

2025

European Consumer Payment Report

intrum



About this report

The European Consumer Payment Report (ECPR) is published by Intrum, Europe's leading credit management company.

With a century of experience and around 9,000 employees serving 70,000 companies, Intrum enables sustainable payments through technology, empathy and a human-centred approach across 20 countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Each day, our employees engage in around 250,000 customer interactions – supporting individuals and companies in addressing their financial challenges, and helping our clients secure payment.

The ECPR 2025 was published in November 2025 and provides insights into European consumers' financial health.

For more information:

Kristin Andersson
Group External Communications Director
kristin.andersson@intrum.com

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About the survey

The ECPR provides an overview of consumers' ability to pay bills on time and highlights evolving attitudes towards financial commitments and is based on data from consumers across 20 European countries.

Respondents completed the questionnaire on their computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Per country, 1,000 respondents participated resulting in 20,000 in total for all 20 countries.

The target group of this research was defined as persons of 18 years and over who were mainly or partly responsible for their personal or household financial administration. Respondents were split across a range of ages, genders, incomes and locations.

Data collection

Between 1 and 31 August 2025

Respondents participating

20,000

Demographic groups

Per country quotas were set on gender, age and region in order to achieve a national representative sample for each country.

Generation definition

Respondents are categorised into the following generational groups based on their year of birth:

Boomers: 1946–1964
Generation X: 1965–1980
Millennials: 1981–1996
Generation Z: 1997–2012

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Foreword

Helping consumers out of survival mode

“We believe that a people-centred and ethical approach, strengthened by technology, helps individuals, companies and communities achieve financial stability. In turn, this contributes to a healthier and more resilient economy.”



Europeans have some cause to feel optimistic. According to the 20,000 consumers who took part in Intrum’s latest European Consumer Payment Report (ECPR), confidence in essentials like providing for one’s family, saving for a comfortable retirement and spending money on loved ones is on the rise. Bills are largely being paid on time, and after years of financial uncertainty, a sense of stability is slowly returning.

But there are also plenty of reasons to feel doubtful about what the next few years may hold. Our findings indicate, for example, that many consumers remain stuck in “survival mode”. They are nervous about investing or spending money and are scarred, psychologically and financially, by years of economic volatility. Geopolitical and geoeconomic uncertainty only adds to the unease.

Hopes for certainty

In this environment, people want lasting financial stability and health – the ability to manage their daily needs, plan for the future and feel secure in their financial lives. They need assurance that another downturn or spike in inflation will not leave them in arrears or saddled with unsustainable levels of debt. Understandably, all businesses that rely on consumers spending money are hoping for the same.

And so, to better understand how people manage their everyday finances, this year’s survey introduces our new Money Management Index. It explores some of the underlying habits and behaviours that help consumers achieve financial stability. The Index is not defined by income, but by people’s ability to live comfortably within their means. It offers valuable insights for businesses and policymakers alike, helping to identify the factors that build financial resilience.

Technology and trust

We also explore how consumers’ attitudes towards technology and digital platforms are evolving. As artificial intelligence and digital tools become part of everyday life and continue to transform society and the economy, we identify the essential trends – around trust, transparency and bias – that will define how consumers engage with the technology in the years to come.

Enabling financial health for people, businesses and society

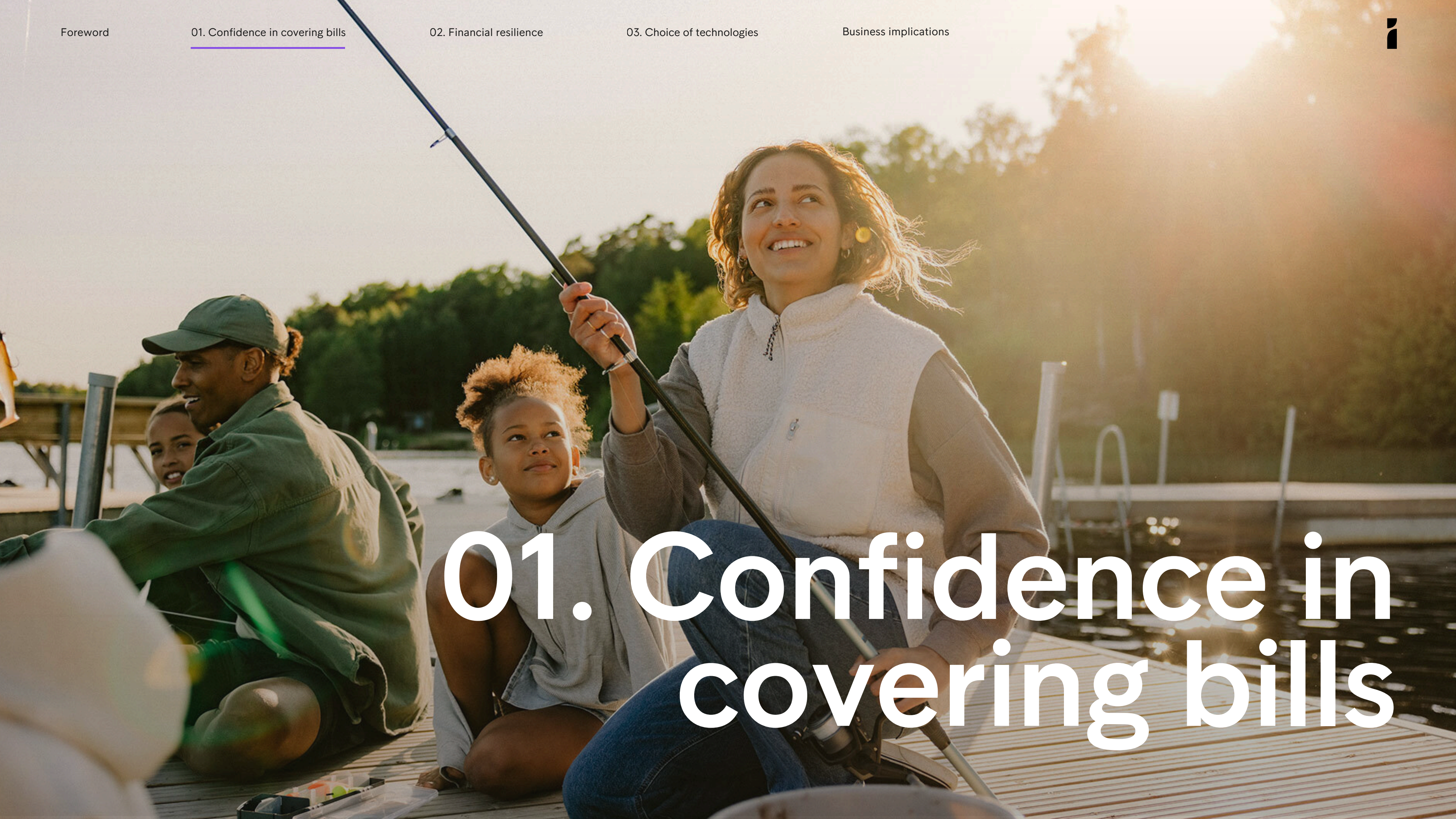
At Intrum, we engage with hundreds of thousands of people every day, individuals from all walks of life and every financial circumstance. We see first-hand how responsible debt management helps people regain control, restore balance and move forward with confidence.

We believe that a people-centred and ethical approach, strengthened by technology, helps individuals, companies and communities achieve financial stability. In turn, this contributes to a healthier and more resilient economy.

That belief, that progress begins with financial health, lies at the heart of everything we do. It guides how we act, how we innovate and how we partner with others to enable financial health for people, businesses and society.

Johan Åkerblom, CEO

01. Confidence in covering bills



75.8%

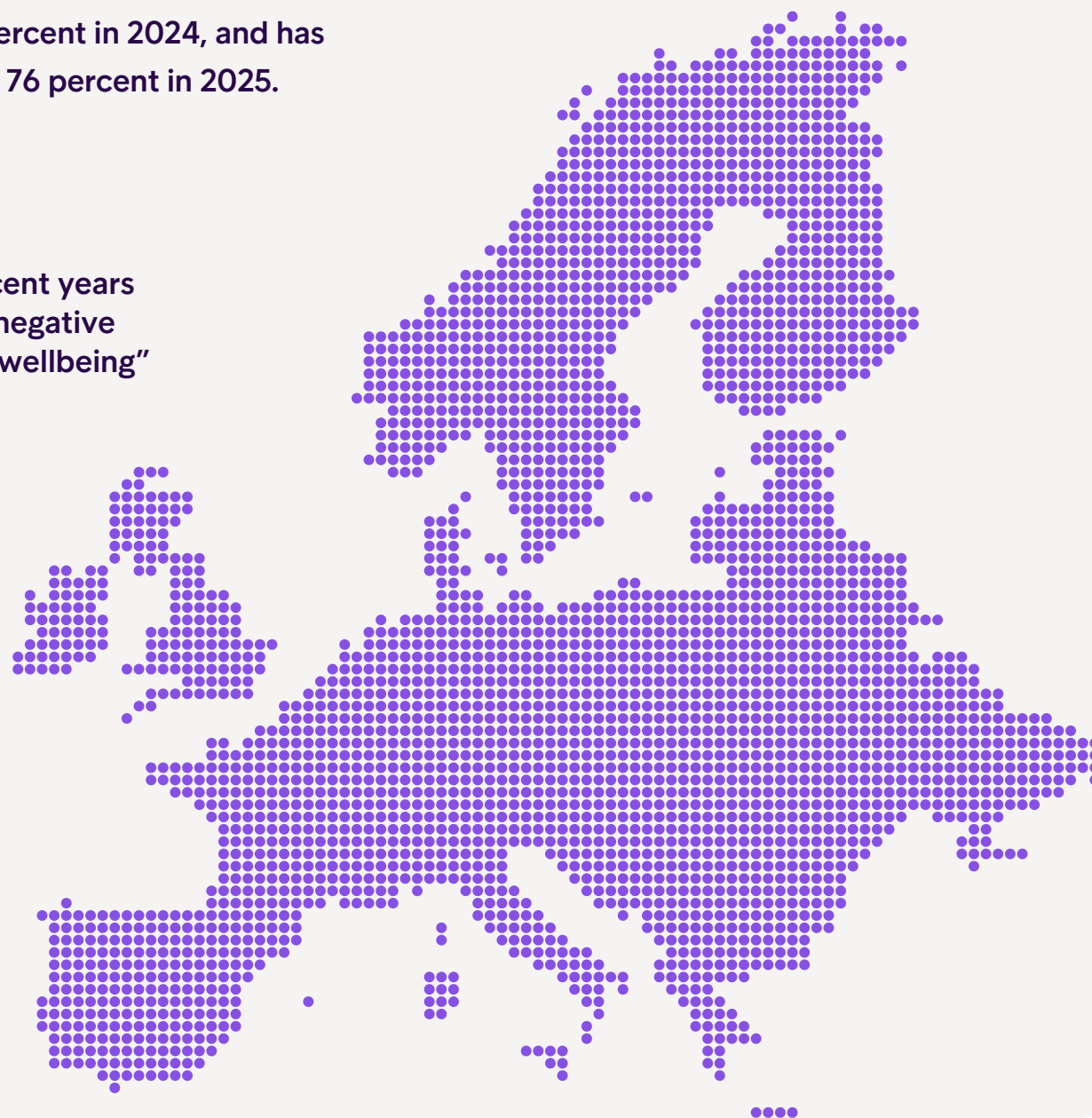
employment rate in the eurozone

63% → 74% → 76%

Consumers paying all their bills on time rose from 63 percent in 2023 to 74 percent in 2024, and has strengthened further to 76 percent in 2025.

43%

“High living costs of recent years have had a permanent negative impact on my financial wellbeing”



Consumer confidence rises, but the debt divide widens

After several difficult years, the European economy is showing tentative but uneven improvement. In turn, most consumers in Intrum’s latest European Consumer Payment Report (ECPR) are growing in financial confidence, especially when it comes to covering bills and day-to-day expenses. Many do, however, remain uncertain about the strength of the recovery.

The positive news is that Europe’s labour markets are largely robust. Growing numbers of women, people aged 55+, and migrants in the workforce are driving a historically high employment rate of 75.8 percent in the eurozone. However, economic challenges remain, leading to slower employment growth, falling vacancies and rising unemployment rates in an increasing number of countries, but strong wage growth in the EU and the UK is helping many consumers rebuild their purchasing power.

An easing of monetary policy across Europe is also helping to improve the cost of living in some countries, where inflationary pressures allow. At the time of writing, the European Central Bank and the central bank of Sweden, Sveriges Riksbank, have lowered interest rates to 2 percent and 1.75 percent, respectively, as inflation rates trend towards their 2 percent targets. Meanwhile, the UK, Norway and Hungary, which are facing higher inflationary pressures, are keeping interest rates higher for longer, at 4 percent, 4 percent and 6.5 percent respectively.

“Overall, it seems that the monetary policy easing process is slowing or being paused altogether in the near-term,” says Anna Zabrodzka-Averianov, Senior Economist at Intrum. “The process of disinflation has stalled in most economies, with food prices and services inflation remaining persistent.”



Encouraging signals from consumers

Against this backdrop, ECPR 2025 suggests that consumer finances are, on average, improving across Europe. The proportion of consumers paying all their bills on time rose from 63 percent in 2023 to 74 percent in 2024, and has strengthened further to 76 percent in 2025. There has also been an increase in consumers’ perceived ability to provide for their families (71 percent in 2025 vs. 63 percent in 2024) and cover job-related expenses such as public transport (73 percent vs. 61 percent).

Encouragingly, these improvements are not entirely a result of self-sacrifice. Consumers in 2025 are, on average, significantly more likely than they were in 2024 to say they can afford quality-of-life experiences such as evenings out (65 percent, up from 55 percent) and holidays (59 percent, up from 46 percent).

Looking ahead, consumers are also more confident about their financial prospects. In 2023, two-thirds believed they would find it difficult to become wealthy within their lifetimes, regardless of how hard they worked and how diligently they saved. This declined to 56 percent in 2024 and is only 45 percent in 2025.

Sticky survival mode

These findings provide grounds for cautious optimism, but there are also important nuances in today’s European consumer experience. Scarred by years of cost-of-living pressures and, since late 2024, rising redundancy numbers and other concerns in the job market, consumers are living in the shadow of geopolitical and geoeconomic crisis. Faced with an ongoing conflict in Ukraine and uncertainty engendered by US tariffs, they may doubt the recovery’s durability.

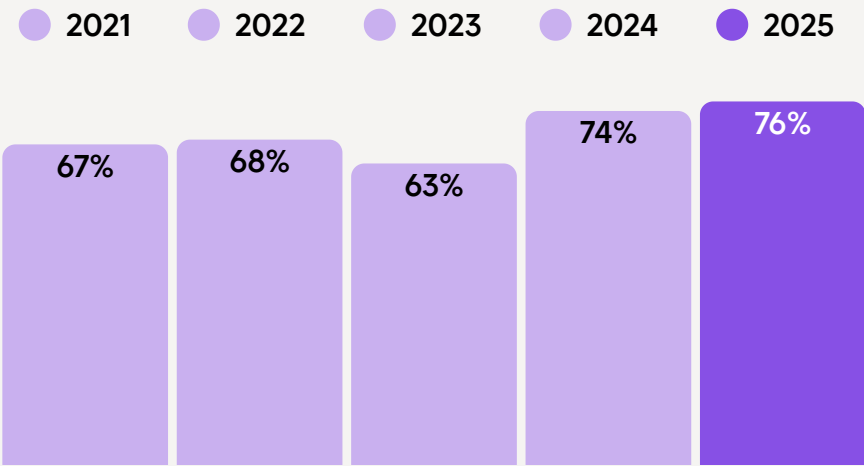
About half (43 percent) say the high living costs of recent years have had a permanent negative impact on their financial wellbeing. Their mental health has also suffered: 29 percent say that consuming news about economic volatility makes them anxious. This figure then rises significantly within countries in Southern Europe.

The anxiety in Southern Europe is surprising at first glance because countries there have been recovering more strongly than core eurozone states like Germany and France since the pandemic. Their concerns may stem from a hangover from the sovereign debt crisis and a decade-long recession. “These events impacted whole generations and may feel like recent memories,” says Zabrodzka-Averianov.

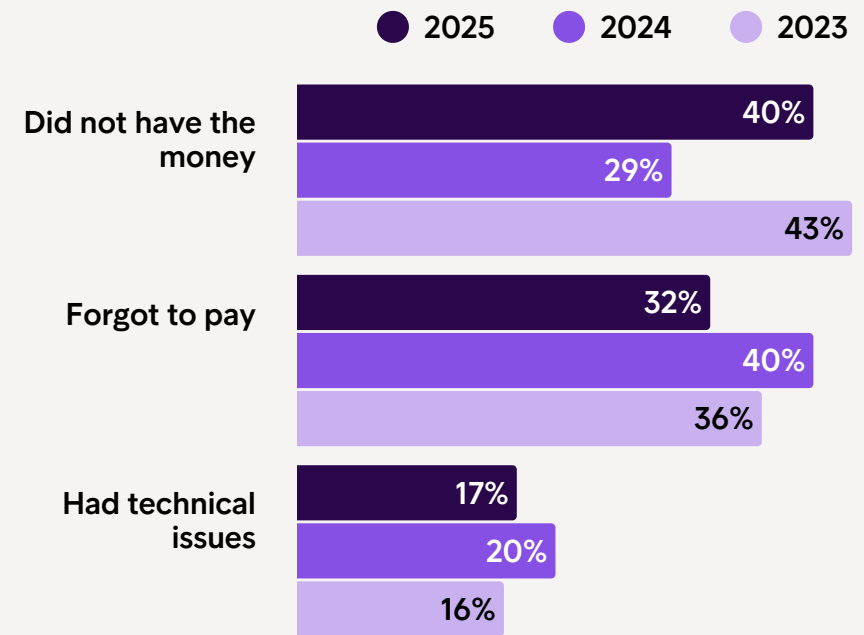
The above sentiments help explain other findings from the ECPR data, which suggest there is a lingering uneasiness about the economy. Six in 10 consumers are putting aside money each month in an emergency fund to support them if they lose their livelihoods, for example.

Not every consumer is prioritising an emergency buffer, and the amounts put aside will range from a token amount to a substantial cut of income. There are also significant differences between countries, which may be explained by concern about these countries’ relatively high exposure to fluctuating housing and currency risk, or by cultural reasons and the relative availability of welfare. We also see a positive correlation between countries that put aside money for emergencies and those that are less affected by watching news of economic volatility, suggesting that investing in a savings buffer – even by a nominal amount – may provide some peace of mind in uncertain times.

Consumers who pay all bills on time



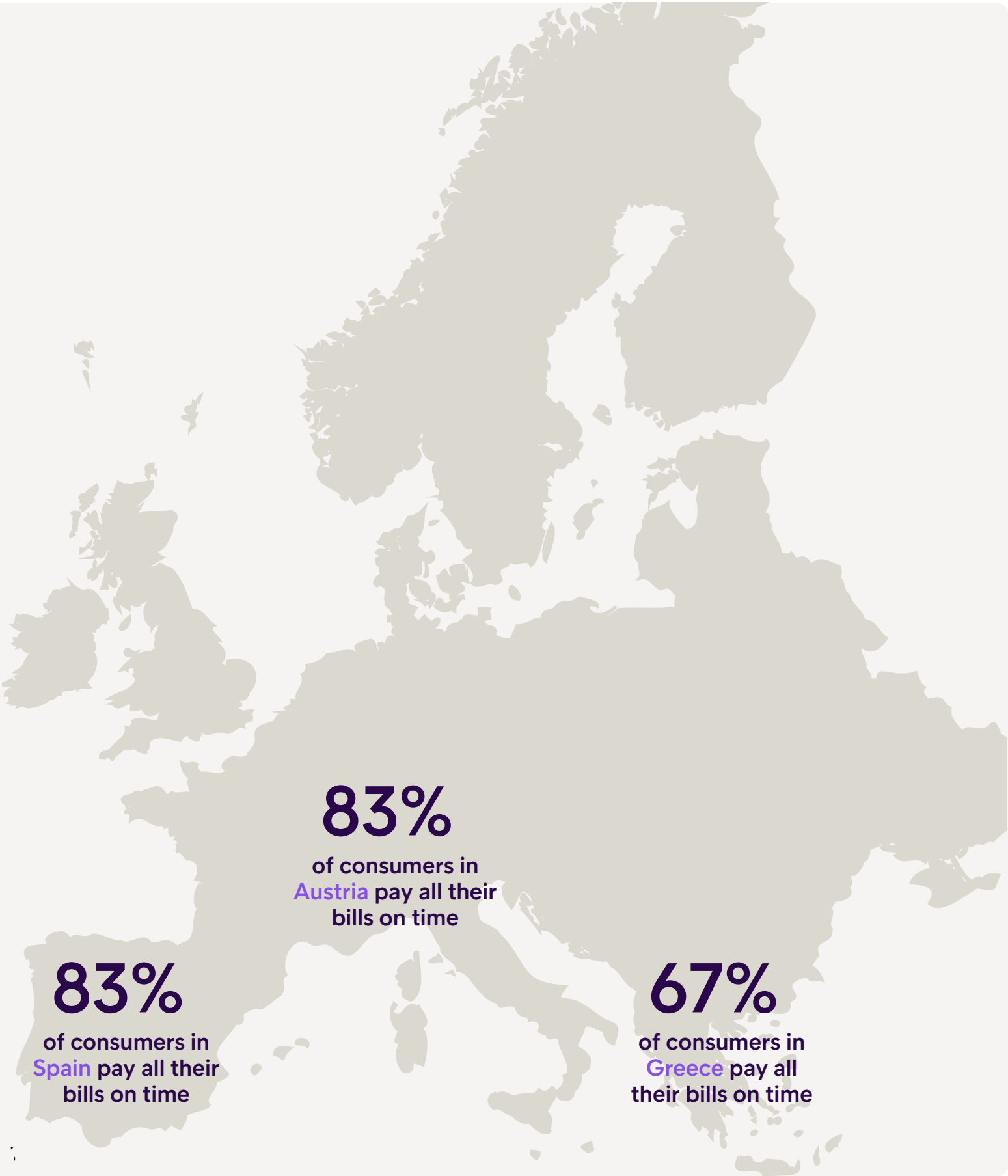
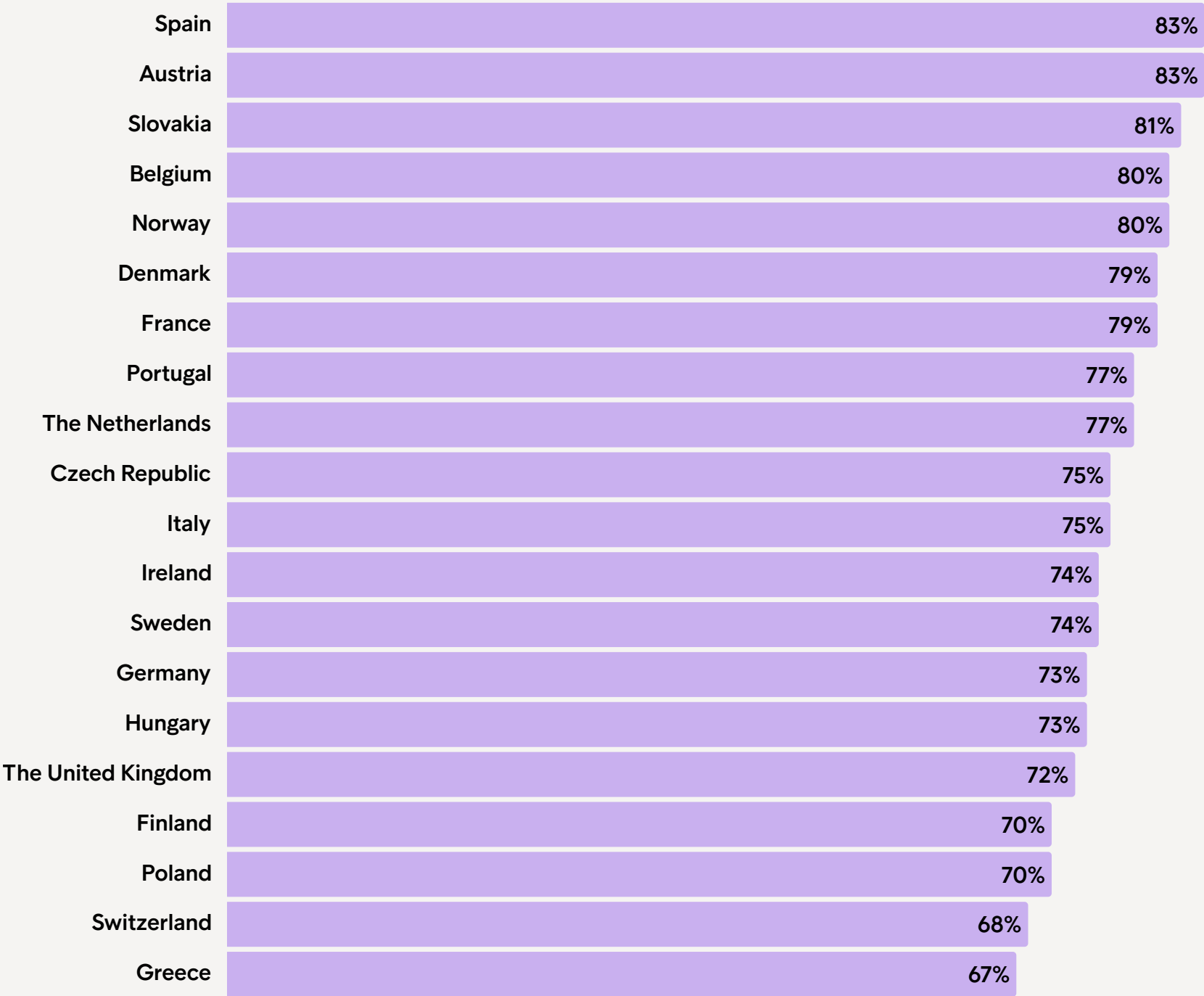
Top three reasons for not paying bill(s) on time





Most Europeans pay on time – a sign of financial confidence

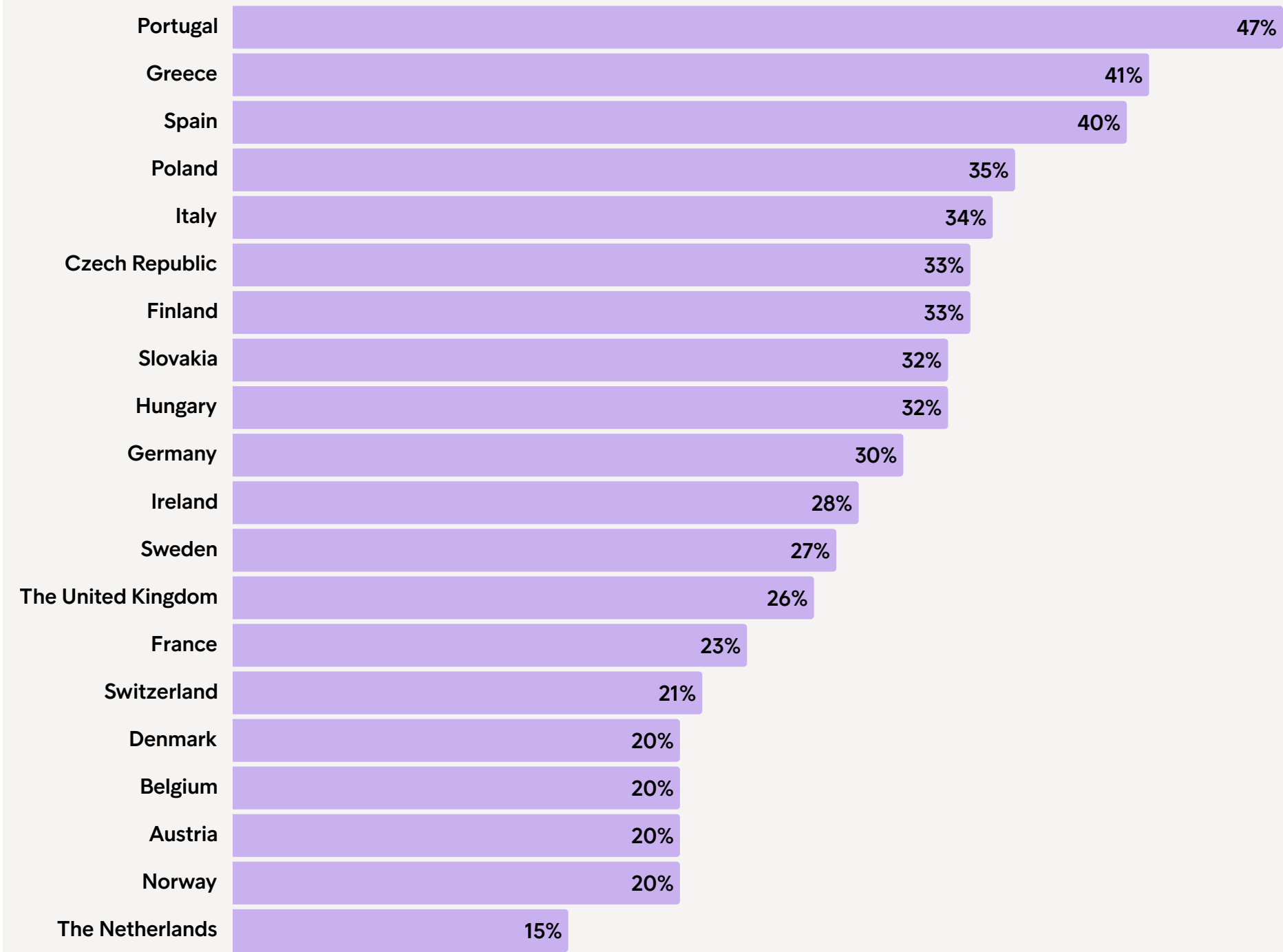
Consumers who pay all bills on time





Economic headlines take an emotional toll

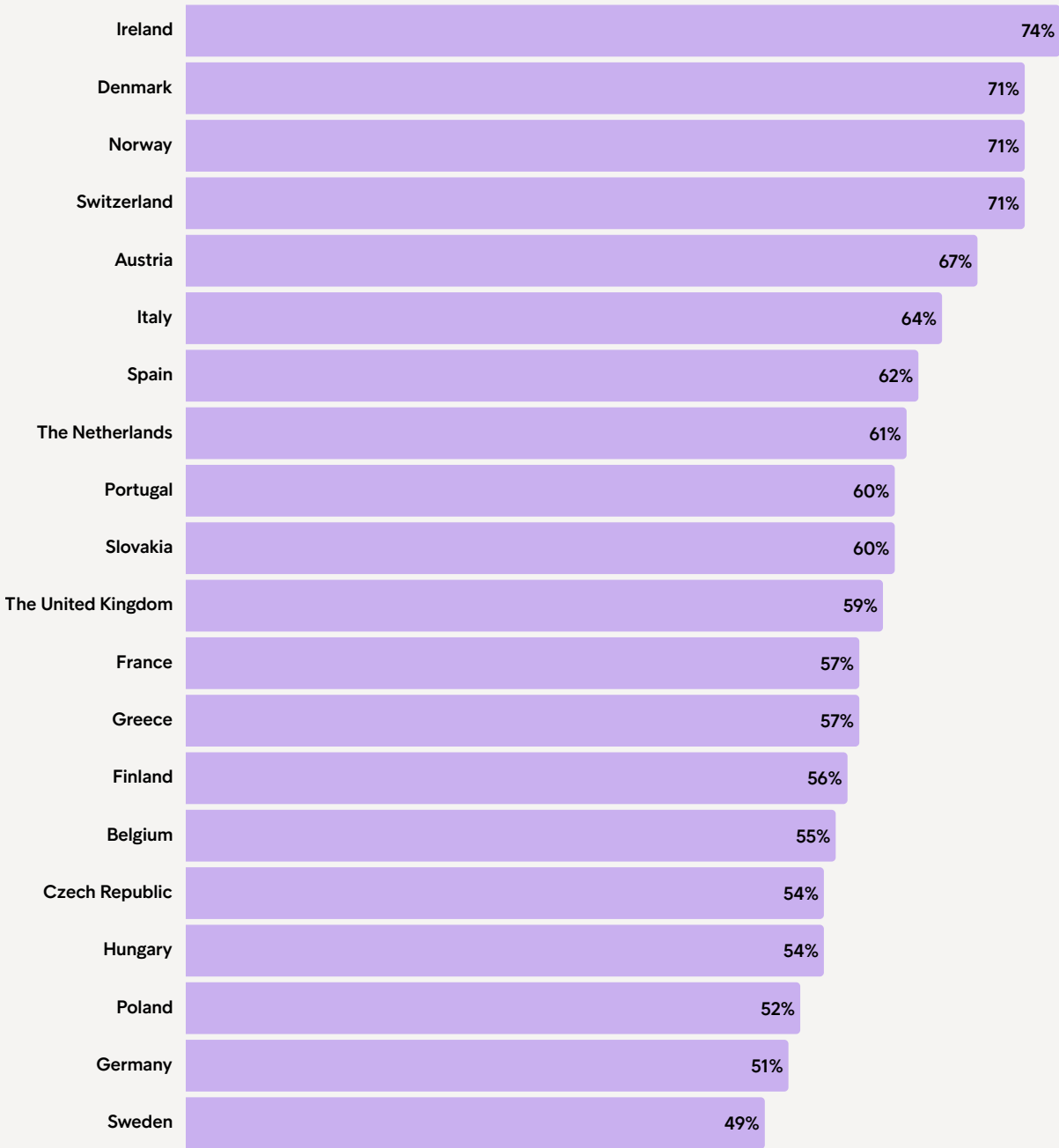
Consumers negatively impacted by economic headlines





Share of consumers saving for an emergency fund varies between countries

Consumers saving monthly for emergencies

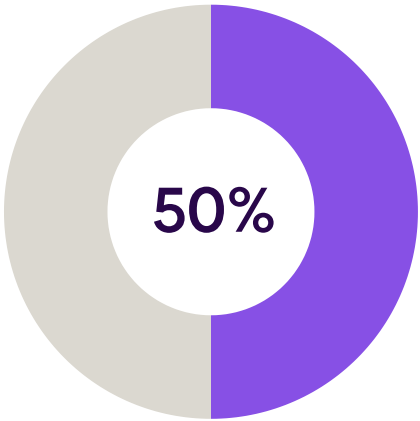


Putting money aside for emergencies is not an inadvisable habit. As we explore in the second section, it is in fact correlated with the sound management of personal finances. But consumers’ need to do so reflects broader trends in declining employment expectations and economic sentiment, both of which have been tracking consistently below their historical averages. This suggests that consumers may be anticipating another fall in their living standards.

Avoiding spending because of perceived economic weakness also risks becoming self-fulfilling, because a healthy economy depends on consumers spending money.

When it comes to big-ticket purchases such as houses and cars, 45 percent of consumers say the uncertain economy makes them hesitant. And 50 percent are currently wary of taking employment-related risks, whether that’s starting a new job or launching a new business venture. If consumers do not feel secure enough to start businesses, it could harm Europe’s entrepreneur-driven economy in which small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) represent 99.8 percent of all companies.

Consumers hesitant taking employment-related risks



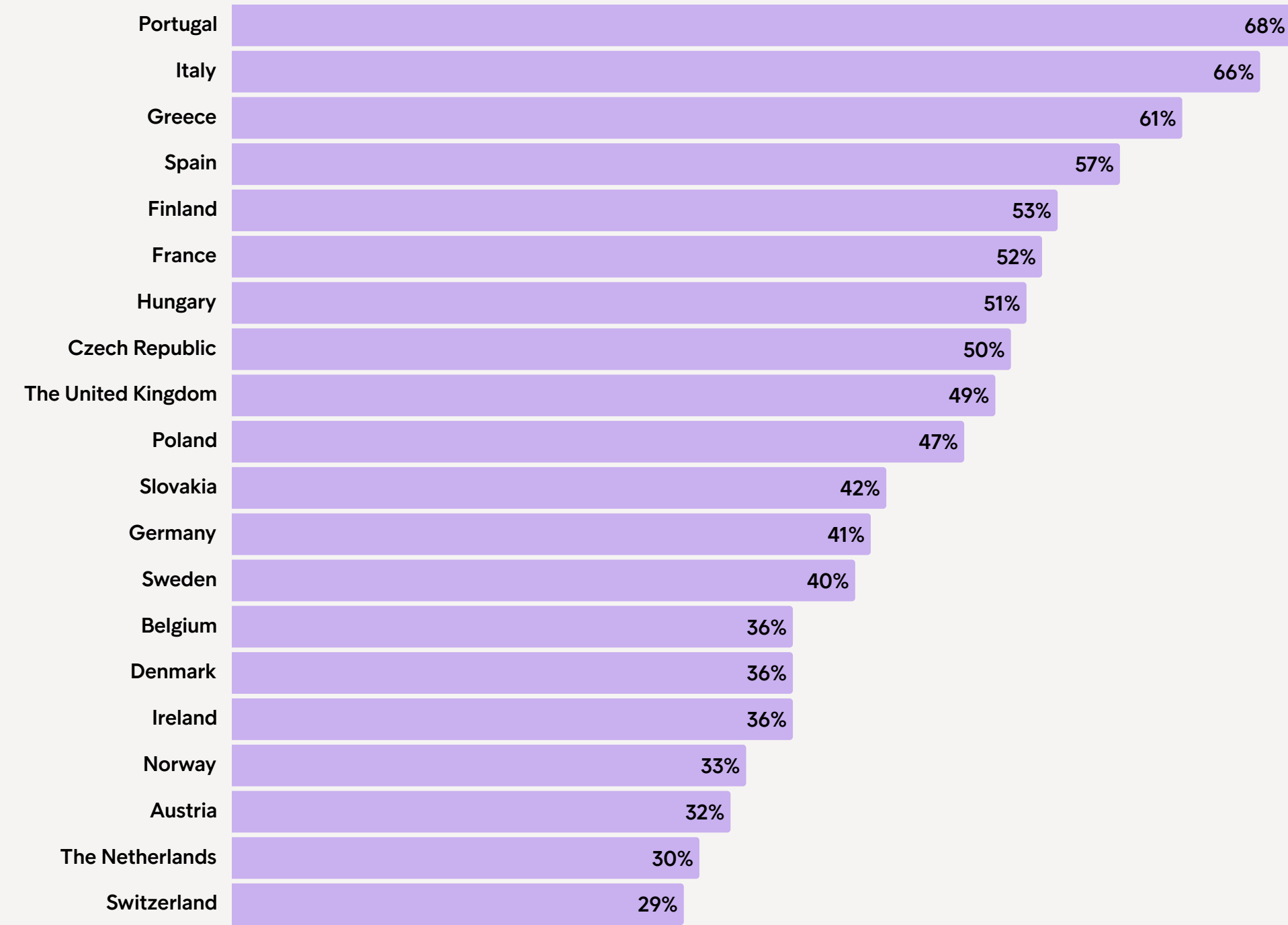
“Consumers’ stated reluctance to spend in ECPR also reflects the rising trend in Europe’s savings rate”, explains Anna Zabrodzka-Averianov. “On one hand it is beneficial that people save for potential emergencies, learning from their experience of the past five years,” she says. “But this also prevents a stronger recovery from taking root in Europe.”

Anna Zabrodzka-Averianov
Intrum Senior Economist

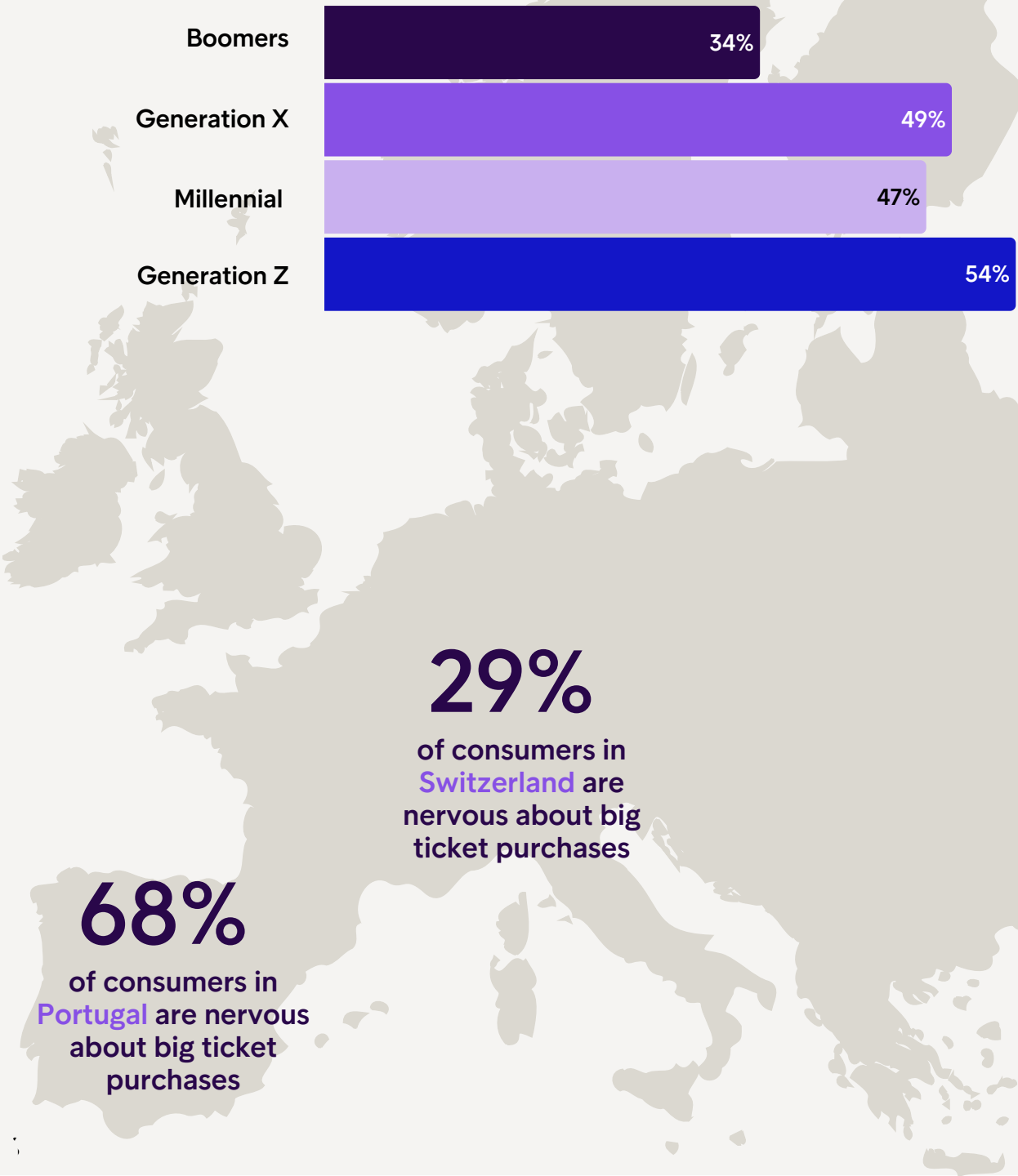


Economic uncertainty fuels financial caution across Europe

Consumers nervous about big ticket purchases



Generational differences





The debt-divide widens

Another sign of underlying economic fragility is the gap between Europe’s wealthiest and poorest consumers.

Inflation has fallen to more manageable levels overall, but its long-term effects still weigh more heavily on lower earners. In the UK, data from the [Office of National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) indicates that low-income households experience higher-than-average inflation compared with high-income households, largely due to higher private rents. According to the ONS, private renters experienced inflation of 4.5 percent compared to 3.4 percent for owner-occupiers. Meanwhile, across the eurozone, inflation in food prices hit poorer households harder as they spend a larger proportion of their income on groceries.

We see signs of this inequality in the ECPR data. Around nine in 10 high-income consumers feel assured in their ability to pay all their bills on time (94 percent) and cover an unexpected cost of €400 (90 percent), compared with those on lower incomes (62 percent and 52 percent, respectively).

Meanwhile, among consumers who have missed a bill payment in the last 12 months, doing so is increasingly becoming frequent rather than a one-time mishap. 25 percent of consumers in 2024 said they did so regularly. In 2025, this figure has jumped to over half (55 percent) – the highest proportion since we started asking the question in 2019.

Reasons for defaulting add to the concerning picture. In 2024, our research showed that consumers who missed bill payments were most likely to say they simply forgot to pay them, even though they were able to do so, but 2025’s findings reveal this trend was short-lived.

Today, the most common reason overall is that consumers do not have the money in the first place. This change is particularly apparent for generation Z: in 2024, only one in five said they did not have the money to pay their bills, but this has grown to 52 percent in 2025.

There are, however, significant differences on a country level. Consumers in countries such as France, Greece and Hungary – which have all experienced economic challenges in recent years – are increasingly likely to say they didn’t have enough money, which is helping drive the overall change. In Norway, increases in households’ interest payments to banks may have led to 64 percent of non-payers blaming shortage of funds for missing bill payments.

However, money anxiety does not have to be inevitable for those on lower incomes. In the next section, our findings show that across Europe, despite the challenging conditions, there are consumers with varying levels of income whose approach to money management is serving them well. Their attitudes and habits may prove instructive to other consumers, while their family backgrounds and experiences could be enlightening for policymakers striving to nurture a more financially resilient population.

52%

of generation Z who are not paying all bills on time state that it is due to not having the money to pay, as opposed to 20% in 2024

56%

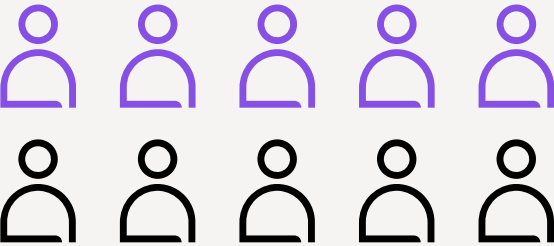
of below average income who are not paying all bills on time state that it is due to not having the money to pay, as opposed to 50% in 2024

The ability to cover unexpected cost of €400 between income level groups

Above average income, 9 out of 10



Below average income, 5 out of 10



02. Financial resilience



The drivers of financial resilience



Why is it that some European consumers struggle with debt even when they are paid significantly more than their country's average salary? And why do others thrive within their means, even though they are paid less than many of their peers?

This year's ECPR provides some answers to these questions through of our new Money Management Index.

This Index allows us to group consumers according to how well they manage their money, and then identify the experiences, attitudes and financial behaviours consistent with good practice.

To create the Index, we used a machine learning technique to create a single, comparable measure of financial health that is based on a combination of the following factors (see methodology description on page 19 for more detail):

- Likelihood of missing bill payments over the past 12 months
- Reliance on borrowing to pay bills
- Total unsecured debt
- Confidence in ability to cover unexpected costs and save money
- Ability to pay off debts

By applying this measure to our survey respondents, we could allocate consumers a Money Management score between zero and 100 and then use this to create three distinct groups of consumers:

Fragile

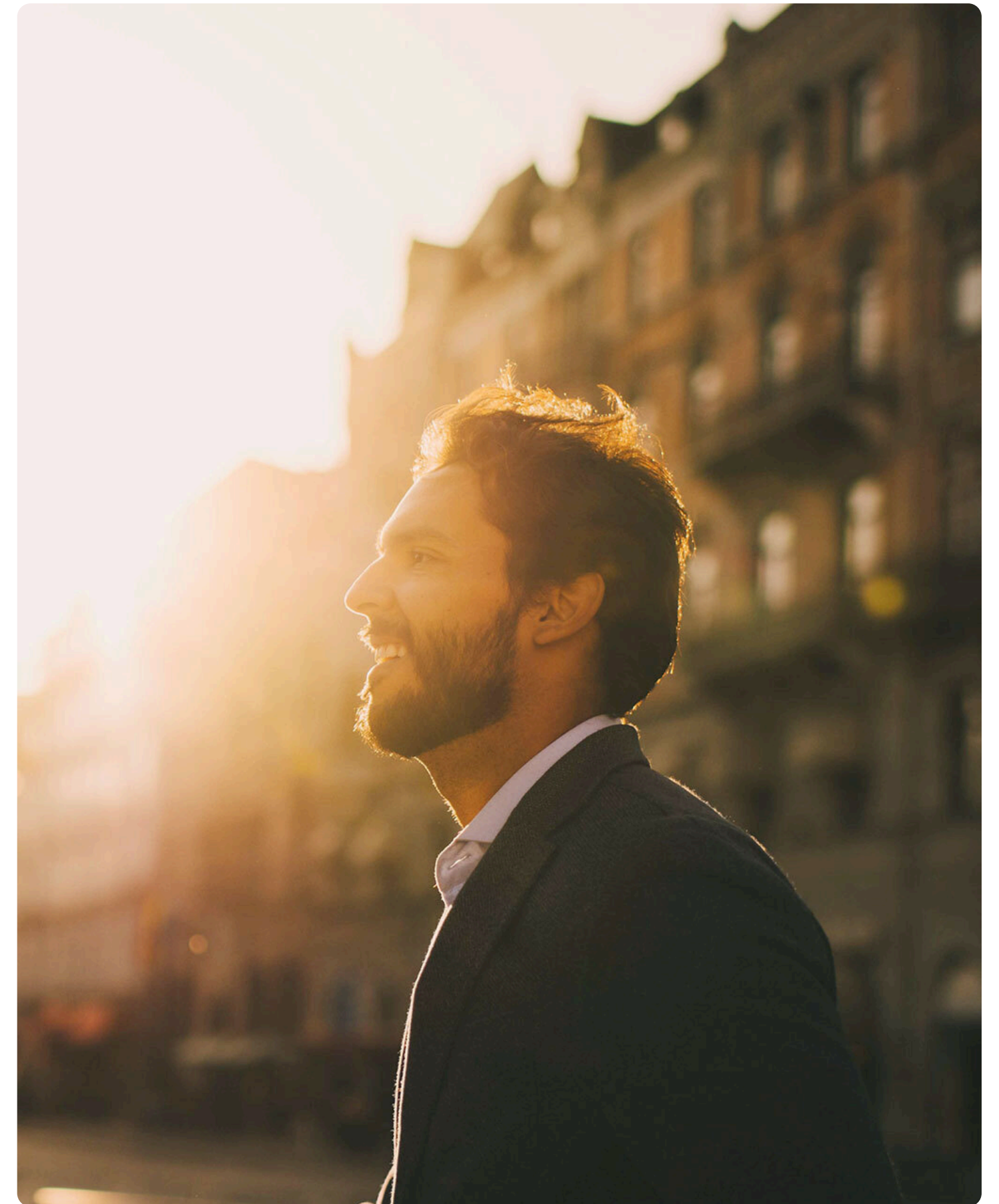
those with a high risk of financial vulnerability and struggling to meet obligations, with an average index score of 62 (comprising 20 percent of consumers in the research).

Coping

those managing day to day but with limited resilience to shocks, with an average index score of 86 (comprising 60 percent of consumers).

Resilient

those financially stable and resilient, with an average index score of 93 (comprising 20 percent of consumers).



According to the demographic composition of these groups, a consumer's income level or employment status does not necessarily determine the health of their personal finances. Although there is inevitably a correlation between how well a consumer is paid and how reliably they can cover their financial commitments, this correlation is not absolute. Just 26 percent of highly paid consumers are in the Resilient group, for example, whereas 22 percent of consumers on average salaries fall in the Fragile group.

We see a positive correlation between age and strong money management, with older people being more likely to be Resilient. Again, however, this is not overwhelming. Those in or approaching middle age, such as generation X and millennials, fall out in a close pattern across the three groups.

To identify the other factors that might influence a consumer's position on the Money Management Index, we therefore carried out further machine learning analysis, a random forest regression algorithm, on their reasons for incurring debt, their attitudes and risk perceptions, and their purchasing and social behaviours. From these, we isolated the factors that appeared to be most important in driving financial health.

The Fragile trap

The drivers that appear to be most important are a mix of external factors - such as being badly affected by the cost of living or taking on extra debt to deal with an emergency - and internal factors such as recurring habits and mindsets.

Habits

Fragile consumers are far less likely to save money habitually. Just 33 percent say they put aside money each month, compared with 68 percent of Resilient consumers. Fragile consumers are also more reliant on borrowing, often to cover everyday essentials like groceries and rent, and are almost five times as likely as Resilient consumers to feel like they need to improve their debt-management skills so they can borrow without risk of defaulting.

Mindsets

When it comes to mindset, there is a strong correlation between Fragile consumers and anxiety about the future and the perceived impossibility of attaining wealth or retiring. To an extent, this might be caused by the experience of struggling to pay bills in the present, but we also see other psychological correlations that may cause rather than be caused by financial hardship. These include feeling pressured to keep up with lifestyles presented on social media – to the extent of experiencing poor mental health as a result – and spending money to alleviate stress, anxiety or boredom.



Three distinct groups of consumers

1. Fragile

Fragile consumers are those with the risk of financial vulnerability and struggling to meet obligations.

Average index score of 62

2. Coping

Coping consumers are managing day to day but with limited resilience to shocks.

Average index score of 86

3. Resilient

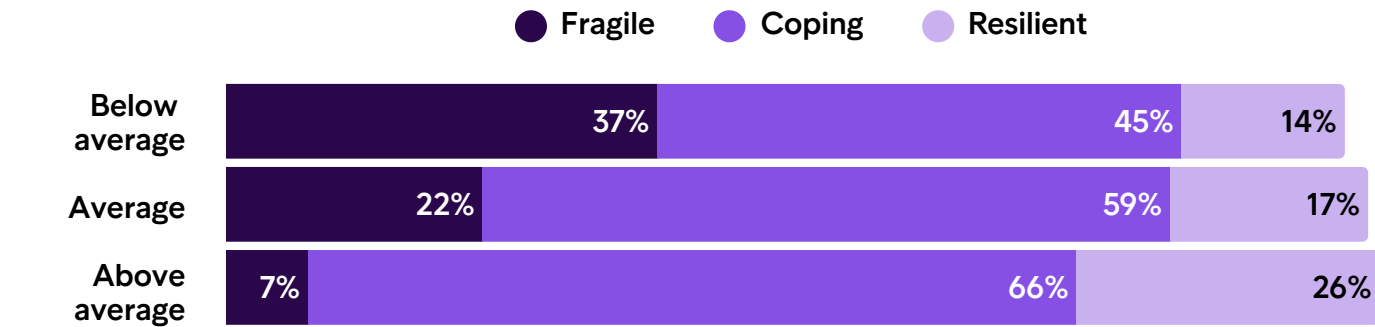
Resilient consumers are financially stable and confident.

Average index score of 93



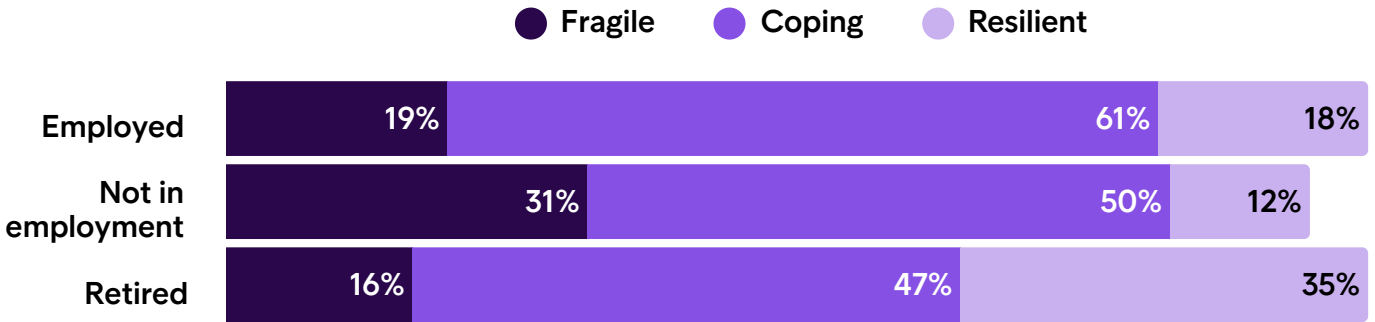
Consumers' finances are not entirely determined by income, employment, age or gender

Proportion of Fragile, Coping and Resilient respondents in different salary categories



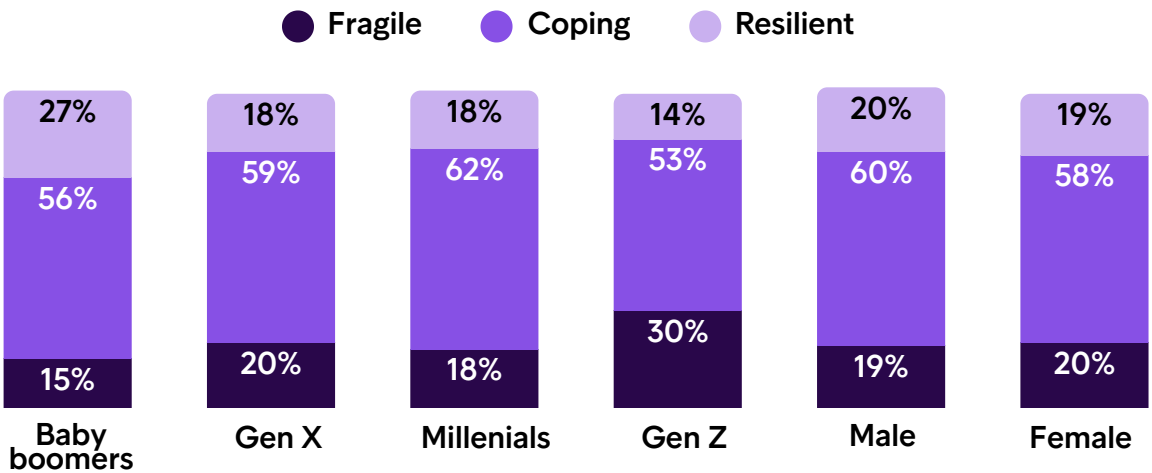
Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because some consumers could not answer specific required questions

Proportion of Fragile, Coping and Resilient respondents in different employment groups



Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because some consumers could not answer specific required questions

Proportion of Fragile, Coping and Resilient respondents in different generation and gender groups



Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because some consumers could not answer specific required questions

Money management issues have roots in childhood

Another telling finding from our study was that consumers' struggles with money management often appear to stem from childhood. Nearly half (46 percent) of those in the Fragile group say they experienced money-related stress and arguments at home while growing up, and only 25 percent have made efforts to build better financial habits than their parents. Just 27 percent of this group have a clear vision for how they would like to live their later lives, compared with 66 percent of Resilient consumers.

Financial education and literacy are key variables here: few Fragile consumers say they received good financial literacy at school (12 percent vs. 24 percent of Resilient consumers) or from their parents (27 percent vs. 56 percent). In recent years, studies have found a clear link between financial literacy and poverty reduction.

In ECPR 2023, for example, we showed that 46 percent of consumers with poor financial literacy had skipped a bill payment in the previous year, compared with just 31 percent of consumers with good financial literacy. It is reassuring, therefore, that boosting financial knowledge and skills is one of the European Commission's foremost initiatives, which has recently been formalised into its financial literacy strategy. Today, about a quarter of Fragile consumers (24 percent) find financial terminology confusing and stressful. They are also most likely among the three groups to say they lack the time to learn. This cycle leaves them vulnerable to deeper money troubles.

Habits and mindsets of Fragile money management

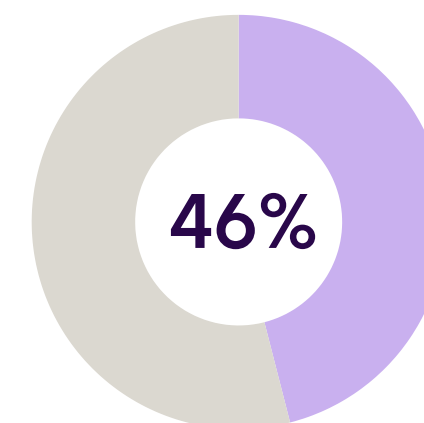
10

1. Failing to set aside money for emergencies
2. Believing wealth is unattainable no matter how hard they work or save
3. Not prioritising saving if it means sacrificing enjoyment
4. Worrying that housing costs will make retirement impossible
5. Feeling nervous about large purchases due to economic uncertainty
6. Experiencing pressure to keep up with lifestyles on social media, to the extent that it harms mental health
7. Expecting unemployment to rise sharply in the next two years
8. Fearing they will choose the wrong debt-management plan
9. Feeling anxious when consuming economic news
10. Spending money to alleviate stress, anxiety or boredom

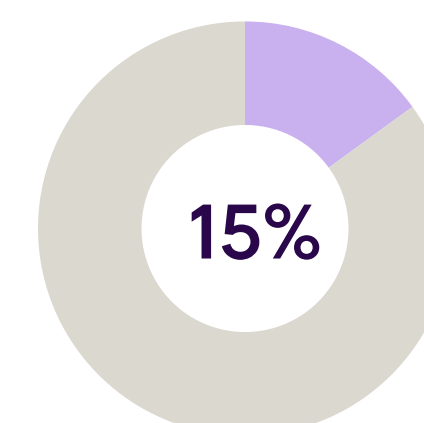
Money management childhood experiences Fragile vs. Resilient

Consumers who said money was a frequent source of stress and arguments at home when growing up

Fragile

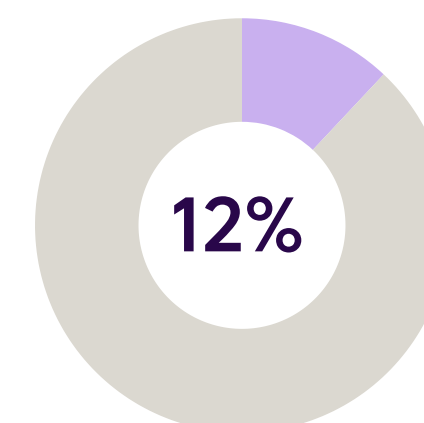


Resilient

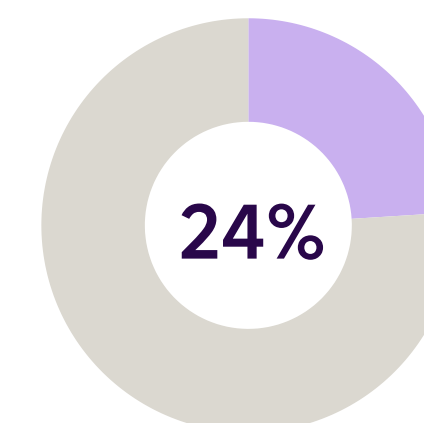


Consumers who said they received a good financial education at school

Fragile



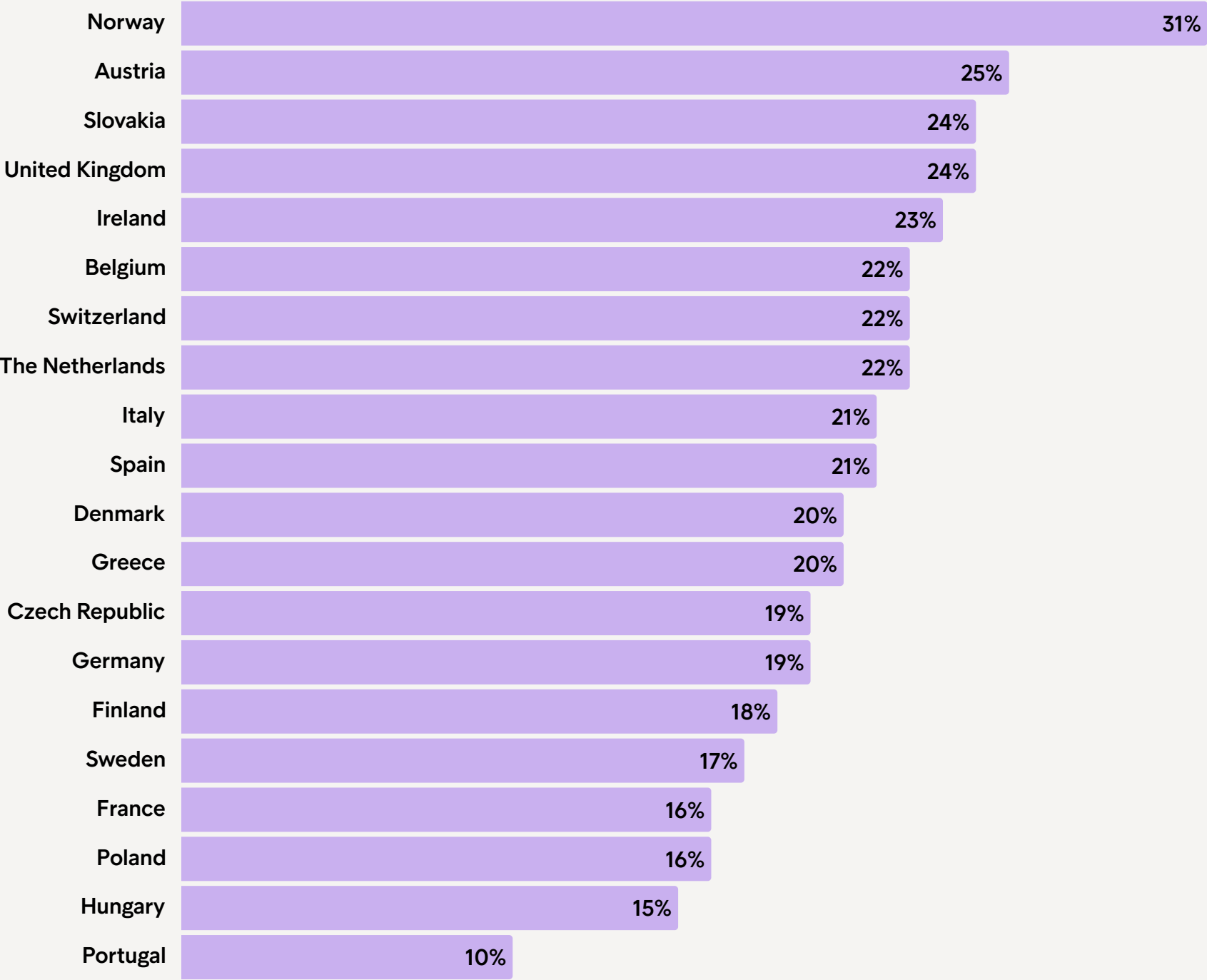
Resilient





Few Europeans feel they received a good financial education

Consumers who received a good financial education at school



Lessons for business:

Get to know the four types of Money Manager

1. Self-disciplined optimisers
2. Cautious savers
3. Financially strained and job-anxious
4. Debt-burdened and financially fragile



Consumer attitudes to debt and financial health are not just informative on an educational or cultural level. If businesses can deepen their understanding of individual consumer needs and preferences, they will be able to develop more ethical and effective strategies for engaging with customers who are struggling with debt or with making timely payments.

Building again on the Index and how consumers respond to different questions in ECPR, we can create four Money Management personas, each with nuances that can help guide businesses' communication and payment plans. These personas are presented in greater detail on the next page.

We believe these personas will be useful for policymakers as well as businesses. The better that policymakers understand the drivers of poor money management, the better they can design frameworks that support healthier financial behaviour and improve payment discipline.

This will not just lead to happier, more financially stable populations – it will also enable timely payments and the flow of capital. As we argue in our annual [European Payment Report \(EPR\)](#), good payment discipline strengthens business confidence and plays a vital role in supporting investment and economic growth.

The Money Management Index: Methodology overview

To create the Money Management Index, we applied a deep learning statistical model (an autoencoder neural network) to a selection of question responses focusing on debt and financial confidence. This model is based on a system of layered mathematical functions that learn from data by automatically adjusting themselves to find patterns and make predictions:

Input layer » Receives the raw data (i.e. survey responses).

Hidden layers » Process the data through a series of weighted connections and activation functions. These layers learn patterns and relationships in the data.

Output layer » Produces the final prediction, classification and Money Management Index score.

The auto-encoder approach is preferable to developing a simple average based on responses to questions because it:

- Captures greater complexity. It finds non-linear relationships between behaviours and attitudes that a simple average would miss.
- Reduces noise. No single question dominates the score, and redundant inputs are automatically down-weighted.
- Rests on solid foundations. The model extracts the shared underlying structure of financial management, not just the arithmetic sum of answers.

To establish the drivers and predictors of good money management, we used a separate supervised machine learning technique (a random forest regression model using the Money Management Index as a dependent variable) and applied that to a broad set of survey responses including reasons for incurring debt and missing payments, attitudes and risk perceptions, and purchasing/social behaviours as independent variables. The model provides importance scores, showing which inputs most strongly explain differences in a consumer's ability to manage finances.

To define the Money Management personas, we developed a data-driven segmentation grounded in the underlying drivers of financial health. By modelling the key predictors from the random forest analysis at the individual respondent level, we identified the relative influence of different behavioural and psychological factors. These influence patterns were used to cluster respondents into distinct segments using a k-means algorithm.

Four types of Money Manager

1 Self-disciplined optimisers

With the strongest position on the Money Management Index (an average of 90/100) among the four personas, self-disciplined optimisers are proactive savers and feel confident about their financial future. Compared with other persona categories, they are less concerned about job losses and housing affordability and see cost-of-living pressures as a temporary setback. They avoid borrowing unless it is required in an emergency, which helps to maintain long-term financial stability.

Self-disciplined optimisers are likely to prefer:

- Little to no proactive contact from vendors or suppliers about payment management. They lean towards digital alerts and advisory content that allow them to continue their positive relationship with money.
- A tone of communication that is reassuring and acknowledges risks without alarmism. Instead, it emphasises resilience and preparedness.

2 Cautious savers

Defined by deliberate saving and strong risk-aversion, cautious savers have a relatively low debt stress and score highly on the Money Management Index (average score of 82/100), though lower than the self-disciplined optimisers. They are actively building emergency funds to give them long-term financial resilience in an uncertain economy. This gives them a cushion for occasional spending bouts.

Cautious savers are likely to prefer:

- A light-touch approach to payment management, where they take charge of their finances with self-serve portals and apps.
- Content that positively reinforces and empowers their frugality.

3 Financially strained and job-anxious

These consumers hold high levels of unsecured debt, which leaves them struggling to afford essentials and gives them an average Money Management score of 71/100. The financially strained and job-anxious are highly concerned about unemployment, housing affordability and overall cost of living, because they lack a strong financial buffer to withstand economic shocks. Some are trying to improve their prospects by saving and educating themselves.

Financially strained and job-anxious consumers are likely to prefer:

- Low-barrier, AI-powered entry points to debt management, with the option to escalate to a human and consider step-by-step repayment plans if needed.
- A calm, supportive communication tone that avoids jargon and judgement.

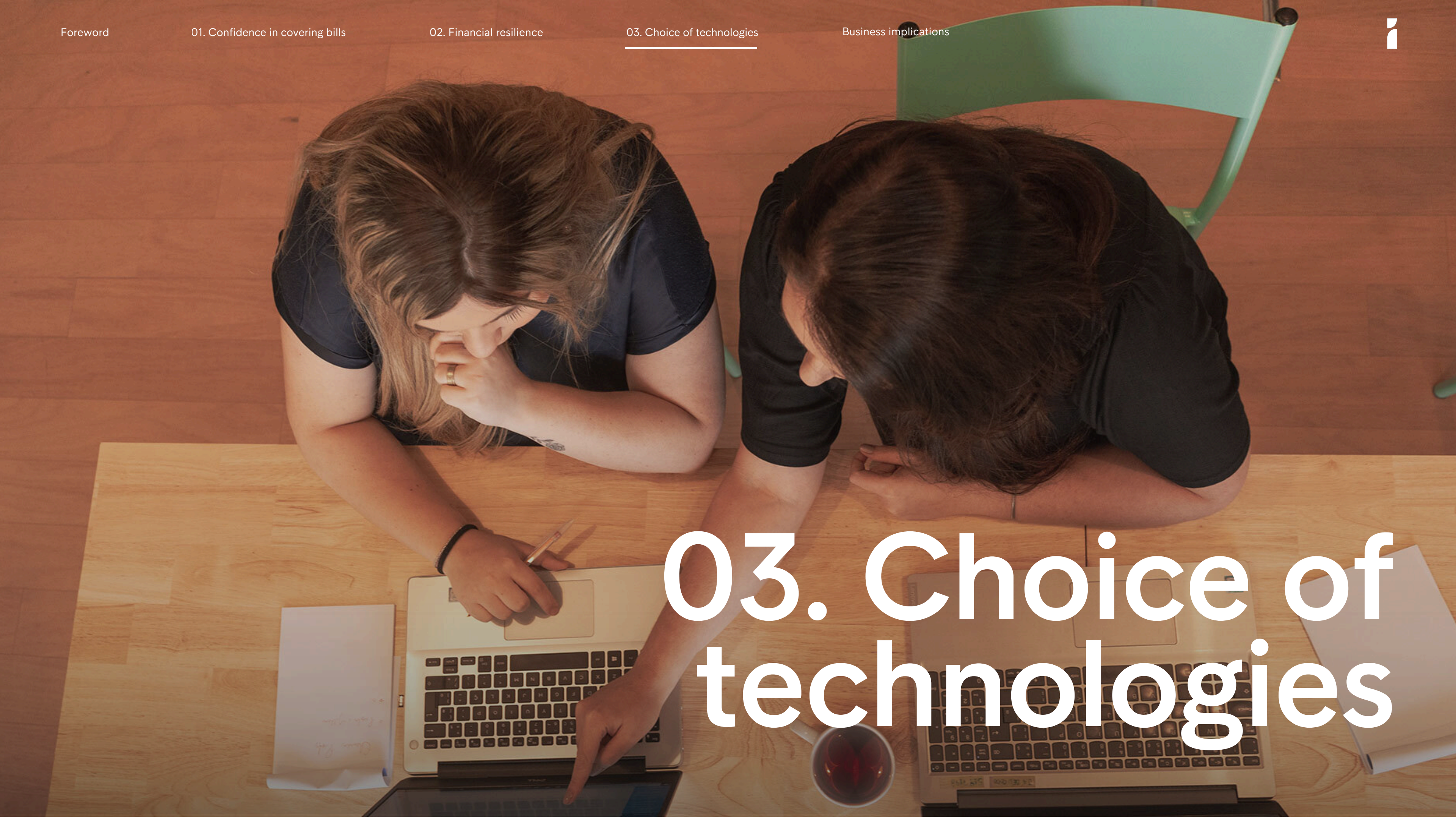
4 Debt-burdened and financially fragile

With the heaviest debt burden and lowest financial health (average score of 58/100), these consumers have been severely affected by the cost-of-living crisis and other unexpected costs. They lack financial safety nets, financial education and confidence, which puts them in a cycle of vulnerability. But they aspire to improve their position, which they think is possible with clear, simple financial guidance that avoids unnecessary jargon.

Debt-burdened and financially fragile consumers are likely to prefer:

- A human-first approach, either over the phone or in-person, supported by digital tools.
- A tone of communication that is empathetic but practical and offers clear solutions such as structured repayment plans and debt consolidation programs.

03. Choice of technologies

A top-down view of two people, a woman with long brown hair and a man with dark hair, sitting at a light-colored wooden table. They are both looking down at their laptops. The woman is on the left, wearing a dark blue shirt, and the man is on the right, wearing a black shirt. The woman is holding a pen over her laptop. There are some papers and a cup on the table. The background is a wooden floor.

Consumers are becoming more selective about the digital tools and platforms they trust

Technology continues to shape how European consumers manage their finances. From everyday purchases to debt advice, digital tools and platforms are increasingly embedded in their lives.

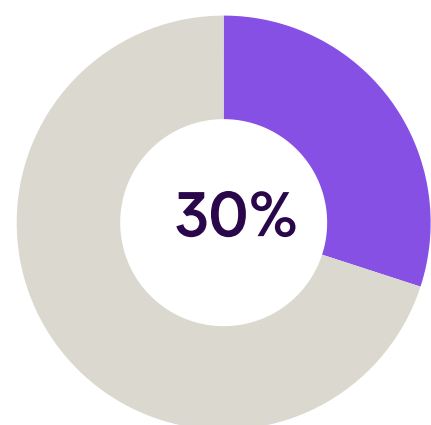
Against this backdrop, our ECPR research identifies three trends in how consumers engage with technology.

1. Attitudes towards AI shifting from fear to trust
2. A step back from spontaneous purchases
3. Push back against social media pressure

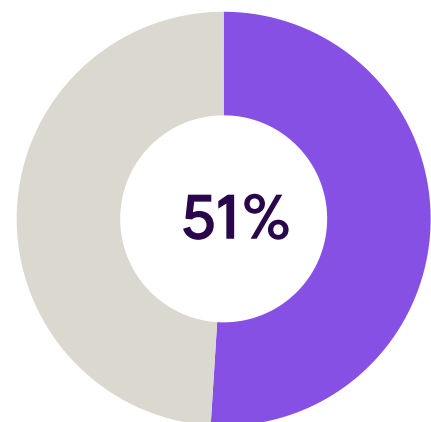


Three trends in how consumers engage with technology

Consumers more likely to be transparent with AI about financial situation than with a human



Consumers who frequently use AI to understand financial terms and conditions – generation Z



1. Consumers' approach to AI is pivoting from fear to trust



Our survey shows that concerns about AI-induced job losses are easing. Just 18 percent now fear that generative AI will replace their roles, while a [Eurobarometer survey](#) found that more than 60 percent of Europeans feel positively about AI at work. In ECPR, more than 70 percent believe that AI boosts productivity.

Beyond work, consumers are also realising how AI can support them. An increasing number say they use AI tools such as ChatGPT to understand financial terms and conditions. This is particularly true for younger generations with less life experience: over half of generation Z rely on AI for financial learning (51 percent vs. 15 percent of boomers).

As fears about large-language models (LLMs) replacing traditional roles subside, and consumers begin to understand the benefits of AI, they are becoming less wary about its use in debt management. Many are less concerned about AI's impact on their personal data security (32 percent indicate they are not concerned in 2025 compared with 19 percent in 2024). They are also less uncomfortable about its lack of empathy during credit decisions (40 percent are comfortable in 2025 vs. 31 percent in 2024).

There has been a slight growth in the proportion who believe AI could reduce judgement and bias in debt-collection processes (35 percent vs. 31 percent in 2024). And 30 percent say that they are more likely to hide the truth from a human than from AI.

But the Money Management Index's Fragile consumers are still hesitant. More than half are worried about their personal data security (59 percent) and AI's lack of human empathy (51 percent). Despite this, they are also most likely to acknowledge that AI could make the process fairer for everyone. These consumers are torn between lingering concerns and cautious optimism, so to shift them from doubt to acceptance businesses must reassure them with transparency and clarity.

There are also significant local differences in consumer transparency during interactions with AI. 50 percent of Danish consumers, for instance, are more likely to be honest with AI than with humans, but in France only 13 percent say the same. So businesses might need to take a different approach to each country when they introduce AI in debt management.

2. Consumers are stepping back from spontaneous purchases

Technology has revolutionised spending, with 77 percent of EU citizens now [buying goods or services for personal use online](#). Its convenience makes purchases easier than ever, but ECPR shows that consumers are becoming wiser to the risks associated with enhanced ease-of-purchase. Only 30 percent now say they make more spontaneous online purchases than they did two years ago, compared with 45 percent in 2024.

Spontaneous buys can be fuelled by buy-now, pay-later options, and the buy-now, pay-later market grew at a significant [CAGR \(Compound Annual Growth Rate\) of 20.6 percent](#) in Europe between 2021 and 2024. However, over-reliance can push consumers to spend beyond their means, damaging financial wellbeing. Policymakers are increasingly concerned about this. For example, the [UK government](#) will introduce stricter rules in 2026, including affordability checks.

But our data shows that consumers are already aware of the risk of taking on too much debt. The share of consumers choosing vendors based on buy-now, pay-later availability is declining, down from 40 percent in 2024 to 28 percent in 2025, indicating the novelty of deferred payment is wearing off.



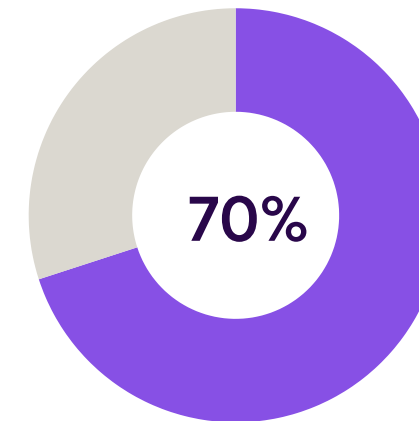
3. Consumers are pushing back against social media pressure

Online spending goes far beyond e-commerce. Social commerce – the direct sale of products and services via social media platforms – continues to expand: Europe's social commerce market is forecast to grow at a CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of 15.6 percent between 2025 and 2030.

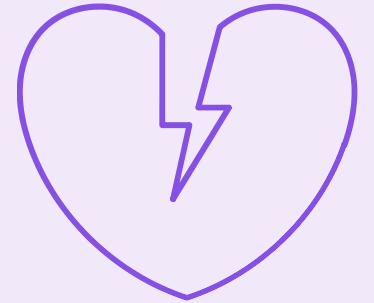
But there is a dark side to social spending. Consumers are wary of the role platforms and influencer culture play, with 70 percent saying that social media creates unrealistic financial expectations. In addition, nearly one in three report mental health damage from pressure to match influencer lifestyles. The Fragile consumers feel this most acutely.

Poor social media sentiment may ultimately be beneficial for consumers' finances. Far fewer now make impulse purchases based on social media advertising compared with 2024 (from 40 percent to 25 percent), while 16 percent say that influencer-induced pressure has pushed them into debt.

Consumers who say social media creates unrealistic financial expectations



Is social media exploiting the most vulnerable?



Social media habits differ between different socio-economic groups, with one study finding adolescents from lower-income backgrounds are more likely to report addictive behaviours.

Increased usage among low-income consumers could be leading to problematic spending. Our latest research shows that Fragile consumers are most likely to make impulse purchases and take on debt trying to live up to influencer lifestyles.

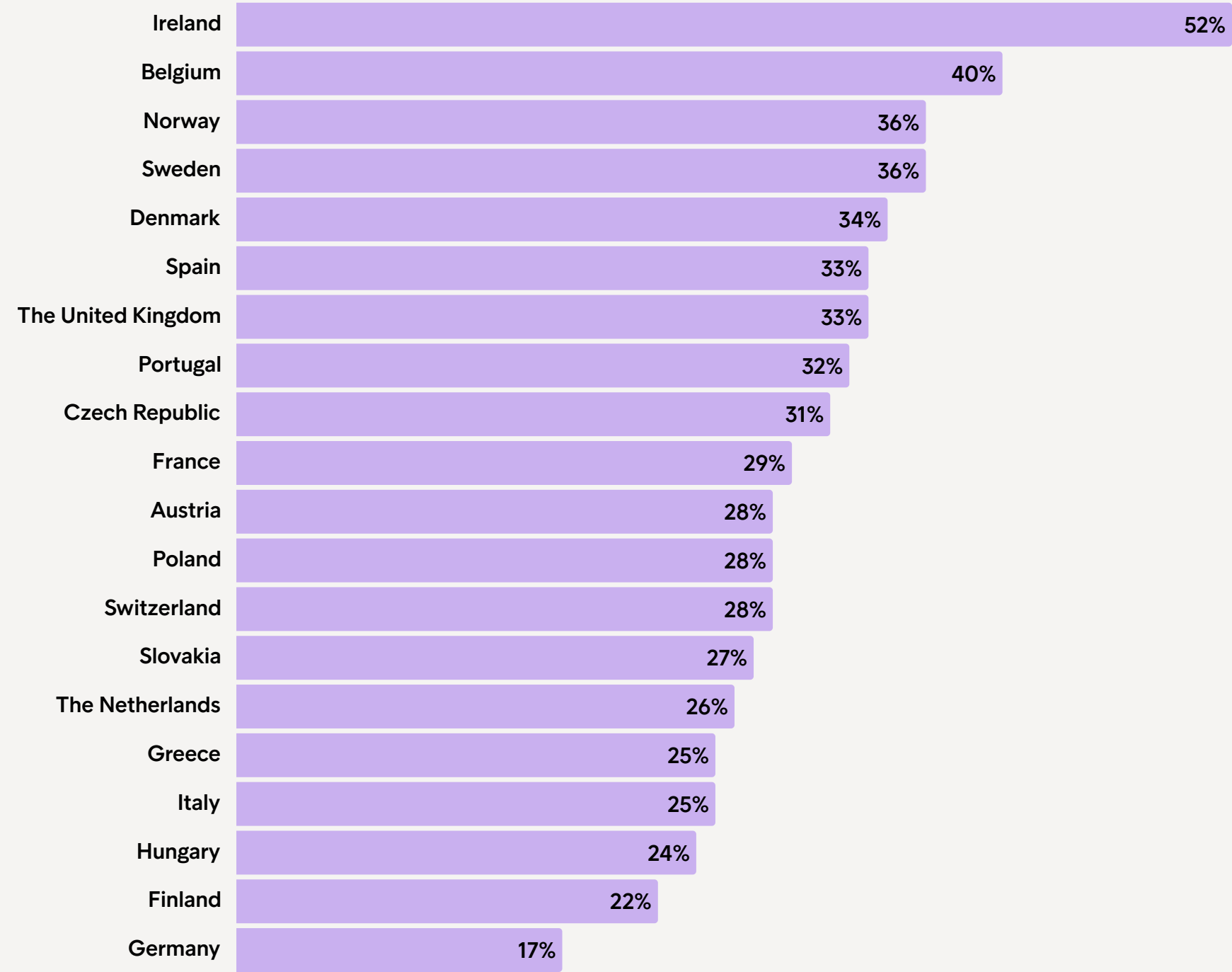
Their wellbeing is also most impacted. Around four in ten (41 percent) say influencer lifestyles have been bad for their mental health, compared with 22 percent of financially Resilient consumers.

It is not just income levels that impact social media usage. The survey also shows that younger consumers are far more negatively impacted than older generations. Almost a third (31 percent) of generation Z say they have pushed themselves into debt replicating lifestyles they see on social media and over half (54 percent) report deteriorated mental health.



Growth in spontaneous online purchases is slowing

Consumers who make more spontaneous purchases online now compared to two years ago



45% → 30%

European average decreased from 45% in 2024 to 30% today

52%

of consumers in Ireland make more spontaneous purchases online now compared to two years ago

17%

of consumers in Germany make more spontaneous purchases online now compared to two years ago

Business implications



How should businesses respond?

The economic picture is gradually improving, but consumers are still coping with the aftermath of the cost-of-living crisis. Businesses will need to show compassion while protecting their revenue streams.



Five ways to improve consumer relationships and make payments more predictable

1. Get to know your consumers

Disposable incomes are rising, but many consumers still feel under pressure. Businesses that are realistic, not over-optimistic, will be better prepared for shortfalls and equipped to deal with varying customer needs.

2. Avoid one-size-fits-all communication

Managing finances can be stressful, even for those on higher-than-average incomes. Businesses must be tactful and non-judgemental in their language when they communicate with defaulting consumers. An overbearing approach risks alienating reliable payers.

3. Tailor solutions to individual needs

Different financial circumstances call for different tools. Light-touch, self-service options help Resilient consumers maintain their position, while a hands-on approach is generally best for the financially Fragile.

4. Adapt social strategies responsibly

Social commerce is a growing revenue stream, but strategies must be ethical. Avoid exploiting insecurities around influencer lifestyles to prevent mental health consequences and long-term defaulting.

5. Embrace AI with transparency

Consumers are warming to AI's role in payments, so businesses should capitalise on this. Be upfront about how and when the technology is used, and highlight benefits to build trust in further digital transformation.



For more information:

Kristin Andersson
Group External Communications Director
kristin.andersson@intrum.com

Intrum AB (publ)
Riddargatan 10
114 35 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel +46 8 616 76 66

www.intrum.com

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