Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH: ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS AROUND FREEZING BREAD

CIRCULAR ECONOMY BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS



Environmental Protection Agency

The EPA is responsible for protecting and improving the environment as a valuable asset for the people of Ireland. We are committed to protecting people and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation and pollution.

The work of the EPA can be divided into three main areas:

- **Regulation:** Implementing regulation and environmental compliance systems to deliver good environmental outcomes and target those who don't comply.
- **Knowledge:** Providing high-quality, targeted and timely environmental data, information and assessment to inform decision making.
- **Advocacy:** Working with others to advocate for a clean, productive and well-protected environment and for sustainable environmental practices.

Our responsibilities include:

LICENSING

- Large-scale industrial waste and petrol storage activities;
- Urban wastewater discharges;
- The contained use and controlled release of genetically modified organisms;
- Sources of ionising radiation;
- Greenhouse gas emissions from industry and aviation through the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

- Audit and inspection of EPA-licensed facilities;
- Drive the implementation of best practice in regulated activities and facilities;
- Oversee local authority responsibilities for environmental protection;
- Regulate the quality of public drinking water and enforce urban wastewater discharge authorisations;
- Assess and report on public and private drinking water quality;
- Coordinate a network of public service organisations to support action against environmental crime;
- Prosecute those who flout environmental law and damage the environment.

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND CHEMICALS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

- Implement and enforce waste regulations including national enforcement issues;
- Prepare and publish national waste statistics and the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan;
- Develop and implement the National Waste Prevention Programme;
- Implement and report on legislation on the control of chemicals in the environment.

WATER MANAGEMENT

- Engage with national and regional governance and operational structures to implement the Water Framework Directive;
- Monitor, assess and report on the quality of rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters, bathing waters and groundwaters, and measurement of water levels and river flows.

CLIMATE SCIENCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- Publish Ireland's greenhouse gas emission inventories and projections;
- Provide the Secretariat to the Climate Change Advisory Council and support to the National Dialogue on Climate Action;
- Support National, EU and UN climate science and policy development activities.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING & ASSESSMENT

- Design and implement national environmental monitoring systems: technology, data management, analysis and forecasting;
- Produce the State of Ireland's Environment and Indicator Reports;
- Monitor air quality and implement the EU Clean Air for Europe Directive, the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution and the National Emissions Ceiling Directive;
- Oversee the implementation of the Environmental Noise Directive;
- Assess the impact of proposed plans and programmes on the Irish environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Coordinate and fund national environmental research activity to identify pressures, inform policy and provide solutions;
- Collaborate with national and EU environmental research activity.

RADIOLOGICAL PROTECTION

- Monitor radiation levels and assess public exposure to ionising radiation and electromagnetic fields;
- Assist in developing national plans for emergencies arising from nuclear accidents;
- Monitor developments abroad relating to nuclear installations and radiological safety;
- Provide, or oversee the provision of, specialist radiation protection services.

GUIDANCE, AWARENESS RAISING, AND ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

- Provide independent evidence-based reporting, advice and guidance to government, industry and the public on environmental and radiological protection topics;
- Promote the link between health and wellbeing, the economy and a clean environment;
- Promote environmental awareness including supporting behaviours for resource efficiency and climate transition;
- Promote radon testing in homes and workplaces and encourage remediation where necessary.

PARTNERSHIP AND NETWORKING

- Work with international and national agencies, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, representative bodies and government departments to deliver environmental and radiological protection, research coordination and science-based decision making.

MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE EPA

The EPA is managed by a full-time Board, consisting of a Director General and five Directors. The work is carried out across five Offices:

- Office of Environmental Sustainability
- Office of Environmental Enforcement
- Office of Evidence and Assessment
- Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring
- Office of Communications and Corporate Services

The EPA is assisted by advisory committees who meet regularly to discuss issues of concern and provide advice to the Board.

Quantitative Research:
Attitudes and Behaviours around Freezing Bread

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Contents

Foreword	4
Research Approach	5
Methodology	6
Freezing Bread Frequency	7
Buying Bread Products	9
Freezing Wraps	9
Eating or Discarding Frozen Bread	10
Reasons for not Freezing Bread	13
Key Learnings	15



Foreword

The EPA's Circular Economy Behavioural Insights Research linked here generates valuable evidence on priority materials and sectors for the circular economy including textiles, food, reuse & repair, plastics, and construction. The research findings and insights inform knowledge gaps, policy development and implementation, and inform stakeholders, national awareness campaigns and intervention development.

The EPA's Stop Food Waste programme is the national food waste prevention campaign, providing guidance and resources to help people adopt good food management behaviours and reduce their food waste. National Stop Food Waste Day, held annually on 1 March, promotes positive food management behaviours in households across the country.

The 2026 National Stop Food Waste Campaign focused on one of the most wasted foods, bread. This nationally representative survey of 1,001 adults aged 16+ was conducted in January 2026, working with Ipsos B&A, to gain insight into the reasons behind bread waste, identify opportunities to help prevent it and to inform campaign messaging.



Research Approach

The EPA's National Surveys on Food Waste Attitudes and Behaviours linked here have identified that bread is one of the foods wasted the most at home.

Informed by these survey insights, the EPA contracted Ipsos B&A to carry out this quantitative research to gain an increased understanding of attitudes and behaviours around freezing bread in Ireland. This includes the extent to which Irish adults are engaging in these behaviours and their reasons for doing so. Additionally, an intervention for freezing wraps was also tested.

48%

of Irish adults say that bread is one of the foods thrown-out most often in their household.

In Irish households, around

24%

of the bread bought ends up uneaten and thrown away.

Source: EPA National Food Waste Survey 2024



Methodology

A nationally representative sample of 1,001 adults aged 16+ years. Quota controlled in terms of gender, age, socio-economic status, region and area. Weighted to population estimates. Fieldwork was conducted in January 2026.

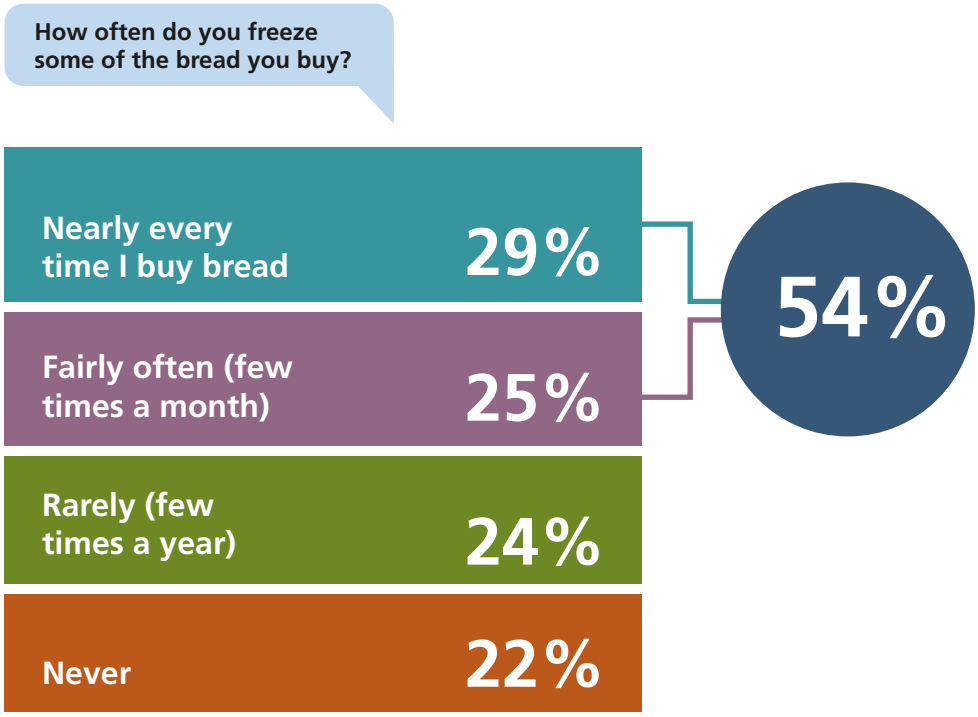
Sample Profile: Socio-demographics

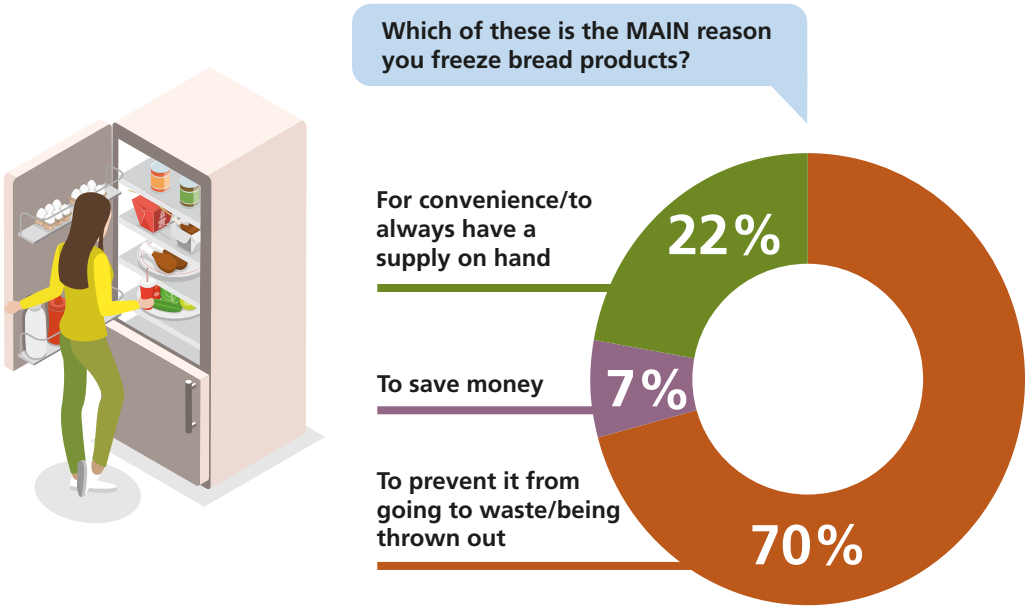
		N – 1,001
Gender	Male	49%
	Female	51%
Age	16-34 years	29%
	35-54 years	37%
	55+ years	34%

		N – 1,001
Social Class	ABC1	53%
	C2DE	47%
Region	Dublin	29%
	Rest of Leinster	27%
	Munster	27%
	Conn/Ulster	18%

Freezing Bread Frequency

Over half of adults freeze bread frequently, with the primary motivation being to prevent it from going to waste.





Q.1 Thinking about the bread you buy, how often do you freeze at least some of it to use later? Q.3b And which of these is the MAIN reason you freeze bread products?

Base: All Adults N - 1001

Freezing Bread Frequency

Looking in more detail at the 54% of people who regularly freeze bread, this is most common among rural residents and those living in Leinster (excluding Dublin), with marginally higher rates observed among women and those aged 55 and over.

	"Thinking about the bread you buy, how often do you freeze at least some of it to use later?"	Base:	Fairly Often + Nearly every time I buy Bread
	Total	**1,001**	**54%**
Gender	Male	494	52%
	Female	507	56%
Age	16-34	250	52%
	35-54	381	53%
	55+	370	56%
Social Class	ABC1F	544	53%
	C2DE	457	55%
Region	Dublin	288	51%
	Outside Dublin	713	55%
	Leinster	249	59%
	Munster	285	56%
	Conn/Ulster	179	48%
Area	Urban	716	52%
	Rural	285	58%

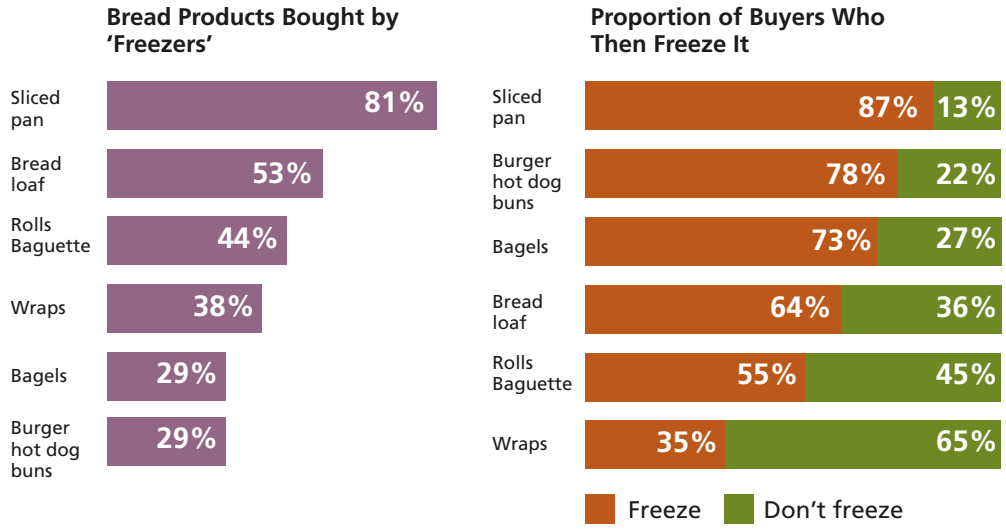
☐ Statistically higher

Q.1 Thinking about the bread you buy, how often do you freeze at least some of it to use later?
Base: All Adults N - 1001



Buying Bread Products

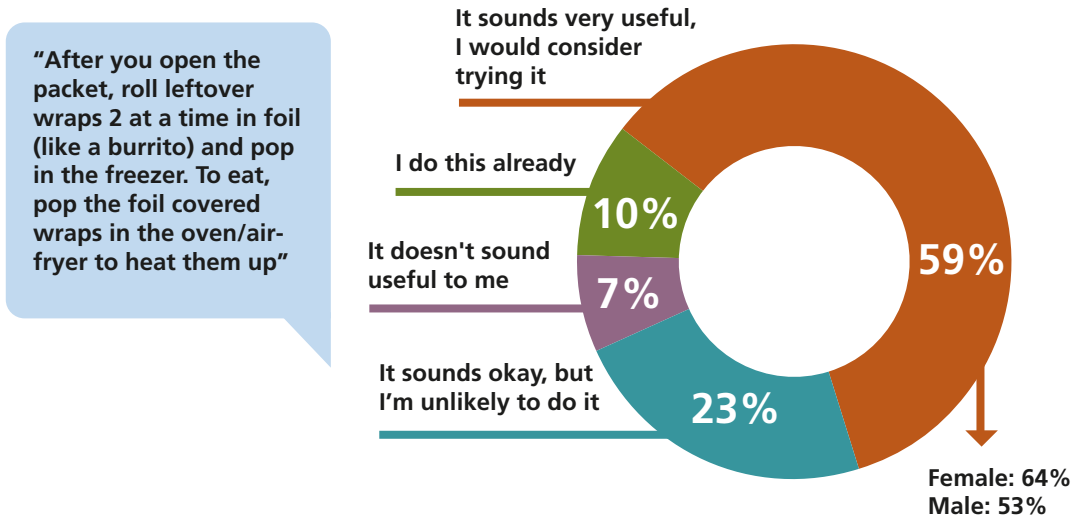
Among those who freeze bread, sliced pan is the most purchased item and the most likely to be frozen. Even among people who freeze bread, there is a big gap where wraps are concerned: they are rarely frozen.



Q2.a Which of the following bread products do you typically buy?
Q2.b For each that you buy please indicate if you freeze any of it to eat it later
Base: All Adults who regularly freeze bread N - 526

Freezing Wraps

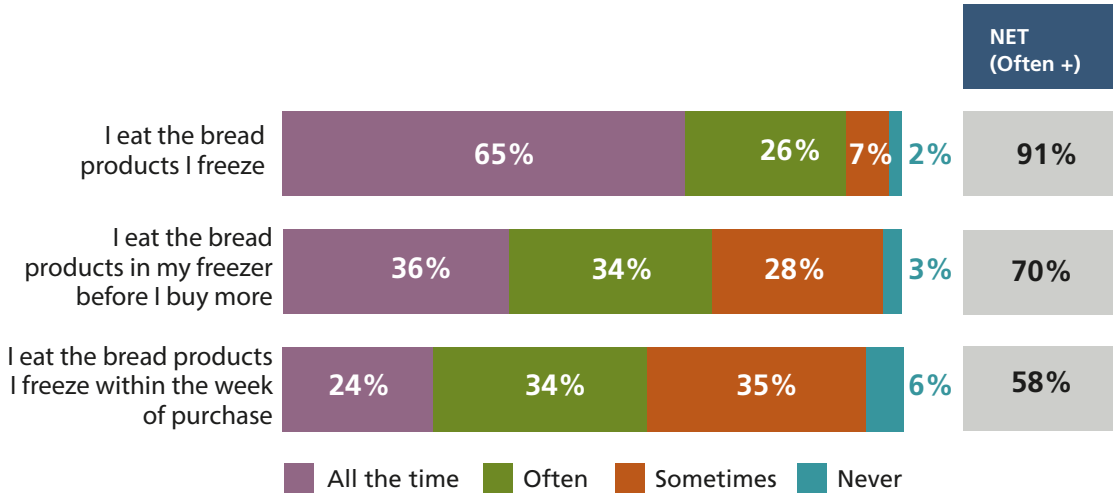
A tip for freezing wraps was suggested to people who said they bought them. A majority find the freezing tip useful and would be willing to try it, with receptiveness especially high among women.



Q7. You say you buy wraps. What do you think about the following tip for freezing wraps: Base: Buy Wraps N 206

Eating or Discarding Frozen Bread

Nine in ten eat the bread they freeze. However, they are less likely to consume it before buying more. They are also less likely to eat what they freeze within the first week after purchase.



Q4. In regard to eating the bread products you have frozen to eat later, how often do you do each of the following?
Base: All who freeze bread regularly N - 526



Eating or Discarding Frozen Bread

Among those who regularly freeze bread, people aged 55 and over are more likely to eat these products 'all the time', and are less concerned with consuming them within a week. Younger adults (16 to 34) are less likely to eat frozen bread products 'all the time' but are more likely to use it within a week.

	"In regard to eating the bread products you have frozen to eat later, how often do you do each of the following?"	Answered: All the time Base:	I eat the bread products I freeze	I eat the bread products I freeze within the week of purchase	I eat the bread products in my freezer before I buy more
	Total	**526**	**65%**	**24%**	**36%**
Gender	Male	**248**	60%	26%	37%
	Female	**278**	69%	23%	35%
Age	16-34	**131**	56%	**37%**	42%
	35-54	**193**	66%	22%	31%
	55+	**202**	72%	**17%**	36%
Social Class	ABC1F	**280**	63%	24%	31%
	C2DE	**246**	68%	25%	42%
Region	Dublin	**145**	66%	28%	36%
	Outside Dublin	**381**	65%	23%	36%
	Leinster	**141**	65%	23%	31%
	Munster	**155**	65%	23%	40%
	Conn/Ulster	**85**	65%	22%	39%
Area	Urban	**361**	65%	27%	39%
	Rural	**165**	66%	21%	31%

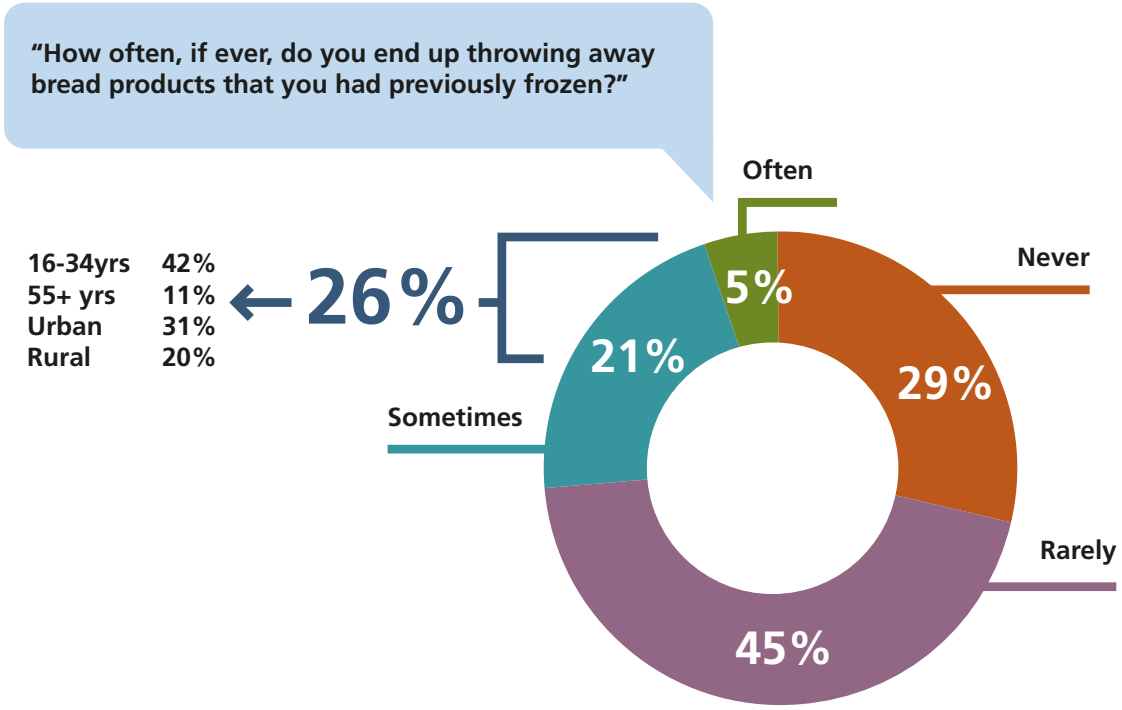
Statistically higher Statistically lower

Q4. In regard to eating the bread products you have frozen to eat later, how often do you do each of the following?
Base: All who freeze bread regularly N - 526



Eating or Discarding Frozen Bread

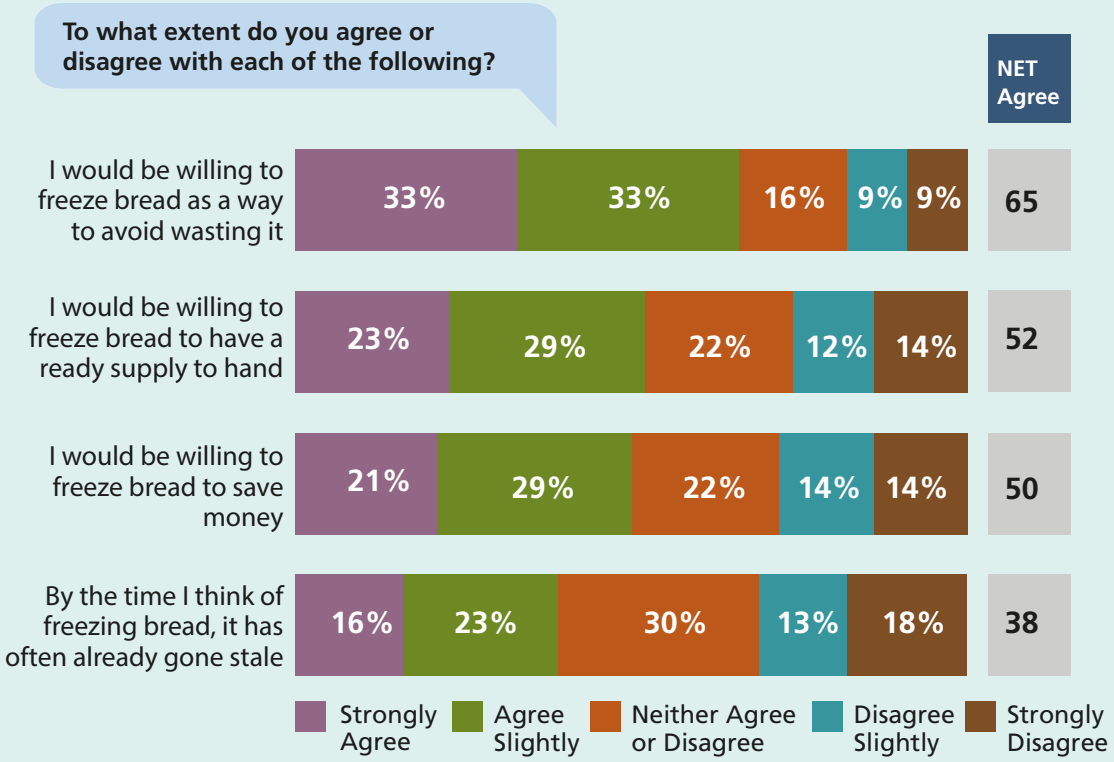
Despite freezing being a waste prevention measure, roughly one in four who freeze bread admit to throwing it away sometimes or often. This rises significantly to 42% among young adults (16-34) signifying that this age group is more likely to use the freezer as another stop on the bread's journey to be discarded.



Q5. How often, if ever, do you end up throwing away bread products that you had previously frozen?
Base: Adults who freeze bread regularly N - 526

Reasons for not Freezing Bread

A majority of those who don't freeze bread are open to doing it. While freezing bread as a way to avoid wasting it was the main reason reported, having an available supply and saving money are also reasons that 'non-freezers' might consider freezing bread in the future.



Q.6 You mentioned you don't regularly freeze bread products to eat later. Can you indicate to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Base: All who don't regularly freeze bread N - 475

Reasons for not Freezing Bread

The prospect of having an available supply is significantly more appealing to women.

	"You mentioned you don't regularly freeze bread products to eat later. Can you indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following?"	Net Agree	I would be willing to freeze bread as a way to avoid wasting it	I would be willing to freeze bread to have a ready supply to hand	I would be willing to freeze bread to save money	By the time I think of freezing bread, it has often already gone stale
	Total	475	65%	52%	50%	38%
Gender	Male	246	61%	**44%**	47%	36%
	Female	229	70%	**60%**	54%	41%
Age	16-34	119	65%	54%	53%	44%
	35-54	188	68%	53%	54%	36%
	55+	168	63%	49%	43%	35%
Social Class	ABC1F	264	71%	54%	55%	39%
	C2DE	211	59%	50%	46%	38%
Region	Dublin	143	60%	47%	50%	40%
	Outside Dublin	332	68%	54%	51%	38%
Area	Urban	355	63%	48%	48%	40%
	Rural	120	70%	61%	55%	35%

Statistically higher Statistically lower

Q.6 You mentioned you don't regularly freeze bread products to eat later. Can you indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following?
Base: All those who don't regularly freeze bread N - 475



Key Learnings

This survey provides a deeper understanding of the behaviours behind wasting bread. These findings offer valuable insights into the attitudes, habits and circumstances that drive bread waste in households and identify opportunities to support more sustainable food management practices. These findings will help inform EPA food waste prevention programmes such as Stop Food Waste campaigns, resources and behavioural interventions aimed at reducing avoidable household food waste.

Wasting bread is a recognised issue with previous EPA research showing nearly half of Irish households see it as a top wasted food. As a result, freezing has become a common solution. Over half of all adults (54%) freeze bread frequently, with the main reason being to prevent waste.

The act of freezing does not always guarantee consumption, especially among younger adults. While about one in four (26%) who freeze bread still discard it, this figure rises dramatically to 42% for 16-34-year-olds. This insight suggests that for this younger demographic, the freezer is sometimes used as just another stop before the bin.

Freezing habits differ significantly by bread type. While sliced pan is commonly frozen (87% of people say they do this), wraps are not, despite being a reasonably popular purchase. The majority of wrap consumers (59%) are receptive to the idea of freezing them, showing a notable gap between current behaviour and potential behaviour.

The 46% of adults who don't regularly freeze bread represent a large and receptive audience. A majority (65%) are willing to start freezing to avoid waste, and their motivations vary. The prospect of having a ready supply of bread, for instance, is a significantly stronger driver for women (60%) than for males (44%).

An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Tá an GCC freagrach as an gcomhshaol a chosaint agus a fheabhsú, mar shócmhainn luachmhar do mhuintir na hÉireann. Táimid tiomanta do dhaoine agus don chomhshaol a chosaint ar thionchar díobhálach na radaíochta agus an truaillithe.

Is féidir obair na Gníomhaireachta a roinnt ina trí phríomhréimse:

- Rialáil: Rialáil agus córais chomhlíonta comhshaoil éifeachtacha a chur i bhfeidhm, chun dea-thorthaí comhshaoil a bhaint amach agus díriú orthu siúd nach mbíonn ag cloí leo.
- Eolas: Sonraí, eolas agus measúnú ardchaighdeáin, spriocdhírithe agus tráthúil a chur ar fáil i leith an chomhshaoil chun bonn eolais a chur faoin gcinnteoireacht.
- Abhcóideacht: Ag obair le daoine eile ar son timpeallachta glaine, táirgiúla agus dea-chosanta agus ar son cleachtas inbhuanaithe i dtaobh an chomhshaoil.

I measc ár gcuid freagrachtaí tá:

CEADÚNÚ

- Gníomhaíochtaí tionscail, dramhaíola agus stórála peitril ar scála mór;
- Sceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh;
- Úsáid shrianta agus scaoileadh rialaithe Orgánach Géinmhodhnaithe;
- Foinsí radaíochta ianúcháin;
- Astaíochtaí gás ceaptha teasa ó thionscal agus ón eitlíocht trí Scéim an AE um Thrádáil Astaíochtaí.

FORFHEIDHMIÚ NÁISIÚNTA I LEITH CÚRSAÍ COMHSHAOIL

- Iniúchadh agus cigireacht ar shaoráidí a bhfuil ceadúnas acu ón GCC;
- Cur i bhfeidhm an dea-chleachtais a stiúradh i ngníomhaíochtaí agus i saoráidí rialáilte;
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar fhreagrachtaí an údaráis áitiúil as cosaint an chomhshaoil;
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí a rialáil agus údaruithe um sceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh a fhorfheidhmiú
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí agus phríobháidigh a mheasúnú agus tuairisciú air;
- Comhordú a dhéanamh ar líonra d'eagraíochtaí seirbhíse poiblí chun tacú le gníomhú i gcoinne coireachta comhshaoil;
- An dlí a chur orthu siúd a bhriseann dlí an chomhshaoil agus a dhéanann dochar don chomhshaol.

BAINISTÍOCHT DRAMHAÍOLA AGUS CEIMICEÁIN SA CHOMHSHAOL

- Rialacháin dramhaíola a chur i bhfeidhm agus a fhorfheidhmiú lena n-áirítear saincheisteanna forfheidhmithe náisiúnta;
- Staitisticí dramhaíola náisiúnta a ullmhú agus a fhoilsiú chomh maith leis an bPlean Náisiúnta um Bainistíocht Dramhaíola Guaisí;
- An Clár Náisiúnta um Chosc Dramhaíola a fhorbairt agus a chur i bhfeidhm;
- Reachtaíocht ar rialú ceimiceán sa timpeallacht a chur i bhfeidhm agus tuairisciú ar an reachtaíocht sin.

BAINISTÍOCHT UISCE

- Plé le struchtúir náisiúnta agus réigiúnacha rialachais agus oibriúcháin chun an Chreat-treoir Uisce a chur i bhfeidhm;
- Monatóireacht, measúnú agus tuairisciú a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán aibhneacha, lochanna, uiscí idirchreasa agus cósta, uiscí snámha agus screamhuisce chomh maith le tomhas ar leibhéil uisce agus sreabhadh abhann.

EOLAÍOCHT AERÁIDE & ATHRÚ AERÁIDE

- Fardail agus réamh-mheastacháin a fhoilsiú um astaíochtaí gás ceaptha teasa na hÉireann;
- Rúnaíocht a chur ar fáil don Chomhairle Chomhairleach ar Athrú Aeráide agus tacaíocht a thabhairt don Idirphlé Náisiúnta ar Ghníomhú ar son na hAeráide;
- Tacú le gníomhaíochtaí forbartha Náisiúnta, AE agus NA um Eolaíocht agus Beartas Aeráide.

MONATÓIREACHT AGUS MEASÚNÚ AR AN GCOMHSHAOL

- Córais náisiúnta um monatóireacht an chomhshaoil a cheapadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm: teicneolaíocht, bainistíocht sonraí, anailís agus réamhaisnéisiú;
- Tuairiscí ar Staid Thimpeallacht na hÉireann agus ar Tháscairí a chur ar fáil;
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán an aeir agus Treoir an AE i leith Aeir Ghlain don Eoraip a chur i bhfeidhm chomh maith leis an gCoinbhinsiún ar Aerthruailliú Fadraoin Trasteorann, agus an Treoir i leith na Teorann Náisiúnta Astaíochtaí;
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar chur i bhfeidhm na Treorach i leith Torainn Timpeallachta;
- Measúnú a dhéanamh ar thionchar pleananna agus clár beartaithe ar chomhshaol na hÉireann.

TAIGHDE AGUS FORBAIRT COMHSHAOIL

- Comhordú a dhéanamh ar ghníomhaíochtaí taighde comhshaoil agus iad a mhaoiniú chun brú a aithint, bonn eolais a chur faoin mbeartas agus réitigh a chur ar fáil;
- Comhoibriú le gníomhaíocht náisiúnta agus AE um thaighde comhshaoil.

COSAINT RAIDEOLAÍOCH

- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar leibhéil radaíochta agus nochtadh an phobail do radaíocht ianúcháin agus do réimsí leictreamaighnéadacha a mheas;
- Cabhrú le pleananna náisiúnta a fhorbairt le haghaidh éigeandálaí ag eascairt as taismí núicléacha;
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar fhorbairtí thar lear a bhaineann le saoráidí núicléacha agus leis an tsábháilteacht raideolaíochta;
- Sainseirbhísí um chosaint ar an radaíocht a sholáthar, nó maoirsiú a dhéanamh ar sholáthar na seirbhísí sin.

TREOIR, ARDÚ FEASACHTA AGUS FAISNÉIS INROCHTANA

- Tuairisciú, comhairle agus treoir neamhspleách, fianaise-bhunaithe a chur ar fáil don Rialtas, don tionscal agus don phobal ar ábhair maidir le cosaint comhshaoil agus raideolaíoch;
- An nasc idir sláinte agus folláine, an geilleagar agus timpeallacht ghlan a chur chun cinn;
- Feasacht comhshaoil a chur chun cinn lena n-áirítear tacú le hiompraíocht um éifeachtúlacht acmhainní agus aistriú aeráide;
- Tástáil radóin a chur chun cinn i dtithe agus in ionaid oibre agus feabhsúchán a mholadh áit is gá.

COMHPHÁIRTÍOCHT AGUS LÍONRÚ

Oibriú le gníomhaireachtaí idirnáisiúnta agus náisiúnta, údaráis réigiúnacha agus áitiúla, eagraíochtaí neamhrialtais, comhlachtaí ionadaíocha agus ranna rialtais chun cosaint chomhshaoil agus raideolaíoch a chur ar fáil, chomh maith le taighde, comhordú agus cinnteoireacht bunaithe ar an eolaíocht.

BAINISTÍOCHT AGUS STRUCHTÚR NA GNÍOMHAIREACHTA UM CHAOMHNÚ COMHSHAOIL

Tá an GCC á bainistiú ag Bord lánaimseartha, ar a bhfuil Ard-Stiúrthóir agus cúigear Stiúrthóir. Déantar an obair ar fud cúig cinn d'Oifigí:

- An Oifig um Inbhunaitheacht i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Forfheidhmithe i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil
- An Oifig um Fhianaise agus Measúnú
- An Oifig um Chosaint ar Radaíocht agus Monatóireacht Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Cumarsáide agus Seirbhísí Corparáideacha

Tugann coistí comhairleacha cabhair don Ghníomhaireacht agus tagann siad le chéile go rialta le plé a dhéanamh ar ábhair imní agus le comhairle a chur ar an mBord.

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