RED C CONSUMER MOOD MONITOR

APRIL 2026 FINDINGS

ISSUED MAY 2026

The RED C Consumer Mood Monitor tracks consumer sentiment every quarter, providing a timely view of attitudes, expectations and spending behaviour among people in Ireland.

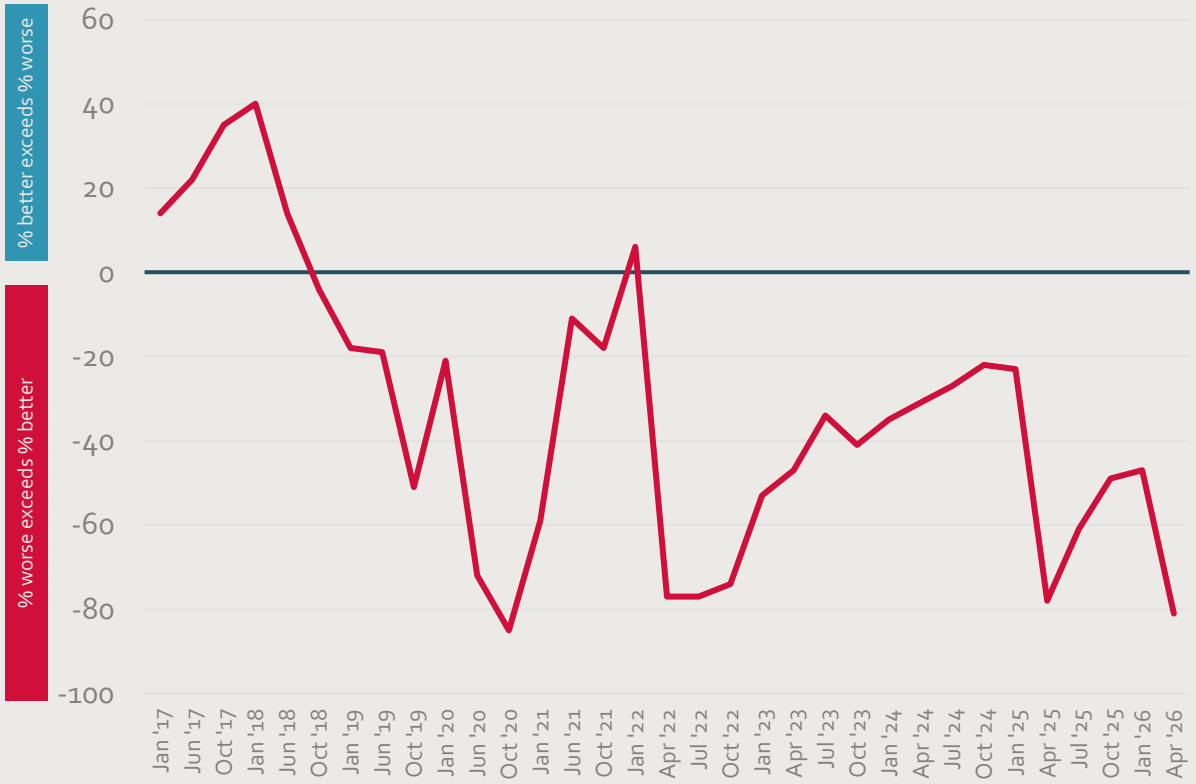
This April 2026 wave shows a sharp deterioration in sentiment, driven primarily by rising fuel prices and renewed global uncertainty, with clear knock-on effects for household finances and future consumer behaviour.

REDC

Consumer sentiment fell sharply in April, as higher fuel costs intensified concerns over the cost-of-living and spending capacity

The RED C Consumer Mood – outlook for the Irish economy (2017 to 2026)

% get better LESS % get worse over the next six months



-81

-34 v Jan-26
-3 v Apr-25

5% expect the economy to get better

versus

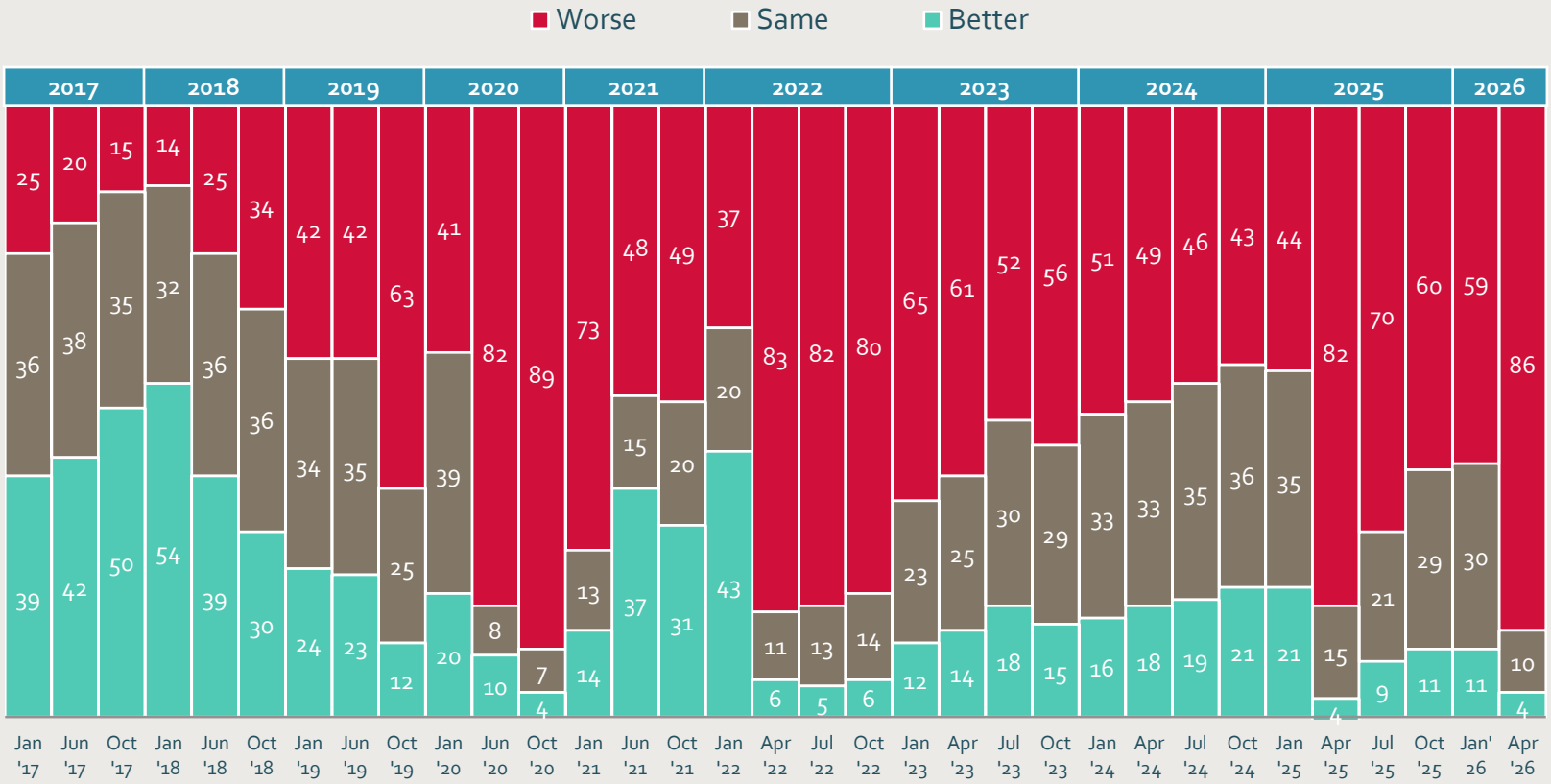
86% expect the economy to get worse

Above zero: % expect things to get better GREATER than % expect things to get worse
Below zero: % expect things to get better LESS % than expect things to get worse
Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

An overwhelming majority of people believe the Irish economy will fare worse in the coming six months

How do you think the Irish economy will fare in the next six months? (2016 to 2026)

% worse / better / stay the same



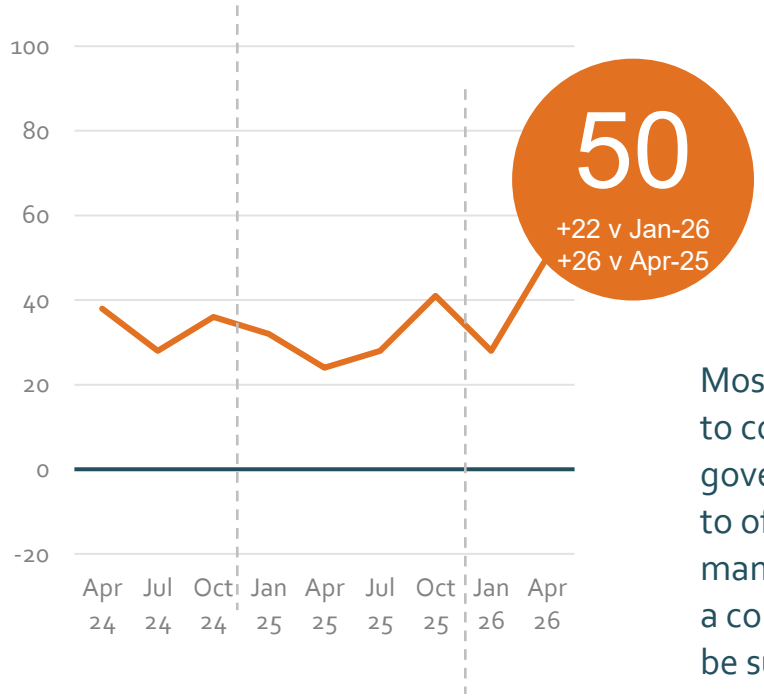
Consumer sentiment in Ireland is at one of its lowest points over the past ten years – the only other times it has been lower or as low was at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (Oct 2020), the start of the cost-of-living crisis (April 2022), and the introduction of tariffs on EU exports into the US (April 2025).

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

The rise in fuel prices has been a key concern for consumers

Expectations for expenditure on motor fuel over the next 6 months

% increase LESS % decrease



68% expect to spend more on motor fuel

versus

18% expect to spend less on motor fuel

Most consumers expect fuel prices to continue to rise despite government introducing measures to offset the increases, suggesting many believe the rise in oil prices as a consequence of the Iran is likely to be sustained for some time to come

Above zero: % expect spend to increase GREATER than % expect spend to decrease
Below zero: % expect spend to increase LESS than % expect spend to decrease

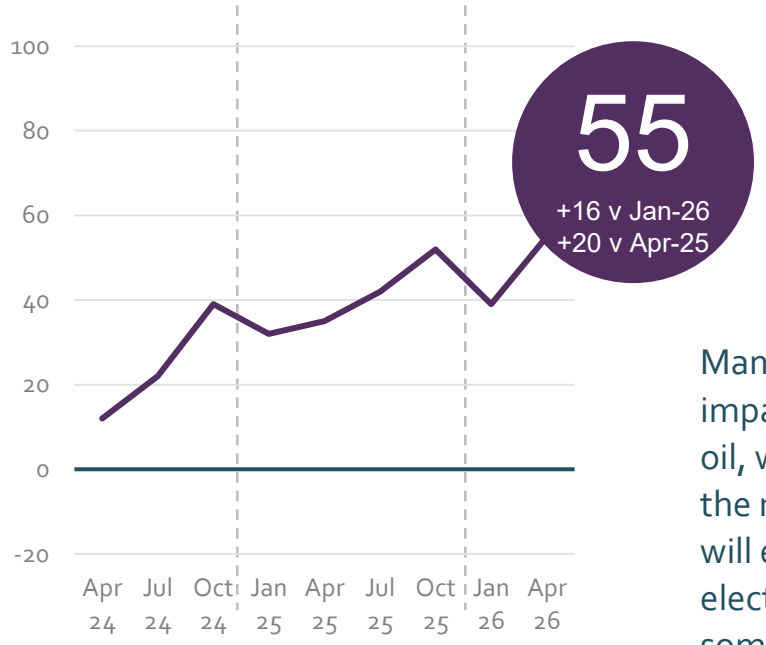
Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Excludes not applicable

Higher oil prices are also expected to impact household energy bills

Expectations for expenditure on household energy bills over the next 6 months

% increase LESS % decrease



68% expect to spend more on energy bills

versus

13% expect to spend less on energy bills

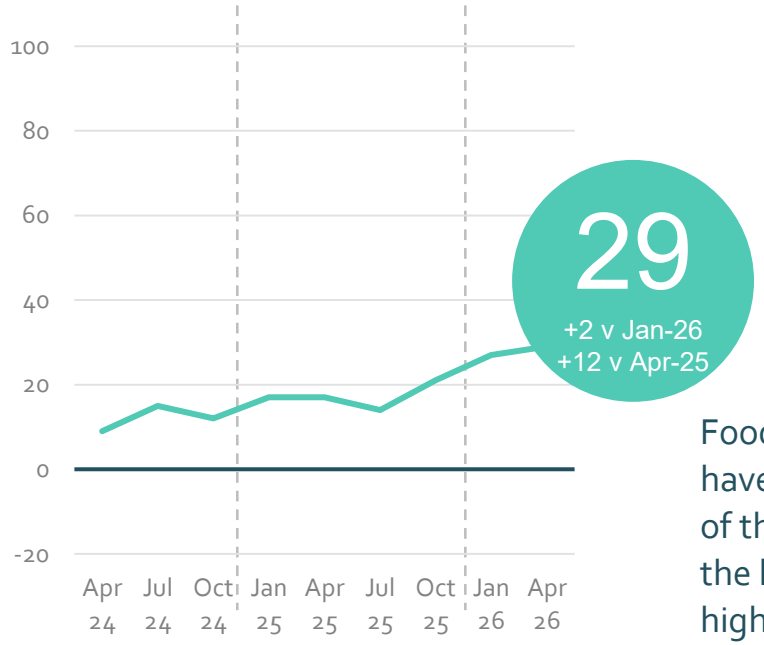
Many households have been impacted by a rise in home heating oil, while it seems inevitable that the rise in international oil prices will eventually see the cost of electricity and gas increase, with some suggestions that electricity increases could be in the range of 4% to 9%

Above zero: % expect spend to increase GREATER than % expect spend to decrease
Below zero: % expect spend to increase LESS than % expect spend to decrease

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Concerns that higher fuel costs could push food prices higher

Expectations for expenditure on grocery spend over the next 6 months
% increase LESS % decrease



Above zero: % expect spend to increase GREATER than % expect spend to decrease
Below zero: % expect spend to increase LESS than % expect spend to decrease

52% expect to spend more on groceries

versus

23% expect to spend less on groceries

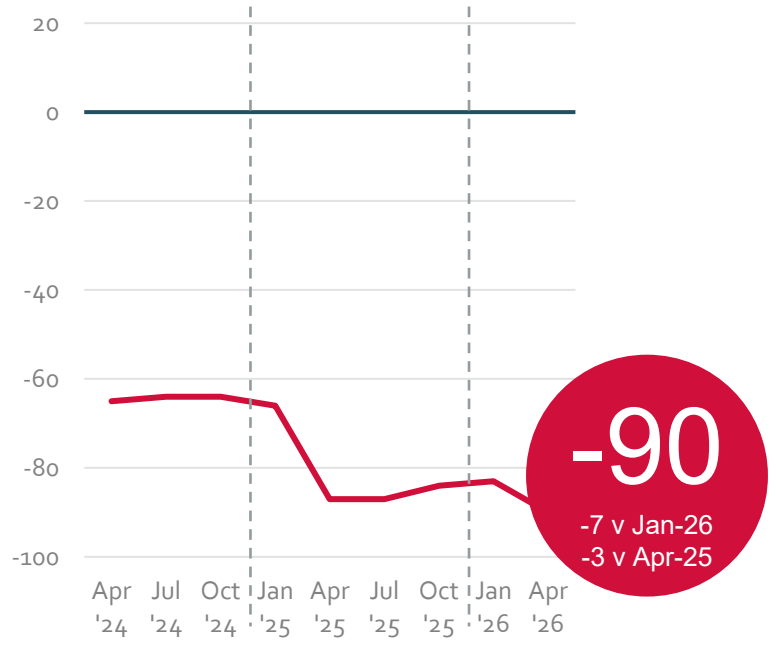
Food price inflation would appear to have moderated in the first quarter of this year, having accelerated in the latter half of 2025. However, higher fuel prices are likely to impact on transport costs and could see food prices rising faster later on this year, leading to consumers spending more on groceries.

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

As a consequence, nearly all consumers believe the cost-of-living will deteriorate further

Outlook for the cost-of-living over the next 6 months

% get better LESS % get worse



2% expect cost-of-living to get better

versus

93% expect cost-of-living to get worse

Above zero: % expect things to get better GREATER than % expect things to get worse
Below zero: % expect things to get better LESS % than expect things to get worse

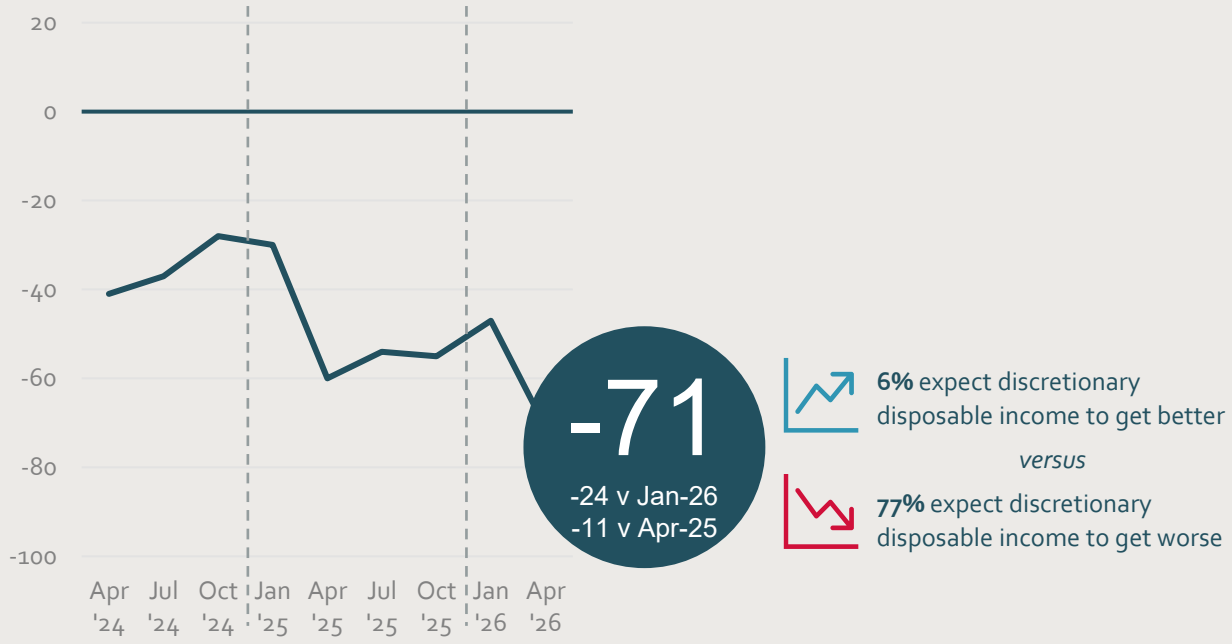
Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Which means consumers will have less money left over at the end of each month for discretionary spend

In fact, this would appear to be a major concern, with a significantly large majority of consumers expecting their discretionary disposable income to deteriorate in the coming six months.

Outlook for discretionary disposable income (money left over after tax, rent, bills, etc) over the next 6 months

% get better LESS % get worse



Above zero: % expect things to get better GREATER than % expect things to get worse
Below zero: % expect things to get better LESS % than expect things to get worse

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Notable reduction in future spend for out-of-home entertainment

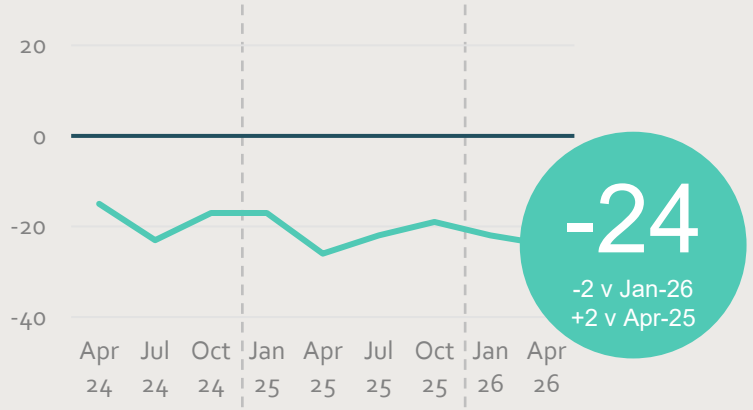
With less money left over to spend at the end of each month, people seem to be more likely to cut back on eating out, drinking and socialising. But we also see a potential significant cut back in spend on holidays / short breaks relative to the beginning of this year.

Expectations for expenditure over the next 6 months

% increase LESS % decrease

Consumer goods and services

(hairdressers / clothes / mobile phones / gaming)



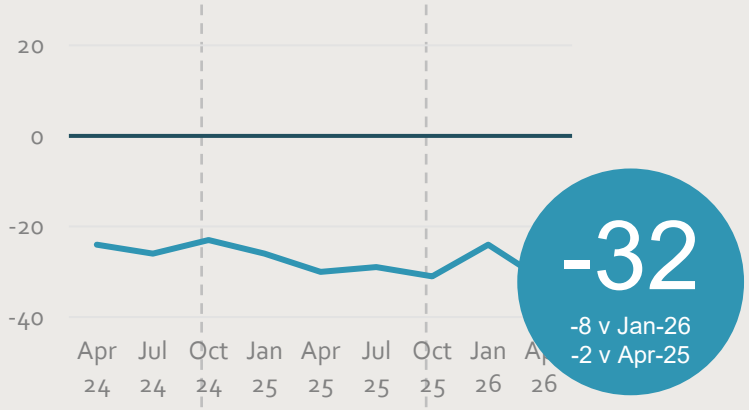
24% expect to spend more on consumer goods and services

versus

47% expect to spend less on consumer goods and services

Out-of-home entertainment

(eating / drinking / socialising)

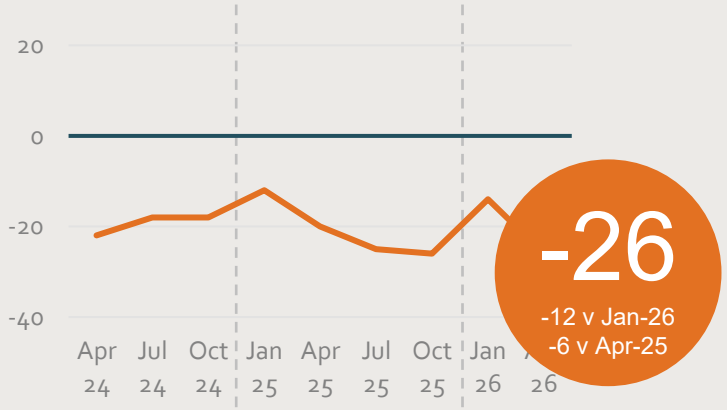


21% expect to spend more on out-of-home entertainment

versus

53% expect to spend less on out-of-home entertainment

Holidays and short breaks



21% expect to spend more on consumer goods and services

versus

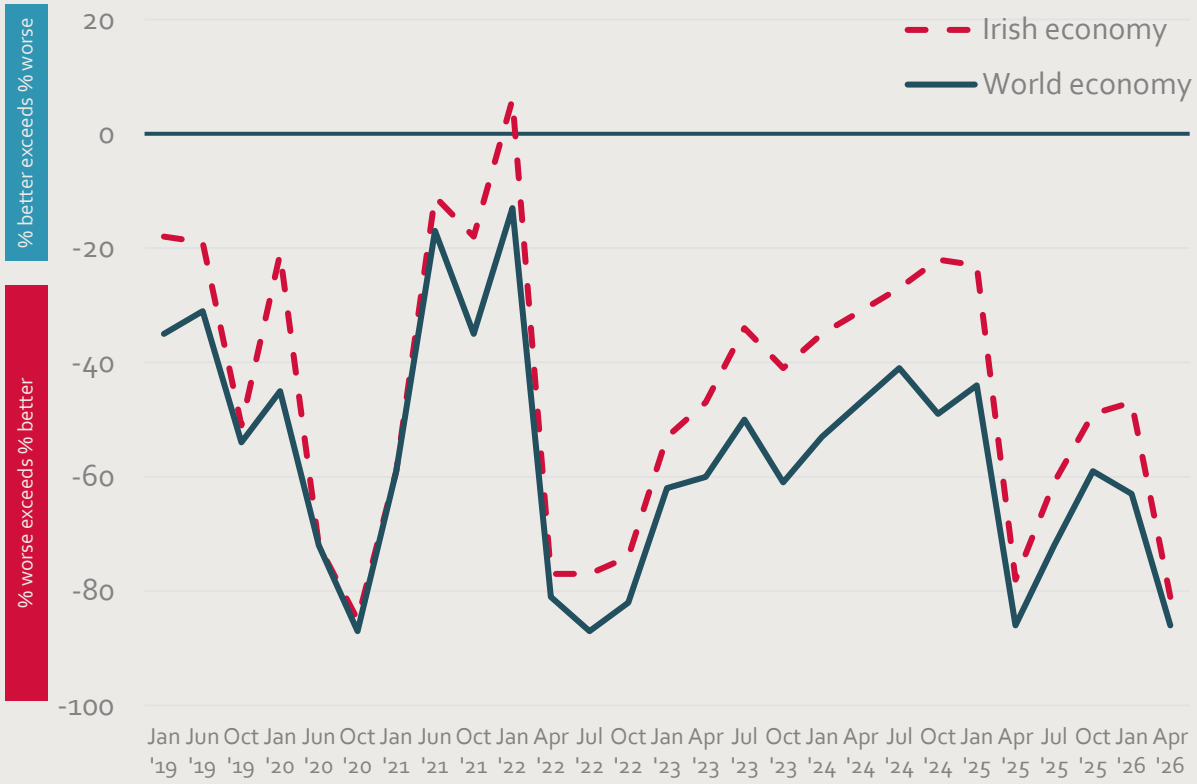
47% expect to spend less on consumer goods and services

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Consumers are just as concerned about the global economic outlook, influenced by the Iran war and ongoing geopolitical uncertainty

Outlook for the world economy (2019 to 2026)

% get better LESS % get worse over the next six months



-86

-34 v Jan-26
-3 v Apr-25

3% expect the world economy to get better

versus

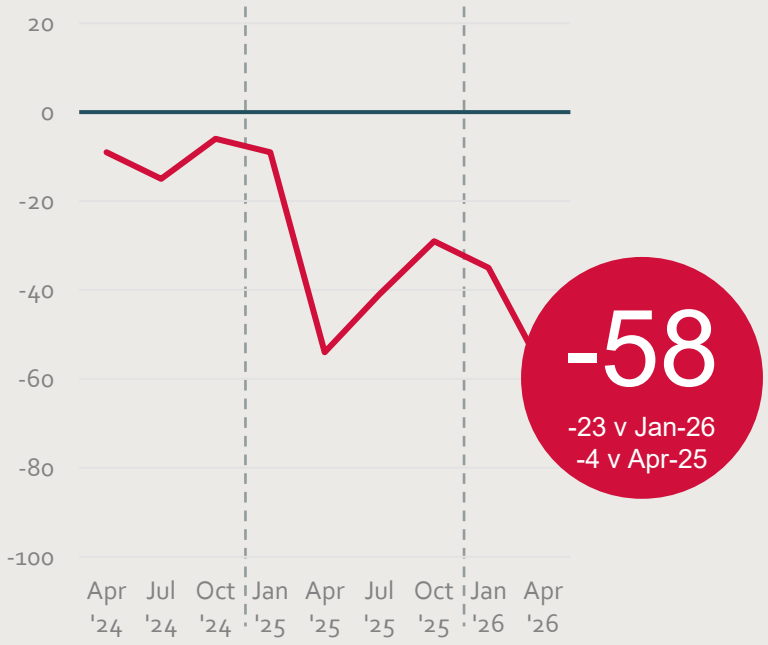
89% expect the world economy to get worse

Above zero: % expect things to get better GREATER than % expect things to get worse
Below zero: % expect things to get better LESS % than expect things to get worse
Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Concerns over the domestic and global economic outlook means consumers are now even more worried about the prospects for the jobs market

Outlook for employment, the ability to get and move jobs over the next 6 months

% get better LESS % get worse



4% expect employment to get better

versus

61% expect employment to get worse

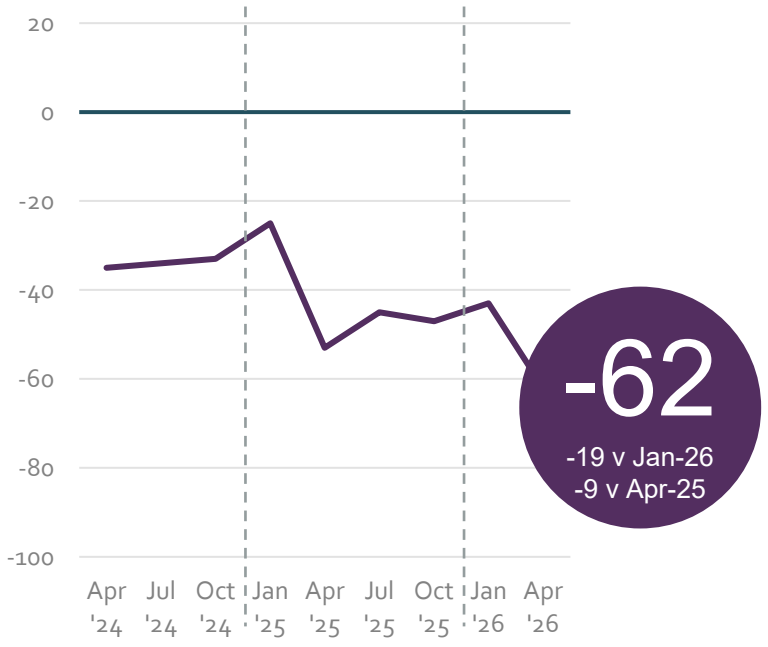
Above zero: % expect things to get better GREATER than % expect things to get worse
Below zero: % expect things to get better LESS % than expect things to get worse

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

All of which is leading to a growing expectation of a decline in consumer financial wellbeing

Outlook for your own financial wellbeing over the next 6 months

% get better LESS % get worse



6% expect their own financial wellbeing to get better

versus

68% expect their own financial wellbeing to get worse

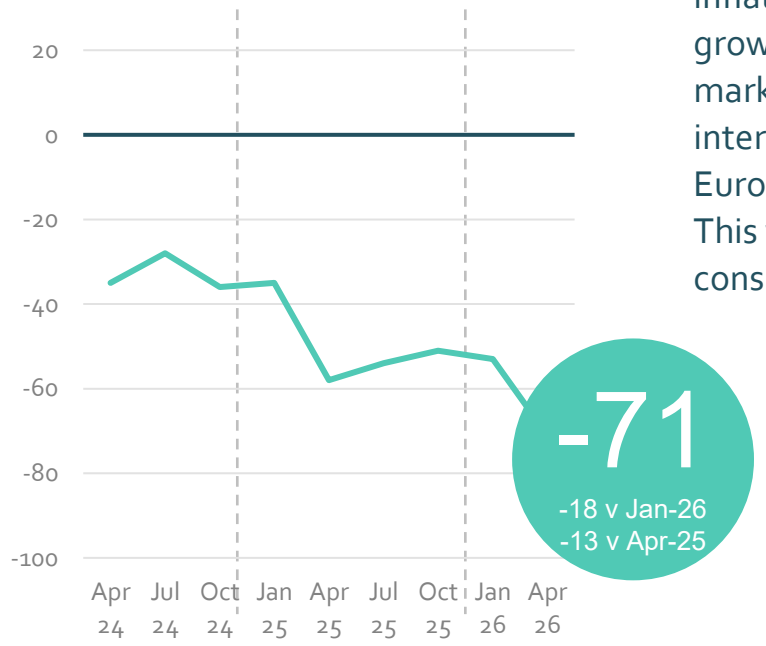
Above zero: % expect things to get better GREATER than % expect things to get worse
Below zero: % expect things to get better LESS % than expect things to get worse

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

With oil prices rising, borrowing costs are expected to increase

Outlook for the cost of borrowing money over the next 6 months

% get better LESS % get worse



Despite the prospect of rising inflation and slower economic growth (the dreaded "stagflation"), markets appear to be pricing-in two interest rate increases by the European Central Bank this year. This would seem to align with consumer expectations.

3% expect the cost of borrowing to get better

versus

74% expect the cost of borrowing to get worse

Above zero: % expect things to get better GREATER than % expect things to get worse
Below zero: % expect things to get better LESS % than expect things to get worse

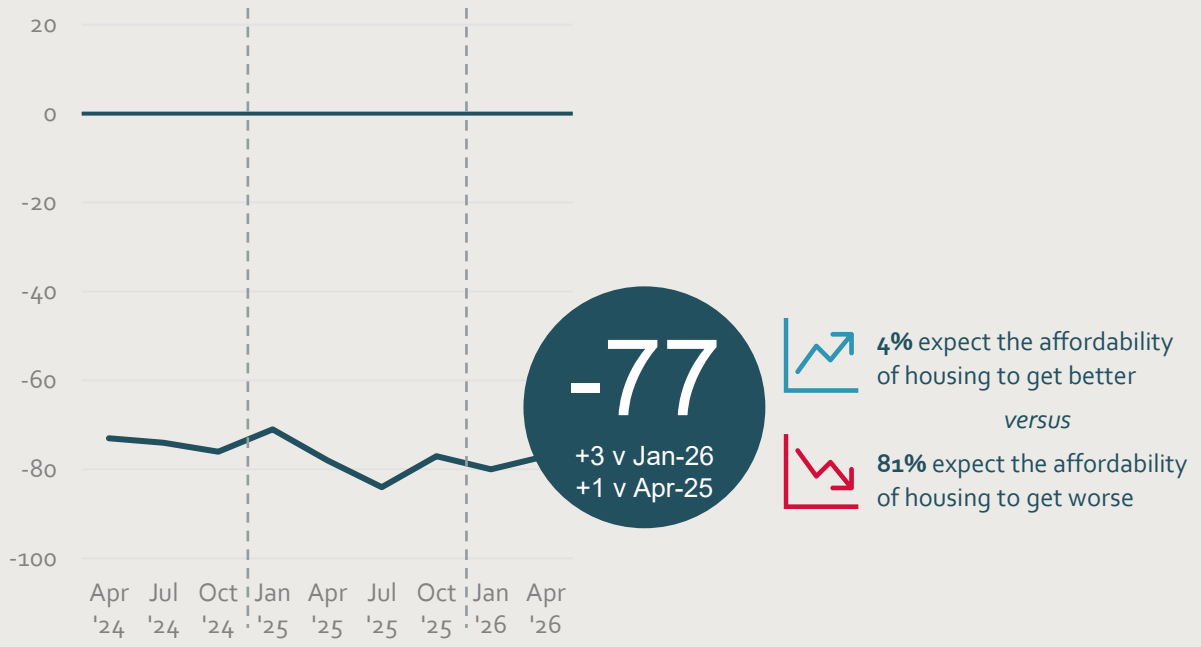
Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

No real change in expectations for housing affordability, despite signs of housing supply increasing

The supply of housing does appear to be expanding, with new home building accelerating in the first three months of the year (completions up 33% in the first three months of the year), yet most consumers still see affordability a major challenge for prospective homebuyers.

Outlook for the affordability of housing over the next 6 months

% get better LESS % get worse



Above zero: % expect things to get better GREATER than % expect things to get worse
Below zero: % expect things to get better LESS % than expect things to get worse

Above zero: % expect things to get better GREATER than % expect things to get worse
Below zero: % expect things to get better LESS % than expect things to get worse

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Consumers are increasingly pessimistic, more financially defensive, and less willing or able to spend. This combination raises the risk that economic anxiety becomes self-reinforcing.

Is consumer frustration with the economy about to boil over?

Fieldwork for this wave coincided with ongoing **fuel protests and blockades**, underscoring just how visible and emotive rising fuel prices have become for consumers. While fuel costs are a clear and immediate trigger, the strength of sentiment suggests **these protests may reflect a broader tipping point**, coming on top of longer-standing frustration around housing affordability, pressure on healthcare services, immigration, and a perception amongst may consumers of limited progress on these and other areas since the current government took office just over a year ago.

Pessimism is particularly pronounced among supporters of non-government parties, who are more negative about the economic outlook, housing affordability and their discretionary disposable income. It should be noted that concern is widespread geographically, with **no clear divide between Dublin and the rest of the country**, although those living in rural areas show somewhat higher levels of anxiety about the cost-of-living.

There are also important demographic differences. For example, **younger adults aged 18–34 are slightly more optimistic about the future economy and their own financial wellbeing**, likely reflecting lower exposure to costs such as mortgages and childcare. Meanwhile, **women tend to be more pessimistic than men** across measures of income security and financial outlook.

Looking ahead, there is limited scope for further government intervention to offset fuel price increases without significant trade-offs in other areas of public spending, **although the budget later on this year is likely to contain a cost-of-living package and changes to income tax putting more money back into peoples' pockets**. At the same time, ongoing geopolitical instability in the Middle East and Ukraine, combined with continued unpredictability in US economic and foreign policy, is likely to keep oil prices elevated and uncertainty high, meaning **consumers are likely to remain cautious about the future for some time to come**.

What does this all mean for brands?

	Key takeouts	Implications
1	Many households are cutting back, focusing on essentials and being more deliberate about where their money goes.	Brands need to clearly justify their place in the basket. Value, usefulness and relevance will matter more than novelty or premium cues.
2	Categories like dining out, leisure, travel and non-essential retail remain exposed as people prioritise financial security.	Expect more cautious purchasing, shorter planning horizons and greater sensitivity to offers, bundles and timing.
3	When people expect things to get worse, they often act in ways that make that outcome more likely e.g. by holding back on spending.	Brands that project stability, empathy and reliability can play a reassuring role and retain loyalty during uncertainty.
4	Even if prices stabilise, highly visible costs (fuel, energy, food) tend to dominate how people feel about affordability.	Explaining price, promotions and value is as important as the price itself. Consumers want to know that prices are fair, that any increases are justified and offers will genuinely help them save.
5	Even if government measures provide some relief, they are unlikely to fully restore confidence. Consumers will remain uncertain about future costs and income.	Brands cannot rely on policy supports to ease pressure on consumers. Instead, they need to assume uncertainty will persist and focus on consistency, reassurance and long-term value.

METHODOLOGY & ABOUT RED C

Methodology

- The research is based on a nationally representative sample of n=1,009 adults aged 18+ living in the Republic of Ireland.
- Interviews were conducted online using RED C's omnibus survey, RED Line.
- Sample is drawn from RED C's proprietary online panel, RED C Live, which comprises over 40,000 members and enables efficient access to a representative cross-section of the adult population in Ireland.
- Quotas were applied and the data weighted to ensure the final sample is nationally representative of the population aged 18+
- This study represents the 59th wave of the RED C Consumer Mood Monitor, with fieldwork conducted between 9th and 14th April 2026.

We deliver clarity on the human behaviours that unlock growth

We help our clients understand audiences across the world, from the UK to USA, Brazil, China, UAE, Europe and more

We have a deep understanding of consumer behaviour, bringing expertise across sectors to deliver clear, action-focused insight to help our clients grow

Our team bring exceptional project management skills, expert knowledge and strategic storytelling to ensure successful delivery of every project

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Segmentation & bringing customers 'to life'

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Brand & ad tracking
Loyalty & churn

Concept development & innovation (iDeator)

Customer closeness programmes

Category Entry Points & Distinctive Brand Assets

Expert advisor lens

Consumer engagement deep-dives

Semiotics & behavioural science

We use a variety of techniques to uncover and understand

Surveying

Face to Face In Person: 150 interviewers nationwide, In Home, Exit, Location

Telephone: 30 Station Outbound Telephone Centre in Dundalk

Online: Bespoke RED C Live Online Panel of 40,000+

Listening

Group Discussions: Online, WhatsApp or Face to Face

Depth Interviews: One of one or paired in depth discussions

Online Communities: 30-100 people in ongoing discussions

Monitoring

Social Media: Monitoring, Listening & Understanding

Biometric Testing: Eye Tracking, Facial Coding, Blood Pressure, Sweat

Passive Monitoring: In person movements, online journey, media consumption

REDC

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For more information please contact:

geoff.tucker@redcresearch.co.uk

REDCRESEARCH.COM

RED C RESEARCH & MARKETING LTD
DUBLIN: Ground Floor, Block G, EastPoint Business Park, Clontarf, Dublin 3, D03 H2N1, Ireland
LONDON: 5.01 The Place, 175 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7AA