



# *Behavioral Insights on Recycling for the Carton Council*

2021



## Objective:

*To identify insights from behavioral science that can help us encourage carton recycling.*

- Behavioral science is the study of how people make decisions and change behaviors in real life—and it's not the way you may think.
- Cartons contain some of the most valuable fiber in the recycling stream and cartons are now accepted in more than half of all residential recycling programs.
- While the carton recycling rate continues to grow – currently estimated to be around 20% - it is still lower than most other commonly recyclable materials.



# *Approach*



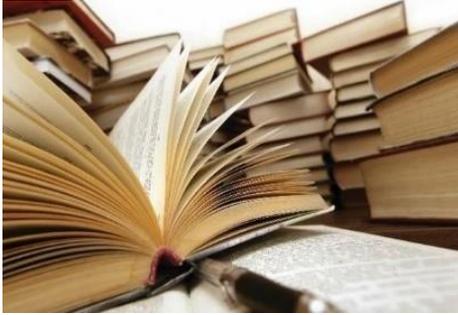
## The approach:

*Apply behavioral science to identify overlooked factors that play into recycling decisions and flip these insights into recommendations.*

- For years the Carton Council has run campaigns that have strived to inform and motivate individuals to recycle their cartons.
- While disseminating accurate and consistent information about carton recycling remains important, the Carton Council wanted to dig deeper to help ensure messaging and activities were designed to resonate with consumers.



## Summary of the evidence that informs our insights:



Review published evidence in consumer behavior for carton recycling

- Our starting point with understanding behavior is to make efficient use of knowledge that's readily available.
- This knowledge published peer-reviewed studies in consumer psychology – with a focus on recycling of cartons.



Lateral category analysis from similar behaviors

- If then extends to lateral categories of similar behaviors, such a food packaging recycling and recycling in the kitchen.



Synthesis any existing Carton Council market research

# Coherently map all factors that influence behavior



Knowledge & Education



Reflective & Intuitive  
Motivation



Practical Opportunity to  
Change Behavior



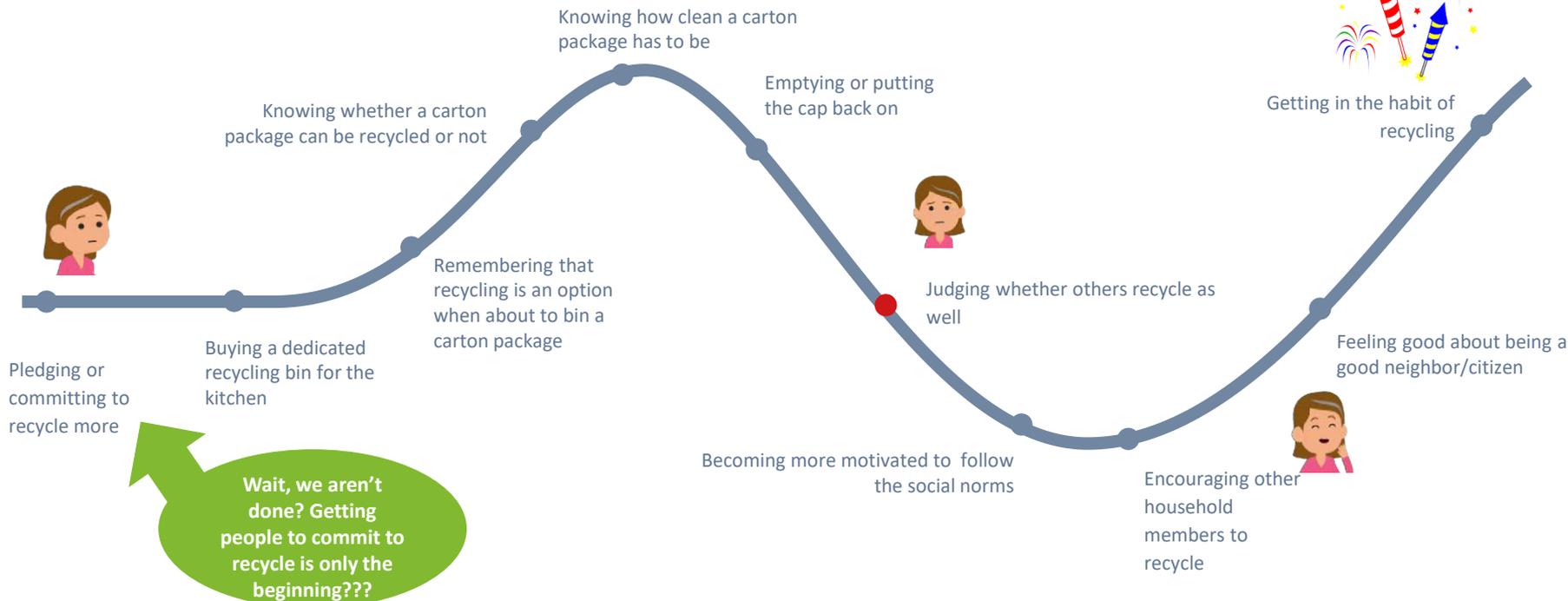
- We organize and interpret our research through a model developed by the Centre for Behavior Change at University College London.
- This ensures we are comprehensive and coherent in understanding the problem – and don't overlook important factors.
- In particular, we commonly identify opportunities under the heading of intuitive motivation – the range of automatic and non – conscious factors that motivate behavior. This is the focus of behavioral economics.

# *Insights*



## The micro-behaviors of the recycling journey after deciding to recycle

Previous research focuses on getting people to recycle but often overlooks that there is still a lot involved before recycling becomes habitual



# Insights for Improving Recycling Behavior:



## 1. Availability

Make it as easy as possible.



## 4. Product experience

How people feel about a product, including perceived value and attachment, shapes their propensities towards reusing, recycling or throwing it away.



## 2. Social influence + identity

People are influenced by societal expectations, a result of the intrinsic need to belong and feel accepted to a group.



## 3. Prompts + cues

Many sustainable behaviors are habitual.



## 5. Planning + commitments

Consumers find it easier to act on concrete, specific steps and are driven to be internally consistent.



## 6. Reciprocity

Consumers do not like to feel indebted to others and will make efforts to pay people back for their good (or bad) behavior.



## 7. Knowledge + expected behavior

Awareness of environmental problems is a contributor to sustainable behavior, but concrete knowledge of what expectations and possibilities are regarding sustainable actions is also important.

# Thank you

