

# Climate Action

## Community & Market Research Report

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**Thurso**  
Community Development Trust

**October 2020**

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**THURSO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST**

**OSCR**  
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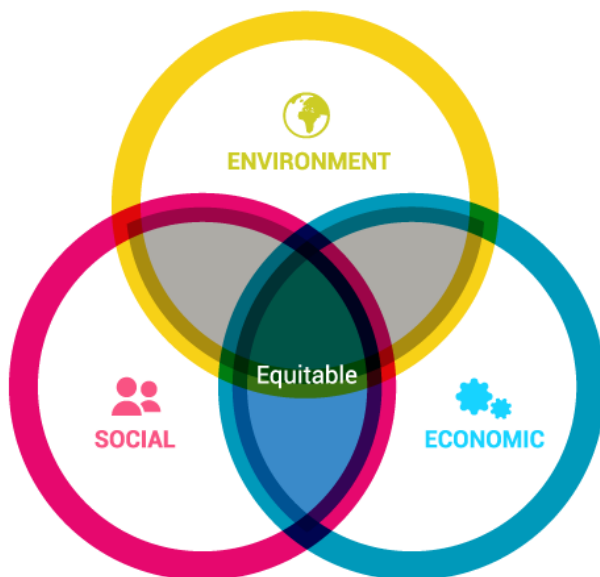
# Introduction

Thurso Community Development Trust have since inception embedded an ethos of Climate Action in developing and delivering projects. The core aim of the Trust is to make Thurso a better place to live, work and visit through community led sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development as defined in the 1987 Bruntland Commission Report and used by the United Nations is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainable Development operates on three pillars working in tandem with each other, Social, Environmental and Economic.

We are currently in a Global Climate Emergency as declared by the Scottish Government in May 2019, Roseanna Cunningham’s statement to the Scottish Parliament indicating the severity of the situation facing countries around the Globe, “There is a global climate emergency. The evidence is irrefutable. The science is clear. And people have been clear: they expect action. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a stark warning last year: the world must act now. By 2030 it will be too late to limit warming to 1.5 degrees.”

To address the Global Climate Emergency action is required from all sectors of society from Global Partnerships, Government, Industry, Businesses, Communities and our own individual actions. The Scottish Government has a target of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2045. To achieve this structural and behavioral change is required from all sectors not least from our community and individuals.

This report outlines the work of Thurso Community Development Trust in addressing the Global Climate Emergency to date and outlines community consultation held over Summer 2020 within the Thurso community, research and community consultation surrounding Covid-19 Recovery and consultation resulting from plans for a Zero Waste Refill Store in Thurso.



The three pillars of Sustainable Development, equity for all being found when all three pillars are met.



# Climate Action in Thurso

Thurso Community Development Trust's 5 Year Strategic plan for Thurso is based on a large community consultation event held in March 2018 using the Scottish Government Place Standard to which responses were received from 20% of the adult population of the town, 1180 people. A key theme emerging from this original consultation was the need to embed climate action in all projects, the people of Thurso wanted to see their green spaces improved, local food and drink, a growing project and for active travel to be enabled throughout the town through walks and cycle routes. As a result of this consultation key strategic threads were developed for the Trust of Economic, Social, Placemaking, Community and Environmental. In terms of our Environmental Strategy this theme cuts across all others in planning and decision making.

*"As a small organisation we may be unable to make large structural changes locally however, the Trust can facilitate, educate and introduce projects which enable our local community to make changes in day to day life that address local carbon emissions. The Trust can also work in partnership and lead by example and aspire to Thurso being a low carbon town."*

- Thurso Community Development Trust 5 Year Strategic Plan

## Climate Action by Thurso Community Development Trust to date:

- Climate Action Policy, we hold a Climate Action policy which includes the sourcing of all procurement of goods, services and supplies should be local wherever and whenever possible. Purchasing from further afield than Caithness is a last resort. Our policy also includes that no disposable or plastic items should be used – we even have ceramic mugs for outdoor events. No food should be wasted, all waste avoided and if necessary to waste is composted.
- Thurso Grows which to date has saved 458 tonnes of carbon emissions locally.
- Led on a Scottish Government Big Climate Conversation event for Caithness with feedback forming the Scottish Government Climate Action Policy.
- The Sharing Shed, taking surplus food to reduce waste and redistributing it with equity.
- A member of Scottish Communities Climate Action Network.
- A member of the Highland Good Food Network.
- We also feature as an example of good practice in the Scottish Government Climate Action Policy.

## Thurso Grows



Thurso Grows funded by the Scottish Government Climate Challenge Fund in April 2019 has through a community garden, workshops on growing, reducing food waste and low carbon eating saved 458 tonnes of carbon emissions and engaged with over 1,000 people, 9 schools, North Highland College and over 20 Community Groups.

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## Community Consultation

During August and September 2020, Thurso Community Development Trust ran an online community consultation regarding climate action in the Thurso Community. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was not possible to host in person workshops or have paper copies of the survey available.

In total 356 people responded to the Survey which was made available on the Trust website and social media channels of both Thurso Community Development Trust and Thurso Grows. An article also appeared in the John O’Groat Journal inviting people to take part in the survey. Of respondents 56% were identified as women, 43% identified as men and 1% were non-binary which matches the general statistics surrounding general social media usage.

Ages of respondents were evenly spread within the groups 18 to 65 years. With 26% of respondents aged 18 – 30, 35% of respondents aged 31 – 40, 31% aged 41 – 50 but only 8% over the age of 50. It is likely that if paper based and event-based consultation had been available the older age categories may have seen a greater uptake in responses.

The first section of the survey asked evaluation questions about the Thurso Grows Project with the following responses.

### **1. Have you over the past 18 months attended a Thurso Grows workshop or volunteer session?**

27% had attended a session or workshop

73% had not attended a session or workshop

### **2. If answering yes, have you changed your behaviours as a result of attending the workshop or session in a response to climate change?**

Responses were open for participants to select more than one option. Of those who responded the following impacts of attendance were measured.

- Growing our own food – 52%
- Regularly composting food and other waste – 46%
- Aware of low carbon food and using seasonal produce and/or eating a plant based diet – 55%
- Have less food waste than previously through meal planning and the food we buy – 76 %

### **3. Over the past 18 months have you followed advice about growing, cooking and climate change on the Thurso Grows and Thurso Community Development Trust social media channels and website?**

86% had followed advice

14% reported not having followed advice

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#### **4. If answering yes, has the online material led to you or your family changing behaviours as a response to climate change?**

Again, respondents could select more than one option when answering the question.

- Growing our own food – 58%
- Regularly composting food and other waste – 41%
- Aware of low carbon food and using seasonal produce and/or eating a plant based diet - 46%
- Have less food waste than previously through meal planning and the food we buy – 82%

#### **5. If you have been unable to attend the Thurso Grows project or follow the advice on social media is there anything that has prevented you from doing so?**

Again, respondents could choose more than one option, in this question they also could enter their own response if an option wasn't suitable.

- I don't know where the Thurso Grows Community Garden is – 19%
- I wasn't aware events were running – 19%
- I didn't feel I had anything to offer the project – 9%
- Timing of events/activities didn't suit – 22%
- Workshops were oversubscribed – 34%

Further analysis of this question from individual responses revealed that of those who submitted their own comments (45 people) 80% would like to have more drop in advice sessions from a centrally located location. 53% of comments indicated that Covid-19 had been a barrier as they were either shielding or the Garden had closed to non essential volunteers. A large proportion of responses also indicated that they had become more aware of the project as a result of the Sir John's Square takeover by Thurso Grows where the square was planted up with vegetables following the cancellation of the Highland Council flower order due to Covid-19.

We have been aware as an organisation that the Thurso Grows Garden location is not easy to locate at the bottom of Falconer Waters Court. This has been an ongoing issue and we had planned on installing signage of banners to direct people but as the Garden had been closed to anyone but essential staff and volunteers we had not put the signage into place during 2020.

#### **6. What if any of the following activities would you be interested in Thurso Grows continuing and developing?**

- Online workshops in composting, growing and gardening – 48%
- Online workshops in reducing food waste – 87%
- Online workshops in seasonal, low carbon food choices – 67%
- In person workshops in composting, growing and gardening – 76%
- In person workshops in reducing food waste – 58%
- In person workshops in seasonal, low carbon food choices – 46%
- Increased growing space – 45%
- Plots available for you to grow your own – 51%
- Support and materials to grow your own at home – 60%
- Growing in more areas of the town e.g. as we have done in the Town Square – 82%

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**7. If we were to expand the range of workshops available in Thurso which teach skills in zero waste and environmentally friendly activities, what would you be interested in?**

- Fermentation workshops – 42%
- Food Storage – 45%
- Jam/Chutney Making – 67%
- Environmentally friendly toiletries – 43%
- Environmentally friendly gifts – 65%
- Upcycling clothing – 47%
- Upcycling furniture – 62%

**8. There are other activities and projects we could explore to promote us being less wasteful, which of the following would you be interested in?**

- A Tool Library where you can borrow tools and equipment – 76%
- A Repair/Reuse facility where you can be taught to repair electrical or household items – 78%
- Sewing, dressmaking and reusing clothes workshops – 54%
- Quality fashion, clothes and accessories swap shop – 54%

**9. We are investigating a facility in Thurso from where we could run a food growing enterprise with the profits invested back into the community. The proposed facility would grow food on a more commercial basis and also provide training and workshop facilities. Which of the following would you be interested in?**

- Training and employability skills development – 42%
- Horticultural qualifications – 32%
- Workshops in learning how to grow – 64%
- Volunteering opportunities – 51%
- Purchase of plants/seeds – 78%
- Advanced permaculture advice and courses – 29%
- Purchase of weekly vegetable boxes – 87%

**10. Would you use a Zero Waste Refill Shop? A shop where you would take your own containers to refill thus eliminating food wrapped and packaged in plastic?**

- Yes – 95%
- No – 5%

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### **11. What type of products would you be interested in buying in a Zero Waste Refill Shop?**

- Dried food, flour etc – 80%
- Locally grown Thurso vegetables – 92%
- Environmentally friendly toiletries – 69%
- Environmentally friendly cleaning products – 77%
- No plastic household products – 78%

### **12. Would you welcome a central advice point where you can get information on being more environmentally friendly and reducing your waste?**

- Yes – 95%
- No – 5%

## **Analysis of Climate Action Consultation**

There exists an appetite in Thurso for further climate action activities. Thurso Grows has been a successful project which was agile and able to pivot during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of the stated respondents of the survey only came to the project during the pandemic with the planting of Sir John's Square and became aware of the further climate action activity taking place.

More people are encouraged to grow their own and additional data from the Thurso Grows team reveals that currently a group of 60 people are being supported via a Whatsapp and Facebook group in growing their own with 85% active participation.

Workshops held by the project and run as a self sustaining pilot outwith the outcomes of their funding have been well attended, over subscribed and the responses in this survey indicate that they would be popular in the future and gain a greater following.

A Zero Waste Refill Store is of great interest in addition to this survey it has been requested by 52 members in responses to Member's emails and our regular calls out to the community for areas of development that they would wish to see in Thurso. Purchase of locally grown vegetables rates very highly throughout the responses and is reflected in earned income of the Trust in Summer 2020.

A survey run at a similar time across Caithness facilitated by Thurso Community Development Trust on Covid-19 recovery clearly identified the need for training and wider opportunities for young people. This was also reflected in this survey in the percentages of people who would be interested in training opportunities both more regimented and also ad hoc as workshops or more specialised horticultural and permaculture courses.



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# Business Feasibility Plan

## Zero Waste Shop in Thurso

Following the results of the Community Consultation, Thurso Community Development Trust were interested in researching further the potential for a Zero Waste Refill Shop in the Thurso Community. Mindful that the impact of Covid-19 and previous to this a slight downturn in the main shopping area of Thurso in Rotterdam the Trust was aware that shop units may be available and that sales of units was proving slow. The Covid-19 recovery consultation run parallel to the Climate Action Survey had indicated fears for the economy and town centre. Fears also existed surrounding training and out migration of young people and opportunities for them. The Trust requires a new office in a central location due to the now profile as a Community Anchor Organisation and a mini-hub while other premises are investigated in which when restrictions are lifted from Covid-19 to bring small groups together. A Zero Waste Refill Store therefore could with a capital investment prove to be an economic advantage to the town centre, assist the community in reducing carbon emissions and single use plastic, provide a small community hub/workshop space and enable the Trust to be centrally located for advice and as an anchor to businesses and other community and voluntary groups.

The key to this approach is could this building/hub be sustainable and generate an income which is associated to the Greenhouses development but also enables profits to be reinvested so the Trust is less dependent on grant funding. Working with BA Business Studies Student from North Highland College we conducted further research directly into market researching and the feasibility of a Zero Waste Shop. The following is the report and research conducted by the student.

### 1.1 The Opportunity

The Scottish Government is investigating the possibility of banning single use plastics. Traditional supermarkets use a lot of single use plastic packaging. A 2018 report by the Environmental Investigation Agency and Greenpeace found that the 10 largest supermarkets in the UK produce 903,000 tonnes of single use plastics.

A 2018 report by the United Nations advised that without intervention the plastics industry will account for 20% of the world's oil consumption by 2050. According to the report 36% of plastics made are for single use and designed for immediate disposal such as milk bottles, freezer bags, cereal packaging, rice bags, etc. Single use plastic is often too thin to be recycled and reused so ends up in landfill. In 2015 of the 141 tonnes of packaging waste produced, only 14% was recycled. Plastic takes thousands of years to break down and is not biodegradable.

A Zero Waste Refill shop will take advantage of the increase in government policy and public awareness by addressing a gap in the market for an environmental shop in Thurso. It will be completely free of single use plastics, have refill stations where consumers can bring their own containers and top up on dried cupboard goods from baking ingredients to pulses to herbs. It will stock plastics free and environmentally friendly cleaning products. There will be a selection of quality household items from scrubbing brushes to toothbrushes to eye pads which will be plastic free. There will also be a range of jars that people can buy when they start shopping reusable. This report will address if this business could work as a social enterprise for Thurso Community Development Trust.

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## 1.2 The Market and The Customer

In the questionnaire for the eco-shop 80.2% of respondents were female (appendix 3, question 3) with 39.6% of respondents in the age group 31-40 (appendix 3, question 2). 95% of respondents said they would use a shop where you refill your own containers (appendix 3, question 13). If this transfers to the Highlands and Islands Enterprise report that would give a potential market of 1143 people, based on the female population of 51% in Caithness, aged 25-44 in Thurso. While everyone in this age range is unlikely to use the market, there will be other consumers out with this age range who could not be reached with the online survey due to limitations in circulating it.

There is significant investment from the Scottish Government in sustainable development (appendix 5). Their latest sustainable development plans lay out how they will make community led development lead for sustainable development. The Scottish Government are also currently investigating the possibility of banning certain single use plastics Nisbet (2007) examined data from 2 surveys on if people had “heard of global warming” and the awareness had increased from 39% in 1986 to 91% in 2006.

The questionnaire shows there is clearly a market for an eco-shop in Thurso, especially with the current push from the Scottish Government on community-led sustainability. An eco-shop and environmental hub as part of Thurso Community Development Trust could capitalise on both the government initiative and the market in Thurso for such a shop.

## 1.3 The Industry

Strategic analysis of the business with Porter’s 5 forces model (Porter, 1979) shows that (appendix 7) while there are already several medium to small supermarkets in Thurso, there are none that put the environment as their main ethos. The threat of substitutes for the eco-shop remains low. Asda opened its first eco shop this year (Asda, 2020) and is looking to open more in 2021. Although there is not an Asda in Thurso it remains possible Tesco will follow and open eco-stores. This is a longer-term threat and it would be hoped the shop would build a loyal customer 80:20 customer base. This is the pareto rule where 80% of business comes from 20% of your customers (Harvard Business Review, 2012), would be established and unlikely to change to another provider. The small population of Thurso makes it unlikely that it would be appealing for another eco-shop to open in Thurso.

The competitive advantage for The Zero Waste Shop comes from its unique selling point of being a one stop shop for your environmentally friendly, low carbon shopping. If it is run through Thurso Community Development Trust as a social enterprise, it will be poised to capitalise on the Scottish Government sustainability policy (Scot.gov, 2020) which puts community led projects at the centre of leading sustainability.

The delivery for Highlands and Islands can be costly, especially if ordering in lower numbers. For a competitive advantage, it would be beneficial to form an environmental businesses group with other vendors in the small towns from Inverness to Thurso, where orders could be bought in bulk and shared and therefor offer increased bargaining power with larger orders.

## 1.4 Assessment of the Entrepreneurial Opportunity

The research shows that there is a market for this type of shop in Thurso. There is a drive in government policy and public opinion towards individuals affecting climate change. 78% of respondents to the questionnaire (appendix 3, question 10) said they did think the individual could make a difference to the environment.

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Using Timmons model of entrepreneurial process (Mullins, 2018) the following critical success factors have been identified for the business:

1. Thurso Community Development Trust running this as a social enterprise so not only is the shop sustainable and environmentally friendly but profits will be reinvested in the community. This achieves the Scottish Government's policy of making communities and development trusts take the lead on sustainability. It also helps attract customers with 95% of respondents in the market research questionnaire saying they would be more likely to choose a small local shop that was socially aware and contributed to the local community (appendix 3, question 18).
2. With the current government policies in place and there being no eco-shop in Thurso yet, this is the perfect time to take advantage of a gap in the market. For this shop to be profitable it must open before a competitor opens so it can establish a strong customer base and presence in the community. This will help resist future competition.
3. The team will be fully trained on in store products and their benefits and uses, as well as the impact of plastic and chemicals on the environment. Trainees will be identified so that customers know they may not be as knowledgeable or may take a little longer.
4. The business must ensure there are no single use plastics in the shop at all. The shop has to have enough of a range of products that fulfil a customer's standard shopping needs.
5. The business has to support local business where possible. Stocking Caithness made products where possible, expanding to Highland products where possible. This reinvests back into the local economy and also reduces carbon from miles travelled for products.

## 1.5 Conclusion

The Zero Waste Shop would be a unique business in Thurso. It offers a completely different experience to any existing food shop and satisfies a growing need to shop more environmentally friendly. The research done in the business feasibility plan evidences there is a clear market for this business.

## 1.6 Recommendations

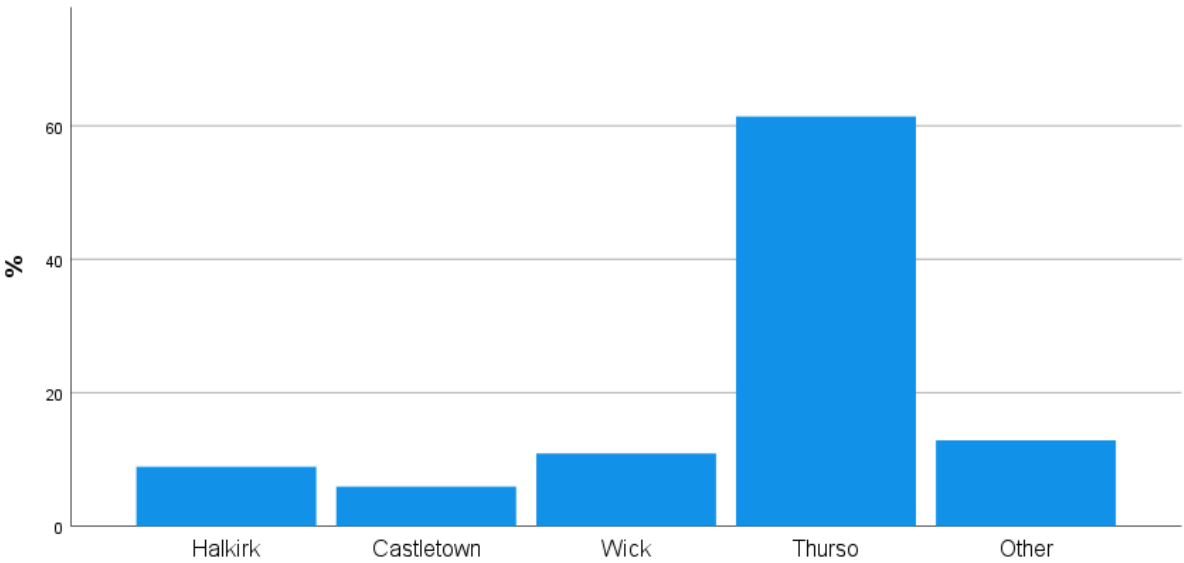
This report recommends the following next steps:

1. Compare financing options available to a private business or a social enterprise and decide which of these would be preferred.
2. Compare stock for the shop from smaller, ethical and sustainable businesses with an ethos similar to the eco-shop versus using cheaper, recognisable products that have been made sustainably, such as Colgate's bamboo toothbrushes.
3. Investigate how the shop could fulfil the needs of drop-in customers who have not brought their own containers while still being zero-plastic, sustainable and keeping costs low.
4. Create a financial plan for how this business could be profitable and a marketing communications plan on how to reach the customer base for this business.

# Appendix 1 – Survey Results

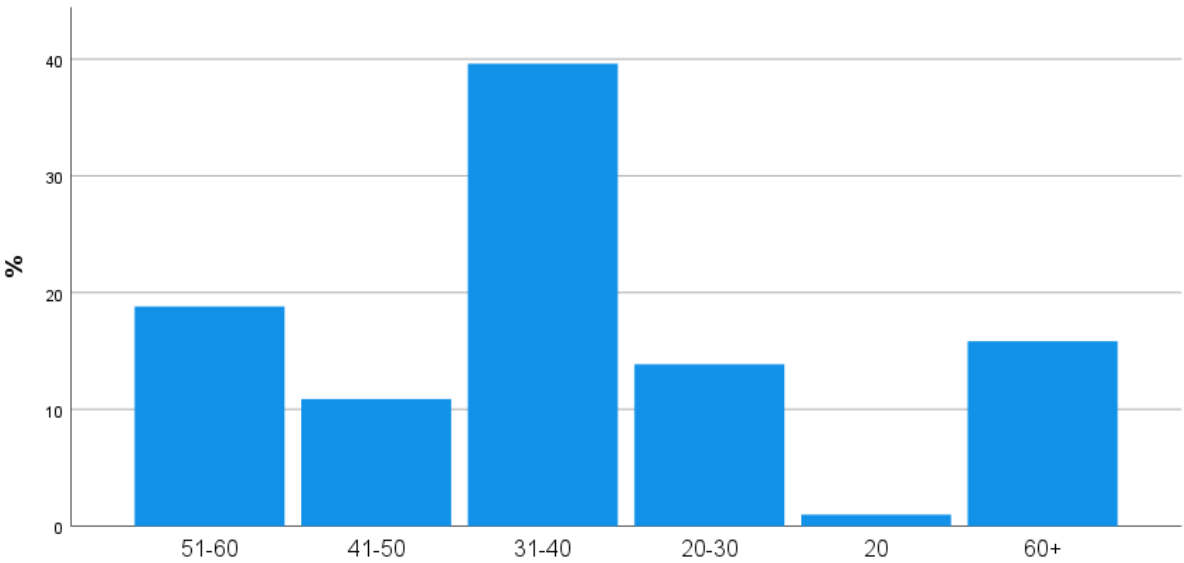
## Question 1

What area of Caithness do you live in?

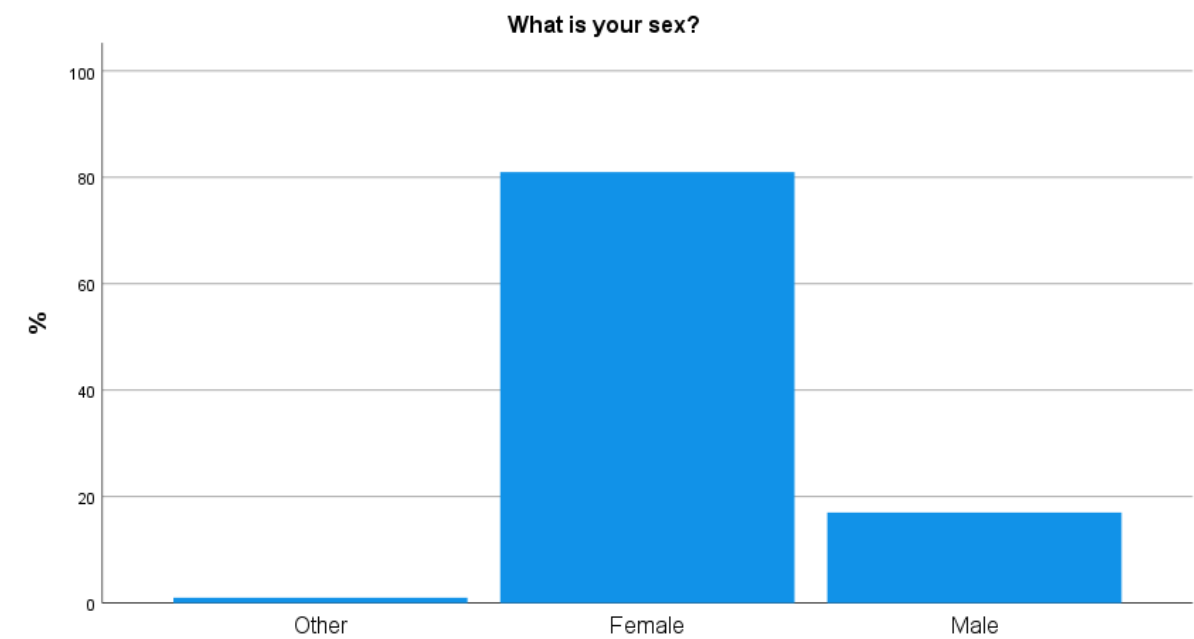


## Question 2

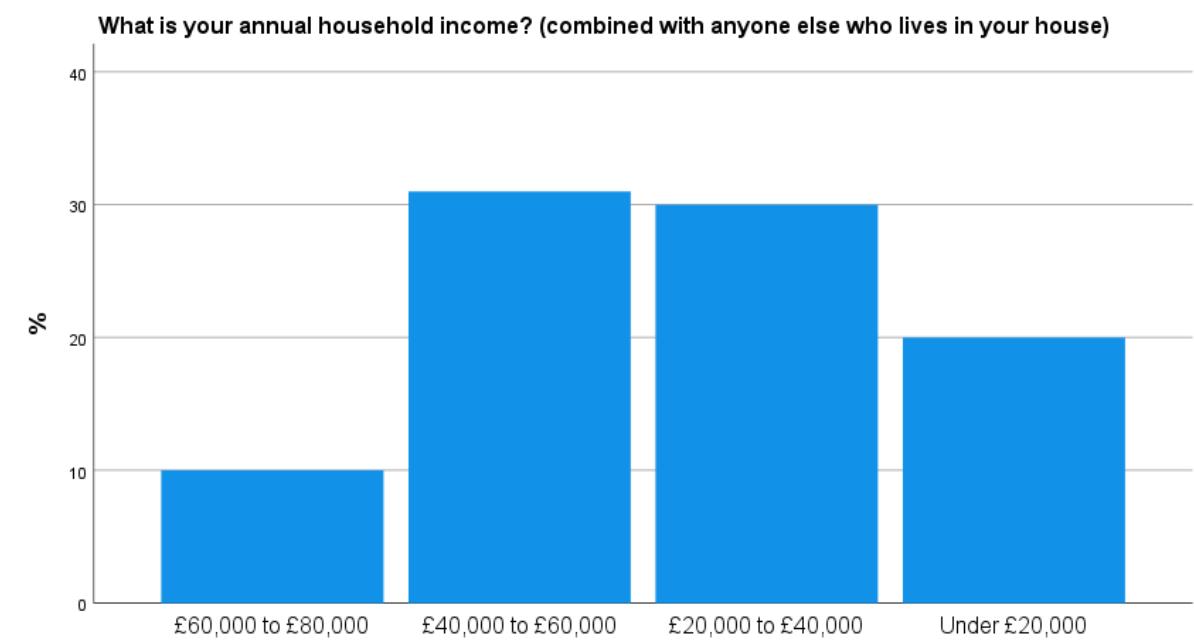
What age range are you in?



Question 3



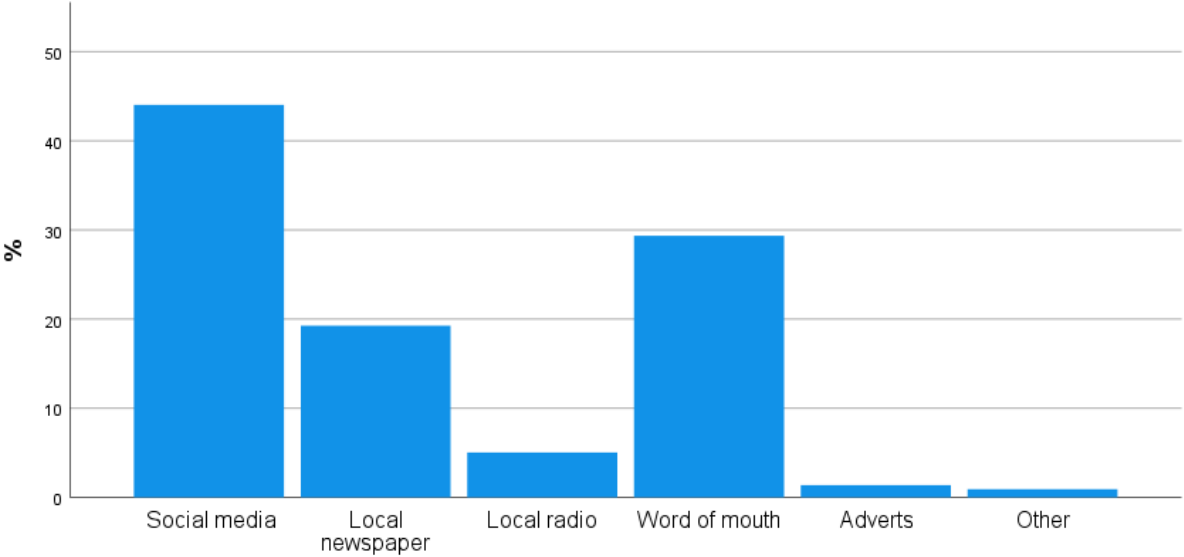
Question 4





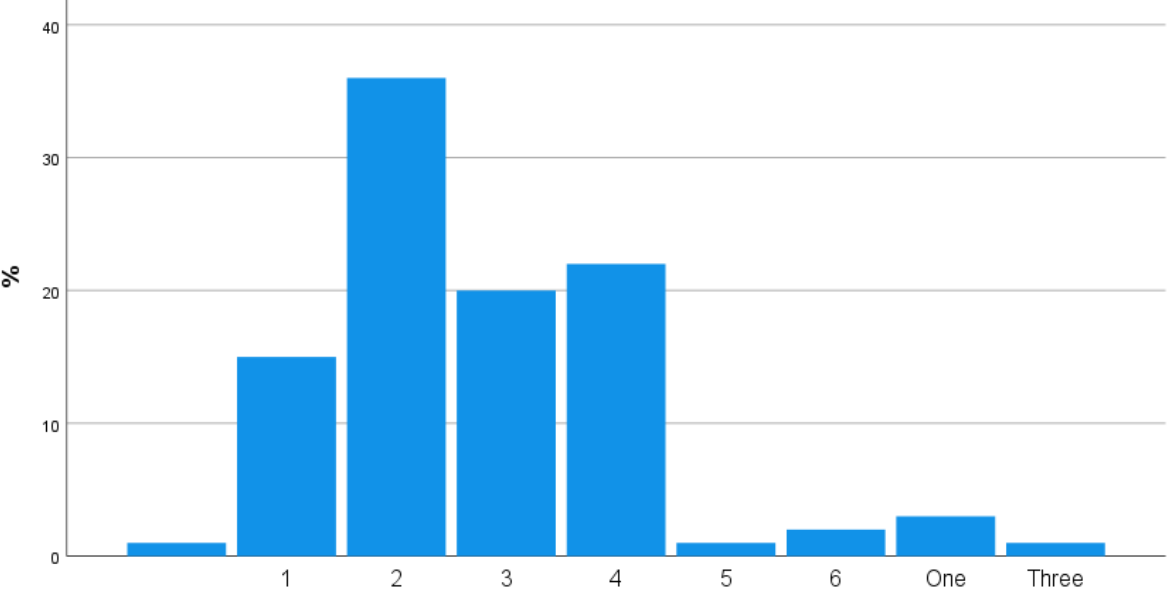
Question 5

Commuication Where do you get most of your information on what is happening locally? Please select all that apply.

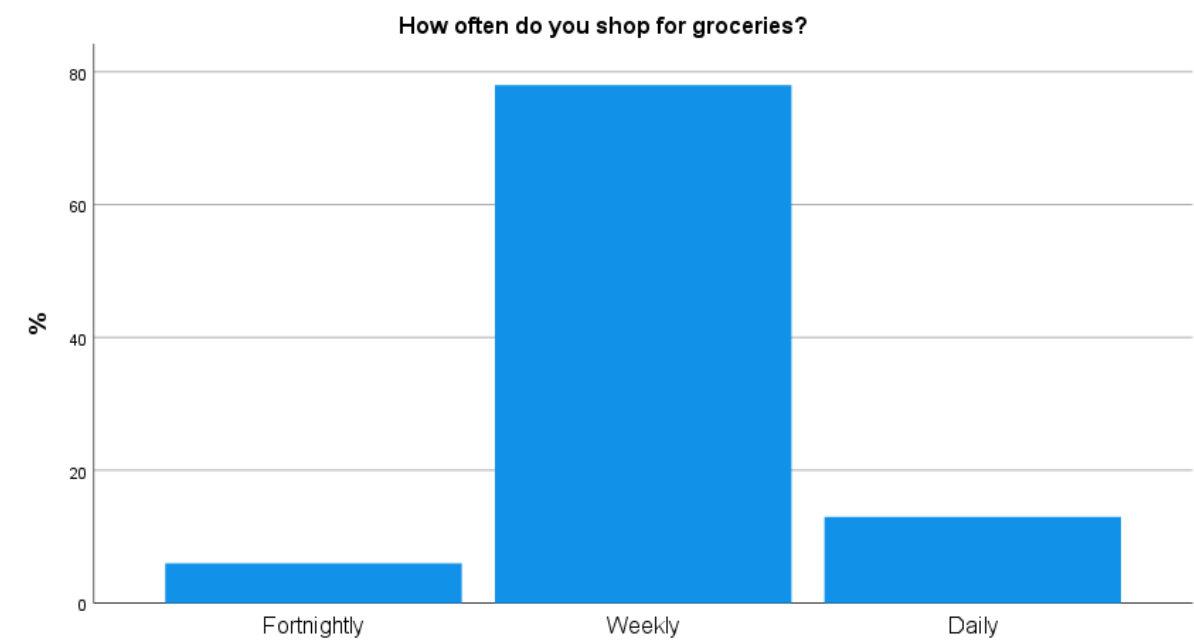


Question 6

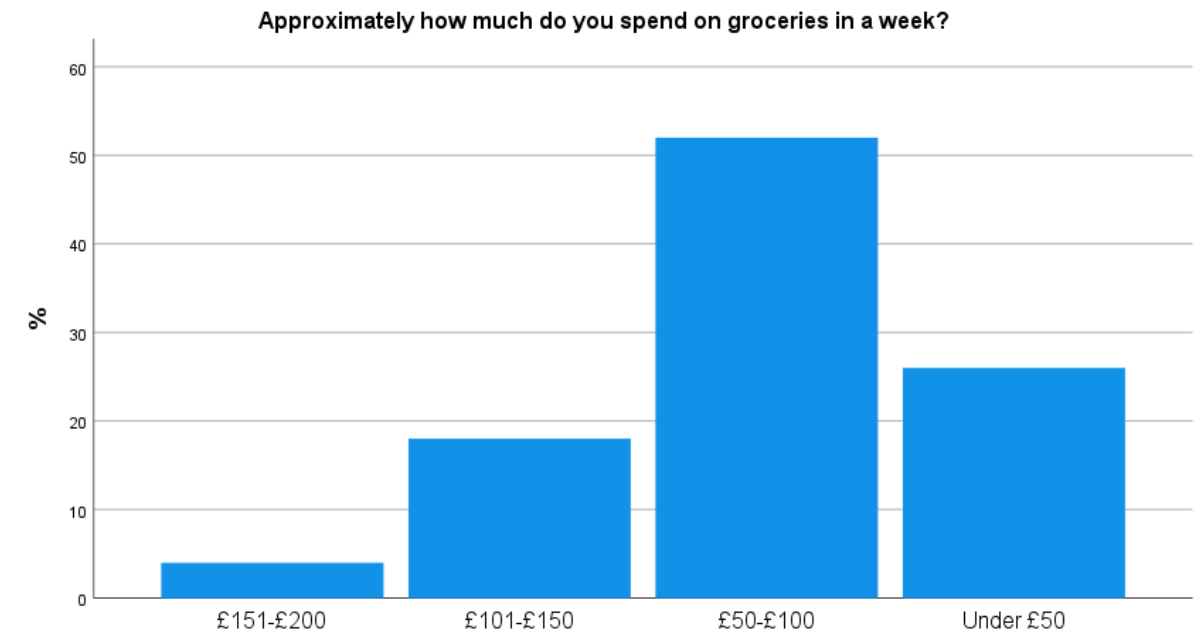
How many people are in your household (including yourself)?



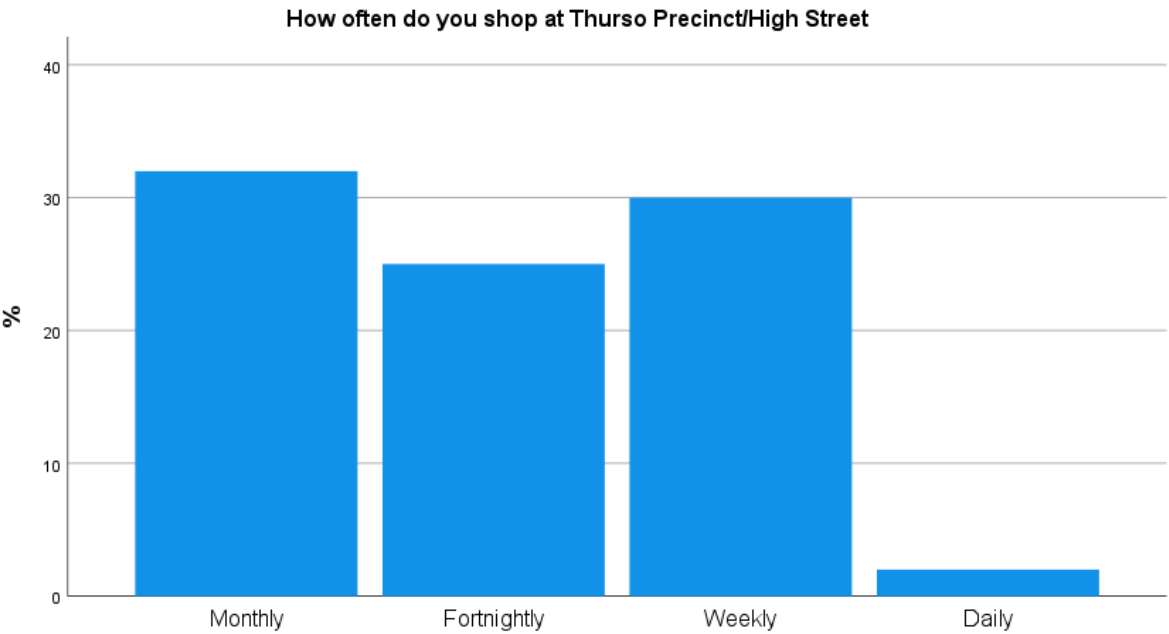
Question 7



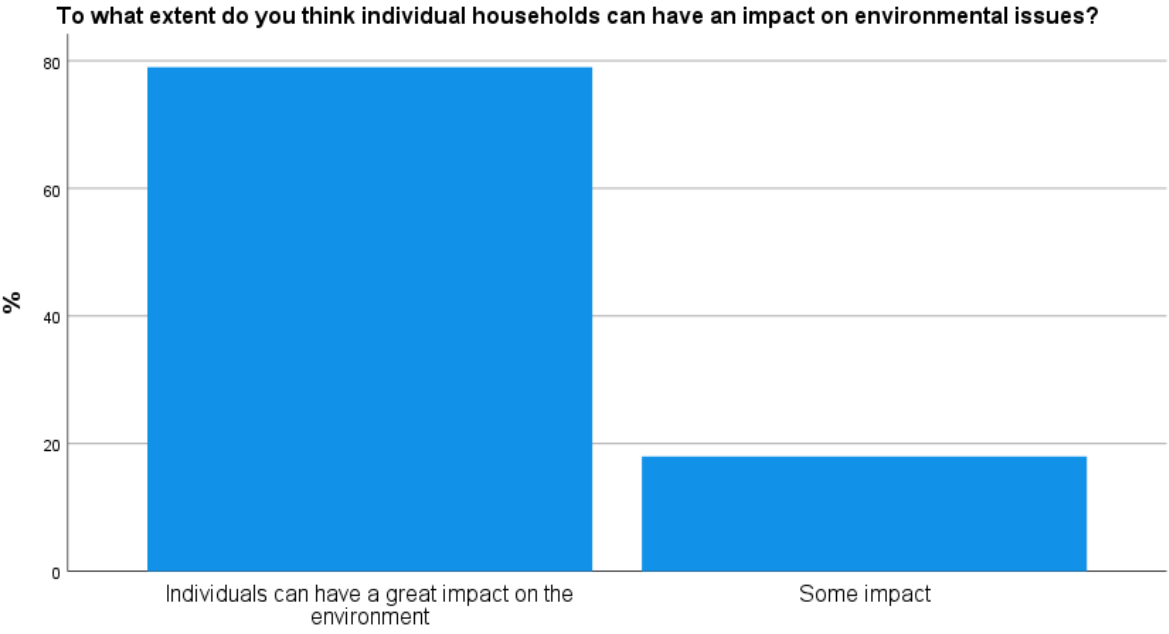
Question 8



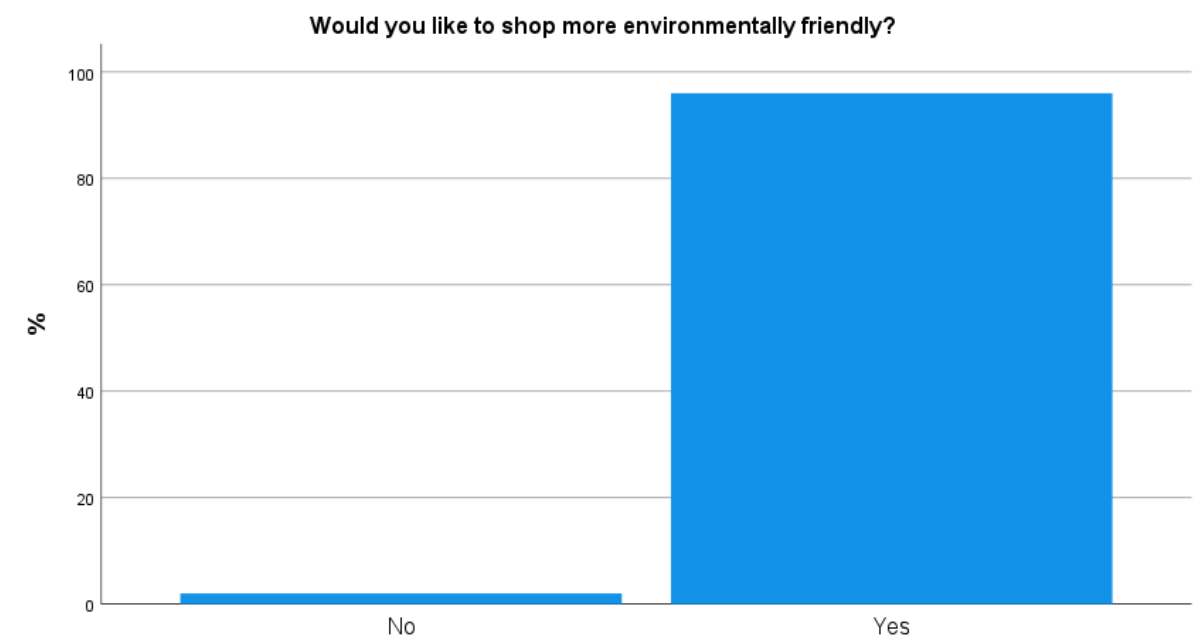
Question 9



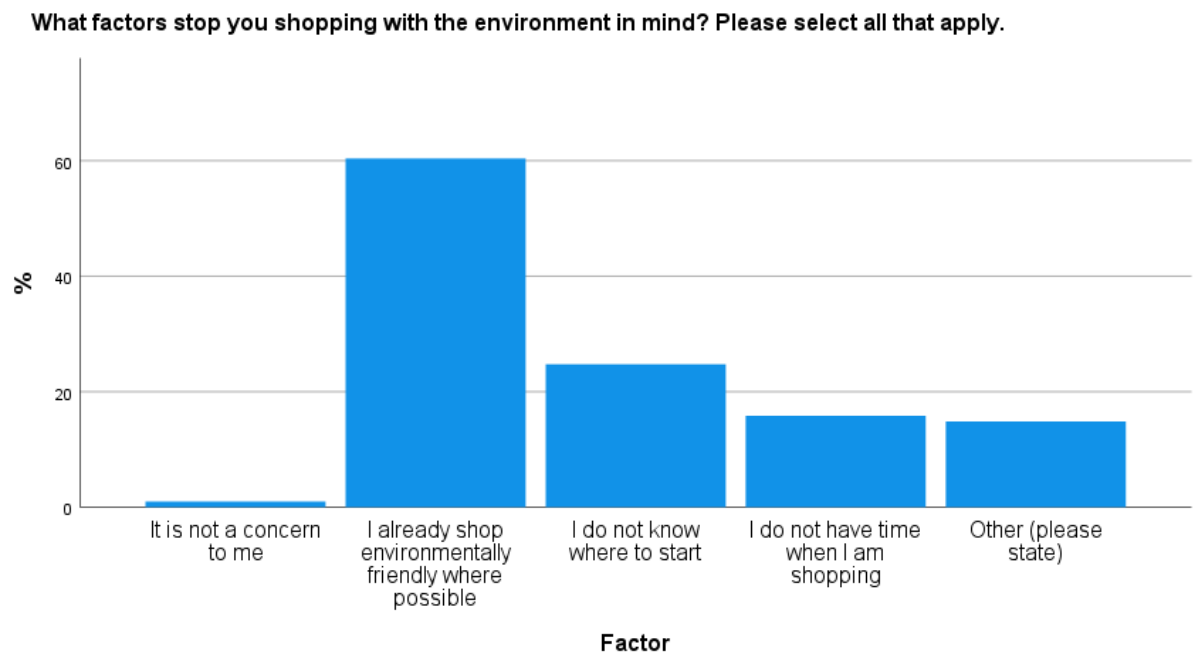
Question 10



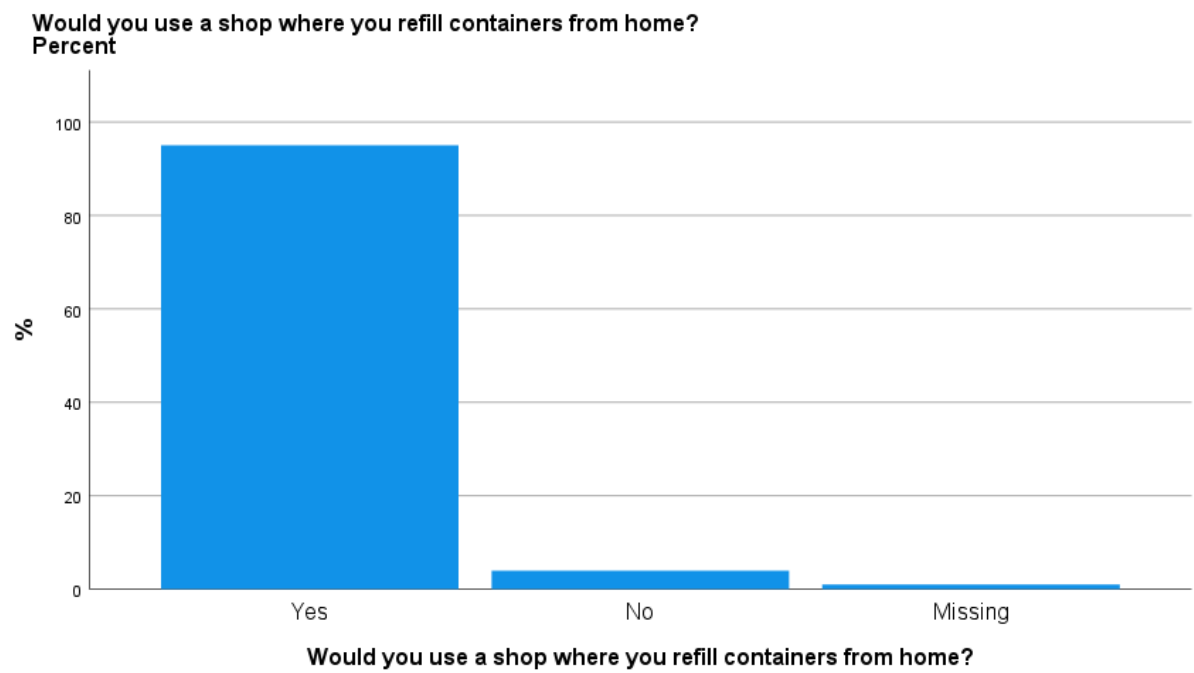
Question 11



Question 12



### Question 13

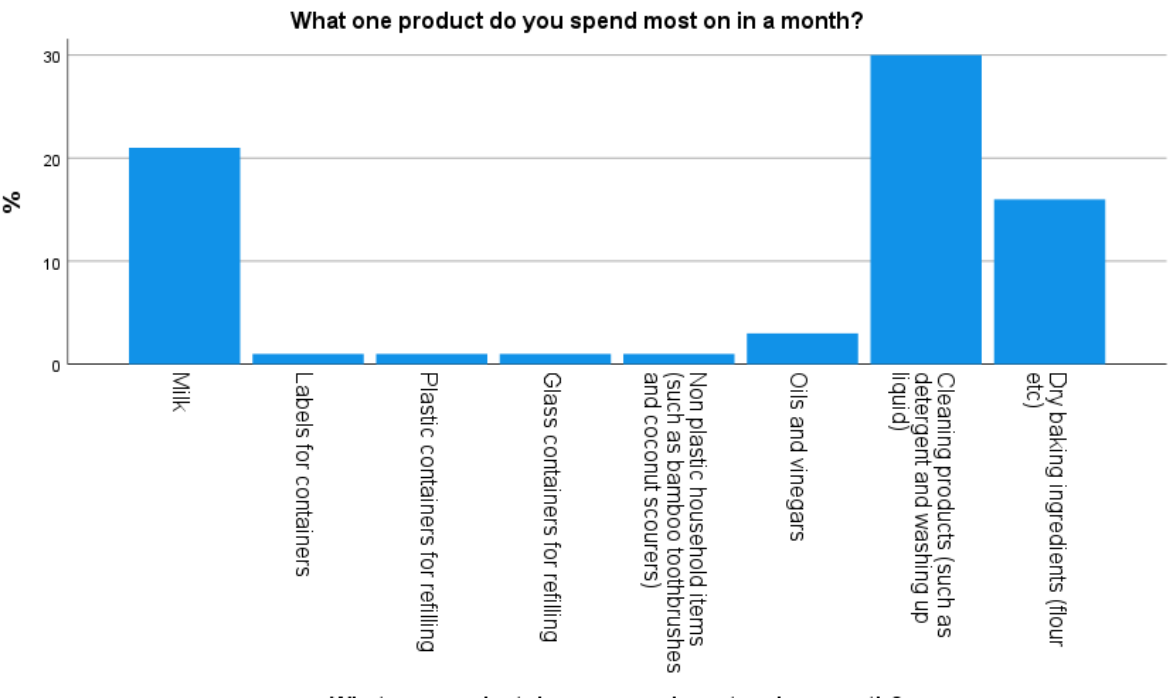


### Question 14

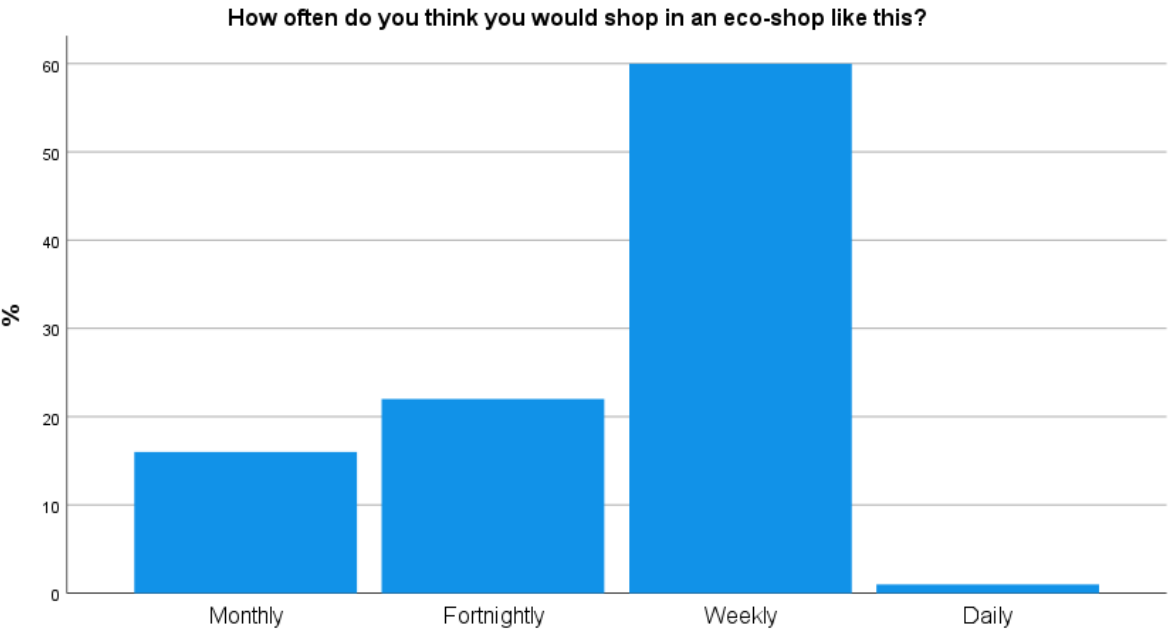




Question 15

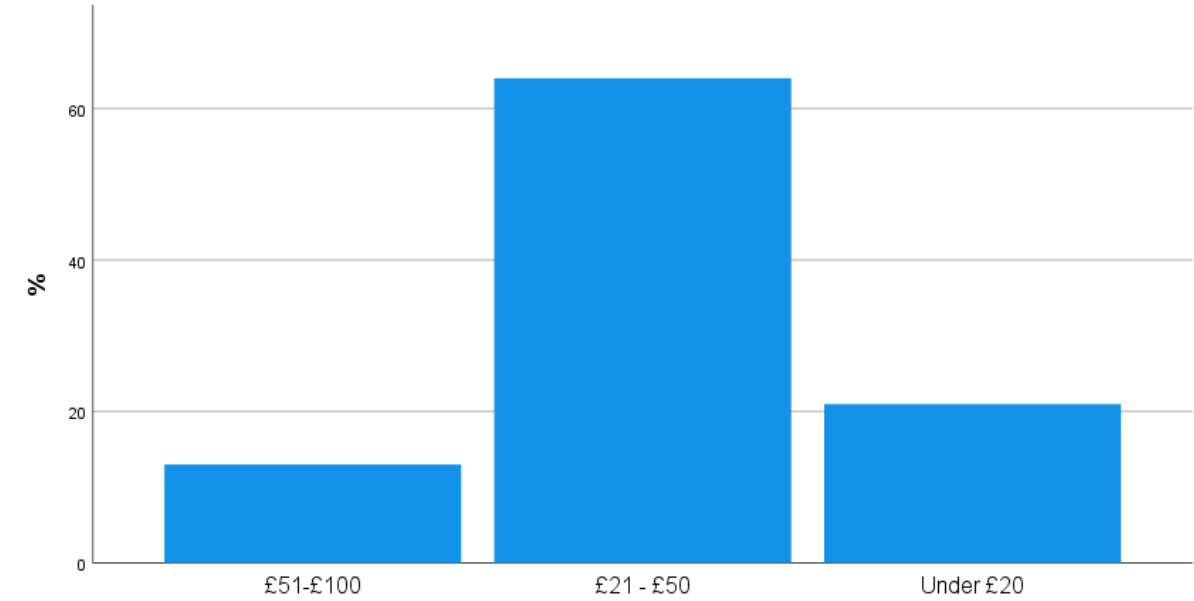


Question 16



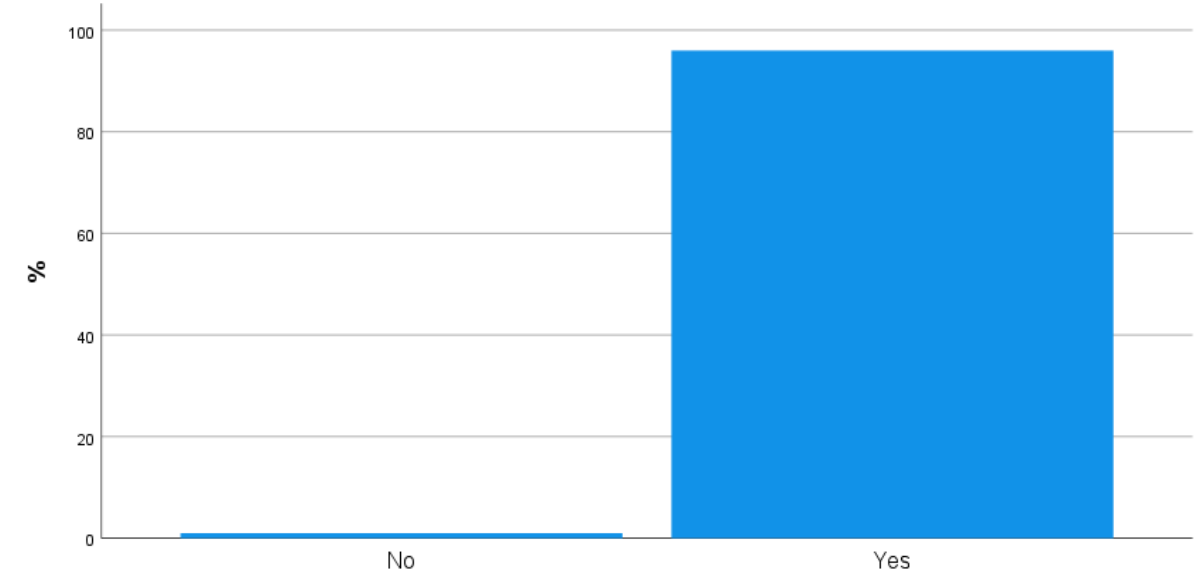
Question 17

How much do you think you would spend a month in a shop that sold this type of products?



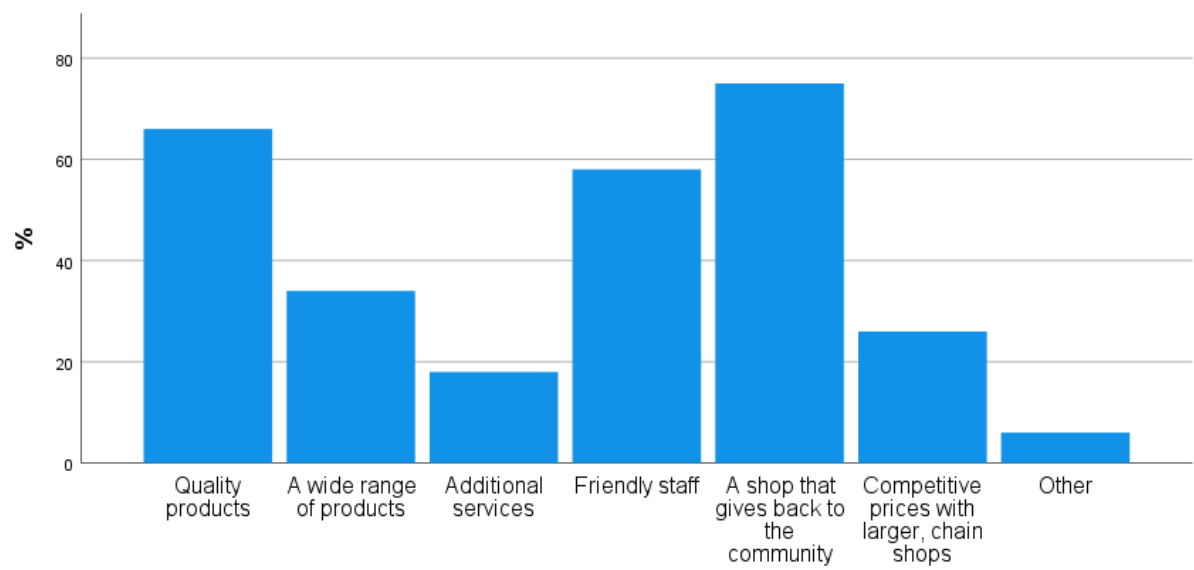
Question 18

Do you think you would be more likely to choose a shop that was socially aware and contributs to the local community?



# Question 19

What makes you choose smaller, local shops?



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