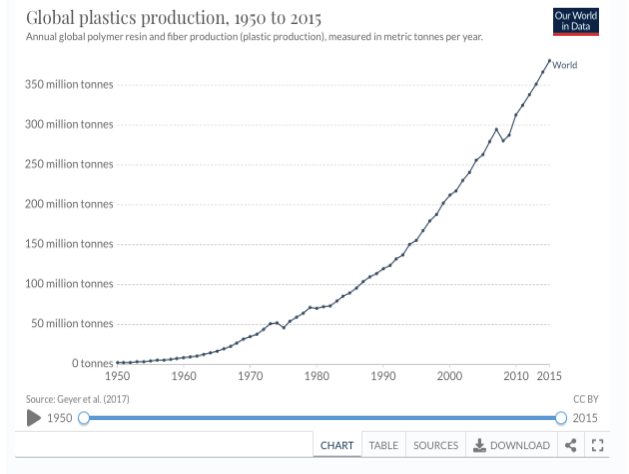


Decomposition rate (years)

Aluminium can	200
Cigarette butt	5
Disposable nappy	450
Fishing line	600
Foam bouy	50
Glass bottle	∞
Photodegradable beverage holder	0.5
Plastic bag	20
Six ring plastic beverage holder	400
Plastic bottle	450
Styrofoam cup	500
Tin can	50
Wax milk carton	0.25
Plastic face mask	450
Vegetable	5d-1m
Tissue	3d
Paper	2-5m
Cotton t-shirt	6m
Orange peel	6m
Tree leaves	1
Wool socks	1-5
Chewing gum	5
Leather shoes	25-40
Nylon fabric	30-40
Tin can	50-100
Aluminium can	80-100

The fate of plastic (1950-2015)

Total produced - 8.3bn tons
 Used once - 5.1
 Still in use 2.6
 Discarded after single use - 4.6
 Recycled - 500m
 Recycled still in use - 100m
 Incinerated - 800m
 Discarded - 4.9b



Which plastics are recyclable?

Summary of plastic polymer groups, their common uses, properties and recyclability. Numerical coding (from 1-7) is typically provided on plastic items and gives information of their polymer grouping below. Recyclability is based on common recycling schemes but can vary between countries as well as regionally within countries; check local recycling guidelines for further clarification.

Symbol	Polymer	Common Uses	Properties	Recyclable?
1 PETE	Polyethylene terephthalate	Plastic bottles (water, soft drinks, cooking oil)	Clear, strong and lightweight	Yes, widely recycled
2 HDPE	High-density polyethylene	Milk containers, cleaning agents, shampoo bottles, beach bottles	Stiff and hardwearing; hard to break down in sunlight	Yes, widely recycled
3 PVC	Polyvinyl chloride	Plastic piping, vinyl flooring, ceiling insulation, roof sheeting	Can be rigid or soft via plasticizers; used in construction, healthcare, electronics	Often not recyclable due to chemical properties; check local recycling
4 LDPE	Low-density polyethylene	Plastic bags, food wrapping (e.g. bread, fruit, vegetables)	Lightweight, free-melt, versatile; fails under mechanical and thermal stress	No, failure under stress makes it hard to recycle
5 PP	Polypropylene	Bottle lids, food tubs, furniture, lawnmowers, medical, ropes, automobile parts	Tough and resistant; effective barrier against water and chemicals	Often not recyclable; available in some locations; check local recycling
6 PS	Polystyrene	Food takeaway containers, plastic cutlery, egg trays	Lightweight; structurally weak; easily dispersed	No, rarely recycled but check local recycling
7 OTHER	Other plastics (e.g. acrylic, polycarbonate, polyacetic fibres)	Water cooler bottles, baby cups, fibreglass	Diverse in nature with various properties	No, diversity of materials risks contamination of recycling

Plastic waste generation by industrial sector, 2015

Global plastic waste generation by industrial sector, measured in tonnes per year.

