



Medication Disposal: 2009 Survey of Attitudes and Preferences Among Oregon and Washington State Residents

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Introduction

■ Background

The Gilmore Research Group was retained by multiple governmental agencies of Oregon and Washington states, as well as by non-governmental professional organizations, to assess the practice of and attitudes toward unwanted medication disposal. These entities include:

- Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Snohomish County Solid Waste Division
- Northwest North American Hazardous Materials Management Association
- National North American Hazardous Materials Management Association

■ Research Objectives

- Topics explored in the survey include:
 - ◆ Experience with disposing of unused medications
 - ◆ Prevalence of current active-use and unwanted medications containers in the household
 - ◆ Exposure to theft, use and abuse of unwanted prescription drugs and medicines
 - ◆ Likelihood of utilizing drop-off sites and free mailers for medication disposal if they were available
 - ◆ Agreement with the proposal of pharmaceutical companies taking responsibility for the creation of take-back programs for the safe disposal of unused or expired medications

Methodology

- **786 telephone surveys conducted with randomly chosen households including:**
 - 396 residents in Oregon State
 - 390 residents in Washington State

- **Surveys conducted between November 11 and December 9, 2009**

- **Maximum margin of error for each group at the 95% confidence level is:**
 - ± 3.5 Total Sample
 - $\pm 5\%$ in Washington
 - $\pm 5\%$ in Oregon

- **Analyst Notations**
 - Percentages in charts and tables may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
 - Where totals are presented, the data were weighted to reflect the combined population of Oregon and Washington states. Individual state results are presented unweighted.

Demographic Profile

- More than half of the people responding to the survey are female (55%), including 53% of Oregon respondents and 57% of Washington respondents.
- Three out of four respondents have at least two people residing in their households (75%), including about one-third who report three or more household members.
- Approximately one-third of respondents had children under the age of 18 in their household.
- Thirty-two percent of respondents are over the age of 65 or live in the household with somebody who is.

	Total (N = 786)	Oregon (N = 396)	Washington (N = 390)
Gender			
Male	45%	47%	43%
Female	55%	53%	57%
# of People in HH			
One	23%	26%	21%
Two	40%	42%	38%
Three or more	35%	30%	38%
Children under 18?			
Yes	29%	22%	32%
No	70%	77%	67%
People 65 or older?			
Yes	32%	34%	31%
No	64%	62%	65%

Demographic Profile (Continued)

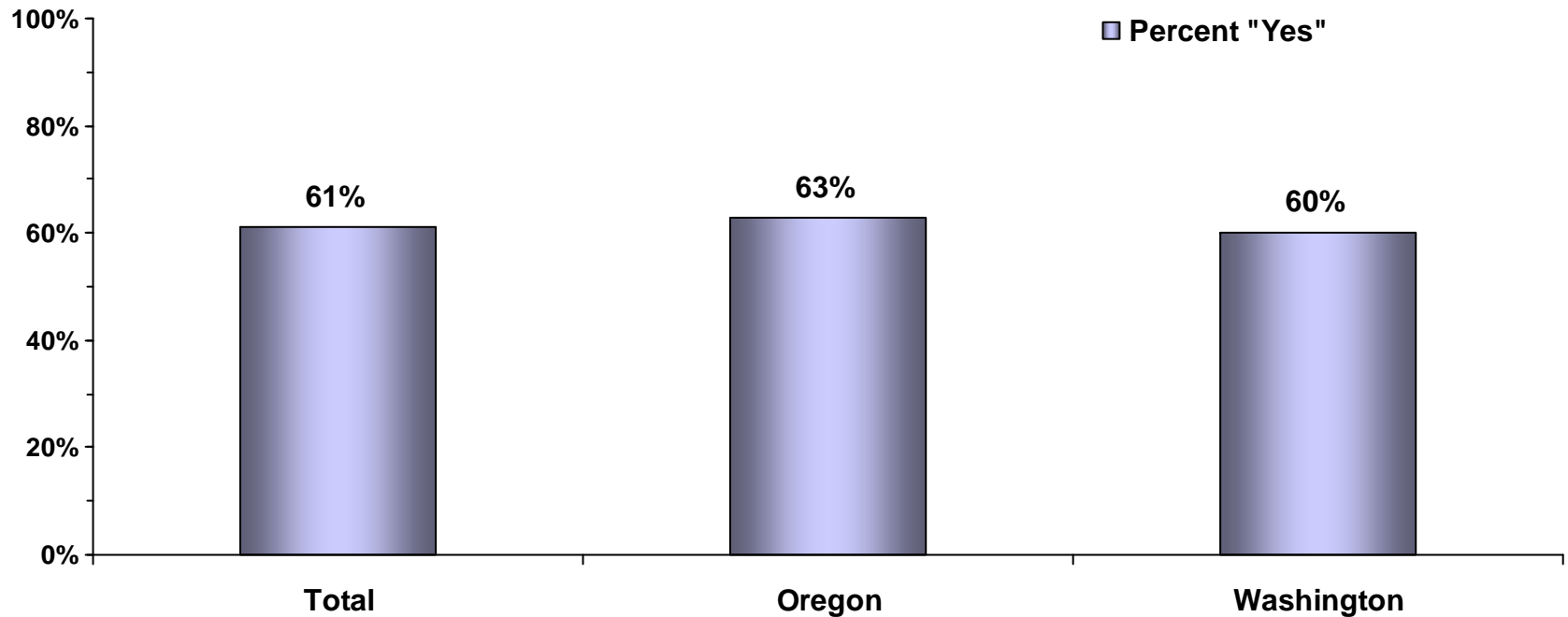
- The average age of all respondents is 55 years. Oregon residents averaged 57 years of age.
- The vast majority of respondents (85%) report that they are white. Oregon respondents were more likely than Washington respondents to list their ethnicity as white (89% compared to 82%).

	Total (N = 786)	Oregon (N = 396)	Washington (N = 390)
Age			
18 to 24	3%	2%	3%
25 to 34	8%	6%	9%
35 to 44	13%	9%	15%
45 to 54	13%	9%	15%
55 to 64	27%	30%	26%
65 to 74	16%	18%	15%
75+	12%	12%	12%
Mean	55 yrs	57 yrs	55 yrs
Ethnicity			
White	85%	89%	82%
Black/African American	2%	1%	3%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%
Asian	1%	1%	2%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	2%	1%	3%
Other	4%	4%	4%
Refused	4%	4%	4%

Past Need for Medication Disposal

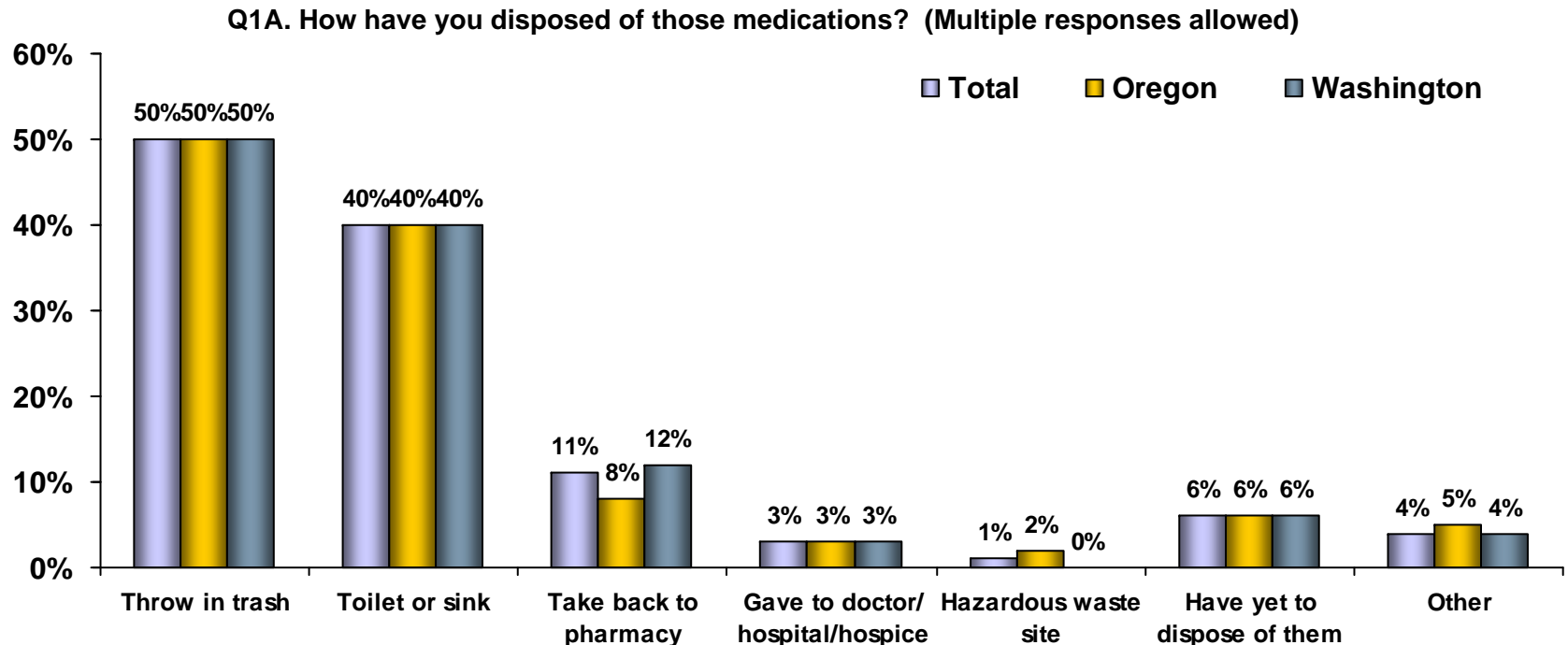
- More than six out of ten respondents reported that they have been in situations where they had needed to dispose of prescription or over the counter drugs. Those respondents who would be likely to use a drop-off site or a mailer for disposing of medications are more likely to have disposed of medications in the past than are those who would not be likely to use such services.

Q1. Have you ever had any medications, such as prescriptions or over-the-counter drugs, that you wanted to dispose of?



Past Methods of Medication Disposal

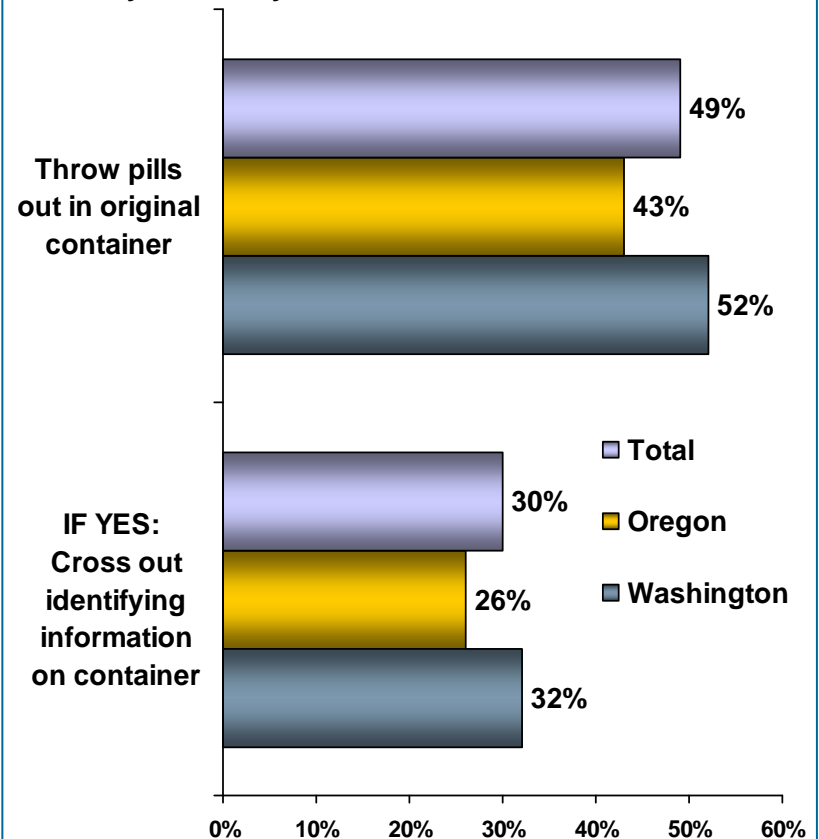
- Respondents who have disposed of medications in the past were given multiple opportunities to indicate how they did so. Among them, half (50%) have thrown them away in the trash. In addition, four in ten (40%) have discarded them in the sink or a toilet. Approximately one in ten had taken them back to a pharmacy.



Trash Disposal Practices

- Of residents who have thrown medications away in the trash, approximately one-half usually throw them out in their original package or containers. Although Washington respondents (52%) are slightly more likely than Oregon respondents (43%) to throw out the containers, the difference is not statistically significant.
- Among respondents who throw medications out in their original packages or containers, less than one-third (30%) crossed out personally identifying information before throwing them in the trash.

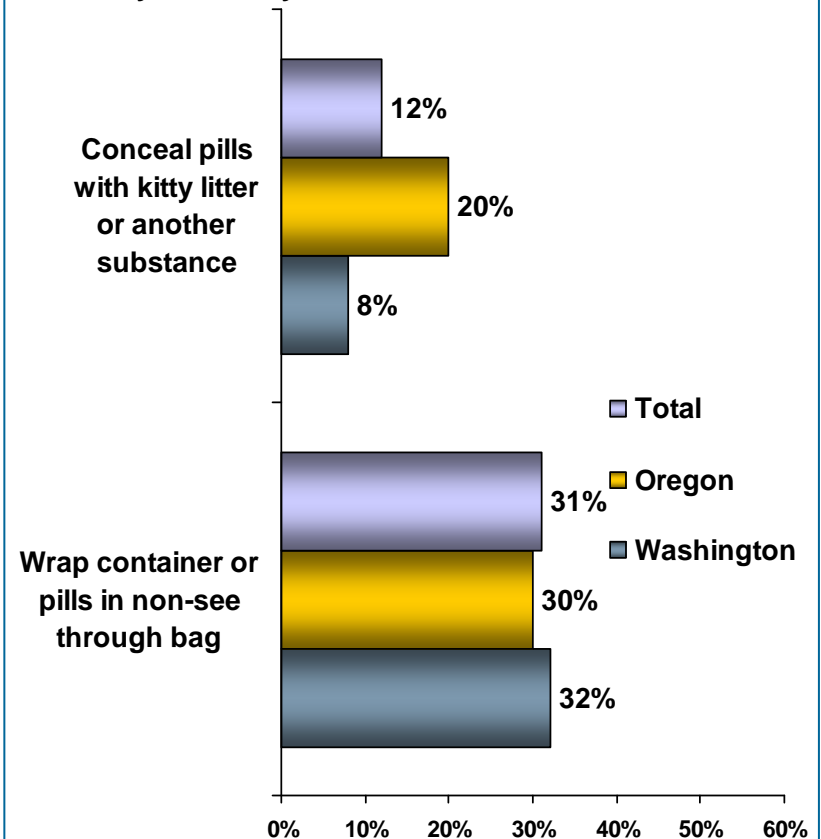
Q1B1 & Q1B2. IF DISPOSE OF MEDICATION IN TRASH: Do you usually....?



Trash Disposal Practices (Continued)

- Oregon residents (20%) are more likely than Washington residents (8%) to have used kitty litter or a similar substance to conceal medications when they have been thrown in the trash.
- Approximately one in three respondents (31%) usually wrap the containers or pills in an opaque bag before discarding them in the trash.

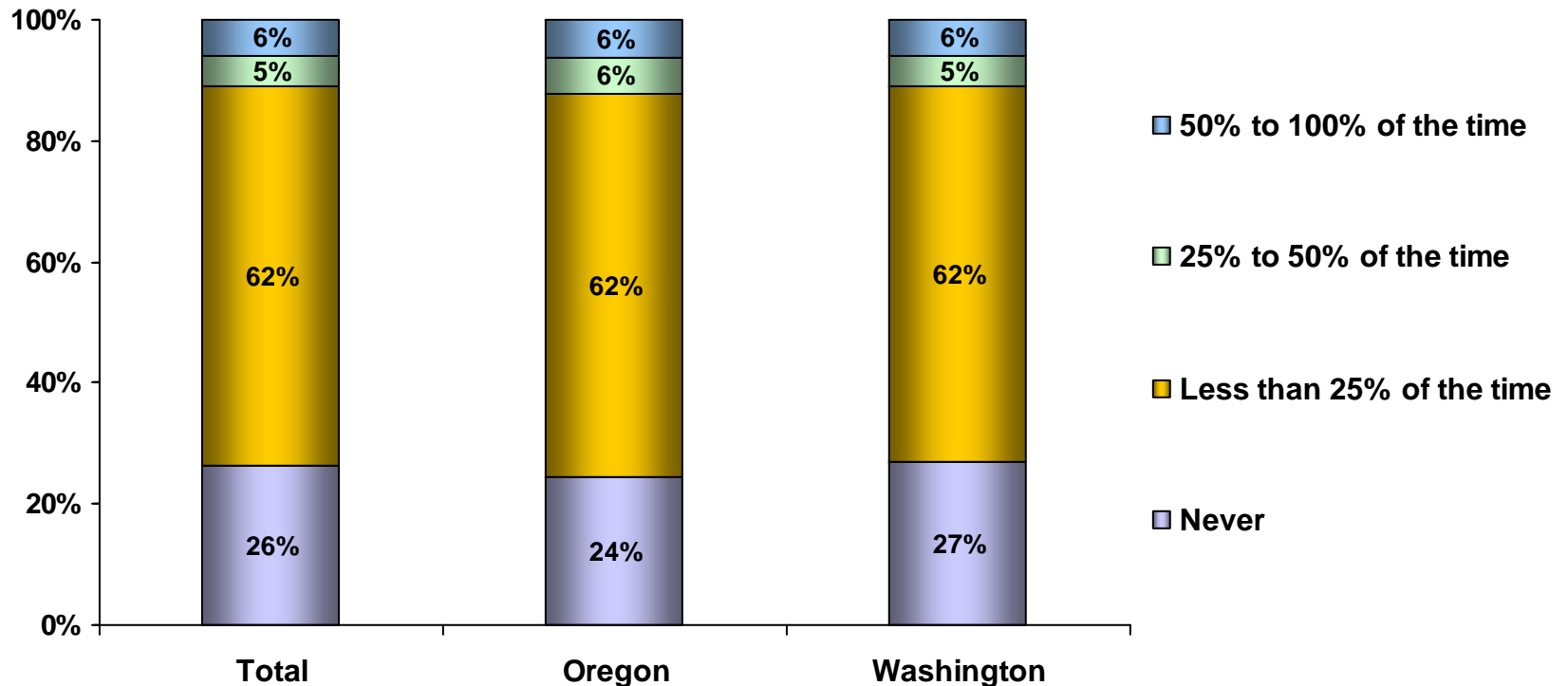
Q1B1 TO Q1B4. IF DISPOSE
OF MEDICATION IN TRASH:
Do you usually....?



Prevalence of Left Over Medication

- The majority of all respondents in both states, about three out of four, feel that they have left over pills when they are prescribed. One in four respondents (26%) report that they never have pills left over. About ten percent of respondents have left over pills between 25% and 100% of the time.

Q2. Thinking about when you have been prescribed medications, how often do you feel you have left over pills?

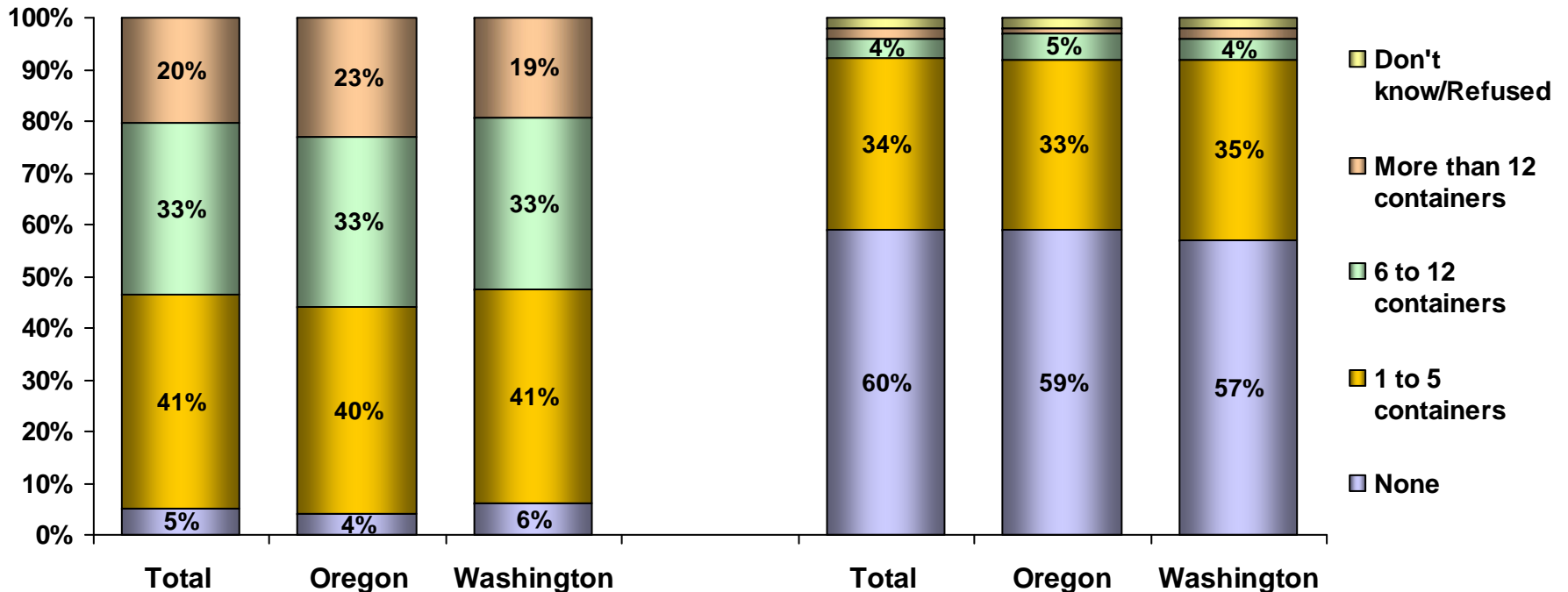


Number of Current Medication Containers

- A vast majority of residents (95%) have at least one container of prescriptions or over-the-counter medication in their household, including more than half (53%) who have six or more containers.
- Among respondents with medication in their households, approximately four out of ten indicate that they had at least one container that had expired or will never be used. One-third have between one and five containers that are expired or will never be used.

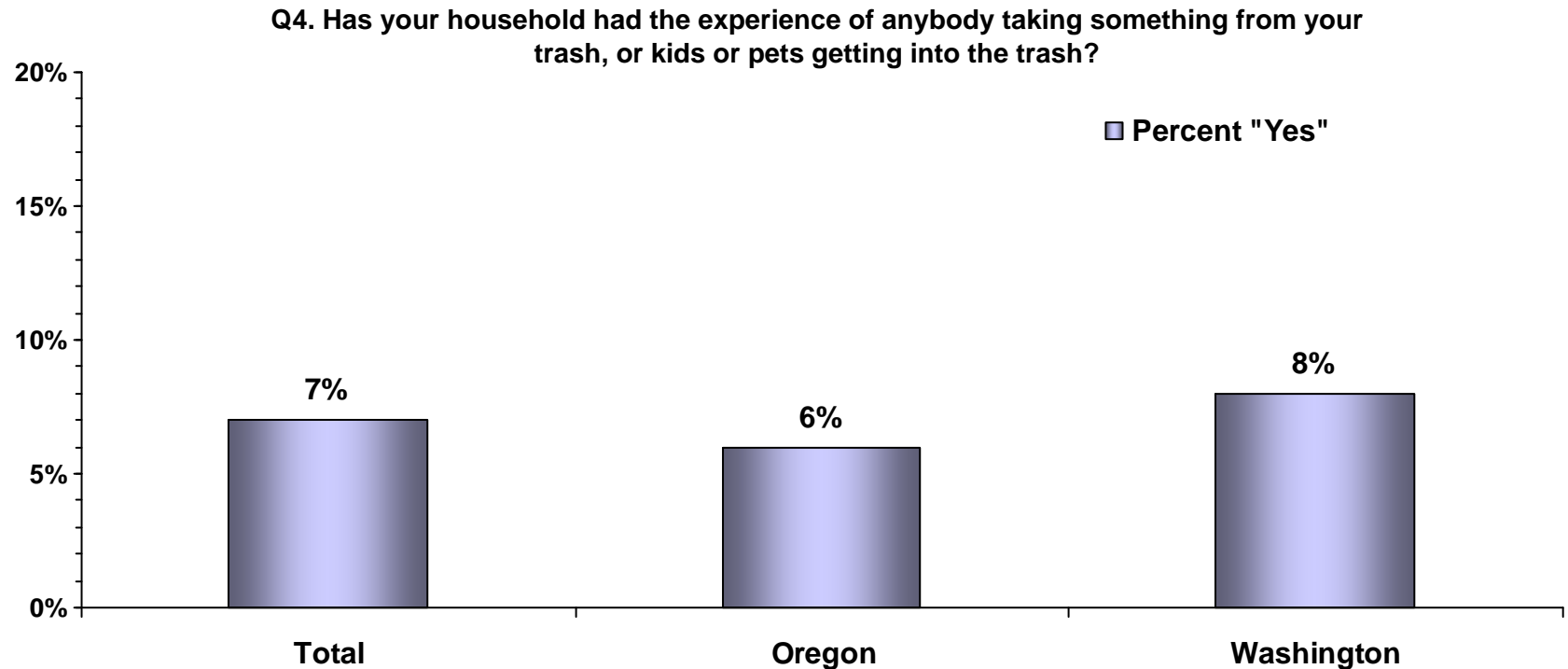
Q3A. How many containers of prescriptions and OTC medicine would you estimate you have?

**Q3B. IF HAVE ONE OR MORE CONTAINER:
How many containers of prescriptions and OTC medicine would you estimate are expired, or for other reasons will never be used?**



Trash Theft Experience

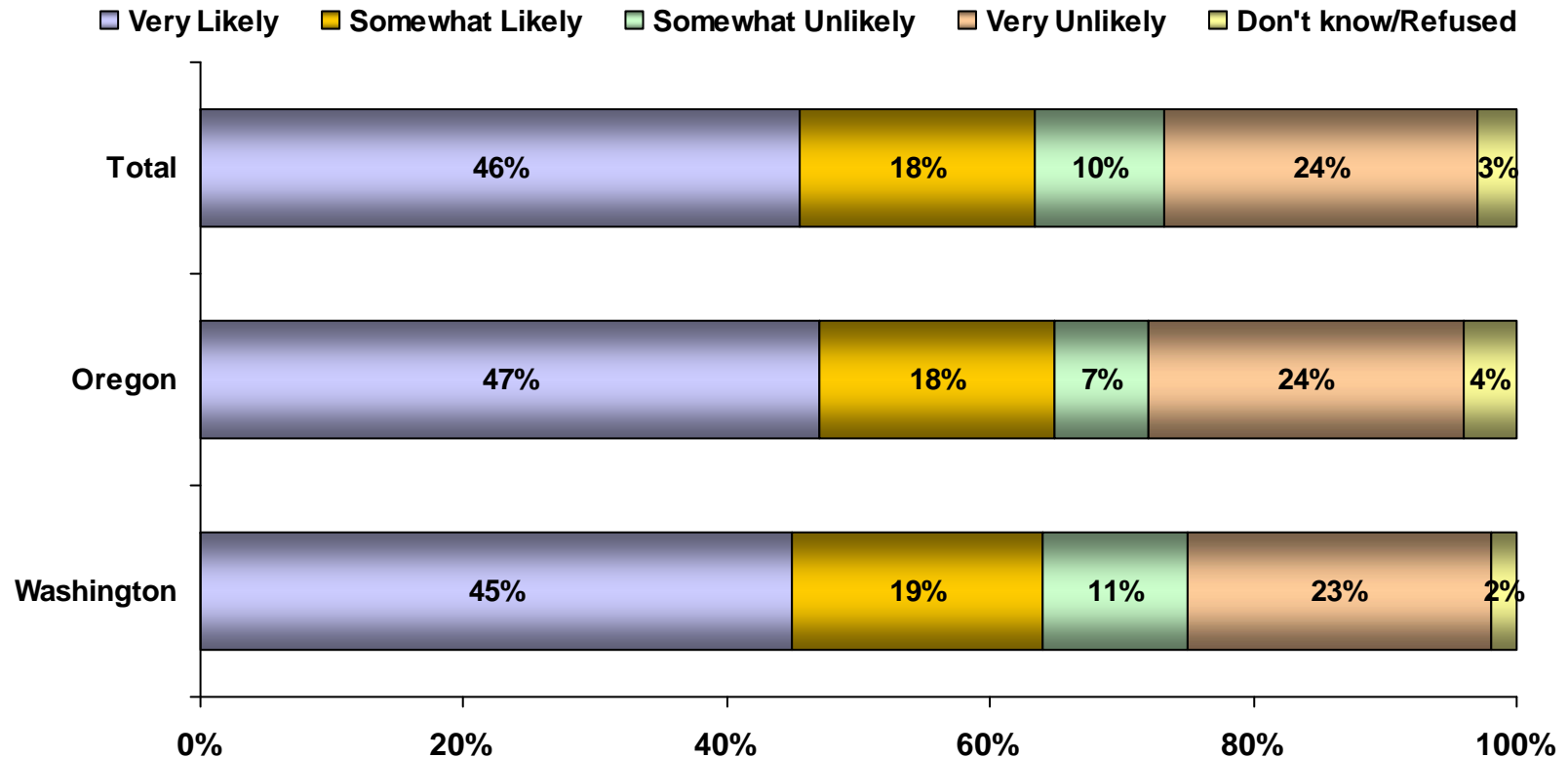
- A small proportion of respondents, six percent of Oregon respondents and eight percent of Washington respondents, have had the experience of somebody getting into their trash.



Likelihood of Using Drop-Off Site

- Approximately two-thirds of all respondents indicate that they would be likely to drop-off unused or expired medication for free disposal if the location was convenient, including nearly half who would be “very likely.”

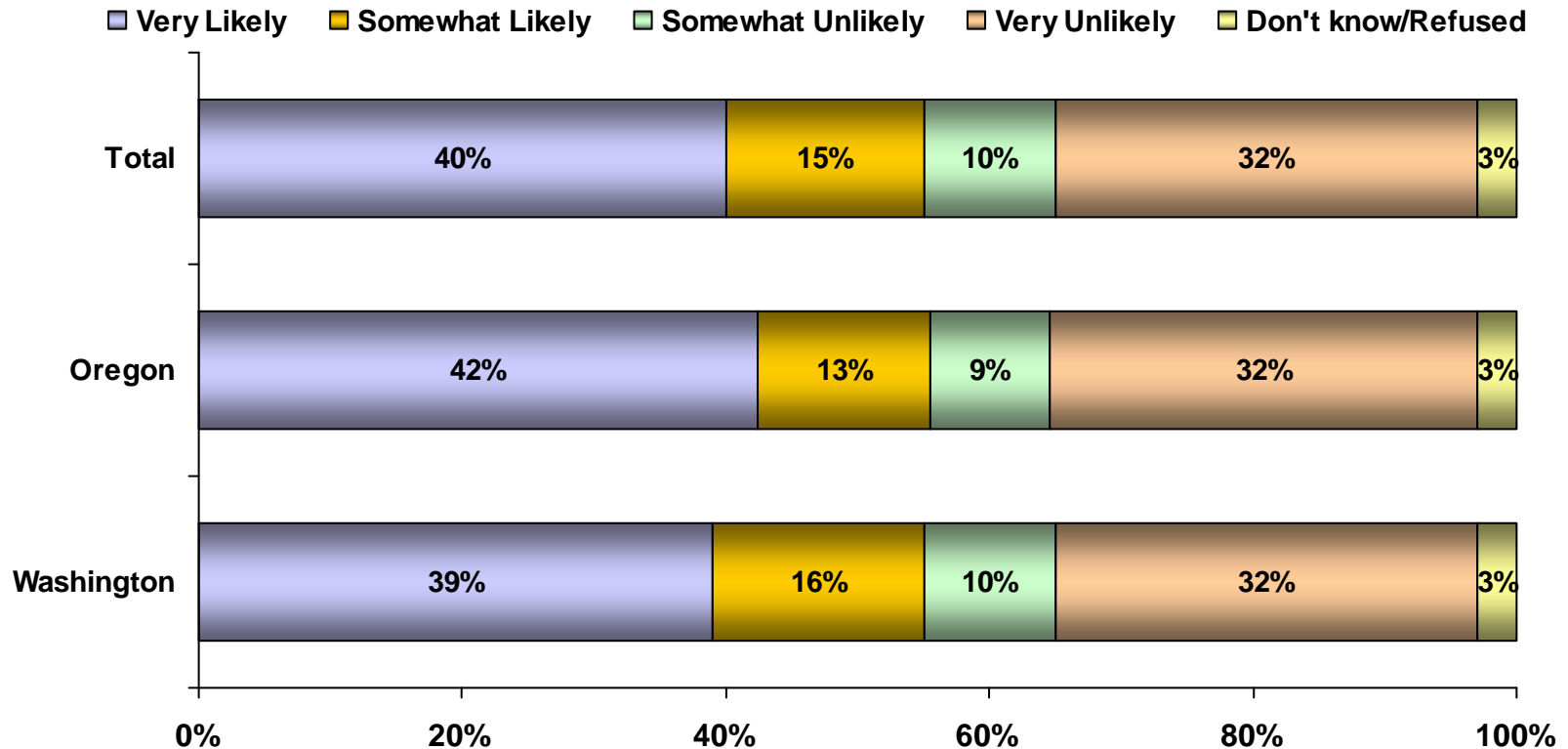
Q5. If there was a convenient location, how likely would you or a household member be to drop off unused or expired medication for free disposal?



Likelihood of Using Free Mailers

- More than half of respondents (55%) said that they would be likely to use a free mailer to dispose of unused or expired medications, including four out of ten who said they would be “very likely”. One-third of respondents (32%) would be “very unlikely” to utilize such a service.

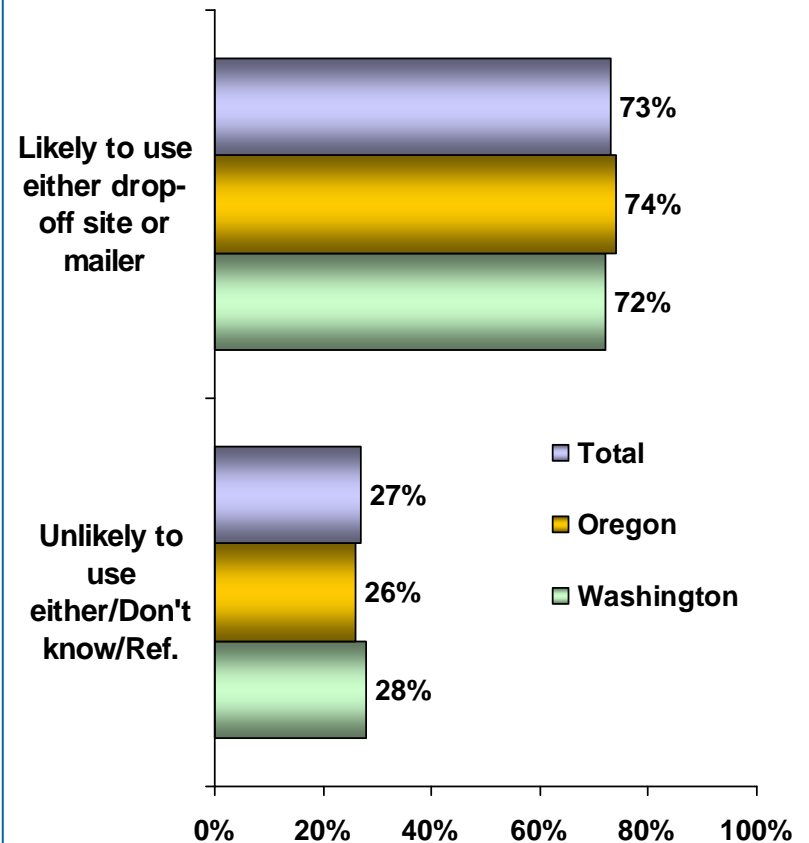
Q6. If you could use a free mailer to dispose of unwanted medications, how likely would you or a household member be to send unused or expired medicines in for disposal?



Likelihood of Using Either Drop-Off Site or Free Mailers

- Almost three-quarters of respondents in both states would be likely to utilize a free mailer to dispose of unwanted medication *or* to take them to a convenient drop-off location, if such services were available.

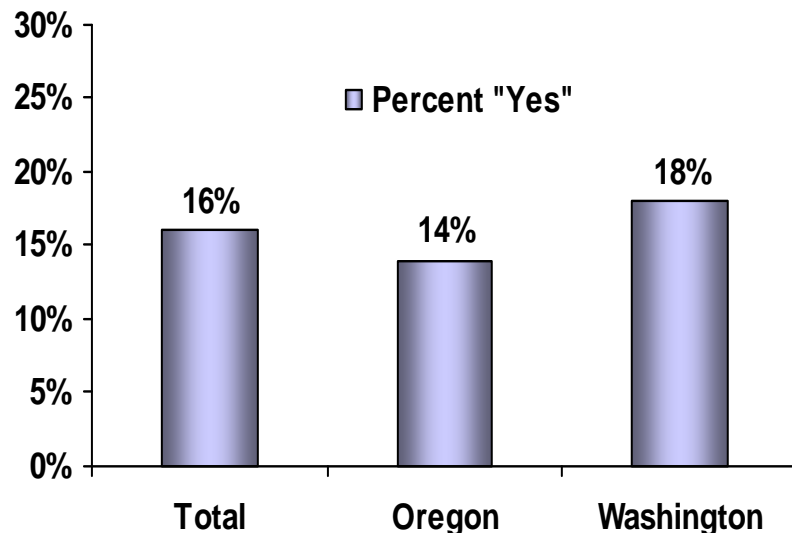
Q5-Q6. Likelihood of using either a drop-off site or a mailer to dispose of medication



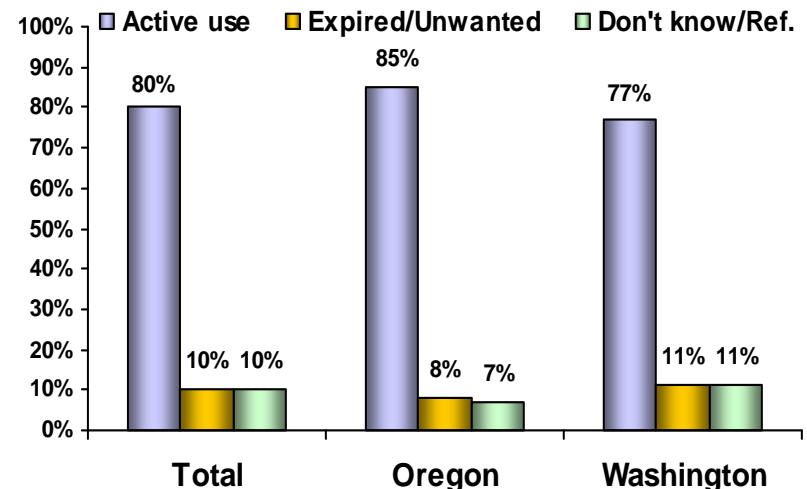
Experience With Medication Diversion

- Fewer than one respondent in five (14% of Oregon respondents and 18% of Washington respondents) have experienced medicines taken from them or somebody they know for use or abuse.
- Among respondents who have experienced medicines taken from them or somebody they know for use or abuse, a majority (80%) report that those medications were still in active use. About ten percent said that these medications were expired or unwanted.

Q9A. Have you experienced a situation in which you or someone you know personally had medicines taken from them for use or abuse by someone else?



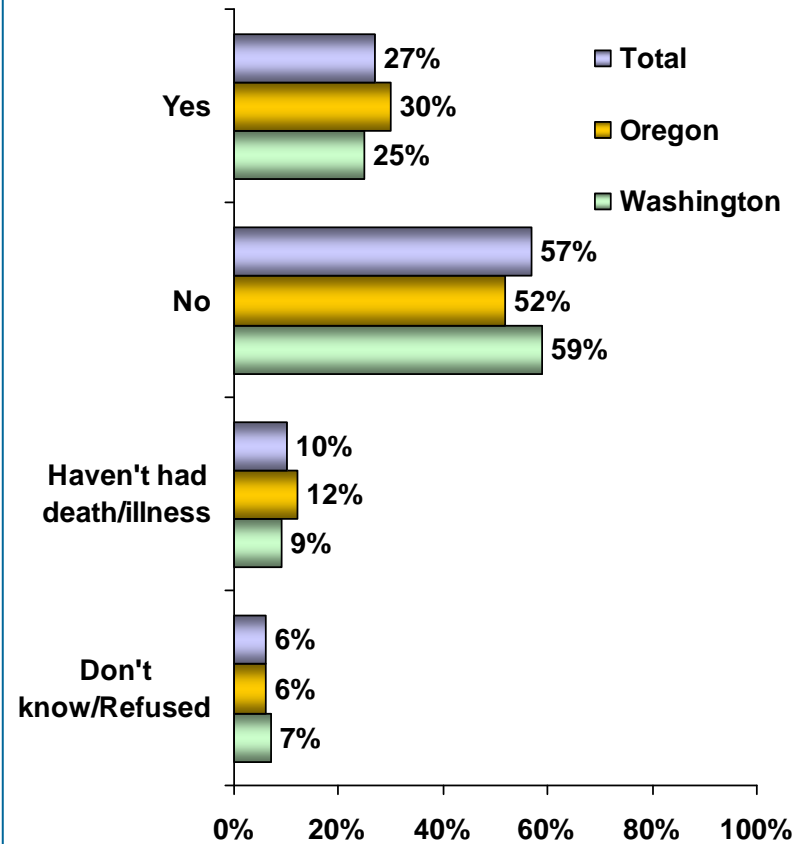
Q9B. IF YES: Were the medications still in active use at the time, or were they unwanted, expired or otherwise being stored until they could be disposed of?



Medication Left Over From Death/Illness

- About one in four residents (27%) said that following a death or major illness of somebody they know, there were unused narcotics or medication left over.
- More than half of respondents, 52% of Oregon respondents and 59% of Washington respondents, report that there were no narcotics left over.

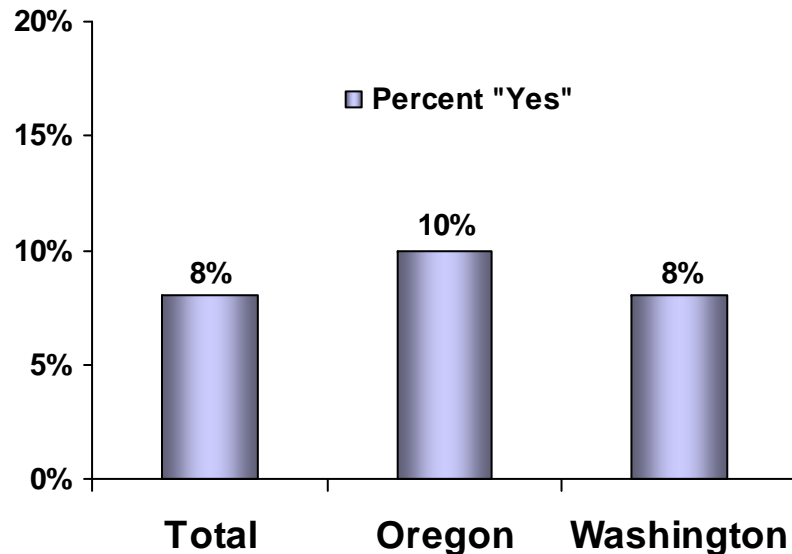
Q8. Recalling any recent situations in which you or someone you know personally experienced a major illness or death, **FOLLOWING** the illness or death, were there narcotics and other medications left over?



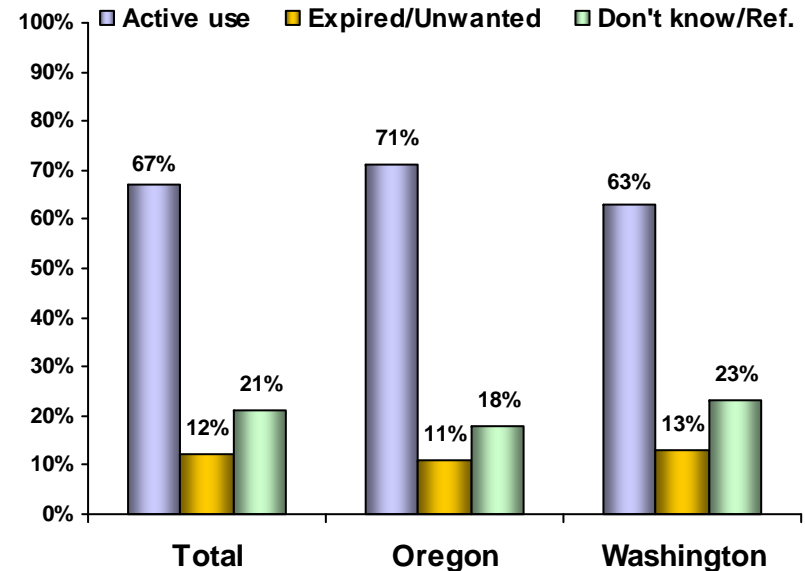
Experience With Medication Abuse

- About one in ten respondents in both states has known somebody who accidentally poisoned themselves or overdosed on a household medication.
- Of these respondents, approximately two-thirds said that the medication was still in active use, while 12% reported that the medications were expired or unwanted.

Q7A. Do you know of a situation in which you or someone you know personally experienced an accidental poisoning or overdose situation due to medications from the home?



Q7B. IF YES: At the time, were the medications still in active use, or were they unwanted, expired or otherwise being stored until they could be disposed of?



Pharmaceutical Responsibility for Take-Back Program

- Approximately two-thirds of respondents in both states (64%) agree that pharmaceutical companies should be responsible for creating take-back programs that will safely dispose of unused medicines, including about four in ten who “strongly agree.”

Q10. Please state your level of agreement with the following statement: Pharmaceutical companies should be responsible for creating a take-back program for safe disposal of unused medicines.

