

Prioritizing plastic pollution



Earth is polluted with plastic waste, with impacts on ecosystems and health. This Issue and online Collection bring together research on plastic in the environment and discussion on how to combat this growing problem.

Like an empty bottle bobbing in the surf, plastic pollution has risen to the top of our collective consciousness. Scientists and citizens are increasingly aware of, and responding to, this problem, as evident in a series of articles in this Issue and the accompanying online Collection.

The cycling¹, fate² and socioeconomics³ of plastics are complex. Improper disposal is widely seen as the source of plastic pollution, and consumer (mis)behaviour undoubtedly is a contributor⁴. However, stemming the source – plastic production – is essential to addressing plastic pollution.

This Collection is brought together to inform and inspire, not discourage or admit defeat. As described in many Comments in this Issue, and Articles in the Collection, there are ways forward. A cohort of entrepreneurs⁵, researchers^{6,7}, citizens, NGOs and policymakers⁸ are working towards understanding and tackling plastic pollution. We hope that others will join.

Published online: 9 November 2022

References

1. Bank, M. S., Mitrano, D. M., Rillig, M. C., Lin, C. S. K. & Ok, Y. S. *Nat. Rev. Earth Environ.* <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-022-00365-x> (2022).
2. Lebreton, L. *Nat. Rev. Earth Environ.* <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-022-00363-z> (2022).
3. Villarrubia-Gómez, P., Almröth, B. C. & Cornell, S. E. *Nat. Rev. Earth Environ.* <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-022-00359-9> (2022).
4. Truelove, H. B., Raimi, K. T. & Carrico, A. R. *Nat. Rev. Earth Environ.* <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-022-00356-y> (2022).
5. Dijkstra, H. *Nat. Rev. Earth Environ.* <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-022-00353-1> (2022).
6. Wang, T. et al. *Nat. Rev. Earth Environ.* <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-022-00349-x> (2022).
7. Fei, X. et al. *Nat. Rev. Earth Environ.* <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-022-00354-0> (2022).
8. March, A., Roberts, K. P. & Fletcher, S. *Nat. Rev. Earth Environ.* <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-022-00361-1> (2022).
9. Geyer, R., Jambeck, J. R. & Law, K. L. *Sci. Adv.* **3**, e1700782 (2017).
10. *Global Plastics Outlook* (OECDiLibrary, 2022).
11. Cabernard, L. et al. *Nat. Sustain.* **5**, 139–148 (2022).

