

Complete each gap with one word.

Plastic is the (1) _____ common type of waste floating in the world's oceans. Waves and sunlight break it (2) _____ into smaller particles called microplastics – fragments less than 5 millimeters across, almost the size of a sesame seed.

To understand the impact of microplastic pollution (3) _____ the ocean, scientists need to know how much is there and (4) _____ it is gathering. Most data on microplastic concentrations comes from commercial and research ships that tow plankton nets – long, cone-shaped nets with very fine mesh designed (5) _____ collecting marine microorganisms.

But net trawling can collect samples from only small areas and may (6) _____ underestimating true plastic concentrations. Except in the North Atlantic and North Pacific areas – large zones where ocean currents rotate, collecting floating debris – scientists (7) _____ done very little sampling for microplastics. And there is little information (8) _____ how these particles' concentrations change over time.