

# The US Waste Investment Sector: A Brief Overview

February 2022

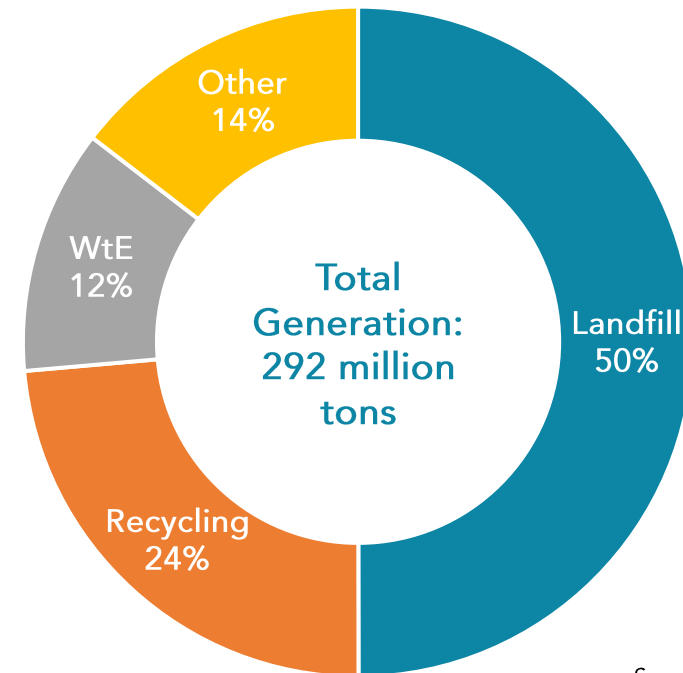
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# 1: US Waste Generation and Treatment

- **Landfill** remains the single largest means of waste disposal in the US. In 2018, it accounted for 50% of all municipal waste disposal. This figure has reduced slowly, from over 60% in the early 1990s.
- **Recycling** accounts for around a quarter of all waste disposal. Recycling rates vary widely, from 68% for paper in 2018, to only 9% for plastics. COVID-19 hit the recycling sector especially hard in 2020/21, so current rates will be lower.
- **Waste-to-energy (WtE)** remains underdeveloped, accounting for 12% of waste disposal in 2018. Most US states have little or no WtE capability.

US Waste Treatment 2018 (%)



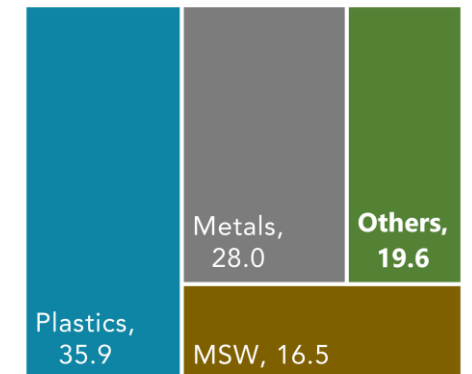
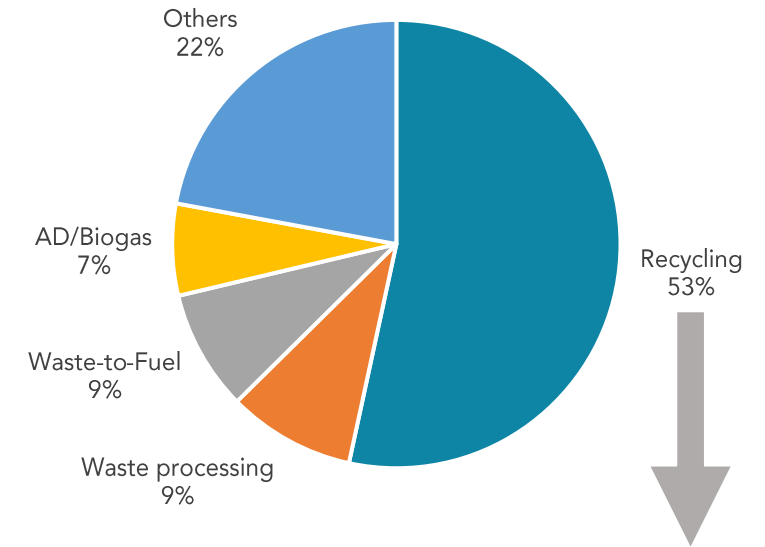
Source: EPA

## 2: Waste Industry Drivers

- **Demographic:** rising population and wealth means a steadily rising level of waste generation per person. This is counter to Europe, where per person waste has recently been falling in some areas.
- **Boost domestic capacity:** Exporting of plastics and other waste is becoming increasingly difficult, so the US needs more capacity to deal with it at home, in a responsible manner.
- **Environmental:** growing need for 'green' solutions. Legislation tends to be at State, not Federal, level, so attitudes and requirements vary across the country. Attention tends to focus on better sorting and recycling. Landfill remains far more viable than in Europe (lots of open space), and WtE has never been popular in much of the US.
- **Financial:** waste solutions need to be run on a commercial basis. Support can be available from State governments and local authorities, but it tends to be limited and unpredictable.

### 3: Waste Investment Trends

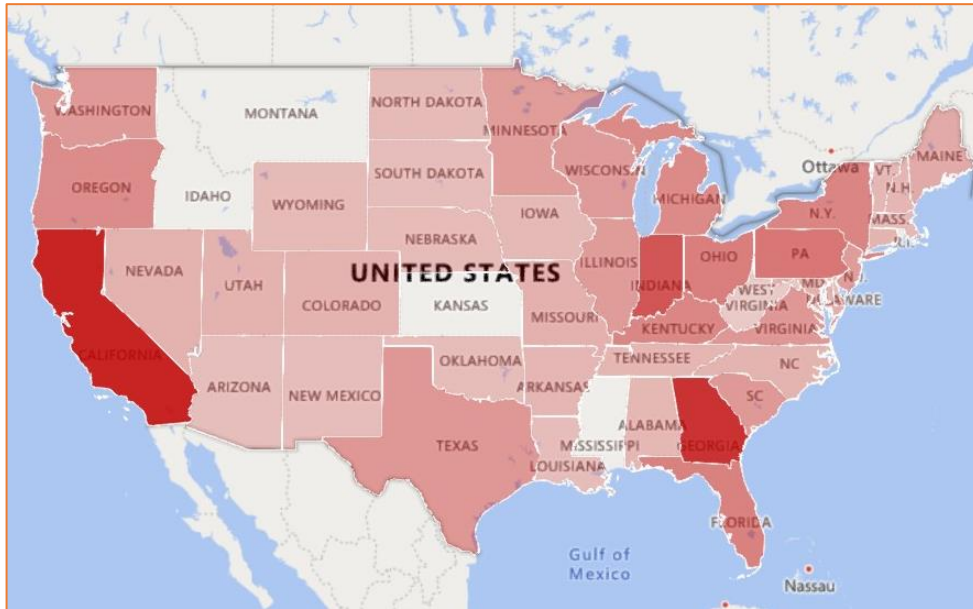
- In the last five years (2017-2022), there have been 334 new projects announced in the USA, worth just under US\$12 billion, or US\$36 million on average. Around one third of these projects are currently operational, with the remaining two thirds estimated due between 2022 and 2028.
- Recycling accounts for 194 of these, equal to US\$6.3 billion (53% of the total). Other significant areas include AD/biogas, waste processing and waste-to-fuel. There has been little investment in WtE or related technologies such as gasification.
- Within the recycling field, plastics (36% of the total by value), metals (28%) and general MSW (17%) are the leading waste types.



Source: AcuComm Waste Investment Database

# 4: Investment locations

- Since 2017, there have been investments in most, but not all, US states. The leaders in terms of \$ investment are California, Georgia and Indiana.



Source: AcuComm Waste Investment Database.  
To explore the full database, visit [www.acucomm.net/search](http://www.acucomm.net/search)