



**PLASTIC FREE JULY
MEDIA Q&A**

We share this Q&A for journalists and reporters to spread the word of plastic avoidance around the world and inspire more people to take the Plastic Free July challenge. Together, we believe we create a world without plastic waste.

We ask you to attribute all quotes to Rebecca Prince-Ruiz, Founder and Executive Founder at Plastic Free July.

Please link mentions of Plastic Free July to the www.plasticfreejuly.org website where possible.

For interview requests, please email media@plasticfreejuly.org and include 'INTERVIEW' in the subject line.

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Media materials

1. What press materials are available for media use?

Media are welcome to use the following assets. We ask you to credit Plastic Free July and link to www.plasticfreejuly.org where possible.

- [2023 press release](#)
- 2023 campaign video (coming soon!)
- [Plastic Free July logo and resources](#)
- [Up Cup campaign resources including video \(choose to refuse single-use cups\)](#)
- [Plastic Free Morning Tea resources](#)
- [Plastic Free July Impact Report 2022](#)
- [Plastic pollution issues](#)

About Plastic Free July

1. What is Plastic Free July?

Plastic Free July® is a global movement that helps millions of people be part of the solution to plastic pollution.

Each year, millions of people around the globe take the challenge by choosing to refuse single-use plastic. People take part at home, at work and in their community.

The Plastic Free July challenge is not about doing everything, it's about choosing one or two items and giving it a try in July.

2. How many people participate in the challenge? How does this compare with previous years?

An estimated 140 million people took part in Plastic Free July 2022.

Each year an increasing number of schools, councils, businesses, partners, organisations and government agencies participate. This global trend is strong: 87% of people support policies and action to reduce plastic waste.

3. Is there a theme or focus for 2023?

The theme of Plastic Free July 2023 is '[Small steps, big difference](#)'.

Plastic waste is projected to double by 2040 (Dalberg & WWF, 2021). We can't recycle or clean up our way out of the plastic pollution crisis. Plastic Free July participants are each taking their own small steps by choosing to refuse single-use plastics. Together, we're making a big difference in turn off the plastics tap and enjoying greater well-being as a result.

Join 140 million people that are stopping around 300 million kg of plastic polluting the world each year as well as creating the cultural change that influences corporate and government policy to change the system and end plastic waste.

a. What do the 'Small Steps' represent?

Small steps are the small changes that people around the world are taking that reduce their use of single-use plastic. This can be avoiding bottled soft drinks and bottled water; refusing pre-packaged produce; choosing reusable coffee cups; and sharing the Plastic Free July challenge with family and friends.

Whatever the alternative, every step we take this July can make a big difference. Other people notice and are inspired to join in. When lots of people make change together it shows businesses and governments they need to step up too!

b. What does the 'Big Difference' represent?

The big difference is the effect millions of people's small steps are having on each other, and the ripple effect as this is spreads to businesses and governments. The UN Global Plastics Treaty (2024) is currently being negotiated and companies and governments are responding to the plastics crisis by developing policies and practices that reduce plastic waste.

The 300 million kg of plastic that was avoided by 140 million Plastic Free July participants in 2022 for a cleaner and healthier environment.

Research has also found that Plastic Free July participants have a positive sense of well-being and strong social connections compared to non-participants.

4. What are some key initiatives planned for the 2023 Plastic Free July challenge?

There is an [interactive global map](#) available with public Plastic Free July events for people to join.

This year, participants are invited to show the world how their steps can make a big difference by sharing photos/videos holding a plastic free item, kicking off on 1 July.

We are also calling on members of parliament, CEOs and people of influence to take a personally take a pledge to refuse single-use cups and choose reusables.

5. Why is breaking the plastic habit more important than ever?

With evidence that we are not able to simply recycle the growing amount of plastic waste it is clear that producing **and** using less plastic must be the first steps to end the pollution problem.

Addressing our plastic habits through reducing and reusing has huge advantages by avoiding some of the every-day items that are used only once or twice before being thrown in the bin.

6. How is Plastic Free July different to other plastic initiatives?

We empower people to take action to reduce plastic waste by empowering individuals and sharing stories and solutions. Systemic change by business and government is driven by a groundswell of community action. Because if we each make a small step it adds up to make a big difference!



Taking the Plastic Free July challenge

7. How does the Plastic Free July challenge work?

It's a personal challenge that's part of a global effort for our oceans, for cleaner streets and for the planet. It has enabled millions of people to take small, daily actions and create long lasting habits that minimise single-use plastic, reduce landfill waste, protect our oceans and reduce our eco-footprint.

8. What are some of the most common plastic items targeted during the challenge?

For first timers of the challenge;

- Avoiding bottled soft drinks and bottled water
- Avoiding pre-packed produce
- Avoiding plastic cups
- Avoiding plastic food wrap

For next steppers, those exploring wider sustainability lifestyle changes to avoid plastic

- Avoiding pre-packed meat and fish
- Avoiding plastic bin liners
- Shopping in bulk food stores
- Sourcing bulk detergents

For organisations that want to instigate a community journey for plastic avoidance;

- Having a Plastic Free Morning Tea to start a workplace conversation
- Head office catering and office stationery
- In-store bags and packaging
- Industry specific e.g. healthcare items, educational tools etc

9. Top tips for people trying the Plastic Free July challenge for the first time?

One change can go a long way – just choose one or two single-use plastic to avoid as a first step. It's all about noticing your plastic purchases and choosing better alternatives. The most popular choices include switching from plastic wrapped to loose produce, avoiding plastic food wrap, choosing to refuse straws and plastic water bottles.

For more examples go to the menu of options on the <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/get-involved/what-you-can-do/> website.

10. What resources are available to help people successfully reduce their plastic during July?

There are plenty of resources and ideas on our website (www.plasticfreejuly.org) to help people reduce single-use plastic waste everyday at home, work, school, and even at your local café.

Here are three simple steps to take the challenge:

- [Take the challenge](#) and get tips, tricks, stories of other participants and news from across the global movement
- Do the [Plastic Free July Quiz](#) (it takes less than 5 minutes) to discover the items you use and decide what you'd like to choose to refuse
- Decide to take your [first step](#) or really [challenge yourself!](#)

a. For people looking to avoid coffee cups?

As more people realise single-use coffee cups aren't readily recycled, many are [Choosing to Up Cup](#) as a first step to make a big difference. It's as simple as Bring, Borrow, Stay!

People can either bring their own reusable cup, borrow or swap a cup from some cafés, or take ten minutes and enjoy their favourite cuppa there.

b. For people looking to avoid plastic on food?

[Plastic Free Morning Tea](#) is a popular way of making and sharing food, fun and conversations about plastic free solutions. People who host their own at work, home or out in the community find it's a great way to invite others to get involved.

There are plenty of resources and ideas on website (<https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/get-involved/what-you-can-do/>) to help people reduce single-use plastic with food.

Often pre-packaged food and drinks can be avoided by shopping at a bulk food store or choosing the loose option at the grocery store.

When eating out, dining-in is the best way to avoid plastic and other packaging.

In some places people still need to ask to have drinks served without a straw or have a look around when you first walk in to see if they are serving single serve sauces or other sachets that can be politely declined.

For takeaways people can bring BYO reusables cups, containers (tiffin pans, Tupperware containers and bento boxes are all popular ideas) and utensils.

11. Beyond taking individual action, what can larger communities do to switch away from plastic?

We often hear how good people feel after taking part in Plastic Free July – by taking action and reducing their waste such as remembering reusables, shopping from local growers and independent stores, eating

less convenience food or picking up litter – taking action is positive. There then want to take the challenge into their own communities!

There are plenty of resources and ideas on website (www.plasticfreejuly.org) to help people reduce single-use plastic waste everyday at home, work, school, and even at the local café.

A few links to explore:

- [Plastic Free Morning Tea](#): a popular way of making and sharing food, fun and conversations about plastic free solutions. People who host their own at work, home or out in the community find it's a great way to invite others to get involved.
- [Changemaker Toolkit](#); a toolkit of resources, curated to help people share the challenge in their communities and networks to amplify impact together.
- [How business can get involved](#); this includes ways to Be part of the push to remove plastics from supply chains, serve food without single-use plastic and engage staff & customers to be a part of Plastic Free July including plastic-free messages and signs.
- For organisations who want to partner with the Plastic Free Foundation, they can become a [Corporate Sponsor](#) or join the [Local Government membership](#).

12. Is there a program for schools to take part in Plastic Free July?

Yes! We created our [Plastic Free Schools challenge](#) because of the overwhelming interest from schools – its not just the teachers but also students, parents, canteen/cafeteria staff and even the gardening and maintenance crews.

The [Schools Program](#) provides free initiative is aimed at supporting schools with useful resources, activities, stories and ideas. It is as simple as filling out a form to receive full access immediately.

13. What are some common challenges faced during the Plastic Free July challenge, and how can they be overcome?

Firstly, some people have the impression that they have to use no plastic at all during July or be perfect. Fortunately, this is not the case! People can sign up for a day, a week or the whole month and also choose their challenge. Whether it is one or two items to find alternatives for or making a habit by remembering reusables or even starting a conversation. This can be overcome through understanding and sharing our message of 'Small steps, big difference'.

Other challenges including finding alternatives and solutions and knowing how to get others involved. By signing up and using our resources as well as following [@plasticfreejuly](#) on social media there are lots of solutions and stories of change which inspire and empower, especially by knowing millions around the world are taking part and making a difference.

14. What are the benefits of taking the Plastic Free July challenge?

The benefits of avoiding single-use plastics go beyond simply reducing plastic waste. By avoiding plastic bottled water and refilling our own bottle we can save money.

Avoiding plastic packaging when purchasing food often results in a switch to fresh local produce from growers and independent stores and unprocessed ingredients which means a healthier diet and supporting local businesses and less food miles.

Our research has found that Plastic Free July participants have a positive sense of well-being and strong social connections compared to non-participants

Impact of the challenge

15. What impact does the Plastic Free July challenge have?

The Plastic Free July challenge is now one of the most impactful environmental campaigns in the world.

- The challenge stops around 300 million kgs of plastic polluting the world each year.
- In 2022, the steps taken by Plastic Free July participants from around the world collectively reduced waste by 2.6 million tonnes – that's the equivalent of around 13 thousand blue whales.
 - This is 30 times the combined weight of waste collected by 12 of some of the largest world waste clean-ups over the last year.
- Plastic Free July participants typically reduce 18 kg of household waste and recycling each year.
- See the [2022 impact report](#) for more details.

16. What has the impact been in Australia?

In Australia, in 2022, participants reduced:

1. non-recoverable (landfill) waste by 52 million kgs
2. recyclable waste by 29 million kg
3. plastic consumption by 7.6 million kg.

17. Are there any notable success stories resulting from previous Plastic Free July challenges?

Yes plenty! Please refer to the [Plastic Free July Impact Report 2022](#) for more information.

18. What are the potential long-term benefits of participating in the Plastic Free July challenge?

Plastic Free July is proven to help people make new habits forever with 88% of Plastic Free July participants make at least one lasting change.

19. Why is the Plastic Free July challenge effective at reducing plastic pollution?

There are fewer barriers to effective adoption of waste avoidance behaviours compared to the cost and time needed to effectively collect, manage and recycle waste.

Every action that people take now to reduce their plastic usage makes a big difference. Plus, it creates a commercial imperative for businesses to step up too.

20. How has Plastic Free July influenced policy or regulatory changes?

Plastic Free Foundation has played an integral role in championing this public voice by positively influencing global policy development through research, engagement, behaviour change and advocacy efforts.

See more information here:

- [Rising Tides II: Public Opinion overwhelmingly supports global rules to end plastic pollution-link will open in a new window](#) (November 2022)
- [Global Survey media release](#) (November 2022)
- Ipsos [Global Attitudes towards a Plastic Pollution Treaty](#) report (November 2022)
- [Rising Tides: Global Opinions on Actions to Stop Plastic Pollution in 28 Countries report \(February 2022\)](#)
- Ipsos [Attitudes to single-use plastics report](#) (February 2022)

21. How has the Plastic Free July challenge been recognised on the global stage?

Plastic Free Foundation was selected as one of two finalists for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action 'Mobilize' award, from over 3,000 applications from 150 countries. The awards recognise initiatives that mobilise, inspire and connect people to drive action towards a more sustainable future.

Furthermore, Plastic Free July was given NGO accreditation to attend the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi in 2022 to represent the millions of participants in Plastic Free July.

"I am deeply impressed by the broad network of activities Plastic Free July set up...triggering sustainable behaviour in so many people. Every individual decision, every little step counts – and together they form collective action that has a strong and clearly measurable direct impact", Jennifer Morgan, State Secretary And Special Envoy For International Climate Action For The Federal Republic Of Germany

The plastic pollution crisis

22. Why is the plastic pollution issue getting worse?

Due to the relative cheapness of plastic as a by-product of oil production and the lack of regulation of its use, there is no commercial reason for a business, beyond consumer preference, to refuse virgin plastic usage. [Plastic Waste Makers Index](#) .

The annual virgin plastic production is set to double by 2040 (Lau et al., 2020; Geyer, 2020)

Unfortunately less than 10% of all plastic ever produced has been recycled (Geyer et al, 2017) and there is a cultural acceptance - from single-use coffee cups and plastic bags to packaging materials, the convenience and ease of disposable plastics have become part of our daily lives.

23. What effective strategies are there to reduce plastic pollution?

Business and governments must be responsible in reducing virgin plastic production at scale. New legislation and progress towards a global plastics treaty will be significant in mandating the use of recycled plastics (and other materials) and designing out waste in new products.

However, these system-level changes require a significant shift in societal attitudes. This is why waste avoidance behavior change programs that enable individuals and communities to reduce waste still provide an essential, accessible and scalable solution.

24. Why is plastic avoidance so important?

As plastic production and waste generation increases, it is clear we can't recycle our way out of the problem and need to "turn off" the plastics tap.

Despite our waste disposal and recycling efforts plastic is everywhere - from the deepest oceans to the summit of Mt Everest. It has been found in our wildlife, the air we breathe, the food we eat and the rain that falls on us. It is not only littering the planet, but now littering our bodies, EVEN found in the placentas of unborn babies.

Even though a product may technically be able to be recycled, this does not mean that it will be.

Waste avoidance (which starts at the point of consumption not disposal) needs to be a critical part of the solution.

25. Looking ahead, what does the future look like in terms of efforts to mitigate plastic pollution?

With plastic production expected to double by 2040, a legally binding plastics treaty must include a global cap on plastic production as a central provision to stop growing harms to health, widespread environmental damage, great economic costs, and deep societal injustices.

Roadmaps must prioritise reduction of plastic, including reuse and refill to ensure a transition to a circular economy for all materials.

Plastic as a health issue

26. Why is plastic a health issue?

The links between plastic and detrimental effects on human health are increasingly clear, including hazardous chemicals used in plastic production and which leach from everyday products, while micro- and even smaller nano-plastics may also be harmful.

Concerns about the human health impacts from plastics are emerging including disruption to hormone systems and links to a wide range of health issues including brain development, reproduction, obesity, diabetes and allergies. We now know that we need to reduce our plastic waste and rethink its use to protect our health, our communities and our environment.

(For the latest information [read this blog](#) and please ask for an interview with Professor Sarah Dunlop, Head of Plastics and Human Health from the Minderoo Foundation.)

The origin story

27. How did the Plastic Free July challenge start?

It started with humble beginnings. Rebecca Prince-Ruiz and a small group of 40 people in Western Australia decided to refuse single-use plastic for a month in 2011 after Rebecca visited her local recycling facility and saw the massive volume of waste created and the challenges of recycling. She knew she needed to take responsibility and that the best way to do that was by using less.

It has since grown one of the most popular environmental campaigns in the world. Millions of people across the globe take part every year, with many committing to plastic reduction far beyond the month of July.

28. Is Plastic Free July a charity?

Yes, Plastic Free July® is a registered charity based in Australia, but operating across the globe.

The Plastic Free Foundation is the global not-for-profit organisation delivery of the annual Plastic Free July® challenge and leading movement to turn waste off at the tap.

29. What is the Plastic Free Foundation's vision for the future?

Our vision is a world without plastic waste. We will continue to drive positive change through simple solutions that help communities live more sustainably.

About Rebecca Prince-Ruiz, Founder and Executive Director

Co-author: [Plastic Free - The Inspiring Story of a Global Environmental Movement and Why It Matters](#)

30. What made you think up the idea of going plastic free for a month 12 years ago?

One day in June 2011 changed everything. I visited a recycling facility for the first time here in Perth and was confronted by seeing (and smelling) my waste firsthand.

I was shocked firstly by the sheer volume of seeing my waste together with that of my neighbours and everyone in my suburb. We talk about throwing things 'away' but I had never thought about that actually being a place but I now here I was in the middle of this mountain of waste and seeing the complex, energy intensive process of seeing it being sorted, processed and baled for recycling.

I learnt about the cost of recycling, watched people handling my waste for a living and learnt about the particular challenges of recycling plastics. That night when I went to put out my recycling in the bin I could picture where it was going and questioned what other choices could I make and wondered if I could actually reduce what was going into my bin so it didn't need to be transported and processed in the first place.

Back in 2011 people weren't talking about the ocean plastic pollution problem, the waste crisis and the particular problems of single-use plastics so I wasn't thinking about trying to change the system or start a movement – it was a purely personal response to wanting to take responsibility for my own waste. That was all I knew I could do.

The next day when I went into work I asked the simple question: 'I'm going plastic free next month. Who wants to join me?'

The following week just happened to be the start of July and along with my two local government colleagues Amy and Nabilla and 40 people in our volunteer network we decided to try it together.

31. When you first did it, did you find it difficult?

When I first tried to avoid single-use plastic for a month, I have to admit it was more difficult than I thought. I already took canvas bags when I shopped and had a reusable water bottle to avoid paying for bottled water – I thought I was pretty good! I was shocked to realise how much plastic there was in my life.

I remember going into a supermarket and coming out almost empty handed apart from a bunch of bananas and some mushrooms in a brown paper bag. It was a challenge but we found by doing it together as a group we could share ideas and support each other. When I first realised the drink I ordered at a café had come with a plastic straw that I didn't need or use or bought my fruit and veggies at the supermarket and used half a dozen plastic produce bags I realised there was a lot of plastic in my life that I had never noticed before.

Over the years it has become easier as we have made new habits in our family – by the front door hangs our shopping bags with a pouch of reusable netting produce bags clipped on the side. Before doing Plastic Free July it was easy just to accept a plastic shipping bag or takeaway coffee cup when we had forgotten our reusables but because having made a pledge to avoid single-use plastics meant no takeaway coffee we didn't forget again and it helped develop long lasting habits!

On Sundays we now shop at the farmers market and our local stores readily accept our reusable containers. It is also easier as awareness has grown and reusable products such as wax wraps, coffee cups, metal straws, shampoo bars and even reusable menstrual products are readily available, even in major supermarkets and the number of bulk food stores grows each year.