



**City of Philadelphia
Office of the City Controller**

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City Controller's Office Releases Data on Trash Collection

Philadelphia, PA – As part of an on-going effort to increase transparency around City services, the Office of the City Controller released data regarding on-time trash collection in response to public concerns around trash collection during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Controller's Office analyzed historical trends and the pandemic's impact on trash collection across Philadelphia using data from the Streets Department.

"Though many Philadelphians have expressed frustration with trash collection for years, the pandemic brought more attention to this issue than ever before," said City Controller Rebecca Rhynhart. "My goal with this release is for the public to better understand what is happening with trash collection across our city's neighborhoods. Our analysis confirmed what Philadelphians have experienced firsthand, that the pandemic had a severe impact on trash collection citywide, but that was not felt equally across neighborhoods. While the pandemic's impact was significant, we found that the city was having challenges with on-time trash collection in the years leading up to the pandemic as well."

The analysis examines data on the on-time collection rate for curbside trash pickup and the total curbside trash tonnage collected by the Streets Department. This includes historical data on citywide trends in trash collection since fiscal year 2009 (FY09) and detailed data on each of the City's 13 sanitation from January 2017 through June 2021. Sanitation districts are neighborhood-sized regions created by the Streets Department to assist with trash removal operations.

The data showed that the Streets Department consistently performed better in trash collection between FY09 and FY13, with a citywide average collection rate of 94%. However, a compactor shortage caused by the Great Recession impacted performance beginning in FY14. In the years following, the on-time collection rate never fully recovered, averaging around 85% in the years leading up to the pandemic. Of note, every sanitation district met the on-time goal in just two months between January 2017 and the start of the pandemic. The analysis showed that the pandemic exacerbated the decline in on-time collections. With pandemic-related staff shortages and a 21% increase in tonnage in FY21, the average citywide on-time rate for trash collection declined to a mere 53% in FY21. For comparison, the on-time rate for trash collection in FY19, the last full year before the pandemic, was 83%.

The data also shows that on-time collection rates varied between the city's 13 sanitation districts. Additional key takeaways include:

- The gap between the districts with the highest on-time collection and the lowest on-time collection grew during the pandemic. Specifically, the difference between the best and worst performing districts went from 31 percentage points in 2017 to 45 percentage points in 2021;
- From January 2017 to February 2020, sanitation districts that include Center City and Northeast Philadelphia experienced higher average rates of on-time collection, 95% and 93%, respectively. During that same period, areas like Northwest Philadelphia, South Philadelphia and West Philadelphia had on-time collection rates between 65% and 76%; and
- Since 2017, South Philadelphia's on-time collection rate is worse than the citywide average despite having one of the lowest tonnage totals in the city.

[View the full analysis here.](#)