

Recycling Survey Report

CITY OF URBANA

July 2014



A report by the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center

www.istc.illinois.edu/zerowaste

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INTRODUCTION

A waste audit was conducted by the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center (ISTC) for the Urbana City Building in December, 2013. ISTC made recommendations to increase overall recycling rates after the waste audit was conducted. The survey was the first recommended step in order to determine how much Urbana employees know about the U-Cycle program, and to obtain employee feedback on how to best implement new practices.

Of the 201 employees that work in the Urbana City Building, 50 employees responded to the recycling survey that was sent via e-mail on July 9, 2014. This accounts for a 25% response rate. The survey had 24 questions and included an incentive of a \$50 Amazon gift card for one employee, picked at random, if they completed the survey. The complete survey is attached in the appendix.

SURVEY RESULTS

Below are a summary of the survey results.

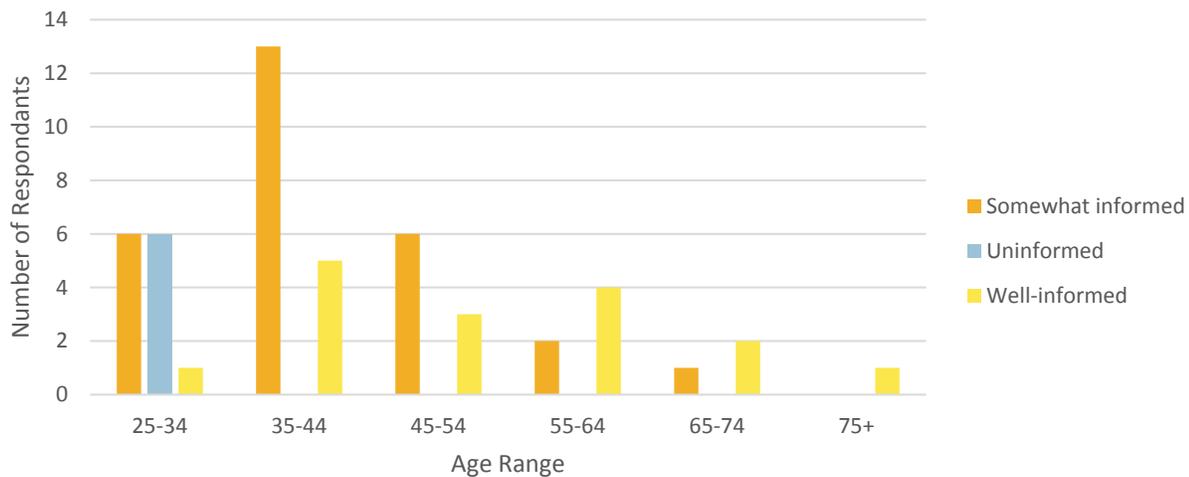
In what department do you work?

The answers for each survey question can be sorted through by department to see which departments are recycling the most, need more bins, etc.

What is your age range?

Through the survey it is apparent that the 25-34 age-group is least informed about the U-Cycle program. This could be because new hires are not given information about the U-Cycle program during orientation.

Figure 1: Awareness of U-Cycle Program by Age group



What is your gender?

There was no strong correlation between gender and the responses to the survey questions.

Do you have a blue recycling bin in your workspace? If “no,” why not?

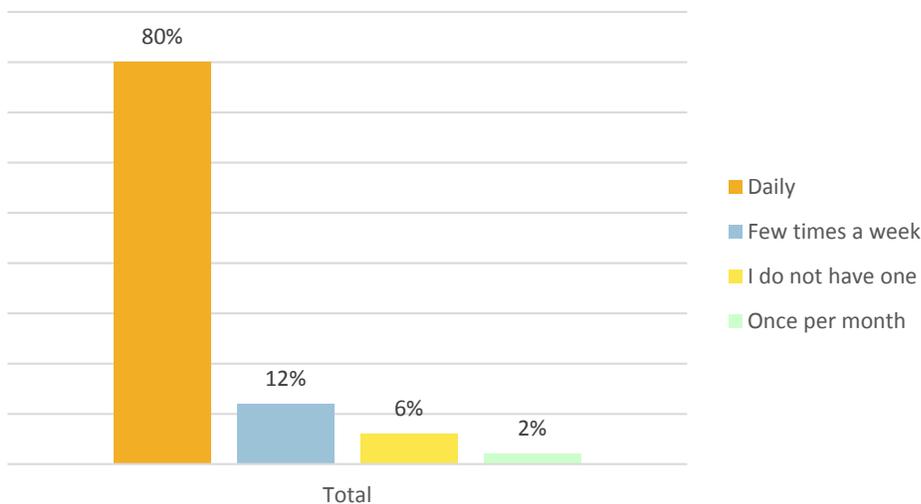
10% (N=5) of employees said they did not have a blue recycling bin in their workspace. 4% (N=2) said they did not have enough space, 4% (N=2) said they never received one, and 2% (N=1) said that their department (Executive) has no small blue ones, but a large bin outside the department.

After a bin audit was conducted at the city building, 20 new bins were ordered so everyone has the opportunity to recycle in their workspace. Bins were distributed to offices without them on July 30, 2014.

Do you use your workspace recycling bin? If “yes” or “sometimes”, how often?

94% (N=47) of respondents said yes or sometimes to using their workspace recycling bins. The other 6% (N=3) did not have workspace recycling bins. Of the employees who answered yes/sometimes, 85% (N=42) recycled daily, 13% (N=6) recycled a few times per month, and 2% (N=1) recycled once a month. The results show that most people in the building recycle daily. This number will only increase once everyone has bins and there is proper signage to indicate what can be recycled.

Figure 2: Percent usage of recycling bin



Is your workspace trash can placed next to your recycling bin? If “no”, why not?

72% (N=36) of employees have trash and recycling bins placed next to each other. The reasons why people do not have the bins placed next to each other is shown in the table.

Response	Number of people
I don't have a recycling bin	3
Not Convenient	1
Not enough space	7
We don't have the small blue bins, just the large one outside our department	1
Recycling is in the briefing room (Police Department)	1

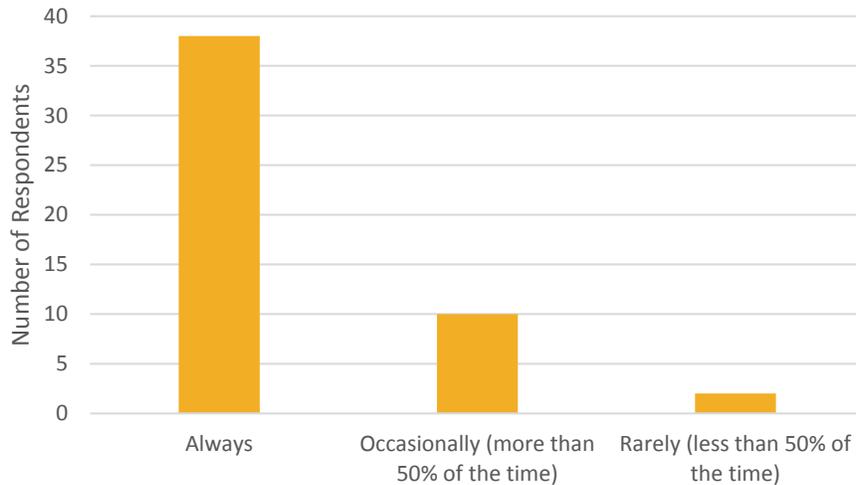
Seven survey respondents said they did not have enough space for a recycling bin. Only one person during the physical bin audit said they did not have enough space. Individuals could utilize recycling bins in the communal

areas of their office. Some individuals didn't realize that the size of the recycle bin can fit in tighter spaces, and were more willing to give them a try once they saw the bin size in person.

How often do you recycle paper in your office or building's recycling bins?

76% (N=38) of employee always recycle paper, 20% (N=10) occasionally recycle paper, and 4% (N=2) rarely recycle paper in their office or building's recycling bins. The waste audit revealed that 23% of the landfill stream is composed of paper. By increasing recycling convenience and awareness of acceptable materials, the amount of paper landfilled should reduce in future audits.

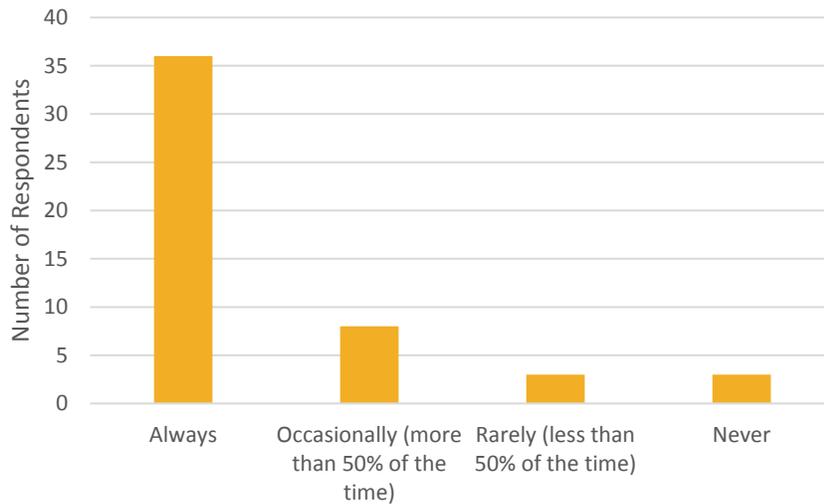
Figure 3: Frequency of recycling paper



How often do you recycle plastic bottles or aluminum cans in your office or building's recycling bins?

72% (N=36) of people recycle plastic bottles or aluminum cans, 16% (N=8) occasionally recycle, 6% (N=3) rarely recycle, and 6% (N=3) never recycle in their office or building's recycling bins. The amount of bottles and aluminum being recycled should increase by the follow-up waste audit because signage will be placed on recycling bins listing acceptable materials.

Figure 4: Frequency of recycling plastic bottles and aluminum cans



How convenient is recycling in your office?

86% (N=43) of people said recycling was very convenient, 12% (N=6) said somewhat convenient, and 2% (N=1) said somewhat inconvenient in their office. No one thought that recycling was inconvenient. After proper signage and an increase of recycling bins, the recycling system should become even more convenient.

Do you think your office/department has enough recycling bins?

80% (N=40) of employees said yes, 12% (N=6) said no, 6% (N=3) said not sure, and 2% (N=1) said not in all areas. More recycling bins are being provided to increase the amount of “yes” responses.

Do you have recommendations on how to reduce waste or improve recycling in your office?

Fourteen people had recommendations:

- Eight of the 14 respondents recommended educating city workers on what can be recycled through signage and awareness. Signage is being created and will be placed on all recycling bins in the near future.
- Two people in the police department recommended larger bins because the small ones fill up quickly. One police employee was not sure where a larger bin would fit. During the bin audit, we scoped out the area and ordered another larger bin to place in the communal area.
- One person recommended that a bin be placed anywhere there are desks. This was completed on July 30, 2014.
- One person recommended finding a place to recycle printer ribbons and cartridges. The Urbana City Building already has a place in the building to drop off ink jet cartridges; therefore employees need to be made aware of the other recycling opportunities.

- The IT department did not have any recycling bins in their department except for a bin directly outside their department entrance. The employee recommended getting bins to put in their department offices which was completed during the bin audit.
- Police documents are shredded through an outside company. Therefore, someone recommended making sure these documents are getting recycled.

Most of the recommendations revolved around making sure people are aware of what can be recycled. Once the signage is up and the U-Cycle brochure is e-mailed to employees, these recommendations will be met.

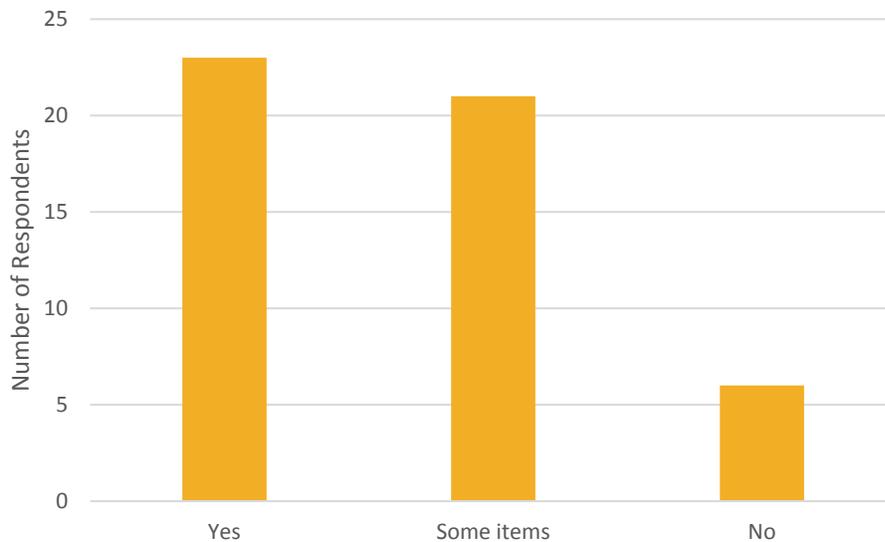
How informed are you regarding Urbana's U-Cycle program?

56% (N=28) are somewhat informed, 32% (N=16) are well-informed, and 12% (N=6) are uninformed regarding Urbana’s U-Cycle program. Once the U-Cycle brochure is e-mailed and the decal stickers are placed on the workspace recycling bins, then most employees should be well-informed. The U-Cycle brochure was e-mailed to all employees on July 21, 2014.

Do you know what types of recyclables are accepted in the U-Cycle program?

46% (N=23) did know what was accepted, 42% (N=21) knew some items, and 12% (N=6) did not know any types of recyclables that are accepted.

Figure 5: Awareness of accepted recyclables in U-Cycle program



What materials do you think can be recycled in your office recycling bin? Check all that apply.

30% (N=15) answered correctly by stating “all of the above.” Most people knew that paper could be recycled. Plastic shopping bags were the items respondents chose the least. Plastics #3-7 and glass (bottles) were also less common answers than all the other choices.

What improvements can the U-Cycle program make to your office recycling experience? Check all that apply.

More than half of the respondents thought that signage should be provided listing acceptable materials. A popular response was to provide incentives/office competitions to make recycling more fun. This is a great idea to implement in the near future once everyone has a workspace recycling bin and is aware of what is recyclable. Another popular response was to send reminder e-mails about recycling information; the first e-mail was sent on July 21, 2014. E-mails should be sent out every quarter to remind people of the program and materials accepted. This is also beneficial to new employees and ensures they are aware of the recycling program and acceptable materials.

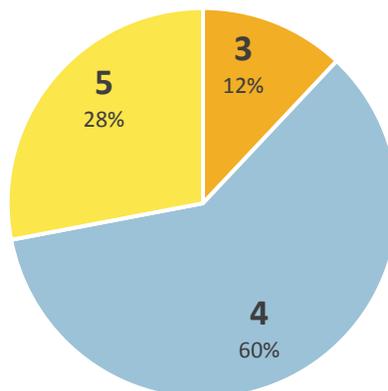
If you think U-Cycle should expand the materials they accept, then please list suggested additions:

Milk cartons and plastic shopping bags were listed, but both materials are accepted in the U-Cycle program. Styrofoam and bubble wrap were also listed. Currently Styrofoam recycling is unavailable, but there are alternatives to Styrofoam that can be used instead.

How would you rank the U-Cycle program from 1 - 5 (1 being poor; 5 being excellent)?

60% (N=30) ranked the program as a 4, 28% (N=14) ranked the program as a 5, and 12% (N=6) ranked the program as a 3. 88% of respondents believe the U-Cycle program is above average by ranking it as a 4 or 5. Once awareness of U-Cycle is known to all employees, more employees should rank the program higher.

Figure 6: Ranking of U-Cycle Program



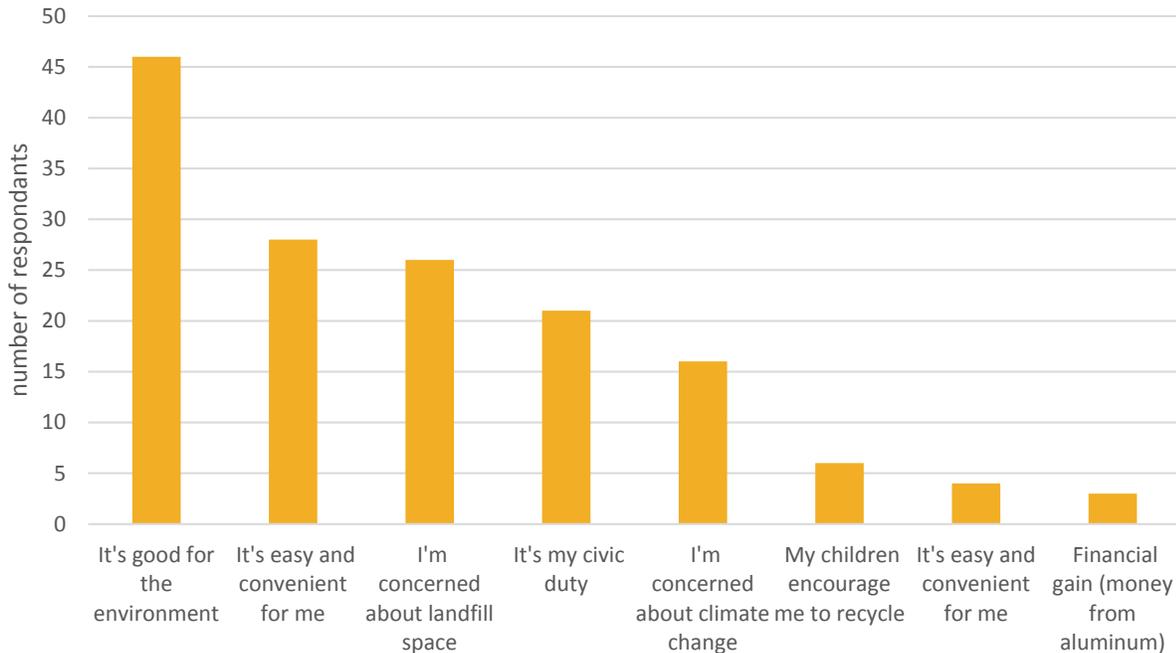
What comments/suggestions do you have for the U-Cycle program?

- Two respondents wanted program to expand to institutional and small business uses. This option could be looked into for further expansion of the U-Cycle program.
- Signage and recycling bins in break rooms and each office was recommended by some and is currently being implemented.
- New employees should be given material to explain the U-Cycle program.
- Recycling of fluorescent tubes. The U-Cycle website states that fluorescent tubes can be recycled at Springfield Electric located at 901 N. Mattis Ave., Champaign, for a fee. If the tubes are generated from City facilities, employees should contact the Facilities Manager for recycling options.

What motivates you to recycle? Check all that apply.

92% (N=46) of respondents said they recycle because it is good for the environment. Below is a graph that demonstrates how many people are motivated for each response.

Figure 7: Motivations for recycling



City of Urbana employees are motivated by a healthy environment. This information can be used when sending out informative emails and creating signage by demonstrating the importance of recycling and its positive environmental influence. More than half of employees are already motivated by the convenience and ease of recycling. With signage and additional bins being placed around the building, more people should find participating in recycling easy and convenient.

CONCLUSION

With the addition of signage and an increase of recycling bins, many of the issues and concerns of employees brought up in this survey should be resolved. A follow-up survey should be conducted several months after recommended changes are made to see whether respondents' answers change.

Appendix:

City of Urbana Office Recycling Survey

In what department do you work?*_

- City Clerk
- Community Development
- Engineering
- Executive
- Finance
- Fire
- Human Relations
- Human Resources
- Legal
- Mayor
- Police
- Public Works

What is your age range?*_

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+

What is your gender?*_

- Female
- Male
- I don't want to answer

Workspace Recycling

Do you have a blue recycling bin in your workspace?*_

- Yes

No

If no, why not?

Never received one

Don't know where it went

Not enough space for a recycling bin

Other:

Do you use your workspace recycling bin?* _

Yes

No

Sometimes

I do not have one

If yes/sometimes, how often?

Daily

Few times a week

Once per week

Every couple weeks

Once per month

Other:

Is your workspace trash can placed next to your recycling bin?* _

Yes

No

If no, why not?

Not enough space

Not convenient

I don't have a recycling bin

I don't have a garbage bin

Other:

How often do you recycle paper in your office or building's recycling bins?* _

Always

Occasionally (more than 50% of the time)

Rarely (less than 50% of the time)

Never

How often do you recycle plastic bottles or aluminum cans in your office or building's recycling bins?*

Always

- Occasionally (more than 50% of the time)
- Rarely (less than 50% of the time)
- Never

How convenient is recycling in your office?* _

- Very convenient
- Somewhat convenient
- Somewhat inconvenient
- Very inconvenient

Do you think your office/department has enough recycling bins?* _

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Other:

Do you have recommendations on how to reduce waste or improve recycling in your office?

How informed are you regarding Urbana's U-Cycle program?* _

- Well-informed
- Somewhat informed
- Uninformed

Do you know what types of recyclables are accepted in the U-Cycle program?* _

- Yes
- No
- Some items

What materials do you think can be recycled in your office recycling bin? Check all that apply.* _

- Paper (office, junk mail, magazines, catalogs, etc.)
- Corrugated Cardboard
- Paperboard (frozen food boxes, cartons, etc.)
- Aluminum (cans, clean foil, etc.)
- Tin (soup cans, etc.)
- PET plastic #1 (soda bottles, water bottles)
- HDPE plastic #2 (milk jugs, detergent bottles)

- Plastics #3-7 (other plastics such as yogurt cups, cooking oil bottles, etc.)
- Glass (bottles)
- Plastic shopping bags (grocery/retail only)
- All of the above

What improvements can the U-Cycle program make to your office recycling experience? Check all that apply.

- Make it more convenient
- Provide me a recycling bin
- Provide signage listing acceptable materials
- Reminder e-mails about recycling information
- Provide incentives/office competitions to make recycling more fun
- Expand materials accepted in the program
- Provide larger recycling bins
- Other:

If you think U-Cycle should expand the materials they accept, then please list suggested additions:

How would you rank the U-Cycle program from 1 - 5 (1 being poor; 5 being excellent)?* _

1	2	3	4	5
●	●	●	●	●

What comments/suggestions do you have for the U-Cycle program?

▲
▼

◀
▶

What motivates you to recycle? Check all that apply.* _

- It's good for the environment
- I'm concerned about climate change
- It's easy and convenient for me
- My children encourage me to recycle
- Financial gain (money from aluminum, etc.)
- It's my civic duty
- I'm concerned about landfill space

I don't care to recycle

Other:

Would you like to be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 Amazon gift card?* _

Yes

No

If yes, please provide your e-mail address: