



**STRATHCONA
COUNTY**

2020 Youth Perceptions Regarding Waste Management



Research Results

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Communications

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In late October 2020, Strathcona County conducted an online survey of youth in Strathcona County in order to measure perceptions that those aged 13 to 17 have toward some aspects of the County's waste management approach.

Obtaining primary data from youth directly will provide the Utilities department with information to make decisions that will enhance the directions taken as the waste management plan is updated. This report will provide a comprehensive review of all steps undertaken in the development and implementation of the survey, as well as a detailed summary of the results. The results from this study were prepared by Phil Kreisel, Ph.D. (Communications); SPSS was used for the data analysis.

A review of the methodology associated in the development and implementation all aspects of the survey can be found in the next section of this report.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was new, using questions that were developed by waste management members of the Utilities department. The survey was then created, reviewed and modified where necessary by members of Survey Central for wording, question ordering and general understanding. This included a final check of the content by FOIP¹ prior to the release of the survey to the public. The wording of the questions and answer options were adjusted in some cases to reflect language expressions used by today's teens.

¹ FOIP stands for Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and was reviewed by selected members from Strathcona County's Legislation and Legal Department (LLS).

B. Sample Demographics and Source of the Sample

The sample frame used in this study consisted of 61 Strathcona County youth who either had signed up independently for SCOOP, Strathcona County's online opinion panel (13.1%), or made use of their parents' accounts to take part in the survey (86.9%). Overall, 72.1% of the participants lived in the urban area and 27.9% came from rural parts of Strathcona County. With respect to gender, 39.7% were male and 60.3% were female.

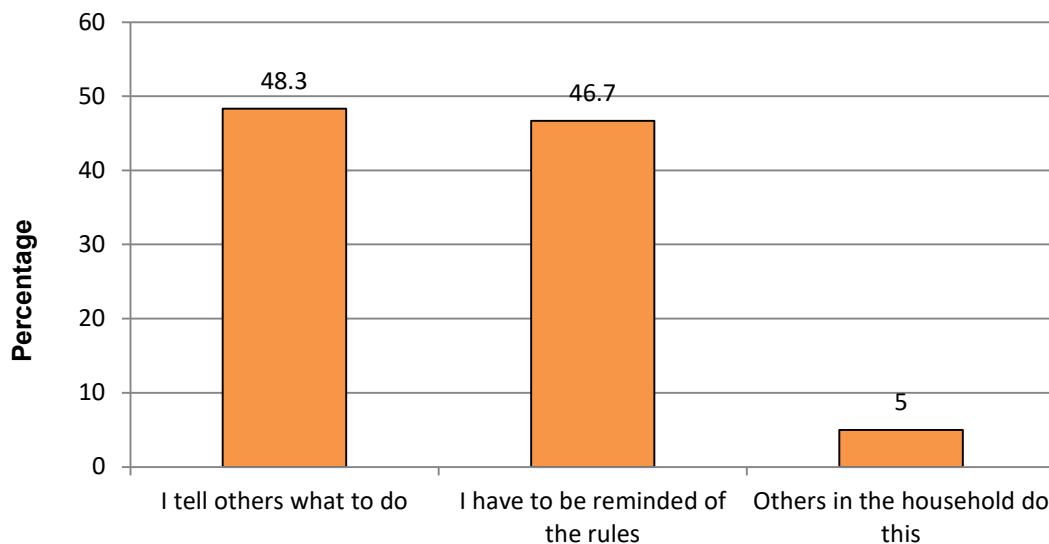
The data was collected between October 29 and November 7, 2020.

III. SURVEY RESULTS

A. Overall Results

Respondents were initially asked the extent that they personally sort waste in their home. It can be seen in Figure 1 that there is a split between teens taking the initiative to sort waste and those who will do it but must be reminded to do so. Very few youth in this survey are not sorting waste.

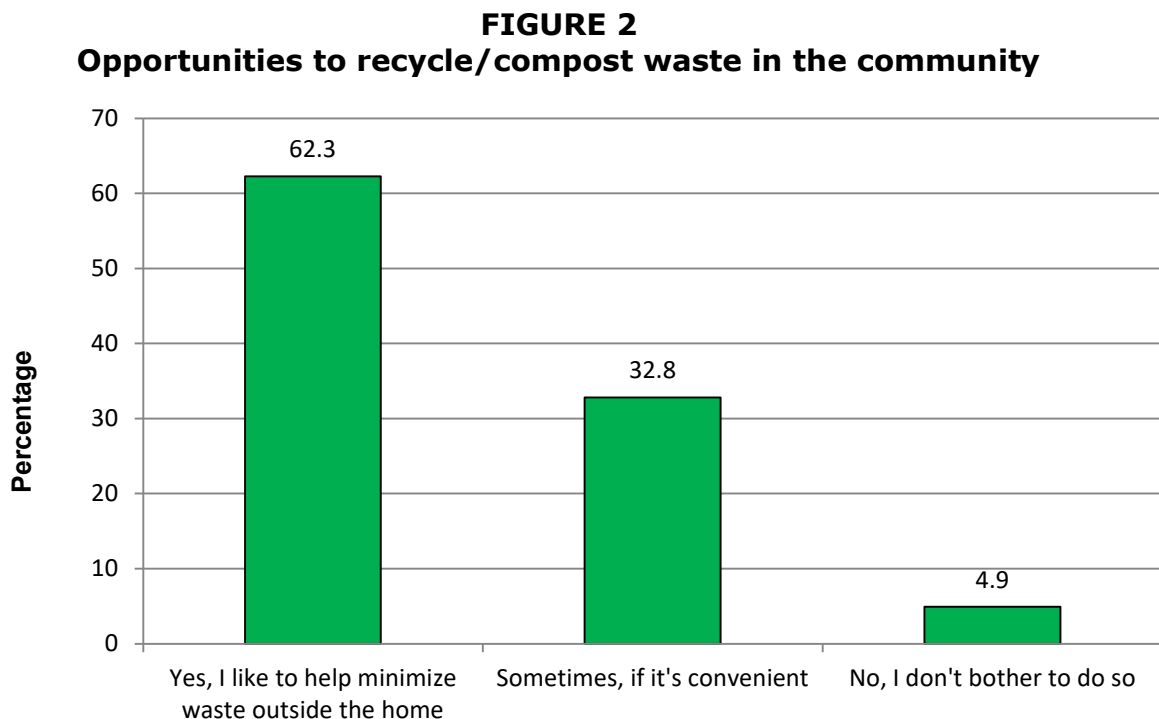
FIGURE 1
How well do you personally sort waste?



When asked whether they would be willing to change personal habits to reduce waste going to the landfill, the majority (86.3%) would be willing to do so, while 6.6% would not. The remaining 9.1% were not sure.

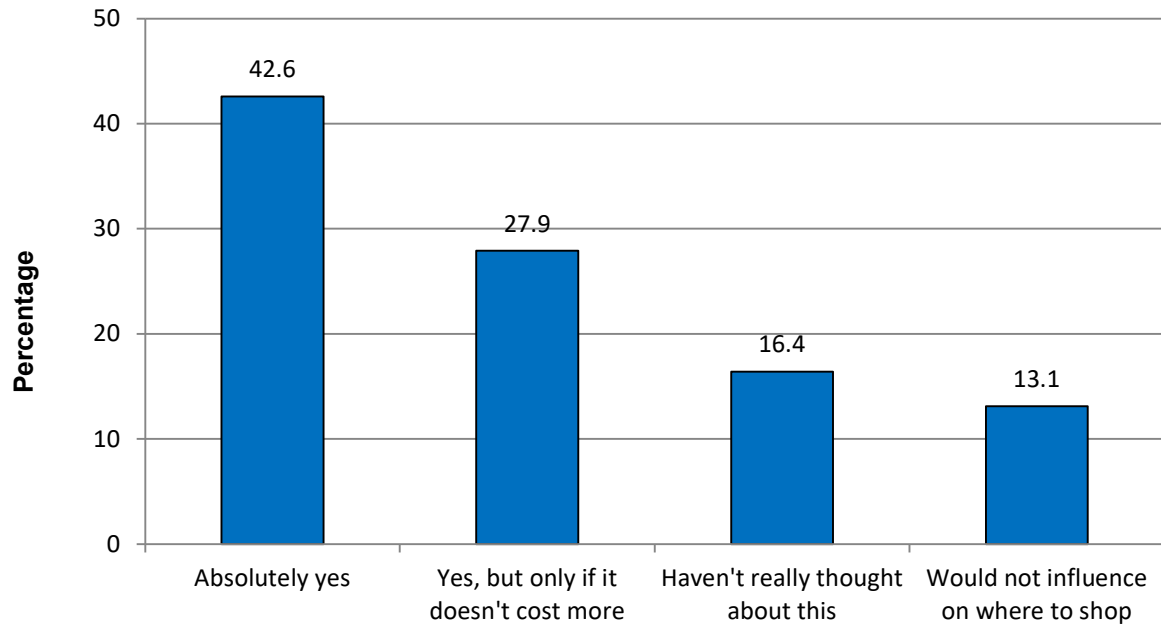
Respondents were then asked about the location of recycling and organic bins throughout the community. Overall, 93.4% support that these bins (and the routine associated with sorting materials) should be the same everywhere. Only 3.3% felt that it was too much work to separate garbage, while 3.3% of teens just didn't care.

All respondents were asked whether they looked for opportunities to recycle/compost your waste outside of their home (such as within a mall, the library and other places within the community). It can be seen from Figure 2 that the majority will do this, while an additional third will do this if it is convenient. Only a small percentage will not bother to do this, even if it is easily available.



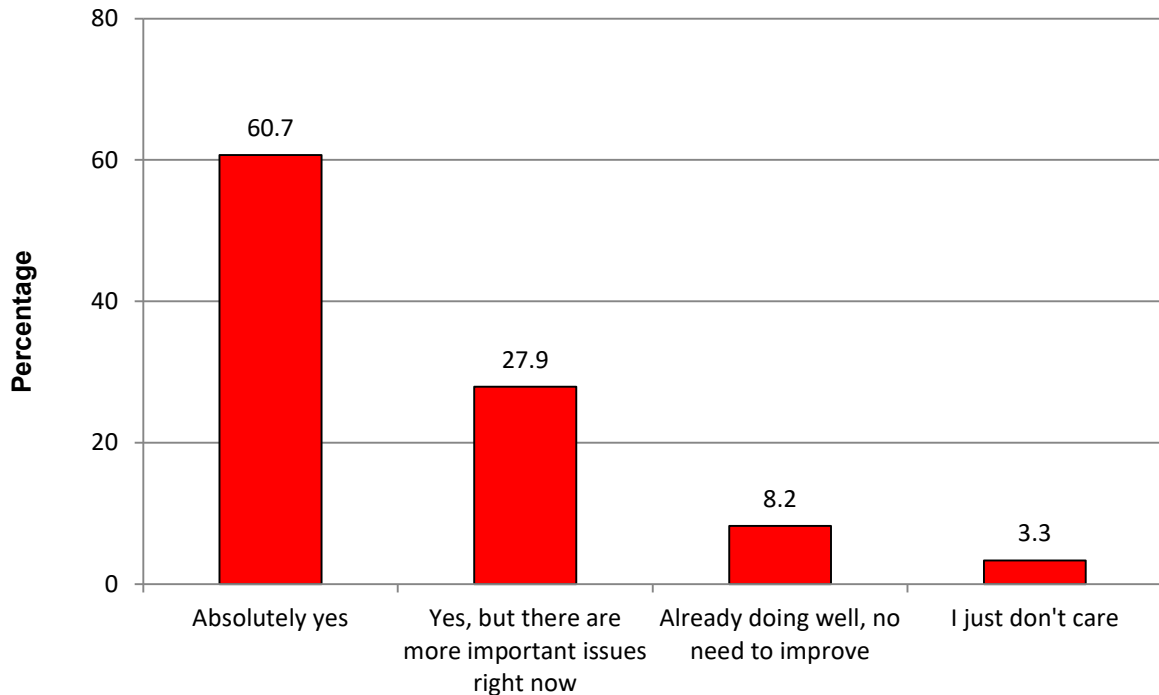
Respondents were then asked if they would prefer to shop at businesses that have eco-friendly options such as compostable plates, paper straws and so on. It can be seen from Figure 3 that there's a tempered, though positive response to this.

FIGURE 3
Support for Eco-Friendly Businesses



The last question respondents were asked was if they thought that Strathcona County should try to be a leader in waste management. From the teens' perspective, it can be seen from Figure 4 that there's a positive response to this.

FIGURE 4
Should Strathcona County try to be a leader in waste management?

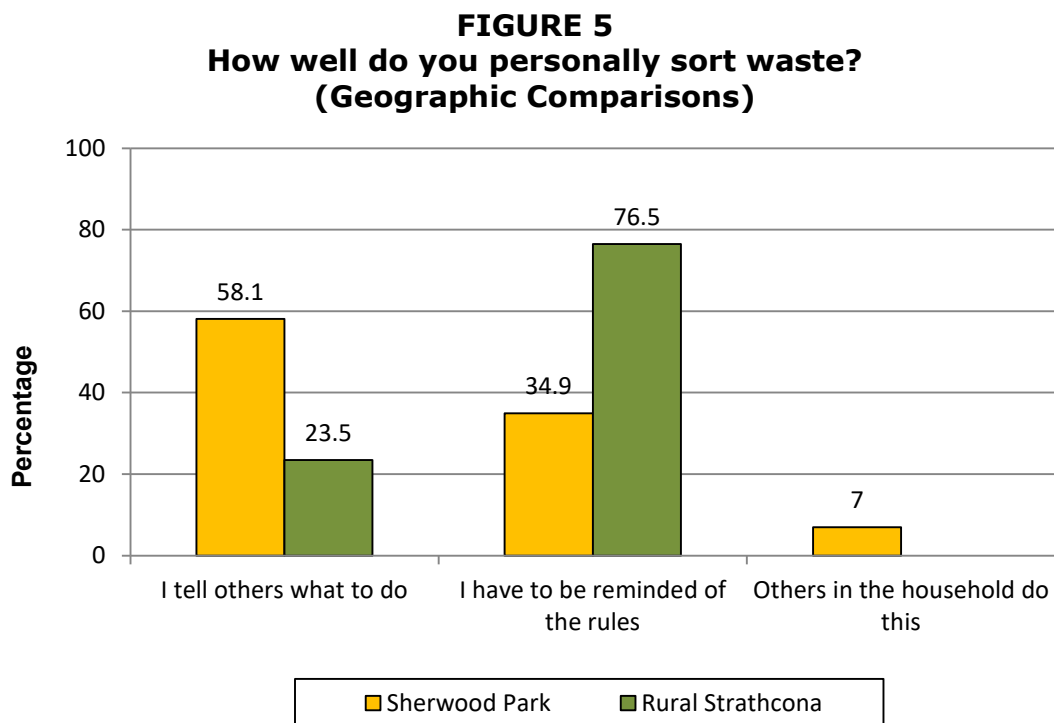


B. Results Based on Demographic Differences

Additional analysis was done to determine if there were potential differences with respect to gender and geographic location with respect to all the questions asked. There were no differences seen between males and females with any of the questions asked in this survey. With respect to where respondents lived, however, there was one question where responses between those living in Sherwood Park and those living in rural Strathcona differed – This was with the question *how would you rate how well you personally sort waste (organics, recycling and garbage) in your home?* It can

be seen in Figure 5 that teens living in Sherwood Park were taking responsibility to handle waste in their household compared to teens living in rural Strathcona. Rural Strathcona teens had a greater tendency to sort waste after being reminded to do so compared to those living in Sherwood Park.

A follow up chi-square analysis determined that there was a relationship between where teens lived and their patterns for sorting waste ($\chi^2= 8.72, 2 \text{ df}, p=.013$).



None of the other questions showed potential significant differences between waste management patterns of teens based on where they lived.