

Research

Repak warns that exaggerated focus on packaging could be holding back overall household recycling rates

- Irish Adults overstating their recycling rates, claiming to recycle more than 40% of their waste
- Irish adults overstate amount of used packaging in household bin by 60%
- 76% of Irish adults claim to recycle their used packaging
- only 23% of Irish adults use home composting
- 71% favour separate recycling bin/bag collections
- 8% favour of deposits

(1 Oct 2007) Irish householders believe they are recycling more of their household bin than they are which could be holding back recycling rates according to research by Repak. The research into the habits and attitudes to recycling of 1,000 adults shows that those surveyed claimed to recycle over 40% of their household waste when recent reports and studies would suggest this is closer to 30%. Local Government Service Indicators show recycling rates closer to the low twenties. EPA research shows an actual recycling rate closer to 22%.

“Although we have made huge strides in recycling, we still have big leaps to make ahead of us. The overstatement means that people believe they are recycling more than they actually are and we fear this means they are easing off when it comes to the less obvious items such as aluminium food trays and beverage cartons and are not composting bio degradable waste at home.” commented Andrew Hetherington, CEO, Repak.

In addition the research shows that people are massively over estimating the amount of packaging waste in their bins by 60% which Repak warns is not helping overall household recycling rates. Those questioned believe that packaging waste is nearly 40% of the household bin which is 60% more than the reality at c25%. The recycling scheme warns that as a result people could be overly concentrating on packaging recycling (with 67% claiming to recycle their used packaging) to the detriment of other waste streams such as biodegradable waste. The view is supported by the low number of adults claiming to home compost (23%) and garden waste which only 28% claimed to recycle. Andrew Hetherington "we are delighted with the rate of household packaging recycling growth which now accounts for 40% of all household recycling. However concentrating on packaging waste which is only 25% of household waste will not get our overall household recycling rates up. As our research shows people are overstating packaging waste and therefore potentially not concentrating on recycling their other wastes such as bio degradable food waste, garden waste, textiles and small electrical goods"

More encouraging is the growth in the spread of items recycled with 37% recycling electrical goods and 56% recycling old clothes.

On attitudes to collections and infrastructure an expected high percentage of people (71%) favoured household collection reinforcing the view that, unless recycling is simple and easy people are slow to engage. This is also reinforced by the low support of 8% for a deposit scheme as a favoured recycling collection system by the general public. Bring Banks and recycling centres scored equally at 9% mainly due to the extra inconvenience of travel.

Recycling trends in general have seen an improvement on last year with 62% of respondents saying they visit a bring bank or recycling centre at least once a month, a 5% increase on last year. The 82% of people who now claim to have

access to a household recycling collection is reflected in expansion of household recycling collections. Repak are now fund kerbside recycling collections reaching to over 1 million households throughout the country. The survey also showed increased awareness of the recycling infrastructure with 84% of people knowing where their nearest bring centre is located, which is up from 60% in 2002 and 76% are aware of where their nearest recycling centre is located. However although 22% of respondents claim to recycle 60% or more of their household waste, there is still a shocking 12% of respondents who admit that they never visit a bring centre or a recycling centre. As glass is mainly recycled at Bring Banks this indicates a relatively high number of people who do not recycle any of their glass packaging. There were only 3% of people who admit to recycling nothing at all through out the year, though this is down from 14% in 2004 Glass topped the poll as the highest recycled item mainly due to the long history of glass recycling while new materials such as beverage cartons scored lower.

- 86% recycle Glass containers (e.g. bottles/jars)
- 74% recycle Aluminium drinks cans
- 67% recycle Steel food cans
- 75% recycle Cardboard packaging
- 73% recycle Plastic drinks bottles
- 69% recycle Beverage cartons
- 76% recycle Paper

The research was undertaken by Milward Brown IMS amongst a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults as part of this year's Repak Recycling Week, which takes places from the 1st of October to 7th October. Repak is encouraging householders to break the Repak Recycling Week record by

recycling 15,000 tonnes of used packaging over the month of October. For more information on Repak or Repak Recycling Week, visit www.repak.ie.

Ends

Notes to editor

Repak have grown packaging recycling rates up from under 15% in 1998 to over 60% in 2006.

Repak has funded the recycling of over 3 million tonnes of used packaging resulting in the equivalent of 2.2 million tonnes of carbon savings.

Since 1997 Repak has invested over €120 million in supporting packaging recycling.

Research shows household green bins/bags are now reaching over 82% of all adults. Repak are now directly/indirectly funding kerbside green bin collections reaching over 1 million households in the state.

Repak has seen kerbside collection schemes grow from under 250,000 in 2002 to well over a million in 2007. Integrated Kerbsides collections are a convenient and important method of collecting dry recyclable and have shown strong growth over the last number of years. Recent developments have seen a number of contractors now beginning to target glass through kerbside.

Last year Repak recycled over 603,000 tonnes of used packaging, in excess of 60% of all used packaging.