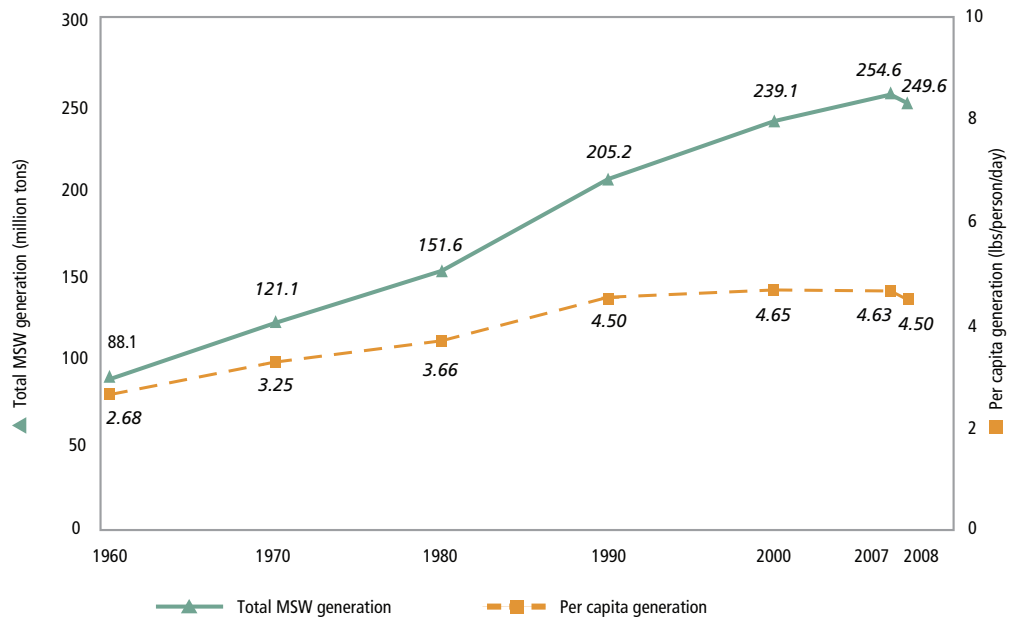


Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2008

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has collected and reported data on the generation and disposal of waste in the United States for more than 30 years. We use this information to measure the success of waste reduction and recycling programs across the country. These facts and figures are current through calendar year 2008.

In 2008, Americans generated about 250 million tons of trash and recycled and composted 83 million tons of this material, equivalent to a 33.2 percent recycling rate* (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). On average, we recycled and composted 1.5 pounds of our individual waste generation of 4.5 pounds per person per day.

Figure 1. MSW Generation Rates, 1960 to 2008



* The previously published 2007 recycling rate, 33.4 percent, was revised to 33.1 percent in this year's report, based on updated data (see Figure 2).

Table 1. Generation and Recovery of Materials in MSW, 2008*
(in millions of tons and percent of generation of each material)

Material	Weight Generated	Weight Recovered	Recovery as Percent of Generation
Paper and paperboard	77.42	42.94	55.5%
Glass	12.15	2.81	23.1%
Metals			
Steel	15.68	5.29	33.7%
Aluminum	3.41	0.72	21.1%
Other nonferrous metals†	1.76	1.21	68.8%
Total metals	20.85	7.22	34.6%
Plastics	30.05	2.12	7.1%
Rubber and leather	7.41	1.06	14.3%
Textiles	12.37	1.89	15.3%
Wood	16.39	1.58	9.6%
Other materials	4.50	1.15	25.6%
Total materials in products	181.14	60.77	33.5%
Other wastes			
Food, other‡	31.79	0.80	2.5%
Yard trimmings	32.90	21.30	64.7%
Miscellaneous inorganic wastes	3.78	Negligible	Negligible
Total other wastes	68.47	22.10	32.3%
Total municipal solid waste	249.61	82.87	33.2%

* Includes waste from residential, commercial, and institutional sources.

† Includes lead from lead-acid batteries.

‡ Includes recovery of other MSW organics for composting.

Details might not add to totals due to rounding.

Negligible = Less than 5,000 tons or 0.05 percent.



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