

# FACTS & FIGURES

**71** Pounds (32 kg) of waste created, on average, for every pound of finished products.<sup>1</sup>

**11 billion** Tons (10 billion tonnes) of total waste created in the United States each year, including discards from manufacturing, mining, oil and gas exploration, agricultural, coal combustion, and other discards.<sup>2</sup>

**4 million** Pounds (1.8 million kg) of material that industry moves, mines, extracts, shovels, burns, wastes, pumps, and disposes in order to provide one average middle-class American family's needs for a year.<sup>3</sup>

**1** Percentage of the total North American materials flow that ends up in, and is still being used within, products six months after their sale.<sup>4</sup>

**25** Percentage of global carbon dioxide emissions generated by the United States.<sup>5</sup>

**33** Percentage of Earth's timber and paper used by the United States.<sup>6</sup>

**3** Number of Earths that would be needed to produce the resources and absorb the wastes if all persons currently living lived like today's Americans and Canadians.<sup>7</sup>

**69** Percentage of dioxins in the global environment attributable to waste incinerators.<sup>8</sup>

**2** Rank of landfills as highest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States (after fossil fuel combustion).<sup>9</sup>

**30** Number of years after closure that today's state-of-the-art landfills are required to be monitored and maintained.<sup>10</sup>

**Hundreds to thousands** Number of years after closure that today's state-of-the-art landfills are expected to be threats to groundwater quality.<sup>11</sup>

**7** Percentage of municipal discards in 1907 in New York City that were manufactured products (by weight).<sup>12</sup>

**76** Percentage of municipal discards in 1998 in the United States that were manufactured products (by weight).<sup>13</sup>

**3 months** Time it takes Americans to throw away enough aluminum to replace its entire commercial aircraft fleet.<sup>14</sup>

**10 tons** Amount of waste (9 tonnes) generated to make a 5 pound (2.3 kg) laptop computer.<sup>15</sup>

**114 billion** Number of single-use beverage bottles and cans thrown away in the United States in 1999.<sup>16</sup>

**5.2** Percentage of all plastic products produced in the United States in 1998 that was recycled.<sup>17</sup>

**270,000** Tons (245,000 tonnes) of disposable plates and cups used in the United States in 1960.<sup>18</sup>

**1,830,000** Tons (1,660,000 tonnes) of disposable plates and cups used in the United States in 1997.<sup>19</sup>

**43** Percentage of landfilled or incinerated municipal discards, by weight, that are packaging and containers, or disposable products such as paper and plastic plates and cups, diapers, junk mail, trash bags, and tissue paper and towels.<sup>20</sup>

**“For all the world to live as an American or Canadian, we would need two more Earths to satisfy everyone, three more still if population should double, and 12 Earths altogether if worldwide standards of living should double over the next 40 years.”**

— Hawken, Lovins, and Lovins, *Natural Capitalism*

Percentage of energy saved by using recycled instead of raw materials to manufacture:<sup>21</sup>

**40%** Glass

**40%** Newspaper

**60%** Steel

**70%** Plastics

**95%** Aluminum (75% when recycled back into aluminum beverage cans)

**\$2 million** Amount Philadelphia businesses saved by recycling in 1995. The city's recycling rate jumped from 10% in 1994 to 29% in 1996.<sup>22</sup>

**\$34 billion** Total annual wages of the 952,614 Americans employed in recycling collection, processing, and manufacturing with recycled materials.<sup>23</sup>

## SOURCES

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