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## DIVE DEEPER

Into the problems with  
**FAST FASHION**

made by **YOU**  
for

As part of our **MADE BY YOU** series

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### An overview of **FAST FASHION**

Fast fashion is the fast-paced production of items of clothing that are often of lower quality and cheap. The main objective is to bring in money quickly by following rapidly changing trends. It encourages people to continually buy clothes in order to keep up with trends (Kelleher, 2026).

Fast fashion impacts many different aspects of life, from the environment and climate to the workers who make the clothes. The fast fashion industry is a very harmful one, the premise of which doesn't take into account what it truly affects, rather that its main goal is to produce as much profit as possible, appealing to consumers due to an incentive to keep up with changing trends in fashion.

In the current day we as a society have moved towards an era of mass consumerism - the state of an advanced industrial society in which a lot of goods are bought and sold, (Anon., n.d.) leading to a growth in the fast fashion industry. The world consumes 80 billion new pieces of clothing every year, which is a 400% increase than the consumption of clothing twenty years ago (*The True Cost*, 2015) (Maiti, 2026).

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## WATER

The fast fashion industry requires 93 billion cubic meters of water every year, which, to put into perspective would be enough to meet the water consumption needs of about 5 million people (Crumbie, 2024). The fashion industry overall is also the second largest consumer of water. It requires around 700 gallons of water to produce one cotton t-shirt and 2000 gallons of water to produce a singular pair of jeans (Maiti, 2026).

## Carbon Emissions & FOSSIL FUELS

The fashion industry as a whole has a large carbon footprint, being responsible for 10% of global emissions (more than the total of flying and shipping), this figure is also set to increase by 50% by the year 2030. In 2015 polyester produced 700 million tonnes Co2 (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *A new textiles economy: Redesigning fashion's future* (2017)). It has also been found that 69% of all textile fibres come from fossil fuels. (Changing Markets, 2021)

The industry produces large amounts of waste contributing to landfill. It is estimated that about 85% of all textiles go to dumps each year (Maiti, 2026). The industry as a whole produces about 92 million tonnes of textile waste per year, this is often either burnt (producing carbon dioxide) or finds its way into landfill, whilst less than 1% is recycled into new items of clothing (Crumbie, 2024). The amount of waste an individual produces per year is also large, with the average American generating 37kg of textile waste each year (Maiti, 2026).

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## MICROPLASTIC & Fibres

It's not just the buying of these items of clothing but also the upkeep when you have materials that contain synthetic and plastic fibres. Washing clothes releases 500,000 tons of microfibrils into the ocean on a yearly basis, this is the equivalent to 50 million plastic bottles. It is estimated that 35% of all microplastics found in the ocean come from washing synthetic textiles, these fibres (e.g. polyester, nylon and acrylic) take hundreds (if not more) years to biodegrade. (IUCN, 2017). These fibres have not only been found in the ocean but almost everywhere including the summit of Mount Everest and the placentas of unborn babies, the effects of these are still unknown (Crumbie, 2024).

## PEOPLE



As well as an environmental impact the fast fashion industry affects many people from designers of high quality products, whose work isn't valued as highly due to the cheaper costs of rapidly produced clothes, to the workers who make the garments, whose working conditions are often very poor and have to live on very low wages.

## Now, it's OVER TO YOU

Overall the fast fashion industry has a large and negative impact, and people should do what they can to avoid buying clothes that are apart of this industry. Some things that you can do include:

**Buy clothes second-hand**

**Re-sell/ donate old clothes rather than throwing them away**

**Wear clothes for longer and not buying new ones as often**

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