

FINLAND RECYCLES

Background information Introduction

Recycled waste includes all reused waste, from glass bottles and metal to textiles and paper. In 2019, a total of over three million tonnes of municipal waste was treated in Finland. Of this, 43% was reused as materials or composted, 56% were utilised as energy and only one per cent ended up at landfills or was incinerated. There are over 10,000 recycling stations in Finland, so citizens are usually able to recycle regardless of their place of residence.

According to the targets set by the EU, the recycling rate should increase. The aim is that by 2025, at least 55% of municipal waste would be recycled and by 2035, the 65% threshold would be broken. Currently, the average recycling rate in the EU countries is 47%.

Sources:

- Statistics Finland's PX-Web database – Municipal waste by treatment method in Finland in 2019
- Eurostat – Recycling rate of municipal waste 2018
- Ministry of the Environment – Waste Act package



The most important thing in recycling is to sort the waste correctly into the appropriate collection containers.

Source: Freepik

Results

In Finland, 46% of municipal waste is collected separately. Paper and paperboard waste and organic waste are recycled most in Finland. Metal and wood waste are recycled clearly less. Electrical and electronic waste, plastic and glass are recycled the least.

Germany has the highest recycling rate among EU countries; clearly over one-half of the country's municipal waste is recycled in Germany. Finland fares well in recycling alongside Sweden, Norway and France. The recycling rate is over 40%. Serbia, Romania and Turkey recycle the least, with a recycling rate of under 12 per cent.

Of the 156 respondents to the survey conducted at our school, 137 said that they recycle something. The recycling rate was thus as high as 88%. Paperboard, glass and metal waste were recycled the most, around 76%, on average. Plastic waste was recycled in around 65 per cent of the households in the survey, organic waste in 63 per cent and electrical and electronic waste in 54 per cent. Wood waste was recycled the least.

Conclusions

In Finland, 43% of municipal waste is recycled, so Finland has not yet reached the recycling targets set by the EU in 2017. However, in a European comparison Finland fares well. In Finland much attention is paid to recycling and its importance, for example, in the media, which in our opinion may in part explain our good recycling situation.

Besides plastic, the most commonly used packaging materials in Finland are glass, metal and paperboard, so it is natural that they are also widely recycled. Composting is common in a town dominated by detached houses, as is incineration of all possible wood waste instead of recycling. These may explain the recycling rates of organic and wood waste in Parainen.

The survey indicates that the recycling rate in Parainen is clearly higher than in the whole of Finland. One reason for the lower recycling rate in the whole of Finland could be the scarcity of recycling centres in Northern Finland. Another reason could be our sample. The survey was conducted among only one population group: Finnish-speaking families with children of secondary school age. The results cannot necessarily be generalised to apply to the whole of Parainen.

Summary

Nearly one-half of waste is recycled in Finland. The most recycled types of waste in Finland are paper, paperboard and organic waste. The recycling situation in Europe is generally good. The eastern regions of Europe recycle the least.



Despite the recycling, part of the waste still ends up at landfill sites and to be incinerated. Source: The Finnish Broadcasting Company

Introduction

We examined what and how much Finns recycle. We compared the amount of recycled municipal waste in different EU countries.

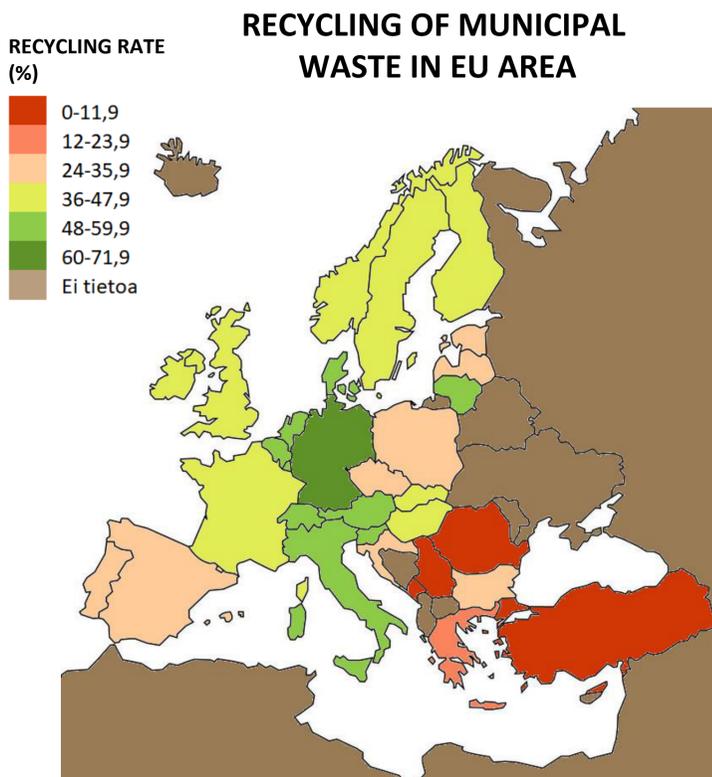
Our research questions were:

- How much do Finns recycle?
- What types of waste do Finns recycle?
- How much is recycled in other EU countries?

We searched the Internet for information about Finland's recycling rate and what types of waste are recycled in Finland. We also conducted a survey to which 156 of 203 pupils in our school responded. This allowed us to chart recycling in pupils' households in Parainen. Finally, we searched the Internet for information about the recycling rate in other European countries. We prepared tables and diagrams of the data we received.

Hypothesis

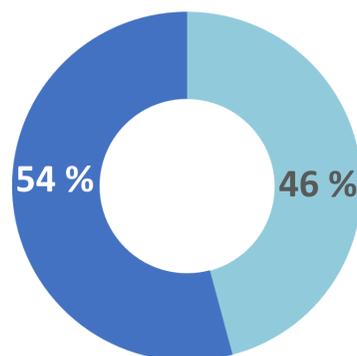
We thought that the most recycled types of waste were organic, paper and glass waste. We assumed recycling was quite common in Finnish households. We believed that Finland would be among the average countries.



Source: Eurostat – Recycling rate of municipal waste 2018

MUNICIPAL WASTE IN FINLAND

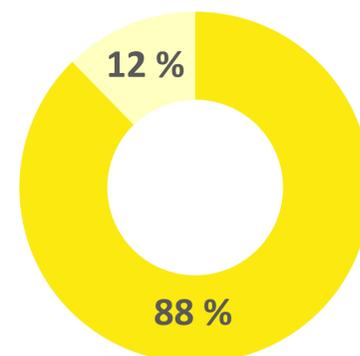
- Separately collected waste
- Mixed waste and other waste



Source: Statistics Finland's PX-Web database – Municipal waste by treatment method in Finland in 2019

DOES YOUR HOUSEHOLD RECYCLE? SURVEY IN PARAINEN

- Yes
- No

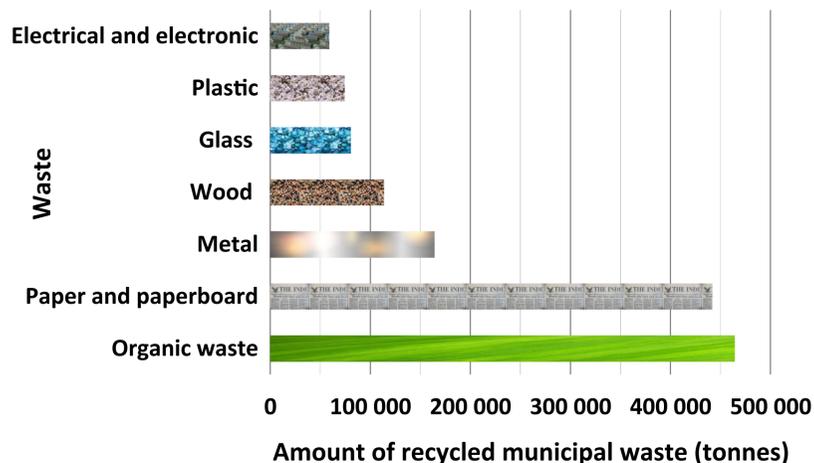


Source: Survey in Parainen 2020

Erilliskerätyt jätteet Suomessa	
Jätelaji	f (%)
Sähkö ja elektroniikka	31 %
Muovi	32 %
Lasi	6 %
Puu	11 %
Metalli	8 %
Paperi ja kartonki	5 %
Biojäte	4 %
Muut erilliskerätyt	2 %

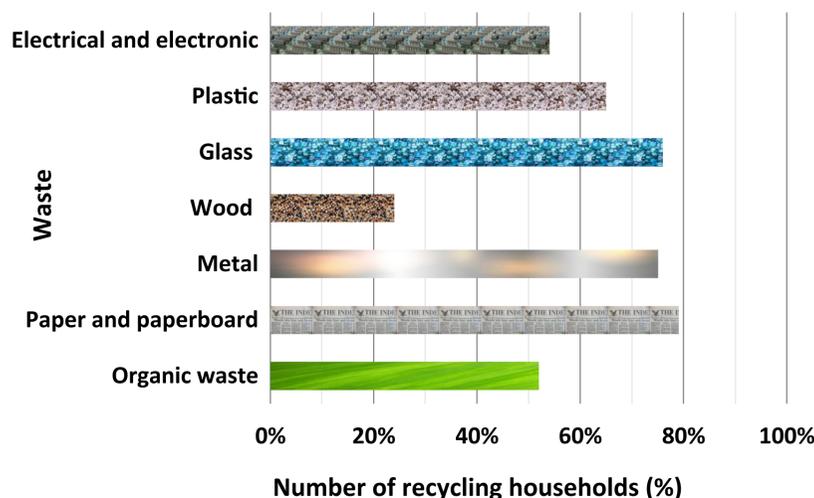
Source: Statistics Finland's PX-Web database – Municipal waste by treatment method in Finland in 2019

RECYCLING IN FINLAND BY WASTE TYPE



Source: Statistics Finland's PX-Web database – Municipal waste by treatment method in Finland in 2019

HOUSEHOLDS RECYCLE IN PARAINEN



Source: Survey in Parainen 2020

Thoughts

It was laborious but interesting to conduct a statistical survey. We were, for example, surprised by the big differences in recycling rates between the countries.

Our hypothesis was partly correct. We thought that glass, metal and paper and paperboard waste were the most recycled waste types in Finland, but the first two were recycled much less than we expected. The recycling rate in Finland was lower than we thought at first.

Of the schools in Parainen, our survey was answered only by the sole Finnish-speaking lower secondary school in town, so our sample was small. However, 56% of Parainen's inhabitants are Swedish-speaking. It would be worthwhile to examine whether this has an effect on households' recycling rate. In future, it would be interesting to also study how the recycling rate.