

Media Uses of TRI Data to Support Community Right-to-Know



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TRI: A Tool for Policy and Education*

October 24, 2023

Data Collection Approach

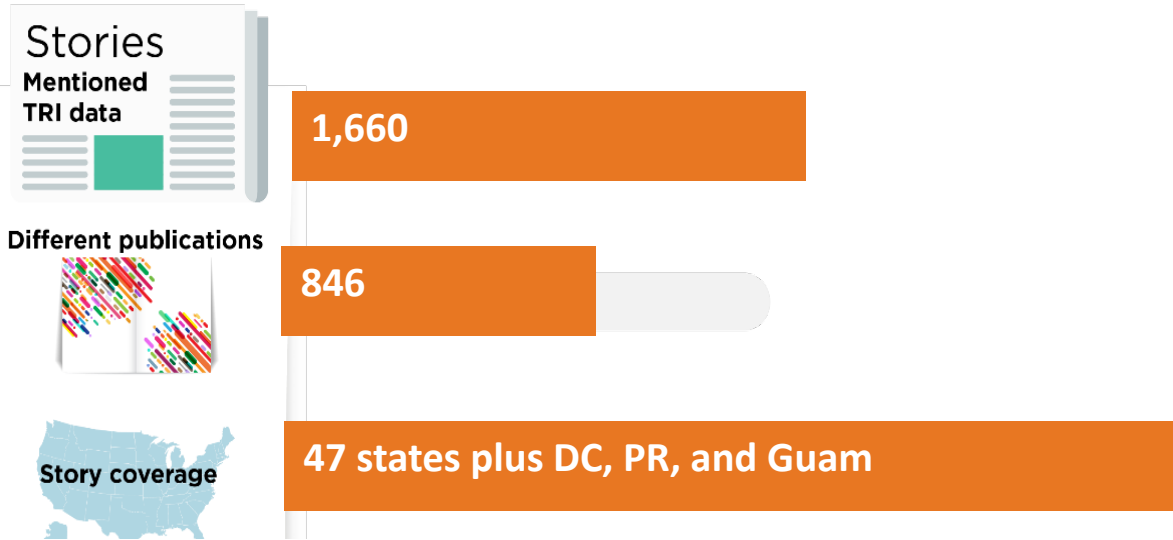


- Mentions of TRI in press, 2018-2023
 - Google News and Talkwalker alerts
 - Publication type, type of article, scope of article, stakeholder type, industry, main topic, tools used
 - Exclude peer-reviewed journals, reports, event announcements, EPA press releases
- Review monthly with TRI program

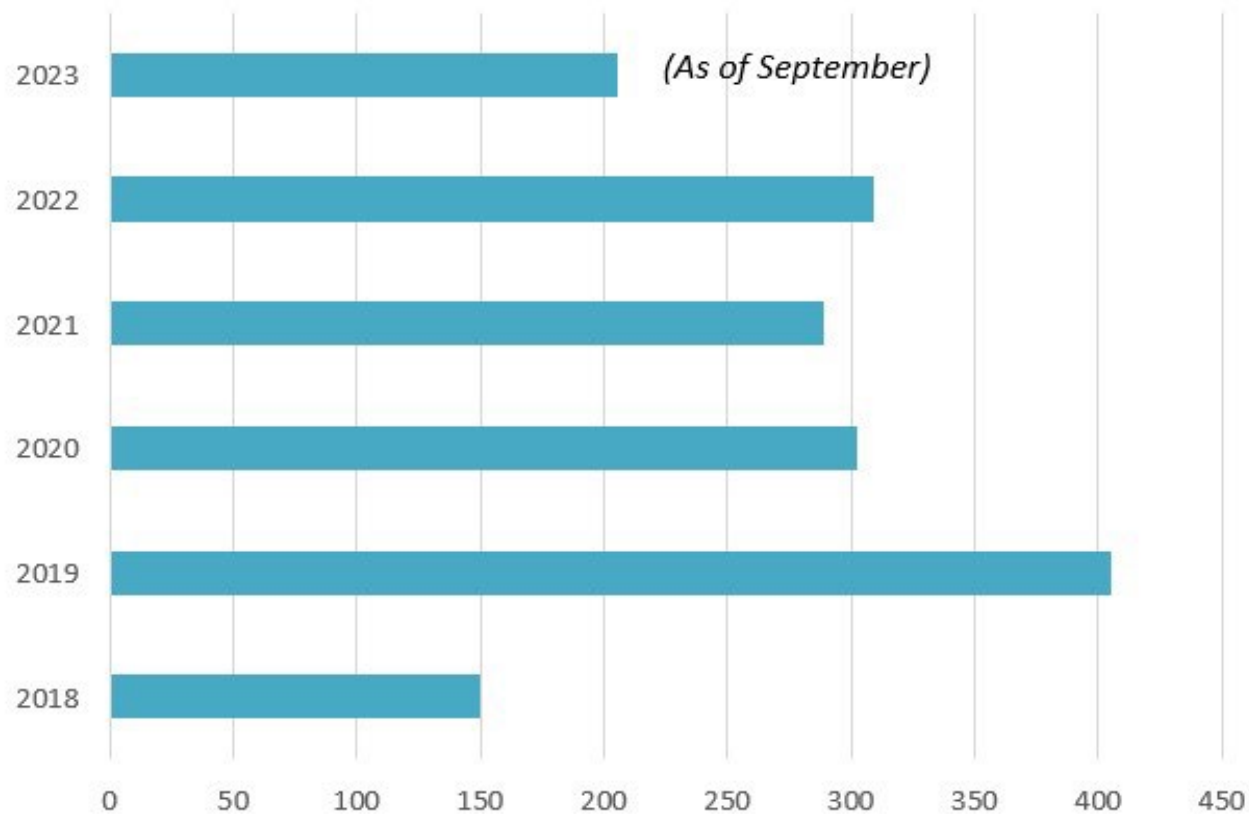
Media Mentions Overview



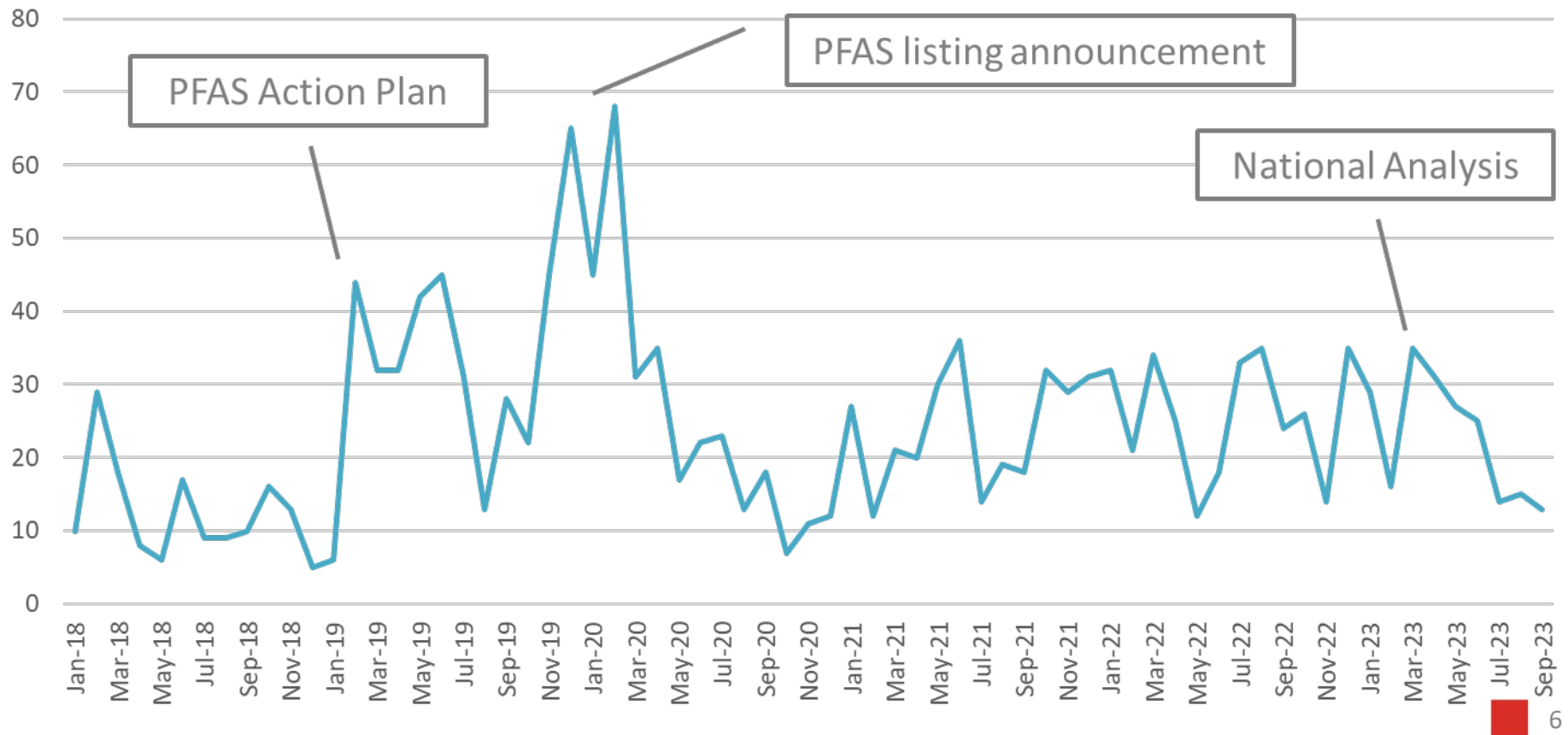
- From 2018 through September 2023:



Articles by Year



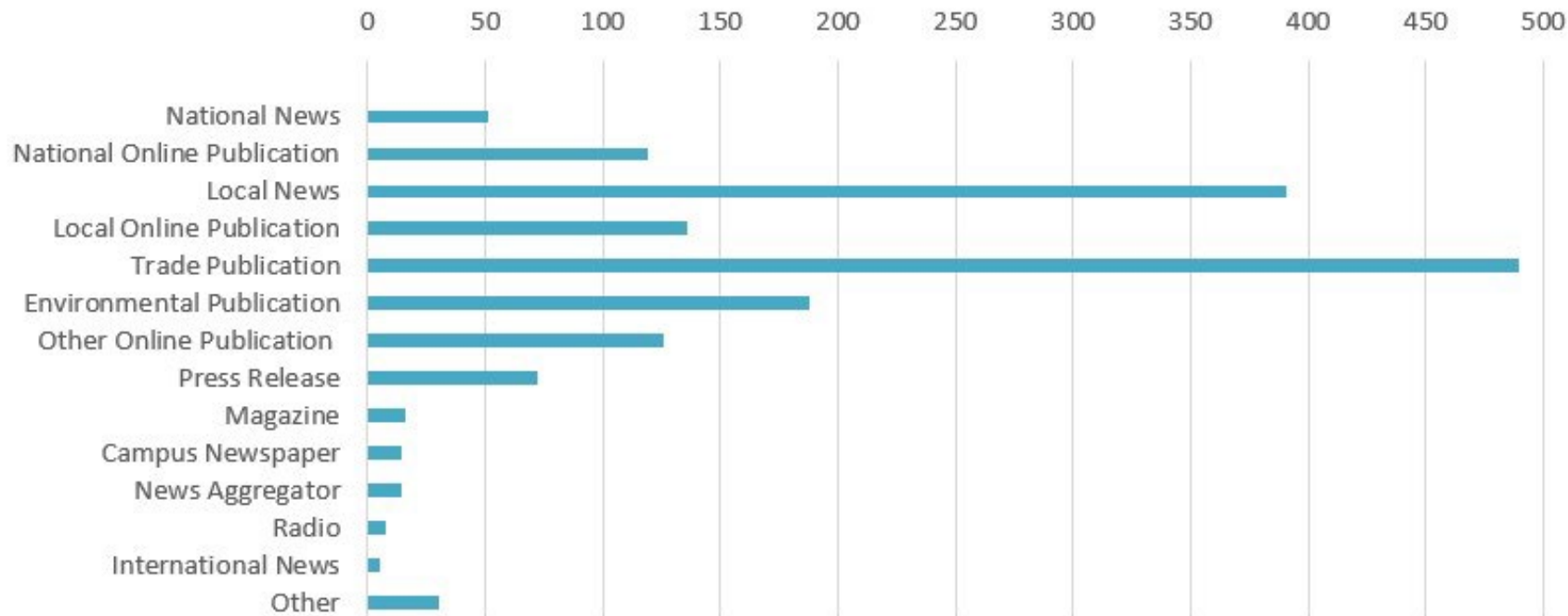
Media Mentions by Month



Scope of Articles



Types of Publications

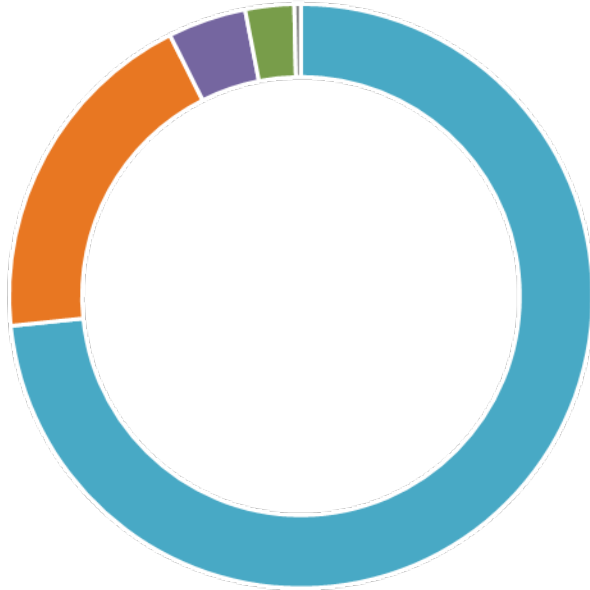


Local Articles



- 80% of articles in local publications mention/discuss TRI at the local/state/regional level.
- Many report on specific facilities in the area or the releases as reported in the National Analysis.
- For some TRI data were used to demonstrate the need for environmental improvements.
- Others mentioned TRI in stories about national PFAS legislation or local PFAS issues.

Types of Articles



73% of articles were traditional news stories

19% were blog posts from environmental and trade organizations

■ News Story ■ Blog ■ Press Release ■ Opinion ■ Other

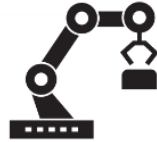
Top Industries & Themes



Mining



Manufacturing



Utilities



Hazardous Waste



Top Themes



Toxics and
Pollution



Environmental
Justice



Reporting,
Compliance, and
Enforcement



Coal



Heavy
Metals



PFAS

Media Mentions Examples



The New York Times

Floods Are Getting Worse, and 2,500 Chemical Sites Lie in the Water's Path

By HIROKO TABUCHI, NADIA POPOVICH, BLACKI MIGLIOZZI and ANDREW W. LEHREN FEB. 6, 2018

The Times analysis looked at sites listed in the federal [Toxic Release Inventory](#), which covers more than 21,600 facilities across the country that handle [large amounts of toxic chemicals harmful to health or the environment](#).

Of those sites, more than 1,400 were in locations the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) considers to have a high risk of flooding. An additional 1,100 sites were in areas of moderate risk. Other industrial complexes lie just outside these defined flood-risk zones, obscuring their vulnerability as flood patterns shift and expand.

Shreveport Times

75 percent improvement in 30 years is a win for Louisiana communities

Greg Bowser Special to The Times

Published 10:46 a.m. CT Nov. 27, 2019

In the last 30 years, chemical facilities operating in Louisiana have cut air emissions by 75 percent. Once inconceivable, this accomplishment is now a reality.

SOUTH SIDE WEEKLY

The Smell Behind the School

by Elena Bruess
May 12, 2020

Nelson rented an air monitor, funded through the UIC program, to analyze the area around the high school for a week. It was hard to decipher exactly what her results meant, but according to the [U.S. EPA Toxic Release Inventory](#), certain chemicals released by BWAY such as [glycol ethers](#), [toluene](#), and [ethylbenzene](#) could cause neurological or even carcinogenic issues. [The amount of chemical waste released into the air by the corporation in 2018 came to 52,579 pounds.](#)

Conclusions & Opportunities



- Number and breadth of mentions indicates press is a key information intermediary
- Opportunities:
 - Build relationships with journalists
 - Misunderstandings of TRI
 - Amplify TRI as a data resource and demonstrate its use at the community level
 - Data use cases
- Could expand analysis to social listening or use of media tracking platform

Recent Resources for the Press

TRI for the Press

The Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) provides more than 30 years of multimedia (air, water, land) industrial toxic chemical management data. Annual data collection and periodic data refreshes make the TRI one of EPA's most current datasets.

On this page:

- [Tips for using the data](#)
- [Choose the best TRI tool](#)
- [Important considerations](#)
- [Helpful resources](#)

Tips for Using the Data

- **Browse the TRI [glossary](#)** to familiarize yourself with the most common TRI terms.
- **Review** the release details when looking at specific chemical or facility data. Not all releases are equally likely to result in the exposure of nearby populations. For example, in general, people are more likely to be exposed to chemicals released into the air than to chemicals in water disposed of in a secure landfill.
- **Consider** the time of year and the name of the online tool or webpage from which you accessed the data when communicating with EPA and the public. The dataset is updated multiple times during the year, and not all the online TRI tools are updated each time.
 - For example, new data are published each July, and from mid-July until October, these new data are considered "preliminary" and are only available in the Envirofacts TRI search tool and in downloadable data files. In October, the complete, quality-checked dataset is available in most of the online TRI tools. See [Current Status and Planned Updates of TRI Tools](#) for details.
- **Remember** that the TRI contains a lot of information, not all of which may be relevant to you or useful for your purposes. Contact press@epa.gov, and you will be directed to TRI Program staff that can help you find the best tool and identify relevant data.

Factors to Consider When Using Toxics Release Inventory Data

Revised 2022

What is the Toxics Release Inventory?

EPA's **Toxics Release Inventory (TRI)** contains data on certain toxic chemicals that are manufactured, processed, otherwise used, and/or managed at thousands of facilities—including federal facilities—throughout the United States and its territories. TRI data reflect, among other things, quantities of chemicals managed by facilities as waste, including those quantities released into the environment, treated, burned for energy, recycled, and transferred from one facility to another for release or further management. The TRI also has information on how facilities are working to reduce or prevent formation of chemical wastes (referred to as "pollution prevention (P2)" and "source reduction").

The TRI is a valuable source of information that supports environmental and human health protection. It is widely used by researchers, community members, government agencies, companies and for many purposes, including:

- identifying the locations and quantities of chemical releases to air, water and land, and transfers of chemical waste sent off site to other facilities;
- learning about a facility's practices for managing toxic chemical wastes;
- identifying potential environmental concerns that may warrant further investigation;
- measuring industry progress toward improving environmental performance; and
- helping companies learn from each other's best practices for reducing toxic chemical use and the amount of chemical waste being managed.

TRI DOES...

- ✓ empower the public with information about how certain chemicals are managed.
- ✓ include information on chemical releases to air, water, land, other waste management activities, and source reduction practices at U.S. facilities.
- ✓ provide a starting point for evaluating potential impacts to human health and the environment.

TRI DOES NOT...

- ✗ cover all chemicals, facilities, or types of pollution (such as bacterial contamination).
- ✗ provide real-time monitoring data.
- ✗ require facilities to reduce releases.
- ✗ provide all information necessary to determine the health risks associated with chemical releases.

The rest of this document gives an overview of factors that should be considered to use TRI data appropriately and directs interested readers to other reference sources. For examples of how TRI data can be used, please see [The Toxics Release Inventory in Action](#).

Latest TRI Data Can Charge Up Local Stories, Including on PFAS

April 5, 2023

SEJ Reporter's Toolbox

Releases by Chemical and Year

Year	Total Releases (Approximate)
2012	4,500,000,000
2013	4,200,000,000
2014	4,000,000,000
2015	3,800,000,000
2016	3,600,000,000
2017	3,400,000,000
2018	3,200,000,000
2019	3,000,000,000
2020	2,800,000,000
2021	2,600,000,000

A chart from the Toxics Release Inventory tracker showing releases by chemical for the last 10 years. SOURCE: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website.

SEJ Reporter's Toolbox: Latest TRI Data Can Charge Up Local Stories, Including on PFAS
By Joseph A. Davis

Toxic substances near you? There's an app for that. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has just released the latest full Toxics Release Inventory, or TRI.

As every year, it can spark important stories. But this year is different—partly because the chemical news is different. The data in the latest TRI are from reporting year 2021. That was the first year that toxic PFAS "forever" chemicals were included in the survey.



Benefits to EPA

- Help EPA tailor TRI materials, such as webpages and training, to better meet users' needs
- Potentially inform EPA's regulatory and programmatic decisions

Benefits to Other TRI Data Users

- Offer ideas of how TRI data can be used that others can model
- Spark ideas for new applications of TRI data
- Share best practices for working with TRI data

Benefits to You

- Increase visibility of your research or project that uses TRI data
- Potentially expand networking opportunities with other TRI data practitioners



What's Next for the TRI Program?



- Promote the 'Share your TRI Data Uses' webpage: www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program/how-are-you-using-tri
- Continue to build out the 'Catalog of Applied TRI Data Uses'
- Create a TRI data "community of practice"
- Continue to analyze reported data uses to better support researchers and others using TRI

For Discussion:

- What else we can do with media metrics to better support the press?
- How can TRI increase use of the data by the media?





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