Reflecting Ireland

An insight into consumer behavioural change in Ireland

Shifting Attitudes to Homeownership

ptsb Altogether more human

August 2026

Contents

Executive Summary

As Ireland moves through 2026, public sentiment is marked by caution, pressure and practical adjustment. Cost of living has re-emerged as the country's top concern, while housing affordability remains one of the issues weighing most heavily on households. Against this backdrop, the report follows a clear journey: from a general unease nationally about the economy, to the emotional weight of the housing market, to the practical ways buyers and mortgage holders are responding.

Homeownership continues to hold a powerful place in the Irish psyche, but the routes to achieving housing security are becoming more varied. People are reassessing expectations, leaning more on family support, engaging more closely with mortgage and housing supports, and thinking more practically about the long-term cost, comfort and sustainability of their homes.

Public Mood

- Concerns about the economy have increased, with 53% expecting economic conditions to worsen over the next 12 months, up from 45% in February 2025.
- Cost of living remains the dominant concern, cited by 78% as a top three issue, while the price of housing ranks next at 50%.
- Personal sentiment remains mixed, with 20% saying they are better off than this time last year compared to 38% who say they are worse off.

Housing Sentiment

- Homeownership continues to be a core aspiration, with 86% saying owning a home is important to them. However, rising prices continue to challenge that ambition, with 94% expecting prices to increase further and 91% describing buying a home as difficult.
- Sentiment towards Ireland's housing market remains negative, with 72% expressing concern about the current situation, a slight increase from 69% last year.
- Younger adults are increasingly recalibrating their expectations. Among 18-24 year-olds, 62% believe they may never be in a position to buy a home, while openness to social housing has increased across age groups.
- Renters feel the pressure most acutely, with 73% holding a negative view of the housing market, compared with 67% of homeowners.

The Buying Journey

- Around one in four adults are currently in the market to buy, with first-time buyers representing 58% of this group.
- Property price remains the dominant purchase driver, cited by 69% of buyers, while space, gardens, energy efficiency and proximity to family continue to influence decision-making.
- Saving for a deposit remains the most difficult stage of the journey, with 47% rating it difficult, although perceptions have improved somewhat compared with 58% last year, 11% pts lower.
- Family support is playing an increasingly important role, with around half of first-time buyers (49%) receiving assistance through gifts, loans or inheritance.

Towards a Greener Housing Future

- Awareness of Building Energy Rating (BER) is improving, with 50% of mortgage holders now knowing their BER and where to access it.
- Interest in retrofitting remains strong. Of those who have undertaken retrofitting works, 71% report a positive experience and 69% are satisfied with the outcome.
- Solar panels represent the largest gap between ambition and action, with 62% planning to install them but only 19% having done so.
- Cost remains the biggest hurdle to retrofitting, cited by 61%, but appetite is clear when the right supports are available; 73% say additional grant support would make them more likely to proceed.

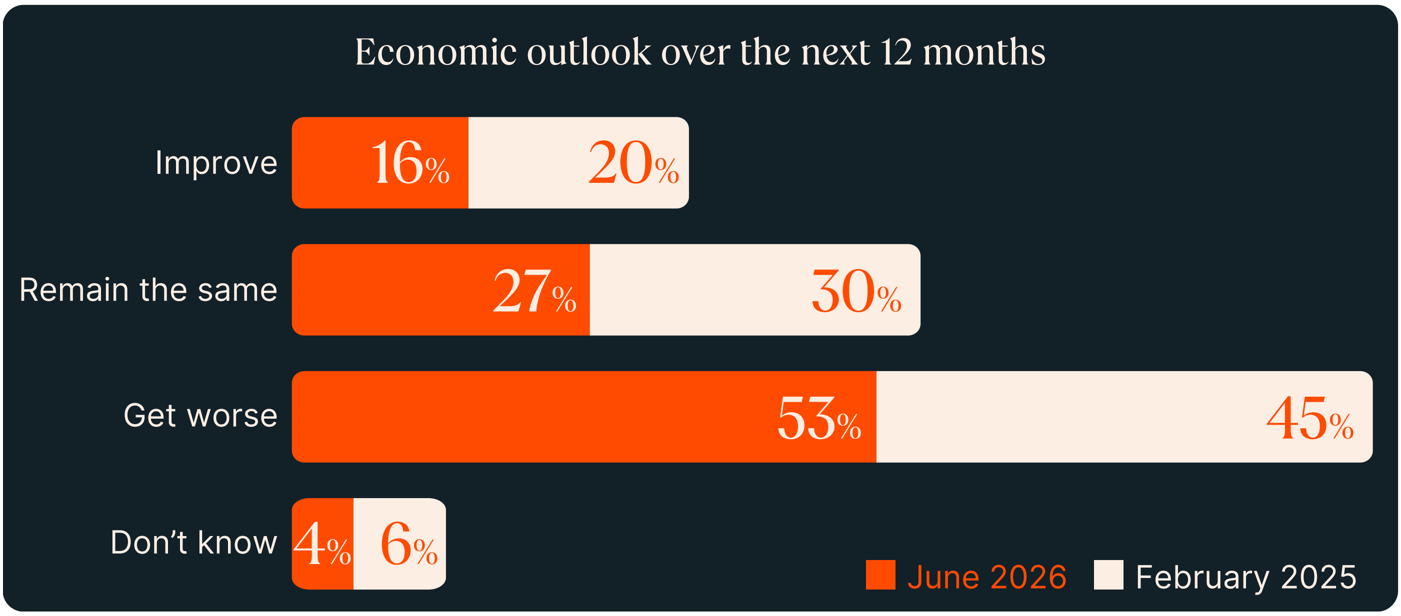
Mortgage Holders

- Mortgage holders are becoming increasingly aware of ways to reduce borrowing costs, particularly through switching provider, reviewing loan-to-value ratios and making overpayments.
- Awareness of switching provider as a money-saving option has risen to 50%, an increase of 15% pts year-on-year.
- Almost half (47%) say they would consider switching mortgage provider, although perceived hassle remains a key obstacle.
- Among those approaching the end of their mortgage term, 75% plan home improvements and 72% intend to invest in retrofitting works, highlighting a growing interest in improving energy efficiency and long-term home value.

The Public Mood

Economic Outlook

Economic confidence has softened since the previous wave, creating a more uncertain backdrop for major financial decisions. While consumers remain resilient in their day-to-day lives, concern about the broader economic outlook has intensified. This contrasts with the SME picture in the PTSB Reflecting Business 2026 report, where 24% of businesses expected the economic situation to improve, compared with 8% in 2025.



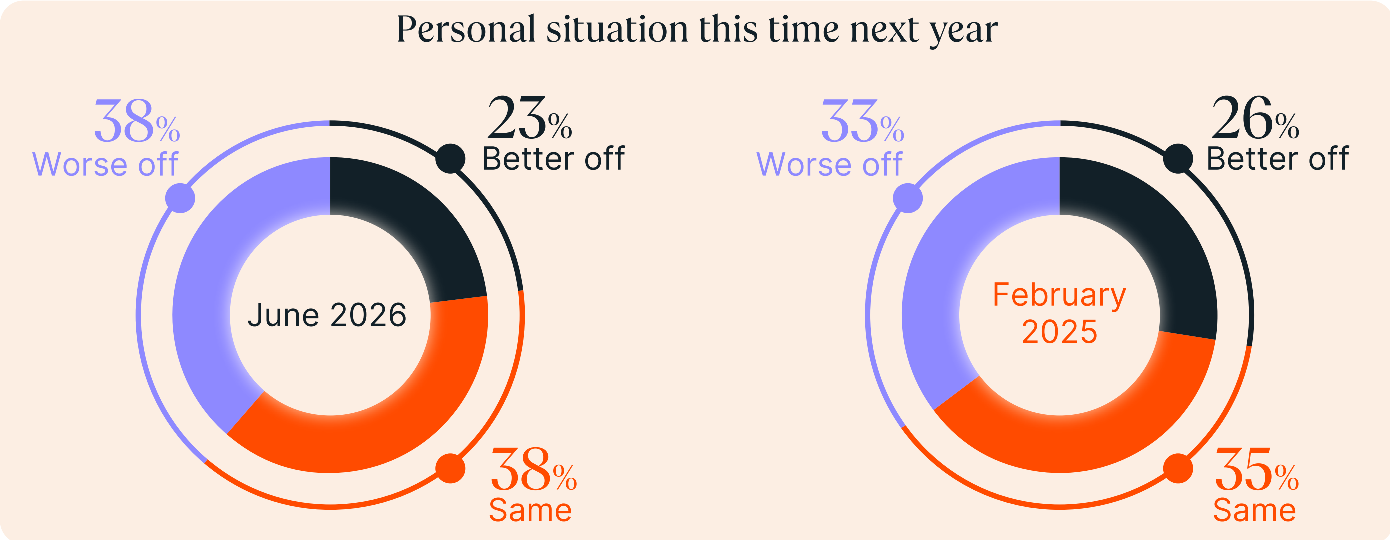
The findings indicate that economic uncertainty remains firmly embedded in public sentiment. While inflationary pressures may have eased compared with previous years, concerns about affordability, public finances and future economic stability continue to shape expectations.

Despite deteriorating macroeconomic sentiment, personal mood about living in Ireland remains broadly stable compared with the previous wave. Almost half of adults (47%) chose a positive word to describe their personal mood, compared with 46% in February 2025, with "happy" (15%) and "optimistic" (12%) the most common positive emotions. Negative mood stands at 52%, compared with 54% in February 2025, although one in five (20%) selected "anxious", underscoring the tension between personal resilience and wider economic concern.

Personal Finances

One in five adults say they are financially better off than this time last year, broadly in line with recent waves. However, 38% now report being worse off, indicating a slight deterioration in current financial wellbeing.

Although optimism has softened slightly since February 2025, younger adults aged 18-34 remain the most likely to anticipate an improvement in their financial circumstances.

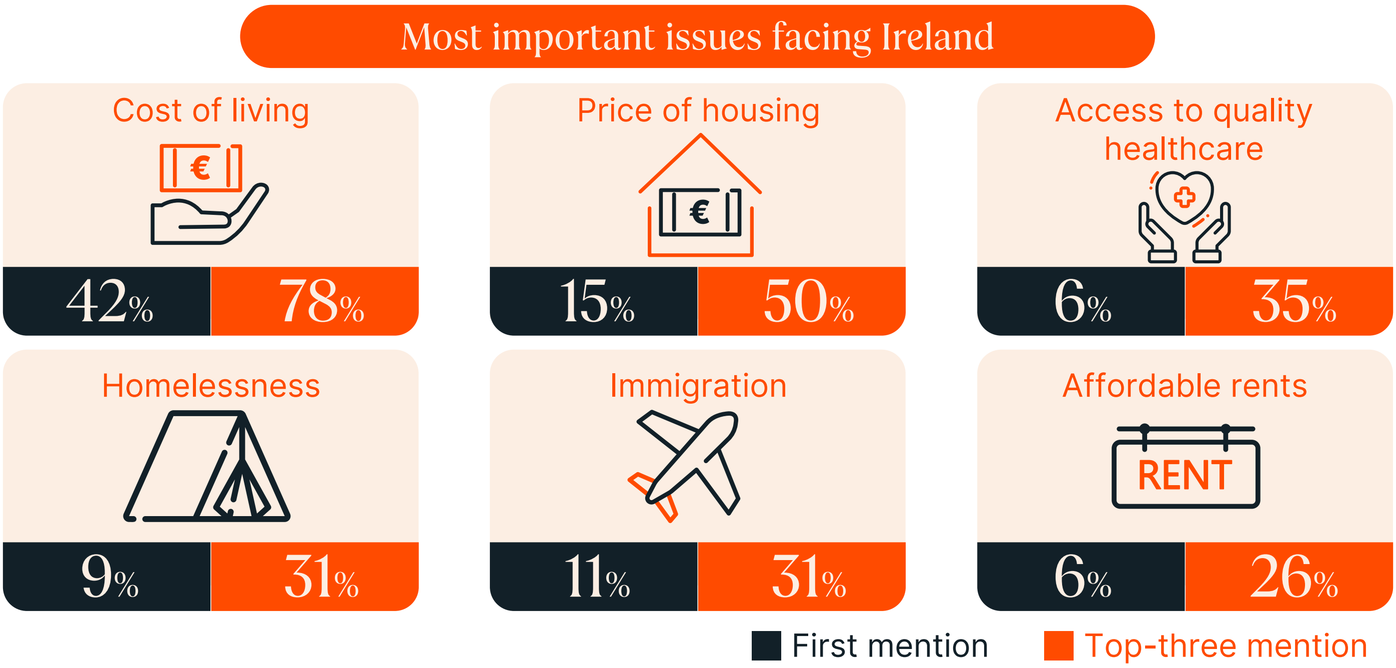


Despite broader economic concern, the difference between macroeconomic sentiment and personal financial outlook is notable. While the majority are not overwhelmingly positive, more people feel more cautious about Ireland's overall direction than they do about their own circumstances.

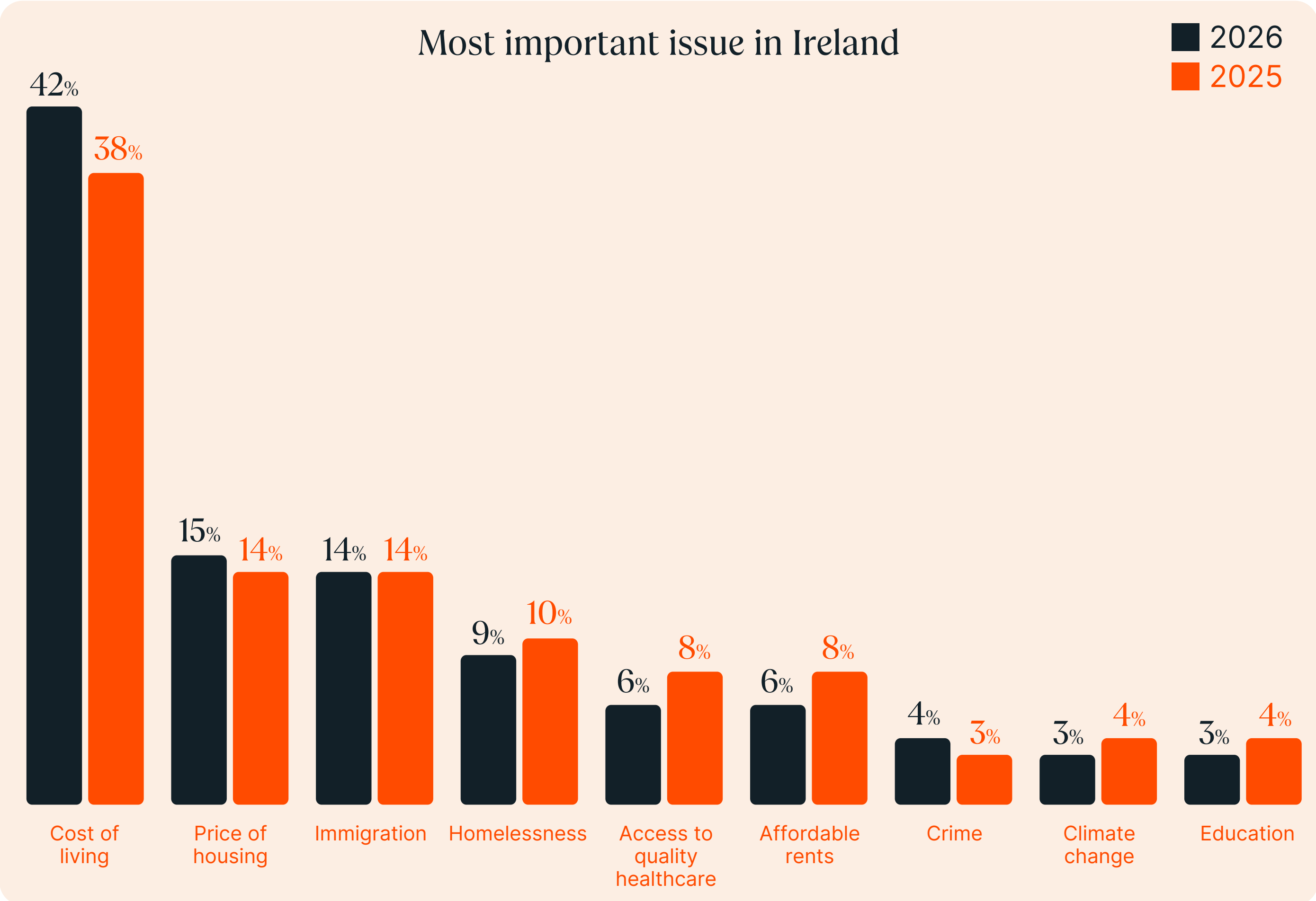
Housing remains one of Ireland's most pressing concerns

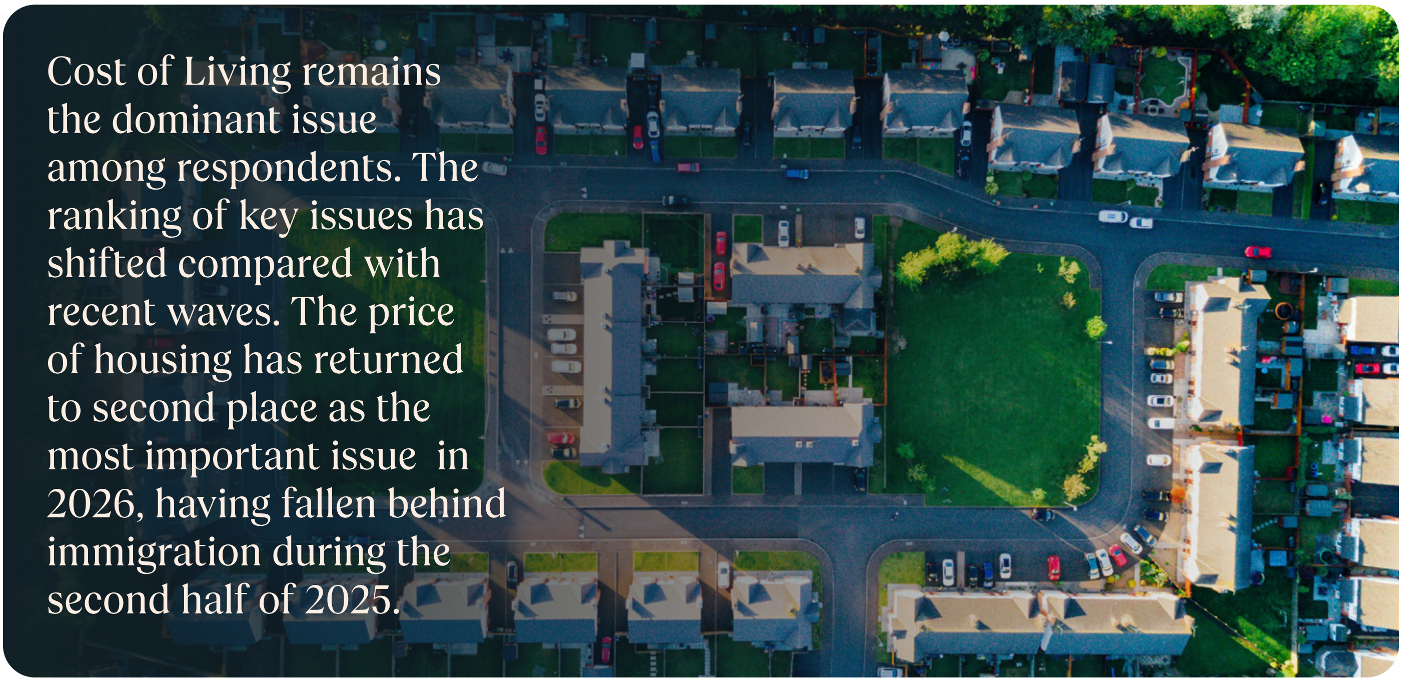
Cost of living has re-emerged as the dominant issue facing the country, with 42% naming it as Ireland's most important issue and 78% including it among their top three concerns.

Housing remains a major challenge too, ranking second overall, with half of all adults selecting the price of housing as one of the country's most important issues.



The comparison shows that cost of living has strengthened as the top first-choice issue in 2026, while the price of housing has returned to second place. Immigration has eased from its 2025 peak, and concern around access to quality healthcare has declined.

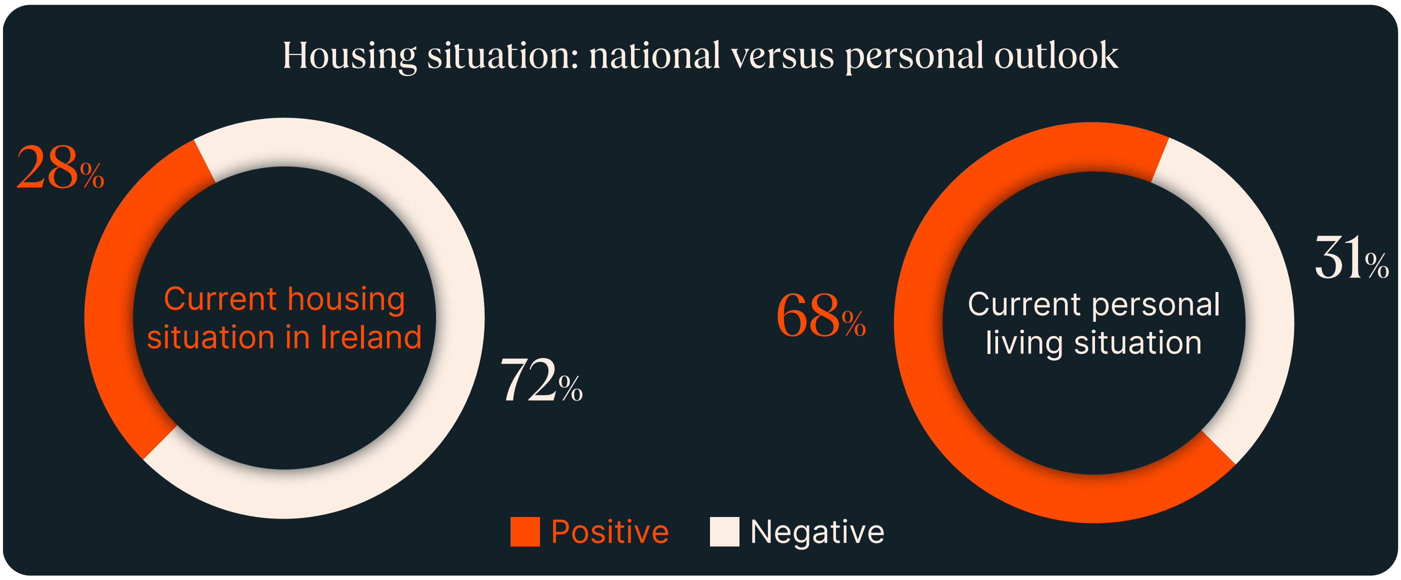




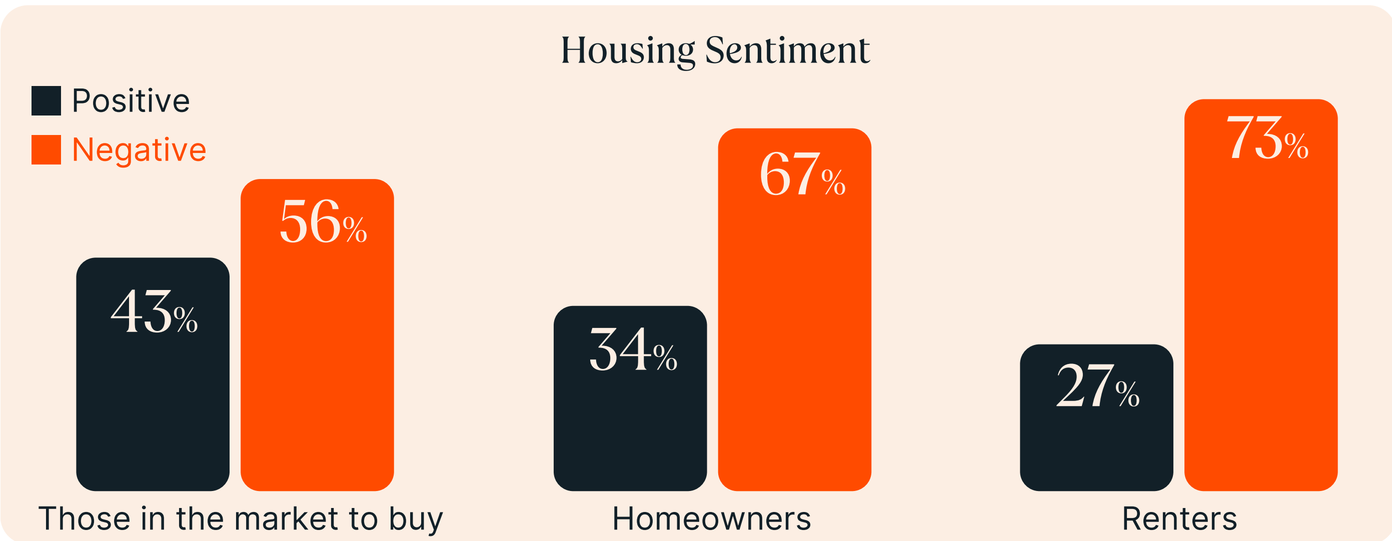
Shifting Attitudes and Emotions Towards Housing

The Emotional Divide

Homeownership remains a key aspiration, with 86% saying it is important to them. At the same time, three-quarters view long-term renting as a last resort, up 4% pts year-on-year. However, affordability challenges persist, with 94% expecting house prices to continue rising and 91% saying it is difficult to buy a home.



Consumers continue to distinguish between their perception of Ireland's housing market and their own housing circumstances. While views of Ireland's housing situation remain strongly negative, most people still feel positive about where and how they live today.

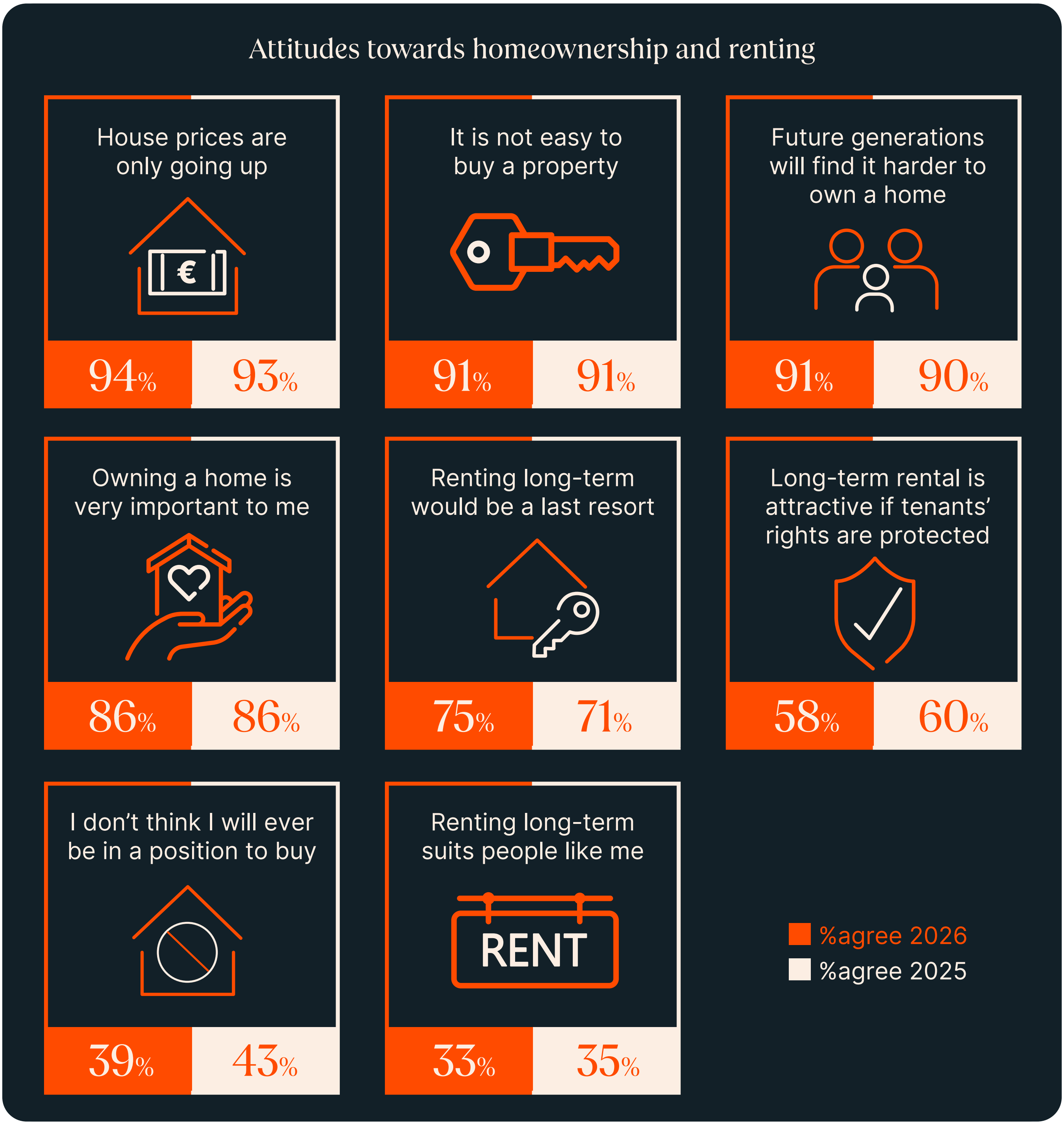


Renters feel the strain most acutely, reflecting the pressures faced by those who have not yet been able to access homeownership. By contrast, those actively looking to buy are the most optimistic, indicating that taking practical steps towards ownership can provide a greater sense of confidence, even in a challenging market.

Housing Affordability Concerns Remain Elevated

Concerns about the housing market remain widespread, with over nine in ten agreeing that house prices will continue to rise, that buying a home is difficult and that future generations will face even greater barriers to homeownership. It points to a possible lag between public sentiment and more recent data from the Central Statistics Office which shows a notable cooling in house price inflation this summer.

Agreement with these statements has increased marginally since 2025, reflecting growing concern about both housing affordability and access to homeownership.



Despite more cautious views of the market, there are also signs of resilience. The proportion of people who believes they will never be in a position to buy a home has fallen from 43% to 39%, indicating that more people still see a possible pathway to ownership despite ongoing affordability challenges.

Overall housing market anxiety has increased since last year, rising from an average of 69% to 72%. At the same time, homeownership remains a strong aspiration, with support increasing from 53% to 55% on average. This sits alongside a broader pattern from 2025 to 2026 of shifting sentiment across PTSB research, with the Reflecting Business report showing SME growth expectations rising from 45% in 2025 to 82% in 2026.

A Nation Explained: Three Housing Mindsets

While homeownership remains important to most adults, attitudes towards the housing market differ significantly depending on people's circumstances, experiences and expectations. Looking at the population from the most secure to the most actively engaged reveals three distinct mindsets.

Property Realists

Property Realists are the largest segment, accounting for almost half of adults (48%). They typically already own their home and are not actively looking to move. While secure in their own position, they are deeply concerned about access to housing for others and often feel anxious or frustrated about the wider market.

Frustrated Aspirers

Frustrated Aspirers represent one-third of adults (33%). They continue to aspire to homeownership but are increasingly questioning whether it remains achievable. Rising house prices, affordability pressures and deposit requirements have left many feeling that the gap between aspiration and reality is widening.

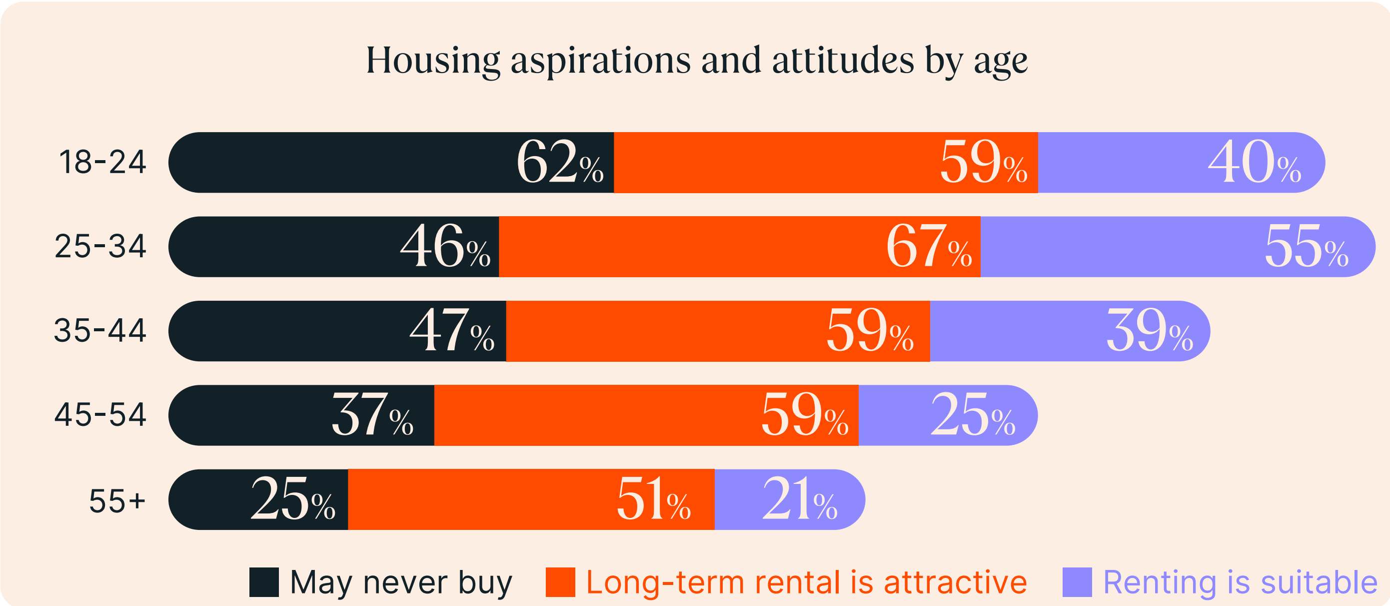
Confident Navigators

Confident Navigators are the smallest segment, accounting for 18% of adults. They have a more optimistic perspective and, while they acknowledge the challenges involved, remain confident in their ability to navigate the process and ultimately achieve homeownership.

Together, these groups show that Ireland's housing experience differs across life stages and circumstances. Some people are secure but concerned for others, some aspire to own but feel increasingly constrained, and some remain confident because they are already progressing through the buying journey.

Under-35s Recalibrate their Housing Expectations

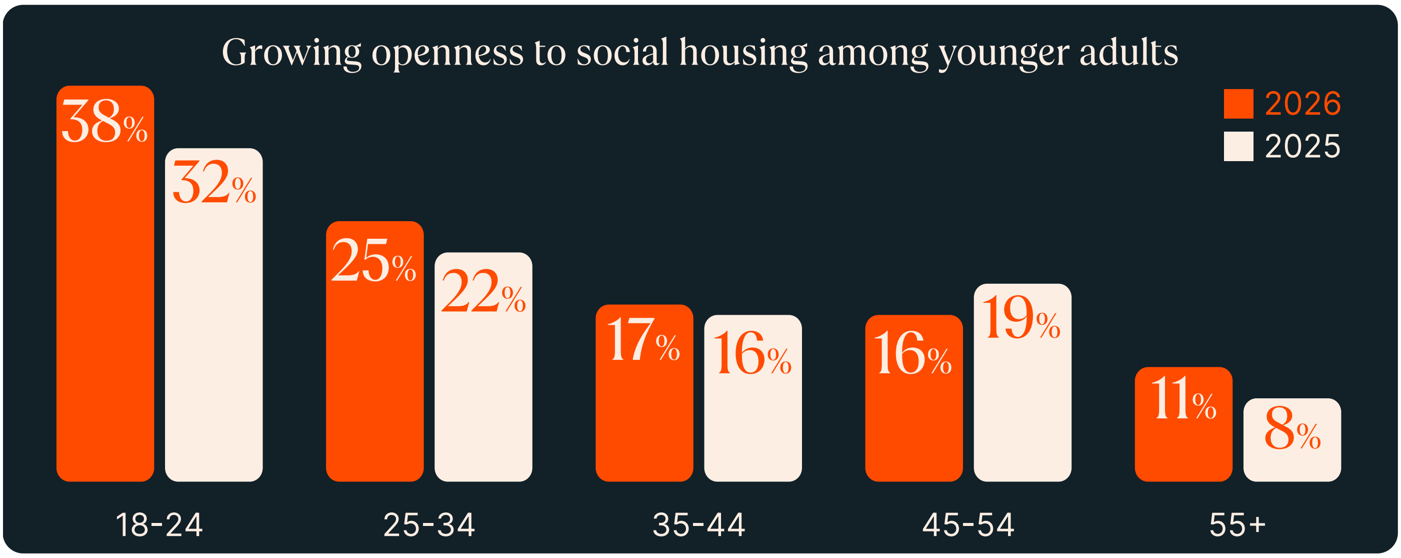
For many younger adults, the challenge of buying on the open market is reshaping what a realistic housing future looks like. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of 18-24 year-olds now believe they may never be in a position to buy a home, while younger cohorts are also significantly more open to long-term renting than older generations.



Under-35s remain the most accepting of long-term renting. More than half of 25-34 year-olds say renting suits people like them, compared with just one in five adults aged 55 and over. This reflects a more pragmatic approach among younger generations as homeownership becomes harder to attain.

Younger Adults Show Growing Openness to Alternative Housing Options

This recalibration is also reflected in attitudes towards social housing. Younger adults are becoming more open to options they may not previously have considered, particularly as buying on the open market becomes more difficult.



There is also broad support for greater flexibility in the planning system. Almost five times as many adults support proposals allowing homeowners to build modular or self-contained housing units, such as garden homes, within existing property boundaries without full planning permission as oppose them. Support is strongest among 25-34 year-olds, reinforcing the extent to which younger adults are open to more flexible housing solutions.

What Matters Most to Buyers

Practical Needs Continue to Shape Home-buying Decisions

For those trying to buy, affordability remains the starting point, but it is not the whole story. Property price remains the dominant factor, with 69% including it among their top three considerations, while space, gardens, energy efficiency and proximity to family continue to shape what people look for in a home.

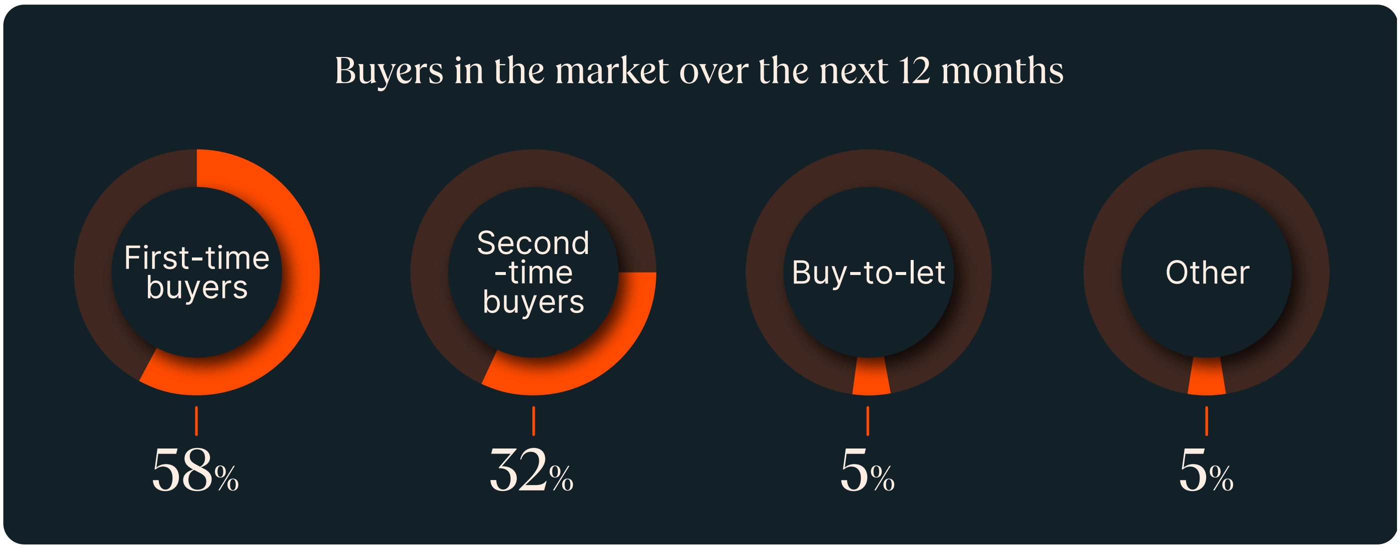
Top purchase considerations

Consideration	2026	2025
Property price	69%	69%
Size of property	31%	36%
Having a garden	26%	29%
Energy-efficient home	24%	27%
Close to family/friends	23%	26%
Close to work	19%	20%
Layout of the house	18%	21%
Close to where I grew up	17%	n/a
Close to schools	16%	16%
Building Energy Rating (BER)	16%	13%
Space for parking	13%	13%
Size of garden	13%	12%
New build	8%	11%

A Quarter of Adults are in the Housing Market

Interest in sustainability and running costs are also becoming more visible in buyer priorities. Building Energy Rating (BER) has increased as a purchase consideration from 13% in 2025 to 16% this year, now matching proximity to schools.

Around one in four adults are currently in the market to buy a home, whether they are actively searching, casually looking or already in the purchasing process. The majority of those in the market are first-time buyers, highlighting continued demand from those seeking to enter homeownership for the first time.



First-time buyers make up almost six in ten of those currently in the market, significantly outnumbering second-time buyers.

This group is largely concentrated among younger adults, with almost two-thirds aged between 25 and 44. In contrast, second-time buyers have a broader age profile and are more likely to include older homeowners, reflecting greater mobility among those already on the property ladder.

Budgets Continue to Rise as Buyers Adapt to Higher Prices

With national house prices increasing by 6.2% year-on-year to a median of €394,980, buyers are continuing to adjust their expectations and budgets. The gap between regions remains significant, with median prices ranging from €685,750 in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown to €197,000 in Longford.

Those searching in Dublin are feeling the impact most acutely. Half of prospective buyers in the capital are now targeting properties priced above €450,000, an increase of 11% pts compared with last year.

Outside Dublin, demand is also shifting upwards, with 29% now targeting properties above €450,000, up 5% pts year-on-year.

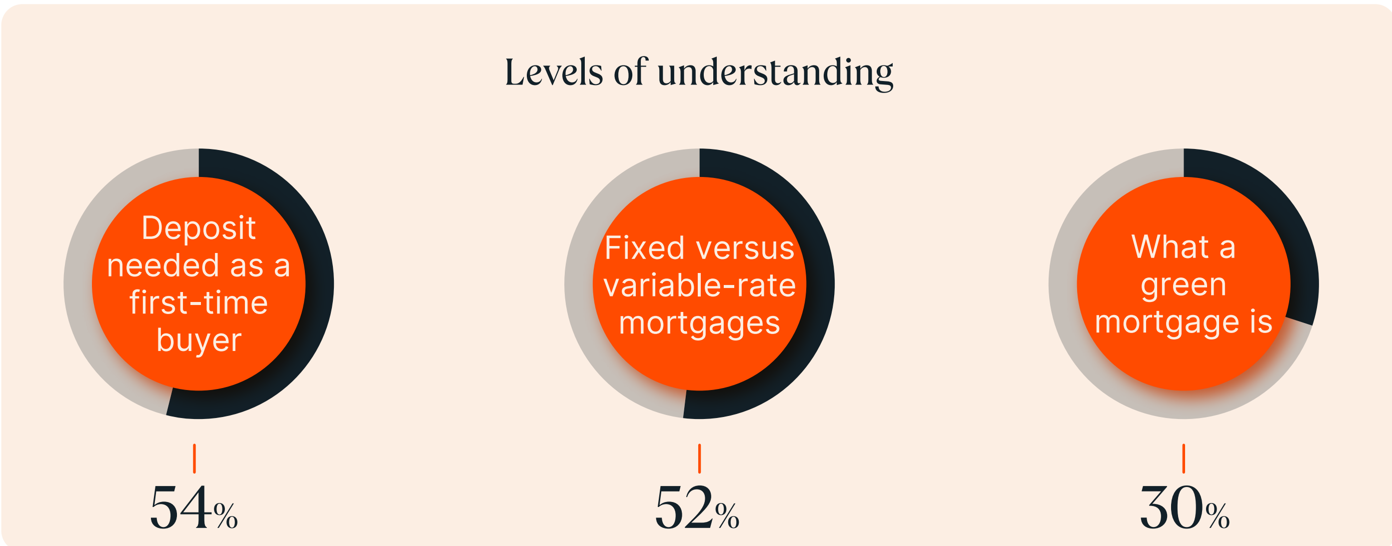
Spend expectations continue to adjust upwards

The same upward pressure is evident across buyer types. More than one in five first-time buyers (22%) now expect to spend over €450,000, up from 15% in 2025. Among second-time buyers, nearly four in ten (39%) are targeting this price bracket.

At the same time, the proportion of first-time buyers seeking homes below €350,000 has fallen from 57% to 51%. This appears to reflect the shrinking availability of housing stock at more affordable price points rather than a meaningful increase in purchasing power.

Understanding the Home-buying Process

Understanding of the home-buying process remains relatively strong among those currently in the market. Confidence is highest around the deposit needed for first-time buyers, documents required for a mortgage application, how much can be borrowed, the difference between fixed and variable rates, and the additional costs that need to be budgeted for.



Green mortgages stand out as the product with the largest knowledge gap. Among those in the market to buy, almost one in three are not confident they understand what a green mortgage is, despite growing interest in energy efficiency, BER and lower running costs elsewhere in the research.

Mortgage knowledge levels are strongest among 25-34 year-olds and ABC1 households, while younger adults aged 18-24 and those in social housing report the lowest levels of understanding.

Saving for a Deposit

Most prospective buyers have already begun building towards homeownership, with three-quarters having started saving for a deposit. More than half (54%) have already accumulated at least 10% of their target purchase price, while just over a quarter (26%) have yet to begin saving.

Among those who have started saving, over half have already accumulated at least 10% of the purchase price. First-time buyers are often saving over a prolonged period, with one in four having saved for more than four years, while around two-thirds have been saving for less than four years.

Deposit funding sources

	Personal savings	Loan from family	Gift from family	Inheritance	Proceeds from sale of another property
First time buyers	68%	24%	26%	20%	12%
Second time buyers	63%	8%	4%	13%	28%

The findings highlight growing pressure on buyers working with tighter budgets, who appear increasingly reliant on support from family or other sources to bridge the affordability gap. Those targeting properties below €350,000 are increasingly reliant on family loans, while higher-budget buyers are most likely to receive support through gifts and inheritance.

Overall, while personal saving remains the foundation of deposit building, family support is becoming an increasingly important part of the path to homeownership.

Awareness of Supports and Mortgage Priorities

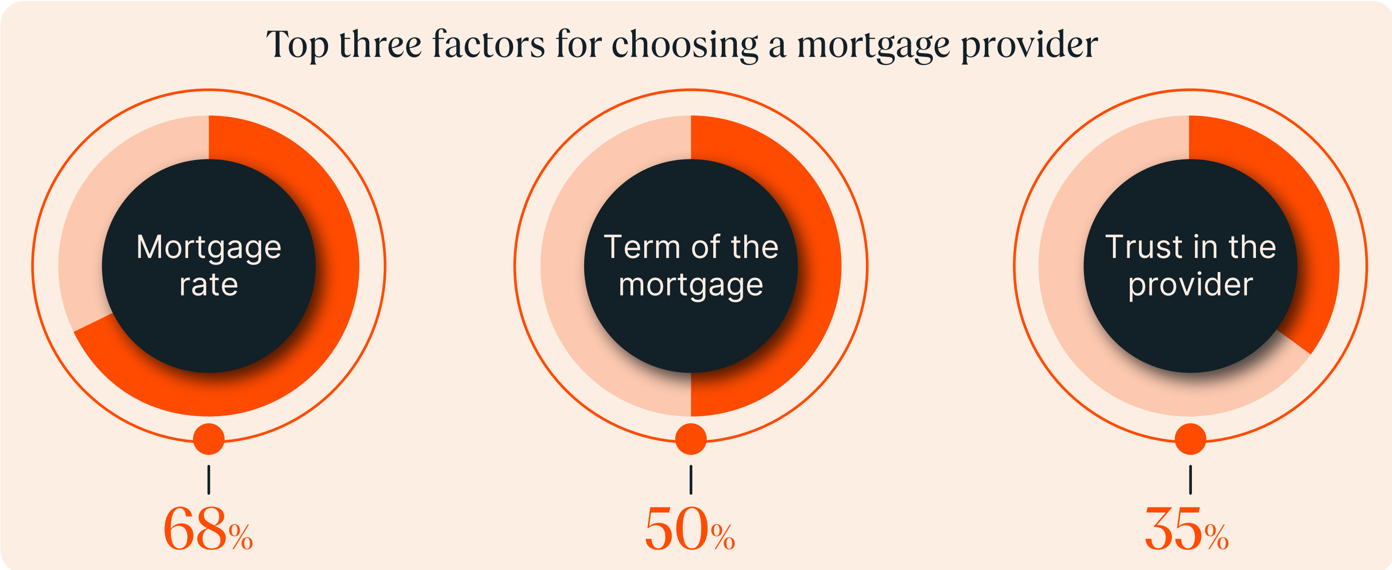
Awareness of housing supports remains high among prospective buyers, particularly among those actively in the market.

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, Help to Buy and the First Home Scheme are the best-known supports among potential buyers, with awareness typically between 70% and 80%.

Awareness is led by the HAP scheme, recognised by 88% of those in the market. Help to Buy and the First Home Scheme are both recognised by 86% of first-time buyers.

Despite these high awareness levels, familiarity does not always translate into understanding. Around one-third of potential buyers recognise housing supports by name, but do not fully understand how they work, pointing to an opportunity for clearer education and guidance.

When it comes to choosing a mortgage provider, the mortgage rate remains the decisive factor. However, the term of the mortgage and trust in the provider also play an important role, showing that buyers are weighing affordability alongside reassurance and confidence in the provider relationship.



While priorities are broadly similar across buyer types, some differences emerge. First-time buyers place greater importance on cashback offers (26%) and speed of application (26%), reflecting the financial and administrative pressures of entering the market for the first time.

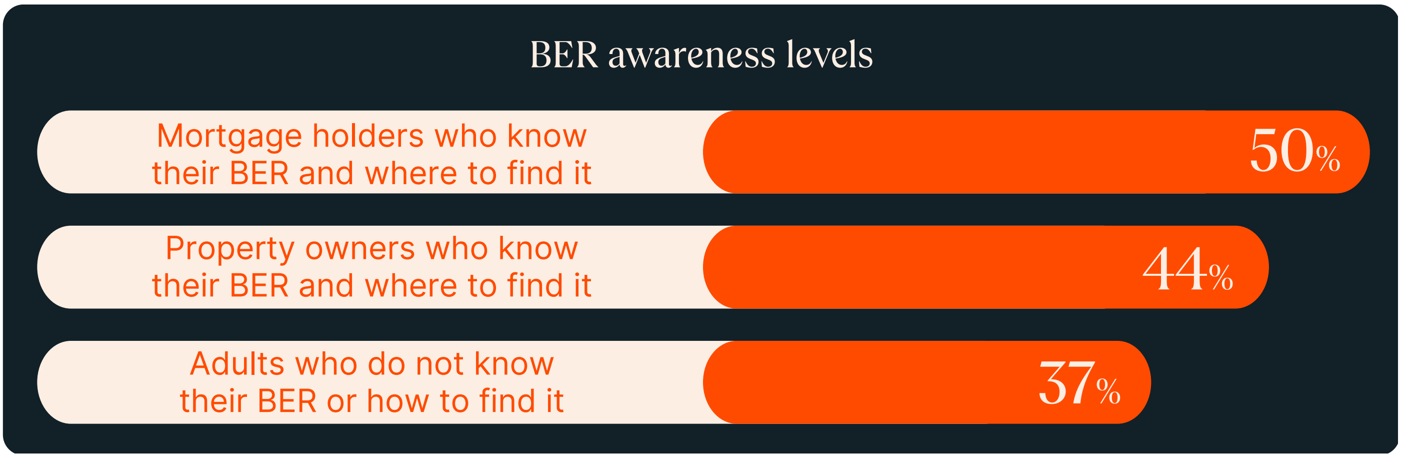
Second-time buyers are more likely to value free legal fees (28%) and trust in the provider (41%), suggesting a greater focus on the overall borrowing experience.

Towards a Greener Housing Future

BER Awareness Improves but Knowledge Gaps Persist

Energy efficiency is moving from a secondary consideration to a more practical part of the housing conversation. For buyers, it is linked to running costs and long-term value. For homeowners, it is increasingly shaped by retrofit ambitions, support schemes and incoming regulation.

Awareness of BER has improved, particularly among homeowners and mortgage holders. Among homeowners, 44% now know their BER, up 5% pts year-on-year. However, more than half still do not know their rating, and half of this group do not know where to find it.



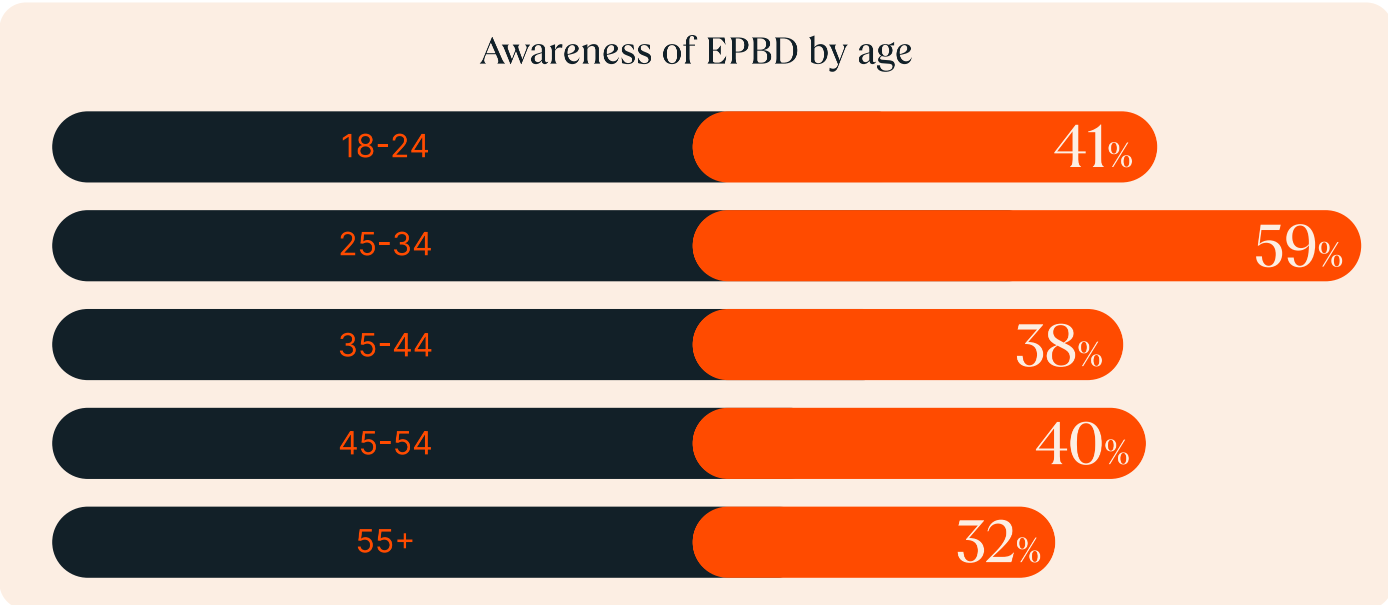
This highlights a persistent knowledge gap regarding a metric that is playing an increasingly important role in both housing decisions and property values.

BER is also becoming more relevant in purchase decisions, rising from 13% to 16% as one of the top three factors.

Awareness of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

In late May 2026, the Government incorporated the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) into Irish law. The Directive introduces a simplified eight-tier BER scale, a long-term commitment to reducing energy use in homes and buildings.

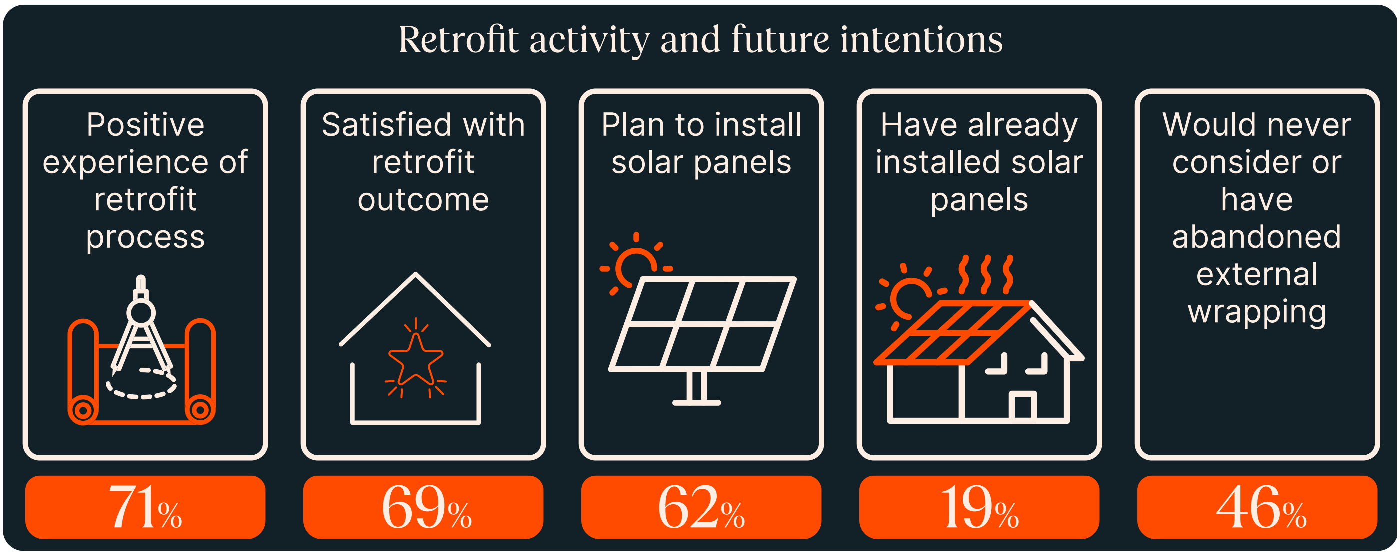
Awareness of the EPBD remains relatively low, despite its recent introduction into Irish law. Six in ten adults (60%) have never heard of the Directive, which introduces a revised BER framework and supports Ireland's long-term goals around reducing energy use in buildings.



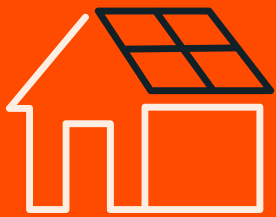
Awareness is higher among those in the market to buy, particularly 25-34 year-olds, and lower among existing homeowners, although homeowners will also be affected by the changes. Among those who are aware of the Directive, many still lack a clear understanding of what it means in practice, underlining the need for further education and guidance.

Retrofit Experiences are Largely Positive

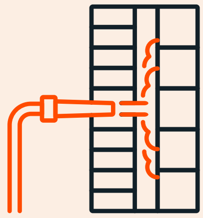
Among homeowners who have undertaken retrofitting works, satisfaction levels are high. Around seven in ten people rate both the retrofit process (71%) and the outcome (69%) positively, showing that while retrofitting can involve significant investment and planning, most people who complete the journey feel the benefits are worthwhile.



Windows, doors and attic insulation remain the most common retrofit measures undertaken, with over four in ten homeowners having completed these upgrades. These improvements are typically lower-cost and less disruptive than larger projects, making them a popular starting point.



Solar panels represent the biggest gap between aspiration and action. While 62% say they plan to install them, only 19% have done so to date. This suggests strong interest in renewable energy solutions, but also highlights potential barriers such as upfront costs, installation requirements or uncertainty around the process.

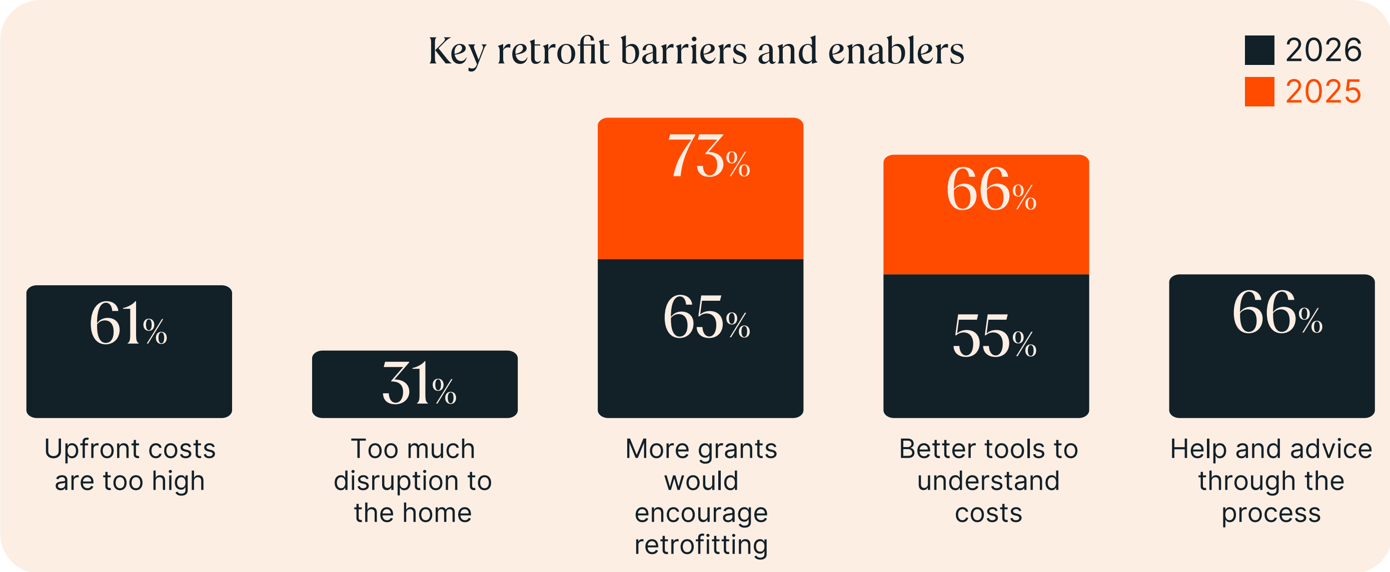


External wall insulation, or external wrapping, faces the greatest resistance. Almost half (46%) say they would never consider it or have previously abandoned plans to proceed, likely reflecting its higher cost and the level of disruption involved.

Cost Remains the Biggest Barrier to Retrofitting

Six in ten adults (61%) cite upfront costs as the main hurdle to retrofitting, significantly ahead of disruption to the home (31%), paperwork and grant administration (27%), and difficulties finding reliable contractors (25%).

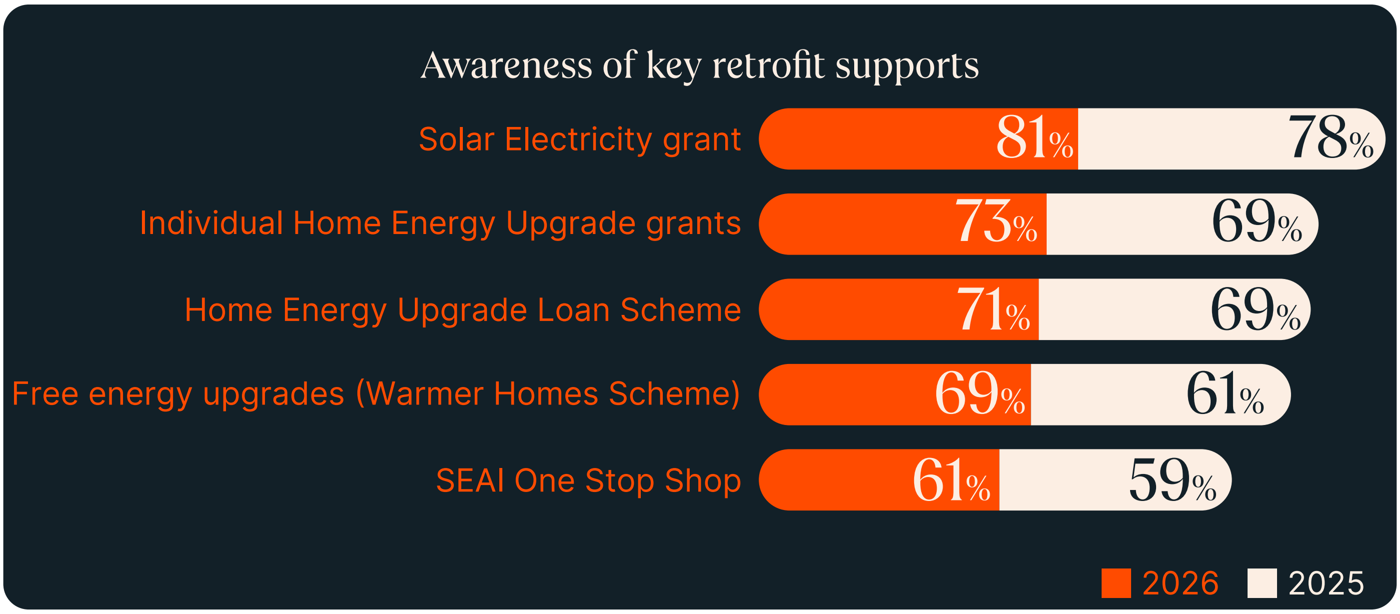
At the same time, appetite for retrofitting is clear when the right supports are in place. Demand for financial assistance, guidance and clearer information has increased across all measures compared with last year, indicating that homeowners need both funding and practical support to get started.



For many homeowners, paying off a mortgage represents a key opportunity to invest in their property. Among those with less than five years remaining on their mortgage, 75% plan to undertake general home improvements once their mortgage is cleared, while 72% intend to carry out retrofitting works to improve their BER rating, up 11% pts from 2025.

Increase in Awareness of Retrofit Supports

Awareness of retrofit supports has increased across all major schemes since 2025, with the Solar Electricity Grant remaining the most widely recognised. However, while awareness is improving, important knowledge gaps remain among people who could benefit most from these supports.



Despite strong overall awareness, familiarity is not universal. One-third (33%) of those currently in the market to buy have never heard of the SEAI One Stop Shop, despite it being one of the most comprehensive retrofit support services available. Similar proportions are unaware of the Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme (23%) and individual Home Energy Upgrade grants (24%).

The Solar Electricity Grant is the best-known support, closely followed by home energy upgrade supports.

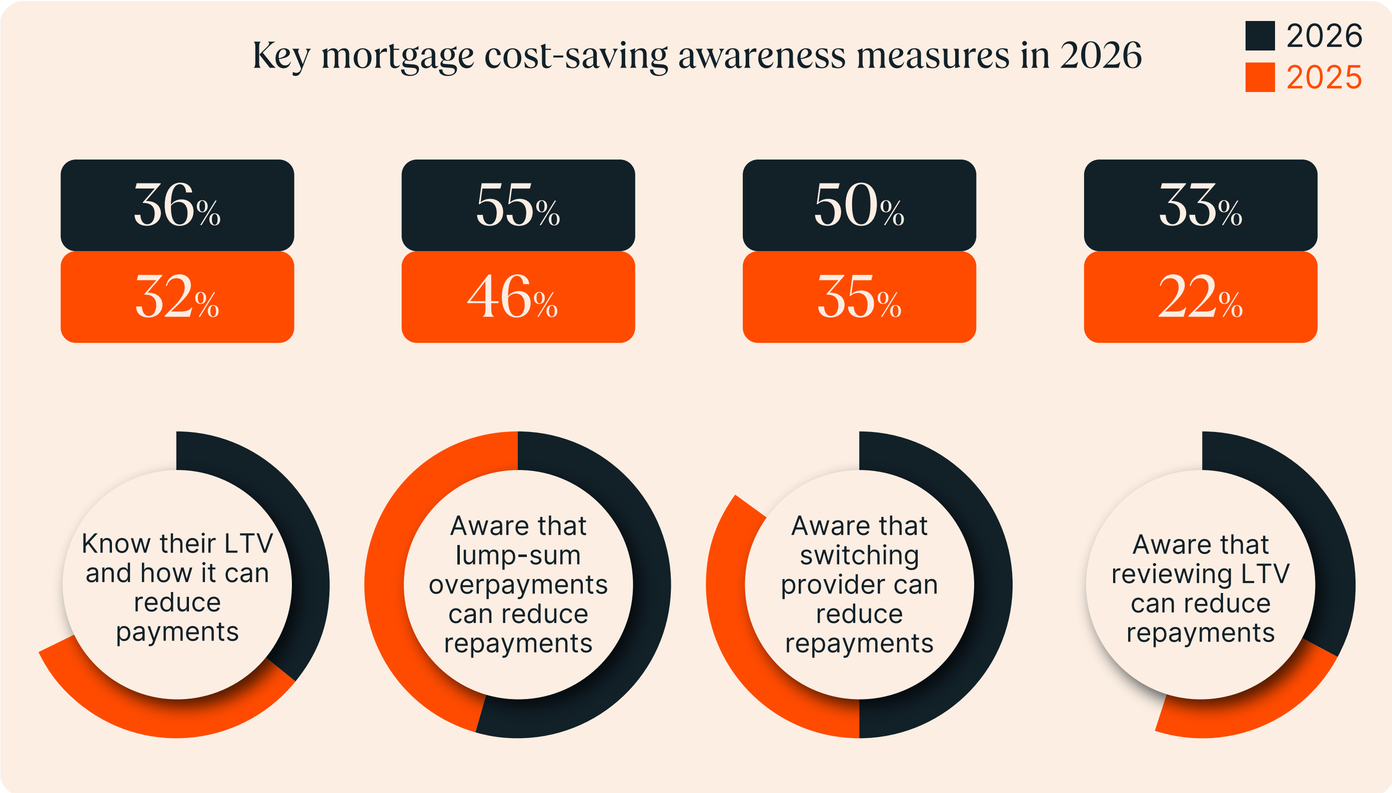
Across all measures, buyers in the market tend to have slightly lower awareness than existing homeowners, suggesting that many prospective buyers are not yet engaging with retrofit supports as part of their home-buying journey.

Managing Mortgage Costs and Planning Ahead

Awareness of Cost-saving Measures Continues to Grow

As housing costs remain under pressure, existing mortgage holders are also looking more closely at the levers within their control, from repayment strategies and switching provider to reinvesting in their homes once mortgage commitments ease.

With cost of living concerns remaining elevated, mortgage holders are increasingly focused on ways to reduce their monthly repayments. Awareness of both loan-to-value (LTV) ratios and mortgage-saving options has improved significantly over the past year, suggesting borrowers are becoming more engaged with managing their mortgage costs.



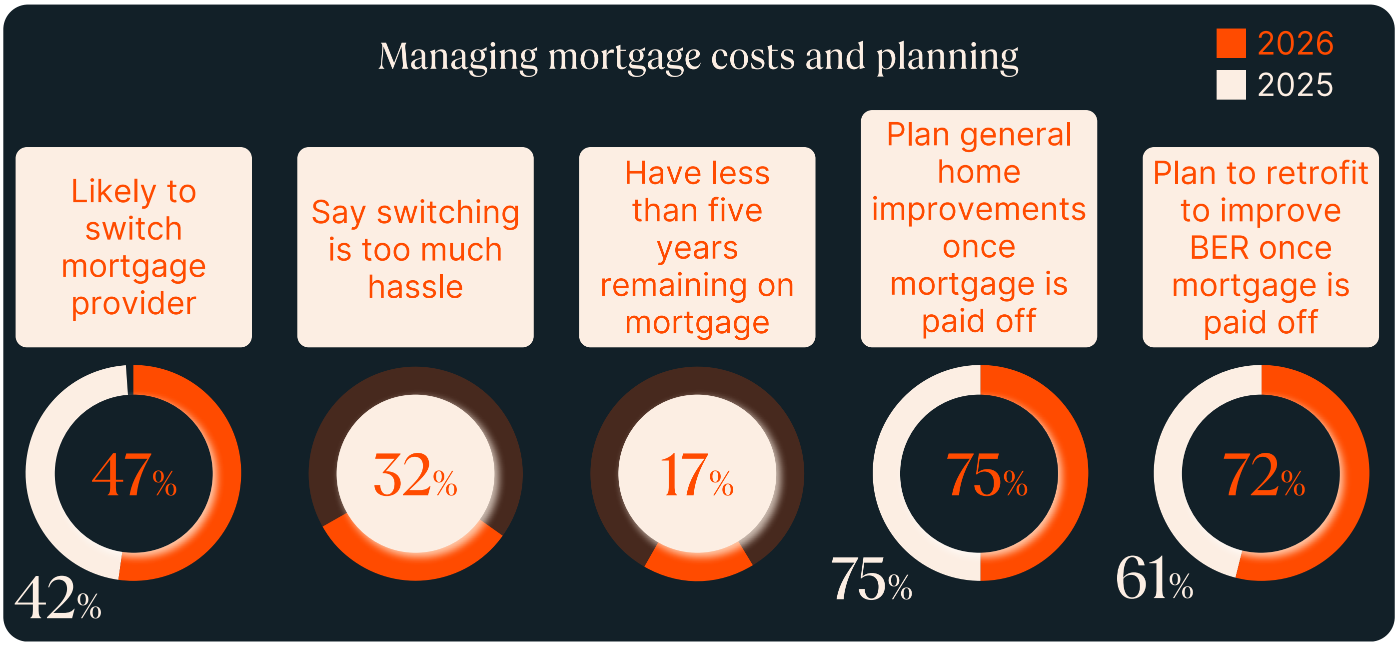
Just over half of mortgage holders (52%) know their LTV ratio. However, awareness of the financial benefit remains limited: around one-third know their LTV and understand that it could help reduce repayments, while many others either do not know their ratio or are unaware of the potential savings available.

Looking Beyond Monthly Repayments

Mortgage holders are becoming increasingly proactive in managing their borrowing, with almost half (47%) saying they are likely to switch provider, up from 42% last year. However, reluctance to switch is driven more by perceived effort than loyalty. Among those unlikely to switch, 35% say they are happy with their current provider, while 32% believe switching would involve too much hassle.

A further 22% doubt the savings would justify the effort, while 14% say they do not know how to switch.

This means the opportunity extends beyond rates. It is also about making the switching process feel easier, clearer and more worthwhile for borrowers who may benefit but are discouraged by perceived complexity.



For those nearing the end of their mortgage term, attention is increasingly turning to future investment in the home. Around one in six mortgage holders (17%) have less than five years remaining on their mortgage, and most plan to reinvest the money freed up once repayments end.

Home improvements remain the most popular post-mortgage plan, with 75% intending to upgrade their property. However, the standout trend is retrofitting, with 72% planning works to improve their BER rating, up from 61% in 2025. This is the largest increase across all post-mortgage intentions.

This suggests mortgage holders are increasingly focused not only on reducing repayments today, but also on how they can improve and future-proof their homes once their mortgage is paid off.

Housing, Homeownership and the Years Ahead

Ireland's housing story in 2026 is not only about pressure; it is also about adaptation. Homeownership remains a powerful aspiration, but the route to housing security is becoming more varied, more practical and more dependent on the supports, knowledge and financial choices available to consumers.

For younger adults, this means recalibrating expectations and becoming more open to alternatives such as long-term renting or social housing. For buyers, it means saving earlier, relying more on family support, and becoming more informed about mortgage choices and housing supports. For homeowners, it means looking at energy efficiency, retrofitting and mortgage management as ways to protect long-term value and affordability.

The central message is clear: Irish consumers remain committed to the idea of a secure home, but they are pursuing that goal in more flexible and considered ways. The challenge for the years ahead will be to make those pathways easier to understand, easier to access and easier to act on.

Methodology

In this edition of Reflecting Ireland, we explore how Irish consumers are navigating today's housing market, their path to homeownership, and the steps they are taking to manage mortgage costs and improve their homes for the future.

Survey Information

- An online survey of 1,000 adults aged 18+ living in the Republic of Ireland.
- Nationally representative sample based on age, gender, region and social class.
- Margin of error: ±3.02% at the 95% confidence level.
- Fieldwork carried out between 18 May and 8 June 2026.

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- Property prices rising 11 times faster than wages, with typical value now €370,000 | Irish Independent
- Annual house price growth eases to 6.2% in April | CSO, via RTÉ

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Altogether
more human