

Sign of the times



Introduction



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- “Thank God that’s over!” was the audible response to the chime of 12 on New Year’s Eve all around Ireland.
- 2009 brought a catalogue of closures and scandals to our shores unseen for a generation. Every news broadcast seemed to disclose more tales of woe.
- Our economy lurched downwards and consumer confidence plummeted.
- There were lots of reports on what went wrong, lists of events of the year, but they detached from the real world.
- At Behaviour & Attitudes, throughout the year, we are presented with stories from individuals’ lives that give a unique perspective on Ireland today.
- This report presents what we have been hearing ‘from the horse’s mouth’ and what it means to be Irish in 2010.

First a
quick
reminder



2009 News stories



Even the weather had it in for us!

2009 Celebrity news



Some new heroes, others lost or tarnished

On our minds in 2009

“Where is the Taoiseach?”

“Can I afford an iPod?”

“Who will replace Pat Kenny?”

“Will the teachers strike?”

“Will I lose my job?”

“Should I emigrate?”

“Will Irish team go to South Africa?”

“Is that sneeze swine flu?”

... Some questions remain unanswered

Main themes



Main themes

Life Goes On

Despite everything, people are getting on with things pretty well

Fear & Loathing

Faith in our institutions is at an all-time low and we don't think much of our values

Authentic Experiences

More than ever we need things we can trust

Zeitgeist 2010

Life Goes On

“Last week my husband was made redundant. The way I see it it could be a lot worse... we have a good family, fantastic friends... you have to make the most of it.”

Despite everything, people are resigned to getting on with things

Fear & Loathing

“You wouldn’t turn your back to a group of teens on the street, you might get knifed”

Faith in our institutions is at an all-time low and we don’t think much of our values

Authentic Experiences

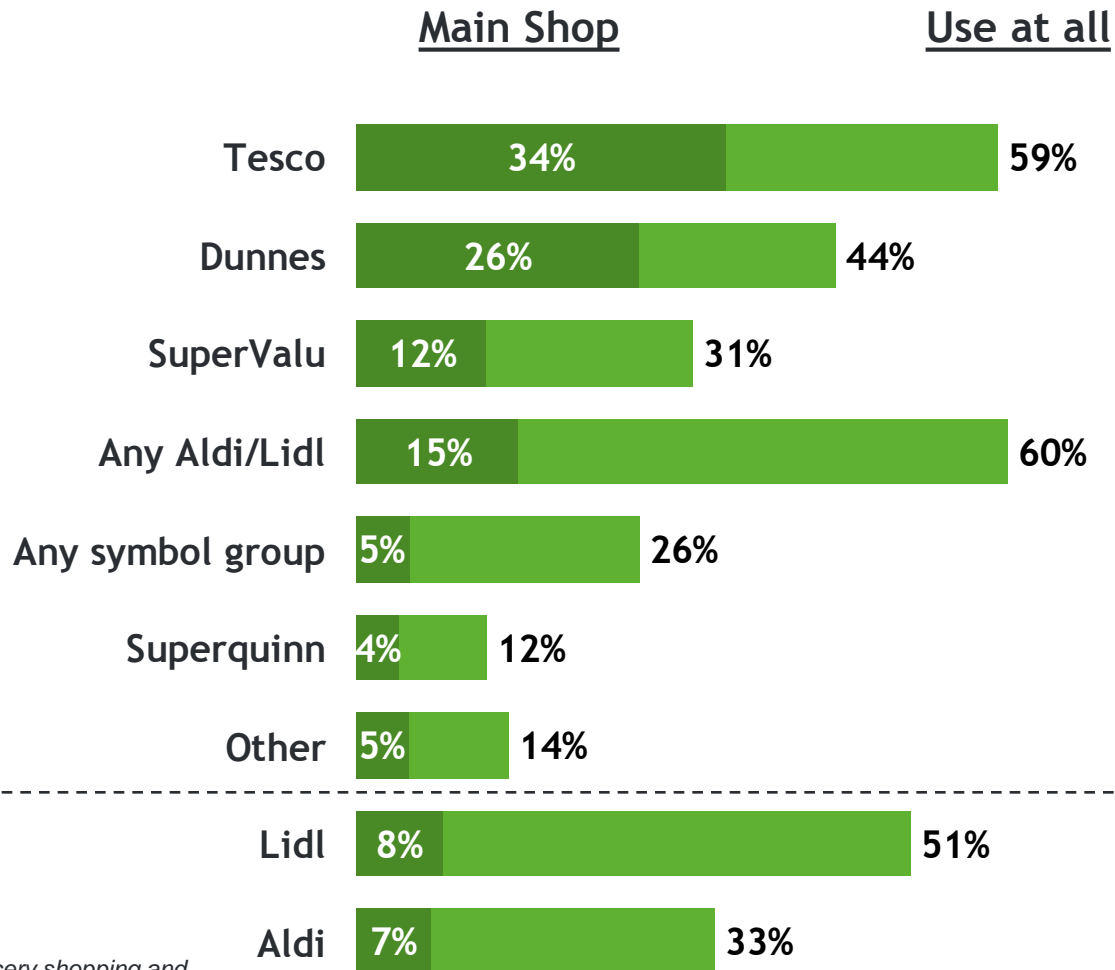
“We lost ourselves during the Tiger years, we need to get back to reality...”

More than ever we need things we can trust

From the Horse's Mouth....

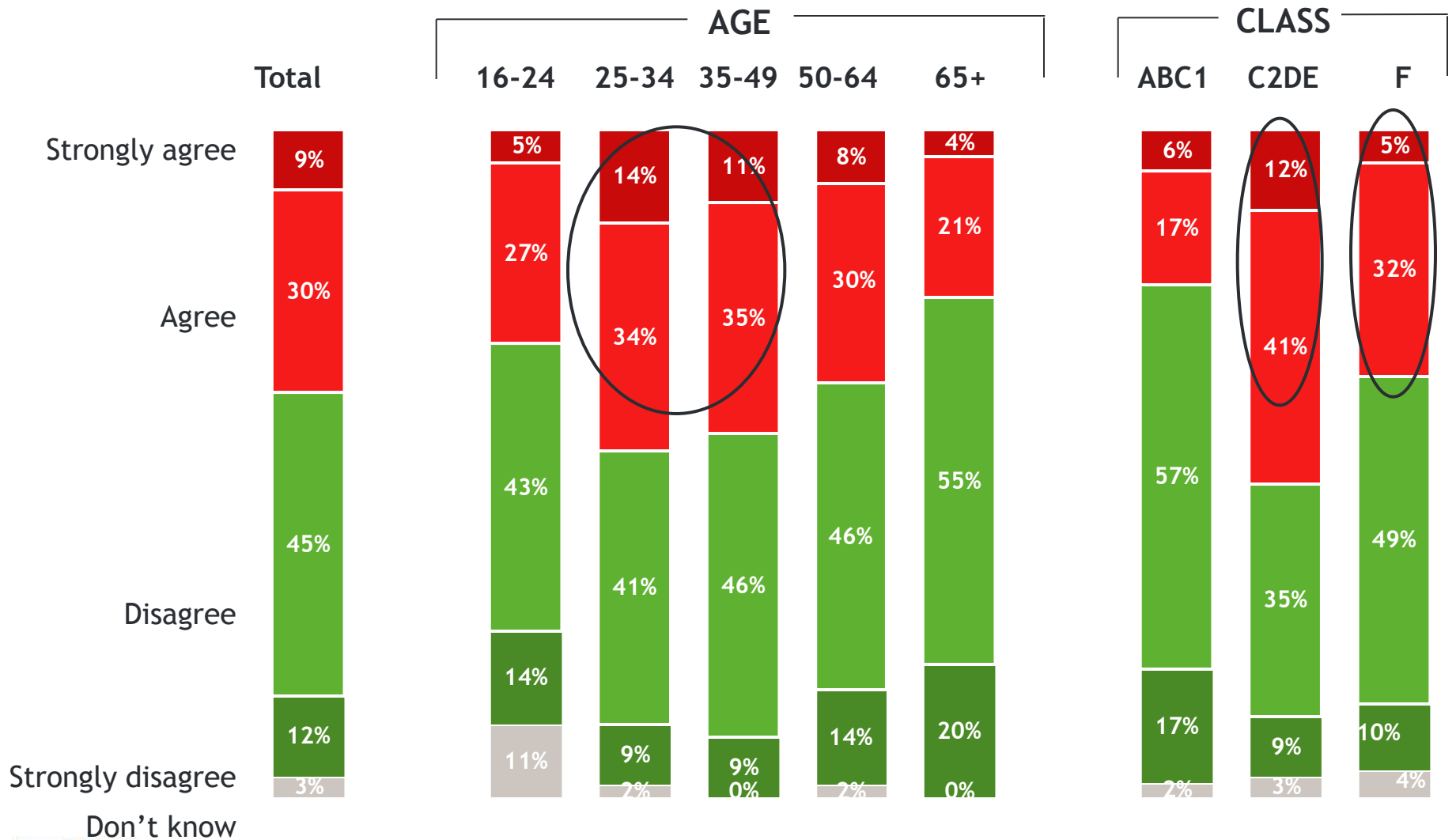


Shop Usage



*Source: B&A Grocery shopping and Discounters Oct 2009

Households Struggling to Make Ends Meet



*Source: B&A Confidence monitor Nov 2009

25-49 year old working class under greatest pressure.

The Recession

“Things changed. Husband made redundant. Children not getting as much as they did before. Some of my sisters also made redundant. Money became scarce. Started shopping in Lidl, taking extra work.”

Louise, 43

“Last 12 months have been hard, as my mother has been ill. Money is tighter, my husband and children are still working and in good health though”

Anne, 50

“Tough economically for family and friends emigrating to find work. Moved out. I’m worried about job all the time”

Steve, 28

“Had a good year. Everyone in my family became closer, many friends got married. Pay cuts for most of my friends and family, but socialising has increased”

Sean, 36

“Some of my children moved out (voluntarily). Second son completed 3rd level education. Two old friends died, two others are ill”

Frank, 60

Good news in 2009?

“Spending time focusing on home life, instead of racing after good times. Bringing us back to reality”

Louise, 43

“Everyone healthy is the main thing. Totally addicted to X Factor. Travelling with friends in Europe”

Carol, 47

“Qualifying as a solicitor, Six Nations. Golf and the summer holidays”

Johnny, 27

“Spending much more time with my daughter. Watching Leeds do well. Getting golf handicap cut”

Anthony, 41

“My son finished his degree and my daughter completed her first year. Nice to have changing relationship with four adults now”

Arthur, 59

Emerging trends



Emerging trends for 2010

- Conspicuous restraint
- Home treats
- Discount chic
- Nesting
- Big Night In
- Pulling together
- Opting out



Emerging trends for 2010

Conspicuous restraint

- While many have had to cut back
 - ❖ Salary cut
 - ❖ Lost job
- Others are more restrained simply because of how it looks.
- In effect, there is pressure to conform to the austerity of the times.



Emerging trends for 2010

Home Treats

- There has been a rapid decline in visits to restaurants, but we still like to reward ourselves at home:
 - ❖ A carry out and a DVD
 - ❖ The Lidl bar of chocolate.
- Pub visits are less frequent, but there is still a bottle of wine in the fridge.



Emerging trends for 2010

Discount Chic

- We got used to little luxuries during the Tiger years.
- It can be hard to constantly deprive oneself nowadays.
- This is where shops own brand 'luxuries' have come into their own.
- Luxury at a discount still triggers impulsive behaviour.

dine in for two
€12.50

Menu
CHOOSE FROM A SELECTION OF
A MAIN MEAL
— + —
SIDE DISH
— + —
DESSERT
— + —
BOTTLE OF WINE
ALL FOR €12.50

dine in for two
€12.50

At M&S this weekend you can dine in with us for just €12.50

From a selection of products, choose a main course and vegetables for two, a dessert for two and a bottle of wine for just €12.50

Enjoy restaurant quality food in the comfort of your own home with your M&S, for just €12.50

Selected product and stores only. Excludes from and food for store. Subject to availability. PHS-FOD90XXXX

Selected product and stores only. Offer runs Thursday to Monday. Subject to availability. See website for details. PHS-FOD90XXXX

Emerging trends for 2010

Nesting

- With a new property off the mental tick list many households have turned to sprucing up their home.
- Woodies and Ikea have come into their own as we turn from planning an extension to redecorating.



Emerging trends for 2010

Big Night In

- Many more people are staying at home to socialise.
- Even teens and twenty-somethings are organising social nights around the TV.
- X Factor has had an influence here, but also dinner parties, poker nights etc. have increased.



Emerging trends for 2010

Pulling Together

- Many comment that we ‘lost the run of ourselves’ during the boom years and we have returned to ‘community values’ now.
- Particularly for those a part time work or recently unemployed there is more engagement with neighbours and family.
- However this is also ‘talked up’ trend for many who feel we need to embrace community more (but in fact rarely meet their neighbours).



Emerging trends for 2010

Opting Out

- Everybody looks forward to experiences overseas whether they are 18 or 55.
- It is the under 30s who are seriously considering emigration.
- Ireland has a long history of exporting its youth and talent and this has returned as a trend.



Concluding thoughts



Concluding Thoughts

- Over the year we have moved from feeling like we are ‘frozen in the head lights’ through a sense of numbness or anger to a **universal sense of resignation**.
- We all take pride in being Irish but feel let down by our leaders and embarrassed by our boom years behaviour.
- We despair for the values of our youth and sense we have lost our way.
- The questions facing us in 2010 are not just financial. In the past we could grab hold of Christian morals, or a liberal agenda, the profit motive or the environmental lobby.
- We said it was okay to seek reward and luxury because we worked so hard.
- There is now a need to reassess and adjust. It is a time of transition.

Concluding Thoughts

- Recent economic collapse comes at the end of a wave of exaggerated optimism, spending and liberalising values. It is sometimes with a sense of guilt that people talk about the benefit of returning to ‘older values’ or a ‘back to basics’ approach to life. There is even a sense of coming down to earth to ‘real Ireland’.
- At this time of resignation and reassessment few have confidence in the church to guide us. We have steadily been losing confidence in the church for many years and recent events have further distanced the church hierarchy from the population.
- There is little confidence in our political leaders but this is actually fairly consistent with our long term outlook. We never really trusted them anyway.
- The banks have fallen furthest in our estimation of course but like the politicians we seem to just carry on with what we know rather than try to make a radical change.
- So what do we want?

Concluding Thoughts

- **We want strong leadership.** Obama's election gave us all a model for intelligent leadership but there seemed to be a long period when there was no clear route forward. At a time of crisis and change we need to know that someone has a plan. We want to feel there is clarity and certainty at the top of government. Brian Lenihan emerged this year as a leader with conviction and determination. His handling of his cancer diagnosis has deepened public affinity.
- **We respond to dedication and integrity.** This year X factor was a huge draw. It was hard to avoid the hype. But it was actually a moment from Britain's Got Talent that left a more permanent mark on the Irish zeitgeist. When Susan Boyle came on the stage everyone assumed they were in for a treat, a chance to laugh at the sad old woman who wants to be on TV. When she began to sing the shock on the judges faces was mirrored by everyone's realisation we too had prejudged her. Her dedication and integrity as much as our jaded cynicism is the real message here.

Concluding Thoughts

- **We need escapism.** The news media have been unremitting in the accurate communication of doom and gloom. Some have stopped listening to the news, others buy extra newspapers. But everyone has welcomed a bit of escapism, whether it is in *Desperate Housewives* or *Avatar*.
- Facing into 2010 we have some insights about Irish people at the end of a tough year.
- Perhaps the most important is that people are ‘getting on with it’.
- Simply, you can only stay in shock or anger for so long and then life goes on.
- We are rediscovering each other, there is a sense of shared perspective and greater interest in being involved.
- In the autumn of 2009 there were some who felt that the country might fall apart, but we feel there is evidence for greater optimism.

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