

# Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020



Helsinki

The Helsinki logo consists of the word "Helsinki" in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a white outline of a speech bubble or a rounded rectangle with a small tail at the bottom.**Inquiries**

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City of Helsinki Environmental services produced an international questionnaire on trash prevention in other cities. **The questionnaire was sent to around 500 recipients**, mostly in Europe. The answers were collected during the summer of 2020. The questionnaire focused on planning, implementation and assessment of action plans and actions to prevent littering and the actors involved in them. The questionnaire was made with the Harava questionnaire tool and the language was English.

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire had three parts.

The first part made sure that the respondent's city had either an action plan or taken actions to prevent littering.

The second part focused on how an action plan was designed and assessed. Also, the different actors that were involved in different parts of the process were identified.

The third part focused on individual actions taken to prevent littering and how they were chosen, implemented and how successful they were. This part could be filled several times to make sure that all the different actions were accounted for in a similar manner. At the same time we got information on which cities had taken several actions.



# Recipients

We tried to choose recipients based on whether they were officials working on trash prevention in their cities. The questionnaire was sent to about 500 recipients either through international communities, city contact forms or via email.

**We received answers from 69 different recipients from 54 different cities.** We were surprised by the percentage of recipients who answered, about 14%, since we anticipated one in ten to answer. Especially helpful in spreading the questionnaire were the following networks:

## **Eurocities Waste Working Group**

A network of Europe's large cities focused on circular economy and waste management. The goal of the WWG is to: Inform the members on EU circular economy legislation, exchange best practices and knowledge between members about and support members on their circular economy transitions.

**The questionnaire was forwarded to about 80 recipient cities through WWG.**

## **KIMO International**

KIMO International is a network of cities from North Sea coastal nations that focuses on keeping the sea and coast clean and protected. KIMO is divided to several smaller national networks, for instance, in Denmark, Germany and Great Britain.

**The questionnaire was forwarded to about 80 recipients through KIMO.**

## **Håll Sverige Rent**

An NGO aiming to affect the citizens' behavior and provide tools to municipalities and businesses to act against litter. A similar NGO is also in Denmark and Norway.

**HSR was kind enough to provide the contact emails of 290 Swedish municipalities,** which is the reason such a large portion of both recipients and answers are from Sweden.

# Action plans

In the questionnaire, we defined action plan as something with a vision, a goal and a plan to achieve them.

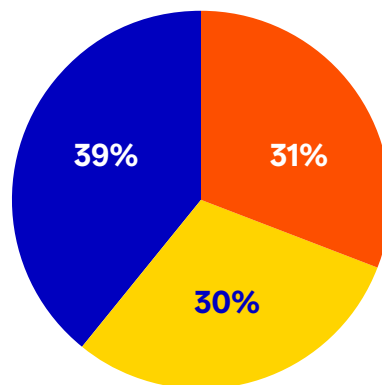
42 of those who answered had either an action plan or a similar plan to prevent littering in their cities.

**This is rather low when compared with the fact that almost all who answered had taken actions to prevent littering.**

Although it is difficult to say, based on the questionnaire, why this is so, it would be an interesting topic for following questionnaires. In addition, it needs to be said that the lack of an action plan in certain cities in no way implies that the actions to prevent littering would not be coordinated, organized or without planning.

**Does your city have an action plan to prevent littering? (n=69)**

■ No  
■ Yes  
■ Other



Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

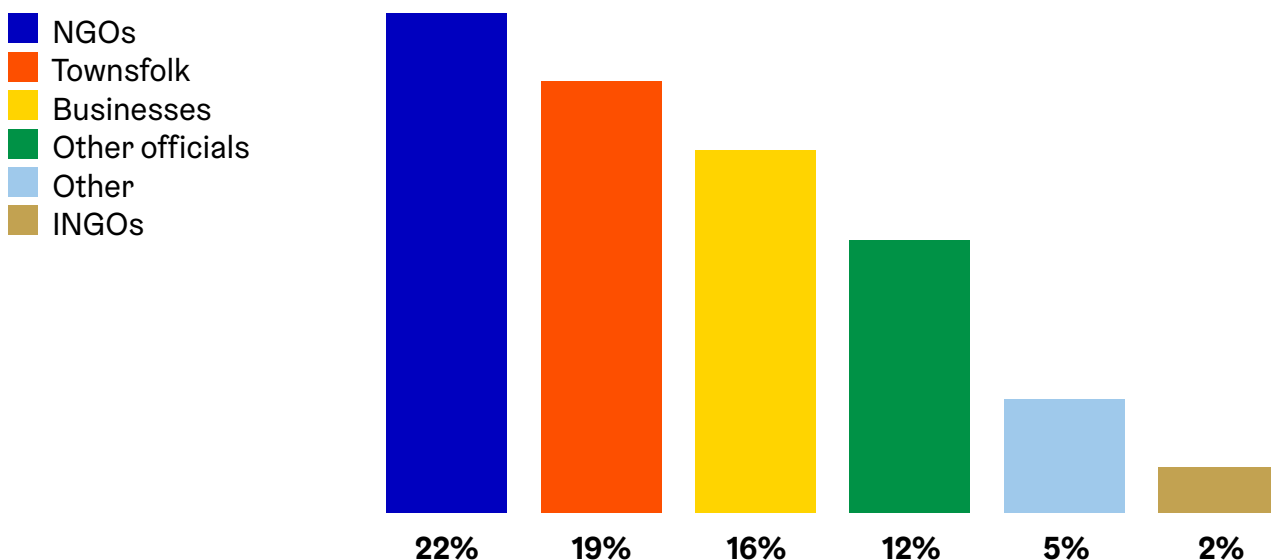
## Key issue identification

**In addition to officials, other actors were consistently involved in identifying the key issues for action plans.**

This was the part of the process in which the knowledge of townsfolk, businesses and NGOs was most taken into account.

After key issue identification especially the role of businesses was greatly diminished as they were as heavily involved only in implementing individual actions.

### What other actors were involved? (n=36)



Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

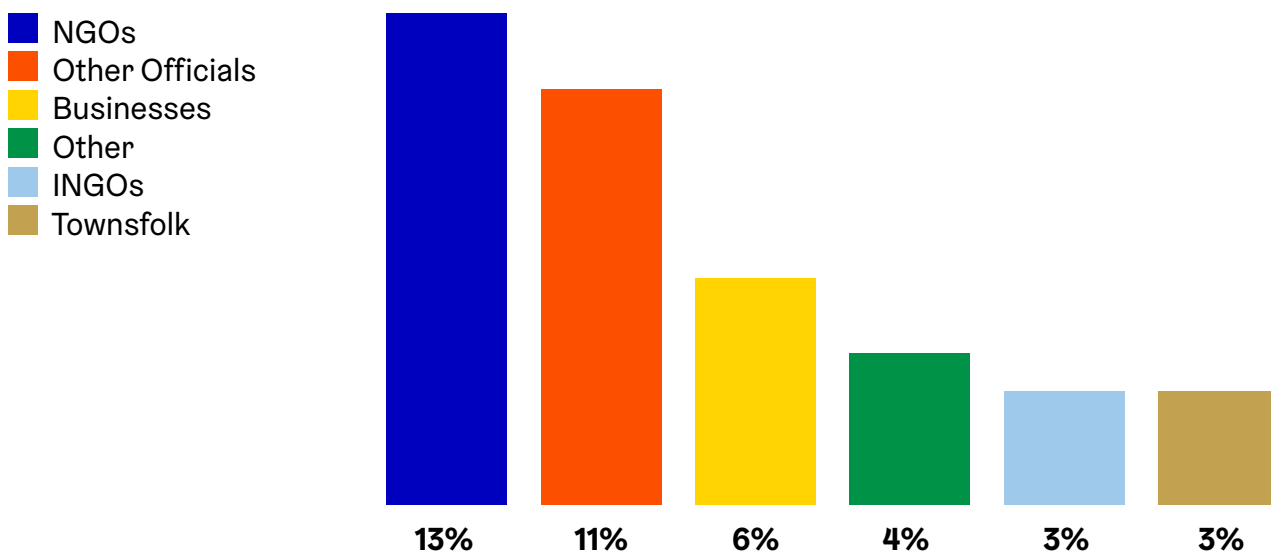
### Monitoring the plan

**The action plans were mainly monitored with litter monitoring and attitude surveys.**

Money was mentioned only in a few answers. Some did not answer this question, which raises the question whether those plans are monitored at all.

Mainly officials and NGOs were involved in monitoring the action plans. Also, one fourth did not answer the question so probably no other actors are part of those monitoring processes or the creation of different monitoring instruments.

### Other actors part of creating the monitoring instruments (n=30)



Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

# Actions

The questionnaire focused more on how the individual actions were chosen, implemented and monitored and what other actors were part of this process than on what particular actions had been taken to prevent littering. That being the case, it should be mentioned that about a third had done an action that dealt with trashcans in a various ways: adding or reducing them, moving them around or upgrading them. Another point is that there were many actions of education and cleanup events.

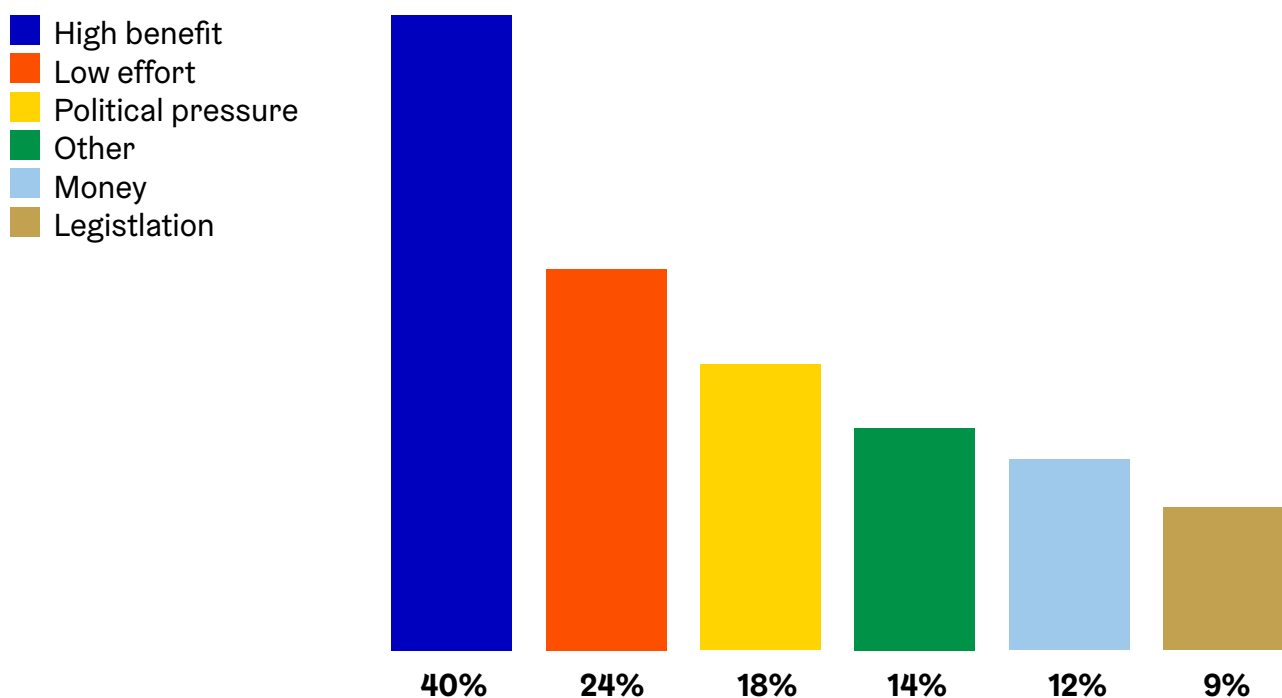
## Choosing actions

**The most important reason to choose an action was high benefits.** Often this was accompanied by the second most important reason: low effort. To summarize, most actions were chosen because they provided a lot of benefit with a low amount of effort.

Another interesting result is the effect of political pressure on which actions were chosen. Political pressure was provided as a reason mainly when there was also an action plan to prevent littering. **Political pressure didn't affect the choice of action when there was no action plan.**

Money, although it didn't have a significant role in the other parts of the questionnaire, did affect which actions were chosen.

### Why was the Action chosen? (n=61)



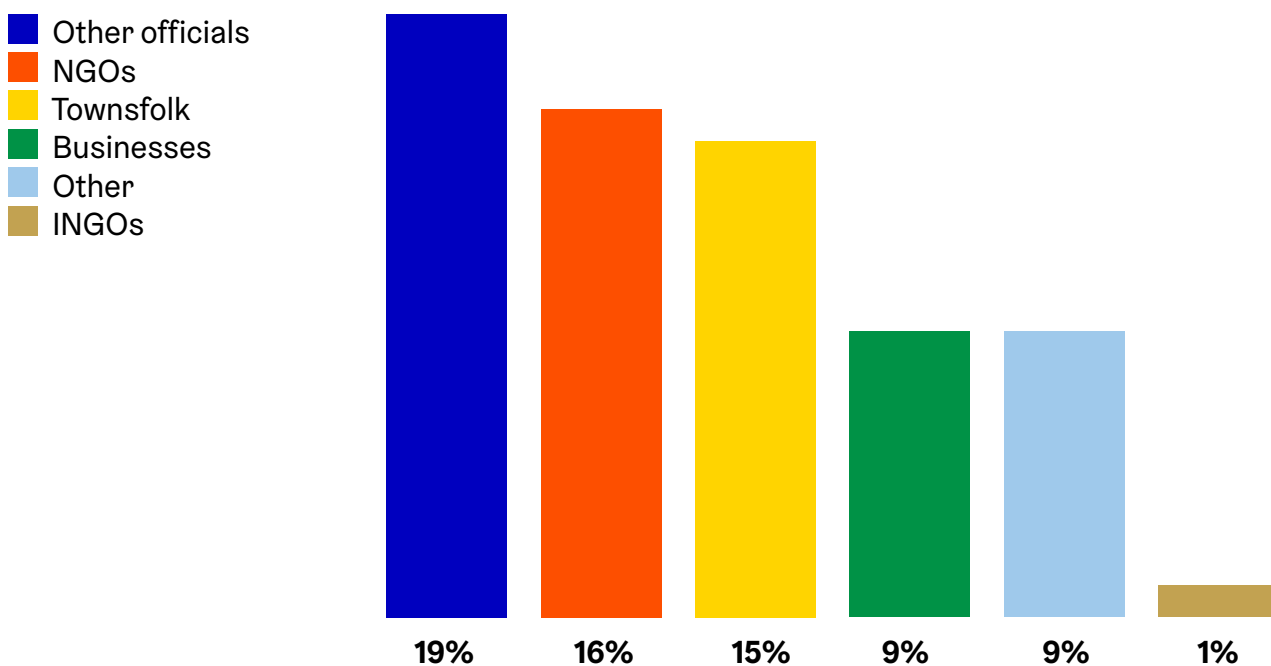
Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020



A quarter of respondents either didn't answer the question on which other actors were part of the decision making or answered that no other actors were part of it. That leads us to the conclusion that **a quarter of the actions were chosen without involving outside opinions.**

When outside opinions were considered, townsfolk, other officials and NGOs got their voices heard the most.

### What other actors were part of the decision process? (n=46)



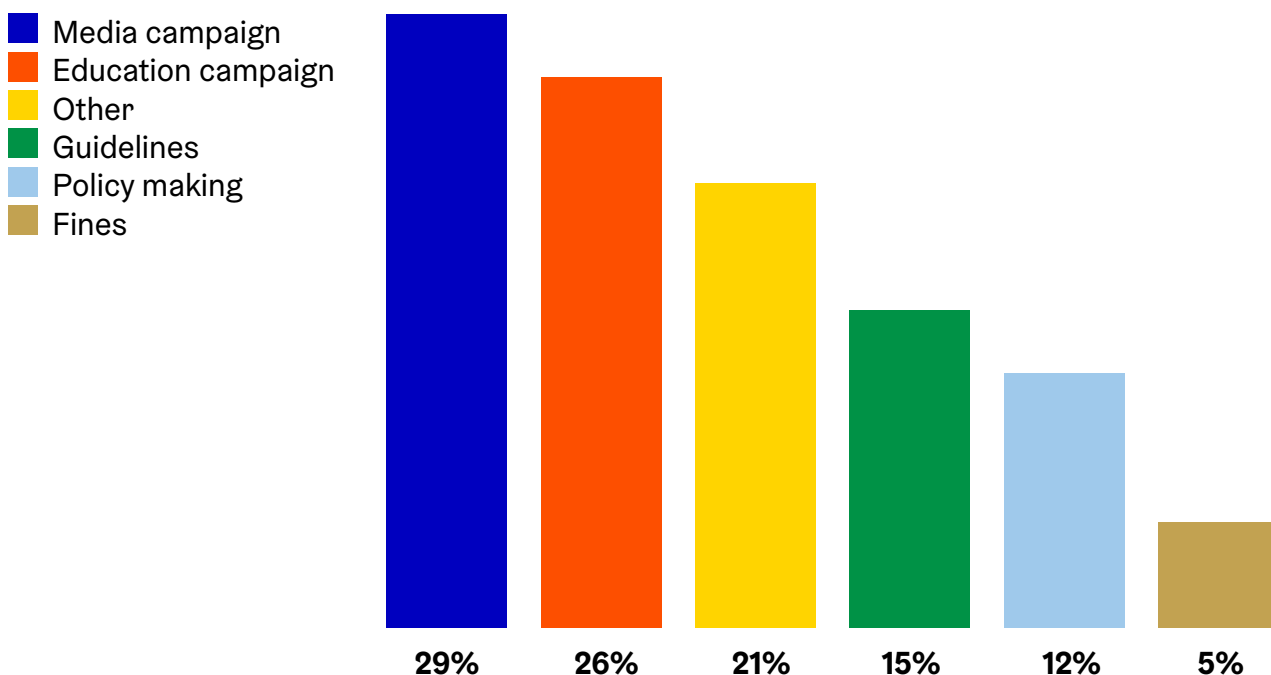
Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

## Implementing the actions

**Specifically communication and education were part of implementing most of the chosen actions.** Answers in the Other category were mainly trashcan related actions.

Like was mentioned earlier, **actions dealing with trashcans were a third of the actions.** This probably has to do with the fact that trashcans are an integral part of the trash prevention infrastructure. Therefore, it is understandable that a lot of trash prevention actions would deal with trashcans one way or another.

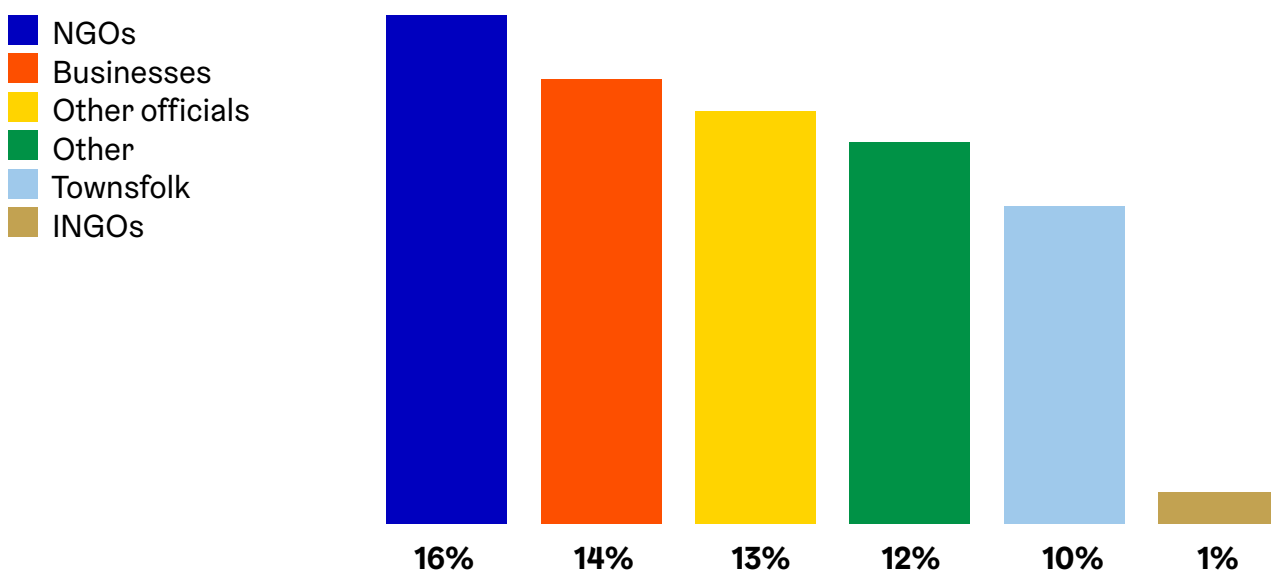
### How was the action implemented? (n=55)



Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

Compared to the previous entries in the questionnaire the role of businesses has changed considerably. Businesses were a part of implementing individual actions even more than other officials. **Businesses were part of implementing the actions considerably more often than in deciding on the actions.**

### What other actors were part of the implementation? (n=39)



Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

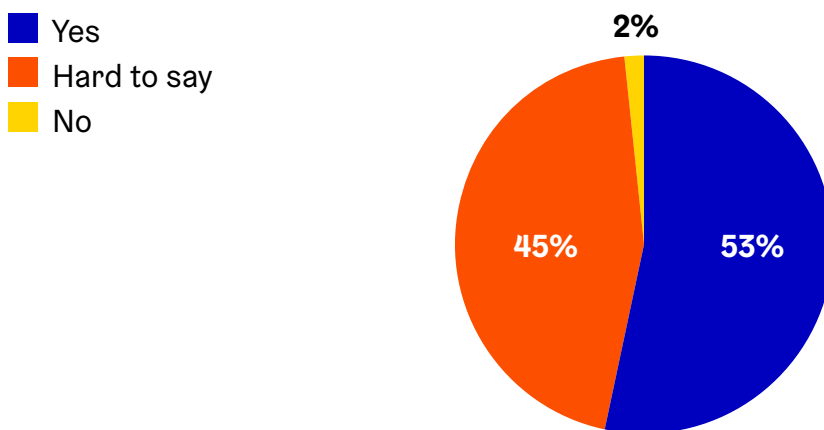
## Assessing the actions

Over half of the actions were considered a success and the rest were difficult to evaluate. Only one was considered a failure.

It is also important to note that **a quarter of the actions were not evaluated**, or at least the question about evaluation was not answered.

When the actions were evaluated the most often used metric, like with action plans, was trash monitoring. Although money affected which actions were chosen, **money was rarely used to evaluate the success of the action**. On the other hand actions were evaluated based on work hours which does affect how much money is spent on the action through salaries.

### Was the action successful? (n=60)

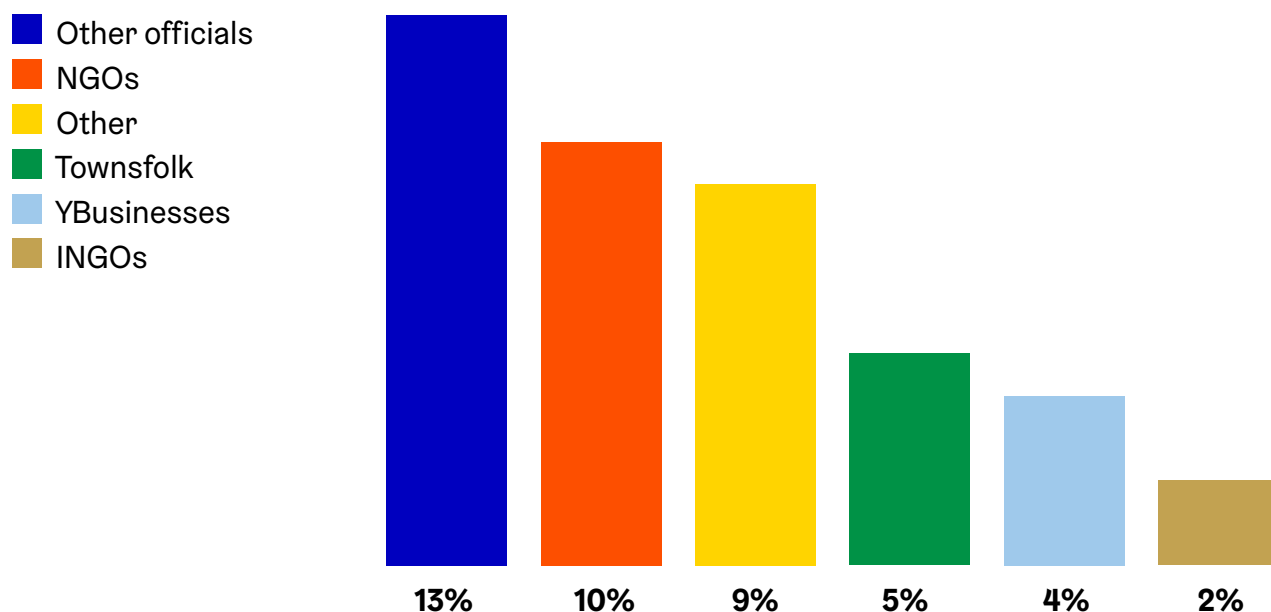


Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

Another interesting result was that, although heavily involved in the implementation, **businesses were rarely involved in evaluating success**.

In other words, **many of the actors that were involved in decision-making or implementation were not involved in evaluating success**.

### What other actors were part of evaluation? (n=31)



Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

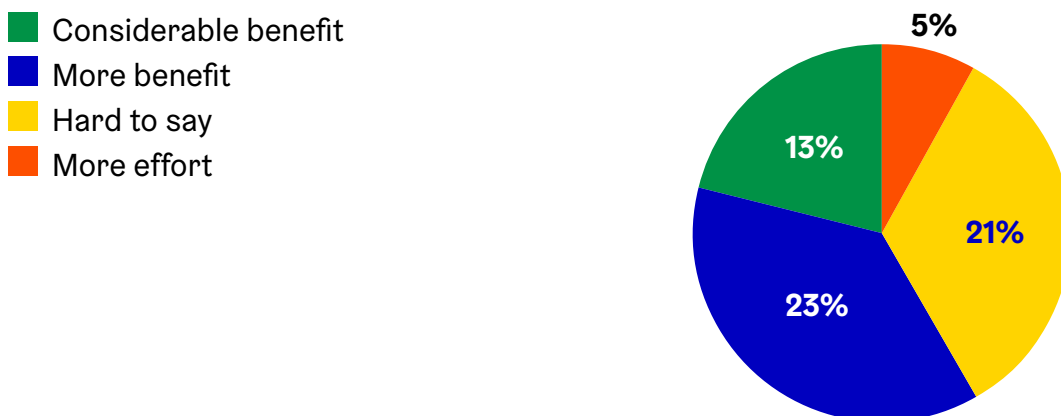
### Benefits from actions

**Most of the actions were felt to have had more benefit than effort to them** and the rest were largely hard to evaluate, though some had more effort than benefit to them.

Half of the actions where comparing the benefit and effort was considered difficult were not evaluated, based on answers to the previous questions.

Unfortunately no individual type of action was consistently found only in the more benefit than effort categories. **It would seem that the benefit and effort of the action has more to do with implementation than on the type of action itself.**

### Benefits vs Efforts (n=62)

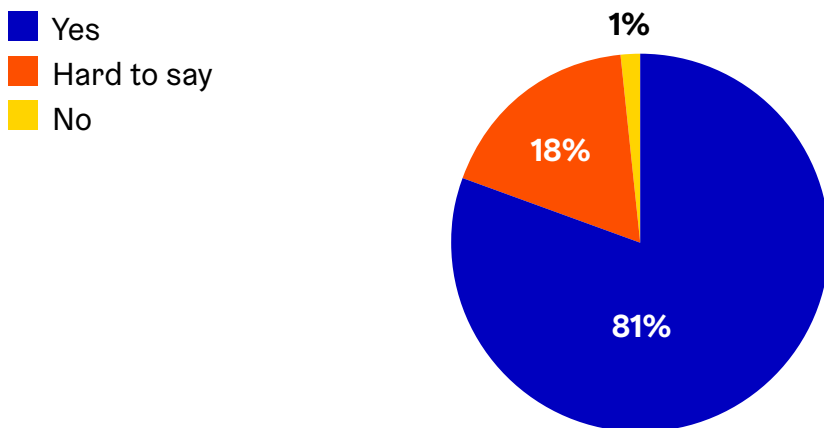


Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

Even though it was hard to say whether some of the actions had more benefit than effort, most actions were recommended to other cities. The action that was considered a failure was the only one that was not recommended.

**Most of the actions were recommended to other cities.** The actions were felt to be beneficial enough that their implementation in other cities too was seen as a positive thing. Even actions where assessing benefits and efforts was difficult were recommended.

**Would you recommend the action to other cities? (n=67)**



Source: Trash prevention questionnaire of summer 2020

# Observations

## Benefits of action

**Most of the actions had more benefit than effort.** There was no particular type of action though that would have been only beneficial. It would seem that the benefits of the actions have more to do with implementation than on the type of action.

## Satisfaction to the actions

**Most of the actions were recommended to other cities.** Only one of the actions was specifically not recommended. The respondents were generally satisfied enough with the actions that they would recommend them to others, even if the benefits and efforts were hard to evaluate.

## Political pressure

Political pressure affected the choice of actions mostly in cases where there was also an action plan. It is likely that **the existence of an action plan creates pressure to act to prevent littering.**

## Money

Despite expectations money played a small role in the planning, implementation and assessment of action plans and actions. **Money does play a role when choosing actions though.**

## Involving actors

**Other officials and NGOs were involved the most in both actions and action plans.** Townsfolk and businesses were involved mainly in identifying key issues for action plans and implementing individual actions. **Particularly interesting was the involvement of businesses in implementing actions,** even though their role was considerably smaller in other parts.



# Next steps

## Improving the questionnaire

The options for different questions should be improved. Especially not having a No or None – option made analyzing the results more difficult than it needed to be. These options would have also made it easier for respondents to answer certain questions. The idea, when the questionnaire was planned, was that if, for instance, the actions success had not been evaluated the question would be skipped. What happened instead was that some chose the option Other, what? and specified that there was no evaluation. Therefore, it is impossible to know how many of the Other – answers in fact mean that there was no evaluation.

The questionnaire would have also benefitted from more specific instructions and definitions for certain terms. Most of the recipients do not speak English as their native language, so it would make sense to try to minimize the possibility of misunderstandings in the questionnaire.

## Follow-up questions

Based on the answers a few interesting paths for follow-up questions emerged.

### Political pressure

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**Political pressure** in choosing actions. It would be interesting to know what kind of political pressure was applied to the decision making process and how did it show in the results.

**Businesses implementing actions.** What kind of roles did businesses have in implementing actions? How much could they affect the specifics of implementation?

**Actions recommended for others** where the benefits and efforts were hard to evaluate. Why was it felt that the actions should be recommended to other cities even though their benefits and efforts were hard to evaluate?

## Number of recipients

Most of the answers to the questionnaire came from Sweden because we were provided with a list of all the municipalities' contact emails. This made it considerably easier to spread the questionnaire in Sweden than in other countries.

In the future, it would be beneficial to spend more time trying to find similar lists of emails from other countries if possible.

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