E-cycling in Wisconsin, by the numbers

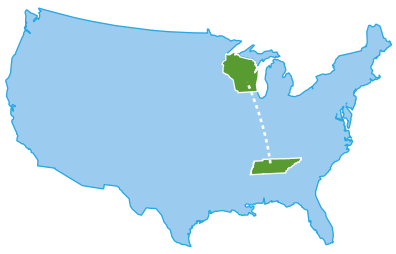
Wisconsin has an electronics recycling law to increase the amount of electronics recycled and to make recycling easier for consumers. The law makes it illegal to put many electronics in the trash and requires electronics manufacturers to help cover the cost of responsible recycling. E-Cycle Wisconsin, the manufacturer-funded electronics recycling program set up by the law, has had many successes since it began in 2010, but there is still work to do.

E-waste

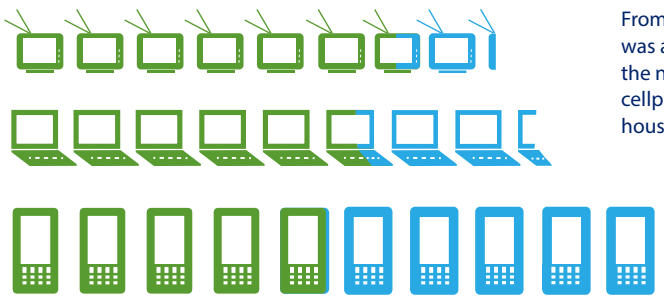
Wisconsin households are using and storing millions of electronics

There are approximately **8.1 million** TVs, **8.2 million** computers and **10 million** cellphones in Wisconsin homes. Many of these devices are **unused and ready for disposal**.

If you lined up all the unused computers stored in Wisconsin households, they would stretch from Madison to Nashville.



Of the 26.3 million devices in Wisconsin homes, 9.3 million are unused.



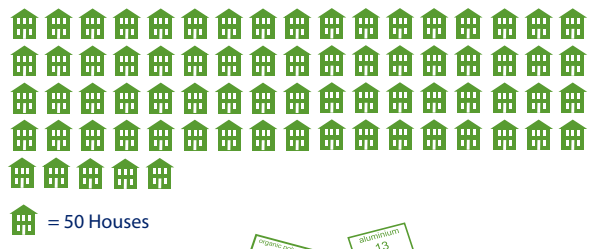
From 2013 to 2018, there was a **53% increase** in the number of unused cellphones in Wisconsin households.

Each icon = 1 million devices ■ = unused

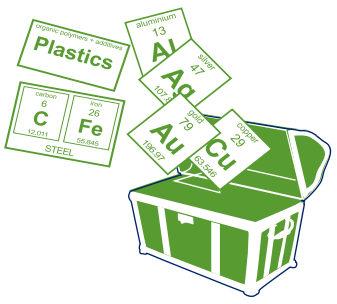
E-cycling

Recycling electronics saves energy, water and tons of materials

Recycling 1 million laptops saves the energy required to power 3,657 U.S. homes for a year.



The **steel**, **aluminum** and **plastic** in electronics can easily be reused to make new materials. Each electronic device also contains small amounts of **precious metals**.



For every 1 million cellphones we recycle, 35,000 pounds of copper, 772 pounds of silver, 75 pounds of gold and 33 pounds of palladium can be recovered.

Many electronics also contain **hazardous materials such as lead, mercury and batteries** that must be handled safely to protect human health and the environment.

Successes

E-cycle Wisconsin has made recycling more convenient and supports local recycling businesses

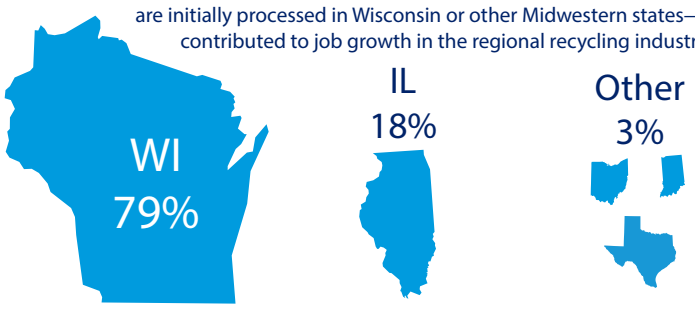
More than 325 million pounds of electronics have been recycled through E-Cycle Wisconsin since the program began in January 2010.

By recycling these devices instead of landfilling them, **we've reduced carbon dioxide emissions by about 123,000 metric tons-** about the same amount as using 14 million fewer gallons of gasoline.

In the last decade, **E-Cycle Wisconsin has recovered about 47 million pounds of steel from electronics.** That's enough to make **20,000 cars.**

Where electronics go for recycling

More than 99 percent, by weight, of the electronics collected under E-Cycle Wisconsin are initially processed in Wisconsin or other Midwestern states—which has contributed to job growth in the regional recycling industry.



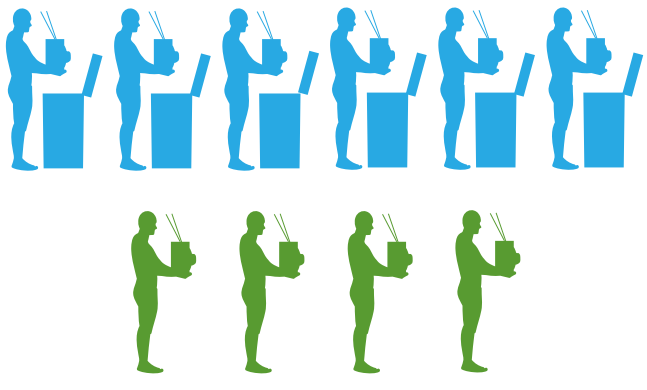
E-Cycle Wisconsin collection sites

E-Cycle Wisconsin helps support a network of private businesses, non-profits and governments that provide collection sites to the public.

Challenges

Wisconsinites still have much to learn about e-cycling

Six out of every **10 Wisconsinites** still think that electronics can go in the trash.



Responsible recycling has a cost

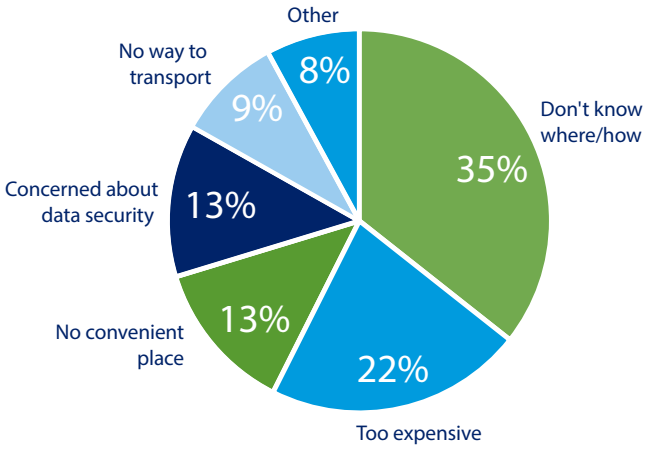
29% of Wisconsinites do not want to pay anything to recycle electronics.

91% of E-Cycle Wisconsin collectors charge a fee to accept some types of electronics.

This disconnect can lead to illegal dumping.

Why some people don't e-cycle

In a 2018 DNR survey, Wisconsin residents cited several barriers to recycling electronics. Not knowing where or how to do so and cost were the most frequent responses.



You can help take e-cycling further…

- ✓ Take old electronics to a registered collector or use a mail-back program for recycling.
- ✓ Visit dnr.wi.gov and search "ecycle" to find a collection site or mail-back program.
- ✓ If necessary, pay a small fee to ensure proper recycling.
- ✓ Tell your friends and family about E-Cycle Wisconsin.

Sources:
Results from the Wisconsin DNR's 2018 household electronics recycling survey ; E-Cycle Wisconsin 2019 report; Quantitative Characterization of Domestic and Transboundary Flows of Used Electronics: Analysis of Generation, Collection and Export in the United States, December 2013, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and National Center for Electronics Recycling; U.S. EPA Waste Reduction Model, accessed Aug. 2020.

This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc.) upon request. Please call (608) 266-2111 for more information.

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