



National Survey for Wales, 2018-19 Recycling, and bags used for shopping

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SB 11/2020

In 2018-19, the National Survey asked questions about people's recycling habits and how satisfied they were with the recycling service provided by their local council. People were asked a series of questions on carrier bag use, the types of bags used, and whether those bags were new or not. Further questions asked about how many times people re-used carrier bags and how they disposed of them when worn out.

Main points

- In the last 12 months, 82% of people had sold or donated items they otherwise would have thrown away, and 57% bought second-hand items.
- 33% of people had repaired clothes and 26% had repaired household items (such as furniture) in the last 12 months.
- 71% of people were satisfied that the council kept them informed about their recycling collection service.
- The majority of people used reusable thick plastic carrier bags to carry their shopping: 63% used these at their last large grocery shop and 55% at their last small grocery shop.
- The majority of people re-used carrier bags from home or the car at their last large (83%), small (80%) or non-grocery (56%) shopping trip.
- 32% said they re-used thick plastic bags more than 50 times.
- A third of plastic bags are thrown away with the general rubbish.



80%
satisfied with
the council's
recycling service



74%
reuse their own carrier
bags for food shopping,
most of the time

About this bulletin

This bulletin provides more detailed analysis of the 2018-19 results for the questions on **Recycling, and bags used for shopping**. It also compares results over time.

The full questionnaire is available on the [National Survey web pages](#).

More tables can be found in the [Results viewer](#).

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Introduction

[Towards Zero Waste](#), the Welsh Government's overarching waste strategy up to 2050, was developed with partners such as Natural Resources Wales. Towards Zero Waste has 3 aims:

- a sustainable environment, where the impact of waste in Wales is reduced to within our environmental limits by 2050. This means that waste production and management will only be at '[One Planet](#)' levels
- a prosperous society, with a sustainable, resource efficient economy
- a fair and just society, in which everyone can achieve their full potential and take action on waste prevention, reuse and recycling

In 2014-15 and again in 2018-19 the National Survey included questions on people's personal recycling activities and their attitudes to the recycling service provided by their local authority. This was done to gauge the progress on the aims of Towards Zero Waste and to establish if any policy intervention are needed to encourage people to recycle more. In this bulletin we compare results from the 2018-19 survey with 2014-15 results where applicable.

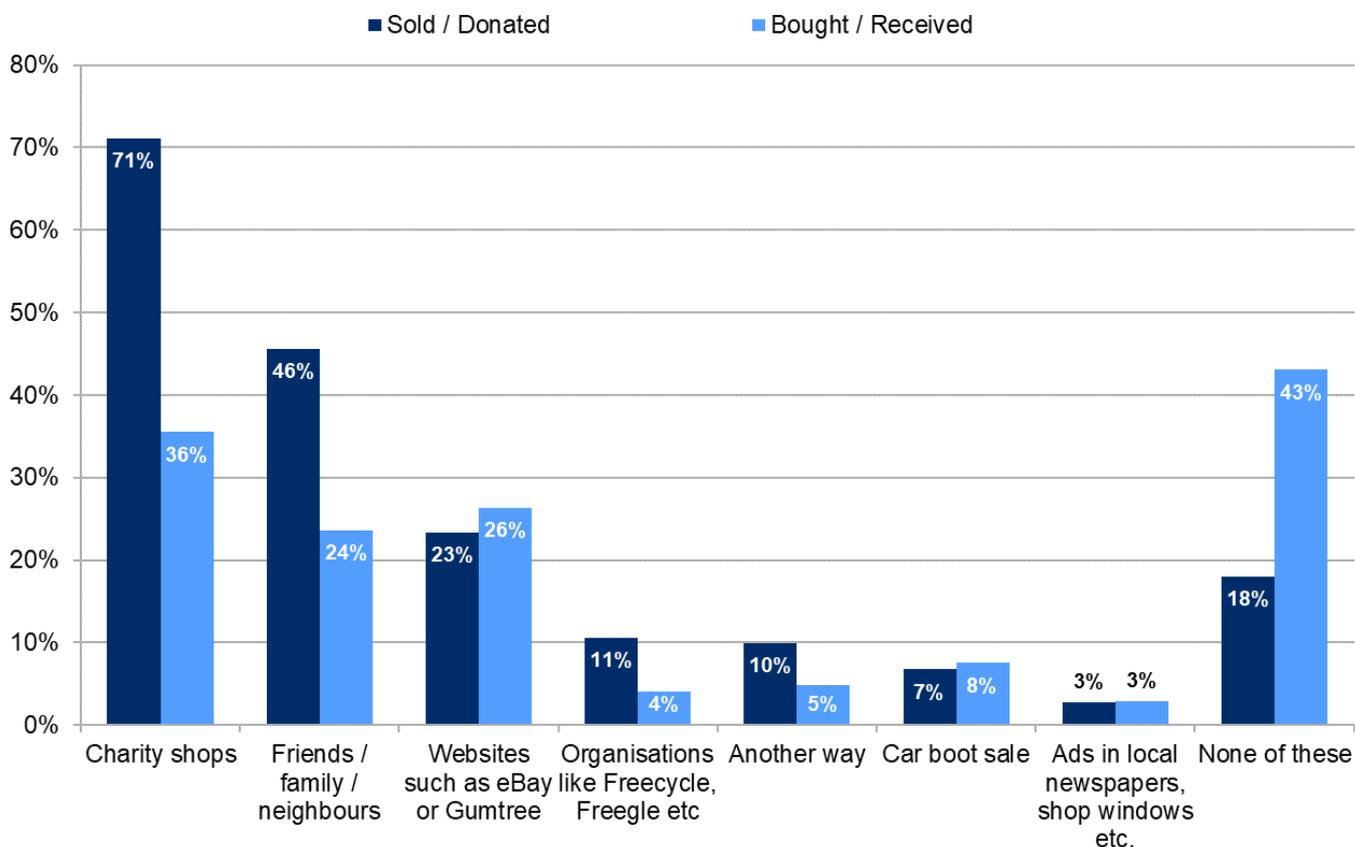
In 2011, Wales became the first nation in the UK to implement a 5p charge on single use carrier bags. This saw a reduction in single use carrier bag use by 79% in the period from 2010 to 2013, according to data from the [Waste Resources and Action Plan](#) (WRAP). However [WRAP data](#) showed that there has been a significant increase in sales of bags for life which are made from thicker plastic. This raises the concern that bags for life may be used as substitutes for single use carrier bags and thrown away after one use.

The [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) gave Welsh Ministers powers to charge for other types of bags (such as bags for life). However, this power is not intended to be used until there is sufficient evidence on whether bags of life are being substituted for single use carrier bags. As part of gathering this evidence the 2018-19 National Survey introduced a series of questions about people's behaviour and use of re-usable carrier bags and to understand what happens to them once they have worn out.

Recycling – personal activity

In 2018-19 the National Survey asked people how they had donated or sold items that they would otherwise have thrown away, and also how they had bought or received second-hand items in the last 12 months.

Chart 1 – Methods used to sell/donate and buy/receive second-hand items



(a) Respondents were allowed to give more than one response so percentages may not sum to 100%

Chart 1 shows the proportion of people who used each method of selling/donating and buying/receiving. The most popular ways of selling/donating and buying/receiving were charity shops, friends/family, and via websites. 43% of people said they had not bought or received second-hand items through any method. The proportion of those who said they sold or gave away items to friends, family or neighbours increased from 40% to 46% since last asked in 2014-15.

People aged 16-24 were more likely to have sold or given away items to family/friends (50%) than those aged 75 and older (26%). Those aged 16-24 were also more likely to have bought/received items from family and friends (33%) than those aged 75 and older (6%).

Those with a limiting long term condition were less likely than those without such a condition to have:

- sold items through websites (16%, compared with 27%)
- bought items through a website (20%, compared with 29%)
- given away/sold second-hand items to friends/family (42%, compared with 47%)
- bought/received second-hand items from friends/family (21%, compared with 25%)

Women were more likely to donate to charity shops than men (76% compared with 66%) and more likely to buy from them (40% compared with 31%). 14% of women had not sold or donated items compared with 22% of men.

73% of people of white ethnicity (Welsh, English, British etc.)¹ donated items to charity shops, compared with 51% of people from the black and minority ethnic (BAME) group. People of other types of white ethnicity (not Welsh, English, British etc.) were more likely (53%) to buy second-hand items from charity shops than white (36%) and BAME groups (22%).

46% of white (Welsh, English, British etc.) gave away second-hand items to friends or family compared with 31% of those from the BAME group. 38% of people self-identifying as white – other bought or received items from friends or family compared with 24% of those from the white (Welsh, English, British etc.) group.

People were asked if they had repaired, or arranged for the repair, of clothes for anyone in their household in the last 12 months. 33% of people had done this in 2018-19, a similar result to 2014-15.

37% of women said they had repaired clothes, compared with 30% of men. 34% of people who described themselves as white² (Welsh, English, British etc.) and 42% of white – other ethnicity were more likely to repair clothes than people from black and minority ethnic groups (24%). 38% of people in rural areas repaired clothes compared with 31% in urban areas.

People were also asked if they had carried out or arranged for the repair of any household items (such as furniture, a fridge or a kettle) that otherwise would have been thrown away in the last 12 months. In 2018-19, 26% of people said they had repaired items, similar to the proportion in 2014-15.

As with repairs to clothing, people in urban areas were less likely to repair household items (22%) than those in rural areas (33%). Those in owner-occupied properties were more likely to repair household items (28%) than those privately renting (22%) or in social housing (19%). Those with degree level qualifications and above were more likely to repair household items (32%) than those with no qualifications (18%).

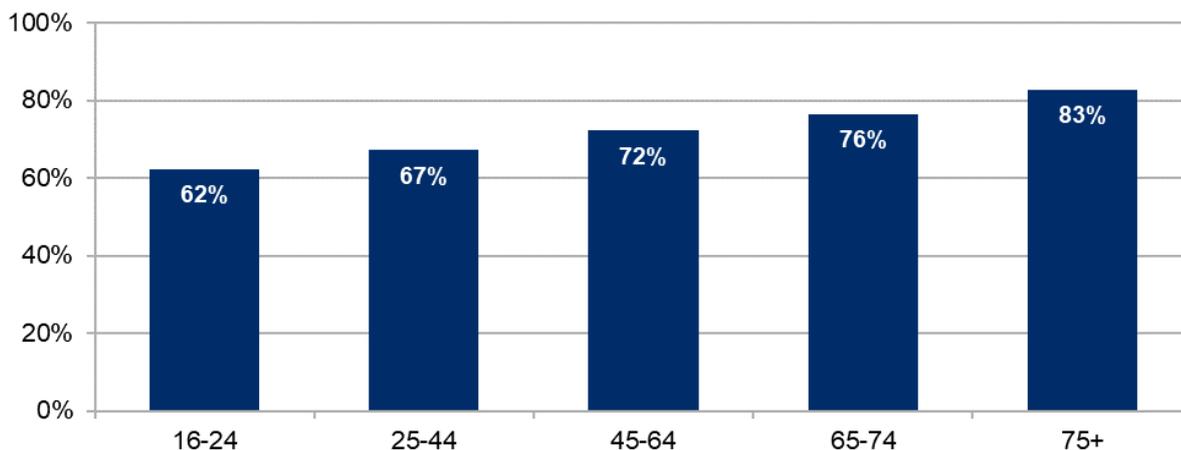
Recycling – local authority

People were asked if they agreed that the local council kept them informed about recycling services. In 2018-19, 71% of people agreed, a similar result to that in 2014-15.

The proportion of people who agreed that the council kept them informed about recycling varied between local authorities. Those living in Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Anglesey and Neath Port Talbot were more likely to agree they were well-informed, with a higher percentage of people in agreement than the overall Wales result of 71%. In contrast, the results for people living in Carmarthenshire, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Rhondda Cynon Taf were notably lower than 71%.

¹ See [Terms and definitions](#) for more information.

Chart 2 – Agreement that council kept them informed about recycling services, by age group



83% of people aged 75 and older agreed that the council kept them informed about recycling services compared with 62% of people aged 16 to 24 (Chart 2). 75% of those who agreed that they can access information about their local authority in the way they want also agreed that they were kept informed about local recycling services. This compares with 60% of those who could not access information in the way they wanted.

Satisfaction with recycling service

In 2018-19, 80% of people said they were satisfied with the recycling collection service provided by the council. This proportion has remained at a similar level since the question was last asked in 2014-15.

77% of those aged 16-24 were satisfied with the recycling service in their area, compared with 88% of those aged 75 and older. 89% of those who agreed that the council kept them informed about recycling services were satisfied with their recycling service. This compares with 54% who were satisfied with the recycling service but thought the council did not keep them informed.

Further analysis – Satisfaction with local council’s recycling collection service

More in depth analysis was undertaken to find out which groups of people were most likely to be satisfied with the recycling service provided by their local council. We used a statistical method sometimes known as “controlling for other factors”³ to study each factor’s link with the outcome of interest, in this case people who were satisfied with the recycling collection service in their area, whilst holding the values of other factors⁴ constant. The following factors each had an independent link with people feeling satisfied with the council’s recycling collection service:

- not being in material deprivation
- agreeing that the council keeps them informed about the recycling collection service
- being satisfied with the local area as a place to live

³ This analysis is known as logistic regression. Information about the method can be found in [Regression analysis](#)

⁴ The full list of factors were: satisfaction with local area as place to live, whether respondent agreed they knew how to find out what services were provide by their local authority, whether respondent agreed they could influence decisions in their local area, satisfaction with services provided by local authority, general health, type of household they lived in, education level, economic status, tenure, material deprivation status, urban/rural areas, age, gender, whether respondent had limiting long term condition, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation.

Other factors that appeared to have an association with satisfaction were: people feeling that they could influence decisions in their local area; general health; and whether people had a limiting long term condition, but there was no clear pattern to these associations. As with all analysis of this type we are unable to attribute cause and effect between the main statement and the associated factors, or to take account of factors that we didn't measure.

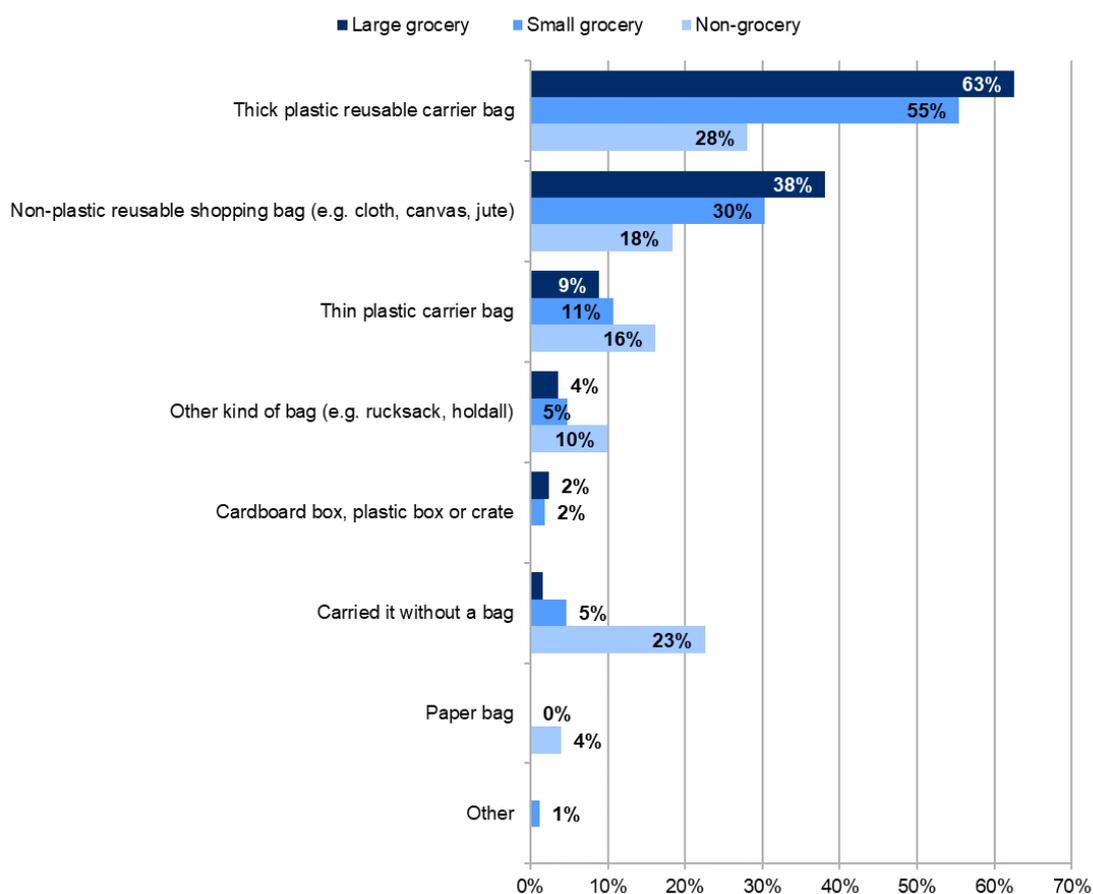
Types of bag used for shopping

In 2018-19 questions were introduced about the kinds of carrier bags used for three different types of shopping trip:

- large grocery trip: food or groceries, more than two full carrier bags of shopping in one trip
- small grocery trip: food or groceries, up to two full carrier bags of shopping in one trip
- non-grocery trip: anything other than food and groceries regardless of the amount of carrier bags filled

People were asked what kind of bag they had used at their last shop on each type of trip.

Chart 3 – Types of bag used for different types of shopping



(b) Where no bar is shown insufficient numbers of people answered the question and the results have been suppressed.

(c) Please note that respondents were able to pick more than one type of bag so percentages may not sum to 100%.

Chart 3 shows the types of bag used for the different shopping trips. Thick plastic carrier bags were the most popular type of bag to use for all shopping trips. Shopping from non-grocery trips was less likely to be carried in either thick plastic or non-plastic reusable bags compared with groceries.

People were more likely to carry their purchases without a bag at their last non-grocery shop (23%) than they were at their last large grocery shop (2%) or small grocery shop (5%).

The type of carrier bag used for each type of shopping varied by several demographic factors. For large amounts of grocery shopping, those with access to a car were more likely to use non-plastic reusable bags (39%) than those without access to a car (27%). For small amounts of grocery shopping 32% of people with access to a car used a non-plastic type of bag, compared with 22% of those without access to a car.

28% of people in material deprivation used non-plastic reusable carrier bags for large grocery trips compared with 39% of those not in material deprivation. For large grocery shopping trips those in material deprivation were more likely to use thin plastic bags (14%) than those not in material deprivation (8%).

Women were more likely to have used non-plastic reusable carrier bags for all types of shop than were men. For:

- large grocery shopping trips 43% of women used non-plastic reusable carrier bags, compared with 33% of men
- small grocery shopping trips 37% of women used non-plastic reusable carrier bags, compared with 23% of men
- non-grocery shopping 24% of women used non-plastic reusable carrier bags, compared with 12% of men

14% of people aged 16-44 used thin plastic carrier bags for large grocery trips, compared with 5% of those aged 45 and over. People aged 65 and older were less likely to use thin plastic carrier bags for small grocery shops (7%), compared with those aged 16-44 (13%) and 45-64 (11%).

In 2018-19, people were asked whether the carrier bags they used at their last shopping trip had been taken from home or the car, purchased at the checkout, or a mix of both. For all types of shop the majority of people used bags taken from home or the car; however, people were less likely to do this for non-grocery shopping (56%) than for large shopping trips (83%) and for small shopping trips (80%). This difference is largely accounted for by a corresponding difference in the proportion of people who used new bags provided at the checkout. 38% of people purchased new bags for non-grocery shopping, compared with 16% for large shopping trips and 11% for small shopping trips.

The proportion of people who got their shopping bags from home or the car, the checkout, or a mixture of both, varied by the type of bag used. For larger amounts of shopping, 30% of people who used exclusively thin plastic bags took them from home or the car, compared with 81% of people who used exclusively thick plastic reusable bags and 95% of people who used exclusively non-plastic reusable bags.

For large shopping trips 74% of people aged 16-44 took bags from home or the car compared with 87% of those aged 45-64 and 93% of those aged 65 and older. A similar pattern is observed with small grocery shopping and non-grocery shopping.

People were asked how often they used their own bags for grocery and non-grocery shopping. For groceries, 74% of people said they used their own bags most/all of the time, 10% used their bags some of the time, 4% rarely used their own bags and 5% never used their own bags⁵. Non-grocery shopping followed a similar pattern, with 58% of people using their own bags most of the time/always, 16% sometimes using their own bags, 8% rarely using their own bags and 12% said they never used bags⁵.

Women were more likely to use their own bags for all types of shopping than men. For grocery shopping, 79% of women used their own bags most/all of the time compared with 70% of men. For non-grocery shopping, this was 64% of women compared with 51% of men.

For non-grocery shopping, 47% of those in material deprivation used their own bags all/most of the time compared with 60% of those not in material deprivation. For grocery shopping 59% of those in material deprivation used their own bags all/most of the time compared with 77% of those not in material deprivation. Those in material deprivation were also more likely to never use their own bag (9%) than those not in material deprivation (4%) for grocery shops.

Re-use of plastic and non-plastic bags

People who said they had used plastic and non-plastic reusable carrier bags were asked further questions about how frequently they used them and what they did when they wore out.

Chart 4 – Number of times carrier bags are re-used

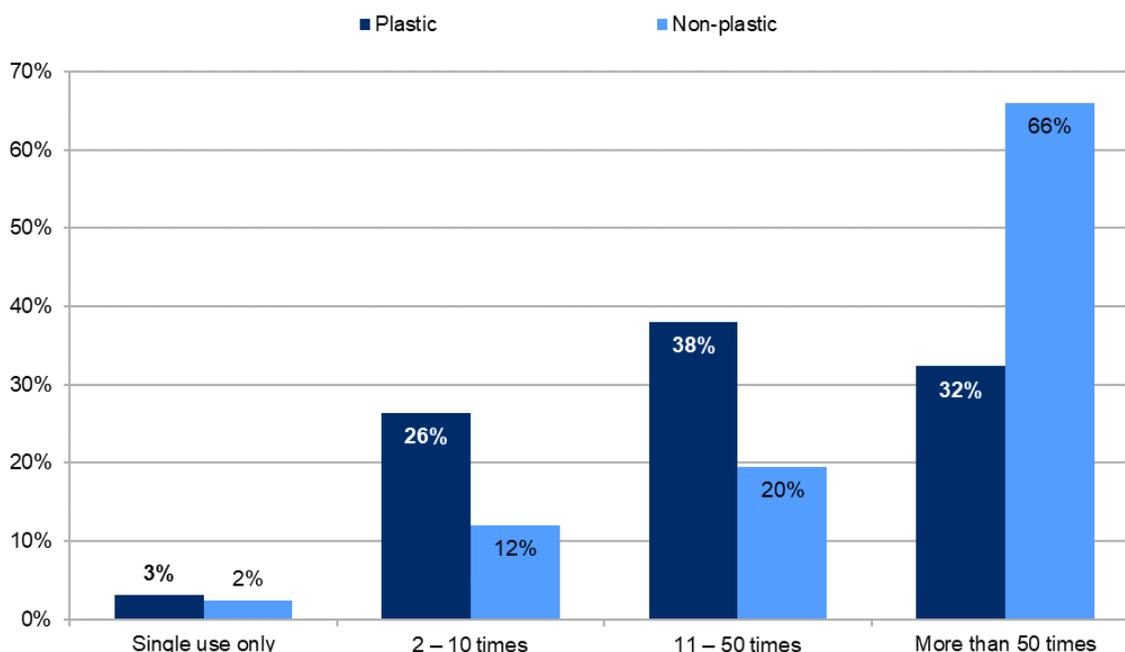


Chart 4 shows that reusable bags of either type are rarely reported to be used only once. It also shows that the majority of plastic bags are said to be used less than 50 times, while the majority of non-plastic plastic bags are said to be used more than 50 times. It's worth considering that re-use may be over-estimated due to the social desirability of the answer.

⁵ A further small proportion of people said they did not shop in store for these items.

The proportion of people who only used plastic bags once varied by:

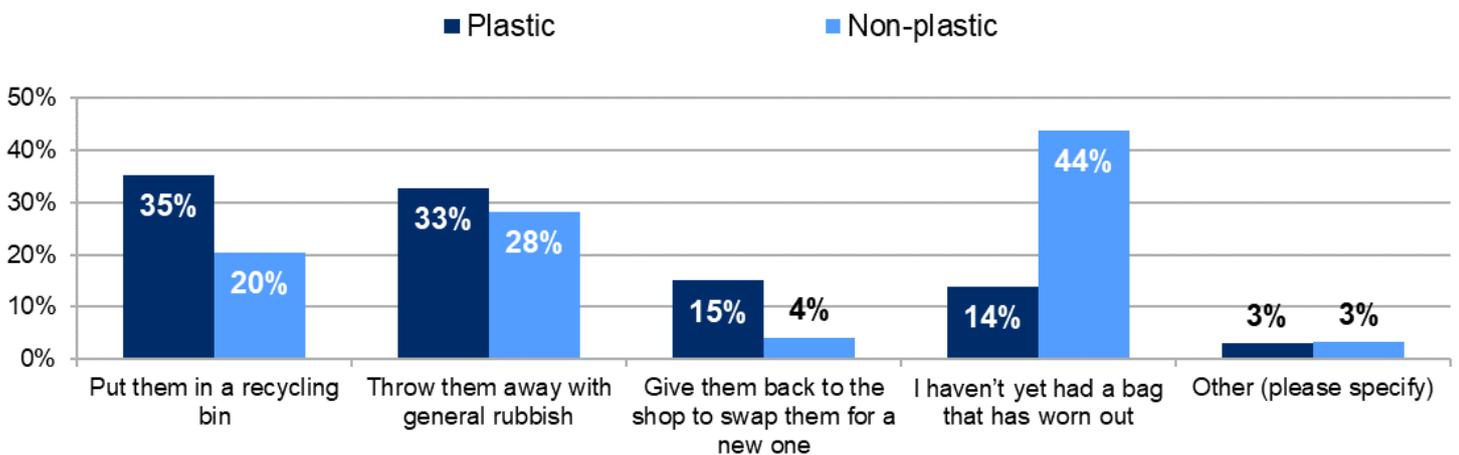
- Material deprivation: 3% of those not in material deprivation used plastic bags only once, compared with 7% of those in material deprivation.
- Access to a car: Those who had access to a car were less likely to use plastic bags only once (3%), compared with those without access to a car (7%).
- Tenure: 6% of those in social housing used plastic bags only once, compared with 2% in owner-occupied properties.

The proportion of people who used plastic bags more than 50 times varied by:

- Material deprivation: Those in material deprivation were less likely to say they used plastic bags more than 50 times (26% of people in material deprivation) compared with those not in material deprivation (33%). They were also less likely to use non-plastic bags more than 50 times (57%) than those not in material deprivation (67%).
- Age: 26% of those aged 16-44 used a plastic bag more than 50 times compared with 40% of those aged 65 and older. Similarly 60% of those aged 16-44 used a non-plastic bag more than 50 times compared with 73% aged 65 and older.

Respondents were asked what they did with their plastic and non-plastic reusable bags when they had worn out (Chart 5).

Chart 5 - Disposal methods of plastic and non-plastic carrier bags once they have worn out



As shown in Chart 5, a third of plastic bags are thrown away with the rubbish (compared with 28% of non-plastic bags) and 15% are given back to the shop (compared with 4% non-plastic bags). The greatest difference between the two types of bag is that 44% of people using non-plastic bags say they haven't had a bag that has worn out yet compared with 14% of people using plastic bags. A larger proportion of 16-44 year olds threw away both plastic bags and non-plastic bags when they wore out than people aged 45 and over. This older group were more likely to recycle them.

Terms and definitions

Material deprivation

Material deprivation is a measure which is designed to capture the consequences of long-term poverty on households, rather than short-term financial strain. Non-pensioner adults were asked whether they had things like 'a holiday away from home for at least a week a year', 'enough money to keep their home in a decent state of decoration', or could 'make regular savings of £10 a month or more'. The questions for adults focussed on whether they could afford these items. These items are really for their 'household' as opposed to them personally which is why they were previously called 'household material deprivation'. Pensioners were asked slightly different questions such as whether their 'home was kept adequately warm', whether they had 'access to a car or taxi, when needed' or whether they had their hair done or cut regularly'. These also asked whether they could afford them, but also focussed on not being able to have these items for other reasons, such as poor health, or no one to help them etc. these questions were less based on the household and more about the individual.

Those who did not have these items were given a score, such that if they didn't have any item on the list, they would have a score of 100, and if they had all items, they had a score of 0. Non-pensioners with a score of 25 or more were classed as deprived and pensioners with a score of 20 or more were classed as deprived. Parents of children were also asked a set of questions about what they could afford for their children. In this bulletin the non-pensioner and pensioner measures of deprivation are combined to provide an 'adult' deprivation variable. The terms 'adult' and 'household' deprivation may be used interchangeably depending on context.

Ethnicity

Where ethnicity is discussed within this report different categories have been grouped together.

White British – people self-identifying as white Welsh, white English, white Scottish, white Northern Irish, white British

White other – white Irish, white Gypsy, white Traveller, other white background

Other ethnicity – all other ethnicities (including black African, black Caribbean, black British, Asian, Asian British, Mixed ethnic groups)

Key quality information

Background

The National Survey for Wales is carried out by The Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Welsh Government. The results reported in this bulletin are based on interviews completed in 2018-19 (1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019).

The sample was drawn from the Royal Mail Small Users Postcode Address File (PAF), whereby all residential addresses and types of dwellings were included in the sample selection process as long as they were listed as individual addresses. If included as individual addresses on the PAF, residential park homes and other dwellings were included in the sampling frame but community

establishments such as care homes and army barracks are not on the PAF and therefore were not included.

The National Survey sample in 2018-19 comprised 24,762 addresses chosen randomly from the PAF. Interviewers visited each address, randomly selected one adult (aged 16+) in the household, and carried out a 44-minute face-to-face interview with them, which asked for their opinions on a wide range of issues affecting them and their local area. A total of 11,922 interviews were achieved.

Interpreting the results

Percentages quoted in this bulletin are based on only those respondents who provided an answer to the relevant question. Some topics in the survey were only asked of a sub-sample of respondents and other questions were not asked where the question is not applicable to the respondent. Missing answers can also occur for several reasons, including refusal or an inability to answer a particular question.

Where a relationship has been found between two factors, this does not mean it is a causal relationship. More detailed analysis is required to find whether a factor causes change in another.

The results are weighted to ensure that the results reflect the age and sex distribution of the Welsh population.

Quality report

A summary [Quality Report](#) is available, containing more detailed information on the quality of the survey as well as a summary of the methods used to compile the results.

Sampling variability

Estimates from the National Survey are subject to a margin of uncertainty. Part of the uncertainty comes from the fact that any randomly-selected sample of the population will give slightly different results from the results that would be obtained if the whole population was surveyed. This is known as sampling error. Confidence intervals can be used as a guide to the size of the sampling error. These intervals are calculated around a survey estimate and give a range within which the true value is likely to fall.

In 95% of survey samples, the 95% confidence interval will contain the 'true' figure for the whole population (that is, the figure we would get if the survey covered the entire population). In general, the smaller the sample size the wider the confidence interval. Confidence intervals are included in tables of survey results published on StatsWales.

As with any survey, the National Survey is also subject to a range of other sources of error: for example, due to non-response; because respondents may not interpret the questions as intended or may not answer accurately; and because errors may be introduced as the survey data is processed. These kinds of error are known as non-sampling error, and are discussed further in the quality report for the survey.

Significant differences

Where the text of this release notes a difference between two National Survey results (in the same year), we have checked to ensure that the confidence intervals for the two results do not overlap. This suggests that the difference is statistically significant (but as noted above, is not as rigorous as carrying out a formal statistical test), i.e. that there is less than a 5% (1 in 20) chance of obtaining these results if there is no difference between the same two groups in the wider population.

Checking to see whether two confidence intervals overlap is less likely than a formal statistical test to lead to conclusions that there are real differences between groups. That is, it is more likely to lead to "false negatives": incorrect conclusions that there is no real difference when in fact there is. It is also less likely to lead to "false positives": incorrect conclusions that there is a difference when there is in fact none. Carrying out many comparisons increases the chance of finding false positives. Therefore, when many comparisons are made the conservative nature of the test is an advantage because it reduces (but does not eliminate) this chance.

Where National Survey results are compared with results from other sources, we have not checked that confidence intervals do not overlap.

Regression analysis

Where further analysis has been carried out selection of the initial variables used in the regression was based on; the results from cross-analysis, policy direction, and the practicality of using the variable. The results for some factors were only available for a sub-sample of respondents, or there were a large number of 'missing' results which resulted in a substantial drop in the sample size on which the regression model could be tested. For this reason some variables/factors were omitted from the investigation. The final models consisted of those factors that remained significant even after holding the other factors constant. These significant factors are those that have been discussed in this bulletin and the use of regression analysis is indicated by the statement that we have 'controlled for other factors'. It is worth noting that had a different range of factors been available to consider from the survey, then some conclusions about which factors were significant may have been different.

More details on the methodology used in the regression analysis in this report are available in the [Technical Report: Approach to regression analysis and models produced](#).

Technical report

More detailed information on the survey methodology is set out in the [technical report](#) for the survey.

National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in 2017 following a compliance check by the Office for Statistics Regulation [[letter of confirmation](#)]. These statistics last underwent a full assessment [[full report](#)] against the Code of Practice in 2013.

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- provided more detailed breakdowns in the [Results viewer](#) and made it easier for users to compare results across years;
- updated the survey topics annually to ensure we continue to meet changing policy need; and
- made regression analysis a standard part of our outputs to help users understand the contribution of particular factors to outcomes of interest.

Equalities data

Availability of data for equality dimensions:

Equality dimension	Collected	Included in release	Available in the Results viewer	Available on request
Race/Ethnicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age groups	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sex	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impairments and disability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sexual orientation	Yes	No	No	Yes
Religion or belief	Yes	No	No	Yes
Marriage and civil partnership	Yes	No	No	Yes
Pregnancy and maternity	Yes	No	No	Yes
Gender identity	No	No	No	No

The National Survey for Wales captures data during the interview based around the Equality Act 2010 which uses the medical definition of disability (“any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more”).

Questions collecting equalities data are included in the National Survey as shown above, however in many cases the sample sizes and quality of the data were not sufficient to provide a breakdown by these groups. Also, unless a significant difference exists between elements of a group then they may not be discussed in this report. Analysis of all results is available on request.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/recycling-and-bags-used-for-shopping-national-survey-wales-april-2018-march-2019>

Next update

Not a regular output

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to surveys@gov.wales.

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