

# Delaware Restaurant Association's Recycling Survey Analysis



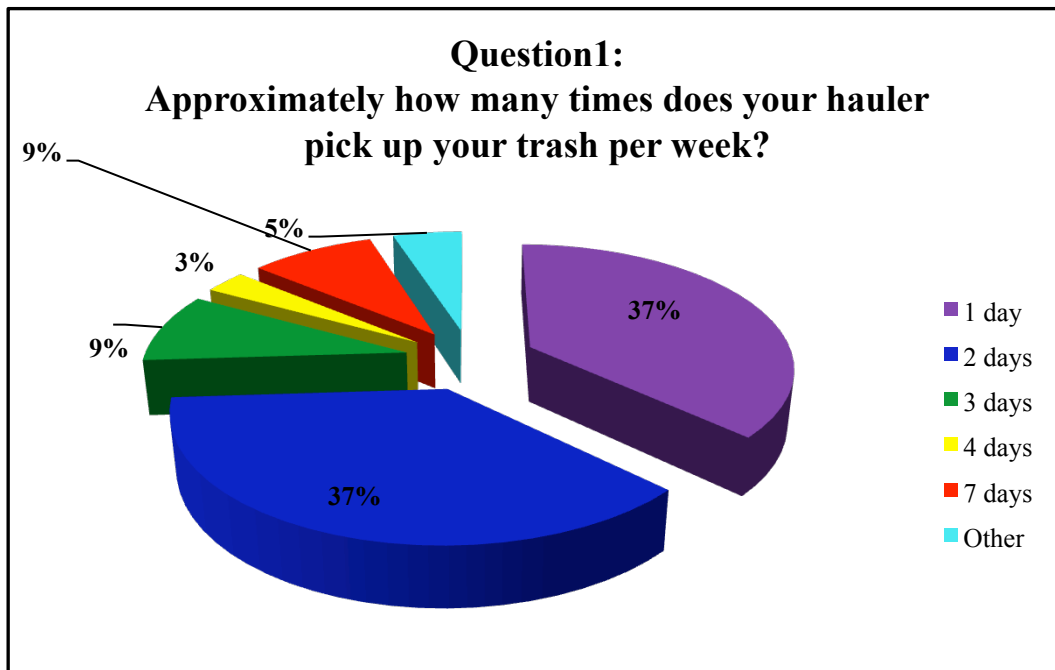
Adrienne L. Shaw

## **Introduction**

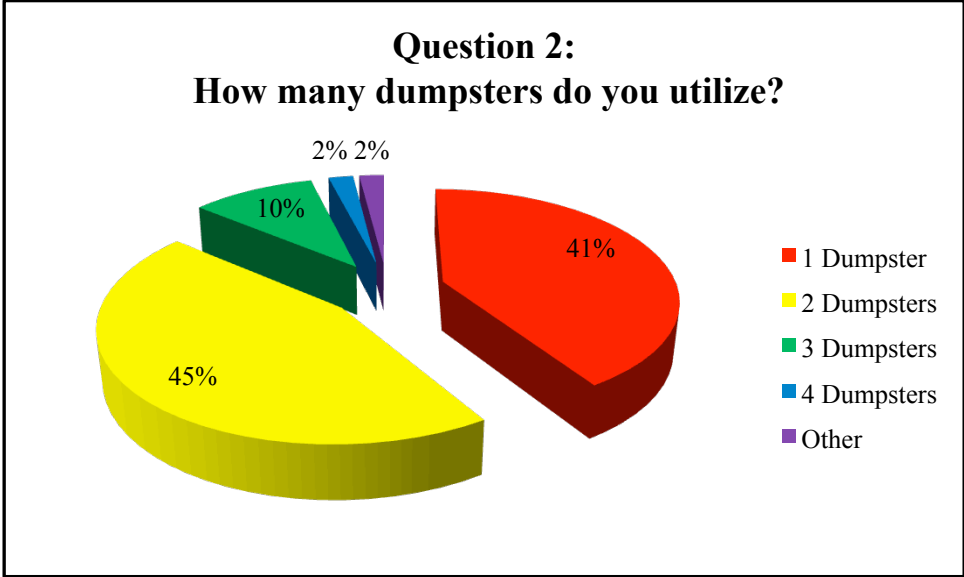
On June 8, 2010, Delaware passed Universal Recycling Legislation which Governor Markell signed into law on July 1, 2010. The law will go into effect for residential consumers and the bar and restaurant community on or before September 15, 2011. The new law will require both private and public waste haulers to provide their customers with single-stream recycling bins, and curbside recycling pick up. Single-stream bins will allow consumers to place all recyclable materials (cardboard, glass, plastic, and metal) in without having to separate them. The purpose of single-stream recycling is to increase recycling rates in the state while decreasing its burden to the community.

## **Executive Summary**

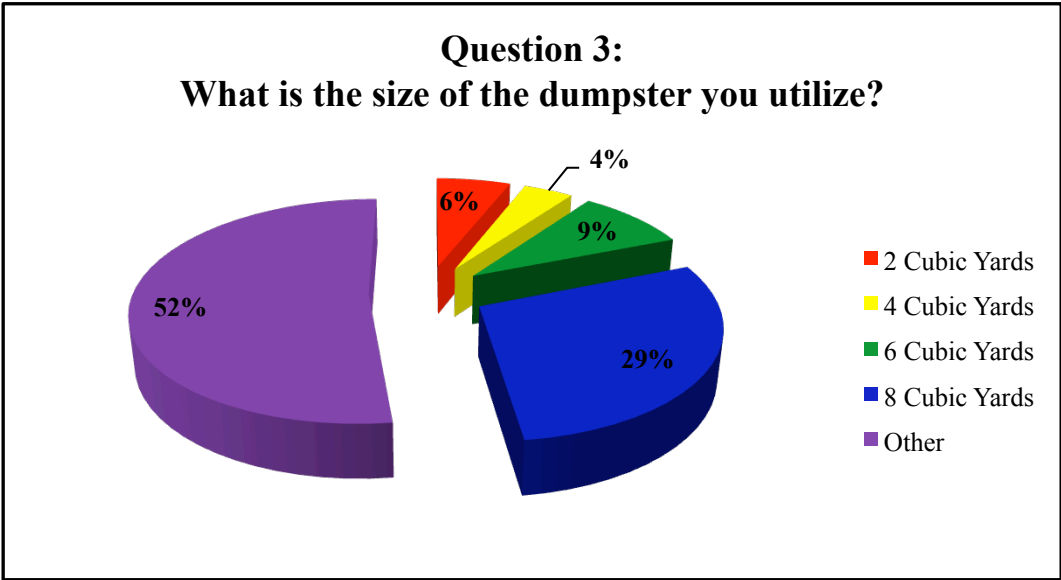
At the time the survey was conducted, most restaurateurs were aware of the passage of Universal Recycling in Delaware. It was encouraging that more than half of the restaurants surveyed were already doing their part in recycling. This number still lags behind the National Restaurant Association survey of restaurants that state more than 65% embrace recycling and have programs established. Many Delaware operators stated that once the new bins are received they hope to recycle in a more organized way. Those who were not currently recycling because of barriers such as time or space are excited about the passage of the law. The DRA believes that restaurateurs in Delaware need more information and training to learn how to maximize recycling in their businesses. The DRA plans to utilize survey results to better educate and offer consultative services to the industry.



While most restaurants had contracts with their waste management companies to have their waste picked up once (37%) or twice (37%) a week, there were some restaurants that needed more frequent pickups. There were also some restaurants surveyed that were seasonal operators and needed daily pick up during their peak season. Once they close for the season however, the schedule for waste pickup changed to once or twice a month.

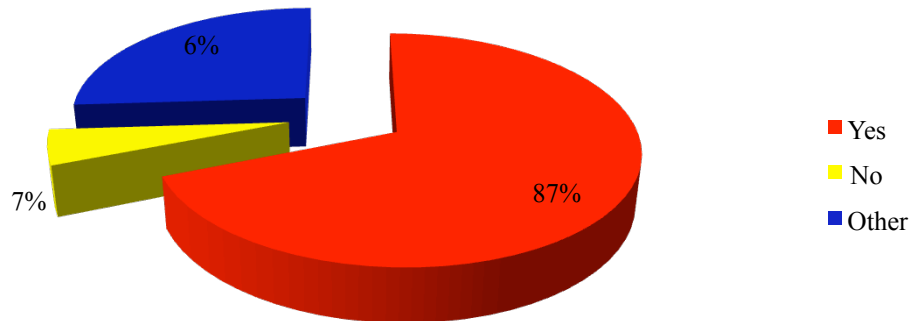


A majority of the restaurants surveyed utilize two dumpsters (45%) -- one for regular waste and the other for recycling (mostly cardboard). A high percentage of those surveyed who use only one dumpster (41%) stated that they did not recycle through their waste management company or, did not recycle altogether.



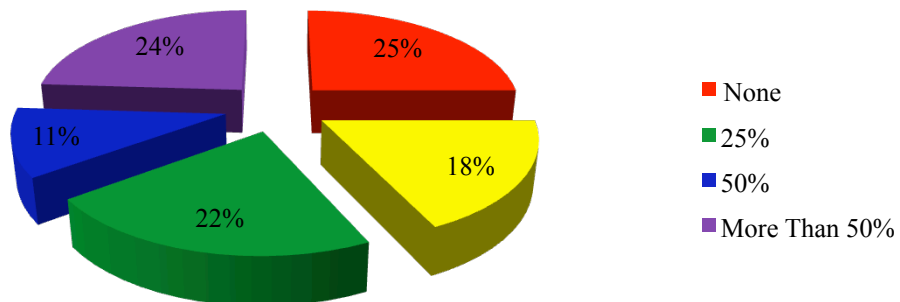
Most operators surveyed (52%) were unsure of the size of their dumpster. Twenty nine percent (29%) noted that they use an 8 cubic yard dumpster.

**Question 4:  
Does your hauler offer recycling services?**

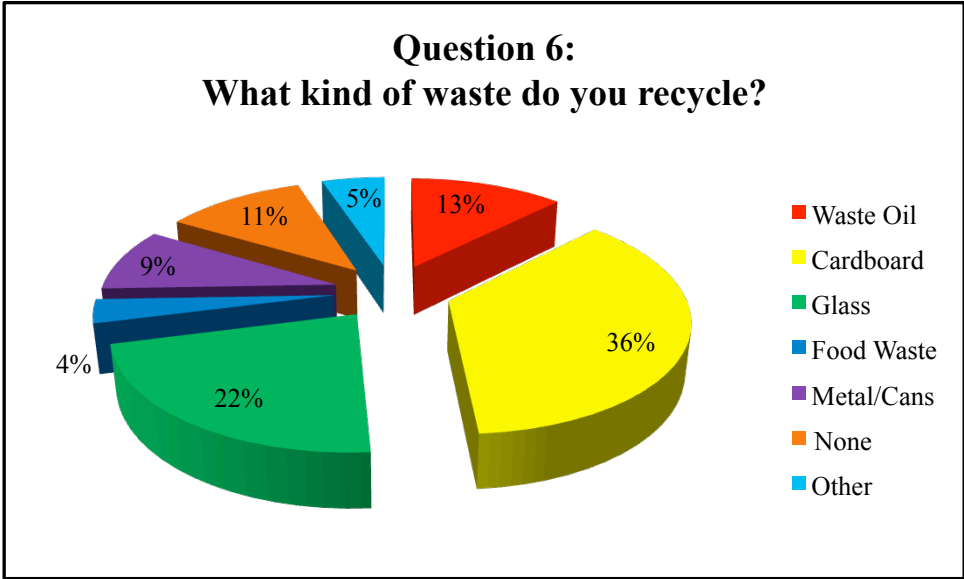


Most operators surveyed stated that their waste management haulers did provide recycling services (87%). Only 7% of respondents stated that their hauler does not provide services and 6% were unsure.

**Question 5:  
About how much material do you recycle on a regular basis?**



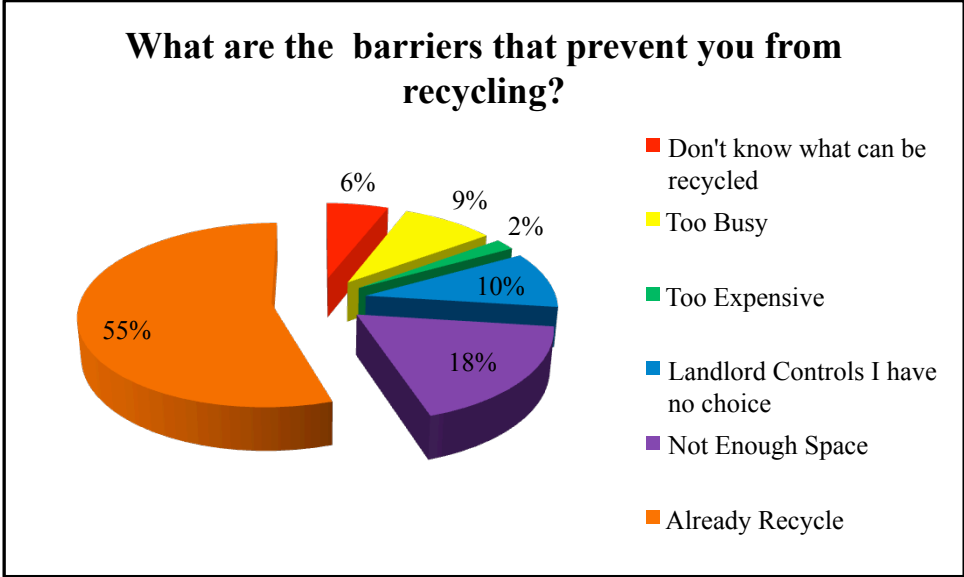
Of those responding, the majority of restaurants (25%) are not recycling on a regular basis.



The majority of respondents (36%) who recycle: recycle cardboard. 22% recycle bottles. Only a small number of restaurants surveyed (4%), recycle (donate or compost) their food waste. Many surveyed however are interested in beginning a recycling program but don't know where to begin. \*This was the only question where those surveyed could choose more than one option.



Most establishments (88%) threw food waste into the main dumpster. 6% stated that they donated to local homeless shelters or soup kitchens.



Although 55% of recipients recycle at some level, those that do not blamed the lack of space as the major factor (18%) currently preventing them from recycling. 10% of all respondents are controlled by lease restrictions and 9% state that time is a factor.



Although recycling is not mandatory, the new law will make it easier for restaurants to universally comply if they are not currently recycling. It is socially responsible and has the potential to save restaurants and bars money and time while having a positive impact on the environment. The Delaware Restaurant Association (DRA) supported passage of the law, and sought data on how many restaurants in the state of Delaware were recycling prior to the law's implementation. The DRA set up a study to find out what the waste disposal habits of restaurants are today. By understanding current rates and waste trends, the DRA believes it will have sufficient data to develop programs and services necessary to increase restaurant recycling habits. Having this data will allow the DRA to measure not only knowledge and interest in recycling but the study will allow the Association to measure the law's effectiveness within this specific segment. This study was supported through a grant by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC).

The DRA constructed an eight-question questionnaire for distribution. This survey contained questions about the restaurants' waste and their procedures used to manage it. The survey left respondents room to add additional comments. Those who were asked to complete the survey were either the owners or the managers of each restaurant. The data collection was a two-fold process. First, the survey was distributed to DRA members via email. After receiving a number of responses from members, the DRA extended the focus group to include all of the restaurants in the state of Delaware. This second round of the collection process involved conducting the survey over the phone.

Of the total number of restaurants in the state (1715), the DRA received responses from 6%. Out of those responses 4% were DRA members and 2% non-members.

## **Resources**

[www.delawarerestaurant.org](http://www.delawarerestaurant.org)

<http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/whs/awm/Recycling/Pages/Recycling.aspx>

[www.restaurantsrecycle.org](http://www.restaurantsrecycle.org)

[www.restaurantsrecycle.com](http://www.restaurantsrecycle.com)