

# FOGO perceptions across NSW CALD groups

Summary Report



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Research conducted in 2024 by the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW for the NSW EPA

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Photos provided by the EPA Starting Scraps Education Program and WSROC FOGO photo library.

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## Aim

Understand attitudes and perceptions of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities towards FOGO introduction:

- current food waste attitudes and behaviours
- knowledge and interest in FOGO service
- motivators that support participation in a FOGO service
- perceived concerns with a FOGO service
- preferred communication and engagement channels for FOGO introduction.

## Approach

### Methodology

- Face-to-face, one-on-one and in-depth interviews
- Bilingual interviewers
- Survey translated into participating communities' languages

### Participants

- 100 participants from 10 ethnic and linguistic groups<sup>1</sup>
- 80% female, 20% male
- Residents of urban and peri-urban councils in Greater Sydney area
- 90% do not have a FOGO service
- 72% in houses and townhouses and 28% in multi-unit dwellings (MUDs)

**Figure 1 Cultural, ethnic and linguistic background of participants**



## Headline findings

- 84% of the CALD group participants are positive about the idea of a FOGO service.
- There is a good understanding of common food waste terms such as **leftovers, food scraps** and **green lid bin**, but less around waste management terms such as **FOGO, landfill, compost** and **kitchen caddy**.
- Participants expressed a high likelihood of participating in a FOGO service. The likelihood increased after exposure to detailed information about the service and the benefits.
- Participants perceived challenges to adoption of a FOGO service include language barriers, cost of the service, odour and pests.
- The main motivator for recycling food waste is knowing that it will be collected and turned into quality compost.
- Participants' strongly support being given a kitchen caddy and liners to encourage participation in the FOGO service.
- Participants unanimously want culturally sensitive, diverse, in-language methods of communication. They suggest the following as the preferred channels of communication:
  - physical materials – letterbox drops, bin stickers
  - council communication channels – social media, webpage, newsletter
  - leveraging existing community and council events and networks
  - collaborating with community leaders.

<sup>1</sup> Ten CALD groups were selected, based on research studies which indicate the NSW communities who need greater support due to language barriers. The findings of the research should be considered in the context of the scope of the research, its nature and limitations. Contact the EPA Organics Unit for specific CALD group findings.

## Current waste attitudes and behaviour

### What are the reasons for food waste?

**The main reason for food waste is buying too much food.**

Other common reasons include:

- portion management
- children's preferences – fussy eaters
- food storage – food is left too long in the fridge/freezer
- food expiration – food goes off before the 'use by' or 'best before' date
- cooking too much food.

*'I can't resist the sale price. When I see cheaper prices, I usually buy more than I need.'*

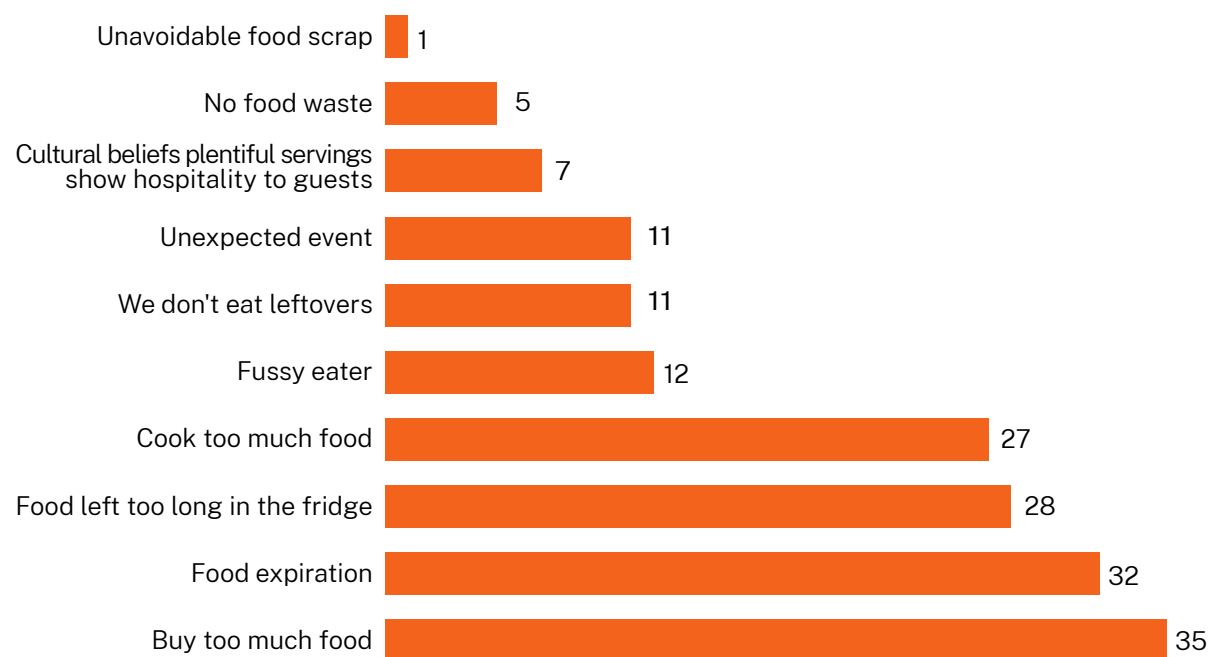
South American and Arabic-speaking participants expressed cultural beliefs around providing hospitality that can lead to excess leftovers.

*'In my culture providing plenty of food and having a wide variety ... shows love and admiration to the people you are inviting over.'* Arabic-speaking group participant

Some participants in the Chinese group raised the tradition of cooking multiple foods leading to excess leftovers.

*'It's my family's cooking habit to cook a variety of things, and I often cook too much.'*  
Participant from Chinese group

**Figure 2 Reasons for food waste**



\*Participants could choose multiple options



## What motivates participants to avoid food waste?

### Motivators for avoiding food waste are diverse.

- Save money and/or time
- Environmental awareness
- Educating children
- Sense of personal responsibility
- Cultural and religious beliefs

*'Saving money is a big motivator. Every bit counts, and we hate to see our hard-earned money go to waste.'* Participant from Vietnamese group

Many participants across multiple groups expressed strong cultural or religious beliefs around food waste.

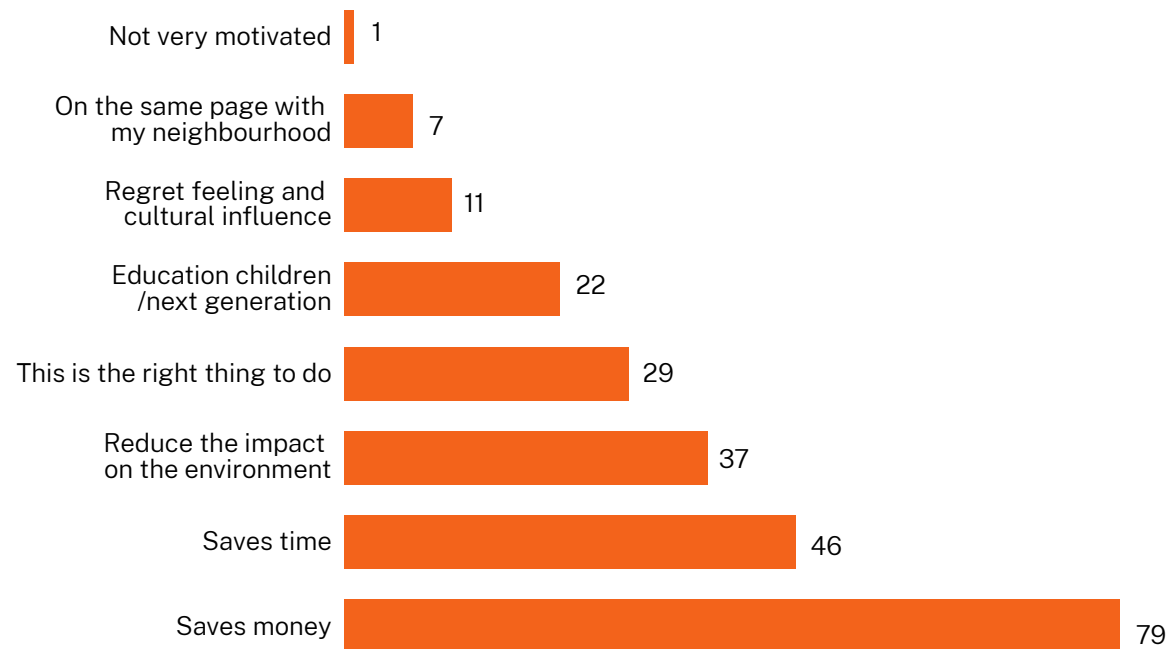
*'We should be more conscious about food waste as many people in the world go without food.'*  
Indian group participant

*'Food waste is wrong and we as Muslims think food is a gift and we can't waste it.'*  
Sub-Saharan group participant

*'Waste is seen as a lack of respect for resources.'*  
Vietnamese group participant

*'Food is a gift, and it is wrong to waste it. I also think of people in need.'*  
Participant from sub-Saharan group

**Figure 3 Motivation to reduce food waste**



\*Participants could choose multiple options



## FOGO knowledge, interest and motivation

### Which common FOGO terminology is familiar to participants?

Familiarity with some waste management terms.



Leftovers



Food scraps



Food waste



Green lid bin

But other terms are less familiar.



FOGO

**76%**  
not familiar



Kitchen caddy

**50%**  
not familiar



Compost

**30%**  
not familiar



Landfill

**40%**  
not familiar

*'FOGO will be an eye opener to people so they would think before throwing food in the rubbish bin.'* Arabic-speaking group participant

### What are participants' thoughts about a FOGO service?

84% of participants are positive about a FOGO service after receiving basic information.

**14%** negative

**3%** neutral

Basic information provided to participants included:

- food scraps and garden waste go in a green lid bin, collected weekly
- FOGO will be turned into quality compost
- many NSW councils already have a FOGO service
- a kitchen caddy is supplied for collecting food scraps.

Support for a FOGO service was particularly high among Arabic-speaking, Vietnamese, Nepalese, Thai and sub-Saharan group participants.

*'Being able to convert food waste into nutritious fertiliser and turn waste into treasure will be a good thing for the environment.'* Participant from Chinese group

### What is the level of willingness to participate in a FOGO service?

There is a high willingness to participate across all groups, when provided with basic information on FOGO.

**74%** expressed a high likelihood of participating.

**20%** likely or somewhat likely to participate.

**6%** not very likely/not at all likely to participate.

*'Excellent. This will reduce the pollution and protect the environment in addition to other benefits.'* Sub-Saharan group participant

*'I am ready to participate by separating food organics.'* Vietnamese group participant

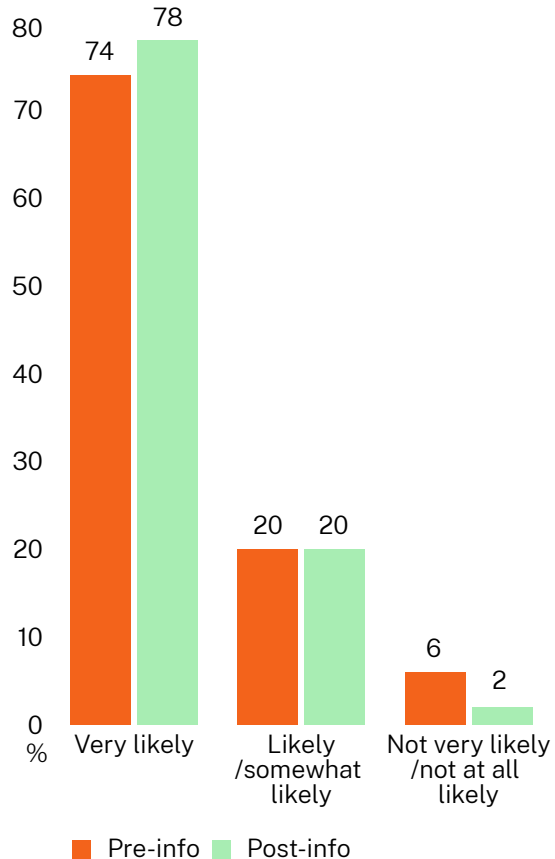
Participants in the Arabic-speaking group who are parents emphasised their commitment to making the service work for the whole community.

*'If this service is going to be beneficial for all, we're going to try our hardest to make it work.'*

Likelihood of participation increases after exposure to more detailed information about FOGO.

High likelihood of participating increases to	78%
Likely/somewhat likely to participate stays at	20%
Not very likely/not at all likely dropped to	2%

**Figure 4 Likelihood of participation in FOGO service, before and after receiving detailed information**



Additional information provided to participants included:

- detailed explanation of the FOGO service
- FOGO terminology
- use of kitchen caddy
- benefits of FOGO service
- discussion on challenges/barriers and contamination management.

## What are the factors that would encourage participation in FOGO?

**Knowing that food waste is turned into compost is the biggest motivator for participants.**

**75%** of participants say knowing food waste will be turned into compost encourages them to recycle their food waste.

*‘Turning food waste into quality compost is great. It’s like giving new life to what we throw away. That’s encouraging.’*

## Other motivators

**75%** understanding their individual efforts have an impact on the environment.

**47%** knowing that others are doing the right thing and that their individual efforts align with collective actions.

*‘When I see everyone around me recycling correctly, it’s inspiring. It makes me want to do it right too.’*

**45%** knowing that half of the red bin is recyclable food waste.

*'I would recycle more if I knew that half of what's in the red bin could be turned into something useful. It's like not wasting food twice.'* South American group participant

**45%** understanding that all food scraps can go in the green lid bin.

**30%** knowing that the FOGO service is a standardised approach across NSW.

*'If everyone is doing it, I want to be a part of it. It's about contributing together.'* Chinese-speaking Mainland group participant



**Figure 5 Motivations for food waste recycling**



\*Participants could choose multiple options





# Kitchen caddy attitudes and concerns

## What are the main attitudes and concerns about the kitchen caddy?

75% are positive to the idea of receiving a kitchen caddy when the FOGO service starts.

*'I feel good; it will help me separate food organics from other garbage.'* Thai group participant

*'I think it is a great idea and an efficient way to manage food scraps.'* Indian group participant

*'I think using a kitchen caddy is a great idea. It makes it convenient to separate food scraps and keeps the kitchen tidy.'* Participant from Vietnamese group

## The provision of a kitchen caddy is a powerful incentive.

Would being provided with a kitchen caddy help/encourage you to use the FOGO service?

82% Very likely

14% Neutral

4% Unlikely

*'The kitchen caddy will remind me to separate food waste.'* Chinese-speaking Mainland group participant

## But there are several universal concerns.

100% mentioned Ongoing cost of liners

80% mentioned Odour/pests

70% mentioned Effort to clean caddy

60% mentioned Space limitations

20% mentioned Effort and frequency of transfers to green bin

*'Smell and the possibility of flies and bugs are my primary concerns.'* Vietnamese group participant

*'I'm concerned that the liner could be easily punctured.'* Chinese-speaking Other group participant

*'The liner looks thin and food waste can sometimes contain many bones and shellfish. I'm concerned that the liner could be easily punctured.'* Participant from Chinese-speaking Other group

*'I don't like to add a caddy into my kitchen bench as it is already too crowded.'* Participant from Vietnamese group

## Some groups expressed concerns around cultural considerations.

*'It's important to me that others don't perceive our kitchen as a place where waste is mixed with food.'* Chinese-speaking Mainland group participant

## Concerns varied across groups

60% of Thai group participants had no concerns.

Korean group and Chinese-speaking Mainland group participants raised more concerns.



## Barriers to FOGO adoption

### What are the main challenges/ barriers to adopting a new FOGO service?

Several challenges were consistently voiced and were universal to all groups.

#### Language barriers

Participants identified challenges relating to language barriers in understanding the FOGO system, particularly Arabic-speaking, Indian, Nepalese, Thai and Vietnamese participants.

*'Interpretation and translation are very important to understand FOGO.'* Arabic-speaking group participant

#### Odour and pests – 80% mentioned

*'I am worried about the caddy getting dirty and attracting pests. Hygiene is crucial to making FOGO a success.'* Indian group participant

*'It is crucial that the FOGO bin will be collected every week otherwise it is going to be problematic.'* Arabic-speaking group participant

#### Cost of the service and bin liners

Participants noted that affordability is a key factor. They recommended clear communication on cost implications and potential benefits to alleviate their concerns.

- Arabic-speaking, Indian, Nepalese, Thai and Vietnamese participants expressed concerns about potential costs of the service.
- Chinese group raised questions about increasing taxes and costs of bin liners.

*'Do we need to pay for the liners in the future? If the kitchen caddy is broken, will I receive a replacement for free?'*

*'Will the Council rate increase with the new FOGO service?'*

#### Clear communication and education

All participants agreed on the importance of community engagement and education to overcome challenges and facilitate understanding.

*'It needs a big campaign, especially in language.'* Thai group participant

*'Awareness in language could be done using pictures and calendars, similar to the other bins.'* Participant from Nepalese group

Participants were asked what issues they had about removing packaging from food waste to prevent contamination.

**47%** had no issues, particularly Thai group participants.

**35%** 'yuk factor' e.g. seeing or smelling mouldy food

**26%** 'messy factor' e.g. spillage

**17%** extra time and effort

**12%** can't be bothered

*'Taking the time and effort to remove packaging is a deterrent. It seems like an unnecessary step.'*



# Effective communication strategies

## Which are the best communication channels for FOGO introduction?

There is unanimous preference for culturally sensitive, diverse, in-language and multi-platform communication methods.

*'Information provided in my language is easier to understand.'*

### Physical materials

Most popular materials were letterbox drops (60%) and bin stickers (38%), in community language.

### Council communication channels

Council's channels were popular including newsletter, webpage and social media.

*'Council's communication channels and social media are crucial for reaching the community.'*

### Council and community events and networks

Arabic-speaking, Chinese and Thai participants advocated for engagement at cultural festivals and community gatherings, as well as at council-run events.

*'In-language engagements during community events would also be a great way to disseminate information.'*

*'To set up a stall to promote FOGO is a very good opportunity.'*

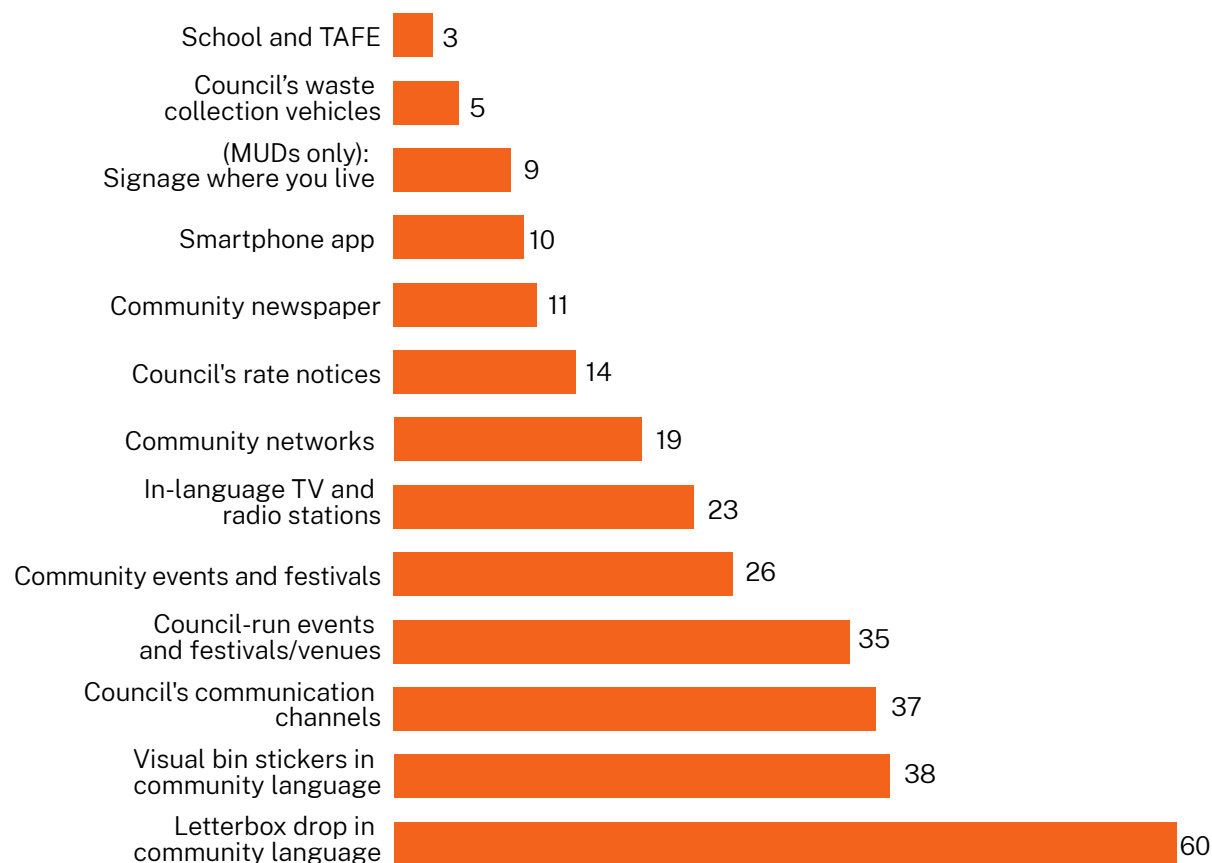
## In-language TV and radio

Arabic-speaking and sub-Saharan participants mentioned the role of TV and radio to communicate the information.

*'Watching a FOGO ad on TV will spark curiosity and deliver information quickly.'*

Sub-Saharan group participant

**Figure 6 Preferred communication channels for FOGO service introduction**



\*Participants could choose multiple options



## What are some strategies for increasing adoption of FOGO services?

**Ongoing supply of compostable liners for kitchen caddies is seen as the best way to increase adoption of the FOGO service.**

### Multilingual communication

Arabic-speaking, Chinese, Indian and Vietnamese unanimously emphasised the need for multilingual communication.

### Working with educational institutions

Arabic-speaking communities highlighted the role of children in sharing information through institutes like schools and TAFE.

*'Education institutes ... shed light on the educational role played by children in their families.'*

### Collaboration with cultural leaders

Arabic-speaking and Vietnamese participants emphasised the role of community influencers and leaders. The Vietnamese group stressed the importance of involving women and senior groups, and other social organisations, including religious entities.

*'Working collaboratively with cultural leaders can provide strong endorsements for the FOGO service.'*

### Practical support and clear instructions

Chinese-speaking Mainland, Indian and Vietnamese participants expressed the need for support and clear instructions.

*'Simple and clear instructions are key. If I don't understand how to use FOGO properly, I might not use it at all.'*

### Address cost concerns

Arabic, Chinese-speaking Mainland, Indian and Vietnamese participants stressed the importance of affordability.

*'Addressing cost concerns is important. If it gets too expensive, people might be discouraged from using the FOGO service.'*

### Door-to-door explanation

Arabic-speaking and Vietnamese participants highlighted the value of a personal touch.

*'Door-to-door explanation during rollout is a personal touch that can make a difference.'*

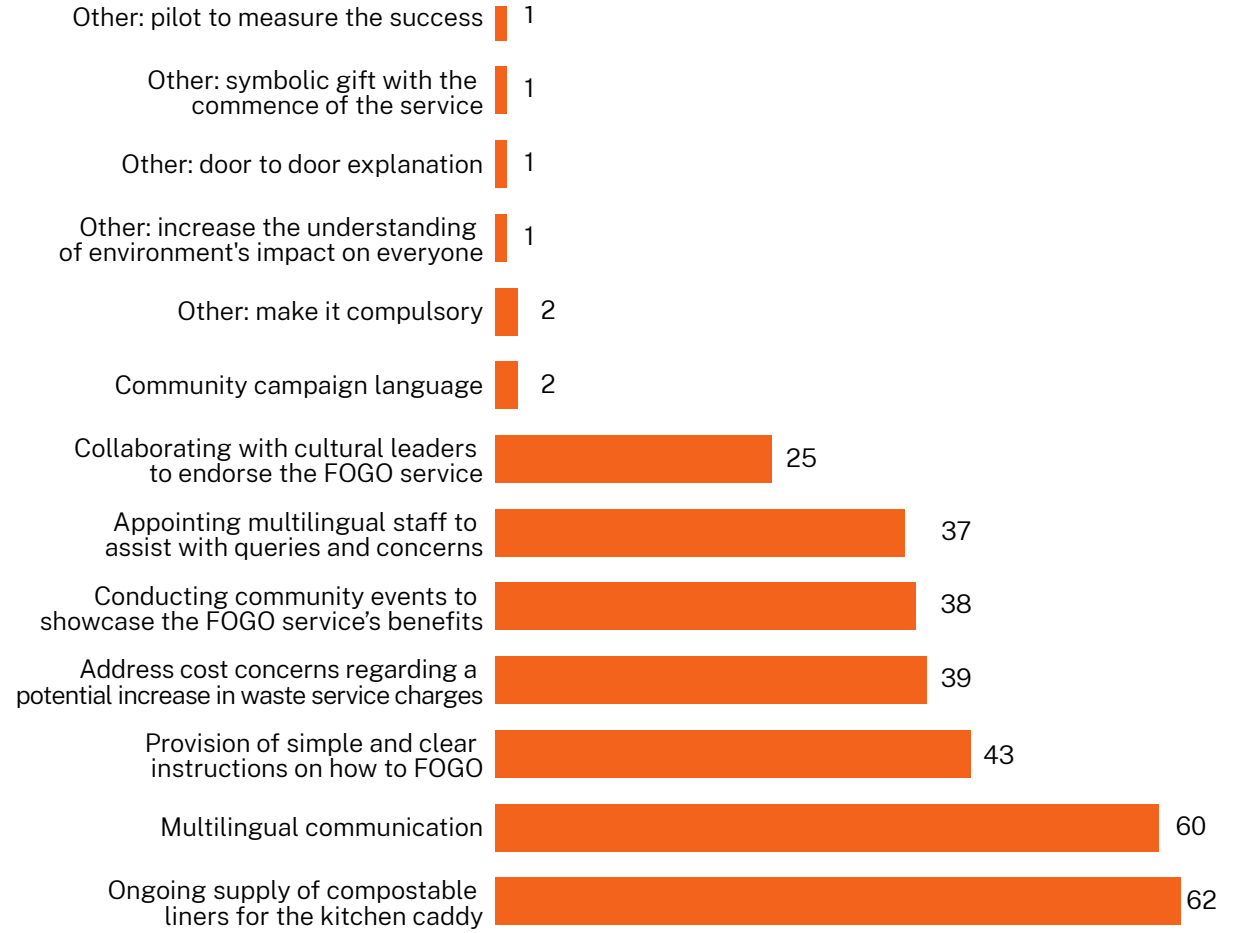
(See next page for Figure 7, Strategies to increase the acceptance and adoption of FOGO service.)







**Figure 7 Strategies to increase the acceptance and adoption of FOGO service**



\*Participants could choose multiple options

## NSW Environment Protection Authority

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