

LET'S FIX FASHION

GREEN-SCHOOLS LET'S FIX FASHION!

We all love to buy clothes, to feel good in a new pair of jeans that fit you just right or to have the latest pair of trainers. Who doesn't love to watch a shopping haul on YouTube!

But listen, we need to get serious about the fast fashion industry and its impact on people and the planet. We need to raise our voices on this important issue! We need to act with our wallets! Join us this school year to learn more about what you can do to take action. Here are some facts and figures about the fashion industry to get you started.

FACTS FROM IRELAND

- In Ireland, the current collection pathways for used clothes (textiles) include donations in-store to charity shops donations to clothing banks, door to door bag drops, collections in communities / schools and collections through commercial retailer take back schemes.
- Approximately 71,700 tonnes textiles are discarded every year via recycling and residual waste bins at household level.
- Of the textiles collected by charity shops, about half is sold locally through charity shops for reuse. The remainder (unusable / unsaleable stock) is sent as rag to commercial textile recyclers, mainly in Northern Ireland, which are then mainly exported. The textiles collected by commercial recyclers are primarily exported. There is a limited amount of upcycling taking place through numerous small-scale projects.
- We discard around 110,000 tonnes of textiles as waste every year and nearly all are processed via waste-to-energy plants or landfill. Of these textiles around 64,000 tonnes are discarded as household waste via kerbside collection and the majority are clothing (42,000 tonnes). This shows that the household bin is the single largest source of textiles waste.
- Around 57,000 tonnes of textiles every year are collected separately through commercial textile banks and collections (24%) and direct donations to charity shops (10%). Of these collected textiles around 44,500 tonnes are sold for reuse - 6% are sold for reuse within Ireland and 21% are exported overseas. Vintage and online reselling of clothes is around 1,500 tonnes each year. In terms of recycling, around 15,000 tonnes of collected textiles each year go for recycling as rags, fibre, etc.

Textiles | Environmental Protection Agency (epa.ie)



What is 'Fast Fashion'?

'Fast fashion' is the term used to describe the mass production of cheap, poor-quality clothing. These cheaply made, trendy pieces have resulted in overwhelming amounts of consumption, and waste. All the elements of fast fashion—trend replication, rapid production, low quality, competitive pricing—add up to having a detrimental impact on the planet and the people involved in garment production.



THE PROBLEMS WITH

FAST FASHION

ARE TWOFOLD: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL

ENVIRONMENTAL



Waste: The fashion industry creates over 92 million tonnes of waste globally, much of which ends up in landfill or is burnt.



Water: The fashion industry is the 2nd largest consumer of water and is responsible for 20% of global clean water pollution. The water footprint network calculates that approx. 2500 litres of water are required to produce just one cotton shirt. A pair of jeans require 7,000-10,000 litres.

Case-Study: The Aral Sea in Central Asia has shrunk to just 10 per cent of its former volume, largely due to irrigation for cotton farming.



Energy: Fibre production, spinning, weaving, dyeing and finishing fabrics, as well as clothing manufacture, and transport, all consume high levels of energy. It is estimated the fashion industry produces up to 10% of global CO2 emissions. By 2030, on current trends, emissions from production are set to rise 60 per cent, reaching an estimated 2.8 billion tonnes of CO2.



Pollution: Toxic chemicals from pesticides and insecticides used in cotton production during the growing process, as well as the 8,000-plus different chemicals used to dye, manufacture, and finish the garments, all release huge amounts of discharge into fresh and oceanic waterways. Synthetics like polyester now account for 70% of all materials. It is derived from fossil fuels, contributes to global warming, and can shed microfibres that add to the increasing levels of plastic in our oceans when it's put through the wash. 1,900 fibres can be released from a typical garment.



Biodiversity: The most damaging stage of the creation of a garment is at the raw material extraction stage. More than 150 million trees are chopped down each year to make certain fabrics like viscose, 30% of which come from endangered forests. Animals are also impacted by fast fashion, by the toxic dyes that are released in waterways and the microfibres that are often ingested by ocean life. When animal products such as leather and fur are used, animal welfare is put at risk.

SOCIAL



Poor working conditions: The Global Slavery Index estimates that 49.6 million people are living in modern slavery or forced labour. Many of those people are working in the supply chains of well-known fast fashion online and high-street retailers

Case study: These poor working conditions may be a lot closer to home than you think. Leicester, in the UK, is home to a hub of approximately 1,500 factories supplying the well known online fast fashion retailers. Investigations showed many of these factories had locked fire doors, filthy toilets, no clean drinking water and deplorable conditions, all while paying their workers as little as £3-£4 an hour.



Living wage: Most of the world's garments are made in Asia and most of the workers who make the clothes are not paid enough to live. Majority of the workers are women. More than 80% of the workforce in Cambodia garment industry are women aged 18-35.



Health and Safety: There are many potential hazards when working in the garment industry, e.g., carrying heavy cotton loads, inhalation of dust or fibers, exposure to harmful chemicals, excessive noise and heat. Many factory buildings fail to adhere to safety regulations. In April 2013 1,134 Bangladeshi garment workers were killed in a factory fire.



Harassment and Abuse: This often goes unreported or is not addressed because workers, especially women, feel unable to speak up for fear of further harassment. In Bangladesh, 68 per cent of women garment workers in one survey reported verbal harassment.