

# Waste Disposal and Recycling

Intense economic activity has sharply increased the volume of waste generated in Japan in recent years. About 109 million tons of industrial waste, or 43% of the total, is recycled through corporate efforts (Table 1 and Fig. 1). The volume of nonindustrial waste has continued to surge, however. The spread of office automation, including the extensive use of computers and copying machines, has produced a vast amount of paper and other waste from offices. Meanwhile, changing consumer lifestyles, including the wide use of throwaway containers, have generated mountains of waste that is difficult to dispose of.

In Japan, waste paper, cans and glass fragments have been collected and recycled at a higher rate than in other industrialized countries. However, the higher yen and lower prices for primary products in recent years have made recycled materials less competitive on the market. Growth in the recycling rate is at a standstill (Fig. 2).

At a time when the environment is in serious danger, there is an urgent need to reduce waste through the conservation of resources and waste recycling. There is a growing consensus that the Japanese people as a whole need to become more conscious of the importance of recycling.

**Table 1 Waste Disposal (FY 1987)**

(1,000 tons)

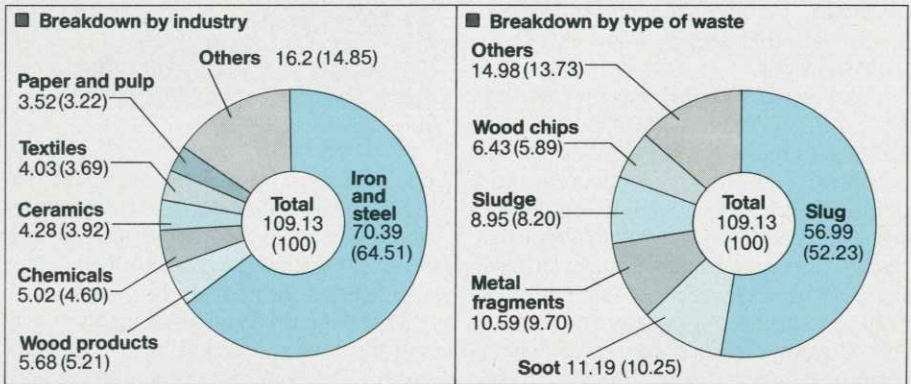
	Nonindustrial waste	Industrial waste
<b>Total volume of waste</b>	46,470	252,660
<b>Volume of waste recycled</b>	—	109,130 (43.2)
<b>Volume of waste disposed of through incineration and other means</b>	28,280 (60.9)	107,030 (42.4)
<b>Volume of waste disposed of in land reclamation and other means</b>	16,490 (35.5)	36,350 (14.4)

Note: Figures in parentheses denote percentage to total waste.

Sources: Survey on Waste Disposal, Ministry of Health and Welfare; Survey on Discharge of Industrial Waste, Ministry of International Trade and Industry

**Fig. 1 Industrial Waste Recycled Nationwide (FY 1987)**

(1,000 tons)

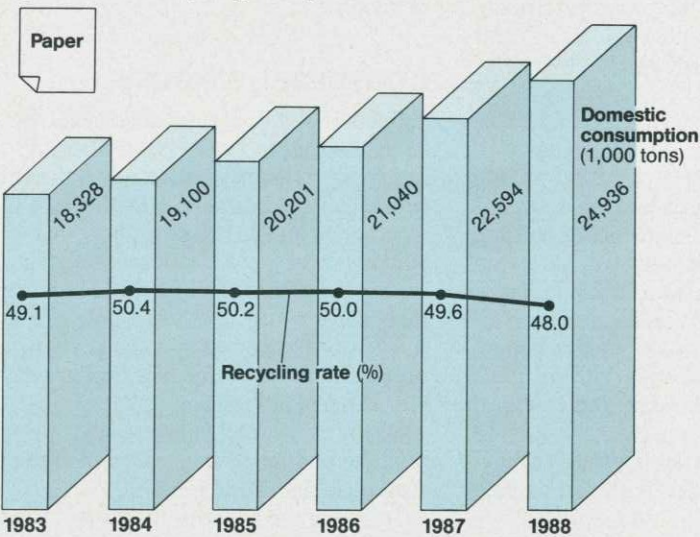


Notes: 1. Estimates based on questionnaire covering 3,000 factories and offices. Shipments from factories factored in.

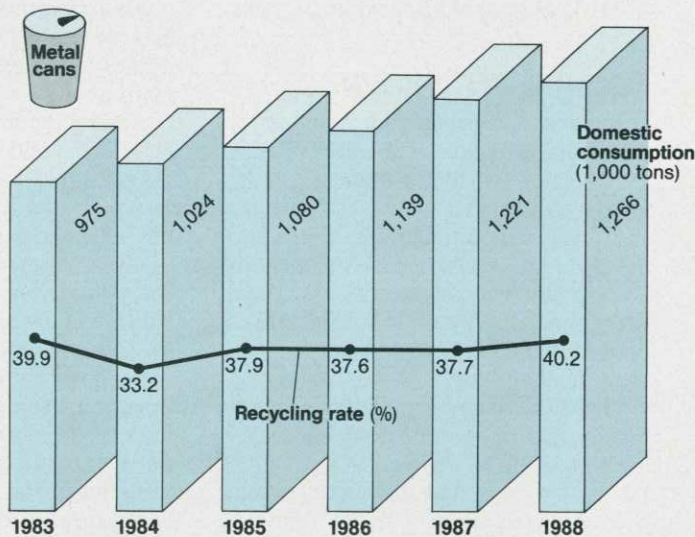
2. Figures in parentheses denote percentage to total industrial waste recycled.

Source: Survey on the Discharge of Industrial Waste, Ministry of International Trade and Industry

**Fig. 2 Rate of Recycling of Paper and Metal Cans**



Note: The rate of recycling of paper is one of the highest in the world.  
Sources: Monthly paper-pulp statistics, Monthly Japan trade report and others.



Note: The recycling rate is almost twice that of Europe, which stands at about 20%.  
Source: An association for can disposal measures