

Nappies - time for a change?

By [Mintel GNPD](#), [Mintel Oxygen](#)

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LONDON, UK: Brits may be ever more environmentally conscious in many areas of life, but there's one area it seems it is a stretch too far for consumers. When it comes to nappies, new research from Mintel finds eco concerns have yet to hit the market, as over a third (36%) of parents* admit they 'know disposables are bad for the environment but still use them'. What is more, just 5% of today's parents use washable or reusable nappies and only 4% use eco or organic disposables.



And it seems the perceived extra expense of eco lines is playing a significant role in this green inertia, with 20% of consumers citing price as a main reason for not buying them. Indeed, while three quarters of adults (75%) agree that they have a duty to recycle, only a third (34%) are prepared to pay more for an environmentally-friendly product. It appears few are prepared to sacrifice performance, convenience and reliability for a better environmental product.

The market for nappies and wipes grew to £625 million (about R6.9 billion) in 2009, up from £615 million (about R6.8 billion) in 2008. What is more, Mintel predicts the market to grow even further by the end of this year to reach £640 million (about R7.04 billion) - up 16% since 2005. Growth has been helped by a rise in the birth rate over this period, with 8% more babies (57 000) expected to be born in 2010 than in 2005. With a market value of £423 million (about R4.65 billion) in 2009, the market for disposable nappies by the end of the year will reach £433 million (about R4.76 billion), with growth also helped by new product development. However, with the birth rate now stabilising, and no real growth expected over the next five years, the major manufacturers are likely to step up the pace of new product development and marketing in order to drive demand. Mintel's research also reveals that the average number of nappies used during the first two and a half years stands at 3,796 per child.

Washable nappies... A 'retro' step too far?

Jane Westgarth, senior retail analyst at Mintel said: "For many parents the notion of washable nappies is a retro step too far. Some new parents are children of adults who were in disposable nappies themselves and very few families will have any notion or experience of using terry nappies. Washable nappies have evolved too and this may be little understood by today's throwaway consumers. Marketing needs to encourage parents to take a fresh look at modern reusable nappy designs, better performance and easy care, while also addressing the positive aspects like reducing landfill and preserving the planet. With 95% of parents of babies and toddlers opting for disposable nappies, there are around 7 million nappies being thrown away every day in the UK, and most of these go into landfill."

According to Mintel's Global New Products Database (GNPD), there were 25 new nappy products launched in the UK last year, up from 23 in 2008 and from 14 in 2005. Despite the prevailing economic gloom and weaker consumer confidence, just 9% of adults switched to cheaper nappies in the last year demonstrating how although consumers appear to want to economise a little, they only want to do so by getting a better deal on the brands they know and trust. However, there is still heightened price sensitivity because of the recession, which supermarkets have responded to, and an estimated three quarters of nappies are bought on promotion.

"Having a baby is an emotional time, charged with love for the baby and the desire to give them the best start in life. This is why the leading nappy brands have maintained an impressive share of this market (around £8 (about R88) in every £10 (about R110), even in a recession that is creating a price-downshift in grocery shopping for many items. For the future it is likely that the leading brands will develop an eco alternative, using new materials to make disposable nappies more compostable and this will help them to cement their share of the market. In the short term, the leading brands will continue to improve dryness, comfort and fit, but as these are already very advanced we expect to see them build more style appeal into their brands including character merchandising, styling and fashion." Jane concludes.

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