RED C CONSUMER MOOD MONITOR

JULY 2026 FINDINGS

ISSUED AUG 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.

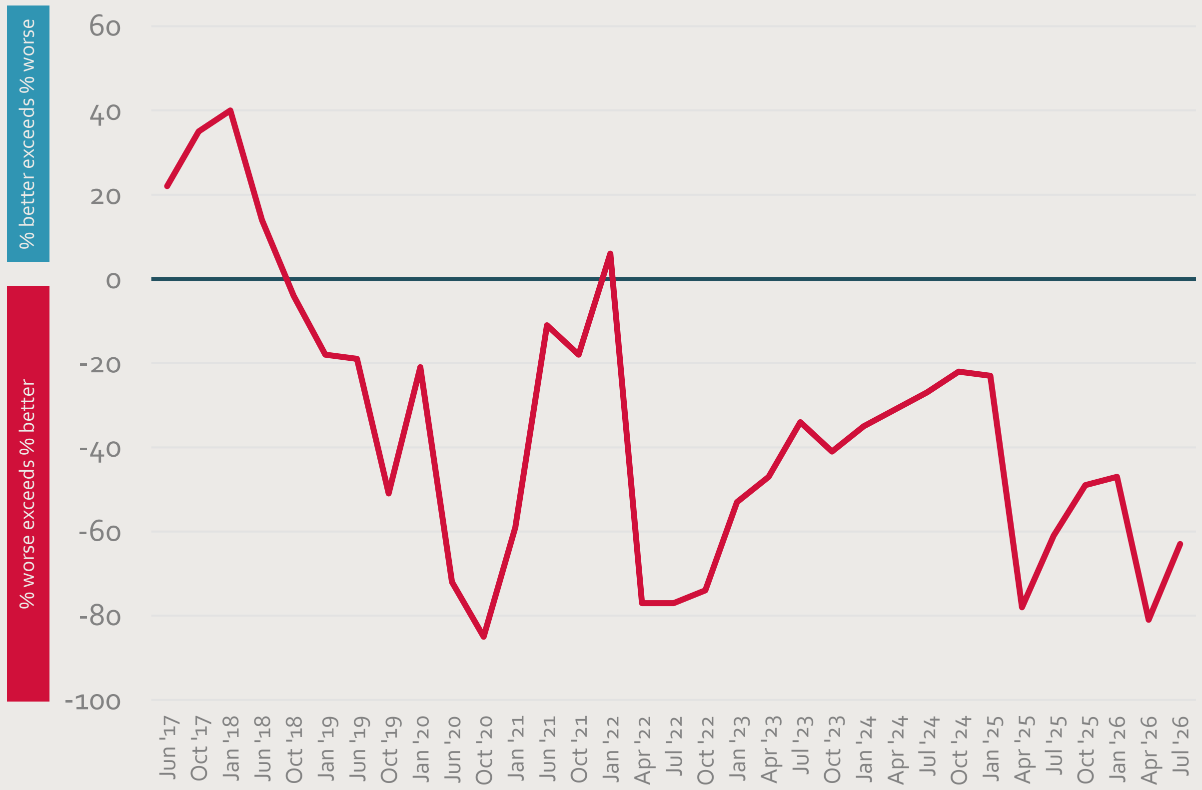
July 2026 shows a modest improvement following the sharp deterioration recorded in April. Concerns around fuel prices and the wider economic outlook have eased somewhat, helping sentiment recover from one of its weakest points in recent years. However, consumers remain deeply concerned about the cost of living, the affordability of housing and pressure on household finances.

The result is a public mood that is less anxious than it was three months ago, but still far from optimistic.

Consumer Mood is back from the brink, but confidence in the outlook for the Irish economy remains weak

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

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



8% expect the economy to get better

versus

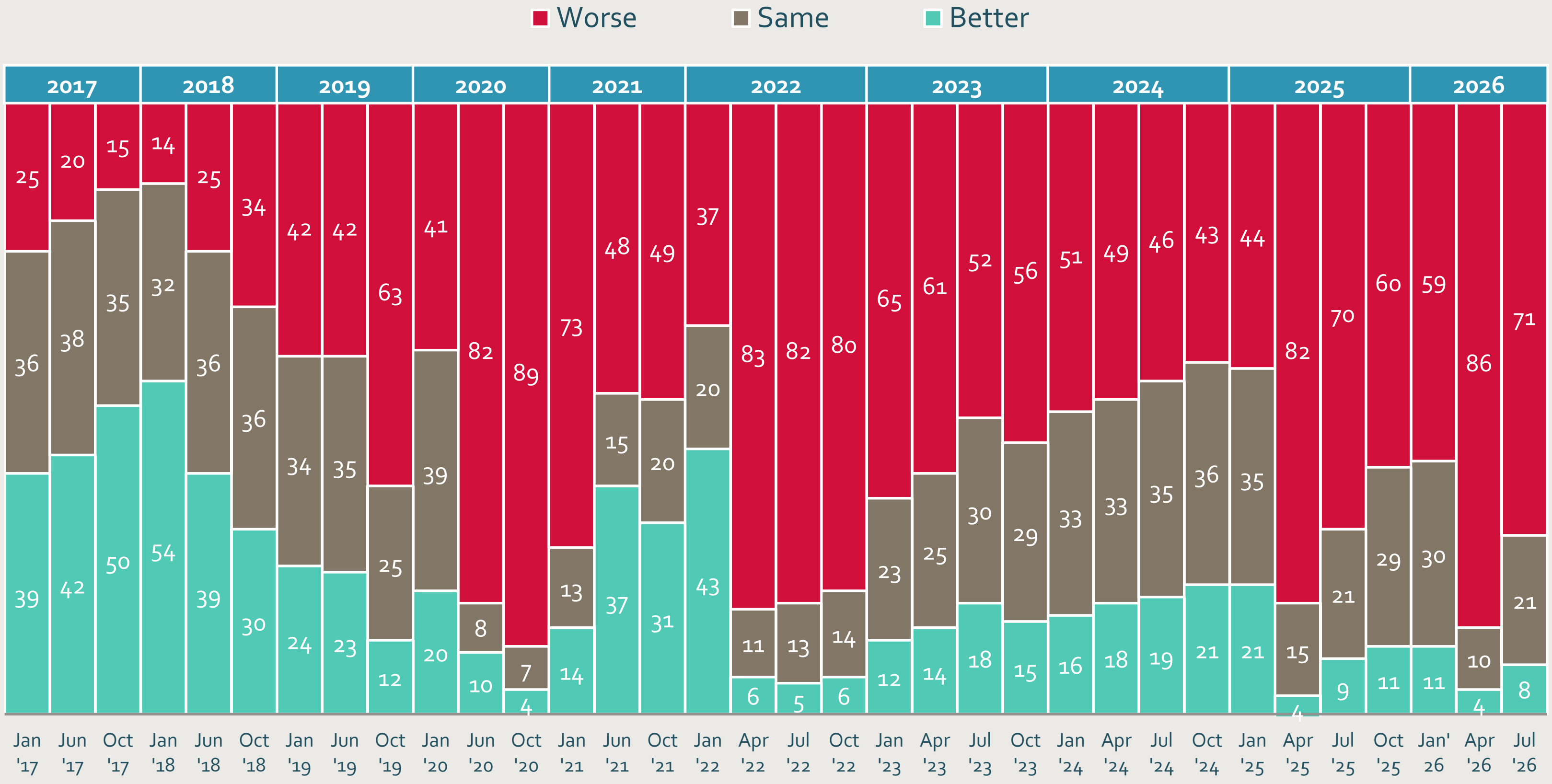
71% expect the economy to get worse

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+

Economic pessimism has eased somewhat since April, with more consumers expecting the economy to hold steady

How do you think the Irish economy will fare in the next six months? (2017 to 2026)

% worse / better / stay the same



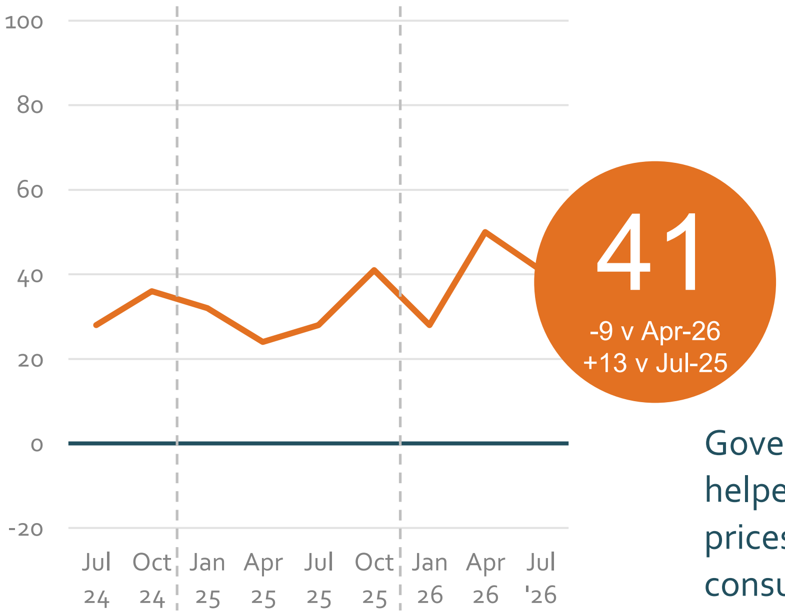
Consumers appear to have stepped back from the worst-case expectations seen in April, but confidence has not returned. Fewer now expect a sharp deterioration in economic conditions, yet ongoing concerns about international instability and domestic cost pressures continue to limit optimism about the months ahead.

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Government supports help ease fuel concerns

Expectations for expenditure on motor fuel over the next 6 months

% increase LESS % decrease



57% expect to spend more on motor fuel

versus

16% expect to spend less on motor fuel

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

Government intervention has helped temper concerns around fuel prices since April. However, consumers remain wary of future increases, particularly as support measures are viewed as temporary and uncertainty persists around global energy markets.

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Excludes not applicable

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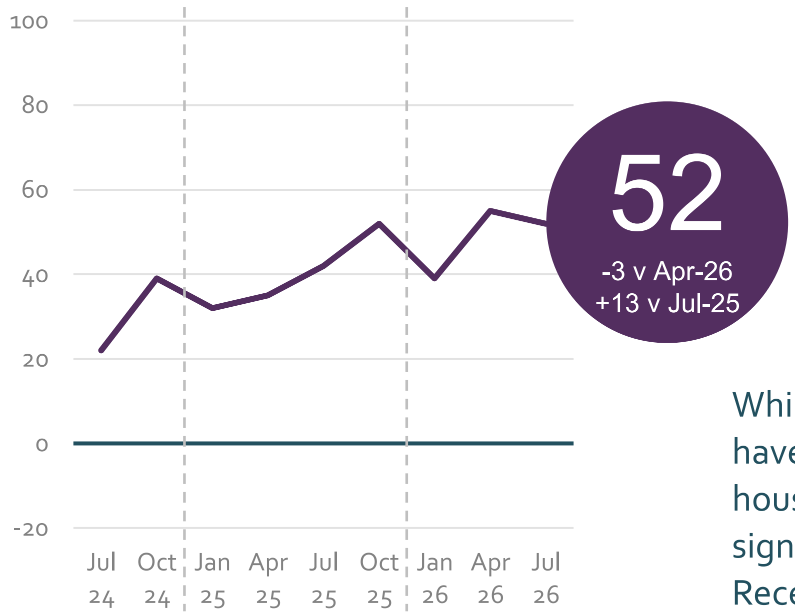
Concerns over household energy bills continue to impact sentiment

Expectations for expenditure on household energy bills over the next 6 months
% increase LESS % decrease



65% expect to spend more on energy bills

versus

13% expect to spend less on energy bills

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

While concerns around fuel costs have eased somewhat since April, household energy bills remain a significant source of anxiety. Recent price increases announced by energy providers have reinforced expectations that pressure on household budgets will persist into the latter half of the year.

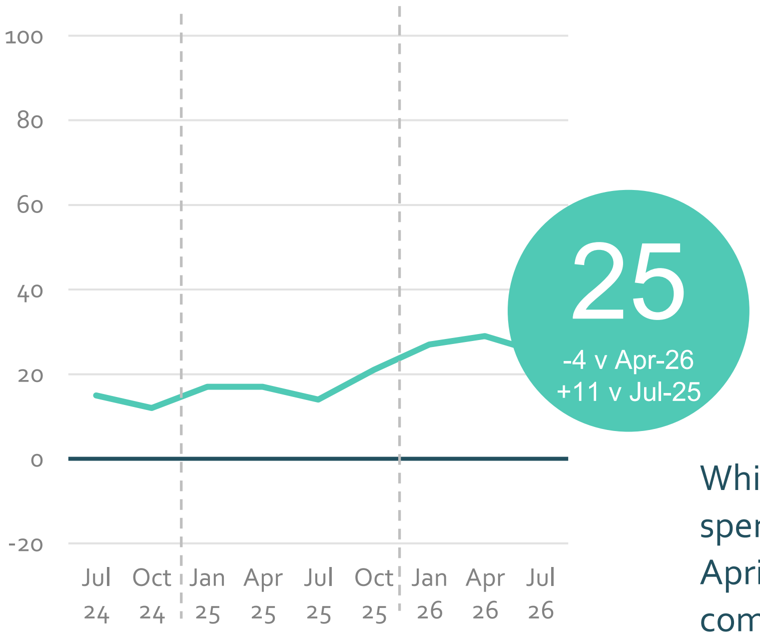
Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Excludes not applicable

Grocery inflation fears ease slightly but increased spend still expected

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

46% expect to spend more on groceries

versus

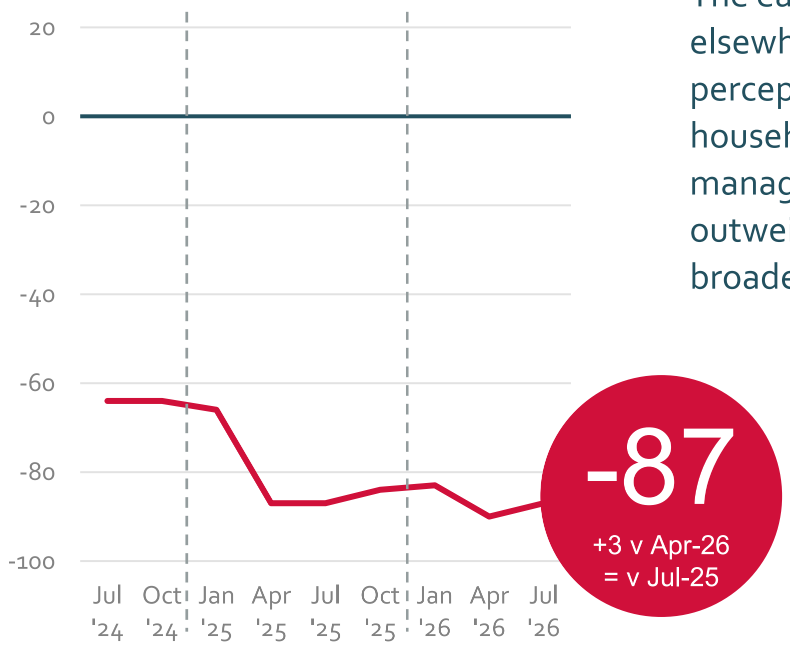
22% expect to spend less on groceries

While expectations of future grocery spending have eased slightly since April, concerns remain elevated compared to last year. With food shopping one of the most frequent household expenses, continued price increases at the checkout remain a constant reminder of wider cost-of-living pressures.

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Cost-of-living pressures remain acute, showing very little improvement

Outlook for the cost-of-living over the next 6 months
% get better LESS % get worse



The easing in consumer mood seen elsewhere has yet to translate into perceptions of affordability. For many households, the day-to-day reality of managing rising costs continues to outweigh any improvement in the broader economic outlook.

2% expect cost-of-living to get better

versus

89% 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

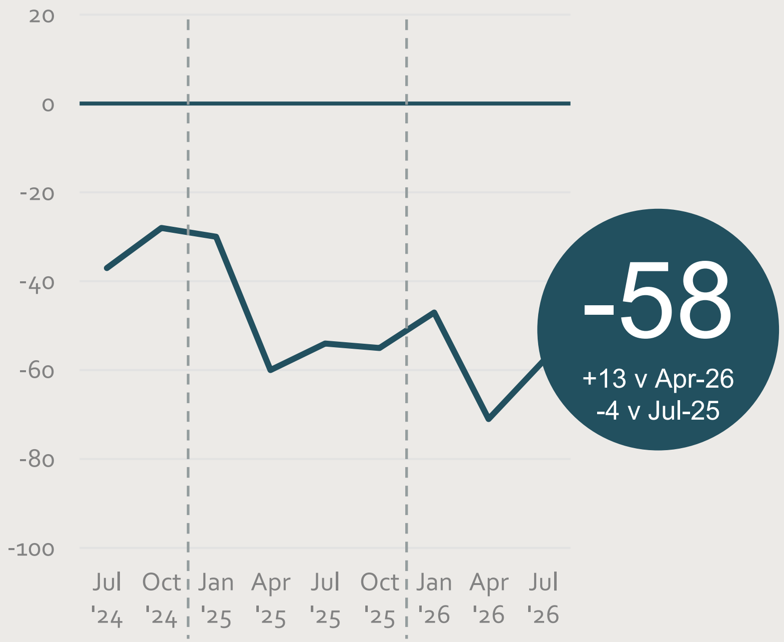
Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Disposable income outlook improves, but households still expect a squeeze

Expectations for disposable income have recovered from April's low point, reflecting slightly lower concern around fuel, grocery and household energy costs. However, most consumers still expect to have less money left over after meeting essential expenses, suggesting that financial pressures will continue to constrain spending decisions over the months ahead.

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

% get better LESS % get worse



7% expect discretionary disposable income to get better

versus

65% expect discretionary disposable income 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

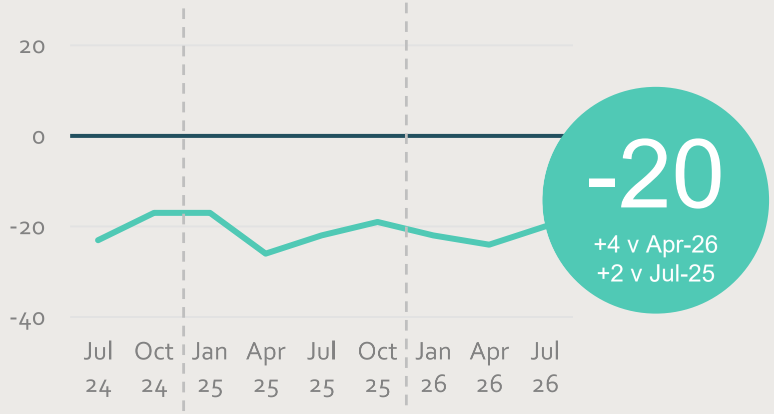
Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Consumers remain cautious on discretionary spending

While discretionary spending expectations have improved since April, households remain cautious and selective about where they choose to spend their money.

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

Consumer goods and services
(hairdressers / clothes / mobile phones / gaming)

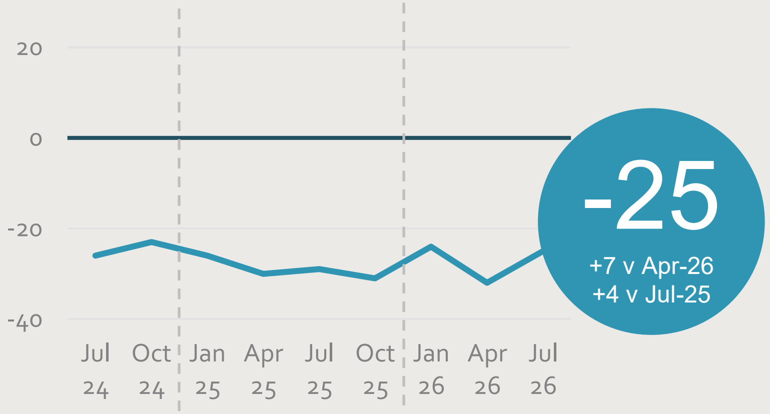


20% expect to spend more on consumer goods and services

versus

40% expect to spend less on consumer goods and services

Out-of-home entertainment
(eating / drinking / socialising)

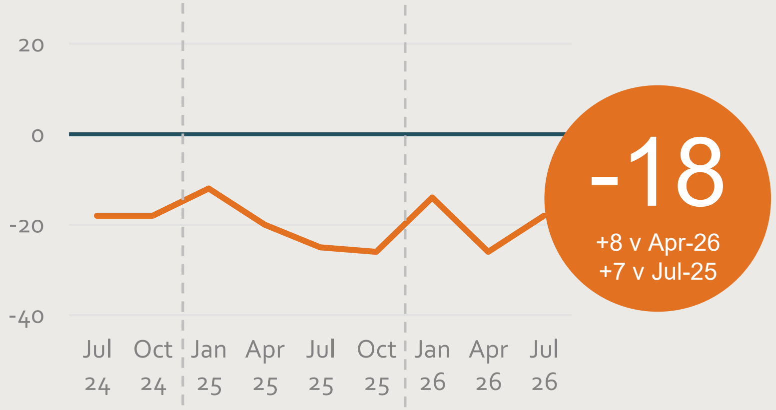


21% expect to spend more on out-of-home entertainment

versus

46% expect to spend less on out-of-home entertainment

Holidays and short breaks



21% expect to spend more on holidays and shorts breaks

versus

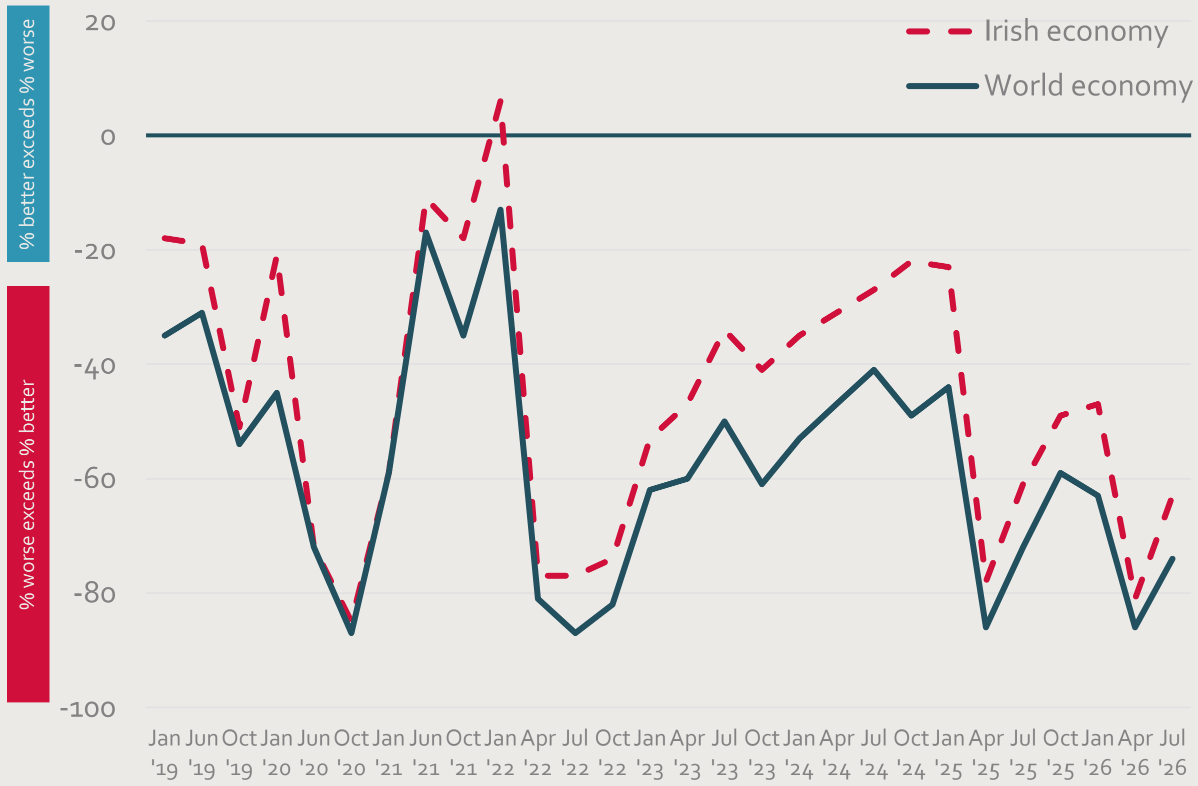
40% expect to spend less on holidays and short breaks

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

While concerns about the global economy have eased somewhat since April, consumers continue to look nervously at an uncertain world

Outlook for the world economy (2019 to 2026)

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



-74

+12 v Apr-26
-2 v Jul-25

5% expect the world economy to get better

versus

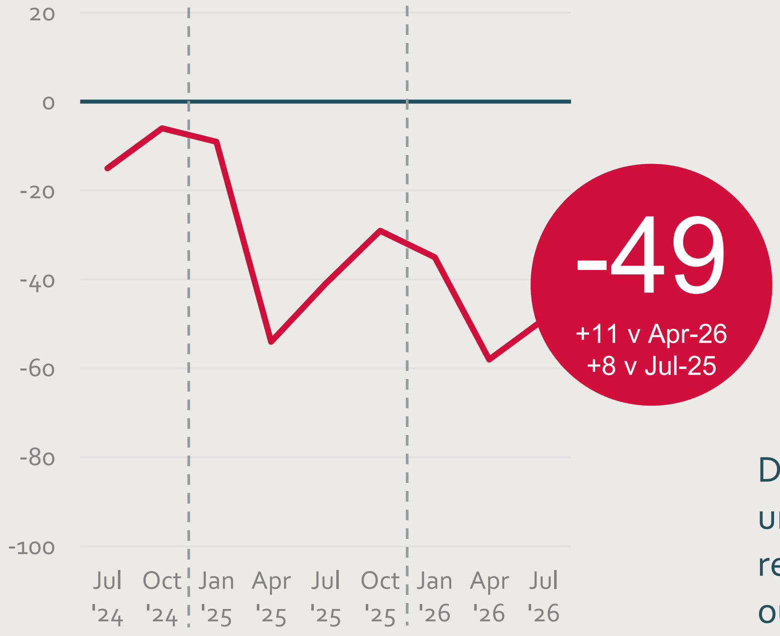
79% expect the world economy to get worse

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+

Employment concerns have eased, but confidence in the jobs market remains weak

Outlook for employment, the ability to get and move jobs 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

7% expect employment to get better

versus

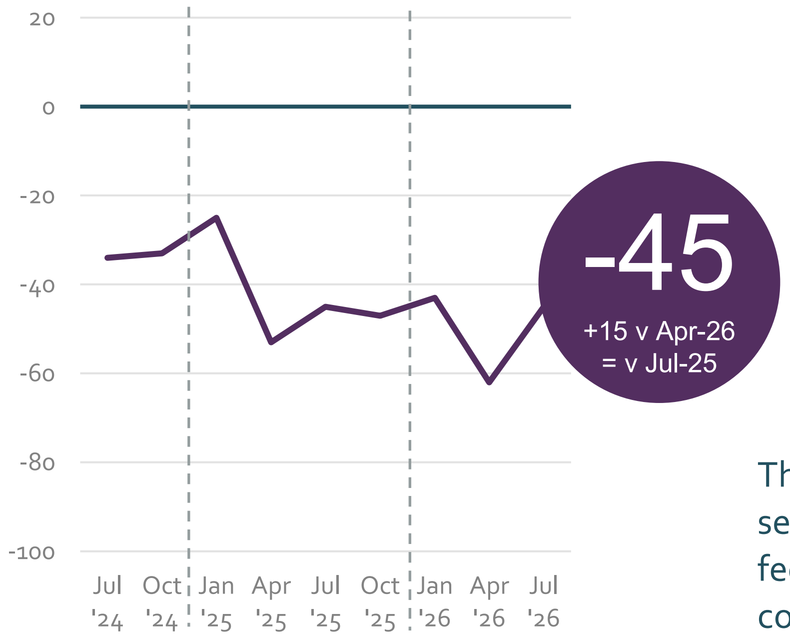
56% expect employment to get worse

Despite relatively low unemployment, consumers remain cautious about the outlook for jobs. Recent high-profile redundancies and broader economic uncertainty are reinforcing concerns about employment prospects.

Own financial wellbeing recovers to pre-April levels but remains fragile

Outlook for your own financial wellbeing 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

9% expect their own financial wellbeing to get better

versus

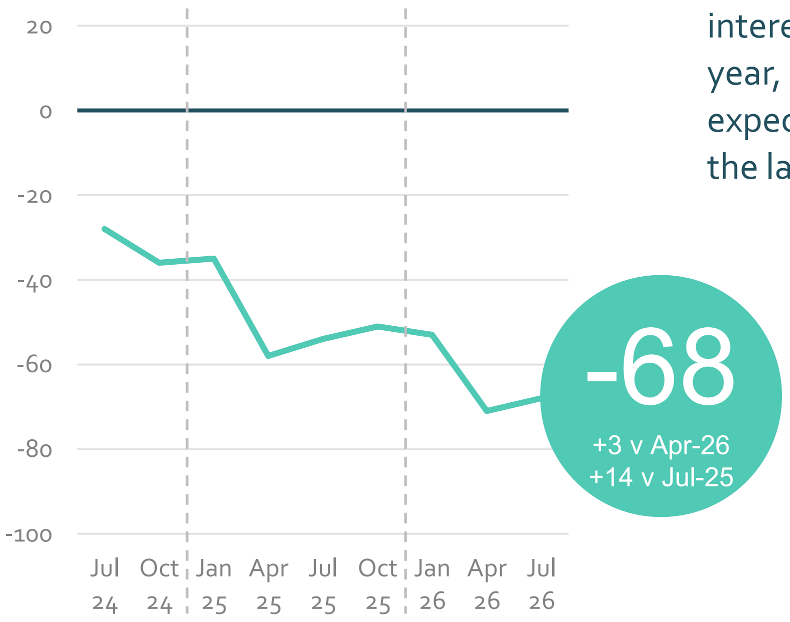
54% expect their own financial wellbeing to get worse

The recovery in personal financial sentiment suggests consumers are feeling some relief from the concerns that dominated April. Nevertheless, expectations remain firmly negative, highlighting the ongoing pressure many households continue to feel.

Cost of borrowing remains a sore spot for consumers

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

% get better LESS % get worse



The ECB announced further interest rate hikes in June this year, as well as setting expectations for further rises in the latter half of this year.

2% expect the cost of borrowing to get better

versus

70% 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

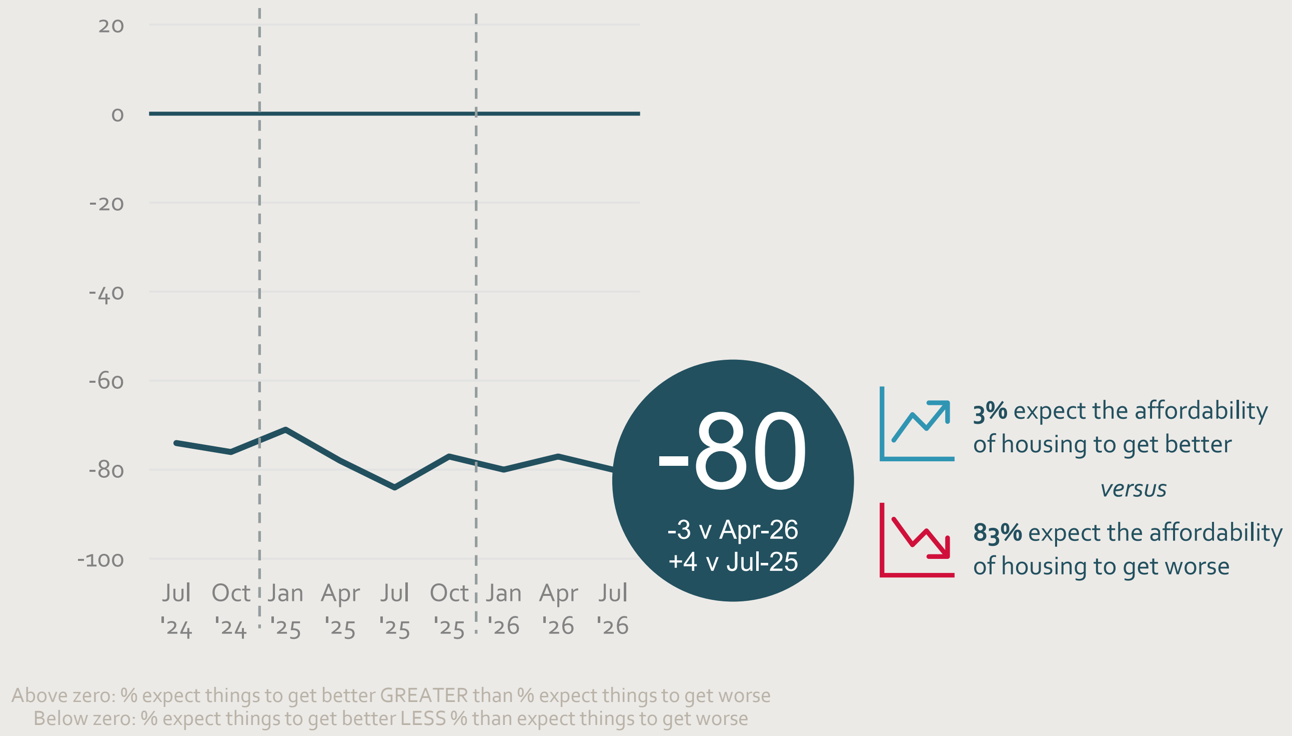
Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

Affordability of housing persists as the primary issue for consumers with no improvement in sight

With new projections suggesting national property prices will increase 5% over the next 12 months, consumers are struggling to see a way forward with more affordable housing, despite the increasing number of houses being built. Housing continues to be the pinch point for consumers with improvements to other metrics having little effect on the outlook of 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

Base: all adults living in ROI aged 18+

The mood has improved, but optimism remains elusive. Consumers are less anxious than they were in April, yet ongoing concerns about rising costs, household finances and the broader economic outlook continue to shape behaviour and spending intentions.

Consumer confidence has stabilised, but households remain on edge

Crisis fears have eased, but pessimism remains

The sharp deterioration seen in April has softened, with consumers feeling less alarmed about the immediate outlook. However, expectations for both the Irish and global economies remain overwhelmingly negative.

Fuel prices continue to cast a long shadow

While concerns around motor fuel costs have eased from April's peak, consumers still expect higher fuel prices ahead. Many also believe increased transport and energy costs will continue to feed through into prices across the wider economy (e.g. grocery, energy).

Cost-of-living pressures remain entrenched

Despite some improvement in sentiment, expectations around the cost of living remain virtually unchanged. Households continue to feel squeezed and see little evidence that everyday expenses will become more manageable.

Personal finances are improving, but only marginally

Consumers are somewhat less negative about their own financial wellbeing and disposable income than they were in April. However, most still expect their finances to deteriorate over the coming months.

Brands need to plan for caution to persist, not for confidence to return

Employment concerns have not disappeared

While fears around jobs have eased, recent high-profile redundancies and global economic uncertainty are reinforcing a sense of vulnerability, even against a backdrop of relatively low unemployment.

Housing remains Ireland's biggest structural concern

Housing affordability continues to be one of the most pessimistic indicators measured. Consumers see little prospect of meaningful improvement despite continued policy focus and increasing housing supply.

Government supports are not yet reassuring consumers

Measures introduced to offset rising costs have helped reduce immediate anxiety, but many consumers view them as temporary. While indications are that Budget 2027 will put money back into peoples' pockets, this has yet to translate into greater optimism.

Consumers are moving from anxiety to uncertainty

The dominant mood is no longer one of acute concern, but neither is it one of confidence. Consumers appear to be settling into a period of cautious uncertainty, remaining highly sensitive to developments in prices, household costs and the international environment.

What does this all mean for brands?

Key takeouts	Implications
1 Consumers are feeling better, but confidence remains elusive	Don't assume that improvements in the economic outlook will immediately translate into stronger demand. Behaviour is likely to lag sentiment.
2 Is caution becoming the new normal?	Businesses should plan for a consumer who remains deliberate and selective, even as immediate pressures ease. Flexibility, reassurance and consistency matter more than ever.
3 Consumers are looking for certainty in an uncertain world	Clear pricing, transparent communications and dependable delivery can be powerful differentiators when people feel unsettled about the future.
4 Trust and reputation are becoming competitive advantages	In times of uncertainty, consumers gravitate towards brands and organisations they believe will do the right thing. Strong reputations help retain customers, support pricing power and build resilience.

METHODOLOGY & ABOUT RED C

Methodology

- The research is based on a nationally representative sample of n=1,008 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 16th and 21st July 2026.

RED C Group conduct research worldwide from Dublin & London

REDC

Ireland

Our founding agency is the largest independent market research agency in the Ireland, specializing in Finance, Travel & Tourism, Entertainment, FMCG, Media and Polling.

REDC

United Kingdom

Our fast-growing UK agency, which encompasses the prior Relish brand, specialises in media, entertainment, FMCG, Places & Spaces, Utilities and Finance.

WIN Worldwide Independent Network Of Market Research

Worldwide Independent Network

Partner agencies in 45 markets across the globe help us design international projects with local market insights

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

Our clients value our collaborative, flexible approach to partnership. We pride ourselves on being easy to work with and we're committed to building long term partnerships with our clients

We are experts in understanding the brand ecosystem

Path to purchase & price modelling

Segmentation & bringing customers ‘to life’

Developing, testing & refining comms strategy

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

SEE MORE CLEARLY

For more information please contact:

geoff.tucker@redcresearch.ie
aoife.woods@redcresearch.ie

REDCRESEARCH.COM

RED C RESEARCH & MARKETING LTD
DUBLIN: IMI Campus, Sandyford Rd, Sandyford, Dublin, D16 X8C3
LONDON: 5.01 The Place, 175 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7AA