

# UK Government response to fast fashion

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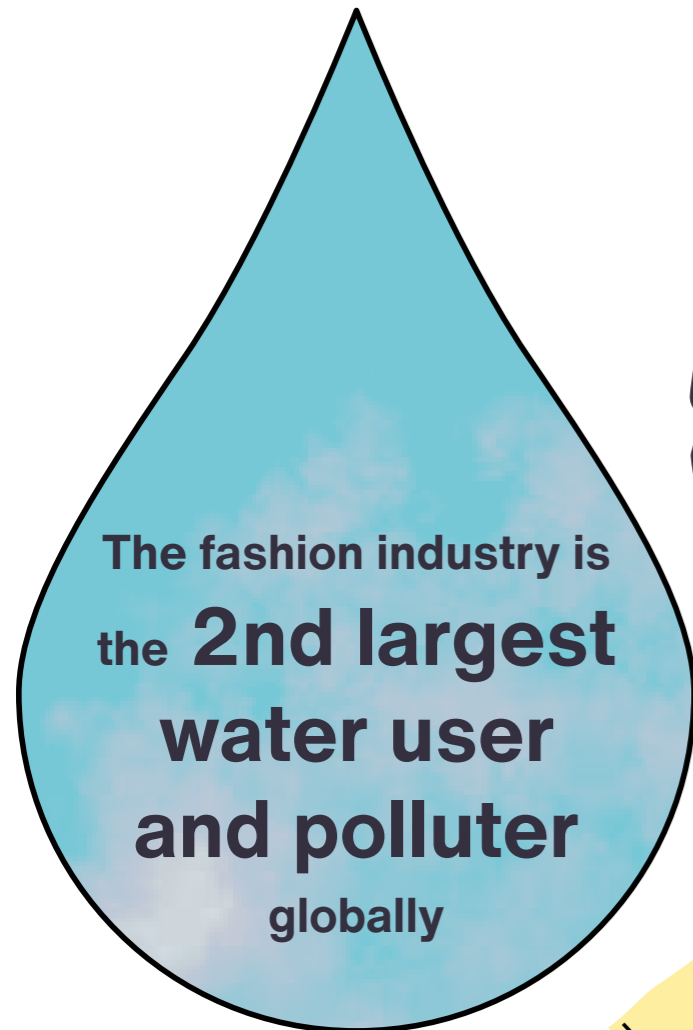
The widespread damage of the fast fashion industry has come into the spotlight in the past few years, with awareness raised around the environmental degradation caused by the industry and the poor working conditions for many in the sector. This research aimed to look into what UK Government have done to tackle the damage caused by fast fashion and what strategies and policies have been implemented to do so. This research was carried out by Alice Russell of **Seahorse Environmental** with Dolly Theis acting as advisor. The research was commissioned by **Hubbub**.



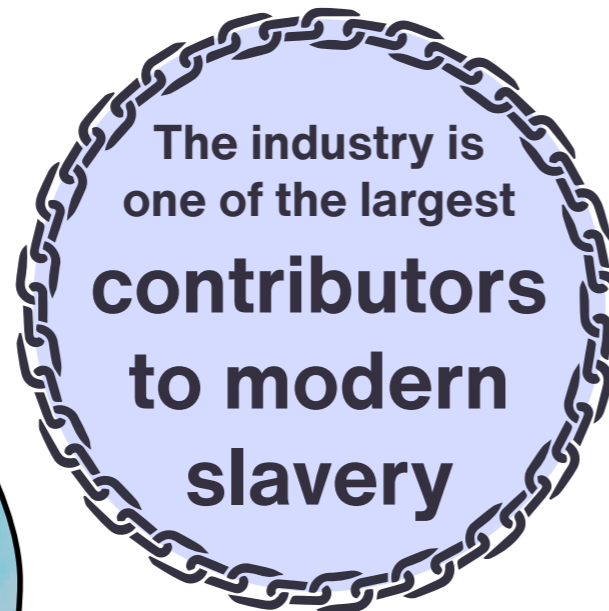
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# The issue



The fashion industry is the **2nd largest water user and polluter** globally



The industry is one of the largest **contributors to modern slavery**



**13 million** items of clothing are sent to **landfill** in the UK every week

# Government (in)action over the last 30 years

Only **five strategies** and **19 policies** that tackle fast fashion

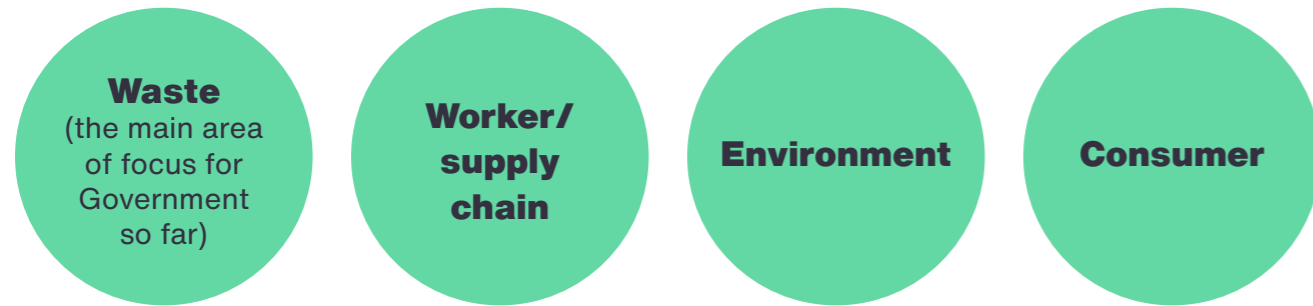
Only **one policy** proposed with any cost or budget

Only **32%** of policies directly take action rather than just raise awareness of the issue

Lack of regulation to enforce these policies

# The research

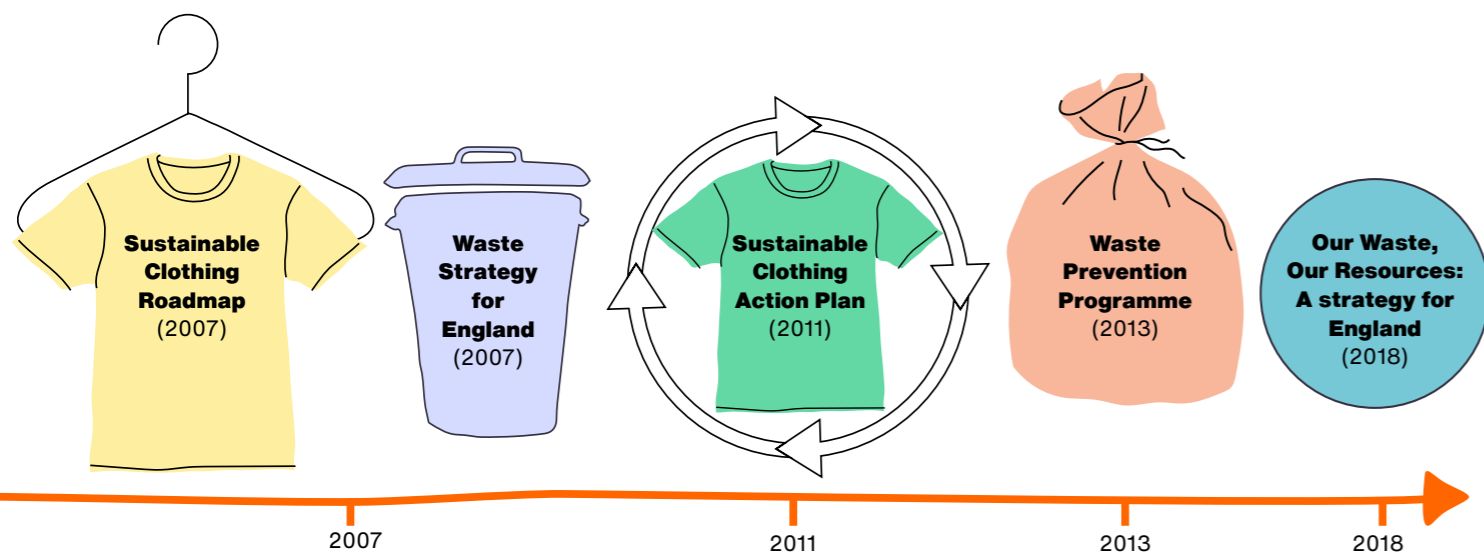
The types of issues created by the fast fashion industry and that should be (but aren't) covered by Government strategies and policies include:



Fashion as a policy area falls under the remit of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). However, the researchers were told by DCMS that they are not responsible for fast fashion strategies and that this was the responsibility of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Even though the **British Fashion Council is sponsored by DCMS.**

The research into Government action on fast fashion found that the UK Government has published five strategies containing 19 policies to tackle fast fashion starting in 2008 to the most recent in 2018. **In comparison, there have been 14 Government obesity strategies containing 689 policies to date.**

**Two of the five strategies published were focused solely on fashion and three were broader waste reduction strategies. The strategies are:**



Not only have there only been 19 Government policies proposed to date, but they have only been proposed in a way that is unlikely to lead to implementation and most policies proposed did not seek to directly address the issue of fast fashion (for example failing to include a timeline, budget or focusing purely on one element of the issue – mainly waste).

The Government has also not taken advice on this issue and rejected all of the Environmental Audit Committee's recommendations from its 'Fixing fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability' inquiry report.

The Government has also announced plans for a new 'Waste Prevention Programme for England: Towards a Resource Efficient Economy' that aims *'to address the negative environmental impacts of the textiles sector and fast fashion, including by supporting more sustainable design, improved consumer information, new business models and better recycling'*.

Fast fashion is a complex issue that incorporates issues of the environment, workers' rights and corporate sustainability yet the government has only looked at it through the lens of waste reduction when in fact this is an issue that must be tackled by multiple departments.

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