



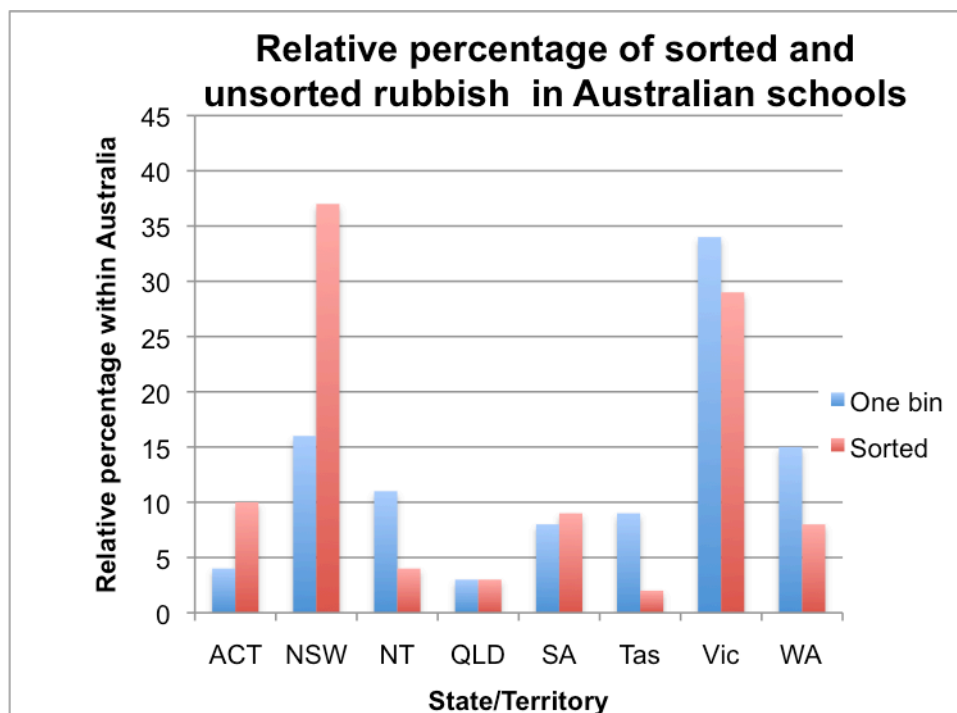
This is Rubbish!

is disgusting!

Thousands of students around Australia collected, classified and counted the rubbish in their classrooms and schools. Here are just a few of the results.*

“It was smelly and yucky but fun!”

We collected data about whether the school rubbish was placed into one bin or was sorted into different bins. And we assumed that if the rubbish was sorted that there was some sort of recycling system.



In the Australian Capital Territory, for instance, there were more than twice the number of schools that sorted their rubbish, but in the Northern Territory this proportion was reversed.

Can you think of a possible reason? Does your school have a recycling system in place? What other observations can you make from the graph?

* Go to www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au for the full set of results and the raw data.

The biggest load of rubbish

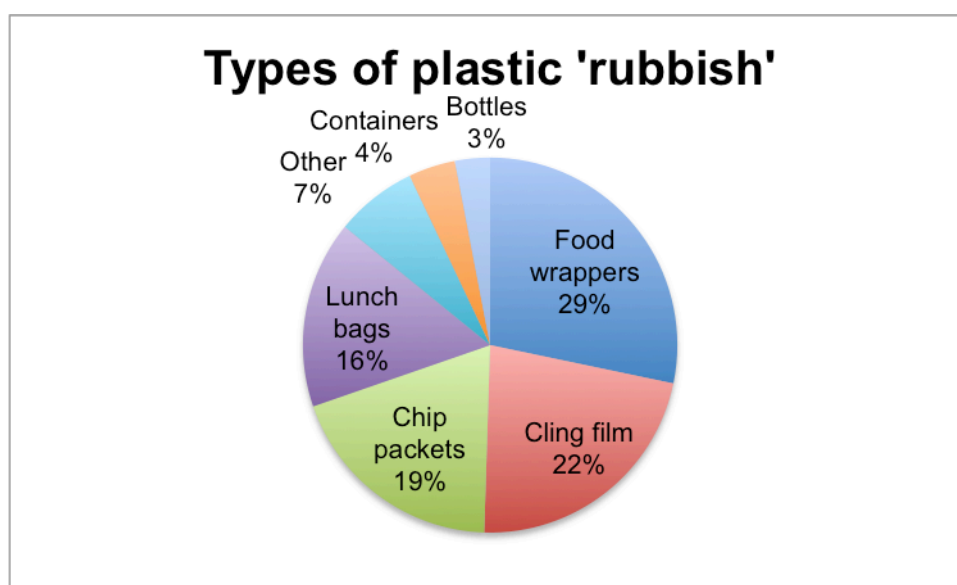
The category with the most rubbish was very clearly Plastic, at just under half (48%). The next closest was Paper and cardboard with 34%, then Food (12%), then Other (6%).

One school gave Metal as the category with the most rubbish (it would be interesting to know where those bins were) and no classes selected Wood. But both Metal and Wood were calculated with 0%. Can you explain how that could occur?

Of course, any interpretation is dependent upon the reliability of the data. Some classes found it difficult to categorise certain items. For example, do teabags belong in the Food category (for the tea) or in the Paper category (for the bag)? How different do you think our results might be if classes chose different categories for the same item?

How much is really rubbish?

What sort of plastic appeared in the bins? And how much of it was actually rubbish?



How does this compare with the data from your class? Could some of the plastic have been recycled?

What could you do to reduce the amount of cling film?

Many classes specifically mentioned chip packets. We wondered where all those chip packets came from. Were they brought from home or purchased at the school canteen?

One class collected no plastic at all – and that was unexpected.

How unusual

There were a lot of very unusual items found in the rubbish. One class found someone's pants! And there was also a dead bird, a golf tee, a rug, chicken bones, tiles and, even more unusual, an uneaten block of chocolate.