



# Survey Report on Packaging Waste in NZ



**By Angus Ho**  
**Wanaka Wastebusters**  
November 2010



## A. Background:

Packaging waste is one of the most common types of solid waste encountered by New Zealanders in their daily lives. Many people find it hard to make good choices about which packaging products to choose. Wanaka Wastebusters (WW) is a community enterprise that works to reduce, reuse and recycle waste. WW is running this project with the goal of 'Demystifying Packaging Choices'.

This project has received financial support from the Waste Minimisation Fund, which is administered by the Ministry for the Environment.

The overall goal is to raise the general public's awareness about the environmental issues arising from the use of disposable packaging, and to help people to choose the best forms of packaging so they can reduce, reuse and recycle packaging waste.

Part of this project involves working with 5 different communities to conduct a survey that establishes a baseline understanding of people's knowledge and awareness about sustainable packaging. The survey is the first step, the second step is a web resource to support people in making better choices, the third step is a road show to raise awareness in 5 communities, the last step is a web based competition showcasing best and worst examples of packaging. A second survey will be done at the end of the project to see whether there is any noticeable change in people's understanding or attitudes.

## B. Objectives of the survey:

- Establish a baseline understanding of attitudes and awareness about sustainable packaging.
- Determine the most important issues of concern for New Zealanders in reducing, reusing and recycling packaging waste.
- Determine the top myths and misunderstandings in relation to choosing sustainable packaging.

**C. Methodology:** Volunteers will conduct face to face surveys in the town centre. In order to have a random sample, every 3<sup>rd</sup> person that goes past, who is over 18 years old will be invited to participate in the survey. The data from each person will be recorded by hand on the form provided as the questions are answered.

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2010

**Sample size:** 1000 total

**Sample Communities and sample size:** Dunedin (250), Nelson (250), Grey Lynn, Auckland (200), Gore (150), Wanaka (150).

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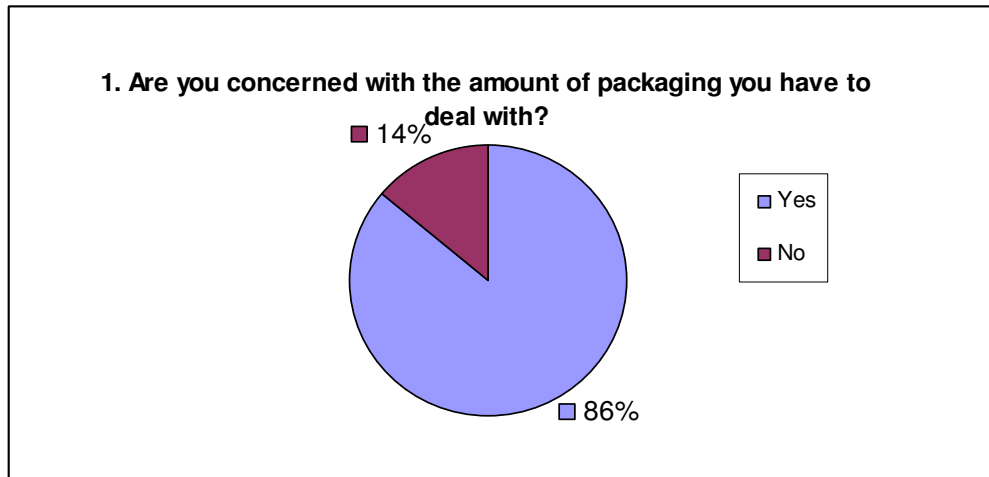
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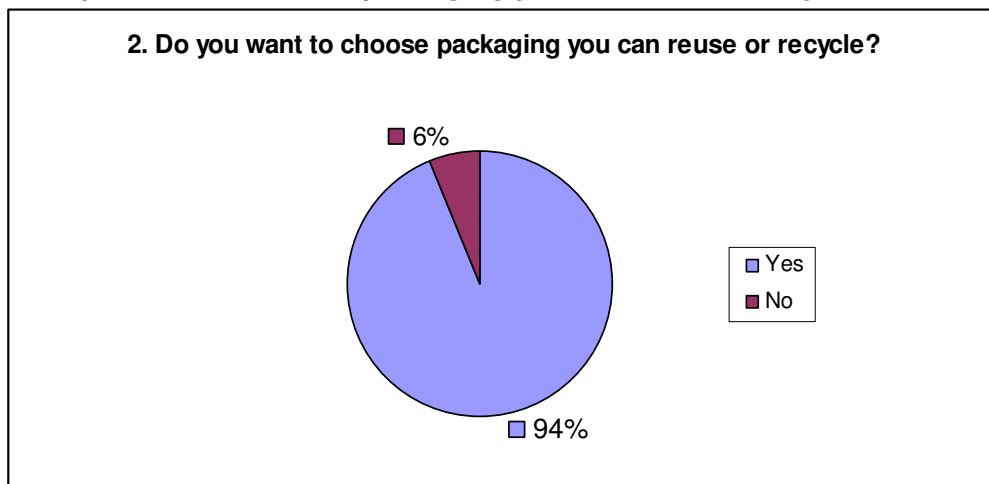
**E. Survey result:**

**1. Are you concerned with the amount of packaging you have to deal with?** Yes No

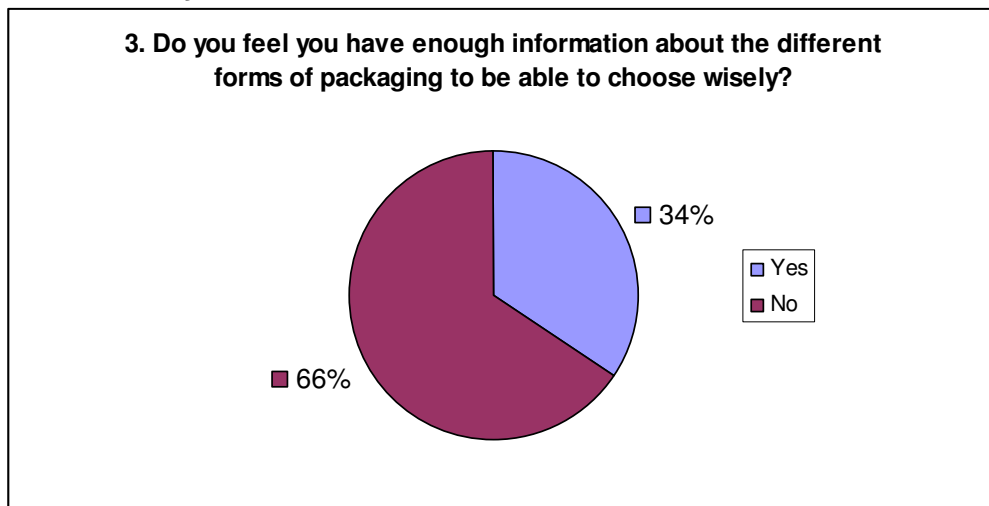


**2. Do you want to choose packaging you can reuse or recycle?**

Yes No



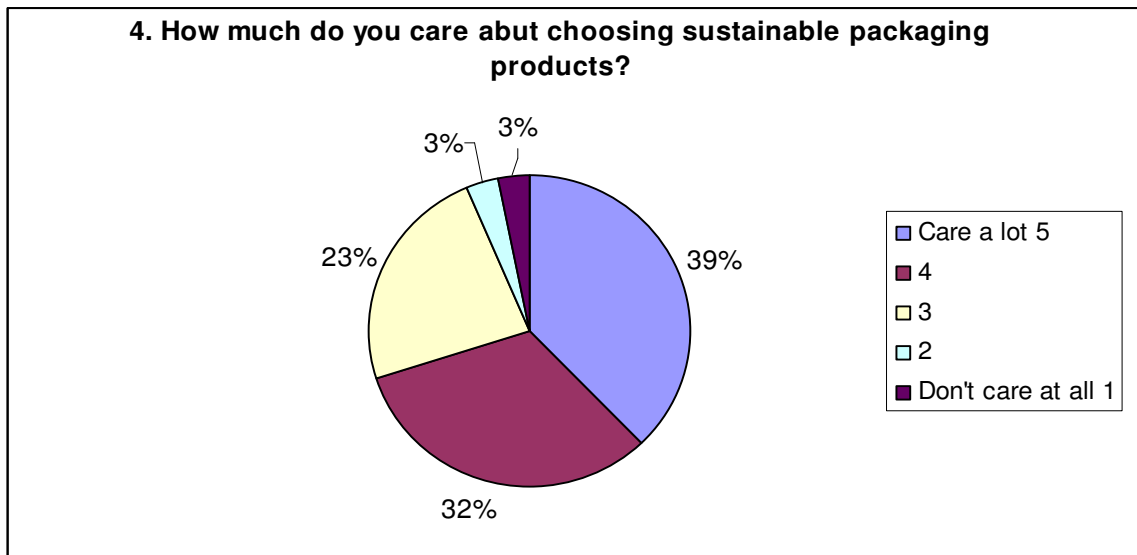
**3. Do you feel you have enough information about the different forms of packaging to be able to choose wisely?** Yes No





**4. How much do you care about choosing sustainable packaging products?**  
 (i.e. A product that makes it easy for you to reduce, reuse or recycle packaging waste)

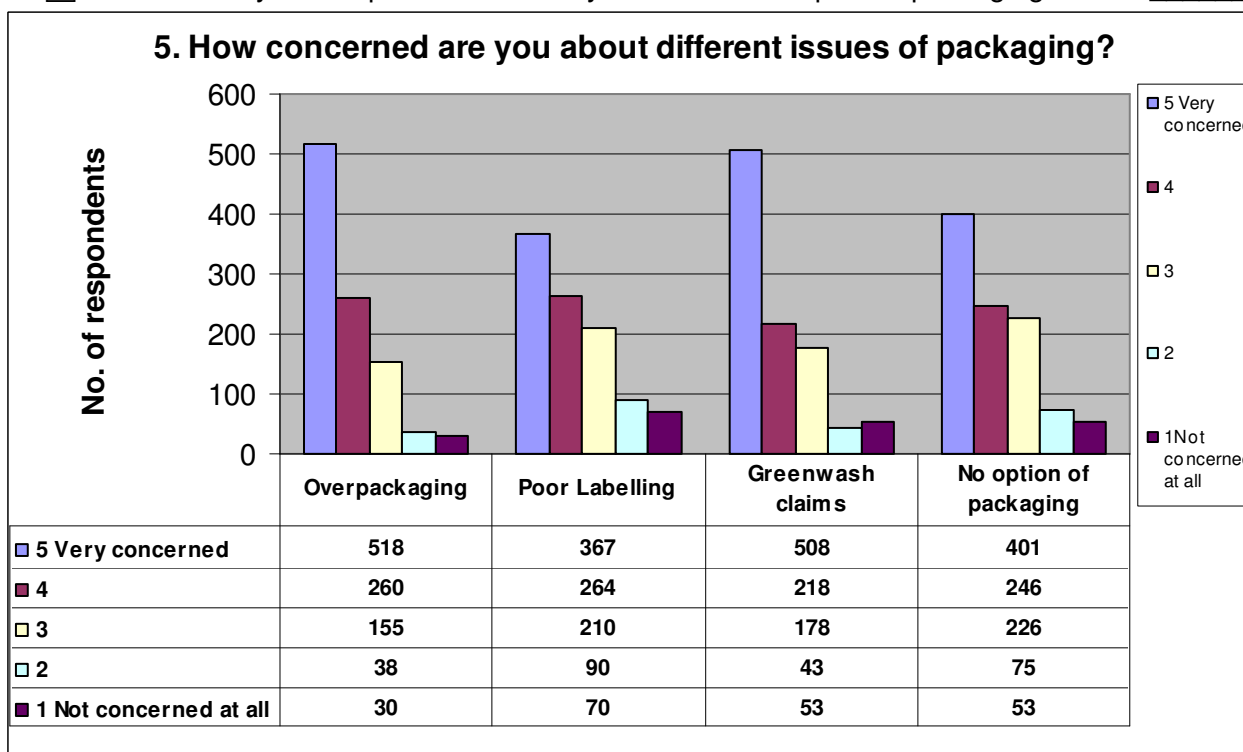
Sustainable packaging: Don't care at all 1 2 3 4 5 Care a lot



**5. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 = "not concerned at all" to 5 = "very concerned",**

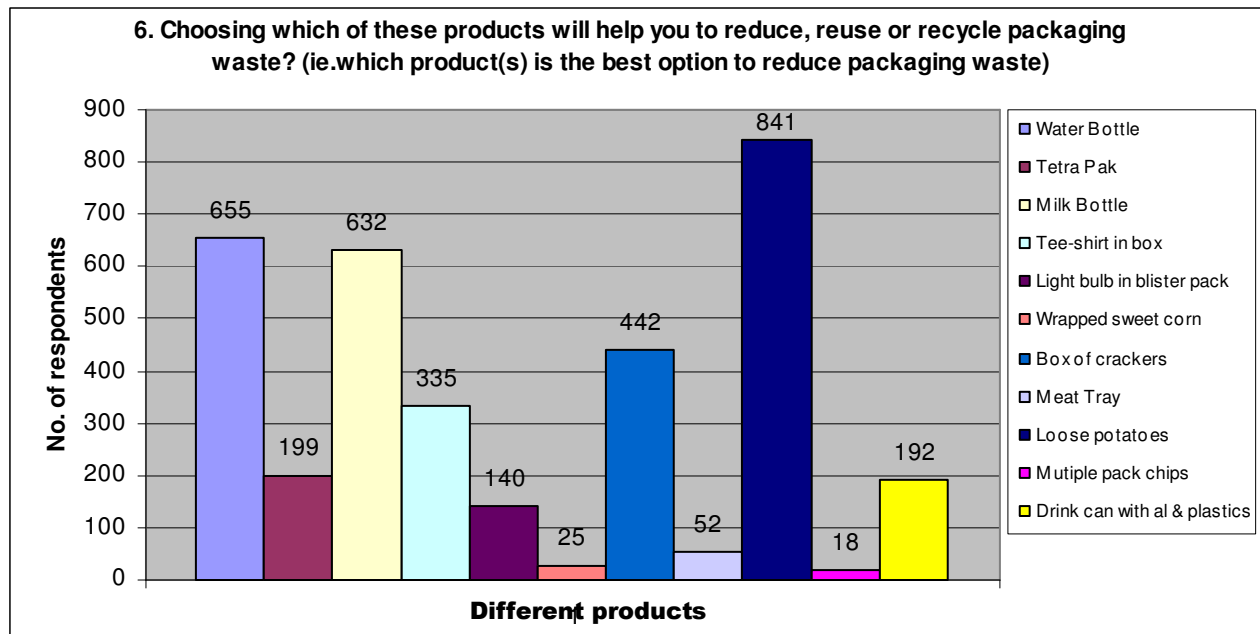
**How concerned are you about:**

- Over-packaging (e.g. individually wrapped items, more layers than necessary): 1 2 3 4 5
- Poor labelling (e.g. no recycling triangle or number): 1 2 3 4 5
- Green-wash claims about packaging (packaging that claims to be environmentally friendly when it is not): 1 2 3 4 5
- No option to choose packaging that can be reused or recycled for the product you want to buy: 1 2 3 4 5
- Are there any other specific concerns you have with respect to packaging? \_\_\_\_\_



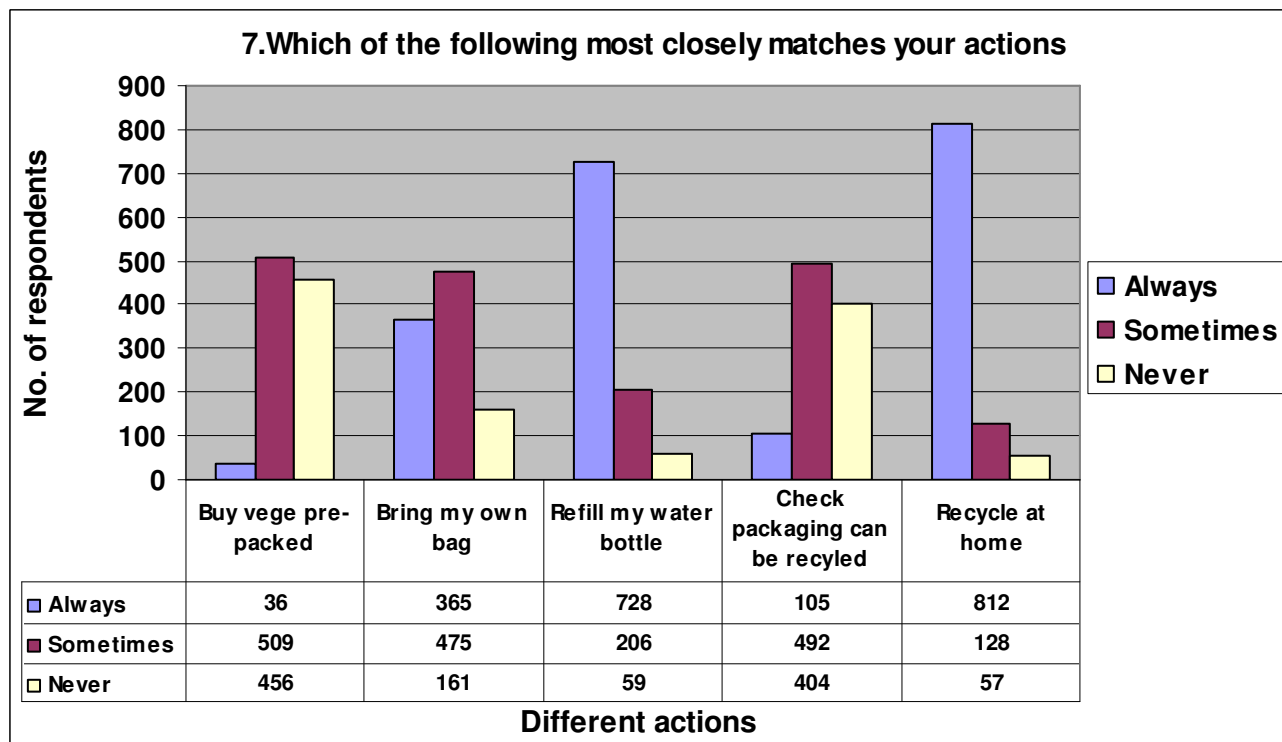


**6. Choosing which of these products will help you to reduce, reuse or recycle packaging waste?**  
(Refer to the picture provided)



**7. For each question, please indicate which of the following most closely matches your actions**

- Q7a. I buy fruit/veges pre-packed in plastic:  Always  Sometimes  Never
- Q7b. When I go shopping I bring my own bag(s) or use a cardboard box:  Always  Sometimes  Never
- Q7c. I refill my water bottle, rather than buy a new one:  Always  Sometimes  Never
- Q7d. I check packaging can be recycled before I buy a product:  Always  Sometimes  Never
- Q7e. I recycle at home:  Always  Sometimes  Never





## F. Analysis

1. The large majority (86%) of respondents are concerned about the packaging they have to deal with. The amount of packaging waste in New Zealand is alarming, and there is a high level of concern amongst consumers.
2. A very high percentage (94%) of respondents want to choose packaging that can be reused or recycled. This indicates that a vast majority of New Zealanders are prepared to make an effort to recycle and reuse packaging waste.
3. Only 34% of respondents think they have enough information about different forms of packaging. Consumers are confused by poor labelling; new packaging forms which can't be recycled and a large assortment of packaging types, especially plastics.
4. When we ask people how much they care about choosing sustainable packaging products, the total percentage of "care a lot" and "quite care" is high at 71%.
5. In general, New Zealanders are very concerned about different packaging issues (over-packaging, poor labelling, green wash claims about packaging and no option of recyclable packaging for products). More than half (63%-78%) of respondents claim they are concerned by all of these issues.

The most serious issue is over-packaging, with 78% of respondents saying they are very concerned or concerned about over-packaging. Green-wash claims about packaging were the next issue of concern, with 73% of respondents being concerned or very concerned about green-wash claims.

New Zealanders are very concerned about over-packaging; they want to have products with less packaging waste. They don't like misleading packaging that falsely claims to be widely recyclable or degradable when it is not. PLA is an example of this type of packaging.

6. New Zealanders do not have clear picture about what is the best option of product to help reduce packaging waste. For example, only 65.5% respondents able to state the reusable waste bottle is a good option. While 19.2% and 14% of respondents misunderstand CFL light bulb in blister pack and soft drink can make up of aluminium and plastic is good respectively. The survey finds that people have a general misconception that recyclable is the best but they failed to think about if the packaging is necessary or not.
7. Question 7 revealed a strong commitment to recycling by householders, with 81% stating that they always recycled at home. This matches with the 94% who answered that they want to choose packaging which they can reuse or recycle. Recycling is an established part of daily life with 78% of New Zealanders having access to recycling at the kerbside.(1)

Despite the very high support for recycling, only 10% of respondents stated that they always check whether packaging can be recycled before purchasing a product; often this is because no other packaging option is available.



Most respondents always refilled their own water bottle rather than buying a new one. It seems that water bottles tend to be purchased as a one-off, emergency or travel situation rather than as regular behaviour.

Despite media attention and overseas trends only 36% of respondents say they always took their own bags or use a cardboard box for shopping. This reflects that the supermarkets have not done enough to reinforce this behaviour.

## **G: Conclusion and recommendations:**

The survey result shows that packaging waste is a very serious issue of concern for New Zealanders and that people are trying to reduce their packaging waste. However the large majority of respondent (66%) do not have not enough information to make these choices.

Given that the Government are not implementing mandatory product stewardship schemes the burden of packaging waste is left with the end consumer.

We suggest that the following action is required:

### **National Government**

- Investigate the introduction of a program like the European Packaging Directive's Green Dot compliance system which has been running successfully since 2004.

### **Producers and Manufacturers**

- Provide products with packaging that is consistent with the reduce reuse recycle hierarchy. This is minimal packaging that can be reused over and over again and can then be recycled.
- All packaging materials should be recyclable and clearly labelled as such.

### **Retailer and Consumers**

Use your power as a consumer and purchaser by:

- Choosing products with minimal, reusable and recyclable packaging.
- Sending an email or letter to manufacturers and producers to ask them to change their packaging to be minimal and recyclable.
- Keeping up the good work by recycling all that they can at home.

### **References**

- (1) The New Zealand Waste Strategy, Published October 2010 by Ministry for the Environment