

Textile Transparency Report 2023

Humana Sweden

Collection and distribution of textiles 2023





Project information

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1. About the report

The Humana People to People network are working for more transparency and traceability in the business sector for used textiles.

Traceability in the value chain of used textiles is a crucial aspect of promoting sustainability, resource efficiency, quality assurance, ethical practices, and consumer empowerment within the textile industry.

Textiles collected for reuse have received increasing public attention in recent years. It has been documented that the reuse of textiles provides environmental benefits by keeping the textiles in use for a longer time and reducing the consumption of new textiles. Also, positive socio-economic effects like profits for charitable purposes, job creation etc. On the other hand, negative claims indicate that export of used textiles to Africa, Asia and South America creates waste problems there and outperform local textile industry. The critics have to some extent succeeded in creating distrust in the second-hand clothing (SHC) sector, locally as well as globally. It affects political decisions and European legislation regarding international textile production and trade. To enable politicians to build legislations on facts, transparency and documentation of the SHC sector, its volumes and flows, environmental and socio-economic effects are crucial.

The purpose of this report is to investigate and document on a factual basis where the textiles from Humana Sweden¹ end up, and what purpose they serve. In line with the Humana People to People Code of Conduct, all sorting centres used by Humana Sweden 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.

2. Humana Sweden

Humana Sweden works strictly by the Waste Hierarchy. The focus is on the top of the hierarchy, waste prevention and reuse. Consequently, it is of high importance to preserve the collected clothing as well as possible, avoiding that humid or dirty items contaminate the dry and clean.

Humana Sweden collects used textiles from collection points, Second Hand Shops and recycle stations. Some of the textiles are also bought from other Swedish textile collectors (Stadsmissionen in Sweden). Humana Sweden collects textiles from mostly all over Sweden. Most of the collection are serviced by Humana Sweden's own operators, while one area is serviced by independent actor that

¹ HUMANA Sverige



collect the textiles and deliver them to one packing point. Humana Sweden also collect not sold items of clothing and textiles from own and other Second-Hand Retail shops, both private and charities.

The textiles are picked up by drivers in vans or trucks and transported to 4 warehouses. The drivers remove or separate obvious waste from the textiles upon collection.

At the warehouses textiles are packed in big-bags and then loaded in shipping containers or trucks for transport to sorting centres in EU. During packing, more waste might be discovered and removed. Waste from collection and packing is sent to incineration. The waste is handled by waste management companies locally.

Humana Sweden has four second-hand shops in Sweden. The stores are supplied with high-quality reusable clothing from the sorting centres abroad. A total of 192,1 tonnes was imported back to Humana Sweden, corresponding to 6,8 % of the collected amount. This number does not appear in the result (chapter 3) because of the calculation method we use (see chapter 4)

Table 1 shows the amount of collected textiles that Humana Sweden sold to 12 different sorting centres. Seven of them received more than 100 tonnes of textiles and have been asked to fill out report-forms. These seven sorting centres have received 93% of the amounts that Humana Sweden collected, and they have reported in detail. The remaining five sorting centres received small amounts, less than 100 tonnes each, and have not been asked to report. There are some minor differences between the amount that Humana Sweden reports sold versus the amount reported received from the sorting centres. This is explained by shipments in transit.



Table 1. Amount of textiles from Humana Sweden 2023, tonnes and percentages.

Sorting centre	Amount sold (reported from Humana Sweden)	Amount received from Humana Sweden (reported from sorting centre)	Total amount received at sorting centre	Humana Sweden's share of total amount received at sorting centre
HPP Bulgaria	681	739	13 294	6 %
HPP Lithuania	537	536	38 685	1 %
Umana Poland	466	407	1 478	28 %
HPP Slovakia	410	410	7 825	5 %
Textile House Slovakia	252	252	26 319	1 %
Tiburon Poland	171	171	n/a	
Amor Poland	126	126	n/a	
Other sorting centres, not reporting (5)	196	n/a	n/a	
Total sold	2 838			
Purchase of sorted textiles to Humana Sweden second hand shops	192			
Sold to reporting sorting centres	2 642			
Waste removed at collection	86			
Total received at sorting centres		2 641		
Deviation sold – received (tonnes)		-1		
Deviation sold – received (%)		0,0 %		
Reported from sorting centres as share of total sold		93 %		



3. Results

3.1. Utilisation of the collected textiles

A total of 74 % of what Humana Sweden collected in 2023 ended up as textiles going for reuse² (Figure 1). 16,5 % ended up as textiles delivered for material recycling, while 1,5 % ended up as textiles delivered for other waste treatment. 7,9 % out of what Humana Sweden collected was not counted as apparel or textiles and was delivered for waste treatment from the sorting centres, either as material recycling (0,7 %) or other types of waste handling (7,2 %).

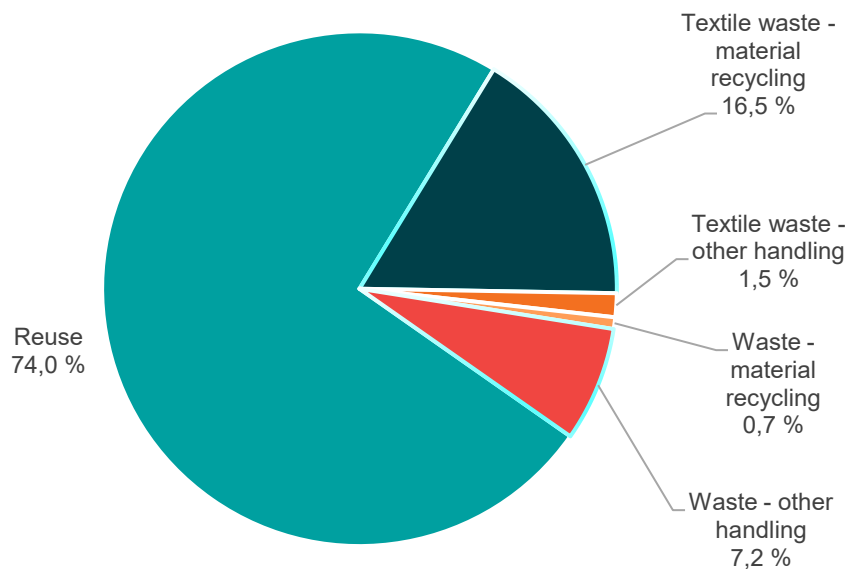


Figure 1. Distribution of purposes for textiles originally collected by Humana Sweden in 2023

Figure 2 shows small changes on all the types of utilisations. The amounts of reuse have slightly decreased compared to the previous year 2022 but is still higher than year 2020 and 2021. The material recycling- and waste rate is more or less the same as previously.

² Calculation from all reporting sorting centres, assuming that quality from the specific collecting organisation is equal to the total for the sorting centres (se detail in chapter 4)

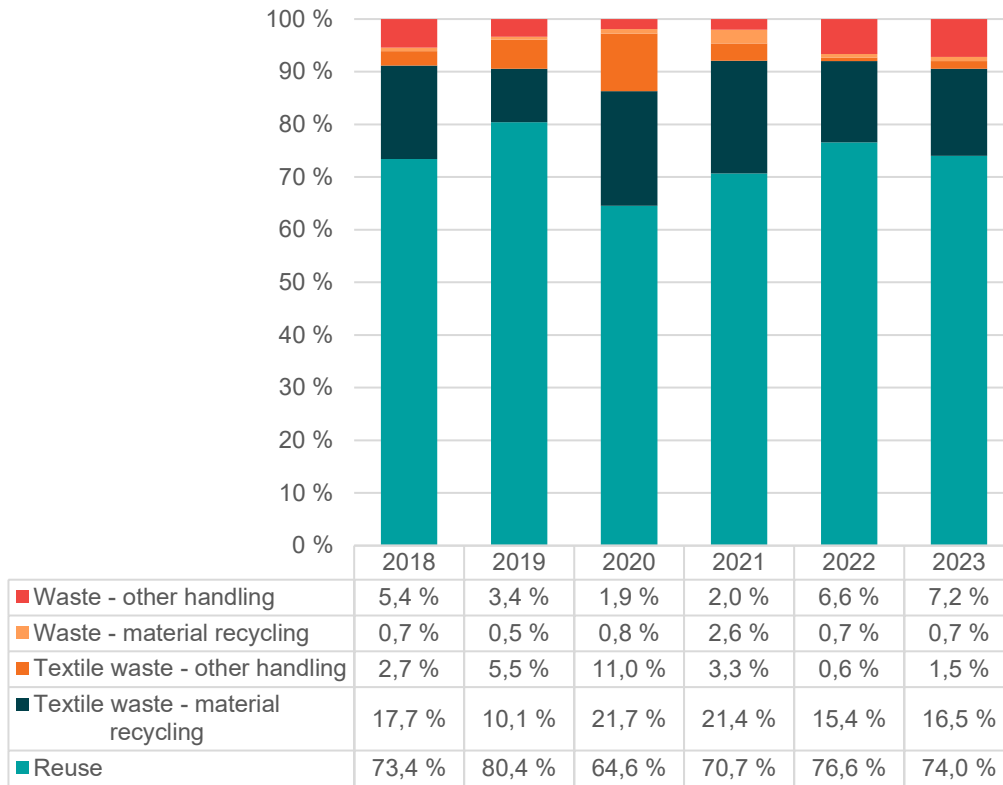


Figure 2: Utilisation of used textiles originally collected by Humana Sweden in the period 2018- 2023.

Changes from year to year can be a result of changes in sales to different sorting centres. The different sorting centres' shares of reuse and recycling depend primarily on the quality of textiles they receive, but also on the markets they supply. The sorting centres must always deliver the goods which the market demands. The SHC market is dynamic, demands will change over time and the sorting centres must comply.

In 2020, adjustments were done to the reporting method, which may have clarified the distinction between the term's 'reuse' and 'material recycling', thereby causing an apparent reduction in the share of 'reuse'. The difference between 2020 and previous years is also likely to be connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on the market for second hand textiles.

As textiles from Humana Sweden only make up a small share of the sorted textiles at all sorting centres (Table 1, last column), it is likely that textiles collected elsewhere are also affecting the share of textiles going to reuse.



Description of the qualities

An important part of the second-hand business is to handle the collected textiles in the best possible way. Sorting the textiles into several specific categories is necessary to meet the customers' needs. Most sorting centres sort the textiles into more than 100 unique categories. In order to present what happens with the textiles collected by Humana Sweden requires only documentation of a few main categories which are referred to throughout this report.

- Reuse: textiles that are used again for the same purpose as originally intended
- Textile waste, material recycling: textiles processed into recycled textile fibres used for other products.
- Textile waste, other handling: 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.

3.2. Geographical distribution of sold textiles

The geographical distribution of sorted textiles and waste originally collected by Humana Sweden is displayed in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

The Asia region includes Turkey and United Arab Emirates. The Nordic region is shown separately, and consists of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

Comparing the year 2023 to 2022, results show a larger share of textiles sold to Europe, and a small reduction in sales to Africa (Figure 3)

Figure 4 shows that all waste that occurs due to sorting is treated locally in Europe. The textiles sold to Africa are entirely for the purpose of reuse. In Asia, textiles from Humana Sweden are used both for reuse and for material recycling.

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.

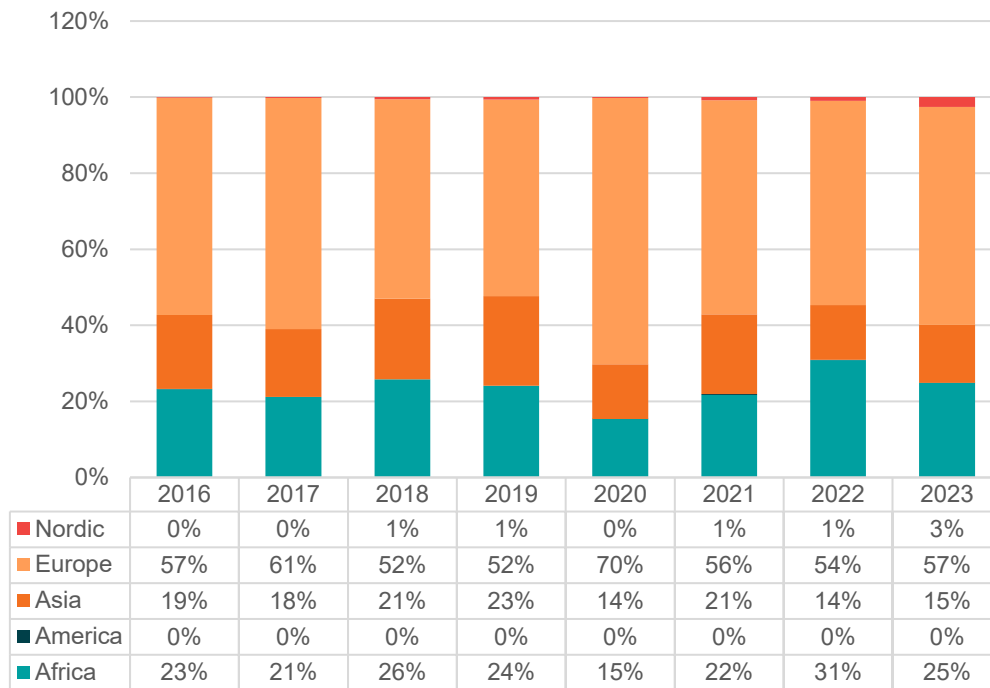


Figure 3: Recipient continents for used textiles originally collected by Humana Sweden, 2016-2023.



Figure 4: Continents and purpose of used textiles originally collected by Humana Sweden in 2023.



Humana Sweden got back 192,1 tonnes with sorted textiles for sale in their second-hand shops in Sweden. This corresponds to 6,8 % of the total amount that Humana Sweden collected. This result does not appear in our calculation presented in Figure 4. The reason for this is that we calculate the continent and purpose of the sorted and sold textiles based on all deliveries to the sorting centres proportionally. The Swedish textiles only make up a small share of the total supply to the sorting centres, in total 3 % (Table 1, last column).

4. Methodology

4.1. Data collection

This report is based on data collected from Humana Sweden and data from sorting centres receiving the collected textiles from these collection organisations.

Collection organisations

Data from the collection organisations was collected through a survey in the form of a spreadsheet. Humana Sweden was asked to provide quantitative information on the amounts of textiles they collected, sold, and sold to whom in 2023, as well as qualitative data on their collection system and how they register data on the textiles and waste they handle.

Sorting centres

The list of sorting centres to be contacted was established based on reports received from the collection organisations. Two forms were 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 100 and 1,000 tonnes from all participating Humana collection organisations.

The sorting centres were asked to provide data on all textiles that they have received and sorted at their location. This is required of them according to the Humana People to People Code of Conduct.

Comparison with previous results

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

Audits

As part of the quality control of reported data, each year Mepex conducts audits of selected sorting centres to ensure that their routines and practices for registration, sorting quality and reporting are



credible. This year, 'on site audits' was performed at UFF Humana Bodø Sorting centre in Norway and Umana in Poland.

4.2. 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, 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

The calculations are made based on reports from the sorting centres. Percentages are calculated in relation to the amount of textiles arriving at the sorting centres. This means that waste removed by the collector prior to export is not included in the calculation.

Textiles accounted for is calculated as the share of textiles sold from the collection organisation to sorting centres which have reported, in relation to the total amount of textiles sold by that collection organisation.

4.3. 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. We have no reason to think that these differences influence the overall results, as the quality of the original is assumed to be quite stable.

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. In 2023, the option "sold for further sorting" was added, 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.



Furthermore, 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 gone to material recycling when it is unclear whether the textiles have gone to reuse or recycling.