

THE TRUTH ABOUT LAUNDRY

The report

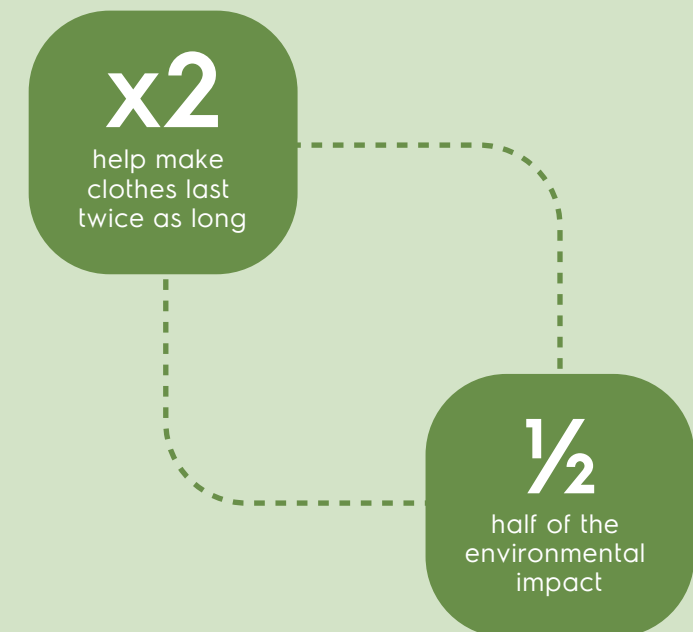


About the report

This report is based on the first pan-European analysis of attitudes and behaviours towards laundry, fabric care and the environment. The study was commissioned by Swedish brand Electrolux, global leader in household appliances and a recognised sustainability leader in the industry¹. The findings in the study are based on quantitative data collected from 12,000 adults across twelve European markets*.



Part of Electrolux's key sustainability priorities is to help make clothes **last twice as long**, with **half of the environmental impact**.



With that in mind the study was commissioned to increase understanding of attitudes and behaviours towards laundry and how people care for their clothes. Also, the aim of the study was to understand to what extent people consider the environment when caring for their clothes.

For more information about the study go to www.betterlivingprogram.com/better-clothing-care

¹ <https://www.electroluxgroup.com/sustainabilityreports/2017/en/reporting-framework/awards-and-recognitions/>
*Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

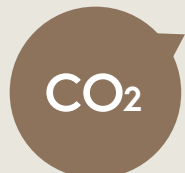
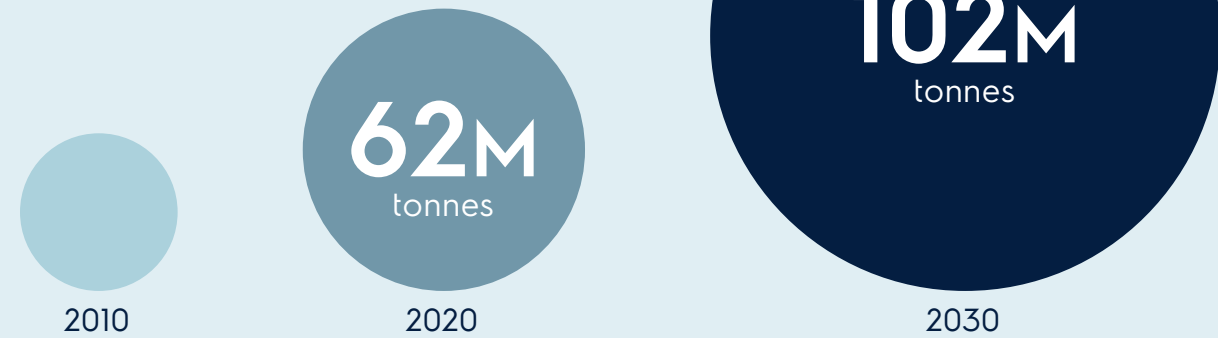


The importance of making clothes last longer

We buy more clothes than ever, wear them fewer times and discard them at a faster rate.

During the past 10 years, the number of items of clothing purchased per consumer has more than doubled. It is expected that clothing consumption will increase globally by 63%, from the current 62 million tonnes to 102 million tonnes by 2030².

By 2030
clothing consumption
will increase globally by
63%



The environmental cost of fashion

Nine out of ten items of clothing end up in landfill long before they should, mainly due to over-washing which can damage the fabric, fade colours, misshape garments, cause shrinkage and spoil clothes due to colour run³.

Extending the life of clothes offers the greatest overall [potential across carbon, water and waste targets⁴.

² <https://www.commonobjective.co/article/fashion-and-waste-an-uneasy-relationship>

³ <http://fashionrevolution.org/dont-overwash-its-time-to-change-the-way-we-care/>

⁴ https://wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/valuing-our-clothes-the-cost-of-uk-fashion_WRAP.pdf



Improving how we care for clothes is an easy and important way to reduce the environmental impact and extend their lifespan. According to Fashion Revolution, an NGO with the vision of a global fashion industry that conserves and restores the environment, up to 25% of clothing garment's carbon footprint comes from the way it is cared for³.



The fashion industry is responsible for 10% of annual global carbon emissions, more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined⁵.



It is estimated that the average garment is worn only ten times before disposal⁶.



If the fashion industry's trajectory continues, greenhouse gas emissions will surge by more than 50% by 2030⁵.



It is estimated that more than half of the fast fashion produced is disposed of in under a year⁷.

⁵ <https://unfashionalliance.org/> and <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/publications/A-New-Textiles-Economy-Full-Report-Updated-1-12-17.pdf>

⁶ https://traid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/impacts_of_clothing_factsheet_23percent.pdf

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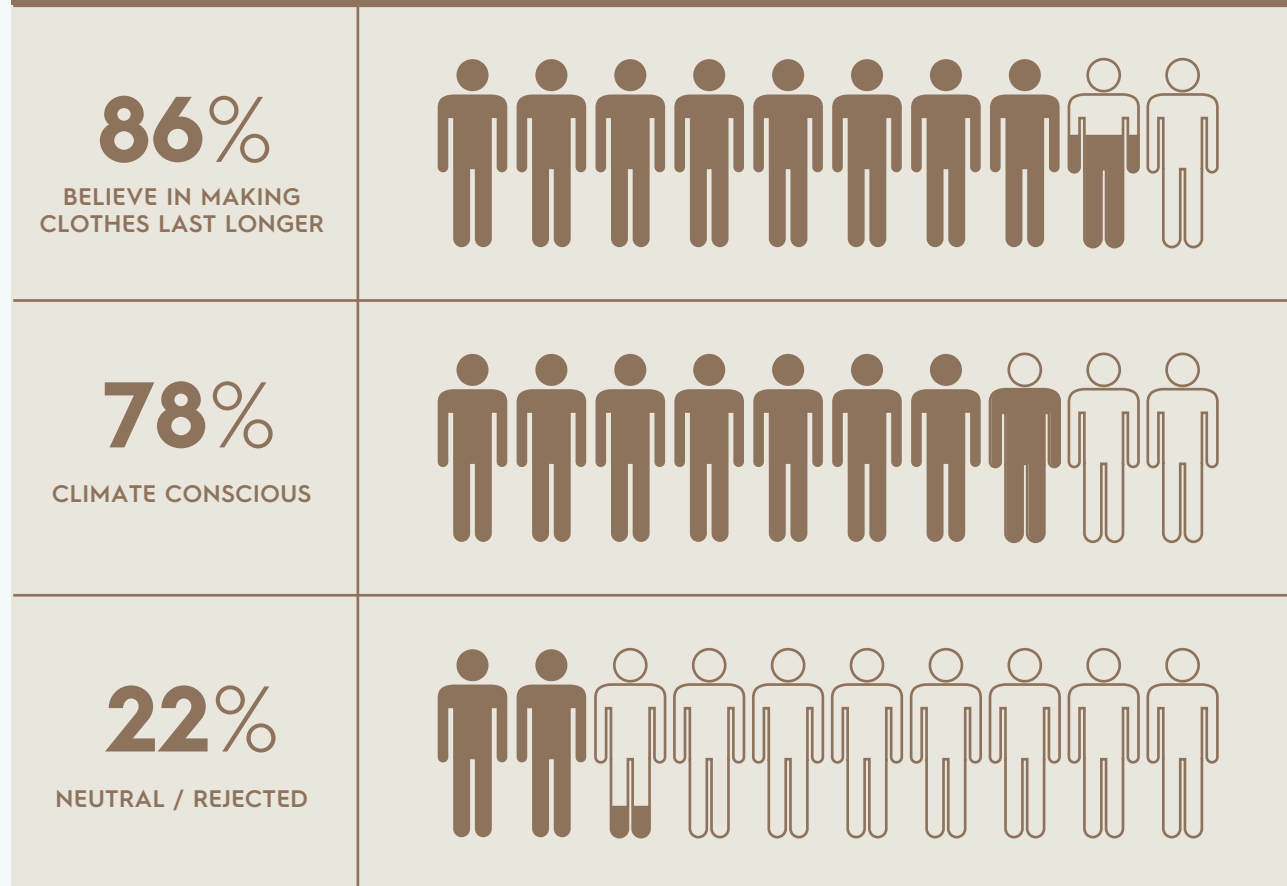


Attitudes towards making clothes last longer

"86% of Europeans believed that making clothes last longer is good for the environment"

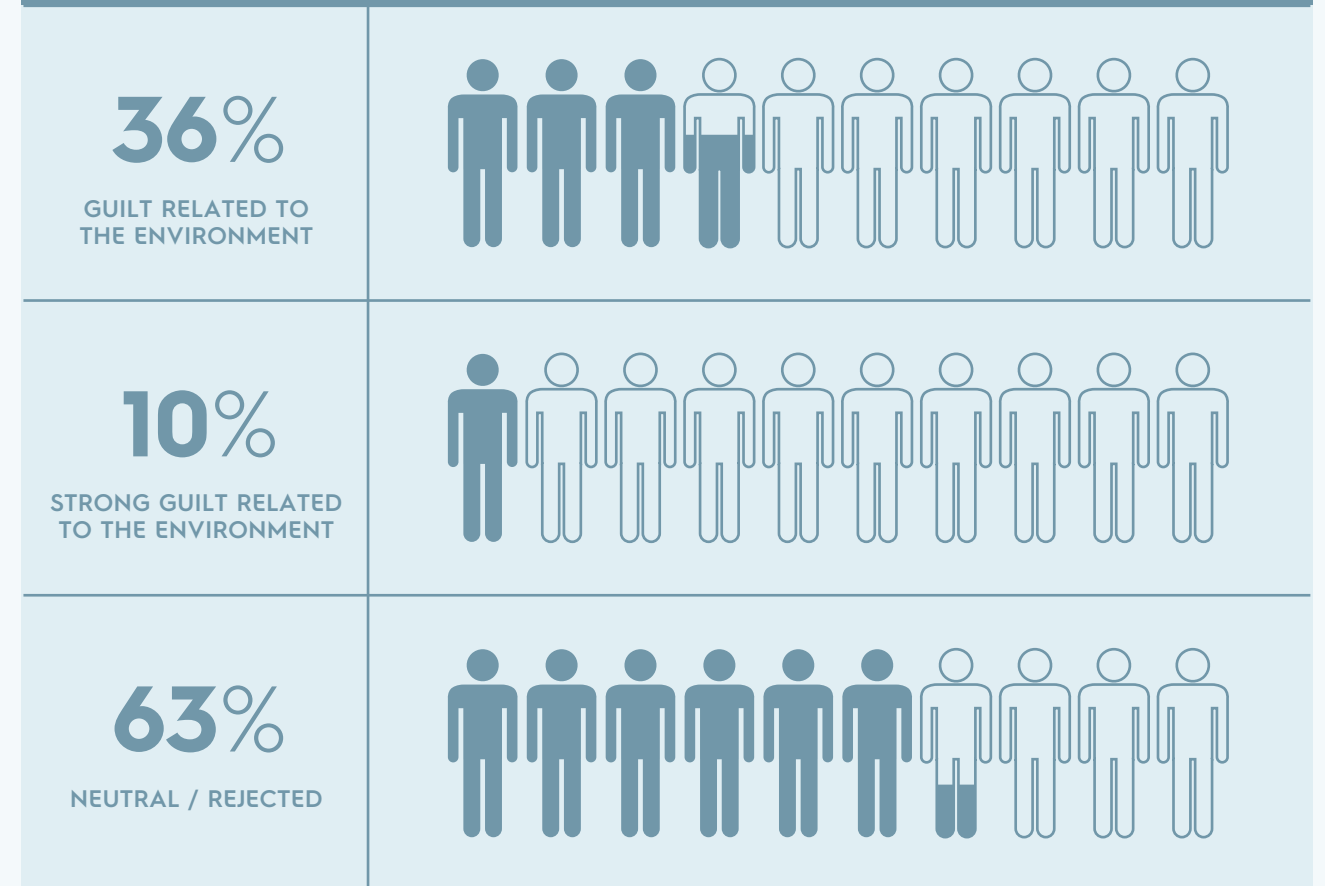
 = 10%

SELF-PERCEIVED CLIMATE-CONSCIOUSNESS



86% of all adults in the study believed that making clothes last longer is good for the environment and 83% of adults care about extending the life of clothes. 78% also identified as being climate conscious with 31% strongly identifying. At the same time, 22% were either neutral or rejected the description.

GUILT RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT



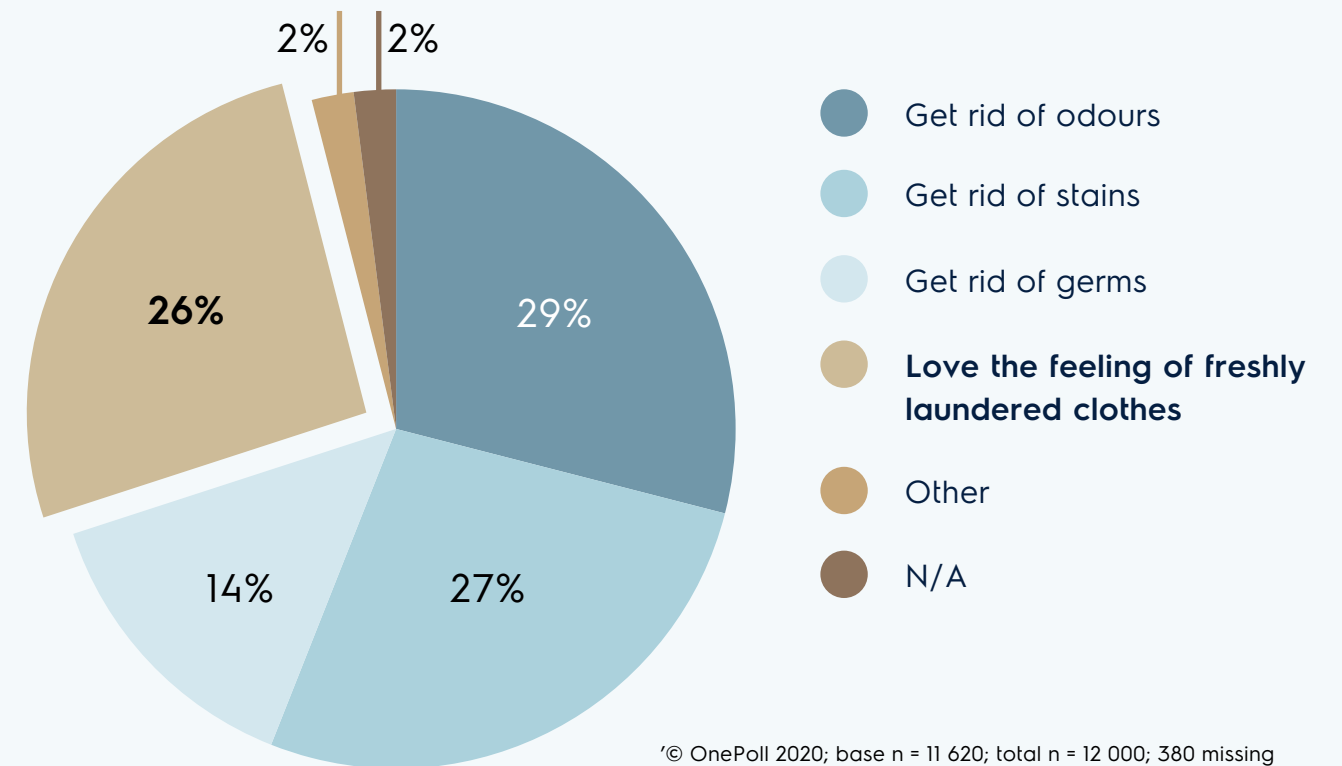
The respondents were also asked if they felt any guilt related to the environment when doing laundry. More than a third (36%) felt some guilt with 10% feeling strongly about it. But for 63% of respondents there was either an absence or a rejection of guilt when it came to the impact of the environment.



The main reasons for doing the laundry



What is the main reason you wash clothes?



The 26% who wash primarily for the emotional benefit of wearing freshly laundered clothes, represents over 409 million washes per week across Europe.

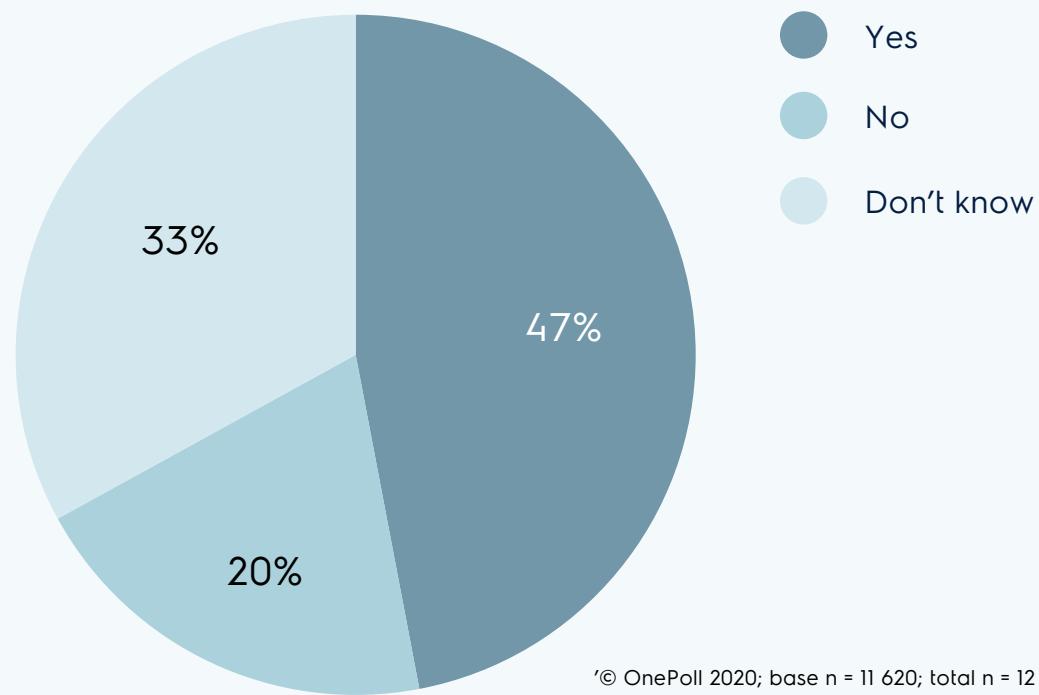
This was especially common among people over the age of 55 years. Younger age groups primarily washed to tackle odours.



Age and doing laundry

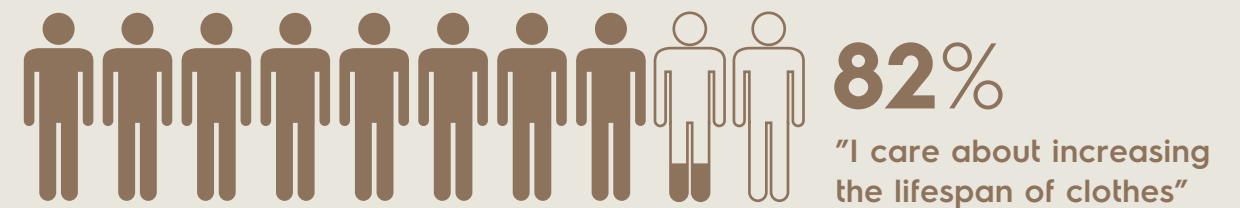
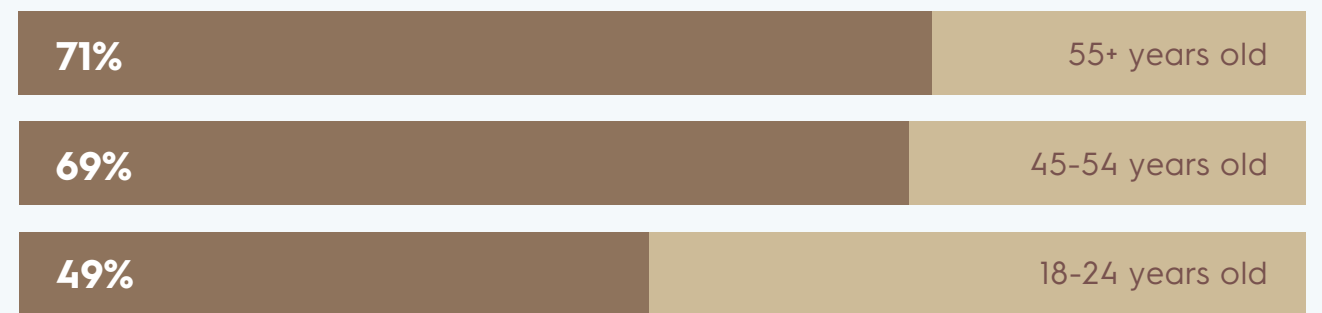
Lower washing temperatures extend the life of clothes⁸. More than half (53%) of all adults though, do not make the connection between washing temperature and clothes' longevity.

Do you think lowering the temperature of your wash would help to make your clothes last longer?



It seems that age is a factor when it comes to doing laundry. Older age groups were less likely to wash at lower temperatures than younger groups. Across Europe, 69% of 45-54 year olds and 71% of 55+ all washed at 40°C or above. This is compared to 49% of 18-24 year olds. Women were also more likely to wash at 40°C than men, but men were more likely to wash at 60°C.

Washing at 40°C or more



At the same time, 82% of the adults responded favourably to the statement 'I care about increasing the lifespan of clothes'. Of those 82%, 50% agreed strongly and 32% somewhat agreed.

⁸ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0143720819320431?via%3Dihub>



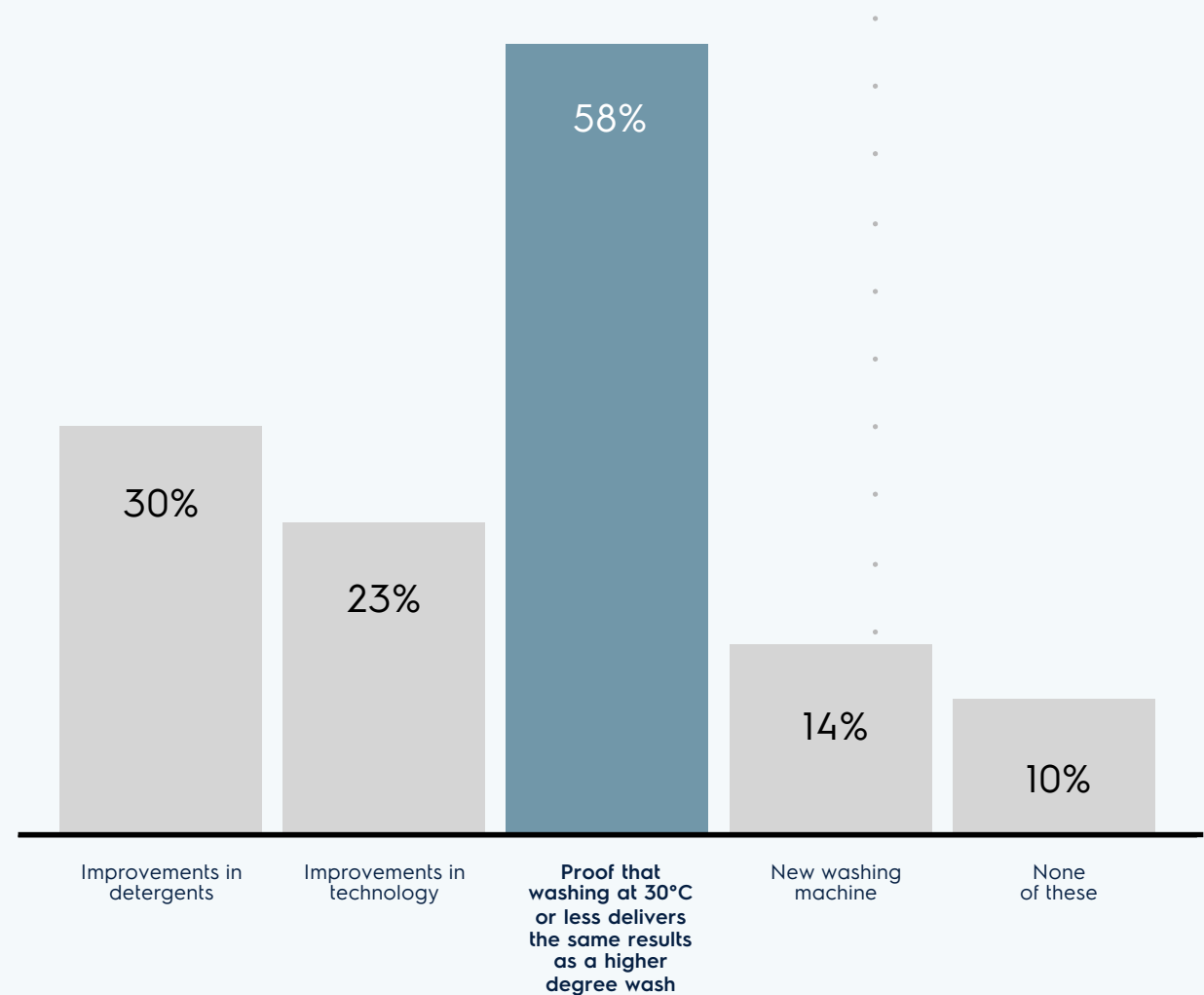
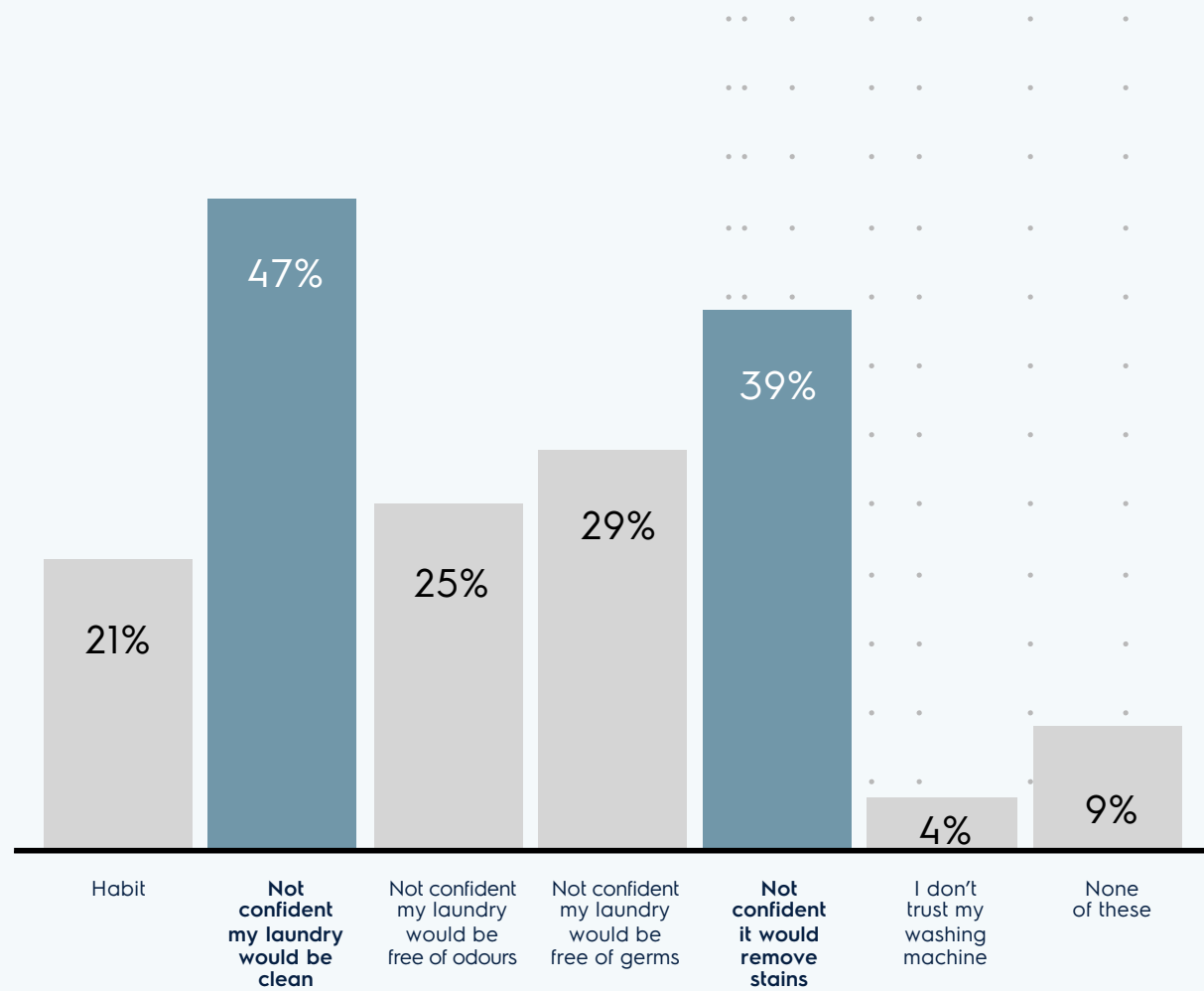
Why do Europeans not wash at lower temperatures?

The main reason for Europeans not washing at lower temperatures was a lack of confidence in cleaning efficiency.

To make Europeans lower washing temperatures, they need proof that such action will deliver the same, if not better, results than higher temperatures.

Which of the following stops you from washing clothes at lower temperatures, such as 30°C or less, more often?

Which of the following would need to change for you to wash your clothes at a lower temperature (30°C or less) more often?





30 IS THE NEW 40

New analysis shows that reducing the temperature from 40°C to 30°C means saving 27.2 kg CO₂ per appliance per year.





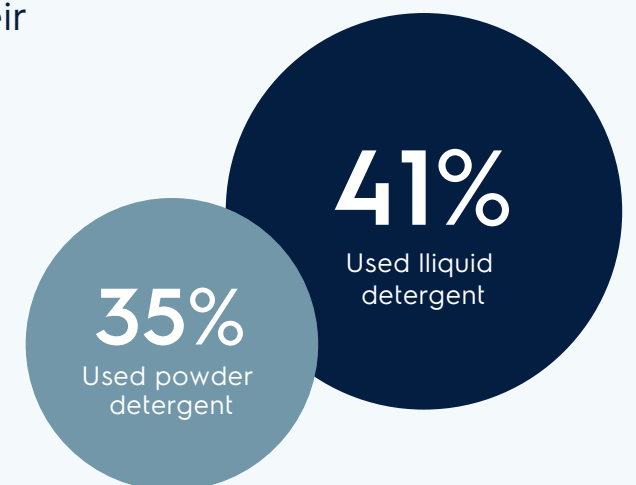
Save up to
50kg
CO₂ equivalent
a year



The importance of choosing the right detergent

The type of detergent used can make a measurable difference to the lifespan of clothes.

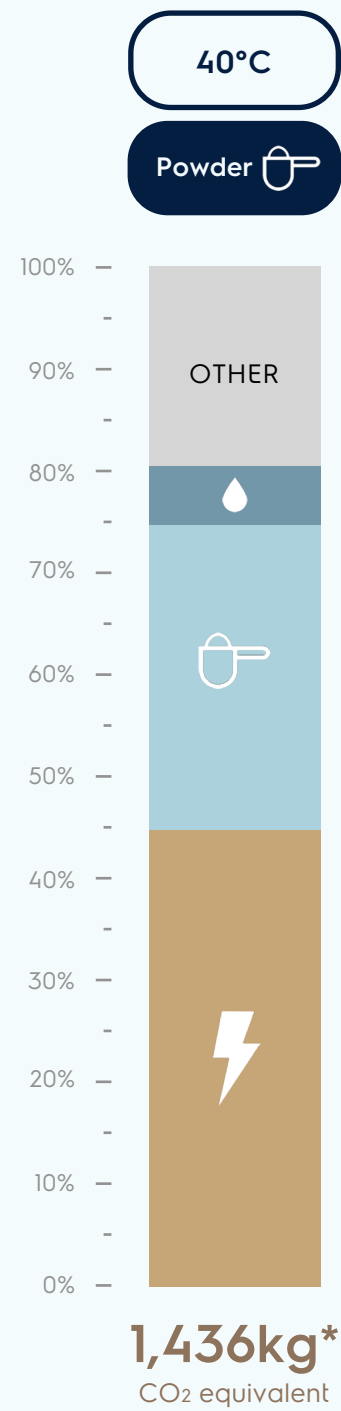
- Over a third of all European adults (35%) reported using powder as their detergent of choice.
- 41% of Europeans reported using a liquid detergent.



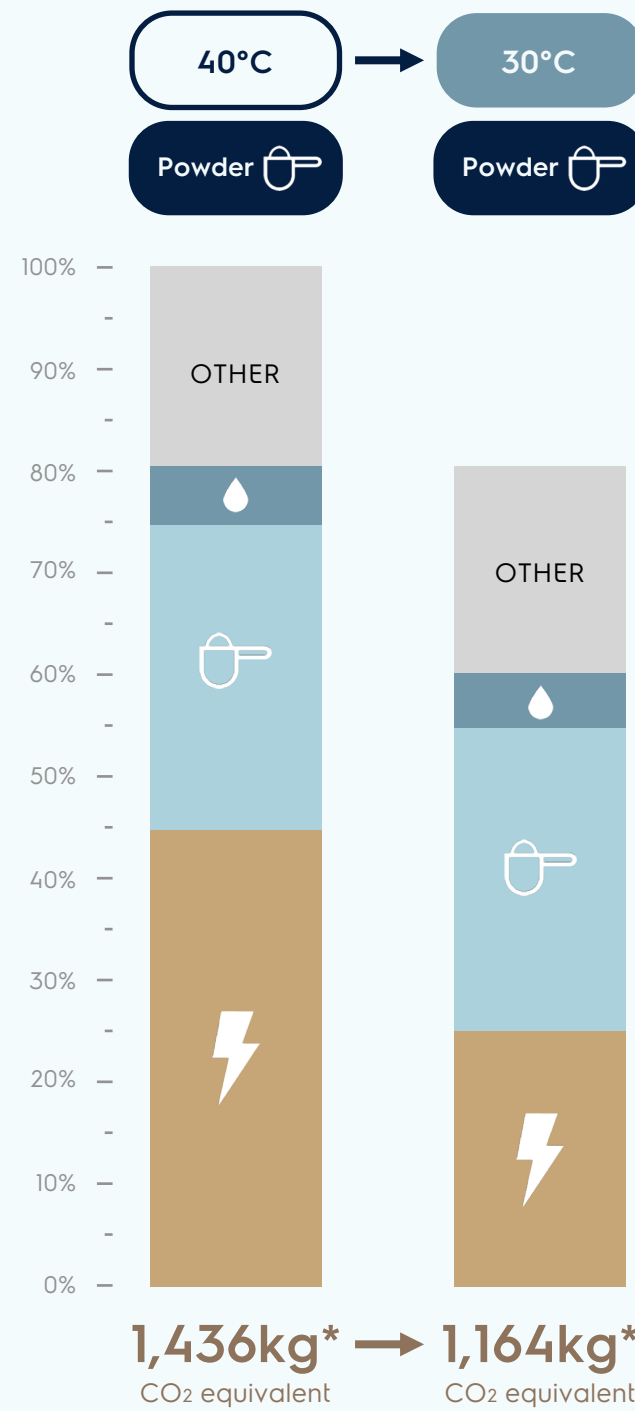
Switching from powder to liquid detergent, when using a 40°C wash cycle, could save 29.6 kg of CO₂ equivalent per year. By lowering wash temperatures to 30°C and switching to liquid detergent from powder could mean saving the equivalent of 50 kg of CO₂ per appliance per year.



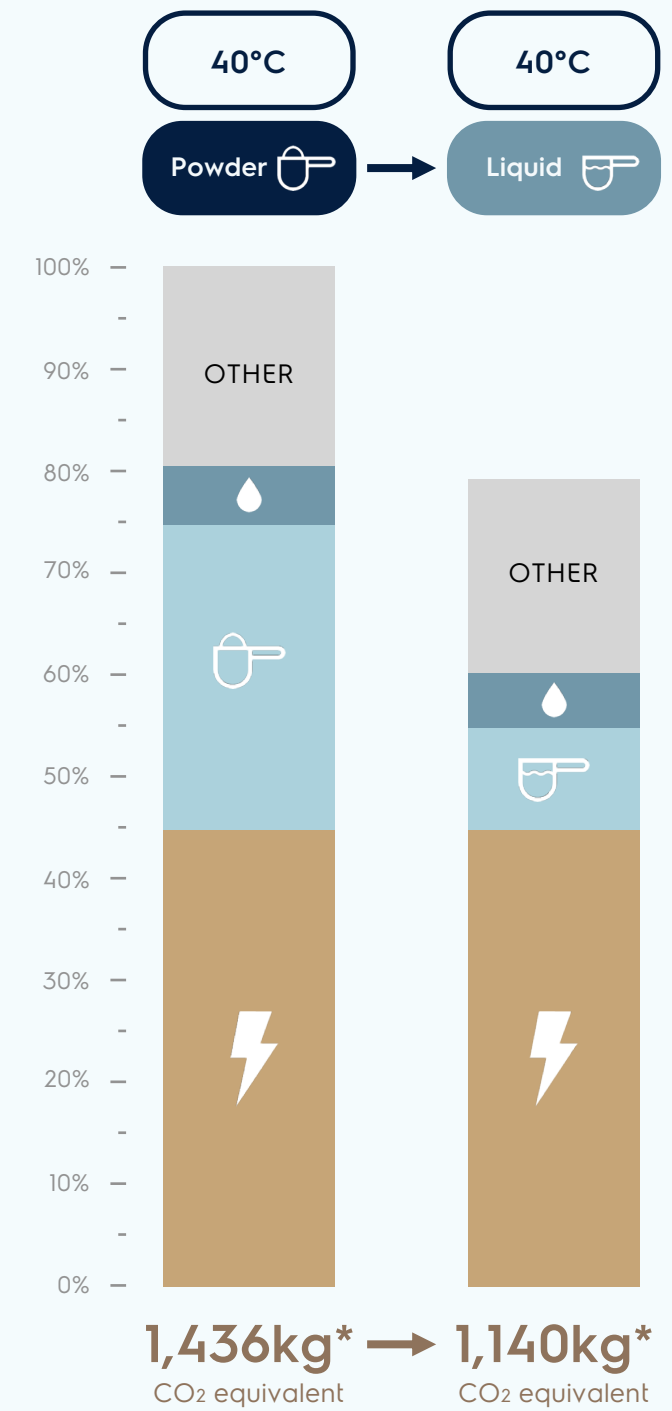
The positive impact of lowering temperature and changing detergent type from powder to liquid



*Cotton 40°C cycle using powder detergent.
8kg Front Loading Washing Machine



*Decrease temperature from 40°C to 30°C.
The result is ≈23% less impact on GWP of
use phase



*Change detergent from powder to liquid.
The result is ≈23% less impact on GWP of
use phase

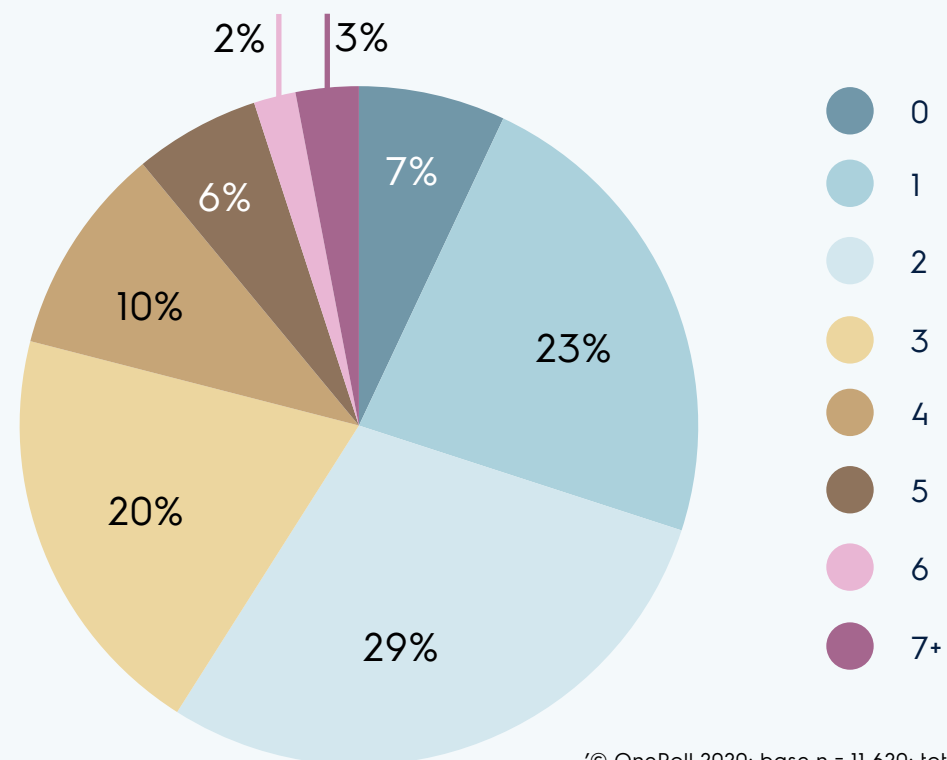


How often do we do laundry?

One of the main contributors to clothes not lasting longer is that we wash them too frequently. In Europe 71% of people do their laundry between one and three times per week.

During the pandemic laundry habits have remained pretty much the same with 68% of people stating that their laundry frequency stayed the same regardless and 12% had reduced the number of times they did their laundry.

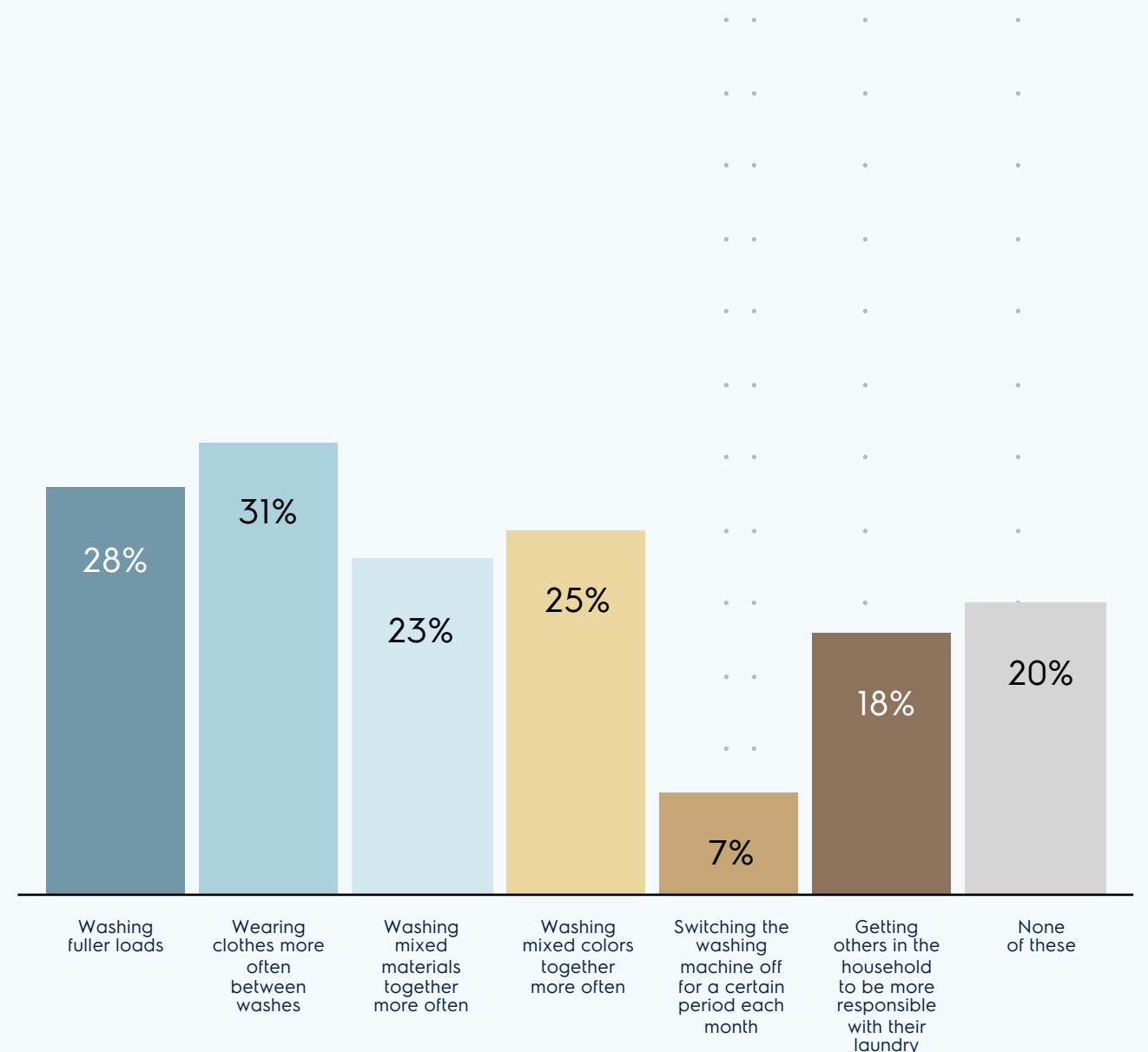
On average, how many times do you do your laundry per week?



© OnePoll 2020; base n = 11 620; total n = 12 000; 380 missing

Laundry has a huge impact on the lifespan of clothes. Because of that it is important to try to reduce the frequency of washing by wearing clothes more often.

Which of the following would help you to do the laundry less often?



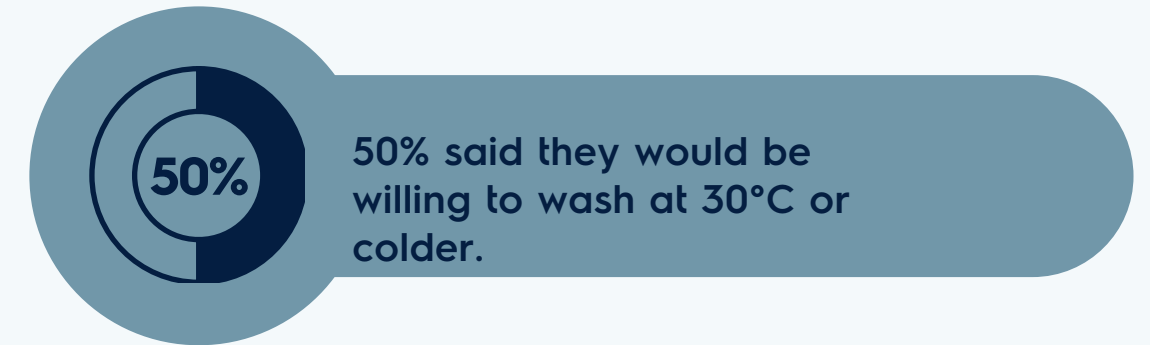


How to make clothes last longer

Making garments last longer is key to reducing the environmental impact of clothes. For half of all respondents, reducing temperature played the most important part in extending garment life.



Washing full loads is generally accepted (63%) to be better for the environment but there are two main reasons preventing people from doing so more often. 44% of people do not want to wash mixed colours and 34% do not want to wash mixed materials.





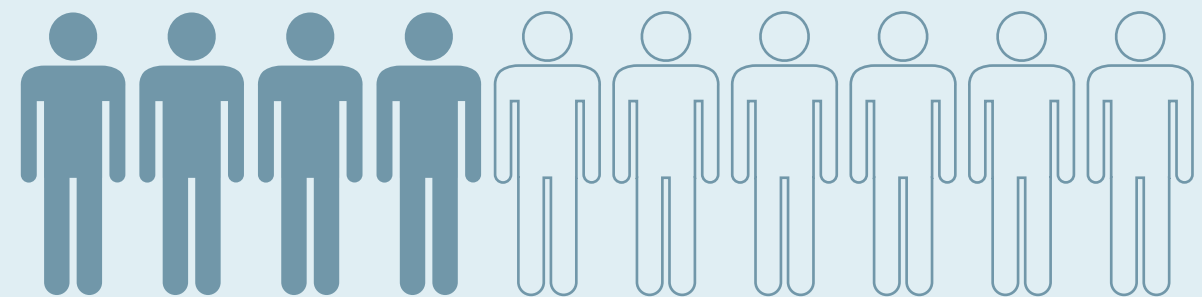
The challenges with fabric conditioners

Fabric conditioner makes our clothes smell great but it has also been shown to have an adverse effect on certain fabrics, in particular on garments with a breathable membrane such as outdoor/technical wear.

The reason for this is that the fabric conditioner, when added to the wash cycle, **reduces the fabric's breathability**. This lowering of performance could lead to garments being discarded long before they need to be.



Over 4 out of 10 respondents (41%) claimed to use fabric conditioner when washing outdoor garments.





How people learn to do laundry

Given the speed of technological advances within appliances and detergents, it is possible to assume that nearly 60% of people have out-dated care habits. With modern appliances, most laundry can effectively be cleaned at 20-30°C lower than the specified maximum⁹.

“

The study shows that people are more or less on auto pilot when it comes to laundry practices with 59% of people in Europe stating that they do the laundry the way they were taught by previous generations.

— Elisa Stabon, Care Experience Development Manager, Electrolux

59%
do laundry as
they were taught



Just under a third of all adults claimed to always follow the washing instructions on the care label. An additional 40% said they often follow the guidelines and 16% claimed they followed the advice 'sometimes'.

The reason why temperature shown on the care label is of significance is because it represents the highest safe level for that particular fabric, not the recommended one.

⁹ https://www.aeg.co.uk/siteassets/common-assets/04.-care/inspiration/clp/lookbook_the_care_label_project.pdf/



Wash less, wear often, care more

In order to reduce the negative impact on the environment and to make clothes last longer we need to change our laundry behaviour.

1.



More people must wash at lower temperatures more often, and more research and analysis should be conducted to further understand overcoming the barriers.

2.

Encouraging people to wear clothes more often between washes would extend garment life and it is already a recognised benefit to the majority of Europeans.

5.



Understanding more about why and how people wash their clothes, could lead to technological and detergent advancements which deliver the benefits people are looking for at a lower environmental cost.

3.



Making people aware of the pros and cons of powder versus liquid, while addressing potential economic barriers, could deliver an immediate environmental benefit, but only if people believe in a comparable cleaning efficacy of liquid.

4.

Age appears to play a large part across a wide range of laundry behaviours and should be considered when developing solutions.



“

At Electrolux, we will continue to make technological advancements to help people whilst constantly ensuring care for the environment. We aim to reduce the environmental impact of laundry by half and I am very happy to see how this study helps break down the opportunities for people to have an impact at home. I hope it will inspire people to continue to ask more of us so that we can move forward together.

— Vanessa Butani, Head of Sustainability BA Europe, Electrolux

