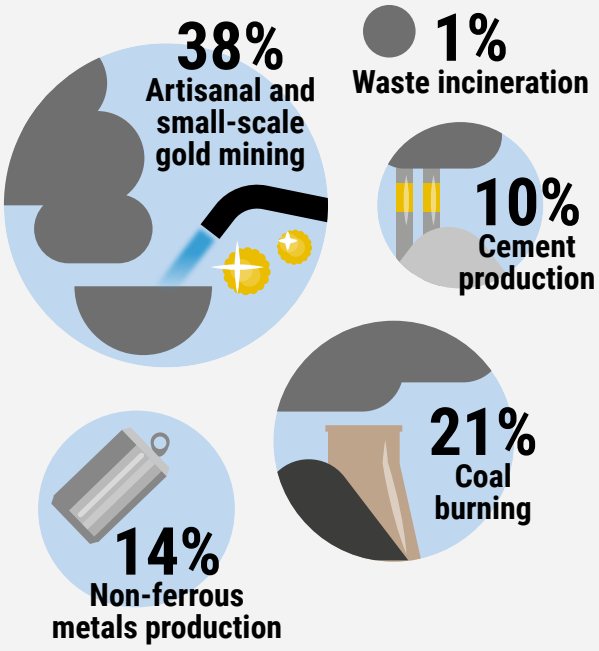
2024 Fact Sheet on

MERCURY EMISSIONS

- Mercury is emitted to the environment by human activities, travels long distances, accumulates through the food chain and damages human health and biodiversity.
- In addition to the mercury intentionally used in consumer products and economic activities, mercury contained in fossil fuels and metal ores is emitted unintentionally through combustion and smelting.



- Every year, about **two thousand tonnes of mercury** is emitted into the atmosphere.
- **Coal burning** is responsible for about **21%** of the estimated 2015 mercury emissions. The transition away from fossil fuels, as agreed at the Climate COP-28 in 2024, also contributes to reducing mercury.
- **Non-ferrous metals production** and **cement production** are responsible for **14%** and **10%** of the global mercury emissions respectively. Mercury emissions from **waste incineration** are estimated as less than **1%** of the global total. However, mercury may be emitted to the environment through open burning or other inappropriate waste management practices.
- Emissions associated with **artisanal and small-scale gold mining** account for almost **38%** of the global total.
- **The atmospheric concentration** of mercury is **450%** higher than the natural level as a result of current and historical human activities. Reductions in mercury emissions may take time to show up as declines in atmospheric, ocean and biotic concentrations.

UN environment programme
MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

WHAT THE CONVENTION SAYS

Article 8 of the Minamata Convention addresses emissions of mercury and mercury compounds to the atmosphere and establishes the commitment of all Parties to controlling and, where feasible, reducing these emissions.

Article 8 specifically covers emissions from the point sources listed in **Annex D**, which are:

- Coal-fired power plants.
- Coal-fired industrial boilers.
- Smelting and roasting process used in the production of non-ferrous metals (i.e., lead, zinc, copper and industrial gold).
- Waste incineration facilities.
- Cement clinker production facilities.

WHAT WE DO

- The Convention establishes that Parties must **control mercury emissions** from relevant sources.
- Parties are responsible for **preparing national inventories** of mercury emissions following the guidance adopted by the COP.
- Parties have different obligations for new and existing sources. Each Party must make sure that **best available techniques and best environmental practices (BAT/BEP) are implemented** for new facilities no more than five years after the Convention entered into force for the Party.
- For facilities that already existed when the Convention entered into force for a Party, the Party must **take measures outlined** in the Convention text **in no more than ten years**.
- The Conference of the Parties adopted guidance on BAT/BEP and inventory development. Parties are encouraged to **share information on their experiences** in using the guidance at the Conference of the Parties.

REFERENCES

- Minamata Convention text and annexes
- Global Mercury Assessment 2018
- Global Mercury Assessment 2018 – Key Findings
- Guidance on Best Available Techniques and Best Environmental Practices
- Mercury Inventory Toolkit
- Guidance on the methodology for preparing inventories of emissions pursuant to Article 8 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury
- Coal Partnership Area

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty that helps countries to control, reduce and eliminate mercury across all its life-stages with the objective to protect human health and the environment.

It is named after the bay in Japan where, in the mid-20th century, mercury-tainted industrial wastewater poisoned thousands of people, leading to severe health damage that became known as the “Minamata disease”. Since it entered into force on 16 August 2017, Parties have been working together to control the mercury supply and trade, reduce the use, emissions and releases of mercury, raise public awareness, and build the necessary institutional capacity.

Minamata Convention website
https://minamataconvention.org