



national union of **students**

Student Opinion| Students, shopping and business behaviour

March 2018

SUMMARY

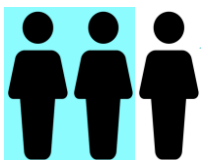
Student Opinion | Students, shopping and business behaviour

In January 2018, we asked students about their views on their shopping habits, how business behaves, ethical credentials, packaging and waste and attitudes towards accreditation marks. Here's what they told us...

The most important issues related to business behaviour are...



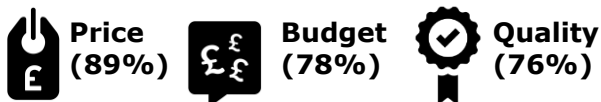
Q. How important are the following issues to you personally, in relation to company or business behaviour? [Base: c.1110]



Two thirds say their shopping decisions have been influenced by ethical or environmental standards in the last year.

Q. When, if at all, did you last make a buying decision that was influenced by the ethical or environmental standards of a retailer or a product? [Base: 1110]

Factors considered when making Purchases include...



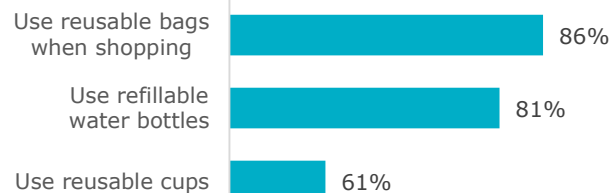
Q. In general what factors do you consider when making purchases? (Base :1153)

Brands associated with good ethical credentials...



Q. Which brands or products do you believe have good ethical and/or environmental credentials (Base: spontaneous mentions)

Actions taken to reduce packaging and waste...



Q. Do you do any of the following? [Base: 1124]

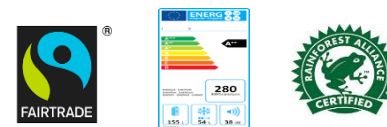
Support for policy designed to reduce waste...

79% would support a tax on suppliers or manufacturers based on non recyclable packaging used

77% would support a deposit and return scheme for one use bottles

Q. Which of the following options would you support or oppose the government introducing in the UK to reduce waste associated with packaging that is just used once? [Base: c.1120]

Most trusted accreditation marks...



84%

72%

71%

Q. To what extent do you trust the following accreditation marks to help you make decisions about products you buy? (Base: c.1120)]

NUS and students' unions should...

Provide more information about the products available in students' union shops, cafes and other retail or catering outlets

67%

Stock a wider range of products with positive environmental or ethical credentials

63%

Q. How, if at all, would you like to see NUS and your students' union support you to choose products that meet positive ethical and environmental standards? (Base:1096)

Image credits [clockwise]: Brands, From company websites, 'Quality', Gregor Cesnar; 'Budget', Mourad Mokrane; 'Price tag', Alex Podolsky; 'Man', Giovanni Tagliente. From thenounproject.com.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Objective, method and survey details

Objective: To understand student attitudes and opinions towards responsible business practices.

Method: This report presents the findings for an online survey research carried out in January 2018.

A total of **1153 responses** were recieved.

Survey details: A prize draw of **£100** was offered to encourage responses.

The survey was advertised via the NUS Extra student database.

The survey **took approximately 10 minutes** to complete.

THE RESPONDENTS

The respondents

LEVEL OF STUDY

Higher Education



Further Education



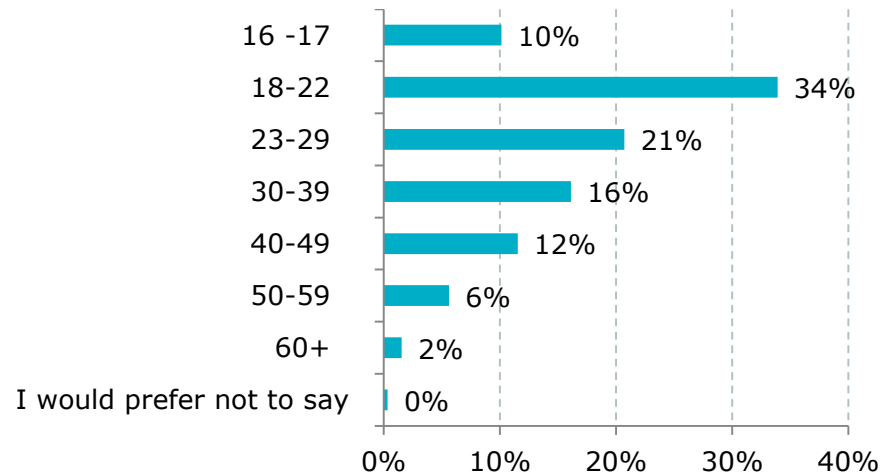
Apprenticeship



Other



AGE



GENDER IDENTITY

57%

Woman

42%

Man

0.7%

Other/In
another
way

0.7%

Prefer not
to say

NATIONALITY



85%
UK



6%
EU

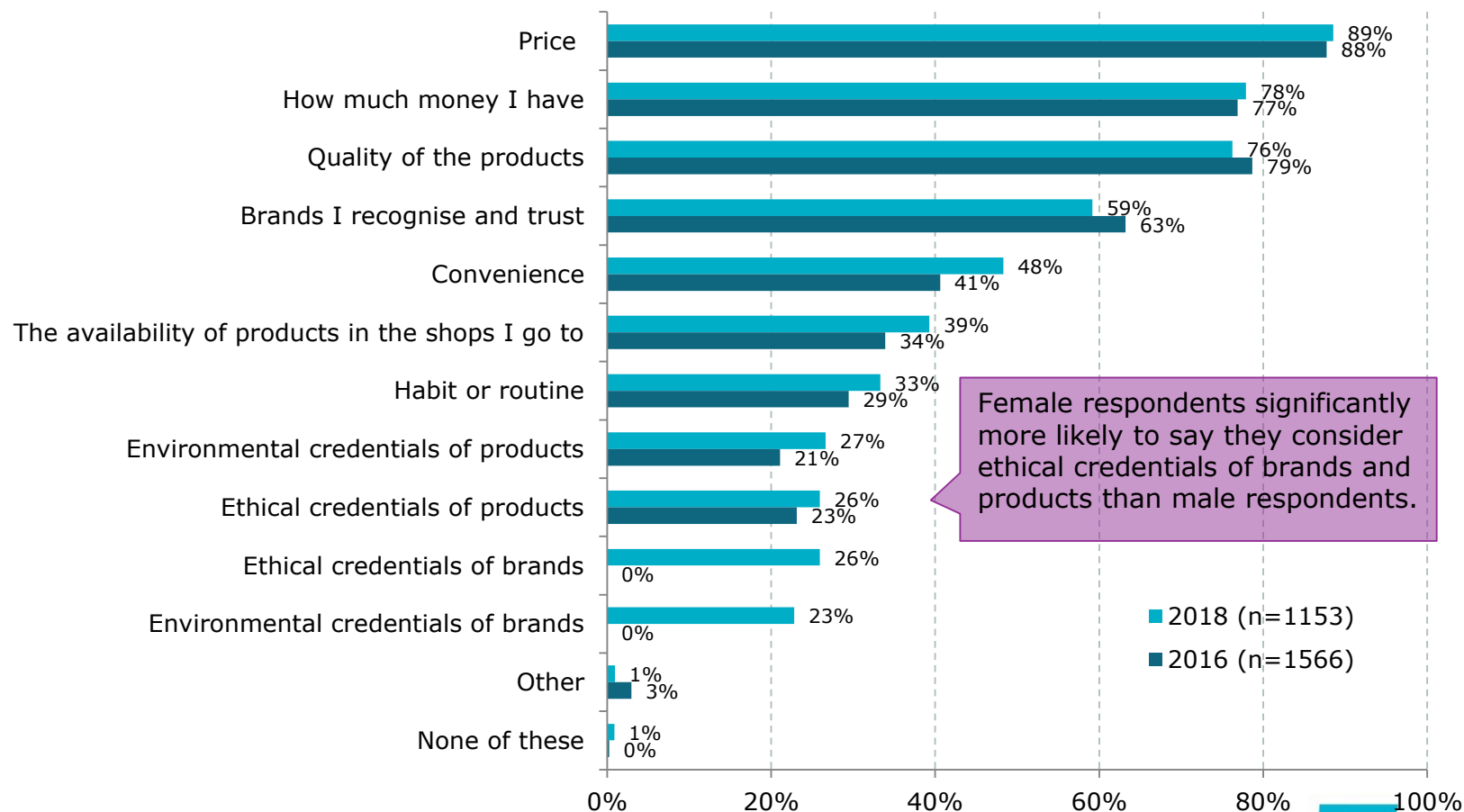


7%
NON-EU

1.6% Prefer not to say

SHOPPING HABITS AND BUSINESS BEHAVIOUR

Price, personal budget and quality of products are the three most influential factors considered by respondents when making purchases (89%, 78% and 76% respectively). 6 in 10 (59%) also consider brands they recognise and trust when making purchasing decisions.



Base: (in brackets).

B1. In general, what factors do you consider when making purchases?

When buying food and drink the most important ethical/environmental issues are the way goods are packaged, animal testing, Fairtrade and free range. In terms of buying alcohol packaging is also important as is whether or not the product is Fair Trade or locally produced.

Main themes – Food and drink (n=623)

- Packaging/use of plastics
- Animal testing / welfare
- Fairtrade
- Free range
- Organic
- Sustainability

"Packaging- if it's recyclable."

"Fairtrade, ethically sourced, organic."

"Ethical treatment of animals, Fairtrade."

"Animal rights and plastic wrapping."

"Packaging, can it be recycled."

"Fairtrade/organic."

"Is it made locally."

Main themes – Alcohol (n=226)

- Packaging
- Fairtrade
- Locally produced
- Organic

When buying stationery having recyclable and sustainable, environmentally friendly products is of most importance. When buying health and beauty products respondents look for products that have not been tested on animals. Recyclable goods and plastics are important when buying kitchen accessories.

Main themes – Stationery (n=282)

- Recyclable products
- Sustainability
- Environmentally friendly
- Packaging

"Amount of packaging - often there is a lot of waste."

"Environmentally friendly, recycled."

"Not tested on animals, organic and ethically sourced."

"Packaging and ingredients used."

Main themes – Health & Beauty (n=543)

- No animal testing
- Packaging
- Organic

Main themes – Kitchen accessories (n=206)

- Use of plastics
- Use of recyclable materials
- Environmentally friendly

"Recyclable packaging, energy-efficient."

"Avoid plastics where possible."

Base: (in brackets)

B3. What ethical or environmental issues are important to you and why, in relation to company/business behaviour or the products you buy?

Respondents look for technology goods that are recyclable and energy efficient, as well as being generally environmentally-friendly. Quality is also sought out, which could be seen as desire for longer-lasting products. When seeking to buy travel and holidays, the carbon footprint is noted as an important environmental issue.

Main themes – Technology (n=298)

- Recyclable products
- Environmentally friendly
- Energy efficient
- Quality

"Quality and reusability."

"Environmental Sustainability of parts and energy efficiency."

"Carbon emissions from transport."

"Environmental factors such as carbon footprint."

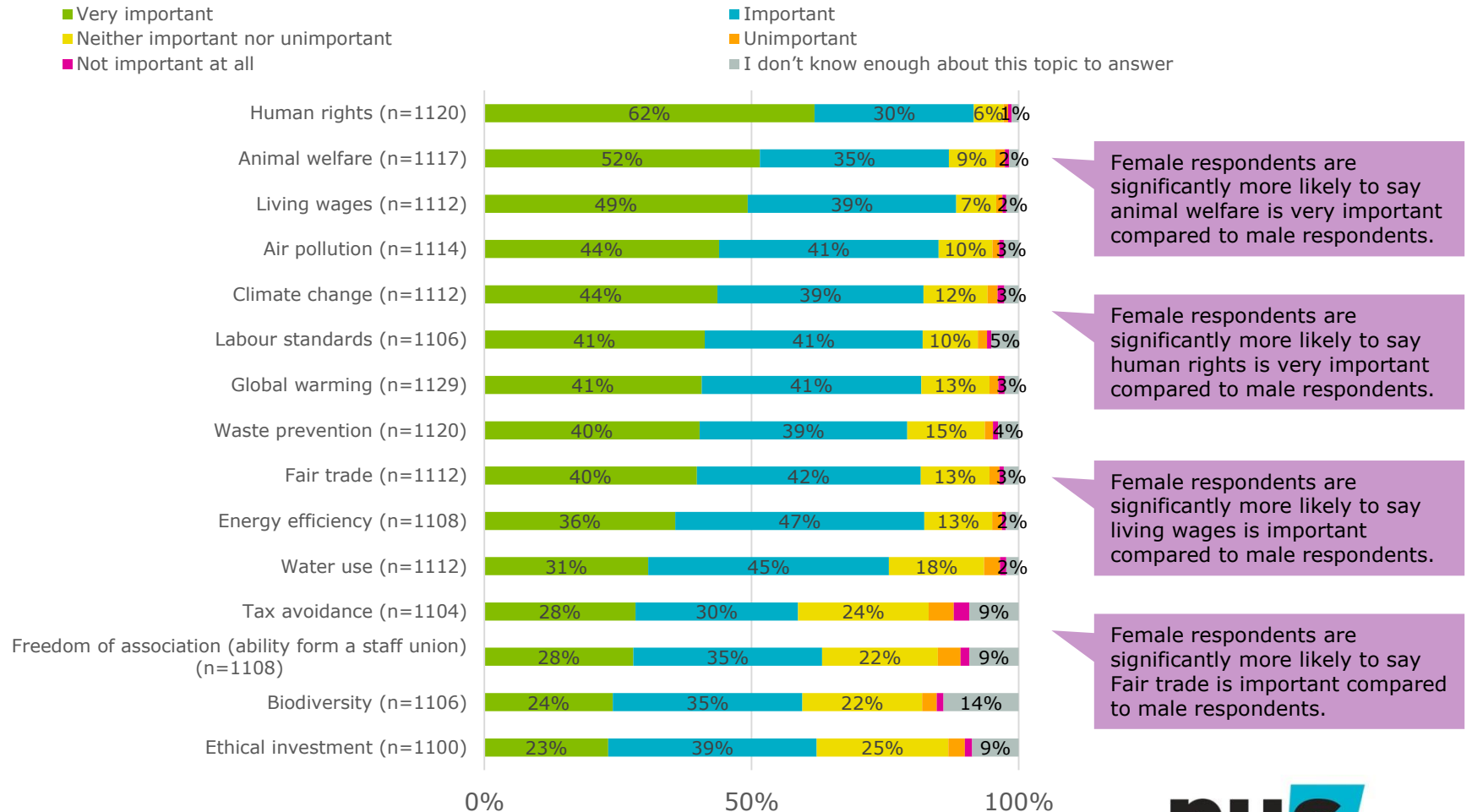
Main themes – Travel & Holidays (n=543)

- Environmental impacts
- Carbon footprint
- Sustainability

Base: (in brackets)

B3. What ethical or environmental issues are important to you and why, in relation to company/business behaviour or the products you buy?

Human rights (92%) and animal welfare (87%) are the most important issues in relation to company or business behaviour for respondents. Female respondents are significantly more likely to rate some aspects as important compared to their male counterparts.



Of those who said waste prevention was important to them, issues relating to recycling, use of excessive packaging, use of plastics and landfill were of key concern.

Main themes

- Need to recycle
- Use of excessive packaging
- Use of plastics
- Landfill issues
- Food waste

"Buy products with little packaging. Recycled packaging should be more standardised."

"Companies should try to reduce the use of non-recyclable packaging as much as possible."

"When items are packaged with materials that cannot be recycled, or packaging made from excess plastic. I prefer packaging made from glass or paper as it is easier to recycle. If I am purchasing an item and I think it is overly packaged / difficult to recycle, often I will not buy it."

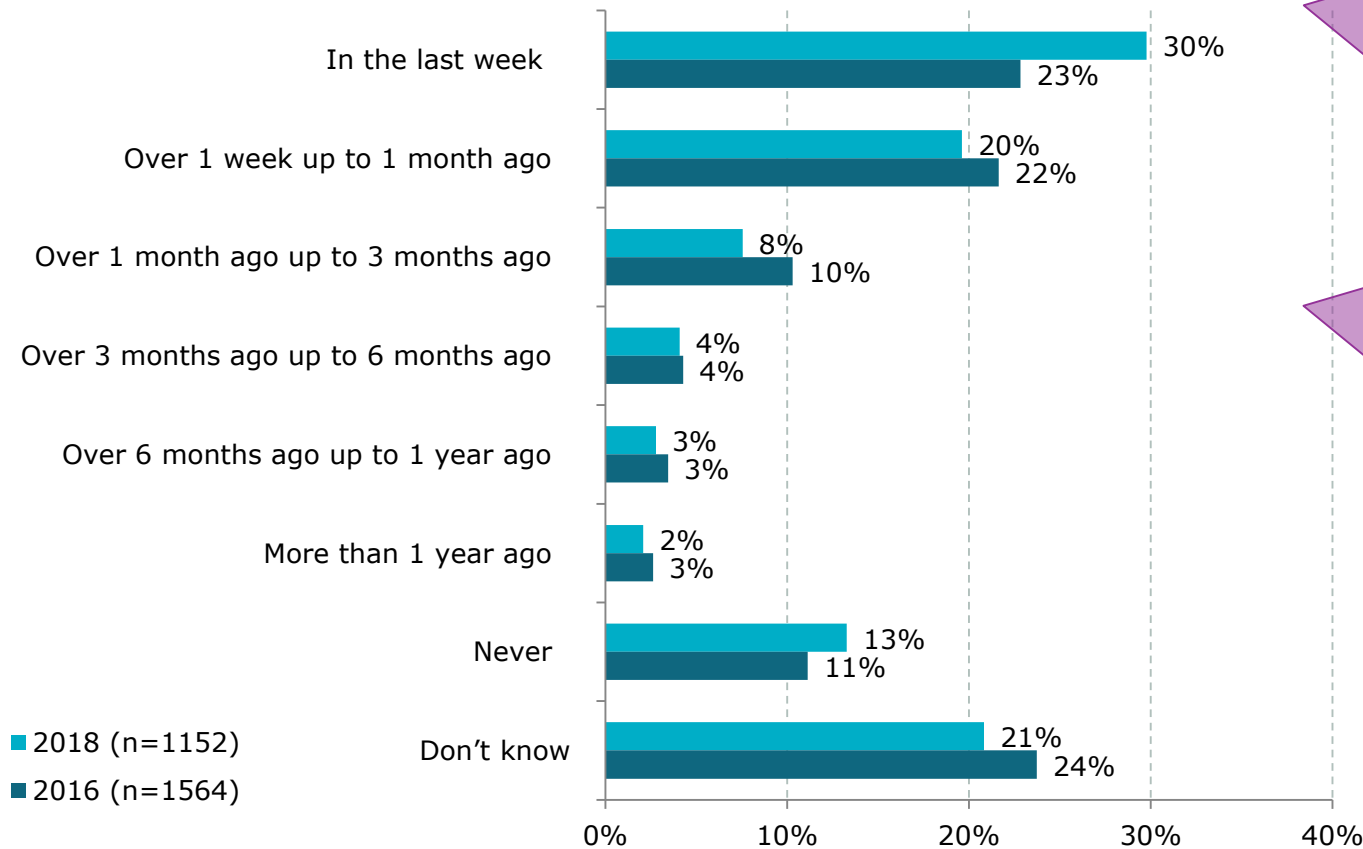
"Ensuring food is packaged in a way which minimises both packaging and food waste."

"I think everyone should recycle all materials they can to save so much going to landfill."

Base: 654 respondents. Balance: Those who said waste prevention was not important and no reply.

B5. You said waste prevention was important to you in relation to company or business behaviour. Please tell us which issues related to waste are important?

Almost a third (30%) of respondents report making a purchasing decision that was influenced by ethical or environmental standards in the last week, this is significantly higher than the 2016 survey. 1 in 5 (20%) report making decisions along the same line within a month.



2018 respondents are significantly more likely to say they have made a buying decision influenced by ethical or environmental standards within the last week, compared to 2016 respondents.

Female respondents are significantly more likely to say they have made a buying decision influenced by ethical or environmental standards within the last month, compared to male respondents.

Base: (in brackets)

B2. When, if at all, did you last make a buying decision that was influenced by the ethical or environmental standards of a retailer or a product?

When asked to name food and drink brands or products that they believe have good ethical and/or environmental credentials Fairtrade, The Co-Operative and local producers were spontaneously mentioned most frequently.

Main themes – Food & Drink (n=411)

- Fairtrade
- Local producers
- The Co-op

"Coop Fairtrade products, ethical and sustainable."

"Fairtrade products (especially Coop comes to mind) in paying farmers and manufacturers a living wage."

"Local producers and farmers in my area."

"Co-op label their vegan wines and invest ethically"

"Fair-trade wines from Europe."

"Stella Artois because each can I buy I am donating water to people in need."

Main themes – Alcohol (n=144)

- The Co-op
- Fairtrade
- Stella Artois

Base: (in brackets)

B5. Which brands or products do you believe have good ethical and/or environmental credentials, and what do you think is good about them?

Few respondents were able to mention specific stationery brands that they thought had good ethical credentials. In terms of health and beauty brands, The Body Shop, Lush and Superdrug were most often cited spontaneously as having such credentials.

Main themes – Stationery (n=129)

- There were few mentions of specific brands

"A lot of stationery now are being produced with recycled materials even though its just a small step its still a lot in the long run."

"I'm unaware of any unethical stationery production."

"BIC - consider recyclable materials."

"Body Shop and Lush as they are animal tested free. "

"Lush, Body Shop, Superdrug (own range with vegan products)."

"Superdrug own brand cosmetics and skin care are cruelty free."

Main themes – Health & Beauty (n=371)

- The Body Shop
- Lush
- Superdrug

Base: (in brackets)

B5. Which brands or products do you believe have good ethical and/or environmental credentials, and what do you think is good about them?

Only a few respondents were able to mention specific kitchen accessory or travel and holiday brands that they believed had good ethical or environmental credentials. In terms of technology, Apple was most frequently mentioned as a brand believed to have good credentials.

Main themes – Kitchen Accessories (n=114)

- There were few mentions of specific brands

"Not aware of specific brands with good credentials."

"Apple products, they have good sustainability programs."

"Apple, for example, is open about how they treat the environment with environmental reports."

Main themes – Technology (n=148)

- Apple received the most mentions

Main themes – Travel & Holidays (n=148)

- There were few mentions of specific brands

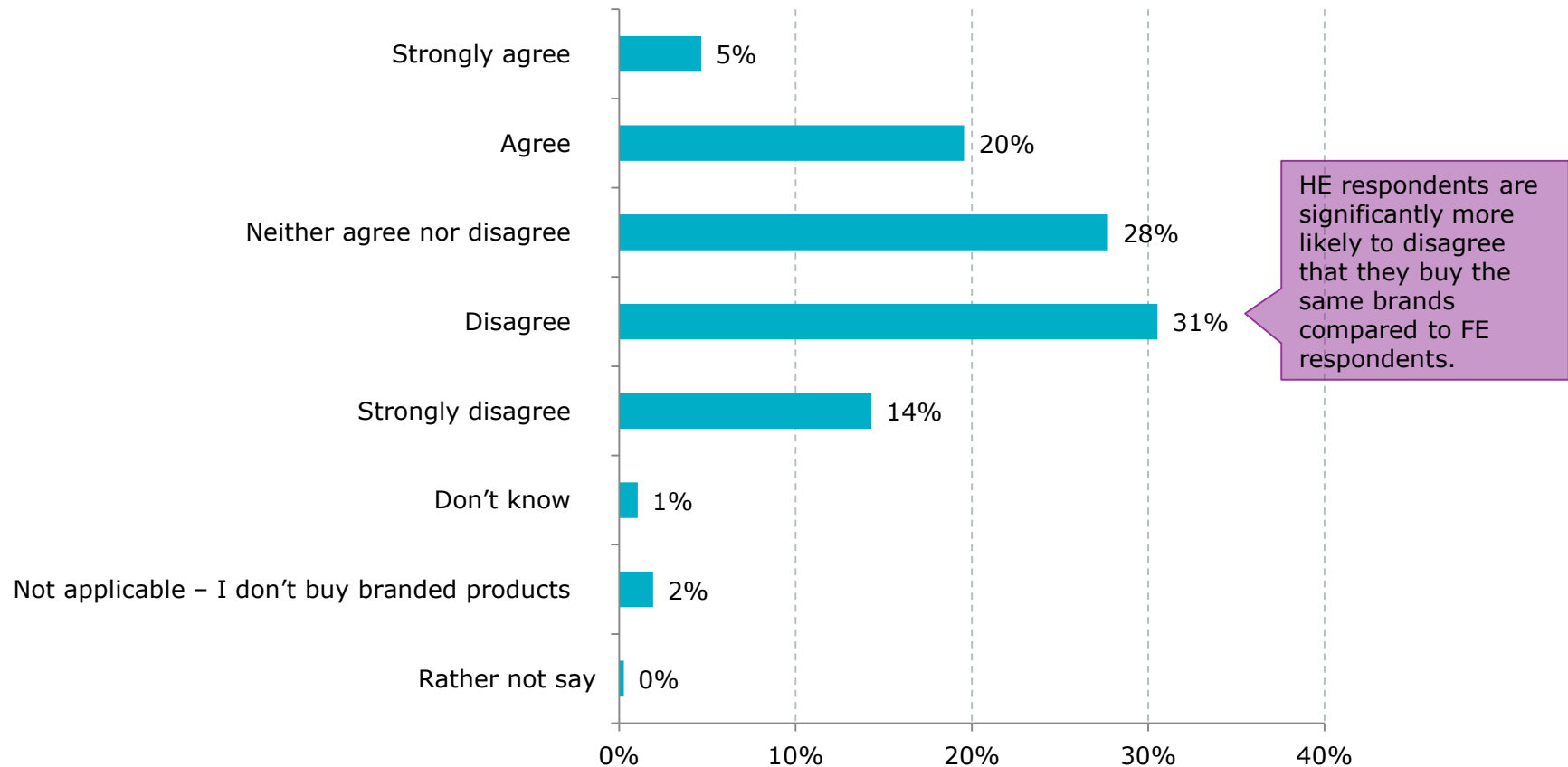
"Don't know. I don't travel much."

"I'm not aware of holiday companies that fit the criteria so tend to book holidays direct."

Base: (in brackets)

B5. Which brands or products do you believe have good ethical and/or environmental credentials, and what do you think is good about them?

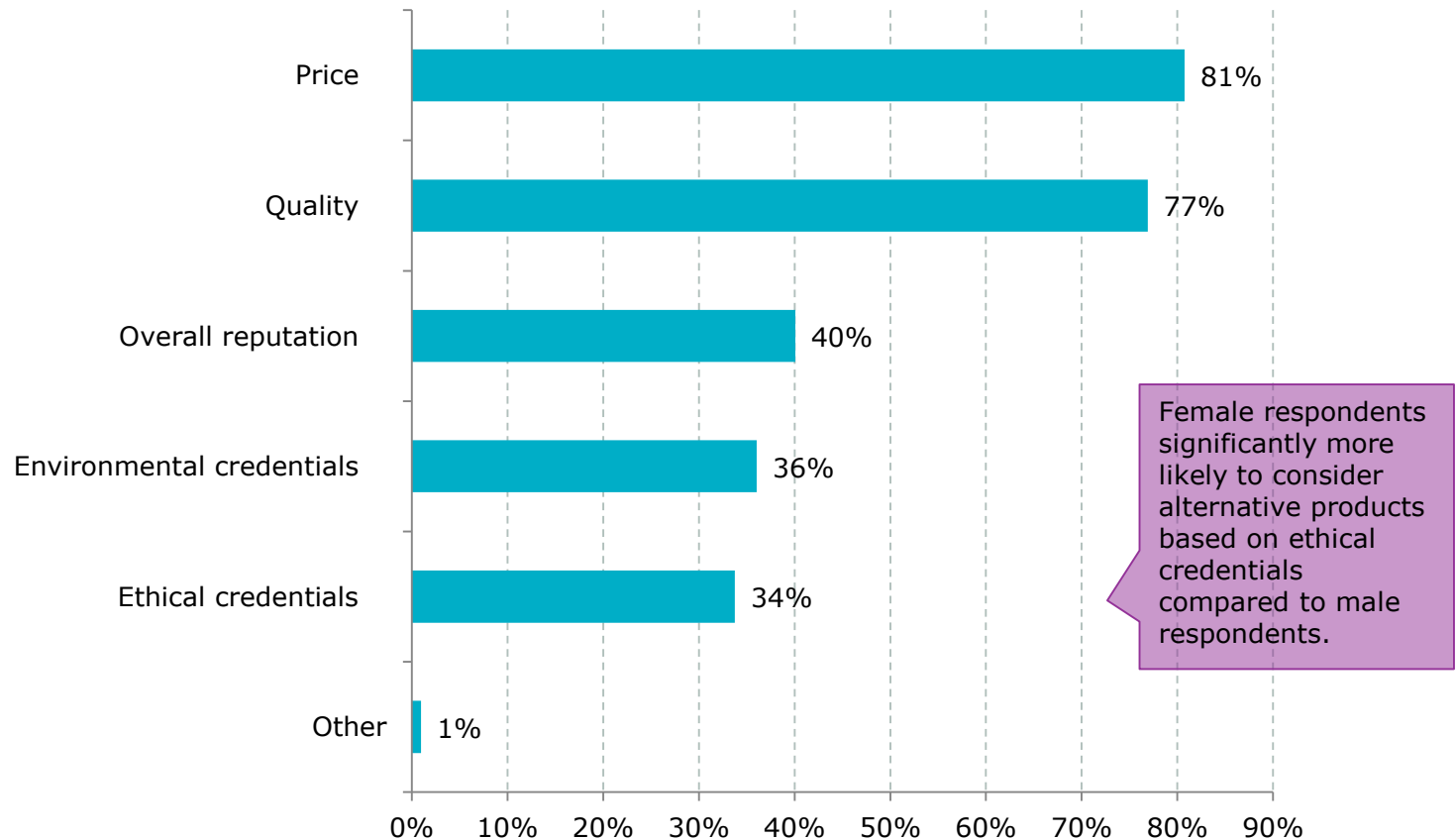
1 in 4 (25%) respondents agree that they always buy the same brands, regardless of price, quality, convenience or reputation. A similar proportion (28%) neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Almost half (45%) do not buy the same brands when buying products.



Base: 1140 respondents. Balance: no reply.

B6. Thinking about the products you buy, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I always buy the same brands, regardless of price, quality, convenience or reputation."

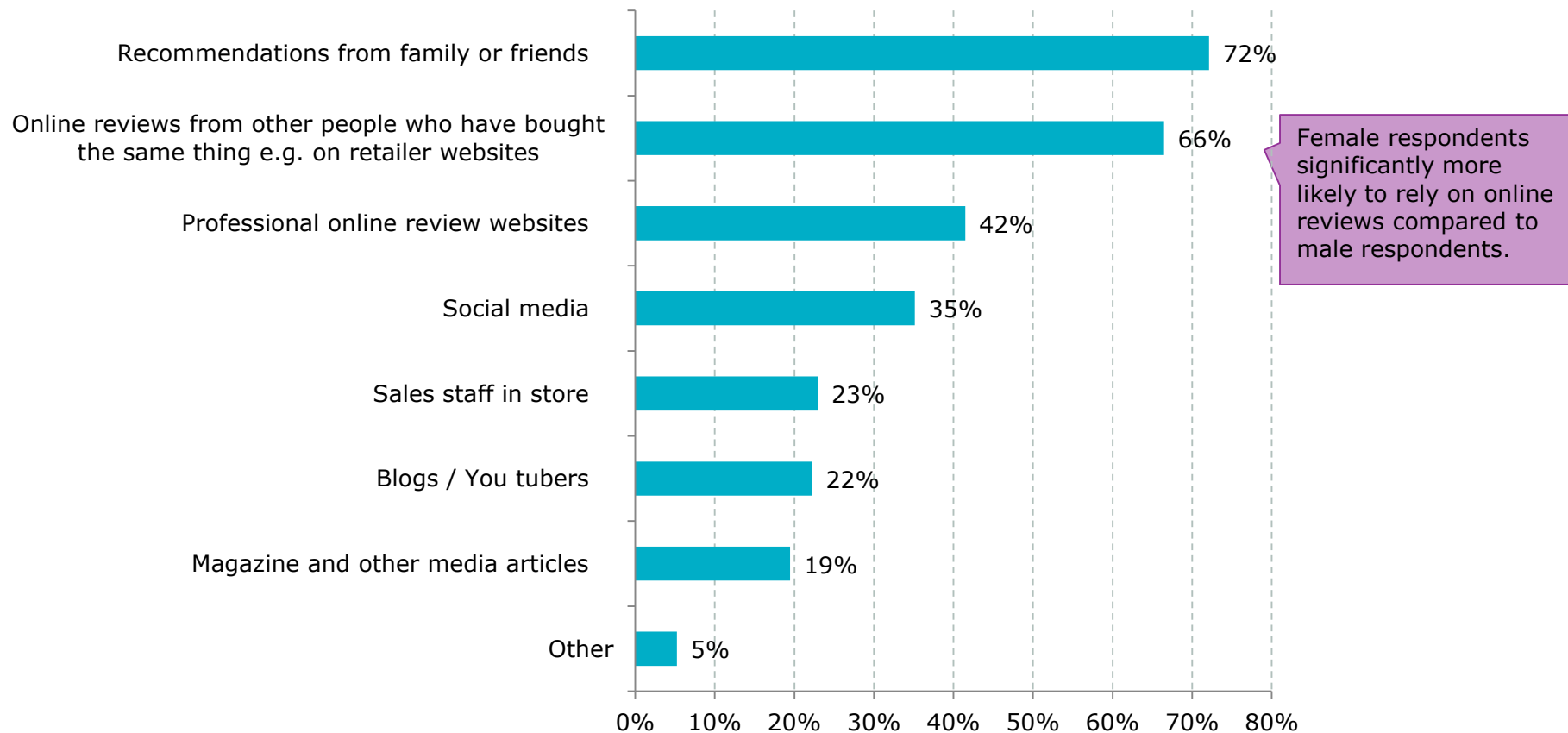
8 in 10 respondents say that price (81%) and quality (77%) are the main factors they would consider if they were to buy alternative products to their preferred brands.



Base: 1143 respondents. Balance: no reply.

B7. Still thinking about the products you buy, which of the following factors would make you consider alternatives to your preferred brands?

Recommendation from family or friends (72%) and online reviews (66%) are the main sources of information used to help them decide what brands and products they buy.



Base: 1130 respondents. Balance: no reply.

PACKAGING AND WASTE

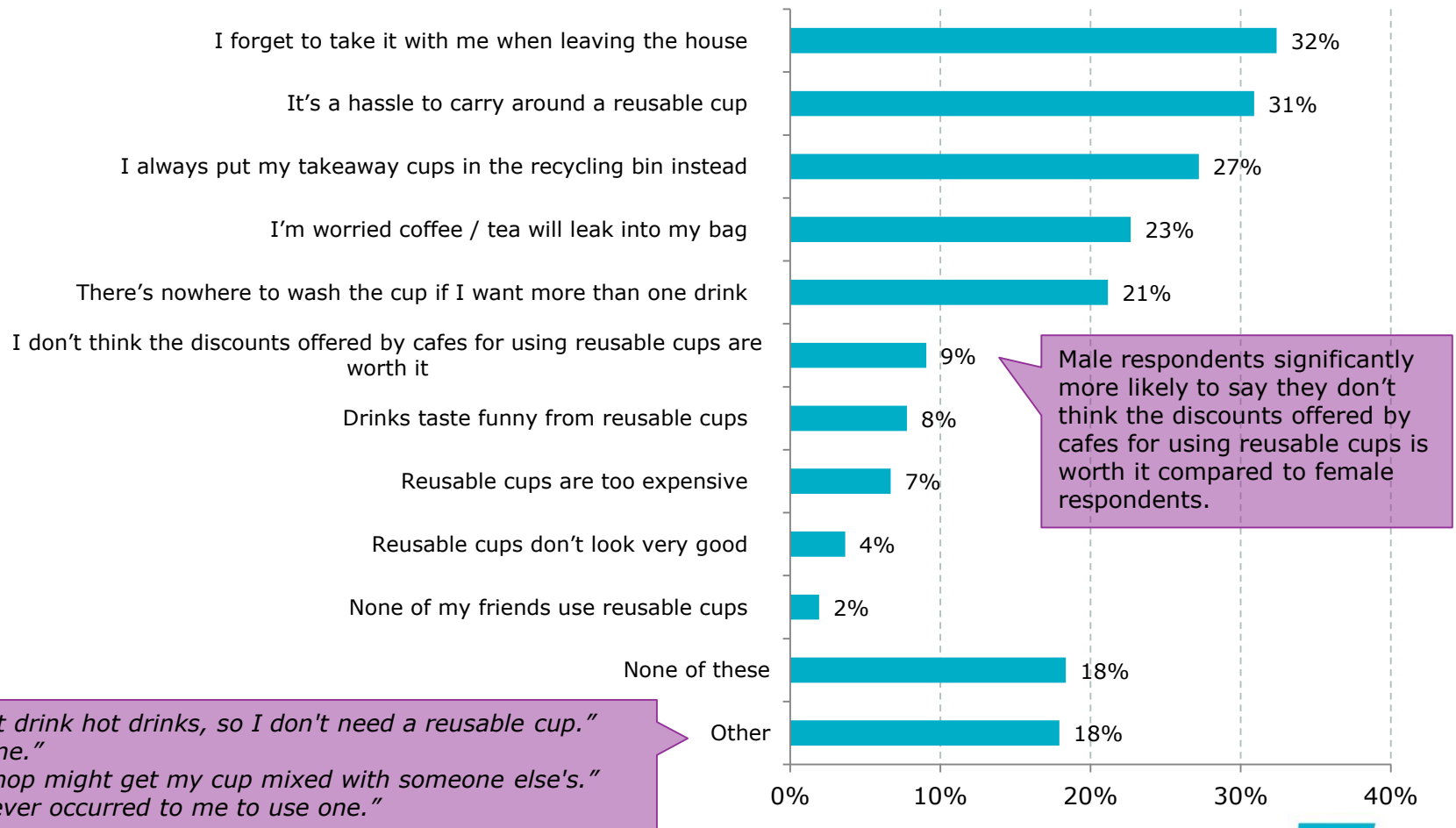
Over 8 in 10 respondents say they take re-usable bags with them when they go shopping (86%) or use refillable water bottles (81%). 6 in 10 (61%) claim to use reusable cups rather than disposable/takeaway ones.



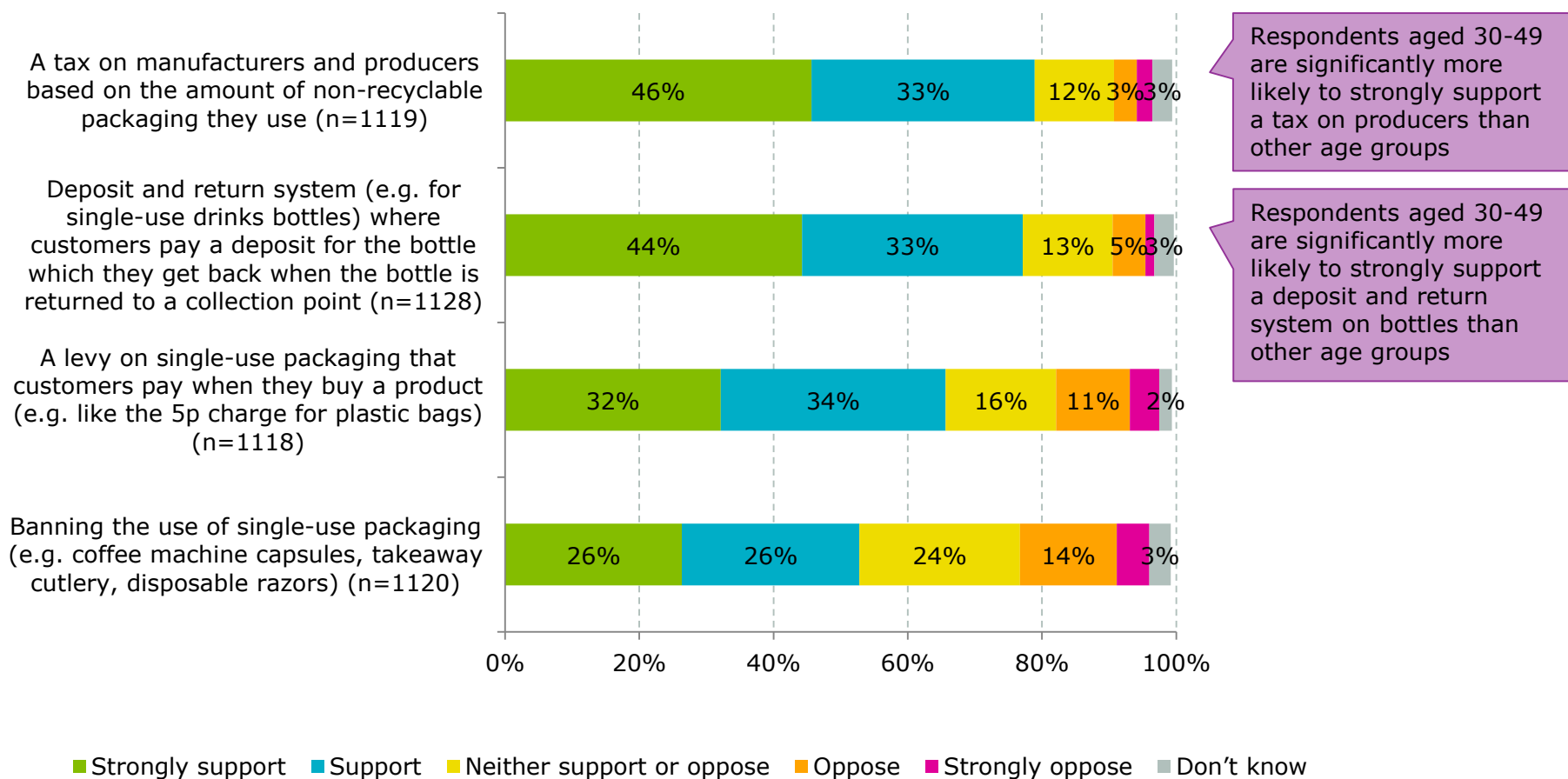
It's worth noting that high street coffee chains report sales using a reusable cup to be around 1-2%, and a study at four universities placed usage around 3% so the 61% reported use of reusable cups by respondents to this survey needs further investigation.

Base: 1124 respondents. Balance: no reply.

For those that don't use reusable cups, the main reasons given were that respondents forget to take them with them when they leave the house (32%) and they find it a hassle to carry them around (31%). 27% say they always recycle the cups reflecting a lack of knowledge around the capability of recycling systems to process this kind of waste.



Around 8 in 10 respondents (79%) support a tax on manufacturers and producers based on the amount of non-recyclable packaging they use. A similar proportion (77%) support a deposit and return system for returning bottles they buy. Bans on single-use packaging are supported by 50% of respondents.

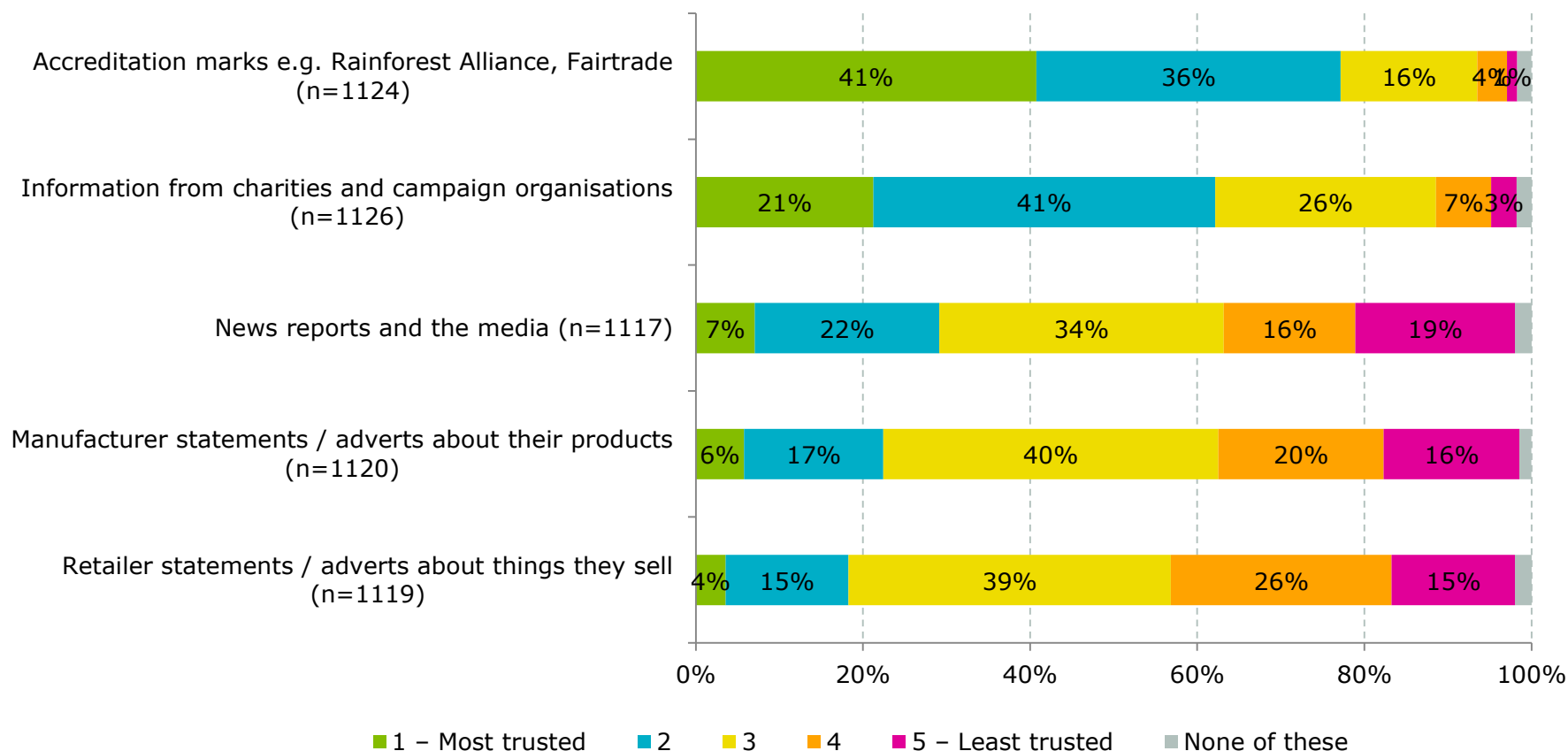


Base: (in brackets)

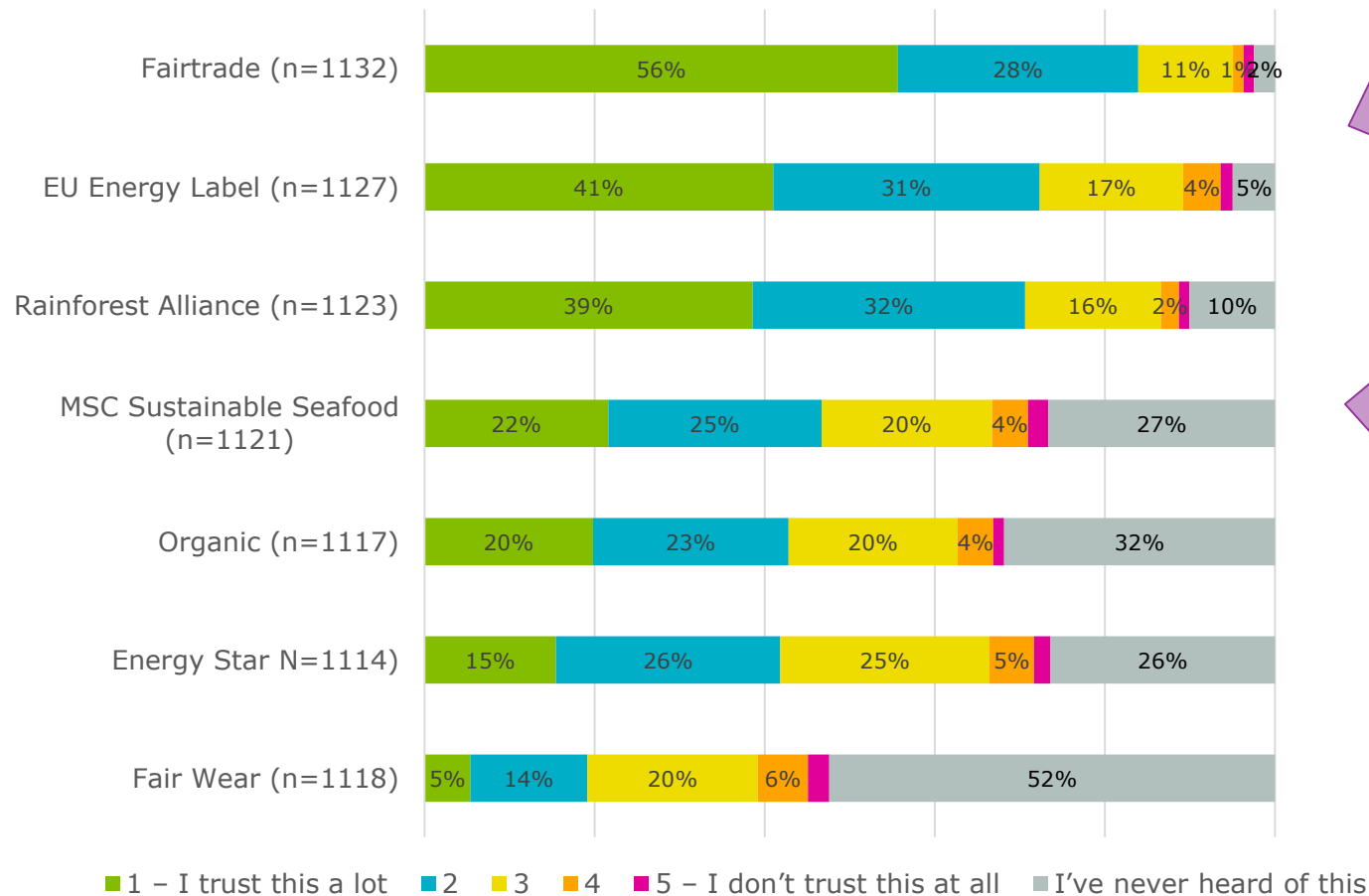
C3. Which of the following options would you support or oppose the government introducing in the UK to reduce waste associated with packaging that is just used once?

ACCREDITATION MARKS

Accreditation marks are the most trusted sources of information when buying products (77% rate them as the most, or second most, trusted sources). 2 in 3 (62%) respondents rate information from charities and campaign organisations as their first or second most trusted source.



The Fairtrade accreditation mark received the highest level of trust when deciding what products they buy (56% trust this a lot). The EU Energy Label (41%) and Rainforest Alliance (39%) are also highly trusted. Fair Wear is an accreditation mark not recognised by half of respondents (52%).



Respondents aged under 22 are significantly more likely to trust the Fairtrade accreditation mark compared to older respondents.

Over 40 yr old respondents are significantly more likely to trust the Organic mark than younger respondents

Base: (in brackets)

D2. To what extent do you trust the following accreditation marks to help you make decisions about products you buy?

The Fairtrade accreditation mark signifies fair pay/wages for farmers, fair prices for goods and goods that are ethical/sustainable to respondents. The Rainforest Alliance mark represents environmentally-friendly products and the protection of rainforests.



Main themes (n=679):

- Fair pay/wages for farmers
- Fair price for goods
- Ethical/sustainable goods



Main themes (n=529):

- Environmentally friendly
- Protection of rainforests
- Sustainable conservation

"Fair wages and support for growers."

"Fair pay for workers, less environmental and economical impact."

"That farmers and manufacturers are paid a fair price for their products and that all staff are treated well."

"Worker rights, fair pay, ethical jobs."

"Very trustworthy, sustainable and reputable, has shown clear benefits in people's lives."

"Environmentally friendly, protects rainforest."

"Working with organisations that support preservation of rainforest areas."

"Sustainably sourced to protect the rainforests."

"Sustainable use that doesn't affect the rainforests negatively."

"Rainforest has been taken into consideration - projects to help rainforest funded."

Respondents say Soil Association accreditation mark means no chemicals or pesticides are used and that goods that are organic. Energy Star represents efficient/low energy products that are sustainable and economic in their use of energy.



Main themes (n=359) :

- No chemicals or pesticides used
- Organic produce
- Healthy and responsible



Main themes (n=332) :

- Efficient/low energy
- Sustainable energy
- Economic

"Never seen this logo before I would suggest it has something to do with soil and how healthy and it is without using chemicals."

"Healthy, trusted, responsible."

"Organic foods without chemicals."

"No chemicals have been used in the process of growing the food."

"That the product is organic in that harsh chemicals are not used on products."

"Efficient and sustainable use of energy."

"Efficient, low energy, reduced carbon."

"Relates to economic energy use."

"Shows a good energy use product."

"Uses energy as economically as possible."

Base: (in brackets)

D3. We'd also like to know what accreditation marks mean to you.

The EU Energy label represents efficient use of energy and gives a clear message about energy saving according to respondents. Fair Wear is understood as meaning good working conditions for those working in the clothing industry and Fairtrade clothing.



Main themes (n=527):

- Efficient use of energy
- Clear about energy saving
- Trustworthy



Main themes (n=202):

- Good working conditions for those in clothing industry
- Fairtrade clothing

"Displays the power efficiency on a mass range of products, and gives people a clear idea about the impact of the products use."

"AAA rating is the best ... it's simple and easy to understand."*

"Efficient use of energy indicated."

"Entirely trustworthy, appropriate, informative, useful."

"Good working conditions for people who work in textiles, i.e. no sweatshops."

"Shows that the people employed to make clothing receive a fair wage."

"Fairtrade clothing, correct pay for farmers, improving life for those who work in labour."

The MSC Sustainable Seafood accreditation mark implies reasonable and responsible fishing to respondents.



Main themes (n=388):

- Reasonable, responsible fishing
- Avoid overfishing
- Sustainability

"Supposed to be more sustainably sourced fish."

"Resourcing seafood using ethical practices, e.g. not over-fishing, returning incorrectly sized seafood to the sea."

"protecting wildlife in the oceans. Responsible sourcing of food."

"Protection for our planet, protection for sea life, against over-fishing."

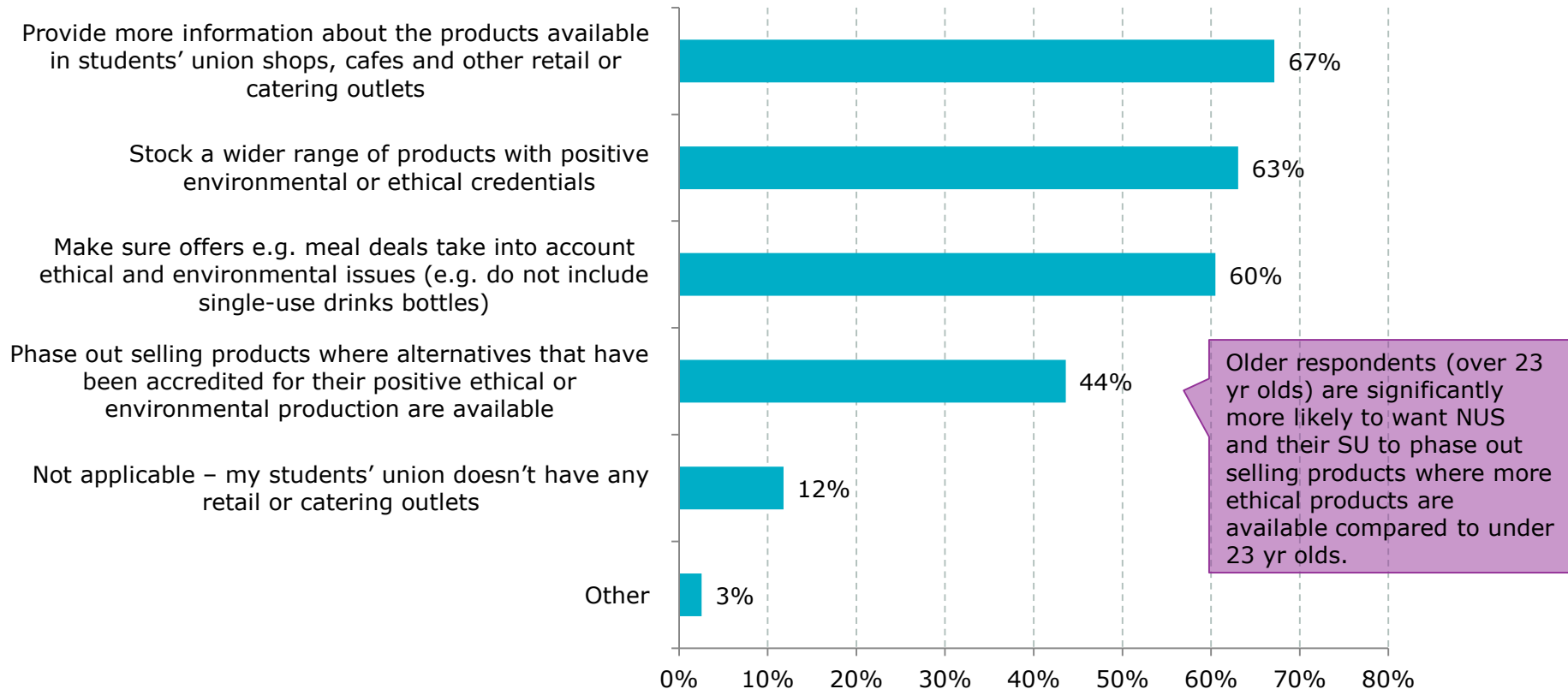
"Important to show that the seafood is sourced in a sustainable manner."

Base: (in brackets)

D3. We'd also like to know what accreditation marks mean to you.

NUS AND SU ACTION

2 in 3 respondents would like to see NUS and their students' union provide more information about the ethical and environmental standards of products available in retail outlets (67%) and for them to stock a wider range of products with positive environmental and ethical credentials (63%).



Base: 1096 respondents. Balance: no reply.

E1. How, if at all, would you like to see NUS and your students' union support you to choose products that meet positive ethical and environmental standards?

Respondents spontaneously said they would like to see NUS working better with companies and businesses who supply their students' union in terms of using less packaging, recycling more. They would also like to be better informed of the ethical credentials of suppliers.

Main themes

- Use less packaging
- Recycle more
- Keep students better informed
- Have more sustainable/ethical products available
- Reduce waste

"Advertise and discount more environmental and ethical products over products that do not fit the criteria. This will encourage more people to help out the environment and buy more goods."

"Consider the amount of un-necessary packaging, try to use fair-trade products, less plastic - as much recyclable alternatives as possible."

"Improve packaging and reduce waste."

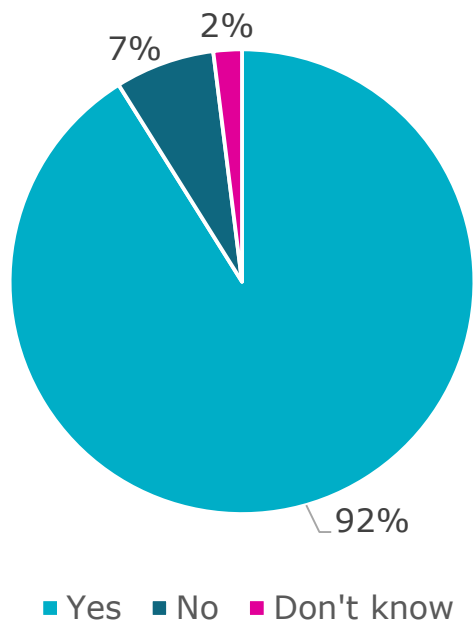
"Less packaging and re using materials e.g. coffee cups."

"NUS should promote the environmental and ethical actions that the companies they work with do...encouraging students to purchase through them. Encourage us to think about environ and ethical issues instead of just cost and how much money can be saved. Finances are important to students but students are also a selection of society who are keen to learn and take on new information. This is the time to send us the right messages."

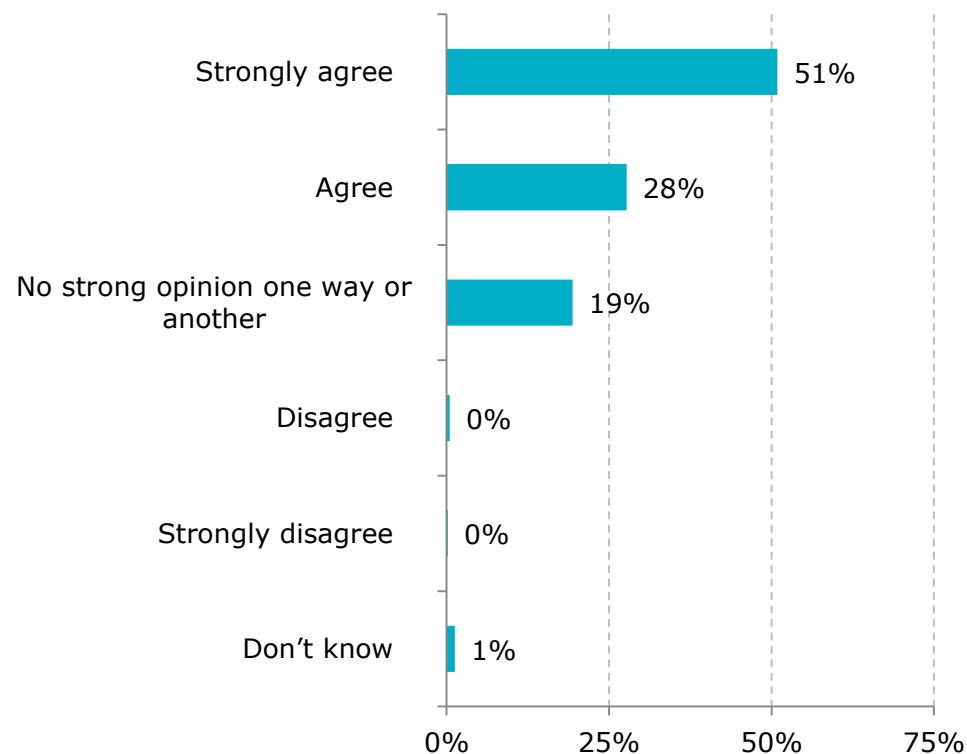
Base: 502 respondents. Balance: no reply.

E2. What ethical or environmental actions do you think NUS should work to improve with the companies and businesses who supply your students' union?

The majority (92%) of respondents have an NUS Extra card. Amongst cardholders, 8 in 10 (79%) agree that they would like to have more deals and discounts on their card with companies known for their ethical and environmental credentials.



"I'd like to have more deals and discounts with companies known for their ethical and environmental credentials through my NUS Extra card"



Base: 1123 respondents. Balance: no reply.

E3. Do you have an NUS Extra card?

Base: 1021 respondents. Balance: no NUS Extra card, no reply.

E4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Deals and discounts respondents would like to see with their NUS Extra card included Fairtrade products/companies, Lush and Body Shop products.

Main themes

- Fairtrade products/companies
- Lush
- Body Shop
- Local stores/suppliers

"Anything offering a 'greener' alternative. Move away from large, corporate companies."

"Fairtrade, Superdrug, The Body Shop, Lush."

"Body shop, Lush, Traidcraft, Tear Fund, Cocoa Alliance."

"Local family-owned shops rather than big chains."

"Ethical Superstore and similar retailers that sell eco friendly, fair trade products."

"Lush and the Body Shop I love and don't offer NUS discount!"

"Lush, the Body Shop, other stores that support the environment and do not test on animals."

Base: 403 respondents. Balance: no reply.

E5. You said you'd like to see more deals and discounts with companies known for their ethical and environmental credentials available through the NUS Extra card. Please let us know what suggestions you have for the kind of companies you'd like to see provide offers through NUS Extra.

For further information about this research, please contact:
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