

# Choosing Secondhand to cut Holiday Waste

Words by Kaili Cochran

Secondhand shopping has become second nature for many of us. Walking through a thrift store can feel like a treasure hunt. It's one of the only times you'd walk down one aisle holding a retro lamp and the next with a brand new sweater with the tags still on it. With Goodwill and locally owned shops just around the corner, it's easy to browse them as often as we do larger stores like Target or Walmart.

Thrift shopping offers several benefits: shoppers can find unique gifts that are no longer mass-produced, items are typically discounted and purchases support local shop owners.

With the holidays approaching, gift-giving often becomes more economical and meaningful when done through secondhand shopping.

That matters even more during the holiday season. A 2021 study from the Center for Biological Diversity found that Americans generate 23% more waste in December than in any other month. Between shipping materials, fast-fashion, packaging and impulse buys, the season's environmental footprint grows fast.

**23%**  
**more waste is produced during December than any other time of year.**

Kelley Dennings, a senior campaigner for the Center's Simplify the Holidays initiative, works on changing that pattern.

"For the pro-biological diversity we are interested in this topic due to the waste that is created during these large holidays and the resources and energy use that's related to producing and distributing these products,"

Dennings said.

"Our main interest is to get the word out there about the harm that can be associated with certain manufacturing of certain products."

One of the initiative's annual events is Secondhand Sunday, held on the first Sunday after Thanksgiving. The event encourages shoppers to prioritize pre-owned gifts instead of Black Friday or Cyber Monday purchases. The goal is to promote sustainable, budget-friendly giving while supporting local second-hand businesses.

The trend is only growing. According to resale marketplace ThredUp, the secondhand clothing sector is expected to grow up to nine times faster than the broader retail clothing industry by 2027.

Economic factors are also pushing consumers toward thrifted options. Recent tariffs implemented under Donald Trump have reshaped the fashion industry.

The American Apparel and Footwear Association reports that 97% of clothing sold in the United States is imported from China, Vietnam, Bangladesh and India. This leaves retailers and shoppers to face high price increases.

As prices rise and environmental awareness grows, more consumers are turning to thrifting for affordability and sustainability. During the holidays, secondhand shopping offers gifts that can be more meaningful, unique and environmentally friendly than what's found on store shelves.

**"A lot of people thrift to find that diamond in the rust,"**

