



Waste and recycling



Transitioning to a circular economy is more important than ever as our waste generation outpaces our capacity to manage its impacts on the environment, human health and the economy.

Waste can leak pollutants into the air, water and land, which then impacts plants and animals, and can lead to health concerns for people.

Waste generation is expected to continue growing. This is related to increases in population, economic growth, and disaster waste from more frequent extreme weather events due to climate change.

The circular economy means that rather than disposing of things after their use, materials are circulated again through reuse, repair, recycling and re-manufacture.

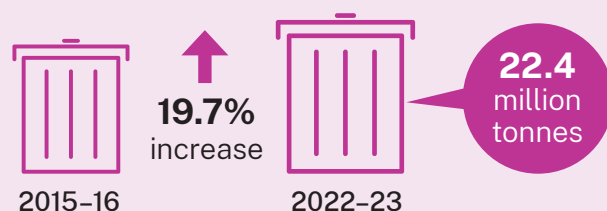
At a glance

How NSW is tracking

- Total waste generation in NSW rose from 18.7 million tonnes in 2015–16 to 22.4 million tonnes in 2022–23. This exceeded the pre-pandemic peak of 2018–19 by 72,000 tonnes. This was 1.4 million tonnes (7%) more than in 2021–22.
- The amount of littered items in NSW is decreasing. This shows a continued decline since a peak in 2018–19 and a decline of 51% from 2021–22. This suggests we are on track to meet the NSW Government's target of a 60% reduction by 2030.
- Plastic litter also continues to decrease, with a 55% decrease between 2021–22 and 2022–23, exceeding the NSW Government target of a 30% decline for this type of litter by 2025.
- Household waste is the most common form of waste illegally dumped (61.6%).
- NSW recycles only 13% of its annual plastic waste from a total of 850,000 tonnes.
- The NSW Container Deposit Scheme *Return and Earn* has collected 15.2 billion containers since the scheme started in 2017. More than 1.08 million tonnes of material has been recycled.
- There are challenges with legacy waste and ongoing illegal dumping in discrete Aboriginal communities due to inadequate waste and recycling services.

Total waste produced

Total waste generation in NSW increased by **19.7%** between 2015–16 and 2022–23 to **22.4 million tonnes**.



Waste per person

On average, we generated **2.7 tonnes** of waste per person in 2022–23. This was up from **2.4 tonnes** in 2015–16.



The big picture

Globally, the percentage of recovered materials being recycled, reused or repurposed is declining. Most waste is dumped or disposed of in landfill.











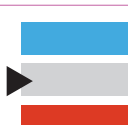






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NSW status and trend indicators

These indicators assess how much waste is being produced, recycled and disposed of.

Indicator	Environmental status	Environmental trend	Information reliability
Total waste generation	 MODERATE	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good
Per person waste generation	 MODERATE	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good
Total solid waste disposal	 MODERATE	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good
Total solid waste recycled	 MODERATE	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good
Litter items per 1,000 m ²	 GOOD	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good

Indicator table scales

- **Environmental status:** Good, moderate, poor, unknown
- **Environmental trend:** Getting worse, stable, getting better, unknown
- **Information reliability:**  Good  Reasonable  Limited

Indicator definitions

Total waste generation – measures the amount of waste generated in NSW.

Per person waste generation – measures the amount of waste generated in NSW per capita.

Total solid waste disposal – measures how much waste is sent to landfill.

Total solid waste recycled – measures how much waste is sent for recycling.

Litter items per 1,000m² – assesses the extent of litter and trends in litter reduction.