



Material Waste Management & Social Impacts





Learning Outcomes

- To understand the social cost of material waste and the impacts on humans
- Examine why some suffer the consequences more than others





Agenda

1. Learn about the social impacts of material waste by looking at different examples
2. Consider what we can do as individuals and how policy can influence the social impacts of material waste
3. Role-playing activity





Social Impacts of Material Waste

Mismanagement of material waste can negatively impact people and communities.

Some of these negative impacts include a polluted local environment, economic impact on local communities, and health problems for people living and working near industrial facilities.

For example, the process of creating plastics from fossil fuels poses a human health risk and one that is disproportionately affecting the low-income communities and communities of color where fossil fuel factories are often placed.





Examples

Breathe This Air - Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act (4 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwVToh8hKFk>

The Dangerous Chemicals In Your Plastic Packages (4 mins)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_6R0fhGtHQ

Reactions?





Examples

The trash from different parts of the world often gets shipped to Asian or African countries to be dumped into a landfill or the local environment, resulting in an unhealthy living environment for local people. Watch these videos to see examples of that:

COP26: Indonesia's largest dump highlights world waste problem | Newsfeed (3 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbmD-3ud3gl>

How fast fashion is turning parts of Ghana into toxic landfill | ABC News (2 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2gbZmQY4jg>





Personal Choices, Collective Action, and Policy Changes

What can we do to mitigate the negative social and environmental problems of material waste habits and mismanagement?

We will examine the possibilities through two different lenses: personal choices and policy changes.





Personal Choices

Individually and collectively, we are all consumers, and our consumption habits have power. As consumers, what can we do to improve waste management issues? Let's brainstorm ways we can help in different areas of types of waste.



Personal Choices

- Plastic
 - Use reusable beverage containers (water bottles, coffee mugs)
 - Bring your own reusable to-go containers
 - Bring your own bags for produce and groceries
 - Reuse plastic containers and bags when it's unavoidable not to use them in the first place
- Clothing
 - Buy higher quality clothes that will last
 - Keep items for long periods of time
 - Buy second hand
 - Donate or sell high-quality items you no longer want
 - Repurpose clothing items not in suitable condition to donate or sell (e.g., turn them into rags, art projects, etc.)
- Electronic waste
 - Take good care of devices and use them as long as possible, repair when possible
 - Sell or donate unwanted items that are still in usable condition
 - Recycle broken and unusable electronics
- Packaging
 - If possible, buy unpackaged food and snacks at the grocery store (nuts, fruits, veggies, bulk bin snacks, food from the deli section, etc.).
 - Buy things locally rather than online





Personal Choices

How could we make those individual actions more collective?

How could we involve other people, and what would the benefit of doing so be?



Policy Impacts

Although personal choices can impact demand and production, policy changes will also be necessary to curb the amount of waste we produce and how our waste management harms people and the planet.

Here is a video that shows an example of how a policy in Maine is helping reduce the amount of waste produced from packaging:



Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging Law (Explained) (3 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N21izp8Tw70>



Role Playing Activity

1. Summarize the policy you just learned about in Maine.
2. List all the different stakeholder groups involved in the law.
3. Split into groups representing those stakeholders.
4. Write down your responses to the following questions:
 - a. What is your stakeholder group's position on this issue?
 - b. What are the impacts of the law on your stakeholder group?
 - c. Would your group want to change anything about this law? If so, what would you change, and why?
5. Each stakeholder group shares what they came up with.





Role Playing Activity

Could our community enact a law like this?

Does a law like this already exist?

How would a law like this impact our community?

What would need to be done to implement a law like this in our community?



Additional Resources

- **[The Story of Plastic: How Plastic Production Pollutes Small Towns](#)**: The Story of Stuff Project - Plastic pollutes every step of the way but especially in the frontline, communities being poisoned by plastic.
- **[Breathe This Air: A #PlasticJustice Film](#)**: Algalita Wayfinder Society - Learn about a powerful tactic for creating a more just world: listening to and amplifying the stories and solutions shared by people being harmed by plastic production and disposal.
- **[How Making Corporations Responsible For Plastic Will Solve The Crisis | The Story Of Plastic](#)**: Discovery UK - Plastic pollution threatens our environment, and the best way to tackle it is to make corporations financially liable for their impact and the lifecycle of petrochemical products.
- **[Zero Waste Is Not the Only Solution - 4 Tips to Have a Bigger Impact](#)**: Exploring Alternatives - Non-zero wasters can do many other things to have an impact, have their voices heard, and make positive changes.
- **[Stakeholder Analysis Definition and Template](#)**: Tractivity - Learn all you need to know about stakeholder analysis, including how to conduct stakeholder mapping.





Contributors

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