

Campus Snapshot

Where are we now?

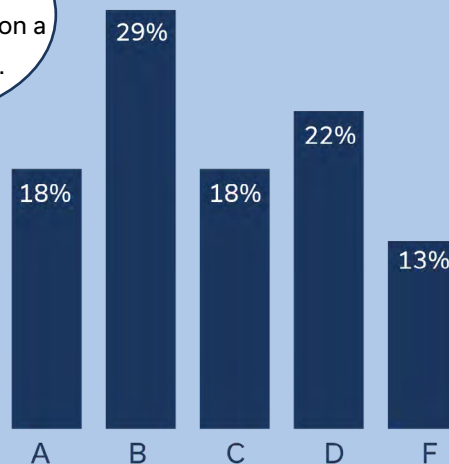
Key take-aways from a Fall 2023 survey of the UK community's recycling attitudes, knowledge and behaviors.

Only 65% of UK community members earn a passing grade for their knowledge of what materials are recyclable on campus. When we asked people to tell us whether specific items like cups, clamshells and pizza boxes go in the recycling or landfill, two-thirds got 70% or more correct.



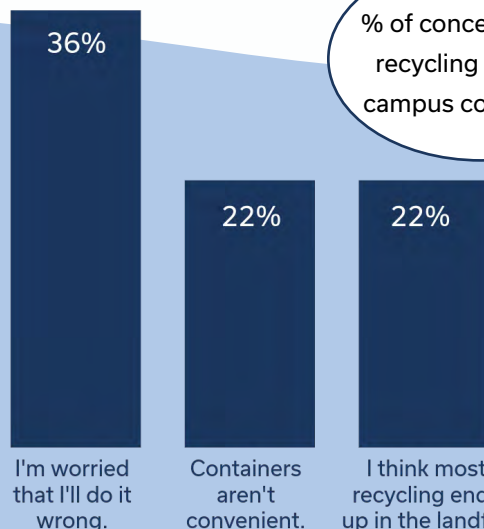
Over 1/3 of the campus community is worried about recycling wrong. Campus community members told us that their top three concerns are whether they know how to recycle correctly, as well as whether campus recycling is convenient and trustworthy.

How UK community members scored on a recycling quiz.

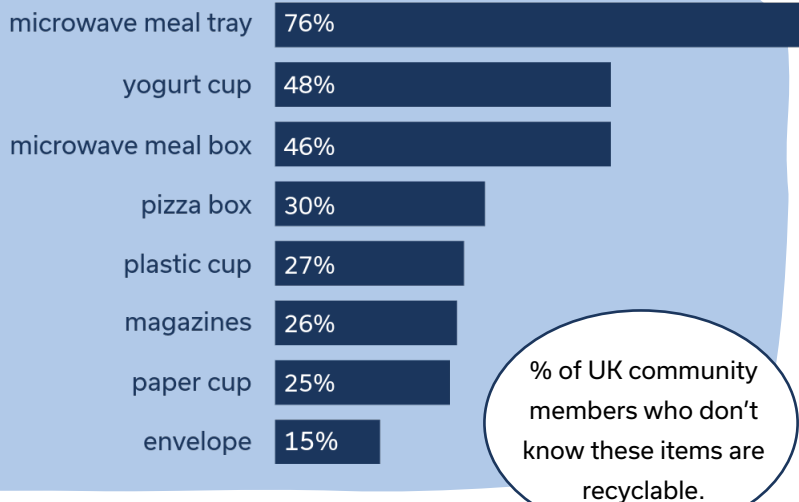


UK community members tend to associate recycling with abstract ideas about sustainability and the environment. When we asked people what recycling makes them think of, the top answers were words like environment, green, sustainability and Earth. Only half as many top answers focused on specific elements of recycling, such as what materials are recyclable.

% of concerns about recycling from the campus community.



How can we improve?



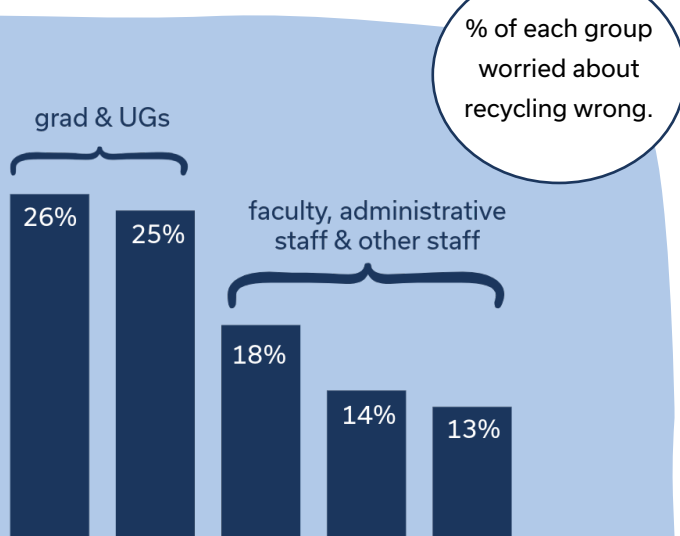
Educating the UK community about *just a few key recyclables* could make a big difference. UK Recycling accepts a much wider range of materials than survey-takers realized. A large number of people incorrectly think post-it notes, plastic and yogurt cups, microwave meal containers and other items should go in the landfill. We can tailor communications to focus on diverting those specific materials.

Showing UK community members, especially staff and faculty, *how recycling happens* could increase confidence in the recycling system.

Undergraduates are most confident that when they put something in a recycling bin at UK it will get recycled (7.8 on a scale of 1-10). Staff and faculty are less sure (6.8). Videos and other evidence of recycling efficacy could grow this confidence score.

"A few years ago I heard (and saw) that one of our building housekeepers just dumped the recycle bins into their large rolling trash cans. I hope that is not widespread and is no longer occurring!"

"I don't think the state of KY recycles at all so all of it ends up in the same landfill."



Increasing student confidence in their knowledge of what's recyclable will remove the top barrier to recycling. Almost no one thinks recycling doesn't matter or that they lack the skills or funds. If students aren't worried they're doing it wrong, they're more likely to choose the recycling bin over the landfill bin. Other groups would also benefit from increased confidence.