



UNBELTS

2020 SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

At Unbelts, sustainability isn't an add-on. It's our purpose, baked into why we're alive as a business in the first place. We launched in 2011 with a goal of making super-comfy, size-inclusive belts through flexible, fairly-paid sewing jobs — and over the past ten years, we've grown carefully and conscientiously so we could expand our sustainability mandate along with our operations.

It's meant, at times, taking more tentative steps than we would have if our only success metric was cash in the bank. It's also meant confronting the limitations of our own understanding, and seeking ways to repair relationships — with the earth and our communities — that we didn't realize were broken.

This learning is still in progress.

This sustainability report is not a finished checklist. It's our way of showing you, our neighbour, where we're building connections now, and what our priorities are for the coming year.

This report is also an invitation to you. Where do you see opportunities for us to use our small but mighty platform to solve big problems? How can we use the resources we've got to amplify voices and causes that deserve more of the spotlight than they're getting?

We are a Certified B Corp, and have been since 2015. In addition to being legally committed to operating in pursuit of a thriving "triple bottom line" (people, planet, and profit), we are also subject to regular check-ins that keep us accountable for reaching our goals.

In 2020, we began aligning our sustainability goals to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) so we could speak a common language with businesses and NGOs globally who are pursuing the same outcomes.

However — above all, we are accountable to you. If you're reading this, you've either traded us dollars for Unbelts products, or you're thinking of doing so one day. Where money flows, so does influence, and that's not a responsibility we take lightly. Thank you for supporting us through a year when living by our values meant taking big risks for the stability and safety of our local and global communities.

Share your thoughts with us.

hello@unbelts.com | @unbelts   

Our Priority UN Sustainable Development Goals



Creating equitable employment and upward mobility for gender minorities, and designing gender-inclusive products that cater to diverse bodies.



Ensuring continuous work in a safe environment while promoting sustainable apparel industry growth.



Designing, manufacturing, distributing, and reclaiming products for lifecycle circularity and reduced overall apparel consumption.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Our mission: to create truly useful products that are made to last, produced with minimal waste, and designed to extend the life cycle of other, more resource-intensive garments.



2020 waste before upcycling: 235.25 m

2020 waste after upcycling: 35.38 m



I. Using Recycled and Diverted Materials

Did You Know?

One cloth mask, worn and washed daily for six months, replaces 180+ disposable masks.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, an estimated 3 million disposable masks were discarded globally every minute.

[Prata]



BELTS

- All Intrepid and 10-Year Kids' Unbelt yarn, except for the ~30% latex content that helps our elastic stretch, is **recycled polyester made from reclaimed PET beverage bottles**.
- We have replaced all virgin polyester yarn in our core Classic Unbelt colours with recycled PET. Virgin polyester will be completely phased out of Classics as we sell through existing seasonal inventory.
- All Unbelts hardware utilizes recycled metal.

MASKS

- Through our mask program, we diverted over **14,000 metres of overstock polyester and organic cotton from landfills**:
 - > 7,000 m performance waterproof polyester for standard Unbelts cloth masks
 - > 400 m cotton for Unbelts chambray masks
 - > 6,600 m organic cotton for mask lining

PACKAGING

- Using elastic offcuts to package 10-Year Kids' Belts
- Using recycled, paper-only packaging for Intrepid belts (now being phased out in favour of elastic offcut bands)
- Redesigning e-commerce mailers in favour of a reusable, recycled design



II. Minimizing Studio Waste

In 2020, we were able to reduce our Edmonton studio's elastic waste by 85%. We achieved this in 3 ways:

1. Sewing all imperfect, but functional, elastic into **Almost Perfect belts** made available at a discount through semi-annual Almost Perfect sales (which also helps us reach our goal of economic accessibility).
2. Repurposing offcuts and imperfect elastic into **Unpackaging bands**, which help us eliminate the need for boxes or other packaging. We piloted Unpackaging with our 10-Year Kids' Belts, and are currently rolling it out to all other collections.
3. Launching **Unbelts Loop**, a collection that repurposes offcuts and imperfect elastic into new, practical products designed for everyday usage. So far, our Loop products include coffee sleeves and Unwallet card holders.

III. Designing for Circularity by Incorporating Repair Costs into Purchase Price

Intrepid and 10-Year Kids' Belts come with **COMPLIMENTARY LIFETIME REPAIRS** or, if needed, replacements.

Classic Unbelts are supported with **500 DAYS OF REPAIRS**.

We offered **REPLACEABLE COMPONENTS FOR AT-HOME REPAIRS** of cloth masks.

42 BELTS REPAIRED in 2020.

To-Do List: Our 2021 Environmental Sustainability Goals

- Replace all remaining virgin polyester yarn usage with recycled PET.
- Achieve the same 85% elastic waste reduction in our Guangzhou studio as we have been able to reach in Edmonton.
- Introduce further Unbelts Loop products, especially to divert excess elastic from our cloth mask collection.
- Discover how we can support waste reduction at the second tier of our supply chain (ie. material suppliers), and collaboratively set targets to be met by Earth Month 2022.
- Entirely eliminate plastic belt packaging in favour of Unpackaging bands made from upcycled scrap elastic.
- Increase awareness of, and identify / remove any barriers to, our repairs program and extend lifetime repairs to all belts.
- Relaunch belt buy-back program (paused for health and safety in 2020) and used Unbelt marketplace.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

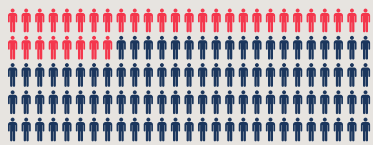
Our mission: to create people-first jobs that produce economically accessible products for a diverse customer base.

I. Dignified Work

In 2020, we had the opportunity to double down on our commitment to providing dignified, continuous work at living wages.

For our suppliers:

- Between April and September, we were able to keep our south China studio and 5 neighbouring factories afloat with our mask orders.
- **We sustained 35 sewing jobs and 100 other factory positions** (ie. cutting, trimming, quality control, packaging) that would otherwise have been eliminated.
- This bridged a crucial revenue gap for our studio and its neighbours until global apparel orders began to increase again in Fall 2020.



35 SEWING JOBS
+ 100 FACTORY POSITIONS

Sustained during COVID-19



MAIN STUDIO
+ 5 NEIGHBOURING FACTORIES

Sustained in China



2 CUSTOMER SERVICE
+ 4 FULFILLMENT JOBS

Created in Edmonton

For our Edmonton team:

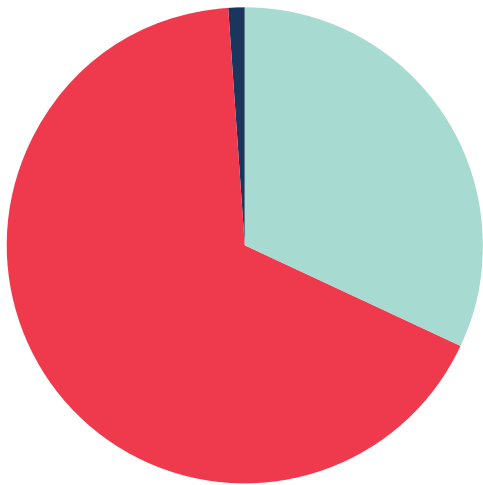
- As our e-commerce operations expanded, we were able to create **2 customer service and 4 fulfillment jobs at our Edmonton HQ.**
- Created an unprecedentedly flexible work schedule to allow for increased mental health, physical health, and caregiving needs.
- Introduced a bias-minimizing hiring process that utilizes an external third party to redact applications' explicit and implicit signals of gender, ethnicity, and other factors that could trigger unconscious bias in our hiring team.
- Introduced a more comprehensive benefits program for all staff working 20+ hours per week.



II. Community Donations & Partnerships

In choosing community partners and donation recipients, we prioritize organizations that align with our goals of creating dignity and inclusivity in our local and global communities.

In 2020, to address the urgent need for quality non-medical PPE, we expanded our mission to reach public institutions and individual households. Some of our 2020 campaigns included those listed to the right.



By the numbers:

Belts	\$70,266 value
Masks	\$146,926 value
Mask Accessories	\$2,480 value
<hr/>	
TOTAL	\$219,672 value

Better Together Masks & Supplies

In April, we launched a mask and mask accessory donation request portal on unbelts.com for individuals and families.

We donated \$22,600.85 value in products, with 93.5% of requests from Canada, and 6.5% of requests from the US.

Black Lives Matter Donation & Fundraiser

Over \$6,500 directed to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Black Women United YEG, and Black Lives Matter YEG, with a continued monthly commitment to Africa Centre.

PRIDE Month Fundraiser

All profits from Rainbow Heart masks and belts were diverted to CHEW Project, which provides frontline support, opportunities for health and wellness, and help to find hope for LGBTQ2S+ youth and young adults. Over \$3,000 raised.

Masks for Schools

Through our Fall 2020 mask donation program for Alberta public schools, we donated \$126,806 value of cloth masks to 55 institutions.

You Gift, We Give

We extended our Black Friday weekend initiative through December 31, matching all belts sold and giving them to organizations supporting the houseless community.

Our 2020 Donation Recipient Organizations

- #5-ing COVID-19 — SickKids Foundation
- Abbott Elementary School
- Alabama PPE Drive
- Alberta AdaptAbilities Association
- Alzheimer Society of Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma District
- amiskwaciy Academy
- Animal Hospital of Marion Inc.
- Anne Fitzgerald Catholic School
- Athlone School
- Balwin School
- Banner Health
- Belmead School
- Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society
- Bertha Kennedy Catholic Elementary School
- Bike Edmonton
- Bishop Savaryn Catholic Elementary School
- Bissell Centre
- Black Lives Matter YEG
- Bonnie Doon Playschool
- Brentwood Elementary School
- Brightview School
- Britannia School
- Calder Elementary School
- Callingwood Elementary School
- Canadian Civil Liberties Association
- Canadian Society for Relapsing Polychondritis
- Centro SOL
- CHEW Project YEG
- Closer to Home Community Services
- Collingwood School
- CommunityAim — Empowering Citizens with Disabilities Society
- Delton School
- Developmental Disabilities Resource Center
- Dickinsfield Amity House
- E4C Alberta
- École Champs Vallée School
- Evansdale School
- Filipino Canadian Saranay Association of Alberta
- Fraser School
- Glendale School
- Gold Bar School
- Habitat for Humanity Edmonton
- Hardisty School
- Hazeldean School
- Hearts 4 the Homeless Edmonton
- HIV Edmonton
- Holy Family Catholic School
- Homesteader School
- Jessica Martel Memorial Foundation
- John A. McDougall School
- John Paul I Catholic School
- Lauderdale School
- Laurier Heights School
- Lendrum Elementary School
- Life Centers of Kansas
- M.E. LaZerte School
- Mary Butterworth School
- McLeod School
- McNally High School
- Metro Continuing Education
- Montrose School
- Mount Royal School
- NAACP Legal Defense Fund
- Norwood School
- Ormsby School
- Our Lady of Peace Catholic Elementary School
- Overlanders School
- Paddle Prairie School
- Parts of Peace
- Philippine Centre Canada
- Ponoka Secondary Campus
- Prince Charles School
- Princeton School
- Restoring Hope Ministries
- Rutherford School
- Sakaw School
- Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities — Diabetes Education Program
- Services and Housing In the Province
- Sherwood School
- Shirley's Personal Care Home Inc
- Sifton School
- Spruce Avenue School
- St. John XXIII Edmonton Catholic School
- St. Dominic Catholic Elementary School
- St. Teresa of Avila School
- Steinhauer School
- Terra Centre
- The Powers Of Giving Foundation
- The Red Door Family Shelter
- Tipaskan School
- Two Hills School
- Ubuntu Children and Families
- Victoria School of the Arts
- Westmount Junior High School
- YEG Youth Connect

Did You Know?

Belts are one of the least-donated items to community closets, but are instrumental in improving the fit of donated pants and jeans.



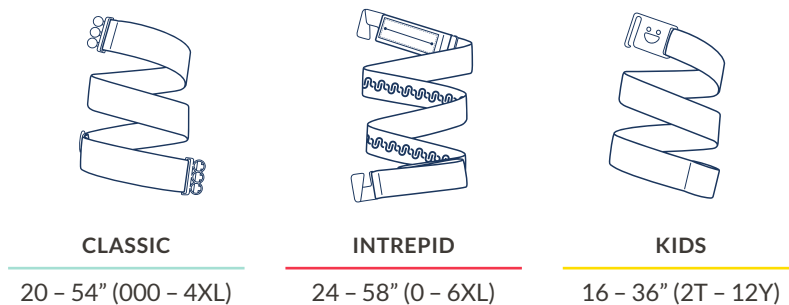
III. Economic Accessibility

We believe that a business is not truly socially sustainable if its products or services are economically inaccessible. We recognize that our standard retail pricing, which accommodates higher-than-industry-standard environmental and social standards along our supply chain, is out of reach for some community members. To bridge the affordability gap, we have introduced:

- No-interest payment by installments on our website
- Almost Perfect sales of fully-warrantied Unbelts with very small sewing or fabric imperfections that do not affect overall appearance or functionality

IV. Size Accessibility

In 2020, we conducted an assessment of how inclusive our belts' size range truly is, recognizing that size discrimination is socially unsustainable — and totally out of line with our inclusivity values. We found opportunity to address a larger size range, and will be incorporating this data into our product lines in and beyond in 2021. Our current size range:



How We Kept Our Edmonton Team Safe During COVID-19

- Creating no-contact customer pick-ups
- Supplying all delivery partners with Unbelts masks and filters
- Supplying all co-tenants of our building with Unbelts masks and filters
- Creating work-from-home office setup budgets and investing in individual-usage in-office supplies, furniture, and safety equipment like fans and air purifiers
- Maintaining an always-on masking policy
- Ensuring physical distance
- Forming carpooling cohorts so public transportation could be avoided
- Offering paid time off for COVID testing

To-Do List: Our 2021 Social Sustainability Goals

- Document our diversity and inclusion policies so they're easily referenced by every team member and external stakeholder.
- Launch an engaging diversity and inclusion training program for our team.
- Finalize a preferred suppliers list that ensures Unbelts' dollars are flowing to values-aligned service and product suppliers.
- Host at least two Almost Perfect sales to increase economic access our products.
- Introduce additional belt lengths to address the need for more inclusive sizing.
- Formalize and publish our donation and partnership program criteria to minimize project approval time and ensure values alignment.



REFERENCES

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Aki S D, Candan C, Nergis B, and Onder N S (2020). [Understanding Denim Recycling: A Quantitative Study with Lifecycle Assessment Methodology](#). Waste in Textile and Leather.

United Nations Environment Program. [Cleaning Up Couture: What's In Your Jeans?](#) (2018), blog post.

Photo: Rooftop garden at Unbelts component factory, Dongguan, China

UNBELTS

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