

ABA 2016 Beverage Container Recycling Rate Summary

The American Beverage Association (ABA) calculates an “all beverage” recycling rate each year for its members’ most widely used container types. Since 2005 this series has tracked the recycling rate for ABA members’ aluminum, PET, and glass containers representing about 90 percent of all containers sold. Prior to 2005 the industry tracked the rate for carbonated soft drinks only. All data and rates are compiled on a weight basis, consistent with other recycling rate reporting.

Results

The preliminary 2016 recycling rate for ABA member packages is 36 percent. The amount of beverage container material recovered for recycling declined slightly (1.8 percent) in 2016, owing to sizeable drop in the recycling rate for aluminum. Meanwhile sales of all package types grew, leading to a 1.4 percentage point decline in the 2016 recycling rate compared to 2015 (Exhibit 1).

Since 2005 when ABA began tracking recycling rates for its major container types, the weight of these packages in the market has increased by 5.5 percent while the weight of material recovered for recycling has grown by 23 percent.

The aluminum recycling rate decreased for the second year in a row in 2016, reflecting weak global commodity markets, which have recovered somewhat since. The PET beverage recycling rate declined slightly as sales grew nearly three percent, but the amount of material recycled remained virtually unchanged. The glass recycling rate used in the calculations was the 2014 rate developed by EPA; the 2015 and 2016 rates are not yet available.

Approach

ABA relies on supplier data, where available, and supplements that with additional data obtained from public and private sources. Unlike other industries, glass producers and recyclers do not compile recycling statistics so ABA uses EPA recycling estimates for glass, which lag significantly and have other limitations as well.

Citations

- Aluminum Association and Can Manufacturers Institute
- NAPCOR
- SBA-CCI
- US EPA
- Beverage Marketing Corporation
- Northbridge Environmental

Exhibit 1

Recycling Rates for ABA Member Packages*

Year	Rates**
2005	31%
2006	31%
2007	33%
2008	35%
2009	37%
2010	38%
2011	39%
2012	39%
2013	40%
2014	38%
2015	38%
2016	36%

** Aluminum, PET, and glass only; limited data are available on other plastics, steel, cartons, drink boxes, and pouches*
*** Recycling rates are derived from weight-based data. Rates reflect use of the consumer recycling rate for aluminum cans.*