

New European study reveals that despite war and inflation, climate change remains number one concern

12 MARCH 2024: The findings of a new European consumer packaging perceptions study reveal that climate change (68%), cost of living (66%), and warfare (56%), are the three largest issues affecting consumers. In parallel, despite these significant global concerns, 62% of European respondents claimed that a sustainable lifestyle has become 'more important' or 'very much more important' over the last two years.

The survey - commissioned by Pro Carton, the leading European association for carton and cartonboard manufacturers and conducted by Perspectus Global - surveyed over 5,000 consumers across five European countries – Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, to explore their attitudes towards the environment and packaging perceptions.

Global concerns top the charts

Across Italy (77%), Spain (72%), and France (70%), climate change ranked as the most significant issue for consumers, while the UK reported the cost of living as the most severe (75%). Germany - with one million refugees from Ukraine in the country - expressed warfare as its greatest concern (66%), and for the older generations, climate change was their greatest concern, with 60+-year-olds surpassing the European average at 71%.

Despite all of this, the survey reflected that consumers are still taking the time to be considerate towards the environment, such as recycling, with just under half (49%) of those surveyed stating they were now recycling more than they were a year ago.

Recycling confidence soars

When asked about which packaging materials can be recycled, the survey highlighted that European consumers demonstrate a commendable level of confidence. 82% of individuals expressed a sufficient degree of confidence in their ability to discern between recyclable and non-recyclable packaging.

Notably, there is a robust trust in the recyclability of sustainable materials, such as corrugated cardboard and folding cartons, with confidence levels reaching 90% and 87% respectively on average in Europe. This indicates a widespread acceptance and support of well-established collection and recycling practices, particularly emphasising the recyclable attributes of key packaging materials.

Bridging the perception gap for consumer trust

While a substantial portion of European consumers express willingness to pay more for eco-friendly packaging, the study reveals mixed perceptions of retailers' and brand owners' efforts in this area. 58.2% consumers across the EU believe companies are doing enough, and 41.8% indicating there is more to be done. Italy stands out the most, with 66% of consumers feeling that businesses are on the right track, followed by UK (63%), Germany and Spain (56%), while France holds less optimistic views (50%).

This presents an opportunity for retailers and brand owners to address consumer concerns, communicate their sustainability initiatives effectively, and offer more eco-friendly packaging options to bridge the gap and gain trust.

Commenting on the latest survey results, **Winfried Muehling, Director of Marketing & Communications at Pro Carton, said:** "Even with continuing concerns surrounding global conflict and the economy, it is clear that environmental issues remain very high on the consumer agenda. As Pro Carton's third packaging perceptions study, the results are highly reflective of this, painting a clear picture that sustainability matters to European consumers, and they are willing to act upon this."

"Companies that prioritise eco-friendly packaging solutions, minimise unnecessary materials, and ensure recyclability, are extremely well-positioned to capture this growing market segment and gain a competitive edge. Consumers in Europe fully support and trust the established collection and recycling system for cartonboard. It is very positive to see this outcome, and on behalf of Pro Carton and its members, we wish that this research is insightful, opens the door for discussion, and that it serves as a motivation to guide our society closer to our shared goal of a sustainable circular economy."

To see the full study and results, visit <https://www.procarton.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/EU-Summary-Slides-Final.pdf>

Ends

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About Pro Carton

Pro Carton is the European Association of Carton and Cartonboard manufacturers. Its main purpose is to promote the use of cartons and cartonboard as an economically and ecologically balanced packaging medium. www.procarton.com

What is cartonboard?

Cartonboard is a multilayer paper-based material with, usually, three or more layers of fibre derived from wood, or recycled materials such as paper or cartonboard. It is used in packaging to make cartons for everyday products, such as breakfast cereals, frozen foods, luxury fragrances and pharmaceuticals.