



FIRST DETAILS: A SOCIAL STUDY



ABSTRACT

According to the National Network of Waste Pickers in Ecuador, there are over 20,000 informal collectors in Ecuador (RENAREC 2018). Collectors or waste pickers, as they are often referred to, are defined as individuals who gather discarded materials, such as plastic or cardboard, which they sell to other traders, collection centres or directly to recyclers to make a living.

Despite the fact that collectors play an important role in Ecuador's circular economy, little is known about this community. While research on collectors has been on the rise since 2012, peaking in 2020 (Morais et al, 2022), only a handful of studies to date have focused specifically on the Ecuadorian context (Burneo et al. 2022; Iñiguez-Gallardo & Mejia 2023; Valencia et al, 2023).

The Prevented Ocean Plastic Research Centre, seeking to better understand the collection practices and patterns of this collector community and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of collecting, commissioned a study. By means of a paper survey, data was gathered from 100 collectors across three provinces in Ecuador – Esmeraldas, Pichincha and Azuay. The data was analysed across demographic groups, using Chi-square and T-tests, both of which were conducted at 95% confidence level.

Better understanding the characteristics and diversity within the collector community, their collection practices, patterns and economics, will allow for a more precise tailoring of programmes or policies which seek to maximise efficiency within the recycled plastics supply chain and ultimately improve the socioeconomic circumstances of the collector community.

The full report will be published soon.



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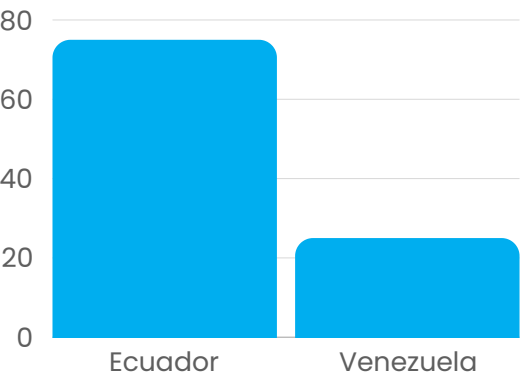
KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The first details of this study are the key demographics across the 100 bottle collectors who participated. Quotas were set for gender to achieve an even split between male and female collectors. In addition, a wide range of ages were included in the sample. All of the collectors were 18 years old or above.

Nationality

Collectors were asked their place of birth. In our study, 75% of collectors were from Ecuador, while the remaining 25% were from Venezuela.

Figure 1. Where were you born? (N=100)



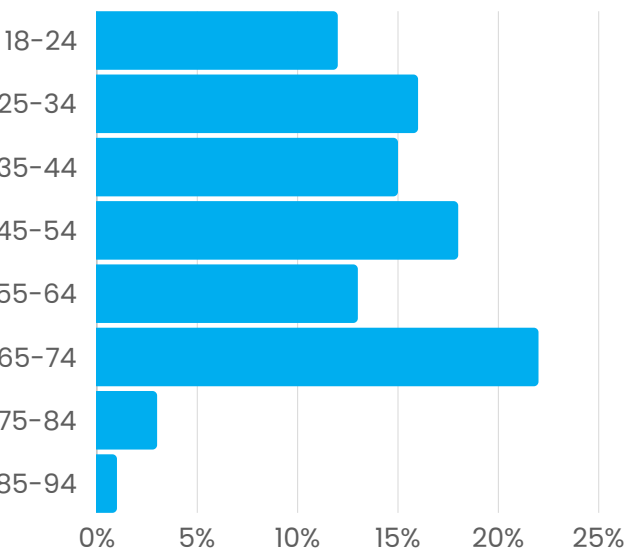
Gender

With regard to gender, half of the collectors were female. However, when taking into account nationality, 72% of male collectors were from Venezuela, while 59% of female collectors were from Ecuador.

Age

A wide range of ages were present in the research sample. The youngest collector being 18 and the eldest 86. The average age of the collector was 48 years old, and more than half (57%) of collectors were over the age of 45. The largest proportion (22%) of collectors were between 65-74 years old.

Figure 2. Age Groups/When were you born? (N=100)





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