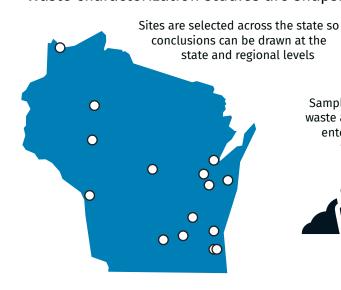
## What is ending up in **Wisconsin landfills?**

The DNR commissions statewide waste characterization studies to better understand what Wisconsinites are throwing in the trash. The most recent study occurred in 2020-2021. Prior studies were completed in 2002 and 2009. The results of these studies help guide waste reduction and diversion efforts at the state, regional and local level.

## **How we study waste**

Waste characterization studies are snapshots in time that reveal the composition and amount of landfilled materials



Samples of municipal solid waste are pulled from trucks entering the landfill or transfer station



The sector that generated the waste is recorded



Institutional. Multi-family commercial



residential

Construction and demolition



and industrial

Single family residential

In fall 2020 and spring 2021, crews hand sorted 398 samples of municipal solid waste and visually inspected 659 samples of construction and demolition (C&D) debris



Samples were sorted into **85** waste components that fall into eight broad categories

## **What was discovered**

Paper

21.3%

Sample

Construction &

demolition

debris

Analysis of the 2020-2021 data shows us that Wisconsinites are dedicated to waste reduction, but there is more we can do

Statewide waste categories

Plastic

17.1%

6.8%

Glass

**Organics** 

30.4%

Metal

4.6%

Other

Problem

materials, includes

appliances, batteries

and sharps

Estimated 2020 tonnage of top three categories

**1.322.200 tons** of organics

Includes wasted food, food scraps and yard waste

**924,900 tons** of paper

Includes cardboard, compostable paper and office paper

**745,600 tons** of plastic

Includes plastic bottles, plastic wrap and other flexible films

Wasted food 14.5%

The combined percentage of wasted 7.2% food and food scraps (20.5%) is roughly double the percentage found in 2009 (10.5%) and 2002 (10.2%)

Other flexible films Food scraps 6% **Textiles** 

Top five waste components statewide

5.5% Compostable paper 5.3%



Combined, residential and commercial sectors threw away an estimated 490,300 tons of recyclables in 2020. valued at \$76 million

The amount of landfilled roofing shingles in the C&D waste stream has decreased significantly from 29.5% in 2009 to 10% in 2020, likely due to the increased use of reclaimed shingles in asphalt roads

Improperly disposed of sharps, such as needles and lancets were found in one of every **five** (20.9%) samples

Wisconsin's electronics recycling law, which establishes a statewide recycling program and bans certain electronics from landfill disposal, went into effect in 2010

The weight of landfilled

TVs and monitors

decreased by 85% when compared to the

2009 study results

## **Reducing landfilled waste**

Reducing what we throw away supports Wisconsin's economy, helps the environment and saves valuable landfill space

Organics make up roughly a third of the waste from single family and multi-family residences, meaning simple household practices can have a major impact on reducing the amount of organics in landfills



Shop with a plan



Store food to extend its life



Compost food scraps and yard materials

Using or composting the amount of wasted food and food scraps landfilled in 2020 would reduce as much greenhouse gas emissions as taking **592,035** passenger vehicles off the road for a year

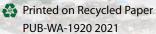
Approximately 19% of landfilled waste could be diverted by households, businesses and institutions taking full advantage of existing municipal recycling programs throughout the state



Go to dnr.wi.gov and seach "waste" to view waste reduction resources, access studies and reports and learn more about waste regulations in Wisconsin



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Sources: Wisconsin Statewide Waste Characterization Studies, final reports published 2003, 2010 and 2021. This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc.) upon request. Email DNRWasteMaterials@wisconsin.gov for more information