

# COVID-19: A *plastic* VIRAL PANDEMIC

How and why did the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbate plastic pollution worldwide and in SG through 2020?

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**References:** <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MtPDqGqownD8vTJJ3Mv58yLfbWoN8tq6H3RRPICjK68/edit?usp=sharing>

**Worldwide plastic waste generated per year increased by almost 50% from 2018 to 2020**



**Ocean Plastic Pollution** was predicted to increase by **8 million tonnes** in 2020 (as of 2016)



Actual increase in 2020 was **13 million tonnes**.

**Causes of PLASTIC POLLUTION from COVID-19**

**COVID-19 caused a huge spike in global plastic waste.**

Discarding of plastic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

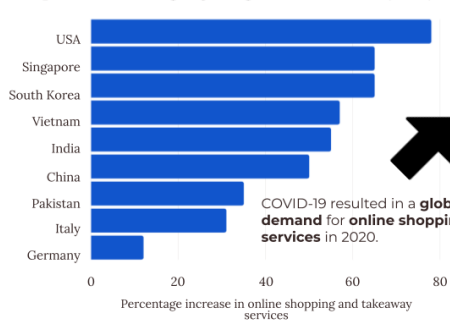


**3.4 Billion** single-use face masks or face shields are discarded daily due to COVID-19 in 2020.

**2.2 Billion** gloves are discarded daily worldwide in 2020, with similar geographical proportions as discarded face masks.

And from 2020 to 2025, the daily wastage of 5.6 billion PPEs is predicted to increase by a shocking: **20%**

**Spike in the usage of Single-use Plastics (SUP):**

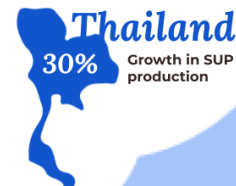


**40%** Increase in demand for plastic packaging worldwide from 2020 to 2021

COVID-19 resulted in a **global increase in demand for online shopping and takeaway services** in 2020.

Amidst the concerns of cross-contamination by reusing plastic bags and containers, many countries like the US, the UK and Thailand have temporarily revoked or deferred SUP bans.

Similar trends to Thailand have been observed worldwide



**COVID-19 exacerbated domestic plastic waste generation in Singapore.**

**COVID-19 collapsed plastic waste disposal methods.**

**30-40%** Reduction in demand of recycled plastics in 2020



Lack of market for recycled plastics led to the **suspension of recycling programmes** and sharp declines in global recycling rates.

**Recycling**

Reduction in the plastic recycling rate amid increased plastic waste generation may lead to **mismanagement and leakage into aquatic ecosystems.**

**Incineration**

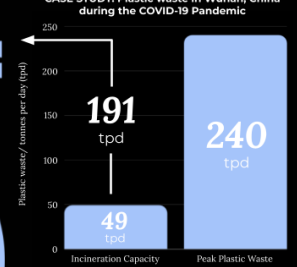
Existing incineration capacities are breached by an increase in plastic waste due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

191 tonnes of plastic waste per day ends up in **landfills and open dumpings**, or as **mismanaged waste**.

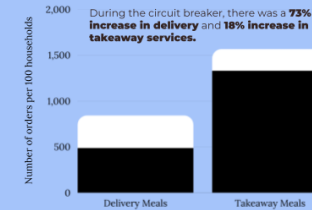
Similar trends in:



**CASE STUDY: Plastic waste in Wuhan, China during the COVID-19 Pandemic**



Despite a 7% decrease in plastic waste due to industrial inactivity, 2020 statistics show a **jarring increase in domestic consumption of plastic**, casting gloomy outlooks for **mismanaged waste and plastic pollution in Singapore.**



During the circuit breaker, there was a **73% increase in delivery** and **18% increase in takeaway services.**

**EXTRA**

**1334 tonnes**

Of **plastic waste** produced during the circuit breaker.