



2025 Waste and Resource Efficiency - Behavioural Trend Monitoring Survey



A Quantitative Report for the Ministry for the Environment
June 2025

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this research is to understand people's attitudes, awareness and behaviours around waste minimisation.

The research has been undertaken since 2023, with the latest results completing a three-year monitoring cycle.

The research tracks the progress and impact of the Ministry's various waste work programmes (including kerbside standardisation, plastic phase outs and food waste reduction), and of sector-led campaigns such as Love Food Hate Waste and Plastic Free July.



Note on sub-samples:

- Region – 'North Island Provincial' refers to North Island locations excluding Auckland and Wellington



Results in this report are based on questions asked of a nationally representative online sample of n=1006 adults 18 years and over.

- The margin of error for a 50% figure at the 95% confidence level is $\pm 3.1\%$.
- Research was conducted between the 4-7 April 2025
- The analysis and commentary provides reporting for the general public. Significant demographic differences have been included in the commentary.



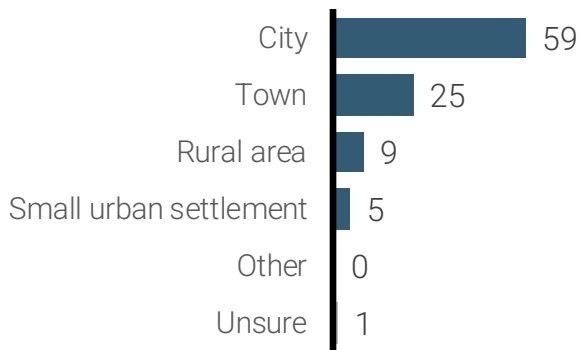
All numbers are shown rounded to zero decimal places, hence specified totals are not always exactly equal to the sum of the specified sub-totals. The differences are seldom more than 1%.

- For example, $2.7 + 3.5 = 6.2$ would appear: $3 + 4 = 6$.

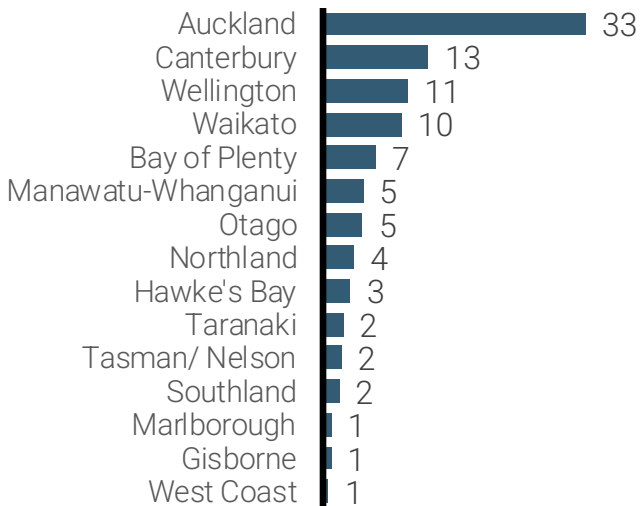
SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS: WHO FILLED IN THE ONLINE SURVEY?

All numbers are percentages of the survey sample (%)

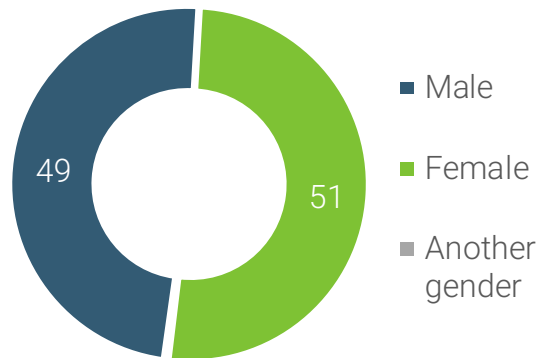
Settlement



Region



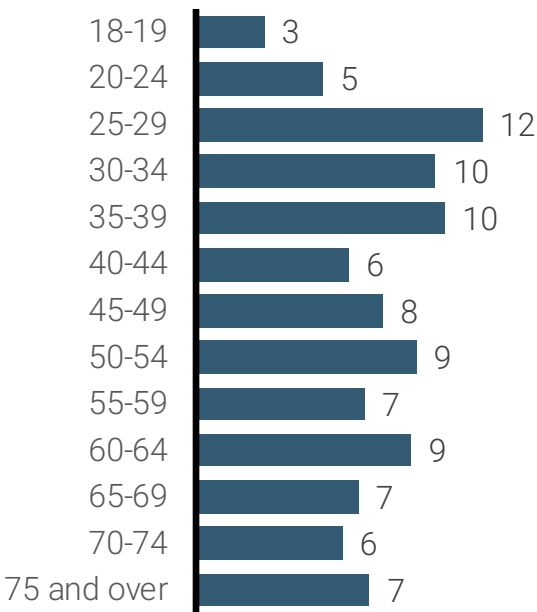
Gender



Household income,	
<\$50,000	27
\$50,001-\$100,000	32
>\$100,000	31

Household occupants	
Spouse/partner	56
Children aged under 18	31
No one	17
Parents	10
Flatmates	7
Other adult family members	15
Other	1

Age group



Ethnicity	
NZ European	64
Asian	17
NZ Māori	15
Pasifika	7
Prefer not to say	1
Other	9

Base: All respondents (n=1006)

Some demographic totals exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.
For example, someone can be both NZ European and Māori.

KEY FINDINGS: RECYCLING BEHAVIOURS AND KERBSIDE RECYCLING



Recycling behaviours and kerbside recycling

- **Recycling remained widespread:** Recycling remained near universal, with 97% reporting they recycle (96% in 2024), and 84% using Council kerbside recycling bins (down 3%).
- **Most continued to be cautious about putting items in recycling:** Caution persisted when uncertain, with most choosing to put items in the rubbish bin (2025: 87%, 2024: 90%, 2023: 88%) rather than risk contaminating recycling.
- **More appeared to be dropping off items to recycle at separate locations:** Over the three years of tracking, an increasing number appear to be recycling at separate drop-off points, with fewer reporting they didn't do this at all (2025: 37%, 2024: 52%, 2023: 41%). Electronics were the most common items to be dropped off.

Recycling actions and frequency

- **Recycling actions indicated room to improve:** A majority continued to rinse or clean recycling, although this has slowly declined (2025: 75%, 2024: 77%, 2023: 83%), remove non-recyclable parts (71%, 68%, 69%), remove plastic wrap from meat trays (70%, 67%, 73%) and remove lids (67%, 67%, 65%).
- **Frequency of sustainable behaviours mostly remained stable or slightly improved:** There were slight increases in less common actions like using reusable cups, containers, and hiring or borrowing items—suggesting gradual but modest behavioural shifts toward more sustainable habits.
- **Perception gap remained:** People continued to believe they recycle more and behave more sustainably than others, though this gap is slowly narrowing for some behaviours like home recycling.
- **Recyclability checks varied:** 61% checked recyclability at disposal time, while only 15% do so at purchase - highlighting an opportunity for informed decision-making.

KEY FINDINGS: RECYCLING ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE/ SEGMENTATION



Recycling attitudes and knowledge

- **Perceived value and knowledge of recycling system remained strong:** Generally stable over the past three years of tracking, most still believed it was worth the effort to recycle properly, found the process easy, and had high confidence in their knowledge of the correct items to place in recycling bins.
- **Misconceptions and trust issues improving but persisted for some:** Less than half were confident their items were actually recycled, and around a third found recycling rules confusing, felt they knew what happened to recycling after being collected, or believed most recycling ended up in landfill. While significant minorities still felt this way, confidence in the recycling process has been gradually increasing and misconceptions declining.
- **Knowledge gaps also remained:** Knowledge of recyclable items remained mostly stable, with common recyclables like bottles and cans well understood. However, confusion remained around items like glass jars (showing a drop in knowledge), pizza boxes, and meat trays. Significant confusion remained around non-recyclables (particularly, coffee cups, juice cartons, lids and compostable packaging).

Recycling and reducing segmentation

- **Low commitment group hold entrenched position:** High commitment recyclers increased with more people moving from medium to high commitment between 2023 and 2025, however, the low commitment segment (25%) was static and resistant to change.
- **Attitudes may be levelling:** Concern about waste and environmental impacts has slightly declined across all segments, though high commitment individuals remained most concerned.
- **Information makes a difference:** High commitment individuals were more likely to recall recycling messaging, suggesting communication plays a key role in supporting sustainable habits.

KEY FINDINGS: FOOD WASTE BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES

Food waste behaviour and attitudes

- **Food waste continued to be a strong concern:** Consistent with 2023 results, 77% (down 2%) said reducing food waste is important, and 76% (no change) are annoyed by others wasting food - providing an ongoing opportunity to leverage these concerns.
- **Self-reported food waste remained low:** A majority of households (71%, stable over the past three years) reported wasting less than one 2L container of food weekly.
- **Uneaten leftovers continued to be blamed for food waste:** Consistent with 2023, leftovers and food going off in the fridge were the top reasons for wasting food; improper storage and fussy eaters also contributed.
- **Good habits around food waste were common but food still being wasted:** Consistent over the three years of tracking, over 90% said they eat leftovers, think about portions, and use shopping lists. Eating food past the best-before dates and taking home leftovers/ offering leftovers to guests have shown gradual increases. However, many still throw out food or put food waste into the rubbish bin.
- **Still room to grow on meal planning:** Just over half use an “eat me first” shelf, and fewer than half use a meal planner - indicating potential areas to continue to focus on.
- **Disposal methods varied:** Food disposal was spread quite evenly across putting it in the rubbish bin, feeding to animals, composting, and putting into the kerbside food scrap bins.
- **Most are open to eating food past best before date:** The majority of respondents (71%) said they would eat food past its best before date if it smelt and looked okay, suggesting a ‘practical’ approach around food waste.

Motivations to reduce food waste

- **Motivations shifted slightly:** Emotional and ethical drivers (like “wasting food feels wrong”) remained the strongest motivators on food waste, while financial motivation declined slightly since 2023.
- **Environmental concern lagged:** Only 55% said they were motivated by environmental harm, and when asked specifically, 51% said they were motivated by greenhouse gas emissions from landfill - possibly, highlighting a gap in awareness around climate impacts.



KEY FINDINGS: FOOD WASTE SEGMENTATION

Food waste segmentation

- **Positive movement in segments over time:** Looking at the change this year since 2023, high waste households dropped (2025: 30%, 2023: 33%), while medium waste households increased (2025: 41%, 2023: 38%) and low wastage households remained on 30%—suggesting a minor shift in behaviour.
- **Demographic stability across the segments:** High wastage remains most common among under-44s, parents with children, and high-income earners - though some positive shifts were seen among high earners.
- **Distinctive behaviours by segment:** Low waste households throw out the least food, plan meals more, and use proactive strategies like portioning and lists. High waste households appeared to struggle more with time constraints and food management e.g. looking at portion size or using a shopping list.
- **Motivations potentially shifting:** Ethical and emotional drivers ("wasting food feels wrong") have become more influential, while financial motivations ("saving money") have declined slightly
- **Motivations differed across segments:** Low waste households were more likely to value the effort in food production and feel guilt over waste, while high-waste households were less connected with these values.



KEY FINDINGS: VIEWS OF WASTE REDUCTION, PLASTICS AND COMMUNICATIONS



Views of waste reduction

- **Waste remained an important concern but link to greenhouse gases not clear:** Similar to 2023, the majority agreed that plastic and food waste were important to them, and that they were concerned about the impact of rubbish on the environment. However, a slimmer majority (57%, no change) were concerned about greenhouse gas emissions - indicating a knowledge or engagement gap around the connection between waste and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Most claimed to reduce waste, driven by environmental concerns:** Nearly all (95%, down 1% from 2023), said they tried to reduce waste, with protecting the environment cited as the top motivation (41%, down 3%), followed by a drive to produce less waste (23%, up 2%) and saving money (13%, up 1%). This showed little change from when last asked in 2023.

Plastics

- **Plastic waste barriers persisted:** Limited and unaffordable alternatives were still key challenges to reducing plastic waste. However, knowledge gaps and a sense of futility were growing issues, particularly across younger people.
- **Strong preference to avoid single use plastics:** Nearly half (45%) avoided single use plastics for environmental reasons, a further 12% for health reasons, and 19% would prefer to avoid them but found it impossible. Only 15% defended single-use plastics, saying they are useful, and 5% said they don't think about plastics at all.

Communication

- **Reasonable understanding of waste hierarchy:** As found in 2024, reducing and reusing came out on top as most environmentally beneficial compared to recycling.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

High engagement with recycling masks knowledge gaps: While most people recycle and feel confident doing so, confusion persists around specific materials and processes—particularly among lower commitment segments.

Low commitment groups are entrenched: Despite campaigns and education efforts, the proportion of low-commitment individuals has remained steady, showing resistance to behaviour change.

Recycling is seen as worthwhile, but some still have trust issues: A significant minority still believe recycling goes straight to landfill or doubt that all items get recycled, highlighting the need to build confidence in the system and address misperceptions.

Food waste remains an issue—with a gap between intention and outcome: Despite strong engagement in waste-reducing habits, food is still being wasted, indicating possible issues with follow-through and planning.

Emotional or ethical motivators are more powerful than financial ones for reducing food waste: Reducing food waste because it "feels wrong" is more common than doing so to save money - especially among low-waste households. However, this may be due to the current economic environment shifting priorities and habits.

Public understanding of waste hierarchy is improving: People recognise that reducing and reusing are better than recycling, but practical barriers - like cost and access to alternatives - are potentially limiting action, especially around plastics.

REPORT FINDINGS: RECYCLING BEHAVIOURS AND FREQUENCY



RECYCLING BEHAVIOURS AND KERBSIDE RECYCLING

This section of the survey asked respondents about their current recycling behaviours.

Asked in 2024 and 2025, the latest results showed that **almost all (97%, up 1%) recycle**, with the majority choosing to recycle by using the Council kerbside recycling bin (84%, down 3%).

- Use of a transfer station or recycling centre was lower for Aucklanders (3%).
- Wellingtonians were more likely to use a private company or landlord provided bin (20%).
- Those living in rural areas were more likely to use a transfer station/ recycling centre (24%).
- Those on higher incomes were more likely to use Council kerbside recycling, while those on lower incomes were more likely to use a transfer station/ recycling centre.
 - *Earning less than \$50k: 77% Council kerbside recycling, 9% private company/ landlord provided, 13% transfer station/ recycling centre*
 - *Earning between \$50-100k: 82%, 8%, 9%*
 - *Earning over \$100k: 90%, 6%, 4%.*

Given a forced choice on what they would do if unsure whether an item could be recycled, **most** (87%, down from 90% in 2024, and 88% in 2023) **would put the item in the rubbish bin**. This appears to be entrenched behaviour, remaining stable since tracking began in 2023.

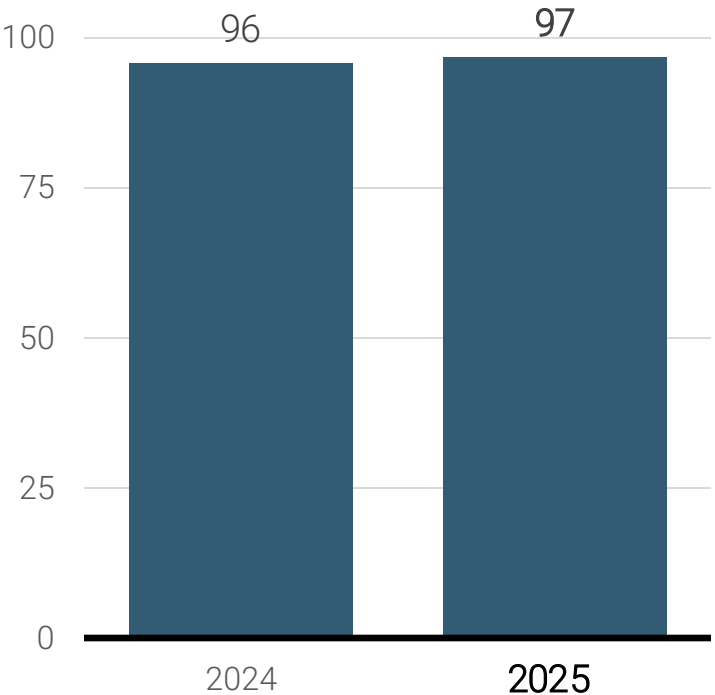
When asked what items they recycled by dropping to a separate location, batteries (39%), rechargeable electronic devices (38%), and plug-in electronic products (36%) were the most commonly cited items. These were new categories added in 2025 – but highlighted **electronics as a key item that merited recycling at separate locations**.

- Compared to previous years, fewer people reported not dropping any items to a separate location to be recycled (37%, down from 52% in 2024 and 41% in 2023), potentially indicating a positive shift in recycling behaviours.
 - *Those aged 60 or over were more likely to drop off batteries (51%), rechargeable devices (47%), plug in devices (51%) and paint (44%).*

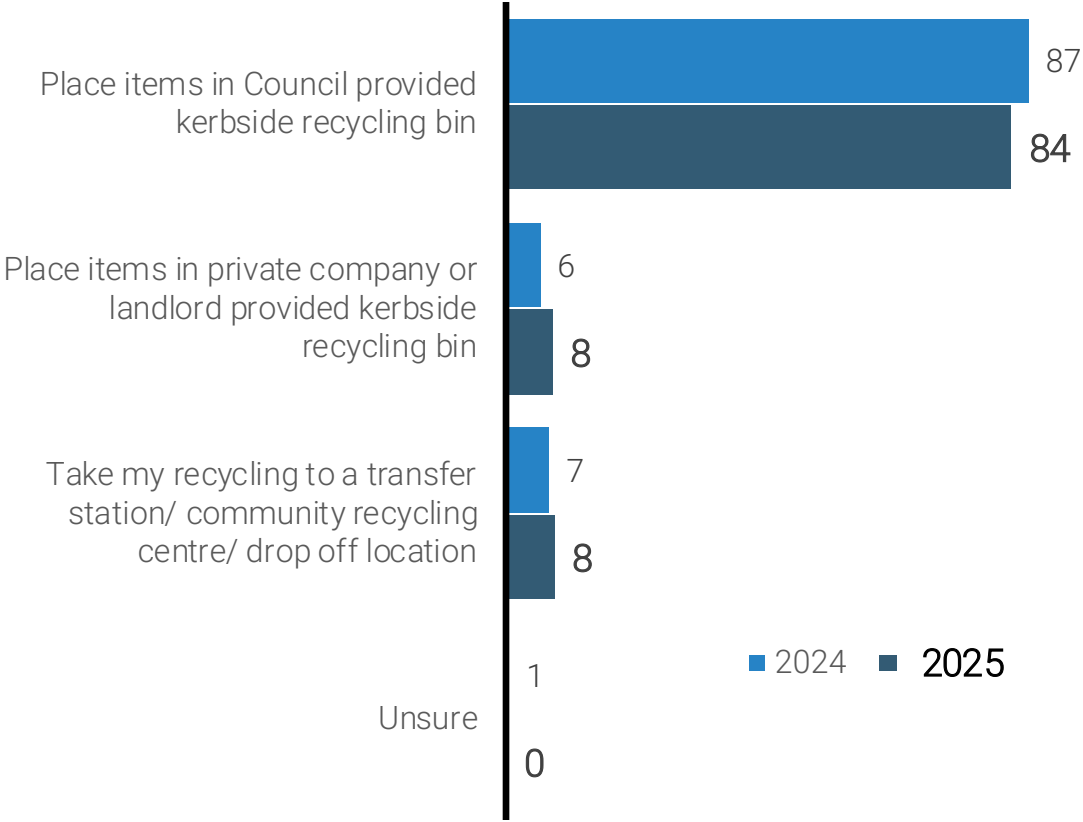
KERBSIDE RECYCLING (TRENDLINE)



Do you recycle? (% Yes)



[Those who recycle] Which is the main way you recycle? (%)

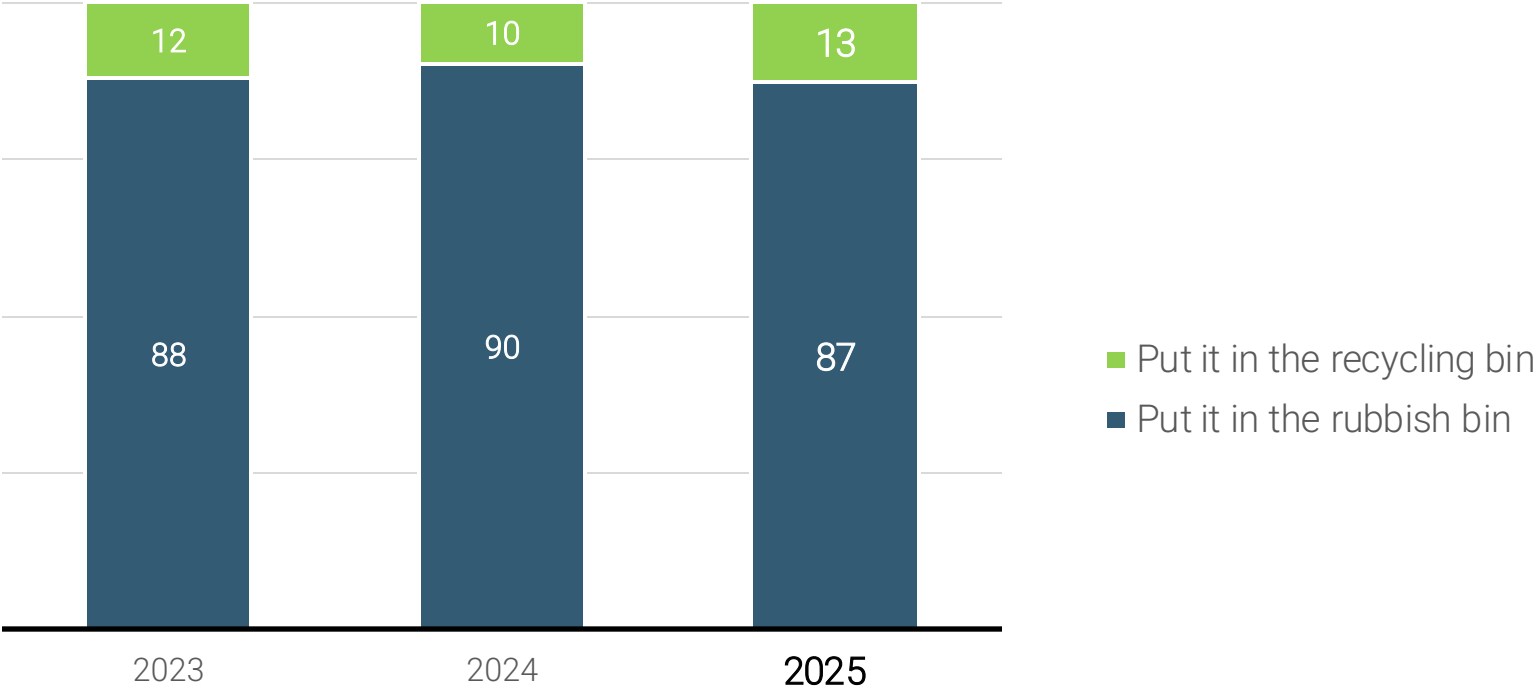


■ 2024 ■ 2025

DISPOSING OF AN ITEM (TRENDLINE)



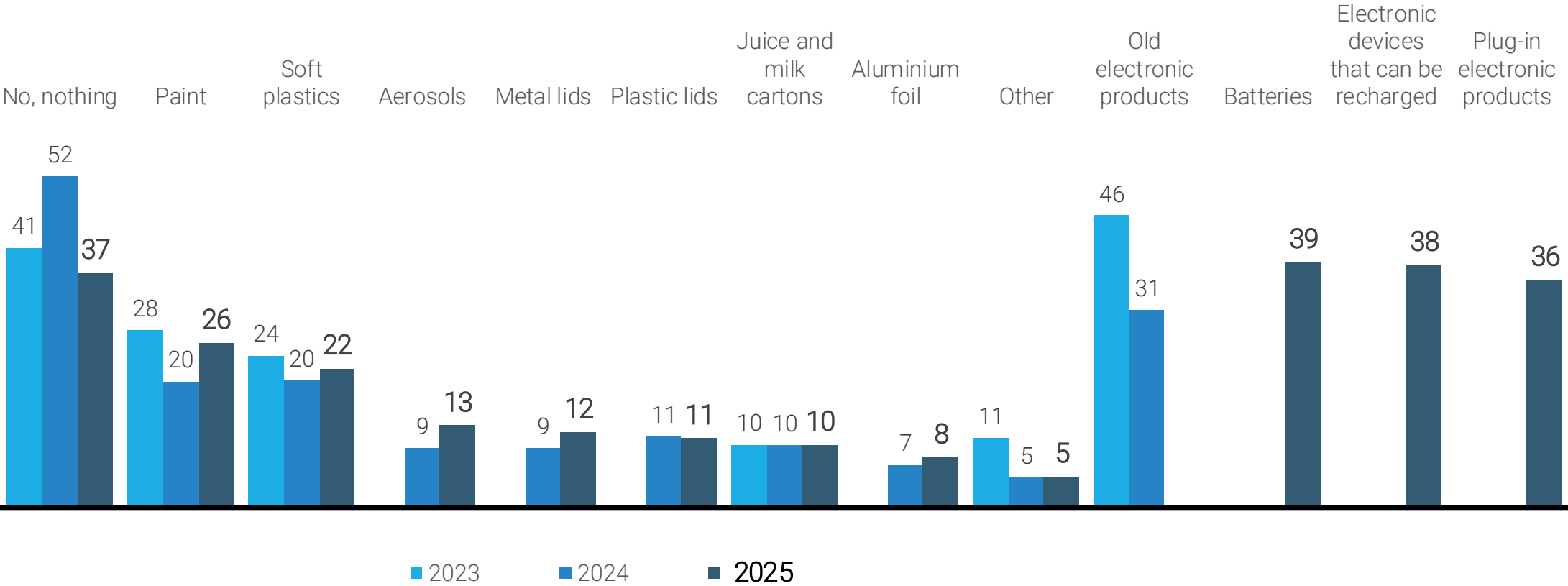
If you are unsure of whether an item can be recycled, what do you typically do when disposing of it? (%)



OTHER ITEMS RECYCLED (TRENDLINE)



Do you or anyone in your household take any of these things to be recycled by dropping them off at a separate location? (%)



Base: All respondents (n=1006)

Note: trendline is indicative as categories changed in 2025, previously only had 'Old electronic products e.g. computers and phones'. In 2025, three categories were added 'batteries', 'electronic devices that can be recharged', 'plug-in electronic products'

RECYCLING ACTIONS

Asked over the past three years, participation in **recycling actions showed little change from 2024**. The drop seen in 2024 of those 'rinsing or cleaning recycling before putting in the bin' showed no recovery. However, the drop in those 'removing plastic wrap from meat trays' did recover slightly.

A majority continued to say they undertake the following positive recycling actions.

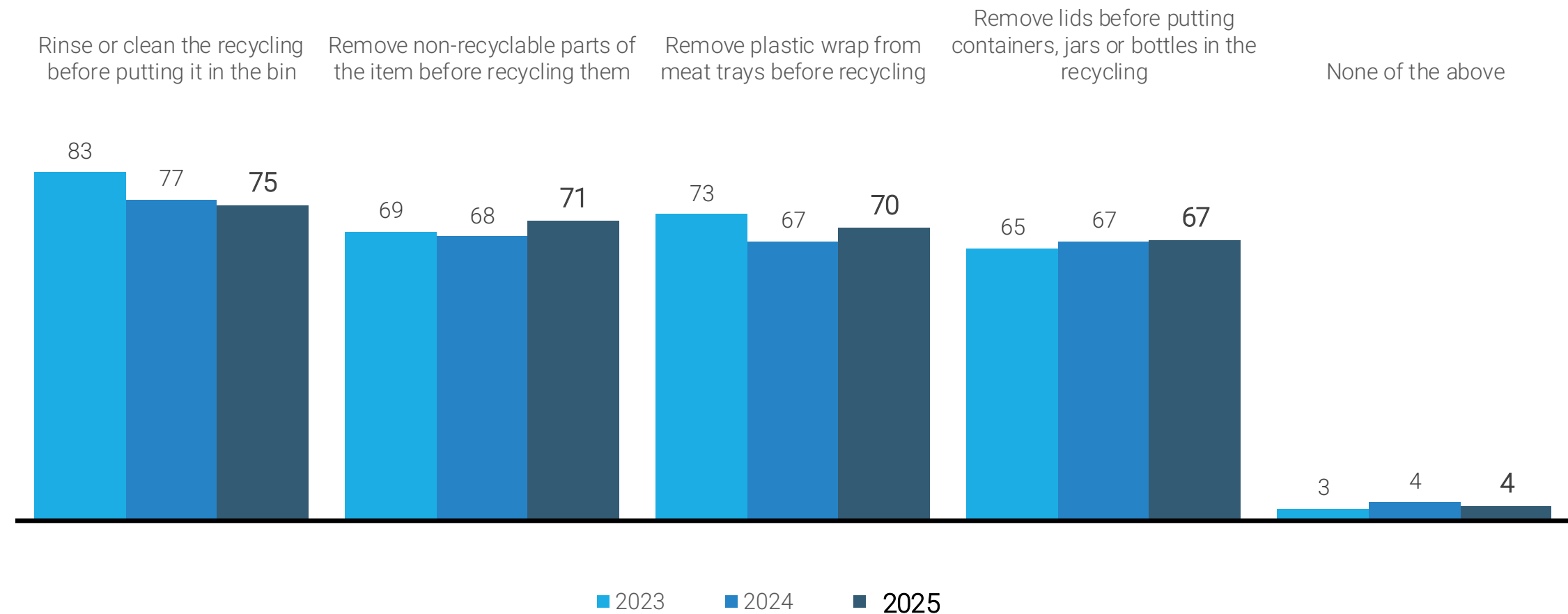
- Rinse or clean the recycling before putting it in the bin: **75%** (down from 77% in 2024, 83% in 2023)
 - *Women were more likely than men to rinse or clean items (83% vs 67%)*
 - *Those in provincial North Island (81%) were more likely, while those in Auckland (67%) were less.*
- Remove non-recyclable parts of the item before recycling them: **71%** (2024: 68%, 2023: 69%)
 - *Those in Auckland (65%) were less likely.*
- Remove plastic wrap from meat trays before recycling: **70%** (2024: 67%, 2023: 73%)
 - *Those living in small urban settlements (51%) were less likely.*
- Remove lids before putting containers, jars or bottles in the recycling: **67%** (2024: 67%, 2023: 65%)
 - *Women were more likely than men to remove lids (71% vs 62%)*
 - *Those in provincial North Island (74%) and South Island (excluding Canterbury) (80%) were more likely, while those in Auckland (51%) were less likely.*

Note: provincial North Island refers to the North Island, excluding Auckland and Wellington

RECYCLING ACTIONS (TRENDLINE)



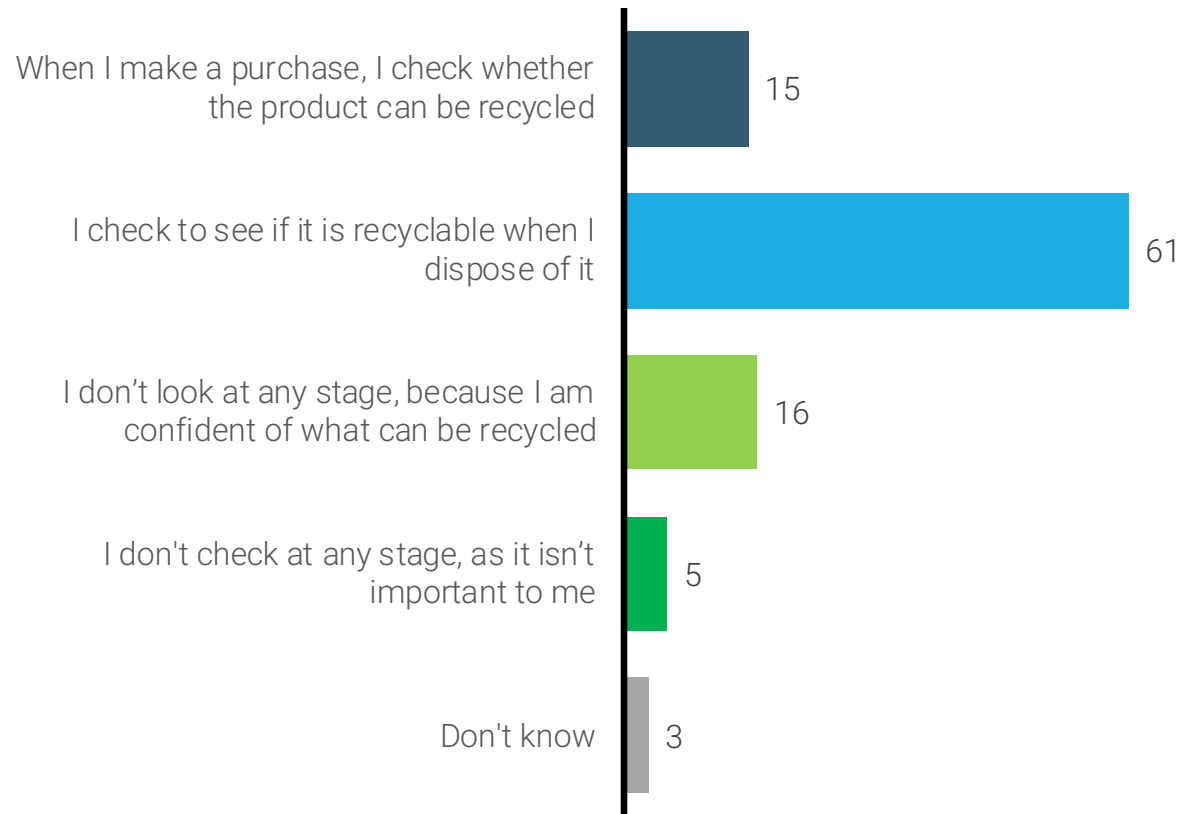
Which of the following do you do? (%)



CHECKING WHETHER AN ITEM CAN BE RECYCLED



When do you check whether an item can be recycled? CHOOSE ONE



- The majority of respondents (61%) checked whether an item is recyclable at the time of disposal, while only 15% do so at the time of purchase. A further 16% felt confident in their knowledge and did not check at any stage. This was a new question added in 2025.
- Those aged 60+ years were more likely to say they checked at time disposal (70%).

FREQUENCY OF BEHAVIOURS

Frequency of sustainable behaviours mostly remained stable between 2023 and 2025, with slight increases in less common actions like using reusable cups, containers, and hiring or borrowing items—suggesting gradual but modest behavioural shifts toward more sustainable habits. Note: These questions were not asked in 2024.

The **top three positive** behaviours with a majority saying they ‘always’ or ‘very often’ did them were:

- Bring their own reusable bags when shopping: **81% (2023: 81%)**
- Recycle waste at home: **68% (2023: 72%)**
- Carry a reusable water or drink bottle with them: **63% (2023: 58%)**.

Practices that were **less common** were:

- Wherever possible, repair items rather than buy new ones: **43% (2023: 42%)**
- Bring their own cutlery or opt not to take free cutlery when getting takeaways: **26% (2023: 23%)**
- Take a reusable cup when buying tea or coffee at a café or use a reusable cup system: **21% (2023: 17%)**.
- Use their own containers for takeaway food rather than being given single use ones, or use a reusable container system: **18% (2023: 11%)**.

The **least common** practices were:

- Hire or borrow items such as tools, toys or clothes, rather than buying new ones: **14% (2023: 9%)**
- Take containers to shops to get a refill (e.g. flour, oil, nuts or cleaning products): **10%. (2023: 6%)**.

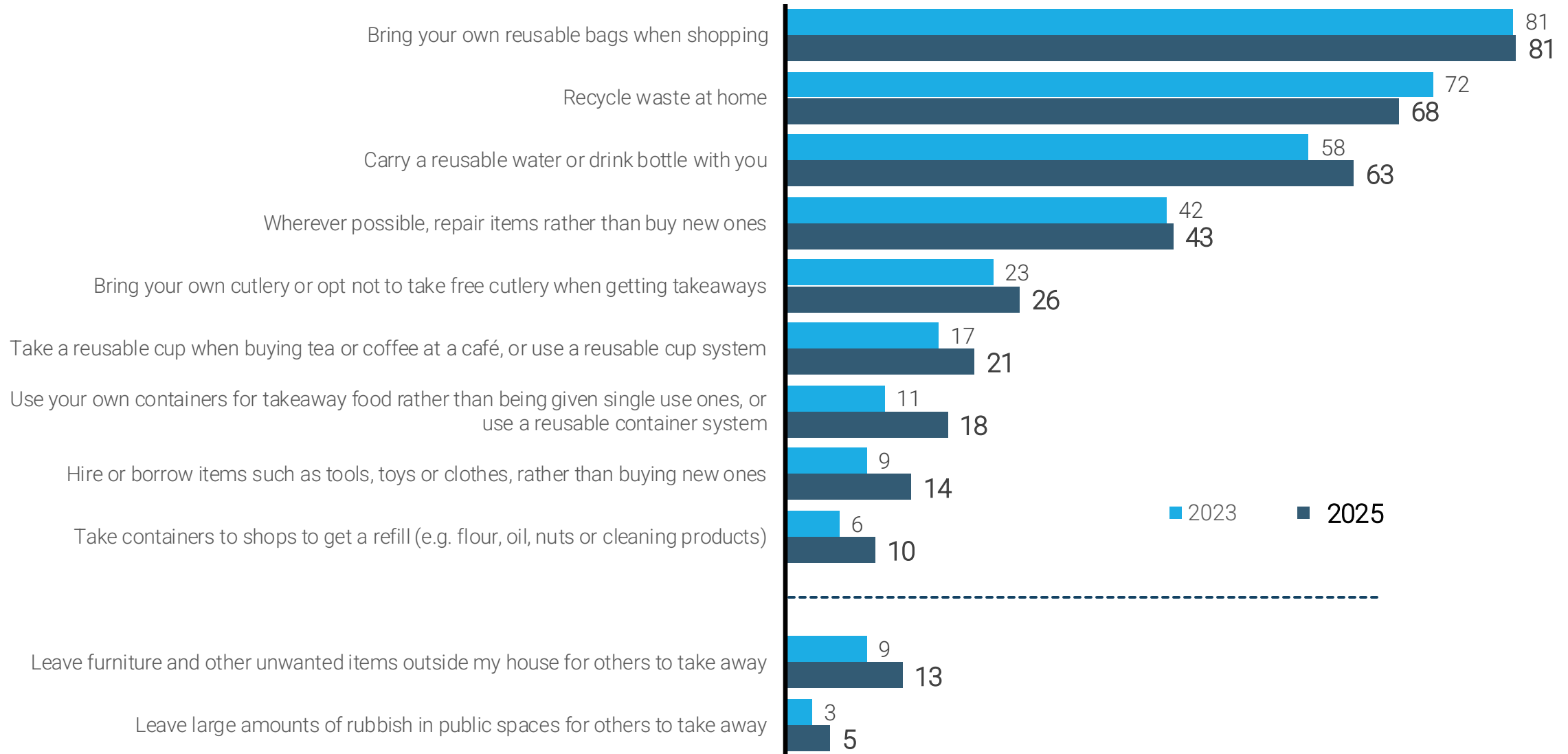
Low proportions continued to say they always or very often do the following **negative** behaviours:

- Leave furniture and other unwanted items outside my house for others to take away: **13% (2023: 9%)**
- Leave large amounts of rubbish in public spaces for others to take away: **5% (2023: 3%)**.

FREQUENCY OF BEHAVIOURS (TRENDLINE)



How often do you do each of the following? (% Always + Very often)



Base: All respondents (n=1006)

COMPARISON OF FREQUENCY OF OTHERS' BEHAVIOURS

There has been an overall increase in the perception in what others do compared to 2023, indicating a shift in social norms.

However, a **consistent perception gap remains** with respondents tending to view themselves as more environmentally responsible than others, especially for behaviours like recycling at home, recycling on the go, and repairing items. The gap declined for 'recycling waste at home' which might indicate people now think this is a more normalised behaviour, but overall expectations of others remained modest. *Note: These questions were not asked in 2024.*

The frequency of behaviour followed the same pattern as for their own behaviour, just at much lower levels. The top three behaviours that they believed others did 'always' or 'very often' were:

- Bring their own reusable bags when shopping: **54% (2023: 53%)** – compared with 81% for themselves.
- Recycle waste at home: **39% (2023: 35%)** – compared with 68% reporting they did this themselves
 - *Those living in provincial North Island were less likely to think others do this (31%).*
- Recycle items they consume on the go (e.g. drink cans or newspapers) in public recycling bins (e.g. shopping centres, on-street, bus stations): **21% (2023: 23%)** – compared with 57% reporting they did this themselves
 - *Those living in Auckland were more likely to think others do this (28%).*

The less common behaviours that people reported others did were:

- Wherever possible, repair items rather than buy new ones: **16% (2023: 13%)** – compared with 43% themselves.
 - *Those living in Auckland were more likely to think others do this (21%).*
- Take a reusable cup when buying tea or coffee at a café or use a reusable cup system: **13% (2023: 9%)** – compared with 21% themselves. This was the behaviour where the perceived frequency was closest to their own.
 - *Those aged 60+ years were less likely to think others do this (6%).*

On the **negative** behaviours respondents continued to rate other people slightly higher, being more in line with their behaviour:

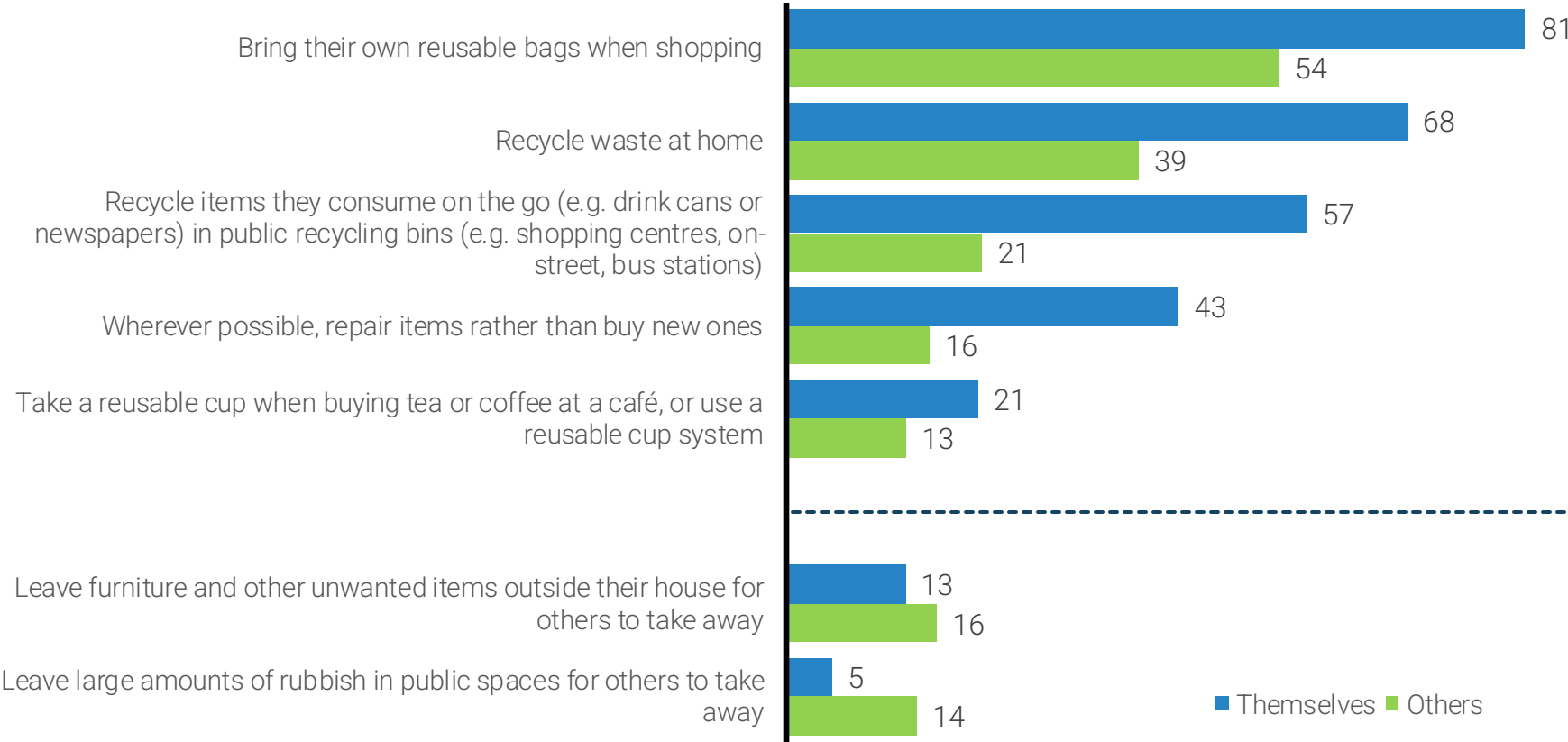
- Leave large amounts of rubbish in public spaces for others to take away: **14% (2023: 12%)** – compared with 5% reporting they did this themselves.
 - *Those aged between 30-44 years were more likely to think others do this (19%).*
 - *As were those living in Auckland (20%).*
- Leave furniture and other unwanted items outside their house for others to take away: **16% (2023: 12%)** – compared with 13%.
 - *Younger respondents were more likely to think others did this (Under 30: 23%; 30-44: 24%, 45-59: 11%, 60+: 10%).*

COMPARISON OF OWN BEHAVIOUR VERSUS OTHERS' BEHAVIOUR (2025)



How often do YOU do each of the following?

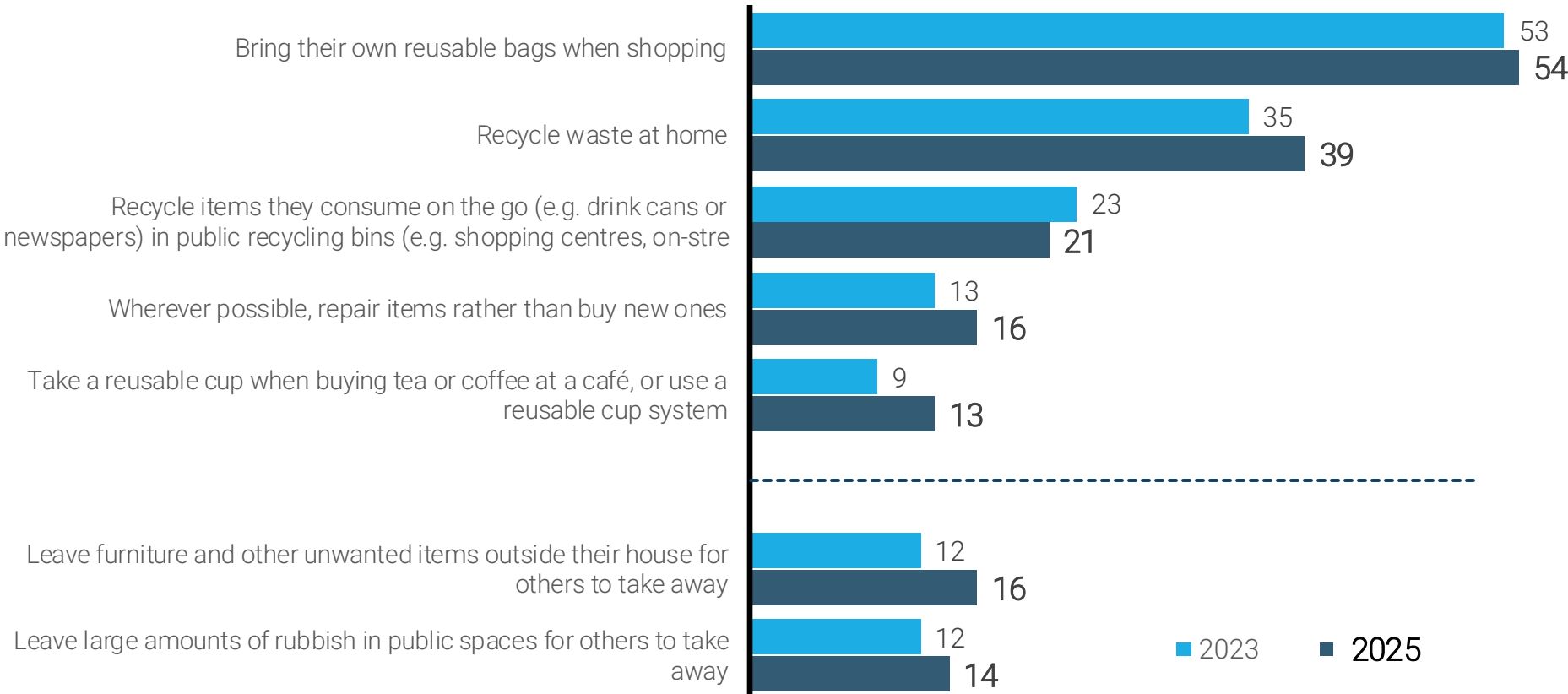
How often do you think OTHERS do the following? (% Total: always + very often)



COMPARISON OF FREQUENCY OF OTHERS' BEHAVIOURS (TRENDLINE)



How often do you think OTHERS do the following? (% Always + very often)



REPORT FINDINGS: RECYCLING ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE



ATTITUDES ON RECYCLING

This section of the survey asked respondents about their current recycling attitudes and tested knowledge levels.

Asked over the past three years, **most still believed it was worth the effort to recycle properly, with high confidence in placing the correct items in recycling bins and finding the process easy.** However, uncertainty persisted around the **recycling process** – with less than half who felt confident their items were actually recycled, and around a third finding recycling rules confusing or knew what happened to recycling after it was collected.

Misconceptions also remained, with just under a third still believing that most recycling ends up in landfill. However, confidence in the system and misconceptions have both shown some improvement.

The top three attitudes were all positive and have remained stable in the latest results.

- I believe it's worth taking the time to get recycling right: **86% (2024: 87%, 2023: 83%)**
- I am confident that I place the correct items in the recycling bin at home: **84% (2024: 83%, 2023: 80%)**
- I find recycling easy: **75% (2024: 73%, 2023: 71%).**

Over the three years of tracking, confidence in the recycling process has gradually increased, while misconceptions—such as the belief that most ends up in landfill—have declined.

Other positive attitudes recorded agreement between 41%-31%.

- I am confident that all the items in the recycling actually get recycled: **41% (2024: 40%, 2023: 32%)**
- I know what happens to my recycling after it is being collected from the kerbside: **31% (2024: 31%, 2023: 24%).**

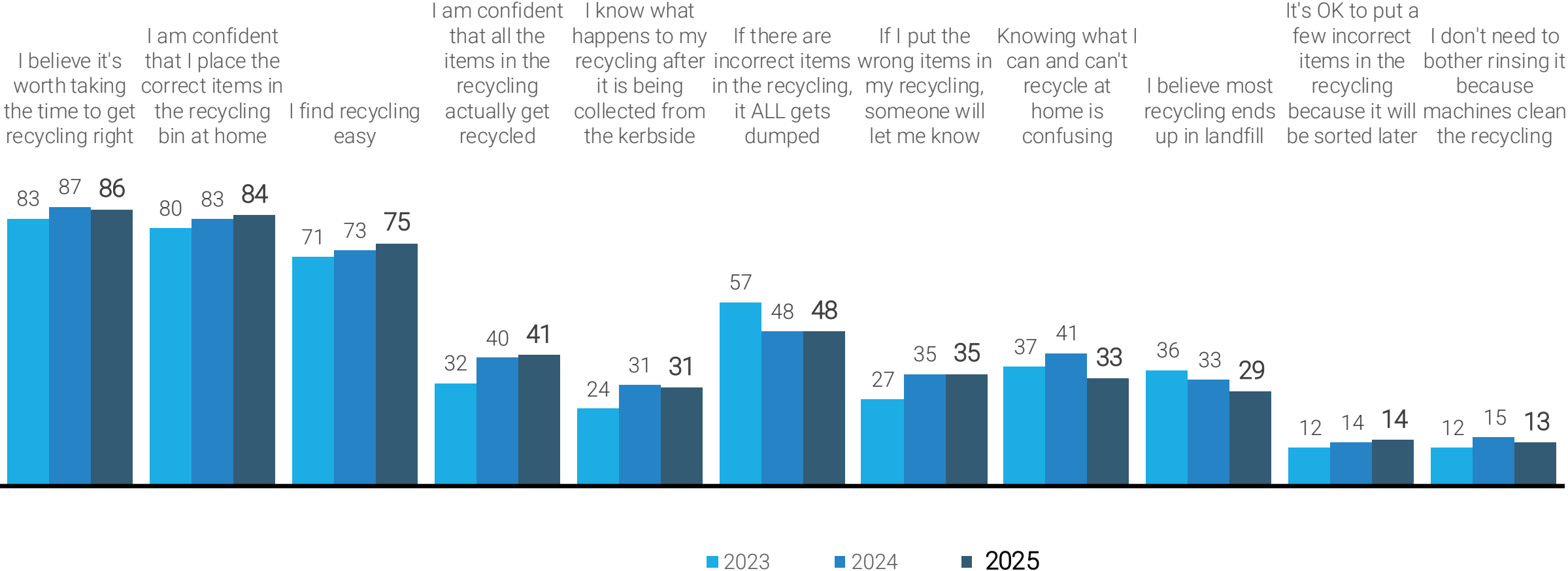
While misconceptions and Incorrect behaviours scored between 48%-13%.

- If there are incorrect items in the recycling, it ALL gets dumped: **48% (2024: 48%, 2023: 57%)**
- If I put the wrong items in my recycling, someone will let me know: **35% (2024: 35%, 2023: 27%)**
- Knowing what I can and can't recycle at home is confusing: **33% (2024: 41%, 2023: 37%)**
- I believe most recycling ends up in landfill: **29% (2024: 33%, 2023: 36%)**
- It's OK to put a few incorrect items in the recycling because it will be sorted later: **14% (2024: 14%, 2023: 12%)**
- I don't need to bother rinsing it because machines clean the recycling: **13% (2024: 15%, 2023: 12%)**

ATTITUDES ON RECYCLING (TRENDLINE)



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about recycling? (% Total agree)



RECYCLING KNOWLEDGE

Tracked over the past three years, knowledge of **recyclable items** remained high for common items like milk bottles, drink bottles, and aluminium cans, with over 90% answering correctly. However, confusion remained around items like glass jars (showing a drop in knowledge), pizza boxes, and meat trays.

Awareness of **non-recyclable items** remained moderate; fewer than half correctly identify juice cartons and coffee cups as non-recyclable. Correct identification of non-recyclables such as aerosol cans, aluminium foil, soft plastics, and clothing remained relatively stable but there is still room for improvement.

Out of 16 items tested this year, there was a slight decrease in the proportion correctly identifying whether an item was recyclable or not. 27% correctly identified 14-16 items (down 2%), 31% identified 12 or 13 (down 2%), and 42% 11 or less (up 4%). Only 15 items were tested in 2023, so this has been omitted from this comparison.

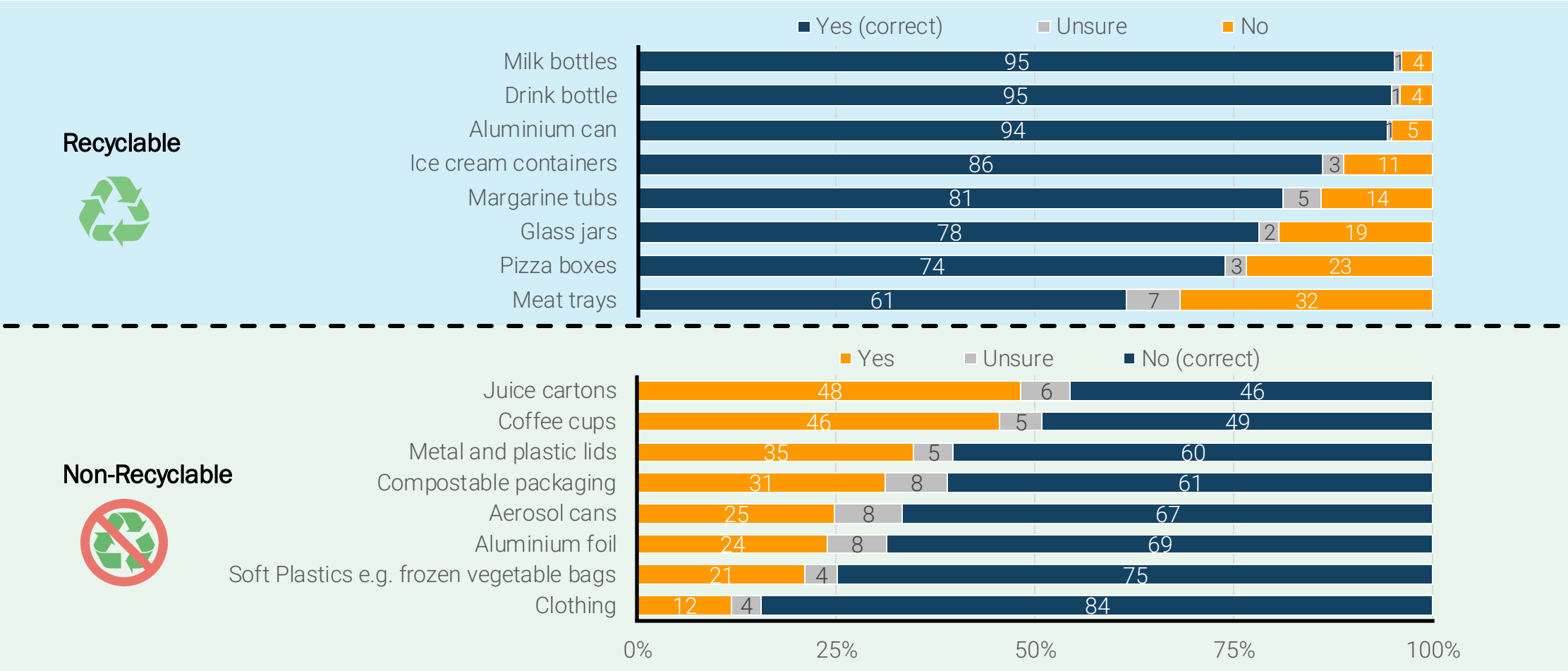
- **80% or more correctly identified the following as recyclable:** Milk bottles on 95% (2024: 96%, 2023: 97%), drink bottles on 95% (2024: 96%, 2023: 96%), aluminium cans on 94% (2024: 95%, 2023: 94%), ice cream containers on 86% (2024: 86%, 2023: 86%), and margarine tubs on 81% (2024: 77%, 2023: 81%).
- There was less certainty about glass jars on 78% (2024: 85%, 2023: 90%), pizza boxes on 74% (2024: 72%, 2023: 71%), and meat trays on 61% (2024: 60%, 2023: 63%). **Glass jars have shown the largest drop** since tracking began in 2023, declining 12% over this period.
 - *Aucklanders (90%) were more likely to know glass jars were recyclable while provincial North Islanders (68%) were less likely.*
 - *Canterbury respondents (62%) were less likely to know pizza boxes were recyclable.*

In terms of non-recyclable items, results were generally stable with the majority correctly identifying most as non-recyclable for council collection. However, confusion over coffee cups and juice cartons remained, with only 49% (2024: 55%, 2023: 48%), and 46% (2024: 48%, 2023: 43%) respectively correctly identifying them as non-recyclable.

RECYCLING KNOWLEDGE (FULL RESULTS 2025)



Would you typically put these items in your recycling? (%)

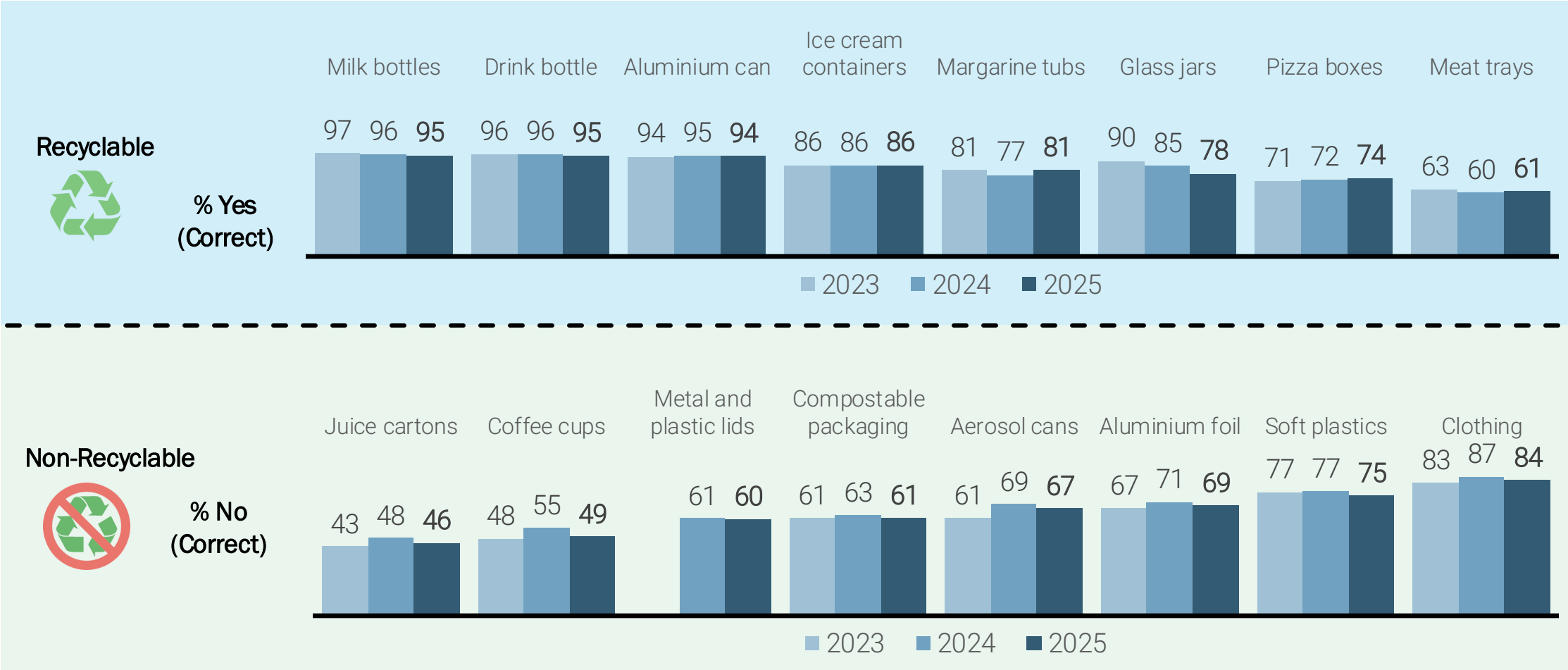


Base: All respondents (n=1006)

RECYCLING KNOWLEDGE (TRENDLINE)



Would you typically put these items in your recycling? (%)



Note: prior to 2025 'soft plastics e.g. frozen vegetable bags' was just 'frozen vegetable bags'; Base: All respondents (n=1006)

REPORT FINDINGS: RECYCLING AND REDUCING SEGMENTATION



RECYCLING AND REDUCING SEGMENTATION

A segmentation of respondents based on the reducing and recycling questions was created, identifying those who exhibit low, medium and high commitment to engage in reducing and recycling behaviours. To do this, respondents were given a score between 0 and 100 for each of the ten positive behaviours tested, depending on how frequently they said they did them (0= Never, 25=Very occasionally, 50=Quite often, 75= Very often and 100=Always).

The average score was taken for each respondent so they each had a score between 0 and 100, depending on how often they said they did the behaviours. Using these average scores, the sample was divided into three segments – low commitment, medium commitment, and high commitment. This segmentation was only conducted in 2023 and 2025.

The **latest results were encouraging, with 6% of those previously showing medium commitment in 2023 now shifting to high commitment.** However, there was no change in the low commitment group, which remained resistant to movement.

Low commitment (25%, no change from 2023) – those who had average scores of 35 or less:

- Sceptical and disengaged; low confidence in recycling, low knowledge, and less likely to take action.

Medium commitment (44%, down 6%) – those with scores between 36 and 55:

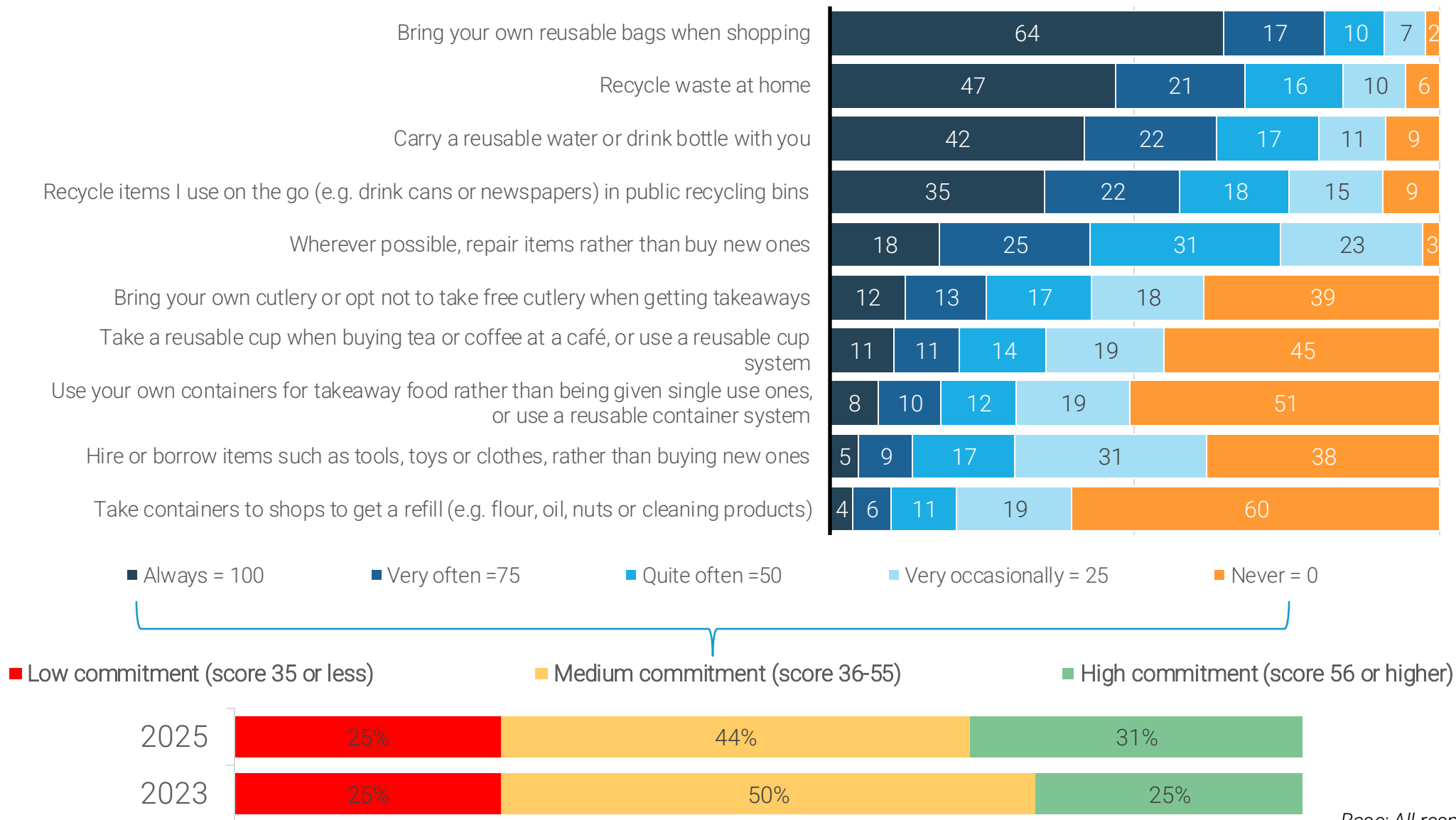
- Moderately engaged; holds some positive attitudes but shares traits with the low group, particularly around knowledge gaps and checking recyclability.

High commitment (31%, up 6%) – those with scores greater than 55:

- Confident and proactive; highly knowledgeable, values the environmental impact, and regularly engages in recycling and waste-reduction behaviours.

DEFINING REDUCING AND RECYCLING SEGMENTS

Q How often do you do each of the following? (%)



Base: All respondents (n=1006)

COMMITMENT SEGMENTS (2025)



Low commitment (25%)

Demographics 'more likely':

- Male
- Live in a city

Attitudes indicate cynicism about recycling and impact of reducing waste.

- Higher - 'Most recycling ends up in landfill'
- Lower - 'Confident all items in recycling actually get recycled'
- Less important - Reducing plastic waste/ food waste/ greenhouse gas emissions is important/ impacts of rubbish on environment

Attitudes show barriers around perceived ease of recycling :

- Lower - 'Find recycling easy'
- Believe others are also recycling/ reducing

Knowledge 'lower':

- 'Confident where to place items'
- 'If incorrect items in recycling, it all gets dumped'
- Lower on correct identification of whether item is recyclable or not

Actions 'less likely':

- Try to reduce waste
- Go somewhere else to recycle
- Check if item can be recycled
- Avoid plastic



Medium commitment (44%)

Demographics 'more likely':

- Have a spouse/ partner

Attitudes are often mid-way between low and high commitment scores – but was closer to low commitment segment on:

- 'Confident all items in recycling actually get recycled'
- Believe others are also recycling/ reducing

Knowledge 'mid to higher range', apart from being lower on:

- 'Know what happens to recycling after being collected from kerbside'

Actions 'mid-range but a majority':

- Try to reduce waste
- Go somewhere else to recycle
- Avoid plastic

Actions 'less likely':

- Check if item can be recycled



High commitment (31%)

Demographics 'more likely':

- Female
- Live in rural area

Attitudes show high confidence and belief in benefits of recycling:

- Higher - 'Find recycling easy'
- Higher - 'Confident all items in recycling actually get recycled'
- Lower – 'Most recycling ends up in landfill'
- Higher - Believe others are also recycling/ reducing
- More important - Reducing plastic waste/ food waste/ reducing greenhouse gas emissions/ impact of rubbish on environment

Knowledge 'higher':

- 'Know what happens to recycling after being collected from kerbside'.
- 'Confident where to place items'

Actions 'more likely':

- Try to reduce waste
- Go somewhere else to recycle
- Check if item can be recycled
- Avoid plastic

REDUCING AND RECYCLING SEGMENTATION – DIFFERENCES

Comparing the demographic spread across segments between 2023 (when the segmentation was last conducted) and 2025 showed the proportion of the High commitment segment had increased across many groups.

- Most often, the increase was due to a decrease in those in the Medium commitment segment, with the Low commitment segment not necessarily shrinking (in fact, the latter sometimes increased as well).
- The shift either up or down perhaps indicates firming views and behaviours rather than growing indifference.

Waste-reduction behaviours strongly correlate with commitment level: 88% of the High commitment group actively try to reduce waste, compared to only 43% of the Low commitment group. **Dedication to reduce waste declined (at varying levels) across all three groups** since 2023: Low (49% to 43%), Medium (75% to 71%), High (90% to 88%).

The proportions in each segment that could correctly identify recyclables remained relatively stable between 2023 and 2025, with knowledge levels continuing to vary by segment: Only 20% (up 1% from 2023) of the Low commitment group correctly identified 14+ recyclables out of 16, compared to 27% (down 4%) of the High commitment group.

High commitment individuals were more likely to engage in proactive recycling actions. Willingness to go to another location to recycle increased slightly in 2025.

Perceived social norms were stronger among High commitment individuals, who were more likely to believe others were also taking recycling/reducing actions (22–63% vs just 4–46% among Low commitment). This was steady compared to 2023.

Segments also varied by recall of information on waste reduction. Differences were relatively small between the High and Medium commitment segments, indicating greater exposure may not result in higher recycling/ reducing behaviour. However, the difference to the Low commitment segment was larger so there may be more scope to increase knowledge and behaviour in this segment. This trend held true for results from 2023 and 2025.

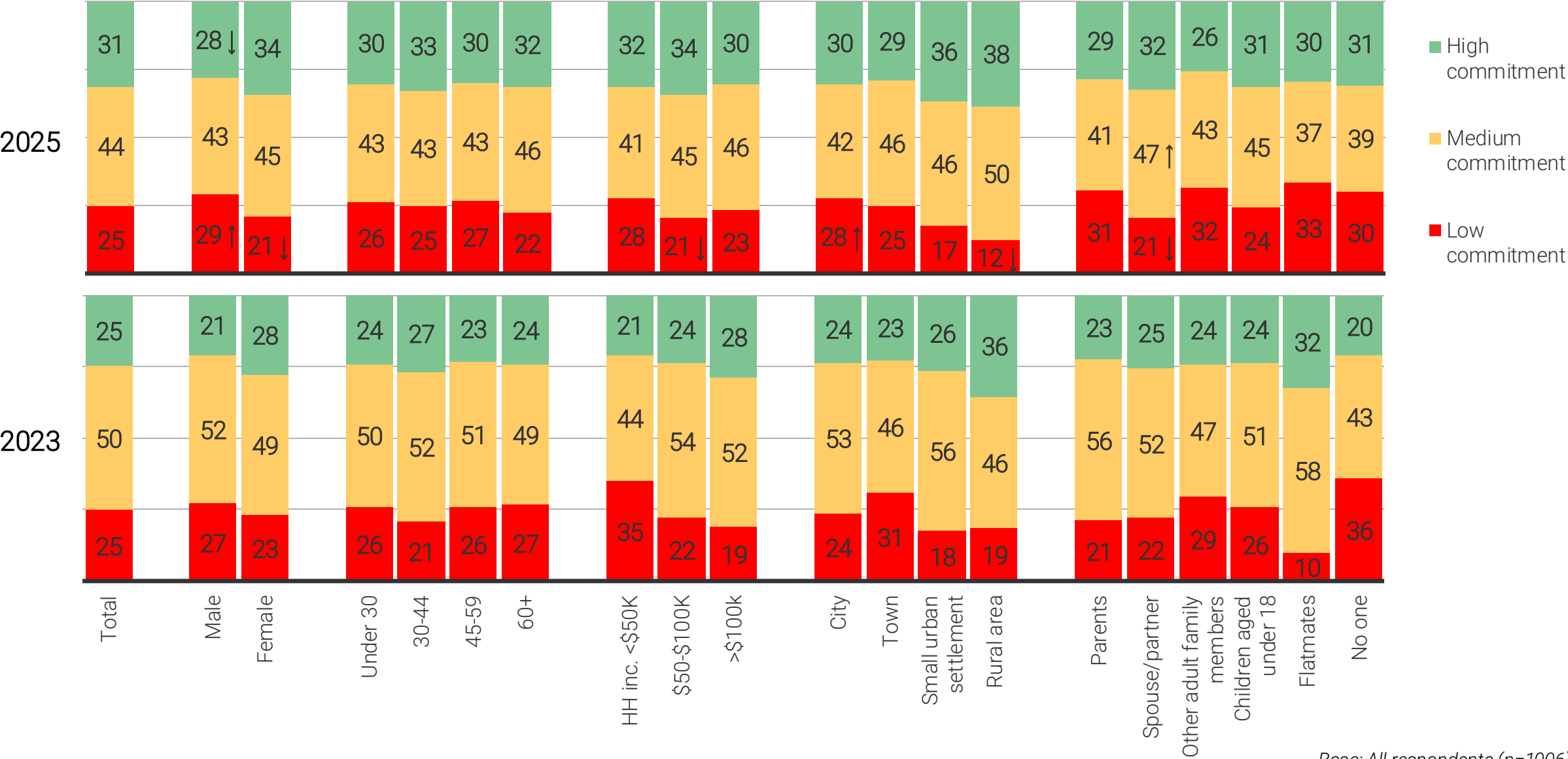
Looking at changes in attitude towards recycling from 2023 to 2025, High commitment individuals have improved across most measures, while Medium and Low commitment segments were relatively stable.

Some persistent misconceptions (like ‘uncertainty that all the items in the recycling actually get recycled’) showed further improvements in knowledge levels.

Overall, there was a modest decline in importance toward various aspects of reducing waste (plastics, food, rubbish, greenhouse gases) across the board, suggesting a plateauing of attitudes.

- High commitment individuals remained the most environmentally motivated, though with small declines since 2023.
- Medium commitment individuals were still moderately concerned but there were some drops since 2023.
- Low commitment individuals continued to show significantly lower concern, especially around climate-related issues. Compared to 2023, ratings were relatively flat or slightly lower.

REDUCING AND RECYCLING SEGMENTS DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS (TRENDLINE)



Base: All respondents (n=1006)
Note: For 2025, arrows next to the percentages mean that differences between groups in 2025 are statistically significant.
Total percentage is 101 due to rounding

OTHER SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS WITH SEGMENTS (2025)

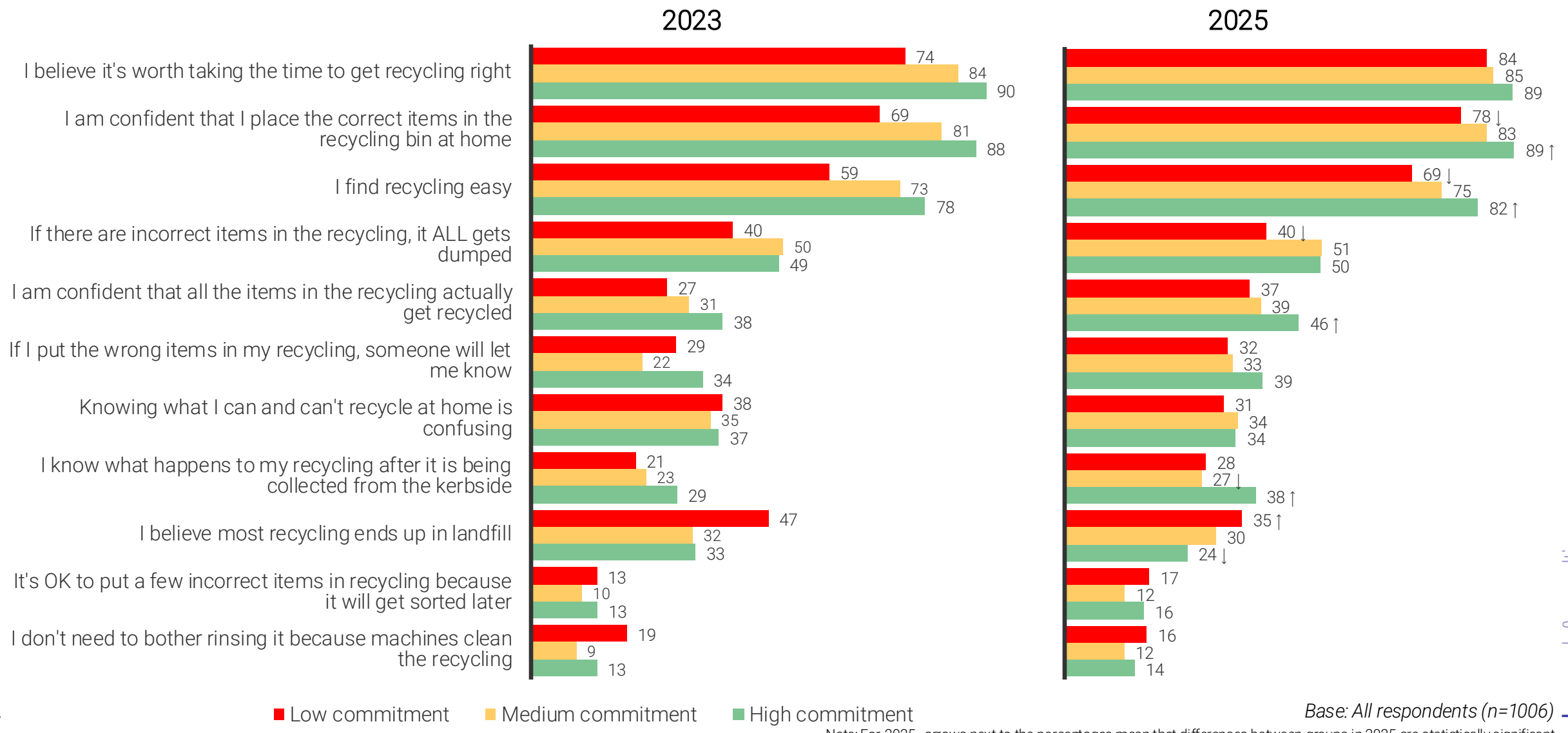
	Low commitment		Medium commitment		High commitment	
	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025
Actively try to reduce waste:	49%	43%	75%	71%	90%	88%
Correctly identified 14 or more recyclables out of 16:	19%	20%	33%	31%	31%	27%
Go to other location(s) to recycle something else:	43%	48%	59%	60%	76%	80%
Think others very often or always do a set of 7 recycling/reducing behaviours:	[3-42%]	4-46%	8-54%	8-52%	18-63%	22-63%
Recycle*:	-	92%	-	98%	-	99%
Check on purchase whether something can be recycled*:	-	10%	-	9%	-	27%
Avoid plastic for health or environmental concerns*:	-	34%	-	58%	-	77%
Recall seeing information in the past 2 years about reducing/recycling:	65%	68%	72%	74%	78%	81%]
Aware of at least one of the tested campaigns^:	-	24%	-	31%	-	50%

*Not asked in 2023

^List of campaigns differed in 2023

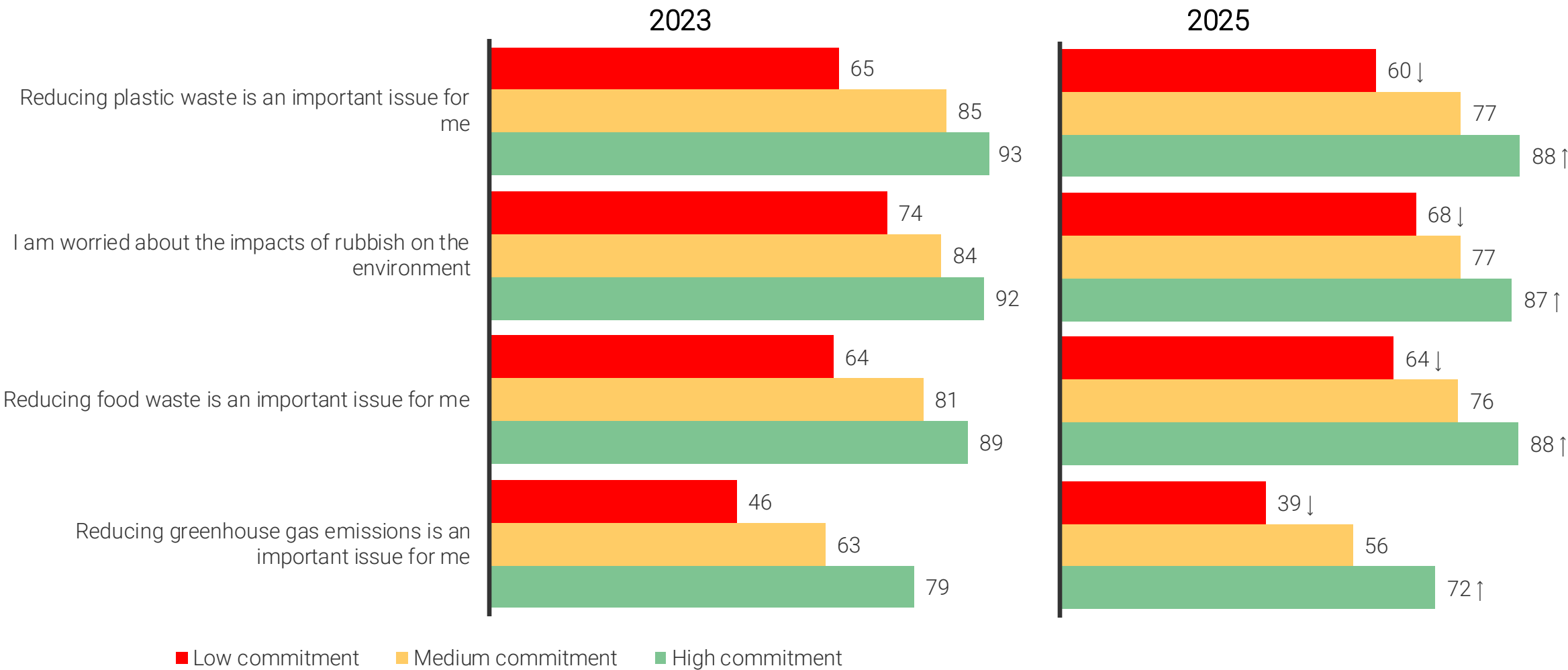
REDUCING AND RECYCLING ATTITUDES (TRENDLINE)

Q How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following about recycling (% AGREE)



IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES RELATING TO WASTE (TRENDLINE)

 How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following about reducing waste (% AGREE)



Base: All respondents (n=1006)

Note: For 2025, arrows next to the percentages mean that differences between groups in 2025 are statistically significant.

REPORT FINDINGS: FOOD WASTE BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES



VIEWS OF FOOD WASTE

This section reviews the questions that explored attitudes and behaviours in respect to food waste.

Asked in 2023 and 2025, **food waste reduction remained an important issue** for the majority. In 2025, 77% (down 2% from 2023) of respondents agreed that reducing food waste was an important issue for them.

Around one-third strongly agreed with this sentiment in both years, showing sustained conviction. There was low disagreement with just 4–5% of respondents disagreeing, indicating broad alignment on this issue.

- Women (81%) were more likely to agree that food waste reduction was important to them as were those aged 60+ years (85%).

Concern about others' food waste remained strong, with over three-quarters (76%, no change since 2023) of respondents that agreed that it annoyed them when they see others wasting food.

- Those aged 60+ years (82%) were more likely to agree.

Similar to 2023, a much lower proportion associated time pressures as being a factor driving their food waste. One-third (33%, down 2%) agreed that busy lifestyles made it hard to avoid food waste, with opinions more split on this.

- Younger respondents were more likely to agree (Under 30: 48%; 30-44: 45%, 45-59: 31%, 60+: 15%).
- Auckland residents (41%) were also more likely to agree, as were those earning between \$50-100k (40%) and parents (51%).

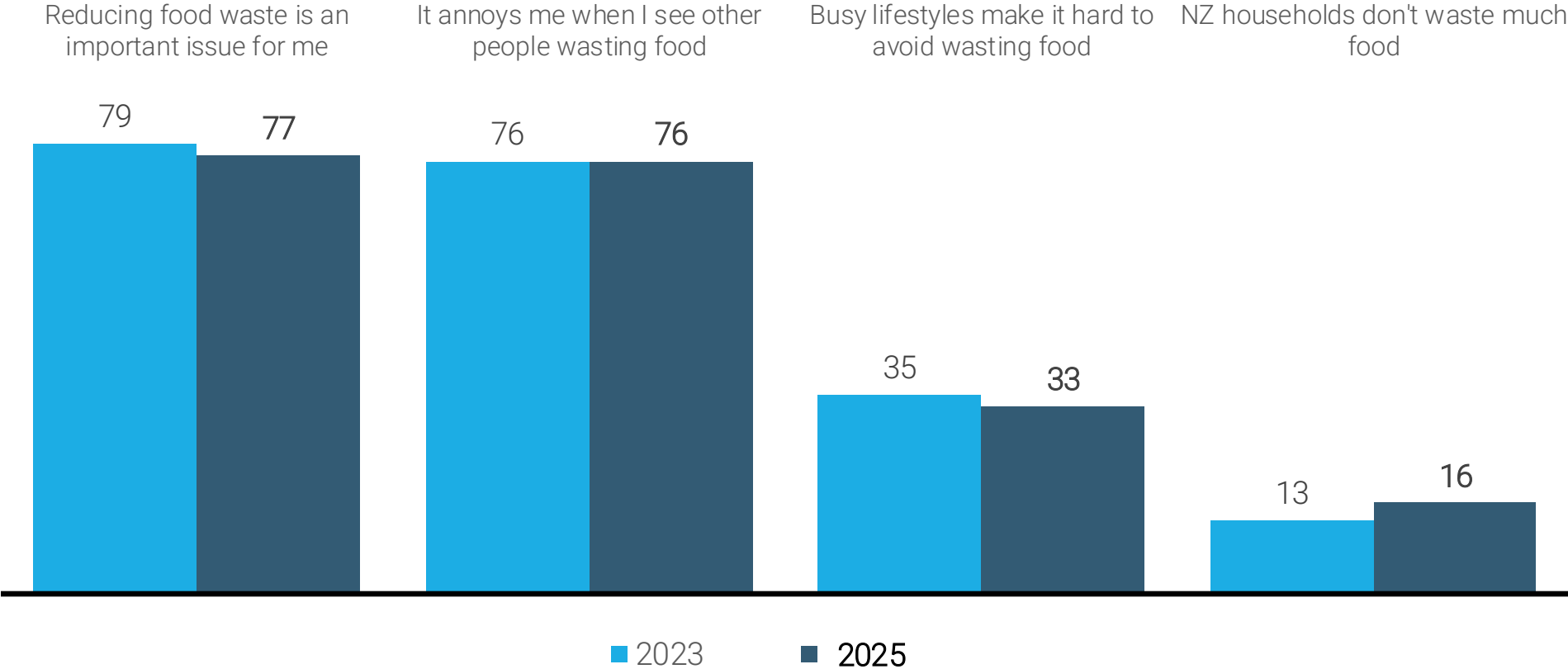
Most respondents felt there was room to improve the amount of food waste produced by New Zealand households. Only 16% agreed that New Zealand households don't waste much food, up 3% from 2023.

- Men (21%) were more likely than women (12%) to agree that households don't waste much food.
- Younger respondents were more likely to agree (Under 30: 27%; 30-44: 20%, 45-59: 15%, 60+: 7%).
- Auckland residents (23%) were also more likely to agree, as were parents (29%).

VIEWS OF FOOD WASTE (TRENDLINE)



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about reducing waste/ food waste? (%)



AMOUNT OF FOOD WASTE

Tracked over the past three years, **most households continued to report low levels of food waste***. In 2025, 71% of respondents said their household wastes less than one 2L container of edible food per week – consistent with 2024 and up slightly from 69% in 2023.

Of this 71%, around half (51%) – (2024: 47%, 2023: 50%) reported wasting less than one 2L container per week, with 20% (2024: 24%, 2023: 19%), saying they did not waste any food.

- Older respondents were more likely to waste less – the proportion saying they waste ‘none’ were (Under 30: 11%; 30-44: 13%, 45-59: 21%, 60+: 32%).

There were 16% (up 2%) that said they waste approximately one 2L container a week, while only a small proportion of households (12%) reported wasting more than two 2L containers weekly.

- Parents (28%) were more likely to say they waste more than two 2L containers weekly.

Across those that said they waste some food, **perceptions of their own food waste behaviour was consistent**, with no major shifts since 2023. In 2025, 70% of respondents said they waste little, very little, or almost no uneaten food – nearly identical to 2023 (71%) and 2024 (69%).

Levels of significant food waste remained low with just 10% of households reporting that they throw out a moderate amount or more, and this has remained relatively stable over the past three years.

- Younger respondents were more likely to waste more.
- Also higher were – parents (39%) and those that live with other adults (38-41%).

Asked in 2023 and 2025, not eating **leftovers remained the leading cause of household food waste**, consistently cited by over half of respondents as a reason (52%, no change from 2023). More than a third (35%, 37% in 2023) stated this as their main reason in 2025.

Food going off in the fridge or freezer was the second most common reason (32%, down 3%), though its incidence as the main reason declined slightly from 2023 (19%) to 2025 (16%).

Other notable contributors included children or fussy eaters, overcooking, and improper food storage, all cited by around 20–25% of respondents and showing slight increases from 2023 (between 2-3%).

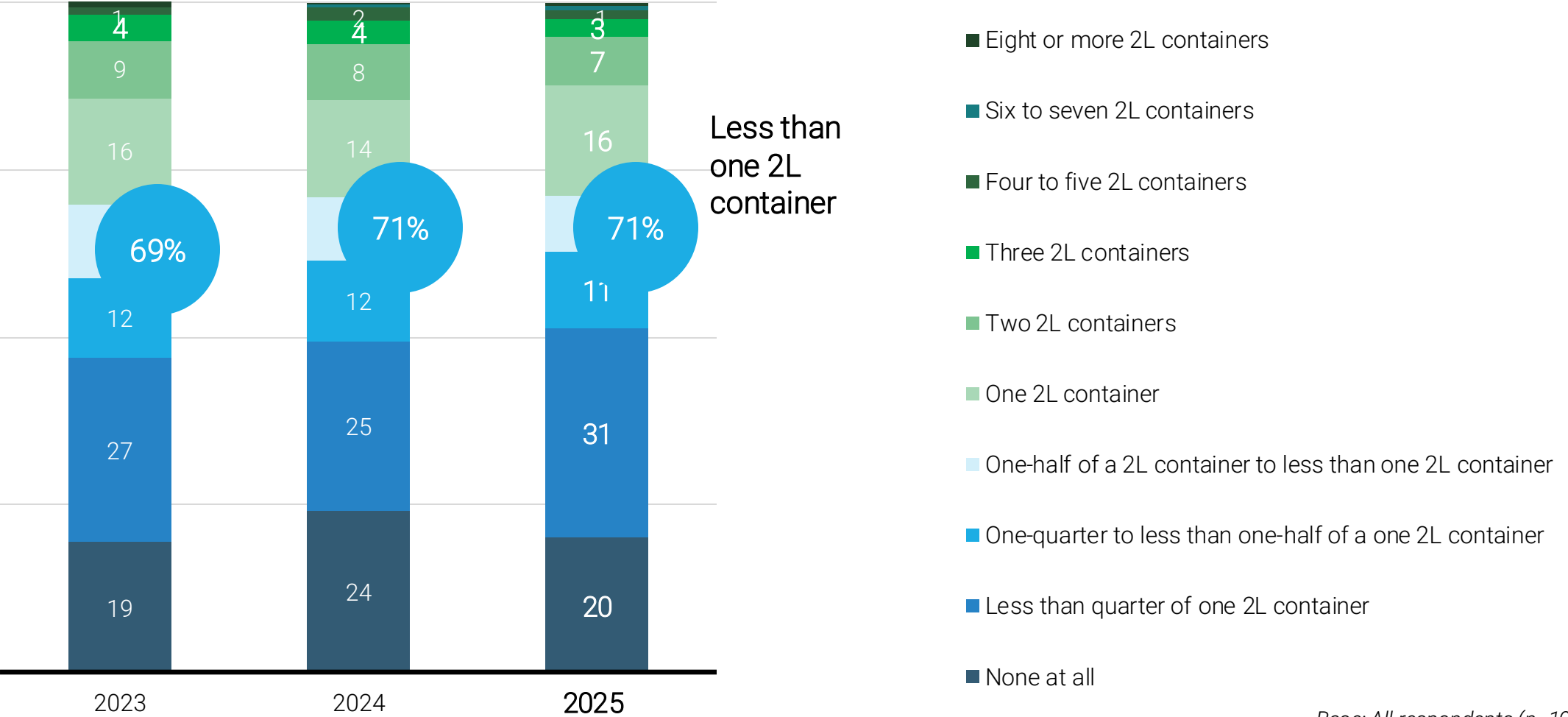
- More likely to cite children or fussy eaters as a cause of food waste were those aged between 30-44 years (39%), and living with dependent children (51%).
- Improper food storage was more likely to be cited by those living with flatmates (41%).

The lowest cause was that they had bought too much food on 16% (up 4%), with this reason given as the main reason rising 5% since 2023.

* Question relates to food that could have been eaten and includes food that was fed to animals or composted.

AMOUNT OF FOOD WASTE (TRENDLINE)

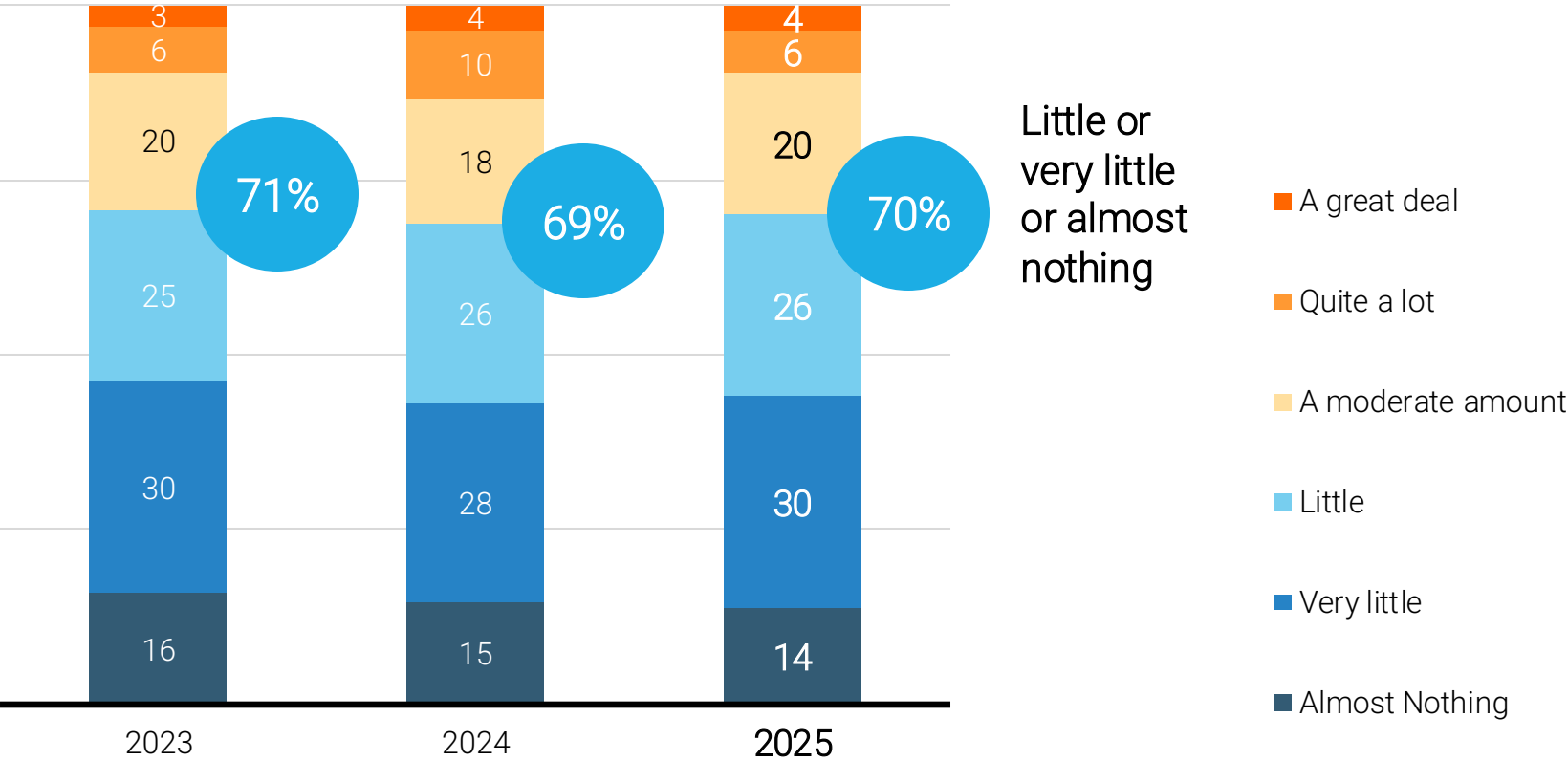
 Using a 2L ice-cream container as a guide, approximately how much food does your household throw away that could have been eaten PER WEEK? This also includes any food that was fed to animals or composted? (%)



WASTING OF FOOD IN HOUSEHOLDS (TRENDLINE)



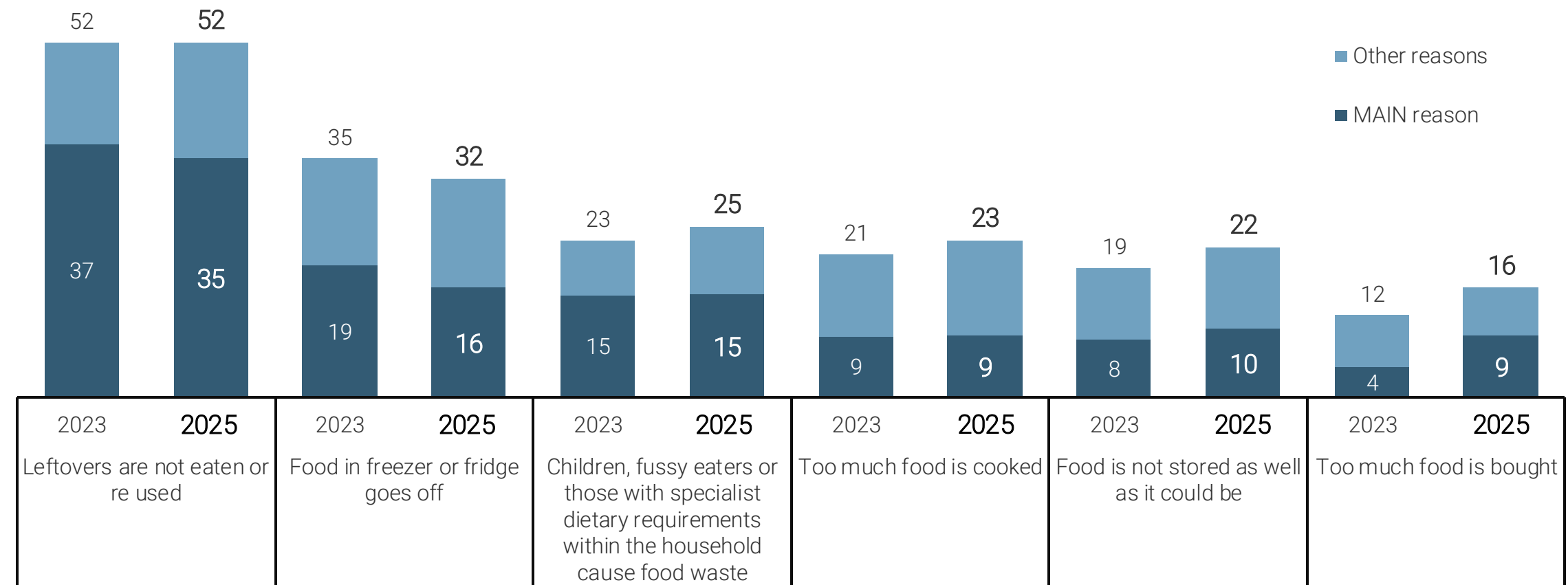
In general, how much uneaten food would you say your household usually throws away that could have been eaten? This also includes any food that was fed to animals or composted. For example, food and drink that was edible at some point before being thrown away? (%)



Base: Those who said they have uneaten food in their household thrown away that could've been eaten (n=812)

REASONS FOR WASTING FOOD IN HOUSEHOLDS (TRENDLINE)

 What are the main reasons your household is wasting food at home? (%)
What is the MAIN reason? (%)



ACTIONS AROUND FOOD WASTE

Core behaviours such as eating leftovers, thinking about portion sizes, and using shopping lists **remained highly consistent and widely practiced**, with over 90% of respondents reporting they do these always or sometimes across all three years of tracking.

- Those aged 60+ were more likely to think about portion size while those aged under 30 years were less likely to eat leftovers.

Meal planning on 86% and combining leftovers into new meals on 87% (2024: 87%, 2023: 88%) also remained common, though there was a slight decline in meal planning from 92% in 2023, 91% in 2024, to 86% in 2025.

- Older respondents were more likely to combine leftovers into a new meal (Under 30: 78%; 30-44: 84%, 45-59: 90%, 60+: 94%).

The act of freezing food that doesn't get eaten also remained common, rising slightly to 84% (2024: 82%, 2023: 82%).

More respondents were now eating food past its 'best before' date, currently up to 81% in 2025 (2024: 78%, 2023: 76%), perhaps indicating growing comfort with reducing waste or the impact of the high cost of living.

First asked in 2025, 80% of respondents reported using food storage hacks or tricks to help their food last longer.

There was a steady increase in people taking leftovers home from social outings now on 78% (2024: 71%, 2023: 68%) and encouraging guests to do the same on 69% (2024: 63%, 2023: 60%) suggesting improved social norms around this behaviour.

- Parents (84%) were more likely to take leftovers home and were also more likely to offer leftovers to guests (77%).

Also only asked this year, just over half (54%) said they used an 'eat me first' shelf or container and less than half (48%) used a meal planner. This suggests continued promotion of these strategies may be beneficial as part of waste-reduction efforts.

- Those aged between 30-44 years were more likely to use a meal planner (57%), as were those earning between \$50-100k (55%), and those with dependent children (61%).

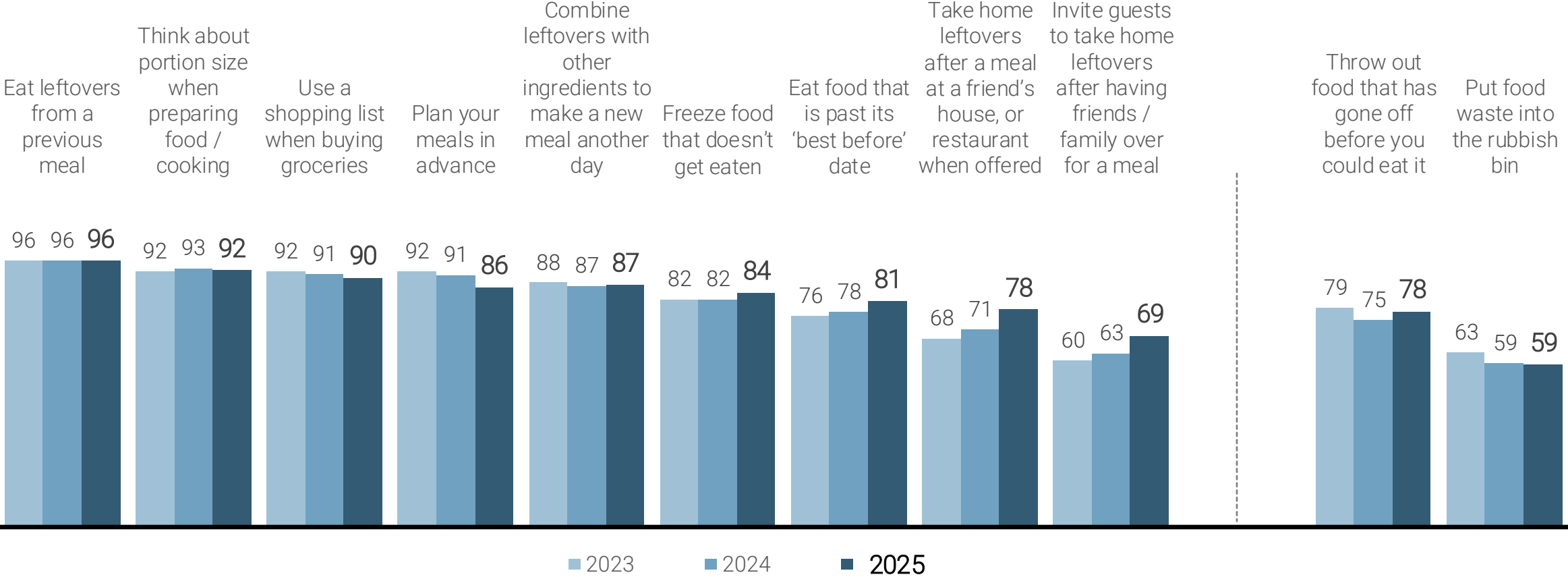
Regardless of intentions around food waste, there were still quite high levels of negative disposal behaviours such as throwing out spoiled food on 78% (2024: 75%, 2023: 79%) or putting food waste in the rubbish bin on 59% (2024: 59%, 2023: 63%) which have remained relatively stable over the past three years.

- Those aged 60+ (67%) were less likely to throw out spoiled food and those with dependent children (85%) were more likely.
- Younger respondents were more likely to put food waste into the rubbish bin (Under 30: 71%; 30-44: 70%, 45-59: 57%, 60+: 40%), as were Wellingtonians (73%) and those with dependent children (68%); while Cantabrians were less likely (46%). The latter result, likely impacted by the fact that Canterbury has a council food scrap collection service, while Wellington does not.

REDUCING FOOD WASTE ACTIONS (TRENDLINE)



How often does the following occur in your household? (% Always + Sometimes)



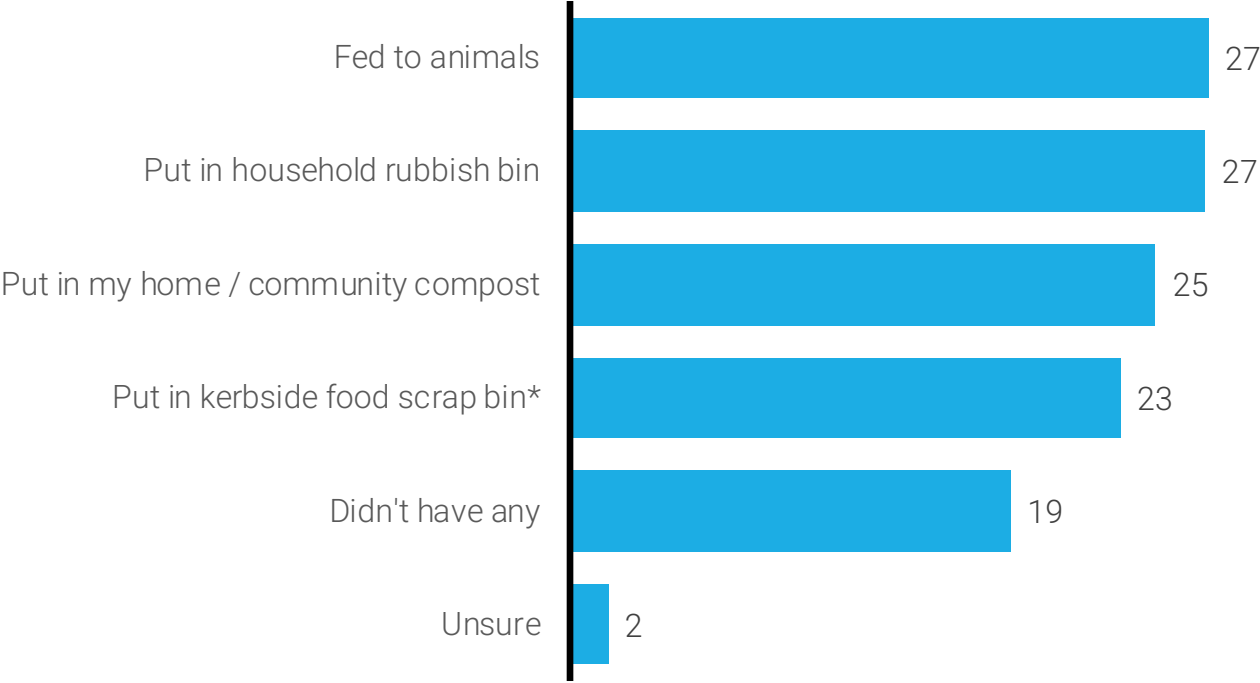
Base: All respondents (n=1006)

Note: trendline only tracks 11 actions, three new actions were added in 2025

DISPOSAL OF UNEATEN FOOD



Of any uneaten food you wasted in the past week (vegetables, leftovers, or bread etc.), what did you do with it?



Feeding food waste to animals (27%) and putting it in the household rubbish bin (27%) were the most common disposal methods for uneaten food in the past week. This was a new question asked in 2025.

- Feeding animals was more common in rural (51%) and small urban areas (45%), and provincial North Island (35%).

A quarter of respondents (25%) used home or community composting, while slightly fewer (23%) made use of the food scrap bin service.

- Use of the food scrap bins was more likely among those under 30 years (34%), men (28%), Aucklanders (34%), and Cantabrians (38%). The latter figures impacted by the fact that both councils have a kerbside collection for food scraps.

Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) reported no food waste in the past week.

- Those aged 60+ years were the most likely to report having no uneaten food to dispose of (31%).

Base: All respondents (n=1006), multiple response question

*Note: only 54% of New Zealand has a kerbside collection for food scraps

EATING FOOD AFTER 'BEST BEFORE DATE'



Do you ever eat food after its 'best before date' CHOOSE ONE



The majority of respondents (71%) said they would eat food past its best before date if it smelt and looked okay, suggesting practical decision-making around food waste. This was a new question asked in 2025.

- Older age groups were more likely to eat food past its best before date, with 80% of those aged 60+ doing so, compared to 62% of those aged 30–44.

Only 8% strictly avoided food after the best before date, believing it to be unsafe.

Caution persisted among some, with 11% acknowledging food may be safe but avoided it due to food safety concerns, while another 6% believed it to be safe but preferred food to be fresh and new. A further 2% said they never checked, and 2% were unsure.



MOTIVATIONS AROUND FOOD WASTE

Asked in 2023 and 2025. **Emotional and ethical drivers remained the strongest motivations to reduce food waste**, with 86% (down 2% from 2023) of respondents who agreed that wasting food feels wrong, and 81% (up 1%) who value the effort it takes to produce food.

- Those aged 60+ were more likely to agree that ‘wasting food feels wrong’ (92%) and that they ‘value the effort to produce food’ (90%).

Financial incentives were also important, though slightly down from 2023—79% saying that saving money motivates them, compared with 89% in 2023.

- Those earning more than \$100k were more likely to agree (85%).

Social and environmental concerns were less prominent motivators, with 68% (down 9%) thinking about global food shortages in relation to food waste and just 55% (no change) motivated by environmental harm.

- Women (73%) were more likely than men (62%) to be motivated by global food shortages.

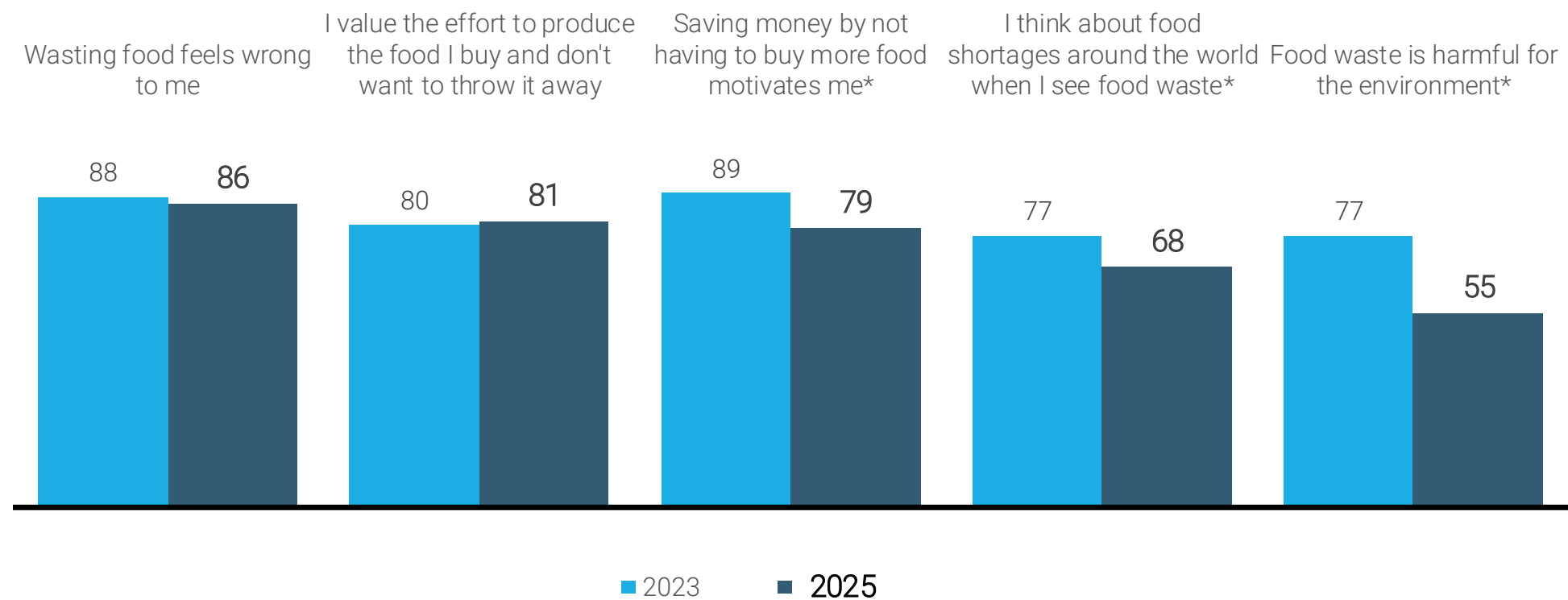
A new statement tested this year, provides further evidence that environmental concerns were less motivating than other factors. Rating lowest, just over half (51%) of respondents agreed that they were concerned about food waste in landfills contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

- Aucklanders were more likely to agree (58%).

MOTIVATIONS TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE (TRENDLINE)



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about food waste? (%)



Base: All respondents (n=1006)

*Some question changes from 2023
Used to be: To what extent do the following motivate you to reduce food waste?
Statement used to be: Saving money by not have to buy more food
Statement used to be: There are food shortages around the world
Statement used to be: I want to reduce my impact on the environment

FOOD WASTE SEGMENTATION

To create a food waste segmentation, two questions were used: 1) how many 2L containers per week of food waste is thrown out and 2) qualitatively how much food waste is thrown out. By cross-tabbing these questions, three groups were generated – low food wastage, medium food wastage, and high food wastage. This segmentation has been conducted over the past three years.

There has been a **slight improvement in food waste behaviour**, with fewer high-waste households and a shift into the medium category—indicating potential progress toward better food management, though low waste levels remain unchanged.

- Low wastage households have remained stable at 30%, 33%, 30% over respective years (2023, 2024, 2025).
- Medium wastage has increased to 41% in 2025, up from 36% in 2024, and 38% in 2023.
- High wastage households declined from 33% in 2023, to 32% in 2024, to 30% in 2025, suggesting a small but encouraging shift toward reduced food waste.

Low food wastage group (30%): those who waste less than a quarter of a 2L container AND say they waste none or almost no food waste.

- This group strongly valued reducing food waste and took action to avoid it. They were least likely to throw away edible food or over-purchase. Older people and those living alone were more likely to fit into this segment.

Medium food wastage group (41%): those who waste one quarter or more of a 2L container AND say they waste very little or more for wastage group food waste BUT don't waste half or more of a 2L container AND waste a little or more.

- This group mostly sat between high and low wastage in attitudes. They cared about environmental impacts but still engaged in behaviours like throwing out food – indicating an opportunity to move opinions and behaviour. Those aged 30–44 years were more likely to fit into this segment.

High food wastage group (30%): those who waste half of a 2L container or more AND say they waste a Little or more of waste.

- This group struggled with busy lifestyles and showed lower motivation to reduce waste. They were less likely to use food-saving strategies and more likely to discard food. Those aged under 44 years, earning over \$100k, in multi-person households, and parents/ dependent children were more likely to fit into this segment.

DEFINING FOOD WASTE SEGMENTS (TRENDLINE)



Using a 2L ice-cream container as a guide, approximately how much food does your household throw away that could have been eaten PER WEEK? This also includes any food that was fed to animals or composted?

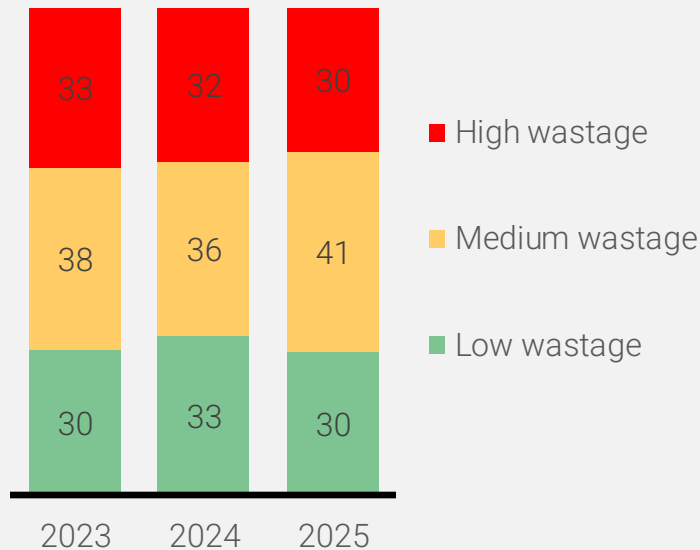
In general, how much uneaten food would you say your household usually throws away that could have been eaten? This also includes any food that was fed to animals or composted. For example, food and drink that was edible at some point before being thrown? (%)

How much food waste is thrown out

2L ice-cream
container of
food waste
per week

	None at all or almost nothing	Very little	Little or more
Less than a quarter	30%	13%	9%
One quarter to one half	1%	4%	6%
One half or more	1%	7%	30%

Overall breakdown of respondents:



REPORT FINDINGS: FOOD WASTE SEGMENTATION



FOOD WASTE SEGMENTS (2025)

High wastage (30%)



Demographics 'more likely':

- Younger aged <44 years
- Higher household income >\$100k
- Parents/ dependent children
- Multi-person household

Attitudes 'higher':

- Busy lifestyle makes it harder to avoid wasting food

Attitudes 'lower':

- Reducing food waste is important
- Annoys me to see other people wasting food

Motivations 'lower':

- Wasting food feels wrong
- Value effort to produce food
- Food waste is harmful for the environment
- Concerned about food waste in landfills creating greenhouse gas emissions

Actions 'less likely':

- Use food storage hacks
- Think about portion size
- Use a shopping list
- Use an 'eat me first' shelf/ container

Actions 'more likely':

- Throw out food that has gone off
- Put food waste into rubbish bin
- Invite guests to take home leftovers

Medium wastage (41%)



Demographics 'more likely':

- Aged between 30-44 years

Attitudes:

- More similar to 'high wastage' group on 'busy lifestyles make it hard to avoid wasting food'

Motivations 'higher':

- Food waste is harmful for the environment
- Often more similar to 'low wastage' group on motivations

Actions 'more likely':

- Use a shopping list
 - Throw out food that has gone off
 - Put food waste into rubbish bin
- [Latter two similar to 'high wastage' group]*

Low wastage (30%)



Demographics 'more likely':

- Older >60 years
- Live alone

Attitudes 'higher':

- 'Reducing food waste is important'
- Annoys me to see other people wasting food

Attitudes 'lower':

- Busy lifestyle makes it harder to avoid wasting food

Motivations 'higher':

- Wasting food feels wrong to me
- Value effort to produce food

Actions 'less likely':

- Throw out food that has gone off
- Put food waste in the rubbish bin
- Invite guests to take home leftovers

FOOD WASTE SEGMENTATION - DIFFERENCES

Across demographics for the past three years, the food waste segments have generally been stable.

Many of the positive food waste actions appear entrenched across all the segments. The key differentiator of the Low wastage segment, was much lower incidence of throwing out food and putting food waste in the rubbish bin.

- High wastage households were less likely to undertake proactive actions such as thinking about portion size or using a shopping list.
- Medium wastage households tended to fall between the extremes but were closer in behaviour to high-wastage households on the key actions.

Looking at the segments across results from 2024 and 2025, showed that general trends were similar. The only difference being greater likelihood for the Low wastage segment to take home leftovers when offered, compared with the Medium and High wastage segment. In 2024, likelihood was much the same between all the segments.

Views of food waste asked in 2023 were re-tested in 2025, with attitudes remaining consistent across the segments. While reducing food waste to save money remains a key motivator, its influence has softened slightly since 2023. This may reflect the effects of the ongoing cost of living crisis—where financial pressure has shifted priorities for many households. In challenging times, people may feel they are already doing all they can or see food waste reduction as a lower priority compared to larger, more immediate financial concerns.

Emotional and ethical motivations (e.g. 'wasting food feels wrong') now appear to carry relatively more weight, possibly reflecting a shift from practical to values-based drivers.

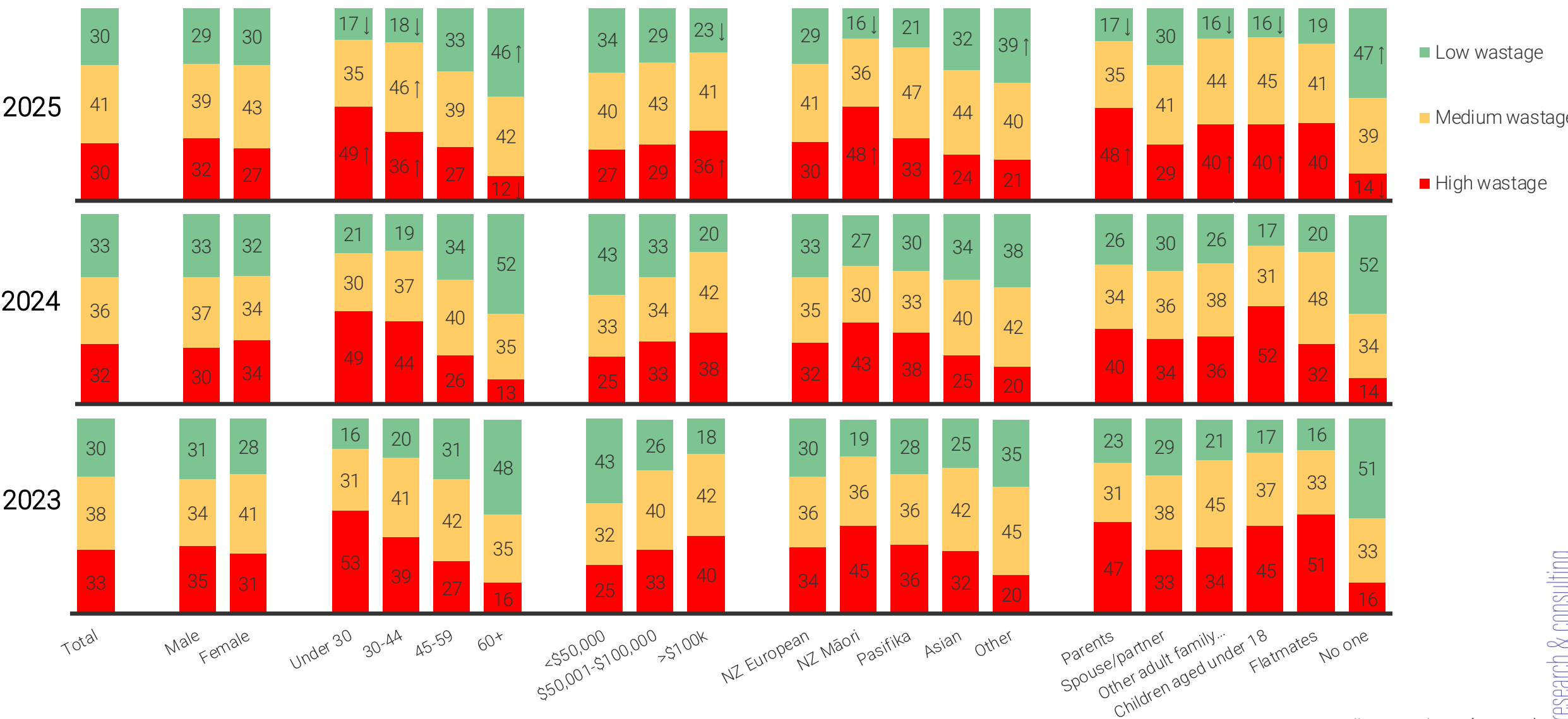
Efforts to reduce waste decreased as food wasted increased: 78% of the Low wastage group actively try to reduce waste, compared to only 57% of the High wastage group. This trend has generally remained stable over the past three years.

Individuals exhibited behaviour in line with their level of food wastage. The Low waste group showed a decline in use of rubbish bins to dispose of food waste in 2025.

Lifestyle factors appeared to impact food waste behaviour. In 2025, a greater share of the High wastage segment reported challenges from busy lifestyles and managing complex household needs.

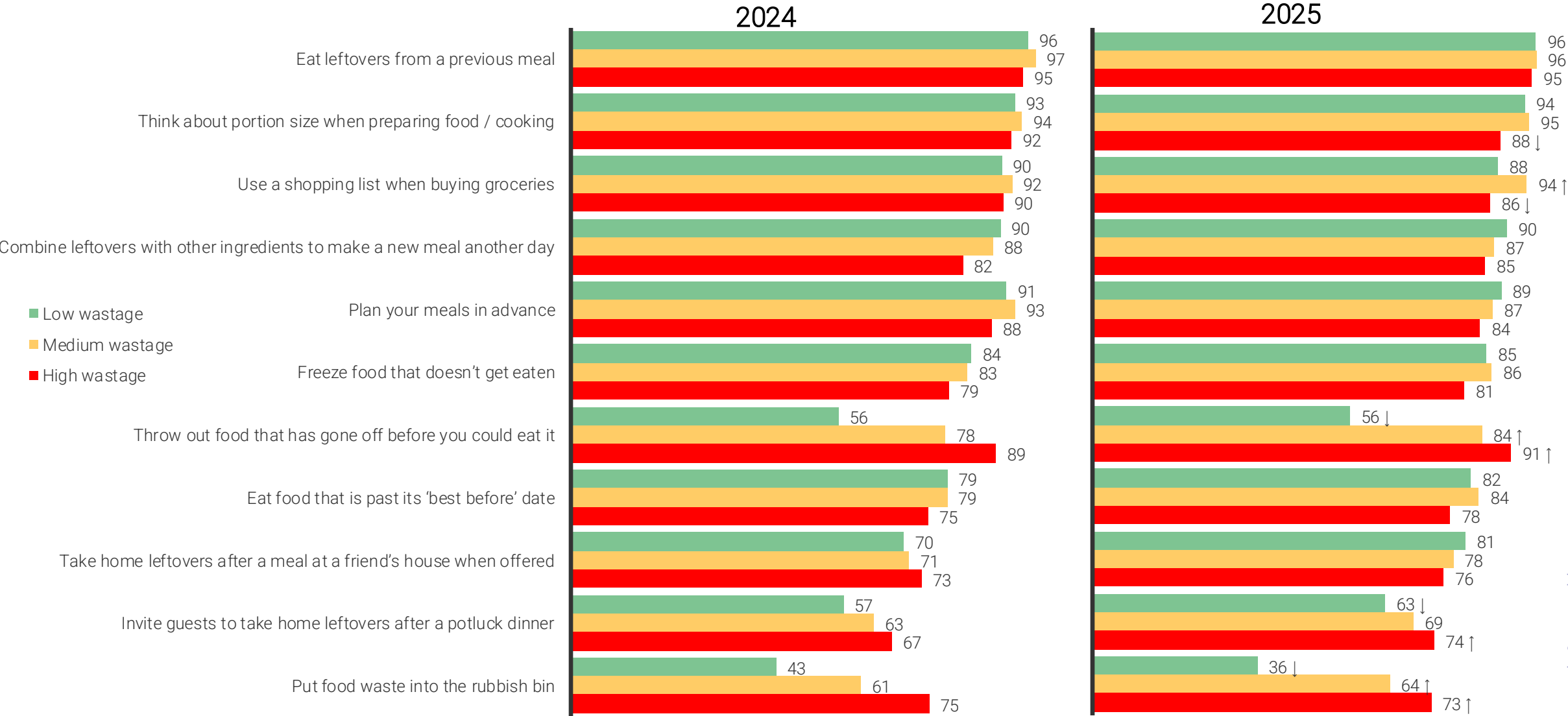
Awareness of information on reducing or recycling waste was highest among the higher waste groups despite their higher waste levels. This may highlight potential barriers with greater exposure to messaging not resulting in behaviour change, perhaps due to complex lifestyles and food-related challenges. The trend has held true over the past three years.

FOOD WASTE SEGMENTS DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS (TRENDLINE)



REDUCING FOOD WASTE ACTIONS (TRENDLINE)

Q How often does the following occur in your household? (% Always or sometimes)



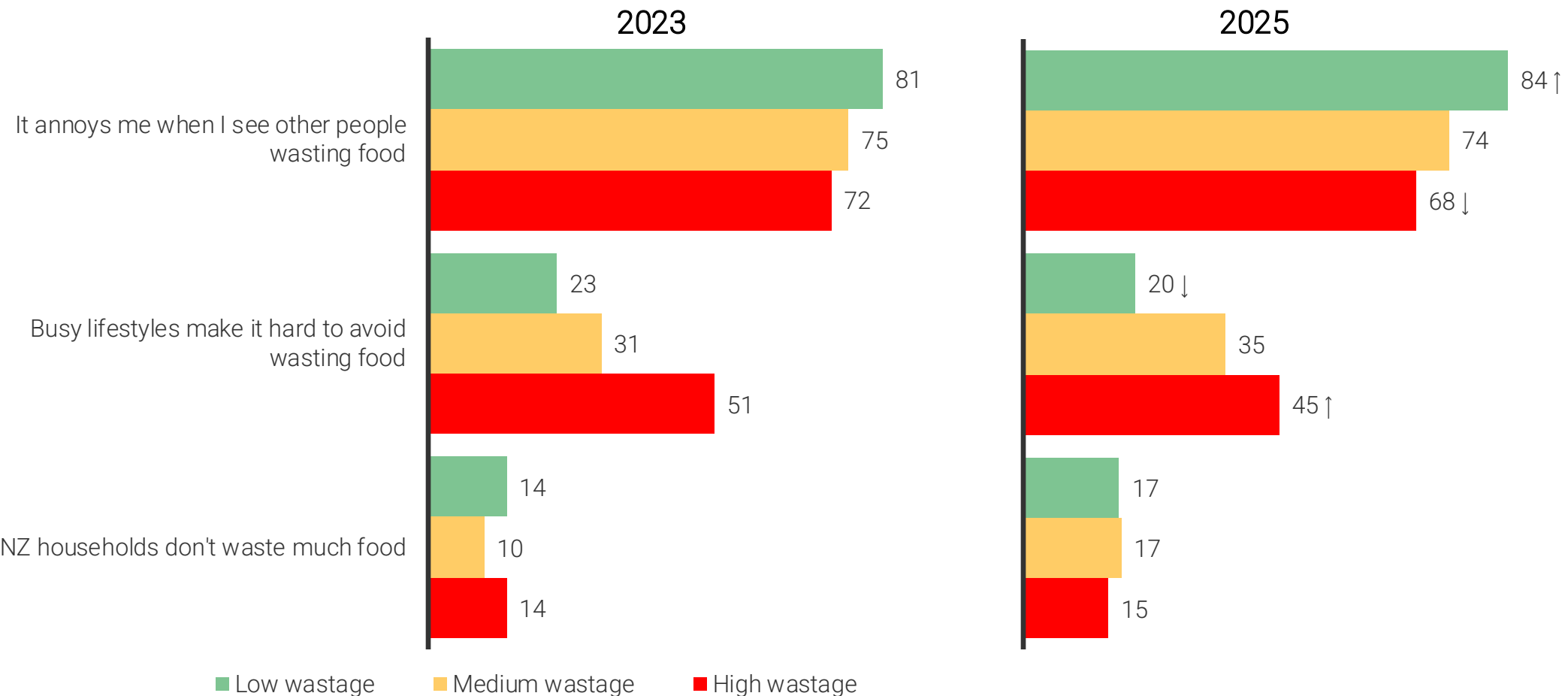
Base: All respondents (n=1006)

Note: For 2025, arrows next to the percentages mean that differences between groups in 2025 are statistically significant.

VIEWS OF FOOD WASTE (TRENDLINE)



How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following (% AGREE)



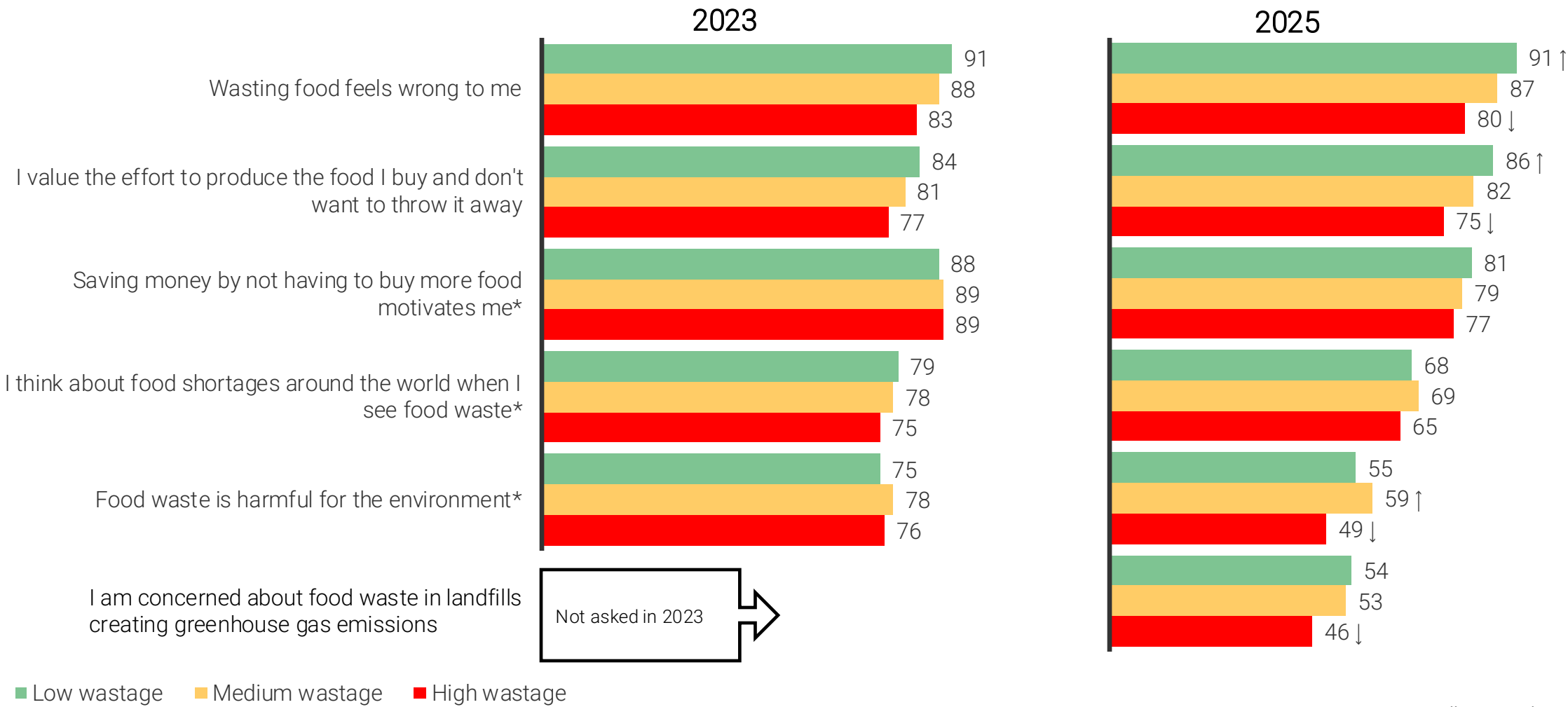
Base: All respondents (n=1006)

Note: For 2025, arrows next to the percentages mean that differences between groups in 2025 are statistically significant.

MOTIVATIONS TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE (TRENDLINE)



How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following (% AGREE)



Base: All respondents (n=1006)

*Some question changes from 2023
Used to be: To what extent do the following motivate you to reduce food waste?
Statement used to be: Saving money by not have to buy more food
Statement used to be: There are food shortages around the world
Statement used to be: I want to reduce my impact on the environment

FOOD WASTE SEGMENTATION – OTHER VARIATIONS (TRENDLINE)

	High wastage			Medium wastage			Low wastage		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
Actively try to reduce waste:	64%	-	57%	74%	-	72%	79%	-	78%
Agree that busy lifestyles make it hard to avoid wasting food^:	51%	-	45%	31%	-	35%	23%	-	20%
Have leftovers that are not eaten or re used^	63%	-	64%	46%	-	47%	38%	-	35%
Live with children, fussy eaters or those with special dietary requirements^:	17%	-	26%	15%	-	21%	8%	-	8%
Throw out food that has gone off before eating it:	89%	89%	91%	85%	78%	84%	60%	56%	56%
Put food waste into the rubbish bin:	78%	75%	73%	64%	61%	64%	45%	43%	36%
Put uneaten, wasted food in the kerbside food scrap bin^*:	-	-	32%	-	-	28%	-	-	7%
Recall seeing information in the past 2 years about reducing/recycling:	75%	83%	80%	74%	83%	77%	66%	75%	66%

*Not asked in 2023

^Not asked in 2024

REPORT FINDINGS: VIEWS OF WASTE REDUCTION



VIEWS OF WASTE REDUCTION

This section of the survey asked respondents about their views on waste reduction. Trendlines compare results from 2025 to 2023, as these questions were not asked in 2024.

Concern about the environmental impact of rubbish remained the highest priority, with 78% agreeing this was an issue they were worried about. This was down 5% from 2023 (then 83%).

Reducing food waste also continued to be a strong priority, with 77% (down 3%) of respondents agreeing it was an important issue for them in 2025.

Concern about plastic waste increased, rising from 71% agreement that 'reducing plastic waste was an important issue for me' in 2023 to 76% in 2025.

- Those aged under 30 years (65%) were less likely to agree, as were those living with flatmates (58%).

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions ranked lowest among the issues, with 57% (no change) agreement in both years, indicating this area may need more public education.

- Those earning between \$50-100k (65%) were more likely to agree it was important.

The majority of respondents (95%, down 1% from 2023) said they actively or sometimes try to reduce waste.

Protecting the environment or planet remained the leading reason for reducing waste, cited by 44% in 2025, up from 41% in 2023. The high ranking of the environment here but lower rating on greenhouse gas emissions, indicates a disconnect between these issues and potential awareness gap or scepticism around greenhouse gases.

Other top reasons include general waste reduction (23%, up 2%), and saving money or financial benefit (13%, up 1%), both showing slight increases over time.

Smaller but still notable reasons include reducing landfill use (12%, up 2%), and doing the right thing as a citizen (8%, up 2%).

The most common reasons given in 2025 for not reducing waste were that it was 'too inconvenient' (22%) and that they 'don't create enough waste' (21%).

Equal proportions said that they 'have not thought about it' (12%) and that they just do 'the bare minimum' (12%).

Other persistent barriers included that they 'have a good system already in place' (11%) and that it was 'not relevant to them' (10%).

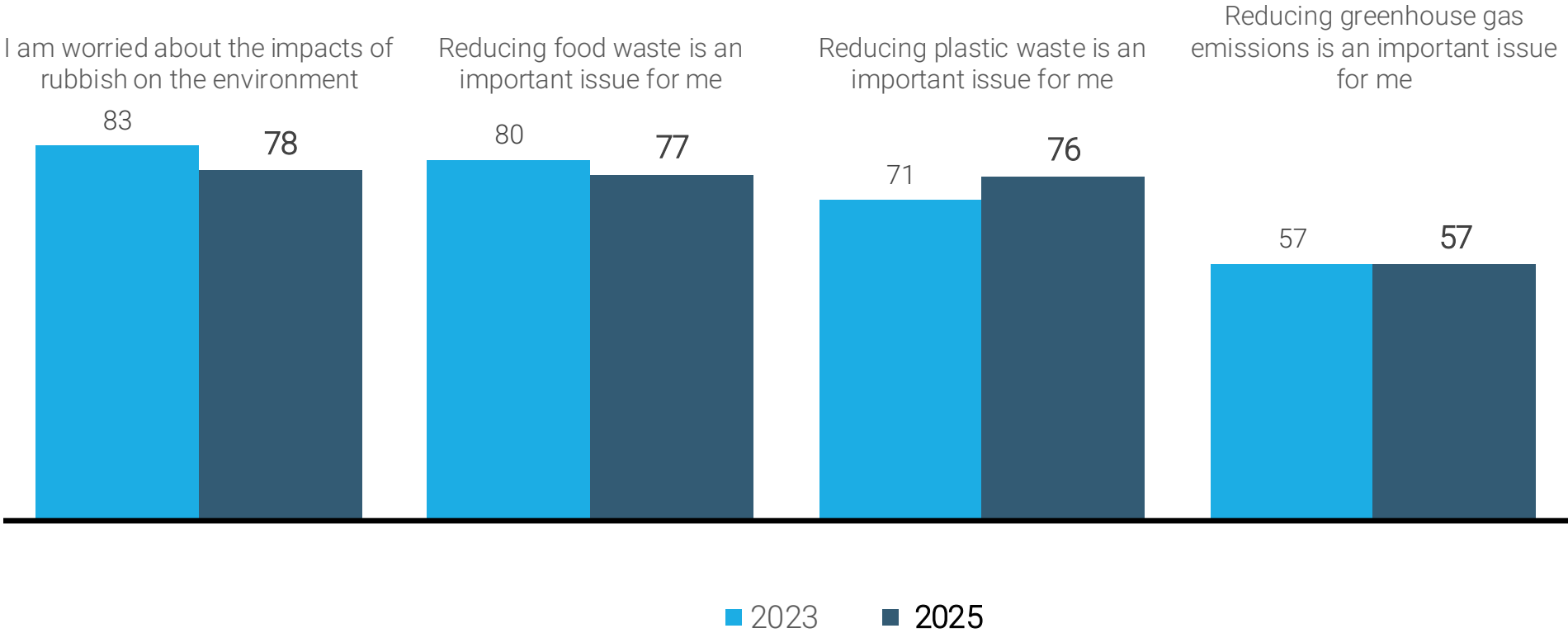
There was a notable increase in the proportion who said they were unsure why they don't try to reduce waste, rising from 8% to 16%.

We have not noted changes between 2025 and 2023 as the sub-sample size was small, and changes were only indicative.

VIEWS OF WASTE REDUCTION (TRENDLINE)

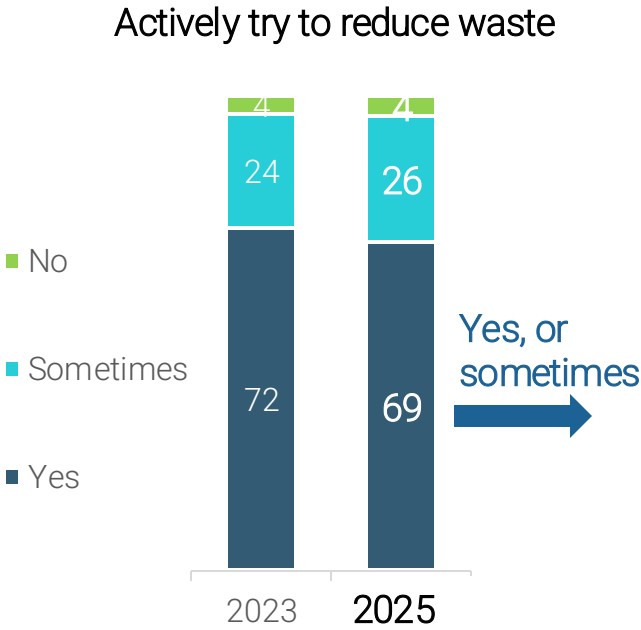


How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about reducing waste ? (% total agree)



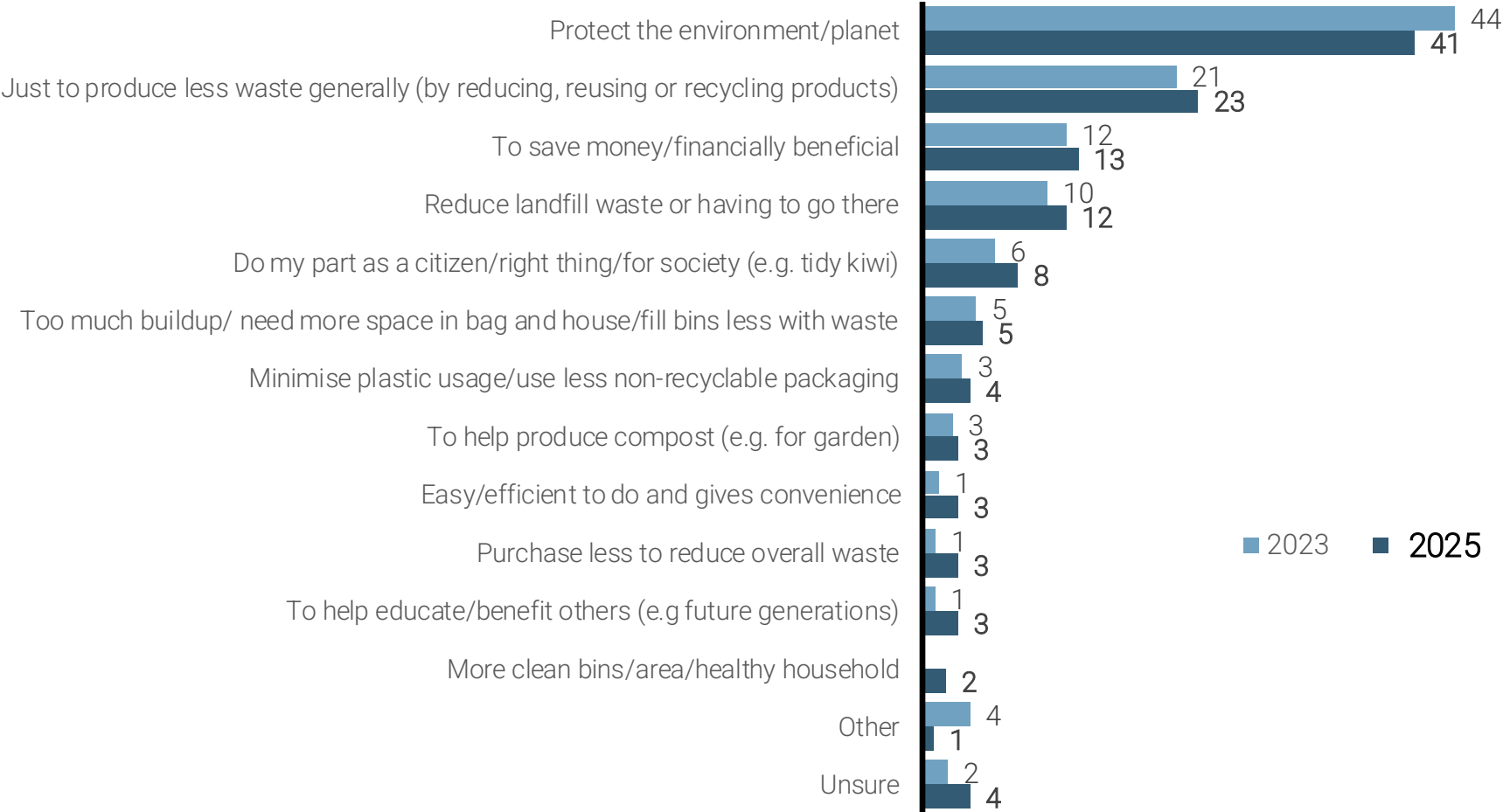
REASONS FOR TRYING TO REDUCE WASTE (TRENDLINE)

Q Do you actively try to reduce your waste?



Base: All respondents (n=1006)

Q [Asked of those who try to reduce waste] What are the reasons you try to reduce waste (either by reducing, recycling or reusing)? (% coded)



Base: Those who said they do or sometimes actively reduce waste (n=964)

Protecting the environment:

I am scared about global warming and micro plastics.

To help save our planet, to ensure we are doing our part. It has become a very throw away society.

It is better for the environment and makes you feel you are doing something towards it.

To fight climate change and preserve nature.

I need to do my part on caring for the earth. It teaches my kids to recycle and be kind to the earth too.

Worried about landfill and our waterways and oceans. Love that NZ is proud of being green.

We have one planet and if we don't take care now what will happen in the future I would love to be known as the ones who cared.

I like feeling that I am doing something good for the environment.

To look after the environment for the next generation and protect animals.

Because there is a decreasing amount of space for disposing of unrecyclable waste and also there is an increasing amount of pollution present in our environment.

I am very concerned about the amount of waste we produce.

I'm being responsible as I can for the good of our environment, and if everyone did the same or tried their best, our environment will be the better for it.

OPEN QUESTION: WHY DO YOU TRY TO REDUCE YOUR WASTE?

Just to reduce waste/ landfill generally:

There is already too much rubbish on the earth and if I can avoid to make more, I am happier. I also like that things are recycled and reused if possible.

I do not throw something away if I can still use it.

Resources are limited, and reducing waste can make more efficient use of existing resources.

Because there's only so much landfill space, and it just seems silly to get rid of something when you can reuse it or repair it.

By reducing waste, we can conserve raw materials such as minerals, timber, and water.

Because we overconsume and do not need to produce the amount of waste we currently have.

I don't like this throw away attitude of people now.

To have less waste in my household first and foremost.

Because we're a very wasteful society and landfills are full of plastic that will take eons to break down.

Resources are limited, and reducing waste can make more efficient use of existing resources.

Because there is so much waste in the world so I reduce, recycle and reuse.

To save money:

A free option to get rid of some waste types e.g cardboard, glass, metals and plastics.

Getting expensive to go to the tip so recycle as much as I can.

We were throwing away a lot of produce so to be economical and efficient use of our personal finances we try to use everything within best before dates.

Because it costs to get rid of things and it's better for the environment to recycle or reuse.

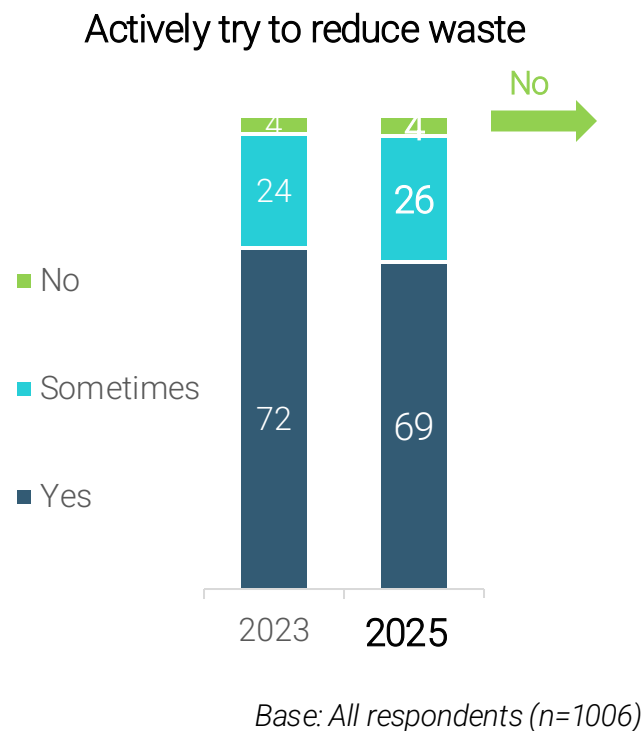
I hate waste- I am frugal, and on a tight budget.

Don't want to spend more money on rubbish bags.

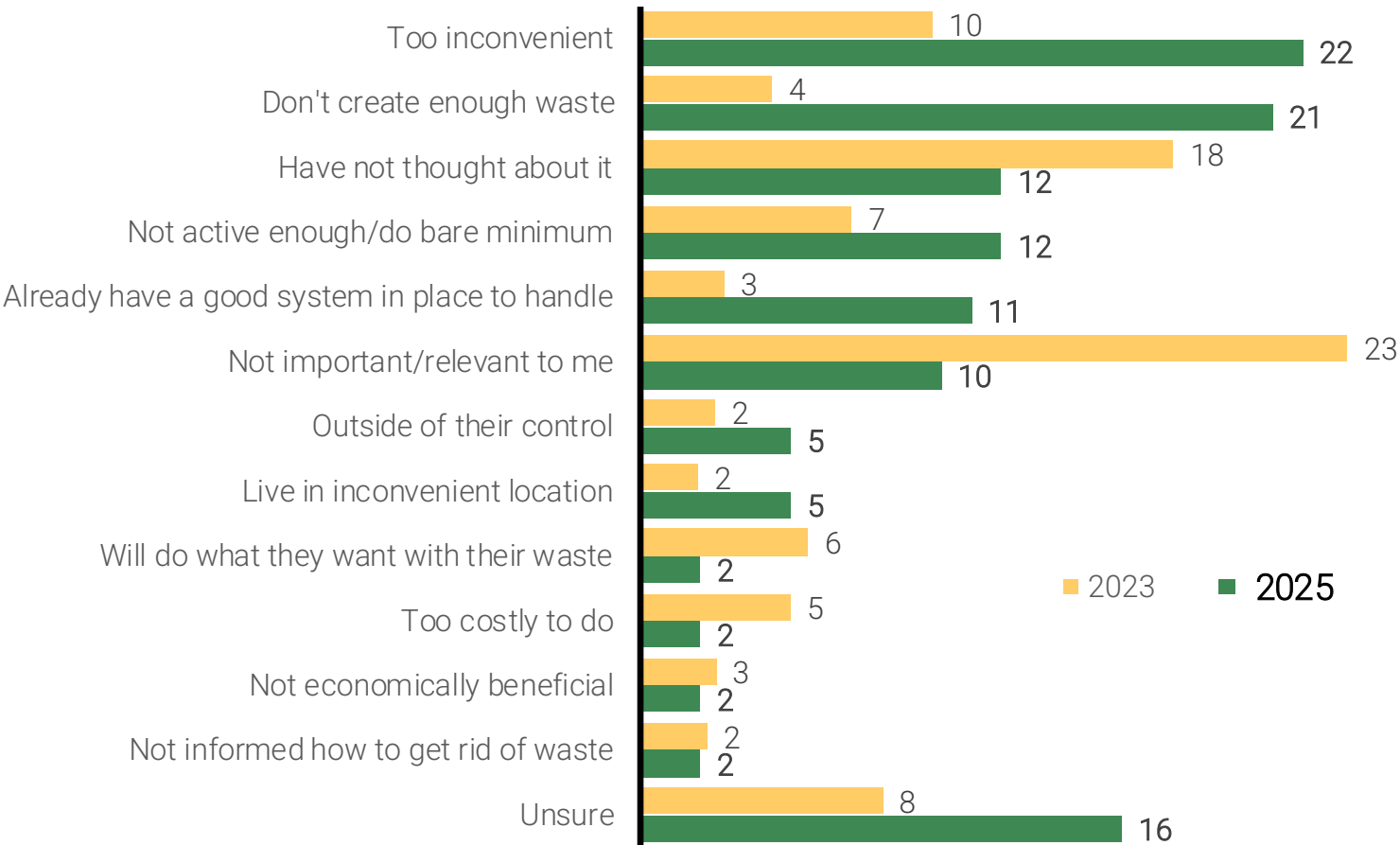
Mainly because we have to pay for our bin if we fill up the Council one.

REASONS FOR NOT TRYING TO REDUCE WASTE (TRENDLINE)

Do you actively try to reduce your waste?



Asked of those who don't try to reduce waste] What are the reasons you don't try to reduce waste (either by reducing, recycling or reusing)? (% coded)



OPEN QUESTION: WHY DON'T YOU TRY TO REDUCE YOUR WASTE?

Too inconvenient:

I don't have time, it's inconvenient and let's be honest, it doesn't really make a difference.

The rules are pretty complicated to figure out and not very forgiving.

Takes too much effort.

Because it will be too hard.

Don't have recycling bins.

Too much time required

I know people who go to great lengths to do this and it makes me think, I wouldn't have time to do that regularly.

Don't create enough waste:

I don't create a lot of waste.

I live on my own and don't create much waste.

I don't produce much waste anyway.

I don't have much waste to recycle.

We buy what we need so whatever packaging comes with it then that is what we have.

Don't waste food.

Have not thought about it:

It isn't top of mind for me.

Never really considered it, though I do recycle whenever I can.

Forget to, don't take notice.

Don't think about it.

Do minimum:

I suppose I could purchase less packaging at the supermarket.

Never really considered it, though I do recycle whenever I can.

Laziness.

REPORT FINDINGS: PLASTICS



PLASTIC WASTE

This section of the survey asked respondents questions related specifically to plastic waste. Trendlines compare results from 2023 to 2023, as these questions were not asked in 2024.

The most common barrier to reducing plastic waste remained the lack of accessible alternatives to plastic, although slightly down from 2023 (37%, down 3%), followed by affordable alternatives (28%, down 5%).

A growing number of people cited a lack of knowledge—with 18% saying they don't know how to reduce plastic waste (up 4%), and 14% struggling to find information on how to do so (up 2%).

- Lack of knowledge was higher for those under 30 years old (28%) and Aucklanders (26%).
- Access to information was higher across men (17%) compared to women (11%) and higher for those aged between 30-44 years (19%).

Perceived futility was a growing concern, with 13% (up 3%) saying no one rewards them for reducing plastic, and 12% (up 8%) believing 'individual efforts don't make a difference'.

- Lack of reward was higher across men (17%) compared to women (9%).
- Individual efforts not making a difference was higher for those under 30 years old (21%).

Just over a quarter (26%) say 'nothing' was preventing them from reducing plastic waste, consistent with 2023, suggesting a stable group is relatively free from barriers. Positively, those saying it was 'not important to them' dropped to 7% (down 10% from 2023).

- Men (10%) were more likely than women (4%) to say it was not important to them.

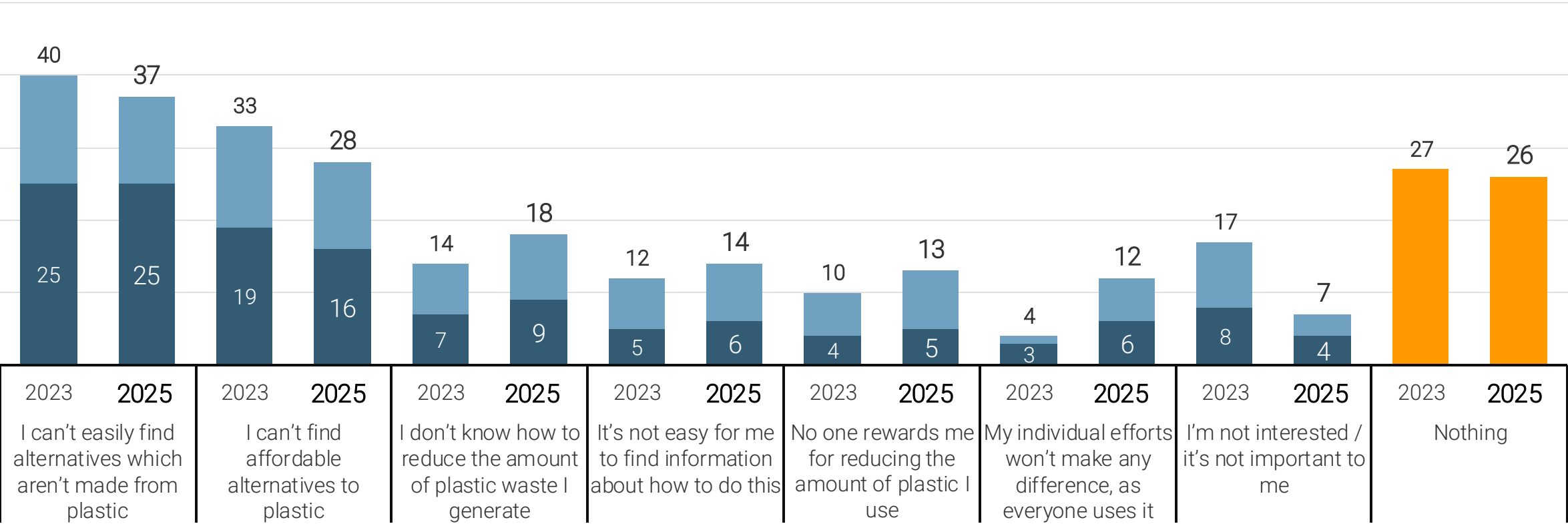
BARRIERS TO REDUCING PLASTIC WASTE (TRENDLINE)



What prevents you from reducing the amount of plastic you waste? (%)

What is the MAIN ISSUE preventing you from reducing the amount of plastic you waste? (%)

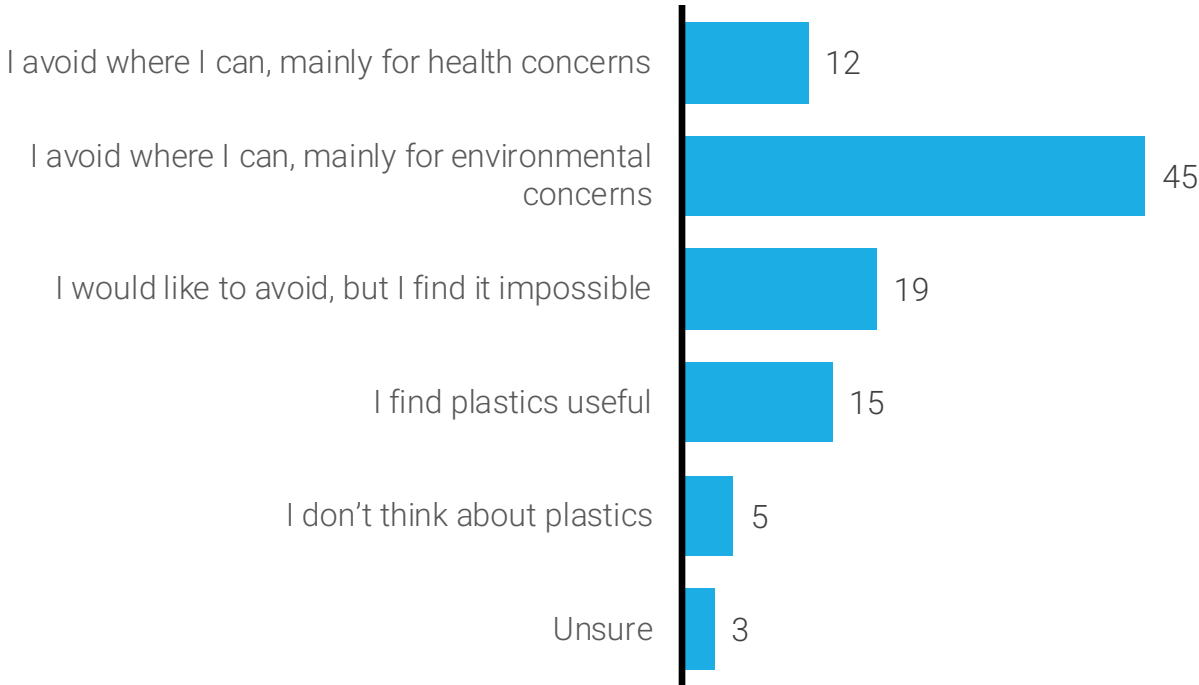
■ MAIN reason ■ Other reasons



VIEW OF SINGLE USE PLASTICS



Which statement best describes your attitudes towards single use plastics:

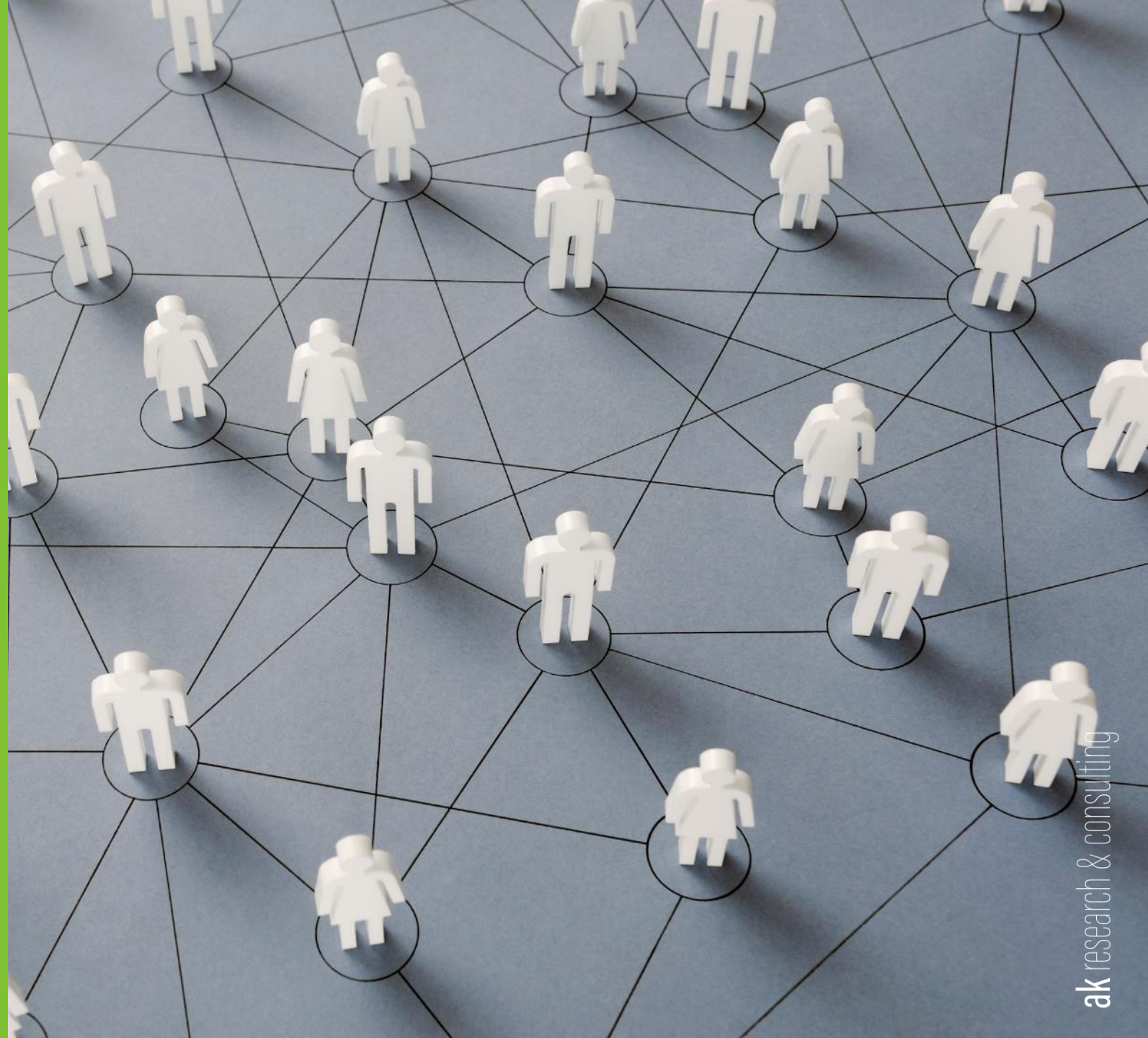


A new question asked in 2025, canvassed opinions towards single use plastics. **Nearly half (45%) of respondents said they avoided single-use plastics** where they can, mainly for environmental reasons. Another 12% avoided single use plastics mainly for health concerns.

One in five (19%) said they wanted to avoid single-use plastics but found it impossible, highlighting ongoing barriers to more sustainable choices.

A smaller group (15%) claimed to find plastics useful. Only a small minority did not think about plastics (5%) or were unsure (3%), suggesting high general awareness of the issue.

REPORT FINDINGS: COMMUNICATIONS ON REDUCING WASTE



COMMUNICATIONS ON REDUCING WASTE

This section covers questions asked about recall of information and initiatives targeting food waste reduction.

Around half (53%) of respondents recalled seeing or hearing information on **how to recycle correctly** (2024: 56%, 2023: 53%) **the most commonly remembered topic** across all three years of tracking.

- Those aged 60+ years (62%) were more likely to have seen or heard information.

Recall of food (40%) and plastic (39%) waste reduction campaigns showed slightly decreased recall (Food 2024: 45%, 2023: 36%)/ (Plastic 2024: 41%, 2023: 38%).

- Aucklanders (47%) were more likely to recall information on food waste.

There was stable recall for campaigns on saving money on their shopping bill on 30% (2024: 33%, 2023: 32%) and standardising kerbside recycling on 24% (2024: 25%, not asked in 2023).

- Parents (46%) were more likely to recall information about saving on their shopping bill.

Recall of messages about having an 'eat me first' fridge shelf remained low on 14%, however, this was a relatively small drop considering the lack of recent promotion of the initiative (2024: 17%, 2023: 8%).

A quarter said they didn't recall seeing any of the listed campaigns, relatively consistent with previous years (2024: 20%, 2023: 28%).

Asked in 2024 and 2025, **reducing waste remained the top priority for most respondents**, with 41% in 2025 identifying it as the most beneficial action for the environment, up slightly from 40% in 2024.

Reusing items was in second place, with 27% selecting it as most beneficial in 2025 (down 2%), and 42% as second (up 3%).

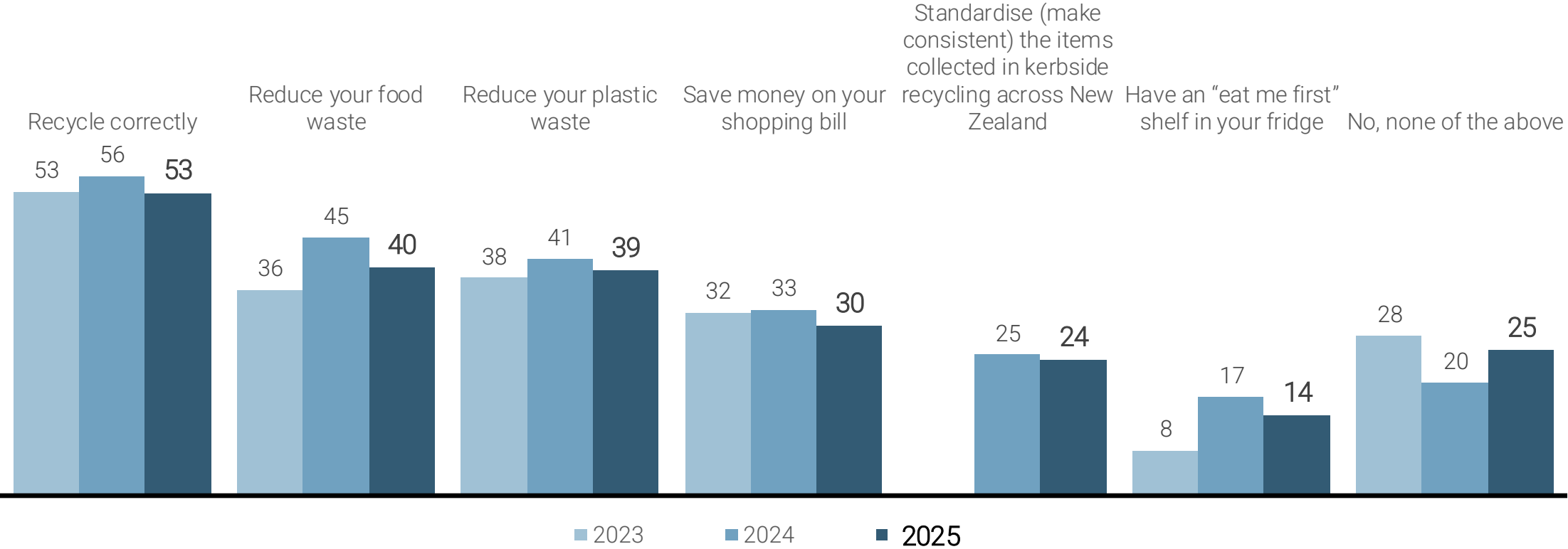
Recycling is consistently rated lowest among the three strategies, with 25% (up 1%) ranking it as most beneficial in 2025 and 29% (up 2%) placing it third.

The data reflects reasonable public understanding of the waste hierarchy, recognising that prevention (reduce) and reuse were more effective than recycling in minimising environmental harm. Evidence of widespread understanding, was the lack of any demographic differences across this question.

RECALL OF WASTE CAMPAIGNS AND INFORMATION (TRENDLINE)



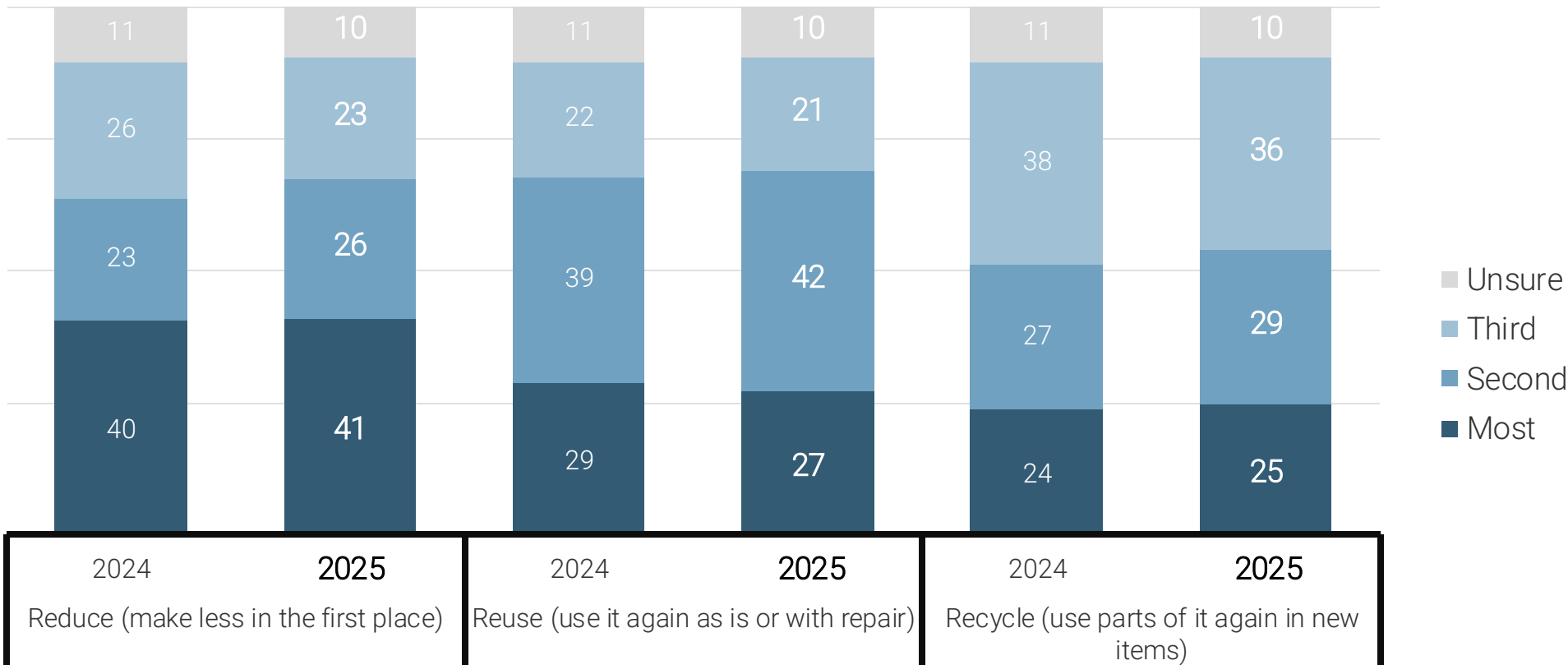
Do you recall seeing or hearing any information about how to do the following in the last 2 years? (%)



PRIORITY RATING OF REDUCING, REUSING, AND RECYCLING (TRENDLINE)



Thinking about the waste you produce, generally which of the following do you think is MOST beneficial to the environment?
And out of the remaining two what is the most beneficial?? (%)



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