

2025

Shoreline Cleanup Impact Report



Community Action on the Shoreline

In 2025, **9,192 volunteers** removed **363,246 pieces of litter** from **1,003 kilometres** of shoreline across Canada and United States, **diverting 14,025 kilograms** of waste from our ocean and waterways.

But every Shoreline Cleanup does more than remove litter.

For more than three decades, volunteers participating in the Ocean Wise Shoreline Cleanup program have been creating Canada's longest-running community-driven shoreline litter datasets. Each cleanup contributes information about the types and quantities of waste found along our shorelines, helping build a growing record of how pollution appears across the country.

Today that dataset spans 31 years, 30,000+ cleanups, and over 15,000,000 recorded items. This long-term record provides valuable insight into the sources and trends of shoreline litter and helps researchers, communities, and decision-makers better understand the scale of plastic pollution in our waterways.

At its core, the Shoreline Cleanup program is about people: students, families, coworkers, and community groups choosing to care for their local waterways. Every cleanup protects wildlife and public spaces while contributing to a national effort to better understand and reduce plastic pollution.

That collective action has built something powerful: **THE ABILITY TO TRACK HOW SHORELINE LITTER IS CHANGING.**





Five Years After The Plastic Ban

In 2022, Canada introduced regulations banning several common single-use plastic items, including checkout bags, cutlery, foodservice ware, stir sticks, and straws. These regulations were designed to reduce the amount of plastic waste entering the environment.

FIVE YEARS LATER: THE AMOUNT OF BANNED ITEMS ON OUR SHORELINES HAS DROPPED.

The data is promising, building off of previous findings we continue to see encouraging signs. Several items targeted by the regulations are appearing less frequently in the data. This suggests that policies designed to reduce plastic waste are having an impact.

However, progress has not always been certain. In 2023, the Federal Court ruled that the federal government's designation of plastics as "toxic" under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act was overly broad, raising questions about the future of the regulations. In early 2026, the Federal Court of Appeal reversed that decision, confirming that the federal government has the authority to regulate plastic pollution in this way and keeping the first phase of the ban in place.

This report explores what volunteers observed on Canada's shorelines in 2025, from the most common items collected to emerging trends in plastic pollution, the observations gathered during Shoreline Cleanups help us better understand how our relationship with plastic is changing.



Your Impact

2025 was a great year for Ocean Wise Shoreline Cleanups across Canada. Volunteers from coast-to-coast-to-coast came together to protect local waterways, remove harmful litter, and contribute valuable data to our database. Thousands of people joined their friends and family in taking action in their communities - improving local environments while helping inform solutions for the future.



806
CLEANUPS



8,570
PARTICIPANTS



13,445 KG
OF LITTER REMOVED



845 KM
OF SHORELINE
CLEANED



345,663
ITEMS REMOVED

The 2025 Dirty Dozen

Each year, Ocean Wise highlights the “**Dirty Dozen**”, our list of the most commonly found items. **These items provide a snapshot of the litter most consistently appearing on our shorelines and help us track how plastic pollution is changing over time.**

Collected and recorded by volunteers during cleanups, these observations help us track trends in shoreline pollution over time. While individual cleanups vary from place to place, the Dirty Dozen highlights the items that consistently appear across the country.

Tracking the Dirty Dozen year after year allows us to better understand how plastic pollution is changing. It also provides a way to monitor items targeted by policies such as Canada’s single use plastics ban.

Turn Insight Into Action

The Dirty Dozen shows what keeps appearing on our shorelines. The next cleanup is your chance to help change that story. Here are some ways to get involved!

- > [Lead or join a Shoreline Cleanup](#)
- > [Become a Shoreline Champion](#)
- > [Ask about Shoreline Cleanup data](#)

OCEAN WISE SHORELINE CLEANUP

The 2025 Dirty Dozen

	Item	Count	SINCE 2021
1.	Cigarette Butts	129,976	-
2.	Plastic Pieces	61,077	-
3.	Paper	26,477	+3
4.	Food Wrappers	25,923	-
5.	Bottle Caps	17,367	-
6.	Styrofoam Pieces	15,515	-3
7.	Beverage Cans	8,163	-
8.	Plastic Bottles	6,283	+2
9.	Coffee Cups And Lids	5,708	+2
10.	Plastic Bags	5,526	-2
11.	Construction Material	4,779	+3
12.	Straws	3,888	-3

Five Years After Canada's Single-Use Plastic Ban: What Shoreline Cleanup Data Is Showing

In March 2022, the United Nations Environment Assembly agreed to develop a legally binding global treaty to address plastic pollution across its full life cycle. Negotiations concluded in August 2025 in Geneva without an agreement. While disappointing, this outcome underscores a key reality: diplomacy alone cannot deliver change at the pace required. A global plastics treaty remains urgently needed, but progress must also continue wherever action is possible.

In Canada, that action is already underway. In 2022, the federal government introduced the Single-Use Plastics Prohibition Regulations (SUPPR), banning six common items, including checkout bags, cutlery, straws (with accessibility exemptions), and other problematic foodservice plastics. Shoreline Cleanup data offers a clear, real-world picture of the impact. From 2017–2021, volunteers collected an average of 2.5–2.9 plastic bags per person per cleanup nationwide. After the SUPPR came into effect, that number dropped to 1.65 in 2022—a decline of roughly 35–40%—and remained lower in 2025 at 1.72 bags per person (about 30% below pre-ban levels). Similar declines were seen for other regulated items: plastic utensils fell by roughly 40–55%, and straws dropped by about 60%.

The data also highlights ongoing challenges. Recent fluctuations in straws and utensils suggest that behaviour change and enforcement take time to stabilize. Meanwhile, unregulated items such as coffee cups and lids have increased significantly, rising from about one item per person in the late 2010s to roughly two in recent years—an increase of 70–100%. These trends reinforce the need to expand policy action to address plastics that remain outside current regulations.

VOLUNTEERS COLLECTION ON AVERAGE OF EACH ITEM			
Item	Before SUPPR 2017-2021	2022 BAN INTRODUCED	After SUPPR 2023-2025
Bags	2.7		1.7
Straws	3.0		1.9
Utensils	1.2		1.1
Coffee Cups	1.1		2

These patterns underscore a key insight from the data: When policies target specific items, reductions often follow, while items outside regulatory frameworks may persist or even increase.





This is where long-term Shoreline Cleanup data becomes especially valuable. By tracking what appears on shorelines year after year, volunteers help reveal which policies are working, where gaps remain, and where additional action may be needed.

Key SUPPR milestones have largely stayed on track. Manufacturing and importing these items for sale was prohibited beginning in December 2022 (June 2023 for ring carriers), followed by retail sales bans in December 2023 (June 2024 for ring carriers and packaged flexible straws). A full prohibition on manufacturing, importing, and selling these items for export was scheduled for December 20, 2025. However, in late 2025, the federal government proposed amendments to remove the export ban.

Alongside the product bans, Canada established the Federal Plastics Registry (FPR) to track plastics across their lifecycle, from production to end-of-life management. Phase 1 reporting began with 2024 data and was due by September 29, 2025. Following stakeholder feedback,

Phases 2 and 3 have been delayed and will be re-scheduled with updated guidance in 2026. Changes to these measures signal the importance of the Shoreline Cleanup dataset.

Want to Explore the Data

Submit a data request to access the dataset and learn more about how it's being used to inform solutions to plastic pollution.

[CLICK TO ACCESS DATASET](#)

STRANGE SHORELINE FIND

Volunteers uncovered a toy dinosaur. Like the real ones, many plastic items can remain in the environment for centuries, turning today's litter into tomorrow's fossils.



Looking Ahead: **Could Ontario's New Provincial EPR Program Reduce Shoreline Litter?**

Ontario's new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Program for the Blue Box system, fully launched under Circular Materials on January 1, 2026, represents a significant shift in how packaging and paper waste is managed, with potential long-term benefits for shoreline litter reduction.

Under EPR, responsibility has moved from municipalities and taxpayers to producers, who must now fund and manage recycling systems and meet provincially mandated diversion targets. The program also introduces a standardized list of recyclable materials across Ontario – including previously hard-to-recycle items like coffee cups, black plastic containers, and toothpaste tubes—aimed at reducing public confusion and improving participation.

By diverting more packaging from landfills and improper disposal, EPR has the potential to reduce litter entering waterways and shorelines. Increased producer accountability may also drive improvements in recycling infrastructure and packaging design, further limiting environmental leakage. While the program shows promise, its effectiveness will need to be evaluated over time through ongoing analysis.

As policies like EPR and single-use plastics bans evolve, Shoreline Cleanup data remains a critical on-the-ground indicator—helping reveal what's working, where gaps remain, and where further action is needed.

Disclaimer: This analysis is based on Shoreline Cleanup data collected by volunteers between 2017 and 2025. Results are normalized per volunteer using calculated group size. Trends reflect observed conditions during cleanups and cannot isolate the impact of any single policy.



Municipalities

From Data to Action: Turning Insights into Impact

Shoreline Cleanup data does more than document litter. It helps communities identify where and why waste enters local waterways. For municipalities, the front-line managers of residential waste, this is critical information that can help address litter issues upstream.

In 2025, with support from the Canada Water Agency, Ocean Wise expanded its municipal partnership initiative from three municipalities to five. Working alongside the Cities of Vancouver, Nanaimo, Edmonton, and Toronto, as well as Halifax Regional Municipality in partnership with Divert NS, shoreline litter data was translated into 14 locally tailored interventions designed to reduce plastic pollution at its source.



UNEXPECTED CLEANUP DISCOVERY

One Shoreline Cleanup team recovered a leather briefcase along the water's edge, proof that all kinds of everyday items can eventually make their way to the shoreline.



Municipality Spotlight

City of Nanaimo

Shoreline Cleanup data revealed that litter accumulation increased during large public events and gatherings in many waterfront parks.

In response, the City of Nanaimo strengthened waste diversion infrastructure by adding **recycling and organics containers** in key event areas, including several parks and along Commercial Street in the downtown core. By increasing access to proper disposal and diversion options where waste is generated, Nanaimo is taking practical steps to prevent litter before it reaches local shorelines.



Municipality Spotlight

Halifax Regional Municipality

Cleanup data highlighted the growing challenge of microplastics: small fragments that often go unnoticed but persist in the environment.

In response, Halifax expanded school-based **education programs focused on ocean plastics and microplastic prevention**. Students now engage in hands-on learning through classroom programming, textile education, on-site Ocean Action Zone experiences, and tools such as pocket microscopes that allow them to observe microplastics firsthand.



Our Volunteers

While policy changes are essential for reducing plastic pollution at scale, the foundation of this work remains community action. Every piece of shoreline cleanup data comes from volunteers who choose to show up for their local waterways.

In 2025, thousands of people from coast-to-coast-to-coast took part in shoreline cleanups, contributing their time, energy, and observations to one of the country's longest-running citizen science datasets. The table below highlights the diverse groups who participated and the role they played in protecting local shorelines.

Group Type	Cleanups	Participants
Community Groups*	201	2217
Corporate and Workplace	317	4041
School & Youth Groups (Educational institutions)	162	2199
Individual and Solo	67	233
Other	12	87
Total	806	8570

* (NGOs, government groups, recreational groups, friends and family)



STRANGE SHORELINE FIND

Volunteers discovered a lost doll buried in the sand, a reminder that unexpected items can travel long distances once they enter our waterways.

Volunteer Spotlight

Thomas Hicks, Vancouver, BC

I've been cleaning up the beaches on the north side of Stanley Park for several years, and I started logging data about six months ago. I think it's really important to track what we're finding. The data shows how serious the problem is and can help push governments to take action.

I also hope the attention the data brings will inspire others to get involved. Beach cleanups are actually easy to do, and they make a big difference.

I'm proud to work with Ocean Legacy to recycle about 850 pounds of material over the last two years. I also encourage other beach cleaners to upcycle large marine debris like barrels and floats. I've had great success finding these items new homes through Craigslist and Marketplace.



Shoreline Champions

Our Shoreline Champions program offers businesses and organizations an opportunity to engage their employees and collaborators in Shoreline Cleanups that contribute to improving local waterways, promote education, and collect data for a lasting impact. This year over 36 businesses joined us in taking action that matters.

“Our 2nd Annual Axiom Builders Shoreline Cleanup was an incredible success thanks to the Ocean Wise Shoreline Champions program. With 90 enthusiastic participants, we removed 231 kg of litter along False Creek—an impact our staff are truly proud of. Our team loved the experience, and we’re grateful for the guidance and meaningful opportunities Ocean Wise provides to protect our waterways.”

**Axiom Builders Inc.,
Shoreline Champions**



60
CLEANUPS

2,200
PARTICIPANTS

4771 KG
OF LITTER REMOVED

119 KM
OF SHORELINE
CLEANED

“From beginning to end, the Shoreline Champions team were very responsive and supportive of our cleanup. They were all ready to go when we arrived and helped to do all of the measuring and final cleanup so our corporate group could have a BBQ. All in all, a great team building exercise while learning about ocean conservation.”

**Corporate Traveller,
Shoreline Champions**



Shoreline Cleanups in the United States

Ocean Wise continues to expand the Shoreline Cleanup program into the United States with support from our founding sponsor Tru Earth and partners like Girl Up USA, and EarthEcho International. These collaborations help mobilize youth leaders, community organizations, and sustainability-focused businesses to take action for their local waterways while contributing valuable data on shoreline litter.

Through initiatives like youth-led cleanups, community engagement campaigns, and partner-hosted events, these organizations are helping build momentum for shoreline stewardship and plastic reduction efforts across the United States.

By engaging youth leaders, community partners, and local volunteers, these cleanups are beginning to build the same kind of long-term dataset that has helped inform plastic reduction policies in Canada. As the dataset grows, it will allow Ocean Wise and partners to better understand how plastic policies and consumption patterns influence what appears on shorelines across different regions.

“This experience has had a large impact on my plastic awareness and advocacy for our environment. The fact that I could host a cleanup where more than double of my expected participants came out to help reduce pollution makes me feel hope for our future!

Alexandra Kanterezhi-Gatto. Ocean County, NJ



 **56**
CLEANUPS

 **622**
PARTICIPANTS

 **1,278 lbs**
OF LITTER REMOVED

Shoreline Champions

Thank you to our Shoreline Champions for showing up for the ocean in such a tangible way. Each team brought enthusiasm and care to help remove debris, restore habitats, and a sense of community.

AstraZeneca	KBL Projects Ltd.
Axiom Builders Inc.	Kruger Products
BC Lions	L'Oreal Canada
BC Ferries	Molson Coors
BLG	Nature's Way
Boomi	Nicola Real Estate
Calgary Airport Authority	OCTAFORM
CDC Construction	Pacific Life Re
Cisco	Prospera Credit Union
Coast Capital Savings	RBC
Corporate Traveller	Safe Software
Deloitte	Thompson Power Systems, a Regal Rexnord Company
DP World (Canada)	Technoform
Eli Lilly Canada Inc.	Trufflepig Travel Inc.
Factset	Westland Insurance
Fidelity Investments	Workday
High Liner Foods	

Become a Champion today!

Looking for a team-building activity that makes a positive impact on our ocean?

> **[Become a Shoreline Champion](#)**



Wrapping Up!

For more than three decades, Shoreline Cleanup volunteers have helped remove litter from waterways while building one of Canada's most valuable citizen science datasets.

That data is now helping inform policies, guide local solutions, and shape how we respond to plastic pollution. As more communities, businesses, and young leaders get involved, this growing dataset will continue to reveal where progress is happening and where more action is needed. Together, shoreline cleanups are proving that community action and evidence-based policy can work hand in hand to reduce plastic pollution. Whether you join a cleanup, lead one in your community, or support this work in other ways, every action helps build the knowledge and momentum needed to protect our ocean, lakes, and rivers.

Turn Insight Into Action

The Dirty Dozen shows what keeps appearing on our shorelines. The next cleanup is your chance to help change that story. Here are some ways to get involved!

- > [Lead or join a Shoreline Cleanup](#)
- > [Become a Shoreline Champion](#)
- > [Ask about Shoreline Cleanup data](#)





Our Sponsors & Supporters

With deep thanks to our sponsors and supporters. Your generosity and partnership make this work possible and help ensure a healthier ocean today and into the future.

FOUNDING USA SPONSOR

TRUEARTH[®]

CANADA SPONSOR



DP WORLD

COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS





Curious about how you can continue your journey with Ocean Wise?

Together, we have the power to rebuild a resilient and vibrant ocean – for our children and future generations.

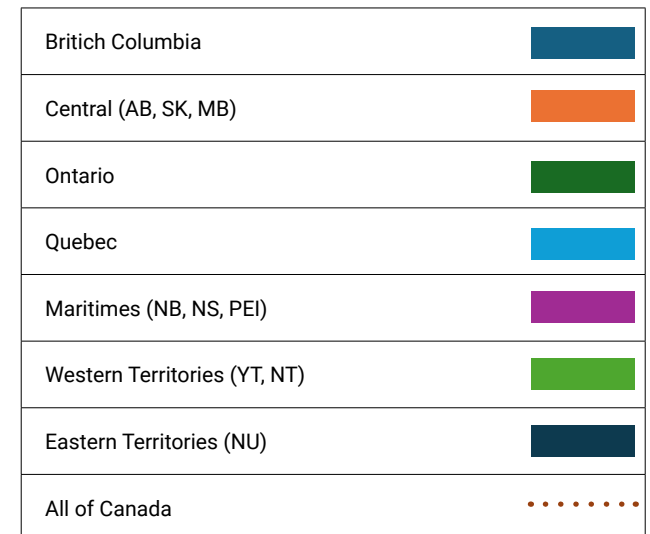
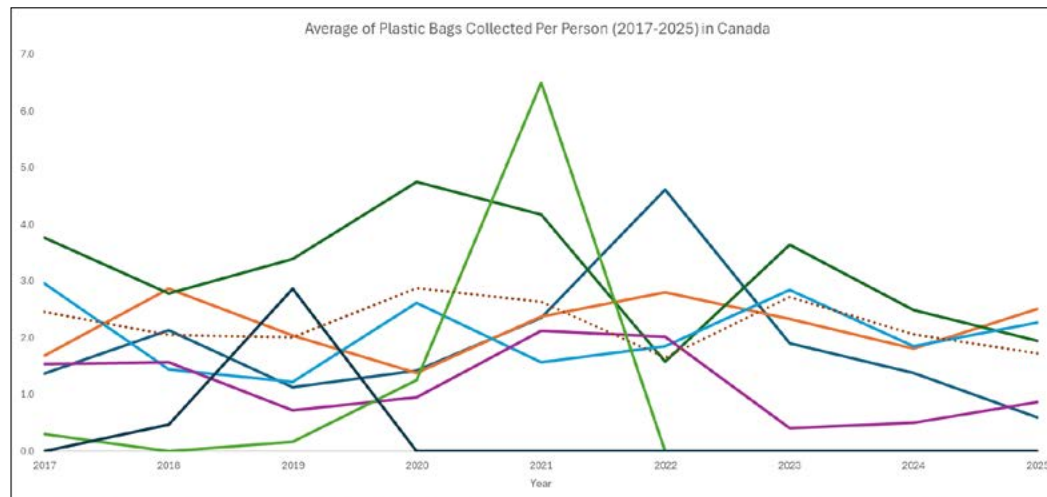
1. Schedule a Shoreline Champions event!
Contact our team at shoreline@ocean.org!
2. Join our Ocean Matters newsletter to receive news and monthly updates
ocean.org/newsletter
3. Donate now to support ocean conservation work with Ocean Wise at ocean.org/donate

Thank you!

Appendix

Average of Bags Per Person - TOTAL

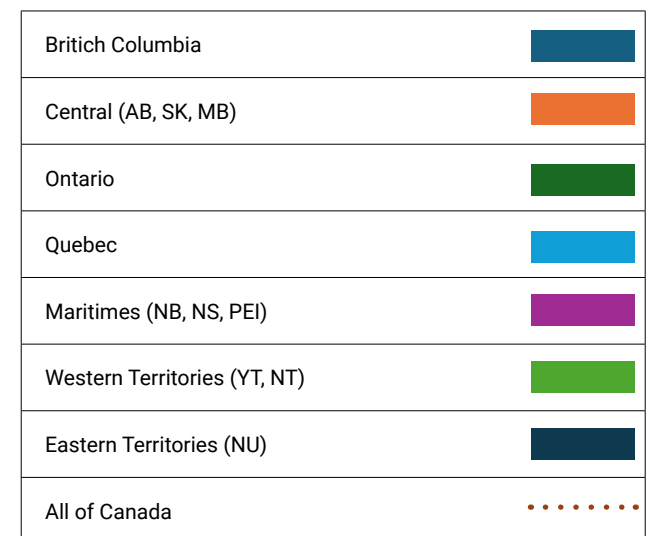
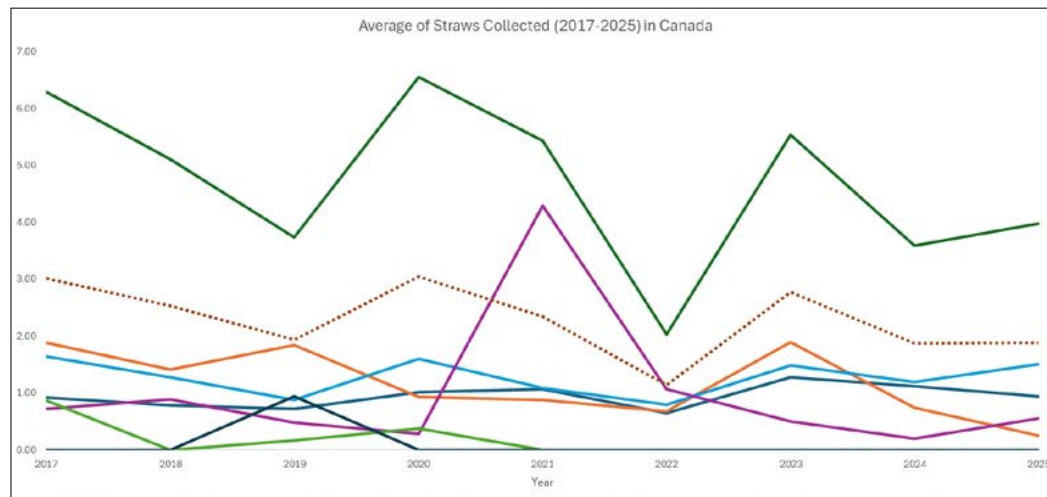
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Alberta	1.4	2.1	1.1	1.4	2.3	4.6	1.9	1.4	0.6
British Columbia	1.7	1.2	1.1	1.8	2.0	1.2	2.2	1.9	1.7
Manitoba	1.5	4.0	3.4	1.7	2.4	0.8	4.8	4.1	7.0
New Brunswick	2.1	2.0	0.9	1.7	4.0	0.9	0.0	0.3	2.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.1	5.2	1.7	1.3	2.5	1.8	2.3	0.0	0.4
Northwest Territories	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	13.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nova Scotia	1.7	2.1	1.1	0.4	2.2	5.0	1.2	1.2	0.6
Nunavut	0.0	0.5	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ontario	3.8	2.8	3.4	4.8	4.2	1.6	3.6	2.5	1.9
Prince Edward Island	0.8	0.6	0.1	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Quebec	3.0	1.4	1.2	2.6	1.6	1.9	2.8	1.9	2.3
Saskatchewan	2.2	2.5	1.6	1.0	2.3	3.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
Yukon	0.6	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
ALL CANADA	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.9	2.6	1.7	2.7	2.1	1.7



Appendix

Average of Straws Per Person - TOTAL

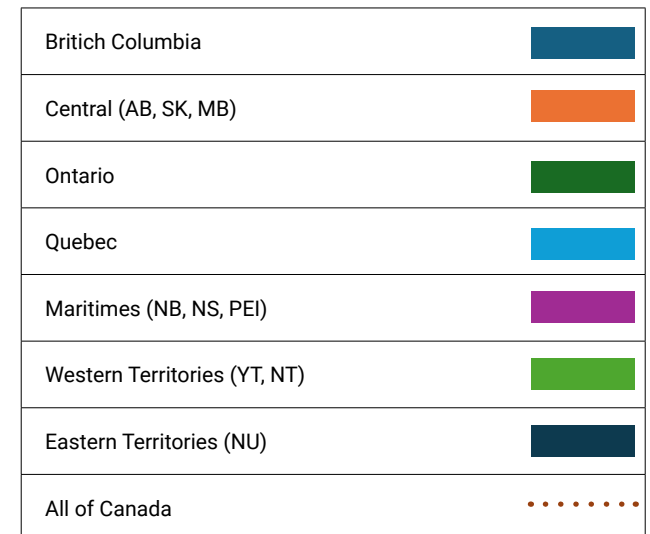
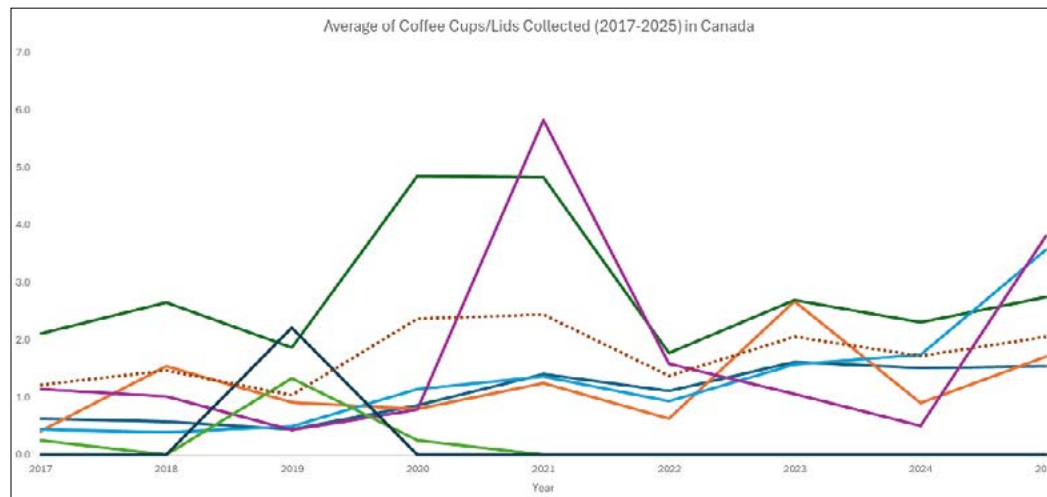
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Alberta	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.9	1.6	0.5
British Columbia	0.9	0.8	0.7	1.0	1.1	0.6	1.3	1.1	0.9
Manitoba	1.3	1.3	2.9	0.8	0.1	0.8	3.4	0.7	0.2
New Brunswick	0.4	0.9	0.5	0.1	9.6	1.1	0.0	0.1	1.1
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.4	2.5	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.2	0.0	0.3
Northwest Territories	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nova Scotia	1.6	1.5	0.8	0.2	2.7	0.8	1.5	0.5	0.5
Nunavut	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ontario	6.3	5.1	3.7	6.6	5.4	2.0	5.5	3.6	4.0
Prince Edward Island	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.6	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Quebec	1.6	1.3	0.9	1.6	1.1	0.8	1.5	1.2	1.5
Saskatchewan	3.2	1.6	1.4	0.8	1.1	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0
Yukon	1.7	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
ALL CANADA	3.0	2.5	1.9	3.0	2.3	1.1	2.8	1.9	1.9



Appendix

Average of Coffee Cups and Lids Per Person - TOTAL

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Alberta	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.8	1.7	1.1	1.2	1.0	0.9
British Columbia	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.9	1.4	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.5
Manitoba	0.5	2.8	1.6	0.8	1.0	0.7	6.6	1.7	4.2
New Brunswick	1.9	0.6	0.6	1.1	13.8	1.8	0.0	0.5	5.5
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.4	1.6	1.5	1.1	0.7	1.6	1.7	0.0	0.2
Northwest Territories	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nova Scotia	1.1	1.8	0.7	0.2	3.0	2.5	3.2	1.0	5.9
Nunavut	0.0	0.0	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ontario	2.1	2.7	1.9	4.9	4.8	1.8	2.7	2.3	2.7
Prince Edward Island	0.4	0.6	0.0	1.1	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Quebec	0.4	0.4	0.5	1.1	1.4	0.9	1.6	1.7	3.6
Saskatchewan	0.2	1.0	0.5	0.8	1.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
Yukon	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
ALL CANADA	1.2	1.5	1.0	2.4	2.4	1.4	2.0	1.7	2.1



Appendix

Average of Utensils Per Person - TOTAL

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Alberta	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.9	0.3	0.7	0.1
British Columbia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.3
Manitoba	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.6	2.9	0.8	0.2
New Brunswick	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.9	0.2	0.0	0.0	1.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.9	0.5	0.0	0.0
Northwest Territories	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nova Scotia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3	1.3	0.9	0.2	0.2
Nunavut	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ontario	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	1.0	0.9	0.6	0.9
Prince Edward Island	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Quebec	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.1
Saskatchewan	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
Yukon	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
ALL CANADA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.5

