E-waste - The frighteningly fast growing problem we need to pay more attention to.

Do you know what E-waste is? Apparently, a lot less people know about it than expected. According to surveys I have conducted, only 57% of people actually know what E-waste is. That means that around half of the people reading this probably have no idea what E-waste is. Confused? Let me explain.

As time goes on, new devices get released and as time goes on, people find they no longer need their old devices. When someone doesn't need something anymore, they throw it away. But here's the real question - how much actually gets thrown away? According to the United Nations University Global E-waste Monitor, around 53.6 Megatons of E-waste was generated in 2019 alone. That's around 53.6 million kilograms of E-waste in a single year! The worst thing is, only around 17% of that 53.6 Megatons is actually disposed of properly.

You may be wondering, what's the big idea? Sure there's a lot of waste, but that shouldn't be too big of a problem right? Wrong. E-waste is a hazard to both the environment and to our health. It's important to note that according to new surveys, over 57% of people have no idea what's inside a computer. Unfortunately, that means they won't know to remove the toxic stuff from inside it. Most electronics contain toxic chemicals and metals like lead, cadmium, flame retardants, nickel, mercury and far, far more. Prolonged exposure to said chemicals can prove to be very toxic. In some countries, improper disposal tactics for E-waste force people to deal with the E-waste. These people are faced with increased risk of respiratory issues, skin diseases, mental illnesses, and even cancer.

Image 1 - Retrieved from https://www.e-cycle.co.nz/

Now to be fair, I've talked about how much people waste and how harmful it is, but it's all useless information unless I also talk about how to dispose of waste responsibly.

The completely honest answer to the question of how to dispose of waste responsibly is an annoying one. The answer is that nobody is really going to care enough to actually dispose of it responsibly. That means no matter what solution is proposed, if it's one that makes people put effort into it, said solution will crash and burn. Why? Let's be completely honest here. Everyone complains about pollution. Everyone complains about deforestation. Everyone complains about global warming. But how many of said people actually do anything about it? A small handful at most. Why? Everyone will complain about something but when it comes to actually doing something about it, nobody can actually be bothered to do anything about it. So if anyone wants anyone to do anything about it, we need an actual big solution that makes it so that nobody has to really do anything about it.

What do we do about it? There's already easy solutions in place. You need to take whatever old electronics you don't need anymore to what's called an [E-waste disposal site](#). Bet you didn't know that existed. E-waste disposal sites take the E-waste and reuse, relocate and recycle said E-waste so that nobody else needs to do anything. It is literally that easy. You don't need to do all the fancy stuff like taking all the stuff out yourself. You don't need to take apart the computer and recycle the parts into a supercomputer. No. Literally just take it to an E-waste disposal site. It is not that complicated. There is nothing you need to do. Please just do the small job of taking your junk to an E-waste disposal site. It is their job.

Image 2 - Retrieved from https://abilities.co.nz/services/electronic-waste-recycling/

Now, let me tell you about the Sustainable development goals (UNSDGs). The sustainable development goals are there because all the UN members decided to band together and actually try to make a difference for our future. They are trying to help many different global issues, such as poverty, health and wellbeing, affordable and clean energy, climate change, sustainable and responsible consumption and production, and so much more. There are 17 sustainable development goals. I think the one that we would be helping work towards would be climate action. Why do I say that? Climate change is widely influenced by pollution. With E waste, the chemicals go into the air and pollute the air. So, dealing with E-waste will slightly help the issue that is Climate Action.

Image 3 - Retrieved from https://sdgs.un.org/goals

Now, after having explained what E-waste is, what the issues are, how it affects people, how we can help stop it and how all of this relates to the UN SDGS, I hope to have taught at least somebody something new. E waste is a very unknown issue apparently, so please try to let more people know about it.

Reference List:

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