

LITTER REPORT FY23 NATIONAL

During the financial year of 2023, Clean Up Australia continued to encourage volunteers across the nation to **Step Up to Clean Up**, by taking to their streets, beaches, parks, bushland and waterways to remove accumulated litter.

While over a million joined us last year across 17,139 sites the Litter Report FY23 is a snapshot of litter removed by Clean Up Australia volunteers during Clean Up Australia Day and Every Day Clean Ups across a portion of these sites. Across the nation, the Report is based on the count of 468,482 items from 1,356 surveyed locations.

TOTAL SITES REGISTERED:

17,139 (12,474 in 2022)

TOTAL ESTIMATED VOLUNTEERS:

1,030,395 (934,433 in 2022)

TOTAL ESTIMATED VOLUNTEER HOURS:

2,060,790 (1,868,886 in 2022)

TOTAL END OF CLEAN UP REPORTS ANALYSED:

1,356 (1,072 in 2022)

MAJOR TYPES OF LITTER REPORTED

	FY23 Count	%
Soft Plastics	159,962	34.1%
Hard Plastics	131,296	28.0%
All Other Plastics	88,913	19.0%
Metal	33,893	7.2%
Paper/Cardboard	24,052	5.1%
Glass	19,576	4.2%
Miscellaneous	4,014	0.9%
E-Waste	2,510	0.5%
Rubber	2,232	0.5%
Wood	2,034	0.4%
	468,482	100.0%

NOTABLE % CHANGES FROM 2022

↑ Increases:	↓ Decreases:	Unchanged:
Soft Plastics 9.2%	All Other Plastics 9.5%	E-Waste
Hard Plastics 4.5%	Metal 0.8%	Rubber
Paper/Cardboard 0.5%	Glass 3.1%	Wood
	Miscellaneous 0.8%	

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

Grouped Items	FY23 Count	%
Soft Plastics	159,962	34.1%
Non-Food Packaging	127,208	27.2%
Beverage Containers	68,028	14.5%
Food Packaging	63,374	13.5%
Beverage Litter	20,277	4.3%
Household Items	12,084	2.6%
Sanitary Items	4,664	1.0%
Construction Materials	4,116	0.6%
Clothing	2,662	0.6%
Toys & Sporting Equipment	2,614	0.5%

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are some changes in the top 10 grouped items when compared with 2022. Soft plastics moved into first place with an increase of 9.2%, a large increase which may have been influenced by the collapse of REDcycle in November 2022.

Non-food packaging moved into second place with a decrease of 1.0%. Despite this, packaging [non-food, beverage containers and food] continues to lead litter counts, representing 55.2% of all reported litter during the year. Beverage containers, food packaging and beverage litter remain in third, fourth and fifth places respectively, with household items moving from seventh place to sixth place with an increase of 0.5% over 2022.

The good news is sanitary items decreased by 3.4%, reflecting a significant reduction in the number of face masks reported.

All other items show minimal percentage changes over 2022.

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

Individual Items	FY23 Count	%
Soft Plastic Pieces	134,488	28.7%
Cigarette Butts	76,085	16.2%
Plastic Beverage Bottles (single-use)	31,566	6.7%
Aluminium Beverage Cans	25,013	5.3%
Takeaway Food Containers	22,513	4.8%
Pieces of Plastic	18,487	3.9%
Chips and Confectionery Bags	17,226	3.7%
Straws	15,530	3.3%
Takeaway Coffee Cups	12,849	2.7%
Glass Pieces	9,997	2.1%

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are some changes from 2022 to FY23. Soft plastic pieces remain in first place with an increase of 11.2%, a trend which could be linked to the collapse of REDcycle in November 2022. Cigarette butts increased as a percentage of reported litter by 2.6%, indicating a persistent and increasing problem regarding butt disposal and recycling in Australia.

Straws and takeaway coffee cups have moved into the top 10 individual items list with bottle caps/lids and face masks making place for these items. Decreased face masks and an increase in coffee cups may be attributed to increased social activity in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Takeaway food containers dropped by 1.2% from 2022 to FY23, which could be reflective of increased awareness surrounding single-use plastics and takeaway containers. Currently, no states have banned lidded plastic takeaway containers although WA is set to phase them out in September, 2024.

LITTER DISTRIBUTION BY SITE TYPE

National	Number of sites	% of total litter count
Coastal/Beach	213	23.3%
Dive Site	2	0.2%
Footpath	87	5.4%
Outdoor Transport	8	0.6%
Park	338	16.7%
Public Bushland	144	11.7%
River/Creek	222	20.5%
Roadway	184	10.2%
School Grounds	107	7.4%
Shops/Mall	9	0.7%
Other	41	3.3%