

Science for Environment Policy

Temporary coastal residents are less aware of anti-littering programmes

Littering on coasts could be reduced by providing environmental information to temporary residents, research suggests. The study found that temporary residents were just as likely to litter as permanent resident populations and other visitors, but tended to be the group least aware of local environmental programmes.

Waste found on coasts and in oceans is a serious problem across the globe. It can kill or injure wildlife and damage ocean floor habitats and communities. It also poses health and safety and [economic](#) problems, through decreasing tourism levels or blocking intake pipes on boats and ships, for example.

The problem of marine litter, whether discarded accidentally or deliberately, is essentially a social and behavioural problem. As such, its solution must also be social. This has led to the development of global programmes aimed at raising awareness and changing behaviour to combat the issue of [marine](#) litter.

In order to better understand the social factors driving marine litter, the researchers in this study examined littering behaviour and the degree of awareness of different environmental programmes in Gladstone, Australia. Gladstone, a small industrial city, is located on the Queensland coast close to the Great Barrier Reef, and has a non-resident population of around 7%.

Temporary workers, who are resident in an area for just brief periods of time, are common in industrial areas. They may lack a connection to the communities in which they work, and, like tourists, are often blamed for anti-social behaviours, including littering.

The researchers conducted a survey of 136 people to investigate littering in Gladstone. The survey was used to identify littering behaviours, demographic information, awareness of local environmental programmes and their levels of guilt associated with littering.

The results showed that only 9% of people admitted to littering, and that this tended to occur more at recreational areas (excluding beaches), such as parks, followed by beaches and whilst boating. Twenty five per cent of respondents who admitted littering reported feeling no guilt for littering. Age was the only demographic factor strongly linked with littering behaviour; more of those aged 18 to 36 admitting to littering than those older than 36.

The reported littering rate is lower than reported in other Australian studies, and the authors note the possibility of people lying in the survey.

A total of 72% of respondents were unaware of environmental programmes in Gladstone. The type of resident, age, gender and level of education influenced their awareness of environmental programmes, with permanent residents much more aware than temporary residents, visitors and tourists. The respondents' level of education was particularly associated with a higher awareness of programmes focused on marine litter.

These results indicated that temporary residents did *not* litter more than other groups. However, they were less aware of local environmental programmes than were non-resident workers.

The study's authors recommend that coastal industries should provide information on local environmental programmes to temporary workers as part of their induction. Additionally, they suggest that other demographics, such as older people, should also be targeted to raise their awareness.



October 2014
Thematic Issue 46

Coastal Zones

Subscribe to free
weekly News Alert

Source: Campbell, M. L., Paterson de Heer, C., & Kinslow, A. (2014). Littering dynamics in a coastal industrial setting: The influence of non-resident populations. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 80(1-2), 179–85. DOI:10.1016/j.marpolbul.2014.01.015

Contact:
Marnie.campbell@waikato.ac.nz

Read more about:
[Sustainable consumption](#), [Waste](#)

The contents and views included in *Science for Environment Policy* are based on independent, peer-reviewed research and do not necessarily reflect the position of the European Commission.

To cite this article/service: "[Science for Environment Policy](#)": European Commission DG Environment News Alert Service, edited by SCU, The University of the West of England, Bristol.