

Pay as you Throw

What We Heard Report

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Communications
April 29, 2022



In February and March of 2022 Strathcona County used a survey to gauge public feedback and perspectives towards a 'pay as you throw' model for waste removal.

Introduction and Methodology

Guided by our Waste Management Roadmap, Strathcona County is starting on a journey to change how we think about and manage our waste. In 2020, we asked residents about how they currently manage their waste and areas they thought could be improved.

The roadmap identified 'pay as you throw' as the next step in our waste management program. This is a system where households pay based on the amount of waste they throw away. This matches how other utilities such as water, gas or power are charged based on the amount used, instead of a flat rate for each household. As we look to implement the recommendations identified in the roadmap, we need to ask more questions to determine how these new programs will work. This survey allowed residents to explore the concept of pay as you throw and what it entails to explore what an acceptable and effective program could look like in our community.

The survey was made available via two platforms—SCOOP (the County's online opinion platform) and Alchemer (the online platform used to obtain responses from residents of Strathcona County who are not members of SCOOP). As the survey was completed by those who chose to answer, rather than those who were randomly selected, caution should be used when applying the results applying the results to the broader population of Strathcona County.

Only respondents who currently receive waste collection services from Strathcona County were invited to complete the survey. The Alchemer survey was completed by 974 respondents and 729 completed the survey via SCOOP, for a total of 1,703 respondents. As questions were not mandatory and some respondents only partially completed the survey, the base of respondents varies question to question. Analysis of open-ended response was conducted using NVivo software and coded by a single analyst to maintain consistency. The survey ran from February 28 to March 18, 2022.

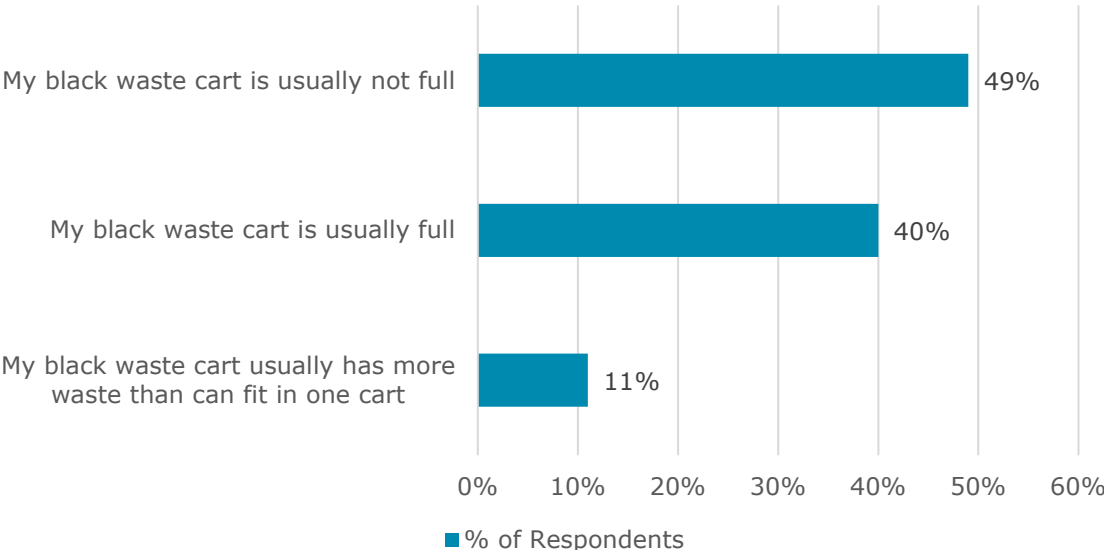
Engagement / Survey Results

Black waste cart usage

The first question we asked: **“In a 2020 survey, half the households in Strathcona County reported their black waste cart was less than 75% (three quarters) full each collection day. Is this true for your household?”**

Just under half of respondents noted their black waste carts are not usually full, with the other half having usually enough waste to either fill or exceed the volume of their black waste cart.

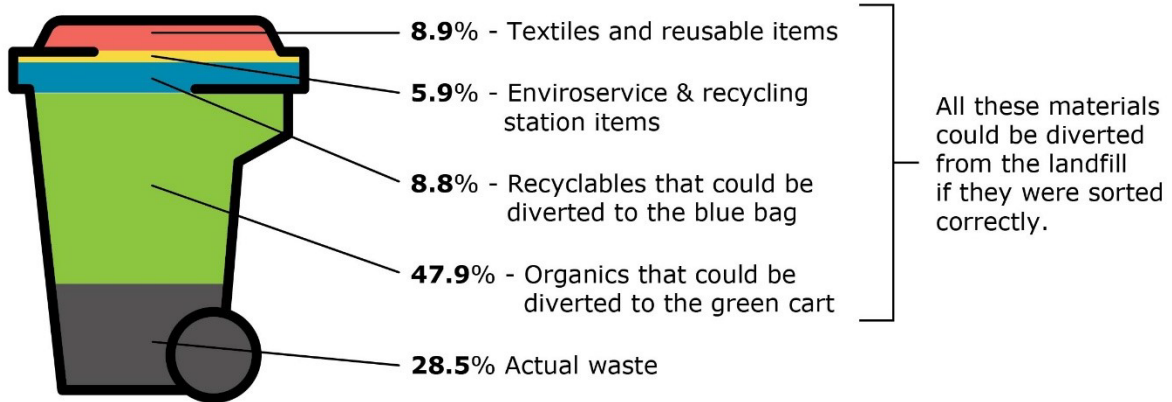
Figure 1: Black Waste Cart Usage



WILLINGNESS TO SORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

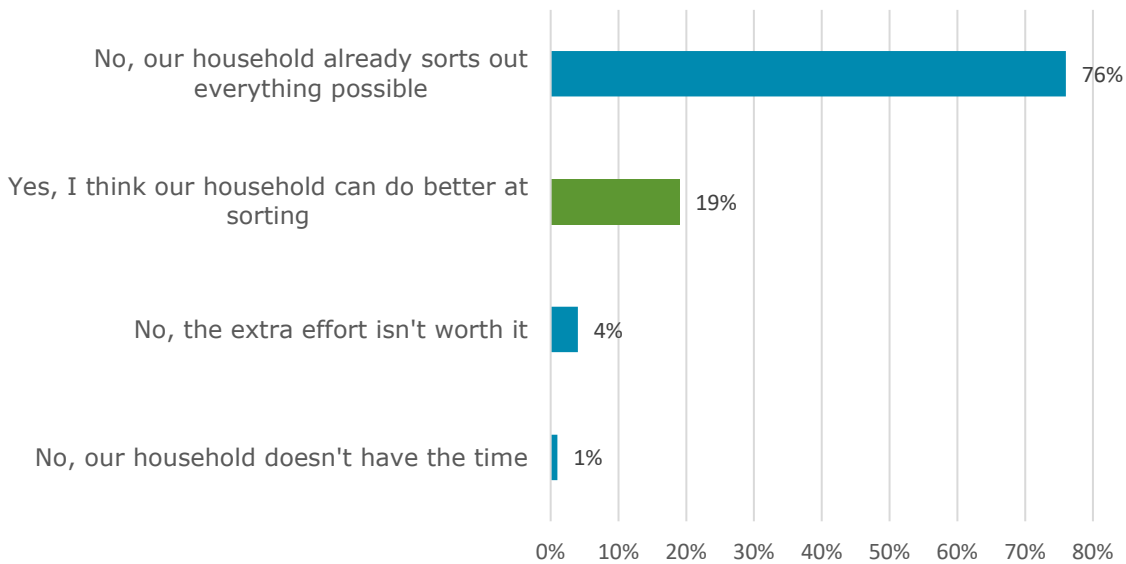
Next we asked: **“Based on a recent waste audit, over 65% of the material being sent to the landfill could be reused, recycled, or composted...are you willing to look at what your household throws away and see if there are more materials you could divert from the waste cart?”**

What's still going to the landfill from our black carts?



As shown in Figure 2 below, only 19% of respondents were willing to do a better job at sorting their waste. 81% were not willing to sort their waste more – with the overwhelming majority (76%) believing they were already sorting out everything possible.

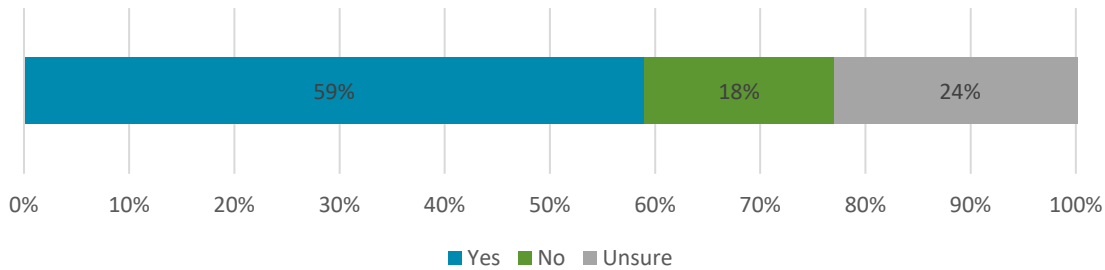
Figure 2: Willingness to Sort Waste



We also asked respondents **“Should households that do not properly sort or try to reduce their waste be held accountable?”** While the majority of respondents indicated yes, they should be held

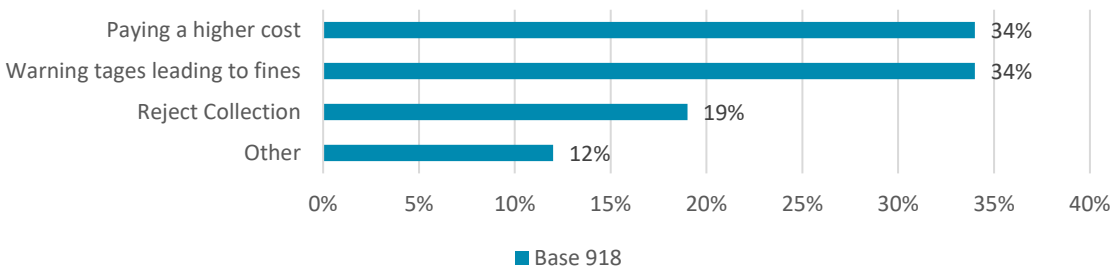
accountable – just under a quarter of respondents selected unsure, likely indicating some important contextual factors would influence their decision.

Figure 3: Should households that do not properly sort or try to reduce their waste be held accountable?



For those who indicated that there should be accountability for those who do not properly sort, we asked **"How should they be held accountable?"** Paying a higher cost and warning tags leading to fines had the same level of support – 34%.

Figure 4: How should households that do not properly sort or try to reduce their waste be held accountable?

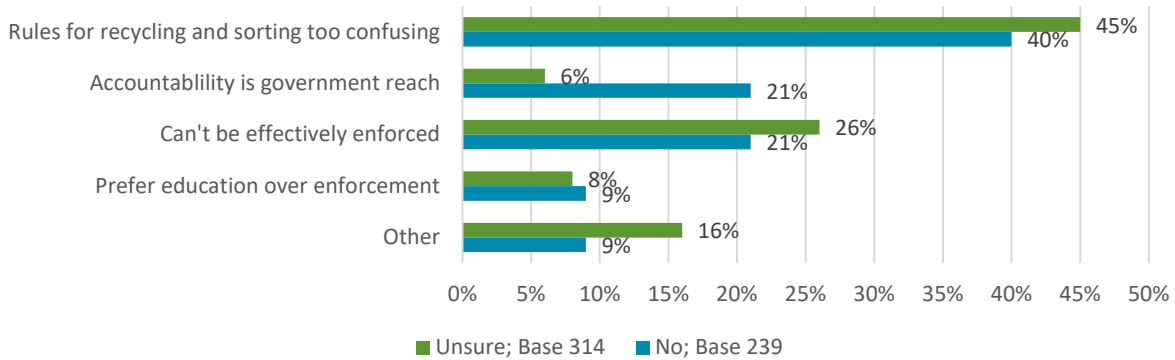


Other responses included mentions of:

- Education and more information for households that are not properly sorting
- Step by step process, with warnings leading to paying a higher cost
- Higher property taxes

- Combinations of two or all three of the above options

Figure 5: Respondents who indicated 'no' and 'unsure' to holding households accountable



The 18% of respondents who indicated that households should not be held accountable for not properly sorting their waste were also invited to provide more details explaining their answer. 239 respondents shared their rationale. 24% were unsure that households should be held accountable, 314 respondents shared more information on why they chose 'unsure.' Many of the 'unsure' responses were similar to the previous 'no' responses, although distributed differently as shown in Figure 5.

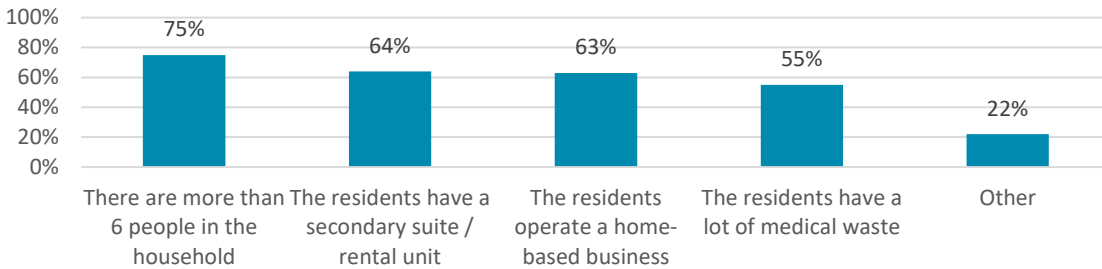
The largest proportion of respondents felt that the rules for sorting waste were too confusing and time-consuming for residents. These respondents felt that they and most other County residents were doing the best they could and should not face punitive measures. 21% of 'no' respondents noted that accountability measures were too punitive and not appropriate for the County government to engage in. Only 6% of 'unsure' respondents felt this way. A similar proportion felt that the monitoring was too difficult or too costly for the County to execute fairly and effectively, although 'unsure' respondents were somewhat more likely to hold this view than 'no' respondents. Lastly, similar proportions of respondents indicated that they preferred education for those who do not sort properly over punitive measures. Other responses were general questions about what types of accountability measures could be imposed and off-topic suggestions for waste removal.

REASONS FOR A LARGER WASTE CART

The last question on waste cart usage was **“What reasons do you think would be acceptable for a household to have a larger waste cart / two waste carts for an extra cost? Please choose all that apply.”**

The majority of respondents believed all the provided responses were acceptable reasons, with large families being the most agreed upon reason at 75%.

Figure 6: What reasons do you think would be acceptable for a household to have a larger waste cart / two waste carts for an extra cost? Multiple responses

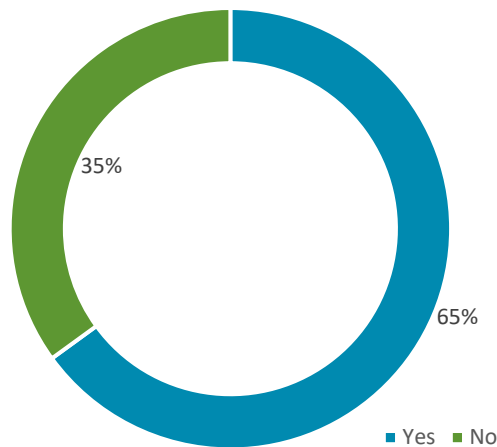


Other responses included respondents who believed no reason is necessary to have a larger waste cart, and that if residents want to pay for more carts they should be allowed to. We also heard mentions that families with young children or seniors might have higher waste due to diapers etc.

Pay as you throw

We asked respondents **“Do you think paying for waste based on how much you throw away is fair?”** Two thirds of respondents indicated that it was fair.

Figure 7: Do you think paying for waste based on how much you throw away is fair?



We asked the 35% of respondents who felt it wasn't fair to explain their answer. 496 respondents shared their comments with us.

The number one reason provided, mentioned by 32% (n=159) of respondents, was a belief that a "pay as you throw" model would be an extra cost to larger families which would naturally produce more waste. Some respondents also noted young families produce larger volumes of non-recyclable waste like diapers, which they should not be punished for.

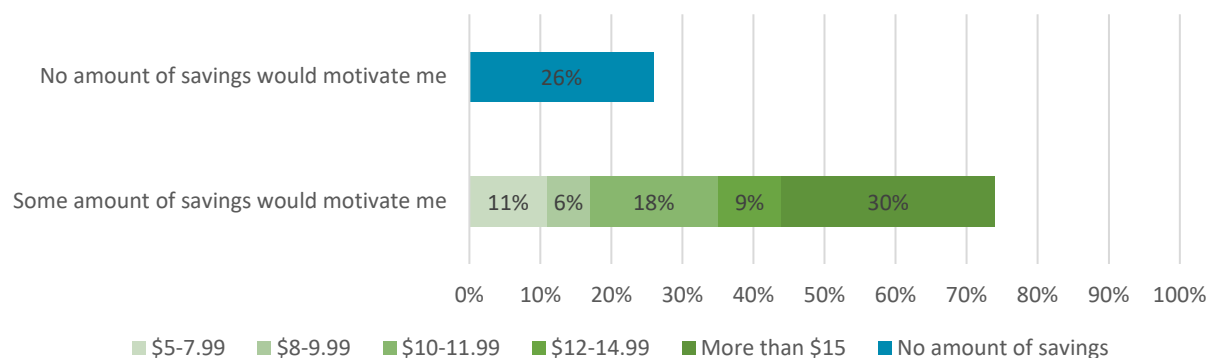
The second largest category of response, mentioned by 23% (n=114) of respondents, felt that the waste they produce is not highly adjustable due to the packaging of most products. These respondents expressed frustration with changes in the County's recycling program and that many items they would prefer to recycle are currently diverted to the landfill. These respondents also noted that their garbage production varies widely depending on the time of year, and that overall, their times of heavy waste production balances the times of light waste production. Under these circumstances, these respondents felt a pay as you throw system would be unfair.

The next two responses at 18% each were concerns about pay as you throw leading to more illegal dumping and a preference for the current fixed cost system. 8% of respondents replied with other comments not related to pay as you throw specifically.

INCENTIVES TO DIVERT WASTE

Next, we asked **"What amount of savings would motivate your household to divert more and change to a smaller size waste cart?"** 74% of respondents indicated that some level of savings would motivate them to divert more waste and change to a smaller size waste cart – with the largest proportion needing to see \$15 or more in savings. 26% of respondents indicated that no level of savings would motivate them.

Figure 8: What amount of savings would motivate your household to divert more and change to a smaller size waste cart?



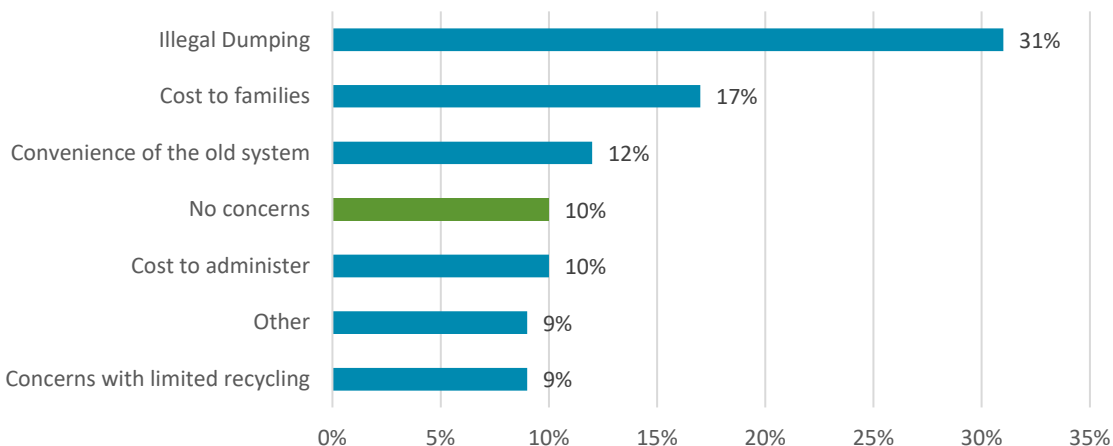
We were interested in learning more about the 26% of respondents who indicated they wouldn't be motivated by any amount of savings. We asked these respondents to explain their answer. 372 respondents shared their views.

71% (n=262) of respondents indicated that they were already sorting to the fullest extent, and that they would likely not benefit from any savings. 15% (n=56) of respondents were skeptical that the program would save households or the County money, and that they preferred the simplicity of the current system. 6% of people noted that the potential savings were either too small to bother with or that monetary incentives were not personally motivating for them. Lastly, 6% of respondents made other comments largely not directly related to the question.

CONCERNS WITH PAY AS YOU THROW

Lastly, we asked all respondents to share with us their concerns about a 'pay as you throw' system. We received 1240 open-ended responses to this question, the results of which can be seen in the chart below.

Figure 9: What concerns do you have moving to a pay as you throw system?



- Convenience of the old system – respondents were concerned that the relative simplicity of the current system would be lost and present challenges to residents. Notably respondents were concerned about how fluctuations in waste volumes would be accounted for or around peak times (such as Christmas.)
- Cost to administer –respondent were concerned that the effort and resources expended to implement the program would not be worth the potential savings to residents. Some

respondents also noted that potential savings and potential extra costs were too small to meaningfully change behavior.

- Cost to families – as noted in another question, the cost to families was noted a major concern. Particularly for lower-income households who might not be able to afford additional costs and for larger households who will face higher costs due to their larger family size.
- Illegal dumping – as noted in another question, many respondents were worried that a pay as you throw model could lead to an increase in illegal dumping and littering as some residents might attempt to dispose of waste without paying.
- Concerns with limited recycling – some respondents noted that limitations on recycling makes sorting and diverting waste difficult, and that a pay as you throw system would be unfair.
- Other – We also heard a number of other comments, questions and ideas that were not related to any of the above themes or pay as you throw. Many of these comments noted that they had left relevant feedback in response to previous questions or were queries about how the program would be implemented.

Who we talked to

The survey was made available to Strathcona County residents who receive waste collection services. To better understand the feedback we received, we collected some respondent characteristics on the location of the respondent in the county and household composition.

Figure 10: Respondent Location in Strathcona County

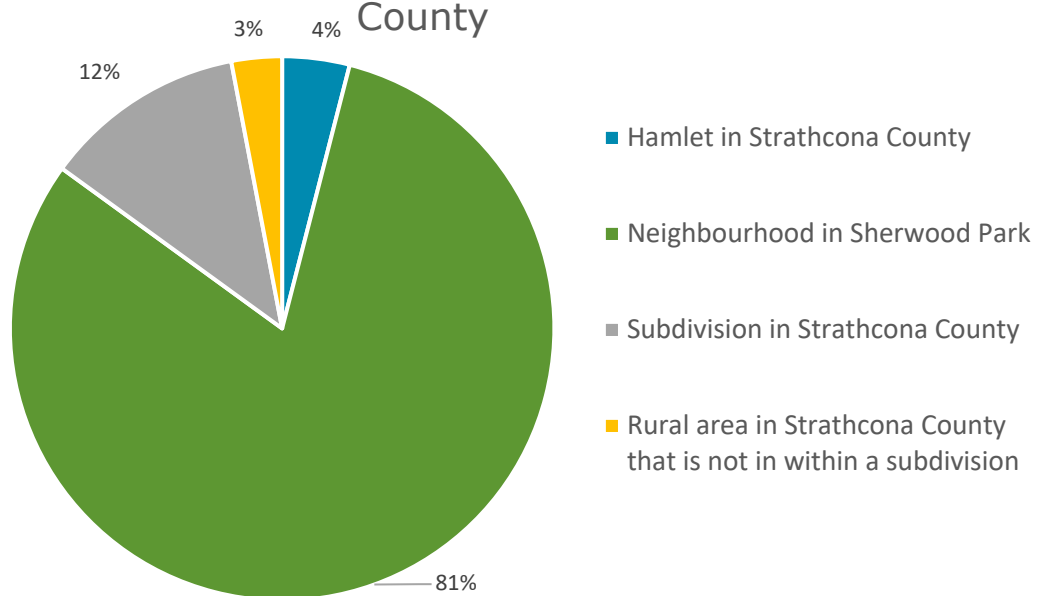


Figure 11: Number of Respondent Households (HH) with Members in each Age Category

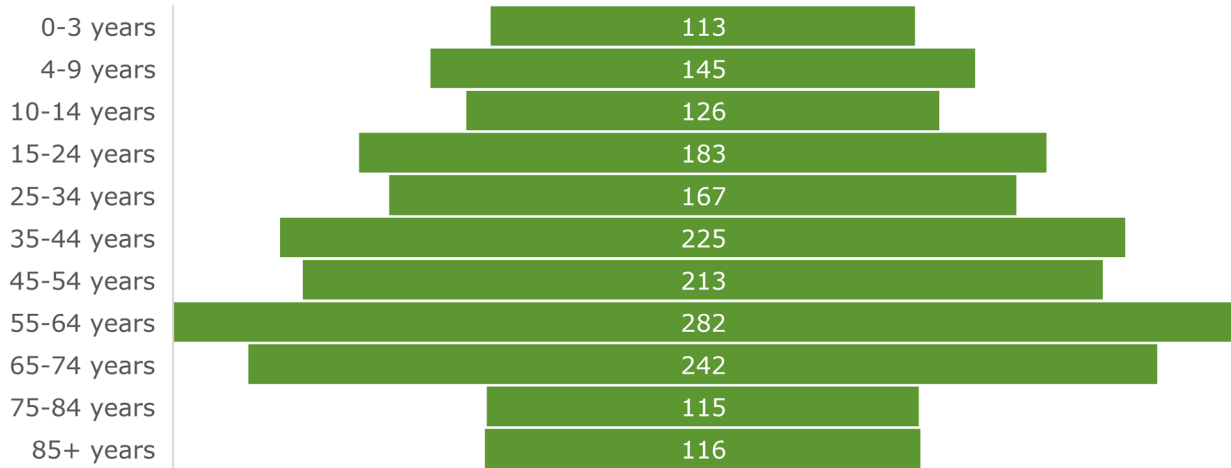


Figure 12: Respondent Household (HH) Characteristics

Max HH Size	12
Minimum HH Size	1
Mean HH Size	2.82
Median HH Size	2
% of HHs with children under 15	22%
% of HHs with Seniors	31%

What's next

The results of this survey will be presented to County Council in the Spring of 2022 with the annual update for our Waste Management Roadmap. Future direction on pay as you throw will be determined following Council direction.



DID YOU KNOW: FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WASTE MANAGEMENT AT STRATHCONA.CA

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