

# Textile Recycling Technologies: U.S. Government Accountability Office Report



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The U.S. Governmental Accountability Office (“GAO”) has issued a July 9th Report titled:

*Science & Tech Spotlight – Textile Recycling Technologies (“Report”).*

See GAO-24-107486.

Because the United States is described as one of the top consumers of textiles in the world and consumers wear clothes fewer times before disposing of them, environmental implications are noted by the Report to arise. These are stated to include discarded clothing being the largest source of household textile waste.

The United States consumption and resulting disposal of clothing in terms of rates is also stated to be due to factors such as:

- Clothing brands produce approximately twice the amount of clothing today compared to two decades ago.
- Mass production and consumption of low-cost clothing.

The focus of the Report is the ability of recycling to assist in diverting textile waste from landfills. The goal would be to instead put such discarded textiles into an alternate use.

In addressing this issue, the Report reaches conclusions such as:

- Mechanical and chemical textile recycling technologies are limited by a lack of supporting infrastructure.
- Recycling technologies that preserve textile quality and can separate blended materials are still in development.
- Obstacles to widespread textile recycling include material suitability, high cost, and environmental considerations.

The Report addresses the available technologies for recycling textiles which can be both mechanical and chemical. Opportunities described by the Report include:

- Reduce waste.
- Support a circular economy.

Additional challenges are stated to include:

- Material complexity.
- Infrastructure.

- Cost.
- Environmental considerations.

Policy issues and questions posed by the Report include:

- What standards might help to improve the suitability of textiles for recycling?
- What safeguards should be taken to minimize the environmental hazards of textile recycling?
- What technological improvement and infrastructure are needed to facilitate widespread textile recycling?

A copy of the GAO Report can be downloaded [here](#).