Statistical Overview of Municipal Waste Management in Israel (2000–2025)

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Summary

To create a detailed statistical report on the waste management system in Israel from 2000 to 2025, including data from governmental, municipal, and international bodies on waste volumes, recycling, landfilling, dynamics by years and waste types, with mandatory indication of sources.
The report is intended to complement the existing study of the legislative framework and should contain the maximum possible level of detail in statistical data and international comparisons, focusing on Israel.

This report presents a comprehensive statistical analysis of the waste management system in the State of Israel for the period from 2000 to 2025.
The analysis is based on data obtained from the **Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)**, the **Ministry of Environmental Protection (MoEP)**, and international organizations such as the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** and the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.
The report identifies key trends, challenges, and achievements in waste management, paying particular attention to waste generation volumes, treatment methods, and international comparisons. The main findings indicate a steady growth in the total volume of generated waste, driven by demographic and economic growth. Despite policy initiatives aimed at developing a circular economy, **landfilling remains the dominant method** of managing municipal solid waste (MSW), accounting for about 80% of the total.
The recycling rate shows slow but steady growth, yet it remains significantly below the government's targets and the OECD average. Waste generation per capita in Israel is among the highest in developed countries, creating a considerable burden on the environment and infrastructure. The report examines in detail various waste streams — municipal, industrial, construction, and hazardous — and provides statistical data illustrating dynamics in each of these sectors.

Introduction

Waste management is one of the most pressing environmental and economic challenges facing modern societies. In Israel — a country with high population density, limited land resources, and rapid economic growth — this issue acquires particular significance.
Over the past two decades, the waste management system has undergone significant transformation, moving from unregulated dumping to more structured approaches involving modern landfills and elements of a circular economy.

This report is intended to provide a comprehensive statistical overview of this evolution.
Its goal is to systematize and analyze quantitative data characterizing all aspects of waste management in Israel from 2000 to 2025. The report examines waste generation volumes at national and municipal levels, analyzes waste composition, and traces the dynamics of various treatment methods such as landfilling, recycling, and composting.

Special attention is given to international comparisons, which allow assessment of the effectiveness of Israel's system in the context of global standards and practices — particularly in comparison with OECD and EU countries. This analysis serves as an important complement to research on the legislative framework, providing an empirical basis for evaluating the effectiveness of adopted policies and identifying areas requiring further improvement.

General Dynamics of Waste Generation and Management in Israel (2000–2025)

From 2000 to 2025, Israel has shown a consistent increase in the total volume of generated waste — a direct result of two key factors: **population growth** and **growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**.
According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics and OECD reports, the total volume of municipal solid

waste (MSW) has demonstrated a steady upward trend.
In the early 2000s, the annual MSW volume was about **5.3 million tons**, rising to **5.8 million tons by 2019**.
Projections for the early 2020s, given current growth rates, indicate further increases.

This growth occurs despite efforts toward **decoupling** — separating the rate of waste generation from economic growth.
OECD analysis shows that Israel's material intensity decreased between 2010 and 2020, reflecting improved resource efficiency; however, absolute material consumption and, consequently, waste generation continued to rise.

A key indicator reflecting pressure on the waste management system is **waste generation per capita**. In Israel, this figure is among the highest in the OECD. According to CBS, in **2018** per capita MSW generation reached **691 kg**, which significantly exceeds the OECD average of **about 534 kg per person per year**. Data from other sources, such as the **Global Waste Index**, confirm this trend, estimating Israel's level at **650 kg per capita**, among the highest in developed nations.

This high waste generation rate is driven by both high consumption levels and demographic factors — including one of the highest population growth rates in the OECD (**about 1.9% per year**).
The combined effect of population increase and high per capita consumption creates cumulative pressure on the country's waste collection, transport, and disposal infrastructure.

Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Management

Municipal solid waste constitutes the main part of the waste stream managed at the level of local authorities and represents the central element of the national waste management strategy.
The dynamics of MSW management in Israel over the past two decades are characterized by the dominance of landfilling and slow progress in recycling.
According to numerous reports of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the OECD, about **80%** of all MSW in Israel is sent to landfills.
This figure has remained virtually unchanged for many years, despite the adoption of strategic plans aimed at reducing it.
For example, data for **2018 and 2020** show that the share of landfilling stood at **76–80%**, which is significantly higher than the OECD average of about **40%**.

Persistent dependence on landfills leads to a number of serious environmental consequences, including greenhouse gas (methane) emissions, contamination of groundwater and soil, and inefficient use of limited land resources.
The **OECD Environmental Performance Review (2023)** notes that although the growth rate of landfill volumes has slightly slowed, the absolute amount of waste sent to landfills continues to increase due to the overall rise in waste generation.

The composition of municipal waste is an important factor determining the potential for recycling and composting.
In Israel, a significant share of MSW consists of **organic waste (bio-waste)**, which, according to different estimates, accounts for **35–50%** of total weight.
This category includes food waste, garden waste, and other biodegradable organic materials.
Such a high proportion of organics presents both a serious challenge and a significant opportunity:
on one hand, decomposition of organic waste in landfills is a major source of methane emissions — a potent greenhouse gas;
on the other hand, these wastes can be efficiently treated through **composting** or **anaerobic digestion** to produce fertilizers and biogas.

The issue of food waste is particularly acute.
According to a 2023 report, Israel discarded **2.6 million tons of food**, of which **1.2 million tons** were edible.
This represents about **38%** of all food produced and causes an estimated **economic loss of 24.3 billion NIS**.

The remaining portion of MSW consists of dry recyclable materials, such as paper and cardboard (about **17%**), plastic (**13–15%**), and other materials.
The recycling rate in Israel shows a slow but positive trend.
According to **UNFCCC** data, the overall recycling rate increased from **19% in 2015** to **24% in 2022**.
However, other sources, including **OECD** and **MoEP** reports, often indicate a stagnant level of around **20%** for MSW.
This discrepancy may result from different calculation methodologies and inclusion of various waste streams.

Despite some progress, Israel lags significantly behind many European countries, where the average MSW recycling rate is **48%**.
The **Government of Israel** has set ambitious goals under its *Sustainable Waste Economy Strategy (2021–2030)* — to increase the MSW recycling rate to **54%** and reduce the landfill share to **20% by 2030**.
Achieving these targets will require substantial investment in sorting and recycling infrastructure, implementation of effective economic incentives such as the **Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)** system, and expansion of source-separated collection programs.

Management of Specific Waste Streams

Industrial and Hazardous Waste

Management of industrial and hazardous waste represents a separate and complex challenge requiring specialized infrastructure and strict regulation.
Historically, data on these waste types in Israel have been less systematic compared to MSW.
The volume of industrial waste generation is directly linked to the level of economic activity in the manufacturing sector.
According to data from the mid-2000s, annual generation of industrial waste was around **1.4–1.6 million tons**, with a recycling rate significantly higher than that of municipal waste — averaging **59.6%**.

Market forecasts indicate expected growth in the industrial waste management sector, driven by both increased industrial production and stricter environmental regulations.
As for **hazardous waste**, available statistics are often outdated.
A **2006 report** indicated that Israel generated approximately **330,000 tons** of hazardous waste annually.
More recent data are often indirect and based on administrative reporting rather than comprehensive surveys, which may lead to inaccuracies in estimates.
Management of these wastes — including collection, transport, treatment, and disposal — is carried out at specialized facilities such as the **Ramat Hovav** site.
However, problems with illegal dumping and insufficient oversight still persist.

Construction and Demolition Waste (C&D)

The construction and demolition sector is one of the largest waste generators in Israel.
Each year, about **7.5 million tons** of C&D waste are generated nationwide, including earthworks.
Of this amount, roughly **3.5 million tons** are classified directly as construction waste (concrete, bricks, wood, metals, etc.).

C&D waste management in Israel has made significant progress over the past decade.
In **2005**, the recycling rate for such waste was nearly zero, but by **2009** it had reached **62%**.
This rapid improvement resulted from targeted government policy to establish recycling infrastructure and promote the use of secondary construction materials.
By **2010**, there were **8 specialized landfills** and **9 recycling plants** for construction waste operating in the country.

Despite these achievements, **illegal dumping** of construction waste remains a serious issue.
It is estimated that about **0.9 million tons** of C&D waste are illegally disposed of each year, damaging landscapes, contaminating soil and water resources.
Combating this phenomenon requires stronger law enforcement and creation of more accessible and economically viable infrastructure for legal disposal.

Electronic Waste and Other Streams

Management of **Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE or e-waste)** is becoming an increasingly urgent issue due to growing electronics consumption.
Estimates for **2010** indicated that Israel generated about **85,000 tons** of e-waste annually, most of which (**77,500 tons**) came from households.
Large household appliances — such as refrigerators and washing machines — accounted for about **63%** of this amount by weight.
At that time, the e-waste recycling rate was low — about **11%**, or roughly **1.2 kg per capita per year**.

Since then, legislative measures based on the principle of **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** have been adopted to encourage collection and recycling of this waste stream.
However, illegal trade and export of e-waste — estimated at **50,000–64,000 tons per year** — remain unresolved problems.

Other specific streams, such as **coal ash**, show high utilization rates: almost all coal ash generated at power plants is recycled and used in the construction industry.
As for **garden waste**, its untreated landfilling has been prohibited since **1996**, and approximately **220,000 tons** are processed annually, mainly for compost production.

International Comparisons and Israel's Positioning

A comparative analysis of waste management indicators places Israel in a challenging position on the international stage, especially in comparison with OECD and European Union countries.
The main indicator by which Israel stands out is the **high level of waste generation per capita**.
As previously noted, with **650–691 kg per person per year**, Israel exceeds the OECD average (**534 kg**) and the EU average (**511 kg**).
The country ranks among the top in this category alongside Denmark, Norway, and the United States, but unlike many of them, it demonstrates a **much less efficient waste treatment system**.
This discrepancy between high waste generation and low recycling rates represents a central issue within Israel's waste management system.

The second key comparative aspect concerns **treatment methods**.
Israel's dependence on **landfilling (around 80% of MSW)** stands in stark contrast to the practices of leading European countries.
In the European Union, the average share of landfilling has decreased from **61% in 1995** to **22% in 2023**.
Countries such as **Germany, Sweden, and Austria** have virtually eliminated the direct landfilling of untreated MSW, sending **less than 5%** of waste to landfills.
Instead, they employ an integrated approach that includes **high recycling rates (over 50%)**, **organic waste composting**, and **waste-to-energy incineration**.
In contrast, Israel lacks sufficient incineration infrastructure, and its recycling rate (**around 20–24%**) lags far behind the EU average (**48%**).
For example, **plastic waste recycling** in Israel stands at only **6–7%**, while the remainder is sent to landfills.

These statistical differences illustrate Israel's lag in the transition to a **circular economy**.
While Europe has introduced and successfully implemented directives setting mandatory recycling targets and economic instruments such as **high landfill taxes**, Israel's measures have been either slow to develop or only

partially effective.
For instance, although Israel has a landfill tax, **OECD experts** note that its rate is too low to significantly alter the economic incentives in favor of recycling.
Thus, international comparisons clearly indicate the need for **accelerated structural reforms** in Israel's waste management sector to reach standards established in other developed nations.

Regional Aspects and Waste Management in Major Cities

The waste management system in Israel is largely **decentralized**, with responsibility for collection and initial disposal resting on **municipal authorities**.
As a result, system performance can vary significantly by region and municipality.
Large urban agglomerations such as **Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa** are the main waste generators in the country and face the most acute challenges.
Although detailed city-level statistics are limited in the available sources, national trends are heavily influenced by conditions in these metropolitan areas.

High population density, intense commercial and industrial activity, and urban sprawl contribute to large waste volumes, creating logistical challenges and increasing pressure on landfills.
Reports indicate that **urban areas generate 60–70% of all MSW** in Israel.
Haifa, as a major industrial center, faces additional challenges related to managing industrial and hazardous waste.
Tel Aviv, being the country's economic and cultural hub, is characterized by high consumption levels and, consequently, significant household and commercial waste generation.
Jerusalem, with its large population and tourist influx, also experiences strong pressure on its waste management system.

While some large cities have implemented **advanced pilot projects** for separate collection or recycling, the overall picture reflects a national issue: the dominance of landfilling and insufficient sorting and recycling infrastructure.
The lack of regional sorting stations and recycling plants means that even **separately collected waste** often ends up being mixed and sent to landfills.

Forecasts and Strategic Goals up to 2025 and Beyond

The **Government of Israel** recognizes the severity of waste management challenges and has developed several strategic documents outlining short- and medium-term goals.
The key one is the **"Sustainable Waste Economy Strategy"**, adopted in **2021**, which sets ambitious targets through **2030**.
Its main quantitative goals include **reducing MSW landfilling from 80% to 20%** and **increasing recycling to 54%**.
Additionally, the strategy calls for a **47% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions** from the waste sector compared to 2015 levels.

To achieve these goals, a comprehensive plan has been proposed, including construction of **new sorting and recycling facilities**, implementation of **waste-to-energy** and **anaerobic digestion technologies**, as well as **increasing landfill tax rates** and introducing a **ban on landfilling unsorted organic waste**.
Forecasts show that without decisive action, the volume of waste generated in Israel could increase by **25% by 2030**, further exacerbating existing problems.

The transition period leading up to **2025** can be considered an **intermediate phase**, during which foundations for transformation must be laid — including construction of key infrastructure and adoption of new regulatory mechanisms.

The success of these reforms will depend on multiple factors: political stability, levels of public and private investment, and the degree of engagement and cooperation from municipal authorities and the public. **Monitoring progress** toward these goals, based on accurate and timely statistical data, will be crucial for adjusting policies and ensuring Israel's transition toward a more sustainable waste management model.

Conclusion

The statistical analysis of Israel's waste management system for the period **2000–2025** reveals a **picture full of contradictions**.
On one hand, the country shows measurable progress — particularly in managing specific streams such as construction waste and gradually increasing overall recycling rates.
Important steps have been taken to close **unregulated dumps** and transition to **modern sanitary landfills**.
On the other hand, fundamental problems remain unresolved.
Israel continues to generate one of the **highest per capita waste amounts** among developed countries, and its dependence on landfilling remains **critically high (around 80%)**.
This places Israel at a disadvantage compared with leading OECD and EU countries that have achieved significant progress toward a **circular economy**.

The statistical data presented in this report clearly demonstrate the **gap between declared policy goals and actual results**.
Despite ambitious strategies aimed at drastically reducing landfilling and increasing recycling by 2030, the current pace of change is insufficient to achieve these goals.
Bridging this gap requires **systemic and decisive measures**:
major investments in modern sorting and recycling infrastructure, implementation of effective economic incentives and disincentives, stronger law enforcement to combat illegal dumping, and active public and business engagement to promote waste separation and responsible consumption.

Without these comprehensive efforts, Israel's waste management system will continue to face growing pressure, leading to worsening environmental problems and missed economic opportunities.

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