

# Ghost Gear Facts & Figures



## Prevalence

- Approximately 11 million metric tons of plastics enter the ocean each year ([Systemiq](#)).
- Recent studies indicate that abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) – also known as ghost fishing gear – makes up 46-70% of all floating macroplastics in the ocean gyres by weight.
  - One study estimated that 46% of marine debris in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch are fishing nets ([Lebreton et al., 2018](#)).
  - Another study found that, by weight, 70% of floating macroplastic debris is fishing gear in the ocean gyres mainly buoys, but also nets, lines, and other fishing gear ([UNEP, Eriksen et al., 2014](#)).

## Wildlife Impacts

- Ocean Conservancy research has found that ghost gear is the most harmful form of marine debris, with pots, lines, traps, nets, and buoys ranking as the highest threat ([Wilcox et al., 2016](#)).
- A 2022 study estimates fishing rope as a major source of ocean microplastic pollution, with the hauling of rope on maritime vessels potentially resulting in billions of microplastic fragments entering the ocean every year ([Napper et al., 2022](#)).
- A single abandoned net is estimated to kill an average of 500,000 marine invertebrates, 1,700 fish and four seabirds ([Hardesty, B. D., Good, T. P., & Wilcox, C., 2015](#)).

## Economic Costs

- An estimated 5-30% decline in some fish stocks is due to damage to important marine habitats attributed to ALDFG ([NOAA Marine Debris Program, 2015](#)).
- In just one crab fishery in British Columbia, Canada, annual replacement of lost gear costs the fishery over 490,000 USD (650,000 CAD) ([Drinkwin et al., 2017](#)).
- Within the USA, 20-25% of lobster pots are lost annually. In real terms, within Maine alone, 3 million pots are set every year, potentially adding at least 600,000 new ghost traps to Maine waters annually ([Bilkovic et al., 2012](#)).

## The GGGI

- The Global Ghost Gear Initiative is the world's only alliance dedicated to tackling the issue of abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear on a global scale.
- The GGGI brings together participants from the fishing industry, the private sector, academia, governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to develop and implement scalable solutions to the ghost gear problem. There are currently 130+ GGGI members and 20 national governments involved with the initiative.
- In 2019, the GGGI and the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation removed an approximately 20,000-pound gear ball offshore of Portland, Maine. ([Ocean Conservancy](#)).