

Press release – February 2020

FAST FASHION STACKS UP

- Brits estimated to buy over 20,000 items of clothing during their lifetime -

- Research from SpareRoom.co.uk¹ reveals the average person could own 20,172² items of clothing over a lifetime, needing a wardrobe over three times the length of Tower Bridge³ to house it all
- The majority of items are purchased between the ages of 18 and 24, with almost 1,000 items expected to be bought annually during this period
- Almost one in five 18-34-year olds (17%) admit to buying new items of clothing⁴ several times a week
- One in seven (15%) 18-34-year olds return 75% of the clothes they order online
- Nearly half (44%) of people admit they don't consider the environmental impact when buying and returning new clothes
- SpareRoom encourages flatsharers to share clothes and cut down buying addiction, to aid the UK's fast fashion crisis

We're known for being a nation of style shopaholics - whether it's winter fashion, weekend getaways, seasonal sales or summer sunshine - you name it, we need a new outfit for it. With fashion now so cheap and easy to buy online, just how many items of clothing might we end up buying over the course of our lives?

Flatsharing site [SpareRoom](#) set out to answer that question by looking at the fashion buying habits of people across the UK of all different ages. Based on current consumption rates, SpareRoom's research estimates that Britons could be buying an average of 20,172 items of clothing in their lifetime. And if they kept this amount of clothes, they would need a wardrobe 807 metres long, or over three times the length of Tower Bridge, to house it all⁵.

Based on current consumption rates by age, we buy the greatest number of outfits between the ages of 18 and 24, buying 968 items per year at this time. In comparison, those surveyed aged 65+ only acquire 35 new items of clothes every year.

A third of people (32%) admit to buying more clothes now than they did five years ago, no doubt due to the convenience of online shopping and quick deliveries. Returning unwanted items is also easier than ever, and it seems many consumers are now buying clothes with the explicit goal of returning them, despite five billion pounds of waste being generated through returns every year⁶.

The SpareRoom study also shows that nearly half of people (44%) admit to not considering the environmental impact when buying new clothes. As a result, a third (37%) are buying items in more than one size when they order online, resulting in one in five (20%) 18-34-year

olds sending back about 50% of their purchases and one in seven (15%) returning 75% of the clothes they buy online.

When it's time for a wardrobe refresh just one in ten (13%) chose to upcycle their clothes, with 24% throwing unwanted items straight into the bin. The likelihood of giving clothes to charity after use increases with age, with over half (57%) of 18-34-year-olds saying they would do this, compared to a huge 80% of 45-54-year-olds.

Fast fashion may make shopping for clothes more affordable and convenient, but in the midst of a climate crisis it's important consumers also consider the impact on the environment. Making small changes such as the below will help the environment and allow us to shop without a guilty conscious:

- Considering where the clothes have been made
- Thinking twice about the amount you're buying
- Reading product reviews to further refine your sizing
- Embracing vintage / second-hand items
- Opting to fix clothes instead of throwing them away
- Swap / borrow clothes from housemates or friends

Miriam Tierney, SpareRoom spokesperson comments: "Everyone has different shopping habits, but to hear that almost a third of people admit to buying more clothes now than they did five years ago is quite shocking.

Everything we buy has an impact on our planet, even before we've brought it home, so it's important to make small changes. Whether that's clothes swapping with housemates, shopping in secondhand shops or just trying to buy less each month, these small steps will be better for your bank account as well as your carbon footprint."

- ENDS -

For more information please contact spareroom@cowpr.com or call 020 7234 9150.

Notes to Editors

¹ Research conducted by SpareRoom in 2020 with 2,002 UK respondents.

² Using the research, SpareRoom calculated how many clothes would be bought each year, then multiplied this by the amount of years in each age break. SpareRoom used the same process across all our age breaks, and then added them all together, to reach the total additional items of clothing they would buy in their lifetime. Please note these figures have been calculated based on respondents (aged 18-65+) providing 'approximate' answers.

³ The length of Tower Bridge is 244m (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_Bridge). Total length of the wardrobe of a lifetime is 807m. 807 divided by 244 = 3.30.

⁴ Please note when speaking about clothing we're referencing: activewear, coats & jackets, dresses, hoodies & sweatshirts, jeans, jumpers & cardigans, jumpsuits & playsuits, nightwear, loungewear,

shorts, skirts, suits & separates, swimwear & beachwear, tops, tracksuits, trousers & leggings, workwear

⁵ Based on the average wardrobe size of 1m, which can hang 25 items of clothing according to Home and Décor: <https://www.homeanddecor.com.sg/blogs/facts-and-figures-wardrobe-design>. 20,172 (total clothes purchased) divided by 25 (items of clothing the average wardrobe can hold) = 807 wardrobes needed to house all the clothes, which is equivalent to 807m.

⁶ BBC Earth, <https://www.bbcearth.com/blog/%3Farticle%3Dyour-brand-new-returns-end-up-in-landfill/>

About SpareRoom

SpareRoom is the UK's leading flat and house share site with nearly 10 million registered users. Founded in the UK in 2004, the company expanded into the US market in 2011 and has currently helped over a million people find a room or roommate in the US.