ukft®

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Mapping non-fashion textile flows

Advancing a circular textile economy in the UK

Foreword

I am delighted to present the ‘Advancing a Circular Textile Economy in the UK: Mapping Non-Fashion Textile Flows’ report.

This research has been conducted by the UK Fashion and Textile Association (UKFT) and University of Leeds with support of the UKRI (Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Innovate UK) as part of the Back to Baselines project.

This research issues a clear call to action: textile waste in the UK extends far beyond fashion alone and must be urgently addressed. Findings reveal that the total post-consumer/ industry textile flow is split roughly 50:50 between fashion and non-fashion items. This lays the groundwork for targeted policies and interventions that include non-fashion textile flows, essential for a true circular textile economy transition. Key sectors include hospitality, medical and healthcare, the public sector and the automotive sector, highlighting the critical role of multi-sector collaboration in this journey.

The findings identify a critical need to further invest in R&D solutions to improve the recyclability of non-fashion textiles and establish a national textile recycling infrastructure to manage them effectively.

Our commitment remains clear: to support the development of an innovative and commercially viable textile recycling system that supports both environmental and economic goals. We thank all those who contributed their time, expertise, and insights to this project.

Adam Mansell, CEO UKFT

Table of contents

Introduction

THE IMPORTANCE OF NON-FASHION TEXTILE FLOWS IN THE UK

The UK fashion and textile industry stands at a pivotal moment with the opportunity to expand its socio-economic impact and address major environmental challenges by embracing a circular textile economy.

The importance of the sector in the UK, contributing to £62 billion to the UK's GDP, reiterates its socio-economic relevance[1]. In parallel, the UK has historically exhibited high market, commercial and consumption activity, and it is currently classified as one of the highest consumption countries globally[2]. Consequently, the UK generates significant volumes of textile waste, difficult to quantify, given the lack of up-to-date, transparent and reliable data on UK textile flows beyond fashion.

A high proportion of textile waste ends up in the residual waste stream, with data from waste management companies indicating that textiles constitute between 7.5% and 10% of their overall waste composition[3]. Meanwhile, the UK is classified as one of the main textile waste export countries globally[4].

The UK is failing to maximise resource efficiency and the socio-economic value of its domestic resource base. Meanwhile, the development of a National Textile Recycling Hub capable of processing 150,000 tonnes of textile waste alone could contribute to £53 million in GDP per year and support 720 jobs nationwide[5].

Whilst the sector is demonstrating appetite for a circular textiles economy transition, the majority of industry-wide initiatives have focused on fashion (clothing, footwear and accessories), or apparel or clothing alone[6, 7]. This approach typically assigns responsibility primarily to households[8], overlooking other textile flow streams and key stakeholders, (such as commercial and industrial sectors) that are also highly polluting and require circular solutions. As a result, industry statistics and data on textile waste, particularly in the UK, are focused on fashion. Failure to address non-fashion streams undermines the achievement of a holistic and just circular textiles economy.

Meanwhile, other sectors in the UK (e.g. the hospitality or healthcare) have their own ambitions of reducing environmental impact, whereby circular textiles can contribute to reduce GHG emissions and meet environmental impact reduction goals[9].

In fact, UK trade data reveals that fashion products only represent a 50% of textile import value, and a 40% of textile export value[10], which underscores the significance of targeting textiles beyond fashion.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this project was to enhance the understanding of non-fashion textile flows in the UK to support informed decision-making in the circular textiles economy transition.

The objectives were as follows:

- To identify, categorise and define the primary non-fashion textile flows in the UK, including associated product categories.
- To quantify the scale and nature of these flows in the UK using available waste and trade data.
- To examine key barriers and opportunities and provide evidence-based recommendations that can support a circular economy transition for non-fashion textiles.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

For this project, UKFT, together with University of Leeds, conducted extensive primary and secondary research to map non-fashion textile flows in the UK. In terms of primary research, the project partners engaged with cross-sectoral key market players and experts. The project also relied heavily on publicly available data on production, imports, exports and waste from the UK Government.

The data collection has encountered several limitations:

- There is limited access to up-to-date data on textile flows within the textile sector, hindering efforts to quantify and understand the scale of material use and waste.
- There is a lack of consistency of data across publicly available sources, academic papers, industry reports and government statistics, as well as lack of standardisation of key textile categories and textile waste stream terms, hindering cohesive decision-making.
- Another limitation is fashion/clothing and textiles usually being categorised under the same trade codes and categories therefore making it difficult to differentiate fashion/clothing vs other textiles in the overall fraction.
- Mass flows of materials in the UK economy are not routinely measured by any authority. However, the arisings and destinations of various waste streams are quantified and it is possible from this data to at least estimate the flow of textile from households and commercial and industrial (C&I) into waste. However, commercial and industrial (C&I) waste remains underexplored in comparison to household waste.
- Waste flows in England and the UK are generally classified as either local authority managed (LAM) (sometime called municipal waste), commercial and industrial (C&I), or construction and demolition (C&D). Statistics on LAM waste flows and composition are published regularly in some detail. There is much less information on C&I and C&D waste, particularly regarding their composition. There is also a certain amount of data published on total waste.

For the purpose of this study, UKFT and University of Leeds took the decision to analyse the textile flows associated with LA and C&I waste for which reasonable assumptions about composition. It was not possible to estimate the textile content of the C&D flow, so it was deemed iout of scope for now.

Non-fashion textile flows

OVERVIEW

A textile product means any *"raw, semi-worked, worked, semi-manufactured, manufactured, semi-made-up or made-up product which is exclusively composed of textile fibres, regardless of the mixing or assembly process employed"*[11]. The only point in the system at which textile flows can be reasonably estimates in mass terms is when they flow into waste; as such, much of this report focusses on waste flows. Within textile waste, thererefore, there exists different categorisations and definitions depending upon its origin. More particularly, non-fashion textile flows can be found in three major textile waste streams: post-consumer household, post-consumer commercial, and post-industrial.

Post-consumer textiles refer to textiles that have been used and discarded, whether by households or by 'commercial, industrial and institutional facilities' (e.g. hotel, automotive, care, etc)[12]. The main differentiation within post-consumer textiles is between post-consumer household and post-consumer commercial. On one hand, there are non-fashion textiles that are placed on the market primarily used and discarded by households (e.g. home textiles and cleaning products)(post-consumer household), and on the other hand, there are non-fashion textiles that are placed on the market for industrial applications and primarily used and discarded by the industry (e.g. in the building and construction, automotive, medical, agricultural industries) (post-consumer commercial)[13, 14, 15].

Furthermore, post-industrial textiles refers to fibre, yarn, fabric and product waste generated during the manufacturing process, which is generated mostly in the countries where manufacturing takes place[16].

Here, a classification of key market sectors and product categories contributing to the non-fashion textile waste streams:

POST-CONSUMER HOUSEHOLD (NON-FASHION)

Within the household, there is a breadth of non-fashion textile categories that can be identified. The main categorisation is into home textiles and carpets and nonwoven household articles.

Category	Description
Home textiles and carpets	Household carpets, bedding and towels, toilet and kitchen linen curtains and drapes, blankets, table linens or furnishings, and other interior furnishings.
Nonwoven household articles	Personal care and household cleaning articles.

POST-CONSUMER COMMERCIAL (NON-FASHION)

The key sectors in which non-fashion textiles are categorised are the following:

Market sector	Textile categories
Automotive	Upholstery fabrics (seat cover, door panels), roof and door liners, carpets and mats, reinforcements of tyres, hoses, safety belts, airbags. *It is estimated that nearly 45 square meters of textile material is utilised in a car for interior trim.
Hospitality textiles	**Food and beverage:** corporate workwear and uniforms, interior textiles (carpets, curtains, drapes and other interior furnishing). **Travel and tourism:** corporate workwear and uniforms, linen and towels (duvet cover, bed sheet, pillow case, towels), interior textiles (carpets, curtains, drapes and other interior furnishing). **Entertainment and recreation:** corporate workwear and uniforms, entertainment costumes, interior textiles (carpets, curtains, drapes and other interior furnishing), leisure equipment (e.g. skis, tennis rackets, bycicle frames).
Public sector	**Public sector employees:** corporate workwear and uniforms. **Law enforcement and security:** Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) treated against rain, fire, or heat is used by police forces, military, firemen or special units, anti-cutting gloves, anti-noise helmets, etc.
Medical and healthcare textiles	Hospitality staff uniforms and patient wear, PPE (personal protective equipment), bandage and dressing materials, implantable textiles (e.g. sutures, grafts, scaffolds), non implantable materials (e.g. wound dressings, pressure garments), hygiene products (e.g. clothing, disposable products such as wipes or face masks), intelligent medical and healthcare textiles, extracorporeal devices, (e.g. artificial kidney, liver, pancreas), medical devices (lumbar belts, anti-edema devices).
Building and construction	**Corporate workwear and uniforms.** **Thermal and acoustic insulation:** fibreglass, natural fibre insulation, fabric panels, curtains, carpeting, rugs, etc. **Geotextiles in road and railway construction:** geogrids, geomembranes and geonets.
Agriculture	**Agro textiles:** wool, jute, nylon, polyester and polypropylene, etc.

POST- INDUSTRIAL (NON-FASHION)

This encompasses fibres, yarns, fabrics and products from the textile manufacturing process. These can either be finished materials/products that are suitable for use/sale, or unusable materials and by-products [17]. In the case of the non-fashion waste stream, this will come mainly from the clothing value-chain (referring to corporatewear and uniforms), the home textiles value chain and the technical textiles value chain[18].

KEY CATEGORIES OF NON-FASHION TEXTILES AND DEFINITION

Overall, non-fashion textile flows can be categorised into the following categories:

Category	Description
Corporate workwear and uniforms	**Workwear:** Garments of simple and typically very durable construction usually in poly/cotton fabrics, including boiler suits and coveralls, bib and brace, coats, jackets and trousers, as well as a wide variety of similar styles used in the catering and wholesale/distribution sectors. Nurses' uniforms also fall into this category. The garments are frequently made specific to the company through badges and logos. **Career-wear:** Garments similar to everyday men's suits and ladies' dresses, skirts, jackets and blouses worn in business environments such as banking, hotel receptions, airlines etc. Quality standards are similar as well. Sometimes the corporate colour(s) or logo of the employer is incorporated in the fabric. **Corporate casual-wear:** Garments are mainly knitted tops (polos, sweatshirts and knitwear) and jeans / chino style trousers or jog pants. These are of similar quality to mid-price consumer equivalent garments. **Uniforms:** Typically highly durable and very good quality tailored outfits, e.g. for military and public service institutions. Some uniforms, such as those of fire services, are part uniform and part protective clothing and will contain additives such as fire retardants.
Home and interior textiles	Interior textiles are made for two main markets: the 'domestic' (also known as 'private' or 'residential') and the 'contract' (also known as 'commercial') sectors. Domestic textiles are used in homes or private spaces, while contract textiles are found in public or commercial environments. These textiles are generally classified into two main groups: 'furnishing fabrics' and 'household textiles'.
Technical textiles	Technical textiles are designed to offer specific technical, functional, and performance characteristics, setting them apart from textiles used in fashion, art, or decoration. They are used in a wide range of applications, including household goods, packaging, sports, medical and protective gear, military use, filtration, geotextiles, agriculture, construction, automotive, marine, aerospace, and various smart technologies.
Protective clothing (PPE)	High performance, durable and high quality specification garments designed to protect the wearer in a particular environment such as foul weather clothing, acid resistant or fire retardant garments.

Continued...

Category	Description
Smart textiles	Smart textiles are advanced fabrics that can sense changes in their environment (sensing function), respond to those changes (actuating function), and adapt their properties or behavior accordingly. These textiles integrate technologies that enable them to interact dynamically with their surroundings, making them suitable for applications in fields such as healthcare, sports, military, and wearable technology.
Geotextiles	Geotextiles, a category of high-performance materials, have become essential components in infrastructure, soil stabilisation, construction, agriculture, and environmental projects over recent decades. A subcategory known as geosynthetics—geotextiles made from synthetic polymers like polypropylene (PP), polyethylene (PE), polyester (PET), and polyvinyl chloride (PVC)—are widely used due to the cost-efficiency of polymer production and the ease of fibre manufacturing through established melt-spinning processes. These materials are particularly well-suited for geotechnical engineering thanks to their excellent mechanical strength, long-term durability, and water-resistant properties.
Agro textiles	A textile designed to provide protection from the sun and insects and reduce the reliance on pesticides.
Nonwoven	Nonwoven fabrics are flat, porous materials or web-like structures created directly from fibres, molten plastics, or plastic films. These fabrics are formed by mechanically, thermally, or chemically entangling the fibres or filaments. They can be made using various methods of web formation and bonding, utilising either natural or synthetic fibres, or directly from polymers.

Quantification of non-fashion textile flows

OVERVIEW

As a first step into the quantification of non-fashion textile flows, the results of this project quantified Local Authority managed waste and non-LAM waste and thereafter quantified fashion vs non-fashion textile waste flows within it. Mass flows of materials in the UK economy are not routinely measured by any authority. However, the arisings and destinations of various waste streams are quantified and it is possible from this data to at least estimate the flow of textile from households and commercial and industrial businesses into waste. Waste flows in England and the UK are generally classified as either local authority managed (LAM) (sometime called municipal waste), commercial and industrial (C&I), or construction and demolition (C&D). Since most of the available data pertains to England, the analysis is initially conducted for England and subsequently extrapolated to cover the entire UK.

Key sources[19, 20, 21]

TEXTILE CONTENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY MANAGED (LAM) WASTE ENGLAND

LAM waste consists of household waste (HH, ~87%) plus non-household waste (nHH) managed via local authority systems (~13%). Total arisings in 2023-24 for England were 25056 kt of which [residual: recycling split]:

- 21776 kt [12200:9576] was HH and
- 3280 kt [2490:790] was nHH

By examining residual waste composition data and recycling collection tonnages it is possible to estimate the proportion of these flows that are textiles.

The proportion of textiles in the residual HH waste is estimated at around 7.6% suggesting that 927 kt of textiles are disposed of as residual HH waste. The proportion of textiles in nHH waste is estimated at around 3.2% suggesting that 80 kt is disposed of as nHH residual waste, giving a total of at least 1007 kt (1.0 Mt) of textiles in LAM residual waste. These figures do not include furniture (3% and 0.4% of HH and nHH residual waste) or mattresses (1.0% and 0.1%) so the true flow of textiles will be appreciably higher. In the same year, separately LA-collected HH textile recycling was 92 kt. The proportion of the nHH LA-collected recyclate that is textiles is estimated at 0.7%, suggesting 6 kt is collected for recycling in this stream, giving a total recyclate of 98 kt. As a result:

Local authority managed waste England (%)	Total KT (residual: recycling split)	Total KT textile waste (residual: recycling split)
Household (HH) (87%)	21776 kt [12200:9576]	1019 kt [927: 92]
Non-household (nHH) (13%)	3280 kt [2490:790]	86 kt [80: 6]

Table 1. Textile waste within LAM waste England

Information on the destination of this residual waste suggests that 85% of residual waste goes to EfW, 9% to landfill and the remainder to other processes. Thus, for the LAM waste stream in England in 2023-24:

- 98 kt of textiles (9%) were collected for recycling;
- 856 kt (77%) went to EfW,
- 91 kt (8%) went to landfill and
- 60 kt (6%) went to other waste management processes including incineration without energy recovery.
- Total 1105 kt.

Destination	Local authority managed textile waste England
Recycling	98 kt
EFW	856 kt
Landfill	91 kt

Table 2. Destination of LAM waste England

TEXTILE CONTENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY MANAGED (LAM) WASTE UK

As the above data reflects data on England, estimations of textile waste flows are made for the UK based on waste data statistics for the UK that show the split of HH waste by region, assuming that England represents 83.3% of UK generated household waste.

Destinations of textile waste	Local authority managed textile waste UK
Recycling	117 kt
EFW	1,027 kt
Landfill	109 kt
Other processes	73 kt
Total	**1,326 kt**

Table 3. Destination of LAM textile waste UK

Statistics for C&I waste are rather less detailed than those for Local Authority Managed. The latest version of Defra's *"UK Statistics on waste"*[20] report suggest that the C&I waste flow for England in 2022 was 33.6 Mt (24.1 Mt commercial (72%) and 9.5 Mt industrial (28%). No direct data on the composition of this waste stream is available, but taking the assumption that it is of similar composition to the nHH component of the LA manages waste stream (i.e. textiles is 3.2%) then this represents a textiles flow of 1075 kt – a very similar magnitude to the total of that managed by LA in England.

Additional assumptions can be made to allow an estimation of the destination for these textiles. If we assume that waste streams containing textiles are likely to fall under the "household and similar wastes", and "other wastes" categories (there being no separate category for textiles), UK Statistics on Waste suggest that the split of such wastes between recycling, EfW, incineration, and backfilling or landfill is 23%, 21%, 17% and 39% respectively. Applying this to the figure above gives the following for the C&I textiles waste stream:

- 247 kt of textiles collected for recycling (cf. 98 kt in the LAM stream)
- 226 kt to EfW (cf. 856 kt)
- 419 kt to landfill or similar (cf. 91 kt), and
- 183 kt to incineration without energy recovery (cf. 60 kt of "other including incineration" in the LAM stream, the proportion of which being incineration is small).

Thus, while the LAM stream is characterised by largely flowing to EfW, the C&I final destination is much more varied. However, overall the final treatment of textile waste in the combined LAM and C&I stream is still dominated by EfW (50%), followed by landfill (23%) and recycling (16%) with the remainder going to other processes, mainly incineration without energy recovery.

TEXTILE CONTENT OF COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL (C&I) WASTE: UK

As the above data reflects data on England, estimations of textile waste flows are made for the UK based on waste data statistics for the UK; It is estimated that the UK generated 40.4 million tonnes of commercial and industrial (C&I) waste in 2020, of which 33.7 million tonnes (83.4%) was generated in England.

Destinations of textile waste	C&I managed textile waste UK
Recycling	297 kt
EFW	271 kt
Landfill	503 kt
Other processes	219 kt
Total	**1,289 kt**

Table 4. Destination of C&I textile waste UK

TEXTILE WASTE SPLIT UK

The results of this research show an estimated total of 2615 kt of textile waste which is divided into: LAM waste (1,326 kt) and C&I waste (1,289 kt). The following table showcases the split further categorised into HH, nHH, commercial (69% of C&I in 2020) and industrial (31%).

Textile waste stream	Kt
LAM WASTE HH	1,224 kt
LAM WASTE nHH	102 kt
Commercial	890 kt
Industrial	400 kt
Total	**2,615 kt**

Table 5. Textile waste streams and kt UK

As previously argued, most analyses of textile waste flows focus on clothing, apparel or fashion, yet it is known that a significant proportion of the total textiles flow is non-fashion items such as bedding, table linen, workwear, technical textiles. Estimates of this flow are this not well developed. WRAP's "Textile Waste Hotspots" report), published in 2024 but based on a 2017 UK compositional analysis splits the arisings of textiles in LAM waste into clothing; shoes, bags and belts; carpet and underlay; and other non-clothing textiles. The data can be summarised as follows:

Restidual waste split	% Kt
Clothing	29%
Shoes, bags and belts	17%
Carpet and underlay	21%
Other non-clothing textiles	33%

Table 6. Fashion/non fashion split residual LAM

On this basis, we can estimate that the LAM residual waste stream is split **45:55** between fashion and non-fashion textiles respectively.

Textile waste stream	% Kt
Clothing	79%
Shoes, bags and belts	1%
Carpet and underlay	20%
Other non-clothing textiles	n/a

Table 7. Fashion/non fashion split recycling LAM

On this basis, the LAM residual recycling stream is split **80:20** between fashion and non-fashion textiles.

The split for the C&I stream is more difficult to calculate owing to a lack of data. It would seem reasonable to assume that the C&I residual waste stream would contain less fashion waste than the LAM stream. Examining 2020 UK data for waste flows allows the total declared non-household textile waste generated (22 kt) and that generated by the non-textile industry (which we would assume to contain no fashion, 17 kt) to be calculated, which suggests that the C&I residual waste stream is split **24:76**. Calculating the split for the C&I recycling stream is not possible, so we have assumed it is also **24:76**.

Quantification of non-fashion textile flows

In addition, there is a proportion of fashion that enters the reuse stream via charity shops, textile banks, online platforms etc, which is estimated (2021) at 649 kilotonnes yearly. The assumption is that this reuse stream is overwhelmingly dominated by fashion. Taking this into account leads to the analysis in Table 8.

Post-consumer and post-industrial textile flows	Estimated volume
Textile reuse (assumed 100% fashion)	649 kt
LAM waste (fashion)	640 kt
LAM waste (non-fashion)	685 kt
C&I waste (fashion)	309 kt
C&I (non-fashion)	980 kt
Total Fashion	1,599 kt
Total Non-fashion	1,665 kt
Total	**3,264 kt**

Table 8. Fashion/non fashion split recycling LAM

In other words, the total post-consumer/ industry textile flow is split roughly 50:50 between fashion and non-fashion items. Given some of the assumptions made (e.g. not including furniture, mattresses and C&D waste) the non-fashion textile flow is potentially considerably larger than the fashion flow which is normally not referred to in discourse on waste textiles. **A more detailed analysis of the non-fashion flows is urgently required if initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of the textile industry are to achieve their aims.**

Key barriers to advance a circular textile ecosystem

Key barriers to advance a circular textile ecosystem

Having identified the significance of the split of non-fashion textiles within the UKs textile waste stream, there are several barriers that hinder the transition to a circular textile's ecosystem in the UK:

1. **Data, transparency and information exchange:** There is a lack of reliable and consistent data regarding non-fashion textile flows beyond household and Local Authority (LAM) managed waste in the UK, particularly a breakdown of commercial and industrial (C&I) waste streams and sectors and its composition, which presents a challenge for evidence-based decision-making. Overall, existing data on textile flows remains inconsistent across sources. Key missing pieces of data: e.g. composition of C&I waste, composition of textiles that go to charity shops, composition of textiles in textile banks.

2. **Lack of established infrastructure to recirculate non-fashion textile flows:** Whilst the UK has an established infrastructure (inc. operations, logistics, skills) to manage fashion/clothing textile flows, including domestic and international end markets for reuse and recycling (mainly in Africa and Asia), it is unknown what the established infrastructure and operations related to non-fashion textile flows is in the UK. It is assumed that the majority of reused textiles in the UK market belong to the fashion stream. Charity shops are one of the main points of donation and redistribution for fashion post-consumer textile flows, but do not usually accept non-fashion textiles as donations. The exceptions include heavy household items (e.g. bed linen, towels, duvets or pillows). The assumption is therefore that a vast majority of non-fashion textile flows, particularly those coming from commercial and industrial streams, go straight into municipal waste management, hence, EfW or landfill, consequently, generating GHG emissions..

3. **Lack of collaboration and date exchange across sectors:** Whilst the non-fashion flow is potentially considerably higher than the fashion flow, there is a lack of data and knowledge exchange across sectors.

4. **Reuse challenges of non-fashion textiles flows:** Whilst textile reuse is the preferrable option after prevention within the textile waste management strategy, for non-fashion textile flows reuse can be challenging due to chemical damage, contamination, hygiene issues, or simply, the lack of an end market (e.g. due to the branding of a company uniform or the fact that no one wants to buy previously used cleaning wipes).

5. **Recycling challenges of non-fashion textile flows:** Moreover, non-fashion textiles can present complex material compositions and contamination issues that can also threaten the recyclability of these textiles. As an example, technical textiles that are designed for non-aesthetic purposes, such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are treated with coatings like flame-retardant, anti-static, or chemically impermeable materials to provide specific hazard protection. Other issues can include: multiple layers, adhesives or non-removal disruptors.

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion and recommendations

The current discourse around textile waste overwhelmingly focuses on fashion-related items, neglecting the significant - and potentially larger-volume of non-fashion textiles within the UK's textile waste stream. These include materials from healthcare, hospitality, transport, construction, and other commercial and industrial sectors. As this analysis shows, there is an urgent need to shift the focus towards understanding, managing, and recirculating non-fashion textiles to build a truly circular textile ecosystem.

The findings reveal several critical barriers that hinder this transition, including lack of consistent and reliable data, insufficient infrastructure, poor cross-sector collaboration, and limited reuse and recycling pathways due to complex material compositions and contamination. To overcome these challenges and enable a circular future for non-fashion textiles, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Improving Data Collection, Transparency, and Accessibility

- Urgent need for comprehensive data mapping of non-fashion textile flows, including commercial and industrial (C&I) sources.
- Develop a standardised framework for textile flow reporting across sectors to ensure consistency and transparency.
- Encourage public-private partnerships and industry-led initiatives to monitor textile types, volumes, and composition, including data from textile banks, charity shops, and waste management facilities.

2. Invest in Infrastructure for Non-Fashion Textile Recovery

- Expand and adapt collection, sorting, and processing infrastructure beyond fashion textiles to include non-fashion categories.
- Incentivise the development of dedicated reuse and recycling facilities for non-fashion textiles, particularly those from commercial and public sectors.
- Encourage innovation in reverse logistics systems to manage post-use textiles efficiently, particularly those from commercial and industrial sectors that currently go to landfill or incineration.

3. Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration

- Create platforms for cross-sector collaboration among industries that generate and handle non-fashion textile waste (e.g., automotive, construction, hospitality, healthcare, and local authorities) to co-design circular solutions.

4. Prioritise Recycling Solutions for Non-Fashion Textiles

- Recognise that reuse may be limited for many non-fashion textiles due to contamination, branding, or functionality constraints.
- Support the development and scaling of mechanical and chemical recycling technologies that can handle complex and contaminated materials.

5. Increase Research and Innovation (R&D) into Circular Material Design

- Invest in R&D to develop bio-based, recyclable, and safe alternative materials for technical and industrial textile applications.
- Innovate in textile finishing and coating processes to ensure materials remain recyclable or biodegradable at end-of-life.
- Encourage collaboration between textile engineers, material scientists, and design professionals to embed circularity from the design stage.

6. Policy and Incentives

- Consider regulatory mandates for data reporting, waste sorting, and recycling for commercial and industrial textile producers.
- Provide financial support, grants, or tax incentives for organisations investing in non-fashion textile recovery infrastructure and innovation.

References

1. https://unbxd.ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com/ukft.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/04181525/OE-Report-executive-summary.pdf
2. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652623013161
3. Confidential source (2025)
4. https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/eu-exports-of-used-textiles
5. https://unbxd.ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com/ukft.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/02091305/OE-The-economic-impact-of-a-Proposed-Textile-Recycling-Facility-in-the-UK-June-25.pdf
6. https://relondon.gov.uk/resources/report-londons-fashion-footprint
7. https://unbxd.ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com/ukft.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/13084405/CFIN_Report_2025_v4.pdf
8. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6620f19f651136bd0b757d85/unlocking-resource-efficiency-phase-2-textiles-report.pdf
9. https://tsa-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/TSA-Sustainability-Report-2024.pdf
10. https://www.uktradeinfo.com/
11. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011R1007
12. https://www.wrap.ngo/resources/report/textiles-market-situation-report-2024
13. https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC134586
14. http://www.ecap.eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ECAP-Workwear-Report-Pt-1-def-final.pdf
15. https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC125110
16. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43615-021-00090-5
17. https://www.wrap.ngo/resources/report/textiles-market-situation-report-2024
18. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/scaling-textile-recycling-in-europe-turning-waste-into-value
19. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-collected-waste-management-annual-results
20. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-waste-data/uk-statistics-on-waste
21. https://www.wrap.ngo/resources/report/quantifying-composition-municipal-waste

ukft®

ukft.org | @ukftorg