

national union of **students**

Recycling on campus

Research to inform the Recycle League pilot

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1. About the research

About the research

In 2018-19, NUS is working with Coca Cola Europe Ltd to deliver a pilot of [Recyclemania](#) – an inter-university recycling competition that has been running in the United States of America and Canada. The competition, to be promoted as RecycleLeague in the UK, will be delivered during the spring term.

To inform the delivery of the pilot, a short online survey was delivered gaining insight into student recycling behaviours both on campus, and where they live during term time.

The survey was distributed to students studying across the UK who are part of NUS' TOTUM discount card database, with a prize draw incentive offered to encourage participation.

A total of 2242 responses were received.

This report outlines the findings from the survey including:

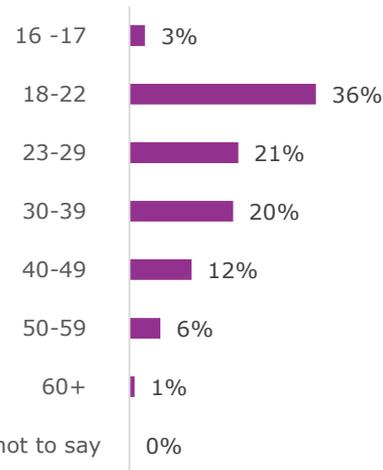
- Attitudes towards recycling
- Recycling behaviour e.g. materials recycled
- Experiences of recycling on campus
- Experiences of recycling in term time accommodation
- Recycling information and communications

Throughout the report, where respondents of differing characteristics vary on a statistically significant basis in their views or behaviour, these have been highlighted (at a 99% confidence level, unless stated otherwise).

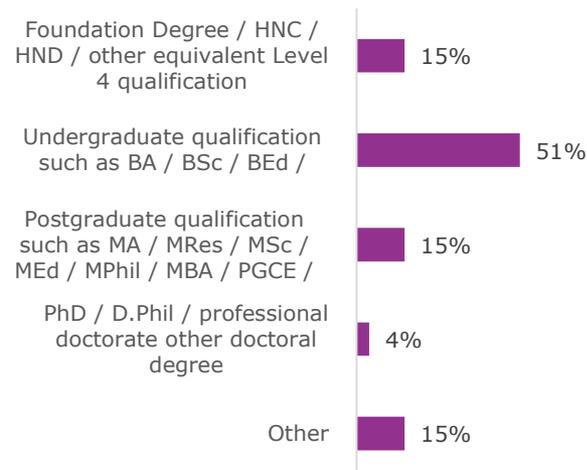
2. The respondents

Respondent demographics

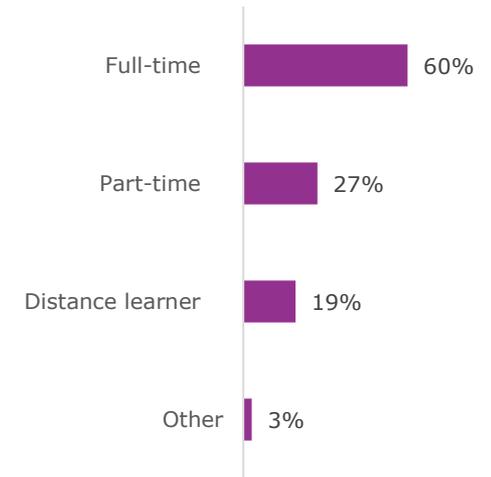
Age



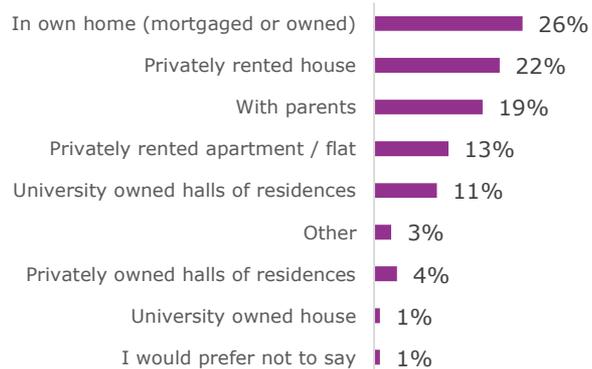
Course



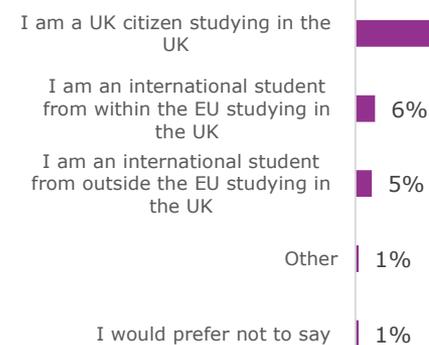
Study mode



Accommodation

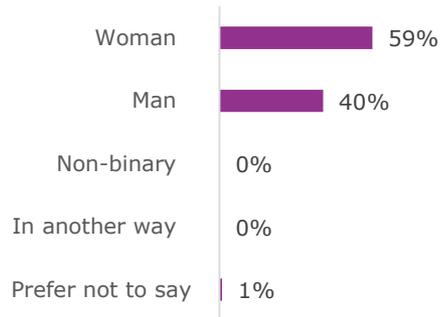


Nationality



Respondent demographics

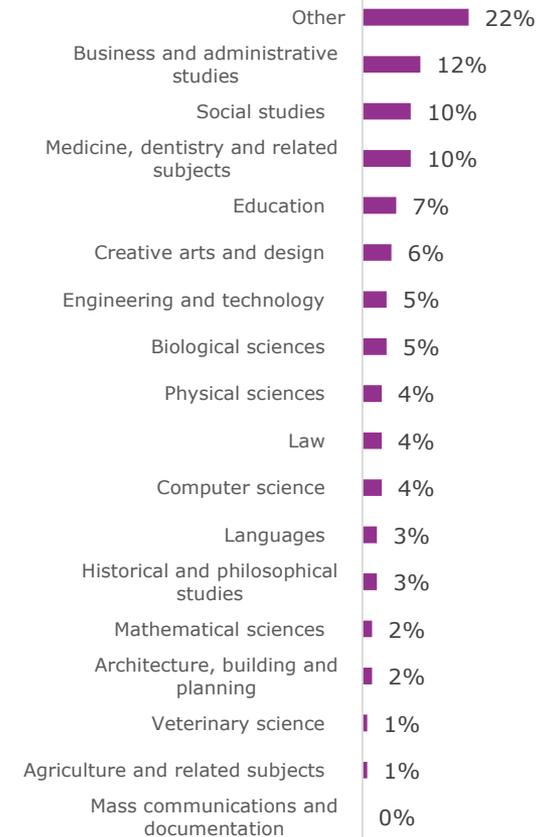
Gender



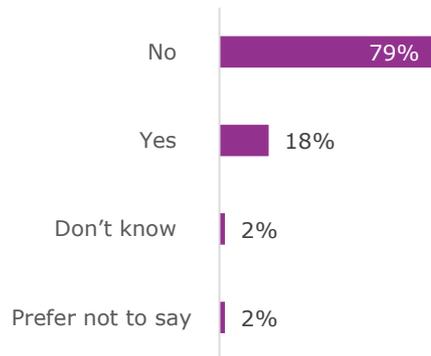
Race / ethnicity



Course

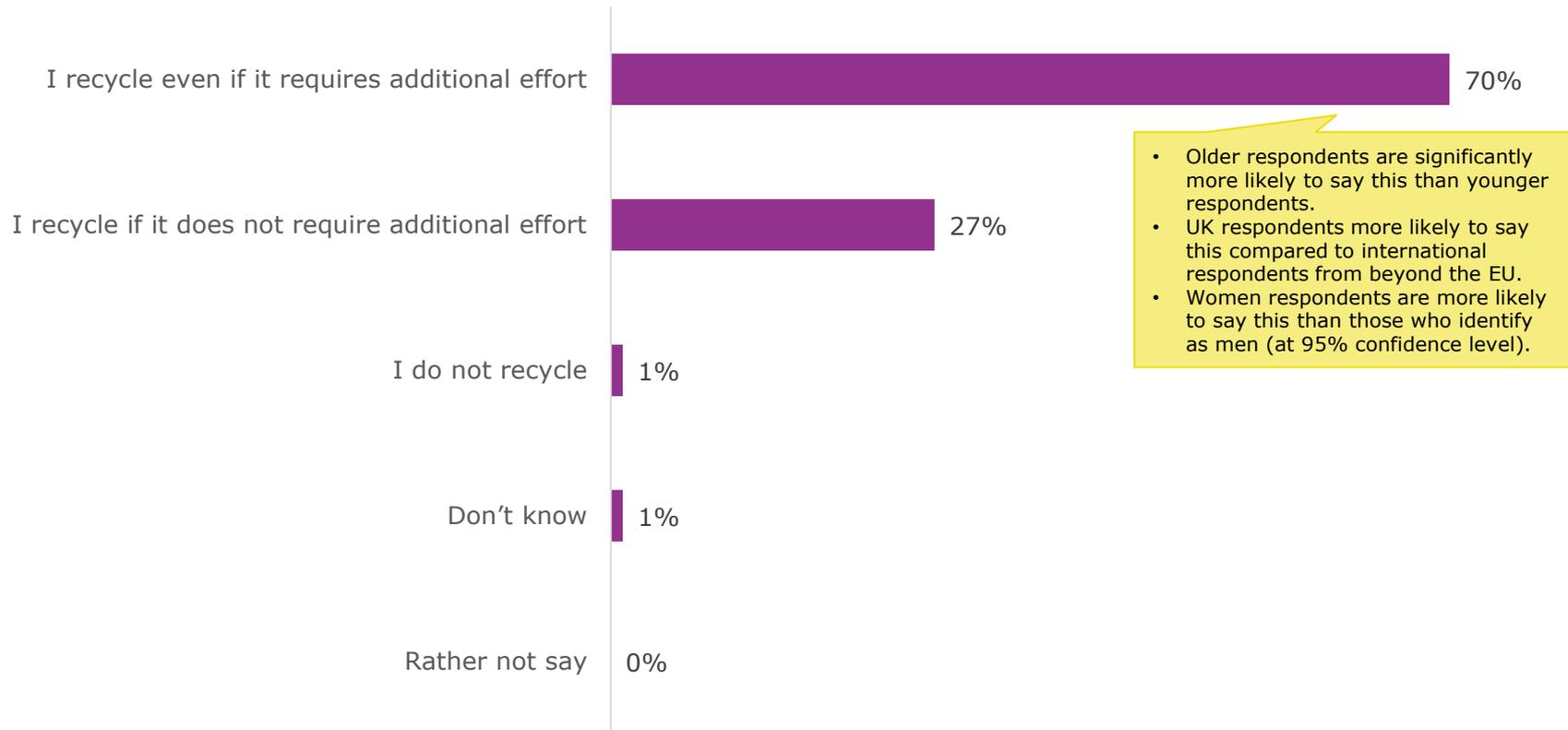


Disability



2. Findings

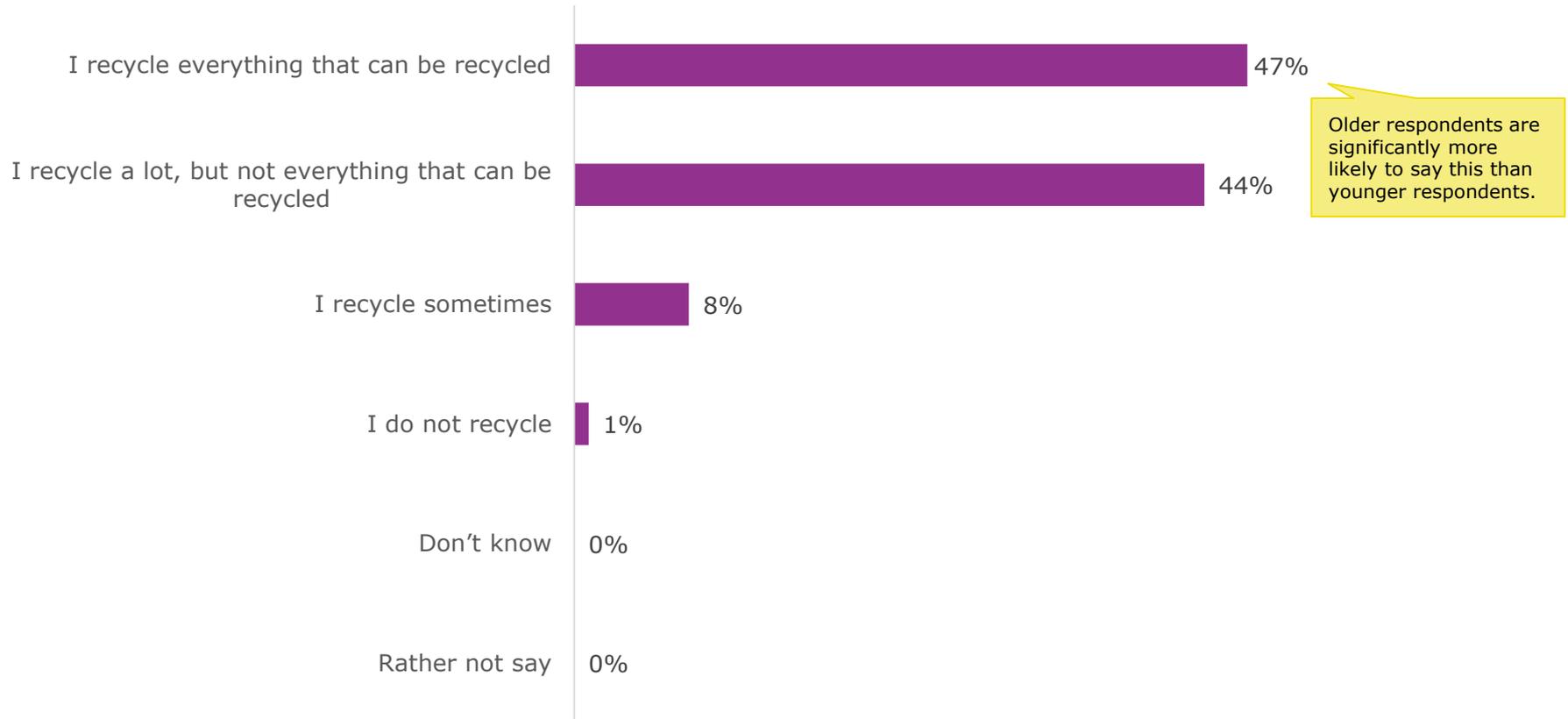
Most respondents say they recycle even if it requires additional effort (70%). Only 2% say they do not recycle.



Q. Which of these statements best describes your attitude to recycling overall?

Base: 2241 Balance: No response

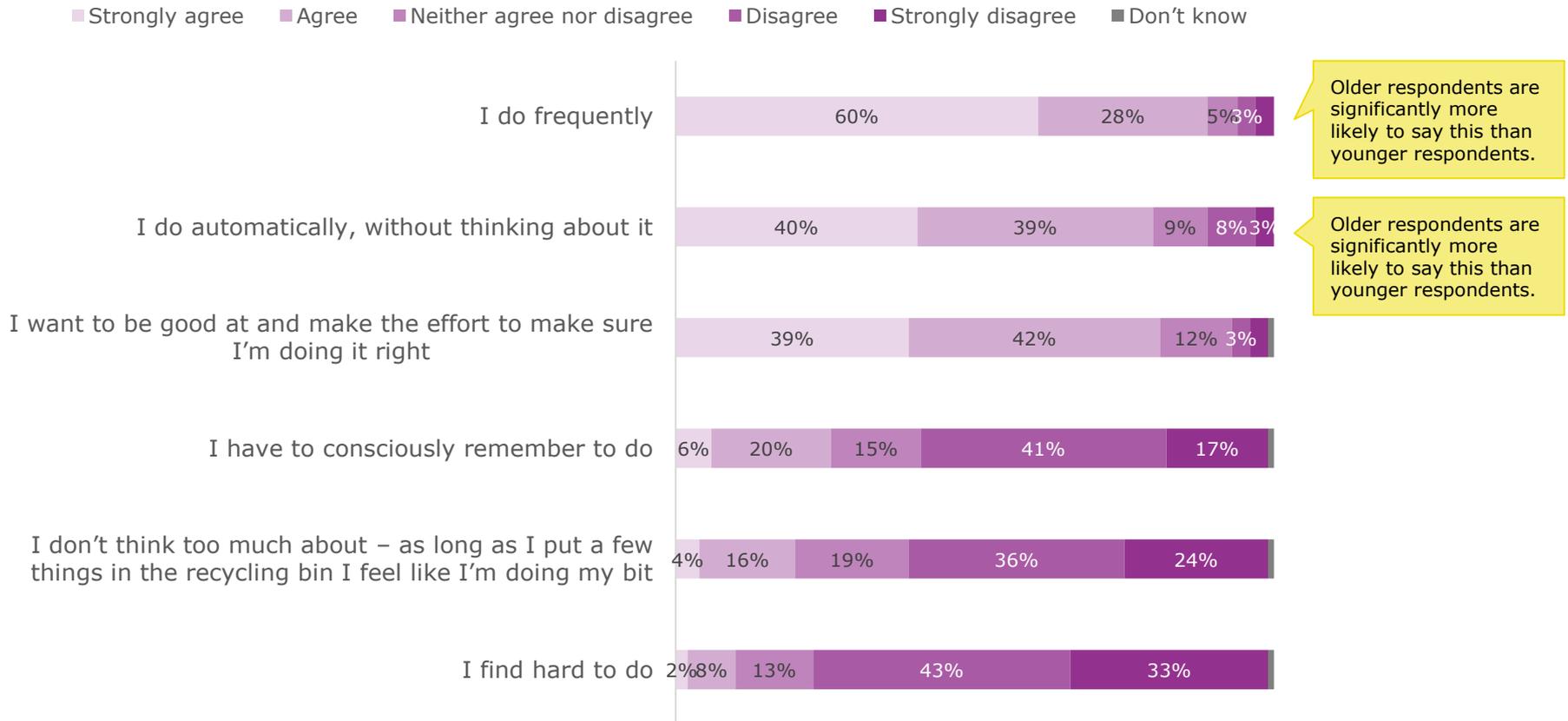
Almost half of respondents report that they recycle everything that can be recycled (47%).



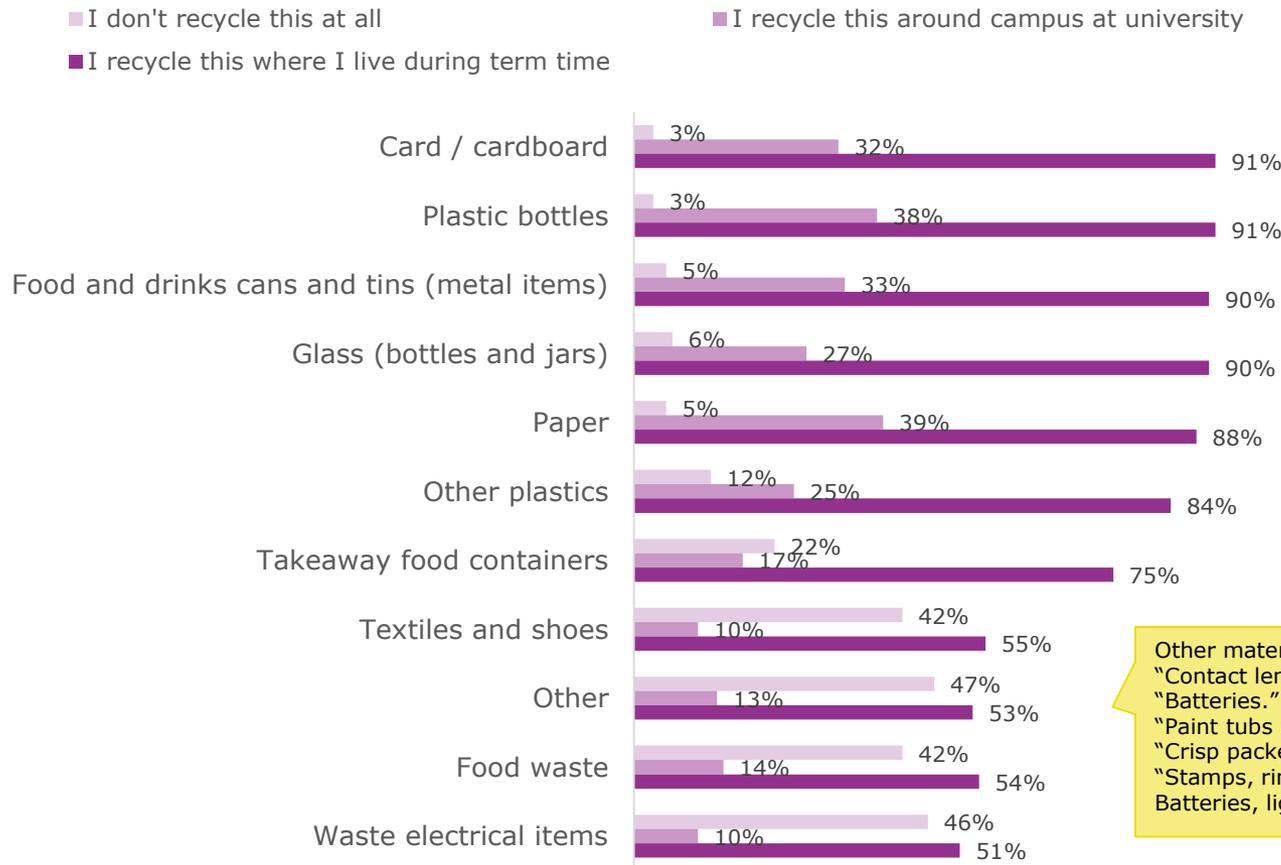
Q. Which of these statements best describes how much you recycle?

Base: 2237 Balance: No response

For most respondents, recycling is something they do automatically (79%) and something that they want to be good at (81%). For around a quarter (26%), recycling is something they have to consciously remember to do.



The most commonly recycled materials around campus are paper (36%) and plastic bottles (36%). Card (92%) and plastic bottles (91%) are the most commonly recycled materials where respondents live during term time. Waste electrical items (43%) and textiles/shoes (42%) are the most commonly reported items that are not recycled at all.

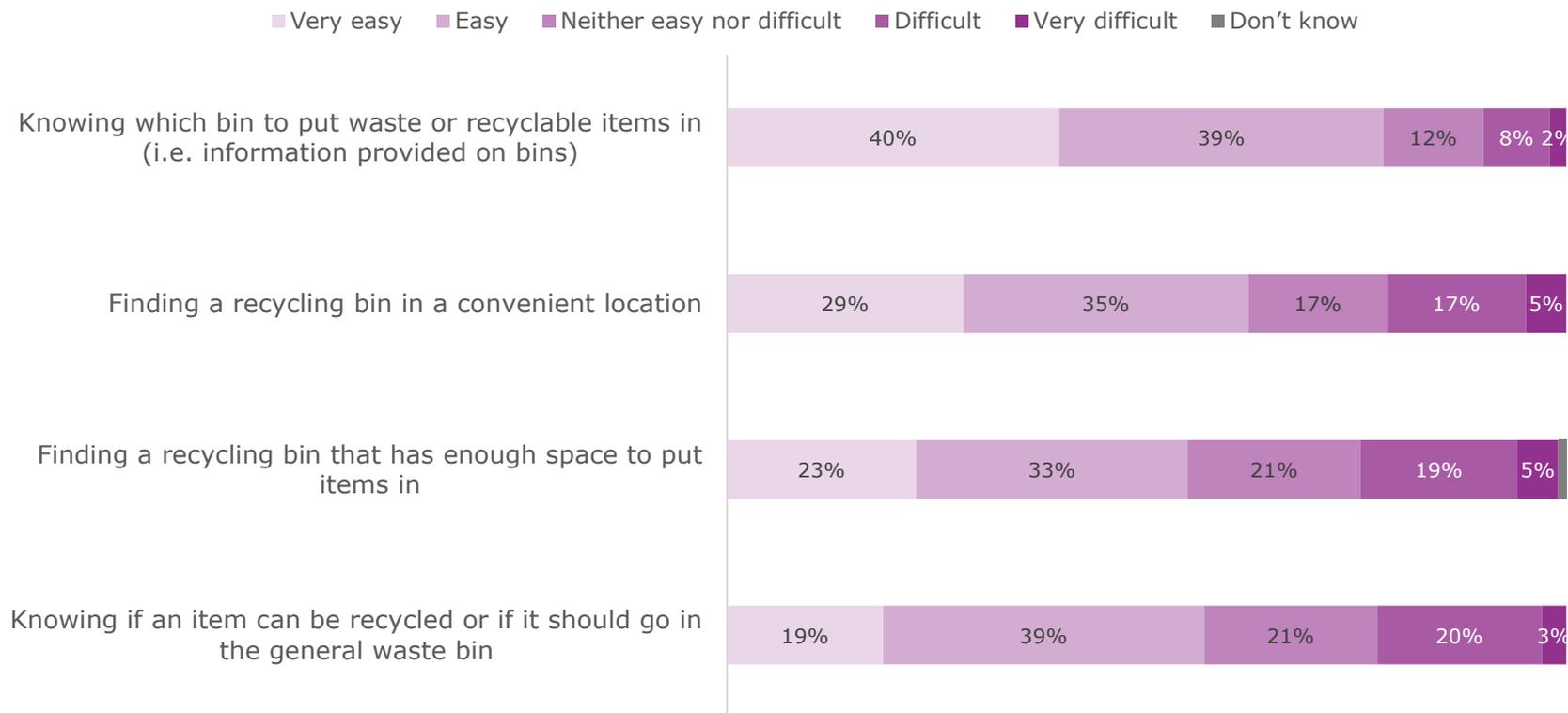


Other materials named include:
 "Contact lenses and their packaging."
 "Batteries."
 "Paint tubs at the paint recycle centre."
 "Crisp packets."
 "Stamps, ring pulls, bottle tops - send to charity."
 Batteries, light bulbs - take to council unit."

Q. Which materials do you recycle and where do you recycle them?

When responding to questions about where you live during term time, please think specifically about the type of accommodation you have told us you are currently living in, for example bins in your halls of residence kitchen, or council collection from your house/flat.

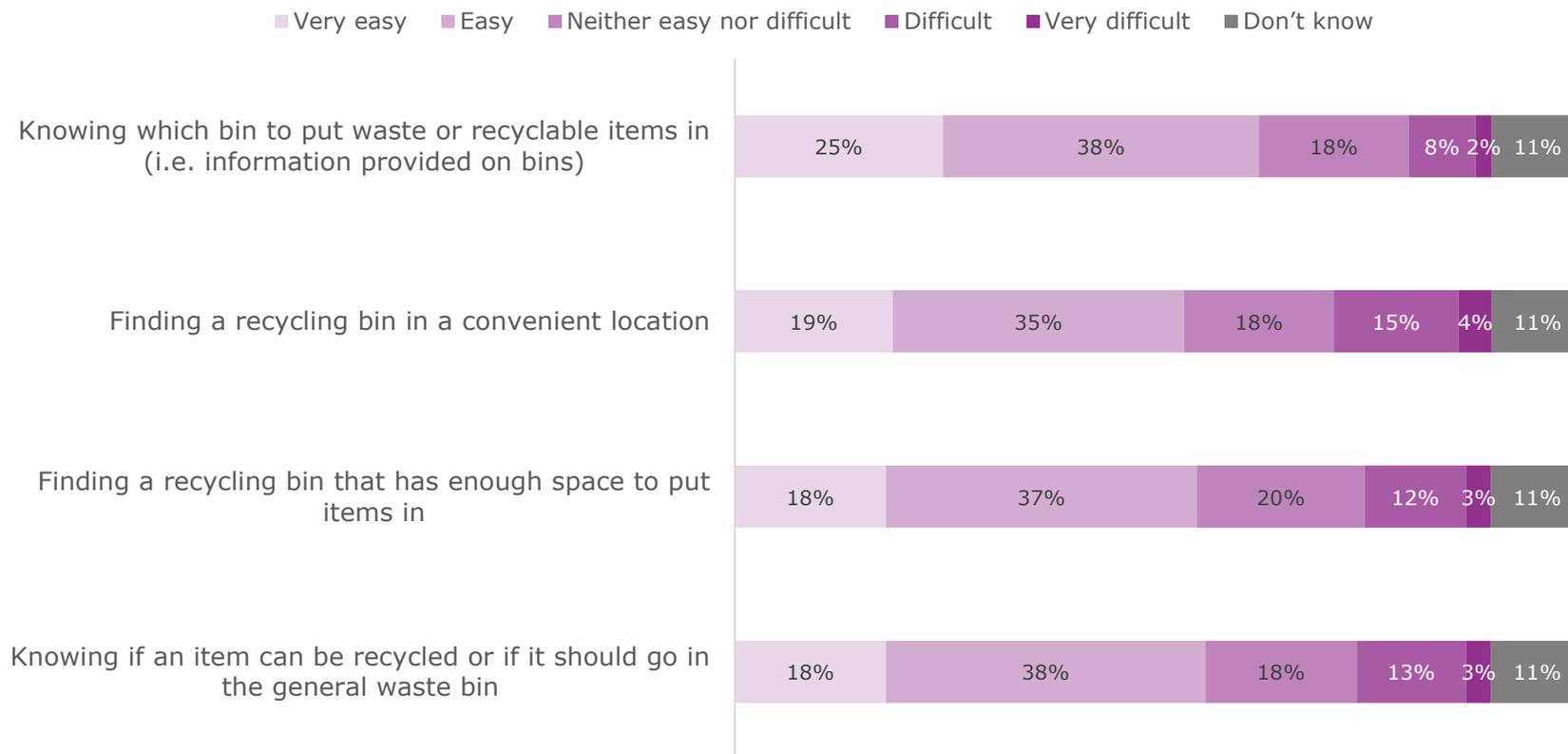
When thinking about where they live during term time, around a quarter say it is difficult to know if an item can be recycled or should go in the general waste bin (23%). A similar proportion say it can be difficult to find a recycling bin that has enough space to put items in (24%).



Q. How easy or difficult are the following aspects related to recycling where you live during term time?

Base: c2212 Balance: No response

When thinking about recycling on campus, 16% say they find it difficult to know if an item can be recycled, and 15% say finding a bin with space for recyclables is difficult. 19% struggle to find recycling bins in convenient locations.



Q. And how easy or difficult are the following aspects related to recycling on your university campus?

Base: c2158 Balance: No response

Barriers to recycling where respondents live during term time includes...

"As a wheelchair user, I am unable to lift up the bin lid- need help from others."

Bin accessibility

"We are only given one recycling box, meaning we have to separate everything when we get to the bins."

Recycling effort

"Recycling food items is difficult because the nearest food recycling bin is quite far away outside."

"Some students may be less likely to recycle because you have to lug it down to the bin storage."

"The recycling bag is sometimes chock-a-block with stuff, so it can be a struggle to fit stuff in it."

Bin provision

"I sometimes struggle to find space to recycle things as it is widely promoted at my university."

"People mix up the bins as they can't be bothered which makes it hard to then work out which bin to use."

Bin information

"Recycling bins are far too small. Difficult enough to even get flatmates to remove rubbish normally."

"There are no food waste bins, it just goes in the landfill."

"Conflicting information in the halls' kitchens about what goes in which bin."

Q. What difficulties, if any, do you face when trying to recycle where you live during term time?

[University and private halls of residences only]

Barriers to recycling on campus include...

"Cannot wash out items before putting them in recycling bin."

Understanding and enabling recycling practices

"Unsure about coffee cups which still have leftover coffee in. Should they go in general waste?"

"A lot of the outside recycling bins have black bags and are clearly mixed in with general waste."

"Recycling bins aren't clear enough - often they are full of rubbish anyway."

Bin information

"Sometimes the labelling of the bins could be clearer."

Recycling bins don't have a list of items that are allowed or not, it's common sense though really.

"Only a few recycling bins say they take cardboard so I have to take it home."

"Not all rooms have a recycle bin and it's not always convenient to wait and find another one."

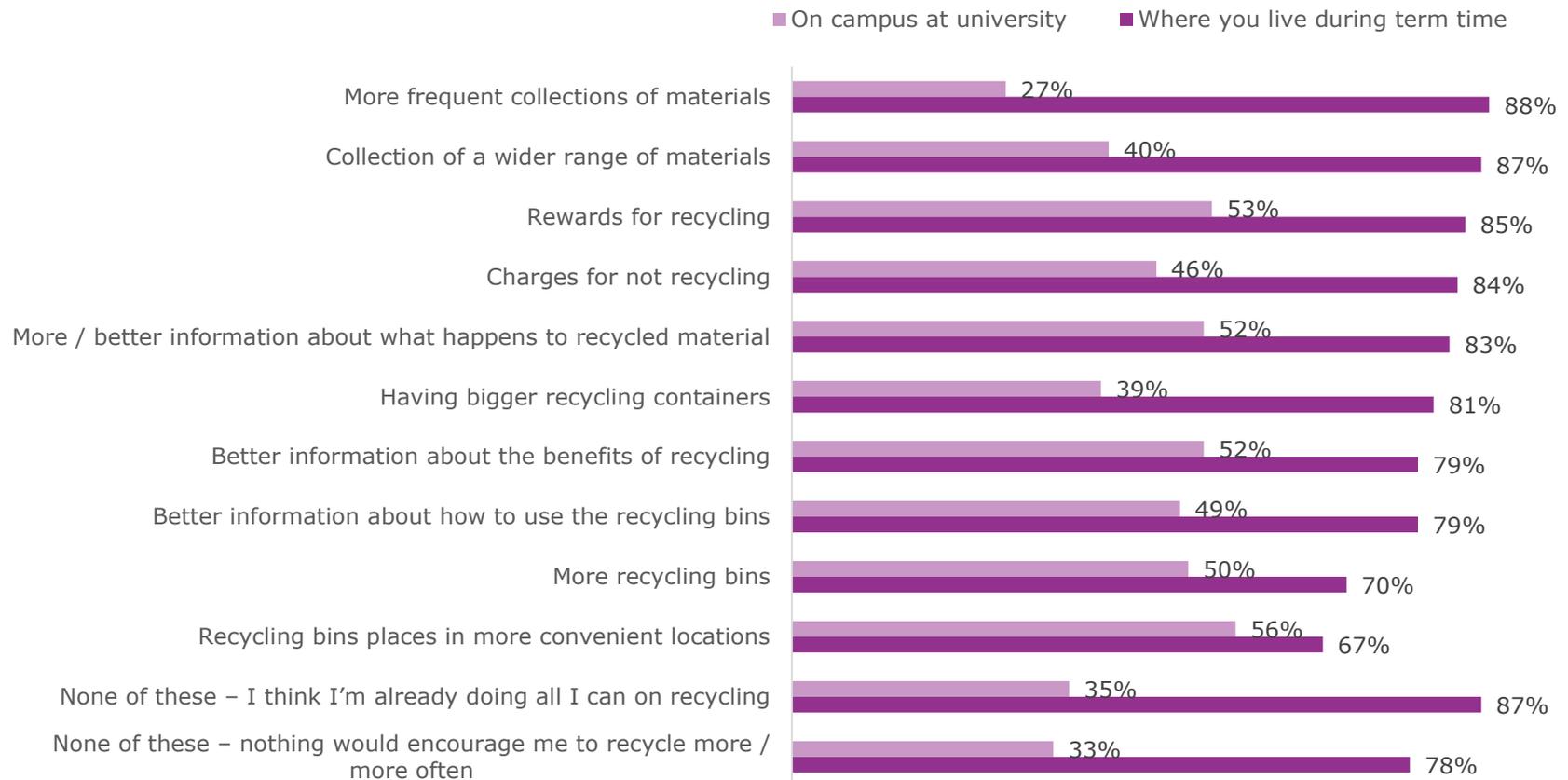
Availability of bins

"Not seeing recycling bins near my lectures and seminars."

"Not sure what can go in the 'mixed recycling' box and what should go into 'general waste'."

"There are not always bins for everything that can be recycled, e.g. a food bin."

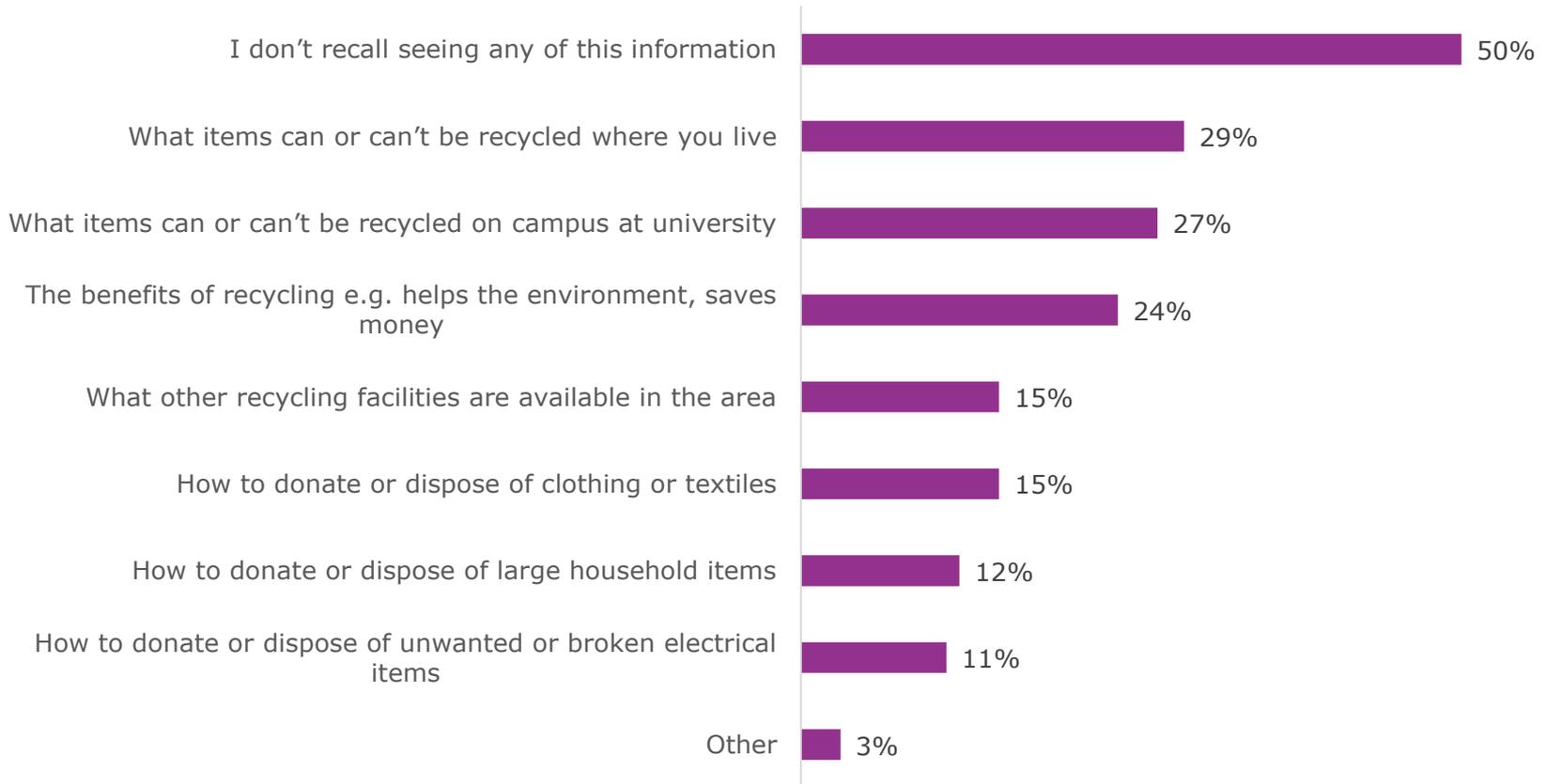
More frequent collections (89%) and collection of a wider range of materials (88%) are seen as the best ways to improve recycling where respondents live. On campus, placing bins in more convenient locations (53%), providing rewards for recycling (50%) and better information about the benefits of recycling (50%) are seen as the best ways of improving recycling.



Q. What, if anything, do you think would help you to recycle more different types of materials, or recycle items more often?

Base: c1300 Balance: No response

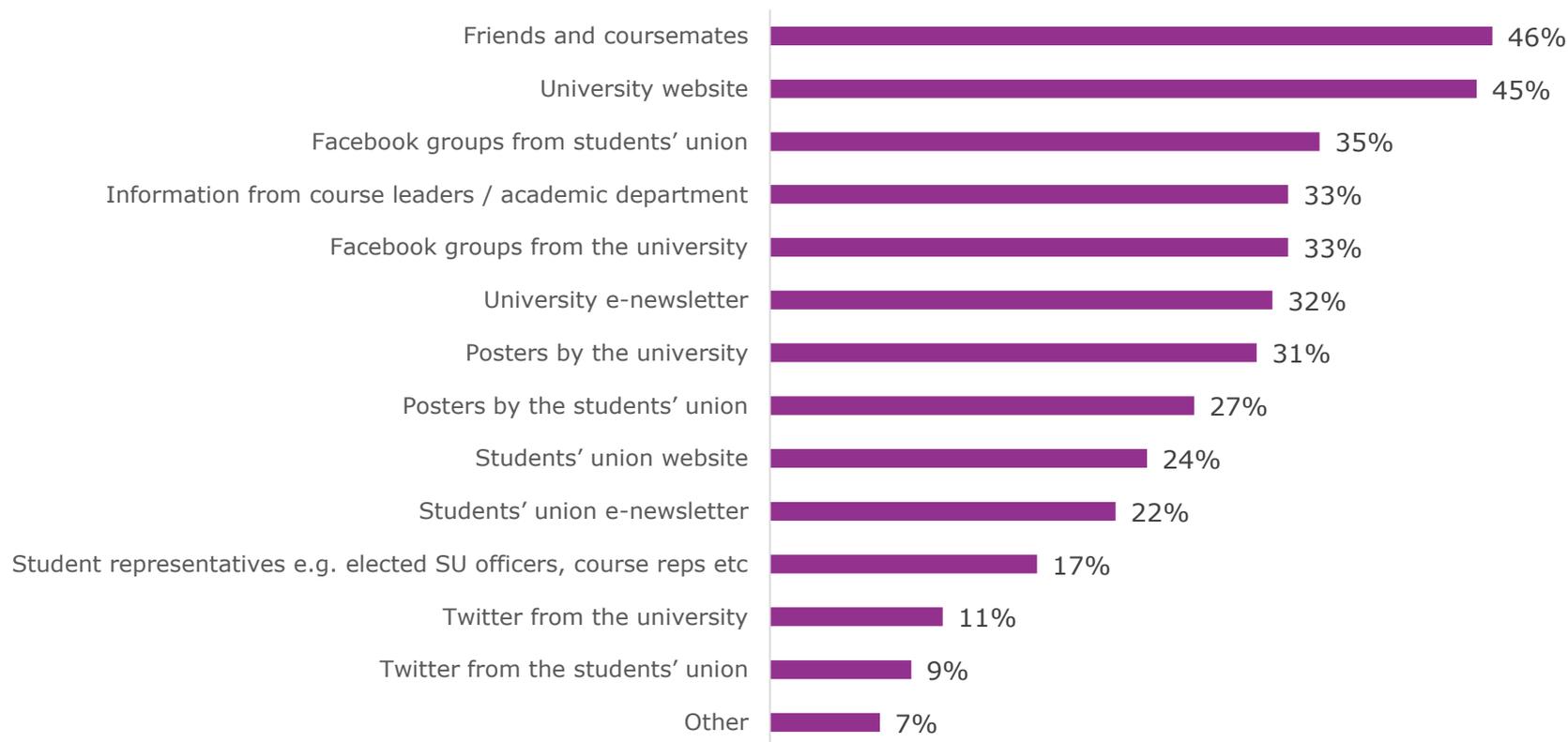
50% of respondents do not recall seeing any information about recycling from their university since the start of the academic year. 29% recall seeing information on what can and can't be recycled where they live and 27% say they recall seeing the same information on campus.



Q. Do you recall receiving or seeing any information from your university about recycling since the start of the academic year?

Base: 2135 Balance: No response

Respondents suggest communication via peers is likely to be most successful with 46% identifying friends and course mates as the source of finding out what's going on at their university. 45% say they consult the university website, and 35% consult Facebook groups from their students' union.



Q. Which of the following methods of communication do you use most often for finding out about what's going on at your university?

Base: 2112 Balance: No response

For more information about this research, please contact:
Rachel Drayson, Insight manager (Sustainability) –
rachel.Drayson@nus.org.uk