

# 2008 Market Trends Report



Bathroom  
Manufacturers  
Association

**BMA**

For Home Owners, Designers, Educators  
and the Media



The Bathroom Manufacturers Association - The BMA is the trade association for bathroom manufacturers. Its authority is underlined by a membership that represents more than 85% of the mainstream bathroom manufacturing business undertaken within the UK. In support of its role as the Voice of the UK Bathroom Industry, the Association has prepared two Trends Reports aimed at different market sectors.

This 2008 Bathroom Industry Trends report is trade focussed and offers an overview of domestic and commercial sectors of the UK Bathroom Industry considering consumer spending and construction operations, looking at lifestyle, design trends, manufacturing and supply.

## LIFESTYLE AND DESIGN OVERVIEW

How times change - in terms of both lifestyle and design. Today we are far more demanding and well informed than a decade ago. International travel has broadened the mind; cheaper borrowing and a powerful housing market has dramatically boosted spending power; the rise of celebrities has led to iconic aspirations; good marketing has created a culture of brand awareness and loyalty; and, the internet has made everything accessible.

The bathroom has greatly benefited from this shift in society and has become a multi-purpose room serving practical needs and offering a haven for private time and indulgence.

The rise in the property market has helped facilitate this shift with consumers releasing unparalleled levels of equity for home improvements and taking a real pride in their bathrooms.

The bathroom is no longer the poor relation to the kitchen when it comes to improving and selling property. The market has accepted that it's not just a kitchen that clinches a sale, but a bathroom too - whether that's by an already existing fantastic bathroom or the potential to create one and every bathroom has this potential, no matter what the size. The market has also realised that the wow factor is far more achievable for most with a bathroom than a kitchen.

In addition, our hectic lifestyles mean that increasingly we use our bathrooms to fulfil a variety of needs including entertainment, rest, relaxation and escapism and look to create a sanctuary of tranquillity. Therefore, overall, we are prepared to invest in quality items to turn our dream bathroom into a reality.

## TECHNOLOGY IN THE BATHROOM



Being cash rich and time poor has produced a craving for technology that aids our 'convenient' lifestyles, allowing us to get things done in less time and with a touch of ease and luxury. This has led to the production of innovative technology and the sales of 'gadgets' for the bathroom are certainly growing.

We could almost 'move into' the bathroom with the variety of technology available to us. Waterproof TVs and splash proof radios offer entertainment, while bathroom furniture pieces with built-in fridges offer refreshments. Then, there are digitally controlled showers that allow the user to switch the shower on from the comfort of the bed, set the flow rate, set the temperature, set both at different settings for various users and switch to an eco setting to save water!

Other technological advancements include WCs that wash and dry the user and flush automatically when the user has finished; sensor taps that know when the user wants water, and showers, enclosures and baths that offer the full wellness experience from massage to steam.



## DESIGNING FOR LIFE

There is a surge of interest in the 'designing for life' concept brought about by the realisation that we have an ageing population. In 2007, for the first time ever in the UK we have more people aged over 65 than under 18 and the trend is set to continue with the older population increasing 70 per cent during the next 30 years and 1,680 people in the UK turning 60 every day. In addition, 80% of UK wealth is held by the over 50s but until very recently there haven't been many attractively designed bathrooms for us to buy.

Once we reach 50 many of the faculties we take for granted start to deteriorate and our capacity to use the same appliances as before dwindles.

Hearing, eyesight, grip, mobility and intellectual ability can all suffer making bathroom activities we once took for granted such as turning a tap on, flushing the toilet, climbing in and out of the bath, reading bottle instructions, shaving and applying make up more difficult.

Until fairly recently the only option was to have a hospital-looking bathroom installed, whereas now the options are greater with some manufacturers really seizing this opportunity and producing some stunning designs that meet the needs, desires and aspirations of all age groups.

We don't want our homes to look like hospitals and more bathroom manufacturers are tuning into this.



To help you buy the bathroom you really want make sure you download the Rate Your Bathroom fact sheet from the website [www.bathroom-association.org](http://www.bathroom-association.org). Fill it in and take it to your retailer, installer or merchant. This fact sheet will help you to consider points you may not have thought of and will ensure you get all important points across to your retailer.

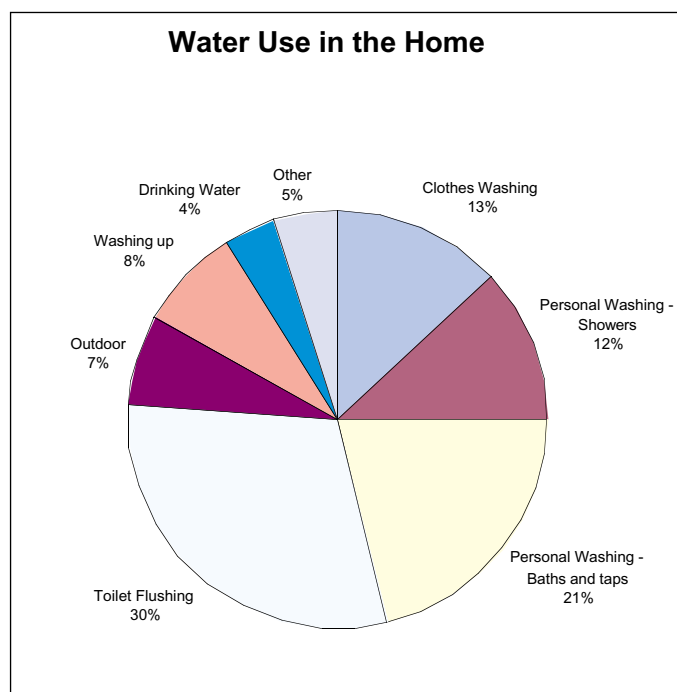
## WATER EFFICIENCY

In addition to an ageing population, we have a population that is growing in numbers. In fact, the population of Britain has doubled in the last 100 years and is set to grow further. This trend coupled with changing weather patterns means we have significant growth in water demand. It might be hard to believe but England has less water available per person than some much hotter countries including Spain and Portugal.

The topic of water efficiency is certainly creeping up the political agenda and changes in regulations could mean we have to reduce the amount of water we each use from the current 150 litres per person per day to approximately 125 litres per person per day.

As two-thirds of all water used in the home are used in the bathroom (see chart), we could start by making changes in the bathroom. These changes could be behavioural changes or product changes.

Two thirds of the water used in the home is used in the bathroom as follows:



There are lots of behavioural changes we can make to reduce the amount of water we waste. A full list of these is available on the BMA websites [www.bathroom-association.org](http://www.bathroom-association.org) and [www.water-efficiencylabel.org.uk](http://www.water-efficiencylabel.org.uk) and examples include turning off the tap to brush teeth and using a beaker of water instead, part filling the basin with water to shave rather than leaving the tap running, fixing dripping taps and taking a shower instead of a bath.

To help us restrict water wastage in the bathroom, manufacturers are also producing a whole host of water efficient products. Today's modern bathroom equipment has been designed to use less water – so the ultimate in saving water is to change

that old water guzzling bathroom suite with an ultra modern one, that will enhance your lifestyle, help the environment and will actually increase the value of your home – what are you waiting for!

To help you easily identify these water efficient bathroom products the BMA has launched its Water Efficient Product Labelling Scheme. You can rest assured that when installed and used correctly, products bearing this label will use much less water than their non-water efficient counterparts and match them in performance. Ask your retailer, installer or merchant for products bearing this label:

To find a database of water efficient bathroom products go to:

**[www.water-efficiencylabel.org.uk](http://www.water-efficiencylabel.org.uk)**



Today, manufacturers of water efficient bathroom products ensure that aesthetics and performance match practical benefits, which apart from hygiene also include water and energy saving – two issues that are very closely linked and growing massively in social importance due to the amount of energy used to heat water.

### COLOUR, SHAPE & MATERIALS

In the bathroom, we are moving away from the traditional matching suite and furniture. Many of us now prefer to mix and match different bathroom pieces to create our own look, to reflect individual taste and personality.



Although many homes still do have coloured suites they are not as fashionable and white is certainly en vogue. Coloured suites were still popular at the beginning of the 1990s when half of the bathrooms sold in the UK had an element of colour, but by the end of the 1990s colour had vanished and, as in Europe, white took over and continues to dominate today.

Although white sanitaryware is set to continue to dominate the UK market, elements of colour are creeping back into UK bathrooms. Accent colouring in the form of tiles, glass, paint and furniture, perhaps in keeping with the growth in popularity of wallpaper and carpets in other areas of the home, is slowly making an appearance.

Shapes have evolved from the traditional Victorian shapes, through to angular minimalist sculptures that became popular at the end of the 1990s and early 2000 when we saw not only angular sanitaryware but also angular brassware. That trend shifted earlier this decade to softer more rounded contemporary shapes.

Natural materials in the bathroom are becoming more popular and serve a dual purpose.

In addition to providing accent colouring, they offer the use of more sustainable products, of which there is a growing trend. Dark wood flooring, slate, wood panelling, marble and stone are appearing more frequently in bathrooms. In addition, the use of other materials for basins is growing. These include corian, stainless steel and glass. All of these materials offer a bathroom an interesting combination of colour, texture and depth and with correct usage and placement result in a stylish, contemporary bathroom.

Carpet can still be found in some British bathrooms, but is rare compared with a decade ago. Today the preferred choice of bathroom flooring encompasses wood, slate, stone and ceramics, with a growing trend for underfloor heating.

## DESIGNING THE HOME

The design of our homes has shifted during the past decade. Regulations from the Department for Communities and Local Government state that new dwellings must have a WC on the entrance storey, which is usually on the ground floor. Then, as standard rather than by regulation, most new dwellings with three bedrooms or more have at least one en suite.

Further regulations have also meant that developers can build a higher number of properties on a plot by reducing the overall footprint of a dwelling. This means houses are built with less floor space, but increasingly over three storeys to compensate for this. This trend means UK bathrooms continue to be tight on space.

We are also noticing a trend for open living spaces where kitchens and lounges are opened up to create a single larger living area. There's also an increasing trend of opening up bathrooms and en suites, so that the bathroom actually becomes part of the bedroom, but often with a privacy divider – particularly important for the WC area. It's because of this need for privacy that the trend of an open plan bedroom and en suite might not continue to grow, unless a separate WC area is made available.

## DESIGNING THE BATHROOM

When TV home improvement programmes first hit our screens there was a tendency to revamp bathrooms in record breaking time frames and conceal what really should have been improved.

Today, however, this trend appears to have disappeared from our screens for the main part and home improvement programmes are promoting quality refurbishments focussing on a proper job being done rather than a quick fix and attention to detail with good finishes and quality products.





Size clearly plays a part in the design of a bathroom and the availability of space saving designs from manufacturers has grown dramatically, but irrelevant of the space available and regardless of individual requirements, preparation and planning is the key to any successful bathroom.

When considering bathroom design both sellers of bathrooms and end users are beginning to take a much more holistic approach than previously and are taking into account plumbing and heating systems, lighting, ventilation, underfloor heating, furniture, room layout, room size, room use and the users' particular needs, rather than just selling/buying a new suite or shower.

The overriding message is definitely one of quality: quality knowledge, quality service, quality design and quality products.

## THE INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

### Brassware



The trend towards chromium plated taps and mixers and showers continues, with growing demand for water efficient taps. Quality and style remain paramount with an increased desire for matching designer taps and accessories. These appear to be more readily available at affordable prices making them accessible to most of the population.

Modern, minimalist designs are more popular than traditional Victorian and Edwardian style taps, although we are seeing a rise in demand for classic style product with a modern twist reflecting a vamp style for glamour and elegance.



It's very unusual to install gold plated taps, mixers and showers today, although some manufacturers do still have the facility to manufacture them upon request, but currently the requests are few and far between.

Cross head taps are still well-liked due to the fact that our homes are traditional Victorian and Edwardian styles, but lever taps are definitely growing in popularity, as are monobloc and wall fixed 'bib' taps for those who want a really, clean fuss free minimalist look.

Flat forms are prominent with large, flat diameter shower heads with soft touch surface finishes.

There is still a significant factor in brassware of supplying water at a controlled temperature through thermostatic valves, similar to thermostatically controlled showers.

## Baths

The trend for space saving baths and shower baths is growing. Space saving baths are deeper rather than long and shower baths have a wide shower area for comfortable showering and a normal bath shape at the end for laying down.

Although space saving and shower baths are growing in popularity, where space is an issue many people are foregoing the bath and having a shower enclosure or wet room area only.

Increasingly baths are regarded as a luxury item and in the wellness arena there will always be a demand for whirlpool baths.

Where space and budget are no object baths of varying sizes and designs remain hugely popular with the emphasis definitely on wellness, relaxation and luxury, rather than necessity bathing.

## Washbasins

There's a basin to suit all occasions now. The basic bathroom basin is still supported by a pedestal, but if you're short on space corner basins are popular and if space is no object wall hung basins, vessel basins and countertop basins are available.



The growth in wall hung basins is particularly noticeable due their various unique selling points including having the capacity to be mounted at a convenient height for the user, which can later be adjusted if necessary and making cleaning the bathroom floor much easier.

Vessel basins and countertop basins in striking materials including stone, glass and marble offer a touch of elegance and accent colour. Demand for these remains firm.

## WCs

As with basins, there's a growing trend towards wall hung and back to wall, but the biggest growth is definitely in water efficient dual flush toilets. Driven by regulations introduced a few years ago that reduced flushing from 7.5 litres to 6 litres for new installations including renovation and improvement, technology has advanced with the most popular dual flush WCs operating on 6 and 4.5 litres. Some really innovative products can flushing with 4 and 2.6 litres. The growth and popularity in dual flush toilets is certainly expected to grow significantly, driven by more changes to regulations and the consumer's green conscious.

There are also some real innovations coming onto the market such as the rimless toilet, of particular interest in commercial environments where hygiene is paramount. Also emerging are toilets that wash and dry the user, which are ideal once again for some commercial applications, but also for some domestic situations where the budget allows.

## Showering

There can be no doubt that we're a nation of shower lovers. Research shows that almost 80% of men prefer showers, while approximately 60% of women would rather have a

shower than a bath. This desire for showering, coupled with the increase in the number of bathrooms in the country due to new build and renovations has certainly fuelled the growth of the shower sector.

We want a sensory experience from their shower, rather than just a 'wash' and the variety of showering products available today reflects this.

The popularity of wet rooms is certainly growing, offering a seamless look without the need for a tray or screen and creating the illusion of more space due to the seamless finish. Wet rooms also offer a truly contemporary feel and increasingly we are recognising the benefit of a having a water tight bathroom and those who can have the entire bathroom as a wet room, while others are opting to simply have the shower area as a wet room.

Popular showers for wet rooms include rainfall showers, which use large showerheads offering the user a light spray to a fantastic soaking. Also popular in wet rooms are steam showers, for which the market is growing. Both of these products mainly cater for the luxury end of the market and highlight the growing trend for the wellness experience in the bathroom.



Optic lighting in shower trays is also popular. The lights give a relaxing, luxurious ambience, similar to that created by candles.

Overall, there is no doubt that the demand for quality showering products continues to grow, but individual manufacturer's sales and market share, as with other sectors of the Bathroom Industry is difficult and it appears to be a case of manufacturers stealing market share rather than growing it.

## Furniture

This section does not consider trends in the commercial market and will take into account trends in the domestic market only.

The popularity of furniture in the bathroom has risen dramatically with the number of bathrooms in new homes increasing, ensuring the bathroom remains the smallest room in the home. Being tight on space has created demand for furniture solutions so we can ensure our bathrooms remain tidy and clutter-free.

Furniture is a popular way to introduce colour, whether it's a strong vibrant colour or a natural colour such as dark woodgrains.

## Accessories

Chrome certainly dominates the trend with wood, ceramics and glass trailing behind.

The most popular bathroom accessory is the heated towel rails and this trend looks set to continue.

An emerging trend in accessories is the incorporation of technology within products, such as clock displays, LCD screens, detachable magnification mirrors and dual purpose handles and accessories.

## Reference Sources:

Department of Health

Overview Report on Water Efficiency Measures in the UK

BMA Member Companies

For information on all of the BMA activities visit: [www.bathroom-association.org](http://www.bathroom-association.org)

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