



American Attitudes Toward Microplastics and Plastic Pollution

Polling by Edge Research

oceanconservancy.org/plasticspolicy

Key Findings

- Americans see plastic pollution as the top threat to ocean health and nearly 9 in 10 say it's a problem – with over 7 in 10 identifying it as an urgent threat.
- Awareness of microplastics has grown significantly since 2023: today, 91% of Americans are aware of microplastics – a 32% increase in only 3 years.
- The majority of Americans are concerned about the impacts of microplastics, with nearly 9 in 10 concerned about microplastics being found in the ocean, the food chain, in land and ocean animals, and human blood and organs; plastic food packaging releasing microplastics into food and drinks; and microplastics being made with chemical additives.
- Americans hold plastic manufacturers and the government most responsible for addressing plastic pollution.
- When it comes to preventing microplastics, more than 4 in 5 Americans support requiring washing machine to include a filter for microplastic fibers.
- 4 in 5 support requiring plastic manufacturers and producers to pay for waste management and recycling.

Awareness

Plastic pollution remains the top concern among U.S. adults when considering threats to ocean health with nearly 9 in 10 saying this is a problem – 71% saying plastic pollution is an urgent threat to the ocean. Those concerned about ocean plastic pollution are primarily worried about harm to ocean life from plastic ingestion and entanglement (55% say this is the most or second most concerning impact of plastic pollution in the ocean). This is followed by concerns over harm to human health from ingesting tiny bits of plastics (40% first or second-most concerning). Since 2023, there has also been a 32% increase in Americans who are aware of microplastics: in 2023, 41% of respondents said they had never heard of microplastics which is down to only 9% today.

Concerns

General concern over potentially harmful impacts of microplastics on humans (47% very concerned, 84% total concerned) is about the same as impacts on the environment (44% very concerned, 85% total concerned).

A majority of Americans are not only concerned (nearly 9 in 10), but *very* concerned (greater than 6 in 10) about the following issues surrounding microplastic pollution):

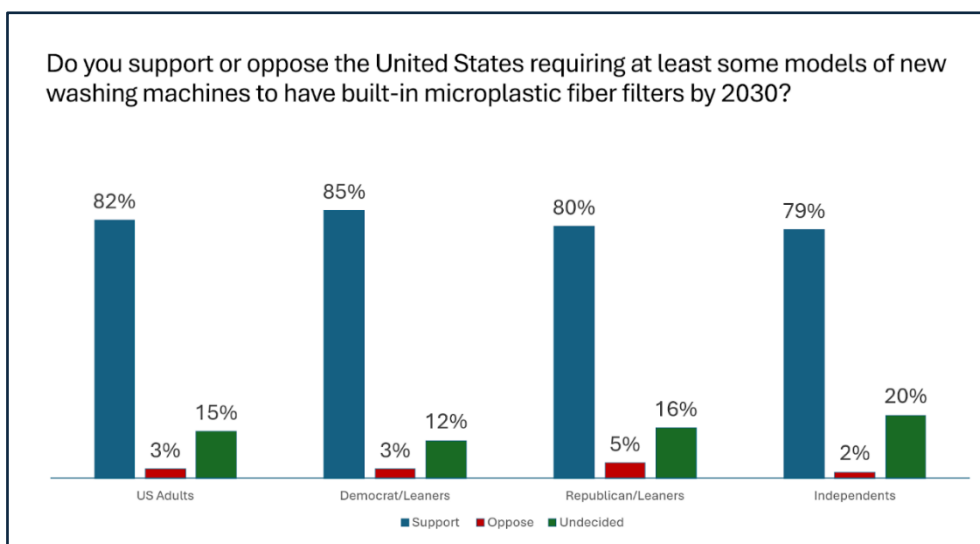
- 89% are concerned that microplastics have been found in nearly 1,600 types of animals (61% very concerned)
- 88% are concerned that scientists have found microplastics in the human body including blood and organs (63% very concerned)
- 88% are concerned that microplastics have entered natural food chains (62% very concerned)
- 87% are concerned microplastics are nearly impossible to effectively clean up from the environment (61% very concerned).

Desire for Solutions

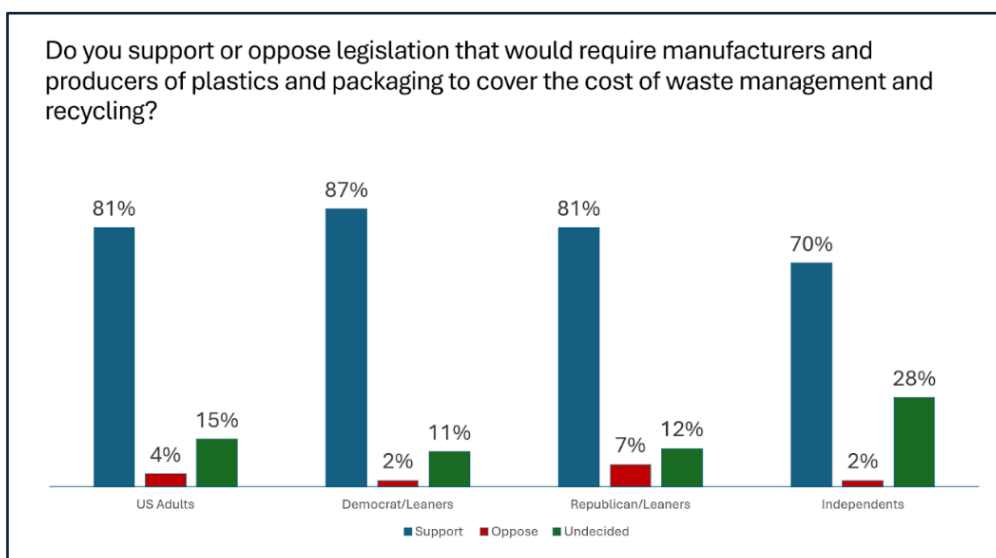
When asked who has the most responsibility to reduce the use of plastics and prevent plastic pollution, most agree that responsibility lies with either plastic industry/manufacturers (42%) or the government (22%).

When it comes to solutions to microplastic pollution, 82% of the public supports requiring all new washing machines manufactured in the U.S. to have built-in microplastic fiber filters by 2030, with strong agreement between Republicans/Leaners (80%) and Democrat/Leaners (85%) and Independents (79%). There is virtually no opposition (3%).

Americans are also willing to put their money where their support is – 79% say if they were to purchase a washing machine in the next couple of years, they are willing to pay the estimated \$20 more for a machine with a built-in filter that captures 90% of microfibers. This willingness cuts across every demographic and political group, including 74% among households with less than \$50,000 annual income.



A large majority of the public (81%) supports legislation that would require manufacturers and producers of plastics and packaging to cover the cost of waste management and recycling. This is true across party lines with 87% of Democrat/Democrat-leaning voters supporting it, 81% of Republican/Republican-leaning and 70% of Independents.



Methodology

This memo reports the findings from an online omnibus survey among a nationally representative sample of 1,010 U.S. adults 18 years of age and older conducted May 8-10, 2026. Where applicable, statistically significant differences between subgroups of the population are noted at the 95% confidence level. Also, where applicable, differences between the 2026 survey results and a similar survey of 1500 U.S. adults conducted in 2023 are noted.