More Than 8 Million Brits Throw Repairable Clothes In The Bin

Submitted by: Thought Clothing
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To mark the day when humanity has officially used up ‘nature’s resource budget’ for the entire year, (Earth Overshoot Day), new research by sustainable fashion brand, Thought (https://www.wearethought.com), investigates why we don’t fix things anymore.

• Only a third of the UK (36%) repair their clothes when they break
• One in four (25%) choose not to mend clothes because ‘it’s easier just to buy something new’
• A fifth ‘can’t be bothered’ to repair broken clothes and one in seven (14%) ‘don’t know how to’
• A third of Brits (33%) admit they wouldn’t know how to sew a button back on if it fell off

29th July 2019: New research by sustainable fashion company, Thought, reveals one in seven Brits (15%) throw their clothes in the bin if they become broken or damaged – that’s more than eight million people in the UK, and only a third of us (36%) choose to save our clothes by repairing them.

When asked why people choose not to repair clothes, ‘fast fashion’ was the main culprit in four of the top five reasons given by respondents. One in four people (25%) say they don’t mend clothes when they break because ‘it’s just easier to buy something new’, a fifth say ‘it wasn’t very expensive’ (19%), one in five (18%) admit ‘I can’t be bothered’, 14 per cent say ‘I don’t know how to’, and ‘I only planned on wearing it once or twice’ was the reason given by one in 20 (5%).

Why learning to sew could help save the planet
Around 350,000 tonnes of clothing goes into landfill each year in the UK* and the UK’s consumption of new clothing is estimated to be higher than any other European country**. If we repaired clothes instead of throwing them in the bin as soon as they lose a button, waste, pollution, carbon and water footprints could all be drastically reduced.

Despite this, less than half of the UK (47%) say they know how to repair an item of clothing that’s broken or damaged, and only two thirds (66%) could sew a button back on if it fell off. This suggests 18.2 million people (a third of Brits) do not know how to sew a button on to an item of clothing.

Lost skills
Just a few decades ago, useful life skills like how to repair clothes, DIY in the home and how to cook were passed on from generation to generation, but the research suggests a number of these key skills could now be at an all-time low. When looking into useful life skills that could help to reduce our environmental impact, almost half the UK (42%) admit they wouldn’t know how to grow their own vegetables and well over two thirds of Brits (70%) wouldn’t know where to start if they had to sew with a sewing machine.

The research also revealed that a number of other life skills seem to have been forgotten. The top 10 other most forgotten skills were:

1. Nearly two thirds of the UK (61%) could not change a tyre on their car
2. Over half of Brits (52%) do not know how to repair a puncture on a bike wheel
3. 46% of the UK does not know how to bake a cake
4. Just less than half the UK (44%) would not know how to put up a pair of shelves
5. 42% of Brits don't know how to bleed a radiator
6. Over a third of the UK (34%) wouldn't be able to change a fuse in a plug
7. Nearly a third of the UK (31%) would not know how to unclog a toilet or sink
8. 28% would be unable to cook a roast dinner from scratch
9. 22% of the UK do not know how to hang up a picture
10. 22% of Brits do not know how to pot a plant

John Snare, Co-Founder and CEO of Thought commented:

"The amount of clothes that are thrown away each year because they're broken or damaged is terrifying. It's unsustainable and it needs to change. At Thought, we are proud supporters of slow fashion – our mantra is 'wear me, love me, mend me, pass me on', so we hope this research will increase the UK's awareness of the negative effects of throwing repairable clothes away rather than extending their lifespan by mending them. There are so many ways we can use less of the Earth's resources each year, and buying less 'fast fashion' and keeping clothes for longer and then passing them on rather than committing them to landfill, is definitely a key way to achieve this."

… ENDS …

Notes to Editors

Survey conducted in July 2019 by Censuswide on behalf of Thought to 2,000 UK adults aged 16 and above.

• UK population figure of 53,534,872 was sourced from ONS to calculate the number of people in the UK in relation to specific statistics within research

*https://traid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/impacts_of_clothing_factsheet_23percent.pdf

** https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1952/report-files/195207.htm

About Thought

Thought is the sustainable clothing brand and ethical fashion leader helping women feel fashionable, comfortable and sustainable. Thought was founded by Rachel Kelly and John Snare and has been at the forefront of the anti-fast fashion movement, their brand motto being 'Wear me, love me, mend me, pass me on".

Pioneering unique prints designed in house by their team in Islington, Thought also uses sustainable fabrics such as bamboo, organic cotton, Tencel and Modal to create wearable, exciting, flattering pieces for the desk-to-dinner woman. Each collection is inspired by notable and often overlooked women in history.

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