

LITTER REPORT FY24 NATIONAL

During the financial year of 2024, Clean Up Australia volunteers continued to unite against litter by taking to their streets, beaches, parks, bushland and waterways to Clean Up.

While over a million joined us last year across 16,320 sites, the Litter Report FY24 is a snapshot of litter removed by Clean Up Australia volunteers across a portion of these sites during Clean Up Australia Day and Every Day Clean Ups. Across the nation, the Report is based on the count of 414,161 items from 1,351 surveyed locations (468,482 items from 1,356 locations in FY23).

TOTAL SITES REGISTERED:

16,320 (17,139 in FY23)

TOTAL ESTIMATED VOLUNTEERS:

1,077,127 (1,030,395 in FY23)

TOTAL ESTIMATED VOLUNTEER HOURS:

2,154, 254 (2,060,790 in FY23)

TOTAL END OF CLEAN UP REPORTS ANALYSED:

1,351 (1,356 in FY23)

MAJOR TYPES OF LITTER REPORTED

	FY24 Count	%	Difference
Soft Plastic	131,734	31.8%	-2.3%
All Other Plastics	105,583	25.5%	6.5%
Hard Plastics	96,869	23.4%	-4.6%
Metal	31,581	7.6%	0.4%
Paper/Cardboard	16,638	4.0%	-1.1%
Glass	16,530	4.0%	-0.2%
Miscellaneous	6,829	1.6%	0.8%
Rubber	3,436	0.8%	0.4%
E-Waste	3,251	0.8%	0.2%
Wood	1,711	0.4%	0.0%

NOTABLE % CHANGES FROM FY23

↑ Increases:	↓ Decreases:	Unchanged:
All Other Plastics 6.5%	Soft Plastics 2.3%	Metal
Miscellaneous 0.8%	Hard Plastics 4.6%	Glass
	Paper/Cardboard 1.1%	Rubber
		E-Waste
		Wood

TOP 10 GROUPED ITEMS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL LITTER SURVEYED

Grouped Items	FY24 Count	%	Difference
Soft Plastics	131,734	31.8%	-2.3%
Non-Food Packaging	125,917	30.4%	3.2%
Beverage Containers	62,012	15.0%	0.5%
Food Packaging	51,628	12.5%	-1.1%
Household Items	18,425	4.5%	1.9%
Beverage Litter	12,115	2.9%	-1.4%
E-Waste	3,251	0.8%	0.2%
Construction Materials	2,985	0.7%	-0.2%
Clothing	2,242	0.5%	0.0%
Sanitary Items	2,077	0.5%	-0.5%

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are some changes in the top 10 grouped items when compared with FY23. Soft plastics saw a decrease of 2.3% despite continuing to lead litter counts. Notably, the top 3 counted litter categories remain the same across FY23 and FY24: Soft plastics, non-food packaging and beverage containers. Non-food packaging includes the highly reported item cigarette butts.

Packaging [non-food, beverage containers and food] continues to lead litter counts, representing 57.9% of all reported litter during the year. Beverage containers and food packaging remain in third and fourth positions with household items moving from sixth to fifth place with an increase of 1.9% over FY23, indicating a need for consumer education around reuse, repair and consuming less.

E-waste is the seventh most collected category in FY24, while in FY23 these items did not make the top 10. E-waste is problematic in the environment as it can release toxins into soil and groundwater. Sanitary items continued to decrease reflecting a reduction in the number of facemasks reported.

All other items show minimal percentage changes over FY23.

TOP 10 INDIVIDUAL ITEMS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL LITTER SURVEYED

Individual Items	FY24 Count	%	Difference
Soft Plastics – packets, wrappers	101,910	24.6%	-9.0%
Cigarette Butts	83,195	20.1%	3.8%
Plastic Bags – food, retail, garbage	28,473	6.9%	6.1%
Aluminium Beverage Cans	24,454	5.9%	0.6%
Plastic Beverage Bottles	22,121	5.3%	-1.6%
Plastic Food Containers & Utensils	20,659	5.0%	-1.2%
Plastics Fragments > 5mm	18,829	4.5%	0.6%
Glass Beverage Bottles	11,862	2.9%	1.0%
Takeaway Coffee Cups	11,755	2.8%	0.1%
Paper Items	6,556	1.6%	-1.4%

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are some changes from FY23 to FY24. Soft plastics remain in first place, however with a decrease of 9.0%. Cigarette butts remain in second place and increased as a percentage of reported litter by 3.8%, indicating a persistent and increasing problem regarding butt disposal in Australia. Notably, soft plastics and cigarette butts have consistently ranked in the top 2 collected items over the past 5 years from 2020.

Plastic bags have also seen a marked increase of 6.1%. While lightweight bags have been phased out across Australia, heavy density bags are widely available, with WA, ACT, SA and Queensland being the first states to phase them out. Alongside soft plastics, these items indicate the need for a nationally implemented soft plastics Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) collection and reprocessing scheme.

Plastic beverage bottles decreased by 1.6% and moved from third to fifth place. Plastic bottles can be returned for recycling via Container Deposit Schemes (CDSs).

Takeaway food containers dropped by 1.2% and plastic straws moved out of the top 10 items, which could be reflective of increased awareness surrounding takeaway containers and single-use plastics and the phase out of plastic straws across the country excluding NT and Tasmania.

LITTER DISTRIBUTION BY SITE TYPE

National	Number of sites	% of total litter count
Beach/Coastal Area	218	26.1%
National Park	379	22.2%
Public Bushland	169	12.9%
Dive Site	165	12.0%
Outdoor Public Transport	155	9.0%
Footpath	111	7.7%
River/Creek	85	4.8%
Roadside	30	2.8%
Park	16	1.2%
Other	9	0.8%
Shops/Malls	12	0.5%
School Grounds/Campus	2	0.1%