



# Foreword

## UNU, ITU, and ISWA

Electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) has become an essential part of everyday life. Its availability and widespread use have enabled much of the global population to benefit from higher standards of living. However, the way in which we produce, consume, and dispose of e-waste is unsustainable. Because of the slow adoption of collection and recycling, externalities –such as the consumption of resources, the emission of greenhouse gases, and the release of toxic substances during informal recycling procedures– illustrate the problem to remain within sustainable limits. Consequently, many countries are challenged by the considerable environmental and human health risks of inadequately managed Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), widely known as e-waste. Even countries with a formal e-waste management system in place are confronted with relatively low collection and recycling rates.

Monitoring the quantities and flows of e-waste is essential for evaluating developments over time, and to set and assess targets towards a sustainable society and circular economy. The development of a recycling infrastructure, sound policies, and legal instruments are more efficiently implemented on the basis of sound e-waste data. Without a global picture of e-waste, the true nature of transboundary movements and, in some cases, illegal shipments will also be incomprehensible.

Building on the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, the United Nations University (UNU), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), in close collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), have joined forces in the Global E-waste Statistics Partnership (GESP). Since late 2019, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) has been co-hosting SCYCLE, UNU's specialized programme on e-waste. The GESP collects data from countries in an internationally standardized way and ensures that this information is publicly available via its open-source global e-waste database, [www.globalewaste.org](http://www.globalewaste.org). Since 2017, the GESP has made substantial efforts by expanding national and regional capacity on e-waste statistics in various countries.

Ultimately, the GESP assists countries in compiling e-waste statistics that are useful for national policy-making with an internationally recognised, harmonised measurement framework. The GESP brings together policy makers, statisticians, and industry representatives to enhance quality, understanding, and interpretation of e-waste data. At the global level, the GESP contributes to the monitoring of relevant waste streams, measuring progress made towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals 11.6, 12.4, and 12.5. Recently, e-waste has officially been included in the work plan for the 12.4.2 and 12.5.1 indicator and in the documentation pertaining to this indicator. The GESP allows international organizations, such as the ITU, to measure progress towards their own goals. In 2018, the highest policy-making body of the ITU, the Plenipotentiary Conference, established a target of increasing the global e-waste recycling rate to 30% by 2023. This would correspond to a 12.6% increase in today's global average.

This third edition of the Global E-waste Monitor is a result of the GESP and its close collaborators; a follow-up to the 2017 edition and UNU-SCYCLE's groundbreaking Global E-waste Monitor 2014. This report shows that the global growth in the generation of e-waste continues.

In 2019, the world generated 53.6 million metric tons (Mt), and only 17.4% of this was officially documented as properly collected and recycled. It grew with 1.8 Mt since 2014, but the total e-waste generation increased by 9.2 Mt. This indicates that the recycling activities are not keeping pace with the global growth of e-waste.

Besides a global perspective, this report includes national and regional analysis on e-waste quantities and legislative instruments. Although 71% of the world's population is covered by some form of e-waste policy, legislation, or regulation, greater efforts must be made towards implementation and enforcement in order to encourage the take-up of a collection and recycling infrastructure.

The Global E-waste Monitor 2020 introduces the wider public to the global e-waste challenge, explains how the challenge currently fits into international efforts to reach the SDGs, and discusses how to create a circular economy and sustainable societies. In parallel, we encourage decision-makers to increase their activities to measure and monitor e-waste by using and adopting the internationally recognised methodological framework developed by UNU-SCYCLE, in collaboration with the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development.

We would like to thank all authors and contributors for this report, and we invite you to collaborate with the GESP and support our continuous efforts to improve the global understanding and environmentally sound management of e-waste.

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