



Textile Transparency Report 2024

Collection and distribution of textiles 2024

UFF-Humana, Denmark



About the report

In recent years, public awareness around textiles collected for reuse has grown significantly. Studies confirm that extending the lifecycle of textiles yields substantial environmental gains by minimizing demand for new textiles^{1,2}. Additionally, reuse initiatives can deliver meaningful socio-economic benefits, including support for charitable causes and job creation. At the same time, the export of used textiles to parts of Africa, Asia, and South America is a source for concern, where large amounts of textiles may end up as unmanaged waste or disrupting local textile markets. Such criticisms have fostered scepticism toward the second-hand clothing sector at both local and global levels, with repercussions on political discourse and EU legislation connected to textile production and trade^{3,4}.

The Humana People to People network is dedicated to advancing transparency and traceability throughout the second-hand clothing sector. Ensuring full visibility along the value chain from

¹ G. Sandin, G. M. Peters, Environmental impact of textile reuse and recycling – A review, Journal of Cleaner Production, Volume 184, 2018, Pages 353-365, ISSN 0959-6526, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.02.266>. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652618305985>)

² <https://global-recycling.info/archives/8171>

³ JRC 2021. Circular Economy Perspectives in the EU Textile sector. <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC125110>

⁴ 2022. EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles. https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/textiles-strategy_en

collection to reuse, recycling, and beyond, is vital for driving sustainability, enhancing resource efficiency, assuring quality, upholding ethical practices, and empowering consumers.

The Textile Transparency Report 2024 is part of an annual undertaking by Humana People to People. The purpose of this report is to document where the textiles collected by Ulandshjælp fra Folk til Folk – Humana People to People (UFF-Humana) end up, and what purpose they serve.

UFF-Humana

UFF-Humana is a Danish development and environmental organization established in 1977. Since its founding, UFF-Humana has worked to help people in African countries. UFF-Humana works for the well-being of all people by ensuring that they have access to education, healthy and sufficient food, health services, and live in a more sustainable and secure world.

The organization has around 43 employees and operates from two locations, one in Sjælland and one in Jylland. UFF-Humana also runs second-hand shops in Copenhagen.

UFF-Humana's work is made possible through the collection and resale of used clothing. The revenue generated supports the organization's activities and is directed toward the following main objectives:

1. Development Aid
2. Environmental Protection
3. Information

Collection, screening and removal of waste

UFF-Humana collects used clothes, shoes, and textiles from recycling stations as well as various private and public collection points across Sjælland and central Jylland. In addition, the organization also purchases used textiles from other Danish collection organizations.

UFF-Humana's goal is not only to collect clothing for reuse but also to ensure that the process is as efficient and sustainable as possible. UFF-Humana optimizes handling of the waste that comes in via our clothing collection.

The collection driver manually empties the collection containers and transfers the contents to the collection truck. During this process, the driver performs two additional important tasks:

1. Screening the collected material and roughly sorting out obvious waste. "Obvious" means that the driver can see, feel, or smell the waste, preferably without opening the bags in which the material has been deposited. In this context, waste refers to material that either has nothing to do with clothing, shoes, and textiles or consists of clothing, shoes, and textiles that are so contaminated or damaged that waste prevention would be more costly than incineration.

2. Packing any loose clothing in plastic sacks (which the driver carries) to protect the clothing and thereby preserve its potential for reuse as effectively as possible.

Obvious waste that has been sorted out is placed separately from the other textiles in the collection truck.

At the warehouse, the textiles are weighed in and packed for export to sorting centres. In this process, warehouse workers also sort out obvious waste. This sorting is crucial to reducing the risk of contamination of reusable clothing and preventing the export of damp or contaminated textile waste.

Two streams of used textiles

The EU's revised Waste Framework Directive obligates all member states to implement separate textile collection. Denmark implements this through its Climate Plan's Initiative II: "Increased and Streamlined Waste Sorting," requiring all municipalities to collect textile waste.

The Waste Framework Directive and the Climate Plan aim to maximize recycling of textile waste and thereby minimize incineration. Denmark now collects used textiles in two streams:

1. Existing collection for clothing and textiles intended for reuse.
2. New collection of textile waste for recycling.

The collection for reuse has been in place for decades and is therefore nearly optimal in terms of composition. The collection of textiles for recycling has only existed for a couple of years and has not yet had enough time to function optimally. Approximately half of the collected textile waste is immediately found to be either reusable or recyclable textiles.

Results

Collection of textiles

Table 1 presents the amount of textiles collected for reuse (stream 1) by UFF-Humana in 2024. In total, UFF-Humana reports having collected 2 722, including 78 tons of waste sorted out in collection and in the local warehouses. The textile collection by UFF-Humana has increased steadily the last years.

In total, 2 645 tons were sold to 11 different sorting centres in Europe. Of the 11 sorting centres, five were asked to report, accounting for 87.1 % of the textiles sold by UFF-Humana.

The sorting centres which have reported to the project has reported the same numbers received as UFF-Humana has reported sold, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Stream 1. Textiles for reuse. UFF-Humana 2024, tonnes and percentages.

Sorting centre	Reported by UFF-Humana	Reported by sorting centre	Total amount received at sorting centre	UFF-Humana's, share of total amount received at sorting centre
Total collection⁵	2 722			
Waste removed in collection and packaging	78			
ABU Poland	740	740		
HPP Slovakia	609	609	8 235	7.4 %
HPP Bulgaria	514	514	12 839	4.0 %
JSC Resna	320	320	3 000	10.7 %
Samulak Poland	120	120	783	15.3 %
Other sorting centres (6)	342	Not reporting		
Total sold	2 645			
Reporting sorting centres	2 303	2 303		
Deviation sold – received (t)		0		
Reported from sorting centres as share of total sold		87.1 %		

Textile waste collected for recycling (stream 2) are presented in Table 2. The amount is rather small compared to the textiles collected for reuse, accounting for about 11 % of the total amount handled by UFF-Humana. These textiles are presorted at UFF-Humana warehouse in Køge, removing 150 tons (44 %) waste before exported to Umana sorting centre in Poland.

⁵ Corrected for changes in warehouse inventory

Table 2. Stream 2. Textiles waste for recycling. UFF-Humana 2024, tonnes and percentages.

Sorting centre	Reported by UFF-Humana	Reported by sorting centre	Total amount received at sorting centre	UFF- Humana's, share of total amount received at sorting centre
Total collection⁶	340			
Waste removed in pre-sorting	150			
Umana Poland	191	191	2 435	7.8%
Deviation sold – received (t)		0		
Reported from sorting centres as share of total sold		100 %		

Utilisation of the collected textiles for reuse (stream 1)

The following description of how textiles are utilized applies exclusively to textiles collected for reuse (stream 1).

Of the 2 645 tons of textiles sold to sorting centres, 70.1 % was sorted out and sold for reuse in 2024 and 16.6 % was sold for material recycling. The remaining 13.4 % (1.8 % material recycling + 11.6 % landfill and incineration) of the material sold to sorting centres were classified as waste by the sorting centres. Waste is both non-textile materials like packaging, and incorrectly sorted items mixed waste including broken, dirty and not usable textiles.

⁶ Corrected for changes in warehouse inventory

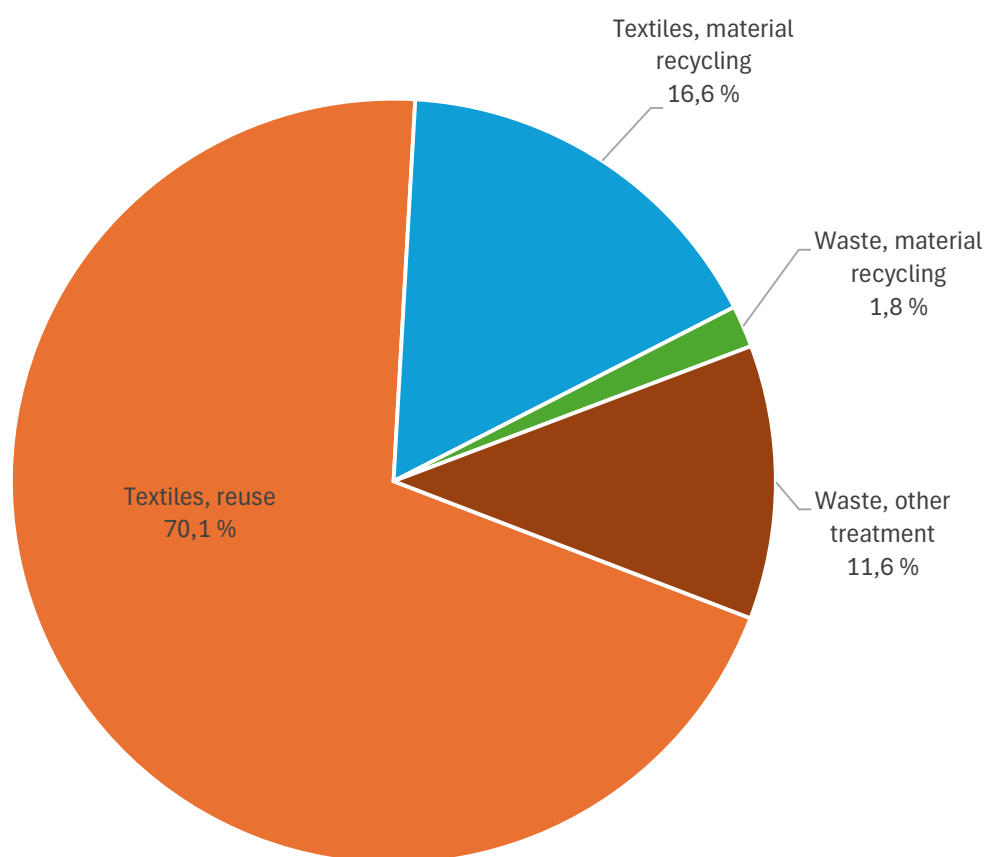


Figure 1. Distribution of purposes for textiles originally collected by UFF-Humana in 2024 (stream 1).

Table 3. Utilisation of used textiles originally collected by UFF-Humana in the period 2020- 2024.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Textiles, reuse	71.2 %	76.4 %	77.7 %	63.7 %	70.1 %
Textiles, material recycling	20.2 %	15.0 %	16.4 %	23.9 %	16.6 %
Textiles, other treatment	3.9 %	1.4 %	1.7 %	0.4 %	0.0 %
Waste, material recycling	2.4 %	5.5 %	0.4 %	0.5 %	1.8 %
Waste, other treatment	2.2 %	1.6 %	3.8 %	11.6 %	11.6 %
Total	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %

As shown in Table 2, the reuse rate in 2024 was higher than in 2023, but somewhat lower than in 2020–2022.

The share of textiles directed to reuse or recycling from each sorting centre depends mainly on the average quality of textiles received, but also on the specific markets they serve. Since sorting centres must adapt to changing market demand, outcomes will naturally shift over time. Based on the available data, it cannot be concluded to what degree the change is linked to the textiles from UFF-Humana. However, as the textiles from UFF-Humana represent only a small portion of the overall volumes processed (see Table 1), the results are likely also influenced by textiles collected from other sources.

Geographical distribution of sold textiles

The geographical distribution of textiles and waste collected by UFF-Humana is shown in Figures 2 and 3. The Asia region includes Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, India and other countries in Asia. The Nordic region is shown separately and consists of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

46.7 % of the textiles ends up in Europe. Textiles sold to Africa (20.1 %) are reported to be used for reuse, whereas those sent to Asia (32.4 %) are used for both reuse and material recycling. As illustrated in Figure 3, all waste generated during sorting is treated locally in Europe.

In line with the discussion in the previous chapter, the change from year to year might be more strongly linked to the selection of sorting centres, which have different sets of customers for sorted textiles.

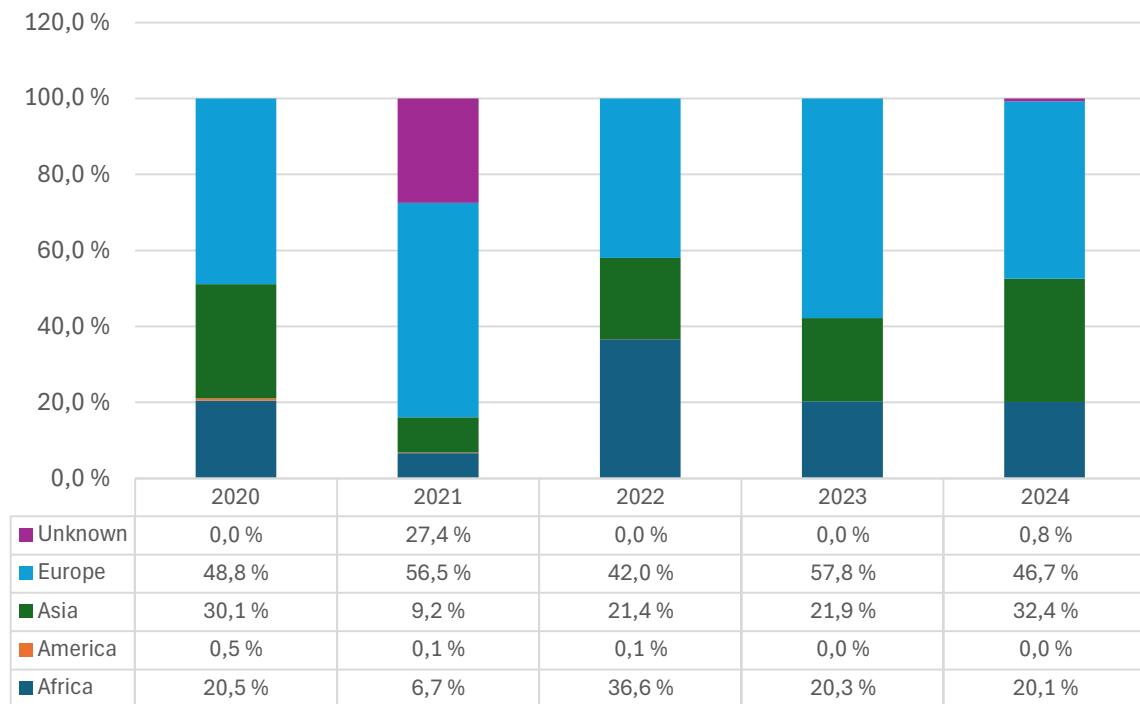


Figure 2: Recipient continents for used textiles originally collected by UFF Denmark, 2020-2024.

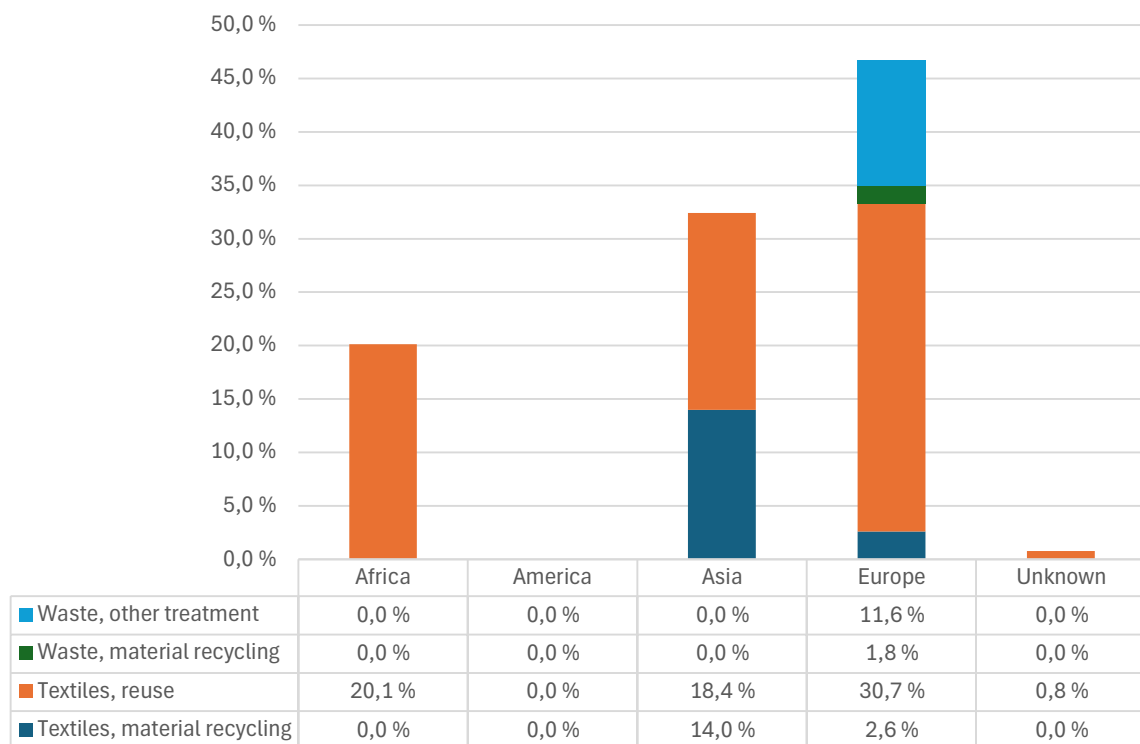


Figure 3: Continents and purpose of used textiles originally collected by UFF-Humana in 2024.

Methodology

Data collection

This report is based on data collected from UFF-Humana and data from sorting centres receiving the collected textiles from UFF-Humana. This is a part of a joint project with participants from six Humana collection organizations for used textiles in Europe (Denmark, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden).

Collection organisations

Data from the collection organisations is collected through a survey in the form of a spreadsheet. UFF-Humana has provided quantitative information on the amounts of textiles they collected, the amounts sold to different customers (sorting centres), as well as qualitative data on their collection system and how they register data on the textiles and waste they handle.

Sorting centres

In line with the Humana People to People Code of Conduct, all sorting centres used by UFF-Humana are obliged to be transparent about their activities and to report their sales of textiles for reuse, material recycling and waste, specified by customer and country.

Data from sorting centres is collected through surveys, using spreadsheets. Two forms are used: one for sorting centres that receive more than 1 000 tonnes from all participating Humana collection organisations, and one simplified form for sorting centres that receive between 500 and 1 000 tonnes from all participating Humana collection organisations. The sorting centres are asked to provide data on all textiles that they have received and sorted at their location, including customers outside the Humana network.

Most advanced sorting centres sort the textiles into more than 100 unique categories. In their report for this work, the sorting centres are asked to group these into the following main categories:

- Textiles, reuse: textiles that are used again for the same purpose as originally intended
- Textiles, material recycling: textiles processed into recycled textile fibres used for other products like wipers etc.
- Textiles, other treatment: waste treatment in form of incineration, with or without energy recovery and/or landfill.
- Waste, material recycling: non-textile waste, processed into secondary raw materials for other products.
- Waste, other handling: non-textile waste for incineration, with or without energy recovery and/or landfill.

Textiles to waste are mostly damaged, wet or dirty textiles not suitable for either reuse or material recycling.

Waste material are mostly packaging materials for the textiles and incorrect sorted items.

Comparison with previous results

Collected data are registered in the database which Mepex has compiled as part of the work with previous years' reports. In the registration process, the data are checked for inconsistency and quality, and where necessary the sorting centres are asked to clarify. All communication with the sorting centres has taken place in writing.

Audits

As part of the quality control of reported data, Mepex conducts audits of selected sorting centres to ensure that their routines and practices for registration, sorting quality and reporting are credible. There has not been any audits in 2024.

Assumptions and calculations

Assumption on quality and averages

Most sorting centres do not have specific information of the utilisation of textiles collected by any specific collection organisation (i.e. the share of textiles from UFF-Humana that is of reuse quality), as the textiles are mixed with textiles from other collection organisations in the sorting process.

A distribution of the utilisation of the textiles (reuse, recycling and waste management) is established for each sorting centre. We assume that for each sorting centre, the quality of the textiles from the Humana organisation is at least equal to the average quality of the total amounts of textiles received at the sorting centre. The overall usage distribution for each collection organisation is then calculated as a weighted average based on the amount of textiles sold to each sorting centre.

Calculations

Unless otherwise specified, all calculations are made based on the received reports from the sorting centres. As an example, the share of textiles from a sorting centre that is reused is calculated as a percentage of the total amount of textiles reported as received by the sorting centre.

The amount of textiles accounted for is calculated as the share of textiles sold from the collection organisation to sorting centres which have reported, divided by the total amount of textiles sold by that collection organisation. This means that waste removed by the collector prior to export is not included in the calculation.

Sources of uncertainty

Shipments in transit

There are some examples of minor differences between the amounts of textiles reported as received by the sorting centres and the amounts reported as sent by the collection organisation. This difference is in most cases attributed to the transit of shipments, i.e., shipments sent late in the year and received

at the sorting centres early in the next year. Such minor deviations will not significantly affect the results. Larger deviations are checked out through the checks carried out after receipt of the reports.

Interpretation of the survey form

The sorting centres are asked to report on the purposes that the sorted textiles are used for, hereunder reuse of clothes, shoes, textiles and accessories. The option “sold for further sorting” are not accounted for, to reduce the possibility for counting textiles more than once.

We are aware that the definitions of reuse and recycling given in the reporting form are interpreted in slightly different ways, which might affect the balance between reuse and material recycling. The sorting centres use different labelling systems for their qualities, which means there is an interpretation done to match the survey form. In some cases, typically for low price mixed qualities sold to Asia, the sorting centres are not sure whether the sold textiles are reused or being recycled. As a principle, textiles are accounted for as material recycling.