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Reflecting Ireland

An insight into consumer
behavioural change in Ireland



Executive Summary

As we approach the busiest shopping period of the year beginning with Black Friday and extending to Christmas, fraudsters will sense opportunity. At a time of heightened anxiety and rising cost of living, falling victim to fraud can have a devastating impact both emotionally and financially.

In this edition of Reflecting Ireland, we focus on ten of the most common types of financial fraud in Ireland (1). We look at how many people have experienced attempts or have been victims, which demographics are most likely to fall victim, and the average amounts that are taken in a successful fraud. Looking at behaviours, we also discover what actions we take to protect ourselves and who we are most likely to tell after we have been targeted.

As online financial fraud is on the increase, we also look at our online shopping behaviour and the steps we take to reduce our risk when conducting transactions online.

Financial fraud on the increase:

- Three quarters of us (75%) have experienced an attempted financial fraud and over a quarter (27%) have been victims. Victims are more likely to be young (under 45, particularly Millennials), men and living in Dublin or urban areas.
- The most common types of financial fraud are vishing (phone call / voice message), smishing (text message) and phishing (email). Other common scams relate to lottery wins, inheritance, investment, romance, tickets sales or property rental.
- Almost two thirds (64%) of incidents involve amounts of €500 or less, 15% amounts of €501-€1,000, 12% amounts of €1,001-€5,000, and 10% amounts greater than €5,000.
- Advice on fraud is having an impact. Two thirds (65%) say we would not trust an unsolicited call, text or email even if it came from a well-known brand, and over 8 out of 10 (84%) agree their bank would never send a text message asking them to click on a link.
- To protect against the risk on fraud, half of us (51%) always or sometimes avoid shopping online and 63% always or sometimes pay by cash rather than card.
- Older people are much more likely to check their bank accounts weekly for evidence of fraud; 80% of those aged 65+ do so vs. 40% of 18-24 year olds.

Pessimism about the economy:

- Despite the resilience of the economy at a national level (2), and Ireland achieving second position as one of the best countries to live in 2022 (3), sentiment at an individual level remains downbeat.
- Almost two thirds (64%) feel worse off than this time last year and only 1 in 10 (11%) feel better off. People are relatively less pessimistic about the year ahead with 55% expecting to be worse off, and 13% better off. This mirrors how we felt in 2013.
- Seven out of 10 (70%) expect the national economy to get worse over the coming year, fewer than 1 in 10 expect it to improve. This mirrors how we felt in 2009, although we have yet to reach the peak levels of negativity seen in the immediate aftermath of the financial crash.
- Our national mood is more downbeat (63%) than positive (37%). The dominant mood is anxiety (28%), now at its highest level since 2017 and three times as high as it was then.
- For 8 out of 10 (83%) the cost of living is the most pressing issue to be addressed in Ireland today. This is followed by housing issues; the price of housing (47%), homelessness (45%) and affordable rents (33%), and access to quality healthcare (44%). Covid-19, a key concern this time last year, is now a key issue for only 1 in 10 (9%).

The Reflecting Ireland research series was conducted among a nationally representative sample of 1,114 adults aged 18+ in the Republic of Ireland. Interviews were carried out between October 14th - October 28th 2022.

Financial fraud on the increase

Not only is financial fraud on the rise, it's growing fast. The statistics say so, and so do our respondents. In the 12 months to June 2022, a total of 16,202 incidents were reported (4). This is an increase of 43% over the previous year and more than three times the level reported 5 years ago.

This increase was largely driven by unauthorised transactions and attempts to obtain personal or banking information online or by phone.

16,202
Incidents reported



Experience of financial fraud is widespread in Ireland. Three quarters of us (75%) have experienced an attempted fraud and over a quarter of us (27%) have been victims. Of those that have been victims of a financial fraud, 3 in 10 (30%) were victims within the last 6 months and almost 6 in 10 (57%) within the past year.

Many of us (44%) have noticed a marked increase in recent months in the number of people we know who have been victims of financial fraud.

Lifetime

3 in 4

of us have experienced an attempted fraud

Over **1 in 4**

have been victims of fraud

Last 12 Months

Over **1 in 7**

of us have been victims of fraud in the last year

Anyone can be a victim

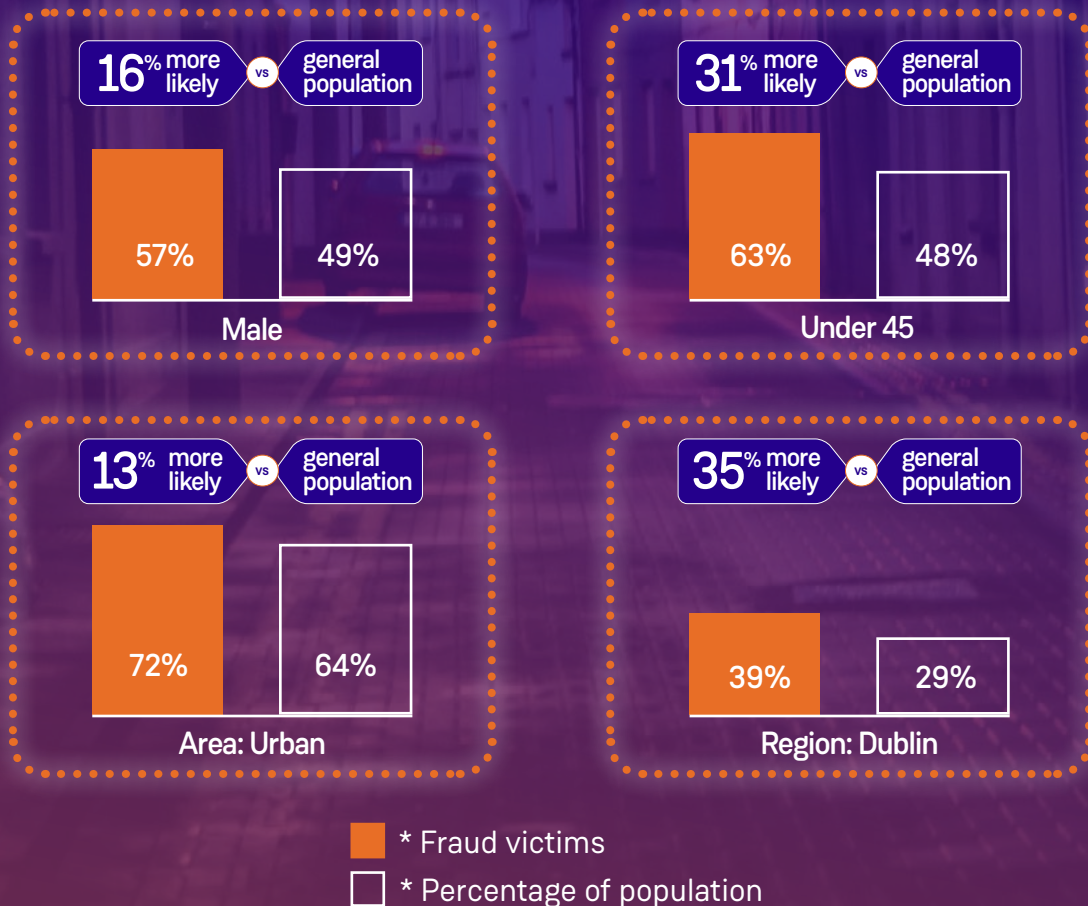
Anyone can become a victim of financial fraud. Because fraud often works at an emotional level, we are all vulnerable to it at different times. Ironically what makes us most vulnerable is thinking it can't happen to us. That said, our research reveals some interesting patterns.

Victims of financial fraud are more likely to be young (under 45, particularly Millennials), men and living in Dublin or urban areas. Research conducted in the UK in 2021 (5) identified a similar pattern, and also found that the general public incorrectly assumed that older people were more likely to be victims of scams, whereas the opposite is true.

Those that have never experienced fraud are more likely to be older (45+) and living outside Dublin or in rural areas. Older people can still be victims of scams, but while those aged over 45 make up over half the adult population (52%), they account for 37% of victims. Those aged over 65 account for 18% of the population, but almost half that proportion (11%) of victims.

Fraud Victims

Men, those under 45 and people living in urban areas are disproportionate victims of financial fraud.



Which types of fraud are most common – and most successful?

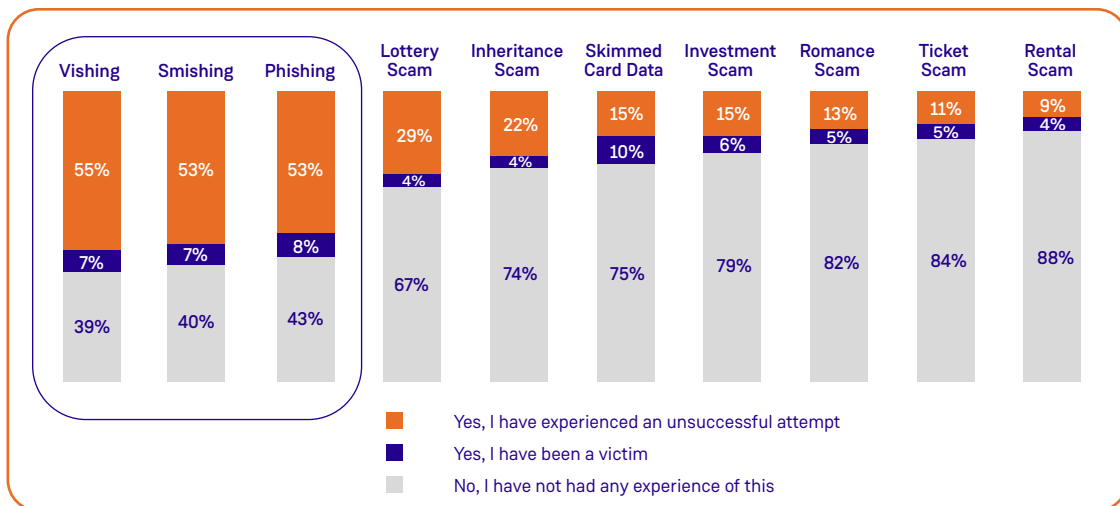
Fraud is becoming more sophisticated

According to our research, 8 out of 10 (82%) believe that financial fraud is becoming more sophisticated and difficult to spot, and that's true. Fraudsters are upping their game. They strive to stay one step ahead of us, developing new and more creative ways to dupe us.

While online fraud is on the rise, it is still through our phones that most attempts at fraud are made.

The most common types of attempted financial fraud in Ireland are vishing (phone call/voice message) and smishing (text message), closely followed by phishing (email). Between 57% and 62% of us have experience of these.

Other common types of fraud include scams relating to lottery wins, inheritance, investment, romance, tickets sales or property rental. These are experienced by fewer than a third of us, ranging from 13% of us for rental scams to 33% for lottery scams.



The most common attempted frauds are not necessarily the most successful.

The most successful, based on those people are most likely to fall victim to, is skimmed card data where 40% of those targeted lose money even if losses are later reimbursed. In contrast, the most commonly attempted frauds are less successful with vishing at 11%, smishing at 12% and phishing at 14%.

The most successful types of fraud (victims as % of attempts):

40% 

Skimmed card data

31% 

Ticket scam

31% 

Rental scam

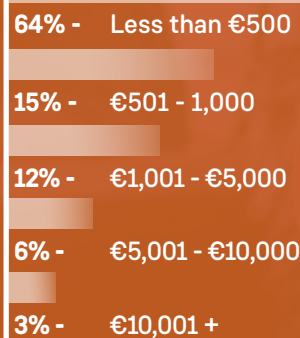
The cost of fraud

The financial cost

Almost two thirds (64%) of financial fraud incidents involve amounts of €500 or less. However losses can be much higher. During the first half of this year, text message scams cost victims an average of €1,700 (6). Our research indicates that 15% of fraud incidents involve amounts of €501-€1,000, 12% amounts of €1,001-€5,000, and 10% amounts greater than €5,000.

Amounts of €500 or less are typical of the most commonly attempted frauds, vishing, smishing and phishing, and also of skimmed card data and ticket scams.

Amount of money that was taken during successful fraud attempt



The emotional cost

In addition to financial loss, there is also an emotional impact on victims of fraud. Many victims feel shame or embarrassment at having been caught out and sometimes this can lead to a reluctance to admit what has happened or to report it.

Certain scams prey on the emotionally vulnerable. Romance scams target people that are feeling lonely, and although one of the less common scams, they are the most lucrative. This tallies with research from elsewhere (7,8).



While across all types of fraud amounts greater than **€500** account for approximately a third of cases, this figure almost doubles for romance scams.

Where we stand on responsibility and prevention

In a world where scams are becoming more sophisticated, 86% of us believe that more needs to be done to drive awareness of financial fraud and protect people from it. Over 8 out of 10 people feel technology companies (85%), the Government (83%) and banks (83%) should each do more to protect people from fraudulent practices.

How we view our response to fraud



Many feel there is an **onus on individuals** to take some responsibility, with half (51%) agreeing that fraudsters succeed because people don't take adequate steps to protect their financial security. This doesn't stretch as far as believing that anyone caught out is responsible for their own actions though, almost half (47%) disagree with this.





Advice on fraud is having an impact

While over half of us (56%) feel confident we would know exactly what to do if we were the target of a financial fraud, almost 1 in 5 of us (18%) don't.

There is evidence that advice about protecting ourselves from fraudulent practices is having an impact, with two thirds of us (65%) saying we would not trust an unsolicited call, text or email even if it came from a well-known brand, and over 8 out of 10 (84%) agreeing their bank would never send a text message asking them to click on a link.

8 of 10
agree their bank would never send a message asking them to click on a link

How Permanent TSB addresses fraud and promotes awareness

- Dedicated fraud team available for customers 24/7** 
- Regular engagement with FraudSMART on key fraud trends** 
- All new account opening letters warn customers of fraud** 
- Frequent customer updates via web, email, social and in-app** 

Buyer Beware – How We Shop

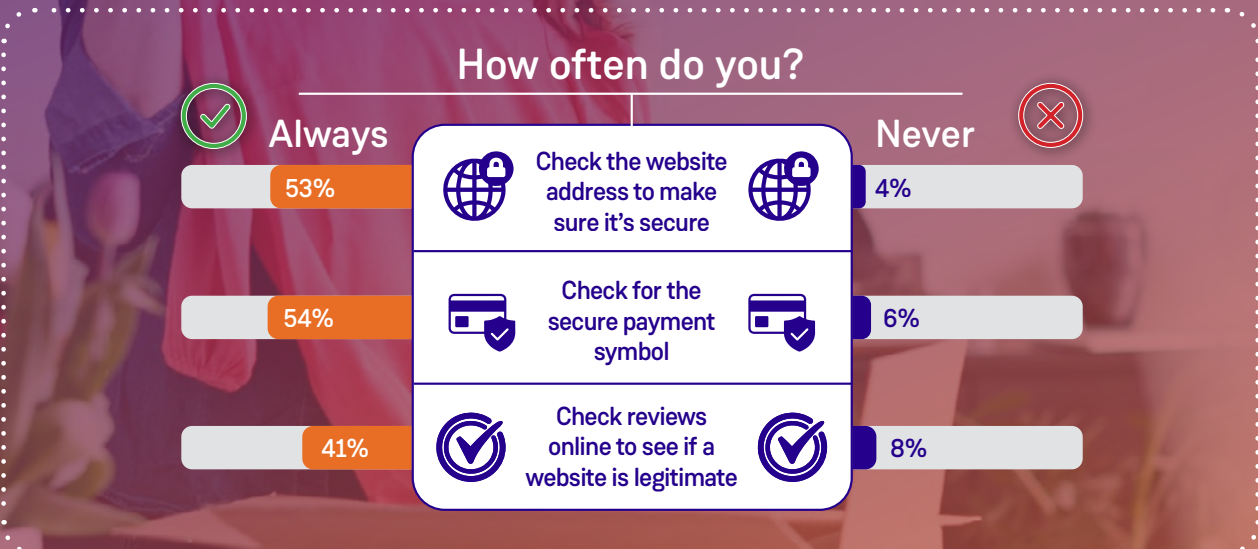
A growing online market for fraudsters

More people are now shopping online, leading to a natural increase in the number of potential victims that fraudsters can target. Almost a quarter of us (23%) shop online every week, and almost 6 out of 10 (58%) every month, rising to 69% among the under 45s.

Only 2% of us say we never shop online, with this being three times more common (6%) among those aged 65+.

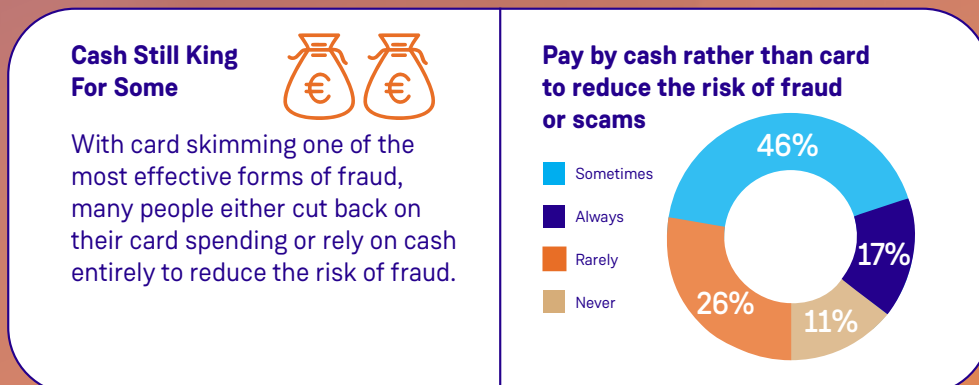
A checklist for fraud prevention

With more of us now shopping online, what steps are we taking to make sure the websites we are using are legitimate?



Half of us cut back on our online shopping to reduce the risk of fraud

To reduce the risk of fraud or scams, half of us either sometimes (39%) or always (12%) avoid shopping online. However, the flip side of this is that another half (49%) would rarely or never take this step. Those most likely to avoid online shopping are men (56% vs. 46% for women) and older people (61% among 55+ versus 46% among under 55s).

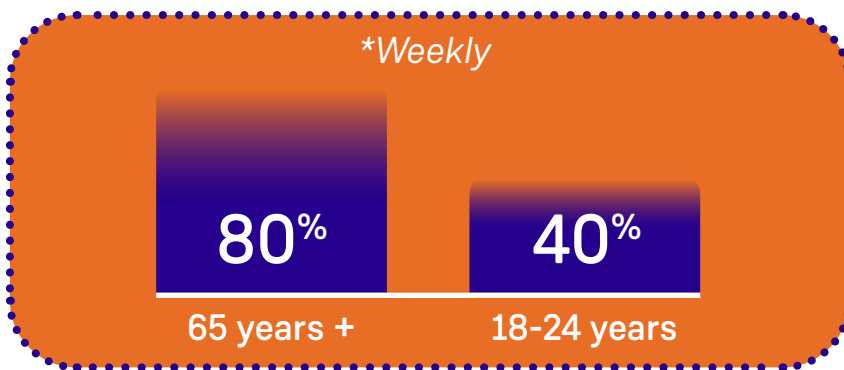


Vigilance and Reporting

How we stay vigilant

Almost two thirds of us (64%) check our bank account statement for evidence of fraud at least weekly, while almost 9 out of 10 (88%) do so at least monthly. There is a strong relationship with age. Older people are much more likely to check their bank accounts frequently; 80% of those aged 65+ check their bank accounts every week, and 72% of those aged 55-64. In contrast, only 40% of 18-24 year olds do so, and 50% of 25-34 year olds. Among 18-24 year olds, 14% say they never check their bank account statements.

How often do you check your bank balance for evidence of fraud?



How we react

In the event of experiencing a financial fraud, 7 out of 10 of us (72%) would report it to our bank or financial institution. Half of us would report it to the Gardaí (49%) or friends and family (48%). Just over 1 in 10 of us (12%) would post on social media about it.

Those aged 55+, women and those living in rural areas are generally more likely to take the step of reporting a financial fraud.

Older age groups are more likely to report it to the Gardaí; 63% of the 55+ age group say they would do so compared to 42% of those aged under 55. Women are more likely than men to report an incident to their financial institution, 77% vs. 68% respectively, and are twice as likely to post on social media, 15% vs. 8% for men.

With only **49%** of people saying they would report an attempted fraud to Gardaí and **72%** to their financial institution, the true level of financial fraud is likely much higher than statistics show.

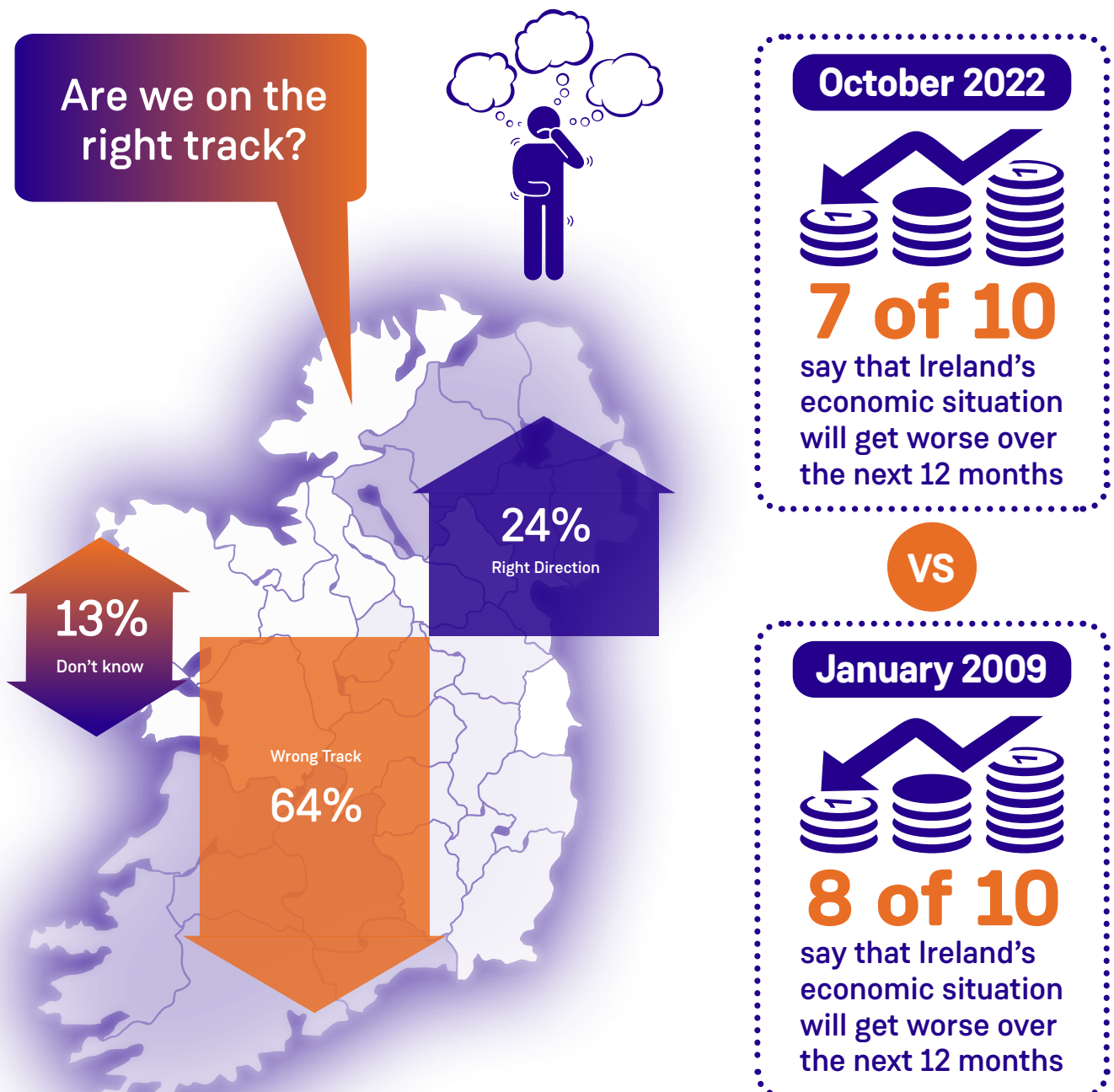


Macroeconomic Consumer Sentiment

Examining consumer sentiment on a broader level

One finding that has remained steady over the last three months is about our direction of travel as a country. 24% say we are moving in the right direction, while 64% say we are on the wrong track.

One other, perhaps more ominous, parallel is that 70% of people believe the national economic picture is going to get worse over the next 12 months. That is the highest level seen since January 2009.



The Economy: Our Personal Outlook

Consumer sentiment about the current economic situation continues to deteriorate. In six months, we've seen the number of people who say they are worse off compared to this time last year jump by a fifth, from 53% to 64%. We've also seen a sharp drop in the number of people who say they are better off versus 12 months ago, which now stands at 11% compared to 16% in the last quarter.

Looking down the line, optimism is hard to find. 55% say they will be worse off in 12 months, the highest on record since 59% agreed with this statement in December 2012. Only 13% expect to be better off this time next year, down from 21% in July. The pessimistic global picture, including warnings of recession in the UK and EU, are signalling to people that turbulent times may lie ahead.



1 in 2 of us say the cost of living is our number one concern



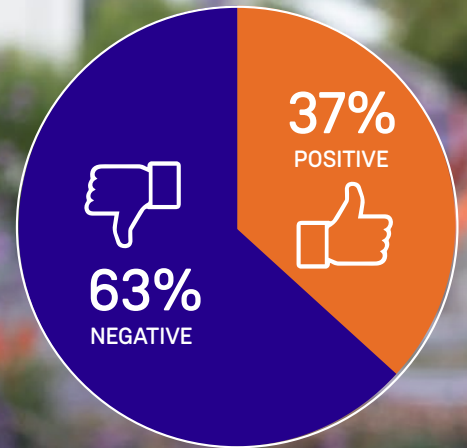
Covid in the rear-view mirror?



Only **9%** cite Covid-19 as a top three concern, down from **17%** last quarter

* includes the price of housing, affordable rents and homelessness

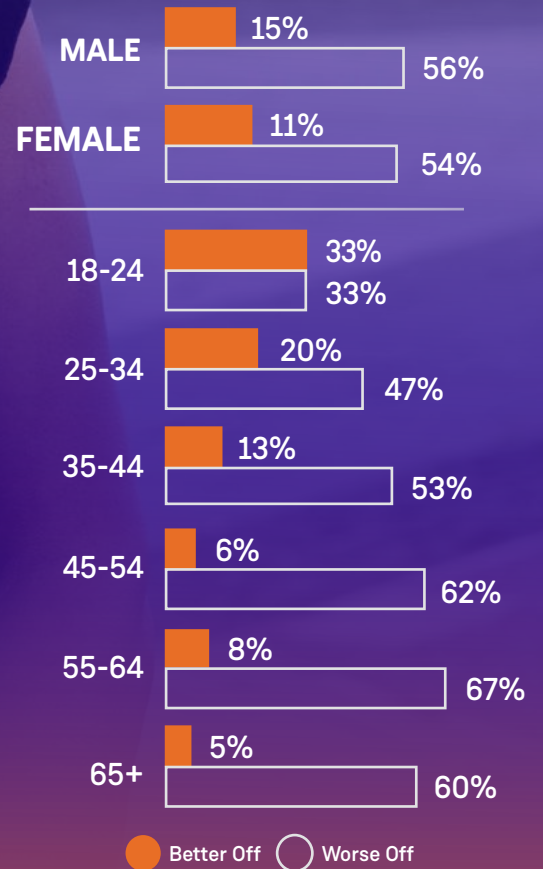
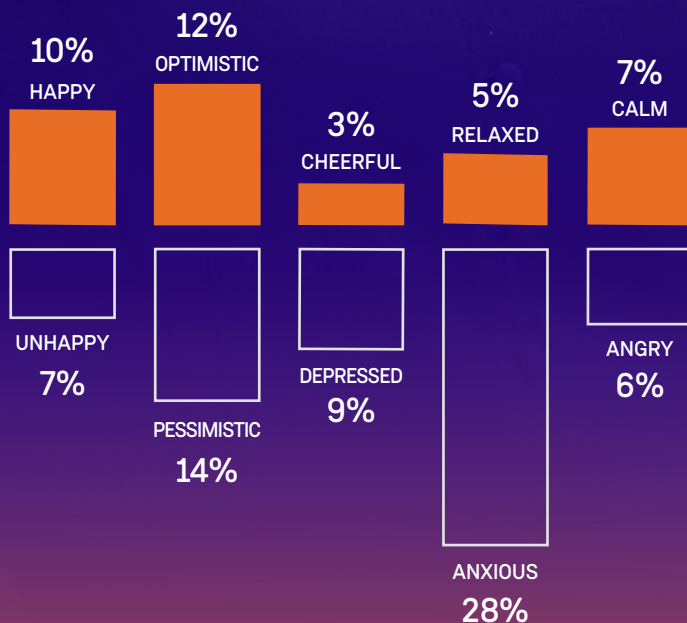
How we feel about living in Ireland nowadays



The number of people feeling anxious has grown significantly in the last three months. Almost 3 in 10 (28%) report this as their personal mood in 2022, up from 23% in the previous quarter. Only 3% describe feeling cheerful as their main emotion, while 10% say the same for feeling happy.

Young peoples' hopes about their prospects next year have plummeted. In the last quarter, 47% of those aged 18-24 expected to be better off this time next year. In the space of three months, that has dropped to 33%.

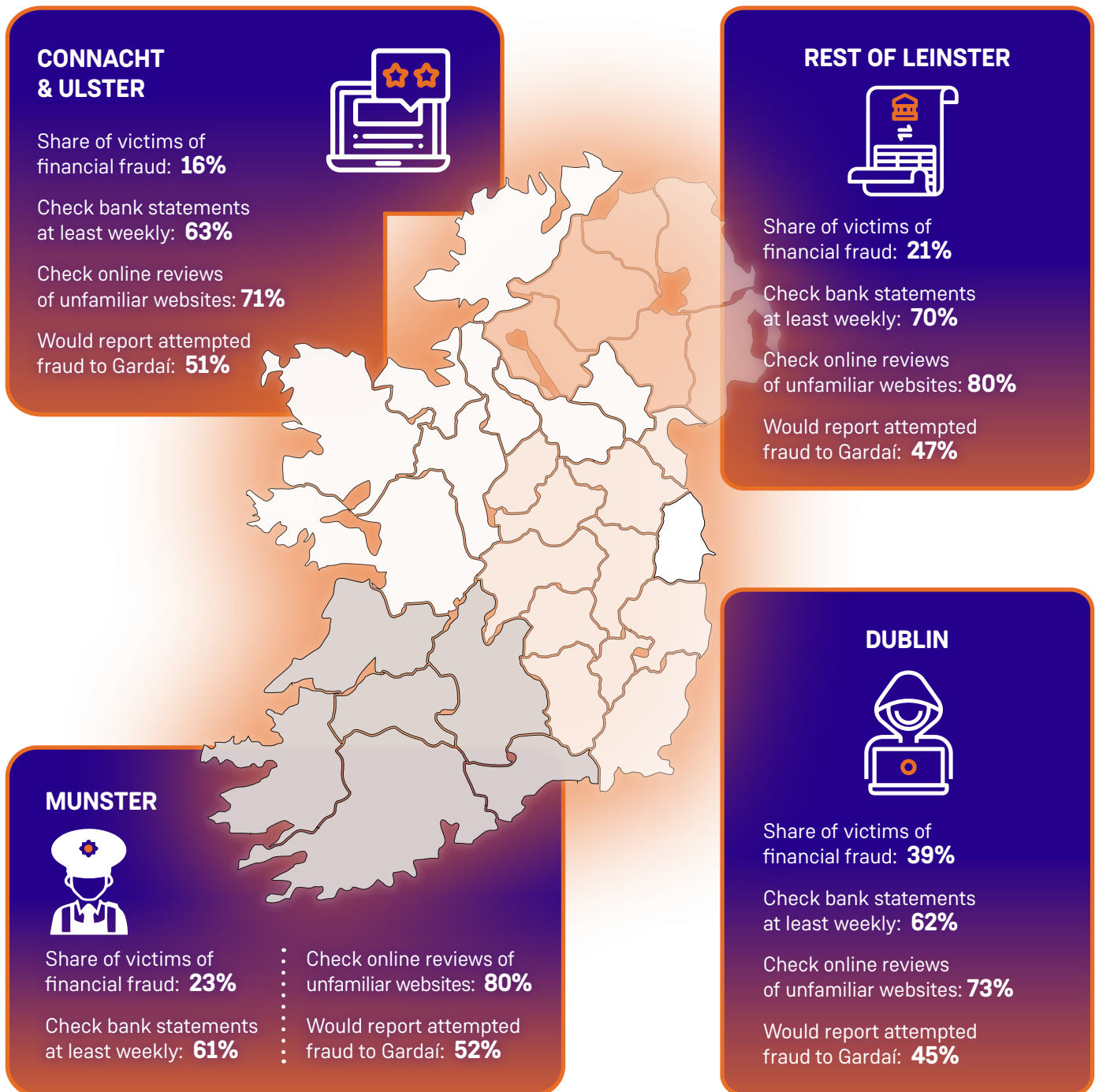
Fewer than 1 in 7 expect to be better off this time next year



Reflecting the Nation

A Regional Look at the Experience of Fraud

When looking at regional differences, the big outlier is how those living in Dublin are more likely to have been a victim of fraud than other parts of Ireland. People in Dublin are also less likely to report an instance of fraud to Gardaí, while findings for the rest of Leinster suggest people there may demonstrate a greater degree of vigilance than other regions.



Methodology

Our Reflecting Ireland research series looks at how consumer behaviour is changing in Ireland.

This report is the sixth in our series and focuses on our attitudes and behaviours towards fraud. We look at how we as a country experience financial fraud, and our attitudes and behaviours towards it.

For help, support and guidance around how to stay safe and avoid fraud scams, please check out our Fraud and Financial Crime hub on permanenttsb.ie



FraudSMART.
Informed. Alert. Secure.

Visit fraudsmart.ie for more information or advice on fraud prevention and awareness.

- Interviews were conducted online among a sample of those aged 18+.
- Quota controls were set on gender, age, social class and region to mirror the 18+ population profile.
- 1,114 interviews were conducted in total.
- Interviews were carried out between October 14th - October 28th 2022.
- Data weighted to reflect the adult population aged 18+.
- The margin of error for this research is +/- 3.1%.

For further information, contact;


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 **behaviour wise**

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