



British Glass

Recycled content – packaging

Glass and recycling

Glass is infinitely recyclable. Glass bottles and jars can be re-melted to make new packaging indefinitely – with no loss of quality. Glass is the ideal circular economy material.

Most bottles and jars made in the UK routinely contain significant amounts of recycled content.

Calculation of recycled content

To allow confidence and consistency in recycled content figures for glass packaging, British Glass and the UK container manufacturers agreed a method for calculating the recycled content of glass containers. This was done in 2008 in conjunction with WRAP and the method is aligned with ISO 14021 *Environmental labels and declarations – self declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labelling)*.

The materials which can be counted towards recycled content under this method are:

- glass packaging waste eg bottles and jars from recycling collections (UK and imports)
- waste plate glass eg glazing, automotive
- calumite (a waste material from iron production)

Glass from internal process losses (eg test runs, rejects) is not included as recycled content because this is not genuine waste product and does not correlate with a reduction in use of virgin raw materials. Furthermore, high levels of internal process losses may indicate manufacturing process inefficiencies and should not be masked as recycled content.

Supply and demand

Glass manufacturers are keen to use recycled material because this improves energy efficiency and reduces CO2 emissions from the manufacturing process. It also reduces reliance on newly extracted raw materials and the energy and emissions associated with this.

Manufacturers use recycled material at the most economical and environmentally efficient locations. However, demand for cullet¹ often outstrips supply. Because glass manufacturing is necessarily a continuous process, lack of cullet can mean manufacturers must use a higher proportion of raw material than they would otherwise choose.

Access to cullet at an appropriate specification and price depends on a range of factors, including:

- collection and recovery methods for household and commercial recycling (eg mixed versus single material collection, kerbside versus bring-banks)
- imbalance between the colour quantities of filled glass packaging placed on the market in the UK and the colour quantities in demand from UK manufacturers.

¹ Waste glass that has been sorted and cleaned for re-melt.

Recycled content of UK manufactured glass packaging

The UK container glass manufacturers declare their actual use of recycled materials to British Glass to allow the following information to be produced.

Despite market fluctuations in price and availability, UK manufacturers have been largely able to maintain the recycled content of their products over the past decade.

Year	Average all colours	Green	Amber	Clear (flint)
2007	37.6%	69.1%	25.3%	31.4%
2008	36.0%	71.1%	24.6%	28.9%
2009	40.4%	72.4%	28.1%	33.4%
2010	35.6%	72.9%	22.7%	28.9%
2011	35.1%	75.9%	19.6%	28.9%
2012	38.0%	81.1%	20.2%	30.4%
2013	34.8%	73.9%	19.5%	29.0%
2014	37.0%	71.4%	25.0%	31.3%
2015	38.5%	75.9%	27.1%	31.6%
2016	38.5%	68.1%	30.32%	31.9%

Data accurate at the time of publication

NB When comparing UK glass recycled content to that of imported glass be aware that in some countries glass from internal process losses is included in the recycled content figure, inflating it (see previous section).

Increasing recycled content

A real and sustained improvement in recycling behaviour and the recycled content of glass packaging needs the whole supply chain to work together.

British Glass and its members are actively looking for opportunities to increase the availability of affordable, good quality cullet. In fact, this is a key part of our decarbonisation strategy. We're working directly with government, local authorities, waste processors, brands and consumers – as well as our manufacturer members.

Our Close the loop network is an informal group of organisations and professionals from across the glass packaging life cycle who want to improve the UK's glass recycling rate. Find out more and join us at www.britglass.org.uk/closetheloop

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Published Sept 2017
00001-E1-17