

Fashion industry's hidden environmental timebomb revealed

November 12 2020



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The devastating environmental impact of plastic clothing hangers has been revealed for the first time—with calls for the fashion industry to urgently address the issue.

Research by ethical fashion expert Dr. Alana James, of Northumbria University, has found that more than 954 million plastic garment hangers are used every year in the UK fashion industry.

Of these, 16% are used solely for transporting clothing from manufacturers to shops and are then discarded, drawing parallels with single-use items such as [plastic bottles](#), carrier bags and drinking straws.

However, while the environmental impact of these products has been recognized and addressed through cost implications, sustainable alternatives and [government policy](#), little has been known about the impact of plastic hangers until now.

Working with Fashion Consultant Emma Reed, Dr. James anonymously surveyed a wide variety of UK fashion businesses, from luxury brands to high street retailers, including e-commerce operations.

Commenting on the findings of their report *Hanger usage in the UK*, Dr. James said: "For nearly a century now fashion has had an unhealthy reliance on the use of plastic, with 65% of all garments currently produced being made from synthetic fibers. However, hangers remain a largely overlooked area of environmental impact in the industry, despite 60% of all clothing sold being associated with a plastic hanger."

The research, which was carried out in partnership with sustainable hanger brand Arch & Hook, also revealed that 60% of all clothes sold in the UK came with an associated plastic hanger, and that more than 82 million hangers are sent out with online clothing orders in the UK each year.

Dr. James, a Senior Lecturer in Fashion at Northumbria University, said: "More than two thirds of the [fashion](#) companies we interviewed were unaware what type of plastic or plastics their hangers were made from,

making it difficult or impossible to recycle them. While there has been a definite shift in awareness of the environmental impact of the [fashion industry](#) in recent years, the issue of plastic hangers seems to be one which has been largely ignored until now. Manufacturers, retailers and consumers all have a role to play in instigating change and we hope the results of this research will raise awareness of this problem and lead to alternative solutions."

Sjoerd Fauser is founder and CEO of Arch & Hook, which combines recycled and recyclable materials to create durable hangers, as well as coordinating hanger recollection operations.

He explains: "Our eye-opening report is just the tip of the iceberg. Data for worldwide hanger usage remains unavailable. We are determined to expand the research into other areas, in collaboration with more partners, to unveil the truth, create awareness and turn sustainability into a tangible action."

The 32-page report, "Hanger usage in the UK," researched the number of [plastic](#) hangers used throughout 2019 in the UK clothing market.

More information: Hanger usage in the UK. [northumbria-cdn.azureedge.net/ ... hanger-usage-uk_arch---hook.pdf?modified=20201112075850](https://northumbria-cdn.azureedge.net/.../hanger-usage-uk_arch---hook.pdf?modified=20201112075850)

Provided by Northumbria University

Citation: Fashion industry's hidden environmental timebomb revealed (2020, November 12) retrieved 20 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-11-fashion-industry-hidden-environmental-timebomb.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.