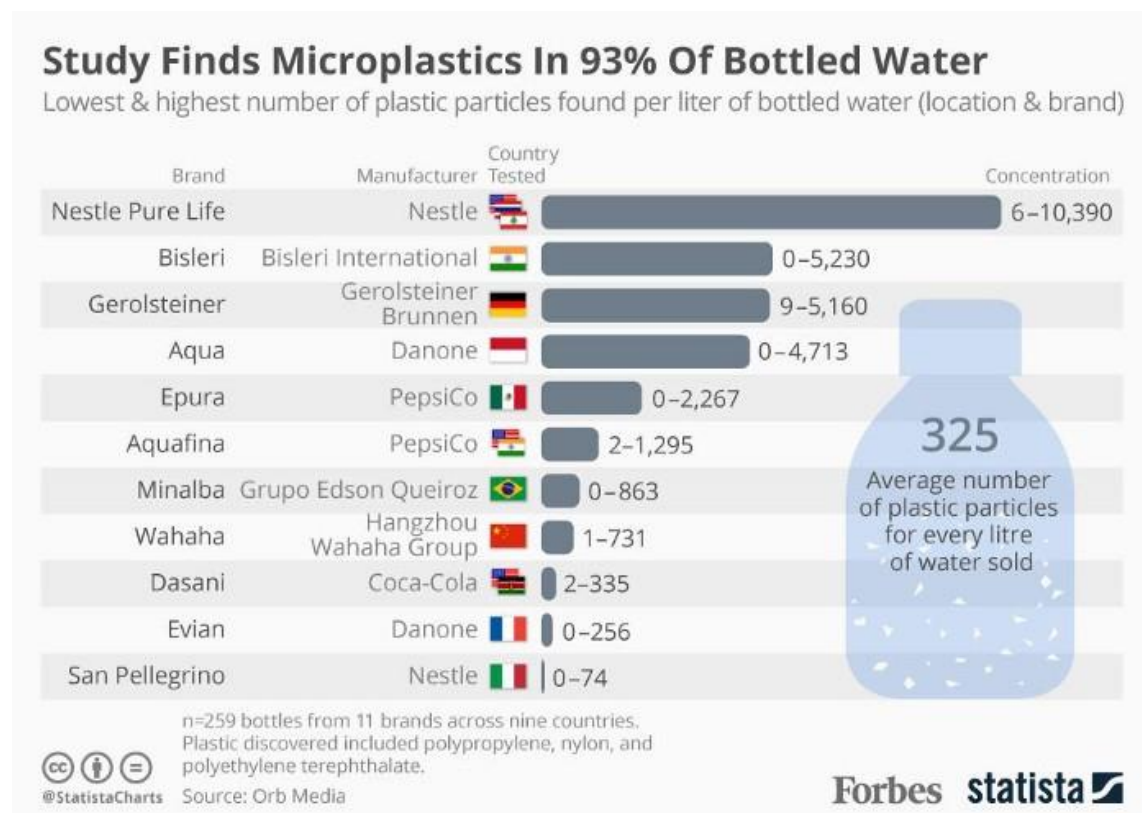


Bottled Water: Unhealthy, Dirty and Costly

What Companies Do Not Disclose But Consumers Must Know

Marina Martinez
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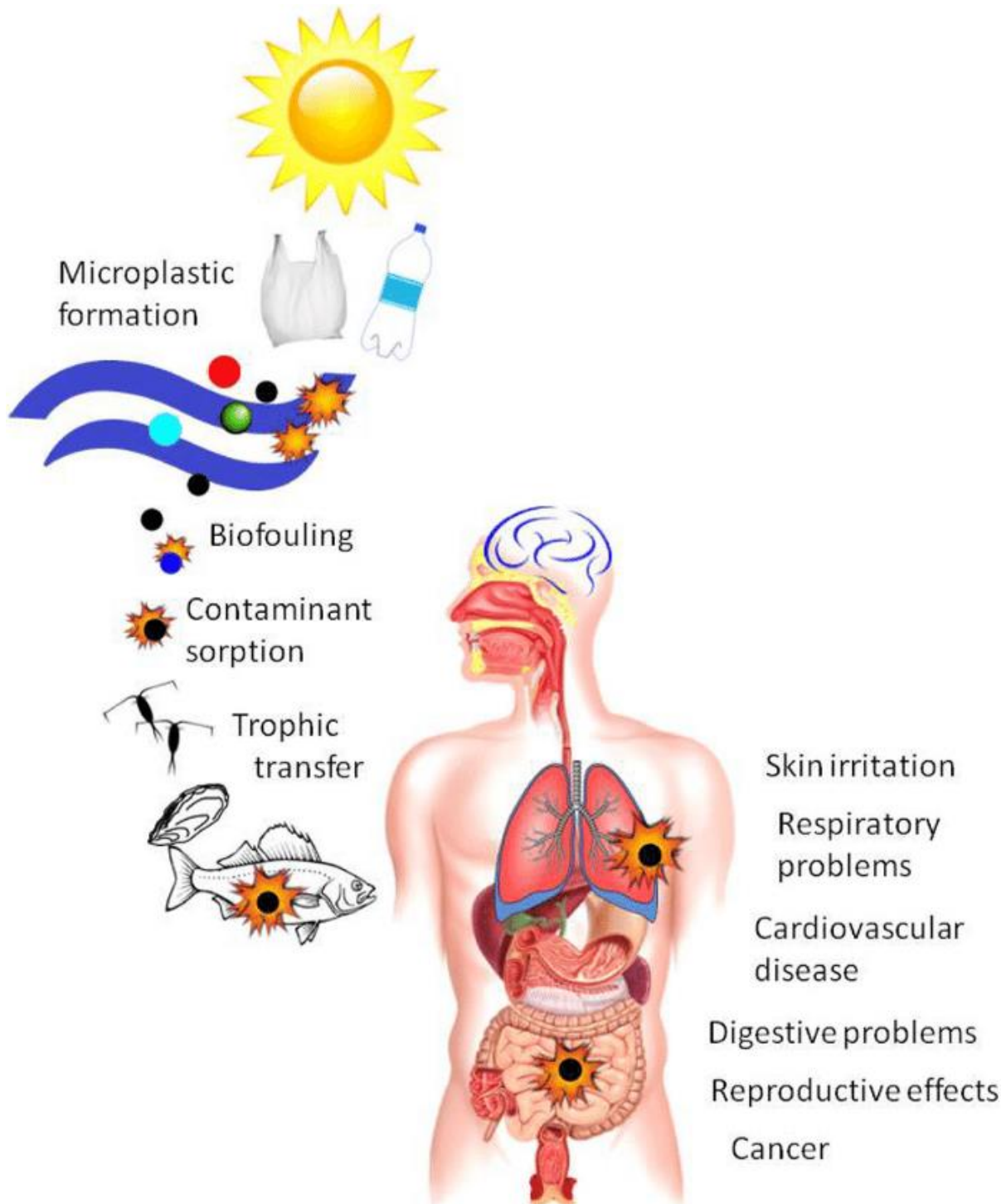
Bottled water usually comes from the same source as kitchen tap water. However, it is [less regulated](#) and [monitored](#) than most municipal tap water supplies. In many countries, like in the United States, it is beverage companies that treat and test the water they sell, which often result in the adoption of [inferior quality standards and inadequate protection](#) against contamination.



[Study Finds Microplastics In 93% Of Bottled Water Brands](#)

A [recent study](#) on more than 250 bottles from 11 leading brands worldwide revealed that a single liter of bottled water can contain dozens or even tens of thousands of **microplastic particles**, which is much greater than the levels found in tap water samples.

[Microplastics](#) hold toxic chemicals that can harmfully impact human health, the wildlife, and natural environments.



Potential health effects resulting from the bioaccumulation of microplastics in the human body
 (Photo: Maddison Carbery/[Research Gate publication](#))

Conventional water bottles are made of **plastic**, a material that generates pollution at [every step of its life](#)—from production to disposal. Many plastics contain chemicals that leach out into our water, food and ultimately accumulate into our biological systems.

In spite of that, plastic production for making water bottles is growing faster than ever. Altogether with the risks of a [“near permanent contamination”](#) of our world’s environment due to mass produced and ineffectively recycled plastic waste.

“ Despite the growing demand, just 5% of plastics are recycled effectively, while 40% end up in landfill and a third in fragile ecosystems such as the world’s oceans.”—Graeme Wearden, at [The Guardian](#)



Recycling systems are currently inefficient ([Photo](#): Hotli Simanjuntak/EPA)

In fact, the new [Ellen MacArthur Foundation report](#) warns that there may be **more plastic than fish in the ocean** by 2050—unless plastic waste stops ending in waterways.



[One garbage truck of plastic enters into our seas every minute, every day](#) (Photo: Daniel Müller/Greenpeace)

As consequence, our global [water supplies](#) are increasingly becoming degraded in quality, costly to treat at drinking standards and more scarce. These water issues are currently giving rise to a [clash of interests](#) among businesses, state authorities and local users.



[Popular Water Brands](#) (Photo: Vicky Wasik)

Meanwhile, Nestlé corporation is [making billions and paying nearly nothing](#) to extract massive amounts of water out of natural reserves in the US, [despite the historic drought](#) that's affecting residents and local environments.



[Billionaire Bottled Water Industry](#) (Illustration: Silja Gotz)

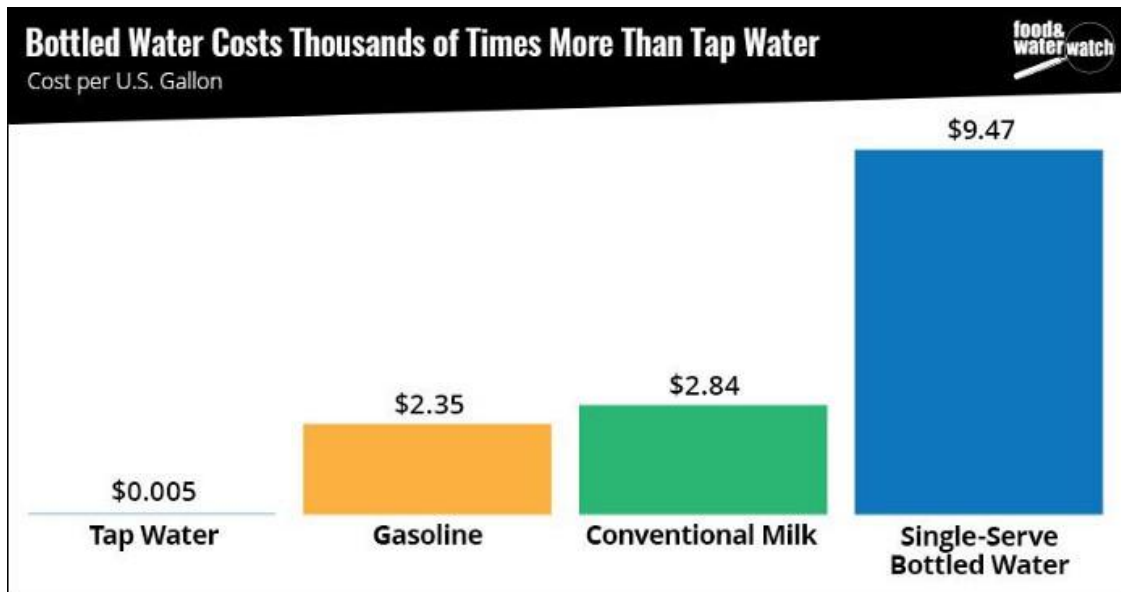
The Coca-Cola company already was accused of [extracting too much groundwater](#) and of significantly contributing to local water shortages and pollution, by Indian authorities that have ordered the closure of one of their bottling plants in northern India.



[Water crisis is a new reality for business and governments](#) (Photo: Daily the Patriot)

According to the Global Water Institute, around [700 million people in 43 countries suffer](#) today from **water stress and scarcity**, which predominantly affects low-income populations and regions.

But instead of being a convenient solution to water poverty people or places, **bottled water usually costs consumers [thousands of times more](#) than tap water**. In the U.S., for example, a gallon of bottled water costs almost 2,000 times the national average price of tap water.



[Bottled Water Is Nearly 2,000 The Price of Tap Water in the US](#) (Photo: Food & Water Watch)

So what can any of us do to help safeguard our access to clean, safe and affordable water resources?

First, consumers can [pledge](#) to **choose tap water** over bottled water whenever possible, and to using **reusable bottles or cups** instead of plastic versions.



[Ditch Plastic Water Bottles](#) (Photo: Plastic Oceans)

Second, stakeholders can **demand that companies take responsibility** for the plastic pollution and water crisis they helped create.

Almost 2 million people worldwide have signed the Greenpeace [petition](#) telling seven of the largest producers of single-use plastics (including Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, and Nestlé—leading bottled water companies) to [“break free from plastic”](#).



[Break Free From Plastic](#) Campaign

Third, citizens can **demand that local and national authorities take effective measures** to counteract present and future water-related conflicts.

In England, for example, [free water](#) refill points and fountains will start to be placed in shops, cafes and high streets in every English town and city by 2021— a national water scheme that aims to combat plastic bottle pollution and to make quality drinking water more accessible to people.

[Marina Martinez](#)

Searching for new answers to vital questions. Writing about controversial relationships among People, Nature and Economy.