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## US produces far more waste and recycles far less of it than other developed countries

**US represents 4% of the world's population but produces 12% of municipal solid waste, a stark contrast with China and India**

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The US produces far more garbage and recycles far less of it than other developed countries, according to a new analysis by the global risk consulting firm Verisk Maplecroft.

The figures emerge as the world faces an escalating waste crisis driven largely by plastics piling up in developing countries and the oceans. The US is at a crossroads as China and other developing countries refuse to continue to accept its waste, the report authors say.

The US represents just 4% of the world's population, but it produces 12% of global municipal solid waste. In comparison, China and India make up more than 36% of the world's population and generate 27% of that waste.

While Americans recycle just 35% of their municipal waste, Germany, the most efficient country, recycles 68%.

The firm estimates the US produces about 234lb (106.2kg) of plastic waste per person per year.

“The US is the only developed nation whose waste generation outstrips its ability to recycle, underscoring a shortage of political will and investment in infrastructure,” the firm said.

Will Nichols, the firm's head of environment, said the US had better recycling abilities than much of the world, “but the sheer amount of waste that is being generated is not being dealt with as well”.

For 2015, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported the country generated 262m tons of municipal waste, with more than half of it sent to a landfill.

About 13% of the waste was plastic. Of the 262m tons, a little over a quarter was recycled, according to EPA.

Compared with all countries, the US performs well on the firm's recycling index. But it is one of the highest-risk countries in terms of waste generated.

Globally, more than 2.1bn metric tons of municipal waste are generated each year - enough to fill 822,000 Olympic-size swimming pools, the report said. Only 16% of that waste is recycled. Humans have made 8.3bn tons of plastic since 1950.

The firm's senior environmental analyst Niall Smith said: “There's too much focus on recycling

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A truckload of plastics flows into the ocean each minute, and tiny particles of plastics are thought to be present in the bodies of most people - with their health effects unknown.

Plastics, made from petroleum, are also an increasingly significant cause of the climate crisis. By 2050, plastics could account for 20% of oil consumption and 15% of the carbon dioxide budget, according to the UN General Assembly.

“If a certain government does not agree, there is also civil society, there is the private sector, activists ... the world is not black and white,” Espinosa said. “We cannot say we cannot have progress because there we have one country that does not agree.”

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... on our progress as an organisation. In service of the escalating climate emergency, we have made an important decision - to renounce fossil fuel advertising, becoming the first major global news organisation to institute an outright ban on taking money from companies that extract fossil fuels.

In October we outlined our pledge: that the Guardian will give global heating, wildlife extinction and pollution the urgent attention and prominence they demand. This resonated with so many readers around the world. We promise to update you on the steps we take to hold ourselves accountable at this defining point in our lifetimes. With climate misinformation rife, and never more dangerous than now, the Guardian's accurate, authoritative reporting is vital - and we will not stay quiet.

We chose a different approach: to keep Guardian journalism open for all. We don't have a paywall because we believe everyone deserves access to factual information, regardless of where they live or what they can afford to pay.

Our editorial independence means we are free to investigate and challenge inaction by those in power. We will inform our readers about threats to the environment based on scientific facts, not driven by commercial or political interests. And we have made several important changes to our style guide to ensure the language we use accurately reflects the environmental emergency.

The Guardian believes that the problems we face on the climate crisis are systemic and that

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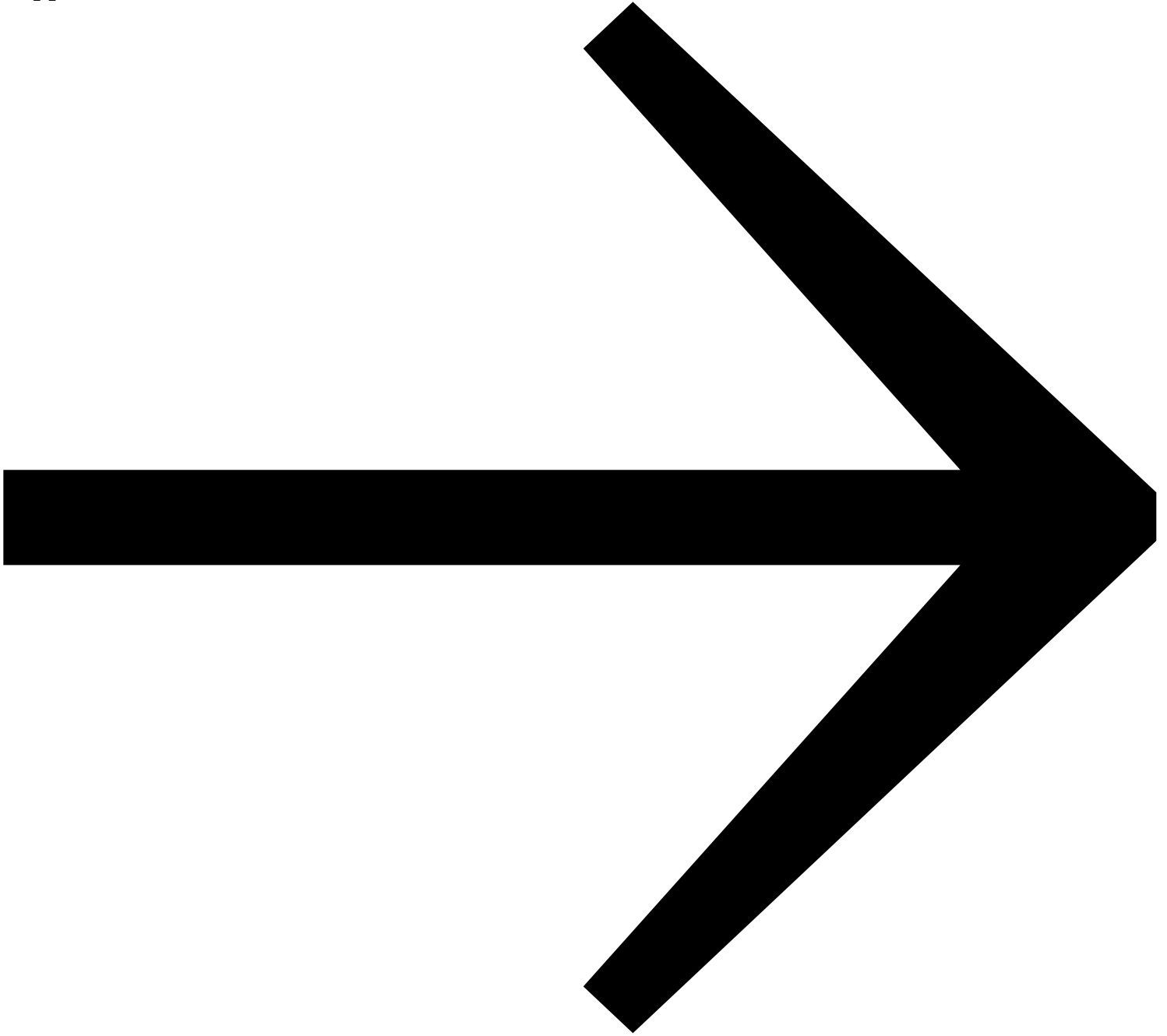
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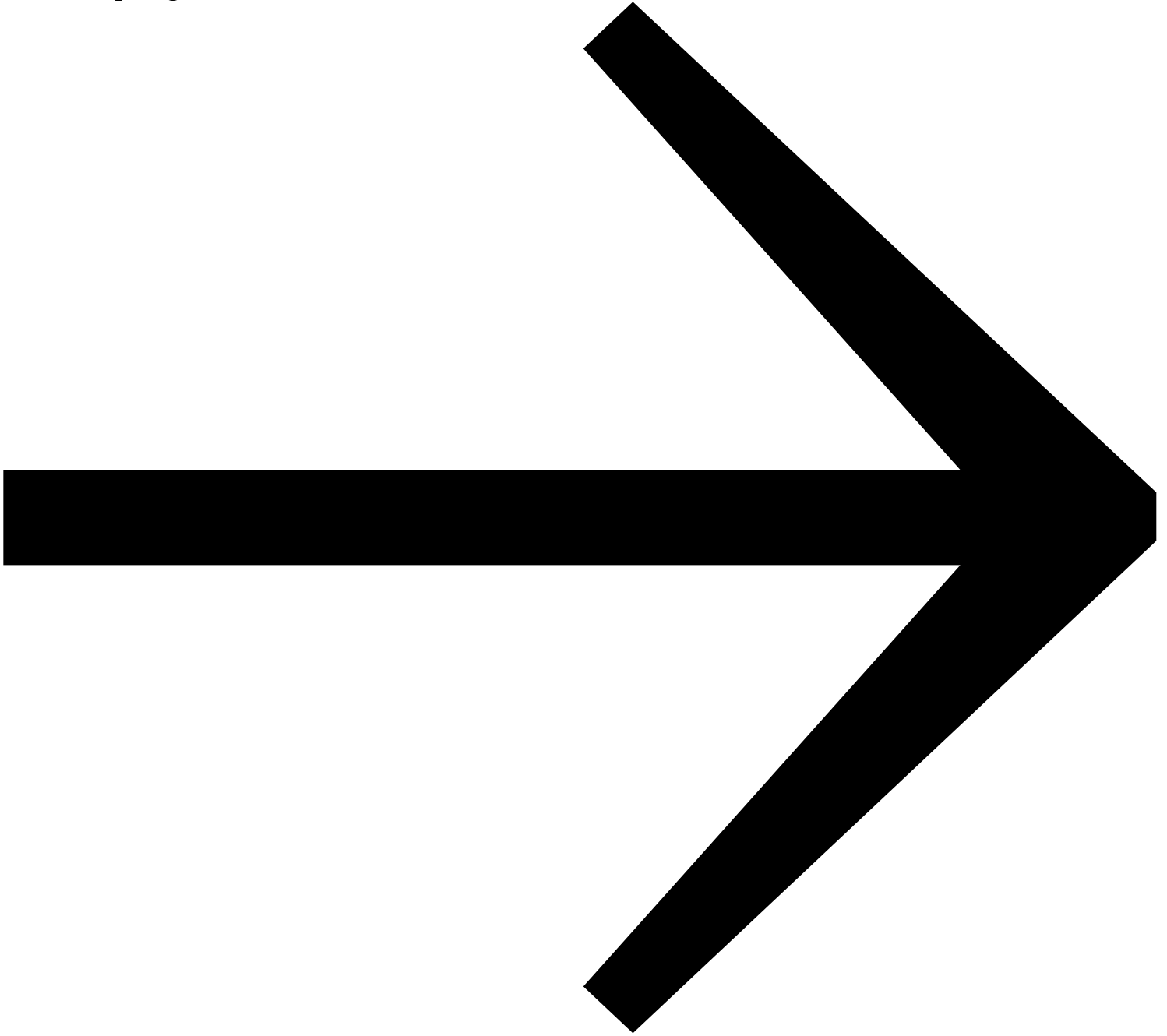
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#### Topics

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- United States of plastic
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