

PENNEYS



Pulse of the Nation Index

How Irish consumers are feeling about their finances today.

PENNEYS in partnership with





Check out – Contents

Foreword & Executive Summary	4
Penneys' Role in Irish Society	6
A Quick Look Back... Lessons Learned	8
Check Up: Taking the Nation's Pulse Again	9
Making Ends Meet and Ireland's 'Vibecession'	10
How the Cost-of-Living Crunch Continues to Reveal Itself at Penneys' Tills	12
Spotlight on Parental Pressures	14
Women, Families & Renters Hit Hardest in Cost-of-Living Crunch	16
Conclusion	21

Taking the Pulse of the Nation – Again

While time and economics have moved on, Irish consumers' confidence has not. Inflation has improved, but it seems we're just not feeling it... Yet. A year ago, we launched the first Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index, giving a snapshot into how the Irish public viewed their Quality of Life. Our research revealed that while most people rated their Quality of Life as good, their financial situation was having a disproportionate effect on their overall state of mind.



'VIBECESSION' IS A TERM COINED BY AMERICAN FINANCIAL ANALYST KYLA SCANLON, WHICH SUMS UP THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN POSITIVE ECONOMIC DATA AND THE PESSIMISM THAT THE PUBLIC IS STILL FEELING ABOUT THE ECONOMY.

In light of this, our first report focused on how the Irish public was navigating the cost-of-living crisis. This showed how the Irish were on the hunt for value, using a range of money-saving hacks to try and balance their budgets. And how despite juggling inflationary pressures across most of the big household bills, the “treat yourself” mentality prevailed, as the nation spent on smaller things to keep the spirits up. Nine months on, has anything changed? We've once again taken another pulse check, asking another 1,200 adults the same Quality of Life and financial questions to see. The macroeconomic picture is certainly improving, and inflation is stabilising, but have the Irish felt this in their wallets and is the public mood lifting?

In reality, there is a clear disconnect between the economic data and consumer sentiment. While all the numbers are moving in the right direction, it seems that people are not feeling better about their financial situation to the same extent - yet.



AS THE PEOPLE'S RETAILER WITH OVER A MILLION CUSTOMERS A WEEK, PENNEYS HAS THE UNIQUE ABILITY TO SEE FIRST-HAND HOW THE PUBLIC MOOD IS AND HOW CONSUMERS ARE ADAPTING TO THESE CHANGING TIMES, ALL THROUGH ITS CUSTOMER BUYING BEHAVIOURS AND TRENDS.

So, what's going on? Ireland appears to be experiencing a trend akin to what the United States has gone through – a 'vibecession': meaning that things may be improving economically, but the public mood does not reflect the reality of their spending. While consumer confidence is rebounding, the research shows that the public is still spending less eating out, trying to control energy bills and generally treating themselves less often. It's a mood that is quite palpable in Irish society currently.

What's unique about this report is that we can measure now just what people say, but also how they are behaving, aka what they are actually doing.

As the People's Retailer, Penneys has the unique ability to see this first-hand: what the public mood is like and how consumers are adapting, all through the buying behaviours and trends it sees across its 37 stores in Ireland: Whether it's buying warmer clothing in a bid to save on heating costs, an uplift in sales of its lower priced essential ranges or popping a lipstick or face mask into their baskets as a mini treat, Penneys certainly has its finger on the pulse of the nation.

Every day, people from every corner of Ireland and beyond come into a Penneys store across the country, from the young, single professional popping in to buy a new blazer for the office, the new homeowner looking to kit out their new bedroom, to a father of three picking up clothes and underwear for his children who don't seem to stop growing. Penneys' customer base spans the spectrum of Irish society – from the savviest shoppers to the fashion followers; Irish mummies and daddies, grandparents to Gen Z'ers.

As a retailer who prides itself on offering something for everyone, Penneys welcomes people from all walks of life in its stores every day, giving us a great snapshot into how Irish consumers are feeling.



WHILE ALL THE NUMBERS ARE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, IT SEEMS THAT PEOPLE ARE NOT FEELING BETTER ABOUT THEIR FINANCIAL SITUATION TO THE SAME EXTENT - YET.

Our first report highlighted three groups in particular that were feeling the cost-of-living crunch more than most: women, families and renters. For this latest Index, we take a closer look at families with children under eighteen to see how they are being acutely affected. The maths is simple – with dependents to cater for and support, parents are finding it harder than ever to make their money go further and are spending it more wisely than most people as a result.

Thank you for taking the time to read the latest Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index, we hope you find it as insightful as we do.



Gerard O'Neill
Chairman, Amárach Research



Affordability in Changing Times: Penneys' Role in Irish Society

Having started my retail career as a trainee manager in Penneys Carlow 30 years ago through to recently becoming Head of Penneys Ireland and Northern Ireland, I have seen Ireland go through huge changes in that time, all through the eyes of this business. Irish consumers have always been conscious about their finances. Penneys' price leadership was and will always be in its DNA. This commitment to value has stayed constant throughout my retail career – and has never been more relevant given the times we are living in.

At Penneys, we are proud of the special place we hold in Irish society, and we never take our success here in our home market for granted. Our stores are more than a destination, they have been a part of the fabric of life in this country for generations. Penneys is so much more than the clothes we sell, it's our stores and the over 5,000 colleagues within them that set us apart for our customers.

Since the cost-of-living crisis emerged almost two years ago, the appeal of Penneys' everyday affordability has brought a broader range of customers into our stores than ever before as value has played on everyone's minds. This value mindset can be clearly seen in this latest Pulse of the Nation Index, which highlights how shopping around for value is still now firmly embedded in Irish consumer behaviour, despite energy costs starting to fall and food price inflation beginning to cool. While value is underpinning everything, we have identified a number of key trends from our own sales data that reinforces the research findings. Themes such as *purposeful pampering*, *winter warmers*, *hibernating homebirds* and *focused families*, all of which you'll read about later in this report.



OUR EVER-EVOLVING OFFERING, BREADTH OF CHOICE, COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY AND FOCUS ON AFFORDABILITY IS WHY OUR CUSTOMERS KEEP COMING BACK TO PENNEYS, ESPECIALLY IN THIS CHALLENGING TIME OF INCREASES IN THE COST OF LIVING.

If value is our core principle, inclusivity is right beside it. Everyone is welcome at Penneys, and we are working harder than ever to ensure Penneys is inclusive for everyone in society. Examples of this in practice include our new Adaptive product range, specifically aimed to support those with limited mobility or our menopause range of nightwear and base layers tailored to relieve symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating. The big innovation here is the affordability, taking what are typically niche and often expensive, hard to find products and putting them in stores at Penneys prices.

One of our biggest focuses is delivering on our promise to offer more sustainable fashion to everyone. Over two years on from the launch of our sustainability commitments – Primark Cares – we are well on track already to achieve our goal that all our clothes will be made of recycled or more sustainably sourced materials by 2030, with 55% of our clothing already meeting this target.

We are also educating and supporting our customers to love and wear their clothes for longer by running repair workshops to teach people core basic repair skills, from sewing buttons to adding zips. Last year, we ran 12 of these repair workshops in 6 Penneys stores (Liffey Valley, Galway, Waterford, Tallaght, Limerick, Cork) across Ireland which saw great consumer interest and feedback.

This ever-evolving offering, breadth of choice, commitment to sustainability and focus on affordability is why our customers keep coming back to Penneys, especially in this challenging time of increases in the cost of living. This Index highlights that the Irish public are still struggling in part and focused on getting value for money; we see this in our own stores and consumers' buying behaviours – specifically with women and parents – who are making sacrifices to ensure that their families do not go without.

Consumers in Ireland are continuing to adapt to changing circumstances in our society, and we pledge to continue to support our loyal customers and show that we value them just as much as they value us.



Fintan Costello
Head of Penneys Ireland
and Northern Ireland



A Quick Look Back...

Lessons Learned

Last year we published the first Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index – which has now become an ongoing series of insights into the lives of the people of Ireland today. Our first report examined how the Irish public perceived their Quality of Life and how they were adapting to the cost-of-living crisis.

Our first Index served up a range of insights into changing consumer behaviour, overlaid with Penneys sales data that reinforced the results and brought the stats to life.

For example, last year we found that in the face of rising energy costs 81% of the Irish public admitted to wearing warmer clothes at home to keep heating costs down. This was validated by Penneys sales data which revealed that sales of items like snuddies (+96%), thermal underwear (+55%) and velvet plush leggings (+160%) all skyrocketed between December 2022 and February 2023. This is a trend which has continued this year, as we saw continued strong sales of warmer products despite the milder weather in the run up to December 2023, with Penneys' sales of Velvet Plush Leggings increasing by 39% and sales of our Ladies Fleece quadrupling.

Despite the pressure on shopper's wallets, most people felt that they have a good Quality of Life. Quality of Life rankings were determined by how happy people were across a range of factors such as family life, their financial situation, mental and physical health, and how they felt about their community.

What was quite apparent from the research was that a person's financial situation had a disproportionate effect on how they viewed their Quality of Life – people struggling with their finances obviously had a more negative outlook on life. We took a closer look, and three groups stood out as being more impacted by the cost-of-living crisis than the general public – women, families and renters.

So now almost one year on, we are revisiting how people feel about their lives and the current cost-of-living crunch. Given Penneys' close affinity with families and supporting them with their everyday needs, we also wanted to explore that particular group more closely in this year's Pulse of the Nation Index.



Check Up: Taking the Nation's Pulse Again

2023 was another year of highs and lows for people in Ireland, but the economic picture improved overall both at home and abroad, with inflation beginning to stabilise, a range of additional supports introduced as part of the recent Budget and employment levels remaining at near record highs.

Financial Impact on Quality of Life

Contentment with one's financial situation continues to be strongly correlated to higher Quality of Life ratings. On the other hand, those who are struggling financially are more discontent. Quality of Life ratings are strongly linked to the circumstances of the last few months – over half of those with a below average rating feel their circumstances have deteriorated since September 2023.

Similar to our original study last year, there are a number of distinct groups that are not as happy about their Quality of Life – women, parents of school-going children, renters and households with a combined income of less than €30,000.

In all these cases, there is a strong link between quality of life and their financial situation. While slightly less than half (46%) of adults are unhappy with their financial situation, there is a marked difference for these groups:

Groups who are most unhappy with their financial situation

Parents of school going children



56%

Women



51%

Renters



60%

Households earning under €30,000



67%

Over the coming sections, we'll take a closer look at these groups and how they fair in this year's Index.

Quality of Life

The public's perception of their overall Quality of Life remained positive, with the Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index recording a near identical average score compared to the first report.

The factors driving the general public's perceived Quality of Life are their family life

80%

positive feelings about their community

77%

accommodation status

74%

and social life

69%

The public's perception of their Quality of Life has remained remarkably stable over the past year. All things are not equal, however, as an individual's financial situation is a key factor in their perceived Quality of Life.

Making Ends Meet and Ireland's 'Vibecession'

This latest Index shows that consumers continue to be savvy and remain cautious with their money, with almost everyone shopping around more and still taking active steps to keep energy bills down despite the fall in costs.

We can see that the Irish public still don't have an optimistic financial outlook for the coming year. While almost half (45%) of adults feel their financial situation has stayed more or less the same compared to last year, those who feel they are now in a worse situation (39%) is considerably higher than those in a better situation (15%). Worryingly, a quarter (25%) of the public also believe that their financial situation will get worse in 2024. So, despite the positive economic mood music, a significant amount of people don't appear to be feeling the benefits in their own daily lives.

How do we explain this? Ireland may be experiencing a similar trend that the United States went through – dubbed a 'vibecession.' This term, coined by American financial analyst Kyla Scanlon, encapsulates the gap between positive economic data and the public's actual perception of the economy. While consumer consumption may remain relatively high, challenges like high energy prices makes them feel negative about their financial situation. So perhaps Ireland is experiencing its very own 'vibecession', with the overall positive economic outlook not filtering down to how people in Ireland really feel about their own prospects.

Most people try and stick to a budget, but also face unavoidable high costs such as electricity bills or increasing grocery shopping bills, so in essence they have to cut their cloth to suit their measure. This pressure on the public's wallets is evident from the finding that three in five people (60%) believe that they have been more impacted by inflation and rising prices in recent months. This means less discretionary spending available and a potential inability to save for that rainy day fund or the next family holiday.

It should come as no surprise that half of adults struggle to manage their monthly outgoings and have little or nothing left at the end of each month. With little wiggle room, consumers are left with difficult choices. Almost a quarter (24%) admitted skipping a bill to prioritise other spending, while two in five (41%) said that they would have to borrow if an unexpected household expense came in. This somewhat precarious financial situation that many find themselves in appears to be weighing in the mood of the public.

In light of the financial pinch that consumers are feeling the majority (84%) of adults are continuing to shop around to find the best value. This year's research shows that the public is doubling down on their efforts to relieve the pressure on their wallets, with similarly high levels of adoption of money-saving hacks compared to the last round of research.

How shoppers are making their money go further

Energy bills are still top of mind for the public with almost nine in ten having taken steps to manage their energy bills last winter

86%

Almost seven in ten of the public are treating themselves less

68%

A similar amount are socialising less

69%

Approximately seven in ten are eating out or getting takeaways less

71%

Almost half of adults have cancelled entertainment subscriptions

47%

Almost two thirds of shoppers have changed to a more affordable grocery retailer

62%

While analysing our latest research findings, it quickly became clear that women, families, renters and low-income households were still feeling the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis, with these groups scoring more negatively in terms of their perceived Quality of Life and attitudes relating to their financial situation, as well as engaging more in money saving hacks.

“

**A QUARTER (25%) OF THE
IRISH PUBLIC BELIEVE THAT
THEIR FINANCIAL SITUATION
WILL GET WORSE IN 2024**



Reality Check: How the Cost-of-Living Crunch Continues to Reveal Itself at Penneys' Tills

One of the striking findings from the original Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index was the clear link between the research findings and sales of specific items in Penneys' stores. For example, a key insight was that the public were taking active steps to manage their energy costs. While they were turning down their thermostats to relieve the pressure on their wallets, they were keeping warm in other ways as evidenced by sales of items like snuddies and thermal underwear all skyrocketing between December 2022 and February 2023. Penneys' sales data highlights that this winter warmth trend is still embedded in consumer behaviour one year on and is one of three trends we have identified from some hero items that are flying off the shelves over the last few months.

Winter Warmers

This trend identified in the first report has now been firmly established in Irish consumer behaviour, with consumers actively seeking out warmer clothing in a bid to keep the heating off and costs down. A striking example of this is the year-on-year growth in Penneys' Velvet Plush Leggings, which are a standout product this winter season, with sales up an incredible 39% versus the previous winter.



Fleece Lined Long Johns
€10



These faux fur lined leggings are helping to keep people warm, with anecdotal evidence showing that consumers love wearing them while working from home or spending time outdoors. On average, Penneys is selling six pairs of these hero leggings every minute in its Irish stores!

Penneys had to adapt quickly to customer demand and feedback, expanding these leggings from a core womenswear product into offering the same line for men and kids. Why? Penneys picked up from customer feedback that their velvet plush leggings are a popular option for male builders on worksites or people waiting on public transport for their commutes to and from work, and mothers buying the smaller sizes of leggings for their kids too. As a result, its Fleece Lined Long Johns for men are now a favourite winter product in its men's department.



High-Rise Plush Lined Leggings
€8

Despite a milder winter, consumers are snapping up more than Velvet Plush Leggings. Another hero product this winter helping to keeping people warm are women's fleeces, which have proved to be hugely popular with customers and highly adaptable in response to changing weather conditions as it can be worn over layers of clothing to add extra warmth but provide a lighter alternative to coats and jackets. Sales of the product have quadrupled compared to the same period last year, with Penneys selling over 80 fleeces an hour in its stores.



Half Zip Fleece Jumper
€8

Purposeful Pampering

While people are cutting back on treating themselves in general, they are still finding ways to treat themselves when they can. There is certainly a move away from frivolous or excessive spending, but we know that shoppers are searching for value while also carving out some money for that little something extra. Penneys has seen strong growth in its cosmetic and skincare ranges, with its customers investing money into their daily regimes.



Vitamin Enriched Moisturising Primer
€5

One of the top selling skincare products in this trend is Penneys' Prep + Protect Vitamin Enriched Moisturising Primer. With a massive social media following for its quality and value price against competitor products, one tub a minute of this wonder primer is sold in Penneys stores every day.

The success of this product, and others like it, prove that shoppers are leaning towards a more natural style – hydrating their skin and preferring the likes of luxe Lip Oils to achieve a "no make-up make-up" look.

Skincare is being prioritised like never before, and whilst our first Index highlighted the high volume of fake tan sales in Ireland, this time around, we have seen a drop-off in popularity of tanning products, as customers embrace their natural selves.

Consumers are also being a lot more considered in their pamper product choices, with influences like sustainability proving to be a key consideration factor when making a purchase. For example, another standout success is the introduction of reusable cleansing pads, in place of single use cotton pads, in the retailers' efforts to reduce waste across its business.



10pk Reusable Cleansing Pads
€2.40

Customers have responded positively with their wallets, with 100 packs on average sold every hour in Penneys stores. The cleansing pads are often paired with Penneys' popular own brand micellar water, which has seen strong growth in the skincare space, with the retailer selling over 30 bottles an hour in its stores. So overall, while people are treating themselves less, they are being very considered in their approach and not foregoing essential purposeful pampering.

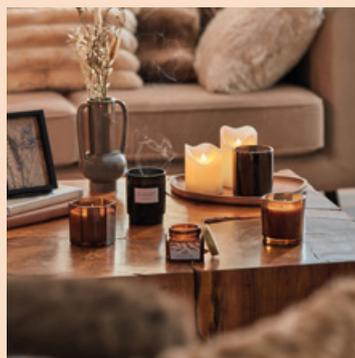


Micellar Cleansing Water
€1.50

Hibernating Homebirds

Since the pandemic we have become a nation of homebirds, but it's not simply a trend driven by remote or hybrid working. With people eating out and socialising less, we have all naturally been spending more time at home.

Consumers have been enjoying more time at home and investing in their nest with the latest home décor. Customers are continuing to snap up their home essentials in Penneys. Bedding and towels were a top seller in homeware essentials, with duvet sets and towels firm favourites – Penneys sold one duvet set and two towels every minute in its Irish stores in the run-up to the Christmas season.



People are also investing in small luxuries on a similar trend to purposeful pampering – home fragrances have proved to be super popular this year with Penneys customers, particularly for key events such as Halloween and Christmas, with small luxuries like glass pumpkin candles, 'harvest' and festive scents flying off the shelves well in advance of those big seasonal and holiday moments.

Feeling the Squeeze: Spotlight on Parental Pressures

Following last year's research which found that families are one of the most impacted groups by the cost-of-living crisis, we commissioned additional analysis this year to specifically examine why parents with children under the age of 18 living at home with them are acutely feeling the pressure.

The latest Pulse of the Nation Index data highlights how parents stand out from other groups, best captured by the finding that they have the least confidence in the economy compared to all other demographics, with over half (56%) expressing a negative outlook.

Why is this? From a financial perspective, parents have more mouths to feed and generally have outgoing costs like childcare on top of the typical household budget that someone without children in the home does not experience.

The real answer is more complex, however, as there are other added dimensions that make their situation more challenging than for most of the general public, for example if we think about work-life balance and the busy life that being a parent entails. In light of this, almost nine in ten (87%) working parents expressed that balancing work and parenthood is stressful.

For many it feels like they are being pulled in two directions, with their job and family responsibilities competing against each other. This leads to unexpected consequences at times, which can appear contradictory given how families would benefit from increased earning power. Many parents feel guilty, with almost seven in ten (67%) expressing that they would like to reduce their working hours to spend more time at home.

This has a direct impact on their employment opportunities, with over half (55%) of parents admitting they had not put themselves forward for promotion or other roles because of their children. Working mums are disproportionately making career sacrifices with 65% saying that they held off putting themselves forward for career opportunities due to their kids.

This behaviour is due to the constricted purchasing power of parents, with a notable difference compared to adults without dependent children. The research also asked participants what their average spend was across a number of different categories and in each case, consumers without dependent children outspent parents every time.

When asked about their finances, parents were far more likely to have taken steps to cut their cloth to measure, engaging in money saving hacks at a far higher rate than a typical consumer:



Parents are far more likely to shop around with almost three quarters (73%) switching to a more affordable grocery retailer, versus the national average of 62%



OVER SIX IN TEN (64%) PARENTS HAVE CHANGED UTILITY PROVIDER COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE OF 49%

Almost half of adults have cancelled entertainment subscriptions 47%, but families are cost-cutting at a significant rate with almost six in ten (58%) parents of school going children cancelling a subscription



Almost double when eating out – An average of **€50.97** on themselves at a restaurant compared to an average spend of **€26.44** per person for families;



Approximately 25% more at the cinema – An average of **€19.55** for a childless adult compared to an average spend of **€14.88** per person for families;



Over a third more at a concert – An average of **€94.65** for a childless adult compared to an average spend of **€67.17** per person for families;



Over double at a sports event – An average of **€72.14** for a childless adult compared to an average spend of **€30.98** per person for families.

What is most evident in the findings is that a major source of financial pressure and stress is childcare costs. Over half (56%) of working parents surveyed said that they had to cut back in other areas to manage childcare costs. As a result, almost half (48%) of families did not do as many day trips or activities during the summer last year. Family trips are taking a hit - one third (34%) of families could not afford to go on holiday abroad and one in four (27%) said that they couldn't holiday in Ireland. A quarter (24%) of families also said that their children did not attend or attended fewer summer camps as a result of having to balance their household budget for childcare costs.

In recognition of the financial pressures facing families, last summer, Penneys committed to lowering the prices on hundreds of its essential kidswear product. Knowing that value was more important than ever, it specifically focused on how it could help family finances go further at a key time of year as part of its Little Prices, Big Smiles campaign.

The everyday essentials covered by the price move last year included wardrobe staples for kids such as long-sleeved t-shirts, leggings, sweatshirts, hoodies and pyjamas - family favourites to keep kids warm and cosy throughout winter. This meant an outfit consisting of a long-sleeved t-shirt, leggings and zip through hoodie is available for €10.10 compared to €13 in Autumn/Winter 2022. Similarly, a baby outfit comprising of a sweatshirt and joggers cost €5.60 compared to €8 previously.

Families continued to look for the best value on the high street this winter as Penneys sold higher volumes of its value children's clothing, particularly for children under eight years of age last year. Boys and girls cuffed tracksuit bottoms proved to be the best-selling item, with over 80 pairs of pants sold per hour, as parents prioritised essentials for their little ones that can be worn time and time again. With inflationary pressures predicted to ease over the coming months, we will continue to monitor families' attitudes to the cost-of-living crisis and whether they are feeling the benefits yet over future editions of the Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index.



**Drawstring
Elasticated
Joggers**
€4



Pulse Points: Women, Families & Renters Hit Hardest in Cost-of-Living Crunch

While it's obvious that low-income households will feel the pressure of the cost-of-living crisis compared to most, what quickly became apparent when the first Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index was launched last year was that there were a number of other distinct groups that are also bearing the brunt more than the typical Irish adult. These were women, families and renters.

This year's research saw a repeat of the trend and this section outlines the key insights for each of these groups, before taking a closer look at families in particular and the struggles they face.



Women – the ‘Shecession’ continues...

Almost two thirds (63%) of those with the lowest Quality of Life rating in this research study are women. They are less content with their financial situation and with their health (physical and mental) than men and less optimistic about their physical health and financial prospects for the months ahead.



There is a marked difference between men and women in how content they are with their financial situation. Over half (57%) of men are content, but this falls by ten points for women, with less than half (47%) of females expressing the same level of satisfaction. Similarly, there is almost a ten point gap (60% vs 52%) in their levels of optimism about their financial situation in the months ahead.



Over six in ten (62%) of women admit that managing their finances on a monthly basis is a struggle compared to just under half (47%) of men.



Working mums with school-going children are shouldering the burden of the cost-of-living crisis more so than other women. More working mums (71%) felt impacted by inflation and rising prices in recent months than any other demographic.



There is also evidence again this year that working mums are making sacrifices to ensure that their children do not go without, with over four in five working mums (82%) treating themselves less compared to 68% of the general public.



Similarly working mums are less likely (84%) to eat out or get takeaways compared to approximately seven in ten (71%) members of the general public.





Families

Just over half (51%) of parents of school going children believe that their financial situation has gotten worse compared to an average of 39%.

51%
39%

Similarly, approximately seven in ten parents (69%) find that managing their money on a monthly basis is a struggle compared to an average of 55% for the general public.

69%
55%

While half (52%) of the general public admit their wages just about covers their expenses (rent/mortgage, utilities, groceries, etc.) with little or nothing left over – this rises steeply for parents with school going children (61%).

61%
52%

Just under a quarter (24%) have skipped a bill to prioritise other spending. This spikes to 34% for parents with school going children.

34%
24%

41% also admit that they would have to borrow if an unexpected household expense came in and this rises to almost six in ten (58%) of parents with school going children.

58%
41%



Low-income households

Households with a combined income of less than €30,000 have a much lower score in their perceived Quality of Life, scoring it 5.60 out of 10, compared to the average score of 6.48 for the general public.

While slightly less than half (46%) of adults are discontent with their financial situation, this rises significantly for this cohort with almost seven in ten (67%) of these households expressing their dissatisfaction.

67%
46%

Low-income households with a combined income of up to €30,000 find it exceptionally difficult to manage their money on a monthly basis, with almost seven in ten (67%) finding it a struggle compared to over half (55%) of the general public.

67%
55%

35% of households with an income of up to €30,000 have skipped a bill to prioritise other spending.

35%

Pulse Points: Women, Families & Renters Hit Hardest in Cost-of-Living Crunch



Renters

There is a marked difference in the mood of renters compared to the general public. While the average Quality of Life score for the public stands at 6.48/10, it drops to 5.77 for renters.

This poor perception of their Quality of Life is directly attributable to their financial situation, with six in ten (60%) renters expressing their discontent about the state of their finances.



Renters have more difficulty managing their finances than any one group, with two thirds (66%) admitting that their wages just about cover their expenses (rent/mortgage, utilities, groceries, etc.) with little or nothing left over and 73% finding it a constant struggle to manage their money on a monthly basis.



This difficulty in managing their finances should come as no surprise as almost seven in ten (69%) of renters said they felt that they had been more impacted by inflation and rising prices in recent months.



Over half (53%) of renters admit that they would have to borrow if an unexpected household expense came in versus an average of 41%.



Approximately three in five (58%) renters are not confident in their outlook for the economy compared to the national average of 46%.



It's also no surprise that renters are the most discontent (47%) about their housing situation compared to any other group.



BEAUTY

ESSENTIALS

PS Bubbles PS...

ESSENTIALS



Bubbles BATH BOMBS FROM €1





PRIMARK.COM

16

Conclusion

While the positive economic forecast begins to brighten and we see a slow in inflation that bodes well for Irish households, the latest Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index underscores the fact that the quest for value is now firmly embedded in consumer behaviour. The latest data makes clear that people are being more purposeful with their money and ensuring that it is spent on what they deem as key priorities, as they are still feeling the effects of the cost-of-living squeeze. To combat this, customers are continuing to shop smarter not harder – they are taking steps to reduce their outgoings by shopping around, switching providers, and budgeting to ensure they are making the most of their money. As the people’s retailer, Penneys is committed to helping consumers get the most value for their money and continues to offer the best value on the high street.

The timing of this latest report also sets an interesting marker as we will watch with anticipation at how quickly the public mood responds to ongoing potential positive developments in future reports.

At Penneys, we have listened to our customers and taken the lessons learned over this period to make more of a conscious effort to ensure that we make fashion accessible to everyone, as evidenced by the recent launch of our first ever adaptive clothing range for people with disabilities. More importantly, we will remain committed to ensuring that sustainable fashion is affordable for everyone, which is a win-win for our pockets and our planet. Not only will more people be able to make the right choices, but their clothing can also be worn and loved for longer, ensuring great value over its lifetime.

And as times continue to change, Penneys will be there with our finger on the pulse, keeping track of how the public’s attitudes are evolving, with a keen interest in topics close to our heart. Later this spring, we look forward to sharing an in-depth report on consumer attitudes to sustainability and how it’s impacting our business in a positive way as part of the ongoing Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index. Until then, feel free to explore editions [one](#) and [two](#) of the Index on our website.



PENNEYS SHOPPERS CAN BE ASSURED THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO FIND THE BEST VALUE IN OUR STORES AROUND THE COUNTRY AS AFFORDABILITY WILL ALWAYS BE AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO. WHETHER IT’S SOMEONE LOOKING FOR SPECIALISED CLOTHING AT AFFORDABLE PRICES LIKE OUR MENOPAUSE RANGE OR THOSE SAVVY PARENTS STOPPING IN TO PICK UP SOME VALUE KIDS CLOTHING FOR THE THOSE TOTS THAT DON’T STOP GROWING, THE EVOLUTION OF OUR OFFER OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS HAS MEANT THAT WE HAVE SEEN MORE PEOPLE FROM A RANGE OF BACKGROUNDS VISIT THEIR LOCAL STORE FOR ALL OF LIFE’S ESSENTIALS.



About the Research

The research was undertaken by Amárach, on behalf of Penneys, and consisted of online questionnaires with a sample of 1,200 adults aged 18+ years. Interviewing was completed online between 16th to 26th November 2023. A combination of quota controls and weighting was used to ensure the final sample is representative of the national population in terms of gender, age, region, and social class.