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Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics

Quarterly provisional estimates for January to March 2024

Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

An Roinn
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe

Depairtment o'
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers

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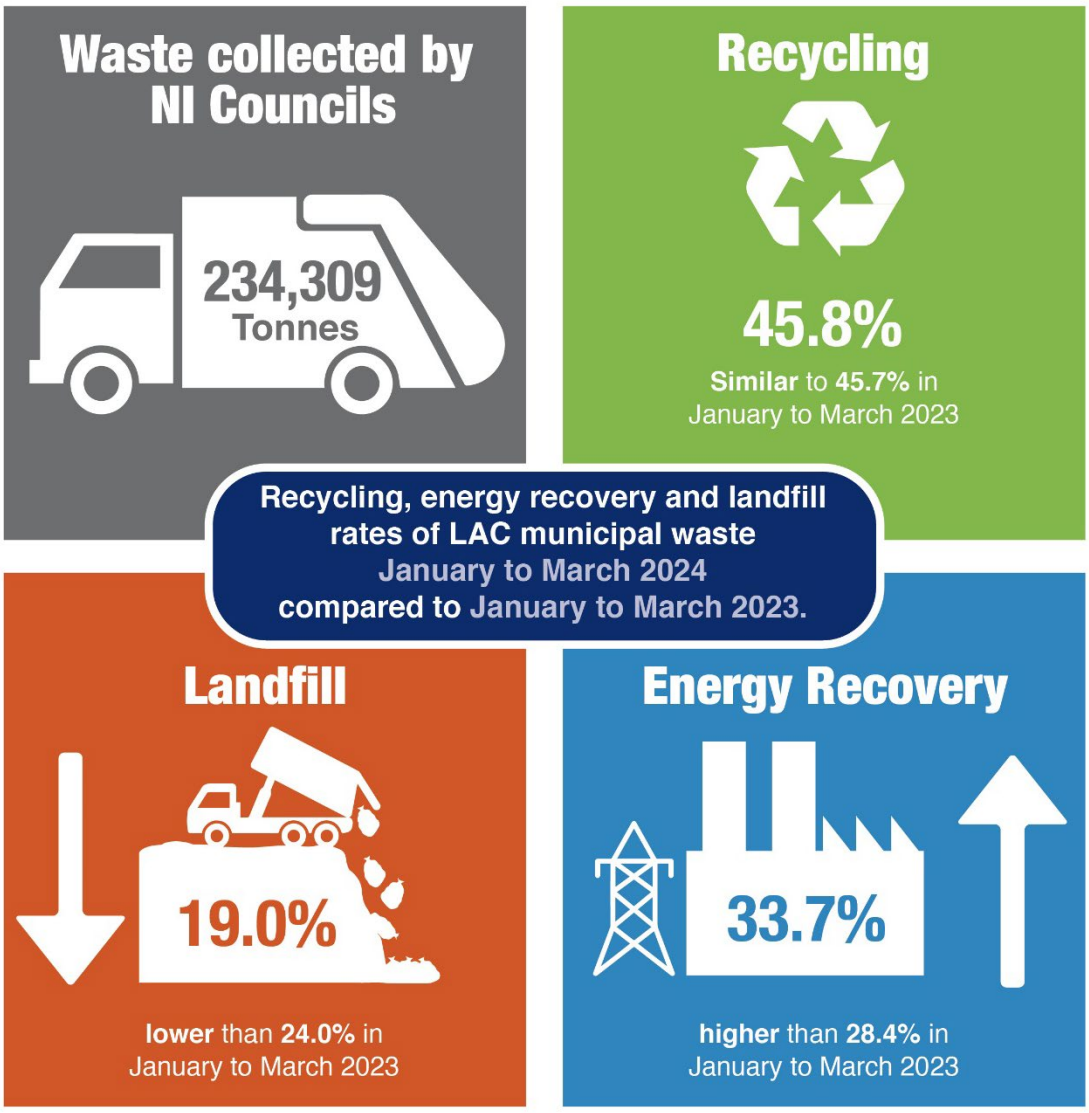
Northern Ireland waste management statistics – January to March 2024



Key Points

- Northern Ireland's councils collected 234,309 tonnes of waste during January to March 2024, higher than the 228,236 tonnes collected during January to March 2023.
- During January to March 2024, 45.8 per cent of waste collected by councils was sent for recycling, similar to the recycling rate recorded for January to March 2023.
- The landfill rate for waste collected by councils was 19.0 per cent in January to March 2024, a fall from both 76.5 per cent in January to March 2007 and 24.0 per cent during January to March 2023.
- Approximately one third (33.7 per cent) of waste arisings were sent for energy recovery in January to March 2024 which was higher than the 28.4 per cent reported in January to March 2023. In the longer term, energy recovery rates have increased from 1.2 per cent recorded during January to March 2010.
- Household waste accounted for 86.8 per cent of all Local Authority collected (LAC) waste during this period.
- The recycling rate for household waste was 46.4 per cent in January to March 2024, similar to the rate recorded in January to March 2023. The landfill rate for household waste was 18.7 per cent, which was lower than the rate of 23.5 per cent recorded in January to March 2023.

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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 and UK Government to measure progress towards achieving targets from various waste strategies including:

- The revised Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy
- The Waste Framework Directive

Data on household recycling was a population indicator for the previous Programme for Government (PfG) and has been proposed as an indicator in the forthcoming PfG.

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 2024 are scheduled for publication in October 2024.
- Finalised data for 2023/24 are scheduled to be published in November 2024 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

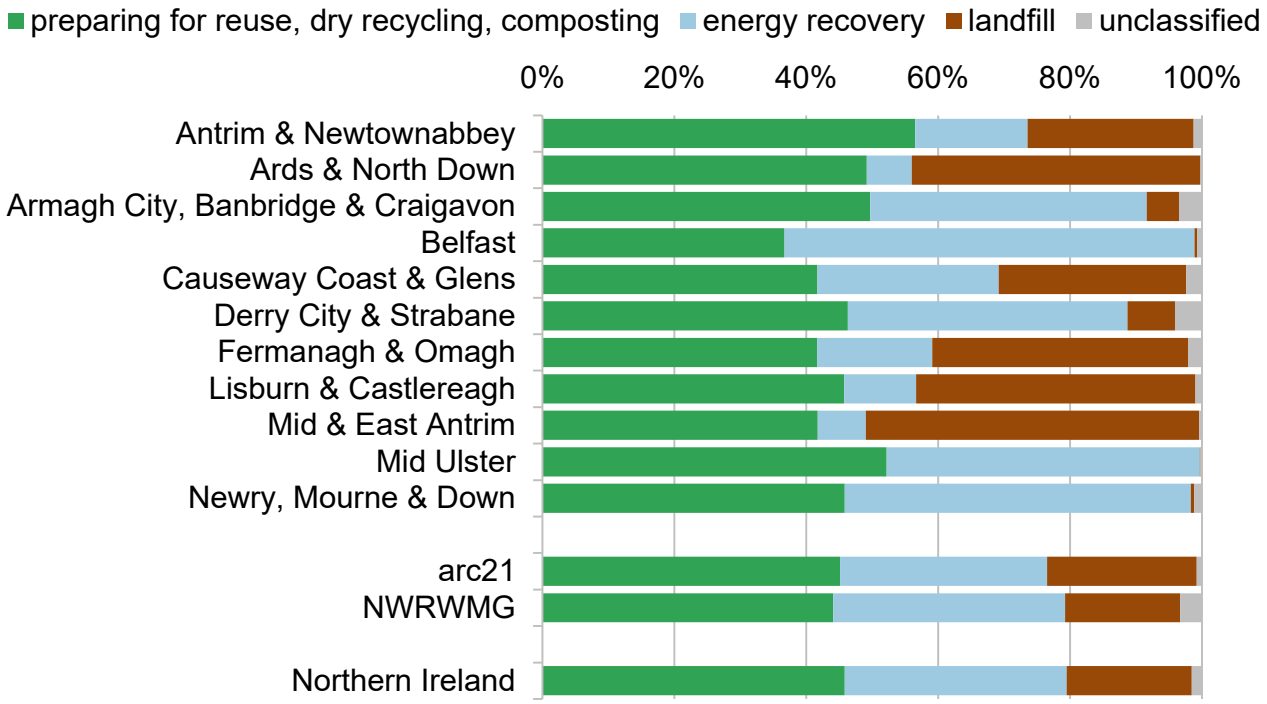
Overview

This report presents information on the quantities of Local Authority Collected (LAC) municipal waste managed in Northern Ireland between January and March 2024. The report is split into four sections, each of which cover local authority collected 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 2024



At the Northern Ireland level, 45.8 per cent of waste collected by councils was sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting between January to March 2024. Energy recovery accounted for 33.7 per cent and 19.0 per cent was landfilled. The remaining 1.5 per cent unaccounted for is likely to involve moisture and/or gaseous losses. Each of the rates are discussed in detail in the appropriate section of the report.

The rate of waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting was similar to that reported in January to March 2023 (45.7 per cent). The landfill rate decreased by 5.0 percentage points whilst the energy recovery rate increased by 5.3 percentage points from January to March 2023. Household waste accounted for 86.8 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.

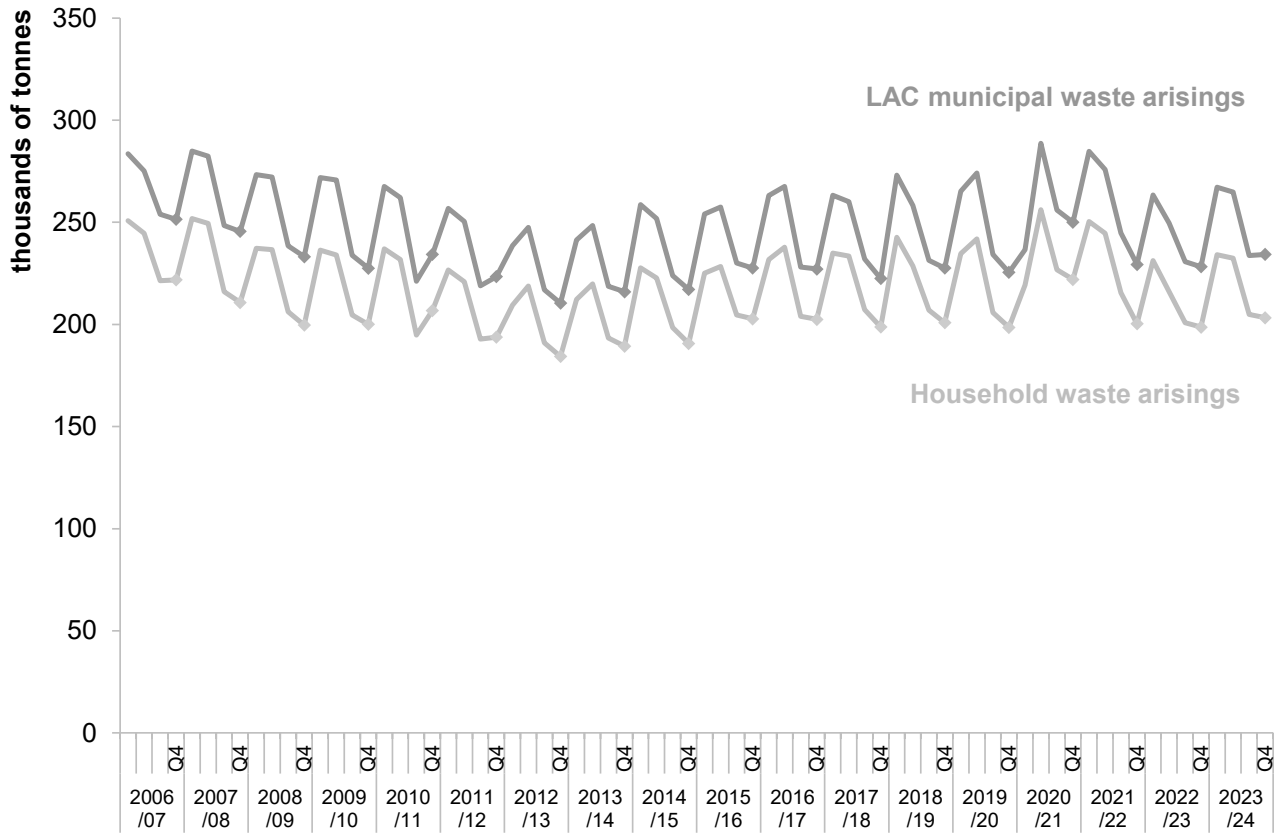
Waste arisings

Northern Ireland's councils collected 234,309 tonnes of waste between January and March 2024. This was higher than the 228,236 tonnes collected during January and March 2023. Factors affecting LAC municipal waste arisings, the majority of which is household waste, include individual household behaviours, the advice and collection services provided by councils, the state of the economy and weather conditions during the specific quarter.

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

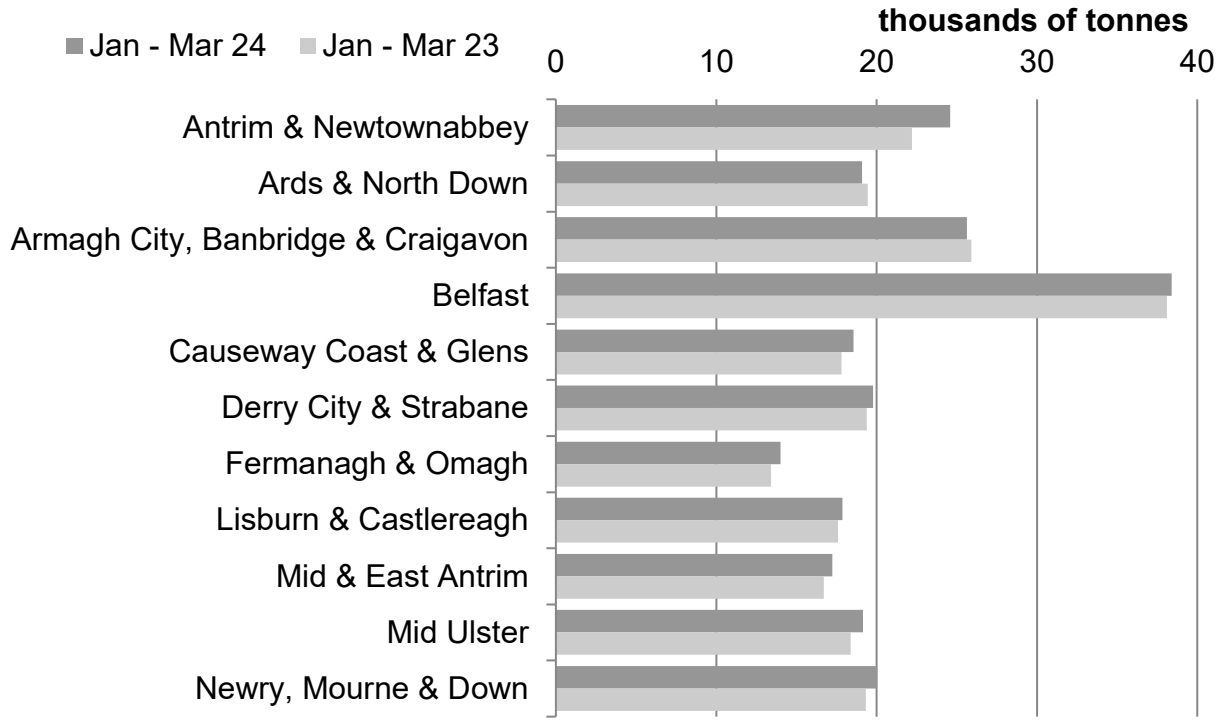
Since 2006/07 household waste has accounted for 86-90 per cent of total waste collected by councils each quarter, apart from April to June 2020 when Covid-19 restrictions resulted in a larger than normal proportion of household waste being collected. During January and March 2024 household waste accounted for 86.8 per cent. The remaining 13.2 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 2023/24 KPI (j)



The longer term trend for January to March saw a gradual reduction in LAC municipal waste arisings of 16.3 per cent across six years, from 251,488 tonnes between January to March 2007 to a low of 210,459 tonnes between the same three months of 2013. From January to March 2013 until January to March 2024 arisings showed a generally increasing trend with 234,309 tonnes collected in the latest quarter.

Figure 3: Waste arisings by council
Northern Ireland, January to March 2023 and January to March 2024, KPI (j)



The proportion of waste collected by each council broadly reflects the population within the councils. Belfast collected the most waste at 38,397 tonnes, whilst Fermanagh and Omagh collected the least at 13,995 tonnes.

Nine councils reported an increase in total arisings in January to March 2024 compared to the same period in 2023 with two councils reporting a decrease in total arisings.

Antrim & Newtownabbey reported the largest increase in total arisings in January to March 2024 compared to the same period in 2023, rising by 10.8 per cent. Fermanagh & Omagh, Causeway Coast & Glens and Mid Ulster reported increases from January to March 2023 to January to March 2024 of 4.4, 4.2 and 4.1 per cent respectively.

The total quantity of waste collected at kerbside was similar to the amount collected in January to March 2023, while the quantity of waste collected at civic amenity sites increased by 8.7 per cent.

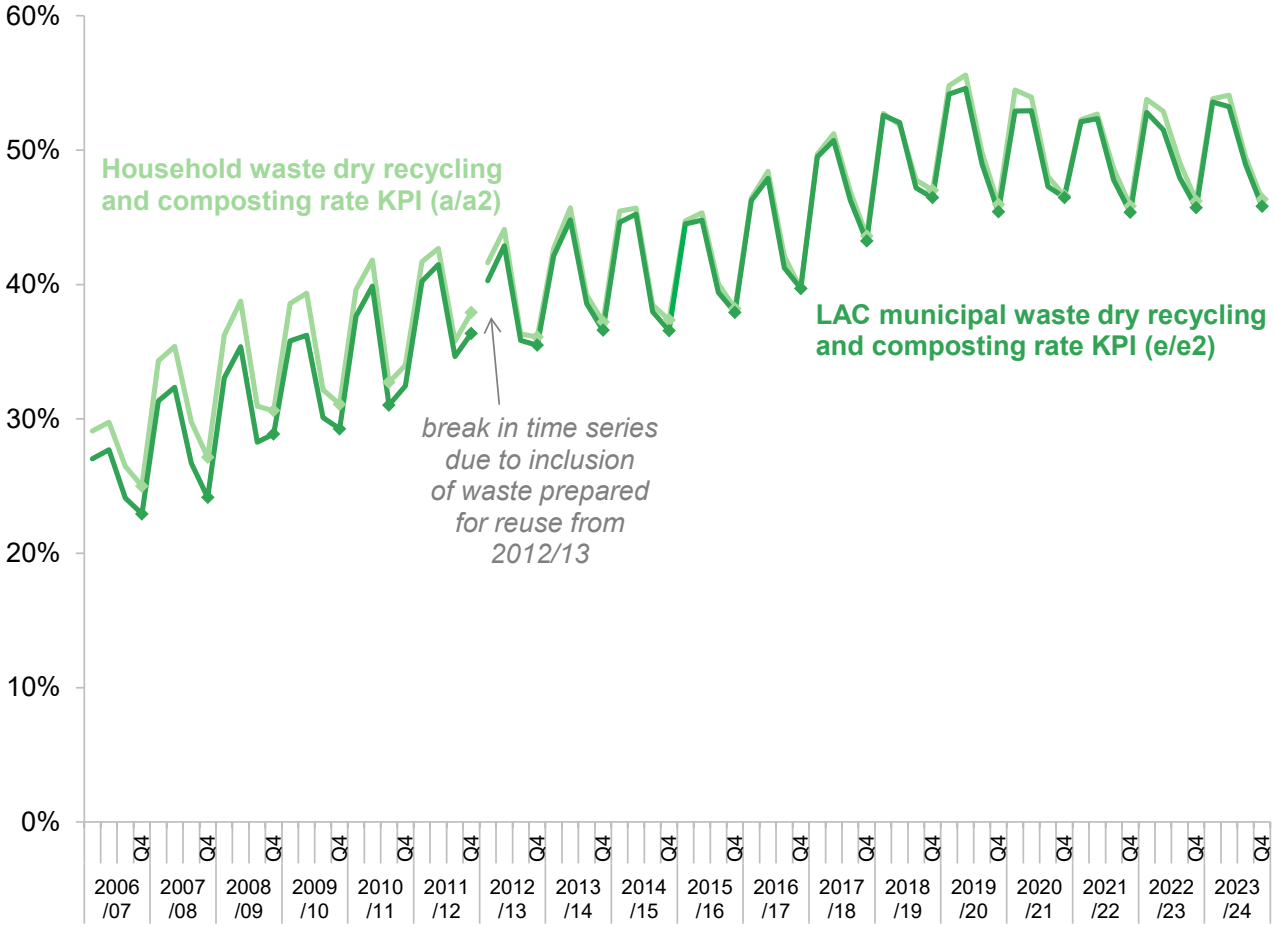
These statistics can be found in Table 1 and Table 2 of the accompanying data tables spreadsheet and in the time series dataset.

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 107,374 tonnes of LAC municipal waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting (referred to as 'recycling' for the rest of this section) during January to March 2024. The waste recycling rate was 45.8 per cent similar to the waste sent for recycling during January to March 2023.

Figure 4: Waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2023/24, KPIs (a), (a2), (e) and (e2)

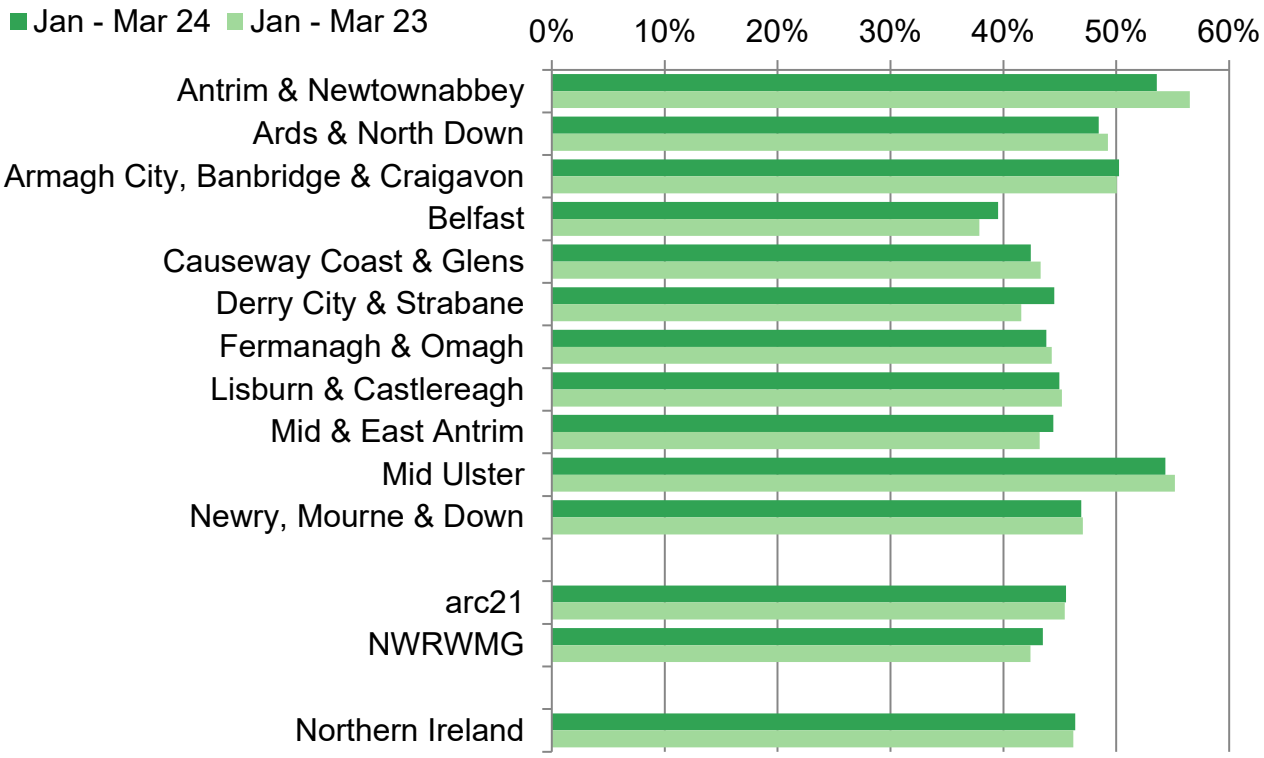


These statistics show seasonal variation which is driven by the quantities of garden waste sent for composting. Greater quantities of garden waste are collected and sent for composting during the spring and summer quarters, April to June and July to September.

The longer term trend for Local Authority Collected municipal waste recycling for the January to March quarter has been a steady increase from 22.9 per cent in January to March 2007 to 46.5 per cent in January to March 2019. Since then, the local authority collected municipal waste recycling rate has remained similar with a recycling rate of 45.8 per cent recorded in January to March 2024. Waste sent for preparing for reuse (650 tonnes this quarter) has been included since 2012/13 and adds 0.3 percentage points to the overall LAC recycling rate in January to March 2024.

The recycling rate for household waste only was 46.4 per cent during January to March 2024 similar to the rate recorded during January to March 2023. The proportion of household waste sent for dry recycling made up 25.0 per cent, composting 21.1 per cent and preparing for reuse 0.3 per cent.

Figure 5: Household waste preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting rate by council and waste management group
Northern Ireland, January to March 2023 and January to March 2024, KPI (a2)



Derry City & Strabane, Belfast and Mid & East Antrim councils reported an increase in their household recycling rate in January to March 2024 compared to January to March 2023. The household recycling rate decreased in four councils with the largest decrease of 2.9 percentage points recorded in Antrim & Newtownabbey council[1].

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 was a population indicator for Programme for Government (PfG) 2016-2021 and is being proposed as an indicator for the next PfG.

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

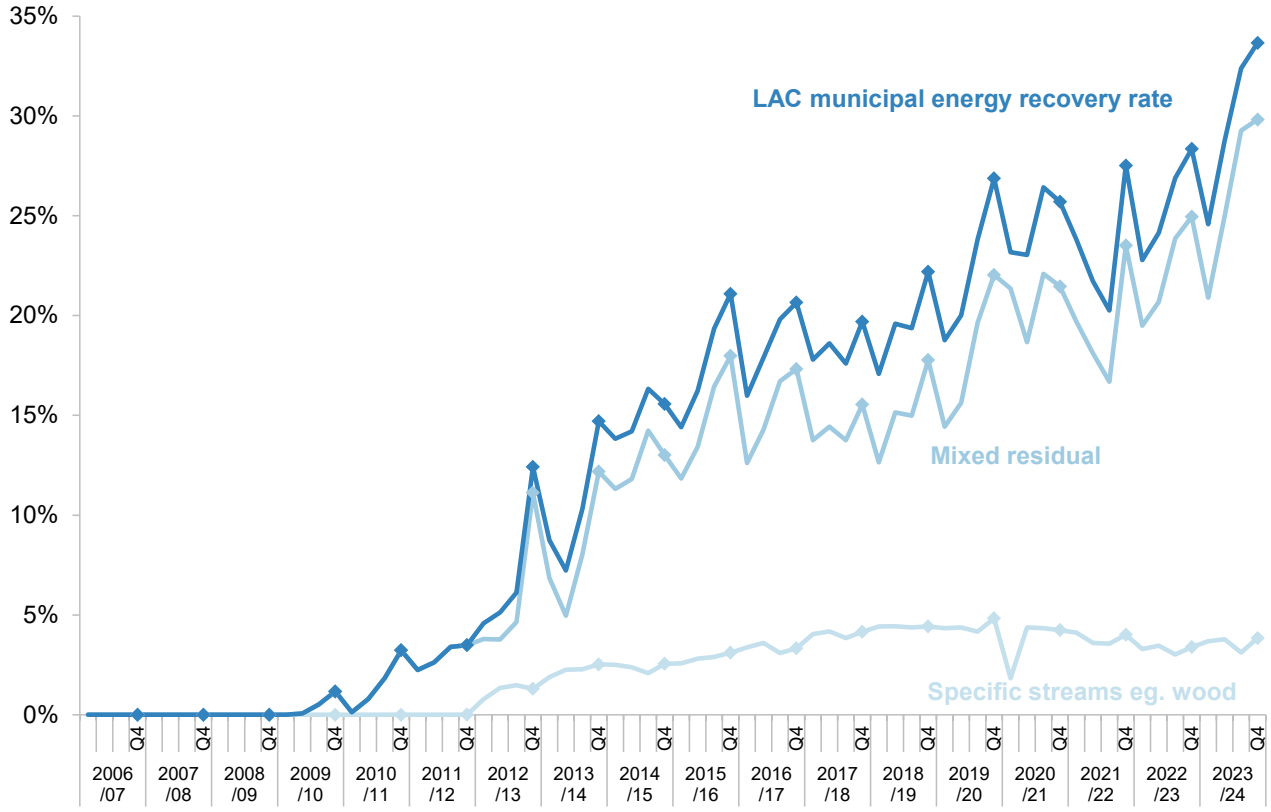
[1] Very small increases or decreases in figures (<0.5 per cent or <0.5 percentage points) are not highlighted in the commentary.

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/gasification, 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.

From January to March 2024, 78,858 tonnes of waste arisings were sent for energy recovery. This produced a waste energy recovery rate of 33.7 per cent, the highest quarterly energy recovery rate ever recorded for Northern Ireland. The majority of energy recovery comes from 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 2023/24

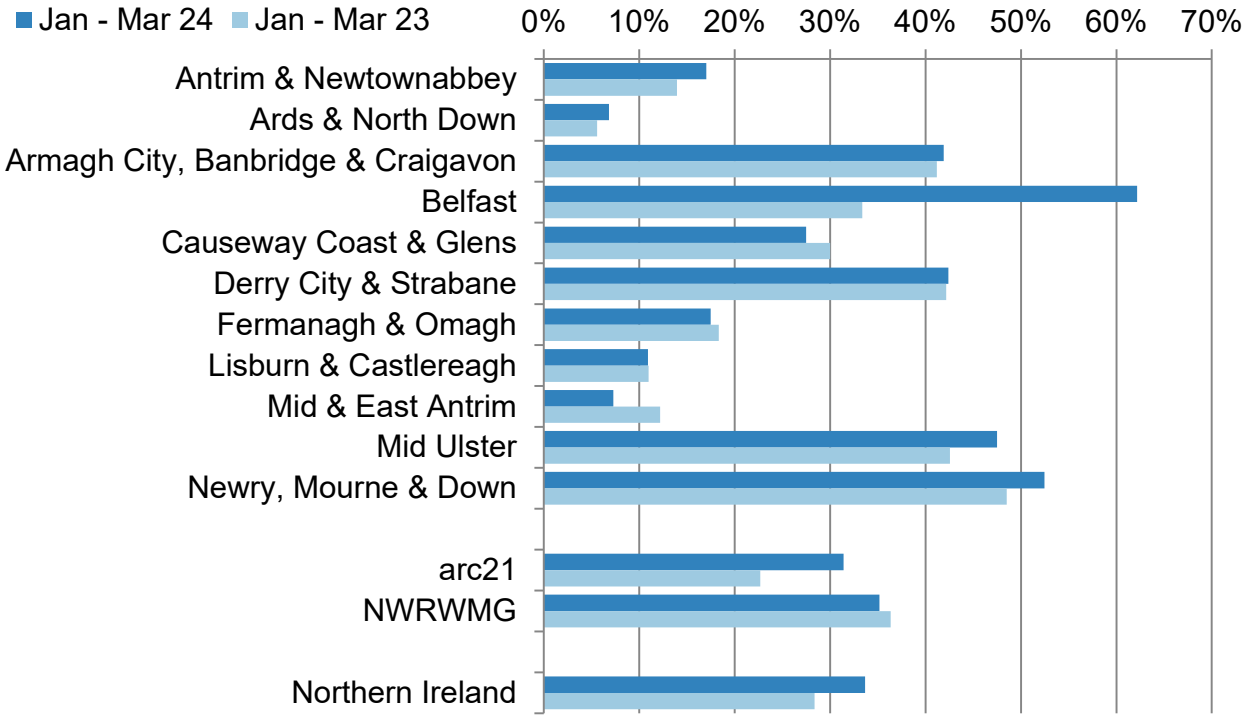


There was zero, or very small quantities, of waste sent for energy recovery before 2009/10. Strong growth began during 2009/10 with the energy recovery rate increasing from 1.2 per cent during January to March 2010 to 33.7 per cent for the same three months of 2024. Most of the growth since 2009/10 has been driven by mixed residual waste sent for energy recovery (from 1.2 per cent during January to March 2010 to 29.8 per cent in January to March 2024). The specific stream proportion was 3.8 per cent in January to March 2024.

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 2023 and January to March 2024



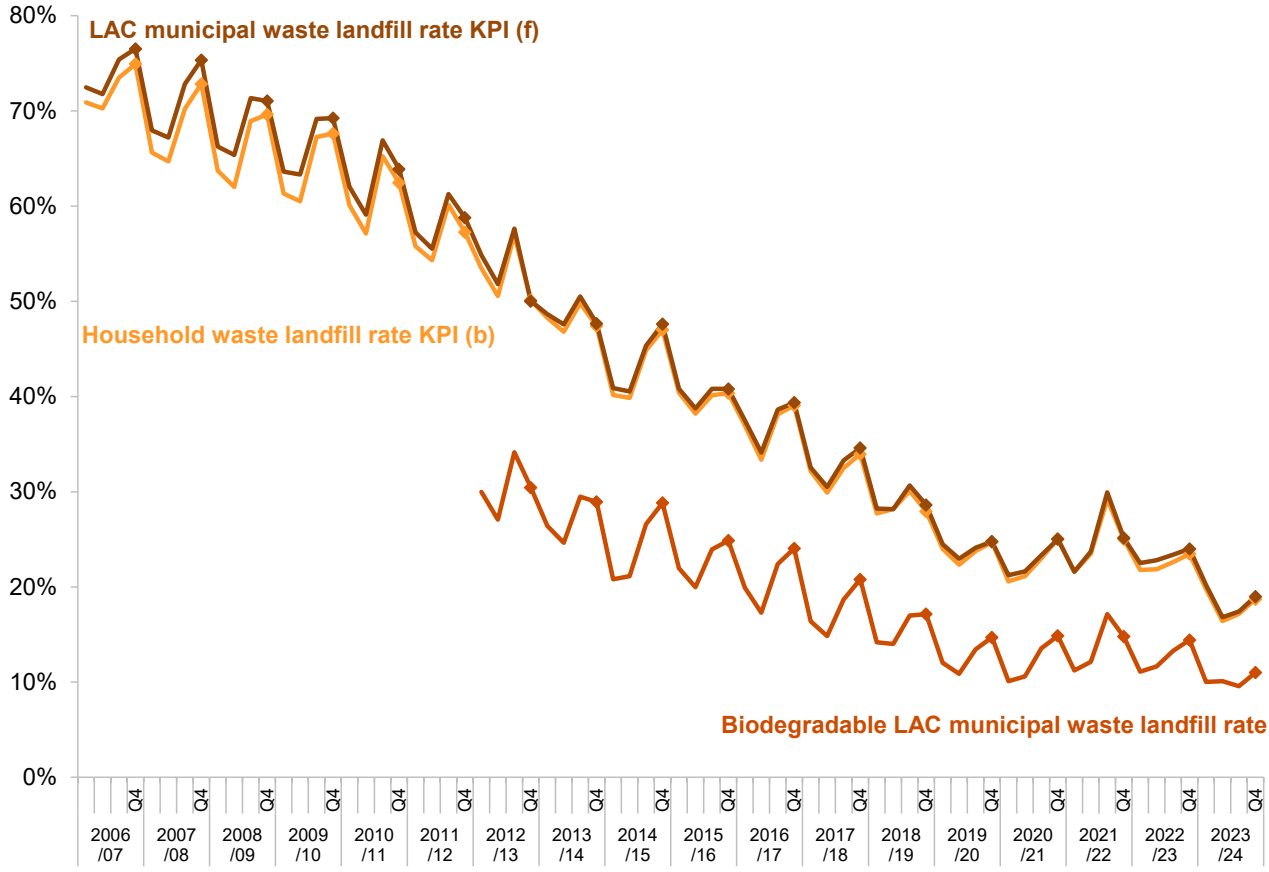
The highest waste energy recovery rate was recorded in Belfast at 62.2 per cent, an increase of 28.8 percentage points compared to January to March 2023. Smaller increases were observed in five other councils, with Mid Ulster and Newry Mourne & Down reporting increases of 5.0 and 4.0 percentage points respectively. Three councils recorded a decrease in the waste energy recovery rate in January to March 2024 compared to the same quarter in 2023 with the largest decrease of 4.9 percentage points recorded in Mid & East Antrim. The remaining councils reported similar energy recovery rates in January to March 2024 compared to the same quarter in 2023.

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 decreased by 18.8 per cent, from 54,799 tonnes during January to March 2023 to 44,512 tonnes during January to March 2024. The quarterly landfill rate for January to March 2024 is 19.0 per cent, lower than the 24.0 per cent recorded during the same quarter of 2023. The latest quarterly landfill rate for household waste only is 18.7 per cent.

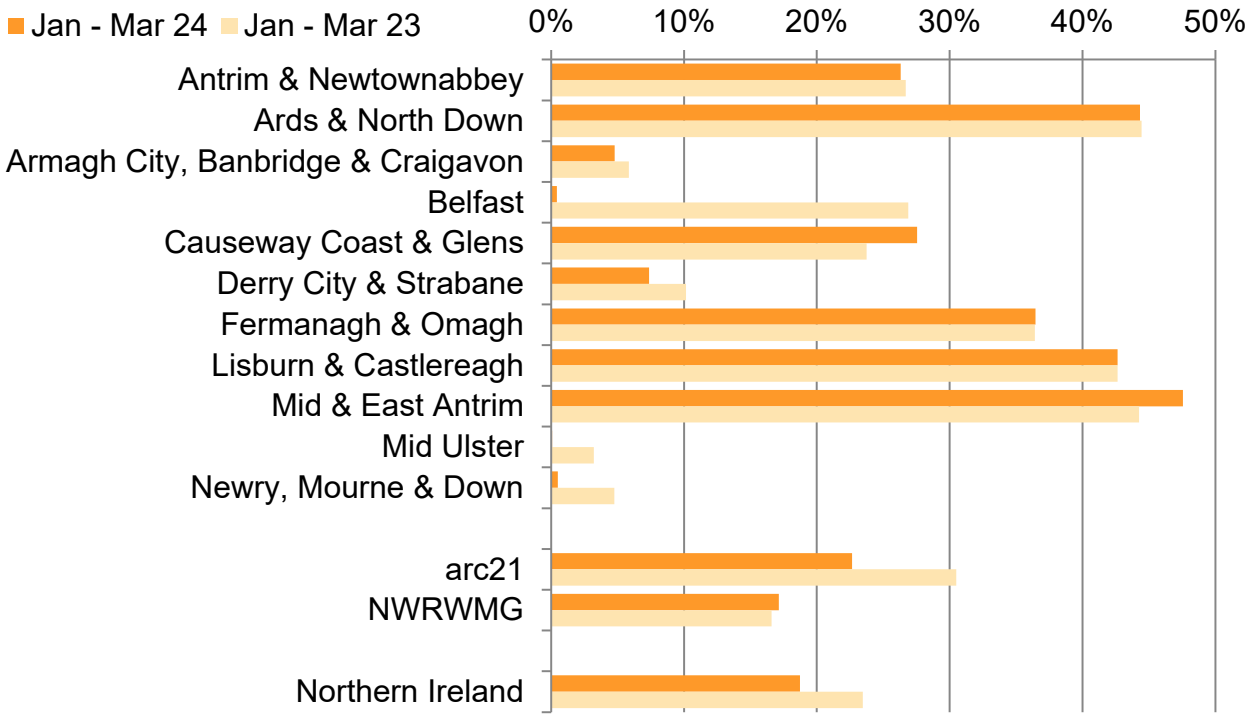
Figure 8: Waste sent to landfill
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2023/24, KPIs (b) and (f)



The longer term trend has seen the January to March household waste landfill rate fall from 74.9 per cent in 2007 to a low of 18.7 per cent in 2024. 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.

Increasing energy recovery rates, a tax on landfill and the statutory requirement for all councils in Northern Ireland to provide households with a container for food to enable its separate collection have all contributed to the long-term reduction in landfill rates.

Figure 9: Household waste landfilled by council and waste management group
Northern Ireland, January to March 2023 and January to March 2024, KPI (b)



The highest household waste landfill rate was recorded in Mid & East Antrim at 47.6 per cent, whilst the lowest was recorded in Mid Ulster at 0.1 per cent. The household waste landfill rate decreased in five district councils in January to March 2024 compared to the same three months in 2023, with the largest decrease recorded in Belfast at 26.4 percentage points. Causeway Coast & Glens and Mid & East Antrim recorded an increase in landfill rates compared to the same quarter in 2023 with increases of 3.8 and 3.3 percentage points respectively.

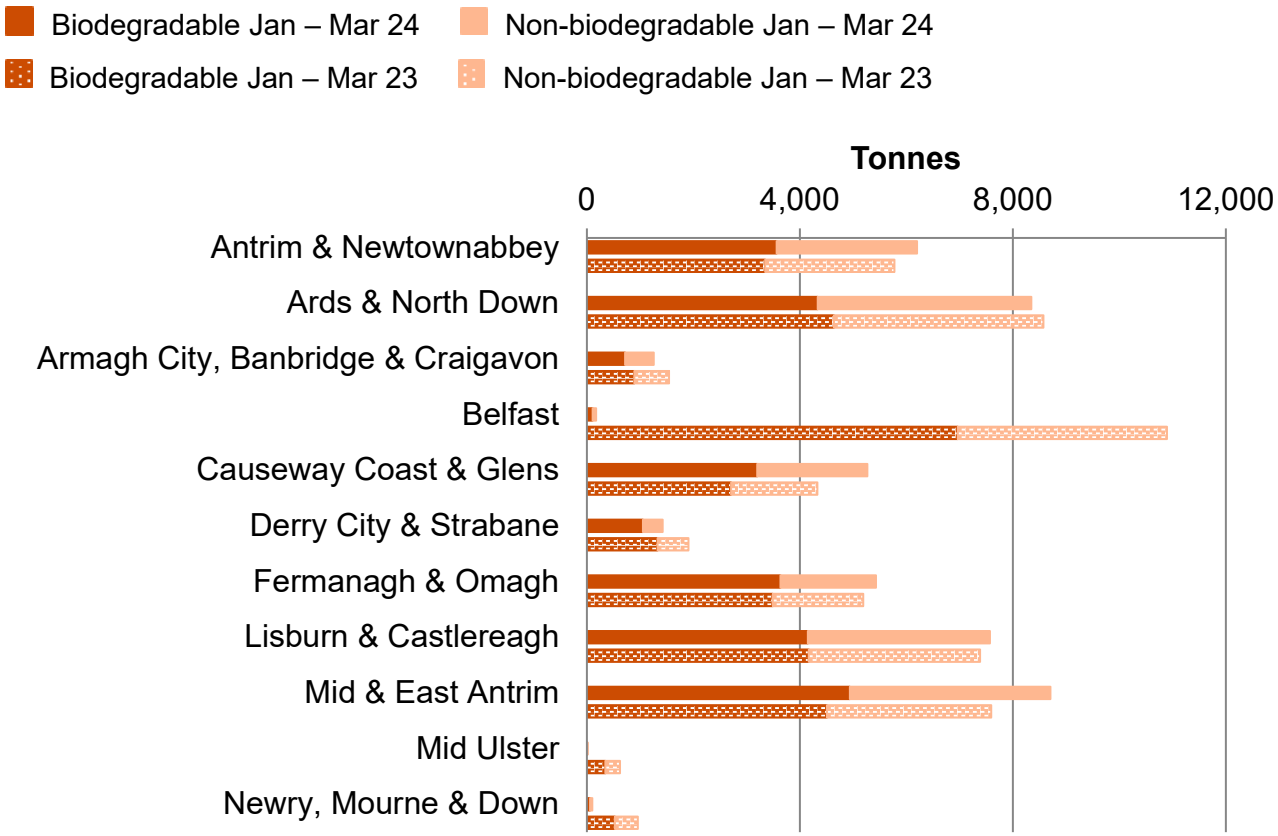
Biodegradable waste to landfill

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 existing target commitments which specify that it must be reduced to 35 per cent of the total amount (by weight) of biodegradable municipal waste produced in 1995.

Northern Ireland's councils sent 25,791 tonnes of biodegradable waste to landfill during January to March 2024, which was 57.9 per cent of all LAC municipal waste sent to landfill. During the same quarter last year, 32,946 tonnes of biodegradable waste was sent to landfill which was 60.1 per cent of all LAC municipal 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 2023 and January to March 2024



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.
In Derry & Strabane, 73.9 per cent (1,053 tonnes) of all LAC municipal waste sent to landfill was biodegradable, whilst in Ards & North Down, 51.9 per cent (4,337 tonnes) of LAC municipal waste sent to landfill was biodegradable.

National Statistics

National Statistics are accredited official statistics[2]. This accreditation confirms that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

Further information on accredited official statistics can be found on the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) website.

These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in October 2020. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled 'accredited official statistics'.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR).

OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards.

Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

[2] Accredited Official Statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007

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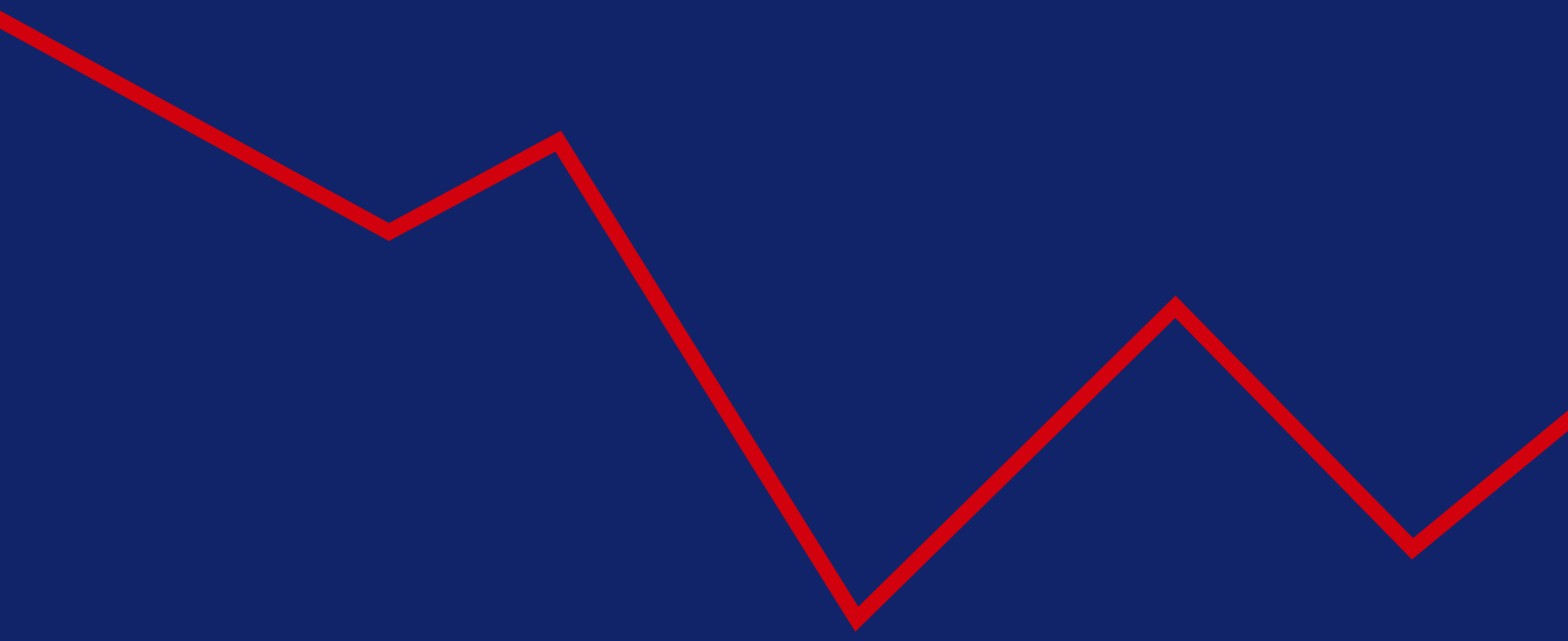

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