

## **‘Irish businesses can compete with the best,’ says Virgin Media**

**Consumers have strongly indicated they will consciously support local shops and businesses both in person and online when the pandemic is finally over.**

The vast majority (90pc) of Irish consumers say they intend to shop local as much as they can during and after the pandemic, according to research commissioned by [Virgin Media Ireland](#) and conducted independently by [Amárach Research](#).

The Virgin Media research surveyed over 1,200 people aged 18 and over across all regions of the country.

Eight in 10 people said they will consciously buy Irish goods and services where there

Similar numbers (more than 80pc) expressed a view that people will need to ‘do more’ to support local businesses and employers as the pandemic comes to an end.

According to the study approximately 50pc of people are currently shopping more online than they ever did before the pandemic.

And, with the ongoing reopening, a strong preference has emerged for a continuing blended approach.

While large numbers of people have returned to main streets across Ireland for groceries, household supplies, furnishing, footwear and appliances, four in 10 said they will still prefer to shop both online and in-person for clothing, healthcare products, accessories, consumer electronics and home entertainment, indicating that businesses and retailers will need to offer the best of both worlds.

### **People have the power**

Irish online consumers wield considerable buying power with a current average monthly spend of €230 reported by those surveyed.

Roughly half of those surveyed said they had spent up to €100 online in the past month, while a third spent between €100 and €500, with 1 in 10 saying they spent up to €1,000 or more. Central Bank of Ireland statistics put online spending using credit and debit cards at €2.7bn for May 2021,

an increase of 30pc on the prior year, representing 47pc of all Point of Sale spending for the month.

The research found that food takeaway and delivery to the home will continue to be popular with up to 70pc of consumers in this category saying they will still be ordering online.

While the preference for online grocery shopping surged to record highs during the course of the pandemic, 8 in 10 people now say they have a preference to do all their groceries in-store, with the intention for continued online grocery shopping returning to previous norms and popularity (circa 20pc).

## **Connected consumers**

The research also highlighted the importance of high-speed broadband networks to life and living in Ireland. Figures from Virgin Media show that people are now far more engaged in online activity than ever before, which is set to continue.

During the pandemic 44pc of people increased their amount of streaming. 7 in 10 people now say they'll continue watching the same or more Netflix content. 40pc of people say they use broadband between 2 - 5 hours daily watching a variety of streaming video services.

On average, 25pc of all respondents said they're using broadband to watch video streaming services more than ever before, including Netflix, YouTube & Amazon Prime, while 20pc said they're watching more video content on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.

In a clear sign of online activity leading to changing consumer behaviour, nearly 1/3 of respondents said they had started listening to more podcasts and Spotify during lockdown, with 9 out of 10 people saying they'll continue to listen to the same amount or more after lockdown.

With Zoom meetings and online video calls keeping people connected with their family and friends during the lockdown, half of all respondents said they're still 'Zooming' to some extent for social gatherings (not work related), and overall, 40pc of us are now doing this more than ever before.

4 in 10 people said they have recently published content online, from making and sharing a video, podcast, music recording or other activity, and among those who haven't, a significant 33pc (one-third of respondents) said they'll do it in the near future.

The findings are reflected in Virgin Media's own network statistics, where since February 2020 the 1GB broadband provider has seen a 91pc increase in overall downstream data usage across its superfast network which passes 1m homes nationwide.

## Switching on a digital nation

Paul Higgins, vice-president of Commercial at Virgin Media Ireland, said that the company is seeing continuously higher levels of online activity across its broadband network relating to remote working, video streaming, entertainment and consumer purchasing.

“Broadband is now an essential mainstream driver and enabler of our lifestyles and choices including shopping, accessing content, connecting with friends and family and more flexible working patterns. This will continue as people want to enjoy the best of both worlds online and offline.

“With our 1Gbps superfast network available to over 1m homes across Ireland, we’re delighted to be at the centre of all these developments as seen in a 91pc increase in ongoing data usage by Virgin Media customers across our network.”

Higgins said it is encouraging for retailers and businesses that consumers say they will consciously support Irish outlets, goods and services. “This is very important as we know that over 60pc of online spending currently finds its way abroad.

“During the pandemic, Irish businesses showed they can compete with the very best offerings online, and this must continue. New online consumer spending patterns are here to stay and businesses who enhance their e-commerce can compete online and create further opportunities for growth. In turn, it’s essential for all of us to get behind Irish businesses by buying local and buying Irish wherever possible,” Higgins said.

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*Published: 21 July 2021*