

Plastic Pollution in India

October 27, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com



What's in today's article?

- Why in News?
- What are the Findings of the Study About Plastic Pollution?
- Effort to Regulate Plastic Use

Why in News?

According to a new study, India has secured the top spot as the biggest plastic polluter in the world.

What are the Findings of the Study About Plastic Pollution?



• Highlights:

- **The study assesses five sources of plastic pollution:** uncollected waste, littering, collection systems, uncontrolled disposal, and rejects from sorting and reprocessing.
- The findings reveal that **global plastic waste emissions** reached 52.1 million tonnes (Mt) in 2020.
- **Notably, 69% of global plastic waste emissions** originate from 20 countries, including 4 low-income, 9 lower-middle-income, and 7 upper-middle-income nations.
- **Littering was the predominant source of emissions** in the *Global North*, while **uncollected waste** was the major source in the *Global South*.
- **High-income countries**, despite having higher plastic waste generation rates, are not in the top 90 polluters due to their comprehensive waste collection and controlled disposal systems.

• Case of India:

- India has emerged as the world's top plastic polluter, **releasing 9.3 Mt of plastic annually** and **amounting to roughly one-fifth of global plastic emissions**.
- Plastic emissions are greenhouse gases (GHGs) released throughout the life cycle of plastic, from production to disposal.
- While India's official plastic waste generation rate (which is about 0.12 kilograms per capita per day) is likely underestimated, waste collection figures are inflated.
- **This discrepancy** may stem from the exclusion of data from rural areas, the open burning of uncollected waste, and waste recycled by the informal sector.

• Case of other countries:

- After India, it's **Nigeria and Indonesia** that hold the 2nd and 3rd position in the plastic emissions, with 3.5 Mt and 3.4 Mt, respectively.

- **China**, which was identified as the top global polluter, has dropped to 4th position, mainly due to progress in waste management, including investments in incineration and controlled landfills over the past 15 years.
- **Significance of the study:**
 - These insights are crucial for the upcoming **Global Plastics Treaty**, which aims to create a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution by 2024.
 - The findings **offer a new baseline** for countries to assess and address their plastic pollution, helping shape future action plans and improve waste management strategies.
- **Concerns regarding study:** This comprehensive study may still underestimate emissions from some high-income countries as it **excluded plastic waste exports**.

Effort to Regulate Plastic Use:

- **India - The Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules (2021):**
 - **In 2022**, India brought into effect the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules (2021) that banned 19 categories of **'single-use plastics'** – disposable goods that are made with plastic but are **generally use-and-throw**.
- **Global:**
 - **Resolution to end plastic pollution:** The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) passed a resolution to “end plastic pollution” in 2022.
 - **An Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)** was set up and tasked to develop a legally binding instrument – a global treaty – to govern plastic production and use across all nations.
 - **Global Plastics Treaty:** In 2022, 175 nations agreed to develop a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution by 2024 to reduce GHG emissions from plastic production, use and disposal.
 - However, after multiple rounds of extensive discussions and negotiations, **the world seems to be nowhere near an agreement on how to deal with the plastic waste menace**.

Q.1. How the Indian state of Sikkim is working to end plastic pollution?

Sikkim, which in 1998 became the first Indian state to ban disposable plastic bags, is also among the first to target single-use plastic bottles.

Q.2. What is the theme of world earth day 2024 and its significance?

The theme for World Earth Day 2024 (April 22) is “Planet vs. Plastics,” which highlights the pressing issue of plastic pollution and aims to raise awareness about the need to reduce plastic production and usage to protect the planet’s health and ecosystems.

Source: India emerges as the world’s largest plastic polluter: Study reveals 9.3 Million tonnes a year | DTE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/plastic-pollution-in-india/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.