Charity Shop Grade Textiles in the UK

This report relates to the Charity Shop Grade (CSG) textiles sold by charity shops to textile merchants for recycling or preparing for reuse.

Publishing the data is important because textiles form a core component of national consumption and the report helps to give a better understanding of textile flows around the circular economy.

The data is based on a quarterly survey carried out by the Charity Retail Association (CRA) and extrapolated to get an estimated textile volume sold on by charity shops in the UK for recycling or preparation for reuse, and the income generated.

The number of charity shops involved in the survey varies from quarter to quarter. There is also the possibility of other factors impacting the data, such as seasonal effect. Due to this, figures are not directly comparable from quarter to quarter.

Figure one: Estimated CSG textiles sold by charity shops each quarter for recycling or preparing for reuse, tonnages and average sale prices, UK, 2016-17

‘CSG textiles sold’ relates to estimated tonnages sold across the charity retail sector
‘Sale price (per tonne)’ relates to the median value for responses to the Charity Retail Association’s quarterly market analysis survey (see Notes on data and limitations)
Source: Charity Retail Association (CRA)

The amount of CSG textiles sold to textile merchants varies slightly from quarter to quarter. In the latest quarter of October to December 2017, the amount of textiles sold to textile merchants for recycling or preparing for reuse was about 33k tonnes.

1 Charity Shop Grade (sometimes referred to as ‘rag’) is that which usually gets sold on by charity retailers for recycling or preparation for reuse, rather than sold in their shops to paying customers for direct reuse.

2 The CSG price data received by the Charity Retail Association is skewed towards the price provided by larger charity retailers, who represent the largest proportion of charity shops in the sample. Charity retailers operating in only one or few locations may be paid a different price compared to national chains. Therefore, the median figure is provided to highlight that there may be some extreme CSG price differences in both directions.
In contrast, the estimated median price of textiles per tonne had been fairly similar up until the April to June quarter of 2017 when it appeared to rise to around £410 per tonne. While the reason for this is unknown, factors such as varying material types or changes in collection points may have caused the price to increase. For a rolling year from January 2017 to December 2017 an estimated amount of 137k tonnes were sold to textile merchants. Please note: some of the textiles sold on in the UK would have been exported for recycling or preparing for reuse.

**Figure two: Estimated quarterly income from sales of CSG textiles sold by charity shops for recycling or preparing for reuse, UK, 2016-17**

The estimated income generated by charity retailers from the sale of the textiles also varies from quarter to quarter. In the October to December quarter of 2017 it was estimated at around £15 million and in a rolling year from January 2017 to December 2017 the estimated income generated was around £59 million.

Overall the estimated amount of CSG textiles sold to textile merchants in 2016 was 147k tonnes, which is larger than the 137k tonnes sold in 2017. However, the total estimated income generated from sales of CSG textiles increased from £54 million in 2016 to £59 million in 2017. This growth in income is due to the median average sale price per tonne of CSG textiles increasing from approximately £360 in 2016 to £420 in 2017.
In 2016, the estimated amount of CSG textiles recycled from households through charity retailers was 147k tonnes. This is equivalent to 5.4 kilos per UK household.

The amount of textiles from households recycled through the local authorities from kerbsides, local authority managed bring banks and civic amenity centres was 119k tonnes.

The amount of textiles recycled from households through other private organisations, including other bring banks, is not yet known but could be very significant. It is hoped that more data will become available for this category in future.

Notes on data and limitations:

Every quarter, the Charity Retail Association (CRA) carries out a quarterly market analysis survey which covers the income generated from Charity Shop Grade (CSG) textiles as well as average price per kilo for the same grade. Data from this survey is extrapolated to get the estimated figures for the charity sector, including volume of CSG textiles sold on for recycling or preparation for reuse.

The data sample varies each quarter. For example, the number of charities included in the sample varies as more or fewer charities might take part from one quarter to another. Also as charities open/close shops, they might fall into a different charity retail chain size category. Number of shops also varies as charities open/close shops from one quarter to another and also because participant charities may change.

The price used in the calculations is based on the average price per kilo reported by national charity retailers in this survey.

Number of shops in the sector is reviewed and updated every 6 months.

3 ‘Textiles recycled’ includes textiles sold for recycling or preparing for reuse.

4 According to data from the Office for National Statistics, there were 27.1 million households in the UK in 2016: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2016