



LITTER REDUCTION

Low-income areas and neighborhoods of color are disproportionately affected by litter and receive less litter cleanup than wealthier neighborhoods³¹. Improving DRSs will primarily impact lower-income and vulnerable populations by reducing beverage container litter by 85% and total litter up to 34% overall, helping make communities more livable.



EQUITABLE AND EASY ACCESS TO RECYCLING SERVICES

Returning bottles and cans should not require any additional trips and should be as easy as doing regular grocery shopping inclusive of all transportation modalities and physical abilities. In many areas of the states covered in this study, this is not yet the case.

Achieving the targeted 90% reduction goal for beverage containers will necessarily require an expansion of return sites throughout the Northeast region. Our analysis found that a high-performing, cost-efficient DRS means that all but the most rural residents in Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts are within five miles of a redemption point in rural areas and within two miles of a redemption point in urban areas.

In Vermont and Maine, almost all residents are within five miles of a redemption point, except the most rural residents. Across the five states, a redemption point is guaranteed for every 1,400 residents, with a state-by-state range of 870 and 2,020 persons per redemption point.

The data in this research also supports the hypothesis that return-to-retail correlates with the highest rates of redemption. The expanded types and numbers of return sites built into the model are intended to serve a diverse range of households and communities and to maximize both access and impact. Across the Northeast states analyzed, return to retail comprised an 89% share of the redemption network, with Massachusetts moving toward a 99% return-to-retail scenario.



IMPACTS ON THE INFORMAL RECYCLING SECTOR

The existing beverage container recycling and waste management system supports a significant informal sector of canners, particularly in large urban areas. Increasing diversion of beverage containers in the targeted states to the DRS will affect these typically marginalized and vulnerable individuals, but opportunities exist to anticipate and mitigate these effects, as outlined further below.