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### The top ten world's worst pollution problems report

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The Blacksmith Institute, in collaboration with Green Cross Switzerland, recently released a report titled *The World's Worst Pollution Problems*. The top ten problems, detailed in this report, include, in first place, artisanal gold mining followed in second place by contaminated surface water. Then, ranked in fourth place were industrial mining activities, followed by, in sixth and seventh places; metals smelting and processing, and radioactive waste and uranium mining, respectively.

There were three primary factors taken into consideration when deciding the ranking. The institute first determines the severity or toxicity of the pollutant. More innocuous contaminants receive a lower ranking, while more dangerous substances, say mercury or lead, garner a higher ranking. Secondly, it evaluates the pathway, or how the pollutant is transferred to the population. People absorb contaminants through direct inhalation, by drinking contaminated water, by inhaling airborne dust, by bathing in contaminated water, by eating contaminated foodstuffs, or through direct skin contact. The more direct, the less diluted and therefore more dangerous the pathway, the higher the ranking the problem receives. Finally, it evaluates the population. Here, population refers to the overall number affected by the pollutant globally. Those problems affecting the most people are ranked highest in this category.

This top ten is drawn from a list of 21 severe pollution problems, with the release being covered in publications such as; *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Scientific American* amongst others. They were compiled based on a variety of criteria. Foremost among these was the impact of pollution on human health. This report aims at giving an overview of the

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