



Which Countries Pollute The Most Ocean Plastic Waste?

Description

Millions of metric tons of plastic are produced worldwide every year. **While half of this plastic waste is recycled, incinerated, or discarded into landfills, a significant portion of what remains eventually ends up in our oceans.**

In fact, many pieces of ocean plastic waste have come together to create a vortex of plastic waste thrice the size of France in the Pacific Ocean between California and Hawaii.

Where does all of this plastic come from? In this graphic, Visual Capitalist's Freny Fernandes and Louis Lugas Wicaksono used data from a research paper by Lourens J.J. Meijer and team to highlight the top 10 countries emitting plastic pollutants in the waters surrounding them.



Plastic's Ocean Voyage

First, let's talk about how this plastic waste reaches the oceans in the first place.

Most of the plastic waste found in the deep blue waters comes from the litter in parks, beaches, or along the storm drains lining our streets. These bits of plastic waste are carried into our drains,

streams, and rivers by wind and rainwater runoff.

The rivers then turn into plastic superhighways, transporting the plastic to the oceans.

A large additional chunk of ocean plastic comes from damaged fishing nets or ghost nets that are directly discarded into the high seas.

Countries Feeding the Plastic Problem

Some might think that the countries producing or consuming the most plastic are the ones that pollute the oceans the most. But that’s not true.

According to the study, countries with a smaller geographical area, longer coastlines, high rainfall, and poor waste management systems are more likely to wash plastics into the sea.

For example, **China** generates 10 times the plastic waste that Malaysia does. However, 9% of Malaysia's total plastic waste is estimated to reach the ocean, in comparison to China’s 0.6%.

Rank	Country	Annual Ocean Plastic Waste (Metric tons)
#1	 Philippines	356,371
#2	 India	126,513
#3	 Malaysia	73,098
#4	 China	70,707
#5	 Indonesia	56,333
#6	 Myanmar	40,000
#7	 Brazil	37,799
#8	 Vietnam	28,221
#9	 Bangladesh	24,640
#10	 Thailand	22,806
	 Rest of the World	176,012
	Total	1,012,500

The **Philippines**—an archipelago of over 7,000 islands, with a 36,289 kilometer coastline and 4,820 plastic emitting rivers—is estimated to emit 35% of the ocean’s plastic.

In addition to the Philippines, over 75% of the accumulated plastic in the ocean is reported to come from the mismanaged waste in Asian countries including India, Malaysia, China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Thailand.

The only non-Asian country to make it to this top 10 list, with 1,240 rivers including the Amazon, is **Brazil**.

The Path to a Plastic-free Ocean

The first, and most obvious, way to reduce plastic accumulation is to reduce the use of plastic. Lesser production equals lesser waste.

The second step is managing the plastic waste generated, and this is where the challenge lies.

Many high-income countries generate high amounts of plastic waste, but are either better at processing it or exporting it to other countries. Meanwhile, many of the middle-income and low-income countries that both demand plastics and receive bulk exports have yet to develop the infrastructure needed to process it.

by Tyler Durden

Category

1. ECO-Climate-Environment
2. Main

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