



2025 REPORT CARD FOR AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Solid Waste



SUMMARY



America's solid waste system is managed by both public and private sectors and funded through user fees and some government support. Limited data exists, especially from private operators, and public data is updated infrequently. Despite growing municipal solid waste current funding and capacity meet immediate needs.

Recycling demand has weakened, and new funding models or market incentives remain underdeveloped. Recycling rates have plateaued, rising from 14.5 million tons in 1980 to 69 million in 2018. Emerging contaminants like PFAS in landfills pose public health risks, requiring better monitoring and treatment. To improve solid waste systems, updated policies, better data, and stronger incentives for waste diversion are needed.

FAST FACTS

- Each American generates about 4.9 pounds of solid waste every day.
- Landfills are designed with layers of protection to prevent water from waste from reaching groundwater or soil.
- New landfills are being designed to handle more frequent heavy rain events.
- The solid waste industry, including trash collection, landfills, recycling facilities, and waste combustion costs, is self-funded through trash collection or tipping fees and the sale of recycled materials and energy.

SOLUTIONS TO RAISE THE GRADE

- ✓ Promote reuse and view solid waste as a resource, not just trash.
- ✓ Support domestic markets for recycled plastics by backing companies building reprocessing and reuse facilities.
- ✓ Support education on reducing food waste and composting.
- ✓ Develop cost-effective recycling and waste solutions for communities with outdated systems or limited scale.

To explore more solutions to raise the grades check out [infrastructurereportcard.org](https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org)