

Fashion Play

A report exploring children's clothing consumption in Europe and the innovative technology that could help tackle it.



November 2025

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Introduction

Fashion offers every age a creative avenue for self-expression, but we all have a part to play in making better choices when it comes to what we buy and how we get rid of it when we're done. While parents are thinking more sustainably about their own clothes, across Europe, 812.6 million items of kids' clothing are thrown into landfill each year.

More than ten years ago Epson challenged its teams to find a new way to close the resource loop for printed paper. The result was PaperLab, the world's first in-office recycler that uses Dry Fiber Technology to securely turn wastepaper into new sheets, using virtually no water at all.

In an exciting step forward for sustainable innovation, Epson has now applied this technology to textiles.

Each year millions of tonnes of clothes are produced, worn, and thrown away. Every second, the equivalent of a rubbish truckload of clothes is burnt or buried in landfill. This approach is not only environmentally unstable, but also economically fragile. Every discarded garment represents financial value lost to both the producer and the end-consumer.

To highlight the extent of the issue, Epson commissioned pan-European research in October 2025 to explore our throwaway culture in the context of children's clothing.

The findings reveal not only the size of the problem – across Europe we discard 812.6 million items of kids' clothing every single year – but also a divide in how adults buy and dispose of their own clothes versus their children's.

While the research serves as a reminder of the simple actions we can take – from reducing the amount we buy and prioritising pre-loved – it also reinforces the need for and importance of innovation like Dry Fiber Technology in helping to tackle the global landfill crisis.

At Epson we will continue to challenge ourselves to find new solutions to world problems and hope this report will encourage others to do the same.

Circular fashion technology

Epson's innovative technologies are transforming textile and fashion production, offering more sustainable solutions that reduce water consumption, minimise environmental impact, and offer the potential to make fashion circularity a reality.

Dry Fiber Technology

For over 80 years, Epson has been at the forefront of printing innovation. Best known for home and office printing solutions, Epson has pioneered a water-free paper and textile re-fibration process known as Dry Fiber Technology (DFT). Initially used for recycling office paper, DFT has now been adapted to produce rolls of printable non-woven fabric from used garments without the need for water. Dry Fiber Technology is a significant innovation and opportunity for the fashion industry because it offers a water-free defibration process that makes fashion circularity a reality.

Monna Lisa

Epson's Monna Lisa digital textile printing technology uses more sustainable pigment inks and can reduce water consumption in the colour printing stage of clothing production by up to 97%¹. It also reduces dye contamination and minimises textile waste.

Research methodology

The research was conducted by 3GEM, among a sample of 7,000 European parents (1,000 UK, France, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Germany, Poland) aged 18+ who have children aged 1-16 years old. The data was collected between 16 – 22 October 2025.

¹ This figure relates to the potential water saving capabilities of the Monna Lisa 13000 (ML-13000) with pigment inks. The source of the 97% comes from the Fuluhashi Environmental Institute, 2024 "Report on Direct Water Input in Digital Textile Printing."

Research findings

Across the seven countries surveyed (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Poland and the United Kingdom), a staggering 813 million pieces of children's clothing are thrown away every single year - equivalent to 918 times the height of Mount Everest if stacked up at 1cm per item.

The number of items of children's clothing binned every year	
UK	216 million items of clothing
Germany	196.7 million items of clothing
France	118.8 million items of clothing
Spain	102 million items of clothing
Italy	101.8 million items of clothing
Poland	75.9 million items of clothing
Portugal	17 million items of clothing

Per population: Based on the population size in each country of children aged 0-16 (Eurostat)

Disposing of children's clothing

The average number of garments a family has binned, sold or sent to charity per child in the past year across countries

Binned								
	Europe	UK	Germany	France	Italy	Spain	Poland	Portugal
T-shirts	1.3	1.6	1.4	1	1.4	1.6	1.2	1.1
Jumpers	0.8	1	1	0.5	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.7
Pairs of trousers or jeans	0.8	1.1	1.1	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.6
Fancy dress	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2
Themed or special occasion outfits	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2
Party outfits	0.3	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2
Pairs of shoes	1.1	1.3	1.1	0.9	1	1.1	0.9	1.1
School uniform items	0.4	1.2	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.2
Pants / knickers	2.2	1.9	2.5	1.8	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.4
Pairs of socks	2.3	2.1	2.9	1.9	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.4

Continued...

Repurposed								
	Europe	UK	Germany	France	Italy	Spain	Poland	Portugal
T-shirts	2.7	2.6	2.9	2.4	2.4	2.1	2.6	4.1
Jumpers	2	1.8	2.3	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.8	3.2
Pairs of trousers or jeans	1.8	2	2	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.6	2.6
Fancy dress	0.6	1.3	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.6
Themed or special occasion outfits	0.7	1.3	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.7
Party outfits	0.7	1.3	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.6
Pairs of shoes	1.3	1.9	1.3	0.9	1	0.9	1.3	2
School uniform items	0.5	1.5	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5
Pants / knickers	0.7	1.3	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8
Pairs of socks	1	1.4	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.2

Binned or repurposed (combined and rounded to the nearest number)								
	Europe	UK	Germany	France	Italy	Spain	Poland	Portugal
T-shirts	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	5
Jumpers	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	4
Pairs of trousers or jeans	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
Fancy dress	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Themed or special occasion outfits	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Party outfits	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pairs of shoes	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3
School uniform items	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	1
Pants / knickers	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Pairs of socks	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4

European findings

812.6 million items of kids clothing are put into bins each year. Equivalent to 918 times the height of Mount Everest if stacked up at 1cm per item

52% of parents actively consider more sustainable clothes for themselves, while 35% admit to getting rid of their children's clothes in the quickest and easiest way possible

Children are each bought 64 items of clothing every year, totalling 4.03 billion across all markets surveyed

13 items of children's clothing are thrown away every year

41% say their kids have unworn items with tags still attached sitting in their wardrobes

54% have thrown away or repurposed clothes that have never been worn

Parents spend €746 a year on each child's wardrobe, with many admitting to overbuying

The average item of clothing is worn 27 times

6% of parents buy new clothes for their child every week

27% of parents admit to throwing kids' clothing in the bin because of lack of time

55% of parents aren't aware that most children's clothing contains synthetic fibres that can take up to 450 years to decompose

Children are bought 6 items of clothing from friends and family during the Christmas period – 2 (33%) of which won't ever be worn



Market comparisons

Notable country comparisons

The UK bins the most children's clothing – 216 million items each year, compared to 17 million in Portugal

The UK buys the most clothes for children – 90 items per child each year, compared to 49 in France, a difference of 84%

UK parents are most likely to throw clothes away due to lack of time – 35% compared to 22% in Portugal

Spanish parents are the least aware of clothing's synthetic fibres – 62% unaware compared to 50% in Germany and Poland

UK parents are most likely to buy new clothes weekly – 12% compared to 3% in France

Italian parents spend the most per child a year – €909 compared to €323.90 in Portugal

Portuguese and Spanish children's clothes last the longest – 30 wears compared to 20 in the UK

French parents throw away the fewest items – 9 per child compared to 17 in the UK





UK

216 million items of kids clothing are put into bins each year in the UK. Equivalent to 244 times the height of Mount Everest if stacked up at 1cm per item

66% of parents actively consider more sustainable clothes for themselves

47% admit to getting rid of their children's clothes in the quickest and easiest way possible

The UK throws away 17 items of children's clothing every year

Children in the UK are each bought 90 items of clothing every year. Totalling 1.1 billion nationwide

59% say their children have unworn items with tags still attached sitting in their wardrobes

57% have thrown away or repurposed clothes that have never been worn

Parents spend £794.60 a year on each child's wardrobe, with many admitting to overbuying

12% of parents buy new clothes for their child every week

The average item of children's clothing is worn 20 times

35% of parents admit to throwing kids' clothing in the bin because of lack of time

61% of parents aren't aware that most children's clothing contains synthetic fibres that can take up to 450 years to decompose



France

118.8 million items of kids clothing are put into bins each year in France. Equivalent to 134 times the height of Mount Everest if stacked up at 1cm per item

48% of parents actively consider more sustainable clothes for themselves

31% admit to getting rid of their children's clothes in the quickest and easiest way possible

The French throw away 9 items of children's clothing every year

Children in France are each bought 49 items of clothing every year. Totalling 654 million nationwide

30% say their children have unworn items with tags still attached sitting in their wardrobes

50% have thrown away or repurposed clothes that have never been worn

Parents spend €687 a year on each child's wardrobe, with many admitting to overbuying

3% of parents buy new clothes for their child every week

The average item of children's clothing is worn 28 times

24% of parents admit to throwing kids' clothing in the bin because of lack of time

54% of parents aren't aware that most children's clothing contains synthetic fibres that can take up to 450 years to decompose

Children are bought 5 items of clothing from friends and family during the Christmas period. 1 (20%) of which won't ever be worn

Germany

196.7 million items of kids clothing are put into bins each year in Germany. Equivalent to 222 times the height of Mount Everest if stacked up at 1cm per item

45% of parents actively consider more sustainable clothes for themselves

31% admit to getting rid of their children's clothes in the quickest and easiest way possible

Germans throw away 15 items of children's clothing every year

Children in Germany are each bought 62 items of clothing every year. Totalling 818.5 million nationwide

39% say their children have unworn items with tags still attached sitting in their wardrobes

57% have thrown away or repurposed clothes that have never been worn

Parents spend €853.60 a year on each child's wardrobe, with many admitting to overbuying

6% of parents buy new clothes for their child every week

The average item of children's clothing is worn 27 times

28% of parents admit to throwing kids' clothing in the bin because of lack of time

50% of parents aren't aware that most children's clothing contains synthetic fibres that can take up to 450 years to decompose

Children are bought 6 items of clothing from friends and family during the Christmas period. 2 (33%) of which won't ever be worn



Italy

101.8 million items of kids clothing are put into bins each year in Italy. Equivalent to 115 times the height of Mount Everest if stacked up at 1cm per item

51% of parents actively consider more sustainable clothes for themselves

33% admit to getting rid of their children's clothes in the quickest and easiest way possible

Italians throw away 12 items of children's clothing every year

Children in Italy are each bought 60 items of clothing every year. Totalling 500.8 million nationwide

37% say their children have unworn items with tags still attached sitting in their wardrobes

57% have thrown away or repurposed clothes that have never been worn

Parents spend €909 a year on each child's wardrobe, with many admitting to overbuying

6% of parents buy new clothes for their child every week

The average item of children's clothing is worn 25 times

23% of parents admit to throwing kids' clothing in the bin because of lack of time

52% of parents aren't aware that most children's clothing contains synthetic fibres that can take up to 450 years to decompose

Children are bought 6 items of clothing from friends and family during the Christmas period. 1 (17%) of which won't ever be worn



Poland

75.9 million items of kids clothing are put into bins each year in Poland. Equivalent to 86 times the height of Mount Everest if stacked up at 1cm per item

51% of parents actively consider more sustainable clothes for themselves

37% admit to getting rid of their children's clothes in the quickest and easiest way possible

The Poles throw away 12 items of children's clothing every year

Children in Poland are each bought 65 items of clothing every year. Totalling 411 million nationwide

43% say their children have unworn items with tags still attached sitting in their wardrobes

58% have thrown away or repurposed clothes that have never been worn

Parents spend €442 a year on each child's wardrobe, with many admitting to overbuying

6% of parents buy new clothes for their child every week

The average item of children's clothing is worn 28 times

28% of parents admit to throwing kids' clothing in the bin because of lack of time

50% of parents aren't aware that most children's clothing contains synthetic fibres that can take up to 450 years to decompose

Children are bought 6 items of clothing from friends and family during the Christmas period. 2 (33%) of which won't ever be worn



Spain

102 million items of kids clothing are put into bins each year in Spain. Equivalent to 115.3 times the height of Mount Everest if stacked up at 1cm per item

50% of parents actively consider more sustainable clothes for themselves

34% admit to getting rid of their children's clothes in the quickest and easiest way possible

The Spanish throw away 14 items of children's clothing every year

Children in Spain are each bought 58 items of clothing every year. Totalling 435 million nationwide

41% say their children have unworn items with tags still attached sitting in their wardrobes

47% have thrown away or repurposed clothes that have never been worn

Parents spend €786.20 a year on each child's wardrobe, with many admitting to overbuying

4% of parents buy new clothes for their child every week

The average item of children's clothing is worn 30 times

30% of parents admit to throwing kids' clothing in the bin because of lack of time

62% of parents aren't aware that most children's clothing contains synthetic fibres that can take up to 450 years to decompose

Children are bought 7 items of clothing from friends and family during the Christmas period. 2 (29%) of which won't ever be worn





Portugal

17 million items of kids clothing are put into bins each year in Portugal. Equivalent to 19 times the height of Mount Everest if stacked up at 1cm per item

56% of parents actively consider more sustainable clothes for themselves

31% admit to getting rid of their children's clothes in the quickest and easiest way possible

The Portuguese throw away 11 items of children's clothing every year

Children in Portugal are each bought 63 items of clothing every year. Totalling 99 million nationwide

41% say their children have unworn items with tags still attached sitting in their wardrobes

52% have thrown away or repurposed clothes that have never been worn

Parents spend €647.80 a year on each child's wardrobe, with many admitting to overbuying

4% of parents buy new clothes for their child every week

The average item of children's clothing is worn 30 times

22% of parents admit to throwing kids' clothing in the bin because of lack of time

59% of parents aren't aware that most children's clothing contains synthetic fibres that can take up to 450 years to decompose

Children are bought 7 items of clothing from friends and family during the Christmas period. 1 (14%) of which won't ever be worn

Want to know more?

This report provides a short summary of the findings but if you do want to learn more about textile waste and existing and emerging technology that could help tackle it, please contact:

Bruno Rost
PR Manager, Epson Europe
bruno.rost@epson.eu



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