



# 2024 Hennepin County Community Recycling Opinion Survey

Final Report, August 5, 2024





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# 01 Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

The 2024 Hennepin County Community Recycling Opinion Survey evaluated community opinion, attitudes, and behavior with respect to solid waste management. HDR, a consulting firm, designed the survey instrument and sampling approach. Telephone-based data collection was implemented by the polling company Oraclepoll on June 12-26, 2024. A sample of 500 County residents responded to the survey. HDR weighted the survey results to create a representative sample and analyzed the data. Following is a summary of key findings from the survey:

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**1. There are notable differences in satisfaction with the cost of trash and recycling across income and race/ethnicity.**

The results found that residents from lower income households were less satisfied with the cost rates for trash and recycling than those from higher income households. The results also indicate that those who identified as Black or African America, or Hispanic/Latino were less satisfied with the cost of trash than those who identified as White. And those who identified as Black or African American were less satisfied with the cost of recycling than those who identified as White.

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**2. Use of the recycling drop-off locations is low.**

A majority of survey participants report that they have never used a recycling drop-off location for most of the materials accepted. Fluorescent bulbs are the least recycled at drop-off locations (81% of respondents reported never dropping these items off), while old paint is the most frequently recycled (only 38% of respondents reported never dropping off old paint). Lower-income residents were more likely to report never using recycling drop-off locations.

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**3. Ease of finding information about disposal is associated with race/ethnicity.**

The results indicate that participants who identify as White are more likely than any other race or ethnicity to find it easy to locate information about trash and recycling disposal.

# Executive Summary

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## **4. Residents who use curbside organics recycling are satisfied with the frequency and cost of collection.**

42% of surveyed residents use the curbside organics recycling program as their primary means of disposing of food waste. Of those, 80% indicated that they were satisfied both with the frequency of collection and the cost of the program.

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## **5. Residents are generally positive about organics recycling.**

Overall, Hennepin County residents are positive with respect to organics recycling. More than 70% of residents find it easy to do, believe it is a high-impact way to reduce waste or feel that it should be required of all residents. However, those who do not use organics recycling were more likely to find it unpleasant or expensive.

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## **6. Not all Commissioner Districts participate in Organics Recycling at the same rate.**

There are some differences in use of curbside organics recycling by Commissioner Districts, but awareness of the availability of organics recycling does not differ across Commissioner Districts. Some differences are expected given variations in programming, including how long organics recycling has been available, what type of program is available (i.e., curbside collection or drop-off site), whether the city contracts for service or not, whether programs are opt-in or voluntary participation, and the level of education and outreach efforts.

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## **7. Residents are mostly supportive of policies that would support waste reduction.**

Residents are generally supportive of policy measures that would reduce waste in Hennepin County. Residents are most supportive of allowing cities to contract for collection of recyclables and trash to reduce cost (84% support) and to reduce the number of trucks on the road (87% support). They are less supportive however of punitive measures and policies that would prohibit disposing certain materials in the trash. Punitive measures and prohibitions are generally opposed by lower income residents, while fee discounts to encourage waste recycling is strongly supported by lower income residents.




There was no association between Commissioner District, race/ethnicity, or gender on policy support.

# 02 Survey Overview



# Survey Goals

The 2024 Hennepin County Community Recycling Opinion Survey had the following goals:

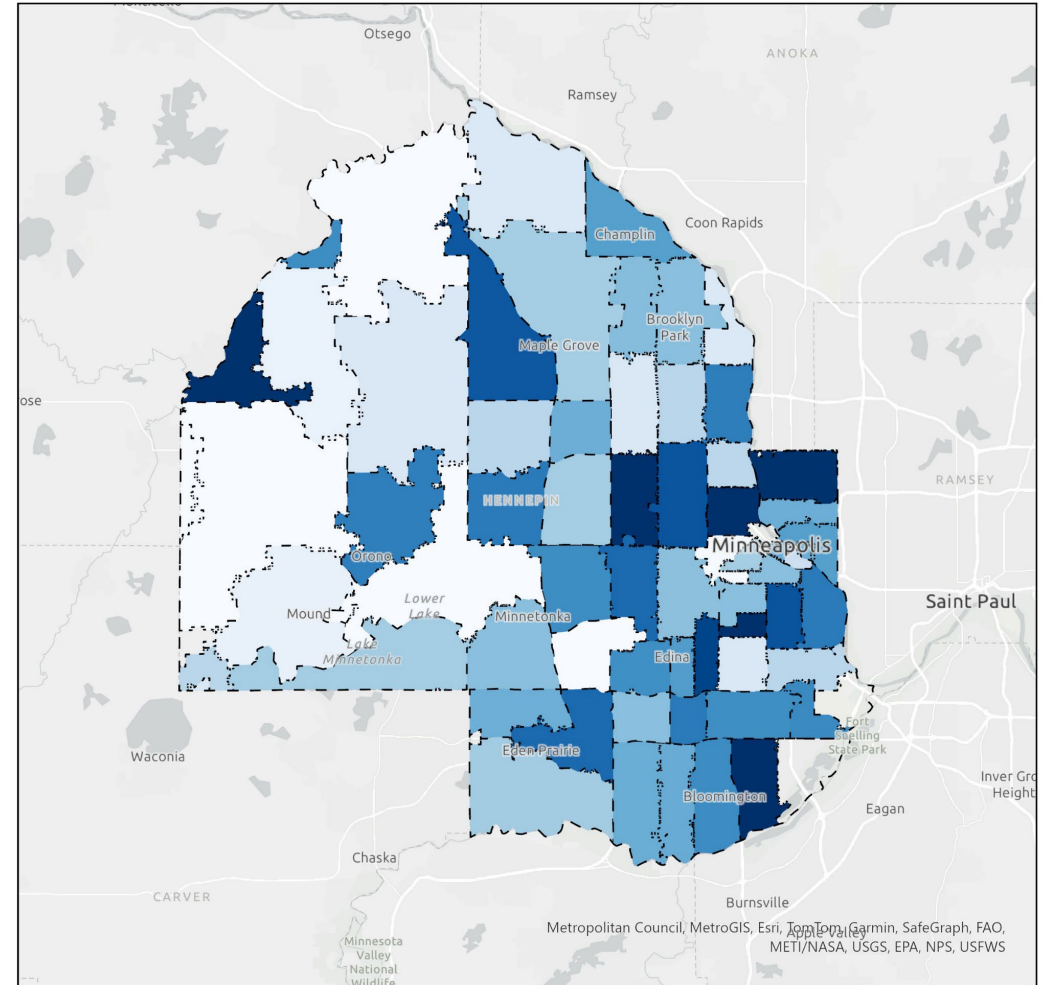
-  Assess current participation or interest/readiness to implement specific waste reduction actions.
-  Assess level of community support for policy that would accelerate a zero-waste future.
-  Establish a benchmark of attitudes, understanding, and behaviors that can serve as the basis for tracking changes over time.



# Sampling Strategy

**Proportional stratified random sampling** was carried out such that the number of respondents per zip code was proportional to the number of households in each of the 66 zip codes within Hennepin County. Further weighting was used to bring the sample in alignment with the number of households in each zip code. The overall weighted sample resident proportions correspond with population proportions and are shown on the following map.

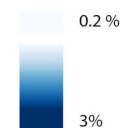
Iterative proportional fitting was used to develop survey weights that align the sample with the 2020 Census and American Community Survey data describing the distribution of households across zip codes and with respect to the distribution of gender, race/ethnicity, and income for Hennepin County.



Surveyed Zip Codes



Proportion of Sample





# Survey Sample

500 surveys with adults 18+ years of age were completed by telephone interview, using CATI software, June 12-26, 2024. The overall survey maximum margin of error was +/- 4.4%.

The survey questionnaire was ~10 minutes in length and asked 45 multiple choice and multiple answer questions, in addition to 4 demographic questions.

The survey sample was weighted to match the county-wide distribution of population for zip-code, gender, household income, and race/ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Weighted Sample %
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.2%
Asian	7.4%
Black or African American	14%
Hispanic or Latino	7.7%
Middle Eastern or North African	4.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<0.1%
Some other ethnicity/Unknown	4.1%
White or European American	60%

Gender	Weighted Sample %
Female	50%
Male	48%
Non-binary or No Response	1.2%

Household Income	Weighted Sample %
Less than \$50,000	21%
\$50,000-\$74,999	15%
\$75,000-\$99,999	13%
\$100,000-\$149,999	18%
\$150,000-\$199,999	11%
\$200,000 or more	17%
Prefer not to Answer	5%

Dwelling Type	Weighted Sample %
Single Family Home	65%
Apartment or Condo	25%
Townhouse or Duplex	8.5%
Prefer not to answer	5.5%

# 03 Community Experience and Participation— Trash and Recycling



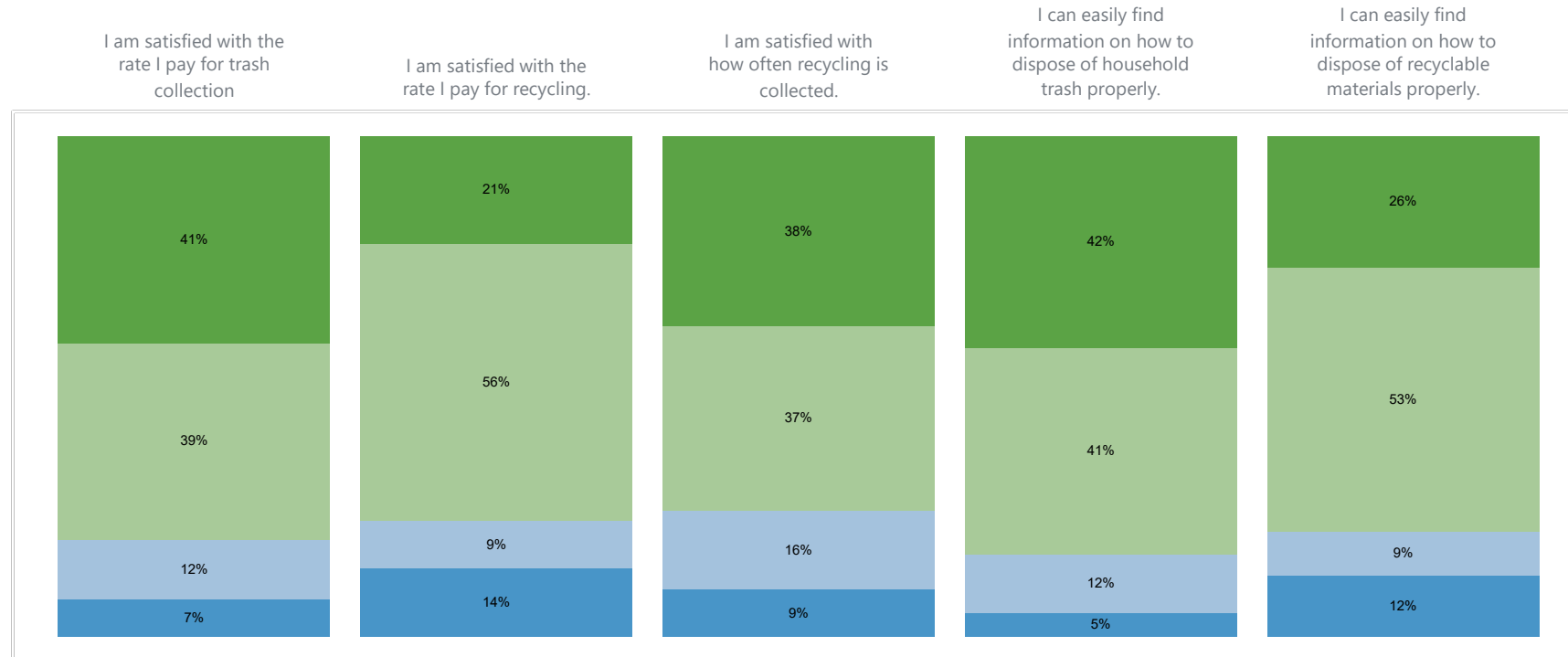
# Satisfaction With Trash and Recycling Collection

Overall, a **high proportion of residents** are **satisfied** with their **trash and recycling** in terms of frequency, cost, and availability of information.

However, by comparison, residents are **slightly less satisfied** with the **recycling** collection programs than the trash collection programs.

We'd like to hear about your experience with trash and recycling collection. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

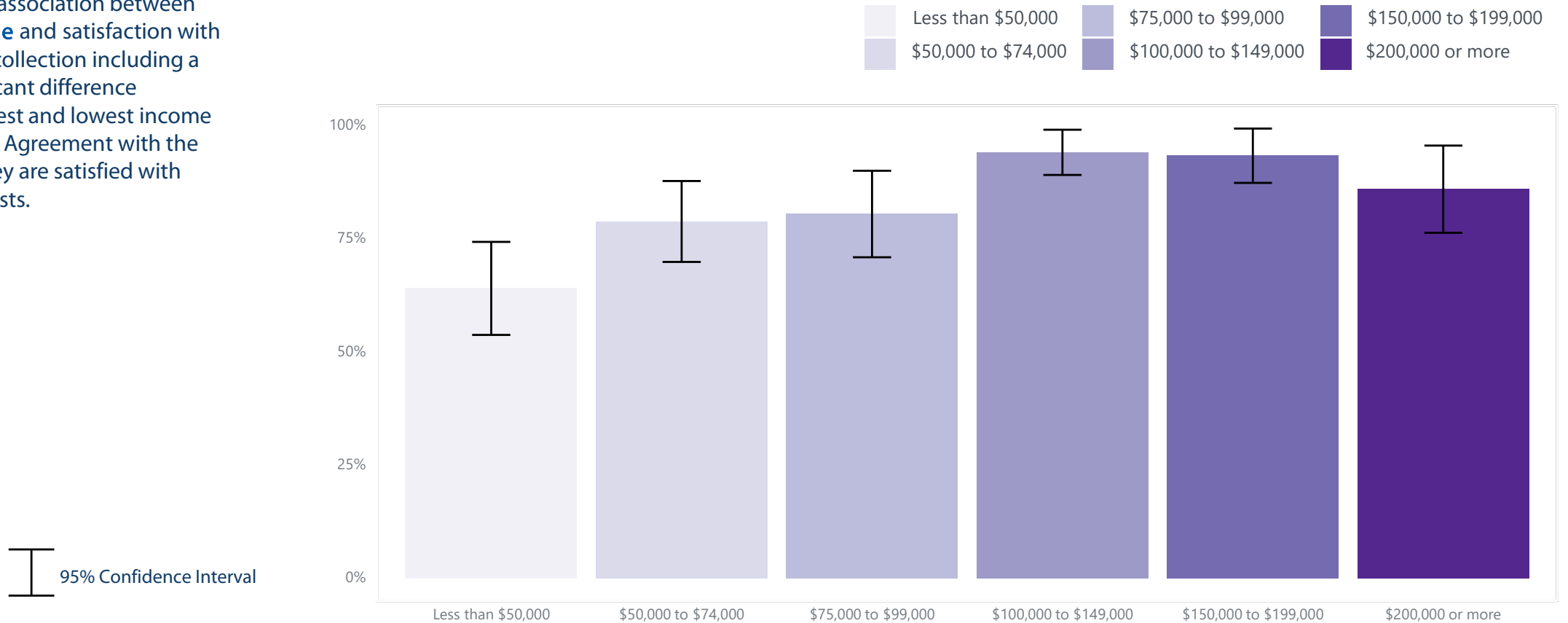


Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

# Satisfaction With Trash Collection Cost by Income

There is a modest association between **household income** and satisfaction with the **cost of trash** collection including a statistically significant difference between the highest and lowest income groups in terms of Agreement with the statement that they are satisfied with trash collection costs.

Strongly Agree or Agree that I am satisfied with the rate I pay for trash collection



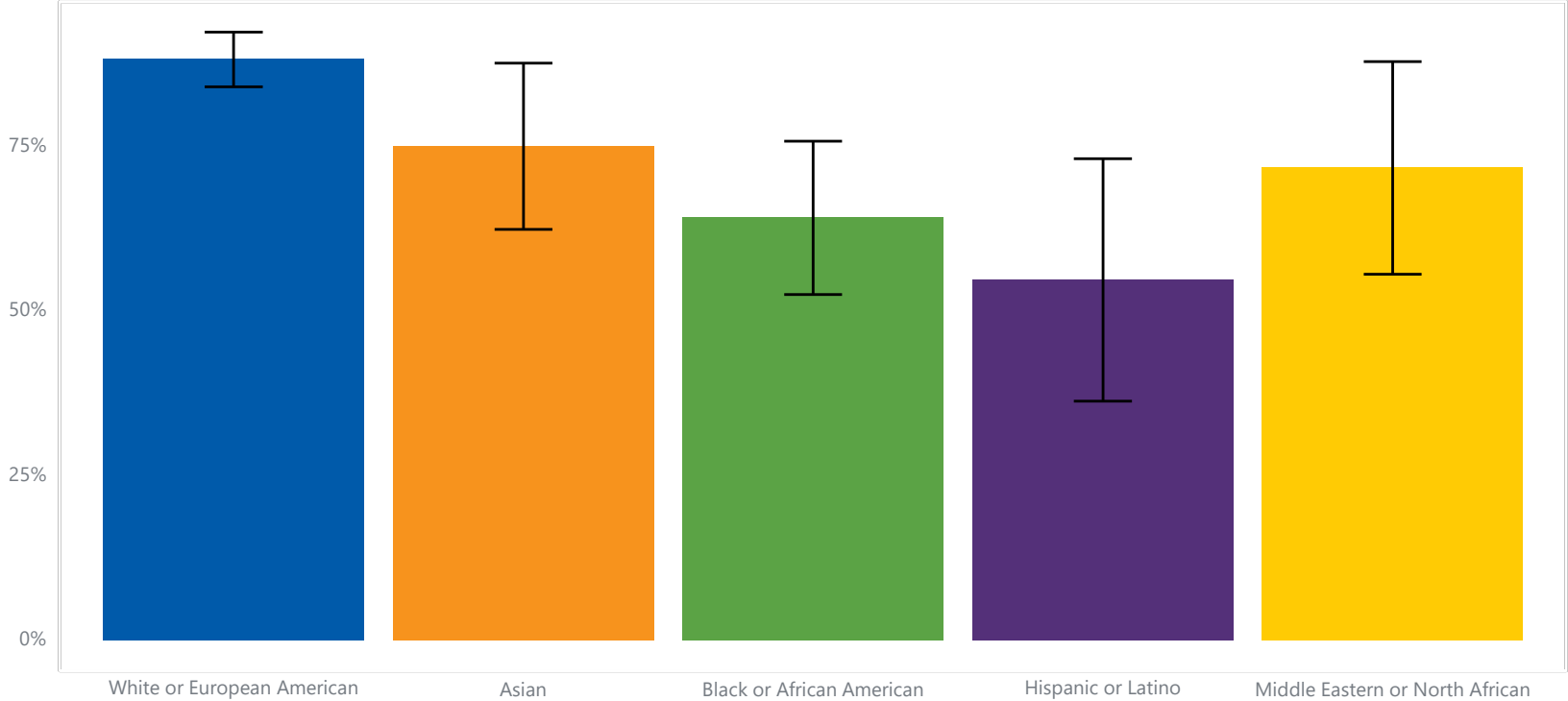


# Satisfaction With Trash Collection Cost by Race/Ethnicity

Respondents who identified as Black or African American or Hispanic/Latino were **less likely** than White residents to Strongly Agree or Agree that they were satisfied with the **rate they pay for trash** collection.

Strongly Agree or Agree I am satisfied with the rate I pay for trash collection

White or European American Asian Black or African American Hispanic or Latino Middle Eastern or North African



95% Confidence Interval

# Satisfaction With Recycling Cost by Income

There is a relatively strong association between household income and satisfaction with the cost of recycling, such that **higher income residents** are generally more **satisfied with cost** of recycling collection.

Strongly Agree or Agree that I am satisfied with the rate I pay for recycling.



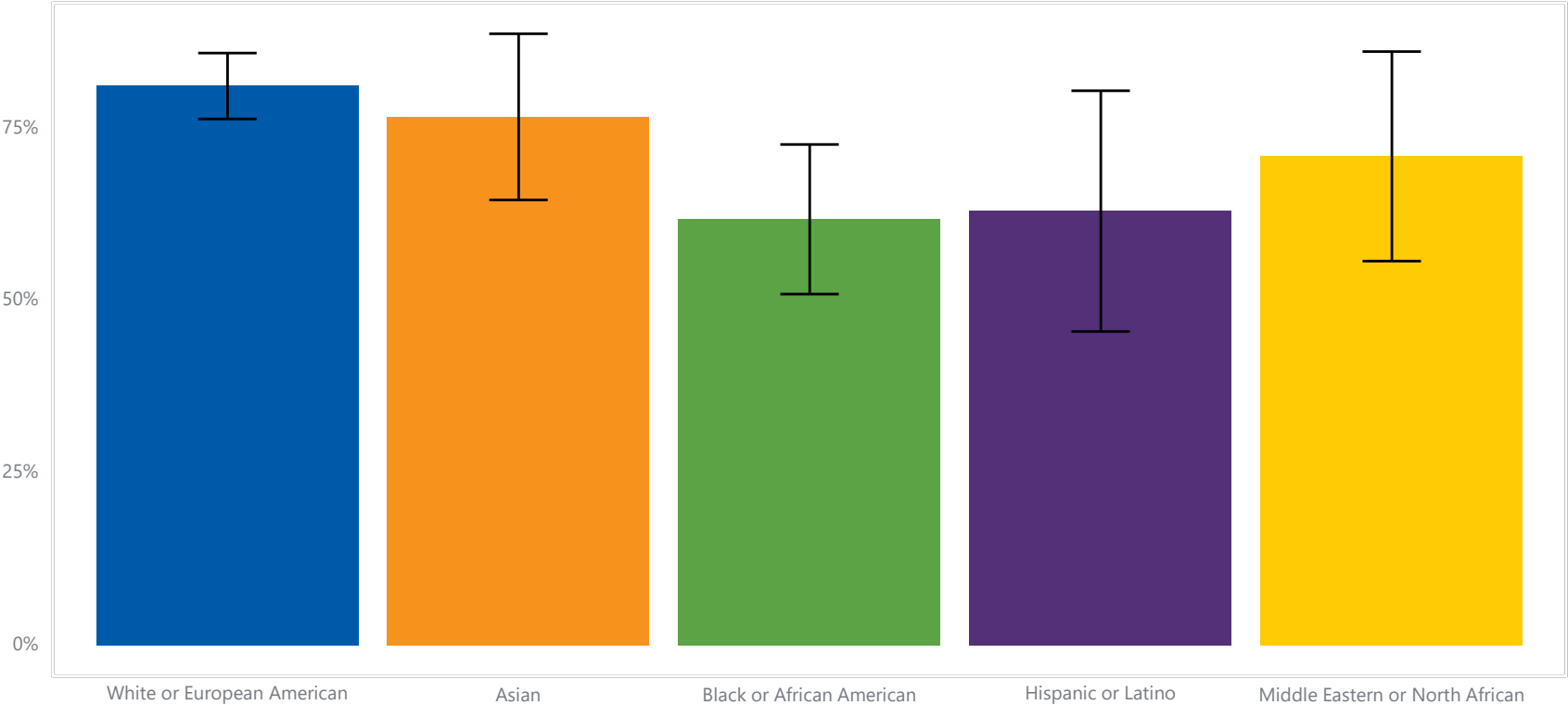


# Satisfaction With Recycling Collection Cost by Race/Ethnicity

Respondents who identified as Black or African American were **less likely** than White identifying residents to Strongly Agree or Agree that they were satisfied with the **rate they pay** for recycling.

Strongly Agree or Agree that I am satisfied with the rate I pay for recycling.

White or European American Asian Black or African American Hispanic or Latino Middle Eastern or North African

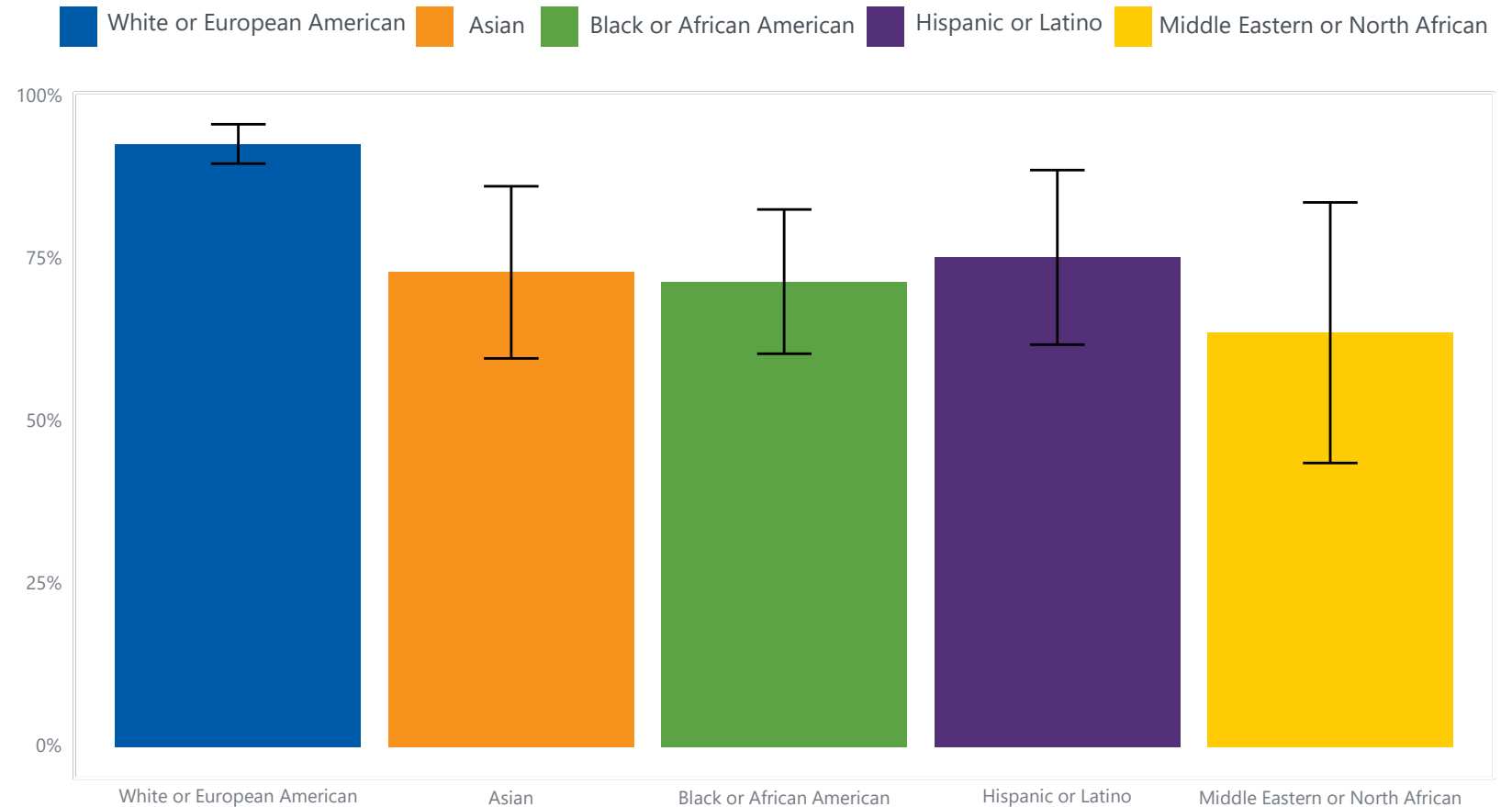


95% Confidence Interval

# Finding Information on Proper Trash Disposal

Respondents who identified as Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, or Middle Eastern or North African were **less likely** than White identifying residents to Strongly Agree or Agree that information on proper disposal of household **trash** was easy to find.

**Strongly Agree or Agree** that I can easily find information on how to dispose of household trash properly.



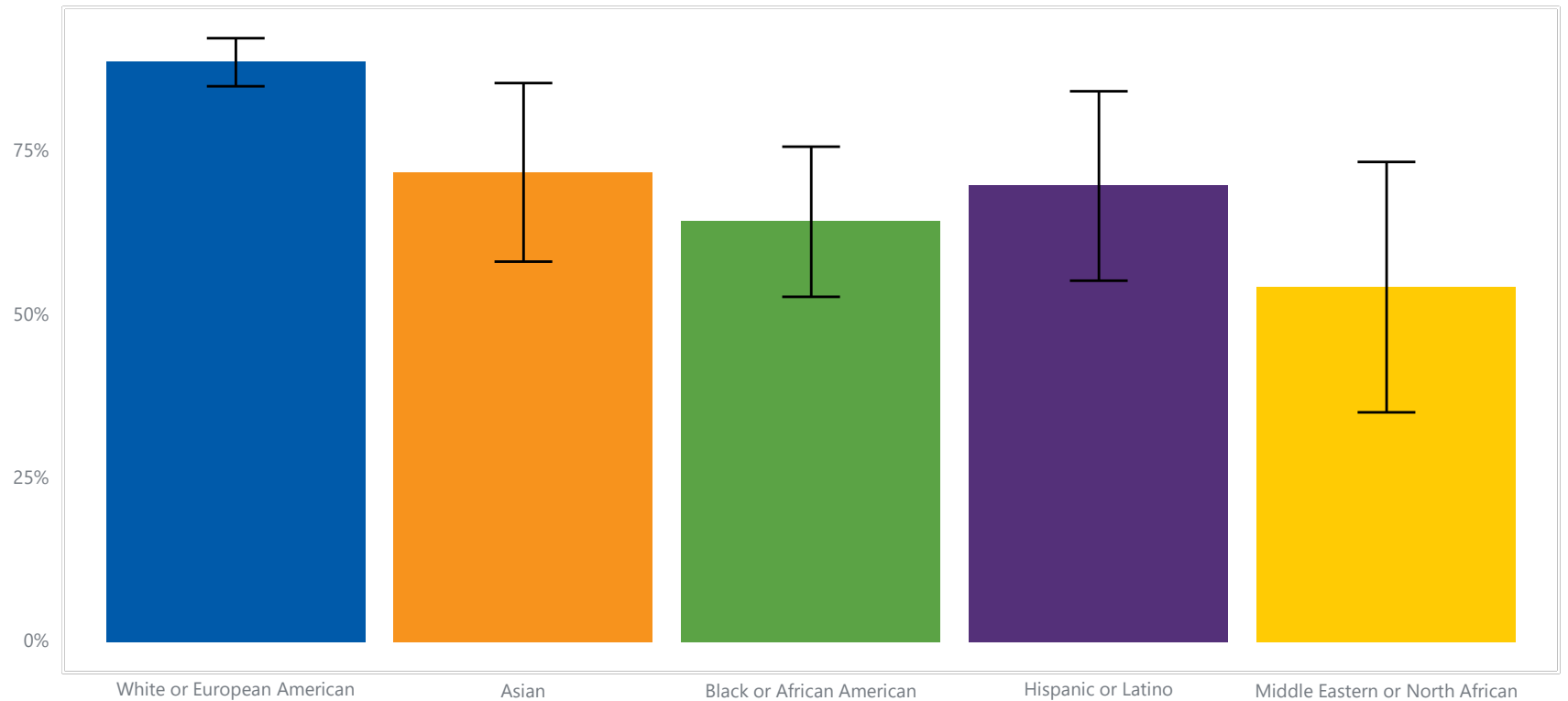
 95% Confidence Interval

# Finding Information on Proper Recycling Disposal

Respondents who identified as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, or Middle Eastern or North African were **less likely** than White or European Americans to Strongly Agree or Agree that information on proper disposal of **recyclable materials** was easy to find.

**Strongly Agree or Agree** that I can easily find information on how to dispose of recyclable materials properly.

■ White or European American ■ Asian ■ Black or African American ■ Hispanic or Latino ■ Middle Eastern or North African



┆ 95% Confidence Interval

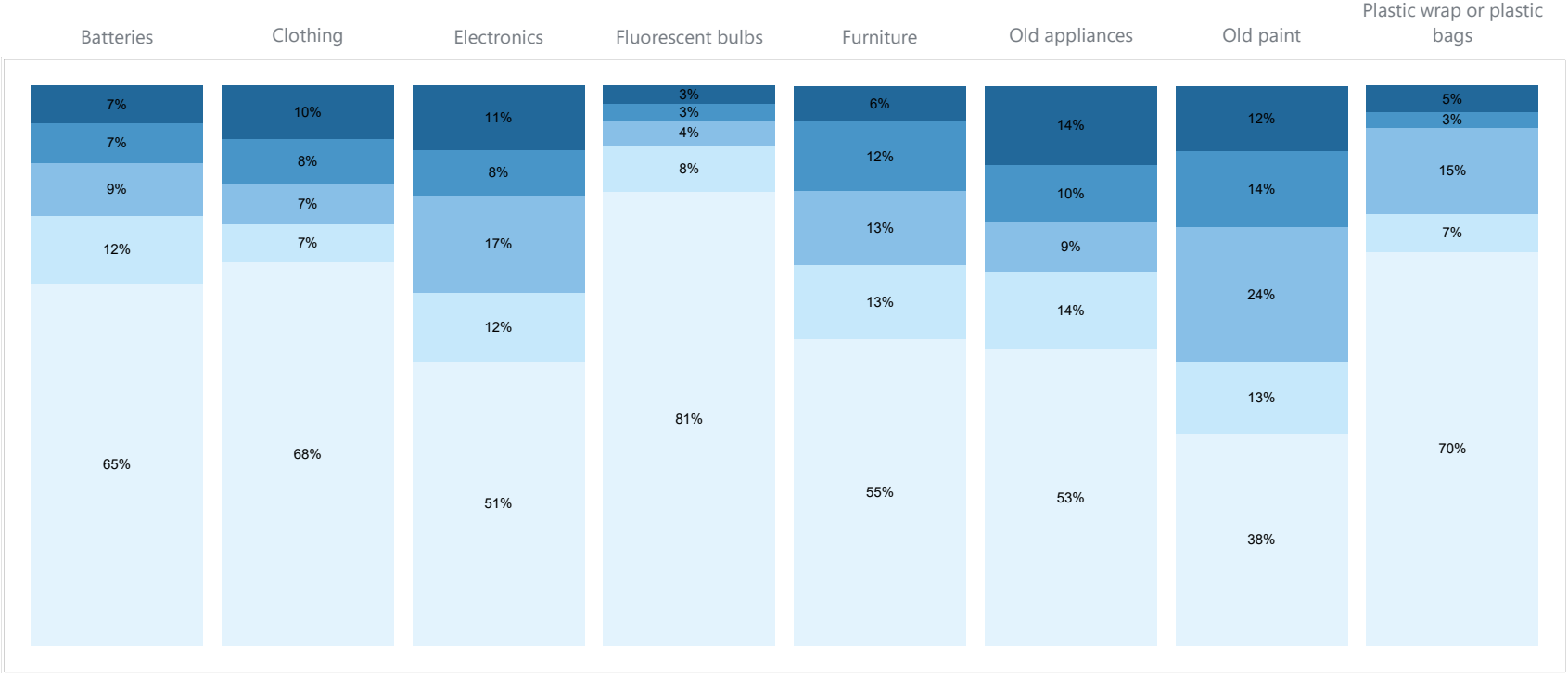
# Recycling Drop-off Use

Recycling drop-off locations are infrequently used by residents, if at all. The majority of residents **never recycle household items** at recycling drop-off locations, with the exception of old paint, which 63% of respondents have dropped off at least rarely.

Fluorescent bulbs, plastic bags, clothing, and batteries were **least often dropped off** for recycling, with respectively 81%, 70%, 68%, and 65% of respondents saying they never dropped these items off.

Please indicate how often you drop off the following for recycling at locations that accept these materials.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

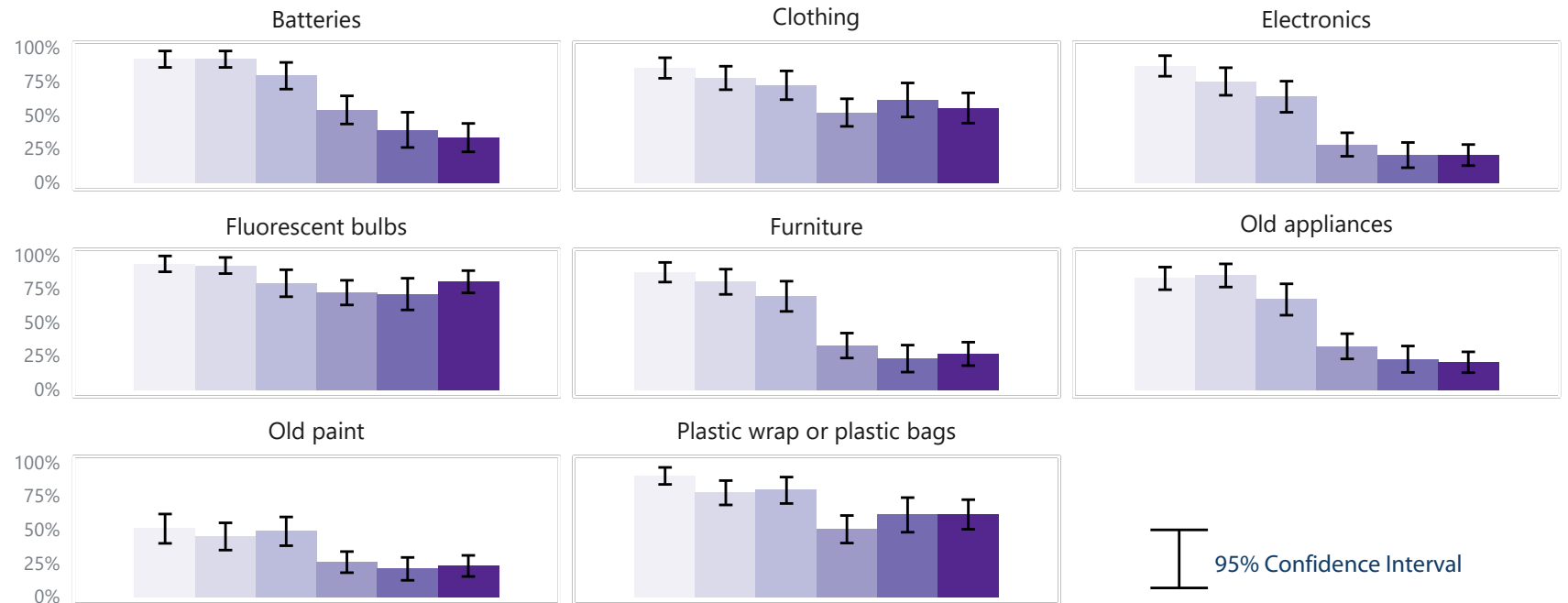
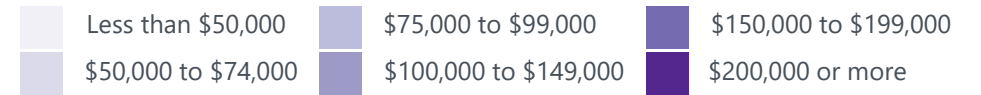


# Recycling Drop-Off Use

**Lower income residents** were more likely to report that they **never use drop-off locations** for all of the items asked about, compared to higher income residents.

There is no statistical difference between race/ethnicities with respect to whether a respondent reported that they never use drop-off locations for any of the items.

Please indicate how often you drop off the following for recycling at locations that accept these materials.  
Response = Never.



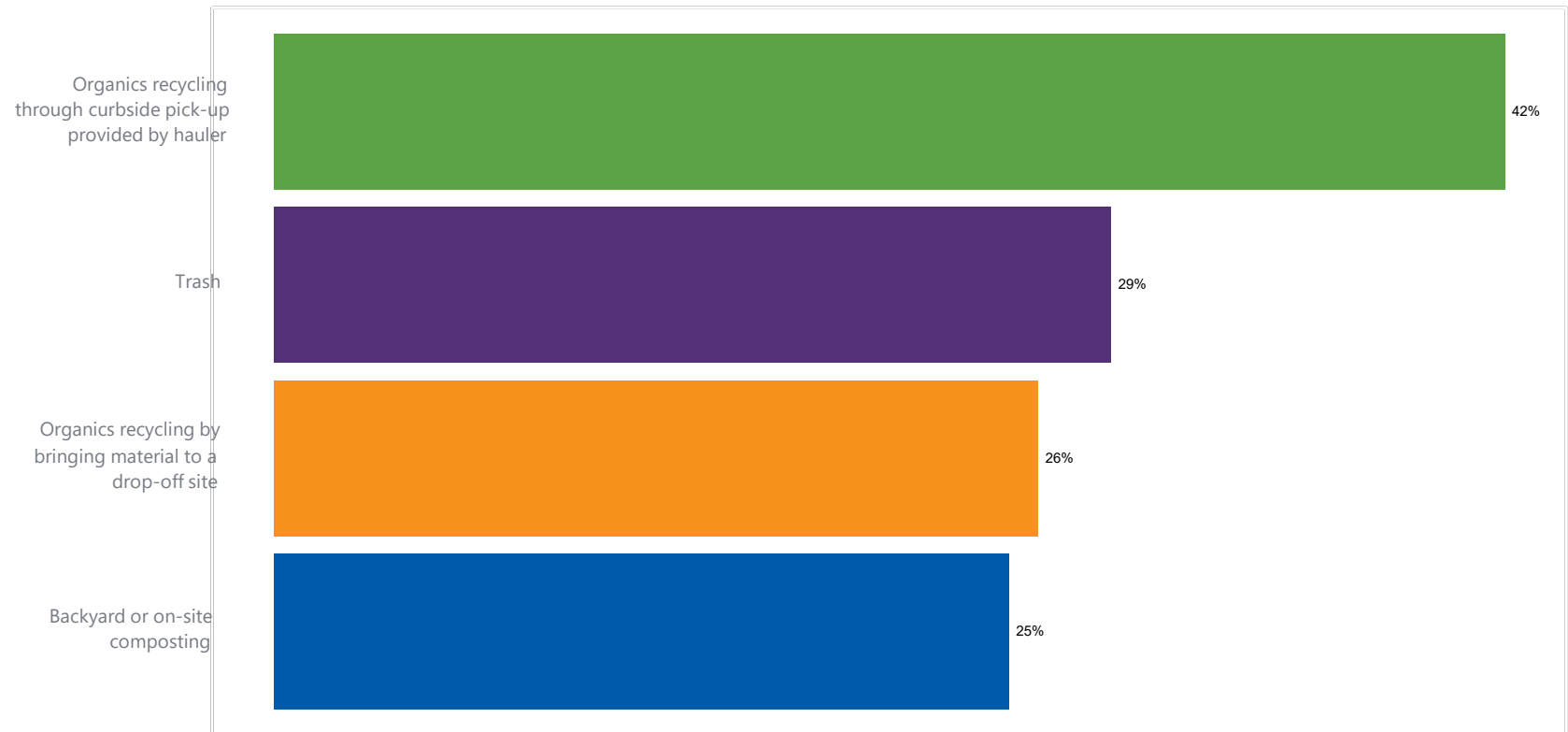
# 04 Community Experience and Participation— Organics Recycling

# Disposal of Organics

**Curbside organics recycling** is the **most common** means of disposing organic materials among residents (42%), while **backyard or on-site composting** was the **least common** (25%).

**29%** of residents use the **trash** as their main outlet for disposing of organic materials.

How do you primarily dispose of food waste and organic materials such as food soiled paper and other compostable items? Please indicate all that apply. N = 500 respondents.



# Awareness of Organics Recycling (Non-Users)

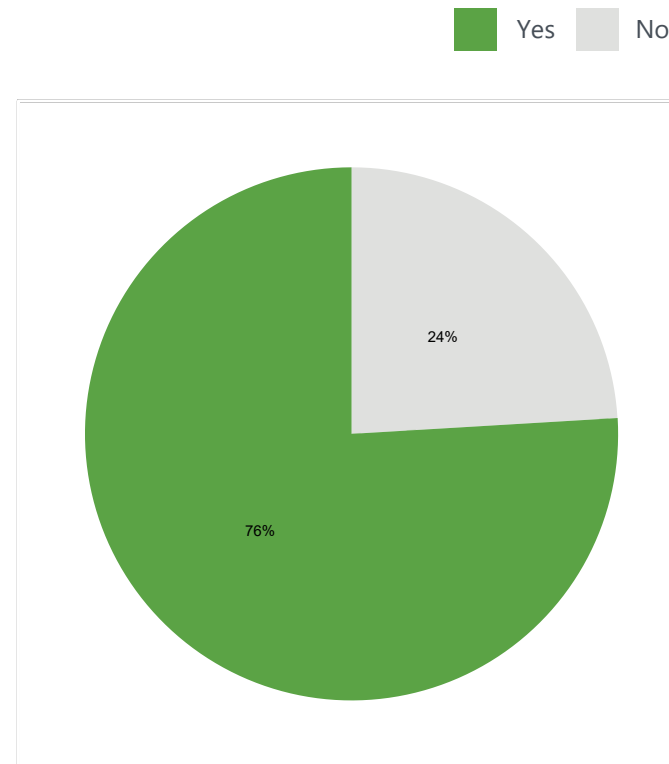
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**42%** of residents **use** the Organics Recycling Curbside Program.

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Out of the 58% of residents who do not use the Organics Recycling Curbside Program, **76% said they are aware** of a curbside organics recycling program available to their household. This would suggest that lack of awareness is not a primary barrier for resident participation in organics recycling.

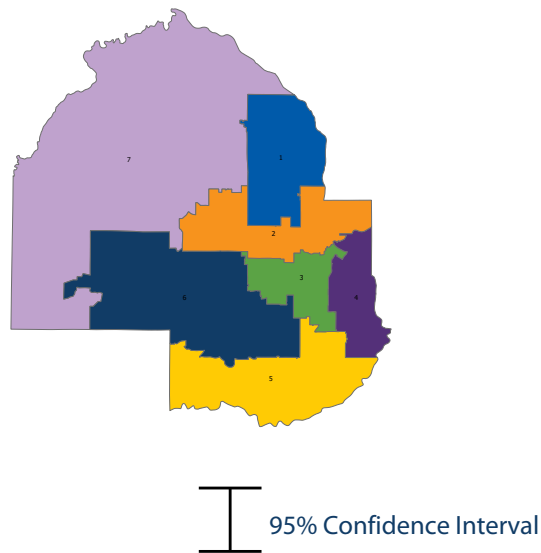
To the best of your knowledge, is curbside pick-up of organics materials, such as food waste, food-soiled paper, and certified compostable products, available for your household? N = 289 residents who do not participate in curbside organics recycling.



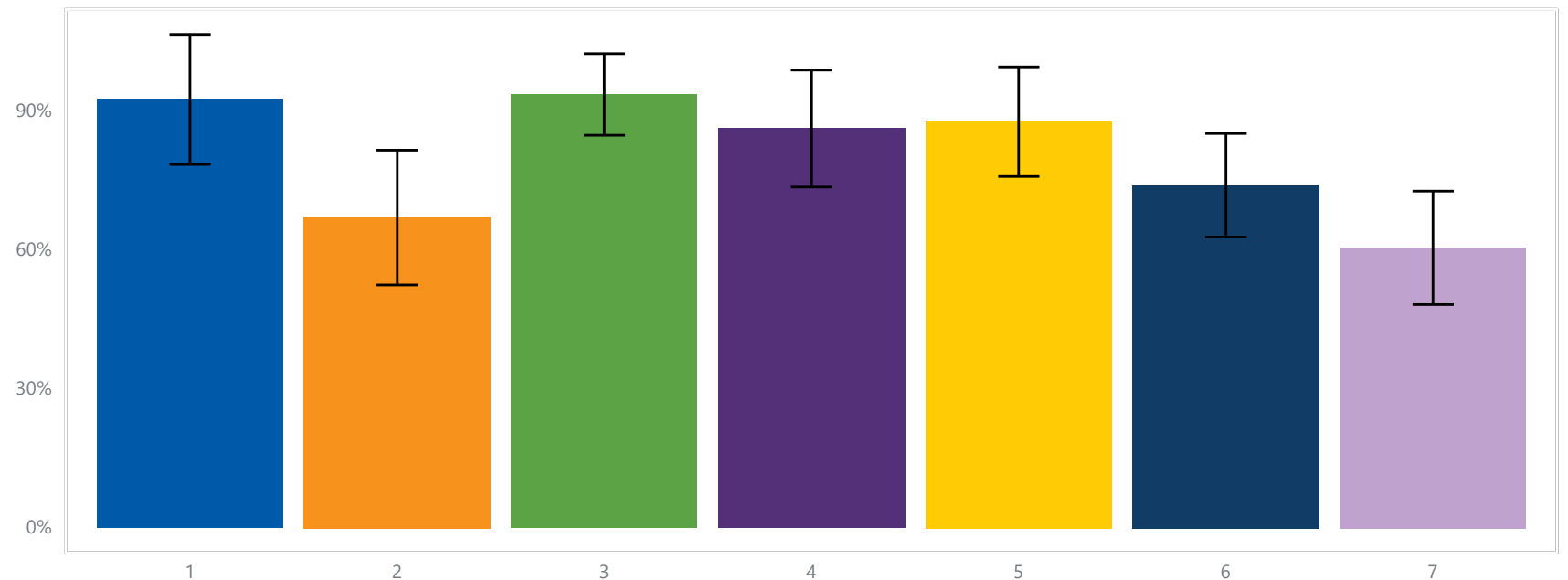


# Awareness of Organics Recycling (Non-Users) by District

Across Commissioner Districts, there is **high awareness** of Organics Recycling curbside pick-up programs among non-users. Differences in awareness across Districts were mostly insignificant statistically.

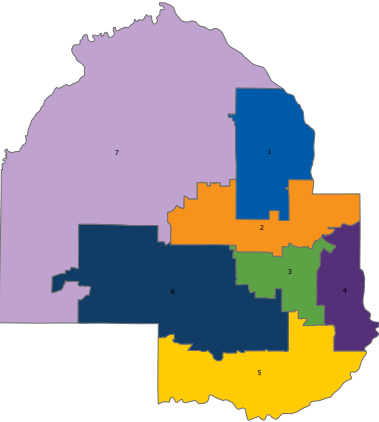


To the best of your knowledge, is curbside pick-up of organics materials, such as food waste, food-soiled paper, and certified compostable products, available for your household? Of N=289 residents who do not participate, proportion who are aware of curbside organics program.



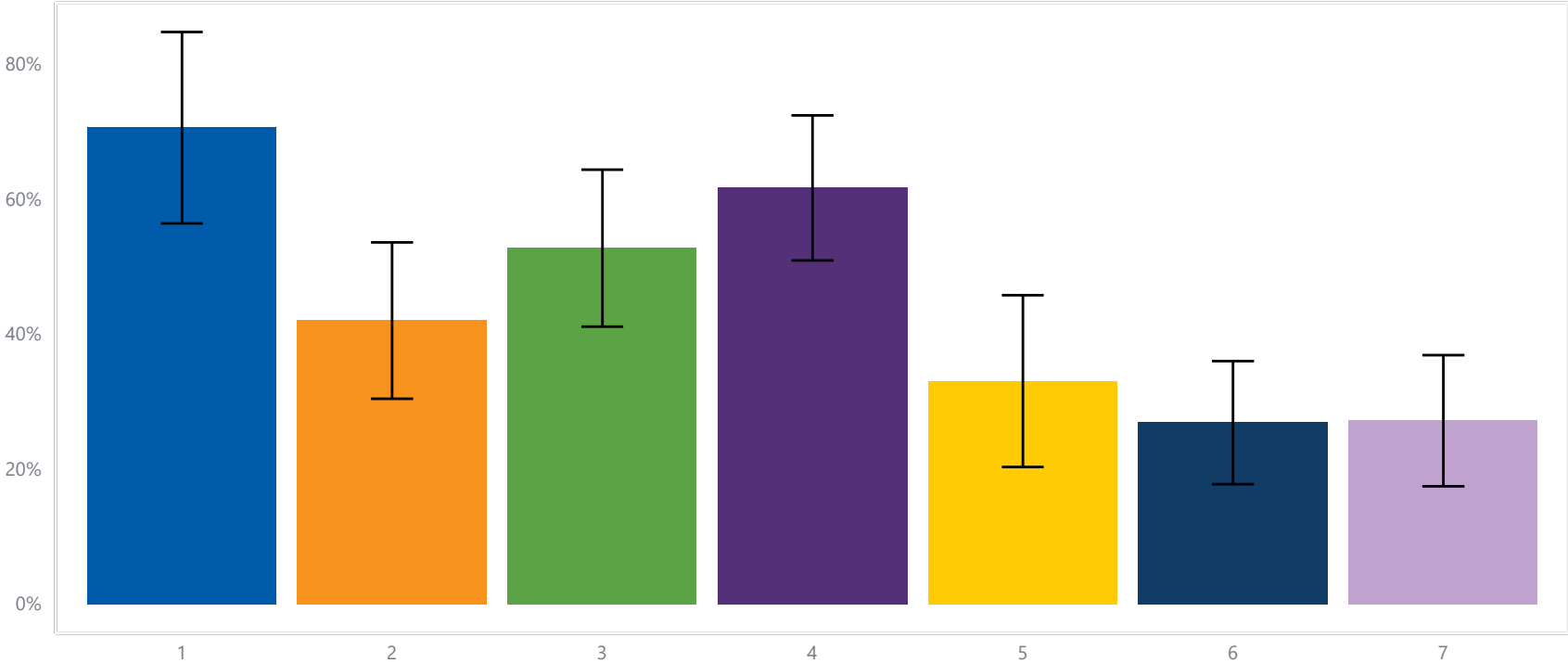
# Curbside Organics Recycling (Users) by Commissioner Districts

There were **statistically significant differences** across Commissioner Districts in use of curbside organics recycling as the primary mode of food waste disposal. Respondents who live in Commissioner Districts 1 and 4 self-reported relatively higher participation rates in curbside recycling than residents who live in Districts 5, 6, and 7.



95% Confidence Interval

Organics recycling through curbside pick-up provided by hauler. N=211 respondents who affirmed use of curbside organics recycling as their primary mode of food waste disposal.



# Satisfaction with Organics Recycling (Users)

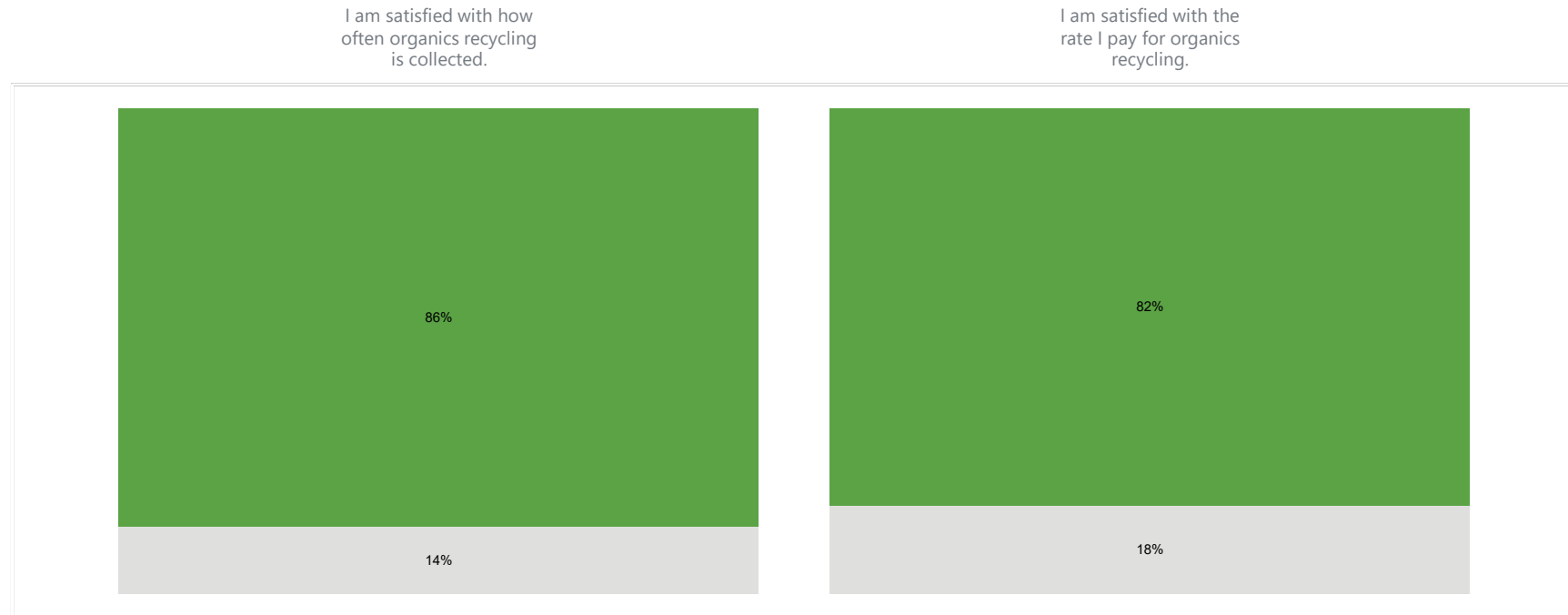
42% of residents **participate** in the organics recycling program.

More than 80% of these respondents indicated that they were **satisfied** both with the frequency and cost of the program.

There was **no significant difference in responses** across Commissioner Districts, Race/Ethnicity, or Income levels in satisfaction with the frequency or cost of organics recycling.

We would like to hear about your experience with curbside organic recycling of food waste and compostable materials. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. N = 211 residents who affirmed participation in curbside organics recycling.

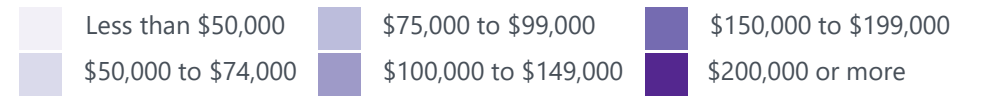
Yes No



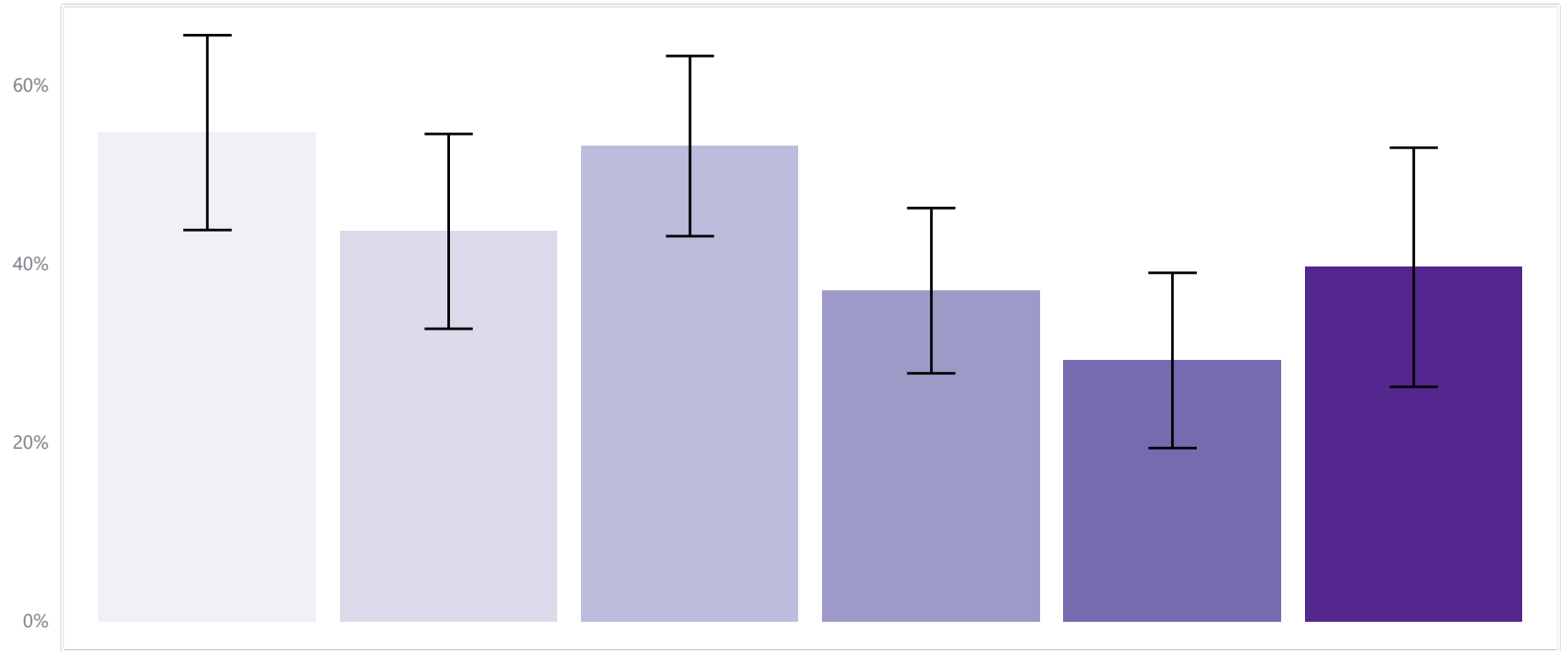
# Curbside Organics Recycling by Income Groups

**Household Income** is generally **not associated with use** of curbside organics recycling as the primary mode of food waste disposal.

Organics recycling through curbside pick-up provided by hauler.  
N = 211 residents who affirmed participation in curbside organics recycling.



 95% Confidence Interval





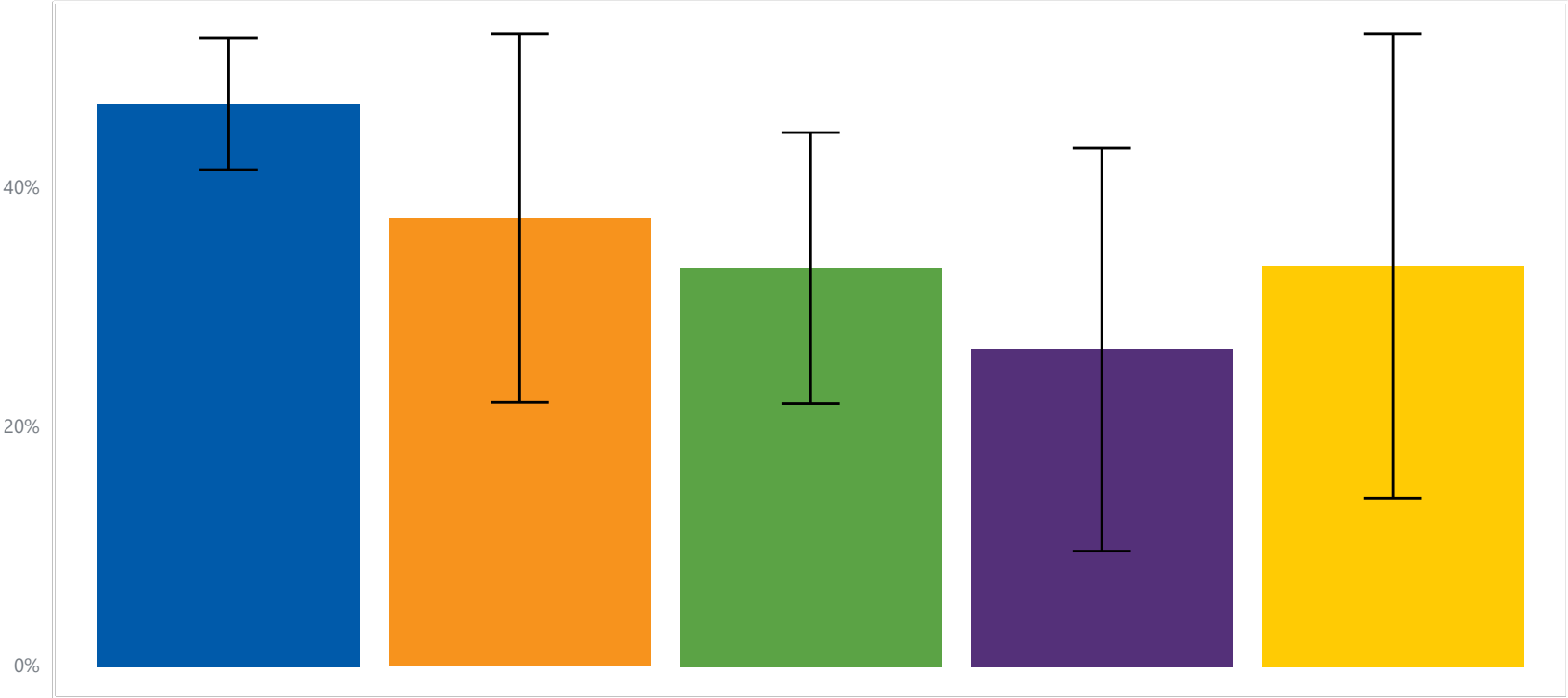
# Curbside Organics Recycling by Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity is generally **not associated with use** of curbside organics recycling as the primary mode of food waste disposal.

Organics recycling through curbside pick-up provided by hauler.  
N = 211 residents who affirmed participation in curbside organics recycling.

White or European American   Asian   Black or African American   Hispanic or Latino   Middle Eastern or North African

95% Confidence Interval



# Organics Recycling Sentiment

Overall, **residents responded positively** about organics recycling.

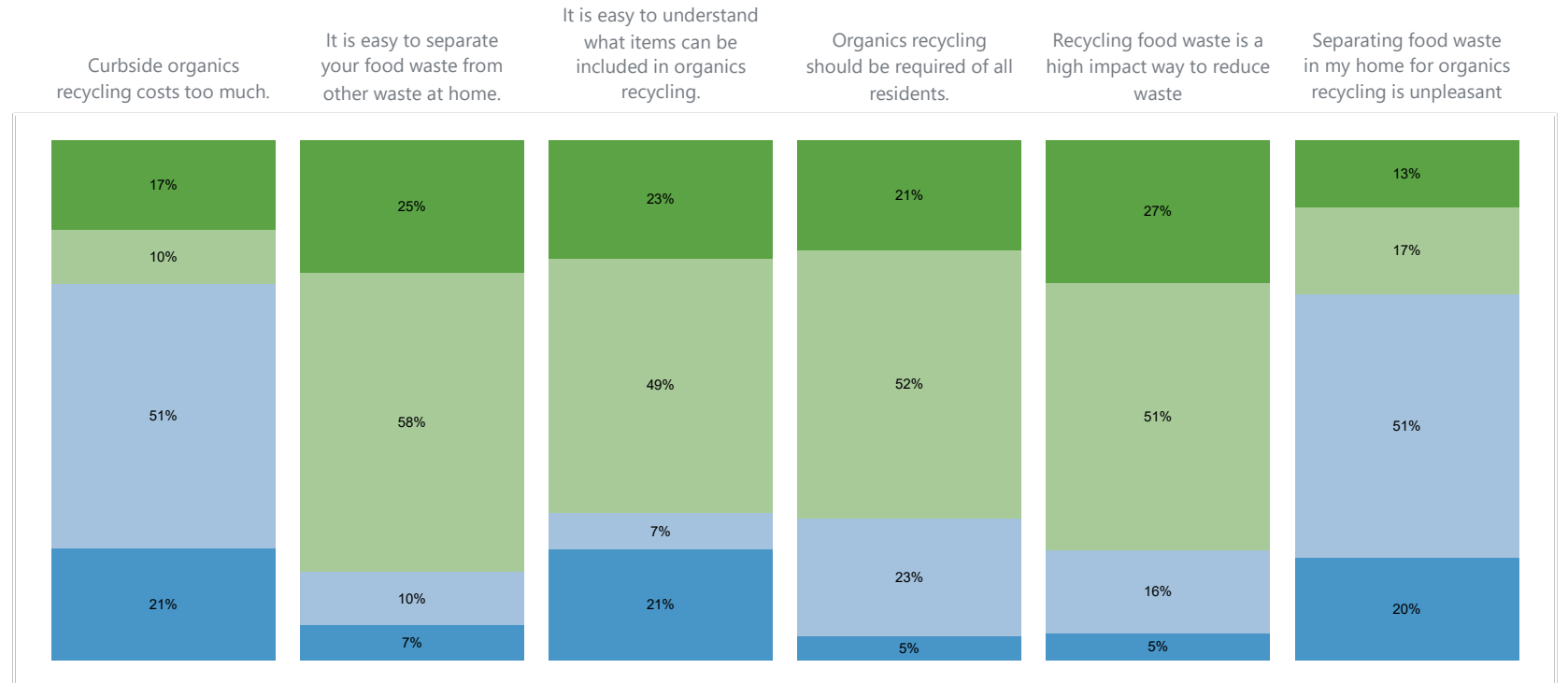
The **majority** of residents find **organics recycling easy** to do. **83%** feel that it is easy to separate food waste from other waste, and **72%** said it is easy to understand what can be included.

However, **27%** of respondents believe curbside organics recycling **costs too much** and **30%** believe that separating food waste is **unpleasant**.

**78%** of residents feel that recycling food waste is a **high impact** way to reduce waste and **73%** believe that it **should be required** of all residents.

We would like to hear your thoughts on organics recycling of food waste and compostable materials. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

# Sentiment of Residents Who Put Organics In The Trash

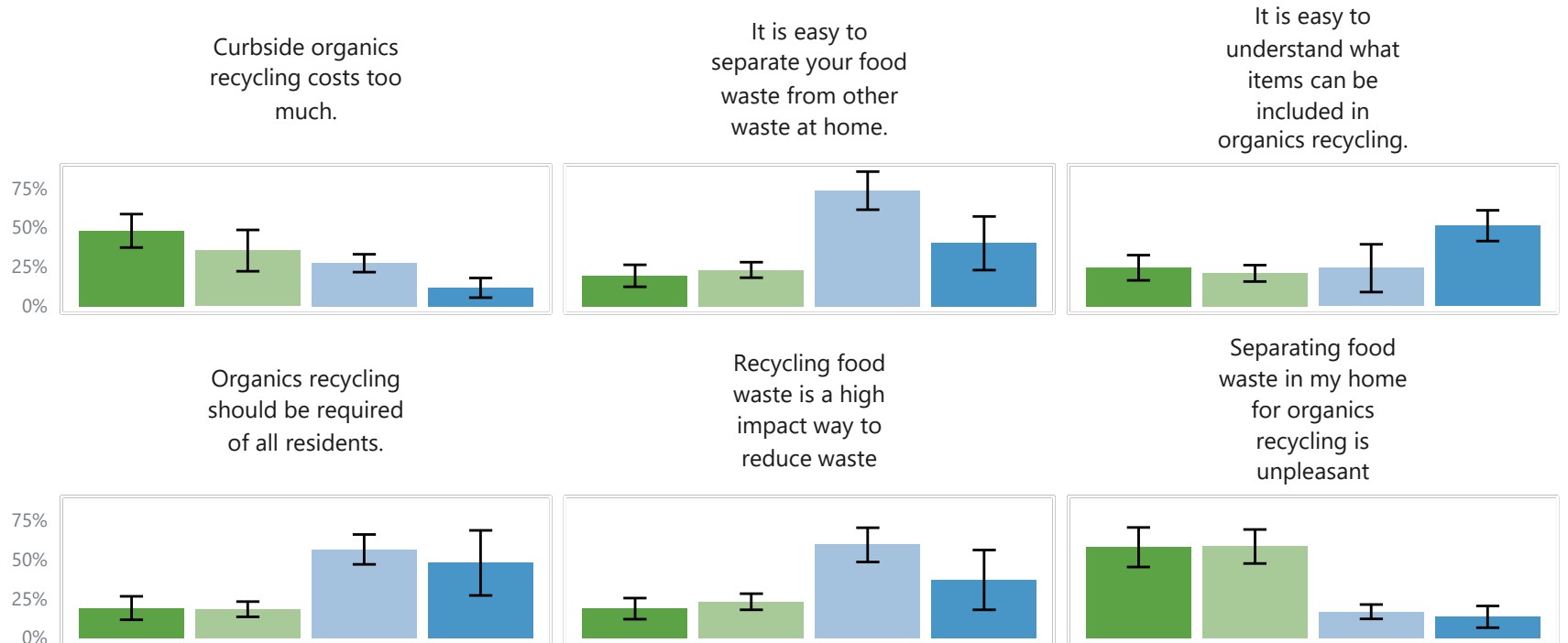
Perception that curbside organics recycling **costs** too much is **positively associated** with disposal of food waste in the trash.

Residents who felt it was **not easy** to separate food waste at home and that it was **unpleasant** to separate food waste at home dispose of food waste in trash at higher relative rates.

Residents who felt that it was **difficult to understand** what can be included in organics recycling were more likely to dispose of food waste in the trash.

Residents who primarily dispose of food waste and organic materials in the trash.  
N = 143 residents who affirmed using the trash as the primary mode of food disposal

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree



95% Confidence Interval

# Food Waste Disposal via Backyard Composting

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25% of residents use **backyard or on-site composting** as their main source of disposal for organic materials.

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The **most common** items composted in this way are **fruits and vegetables (95%)**, while the **least common** are **paper towels and napkins (65%)**.

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**Each of the items listed** are composted by a **majority** of residents who recycle organic matter in this way.

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I am going to name different types of food waste. What items do you compost in your backyard bin?  
Please indicate all that apply. N = 124 respondents.



# 05 Support of Waste Reduction

# Urgency of Trash Reduction

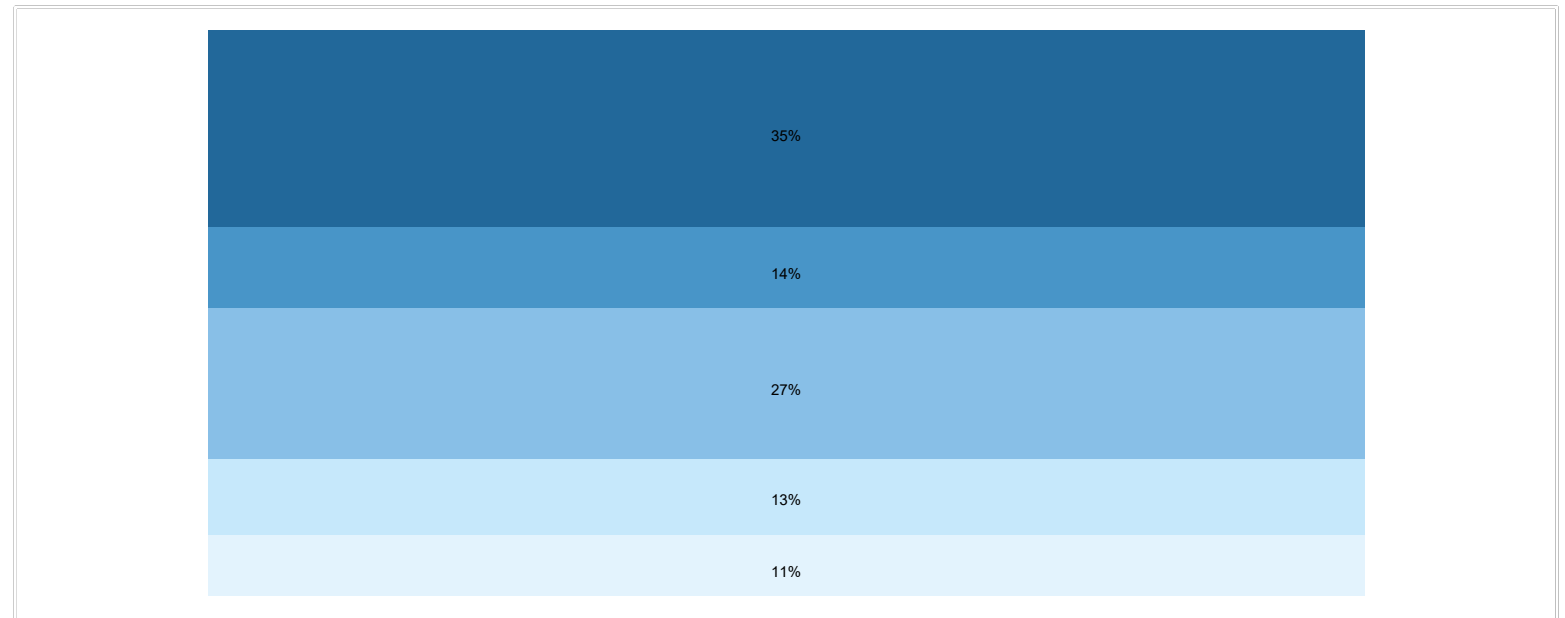
In general, residents believe that reducing the amount of trash they produce is an **urgent** matter.

**35%** of residents believe it is **very urgent** and **14%** believe there is an urgent need to reduce the amount of trash generated.

However, **11%** of residents believe it is **not urgent at all**.

In your view, how urgent is it to reduce the amount of trash generated by residents of Hennepin County?

Very urgent   Urgent   Moderately urgent   Slightly urgent   Not urgent at all





# Income and Urgency of Trash Reduction

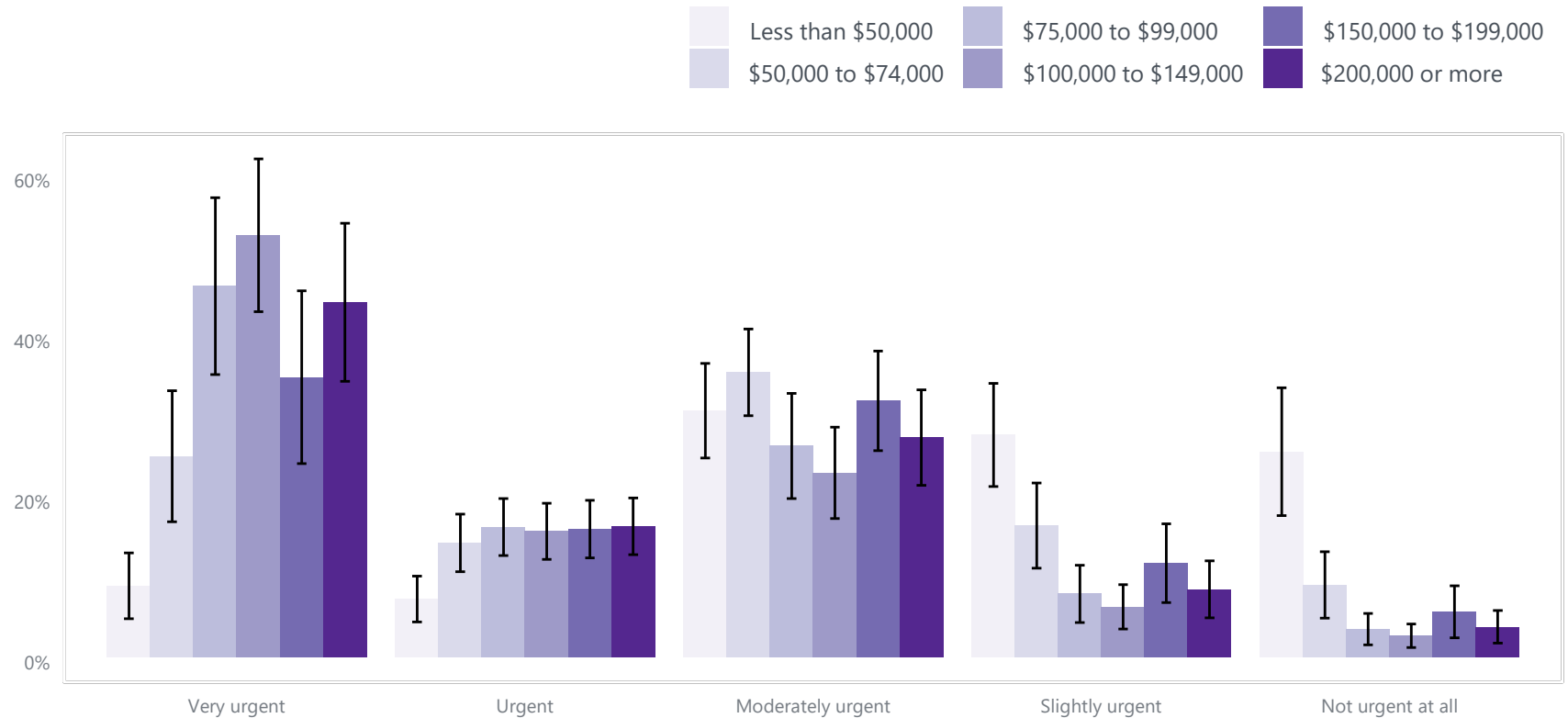
A **sense of urgency** with respect to trash reduction in Hennepin County is **associated with household income**.

**Higher income** residents reported a **greater sense of urgency** to reduce the amount of trash generated by residents of Hennepin County.

There is **no difference in the sense of urgency** to reduce the amount of trash generated by residents of Hennepin County based on Commissioner District, Gender, or Race/Ethnicity.

 95% Confidence Interval

In your view, how urgent is it to reduce the amount of trash generated by residents of Hennepin County?



# Support for Action

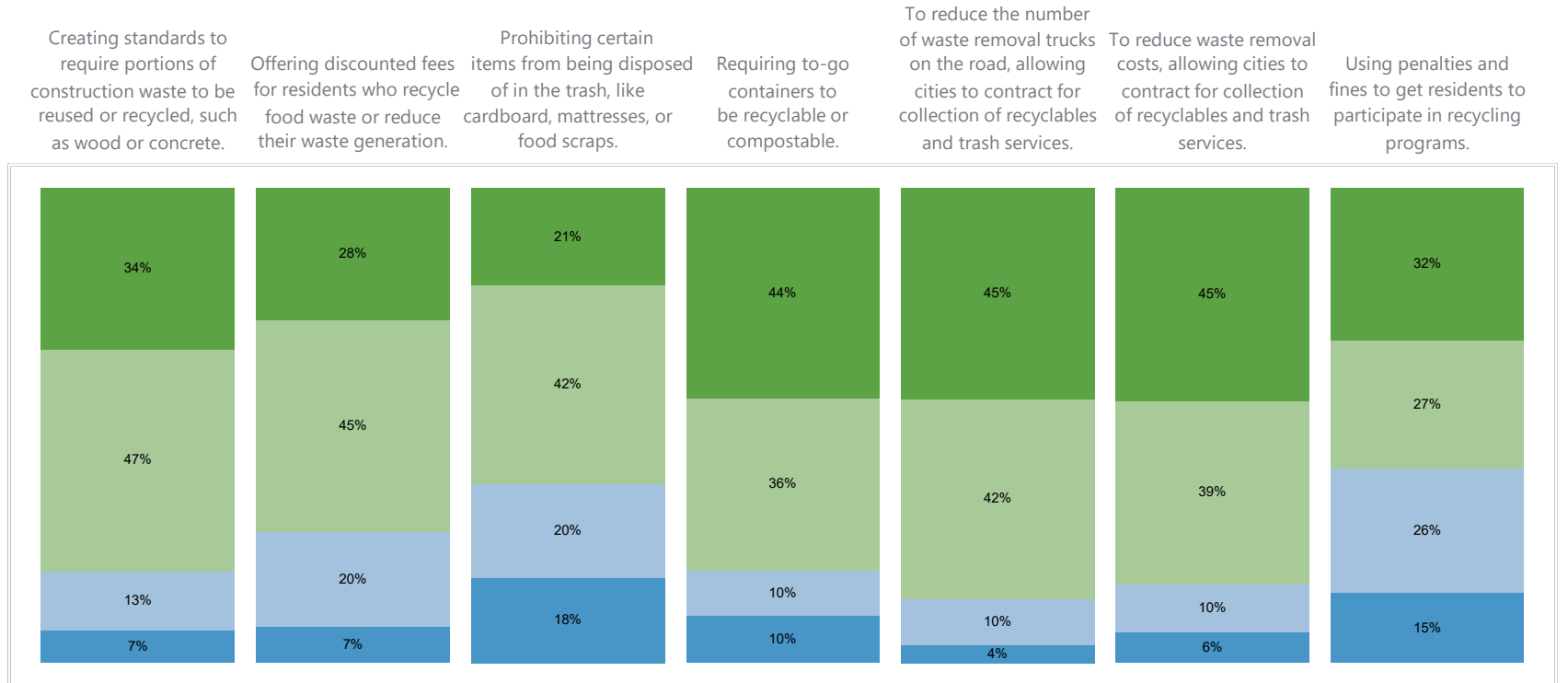
Residents are **generally supportive** of measures that would reduce waste in Hennepin county.

Residents are **most supportive** of allowing cities to contract for collection of recyclables and trash to reduce costs (84% support) and reduce number of trucks on the road (87% support).

Residents are **least supportive** of prohibiting items from disposal in trash (38% oppose) and using penalties and fines to get residents to recycle (41% oppose).

I am going to read to you a number of actions to reduce waste in Hennepin County. Please tell me whether you support or oppose the following actions.

■ Strongly support
 ■ Somewhat support
 ■ Somewhat oppose
 ■ Strongly oppose



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

# Support for Action – Analysis of Associations

There is no association between any of the action items and where a resident lives within Hennepin county.

There is greater support for prohibiting certain items from being disposed of in the trash and using penalties and fines to get residents to participate in recycling among higher income residents. Residents reporting less than \$75,000 per year in household income are ~10x more likely to be opposed to these actions.

Lower income residents were also substantially more likely to support discounting fees to encourage residents to recycle food waste than higher income residents.

Explanatory Variable	Creating Standards to require portions of construction waste to be reused or recycled, such as wood or concrete.	Offering discounted fees for residents who recycle food waste or reduce their waste generation.	Prohibiting certain items from being disposed of in the trash, like cardboard, mattresses, or food scraps.	Requiring to-go containers to be recyclable or compostable.	To reduce the number of waste removal trucks on the road, allowing cities to contract for collection of recyclables and trash services.	To reduce waste removal costs, allowing cities to contract for collection of recyclables and trash services.	Using penalties and fines to get residents to participate in recycling programs.
Commission District	No association	No association	No association	No association	No association	No association	No association
Gender	No association	No association	No association	No association	No association	No association	No association
Income	No association	Support associated with lower income residents	Support associated with higher income residents	Support associated with higher income residents	No association	No association	Support associated with higher income residents
Race / Ethnicity	No association	No association	Relatively more support among White/European Americans	No association	No association	No association	No association
Housing Type	No association	No association	No association	No association	No association	No association	No association

# 06 Appendix

# Appendix: Survey Methodology

- **Stratified random sampling** by zip code was conducted by telephone (landline and cellphone) during June 2024. The survey was weighted to align with the distribution of population across zip codes, and county-wide gender, race/ethnicity, and household income taken from the American Community Survey. Iterative proportional fitting was used to weight the sample in accordance with best practice. Small weights were applied. A description of the unweighted and weighted sample are included on the following page.
- **Descriptive statistics** were run for all multiple choice, multiple answer, and open-ended questions. The **analytic approach was hypothesis driven**: Plausible associations between questions, and between questions and key demographic variables were explored using appropriate statistical techniques.
- For questions where the response was a Likert-type scale (e.g., Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) an **ordered logistic regression** was used to evaluate differences between subgroups. All models included Gender, Housing Type, Race/Ethnicity, Household Income and Commissioner District as control variables, with differences noted in the Findings.
- For questions where the response was dichotomous (e.g., Yes, No) a **logistic regression** was used to evaluate the differences between subgroups. All models include Gender, Housing Type, Race/Ethnicity, Household Income and Commissioner District as control variables, with differences noted in the Findings.
- Graphics reporting the results of analysis by geography and demographics, as described above, are shown with 95% confidence intervals.

# Appendix: Survey Sample Description

Ethnicity	Unweighted Sample %	Weighted Sample %
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.4%	1.2%
Asian	8.0%	7.4%
Black or African American	14%	14%
Hispanic or Latino	6.4%	7.7%
Middle Eastern or North African	5.0%	4.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.2%	<0.1%
Some other ethnicity/Unknown	4.0%	4.1%
White or European American	62%	60%

Gender	Unweighted Sample %	Weighted Sample %
Female	49%	50%
Male	49%	48%
Non-binary or No Response	1.2%	1.2%

Household Income	Unweighted Sample %	Weighted Sample %
Less than \$50,000	25%	21%
\$50,000-\$74,999	15%	15%
\$75,000-\$99,999	14%	13%
\$100,000-\$149,999	19%	18%
\$150,000-\$199,999	13%	11%
\$200,000 or more	9.6%	17%
Prefer not to Answer	5.0%	5%

Dwelling Type	Unweighted Sample %	Weighted Sample %
Single Family Home	63%	65%
Apartment or Condo	27%	25%
Townhouse or Duplex	9.0%	8.5%
Prefer not to answer	1.4%	5.5%