

19th July 2005

BRITAIN A NATION OF HYPOCRITICAL 'LITTER THUGS'

- Britons hate litter but still admit to dropping 205 million bits in just three months -

Litter facts:

- Over 30% of the population have littered in the last three months
- Together we drop 2.26m pieces of litter per day and 68.6m pieces of litter per month
- 82% of the population agreed with fining 'litter thugs', up to a maximum of £75
- 2.97m more men than women dropped litter in the last three months
- On average, men drop three times as much litter as women
- 16-24yr olds drop three times as much litter as the rest of the population
- People aged 55 and over are least likely to litter
- Regionally, southerners drop more litter than northerners
- Single people drop more litter than married people or couples!

New research reveals the British public's hypocrisy when it comes to littering. A new study from Symphony Environmental, the environmentally friendly degradable plastics company, shows that whilst approximately 46 million people (99% of the UK adult population) believe that people should discard of their litter appropriately, they still openly admit to dropping a whopping 205 million pieces of litter in just three months. This equates to over 30% regularly dropping between one and fifty pieces of litter in three months and the grubbiest 4% admitting to littering over 50 items in the same time period!

Despite these honest admissions from UK adults, the research shows that it is clear that people have real objections to certain types of litter and waste. 41% of respondents (19m people) hate to see uncollected dog faeces on the floor and a further 31% (14.1m people) dislike types of plastic litter the most. Chewing gum comes in third with 17% respondents (7.7m people) taking offence. A substantial 96% also said that they realise that uncollected waste, particularly non-degradable plastic, will harm the environment and wildlife.

Allan Blacher, chief operating officer, Symphony Environmental said: "These littering habits are worrying because some litter, especially if it is made of plastic, will never degrade and could end up harming the environment and wildlife. It is a fact that about 90% of all the plastic ever produced is still around somewhere today! People are unlikely to stop littering overnight so we need to encourage more businesses to start taking greater responsibility for their plastic bags and packaging that can so often end up as uncollected litter waste.

Put simply, if consumers won't practice what they preach then retailers and the packaging industry should help address the problem of harmful litter by introducing and providing degradable plastic bags and product packaging."

The Symphony research reveals that the public's enjoyment of their local environment is being ruined by litter with 88% (40.1million) people stating that this was the case. The study also explored which public spaces and beauty spots, across the UK, were most affected by so called 'litter thugs'. Millions of people said that they had observed uncollected litter, in the form of packaging, crisp packets, drink bottles in many beautiful areas within their region and local area. The results show that British parks have been the most affected by plastic litter over the last 12 months.

Worst affected locations for plastic litter in the UK

Beauty spot	Percentage	Region that has noticed the highest prevalence of plastic litter at beauty spots over the last 12 months	Region that has noticed the lowest amount of plastic litter at beauty spots over the last 12 months
Parks	66%	East Anglia (72%)	Yorks/Humber & East Midlands (60%)
Coastline or beaches	50%	Wales (61%)	Greater London (32%)
Tourist attractions	48%	Wales (67%)	North East 33%
Woodlands	48%	Wales (69%)	Greater London (36%)
Rivers	47%	Wales (62%)	Yorks/Humber (39%)
Historic cities	40%	Yorks/Humber (49%)	North West (31%)

The problem of litter has clearly been noticed by, and is disliked by, the majority of people. However, these same people openly admit that they contribute to the amount of litter that is either collected or left uncollected up and down the UK. Under new laws, councils are cracking down on litter thugs because they are now able to issue on the spot fines to those caught littering.

Symphony's research found that people were mostly positive about the introduction of fines – which can be as much as £75. 82% agreed with fining and 8% said that they agreed in principle but if they themselves got caught they wouldn't want to pay up. Twice as many

men did not to agree with the fine or want to pay up if caught – when compared to women. 16-24 years agree the least with litter fines (60%) compared to 91% of 55-64 year olds and 85% of those aged sixty five plus. And 19% of 16-24 years disagree with fines and 22% wouldn't want to pay if caught.

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

Research was conducted by TNS between 24th and 26th June, amongst a representative sample of 1015 GB adults aged 16+.

Symphony Environmental has developed an innovative range of totally degradable flexible and semi-rigid plastic products, as well as a variety of unique additives, marketed under the **d₂w**[®] brand. When included in the normal manufacturing process, these cause plastics to break down completely safely into water, carbon dioxide and a small amount of bio-mass, as opposed to congesting the environment for around 400 years or more.