

Halloween Clothing & Costumes Survey 2019

Fairyland Trust/ Hubbub

October 2019



Author: Chris Rose chris@campaignstrategy.co.uk for www.fairylandtrust.org

@campaignstrat @fairylandtrust

Contact: 07881 824752 01328 711526

Researcher: Amazon Rose

This survey was part-funded by Hubbub working in partnership with the Fairyland Trust Hubbub

<https://www.hubbub.org.uk/>

@hubbubUK

Contact: Trewin Restorick trewin@hubbub.org.uk

CONTENTS

Section	Page
Summary	2
Introduction	4
What Can Be Done ?	5
The Survey	7
Results	8
Individual Retailer Results	12
Weights	23
Waste Generated	23
The Popularity of Halloween	24
Conclusions	25



SUMMARY

An October 2019 survey of 19 retailers by the family nature charity [Fairyland Trust](#) supported by [Hubbub](#), estimates that UK Halloween celebrations generate over two thousand tonnes of plastic waste from clothing and costumes alone. The investigation found that 83% of the material in 324 clothing items promoted through online platforms of retailers was oil-based plastic. The study estimates that this is equivalent by weight of waste plastic to 83 million Coca Cola bottles, over one per person in the UK.

The retailers surveyed were Aldi, Argos, ASOS, Amazon, Boden, Boohoo, Ebay, H & M, John Lewis, Marks and Spencer, Matalan, Next, PrettyLittleThing, Sainsburys, Tesco, TK MAXX, Topshop, Wilko, Zara. Fairyland Trust says 'the scariest thing about Halloween is now plastic'.

Other research has shown that more than 30m people dress up for Halloween, over 90% of families consider buying costumes, some 7m Halloween costumes are thrown away in the UK each year, and globally less than 13% of material inputs to clothing manufacture are recycled and only 1% of clothing textiles are recycled into new clothes.

The commonest plastic polymer found in the sample was polyester, making up 69% of the total of all materials. The most frequent non-plastic material was cotton (10%) followed by viscose (6%) [a plant-based manufactured fibre].

The report states that 'Unless retailers and manufacturers take action to increase the use of non-plastic alternative fibres such as cotton, viscose and lyocell/tencel' the huge plastic-waste footprint of Halloween 'is likely to continue', and calls for 'better and consistent labelling' as many consumers do not even realise that materials like polyester are in fact plastic.

It notes that 'concerned consumers can take personal action to avoid buying new plastic and still dress-up for Halloween, buying from charity shops or re-using costumes to create outfits, or making their own from non-plastic materials' but 'without regulatory action to limit plastic entering the supply chain a comprehensive solution is unlikely to be found'. The Fairyland Trust proposes regulation to 'phase out non-essential plastics from the market'.

The [Fairyland Trust](#) runs plastic-free nature events for families such as [The Real Halloween](#) 26/7 October which includes a [No-new-plastic Fancy Dress Competition](#). [Hubbub](#) is working with the All Party Parliamentary Group, chaired by Anne Main MP, looking into the environmental sustainability of the fashion industry.

It concludes: 'The actual plastic-waste footprint of Halloween will be significantly larger than this survey suggests as it does not include food and other packaging, and toys produced and marketed for Halloween. There is a strong case for also looking into the Christmas and Easter celebrations which also generate a significant plastic waste footprint'.

1. Introduction

Halloween is now firmly established as an annual social fixture looked forward to by many people in the UK but because so much plastic is used in clothing and costume textiles, it produces a mountain of extra plastic pollution in just one weekend. Research has shown (see below) over 30m people dress up for Halloween and over 90% of families considered buying costumes.

This survey of 324 textile items from 19 major UK retail outlets (Aldi, Argos, ASOS, Amazon, Boden, Boohoo, Ebay, H & M, John Lewis, Marks and Spencer, Matalan, Next, PrettyLittleThing, Sainsburys, Tesco, TK MAXX, Topshop, Wilko, Zara¹) finds that 83% of the material offered in clothing or costumes promoted for Halloween is plastic. Previous studies have shown that most of the plastic generated at Halloween is highly 'disposable', becoming 'waste'.

Based on a sample of 30 Halloween costumes sold through Amazon which showed an average weight of 361g (297g plastic), and a previous Hubbub survey finding 7m Halloween costumes are disposed of each year, this indicates 2.079m kg or 2,079 tonnes of plastic waste is generated in the UK each year by Halloween clothing/ costumes². This is equivalent by weight of waste plastic to 83 million Coca Cola bottles³, over one per person in the UK.

This validates our previous impression that "[the scariest thing about Halloween is plastic](#)". We believe that at a time of growing awareness of major environmental problems such as climate change and plastic pollution, it is tragic and inexcusable that Halloween also injects a massive dose of oil-based plastic pollution into the national economy and environment. Manufacturers and retailers need to work far harder and faster to substitute materials like polyester, nylon and acrylic with non-plastic alternatives.

Research has shown that plastic in clothing mainly becomes waste which is not recycled, and is often disposed of quickly. The 2017 MacArthur Foundation study *A New Textiles Economy* found 'less than 1% of material used to produce clothing is recycled into new clothing', and 'across the industry, only 13% of the total material input is in some way recycled after clothing use'⁴.

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee [found](#) that British consumers buy more 'fast fashion' clothing than counterparts in N Europe (26.7kg per head compared for instance to 12.6kg in Sweden). [It costs](#) £82m a year to landfill clothes in the UK.

¹ Last year our smaller survey included six retailers - Marks and Spencer, Next, Top Shop, ASOS, H & M and Amazon – see <http://www.fairylandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Halloween-Plastic-Clothing-Report-2018-Fairyland-Trust.pdf>

² Our smaller 100 sample survey from 2018 estimated a figure of 2,660 tonnes.

³ A standard sized Coke bottle contains 25g of PET (a very similar substance to polyester), so 40 coke bottles contain 1kg of plastic. 2,079 tonnes plastic as Coke bottles = 83.16 million bottles.

⁴ Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *A new textiles economy: Redesigning fashion's future*, 2017, <http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications>

What Can Be Done ?

Families and consumers can avoid adding to the problem by not buying new items for their Halloween outfits, made from plastic. The Fairyland Trust charity is trying to eliminate new plastic from all its events and Workshops, and [is offering advice to families](#) on how to dress up and look good for Halloween without buying new plastic. For the last two years it's nature-based family event [The Real Halloween](#) at Bradmoor Woods in Norfolk (26/27 Oct) has included a [no-new-plastic Fancy Dress Competition](#). The Trust advocates that families adopt a 'no new plastic' rule, and wherever possible use existing or second hand clothes (eg from charity shops) to put together outfits for Halloween celebrations. It believes that government and retailers/manufacturers should agree a statutory labelling system and nomenclature to make it clear to consumers whether items contain plastic, and government should regulate to phase out non-essential plastics from the market.

In 2018 the Trust [contacted retailers](#) to ask them to avoid selling new plastic Halloween costumes in future and substitute other materials, and encouraged other event organisers to also try and go plastic-free.

In 2019/2020, Hubbub are developing the following activities:

APPG for Sustainable Clothing and Textiles

Hubbub is working with the secretariat of a new All Party Parliamentary Group, chaired by Anne Main MP, which is looking into the environmental sustainability of the fashion industry. The APPG is seeking to create more informed decision-making, boost collaboration and create a positive impact. The topic area is vast and consequently the APPG is looking to focus on a select number of areas. These are:

- Traceability of fabrics that are thrown away.
- The sustainability of different fabric choices .
- Opportunities for a more circular business model.
- Creating a more informed public.
- New business models.

To gain insight, the APPG instigated a call for evidence from retailers and experts. The call for evidence will build on the Environment Select Committee report by engaging organisations and trade bodies in open dialogue about key challenges faced by the sector.

Hubbub have conducted interviews with many retailers to explore ambitions and barriers towards a more sustainable fashion industry and are turning these insights into a report that will be publicly shared in Autumn 2019. The report will also include learnings identified through public polling on attitudes and behaviour towards shopping and fashion. Polling is taking place in October 2019 through Censuswide.

Wear The Movement: Launching in Dec 2019/Jan 2020:

The fashion industry is one of the most polluting and it's putting enormous pressure on our wardrobes and the planet. Our research has found that more than half of women aged 16-24 are buying new clothes once a month (Censuswide, 2019), yet across the UK it's estimated that 30% of the clothes in our wardrobe haven't been worn in the past year (WRAP). Social media is also building

pressure to have something new, with 1 in 6 18-25 year olds saying they wouldn't wear the same thing twice if it had already been tagged on social media (Censuswide, 2017).

Hubbub will soon be launching a new high-profile campaign called 'Wear The Movement', that will bring together voices across the sustainable fashion industry to educate more young people on the impacts of fast fashion, inspiring them to make more mindful purchasing decisions, whilst caring for the clothes they already have. Our ambition is to reach out to young people not already engaging in environmental issues to create a movement of people who are passionate about sustainable fashion. We will collaborate with influential voices to share advice and tips and create a new culture that values clothes, and run practical and proactive campaigns with supporting resource packs that enable people to take action.

Previous Hubbub work

Hubbub have a proven track record on communication campaigns around the impact of fashion. We previously run campaign such as:

- [Bright Friday](#) – providing a more sustainable alternative to Black Friday
- [Gift A Bundle](#) – gifting barely worn baby clothes in collaboration with Mothercare
- [What's In My Wash](#) – Educating the public on the impact of microfibres in collaboration with Campaign for Wool and House of Fraser
- [Give a knit](#) – providing a sustainable alternative Christmas jumper
- [Sew Spooky](#) – Educating people on the impact of Halloween costumes and providing alternative methods (swaps / upcycling etc.)

How to videos were created as part of this:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DB8ncSINBw>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6or2aXXDBnE>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxhzHDIBS-Q>
- Promoted the benefits of organic cotton over traditional cotton in collaboration with the Soil Association
- [Hubbub Investigates](#) – we've delivered many vlogs focusing on fashion and the impact on the planet

Other Organisations

Other organisations working on plastic textile pollution include the NFWI (Women's Institute) which is running a '[End Plastic Soup](#)' campaign focused on the fibres of microplastic that are released when synthetic items are washed (and worn), and Friends of the Earth which is campaigning about [plastic clothes fibres](#) and for [phase-out regulation](#) of non-essential plastics. A great deal of product innovation is going on in the textile industry as manufacturers and retailers start to try and substitute oil-based plastics – a good source of information is [Textile Exchange](#). For example, it's 2018 [Preferred Fiber and Materials Market Report](#) found that the 'new' non-plastic cellulosic (plant material) 'lyocell' fibre has now grown to 4.5% of the global market and organic/better cotton is 19% – but the vast majority is still plastic.

THE SURVEY

Method

This survey aimed to take a snapshot of what an ordinary consumer/ shopper might find when searching online for a costume or clothing to make up an outfit for Halloween. It is not intended as a definitive survey of the textile plastics problem.

Within retail websites, we used the search engines provided and took samples of items from six retail platforms. These were Marks and Spencer, Next, Top Shop, ASOS, H & M and Amazon.

Of course this means that the items located were those tagged by the retailer webmasters to show up when someone entered 'Halloween' or 'Halloween Costume' etc⁵. The content of the returns are therefore affected by the internal decision making of the retailers but it reflects the 'shopping experience' of a member of the public going online. In some cases only a small number of items appeared in searches. In 2018 Fairyland Trust conducted a similar survey of six retailers, which have been included in this survey, along with 13 more.

The original six were chosen as they were leading brands, and the additions were suggested by friends of friends who were asked where they might look for a costume or outfit online. The friends doing the asking were instructed not to pick any friends known to be activist "environmental" shoppers in order to try and make them represent the 'mainstream'.

Items were only recorded where the material composition was given as a percentage. The provision of this information varied between retailers and in some cases within websites. Some of the websites were 'platforms' for markets such as EBAY and Amazon but most are integrated retail brands. This information has been used to calculate an overall picture of the proportion of plastic in the items (eg polyester, nylon, acrylic etc), In all some 324 items were recorded as samples in this way (compared to 100 in the 2018 survey). This work was carried out for the Fairyland Trust by Chris and Amazon Rose and was part-funded by Hubbub.

No distinction was made between adult, men's, women's, children's or teens clothing or costumes. The tables show the range of materials listed (including a few eg bamboo and EVA, found in 2018 but not 2019). The great majority of the items are made mainly or wholly of polyester. The terms used to describe materials vary according to retailers and manufacturer. For example nylon and polyamide may refer to much the same thing. 'Polyamide nylon' is a generic name given to all kind of long-chain fibre-forming polyamide having recurring amide groups in them. Polymer chemistry is complex leading to terminological issues and in some cases polymers are made from fossil fuel (oil, gas etc) but can also be made from natural chemicals eg polyamide 1010 can be made from castor oil. However in the vast majority of cases mainstream production of plastic polymers in clothing with names like polyester, nylon and acrylic is made entirely from oil and behaves in the environment as a persistent

⁵ We searched 'Halloween' at the store website every time. For some this instantly came up with usable results, for others it didn't. For those that didn't have straight away good results (eg Halloween costumes) we then followed links/clicked on filters eg to get to a page with Halloween costumes on it. This is specified through the arrows and link names on the retailer Excel sheets

pollutant (microplastic etc). One retailer used the term 'synthetic' which in this context can be taken to mean plastic (and probably represented polyester or nylon).

The definite 'non plastic' items found in the clothing included cotton, wool, metals, leather and viscose. Viscose is a plastic-like fibre made from plants (eg wood). Modern methods of making viscose (eg as lyocell, tencel) can be very low polluting whereas some old methods give rise to pollution and land use issues. Until governments and industry agree on a comprehensive and consistent labelling system, consumers face a difficult choice in determining exactly which are preferable fabrics. (See section on shopping advice). Non-organic cotton can also have significant environmental impacts (eg pesticide and water use) but is not a persistent organic pollutant with the same health and environmental risks as plastic. Organic cotton is obviously environmentally preferable but those considerations are beyond the scope of this report.

A sample of 30 costumes from Amazon was used to calculate the average weight of a costume⁶. As these were all bespoke Halloween 'fancy dress' costumes, this significantly under-states the amount of plastic that would be found in a 'normal' sample of clothing as they were very lightweight in construction (leading of course to an increased chance of rapid disposal into the waste stream or environment). This weight value and the proportions of plastic enables comparison with other data collected by Hubbub to estimate the amount of plastic waste being created by companies making and selling Halloween clothing each year, and by the customers who buy and often dispose of it.

The full data tables (Excel spreadsheet) have been made available and the url of each item is included. The names of the items were recorded wherever possible and the search string appears at the top of each excel sheet eg (M & S) 'Halloween Clothes and Costumes Survey 2019 Search term 'Halloween'- > Halloween'- > product type - >Fancy Dress'.

This survey is not intended as a way to rank or compare retailers although the prevalence of plastic and non-plastic in items offered does vary. It excludes are large volume of non-wearable plastic Halloween items sold for example in supermarkets, and those not listed as for sale online.

The samples were all taken in October 2019 in the UK. We recognize that this is still a relatively small survey of a huge market but it indicates a huge problem and we do not know of any other surveys. Manufacturers and retailers are themselves in the best position to provide accurate data but their focus should be on active measures to eliminate the source of the problem, which they can easily do by changing their purchasing and specification decisions. Government could regulate to prevent plastic getting into the mainstream clothing /textile markets, excepting essential uses.

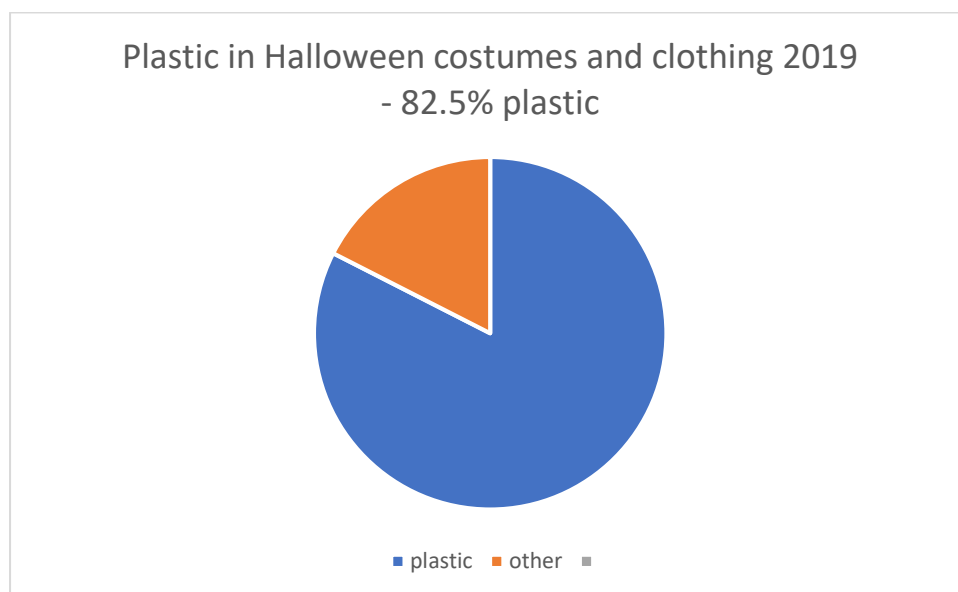
⁶ Amazon gives the weight of many of the costume items under 'more product information' unlike most platforms.

Retailer	Data Entries
M&S	22
Next	22
ASOS	20
H&M	20
TOPSHOP	20
Amazon	20
Boohoo	20
Ebay	20
Sainsbury's	10
TKMAXX	23
Tesco	3
Aldi	8
Matalan	21
Wilko	12
Argos	20
Boden	20
John Lewis	13
Zara	10
PrettyLittleThing	20
TOTAL	324

Above: number of samples in the survey by retailer



Results



Overall 82.5% of the listed ingredients (materials) in the 324 items sampled were plastic. The commonest polymer was polyester, making up 68.81% of the sample fabric by listing of materials.

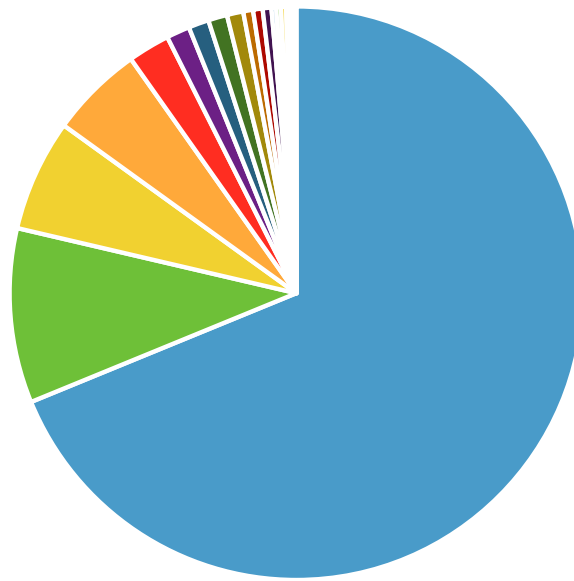
	Polyester	Cotton (1)	Viscose (2)	Synthetic (3)	Acrylic	Polyurethane
total values	1308	187.1	119.8	100	44.85	25
total percent	68.81%	9.84%	6.30%	5.26%	2.36%	1.32%

Nylon	Elastane	Latex (4)	Felt (5)	Polyester/cotton blend (6)	Polyamide (7)	Spandex	Leather
21.9	20.35	17.5	10.5	10.25	9.35	5	5
1.15%	1.07%	0.92%	0.55%	0.54%	0.49%	0.26%	0.26%

Polyethylene	Modacrylic	Metallised fibre (8)	Metal	Wool	Cashmere
5.5	4.5	2.95	2.5	0.5	0.4
0.29%	0.24%	0.16%	0.13%	0.03%	0.02%

[Materials shaded green are non-plastic; materials shaded brown are a mixture of plastic and non-plastic (cotton polyester), while 'felt' can be natural from wool but is often polyester, and 'metallised fibre' probably contains plastic. The others are all plastic].

Summary Halloween Clothing/ Costume Materials by %

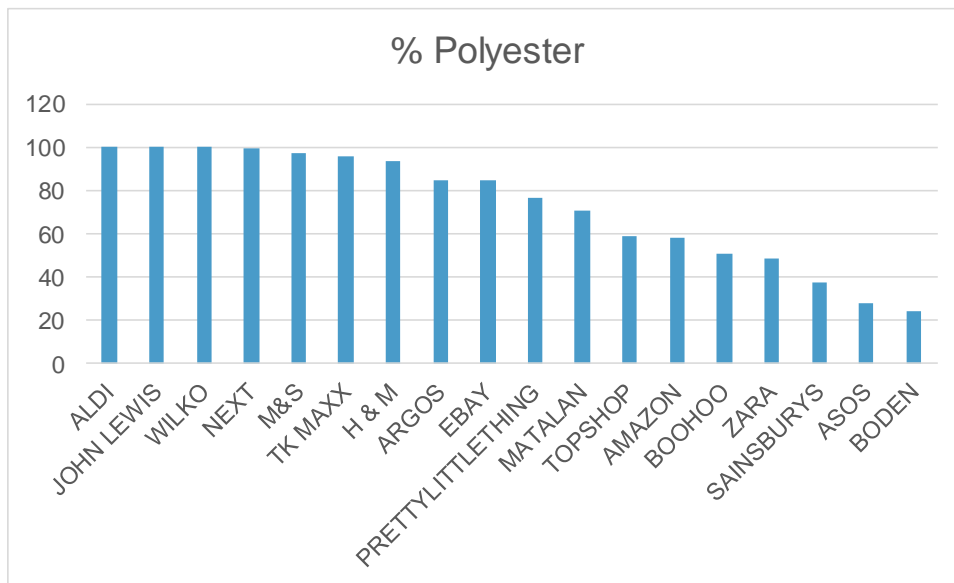


- Polyester
- Cotton (1)
- Viscose (2)
- Synthetic (3)
- Acrylic
- Polyurethane
- Nylon
- Elastane
- Latex (4)
- Felt (5)
- Polyester/cotton blend (6)
- Polyamide (7)
- Spandex
- Leather
- Polyethylene
- Modacrylic
- Metallised fibre (8)
- Metal
- Wool
- Cashmere

A summary of the textile survey results – polyester is the commonest ingredient (69%), cotton is the commonest non-plastic alternative (10%) followed by viscose (6%) and polyester plus other plastics make up 83% in total.

Individual Retailer Results

Polyester made up the majority of Halloween fabrics sold in most but not all of the outlets.



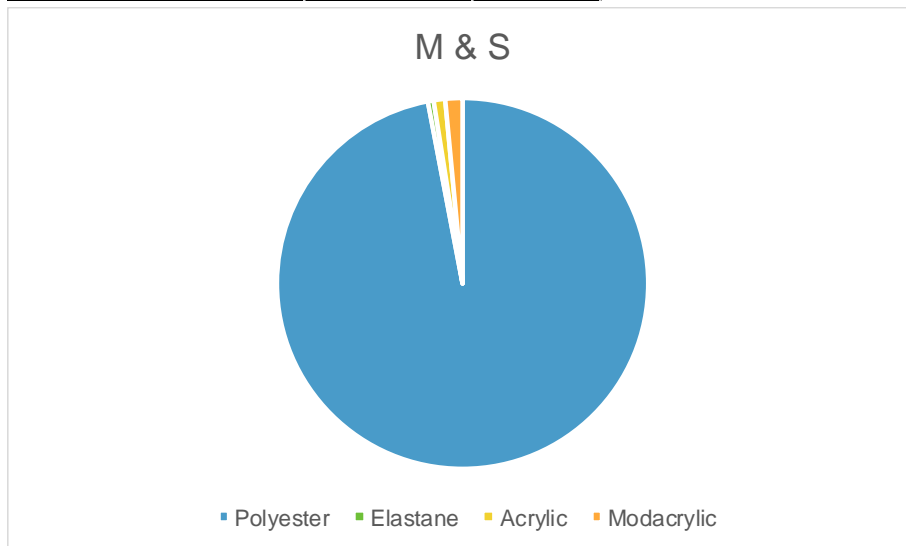
Polyester	
ALDI	100
JOHN LEWIS	100
WILKO	100
NEXT	99.3
M&S	97
TK MAXX	96
H & M	93.3
ARGOS	85
EBAY	85
PRETTYLITTLETHING	76.25
MATALAN	71
TOPSHOP	58.75
AMAZON	57.9
BOOHOO	50.9
ZARA	48.6
SAINSBURYS	37.5
ASOS	27.5
BODEN	24
TESCO ('synthetic')	100

The 'synthetic' items (wigs) sold in Tesco may also be polyester or nylon.

The below retailer by retailer pages show the percentage make up of items in the sample (see further detail in spreadsheet).

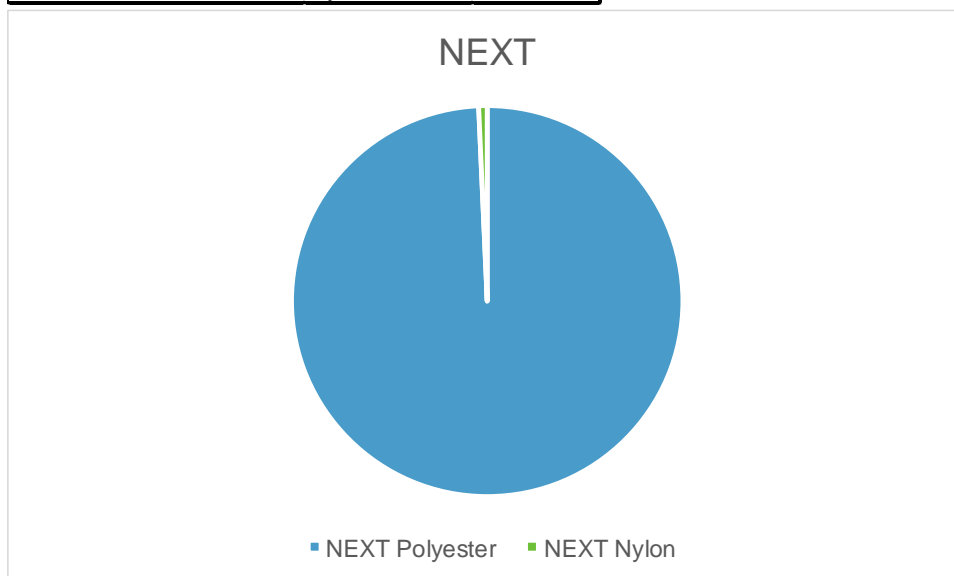
Marks & Spencer

retailer	materials	percent
M&S	Polyester	97
	Elastane	0.5
	Acrylic	1
	Modacrylic	1.5



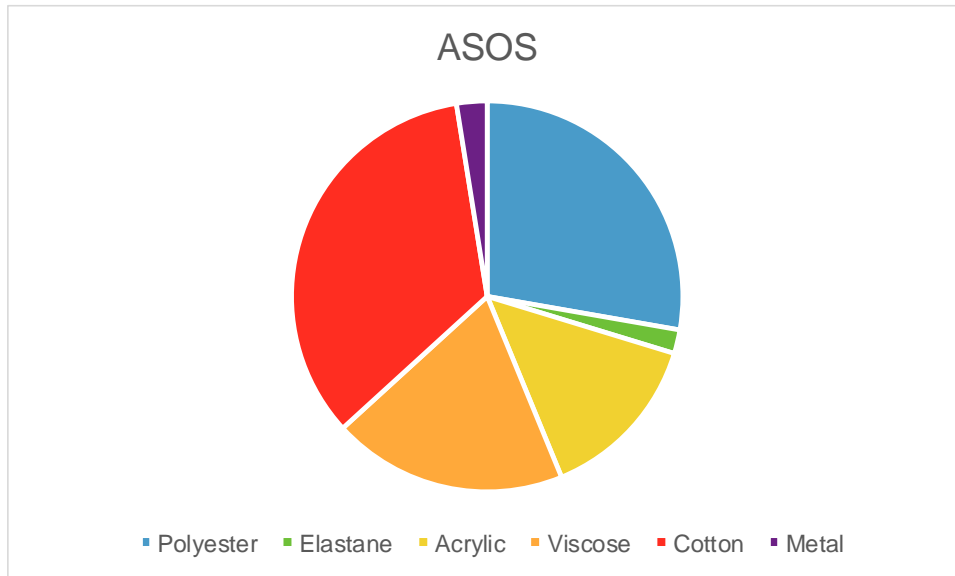
NEXT

NEXT	Polyester	99.3
	Nylon	0.7



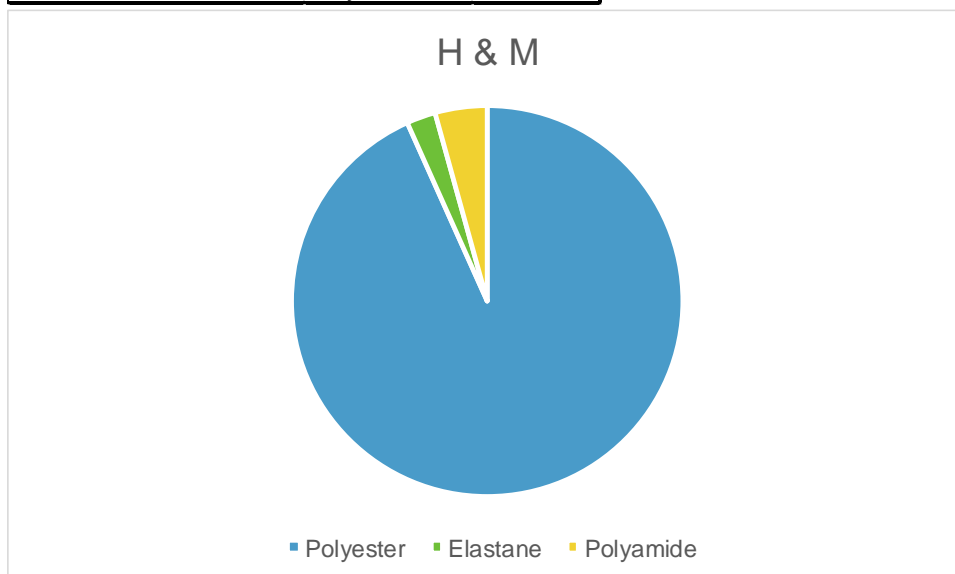
ASOS

ASOS	Polyester	27.5
	Elastane	1.95
	Acrylic	13.95
	Viscose	19.25
	Cotton	33.95
	Metal	2.5



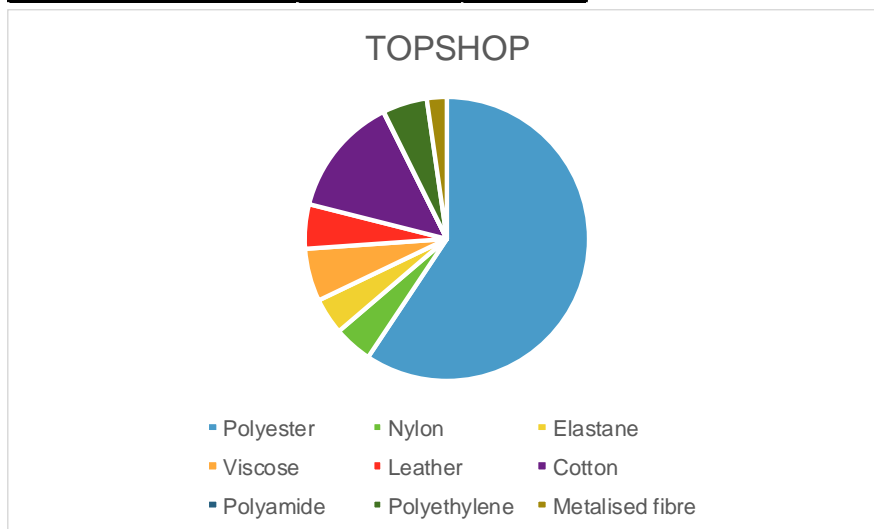
H & M

H & M	Polyester	93.3
	Elastane	2.4
	Polyamide	4.3



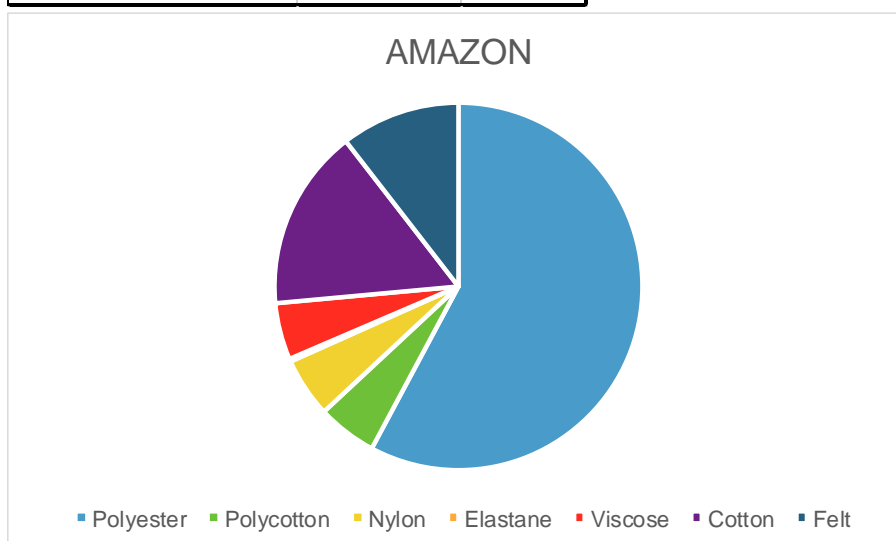
TOPSHOP

TOPSHOP	Polyester	58.75
	Nylon	4.35
	Elastane	4.1
	Viscose	5.95
	Leather	5
	Cotton	13.55
	Polyamide	0.05
	Polyethylene	5
	Metalised fibre	2.25



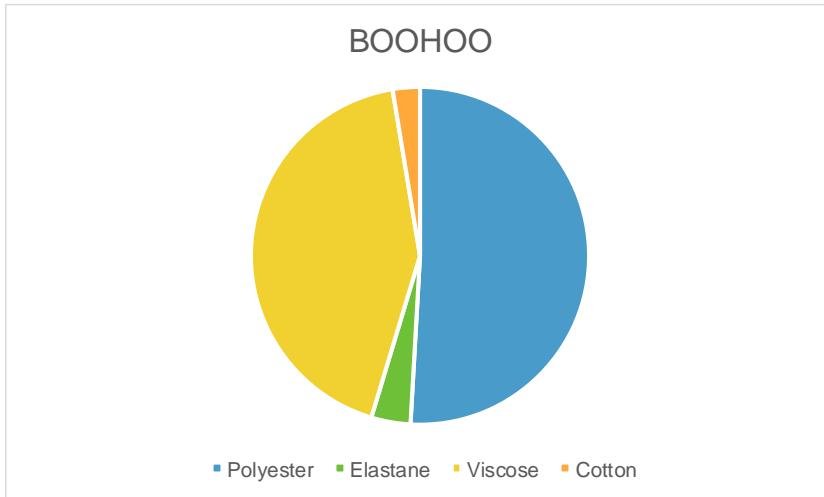
AMAZON

AMAZON	Polyester	57.9
	Polycotton	5.25
	Nylon	5.25
	Elastane	0.25
	Viscose	5
	Cotton	16
	Felt	10.5



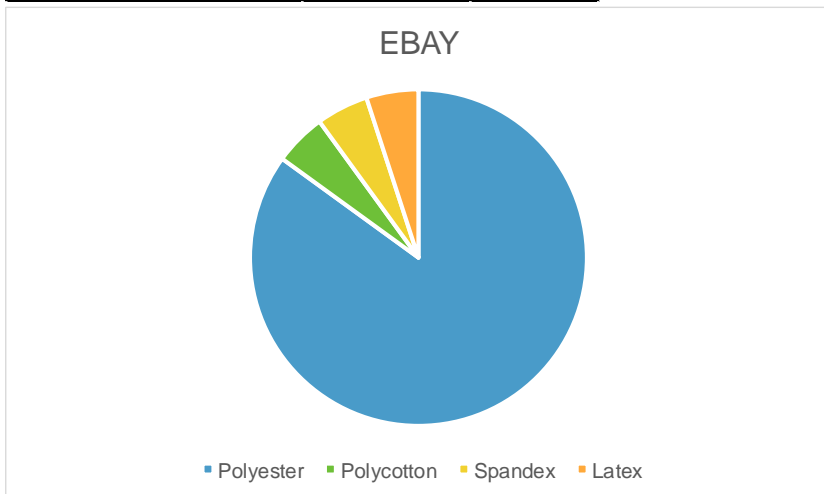
BOOHOO

BOOHOO	Polyester	50.9
	Elastane	3.75
	Viscose	42.75
	Cotton	2.6



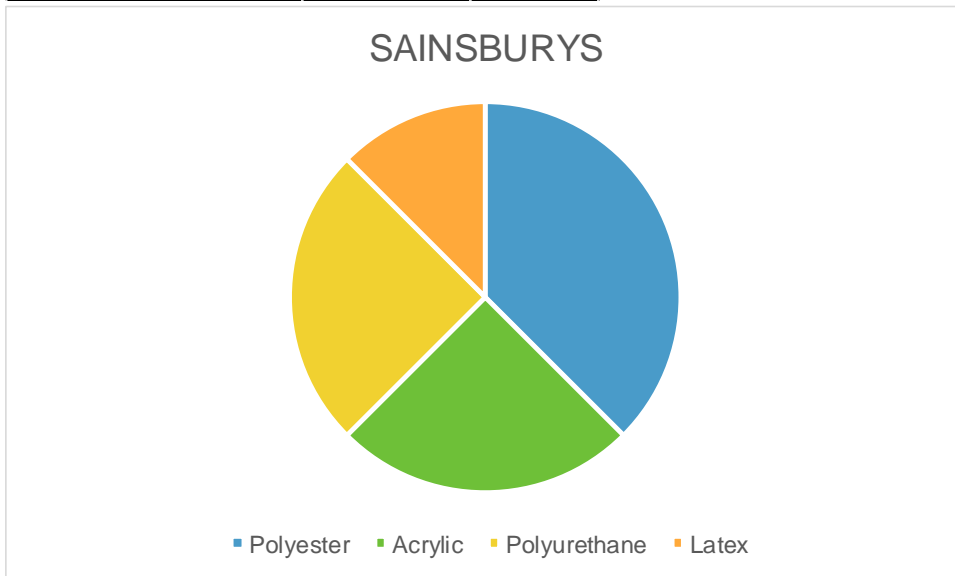
EBAY

EBAY	Polyester	85
	Polycotton	5
	Spandex	5
	Latex	5



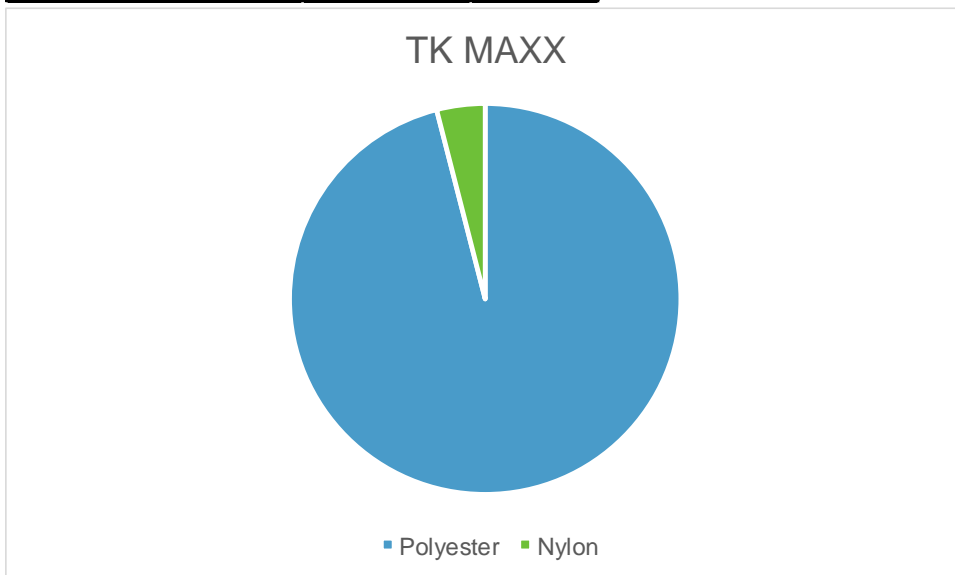
SAINSBURYS

SAINSBURYS	Polyester	37.5
	Acrylic	25
	Polyurethane	25
	Latex	12.5



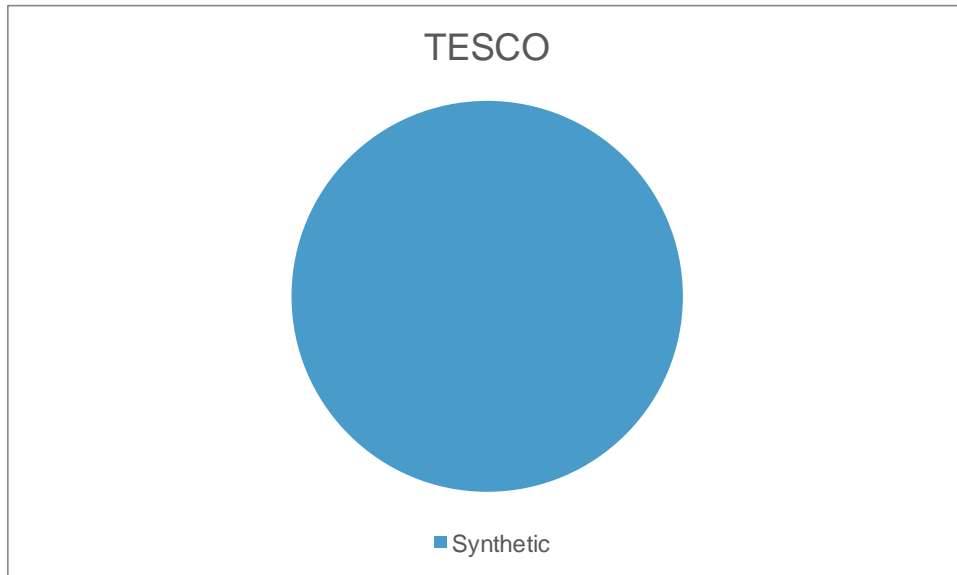
TK MAXX

TK MAXX	Polyester	96
	Nylon	4

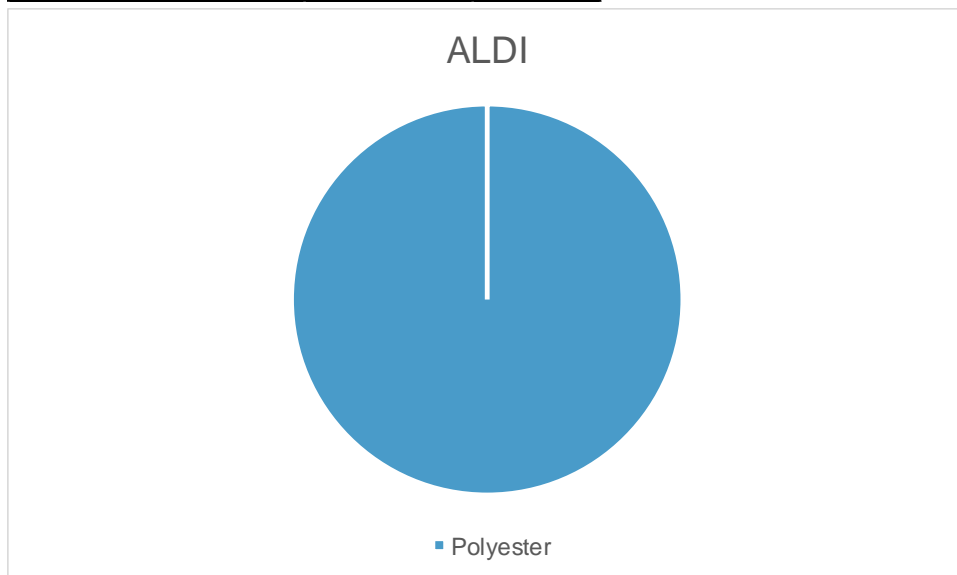


TESCO

TESCO	Synthetic	100
-------	-----------	-----

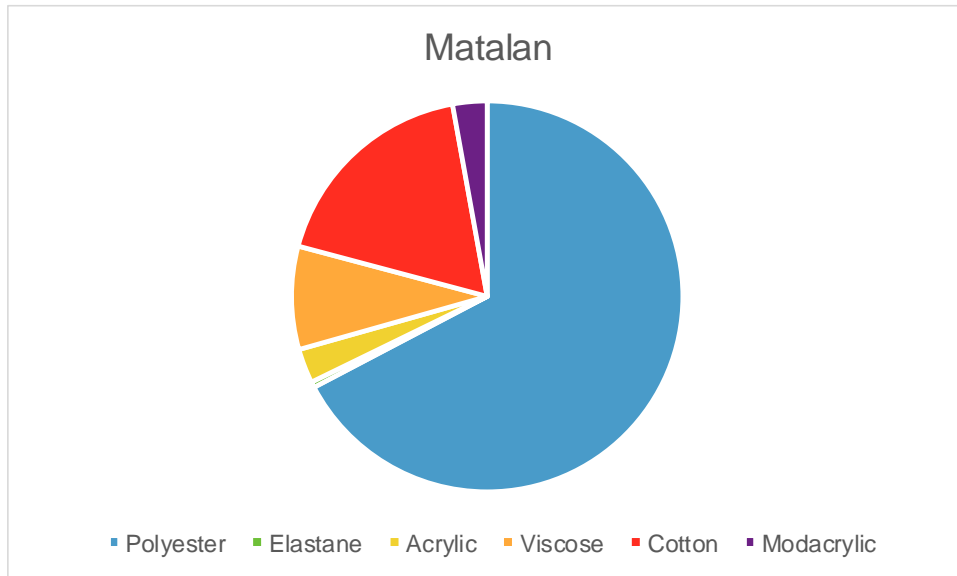


ALDI	Polyester	100
------	-----------	-----



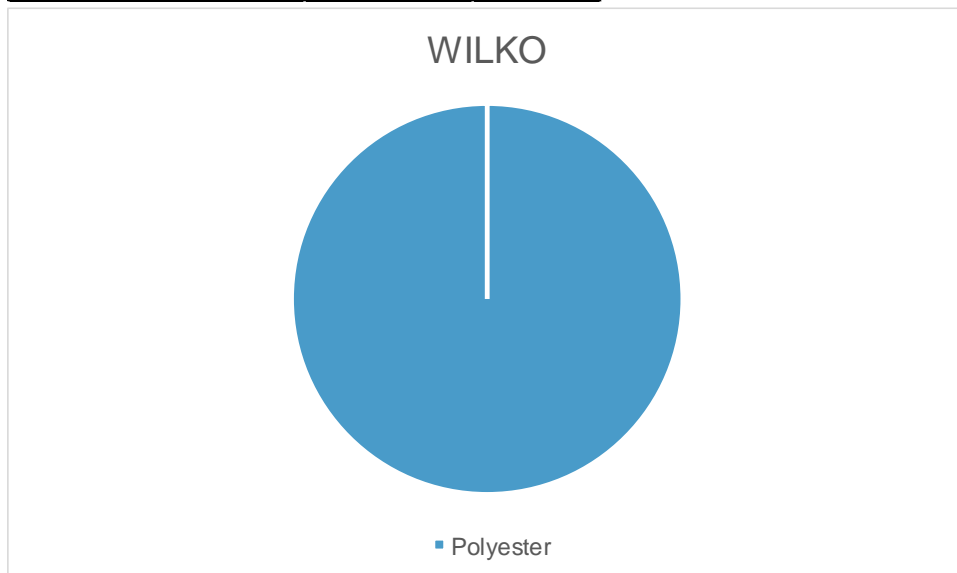
MATALAN

MATALAN	Polyester	71
	Elastane	0.5
	Acrylic	3
	Viscose	9
	Cotton	19
	Modacrylic	3



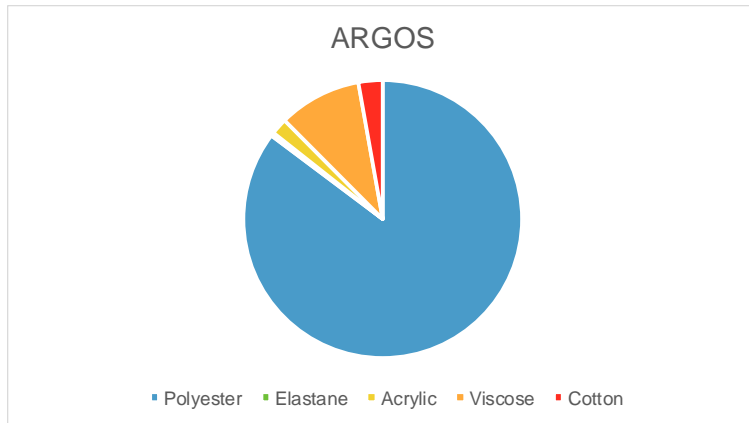
WILKO

WILKO	Polyester	100
-------	-----------	-----



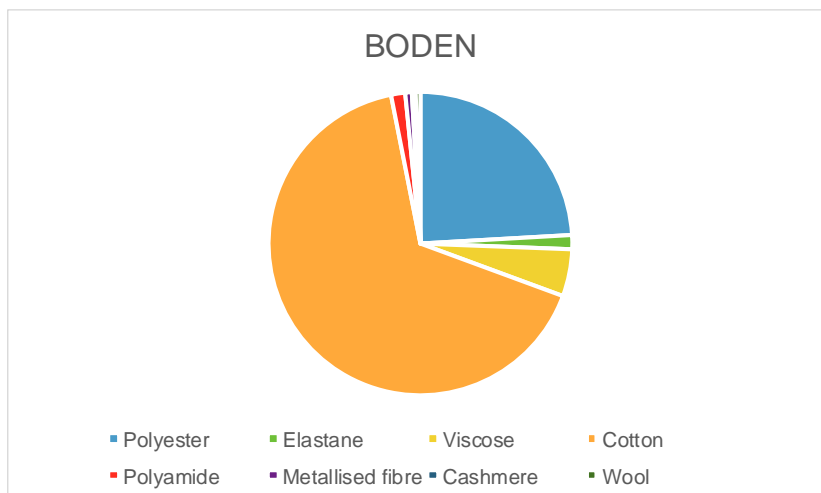
ARGOS

ARGOS	Polyester	85
	Elastane	0.4
	Acrylic	1.9
	Viscose	9.6
	Cotton	2.8



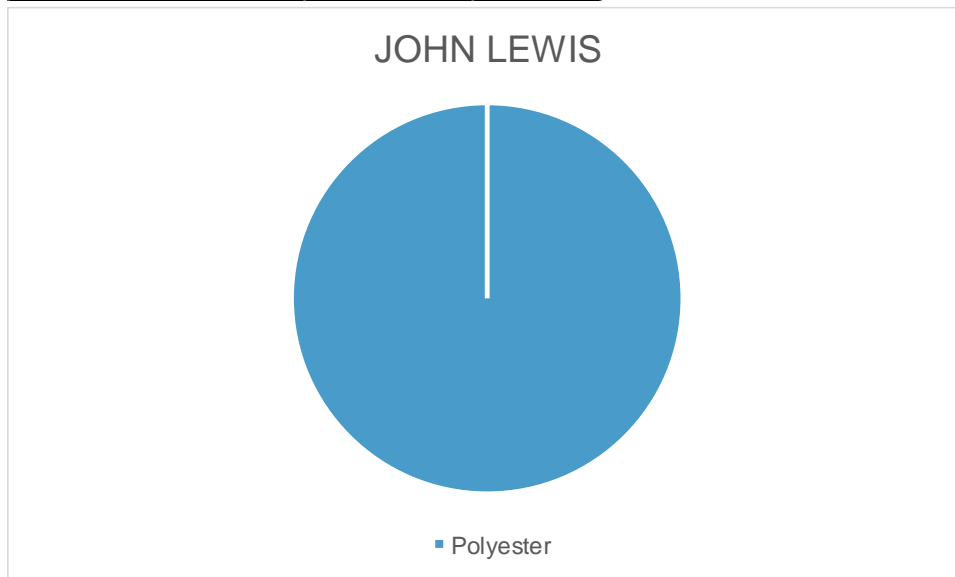
BODEN

BODEN	Polyester	24
	Elastane	1.5
	Viscose	5
	Cotton	66
	Polyamide	1.5
	Metallised fibre	0.7
	Cashmere	0.4
	Wool	0.5



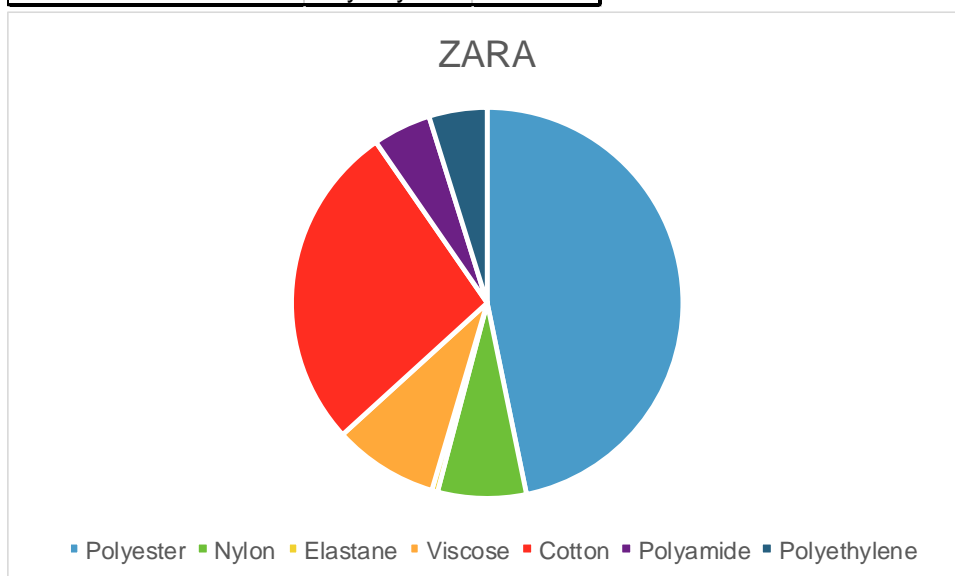
JOHN LEWIS

JOHN LEWIS	Polyester	100
------------	-----------	-----



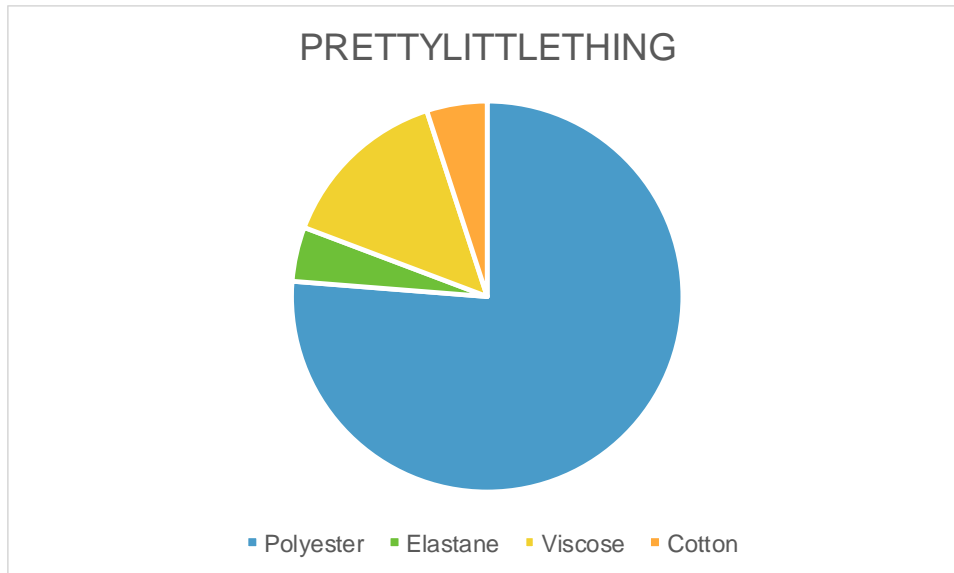
ZARA

ZARA	Polyester	48.6
	Nylon	7.6
	Elastane	0.5
	Viscose	9
	Cotton	28.2
	Polyamide	5
	Polyethylene	5



PRETTYLITTLETHING

PRETTYLITTLETHING	Polyester	76.25
	Elastane	4.5
	Viscose	14.25
	Cotton	5



Summary

All data from above (collated by material):

	Polyester	Polyester/cot ton blend	Nylon	Elastane	Acrylic	Polyurethane	Viscose	EVA	Spandex	Synthetic	Leather	Cotton	Bamboo	Latex	Polyamid e	Modacrylic	Metal	Polyethyl ene	Felt	Metallised fibre	Cashmere	Wool	
M&S	97			0.5	1												1.5						
NEXT	99.3			0.7																			
ASOS	27.5			1.95	13.95		19.25					33.95						2.5					
H & M	93.3			2.4												4.3							
TOPSHOP	58.75			4.35	4.1		5.95					5	13.55			0.05			0.5		2.25		
AMAZON	57.9	5.25		5.25	0.25		5					16								10.5			
BOOHOO	50.9			3.75			42.75					2.6											
EBAY	85	5							5						5								
SAINSBURY'S	37.5				25	25									12.5								
TK MAXX	96			4																			
TESCO										100													
ALDI	100																						
MATALAN	71			0.5	3		9					19					3						
WILKO	100																						
ARGOS	85			0.4	1.9		9.6					2.8											
SOODEN	24			1.5			5					66									0.7	0.4	
JOHN LEWIS	100																						
ZARA	48.6			7.6	0.5		9					28.2			5				5				
PRETTYLITTLE THING	76.25			4.5			14.25					5											
Grand Totals	1308	10.25		21.9	20.35	44.85	25	119.8	5	100	5	187.1		17.5	9.35	4.5	2.5	5.5	10.5	2.95	0.4	0.5	
total values	1308	10.25		21.9	20.35	44.85	25	119.8	0	5	100	5	187.1	0	17.5	9.35	4.5	2.5	5.5	10.5	2.95	0.4	0.5
total percent	68.81%	0.54%		1.15%	1.07%	2.36%	1.32%	6.30%	0.00%	0.26%	5.26%	0.26%	9.84%	0.00%	0.92%	0.49%	0.24%	0.13%	0.29%	0.55%	0.16%	0.02%	0.03%

Enlarge to read or access spreadsheet

Weights

A sample of 30 costumes from Amazon used in the 2019 calculation of an average weight:

Item no	description	url	Weight g	
1				113 descriptions
2				90.7 and
3				340 urls on
4				540 Amazon sheet
5				200
6				99.8
7				304
8				99.8
9				99.8
10				308
11				585
12				467
13	priest costume	https://www.ar	499	
14	corpse bride	https://www.ar	476	
15	cloak	https://www.ar	358	
16	zombie pirate	https://www.ar	399	
17	hooded monk	https://www.ar	449	
18	day of dead	https://www.ar	721	
19	unicorn skeleton	https://www.ar	118	
20	ghost town	https://www.ar	599	
21	kids cloak	https://www.ar	150	
22	skeleton clown	https://www.ar	399	
23	cowl friar	https://www.ar	680	
24	spellbound witch	https://www.ar	540	
25	female jester	https://www.ar	322	
26	zombie priest	https://www.ar	581	
27	zombie countrygirl	https://www.ar	358	
28	teens costume	https://www.ar	358	
29	halloween angel	https://www.ar	281	
30	spider girl	https://www.ar	290	
			10825.1	
		average	360.83g	

The average is 360.83g

Waste Generated

If this average is taken to apply across all the items in the survey, and the average plastic content is 82.5%, the average plastic content by weight would be approximately 297g per item. (In 2018 the average weight of ten costumes sampled was 426 grammes, and the 100 samples surveyed gave an average of 90% plastic or 383g per costume).

In 2017 a [survey](#) funded by the North London Waste Authority and run by NGO [Hubbub](#), found that some seven million Halloween costumes are thrown away each year. Seven million costumes at 0.297kg of plastic each is 2.079 million kg of plastic. One million kg is 1000 tonnes so 2.079m kg = 2,079 tonnes of plastic waste generated. (The 100 sample survey from 2018 suggested a figure of 2,660 tonnes).

The 2019 and 2018 surveys are both based on relatively small samples compared to the seven million costumes (and many more other items bought for Halloween and containing plastic) purchased each year. So far as we know these are the only surveys attempting to quantify this volume of plastic waste generated at Halloween. They are unlikely to be 'wrong' by an order of magnitude and together suggest that in the UK, 2 – 3m tonnes of plastic waste is generated by Halloween costumes alone, each year.

For comparison, a standard sized Coke bottle contains 25g of PET (a very similar substance to polyester), so 40 coke bottles contain 1kg of plastic. 2,079 tonnes plastic as Coke bottles = 83.16 million bottles.

This is similar to the weight of plastic [waste generated at Easter](#) in egg-wrappings but doesn't take into account other Halloween plastic such as party kits and decorations, much of which are also plastic, or Halloween food packaging, most of which quickly becomes 'rubbish' and ultimately, breaks down to be plastic pollution.

Taken together the results of the 2018 and 2019 surveys confirm that the plastic Halloween waste problem is enormous and a significant addition to the plastic pollution crisis. It is also essentially avoidable as alternatives to plastic are available.

A 2014 study by the waste agency WRAP found 45% or nearly [half of all clothing](#) bought-new in the UK is made up of 'hidden' plastic such as polyester, acrylic or nylon, rather than natural fibres. In 2017 the industry group Textile Exchange [found that](#) 64% of global textile production was plastic, mostly polyester. Manufacturers are increasingly interested in using traditional natural fabrics like cotton or wool as well as new substitute lignin/ cellulose (plant-based) materials such as [Tencel](#) or [Lyocell](#) but these are still a small proportion of the market, if growing rapidly⁷.

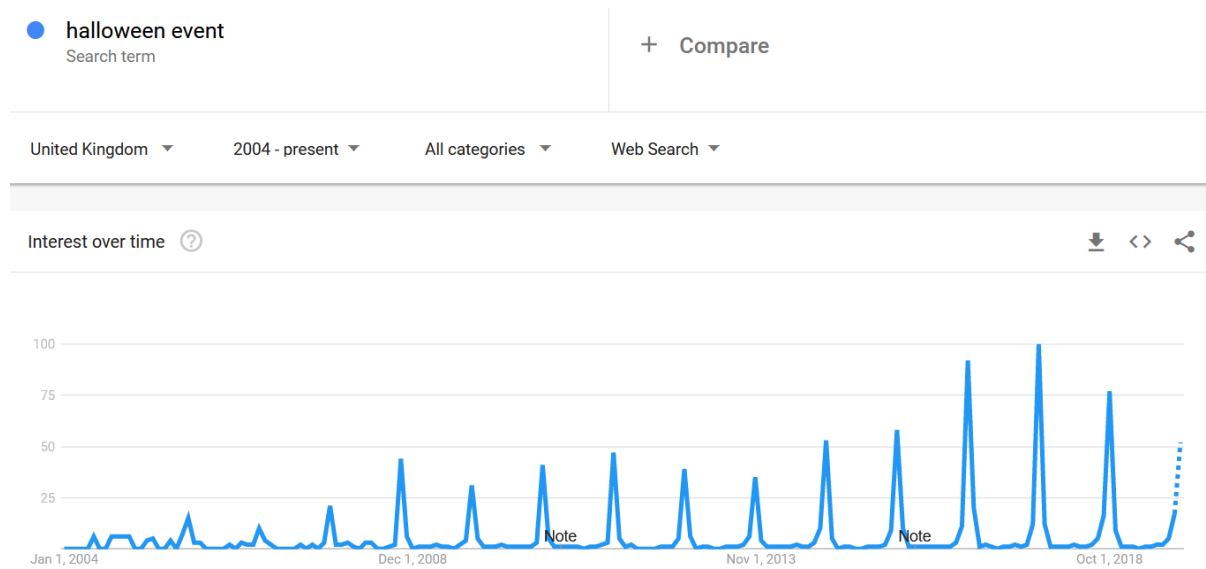
The Popularity of Halloween

More costumes are being bought as the number of people participating in Halloween increases. In 2017 a poll of mothers for Channel Mum [found that](#) 84% of families planned to celebrate Halloween, with 94% planning on buying outfits (up from 82% in 2016). A 2017 Hubbub study calculated that 33m people dressed up for Halloween, and in households with children the proportion with at least one person dressing up rose to 79%. 4 in 10 costumes were worn only once.

⁷ Wood v. Oil <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=2150> and, Textile Exchange reported in 2017 that of 95 companies reporting on fibre choices, 'demand for lyocell grew by a staggering 128 per cent' <http://textileexchange.org/downloads/2017-preferred-fiber-materials-market-report/>

Halloween has become big business. Britons now spend over £300m celebrating each Halloween and in 2016 market research agency [Mintel](#) found that alongside sweets and chocolate the top five Halloween purchasing categories were ‘pumpkins, fancy dress items, decorations and cosmetics’. A 2015 Verdict shoppers survey [found](#) that 55% of those spending on retail for Halloween bought clothing. Britons are high buyers of new and disposable clothing [4].

In the UK interest in ‘Halloweening’ [increased sharply](#) in the second decade of the C21st and with [Millennials](#) joining the party along with children and families, dressing up is a large part of it.



Above: Google trends for interest in ‘Halloween Event’ in the UK. Commercial Halloween events are growing in popularity in other countries eg [Japan](#) but also criticised for displacing authentic traditional forms of Halloween (eg in [Germany and Australia](#))

Conclusions

This report shows that Halloween celebrations have become an un-necessary and significant source of new plastic waste. Plastic dominates the content of Halloween clothing promoted through 19 retail outlets at over 80%⁸. Unless retailers and manufacturers take action to increase the use of non-plastic alternative fibres such as cotton, viscose and lyocell/tencel, this is likely to continue.

Many people are unaware that substances like polyester used in textiles are in fact plastic (polyester is essentially the same as PET used in plastic bottles for instance). Better and consistent labelling is needed.

Concerned consumers can take personal action to avoid buying new plastic and still dress-up for Halloween, buying from charity shops or re-using costumes to create outfits, or making their own from non-plastic materials.

⁸ Plastic is the majority material in all retailer items surveyed except for ASOS and Boden but this survey cannot be used to definitively compare retailers

However without regulatory action to limit plastic entering the supply chain a comprehensive solution is unlikely to be found.

The actual plastic-waste footprint of Halloween will be significantly larger than this survey suggests as it does not include food and other packaging, and toys produced and marketed for Halloween. There is a strong case for also looking into the Christmas and Easter celebrations which also generate a significant plastic waste footprint.



About

The **Fairyland Trust** is a conservation charity based in Norfolk which has engaged over 150,000 children and their families in nature since 2001. It runs workshops, events and activities in which young children make something magical and in the course of that discover natural history and folklore, for example learning to identify native trees from the Magic Wands workshop. www.fairylandtrust.org It strives to make its events completely plastic free and encourages visitors to avoid buying new plastic. The Real Halloween (above) includes a non-new plastic fancy dress competition.