

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

District Department of the Environment



Bag Law Survey Overview

SURVEY DESIGN

In 2012-2013, DDOE commissioned a series of surveys to measure the impact of the Anacostia River Clean Up and Protection Act of 2009, commonly referred to as the District of Columbia's (District's) Bag Law, on reducing litter and to assess the effectiveness of the law in reducing disposable bag consumption. An independent research firm, OpinionWorks, developed and conducted the surveys, in partnership with the Alice Ferguson Foundation and the Anacostia Watershed Society. DDOE provided a grant for the project, funded by fees collected under the Bag Law.

OpinionWorks, a research firm specializing in opinion polling, completed the following representative surveys of District residents and businesses:

- **Resident Survey:** 600 randomly sampled residents across all eight wards of the District. The research call center contacted residents both via landlines and cell phone numbers.
- **Business Survey:** 177 Census-balanced in-depth telephone and in-person interviews of a cross-section of businesses across all eight wards of the District.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Both residents and businesses reported a significant reduction in disposable bag use across the District and substantial majorities of residents and businesses support the bag fee. In addition, both residents and businesses report seeing much less plastic bags as litter throughout the District. Below are a few key findings from the surveys.

- 67% of residents and 68% of businesses reported seeing less plastic bags found as litter today versus three or four years ago.



- Residents estimate that their households have moved from using 10 disposable bags per week before the law to 4 bags per week at the time of the survey – a 60% decrease in household bag use.
- 80% of residents are using fewer disposable bags and 79% of businesses are providing fewer disposable bags to customers.
- 79% of residents report carrying reusable bags when shopping and 74% of businesses are seeing an increase in customers bringing their own bags.
- 50% of businesses have saved money as a result of the Bag Law.
- 69% of businesses reported experiencing a positive or neutral impact as a result of the Bag Law.
- 83% of residents and 90% of businesses either support or are indifferent to the Bag Law, with only 16% of residents and 8% of businesses feeling bothered by the law.