

On Dec. 13, 2022, Amazon released a [blog](#) outlining how the company is reducing its packaging. Most of the information provided in the article has already been publicly communicated by the company in its sustainability reporting, apart from the following disclosure:

“...in the midst of a rapid increase in customer orders throughout the pandemic, [Amazon] continued to take steps to reduce single-use plastics in our outbound packaging. In 2021, we reduced average plastic packaging weight per shipment by over 7%, resulting in 97,222 metric tons of single-use plastic being used across our global operations network to ship orders to customers.”

In response to this new information, Oceana’s Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives, Matt Littlejohn, released the following statement:

“After refusing for years to be transparent about its global plastic packaging footprint, Amazon has taken a step in the right direction by disclosing information on the amount of plastic packaging it uses for part of its business. The reported figure (roughly 214 million pounds) is not directly comparable to Oceana’s estimate of Amazon’s 2021 plastic packaging footprint: [709 million pounds](#) (*Note this figure is under embargo until Dec. 15, 2022, at 1 AM ET*). Oceana’s estimate includes all sales through Amazon’s e-commerce platforms globally, whereas Amazon’s figure only includes plastic packaging used for all orders sent through Amazon-owned and operated fulfillment centers across its global operations network. This excludes orders made on Amazon’s e-commerce platforms and fulfilled through third-party sellers. It is unclear how much of Amazon’s total sales are sent through the company’s fulfillment centers. Amazon has declined to disclose this information to Oceana.

Amazon claims to have reduced average plastic packaging weight per shipment by over 7% in 2021. However, it has not disclosed how much its plastic footprint grew from 2020 to 2021. Amazon’s sales are [reported to have grown by 22%](#) in this period. As sales increase, the company’s plastic footprint grows too. Oceana estimated a plastic footprint growth of 18%, accounting for the plastic reduction measures Amazon has taken in some countries (such as India).

While Oceana acknowledges that the company has taken an important step towards increased transparency, it is disappointing that Amazon continues to deny that single-use plastic pollution is a problem that merits specific global reduction goals. Until Amazon is fully transparent on its company-wide use of plastic packaging, based on current public information Oceana’s 2021 estimate of 709 million pounds is the best available estimate of the company’s total plastic footprint. If Amazon really is “a company that obsesses about [their] customers,” they would eliminate plastic packaging, increase the number of products shipped in reusable containers, and adopt policies that demonstrably reduce their global plastic pollution footprint.”