

# Let's Talk Rubbish: Survey Report

December 2024



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## 1.0 Key findings

### Overall

A total of 10,475 responses were received for the Let's Talk Rubbish survey, and this means we can be confident the survey results reflect the views of people in North Yorkshire.

We received responses from people who live and work within all areas across North Yorkshire, although people from Scarborough & Whitby and Selby & Ainsty are underrepresented in the responses.

Some older age groups are also overrepresented and younger people underrepresented in the responses.

We monitored responses during the survey live period to check representation and tried to target survey promotion and engagement events to encourage underrepresented groups to respond.

### Rubbish bins and additional rubbish

- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of people say they have some spare capacity in their rubbish bin when it is normally collected – nearly half say their bin is three-quarters or half full and nearly one-in-five people say it is only a quarter full or nearly empty.
- People with additional rubbish are most likely to store it until the next collection (18%) or take it to a household waste recycling centre (HWRC) (18%). Nearly one-in-ten say they use a neighbour's bin (9%).

### Kerbside collection service and other recycling

- More than nine out of ten people say they use their kerbside recycling collection service every time (84%) or most of the time (8%).
- While many people say they have enough space in their recycling container, the most popular options are for people to take any additional recycling to a HWRC (33%) or store it until the next collection (31%) or use an extra container (17%).

### Satisfaction with recycling services

The survey shows most people are very happy or happy with the council's recycling service, particularly the collection teams (84%) and reliability of services (84%). Benchmark data from the Local Government Association shows 77% of residents are very satisfied (40%) or fairly satisfied (37%) with their council waste collection services in England and Wales<sup>1</sup>.

### Recycling containers

- Some 61% of people are very happy (33%) or happy (28%) with the type of container they have for recycling. People using wheelie bins are much more likely to be very happy or happy with their container type (83%), while those using boxes or bags are less likely to say this (both 41%).
- The majority (58%) of people are also very happy (30%) or happy (28%) with the size of their recycling container. People using wheelie bins are also much more likely to be very happy or happy with their container size (78%), compared to 40% of box users and 41% of bag users being satisfied.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: LGA Polling on resident satisfaction with councils: Round 38 Research Report June 2024. [Polling on resident satisfaction with councils: Round 38 | Local Government Association](#)

### **Recycling materials**

- More than one quarter (26%) of people are very happy and 38% are happy with the range of materials collected as part of the recycling services. Around one-in-six people are unhappy (12%) or very unhappy (5%) with the materials collected.

### **Collection teams**

- Over half (52%) of people are very happy and 32% are happy with the collection team that empty their bins, boxes or bags. Only 5% are unhappy (3%) or very unhappy (2%).

### **Reliability of collections**

- Nearly half (49%) are very happy and 35% are happy with the reliability of collections. Only 6% are unhappy (4%) or very unhappy (2%).

### **Equal recycling services**

- Nearly nine-in-ten people (88%) say it is very important (61%) or important (26%) that North Yorkshire residents have access to an equal recycling service. Only 3% say this is not very important (2%) or unimportant (1%).

### **Free text comments**

- Residents provided 5,274 suggestions to improve recycling services, including the need for better containers, expanding the range of recyclables, and increasing collection frequency.
- There are 6,513 comments providing feedback on proposed changes to recycling services in North Yorkshire and they show a mix of support and concern. There are more positive comments than negative comments. When the comments were categorised into positive, neutral, and negative sentiments, based on the tone and content of the responses, a majority (51%) of the comments showed a positive sentiment, while nearly one-third (32%) were negative and 17% were neutral.
- Key themes include support for modernising collections with more space in bins to make recycling easier, reducing litter, the practicality of additional bins, the frequency of collections, and the potential for confusion among residents.

### **NOTE:**

There are six area committees, whose role is to improve the quality of life for people in their area by acting as a 'critical friend' to policy makers and decision makers, enabling the voice and concerns of the public to be heard and driving improvements in public service. The results of the Let's Talk Rubbish survey are broken down by area committee within this report to give further local insight into your experiences and highlight differences and similarities across the county. The six area committees that we have reported on are:

Harrogate and Knaresborough, Richmond (Yorks), Scarborough and Whitby, Selby and Ainsty, Skipton and Ripon, and Thirsk and Malton. The results reported in this document are based on the original six constituencies, which were in place at the time of the survey in Summer 2024.

Since the general election on 4 July 2024, the constituency boundaries have changed. You can find out more about the boundary review on the Parliament website:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/boundary-review-2023-which-seats-will-change/> Due to these changes, there are now seven constituencies within the North Yorkshire area: Harrogate and Knaresborough, Richmond (Yorks), Scarborough and Whitby, Selby and Ainsty, Skipton and Ripon, Thirsk and Malton, Wetherby and Easingwold.



## 2.0 Introduction, background, and methodology

Our ambition for Let's Talk North Yorkshire is for it to be our biggest ever countywide conversation, to help understand how the public are feeling, and use that intelligence to improve decision making and inform the council's policy development process.

Let's Talk Rubbish was launched on 8 July 2024 and ran until 16 September 2024. A total of 10,475 valid survey responses were received.

The survey was hosted on 'Commonplace', our digital engagement platform and supported by a marketing campaign directing people to the platform. Paper surveys were available from council offices, libraries and leisure centres. An easy read version of the questionnaire was also produced and, where requested, alternative formats such as large print were supplied.

As usual with self-completion questionnaires, some participants did not complete all questions. This may be because they did not have an opinion on the question asked. All charts show the number of responses received for each question.

The survey results are reported as whole numbers for percentages. As a result of this 'rounding' process there may be occasions when the figures do not add up to 100.

Free text response questions were analysed to look for patterns and themes in the responses.

We also received feedback via social media and directly from people in the form of emails, and staff from the council also had more than 500 conversations with residents at local engagement events.

### Reliability of the results

The number of responses received as part of the Let's Talk Rubbish survey indicates we can be confident that the survey results reflect the wider view of people in North Yorkshire and can be generalised to the whole population.

While the sample of responses in the survey is broadly representative of the population in North Yorkshire, the over-representation of people from some geographical areas and age groups will have an impact on the survey results if people from these groups have different views on issues.

Demographic information was not provided by many people taking part in the survey, and this also limits the ability to determine how truly representative the sample of responses is.

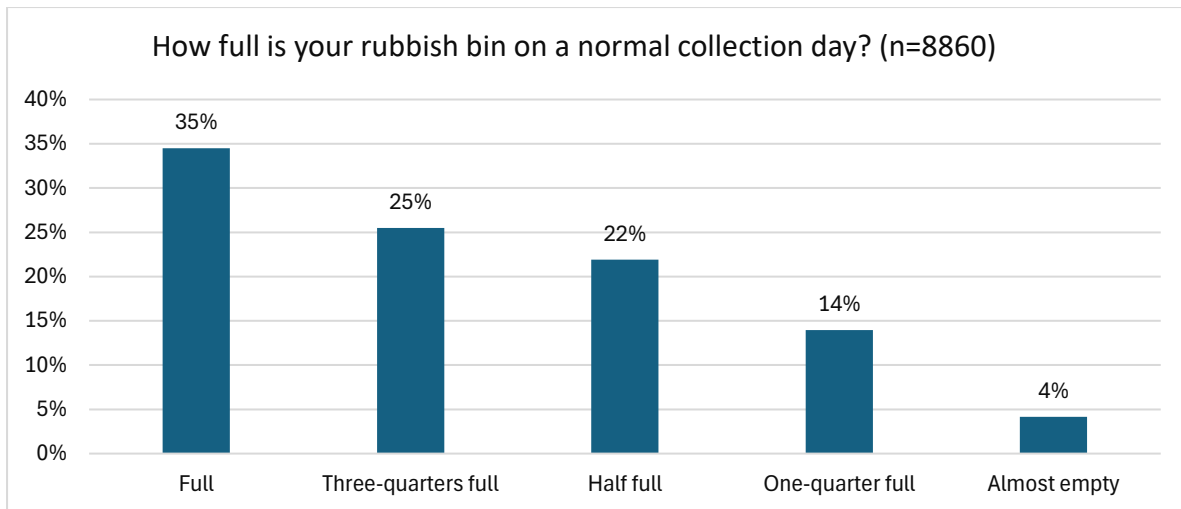
We monitored responses during the survey live period to check representation and tried to target survey promotion and engagement events to encourage underrepresented groups to respond.

We acknowledge that there is likely to be some survey error in the results, due to the over-representation of certain sub-groups in the sample. Although the survey is not truly representative, we always assume that there will be some sampling error and/or response bias in every survey, and this does not invalidate the survey findings.

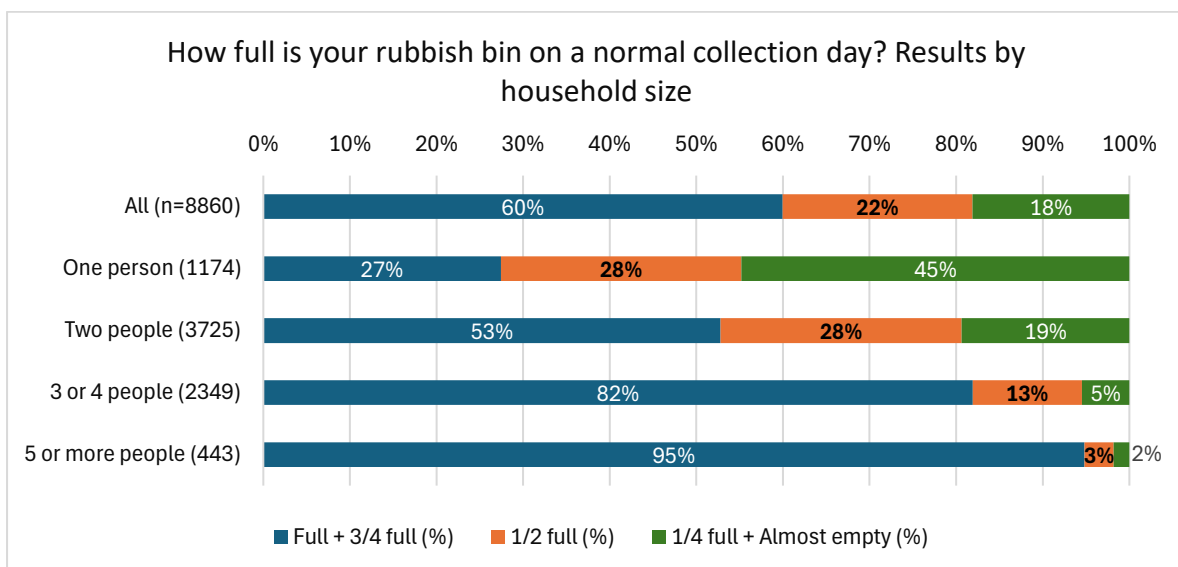
## 3.0 Summary of main findings

### Rubbish bins

Slightly more than one-third of people say their rubbish bin is normally full (35%), while nearly half say it is three-quarters full (25%) or half full (22%).



The chart below shows larger sized households are more likely to have a full or three-quarters full rubbish bin. Some 95% of households with five or more people report having a full or three-quarters full bin, compared to just 27% of one-person households.



People in Selby & Ainsty are most likely to have a full or three-quarters full rubbish bin (62%) while people in Skipton & Ripon (51%) and Harrogate & Knaresborough (54%) are least likely to have this.

People in the oldest age groups are least likely to have a full or three-quarters full rubbish bin and the youngest age groups are most likely to have this.

#### Additional rubbish

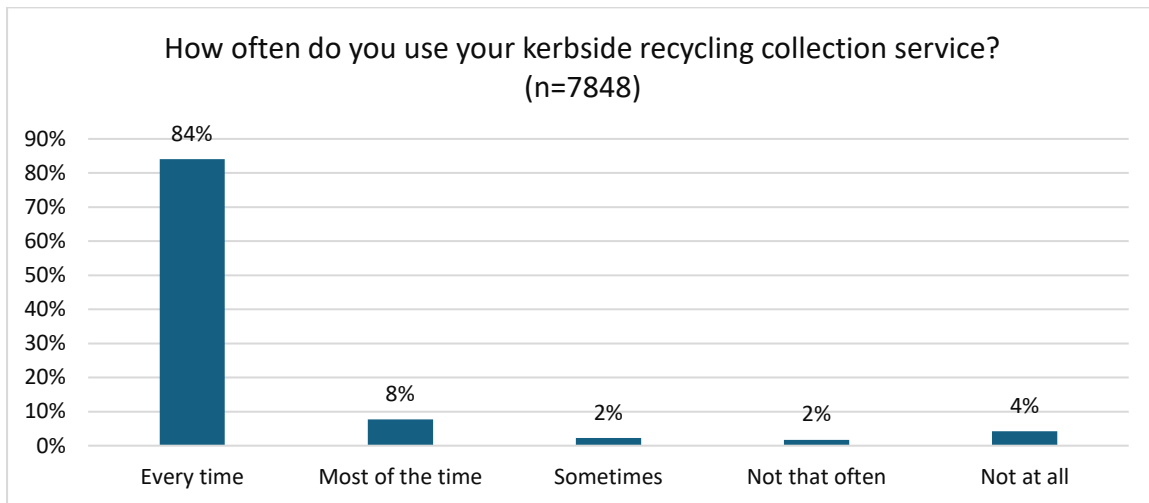
Most people say they have enough space in their bin (55%), but other people say they store additional rubbish until the next collection (18%) or take it to a household waste recycling centre (HWRC) (18%) or use their neighbour's bin (9%).

People in Skipton & Ripon are most likely to have space in their bin (63%), while people in Thirsk & Malton are least likely to say this (53%).

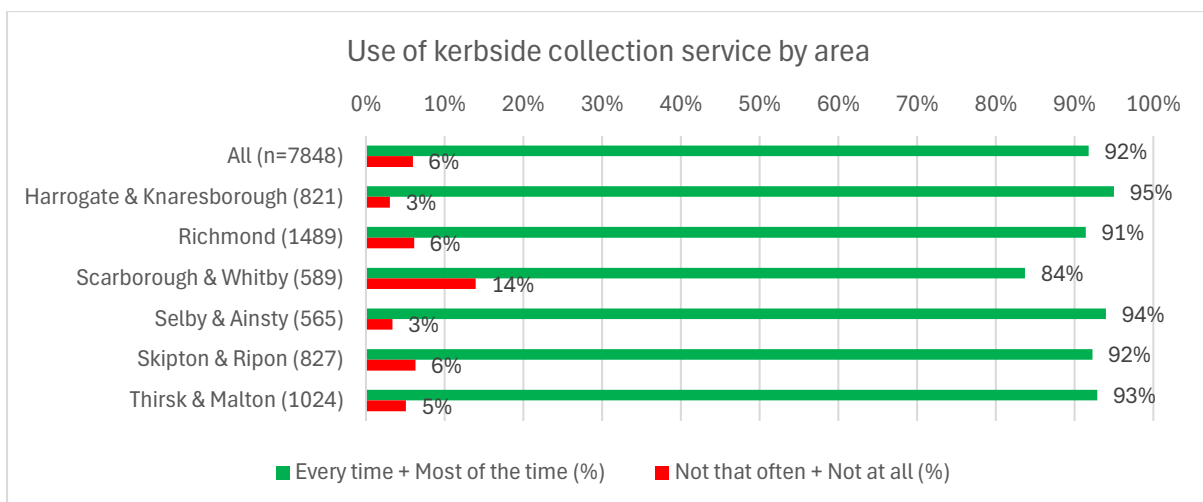
Older age groups of people are more likely to say they have space in their bins, while the youngest age groups are least likely to say this.

### Kerbside recycling collection services

More than nine out of ten people say they use their kerbside recycling collection service every time (84%) or most of the time (8%).



The chart below shows most people from all parts of North Yorkshire use the kerbside collection service every time or most of the time. Usage is lowest in Scarborough & Whitby where 84% say they use this every time or most of the time and 14% say they do not use it at all or not very often.



The results suggest the oldest (75 years and over) and youngest (16 to 29) age groups are slightly less likely to use kerbside collection services every time or most of the time.

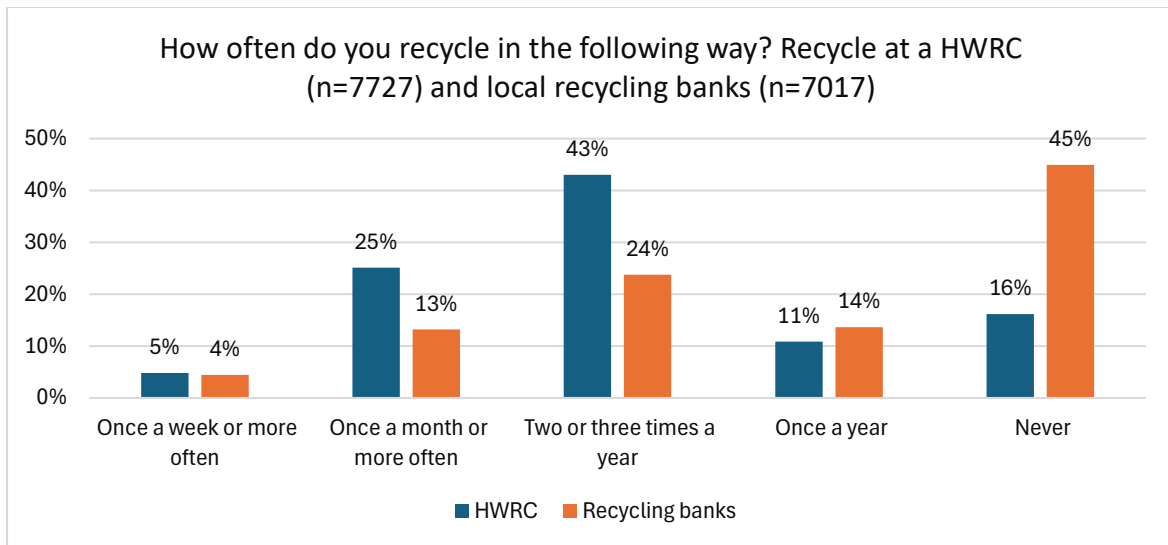
People living in apartments or flats and other properties are less likely to use kerbside collection services every time or most of the time, compared to all other property types.

People in the smallest (one person) households are also less likely to use kerbside collection services every time or most of the time (83%), compared to people in larger households.

### Other recycling

People are more likely to use a household waste recycling centre (HWRC) to recycle than local recycling banks.





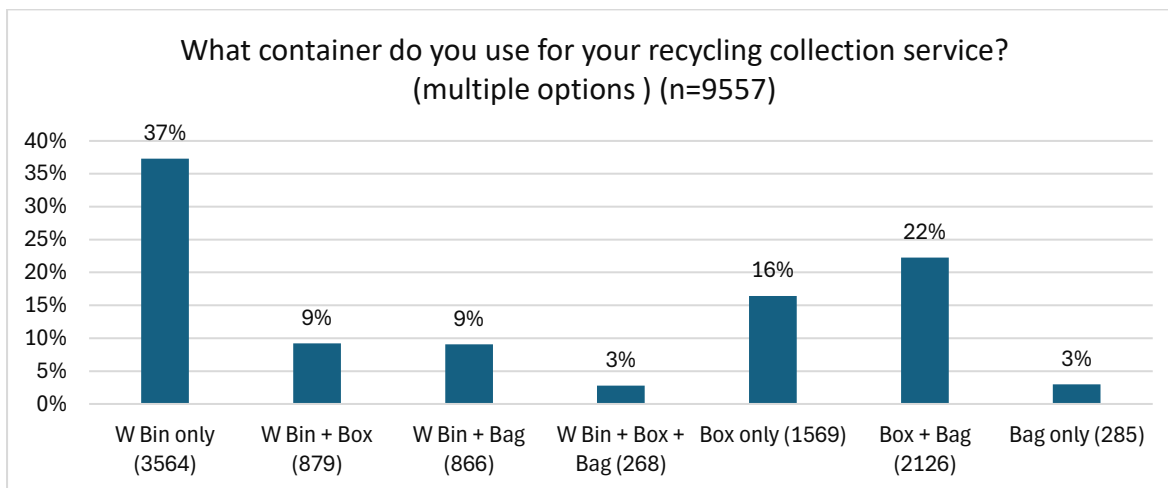
Some 43% of people say they recycle at a HWRC two or three times a year while 45% of people say they never use local recycling banks.

The results show that people in Richmond and Thirsk & Malton are most likely to use HWRCs and local recycling banks regularly.

### Recycling containers

More than half the people in the survey (58%) use a wheelie bin, either on its own (37%) or with another type of container (9% with a box, 9% with a bag, and 3% with a box and bag).

Many people (51%) also use a box, often in combination with another type of container. Some 16% only use a box while 22% use a box and bag. More than one-third (37%) of people use a bag, usually with other container types -3% use only a bag for recycling.



### Satisfaction with recycling services

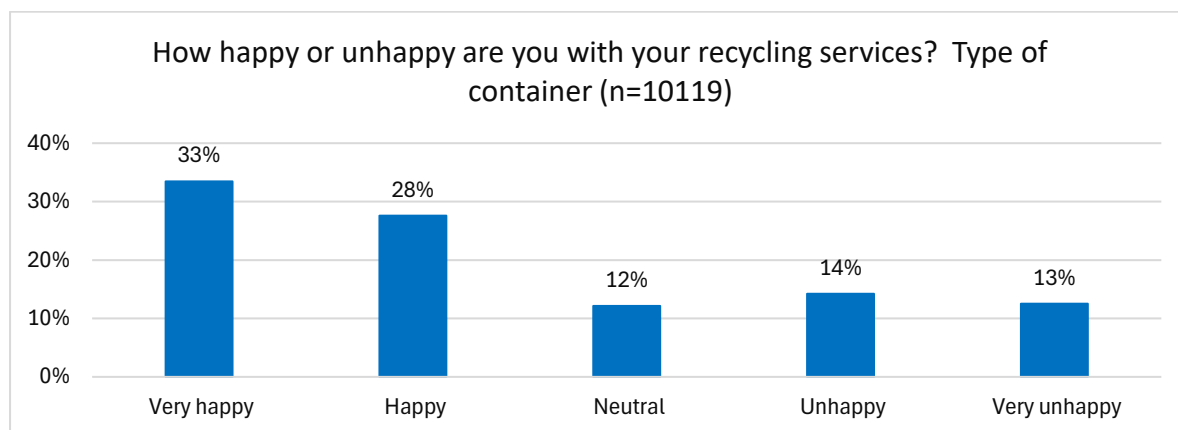
The survey shows high levels of satisfaction with different aspects of the council's recycling service:

- 84% are very happy or happy with their collection team
- 84% are very happy or happy with the reliability of collections
- 64% very happy or happy with the range of materials collected
- 61% very happy or happy with the type of container
- 58% very happy or happy about their container size.

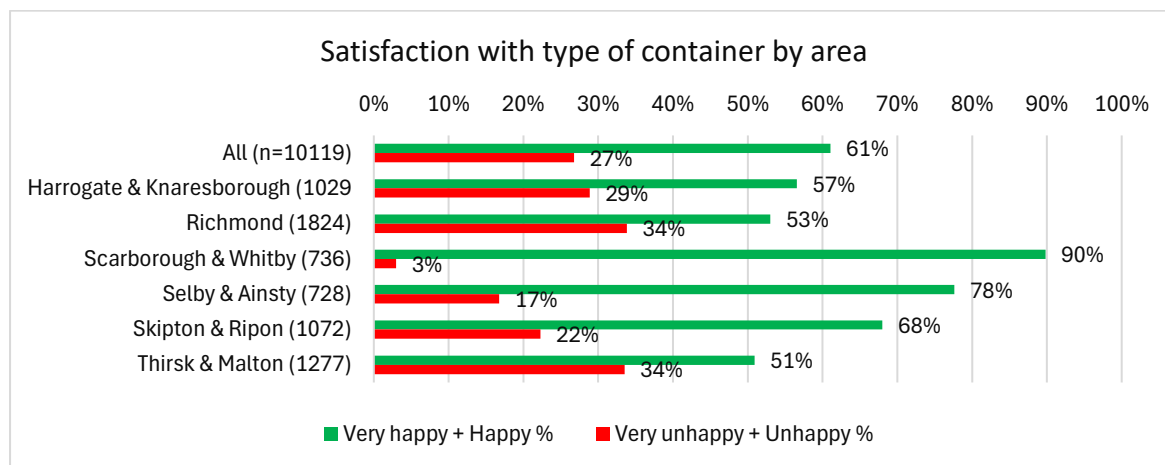
Local Government Association data for England and Wales shows 77% of residents are very satisfied (40%) or fairly satisfied (37%) with their council waste collection services, while 9% are fairly dissatisfied and 6% are very dissatisfied.<sup>2</sup>

### Container type

More than 60% of people are very happy (33%) or happy (28%) with the type of container they have for recycling, and slightly more than a quarter (27%) are unhappy (14%) or very unhappy (13%).



People in Scarborough & Whitby and Selby & Ainsty are most likely to be satisfied with their type of recycling container, while those in Thirsk & Malton and Richmond are least satisfied. Some areas, such as Richmond and Thirsk & Malton, have more than one type of collection system (based on the former district/borough council arrangements) and the data shows much higher satisfaction levels for people using wheelie bins than box and bag collection systems in these areas.



Older age groups are much more likely to be satisfied with their type of container than younger age groups.

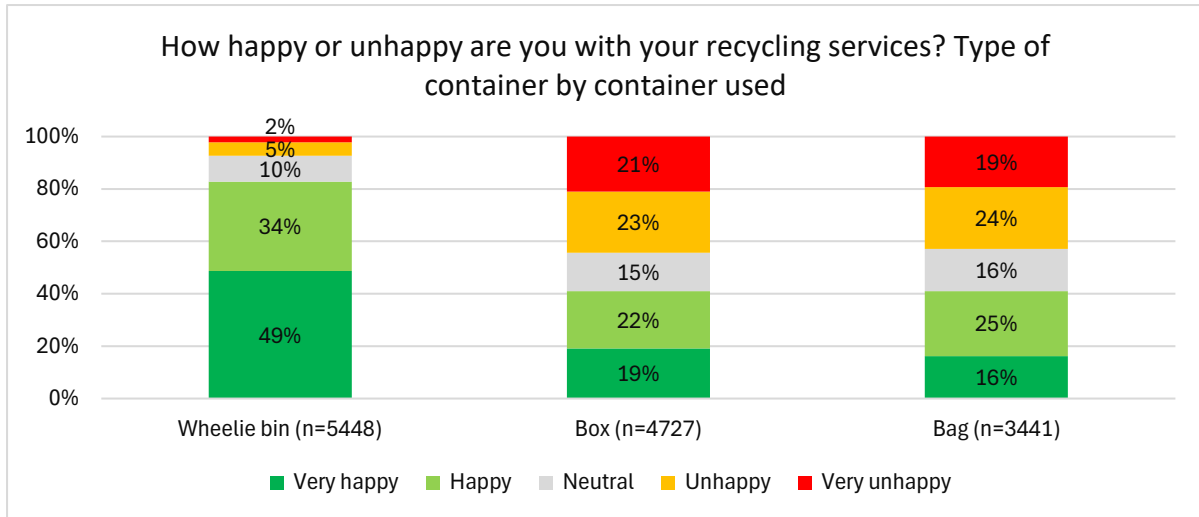
People living in smaller households are more likely to be satisfied with their type of container, while those in larger households are less satisfied.

<sup>2</sup> Source: LGA Polling on resident satisfaction with councils: Round 38 Research Report June 2024. [Polling on resident satisfaction with councils: Round 38 | Local Government Association](#)

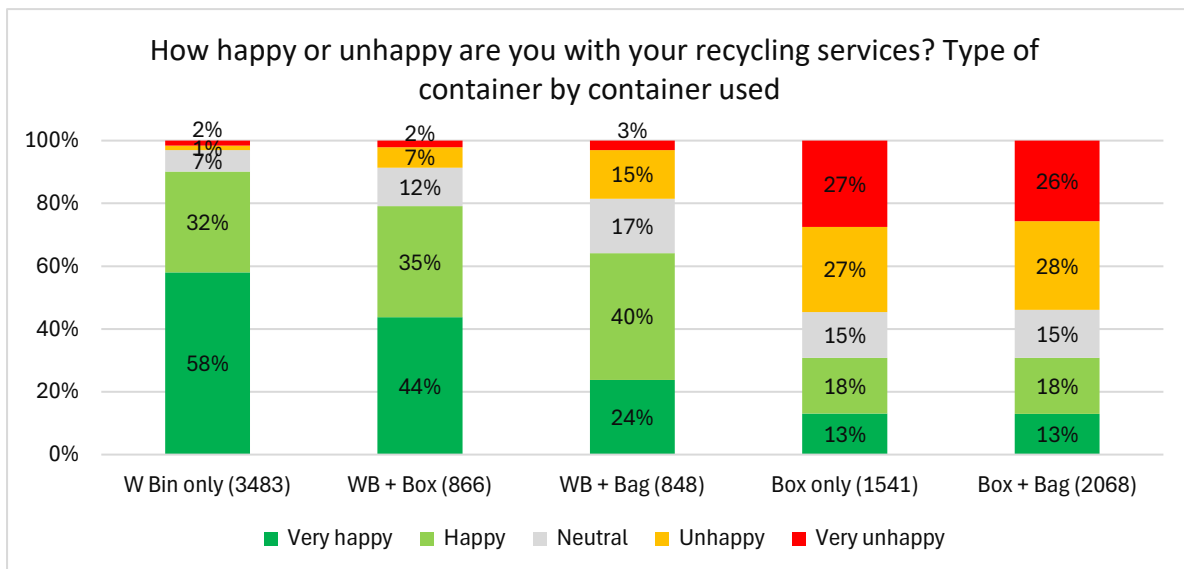
People who consider themselves disabled or as having a long-term, limiting health conditions are less likely to be satisfied with their container type (56%), compared to those who are not disabled or do not have a condition (62%).

People using wheelie bins are most likely to be very happy or happy with their container type:

- 49% of wheelie bin users are very happy and 34% are happy with their container type
- 19% of box users are very happy and 22% are happy with their container type
- 16% of bag users are very happy and 25% are happy with their container type.

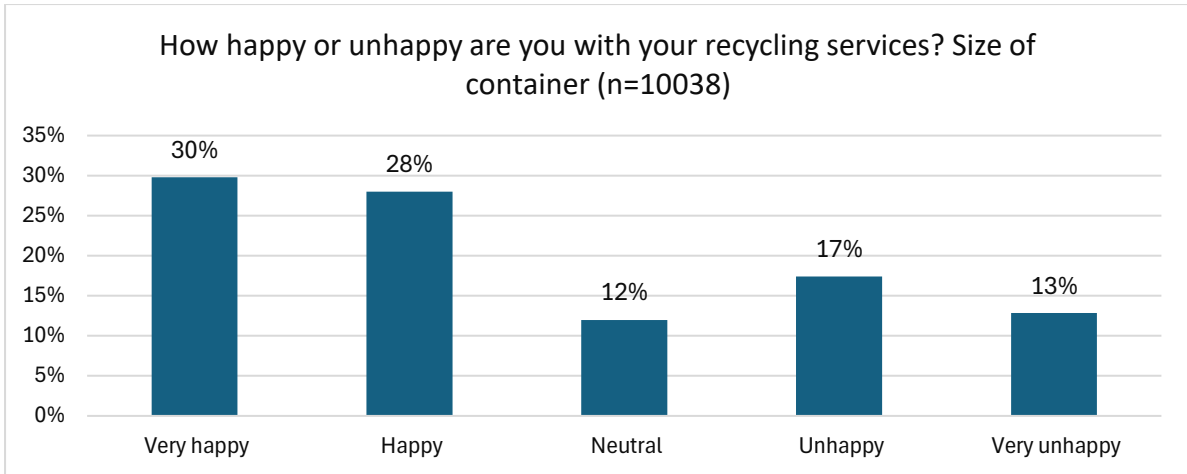


A more detailed analysis shows satisfaction is highest where the type of container is wheelie bin only (90% are very happy or happy) or a combination of wheelie bin and bag (79%).



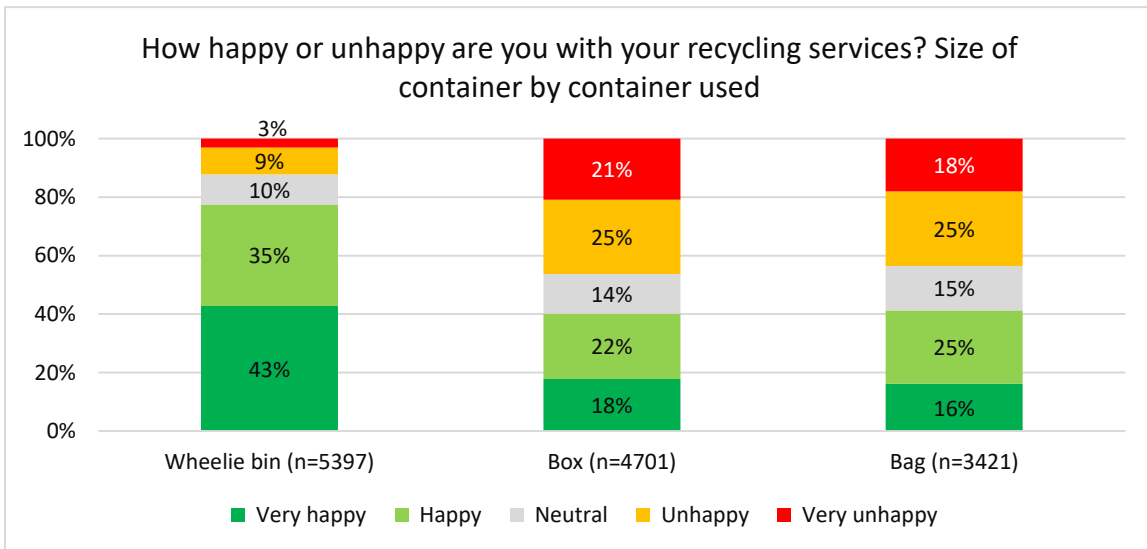
### Container size

The majority (58%) of people in the survey are very happy (30%) or happy (28%) with the size of their recycling container, although one-in-three people are unhappy (17%) or very unhappy (13%).

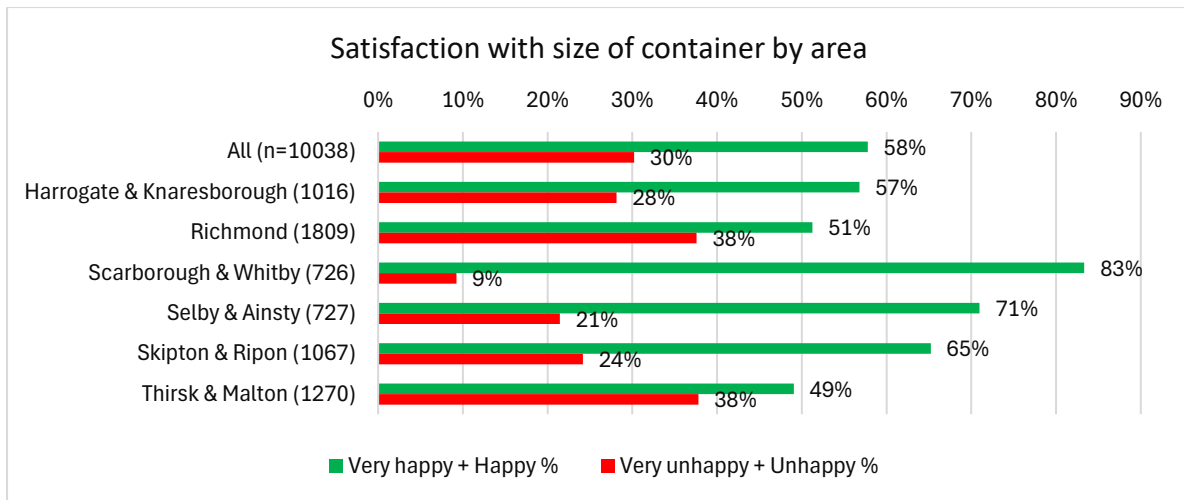


People using wheelie bins are most likely to be very happy or happy with their container size:

- 43% of wheelie bin users are very happy and 35% are happy with their container size
- 18% of box users are very happy and 22% are happy with their container size
- 16% of bag users are very happy and 25% are happy with their container size.



The chart below shows people in Scarborough & Whitby (83%) and Selby & Ainsty (71%) are most likely to be very happy or happy with the size of their recycling container. People in Thirsk & Malton (49%) and Richmond (51%) are least likely to be satisfied with their container size.



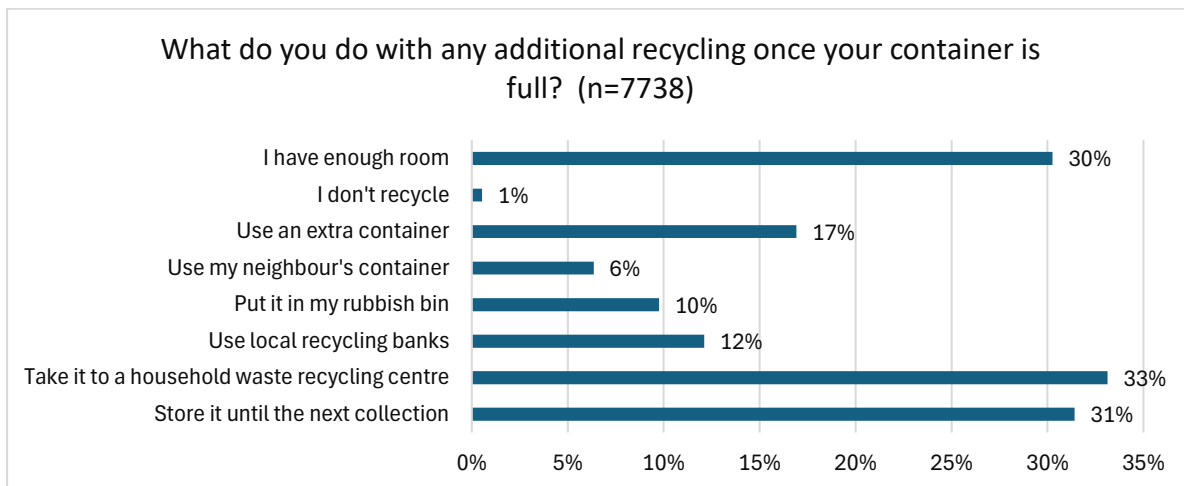
People in the older age groups are most likely to be very happy or happy with the size of their container, while younger age groups are less satisfied.

Around two-thirds of people in one-person or two-person households are very happy or happy with their container sizes, compared to 47% of people in three or four person households and 37% of five or more person households.

People who consider themselves disabled or as having a long-term, limiting health conditions are less likely to be satisfied with their size of container (52%), compared to those who are not disabled or do not have a condition (59%).

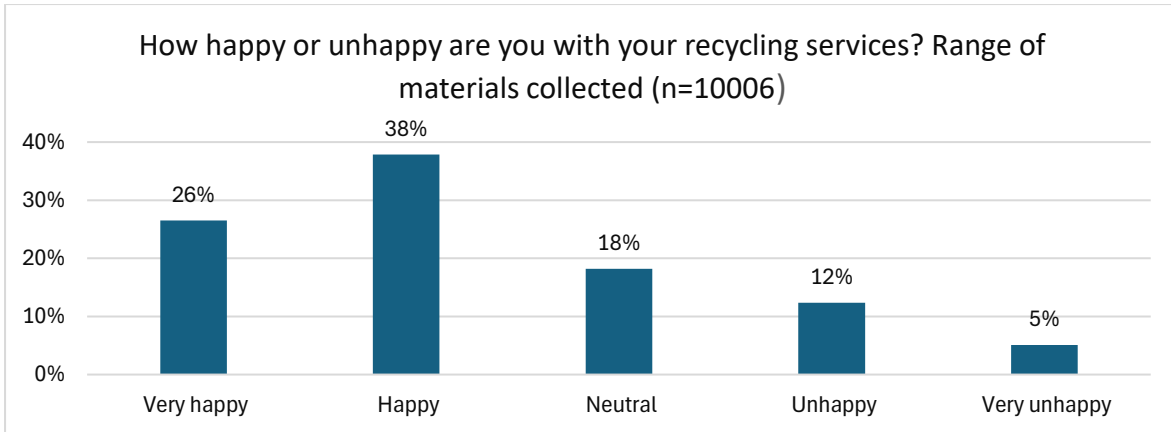
#### Additional recycling once container is full

Nearly one-in-three people say they have enough space in their bin. The most popular options for people with any additional recycling is to take it to a HWRC (33%), to store it until the next collection (31%), or to use an extra container (17%).

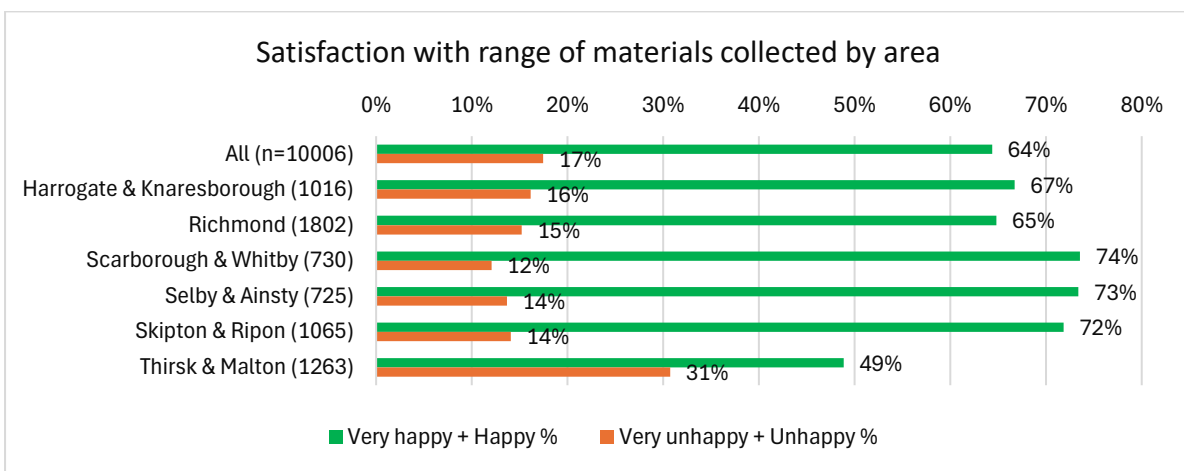


#### Recycling materials collected

More than one quarter (26%) of people are very happy and 38% are happy with the range of materials collected as part of the recycling services.



The chart below shows a lower satisfaction level with materials recycled in Thirsk & Malton (49%).

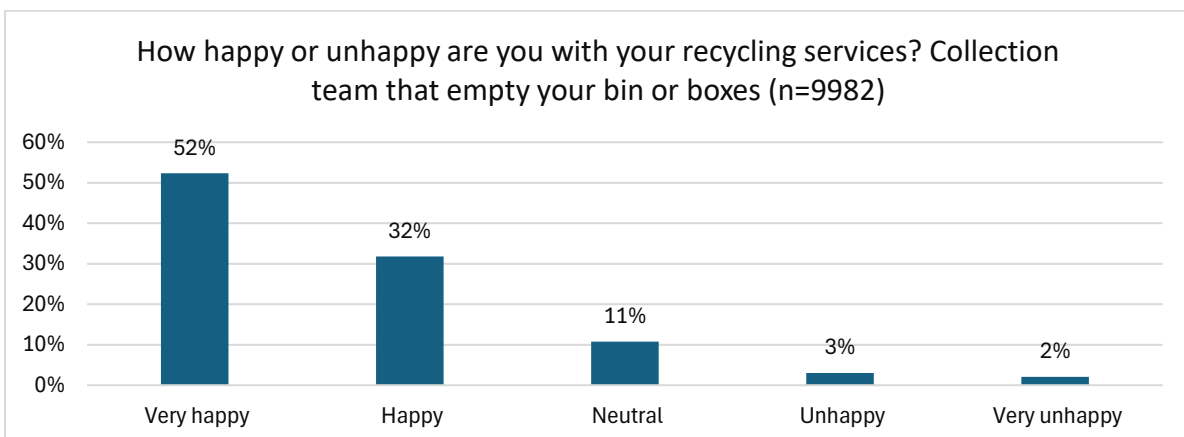


The results show similar satisfaction levels by age group, by type of property and by household size. People who consider themselves disabled or as having a health condition are less likely to be satisfied with the materials collected (58%), compared to those who are not disabled (65%).

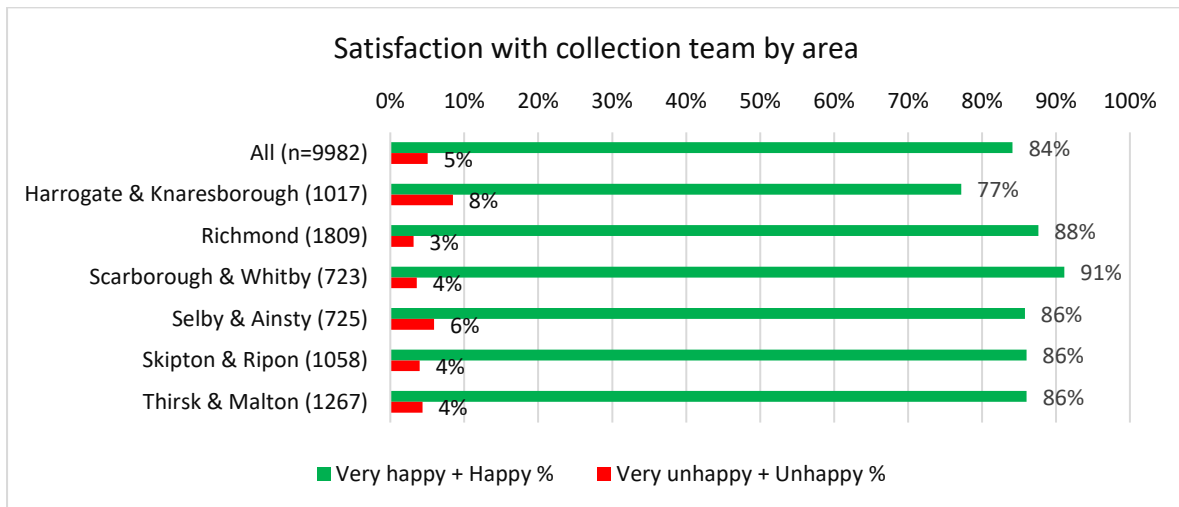
In the former Ryedale District Council area, currently only plastic bottles are collected for recycling and not pots, tubs and trays which may explain why satisfaction with the range of materials collected is lower in the Thirsk and Malton area.

#### Collection team

Over half (52%) of people are very happy and 32% are happy with the collection team that empty their bins, boxes or bags. Only 5% are unhappy (3%) or very unhappy (2%).



The chart below shows people in Scarborough & Whitby (91%) and Richmond (88%) are the most likely to be very happy or happy with the team collecting their recycling, while people from Harrogate & Knaresborough (77%) are the least likely to be satisfied.



People in the youngest age group (16 to 29 years) are the least likely to be very happy or happy with their recycling team (77%). The oldest age group, aged 75 and over, are most likely to be satisfied with their collection team (89%)

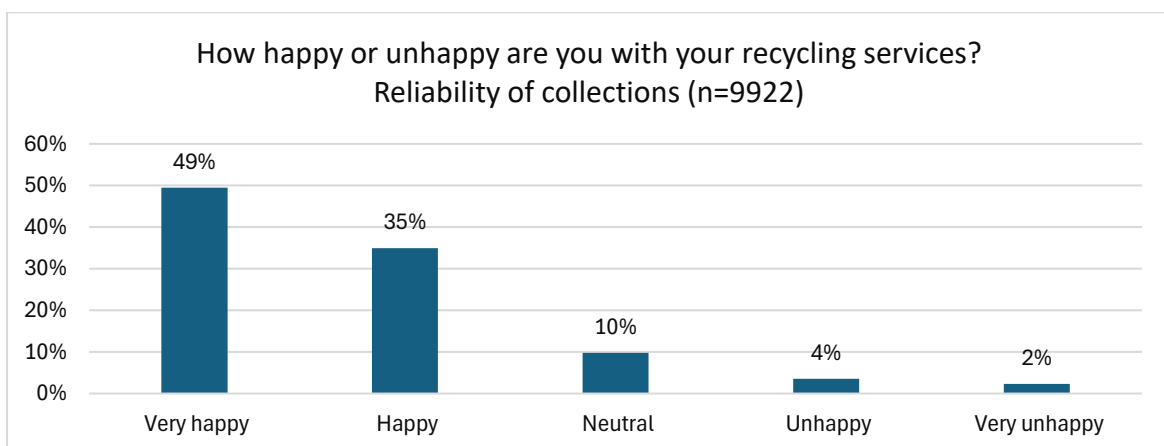
People living in an apartment or flat are the least likely to be very happy or happy with their recycling team (74%). There is little difference in satisfaction levels among most other property types.

The results suggest there is little difference in satisfaction levels for different sized households.

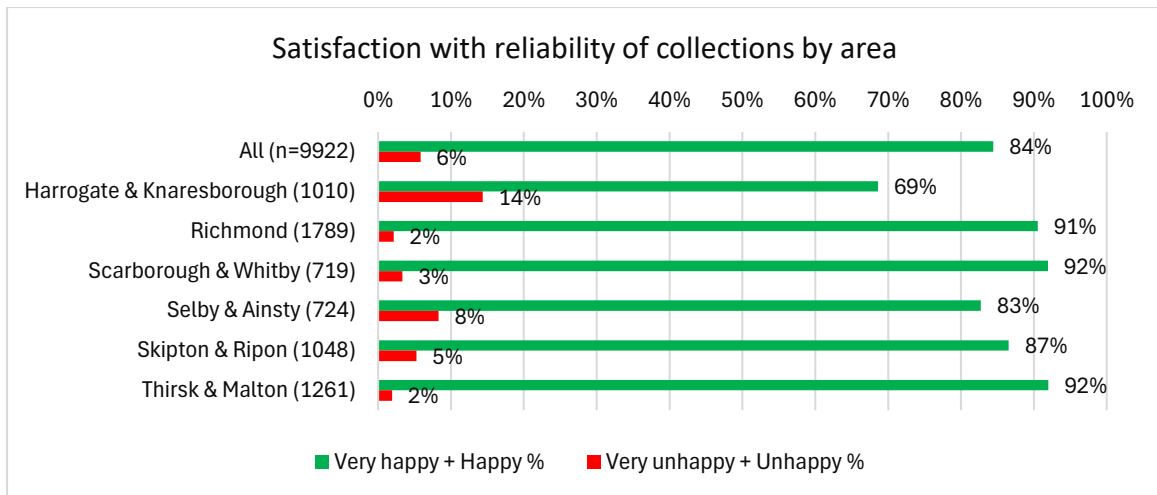
People who consider themselves disabled or as having a long-term, limiting health conditions are less likely to be satisfied with their collection team (80%), compared to those who are not disabled or do not have a condition (86%).

### Reliability of collections

Nearly half (49%) are very happy and 35% are happy with the reliability of collections. Only 6% are unhappy (4%) or very unhappy (2%).



The chart below shows lower levels of satisfaction with the reliability of collections in Harrogate & Knaresborough (69%) and Selby & Ainsty (83%).

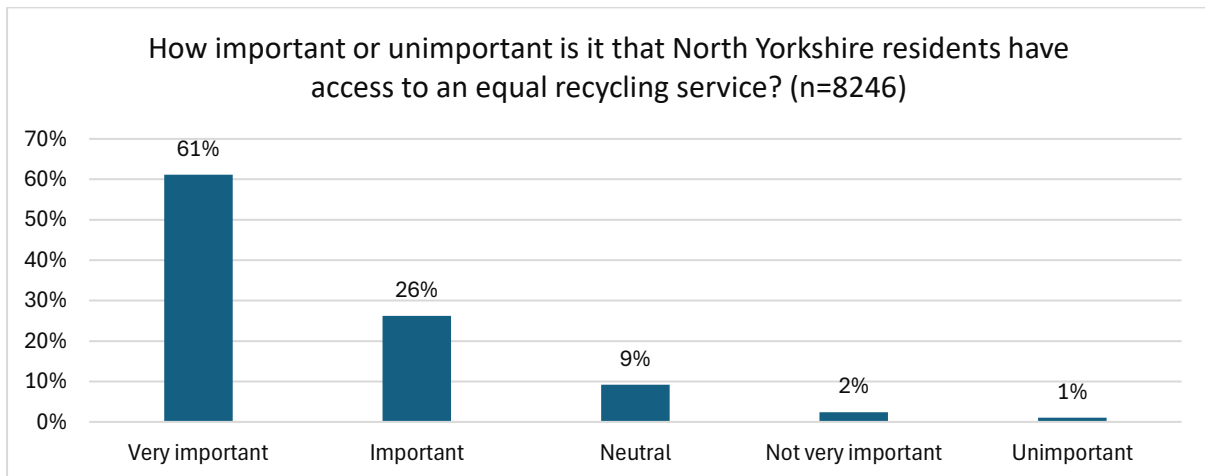


The results show similar satisfaction levels with the reliability of collections for most age groups, by type of property, and by size of household.

People who consider themselves disabled or as having a long-term, limiting health condition are less likely to be satisfied with the reliability of collections (81%), compared to those who are not disabled or do not have a condition (86%).

#### Equal recycling services

Nearly nine-in-ten (87%) say it is very important (61%) or important (26%) that North Yorkshire residents have access to an equal recycling service. Only 3% say this is not very important (2%) or unimportant (1%).



The survey results show little difference in views on the importance of this by geographical area, with a large majority of people saying this is very important or important in all areas.

There is little difference in views on importance by age group, by property type or household size, or by disability status, with all groups rating this as very important or important.

#### Do you have any other ideas about how we can provide a better recycling service?

People provided 5,274 suggestions to improve recycling services, including the need for better containers, expanding the range of recyclables, and increasing collection frequency.

The most common suggestions are:



- Expand the range of materials collected, such as thick cardboard, more types of plastics, and certain food packaging items that are currently excluded from the service.
- Increase recycling capacity and better containers, such as for larger bins or additional wheelie bins instead of small boxes or bags. The current containers are perceived as inadequate by many, particularly for larger households.
- More frequent collections, especially for households that generate a lot of waste. People are concerned about waste piling up between collection days.
- Better communication and education about what can and cannot be recycled, along with better public education campaigns on how to recycle effectively. Misunderstandings about what can be recycled seem common.
- Reduce reliance on plastic bags for recycling, suggesting a shift towards more sustainable, reusable containers or bags.
- Simplification of the system - some people find the current recycling system confusing or overly complicated and want a simpler, more consistent approach to recycling to encourage higher participation rates.
- Collection of food waste.

The theme of increasing recycling capacity is mentioned most frequently in Richmond, Thirsk & Malton, and Harrogate & Knaresborough, and this suggests that these areas, particularly Richmond, have a higher concentration of people expressing concerns about the need for more space, larger bins, or additional bins.

Selby & Ainsty and Scarborough & Whitby had fewer mentions, possibly indicating that residents in these areas are less concerned with increasing recycling capacity.

This difference likely reflects the variations in current recycling systems, with some areas already having more substantial capacity (such as larger bins or more frequent collections), while others may have less space or fewer resources, driving the demand for increased capacity.

### **What do you think about our idea to improve recycling services in North Yorkshire?**

The council put forward a proposal to improve to improve recycling services in North Yorkshire based on the current recycling model used in Selby (using two wheelie bins: one for glass, cans and plastics, and one for paper and cardboard, with alternating fortnightly collections).

The feedback was categorised into positive, neutral, and negative sentiments, based on the tone and content of the responses.

In total, **6,513 free text responses** were analysed, and the breakdown of the overall sentiments shown in the comments is as follows:

- **Positive sentiment:** 3,297 comments (51%)
- **Negative sentiment:** 2,074 comments (32%)
- **Neutral sentiment:** 1,142 comments (17%).

Comments categorised as having neutral sentiment often contained a mix of positive and negative sentiments such as when people recognised the potential benefits of the proposal while also raising practical considerations. In other neutral comments people also wanted more information and guidance on how things might work.

### **Positive sentiment**

Over half of the responses (51%) expressed support for the proposal to improve recycling services.

- **Support for modernisation:** People are in favour of updating the current system, particularly by introducing larger containers, which they felt would make recycling easier and more efficient.
- **Improved community cleanliness:** Responses noted that the proposed improvements would reduce litter and enhance the overall cleanliness of neighbourhoods.

#### Sample quotes

- "This proposal is a great step forward to make recycling easier for residents and reduce waste."
- "I fully support the idea. It will help cut down on litter and improve the recycling rate in our community."
- "We've had extra bins in Selby for a while, and it's made a big difference in reducing litter around the area."

#### Negative sentiment

While there is overall support, nearly one-in-three responses (32%) expressed concerns about the complexity of the new system and the practical challenges it might introduce.

- **Space constraints:** Many respondents are worried about finding space for additional or larger containers, particularly in smaller homes or properties with limited outdoor space.
- **Increased complexity:** Some respondents expressed concerns that the proposed system would be too complicated, particularly for elderly residents or those who might struggle with managing multiple bins and collection schedules.

#### Sample quotes

- "I don't have enough room for another wheelie bin, and this will just complicate recycling further."
- "This is just going to confuse people, especially the elderly or those who struggle with current collection schedules."

#### Neutral sentiment

Neutral responses generally reflected mixed views or uncertainty.

- **Balanced perspectives:** People often acknowledged that the changes could be beneficial but were uncertain about how the new system would be implemented.
- **Need for clear communication:** Many responses highlighted the importance of providing clear instructions to ensure people understand the new system, particularly regarding collection schedules and how different bins should be used.

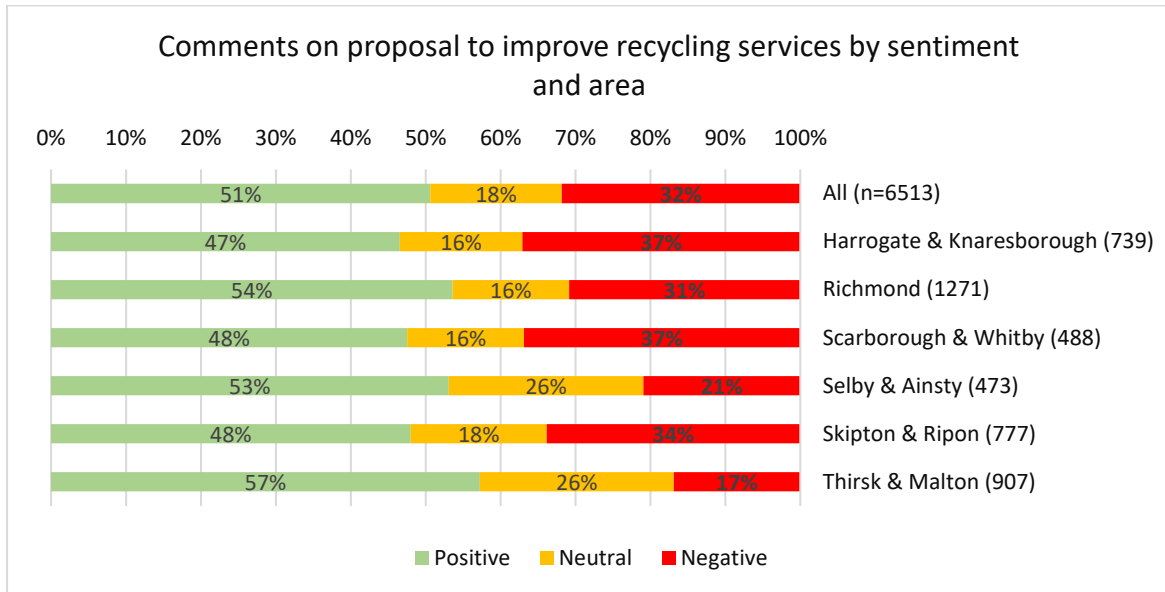
#### Sample quotes

- "The changes sound good, but I think people will need clear instructions to avoid confusion."
- "It could work, but only if it's done properly and people know what to expect."

Overall, the responses indicate that while there is strong support for the proposal to improve recycling services, its success will depend on addressing practical concerns. Issues around bin storage and ensuring clear communication about collection schedules were key challenges identified by people. Nevertheless, many people recognise the importance of improving recycling systems and are optimistic about the potential benefits if the initiative is implemented thoughtfully and with proper guidance.

#### Feedback by areas within North Yorkshire

The chart below shows there are more positive than negative comments for all areas within North Yorkshire. The highest proportion of positive sentiments is found in the comments from people in Thirsk & Malton (57%), Richmond (54%) and Selby & Ainsty (53%).



## 4.0 Survey response demographics

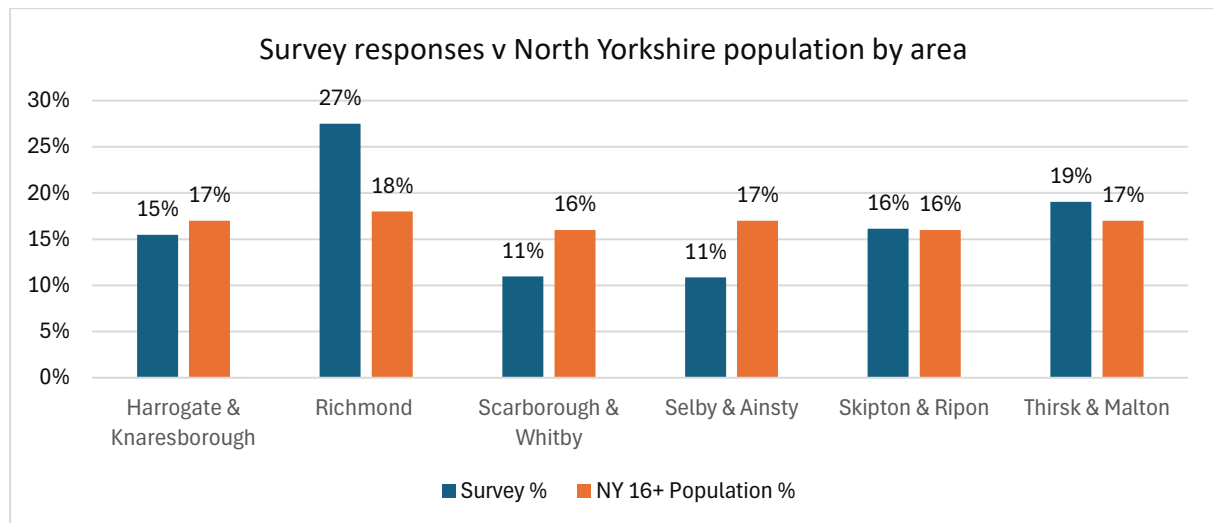
### Connection to the area

People were asked for their connection to North Yorkshire and were able to choose several options. Nearly all (96%) of those who provided a reply said that they live here, slightly more than a quarter (27%) said they work here. One-in-ten work for the local authority (10%) and nearly one-in-ten run a business here (5%) or represent an organisation here (4%).

People were asked for their postcode to identify where they live.

### Area

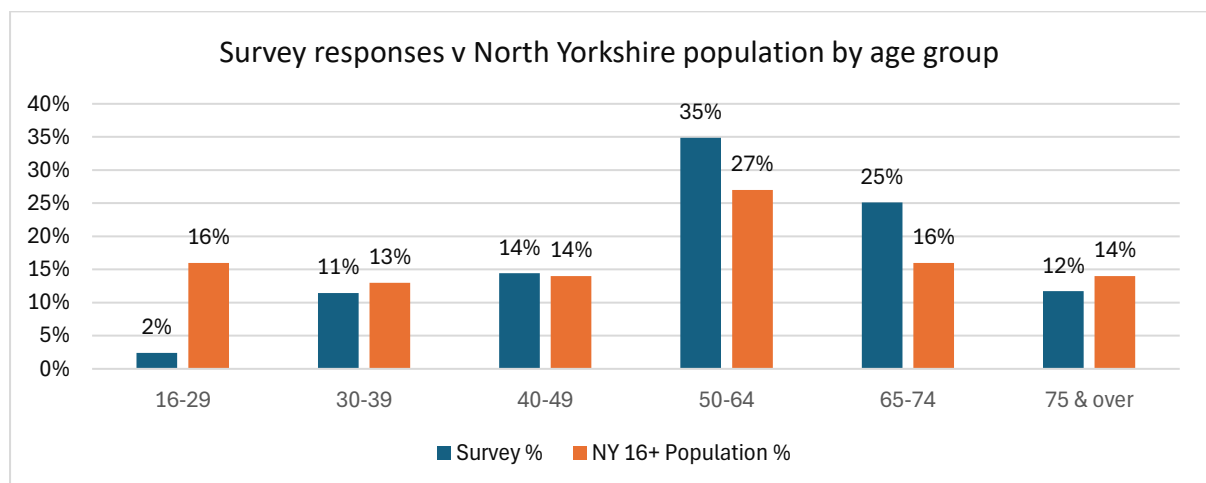
The chart below shows how the distribution of survey responses by geographical area compares to the distribution of the age 16+ population within North Yorkshire.



Richmond is overrepresented in the response, while Scarborough & Whitby and Selby & Ainsty are underrepresented. We received feedback that people from Selby & Ainsty may have been less interested in taking part because the proposal already reflected their current recycling arrangements.

### Age group

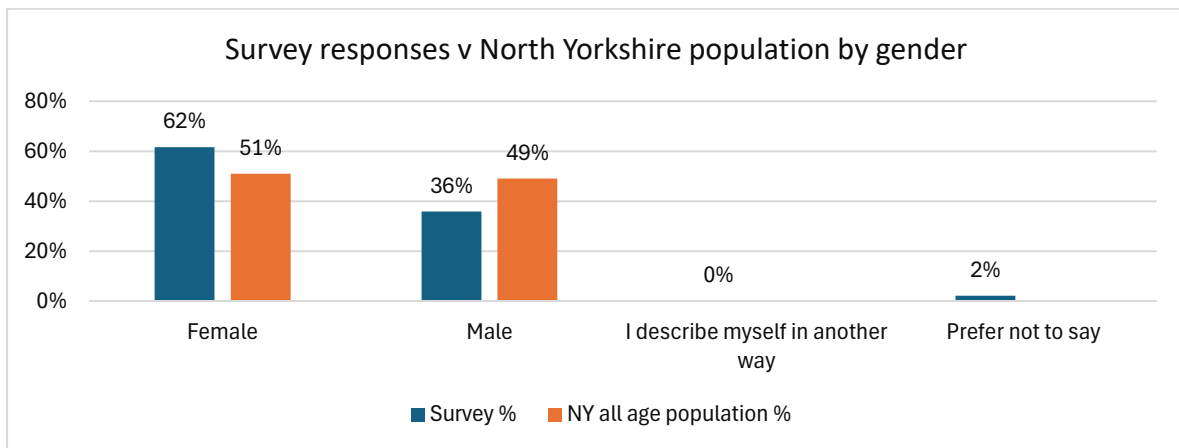
The chart below shows how the age group distribution of survey responses compares to the age distribution of the age 16+ population within North Yorkshire.



The youngest age group, aged 16 to 29, are underrepresented, while those aged 50 to 64 and 65 to 74 are overrepresented. Younger people are more likely to live at home with parents. The Labour Force Survey shows, in 2023, 93% of 16-year-olds, 71% of 19-year-olds, and 50% of 23-year-olds live with their parents (UK).

### Gender

There were more responses from people identifying as female (62%) than male (36%), with 2% preferring not to say and a small number (20 responses) describing themselves in another way.



### Disability and health condition

The data available on disability and long-term limiting health conditions suggests that the survey sample is broadly representative of the wider North Yorkshire population.

Some 880 people consider themselves to be a disabled person or have a long-term, limiting condition (15%), while 4,945 say this is not the case (85%) and 199 people prefer not to say.

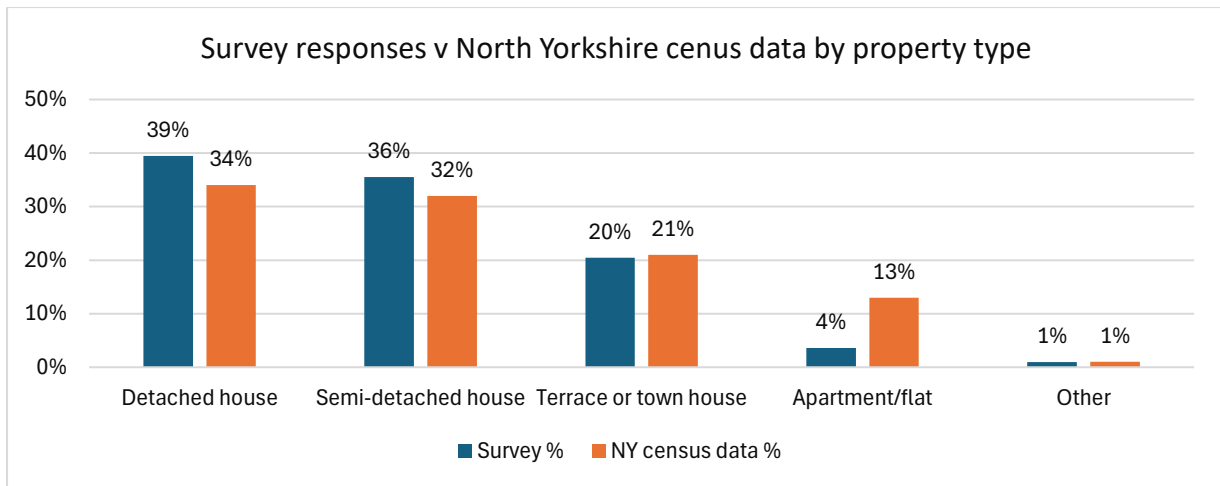
ONS data shows 17.5% of the North Yorkshire population are disabled under the Equality Act (6.8% say their day-to-day activities are limited a lot and 10.7% say they are limited a little). There are also 8.1% of people who are not disabled under the Equality Act but report having long-term a physical impairment or mental health condition, but their day-to-day activities are not limited.

### Ethnic group

The data on ethnic group suggests that the survey sample is broadly representative of the wider North Yorkshire population. Of the 5,902 responses to this question, 99% (5,836) are from people saying their ethnic group is White (all groups). The 2021 Census data shows the population of North Yorkshire is 96.7% White, 1.4% Asian/Asian British, 1.1% Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, 0.5% other ethnic group, and 0.4% Black/Black British, Caribbean or African.

### Property type

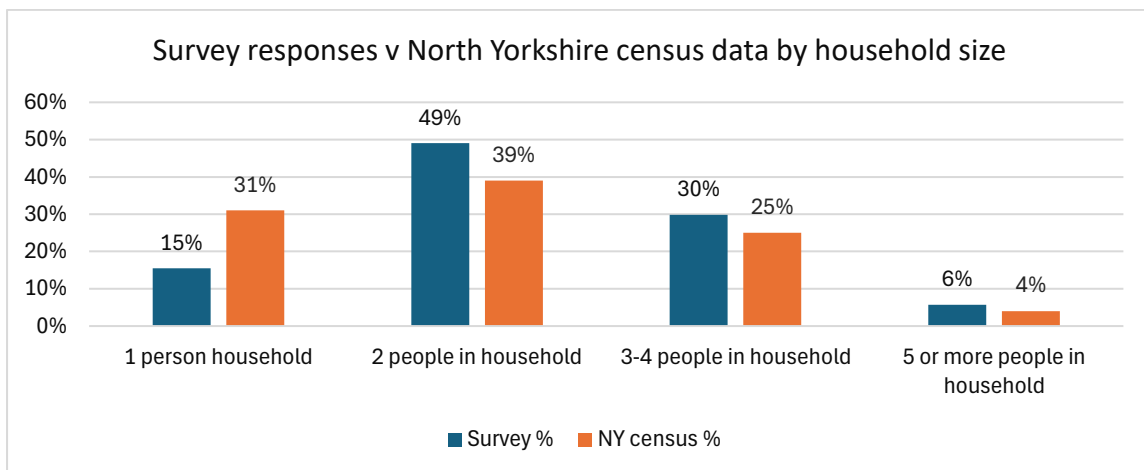
The chart below shows the distribution of survey responses by property type, compared to 2021 census data on types of properties in North Yorkshire.



The survey has a greater proportion of responses from people living in detached houses while people living in apartments or flats are underrepresented in the survey. People living in bungalows are excluded from the chart because bungalows can be detached or semi-detached.

### Household size

The chart below the distribution of survey responses by household size, compared to 2021 census data on the 274,400 households in North Yorkshire. People in two-person households are overrepresented in the survey, while those in single-person households are underrepresented.



### Employment status

People were also asked their employment status and could choose more than one option. Of those answering the question, 42% are retired, which reflects the age group of those responding. More than (54%) of the respondents are working in one way or another: 32% are working full time, 14% part time, 7% are self-employed and 1% have zero-hour contracts.

## 5.0 What happens next?

The feedback from the Let's Talk Rubbish survey will be used to inform future recycling collection services.

North Yorkshire Council's members will be asked to approve plans to introduce two wheellie bins for recycling for most residents across the county at the full council meeting in February 2025.

## Contact us

Online: [northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us](https://northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us)

By telephone: **0300 131 2 131** and say 'Let's Talk' when prompted

North Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD

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[northyorks.gov.uk/accessibility](https://northyorks.gov.uk/accessibility)