

**MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE  
IN THE UNITED STATES: 2005 FACTS AND FIGURES  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**OVERVIEW**

This report describes the national municipal solid waste (MSW) stream based on data collected for 1960 through 2005. The historical perspective is useful for establishing trends in types of MSW generated and in the ways it is managed. In this Executive Summary, we briefly describe the methodology used to characterize MSW in the United States and provide the latest facts and figures on MSW generation, recycling, and disposal.

In the United States, we generated approximately 245.7 million tons of MSW in 2005—a decrease of 1.6 million tons from 2004. Excluding composting, the amount of MSW recycled increased to 58.4 million tons, an increase of 1.2 million tons from 2004. This is a 2 percent increase in the tons recycled. The tons recovered for composting rose slightly to 20.6 million tons in 2005, up from 20.5 million tons in 2004. The recovery rate for recycling (including composting) was 32.1 percent in 2005, up from 31.4 percent in 2004.<sup>1</sup> (See Tables ES-1 and ES-2 and Figures ES-1 and ES-2.)

MSW generation in 2005 declined to 4.54 pounds per person per day. This is a decrease of 1.5 percent from 2004 to 2005. The recycling rate in 2005 was 1.46 pounds per person per day. Discards sent to a landfill after recycling declined to 2.46 pounds per person per day in 2005 (Table ES-3).

Table ES-1  
GENERATION, MATERIALS RECOVERY, COMPOSTING,  
COMBUSTION WITH ENERGY RECOVERY, AND DISCARDS OF MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE,  
1960 - 2005  
(in millions of tons)

Activity	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2003	2004	2005
Generation	88.1	121.1	151.6	205.2	237.6	240.4	247.3	245.7
Recovery for recycling	5.6	8.0	14.5	29.0	52.7	55.8	57.2	58.4
Recovery for composting*	Neg.	Neg.	Neg.	4.2	16.5	19.1	20.5	20.6
Total materials recovery	5.6	8.0	14.5	33.2	69.1	74.9	77.7	79.0
Combustion with energy recovery†	0.0	0.4	2.7	29.7	33.7	33.7	34.1	33.4
Discards to landfill, other disposal‡	82.5	112.7	134.4	142.3	134.8	131.9	135.5	133.3

\* Composting of yard trimmings, food scraps and other MSW organic material.  
Does not include backyard composting.

† Includes combustion of MSW in mass burn or refuse-derived fuel form, and combustion with energy recovery of source separated materials in MSW (e.g., wood pallets and tire-derived fuel).

‡ Discards after recovery minus combustion with energy recovery. Discards include combustion without energy recovery.  
Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table 1**  
**Generation, Materials Recovery, Composting, and Discards of Municipal Solid Waste, 1960 - 2003**  
(in millions of tons)

Millions of Tons									
	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>Generation</b>	88.1	121.1	151.6	205.2	213.7	234.0	231.2	235.5	236.2
Recovery for recycling	5.6	8.0	14.5	29.0	46.2	52.4	52.8	53.8	55.4
Recovery for composting*	Neg.	Neg.	Neg.	4.2	9.6	16.5	16.6	16.7	16.9
<b>Total Materials Recovery</b>	5.6	8.0	14.5	33.2	55.8	68.9	69.3	70.5	72.3
<b>Discards after Recovery</b>	82.5	113.0	137.1	172.0	158.0	165.1	161.9	165.0	163.9

\*Composting of yard trimmings, food scraps, and other MSW organic material.  
Does not include backyard composting.  
Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Full report is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/msw/msw99.htm>