

Summary of key results: Waste collection by the City of Cape Town in informal settlements
June 2023

No of partner organisations	Total number of settlements	Total number of resident	Male	Female	% of female residents
3	71	397	118	279	69,5%

Overview

In June (Asivikelane #37), residents in informal settlements were asked about their access to waste removal services. In addition, residents were asked specific questions on how uncollected waste impacts them and what they would like to see improve regarding waste removal. This included the number of plastic bags they wanted to receive, the frequency of waste removal in a week, and the health and environmental impact of uncollected waste.

According to the City, 99,79% of “known” informal settlements currently receive a basic refuse collection service. On the City of Cape Town’s website it states there is a reliable weekly refuse collection service operating throughout the City, except for unregistered and or unrecognised informal settlements. It states that they offer “certain waste removal services to people living in informal housing”. In addition, the City says it also provides two blue waste bags per week.

According to its [2023/24 budget](#), the operating budget allocation to Contracted Services in the Urban Waste Management Directorate mostly funds “refuse removal services; area cleaning and door-to-door refuse removal services to informal settlements; cleaning of the previously disadvantaged sandy areas; hauling of waste from various facilities to the Landfill sites; and chipping of garden greens”.

The City has increased its 2023/24 allocation for Contracted Services in the Urban Waste Management Directorate by 14% and has also indicated that it has set aside an additional R30 million for Contracted Services for informal settlement refuse removal. Despite these positive developments, the City’s budget doesn’t show how much has been set side in total for refuse removal and area cleaning in informal settlements. There is also no indication of how much has been allocated for the provision of refuse bags to informal settlements.

The lack of information makes it difficult to evaluate to what extent the additional funding will improve this service. About 20% of informal settlement residents have previously told Asivikelane that they do not receive any refuse collection service. Residents who do receive a service sometimes say that refuse is not collected regularly. The lack of regular waste removal and the provision of plastic bags to informal settlements residents is an ongoing challenge that poses a severe health hazard to residents and negatively impacts the environment.

Table 1 shows that in [June 2023](#), around 40% of residents surveyed in the City of Cape Town said that their waste was not collected in the previous seven days. This number includes both residents who do not receive the service and residents who usually receive the service but whose refuse was not collected in the week leading up to data collection.

Table 1: How often was waste collected in your settlement in the last 7 days?

Number of times waste collected in 7 days	Number of residents	%
0	150	37,8
1	41	10,3%
2	86	21,7%
3	70	17,7%
4	31	7,8%
5	3	0,76%
6	2	0,51%
7	13	3,28%

10% of residents who did have waste collection services said their waste was removed once a week. 21% of residents said their waste was collected twice a week, while those who did not receive the service said they dumped their waste next to the road.

In Table 2, it shows that close to 40 % of residents said they required three refuse bags a week, while close to 20% said they required more than three refuse bags a week. In the [Asivikelane #32](#) released in October 2022, only 28% of residents said the metro provided enough refuse bags

Table 2: Number of plastic bags residents want to receive

Number of bags	Number of residents	%
1	37	9,3%
2	131	33%
3	151	38%
More than 3 bags	78	19,7%

Detailed findings

Asivikelane #37 asked residents what they require from a waste removal service. The table below ranks these refuse removal requirements according to residents' responses. Residents could select more than one option. The results show that close to 70% of residents requested communal skips or refuse containers while nearly half of the residents said they wanted designated dumping sites within five minutes walking distance from their homes and refuse bags to be provided weekly.

Around 40% said they wanted communal bins provided close to taps and toilets and dumping sites cleaned weekly.

Table 3: What do residents require from an adequate waste removal service?

Asks	Number of responses	%
Provide communal skips or refuse containers	266	67%
Provide designated dumping sites within 5 minutes walking distance from my home.	192	48,4%
Provide refuse bags every week	192	48,4%
Provide communal bins close to communal taps and toilets	158	39,8%
Clean dumping sites at least once a week	156	39,3%
Collect refuse from my home once a week	59	14,9%

The table below shows the impact of uncollected refuse on residents' health and quality of life. Asivikelane #37 gave residents a series of options from which residents could select one or more.

The biggest impacts facing residents were that the uncollected waste created a bad smell (72%), that it attracted rats, mice and mosquitoes (67%), made the settlement dirty (59%), polluted the drinking water (58%) and was a danger to children who might play in dumps (49%). While around 22% of residents collectively said it led to the blockage of toilets and drains.

Table 4: Health impact of uncollected waste

Impact of uncollected waste	Number of responses	%
Uncollected waste creates a bad smell	289	72,8%
It attracts rats, mice and mosquitoes	268	67,5%
It makes the settlement dirty	238	59,9%
It is a health risk because waste pollutes drinking water	233	58,7%
It is dangerous because children might play in or near it and get hurt	197	49,6%
It leads to the blockage of drains	70	17,6%
It leads to the blockage of toilets	17	4,28%