

EXPLORING COMPOSTING HABITS & BARRIERS AMONG STUDENTS AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY: SUMMARY REPORT



**CONCORDIA GREENHOUSE PROJECT
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Summary of Findings:

This study examined composting practices among Concordia University students to identify personal, cultural, systemic, and institutional factors influencing participation. Specifically, it aimed to understand barriers to household and on-campus composting and assess students' satisfaction with existing composting services. The research was guided by four hypotheses: (1) time availability influences composting, (2) upbringing and prior exposure shape composting habits, (3) access to accessible composting services affects participation, and (4) attitudes toward composting influence behaviour.

A quantitative, anonymous online survey of 19 questions was developed and distributed via Microsoft Forms to Concordia students through social media, newsletters, campus organizations, and academic departments. The survey captured demographic information (e.g., program, dwelling type, dependent status, weekly work/study hours), household and campus composting practices, perceived importance of composting, and barriers to participation. Of 126 respondents, 124 completed the survey and were included in the analysis, representing a diverse range of faculties and programs.

Results for Question 12: Do you Currently Compost your Household Food Waste?

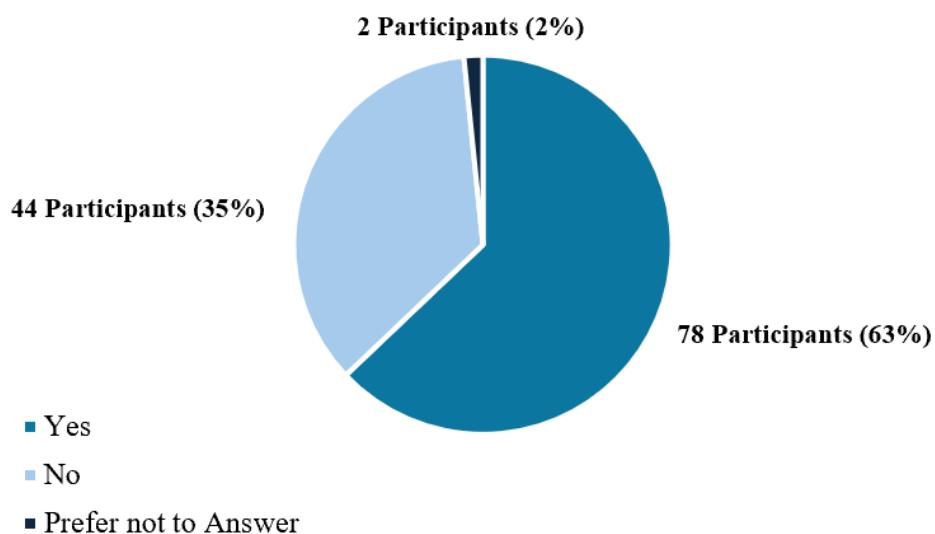


Figure 1: Results for question 12: Do you currently compost your household food waste?

Results indicate that 78 students composted their household food waste, primarily via city pickup (67 students). Among the 44 students who did not compost, the most common barriers were living with individuals uninterested in composting (17 students) and lack of access to composting services (16 students). Other reasons included limited time (11 students) and insufficient knowledge on what is compostable (10 students).

Results for Question 14: If you do not Currently Compost your Household Organic Waste, why? Select all that Apply.

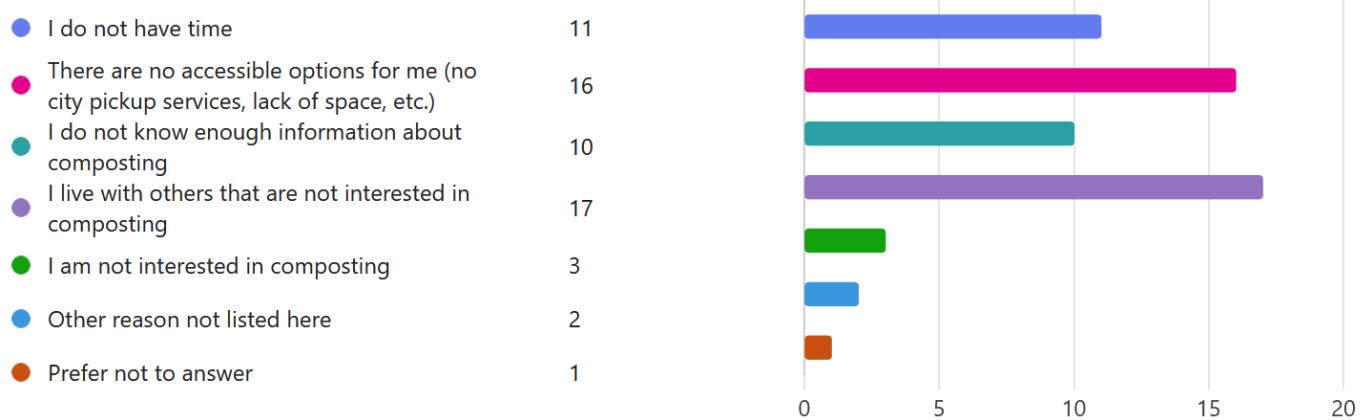


Figure 2: Results for question 14: If you do not currently compost your household organic waste, why? Select all that apply.

Barriers that students faced when composting at Concordia included difficulty locating bins and uncertainty about what materials are accepted in compost bins. Over 90% of respondents perceived composting as important, yet this attitude was not a significant predictor of behaviour. Statistical analysis revealed that upbringing and access to municipal composting services were significant predictors of household composting, while work hours, dependent status, and attitudes were not.

Results for Question 16: If/When you Don't Compost at Concordia, why? Select all that Apply

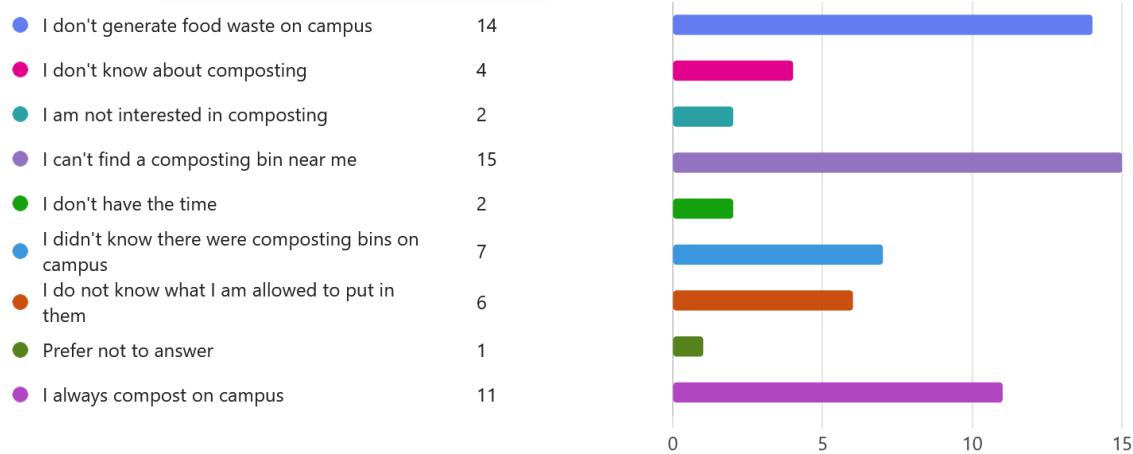


Figure 3: Results for question 16: If/when you don't compost at Concordia, why? Select all that apply.

Results for Question 17b: I think that Concordia University Should Provide More Educational Services on Composting to Students

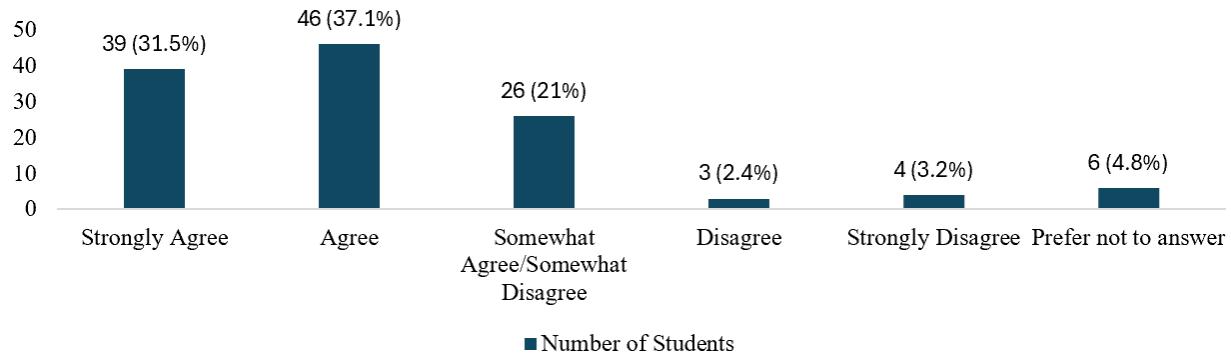


Figure 4: Results for question 17b: I think that Concordia University should provide more educational services on composting to students.

These findings underscore the importance of social and structural factors over personal attitudes or time constraints in shaping composting behaviour. Based on these findings, the study recommends two main strategies to enhance composting participation:

1. **improving composting accessibility and infrastructure:** expanding municipal pickup to multi-unit dwellings, and increasing campus bin availability and visibility;
2. **Introducing hands-on educational programs:** workshops, peer-led demonstrations, and integration into coursework to normalize composting and build familiarity with circular food waste systems.

Evidence from other universities demonstrates that combining accessible infrastructure with experiential learning increases composting participation and enhances environmental literacy, while also fostering a campus culture supportive of sustainable practices. These results highlight that promoting composting requires addressing multiple social, cultural, and systemic barriers simultaneously, rather than relying solely on awareness campaigns. By implementing accessible infrastructure and experiential learning initiatives, Concordia University can strengthen student engagement in composting, contributing to broader sustainable waste management goals within the university and the city of Montreal. **A full report on findings is available on the Concordia Greenhouse Project's website.**