

## New survey shows consumers are struggling with rising prices, as they have been forced to change their purchasing habits

**Brussels - 24 May 2022** - Euroconsumers' annual [Affordability Barometer](#) published at the beginning of this year already showed great pessimism and a bleak outlook for consumer finances as rising inflation, the lingering covid-19 crisis, and energy prices started to hit home. Since then, the devastating effects of the Ukraine war have put even more pressure on prices.

Today Euroconsumers is releasing the results of another large-scaled survey, carried out in the countries of its five member organisations (Belgium, Portugal, Italy, Spain, and Brazil), that indicates how consumers are adapting to this (new) reality. It found the majority of respondents have already significantly changed their behaviour - mostly in the areas of energy, food, and mobility. And the future doesn't look bright, as a worrying number of respondents indicated that they do not have any margins or savings left to deal with future price increases.

This survey will be the focus of further discussion at the next Euroconsumers' [Start Talking webinar](#) on the 9th of June, which will gather experts and consumer professionals to discuss the impact of inflation on consumers.

### Consumers' quality of life is taking a hit as most cut back on basic costs such as utilities

Consumers across the European countries surveyed and Brazil have adapted their behaviour across all areas of expenditure since the beginning of 2022, mainly when it comes to energy, food, and mobility, but also social activities and even health care:

- 3/4th of respondents declared having changed their consumption habits in the area of home and energy expenditures. For example, **half of the respondents have turned the heating lower to save energy<sup>1</sup>**, and 43% of the surveyed European consumers stated they have switched off appliances or avoided using them more often to save on electricity. In Brazil this goes up to 70%.
- 2/3rds have changed their mobility consumption behaviour. For example, **4 out of 10 respondents declare having avoided using their car due to fuel price increases**, while one quarter started driving more economically.
- A vast majority also changed their food and leisure habits. 43% of European respondents and 65% of the Brazilian ones have started buying lower price brands in the supermarket (e.g. white brands, supermarket brands), while **1 in 3 has cut down on non-essential food. 1 out of 5 European respondents also indicated they are buying less fish or meat. In Brazil this is even 1 out of 2.**

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<sup>1</sup> This doesn't include Portugal.

- Surveyed consumers not only stated they have stopped/postponed buying clothes for themselves (37%), started cutting on social activities like going to restaurants and bars (36%), or changed holiday plans (24%). They have also **cancelled dental care (19%), postponed medical consultations (15%) and the purchase of glasses or hearing aids (13%) because of the increasing prices.**

While the lower-income households have been hit the hardest and are changing their behaviour in higher numbers than the average population, it should be noted that even among financially comfortable consumers, an overall majority of respondents are still changing their behaviour.

### **Rising prices put a worrying proportion of consumers in a precarious situation**

The results show many are struggling financially:

- Almost one fourth of all respondents describe the financial situation of their household as difficult.
- 39% declare that their financial situation at this moment is worse compared to one year ago.

A worrying number of respondents also indicated that they do not have any margins or savings left to deal with future price increases (35% in EU, 58% in Brazil).

### **The future doesn't look bright, yet consumers show support for action against Russia**

Consumers anticipate more economic hardship to come, as 4 in 5 are expecting energy and fuel prices to keep on increasing. Two thirds of all respondents are afraid to spend money because they expect harder times to come.

Despite their financial struggles, consumers in Belgium, Spain, Italy, and Portugal indicated a willingness to continue with the sanctions against Russia:

- 57% agreed that the EU should continue to enforce economic sanctions against Russia even if this means that affects the economies of the EU member states.
- 58% would be willing to renounce some comfort in their daily life if that helps fighting against the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

### **Quotes:**

“Consumers need all the support they can get, from the highest to the lowest political and economical level, to keep up with soaring prices on energy, food and many more essential products and services,” said **Els Bruggeman, Head of Policy and Enforcement at Euroconsumers**. “Euroconsumers will be there all the way. To provide easily accessible price comparison tools, to make sure all consumers can shift to green energy, and to ensure they remain empowered to take a leading and rebalancing role in this vastly changing economy.”

“Consumers’ future is changing dramatically, and so is the future of consumer organisations” said **Marco Pierani, Director of Public Affairs & Media Relations at Euroconsumers**. “Facing the risk of losing precious consumer choice and well-being, it is our duty to develop solid countermeasures by also working with the most relevant and responsible market players.”

### **Background:**

Euroconsumers’ member organisations have been helping consumers on the ground since energy prices [first began to rise](#), and continue to [assist them now as the crisis worsens](#) since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Euroconsumers’ members are lobbying for government schemes to help consumers, to cut taxes within electricity bills, and to make the green energy shift possible for all consumers. And they are helping consumers compare providers and supermarkets, save energy, and jointly purchase renewable energy technology. This survey will further guide Euroconsumers’ organisations to pinpoint how to best support consumers.

### **Methodology:**

The sample was reached through an online questionnaire sent out to a representative sample, based on the latest national statistics of each country. The socio-demographic variables taken into account were: gender, age (25-74 years) and regional distribution. After receiving the results, the data were weighted for gender, age, region and educational attainment. The data collection took place from the 26th of April 2022 to the 29th of April 2022. The total number of valid answers used for analysis is 5229.

### **About Euroconsumers:**

Gathering five national consumer organisations and giving voice to a total of more than 1.5 million people, Euroconsumers is the world’s leading consumer cluster in innovative information, personalised services and defence of consumer’s rights. We work closely together with Consumers International to ensure consumers are safe, that markets are fair and benefit from honest relations with businesses and authorities. Our European member groups are also part of the umbrella network of BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation. Together we advocate for EU policies that benefit consumers in their daily lives.

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