



# YOU CAN CHANGE FRESNO

## Littering Fact Sheet

Significantly reducing, and eventually ending, littering and litter is key to developing clean, beautiful, sustainable, healthy, equitable, and more prosperous communities across the United States.

### | What is litter?

Litter includes waste that is intentionally and improperly disposed. It also includes waste that is unintentionally and improperly disposed, such as overflowing trash and recycling cans, improperly secured loads (e.g. trash from garbage trucks or pick-up truck beds), and vehicle debris (e.g. trash from vehicle accidents).

### | What is littering?

A person's behavior that results in misplaced waste. Litter affects environmental, community, and individual health, as well as quality of life, economic development, the safety of our water, environmental justice, and our climate.

### | Litter

- Cigarette butts
- Food packaging
- Plastic bottles
- Disposable cups
- Grocery bags
- Plastic straws
- Other trash discarded by pedestrians and motorists



## The truth about littering

### A strong contributor to littering is the prevalence of existing litter.

About 15% of littering is affected by the environment, or existing litter. Littered environments attract more litter.

### About 85% of littering is the result of individual attitudes—how people think and feel about littering.

Changing individual behavior is key to preventing litter.

Nearly one in five, or 17%, of all disposals observed in public spaces were acts of littering. The remainder (83%) was properly discarded in a trash or recycling receptacle.

### Most littering behavior (81%) occurred with notable intent—meaning an individual chose to litter.

This included dropping (54%), flick/fling of the item (20%), and other littering with notable intent (7%).

### Individuals under 30 are more likely to litter than those who are older.

In fact, age, and not gender, is a significant predictor of littering behavior.

Nine out of 10 pieces of litter on the ground in the U.S. are under four inches in size.

Cigarette butts are the single most littered item in the United States.

Plastic films, both general use films and food-packaging films, such as candy wrappers or snack bags, represent the second and third most littered items in America.

## How to prevent littering

Preventing litter requires changing individual behavior—and the environment. There are a lot of things we can't change, but we can change Fresno by not littering and picking up litter when we see it.

### Make proper disposal convenient and accessible.

Provide sufficient trash, ash, and recycling receptacles. There is a special need for more ash receptacles.

### Ensure consistent and ongoing clean-up efforts.

Littered environments attract more litter. Decrease the amount of existing litter. Start or join a cleanup in your neighborhood!

### Use landscaping, improving the built infrastructure, and ongoing maintenance.

These strategies set a community standard and promote a sense of personal responsibility not to litter. Communities that make an effort to “beautify” result in lower rates of littering behavior.

### Make the most of awareness and motivational campaigns.

Use messaging that highlights social disapproval for littering and a preference for clean, litter-free communities. Messages that show littering as common undermine littering prevention. Keep the focus on individual responsibility. You can change Fresno!