

# The zipper on Alex's coat is broken. Will Alex fix her coat or will it end up in a landfill?

See what happens when Alex, who lives in New York City, makes different decisions about the broken zipper on her coat. The visualization map below includes insights discovered during a 2023 research study conducted by NYSP2I and Hylöh. The study aimed to better understand the barriers to textile repair facing New York City residents in order to expand access to repair services and knowledge.



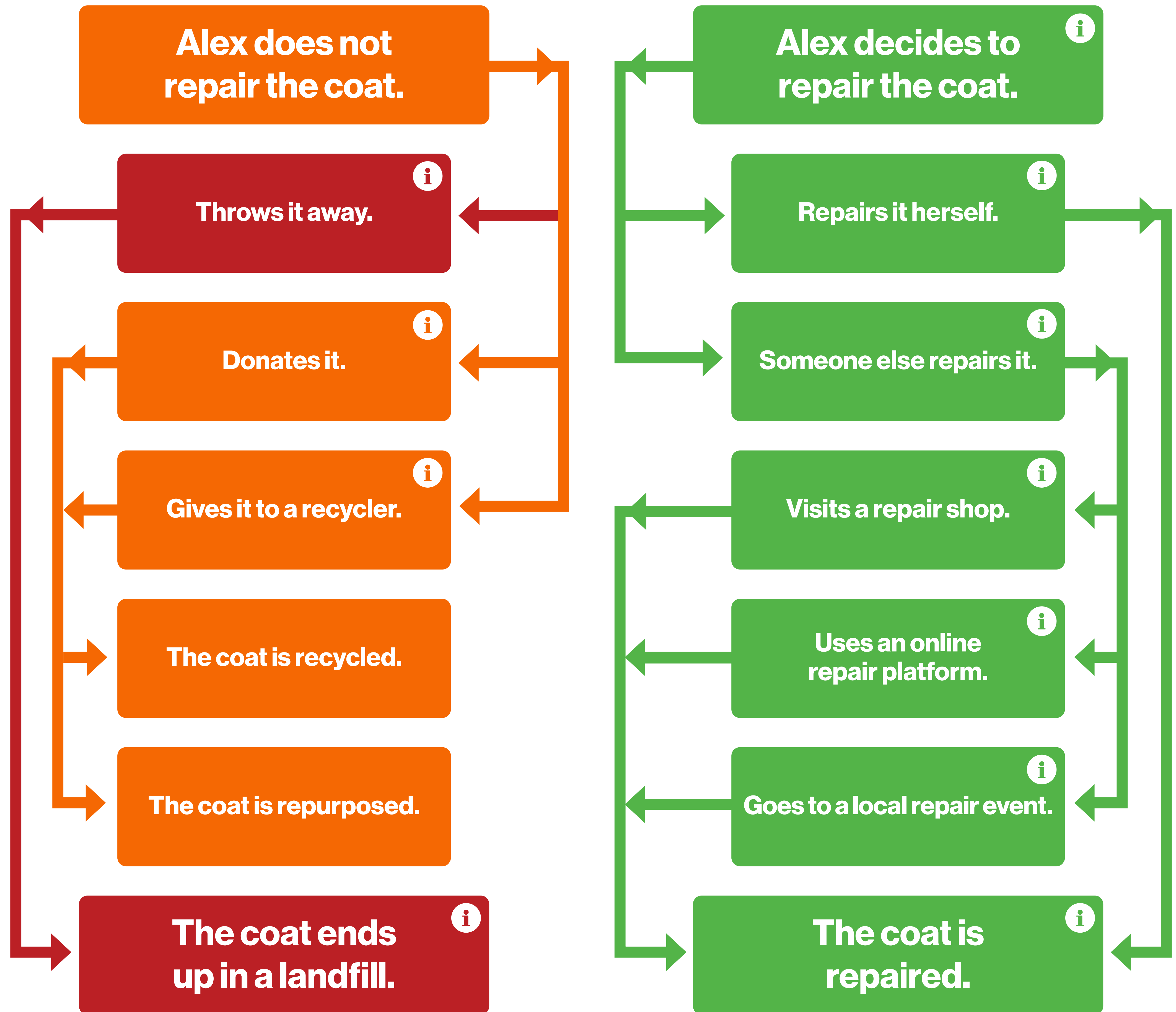
## Key:

 = Click to learn more

 = Textile stays out of waste stream

 = Textile *potentially* stays out of waste stream

 = Textile sent to landfill



# Alex isn't aware that her coat can be mended—so she throws it away.

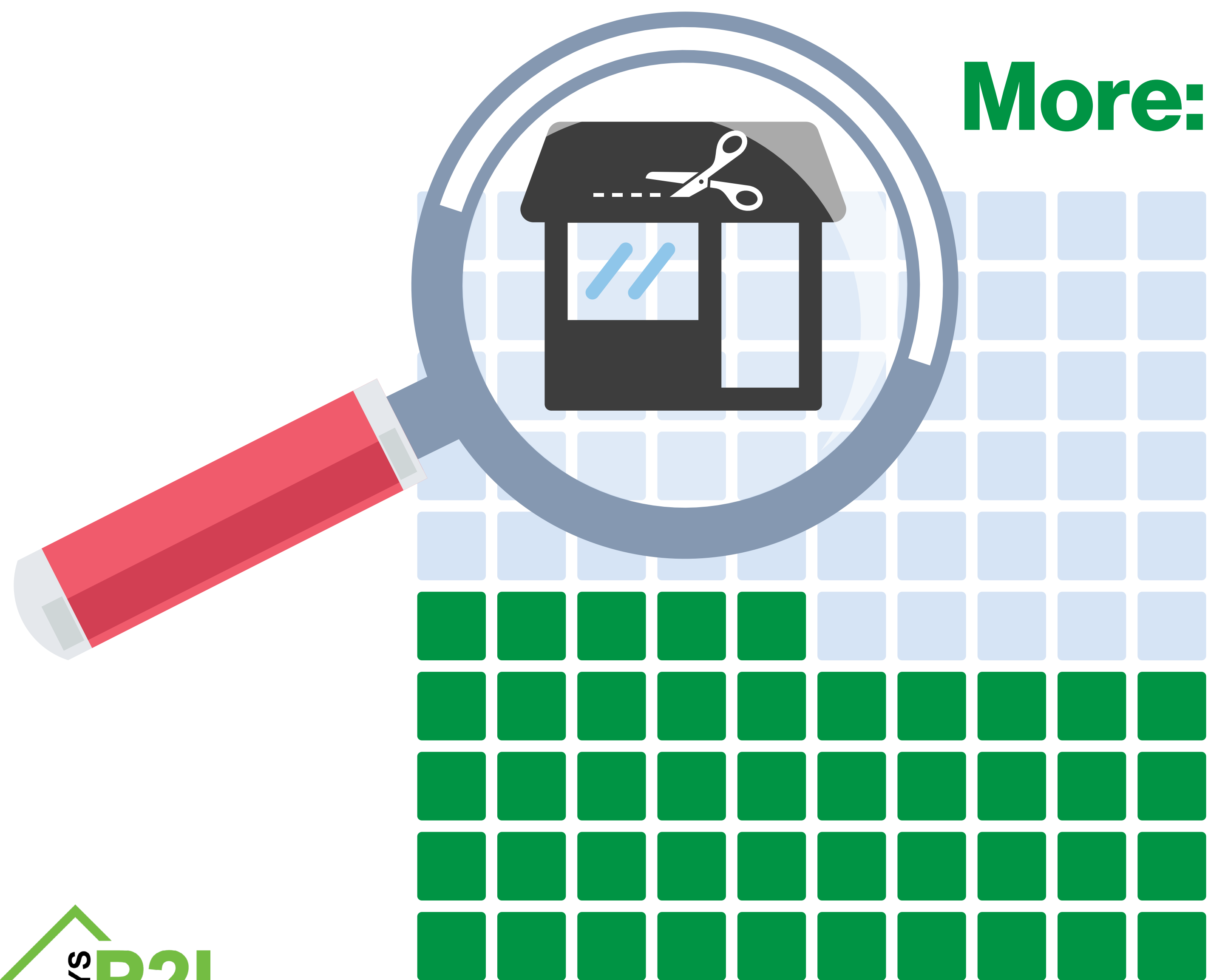
**Why?** Alex doesn't know that clothing, footwear, accessories, and other garments can be repaired.



## More:

### Known unknowns?

In our survey, **45%** of respondents indicated that a top reason preventing them from getting clothing or accessories fixed is that **they don't know how to find a repair shop or what kind of shop is right for the type of repair they need.** If they do know of a shop, it's inconvenient to take it there.





# Alex donates her coat.



**Why?** Like most people we surveyed (**55%**), Alex does not want to contribute to textile waste, so she looks for a sustainable option. Unaware of other options, she donates the item to a local charity.

**More: Did you know?** In 2018, over **17 million** tons of textile materials were thrown out—over **66%** of that went into landfills. *Reference link (1) below*

New York City residents can search for local clothing and textile drop-off locations at [nyc.gov/donate](https://nyc.gov/donate). *Reference link (2) below*





# Alex drops off her coat at a textile recycler.



**Why?** Taking the coat to a recycler is an inexpensive way Alex can try to keep it from becoming waste—especially when she doesn't know what else to do with it.

**More: Can we fix it?** In our survey, we found that over **50%** of our respondents did not get something mended because they didn't know how it could be done.

**Did you know?** Eighty percent (**80%**) of clothing that gets donated is sold eventually to textile recyclers, who sort and separate it. Forty-five percent (**45%**) of it is exported to other countries. *Reference link (1) below*

New York City residents can search for local clothing and textile recycling drop-off locations at [nyc.gov/textiles](https://nyc.gov/textiles). *Reference link (2) below*



# Alex decides to repair the coat.



**Why?** The number one reason that Alex, like **55%** of our survey respondents, decides to repair an item of clothing or an accessory is **sustainability**.

**More: Why bother?** There are many reasons people decide to mend an item. We found the following in our study:

- The item has a unique style and fit (**47%**).
- It has a high market value or was expensive to purchase (**39%**).
- It has sentimental value (**31%**).
- It is well made and of a high quality (**29%**).

**Too much?** Over **60%** of the people we surveyed said a major reason for not getting something professionally repaired is because it's too expensive.





# Alex decides to have it repaired by someone else.



**Why?** Alex is like **21%** of the people we surveyed, who said that they did not possess the skills, time, resources, or tools to repair a damaged article of clothing themselves and would rather hire someone to do it for them.

**More: Worth it?** Seventy-two percent (**72%**) of respondents indicated that it was likely or very likely that they would have outerwear, like Alex's coat, repaired.

**Did you know?** An unpublished study Hyloh conducted with the New York City Department of Sanitation in 2022 found that there were roughly **6,800** physical clothing reuse, repair, and rental businesses across the five boroughs.

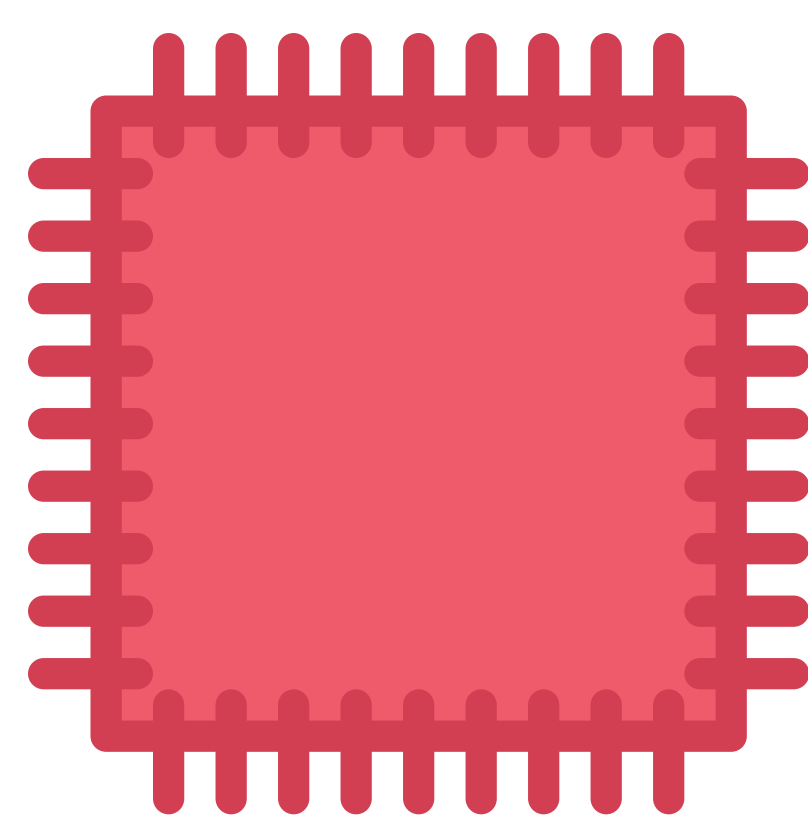
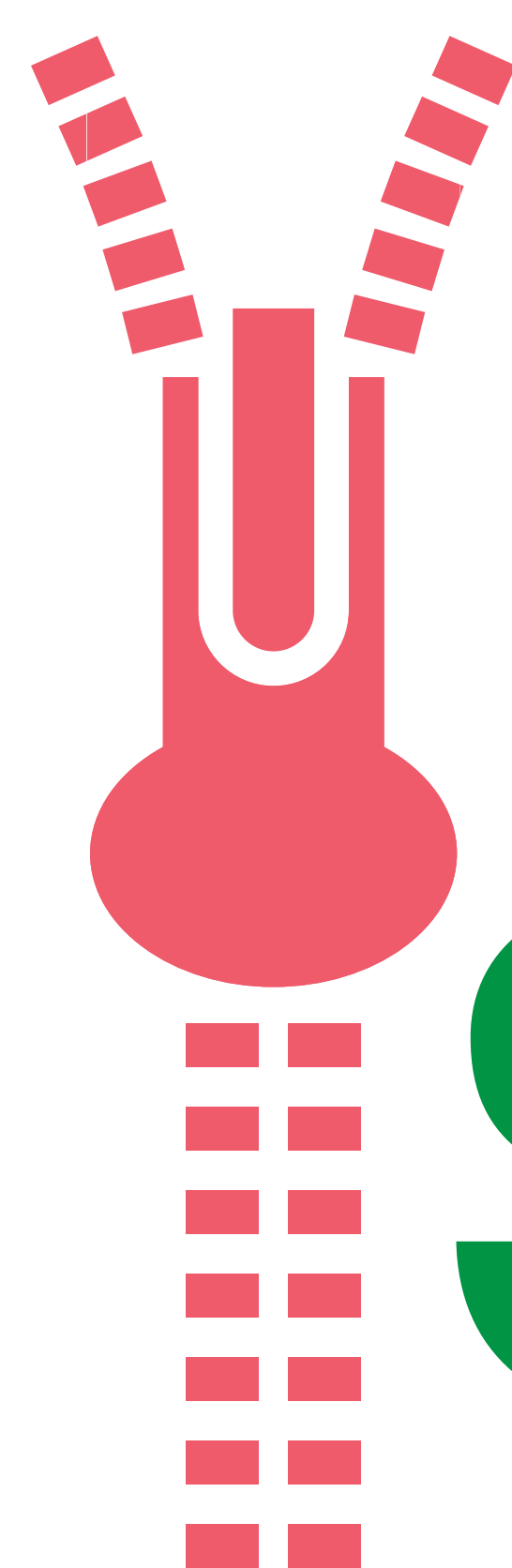


# Alex repairs it herself.

**Why?** Alex has repaired her own clothes before, like **87%** of the people we surveyed.

**More: Do it yourself?** Hiring someone to repair a garment or accessory comes at a cost. We found the following perceptions when we asked participants about what they would be willing to spend to fix different types of items:

- Fix a broken coat zipper: Nearly **50%** of respondents indicated that they would not pay more than **\$19**, while **39%** said **\$39** would be their price cap.
- Mend a rip in a pair of jeans: About **60%** would not pay more than **\$19**. A repair shop in lower Manhattan that we interviewed estimated **\$65** to do the repair using basic patching.
- Resole a pair of shoes: Thirty-six percent (**36%**) felt a reasonable range was **\$20–\$39**, while **34%** said anywhere between **\$40** and **\$59** was a comfortable price. One Manhattan shoe-repair business with five locations charges about **\$90** for a resole.





# Alex takes it to a repair shop.

**Why?** Alex's coat is a quality garment made of wool—and it has a sentimental value to her, so she puts in the effort to find a place that can repair it.



**More: Valuable enough?** Our survey found that **69%** of respondents have paid someone to repair an item of clothing or an accessory.





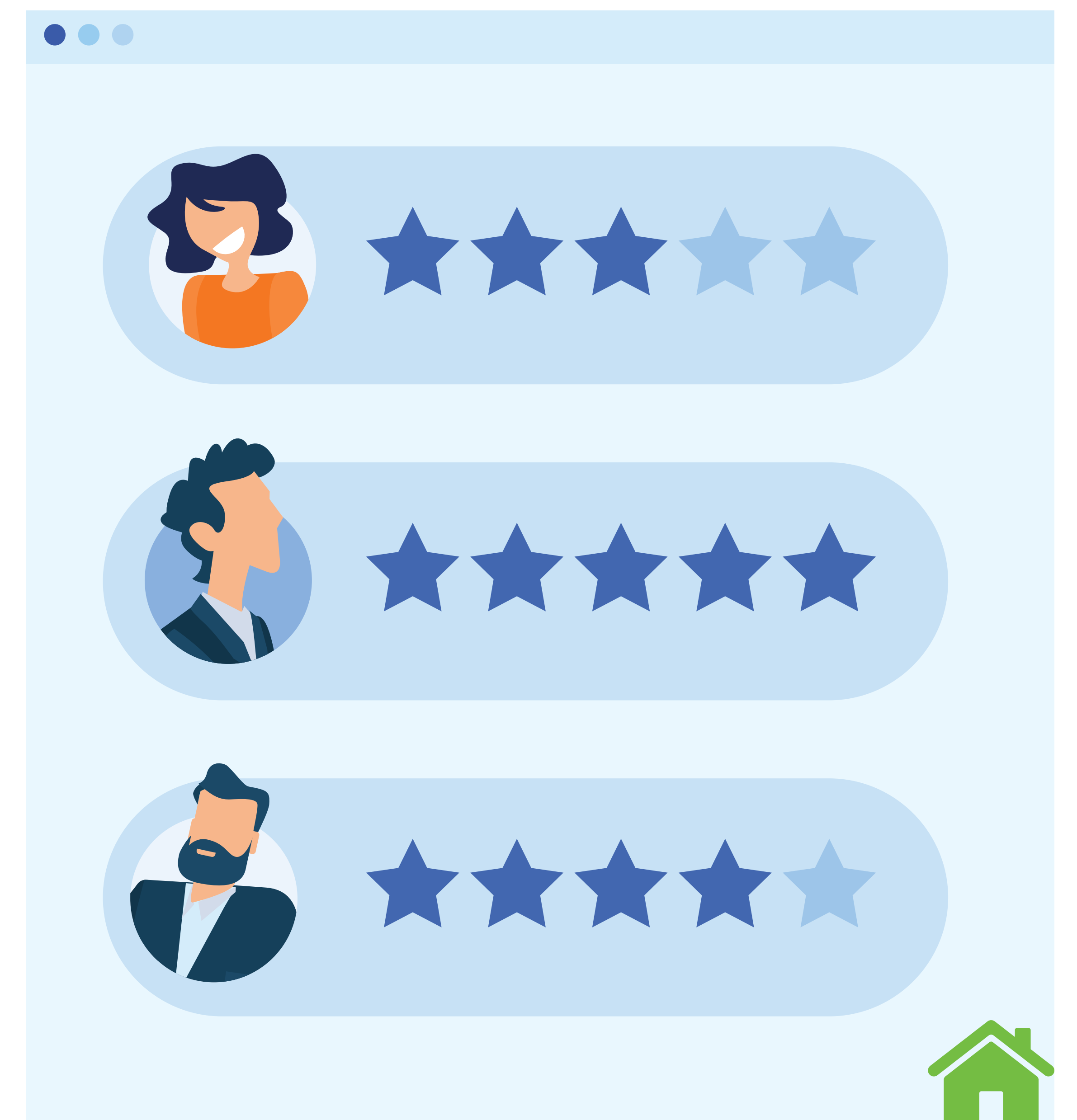
# Alex uses an online freelance repair platform.



**Why?** A friend of Alex's recommends a website where she can hire a freelance repairer. After browsing the site, she finds one that specializes in coat zippers at a cost she likes.

**More: Too few?** Our research revealed **39** individuals across New York City's five boroughs who provide freelance repair services through online platforms.

**The right price?** Thirty-one of the professionals provided their hourly rate, which ranged from **\$29.94** to **\$134.21** per hour, the average being **\$55.35** per hour.



# Alex attends a repair event in her community.

**Why?** Alex saw a flyer in a local café about a clothing “swap shop and repair fair” in her community. She thinks maybe someone will be able to fix her coat, so she attends it the following weekend.



**More: Lend a hand?** The study revealed **53** hyperlocal, informal textile reuse and repair groups holding various events, such as clothing swaps, mending circles, workshops, and educational events.





# Alex's coat ends up in a landfill.

**Why?** Not knowing how to repair her coat or even that it can be repaired, Alex throws it away when she moves from her apartment after keeping it in her closet for a while.



## Textile waste is a growing problem:

**One truckload of textiles is dumped into a landfill or incinerated every second**, contributing to millions of metric tons of material going to waste each year. [Reference link \(1\) below](#)

In the United States, **7.7%** of all materials that went into landfills were some kind of textile in 2018. [Reference link \(2\) below](#)

Valued at **\$2.4 trillion**, the fashion industry is the second-largest consumer of water and is responsible for **2-8%** of global carbon emissions. The amount of clothing that goes into landfills represents an estimated **\$500 billion** in value for the industry. [Reference link \(3\) below](#)

Textiles that can't be repaired often can still be **recycled or repurposed**.



# Alex is able to wear her coat again.

**Why?** Because Alex knew about different options for repairing her coat, she was able to make a decision that was right for her budget, needs, and tastes.

## Increasing access to textile repair in New York City:

A common theme throughout our study was that of awareness—**most people simply don't know about repair**, how it is done, or who it can be done by. Below are some ways to increase access to repair services.

- **Promote local** textile repair businesses and community groups.
- **Provide basic education** on how proper care of clothing and accessories could make them last longer over time.
- **Create new forms of textile repair services**, such as a mobile repair shops or reoccurring pop-up repair events at convenient locations.
- **Incentivize manufacturers** to make clothing using recovered materials.

