

5 billion pairs of jeans are made each year. Ever given a thought to how they are produced?

The hidden story of a pair of jeans

Jeans and other clothing is manufactured in a range of countries which have very low human rights standards and where abuses are routine. Well known brands sell these clothes and make little effort to track the supply chains to stop the abuses.

Human rights abuses:

- ⇒ **Use of slaves or forced labour in the production of cotton. Huge amount coming from China where genocide is taking place in Xinjiang with the Uyghurs**
- ⇒ **Abuse of staff and unsafe working conditions of staff in the dyeing, washing and carding process**
- ⇒ **Deadly silicosis among workers to create the 'faded' look**
- ⇒ **Low wages, wage theft and a refusal to allow unions or collective bargaining**
- ⇒ **Over-work and forced overtime**
- ⇒ **Sexual abuse and violence against mainly female staff**

Resource depletion:

The processes involve significant resource depletion especially water. Manufacture takes place in a range of countries meaning costly movement from country to country where the labour is cheapest.



Produced by the Salisbury Amnesty International group
<https://salisburyai.com> . Also on Facebook and Bluesky
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Background

It isn't just jeans of course but all kinds of clothing. Globalisation has led to the export of garment manufacture to the Far East mostly but also Africa.

The conditions in the factories are grim. Hours are long and overtime not an option if pressure to deliver is high. The rights of those employed—who are mostly women—are minimal. Trades unions are almost unknown as is any kind of collective bargaining.

As Rana Plaza showed, safety is poor. Physical and sexual abuse is common.

There is wage theft against which employees have little hope of success. So workers appear to be paid the minimum wage but do not in fact receive the money.

Countries

A wide range of countries are involved which include; China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India. Much of the cotton is produced in Xinjiang region of China which has a large population of Uyghurs. Their persecution amounts to genocide. If you are wearing something made of cotton there is a high chance that at some stage slaves or forced labour is involved in its production.

Retailers

But surely our retailers have inspectors and policies to keep tabs on how their products are made? Aren't they concerned at possible reputational damage if these abuses become known? It seems not and well-known retailers source their clothing from these factories. M&S, Next, H&M, Adidas, and many others are all involved. They have the policies but the extended chains and the abuse a long, long way away. Out of sight, out of mind.

Causes

Desire for cheap clothing, fierce competition, investor and shareholder demands for a dividend, are powerful forces.

Consumer ignorance of what is going on in the supply chain. The chains are long and that means the abuses mostly happen on the other side of the globe.

There is little media interest so it doesn't get reported. There is little attention from politicians who are mostly concerned about cost of living for their electors (that's us).

We thought slavery and forced labour ended in the nineteenth century. It's alive and well today.

Don't believe us?

Sources . There are many sources and these are just a few.

- ◇ [Commonslibrary.parliament.uk/worker-exploitation-in-uk-clothing-chains](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/worker-exploitation-in-uk-clothing-chains)
- ◇ [Business-humanrights.org](https://business-humanrights.org)
- ◇ [Corporatejusticecoalition.org](https://corporatejusticecoalition.org)
- ◇ [Walkfree.org](https://walkfree.org) (Global slavery index)
- ◇ [Amnesty.org 'Stitched Up' report \(primary source\)](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/reports/2019/06/stitched-up/)
- ◇ [Theguardian.com 'Fashions dirty little secret: how sexual assault took hold in jeans factories'](https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2015/feb/26/fashions-dirty-little-secret-how-sexual-assault-took-hold-in-jeans-factories)

What can I do? You can buy sustainably see sustainablykindkiving.com. There are ethical suppliers out there.

