

# People who Litter



# People Who Litter

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This publication is one of an occasional series of papers researched, written and produced by ENCAMS. It attempts to highlight the issues of litter behaviour.

[www.encams.org](http://www.encams.org)

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# Executive Summary

ENCAMS is the independent charity behind the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. The aim of this campaign, which has been running for over 50 years, is to achieve litter free environments; not just now but for future generations to come.

In 2001, ENCAMS undertook a piece of market research that changed the face of the Keep Britain Tidy campaign forever. A technique widely employed by the private sector was used to segment members of the public according to their attitudes towards litter and their litter dropping behaviour. Further information was obtained about the preferences of these groups – the types of newspapers and magazines they read, the television programmes they watched. ENCAMS used these profiles and the results of the Local Environmental Quality Survey of England (LEQSE) – an annual survey of 12,000 sites across a range of different land uses – to decide who to campaign to, about what, and how, and has been following this approach over the last six years.

In 2006, the segmentation was repeated to update the information ENCAMS held on each of the segments identified in 2001, to see if attitudes towards litter had changed and if so how.

The results were extremely encouraging. In 2001, dog owners did not clean up after their pets fouled in a public place. Everyone was doing it, it seemed. Six years later and the balance has tipped. Now, not cleaning up after your dog is a socially unacceptable behaviour and people are even putting pressure on others to do the right thing.

Generally, there is more awareness about litter now than there was six years ago. More people feel guilty about dropping litter and are more likely to notice and talk about the two biggest components of litter – smokers' materials and chewing gum. There is still more to be done, however. While people are more aware of littered smokers' materials and gum, they are still dropping these items. Fast food litter and littering from a car are also on the increase.

Campaigns alone will not be sufficient to reduce or prevent littering. A multi-faceted approach must be adopted to increase the chances of reaching as many of the different litter dropping segments as possible. Streets should be cleaned to a consistently high standard at all times of the day and night. There should be bins in the right places and information about what to do with litter in the event of a bin not being available or alternative disposal options. Education and awareness raising campaigns can challenge attitudes towards litter and must be backed up by effective enforcement. For some litter droppers, enforcement is the only thing that will change their behaviour.

ENCAMS will continue to campaign to the groups identified by the segmentation described in this report, using their preferred communication channels, about the issues identified as a priority by the LEQSE. In addition, as ENCAMS moves forward we will deliver a programme of work that recognises those people who have heard our message and take pride in where they live. We hope to provide them with the knowledge, tools and skills they need to bring about a positive improvement in their local environments.

# 1. Introduction

## Without people litter would not exist.

### 1.1 What is litter?<sup>1</sup>

Litter is constantly changing, but generally it includes synthetic materials associated with smoking, eating and drinking that are improperly discarded, left by members of the public, or spilt during waste management operations. It also includes putrescible and clinical waste<sup>2</sup>.

Because of the dynamic nature of litter, it has not been statutorily defined and attempts to describe it remain as broad as possible. The Environmental Protection Act 1990, for example, states that litter is 'anything that is dropped, thrown, left or deposited that causes defacement in a public place'. The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (CNEA 2005) widened this definition of litter to include anything dropped on private land and rivers, ponds and lakes.

Although definitions of litter may be broad, there is one thing about which it is possible to be specific. Without people litter would not exist. People and their activities generate waste and this waste can become litter if it falls outside of the usual mechanisms to deal with it. It is for this reason that the occurrence of litter and waste are inextricably linked to the history of human civilisation.

The following is a simple summary of the more recent major events in the history of litter and waste and how these were driven by changes in human society. It describes the growing litter and waste problem, focusing particularly on litter, what measures progressive governments have put in place to deal with it, and where the Keep Britain Tidy campaign fits within this context.

1. The term litter is used by adults. Research carried out by ENCAMS indicates that children and young people use the word 'rubbish' instead. This research can be found in the report: Semiotic development of ENCAMS anti litter campaigns. 2003. ENCAMS.

2. Source: [www.leq-bvpi.com](http://www.leq-bvpi.com)

### 1.2 The history of waste, litter and people

Before the first half of the 19th century, there was no regulated way of dealing with waste and litter in Britain<sup>3</sup>. Waste was burnt in open house fires or thrown out into the street. In 1297, a law was passed that required householders to keep the front of their house clear, but this was largely ignored. As a consequence, disease and vermin were rife and between 1348 and 1349, two-thirds of London's inhabitants were killed by the Black Death: a plague carried by fleas of the black rats that fed on the waste.

By the mid 14th century, men were employed as rakers to take waste to pits outside the city gates or to the river where it was ferried away on boats. By the early 1400s, household waste had to be kept indoors until it was removed by rakers, and if it wasn't removed, forfeits were paid.

The situation worsened in the 18th century when the Industrial Revolution began. Goods were produced cheaply, production increased and people moved to towns. Scavenging was commonplace, with many people selling what they found to earn a living.

It wasn't until the first Public Health Act in 1848 that the process of waste regulation began. Waste was removed from dwellings and stored in large holes next to them. When full, the holes were dug out and the waste taken away by a horse and cart for disposal. In 1875, householders were put under a duty to keep their waste in "moveable receptacles" or dustbins, while local authorities had to remove and collect waste. Following the third Public Health Act in 1936 it became possible to prosecute people for dumping waste and also for scavenging, which led to an increase in litter as people started scattering waste to get rid of it. Local authorities were also given the power to sweep and keep clean courts, yards or passages where these had not been kept clean and free from rubbish.

Litter is 'waste in the wrong place' and it seems likely that as the mechanisms for dealing with waste were put in place, the opportunity for litter arose. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, one of the earliest recorded uses of the word litter was in 1927 when a children's newspaper featured an article that said: "It is time the Litter Lout was taken seriously in hand." The next recorded use of the word in a new context occurred in the News Chronicle in 1953 and said: "What a mess there will be on Coronation Day unless people use the litter-boxes".

The post war boom may have been responsible for the fact that more people began to notice and talk about litter. A consumer society had been born, production and consumption increased, there was more packaging than ever before and products were designed to be thrown away.

The Women's Institute was the first organisation to respond to this trend. At their annual general meeting in 1954, a resolution was passed to start a national anti-litter campaign. In 1955, a conference of 26 interested organisations was called and the Keep Britain Tidy campaign was born. The aim of the campaign was to get people to stop dropping litter and put it in the bin instead. As a result of endorsements from celebrities such as Abba and Morecambe and Wise, and also because of the sheer number of anti-litter posters that appeared all over the country in the 1970s, Keep Britain Tidy became a household name, even a national icon.

3. Source: [www.integra.org.uk](http://www.integra.org.uk); [www.wasteonline.org.uk](http://www.wasteonline.org.uk)

Further progress in the fight against litter was made in 1958 when the Litter Act came into force. The Act repealed local bye-laws on litter, putting in place an overall law, and made it possible to fine, up to £10, anyone caught dropping litter any place in the open air to which the public had access without payment. In 1971, the Dangerous Litter Act became law, increasing the maximum fine for dropping litter to £100. Prosecutions became instituted by local authorities, the police or private individuals and in 1978, 1,975 people were fined under the Litter Act.

Meanwhile, public concern about the environment continued to rise. During the seventies, people started to become worried about the use of energy and the depletion of resources, and health and safety awareness increased. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution was established in 1970 and more legislation was passed including the Clean Air Act 1956 and the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Unlike the Public Health Acts before them, the emphasis had shifted from protecting people to protecting the environment.

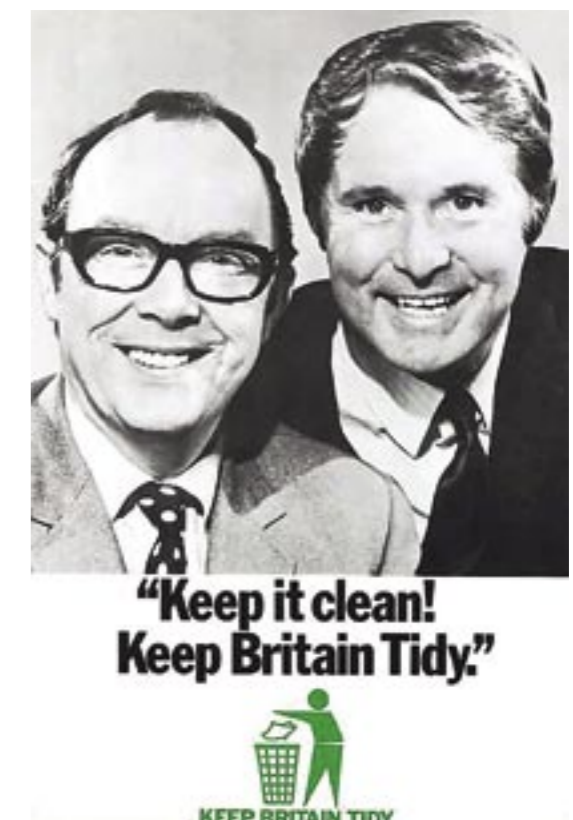
But the 1970s was also a throwaway society. Many things including pens, lighters, razors, tissues and nappies were not built to last. Britain's streets became increasingly littered despite the 1983 Litter Act that placed a duty on local authorities to provide litter bins and arrange for their emptying and cleaning. In 1986, when driving between RAF Northolt and Downing Street, Margaret Thatcher looked out of the window of her car and was appalled by what she saw. UK 2000, an organisation that existed to bring about environmental improvement, was charged with the mandate to 'clean up Britain' under the chairmanship of Richard Branson.

Meanwhile, there was a surge in convenience food including the packaging it required and increasing numbers of white goods were being thrown away. The Government funded 'Clean Nineties' programme was launched with the aim of making Britain one of the cleanest, tidiest countries in Europe by changing people's attitudes towards litter and the way in which it was dealt with. It began in 1990 with a year long campaign. National Spring Clean also ran in the nineties and at the height of their success, saw thousands of volunteers tidying towns, cities and villages. Margaret Thatcher herself joined in a litter pick in St. James's Park in 1998 with Dennis Thatcher and Nicholas Ridley, the then Secretary of State for the Environment.

In 1990, a White Paper that set out Government's environmental policy was published and the Environmental Protection Act – which was designed to prevent pollution of air, land and water, including littering – received Royal Assent.

By 2001, National Spring Clean had become a thing of the past and the Keep Britain Tidy campaign underwent a radical overhaul. It was no longer enough to clean up litter other people had dropped. It was more important to stop them from dropping it in the first place and, as a result, the campaign became more targeted.

Campaigns were reinforced in 2005 when the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, which strengthened powers to enable land managers to improve the quality of local environments and deal with problems such as littering, received Royal Assent.



### 1.3 How was the Keep Britain Tidy campaign reinvigorated?

Public education campaigns are widely used to communicate important messages to the public. Messages can be simple (asking the public not to drop litter), or they can be more complicated (providing advice about what to do in the event of a terrorist attack). In either case, public education campaigns must compete with the marketing of fast moving consumable goods by companies with large advertising budgets.

To get smarter about the way in which it reached litter droppers, and get its message heard, ENCAMS, the charity that runs the Keep Britain Tidy campaign, employed two techniques already used widely by the private sector, but less so by the public, voluntary and charity sector. The first is called market segmentation and is used to divide a market into distinct subsets that behave in the same way or have similar needs. Each segment is homogenous in terms of their needs and attitudes, so they are likely to respond in similar ways to a marketing strategy. The second technique is called targeting. The aim of targeting is to prioritise the groups to be addressed and to respond with an appropriate marketing strategy that satisfies their requirements.

ENCAMS undertook its first market segmentation in 2001 in conjunction with The Marketing Works, a brand and social research consultancy. We used the results of this research to campaign on a range of issues to specific groups within the population. In 2006, ENCAMS repeated this segmentation to update the information it held on the groups it campaigned to and to see if attitudes had changed.

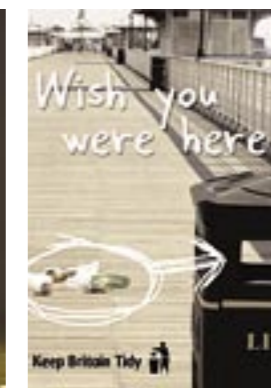
We have also used this technique to segment other groups including 13 – 16 year-olds, smokers and people who chew and drop gum. The results of these segmentations are reported elsewhere<sup>4</sup> or will form the basis of future research reports.



Youth litter, May 2004



18 – 24 year-olds July 2005



Coastal litter, August 2005



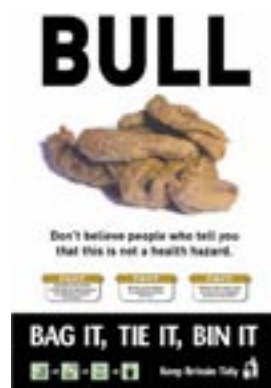
Drugs related litter, October 2005



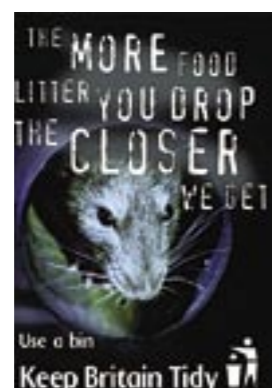
18 – 24 year-olds December 2005



Smoking related litter March 2006



Dog fouling June 2002<sup>5</sup>



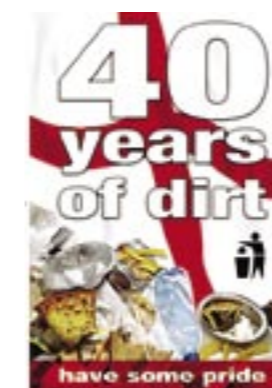
Fast food litter, August 2002



Youth litter, January 2003<sup>6</sup>



Car litter, August 2003<sup>7</sup>



Fast food litter, June 2006



Fast food litter, August 2006

4. I'm just a teenage dirtbag, baby! 2003. ENCAMS.

5. This campaign was targeted at a group called the Justifiers. For an overview of the campaign

6. This campaign was targeted at 13 – 16 year-olds. For an overview of the campaign.

7. This campaign was targeted at a segment called Life's Too Short. For an overview of the campaign..

## 1.4 What is the purpose of this report?

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the market research undertaken by ENCAMS in 2001 and 2006 to segment members of the public according to their attitudes towards litter and their litter dropping behaviour. Full details of the research, including the profiles and preferences of each of the litter dropping segments can be obtained directly from ENCAMS Market Research team.

The report has been divided into sections that address the following questions: (i) What is litter? (ii) Who drops litter? (iii) What can be done to prevent or deter people from dropping litter? And (iv) has it worked?

It should be emphasised that the views expressed within each of these sections are not those of ENCAMS. Rather, they are the opinions of people who have admitted to dropping litter. In some cases, people may paint an accurate picture of the litter problem. In others, their views may be biased and contradictory. For example, all participants in this research admitted to dropping litter and all were aged between 18 and 64. Yet, many of these same individuals blamed the litter problem primarily on young people.

**The report also describes how ENCAMS will be acting on the results of these segments both now and in the future.**

## 1.5 Who is this report for?

This report is likely to be of general interest to any public, voluntary or charity organisation that is planning to undertake campaigns to change public behaviour on a limited budget. It will also be of specific interest to land managers who want to undertake anti-littering campaigns as they can use the information presented here to decide who to campaign to, about what and how.

## The history of segmentation research

Segmentation research was not formalised until the 1950s although the practice is as old as marketing itself<sup>8</sup>.

At the height of industrialisation, in the mid-nineteenth century, there was very little market research as it is known today. Those who wanted to sell products to people aimed them at the mass market. The main media for advertisers was weekly and monthly magazines which relied heavily on advertising revenue. In order to persuade advertisers to use their magazine, editors would collect basic information on their readership, gathered from letters to the magazine and photographs of reader's homes. From this information, basic lifestyles were surmised and the readership was classified into groups. There was very little or no scientific evidence to support this practice and these first segmentations were based largely on social class<sup>9</sup>.

After the First World War, more research into consumer tastes, habits and spending began to take place and it was common for large publishers to set up reader's panels. Panel members were asked to provide information including their age, income, lifestyle, husband's occupation, type of home, interests and hobbies. Some panel members were even visited to check the contents of their pantries. The panellists were then classified into groups based on this information – A, B, C or D. It was a rigid grouping based on basic demographic information and inflexible ideas about social class. However, it allowed for highly standardised and streamlined marketing to take place to these groups.

In the 1930s, as radio became more mainstream, these segments were used to classify listeners. Daytime radio series were devised from the knowledge that the audience was made up mostly of working and middle class housewives. They became known as soap operas due to the soap companies sponsoring so many of the programmes<sup>10</sup>.

After the Second World War, the ABCD grouping no longer provided an adequate representation of the market. The economy was booming, income levels were rising, there were more products available than ever before, people had more choice and greater buying power. Television began to surpass radio advertising, putting more pressure on advertisers to understand their audience. This required more detailed market research.

During the 1970s, new research methods were developed which analysed the emotional and psychological aspects of the consumer. With the aid of computers, complex variables were used to cluster groups and produce theoretical lifestyles<sup>11</sup>. The lifestyle survey became common practice during this time and one of the main attributes was that it allowed for segments to be more fluid. It was recognised that attitudes within different segments could change over time and consumers could switch segments depending on the occasion<sup>12</sup>.

The technology revolution during the 1980s and 1990s meant that there were many more advertising channels and consumers had far greater choice over what they paid attention to. It was easier for consumers to avoid advertisements altogether and so targeting messages at particular segments became even more important.

Segmentation and targeted advertising is now common practice in the private sector.

For example, for many years Coca-Cola aimed their product at the mass market with just one drink that was supplied in a 6 ounce bottle. They now market their product to many different segments who have different expectations. Coca-Cola has customers who want low cost drinks to give children, those who want a mixer or a non-alcoholic drink in a bar or those who are hot and thirsty and want a cool refresher in the park. The same consumers may switch segments depending on their circumstances and they see the product in a different light and value it in a different way<sup>13</sup>. Coca-Cola has become part of a lifestyle and is one of the world's most recognised brands.

Meanwhile, the public sector continues to aim messages at the mass market. This is because segmentation research is perceived to be complex and expensive. This is, however, beginning to change as Government, charities and voluntary organisations become much smarter about the way in which they undertake behaviour changing campaigns.

8. Segmentation - WARC Best Practice. 2006. [www.warc.com](http://www.warc.com)

9. On the pre-history of the panoptic sort: Mobility in market research. Adam Arvidsson. <http://www-surveillance-and-society.org/issue4abstracts.htm>

10. <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/S/htmlS/soapopera/soapopera.htm>

11. An Overview of Segmentation: Why You Should Consider It And a Thumbnail of Its dynamics. Edward J. Hass, Ph.D. Vice President – Advanced Research Methods

12. On the pre-history of the panoptic sort: Mobility in market research. Adam Arvidsson. <http://www-surveillance-and-society.org/issue4abstracts.htm>

13. Marketing Research Methodological Foundations. Gilbert A Churchill. 1995. Dryden Press.

**In 2001, ENCAMS undertook a piece of market research to better understand the attitudes and behaviour of litter droppers. The same exercise was repeated in 2006. This section describes what was done and why.**

### 2.1 Aim

The aim of the research conducted in 2001 was to determine if litter droppers could be segmented into groups that had similar attitudes and behaviours. If they could, then it would be possible to specifically target these segments rather than the blanket approach to communications previously adopted by the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. The aim of the research conducted in 2006 was to determine if attitudes and behaviours amongst litter droppers had changed over the past six years and whether the segments identified in 2001 still existed.

### 2.2 Sample

ENCAMS believes that people can be divided according to their attitudes towards the environment. In 2001, we decided to recruit people who dropped litter but were broadly aware that their behaviour could impact on the environment and were taking small steps towards leading more sustainable lifestyles (i.e. sympathisers). We chose this group because we assumed that they would be more likely to respond to a marketing campaign and ultimately change their littering behaviour. And because this was the first time we had undertaken work of this kind, we wanted to maximise our chance of success.

By 2006, ENCAMS approach to market research and campaigning had advanced significantly. We had the knowledge and skills to tackle the more challenging groups of litter droppers including people who were unaware that their behaviour affected the environment and were not taking any steps towards leading a more sustainable lifestyle (i.e. unaware). Also, those who may or may not have been aware their behaviour affected the environment and would strenuously resist any attempts to change their lifestyle (i.e. sceptics). To reflect this, recruitment for the segmentation undertaken in 2006 was not selective but included all litter droppers.

### 2.3 Method

Segmentation is widely used by private sector organisations to identify target groups and prioritise communications. There are many techniques available to conduct a segmentation study and it is important to select that which is most suited to the aims of the research. The majority, however, are based on large-scale quantitative studies and involve statistical analysis of data (i.e. clustering) to identify segments.

ENCAMS did not adopt this approach but based our segmentation on a three-step process instead. The first two steps involved qualitative research to identify the segments while the final step involved quantitative research to quantify the segments. There were a number of reasons for doing this. First, attitudes towards litter and litter dropping behaviour cannot be ascertained from readily collectable objective data. More in-depth discussions are required to fully understand people's views. Second, litter is a sensitive subject and to get people to admit to dropping it, it is necessary to build up trust. This can be achieved more easily in focus groups that employ enabling techniques rather than through questionnaires.

#### ENCAMS marketing sympathiser model

##### Converts

Aware that their behaviour has an effect on the environment and taking big steps as an individual or as part of a community towards leading a more sustainable lifestyle.

##### Sympathisers

Aware that their behaviour has an effect on the environment and taking some steps towards leading a more sustainable lifestyle.

##### Unawares

Unaware that their behaviour has an effect on the environment and not taking any steps towards leading a more sustainable lifestyle.

##### Sceptics

May or may not be aware that their behaviour has an effect on the environment and would strenuously resist making any changes to their lifestyle.

### 2.3.1 Stage 1

During the first stage of the research, people who admitted to dropping litter took part in focus groups. The groups explored people's attitudes towards litter, their litter dropping behaviour and the local environment more generally. Topics covered included: what items of litter they dropped, how frequently, in what locations, how they felt about their actions and what could be done to stop people littering. The output from the focus groups was analysed to spot clusters of attitudes and behaviour, and thereby identify potential segments.

### 2.3.2 Stage 2

The purpose of the second stage of the research was to verify that the segments identified during stage 1 did exist, to better understand them and test a variety of campaign messages aimed at changing their behaviour. More focus groups were conducted. This time respondents who identified with one of a series of statements were recruited, where each statement described a different litter dropping segment.

### 2.3.3 Stage 3

Once the second stage of the research had confirmed the segments, the third stage quantified their size within the litter dropping population and also collected demographic and lifestyle information about them. This involved a survey consisting of face-to-face interviews and was undertaken in a number of locations across England.



Getting People to Talk

Experience has taught us that people do not readily admit to dropping litter. In order to encourage people to talk about behaving in this way, we used a number of enabling techniques designed to facilitate discussion, but also to ensure people were telling the truth. This included anonymous confessions or asking people to tell us about when they last dropped litter, what it was, when it was and who they were with. Respondents were also given bubble diagrams to complete. These helped people express how they felt in a number of situations, including being caught dropping litter.

3. Litter

**This section summarises peoples' views about litter: what do they think it is, who do they think drops it, where and when? Respondents' comments are verbatim and highlighted.**

**3.1 What is litter?**

People generally agreed about what litter was. Litter was anything that had been discarded or was 'not in a bin'. (This included items that had been left on or around a bin that was full or overflowing.) It tended to be smaller items. Larger items such as mattresses and fridges were considered to be rubbish. (Rubbish was also what litter became when it was properly disposed of.) Refuse and waste tended to be commercial or industrial in origin.

**"Things that we've eaten."**

**"Something that isn't in a place it should be."**

The most frequently mentioned items of litter were: (i) fruit debris, (ii) small pieces of paper, sweet wrappers, tissues and tickets, (iii) take-away food wrappers, (iv) plastic bags, (v) chewing gum, (vi) nappies, condoms, needles and sanitary products, (vii) glass bottles and cans, (viii) cigarette butts, papers and packets.

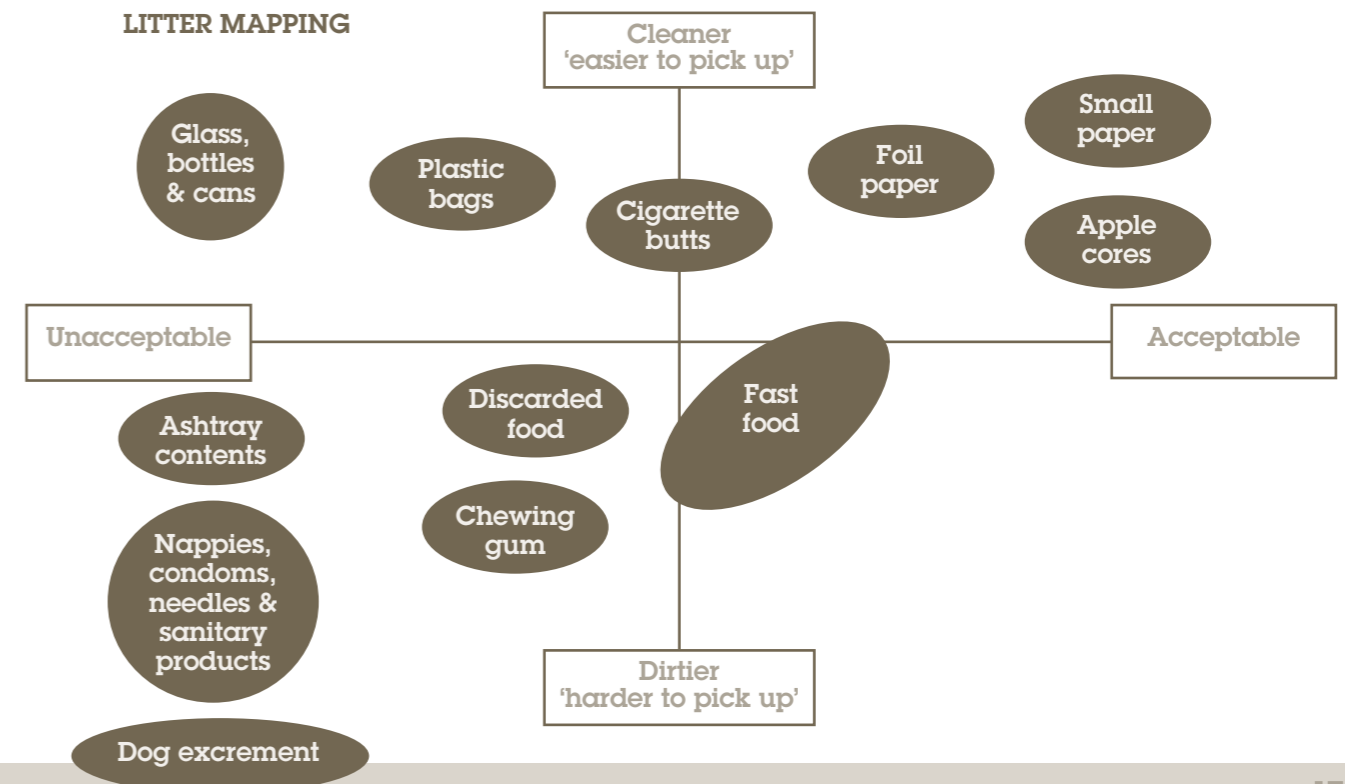
Dog fouling was not readily regarded as a type of litter. It was seen as more harmful than anything a human could drop. Abandoned vehicles and fly-tipping also did not fit the definition of litter. They were regarded as more serious types of crime.

People categorised items of litter according to their size, frequency, bio-degradability, hazard and cleanliness. The two most important dimensions, however, were how acceptable or unacceptable the litter was deemed to be, and how clean or dirty it was. The following chart shows where the different types of litter people most commonly recognised fall on these two dimensions. Apple cores were the most acceptable form of litter because they readily broke down back into the environment and sometimes positively contributed to it. The most unacceptable forms of litter were anything that posed a threat to public health – glass bottles, dog excrement, clinical waste. Items such as small pieces of paper were perceived to be cleaner because they were easier to pick up, whereas chewing gum was dirtier because it was harder to pick up.

**'I throw an apple core into the field and I know that squirrels and things will eat it.'**

**'You can't brush up chewing gum.'**

**LITTER MAPPING**



### 3.7 Is it ever acceptable to drop litter?

#### 3.2 Why do people litter?

Respondents gave many reasons why other people littered. The majority related to factors outside of a person's control. People littered because there weren't enough bins in the right places; there was nowhere to put litter in cars; an area was already run down and dirty so it didn't matter; there was a lack of education and awareness about what to do with litter; parents did not bring children up to know any better.

**"Sometimes I've thought I'll put this in the bin, I've been walking for a while, you think 'Oh sod it' and I drop it".**

Fewer causes of littering were directly attributed to individuals, although they were made. People who littered were unthinking and lazy; they were at the age where to litter was not only acceptable, it was expected; they were responding to peer pressure.

When prompted, people could even find benefits to littering. It provided jobs for cleansing staff; revenue was raised from fining people; it fed birds and other wildlife. Littering was also regarded as something of a tradition; just like the Keep Britain Tidy campaign in its heyday in the 1970s.

**"I remember when I was a child everywhere was campaigns 'don't drop litter' but you don't see that so much these days".**

#### 3.3 Where do people litter?

Most people thought that littering was widespread. It occurred wherever people were, both indoors and outdoors, at train stations and bus depots, outside schools, in city and town centres, on the train, at concerts, sporting events, theatres and cinemas. There was considerable evidence to suggest that litter attracts litter.

**"If I've been to 'party in the park' and the bins are absolutely overflowing and there's about two feet around it piled high with litter, I throw my litter on top of that because I know someone would be coming to clean it up".**

#### 3.4 When do people litter?

Littering was believed to occur at night-time when it was fuelled by drunkenness. But it also occurred at mealtimes – lunch and dinner – when more people were eating food on the go.

**"It's a take-away place, it's open until about 3 a.m. in the morning which is when people are most likely to litter because they're drunk so they don't really care about what they are doing".**

**"If you're in a rush... if it's easier to drop it and it's quicker".**

#### 3.5 Who litters?

Despite the fact that all of the people who took part in this research had admitted to dropping litter, they blamed the litter problem primarily on teenagers and school children.

**"I always see wrappers in my garden during term-time."**

**"Teenagers... it's probably not cool is it to put your stuff in the bin."**

#### 3.6 Why don't people litter?

Reasons for not littering were more likely to be attributable to the individual than to factors outside of their control. People did not litter because they had respect for other people, their property and the environment more generally; they were brought up by their parents not to litter; they took pride in where they lived; they had a conscience and a sense of responsibility; they would feel guilty if they were caught littering.

**"We were always brought up to clean up after you, don't drop anything and now I do it with my kids."**

Only one factor was outside of a person's control. If an area was already clean and tidy it was unlikely to be littered.

**"If I was in a posh area with mansions I'd be a bit more wary of chucking my kebab."**

Littering was deemed to be acceptable when an individual's sense of personal responsibility had been taken away – because everyone else was doing it (e.g. cinema, theatre, pop concert, football or rugby match, bowling alley), they were drunk, or the material that they were littering was bio-degradable.

**"Everything is alright when you're pissed, just blame it on the drink."**

It was most acceptable to drop litter when an area was already dirty and run-down, but not when it was tidy and presentable.

It was most excusable to drop litter when everyone else was doing it, but not when in respectable company.

#### Rational reasons for littering

Axis of acceptability

Axis of excusability

ACCEPTABLE	EXCUSABLE
If the area is already dirty or run-down	When everyone else is doing it
If the litter will be cleaned up by others	When drunk
If there aren't sufficient bins	When you can't be seen
In the country where it's more noticeable	In front of the children
In my own back yard	In (respectable) public
If the area is tidy and presentable	
UNACCEPTABLE	TABOO

# 4. People

## 4.1 Beautifully Behaved

**Nearly half of the general population (48%) admitted to dropping some form of litter. People who litter could be divided into five distinct segments according to their attitudes and behaviour. This section describes each group.**

People who were beautifully behaved comprised 43% of the litter dropping population. They dropped apple cores and small pieces of paper, but little else, and quite often did not see this as a problem.

**“If I knew apple cores were a problem I’d rethink my behaviour but you don’t see them that often.”**

People in this group were brought up not to drop litter and saw poor parenting as one of the biggest causes of littering. They took pride in where they lived and were almost ‘smug’ about their seemingly perfect behaviour. They would be extremely embarrassed if someone caught them littering and offer to pick it up immediately. They regarded others who littered as thoughtless.

Members of this group were more likely to be female, non-smokers, aged 25 and under.



## 4.2 Justifier

Justifiers were the second biggest group. They comprised 25% of the total litter dropping population. They justified their behaviour by saying that ‘everyone else is doing it’ and also blamed the lack of bins for their littering, particularly of cigarette butts and chewing gum. Some members of this group also failed to clean up after their dogs had fouled.

**“I go to football and have to leave a drink on the floor, there’s nothing else to do with it.”**

**“You can’t put it in your pocket, you have to stub it out on the floor.”**

Justifiers would be embarrassed if someone caught them littering and would pick up the item. They thought that people who littered were lazy.

Justifiers were a predominantly male segment. They tended to be smokers and were aged 34 and under.



## 4.3 Life’s Too Short and ‘Am I Bothered?’

Together, these two segments comprised 12% of the litter dropping population. They have been combined because they had a complete disregard for the consequences of littering and therefore the marketing strategies used with them are likely to be similar.

There was, however, a subtle difference between them. Life’s Too Short were aware that dropping litter was ‘wrong’ but had more important things to worry about, whereas Am I Bothered? were completely unaware of the consequences of dropping litter and even if they were, would not care.

**“I can’t really see how they can make a fuss about a wrapper on the floor or a coke can, when there’s cultural littering of brands, signage, advertising, etc and vandalism all over the place.”**

**“I don’t even think about it, I litter loads but I do look out for old biddies.”**

Both groups would not feel guilty if someone caught them littering and would not offer to pick the item up. In some cases, they might be considerably more verbose, aggressive even. They would, however, consider it rude if someone dropped litter in front of them.

This group was more likely to contain young male smokers.



4.4 Guilty

Members of the Guilty segment comprised 10% of the total litter dropping population. They knew that dropping litter was 'wrong' and felt guilty when doing so, but carrying it was inconvenient and so they went about littering in a furtive manner.

**"You stick it in a plant pot or under a bench down the side, so nobody can see."**

**"Look around, then let it slip out of your hand."**

Members of this segment will litter when others are not around to watch them, in the car or at public gatherings. Much the same as the Beautifully Behaved segment, they would feel extremely guilty if someone caught them littering and offer to pick the item up immediately. They regarded people who litter as lazy and inconsiderate.

The Guilty segment was similar in some respects to the Beautifully Behaved. It was a predominantly female segment, was more likely to be non-smoking and aged 25 and under.



4.5 Blamer

Blamers constituted 9% of the litter dropping population. They blamed their littering on the council for their inadequate bin provision. They also blamed fast food operators, teenagers and manufacturers for over packaging food and other goods.

**"I blame the Council because they don't empty bins for a start."**

**"The amount of times I stop in a lay-by on a journey, the bins are always full and there's lots of litter around them."**

Members of this group would be embarrassed if someone caught them littering and pick it up while making excuses about their behaviour. They thought that people who littered were lazy, but if there weren't any bins, or if the bins were overflowing or full then it was okay.

This was a predominantly young, male, smoking segment.



Youth litter 2003

Young people are often the hardest people to campaign to because like segments such as Life's Too Short and Am I Bothered? they experience very little guilt over their littering.

In 2003, Keep Britain Tidy produced a series of posters. The posters featured a dead cat and a dead dog and asked the audience how the animal had died. The posters, which were aimed at 13 – 16 year-olds, did not include any branding or anti-litter message but simply a website address. They were run on bus shelters and bus headliners (within the bus). On entering the website, users had to guess the reason for the death of various animals, some of which died due to litter injuries and others died of natural causes. Other facts on litter and the harm it causes to animals were explained in more detail on the site and successful guessers could also enter a competition to win prizes such as a home and away football kit of their choice, £100 HMV vouchers or tickets to Wembley Arena.

The campaign achieved national media coverage. However, surveys measuring the amount of litter dropped in streets on school routes surrounding the advertising sites recorded an overall decrease of 8% against a target of 20%. Research was also carried out by questioning young people on their thoughts about the campaign and whether they had visited the website. This revealed that the advertising message was too sophisticated for the audience and would have to be refined before the campaign could be run again.

In response to the difficulties experienced when campaigning to a young audience, Keep Britain Tidy carried out extensive research into how to change teenagers' attitudes and behaviour towards littering. Following the research it was decided that during 2004 a series of different campaigns using a variety of media channels would take place to put the research into action. These were considerably more successful.



## 5. What can be done to stop littering?

### 5.1 Clean streets

**We asked people what would stop them littering. This section describes their views, focusing particularly on how successful the proposed measures are likely to be with each of the different segments, and campaigning.**

People who litter say that they would be less likely to do so in areas that are clean and tidy. Conversely, they would be more likely to litter in areas that are run-down and dirty.

An obvious solution then, to the problem of littering, is to maintain streets and public spaces to consistently high standards of cleanliness at all times of the day and night. This measure is likely to be particularly effective with people belonging to the Guilty segment, perhaps because it would make them feel even worse about dropping litter. It was also proposed as a measure to prevent littering by the Life's Too Short segment, although to a lesser extent.

**"Start with a really clean place that makes people less willing to litter, make it socially unacceptable"**

Many of the people that took part in this research compared the cleanliness of England's streets unfavourably with that of other countries.

**"Make it like abroad, they have lots of people cleaning up all the time".**

### 5.2 Bins

A lack of bins, or bins that were full or overflowing, was one of the most common excuses for littering. Yet the research also showed that many people would not go out of their way to find a bin, preferring instead to drop their litter on the street. This means that simply providing more bins or emptying them more often is unlikely to be effective. Nonetheless, people had legitimate concerns about the inappropriate positioning of bins, difficulties carrying 'dirty' or 'unclean' items on their person until they found a bin, and what to do with litter when travelling in cars.

**"They have a bin outside, you buy crisps, you're not going to stand outside eating it, it's always on the way home."**

Solutions to this problem should include placing litter bins in hotspots, informing people about what to do with their litter if they cannot find a bin, and making available alternative disposal options such as pocket ashtrays and gum pouches. A number of the smokers who took part in this research hadn't even heard of the use of pocket ashtrays.

These measures are likely to be popular with the Blamer segment who thinks the council should be doing more to prevent littering. If it can be shown that they are, this will shift the onus onto them to do something.

**"If you put something in a bin and it's full but there's no bins around then it's not my fault, I've made the effort."**

It may also be effective with the Life's Too Short and Am I Bothered? segments, neither of whom will go out of their way to dispose of litter and for whom it has to be made as easy as possible.

### 5.3 Education

Even though this research revealed that nearly half of adults admit to dropping litter, many of these adults attributed the problem to children and young people and believed education was a suitable solution.

**"You've got to start with the youth, because they're the main offenders unfortunately."**

Education was particularly stressed by two segments - the Justifiers and Am I Bothered?

5.4 Advertising campaigns

Advertising campaigns can raise awareness of the litter problem and were mentioned by two segments - Am I Bothered? and Guilty. They may also work well with the Beautifully Behaved who although they will be less of a priority because they drop less litter, could be made aware of the cumulative effect of dropping small amounts of litter.

**“Show a girl or boy who was blind from dog mess or show their foot in bandages where they’ve stood on the glass or show dead animals.”**

**“Use people that are popular, famous, Wayne Rooney, Elton John, pictures of them throwing rubbish in the right place.”**

Recall of previous anti-littering advertising campaigns was high across all groups except the Justifiers and Am I Bothered? The ‘rats’ campaign was the most likely to be recalled.

Different advertising messages were tested with the segments. This revealed a great deal of consistency across groups in terms of what messages they thought were likely to be effective. The two most popular were “If you are caught dropping litter, you will be fined £75” and “Rats feed on fast food litter, the more you drop, the more they breed, the closer they get.” Naming and shaming – “If you are caught littering, you will be punished by being named and shamed in your local newspaper” - was also regarded to be an effective theme.

**“Make it £100, get the police to do it... they’d soon make money, a bit like speed cameras, and people wouldn’t chance it.”**

**“It’s good to shock, like those cigarette ads when you see the fat in them – and the car crash ones.”**

**“The thought of being in the paper for littering, you’d die.”**

5.5 Enforcement

Local authorities are often criticised for overzealous enforcement and using fines as a means to generate revenue. Nonetheless, the public are very big supporters of the use of enforcement to prevent littering and it was suggested by all groups that took part in this research. Enforcement could mean handing out fines. It could also mean community service. Either way, people had to believe there was a strong possibility they would be caught for littering and that enforcement would be carried out strictly.

**“The only way to stop it is to make it completely illegal like in Singapore – I appreciated it as it was so clean there.”**

**“Fine as high as possible, no messing around.”**

Car litter

England’s highways are littered with rubbish that people throw out of their cars thinking they will not be seen. In 2003, Keep Britain Tidy ran a campaign encouraging drivers and passengers to take their litter home with them instead. The Life’s Too Short segment, particularly young men aged between 18-25, were the campaign’s main target audience.

Posters appeared in motorway service station toilets and other sites showing how others find throwing litter out of cars disgusting and a radio advert was also produced, featuring the voice of Angus Deayton, to ensure the campaign message targeted people at a time when they might consider littering from their car. Anti-litter messages were displayed on the side of vehicles belonging to the Highways Agency and other high profile, national organisations such as Kwik Save/ Somerfield, WH Smith and JJB Sports.

The campaign was launched at Camden Lock in London and featured ex-Brookside star Jennifer Ellison holding up a sign saying ‘Don’t be a Tosser’. At the launch some of the unusual items that are found littered on the roadside were displayed, including a toy gun, a pantomime horses head and a blow up doll.

The campaign received excellent national and regional media coverage and there was a 39% improvement in the cleanliness of the slip roads surveyed following the campaign.



## 6. Have attitudes and behaviour towards littering changed?

### 6.1 Types of litter

Over the past six years, ENCAMS has run a number of campaigns based on the results of the 2001 segmentation. It is possible to measure the success of these campaigns through surveys that record the incidence of different types of litter at a local and national level. However, the results may be influenced by a variety of factors such as better street cleansing. To determine if the campaigns have really changed the attitudes and behaviour of people, the results of the 2001 and 2006 segmentation were compared.

#### 6.1.1 Dog fouling

The biggest change in people's behaviour over the past six years occurred in relation to dog fouling. In 2001, people said that they did not clean up after their dogs had fouled, it was socially acceptable and everyone else was doing it. By 2006, the balance had tipped. People were saying they cleaned up after their dogs, it was socially unacceptable not to, and if they didn't other people would tell them to.

The change in people's attitudes was attributed to social pressure, the known danger of dog faeces to children and the risk of being fined. An increase in the number of bins specifically designed to take dog waste was also regarded as a positive step forward.

**"It's because of the bins and I think people are more aware of it and the fines... it's socially unacceptable now as well".**

**"They wouldn't want to be seen walking away from it".**

This finding is consistent with the results of ENCAMS LEQSE. This is an annual survey of 12,000 sites across a range of different land uses. It monitors standards in relation to cleanliness, types of litter and environmental crimes such as graffiti and fly-posting. When the survey was first conducted in 2001/02, dog fouling was found at 10% of sites. In the most recent survey, it was found at 8% of sites. Its lowest level was 6% in 2004/05.

#### 6.1.2 Smoking related litter

People were more aware of smoking related litter in 2006 than they were in 2001. They believed that no-smoking offices have contributed to the problem by forcing more people to smoke out on the streets, and it will further increase when the ban on smoking in public places comes into effect.

**"It's going to get worse when they stop people smoking inside".**

**"I think it was Leeds, if they saw someone put a fag butt on the floor they'd get a £50 fine on the spot".**

Although awareness has been raised, attitudes have yet to change. Smokers were still dropping their cigarette butts on the ground wherever they went.

This is consistent with the results of the LEQSE. According to this, smokers' materials are the most prevalent type of litter and have been found at 79% of sites consistently over the last three years.

#### 6.1.3 Chewing gum

As in the case of smoking related litter, over the last six years people have become more aware of the problems caused by inappropriately discarded chewing gum. Many had heard about efforts to clean it up on the television and in newspapers. Attitudes have yet to change, however, as people were still admitting to dropping gum.

**"I've seen loads of stuff on the telly and the papers, we must clean up England".**

#### 6.1.4 Fast food litter

People thought that fast food litter had increased over the last six years. This was attributed to more outlets selling food on the go cheaply; changing lifestyles; longer pub opening hours; and modern packaging.

**"It's the take away mentality of this day and age. When I was a kid you didn't take your food away and walk away with it, you went and ate in the restaurant".**

**"One day I saw four piles of sick, kebabs everywhere, loads of packets, it looked like a bombsite".**

According to the LEQSE, food on the go is the fastest growing type of litter, although the rate of increase had slowed in the last survey.

#### 6.1.5 Car litter

Car littering had also increased, with more people than before admitting to dropping litter from their car. In fact, being in a car provided the perfect opportunity to litter as quite often it meant that no one else was around to see. There were also problems with carrying 'dirty' and 'unclean' litter in their car with them.

This is consistent with the results of the Local Environmental Quality. According to this, litter standards on main roads have been unsatisfactory for the last three years.

#### 6.1.6 Bio-degradable materials

Since the 2001 research, people had generally become more aware of materials such as plastics that don't bio-degrade when they are littered.

## 6.2 Segments

In addition to changes in the types of litter people noticed and also dropped, there were changes in who was dropping litter.

### 6.2.1 Beautifully Behaved

The Beautifully Behaved segment was very much entrenched in the 2006 market research. If anything they had started to see their light littering as positively helpful to the environment. The only change was that in 2001 this group tended to be young women with families, whereas in 2006 it had moved across the life stages to include young families and empty nesters.

**“A banana skin and I just threw it in the hedgerow. If it was a crisp packet I would just stick it in my car door but because it will rot into the ground or an animal will eat it I always think it's doing some good. I would say that was acceptable”.**

### 6.2.2 Guilty

The Guilty segment were the next lightest litter droppers in 2006 and entirely absent in 2001. While some groups may feel guilty to some extent about dropping litter, it was the defining characteristic of this group.

### 6.2.3 Captain Cross

In the 2001 segmentation, a group called Captain Cross was identified. They tended to be older, blamed education and poor parental upbringing on littering, most of which they attributed to young people, and recalled how different things had been in their day even though their own behaviour was far from perfect. Captain Cross was still in evidence in 2006 but to a lesser extent and people that identified with this segment were almost exclusively older men. However, since the overriding attitude is one of blame, the strategies for changing the behaviour of this group are likely to be the same as the Blamers group so the two segments were combined.

**“Kids can do what they want these days – I had to do National Service”.**



### 6.2.4 Blamers

The Blamers were still very much in existence during the 2006 segmentation and were placing even more emphasis on bins and other people's responsibility towards dealing with food litter.

**“I think manufacturers have a responsibility about packaging”.**

### 6.2.5 Justifiers

In 2001, Justifiers were responsible for failing to clean up after their dogs had fouled, and also for dropping chewing gum and cigarette butts. By 2006, they were no longer able to use the argument – everyone else is doing it – to justify their failure to clean up after their dogs as this had become a socially unacceptable behaviour. They were, however, dropping ever increasing amounts of smoking related litter.

**“They're safer out the window, I don't think I would lean over and put a cigarette out in the ashtray, that would be taking my concentration off driving”.**

### 6.2.6 Life's Too Short and Am I Bothered?

In 2006, the Life's Too Short segment contained a hardened group of frequent litter droppers that was absent from the research undertaken in 2001. However, this may not be an indication that people are getting worse in their litter dropping behaviour. Rather, it is likely to reflect the fact that in 2001 sympathisers were recruited, or people who were aware that their behaviour had an effect upon the environment and were taking small steps towards leading more sustainable lifestyles. In 2006, the scope of the research was widened to include everyone who admitted to dropping litter irrespective of their attitudes towards the environment.

### Justifiers 2001

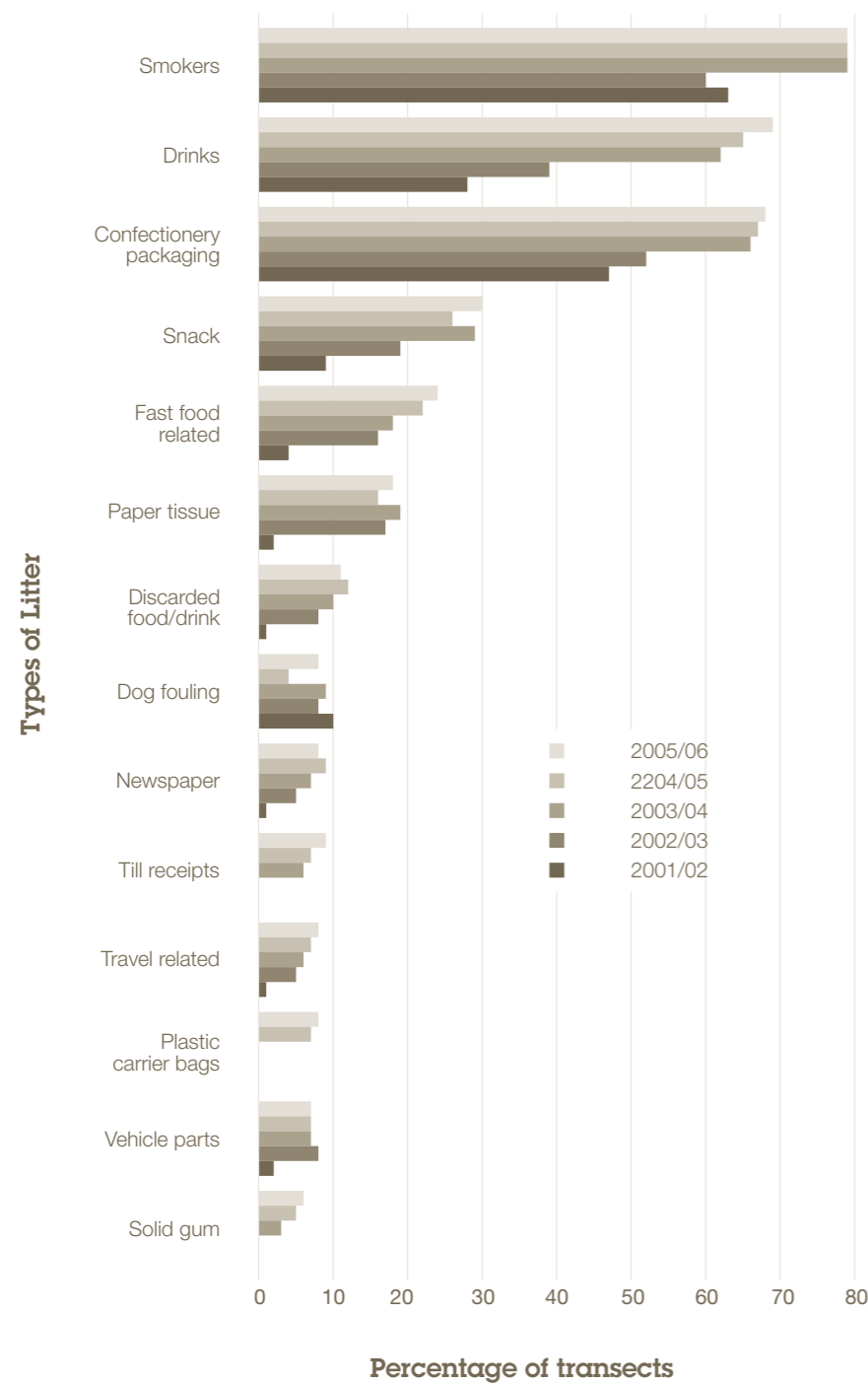


### Justifiers 2006





### Dog fouling campaign



The UK dog population stands at an estimated 6.5 million, producing 1,000 tonnes of faeces each day. This helps make dog fouling an issue about which members of the public regularly complain to local authorities, local councillors and MPs.

In 2002, Keep Britain Tidy produced three shocking posters that were targeted at the Justifier segment. They highlighted the dangers of dog fouling and were displayed on bus shelter sites near parks and open spaces across England. In addition, Pets at Home agreed to discount doggie doo bags, poop scoops and freeze spray during the campaign to further encourage the target audience to clear up after their dog.

The campaign was launched in June on Clapham Common. Ricky Tomlinson sat on a toilet to illustrate the point that 'you wouldn't do that, so don't let your dog!' For the purpose of the photocall, a Shitsui dog was used. This provided 'toilet' humour for the media target – the tabloid newspapers read by Justifiers.

The dog fouling campaign was successfully covered across a range of different media and achieved over one million pounds in terms of 'bought advertising space'.

Five parks in the North West of England were chosen and surveyed for dog fouling prior to the campaign and then following the launch to assess its impact. The results far exceeded expectation. Sites showed a 40% decrease in dog fouling, whilst nationally a decrease of 29% was measured. Product sales at Pets at Home were up between 13-50% on the previous year.



## 7. Conclusions and next steps

There is a long tradition of littering in this country. People dropped litter in the 1920s and they still do today, even though the types of litter may have changed and the reasons for dropping it.

This does not mean, however, that efforts to prevent or reduce littering have not worked. There is strong evidence that campaigns at a local and a national level have been effective in changing people's attitudes towards litter and curbing their litter dropping behaviour.

The single biggest change was in people's attitudes towards dog fouling. In 2001, dog owners believed it was acceptable not to clean up after their pets had fouled in public spaces. By 2006, this had become utterly unacceptable with people exerting pressure on others to do the right thing. More bins were available to dispose of dog faeces correctly and there was increased awareness of the risk of dog faeces to children.

The research also found evidence of an increase in general awareness about litter and even the material of which it was made. Awareness of the two biggest components of litter – smokers' materials and chewing gum – had increased, although attitudes had yet to change. Worryingly, more people than before reported throwing litter from their car and also dropping fast food litter on the streets.

People who drop litter have also changed. The research found a distinct group within the general population that felt extremely guilty about dropping litter and it is likely that they would be susceptible to marketing campaigns that attempt to change their behaviour. Six years ago this group did not exist. Conversely, the research also revealed a hardcore of litter droppers who would be very resistant to any attempts to change their behaviour. It is not that this group did not exist six years ago. Rather, in the most recent research the sampling was widened from those people who were aware that their behaviour had an affect on the environment and were taking steps towards a more sustainable lifestyle, to include all litter droppers irrespective of their attitudes towards the environment.

The research also indicated that campaigns alone will not be sufficient to reduce or prevent littering. Rather, local authorities and other land managers must adopt a multi-faceted approach, thereby increasing their chances of reaching as many of the different litter dropping segments as possible. Streets should be cleaned to a consistently high standard at all times of the day and night to deter people from dropping litter, especially those belonging to the Guilty segment. More bins in the right places will shift the onus for litter prevention away from the council to people such as Blamers. This will not always be possible though, and people should also be advised what to do with their litter if they cannot find a bin or offered an alternative disposal option such as a pocket ashtray or a gum pouch. Education of children and young people is important, but also of adults, half of whom admit to dropping litter. This can be achieved through advertising campaigns. Finally, enforcement can complement campaigns and education drives. In some cases – such as when people belonging to the Am I Bothered? and Life's Too Short segments drop litter – it is the only option.

During 2007/08, ENCAMS will continue to campaign to the groups identified by the segmentation described in this report, using their preferred communication channels, about the issues identified as a priority by the LEQSE. In addition, we will continue to support the work of the Chewing Gum Action Group, whilst providing local authorities with the knowledge and tools they need to run campaigns at a local level. Local authorities are advised to undertake dog fouling campaigns as despite an initial drop in levels since 2001/02, they may be starting to show an upward trend once again. Fast food litter and littering from a car should also be regarded as a priority.

It has been six years since ENCAMS reinvigorated the Keep Britain Tidy campaign, with considerable success as the results of this report have demonstrated. It is now time for the next big push. This will take place in two ways.

First, the results of this research clearly demonstrate that littering is a deeply ingrained behaviour that people find easy to excuse. People do not take responsibility for their littering behaviour and blame it on a variety of external influences such as dirty streets and a lack of bins. ENCAMS would like to see more people taking responsibility for, and feeling proud of the places where they live, work and socialise.

Second, for six years ENCAMS has been speaking directly to members of the public who drop litter through campaigns and press releases. Less has been done to address the needs of those people who are aware of the impact of their behaviour on the environment and are taking big steps, either individually or as a community, to lead more sustainable lifestyles (i.e. converts). ENCAMS certainly knows these individuals exist and has been approached by them over the years.

ENCAMS will work towards meeting both of these objectives as we move forward. It will involve supporting people who wish to bring about a positive improvement in their local neighbourhoods by providing them with the knowledge, tools and skills they need to do this.



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