

Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics

Quarterly provisional estimates for January to March 2021



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Northern Ireland waste management statistics – January to March 2021

Waste collected by NI Councils



Recycling



46.7%
up from 45.4%
Jan - Mar 2020

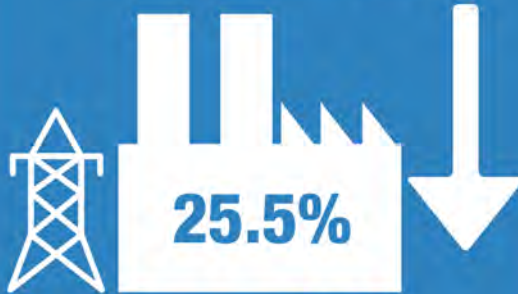
Recycling, energy recovery and landfill
rates of LAC municipal waste
January to March 2021
compared to
January to March 2020.

Landfill



similar to 24.8%
Jan - Mar 2020

Energy Recovery



down from 26.9%
Jan - Mar 2020

Key Points

- Northern Ireland's councils collected 250,228 tonnes of waste during January to March 2021 which was 11.0 per cent higher than the same three months in 2020.
- During January to March 2021, 46.7 per cent of waste collected by councils was sent for recycling, 1.3 per cent higher than the recycling rate for January to March 2020.
- The landfill rate for waste collected by councils was 25.0 per cent in January to March 2021, a fall from 76.5 per cent in January to March 2007, and similar to the 24.8 per cent recorded during January to March 2020.
- More than a quarter (25.5 per cent) of waste arisings were sent for energy recovery in January to March 2021, compared to 26.9 per cent in January to March 2020, and 1.2 per cent during the same quarter in 2010.
- Household waste accounted for 89.3 per cent of all waste collected during this period.
- The recycling rate for household waste was 46.7 per cent, up from 46.0 per cent in January to March 2020. The landfill rate for household waste was 25.2 per cent, an increase from 24.7 per cent compared to the same quarter last year.

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Reader Information

This document may be made available in alternative formats, please contact us to discuss your requirements. Definitions of key terms used in this publication are available in [Appendix 2 – Glossary](#) of the latest Annual Report.

Purpose

This is a quarterly publication which reports provisional statistics on the key measurements of local authority collected municipal waste for councils and waste management groups in Northern Ireland.

The data contained are used by local authorities, waste management groups, Devolved Administrations, UK Government and the EU to measure progress towards achieving targets from various waste strategies including:

- The revised Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy
- The draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021
- The EU Waste Framework Directive

The data are also used by media, the general public and special interest groups to inform policy and lifestyle choices related to the treatment of waste.

Further details are available in [Appendix 1 – Main Uses of Data](#) of the Annual Report.

Next Updates

- Provisional statistics for April to June 2021 are scheduled for publication in October 2021.
- Finalised data for 2020/21 are scheduled to be published in November 2021 and will supersede previously published data from the four quarterly returns for that financial year.
- The scheduled dates for all upcoming publications are available from the GOV.UK statistics release calendar: www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics

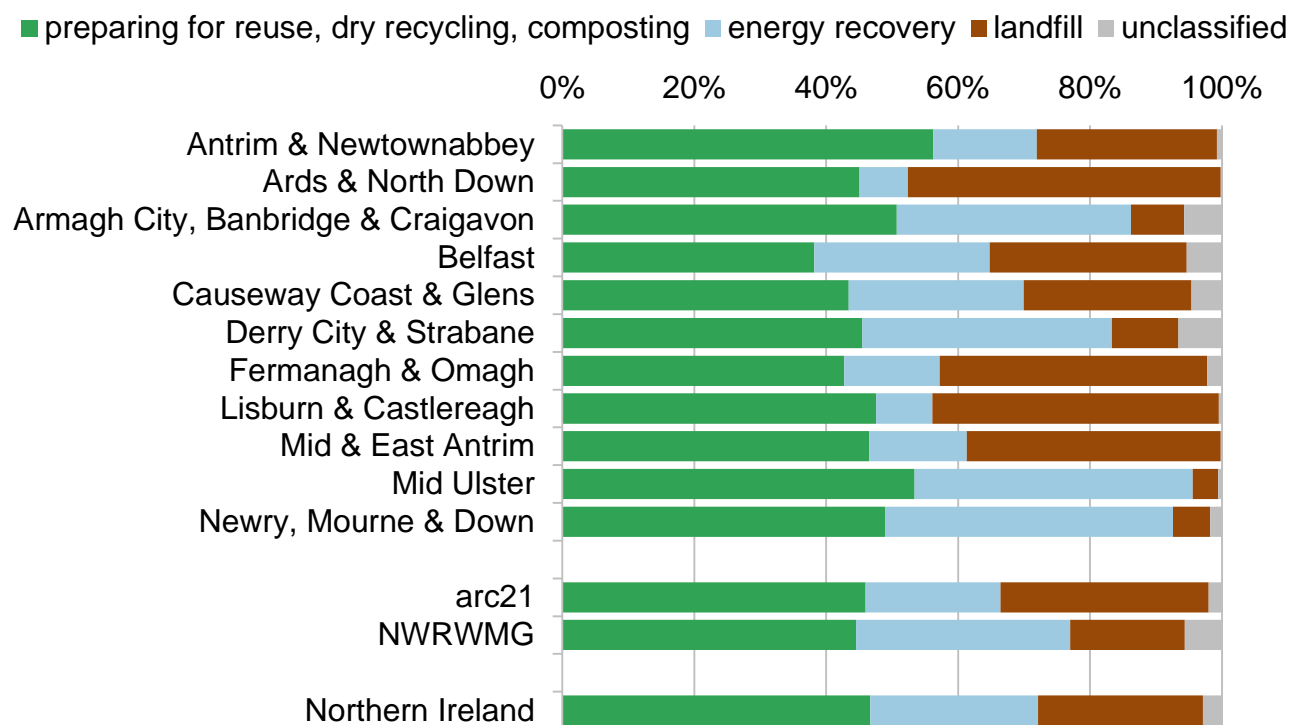
Overview

This report presents information on the quantities of local authority collected municipal waste managed in Northern Ireland between January and March 2021. The report is split into four sections, each of which cover local authority collected (LAC) municipal waste and, where appropriate, household waste:

- waste arisings (pages 2-3),
- recycling (pages 4-5),
- energy recovery (pages 6-7),
- landfill (pages 8-10).

Figure 1: Waste preparing for reuse, dry recycling, composting, energy recovery and landfill rates by council and waste management group

Northern Ireland, January to March 2021



At the Northern Ireland level, 46.7 per cent of waste collected by councils was sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting between January and March 2021. Energy recovery accounted for 25.5 per cent and 25.0 per cent was landfilled. The remaining 2.9 per cent unaccounted for is likely to involve moisture and/or gaseous losses. Each of the rates is discussed in detail in the appropriate section of the report.

The rate of waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting increased by 1.3 percentage points compared to January to March 2020. The energy recovery rate decreased by 1.4 percentage points and the landfill rate remained at a similar rate to January to March 2020. Household waste accounted for 89.3 per cent of total waste collected by councils. Household waste includes materials collected directly from households via kerbside collections, material taken to bring sites and civic amenity sites as well as several other smaller sources.

Waste arisings

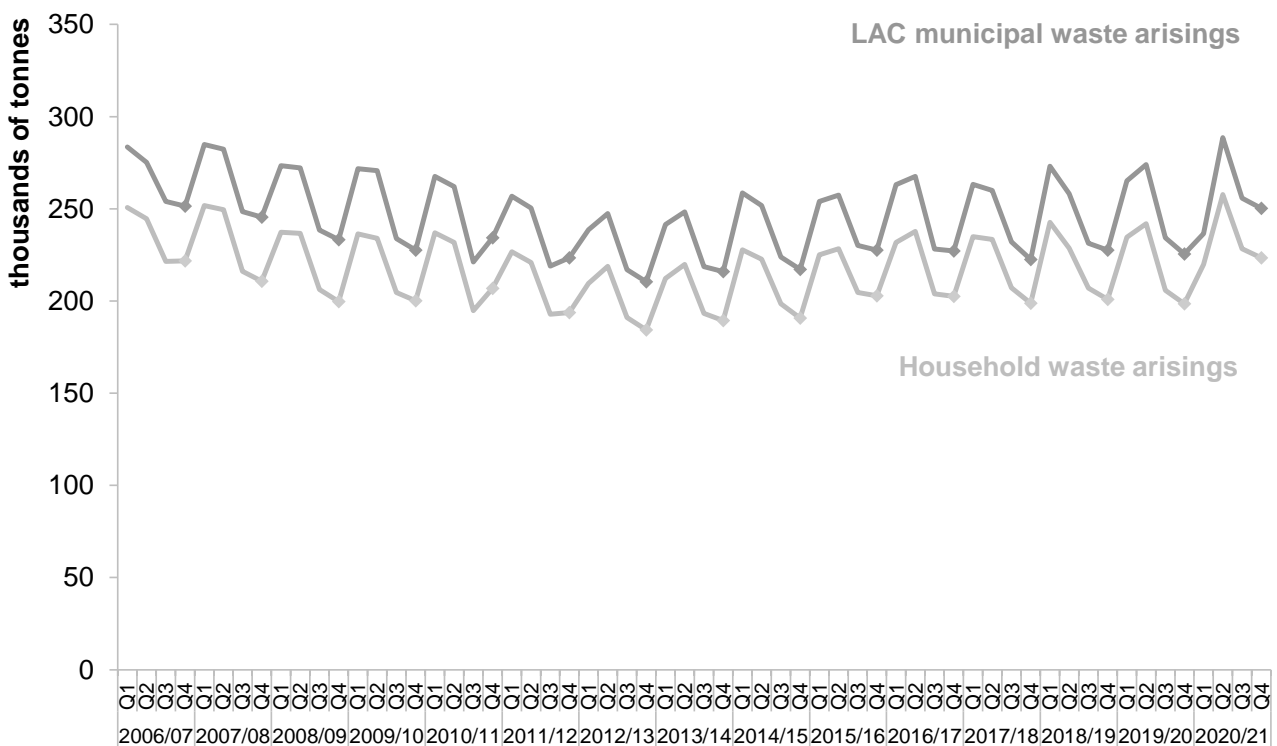
Northern Ireland's councils collected 250,228 tonnes of waste between January and March 2021. This was 11.0 per cent higher than the 225,472 tonnes collected during the same three months of 2020. Growth in the tonnage of waste collected at kerbside and Civic Amenity sites was equally strong in January to March 2021 compared to the same three months last year. This increase may be due to greater numbers of people spending more time at home because of Covid-19 restrictions and advice pertaining during the period. With higher numbers of people working from home, household type waste increased along with greater use of kerbside collections and Civic Amenity sites.

The total quantity of local authority collected (LAC) municipal waste arisings is a key performance indicator, KPI (j). This indicator is also used to monitor performance under the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Since 2006/07 household waste has accounted for 86-90 per cent of total waste collected by councils each quarter, apart from April to June 2020 when Covid-19 restrictions resulted in a larger than normal proportion of household waste being collected. During January to March 2021, household waste was at the higher end of this range and accounted for 89.3 per cent, once again impacted by Covid-19 restrictions and advice. The remaining 10.7 per cent was non household waste such as rubble/soil and commercial/industrial waste.

Figure 2: Waste arisings

Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2020/21 KPI (j)

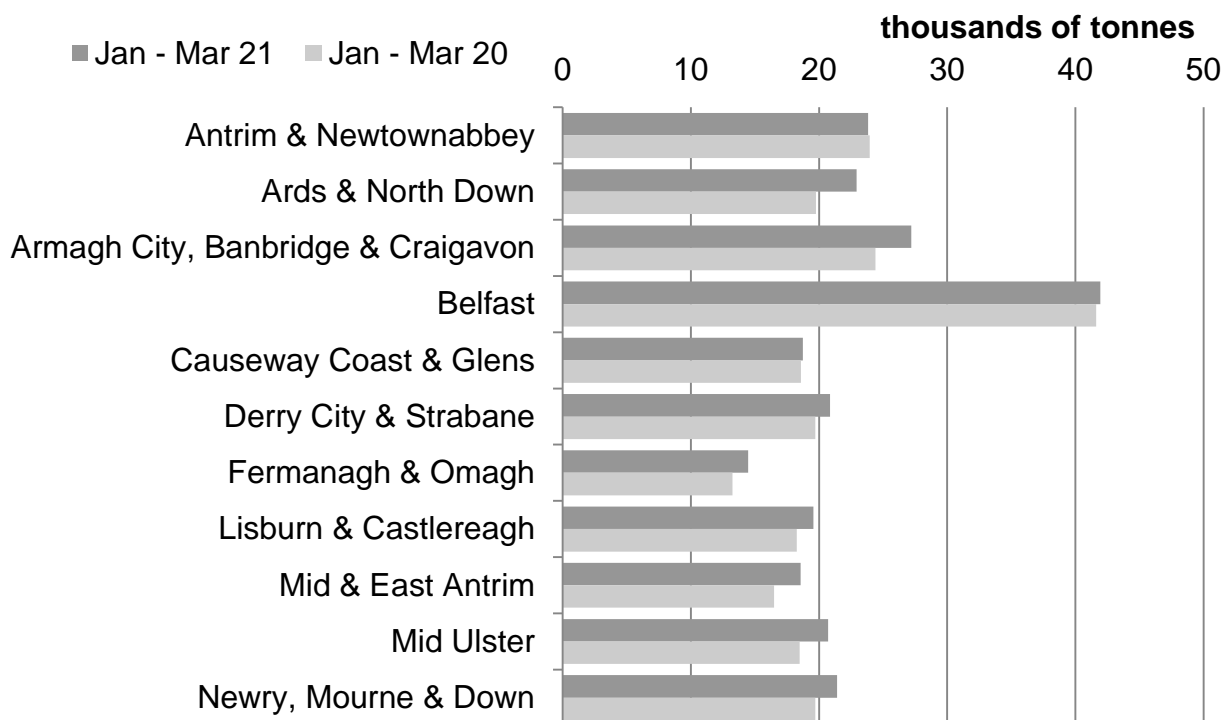


The longer term trend for January to March saw a gradual reduction in waste arisings of 16.3 per cent across six years, from a high of 251,488 tonnes between January and March

2007 to a low of 210,459 tonnes between the same three months of 2013. From 2013, arisings increased by 18.9 per cent to 250,228 tonnes in January to March 2021.

Figure 3: Waste arisings by council

Northern Ireland, January to March 2020 and January to March 2021, KPI (j)



The proportion of waste collected by each council broadly reflects the population within the councils. Belfast collected the most waste at 41,954 tonnes, whilst Fermanagh and Omagh collected the least at 14,466 tonnes.

All councils except Antrim & Newtownabbey recorded an increase in total arisings in January to March 2021 compared to the same period in 2020, with the largest increase recorded in Ards & North Down at 16.0 per cent.

These statistics can be found in Table 1 accompanying data tables spreadsheet and in the [time series dataset](#).

Recycling

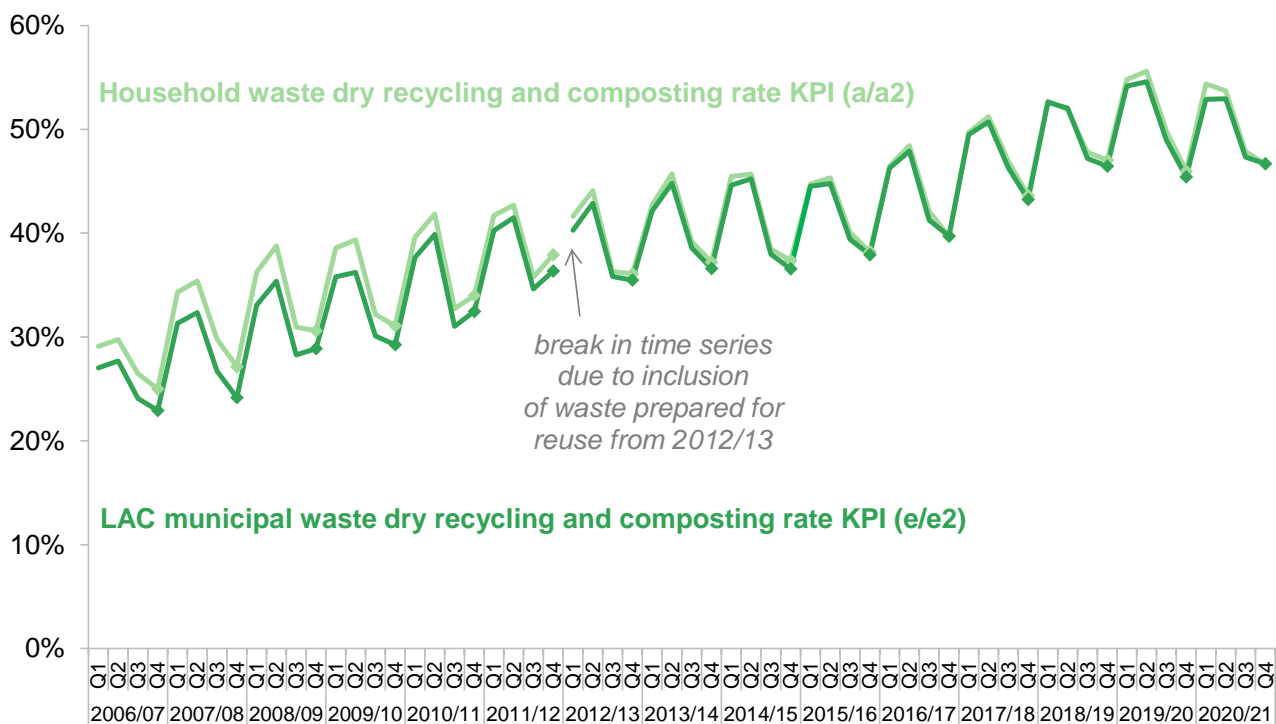
This section of the report looks at local authority collected (LAC) municipal waste and household waste recycling rates, both of which include waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting.

There were 116,823 tonnes of waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting (referred to as ‘recycling’ for the rest of this section) between January and March 2021. The waste recycling rate was 46.7 per cent. This was an increase of 1.3 percentage points on the 45.4 per cent of waste sent for recycling between January and March 2020.

The recycling rate for household waste only was 46.7 per cent between January and March 2021, higher than the 46.0 per cent recorded during the same three months of 2020. The proportion of household waste sent for dry recycling made up 25.8 per cent, composting 20.6 per cent and preparing for reuse 0.3 per cent. Last year the equivalent rate for preparing for reuse was 0.1 per cent, whilst the dry recycling and composting rates were 26.1 per cent and 19.7 per cent respectively.

Waste sent for recycling is included in a number of key performance indicators, KPI (a), (a2), (e), and (e2). These indicators are used to monitor performance under the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. The household waste annual recycling rate is also a population indicator for [Programme for Government \(PfG\)](#).

Figure 4: Waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2020/21, KPIs (a), (a2), (e) and (e2)

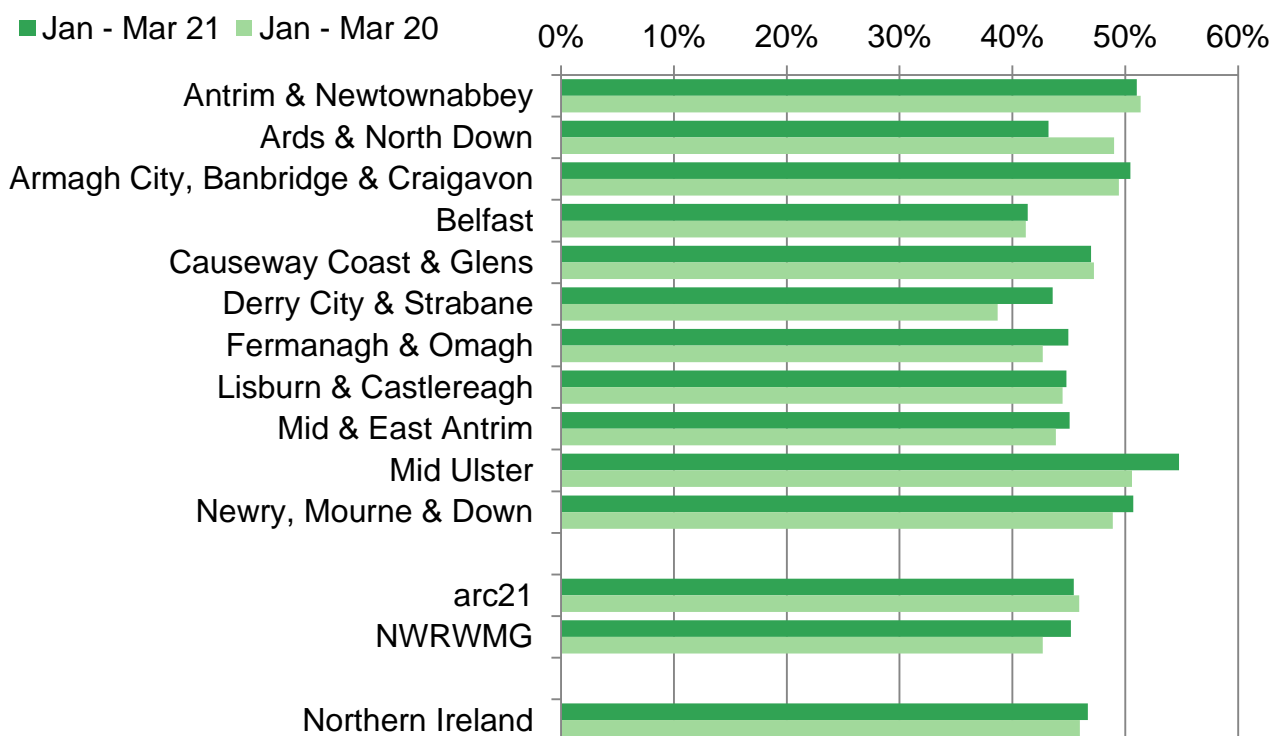


These statistics show seasonal variation which is driven by the quantities of garden waste sent for composting. Greater quantities of garden waste are collected and sent for composting during the spring and summer quarters, April to June and July to September.

The longer term trend for household waste recycling during this quarter has been a steady increase from 25.0 per cent in January to March 2007 to 46.7 per cent in 2020. Waste sent for preparing for reuse (586 tonnes this quarter) has been included since 2012/13 and adds 0.3 percentage points to the overall household recycling rate in January to March 2021.

Figure 5: Household waste preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting rate by council and waste management group

Northern Ireland, January to March 2020 and January to March 2021, KPI (a2)



Ards & North Down reported the only decrease in their household recycling rate compared to January to March 2020 at 5.8 per cent. Four of the remaining councils reported little change in their household recycling rates, whilst the rate increased in the other six councils, the largest of which were 4.9 per cent in Derry City & Strabane and 4.2 per cent in Mid Ulster.

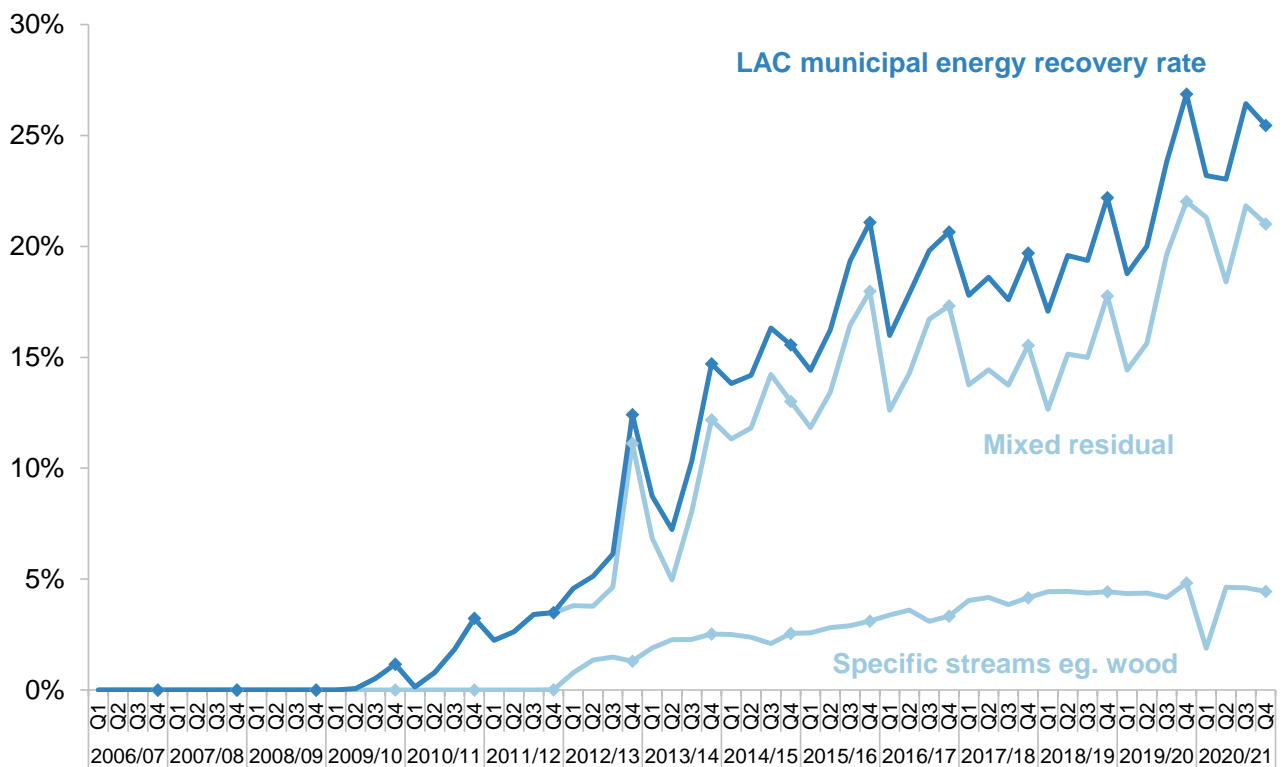
These statistics can be found in Tables 4 and 12 of the accompanying data tables spreadsheet and in the [time series dataset](#).

Energy recovery

This quarterly report includes statistics on energy recovery, which is the term used when value is gained from waste products by converting them into energy. All energy recovery statistics reported in this section are derived from material sent for energy recovery via incineration, although other technologies exist. Energy recovery via anaerobic digestion is not included in this section and is explained further in [Appendix 1 – Limitations of Data](#) of the latest Annual Report.

Between January to March 2021, 63,699 tonnes of waste arisings were sent for energy recovery. This gave a waste energy recovery rate of 25.5 per cent, lower than the 26.9 per cent rate reported for the same period in 2020. In each year, the majority was mixed residual waste with a smaller proportion from specific streams, e.g. wood.

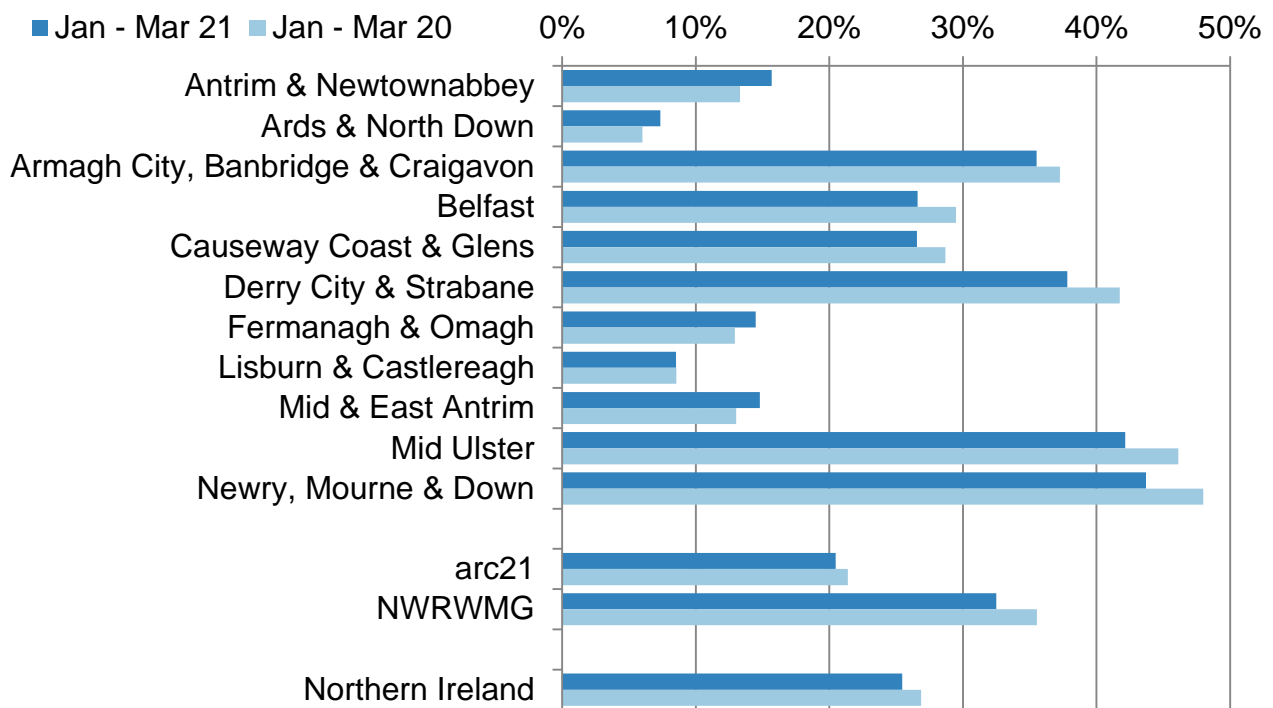
Figure 6: Waste sent for energy recovery via incineration
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2020/21



There was zero, or very small quantities, of waste sent for energy recovery before 2009/10. Strong growth began during 2009/10 with the energy recovery rate increasing from 1.2 per cent during January to March 2010 to a high of 26.9 per cent for the same three months of 2020, before falling to 25.5 per cent in January to March 2021. Most of the growth since 2009/10 has been driven by mixed residual waste sent for energy recovery (from 1.2 per cent during January to March 2010 to 21.0 per cent in January to March 2021). The specific stream proportion was 4.4 per cent in January to March 2021.

Mixed residual waste sent for energy recovery is combustible residual waste collected from the kerbside and from civic amenity sites which is processed into refuse derived fuel at material recovery facilities. The specific streams element of energy recovery is mostly wood but also includes furniture, carpets and mattresses, mostly collected from civic amenity sites.

Figure 7: Waste energy recovery rate by council and waste management group
Northern Ireland, January to March 2020 and January to March 2021



The highest waste energy recovery rate was recorded in Newry, Mourne & Down at 43.7 per cent, down from from 48.0 per cent between January and March 2020. The lowest rate recorded was 7.3 per cent in Ards & North Down. Six councils reported decreases in their energy recovery rates, the largest being recorded in Newry, Mourne & Down at 4.3 per cent.

For most councils, energy recovery for mixed residual waste accounted for a greater proportion of total energy recovery than specific streams such as wood.

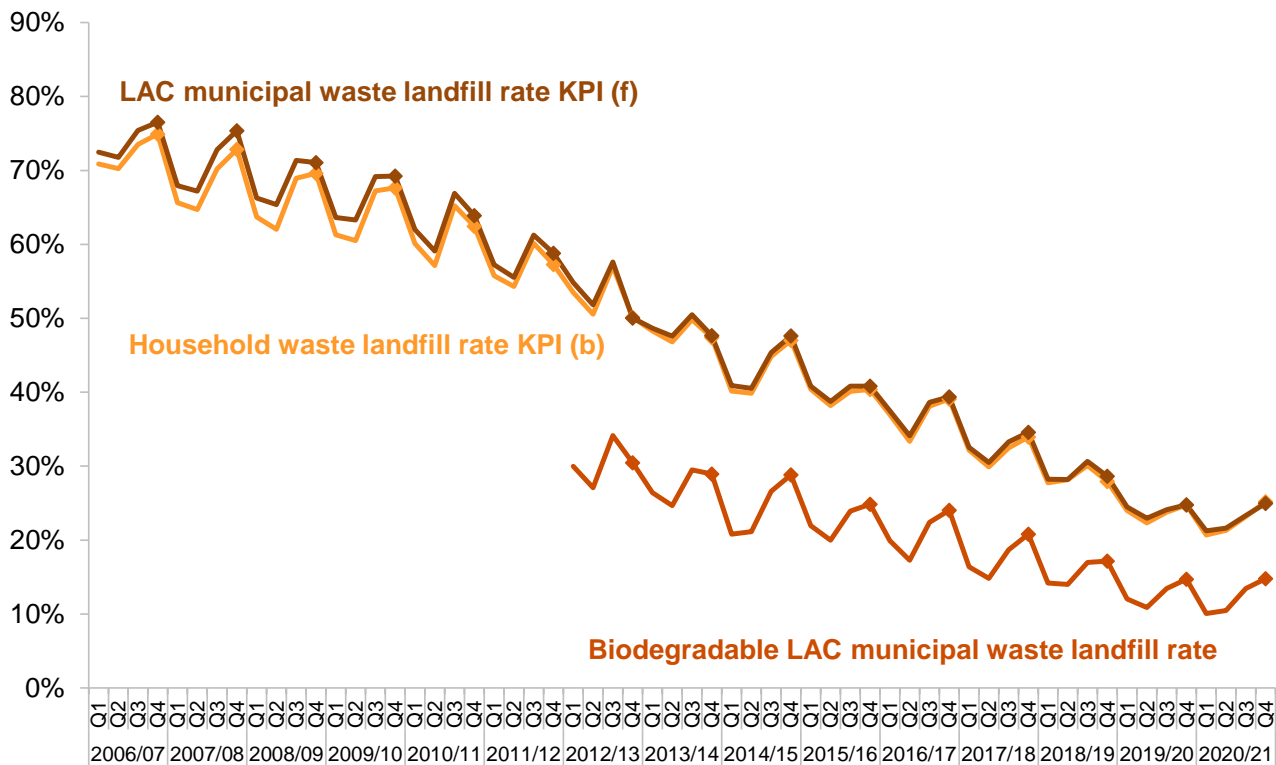
These statistics can be found in Tables 3 and 4 of the accompanying data tables spreadsheet and in the [time series dataset](#).

Landfill

The quantity of LAC municipal waste sent to landfill increased by 11.9 per cent, from 55,849 tonnes during January to March 2020 to 62,497 tonnes between January and March 2021. This gave a quarterly landfill rate of 25.0 per cent for January to March 2021, similar to the 24.8 per cent recorded during the same quarter of 2020. The latest quarterly landfill rate for household waste only is 25.2 per cent, compared to 24.7 per cent recorded during the same three months of 2020.

Figure 8: Waste sent to landfill

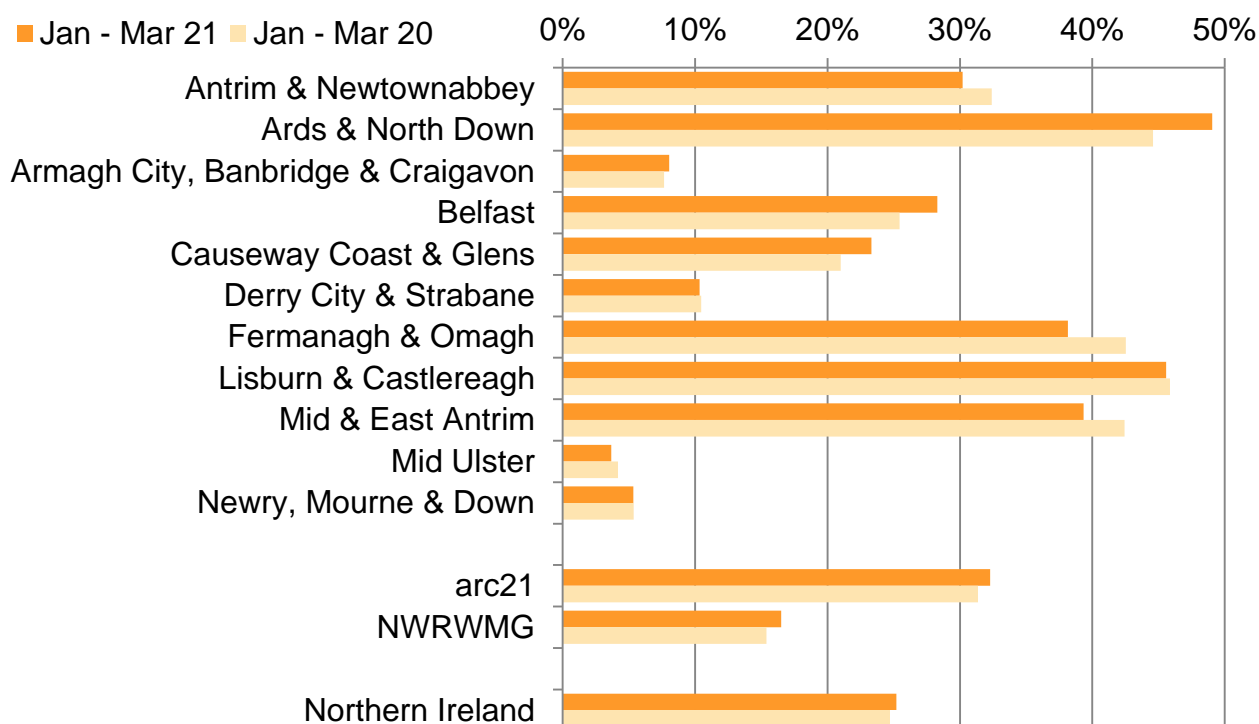
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2020/21, KPIs (b) and (f)



The long term trend has seen the January to March household waste landfill rate fall from 76.5 per cent in 2007 to 25.0 per cent recorded in 2021. Note that the landfill rate exhibits seasonality and the April to June and July to September quarters tend to have lower rates than October to December and January to March. The seasonality stems from the higher level of compostable garden waste arising during spring and summer.

Figure 9: Household waste landfilled by council and waste management group

Northern Ireland, January to March 2020 and January to March 2021, KPI (b)



The household waste landfill rate increased for three councils in January to March 2021 compared to the same three months in 2020, with Ards & North Down reporting a 4.5 per cent increase to 49.0 per cent. Three councils reported a fall in the household waste landfill rate whilst the remaining councils showed a similar rate to January to March 2020. Fermanagh & Omagh reported the largest decrease to their household waste landfill rate at 4.4 per cent.

The statutory requirement for all councils in Northern Ireland to provide households with a container for food to enable its separate collection has contributed to a drop in landfill rates, though increasing energy recovery rates for some councils have also contributed.

Biodegradable waste to landfill

The Landfill Allowance Scheme (NI) Regulations 2004 (as amended) placed a statutory responsibility on councils, in each scheme year, to landfill no more than the quantity of biodegradable waste for which they had allowances. The scheme concluded at the end of the 2019/20 financial year, however the continued monitoring of Biodegradable waste is required for targets set in the [EU Council Directive on the Landfill of Waste](#) which specify that it must be reduced to 75 per cent of the total amount (by weight) of biodegradable municipal waste produced in 1995.

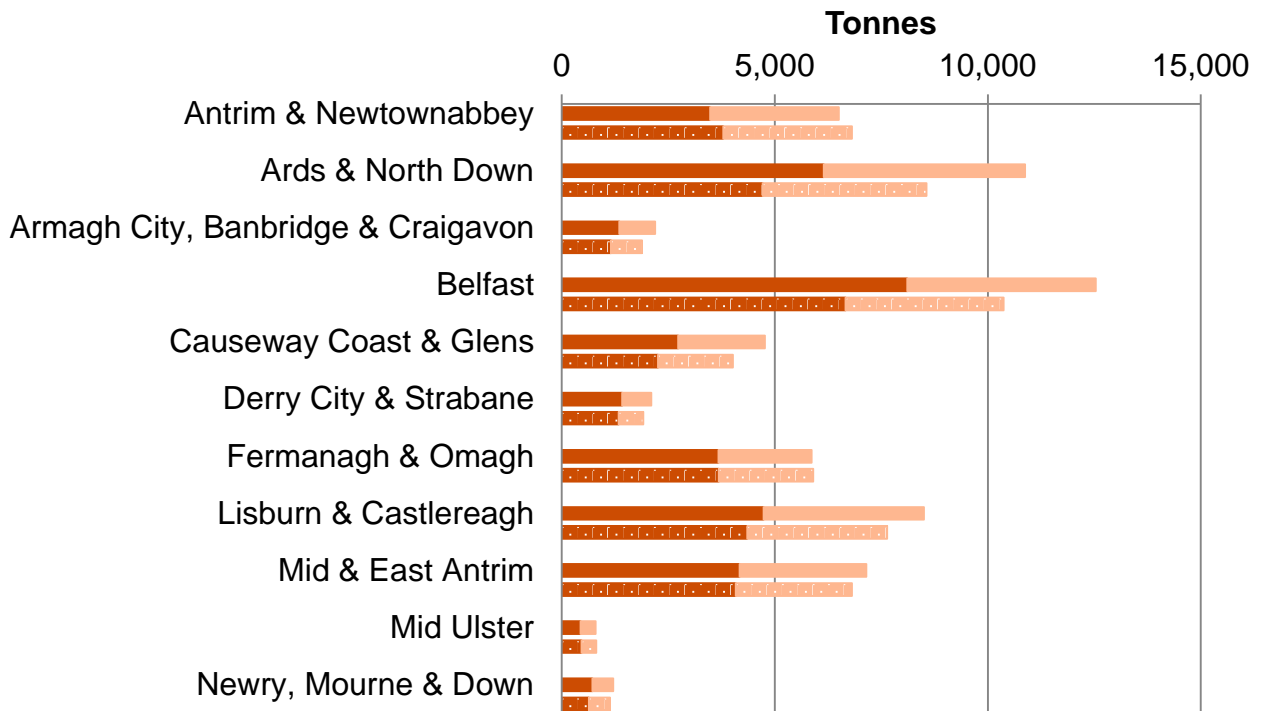
Northern Ireland's councils sent 36,985 tonnes of biodegradable waste to landfill between January and March 2021, which was 59.2 per cent of all waste sent to landfill. During the same quarter last year, 33,151 tonnes of biodegradable waste was sent to landfill which was 59.4 per cent of all waste sent to landfill.

Figure 10 displays the tonnages of LAC biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste sent to landfill by each council, comparing them with other councils and to the same quarter last year.

Figure 10: Biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste to landfill by council

Northern Ireland, January to March 2020 and January to March 2021,

- Biodegradable Jan - Mar 21
- Non-biodegradable Jan - Mar 21
- Biodegradable Jan - Mar 20
- Non-biodegradable Jan - Mar 20



There is considerable variation between councils in the quantities of biodegradable waste sent to landfill, as well as the proportion of biodegradable waste in total landfill. Fermanagh & Omagh reported the largest decrease in biodegradable waste sent to landfill as a proportion of all landfill compared to January to March 2020, decreasing by 2.5 per cent.

National Statistics Status

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

These statistics were first designated as National Statistics, and underwent a full [assessment](#) against the Code of Practice, in January 2014 by the UK Statistics Authority.

A compliance check [assessment](#) was completed for the waste statistics produced by each of the UK regions in 2020 with the results of the finding published in October 2020.

The trustworthiness, quality and value of the statistics, including the coherence of the data source, methods and quality assurance (QA) arrangements, and the presentation of the statistics were reviewed with a final outcome that the statistics can continue to be designated as National Statistics.

The conclusion of the compliance check cited the following actions as strengths:

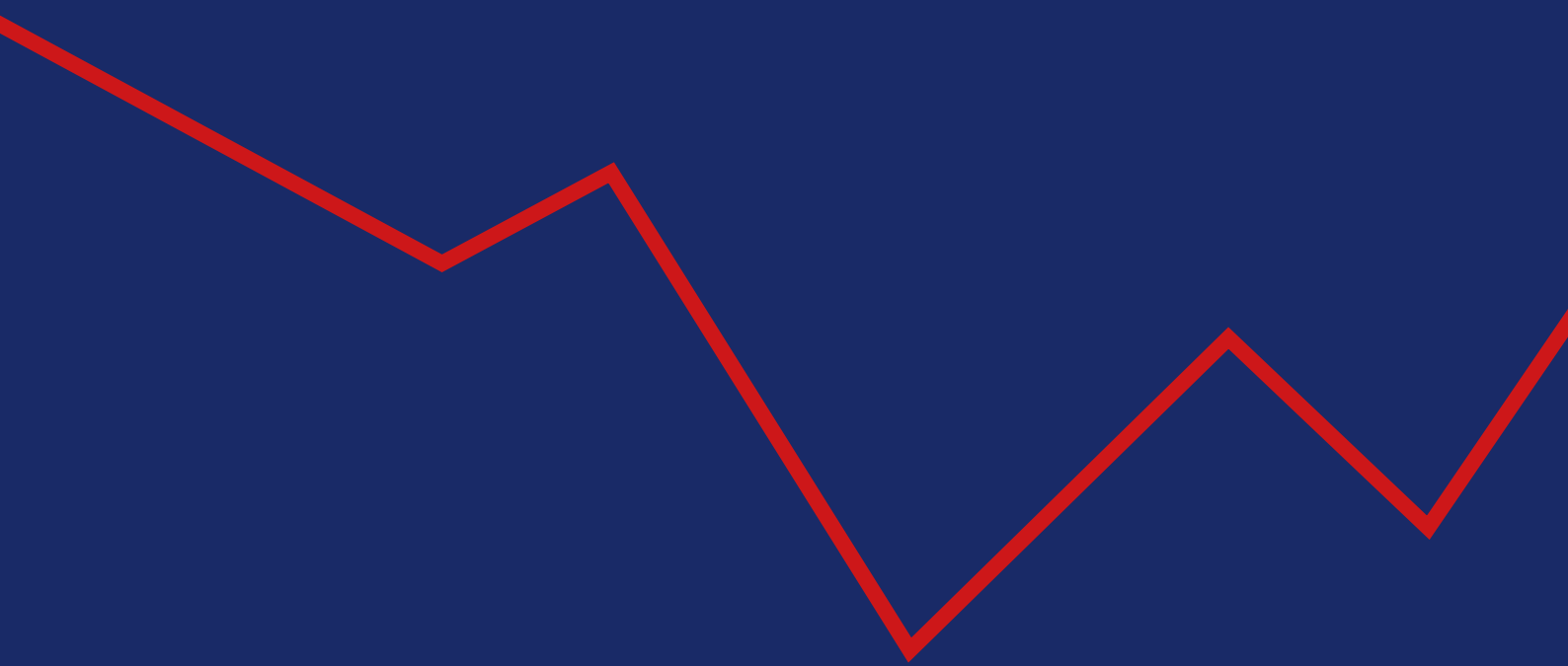
- Ongoing quality assurance of the data contained within the report by reviewing methods on a quarterly basis.
- Improved statistical output by creating a [time series](#) of Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics to accompany the report and tables. This [dataset](#) is also available on Open Data NI along with a [time series](#) of materials collected at Northern Ireland local authority waste management sites.
- Improved statistical output by creating [infographics](#) to accompany the report and tables.
- Improved statistical output by creating an [interactive dashboard](#) to accompany the report and tables.
- Hosted a workshop with users in February 2020 to review publications and statistical outputs.
- Sought and implemented recommendations from GSS good practice team to improve the publication.

Some areas for minor improvement were also suggested and these will be addressed as we continually improve the statistical output.

One suggestion was to liaise with the other UK regions to produce a guide on how waste is defined as recycled and explain the main definitional differences in recycling rates between countries. The recycling explainer is now available at the following link:

[Recycling Explainer](#)

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