

# Exploring the existing and emerging trends in domestic consumption behaviour: a case study from Ireland

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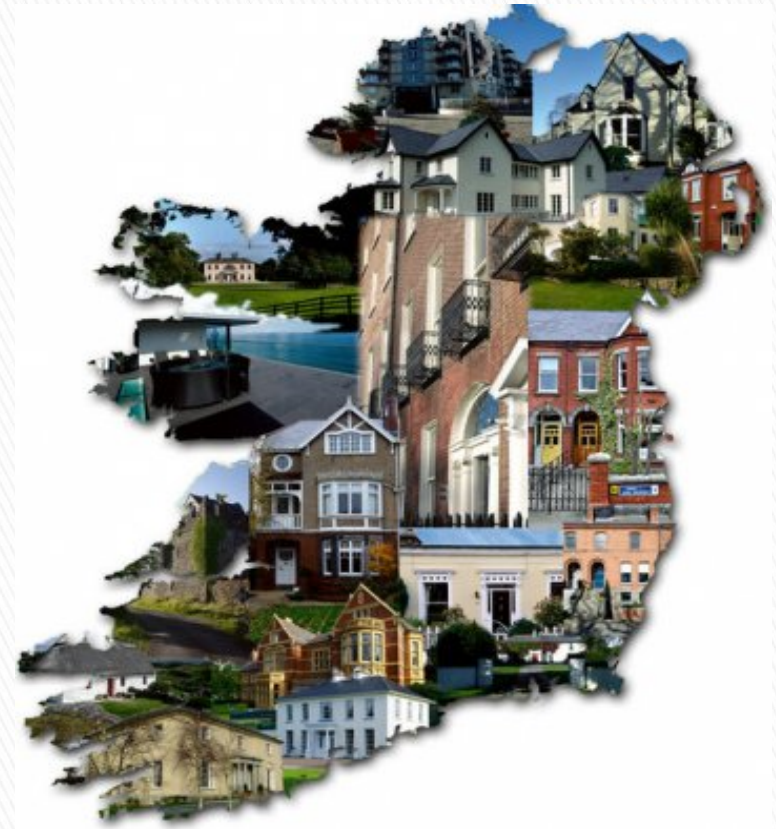
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# Presentation Structure:

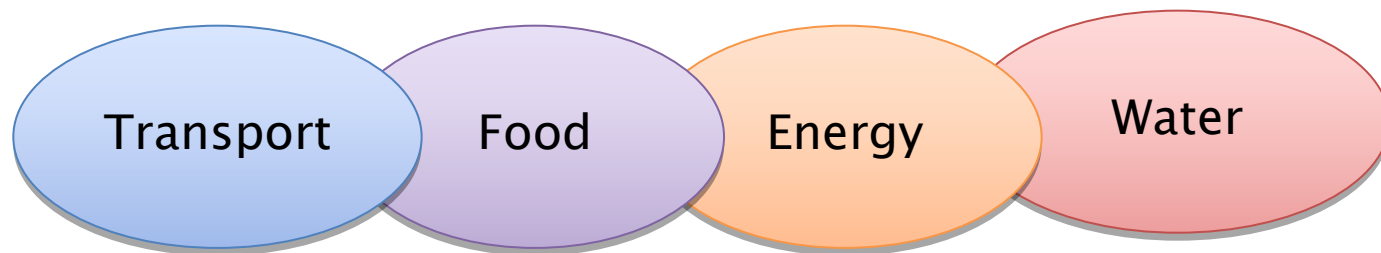
- ❑ Overview of the Consensus Project
- ❑ SC Challenges in an Irish context
- ❑ My research aims
- ❑ Methodology
- ❑ Results-
  - ❑ Current consumption trends:
    - ❑ Transport, water and energy



(Source: Irish times, 2011)

# What is the ConsEnSus Project:

- ▶ **ConsEnSus:** Consumption, Environment, Sustainability
- ▶ Four year collaborative research project
- ▶ National University of Ireland, Galway and Trinity College Dublin
- ▶ EPA funded (STRIVE Programme)
- ▶ SCRN – Sustainable Consumption Research Network
- ▶ Four key areas of household consumption that impact negatively on the environment:



# Challenges for Sustainable Consumption in the Irish Context:

## ▶ Ireland:

- ▶ Relatively young population
- ▶ North-South divide: different policy regions
- ▶ The Celtic Tiger era- impact on environment?
- ▶ High import dependency (91%) and low renewable energy.

## ▶ Energy:

- Higher energy usage per dwelling and higher CO2 emissions than the EU averages:
  - Ireland was 31% above the EU average energy usage per dwelling
  - 36% above the EU-27 average (SEI, 2008)

## ▶ Water Consumption:

- Ireland- 148 litres per person per day in comparison to Denmark (116 litres)
- High levels of water leakage; up to 55% in certain areas.... costing the state almost €1bn annually (EPA, 2008).

## ▶ Mobility:

- Ireland amongst the most car dependent societies in Europe (Gkartzios & Scott, 2007).
- An increasing reliance on the private motor vehicle as the preferred mode of transport (Clinch et al., 2002)



# Research Context:

- ▶ International household consumption studies (see *Quist et al., 2001; Trentmann, 2007; Tudor, et al., 2011*)
- ▶ Sustainable consumption research still in it's infancy in Ireland; both North and South of the border
- ▶ A lack of baseline data regarding attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles.



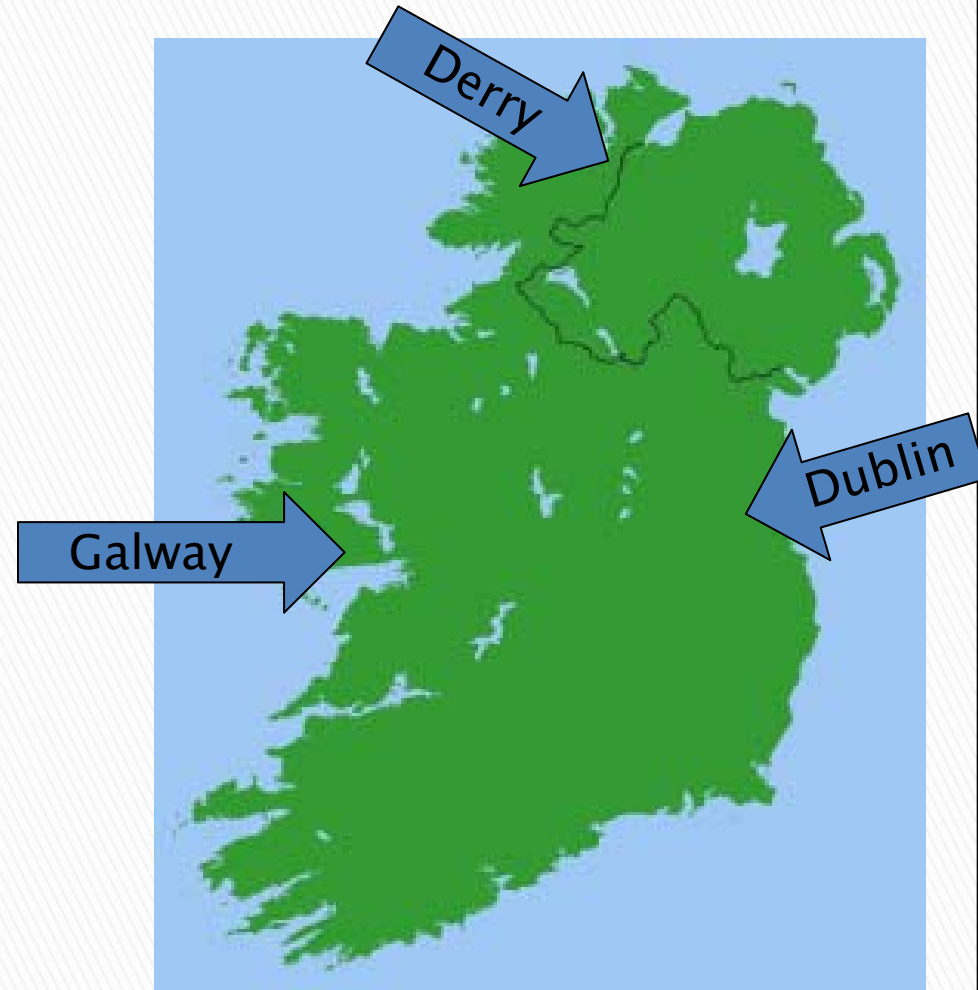
# My Research Aims:

- ▶ To examine the reported attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable household consumption and sustainable lifestyles across the island of Ireland.
- ▶ To produce the first baseline dataset of attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable consumption; both north and south of the border.



# 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) & Pointer database (Northern Ireland)
  - Multi-cluster sampling
  - 500 households- 250 Urban/ 250 Rural divide



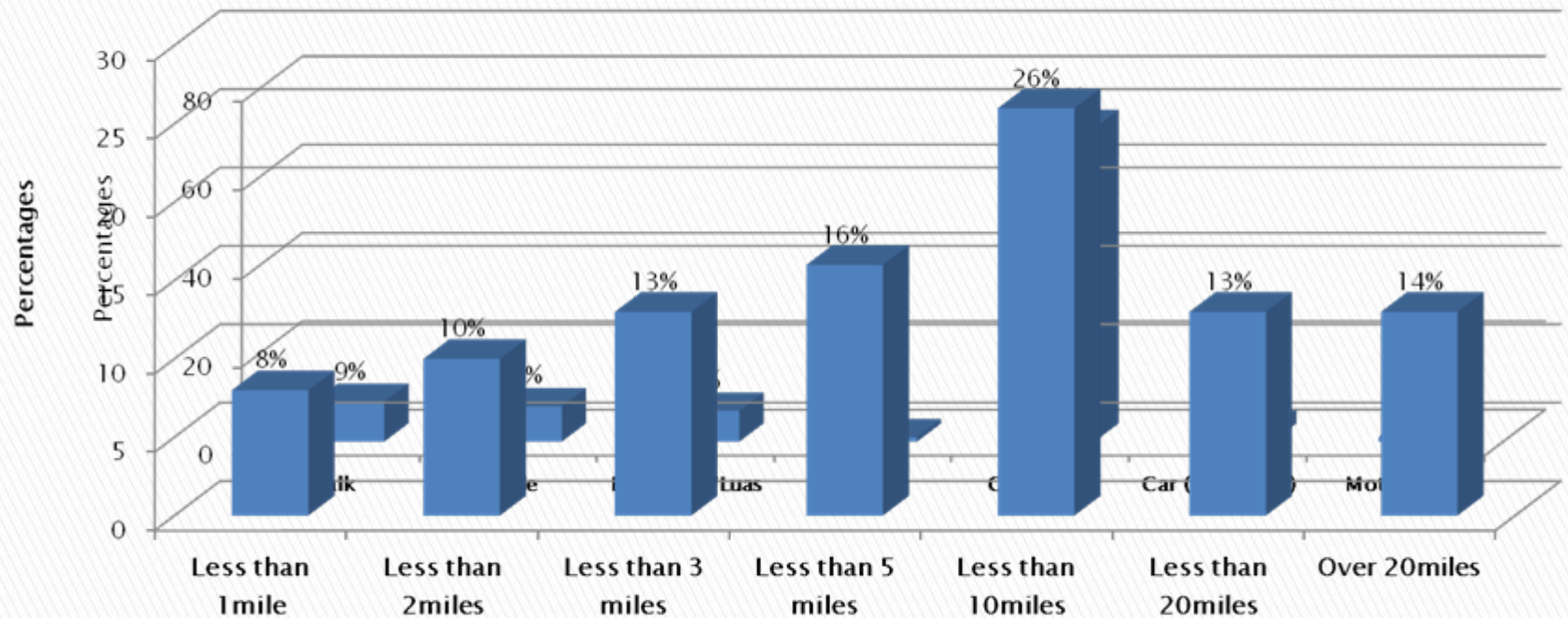
# Existing and Emerging Trends in Domestic Consumption Behaviours:

Transport, Water and Energy Behaviours

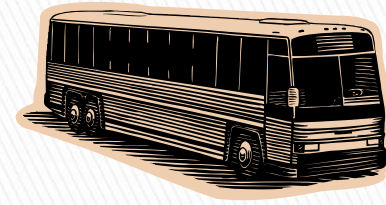
# Transport Trends:

Distance travelled to work, school or college (one way)

Method of transport used to travel to work / school/ college?



# Public Transport:



## ▶ ***Availability of public transport***

- 35% of the respondents stated that there was no public transport available for their commute work, school or college (n= 359).
- This gap in public transport provision was more pronounced in rural areas (44%, n=208) compared to urban areas (28%, n=151).

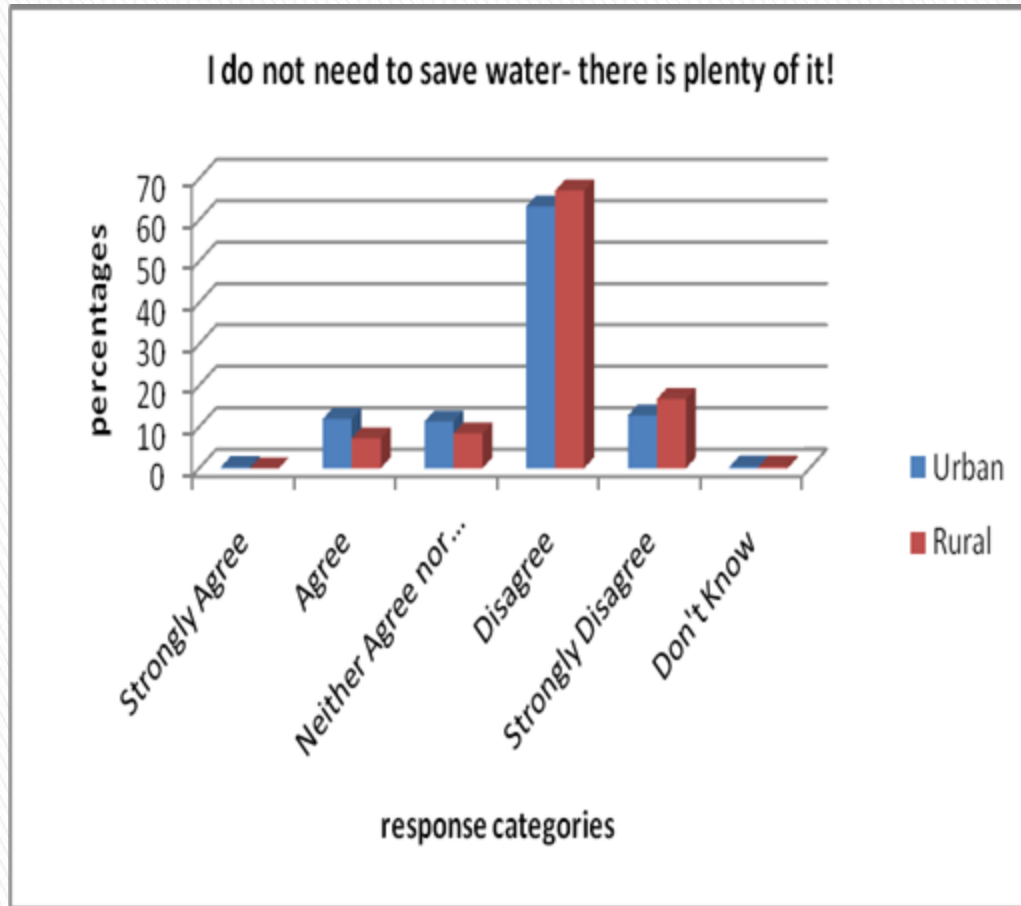


## ▶ ***Reported reasons for not using available public transport for this commute:***

- Public transport is too restrictive 42% (n= 272)
- I need my car or van for my job 16% (n=108)
- Public transport is too unreliable 11% (n=70)

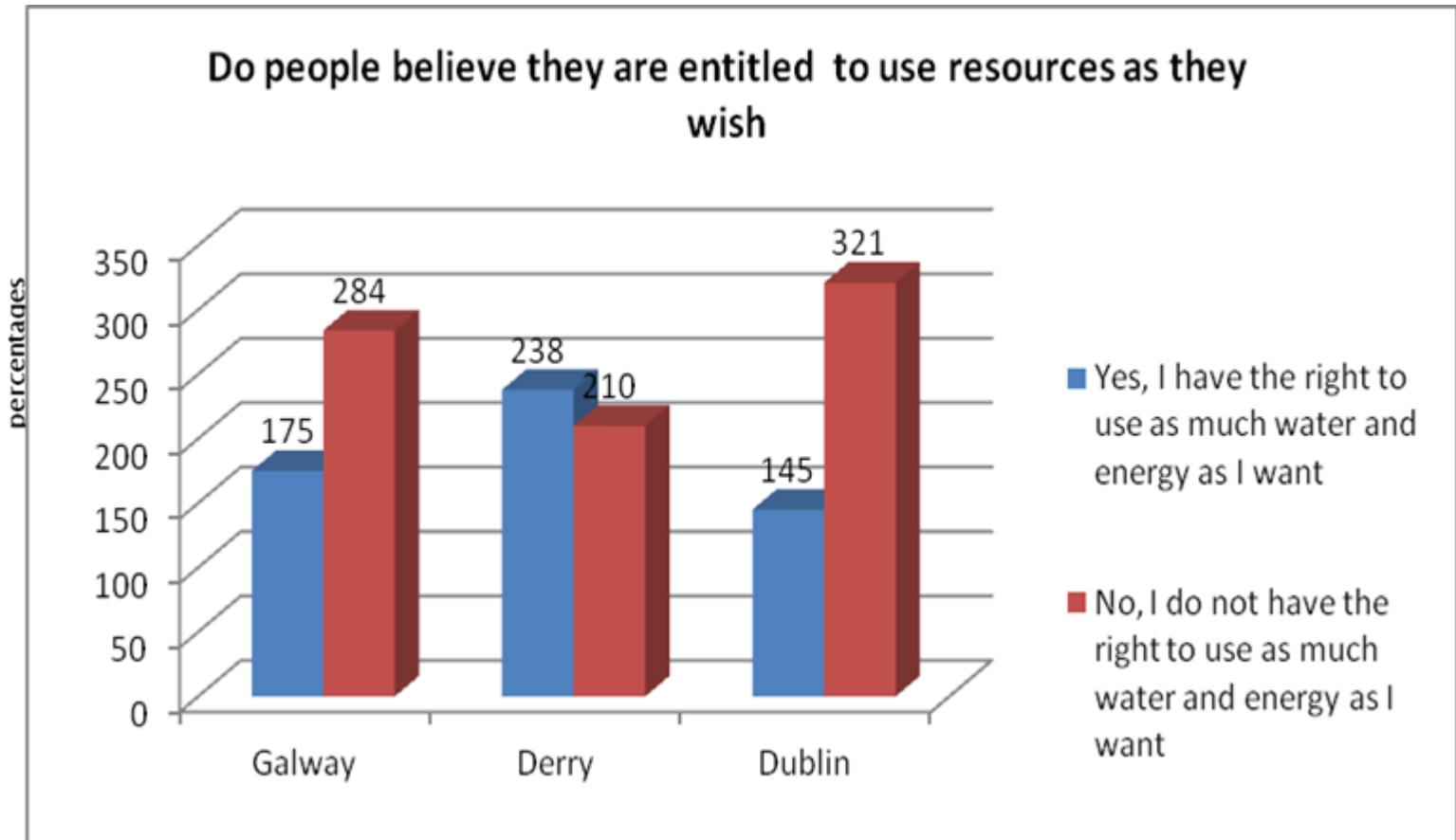


# Water Trends:



- ▶ 80% respondents (n=1,198) stated that there was a need to save water!
- ▶ 63% respondents (n=945) stated that they had not reduced their water use in the past month for environmental reasons.
- ▶ 40% of the respondents interviewed (n=597) stated that they DO NOT pay much attention to the amount of water that they use in their homes.
- ▶ More rural dwellers (61%) reported paying attention to the amount of water they use, in comparison their urban counterparts (53%).

# Water Usage:





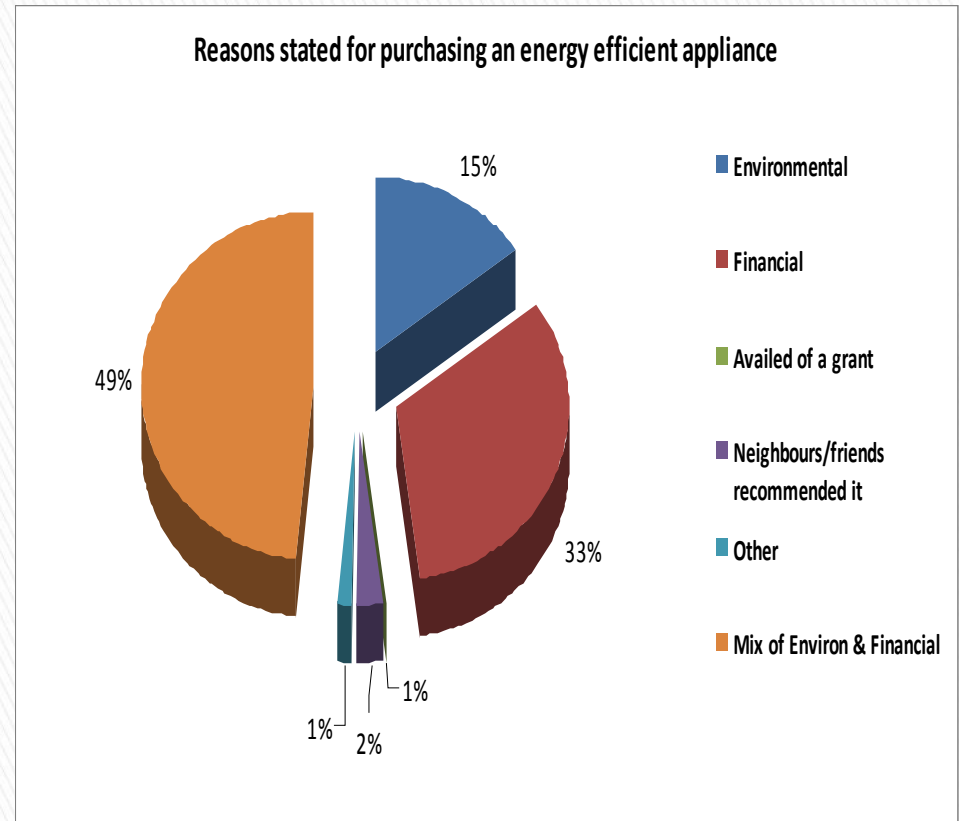
# Energy Usage:

## Energy efficient appliances:

- ▶ 91% of respondents (n=1,365) stated they would be willing to buy more energy efficient appliances
  - 46% of respondents (n=689) stated they had purchased an energy efficient appliance in the past five years.
  - Rationale given for purchasing an energy efficient appliance?

## Installing insulation:

- ▶ Approx one quarter of respondents (n=341, 23%) installed insulation in their houses in past 5 years.
- ▶ Reasons for carrying out this activity were as follows:
  - Only 5% cited “solely environmental reasons” (n=18)
  - A further 41% stated “a mix of environmental and financial reasons” (n=158).
  - Over one third reported “financial reasons” 33%, (n=131)



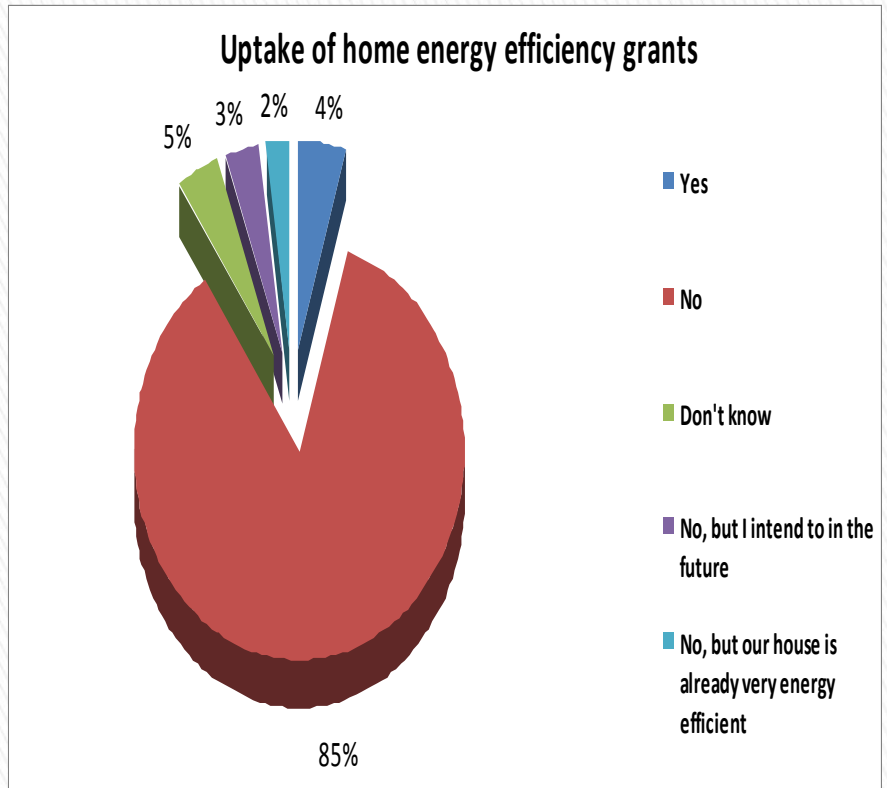
# Energy Consumption:

## Renewable Energy Suppliers:

- ▶ Just over one fifth of respondents (21%, n=315) had changed to a renewable energy supplier in the past five years:
  - Almost two thirds of respondents stated “financial reasons” for this 65% (n=266).
  - Only 9% reported “solely environmental reasons” (n=38).

## Energy Efficiency Grants:

- ▶ Majority of respondents were aware of the government grants and subsidies available
  - Only 5% of respondents reported availing of a grant in past five year to make their home more energy efficient.



# Purchasing Decisions:

93% of the respondents stated that they would be willing to buy products with less packaging; in order to protect the environment?

More than half of the respondents (51%, n=770) stated that they were aware of energy meters and smart meters.

Over two thirds of the respondents (68%, n=1025) stated that they had not avoided products with excess packaging in the past month for environmental reasons.

73% stated that they would be willing to install insulation or smart meters in their homes for environmental reasons.

However less than one quarter had done so in the past 5 years and of these 24%: only 5 % cited environmental reasons as their rationale.

# Personal Attitudes:

**Environmental Concern:**  
86% respondents were either  
“very concerned” or  
“somewhat concerned” about  
environmental issues (n=1289)

**Environmental  
Responsibility:**  
More than half of the sample  
(58%, n=871) stated that they  
needed to act in a more  
environmentally friendly way.

More women (61%) than men  
(54%) reported that they should  
behave in a more  
environmentally friendly way.

More women (85%) in  
comparison to men (77%) felt  
that their own personal  
behaviour could make a  
difference in the environment .

More women wanted to be seen  
as environmentally friendly (74%)  
in comparison to men (62%).

More respondents in the third  
level education grouping wished  
to be seen as environmentally  
friendly (73%) in comparison to  
those in the secondary level  
education group (64%) and the  
primary education group (59%).

# Conclusions:

- ▶ First baseline dataset on SC produced in an Irish context
  - Further in-depth qualitative analysis–ConsEnSus Members
  
- ▶ Although levels of environmental concern were high (86%), very few respondents stated solely environmental rationale for their behaviours.
  - Personal finances
  - Social desirability
  - Value Action Gap
  
- ▶ No significant differences between the rural-urban dwellers
  
- ▶ Variations across the different policy regions
  - Tailored policies needed to address the motivating factors

Thank you  
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**consensus**

consumption environment sustainability



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