

# THE LIFE CYCLE OF SECONDHAND CLOTHING



## What happens to your recycled used clothing?

Once a resident determines that their clothing, shoes, handbags, or household textiles have reached the end of their useful life, materials are collected by Simple Recycling and collected clothing is sorted and graded for condition.

**10-20%**  
Top quality materials are sold to local thrift stores where they create access to low cost clothing and jobs for local residents.

**80%**  
The vast majority of clothing collected is not resaleable in the U.S. so it is further sorted for international export or broken down for raw materials.

**45%**  
Reused and Repurposed  
Majority is exported as secondhand clothing.

**30%**  
Recycled and Converted  
Reclaimed wiping rags are used in various ways as industrial and residential absorbents.

**20%**  
Recycled into Fiber  
Post-consumer fiber is used to make home insulation, carpet padding, and raw material for the automotive industry.

Only 5% ends up as waste.



Thrift industry employs nearly 100,000 workers in the U.S. with over \$1 billion wages paid. In addition, private sector recyclers create an additional 15,000 to 20,000 jobs nationally.<sup>2</sup>

The textile recycling process follows the conventional recycling maxim of  
**Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!**

### Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> EPS 2009 Federal MSW waste study; 3.8 billion lbs. recovered divided by 2010 U.S. Census Population 310 million
- <sup>2</sup> "Textile Recycling in the U.S." Report submitted to SMART by Dr. Jana Hawley PhD. Univ. of Missouri 2009
- <sup>3</sup> EPA 2009 Federal MSW waste study.