25 June, 2024

**UK public need clarity on changes to recycling policy: the next Government should prioritise waste reform communications**

*New research - commissioned by Sonoco and undertaken by Opinium - has found that the majority of the U.K. public (73%) has little to no awareness of the Government's planned changes to national recycling policy.*

**UK Polling headlines:**

* Public awareness of upcoming changes to recycling policy is low: **73% have not heard of Simpler Recycling** and, of the 27% who had, most have a poor grasp of what the policy will entail.
* But consumers overwhelmingly want to do the right thing: **80% of them check whether an item is recyclable** using either local recycling guidance or on-pack labels.
* Most people prefer clear on-pack labels or council leaflets (66%) rather than social media or TV campaigns (22%) to present information about recyclability. And **71% of them say they do what the packaging says** all or some of the time.

**Chesterfield, The UK** – The UK Government plans to introduce “Simpler Recycling” for households from 2026, with local authorities across England given a single list of materials that they must collect for recycling. However, polling shows that the public is unaware of the change and what it will mean for their local recycling collections. Of the 27% aware of the changes, most have a poor grasp of what the policy will entail.

Despite a lack of awareness about the wider policy, the research shows that consumers want to do the right thing – 80% of them check whether an item is recyclable using local recycling guidance or on-pack labels, and 71% say they do what the packaging tells them to do some or all of the time.

It was also found that most people prefer clear on-pack labels or council leaflets (66%) to present information about recyclability – rather than social media or TV campaigns (22%). And **71% of them say they do what the packaging says** all or some of the time.

As a global leader in sustainable packaging, Sonoco is supportive for government leaders to take actions to improve communication about upcoming change and ensure the policy is comprehensive across all recyclable materials.

**Skye Oudemans, Sustainability Manager at Sonoco, said:**

“It’s clear that the public want clear guidance on what they can and can’t recycle – and are happy to pay attention to this guidance so they can do the right thing. But these results show that there’s some work for the next Government to do to communicate the upcoming changes with the public. Meanwhile, there’s an opportunity in this General Election campaign to put popular waste and resources policy at the heart of party proposals: the UK’s recycling policy should be simple, but it should also be ambitious, and we need to collect and recycle as much material as possible.”

**Scott Byrne, Director of Global Sustainability Services at Sonoco, said:**

“While Defra has done a lot of work on the recycling policy itself, the public are still unaware of the upcoming changes. There’s an opportunity throughout the General Election campaign for parties to set out bold and clear waste and resources policy – and Sonoco is calling on all parties to be ambitious, work with industry, and help to deliver a recycling system that raises the UK’s recycling rates.”

**Paul Vanston, CEO of the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment (INCPEN), said:**

“When the Government sets out clear guidance about what consumers should do with their packaging, the public listen and do the right thing. With the General Election campaign ongoing, all parties now have an opportunity to set out an ambitious vision for the waste and resources policy agenda, and we hope that they’ll start to do that soon. Post-election, we call on whoever makes up the next government to provide clarity to both industry and the general public as soon as possible, so that we can start to make inroads into boosting recycling rates.”

Sonoco is a global leader of sustainable consumer packaging, industrial products and protective packaging for some of the best-known UK food and non-food products. Driving investment across the regions of the UK, Sonoco employs approximately 900 employees across ten sites, operating manufacturing and recycling plants that help to deliver growth and Sonoco’s aim of being a responsible producer with a full recycling solution.

**ENDS**

**About Sonoco**

With net sales of approximately $6.8 billion in 2023, the Company has approximately 23,000 employees working in more than 300 operations around the world, serving some of the world’s best-known brands. With our corporate purpose of Better Packaging. Better Life., Sonoco is committed to creating sustainable products and a better world for our customers, employees, and communities. Sonoco was named one of America’s Most Responsible Companies by Newsweek. For more information on the Company, visit our website at sonoco.com.

All figures are from research carried out by Opinium. Figures for Britons are based on a sample size of 2,051 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17th - 19th April 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted to be nationally and politically representative.

For more information contact: [rharry@adcomms.co.uk](mailto:rharry@adcomms.co.uk)Tel +44 (0)7747 235 616 or [SonocoCPE@sonoco.com](mailto:SonocoCPE@sonoco.com)   
[www.sonocoeurope.com](http://www.sonocoeurope.com/)