



Plastic waste

Figure 1 – Major municipal waste discarded at landfills

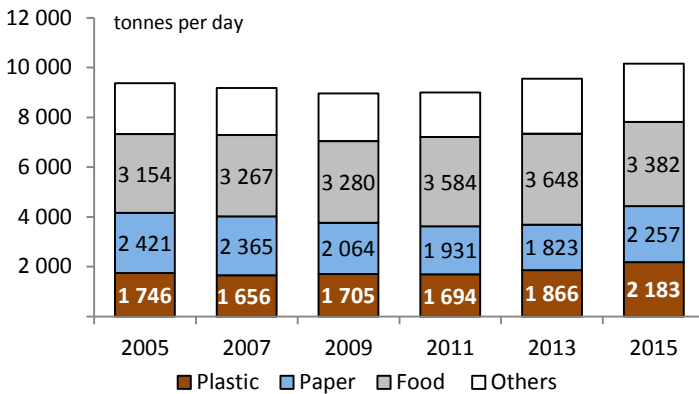


Figure 2 – Plastic waste by source per day

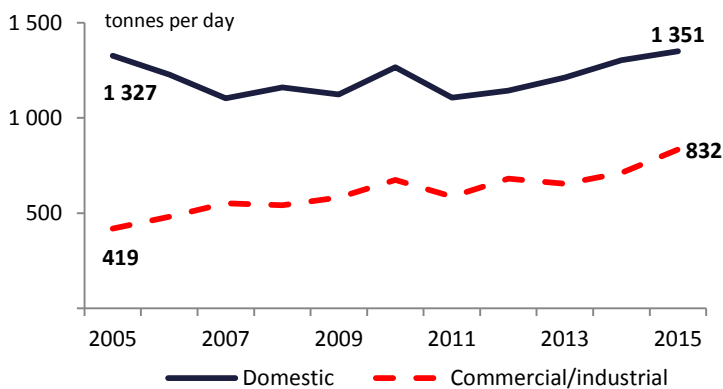
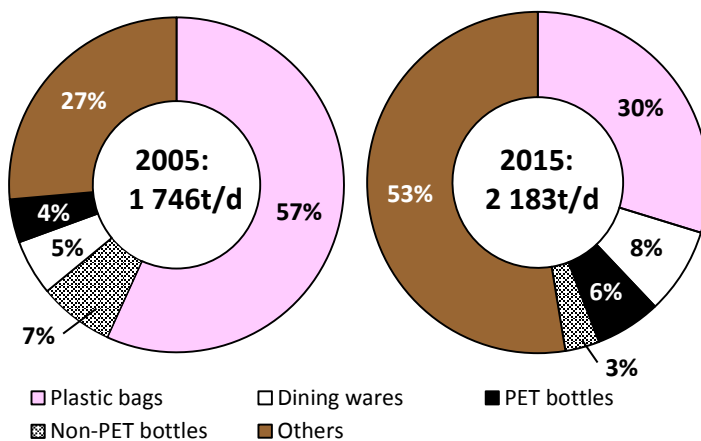


Figure 3 – Composition of daily plastic waste discarded



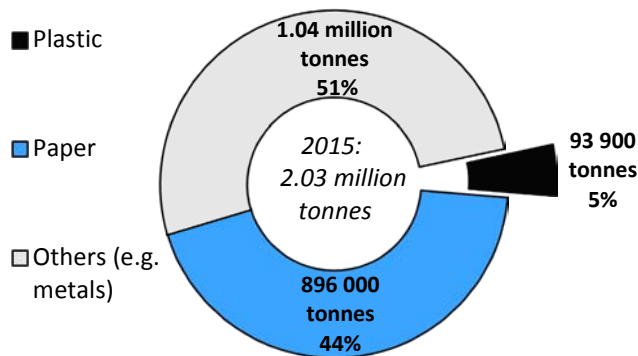
Note: t/d = tonnes per day

Highlights

- Plastic waste is a looming global concern as it could take up to 1 000 years to decompose plastic materials in the ecosystem. In Hong Kong, plastic waste discarded at landfills has increased by 25% during 2005-2015, along with a rise in its relative share from 19% to 21%. Plastic waste is now the third largest category of municipal solid waste, after food and paper (Figure 1).
- Analyzed by source and despite a meagre 2% waste growth over the past decade, local households were still the largest generators of plastic waste in Hong Kong, taking up 62% of the total in 2015. On the other hand, plastic waste generated from the business sector registered a significant growth of 99% during 2005-2015, partly due to increased usage of plastic packaging (Figure 2).
- There has been a visible decline in the volume of plastic bags dumped at the landfills, after the introduction of plastic bag levy in 2009. The share of plastic bags within the plastic waste has thus halved from 57% in 2005 to 30% in 2015. Although the share of plastic bottles fell from 11% to 9%, it remained the second largest component of plastic waste. The Government is now exploring the feasibility of introducing a producer responsibility scheme for plastic product containers. Meanwhile, concern was raised on the increasing use of disposable dining wares, as the proportion of plastic dining wares waste has increased from 5% to 8% during 2005 to 2015 (Figure 3).

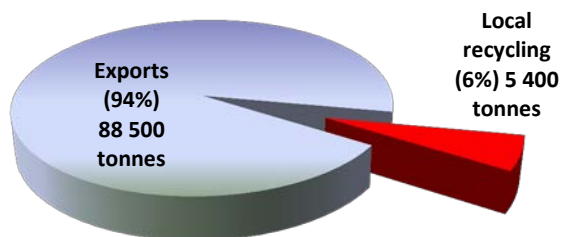
Plastic waste (cont'd)

Figure 4 – Plastic waste recovery in 2015*



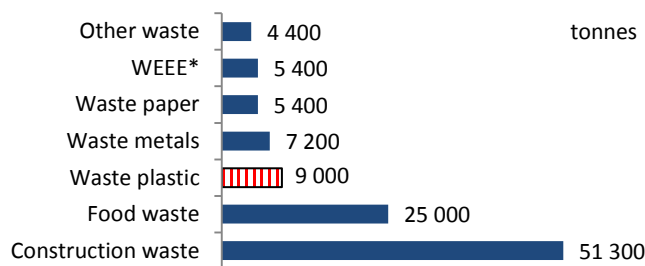
Note: () According to Environmental Protection Department ("EPD"), some imported plastic waste for re-export may have been misreported as locally generated plastic waste before April 2014. As such, annual statistics on recovery of local plastic waste in 2015 are not strictly comparable to those of the earlier years.

Figure 5 – Plastic waste for local recycling and exports



2015: 93 900 tonnes plastic waste recovered

Figure 6 – Additional processing quantities due to projects approved by the Recycling Fund by end-2016



Note: (*) WEEE refers to waste electrical and electronic equipment.

Highlights

- Recovery of plastic waste faces higher collection and transportation cost before compaction, as a truck capable of carrying 5.5 tonnes of cargo can take up at most 0.8 tonnes of un-compacted plastic waste. Partly due to lower commercial viability, only 93 900 tonnes of local plastic waste were recovered in 2015, representing just 5% of overall recovered waste in Hong Kong (Figure 4).
- Most of the plastic waste (94%) recovered from local waste generators undergo simple sorting, compression and then baling before export. Currently, the Mainland is the largest importer of such waste from Hong Kong as the cost of waste recycling is relatively cheaper there. In 2015, such export was valued at HK\$200 million. The capacity of local recycling is rather small at present due to higher running costs. It only accounted for about 6% of the plastic waste in 2015 (Figure 5).
- In 2015, the Government launched the HK\$1 billion Recycling Fund to assist recyclers to overcome the challenges facing them, including HK\$70 million earmarked as subsidy for procurement of compactor trucks and processing facilities. While the approved projects helped lift processing quantity of plastic by 9 000 tonnes in 2016, it represented just 1% of plastic waste generated in Hong Kong (Figure 6).

Data sources: Latest figures from Environmental Protection Department and Census and Statistics Department.

Research Office
Information Services Division
Legislative Council Secretariat
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Tel: 2871 2127

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