



SINGLE-USE ITEM REDUCTION STRATEGY

Talk Vancouver Survey Summary Report: Shopping Bag By-law

July 2019

Executive Summary

In April 2019, Vancouver City Council directed staff to explore how public opinion has changed since the City of Victoria introduced its Checkout Bag Regulation by-law and then report back on adopting a ban on plastic bags similar to Victoria's. Victoria's Checkout Bag Regulation by-law, which bans plastic shopping bags, and requires fees on paper and reusable shopping bags, has been in effect since July 2018.

A total of 7332 respondents completed the survey, including 213 stakeholders who would be required to comply with a shopping bag by-law. Of the 213 affected stakeholder respondents, 42 completed the survey through an in-person visit from the Hua Foundation.

The results of the online survey show that there is a high level of support for adopting a by-law for shopping bags in Vancouver that is similar to the City of Victoria's Checkout Bag Regulation By-Law.

Survey results show that 72% of the public opinion respondents and 64% of affected stakeholder respondents agree with replicating the Victoria Checkout Bag Regulation By-Law in Vancouver.

Likewise, there was overall a high level of support for the individual by-law details:

- 80% of public opinion respondents agree with a ban on plastic shopping bags, 67% agree with a 15-cent fee on paper shopping bags (increasing to 25-cent in the second year), and 68% agree with a \$1 fee on reusable shopping bags (increasing to \$2 in the second year).
- 70% of affected stakeholder respondents agree with a ban on plastic shopping bags, 57% agree with charging a 15-cent fee on paper shopping bags (increasing to 25-cents in the second year), and 62% agree with charging a \$1 fee on reusable shopping bags (increasing to \$2 in the second year).

Table 1. Percent of Respondents that Agree with Individual By-law Details

By-law Requirement	Percentage of Respondents that Agree	
	Public Opinion Respondents	Affected Stakeholder Respondents
Overall. Thinking about the by-law as a whole, do you agree or disagree with replicating the Victoria Checkout Bag Regulation By-Law in Vancouver?	72%	64%
Plastic Bag Ban. Businesses cannot provide customers with single-use plastic checkout bags of any thickness, including compostable or biodegradable plastic.	80%	70%
Fees on Paper Bags. When requested by the customer, businesses may provide paper checkout bags for a minimum charge of 15 cents per bag (rising to 25 cents after 1 year).	67%	57%
Fees on Reusable Bags. When requested by the customer, businesses may provide reusable checkout bags for a minimum charge of \$1 per bag (rising to \$2 after 1 year).	68%	62%

Recycled Content. Paper bags must contain at least 40% post-consumer recycled paper content and display the words “Recyclable” and “made from 40% post-consumer recycled content”.	83%	69%
Applicable Bags. Applies to any bag intended to be used by a customer to transport items purchased or received from a business, including bags used to package take-out or delivery of food.	66%	53%
Applicable Stakeholders. Applies to all businesses and restaurants.	68%	61%
Exemptions. There are several exemptions to the by-law. See below for the full list.	48%	46%

Respondents were asked to describe why they agree or do not agree with replicating the City of Victoria’s Checkout Bag Regulation By-Law in Vancouver, or if they have additional comments.

Comments from the public and stakeholders in support of replicating the City of Victoria’s by-law included the following sentiments:

1. This approach is working well in other places.
2. Customers in other places have adjusted to this kind of by-law; people will get used to it.
3. Support for reducing waste, litter and plastic pollution.
4. Regulation should be the same everywhere.
5. Regulation is necessary for people and businesses to change.

Comments from the public and stakeholders also described reasons for disagreeing with replicating the City of Victoria’s by-law:

1. Plastic shopping bags are used as garbage bags and pet waste bags.
2. Concern about the environmental impacts of paper and reusable shopping bags, and garbage bags made from heavier plastic.
3. Proposed fees on paper and reusable shopping bags are too high.
4. Paper shopping bags are not waterproof, strong or malleable.
5. Compostable/biodegradable plastic bags should be allowed.
6. Concern about potential negative impacts to marginalized residents.
7. Concern about providing good customer service.

Comments also identified other types of actions respondents would like to see:

1. Make sure there is a public education campaign in addition to a by-law.
2. There should be fewer exemptions/more types of plastic bags should be banned.
3. Develop by-laws for other single-use plastics such as food packaging.

Finally, 80% of affected stakeholder respondents agree that regulation on shopping bags should be the same across all jurisdictions. If by-law requirements similar to Victoria’s were adopted in Vancouver, 84% of affected stakeholder respondents indicated they would be ready to comply within 1 year.

Background

The Single-Use Item Reduction Strategy, approved by Council on June 5, 2018, was the result of extensive consultation with over 8,000 residents and businesses to create a made-in-Vancouver approach to reduce the impact of:

- Plastic and paper shopping bags
- Polystyrene foam cups and foam take-out containers
- Disposable hot and cold drink cups
- Take-out food containers
- Plastic straws
- Single-use utensils

As much as possible, the strategy is designed to support convenient, affordable and accessible alternatives, shift societal norms, support lasting behaviour change, and value all members of Vancouver's diverse communities. The strategy strives to meet the needs of everyone, regardless of physical ability.

In April 2019, Vancouver City Council directed staff to explore how public opinion has changed since the City of Victoria introduced its Checkout Bag Regulation by-law and then report back on adopting a ban on plastic bags similar to Victoria's. Victoria's Checkout Bag Regulation by-law, which bans plastic shopping bags, and requires fees on paper and reusable shopping bags, has been in effect since July 2018.

Plastic and Paper Shopping Bag Waste Snapshot

- Around 2 million plastic shopping bags are disposed in the garbage in Vancouver each week (63% are reused as garbage bags).
- Plastic bags make up 3% of shoreline litter and 2% of large litter items in Vancouver streets, parks, and public spaces.
- Paper bags make up 1% of large street litter items.
- Plastic bags harm marine life and are made using non-renewable fossil fuels.
- It can take anywhere from 10 to 10,000 years for a plastic shopping bag to decompose, and even then it only breaks down into small plastic pieces, causing microplastic pollution.
- Paper bags actually cause more harmful greenhouse gas emissions over their lifetime than plastic bags because of manufacturing processes and they require more fuel because they are heavier to transport.

Vancouver residents, non-profit organizations, businesses and institutions were invited to share their perspective through an online Talk Vancouver survey on whether the City should ban plastic bags and charge fees on paper and reusable bags, similar to the City of Victoria.

The online survey was available in English and Simplified Chinese between July 9-30, 2019. The City retained the Hua Foundation to conduct in-person Talk Vancouver surveys with multi-cultural stakeholders, with language support in Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Vietnamese, based on stakeholders' preferences.

Analysis Methodology

Surveys were created for members of the public and for stakeholders who would be required to comply with a shopping bag by-law. Both surveys included the same primary set of questions, and the survey for affected stakeholders included additional questions about potential challenges and opportunities associated with replicating the City of Victoria's by-law.

Survey respondents were asked to identify if they were a Vancouver resident; a Vancouver business, organization or institution; or "none of the above." Respondents that identified as a Vancouver resident or "none of the above" were given the survey for members of the public (6923 respondents). Respondents that identified as a Vancouver business, organization or institution were given the survey for affected stakeholders (409 respondents). This approach aimed to allow stakeholders that would be required to comply with a shopping bag by-law to give more detailed feedback on the impacts to their organization through additional questions about potential challenges and opportunities (such as customer experience and supply chain).

During the data analysis, it was determined that some respondents that completed the survey for affected stakeholders were not one of the targeted stakeholder groups. The survey asked respondents what type of organization they represent and whether they currently give out any shopping bags. 196 respondents indicated that they do not represent a type of organization, such as a retailer or food vendor, that would be directly affected by a shopping bag by-law and do not currently give out shopping bags. To prevent misrepresenting feedback from stakeholders that would be required to comply with a shopping bag by-law, data from these respondents has been analyzed and presented with the public opinion survey results, for a total of 7119 public opinion respondents and 213 affected stakeholder respondents.

Who Did We Hear From

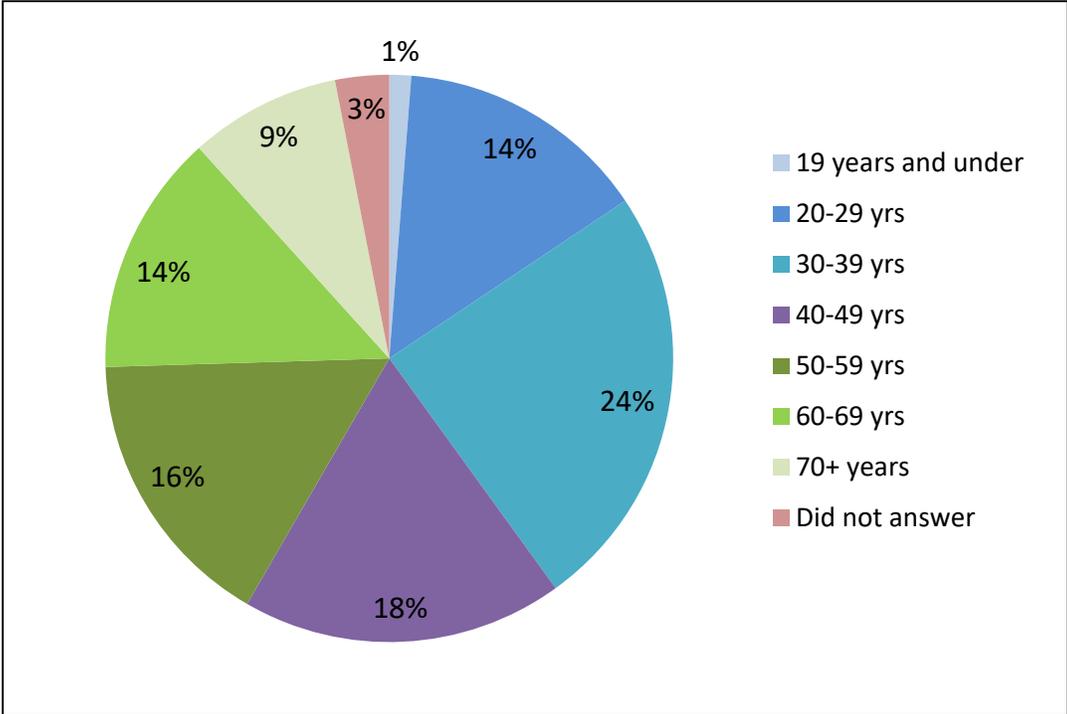


Figure 1. Age of survey respondents

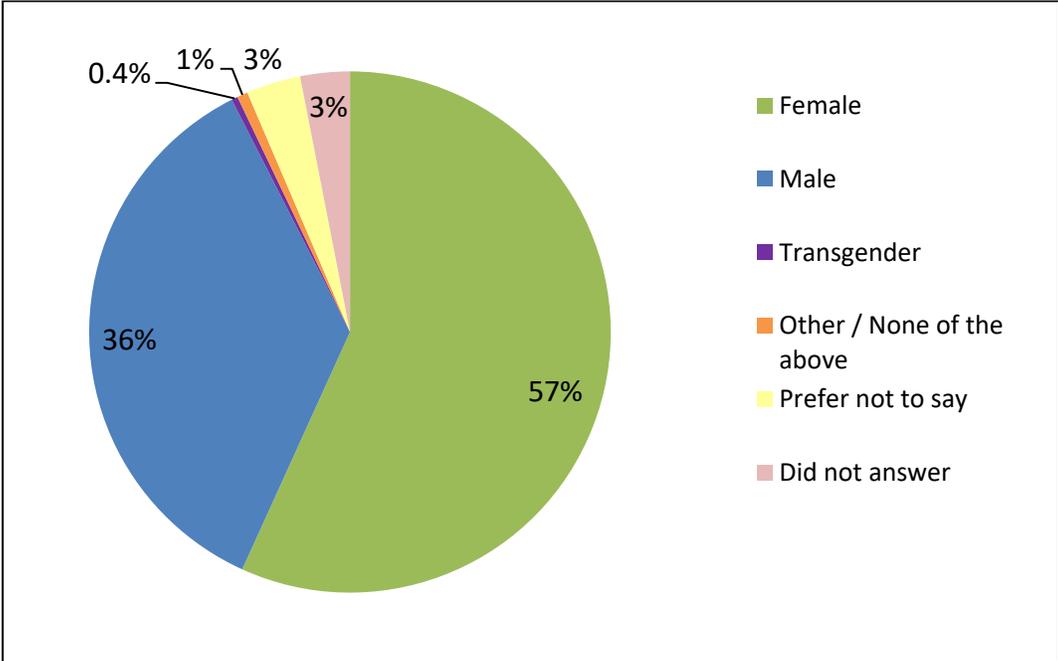


Figure 2. Gender of survey respondents

Results: Public Opinion

Question 1

Do you agree or disagree with replicating the following approaches in Vancouver?

- **Plastic Bag Ban.** *Businesses cannot provide customers with single-use plastic checkout bags of any thickness, including compostable or biodegradable plastic.*
- **Fees on Paper Bags.** *When requested by the customer, businesses may provide paper checkout bags for a minimum charge of 15 cents per bag (rising to 25 cents on July 1, 2019).*
- **Fees on Reusable Bags.** *When requested by the customer, businesses may provide reusable checkout bags for a minimum charge of \$1 per bag (rising to \$2 on July 1, 2019).*
- **Recycled Content.** *Paper bags must contain at least 40% post-consumer recycled paper content and display the words “Recyclable” and “made from 40% post-consumer recycled content”.*
- **Applicable Bags.** *Applies to any bag intended to be used by a customer to transport items purchased or received from a business, including bags used to package take-out or delivery of food.*
- **Applicable Stakeholders.** *Applies to all businesses and restaurants.*
- **Exemptions.** *There are several specific exemptions to the by-law.*

List of Exemptions

- *Small paper bags (15 x 20 cm when flat)*
- *Any plastic, paper or reusable bag used to:*
 - *Package loose bulk items such as fruit, vegetables, nuts, grain, candy*
 - *Package loose hardware such as nails and bolts*
 - *Contain or wrap frozen foods, meat, poultry or fish*
 - *Wraps flowers or potted plants*
 - *Protect prepared foods or bakery goods that are not pre-packaged*
 - *Contain prescription drugs from a pharmacy*
 - *Transport live fish*
 - *Protect linens, bedding or other similar large items that cannot easily fit in a reusable bag*
 - *Protect newspapers or other printed materials left at customer’s residence or place of business*
 - *Protect clothes after professional laundering or dry cleaning*
- *The sale of packages of multiple bags (paper or plastic) intended for use at the customer’s home or business (e.g. garbage bags and bin liners) is not restricted by the By-law*

Figure 3 shows that overall, there is a high level of agreement with all by-law details among public opinion respondents. 80% agree with a ban on plastic shopping bags, 67% agree with a 15-cent fee on paper shopping bags (increasing to 25-cent in the second year), and 68% agree with a \$1 fee on reusable shopping bags (increasing to \$2 in the second year).

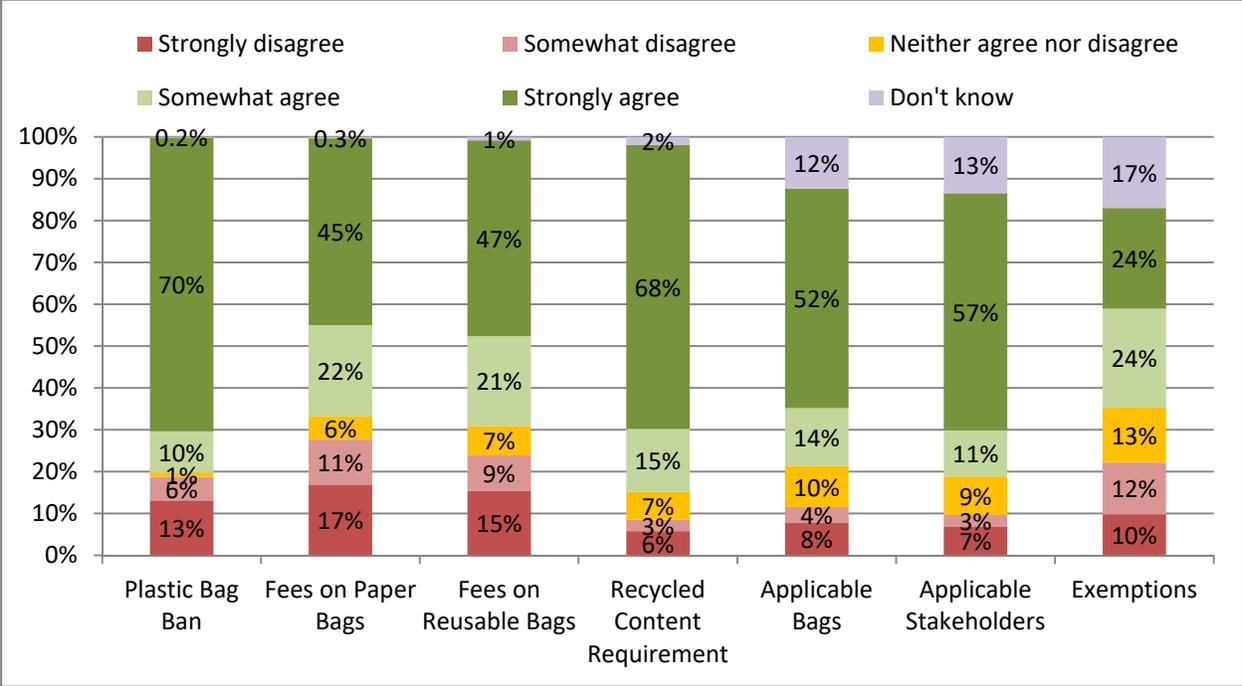


Figure 3. Public opinion respondents' level of agreement with each by-law detail

Question 2

Thinking about the by-law as a whole, do you agree or disagree with replicating the Victoria Checkout Bag Regulation By-Law in Vancouver?

Figure 4 shows that 72% of public opinion respondents agree with replicating the Victoria by-law in Vancouver.

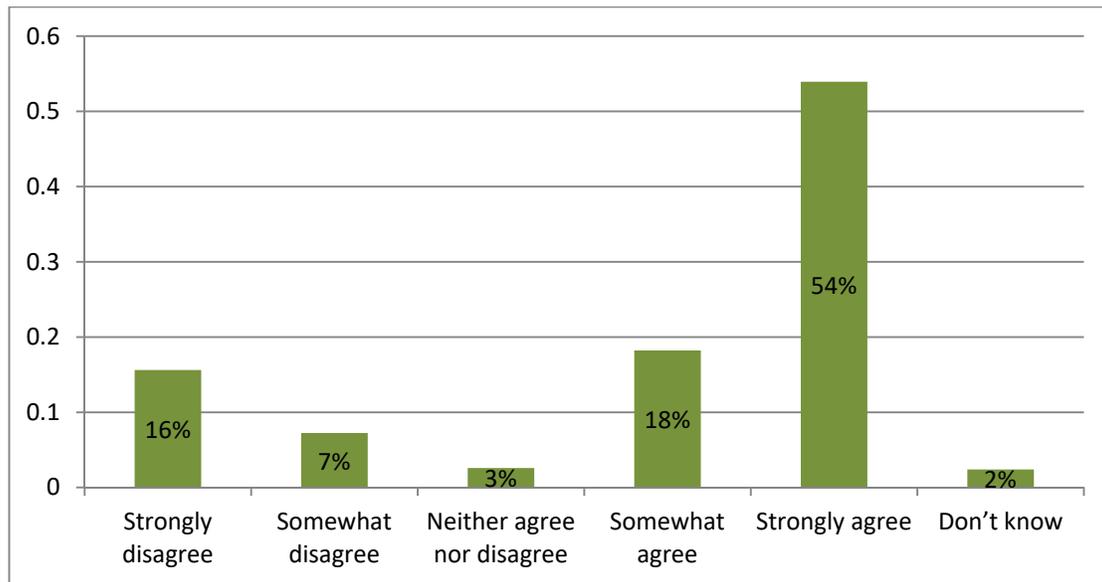


Figure 4. Public opinion respondents' level of agreement with replicating the by-law overall

Question 3

Why do you agree or disagree with replicating the Victoria Checkout Bag Regulation By-Law in Vancouver?

Public opinion comments in support of replicating the City of Victoria's by-law included the following sentiments:

1. Support for reducing waste, litter and plastic pollution.
2. People will get used to it.
3. Regulation is necessary for people to change their behaviours.
4. This approach is working well in other places.

Public opinion comments also described reasons for disagreeing with replicating the City of Victoria's by-law:

1. Plastic shopping bags are used as garbage bags and pet waste bags.
2. Concern about the environmental impacts of paper and reusable shopping bags, and garbage bags made from heavier plastic.
3. Proposed fees on paper and reusable shopping bags are too high.
4. Compostable/biodegradable plastic bags should be allowed.
5. Concern about potential negative impacts to marginalized residents.

Finally, comments included other types of actions public opinion respondents would like to see:

- 1. There should be fewer exemptions/more types of plastic bags should be banned.
- 2. Develop by-laws for other single-use plastics such as food packaging.

Question 4

How often do you bring a reusable bag when you're shopping?

Figure 5 shows that 49% of public opinion respondents always bring their reusable shopping bags to the grocery store, and 35% often do. For other types of stores, 26% always bring their reusable shopping bags, and 37% often do.

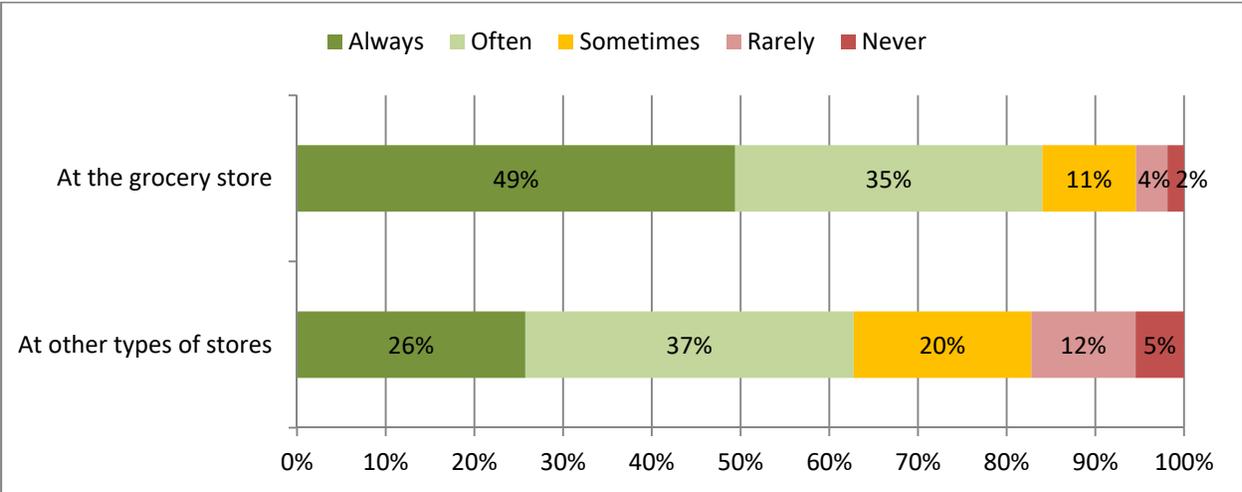


Figure 5. Public opinion respondents' reusable shopping bag use

Results: Affected Stakeholders

Question 1

What type of business/organization/institution do you primarily represent?

Figure 6 shows that 40% of affected stakeholder respondents were non-food retailers, and 23% were grocery and supermarket food vendors.

Examples of types of organizations listed in the “other” category include: festivals and events, health care organizations, industry associations and service-producing businesses that indicated they give out shopping bags.

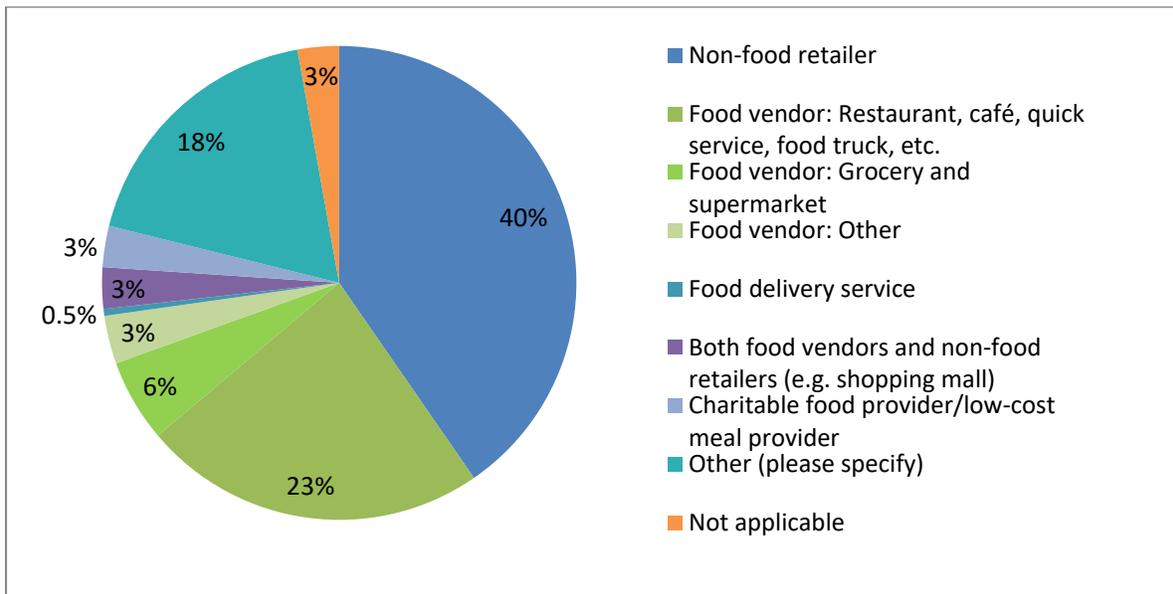


Figure 6. Affected stakeholder respondents' organization type

Question 2

If you are a business, describe your business ownership.

Figure 7 shows that 76% of affected stakeholder respondents were independent businesses or local chains, and 10% were national or international chains.

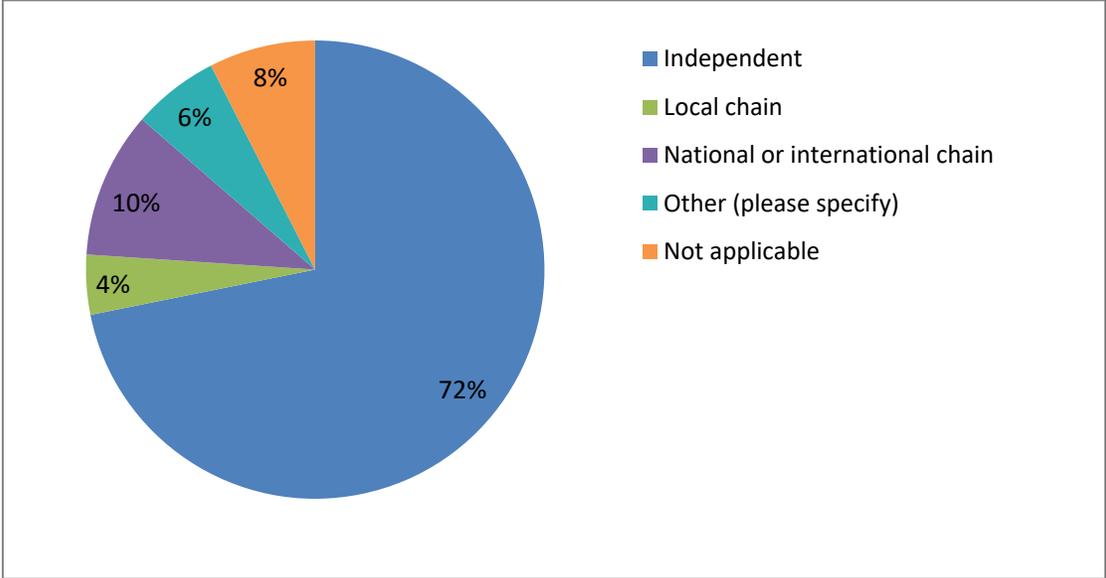


Figure 7. Affected stakeholder respondents' business ownership type

Question 3

If you are a food vendor, are your customers more likely to stay on-site or take-out?

Figure 8 shows that 12% of respondents were primarily dine-in, 10% were primarily take-out, and 11% were approximately an equal mix of both dine-in and take-out.

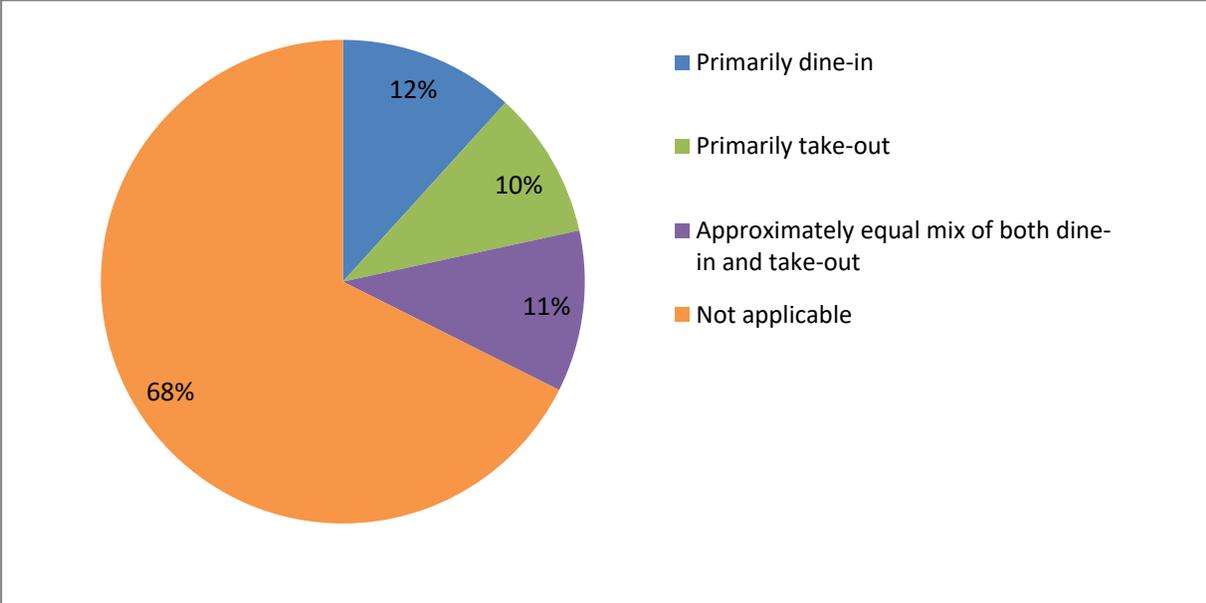


Figure 8. Affected respondents' primary food service type

Question 4

How do you currently give out shopping bags?

Figure 9 shows that only 51% of affected stakeholder respondents give out free plastic shopping bags, 50% give out free paper shopping bags, and 14% give out free reusable shopping bags.

46% don't give out plastic shopping bags, 47% don't give out paper shopping bags, and 70% don't give out reusable shopping bags.

3% charge fees on plastic shopping bags, 2% charge fees on paper shopping bags, and 16% charge fees on reusable shopping bags.

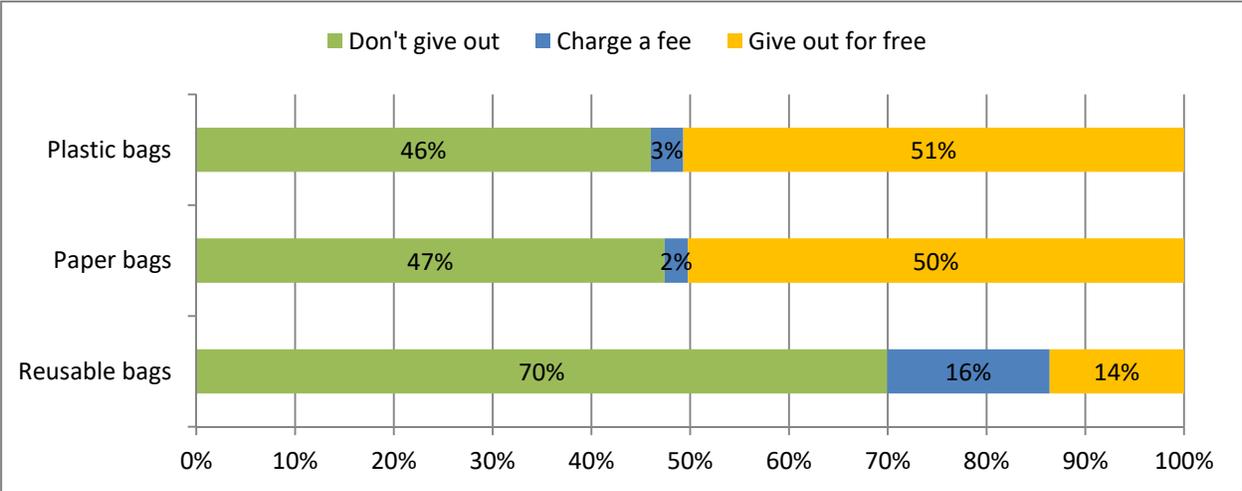


Figure 9. Affected respondents' shopping bag distribution

Question 5

Do you agree or disagree with replicating the following approaches in Vancouver?

- **Plastic Bag Ban.** Businesses cannot provide customers with single-use plastic checkout bags of any thickness, including compostable or biodegradable plastic.
- **Fees on Paper Bags.** When requested by the customer, businesses may provide paper checkout bags for a minimum charge of 15 cents per bag (rising to 25 cents on July 1, 2019).
- **Fees on Reusable Bags.** When requested by the customer, businesses may provide reusable checkout bags for a minimum charge of \$1 per bag (rising to \$2 on July 1, 2019).
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- **Exemptions.** There are several specific exemptions to the by-law.

List of Exemptions

- Small paper bags (15 x 20 cm when flat)
- Any plastic, paper or reusable bag used to:
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 - Contain or wrap frozen foods, meat, poultry or fish
 - Wraps flowers or potted plants
 - Protect prepared foods or bakery goods that are not pre-packaged
 - Contain prescription drugs from a pharmacy
 - Transport live fish
 - Protect linens, bedding or other similar large items that cannot easily fit in a reusable bag
 - Protect newspapers or other printed materials left at customer’s residence or place of business
 - Protect clothes after professional laundering or dry cleaning
- The sale of packages of multiple bags (paper or plastic) intended for use at the customer’s home or business (e.g. garbage bags and bin liners) is not restricted by the By-law

Figure 10 shows that overall, there is a high level of agreement with all by-law details among affected stakeholder respondents. 70% agree with a ban on plastic shopping bags, 57% agree with charging a 15-cent fee on paper shopping bags (increasing to 25-cents in the second year), and 62% agree with charging a \$1 fee on reusable shopping bags (increasing to \$2 in the second year).

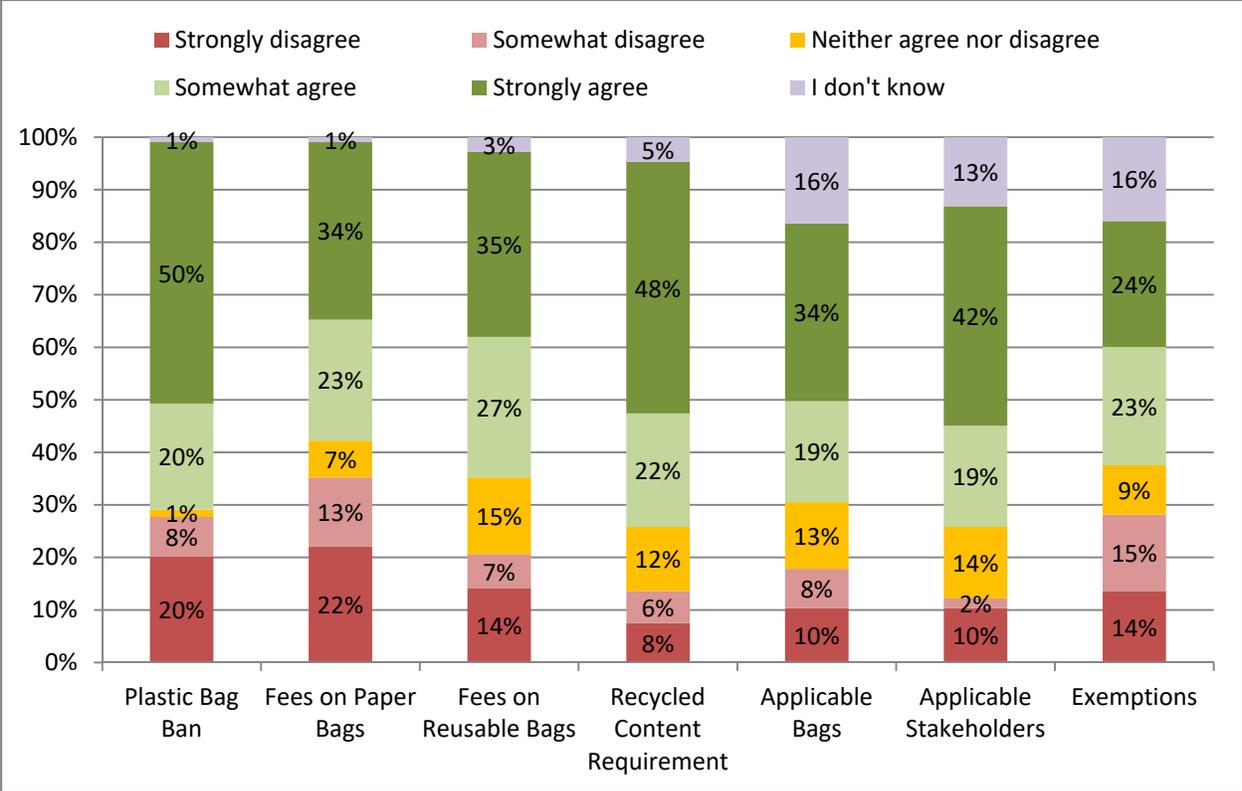


Figure 10. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with each by-law detail

Question 6

Thinking about the by-law as a whole, do you agree or disagree with replicating the Victoria Checkout Bag Regulation By-Law in Vancouver?

Figure 11 shows that 64% of affected stakeholder respondents agree with replicating the Victoria Checkout Bag Regulation By-law in Vancouver.

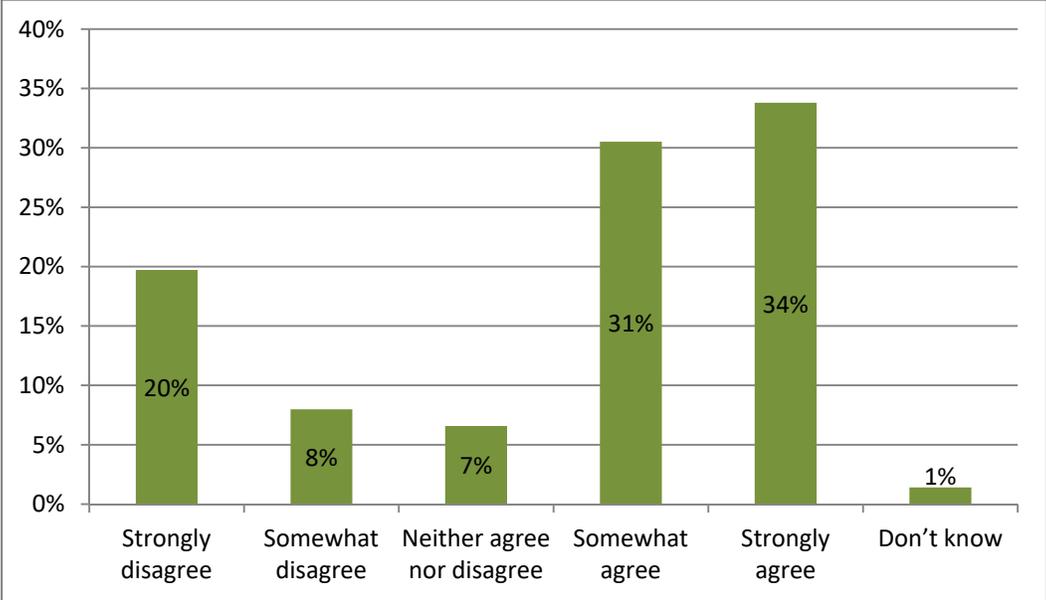


Figure 11. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with replicating the by-law overall

Question 7

The statements below describe potential opportunities and challenges associated with regulating shopping bags. Do you agree or disagree with these statements?

- 1) My customers would be unhappy that my business couldn't give them plastic bags for their purchased items.

Figure 12 shows that 35% of affected stakeholder respondents agree their customers would be unhappy that their business couldn't give them plastic bags for their purchased items.

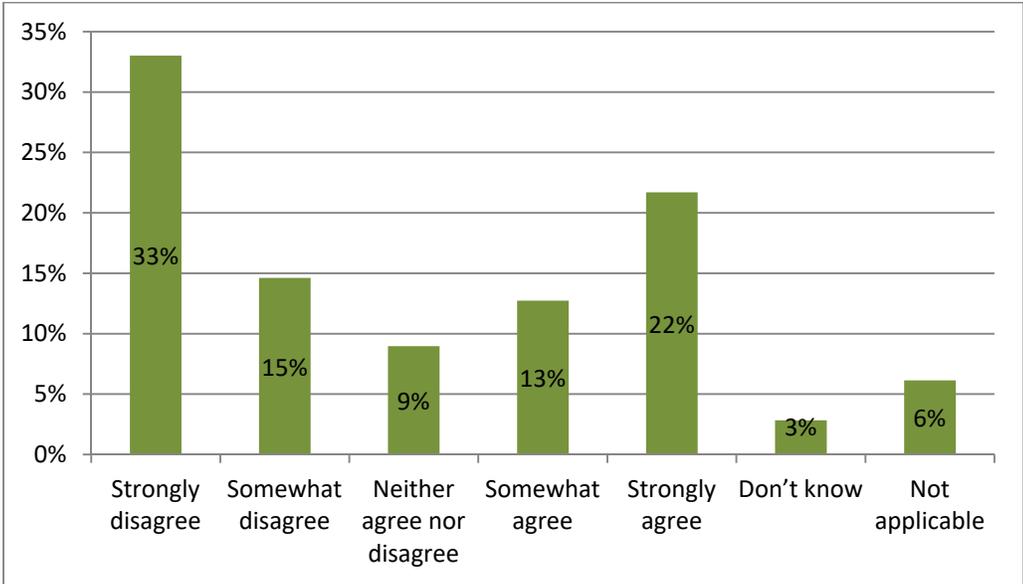


Figure 12. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "My customers would be unhappy that my business couldn't give them plastic bags for their purchased items"

2) *My customers would be unhappy paying a fee to get a bag (paper or reusable) for their purchased items.*

Figure 13 shows that 52% of affected stakeholder respondents agree their customers would be unhappy paying a fee to get a bag (paper or reusable) for their purchased items.

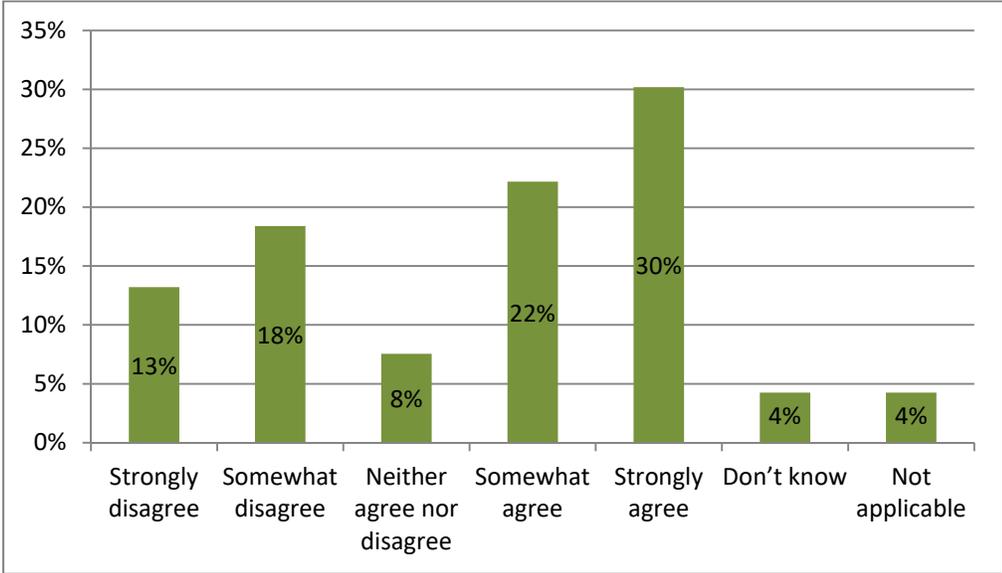


Figure 13. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "My customers would be unhappy paying a fee to get a bag (paper or reusable) for their purchased items"

3) *Businesses shouldn't have to charge fees on bags in situations where customers don't have the option to use their own.*

Figure 14 shows that 58% of affected stakeholder respondents agree businesses shouldn't have to charge fees on bags in situations where customers don't have the option to use their own.

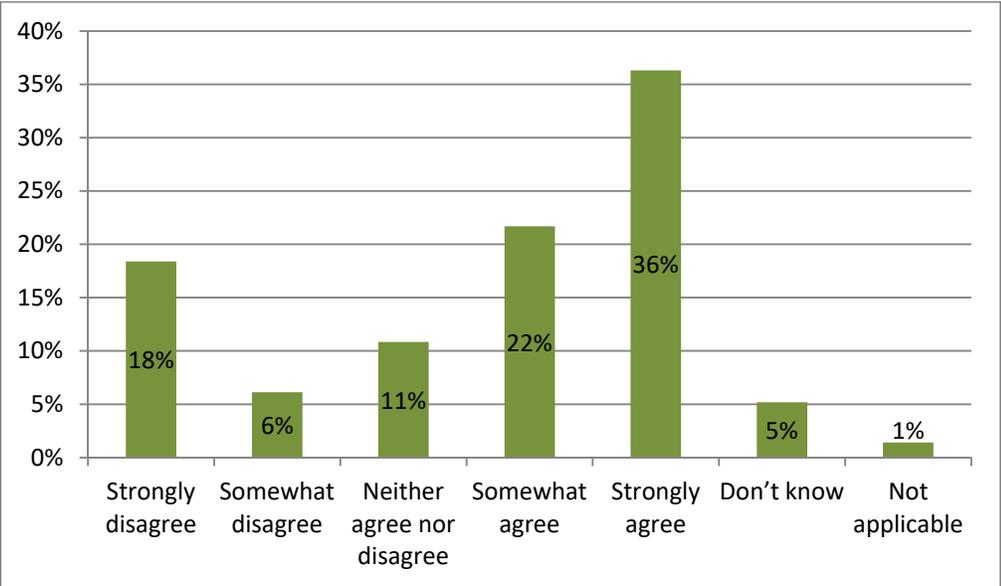


Figure 14. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "Businesses shouldn't have to charge fees on bags in situations where customers don't have the option to use their own"

4) Paper shopping bags with 40% **post-consumer** recycled content would be easy to source.

Figure 15 shows that 43% of affected stakeholder respondents agree paper shopping bags with 40% post-consumer recycled content would be easy to source.

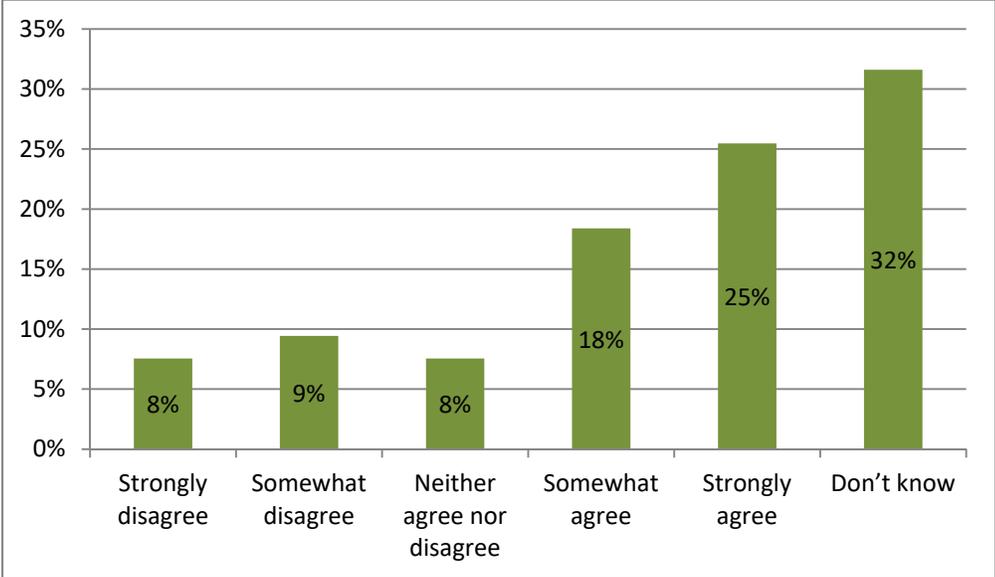


Figure 15. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "Paper shopping bags with 40% post-consumer recycled content would be easy to source"

5) Paper shopping bags with 40% **post-industrial** recycled content would be easy to source.¹

Figure 16 shows that 36% of affected stakeholder respondents agree that paper shopping bags with 40% post-industrial recycled content would be easy to source.

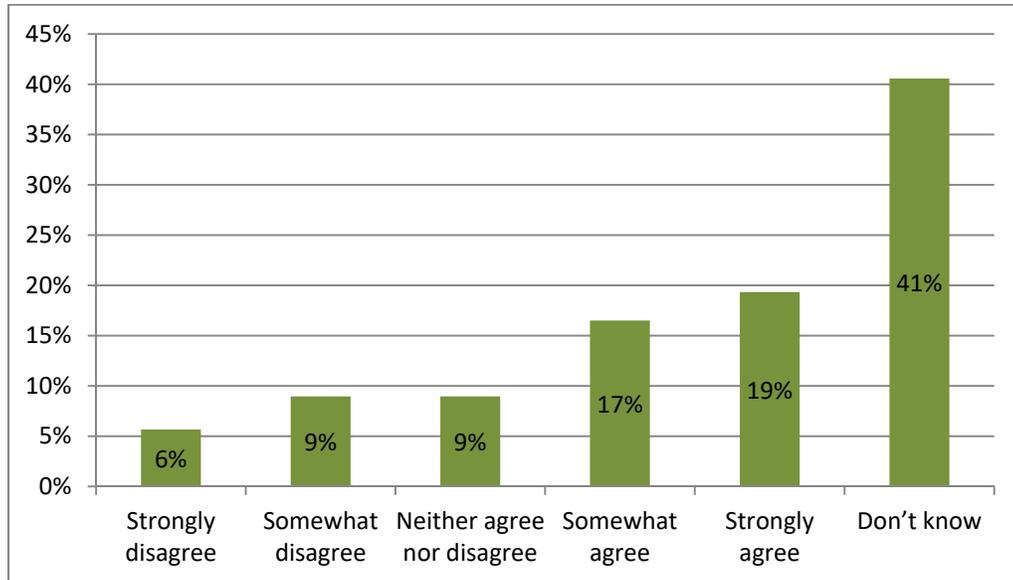


Figure 16. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "Paper shopping bags with 40% post-industrial recycled content would be easy to source"

¹ This survey question was developed prior to conducting research into the availability of different types of recycled paper content and does not reflect the technical finding that post-industrial content is a small portion of the overall recycled content used in kraft paper used to make paper bags.

6) *My business depends on plastic bags for take-out and delivery food orders.*

Figure 17 shows that 33% of all stakeholder respondents who serve food agree their business depends on plastic bags for take-out and delivery food orders.

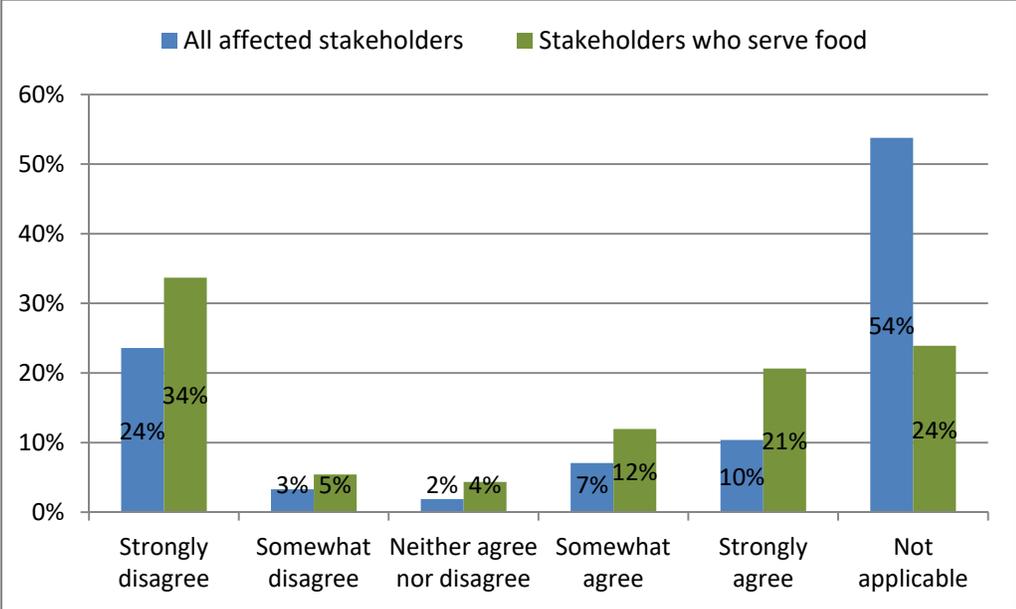


Figure 17. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "My business depends on plastic bags for take-out and delivery food orders"

7) *I'm concerned that packaging take-out food orders in a customer's own reusable bag might be a food safety risk.*

Figure 18 shows that 32% of stakeholder respondents who serve food are concerned that packaging take-out food orders in a customers' own reusable bag might be a food safety risk.

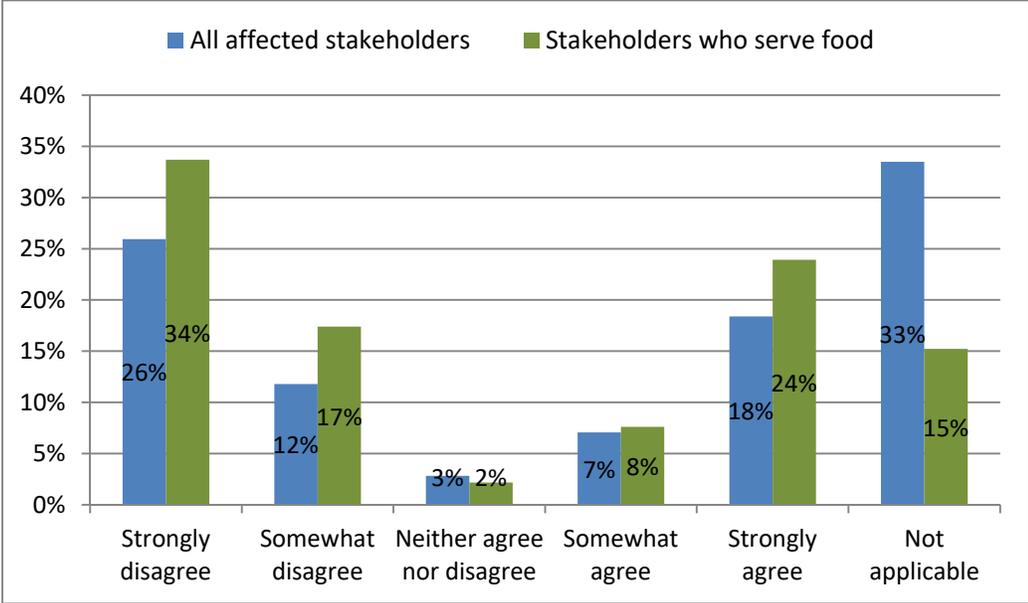


Figure 18. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "I'm concerned that packaging take-out food orders in a customer's own reusable bag might be a food safety risk"

8) *If fees are required, then all businesses in Vancouver should have to charge the same minimum fee on paper and reusable bags.*

Figure 19 shows that 74% of affected stakeholder respondents agree that if fees are required, all businesses in Vancouver should have to charge the same minimum fee on paper and reusable bags.

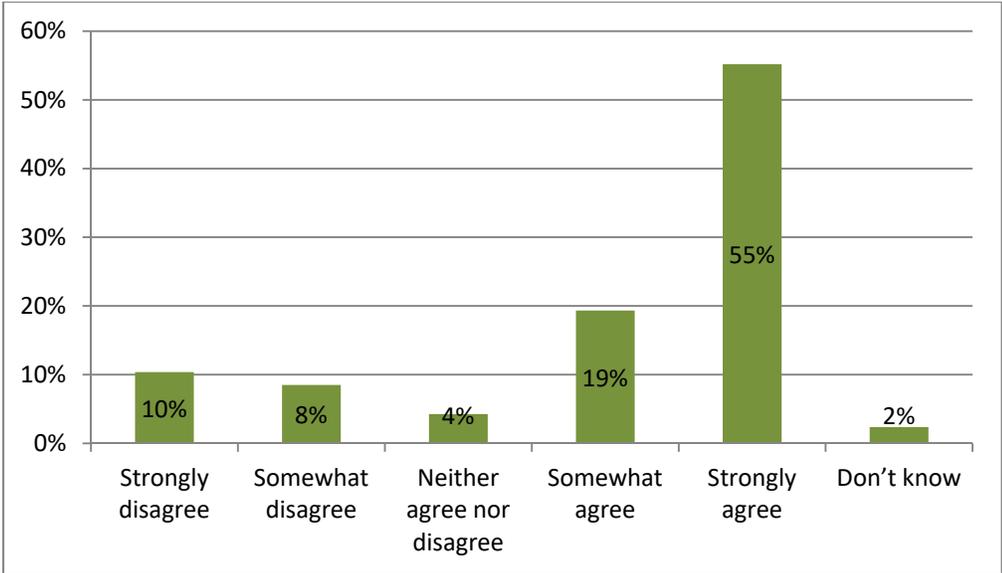


Figure 19. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "If fees are required, all businesses in Vancouver should have to charge the same minimum fee on paper and reusable bags"

9) *I feel that paper bags should be free to customers because they can be recycled or composted.*

Figure 20 shows that 50% of affected stakeholder respondents feel paper bags should be free to customers because they can be recycled or composted.

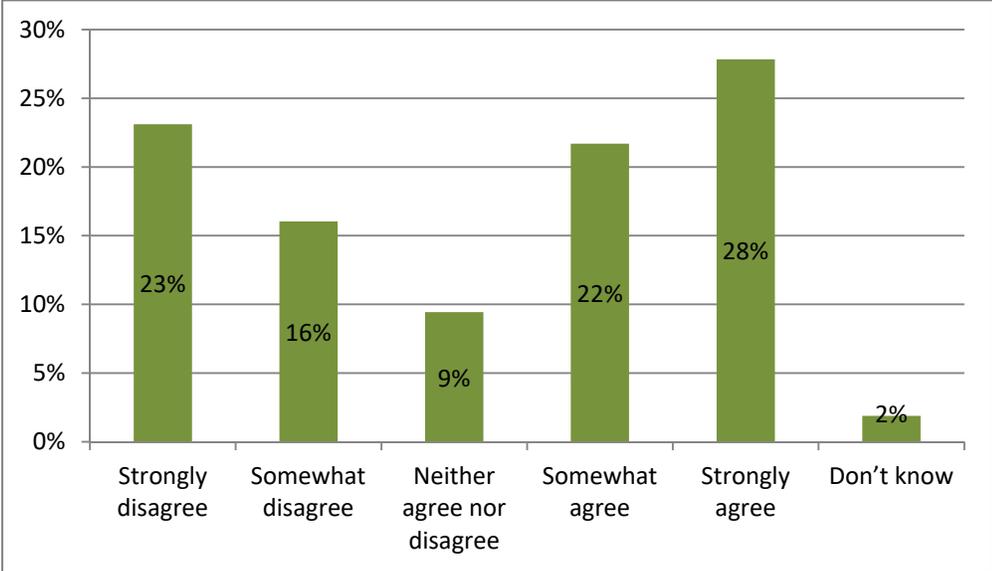


Figure 20. Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "I feel that paper bags should be free to customers because they can be recycled or composted"

10) *Banning plastic bags and charging fees on paper and reusable bags, aligns with the environmental values of my business/organization/institution.*

Figure 21 shows that 56% of affected stakeholder respondents agree that banning plastic bags and charging fees on paper and reusable bags aligns with the environmental values of their organization.

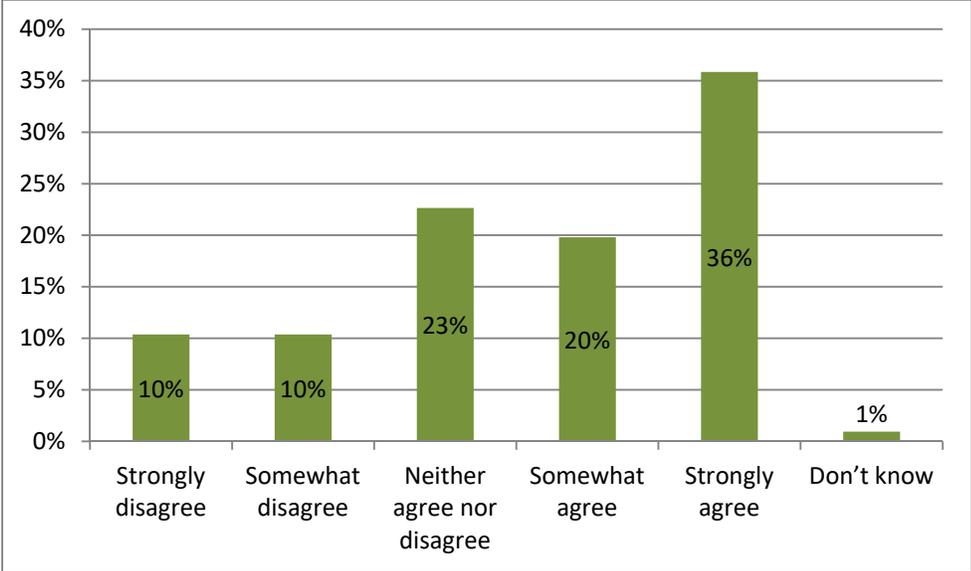


Figure 21: Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "Banning plastic bags and charging fees on paper and reusable bags, aligns with the environmental values of my organization"

11) Regulation on shopping bags/checkout bags should be the same across all jurisdictions.

Figure 22 shows that 80% of affected stakeholder respondents agree that regulation on shopping bags should be the same across all jurisdictions.

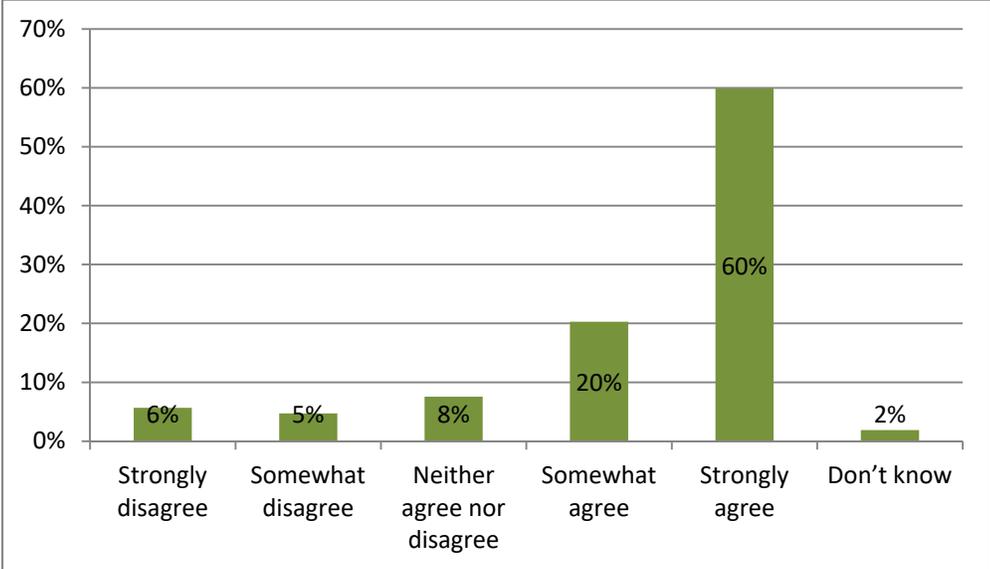


Figure 22: Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "Regulation on shopping bags/checkout bags should be the same across all jurisdictions"

12) *The Victoria Checkout Bag Regulation By-law requirements are easy to understand.*

Figure 23 shows that 64% of affected stakeholder respondents agree the Victoria Checkout Bag Regulation By-law requirements are easy to understand.

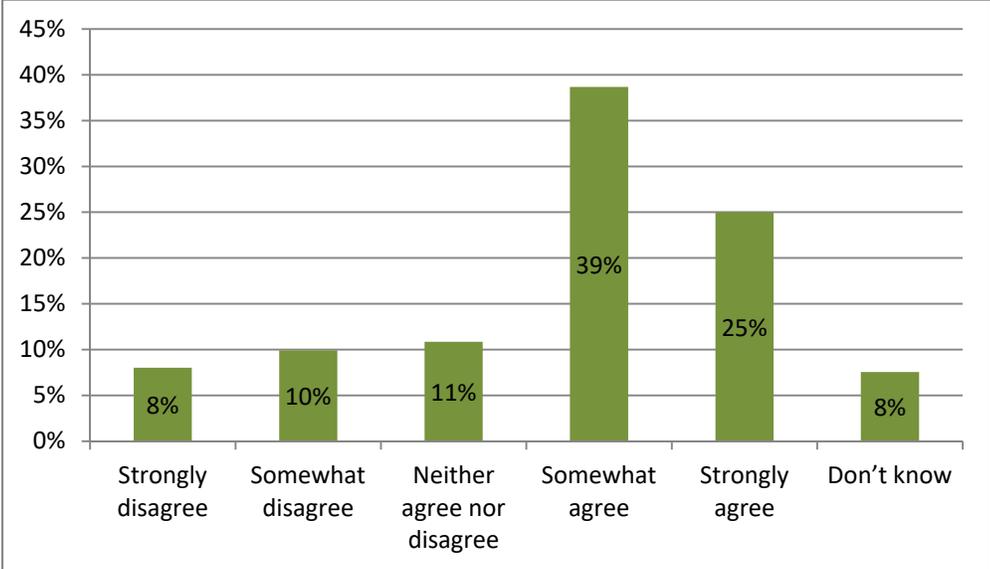


Figure 23: Affected stakeholder respondents' level of agreement with: "The Victoria Checkout Bag Regulation By-law requirements are easy to understand"

Question 8

How much time would your organization need to be ready to comply with by-law requirements similar to those in Victoria if they were adopted in Vancouver?

Figure 24 shows that if by-law requirements similar to those in Victoria were adopted in Vancouver, 84% of affected stakeholder respondents indicated they would be ready to comply within 1 year.

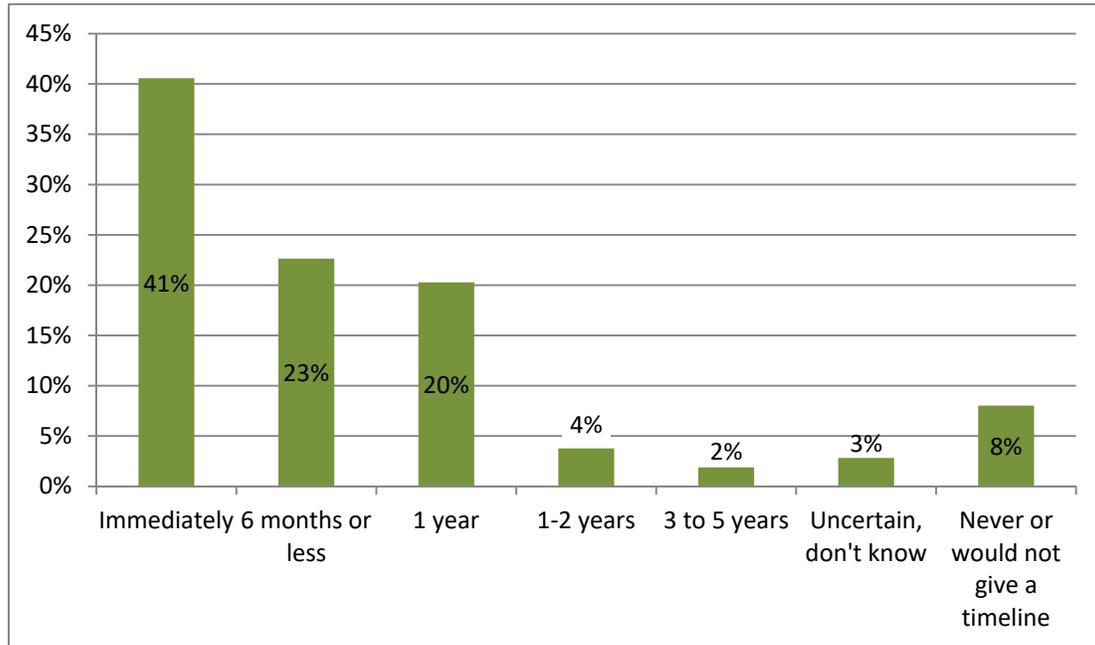


Figure 24: Affected stakeholder respondents' readiness to comply with the by-law

Question 9

Do you have any other comments?

Affected stakeholder comments in support of replicating the City of Victoria's by-law included the following sentiments:

1. This approach is working well in other places.
2. Customers in other places have adjusted to this kind of by-law.
3. Support for reducing waste, litter and plastic pollution.
4. Regulation should be the same everywhere.
5. Regulation is necessary to change business practices.

Affected stakeholder comments also described reasons for disagreeing with replicating the City of Victoria's by-law:

1. Concern about the environmental impacts of paper and reusable shopping bags, and garbage bags made from heavier plastic.
2. Proposed fees on paper and reusable shopping bags are too high.
3. Paper shopping bags are not waterproof, strong or malleable.
4. Compostable/biodegradable plastic bags should be allowed.
5. Concern about potential negative impacts to marginalized residents.

6. Concern about providing good customer service.

Finally, comments included other types of actions affected stakeholder respondents would like to see:

1. Make sure there is a public education campaign in addition to a by-law.
2. There should be fewer exemptions/more types of plastic bags should be banned.

Next Steps

The findings from the Talk Vancouver survey will inform the development of a by-law for shopping bags, which will be presented to Vancouver City Council in November 2019.