



PRESS RELEASE

2013 UK Household Plastics Collection Survey

The Recoup UK Household Plastics Collection Survey is a report which provides an in-depth review of the services in place for the collection of household plastics for recycling in the UK.

By surveying all Local Authorities in the UK, it is the most complete source of information about household plastics collection in the UK. It provides an in-depth review of the infrastructure in place and informs stakeholders on the core raw data and information such as current plastics packaging collection levels, recycling rates, collection methods and practices, and performance against the UK 2013-2017 plastics packaging recycling target.

Sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline, Nampak Plastics, Indorama Wellman Recycling and the RPC Group, the 2013 Survey also looks at sales, markets and PRN's, alternative waste technologies, waste and recycling strategies in the UK and communications.

The 2013 Survey is now available to download free of charge from the new Recoup website (www.recoup.org).

Key Data

Collection Levels and Recycling Rates

- It is estimated that nearly 1.2 million tonnes of plastics packaging are consumed by households in the UK
- From this 1.2 million tonnes, it is reported that 440,401 tonnes is collected for recycling – an overall 37% recycling rate
- The overall tonnages collected by scheme type (kerbside and bring) and plastic format (plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays) is:

2012	Plastic Bottles (Tonnes)	Pots, Tub and Trays (Tonnes)	TOTAL (Tonnes)
Kerbside Schemes	269,790	116,071	385,861
Bring Schemes	46,264	8,276	54,540
TOTAL	316,054	124,347	440,401

- Although there is only a minor increase in the number of plastic bottles collected, new plastics packaging consumption data has created a significant increase the plastic bottle recycling rate, increasing from 52% to 58%
- There is a 19% recycling rate for pots, tubs and trays

Local Authority Household Collection Provision

- At the end of March 2012 391 (96%) Local Authorities of the 407 local authorities in the UK provide a kerbside collection service that includes plastic bottles
- 244 Local Authorities collect pots, tubs and trays – 60% of Local Authorities
- 65 Local Authorities collect plastic film – 16% of Local Authorities

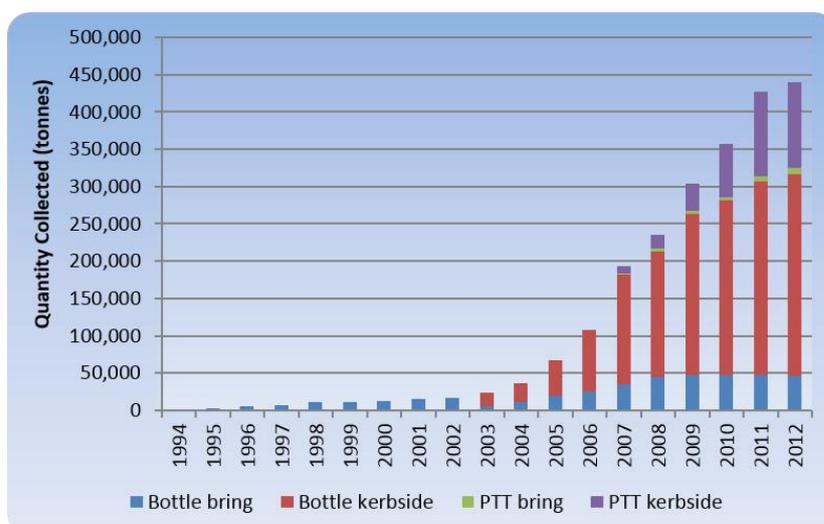
Comment

With 96% of local authorities providing a kerbside collection scheme for dry recyclables that includes plastic bottles, the average plastic bottle collection rate per household has only experienced modest increases in recent years and has plateaued. This is evidence that the provision of kerbside collection infrastructure alone will not allow the UK to reach the 2013-2017 recycling targets. The barriers to increased collection need to be clearly identified and addressed, to ensure all householders are using the service provided for dry recyclables, and that all plastic bottles and as many other plastics requested by the Local Authority are placed in the recyclables collection container.

Collections of pots, tubs and trays have continued to increase, but the lower than expected collection tonnage could be due to far more refined data being collected this year. With 60% of local authorities collecting pots, tubs and trays, and collection levels are expected to rise significantly between 2013 and 2017. Investment in infrastructure for sorting technologies is now happening, however, end markets need to be developed to provide the necessary drivers for both implementing a collection for pots, tubs and trays and an outlet for the material that is already collected. Sustainable pack designs will help, and Recoup is active in this area working across the plastics packaging supply and recycling chains to produce its *Recyclability by Design* guidance, with a revised version also now available for free download from the new Recoup website.

The Story of Household Plastics Packaging Collections

Household plastics recycling tonnages and rates have been reported by Recoup's UK Plastics Collection Survey since the first year it was published in 1994, and as a result the impressive progress and story of plastics recycling from UK's households can be tracked throughout this time. The figure below shows the percentage split of how many plastic bottles are being collected through kerbside and bring schemes since data from kerbside schemes was introduced.



Sales, Markets & PRNs

There is a compelling business case to collect plastics for recycling. It is estimated that based on the median landfill gate fee for non-hazardous material of £85 per tonne the 42% of plastic bottles that were not collected for recycling cost over £19m to dispose of, and the value these plastic bottles would attract from reprocessors is an estimated £25m. Markets for pots, tubs and trays are more uncertain, but the household pots, tubs and trays not collected for recycling would incur estimated disposal costs between £45m and £55m.

Recoup estimate the ultimate destination of 50%-70% of plastics collected in 2012 is export, with 30%-50% staying in the UK for reprocessing. With the Chinese Green Fence Policy continuing to be strict on imports of unwashed plastics, outlets for the lower grade plastics are harder to find, driving down prices of pot, tub and tray prices to negative values and increasing disposal costs for plastics that cannot find end markets.

There is strong opinion that more PRN monies should be invested in collections. The 2013 Survey has been supported by LARAC (Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee), and Policy Officer Dave Thomas stating: ““The importance of collections by Local Authorities are essential in helping industry meet the new plastics recycling targets. There is a clear lack of investment from PRN monies in collections, both in terms of infrastructure but also increasing the quality of the material collected.”

UK Plastics Packaging Recycling Targets Update

The UK is now in the first year of the government’s 5 year recycling targets for packaging waste for 2013 to 2017, and the UK’s recycling performance will be judged on increasingly tough targets, and the real focus is on plastics packaging.

There were 640,613 tonnes of plastics packaging collected for recycling in 2012, which is from both the household and C&I sectors. With 440,401 tonnes reported as coming from UK households (69%), it is estimated that the other 31% (200,242 tonnes) is from other sectors, which is mainly from C&I sources.

Extensive profiling work has been completed in Valpak’s *Plasflow 2017*, which Recoup has contributed to. This maps the flow of plastics packaging from consumption through to end markets in order to develop a range of compliance scenarios to meet the 2017 plastic packaging recycling targets. The 2017 scenario stated it is estimated that 1,213,000 tonnes of plastics packaging to be recycled by 2017 to meet UK targets.

Year	2012	2017
Business Target	32%	57%
Actual Target	22.5%	42%
Plastic Packaging Consumption Based on 2% Annual Increase	2,535,000	2,868,000
Actual Performance	640,613	1,213,000

Although this is for plastics packaging from all sectors, it does provide an indication of the collections needed from UK households to meet the 2017 42% recycling target. If the 2012 split between household (69%) and non-household sources (31%) of the total plastics packaging recycled is applied to the target of 1,213,000 tonnes in 2017, there would be 836,970 tonnes of plastics packaging that needs to be collected from UK households - almost double the current 440,401 tonne collection level.

ABOUT RECOUP

For more information please contact Recoup's Technical Manager, Steve Morgan, at steve.morgan@recoup.org or on 01733 375679.

- Recoup is a leading authority on plastics recycling, providing expertise and guidance to a wide range of clients and members across the plastics supply, use and recycling chain
- Established in 1990, Recoup (RECYcling of Used Plastics) has charity status and its patron is Professor David Bellamy OBE
- Built on a network of members and much of the good work that Recoup undertakes is achieved by the support of these valued members
- Recoup deliver research, project management and policy review activities for its members and clients, working to maximise plastics recycling by stimulating the development of sustainable plastics waste management practices
- Recoup works with many other leading international plastics recycling organisations to ensure that it stimulates the implementation of latest best practices and developments worldwide

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