

INSIGHTS

CONSUMER LAUNDERING HABITS



In deciding how to care for their garments and home textiles, consumers weigh such factors as economy, convenience, and performance. According to Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™, the vast majority of consumers (97%) do laundry themselves rather than taking everything to the cleaners. The typical consumer does laundry twice a week, averaging 6 loads per week (4 of clothing and 2 of home textiles). Care labels provide important instructions on how to clean textile products to help them last longer and maintain their appearance and performance. But do consumers actually stop to read and follow the instructions? And will they change their laundering habits in response to new technologies in both garment performance and laundry appliances?

ATTENTION TO CARE INSTRUCTIONS

According to the Lifestyle Monitor, over half of consumers (57%) "always" or "usually" read laundering instructions before washing a garment. However, this figure is down significantly from 64% in 2007 and 77% in 2003. Older consumers (aged 35+) are more likely than younger consumers to check garment-care instructions (62% vs. 50%). The declining numbers of consumers who diligently read the care instructions could raise a "red flag" for brands and retailers—Lifestyle Monitor research shows that when consumers are dissatisfied with garments after laundering, they tend to fault the retailer, brand, or manufacturer even when their own laundering practices may be to blame.

Among consumers who said they did read the laundering instructions before washing a garment, the top reasons

were "to know how to wash it" (48%) and "so it doesn't get ruined" (27%), indicating that many consumers do not understand that care affects a garment's longevity and performance. Consumers also consider the economic impacts of garment care—over half (57%) said that current economic conditions were motivating them to take better care of their clothing. In particular, consumers reported trying harder not to stain or rip garments (43%) and not wearing their nicer items as often (15%). However, only 7% said they were paying more attention to care instructions.

ECONOMIZING BY TAKING BETTER CARE

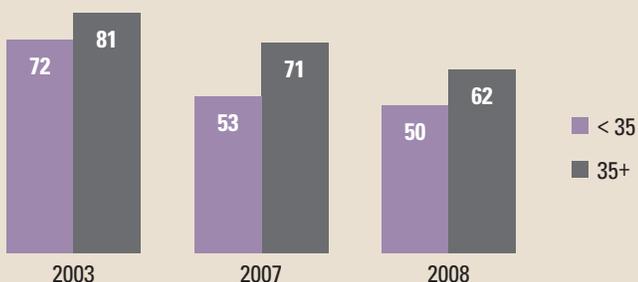
% responding among consumers taking better care of their clothes



Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™

FEWER CONSUMERS CHECK INSTRUCTIONS

% who "always" or "usually" check the care instructions, by age



Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™

CREATURES OF HABIT

Historically, most consumers learn how to launder clothing from their mothers. Laundering habits are refined through experience and depend in part on the type of garment. For example, some consumers who do their own laundry take certain items to the dry cleaner, including dresses (26%), dress shirts (17%), and sweaters (13%). Garment type also influences decisions about water temperature and drying method. Overall, consumers wash most garments in cold water. When they use warm or hot water, it is most likely for socks, sleepwear, T-shirts, or undergarments. Consumers believe that hot water sanitizes, disinfects, and gets clothes cleaner, and that cold water reduces or prevents fading, bleeding, and shrinkage. Consumers dry most garments on low or medium heat, but they are more likely to use high heat for socks (55%) and jeans (43%), while letting sweaters air dry or tumble without heat (49%). Other garments of-

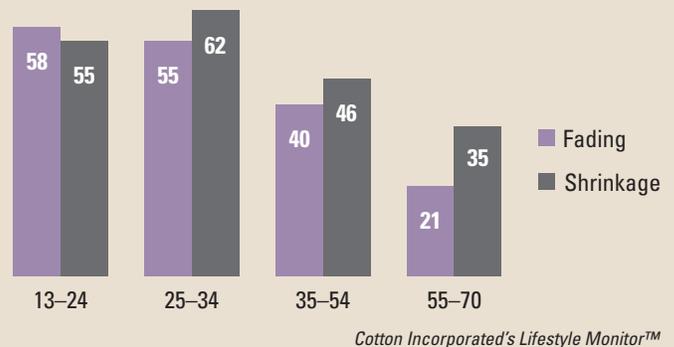
CONSUMER LAUNDERING HABITS

ten dried on high heat include sleepwear (45%) and T-shirts (40%), and items often air-dried include dresses (38%), undergarments (34%), and dress shirts (32%).

Research shows that consumers are slow to change their laundering habits even when they are aware of the care instructions. Consumers' laundering habits can contribute to problems with garment performance, especially fading and shrinking. Fading is generally caused by abrasion during washing, and shrinking results from over-drying. When asked about their experiences with recently purchased garments, 43% of consumers said they had encountered fading, and 49% had encountered shrinkage. The oldest consumers (aged 55 to 70) were significantly less likely than the youngest (aged 13 to 24) to have had a recently purchased garment fade or shrink. Older consumers may have fewer problems with fading or shrinkage because they are more likely than younger consumers to read care instructions or they have learned from experience how to avoid these problems; differences between the garments purchased by older and younger consumers could also be a factor.

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE?

% who had encountered fading or shrinkage, by age group



High-efficiency front-loading washing machines are relatively new to the U.S. home laundering market, but are becoming more common as manufacturers respond to the Department of Energy's requirements for reduced water and energy use. Though only 19% of consumers reported using front-loading machines, 70% said they used energy-efficient settings or high-efficiency washers. Future requirements for higher-efficiency laundering technology will likely address drying. Many dryers already offer moisture sensors to help save energy wasted by over-drying, which also benefits garment performance. However, only 47% of consumers reported using their dryers' moisture-sensing function, while 53% said they selected "timed dry" all or most of the time.

Laundering practices are key to consumers' satisfaction with the performance of cotton textile products. Although consumers may be reading laundering instructions less often, advances in laundering technology could make it easier for them to follow best laundering practices even when they don't pay attention to the instructions — thus increasing their satisfaction with product performance. To encourage compliance and ensure consumer satisfaction, some retailers and brands have started making fabric and care information more prominent at the point of purchase and on their Web sites. Consumers can also be directed to Cotton Incorporated's on-line resource for fabric and care information — www.thefabricofourlives.com.

GARMENT TYPE GUIDES WATER TEMPERATURE

% of consumers using cold, warm, or hot water, by garment type

	 Cold	 Warm	 Hot
Dress	72	26	2
Sweater	70	25	4
Jeans	60	34	5
Dress shirt	57	39	5
T-shirt	48	41	11
Undergarment	48	34	17
Sleepwear	44	46	10
Socks	33	35	32

Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™

THE FUTURE OF GARMENT CARE

Newer, high-efficiency front- or top-loading washing machines are engineered to use less water than traditional top-loading machines and to reduce abrasion and stress on textile products. Front-loading washers also shorten drying time, because their higher spin speeds remove more moisture. A study by Cotton Incorporated compared the effects of laundering clothing and home textiles in a traditional top-loading and a high-efficiency front-loading washer. The items washed in the front-loading machine showed (after 25 washes) less shrinkage, less fading, and less color transfer in mixed-product loads, and heavyweight cotton towels and denim jeans also dried faster.

About the Research

Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™ is a monthly on-line research study that gauges the attitudes and behavior of U.S. consumers regarding clothing, appearance, fashion, home furnishings, fiber selection, and other topics. Each year, 6,000 consumers are surveyed, 60% female and 40% male, aged 13 to 70, and representative of the U.S. population based on ethnicity, income, education, and geography.

