

Exploring Sustainable Household Consumption in Ireland: A comparative overview of urban-rural and cross cultural trends



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The Problem....

- "the combined impact of global domestic energy consumption... a major contributor to environmental pressures" (OECD, 2002).
- Domestic consumption levels ...increasing dramatically worldwide...
 - EU -domestic energy consumption has grown by one-third between 1990-2002 (OECD, 2001; EEA, 2005).
 - Ireland the residential sector's Total Primary Energy Requirement increased by 31% between 1990 and 2004

Challenges for Sustainable Consumption in the Irish Context:

Energy

- Energy accounts for 66% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions
- High import dependency (91%) and low renewable energy

Water

- A lack of investment in infrastructure and very high reported levels of water leakage - up to 55% in certain areas (EPA 2005)

Transport

- Ireland amongst the most car dependent societies in Europe (Gkartzios & Scott, 2007).
- The complex social, cultural, economic and environmental consequences of car-dependency... vulnerable groups such as car-less households and the rural elderly in particular, (McDonagh, 2006; O' Shea, 2008).

Research Context:

- International household consumption studies (see Quist et al. 2001, Trentmann 2007, Tudor, Robinson, Riley, Guilbert, & Barr 2011)
- Challenges in changing consumer behaviour: evidence that behavioural change without attention to wider structural, societal and personal factors proves problematic (Burgess et al. 2002, Dolan 2002, Hinton and Goodman 2010).
- Measuring consumption patterns without attending to the means and motivations that underpin them is only a partial response

Methodology:

Quantitative methodology- a cross sectional research design

A detailed administered questionnaire survey

Sampling -

1,500 Households

Selected counties: Derry, Dublin & Galway

Geo-directory (Republic) & Pointe database (Northern Ireland)

Multi-cluster sampling

500- 250 Urban/ 250 Rural divide



(Source: Bryman, 2006)



Analysis :

Exploratory analysis of the possible relationship between place of residence and specific environmental attitudes and reported behaviours.

Early studies indicated that "rural residents appear to be less concerned about environmental problems than urbanites" (Tremblay and Dunlap 1978; Lowe and Pinhey 1982).

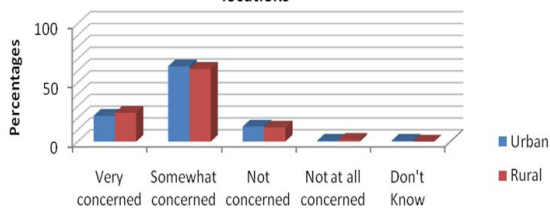
"Economic weaknesses that could lead them to favor economic development even at the expense of environmental protection"(Freudenburg,1991:2007)

"High level of environmental concern and low level of Behaviour across both urban and rural Samples"(Berenguer et al.,2005)



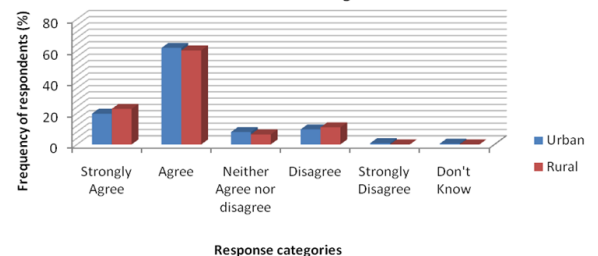
Results: Levels of Environmental Concern

Reported levels of environmental concern across the different locations

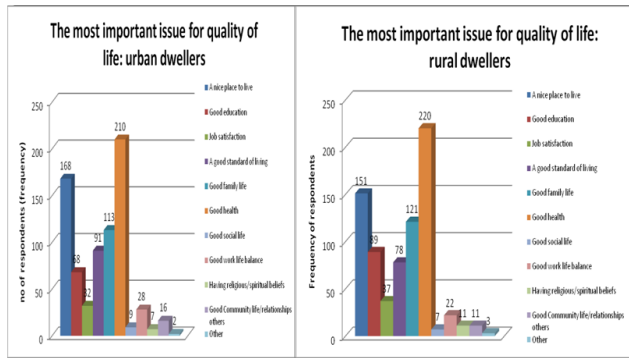


Results: Personal Attitudes

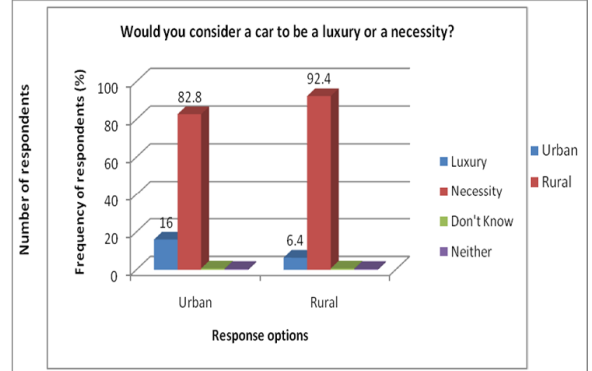
"I feel my own personal behaviour can bring about positive environmental change"



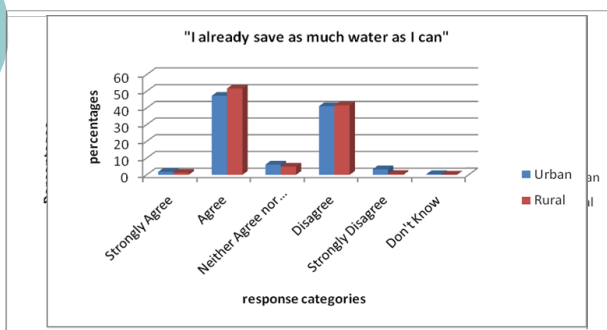
Impact of the Recent Economic Downturn on Quality of Life:



Travel Behaviours



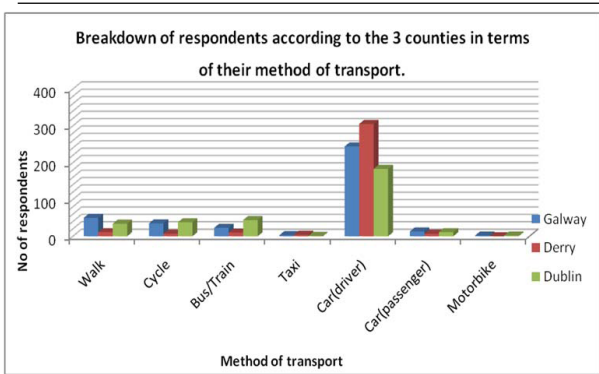
Water Usage...



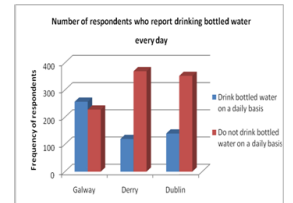
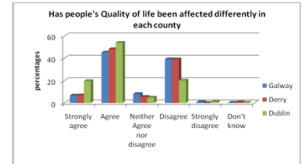
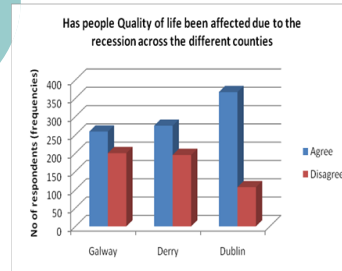
Conclusion

- No significant difference in rural-urban dwellers environmental attitudes, concerns and behaviours
- However, variations apparent across the three cross border region - impact of policies?

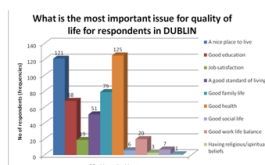
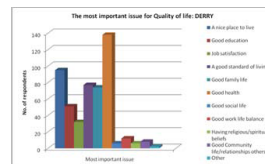
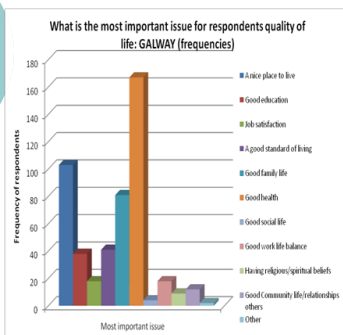
Cross Cultural Differences.....



Cross Cultural Differences.....



What Issues are Important for Quality of Life Across the Three Counties:



Conclusion

No significant differences in terms of rural-urban locations and the corresponding attitudes towards the environment as well as environmental behaviours...

Variations were apparent across the different policy contexts- i.e. the Republic and Northern Ireland.

Focus of analysis:

- Life stages,
- lifestyles investigation
- Consumer typologies approach