

Five things to know about plastic waste and recycling in India

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An Indian volunteer collects plastic waste during a cleanup drive at Versova beach in Mumbai—India generates around 5.6 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, according to government figures

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is pursuing an ambitious project

to phase out single-use plastics by 2022 in the vast South Asian nation, which has a population of 1.3 billion.

Here are five key facts about [plastic waste](#) and recycling in India:

Consumption per person

India's per capita consumption is 11 kilogrammes (24 pounds) compared to the United States, where it is the world's highest at 109 kilogrammes, according to figures released by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in 2017.

The world average is about 28 kilogrammes, the data said. Consumption is projected by the government to increase to 20 kilogrammes by 2022.

India, the world's second-most populous country, generates around 5.6 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, according to government figures.

Single-use plastics

Modi wants to limit the use of single-use plastic such as bags, cutlery and straws. Almost half of plastics in India are used for packaging, with much of it single-use, according to the industry.

Several states in India have already banned plastic carry bags. But enforcement has been lax. Amid a push by Modi for businesses to join his campaign, national carrier Air India and online e-commerce giants Amazon India and Walmart-backed Flipkart say they will ditch [single-use](#) plastic for packaging in coming years.

Waste

Plastic makes up about eight percent of total solid waste in India, according to the government.

Visible impact

The impact of plastic waste is visible in two major river systems flowing through India. The Indus (164,332 tons) and Meghna-Brahmaputra-Ganges (72,845 tons) carry some of the world's highest amounts of plastic debris to the oceans, according to the United Nations.

Recycling

Waste is not segregated in India when it is collected, and vast amounts of plastic litter clog [public spaces](#) as well as [water bodies](#).

India's segregation and recycling system operates through an informal chain of workers—from ragpickers who sort through waste to dealers who sell the plastic to plants.

About 60 percent of plastic waste in India is recycled, according to various estimates. Just nine percent of all plastic waste ever produced globally has been recycled, according to the United Nations.

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