



COTTON INCORPORATED'S | SUPPLY CHAIN INSIGHTS

# SUSTAINABILITY

## SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING

**S**ustainability is important to 8 in 10 consumers when purchasing clothing. While they continue to prioritize traditional purchase drivers such as comfort and quality, sustainability can be a differentiator to set a brand apart from others. With rising awareness of key environmental issues affecting the textile industry, such as microplastics waste, sustainable clothing is more important than ever. Brands can tap into consumer environmental concerns by using natural fibers such as cotton and by communicating their impact on the issues consumers care about.

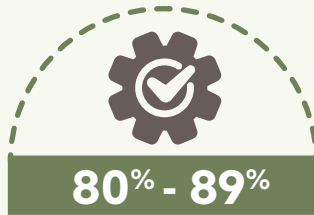
### KEY INSIGHTS

- > Brands can market sustainability by connecting its benefits to primary purchase drivers comfort, quality, and durability.
- > Cotton and other natural fibers are consistently understood to be more sustainable than manmade fibers.
- > Brands have an opportunity to build on emerging awareness of microplastic waste in the world's oceans to promote more sustainable fiber options.

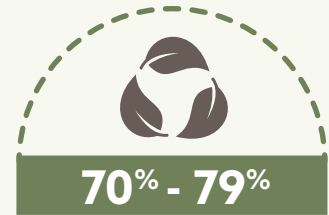
### CLOTHING PURCHASE DRIVERS



Comfort, Quality, & Fit



Durability, Price, Clothing Material, Softness, & Style



Sustainability, Color, Performance Features, & Laundering Instructions

### IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY ON CLOTHING PURCHASES

Percent who say sustainability is an important purchase driver. (+ increase from 2017 research)



### WHY IS SUSTAINABILITY IMPORTANT?

Percent who say sustainable clothing is:



**59%**

Higher Quality



**58%**

Better For My Health



**57%**

Better Value For My Money



**55%**

Functions Better

**76%**



are likely to look for clothing made from natural fibers

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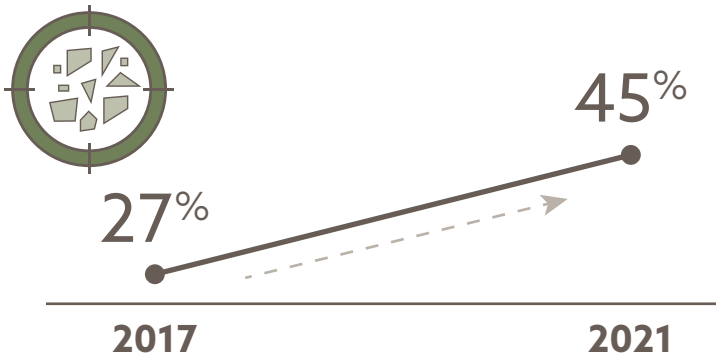
Source: CCI & Cotton Incorporated's 2017 & 2021 Global Sustainability Survey, a survey of 6,000 consumers in the U.S., U.K., Germany, Italy, Mexico, India, and China. Additional Sources: <sup>1</sup>Marine Pollution Bulletin. (2019). Microfibers Generated from the Laundering of Cotton, Rayon and Polyester Based Fabrics and their Aquatic Biodegradation. <sup>2</sup>U.N. Environment Programme. (2019). Fashion's tiny hidden secret. <sup>3</sup>World Economic Forum, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, and McKinsey & Company. (2016). The new plastics economy: Rethinking the future of plastics.

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**M**icroplastic waste is an issue of critical importance to the textile industry. When clothing and other textiles are washed, they shed microfibers that enter our waterways and, eventually, the world's oceans. When those textiles are made from manmade fibers such as polyester and nylon, they become microplastic waste that infiltrates our oceans. Consumers are taking note of this concern, as awareness of the issue has nearly doubled since 2017. Following research findings on biodegradability, consumers who are aware of microplastic waste are more likely to perceive cotton as safe for the environment, while perceiving polyester as harmful.

### AWARENESS OF MICROPLASTIC WASTE



### IMPACT OF MICROPLASTIC WASTE<sup>3</sup>

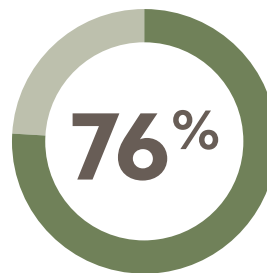
- 1.4 million trillion plastic fibers currently in the world's oceans
- 1/2 million tons of plastic microfibers from laundry yearly
- By 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans<sup>4</sup>

### COTTON AND MICROPLASTICS<sup>2</sup>

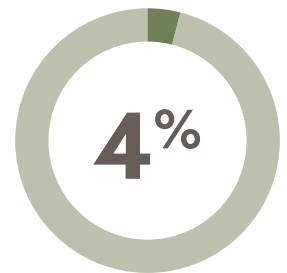
Percent of fibers biodegraded after 243 days in wastewater.



Cotton degrades 95% more than polyester in wastewater and continues to degrade over time, unlike polyester whose degradation plateaus after the time tested.



COTTON



POLYESTER

### AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF FIBER SUSTAINABILITY

Percent of consumers who say fiber is safe for the environment.



**88%**  
COTTON



**38%**  
POLYESTER

**LEARN MORE**

Learn more about Sustainable Cotton Innovations at <http://cottontoday.cottoninc.com>



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