

Waste Packaging Statistics for Ireland

Introduction

The EPA produces national statistics on waste generation and management to meet legislative reporting obligations and to inform national policy development.

This release reports information on the recovery and recycling of waste packaging in Ireland in 2014.

Packaging is used to contain, protect and present goods and is made from materials such as glass, paper & cardboard, metals, plastic, wood, and composite materials (e.g. milk and juice cartons). The EU Packaging and Waste Packaging Directive (94/62/EC as amended) seeks to promote the recovery and recycling of packaging waste to reduce its environmental impact and encourage resource efficiency.

Key points

- Ireland met the EU targets for recovery and recycling of packaging waste in 2014.
- New ambitious targets for recycling of packaging waste are proposed under the European Commission's Circular Economy Package for 2025 and 2030.

Data methodology

The estimation of packaging waste generated in Ireland was obtained by combining data on packaging waste recovered with an estimation of packaging waste in residual waste (black bin waste) that may be either sent for recovery or disposal. Recovery includes preparation for reuse, recycling, energy recovery and other recovery. Data on recovery and recycling of packaging waste was obtained from waste operators, Repak and self-complying producers of packaging.

Treatment of Packaging Waste

The EPA estimates that 969,423 tonnes of packaging waste was generated in Ireland in 2014. Of the total generated, 93% (897,731 tonnes) was recovered. The 93% recovery includes 68% (662,158 tonnes) waste packaging that was recycled.

Recovery operations include:

- Recycling - reprocessing into products, materials or substances whether for the original or other purposes e.g. reprocessing of glass or metal packaging back into products.
- Preparation for reuse e.g. repair of wooden pallets.

- Energy recovery e.g. incineration of residual waste containing waste packaging at plants with energy recovery or co-incineration of solid recovered fuel at cement kilns.
- Other recovery such as use of biostabilised residual waste as landfill cover.

In 2014 the majority, by weight, of packaging waste was recycled. Since 2011 there has been a significant shift towards energy recovery of residual waste rather than its disposal to landfill. In 2014 energy recovery of plastic packaging waste exceeded the tonnage recycled for the first time. The transition to a circular economy requires that waste to energy capacity strikes the right balance and does not pose an economic or infrastructural barrier to the achievement of higher recycling rates.

Targets

Each Member State is obliged to meet targets for the recovery of waste packaging and recycling of waste packaging. There are also targets for recycling of waste packaging materials (glass, plastic, paper & board, metals and wood). Figure 1 shows that Ireland has met the overall % packaging waste recovery rate and % recycling rate targets since they came into force in 2011.

Figure 1. Overall recovery rate (%) and recycling rate (%) for packaging waste, 2009 to 2014

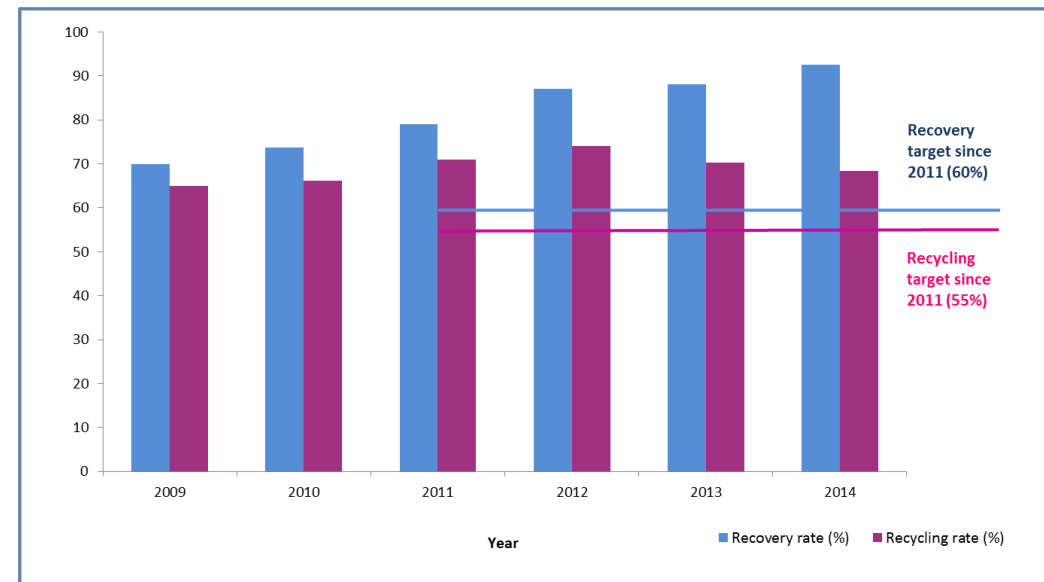


Table 1 provides information on Ireland's performance in 2014 against the EU Directive targets for packaging waste material recycling rates.

Table 1. Packaging waste material recycling and recovery rates compared to EU targets, 2014

Material	EU recycling rate target (Packaging Directive 94/62/EC as amended)	Ireland's recycling rate, 2014
Glass	60% by weight	87%
Plastic	22.5% by weight, counting exclusively material that is recycled back into plastics	35%
Paper & Board	60% by weight	79%
Metals	50% by weight	81%
Wood	15% by weight	85%

Legislation

The Packaging Directive (94/62/EC) aims to prevent the generation of packaging and sets targets for the recovery of packaging waste. The Directive was transposed into national law (Statutory Instrument No. 282 of 2014).

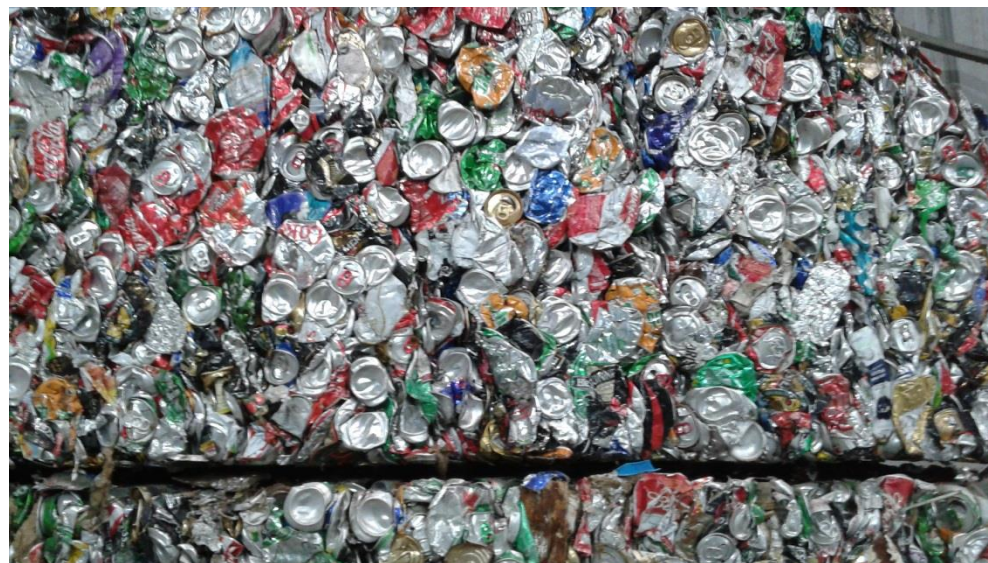
Under the Circular Economy Package, the Commission has proposed new targets for preparing for reuse and recycling for all packaging waste (65% by 2025 and 70% by 2030) and targets for individual materials (plastic, wood, ferrous metal, aluminium, glass, paper & cardboard). The legislative proposals under the Circular Economy Package are currently under negotiation with Member States.

Producer Responsibility Initiative

The Packaging Directive is a Producer Responsibility Initiative (PRI) Directive, where the packaging producers (persons who, for the purpose of trade or otherwise in the course of business, sells or otherwise supplies to other persons packaging material, packaging or packaged products) have responsibility for the environmentally sound management of packaging at their end of life.

Between 2012 and 2014, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government reviewed the PRIs operating in Ireland. The Packaging PRI model was found to be operating effectively, enabling Ireland to meet the Packaging Directive targets. Repak is the compliance scheme for packaging (www.repak.ie).

Figure 2. Baled waste aluminium packaging for recycling



More information

For more information on EU statistics on packaging and waste packaging, see http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Packaging_waste_statistics.

