

Potty Training Survey

Thank you to everyone who participated in this on-line survey. We only expected around 100 responses but our final sample was 295.

Why was the survey carried out?

RNfL wanted to find out what information parents were receiving about potty and night training, the experiences parents had and the advice they would give to other parents based on such experiences. We also wanted to identify if there were any trends between wearing disposable nappies or reusable nappies and the time it takes to potty train. The on-line survey was carried out during March 2011 and was aimed at parents living in London.

The Findings

The sample broke down into an approximate 50/50 mix of disposable and reusable nappy users, with more people using cotton than micro-fibre/fleece nappies. As there were over 100 respondents using cloth and over 100 using disposables this makes the research pretty robust. A possible criticism is that the respondents are self-selected parents that wanted to respond to a survey on this subject rather than a random sample of parents whose children had potty trained within the last 10 years. Please read the results with this in mind.

Fast Facts

- 43.9% of toddlers took less than a month to make the transition from nappies to dry pants, with 77% achieving this within 3 months.
- 55.3% of the sample had bowel control before bladder control. 8% did not have bowel control by the time they were 3, but all had achieved this by 4.
- 14% of children had bladder control by 2, with 83% of children out of nappies by 3.
- More girls had bladder control by 2, but by 4 there was little difference.
- 19% of children in cotton nappies had bladder control by two years, compared to just 6.6% of those in disposables – see Figure 2.
- Of the 2% of children still without bladder control after the age of 4, it made little difference what nappy they wore.

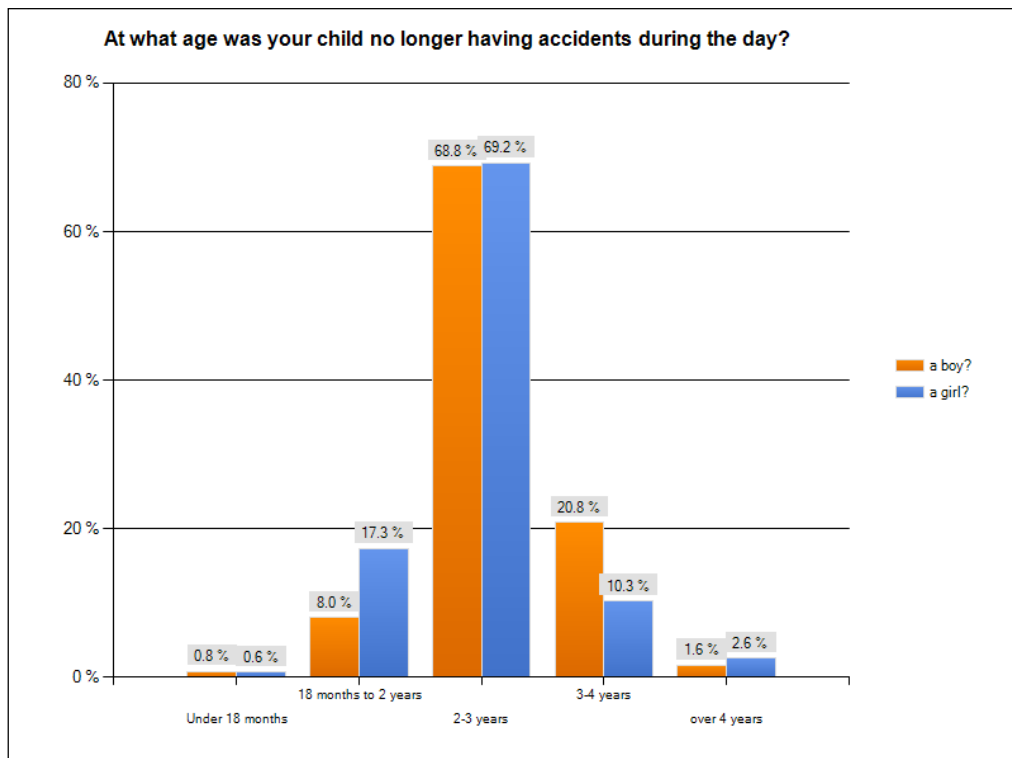


Figure 1: At what age was your child no longer having accidents during the day? Breakdown by Gender

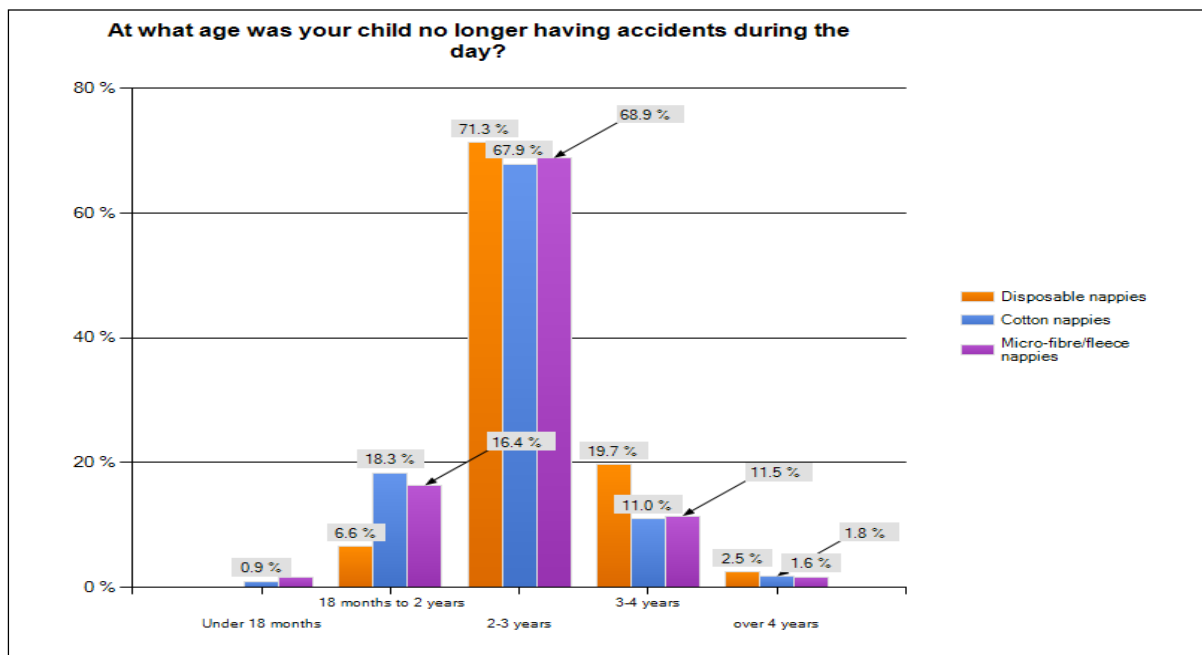


Figure 2: At what age was your child no longer having accidents during the day? Breakdown by Nappy Types

Effect of Single Use Nappy Pants

It appears from the results that wearing single use nappy pants lengthens the time children take to potty train. Figure 3 shows that 48.3% of children who did not wear single use nappy pants made the transition from nappies to dry pants in less than a month compared to the 33.3% of those who did wear single use nappy pants. Of the small number who took over 6 months to make the transition from nappies to dry pants, 8% wore disposable nappy training pants e.g. pull ups, compared to 3.9% who did not.

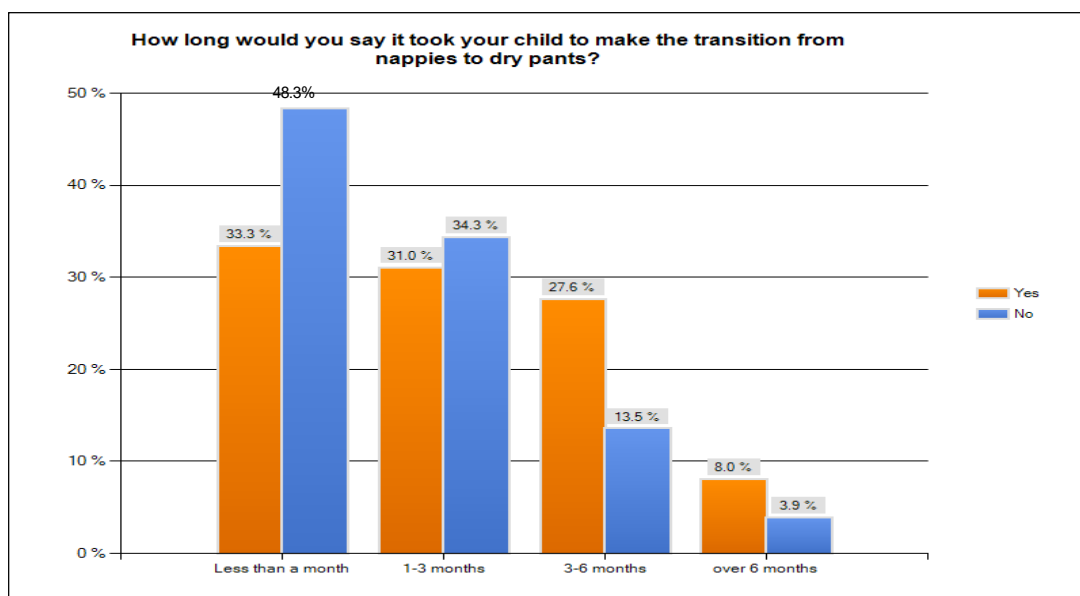


Figure 3: Yes and no figures taken from question "did you child wear disposable nappy training pants e.g. pull ups"

Figure 4 below illustrates that 41% of children were no longer wetting the bed under and up to the age of three. Only 4% of children were still wetting the bed over the age of seven.

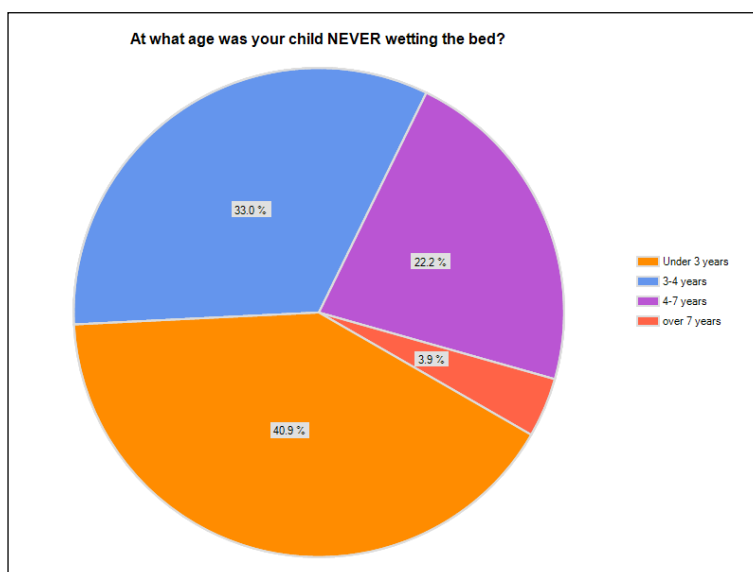


Figure 4: At what age was your child NEVER wetting the bed?

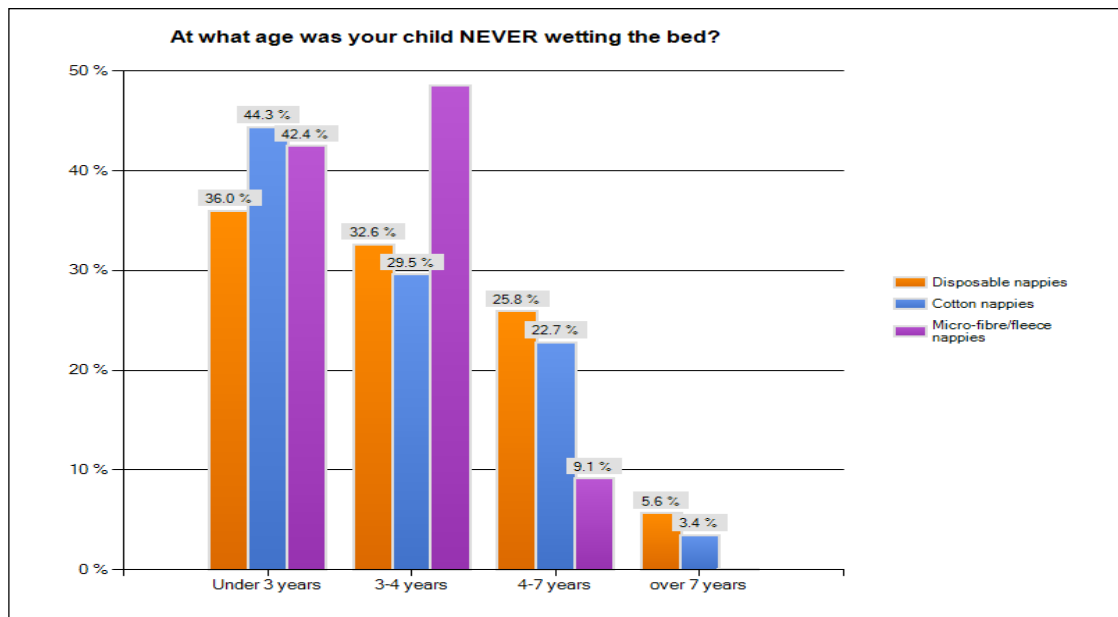


Figure 5: At what age was your child Never Wetting the Bed?
Breakdown by type of nappy worn from 0 to 6 months

Figure 5 shows children were likely to be dry at night earlier if they had worn cloth nappies 'most of the time' in the first 6 months.

We asked: “What would be your advice for other parents”

“Take your time, don’t rush it. Your child will learn when she/he is ready. Just encourage, and don’t get pushy about it.”

“Introduce concepts early (wee wee in toilet, toilet paper, flush, wash hands, accidents happen) so when they’re ready they understand of what they need to learn. I suspect the ‘three days’ method works well if you have the time to do it.”

“Just go for it. Go straight into pants and be prepared for accidents but your child will learn so much quicker. I would also say don’t listen to people who tell you to wait until 2.5 years as I think this is not necessary and it can be done much earlier.”

“Take a relaxed approach, and try real nappies – I feel that one of the reasons potty training was a stress-free process for us was that my son could feel when he was wet from a young age.”

Only 7% of respondents were given advice by health visitors. Most parents (64%) were advised to potty train their child between 2 and 3, with only 2% advised to start at over 3 years old. From our research 33% of parents believed potty training could start earlier (before the age of 2 years).

50% of parents found their nursery 'very helpful' in terms of helping with potty training, but the survey did reveal some bad experiences:

"Mixed views, sometimes [they] were helpful, sometimes not paying attention to my daughter so she had accidents. She would not drink deliberately so she didn't have accidents. Also, she didn't want to do a poo in the toilet so trained herself to only do a poo in the morning or night when she was at home."

"They weren't particularly interested in helping but did offer snippets of advice"

"She was ready to potty train before 2 but couldn't at her nursery because the under-2s room didn't have access to a toilet."

"[Our nursery] seemed very surprised that we were attempting it under 2 years old and we felt that there was very little support at the beginning. We took her out for a week and through very little effort she was completely potty trained (day time only). Only when she returned to nursery she started having accidents, which seemed to reinforce the idea that she had not made a connection with any of the carers and hence was having accidents. Her new nursery was incredibly supportive and she never had an accident there!"

Conclusion

This report shows encouraging evidence that most children are out of nappies by 3 during the day and out of nappies at night by 4.

The age bands were quite vague but from what we can tell the research indicates that the average age of children no longer having accidents during the day was 2.5 years for reusable nappies and 2.7 years for those who wore disposable nappies.

In addition, the research indicates that most parents don't find it excessively stressful but let their children take the lead. We have limited resources to analyse the individual responses in depth and this could be returned to in the future if resources could be identified. As it stands, we now have a benchmark to monitor any changes in potty training trends.

