

2015-2016 Zero Waste Awareness Research

High Level Findings

CITYWIDE

- Awareness of the program is broad: most say that they have heard of Zero Waste (79%), have access to all three types of bins (85%), and know how to use them (93%).
- There is significant confusion around what to do with plastics, soiled food in its original package, as well as with food-soiled paper and pizza boxes.
- **Confusion leads to items going in the black bin, and there is a very widespread mistaken belief (77%) that trash in the black bin is sorted to remove recyclables before going to a landfill.**
- Practical concerns about smell, mess, and pests are primary deterrents to using the green bin

RESIDENTS

- About half of those polled are confident that the City can meet a goal of 100% diversion by 2020.
 - Younger, more affluent residents are less aware and more skeptical of the program.
- **A majority of residents (52%) say they understand the guidelines but do not always follow them.**
 - Younger residents, communities of color, and low-income households are particularly likely to fall into this category.
- People in multi-unit buildings that are particularly large or require them to use trash chutes have lower levels of understanding and participation.
- **Are motivated by practical assistance like free compostable bags, sealable pails, or bin cleaning by the City.**

SMALL BUSINESS

- The self-reported rate of green bin use was much lower than for blue bins.
- Though the subsample of property managers was small, many acknowledge not educating their tenants, and few report that their tenants are using the green bin correctly or sufficiently.
- Businesses in office and other multi-unit buildings reported less access to green bins, and lower rate of using them.
- 50% say that they are aware of the Mandatory Recycling and Composting Ordinance and the associated penalty. However, most say that “the law” is a very important reason why they recycle, and those aware of the penalty participate at notably higher rates

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- San Franciscans have an exceptionally high knowledge of what goes in what bin...but are not always choosing to do the right thing.
- Increased outreach is needed to the business community around the mandatory ordinance
- Multi-tenant buildings create significant barriers to participation, whether from lack of service access, education opportunities and feedback loop opportunities