



What is a Bottle Bill?

A bottle bill is a term used for a “container deposit law”, or a piece of legislation that encourages a high rate of recycling through a minimum refundable deposit on plastic, aluminum, and glass drink containers. There are ten states that currently have such programs in place, and individuals have been trying to add Tennessee to that list for a very long time. Many believe that a bottle bill would help Tennessee collect a lot of recyclable material that would otherwise go into landfills.

California

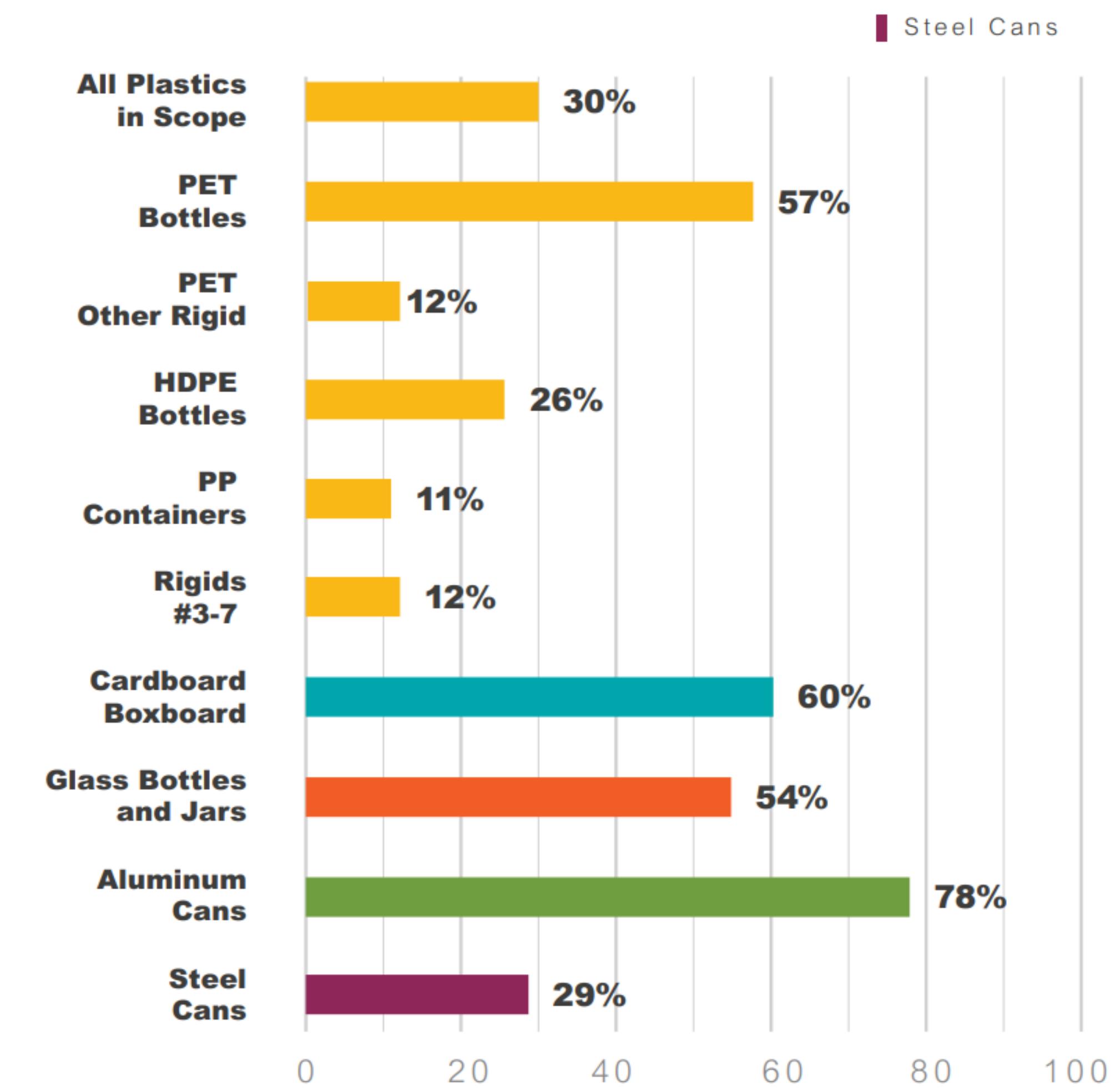
History

- Implemented in 1987, California has the oldest container deposit law still active today
- Four additional bills have been passed to strengthen the scope of the bill
- Current law calls for the collection of beer, malt, wine, distilled spirits coolers, and all non-alcoholic beverage containers except milk and vegetable juice over 16 oz

Recycling By the Numbers

- A study by Eunomia calculates California's recycling rate to be 54%. Without cardboard, this number is still 44%
- CalRecycle has calculated that “the beverage container recycling rate for all materials during the January through June 2020 period is 71 percent.”

MATERIAL-SPECIFIC PACKAGING RECYCLING RATES



Recycling rates of CCPM (Common Containers and Packing Materials) for California, as calculated by Eunomia; March 2021

Why does California work?

California has an extensive recycling program and an impressive bottle bill that is given a lot of respect. There are approximately 1,600 recycling centers in California, and they have a complete strategy for recycling all kinds of objects, from paints to mattresses. This, coupled with many years of support, gives the state of California an impressive recycling record. If such programs were passed in Tennessee, similar results would be seen.

Tennessee

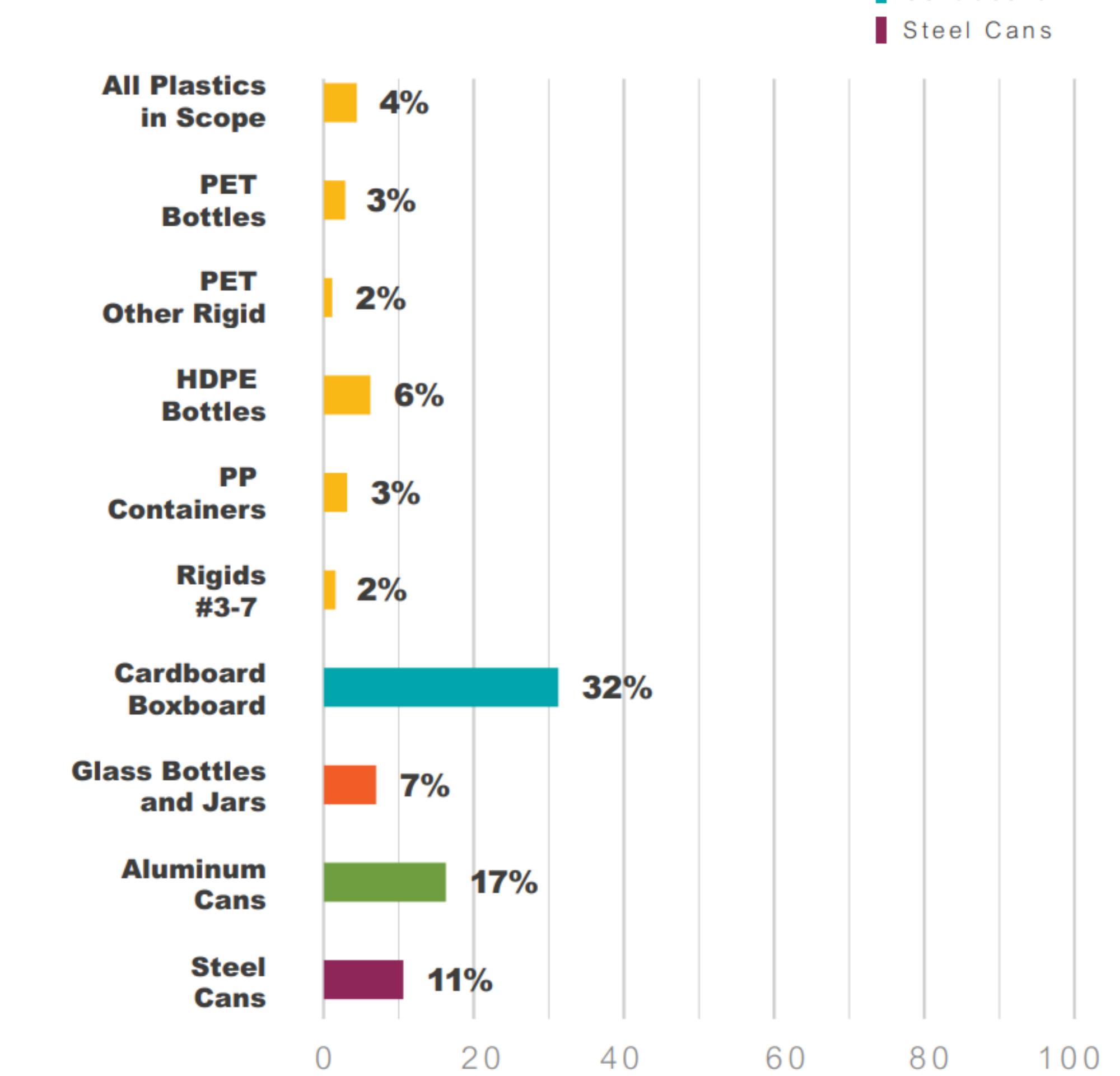
History

- A bottle bill has been in proposition since 2004
- Introduced to the state legislature in 2009 and 2010, but failed
- Individuals and small groups have continued trying to pass a bill, but no major developments have been made

Recycling By the Numbers

- Two independent studies calculated the Tennessee average recycling rate to be approximately 22%
- Without cardboard, this number drops to 7%
- The Tennessee Bottle Bill Project determined that approximately 50% of all litter in Tennessee was bottles and cans, items that can be redeemed at bottle bill centers
- TENNANCAN, an all-volunteer effort to increase recycling rates in Tennessee, determined that with a Bottle Bill, the recycling rate of Tennessee would increase to 80 percent for bottles and cans

MATERIAL-SPECIFIC PACKAGING RECYCLING RATES

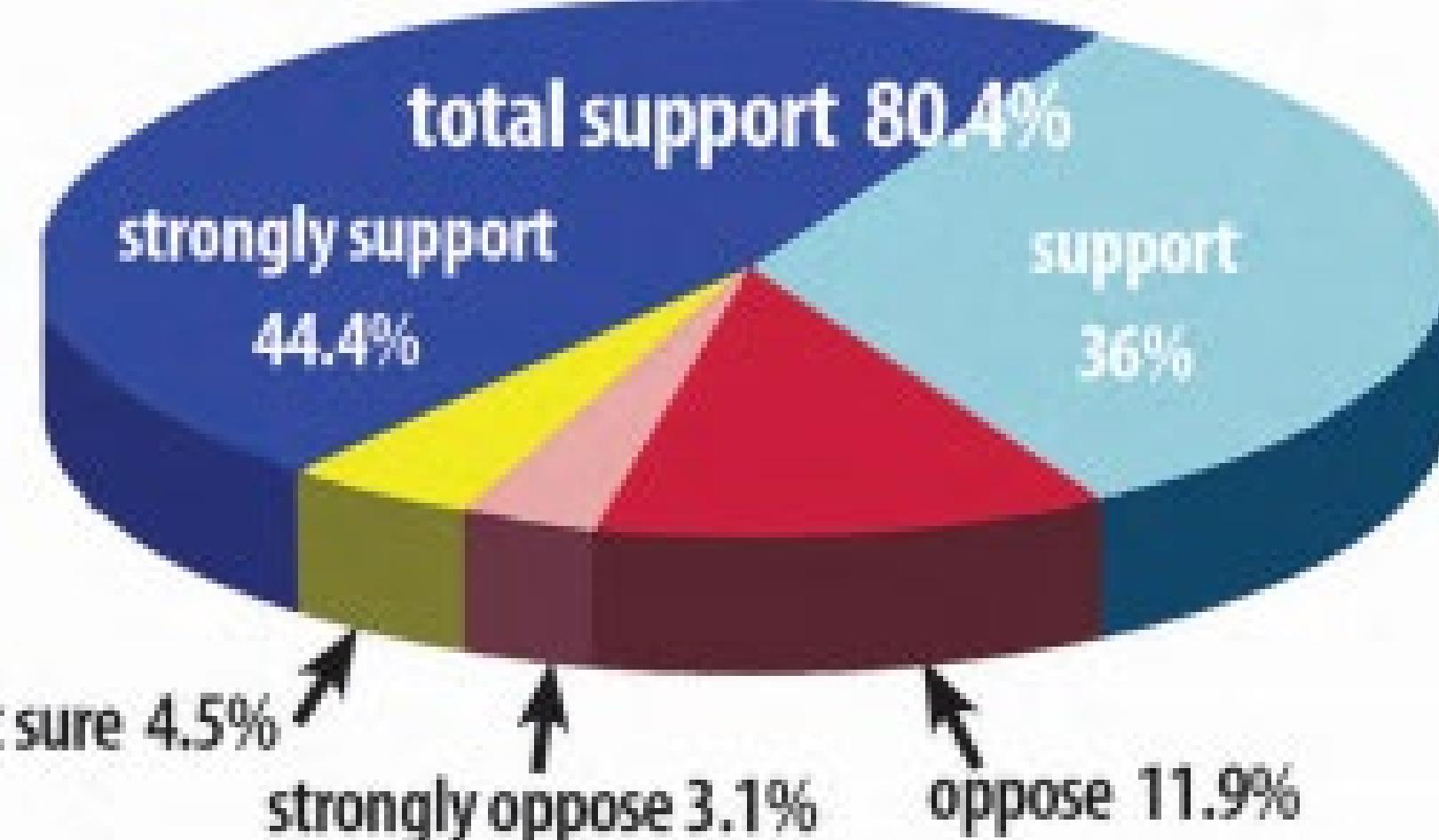


Recycling rates of CCPM (Common Containers and Packing Materials) for Tennessee, as calculated by Eunomia; March 2021

Comparing the Effects of a Bottle Bill in Tennessee to Other States

Grady Hicks, Dr. Lachelle Norris
Environmental and Sustainable Studies Major, SOC 3600

Why should Tennessee work?



University of Tennessee March 2008 Recycling Poll; Sample Size: 777

Providing a bottle bill can eliminate potentially half of Tennessee's volume of litter. TENNANCAN estimates that the monetary value of all packages redeemed amounts to nearly fifty million dollars annually, but that money is currently rotting in landfills. With a bottle bill, such waste would be diverted from the waste stream and back into the production cycle.

Delaware

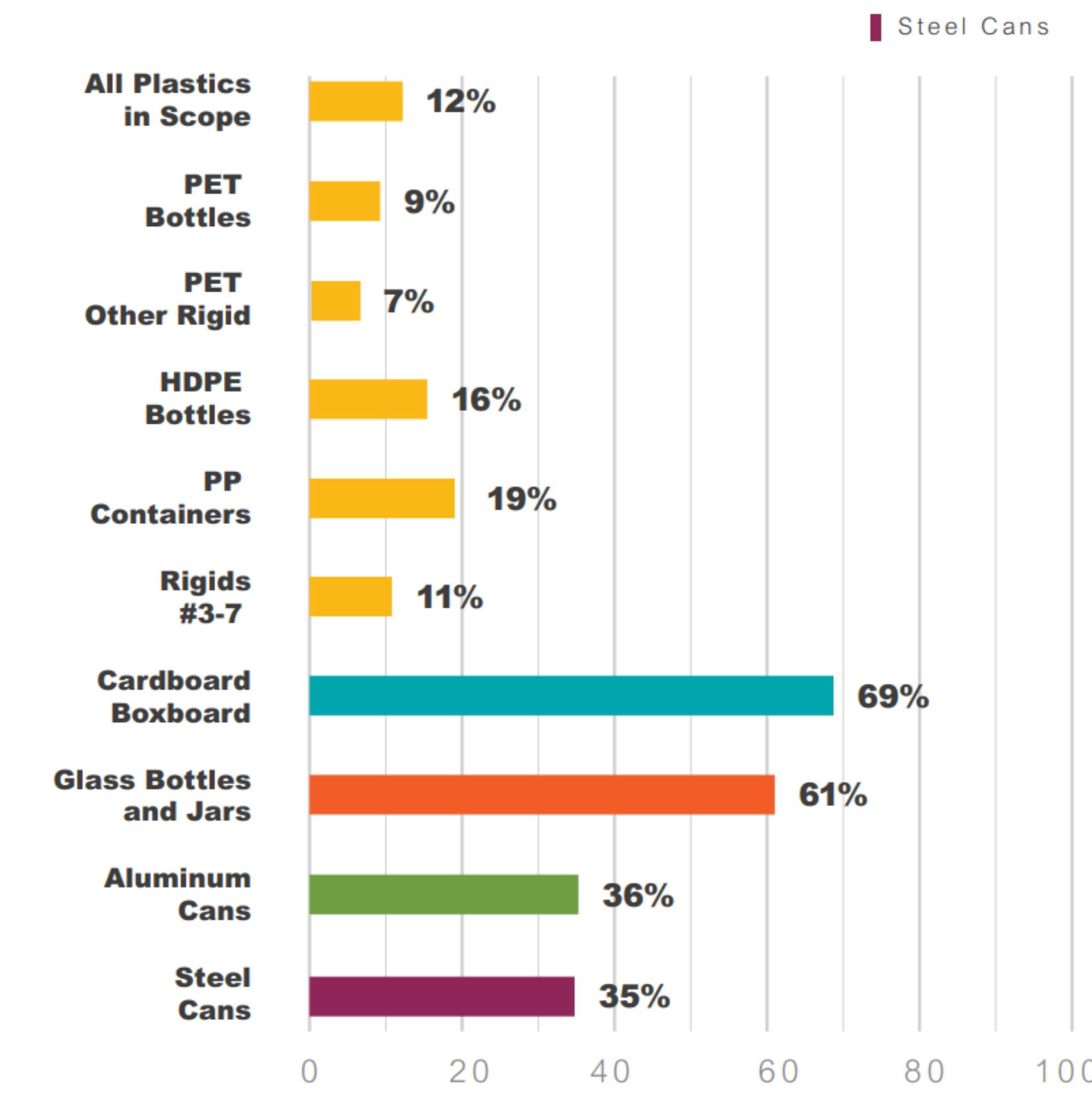
History

- Delaware had a bottle bill for 28 years before it was repealed in 2010
- People voted in favor of a curbside program for all single-family households in the state
- State is used as an argument against container deposit laws

Recycling By the Numbers

- In 2008, Delaware's recycling rate was 30% between consumer and residential sectors
- In 2018, Delaware's recycling rate was ~59%. Without cardboard, this number drops to ~43%

MATERIAL-SPECIFIC PACKAGING RECYCLING RATES



Recycling rates of CCPM (Common Containers and Packing Materials) for Delaware, as calculated by Eunomia; March 2021

Why did Delaware not work?

- Delaware's bottle bill lacked the expansion of successful programs such as California. The 2006 Delaware Code on Beverage Containers only classified containers that were “nonaluminous” as eligible for return, so aluminum cans could not be returned under Delaware's law.
- 2008 Governor Jack Markell reported that a removal of the bottle bill would decrease recycling rates by 1.75%, which is not a significant number.
- Since the removal of the bill, Delaware has passed several laws to aid the process of recycling. This includes providing all single-family households curbside recycling, promoting recycling efforts through education, and establishing programs to collect Styrofoam, a product that is notoriously bad for the environment.

Conclusion

The evidence and research on the topic of container deposit laws strongly suggests that in areas that bottle bills are properly implemented, litter is reduced. However, it is important to note that a bottle bill is not the final solution.

California, a state praised for their recycling rates, has huge amounts of infrastructure to support their container deposit law and to collect other materials not covered under the law.

Delaware's bottle bill program was ineffective because it lacked support from other sources, but once focus was brought to these areas the recycling rate increased. When determining what actions to take in Tennessee, both California and Delaware shine as examples of why such legislation is needed.

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