

Canada-wide

Plastic Packaging Flows: Deposit Return, Residential, and Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Recycling System Performance

2024 Progress Report Summary



About this Study

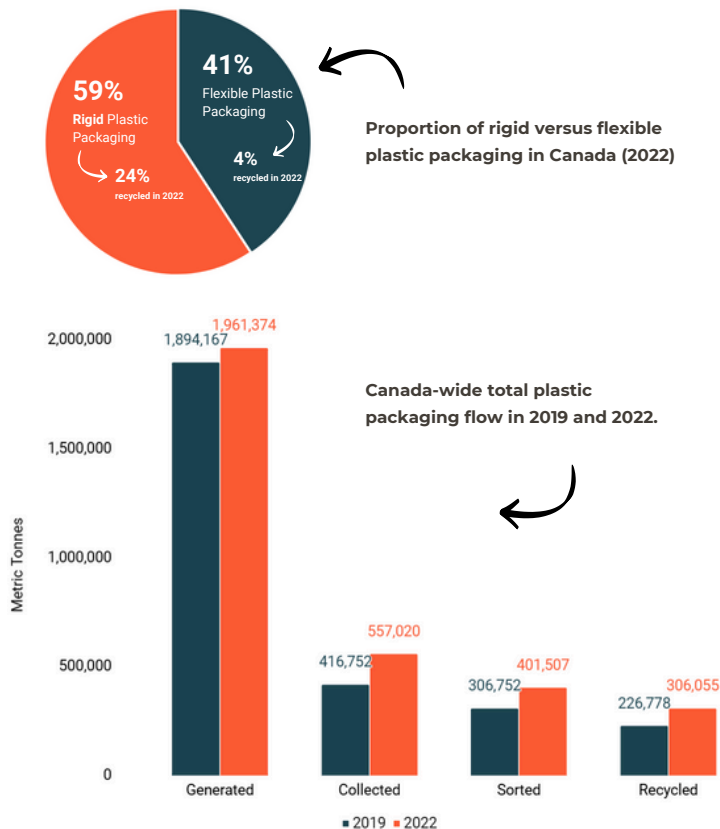
The Canada Plastics Pact (CPP) 2024 Progress Report is an updated Canada-wide baseline of plastics packaging flows for 2022, including Canada's residential sector, provincial and territorial deposit return systems (DRSs), and the industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) sector.

The report also presents an assessment of changes to that flow since CPP's Foundational Report, which was based on 2019 data.

It broadens the scope to encompass all plastic packaging generated and managed at end-of-life in Canada, offering a deeper analysis of barriers and key focus areas, including the ICI sector, which to date has not yet been comprehensively studied.

This report is intended to inform future planning and solutions for stakeholders throughout the plastics value chain.

[The full report can be downloaded here.](#)



KEY UPDATES

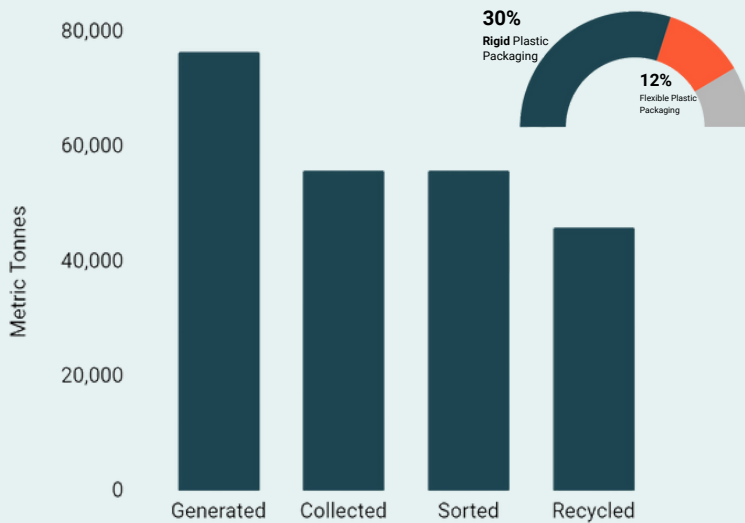
Total Generated - 1,961,374 tonnes
(4% increase since 2019)

- Rigid Plastics - 17% increase since 2019
- Flexible Plastics - 6% decrease since 2019

Total Recycled - 16%
(4% increase since 2019)

- Rigid Plastics - 2% decrease since 2019
- Flexible Plastics - 13% increase since 2019

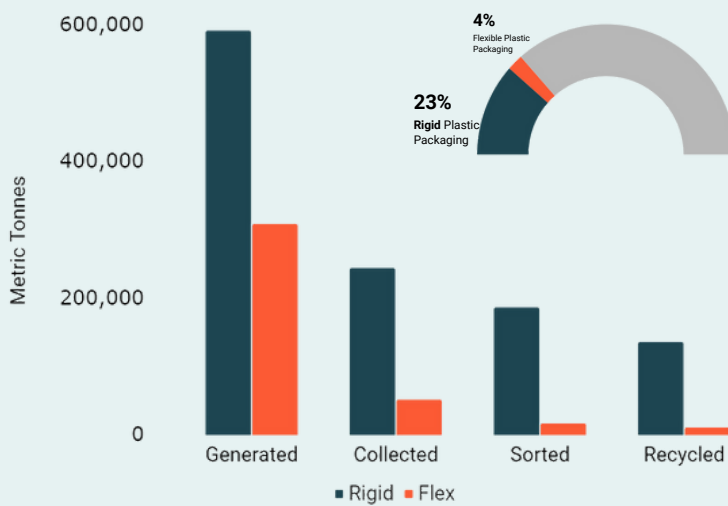
Breakdown by Waste Stream



Deposit Return Systems (DRSs) in 2022 Total Recycling Rate: 60%

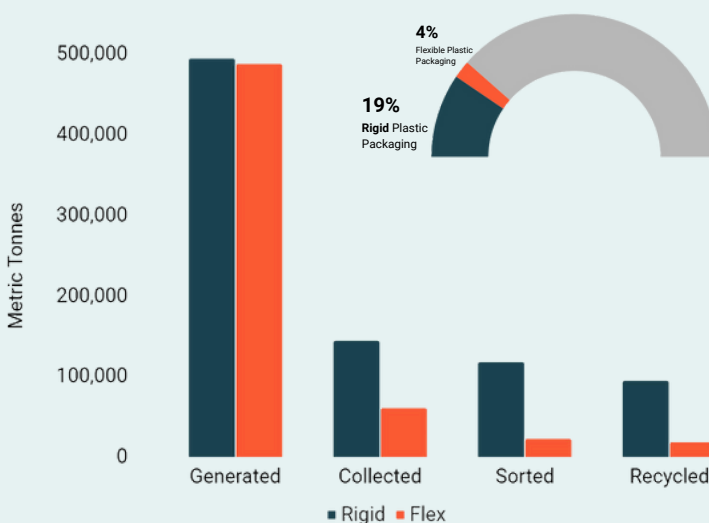
- Although only addressing a small fraction of the overall plastic packaging generated, DRSs have the highest recycling rates.
- Quebec and New Brunswick are implementing improvements to their DRSs that should increase rates.

Given that flexible plastics represent only a small percentage in DRSs, this graph includes data exclusively for rigid plastics. A comprehensive analysis is available in the full report.



Residential Sector in 2022 Total Recycling Rate: 16%

- The recycling rate has remained consistent compared to 2019 data.
- Significant changes to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) systems nationwide are anticipated to be fully implemented between 2025 and 2030 and are expected to drive improvements in recycling rates.



Industrial, Commercial, Institutional Sector (ICI) in 2022 Total Recycling Rate: 11%

- Represents the largest amount of plastic packaging generated with the lowest recycling rates.
- ICI analysis indicates the subsectors disposing of the greatest quantity of plastic packaging are (from highest to lowest): Food services, Manufacturing, Trade, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Administration & Offices.



Key Findings

RELATED TO PLASTICS

Barriers to ICI Plastic Packaging Recycling

There are continued barriers to ICI plastic packaging recycling including market demand, contamination, lack of recycling infrastructure, an imbalance of information and controls, lack of economies of scale, and economic instability.

Next Steps: Focused attention on finding solutions to the barriers identified above will assist with improving outcomes.

Flexible Packaging Recycling

There are early signs of improvement for flexible plastic packaging, but more work is needed. Flexible packaging continues to be recycled at significantly lower rates than rigid packaging due to the complexity involved in recycling this material, including challenges with its collection, sorting, and final recycling. A switch from flexible to the more recyclable rigid packaging is not likely to solve this issue. The design of flexible packaging plays a critical role in this challenge, as materials that are difficult to separate or incompatible with existing recycling streams further hinder recycling efforts.

Next Steps: Continue work on flexible plastics packaging infrastructure and design for recyclability.

Improving Data on Plastic Packaging Flows

There are significant barriers and opportunities to improve the collection, transparency and reporting of data related to plastic packaging flows.

Next Steps: Stay tuned for updates in the upcoming CPP Data Roadmap.

Opportunities for Key ICI Subsectors

There are opportunities to target recycling system improvements in specific ICI subsectors. The ICI modelled data estimates that four of the ICI subsectors (i.e., food services, manufacturing, trade, and health care and social assistance) generate 78% of all ICI plastic packaging disposed. However, while these subsectors contribute significantly to disposal, the raw waste audit data obtained also shows that there are individual organizations within each of these subsectors that achieve high levels of recycling.

Next Steps: Improve the overall ICI subsector performance by targeting actions that help individual generators overcome barriers to improved performance.

Future Impacts in Canada's Recycling Systems

Changes are underway, though their full impacts are yet to be realized. For instance, there has been significant expansion of regulated recycling systems across Canada. Policy shifts are poised to enhance the collection and management of plastic packaging, particularly in the residential sector and deposit return systems. These developments aim to provide broader recycling access for households and improve economies of scale for recycling challenging materials, such as flexible plastics.

Next Steps: Monitor the implementation of these new policies to ensure they are achieving intended objectives and explore opportunities to better align policies and oversight.

For more information, please contact the Canada Plastics Pact at info@plasticspact.ca.

@ Canada Plastics Pact, December 2024
Report researched and written by:



A Solution Space by
Generate Canada

plasticspact.ca

The Canada Plastics Pact (CPP) is made up of a diverse mix of leading organizations and governments from across Canada's plastics value chain who are committed to eliminating plastic waste and pollution, while advancing a circular economy for plastics.

By fostering innovation, collaboration and collective action, we are developing, testing and scaling solutions to the systemic barriers so that the **right** plastics remain in the economy and **all** plastics out of people, animals and nature.

CPP is a Generate Canada Solution Space, advancing a shared vision for a strong and inclusive economy that thrives within nature's limits. CPP is also an active participant in the Plastics Pact Network, convened by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP).