



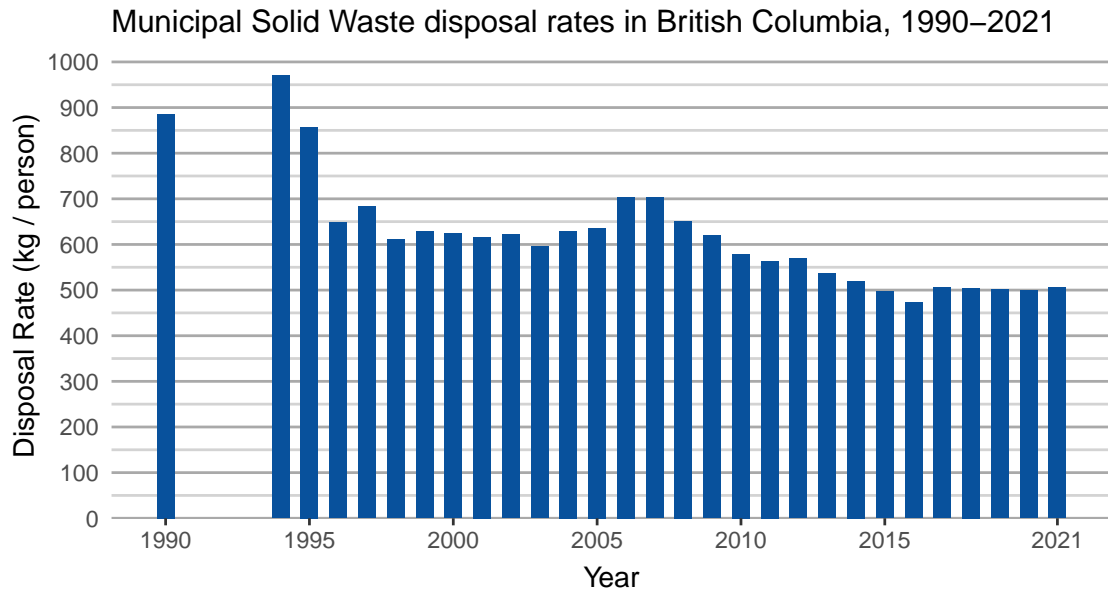
Sustainability

Municipal Solid Waste Disposal in B.C. (1990-2021)

This indicator reports the estimated amount of municipal solid waste disposed per person for each regional district and for British Columbia. The per-person disposal rate is an estimate of how many kilograms of solid waste each B.C. resident sends to a landfill or other disposal site in a given year.

- Approximately 2.7 million tonnes of municipal solid waste was disposed of in B.C. in 2021. While there has been an overall decreasing trend in municipal solid waste disposal rates since the 1990's, much of the waste disposed of could be reduced (by not being generated in the first place), repurposed, composted or recycled.
- Waste reduction efforts have become more and more important as the [B.C. population continues to increase](#), landfills approach their capacity for receiving new waste, and the imperative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from waste disposal grows.
- Tracking waste disposal across B.C. is important as it provides historic trend information and the current status of waste disposal—both of which inform and guide efforts to reduce the amount of waste we create.
- In 2021, British Columbians disposed of an average of 506 kg of municipal solid waste per person—down 63 kg per person from 2012, though higher than the low of 473 kg per person in 2016.
- Provincial initiatives which support decreases in waste disposal rates include the CleanBC [Plastics Action Plan](#), [organics diversion](#), [food waste prevention](#), and [extended producer responsibility \(recycling\)](#) programs, and funding for [organics infrastructure](#) and [collection](#).
- Variability in disposal rates from one region to the next is influenced by factors such as population density, economic activity, tourist and transient population fluctuations, distance to recycling markets, the role of various stewardship agencies operating in an area and the capacity and infrastructure in place in a region. While disposal rate data do not tell the whole story, they are useful in setting the stage for continuous improvement in waste management in B.C.

The charts below show the estimated per person weight of solid waste disposed of in 2021 for each regional district and the province as a whole, as well as a history of disposal rates for each region.



Municipal Solid Waste disposal rates in B.C. Regional Districts, 1990–2021



What is Included in Disposal Rate?

- Disposal rates reported here include waste from the residential sector, institutional, commercial, and light industrial sources as well as waste from construction, demolition and renovation activities.
- Disposal rates do not include hazardous, biomedical, or agricultural waste, motor vehicles or components, heavy industry, or contaminated soil.
- Waste that is reused or recycled is also not included.

Interpreting the Data:

- 2021 disposal rates were provided by regional districts.
- Where no bar is shown on a chart for certain previous years, a verifiable estimate was not available.
- Historic disposal rates cannot be directly compared between years because the data were collected using different methods. However, the data from 2012 onward have been collected using the same methodology.
- In some cases, waste from light industry may be included in the municipal solid waste disposal rate data as it cannot be disaggregated.
- Regional district population estimates are sourced from [BC Stats](#). Alberni-Clayoquot, Metro Vancouver, Squamish-Lillooet and East Kootenay population estimates have been adjusted to take into account tourist populations, based on data submitted by the regional districts.
- Disposal rates for Comox Valley and Strathcona are reported as one as they handle their waste streams [together](#).
- The 2020 disposal tonnage for Thompson-Nicola Regional District and Regional District of Central Kootenay was updated in October 2023 based on new data provided by these regional districts and the updates are now included in the data presented. The updates were not large enough to change the provincial disposal rate of 499 kg per person in 2020.

Regional districts that wish to update the waste disposal data reported above should contact the Environmental Standards Branch. Input from regional districts will also serve to inform future waste reporting methodology development.

The **R** code supporting this indicator is [available on GitHub](#).

References and Other Useful Links:

- Find out where to recycle using the Recycling Council of British Columbia's [Recyclepedia App](#)
- [Extended Producer Responsibility in B.C.](#)
- [Garbage Management in B.C.](#)
- [British Columbia's Environmental Management Act](#)
- [Solid Waste Generation in British Columbia: 2010-2025 Forecast \(report and fact sheet\); BC Stats \(2012\)](#)
- [British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25 Service Plan \(February 2022\) \(PDF\)](#)

Data

*By accessing these datasets, you agree to the license associated with each file, as indicated in parentheses below.



- Municipal Solid Waste Disposal, 1990-2021 (Licence: Open Government Licence - British Columbia)

Published and Available On-Line at Environmental Reporting BC (October 2023): <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/indicators/sustainability/municipal-solid-waste.html>