

BRANDED 6

Holding the World's Worst
Plastic Polluters Accountable
Annually Since 2018



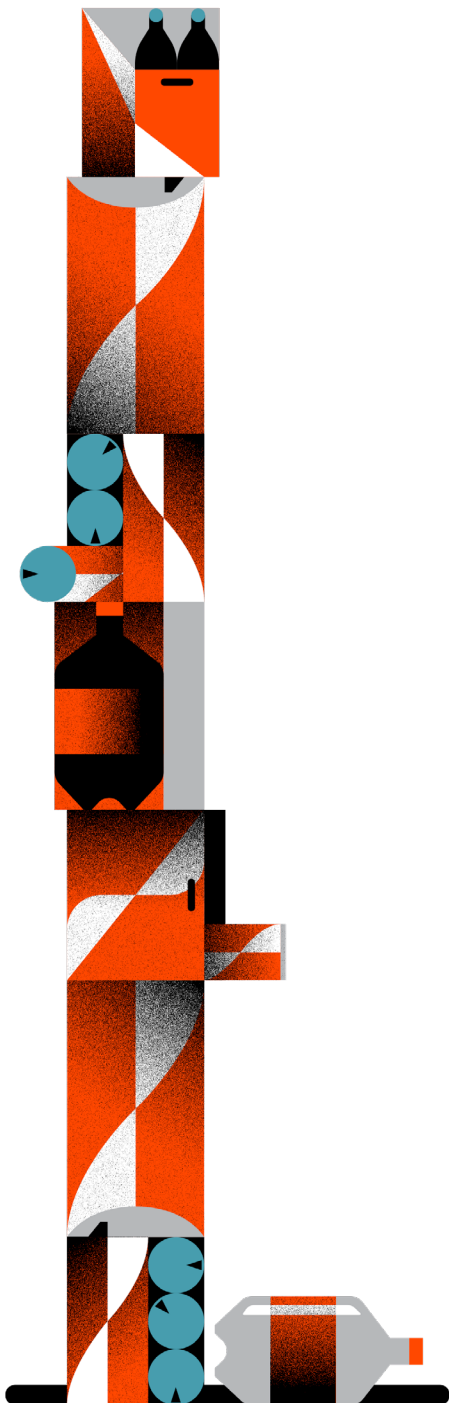
#BreakFreeFromPlastic
Brand Audit Report 2023

Every year since 2018, hundreds of Break Free From Plastic (BFFP) movement member organizations and supporters around the world have joined the global brand audit project to hold corporations accountable for plastic pollution. A brand audit is a participatory community initiative in which branded plastic waste is gathered, counted, and documented in order to identify the companies responsible for plastic pollution. Now in its sixth consecutive year, the annual audit continues to grow and evolve. While the methodology¹ for collecting data has remained the same as established in 2017 by Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), Mother Earth Foundation, Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), and Greenpeace Philippines, **this year, the data is presented in a new format: a condensed scorecard focusing on the essential data analysis results.**

In 2023, 250 brand audits were conducted by 8,804 volunteers in 41 countries. Together they collected and audited 537,719 pieces of plastic waste. Participants from 97 civil society organizations documented 6,858 brands from 3,810 parent companies. The analysis reveals that this year's top global plastic polluters are The Coca-Cola Company, Nestlé, Unilever, PepsiCo, Mondelēz International, Mars, Inc., Procter & Gamble, Danone, Altria, and British American Tobacco. "Top global plastic polluters" are defined as the parent companies whose brands were found polluting the most countries with the most plastic waste, according to the brand audit data.

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The Coca-Cola Company, PepsiCo, and Nestlé have consistently been in the top four global plastic polluters every year since auditing began six years ago. Following close behind, Unilever, Mondelēz International, Procter & Gamble and Mars, Inc. have all remained in the top ten every year. The Coca-Cola Company has been the #1 top polluter every year, but this year it beat its own record with a total plastic waste count of 33,820 – more than in any previous year since the project began. For the first time, PepsiCo branded plastic waste items outnumbered those of The Coca-Cola Company! According to the methodology that takes into account how many countries a brand is found in, PepsiCo didn't make the top polluter spot as their waste was found in 30 countries compared to Coca-Cola's 40.



¹ For details on the methodology, visit our [website](#) and check out the [five year report](#).

2023 was a challenging year for PepsiCo, with [New York State Attorney General Letitia James suing the company](#) over its plastic pollution – both for misleading the public about its goals to eliminate single-use plastic and for endangering the environment. Additionally, after three different lawsuits were filed in the USA against The Coca-Cola Company in 2020 and 2021², 2023 saw litigation against top polluters escalate in Europe. BFFP Europe member organizations launched a [legal action against Danone](#) in France and worked with the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) to file a [legal complaint against Coca-Cola, Danone and Nestlé](#), arguing that '100% recycled' and '100% recyclable' claims on single-use beverage bottles sold across the EU are misleading to consumers. Brand audit data is often cited as evidence in these legal actions.

Despite their own voluntary sustainability targets to tackle plastic pollution, the top polluting fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies remain exactly the same year after year, proving that actions, not announcements, are needed to reduce the plastic that causes pollution. The top plastic polluters are also the top users of single use plastic, according to data from the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation Global Commitment 2023 Progress Report](#): the FMCG companies with the largest total weight of annual plastic packaging in metric tons in 2022 were The Coca-Cola Company (3,430,000), PepsiCo (2,600,000), and Nestlé (927,000). What's worse, these numbers have steadily increased each year since the Global Commitment first began reporting.³ It is clear that the amount of single-use plastic used is linked to the amount of a company's plastic that is found in the environment. The fact that companies are increasing their plastic footprints makes a mockery of their stated commitments to tackle pollution.



Photo from: Sustainable Ocean Alliance Tanzania (SOA Tanzania) 2023

² Citing brand audit data, BFFP member organizations in the USA filed three different lawsuits against top polluter The Coca-Cola Company for [public nuisance and defective product liability](#) (2020), [false and deceptive advertising](#) (2021), and [misleading consumers on plastic bottle recycling](#) (2021).

³ In 2019, Coca-Cola produced 3 million metric tons of plastic packaging annually, PepsiCo 2.3 million, and Nestlé 1.7 million ([Global Commitment 2019 Progress Report](#)).



In 2022, governments of the world came together to begin [negotiating a new multilateral instrument to tackle plastic pollution](#). As the negotiations for the new treaty gather pace, many top polluting consumer goods companies have formed a lobbying alliance called [‘The Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty.’](#) This alliance calls for the future treaty to prioritize a reduction in plastic production and support the scale up of reuse systems globally. Yet the same companies are part of trade associations lobbying against legislation that would support development of [reuse in Europe](#).











The world urgently needs to dramatically reduce reliance on plastic for the sake of the climate, biodiversity, human health and wellbeing of communities. Consumer goods companies are the single largest customers of plastic-producing fossil fuel corporations. By changing their business model away from single-use, they can have a huge positive impact globally.

It’s time consumer goods companies accepted responsibility for the harm their business models have caused. To take accountability and to provide solutions, companies must:

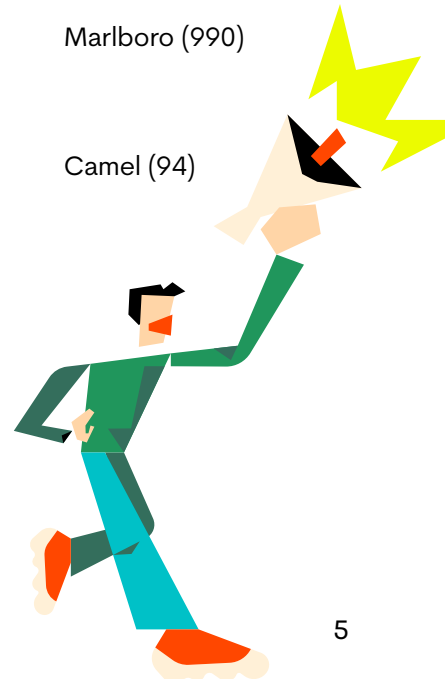
1. **Reveal** their plastic use by providing public data on the type and quantity of packaging used in different markets, and the chemicals in that packaging.
2. **End support for false solutions** such as burning plastic and chemical recycling.
3. **Redesign business models** away from single use packaging of any type - including novel materials such as bio-based or compostable plastics.
4. **Invest in accessible, affordable reuse, refill or packaging-free product delivery systems** in all markets, while ensuring a just transition for all relevant workers.

BFFP movement member organizations and supporters stand united in calling for corporate accountability for plastic pollution. Together, we demand massive reductions in single-use plastics and lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis. As well as urgent and systemic action from corporate plastic polluters, we need a [strong plastics treaty](#) to address plastic pollution across its full lifecycle.

Top 10 Global Corporate Plastic Polluters of 2023

Ranking	Company	Countries	Total Count	Most Common Item	Most Common Brand
1	 THE <i>Coca-Cola</i> COMPANY	40	33,820	Bottles (17,703)	Coca-Cola (16,931)
2	 Nestlé	33	9,931	Bottles (4,586) and Food Wrappers (3,451)	Nestlé Water ¹ (4,586)
3	 Unilever	31	4,485	Detergents (1,439), Sachets (700), and Bottles (492)	Surf Excel (1,440)
4	 PEPSICO	30	34,780	Food Wrappers (11,080) and Bottles (13,861)	Lay's (7,336)
5	 Mondelēz International	26	8,094	Food Wrappers (7,219) Candy Wrappers (100), Food Packaging (64)	Center Fruit (3,936)
6	 MARS	24	1,247	Food Wrappers (855) and Candy Wrappers (51)	Snickers (419)
7	 P&G	21	776	Sachets (286), Diapers (155)	Vicks (320)
8	 DANONE	18	3,602	Bottle (1136), Bottle Caps (724), Labels (352)	Aqua (3,248)
9	 Altria	16	1,174	Cigarette Butts (852)	Marlboro (990)
10	 BAT	15	259	Cigarette Butts (56)	Camel (94)

¹ Brand audit data literally specified "Nestlé Water", which is in itself not a brand, but could refer to any of Nestle's four [primary water brands](#) (Perrier, S. Pellegrino, Acqua Panna, Pure Life) or 10 [local water brands](#).



Top 10 Parent Companies with Highest Plastic Waste Count in BFFP Global Brand Audit 2023

1		34,780
2		33,820
3		9,931
4		8,094
5		4,485
6		3,602
7		1,247
8		1,174
9		776
10		259



Summary Results of BFFP Global Brand Audit 2023

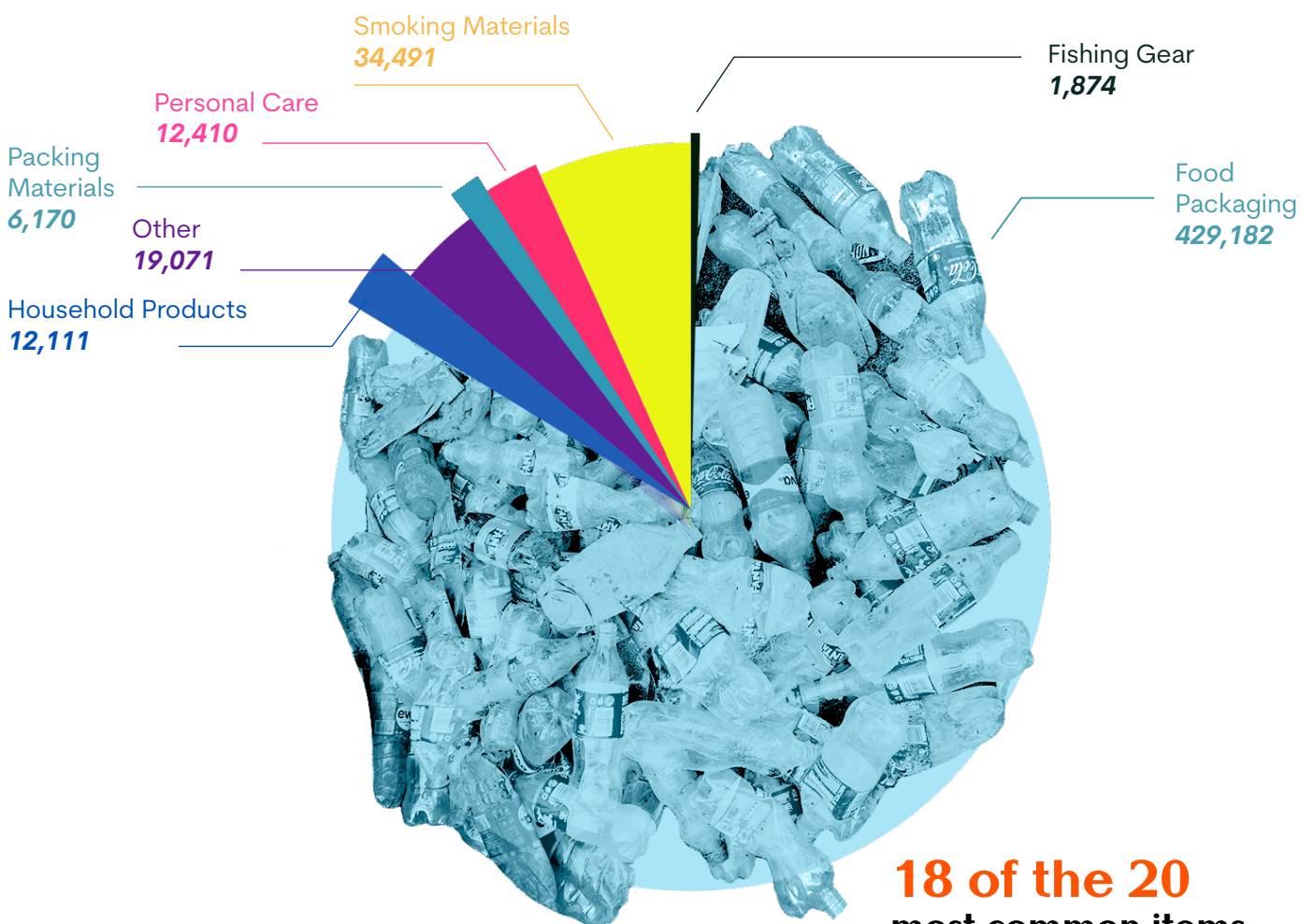
Category	Total
Total Parent Companies	3,810
Total Brands	6,858
Total Volunteers	8,804
Total Items	537,719
Total Orgs Participated	97
Total Countries Participated	41
Total Events	250



Region	Country	Events	Organizations	Total Volunteers	Total Count of Plastics
Africa	Congo	2	2	37	14,435
Africa	Ghana	5	3	910	19,679
Africa	Kenya	2	2	1,211	36,544
Africa	Malawi	1	1	20	125,047
Africa	Mozambique	1	1	20	6,385
Africa	Nigeria	6	6	333	45,786
Africa	South Africa	1	1	36	782
Africa	Tanzania	5	5	176	4,781
Africa	Togo	2	2	240	8,340
Asia	India	6	5	1,372	116,688
Asia	Indonesia	29	10	1,136	42,044
Asia	Japan	4	1	49	1,038
Asia	Kuwait	1	1	6	1,690
Asia	Malaysia	14	5	245	2,651
Asia	Myanmar	1	1	15	1,030
Asia	Philippines	5	5	245	8,124
Asia	Thailand	50	7	914	4,179
Asia	Vietnam	1	1	6	3564
Central America	Costa Rica	1	1	20	524
Central America	El Salvador	1	1	29	2,319
Europe	Denmark	1	1	135	2,631
Europe	Estonia	3	1	15	2,398
Europe	France	13	4	149	5,797
Europe	Germany	3	3	23	2,669
Europe	Latvia	1	1	12	471
Europe	Portugal	1	1	20	167
Europe	Slovenia	1	1	6	17
Europe	Spain	1	1	60	3,041
Europe	Switzerland	3	1	37	139
Europe	Ukraine	1	1	4	433
Europe	United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland	5	3	23	1,414

North America	Canada	1	1	15	87
North America	Honduras	11	1	207	12,866
North America	Mexico	5	2	127	3,408
North America	United States of America	6	5	240	8,116
Oceania	Australia	3	1	50	243
South America	Argentina	3	3	340	16,424
South America	Brazil	4	2	130	7,439
South America	Chile	1	1	20	477
South America	Colombia	1	1	28	720
South America	Ecuador	5	2	143	2,179

Most Common **Types of Products** Found in BFFP Global Brand Audit 2023

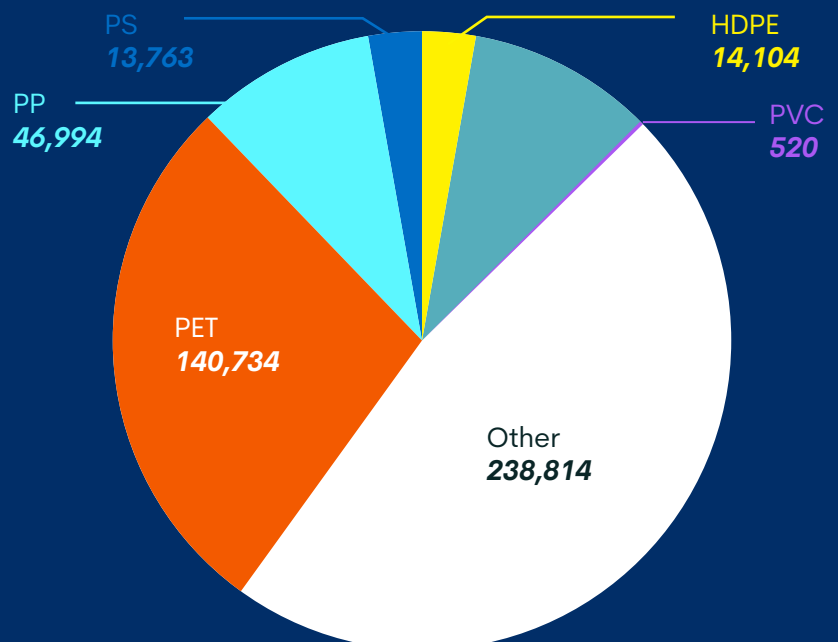


18 of the 20 most common items recorded were food packaging, primarily beverage bottles, food wrappers, and food containers.

Top 5 Most Common Types of **Food Packaging** Found in BFFP Global Brand Audit 2023



Most Common Types of **Plastics** Found in BFFP Global Brand Audit 2023



Thank you

to all of the BFFP member organizations for their leadership organizing brand audit events in their communities around the world. Special shoutout to the ten organizations that collected the most plastic waste for the 2023 global brand audit!

1. **Malawi:** Go Green Save the Environment (125,047)

2. **India:** Zero Waste Himalaya (109,520)

3. **United States:** 5Gyres (43,455)

4. **Kenya:** Pwani Youth Network (35,544)

5. **Nigeria:** Centre For Peace Across Borders (31,275)

6. **Indonesia:** Dompét Dhuafa (27,867)

7. **Argentina:** Taller Ecologista and Más Río Menos Basura (15,696)

8. **Multiple Countries (Southeast Asia and Europe):** Trash Hero (14,419)

9. **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Solidarité pour la Protection des Droits de l'Enfant (13,875)

10. **Ghana:** Let's Do It! Ghana (13,557)



End Plastic Pollution
(Uganda)



Environmental Green
Society (Indonesia)



Solidarité pour la
Protection des Droits de
l'Enfant (Democratic
Republic of the Congo)



Ecoseva Institute
(India)

CESTA Amigos de la
Tierra (El Savlador)



Taller Ecologista
/ Más Río Menos
Basura (Argentina)

