

# CUTTING OVERCONSUMPTION

## LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC FOR BETTER LIVING



Re  set  
lessons from  
lockdown

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# CUTTING OVERCONSUMPTION

## How the pandemic revealed rapid change can happen to what we buy, eat and use

Can people change faster than the climate? As temperature records get repeatedly broken and action becomes critical, is there any evidence-based hope that change at the speed and scale needed can happen? We have found multiple examples from different times, places and areas of life that suggest people are much better at rapid change than we give ourselves credit for. You can find these stories at: [rapidtransition.org](https://rapidtransition.org)

More recently, the world has lived through an exceptional upheaval caused by the coronavirus pandemic and in this briefing we take a special look at some of the incredibly rapid changes that occurred in how we lived - and in particular how we changed our consumption patterns. This has been a traumatic and difficult time, but it has also encouraged innovative behaviour and fostered communities in an entirely new way. It also brought to life real hope about humanity's abilities to change direction and avert the climate and ecological emergency.



After capturing **lessons from the first lockdown** at the start of 2020, the Rapid Transition Alliance began in early 2021 to examine the trends in behaviour and systemic change that were emerging during the pandemic.

We collected reflections by people as this new world unfolded and began to analyse how new behaviours might prove positive for a future low-carbon world. **Two of the big shifts** we noted were an increased awareness of our own **overconsumption** across wealthier parts of the world, and a huge reduction in what became “**unnecessary travel**” - including commuting, holidays and business journeys.

The short stories here look in more detail at overconsumption and consider some of the key messages and solutions that have become apparent during the pandemic that could help us make the rapid transition to a more sustainable future. The deluge of stuff shown by the breakneck growth of fast fashion, the boom in self storage facilities and the increasingly global issue of plastic pollution is being tackled by a wide range of initiatives, from reuse and repair workshops, and secondhand clothes exchanges, to refill shops and local cooking services that prevent food waste. The huge power being brought to bear by advertisers encouraging us to consume is being resisted by people turning instead to local, artistic and communal activities, such as singing, craft, volunteering and protesting. High streets are being reimagined and green spaces appreciated more than ever.

These stories and the messages they carry are a resource to be shared and we encourage you to reuse them, share them and to let us know your own stories of positive change.





# PANDEMIC EPIPHANIES



**Millions locked into the consumer 'work and spend' cycle experienced something different during the global pandemic, rethinking what really matters**

Eat, sleep, work, shop – sometimes in consumer societies it seems as if there's not much more to life. In pre-pandemic days, the old economic system wanted and expected people to behave as selfish, competitive individuals. But the virus not only brought out the best in many people, with millions enthusiastically making sacrifices to help others and put public safety first, it also created an opportunity for millions to rethink what mattered in life and seek to escape the 'work and spend' consumer trap.<sup>1</sup>

For many, this meant making time for creativity, activism, community volunteering, spending time with friends and family, and to grow as people. Demands for better work-life balance, made possible by a shift to a shorter working week, are also on the increase. As a mirror of the rapid transitions needed for the climate and ecological emergency, people themselves have experienced transformations. It could be called the great pandemic epiphany.

As Covid-19 rapidly spread around the world, and governments demanded that citizens stay at home to halt its transmission, the daily lives of billions were turned on their heads. Almost overnight, the rhythms and grooves of everyday life were put on pause. Many people were unprepared for the challenges this would bring. After all, daily habits are what we use to navigate the trials and tribulations of life; they shape the way people move around, how communities interact, and underpin the values many hold dear.

**"Covid has jolted the record player of all our lives. The new experiences people have had as a result means that, as the needle returns to the vinyl, we could find ourselves in a different groove."**

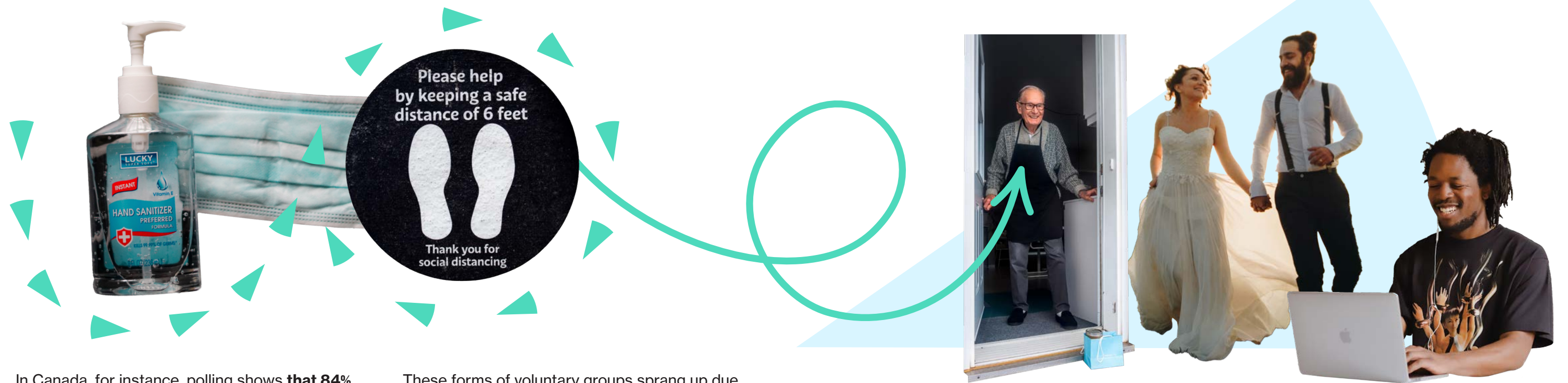
Leo Murray, director of innovation at Possible

At the onset of the pandemic, when an understanding of the virus was in the nascent stages and there were no viable means of preventing infection and death, people's priorities shifted rapidly. Decades of ingrained individualism were upended by governments' pleas for people to protect one another through social distancing and a mutual respect. Some were worried that the virus would take advantage of an individualistic culture, but evidence strongly suggests that people went above and beyond government guidelines – time and time again – in order to keep their fellow citizens safe and do their bit to halt the spread of the virus.



**People were not only more willing to volunteer within the community, but they also had more time to reflect on what was important to their life**





In Canada, for instance, polling shows **that 84% of citizens complied with Covid-19 restrictions most of the time.**<sup>2</sup> **Figures from the UK paint a similar picture**<sup>3</sup> with the compliance rates of social distancing remaining in the range of 80%, **despite the government's official advisors expecting rates of between 50% and 75%**<sup>4</sup>. Regardless of what individual citizens wanted to do, and the disruption that lockdowns and social distancing caused, high compliance rates across different contexts suggests that people were prepared to put self-interest to one side in favour of keeping both their loved ones and complete strangers safe.

Alongside this civic duty to slow the spread of the virus, there was an increase in community initiatives that sought to help people meet their needs. Mutual aid, a form of voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit, swept across countries and empowered communities. The UK saw **4,300 mutual aid groups blossom in the first throes of the lockdown**<sup>5</sup>, with citizens offering help to the vulnerable or those needed to self-isolate, as well as exchanging everything from baked goods to exercise classes. For many of the citizens that engaged in these mutual aid groups, it was their first step into community activism and brought with it a whole host of benefits, **including significant improvements in mental health, community identification and people's sense of belonging**<sup>6</sup>.

These forms of voluntary groups sprang up due to many people having more free time. While not ubiquitous, the pandemic enabled many people to work from home while others couldn't work at all. The increase in free time meant that people were not only more willing to volunteer within the community, but they also had more time to reflect on what was important to their life.

**One study from Germany**<sup>7</sup> found that respondents used this additional time to go outdoors, to experience nature more intensely, to spend more time with their partner and their children – and generally to have more time for themselves. **Many within the study**<sup>8</sup> used this time to reflect on those things which may give meaning in life, to reflect on what is essential to a good life, and also as a hint to change certain aspects of life, to be more aware of nature and of people around them and to deal more mindfully with those people.

One symptom of this re-evaluation of what matters is the growing demands for a four day working week. Having got used to an abundance of free time, many people are unsurprisingly reluctant to return to work five days a week. There is currently a pilot study underway in the UK, run by think-tank Autonomy, involving 50 businesses around the country and trialling a four-day week to boost productivity and halt burnout. Governments are supporting companies and workers demanding more free time too, with the **Belgian government recently giving workers the right to request a four-day week**<sup>9</sup>.

**“The pandemic has certainly accelerated a shift in attitudes towards work-life balance. While the desire to cut down on working time and make greater space for life away from work isn't new, the overnight shift to remote working experienced by many has revealed that working practices aren't set in stone – they can be rapidly changed. Policies like the four-day working week with no loss in pay have therefore begun to appear much more feasible to both workers and businesses alike. Few are eager to simply return to the ‘old ways’ from before the pandemic, and want to capitalise on a chance to experiment with alternatives. Given the interest we've seen in our forthcoming four-day week pilot, a reduction in working time is at the front and centre.”**

Jack Kellam, researcher at think-tank Autonomy

A shift in what a person values and wants from their life is common after a traumatic or stressful event – which the pandemic most certainly was. **Studies show**<sup>10</sup> that in the wake of natural disasters and traumatic events people are more likely to make big transitional decisions in their lives, such as getting married or divorced. Psychologists have labelled this phenomena as **‘posttraumatic growth’**<sup>11</sup> or **‘spiritual transformation’**<sup>12</sup>, where pivotal junctures in life cause people to search for meaning and support in other areas of their life, leaving behind old behaviours and values.

In the wake of the pandemic, as the world emerges from restrictions, there is an opportunity to leverage some of these more social and collective shifts in values and sentiments to accelerate the transitions in energy, lifestyles and consumption patterns. Not only could this break the cycle of expensive overconsumption that never satisfies, but it could help people live healthier lives with much higher well being. The boost it may also give to active citizenship could help solve multiple other engrained social problems, and give people the time and motivation to engage enthusiastically in the great task of rapid, low carbon transition.



# HOW WE LEARNED TO USE OUR HANDS AGAIN



Having the time to make  
and do: how the repair  
revival can cure consumer  
waste for climate and  
human well being

During lockdown, many people found themselves confined to their homes. Suddenly social circles became more separate and physical human interactions were suspended until further notice. People were forced inwards and asked to function as normal within just four walls, alongside the people, family, creatures and objects that make their homes what they are.

At the same time, for those not still compelled to leave the home to go to work in key and front line services, many people found themselves working from home for the first time or on furlough. For these people, the time that they had to themselves grew. Ironically, people had more free time to do whatever they wanted, outside the rigours of work and social commitments, but less physical space to exercise it.

But when left to live their lives within four walls, people's creativity knew no bounds. **Musicians jumped on Zoom**<sup>1</sup> to perform with each other, **ballet dancers**<sup>2</sup> traded their dance studios for their kitchens and front rooms, and **windows suddenly became colourful portals into the lives of millions**,<sup>3</sup> as part of a nation-wide Art Exhibition. When faced with limits and restrictions, human imagination thrived as people chose to do things differently. And when provided with this impromptu abundance of free time, people not only adapted to and found inspiration in their immediate environment: they also sought to transform it by embracing the practical and creative skills of repair.



In the UK, throughout the first lockdown, spending on DIY and home improvements jumped up by 21.6% in just **three months**.<sup>4</sup> Sewing machine sales saw a 127% increase, with both large retailers and smaller shops experiencing a sudden shortage of fabric and **sewing paraphernalia**.<sup>5</sup> While many turned their hands to mending and repairing clothes, others joined the cannon of cottage industrialists sewing masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) for those in the **health and care sectors**.<sup>6</sup> Youtube became a global source of shared skills, and a BBC program called Repair Shop, about mending emotionally important belongings, gained huge audiences.

In the eastern German town of Jueterbog, refugees banded together to sew face masks for elderly residents at the **local retirement home**.<sup>7</sup> Some of these refugees had run sewing repair businesses in their home countries, bringing their skills and experience to help their new communities at a time of need.





This human urge to mend, repair and improve is nothing new – it has just been forgotten and gone untrained, buried under an avalanche of mass produced garments, hemmed with injustice, exploitation and emissions. Ten million tonnes of which end up in landfills every year in North America, despite 95% of it being eligible for **re-use or recycling**.<sup>8</sup> The UK sends an eye-watering £140 million worth of good clothing to landfill **each year**.<sup>9</sup> By re-skilling in the art of repair, tonnes of waste can be diverted and millions of pounds can be saved every year.

**“Repairing is crucial to regain true ownership of the products we own.”**

– Ugo Vallauri, co-founder and project lead, The Restart Project

Even for the clothes that are lucky enough to avoid landfill and enter the multi-billion pound second-hand clothing trade, Covid-19 has brought unparalleled turbulence. Second-hand clothes garment retailers and charity shops have been inundated with clothes to sell on due to a combination of retail closures and home-bound citizens looking to create some residential reprieve from clutter. Textile recyclers and exporters too are having to cut their prices to shift excess stock as **Covid-19 restriction measures restricted the movement of goods and dampened demand in end countries**.<sup>10</sup>

And demand in these nations may never pick up again, because many poorer and less developed nations are beginning to stop second-hand clothes imports, as their domestic economies begin to buckle under the sheer weight of Western hand-me-downs. In 2019, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Burundi and Uganda all outlawed secondhand clothing imports in an effort to **boost their domestic manufacturing capacity**<sup>11</sup>, as cheap secondhand clothing consistently undercuts domestically produced garments and threatens to eradicate traditional textile design. All around the world, communities are realising that these practical skills are a vital piece of the puzzle to bring a new economy into existence.

During the Great Depression, citizens were told to ‘repair, reuse, and make do’, and during both World Wars, citizens were asked to ‘make do or do without’ as part of the war effort. In light of the climate crisis, where the choice between systems change or individual behaviour change in richer industrialised nations has long since passed, fostering this human urge to mend, repair and improve, will endow wider society with these practical skills. Call it Home Ecology, since ecology describes the relationship between organisms and their environment and the term itself derives from the Greek ecos meaning home. Lockdown provided a crash course on kickstarting the process.

**“A citizen implies some sort of reciprocity and agency – rights and responsibility, while a consumer is passive – you’re not invited to play any part in shaping a product or providing a solution.”**

– Karen Creavin, chief executive at The Active Wellbeing Society



But having the time to make and do will only get society half way there. To radically curtail overconsumption of consumer goods, there must be a right to repair enshrined in law. The UK government recently introduced a raft of ‘right to repair’ laws for washing machines, TV, fridges and other household appliances in a bid to **cut electrical waste**.<sup>12</sup> Last year, the EU Commission also unveiled their action plan for a circular economy, **which will revise key European directives around packing and waste by the end of 2021**.<sup>13</sup>

**“More than 70% of the overall emission linked to electronic products occurs before they have ever been switched on. So we should reuse, repair and prevent unnecessary wastage.”**

– Ugo Vallauri, co-founder and project lead, The Restart Project

But as lockdown has shown this newly formed army of DIYers, it’s not just electrical goods that need to have a right to repair: it’s the clothes, shoes, furniture, walls, windows and roofs that make up homes. To bend the emissions curve, all products bought and “consumed” or used must stand the test of time and should be designed with **longevity and circularity in mind**.<sup>14</sup>

As lockdown caused many people to reclaim these practical skills, many noticed that mending, repairing and improving household items didn’t feel like the arduous and frustrating task that our outsourcing culture has led us to believe. In fact, it made people feel better. There’s ample scientific and neurological research too that shows how using our hands practically, be it for mending something old or creating something new, can promote **better mental health**.<sup>15</sup> With pandemic restrictions causing spikes in anxiety and depression throughout society, repairing and creating became a form of therapy that many people could now access.

The lockdown-induced renaissance in sewing, mending, making and doing can also be understood as an **act of resistance**.<sup>16</sup> a protest against the loss of these very skills and a recognition that society cannot allow them to be forgotten once again. Taking ownership of these skills is one way of threading communities together, bringing together groups locally and also cross-culturally online. It’s also an effective way of limiting overconsumption at a personal and household level. These skills also allow us to build the capacity for managing and tending to our own **mental and emotional wellbeing**.<sup>17</sup> Having the time to make and do today will allow society to create a more resilient tomorrow.





# PLANT-BASED FOOD ENJOYS A PANDEMIC BOOST



When habits were broken, people thought more about what they ate, where it came from and its impacts on the world around them

We all have habits – some are good, some bad – things we don't think twice about doing. And, many of them involve food – what we eat, where we buy it and how we consume it. When the global pandemic hit, many of our habits around food changed as some people working at home had more time to grow and cook food and eat meals together, while others struggled to buy the food they needed. One of the biggest behaviour changes that could offer hope for a rapid transition was the rise of plant-based diets, which can bring a range of significant climate, nature and health benefits.

The forced suspension of habits is what psychologists and behavioural scientists call a '**habit discontinuity event**'<sup>1</sup>. Whether it's **the way we travel**<sup>2</sup>, how we understand our relationships with other people, or even **the beliefs that we hold dear**<sup>3</sup>, a habit discontinuity event can cast everything in a new light. When pandemic restrictions took hold, many people were unable to shop in the way they were used to or to eat-out in cafés and restaurants. Many had much more time on their hands. And the **politics of protest**<sup>4</sup> brought climate change to the fore, encouraging people to question diet as part of their impact. This combination of factors had a huge impact on our eating habits.

There were many different drivers for pandemic-induced dietary shifts. Some people used the pandemic to try and **make healthier choices and cut out junk food**<sup>5</sup>, while others sought to **improve their culinary skills and cook with and for their families**<sup>6</sup>. **Baking bread became a meditative exercise to relieve stress and**<sup>7</sup> fridges filled with sourdough starters to make the popular loaf. People with any amount of space to grow their own produce started **to plant and harvest**<sup>8</sup>, while others sought out **more local food**<sup>9</sup> producers and suppliers **to supplement or replace**<sup>10</sup> supermarket shopping. Many people also saw the pandemic as an opportunity consciously to pursue a more climate friendly, sustainable and cruelty-free diet. One country in particular has seen a dramatic shift, but it is not alone.



In the UK, the pandemic was a tipping point for accelerating the uptake of vegan diets. According to **industry research**<sup>11</sup>, one quarter of British people aged between 21 and 30 said that the pandemic had made a vegan diet far more appealing to their lifestyle. When this question was put to people of all ages, **12% agreed**<sup>12</sup> that a vegan diet became more attractive to them during lockdowns.

The reasons for these shifting sentiments go beyond environmental concerns. The same survey found that **over half of British adults**<sup>13</sup> believed that plant-based ingredients can have medicinal and health benefits. And, further, **23% said they were eating more fresh fruit and vegetables**<sup>14</sup> for health reasons, while 27% made changes because they wanted to save money. It's clear that the Covid-19 virus brought both physical and financial health to the forefront of public concerns, so supporting a healthy immune system with good ingredients became a **popular priority**.<sup>15</sup>



People started to plant and harvest



**“Demand for our delivery service – organic fruit, veg and other staples – shot up during the lockdowns. This is from a health perspective – i.e. not buying food sprayed with poisons – but also from an environmental perspective.**

**People are definitely more aware that animal agriculture, and in particular factory farming which produces over 95% of what is in the supermarkets, is destroying the planet. Awareness about the amount of carbon used to produce animal products is huge, as well the growing importance of food security.**

Danny Moore, Co-Founder of Farmacy Co-op

Britain has become a global hotspot for **vegan diets**<sup>16</sup>, but choosing to reduce meat and dairy consumption is on the rise everywhere. In Australia, a **2020 study found that 47% of Australians**<sup>17</sup> were reducing their meat and dairy intake. A similar trend was found in Canada, where 43% of people were committed to reducing their meat and dairy consumption. Across China, **60% of people expect to eat fewer dairy and meat products after the pandemic**<sup>18</sup> to limit their personal contribution to climate change.

Other countries, like India, were already more advanced with regard to meat-free diets due to cultural and religious preferences. A 2021 survey of Indian citizens found that **9% of the population now identified as fully vegan**<sup>19</sup> and **almost one in four**<sup>20</sup> identified as vegetarian. Results like this mean India has hundreds of millions of vegetarians, **the biggest share of non-meat eaters**<sup>21</sup> in the world. The growth of veganism in India has been a result of **a growing awareness around zoonotic diseases in the country**<sup>22</sup>, stimulated by the onset of the global pandemic.

Alongside the environmental and health benefits of renouncing meat and dairy, there is also a social dynamic with plant based diets increasingly being seen as more normal and attractive, especially among younger people. In many parts of the world, vegan and vegetarian diets are becoming aspirational and admirable. In India, many **Bollywood and cricket superstars have gone vegan**<sup>23</sup>, with their adoring fans following suit. One UK survey found that **36% of adults believe eating plant-based is “an admirable thing to do”**<sup>24</sup>. And, some of the world’s biggest celebrity influencers have gone meat-free, **from Beyonce and Billie Eilish to Venus Williams and Zac Efron**.<sup>25</sup>



**36% of adults believe eating plant-based is “an admirable thing to do”**

**“Celebrities and social media influencers are often seen as role models – their influence helps to bring veganism into the mainstream while their position allows them to speak out and inspire others to take action. During the last couple of years, and especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, many of us have spent more time on our phones, following the lives of our favourite actors, singers and athletes. Interestingly, a 2021 survey by The Vegan Society found that 1 in 5 Brits have cut down on meat consumption during the pandemic while 15% have reduced their dairy/egg intake over the lockdown period. While health, environmental or animal rights are usually the top reasons given for cutting back, there’s no doubting the power influencers can have on people’s decision to go vegan.”**

Francine Jordan, The Vegan Society UK

The shift away from meat and dairy-heavy diets could have large implications for the planet. Currently, the food system is responsible for around **one quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions**<sup>26</sup>, 47% of which are from livestock and fisheries, as well as the land use for their management. Unlike energy, where new technologies are making rapid transition more feasible, decarbonising agriculture is a daunting challenge. As such, the idea that dietary change is a must for creating a low carbon food system is commonplace.



It is also fostering an emergent, innovative and highly lucrative food sector. In the USA, the sale of plant-based products **grew by 27% in 2021**<sup>27</sup>. It’s estimated that the American market for vegan products is **now worth \$7 billion**<sup>28</sup>, up from \$5.5 billion in 2019, and growing 2.5 times faster than total food sales. In the UK, the supermarket Aldi saw its **vegan food sales grow by 250% in 2021**<sup>29</sup> and are forecasting even higher sales this year.

There is even scope for plant-based diets to stimulate dynamic, thriving local economies. The National Food Strategy for England, published last year, emphasised the benefits that could accumulate from developing the domestic manufacturing of alternative, plant based proteins, rather than importing them. The report concludes that this could create **upwards of 10,000 new factory jobs and 6,500 additional jobs in the farming industry**<sup>30</sup>. There are known health dangers to shifting to highly processed food products – even if they are vegan – so it will be important to balance manufacturing exciting new proteins with simply growing more seasonal vegetables close to where they will be eaten.

The pandemic has undoubtedly changed the way people think about their food and what they eat. Many of these changes will stand the test of time as new habits are developed and the increased visibility of plant-based diets sees a different, positive kind of social contagion as people follow friends and family members to eat differently – and with less climate impact. The shift has a momentum likely to continue as the pandemic subsides, with new diets making people feel better, healthier and more aligned with the natural world.



# SLOWING DOWN FAST FASHION



How the pandemic sowed the seed for a more sustainable fashion future

During the pandemic, so many people had extra time because they stopped commuting to work or attending social functions. This caused a huge shift in behaviour towards clothing and fashion. Some of the changes offer evidence-based hope for a much slower and less wasteful future for the fast fashion industry. Young fashion designers like Jeremy Salazar (@happyxloco)<sup>1</sup> in New Mexico, took to upcycling second-hand clothing, textiles and objects sourced from local community thrift shops. Purchasing second hand or 'pre-owned' clothing became more broadly socially acceptable as people also cleared out cupboards of unworn clothes and passed them on and home-making skills such as **sewing**,<sup>2</sup> knitting and crocheting became widespread again. In India, the **Mother India's Crochet Queens (MICQ)**<sup>3</sup> flourished, with 6,000 members across the globe collaborating on crochet projects. **Re-purposing**<sup>4</sup> and **re-styling**<sup>5</sup> wardrobes took off, together with exchanging clothing with friends, and simply making do with fewer, maybe more expensive but longer lasting items was a concept gathering popular support.



QUALITY

NOT

QUANTITY

Fashion is still one of the **largest industries**<sup>6</sup> in the world with annual revenues of around **\$1.4 trillion in 2018**,<sup>7</sup> carbon emissions of **2.1 billion tonnes**<sup>8</sup> – more than aviation – and over 60 million people working along the global supply chain. On average, each person in Europe buys **5kg of clothes per year**<sup>9</sup> and for the USA, the figure is over three times higher at 16kg. According to the Swedish researchers, **Mistra Future Fashion**,<sup>10</sup> 80% of the climate impact of clothing stems from the production phase, before the garments even hit the racks. They found that doubling the active lifetime of a garment, decreased its climate impact by 49%. For example, on average a t-shirt is used 30 times and washed 15 times. If this T-Shirt is instead used 60 times, the climate impact can be cut in half. Producing these same garments using solar-powered energy could mean a total reduction of 67%. If the consumer bikes or walks to the store instead of taking the car, the total impact decreases by 78%. This is why extending the life of any given item by encouraging more uses per garment, minimalist approaches and the use of secondhand markets and charity shops is so important.



An **April 2020 report**<sup>11</sup> by The Business of Fashion suggested that there was already an increasing awareness of the wasteful nature of fast fashion and a growing interest in “purpose-driven, sustainable action”. It predicted that what it called the lockdowns’ effective “quarantine of consumption” could accelerate some of these shifts and that if stores remain closed for two months, 80% of publicly listed fashion companies in Europe and North America would be in financial distress. A **follow up report in 2021**<sup>12</sup> showed the fashion industry experienced a 20% decline in revenues in 2019–20, with 7% of the industry participants leaving the market entirely. This was a seismic shakeup with the potential to cut emissions significantly. New trends highlighted include consumer demand for circular sourcing – where no waste is generated – and virtual shopping, which will involve producing a design in the metaverse only. Research is still to be done on the carbon impact of virtual shopping.

There is some concern that the boom in online shopping entrenched by lockdowns could simply replace local shops and high streets with faceless firms and their invisible sourcing practices. The Chinese retailer Shein – worth \$10 billion – rose to the top of the fast fashion industry from nowhere in the last two years and Boohoo, another fast fashion giant, recorded a **41% jump in revenue**<sup>13</sup> in 2020. But the **2020 Resale Report**<sup>14</sup> showed that the global online market for luxury second hand clothes grew 25 times faster than the wider retail market in the previous year. A **ThredUP report**<sup>15</sup> also estimated 33 million consumers bought second hand apparel for the first time in 2020 and these habits were in place for long enough to stick. It estimates that the second hand clothing market will double in the next 5 years to \$77 billion. Around **60% of retailers**<sup>16</sup> in the report indicated they would be interested in selling secondhand clothes in the future.

Gains to be made by slowing down fast fashion are not just environmental, but also contribute to better well being. According to **international research**<sup>17</sup> on consumerism and well being, people who shop excessively experience emptiness and boredom in between shopping periods, with enjoyment lasting a maximum of 3 days for 90% of people and as little as a few moments for 8% of shoppers. Young, high income women are the most vulnerable. The spread of online shopping and social media makes people even more susceptible to overconsumption, driven also by constant comparison to others which is known further to undermine human well being.



Even before the pandemic, some influencers were helping to reduce consumption and set new behavioural norms among groups who might not otherwise be considering a more sustainable lifestyle. For example, Courtney Carver, a woman from Utah in the US, started **Project 333**<sup>18</sup> as a “minimalist fashion challenge that invites you to dress with 33 items or less for 3 months”. In 2014, Caroline Joy, a Texan blogger, started **Unfancy – Mindful Style**<sup>19</sup> to record a journey as she engaged in a year-long challenge to try to live with a small and structured closet of 37 pieces. Since then, so-called ‘haul’ videos shared on social media that glorify shopping and consumption have also experienced a backlash, with a rise in ‘anti-haul’ vlogging about the joys of not shopping. And the **10x10 challenge**<sup>20</sup> encouraged participants to be more creative with their existing wardrobe by focusing on 10 items over a 10 day period.

Fashion Revolution, a London-based NGO with chapters around the world, has been campaigning since 2014 to draw consumers’ attention to unsustainable fashion industry practices with their “**Who Made My Clothes?**”<sup>21</sup> campaign. The Greenpeace environmental group has led the “**Detox my Fashion**”<sup>22</sup> campaign since 2011, aimed at eliminating toxic chemicals from the production processes in the fashion supply chain. The British fashion designer Vivienne Westwood put it succinctly: “**Buy less. Choose well. Make it last. Quality, not quantity. Everybody’s buying far too many clothes.**”<sup>23</sup> And British designer **Stella McCartney spoke out**<sup>24</sup> against her industry following a **report on clothing’s environmental impact**<sup>25</sup> by the sustainable economy think tank the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

What was new during the pandemic was the way people had time to consider where their clothes came from, who was making them and even whether they really needed them in the first place. Fast fashion had grown into almost the definition of wasteful, unsatisfying, over-consumption. But the pause enabled by the pandemic’s upheaval, and opportunity for reflection, rethinking, and trying different ways to approach clothing - one of our most basic essentials - may well have set our behaviour, and the industry in a new, healthier and greener direction.

**BUY LESS.**  
**CHOOSE WELL.**  
**MAKE IT LAST.**



# INVESTING IN CHANGE, NOT JUST PROFIT



Switching from shopping  
to green investment, the  
pandemic saw a new wave of  
people putting their money  
to work saving the planet

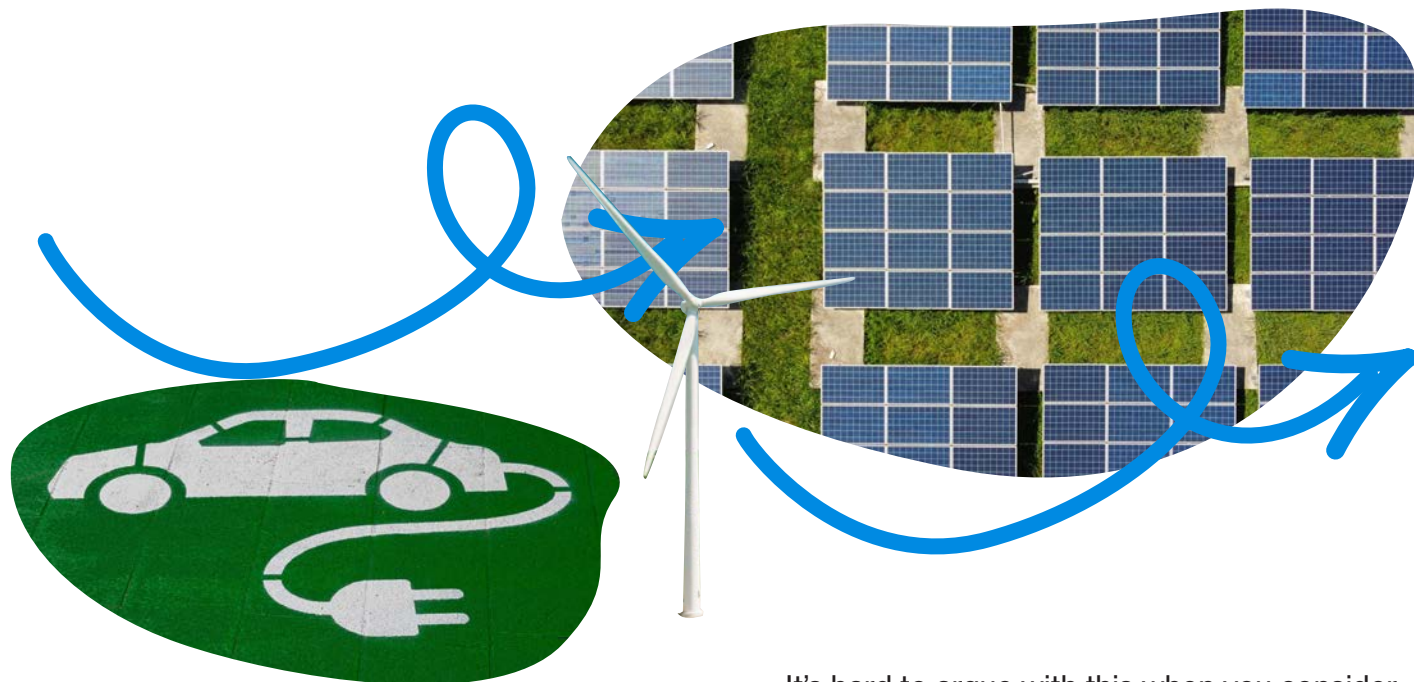


For many, the onset of the pandemic disrupted the rhythm of everyday life which included, for those who had spare income, what to do with it. This forced pause led many to take stock of what resources they had and to question what they were doing with them. With shops, cafes and restaurants closed during lockdown to slow the spread of the virus, those lucky enough to keep their jobs – or even be paid to stay at home – often found themselves with more money left at the end of each month.

Surplus savings for some drove a wave of people across Europe and North America to experiment with investing – sometimes for the first time. **Over 15%**<sup>1</sup> of current retail (non-professional) investors in the US began investing in 2020. In the UK, **22% of adults**<sup>2</sup> saw an increase in their ability to invest due to increased savings. The same number of adults – **over a fifth of British people**<sup>3</sup> – used the pandemic as an opportunity to explore ethical investing. Among under 35s, **this figure rises to 35%**.<sup>4</sup>







Ethical and so-called impact investing – investing in social change that benefits others – is nothing new, with its origins **traced back to the religious movement of the Quakers in the 1750s.**<sup>5</sup> The peculiarities of the pandemic, however, created a fertile ground for people to think and move their money so it better aligns with what's important to them. **Over half of British adults**<sup>6</sup> believe that carefully selecting where you put your savings is one of the best ways to protect the planet. When this question was put to 18-32 year olds, the number **rose to 58%.**<sup>7</sup>



It's hard to argue with this when you consider the scale of capital that savings could provide. In 2021, asset managers overseeing green funds in the UK pulled in **£4.3 billion from retail investors,**<sup>8</sup> the highest quarterly total since records began. In the US, between 2018 and 2020, the total amount of assets with some sustainability criteria that were being formally managed – in funds run by financial institutions, for example – **grew by 42%, reaching \$17.1 trillion.**<sup>9</sup> Of the total \$51.4 trillion in assets under management in the US, **33% are deemed to be governed in some way by environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors.**<sup>10</sup> In 2014, ethical investments made **up just 1% of these financial flows.**<sup>11</sup>

The scope to ramp this up further, however, is substantial. If all 2.4 million British people that currently hold stocks and shares ISAs – a form of tax free saving – switched to an impact investment fund, it could raise **£22 billion**<sup>12</sup> a year to be put to addressing the biggest challenges of our time. The need to tap into this vast reserve of capital is only going to intensify as the world emerges from the pandemic, and large amounts of investment are needed to shift whole industries towards zero emissions. The most recent research suggests the global economy needs to muster **an additional \$1 trillion a year**<sup>13</sup> to reach net-zero by 2050.

Ethical investing isn't just the reserve of younger retail investors – people old enough to be taking their pensions are flexing their financial muscles. In the UK, there is a staggering **£3 trillion invested in pension funds.**<sup>14</sup> Research on pensioner sentiment finds that **70% of pension savers**<sup>15</sup> are concerned about the ethics of their investments and want to ensure that their money is being put to the solutions of the climate crisis, not the drivers of it. This movement has been particularly strong in universities and **local authorities,**<sup>16</sup> where unions have helped to galvanise action and attempt to engage pension holders.



**“People are demanding that the financial institutions who manage their money, through their pensions and savings, take environmental and social issues like climate change, human rights and diversity into account and the potential impacts of this are huge. Pension funds are a large component of the financial system and a positive shift in them towards better responsible and sustainable investment policies and practices helps change the whole sector.”**

Lisa Stonestreet, EIRIS Foundation

Big institutions and funds are also getting in on the action in response perhaps to both the clear long-term direction of travel away from fossil fuels and to growing customer demand. Nowhere is this clearer than in the world of pension funds and institutional investors, who are increasingly claiming to be committed to the full decarbonisation of their portfolios. Just last year, at the height of the pandemic, **a group of 70 pension funds from all around the world**<sup>17</sup> pledged to decarbonise their whole portfolios by the middle of the century, which are worth a combined \$16 trillion.

Of course there are still very real concerns over the transparency and integrity of investment opportunities claiming to be sustainable, as well as worrying tales of capital earmarked as ‘green’ being used to prop up the very industries driving the climate crisis. But the level of interest now palpable across the world means that institutions, auditors and regulators are all rushing to provide workable frameworks for ethical and sustainable investment to build upon.

The pandemic, and the lockdowns introduced to halt its spread, gave us all a chance to reflect on how we live our lives and what we want from them. For many people this meant reflecting on where they put their money and how their money is being put to use. Ethical investing has been given a boost during the lockdowns and its importance as both an option for savers and investors, and a way of raising the capital required to transition the global economy is growing noticeably.





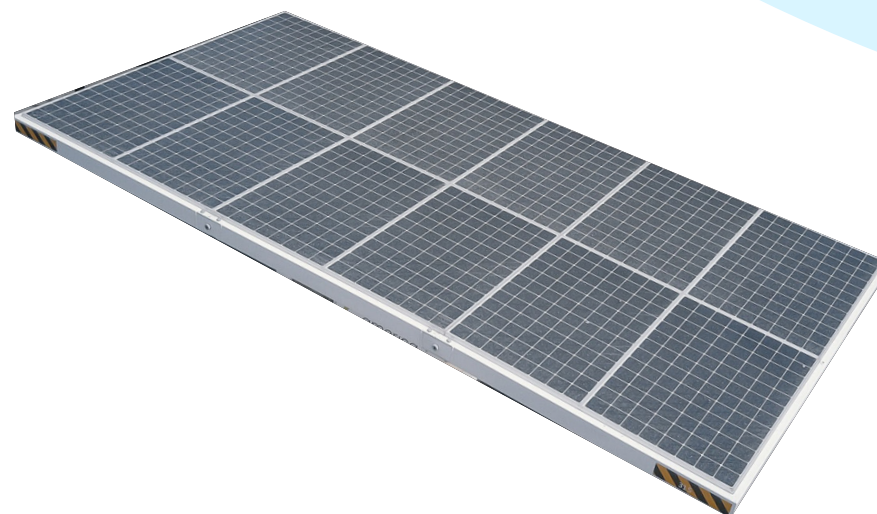
# CUTTING ENERGY COMES HOME



How more time at home created awareness and opportunity to reduce our energy use

The concept of trying to reduce our energy footprint took root strongly during the pandemic as people stranded at home saw their energy use and bills soar – and **started to think about taking action**<sup>1</sup> to reduce them. Reducing energy use, both at the individual and societal levels is of paramount importance in our struggle to keep global warming within the 1.5 degrees limit of the Paris Agreement. Both systemic and individual change will need to play a role here. Although the consumption of food and other goods and services need to be addressed, as shown in the groundbreaking **Hot or Cool report**,<sup>2</sup> most of our direct energy use is in home and water heating, and transport and travel, all of which were profoundly affected by changes during the pandemic.

During the lockdowns, many people became acutely aware of their own space and its energy performance, particularly if working from home and needing to heat their homes all day. Many re-learned the old lessons of **turning down the heating**,<sup>3</sup> wearing more layers of clothing, checking insulation and – for those who could afford it – switching to renewables for heating, lighting and even transport fuel. Price hikes as a result of the war in Ukraine have since compounded this and give us even more reason to look for some “evidence-based hope” for **rapid transition**<sup>4</sup> to a lower energy footprint. The good news was that **wind and solar installations**<sup>5</sup> continued to increase throughout the pandemic period according to the International Energy Agency (IEA) and governments worldwide have earmarked over US\$710 billion for the **largest ever clean energy recovery effort**<sup>6</sup> – 40% higher than what was spent to rescue economies from the last global financial crisis. A growing awareness of our need for rapid transition away from fossil fuels has also resulted in the emergence of new community energy schemes.



In London's Waltham Forest, during the pandemic, a whole street of terraced Victorian houses with leaky windows and poor insulation started to work together as a community to make itself into a local power station. Run by two artists living on the street, the **Power project**<sup>7</sup> aims to sell locally made art in the form of “banknotes” and to use the proceeds to fund solar panels and other local schemes such as food banks that address inequality. Building on the idea of the US New Deal of the 1930s, when artists played a leading role, the project plans to make its own local Green New Deal through shared learning, training and employment across film and art, green technology and sustainable construction.

**“During the pandemic, people stuck at home really noticed their energy use and their bills shooting up. Insulation and retrofitting can help, but wouldn't it be better for everyone to have renewable energy? POWER grew out of pandemic mutual aid networks, and is all about community owned energy and energy infrastructure – literally taking and making power for ourselves.”**

Dan Edelstyn, Power Project





With many former commuters continuing to **work from home**<sup>8</sup> as an enduring legacy of the pandemic, and with millions of people now grappling with soaring fuel prices, **community energy**<sup>9</sup> seems to offer a great alternative when widespread national policies are lacking in speed and scale. Some countries are already advanced in this area, including Germany, which has over **1,000 cooperative**<sup>10</sup> energy projects selling energy directly to third parties, and Denmark where the “right to invest” principle requires project developers to give local residents priority when financing a community energy scheme.

In the UK, the climate protest movement Extinction Rebellion’s offshoot “**Insulate Britain**”<sup>11</sup> drew attention to this often overlooked and low-tech intervention. Effective home insulation is particularly key in countries with older, poorly insulated housing stock, such as the UK and many Eastern European nations. Government agencies and NGOs are once again publishing **lists**<sup>12</sup> of ways to save energy, from using natural light to changing filters in air conditioners, installing **LED bulbs**<sup>13</sup> and using **smart meters**<sup>14</sup> to make sure usage only happens when it’s really needed. Although smart meters do not necessarily reduce usage per se, they use visual displays to remind people of their energy use in real time and are therefore thought to encourage energy-saving behaviour. They also help energy companies to balance out times of high and low demand on the grid so they can make the most of the natural fluctuations of renewable energy from the sun and wind. Houses today have large numbers of electrical appliances, many permanently plugged into wifi networks, so turning off plugs at the wall is becoming common practice once again.

A UK poll<sup>15</sup> found that 73% of people asked had made changes at home in an attempt to reduce bills, including only filling the kettle with the amount needed (50%), improving their home’s insulation (37%) and turning the TV off at the plug when not in use (34%). One energy supplier to Southern California advocated using nature to your advantage, opening curtains and blinds to let in sunlight or a window to allow warmer air to enter the house when it’s sunny and pulling down shades or opening a window to **let in cool air instead of relying on an air conditioner**.<sup>16</sup> These principles may seem obvious – and are used in sustainable design to reduce energy loads – but many people are accustomed to using energy-driven heating and cooling to change temperatures at home, and most houses are not built to benefit from passive solar energy gain. In wealthier countries many people also have unused rooms in their homes that are still heated or cooled, wasting energy.

Increasing numbers of people turned to **heat pump technology**<sup>17</sup> as a potential replacement for gas and oil boilers, and by 2020 almost **180 million heat pumps**<sup>18</sup> were in use globally for heating – an increase of nearly 10% per year over the previous 5 years. Heat pumps became the most common technology in newly built houses in many countries. In the United States, for example, the share of heat pump sales for newly constructed buildings exceeded 40% for single-family dwellings and was near 50% for new multi-family buildings. However, current heat pump installations still only meet **7% of global building heating demand**<sup>19</sup> although they could easily supply more than 90% of global space and water heating at a lower CO2 emissions level. In Finland, for example, where heat pumps have proven popular and grown in dominance, the amount of energy used by households for heating **has declined accordingly by roughly 15%**<sup>20</sup> since 2000.

The growth of new technologies and the phasing out of fossil fuel reliant products such as gas boilers, means there is an opportunity for increased investment in training for a new range of greener jobs. In Spain, trade unions have suggested that energy efficiency renovations **could make enough work for nearly half a million citizens**.<sup>21</sup> In the UK, an ambitious retrofitting programme **could create 138,000 jobs over the next ten years**.<sup>22</sup>

Electric vehicle sales soared during the pandemic, despite the economic shrinkage and transport restrictions. The shift to electric cars and vans, particularly when accompanied by renewable electricity generation and local battery storage, is preferable to the combustion engine but not the answer to zero carbon transport at scale and speed. Breakthroughs in enabling car batteries to be used as **storage for the grid**<sup>23</sup> are ongoing and trials are currently underway in the UK. More **sustainable batteries**<sup>24</sup> are also on the cards, reducing our dependence on minerals such as lithium that are often mined under poor environmental and working conditions. However, the pandemic also saw a flowering of **other kinds of use of electric vehicles**,<sup>25</sup> such as scooters, e-bikes, **cargo bikes**,<sup>26</sup> and of car sharing as a norm. These types of mobility are expected to **continue to grow**<sup>27</sup> and to contribute – alongside improved public transport systems – to reducing our use of fossil fuels.



Those unable to invest in a cleaner mode of transport are reliant on public transport cleaning up its act and also on local infrastructure enabling **cycling and walking**,<sup>28</sup> plus opening up some streets for **better public use**.<sup>29</sup> Cities from Milan to Mexico City and Mumbai took **steps to advance**<sup>30</sup> active transportation, build new bike lanes and create “**the 15-minute city**”.<sup>31</sup> Improved, **free**<sup>32</sup> or cheaper and more accessible public transport was tried in various places across the world during the pandemic. For example, **Luxembourg**<sup>33</sup> made public transport free, Sydney, Australia ran **trials**,<sup>34</sup> and **Estonia**<sup>35</sup> made it free for residents. There were many drivers behind these policies, but clean air is what people noticed; in a survey, **around two thirds of Europeans said**<sup>36</sup> they did not want to return to pre-pandemic levels of air pollution.

Going forward, the pandemic has brought back into the public eye a whole slew of practices that could contribute toward a low carbon and more sustainable future. Nowhere are these perhaps more important than in the hard-to-change areas of energy for housing and transport. This is where policy change, systems design and individual behaviour needs to come together to enable the rapid transition that everybody needs.





# HELLO GOOD FOOD – GOODBYE WASTE



How people learned to love food and cut waste during the pandemic, and how it revealed the need to reshape the food system for resilience and meeting human needs

From field to plate, around one third of food is wasted creating a huge impact on nature and the climate. But during the pandemic, there is evidence that people relearned food skills and that led to a drop in waste and unlocked a variety of other benefits. Now new initiatives are growing to reverse the problem of food waste. Can we now grow a better, less wasteful relationship with food from these signs of progress?

Food, and the industries that grow it and get it to our plates, suffered widespread disruption during the global pandemic. As the virus spread and governments responded by sealing borders, food and agricultural supply chains were disrupted, **shipping containers of food were left to rot at borders<sup>1</sup>**, and restaurants were forced to close, putting the livelihoods of millions into doubt overnight. Against a backdrop of the increasingly centralised logistics of the food industry, it highlighted the **neglected importance and potential of local food chains<sup>2</sup>**. Consumers responded initially to the vulnerabilities revealed in the food system with panic buying in supermarkets, seen from **England<sup>3</sup> to India<sup>4</sup>**.

But, in spite of the rush on supermarket shelves, the amount of food wasted actually declined during the pandemic. And, this decline wasn't concentrated in just a few countries: it happened around the world. In Italy, one of the nations hit hardest by the first wave of the virus, **food waste fell despite vast increases in the purchase of foods<sup>5</sup>**. As well as being more careful, some other attitudes were shifting too. Germany saw sharp falls in food waste and, at the height of the pandemic, **91% of Germans were checking food after its sell-by date and not automatically throwing it away compared**



to only 76% in 2016<sup>6</sup>. In the UK, where 59% purchased more food than usual<sup>7</sup>, food waste also dropped significantly. In November 2020, food waste in the UK was **22% lower than the previous year<sup>8</sup>**. These trends show promise, but the challenge will be how to lock them into daily lives as memories of the lockdowns fade.

**“Food waste isn’t just a massive problem, it’s also a vital part of the solution. Preventing food waste is considered one of the single most effective ways to counter the climate crisis. Preventive measures are relatively fast to implement and as food actively engages citizens up to three times a day, it can build actionable awareness to start producing, selling, buying and eating food in healthier and more sustainable ways, including a serious reduction of meat.”**

David Kat, Vice President Business Development at Wasteless,  
an EIT Food RisingFoodStar





Before the pandemic, food waste was at unacceptably high levels, especially considering that **11% of humanity suffers from undernourishment**<sup>9</sup>. Roughly one third of all the food produced in a year is wasted. This is approximately **1.3 billion tonnes**<sup>10</sup> of food and costs the global economy **\$2.6 trillion every year**<sup>11</sup>. The amount of food we waste every year is enough to feed the **815 million hungry people around the globe four times over**<sup>12</sup>.

Alongside these figures is the environmental imperative for cutting food waste. **Food waste is a climate emergency issue**<sup>13</sup>. Rotting food in landfill accounts for around **8% of global greenhouse gas emissions**<sup>14</sup>, which is only slightly less than the amount of emissions created by road transport<sup>15</sup>. In just the US, the production of food that gets wasted generates the equivalent of **32.6 million cars**<sup>16</sup> worth of greenhouse gas emissions. If food waste was included in a list of countries ranked according to their greenhouse emissions, **food waste would come in the third spot, right after the USA and China, due to the natural resources expended in producing, processing, transporting, storing and cooking food around the world**<sup>17</sup>.

Emissions, however, are only one part of the picture. **With agriculture using up roughly 70% of the world's fresh water**<sup>18</sup>, food waste represents an enormous misuse of both freshwater and groundwater. Just to produce food that is never eaten, the global food industry wastes a volume of water that is approximately **three times the amount of water contained in Lake Geneva**<sup>19</sup>. For every kilogram of beef wasted, **15,500 litres of water are wasted too**<sup>20</sup>. There's the issue of land-use too: **one-third of the world's total agricultural land is used to grow food that will never be eaten**<sup>21</sup>, needlessly creating monocultures and clearing wild lands that are vital for maintaining biodiversity.

It will be possible to feed the global population if it nears 10 billion by the middle of the century, but waste and inequality will make it far more difficult. They also make it harder to find ways to do so without worsening the climate crisis. But, as the pandemic brought into focus, there are models, methods and initiatives being rolled out and experimented with to help cut food waste and enjoy nourishing diets without costing the earth.

**Milan's Food Waste Hub programme**<sup>22</sup>, which was one of the first winners of the **Earthshot Prize**<sup>23</sup>, is case in point. Through this programme, dedicated food waste hubs collect unwanted food from supermarkets and restaurants and redistribute it to citizens in need. In the middle of the pandemic, in 2021, **Milan had three food waste hubs that recovered 130 tonnes of food per year, equivalent to 260,000 meals**<sup>24</sup>.

A diversity of community kitchens and food and cooking initiatives popped-up to help those suffering from both the economic impacts of the global pandemic and the isolation that many felt during the lockdowns. The **Wivey Food Project**<sup>25</sup>, launched by a chef under local charity Wivey Cares, created a space where the community could come together to cook and serve nutritious food, cooked from surplus food collected by FareShare and local growers. Running on a 'pay as you feel' basis, Wivey Food Project managed to feed hundreds of people in the south west of England with over 30,000 meals, while cutting food waste and connecting communities through food.



**"We are all about cutting waste – we use in-date foods that would otherwise go to landfill. And by getting together to make and deliver high quality, tasty dishes, we are also joining up people from across our community. I thought we would lose all the volunteers once the pandemic ended, but everyone who can has stayed. The social aspect is also important – people have made new friends and really look forward to the weekly 'chop and chat'."**

Rosie Boylan, Founding Member, Wivey Food Project

The power of food to transform lives and bring us joy was better appreciated as lockdowns forced many to stay at home with more free time. Greater knowledge about food and its preparation is key to cutting waste. As more people cooked at home rather than eating out, preparing fresh produce and baking more, there was a rapid reskilling in the kitchen. According to YouGov, **91% of British people**<sup>26</sup> want to cook as much or more than they did during the 2021 lockdowns, with **71% of people saying that they enjoyed home cooking during the pandemic**<sup>27</sup>. Bain & Co. estimate that **60% of meals were cooked at home before the pandemic, but this has now increased to 72%**<sup>28</sup>. This increasing trend in home cooking was visible **across Europe, with France, Italy, Sweden and Germany**<sup>29</sup> all reporting higher rates of home cooked meals. In the same vein, **mealtimes became more of an occasion**<sup>30</sup>, bringing families and friends together against a backdrop of uncertainty and suffering.



Leveraging the positive attitudes and associations that many hold towards food could help stimulate sustainable and rapid transitions across the food and agricultural sectors. Polling in the UK shows that **64% of people**<sup>31</sup> regard food as a source of comfort, while **62%**<sup>32</sup> note its foundational role in family time. Similar polling suggests that when given more free time, people made healthier food choices, with **82% of those who cooked more due to free time expecting these habits to continue long after the world emerged from the pandemic**<sup>33</sup>.

Cutting food waste is ultimately about developing our appreciation of food – what we eat, where it comes from, and how we prepare it. The pandemic offered an opportunity to think differently about food, the habits we have around it, and how food can provide sustenance and joy. From the global **army of new bakers**<sup>34</sup> to **the growing ranks of pandemic vegans**<sup>35</sup>, Covid-19 reminded us of the importance of food and its transformative potential. This rejuvenated appreciation, and the proliferation of new and exciting models to provide people with the food they need while cutting waste, is here to stay and could help rewire the global food system.





# MAKE PUBLIC ART NOT WASTE



How public art challenges  
over-consumption, creates  
community and making it is  
more fun than shopping



From decorated stones left in public parks, to chalked pavements and doorstep theatre, making public art flourished during the pandemic. But it was much more than just a creative way to fill time for populations in lockdown. It demonstrated that the benefits to human well being of making art can be more widely enjoyed, brought communities together, and democratised an activity that can be a powerful alternative to consumerism. More widely, it is now being taken up and used directly to challenge the overconsumption behind the climate crisis.

Children were particularly affected by the stay-at-home rules during the pandemic, and even by the restrictions of class bubbles for those able to finally return to school. In Portland, Oregon, using **chalks on the pavement**<sup>1</sup> was one low-tech idea that made art accessible for everyone. One Canadian teenager made a **new drawing**<sup>2</sup> on her driveway each day for 100 days to cheer up her younger brother, while “**active sidewalks**”<sup>3</sup> became a way of encouraging safe outside play in a post-covid world for children who had become fearful of interactive play.





Leading artists like the UK's Grayson Perry and Antony Gormley created initiatives to democratise art making and encourage the wider public to make their own, breaking down barriers that can otherwise make art seem like something only for elite professionals. The results, for example, in Grayson Perry's **Art Club**<sup>4</sup> on television was inspirational, entertaining and transformative, giving thousands effective permission to find satisfaction and meaning in a creative activity. Antony Gormley's **The Great Big Art Exhibition**<sup>5</sup> emboldened people to turn their windows and gardens into galleries to turn neighbourhoods into open galleries during lockdowns.



Public expression also flowed in gratitude toward those serving on the frontlines of healthcare and service supply, bringing a welcome focus to people in jobs that are rarely lauded, including car workers and supermarket delivery drivers. One exhibition in the UK entitled **Gratitude**<sup>6</sup> comprised 51 sculptures created by a number of artists and accompanied by real-life audio stories, recorded by famous voices, about key workers. A US primary school was just one of many making and **displaying posters**<sup>7</sup> of thankfulness in their windows and outside their homes. In the UK, a huge wave of **rainbow pictures**<sup>8</sup> done by children appeared in almost every roadside window as a symbol for compassion and connection in a time of isolation. Parents began to task their children with spotting the rainbows while out on daily walks, sparking the Twitter hashtag #ChaseTheRainbow.

Some unusual public spaces became fair game as people used their creativity to cheer others up, to comment on social issues or to simply have shared fun. One Chicago artist made **local potholes**<sup>9</sup> into works of art with mosaic. Many street artists used the **ubiquitous facemask**<sup>10</sup> as a way of poking fun at people in power, while also reminding the public that artists – many of whom were struggling to survive without support or art galleries and museums being open – were still alive and kicking.

Art institutions around the world not only reeled from the lack of income from visitors; they also saw their funding continue to be cut. Most of Australia's national collecting institutions, for example, will see funding drop by between **4% and 21%**<sup>11</sup> over the next five years. Calls have been made for more **investment in public art**<sup>12</sup> similar in scale to US president Franklin D Roosevelt's Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) and Works Progress Administration (WPA), **set up during the Great Depression in the 1930s**.<sup>13</sup> Theatre is one genre that has struggled during the pandemic, especially against the well-funded and convenient home-viewing platforms like Disney+ and Netflix. Commentator **Naomi Klein**<sup>14</sup> points to this as part of a dangerous future of isolation and artificial intelligence-controlled experiences. In this context, some argue that going to a live performance becomes a political statement in itself and will become increasingly important.



**"One aspect of theatre is that it brings people together to explore and entertain through stories – importantly it is a public space, and a partially anonymous one, where you can let go of your own identity for a while and imagine others. Participation in the arts enlarges the imagination, and rehearses different ways of being, allowing us to countenance change, or reframe our experiences, equipping us better for change. In other words, it rehearses imaginative capacities that we will radically need in the coming times – and importantly, it reminds us we are not alone."**

Zoe Svendsen, Director, Metis





Historically, **public art**<sup>16</sup> has been **created for specific spaces**<sup>17</sup> in an organised way, but much of the **creative response**<sup>18</sup> that emerged during the pandemic has been more spontaneous and organic. Some art institutions have also shifted in response to having to close their premises to the public by **moving online**<sup>19</sup> and increasing the accessibility of their exhibitions in a way that is expected to continue long after the pandemic has ended. Even China's **Forbidden City museum**<sup>20</sup> opened its online doors to the public enabling many to see a place that might never be able to visit in person. Many institutions also responded to the public's takeover of creativity and its demand that they connect better with more diverse communities, by prioritising co-creation and collaboration, by showcasing **more street art**<sup>21</sup> and **encouraging art as protest**.<sup>22</sup> But most of the real creativity that has blown open the idea of public space has not come from our august institutions but from ordinary people.

The pandemic reminded people of the importance of community – both locally where neighbours responded to the need to help each other – and globally where our shared humanity and vulnerability became painfully obvious thanks to a virus. People across the world also turned to public art and creativity, using their bodies, imaginations and voices to bring shared hopes and fears to the attention of others in their community. Public art and expression is important because it brings live issues into our everyday spaces and forms a key role in a flourishing and sustainable society by revealing our evolving culture. This is also part of reimagining our streets, as shopping habits change and **high streets**<sup>15</sup> potentially become places for socialising and participating in community activity.

The pandemic coincided with a huge uprising in anti-racist activities online and in person, and this particular form of public expression frequently clashed with historic public art and statues in particular. Wikipedia has a **whole page**<sup>23</sup> dedicated to statues removed during the George Floyd protests, showing the extent to which people's anger about racism expressed itself in the downing of statues of slave traders and others who benefitted from the trade and from colonialism.



One of the most visible forms of public expression in the last few years has been public protest by groups such as **Fridays for Future**,<sup>24</sup> **Extinction Rebellion**,<sup>25</sup> **Black Lives Matter**<sup>26</sup> and **Culture Declares Emergency**.<sup>27</sup> People have taken to the streets to show their anger at the failings of governments over climate change, racism, inequalities and ecological disaster. **Young people**<sup>28</sup> have responded particularly strongly to the call to protest with **vibrant and effective homemade signs**,<sup>29</sup> art as protest and **imaginative ways**<sup>30</sup> of getting the attention of the adult world. Making a homemade sign has become cool again, and the use of visual expression to draw attention to social issues has become mainstream. **Extinction Rebellion**<sup>31</sup> in particular is known for its use of **cleverly designed artwork**<sup>32</sup> made specifically for letting loose into the public arena. Protesters are encouraged to adapt and share, bringing their own expression to the combined effort. As a result, its flags and banners have flourished into an impressive body of work, including **vast silk flags**<sup>33</sup> co-created under artist Otavio Avancini and **giant pink structures**<sup>34</sup> that also act as road-blockers.

**Craftivism**<sup>35</sup> has also stimulated a rebirth in the once popular idea of embroidery messaging, hand-stitched banners and quilts with embedded meaning. A recent **exhibition of quilters**<sup>36</sup> co-creating work on the theme of the UK's National Health Service (NHS) brought radical ideas into local churches and community centres using traditional craft. **Stitches for Survival**<sup>37</sup> made 1.5km of handmade stitched work to display at the COP 26 in Glasgow as a reminder of the 1.5 degrees of warming we are trying to stay within, with the final work displayed in a public park.

The pandemic has helped us to view our public spaces differently – perhaps less as places to simply shop, or walk through on the way to somewhere else, and more as destinations in themselves. Places where we meet friends and family, enjoy nature and the outdoors, watch and participate in music, theatre, art, dance, and perhaps join others in giving expression to our beliefs. As tech encourages us to stay at home and have everything our hearts desire delivered by a drone, the real world offers diversity, difference, sensations, experience as yet unparalleled by virtual reality. It's time now to get out there and participate.





# WAKING-UP TO ADVERTS PROMOTING POLLUTING LIFESTYLES



How the pandemic pause drew attention to adverts fuelling the climate emergency and undermining wellbeing, and the cities now acting to end 'high-carbon advertising'

Two of people's most polluting activities – flying and driving – were heavily interrupted during the pandemic. And, as many quickly adapted, attention fell on the role of advertising in promoting heavily polluting personal behaviour. Now, cities are starting to pass new rules banning 'high carbon' adverts, and international campaigns are growing to stop adverts fuelling the climate emergency.

Overnight the pandemic transformed the way people moved, worked and spent their hard-earned cash. **Whole industries, institutions and communities<sup>1</sup>** adapted in the face of a new reality. The advertising industry cottoned onto this quickly and there was a flurry of brands pronouncing that '**we are all in this together<sup>2</sup>**'. From British supermarket Asda to **American smartwatch manufacturer Fitbit<sup>3</sup>**, advertisements appealed to people's emotions and desire for solidarity, security and community to help them navigate such turbulent times. But many soon questioned the messaging, and whether the products being pushed were actually improving human wellbeing. The safer streets and cleaner air that came with the sudden absence of commuting at the height of lockdown, and the time, money and pollution saved by not flying, and holidaying nearer home, or holding work meetings online, seemed beneficial.

Living more local lives, suddenly advertisements glorifying holidays and flights to far-flung destinations, or the wonders of giant gas-guzzling SUVs, felt alien to many. Spending more time at home, surrounded by piles of 'stuff' and forgotten purchases, **led many people to realise they had too many things<sup>4</sup>**. These realisations caused people to shift their priorities around consumption, **with many deciding they wanted to buy fewer, higher-quality products that can stand the test of time<sup>5</sup>**, or instead **choosing to repair and maintain what they had<sup>6</sup>**. It was a small step from questioning consumerism to noticing the role of the huge advertising industry in fuelling overconsumption. Campaigns like **Adfree cities<sup>7</sup>**, **Badvertising<sup>8</sup>**, and **Clean Creatives<sup>9</sup>** are now growing rapidly to confront the influence and visual pollution of advertising, with a special focus on the climate emergency.

**"Now more than ever, we are seeing an increasing awareness from citizens and climate groups about the dangers from advertising promoting polluting activities and debt-fuelled consumerism in the midst of a climate and 'cost of living' crisis. This has successfully translated into actions on the ground to resist corporate polluters' propaganda, while supporting a growing sense that advertising that fuels the climate emergency has no place in our society."**

Emilie Tricarico, member of the Badvertising campaign





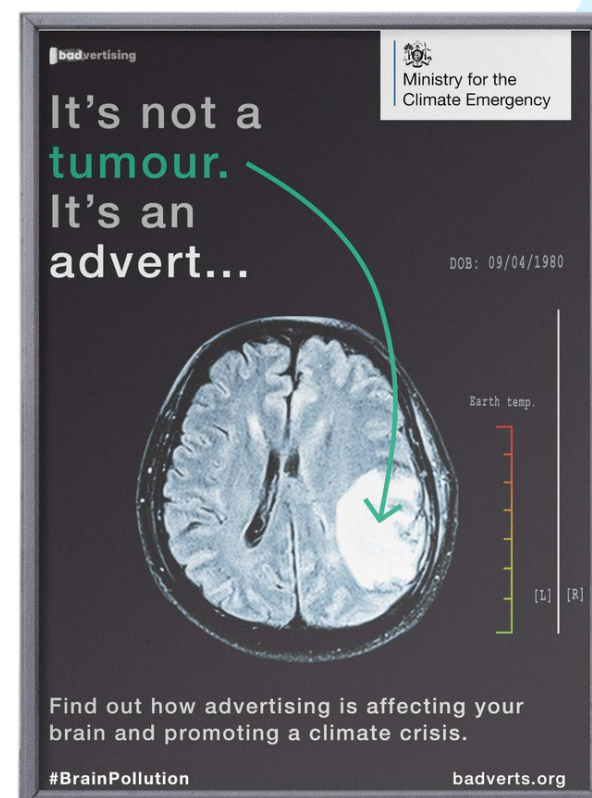
From this increased awareness came another lightbulb moment. Many of the products like cars, flights and consumer goods being advertised to us, digitally and physically, were things that people were learning to live more without, and whose absence during the pandemic, delivered a range of benefits to communities around the world. Grounded aeroplanes and the impossibility of foreign holidays cleansed the skies of chemtrails, while roads rid of SUVs and cars allowed people to fall in love with bird song and cleaner air. **Recent research has shown**<sup>10</sup> that advertisements for cars and flights could be responsible for between 202 and 606 million tonnes of greenhouse gases in 2019. At the lower end of the range, **the emissions are equivalent to that of the annual emissions from the Netherlands in 2019, while at the higher end of the range it is approximately twice the national emissions from Spain in 2019**<sup>11</sup>.

**“Before the pandemic, air travel was prognosed to have an annual growth of 5%. They presented this number as if it were a law of nature. But demand is also created by advertising. As soon as Covid-restrictions were lifted, ads for flying spread like a virus: on our streets, in our newspapers, and on our digital timelines. Advertising raises emissions considerably and maintains an illusion that a high carbon lifestyle is normal and appealing to a huge mass. This is an important roadblock for the transition and that’s why we are campaigning for a law that bans fossil ads, just like tobacco ads are banned.”**

Femke Slegers, Reclame Fossilvrij (Fossil Free Advertising)

With the benefits that could be accelerated from ditching advertising, what is the point of continuing to push high-emission products that damage physical and planetary health? During the pandemic this question echoed through cities and towns around the world with politicians and citizens working together to rid cities from high-carbon ads. The **Dutch city of Amsterdam**<sup>12</sup> became one of the first to ban ads from fossil fuel and aviation companies throughout the city in a bid to curtail the excesses of fossil fuelled overconsumption. And the campaigners aren’t stopping there, with their eyes now firmly set on winning a ban in the **Dutch cities of the Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam**<sup>13</sup>.

Momentum is building elsewhere too. The **French government recently introduced a law**<sup>14</sup>, which is set to come into force in the summer of 2022, that bans the advertisement of petrol and diesel to consumers. This is just the first step in France, as **a ban on the advertisement of the most polluting cars is set to come into force by 2028**<sup>15</sup> and, more recently, **introduced a law requiring car manufacturers and brands to include a disclaimer in their adverts**<sup>16</sup> encouraging more energy efficient and climate-friendly modes of transport, such as walking, cycling, jumping on public transport and even carpooling.



In many cases, towns and cities have outstripped the ambition of national governments when it comes to banning fossil fuel ads due to vociferous grassroots campaigns. The British cities of **Norwich**<sup>17</sup>, **Liverpool**<sup>18</sup>, as well as the administrative region of **North Somerset**<sup>19</sup>, have all tabled motions to ban high carbon advertisements that harm both public health and planetary health, with other towns considering the move too. The **Swedish city of Lund is set to ban adverts for flying by 2023**<sup>20</sup>, while the **city council of Helsinki in Finland have just tabled a motion proposing a ban on all fossil fuel advertisements within the city**<sup>21</sup>. Similar citizen-led initiatives have been launched in towns and cities across **Canada**<sup>22</sup>, the **USA**<sup>23</sup> and **Norway**<sup>24</sup>.

Efforts to ban high carbon advertising during the pandemic go hand-in-hand with initiatives to tackle the persistent greenwash from some of the biggest polluters. In the UK, environmental lawyers **ClientEarth**<sup>25</sup> is calling on policymakers to ban all fossil fuel company

adverts **unless they are accompanied by a tobacco-style health warning to reverse this “great deception”**<sup>26</sup>. This move built on a legal challenge lodged against fossil fuel giant BP in 2019, **who were playing up their renewable energy investments through advertising despite 96% of the company’s annual investment being on oil and gas infrastructure**<sup>27</sup>.

The global pandemic gave us pause to consider what really mattered to our wellbeing and communities. This pause brought into question what we buy and how we move around, as well as what fills our public spaces. Citizens around the world, through grassroots initiatives and Citizen Assemblies, are beginning to demand a stop to advertisements fuelling the climate crisis – and the pandemic was a catalyst. As the world emerges, and people begin to spend money once again, the power of advertising could be used to accelerate the solutions to the climate crisis instead of glorifying the companies and products that are driving it.



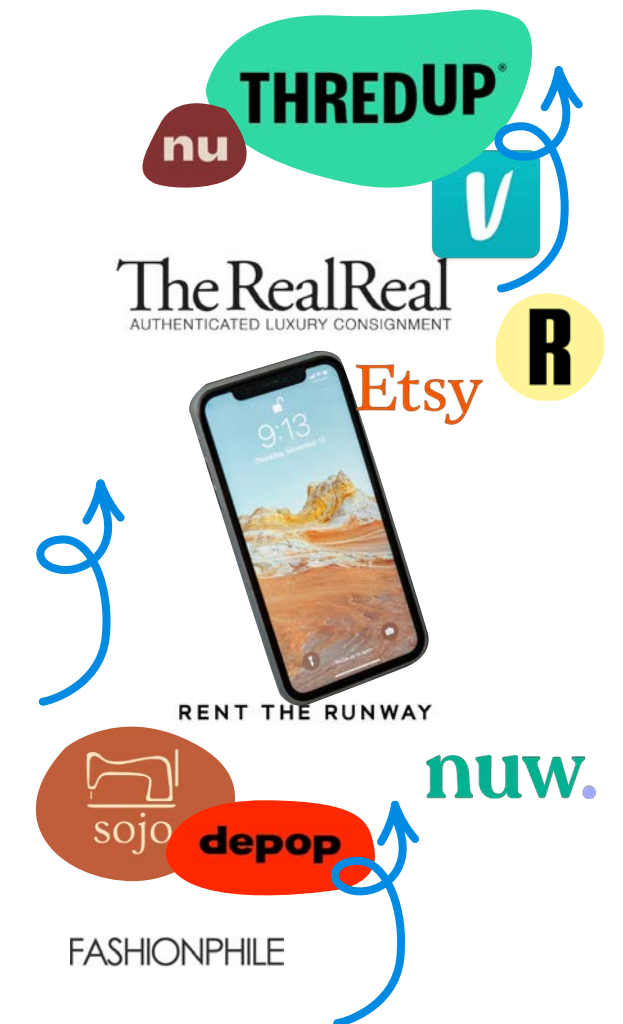
# LOVING MAKING CLOTHES LAST



How the pandemic broke old shopping habits and we learned to love, mend, share, swap, sell and make clothes last

In the cracks of shopping habits broken by the pandemic, a new group of initiatives blossomed. Attitudes shifted towards clothing, fashion and shopping in a way that spells potentially good news for our well being and a more sustainable future. People began to slim down their shopping by swapping clothes, renting high fashion for special occasions instead of buying, repurposing old favourites or reselling unwanted items via peer-to-peer platforms.

Fashion is **one of the largest industries in the world**<sup>1</sup> and – according to **a 2020 report**<sup>2</sup> – to reach the relative safety of the internationally agreed 1.5-degree climate pathway, it would need to reduce annual emissions by 2030 to around roughly half of the current figure. It estimated that much of this could come from energy-efficiency improvements and a transition to renewable energy, but some 21% could come directly through the kind of changes in consumer behaviour we have seen during the pandemic. According to the Swedish researchers, **Mistra Future Fashion**,<sup>3</sup> 80% of the climate impact of clothing stems from the production phase, before the garments even hit the clothing racks. This means that more uses per garment, minimalist approaches to fashion consumption and the use of secondhand markets and charity shops can have a sizable impact.



Stimulated originally by the freedom to dress differently when working from home and the inability to go shopping, the growing “shift to thrift” has also been boosted by an increased awareness of the impact of overconsumption on nature and the climate, and a wider re-prioritising of human health and wellness. Taking a cue from the success of food delivery firms, Sojo – a ‘two wheel’ delivery – service for clothes repairs and alterations – has **launched a pilot in London**<sup>4</sup> connecting customers to local seamster businesses through its app and bicycle delivery service. Ireland-based app Nuw allows people to swap items, from high-street to designer, using a “swishing” system, earning tokens for each item you swap, removing the need to exchange directly with other users. Innovation is blossoming in these once niche areas and secondhand or repurposed clothing is fast becoming a part of the fashion industry and our routine behaviour.



For the past five years, **Thredup**,<sup>5</sup> an online platform selling secondhand clothes, has been reporting on the growth of the secondhand clothing market. Its **2021 Resale Report**,<sup>6</sup> shows this sector as one of the fastest-growing segments of retail, with global turnover projected to double to \$77 billion by 2025, and predicts that within 10 years secondhand clothing will outstrip fast fashion. Any stigma that once came with purchasing and wearing or using pre-worn goods has practically disappeared and many of the re-sale platforms are financially valuable. Thredup, Poshmark and The Real Real have now **gone public**,<sup>7</sup> and London-based online reseller, Depop, was **purchased by the online homemade and resale platform Etsy**<sup>8</sup> for \$1.63 billion. The French brand reseller **Vinted**<sup>9</sup> created a market of 22 million people in just one year through an app that offers peer to peer mobile sales of secondhand clothing. Online influencers have contributed to this by linking self-regulated minimalism to mindfulness and well-being. The headline-grabbing Kardashian-Jenner family launched a resale apparel site '**Kardashian Kloseet**',<sup>10</sup> while the anti-poverty charity, Oxfam's huge **#SecondHandSeptember**<sup>11</sup> campaign was fronted by top screenwriter and actor **Michaela Coel**,<sup>12</sup> helping to elevate resale to trend status.

More people than ever contributed to the **circular economy**<sup>13</sup> during the pandemic lockdowns – decluttering, re-selling, eliminating waste and using the resources that they already have – even if not everyone is driven primarily by concerns for sustainability, or even aware of the beneficial impact of their actions on the planet. The pandemic generated millions of new secondhand shoppers as tighter budgets saw many turn to their own wardrobes for an additional source of income by selling unwanted pieces online. A massive **33 million consumers**<sup>14</sup> bought secondhand apparel for the first time in 2020 and 76% of those first-timers planned to increase their spend on secondhand or 'pre-owned' items in the next five years. It also created an estimated 36.2 million first-time sellers in 2020 – people selling their own or other people's secondhand clothing, many of them doing it as a business.

**"I think the lockdown has made people aware of how they use the space in their homes and the things that they need. Many more people are thinking about sustainability in regard to fashion by purchasing fewer items, wearing more of their existing wardrobe, mixing in preloved items, and thinking about the number of wears per item when purchasing new pieces."**

Tracy Ross, Blissfully Organised

However, many people are directly motivated by climate change and the impact of their own behaviour. **Thredup's report**<sup>15</sup> found that a third of consumers care more about wearing sustainable apparel than they did before the pandemic, and that half of consumers care more about longevity than before the pandemic. A full 43% of consumers reported caring more about clothing quality than they used to (which means longer lasting and fewer items) and over 50% cared more about avoiding waste than they did before. One in two mothers with young children questioned said they planned to spend more on secondhand in the next five years, representing the biggest behaviour shift of any group.



Resale companies like **Fashionphile**<sup>16</sup> specialise in long-life luxury brand items such as scarves and bags, encouraging people to swap items in and out of the system - like renting for a few months - instead of buying new ones. Companies such as **Vestiaire Collective**<sup>17</sup> and **Rebag**<sup>18</sup> have also benefited from the last decade's obsession with handbags as prized fashion items, encouraging people to dig out their old ones and trade them in for cash. Top designer brands see which way this is going and several have joined in already: luxury brand **Gucci began a partnership**<sup>19</sup> with reselling platform **The RealReal**,<sup>20</sup> while **Neiman Marcus**<sup>21</sup> designerwear announced it was **facilitating resale opportunities**<sup>22</sup> through Fashionphile. Even High street brands like **REI, Levi's, Patagonia**<sup>23</sup> and **Fabletics**<sup>24</sup> have introduced resale to their e-commerce or established resale partnerships with companies like resale platform ThredUp and resale tech company Trove. Sportswear resale is particularly strong and was one of the earliest segments to pick up speed, with some training shoes **selling for many times their original high prices**.<sup>25</sup>

Clothing rental has also increased as part of the fashion industry and companies in this sector are now morphing to include resale as part of their model. **Rent the Runway**<sup>26</sup> in the US enables members to access new clothes that might otherwise be out of reach pricewise through a monthly membership plan. The company claims that 89% of their users buy fewer clothes as a result. They now offer **everything on their site**<sup>27</sup> for resale to both subscribers and non-subscribers, while competitor Nuuly launched a resale platform called **Nuuly Thrift**.<sup>28</sup>

According to **Forbes**,<sup>29</sup> it's the younger generations really powering the demand for a lower impact approach to apparel. Gen-Z consumers are turning to resale for an ethical and greener shopping experience, with 37% of Gen-Z shopping second hand compared to 27% of Millennials and 19% of Baby Boomers (not sure what happened to Gen-X in this survey, but maybe they have returned to their punk homemade roots?). Up to **one in five people**<sup>30</sup> in the 16-24 age group also belongs to a 'virtual swap group' to share clothes, and just 11% said they wouldn't wear clothes someone else has already worn, compared to the poll average of 13%.

For these younger people, buying vintage or second hand can be an ethical badge of honour that also showcases their identity. Much of the creating and sharing is done online as part of social media entertainment where followers comment and share tips and trends. Instagram in particular has been key in promoting the idea of **making your own clothes**<sup>31</sup> from sustainable fabrics, using homemade patterns and buying very little new. Young designer Tara Viggo's **#Zadiejumpsuit**<sup>32</sup> has been tagged in almost 11,000 posts and is sold through **The Fold Line**,<sup>33</sup> a growing pattern website. Meanwhile, the hashtag #handmadewardrobe features in more than 900,000 posts.

The pandemic revealed to us just how fast the churn of our wardrobes and other household items had become, making a treadmill of consumption and reducing the real well-being attached to these very transient pleasure highs. The actions of many individuals here has already had an effect on the mainstream market, with second hand clothing moving from poor to cool. As sustainability criteria become more embedded in our wider economy, this new approach to clothes seems here to stay.

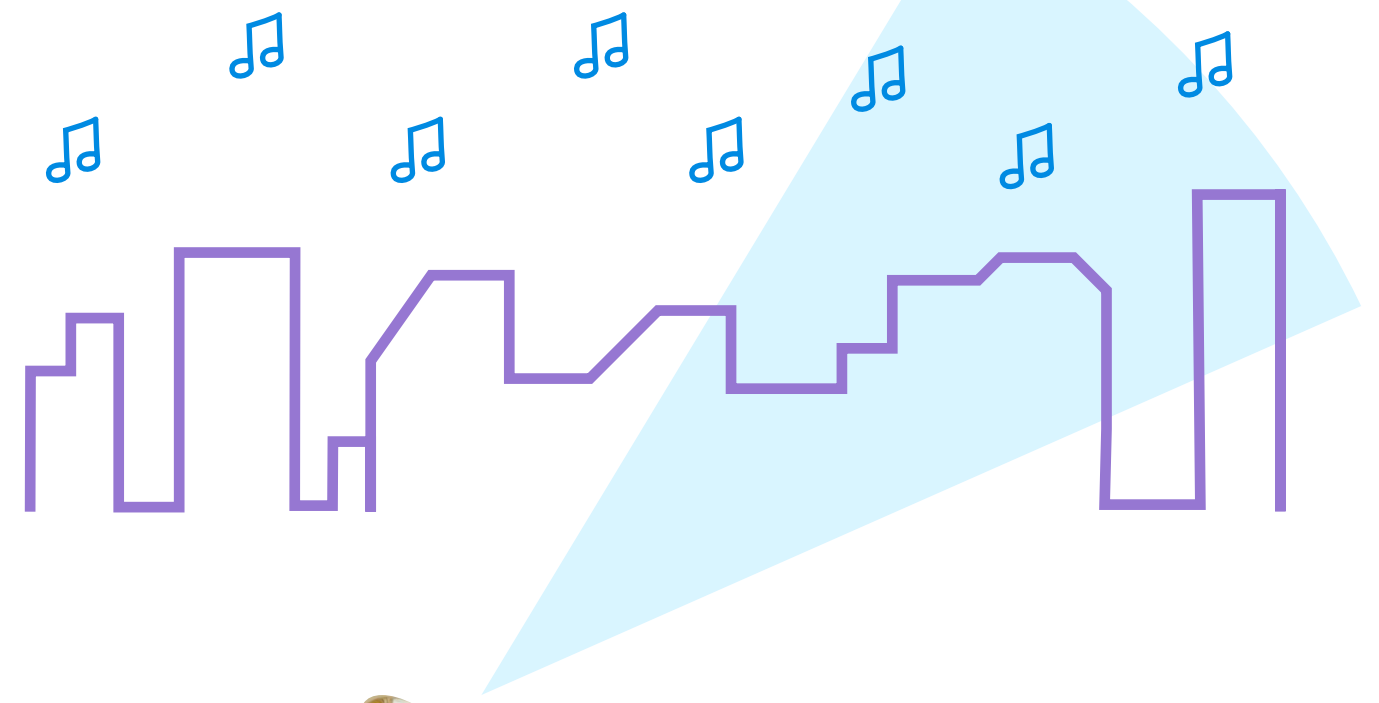




# GETTING CREATIVE BEATS CONSUMERISM



How the pandemic unlocked our abilities to entertain each other, and brought people together over jigsaws, song, chess and learning the ukulele



Finding pleasure in play, culture and experience rather than the false promise of shopping for more 'stuff', is a potentially big, positive step for raising our well being and lowering ecological impact. It makes us feel better for longer and, done well, uses fewer resources and produces less waste. When shops closed during the pandemic it turned out that behind all that passive consumption, many people were in fact frustrated producers of their own entertainment and jumped, or in some cases danced, at the chance.

The Italians showed us the way. In March 2020 when the word “lockdown” was still strange, the world watched enthralled as communities across Italy, who were confined to often very small apartments, began to use what outside space they had – often just a balcony – to come together in music, dance and song. With all the usual forms of public face-to-face entertainment shut, a **huge national concert**<sup>1</sup> was held, in which everyone played at home with their doors and windows open to whoever wanted to listen. One dancer used the only time he was allowed into the street – **to put out his household waste**<sup>2</sup> – to perform to rapturous applause from his neighbours.





As the pandemic spread and other countries and populations found themselves similarly trapped inside for much of the day with friends or family, there was an outpouring of human creativity. Families played old games, inventors made up new ones, people did art and craft in groups, and millions of others took advantage of a huge range of ready-made entertainment activities in the virtual world via online communities. Many of these revealed our need for connection and showed how well we functioned without the travel and razamatazz of elaborate, expensive activities.

**“Time together as laughing, singing, dancing people is vital to counter the way the economy so often boxes us into spending, competing, me-first people: the arts help us bring a more humane economy into being”**

Dr Katherine Trebeck, Wellbeing Economy Alliance

The most immediately available form of home entertainment – the television or games console – was a big winner. With cinemas, theatres and music venues closed, millions forced to stay home for their video entertainment and already fed up with regular daytime TV, turned en masse to streaming video services. Industry analysts had commented that this trend was already happening, but **the pandemic sped-up the pace of adoption.**<sup>3</sup> Providers jostled for market share, subscriptions rose across the board and pay-per-views became increasingly mainstream. Netflix became a household name and “binge-watching” a common experience for all but the extremely self-controlled. Overall spending on digital entertainment in the UK soared by **17% year-on-year in 2020**<sup>4</sup> – the fastest annual rate in the 25 years the Entertainment Retailers Association (ERA) has been compiling figures. This experience mirrors other historical experiences, **such as in during the Second World War,**<sup>5</sup> when spending shifted from resource-intensive material goods to entertainment and cultural activities.

Some also dusted off their turntables and took time to listen together to music they already owned and remembered how much they liked it. Lockdowns proved to be a boon for the vinyl market, which enjoyed its **best year in decades**<sup>6</sup> in the UK as fans deprived of live gigs spent their spare cash on their record collections. **Sales of vinyl rose 13% to £110m,**<sup>7</sup> and now accounts for a surprisingly high 40% of the total £271m physical music market. Overall, the physical and digital music market rose **6.8% to £1.5bn.**<sup>8</sup>

An incredible **one in six Americans**<sup>9</sup> sing in a choir, so not being able to sing together had a big impact on a huge number of people. Many community choirs turned to virtual meeting technologies in a mass, spontaneous experiment in **collaborating online.**<sup>10</sup> Since video platforms experience a 300-millisecond to one-second lag between computers over the internet, directing and singing music simultaneously is difficult. So people found ways of working to enable people to get as much joy out of singing as possible by listening and singing on mute or pre-recording parts. An ensemble in Canada **sang from their cars,**<sup>11</sup> streaming the music over the slightly-faster radio waves using microphones, a mixer and an FM transmitter to prevent the lag time experienced online.

**The Association of British Choral Directors**<sup>12</sup> even published information on how to lead choirs in lockdown. An online survey of **nearly 4000 choir members**<sup>13</sup> in the UK identified that continuing the choirs online – even in a limited way – improved people’s sense of wellbeing, was important for their community and social identity, and encouraged creative co-creation. It is also an activity that is about using what you have – your voice – rather than buying a new toy.

**“Dark clouds can have silver linings – personal tragedy and communal grief were the dark clouds of the pandemic but the stimulation of the arts and entertainment through enforced staying at home added flashes of silver. And not just works ‘on your own like painting and writing but the online world buzzed with communal singing, dancing and drama. It often requires a shock to a system to open up possibilities and they then stay open to reveal what is possible to increase our wellbeing.”**

Ian Roderick, The Schumacher Institute



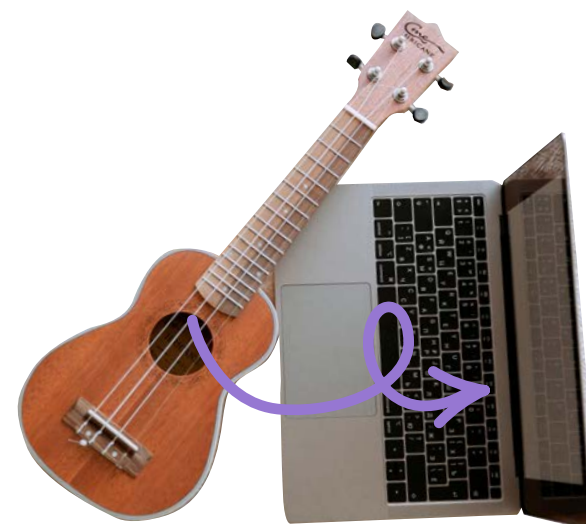


Many musicians and other artists took to sharing their teaching skills online for the first time, aimed at new learners taking advantage of more spare time to take up an instrument. The recent **popularity of the ukelele**<sup>14</sup> continued, with **virtual learning communities**<sup>15</sup> teaching, learning together and supporting each other. Many of these online options also enabled musicians to earn a living of some kind, when all other sources had disappeared overnight. And geography is no barrier, with **one British man**<sup>16</sup> taking advantage of Australia's time difference to find a teacher in the early hours of the morning before his young family wakes up and others finding tuition for unusual instruments easier to source overseas.

Dancing was an activity that demanded some of the highest ingenuity during the pandemic, with online classes proving popular, **living room dancefloors**<sup>17</sup> booming, and students keeping up their physical fitness and skills by **dancing at home**<sup>18</sup> in gardens and bedrooms. The Dutch National Ballet made an **at home ballet**<sup>19</sup> to connect people and keep the love of dance alive. General keep-fit at home also flourished online, with the UK's fitness guru **Joe Wicks**<sup>20</sup> getting millions of people off the couch for his 30 min morning workouts. Yoga aimed at beginners also drew huge new audiences, with **Adrienne**<sup>21</sup> seeing up to 35m viewers on some videos.



Many writers and artists are used to working alone, but lockdown encouraged people to use those activities **in a more communal way**,<sup>22</sup> to ease the sense of isolation and be part of something bigger. In the UK, ceramicist and TV documentary maker, Grayson Perry, hosted an **Art Club**<sup>23</sup> with his wife, in which people sent in their art and he chose a selection to be part of an eventual real world exhibition. The Art of Rapid Transition held an **online exhibition**<sup>24</sup> on Instagram to provide a platform for art students. **Local art groups sprang up**<sup>25</sup> to provide an outlet for creativity and a social gathering for more **vulnerable or isolated people**<sup>26</sup> to have fun while painting or drawing. The Getty Museum in Los Angeles challenged people to recreate some of **their favourite works at home**<sup>27</sup> with minimal props and then share their artistic interpretations on social media, with hilarious results and a huge viral phenomenon. This inspirational idea illustrated beautifully how much fun can be had with very little; huge numbers of people raided their wardrobes, sheds, tool cupboards for props that brought joy and laughter to so many others.



But it was not all about screens – in fact, many people were fed up with online activities and Zoom meetings and classes, and families enjoyed a surprising return to basics with a huge upswing in the popularity of board games and puzzles. The **runaway success**<sup>28</sup> of Netflix's stylish series focusing on a young woman chess prodigy, "The Queen's Gambit", also created **a real world explosion**<sup>29</sup> in the popularity of chess. Over 12 million new members flocked to **chess.com**<sup>30</sup> for games, lessons and puzzles in 2020, 3.2 million of whom joined after the Netflix show's debut in late October. More time for chess means less for shopping, which is good news if we are to rein in our current overconsumption.

According to the online resource **BoardGameGeek**,<sup>31</sup> more than 5,000 new board games or expansions are released every year, sales have **increased**<sup>32</sup> because of the pandemic, and board game **cafes**<sup>33</sup> have popped too, encouraging communities formed during the pandemic to continue. Digital connectivity has allowed the hybridisation of **board games**<sup>34</sup> using sites like **Board Game Arena**,<sup>35</sup> **Tabletopia**<sup>36</sup> or **Tabletop Simulator**,<sup>37</sup> which only needs a Zoom call and a digital board game to get going. Many people found new games and had more time to learn complicated rules and some even made up **their own games**<sup>38</sup> just for the pandemic. Jigsaw puzzles also moved from being a desperate activity for rainy days before TV to being an ongoing activity for all ages that can displace more wasteful activities. Puzzle maker Ravensburger saw its sales explode, and US puzzle sales were up **370% year on year in March 2020**,<sup>39</sup> and secondhand puzzle sales are also strong.



For parents with young children, simply getting through the lockdown-extended time at home – often working while also trying to teach or care for children or other relatives – was difficult. Putting formal education aside, many people rose spectacularly to the challenge of entertaining without the usual holiday plans, summer camps or playdates that had become the norm. Even those without a garden or outside space could have a go at **shaving foam marbling**,<sup>40</sup> **body tracing**<sup>41</sup> or perhaps an **ecology "snack"**<sup>42</sup> – snippets for young ones at home. Perhaps the days of back-to-back pricey activities for children are numbered, as we remember that social interaction and being occasionally bored are also important.

The pandemic tested aspects of our societies to the extreme but it also brought out moments of stunning creativity, shared humour – and the realisation that we also need the time to enjoy each other's company without hang-gliding, bungee jumping or training to be a toastmaster (nothing wrong with any of these activities per se). For a more sustainable future, where we might be thrown more often on our own resources to have fun, perhaps we have relearned some important skills.



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# Re→set

## lessons from lockdown

This guide has been made possible by the support of ClimateWorks Foundation – [climateworks.org](https://climateworks.org) – and is published by the Rapid Transition Alliance – [rapidtransition.org](https://rapidtransition.org) – where you can find many of these examples explored in more detail.

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