



# Choosing to reuse

Customer insights from  
SUEZ re-use shops

Report summary

September 2024





In 2023, the 30 re-use shops and Renew Hub that SUEZ operates on behalf of local authorities across England and Scotland successfully prevented more than 500,000 items from becoming waste to be recycled or disposed of.

Instead, these items were fixed, upcycled or resold to someone in the local community to be used again.

However, with millions more potentially reusable items being deposited at household waste recycling centres across the country every year, there is clearly more to be done to keep a larger proportion of them in use by developing a convenient and attractive retail offer.

As part of our ongoing investment into the development of our services, we wanted to understand more about what drives people to buy reused items. Household waste recycling centres and their re-use shops provide an ideal opportunity to engage with the public directly at the point of use, providing an insight into their choices.





Keep Britain Tidy were chosen as partners to conduct the research on SUEZ's behalf, with face-to-face surveys taking place during May 2024 at 11 locations in Greater Manchester, Surrey, Devon, Calderdale and Aberdeen.

Two shifts took place on each site, one at the re-use shop and one on the household waste recycling centre to target both customers and non-users of the re-use shop. The survey team used a mixture of prompted and unprompted questions to prevent limiting answers to specific categories.

**In total, 707 people (517 re-use shop customers and 190 non re-use shop users) took part in the research.**

The findings are extensive and SUEZ teams across our re-use network are already using the learning in their efforts to continually improve how we operate and develop our re-use services. There are highlights too which are useful for anyone currently operating or intending to open a re-use shop at a household waste recycling centre.

We present our top 10 findings here.

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## Stopping items from becoming waste and saving money are the biggest motivators for re-use shop customers.

Almost 50% of customers gave an environmental reason for using their local re-use shop.



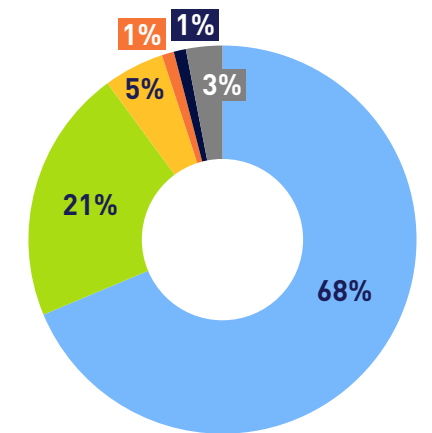
**It's a brilliant idea, all council tips should do same. It saves the planet, there's less landfill, educates people to reuse, and some money raised goes to charity."**

— Leatherhead, Surrey

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## Customers are enjoying the experience.

From the ease of parking to the process of searching for a bargain or unique item, 89% of customers told us that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience of using their local re-use shop. Not only is this important for encouraging repeat custom, but word of mouth was also the second most common reason for someone finding out about their local re-use shop.



Overall shopping experience

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know



**It's all clearly laid out and it's good to buy used instead of new. I'm always interested to see what you might find."**

— Sidmouth, Devon

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### Managing stock and presenting it in the right way are important.

Having a regular turnover of stock and making sure it's presented well plays a key role in determining the quality of the customer experience, 86% of customers told us that the items they want are displayed well and 79% were confident they could find something they needed or wanted.



**It's fantastic, you never know what you can pick up."**

— Pinbrook Road, Devon

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### The social benefits of a re-use shop shouldn't be underestimated.

From the interactions with staff to simply bumping into a neighbour, customers appreciated the more social side of visiting and browsing.



**I meet other locals here, it's sociable."**

— Witley, Surrey

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### The benefits a shop brings its local community are a motivator.

15% of customers reported that the benefits to their local community were a motivator for them to use their local re-use shop.



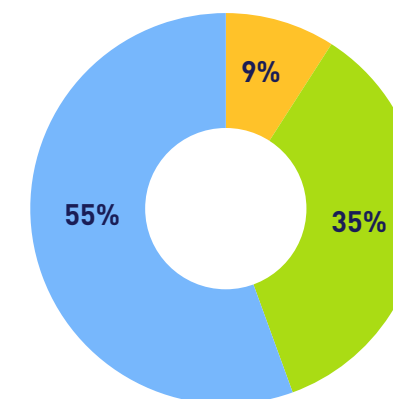
**I like the fact that the money goes back into the community."**

— Arkwright Street, Greater Manchester

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### Once someone starts using the re-use shop, they continue to visit.

9 in 10 customers have visited at least twice before. Encouraging people using the household waste recycling centre to try the re-use shop for the first time is important to increasing customer numbers.



Re-use shop usage

- I have visited it once / for the first time today
- I have visited it a couple of times before
- I have visited it many times before

Base: 517 re-use shop users

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### Customers will make specific trips to visit their local shop.

More than 40% of customers have or would make a specific trip to their household waste recycling centre just to visit their local re-use shop, which also needs to be considered alongside general on-site traffic volumes.

# 8

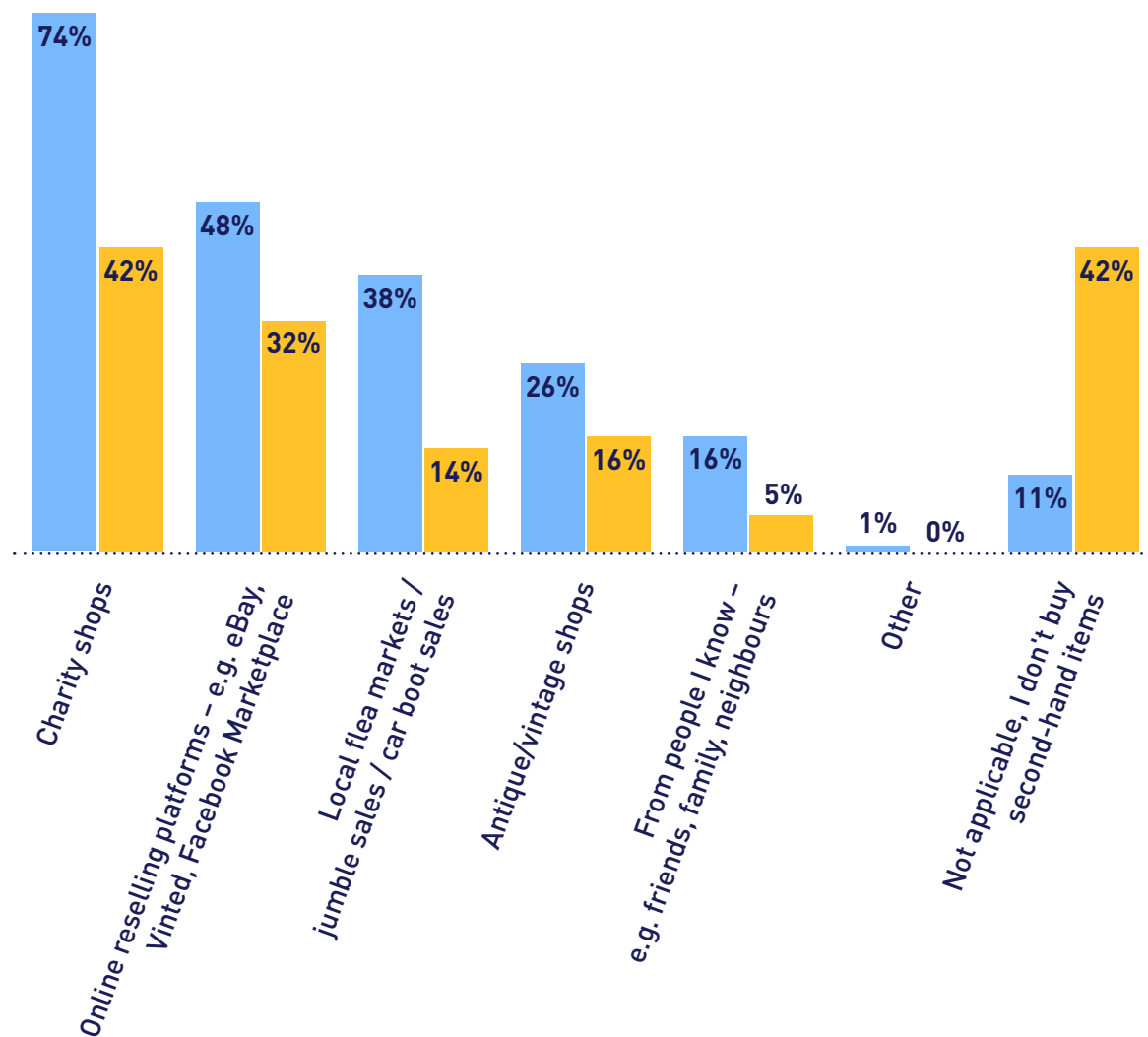
## Household waste recycling centre users who don't buy from the shop are still choosing to reuse.

More than half of non-users are already participating in other second-hand shopping behaviours. Therefore encouraging them to use their local household waste recycling centre re-use shop is simply adding to existing positive behaviours, rather than trying to persuade those who don't choose to buy second hand to start.

### Purchasing second-hand items

- Re-use shop users
- Non-users

Base: 517 re-use shop users, 90 non-users



# 9

## A shop is its own marketing tool.

Making sure a re-use shop stands out to household waste recycling centre users and has 'kerb appeal' could be one of the simplest ways to encourage more people to visit. 31% of household waste recycling centre users who were not currently using a re-use shop simply didn't know it was there, while 70% of customers visited the shop after seeing it on site.

# 10

## Convenience is key.

As with other behavioural change, the easier buying from a re-use shop is, the more likely people are to do it. The word 'convenient' was mentioned over 150 times by customers (19%) during the interview – from ease of access or a shop's location at their household waste recycling centre, to the ease of finding something to buy.



**It's convenient, I always find something that can be reused, and the staff are great."**

— Boysnope Wharf, Greater Manchester

## How are SUEZ using the results?

Beyond using the results to develop our current services, this knowledge and understanding will feed into our longer-term vision and plans for re-use at SUEZ, as we continue to grow our network of re-use shops and associated services and activities.

We are also using our insight to demonstrate to central government the need for more emphasis on national policy to support the higher tiers of the waste hierarchy, and we have more activity planned over the coming months.

## Find out more

To find out more about the research, our re-use activities or to support our calls for policy change, get in touch at [sustainableenvironment.uk@suez.com](mailto:sustainableenvironment.uk@suez.com)



SUEZ recycling and recovery UK  
SUEZ House, Grenfell Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1ES

[www.suez.co.uk](http://www.suez.co.uk)

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