

When Getting Rid of Unwanted Items around the House, Canadians Often Give Them to Charities or to Friends and Family

The Hassel and Time It Takes to Dispose of Unwanted Items Tend to Be the Biggest Deterrents

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When Getting Rid of Unwanted Items around the House, Canadians Often Give Them to Charities or to Friends and Family

The Hastle and Time It Takes to Dispose of Unwanted Items Tend to Be the Biggest Deterrents

Toronto, ON – When looking to dispose of old household items such as old furniture, books, or children's clothing, Canadians tend to make sure that these items are put to good use, as 81% report that they usually donate these items to a charity such as the Salvation Army or Goodwill, according to a new survey of over 1,000 adults conducted by Ipsos Reid on behalf of Kijiji. Additionally, 43% report that they typically give these items to a friend or family member that wants them. Others try to sell these items, either at a garage or yard sale (19%) or online (13%). One in seven (14%) just leave them by the curb with hopes that someone will pick them up, while 7% take them to the nearest dumpster.

When getting rid of unwanted household items, more than eight in ten (84%) say that they are 'very' (46%) or 'somewhat' (38%) likely to take the environment into consideration. Just 16% say that it is 'not very' (13%) or 'not at all' (4%) likely. Older adults, particularly those 55 and older (89%) are more likely than those under 34 (77%) to think about the environment when disposing of unwanted items.

Many Canadians also donate their old electronics, such as computer parts, televisions or video games to a charity (22%) or give them to a friend or family member (14%), though they are most likely to take what they are looking to dispose of to a special e-waste procession facility (41%). Just 10% try to sell these items, either online (6%) or at a garage sale (4%). In fact they are more likely to just throw them away, by either tossing them in the regular garbage (7%) or leaving them on the curb (5%).

Trash or Treasure?

Though few Canadians tend to sell their unwanted goods, many have valuable items that they no longer want. Two in ten (19%) say that they estimate that the unwanted items lying around their house are worth at least \$500, including 8% who think that the value exceeds \$1,000. A majority (58%) feel that their unwanted items would be worth \$500 or less, including a plurality (31%) that put the value at \$100 or less. A quarter (23%) is unsure as to the total values of these items in their house.

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Currently, over a quarter of adults (26%) say that they are looking to get rid of these types of household items, and an additional 19% say they may be interested in doing so. Though nearly half (45%) admit that they are holding onto items they think they should get rid of, only three in ten consider themselves ‘clutter collectors’ or ‘pack-rats.’ Just 29% say that they would label themselves this way to ‘a great extent’ (4%) or to ‘some extent’ (25%). Rather, seven in ten (71%) say that they wouldn’t describe themselves as a pack-rat, including 37% who wouldn’t consider themselves a clutter collector ‘at all.’

Storing Unwanted Items...

Among those who have unwanted items that they are thinking about getting rid of, half (50%) say that they tend to store them in the basement, while three in ten use their garage (29%) or closet (29%) to store these goods. Fewer keep them in their bedroom (15%), family room (5%), attic (3%), or a storage unit (3%). Over a third (36%) say that they store unwanted items wherever they can find the space.

With the basement being the most common spot to store unwanted items, Canadians are also most likely to name the basement as the room or area of their home that they would like to make better use of (26%). Others would like to make better use of their closets (13%), family rooms (12%), bedrooms (11%) or attics (2%). However, nearly four in ten (37%) are happy with how they are using their space, saying that there is no room or area of their home that they would like to make better use of.

Reasons for Holding onto Unwanted Items

Though many seem to be holding onto these unwanted items, storing them in various places in the house, just a quarter of Canadians (25%) feel that disposing of these items is a difficult task. Rather, 75% say that it is ‘not very’ (46%) or ‘not at all’ (30%) difficult to get rid of their unwanted items.

Those who do find this difficult tend to say so because the items have sentimental value (35%) or because they feel that they may need the items again in the future (35%). Roughly a quarter blame a lack of time (27%) or lack of knowledge as to how to get rid of these items (22%), while a similar proportion says that they forget about these items once they are put away (27%). One in seven (14%) say that they find it hard to get rid of unwanted items because they are not sure how to recoup the cost of the items while 18% say that they have trouble disposing of unwanted household items for other reasons.

Though few see getting rid of household items as a difficult task, Canadians offer a variety of reasons as to why they hold onto these items longer than they’d like, namely the hassle associated with getting rid of them (33%). Others say they put it off because it is time consuming to get rid of large, bulky items (22%) or because it is costly to do so (9%). One in ten (11%) say that they keep old household items because they just don’t

know how to get rid of them. However, nearly half (48%) say that none of these factors in particular cause them to hold onto unwanted items.

...and Motivations for Getting Rid of Them

However, Canadians would be more likely to get rid of their unwanted items if they had the ability to easily find someone who needed them (45%) or if there was a free and easy way to do it (41%). Similarly, roughly a third of Canadians would be more motivated to dispose of these items if they didn't have to transport them (37%) or if they had the ability to prevent the items from ending up in a dumpster or landfill (32%). At least one in five say that having more time (24%) or being able to recoup the costs (21%) would be motivating factors to de-clutter. However, 12% say that none of these solutions would increase the chance that they would get rid of their unwanted items.

There are also emotional motivations for getting rid of clutter, as a clutter-free home makes two thirds of Canadians (66%) feel 'satisfied.' Others say that it makes them feel 'refreshed' (35%), 'energized' (24%) or 'renewed' (22%). Just 8% would not feel any of these emotions after de-cluttering their homes.

Just as de-cluttering can generate positive feelings, letting clutter build up can invoke negative feelings. A third of respondents say that they feel 'frustrated' (32%) or 'like they are always trying to catch up' (31%) knowing that there is clutter around the house that needs to be cleared out. Many also feel 'unclean' (25%), 'stressed' (22%) or 'somewhat depressed' (17%) when de-cluttering is on their to-do list. However, one in three (29%) say that it does not bother them.

In addition to these negative emotions, clutter around the house can also be a point of contention among families, as 14% say that their clutter 'frequently' (3%) or 'often' (11%) causes arguments with family members. However, 86% say that this 'rarely' (45%) or 'never' (41%) happens.

Spring Cleaning Habits

Over half of Canadians (54%) say that they engage in spring cleaning every year, and an additional 26% do so almost every year. However, one in five (20%) rarely or never engage in spring cleaning, though 2% say that they feel they really should. Women are more likely than men to do spring cleaning most years (83% vs. 77%). Those over 35 are also more likely to do this regularly than are adults under 35 (83% vs. 73%).

Among those who 'rarely' or 'never' engage in spring cleaning, a plurality (42%) say this is because they prefer to clean regularly. Others blame time management – either they keep putting it off so that it never happens (23%) or just not having the time for it (9%). Just one in ten (10%) do not think spring cleaning is necessary. Four percent cite some other reason and 12% are unsure.

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Those who do spring cleaning most years say that it typically involves a thorough cleaning (84%), clutter control and disposal of unwanted items (74%), and outdoor maintenance and gardening (61%). Fewer say that they do renovations, upgrades or repairs (29%) or replace used furniture and household items (13%) as part of their spring cleaning routine. Three percent engage in other spring cleaning activities.

Spring cleaners tend to spend the most time on organizing and hosting a garage sale. Those who have a garage or yard sales say that it takes an average of over 12 hours to organize and host. However, fewer than half (45%) spend any time on this during spring cleaning. Other time consuming tasks include getting rid of unwanted items (4.4 hours on average) and cleaning and organizing a room in the house (4.7 hours). On average, cleaning out an organizing a closet is a speedier task, taking 2.4 hours.

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid online poll conducted April 5-12, 2010, on behalf of Kijiji. For this survey, a national sample of 1,041 adults from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-3.0 percentage points 19 times out of 20 of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Canada been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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For more information on this news release, please contact:

***Sean Simpson
Senior Research Manager
Ipsos Reid
Public Affairs
(416) 572-4474***

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