



## Illegal Disposal of Electronics in Colorado

Survey Results  
March 2019

### Background

In 2012 Recycle Colorado (formerly the Colorado Association for Recycling) was instrumental in passing legislation that bans landfill disposal of certain electronic devices in Colorado. Several years later the state is faced with obstacles to capturing and sustainably recycling e-waste. Without funding for public education and contingency plans for counties without local certified recyclers, the ban has produced confusion – potentially leading to an increase in illegal disposal of this waste stream.

Recycle Colorado convened a round table, “E-Waste Recycling – What’s Missing?” on March 29, 2018, to discuss solutions to the issue and identify participants willing to develop a potential action plan. As a result, an action group was formed and that group identified electronics recycling education as a primary need. Prior to any sort of pilot program, however, the group determined that data on the actual occurrence and amount of illegal disposal of electronic waste in Colorado was needed first.

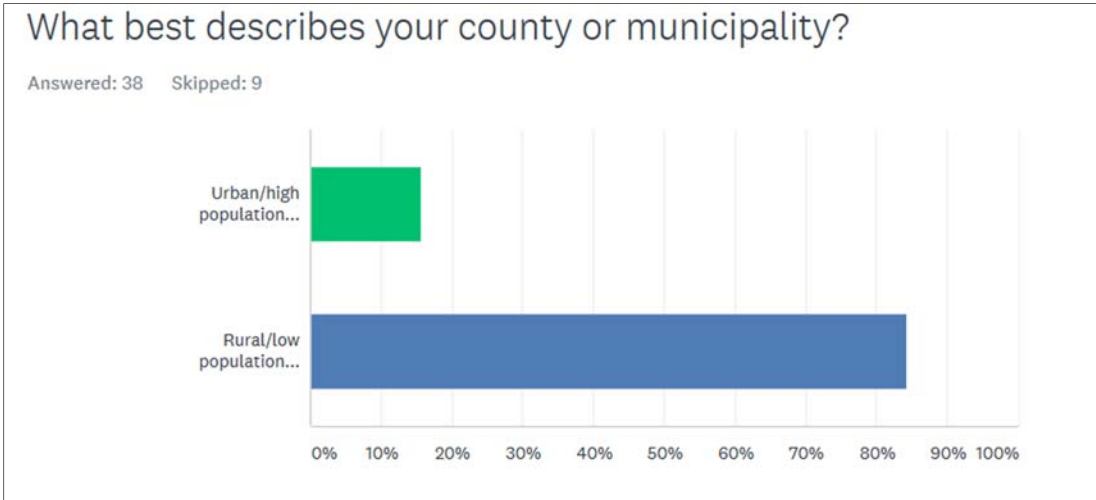
The action group designed a survey to focus on illegal disposal of cathode ray tube televisions (CRTs) and provide the opportunity to collect information on other items if available. The goal of the survey was to ascertain the actual amount of illegal disposal happening in the state by county, summarize the environmental and economic impacts of illegal disposal and then look at next steps for policy and/or a pilot program to support policy.

The survey was distributed to cities and counties with the help of Colorado Municipal League and Colorado Counties, Inc., and to the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, ski-area communities, nonprofits, public and private landfills and other government entities.

### Summary of Results

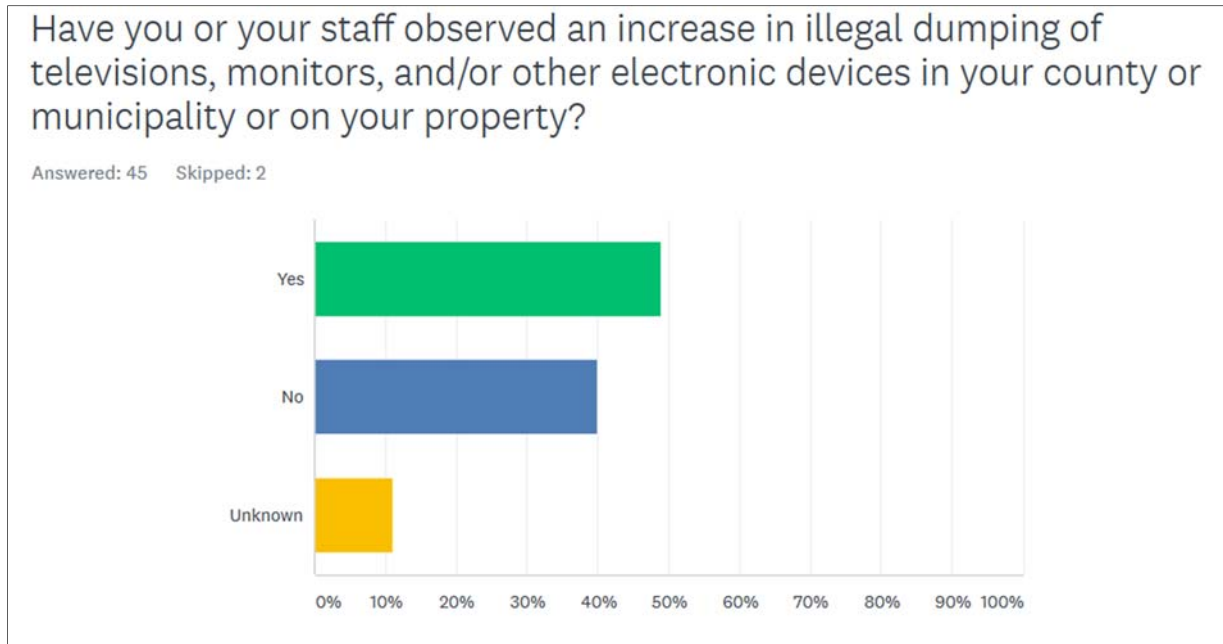
#### Respondents

- 47 entities participated in the 15-question survey between July and December 2018.
- 84% of the survey respondents identified as being from a rural area.
- The urban corridor is also represented in the survey (Denver, Lakewood, Larimer County)



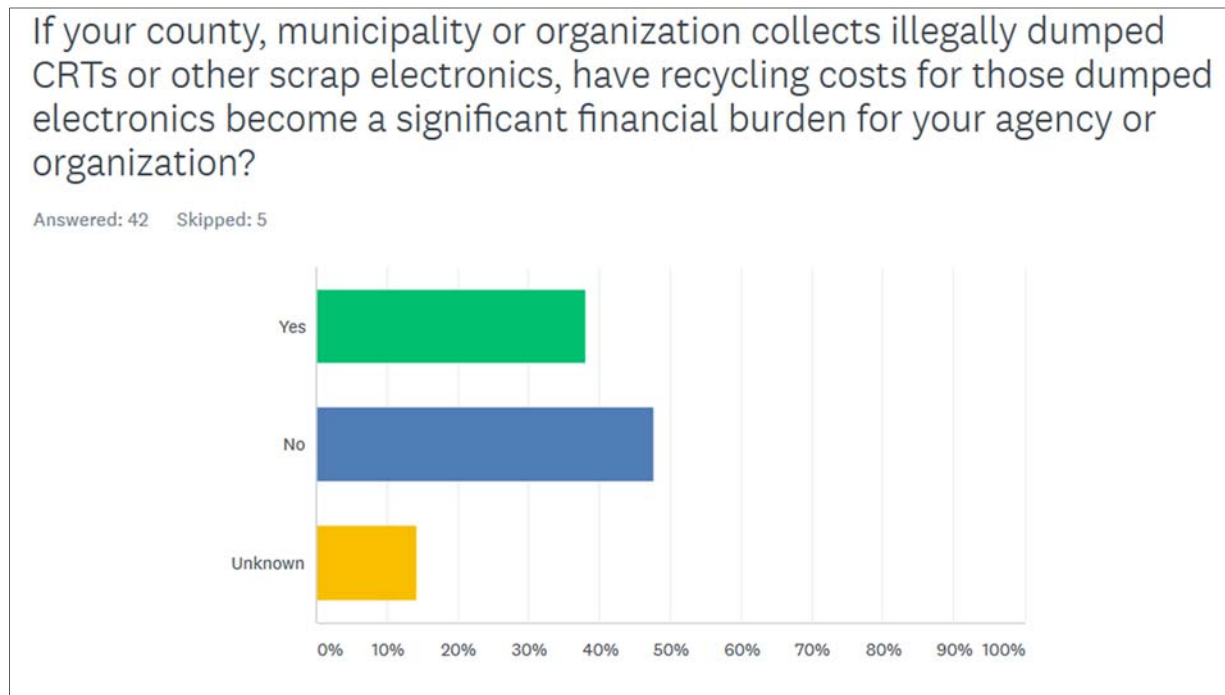
### Status of Illegal Disposal of Electronics in Colorado

- For entities experiencing illegal disposal of e-waste, it is primarily occurring on public lands, in ditches, in forests and along rural county roads.



- Cleanup costs of illegal disposal of electronics range from \$500 – \$9,000 per year.
- Two entities reported cleanup quantities of 4,000 - 6,000 pounds per year of illegally dumped electronics; one of these entities was Fremont County Road and Bridge.
- Electronics that are illegally disposed of are almost exclusively CRT televisions (11 of 12 responses).
- 65% of respondents have a nearby location to recycle (within town or city).
- 83% of respondents have a location to recycle regionally (within the county).

- One comment regarding access to recycling noted the issue is not having a place to recycle, it's the cost of recycling electronics that's the problem.
- Average distance to the nearest recycling facility is 29 miles, including four responses that reported more than 100 miles to the nearest facility. Average distance excluding outliers (over 100 miles) is 16 miles.
- 44% of respondents indicate that recycling CRT televisions is a financial burden for residents. 8 respondents note the city or county subsidizes collection costs or has a financial mechanism in place to help reduce the cost of electronics recycling.
- 39% of respondents (16 of 41) indicate that cost to recycle CRTs and other electronics have become financially burdensome for the county, municipality or organization.



### Outreach Communication on Recycling

- 87% of respondents indicate that they would use free educational materials on how and when to recycle electronics if made available. Three comments noted educational resources already exist, one comment noted “we need more of the WHY, we have the where and how.”
- The most common way respondents communicate and share information with residents is by use of 1) webpage (57%), 2) social media (50%) and 3) news media (45%).

### Additional Comments from Respondents

- Cost to get rid of the electronics is what makes it hard. (5)
- More education is needed. (3)
- It is tougher for residents that live in the rural parts of our county.
- We only charge \$8.00 for televisions, and residents still choose to dump illegally.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to Gracestone, Inc., Yampa Valley Sustainability Council, Blue Star Recyclers, Town of Breckenridge, City and County of Denver, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Colorado Municipal League and Colorado Counties, Inc. for their part in designing and distributing the survey and preparing the results.

Information on the proper disposal of electronics and computer waste is available on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's website:  
<https://colorado.gov/cdphe/ewaste>

For more information and detailed survey results, contact Amy Randell, Recycle Colorado Associate Executive Director, at [amy@recyclecolorado.org](mailto:amy@recyclecolorado.org).