Fly-tipping statistics for England, 2018/19

This statistical notice provides statistics on fly-tipping incidents recorded by Local Authorities in England, for April 2018 to March 2019. It covers trends in the number of fly-tipping incidents, fly-tipping incidents by land type, waste type and size. It also covers enforcement and prosecution actions undertaken for fly-tipping incidents. It excludes the majority of private-land incidents and large scale incidents dealt with by the Environment Agency.

Key points

- For the 2018/19 year, local authorities in England dealt with over 1 million (1,072,000) fly-tipping incidents, an increase of 8% from the 998,000 reported in 2017/18.

- Nearly two thirds (62%) of fly-tips involved household waste. Total incidents involving household waste increased by 2% from 2017/18.

- Consistent with previous years, the most common place for fly-tipping to occur was on highways (pavements and roads), which accounted for almost half (46%) of total incidents in 2018/19. The number of highway incidents has increased by 6% from 2017/18.

- As in the last few years, the most common size category for fly-tipping incidents in 2018/19 was equivalent to a ‘small van load’ (33% of total incidents), followed by the equivalent of a ‘car boot or less’ (30%).

- In 2018/19, 36,000 or 3% of total incidents were of ‘tipper lorry load’ size or larger, which is similar to 2017/18. For these large fly-tipping incidents, the cost of clearance to local authorities in England in 2018/19 was £12.9 million, compared with £12.2 million in 2017/18.

- Local authorities carried out 499,000 enforcement actions in 2018/19, an increase of 5,000 actions (1%) from 2017/18.

- The number of fixed penalty notices issued has continued to increase, up 11% to 76,000 in 2018/19. This is the second most common action (after investigations), and accounted for 15% of all actions in 2018/19.

- For 2018/19, 12,000 (16%) of fixed penalty notices were issued specifically for small scale fly-tipping, 37,000 (48%) in relation to littering and 26,000 (35%) in relation to other offences.
• The number of fines issued increased by 6% to 2,052 in 2018/19, with the value of total fines increasing to £1,090,000 (an increase of 29% on the £843,000 total value of fines in 2017/18).

Background on data reporting and data caveats

These data are based on incidents and actions reported through WasteDataFlow. The intention is to capture incidents and actions dealt with by local authorities under Section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act, 1990.

Local authorities gather their data from a number of different sources, and data can often be collected and reported by separate teams. There is a level of discretion in applying the reporting guidance. This can lead to some differences in how local authorities record incidents. The nature of fly-tipping means that there can be relatively high variation between years and between local authorities. Changes in data collection and reporting over time mean that trends should be interpreted with caution.

In assessing the figures, local authorities should not be ranked or classified as ‘good’ or ‘poor’ performers based purely on numbers of fly-tips. Direct comparison between local authorities is not appropriate. The situation is complex and can be influenced by population density, housing stock, demographics, commuter routes, the rigour with which local authorities identify incidents or encourage the public to report incidents, training of street crews, and increased use of more sophisticated methods for capturing and reporting incidents. Those reporting higher incident numbers are often those being more pro-active and rigorous in identifying incidents. Large authorities may have large enforcement teams using modern, sophisticated methods (covert surveillance, SmartWater) to catch professional fly-tippers.

Trends over time for a particular local authority may be a fairer comparison and a time series of total incidents for each local authority is available for download.

Through data quality assurance checks carried out on the 2018/19 data, Defra are aware that four local authorities have provided figures based on customer-reported fly-tips only, i.e. not including those reported by their own staff which should be included. Defra will therefore be undertaking a comprehensive check with all authorities in the coming year in order to improve transparency and consistency in reported data. Customer-reported fly-tips for the four local authorities that Defra are aware of have been included at local-authority-level in the dataset, but national totals include estimates for all fly-tips to ensure the headline totals are reported on a basis that is consistent with the rest of the time series.

Please note that due to higher numbers of incidents being reported as ‘other unidentified’ for land type and waste type in 2018/19, some caution is needed in the interpretation of year-on-year changes and longer-term trends for individual categories.

Similarly to the 2017/18 data, there has been a change to the presentation of costs data, as the standard unit costs used for the majority of clearance and enforcement categories are now more than 10 years out of date. Defra therefore took the decision to cease using these costs from the 2017/18 release onwards and total cost estimates for fly-tipping clearance and enforcement will not be produced. The only costs published will be clearance costs for ‘tipper lorry load’ and ‘significant/multi load’ incident categories and enforcement costs for ‘prosecutions’ and ‘injunctions’ action categories, which are reported directly by local authorities.
1. Trends in the total number of fly-tipping incidents in England

Incidents of fly-tipping had shown steady declines from 2007/08 until 2013/14, when there was an increase to 858,000 incidents. Since then, the number of fly-tipping incidents has generally been increasing year-on-year. In 2018/19 there were 1,072,000 incidents reported, which was an increase of 8% from the previous year.

Many local authorities have changed the way they capture and report fly-tips over the past few years, so the changes over time should be interpreted with some care. Defra is also aware that the definitions used to describe fly-tips in the guidance are interpreted broadly by local authorities.

Incidents involving the Environment Agency or cleared by private landowners are not included in this Notice. Details of the 204 incidents of large-scale, illegal dumping dealt with by the Environment Agency in 2018/19 are published separately by the Environment Agency and are available [here](#).
2. Fly-tipping incidents in England by land type

Figure 2.1  
Fly-tipping Incidents in England by land type, 2007/08 to 2018/19

*Other includes agricultural, watercourse, railway and other unidentified land.

The increase seen for ‘Other’ land types is largely driven by an increase in incidents reported as ‘other unidentified’, which are up by 17,000 (26%) on 2017/18. Caution should therefore be exercised when interpreting year-on-year changes and longer term trends for the other categories.

Figure 2.2  
Fly-tipping incidents by land type in England, 2018/19, compared to 2017/18.

*Other includes agricultural, watercourse and railway.

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Highways (pavements and roads) have consistently been the most common land type for fly-tipping incidents over time, accounting for almost half (46%) of all incidents in 2018/19. In 2018/19 there were 493,000 incidents, an increase of 6% from 2017/18 (464,000 incidents).

Fly-tipping on council land, and ‘footpaths and bridleways’, each made up around 16% of all incidents in 2018/19. Council land incidents increased by 3% to 166,000 incidents, while footpath and bridleway’ incidents increased by 14% to 187,000 incidents.

Fly-tipping incidents in back alleyways amounted to a further 11% of all incidents (116,000 incidents) in 2018/19, an increase of 1% from the previous year.

3. Fly-tipping incidents in England by waste type

Note that there has been an increase in incidents reported as ‘other unidentified’ waste types in 2018/19, which are up by 54,000 (59%) on 2017/18. This type of waste accounted for 14% of total incidents in 2018/19. Caution should therefore be exercised when interpreting year-on-year changes and longer-term trends for the other categories.

Figure 3.1 Household and commercial waste in England, 2007/08 to 2018/19 (% of total incidents)

Household waste (other) could include material from house or shed clearances, old furniture, carpets and the waste from small scale DIY works.
Commercial waste (other) could include pallets, cardboard boxes, plastics, foam and any other waste not contained in bags or containers and not due to be collected.

Most fly-tipping incidents are household waste (the sum of ‘black bags’ and ‘other’), which in 2018/19 accounted for almost two-thirds (62%) of all incidents. The majority of this was ‘household waste (other)’.
Total household waste increased by 2% from 656,000 incidents in 2017/18 to 668,000 incidents in 2018/19. The household waste sub-categories, ‘black bags’ and ‘other’ increased by 7,000 incidents (7%) and 5,000 incidents (1%), respectively.

There were 70,000 incidents involving commercial waste in 2018/19, accounting for 7% of total incidents. This was a 3% increase on 2017/18, when 68,000 commercial waste incidents were reported.

The increase in total commercial waste incidents is accounted for by an increase in reported incidents of ‘commercial waste (other)’. These increased by 3%, from 37,000 incidents in 2017/18 to 38,000 incidents in 2018/19. There were 32,000 incidents of commercial waste from black bags in 2018/19 – an increase of 2% from the previous year.

Types of fly-tipping, other than household and commercial waste – which are construction, demolition and excavation; other unidentified; white goods; green waste; other electrical; tyres; vehicles parts; animal carcasses; chemical drums, oil and fuel; clinical; and asbestos – amount to 31% of all fly-tipping incidents. Within this, vehicle parts, animal carcasses, clinical waste, asbestos, and ‘chemical drums, oil and fuel’ incidents each account for less than 1% of total incidents.

Table 3.1 Types of other fly-tipping in England, 2007/08 to 2018/19 **

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Other Unidentified</th>
<th>Construction, Demolition, Excavation</th>
<th>White Goods</th>
<th>Green Waste</th>
<th>Other Electrical</th>
<th>Tyres</th>
<th>Other Identified*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>89,000</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>66,000</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>42,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>37,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>21,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>67,000</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>91,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other Identified includes vehicle parts, animal carcasses, clinical waste, asbestos, and ‘chemical drums, oil and fuel’.

** Rounded to nearest thousand

For some waste types, such as green waste or electrical goods, it is not always possible to tell whether they originated from households or businesses.

Incidents of white goods increased sharply in 2013/14 with smaller increases through to 2016/17. The number of white goods incidents in 2018/19 was 49,000, the same as for 2017/18 but lower than in 2016/17.
Since 2007/08, green waste has generally decreased over time, and accounted for 3% of total incidents in 2018/19. Tyre incidents have been generally declining since the start of this time series in 2007/08, and accounted for around 1% of total incidents in 2018/19.

Incidents with other electrical items have decreased by 3% since 2017/18, and incidents with construction/demolition/excavation material have increased by 11%.

4. Fly-tipping incidents in England by size

Fig. 4.1 Fly-tipping incidents by size in England 2018/19, compared to 2017/18

Incidents recorded by size category relate to those investigated and cleared by the local authority. For a number of reasons, but primarily due to incidents on private land, which an authority may not clear, total incidents by size category will not match total incidents recorded by land type or waste type.

As in 2017/18, most fly-tipping incidents were equivalent to a ‘small van load’. In 2018/19, a third of incidents (33% or 347,000 incidents) were reported to be the size of a small van load, a 7% increase on 2017/18.

The second-largest size category is equivalent to a ‘car boot or less’. Fly-tipping incidents of this size increased from 270,000 incidents in 2017/18 to 308,000 incidents in 2018/19, and made up 30% of all incidents.

‘Single items’, such as furniture, mattresses etc. accounted for 18% of total incidents and have increased by 6%, from 172,000 incidents in 2017/18 to 183,000 in 2018/19.
In 2018/19 ‘Single black bag’ size incidents accounted for 4% of total incidents and have decreased by 10%, from 52,000 incidents in 2017/18 to 47,000 incidents in 2018/19.

In 2018/19, 36,000 or 3% of total incidents were of ‘tipper lorry load’ size or larger, which is similar to 2017/18. For these large fly-tipping incidents, the cost of clearance to local authorities in England in 2018/19 was £12.9 million, compared with £12.2 million in 2017/18.

As noted above, we no longer produce estimates of clearance costs for other size categories.

5. Fly-tipping enforcement and prosecution

Figure 5.1  Fly-tipping enforcement actions in England, 2007/08 to 2018/19

Thousands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>420</td>
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<td>400</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Notice</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty of Care Inspection</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>210</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other* is the sum of stop and search, vehicles seized*, formal caution, prosecution and injunction

*Note that data for vehicles seized is only available from 2011-12, so is not included in the ‘other’ category prior to this.

There were 499,000 enforcement actions carried out in England in 2018/19, a 1% increase (of 5,000 actions) since 2017/18. It should be noted that multiple actions can sometimes be carried-out on one particular incident. Total enforcement costs have not been estimated for 2018/19 as accurate costs are not available for the majority of enforcement categories.

Investigations have consistently been the most common action taken against fly-tipping incidents over time, accounting for 63% of all actions in 2018/19, with 314,000 investigations in total. This is the same as 2017/18.

In May 2016 local authorities in England were given the power to issue fixed penalty notices for small scale fly-tipping. Prior to this date, local authorities issued fly-tippers with fixed penalty notices in relation to littering, duty of care or anti-social behaviour. This fixed penalty notice gave local authorities a more specific fixed penalty notice type, an
alternative to prosecutions and a more efficient and proportionate response to small scale fly-tipping. Local authorities are still also using the previous fixed penalty notices as well as the new ones in appropriate circumstances.

Further enforcement powers have been given to local authorities and the Environment Agency, who can now issue fixed penalty notices for breaches of householder duty of care, where householders give their waste to fly-tippers. However, this power only came into force in January 2019, so data for this category relate to just the final quarter of 2018/19 rather than the full year.

For the 2018/19 reporting year and going forwards, it is obligatory for local authorities to report a more detailed breakdown of fixed penalty notices issued. Local authorities issued 76,000 fixed penalty notices in total during 2018/19 and these were the second most common enforcement action, accounting for 15% of total actions. The total number of fixed penalty notices has increased by 11% from 69,000 in 2017/18.

Figure 5.2 Number of Fixed Penalty Notices by type, 2018/19

*FPNs related to householder duty of care relate only to January to March 2019 as these powers only came into force in January 2019.

For 2018/19, 12,400 (approximately 16%) of fixed penalty notices were issued specifically for small scale fly-tipping, 36,900 (approximately 48%) in relation to littering and 26,500 (35%) in relation to other offences. These percentages are similar to those seen in 2017/18, when 145 authorities voluntarily provided breakdowns of Fixed Penalty Notices issued.

The number of prosecution actions has also increased (by 7%), from 2,243 in 2017/18 to 2,397 in 2018/19.

There were 47,000 warning letters issued in 2018/19, accounting for 9% of total enforcement actions. This was similar to the number of warning letters issued in 2017/18.

The number of duty of care inspections fell slightly (2%) in 2018/19, from 39,000 inspections to 38,000 inspections. This accounted for 8% of total enforcement actions in both 2018/19 and 2017/18.

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A total of 20,000 statutory notices were issued in 2018/19, accounting for 4% of total enforcement actions, this was a decrease of 10% from 22,000 in 2017/18.

Table 5.1 Fly-tipping prosecution outcomes in England, 2007/08 to 2018/19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fine</th>
<th>Absolute/Conditional Discharge</th>
<th>Other (successful outcomes)*</th>
<th>Community Service</th>
<th>Custodial Sentence</th>
<th>Cases Lost</th>
<th>Total Prosecutions</th>
<th>Successful Prosecutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>1,624</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2,209</td>
<td>95.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>1,497</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1,995</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>1,859</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2,457</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>2,023</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2,409</td>
<td>95.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>2,487</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2,796</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>1,839</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2,170</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>1,685</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2,002</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>1,492</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1,810</td>
<td>97.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>1,838</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2,203</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>1,318</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1,571</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>1,938</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2,243</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>2,052</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>2,397</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other successful: Any other positive results awarded by the court this period.
Successful prosecutions: Presented as a percentage of total prosecutions.

Local authorities carried out a total of 2,397 prosecutions for fly-tipping offences in England in 2018/19, an increase of 5% on 2017/18. Costs of prosecution actions also increased, by 18% from £847,000 in 2017/18 to £1,002,000 in 2018/19.

The success rates for prosecution actions against fly-tipping are consistently very high over time. Over 96% of prosecutions resulted in conviction in 2018/19, just slightly lower than the average rate of around 98% in the last five years.

The majority of prosecution outcomes are fines, which were issued for 85% of the outcomes from actions taken against fly-tipping incidents in 2018/19. The number of fines issued increased by 6% to 2,052 in 2018/19, with the value of total fines increasing to £1,090,000 (an increase of 29% on the £843,000 total value of fines in 2017/18). In 2018/19, for the first time two local authorities each issued a fine of over £50,000 for fly-tipping.

The number of community service outcomes decreased 11% from 45 in 2017/18 to 40 in 2018/19.

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Data uses, Context, methodology, Feedback and revisions policy

Fly-tipping is the illegal deposit of waste on land, contrary to Section 33(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Local authorities and the Environment Agency both have a responsibility in respect of illegally deposited waste. This includes local authorities and the Environment Agency collecting and reporting data on fly-tipping in their area. This statistical notice covers data reported by local authorities in England.

User Statement

Data on fly-tipping is collected to inform policy making and to provide local authorities with a management tool which enables a problem solving approach to be taken. It records the number of fly-tipping incidents, the type of material tipped, location and size, together with enforcement action taken. The data are used by local and central government, researchers and the public.

Context

Fly-tipping is a significant blight on local environments; a source of pollution; a potential danger to public health; a hazard to wildlife and a nuisance. It also undermines legitimate waste businesses where unscrupulous operators undercut those operating within the law. Local authorities and the Environment Agency both have a responsibility in respect of illegally deposited waste with certain obligations set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Local authorities have a duty to clear fly-tipped material from relevant land in their areas and consequently they deal with the vast majority of fly-tipping on public land, investigating these and carrying out a range of enforcement actions. The Environment Agency is responsible for dealing with large-scale, serious and organised illegal dumping incidents which pose an immediate threat to human health or the environment. Responsibility for dealing with fly-tipping on private land rests with private landowners and is not subject to mandatory data reporting.

Incidents involving the Environment Agency or cleared by private landowners are not included in this Notice. Details of the 204 incidents of large-scale, illegal dumping dealt with by the Environment Agency in 2018/19 are published separately by the Environment Agency and are available here.

Methodology

These statistics are based on the returns made to the Fly-tipping Module in the WasteDataFlow database by local authorities in England from April 2018 to March 2019. The Fly-tipping Module is the national system used since 2015 to record the incidents and cost of clearing and enforcing against illegally deposited waste by local authorities and the Environment Agency. Detailed guidance is available here on use of WasteDataFlow. Private landowners are not required to report fly-tips on their land, although some choose to do so voluntarily.

It should be noted that the private land data included in this notice do not reflect the full scale of the problem as most cases on private land go unreported.

The reporting system has been modified to allow more detailed information capture on the individual types of fixed penalty notices issued by local authorities. This has included fixed

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penalty specifically for small scale fly-tipping which were introduced in May 2016 and more recently fixed penalty notices for breaches of householder duty of care which came into force in January 2019.

Local authorities gather their data from a number of sources and departments. Incidents are reported by the public through call centres or online, operatives on the ground collecting and recording, Enforcement Officers, contractors and management companies. Many authorities await verification from investigations before recording public reports as fly-tips.

Data are requested in respect of incidents cleared or investigated by local authorities and, separately, the enforcement actions taken against fly-tippers. These can often be collected and reported by separate teams. Therefore, data can be entered onto the system by one or more persons within an authority. This may lead to some discrepancies and a level of uncertainty. Data verification and quality assurance is carried out by WasteDataFlow personnel and Defra. This is done by a quarterly check of specific aspects of the data to identify significant anomalies which would be queried with authorities.

Until 2017/18, estimate costs for the majority of clearance and enforcement categories were calculated based on typical unit costs for dealing with the different types of incidents/actions. Costs were provided by a small selection of local authorities between 2003 and 2006 when the Flycapture database was being set up. These were used to generate standard unit costs for the clearance and enforcement categories, which were then multiplied up by the numbers of incidents and enforcement actions respectively, in order to generate total cost estimates. The standard unit costs used are detailed in the accompanying notes to the published datasets.

In August 2015 Defra undertook an exercise to update the cost basis by surveying 100 local authorities that had previously indicated a willingness to participate. Unfortunately, both the quantity and quality of response data was insufficient to provide robust factors as replacements. During 2017, Defra carried out some preliminary investigations to source updated costs, but concluded that more targeted and detailed work is required to properly understand the complexities surrounding costs to local authorities. As the standard unit costs are now more than 10 years out of date, the decision has been taken to cease using these from the 2017/18 publication onwards. For the time being only costs for clearance categories ‘tipper lorry load’ and ‘significant/multi loads’, and enforcement categories ‘prosecutions’ and ‘injunctions’ (which are reported directly by local authorities) will continue to be published. Defra is currently considering the feasibility of updating the standard unit costs via research or alternative methodology, subject to resource and other priorities.

Detailed breakdowns

A breakdown of data for each local authority is available on the Defra website. In assessing the figures local authorities should not be ranked or classified as ‘good’ or ‘poor’ performers based purely on numbers of fly-tips. Direct comparison between local authorities is not be appropriate as there can be some differences in approach, where there is a level of discretion in using the guidance on reporting. The situation is complex and can be influenced by population density, housing stock, demographics, commuter routes, the rigour with which local authorities identify incidents or encourage the public to
report incidents, training of street crews, and increased use of more sophisticated methods for capturing and reporting incidents. Those reporting higher incident numbers are often those being more pro-active and rigorous in identifying incidents. Large authorities may have large enforcement teams using modern, sophisticated methods (covert surveillance, SmartWater) to catch professional fly-tippers. Trends over time for a particular local authority may be a fairer comparison and a time series of total incidents for each local authority is available for download. There can be relatively high variation between years and between local authorities.

As part of enquiries made during the quality assurance process, several authorities reported that the increase in the number of incidents reported compared to previous years was a result of the introduction of new technologies; such as on-line reporting and electronic applications as well increased training for staff and a more pro-active approach to removing fly-tipping and have explained this as a factor in the increase in the number of incidents reported. For reasons explained about variability of reporting by local authorities, please see the dataset showing the trend in total number of incidents by local authority since 2012/13, available with the local authorities’ data for 2018/19 here.

Defra are aware that for the 2018/19 year, four local authorities have provided figures based on customer-reported fly-tips only, whereas in some previous years these authorities have provided figures based on all incidents of fly-tipping. Customer-reported fly-tips for these four local authorities have been included at local-authority-level in the dataset, but national totals include estimates for total fly-tips to ensure the headline totals are reported on a basis that is consistent with the rest of the time series.

Non-response and estimation:

Tunbridge Wells and Isle of Wight did not submit data for quarter four of 2018/19, so an estimate was made by Defra for this quarter. Estimates were made based on the proportions of their data from the first three quarters of 2018/19.

Redbridge did not submit data for the year 2018/19, so an estimate was made by Defra for this year. Estimates were made based on Redbridge’s data from 2014/15 to 2017/18.

Land type and waste type breakdowns did not sum to the total incidents for Bolsover, as there were 166 more total incidents than in the breakdowns, so an adjustment was made to the “Other – unidentified” and “Other household waste” categories. Waste type breakdowns did not sum to the total incidents for Rugby, as there were 2 more total incidents than in the breakdowns, so an adjustment was made to the “Other household waste” category.

For 2018/19, nine of the 326 local authorities did not submit data on clearance costs for ‘tipper lorry load’ and/or ‘significant/multi load’ incidents for some or all quarters. These were estimated by Defra based on previous quarters’ data where the figures were consistent, or otherwise using average 2018/19 unit costs from the known returns. These nine local authorities were Arun, Bristol, Cheltenham, Crawley, Eastbourne, Hammersmith and Fulham, Newham, North Somerset and Tunbridge Wells.

Due to higher levels of estimation made from the 2015/16 data, some caution is needed in the interpretation of year-on-year changes and longer-term trends.
Feedback

We welcome feedback on the data from all users including how and why the data is used. This helps us to understand the value of the statistics to external users. Please see our contact details at the bottom of the first page of this notice.

Revisions Policy

Defra will provide information about any revisions made to published information in this statistics release and the associated datasets. Revisions could occur for various reasons, including when data from third parties is unavailable or revised data has been input to the Fly-tipping Module of WasteDataFlow.