough space for Newport's recycling boxes (1 green box, 1 blue box, 1 food caddy, 1 black bin, 1 green bag, 1 red bag and one orange bin), leaving them with the option of recycling the basics – Participant from Newport City Council*

*Simplification of system to single recycling bin. A universal system for collection and what's collectible across the country. Local authorities could combine to create central recycling/sorting centres. Some authorities already have this which are revenue generators – Participant from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council*

*To have 2 bins. One for general waste and the other for recyclable. It's too confusing and the 5 bins take up space - Participant from Bridgend County Borough Council*

3. Participants were asked what it's like to recycle each of the materials below by rating their experience with; Very Easy / Easy / Neither Easy or Challenging / Challenging / Very Challenging.

Overall, survey participants decided the following were the easiest to recycle in this order:

- Glass
- Food Waste
- Paper / Carboard
- Tins / Cans / Foil
- Garden Waste
- Plastic
- Black Bin Bag Waste
- Christmas Waste (not including Christmas Trees)
- Large Goods – suitable for kerbside collection

Less than half of the participants answered for Nappy / Sanitary Waste and Christmas trees and comments afterwards showed that these participants didn't have a need for these services therefore they didn't answer.

4. When asked why they rated the materials above under those ratings comments followed several themes:

- Certain areas that could be described as more rural demonstrated finding green waste easier to recycle. Comments pointed towards these participants having facilities to deal with their garden waste locally.

*Garden waste is only easy at the moment because a local farmer will take all our hedge and grass cuttings, weeds etc. Otherwise, with a large garden and all boundaries hedged, it would be very very difficult to take to recycling centre. Too much waste for one garden bin collection. Used to regularly take 20 tubs trugs weekly to Llangadog throughout the summer. Don't know how the elderly living in the rural areas cope without a helpful neighbour – Participant from Carmarthenshire County Council*

- Several people mentioned they were unable to recycle certain items due to their accessibility needs or costs

*It would be good if there was a facility to request an extra one bag allowance for a standard charge. I am mentally ill and do miss my bag collection occasionally, I do not have the wherewithal to get rubbish to the tip so I need to catch up and it means having rubbish hanging around potentially attracting vermin – Participant from Pembrokeshire County Council*

*Very challenging for Glass- they will not collect. Very challenging for green waste - as charged a large amount of money to collect that I can't afford living on disability. Very challenging for Large goods kerbside as it £25 for up to 3 items. This is extortionate if I have 1 item it's still £25 and I live on disability payments. I cannot take stuff to the tip as I don't drive and I am unable to – Participant from Carmarthenshire County Council*

*Picking up Glass ! I moved from a council with Glass collection which was wonderful and I was abled bodied then. Now I live in Carmarthen and I've been left disabled and unable to drive through disease, I CANNOT get Glass to any of the recycling areas provided. I have been told by the council to just dump it in black bags for dumping. This makes me furious, Glass is the easiest thing to recycle and why should I be penalised because of my disability by denying me the right to recycle some of my waste, as I'm not able bodied enough to get it there myself. This is discrimination – Participant from Carmarthenshire County Council*

- 26% of comments said they had problems with collections, perhaps due to access road or facilities within their building, or they had been refused collection on the day

*Most items are easily recycled, as long as those collecting it, take it. But when you have any excess waste, a one sized bin system does not work and is unfair, how does a family of 5 with pets, get the same sized bin as 1 person living alone! – Participant from Newport City Council*

*I have very bad arthritis in my hands and cannot bend large cardboard boxes. I left a folded box last year wedged between my bins and the waste management people left in on the pavement..... I tried contacting them with great difficulty. Very unhelpful. They are still not very helpful with these issues – Participant from Newport City Council*

*No provision for food waste removal is given to the tower block where I live. Pink recycling bags for plastic are difficult to get hold of from Swansea Council who gate keep them. If you do order some, often 2 rolls are dumped in the foyer on a first come first serve basis. The only bins available for the blocks to use are for black bag rubbish – Participant from City and County of Swansea*

*Large goods are very challenging because there is no pavement and I'm informed that collectors won't come on to my property. Living alone I have to get help to put any large goods out, this would have to be the night before as collections are very early. I'm also informed that if it rains the item my get wet and be too heavy but nobody would tell me what too heavy is – Participant from Carmarthenshire County Council*

- 23% of comments said they found the instructions clear and this is why they'd chosen this rating. However 12% of comments said they found the process confusing / unclear

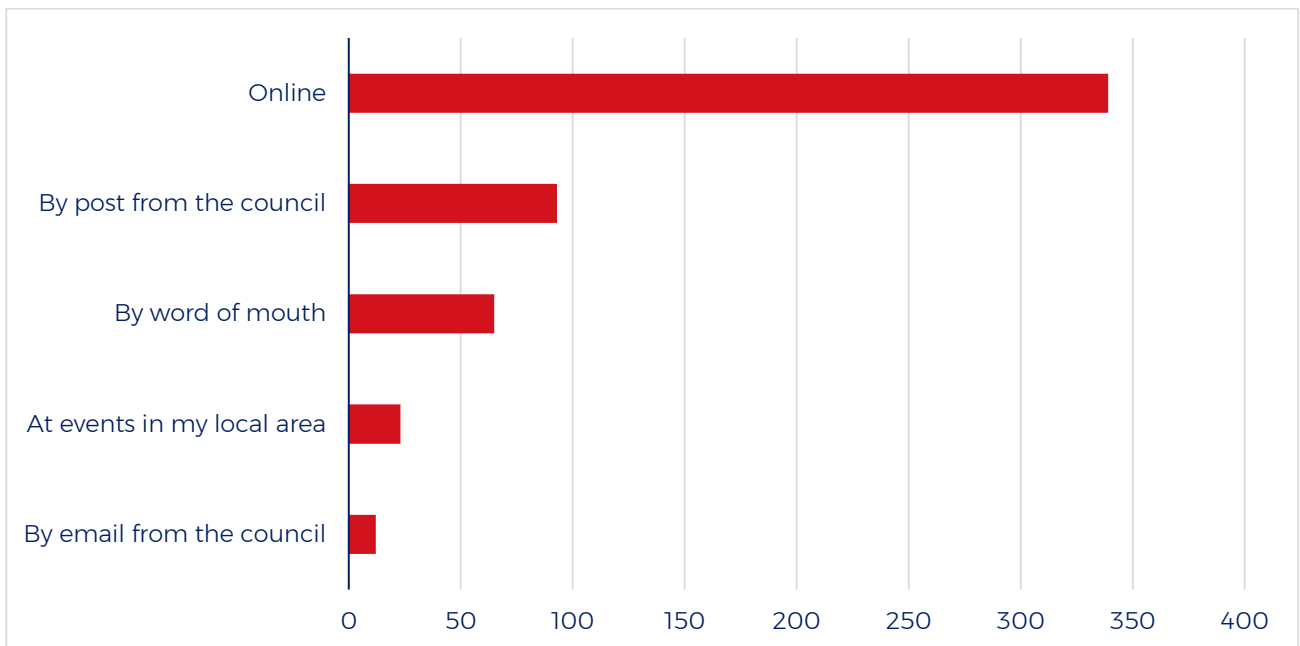
*System bin ailgylchu cymysg mewn un bin olwynion yn ardderchog, dim angen didoli, felly'n gwneud y cyhoedd yn fwy tebygol o ailgylchu. Hefyd, rhai wythnosau bydd mwy o blastig, wythnosau eraill mwy o bapur, gydag un bin mawr, mae lle i bob ailgylchu, bethbynnag ydyw, hyn ddim yn wir gyda'r bocsys bach sydd mewn siroedd eraill – Anonymous Participant*

*Where there are clear instructions, and clear receptacles it's easy. Some stuff doesn't get covered in on-line instructions. Though we have paid for garden waste collection, it seems the van cannot access our property. What we are told on the phone doesn't happen in reality – Participant from Pembrokeshire County Council.*

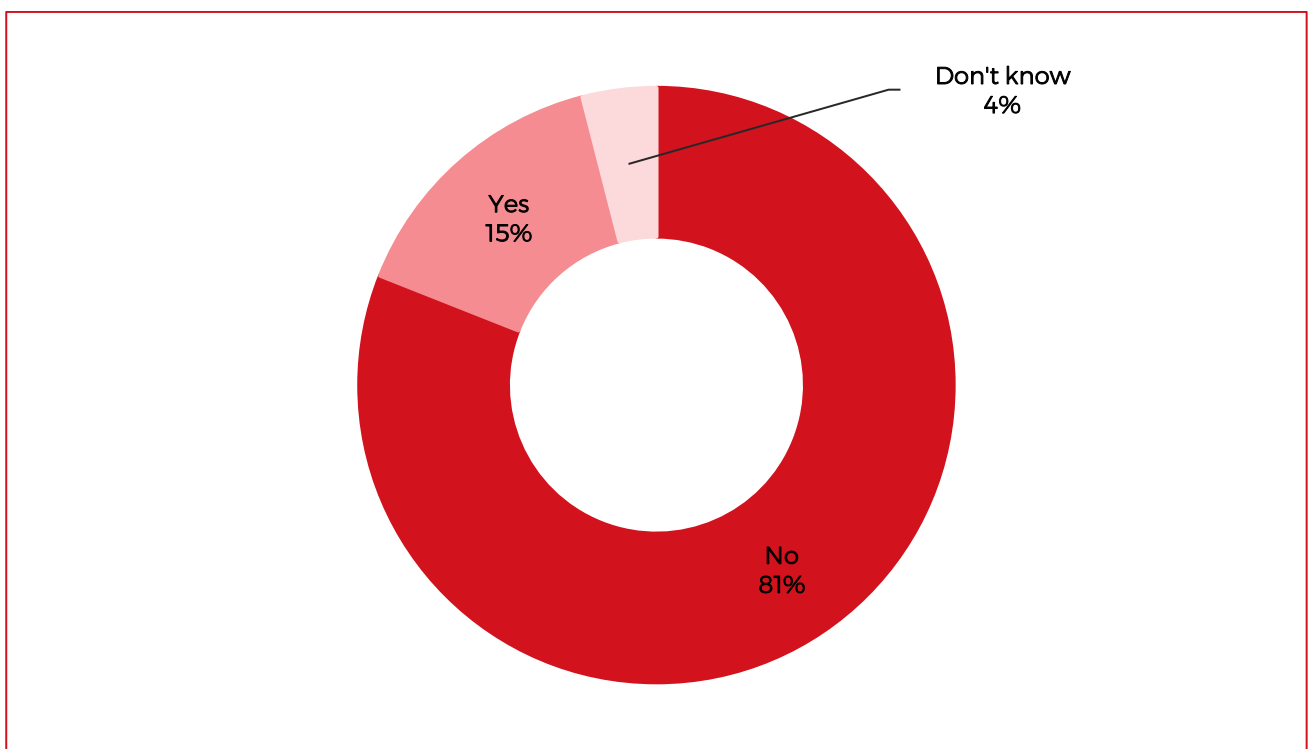
*Confusing when different plastic items go in different bags. Think you're getting it right and then things are returned in the bag after collection. Things taken one week not necessarily taken every week! So who's getting it wrong? – Participant from Monmouthshire County Council*



5. Participants were asked: Where do you find out information about the recycling facilities in your area? They could select more than one option. The table below shows the number of responses selected for each option:



6. Participants were asked: Have you heard of the Welsh Government website, My Recycling Wales? The percentage of people answer Yes, No and don't know are illustrated below:



7. One final theme that arose through the engagement was a noticeable negative feeling towards regional differences and how this can often cause confusion. Here is a selection of comments from survey participants:

*There is so much difference between recycling services across Wales on what is recycled by councils and what isn't. In Carmarthenshire people have to take their glass to designated areas for recycling which is ok if you have car but what if you don't? – Participant from Carmarthen County Council*

*A Wales wide approach could be helpful. I live in Newport but work in Cardiff they both have 2 completely different systems - Participant from City of Cardiff Council*

*I do find the recycling system a little frustrating. We moved from a RCT council area where all the recycling went into one plastic bag which was easier. That being said I feel the Bridgend method is better for the environment and not adding to the single use plastic problem – Participant from Bridgend County Borough Council*

*I had to pay an excess charge to have large electrical removed as there was an 8 week wait and we needed to move house! It is also a pain to have to drive to different supermarkets and waste centres to recycle things which were once able to be recycled in the Vale – Participant from Vale of Glamorgan Council*