



Textile Reuse and Role of Thrift Stores

NERC Material Reuse Webinar
July 7, 2026



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planetaid.org

Introduction to Planet Aid



- **501(c)(3) nonprofit** working to protect the environment & promote sustainable community development through textile reuse since 1997.
- **Impact:** 70+ millions of pounds of clothes & shoes collected for reuse annually.
- **Global Reach:** Supports projects in education, health, poverty reduction, sustainability and more in the U.S., Latin America, Africa and Asia



Facts & Figures

Planet Aid's positive impact over nearly three decades



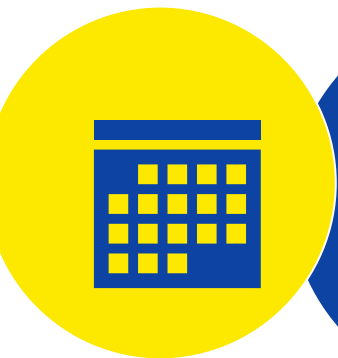
2+ Billion Pounds

Of donated clothes and shoes collected and reused since 1997



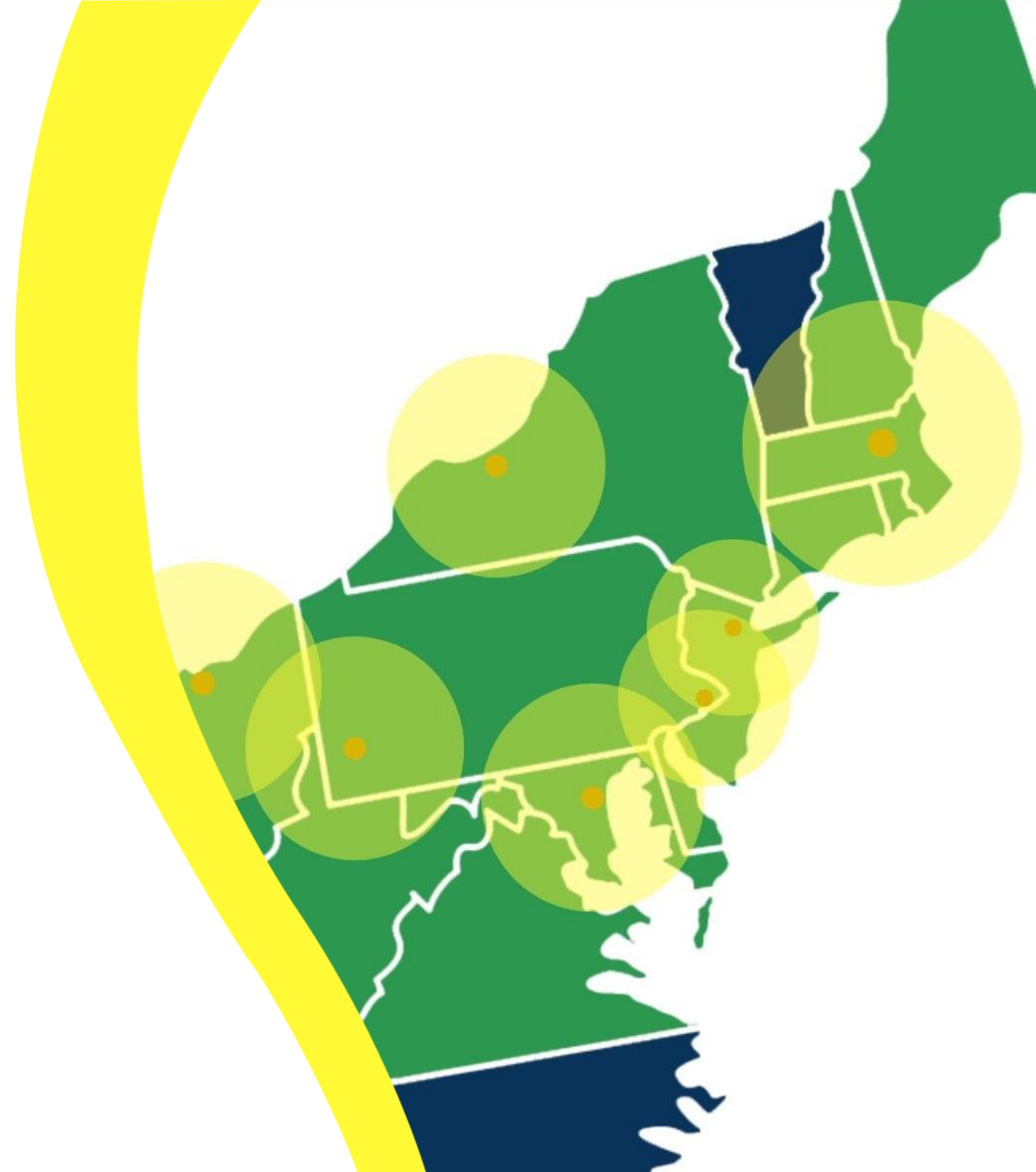
\$100+ Million

Raised for charities and nonprofits around the globe since 1997



Nearly 30 Years

Turning unwanted clothes into economic development & sustainable fashion





How used textiles are collected in the USA

1. Retail stores:

- Big thrift chains
- Consignment stores
- Churches, non-profits, Shelters
- Vintage Stores

2. Drop of locations

- Bins
- Donation Centers (manned and unmanned)

3. Home pick ups, Clothing drives, Brand Take back

- Curbside
- Drives at schools, organizations etc.
- Brands take back used merchandise





The Opportunity that Keeps Giving

The trade in second-hand clothing is as old as clothing itself

Worn textiles were collected in Victorian London; immigrant families in New York built livelihoods reselling donated clothes

The Salvation Army and Goodwill were founded in the late 19th century to clothe the poor and employ the marginalized

Today more than 20,000 second-hand clothing stores in the U.S. employ over 222,000 people — mostly small, community-based businesses, one-third of them non-profits



Where the donated Textiles end up

In the 20,000 second-hand clothing stores, where they are sorted for reuse for the U.S market

As export goods to other countries where they are sorted for reuse, resale and recycling – credentials or original clothing

At U.S grading facilities where they are sorted for reuse and repurposed for other products (wipers, etc.)



How Thrift stores process donated textiles

Textiles are sorted for reuse and resale

Each store has it's own process and guidelines regarding sorting and resale

Anywhere between 10% and 50% of the textile is offered for resale, most common 20-30%

A small part of the donated textiles is classified as trash, mostly soiled items

Items not for resale are combined with store returns and classified as "Mixed Rags"; they are typically baled for export

Sorting of textile is labor intensive work

How Mixed Rags are processed for Reuse

Mixed Rags are exported from the U.S. for sorting and reuse

They mostly go to Pakistan, but also to Malaysia or a few U.S. cities

The sorting facilities abroad are very extensive and specialized

Sorting goes through several steps, making sure to get the most out of each item

Employees receive extensive training

Sorted goods are exported to Africa and other locations for resale in stores and markets



Case Study: Guatemala

Garson&Shaw and Full Cycle Resource 2025 Study "Secondhand clothing imports from the USA to Guatemala: A study of trade, distribution and local impact"



290 million pounds of used clothing imported in 2023

98.6% originated from the U.S.



57.4% of used clothing business owners are women

Sector's importance for female entrepreneurship



91.6% of Megapaca's clothing imports were reused

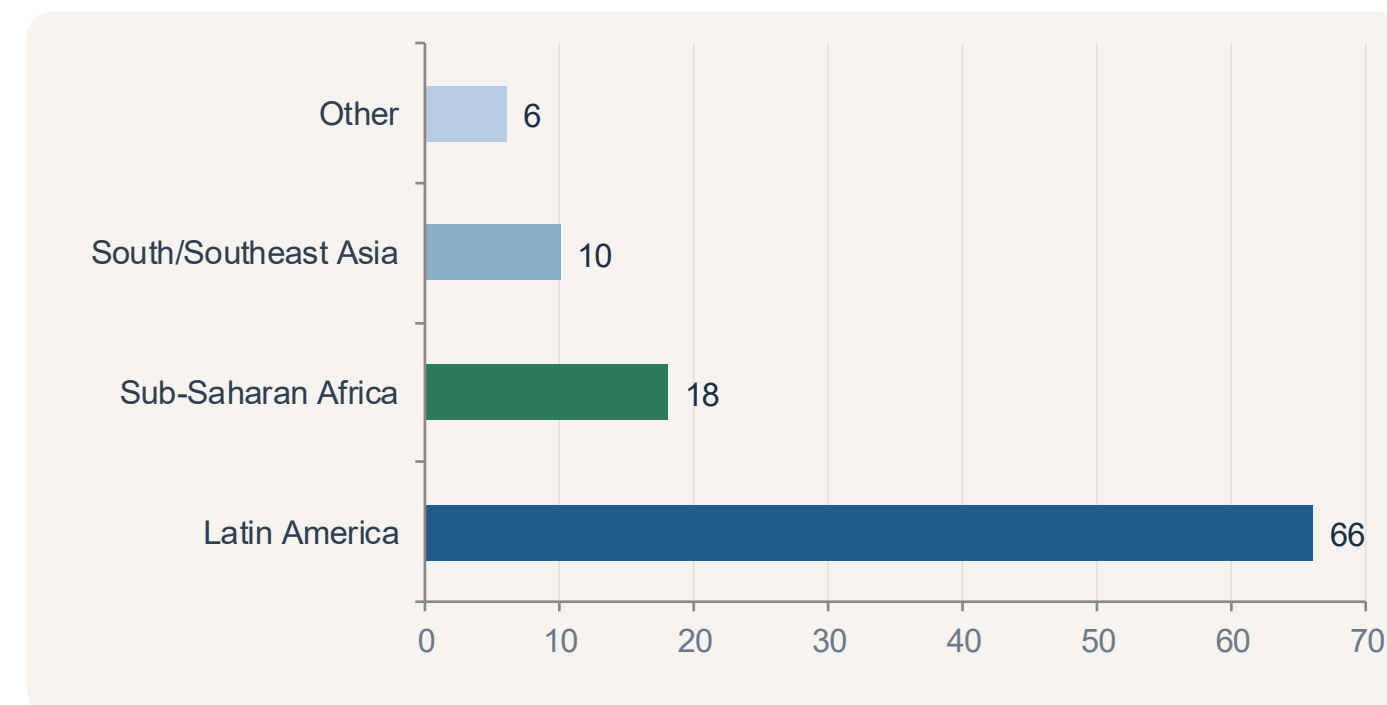
Clothing, wipes & rags, insulation





The Second-Hand Clothing Global Trade

- The U.S. is the world's #1 exporter of second-hand clothing – close to 17% of global share
- More than 1.5 billion people worldwide rely on second-hand clothing
- Other options for affordable clothing is often low-quality fast fashion



U.S second-hand clothing exports by destination

The potential of Thrift Stores and Reuse

U.S. second-hand apparel market **grew 14% in 2024**—the strongest since 2021

39% of younger shoppers (versus 28% overall) purchased second-hand via social platforms in the past 12 months.

U.S. second-hand apparel is projected to reach \$74 billion by 2029. Global secondhand apparel is expected to hit \$367 billion by 2029 (CAGR 10%)

ThredUp's 13th Annual Resale Report – Key Insights (March 19, 2025)





Thank You

Stay in Touch!



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