



RECYCLING UNPACKED

Assessing the Circular Performance and Potential of Beverage Containers in the United States

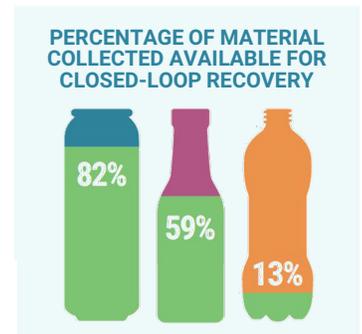
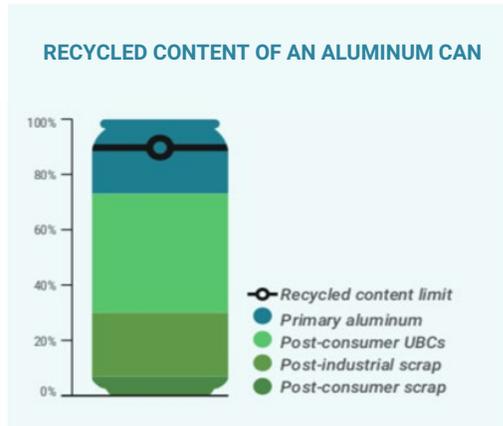
Aluminum Cans Show Highest Circular Performance and Potential of U.S. Beverage Packages

A [new report](#) assessing three U.S. beverage packaging types—aluminum cans, glass bottles and plastic PET bottles—finds aluminum cans have the highest circular performance and potential. The analysis explores the circular potential for each packaging type under current and future scenarios, considering how product design and recycling infrastructure influence the quality and quantity of material recovered over multiple recycling loops.

CIRCULAR PERFORMANCE

In the current U.S. recycling system, aluminum cans perform highest on circularity because they:

- Contain high recycled content
- Have minimal processing losses
- Provide critical revenue to material recovery facilities
- Are recycled efficiently for multiple recycling loops



[FULL MATERIAL FLOW ANALYSIS](#)

CIRCULAR POTENTIAL

Aluminum cans are best situated to achieve circularity and maximize impact reduction potential within the existing U.S. recycling infrastructure. **Aluminum cans are the only packaging material that show life cycle environmental improvements across all indicators and scenarios, both for closed-loop and open-loop recycling.**

CLOSED-LOOP PRODUCTION-RELATED IMPACT REDUCTION POTENTIAL (% Change for 2020 baseline)

Pack Type	100% Collection Scenario			100% Sorting Scenario			National Deposit System Scenario		
	GWP	WDP	CED	GWP	WDP	CED	GWP	WDP	CED
Aluminum	-33%	-57%	-25%	-15%	-23%	-12%	-35%	-57%	-27%
PET	-2%	+3%	-1%	-1%	+1%	-1%	-26%	-1%	-26%
Glass	+2%	+14%	-1%	0%	0%	0%	-1%	+14%	-9%

GWP = Global Warming Potential; WDP = Water Depletion Potential; CED = Cumulative Energy Demand

- Reaching a 100-percent collection rate for used beverage cans has the potential to save an additional 6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) each year—the equivalent of the annual CO₂e emissions from electricity used in over 1 million U.S. homes (compared to a 2020 baseline).
- Once a 100-percent deposit collection rate is achieved for each material type, the total emissions impact reduction potential for recovering one metric ton of aluminum cans is three times higher than plastic PET bottles and 42 times higher than glass bottles.



Consumers, policymakers, brands and other key stakeholders looking for the beverage container that performs best in today's U.S. recycling system and offers the highest emission reduction potential in the recycling system of the future should choose the aluminum can.

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