

# RETHINKING RECYCLING IN NELSON AND TASMAN

FINAL REPORT  
April 2022

**KANTAR PUBLIC**



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# 01

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## SUMMARY INSIGHTS

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1

## Engagement with recycling has rebounded in 2022.

Key beliefs around the value of recycling and residents' commitment to reducing waste were challenged in 2021, potentially as a result of the pandemic.

However, they have rebounded to pre-COVID-19 levels. 85% now believe it is worth the time to recycle. The proportion who rate themselves as highly committed to recycling (76%) and reducing waste (61%) are their highest levels to date.

2

## Residents desire to do the right thing might push them towards increased wish-cycling

While commitment to do the right thing is stronger than ever, knowledge of what items can and can't be recycled is slipping.

On average residents correctly identified items 64% of the time compared, to 72% last year.

This emerging confusion is most evident when it comes to non-recyclables like compostable items, and potentially reflects an expectation or desire that these items should be recyclable.

Indeed a key frustration for residents is items being sold in non-recyclable packaging.

3

## Residents need greater support to identify recyclable plastics

Residents also seem to be thinking twice when it comes to plastic items that can be recycled. They are less likely than in 2021 to correctly identify numbers 1 and 5 as the symbols that tell them that a plastic item can be recycled. In addition only 57% correctly identify that number 2 items can be recycled.

This hesitancy is potentially leading to missed opportunities to collect recyclables.

4

## Residents feel we have a shared responsibility to deal with waste, and recognise their role as individuals. But they also want leadership.

77% of residents agree that they as individuals are highly responsible for reducing waste. This compares to 69% for businesses, 68% for the local councils and 62% for community groups.

That said the majority want to see more action from local and central government. Only 26% agree their local council is doing enough and 13% that central government is doing so.

5

## The waste video produced by the Councils has the potential to have a positive impact if promoted more widely.

While only 4% of residents claim to have seen the video waste, it has the capacity to grab and hold people's attention.

When compared to Kantar Public's advertising norms the video scored well, in particular in terms of being interesting.

The challenge is to extend its reach and share it more widely.

# 02

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## BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

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150  
online interviews

*Respondents were sourced from Colmar  
Brunton's online panel*



Nelson and Tasman residents  
18+, weighted by age within  
gender, and region

*Data has been post weighted to align it with  
Stats NZ population counts from the 2018  
census*



Fieldwork  
12 – 26 March



Maximum margin of error  
+/-7%  
*(at the 90% confidence level)*

This research investigates Nelson and Tasman residents' awareness and understanding of the recycling system and how to recycle correctly, as well as their attitudes towards waste reduction, and waste reduction behaviours.

This study continues on from a number of studies exploring the same topic in the region. Most recently, the Nelson and Tasman Rethinking Recycling April 2021 survey but also the Rethinking Rubbish & Recycling study, conducted for WasteMINZ in 2020 (fieldwork was conducted prior to the Lockdown) and the Environmental Attitudes study, conducted for Nelson City Council in 2019.

This report provides updated figures on some of the questions asked in these previous bodies of work.

The information will be used to help inform the Councils' performance indicator, relating to waste minimisation attitudes, and participation in waste minimisation activities by constituents.

### Comparisons to previous work

Where possible, comparisons are made to both of the previous bodies of work. Please note that whenever the report refers to 'the average', this is the average figure from the current wave (2021). All differences are statistically significant at the 90% confidence level, unless otherwise stated.

It should be noted that comparisons are made to the 2021 study, as well as the 2020 Nelson / Tasman WasteMINZ study and the 2019 Nelson study. Comparisons to the 2020 and 2019 studies should be treated with some caution. The 2020 Nelson / Tasman sample from the WasteMINZ study had a lower sample size and quotas were not set to control for the balance of residents between Nelson and Tasman. The 2019 Nelson study did not include Tasman residents.

# 03

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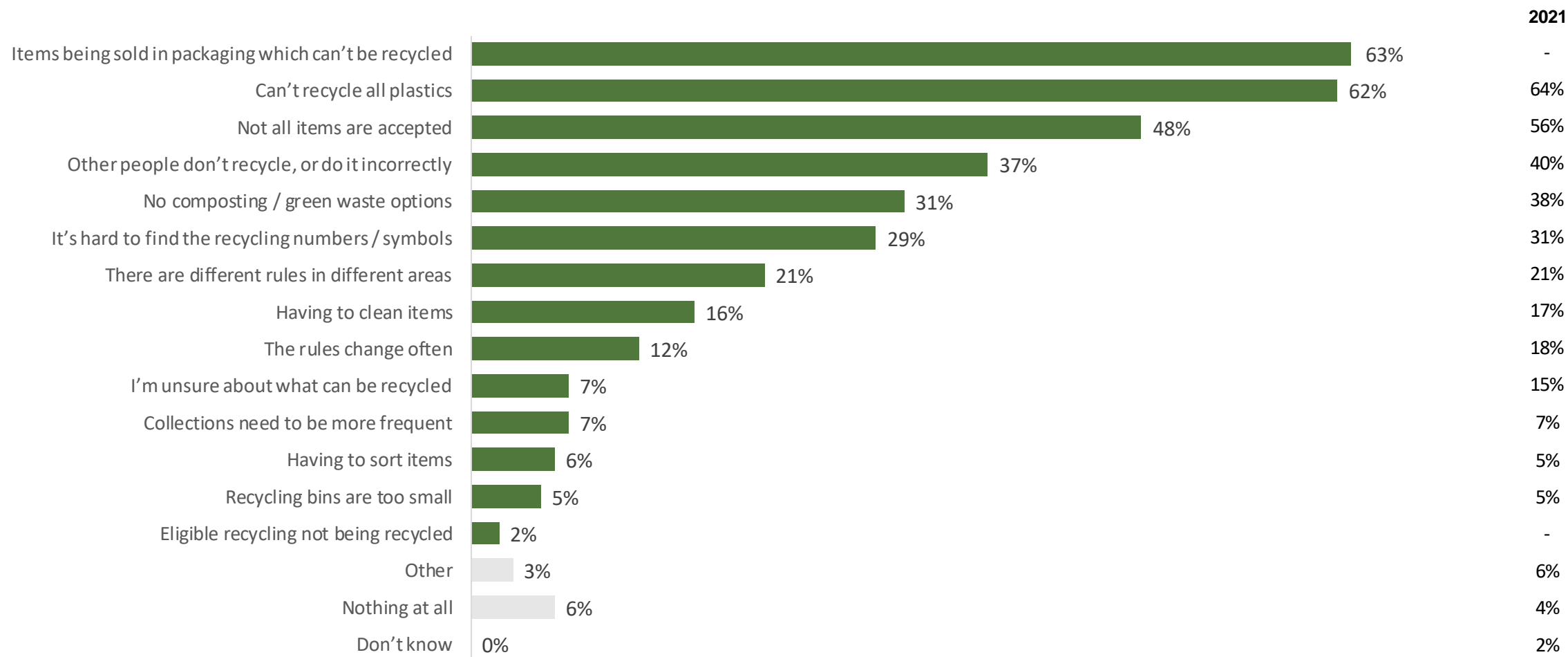
## RECYCLING ATTITUDES

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**RECYCLING PAIN POINTS:** Nelson / Tasman residents are most annoyed about items being sold in packaging which can't be recycled. This survey item was added in 2022 and has uncovered a common sentiment among residents. In line with 2021, almost two in three residents are annoyed that they are unable to recycle all plastics (62%), while only 16% mention having to clean items, and 6% mention sorting, as pain points.

### What, if anything, annoys you the most about recycling?<sup>1</sup>

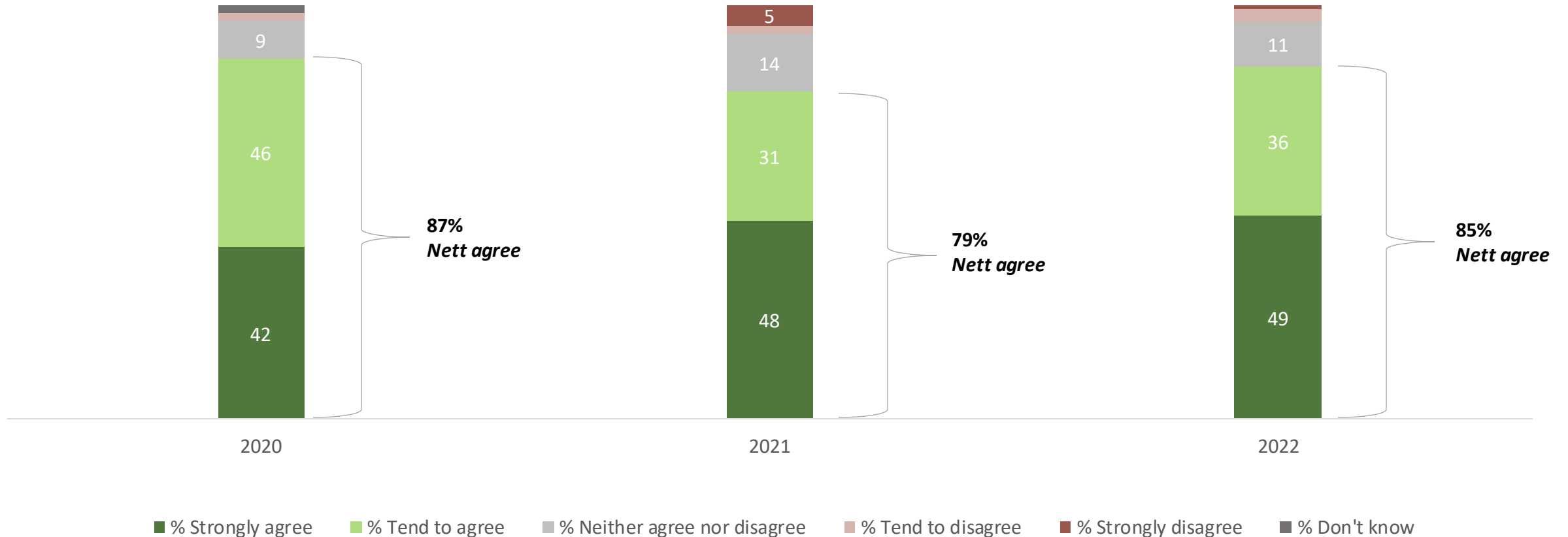


Source: C4 – What, if anything, annoys you about recycling?  
 Base: All respondents [Nelson / Tasman residents (2021 n=150, 2022 n=150)]  
 1 | Respondents had the option to select multiple responses from the list charted.



**BELIEF THAT RECYCLING IS WORTH THE TIME:** More than eight in ten residents (85%) believe that it is worth taking the time to recycle correctly. This compares to 79% in 2021, albeit the increase is not statistically significant. The results indicate that there has been a bounce back in the belief that 'it's worth the time to recycle' from 2021 to pre-lockdown 2020 levels.

*“I believe it’s worth taking the time to recycle right”*

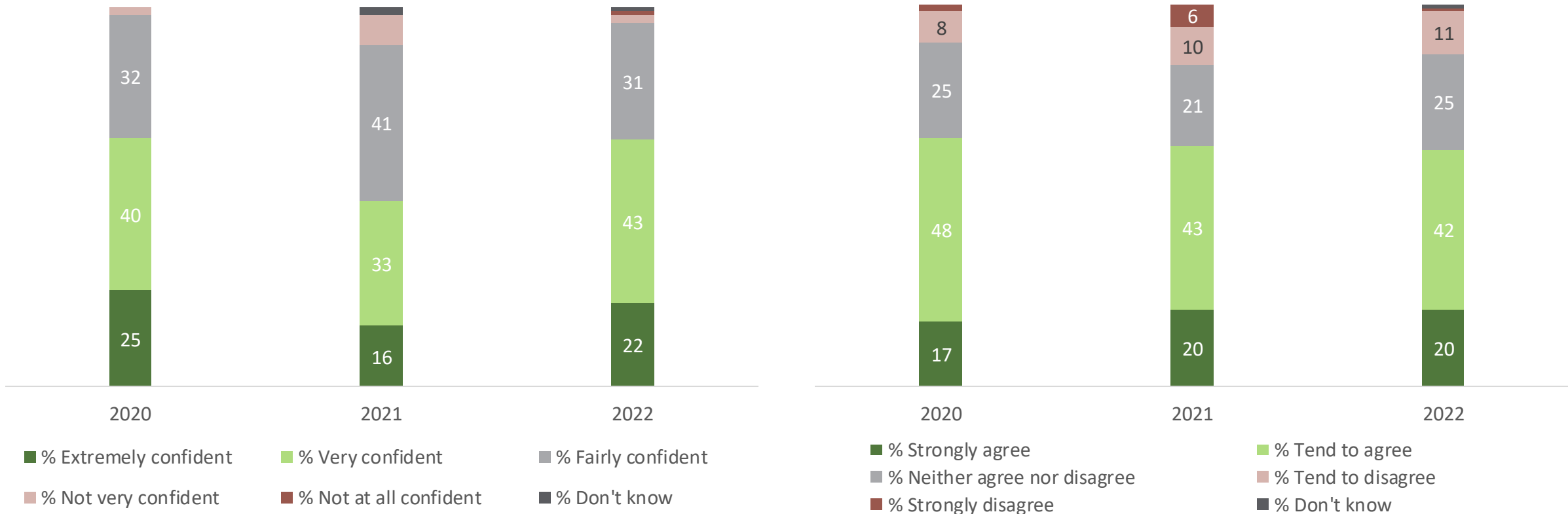


**EASE AND CONFIDENCE IN RECYCLING:** Nelson / Tasman residents' confidence in their ability to recycle correctly has bounced back from the dip noted in 2021. In line with previous years, most residents (62%) agree that they find it easy to recycle.

### Confidence in recycling ability

### "I find recycling easy"

<i>% Very / extremely Confident</i>	64	49	▲ 65	<i>% Nett Agree</i>	65	63	62
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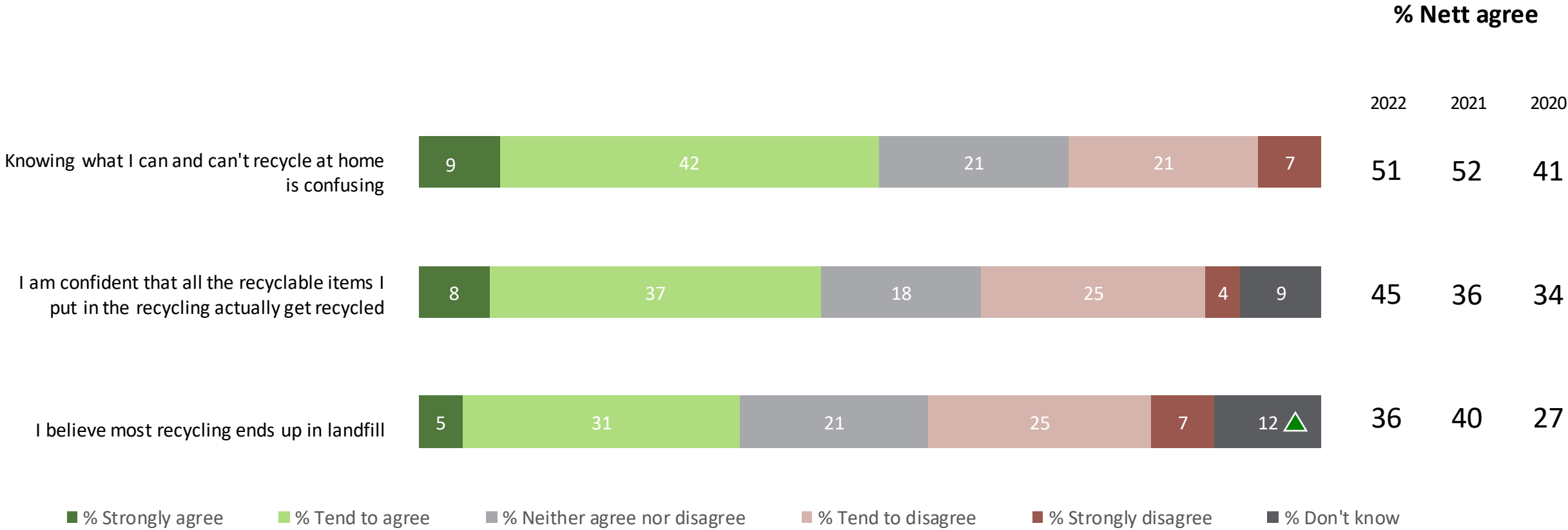


Source: E1 / D1  
 Base: All respondents [Nelson / Tasman residents (2020 n=100, 2021 n=150, 2022 n=150)]

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than 2021

**BARRIERS TO RECYCLING:** As found in the previous research, confusion in the recycling system and a lack of confidence in it can deter commitment to recycling correctly. Consistent with 2021, half of Nelson / Tasman residents now say that knowing what they can and cannot recycle at home is confusing – that’s up from 41% in 2020. Positively, the proportion who are confident that recycling does actually get recycled has increased year on year. At the same time, some conflicting ideas persist with one in three continuing to agree that most recycling ends up in landfill.

*Barriers to recycling – How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

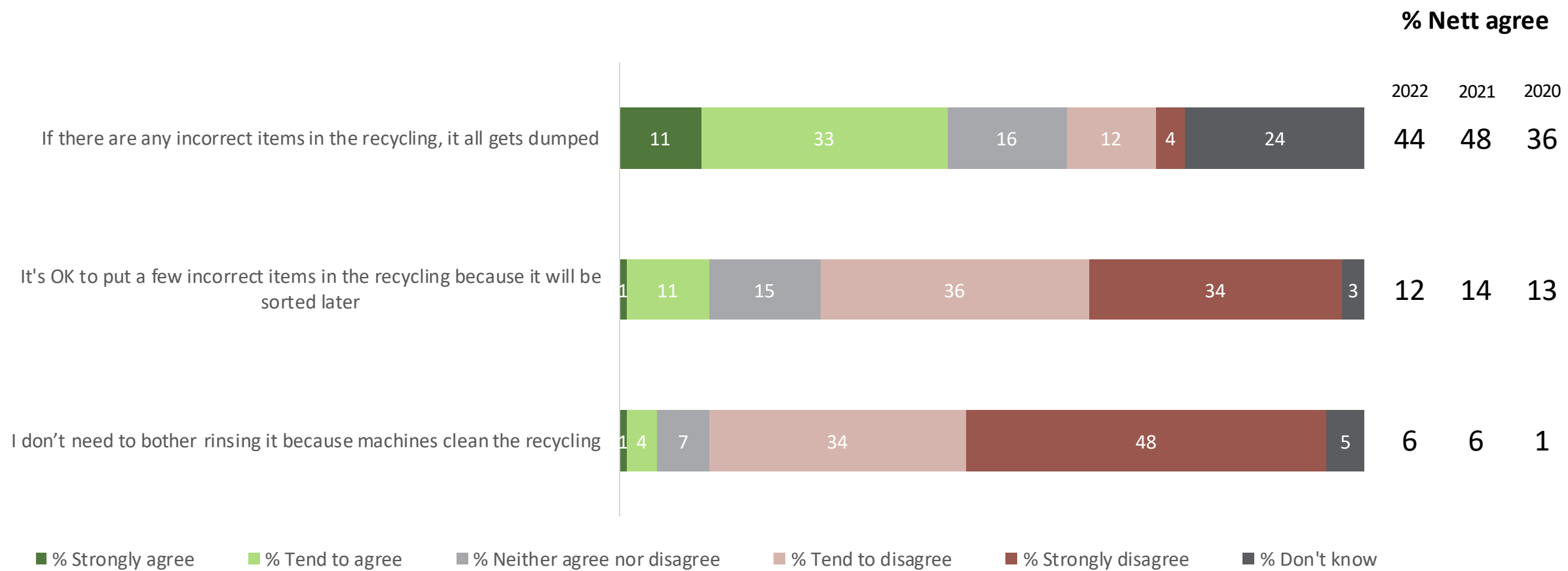


Source: E1  
 Base: All respondents [Nelson / Tasman residents (2020 n=100, 2021 n=150, 2022 n=150)]

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than 2021

**MISPERCEPTIONS AROUND THE RECYCLING SYSTEM:** The proportion of residents who believe that recycling gets dumped (if it contains any non-recyclables) is consistent with 2021, at 44%. In line with previous years, residents acknowledge they have a responsibility to correctly sort and rinse items, and that this is not 'magically' taken care of by the system. Of course whether they do the right thing, is a separate issue.

*Misperceptions around contamination and automation in the recycling system:  
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*



Source: E1  
Base: All respondents [Nelson / Tasman residents (2020 n=100, 2021 n=150, 2022 n=150)]

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than 2021

# 04

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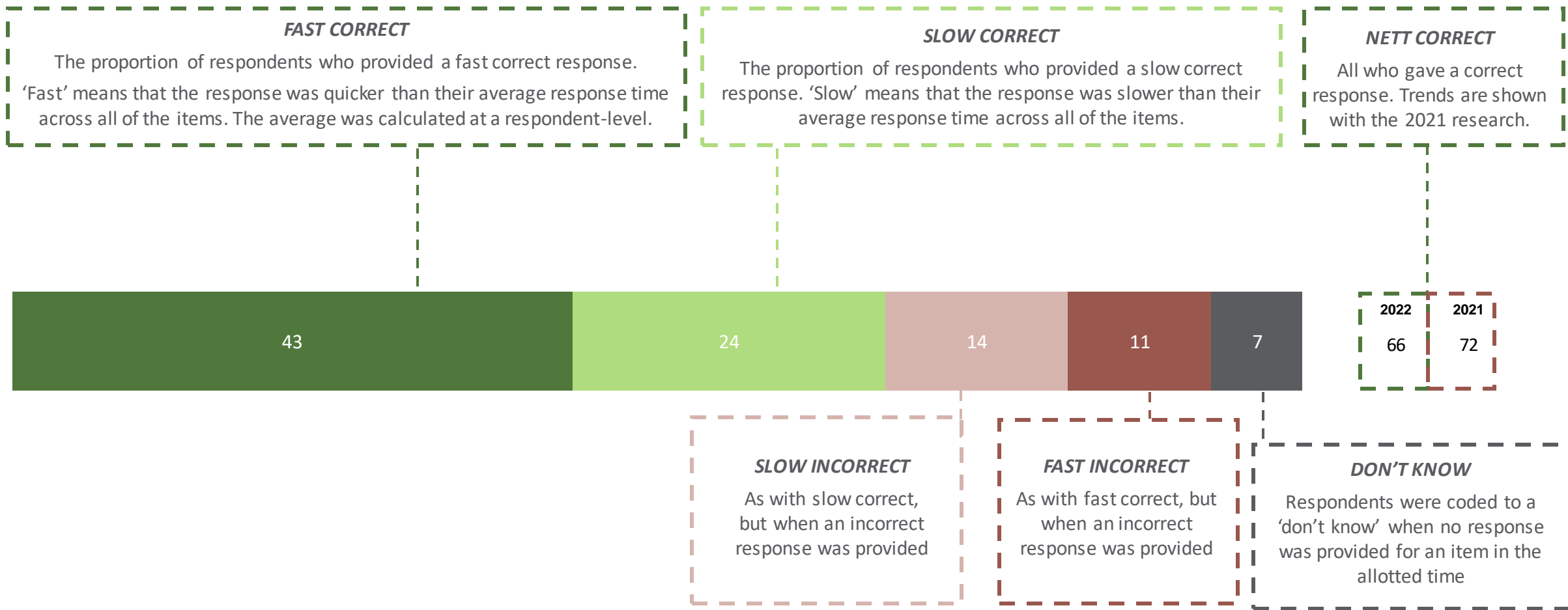
 tasman  
district council  
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## RECYCLING KNOWLEDGE

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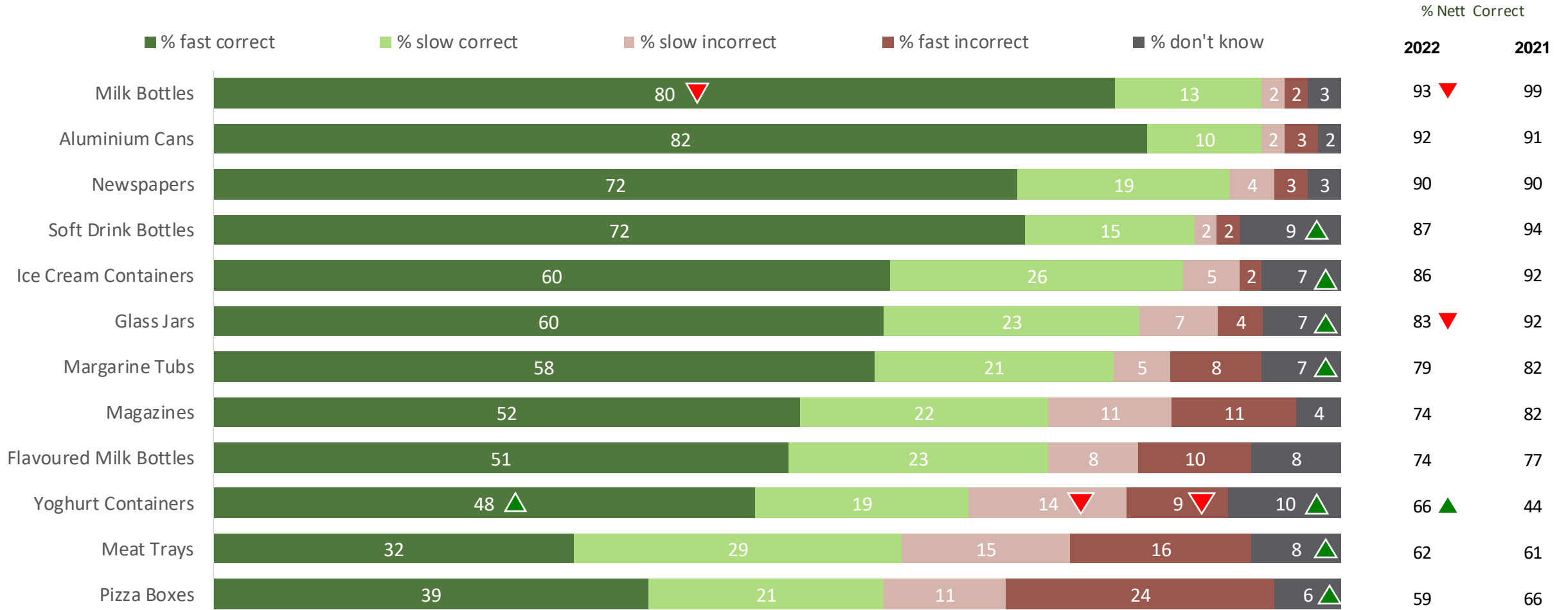
**INTUITIVE ASSOCIATION:** The next few slides break down the results of the implicit association exercise. Respondents were provided with a series of items and asked to select if they would typically recycle them. Their response was timed so we could measure the strength of their response. In other words, is this something they intuitively believed (i.e. it's hard-wired in their brain), or did they take more time to deliberate over their answer? Below is a breakdown of each category.



Source: C3  
Base: All respondents with a kerbside collection [Nelson / Tasman (2021 n=150, 2022 n=150)]

**RECYCLABLE ITEMS:** This slide shows the results for those items accepted for recycling by both councils. As in 2021, most residents say they would correctly sort items that are recyclable. Key items to continue to focus on are meat trays and pizza boxes, albeit pizza boxes do need to be clean, and some meat trays are in fact not recyclable. There are also some dips in accuracy for milk bottles and glass jars relative to 2021, albeit most residents continue to correctly identify them as recyclable. In contrast, yoghurt containers increased in their accuracy compared to 2021 with more residents able to quickly identify they are recyclable.

*Would you typically put these items in your recycling?  
(Accepted by both Nelson and Tasman Council)*

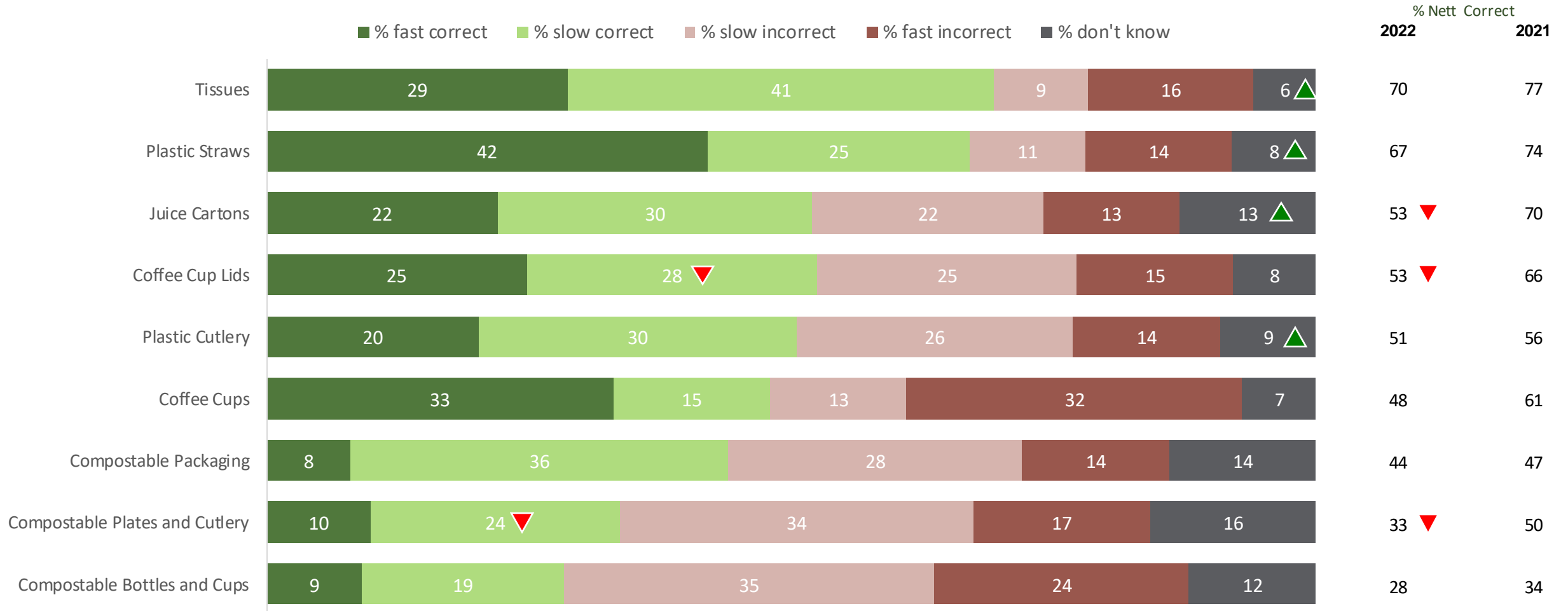


Source: C3  
Base: All respondents with a kerbside collection [Nelson / Tasman (2021 n=150, 2022 n=150)]

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than 2021

**NON-RECYCLABLE ITEMS:** Residents continue to be less confident in being able to identify items non-recyclable items than recyclable ones. This potentially represents a tendency towards 'wish-cycling'. This inclination is building as significantly fewer residents correctly identify some of these items as non recyclable compared to 2021. Knowledge has decreased for juice cartons, coffee cup lids, compostable plates and cutlery. In addition, a majority of residents cannot accurately identify compostable items as non-recyclable.

*Would you typically put these items in your recycling?  
(Not accepted by Nelson and Tasman Council)*



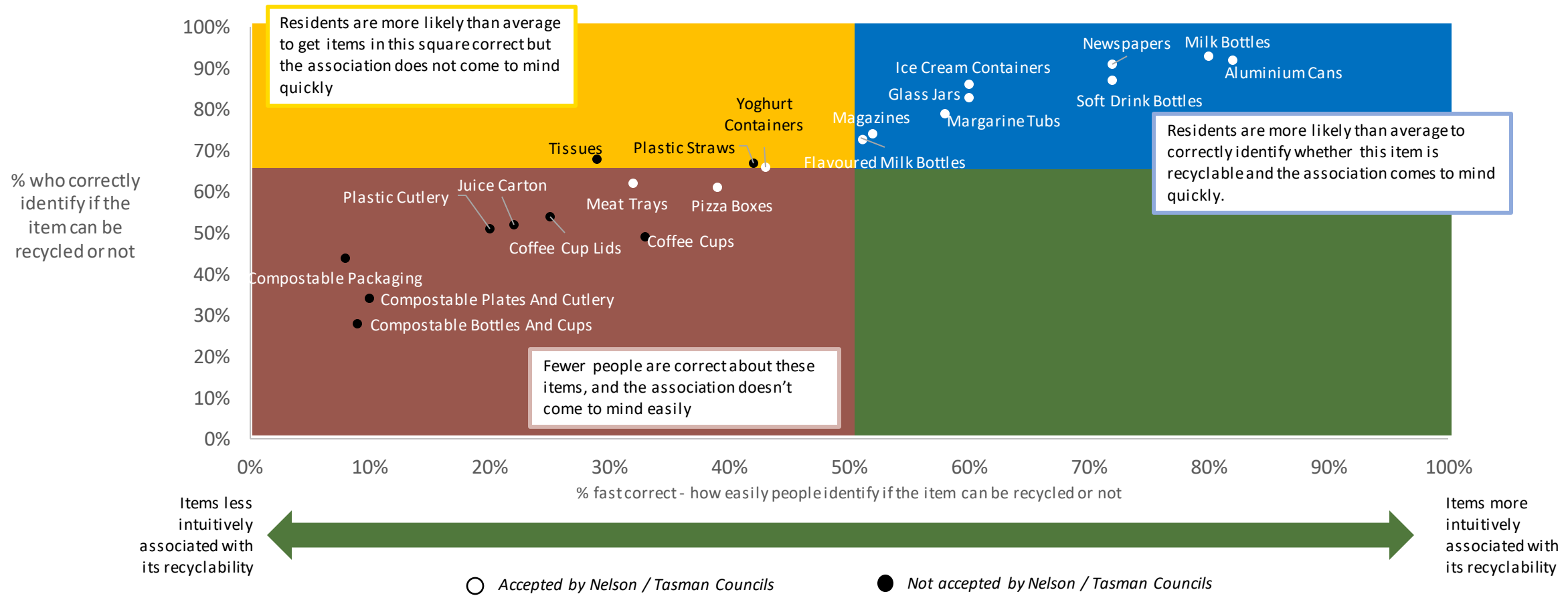
Source: C3  
Base: All respondents with a kerbside collection [Nelson / Tasman (2021 n=150, 2022 n=150)]

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than 2021



**NELSON / TASMAN INTUITIVE ASSOCIATION:** This slide provides another way to map the data from the sorting exercise. The yellow quadrant represents items which respondents are more likely to sort correctly but the association could be stronger. The red quadrant represents items that are more likely to be sorted incorrectly and where residents need support. Overall, residents intuitively know those items they can recycle, with the exception of meat trays and pizza boxes. It is the items they can't recycle which tend to trip them up, which points towards a tendency for wish-cycling.

*Nelson / Tasman - Intuitive association with recyclability*

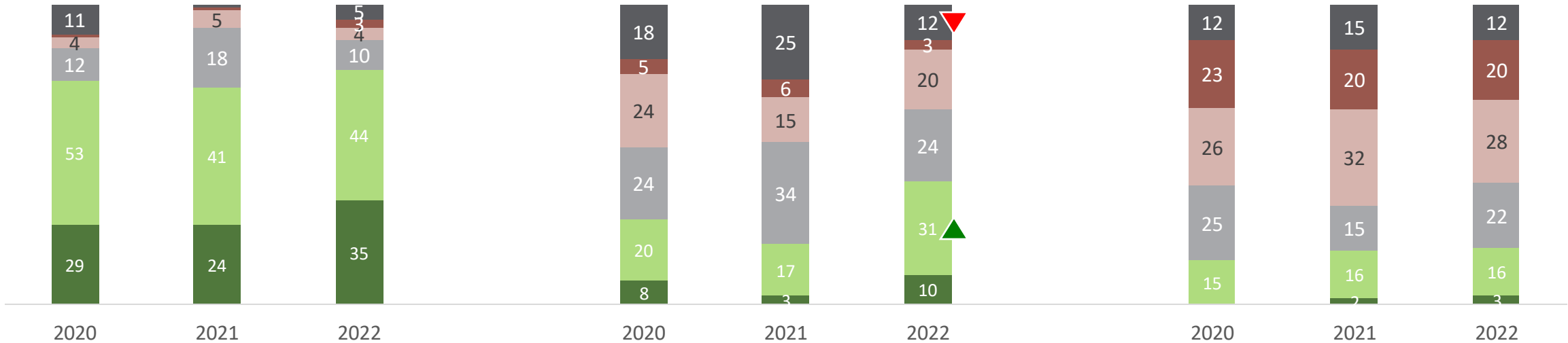


Source: C3  
 Base: All respondents with a kerbside collection [Nelson / Tasman (2022 n=150)]

**PERCEPTIONS OF COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING:** Residents view compostable packaging more positively than ever (of course whether it truly is debatable). The perception that it is better for the environment than plastic packaging has bounced back to 2020 levels and a significantly greater amount of residents now believe compostable packaging will compost in a landfill with no negative impacts. Consistently with the prior two years, a minority of residents agree that compostable packaging will break down quickly when littered.

*Perceptions of compostable packaging*

<b>% Nett Agree</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>78 ▲</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>41 ▲</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>
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**Compostable packaging is better for the environment than plastic packaging**

**Compostable packaging will compost in a landfill with no negative impacts**

**Compostable packaging will break down quickly if littered**

■ % Strongly agree    ■ % Tend to agree    ■ % Neither agree nor disagree    ■ % Tend to disagree    ■ % Strongly disagree    ■ % Don't know

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than 2021

# 05

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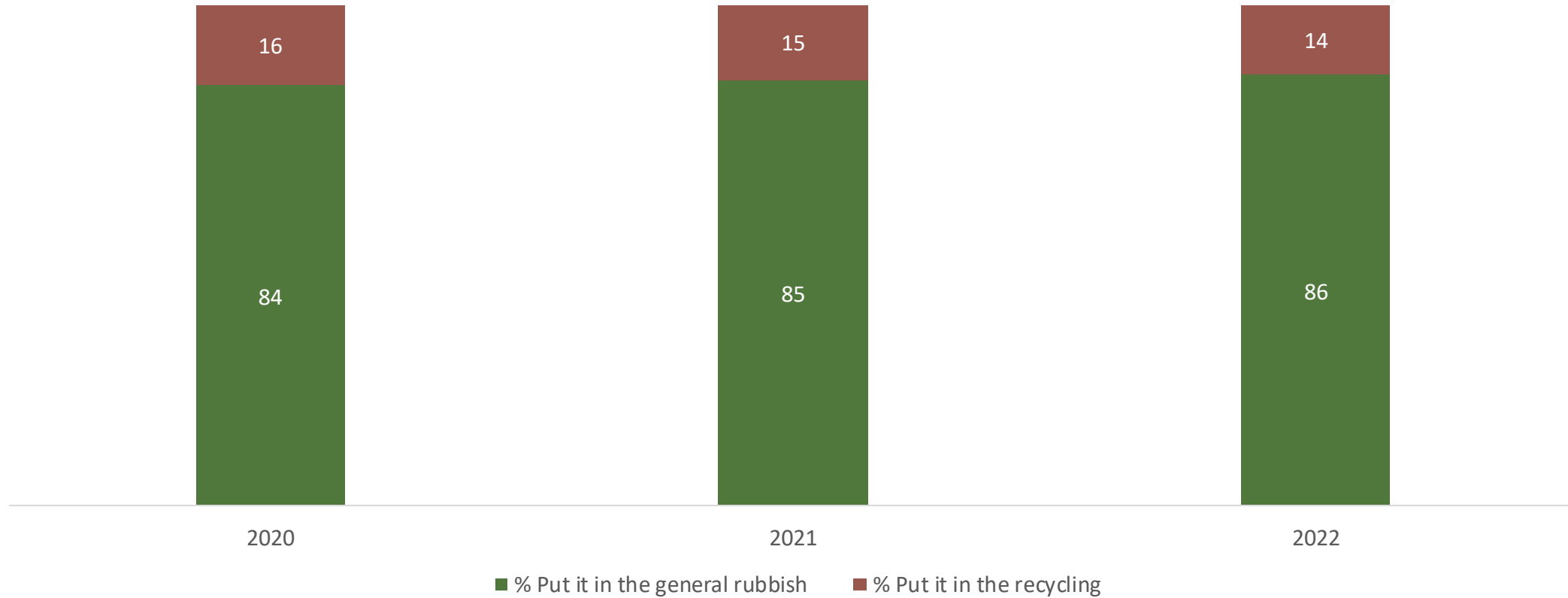
## SELF-REPORTED RECYCLING BEHAVIOURS

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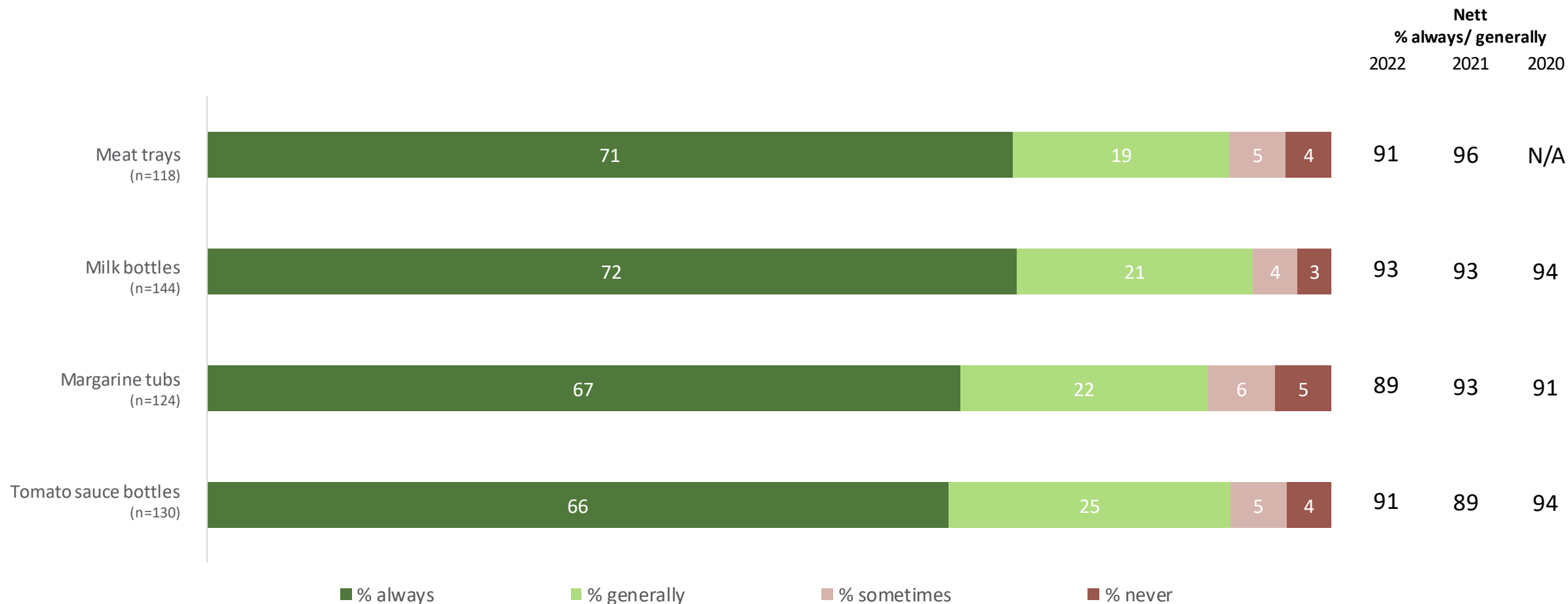
**BEHAVIOUR IF UNSURE:** Residents say they continue to err on the side of caution when they are unsure of an item’s recyclability. 86% say they would typically put such an item in the general rubbish, rather than take a chance and put it in the recycling. This is in line with the Nelson / Tasman scores in 2020 and 2021. However, as the previous slides reveal, there is a lack of knowledge about some items (such as compostable items and yoghurt containers) and residents may genuinely believe they are recyclable.

*If you are unsure whether an item can be recycled or not, what do you typically do?*



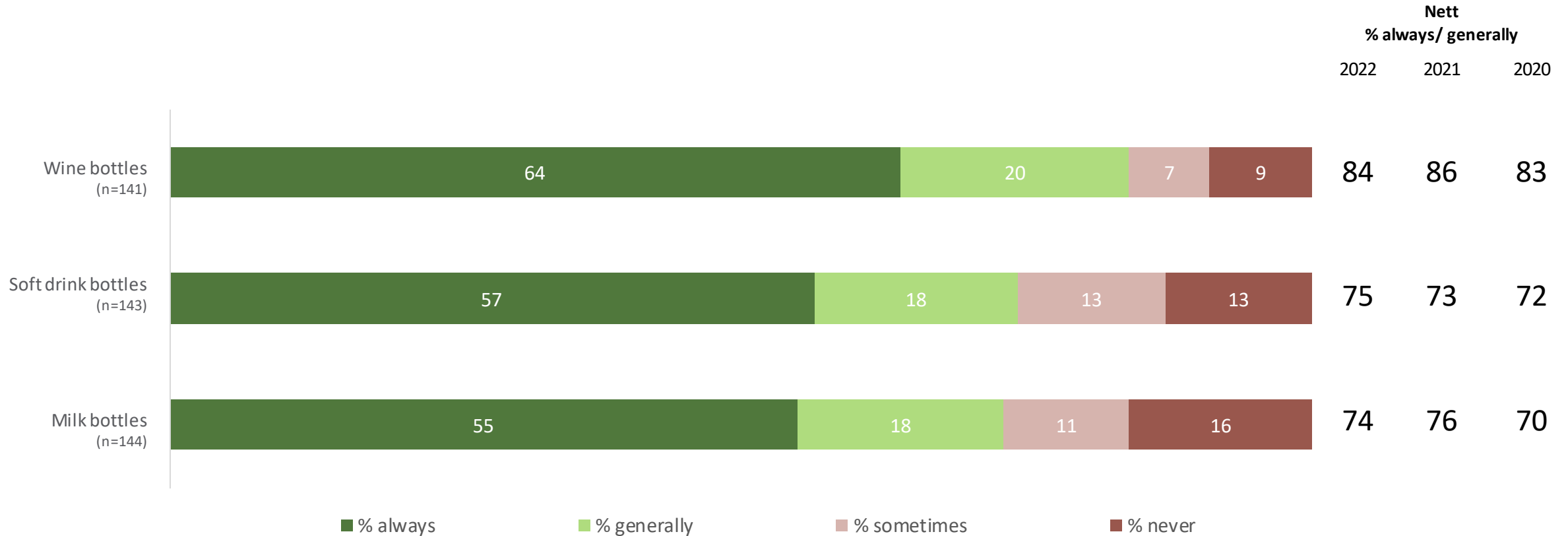
**RINSING OF RECYCLABLES:** We asked residents how often they perform various recycling behaviours. Around nine in ten Nelson / Tasman residents say that they generally / always rinse the items listed. This is largely in line with previous years.

*Do you wash or rinse the following items before you recycle them?*



**REMOVING LIDS FROM RECYCLABLES:** Removing lids continues to be a less common behaviour than rinsing amongst Nelson / Tasman residents. The results are consistent with the previous two years.

*Do you remove the lid from the following items before putting them in your recycling?*

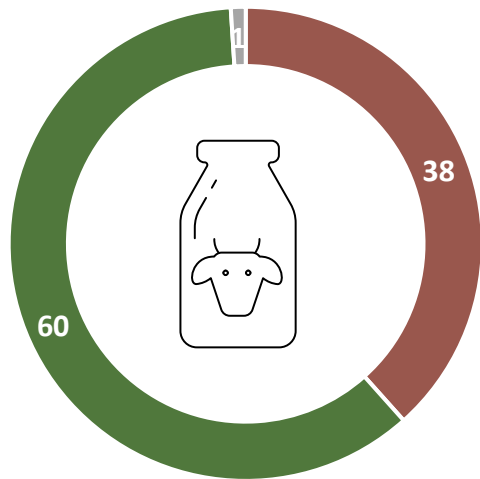


▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than 2021

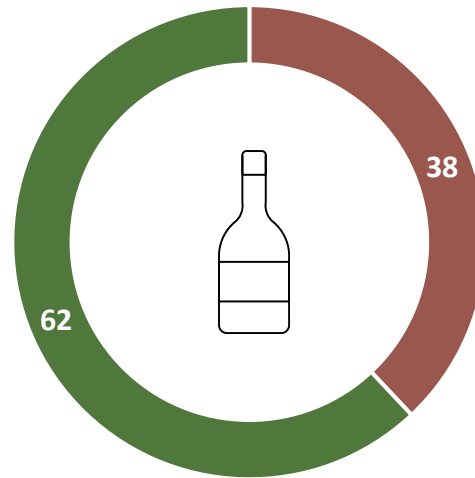
**WHERE LIDS ARE PUT ONCE REMOVED:** Residents who claimed to remove lids before recycling were asked what they did with the lids. The majority of residents put these lids in the general rubbish, while around one-third put them in the recycling. A small minority (who said 'other') collect the lids for various purposes (e.g. for school projects).

*And where do you put the lids of each of these items once you remove them?*

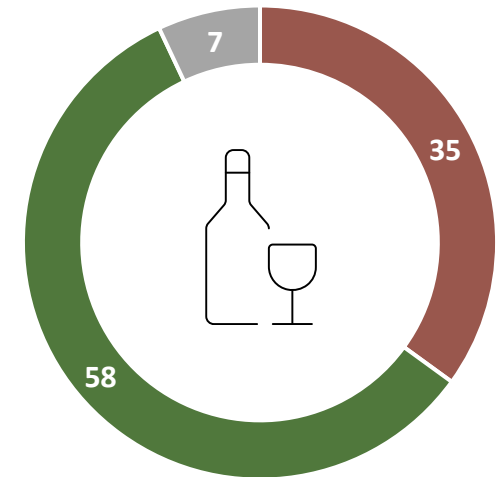
**Milk bottles**  
(n=121)



**Soft drink bottles**  
(n=124)



**Wine bottles**  
(n=127)



■ Recycling Bin ■ General Rubbish ■ Other

# 06

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## RECYCLING SYMBOLS

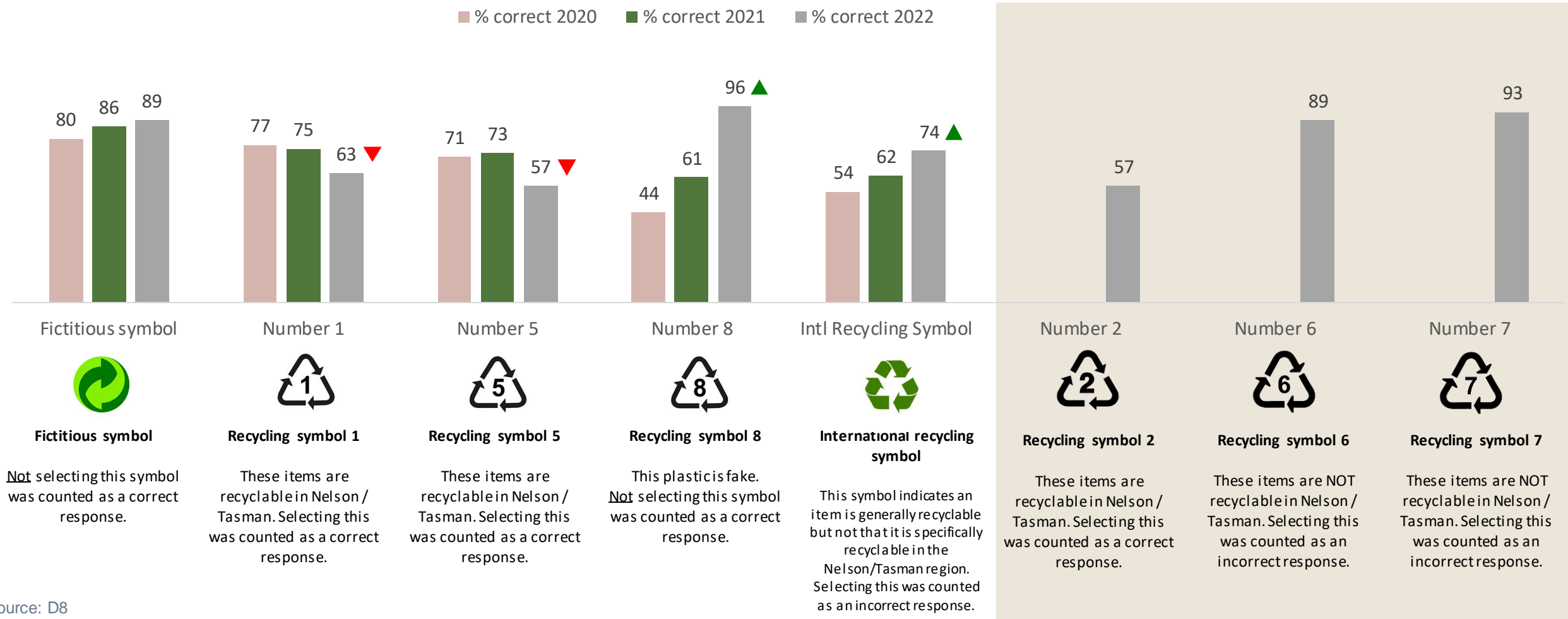
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**RECYCLING SYMBOLS KNOWLEDGE:** We asked residents to identify whether certain symbols denote if a plastic container is recyclable or not in their region. The slide shows the proportion of residents who correctly identified whether the symbol indicated this or not. Most residents can correctly identify that the fictitious symbol is fake and there is a significant increase in the number of people who correctly identified number 8 as a fake symbol, and that the international recycling symbol in itself is not sufficient to identify recyclable plastic containers. At the same time, there is also a significant decrease in the number of people who correctly identified numbers 1 and 5. We also introduced three new symbols to the survey for this year (numbers 2, 6 and 7). While a high proportion of residents correctly identified that numbers 6 and 7 are not recyclable, residents were less able to identify number 2 as a recycling symbol. Overall the results show residents are more hesitant than before in identifying those symbols that indicate an item is recyclable in Nelson or Tasman, which suggests there could be missed opportunities for recycling due to a lack of knowledge.

*Which of these symbols or numbers tell you that a plastic container is recyclable in Nelson / Tasman?\**



Source: D8

Base: All respondents [Nelson / Tasman residents (2020 n=100, 2021 n=150, 2022 n=150)]

\*The wording of this question changed in 2022 to reflect that it was specifically referring to the Nelson and Tasman regions as such trends should be treated with some caution.

# 07

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## THE PATH TO REDUCING WASTE

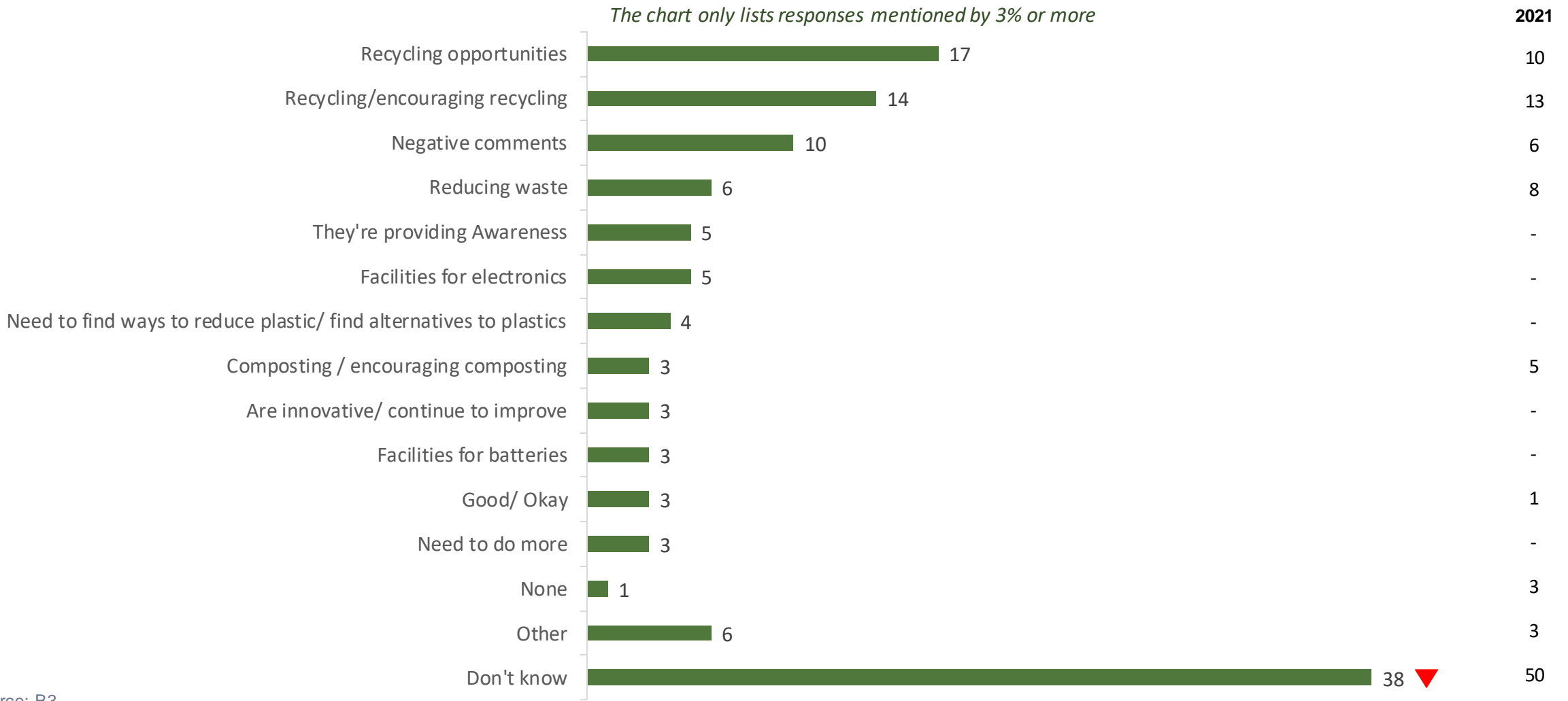
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**UNDERSTANDING OF COUNCIL PLANS:** Without prompting, residents were asked what they thought the plan for reducing waste was in the Nelson and Tasman regions. Compared to 2021, a greater portion of residents were able to name something, indicating that they have an idea of the councils' plans. The main responses referenced recycling – either providing opportunities for further recycling or encouraging residents to do so. 6% of residents also mention 'reducing waste' – including minimising what goes to landfill, as well as reducing the amount of waste produced by businesses and at things like public events.

*What residents think their local council's plan for reducing waste in their region is<sup>1</sup>*

*The chart only lists responses mentioned by 3% or more*

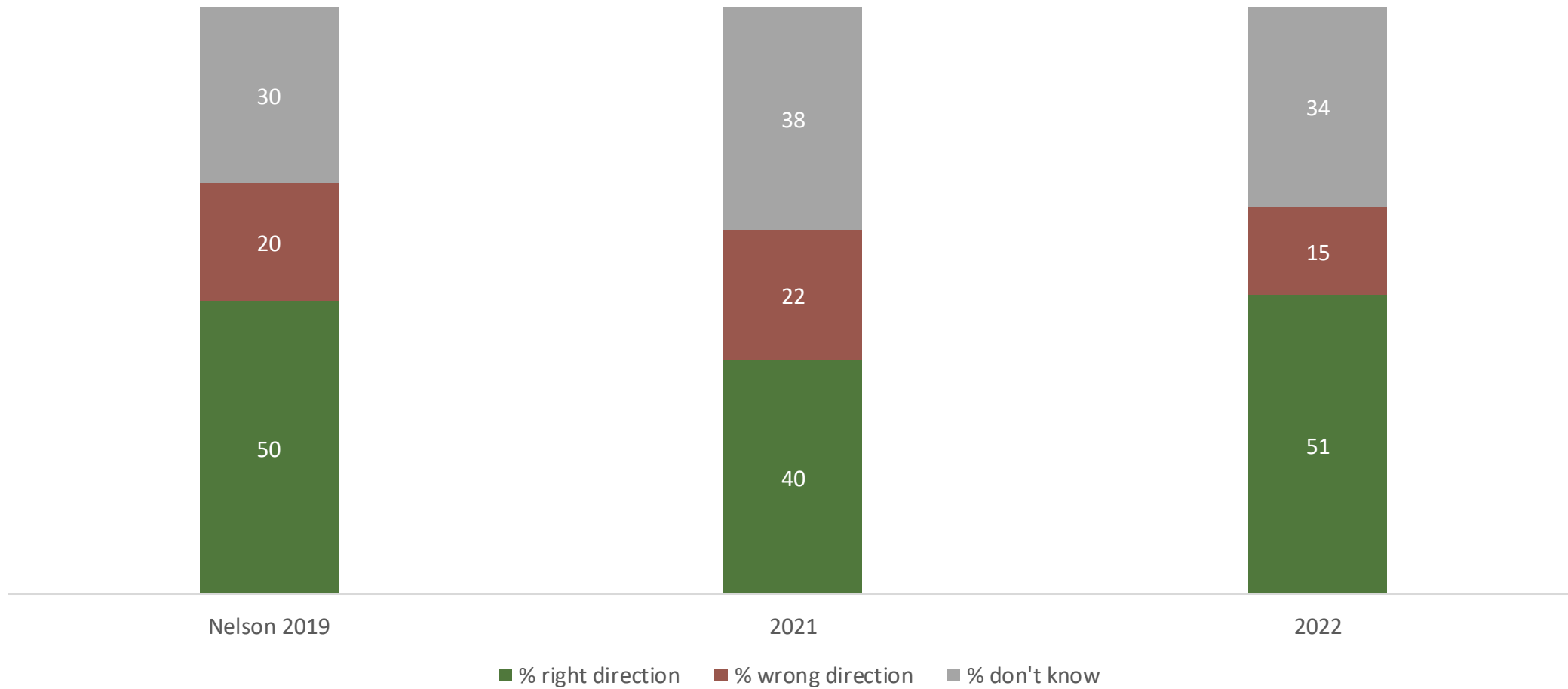


▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than 2021

Source: B3  
Base: All respondents [Nelson / Tasman residents (2021 n=150, 2022 n=150)]  
1 | Question was asked open-ended.

**REGIONAL DIRECTION:** A majority of residents again believe that Nelson and Tasman regions are heading in the right direction, albeit the differences between 2021 and 2022 are not statistically significant.

*Is the [Nelson / Tasman] region heading in the right or wrong direction in how it approaches reducing the amount of waste we produce?*

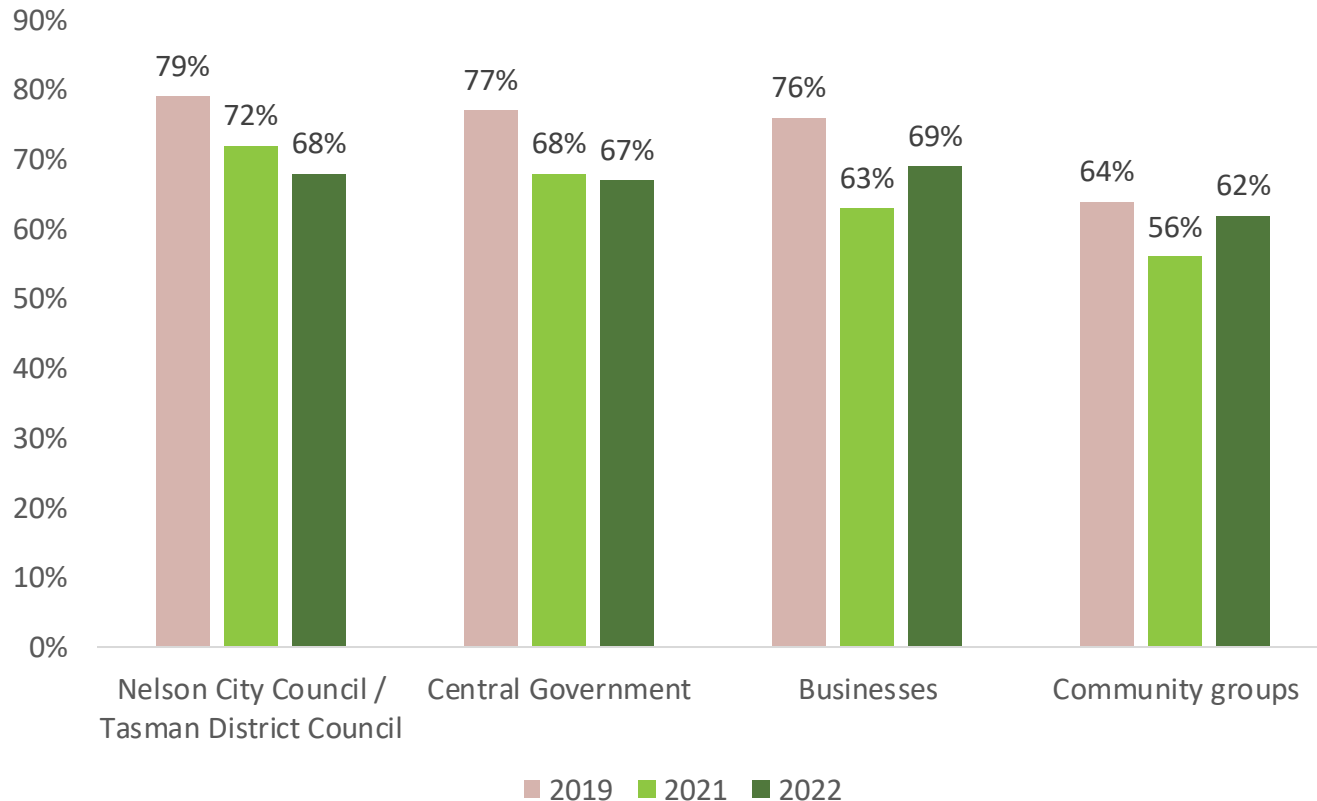


Source: B2  
 Base: All residents [Nelson 2019 n=325,  
 Nelson / Tasman 2021 n=150, Nelson / Tasman 2022 n=150]

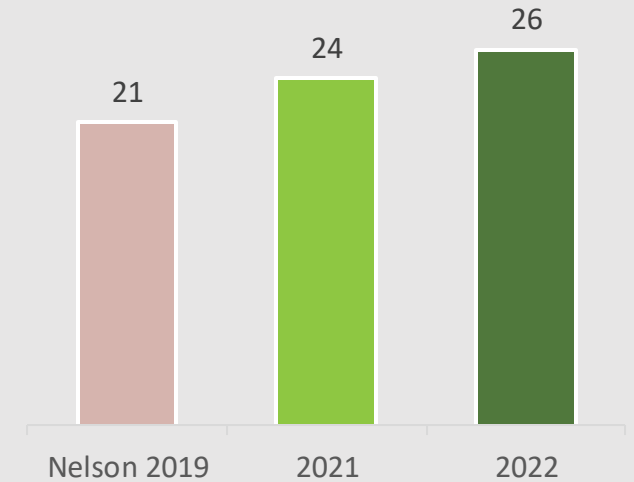
▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than Nelson 2021. Please note 2019 results did not include Tasman and so comparisons should be treated with caution.

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR REDUCING WASTE:** Residents place a similar level of responsibility for reducing waste on different players as they did in 2021. However, only a minority of residents feel that the councils are actually doing enough to reduce waste, and the same is true for central government. The increase in the proportion who feel their council is not doing enough is not statistically significant.

### Proportion of people surveyed who agree that these groups have a high responsibility for reducing waste:



### % agree that their council is doing enough to reduce waste



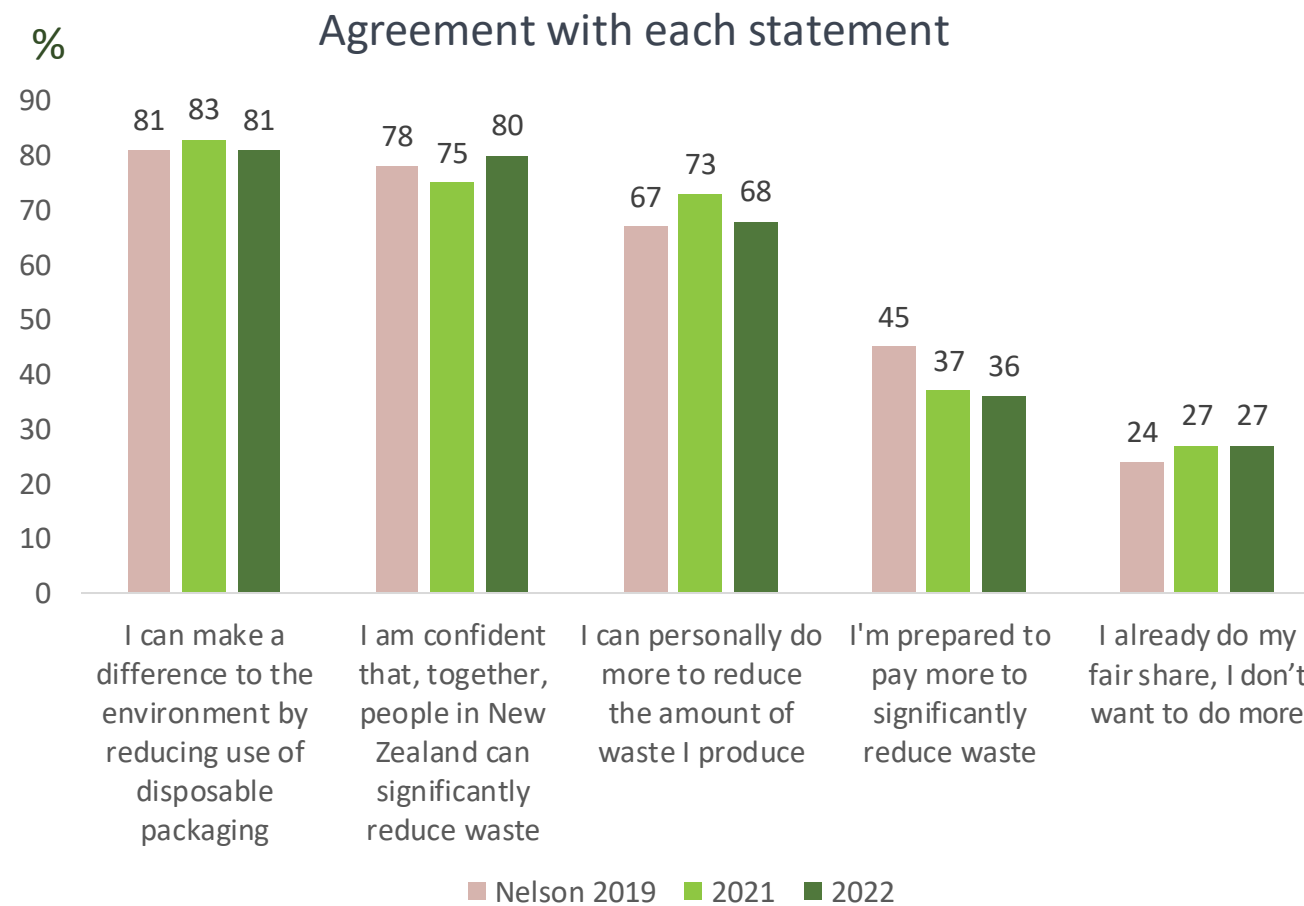
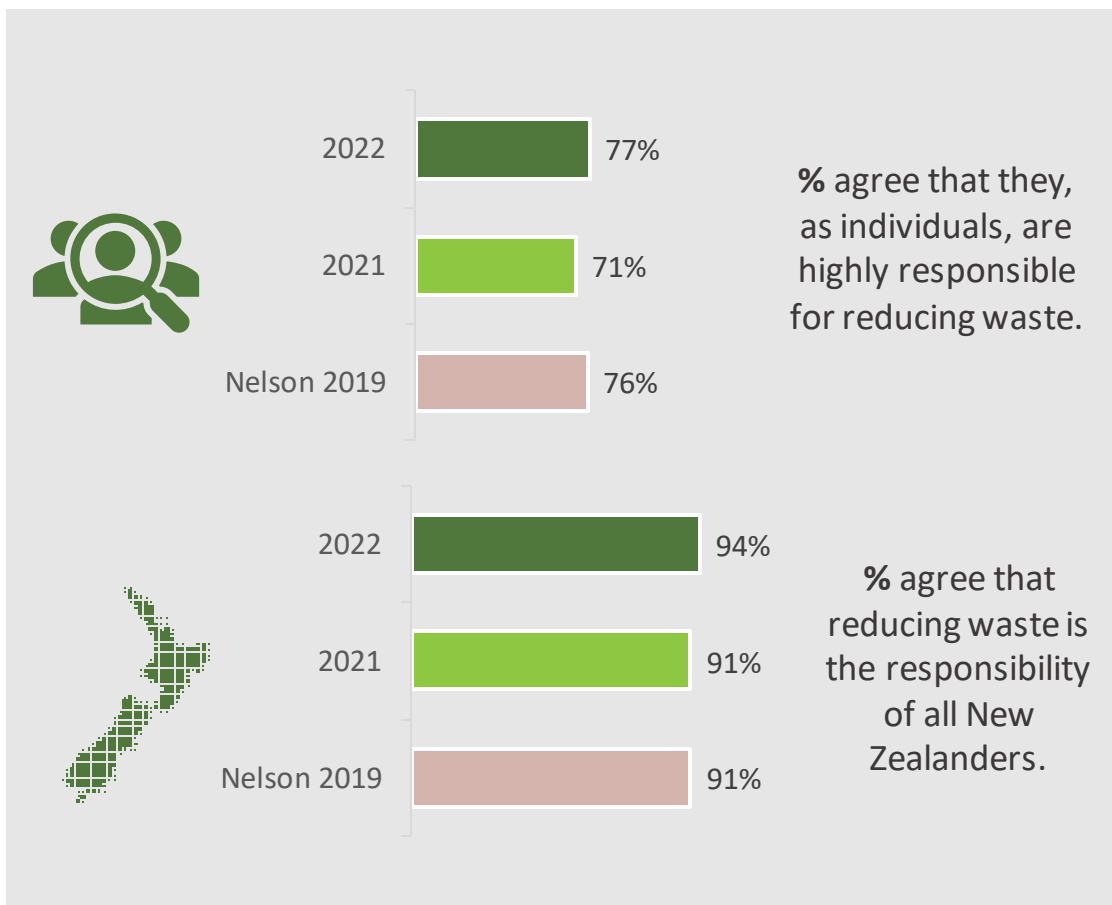
### % agree that Central Government is doing enough to reduce waste



Source: F3, F5  
 Base: All residents [Nelson 2019 n=325, Nelson / Tasman 2021 n=150, Nelson / Tasman 2022 n=150]

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than Nelson 2021. Please note 2019 results did not include Tasman and so comparisons should be treated with caution.

**PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:** There is a strong sense of personal responsibility for reducing waste, and this is in line with the previous research. That said, most residents continue to feel that reducing waste is a collective responsibility. There continues to be an acknowledgement amongst residents that there is more than they personally can do, and that they can actually make a difference.



Source: F3, F5  
 Base: All residents [Nelson 2019 n=325, Nelson / Tasman 2021 n=150, Nelson / Tasman 2022 n=150]

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than Nelson 2021. Please note 2019 results did not include Tasman and so comparisons should be treated with caution.

# 08

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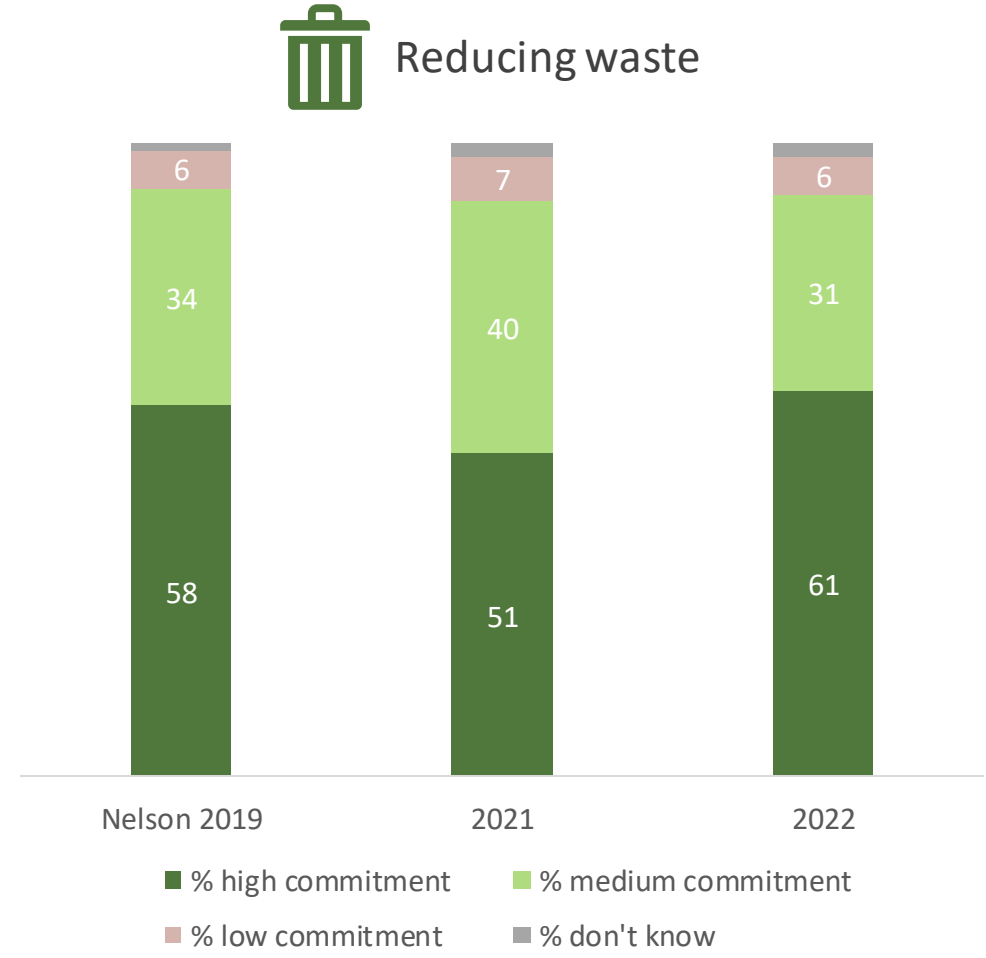
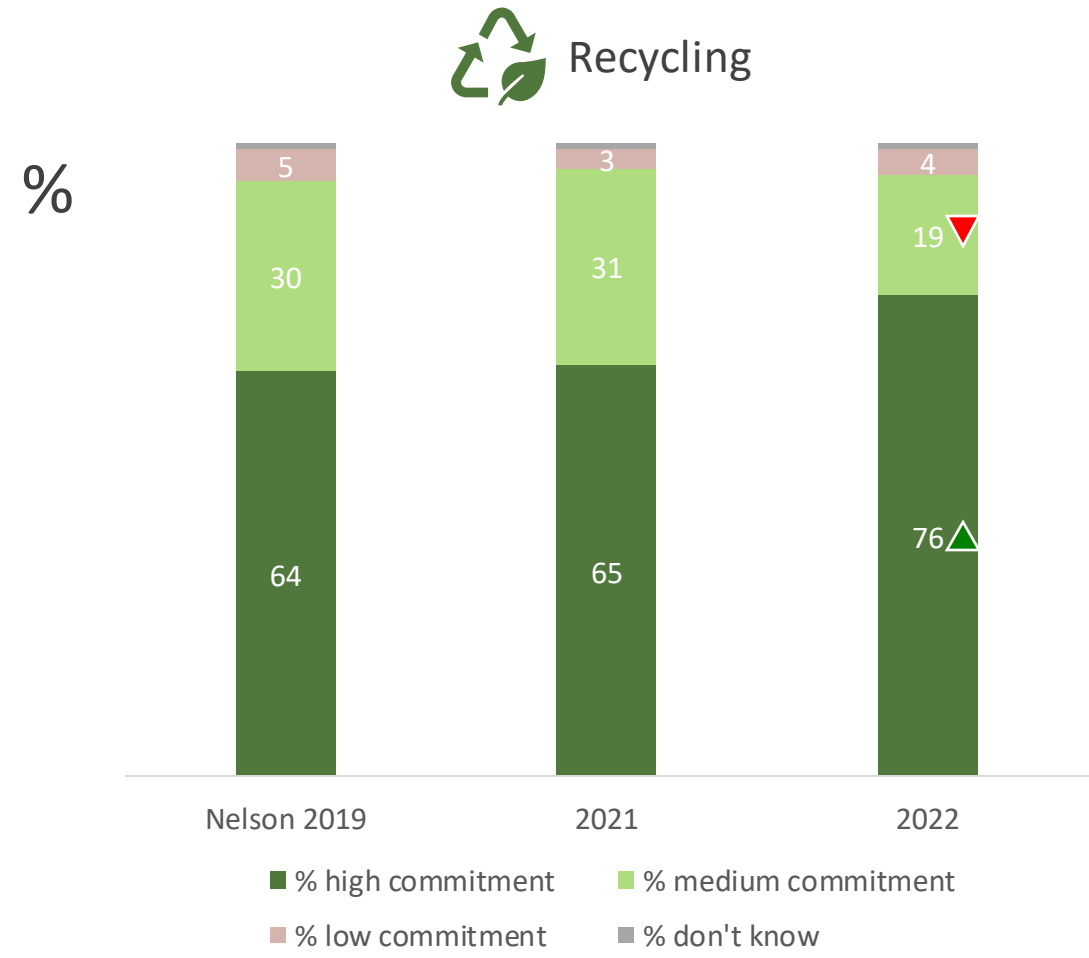
## WASTE REDUCTION IN PRACTICE

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**COMMITMENT TO RECYCLING AND REDUCING WASTE:** Nelson and Tasman residents are broadly committed to both recycling and reducing waste, and there is evidence this is building. 76% say they are highly committed to recycling which is significantly greater than in previous years. In addition, 61% say they are highly committed to reducing waste. This is the highest level to date, albeit the differences with the previous years are not statistically significant.

*How would you rate your personal commitment to the following?*



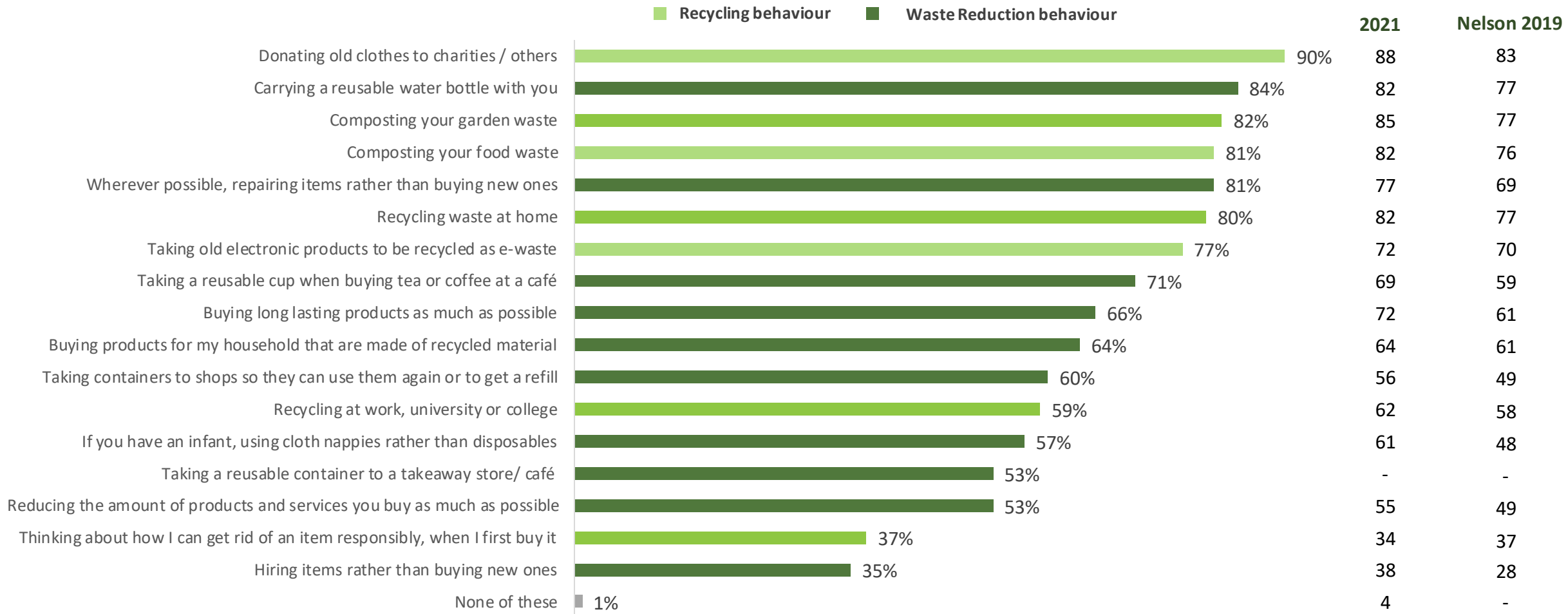
Source: B1  
 Base: All residents [Nelson 2019 n=325, Nelson / Tasman 2021 n=150, Nelson / Tasman 2022 n=150]

▲▼ Significantly higher / lower than Nelson 2021. Please note 2019 results did not include Tasman and so comparisons should be treated with caution.



**AWARENESS OF BEHAVIOURS:** There is strong awareness of most of the waste reduction and recycling behaviours, with over half of Nelson / Tasman residents being aware of almost all behaviours. Awareness is also building over time with significant increases for multiple behaviours when compared back to 2019. The key behaviours to raise awareness of are hiring, rather than buying items, and encouraging residents to think about how they will responsibly dispose of an item when they first purchase it.

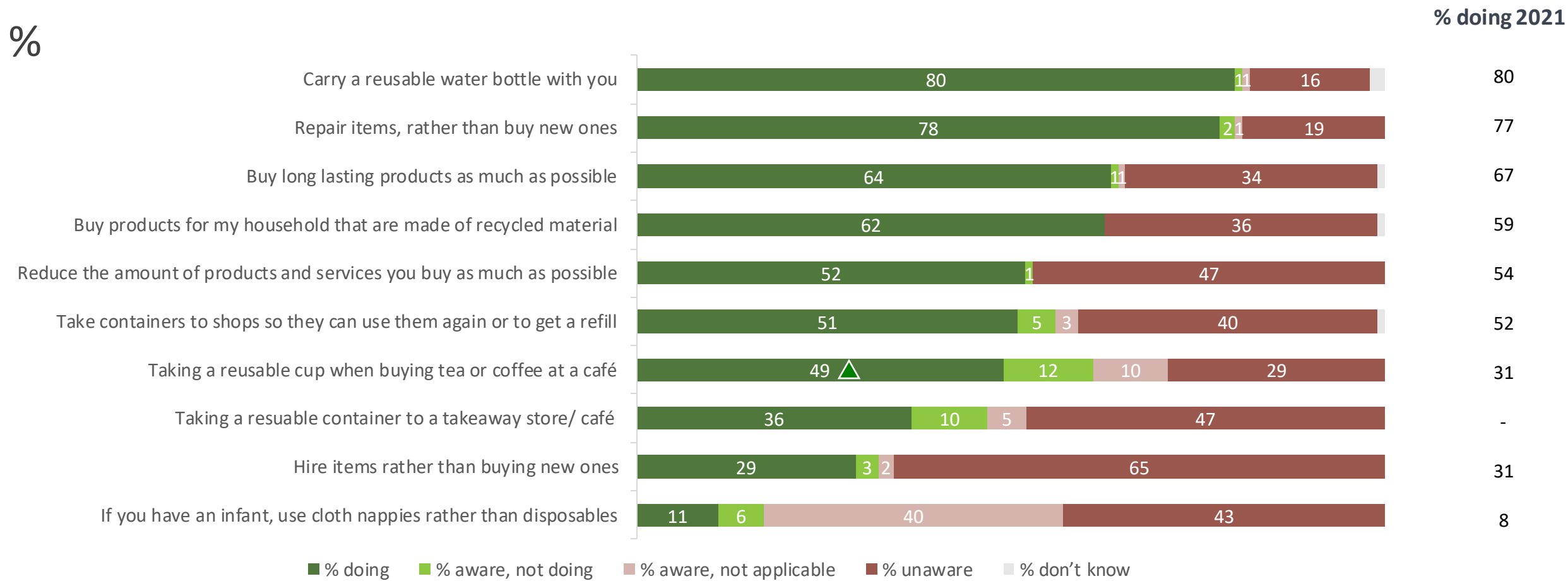
*Which of the following did you realise was a way of reducing waste?*



▲▼ Significantly higher / lower than 2021. Please note 2019 results did not include Tasman and so comparisons should be treated with caution.

**PERFORMANCE OF WASTE REDUCTION BEHAVIOURS:** Consistent with 2021, most residents are doing most of the listed waste reduction behaviours. One difference to note is that residents are more likely to take a reusable cup to a café compared to 2021. A newly added item to this year's survey was asking people whether they take a reusable container to takeaway stores and cafés. A third of residents perform this activity though a large proportion of people are aware but not doing this task.

### Performance of waste reduction behaviours



Source: F2  
 Base: All residents [Nelson / Tasman 2021 n=150,  
 Nelson / Tasman 2022 n=150]

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than Nelson 2021. Please note 2019 results did not include Tasman and so comparisons should be treated with caution.

**PERFORMANCE OF RECYCLING BEHAVIOURS:** Over half of Nelson / Tasman residents are performing many of the recycling behaviours. There are no significant differences in the proportion of people performing these recycling behaviours compared to 2021.

### Performance of recycling behaviours

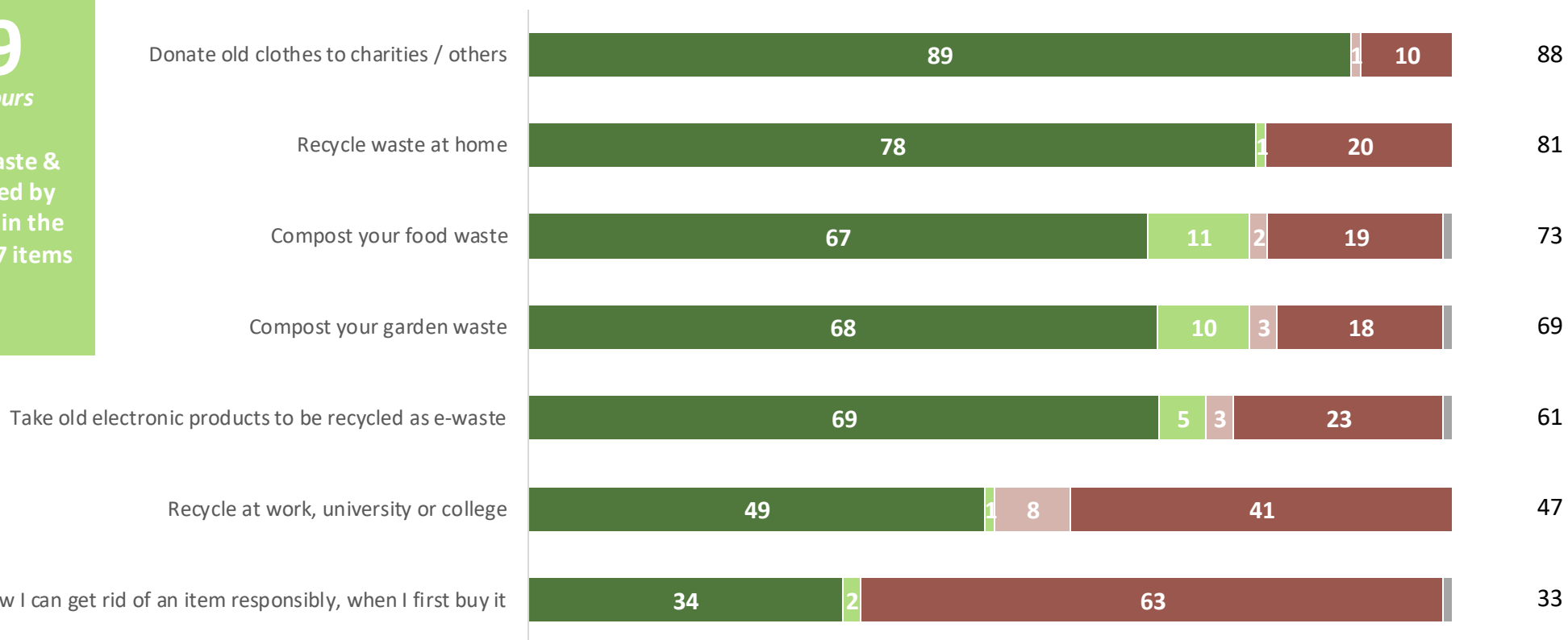
%

% doing 2021



**9.9**  
behaviours

The average number of waste & recycling actions performed by Nelson / Tasman residents in the last 12 months out of the 17 items presented\*

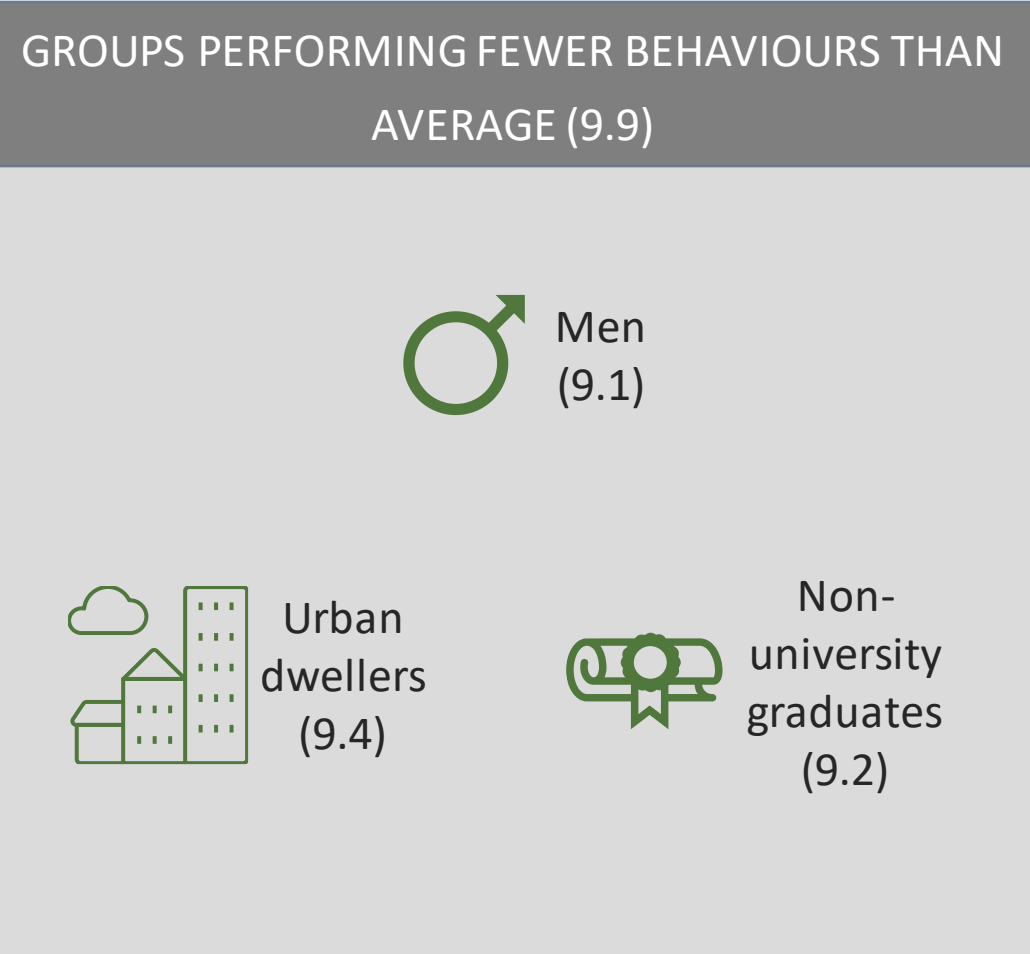


■ % doing ■ % aware, not doing ■ % aware, not applicable ■ % unaware ■ % don't know


▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower than Nelson 2021. Please note 2019 results did not include Tasman and so comparisons should be treated with caution.


**SUB-GROUP DIFFERENCES:** There are a number of groups that are performing fewer waste reduction and recycling behaviours than the average Nelson / Tasman resident. These groups include men, urban dwellers, and people who have not completed a tertiary education course or above. Efforts should be made to increase engagement with these groups, in order to increase performance moving forwards.

*Sub-group differences*



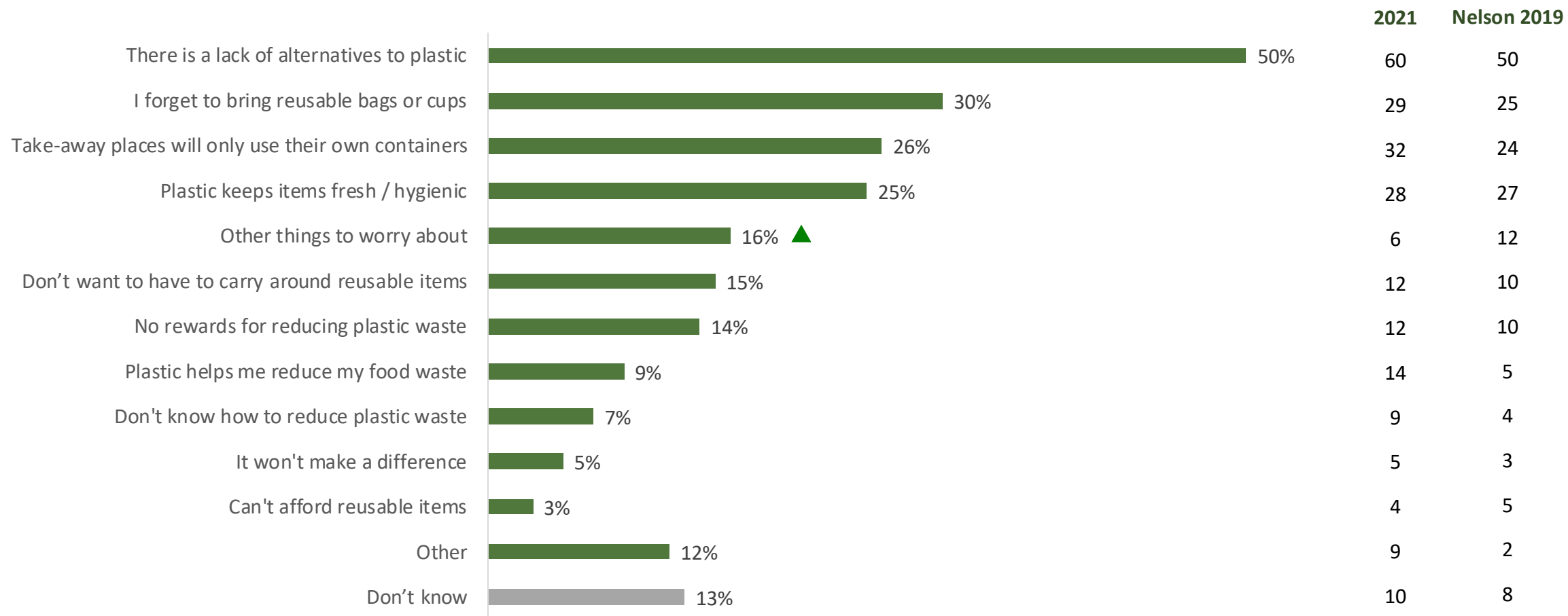
 Men (9.1)

 Urban dwellers (9.4)

 Non-university graduates (9.2)

**BARRIERS TO REDUCING WASTE:** Out of the list provided, the biggest barrier that prevents residents from reducing their plastic waste is that they believe there is a lack of alternatives to plastic. This is in line with the previous years results. Residents are more likely than in 2021 to indicate there are other things to worry about suggesting that reducing plastics has decreased as a priority for some residents.

*What prevents you from reducing the amount of plastic waste you generate?*



▲ Significantly higher / lower than Nelson 2021. Please note 2019 results did not include Tasman and so comparisons should be treated with caution.

Source: F4  
 Base: All residents [Nelson 2019 n=325,  
 Nelson / Tasman 2021 n=150, Nelson / Tasman 2022 n=150]

•9

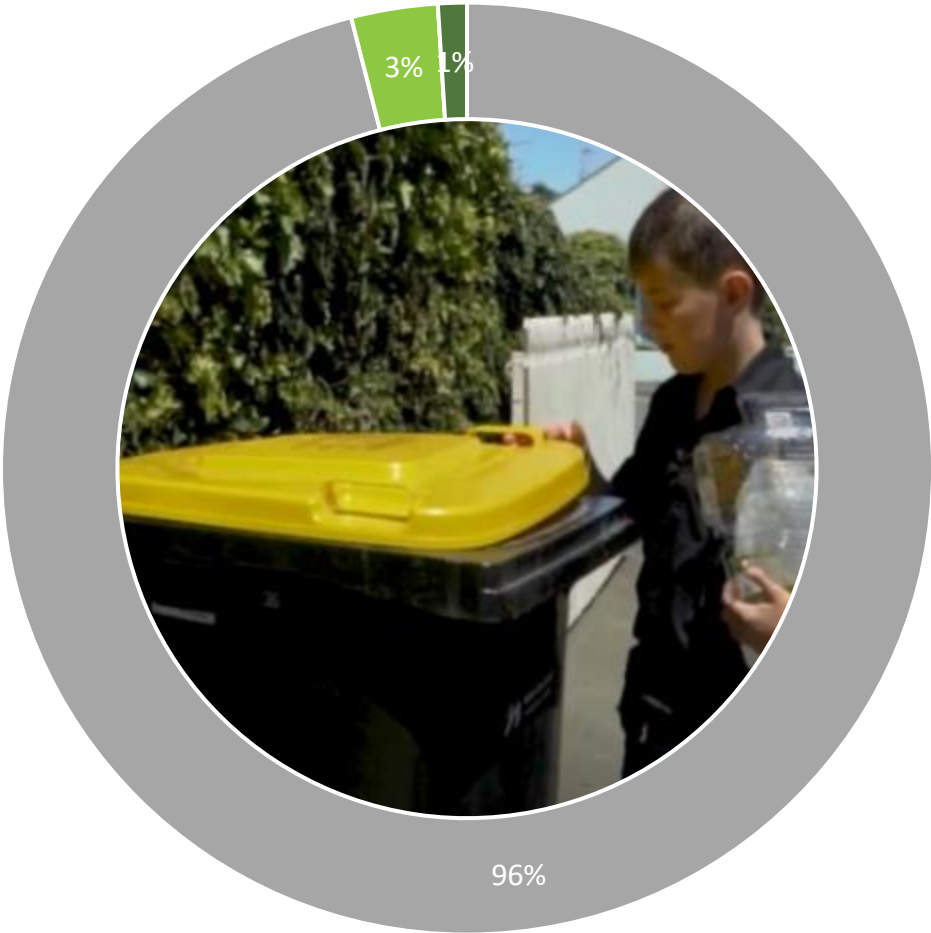


# VIDEO RECOGNITION AND IMPACT

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**Recognition of Video:** Respondents were shown a video produced by the two councils on the recycling journey. Only 4% said they had seen the video before.

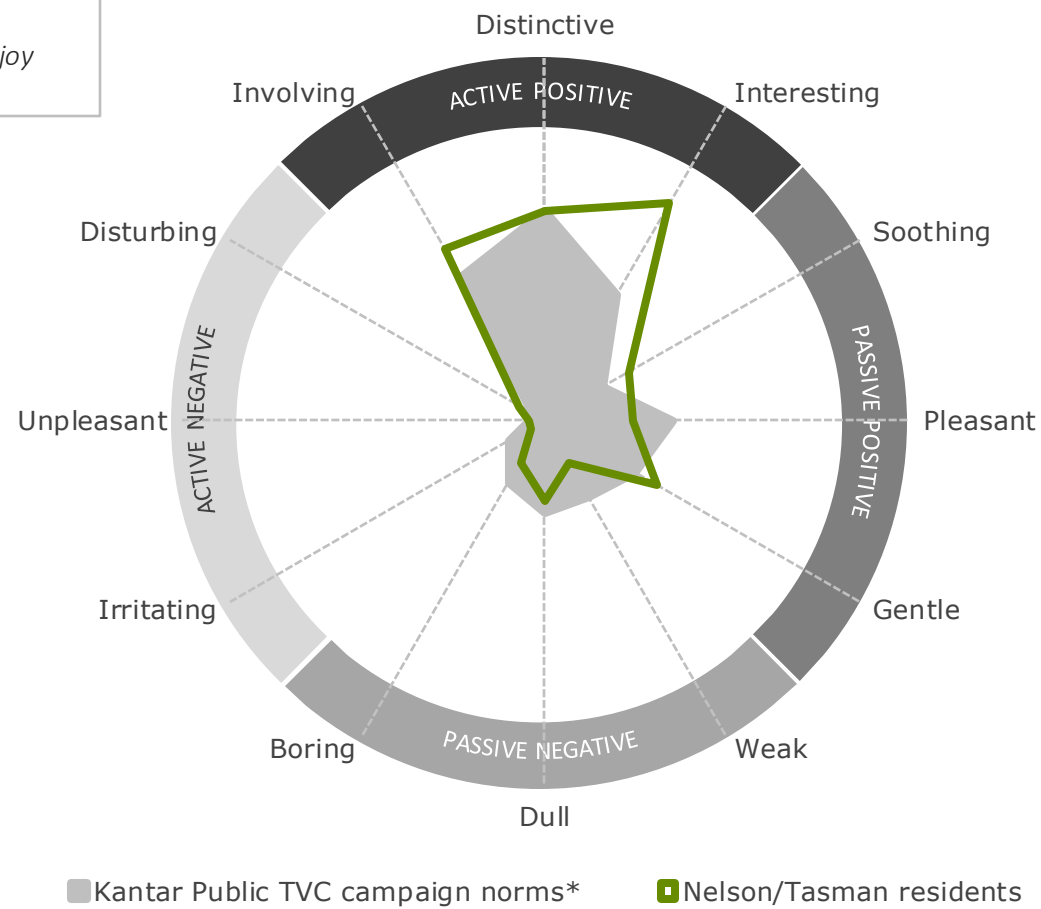


■ No, this is my first time   ■ Once or twice   ■ A few times

Source: H1  
Base: All residents [Nelson / Tasman 2022 n=145]

**Description of the video:** While recognition of the video was relatively low, perceptions of it were relatively strong when compared to Kantar Public's norms. Respondents were asked to choose one word from each of three lists that describe the video. Most described the video as interesting, distinctive and involving – meaning it is more likely to grab and hold peoples' attention.

*For an ad to be noticed, to grab and keep attention, it should aim for the 'Active' quadrants. However, a 'Passive' can still be effective however if people enjoy watching it.*





**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
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