



BRITONS THROW AWAY OVER £5.6 BILLION PER YEAR

New research reveals households in the UK admit to disposing of usable household items worth over £5.6 billion in the last 12 months alone. The roll call includes 1.35m working fridges and freezers, 2.6m sofas and over 15 million music CDs binned without an attempt to find them a new owner.

If you've ever been to a sold-out event and seen empty seats, that could be because Britons even threw away 1.8m paid for tickets for live sporting and cultural events they never got round to seeing – equivalent to 22 FA Cup finals. Functioning electrical items thrown away in the last year include 1.2m DVD players, 1.3m televisions, 900,000 PCs and even 200,000 iPods or MP3 players (full table at end).

The research of 1,400 UK adults was conducted by Gumtree.com, the UK's number one community classifieds site, which includes a freebies section where people can find or give away unwanted stuff for free in their local area.

Moving into new property was the reason 56% of people said they threw away usable items. Rather than find a new owner or take to a charity shop, 40% of people who've binned before thinking admit they didn't think anyone else would want or need them. 94% of people surveyed said they WOULD have used the Internet to give free stuff away had they known before

Other key findings:

- In the last year, almost a million (914,000) working PC laptops have been dumped by households and businesses
- Disillusioned dieters may explain for the 708,000 pieces of dumped gym equipment such as rowing machines and exercise bikes

- 52% of respondents admit to dumping rubbish in a neighbour's skip to dispose of household items
- A charge of £30 for local councils to collect and dispose of bulky items would deter 85% from using this service

Each month Gumtree.com receives 3,000 posts from people offering free stuff such as household goods, office equipment and building materials – including enough sofas and armchairs offered in the last year to seat 16,000 bums – the same as Wembley Arena. More unusual items include pub fruit machines, greenhouses and half a ton of dirt.

Cristina DeParres, 32, a Senior Manager from Wimbledon, tried using Gumtree.com to give away the old furniture from her kitchen and bathroom – including a bed – during a house move, “I needed an immediate solution and didn’t have time to find a buyer. I went online and received a response from a young couple within minutes of posting my ad. They collected it the same day and couldn’t believe the money they’d saved to furnish their flat.”

According to Sophy Silver, Gumtree.com, ‘There is a desire for people to pass on stuff, but time pressures or not knowing where to go mean we are simply throwing away items that many others – possibly in the next road – are looking for. We guarantee on Gumtree.com that there’s something for everyone – even if it’s no use to you and we challenge anyone to not get rid of an unwanted item on our site.’

‘Freebies is an alternative economy for getting what you need, but isn’t just about saving a bit of money. By taking two minutes to post what you are giving away it’s a much greener way of moving goods out of the house and making somebody’s day.’

Fig1. Items disposed of in 12 months – £5.6bn is based on average rrp per unit.

Product	Percentage of adults who have thrown away	Working / usable units thrown away by UK households (2 adults per house)
Fridge freezer	6.75%	1,350,000
Washing machine	7.43%	1,486,000

PC / laptop	4.57%	910,400
10 or more DVDs	1.37%	2,740,000
10 or more books	4.11%	8,220,000
10 or more CD's	3.43%	15,100,000
Tickets for an event (concert/ theatre / sporting)	9.26%	1,852,000
DVD Players	6.09%	1,218,00
iPod / mP3	1.02%	204,000
Games console (Ps2 or X-Box)	1.60%	320,000
Sofas	13.04%	2,605,000
Tables / chairs	12.01%	2,402,00
Beds	13.15%	2,630,000
Suit (rrp £100+)	4.34%	868,000
Dress (rrp £100+)	3.77%	754,000
Bike	6.29%	1,255,000
Adult magazines / videos	13.27%	2,654,000
Garden furniture	9.83%	1,966,000
Barbecue	8.58%	1,716,00
Office furniture	7.78%	1,556,000
Microwave oven	8.58%	1,716,000
Stereo / Hi Fi systems	6.97%	1,394,000
Hairdryers	9.38%	1,876,000
VCR's	9.26%	1,852,000
TVs	6.63%	1,326,000
Sex toys	8.69%	1,880,000
Gym equipment (exercise bike/rower)	3.54%	708,000

Unusual freebies on Gumtree.com include:

- Fiat Panda 1989 (St Albans)
- A glass greenhouse (Manchester)
- 300 Redland Roofing tiles (Kingston)
- 48m drum of earth cable (Edinburgh)
- "Adorable baby pet rats" (Edinburgh)
- Some rose bushes (Leeds)
- Pub fruit machine (London)
- Half a ton of dirt (Edinburgh)
- A sailing dinghy (London)
- A wooden sword (London)