



# The Growing Community Composting Movement

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**IISR** INSTITUTE FOR  
Local Self-Reliance

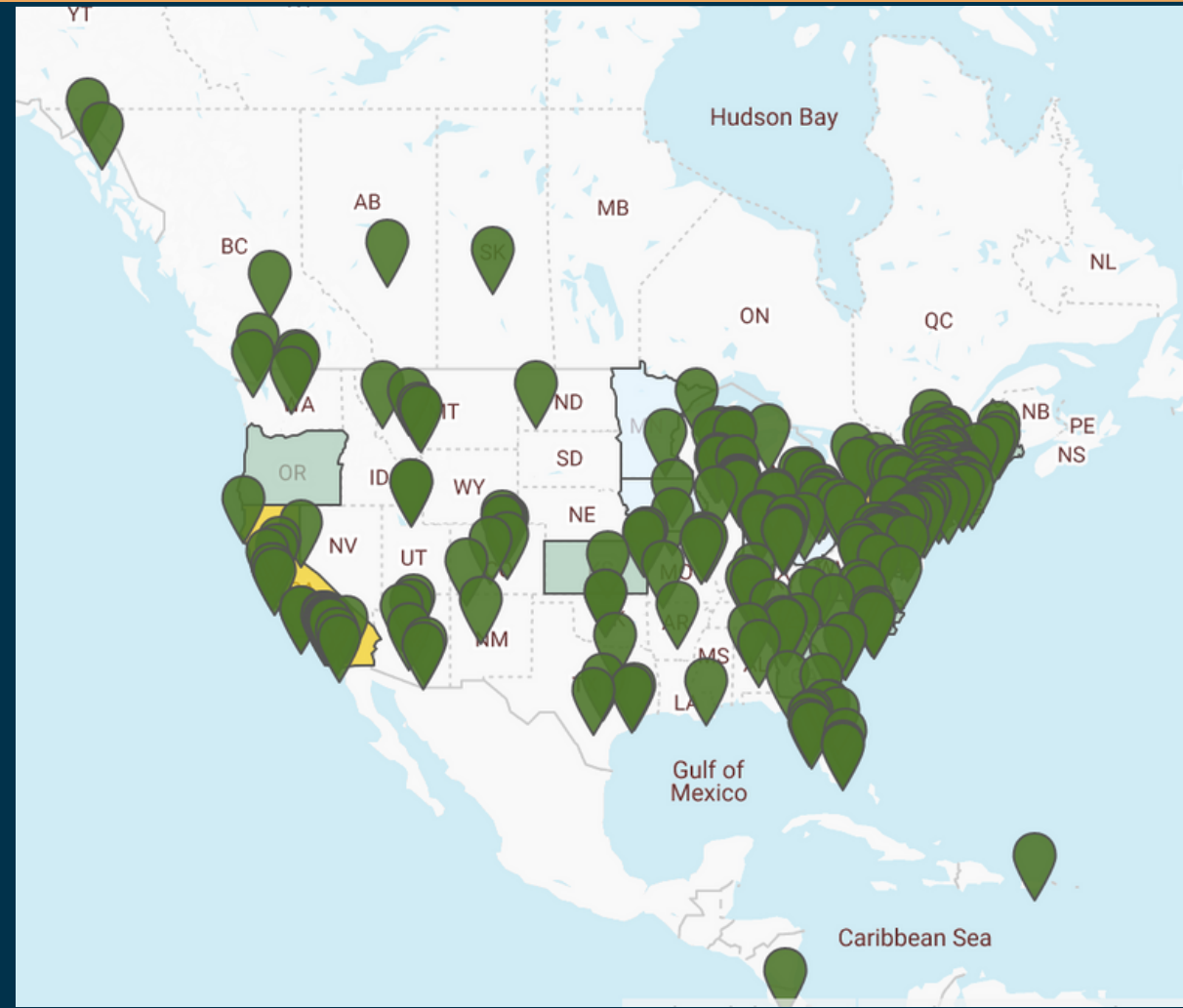


# Community Composter Coalition

258 members

42 states

+ D.C., Puerto Rico,  
Canada, Australia,  
Costa Rica, Iran,  
Lebanon, New  
Zealand, U.K.





## On-Farm Composting & Compost Use Webinar Series

**On-Farm Composting Fundamentals (Aug 24)**  
with Dr. Robert Rynk

**Integrating Composting Into Your Farming Business (Sept 14)**  
with Ellen Polishuk

**Composting Recipes & Integrating Food Scraps (Oct 5)**  
with James McSweeney

**Compost & Soil: Restoring Health & Rebalancing the Climate (Oct 26)**  
Calla Rose Ostrander and Jean Bonhotal

**Profiting With Compost & The Importance of Compost Quality (Nov 16)**  
with Dr. Greg Evanylo and Jayne Merner Senecal

**Compost - Soil - Plant: Putting the Many Facets Together (Dec 7)**  
with Dr. Will Brinton

Find out more at [ilsr.org/on-farm-composting-webinar-series](https://ilsr.org/on-farm-composting-webinar-series)

### Community Composting 101

Neighborhood Soil Rebuilders Composter Training Program

Composting Initiative

Institute for Local Self-Reliance



### What is composting?

Composting is... the controlled decomposition of raw organic materials (such as food scraps and dry leaves) that creates compost, a valuable soil amendment. This process is driven by fungi, bacteria, and other microorganisms.

There are 5 key ingredients:

- 1 Water**  
Like us, composting microbes need water to thrive! They require a thin layer of water around materials in the compost pile in order to be active.
- 2 Air**  
Composting is an aerobic process; the microbes need air to feed. Air flow in the pile can be maintained by regular re-mixing or use of a special fan.
- 3 "Greens"**  
These are materials relatively high in nitrogen, providing microbes with protein to grow and reproduce.
- 4 "Browns"**  
These are materials relatively high in carbon, providing microbes with carbohydrates for energy. Bulky browns help make space for air in the pile.
- 5 Living Organisms**  
**Microbes**  
Microorganisms, or microbes, are the powerhouses of your compost pile. Bacteria are the most numerous and diverse, and consume a wide variety of materials. Actinobacteria and fungi both work to break down leaves, stems, nut shells, bark, and wood.  
**Macroorganisms**  
These larger organisms eat microbes and shred materials into smaller pieces.

Recipe: 1 part greens, 2 parts browns

Lots of ways and sizes!

Learn more about how to compost: [ilsr.org](https://ilsr.org)

✓ YES	X NO
<b>GREENS</b>	<b>BROWNS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FRUIT &amp; VEGETABLE SCRAPS (No stickers)</li> <li>EGG SHELLS</li> <li>COFFEE GROUNDS &amp; PAPER FILTERS</li> <li>TEA BAGS (No staples or plastic)</li> <li>GARDEN TRIMMINGS (6" or smaller)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FALL LEAVES</li> <li>PLANT STALKS (6" or smaller)</li> <li>WOOD CHIPS &amp; SHAVINGS (Not chemically treated)</li> <li>SHREDDED NEWSPAPER &amp; BROWN BAGS (No glossy pages)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MEAT, FISH, OR BONES</li> <li>EGGS OR DAIRY PRODUCTS</li> <li>PRODUCE STICKERS</li> <li>GLOSSY PAPER</li> <li>DISEASED AND PEST-INFESTED PLANTS</li> <li>WEEDS WITH SEEDS</li> <li>"COMPOSTABLE" TABLEWARE &amp; PLASTIC BAGS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FATS, OILS, OR GREASE</li> <li>COOKED FOOD</li> <li>PET WASTE &amp; KITTY LITTER</li> <li>TREATED OR PAINTED WOOD</li> <li>HERBICIDE-TREATED PLANTS</li> <li>DRYER LINT</li> <li>USED TISSUES</li> </ul>





# Why a census?

- Representation
- Data for composters themselves
- Baseline for growth
- Document benefits
- Identify challenges

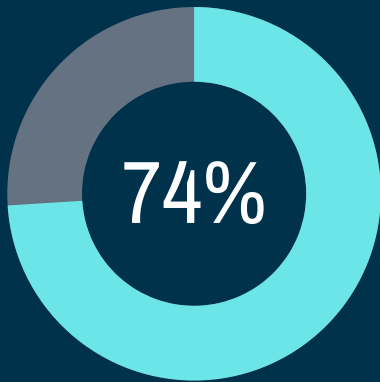




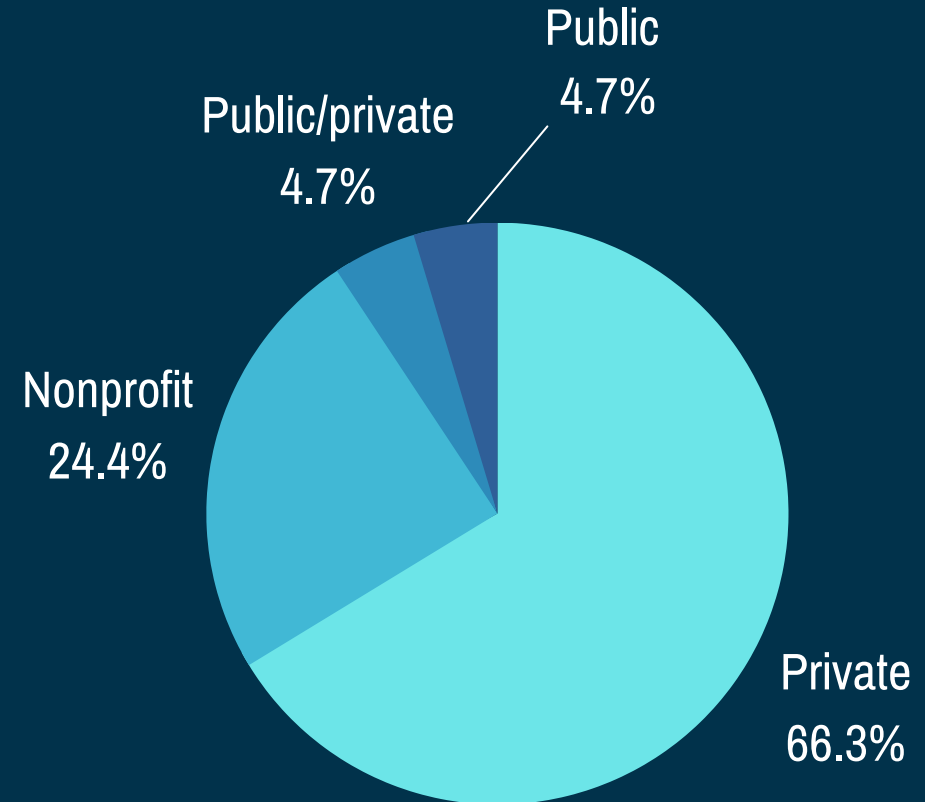
# Participants

86 complete responses

33 states (+DC, PR, Canada)



Offer both composting  
and collection



## Top 5 Revenue Sources



**1** Collection  
service fees



**2** Sales of  
compost



**3** Trainings/ workshops/  
speaking fees



**4** Sales of compost-  
related products



**5** Grants

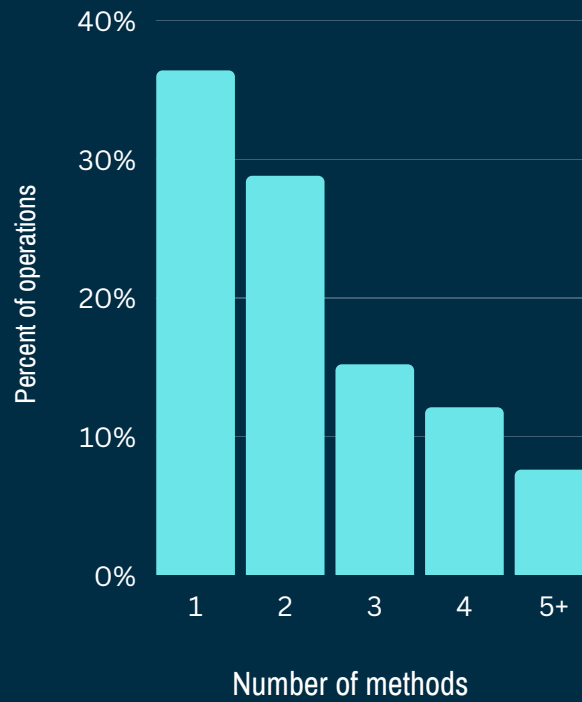
**Community  
composters have  
diverse & dynamic  
operations.**





- Windrow
- Bin system
- Vermicomposting
- Static pile
- Forced aeration
- Passive aeration
- Batch system
- In-vessel
- Tumbler
- Bokashi
- Continuous flow system
- & more

**Number of Composting Methods Used**



**1. Windrows**



**2. Bin System**



**3. Vermicomposting**



# Community composting tackles wasted food.

Food = single largest component of solid waste in landfills and incinerators.

Food scraps = **only around 10%** of the total municipal solid waste composted in the U.S.



**71%**  
of U.S. composting  
operations compost **only**  
**yard trimmings**

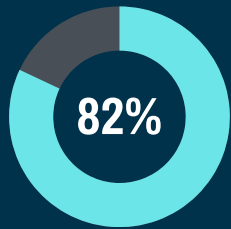
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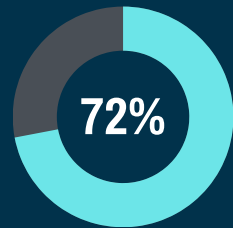
**97%**  
of Census  
respondents  
report handling  
**food scraps**



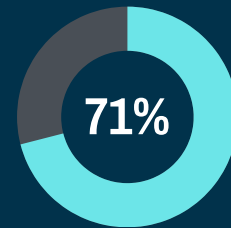
# Community Impact



of composting sites located within areas served by collection



use some, most, or all of their product on-site



provide community engagement opportunities



# Jobs

Job creation compared to waste industry:



1

job per 10,000 tons per year of material incinerated



2

job per 10,000 tons per year of material landfilled



6.2

full-time jobs per 10,000 tons per year of material composted

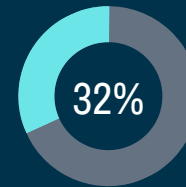


Waste industry:  
83% male



Community composters:  
33% male

Respondents report an average of



LGBTQ+ staff

That's over

4.5x

the national percentage of LGBTQ+ identifying adults in 2021 (x).

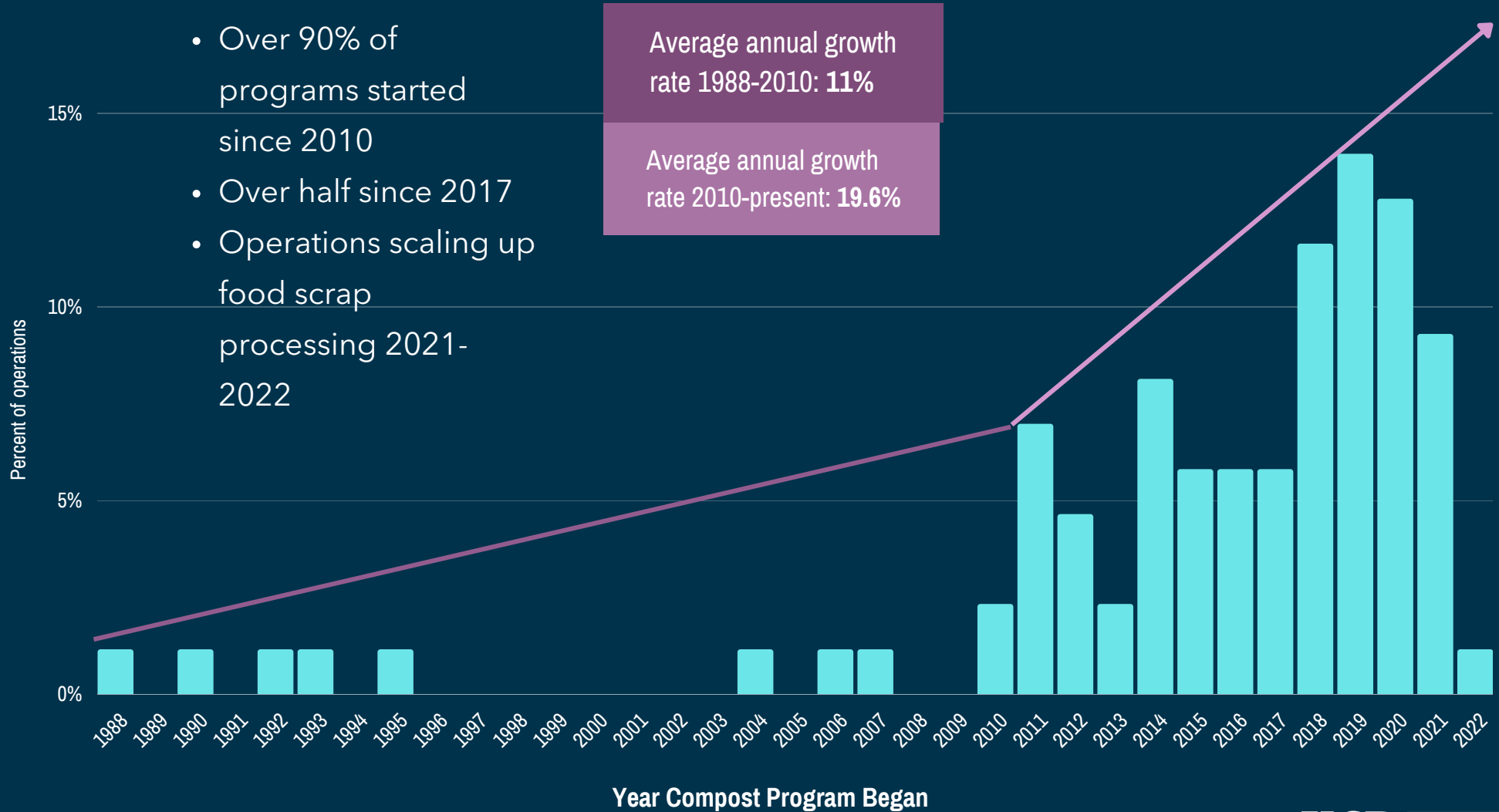


# Growth

- Over 90% of programs started since 2010
- Over half since 2017
- Operations scaling up food scrap processing 2021-2022

Average annual growth rate 1988-2010: **11%**

Average annual growth rate 2010-present: **19.6%**



# Challenges

#1: Scaling up (63%)    Graphic included = Over 40%



# What's next for the Community Composter Coalition?





# What's next for the Community Composter Coalition?

Census results

Networking

Communication

Peer Learning  
Community  
Events

Pledge

Leveraging  
collective  
power

Knowledge-sharing

Grants

Collaboration

Circle.so?

Working groups





**Thank you &  
let's chat!**

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