

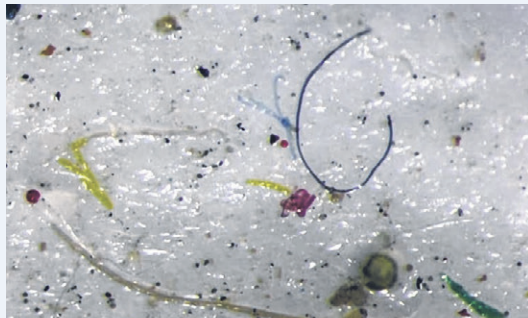
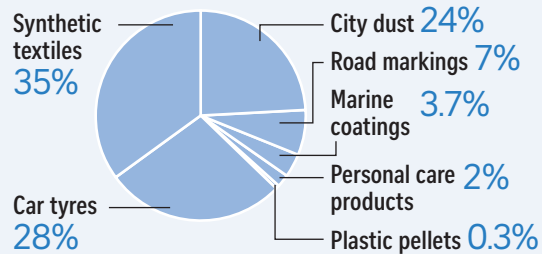
Not so pure

Two studies have revealed high concentrations of microplastics in the Arctic, suggesting tiny plastic particles are being carried by the air and raising questions about how much is being inhaled by humans and wildlife.

WHAT ARE MICROPLASTICS?

- Anything **less than 5mm**.
- They can be plastic fragments eroded by sunlight and wave action in the oceans.
- They can also come from paint flakes from ships, oil rigs and buildings, tiny rubber particles from tyres, and microfibres from clothing.

5mm
(actual size)



Microplastics found in an ice core sample taken as part of an 18-day US-led Northwest Passage Project that took place in July and August this year.

WAYS TO REDUCE MICROPLASTICS

- Throw beverage rubbish into recycling bins.
- Stop using single-use plastic bags.
- Remove micro beads from personal care and laundry products.

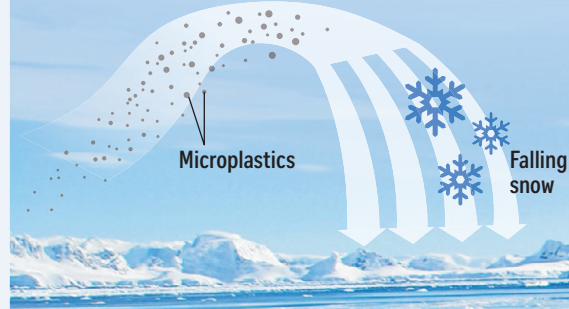
JOURNEY OF THE PLASTIC SCOURGE

1

Blowing in the wind

Microplastics can be sucked up into the atmosphere from the ocean's surface or land, where they travel thousands of kilometres until clouds and falling snow trap them.

Microplastics then land on Arctic ice and sea surface.



2

Stored in ice

Snow and ice floes act as reservoirs, storing the particles until they melt, releasing them back into the environment where they pose a danger to marine organisms.

3

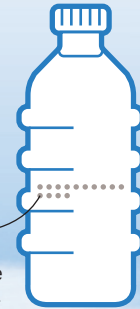
The results

The highest concentrations of microplastics were found in the Bavarian Alps in Germany, with one sample having more than 150,000 particles per litre.



Arctic samples were less contaminated, though one had 14,000 particles per litre.

NOTE: Particles are not drawn to scale.



4

The concern

Plastics degrade slowly, often taking up to thousands of years. Scientists still do not know the extent of contamination of microplastics in our food or how much we are breathing in or eating.

