

Global survey sees nearly nine in 10 people supporting a UN plastic pollution treaty but will governments follow?

- An average of nearly 90% of people surveyed across 28 countries believe having a global plastics treaty is important to effectively address the plastic pollution crisis; in addition, 85% want manufacturers and retailers to be held responsible for plastic packaging.
- Over 150 UN member states have publicly called for a treaty, but unless these calls are followed by a decision to establish a treaty with wide reach that extends across plastics' lifecycle, we will be no closer to solving the plastic pollution crisis.
- WWF and the Plastic Free Foundation call on UN member states to initiate negotiations for a legally binding global treaty against plastic pollution at the UN Environment Assembly in February (UNEA 5.2) that reflects overwhelming public demand for ambitious and coordinated action.

GLAND, SWITZERLAND, 22 February 2022 – An average of nearly nine in 10 people surveyed across 28 countries think it is important to have a global treaty to combat plastic pollution but whether this overwhelming global public support will result in the adoption of an ambitious, legally binding global treaty remains uncertain.

Ipsos polled over 20,000 adults in late 2021 for the Plastic Free Foundation, with WWF partnering to release the results, and this is the first comprehensive global polling on the need for a plastic pollution treaty, which should further strengthen the case for a treaty that sets high global standards for addressing all stages of plastic's lifecycle and a pathway to ending plastic pollution by 2030.

Latin American countries lead with 93% of the region's respondents acknowledging the importance of a global plastics treaty, followed by respondents in Europe and the Asia Pacific region. The proportion of people who think a treaty is important was highest in Mexico (96%), China (95%) and Peru (95%).

"We know people are extremely concerned about the growing plastic pollution crisis and in 2021, an estimated 140 million people globally took part in Plastic Free July, but individual action is not enough. There needs to be clear and ambitious mandates and targets that reframe our relationship with plastics so that people's health and that of the environment are not at risk from plastic pollution. The survey is a clear call by people from all corners of the world that they want their governments to act now," **said Rebecca Prince-Ruiz, Founder and Executive Director, Plastic Free Foundation.**

The survey also found that 85% of respondents want manufacturers and retailers to be held responsible for reducing, reusing and recycling plastic packaging. These demands are in line with a full lifecycle approach to the management of plastic pollution, which Peru and Rwanda have proposed to UN member states to consider ahead of a two week-long negotiation starting 21 February with a decision to be made 1-2 March at the conclusion of the high level segment of the UN Environment Assembly.

Following a growing focus on the issue of plastic pollution that started at UNEA in 2014, 156 nations, or ¾ of UN member states, have now publicly expressed support for a global plastics treaty.

Public awareness and concern around the crisis have gained strength as the problem of plastic overconsumption and pollution has grown exponentially: modelling suggests that business-as-usual will result in plastic waste generation doubling and plastic leakage into the ocean tripling by 2040, compared with 2016 levels^[1]; 2,144 species of microbes, plants and animals are known to be affected by plastic pollution^[2]; and the social, environmental, and economic costs of plastic produced in 2019 alone are estimated to be at least US\$3.7 trillion (+/-US\$1 trillion) over its estimated lifetime.^[3]

Pressure has been mounting on governments for a legally binding treaty to address the plastic pollution crisis. More than 2 million people around the world have signed a WWF petition calling for this, while over 100 global companies, and more than 700 civil society organisations have also backed calls for a treaty.

The survey not only mirrors the overwhelming global public support for a plastics treaty but also highlights the kind of strong and ambitious targets that people would like to see their governments endorse.

“Our plastics crisis threatens to spiral out of control and it is high time for governments around the world to provide leadership. People worldwide have made their views clear. The onus and opportunity is now on governments to adopt a global plastics treaty - one that is legally binding and establishes global rules and regulations that address the full lifecycle of plastic - so we can eliminate plastic pollution in the environment by 2030. We cannot afford anything less,” **said Marco Lambertini, Director General, WWF International.**

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Notes to the Editor

For more information, please contact: news@wwfint.org.

Background

The full results of the survey “Attitudes towards single use plastics” are available [here](#) (after the embargo lifts). A key element of the survey looked at global opinions on actions to stop plastic pollution in 28 countries.

The Plastic Free Foundation partnered with global research company Ipsos to undertake the survey, which polled 20,513 respondents in 28 countries. Respondents were aged between 16 and 74 years. The survey was conducted between 20 August and 3 September 2021. WWF worked with the Plastic Free Foundation to analyse and report on the data.

16 of the 28 countries surveyed generate nationally representative samples. These countries are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the UK, and the US.

Samples in the remaining countries (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey) are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent compared with the general population. These results are not nationally representative.

Key analysis include:

- Ipsos data from this and earlier global surveys have shown global citizens’ consistent willingness to act on this issue, and the extent to which they want stronger action from brand owners and retailers, has grown in recent years.
- Questions asked in this survey focused on plastic consumption more broadly, as well as exploring attitudes towards a treaty. It found that 85% of people agree that manufacturers and retailers should be responsible for reducing, reusing and recycling plastic packaging (up from 80% in 2019); around three quarters of people think single-use plastics should be banned as soon as possible (up from 71%); and 82% say they want to buy products with as little plastic packaging as possible (up from 75%)
- Even in the countries where respondents were comparatively less supportive, a significant majority of people still believe a plastic pollution treaty is important. Nearly eight in ten people surveyed in the United States (79%) and Canada (78%) say a treaty is important. Other studies have found comparable levels of concern about plastic consumption and pollution in North America.^[4] This survey found that nearly three in ten Canadians surveyed think a treaty is essential, compared with nearly one in four respondents from the US.

About WWF

WWF is an independent conservation organization, with over 30 million followers and a global network active in nearly 100 countries. Our mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources

is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. Visit panda.org/news for the latest news and media resources; follow us on Twitter [@WWF_media](https://twitter.com/WWF_media)

About the Plastic Free Foundation

The Plastic Free Foundation is a not-for-profit global social movement of over 100 million people that stops around 300 million kgs of plastic polluting the world each year. Through advocacy and initiatives like our Plastic Free July challenge, we share plastic free solutions with people and organizations so that we can all take action to end plastic waste and enjoy a healthy world. Join us at plasticfreejuly.org and Instagram [@PlasticFreeJuly](https://www.instagram.com/PlasticFreeJuly).

^[1] Pew Charitable Trust & Systemiq, 2020. Breaking the Plastic Wave: A comprehensive assessment of pathways towards stopping ocean plastic pollution.

^[2] Tekman, M.B., Walther, B.A., Peter, C., Gutow, L., and Bergmann, M., 2020. Impacts of plastic pollution in the oceans on marine species, biodiversity and ecosystems, 1-221, WWF Germany, Berlin.

^[3] WWF & Dahlberg, 2021. Plastics: The cost to society, the environment and the economy.

^[4] WWF and Corona Insights, 2020. Public opinion surrounding plastic consumption and waste management of consumer packaging & Abacus Data, 2018. New poll: Canadians say plastic in oceans a problem and more action needed.