American Forest & Paper Association

2024 U.S. Paper and Cardboard Recycling Rates

Paper recycling rates have continuously grown over recent decades and remain consistently high. The paper industry recycles nearly 60% more paper today than it did in 1990.

Paper Recycling Rate

- In 2024, the paper recycling rate was **60% - 64%.**
- We recycled around **46 million** tons of paper.
- That's **125,000** tons per day.

Cardboard Recycling Rate

- The 2024 cardboard recycling rate was **69% - 74%.**
- We recycled more than **33 million** tons of cardboard.
- That's **90,000** tons per day.

Paper and Cardboard Recycling Streams

Paper is one of the most widely recycled materials in America. Paper and paper-based packaging is recovered for recycling from multiple places, including:

01 **Residential:**
This includes curbside, condo/apartment building communal or drop-off recycling.

02 **Commercial:**
This includes retail like your grocery store and big box stores. Also office buildings.

03 **Institutional:**
This includes places like hospitals and schools.

04 **Industrial:**
This includes factories, gas and electrical plants, and more.

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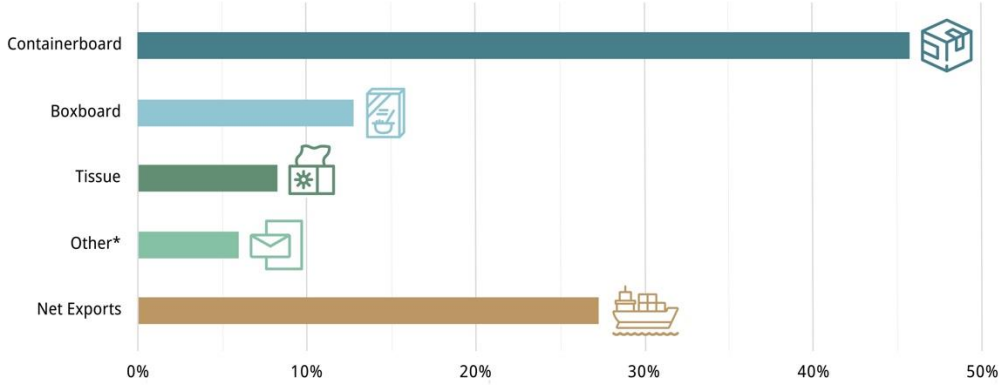
How Recycled Paper is Used

- At paper mills across the country, recycled paper is used to make the essential products millions of people rely on every day!
- In 2024, nearly half of recycled paper went into making containerboard — the material used to make cardboard boxes.
- Recycled paper makes boxes for food and medicine, tissue products like toilet paper and paper towels, and newspapers.
- Recycled paper is also exported. It's used in paper mills around the world to manufacture new products.

Where Recycled Paper Goes

More than 2/3 of recycled paper goes into new products Americans rely on



* Other includes newsprint, printing-writing, Kraft packaging and Industrial converting, construction paper and board, and molded pulp

Source: *AF&PA Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau*

About AF&PA

The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) serves to advance public policies that foster economic growth, job creation and global competitiveness for a vital sector that makes the essential paper and packaging products Americans use every day. The U.S. forest products industry employs more than 925,000 people, largely in rural America, and is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 44 states. Our industry accounts for approximately 4.7% of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP, manufacturing more than $435 billion in products annually. AF&PA member companies are significant producers and users of renewable biomass energy and are committed to making sustainable products for a sustainable future through the industry's decades-long initiative — ***Better Practices, Better Planet 2030.***