

Recycle or Not to Recycle? - YouGov Poll Uncovers Lack of Understanding About Food Contaminated Corrugated Cardboard



Research commissioned by the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI) has revealed that when asked to choose who is most responsible for ensuring that recyclable packaging from the home is of good enough quality to be recycled, 45% of respondents said the onus was on the household, while 38% believed that it was down to the packaging manufacturers or the reprocessors of recyclable material, with a further 8% believing it should be down to local authorities.

A nationwide survey conducted by YouGov* also found that more than half (55%) of 2,163 respondents would recycle paper and cardboard soiled with grease (for example a takeaway pizza box) because they thought it was the right thing to do, or were under the impression that the waste processing plant could remove it if it was not recyclable.



The YouGov poll reveals that many households acknowledge their responsibility for achieving good recycle quality and suggests they may be willing to help reverse the recent rise in general recycling rejection rates, with the right guidance. The poll's findings also reveal a misconception among some residents that there is a sorting mechanism somewhere in the process that can guarantee separating contaminated paper or cardboard and are unaware that material spoiled by food and grease from items like takeaway containers can get through to reprocessing plants where it could cause the whole recycling batch to be treated as waste.

The findings of the poll strongly support the premise behind work being carried out by WRAP which aims to help local authorities achieve greater consistency both in collection methodology and in what can and cannot be recycled by residents. The WRAP Recycling Guidelines launched earlier in the year are designed to help local authorities inform the public what they should and should not recycle and are the culmination of work carried out with reprocessing to agree a common list of do's and don'ts.

Greasy food packaging such as pizza boxes are specifically referenced in the guidelines, which suggests they should be put in the residual general waste not in recycling, and demonstrates the importance of the need to continue efforts to educate a willing public about recycling.

With the focus of WRAP's Recycle Now campaign currently on paper and cardboard during the festive season, this survey is a timely reminder of the need to continue to communicate with the public to help them understand how they can fulfil their responsibilities. With paper packaging rates now calculated to be close to 85% (source CPI) we need to focus on extracting the remaining material at the best available quality from householders.

WRAP has recently launched a Christmas campaign called #SpreadTheSparkle. It's all about encouraging people to swap glitter (another problem for reprocessors) for a different kind of sparkle this Christmas by spreading joy through acts of kindness. They are asking people to swap glittery and metallic wrapping paper and cards for recycled and recyclable options, which are kinder to the environment.

CPI's Director of Packaging Affairs, Andy Barnetson, says: "The Corrugated Industry is proud of its recycling heritage – every year, an amount of material is recycled, which if laid flat would cover an area the size of Greater London three times over – but corrugated contaminated with food or grease cannot be recycled due to hygiene concerns."

He added: "From a domestic perspective, the message about the benefits of recycling cardboard is clearly getting through, and the public does realise its role in the process which is vital. However, we need to offer guidance about the impact of poor quality recycled packaging, and consistent and precise information for households does provide greater clarity and simplicity."

ENDS

*All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,163 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 23rd-24th November 2016. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

For additional information, please contact Emma Punchard, Director of Communications, tel: 01793 889609, email epunchard@paper.org.uk.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI) is the leading trade association representing the UK's Paper-based Industries, comprising paper and board manufacturers and converters, corrugated packaging producers, makers of soft tissue papers and collectors of paper for recycling.
- CPI represents an industry with an aggregate annual turnover of £6.5 billion, 25,000 direct and more than 100,000 indirect employees.
- CPI corrugated promotes a sustainable and renewable material, more than 80% of which is recycled.
- For facts on the UK's Paper-based Industries please visit: www.paper.org.uk.
- The WRAP Recycling Guidelines can be found at: www.wrap.org.uk/content/recycling-guidelines-0