



# NATIONAL REUSE SURVEY 2023

Sourcing Second-hand;  
Part 2 of 4 series

EPA Circular Economy Programme and B&A

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**B&A** RESEARCH  
& INSIGHT

## Overview of survey

Behavioural insight is a foundation of the EPA's Circular Economy Programme, providing evidence to inform policy, to inform behavioural change interventions and to inform awareness campaigns.

The EPA contracted Behaviour & Attitudes (B&A) to carry out this quantitative research to investigate the incidence and attitudes towards reuse behaviours among the Irish population. For the scope of this report, Reuse Behaviours include the following activities: 'making items available for reuse', 'sourcing second hand' and 'renting, leasing or borrowing' (please see the next page for a more detailed definition).

The fieldwork for the online survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,264 adults ages 16+ was carried out in May 2023.

This report is composed of four different sections with the first three sections dedicated to each of the three components of Reuse Behaviours. In the fourth and final section, a behavioural categorisation is presented.

The sections of the report are as follows:

1. Making Available for Reuse
- 2. Sourcing Second-Hand**
3. Renting, Leasing and Borrowing
4. Reuse Behavioural Categorisation



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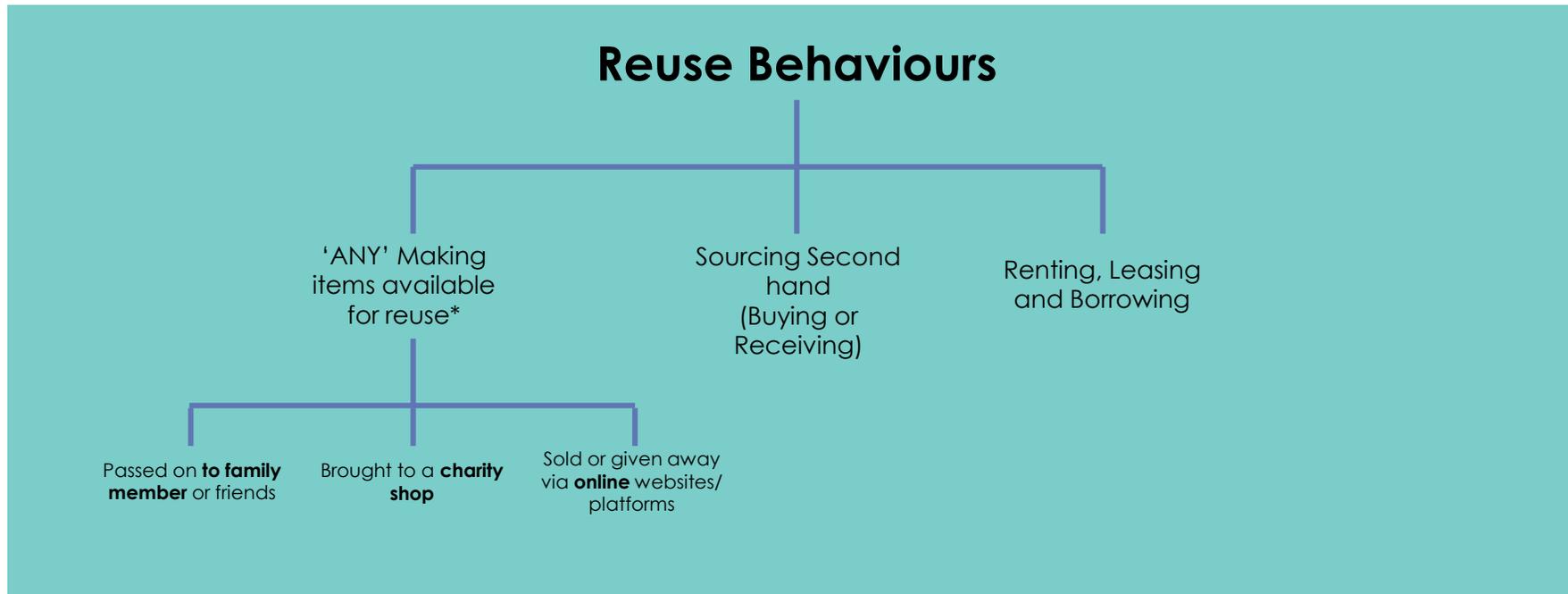
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## Definitions

- ▶ For the purpose of this report, **Reuse Behaviours** have been conceptualised as composed by three distinct components; 1) Making items available for reuse 2) *Sourcing Second hand (Buying or Receiving)* and 3) Renting, Leasing and Borrowing.



\*Making items available for reuse has itself been conceptualised and measured as a combination of 1) Passing on to family member or friends, 2) Bringing to a charity shop and 3) Selling or giving away via online websites/platforms. When these three behaviours are considered in combination the term 'ANY' has been included.



## Sourcing Second Hand: *Infographic*

### Sourcing second hand



38%

of people bought or received a second-hand clothing item in the past 12 months.

### Volume estimate of buying or receiving second hand items



11 million

second hand items were bought or received in the past 12 months.

### Charity Shops are the primary source of second hand items



55%

of people who bought or received a second-hand item sourced the item from a charity shop.

### Online platforms are the second most important source



36%

of people bought or received a second hand item online.

### Cost savings are a key motivation



64%

of people bought or received a second-hand item for cost reasons.

### Concerns for the quality of second hand items is a common barrier



61%

of people mentioned the quality of second hand items as a concern.



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## Second-hand Items: Buying or Receiving Volume Estimate 'Past 12 Months'

Item/Product type	Nat. Pop**	Mean Units N	Unit Estimate (000)
	%		
	N-1264		
Clothing	38	8	<b>11,413</b>
Furniture (small items)	14	2	1,264
Textiles other than clothing	7	4	1,239
Small Electronics/ Electrical equipment	12	2	1,078
Building material	2*	9	737
Furniture (large items)	9	2	733
Large Electronics/ Electrical equipment	4	2	314
Tyres (car)	2*	3	229
Bikes	4*	1	216
Paint	1*	2	130

The volume estimate for second-hand buying or receiving in the past 12 months is dominated by clothing.

- Of the people who bought or received a second-hand clothing item (38%), on average, they received or bought **8** items.
- This equates to **11 million** second-hand clothing items bought or received at the national level.
- Small furniture, textiles, and small electronics form the second tier of second hand buying or receiving activity.

2023 nationally representative survey (Q5 How many used/second-hand items of INSERT PRODUCT did you buy or receive in the past 12 months?)

Base: All adults living in Ireland aged 16+; N – 1,264

\*\*Nat. Pop= Incidence of the full population (all adults 16+) who bought or received second-hand items for each product type in the past 12 months.



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## Second-hand Items: Sources for Buying or Receiving

	Clothing	Textiles other than clothing	Electronics / electrical equipment (small items)	Electronics / electrical equipment (large items)	Furniture (small items)	Furniture (large items)	Building/ Construction materials and items	Tyres (car)	Bikes	Paint	ANY ITEM**
	463	87	155	55	182	118	24*	19*	49*	17*	710
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Charity or second-hand shop	65	54	26	33	53	32	10	4	30	14	55
Online website/ platform	25	19	41	43	39	46	34	26	41	38	36
Informal/Private gifts, donations or swap groups	21	33	32	29	21	22	49	15	22	42	26
Retailer	8	9	22	18	9	8	12	57	14	5	16
Local Authority (OR OTHER) Reuse facility	0	2	2	6	2	1	8	-	2	-	2
Other (e.g., Family, Friends)	10	9	8	12	6	11	11	10	14	29	12

**Overall, second-hand sources across the product types are evenly divided between charity shops and online.**

- Charity and second-hand shops dominate as sources for clothing and textiles items,
- Online platform are used for small and large Informal/private electronics items, and furniture
- Gifts or donations are the third most common source of secondhand items.

\*Caution low base \*\*The any figure is a combination of source used for any item. The any figures calculated at the respondent level.

2023 nationally representative survey (Q.6 Thinking of the used/second-hand items you bought or received in the past 12 months. Where did you source these used/second-hand items from? and Q.6b Which Online websites/ platforms did you source these used/second-hand items from in the past 12 months? )

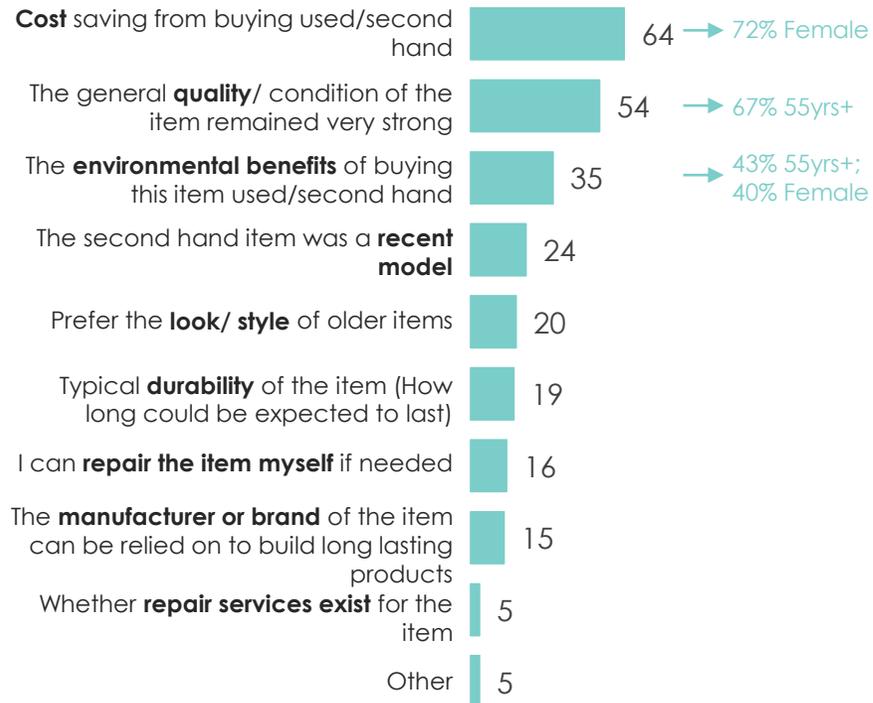
Base: Bought/Received each product type second hand past 12 months

Behaviour with highest incidence within each product category.



## Second-hand Items: Triggers & Barriers for Buying or Receiving

**Triggers\***  
(Motivations for buying/receiving)  
N-710  
%



**Barriers\***  
(Reasons for never buying/receiving)  
N-1261  
%



**The cost saving opportunity is the strongest trigger for buying or receiving second-hand.**

- 64% bought or received second-hand for this reason and this is even stronger among women (72%).
- A preference for new rather than second-hand is the first barrier for buying or receiving second-hand (67%).
- Concerns about the quality and the safety of second-hand items are also important barriers mentioned by, respectively, 61% and 54% of people.

2023 nationally representative survey (Q.7 For which of the following reasons have you bought or received used/second-hand items for in the past 12 months? and Q.8 For which of the following reasons have you never bought or received used/second-hand items for ?)

Base: Bought/Received any product type second hand (past 12 months) and Never Bought/Received any product second hand

\*Any figures calculated at the respondent level.



## A Focus on Quality and Durability

BARRIERS	ANY ITEM*
	1261
	%
I was concerned about <b>quality</b>	<b>61</b>

TRIGGERS	ANY ITEM*
	710
	%
The general <b>quality</b> / condition of the item remained very strong	<b>54</b>
Typical <b>durability</b> of the item (How long could be expected to last)	<b>19</b>
The <b>manufacturer or brand</b> of the item can be relied on to build long lasting products	<b>15</b>

### Quality of the items play an important role in choosing second hand.

- **61%** of people mention that concern about the quality of second hand items is a barrier for buying or receiving.
- On the other hand, **54%** of people reported that they bought or received second hand items because the quality of item 'remained very strong'.
- **19%** of people reported that they bought second hand because it could be expected to last.

2023 nationally representative survey (Q.7 For which of the following reasons have you bought or received used/second-hand items for in the past 12 months? and Q.8 For which of the following reasons have you never bought or received used/second-hand items for ?)

Base: Bought/Received the product type second hand past 12 months

\*Any figures calculated at the respondent level.

17

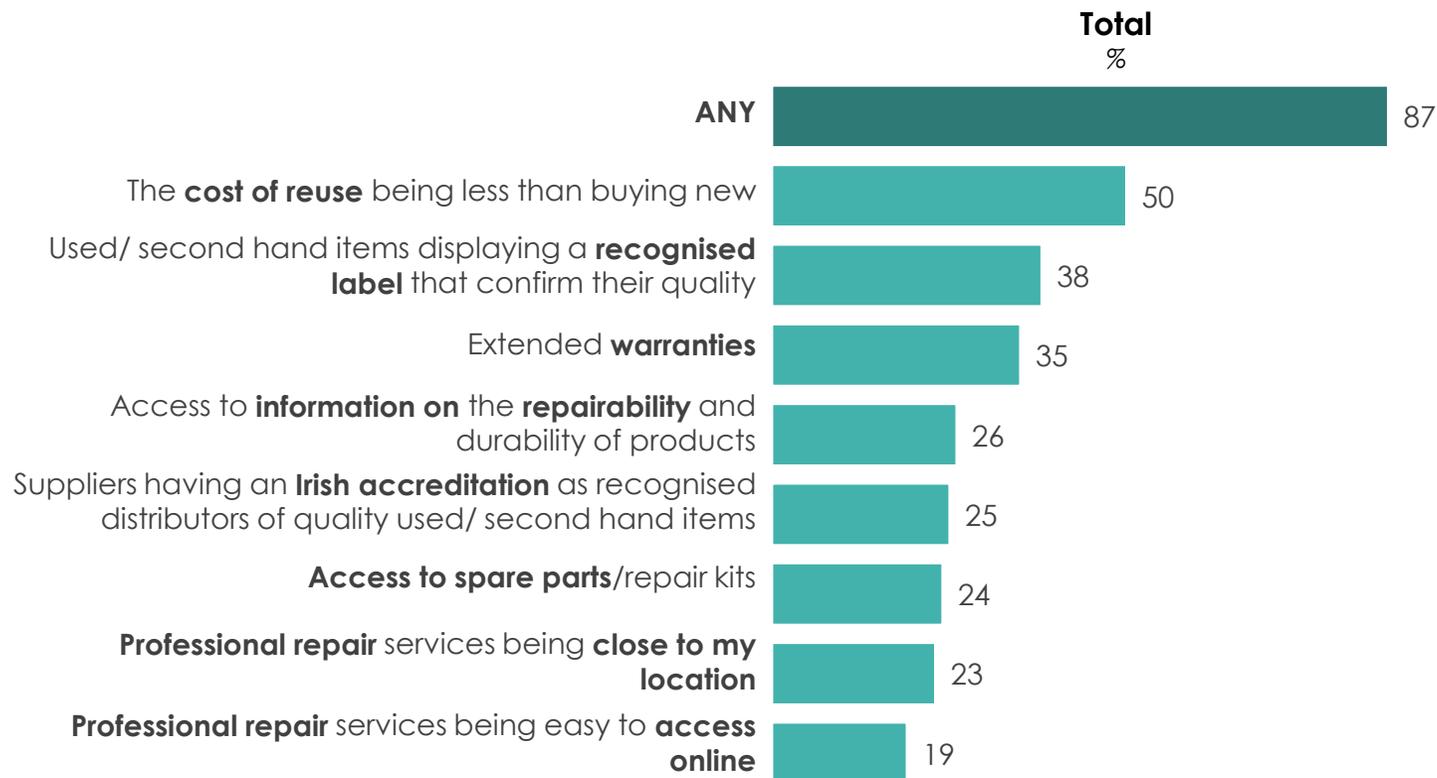


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## Second-hand: Effective Encouragement



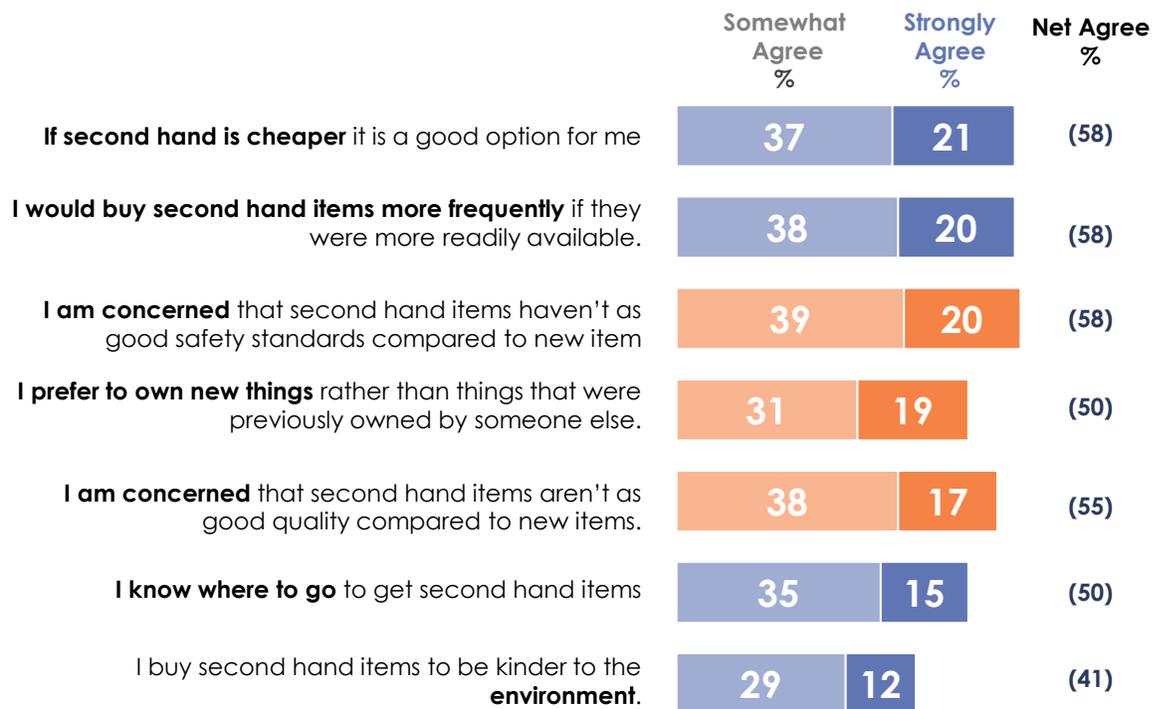
**Large majority (87%) of people can mention at least one factor that would encourage them to choose second-hand products rather than buying new.**

- The strongest encouragement is the lower cost of reuse in comparison to buying new, which has been mentioned by **50%** of people.
- **38%** of people would be encouraged by items displaying labels that confirm the quality.
- A similar proportion of people (**35%**) mentioned that extended warranties would encourage them to choose second-hand products rather than buying new.

2023 nationally representative survey (Q.9 Which, if any, of the following would encourage you to use a product previously owned by someone else instead of buying new?)  
 Base: All adults living in Ireland aged 16+; N – 1,264



## Second-hand: National Attitudes



**'Positive' and 'negative' attitudes towards second-hand items in the Irish population are equally spread.**

- **58%** of people identified that if second hand is cheaper it's a good option for them and that they would buy second-hand items more often if they were more readily available.
- However, the same proportion of the population (**58%**) is concerned that second-hand items have lower safety standards in comparison to new items.
- Concerns about the quality of second-hand items is also a factor identified by more than half of the population (**55%**)

2023 nationally representative survey (Q.13 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?)  
 Base: All adults living in Ireland aged 16+; N – 1,264





## National Reuse Survey 2023

### TO FIND OUT MORE:

Download Survey Excel data [here](#).

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