

# Most Black Friday purchases soon end up as waste

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The retail bonanza set to begin today, Black Friday, is expected to see more than half of shoppers buying electronic goods and almost a third purchasing clothes.

But a new report says that up to 80 percent of items—and any plastic packaging they are wrapped in—will end up either in landfill, incineration or—at best—low quality recycling, often after a very short life.

Most of the resources they are made from will only get one use before being wasted.

A new report, *Building a Circular Economy*, was produced by charity and independent think tank Green Alliance as part of a partnership with the Resource Recovery from Waste program, based at Leeds' School of Civil Engineering.

The report, based on research by Professor Phil Purnell, Professor of Materials and Structures, and Research Impact Fellow in Circular Economy Dr. Anne Velenturf, finds:

Vast amounts of valuable resources are being lost to the economy. Some 80 percent of household plastics and textiles are landfilled or incinerated and nearly all electronic waste goes to low quality recycling when it enters the waste management system;

Eliminating this waste requires a major shift to different infrastructure: up to 80 percent less residual waste treatment infrastructure would be needed in a circular system for plastic, electronics and clothing. Instead, new business models, facilities and logistics would lower consumption and enable takeback, repair, remanufacture and reuse of products.

A circular economic system—where long-lasting repairable products are the norm and resources are maintained, reused or recycled back into high quality uses—is the way to avoid such unnecessary waste.

It would also avoid the environmental damage caused by such resource

wastage, from initial raw material extraction to end-of-life problems such as marine plastic pollution.

The country's current system is not set up to be circular, despite recent promises in the government's resources and waste strategy to "preserve our stock of material resources by minimizing [waste](#), promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy."

A circular system would involve better design, logistics and infrastructure for repair and reuse, a National Materials Datahub to map resource stocks and flows, and business models to help reduce unnecessary consumption.

Libby Peake, senior policy adviser on resources at Green Alliance, said: "Black Fridays could look very different in the future.

"They wouldn't need to be followed by buyers' remorse shortly after as low quality products are ditched. The next government needs to kick-start a resource revolution and change the system, starting with the infrastructure that enables a circular economy to thrive.

"It's not just good for the environment. People want high quality, long lasting, repairable goods."

Professor Purnell, who convenes the Resource Recovery from Waste program, added: "There's plenty of support for the idea of a circular economy, including from government departments and big high street names such as Apple and IKEA.

"However, by failing to invest in the right infrastructure that supports reduced resource use, we are perpetuating the linear economy. We urgently need to change focus.

"A high value circular economy could generate billions of pounds for the [economy](#), deliver half a million clean [green jobs](#), and be a huge opportunity to reduce carbon emissions."

**More information:** Resource Recovery from Waste: [rrfw.org.uk](http://rrfw.org.uk)

Green Alliance: [www.green-alliance.org.uk](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk)

Provided by University of Leeds

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