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Mid-South Social Survey

Public Attitudes Toward Littering in Tennessee: April 3-25, 2006

David R. Forde, Ph.D.

See-Trail Mackey, M.S.

Mid-South Social Survey
School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy
University of Memphis

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Purpose of this poll

- Provide a baseline to identify attitudes toward littering in Tennessee
 - Conducted April 3 to April 25, 2006
- Core questions designed to assess attitudes toward littering, behavior, anti-littering knowledge and awareness and effectiveness of anti-littering advertising.

Sample design

- Telephone survey
 - 600 respondents (approximately 200 in 3 areas)
 - Memphis and Shelby County (Area code 901)
 - West (Area codes 731, 931)
 - East including Chattanooga, Knoxville and Nashville (423,615,865)
- Qualified interviews
 - Resident of Tennessee for > 2 years
 - Adults of age 18-34

Questions on the littering poll designed to evaluate:

- Public perceptions of littering
- Awareness of litter
- How often people litter
- Disposal of cigarette butts
- Awareness of anti-littering advertising
- Perception of who is responsible for litter
- Awareness and effectiveness of anti-litter penalties

Key findings

1. On average, people perceive about the same amount of litter today as two years ago
2. There is extremely strong consensus about things that people would call litter.

Key findings

3. Half (48%) of the people on this poll say that they have knowingly thrown trash on the street.
4. About 1 in 5 people say they do this on a regular basis

Key findings

5. About 40 percent of people say that they have seen some form of anti-littering advertising in the past month.
 - Television has the highest recognition; Billboards are also high
 - Television is also seen as most effective

Key findings

6. Most people (81%) say legal penalties would stop them from littering.
7. Very few (3%) people say that litter laws are enforced all of the time.
8. Most people said it is prisoners who pick up litter.

Key findings

9. There is only a moderate awareness (59%) of recycling opportunities. Awareness is lower in Urban areas.

10. About half (46%) of persons on the poll say they recycle.

Implications

- While men and women share a common understanding of littering, men are more likely to litter.

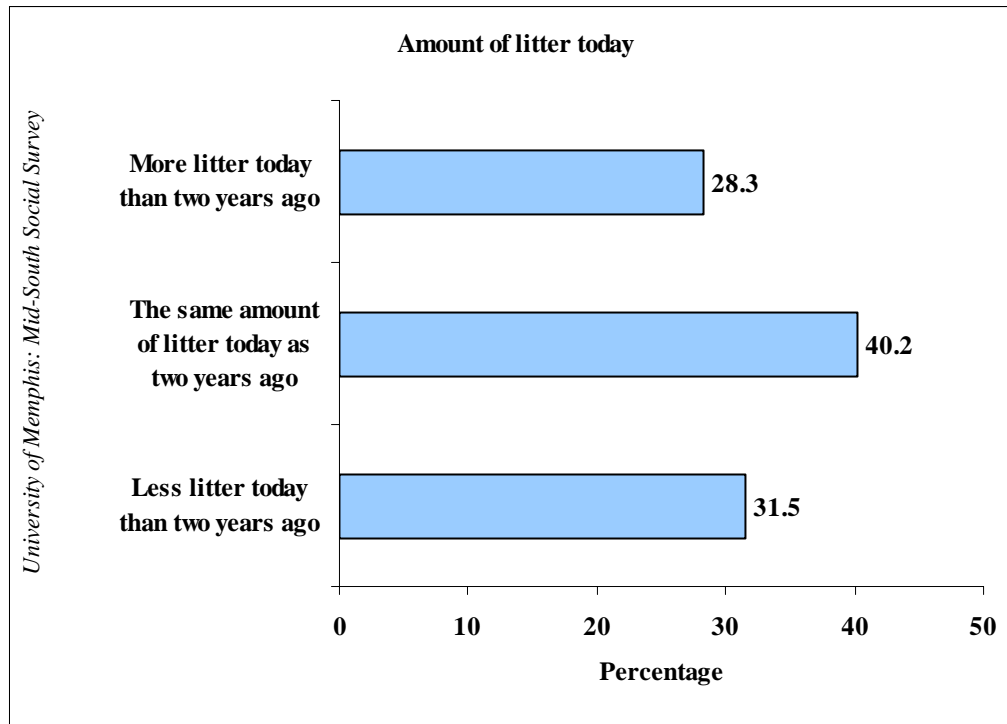
Implications

- Many people are aware of anti-littering advertising and most people rate television as the most effective way to advertise.
- Obstacles for moving ahead continue to be seen in people's perception that anti-litter ordinances will not be enforced, and in a lack of personal responsibility for littering.

Issue agenda

The results of the April 4-25 poll show that people perceive about the same amount of litter today as they did two years ago.

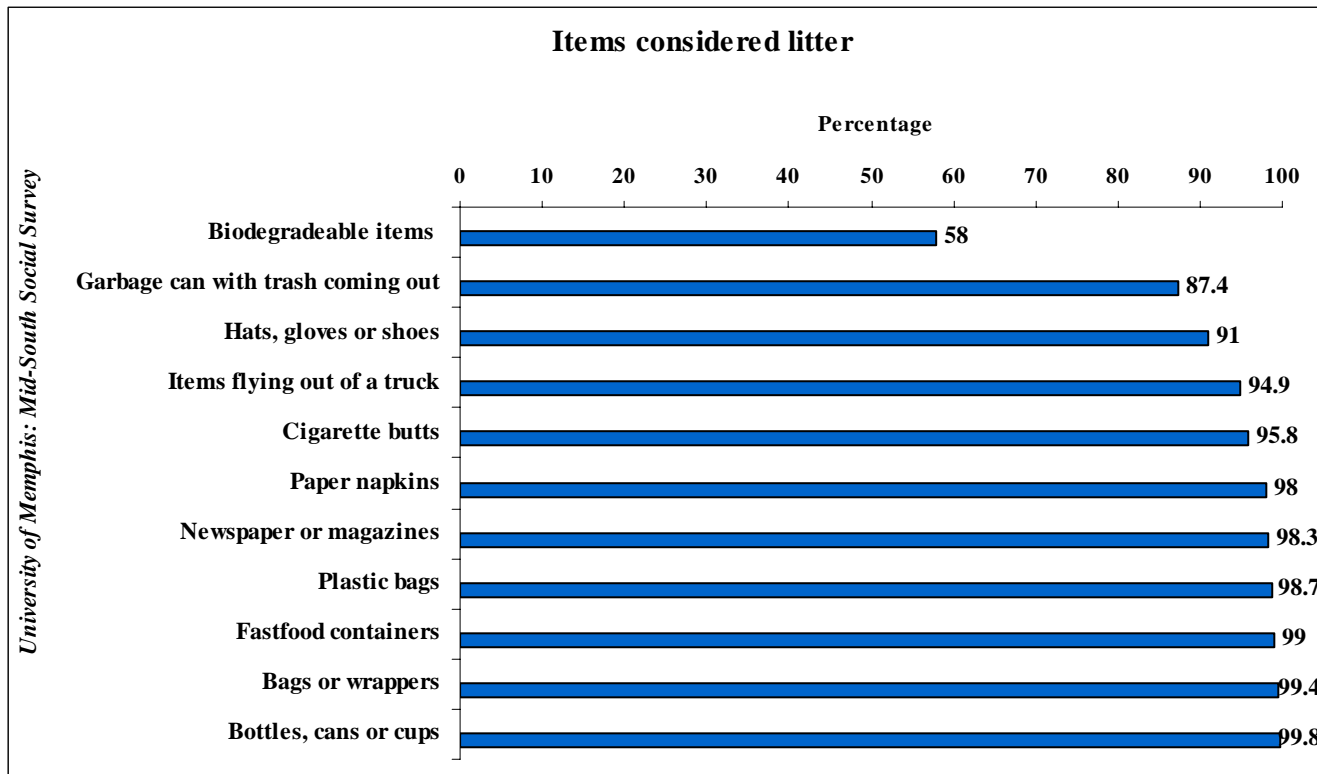
There are no significant differences in views on the amount of litter by sex, location in Tennessee, or income. Older respondent's though were more significantly more likely to say there was more litter today than two years ago.



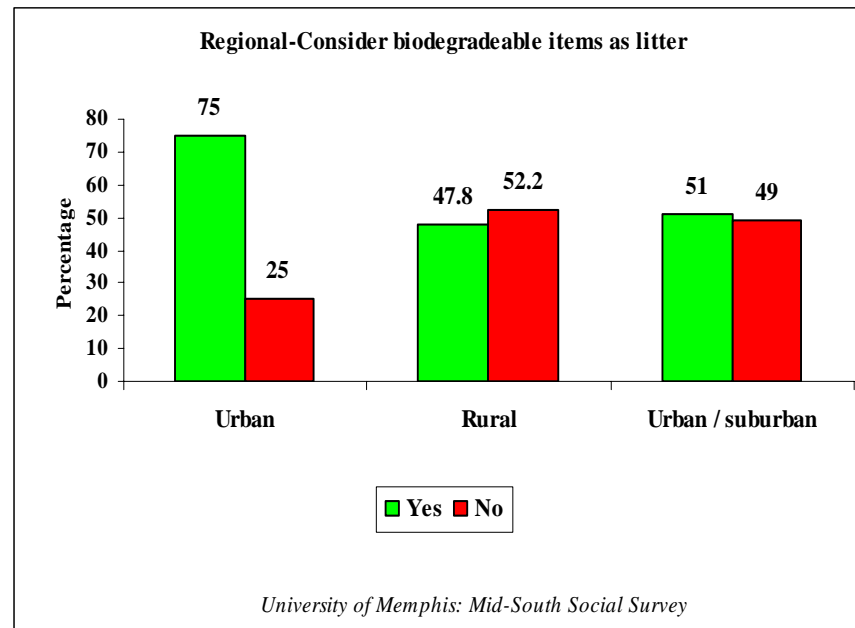
What is litter?

- A list of items was read to respondents. They were asked (Yes or no), if they saw these items on the street, highway or sidewalk, if they would call each item litter.
- The results show a near universal perception that each of the items on the list would be seen as litter.

Most non-perishable items tend to be near universally seen as litter. There is a strong consensus that hats, gloves and shoes, and a garbage can with trash coming out of it are problems. There is far less consensus though when it comes to biodegradable items like banana peels and apple cores.



People in urban areas are more likely to view banana peels and apple cores as litter than are people in urban/suburban and rural parts of the State.

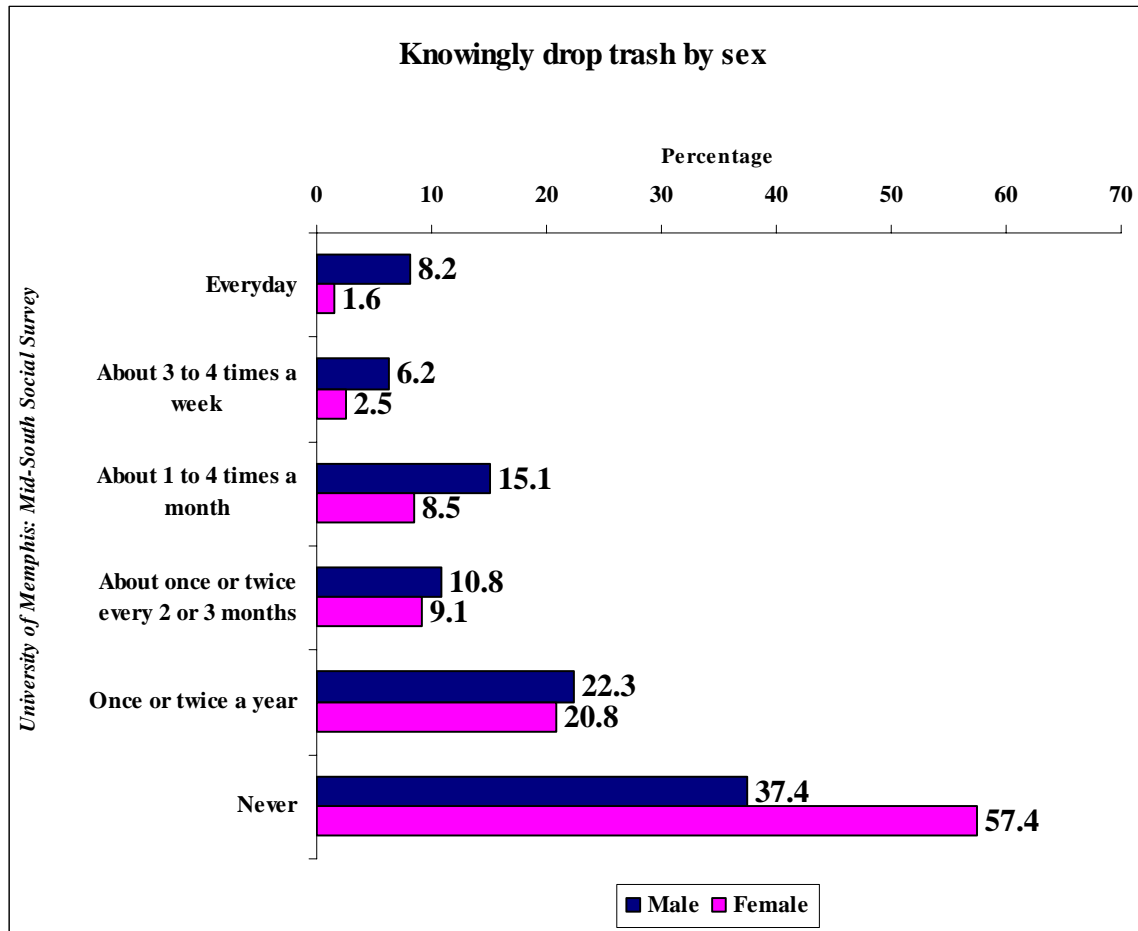


- People were asked about “why” they did not see some of these items as litter.
- People most often said things such as:
 - The item is biodegradable
 - Animals will eat it
 - Items coming out of a truck is more of a mistake than it is litter.

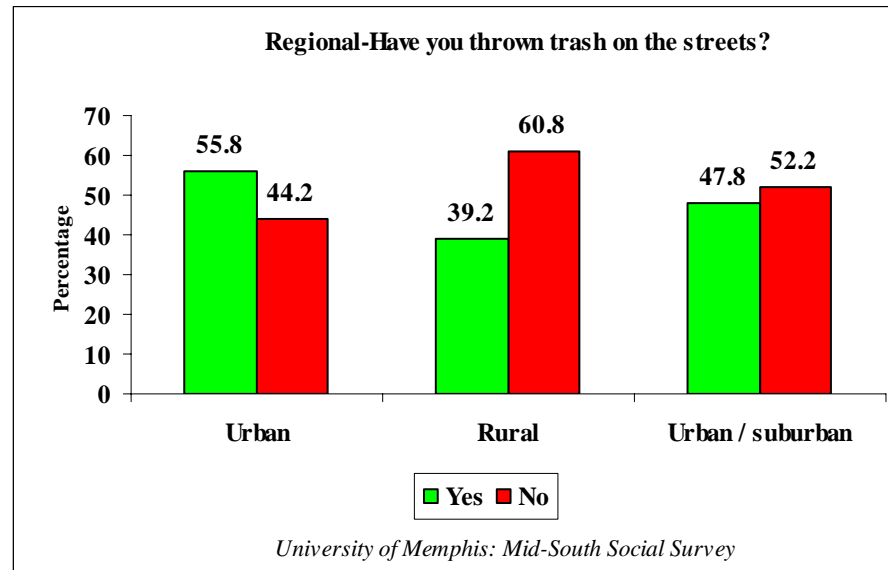
Littering behavior

- People were asked about their own behavior. The question was:
- *During the last year have you ever thrown or dropped a piece of trash on a street, highway, sidewalk, or parking lot?*
- 48 percent of respondents said “yes”

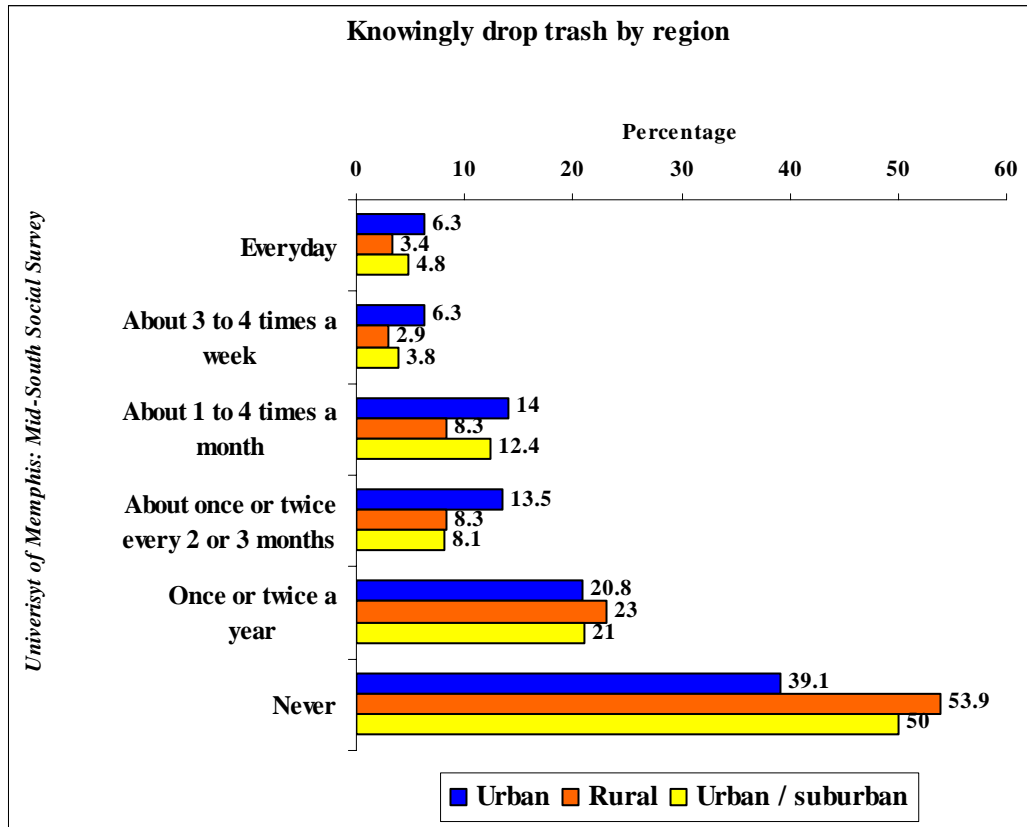
Respondents were asked how often they knowingly drop trash. The chart below shows how males are more likely than females to drop trash. It also shows that many people litter quite often.



People in urban areas are significantly more likely to say that they have littered.



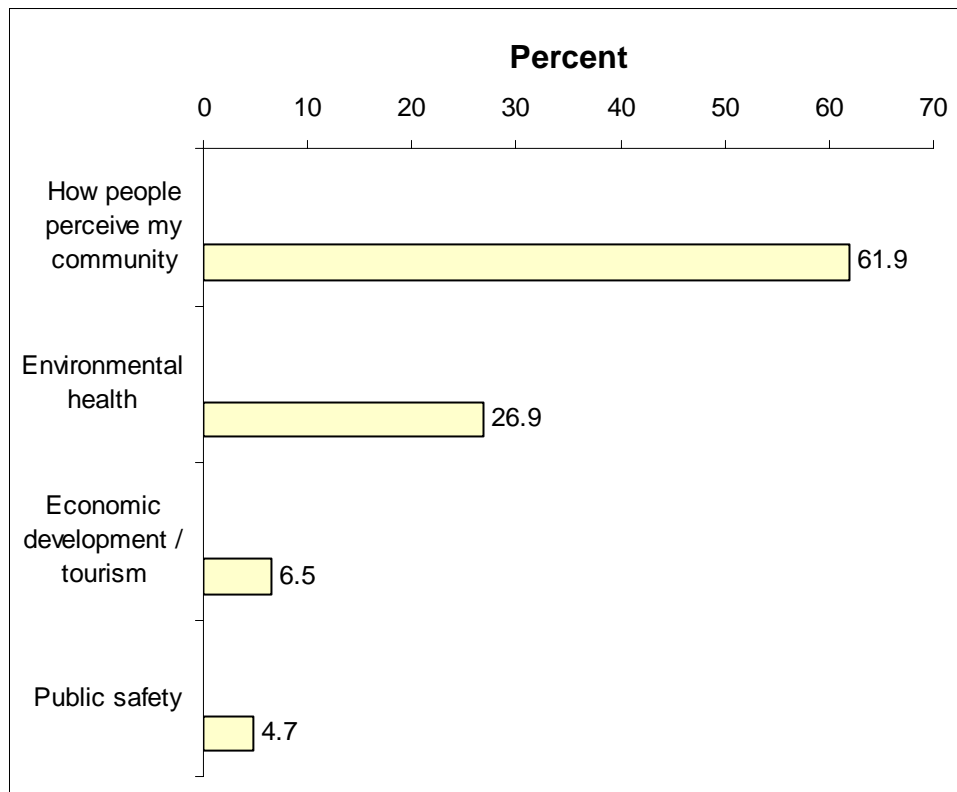
People in urban areas are also significantly more likely than people in other areas to say that they litter more often.



Additional analysis shows:

- Self-reported littering behavior drops as socioeconomic status increases
- And, littering behavior drops as persons get older

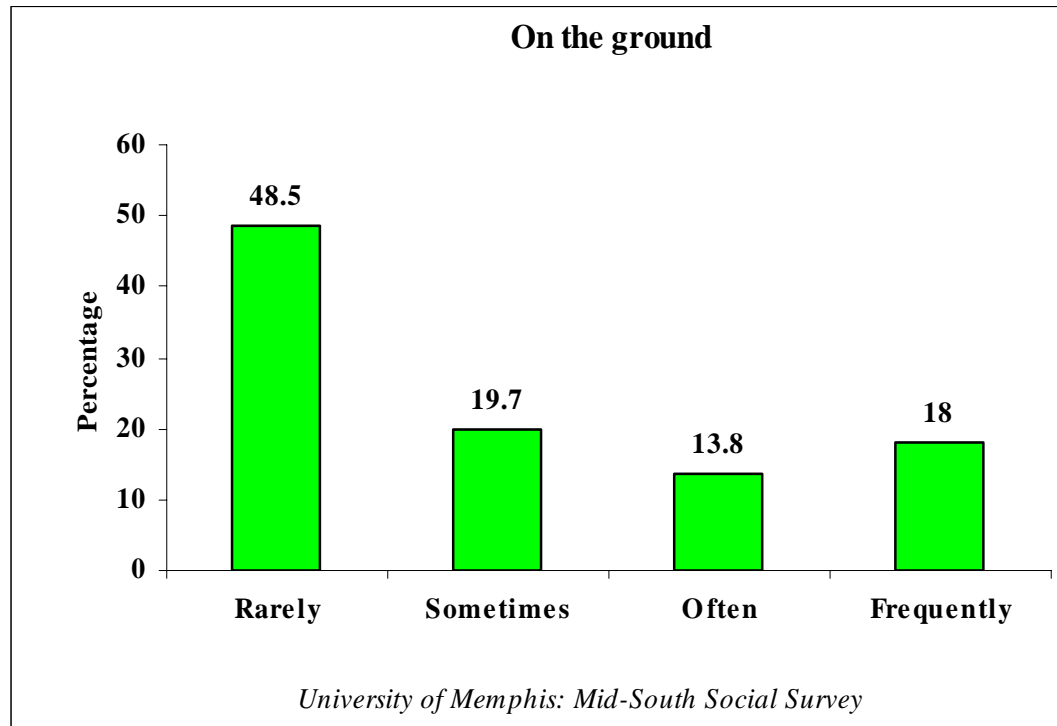
People were asked to think about litter on the ground and its impact. Most people view litter as impacting how other people view their community.



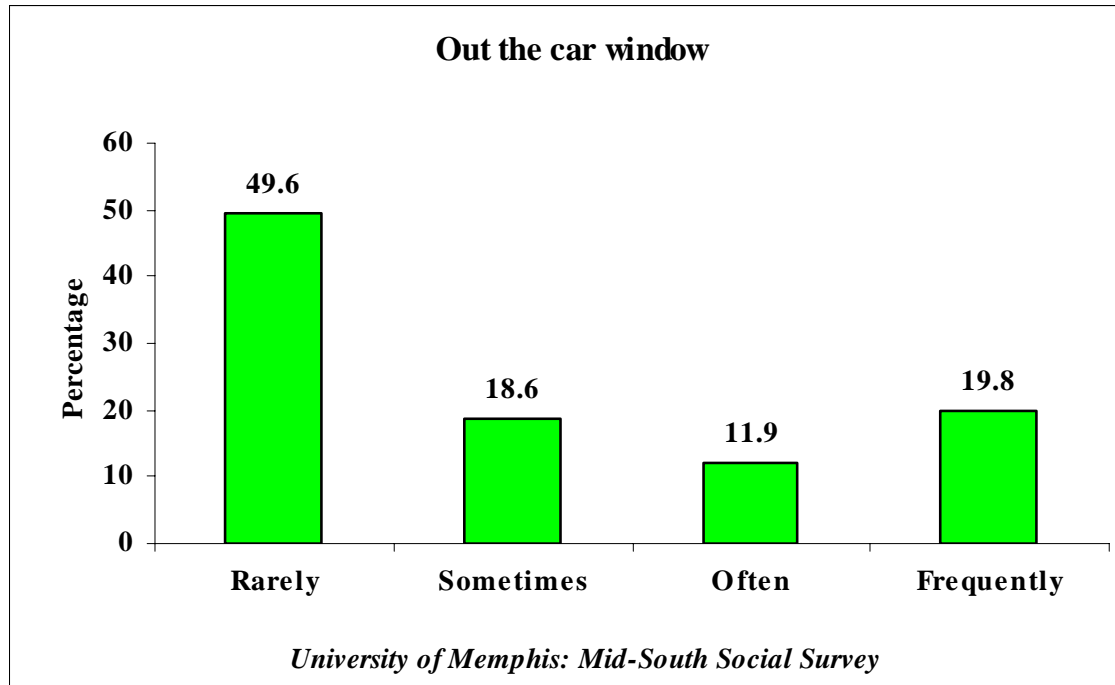
Disposal of cigarette butts

- Several questions on the survey poll people about whether they smoke, and how they dispose of cigarette butts.
- 28 percent of persons said they smoke cigarettes.
- Only about half of these respondents said they safely dispose of their cigarette butts.

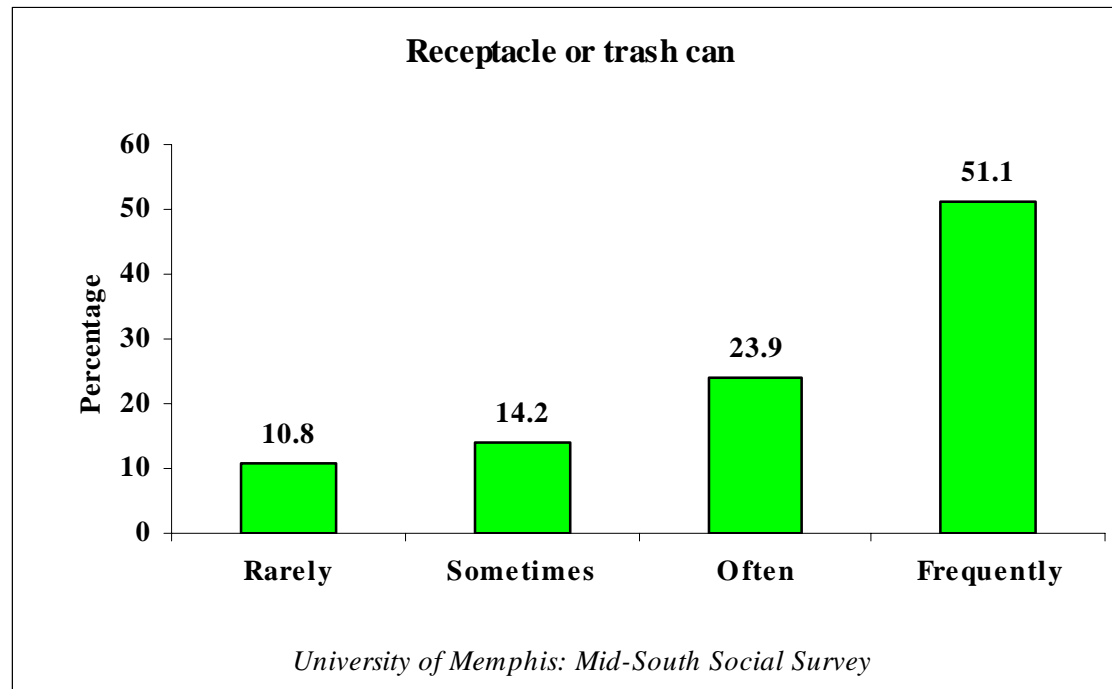
People were asked how often they dispose of their cigarette butts on the ground. There are no significant differences by sex, age, or income.



... how often they throw them out the car window.

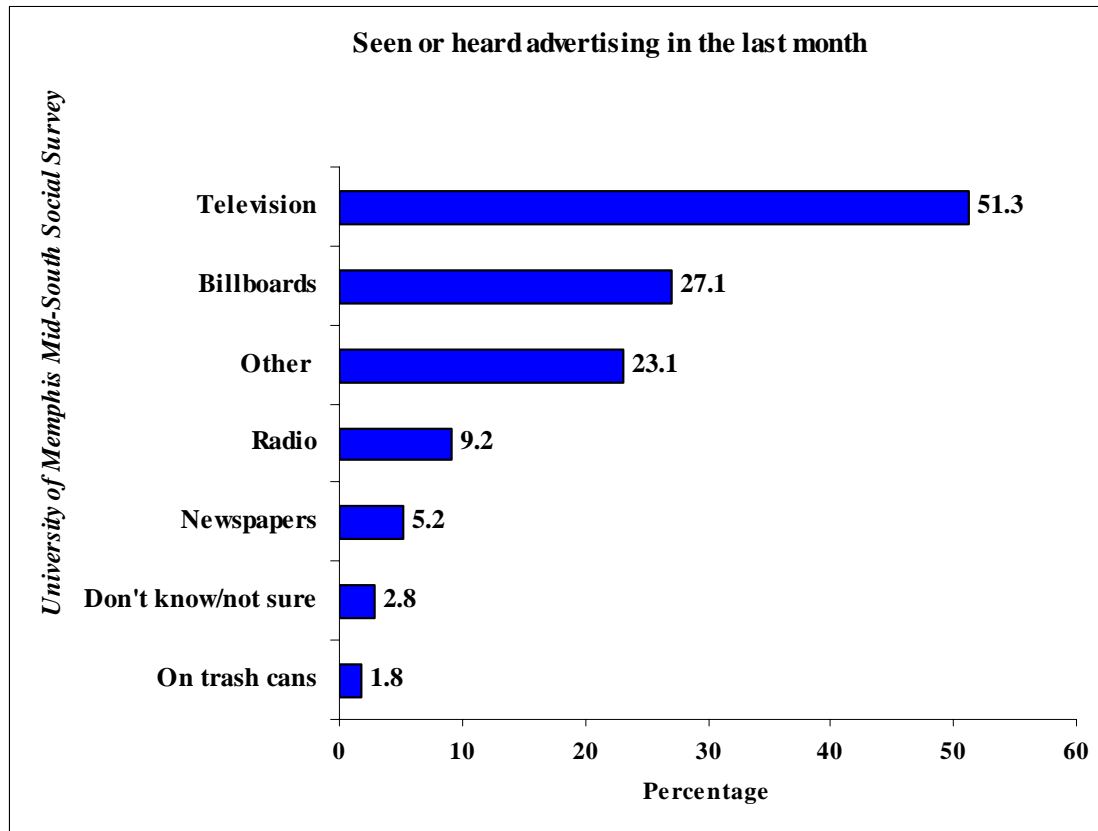


And, how often they place them in an ash receptacle or trash can. There is a strong correlation between disposing of them on the ground and throwing them out the window. Persons who say they dispose of them in an ash receptacle are also less likely to dispose of them on the ground or out the car window.



Heard advertising about litter

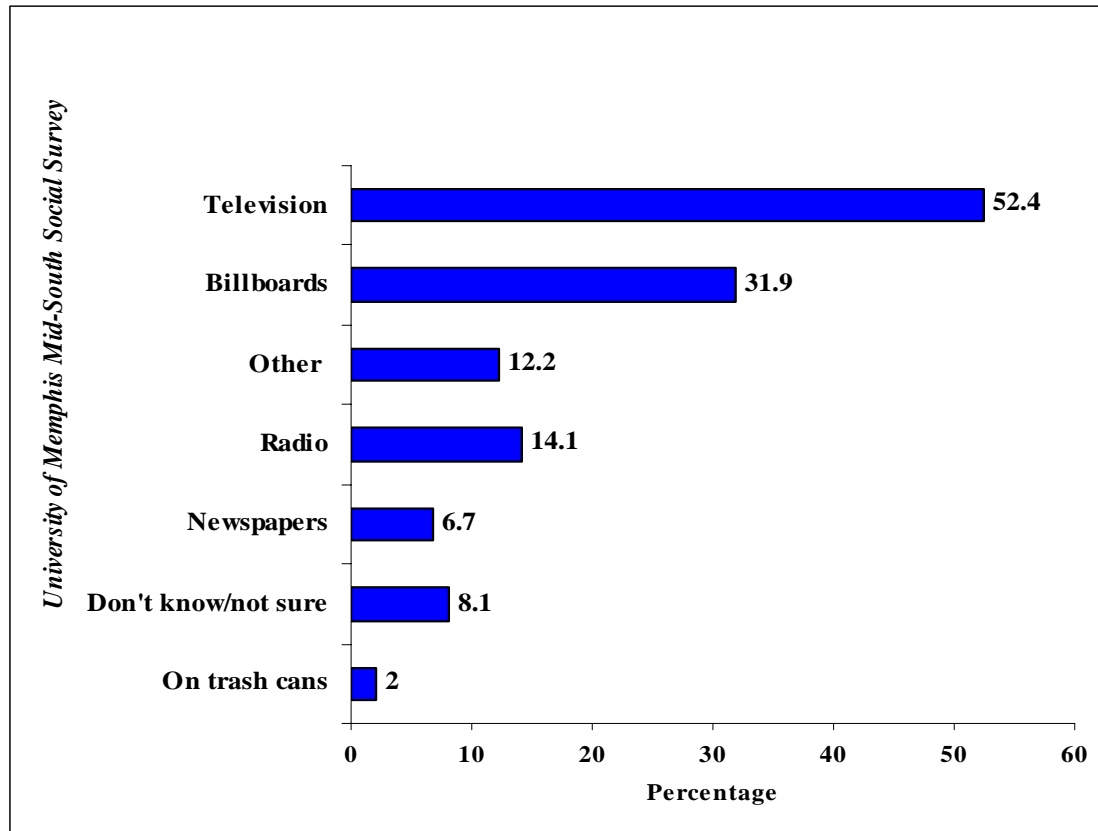
About 40 percent of respondents said they had seen or heard some form of advertising about litter or the act of littering in the past month. Of these people, anti-litter advertising was most often seen on television or billboards.



Additional analysis shows:

- Men (46%) were significantly more likely than women (37%) to say that they had seen anti-litter advertising.
- There were no sex differences in advertising media. That is men and women were equally likely to see it on t.v., billboards, newspapers, radio, and trash cans.
- Of persons who saw anti-littering on t.v., these were younger persons.

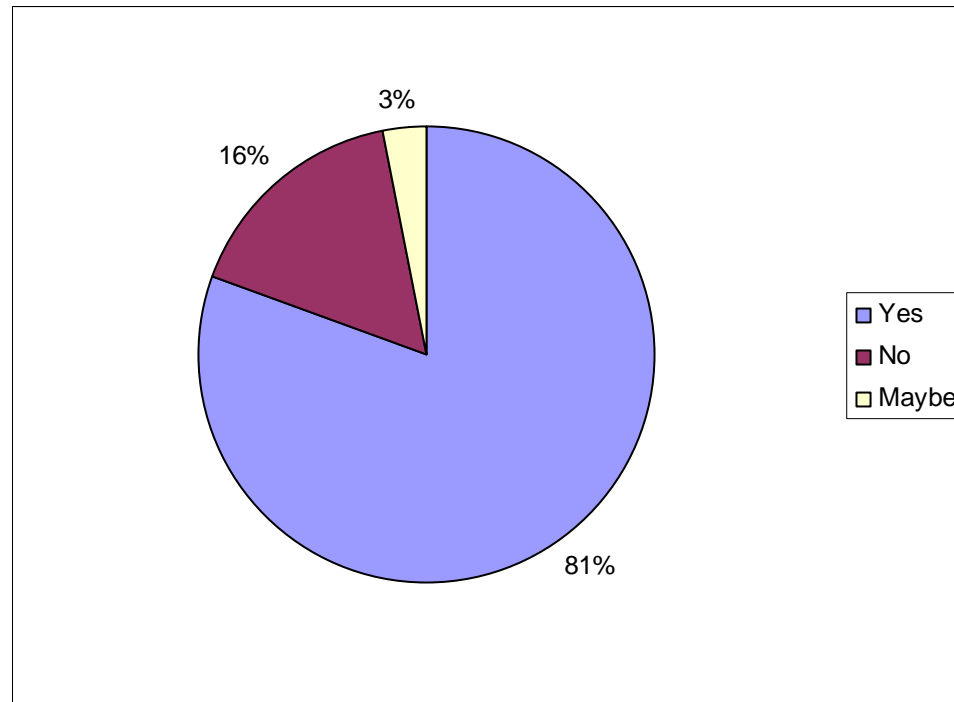
Respondents were asked about what types of advertising they would pay the most attention to about not littering. By far people suggest television and billboards as most effective.



Legal penalties for littering

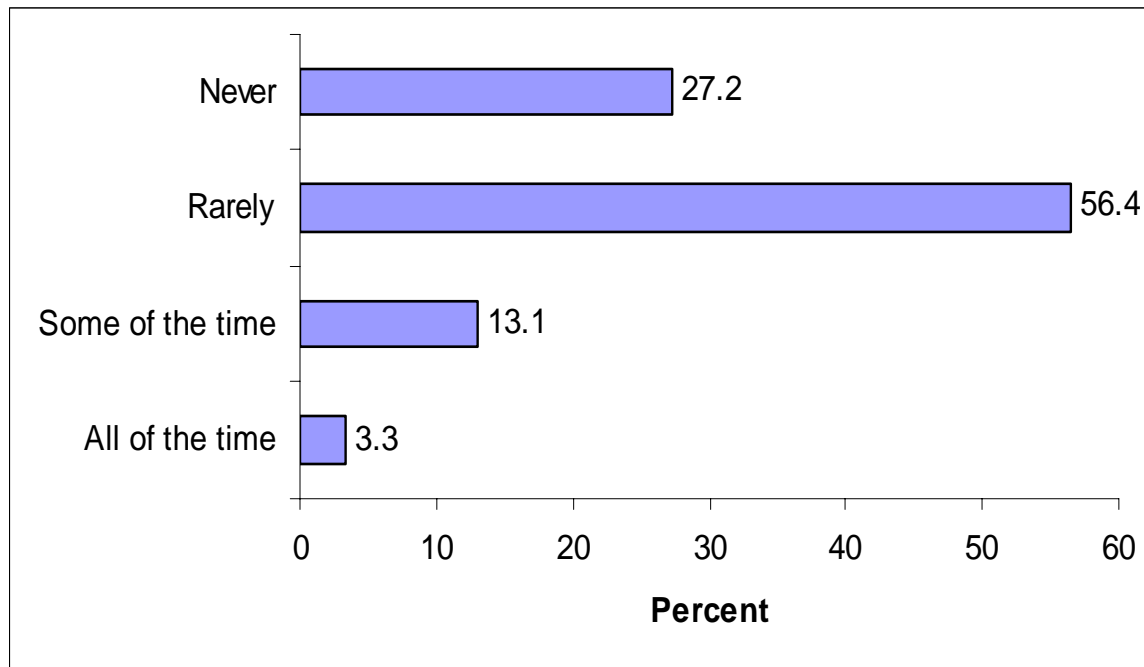
The vast majority of people said knowledge of legal penalties would stop them from littering.

If you knew that there were legal penalties for littering, would that stop you from littering?



Very clearly, people do not view litter laws as being effective since they don't perceive them as being enforced.

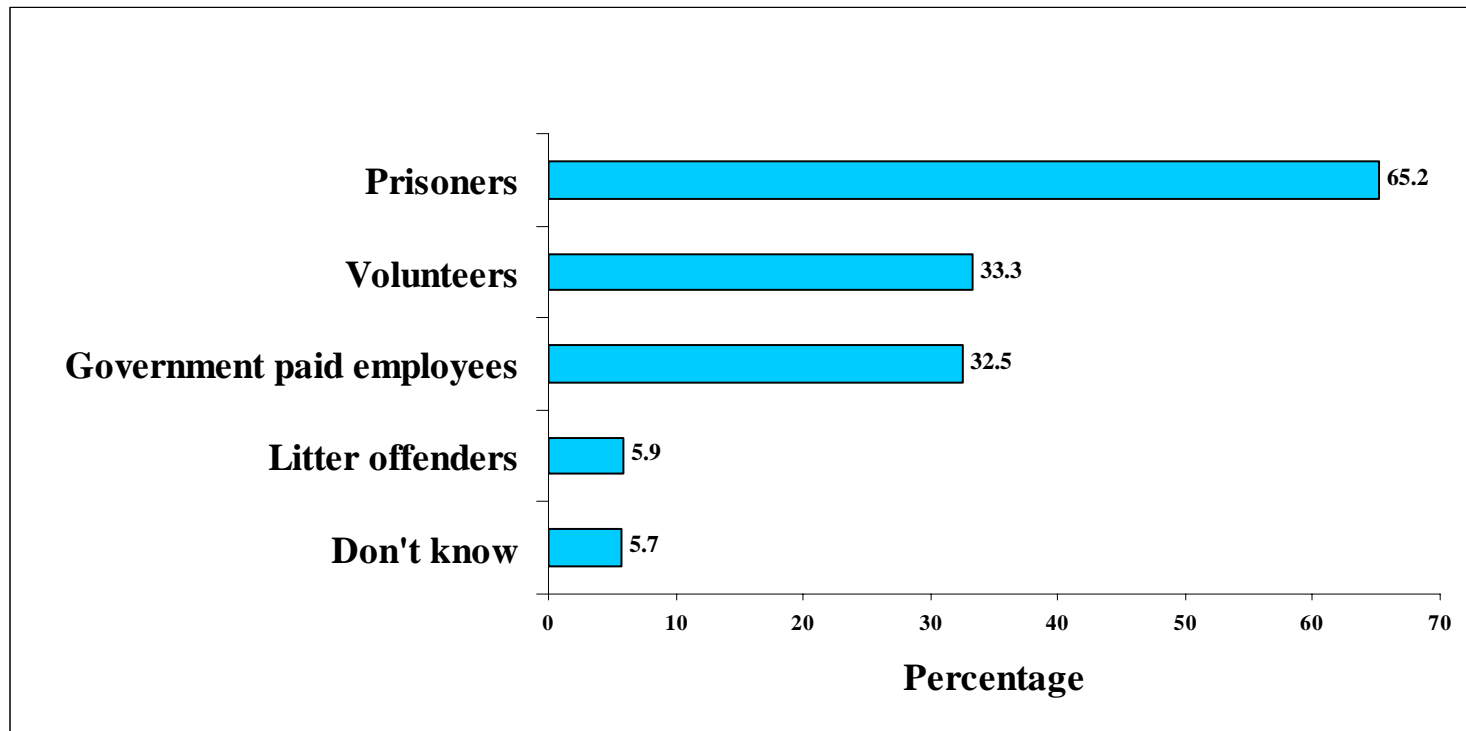
How often do you think litter laws are enforced?



Clean-up and recycling

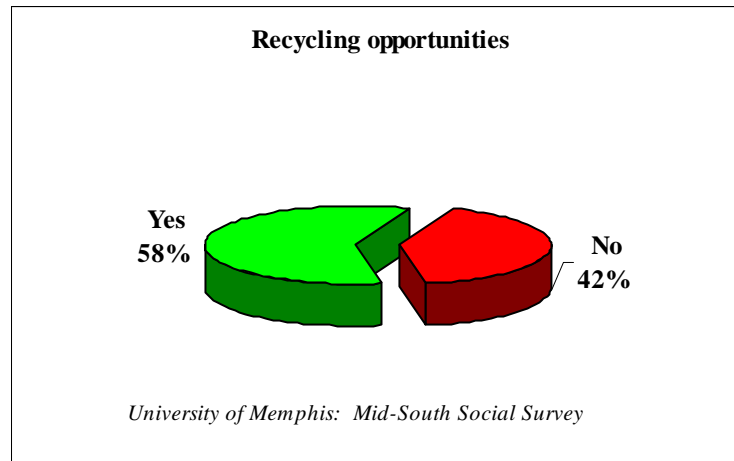
Respondents say that it is most often prisons that pick up trash and litter. Few people suggest it is the litter offender that picks up trash.

Who do you think picks up trash and litter that's left on sidewalks, streets, and highways? (Check all that apply)



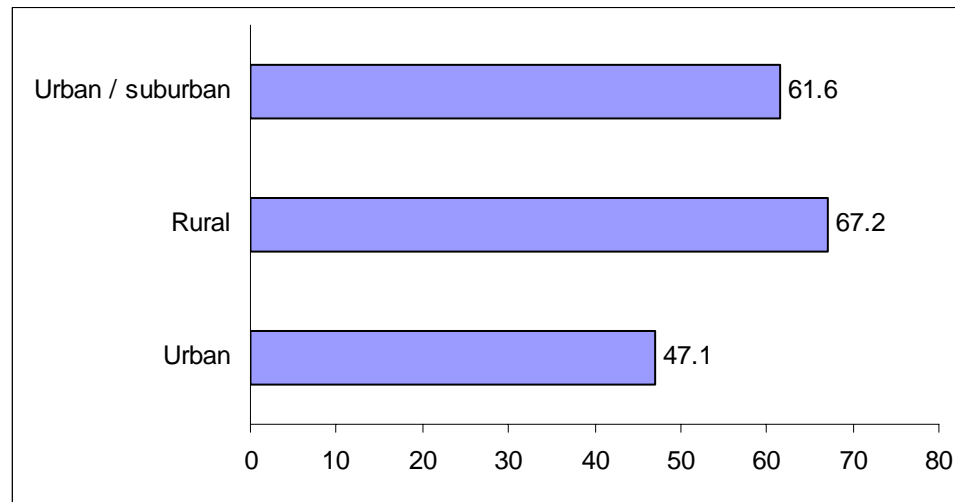
A majority of respondents are aware of recycling opportunities. Men and women are equally likely to be aware of recycling opportunities. Higher income and older persons are more likely to be aware of recycling opportunities.

Do you know of recycling opportunities in your community?

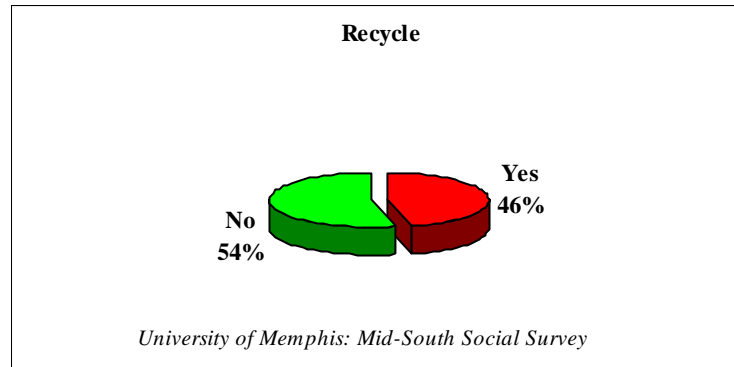


People in urban areas were less aware of recycling opportunities than were people in other parts of the State.

Do you know of recycling opportunities in your community?



Fewer than half of the people on this survey said they recycle.



Person's most likely to recycle tend to be:

- Aware of recycling opportunities
- Higher income
- Outside of Urban areas

David R. Forde, Ph.D.

Director

SeéTrail Mackey, M.S.

Project Coordinator

Mid-South Social Survey

School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy

311 McCord Hall

The University of Memphis

Memphis, Tennessee. 38152-3330

Phone: 901-678-5733 Fax: 901-678-5279

E-mail: drforde@memphis.edu

E-mail: snmackey@memphis.edu

<http://msss.memphis.edu>

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