

# Repairing and upcycling clothes

Survey report

**LPP**



**WEAR YOUR  
STORY**

**April 2024**



## Introduction

Sustainability, the circular economy and conscious consumption are the most important trends of recent years. In the discourse on fashion and climate change, the repair and upcycling of clothing are gaining importance. Repairing clothes makes it possible to extend the life of a garment and, in doing so, contributes significantly to reducing waste and minimising the carbon footprint associated with the fashion industry.

However, clothes are also more than just fabric – they often carry sentimental value and memories. They are part of each person's story, they become part of a personal narrative and identity, they reflect individual experiences and values. Therefore prolonging their life is also a way of preserving one's own memories.

In repairing and upcycling clothes, environmental awareness is combined with the creation of your own unique history. However, do Poles repair and rework clothes? Do they have the necessary skills and knowledge to do so? Do they even intend to take care of their clothes in this way?

LPP, as a leader in the clothing industry, which for several years has been implementing solutions in its operations aimed at successively reducing its environmental footprint, wants to sensitise its customers to the need of taking care of clothes and extend the life cycle of textiles. This is why the company has carried out a survey to answer all the questions and check people's attitudes to clothing care. The results show that the public feels the need to repair their clothes and wants to expand their knowledge on the subject.



In response, LPP is back with the second edition of the educational campaign 'Take Care of Your Clothes', which promotes the conscious use of clothing so that you can enjoy wearing it for longer. 'Wear Your Story', as the next instalment of the campaign is called, is a tale about the stories, emotions and memories of clothes that you don't have to part with because they are damaged, but can be repaired to benefit yourself and the environment. The campaign includes materials with practical tips and knowledge necessary to look after your wardrobe and prolong the life of your favourite clothes.

More at:

[WWW.CAREFORCLOTHES.COM](http://WWW.CAREFORCLOTHES.COM)

## Study on extending the life of clothes

In cooperation with the research company ARC Rynek i Opinia, LPP conducted an opinion poll on a representative group of Poles. This made it possible to gather up-to-date information on the use of clothes, as well as the public's awareness on the topic of prolonging the life of clothes. This report is a summary of the research, and is supplemented with analysis and comments from experts supporting the campaign.

### MAIN CONCLUSIONS:

- Poles are aware that throwing away clothes can have a negative impact on the environment.
- 80 per cent of Poles believe that repairing clothes can have a positive impact on the environment.
- Poles want to learn how to repair and rework clothes.
- 71 per cent would like to have access to a compendium of knowledge about repairing clothes.
- For 73 per cent of Poles, clothing repair skills are something everyone should have.
- Getting rid of clothes is most often determined by wear and tear or damage.
- People who do not repair clothes most often don't do so because they don't have the necessary skills.
- The term 'upcycling' is unknown to 65 per cent of Poles.
- 91 per cent of Poles have basic clothing repair tools at home.
- Many people replace damaged clothes with new ones, and as many as 87 per cent will decide to buy a new pair of jeans if the repair cost is close to the price of the trousers in the shop.

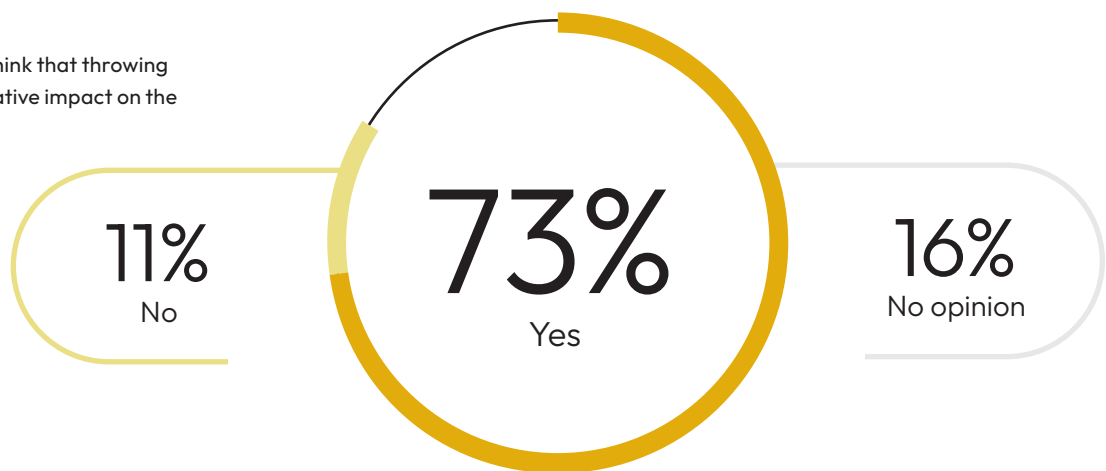




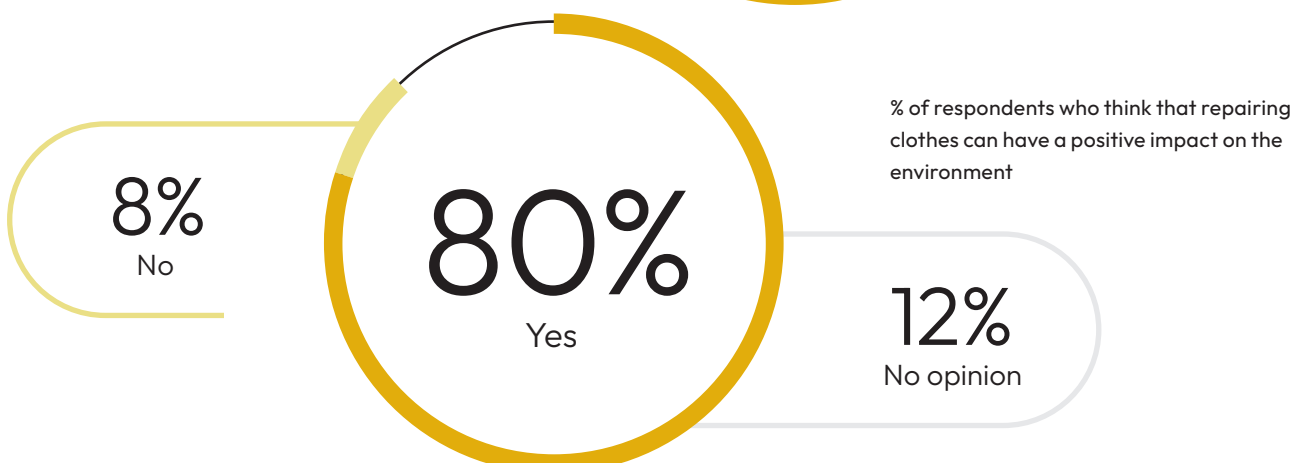
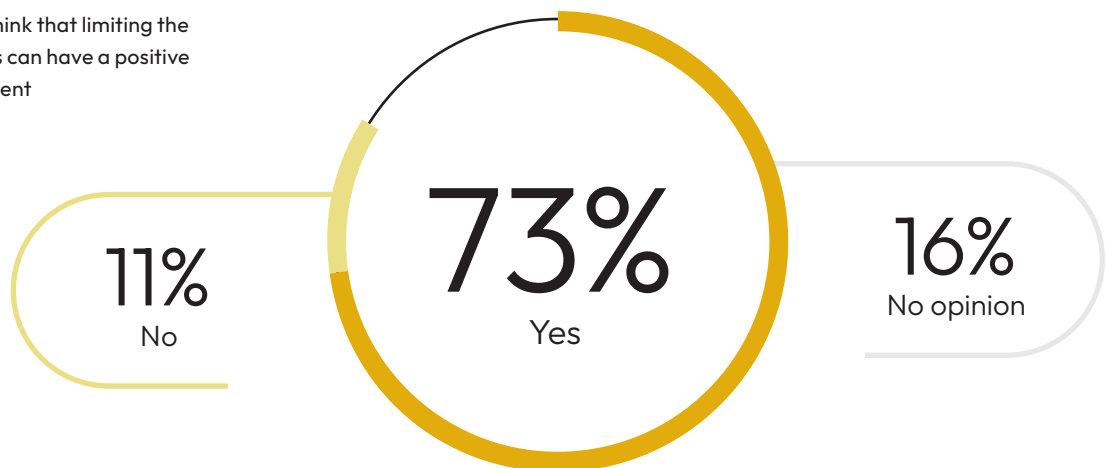
## Environmental impact

Most Poles are aware that their attitudes towards clothing have an impact on the environment. 73 per cent believe that throwing away clothes has negative consequences for nature, and just as many believe that limiting the purchase of clothes can contribute to protecting the environment. As many as 80 per cent say that repairing clothes is beneficial to the environment.

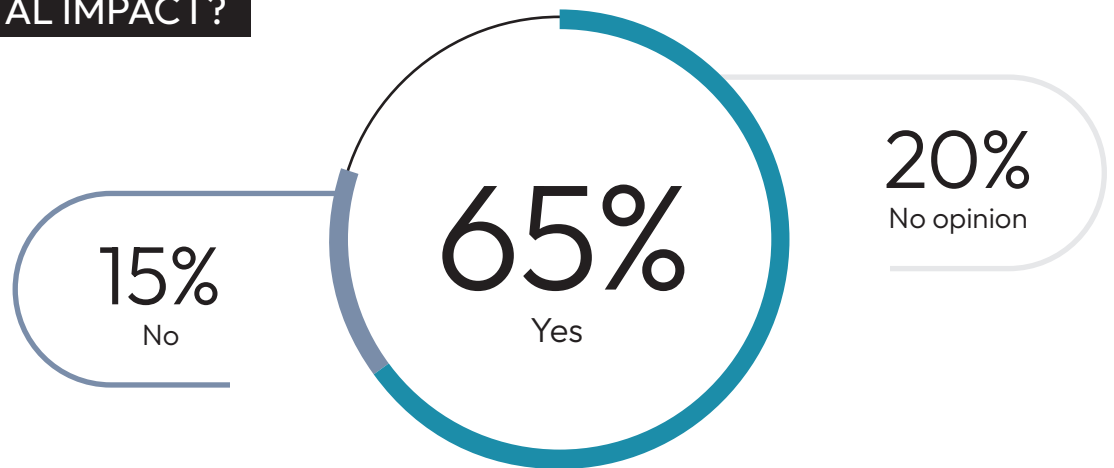
% of respondents who think that throwing away clothes has a negative impact on the environment



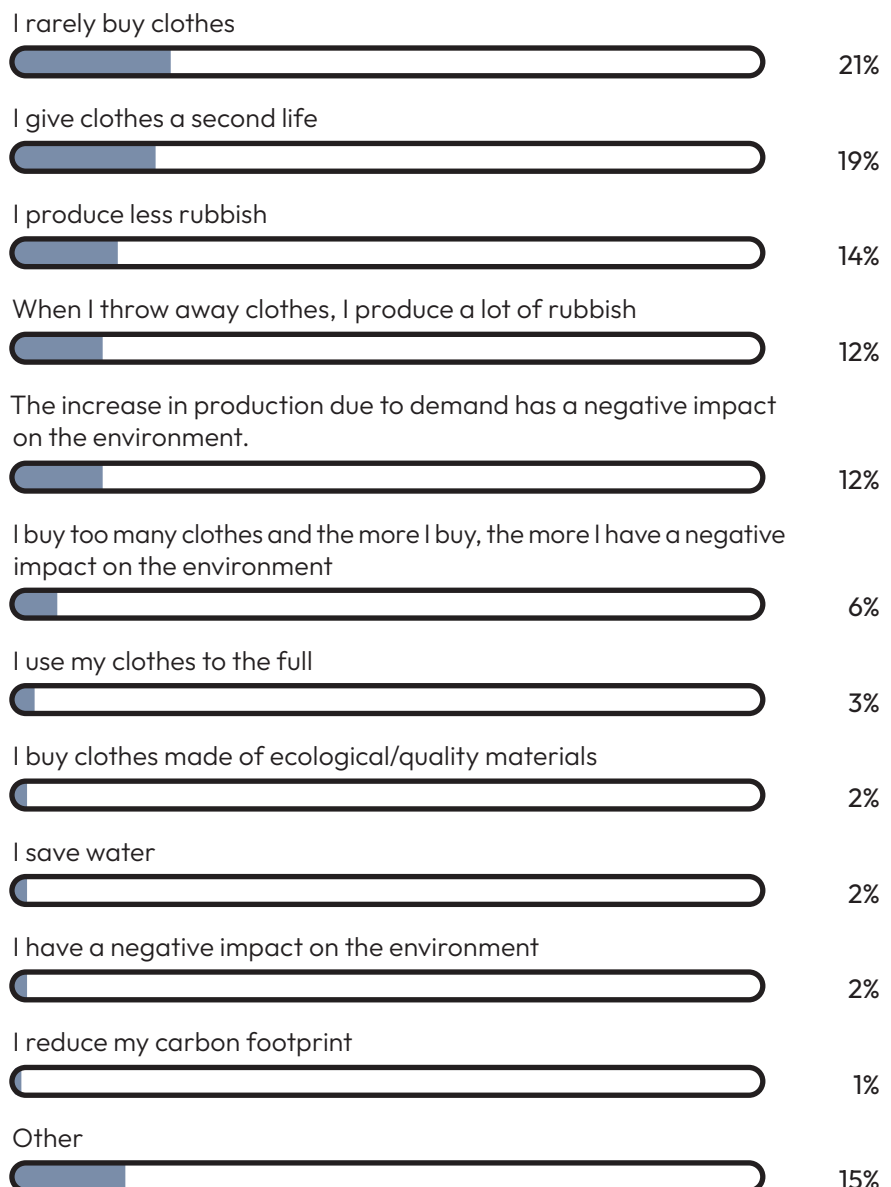
% of respondents who think that limiting the purchase of new clothes can have a positive impact on the environment



## Does my attitude as a consumer have an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT?

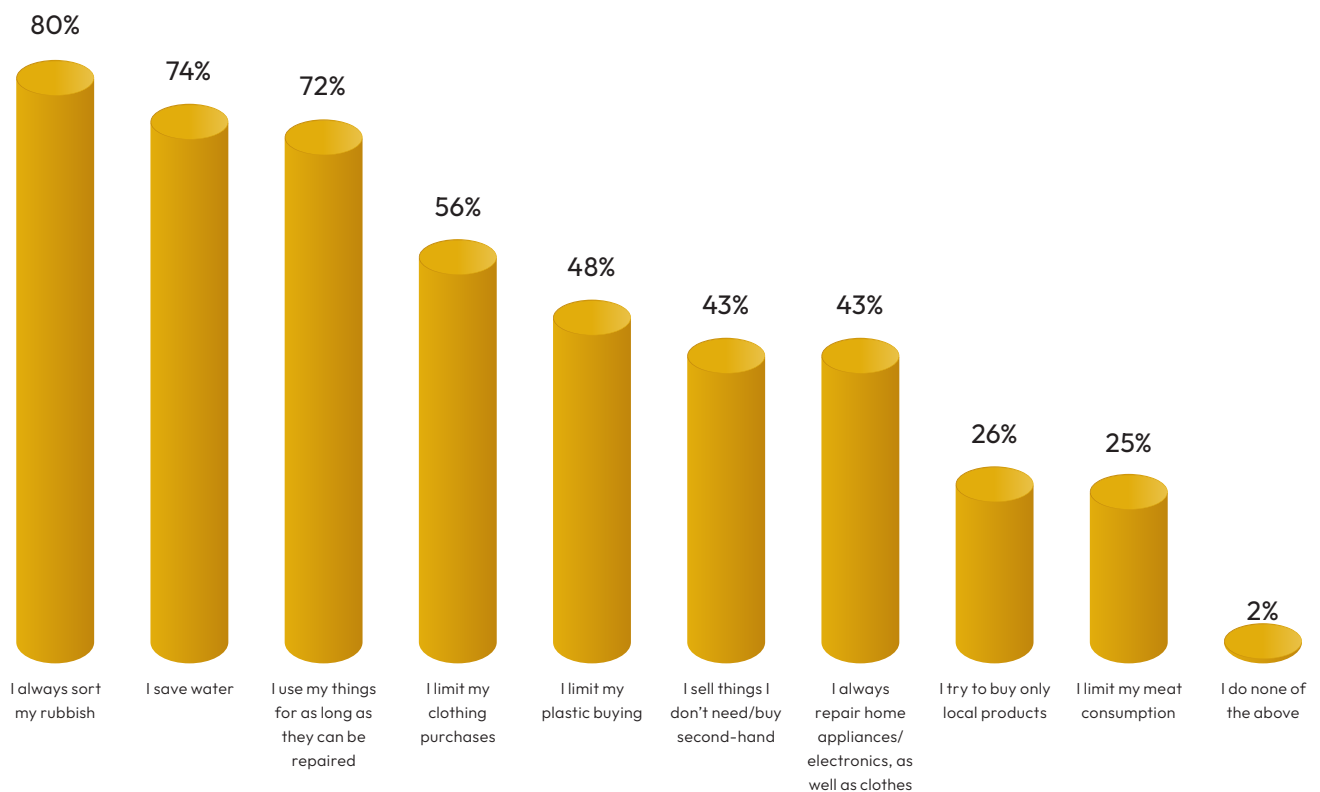


## IN WHAT WAY?

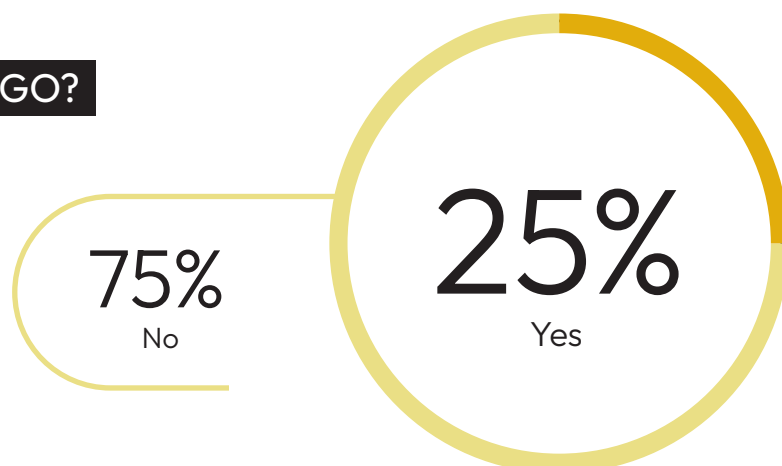


## How do we take care of the environment IN DAILY LIFE?

In addition to sorting waste and saving water, Poles declare that they use their clothes as long as they can be repaired. More than half of them limit their clothing purchases to take care of the environment.



## Do you know where DISCARDED CLOTHES GO?



## The need for education

Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of those surveyed believe that everyone should have clothing repair skills. At the same time, 58 per cent of those questioned are of the opinion that basic skills related to getting rid of damage to clothes are becoming obsolete (mainly women and the oldest participants of the survey). Despite this, the majority of respondents see an opportunity to restore the reflex of repairing clothes in society.

### What do we think about REPAIRING CLOTHES?



# WEAR YOUR STORY

8

More than half of Poles admitted that they have damaged clothing that they are attached to, but which they cannot repair or remake. However, we want to learn – 64 per cent of people say they are willing to learn basic tailoring techniques to repair clothes. Nearly 3/4 of respondents believe that access to simple advice on repairing and reworking clothes would be of value to them – for a large proportion, short instructional videos are the most attractive form of such material.

People who want to have access to a knowledge compendium collecting simple tips on how to repair/rework clothes



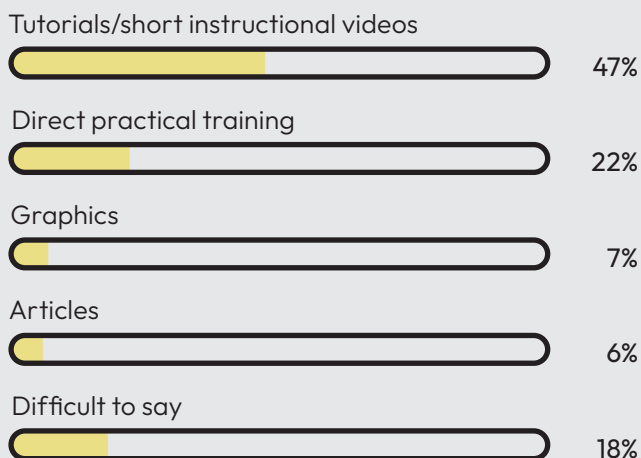
People who want to learn basic sewing techniques to repair clothes themselves



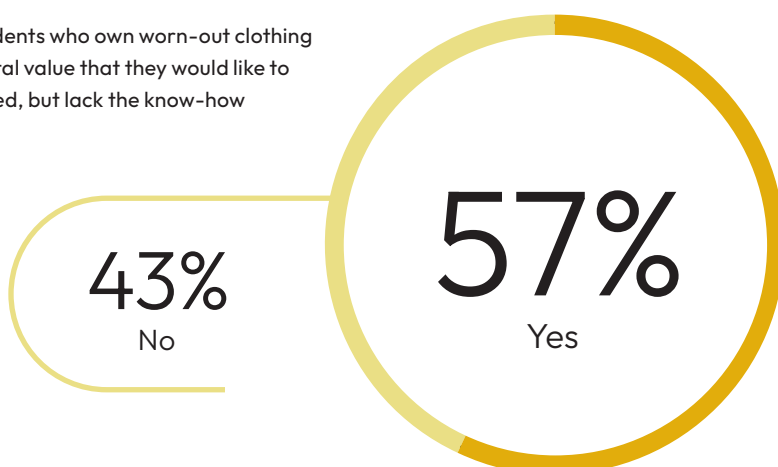
People who want to learn basic tailoring techniques in order to make their own clothes



## The most attractive form OF TRADING KNOWLEDGE



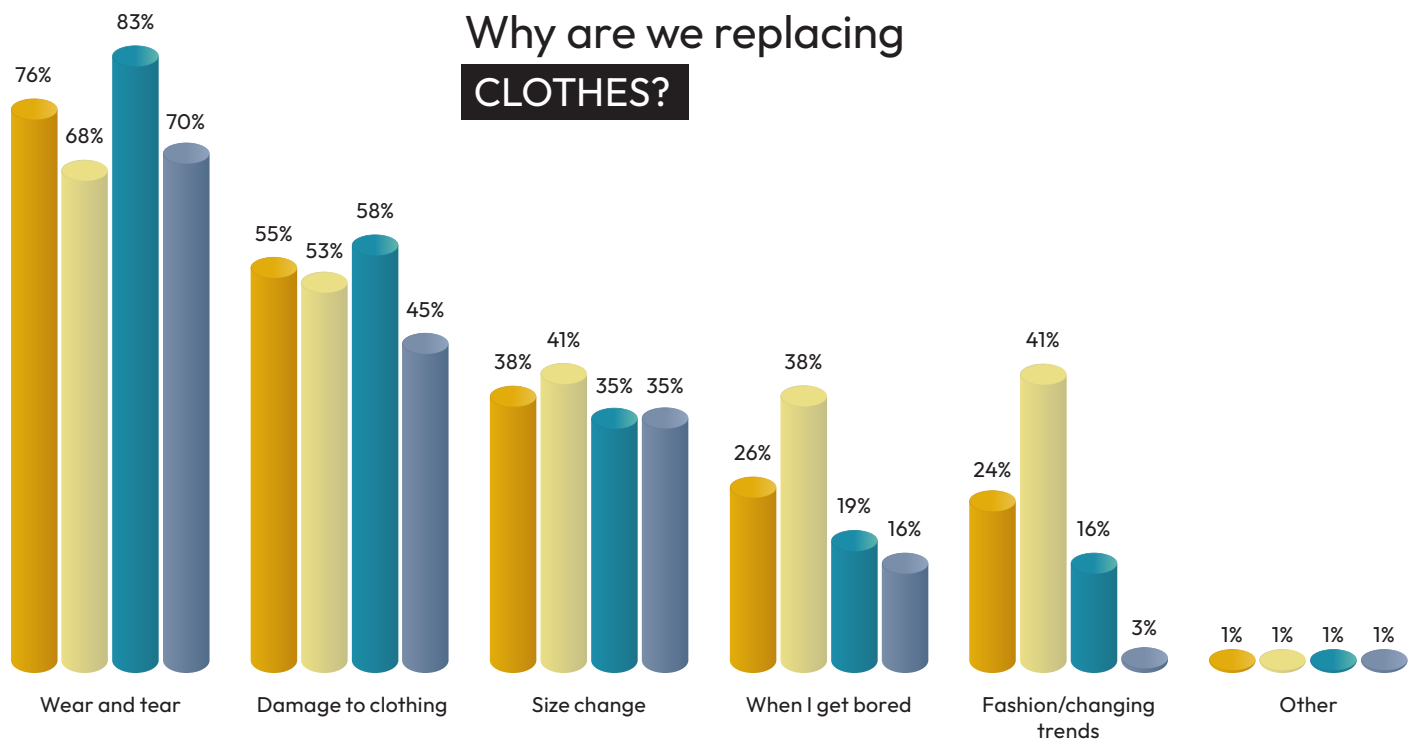
% of respondents who own worn-out clothing of sentimental value that they would like to have repaired, but lack the know-how





## Repairing clothes

Respondents indicated that they consider clothes with visible holes and torn clothes as damaged. Just under half of the respondents attempt to repair such garments by themselves. The vast majority of us can sew on a button, but half of the respondents cannot cope with torn fabric. Those clothes that cannot be saved are most often turned into cloths for the home or disposed of in special containers. On average, Poles dispose of seven pieces per year.

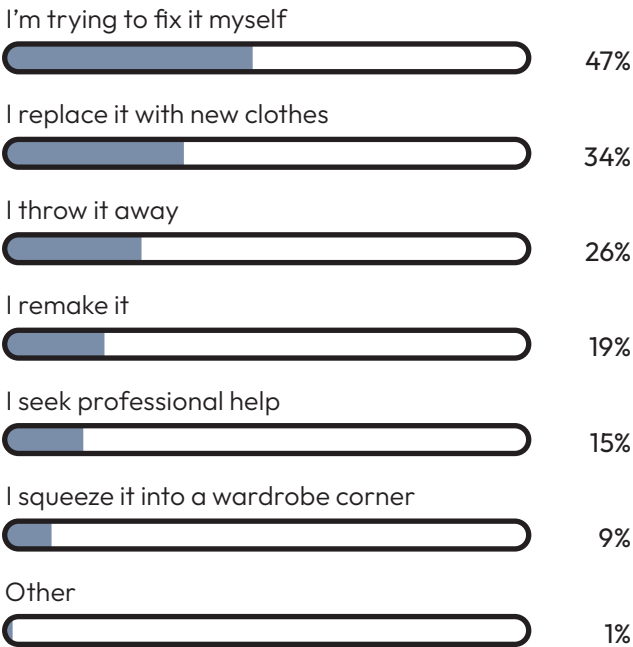


- Occasional buyers N=80
- Moderate buyers N=538
- Frequent buyers N=365
- Total N=1015

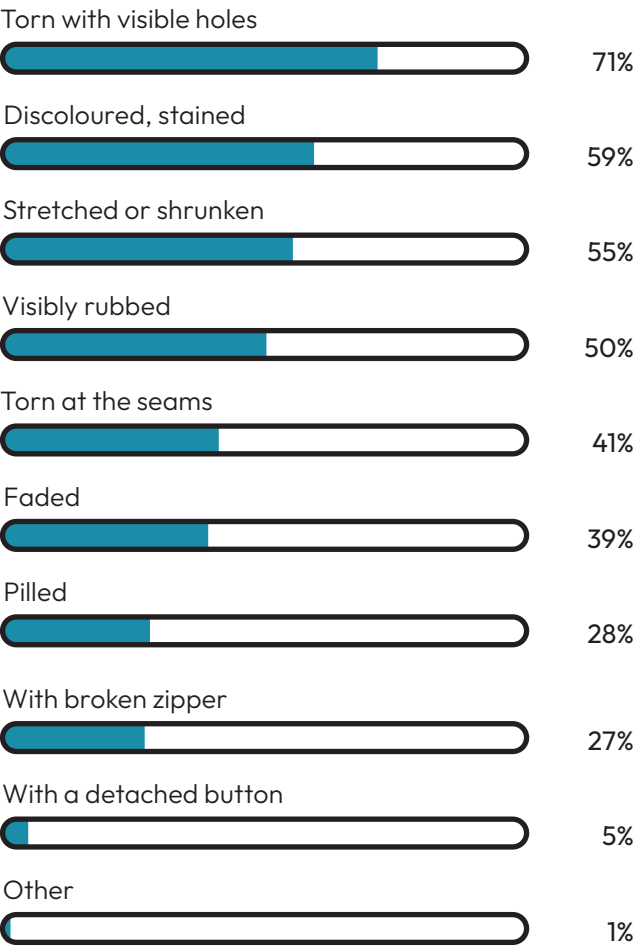


# What does it mean if a garment is damaged and what do we do with it?

## What do you do when there is DAMAGE TO YOUR CLOTHES?



## Which clothes do you consider DAMAGED?

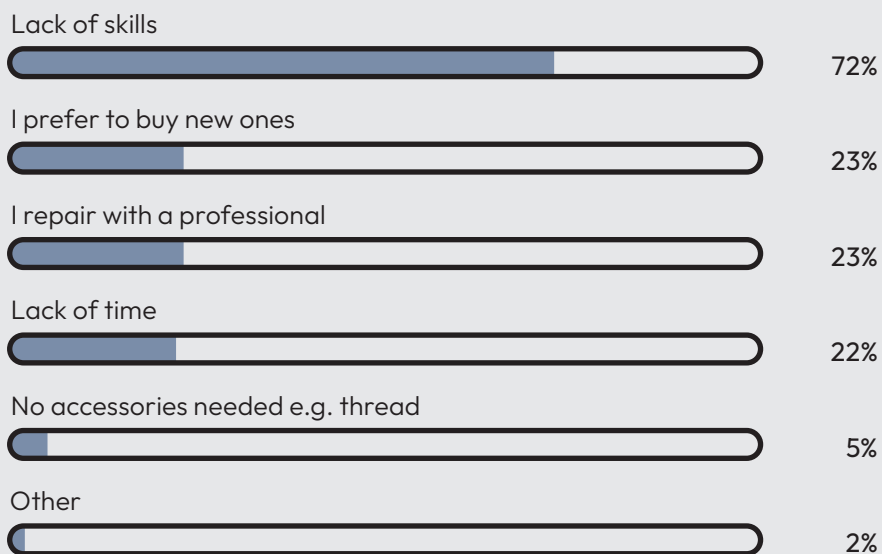


# WEAR YOUR STORY

## Why don't we repair CLOTHES?

42%

% of people who don't repair damaged clothes by themselves





# WEAR YOUR STORY

12

How often do we

**THROW AWAY CLOTHES?**

The vast majority of those questioned prefer to buy new jeans if the cost of repairing the old ones equals the price of a new pair. The results also show that Poles throw away an average of 7 pieces of clothing each year, while those who frequently buy new clothes get rid of around 10 pieces.

How many clothes do we

**THROW AWAY EACH YEAR?**



# 87%

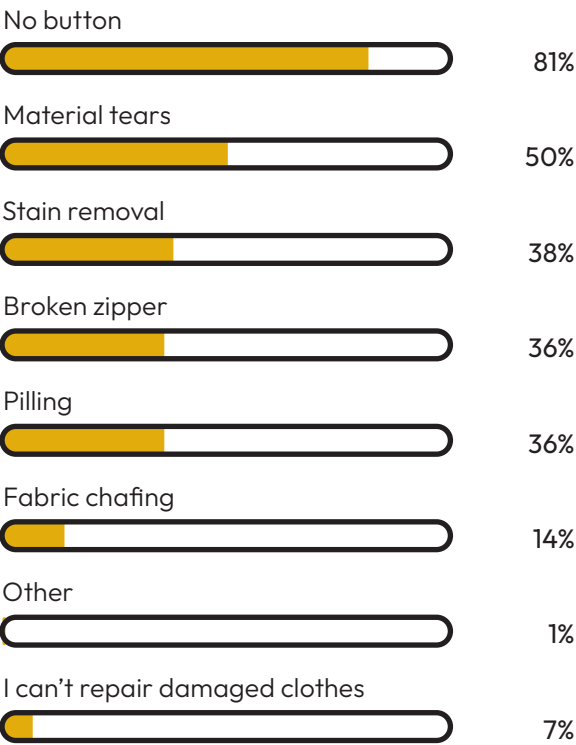
87 per cent of Poles will buy new jeans if the cost of repairing their old ones equals the price of a new pair



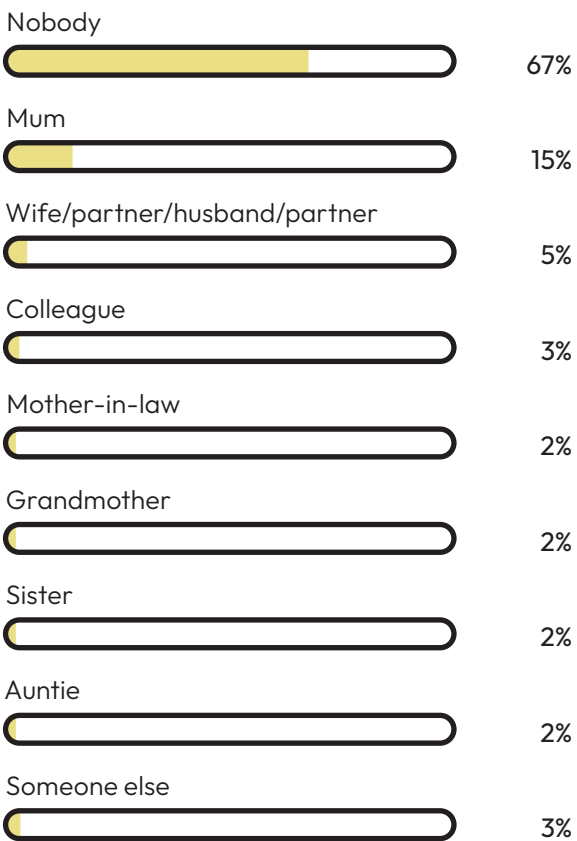
## What can we REPAIR?

The majority of those asked are able to sew on a button by themselves, 7 per cent are not able to make any repairs to damaged clothes. Most often Poles ask their mums for help in this matter.

### Type of DAMAGE

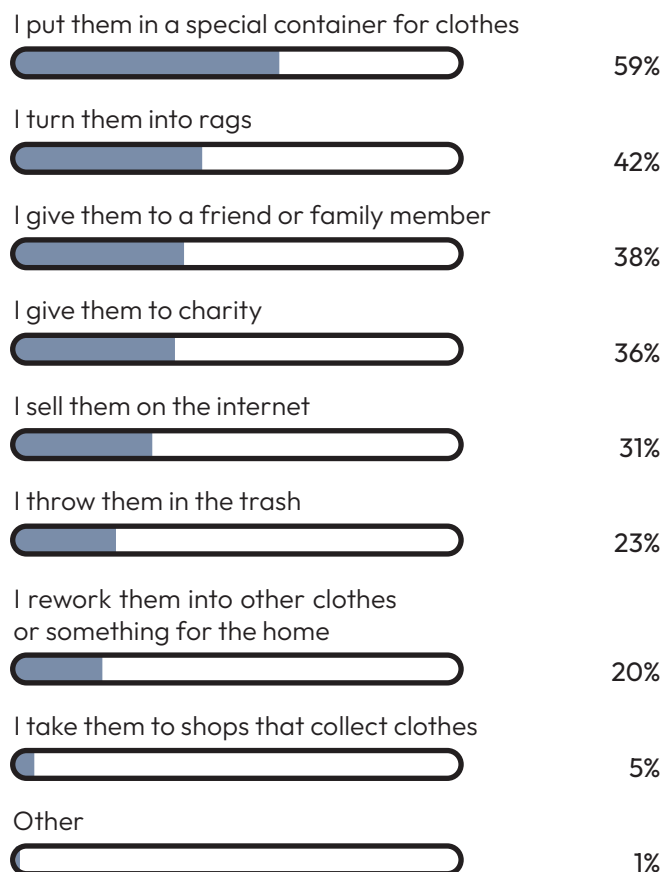


### Who am I asking FOR HELP?

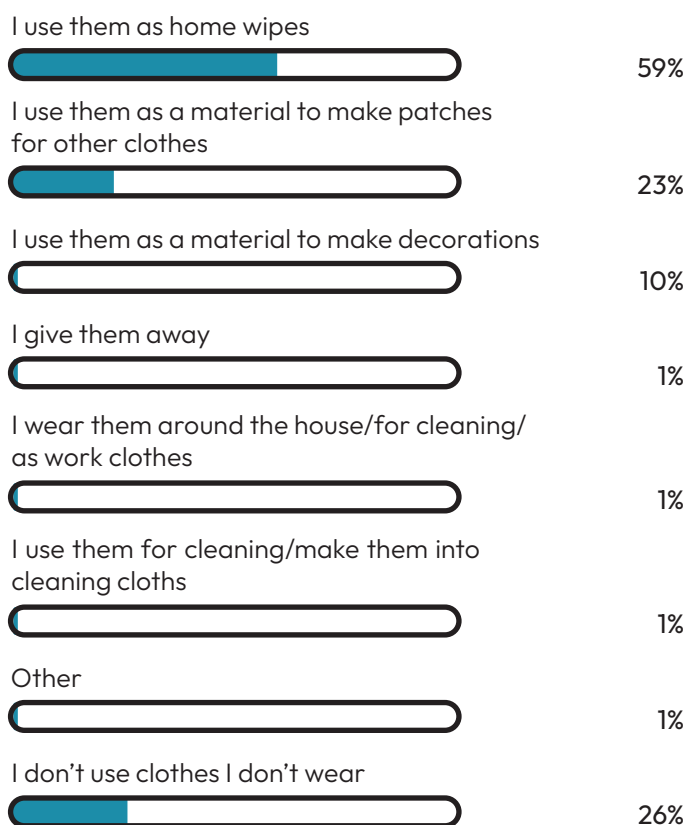


## How do we most often use clothes we no longer wear?

### What do you do with the clothes YOU NO LONGER WEAR?



### How do you use clothes YOU NO LONGER WEAR AT HOME?

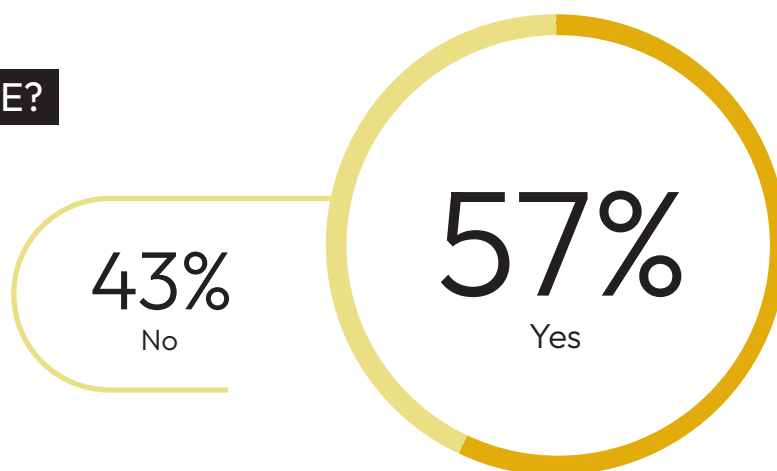




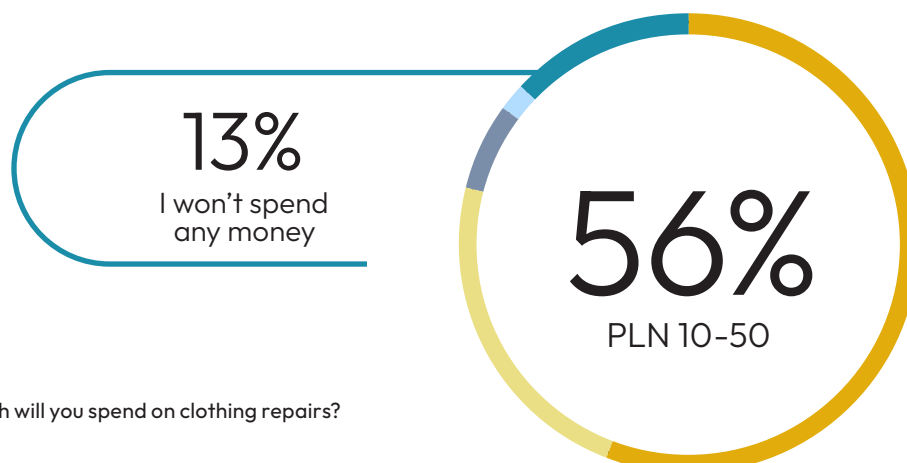
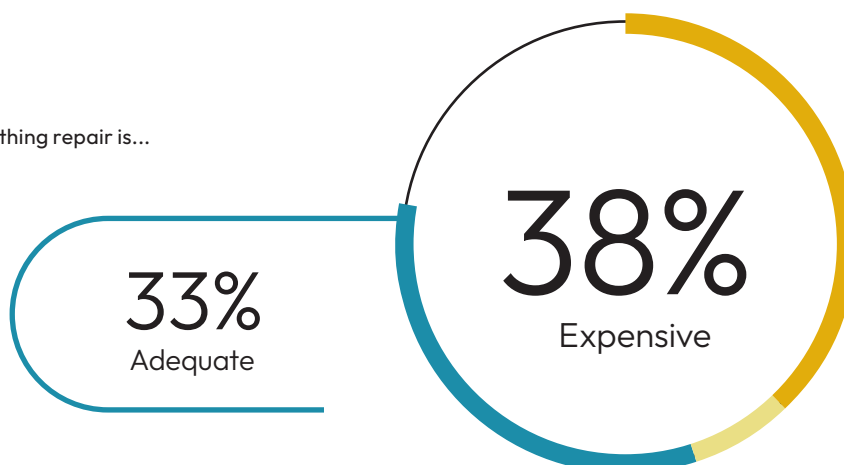
## Repair by a professional

More than half of respondents use tailoring services. 38 per cent think that the price of such services is high, 33 per cent that it is adequate and 7 per cent that such services are cheap. 56 per cent will spend up to PLN 50 to have their clothes repaired, and 8 per cent are willing to pay more than PLN 100.

### Do you use A TAILORING SERVICE?



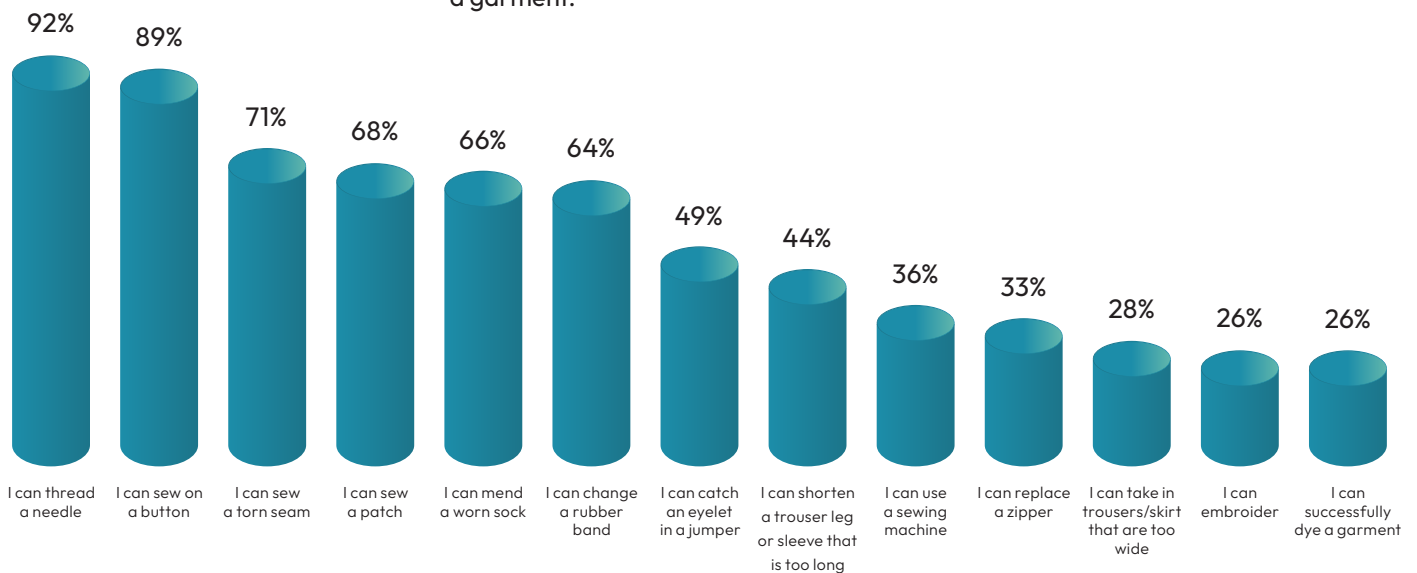
Professional clothing repair is...



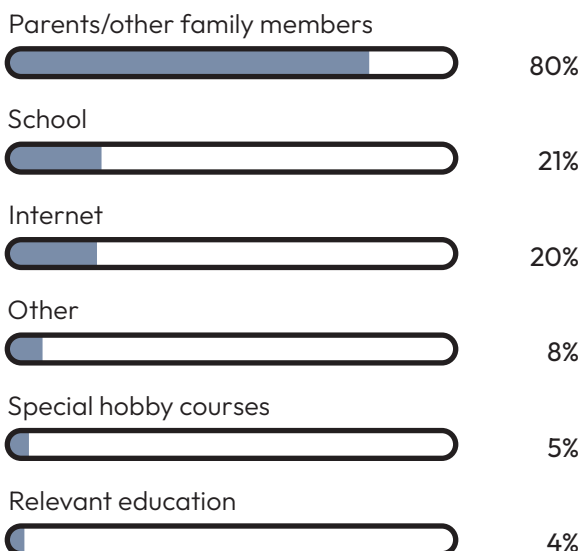
How much will you spend on clothing repairs?

## Our skills

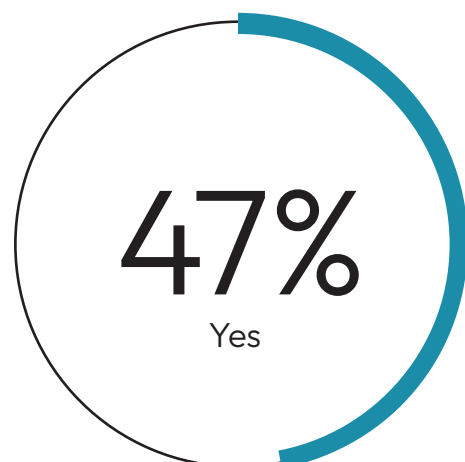
Most people who have basic clothing repair skills learned them from their parents or family members, but 20 per cent of those surveyed also point to the internet as a source of knowledge. This is how Poles learn the most basic clothing repair activities: threading a needle, sewing on a button or sewing seams. However, catching an eyelet in a jumper, replacing a zipper or using a sewing machine is a challenge for most. The same applies to alterations: only 26 per cent of those surveyed know how to rework a garment.



## Sources of owned SKILLS

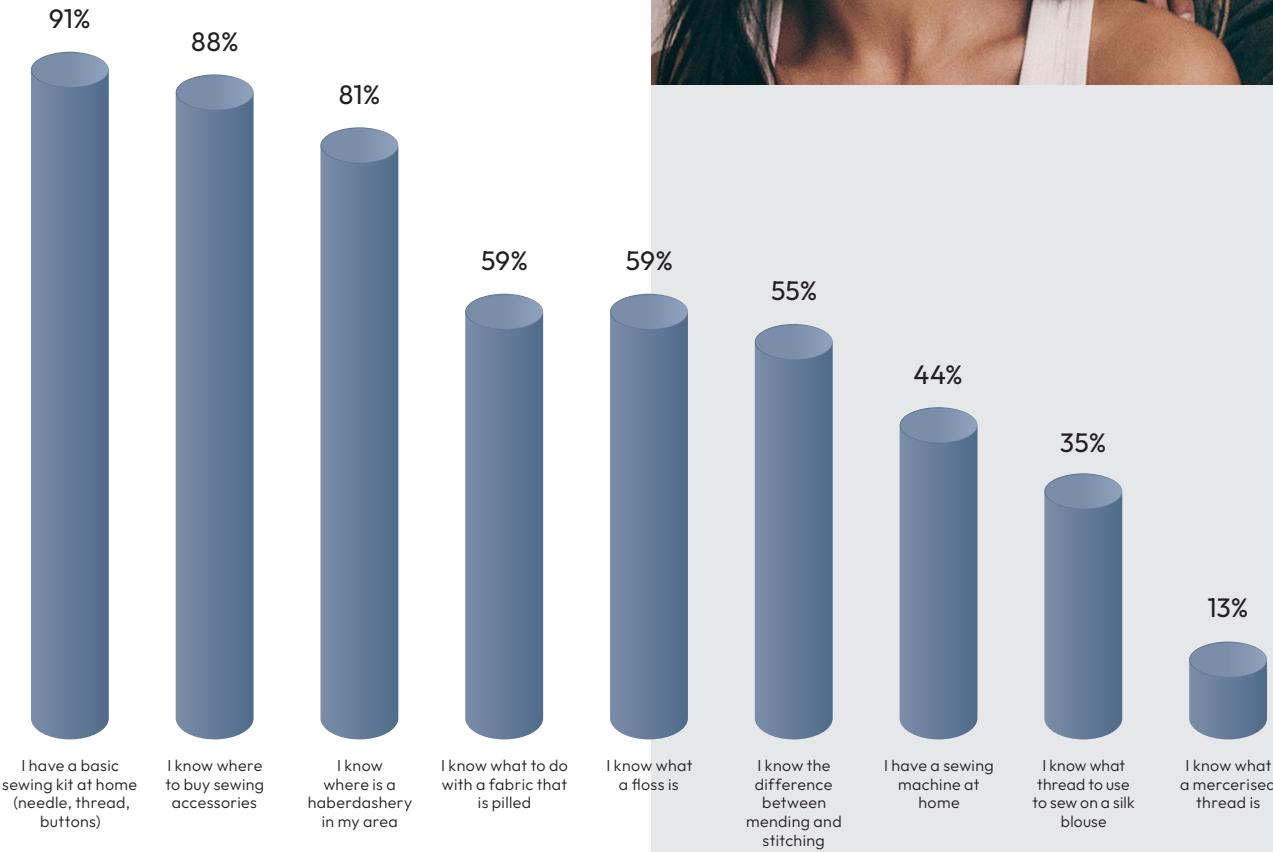


## Do you share your practical knowledge with others?



# WEAR YOUR STORY

## Our knowledge and tools WE HAVE AT HOME

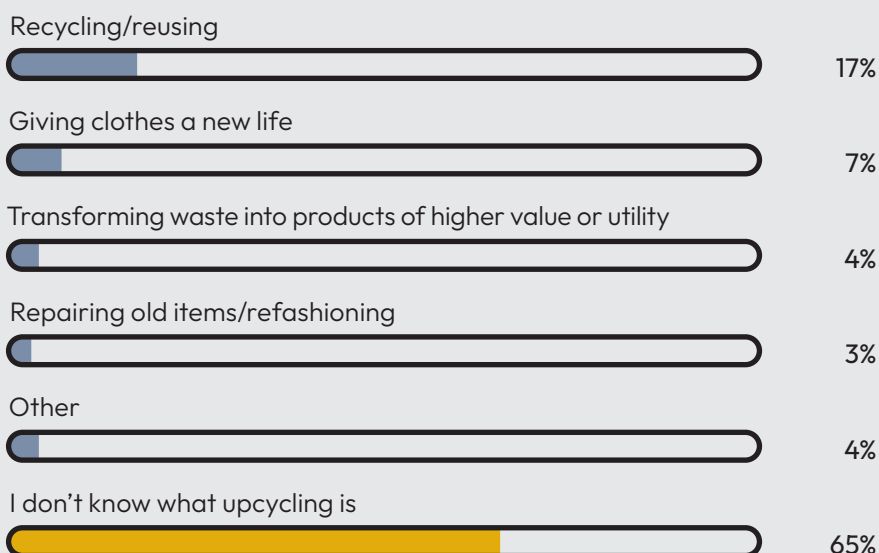




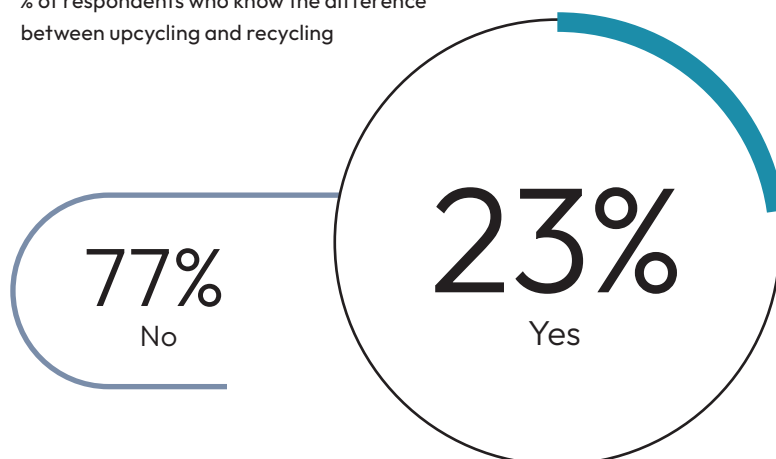
## Upcycling and our knowledge of it

Poles are unfamiliar with the term 'upcycling' – only 4 per cent of respondents are able to give a correct definition, and 65 per cent admit that they are completely unfamiliar with the term. At the same time, less than 1/4 declare that they know how upcycling differs from recycling.

### Associations with UPCYCLING



% of respondents who know the difference  
between upcycling and recycling



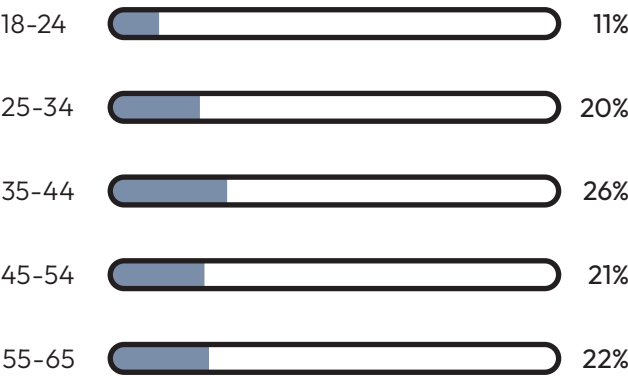
# About the survey

The survey was conducted using the CAWI method (Computer-Assisted Web Interview – a technique for collecting information in quantitative market research in which the respondent is asked to complete an electronic survey) on a nationwide representative sample (N=1015) in February, 2024.

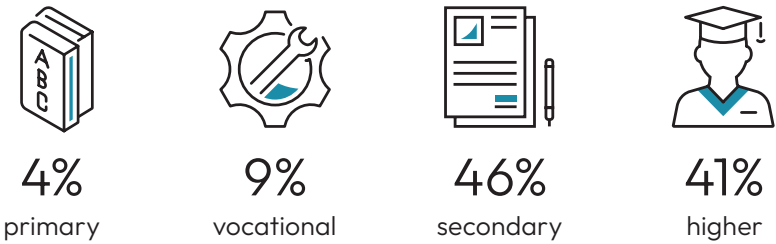
## SEX



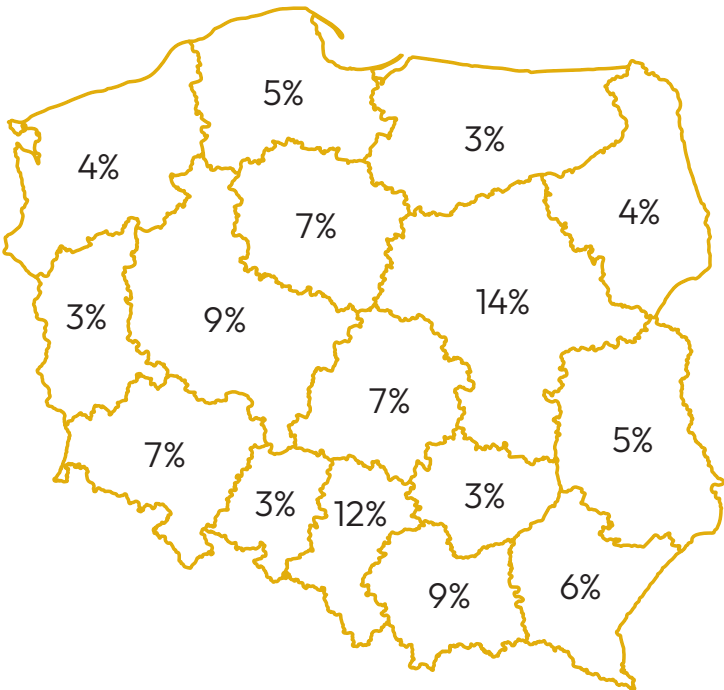
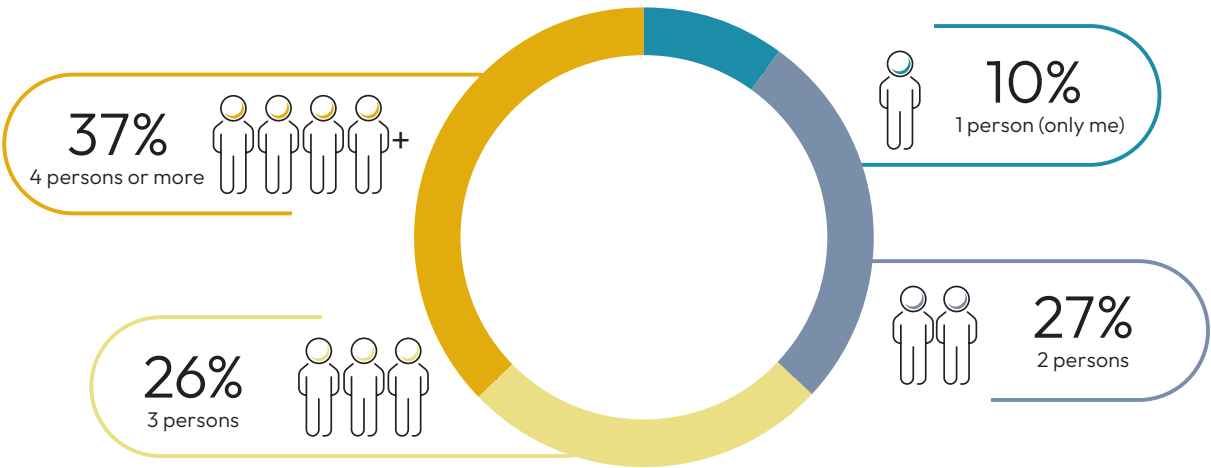
## AGE



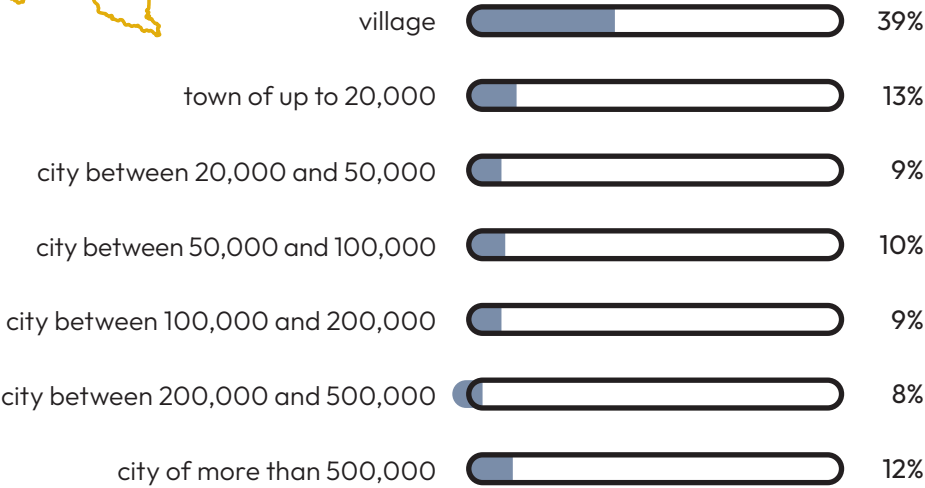
## EDUCATION



Number of persons  
IN HOUSEHOLD



Place of  
RESIDENCE



## Martyna Zastawna

Founder of the woshwosh brand and the these girls marketing agency, lecturer and mentor. Climate expert at the European Investment Bank and the UN. According to Forbes, one of the most influential women and a leader in sustainable development.

### woshwosh<sup>+</sup>



The clothing industry is one of the sectors with the greatest environmental impact. What's more, around 92 million tonnes of textile waste are sent to landfill every year and need urgent management. In the face of these figures, it is increasingly important to act to change the model on which the industry operates, but also to which consumers are accustomed. What I have in mind here is the urgent need to move from a linear to a circular model, to which, as a founder of woshwosh, I have dedicated most of my activities for almost 10 years. The need for specific changes in the business strategies of companies that not only set trends, but also shape consumer habits, is undeniable. Today woshwosh is not just about repair and cleaning, but above all a commitment to educate and act to raise consumer awareness, which is why, as pioneers in the field of sustainable fashion, we are extremely committed to promoting business practices based on circularity.

Over the course of almost 10 years – in which I have been actively involved in the sustainable fashion market – I have seen a significant change in consumer and business awareness. By consistently applying circular practices, we can not only prolong the life of products, but also educate the market, showing that fashion can be responsible.

In recent years, the fashion industry has faced significant challenges in terms of the need to make real changes and to take responsibility for the impact that clothing manufacturers have on the environment. One of the key directions for change is the promotion of clothing longevity and the principle of 'care & repair' as a response to mass production and rapidly changing trends that generate huge amounts of textile waste. Increased consumer awareness is leading more and more companies to recognise the need to initiate actions that can make a real difference to the behaviour of their customers and create new, more sustainable habits in their everyday behaviour. In addition to the introduction of practices that promote repairing and prolonging the life of products, specific legal regulations that can realistically influence consumers' choices and companies' actions are also crucial. Legal frameworks, such as the 'right to repair', aimed at obliging manufacturers to create more durable and repairable products, are fundamental to accelerate the transformation towards sustainability.

Legislative developments in Europe, such as the work on the 'right to repair', which is due to be implemented in the next few years – and in which I am actively involved – are an example of this. Other countries are already introducing actual measures to promote reparability, such as subsidies in France for repairing clothes and shoes or zero VAT for repair services in Sweden. These measures



are not only aimed at reducing waste, but also at promoting local craftsmanship and skills that are passed on from generation to generation. The growing social pressure on the fashion industry is also significant, prompting companies to take real action towards sustainability.

According to the LPP report on prolonging the life of clothes, up to 80 per cent of Poles believe that repairing clothes has a positive impact on the environment, and 73 per cent say that reducing the purchase of new clothes can also bring environmental benefits. Thus, the 'Wear Your Story' campaign becomes a response to the real needs of consumers who want to repair and learn how to take care of their clothes.

It is initiatives such as 'Wear Your Story' that not only support the idea of circularity in fashion, but also highlight the importance of returning to the tradition of repairing and transforming garments. They promote the knowledge and skills that are the foundation of sustainability and an alternative to throwing away clothes.

Small changes in habits, such as repairing damaged shoes or clothes instead of throwing them away, can make a significant difference to the environment and the future of our planet. These actions are extremely important because their main purpose is not only to promote appropriate behaviour, but above all to educate the public. Education that lays the foundations for understanding the need for change and enables people to consciously shape their daily habits and make reasoned purchasing choices.

By supporting these activities, each of us contributes to building a more sustainable future, where resources are respected and environmental impact is minimised.

## Katarzyna Stasiuk

DSc in psychology and professor  
at the Institute of Applied Psychology  
of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków



Until the middle of the last century, repairing and reworking clothes was a common practice. In recent years, however, these habits have changed enormously, with fewer and fewer consumers trying to repair damaged clothes, preferring to throw them away and buy new ones<sup>1</sup>.

There may be several reasons for these changes. First of all, a hundred years ago, owning clothes had a much higher value, because they were less available and many people could not afford to buy them often. Today, the ubiquity of mass fashion has made clothes more attainable both physically and materially. This has not been without a loss in the durability of the garments sold. Its shorter life cycle and, at the same time, unlimited supply mean that, for the majority (76 per cent) of participants in the LPP survey, the main reason for disposing of clothes is wear and tear.

However, clothes are discarded and replaced by new ones not only for practical reasons. Other reasons (which consumers are usually less willing to admit) are related to psychological factors. The very process of buying and wearing new clothes generates positive emotions in many people, and some see it as a way of improving a bad mood (hence the sometimes used term 'shopping therapy')<sup>2,3</sup>. Consumers therefore buy clothes frequently (71 per cent of survey participants do so once every three months or more often), but the satisfaction of owning them is short-lived.

Interestingly, consumers simultaneously declare a high environmental awareness. The vast majority of those surveyed (over 70 per cent) believe that limiting the purchase of new clothes and repairing the clothes they already own has a positive impact on the environment, while throwing away clothes is harmful to the environment. Many consumers are also aware that repairing and altering clothes is good for the environment, they also declare that they would like to repair their clothes by themselves. The problem is that they rarely do this, with less than half of the survey participants saying that they try to repair damaged clothes by themselves, and a third admitting that they throw them away and buy new ones. Almost half of those surveyed have never redone their clothes or have only done so once.

This incompatibility is an example of the so-called 'attitude-behaviour gap' that has long been observed in responsible consumption studies<sup>4</sup>. Their results show that consumers tend to be very knowledgeable about how to care for the environment and declare that this topic is important to them, while for various reasons they do not translate these declarations into their own behaviour.

When it comes to repairing clothes, the main obstacle declared is the lack of knowledge (declared by 72 per cent of respondents). When repairing or reworking clothes ceased to be a necessity (because it's easy to buy new ones), the skills obvious to previous generations also naturally began to disappear. Today, although most people are able to thread a needle or sew on a button, they do not have the skills or equipment (e.g. a sewing machine) that would allow them to make major repairs or alter clothes.

Another barrier (although less frequently perceived and expressed by consumers) to extending the life of clothes can be negative stereotypes and fear of social judgement. Repaired clothes often evoke associations with a bad financial situation ('I repair because I can't afford new ones') or the unattractive appearance of the repaired clothes and their owner. Many consumers may therefore fear that by wearing clothes with visible signs of repair they will be judged negatively by others<sup>5</sup>.

It is therefore possible that the image of the repaired garment needs some 'disenchantment'. This can be done by building positive associations that link repairing with responsibility, originality and creativity, which may be attractive especially to young people. This approach to damaged items has been around for many years in Japan, where the philosophy and art of kintsugi originated. It involves repairing broken porcelain by visibly joining its fragments and creating a completely new whole, in which the imperfection of the damaged thing is turned into an advantage.

A way to encourage consumers to fix their clothes could also be to add a social relationship benefit to the activity. This was the idea of the creators of repair cafes – an initiative to fix broken things (including clothes) together. The cafes bring together people who bring items that need repair with people who can repair them and are willing to share their skills (free of charge). The aim of this initiative is not only to prolong the life of damaged clothes or household items, but also to build social relationships (including intergenerational) and integrate local communities.

1. Gwilt, A. (2020). *A practical guide to sustainable fashion*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
2. Kang, J. Y. M., Johnson, K. K., & Kim, J. (2013). Clothing functions and use of clothing to alter mood. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 1, 43-52.
3. Stasiuk, K., Maison D. (2014). *Psychologia konsumenta*, Warszawa, PWN.
4. Reimers, V., Magnuson, B., & Chao, F. (2016). The academic conceptualisation of ethical clothing: could it account for the attitude behaviour gap?. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 20, 383-399.
5. Gwilt, A. (2014). What prevents people repairing clothes?: An investigation into community-based approaches to sustainable product service systems for clothing repair. *Making Futures Journal*, 3.



## Małgorzata Czudak

dress designer, professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź,  
lecturer in design at the Institute of Fashion at the Academy of Fine Arts  
in Łódź



The need for conscious, sustainable design has been talked about in the community for a long time. We want a product to be not only aesthetically pleasing, but also functional and, above all, we are paying more and more attention to what the product is made of, where the raw material comes from, how long its 'life' will last and what happens to it after it is disposed of to the garbage.

I have been interested in the subject of extending the life of clothes for years – I started looking for information and reliable news about it as early as during my studies. At some point, I also realised that shoemakers' shops, tailoring services, alterations and repairs, as well as fabric shops and haberdasheries, where you could buy everything necessary for sewing: from needles to thread and snaps, had started to disappear. My friends rescued me with some fabric from their stocks, and I learned to sew on an old Łucznik machine. After graduation I bought a good machine, which has not only served me for years, but I have sewn several collections and dozens of garments on it. I am the best example of the fact that sewing can be learnt and, what is more, new clothes can be created from so-called waste.

The fashion industry is currently undergoing a transformation. Alternatives are being sought to traditional raw materials: cotton, linen or wool, the cultivation of which has an impact on the environment, and the traditional confection known since industrialisation is now receding into the background. Consumers are increasingly trying to give an individual, unique look to their own items. And although this has been done before, e.g. by painting or dyeing things, the slogan DIY (Do It Yourself) has just now become extremely popular.

What do Poles know about repairing and altering clothes, and what skills do they have in this area? A survey conducted by LPP in cooperation with ARC on a representative group of Poles confirmed my previous observations.

Our society has now become accustomed to the phenomenon of recycling, to which not only clothes are subjected – since it is a waste treatment process that allows certain materials to be reused for new products and is one way of protecting the environment, thanks to which we can reduce the amount of rubbish.

A new phenomenon has emerged in recent years: 'upcycling'. As the survey shows, it is so far known to a small group of consumers. Mature people, especially those over 50, have not encountered the term. So what is upcycling? It is a form of waste processing that results in products with a higher value. Examples include bags or backpacks sewn from advertising banners, which are printed on durable substrates. We can also upcycle clothing, of course. According to research presented in the LPP report, only 4 per cent of respondents knew the correct definition of the term, and less than 1/4 declared that they knew the difference between upcycling and recycling.

This does not deter upcycling advocates from taking action. Especially since the result is not only not wasting and not throwing things away, but above all protecting the environment. Many people are still unaware of what happens to their clothes once they have been thrown away. And these do not just vanish into thin air.

Another important issue related to this topic is education. I am convinced that programmes to develop knowledge and skills in this area would be applicable from primary schools. Teaching theory and practice is a process that requires patience and so-called 'grassroots work'. The 'Wear Your Story' campaign has the potential to be a resource for many people who would like to learn how to repair or rework clothes and, in doing so, create unique creations. It is also an opportunity to preserve the special memories hidden in parts of our wardrobe. One of the most frequently specified forms of attractive transmission of such knowledge are tutorial videos – in the LPP survey, these were indicated by 47 per cent of respondents. I believe that the internet and popular communication platforms will help to drive these positive actions and change people's attitudes towards repairing and altering clothes.