

Goodbye Disposable Cups

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The climate is changing—and so is the way we drink.

Enter the [reusable water bottle](#), [to-go coffee cup](#), and [straw](#). They come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and materials—from clear glass to matte orange aluminum. [As consumers become more concerned with environmental sustainability](#), they're demanding that brands take a stand on the issue. As a result, reusable cups are starting to show up in our top-selling lifestyle imagery.

Disposable coffee cups and plastic water bottles are emblems of an on-the-go lifestyle, but zero-waste alternatives have evolved into an aspirational status symbol. Contestants on [Love Island](#) hydrate with [personalized reusable water bottles](#), and a [HydroFlask](#) is an indispensable accessory to any Gen Z [VSCO girl](#). Actress [Jennifer Garner](#) sips coffee from a [KeepCup](#) all over Hollywood, and US Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez [appeared on Instagram](#) with her reusable to-go mug. With high-profile role models at the forefront, reusable cups are going mainstream.

Sure enough, at Getty Images, searches for “reusable coffee cup” have shot up +479% over the past year. “Reusable cup” is up +281%; “metal straw” is up +206%; and “reusable water bottle” is up +155%. With the rise of climate activism in the public eye, demand for zero-waste themes in imagery is only expected to grow.

Many companies are already transitioning to sustainable business practices, especially in the beverage industry. Start-ups such as the [Coffee Cup Collective](#) in Boston are testing out regional solutions, and, this year, third-wave roaster BlueBottle is [piloting a cup-share program](#) in two of its San Francisco stores. Larger chains such as Starbucks and Peet's offer [10-cent discounts](#) for customers who bring their own refillable cups. A business's ability to close the loop and adopt a circular economy model is becoming crucial, and brands that achieve it will want to show it in their advertising.

Reusable to-go cups or water bottles can visually convey that a brand is committed to sustainability.

While reducing cup pollution might seem like a drop in the bucket, soon, in some places, consumers won't have a choice. Plastic straws are already [banned in major US cities](#) such as Washington, D.C. and Seattle, and by April 2020, they'll be [banned throughout England](#). [The entire European Union](#) will wave goodbye to certain single-use plastics by 2021. Recycling is expensive, labor-intensive, and [doesn't always happen](#)

[when it's supposed to](#). After all, the only way to be 100% sure that a cup is reused... is to reuse it.

Eliminating single-use plastics is now a widespread goal around the world, and imagery will need to reflect that in order to remain contemporary. Imagery with details such as reusable to-go cups, water bottles, or straws can visually convey that a brand is committed to sustainability—and model a sustainable future.