



2021 RUBBISH REPORT NATIONAL

The 2021 Rubbish Report is a snapshot of rubbish removed by Clean Up Australia volunteers. Across the nation, the Report is based on the count of 379,606 rubbish items from 944 surveyed locations [365,922 items from 1,274 locations in 2020].

13,031

**SITES
REGISTERED:**
[7,778 in 2020]

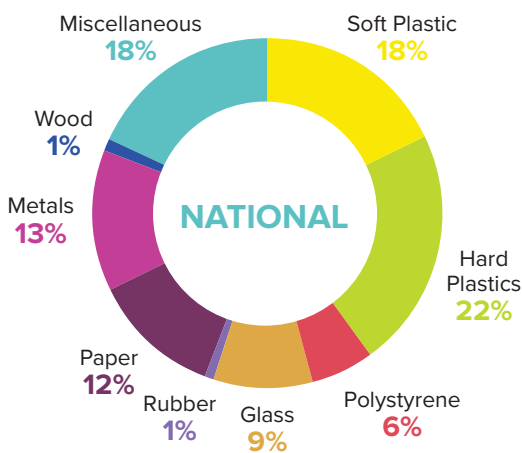
908,437

**ESTIMATED
VOLUNTEERS**
[683,242 in 2020]

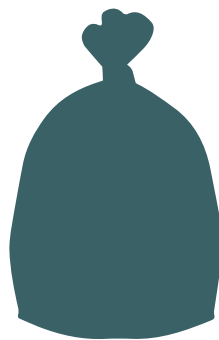
1,816,874

**VOLUNTEER
HOURS:**
[1,366,484 in 2020]

MAJOR TYPES OF RUBBISH REPORTED



NOTABLE CHANGES FROM 2020



Hard plastics, rubber, paper and wood remained on par

**4%↑
SOFT PLASTICS**
(as percentage of rubbish reported)

**1%↑
POLYSTYRENE
AND METALS**

**4%↓
GLASS**

**2%↓
MISCELLANEOUS**

2021 participation reflects the impact of COVID-19 on volunteer desire to join with their neighbours and friends to clean up their favourite locations.

Despite local lockdowns and restrictions, Australians continued to Step Up to Clean Up with a 25% increase in the number of estimated volunteers across the nation.

This clearly demonstrates the importance volunteers place on our local parks, streets, beaches, waterways and bushland.

TOP 10 RUBBISH ITEMS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL RUBBISH SURVEYED

GROUP ITEMS



RANK #1
Non-Food
Packaging
33.4%



RANK #2
Soft
Plastics
17.7%



RANK #3
Beverage
Containers
13.3%



RANK #4
Food
Packaging
11.7%



RANK #5
Beverage
Rubbish
9.8%



RANK #6
Household
Items
5.1%



RANK #7
Construction
Materials
2.8%



RANK #8
Sanitary
Items
2.6%



RANK #9
Toys, Sporting
Goods, Ropes
1.9%



RANK #10
Clothing
1.2%

NOTABLE CHANGES

Following their separation in 2020, soft plastics have again been separated into their own category. Counts include plastic food, retail and garbage bags, plastic confectionery wrappers, cling wrap and 'other' soft plastics. 2021 volunteers counted 38,266 [33,562 in 2020] of these items, representing 17.7% of all surveyed rubbish and 45% [40.4% in 2020] of plastics.

Beverage container counts continue to fall. We are still seeing evidence of 'container hunting' in states where the redemption scheme is new, but established states are reporting decreased counts as more containers are intercepted for redemption before they become litter. In 2021, beverage containers reflected 13.3% [15.5% in 2020] of counted rubbish. This is 4.6% down on 2019 figures.

Packaging continues to dominate rubbish counts, representing 45% [49.8% in 2020] of all reported rubbish during the year. In 2019, packaging represented 50.3%, which suggests we are seeing a downward trend.

INDIVIDUAL ITEMS



RANK #1
Cigarette
Butts
14.3%



RANK #2
Plastic Chip &
Confectionery
6.1%



RANK #3
Other Soft
Plastics
5.7%



RANK #4
Bottle Caps
& Lids
4.3%



RANK #5
Glass
Pieces
3.2%



RANK #6
Bottle
Caps
2.9%



RANK #7
Alcoholic
Bottles
2.8%



RANK #8
Food
Bags
2.8%



RANK #9
Plastic
Packaging
2.7%



RANK #10
Foil Confect.
Wrappers
2.7%

NOTABLE CHANGES

While again decreasing their % representations, cigarette butts remain the #1 item reported by volunteers. In 2021 they represented 14.3% [16.2% in 2020] of all reported rubbish which is a welcome decrease of another 1.9% and 7.7% over 2019. While small, the environmental impact of a cigarette butt cannot be underestimated. Leaching toxins and leaving small pieces of plastic in their wake – every littered butt provides immediate, short and long-term danger for our precious flora and fauna.

It is also clear that small stuff remains an issue. Butts, wrappers, lids and pieces of glass dominate the Top 10 list, rising by 3% to now account for one third [30% in 2020] of Top 10 reported rubbish.

*Grouped Data made up 99.5% [99.5% in 2020] of surveyed rubbish

*Individual Item Count Top 10 data = 47.3% [49.9% in 2020]

FAVOURITE CLEAN UP SITES

33.1% [30.3% in 2020] is along roadsides and along footpaths

RIVER/CREEK/ WATERWAYS WATER STORAGE

Sites: **134**
Items: **53,466**
Total waste: **14%**
Average # Items **399**

OUTDOOR TRANSPORT

Sites: **7**
Items: **3,262**
Total waste: **1%**
Average # Items **466**

SHOPS/MALLS

Sites: **20**
Items: **7,229**
Total waste: **2%**
Average # Items **361**

BEACH/COASTAL

Sites: **116**
Items: **58,957**
Total waste: **16%**
Average # Items **508**

DIVE SITE

Sites: **3**
Items: **653**
Total waste: **0%**
Average # Items **218**

38.9% of Miscellaneous items [prime individual item of which is cigarette butts] are mostly reported along roadsides and footpaths [27.5% in 2020], followed by waterways 34.9% [16% in 2020] and parks 14.6% [15% last year]

36% of all reported paper was along roadsides, followed by waterways @ 24.7% and parks @ 21.9%.

SCHOOL GROUNDS

Sites: **68**
Items: **26,028**
Total waste: **7%**
Average # Items **383**

32.2% of all reported metals were along roadsides and footpaths

OTHER

Sites: **6**
Items: **1,585**
Total waste: **0%**
Average # Items **264**

PARKS [INCL NAT PARKS]

Sites: **255**
Items: **74,611**
Total waste: **20%**
Average # Items **293**

41% of rubbish reported within parks is plastics. This is on-par with 2020 when the % was 40.6%.

ROADSIDES

Sites: **172**
Items: **69,936**
Total waste: **18%**
Average # Items **407**

37.2% [31.7% in 2020] of reported plastics were found in our waterways [rivers + beach/coastal areas + dive sites]

Glass is most likely to be found in waterways, accounting for 29.4% of this material type, followed by roadsides and footpaths where it was reported @ 28.3% of the category

PUBLIC BUSHLAND

Sites: **104**
Items: **31,902**
Total waste: **8%**
Average # Items **307**

FOOTPATHS

Sites: **109**
Items: **51,977**
Total waste: **14%**
Average # Items **477**

RUBBISH BY LOCATION



River/Creek/
Waterways/
Water storage



Parks



Beach/
Coastal



Roadsides



Footpaths



Bushland



Shops/
Malls



Schools



Outdoor
transport

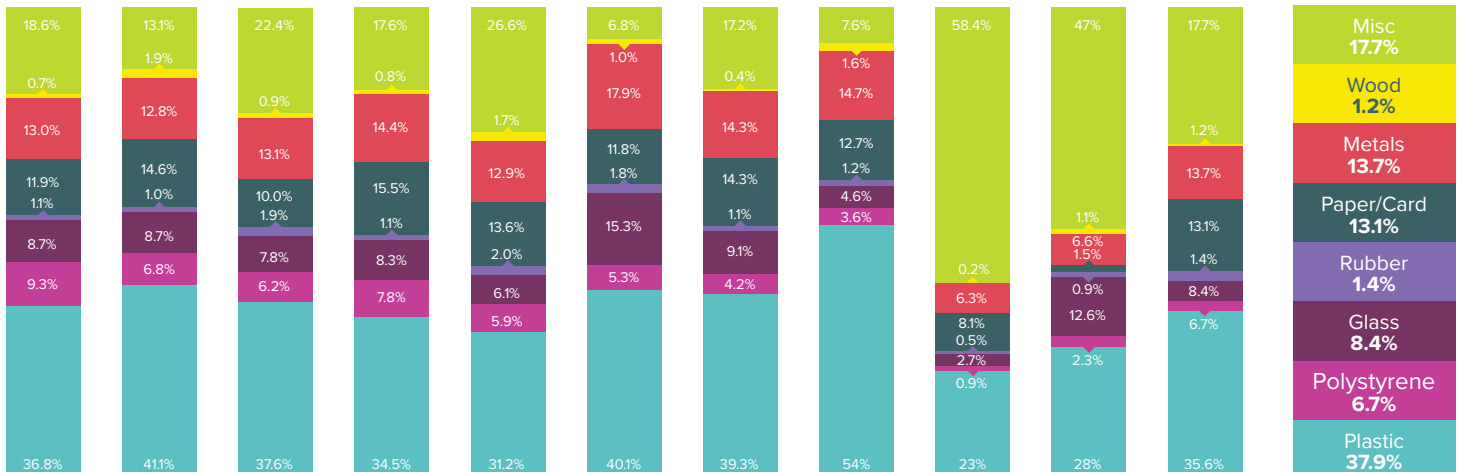


Dive Sites



Other

TOTAL



Founding Partner



Partners



Media Partners



Suppliers