

Is recycling worth the effort in the 21st century?

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Is Recycling worth the Effort in the 21st Century? Is recycling worth the effort in the 21st century and what is recycling? The definition of recycle given by dictionary is “ to pass again through a series of changes or treatments ; to process (as liquid body waste, glass, or cans) in order to regain material for human use ; to reuse or make (a substance) available for reuse for biological activities through natural processes of biochemical degradation or modification”. Recycling has been around for thousands of years.

Not only do people recycle but nature has been recycling plants, trees, insects and creatures for as long as there has been nature. We recycle mostly because it is the smart thing to do for our earth but it also helps save energy, creates jobs and reduces many of our problems with litter and trash. In 1031 Japan was the first country recorded to use waste paper for making new paper. In 1776 America declared its independence from England and they advertised for scrap metals like iron kettles and pots to melt down for their weapons.

In 1865 The Salvation Army started in England and they start collecting and recycling unwanted goods of all kinds and they give jobs to the poor and uneducated and then it comes to the United States in the 1890's. In 1904 the first aluminum can recycling plant opens in Chicago and in Cleveland Ohio and the all aluminum can is introduced in 1964. The value of the aluminum can starts a huge recycling system and for redeeming the used beverage containers.

Landfills came about in the 1940's and 1950's when these huge areas became available and they were very popular because of the it was to easy

to toss unused products away. No one knew at that time how they would grow and multiply to how they are today. In 1965 the Solid Waste Disposal Act is passed by Congress which recognizes trash as a national issue and to develop programs to state and local governments with disposal programs. In the 1970's the first national Earth Day is held on April 22, 1970 and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency is created to response to the public's concern for the environment and waste disposal. In the early 70's the PET plastic bottle is also introduced and starts replacing many glass bottles but recycling for PET plastic bottles does not start until 1977. It is not until the late 80's that Rhode Island is the first state to pass a mandatory recycling law for aluminum and tin cans, glass, plastic bottles and newspapers where residents and businesses must separate these items from the regular trash and recycle.

As stated by the White House Task Force on Recycling in 1998; Recycling is everybody's business. From industry to government, from schools to our very own households, America's commitment to recycling has helped keep our communities clean and our economy strong. Federal agencies are further reducing waste generation, increasing recycling, and increasing purchases of recycled products. Working together, there is even more we can do. Today, we challenge every American to step forward, take action, and contribute to this important national effort.

By bringing new partners to the recycling efforts of businesses and families across the nation, we will better protect our natural resources, improve our quality of life, and strengthen our economy. So is recycling worth it? Michael

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Shapiro, director of U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Office of Solid Waste states " A well-run curbside recycling program can cost anywhere from \$50 to more than \$150 per ton...trash collection and disposal programs, on the other hand, cost anywhere from \$70 to more than \$200 per ton.

This demonstrates that, while there's still room for improvements, recycling can be cost-effective. " Many people still say it costs more than it is worth.

John Tierney wrote in the New York Times Magazine that Recycling is Garbage and stated " Mandatory recycling programs offer mainly short-term benefits to a few groups -- politicians, public relations consultants, environmental organizations and waste handling corporations -- while diverting money from genuine social and environmental problems. Recycling may be the most wasteful activity in modern America..."

Controversy over the benefits of recycling bubbled up in 1996 when columnist John Tierney posited in a New York Times Magazine article that " recycling is garbage. " [http://environment. about.](http://environment.about.com/od/recycling/a/benefit_vs_cost.htm)

[com/od/recycling/a/benefit_vs_cost. htm](http://environment.about.com/od/recycling/a/benefit_vs_cost.htm) Officials in some cities claim that curbside recycling programs are cheaper than burying the garbage in a landfill, which can be true in places where the landfill fees are high and the collection costs aren't as exorbitant as in New York. But officials who claim that recycling programs save money often don't fully account for the costs. A lot of programs, especially in the early years, have used funny-money economics to justify recycling," says Chaz Miller, a contributing editor for Recycling Times, a trade newspaper. " There's been a messianic zeal that's hurt the cause. The American public loves recycling, but we have to do it efficiently. It should be a business, not a religion. " Recycling programs didn't <https://assignbuster.com/is-recycling-worth-the-effort-in-the-21st-century/>

fare well in a Federally financed study conducted by the the Solid Waste Association of North America, a trade association for municipal waste-management officials. The study painstakingly analyzed costs in six communities (Minneapolis; Palm Beach, Fla. Seattle; Scottsdale, Ariz; Sevierville, Tenn. , and Springfield, Mass.). It found that all but one of the curbside recycling programs, and all the composting operations and waste-to-energy incinerators, increased the cost of waste disposal. (The exception was Seattle's curbside program, which was slightly cheaper -- by one-tenth of 1 percent -- than putting the garbage in a landfill.) Studies in European cities have reached similar conclusions. Recycling has been notoriously unprofitable in Germany, whose national program is even less efficient than New York's. We have to recognize that recycling costs money," says William Franklin, an engineer who has conducted a national study of recycling costs for the not-for-profit group Keep America Beautiful. He estimates that, at today's prices, a curbside recycling program typically adds 15 percent to the costs of waste disposal -- and more if communities get too ambitious. Franklin and other researchers have concluded that recycling does at least save energy -- the extra fuel burned while picking up recyclables is more than offset by the energy savings from manufacturing less virgin paper, glass and metal. The net result of recycling is lower energy consumption and lower releases of air and water pollutants," says Richard Denison, a senior scientist at the Environmental Defense Fund, which has calculated the ecological benefits of recycling <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/06/30/magazine/recycling-is-garbage.html?pagewanted=7>

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curbside recycling was far less than the extra costs of collection, transportation, sorting and processing incurred by municipalities.

Recycling Often Costs More Than Sending Waste to Landfills Plain and simple, recycling still costs more than landfilling in most locales. This fact, coupled with the revelation that the so-called “landfill crisis” of the mid-1990s may have been overblown—most of our landfills still have considerable capacity and do not pose health hazards to surrounding communities—means that recycling has not caught on the way some environmentalists were hoping it would. Education, Logistics and Marketing Strategies Can Lower Recycling Costs However, many cities have found ways to recycle economically.

They have cut costs by scaling back the frequency of curbside pickups and automating sorting and processing. They’ve also found larger, more lucrative markets for the recyclables, such as developing countries eager to reuse our cast-off items. Increased efforts by green groups to educate the public about the benefits of recycling have also helped. Today, dozens of U. S. cities are diverting upwards of 30 percent of their solid waste streams to recycling.

http://environment.about.com/od/recycling/a/must_recycle.htm Recycling Statistics / United States 2 million tons of materials are recycled in the United States. 53.4 % of all paper products are being recycled. There is about 100% increase in the total recycling in the United States during the past decade. Each person produces 4.6 lbs. of trash per day in the United States. In 2005, roughly 8,550 curbside recycling programs existed throughout the United States. 8,875 programs existed in 2003. United States recycles about 32% of its waste today. An average American <https://assignbuster.com/is-recycling-worth-the-effort-in-the-21st-century/>

produced 800 kilograms of rubbish in the year 2005, compared to only 577 kilograms per person in Western Europe. <http://www.benefits-of-recycling.com/recyclingstatistics.html> <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/msw2008rpt.pdf> <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/msw2008rpt.pdf> <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/msw2008rpt.pdf> Cost Benefit Analysis: <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/waste/recycling-cost-benefit-analysis-apr07/recycling-cost-benefit-analysis-apr07.pdf> page 11 <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/msw2008rpt.pdf> Appendix (1)7, Dec. 2010

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