

One-page summary: Waste prevention and recycling barriers and enablers

Background

As part of the EPA-IUA Campus Living Labs Sustainability Project a behavioural diagnosis was conducted to study the main barriers and enablers that influence waste prevention and recycling behaviours and to scope opportunities to trial interventions at universities. The behavioural diagnosis included an extensive literature review and in-depth interviews with participating universities.

Waste prevention

Five main barriers and five key enablers of waste prevention among university students were identified from literature review and stakeholder interviews. They include:

| Barriers | Enablers |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low environmental concern• Lack of knowledge and awareness• Lack of alternatives to single-use materials• Bad choice architecture• Lack of incentive to prevent waste | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing information and feedback on waste prevention• Creating an environment conducive to waste prevention• Incentivising waste minimisation and disincentivising waste generation• Leveraging social norms to encourage waste reduction• Changing the default options |

Waste recycling

Five main barriers and six key enablers of waste recycling on campus were also identified. They include:

| Barriers | Enablers |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of waste recycling infrastructure• Limited waste sorting knowledge• Lack of trust in the recycling process• Low environmental concerns• Low perceived collective waste recycling effort | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing adequate waste recycling infrastructure• Providing information about waste recycling• Incentivising waste recycling• Encouraging students to make personal or public commitments• Making social norms around waste recycling more visible• Supporting waste recycling advocates |

Intervention design implications

Identifying the main barriers and enablers of the target behaviour(s) is an important step in designing and trialling behavioural interventions. The list of barriers and enablers can be used to inform the intervention design, as researchers start brainstorming solutions to reduce barriers and add additional fuels to achieve the desired outcome(s).