Moving the Needle: What Actually Changes Consumer Behavior?



Key Headlines



Litter is Declining Across America, but the Work is Not Done. Litter is Still a Major Problem



Litter Rates Did Not Drop By Accident
Americans Want to Make a Real Difference



Everyone Has a Role to Play in Sustaining this Progress and Tackling the Challenges Ahead

Visible Litter Study
Highlights & Key Trends

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Litter is Declining Across America

	2020	2025	
	49.6B	32.6B	↓ 34%
Litter Count	Roadways: 23.7B	Roadways: 18.4B	↓ 22%
	Waterways: 25.9B	Waterways: 14.2B	↓ 45%
Litter Per Mile	Roadways: 2,857	Roadways: 2,204	
	Waterways: 2,411	Waterways: 1,300	
Litter Per Capita	Roadways: 73	Roadways: 54	
	Waterways: 80	Waterways: 42	

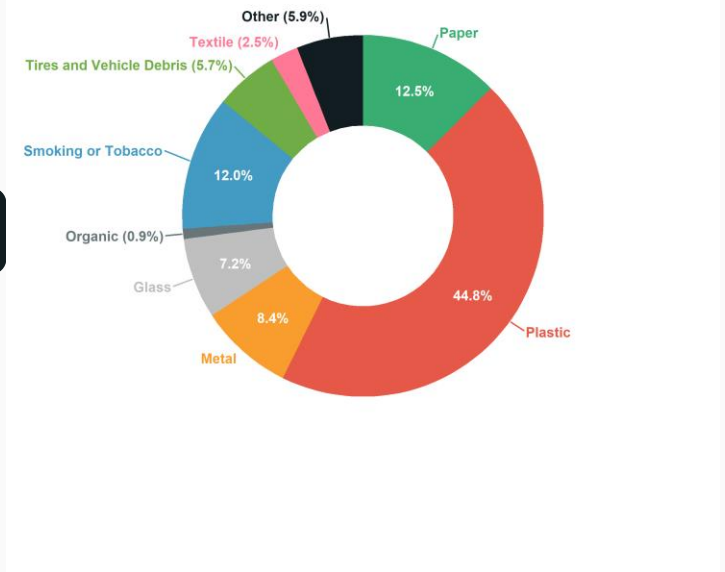
Very small litter continues to represent the largest count of litter (84%), similar to 2020 (88%)

Trend data represents roadway and waterway data only. Coastal data was estimated in 2025 for the first time.

Litter is down across almost all material categories

Paper	45% Reduction
Plastic	24% Reduction
Metal	30% Reduction
Glass	34% Reduction
Organics	77% Reduction
Smoking/Tobacco	60% Reduction
Tires/Vehicle Debris	INCREASE 36%

Litter Composition



Of the 17B piece reduction in litter along roadways and waterways, the largest contributors were Smoking or Tobacco (35%), Plastics (27%), and Paper (20%).

The Work is Not Done. Litter is Still a Major Problem

Pct <4”



Roadways: 18.4B pieces

2,200 pieces/mi

88%



Waterways: 14.2B pieces

1,300/mi

78%



2.4B Coastal Areas

16,800 pieces/mi

91%

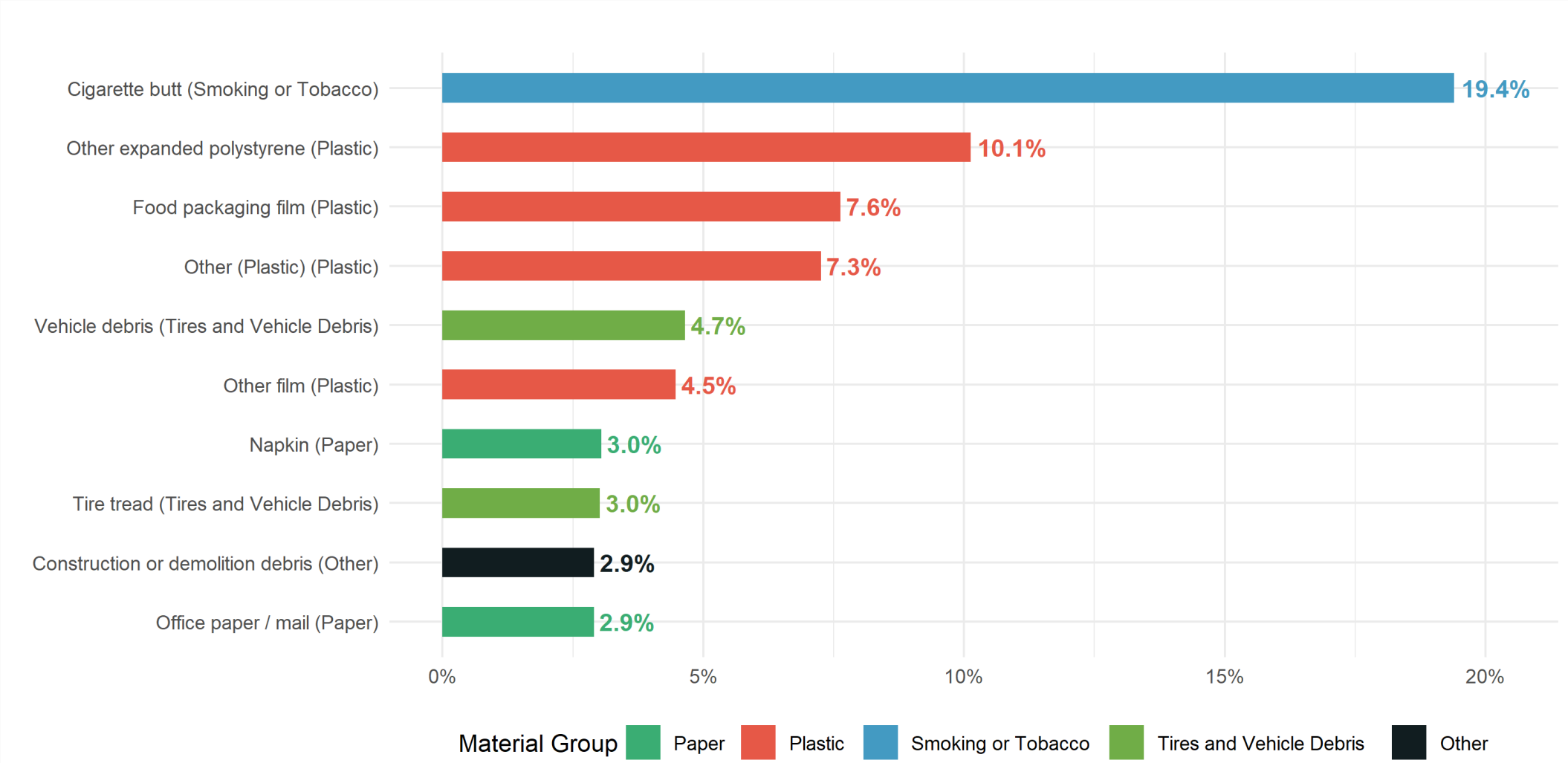
Over 120 Products Tracked

Table 3-4: Aggregate Count of Litter by Material Group, Roadway, Waterway, and Coastal

Litter Type	Litter Subtype	Roadway	Waterway	Coastal	Total	Percent Total
Paper	Fast food bag	66,101,200	19,602,100	214,800	85,918,100	0.2%
	Fast food cup (Paper)	22,952,400	13,803,300	618,600	37,374,300	0.1%
	Other fast food service item (Paper)	373,585,300	13,042,300	12,989,700	399,617,300	1.1%
	Cardboard	266,246,400	84,957,600	3,837,700	355,041,700	1.0%
	Kraft bag	21,682,400	383,200	3,205,300	25,270,900	0.1%
	Receipt	67,929,000	254,856,800	4,005,300	326,791,100	0.9%
	Political sign	601,100	0	0	601,100	0.0%
	Other advertising sign	9,043,200	13,591,100	1,519,700	24,154,000	0.1%
	Office paper / mail	507,684,200	287,420,600	3,019,900	798,124,700	2.3%
	Newspaper / insert	10,725,700	86,848,600	487,200	98,061,500	0.3%
	Magazine	2,060,800	211,300	0	2,272,100	0.0%
	Book	5,247,600	902,900	0	6,150,500	0.0%
	Aseptic / gable top container	2,375,600	10,644,700	105,500	13,125,800	0.0%
	Beverage carrier / carton	1,934,400	7,191,600	376,700	9,502,700	0.0%
	Home food packaging	266,652,900	113,653,700	6,213,900	386,520,500	1.1%
	Napkin	585,841,900	310,765,900	17,460,200	914,068,000	2.6%
	Other cup	8,036,700	32,259,000	0	40,295,700	0.1%
	Wine or liquor container	853,200	8,552,400	0	9,405,600	0.0%
	Other (Paper)	366,805,200	241,486,800	10,520,200	618,812,200	1.8%
	Subtotal	**2,586,359,200**	**1,500,173,900**	**64,574,700**	**4,151,107,800**	**11.9%**
Plastic	Soda (Plastic)	22,110,900	40,607,000	3,691,900	66,409,800	0.2%
Other	Other camping item	29,597,500	5,855,800	981,800	36,435,100	0.1%
Other	**Subtotal**	**1,125,245,300**	**813,020,100**	**64,784,600**	**2,003,050,000**	**5.7%**
	Total	**18,403,372,900**	**14,203,486,900**	**2,388,099,800**	**34,994,959,600**	**100.0%**

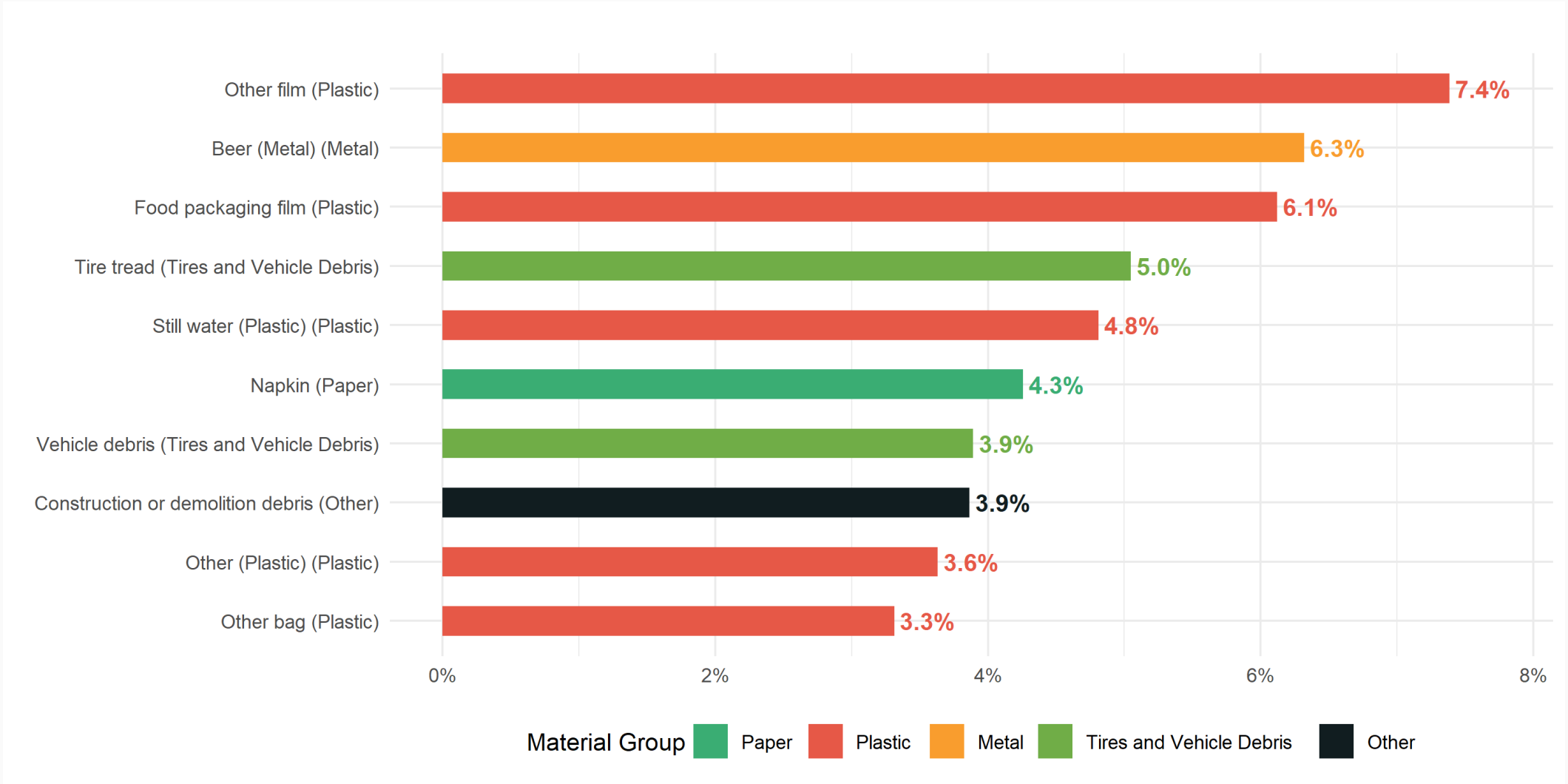
Roadways Top 10 Most Littered Items

Smaller (<4”)



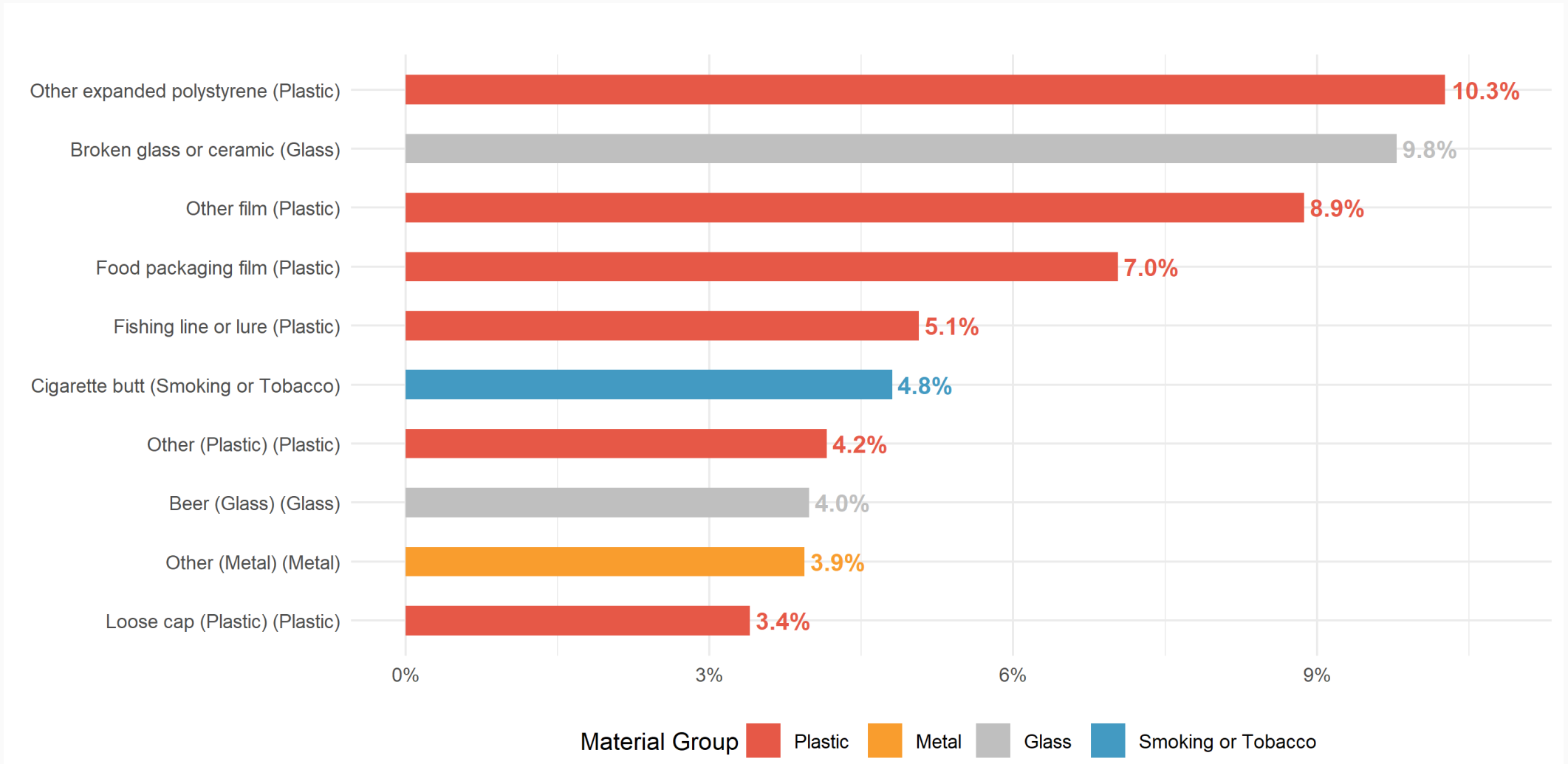
Roadways Top 10 Most Littered Items

Larger (4”+)



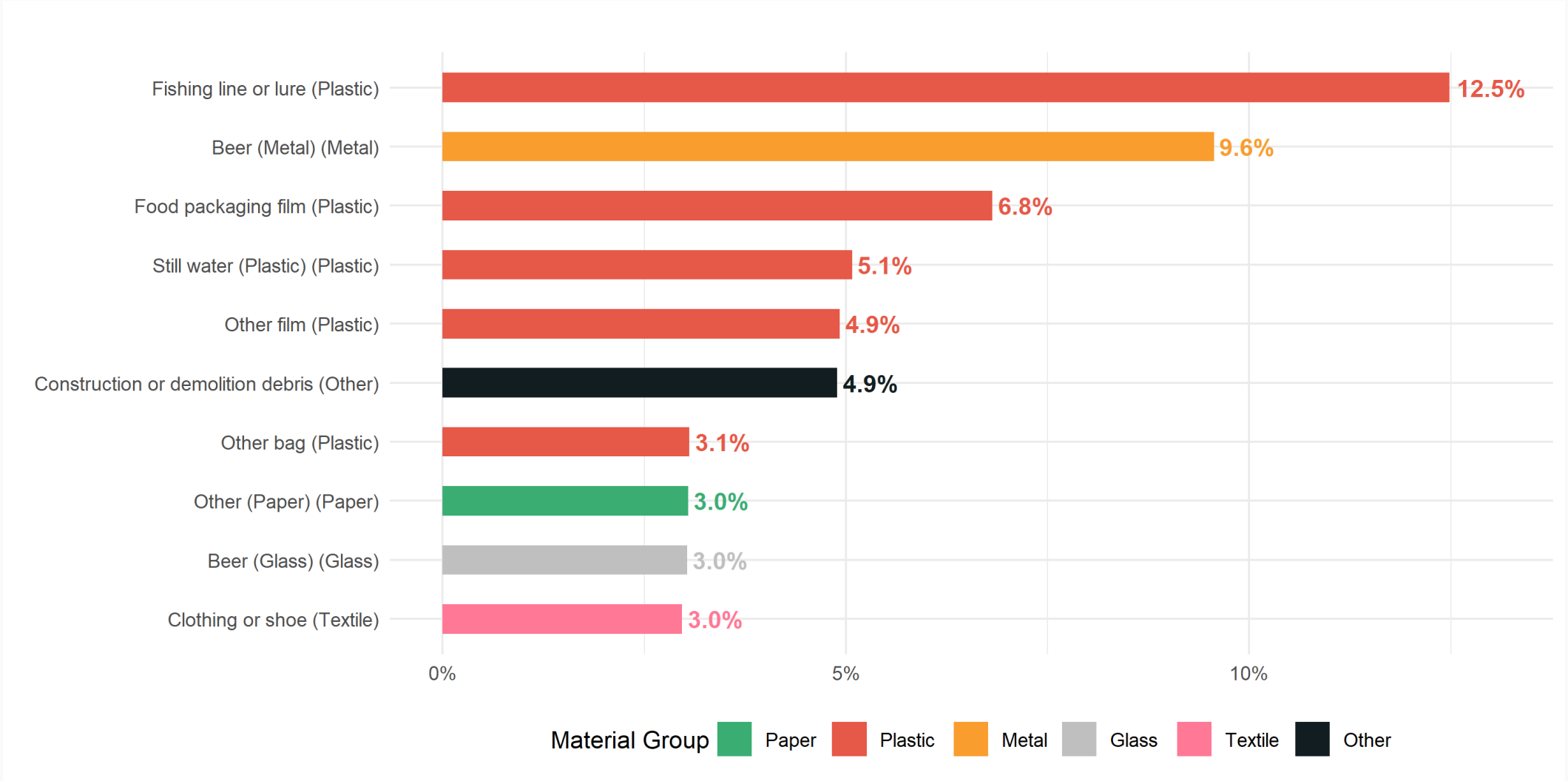
Waterways Top 10 Most Littered Items

Smaller (<4”)



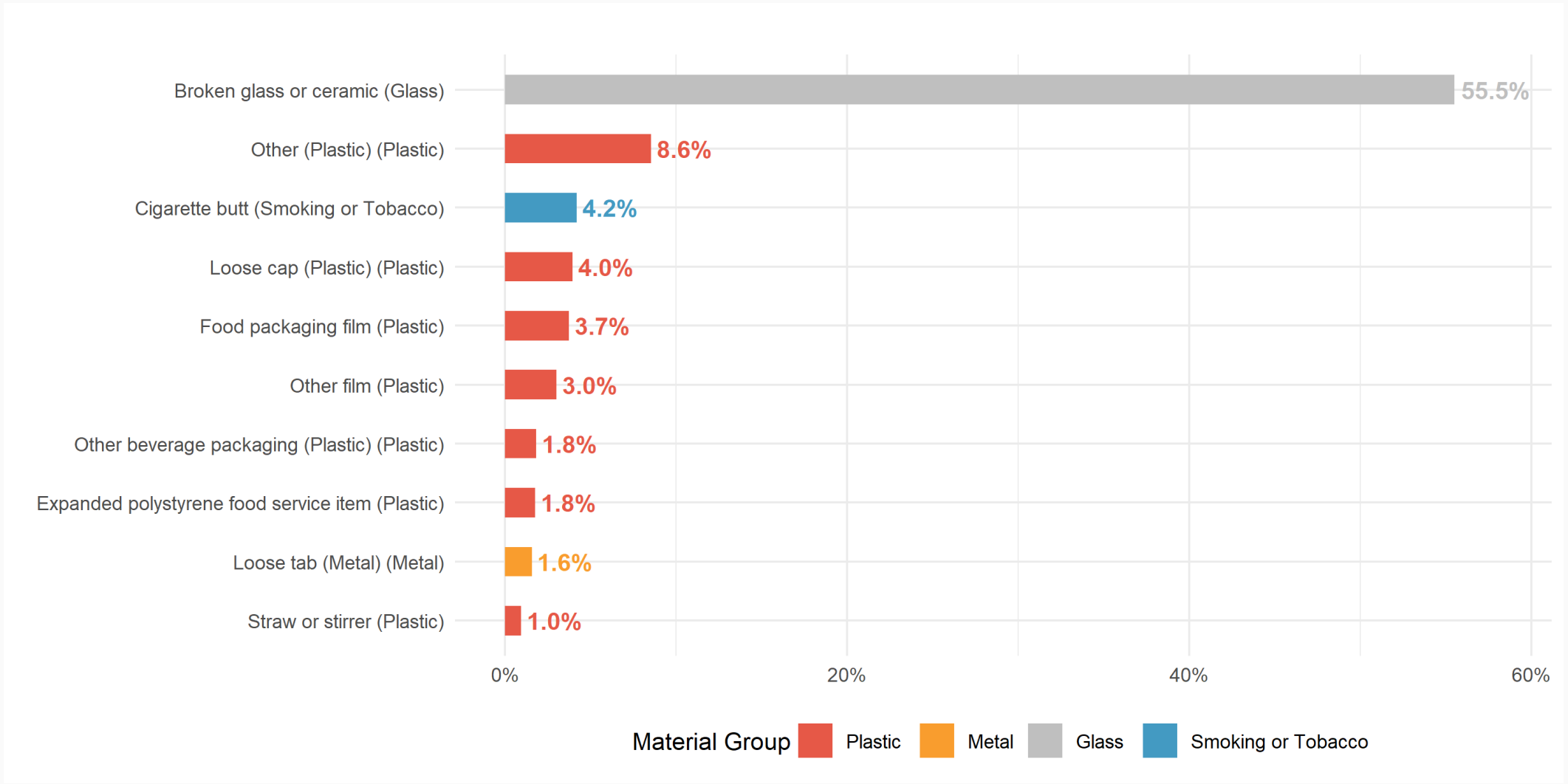
Waterways Top 10 Most Littered Items

Larger (4”+)



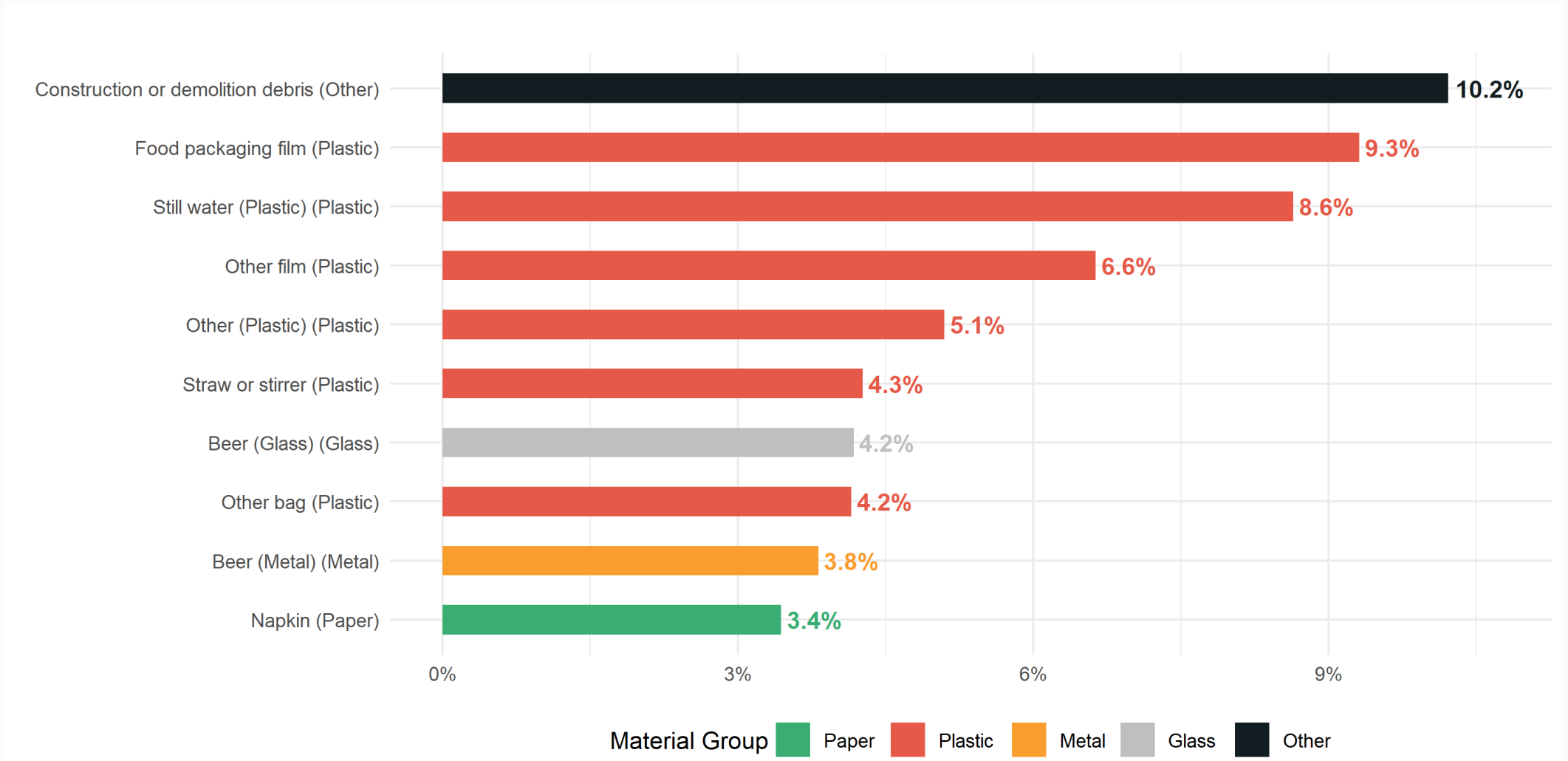
Coastal Top 10 Most Littered Items

Smaller (<4”)

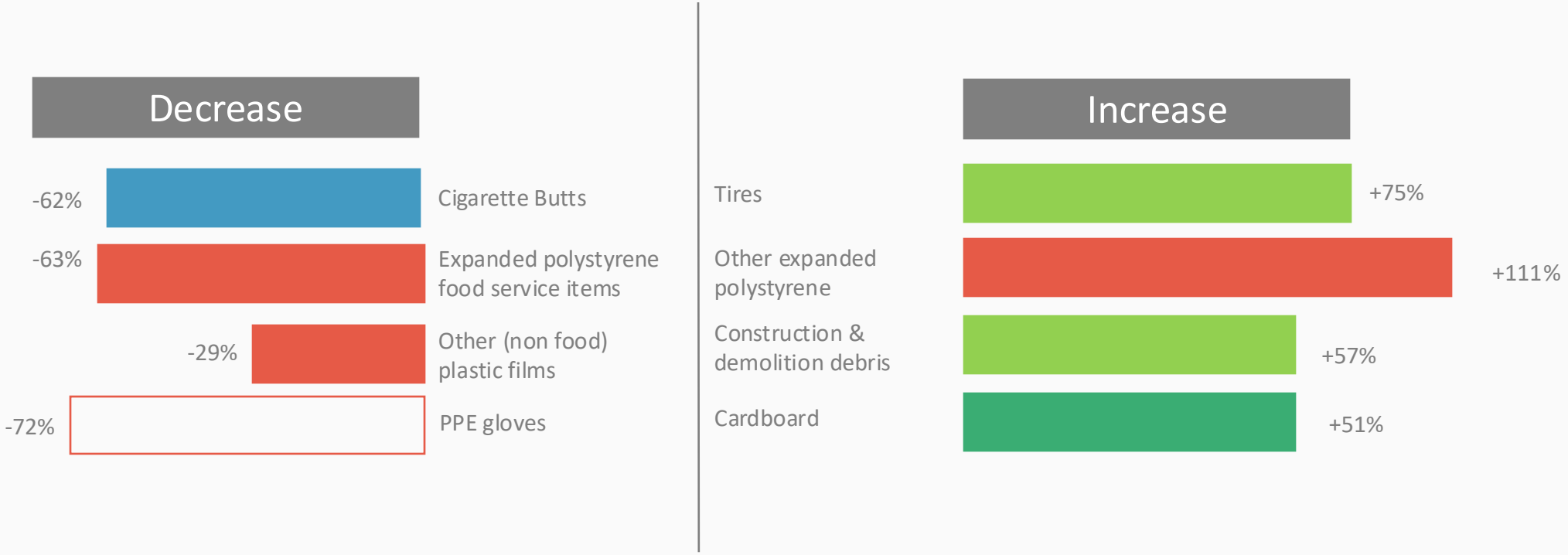


Coastal Top 10 Most Littered Items

Larger (4”+)



Notable Product Changes 2020-2025



Public Attitudes Survey Review

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Public Attitudes Toward Litter

- Harris Poll conducted a large national survey to determine what Americans think about litter today
- What do we find? The work of Keep America Beautiful is meeting the moment in many ways

Methodology

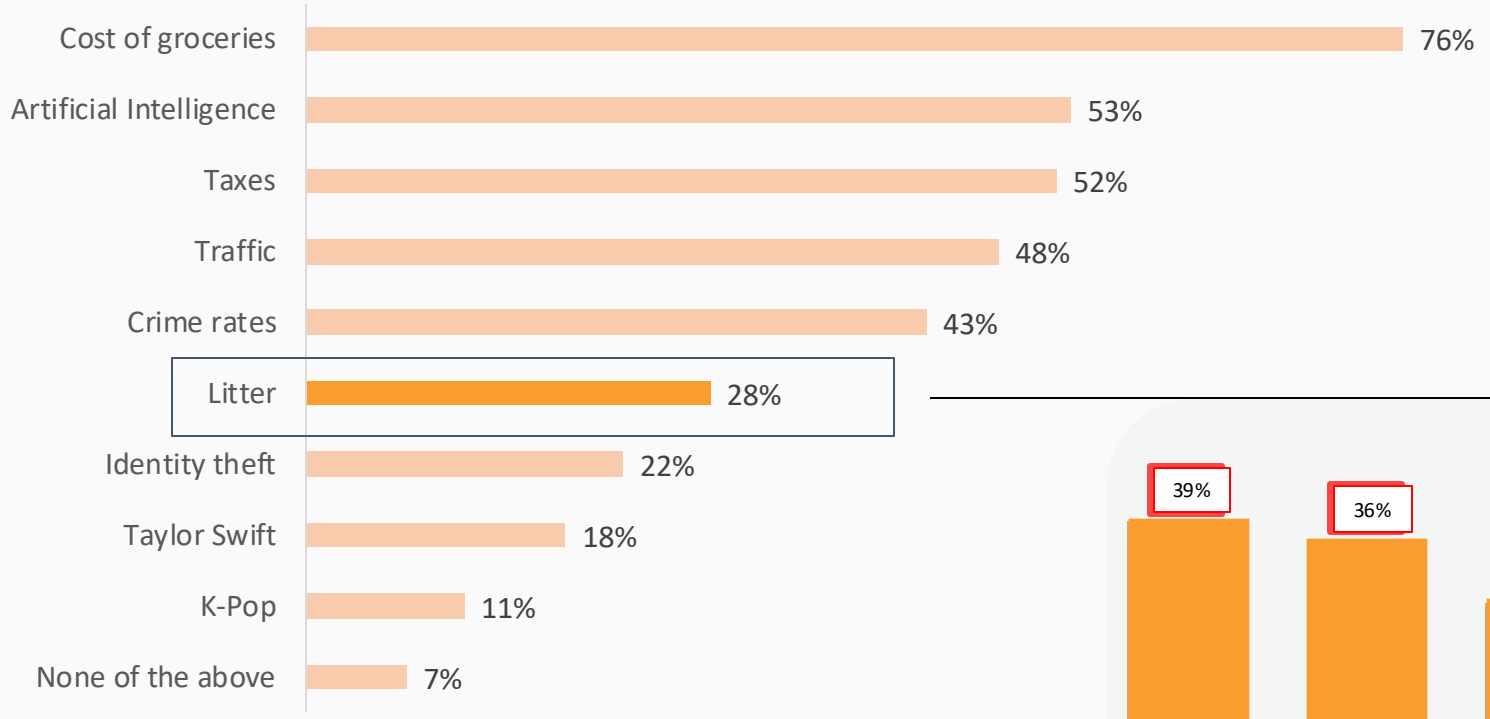
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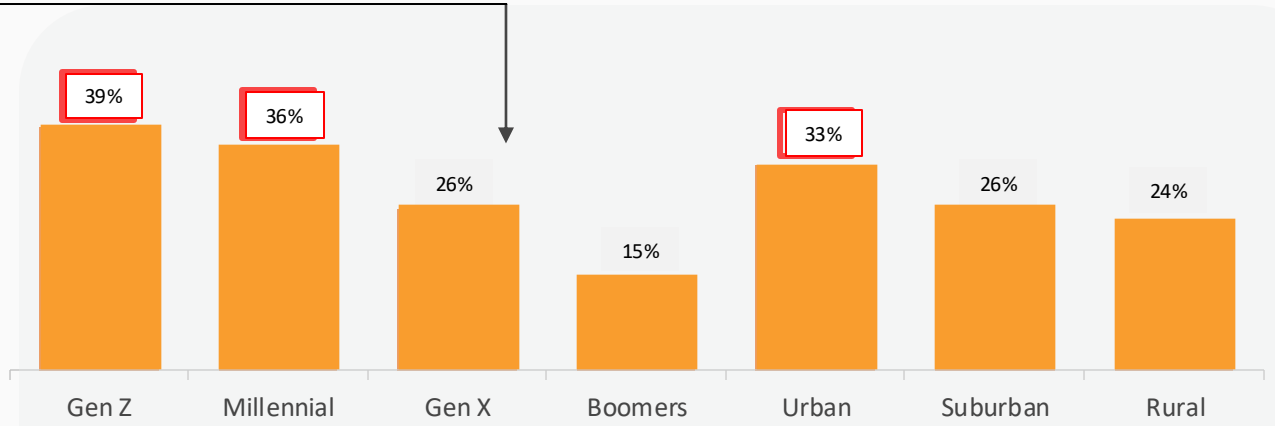
2025 National Litter Study
Public Attitudes Component

- Sample Size 3,000 residents
- Nov 26 – Dec 11, 2025
- US General Population

Though inflation tops the list, many Americans are talking about litter; Litter buzz are loudest among younger and urban audiences

Conversations around Litter



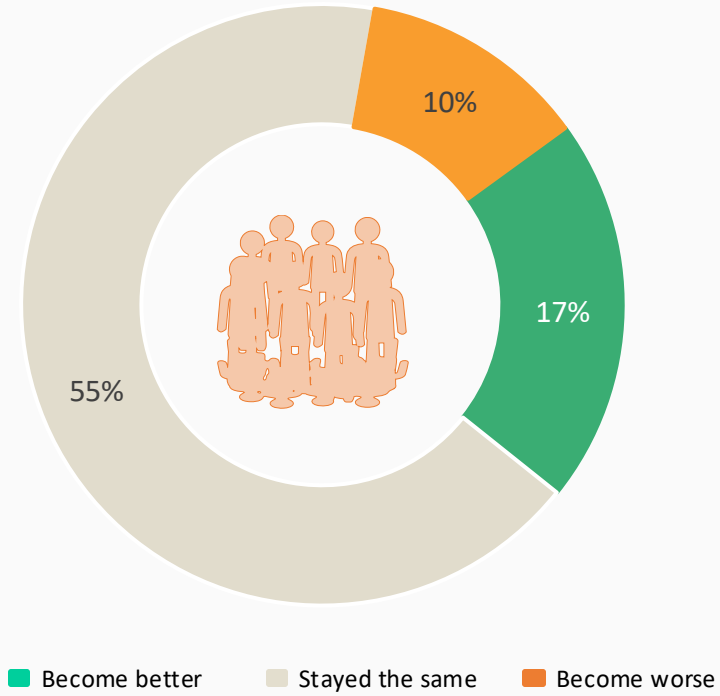


denotes significant difference within segments at 95% level of significance

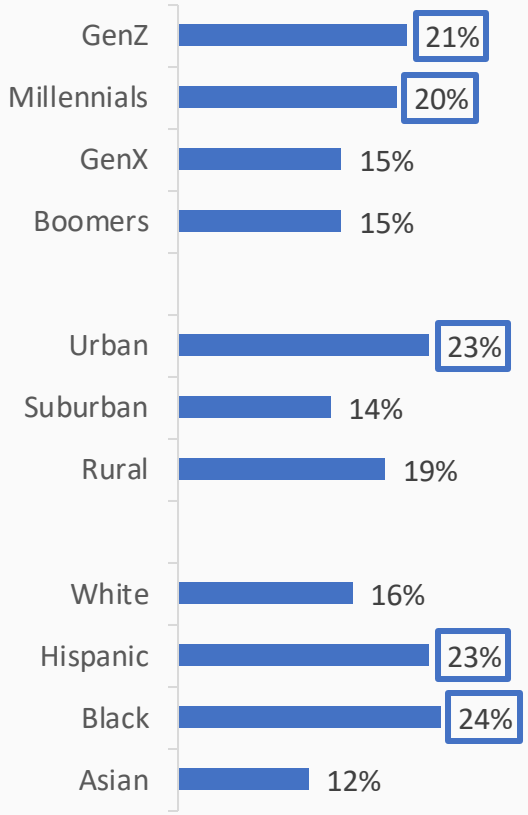
KAB19. Which of the following topics have you talked to friends/family about in the **past year**? Select all that apply.

Little has changed over the past 5 years. Among those who feel it has become better are younger, urban and some POC

Perceived Change in Community's Litter Problem



Among those who say Litter has become **better**



denotes significant difference within segments at 95% level of significance

KAB2. In the past 5 years, would you say litter in your community has…?

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Americans across party lines believe that keeping America clean and green is a top priority and shared responsibility; most are willing to step up

Community involvement (% Strongly/Somewhat Agree)

93%

"All community residents have a shared responsibility to help reduce litter"

92%

A significant increase from 78% in Feb'25

"Republican, Democrat, or somewhere in-between, cleaning and greening America should be a top priority for everyone."

90%

"It is my personal responsibility to help reduce litter"

84%

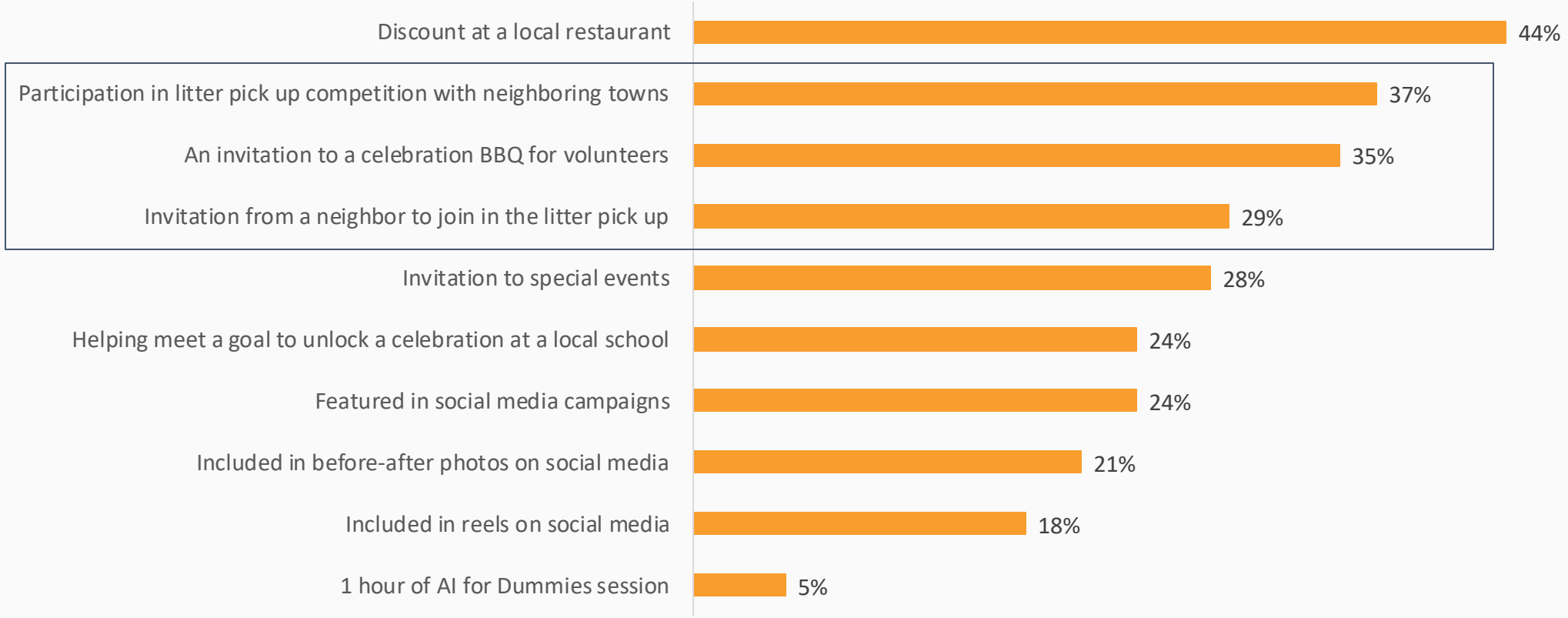
A significant increase from 75% in Feb'25

"I'd love to accomplish something with my community (e.g., planting trees, improving recycling, organizing a cleanup) and bring people together in the process"

KAB17/KAB3. How much do you agree/disagree?

Beyond financial incentive, solving litter problems together as a community has the potential to motivate

Motivation to pick-up litter



KAB18. The following are a few things that could motivate someone to get off the couch and pick up litter or other community beautification activities. Please select 3 that you think would work the best.

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What We Hope You Heard

Litter is socially relevant and part of the conversation – particularly among younger and urban audiences



Americans believe litter is a major problem, and one that isn't getting any better



There is almost unanimous agreement on the negative impacts of litter



Despite that , the vast majority confess they have contributed to the problem





Importantly, Americans across party lines believe keeping America clean is a shared responsibility, and there's a willingness to step up



Volunteers are expected to play a role in litter pick-up – more than the government



Trash receptacle access/convenience key excuse for littering; many believe clean-up is someone else's job



Significantly more Americans than earlier this year believe cleaning & greening America should be a top priority.

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What is Working?

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LOVE Campaign – Turning Civic Pride into Community Action

- National campaign built around bright, visible, positive messaging
- Combines national support with local branding, leadership, and action
- Delivered through murals, banners, social media, radio, events, and community outreach
- Gives residents practical ways to express their connection to their community
- Core idea: **Love for our communities is not just something we feel, it's something we do**





Positive Messaging Created an Invitation to Participate in Oakland

- The **LOVE OAK** campaign connected litter reduction, recycling, composting, and bulky-item pickup to a positive vision for Oakland
- Messaging focused on what residents could help create, not only on what they should stop doing
- The **LOVE OAK** pledge provided a clear, community-centered call to action
- Partner promotion and community storytelling carried the message beyond individual events



LOVE OAK Impact in Action

- A bright, highly visible mural gave residents positive, actionable ways to care for Oakland
- The mural inspired additional public art and built momentum for broader community action
- Public art became a catalyst for cleanup, greening, planting and community participation
- What began with a positive message grew into the revitalization of the East 12th Street corridor



During Revitalization



After



Thank you

Kanika Greenlee

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