Introduction

When it comes to going green, recycling is top of mind for many consumers. However, when thinking of recycling, what specifically comes to mind? Do people only think of newspapers, plastic, glass and aluminum, forgetting about electronics? Do consumers know where to look when they want to recycle or donate old CE products they no longer want or need?

While American adults ages 50 and over are quite similar to younger adults regarding their green efforts, there are a number of distinct differences. It is important for CE device manufacturers and retailers to consider the unique needs and desires of adults ages 50 and over because this age segment is sizable in both their numbers and spending power.

This AARP sponsored analysis brief examines the results from CEA’s 2012 CE Recycling and Reuse study to provide insight into how the 50+ segment of the U.S. population differs from their younger counterparts.

Recycling – Consumer Sentiment

Consumers of all ages place high importance on recycling. Younger and older Americans alike engage in environmentally friendly behaviors such as recycling because they feel “it is the right thing to do” and tend to place highest importance on recycling household trash (such as plastics, aluminum cans, newspapers, etc.) above any other product category.

- Nine in ten (88%) U.S. adults ages 50 and over feel it is important to recycle items or products they no longer need or use, with more than half (51%) saying it is “very important.” This compares to a significantly higher 92% total importance for those under age 50 (54% “very important”).

- When it comes to the importance of recycling consumer electronics products such as TVs, computer monitors and cell phones, consumers ages 50+ place equal importance on recycling CE as do their younger counterparts with 86% of both groups stating it is either “important” or “very important.”
Older Americans engage in environmentally friendly behaviors such as recycling for many reasons. More than three fourths (79%) say they do so “because it is the right thing to do.” Other top reasons for environmental responsibility include “to reduce pollution” (69%), “to save natural resources such as water or oil” (67%) and “to save money” (62%).

In comparison, younger Americans engage in environmentally friendly behaviors for the same reasons as older Americans do. “Because it is the right thing to do” (77%) is the number one motive for environmental friendliness among those 18-49, followed by “to reduce pollution” (73%), “to save natural resources such as water or oil” (70%) and “to save money” (70%), the one reason significantly more important to younger Americans when compared to those ages 50+.

Looking at specific categories, 92% of U.S. adults ages 50+ feel that it is important to recycle household trash (such as plastics, aluminum cans, newspapers, etc.) above any other product category. This is followed by household appliances (such as refrigerators, dishwashers, etc.), with 88% of older consumers saying it’s important to recycle these items and 86% indicating it is important to recycle consumer electronics products (such as TVs, computer monitors, cell phones, etc.), all at statistical parity with that seen among 18-49 year olds.

Removal of CE and Reasons for Disposal

Half (52%) of CE owners over age 50 disposed of at least one CE product in the past year, considerably less than the 66% seen among those under age 50. This may be a result of older Americans holding onto their CE products longer than their younger counterparts who often have a tendency to upgrade their products sooner.

Among all consumers, regardless of age, “got a new one and no longer needed the old one” was the top reason for recycling or donating, while “it no longer worked” was the main reason for trashing CE devices.

In the past 12 months, half (52%) of CE owners ages 50+ disposed of at least one CE product, either by donating (38%), recycling (24%) or trashing (7%) it.

Comparatively, two thirds (66%) of CE owners under age 50 disposed of at least one CE product, either by donating (54%), recycling (28%) or trashing (16%) it.
More than half (56%) of CE owners ages 50+ indicated they “got a new one and the old one was no longer needed” as the top reason for disposing of CE regardless of disposal method. This was followed by “just didn’t want it anymore” (40%), “it worked, but just weren’t using it” (39%), “it no longer worked” (34%) and “had more than one and wanted to give one away” (34%).

Televisions are the most removed CE device in the past 12 months with 44% of television owners ages 50+ removing at least one from their household (regardless of disposal method). Behind televisions are 34% of computer owners, 31% of mobile device owners and 25% of “other” electronic device owners removing at least one device.

Looking at those ages 18-49, televisions are again the most removed CE device with more than half (56%) of owners removing at least one from their household in the past 12 months. This is followed by mobile devices (55%), computers (39%) and “other” electronic devices (36%). With the exception of computers, and regardless of disposal method, removal of CE is significantly higher for 18-49 year olds when compared to those over age 50.

Donating

Regardless of age or device, donation/giving away was the most popular method of disposing CE in the past year (38% among those 50+ compared to a significantly higher 54% among those 18-49). Televisions were most often donated (26%) by those ages 50+, followed by computers (19%) and mobile devices (17%).

In the past year, significantly more device owners ages 18-49 reported donating at least one television (35%) and/or at least one mobile device (35%) when compared to their 50+ counterparts.

Family and friends are the main recipients of unwanted CE devices with more than half (55%) of 50+ donors indicating they passed their CE onto people they know. Four in ten (38%) specified they gave their CE devices to a charitable organization/school.
Spotlight on Americans 50+

Donating

- Meanwhile, a significantly higher 68% of younger donors gave their used CE to people they know, while a significantly lower 28% gave to a charitable organization/school.

- Six in ten (60%) adults ages 50+ donated their CE devices because they "got a new one and no longer needed the old one." This was followed by "it worked, but just weren't using it" (45%) and "just didn't want it anymore" (41%).

Recycling

- Awareness of locations to take CE for recycling is relatively high with six in ten (62%) consumers ages 50+ indicating they know where they can recycle consumer electronic products, at statistical parity with those under age 50 (63%).

- Among the one in four (24%) adults ages 50+ who have recycled CE in the past year, dropping the product off at a recycling center (38%) was the top means of recycling. Nearly one fifth (17%) dropped their CE off at a local recycling drive, 14% placed their CE in a recycling bin for regular trash pickup and 12% reported they dropped their CE off at a local electronic retailer. The least utilized method of recycling was mailing the product in to a center or program (6%).

- Comparatively, a significantly lower 25% of CE recyclers under the age of 50 dropped their CE product off at a recycling center, while another 25% dropped their CE off at a local recycling drive. Notably, 24% reported they dropped their CE off at a local electronic retailer, which is significantly higher than the 12% reported among those 50+. This is followed by 9% who mailed the product in to a center or program and 7% placed their CE in a recycling bin for regular trash pickup.

- Six in ten (61%) adults ages 50+ recycled their CE devices because they "got a new one and no longer needed the old one." This was followed by "it no longer worked" (49%) and "just didn't want it anymore" (46%).

Trashing

- In the past 12 months, 7% of adults ages 50+ admitted having thrown away some type CE device in the trash. At the top of the list were televisions, with 4% indicating they had recently tossed at least one television. Mobile devices were thrown away by 3% of the over 50 population and 2% acknowledged having thrown away a computer in the past 12 months.

- When looking specifically at device owners ages 18-49, significantly more consumers concede they have thrown away some type of CE device in the past year (16%) with televisions (8%) topping the list (significantly higher than the 4% among those 50+), followed by mobile devices (6%) and computers (4%).

- Regardless of age, a top reason for skipping recycling and donation in favor of trash is convenience. Three quarters (76%) of those 50+ who threw a CE device away indicated they needed to dispose of the product and it was easiest to put it in the trash. Four in ten (43%) of those tossing CE devices indicated they did not know of any recycling programs for electronics, one quarter (24%) indicated they couldn't find anyone that wanted the product and 6% favored the trash over recycling because there was a fee for recycling the product and they did not want to pay it.

- Among those 50+ who trashed CE, 58% cited the product “no longer worked” as the top reason for trashing, followed by “got a new one and no longer needed the old one” (37%), “had more than one and wanted to give one away” (22%) and “just didn’t want it anymore” (22%).
“Got a new one and no longer needed the old one” is the top reason for CE removal for those ages 50+ that recycled and/or donated. For those 50+ that trashed their used CE, “it no longer worked” was the primary reason for CE removal.

Motivations

Safe, responsible recycling and charity are what inspires consumers to recycle CE most. In general, older consumers are less influenced to recycle by monetary incentives than are their younger counterparts.

- What inspires 50+ consumers to recycle CE? Safe, responsible recycling and charity. Nearly nine in ten consumers ages 50+ reported they would be more likely to recycle if they knew it would be recycled safely and responsibly (88%) or if they knew it would be given to someone in need who couldn’t afford it (88%).

- Older consumers are noticeably less influenced to recycle CE by monetary incentives than are their younger counterparts. Knowing that a monetary contribution would be made to charity, receiving a discount on a new product of the same type being recycled, receiving a refund of the recycling fee paid when the product was originally purchased and receiving cash in exchange for the product all had significantly less of an impact on the likelihood to recycle CE for those 50+ than for those 18-49.
What Consumers Want When it is Time to Recycle Used CE

Convenience is important to all consumers when it comes to recycling CE, regardless of age, and many consumers do NOT feel it is convenient to do so. When asked which method of recycling they would prefer if an electronics recycling program was started in their area, being able to leave the product in a designated recycling bin curbside and taking the product to a designated recycling center were the most preferred methods among those ages 50+.

- When it is time to recycle used CE devices, many consumers, regardless of age, do not feel it is convenient to do so. While three fourths (75%) of those 50+ state recycling CE is important to them, roughly half say there are locations available in their community to recycle CE (56%) and that they have CE recycling events in their area (50%). As a whole, only 45% of older Americans describe CE recycling as convenient.

- Notably, older consumers agree there are locations available in their community to recycle CE and say that they have CE recycling events in their area significantly more so than do those consumers ages 18-49, suggesting that older consumers have a higher awareness of CE recycling in their communities.

- Convenience in recycling CE is an important factor to all consumers. When asked which method of recycling they would prefer if an electronics recycling program were started in their area, 42% of consumers ages 50+ indicate they would like to be able to leave the product in a designated recycling bin curbside, at statistical parity with the 44% seen among 18-49 year olds. This was closely followed by taking the product to a designated recycling center (41% for those 50+, significantly higher than the 32% reported for those 18-49) and dropping the product off at a retail store (14% 50+, 17% 18-49). Mailing the product to an approved recycling facility was the least preferred method among both age groups (2% of those 50+, 4% of those under 50 selecting it as most preferred).

Figure 7

Ease of Recycling CE
(% Agree + Strongly Agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Ages 50+</th>
<th>Ages 18-49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recycling is important to me</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling consumer electronics is important</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are locations for me to recycle</td>
<td>56%**</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are consumer electronics recycling</td>
<td>59%**</td>
<td>59%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>events in my community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find recycling consumer electronics</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: U.S. adults (ages 50+ n=422; ages 18-49 n=572)

Q. Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Figure 8

Preferred Method for Recycling CE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Ages 50+</th>
<th>Ages 18-49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving the product in a designated recycling bin</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking the product to a designated recycling center</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>41%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropping the product at a retail store</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailing the product to an approved recycling facility</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: U.S. adults (ages 50+ n=422; ages 18-49 n=572)

Q. If an electronics recycling program were started in your area, when it comes time to recycle a device you own, which of the following methods would you PREFER?
 Going Green

Receiving a discount on a product is the highest rated incentive to purchasing environmentally friendly CE among all Americans, young and old alike. However, as a whole, older Americans are significantly less motivated by monetary incentives than are their under 50 counterparts.

- What motivates 50+ consumers to purchase environmentally friendly CE? Receiving a discount on a product is the number one motivator with 77% of those 50+ indicating they would be likely to purchase. This is followed by certification by a trusted organization (68%), receiving a federal (66%) or state (64%) tax break and, lastly, certification by the manufacturer (62%).

- Of interest, older consumers are considerably less motivated to purchase environmentally friendly CE by monetary incentives than are their younger counterparts. Receiving a discount on the product or a federal or state tax break all have significantly less of an impact on the likelihood to purchase CE for those 50+ than they do for those 18-49.

Environmental Friendliness

Older consumers place significantly less importance on products having environmentally friendly attributes and are generally more skeptical about environmentally friendly claims. Additionally, they are often confused by the language used to describe environmentally friendly products. However, certifications from trusted sources go a long way with this age group and can help to ease distrust and/or concern when it comes to purchasing green.

- Consumers ages 50+ place significantly less importance on products having environmentally friendly attributes than do those under age 50. Two thirds (66%) believe it is either “very” or “somewhat important” for CE to have environmentally friendly attributes compared to a higher 72% for those ages 18-49.

- Furthermore, consumers over age 50 are more skeptical of claims surrounding environmental friendliness and are less clear as to related terminology, perhaps explaining why they tend to place less importance on CE products having environmentally friendly attributes. With that, nearly two thirds (63%) of older consumers say they don’t believe everything they see or read about environmentally friendly products (compared to 55% of those under age 50) and nearly half (45%) are often confused by the language used to describe environmentally friendly products.
How can manufacturers and retailers boost older consumers’ confidence in and understanding of CE environmental friendliness claims? Certifications go a long way with the 50+ age group. Nearly three quarters (73%) of consumers ages 50+ say they would trust certification by an independent review group such as Consumer Reports. This is followed by certification by an electronic industry group such as the Consumer Electronics Association (65%) and certification by the Environmental Protection Agency (64%).

Despite their likelihood to be more skeptical of CE environmental friendliness claims, consumers over age 50 are considerably more trusting of independent review groups, industry related review groups, friend/family member claims and even “green” logos than are their 18-49 year old counterparts. This suggests that older consumers, with a little reassurance from a trusted source, are willing to put their faith in claims of environmental care.

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**Figure 11**

**Agreement With Statements: Environmental Friendliness (% Strongly + Somewhat Agree)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Ages 50+</th>
<th>Ages 18-49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think some companies are over-stating how environmentally friendly their products are in order to sell more</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t always believe what I see or read about environmentally friendly products</td>
<td>85%**</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am often confused by the language used to describe environmentally friendly products</td>
<td>45%**</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 12**

**Ways to Increase Belief that CE Products are Environmentally Friendly**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Ages 50+</th>
<th>Ages 18-49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certified by an independent review group similar to Consumer Reports</td>
<td>73%**</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified by an industry group such as the Consumer Electronics Association</td>
<td>65%**</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified by the Environmental Protection Agency</td>
<td>64%*</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company making the product was publicly known for its environmental activism</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend or family members verified claims</td>
<td>57%**</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified by the Federal Trade Commission</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It had a “green” logo</td>
<td>44%**</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Base:** U.S. adults (ages 50+ n=422; ages 18-49 n=572)

Q. Which of the following, if any, would make you believe electronic products are environmentally friendly?
In Summary

Consumers of all ages place high importance on recycling. Americans ages 50+ engage in environmentally friendly behaviors such as recycling because they feel “it is the right thing to do” and tend to place highest importance on recycling household trash (such as plastics, aluminum cans, newspapers, etc.) above any other product category.

Safe, responsible recycling and charity are what inspires older consumers to recycle CE most. In general, they are less influenced to recycle by monetary incentives than are those under age 50.

Convenience is important to all consumers when it comes to recycling CE, regardless of age, and many consumers do not feel it is convenient to do so. Being able to leave a CE product in a designated recycling bin curbside and/or taking CE products to a designated recycling center are the most preferred methods of CE recycling among those ages 50+.

Older consumers place significantly less importance on products having environmentally friendly attributes and are generally more skeptical about environmentally friendly claims. Additionally, they are often confused by the language used to describe environmentally friendly products. However, certifications from trusted sources go a long way with this age group and can help to ease distrust and/or concern when it comes to purchasing green. Therefore, CE manufacturers and retailers should focus their efforts on educating the 50+ consumer on the benefits of green CE, ensuring they have all the resources they need available to them, as this group of consumers will continue to grow with the green movement into the future.
Methodology

The report described herein was designed and formulated by the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA)®. Data from this analysis brief was sourced from CEA’s CE Recycling and Reuse 2012 Edition study. The quantitative study was administered via telephone interview between August 23—26, 2012 to two national probability samples, which, when combined, consists of 1,059 U.S. adults. 760 interviews were conducted by landline phone, and 251 interviews were conducted by cell phone. The margin of sampling error at 95% confidence for aggregate results is +/− 3.0%. For Americans 50+ the sampling error is +/− 4.8%.

About CEA

The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) is the preeminent trade association promoting growth in the $216 billion U.S. consumer electronics industry. More than 2,000 companies enjoy the benefits of CEA membership, including legislative advocacy, market research, technical training and education, industry promotion, standards development and the fostering of business and strategic relationships. CEA also owns and produces the International CES - The Global Stage for Innovation. All profits from CES are reinvested into CEA’s industry services.

About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a membership that helps people age 50 and over have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole, ways that help people 50 and over improve their lives. Since 1958, AARP has been leading a revolution in the way people view and live life.

About AARP’s Innovation@50+ initiative:

The Innovation@50+™ initiative aims to spark entrepreneurial activity across public and private sectors. Anchored by the AARP social mission – to enhance the quality of life for all as we age – the initiative enlists the expertise of visionary thinkers, entrepreneurs, the investment community, industry and not-for-profits to spur innovation to meet the needs and wants of people over 50.

On the ground, the initiative catalyzes research and helps shape a marketplace ethos by promoting core, unifying principles such as "design for all." It stimulates new business models that reflect the broad transformation in how the 50-plus life is being re-imagined. Lastly, the initiative prepares 50-plus people to communicate with, access, engage and thrive in a new "longevity economy."

For more information please visit: www.aarp.org/innovation50plus