

# PAPER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

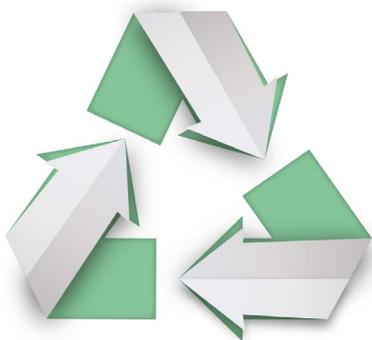


Paper has been an essential communications medium for 2,000 years. Even in today's digital world, paper continues to be the preferred format for readers of books, magazines and newspapers.

Yet the myths around paper still exist. A 2019 survey by Two Sides<sup>1</sup> revealed 59% of European consumers believe European forests are shrinking, when in fact they have been growing by an area equivalent to 1,500 football pitches every day. There is also a widespread misconception that digital communication has no environmental impact.

## PAPER LOVES TREES

Paper is a uniquely renewable and sustainable product. The main raw material, trees, are grown and harvested in a carefully controlled and sustainable way - so successfully that European forests, which provide 90% of the wood fibre used by the European pulp and paper industry<sup>2</sup>, have grown by an area the size of Switzerland in just 10 years!<sup>3</sup>



## THE PAPER REVOLUTION

In 2018, the European recycling rate for paper was 72%.<sup>4</sup> The paper industry is now seeking to make another leap forward by reaching the elevated rate of 74% by 2020 - this is close to the practical maximum recycling rate of around 80% (this is because books and archived materials are kept for a long time and some paper products can't be recycled e.g. tissue and sanitary products.)<sup>5</sup>

Paper is recycled on average 3.5 times a year in Europe. Paper cannot be recycled indefinitely as fibres get too short and worn out and therefore sustainable virgin fibre will always be needed.<sup>6</sup>

## PAPER POWER

The European pulp and paper industry is the biggest single user and producer of renewable energy in Europe. 60% of European pulp and paper mills' energy consumption comes from renewable sources.<sup>7</sup>

The paper industry's key raw material, wood fibre, also sequesters greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Carbon remains locked-up within wood products for the duration of their life cycle, equivalent to removing 693 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere annually.<sup>8</sup>

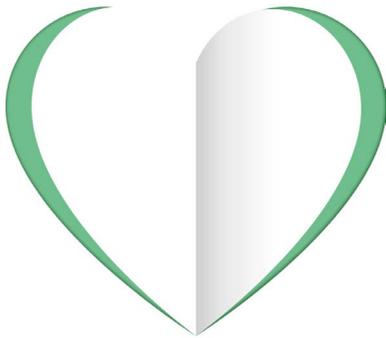
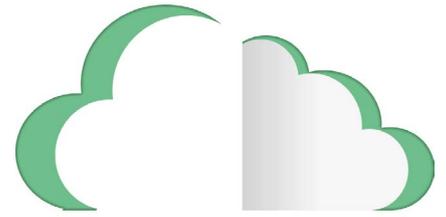


## DIGITAL HAS IMPACTS

The share of digital technologies in global greenhouse gas emissions has increased by half since 2013, from 2.5% to 3.7% of global emissions. The demand for raw materials such as rare and critical metals, essential for both digital and low-carbon energy technologies, is also growing.<sup>9</sup>

Worldwide, total emissions generated by emails is estimated to be 300 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year – equivalent to the annual emissions of 63 million cars.<sup>10</sup>

In 2016 alone, 44.7 million tonnes of e-waste were generated globally, of which 435 thousand tonnes were mobile phones, representing more than the mass of the Empire State Building. E-waste has a recycling rate of just 20%.<sup>11</sup>



## PAPER IS PREFERRED

In today's digital world, the power of print on paper is becoming more apparent than ever. Consumers throughout Europe love reading in print, with many understanding the importance of "switching off".

28% of respondents to a 2019 Two Sides survey feel they are suffering from a "digital overload" with a clear preference to enjoy the offline world. 69% say print is the most enjoyable way to read books. 61% prefer magazines in print and 54% still love to read news in print.<sup>12</sup>

DISCOVER THE STORY OF PAPER  
[www.lovepaper.org](http://www.lovepaper.org)

### Sources

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