

Seen waste

- Cigarette butts
- Packs, foil, and wrappers
- Used nicotine pouches
- Vape pods and disposable devices

Unseen waste

- Microplastics
- Nicotine residue
- Heavy metals
- Toxic leachate
- Lithium battery waste
- Circuit-board e-waste

What looks small on the ground becomes plastic, toxic, and battery waste in the environment.

Take action

- Do not litter
- Use proper receptacles
- Keep nicotine products away from waterways
- Treat disposable vapes like battery / e-waste, whenever local collection is available

Data compiled from public-health and environmental reporting on tobacco product waste, cigarette filter plastics, nicotine pouch litter, and disposable e-cigarette disposal. Full source list on the inside panels.

#DontMessWithTexas #TheWorldIsNotYourAshtray



More at ashtray.fyi



Tobacco and Nicotine Waste

The Seen and Unseen Pollution



Cigarette butts, nicotine pouches, plastics, and disposable vapes leave more than litter behind.

THE WORLD IS NOT AN ASHTRAY

#DontMessWithTexas #TheWorldIsNotYourAshtray

What counts as tobacco and nicotine waste?

Some waste is easy to see:

- Cigarette butts
- Empty packs and wrappers
- Used nicotine pouches
- Discarded disposable vapes

Some waste is harder to see:

- Microplastics from cigarette filters
- Nicotine and toxic residue in soil and water
- Heavy metals
- Lithium battery waste and circuit-board e-waste

Why it matters

Tobacco and nicotine waste is not just a cleanliness issue. It is also a plastic pollution, toxic waste, and electronic waste issue.



Cigarette butts are the biggest visible problem

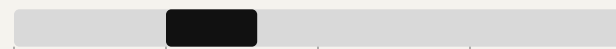
About 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are improperly discarded every year worldwide — an estimated 1.69 billion pounds of toxic trash.

Tobacco product waste has consistently made up an estimated 25–40% of all items collected in litter and coastal cleanups worldwide.

In one recent year of the International Coastal Cleanup, volunteers removed more than 1.2 million cigarette butts from beaches and waterways around the world — more than almost any other single item.

4.5 TRILLION BUTTS.
ONE YEAR. ONE GLOBAL
WASTE STREAM.

Share of global litter that is tobacco-related



25%–40% of items collected

Range reported across multi-decade international cleanup data

SOURCES

1. WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat, “4.5 Trillion Cigarette Butts Are Equal to 1.69 Billion Pounds of Toxic Trash,” [fctc.who.int](https://www.fctc.who.int)
2. Truth Initiative, “Why Are Cigarette Butts the Most Littered Item on Earth?,” truthinitiative.org
3. Ocean Conservancy, International Coastal Cleanup reporting, oceanconservancy.org



The plastic problem most people miss

Most cigarette filters are made of cellulose acetate — a plastic. More than 90% of cigarettes sold worldwide are sold with one.

Filters do not disappear quickly. Instead, they break apart into microplastic fibers that persist in soil and water. A single filter contains more than 15,000 individual plastic fibers.

Discarded butts can also leach nicotine, lead, cadmium, and other toxic chemicals into the surrounding soil and water.

A CIGARETTE FILTER IS
PLASTIC WASTE WITH
TOXIC RESIDUE ATTACHED.

15,000+

Plastic fibers in a single cigarette filter



SOURCES

1. Belzagui et al., “Cigarette Butts as a Microfiber Source with a Microplastic Level of Concern,” *Science of the Total Environment* (ScienceDirect)
2. Wooliscroft, “Time to Kick the Butt of the Most Common Litter Item in the World,” *Science of the Total Environment* (ScienceDirect)



Smokeless products and vapes add a newer waste stream

Used nicotine pouches and snus create litter through pouches, cans, and wrappers. In a 2024 survey of urban litter, nicotine pouches and snus made up 21% of all litter collected — second only to cigarette butts at 49%. Of the pouch litter collected, 65% was tobacco-free nicotine pouches.

Disposable vapes add a different kind of waste: plastic, metal, circuit boards, nicotine liquid, and lithium batteries. In the United States, an estimated 150 million disposable vapes are thrown away each year — about five every second.

Among young disposable-vape users surveyed, 52.9% threw spent devices in the regular trash, and only 13% reported any kind of recycling.

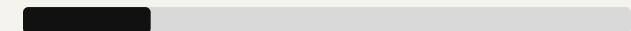
DISPOSABLE VAPES ARE
NOT JUST LITTER.
THEY ARE E-WASTE.

2024 urban litter survey

Cigarette butts 49%

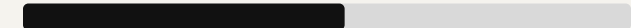


Pouches / snus 21%

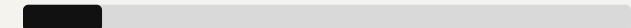


Disposable vape disposal (self-reported)

Regular trash 52.9%



Any recycling 13%



SOURCES

1. Keep Sweden Tidy (Håll Sverige Rent), 2024 urban litter survey, via Nordic Welfare Centre, nordicwelfare.org
2. Truth Initiative, survey of disposable e-cigarette users published in *Addiction* (2024), truthinitiative.org
3. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 2022 disposable vape estimate, thebureauinvestigates.com

