



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

RESEARCH

Public willingness to pay for carrier bags in Wales (summary)

A survey exploring how much the Welsh public is willing to pay for different bag types, their reasons for bag re-use and changes to bag use during the COVID-19 pandemic.

First published: 4 November 2021

Last updated: 4 November 2021

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/public-willingness-pay-carrier-bags-wales-summary-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Contents

[Research aims and methodology](#)

[Main findings and conclusions](#)

[Conclusions](#)

[Contact details](#)

Research aims and methodology

The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Wales) Regulations 2010, require all persons who sell goods in Wales or for delivery to persons in Wales (sellers) to charge a minimum of 5 pence for each single use carrier bag (SUCB) issued. The charge is levied at the point of sale and applies both in store and via deliveries. At present, there is no mandatory charge on other types of shopping bags (for example, 'bags for life') made from plastics or other materials.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (EWA 2016) includes a provision that a minimum charge can be extended to all types of carrier bags in addition to the existing charge on SUCB, if their use rises to levels which have a detrimental impact on the environment. However, the Welsh Government has yet to give effect to these powers.

When developing this provision, a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) was undertaken to identify the optimal price for the charge, should it be extended to all types of carrier bags. However, the identified prices were calculated based on environmental and social costs, without considering how much consumers would be willing to pay for different bags. Therefore, it is not clear whether the suggested prices would be sufficient to change consumer behaviour. Moreover, as this report was published in 2015, it is likely that the price of different carrier

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/public-willingness-pay-carrier-bags-wales-summary-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

bags across supermarkets have changed since then.

The aim of this research was to identify the maximum amount consumers were willing to pay for different types of shopping bags. This information could then be used alongside further research, and the research reported in the RIA, to consider potential price points for each shopping bag type

This research took place via an online survey run by **Beaufort Research** in February 2021.

Main findings and conclusions

Willingness to pay for different types of bag

Across all of the six types of carrier bags, the average maximum amount participants were willing to spend was consistently lower than the average price participants would refuse to buy a bag because it was too expensive.

Responses were most certain for single-use plastic bags; the median maximum price that participants were willing to spend was £0.05, which was selected by over half of respondents. The majority of respondents (64%) would refuse to buy a single-use carrier bag if it was £0.20 or above. This suggests the current price of single-use carrier bags is viewed as acceptable among the public, and if it were to increase, fewer people may buy them.

For plastic bags for life, the median maximum price participants were willing to spend was £0.20. The median price that participants thought would be too expensive for them to purchase the bag was £0.50. Responses were more varied than single use carrier bags, with no 10-pence increment receiving a majority of responses.

The median maximum price that participants were willing to spend for cotton bags and all three of the heavy duty bags for life was £1 (plastic, canvas and fabric). The most common category that participants fell between was £1 to £1.40 for all four of the bags. However, it should be noted there was a large

spread of participants across the price options for each of these bags, with no price option or cluster receiving a majority of participants selecting it.

Across the heavy duty bags for life, the median price that participants thought would be too expensive to purchase the bags was £1.50 for the plastic types, £1.70 for fabric and £1.80 for canvas. For cotton bags, the median price that participants thought was too expensive was £1.19.

The largest variability in responses was found for the amount participants were willing to pay (and perceived as too expensive) for the three heavy duty bags for life (plastic, fabric and canvas). This indicates a lack of consensus and uncertainty among participants about how much these types of bags are worth to them

There were some differences between age groups and gender among the responses to some heavy duty bags. For example, the 55 to 64 age group were willing to pay more than other age groups for canvas and fabric heavy duty bags for life. Also, females were willing to pay more for fabric and canvas heavy duty bags for life than males. More extensive demographic analysis could be undertaken on the data in future if required.

'The Environment' was identified by the highest percentage of participants (74%) as a reason for bringing their own shopping bags to the supermarket rather than purchasing one. This was closely followed by saving money at 69%. All other reasons fell below 50% of all participants.

Changes to carrier bag use since the start of COVID-19 pandemic

Participants were asked how they have tended to shop for groceries since the start of the pandemic. Around half of the respondents (49%) have shopped in store, around a third (30%) have shopped both in-store and online, 18% have shopped purely online/click & collect, and a very small minority have someone shopping for them (2%).

Of those participants who responded that they had shopped in-store for their

groceries since the start of the pandemic, most are using the same amount (47%) or fewer (45%) single use bags than before the pandemic. Only a small minority (5%) are using more single use bags.

For those who selected that they were using fewer or more single use bags, they were asked to give the main reason for doing this was. The most common reason response was focused on environmental reasons (33%). Respondents aged 16 to 34 were more likely to select 'For convenience/ease' as their main reason for changing their bag use. There was also a statistically significant difference between age categories for the response 'Do not use single use bags' with those in the age category 55+ more likely to select this option.

Conclusions

The research found there was a variety of responses among respondents for how much they would be willing to spend on different types of carrier bags and the price at which they would deem the bag too expensive to purchase. Responses were most varied for the different types of heavy duty bags for life and least varied for single-use carrier bags and plastic bags for life. There were also some differences in willingness to pay by age and gender. Together, this variation suggests that people perceive the price of bags differently and therefore a statutory charge may not have an equal impact on people's purchasing choices.

The environment was a common reason for reusing bags, rather than purchasing them. This indicates the price of a bag does not necessarily feature in people's decisions to purchase a carrier bag.

Future research could explore other factors, in addition to price, which may encourage carrier bag reuse.

Contact details

Report Authors: Emily Wolstenholme, Lucy Campbell and Isabella Malet-Lambert

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

For further information please contact:

Aimee Marks

Email: sustainablefuturesresearch@gov.wales

Media: 0300 025 8099

Social research number: 71/2021

Digital ISBN: 978-1-80195-713-7



This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/public-willingness-pay-carrier-bags-wales-summary-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

About this document

This document is a copy of the web page [Public willingness to pay for carrier bags in Wales \(summary\)](#) downloaded.

Go to <https://gov.wales/public-willingness-pay-carrier-bags-wales-summary-html> for the latest version.

This document may not be fully accessible, for more information refer to our [accessibility statement](#).

Get [information on copyright](#).

