



SINGLE USE PACKAGING FOR FRUIT & VEGETABLES

National Survey on Usage & Attitudes 2024

EPA Circular Economy Programme and Ipsos B&A

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Overview of survey

Behavioural insight is a foundation of the EPA's Circular Economy Programme, providing evidence to inform policy, behavioural change interventions and awareness campaigns.

The EPA contracted Ipsos B&A to carry out this quantitative research to assess usage and attitudes around single use packaging for fruit and vegetables, with the aim to contribute to a report for the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications examining how single use packaging used in the sale of fruit and vegetables can be reduced. For this project, three packaging types were considered: pre-packaged items; loose items placed in a plastic or paper bag; and loose items placed in a shopping basket.

The fieldwork for the online survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,016 adults ages 16+ was carried out in March 2024.

The sections of the report are as follows:

1. Fruit & Vegetables Purchasing
2. Usage of Packaging Types
3. Packaging Types Preference
4. Perceived Advantages of Packaging Types



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Section 1: Fruit & Vegetables Purchasing



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Fruit & Vegetables Purchasing : *Infographic*



96%

of people eat fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a week.



38%

of people purchase fresh fruit and vegetables 2-3 times a week or more often.



95%

of people buy 'most' fresh fruit or vegetables from supermarkets.



62%

of people own a cloth reusable bag they could use to carry loose fruit and vegetables.



23%

of people waste a large or moderate amount of fresh fruit and vegetables.



Approx. **35%**

of people under 35 years and family with pre school children waste a large or moderate amount of fresh fruit and vegetables.



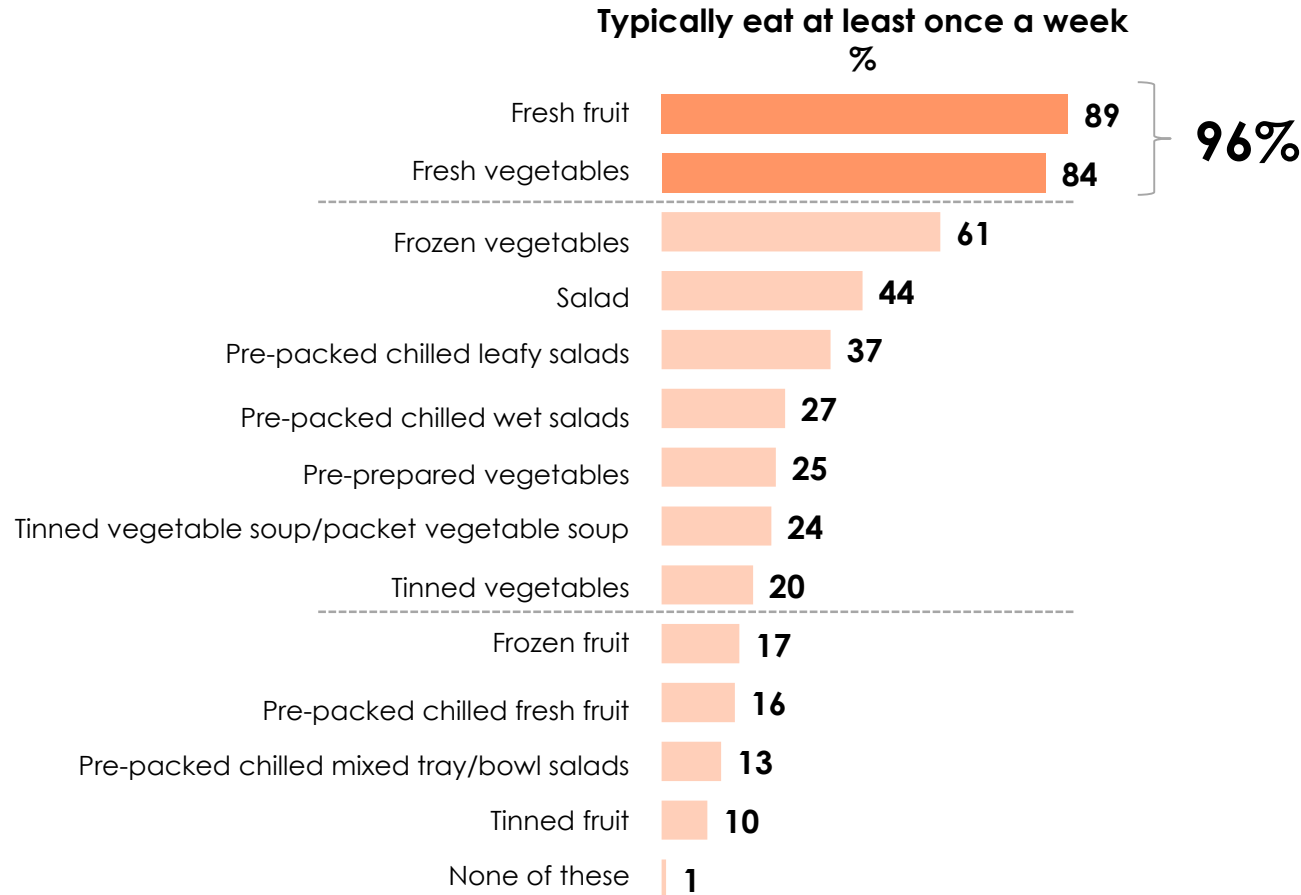
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Fruit & Vegetables Consumption



Almost everyone eats fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a week.

- 96% of people typically eat fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a week.
- Weekly consumption of fresh fruit is marginally higher in comparison to consumption of fresh vegetables. Respectively, 89% eat fresh fruit and 84% eat fresh vegetables at least once a week.
- Consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables is significantly higher in comparison to other type of fruit and vegetables (e.g., frozen, chilled or tinned).

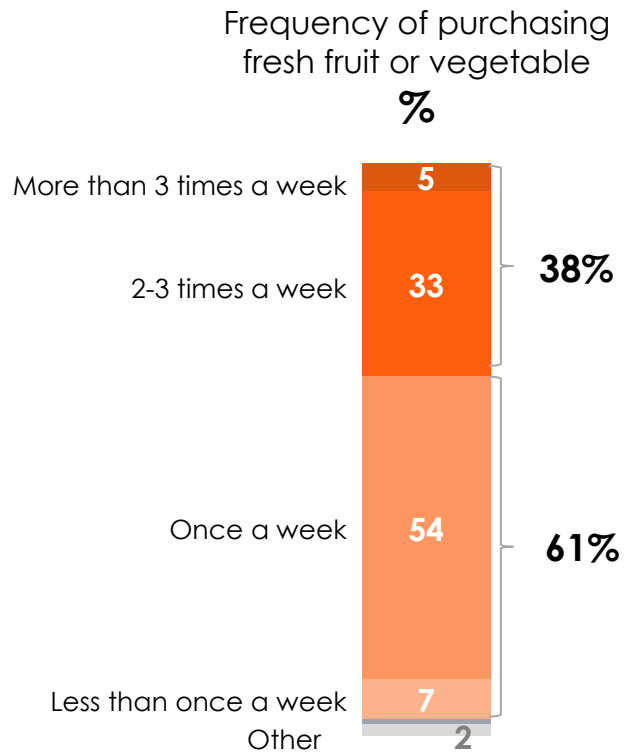
Q.1b Which, if any, of the following do you personally typically eat at least once a week?
 Base: All people aged 16+ N = 1,016



Frequency of Purchasing Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Profile of fresh fruit or vegetables purchasers

	Total	Once a week or less	More than once a week
Base	1016	629	382
	%	%	%
Gender			
Male	49	48	50
Female	51	52	50
Age			
16-34	30	31	27
35-54	37	34	41
55+	33	35	31
Area			
Urban	67	63	72
Rural	33	37	28
Social Class			
ABC1	52	49	58
C2DE	48	51	42
Region			
Dublin	29	28	30
Exl. Dublin	71	72	70
Lifestage			
Single	34	35	31
Pre Family	9	10	8
Family Pre	12	11	15
School	11	10	13
Family Teen	8	8	7
Empty Nester	26	26	26



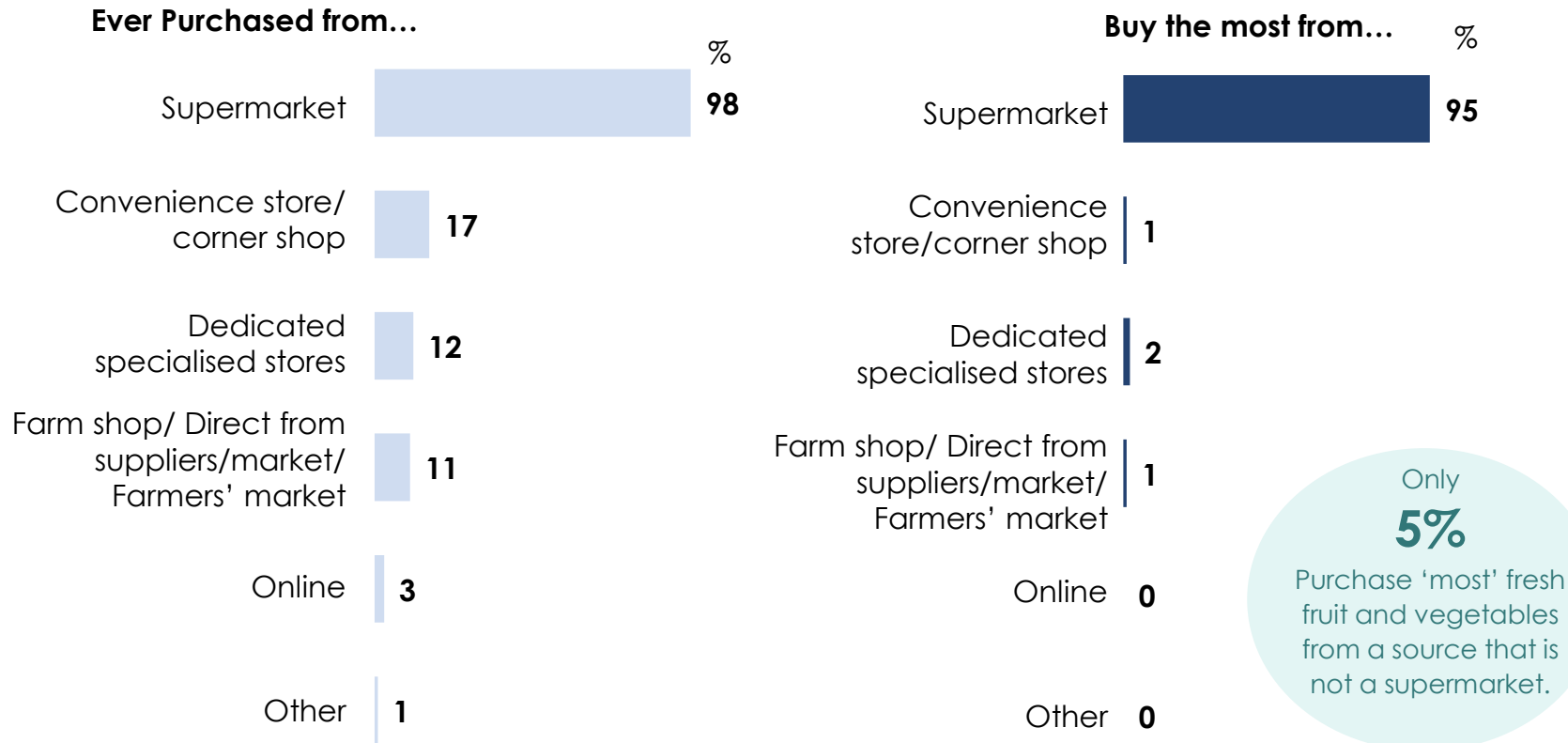
Most people buy fresh fruit and vegetables once a week (or less frequently).

- 61% of people purchase fresh fruit and vegetables once a week (or less frequently).
- 38% of people purchase fresh fruit and vegetables 2-3 times a week or more often.
- The profile of these two consumer categories is very similar with only a bias towards urban areas among more frequent fruit and vegetables shoppers.

Q.2 How often do you purchase fresh fruit or vegetables?
Base: All people aged 16+ N – 1,016



Purchases of Fresh Fruit and Veg: Retailer Types



Only **5%** Purchase 'most' fresh fruit and vegetables from a source that is not a supermarket.

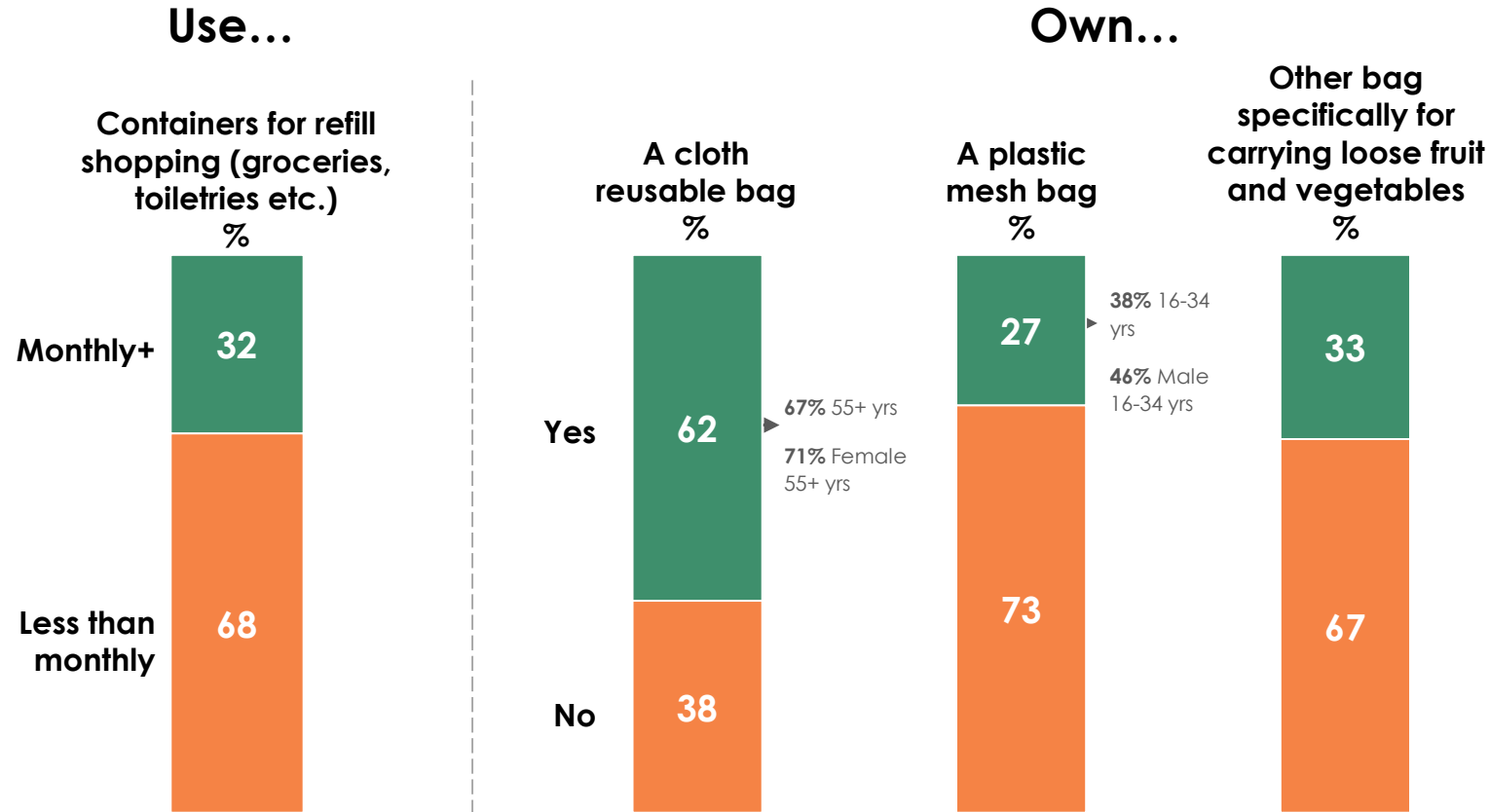
Supermarkets dominate for purchases of fresh fruit and vegetables.

- **95%** of people buy 'most' fresh fruit and vegetables from supermarkets.
- Almost everyone has purchased fresh fruit and vegetables from a supermarket (98%).
- **11%** of people have ever purchased fresh fruit and vegetables from farmers' markets or similar.

Q.3a In which of the following store types do you ever buy fresh fruit and vegetables?
 Q.3b And in which store do you buy the most fresh fruit and vegetables?
 Base: All buy fruit/veg – 1,011



Reusable Containers/ Bags to Carry Fruit and Vegetables



A cloth reusable bag is the most commonly owned bag type for carrying loose fruit and vegetables.

- 62% of people own a cloth reusable bag and this is higher among older people and women.
- Ownership of a plastic mesh bag or any other bag is similar; respectively 27% and 33%.
- 32% of people use a container for refill shopping at least once a month.

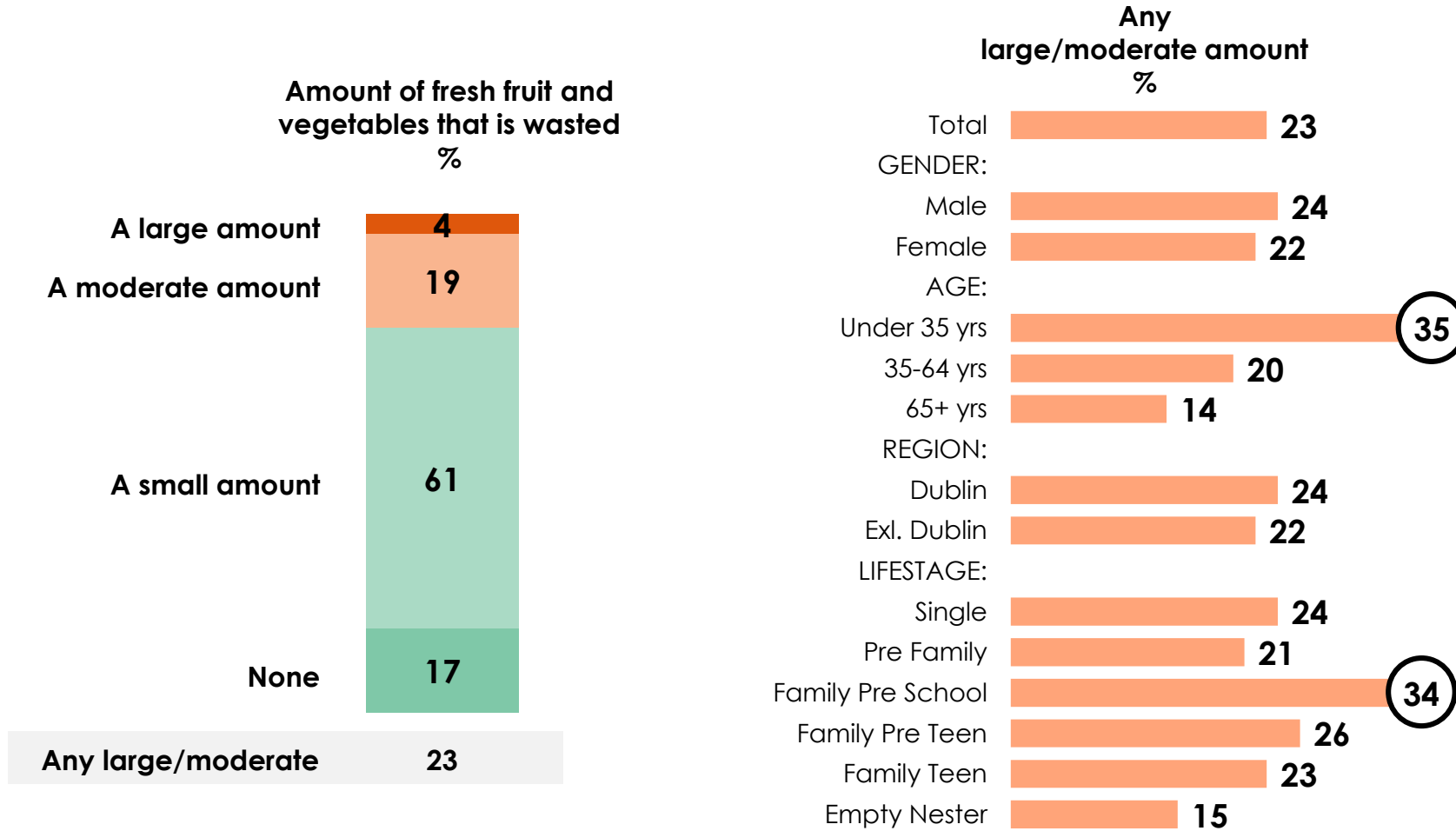
Q.18 How often, if at all, do you use the following?

Q.14 Do you have any of the following at home that you bring shopping for carrying loose fresh fruit and vegetables?

Base: All people aged 16+ N – 1,016



Waste of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables



Less than 1 in 4 reported they waste a large or moderate amount of fresh fruit and vegetables.

- Only **4%** of people report they waste a large amount of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- **19%** of people report wasting a moderate amount of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Incidence of wasting a large or moderate amount of fresh fruit and vegetables is higher among people under 35 years and families with preschool (0-4 years) children.

Q.5 Realistically, how much fresh fruit and vegetable do you think you waste/ throw away uneaten?
 Base: All buys fruit/veg 16+ N = 1,011

Encircled figures are statistically higher.



Section 2: Usage of Packaging Types



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Usage of Packaging Types: *Infographic*



53%

of people purchase pre-packaged fresh-fruit and vegetables (always or often).



39%

of people purchase loose fresh fruit and vegetables that are then placed in a plastic or paper bag (always or often).



35%

of people purchase loose fresh fruit and vegetables that are then placed in a basket (always or often).



Approx. **45%**

of people under 35 years and pre-family always or often purchase loose fresh fruit and vegetables that they place in a basket.



33%

regularly purchase pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables but do not regularly purchase them loose.



49%

believe that supermarkets or grocery stores are the key decision makers regarding packaging.



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Use of Packaging Types



* (e.g. in a Plastic tray with soft plastic film covering/ Plastic bag/ Cardboard/ paper / marked as 'Compostable'/ Netting etc.)




The Pre-packaged option is the most regularly used.

- **53%** of people purchase pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables always or often.
- **39%** of people purchase loose fresh fruit and vegetables that are placed in a plastic or paper bag always or often.
- **35%** of people purchase loose fruit and vegetables that are placed into a shopping basket always or often.

Q.6 Now thinking about how fresh fruit and vegetables are presented for sale, how often would you say the fruits and vegetables you purchase are ...?
 Base: All buys fruit/veg 16+ N – 1,011



Use of Packaging Type Across Demographic Groups

Always/ Often	Total	Gender:		Age:			Region:		Life stage:						Fruit/veg wasted:	
		Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	Dublin	Excl. Dublin	Single	Pre Family	Family Pre School	Family Pre Teen	Family Teen	Empty Nester	Large/ Moderate	Small/ none
	1011	501	510	283	378	350	259	752	316	95	129	119	82	270	226	785
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
 Pre-packaged*	53	53	53	57	54	50	55	53	53	55	57	55	52	51	60	51
 Loose which I then place in ready plastic or paper bag(s)	39	39	39	44	32	42	41	38	40	36	40	32	26	44	41	38
 Loose which I then put loose into my shopping basket	35	34	35	44	30	32	38	33	37	45	40	26	25	32	37	34

Incidence of buying pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables is consistently high across demographic groups.

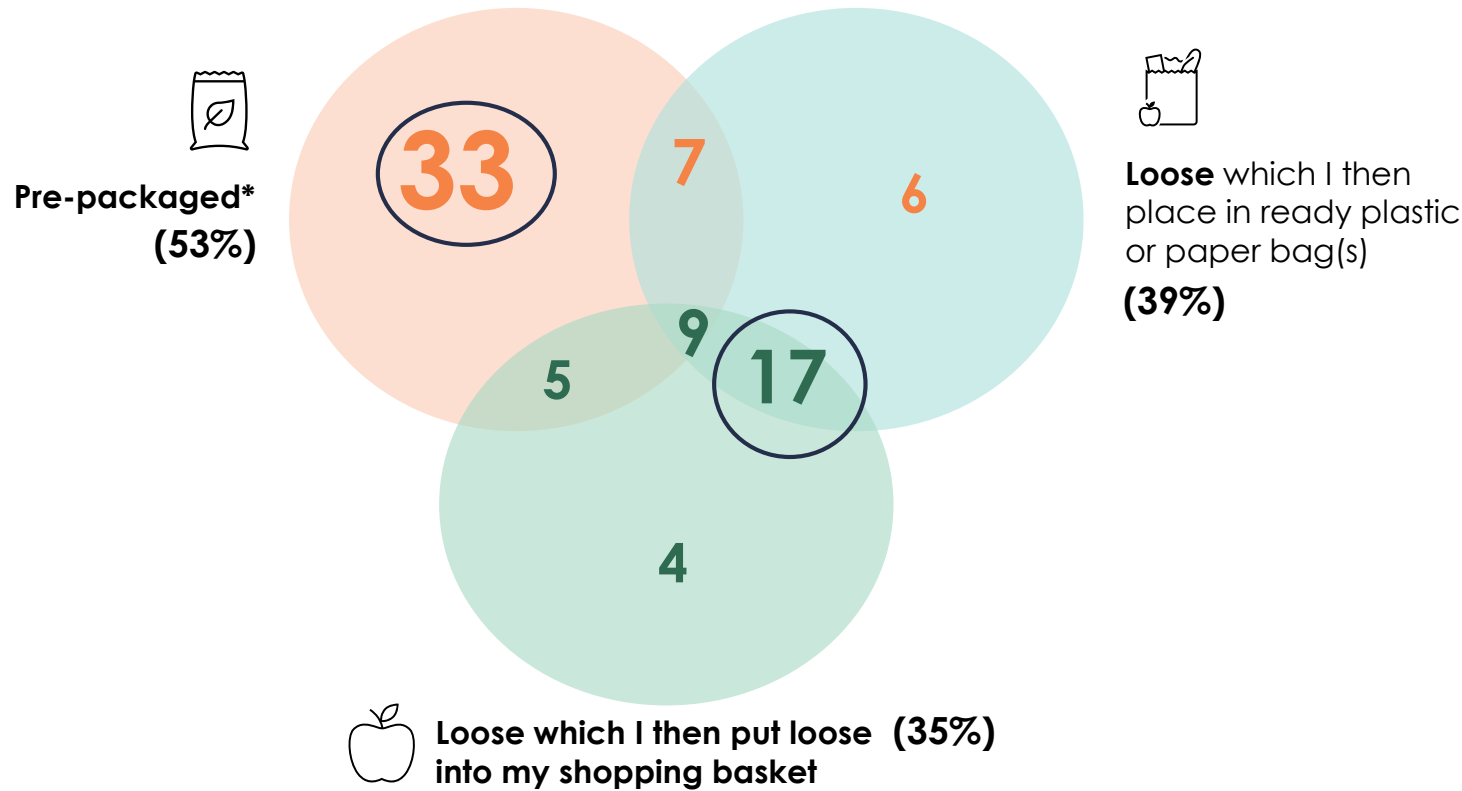
- Across each of the demographic groups of gender, age, region and life stage, over 50% regularly purchase pre-packaged fruit and vegetables.
- The incidence of buying loose fruit and vegetables that are then placed in a bag is relatively stable across demographic groups.
- The incidence of buying loose fruit and vegetables and placing them into shopping baskets is higher among people under 35 years (44%) and pre-family (45%).
- Those wasting a large or moderate amount of fresh fruit and vegetables are more likely to buy pre-packaged fruit and vegetables (60%).

*(e.g. in a Plastic tray with soft plastic film covering/ Plastic bag/ Cardboard/ paper / marked as 'Compostable'/ Netting etc.)

Q.6 Now thinking about how fresh fruit and vegetables are presented for sale, how often would you say the fruits and vegetables you purchase are ...? Green cells indicate statically higher.
Base: All buys fruit/veg 16+ N = 1,011



Cross over in Purchases of Packaging Types



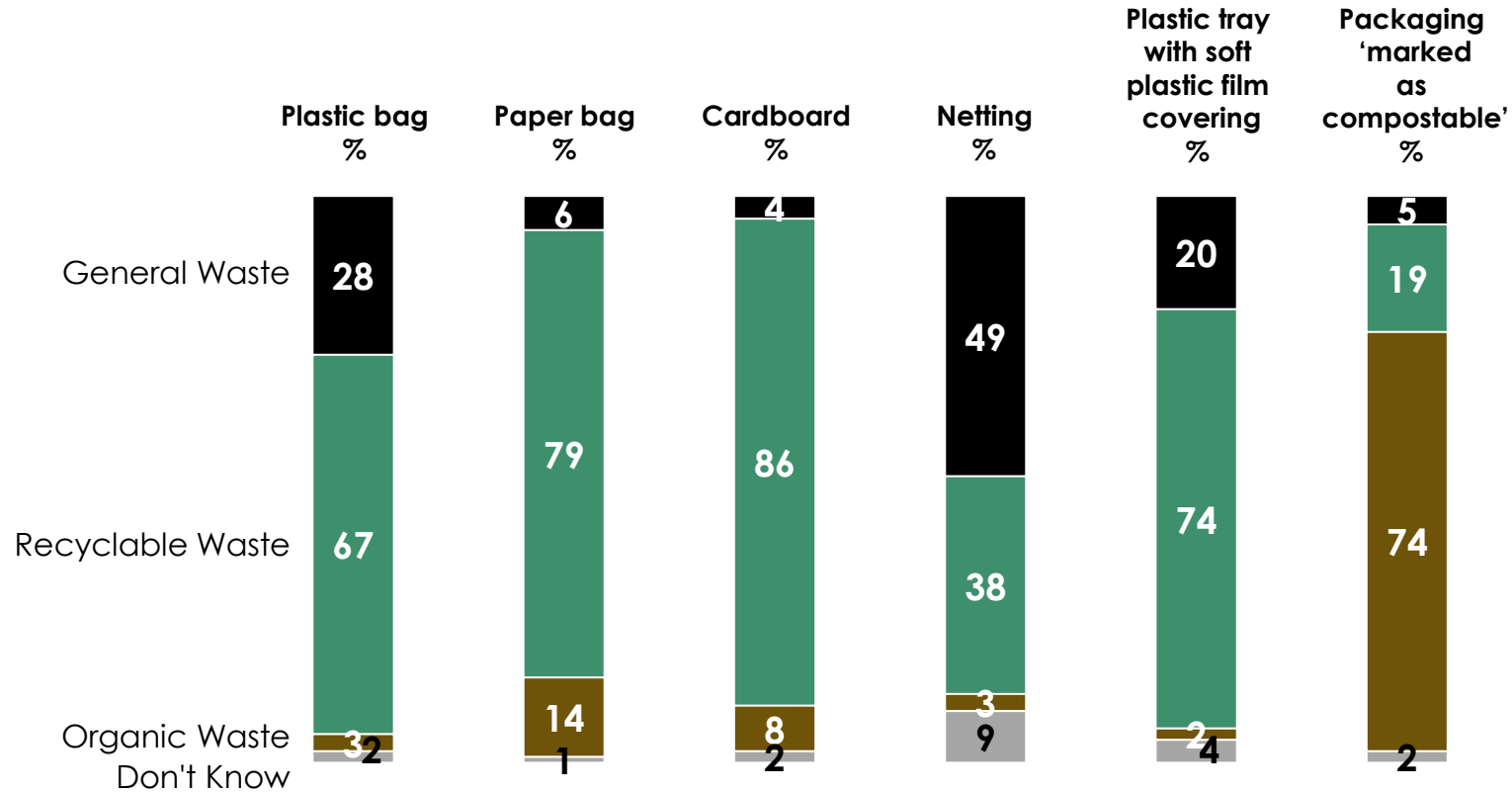
The majority of those who regularly buy pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables purchase predominantly in this manner - they do not regularly buy loose fruit and vegetables.

- Regular purchasers of pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables are less likely to also regularly purchase one of the 'loose' packaging options (33%).
- Purchase with 'loose' packaging is the most interchangeable: the biggest overlap in regular usage is between 'loose in plastic/ paper bag' and 'loose in basket' (17%).

Q.6 Now thinking about how fresh fruit and vegetables are presented for sale, how often would you say the fruits and vegetables you purchase are ...?
 Base: All buys fruit/veg 16+ N = 1,011



Ways of Disposing Packaging Types



Confusion particularly evident about which is the correct way of disposing 'netting'.

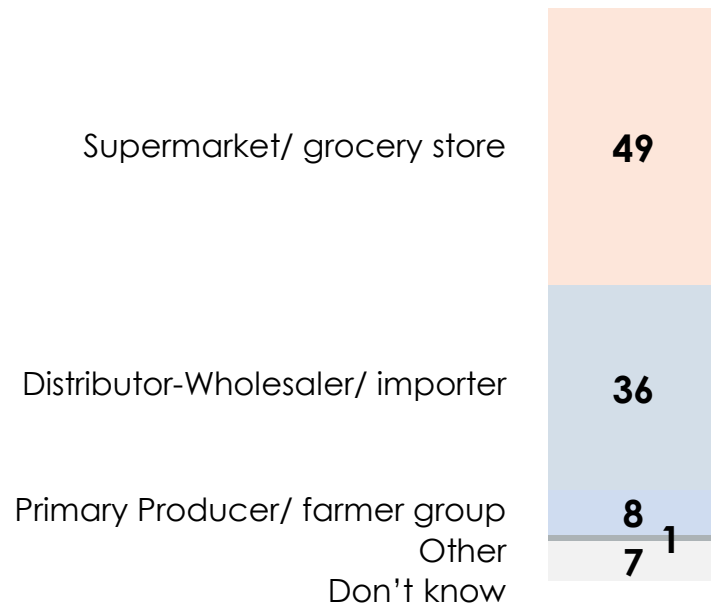
- 49% of people believe that placing in the general waste bin is the correct way of disposing netting while another 38% believe that in recyclable waste is the correct way of disposing netting.
- Strong agreement (74%) considering placing in the organic waste bin the correct way of disposing any packaging marked as compostable.
- 1 in 3 believe that placing in the general waste bin is the correct way of disposing plastic bags (clean, dry, loose plastic bags should be placed in the recyclables bin).

Q.11 For each of the following packaging types for fresh fruit and vegetables, please indicate which you think is the correct way of disposing of each. Base: All people aged 16+ N = 1,016



Perceived Key Decision Maker Regarding Packaging

Who is the key decision maker regarding how fresh fruit and vegetables you purchase are packaged?
%



Majority of people believe they know who is the key decision maker regarding how fresh fruit and vegetables are packaged with only 7% of people saying that they don't know.

- **49%** believe that supermarket or grocery store are the key decision makers.
- **36%** believe that distributor, wholesaler or importer are the key decision makers.
- **8%** believe that primary producer or farmer group are the key decision makers.

Q.16 In your opinion, who is the key decision maker regarding how fresh fruit and vegetables you purchase are packaged?
Base: All people aged 16+ N – 1,016



Section 3: Packaging Types Preference



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Packaging Types Preference: *Infographic*



38%

of people prefer buying pre-packaged or loose fruit and vegetables that are placed in a bag (assuming availability of all packaging types).



24%

of people prefer buying loose fruit and vegetables that they then place in a basket (assuming availability of all packaging types).



62%

of people prefer buying pre-packaged strawberries suggesting a preference for soft fruit and vegetables to be pre-packaged.



45%

of people who waste a moderate or large amount of fruit and vegetables prefer buying pre-packaged items.



78%

of people who purchase loose fruit and vegetables do so to reduce the packaging waste they bring home.



62%

of people would like stores to offer more loose fresh fruit and vegetables to reduce the amount of packaging they buy.



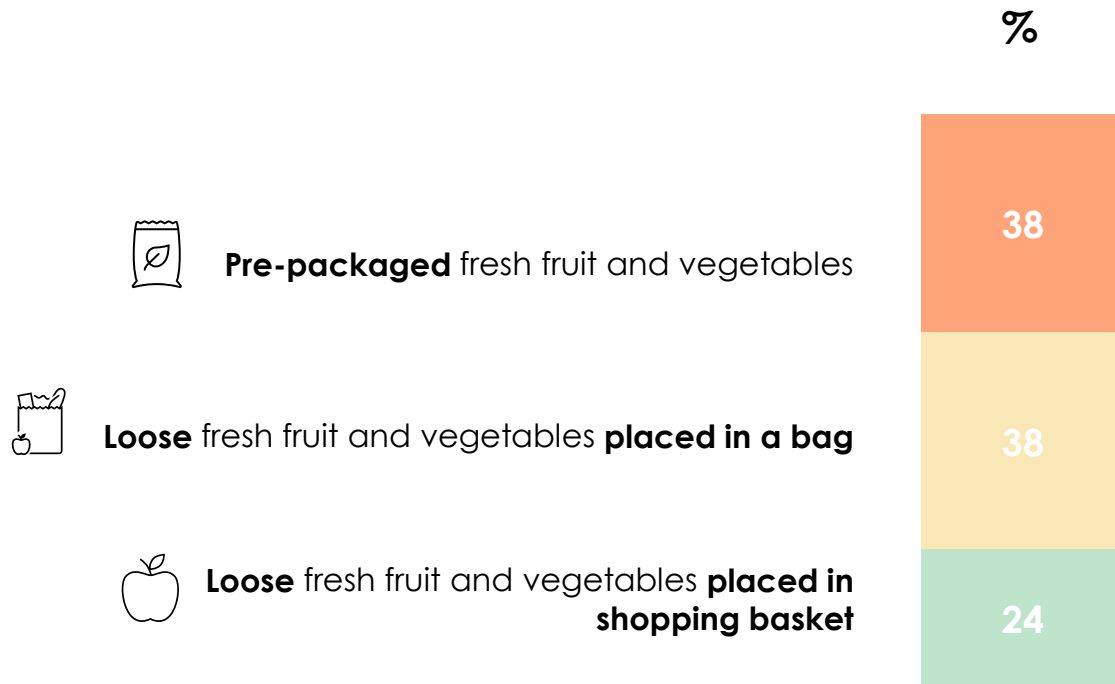
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Preference for Packaging Types



Pre-packaged fruit & vegetables and loose fruit & vegetables then placed in a bag registered the same preference level.

- Assuming that all the three packaging types were available, **38%** of people would prefer pre-packaged fruit and vegetables
- Another **38%** would prefer loose fruit and vegetables placed in a bag.
- Slightly smaller group (**24%**) would prefer loose fruit and vegetables that they then place in a basket.

Q.12 Assume you are in a store where the same fresh fruit and vegetables are available in these three options, which option would you prefer?
 Base: All people aged 16+ N – 1,016



Preferred Packaging for Fruit and Veg Across Demographic Groups

	Total	Gender		Age			Area		Region		Life stage						Fruit/veg wasted	
		Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Rural	Dublin	Excl. Dublin	Single	Pre Family	Family School	Pre Family Teen	Family Teen	Empty Nester	Large/moderate	Small/none
	1016	505	511	287	378	351	697	319	260	756	319	96	129	119	82	271	226	785
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables	38	39	37	47	37	30	38	37	36	38	39	38	44	47	37	29	45	36
Loose fresh fruit and vegetables, which I then place in a small plastic / paper bag(s)	38	41	36	31	38	44	38	38	39	38	37	37	33	33	43	44	37	39
Loose fresh fruit and vegetables, which I then put loose into my shopping basket	24	21	28	22	24	26	24	25	26	24	25	25	23	20	21	27	19	26

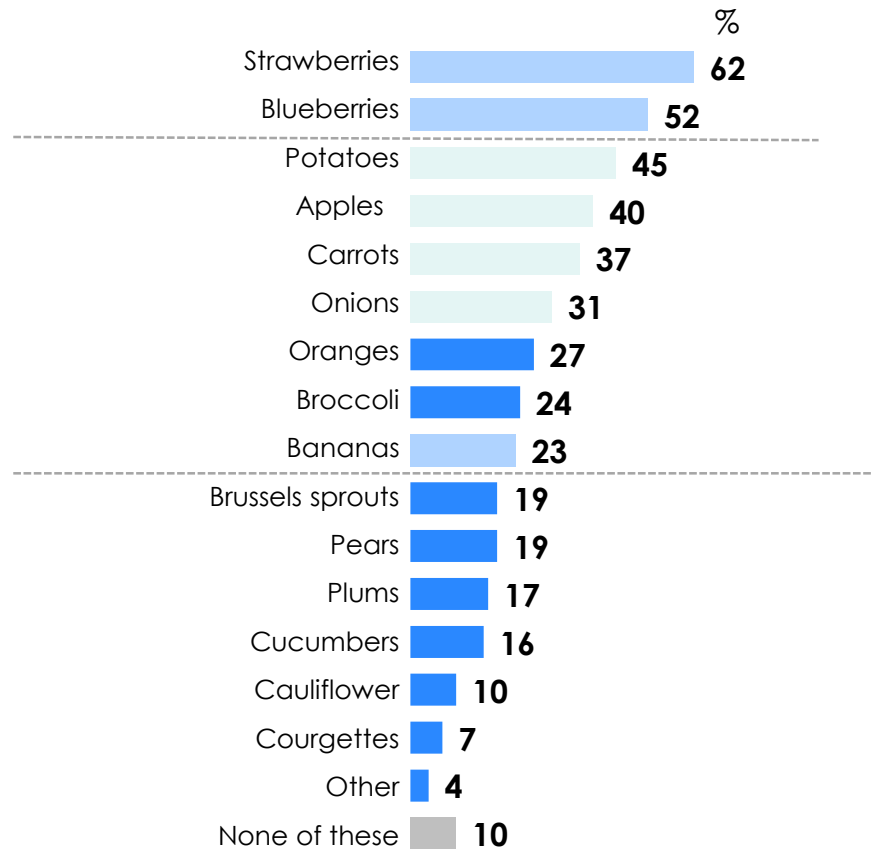
People under 35 years are more likely to prefer pre-packaged options.

- Assuming that all the three packaging types were available, 47% of people under 35 years would prefer pre-packaged fruit & vegetables.
- Those who waste a moderate to large amount of fresh fruit and vegetables are also more likely to prefer pre-packaged fruit & vegetables (45%).
- People aged 55+ are more likely to prefer loose fruit & vegetables that they then place in bags.

Q.12 Assume you are in a store where the same fresh fruit and vegetables are available in these 3 options, which option would you prefer?
Base: All buys fruit/veg 16+ N = 1,011



Fruit & Vegetables Preferred Pre-packaged



Light blue indicates soft items.

Light green indicates items typically purchased in large quantities.

Soft fruit & vegetables and those typically purchased in large quantities are preferred pre-packaged.

- 62% of people prefer buying pre-packaged strawberries.
- 52% of people prefer buying pre-packaged blueberries.
- 45% of people prefer buying pre-packaged potatoes.

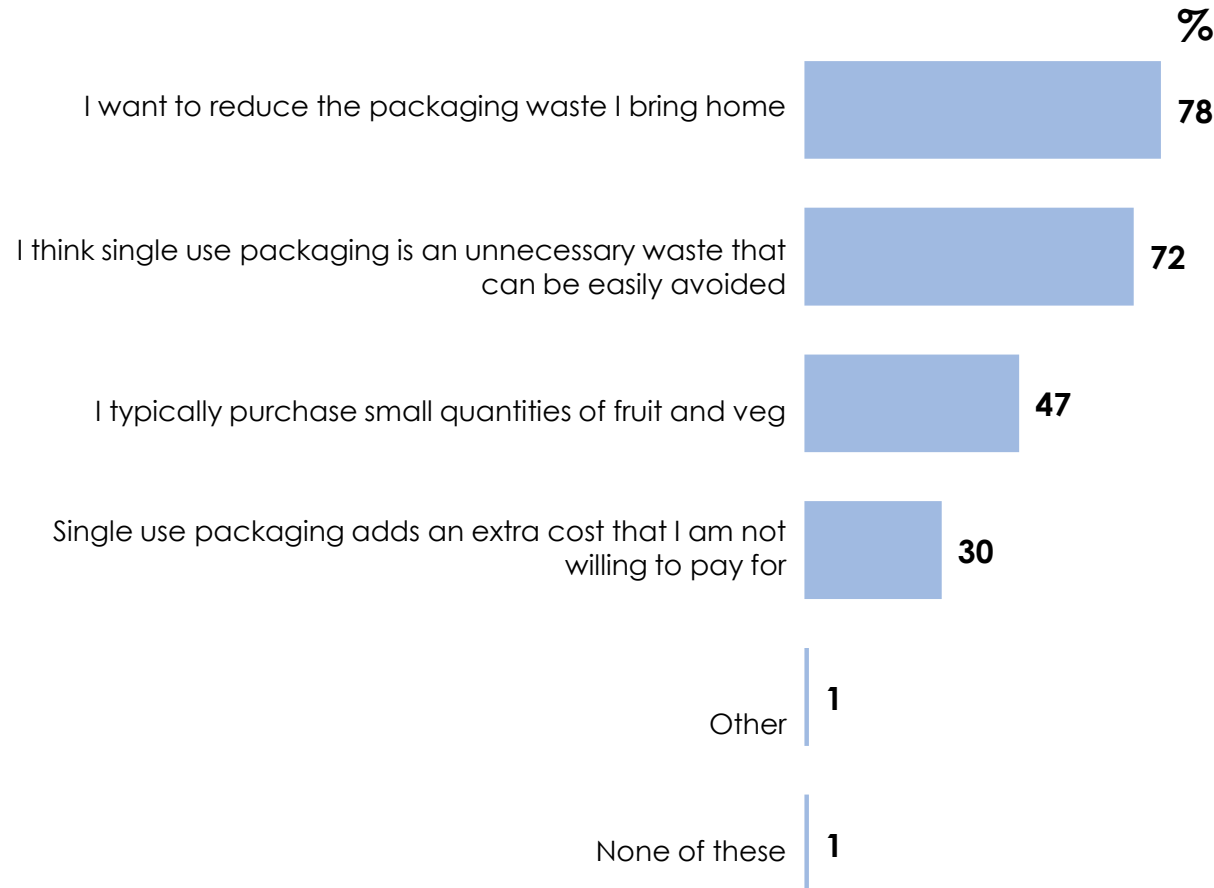
Q.10 Now please review the below list of fruit and vegetables.

Which of these do you prefer to purchase fresh pre-packaged (e.g. in a Plastic tray with soft plastic film covering/ Plastic bag/ Cardboard/ paper/ marked as 'Compostable'/ Netting etc.)

Base: All buys fruit/veg 16+ N = 1,011



Reasons for Preferring Loose Fruit and Vegetables Placed in a Basket



Environmental attitudes dominate as reasons for preference for loose fruit and vegetables that are placed in shopping basket.

- **78%** prefer this approach because they wish to reduce the packaging waste they bring home.
- **72%** think single use packaging is an unnecessary waste that can be easily avoided.
- Less than half (47%) prefer loose fruit and vegetables placed in a basket because they typically purchase small quantities.

Q.13 You said you would prefer fresh fruits and vegetables which are Loose which I then put loose into my shopping basket (no small plastic / paper bags available in store), which of the following are reasons for this preference?

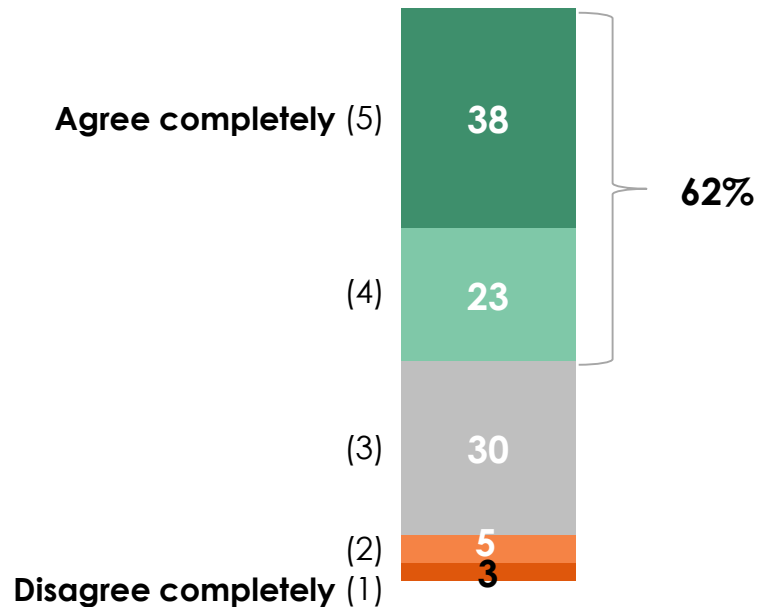
Base: All preferring loose items placed in shopping basket N – 246



Wishing More Loose Options to Reduce Packaging

I would like stores to offer more loose fresh fruit and vegetables so I could reduce the amount of packaging I buy

%



NET AGREE
(Agree completely-5 or Agree-4)
%



A large majority would like stores to offer more loose fresh fruit and vegetables to reduce the amount of packaging they buy.

- **62%** of people would like stores to offer more loose fresh fruit and vegetables to reduce the amount of packaging they buy.
- This incidence is significantly higher among those who prefer buying loose fruit and vegetables that they place in a basket (88%).
- Only in 1 in 3 of those who prefer buying pre-packaged fruit and vegetables would like stores to offer more loose fruit and vegetables.

Q.15 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I would like stores to offer more loose fresh fruit and vegetables so I could reduce the amount of packaging I buy.

Base: All people aged 16+ N – 1,016

Encircled figures are statistically higher.



Section 4: Perceived Advantages of Packaging Types



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Perceived Advantages of Packaging Types: *Infographic*



43%

of those who buy pre-packaged fruit and vegetables say that this packaging type makes it easier to know the exact price.



48%

of those who purchase loose fruit and vegetables and place them in plastic or paper bags say that this makes it easier for them to buy smaller amounts of fresh fruit and vegetables.



42%

of people who buy loose fruit and vegetables and place them in a basket report that this helps them to avoid food waste.



45%

of people who buy loose fruit and vegetables and place them in a basket consider it more environmentally friendly.



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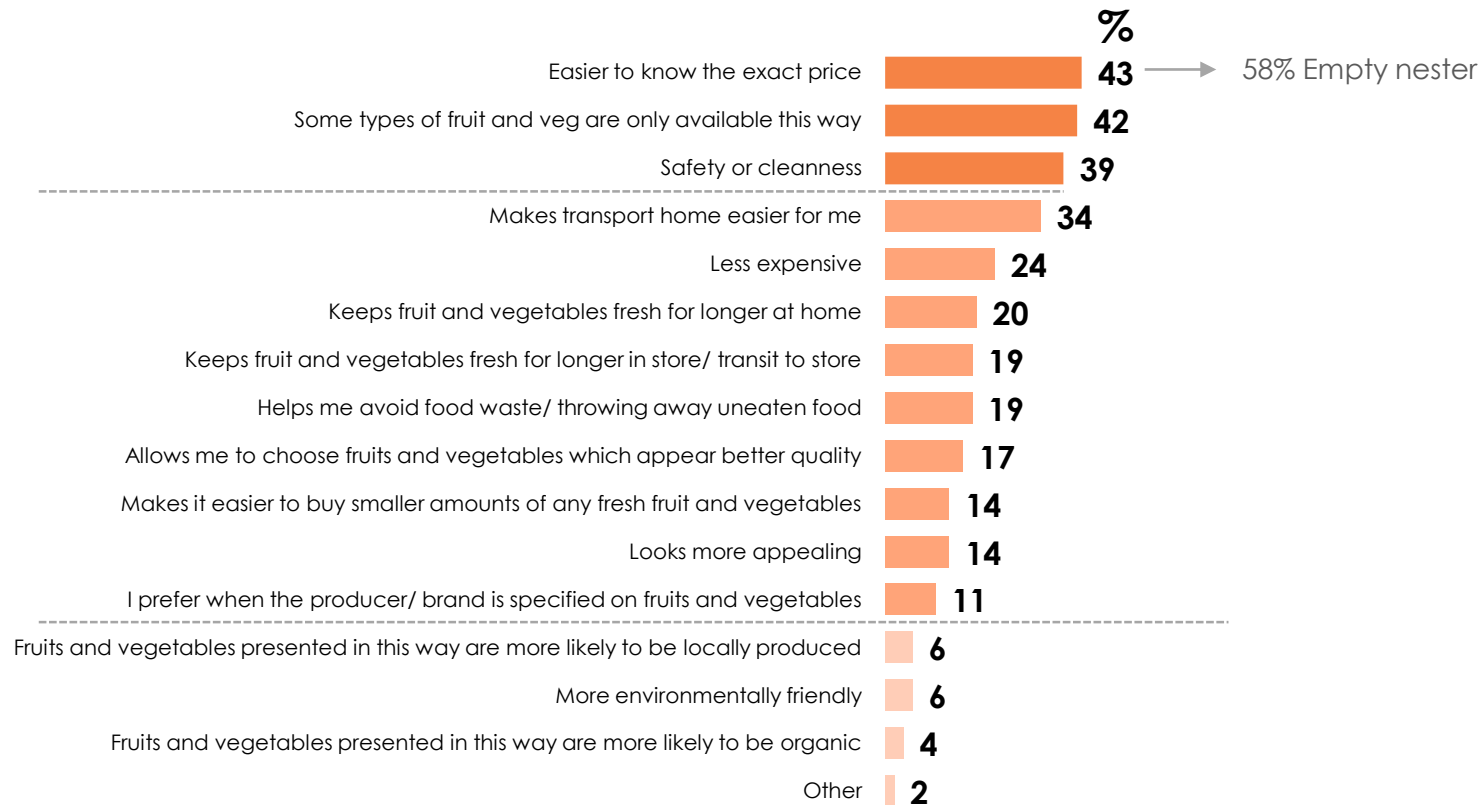
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Perceived Advantages: Pre-packaged



More transparent pricing, availability, safety and cleanness are the most common perceived advantages of pre-packaged options.

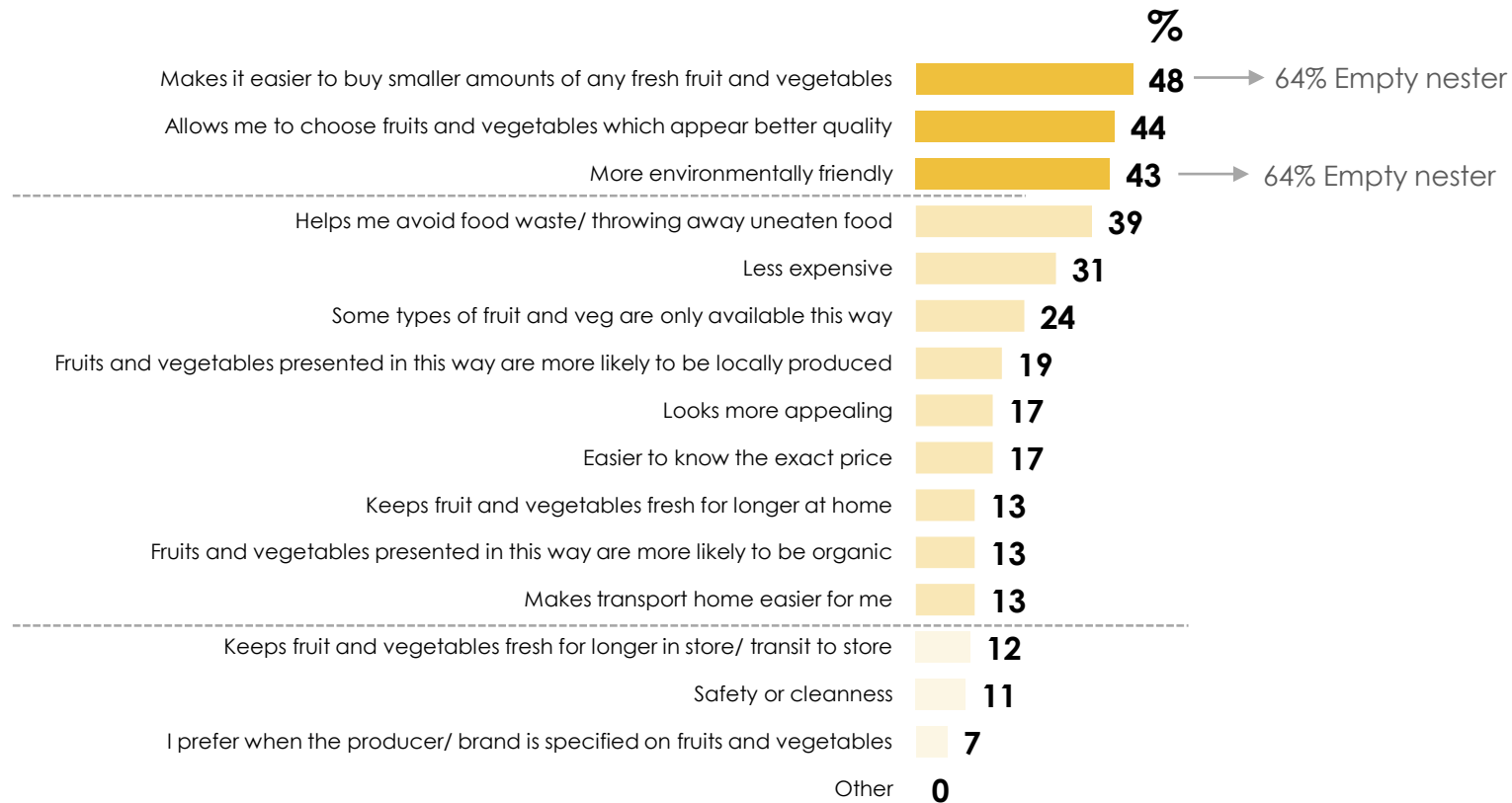
- **43%** of those who buy pre-packaged report that this packaging type makes it is easier to know the exact price.
- **42%** of those who buy pre-packaged reference that some types of fruit and vegetables are only available in this way.
- **39%** of those who buy pre-packaged associate this packaging type with safety or cleanness.

Q.7 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables?
Base: All buying pre-packaged- 891





Perceived Advantages: Loose items placed in plastic or paper bag



Pro-environment reasons, quality and flexibility with quantity are key factors in choosing loose fruit and vegetables that are then placed in a bag.

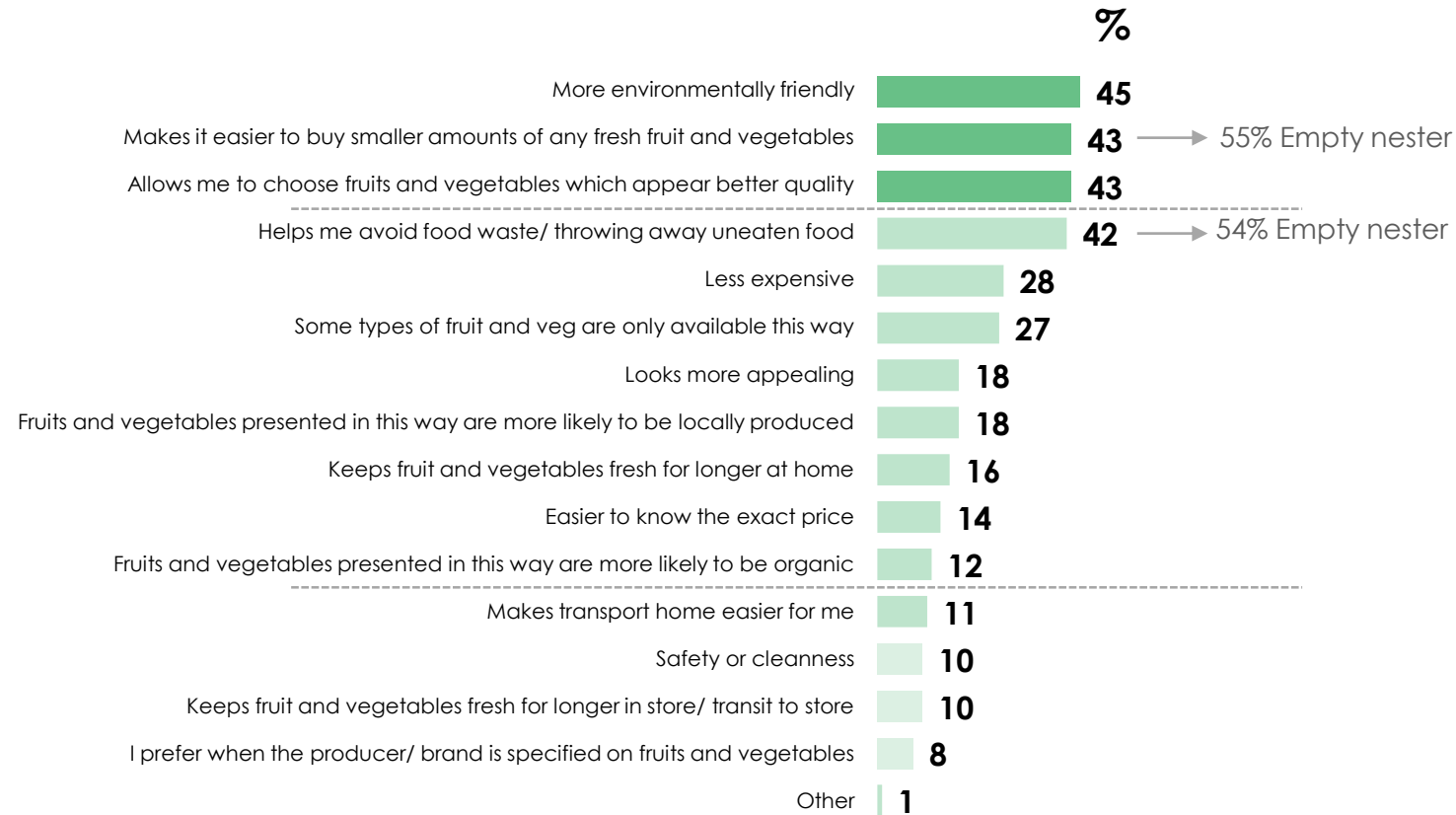
- **48%** of those who purchase loose fruit and vegetables and place them in plastic or paper bags say that this makes it easier for them buying smaller amounts.
- Empty nesters are more likely to prefer loose fruit and vegetables placed in a bag because it allows them to buy smaller amounts and to choose items of better quality.
- Perceived advantages for loose fruit and vegetables placed in a bag are much less evident for 'longer freshness,' transparency of pricing, and 'safety or cleanness'.

Q.8 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables loose (which I then place in a plastic or paper bag)?

Base: All buys Loose plastic/paper bags- 776



 Perceived Advantages: Loose items placed in a basket



Pro-environment reasons, quantity and quality are also the main reasons for choosing loose fruit and vegetables that are placed in the shopping basket.

- **45%** of people who buy loose fruit and vegetables and place them in a basket consider it more environmentally friendly.
- **42%** of people who buy loose fruit and vegetables and place them in a basket report that this helps them to avoid food waste.
- Perceived advantages for loose fruit and vegetables placed in a basket are much less evident for transparency of pricing, 'safety or cleanness's and 'longer freshness'.

Q.9 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables loose (which I then put loose into my shopping basket)?
 Base: All buys Loose in shopping basket- 680



Top 5 Advantages by Packaging Type



Advantages of pre-packaged

	Total
Base	891
	%
Easier to know the exact price	43
Some types of fruit and veg are only available this way	42
Safety or cleanness	39
Makes transport home easier for me	34
Less expensive	24



Advantages of loose placed in a bag

	Total
Base	776
	%
Makes it easier to buy smaller amounts of any fresh fruit and vegetables	48
Allows me to choose fruits and vegetables which appear better quality	44
More environmentally friendly	43
Helps me avoid food waste/ throwing away uneaten food	39
Less expensive	31



Advantages of loose placed in shopping basket

	Total
Base	680
	%
More environmentally friendly	45
Makes it easier to buy smaller amounts of any fresh fruit and vegetables	43
Allows me to choose fruits and vegetables which appear better quality	43
Helps me avoid food waste/ throwing away uneaten food	42
Less expensive	28

The perceived advantages for pre-packaged fruit and vegetables are very different to those for the loose packaging types.

- Pragmatic rationales dominate the advantages for pre-packaged.
- Pro-environment reasons are prominent advantages for both "loose" packaging types.
- Both 'loose' packaging types are associated with avoiding food waste.

Q.7 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables?

Q.8 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables loose (which I then place in a plastic or paper bag)?

Q.9 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables loose (which I then put loose into my shopping basket)?

Base: All people aged 16+ N – 1,016



Perceived Advantages: Themes Summary

PRACTICAL

- Makes transport home easier for me
- Some types of fruit and veg are only available this way

FRESHNESS & SAFETY

- Safety or cleanness
- Keeps fruit and vegetables fresh for longer in store/ transit to store
- Keeps fruit and vegetables fresh for longer at home

APPEARANCE & QUALITY

- Looks more appealing
- Allows me to choose fruits and vegetables which appear better quality
- I prefer when the producer/ brand is specified on fruits and vegetables

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

- Helps me avoid food waste/ throwing away uneaten food
- More environmentally friendly

ORGANIC & LOCAL

- Fruits and vegetables presented in this way are more likely to be organic
- Fruits and vegetables presented in this way are more likely to be locally produced

COST & PRICING

- Less expensive
- Easier to know the exact price

PREFERRED QUANTITY

- Makes it easier to buy smaller amounts of any fresh fruit and vegetables

Themes Summary Analysis

- In analysis, the 15 'advantages' presented in the survey for each packaging type were summarised into 7 different themes.
- Here we list the specific advantages included under each of the 7 different themes.

Q.7 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables?




Q.8 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables loose (which I then place in a plastic or paper bag)?

Q.9 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables loose (which I then put loose into my shopping basket)?

Base: All buys fruit/veg 16+ N = 1,011



Perceived Advantages: Comparative Summary

			
	Prepackaged	Loose placed in bag	Loose placed in basket
	891 %	776 %	680 %
PRACTICAL	60	33	35
FRESHNESS & SAFETY	57	27	27
COST & PRICING	55	42	37
APPEARANCE & QUALITY	34	56	55
ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY	22	61	66
PREFERRED QUANTITY	14	48	43
ORGANIC & LOCAL	9	26	25

Pre-packaged and loose packaging options show a very different ‘thematic’ profile in terms of perceived advantages.

- Distinctive advantages of pre-packaged options are practicality, freshness/safety and cost to a smaller extent.
- Loose fruit and vegetables placed in a bag or in a basket show a very similar profile in terms of perceived advantages.
- The common perceived advantages for the ‘loose’ packaging options are appearance/quality, smaller quantity and associations with organic and locally produced products.

Q.7 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing pre-packaged fresh fruit and vegetables?
 Q.8 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables loose (which I then place in a plastic or paper bag)?
 Q.9 Which of the following would you consider as advantages of purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables loose (which I then put loose into my shopping basket)?

Base: All buys fruit/veg 16+ N – 1,011





SINGLE USE PACKAGING FOR FRUIT & VEGETABLES National Survey on Usage & Attitudes 2024

TO FIND OUT MORE:

Download Survey Excel data [here](#).

Email us: cep@epa.ie

Check our website: www.epacirculareconomy.ie

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