



LOUISIANA LITTER RESEARCH

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CONDUCTED BY



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PUBLIC ATTITUDE SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

- Most Louisiana citizens, 92 percent, believe that litter is a problem.

92%
BELIEVE
LITTER IS A
PROBLEM

- Litter negatively impacts communities. 88 percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that litter harms humans and animals, affects environmental quality, contributes to flooding, reduces property values, negatively impacts tourism, and decreases business revenues.



- Littering is frequently observed. 38 percent of respondents reported that they witness littering behavior weekly, and 44 percent reported seeing it several times a month.

- The top reasons people litter are convenience and laziness. 29 percent of respondents believe most people litter because it is more convenient to litter than to dispose of trash properly.
- More enforcement of litter laws and illegal dumping is supported. 67.6 percent support more enforcement.
- 68 percent support an additional fee to fund local litter cleanup and prevention.



LITTER COST STUDY KEY FINDINGS



- An estimated \$91,409,573 was spent in 2022 by local governments and state agencies on cleanup, prevention, and remediation efforts related to litter and illegal dumping across Louisiana, which is a cost increase of 65 percent since 2010 after adjustment for inflation. 
- Municipalities, cities, and towns bear the highest percentage of litter costs (36.4%).
- The LADOTD pays \$13 million a year for litter abatement costs, more than any other state agency.
- Determining the costs of litter is challenging, since few entities monitor the costs through direct budget line items and rely on estimations, especially for determining labor costs. 
- Expenditures overwhelmingly focus on remediation or cleanup versus prevention. Local jurisdictions spend seven times more to remove litter and trash from public spaces than they spend on preventing it from being generated.

Table 2-7: Top Ten Least Littered Sites Based on Aggregate Litter

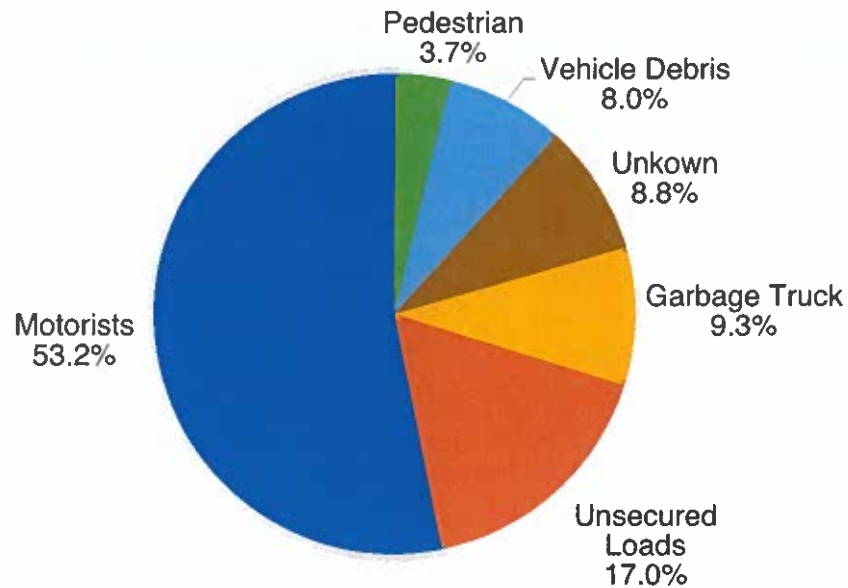
Least Littered	Parish	District	Roadway
1	St. Bernard	2	LA 46
2	St. Mary	3	LA 70
3	Vermilion	3	LA 14
4	Vernon	8	LA 117
5	Desoto	4	I-49
6	St. Mary	3	US 90
7	Tangipahoa	62	I-55
8	West Feliciana	61	US 61
9	Terrebonne	2	LA 24
10	Rapides	8	LA 28 West

District 4 had two sites in the top ten for Visible Litter (Table 2-8) and one in the top ten for Micro Litter (Table 2-9). At the site identified with the highest amount of Visible Litter, the survey team commented on both the extreme litter condition within and also noted litter in an adjacent drainage area outside the survey site. Most of the highest littered sites were either along roadways with high traffic volume or larger populated areas, although a couple of sites in more rural areas had high litter counts and visible signs of dumping.

Table 2-8: Sites with the Highest Amount of Visible Litter

Litter Rank	Parish	District	Roadway
1	Bossier	4	I-20
2	Lincoln	5	US 80
3	Avoyelles	8	LA 115
4	Allen	7	US 165
5	Jefferson	2	LA 18
6	Bossier	4	US 71
7	Acadia	3	US 90
8	Washington	62	LA 21
9	Orleans	2	I-10
10	East Baton Rouge	61	LA 67

Figure 2-14: Top Sources of Litter



Brand Name Analysis

The survey members documented brand names when possible. During the field survey, 132 unique products were identified by brand name. Since the purpose of identifying brand names was just to identify trends, products within the same category were combined.

Figure 2-15 shows the most commonly identified brand names. The three most prevalent brand names were beer containers including Bud Light, Busch, and Miller. Coca-Cola and McDonald's were also in the top five. This brand data correlates with the survey findings of beverage containers and fast food being among the most prevalent categories of litter.

ROADWAY LITTER SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

- There are approximately 143.8 million pieces of litter on Louisiana roadways.

143.8
MILLION
PIECES OF LITTER

- Littering patterns, including the number of littered items and locations, are similar on interstates, highways, and state routes.

- Interstates are the most littered type of roadway, with an average of 10,178 pieces of litter per mile.



- The most prevalent Aggregate Litter (Visible + Micro) categories are tobacco products (24.5%), beverage containers (13.7%), and construction debris (10.8%). Appendix 2 provides detail on categories, items, and packaging materials, including Aggregate Litter counts for items.



- The top three Aggregate Litter packaging materials are plastic, tobacco, and metal. The highest percentage of Aggregate Litter by packaging material is plastic (43.1%), followed by tobacco-products other (24.5%) and metal (10%).

- A significant amount and variety of plastic items are littered. Over 61.9 million plastic items were found on Louisiana roadways. The top three Aggregate Litter items are cigarette butts (21%), plastic beverage containers and cup pieces (13.8%), and plastic fast-food pieces (7.2%).

- Plastic water bottles are the most common Visible Litter item. Plastic water bottles were found at 80 percent of all surveyed sites. Plastic water bottles were also the most prevalent single item of Visible Litter and make up the largest share (24.1%) of the beverage container category.



- The leading litter sources are motorists, unsecured loads, and garbage trucks. Motorists (53.2%) and unsecured loads (17%) are the leading sources of litter. The third-highest source of litter is garbage trucks (9.3%).



- Many littered items could be recycled. Nearly 42 percent of Visible Litter contains recyclable packaging materials like metal, plastic containers, and paper products.



- Beautification efforts reduce litter. Sites without beautification efforts have approximately 38 percent more litter than beautified sites.
- Visible Litter is comparable across all LADOTD districts. The average number of Visible Litter items is highest in District 4, Bossier. District 58, the Chase area, has the lowest number of litter items.
- Brand name litter items are most often beverage containers and fast-food products. The most common brand names found at the 137 survey sites, in order of prevalence, were Bud Light, Busch, Miller High Life, Coca-Cola, and McDonald's.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop improved litter removal systems including procedures and practices including frequency of litter collection depending on conditions along roadways, eliminating the accumulation of litter, which may lead to increased littering behavior and the accountability for the litter removal.
- Develop new systems to ensure litter removal prior to mowing roadsides to help reduce the creation Micro Litter from mowing.
- Encourage beautification. Sites that were not beautified had an average of 38 percent more Visible Litter than beautified sites.
- Create litter prevention messaging for fast-food and beverages at points of sale, including restaurants and convenience stores.
- Encourage the enforcement of litter laws, including for uncovered loads.
- Expand Adopt-a-Road or adoption programs to removal and raise awareness of litter issues.
- Expand youth litter education programs.
- Support expansion of KLB affiliation with new affiliate options, such as community and university affiliates, that can encourage litter prevention rather than litter remediation.



- Identify consistent funding for ongoing statewide litter programs



- Identify best practices and evaluate waste collection and hauling infrastructures, expand effective residential and commercial waste processing, and reduce escaping litter from vehicles.

- Promote the recycling of beverage containers.



- Continue the “Let it Shine” campaign to expand public awareness about impacts of litter.



- Conduct statewide research every 5 to 10 years to evaluate litter abatement strategies, and conduct periodic litter assessments with communities and businesses to determine if litter programs are decreasing litter or littering behavior.

Parishes

Louisiana is divided into 64 Parishes, ranging in population from approximately 4,000 to 453,000. For comparison, the Project Team used the same three distinct population categories as the 2010 study: Large (>200k), Medium (100-200k), and Small (<100k). In 2023, 16 parishes provided their estimated expenditures (see Table 4-3) including costs for removal by staff or litter crews. Parishes spent an estimated \$27,921,413 managing litter and illegal dumping. The parish cost total was computed with a similar method used to compute the municipal costs, by adjusting to reduce duplication, as to avoid double counting any municipal population within specific government structures. Additionally, if a sheriff’s office costs indicated a financial agreement with a parish regarding litter and illegal dumping costs, the populations were adjusted to reduce duplication. The Project Team subsequently calculated a per capita cost for each parish population category, then applied it to reach the parish cost estimate.

Table 4-3: Responding Parishes and Cost Estimates Based on Population

Type	Large (>200k)	Medium (100-200k)	Small (<100k)	Total
Parishes Reporting	6	3	7	16
Average Per Capita	\$4.58	\$6.42	\$7.78	\$6.20
Parish Costs	\$10,462,471	\$5,936,669	\$11,522,273	\$27,921,413

Sheriff’s Office

There are 64 sheriff departments within Louisiana, with the same population as the parishes. Because many parishes utilize sheriff departments for their anti-litter and illegal dumping enforcement efforts and as their primary funding source, the 2010 study combined the sheriff and parish expenditures into one total. In 2023, it was determined that these sheriff’s expenditures should be shown as its own category. In some parishes, sheriff departments are partially responsible for tackling litter including management of litter crews. Project Team made efforts to reduce duplication by verifying consolidated government operations and identifying partnerships between the parish and sheriff’s office. Sheriff departments spent an estimated \$10,610,546.

LITTER COST STUDY KEY FINDINGS

- The annual cost of litter in Louisiana is over \$91 million. This is a conservative estimate, based on government expenditures. **2023 ESTIMATE \$91,409,573 PER YEAR**
- Local governments bear over 80 percent of the cost of dealing with litter and illegal dumping issues. **7X MORE IN COST TO REMOVE**
- Expenditures overwhelmingly focus on remediation or cleanup versus prevention. Local jurisdictions spend seven times more to remove litter and trash from public spaces than they spend on preventing it from being generated.
- Most entities do not have a budget line item for litter and illegal dumping expenditures, making it challenging to account for all costs associated with all department(s).