

City of Toronto Litter Research

Study Conducted By:
OnSurvey

Background

Business Objective

A clean and safe environment in which to live and work is among the City of Toronto's Task Force 2010 objectives, which focus on 100% diversion from landfill by 2010.

Research Objective

In February-March 2003, Toronto Works and Emergency Services (WES) conducted research with Toronto residents to determine attitudes towards litter: who is doing it and why, and what would motivate them to stop.

Methodology

Quantitative:

a ten-minute telephone interview conducted with 1,200 City of Toronto residents aged 15 and older (margin of error +/- 2.9%, 19 times out of 20)

Qualitative

Four one-hour online focus groups, each with eight to ten participants, segmented by age with two groups being aged 15 to 24, and two being the general population

Results

A total of 80% of Torontonians are concerned about litter

Where are the hotspots:

- Torontonians are equally concerned about litter in their own neighborhoods as they are about litter in the downtown core
- Public spaces that are of concern include streets and sidewalks

Our parks are considered some of the cleanest public spaces (20% find parks to be very clean)

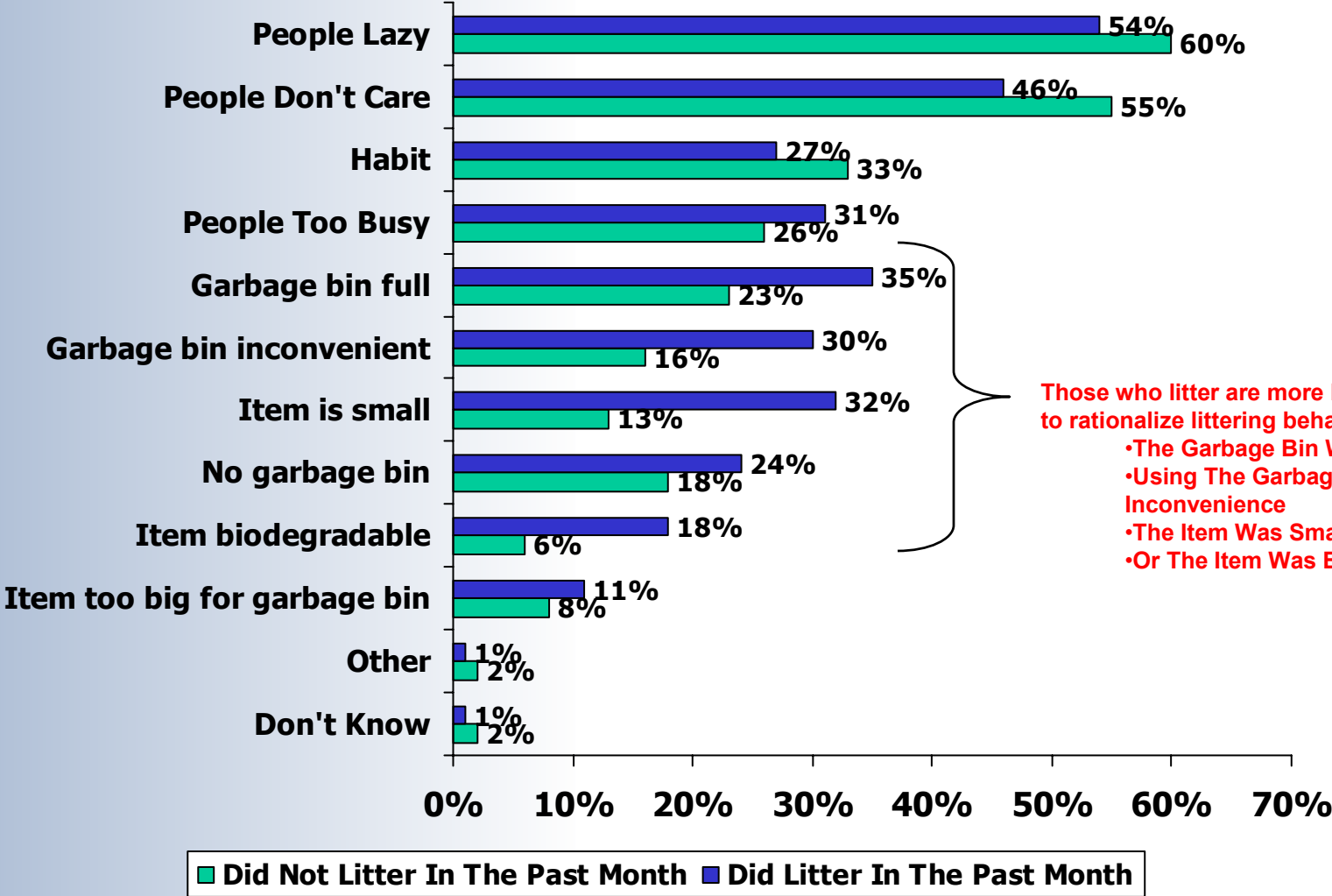
Almost one-half of respondents admitted to littering within the past month

- Types of litter include candy wrappers, coffee cups, bus transfers and cigarette butts

Those who litter tend to be young, new residents to the City (1-5 years), those in lower income categories

- Young people are less likely to feel guilty when they litter

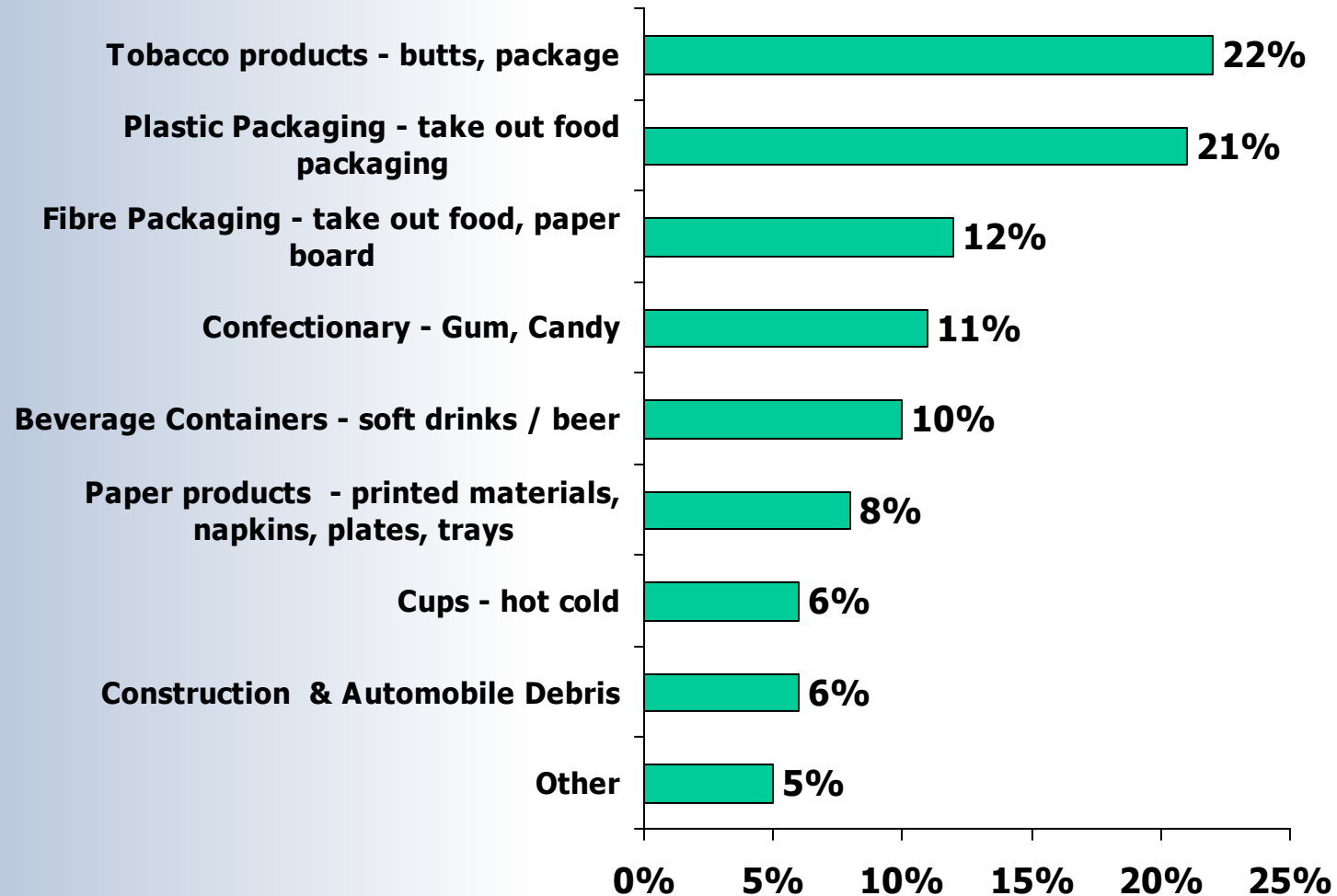
Why People Litter



Those who litter are more likely than non-litters to rationalize littering behaviour by stating:

- The Garbage Bin Was Full
- Using The Garbage Bin Was An Inconvenience
- The Item Was Small
- Or The Item Was Biodegradable

The Most Offensive Types of Litter



Results...

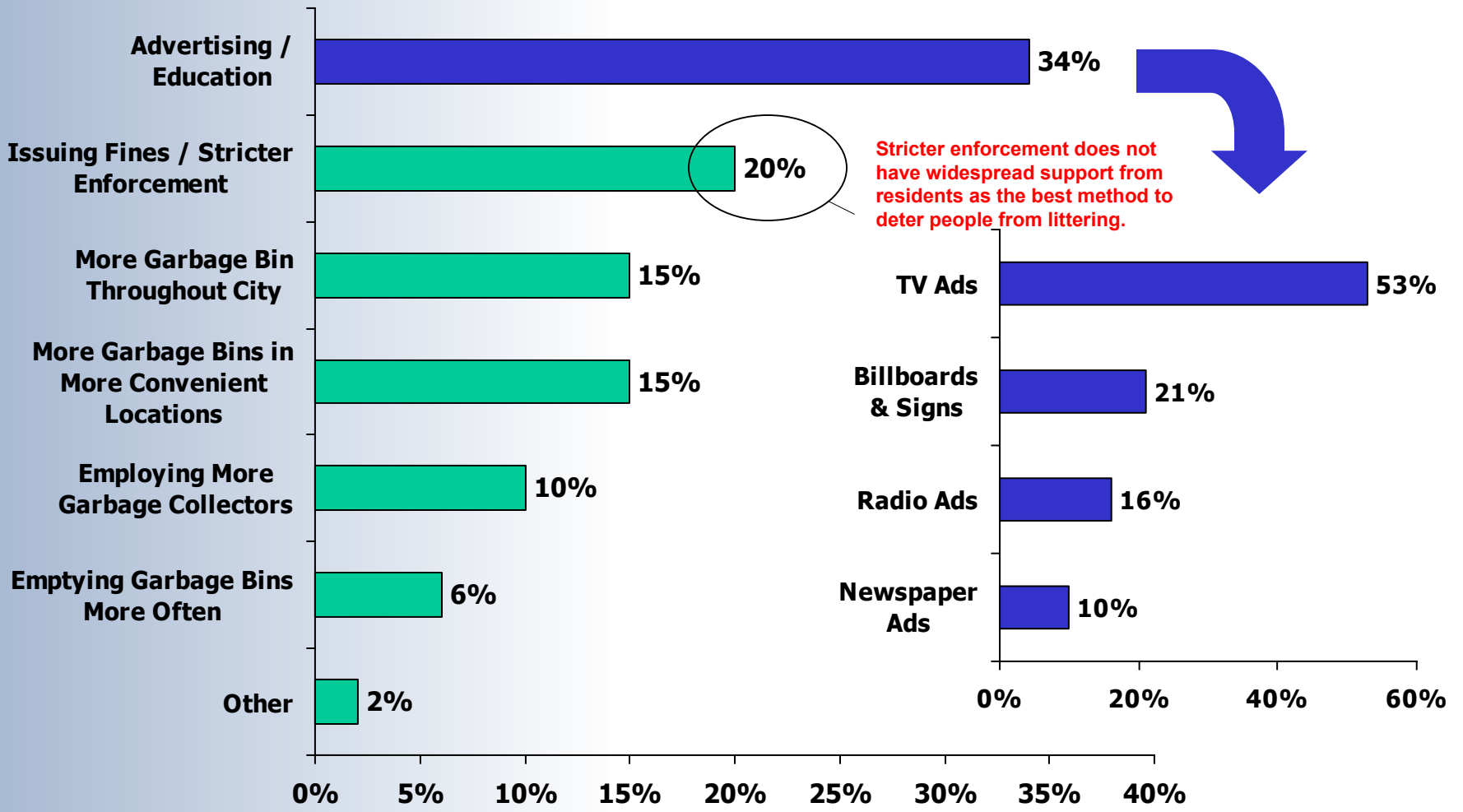
Unclean public spaces creates a cycle of littering behaviour

- Almost one-half of those who see litter on the ground will in turn litter

71% believe that littering is a serious offense

- But only 40% are aware that littering is a crime
- Only 28% of those under the age of 18 are aware that littering is a crime

How To Reduce Litter



Focus Group Results

Laziness. If you tried to throw a flyer into the litter bin but you missed, would you pick it up? “ I wouldn’t pick it up because there’s no cost to me or penalty for NOT picking it up.” “I think our society is a lazy society and whether there was a garbage can nearby or not, people would still throw it on the ground.”

Convenience. People use the ground when litter bins are not accessible: “I am in a hurry so forget about the garbage can.” Chase after a napkin that blew away? “No, if it is out of my reach I wouldn’t bother.”

Awareness of consequences. Unanimous lack of awareness of the City’s littering by-law: “There is????? Ohh dear! I never knew that.”

Some Quotes...

Why do people throw garbage on the ground?

"easy accessibility"

"i think our society is a lazy society and whether there was a garbage can nearby or not, people would still throw it on the ground "

"i think we as a society don't really digest the effects of littering and therefore don't care whether we litter or not"

"There is no cost to us personally. It's a simple cost/benefit analysis"

"people are lazy"

"well if they happen to see a garbage bin they will not (litter)"

Are you aware that there is a fine for littering?

"really"

"NOOOOOOOO"

"i did not know that"

"there is????? ohh dear! i never knew that"

"i did not no that but seriously, how many people actually get caught and fined"

":0 i could've been fyned like over a thosand dollars already!"

"I'd be broke..."

"yeah one such fine and i guess your litter habit will stop"

"wow"

"hellllls no"