

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	i
Introduction.....	1
Reactions to Proposed Reforms	1
Support for the Existing Law and Reasons to Support or Oppose Bottle-Deposit Programs	7
Consumption and Bottle-Return Habits and Support for Reform	10
Impact on Support for Legislative Candidates	14
Extended Producer Responsibility	16
Demographics	17
Conclusions.....	18

Executive Summary: Survey of New York Registered Voters Attitudes Toward New York's Bottle Bill and Proposed Reforms

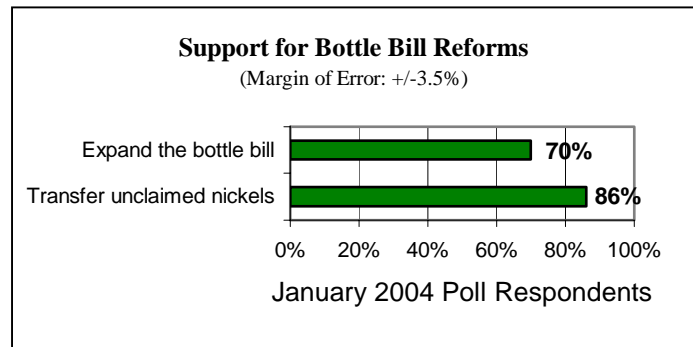
Introduction

New York's Returnable Container Act, better known as the "bottle bill," requires a five-cent refundable deposit on all beer, soda, and wine-cooler containers sold in New York State. The measure was enacted in 1982 to reduce litter and increase recycling. Since that time, the beverage market has changed, with noncarbonated beverages such as bottled water, iced tea, and sports drinks comprising an increasing market share. Additionally, curbside recycling is now mandatory throughout most of the state.

Currently, the State Legislature is considering several proposals that would modify New York's container-deposit law. This poll was conducted to measure New York voters' attitudes toward the existing law and certain proposals to amend it. The results of the poll show strong support for a "bigger and better" bottle bill in New York.

Key Findings

New York voters support expanding New York's bottle bill. Seventy percent of a random statewide sample of 800 registered New York voters supports an expansion of the bottle bill to include noncarbonated beverages such as bottled water, juice, sports drinks, and iced tea. Support for expanding the bottle bill was robust: examinations of response by area of the state, age, race and ethnicity, household income, and political-party identification revealed widespread support independent of these characteristics. Support was also robust to variations in consumption habits: those who consume the greatest quantity of these types of beverages—who would be most affected by the proposal—support expansion.



New York voters support transferring unclaimed deposits from beverage distributors to the State to fund environmental programs. Eighty-six percent of the respondents support a transfer of unclaimed bottle deposits from beverage distributors to the State to fund environmental programs. Republicans, Democrats, Independents, and voters of all ages, races, ethnic backgrounds, and levels of income across the state support a transfer and use of these funds for state environmental programs. The survey also confirmed that New Yorkers do not know what happens to unclaimed deposits: when asked to identify who keeps unclaimed deposits from a list including the stores that sold the beverages, the companies that distributed the beverages, the State of New York (to use for environmental programs), or "someone else," only 19% selected beverage distributors; 23% selected the State of New York, 29% selected retailers, 10% selected "someone else," and 19% said they didn't know.

New York voters support the existing bottle bill and say the state is "much cleaner" because of it. Eighty-four percent of those surveyed support the existing New York bottle-deposit program. Seventy-eight percent of those surveyed agree that "the bottle-deposit program has made our state much cleaner," and 81% agree that "curbside recycling is not enough: we need the bottle-deposit program to control litter."

New York voters support the bottle bill because it protects the environment, keeps litter off the streets, and encourages recycling. When asked to describe, in their own words, the most important reason to support or oppose the bottle bill or the changes under consideration, 36% of the statewide sample mentioned environmental benefits as the most important reason for their opinions; 24% mentioned controlling litter, 17% mentioned incentives to recycle or reducing the quantity of waste in landfills, and 9% spoke generally of cleanliness. Only 11% of the comments offered a reason to oppose the program and/or proposed changes, with the most common response being that the bottle-deposit system is “a hassle.”

Many New York voters say this issue is important in their decision to support a candidate for the State Legislature. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) said a candidate’s stance on the bottle bill reforms would be “very important” or “somewhat important” to earning their support. Those identifying themselves as Independents were most likely to say the issue is important (54%, including pure Independents and those leaning towards one of the major parties), and those who supported the bottle bill reforms placed more importance on a candidate’s position than did those who opposed the reforms.

New York voters feel we are spending too little to protect and enhance the environment. New Yorkers feel that, in general, we are spending “too little” to protect and enhance the environment. Consistent with national polls on the subject, 62% of the respondents say “we are spending too little” and only 4% say “we are spending too much.”

Survey Methodology

The data were collected through telephone interviews with registered New York voters between January 16, 2004 and January 31, 2004. The survey was conducted by Public Policy Associates, Incorporated a national research organization. The summary data are associated with a margin of error of (+/-) 3.5% and represent 800 New York registered voters, of whom 267 reside in New York City; 266 reside in Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, and Rockland Counties; and 267 reside in the remainder of the state. Some questions were administered to only half the sample, and the margin of error for these questions is (+/-) 4.9%. The sample’s racial, ethnic, gender, and partisan composition is approximately proportionate to the registered-voter population within each of the three sampling regions. The summary data have been weighted on the dimensions of county of residence, voter age, and voter gender to mirror the New York registered-voter population.

About the Sponsors

The poll was commissioned by Environmental Advocates of New York, a statewide nonprofit environmental organization, and was developed in conjunction with the Container Recycling Institute, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the New York Public Interest Research Group. For more information about these groups or to see the complete report, please visit the Web site of the Bigger, Better Bottle Bill Campaign at www.nybottlebill.org or the Web sites of the participating organizations:

- Environmental Advocates of New York, www.eany.org
- Container Recycling Institute (CRI), www.container-recycling.org
- Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), www.nrdc.org
- New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), www.nypirg.org

Introduction

New York's Returnable Container Act, better known as the "bottle bill," requires a five-cent refundable deposit on all beer, soda, and wine-cooler containers sold in New York State. The measure was enacted in 1982 to reduce litter and increase recycling. Since that time, the beverage market has changed, with noncarbonated beverages such as bottled water, iced tea, and sports drinks comprising an increasing market share. Additionally, curbside recycling is now mandatory throughout most of the state.

Currently, the State Legislature is considering several proposals that would modify New York's container-deposit law. This report presents the results of a poll of 800 New York State registered voters conducted in late January 2004 that measured voters' reactions to several proposed reforms to New York's bottle bill and explored attitudes about the existing program. Surveys were equally distributed among three constructed "regions" of the state: New York City, the New York City suburbs (Nassau, Suffolk, Rockland, and Westchester Counties), and the balance of the state. The sampling error for the survey results as a whole is (+/-) 3.5%, and the results for each of the regions are associated with a sampling error of (+/-) 6.0%. Some questions were presented to only half the sample; these results are noted and are associated with a sampling error of (+/-) 4.9%. Subgroup analyses—such as by race, political party identification, or household income—are associated with considerably higher margins of error and should be interpreted with caution.

The survey sampling approach resulted in a final dataset that overrepresented the New York City suburbs relative to the more populous New York City and the balance of the state. To correct for the skew introduced by the sampling approach, the final dataset was weighted by the voter's county of residence; weights were additionally used to distribute the cases to mirror the registered-voter population's age and gender distributions.

The survey opened with questions that confirmed that the respondent was a registered voter and familiar with the current New York bottle-deposit system. Respondents who indicated they were not familiar with the bottle-deposit system were prompted with a brief description of the deposit/return process and again asked if they were familiar with the system. Surveys were completed with only those voters who affirmed that they were familiar with the program.

Reactions to Proposed Reforms

The poll tested voter support for three potential reforms to the bottle bill currently being considered by the New York State Legislature: expansion of the program to include containers for noncarbonated, nonalcoholic beverages such as water, juice, iced tea, and sports drinks; transferring unclaimed deposits (deposits that are paid but never refunded) from the beverage industry to the State to support environmental programs; and an increase in the deposit from five cents to ten cents.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of survey respondents that indicated they would "strongly support," "somewhat support," "somewhat oppose," or "strongly oppose" a proposed expansion of New York's bottle bill to include noncarbonated drinks such as water, juice, and iced tea. Interviewers provided respondents with a specific description of the types of containers to be covered under one proposal to

expand the law¹ and ensured the respondent had no questions about the types of containers to be included before questioning respondents about the proposed reform. The specific question was:

If the New York State Legislature were to consider expanding the bottle-deposit law to include nondeposit containers such as for water, juice, and iced tea, would you support it strongly, support it somewhat, oppose it somewhat, or oppose it strongly?

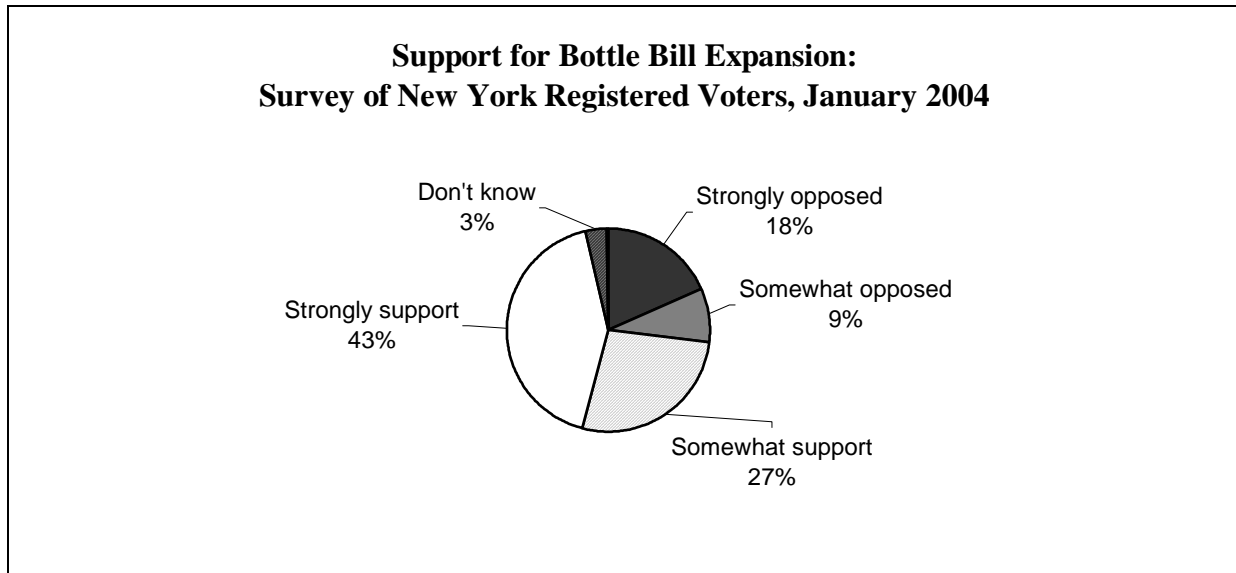


Figure 1

As Figure 1 shows, respondents are clearly in favor of expanding the bottle bill. Seventy percent would support the legislation, while 27% are opposed and 3% said they “don’t know.”

Figure 2 presents responses by demographic subgroups of interest, including region of the state, household income, political-party identification, age, race and ethnicity, and gender. Every group expressed more than majority support: New Yorkers of all ages, incomes, races, and parties like the proposal. Support varies between 60% and 83% for the measured subgroups, with 65% to 75% of most population segments indicating they would support expanding the bottle bill.

¹ The specific language was, “One change in the law that is being considered involves nondeposit bottles and cans, or containers that are NOT covered by the current deposit law. By nondeposit beverage containers, I mean bottles and cans, less than a gallon in size, that hold noncarbonated drinks such as water, juice, sports drinks, and iced tea. This definition does not include milk, wine or liquor, cardboard cartons, juice boxes, or foil-wrapped drinks. Do you have any questions about the types of containers I am talking about?”

**Support for Bottle Bill Expansion by Demographic Group:
Survey of New York Registered Voters, January 2004**

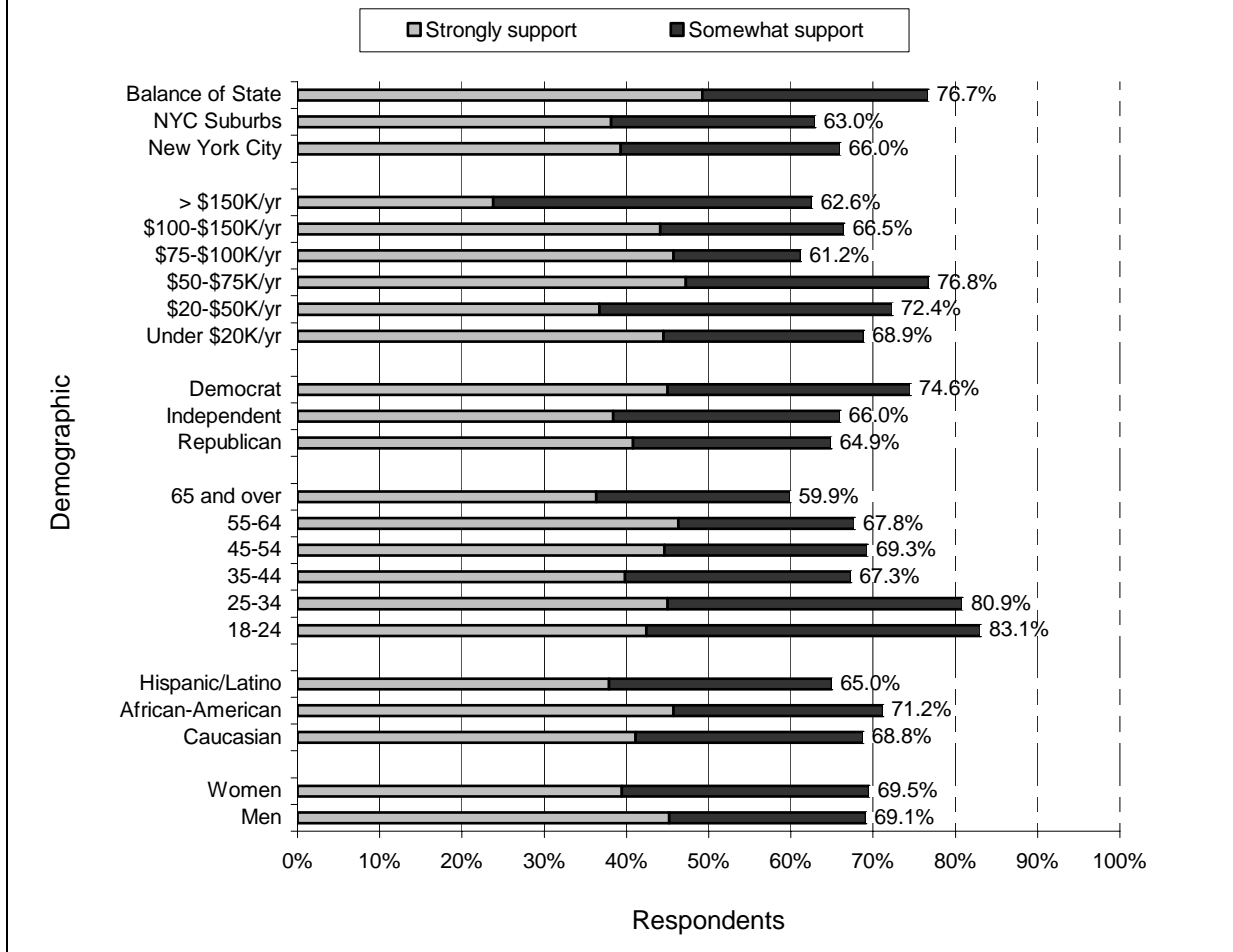


Figure 2

The next survey question probed New York voters' understanding of who retains unclaimed deposits. The specific question was, "Some of the containers with a five-cent deposit are never returned for the nickel refund. From the following list, who would you guess currently keeps the nickels that were never refunded? Would you say the stores that sold the beverage, the companies that distributed the beverage, the State of New York, or someone else?" Figure 3 shows the responses and confirms that most New Yorkers do not understand what happens to unclaimed deposits. Only 19% correctly selected beverage distributors, while 29% selected retailers, 23% selected the State, 10% selected "someone else," and 19% said they didn't know.

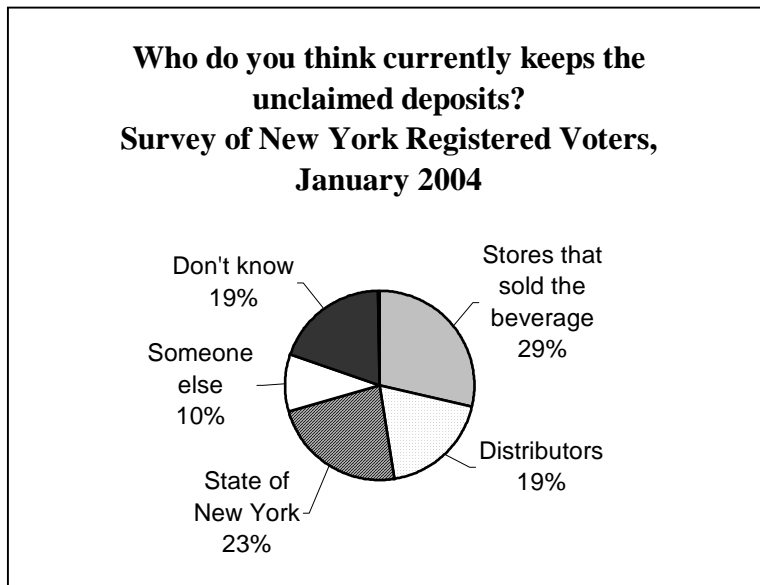


Figure 3

while 4% said they didn't know.

The next question was, "Currently, the companies that distributed the beverages keep the unclaimed deposits. If the New York State Legislature were to consider passing a law that transferred the unclaimed deposits from the beverage distributors to the state to support environmental programs, would you support it strongly, support it somewhat, oppose it somewhat, or oppose it strongly?"

As Figure 4 shows, voters give resounding support to the proposal to transfer unclaimed deposits from the beverage industry to the State for support of environmental programs. Eighty-six percent supported the proposal, and 59% supported it strongly. Only 10% were opposed, while 4% said they didn't know.

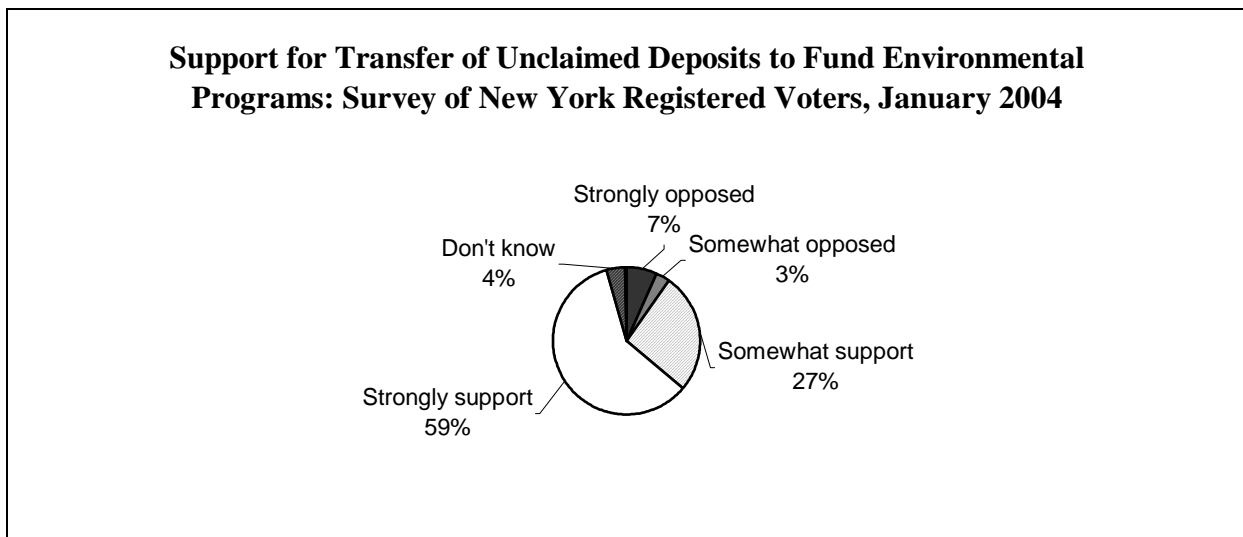


Figure 4

Figure 5 provides subgroup statistics on support for the proposal to transfer unclaimed deposits to the State by region, household income, political party identification, age, race and ethnicity, and gender. Support is bipartisan and strong in all regions of the state.

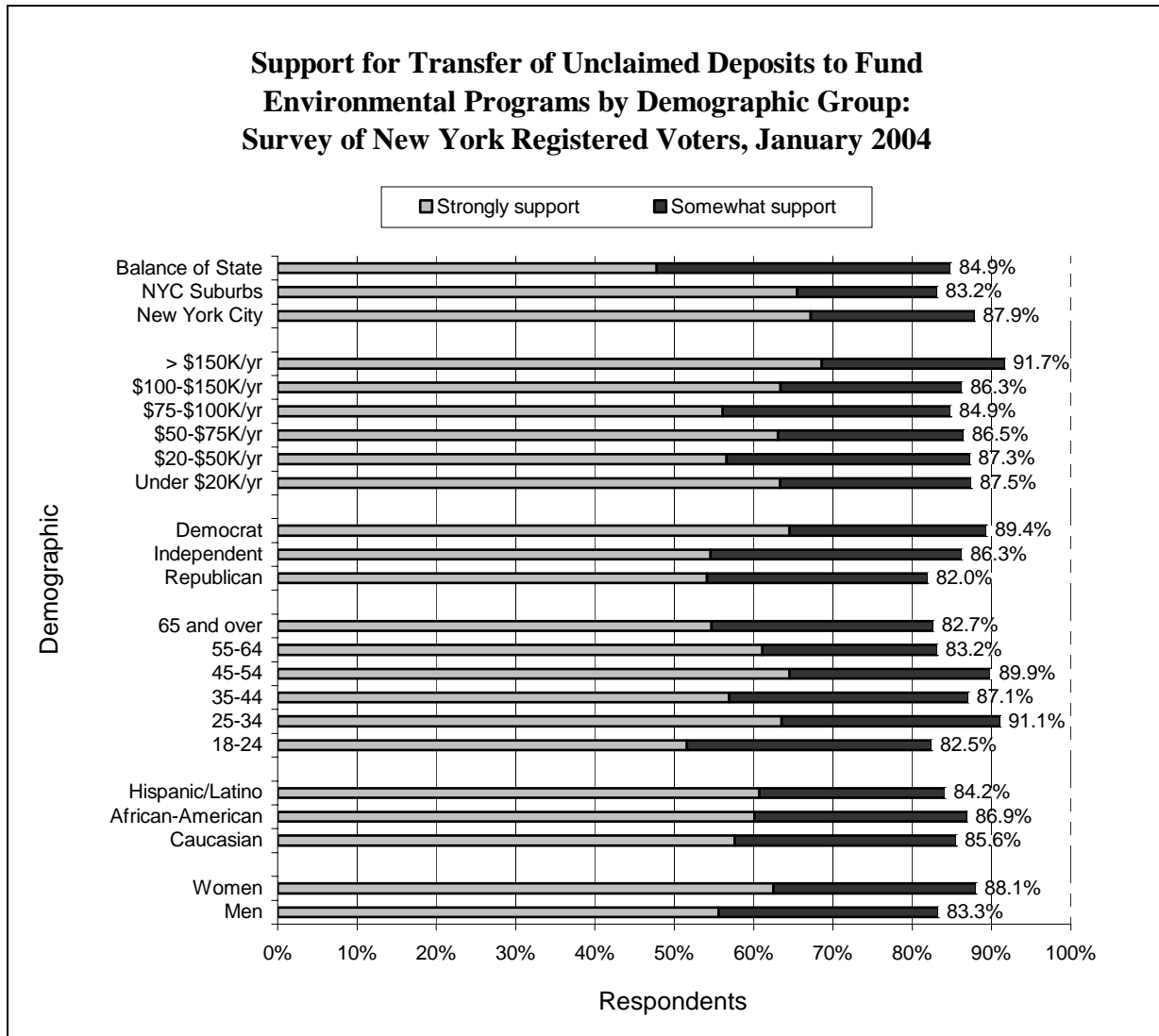


Figure 5

The last reform tested in the poll was an increase in the bottle deposit from the current five cents to ten cents. The specific question asked was as follows:

Now I'd like to ask you about one additional reform that is being talked about. If the New York State Legislature were to consider passing a law increasing the bottle deposit from five cents to ten cents, would you support it strongly, support it somewhat, oppose it somewhat, or oppose it strongly?

**Support for Increasing the Deposit to Ten Cents:
Survey of New York Registered Voters,
January 2004**

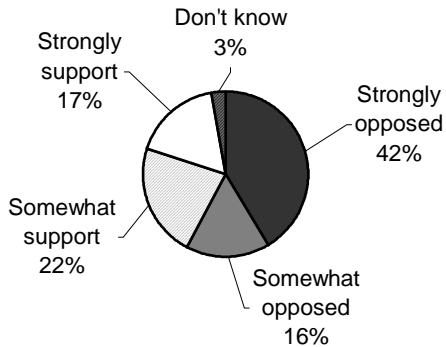


Figure 6

Figure 6 shows the level of support among New York voters for an increase in the bottle deposit from five cents to ten cents. Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed opposed such a change, while 39% supported it and 3% were unsure.

Figure 7 shows subgroup breakouts. Younger voters tend to be most supportive and voters aged 65 and over tend to be less inclined to support a change. Support for an increase in the bottle deposit is also stronger in upstate New York than in the New York City suburbs and stronger among Democrats than among Republicans. Observed differences between men and women fell within the boundaries of the survey margin of error and were thus not statistically significant.

**Support for Increasing the Deposit by Demographic Group:
Survey of New York Registered Voters, January 2004**

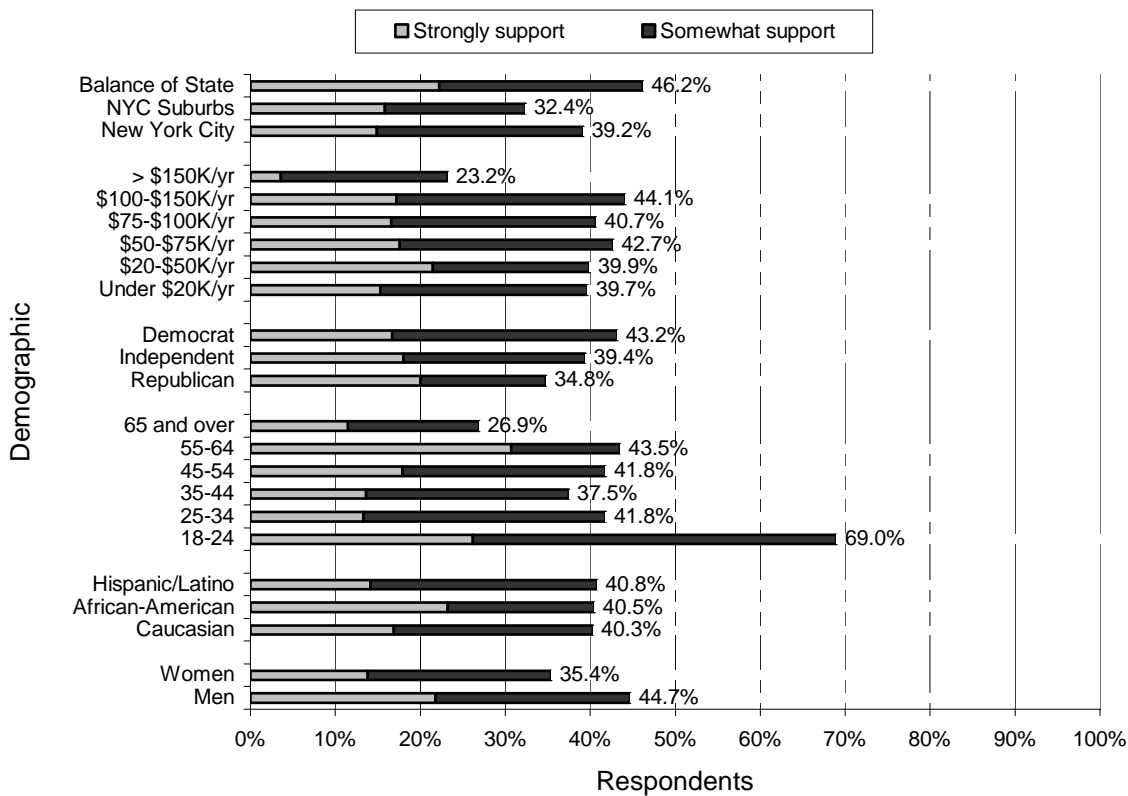


Figure 7

Support for the Existing Law and Reasons to Support or Oppose Bottle-Deposit Programs

Survey respondents were all asked, “To you as a voter, what is the most important reason to support or oppose bottle-deposit programs and the types of changes we’ve discussed?” When in doubt, interviewers confirmed whether the response was a reason to support bottle-deposit programs or a reason to oppose bottle-deposit programs. The open-ended responses were collapsed into like categories and are presented in Table 1. In many cases, respondents gave an answer that spoke to more than one category, and when this occurred, the response was placed in multiple categories, yielding a total greater than 100%.

Table 1: Reasons to Support or Oppose Bottle-Deposit Programs and Proposed Reforms

Reason	Direction	Number of Mentions	Percentage of Respondents
Reference to environment	Support	285	35.7%
Reference to litter/streets/trash	Support	193	24.1%
Promote recycling/reduce landfill	Support	133	16.7%
Cleanliness	Support	72	9.0%
Hassle	Oppose	31	3.9%
Support low income/homeless	Support	30	3.8%
Enhance State revenues	Support	24	3.0%
Cost	Oppose	21	2.6%
I “like the money” (enjoy collecting the refund)	Support	20	2.5%
I already recycle	Oppose	14	1.7%
The system doesn’t work	Oppose	10	1.3%
Keep program as is	Oppose	5	0.6%
Deposits are like a tax	Oppose	4	0.5%
All others	Support	45	5.0%
All others	Oppose	19	2.1%
Totals		906	112.50%

As Table 1 shows, respondents were significantly more likely to describe a reason to support the proposal than a reason to oppose the proposal. As a percentage of responses, 88.5% or 802 were reasons to support, and 11.5% or 104 were reasons to oppose. Environmental benefits, often described in connection with protection or cleanliness, were most often cited as a reason to support bottle-deposit programs and proposed changes. Controlling litter, particularly on streets and highways, was the next most common reason, followed by promoting recycling or reducing landfill waste. Other reasons for support included fulfilling responsibilities to future generations, “public benefits,” and conservation.

Reasons to oppose the proposal were most commonly associated with the bottle-return system being a “hassle,” a “pain,” or “inconvenient,” which was expressed by 3.9% of the participants. Other common reasons for opposing the system included that respondents already recycle or prefer curbside recycling (14 or 1.7% of respondents) and that the existing system does not work effectively (10 or 1.3% of respondents). Other reasons for opposition included the perception that the program does not produce environmental benefits or litter control and that it encourages people to rummage through the trash.

Respondents were asked whether they supported or opposed the current bottle-deposit program, regardless of their feelings about any of the proposed reforms. The specific language was, “Whatever you may think of the changes being considered, how do you feel about the existing New York bottle-deposit law? Do you support it strongly, support it somewhat, oppose it somewhat, or oppose it strongly?” The responses are presented in Figure 8. Eighty-four percent were supportive of the existing law, while 14% were “strongly opposed” or “somewhat opposed” and 2% reserved judgment.

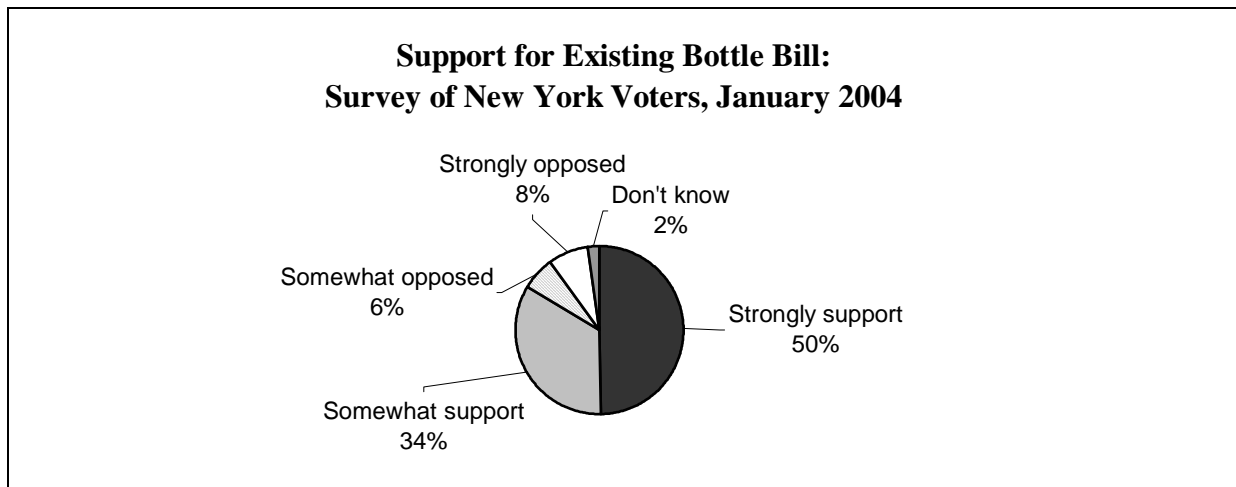


Figure 8

Table 2 presents the responses to a question measuring New Yorkers’ perceptions of the success of the bottle bill in controlling litter. Respondents were asked, “Please tell me if you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement: New York’s bottle-deposit law has made our state much cleaner.” Seventy-eight percent agreed that the bottle-deposit law has made New York “much cleaner,” while 16% disagreed and 6% were not sure.

**Table 2:
“New York’s bottle-deposit law has made our state much cleaner.”**

Response	Respondents
Agree strongly	36.1%
Agree somewhat	42.3%
Disagree somewhat	10.6%
Disagree strongly	5.4%
Don’t know	5.7%
Total	100.1% ²

Each respondent was asked a second agree-disagree question: half of the respondents were asked to react to the statement listed in Table 3, and half were asked to react to the statement listed in Table 4. The smaller respondent pool for these questions is associated with a sampling error of (+/-) 4.9%. Eighty percent of the respondent pool “agreed strongly” or “agreed somewhat” that curbside recycling is insufficient to control litter, and 59% “agreed strongly” or “agreed somewhat” that a dime deposit would increase the return rate and help to control litter.

² Here and throughout this report, totals occasionally vary slightly from 100% due to rounding.

**Table 3: “Curbside recycling is not enough:
We need the bottle-deposit program to control litter.”**

Response	Respondents
Agree strongly	55.2%
Agree somewhat	25.4%
Disagree somewhat	9.9%
Disagree strongly	7.3%
Don't know	2.1%
Total	99.9%

**Table 4: “If the deposit were ten cents, people would be more likely
to return their bottles and cans and the state would be cleaner.”**

Response	Respondents
Agree strongly	32.6%
Agree somewhat	26.4%
Disagree somewhat	16.2%
Disagree strongly	20.6%
Don't know	4.2%
Total	100.0%

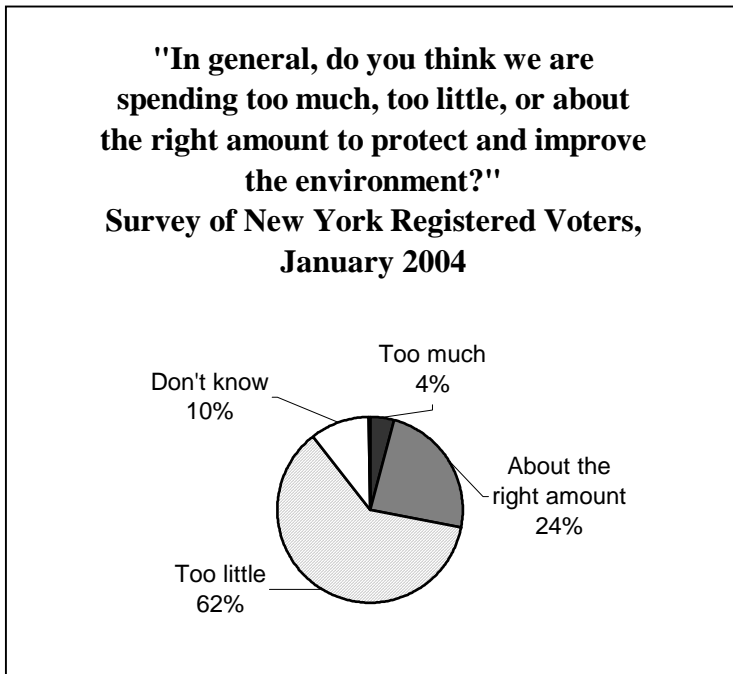


Figure 9

Figure 9 shows responses to a question that measured respondents' general perceptions of the adequacy of support for the environment. Survey data collected by the National Opinion Research Center between 1973 and 2000 used this question to measure national perceptions of the adequacy of support for the environment. According to the most recent data available (gathered in February 2002), 62% said “we are spending too little” and 7% said “we are spending too much.” Over time, the fraction of respondents indicating that “too little” is being spent varied from a low of 48% in 1980 to a high of 71% in 1990, and the fraction of respondents indicating that “too much” is being spent varied from a low of 4% in 1989 and 1990 to a high of 15% in 1980.³ The responses of participants in the survey of New York voters are

consistent with national opinion trends among the general population.

³ Riley E. Dunlap, “An Enduring Concern: Light stays green for environmental protection.” *Public Perspective*, September/October 2002, p. 10, citing the National Opinion Research Center General Social Survey.

Consumption and Bottle-Return Habits and Support for Reform

Table 5 shows the weekly quantity of containers that survey respondents report purchasing, including containers covered by the current beverage-deposit law and containers that would be covered under the proposed expansion. The specific questions were, “How many returnable bottles and cans of beer, soft drinks, sparkling water, and wine coolers do you purchase in an average week?” and, “And how many bottles and cans of water, juice, sports drinks, and iced tea do you purchase in an average week?” Interviewers coded the responses into preestablished categories. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents reported that they purchase five or fewer beverages covered by the deposit law in an average week, and 53% purchase five or fewer containers of water, juice, and iced tea that would be included in an expanded bottle bill. Correspondingly, 21% of the respondents purchase twenty or more cans or bottles of soda, beer, and wine coolers in an average week, but only 10.5% purchase twenty or more cans or bottles of water, juice, and iced tea.

Weekly Quantity	Soda, Beer, and Wine Coolers	Water, Juice, and Iced Tea
None	4.4%	14.4%
1 – 5	32.3%	38.3%
6 – 10	20.9%	20.8%
11 – 15	14.2%	9.4%
16 – 20	6.1%	5.6%
More than 20	20.9%	10.5%
Don't know/refuse	1.3%	1.0%
Total	100.1%	100.0%

It would be reasonable to expect that respondents who purchase relatively more of the beverages affected by the proposed reforms would have a greater financial stake and express a lesser degree of support for the proposals. However, the survey data show otherwise. Table 6 shows the percentages of respondents supporting and opposing proposed reforms by their quantity of weekly purchases of soda, beer, and wine coolers, and Table 7 shows the same data based on weekly purchases of water, juice, and iced tea. Neither table reveals a pattern in which reform sentiment diminishes as quantity consumed increases. The data also show that many opponents purchase few of the covered beverages and are not likely to experience significant impact.

Table 6: Relationship Between Quantity of Returnable Bottles and Cans Purchased and Propensity to Support Reforms

Weekly Quantity of Returnable Bottles and Cans	Oppose	Support
Expansion of the bottle bill		
None	31.3%	68.8%
1 – 5	29.0%	71.0%
6 – 10	27.8%	72.2%
11 – 15	27.5%	72.5%
16 – 20	29.2%	70.8%
More than 20	25.3%	74.7%
Transfer of unclaimed deposits		
None	10.1%	89.9%
1 – 5	9.0%	91.0%
6 – 10	9.4%	90.6%
11 – 15	8.4%	91.6%
16 – 20	13.1%	86.9%
More than 20	11.9%	88.1%
Increase the deposit to a dime		
None	62.9%	37.1%
1 – 5	61.8%	38.2%
6 – 10	56.4%	43.6%
11 – 15	64.5%	35.5%
16 – 20	61.7%	38.3%
More than 20	54.0%	46.0%

Note: Oppose/support figures include only those registering an opinion; those indicating “don’t know” or who refused the question are excluded.

Table 7: Relationship Between Quantity of Water, Juice, and Iced Tea Purchased and Propensity to Support Reforms

Weekly Quantity of Water, Juice, and Iced Tea	Oppose	Support
Expansion of the bottle bill		
None	33.0%	67.0%
1 – 5	28.9%	71.1%
6 – 10	19.6%	80.4%
11 – 15	25.7%	74.3%
16 – 20	32.6%	67.4%
More than 20	30.9%	69.1%
Transfer of unclaimed deposits		
None	10.3%	89.7%
1 – 5	10.9%	89.1%
6 – 10	5.8%	94.2%
11 – 15	12.0%	88.0%
16 – 20	10.8%	89.2%
More than 20	11.6%	88.4%
Increase the deposit to a dime		
None	64.2%	35.8%
1 – 5	57.6%	42.4%
6 – 10	55.6%	44.4%
11 – 15	56.0%	44.0%
16 – 20	79.5%	20.5%
More than 20	55.4%	44.6%

Note: Oppose/support figures include only those registering an opinion; those indicating “don’t know” or who refused the question are excluded.

Levels of support for the proposed reforms could also be expected to vary depending on the respondents’ bottle-return habits. Survey respondents were asked what they “usually do” with their returnable bottles and cans. Figure 10 shows the percentages of respondents indicating each of several methods. Because Figure 10 includes multiple methods where respondents provided them, the percentages total more than 100%. When the responses are restricted to the method that respondents use for the greatest number of their bottles and cans, the response patterns are essentially the same.

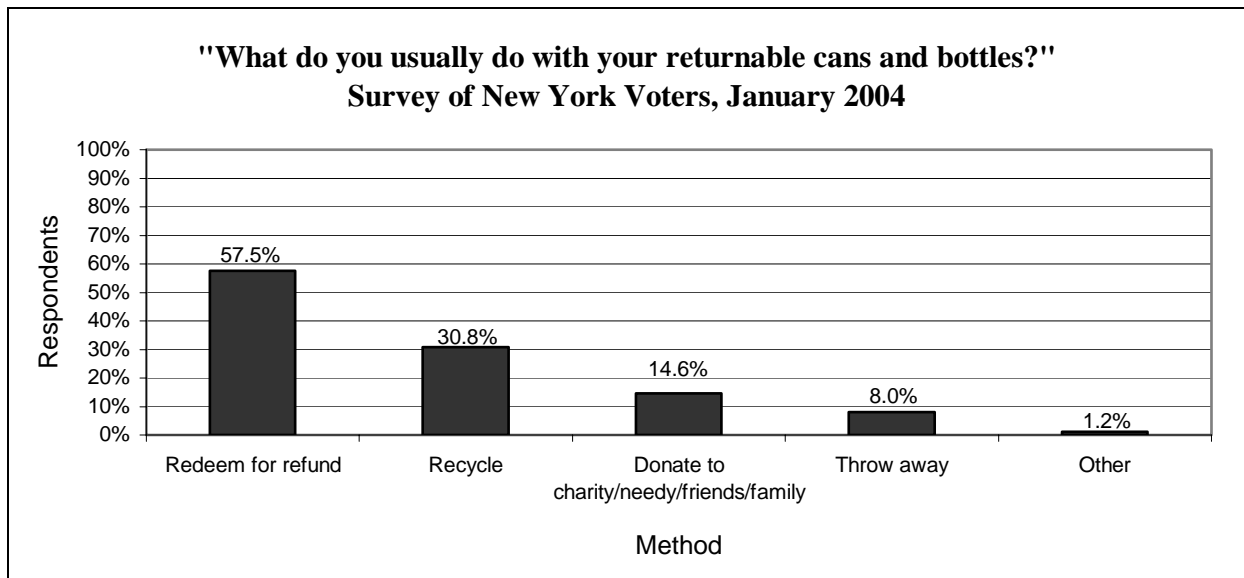


Figure 10

Table 8 compares the propensity to support each reform among those who personally return their bottles and cans to a retailer or redemption center for a refund and among those who do not personally return their bottles and cans for a refund. Opposition to bottle bill expansion and to increasing the deposit is greater among those who do not personally collect their refunds, but even a majority of those who do not personally return their bottles would support an expansion of the bottle-deposit program. Support for transferring unclaimed deposits to the State was slightly stronger among those who do not claim their refunds—in other words, the donor group.

Table 8: Support for Bottle Bill Reforms by Habit of Returning Bottles for Refund

Reform Type	Expand the Bottle Bill		Transfer Unclaimed Deposits		Increase the Deposit	
	Claim refunds	Do not claim refunds	Claim refunds	Do not claim refunds	Claim refunds	Do not claim refunds
Support for Reform						
Strongly opposed	13.6%	24.4%	7.1%	6.2%	34.7%	50.0%
Somewhat opposed	9.5%	7.8%	2.4%	3.5%	18.2%	14.0%
Somewhat support	27.5%	26.8%	28.7%	23.7%	22.7%	21.6%
Strongly support	45.6%	37.5%	57.0%	62.4%	21.6%	12.0%
Don't know/refuse	3.8%	3.5%	4.9%	4.2%	2.9%	2.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.1%	100.1%

Note: Those who "claim refunds" include those who claim *any* refunds, even if more than one approach was indicated. Those who "do not claim refunds" did not mention returning bottles and cans to a retailer or redemption center at all.

Impact on Support for Legislative Candidates

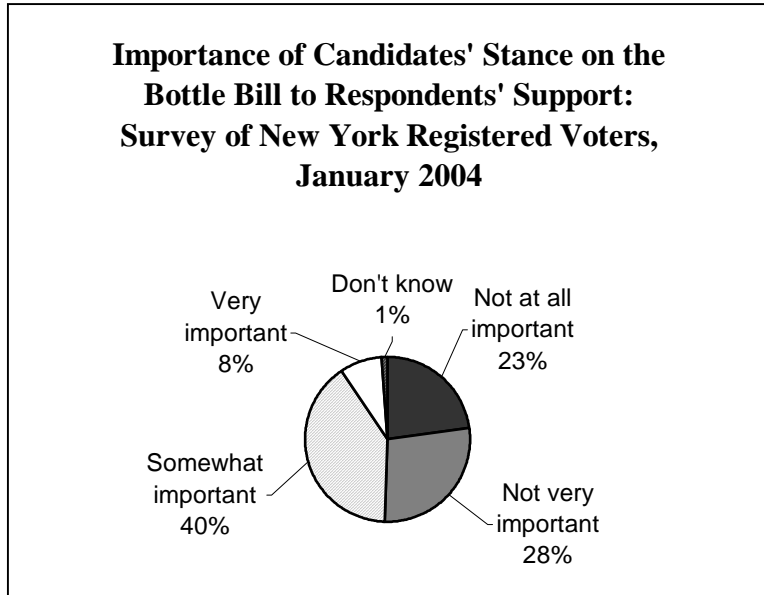


Figure 11

Figure 11 shows voters' responses to a question that asked, "Please think about how your State Legislators' positions on changes to the bottle-deposit law would affect your choice of a candidate in the next election. Regardless of whether you support or oppose changes in the law, would you say that a candidate's position on the bottle-deposit law would be very important in earning your support, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all?" As the figure shows, nearly half say the issue would be at least somewhat important to earning their support.

on bottle bill reform would be "very important" or "somewhat important" in earning their support by region of the state, political party identification, and gender. New York City residents and pure Independents were most likely to say that the issue is important to their vote.

Figure 12 shows the percentages of voters indicating a candidate's stance

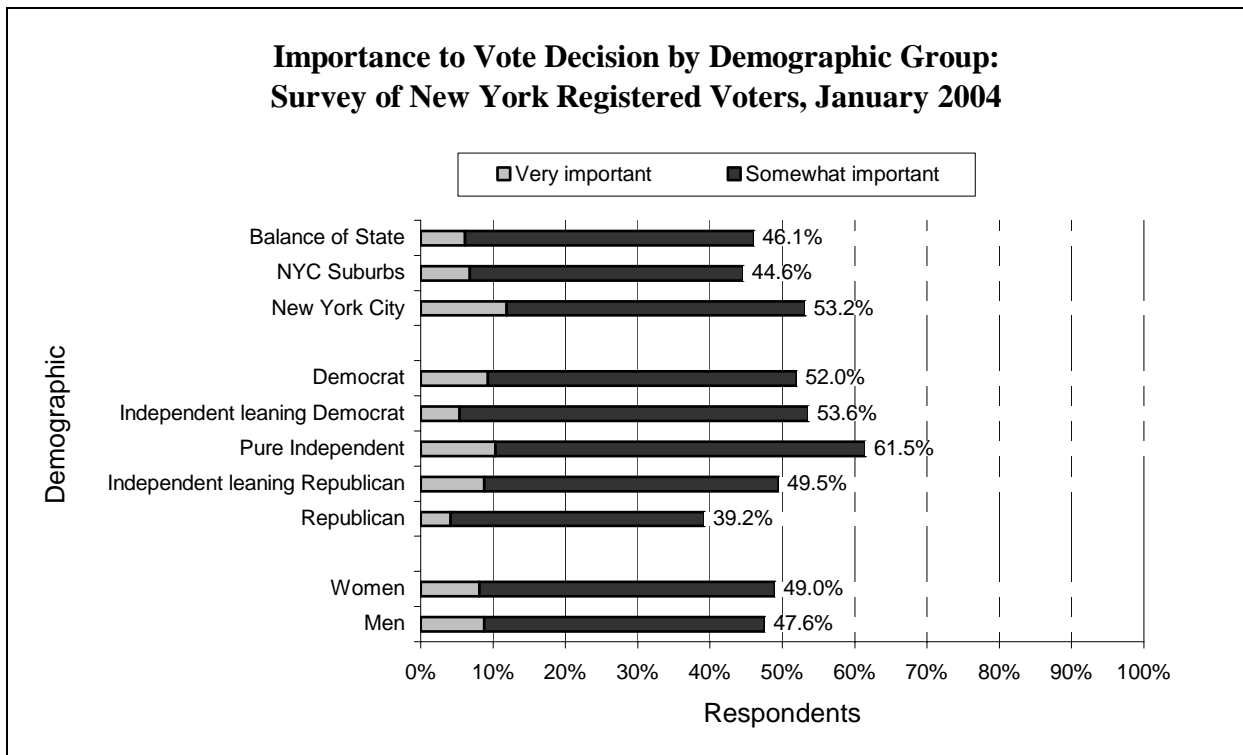


Figure 12

Those opposed to expanding the bottle bill placed less importance on a candidate's pro- or antireform stance than did proponents. Among those who said the issue was "not at all important" to earning their support, 66% supported expanding the bottle bill, 84% supported a transfer of unclaimed deposits to the State to support environmental programs, and 34% supported increasing the deposit. Among those who said the issue was "very important" to earning their support, 80% supported expanding the bottle bill, 93% supported a transfer of unclaimed deposits, and 51% supported increasing the deposit.

Table 9: Relationships Between Support for Reforms and the Importance of a Candidate's Position on Bottle Bill Reforms

		Reaction to Bottle Bill Expansion		Reaction to Transfer of Unclaimed Deposits		Reaction to Increase in Deposit	
		Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support
Importance of the Issue for Candidate Support	Not at all important	34.1%	65.9%	15.5%	84.5%	65.9%	34.1%
	Not very important	26.8%	73.2%	7.4%	92.6%	61.6%	38.4%
	Somewhat important	27.4%	72.6%	8.7%	91.3%	55.4%	44.6%
	Very important	20.3%	79.7%	7.3%	92.7%	49.3%	50.7%

Note: Oppose/support figures exclude those who answered, "I don't know" or refused to answer the question.

Extended Producer Responsibility

New York's bottle bill exemplifies the concept of “extended producer responsibility,” in which producers are required to take responsibility for the life-cycle impacts of their products and associated packaging, including waste recycling and disposal. Support for the concept of extended producer responsibility was tested with two questions that varied slightly in their presentation, each of which was presented to half of the respondent pool.

Version A tested public support for the concept based on reducing waste-disposal costs for communities:

“Some states have laws that require producers to take back their products and packaging and recycle them, including hazardous and hard-to-recycle products like paint, pesticides, and consumer electronics. Because manufacturers are required to take back the products and packaging as part of their business, recycling and waste management are built into the cost of the products. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose a law that required producers to take back these types of products for recycling, so communities would not have to collect these products at public expense?”

Version B tested public support for the concept based on requiring manufacturers to design products to be more recyclable:

“Some states have laws that require producers to take back their products and packaging and recycle them, including hazardous and hard-to-recycle products like throwaway packaging, paint, pesticides, and consumer electronics. It is believed that when producers are responsible for recycling the waste, they will design their products to be more easily recycled. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose a law that required producers to take back these types of products for recycling, so they would design them to be easier to recycle?”

Both versions received strong support from survey respondents, as shown in Table 10.

Level of Support	Version A: Reducing Waste Disposal Costs for Communities	Version B: Making Products More Recyclable
Strongly opposed	6.9%	4.4%
Somewhat opposed	10.6%	5.9%
Somewhat support	28.3%	30.0%
Strongly support	46.2%	53.2%
Don't know/refuse	8.0%	6.4%
Total	100.0%	99.9%

Demographics

This section describes the characteristics of the survey sample and does not employ weights.

Table 11: Sample Demographics

“How do you describe your race?”		“I will read a list of household income brackets. Please stop me when I read your bracket.”	
White or Caucasian	74.8%	Under \$20,000 per year	13.1%
African American	11.6%	\$20,000 to \$50,000 per year	21.6%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3.5%	Over \$50,000 to \$75,000 per year	19.5%
Native American	0.5%	Over \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year	11.5%
Hispanic/Latino ⁴	5.0%	Over \$100,000 to \$150,000 per year	8.3%
Multiple	0.5%	More than \$150,000 per year	3.4%
Other	0.4%	Refuse	22.6%
Refuse	3.8%		
“Do you consider yourself to be of Hispanic or Latino origin?”		“In what year were you born?” (Responses recoded into age brackets)	
Yes	8.0%	18-24	4.5%
No	90.3%	25-34	11.4%
Refuse	1.8%	35-44	15.4%
Gender (recorded by interviewers)		45-54	20.6%
Male	50.0%	55-64	19.9%
Female	50.0%	65 or over	23.5%
		Refuse	4.8%
“Do you currently have access to curbside recycling at your home?”		“Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?” If “Independent”: “Do you think of yourself as being closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?”	
Yes	85.0%	Republican	26.0%
No	13.5%	Independent leaning Republican	7.4%
Don’t know	1.3%	Pure Independent	7.5%
Refuse	0.3%	Independent leaning Democrat	8.0%
		Democrat	41.5%
		Other party	2.3%
		Refuse	7.4%

⁴ Those indicating they describe their race as “Hispanic” or “Latino” were asked a follow-up question: “Do you consider yourself white, black, or another race in addition to being Hispanic?” Those who selected another race were classified as members of that race; those who indicated they did not think of themselves as a member of a race were classified as “Hispanic/Latino.” The quality of being Hispanic or Latino is technically considered an ethnicity rather than a race, but the U. S. Census and other population surveys have long treated Hispanic/Latino ethnicity as a racial category.

Conclusions

- **New York voters support expanding the bottle bill.** Seventy percent of survey participants supported an expansion of the bottle bill to include noncarbonated drinks such as water, juice, and iced tea. Support was strong among all measured demographic groups and among those who consume the greatest quantities of these types of beverages.
- **New York voters support a transfer of unclaimed deposits from beverage distributors to the State to support environmental programs.** Eighty-six percent of the survey participants supported a transfer of unclaimed bottle deposits from beverage distributors to the State to fund environmental programs. Only 19% of respondents correctly identified the beverage distributors as the current recipients of unclaimed deposits; 23% selected the State, nearly 29% selected the stores that sold the beverages, 10% said “someone else” retains the nickels, and 19% said they didn’t know.
- **New York voters support the existing bottle bill and say the state is “much cleaner” because of it.** Eighty-four percent of those surveyed support the existing bottle bill, and 78% agree “the bottle-deposit program has made our state much cleaner.” Additionally, 81% agree that “curbside recycling is not enough: we need the bottle-deposit program to control litter.”
- **New York voters like the bottle-deposit program because it protects the environment, keeps litter off the streets, and encourages recycling.** Thirty-six percent of the statewide sample identified environmental benefits as the most important reason to support bottle-deposit programs; 24% emphasized controlling litter, 17% spoke of incentives to recycle or reducing the quantity of waste in landfills, and 9% spoke generally of cleanliness. Eleven percent of the comments focused on reasons to oppose bottle-deposit programs: 4% said that returning containers is “a hassle” or “inconvenient,” 3% dislike the out-of-pocket cost, 2% said they already recycle or think existing recycling systems are adequate, and 1% said the current system does not work effectively.
- **A majority of New York voters agrees that a ten-cent deposit would make the state cleaner and encourage a higher rate of return on deposit containers...but most are not ready to pay a dime.** When asked if they would support State legislation to increase the bottle deposit to a dime, 39% of those surveyed supported the idea, 58% were opposed, and 3% said they didn’t know. In contrast, 59% agreed that, with a dime deposit, the state would be cleaner and more people would return their bottles and cans, while 37% disagreed and 4% said they didn’t know.
- **Many New York voters say this issue is important in their decision to support a candidate for the State Legislature.** Forty-eight percent of survey respondents said a candidate’s stance on the bottle deposit would be “very important” or “somewhat important” to earning their support. Independents and those in favor of reform placed more importance on a candidate’s position on the issue.
- **New York voters feel we are spending too little to protect and enhance the environment and favor the concept of extended producer responsibility.** Consistent with national polls on the subject, 62% say “we are spending too little” and only 4% say “we are spending too much” to protect and enhance the environment. Also, between 74% and 83% of New York voters express support for the concept of extended producer responsibility when presented in the context of reducing the burden on communities for waste disposal or encouraging manufacturers to create products that are more easily recycled.