

# The Water Footprint of our Clothes

Water is one of the most important resources on our planet, playing a vital role to ensure that people, animals and plants can survive. We are often not aware of the amount of water we are **actually** consuming, and how much of it is needed to manufacture products we use on a daily basis.

**Virtual water** is the quantity of water that is used indirectly for producing goods and services. It refers to “hidden” water which is used over the different stages of manufacturing and during the transport of products, from agriculture to industry, right up to the end consumer.

The **water footprint** is an indicator of the total water used by a country, region, or person, which takes into account both direct and indirect consumption of water.

It is comprised of three main components: green, blue, and grey water footprints.



The blue water footprint covers surface and groundwater which is used in the manufacturing of goods and to provide services



The green water footprint relates to rainwater used in agriculture



The grey footprint relates to contaminated water which results from manufacturing

The average water consumption in the Republic of Ireland is approximately **133 litres per person per day** (Uisce Éireann). This includes drinking water and service water, e.g. used for washing and showering – in this case, we are dealing with our **blue water footprint**. However, the average **virtual water footprint** for one person in the Republic of Ireland is considerably higher, coming in at around **3,600 litres per person per day** (Water Footprint Network). The majority of this is due to the consumption of food and drinks, as well as due to using energy and materials.

# Guess the Water Footprint of our Clothes

**A pair of jeans**

**One pair of underwear**

**One T-shirt**

**One hoodie or sweatshirt**

**One pair of socks**

**One kilogram of raw cotton**

**One kilogram of polyester fiber**



# Answer sheet

## Activity 1



7,250 litres of water to produce one pair of jeans

3,350 litres of water to produce one hoodie or sweatshirt

1,500 litres of water to produce one shirt

850 litres of water to produce one pair of pants or boxers

375 litres of water to produce one pair of socks

7,000 - 29,000 litres of water to produce one kilogram of raw cotton

100 – 150 litres of water to produce one kilogram of polyester

# Answer sheet

## Activity 2

Fashion is responsible for 10% of all greenhouse gas emissions

70% of all clothes in the world are made of plastic

The textile industry is responsible for 35% of microplastic pollution in the oceans

20% of industrial water pollution globally comes from the treatment and dyeing of textiles

Cotton is used in 60% of all U.S produced retail clothes and home furnishings

# Guess the environmental impact of our clothes

Aviation is responsible for 2% of all greenhouse gas emissions.  
What percentage is the Fashion industry responsible for?

What percentage of all clothes in the world is made of plastic?

What percentage of microplastics in our ocean is the textile industry responsible for?

What percentage of industrial water pollution globally is due to the treatment and dyeing of clothes?

What percentage of clothing is made from cotton?