

Hong Kong wants to slap tax on garbage disposal

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File photo of workers removing rubbish from a beach on Lamma island in Hong Kong. Environmentalists Wednesday welcomed plans for Hong Kong to introduce a "pay-as-you-throw" tax on rubbish disposal as the city moves to tackle a growing waste problem.

Environmentalists Wednesday welcomed plans for Hong Kong to introduce a "pay-as-you-throw" tax on rubbish disposal as the city moves to tackle a growing waste problem.

Under the new system -- which is also known as trash-metering and has been implemented in places including Taiwan, [South Korea](#), Japan and New Zealand -- residents would be charged based on how much rubbish they throw out.

The city must "tackle the imminent waste problem" and such a plan could "prompt the public to change their daily living habits", Secretary for the Environment Edward Yau said in a statement.

Official data shows that the city generates about 19,000 tonnes of [solid waste](#) every day, with 9,100 tonnes dumped into [landfills](#) -- two thirds of it domestic waste. Only 52 percent of total waste is recycled.

"We fully support the government's proposal to put a tax on the throwing of garbage," said Michelle Au, Friends of the Earth's deputy environmental affairs manager in Hong Kong.

"If Hong Kong implements this fee, it can greatly extend the life of rubbish dumps."

But [environmentalists](#) are also calling for the government to have a clearer waste reduction target, something that is not spelt out in the proposal.

The city produces an average of 921 kilograms of rubbish per person per year, more than twice the amount compared to Japan (410kg) and South Korea (380kg), the Organisation for [Economic Cooperation](#) and Development has reportedly said.

Hong Kong replaced its three waste incinerators in 1989 because of environmental concerns, becoming reliant on landfill sites.

"The local government is initiating a three-month public consultation period on (the new proposal)," a government spokeswoman told AFP.

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