



***The Lancet* Countdown on Health and Plastics: Indicator Proposal Requirements**

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Background

The Lancet Countdown on Health and Plastics (the Countdown) will identify and regularly report on a suite of meaningful and geographically and temporally representative indicators across all stages of the plastic life cycle, and track progress towards minimising exposures and human health impacts. An indicator is a measurable variable or metric used to assess, monitor, and evaluate a specific condition, trend, or outcome over time or to provide quantitative or qualitative evidence that helps in decision-making, policy development, and performance tracking over time.

Initially, the Countdown aims to track and report on indicators in four domains relevant to plastics and human health:

1. Production & Emissions: monitoring, and where possible, quantifying, hazardous emissions to the environment across all stages of the plastic life cycle.
2. Exposures: monitoring environmental and biological concentrations of plastics, plastic chemicals, and micro- and nanoplastics.
3. Health Impacts: tracking the direct health effects of plastics (macro, micro and nano), plastic chemicals, and plastic-related pollutants across the plastic life cycle.
4. Interventions & Engagement: tracking interventions and engagements across the plastic life cycle that have potential to affect exposures and human health, and the activities that enable these interventions, as well as monitoring public engagement with the health impacts of plastic pollution.

These are more fully described in [The Lancet Countdown on health and plastics](#) *The Lancet*, Volume 406, Issue 10507, 1044 - 1062.

We are opening a call for submission of Indicator Proposals in these domains. We are seeking indicators that are meaningful, relevant, scientifically sound and reproducible, that are geographically and temporally representative, and that will be developed from reliable data (ideally updatable annually).

This template outlines the guidance and requirements for Indicator Proposals. All Indicator Proposals will be reviewed by members of the Countdown Steering Committee using established evaluation criteria. Authors of successful Indicator Proposals will be invited to produce indicator reporting for the first - and subsequent - *Lancet* Countdown on Health and Plastics, with a target publication date for the first Countdown Report in 2026.



Evaluation Criteria

All indicator proposals will be reviewed using the following criteria. Selected indicators will be:

Meaningful and relevant:

Does the proposed indicator track an outcome, process, or structural change that relates to plastics' impacts on human health? Does the proposed indicator track an issue likely to be relevant to stakeholders such as policy makers, environmental and public health organisations, healthcare practitioners, civil society, and/or citizens? Factors may include the importance of the indicator in monitoring and assessing trends, tracking impacts, increasing awareness, and informing policy or other actions.

Credible and reproducible:

Is the proposed indicator a quantifiable metric? Is the indicator based on rigorous and replicable scientific methodology and data, allowing objective and independent evaluation of connections between plastics and health? Methods, including any statistical methods, must be described in sufficient clarity and detail to enable replication. Limitations and the caveats of the proposed indicator should be stated.

Temporally representative:

Does the indicator track change over time in a meaningful way? Can the indicator be updated for reporting in future years? Data availability with updated information at relevant intervals is a key consideration.

Geographically representative:

Is the proposed indicator available at a level of geographic representation that could allow for future scaling (e.g. national, subnational)? Indicator selection aims to include as many countries and regions as possible, recognizing that data needed to track some indicators may be available for a limited number of jurisdictions/regions.

Considers impacts for vulnerable populations:

Does the proposed indicator consider disproportionate impacts of plastics for vulnerable groups (e.g. by considering or disaggregating by gender, socio-economic status, age, education, etc.) in a way that can usefully inform efforts to address environmental and health inequalities? Does the indicator consider impacts that are unique to a particular geographic region or population?

Feasible:

Are the data to be used for the tracking indicator available and fit for purpose? Publicly accessible data sets are preferred—particularly those maintained by international organizations, government agencies, or academic institutions. Private datasets, including those of industry, with opaque or potentially biased collection methodologies should be avoided whenever possible. All sources must be reported.



Proposal requirements and deadlines

Purpose. This guidance specifies the information required to assess an indicator for potential inclusion in the *Lancet* Countdown on Health and Plastics.

Submission Deadline: 9 January 2026, 23:59 EST

Submissions: Completed via this link by the 9 January deadline:

<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/research/sites/global-observatory-planetary-health/programs-initiatives/plastics-countdown/call-for-contributions/>

Acceptance/rejection communication to all proposals: 6 February, 2026, 23:59 CET. Notification will come via email from the *Lancet* Countdown Co-Chairs.

Commitment to indicator production: Authors of successful indicator proposals will be invited to join the relevant Working Group(s) within the *Lancet* Countdown on Health and Plastics. Author teams for selected indicators will commit to producing indicator results and write ups o/a April 2026, and for subsequent Countdown reports for periodic publication in *The Lancet* or *Lancet* satellite journals.

Content and length. All proposals must be submitted using the template and guidance provided. Proposals shall not exceed five pages, exclusive of **supporting materials** (see below), and the completion of a google form which will include identification and contact information for each proposal. Proposals should be in PDF form, using 12-point sans serif font and standard margins (1-inch/2.54 cm).

Individual proposals should include only one indicator. You may submit more than one proposal. Each proposal be submitted separately, with a separate Google Form entry. You may upload submissions in one combined PDF document, or as separate PDFs between the proposal and supporting materials.

Supporting materials. In addition, proposals should append, in PDF form:

- **References (Required):** A list of no more than ten references (where available) that document the scientific basis of the indicator. There is no page limit for this PDF document.
- **Visualization (Optional):** A visual mock-up (e.g. graph, map, or table) illustrating how the proposed indicator will be communicated. This PDF document may not exceed one page.



Proposal Instructions/Template

Page 1: Identifying Information (this section may not exceed one page)

1.1 Indicator Author(s): You may list three authors. The first author listed should be the lead author and point of contact.

(#1 Name, email, affiliation)

(#2 Name, email, affiliation)

(#3 Name, email, affiliation)

If there is a critical rationale for including more than three authors, please include a brief explanation here, with the names of additional authors (200 character limit) _____

1.2 Indicator Name _____

1.3 Indicator domain of relevance for the Countdown (please check one, or you may check up to two if your proposed indicator could fall in multiple domains):

- ☐ Production & Emissions
- ☐ Exposures
- ☐ Health Impacts
- ☐ Interventions & Engagement



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Page 2: Narrative Description of the Indicator (this section may not exceed one page)

2.1 Provide a narrative summary that describes:

- A. The meaningfulness and relevance of this indicator for tracking impacts to human health and/or progress towards addressing impacts to human health;
- B. the geographies and population groups for whom this indicator is relevant; and
- C. how the indicator will make a valuable contribution to Countdown reporting.



Page 3: Description of the data (this section may not exceed one page)

3.1 List the datasets and data sources that will be used in developing this indicator. For each data source, indicate whether the data are publicly available, privately held, requiring a licence to access, or other.

3.2 Describe the temporal coverage and resolution of the data. (e.g., 2020-2025, annual).

3.3 Describe the geographical (spatial) coverage and resolution of the data (e.g., global, country, municipal) as well as any limitations to the geographical coverage (e.g. country-level data only or data for ASEAN countries only)

Page 4: Description of methodology (this section may not exceed one page)

- 4.1 Provide a summary of the proposed methodology for data analysis and the underlying assumptions or hypothesis. Discuss how the scientific methods described will be applied.
- 4.2 List the strengths of the methodology for this indicator in its current form.
- 4.3 Describe any caveats and limitations of the methodology for this indicator.

NB: For indicators in Domains 1-3, the underlying methodology should be published, accepted for publication, or available as a pre-print by April 1, 2026, so that methods are already published or in pre-print when the first report of The Lancet Countdown on Health and Plastics is published. If this requirement cannot be met, provide a brief explanation. Full citations of these papers must be included in the “References” supplemental materials section of this proposal.

NB: For indicators in Domain 4, the methodology must be either available through one of the sources described above for Domains 1-3, or through other types of publication including those released by government agencies, intergovernmental organizations, universities and research institutes or non-government organizations. These references should be cited in the “References” supplemental materials section of this proposal.



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Page 5: Indicator communication: (this section may not exceed one page)

5.1: Describe how the indicator can be reported (e.g. a trend line, map, or a narrative summary). Summarize how the reports against the indicator will be described (e.g. “exposure to air pollution due to burning of plastic waste increased by XX% from XX to 2024”). If you have a visual mock-up to illustrate the potential communication of this indicator, please attach it as *optional* supplemental material, per the specifications on page 2.



Supporting materials

In addition to the template requirements, proposals should append:

- **References** (*Required*): A list of no more than ten references (where available) that document the scientific basis of the indicator. There is no page limit for this PDF document.
- **Visualization** (*Optional*): A visual mock-up (e.g. graph, map, or table) illustrating how the proposed indicator will be communicated. This PDF document may not exceed one page.