



national consumer agency
gníomhaireacht náisiúnta tomhaltóirí

putting consumers first

National Consumer Agency

Market Research Findings: Consumer Empowerment and Complaints

August 2011

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1 Introduction and Methodology

In May and June 2011 Amárach Research continued the programme of consumer research conducted on behalf of the National Consumer Agency with a view to monitoring, analysing and recording patterns of consumer behaviour and experiences in Ireland.

A key feature of how this market research is used involves the comparison of data collected in previous iterations (see Table 1 below), with that reporting on the current consumer landscape. This comparison provides a valuable time-series.

Table 1 Previous Waves of Market Research

Survey	Conducted
Benchmark	November/December 2007
Wave 1	August 2008
Wave 2	November/December 2008
Wave 3	May/June 2009
Wave 4	November/December 2009
Wave 5	June 2010
Wave 6	November/December 2010

The latest research, consistent with previous surveys, was conducted by means of face-to-face interviewing with 1,000 people between the ages of 15 to 74. To ensure that the data is nationally representative, quotas were applied on the basis of age, gender, social class and region. Interviews were conducted over a four-week period in May and June 2011.

The Agency's programme of market research explores a wide range of consumer behaviour and experiences in Ireland, including:

- The level of consumer empowerment, awareness of consumer rights and the propensity to complain

- Consumer behaviour with regard to shopping and pricing
- Consumers' response to the recession and household budgeting
- Trends in switching goods / service providers and consumer experience with regard to direct selling

The findings of the market research are compiled across four volumes. This report details the results relating to Irish consumers' experiences and attitudes with regard to consumer empowerment and complaints.

PowerPoint versions of the slides in this report, in addition to details of all of the Agency's research activities, are available at http://www.nca.ie/eng/Research_Zone/Reports/.

2 Consumer Rights Awareness Levels

Figure 1 presents consumers' stated levels of confidence about their rights when buying goods and services from shops and other businesses. Data is presented for seven comparable iterations of research.

Almost 4 in 5 (78%) respondents feel confident of their rights as a consumer, an increase of 3 percentage points on the November/December 2010 figure and the highest level recorded to date. The number of consumers who claim not to be confident of their rights as a consumer continues to fall, reaching its lowest level to date of just 1 in 10 (10%).

Figure 1 Confidence About Rights as a Consumer

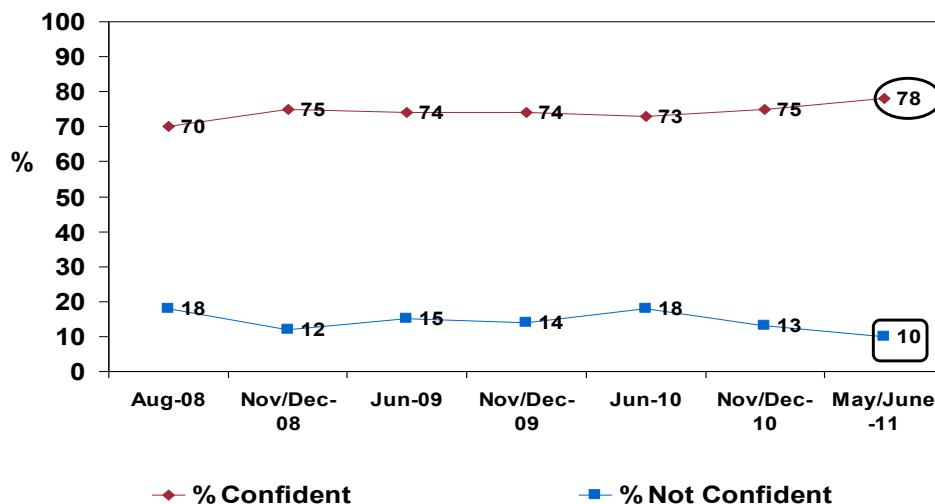
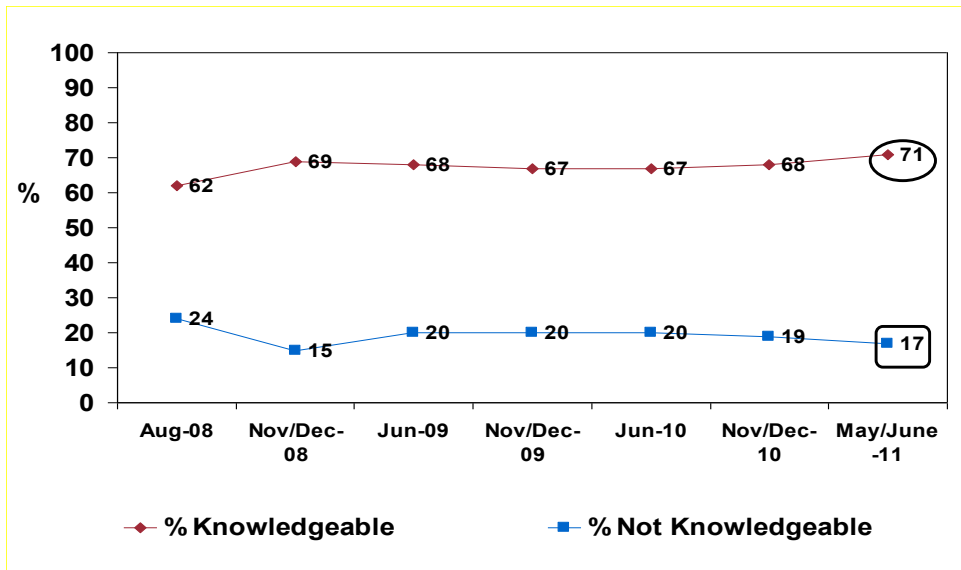


Figure 2 examines respondents declared knowledge of their consumer rights, 71% of consumers claim to be knowledgeable about their consumer rights, up 3 percentage points on November/December 2010 figure, while 17% of respondents feel they are not knowledgeable of their consumer rights, a decrease of 2 percentage points from the previous wave of market research.

Figure 2 Knowledge About Consumer Rights



As can be seen in Figure 3 below, there is an increase of 2 percentage points in the number of consumers who feel protected in respect of their consumer’s rights which has increased to just over 7 in 10 (71%). Fewer than 1 in 10 (8%) respondents stated that they do not feel protected in respect of their consumer rights, the lowest level recorded to date.

Figure 3 Protected Regarding Consumer Rights

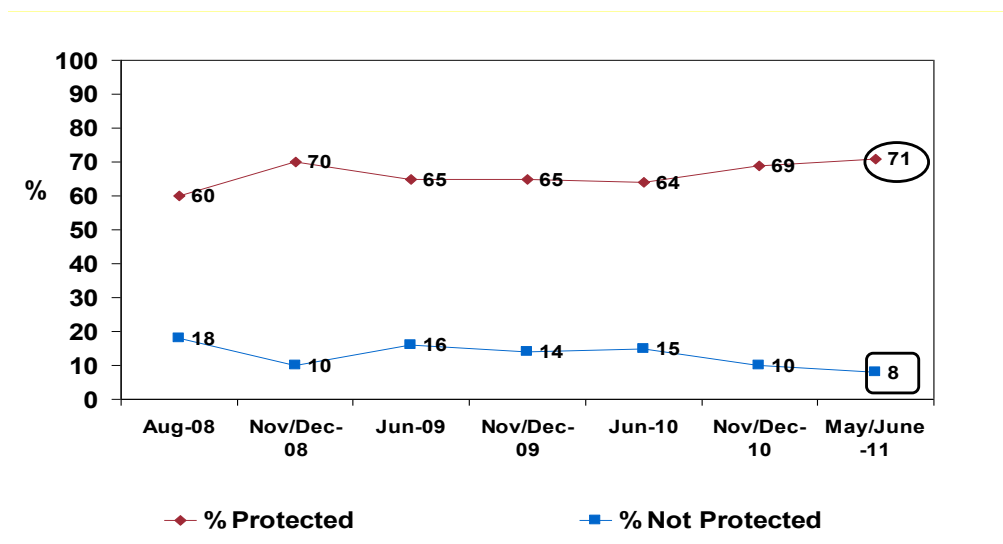


Figure 4 presents the results of the three key empowerment indicators by demographic profile. A red circle denotes a significant difference higher than the total sample while a blue square highlights groups for whom results are significantly lower than the total sample.

It can be seen that the 15-24 year old age group and the socio economic grouping C2DE poll significantly lower than the overall sample in respect of confidence, knowledge and feeling protected with regard to their consumer rights. Females, the socio economic grouping ABC1 and those responsible for the main grocery shop recorded higher than average levels of consumer confidence, knowledge and protection.

Figure 4 Summary of Empowerment

	Confident	Not Confident	Knowledgeable	Not Knowledgeable	Protected	Not Protected
Overall	78%	10%	71%	17%	71%	8%
Male	73%	12%	65%	20%	70%	7%
Female	82%	8%	76%	15%	72%	10%
15-24	65%	15%	54%	27%	56%	7%
25-34	79%	7%	76%	14%	74%	6%
35-44	84%	9%	74%	15%	76%	8%
45-54	81%	8%	78%	13%	76%	10%
55+	78%	12%	71%	17%	73%	10%
ABC1/F50+	82%	9%	76%	13%	79%	6%
C2DE/F50-	74%	12%	66%	21%	64%	10%
Responsible for main shop	84%	8%	77%	14%	73%	10%
Not responsible for main shop	72%	13%	64%	20%	69%	6%

3 Making Complaints

Figure 5 presents data relating to the number of Irish consumers who would/would not be prepared to complain if a problem arose. Figures in brackets refer to the previous wave of market research conducted in November/December 2010.

The number of consumers willing to complain if the need arose has increased by 8 percentage points since November/December 2010, to 85%. From detailed data (not shown), of those willing to complain the numbers are found to be highest amongst those responsible for the main grocery shop (90%), 35-54 year olds (91%), and those asserting to be knowledgeable, confident and protected in regards to their consumer rights (90%).

Figure 5 Propensity to Complain

As a consumer would you be prepared to complain if a problem had occurred or you are dissatisfied with a good or service you have purchased?

(Base: All aged 15-74 – 1,000)

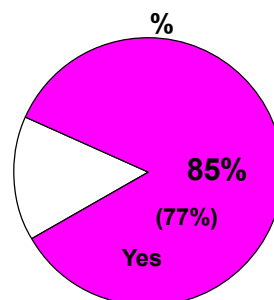
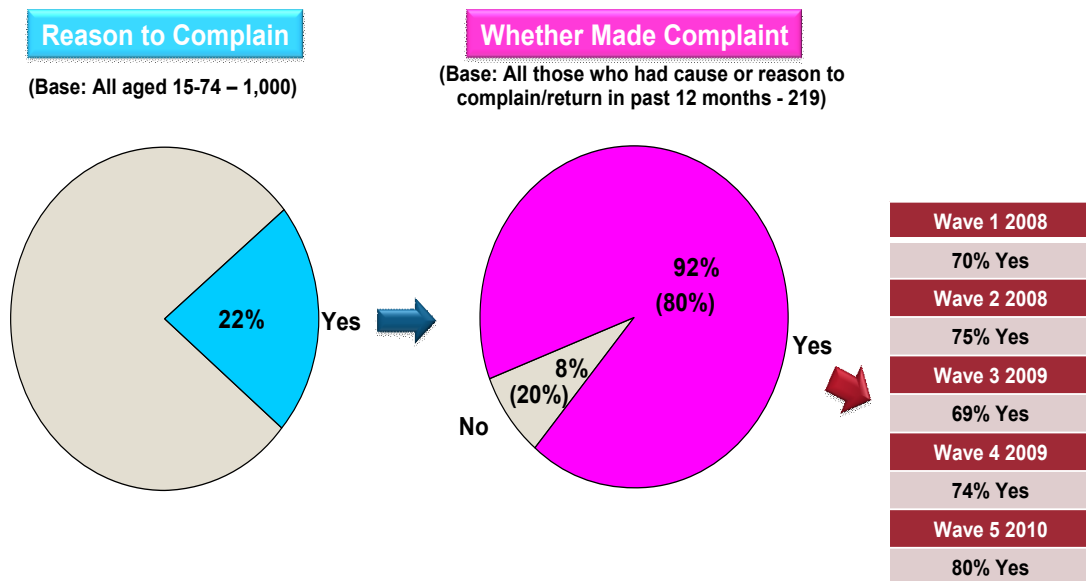


Figure 6 presents the results of whether consumers actually made a complaint when they had a reason to do so. In the past twelve months, 22% of Irish consumers had reason to complain and of those over 9 in 10 (92%) actually made a complaint.

From detailed data (not shown), consumers who made complaints within the last year when they had reason to do so are found to be higher amongst women (95%), the 35-44 year old age group (94%), the over 45s (95%) and those responsible for the main grocery shop (94%).

Figure 6 Whether Complaint Made When had Reason to Do So



For consumers who had made a complaint within the last 12 months, shown in Figure 7, over 3 in 4 consumers (78%) found the process easy an increase of 3 percentage points on the last wave (75%); of those 32% found the process very easy; just under 1 in 5 (18%) found the process difficult.

Figure 7 Assessment of the Complaints Process

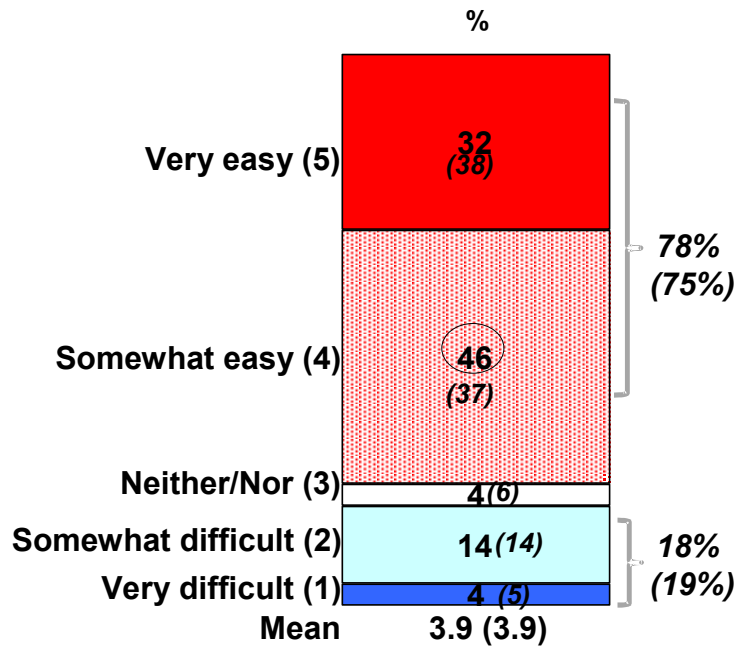
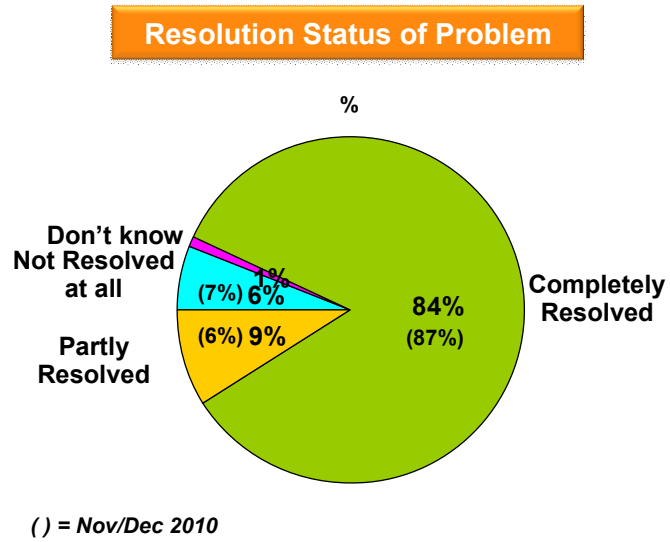


Figure 8 reveals of those who made a complaint in the past 12 months, 84% have had the issue completely resolved, a 3 percentage point drop from November/December 2010 figure which was the highest level recorded in the series of research. Consumers who have had their complaint partially resolved increased from 6% to 9%.

Figure 8 Resolution Status of Problem

(Base: All those who made a complaint/return - 202)



4 Key Points

In May and June 2011 the National Consumer Agency continued its programme of consumer research with a view to monitoring, analysing and recording patterns of consumer behaviour and experiences in Ireland. The research, consistent with previous surveys, was conducted by means of face-to-face interviewing with a nationally representative sample of 1,000 people between the ages of 15 to 74. This report presented the results relating to Irish consumers' empowerment and complaints.

- Nearly 4 in 5 (78%) consumers feel confident in respect of their consumer rights. 10% do not feel confident in relation to consumer rights, the lowest level recorded in the series of research.
- 71% of consumers feel knowledgeable in relation to their consumer rights an increase of 3 percentage points from the previous wave with 17% stating that they are not knowledgeable of their rights. A similar proportion, 71% feel protected by their consumer rights, with the numbers that do not feel protected at 8% the lowest level recorded to date.
- Examining consumer behaviour and experiences with the complaints process, an increase of 8 percentage points to 85% has been observed in the number willing to complain when they have cause or reason to do so.
- The number with cause or reason to complain or return an item and actually doing so reached a record high of 92% in the May/June wave of research, an increase of 12 percentage points from the November/December 2010 research.
- 78% of those who complained found the process easy and 84% of those who complained had their problem completely resolved, with a further 9% having their complaint partially resolved.