

An observational study of recycling participation and habits at the *Recycling Drop-Off Site* in Fayetteville, Arkansas

Robert Robbins
Department of Biology

THE PROBLEM

- Very little is known about who is actually recycling; what age, race and gender? Demographic studies help researchers and leaders alike gain a better insight into the population in question, this case, people who recycle.
- Landfills are unsustainable
- The city's curbside pickup is limited to only #1 & #2 plastics.
- People outside city limits have no recycling pickup
- Most apartments have no recycling

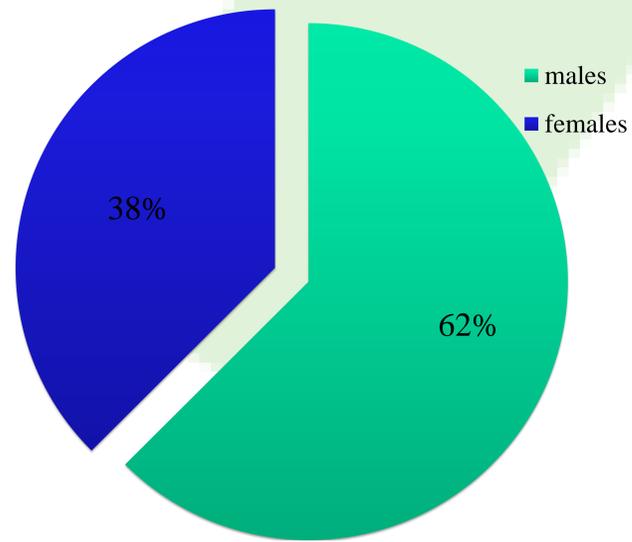
THE PROJECT

- This project was developed to gain insight into the people using Fayetteville's Recycle Drop off Center.
- The city's recycle center can handle a wide variety of material including plastic's #1-7.
 - This project looks at who actually goes out of their way to recycle items at the center and why.
 - The data used was gathered from voluntary, anonymous surveys handed out at randomly assigned times at the city's recycling drop off center.
 - The survey included age, gender, race, approximate distance traveled, how often they came to the center and why, also two questions were asked about their perceptions of recycling.

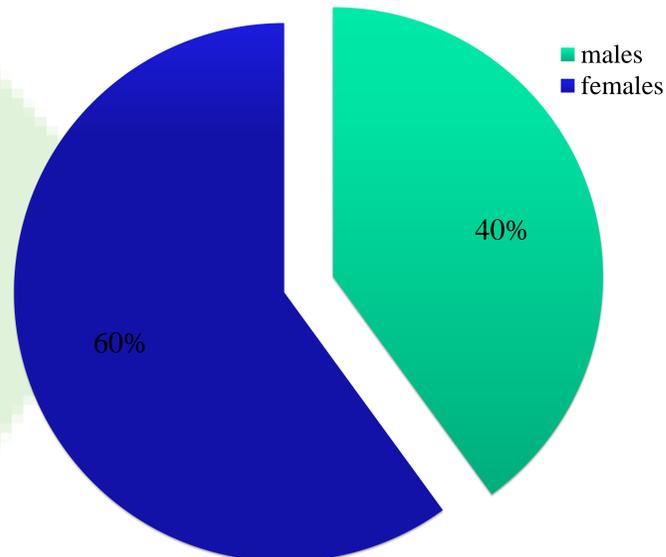
THE LIMITS

- Small sample size allotted
- Only 45 participants were analyzed for the data.
- Participants were above the age of 18

Gender of Participants Recycling



Who Do You Think Recycles More?



*Demonstrates that 60% of participants believe that women recycle more.

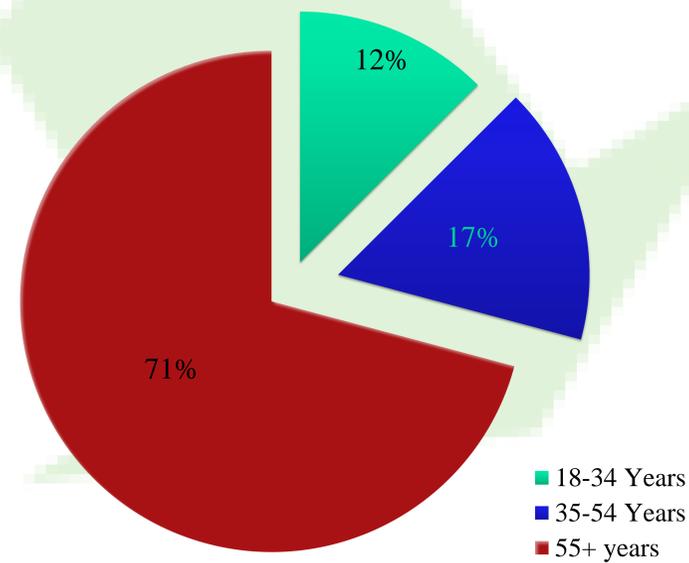
THE OUTCOME

From the data gathered, the majority gender turned out to be male.

The results could be explained by the fact that men could account for all the recycling from an individual household.

The ratio of males to females was almost exactly opposite of people's views, and shows there is inconsistency between people's perceptions and reality, so a possible disconnect of awareness programs may be losing target audiences.

Age of Participants Using Recycling Center



Recycling Drop Off Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas



THE OUTCOME

- 71% of the people recycling were older than 55 and very few people were under the age 34.
- An improvement of recycling in younger ages is probably needed. This project can help future researchers, and activists learn about Fayetteville's recycling habits and possible improvement strategies.

SUSTAINABILITY

- People are the problem and the solution. The overconsumption of goods is the main problem that needs to be addressed to limit the amount of waste bulking up landfills.
- The best and easiest solution is to reduce consumption habits, buy in bulk and buy with sustainable packaging.
- Recycling mitigates the large amount of waste, post production. The more raw materials that can be reused the better.
- Recycling helps limit toxin escape into the land, water and air
- Limits unnecessary harvesting of "virgin" materials.
- Human actions are drastically affected by the society we live in. By understanding social interactions and the dynamics of a population, we can address issues towards a *specific* population to achieve best results.
- Managing and using recycled materials takes cooperation from everyone from the producers of materials, to those recycling the waste. Recycling rates are on the rise and with the right knowledge we can increase it to a more sustainable rate.

THE STORY

Throughout the course of this project I learned as much about people's recycling habits as I did about people. The lack of college students recycling at the drop off center is something that opened my eyes to the lack of awareness and possible action from college age students.

There needs to be more awareness of recycling all things that are recyclable, not just the items that are the most convenient.