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Cleanliness & hygiene – Consumers' understanding and washing & cleaning habits at home

A.I.S.E.'s pan-European consumer habits and perceptions research

2025 report



Research methodology & demographics

More than 15 years of research

Every three years since 2008, A.I.S.E. has commissioned a pan-European survey on citizens' habits and perceptions with the market research agency Human8 (previously known as Insites Consulting). The research aims to map consumers' perceptions about the cleaning and hygiene products industry, as well as to monitor the evolution of their washing, cleaning and sustainability habits at home. The fieldwork of the previous survey in 2020 was carried out in February: the survey was then partially re-run in June to establish whether and to what extent attitudes and understandings of cleanliness and hygiene may have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research methodology

The research was carried out in 23 countries in Western, Southern, Eastern Europe, the Nordics, Ireland and the UK, with approximately 4600 respondents in total in February 2024. The data presented in this summary is the overall aggregated results for Europe, with some reporting by region for some topics. Per country, 200 respondents received online questionnaires – recruitment was done via panel, including men and women aged 18-65, responsible for purchasing laundry detergent products and using a washing machine to do laundry for the household.

Structure of this report

This report provides the results of the 2024 research and is structured in two sections:

- Part one focuses on all aspects of cleaning and washing habits at home. Here, a 10-year comparison is made between 2024 results and 2014 (where possible).
- Part two focuses on cleanliness and hygiene perceptions and accompanying habits. Here, the 2024 data is compared with the post-pandemic June 2020 data.



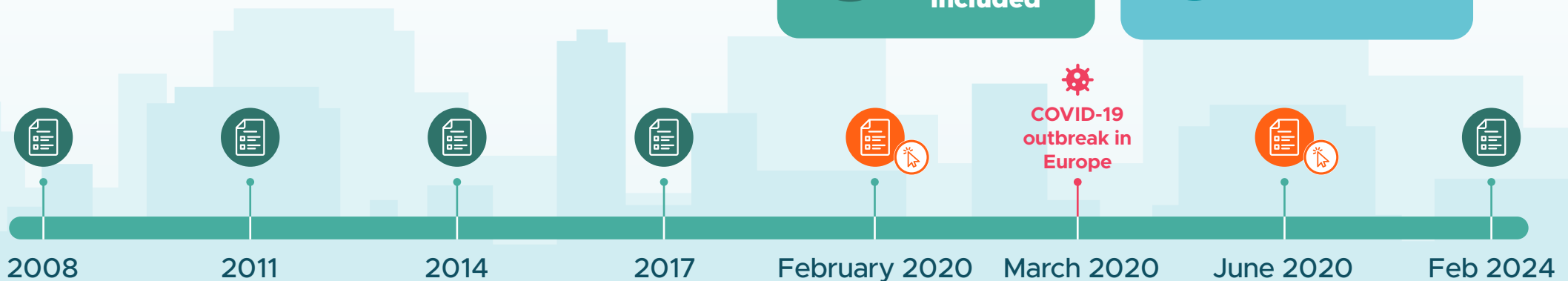
Research conducted every
3 years since 2008



23
countries
included



4,600
panellists



Section 1

Consumers' habits when cleaning & washing at home – highlights

60%

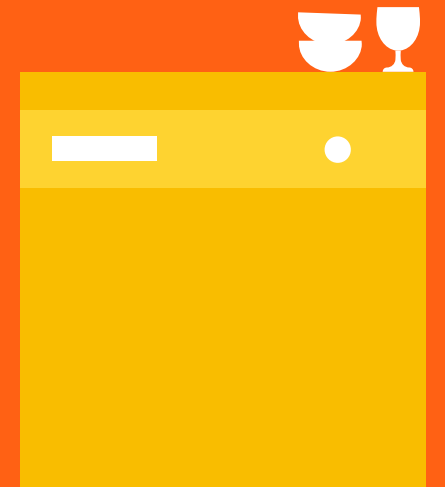
believe cleaning & maintenance products are safe for users

68%

of families with children store laundry detergent safely

**A.I.S.E.
Charter label****46%**

understand this label

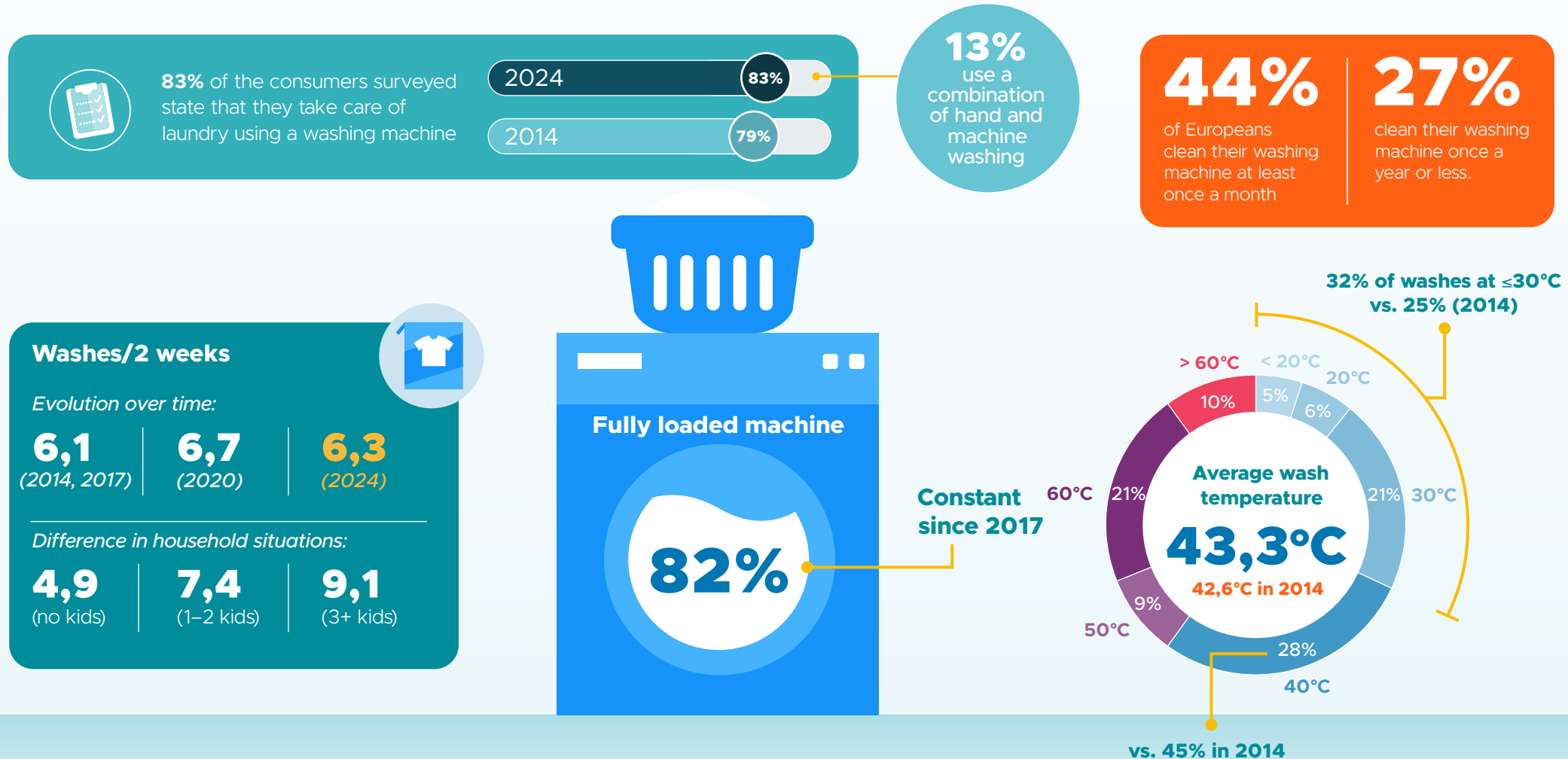
40%This label positively influences **40%** in their purchase decision**6,3** laundry washes per fortnight**43,3°C** average wash temperature**75%** prefer laundry liquid/gel detergent**80%** find it easy to dose laundry detergents**71%** aware of dosing instructions on pack**4,8** dish loads / week**54%** clean dishwasher minimum monthly**60%** clean filter minimum monthly

Section 1: Consumers' habits when cleaning & washing at home

How do consumers take care of the laundry?

The average number of washes per household in Europe has increased slightly over the past decade (following a spike in 2020) and families with children run more washloads.

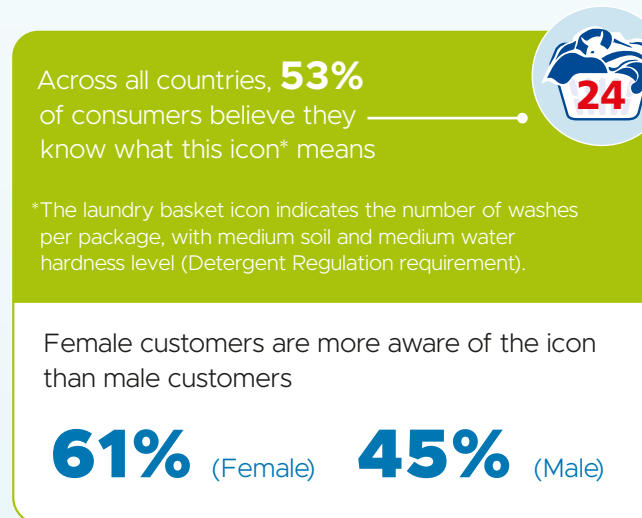
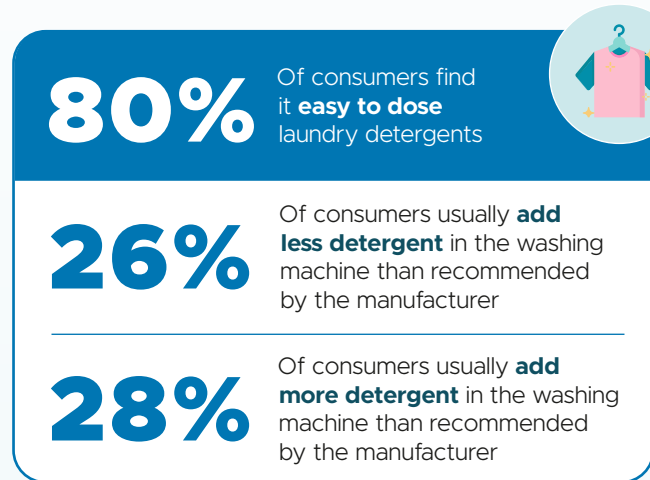
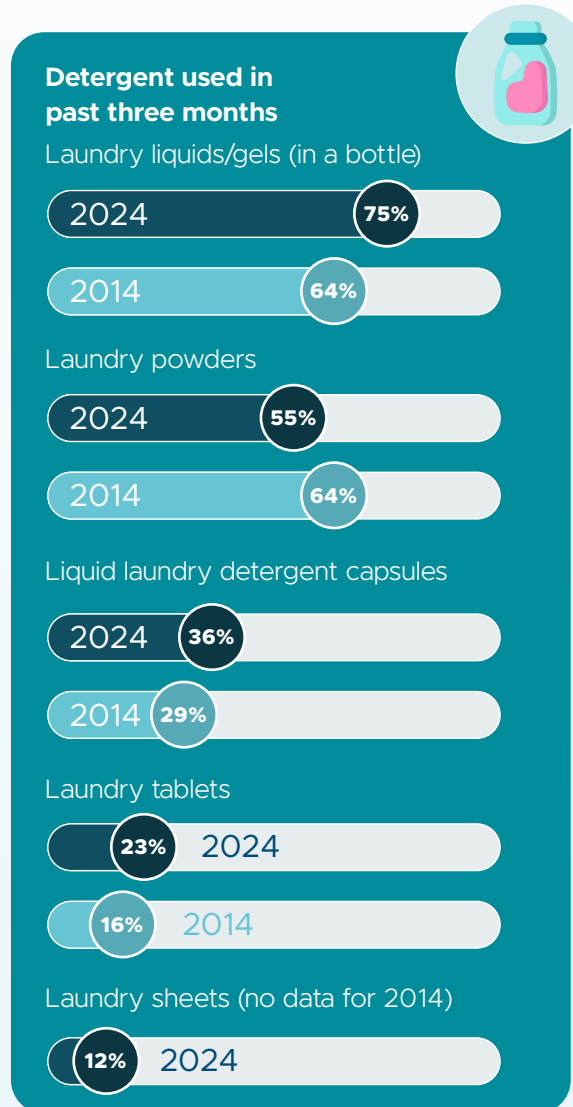
The washing machine is fully loaded most of the time and 60% of washes are done at 40°C or lower. However, the average wash temperature has increased slightly over the past decade.



Section 1: Consumers' habits when cleaning & washing at home

How do consumers choose laundry detergent?

Liquids and gels are consumers' preferred product for the laundry. The vast majority find dosing easy, although about one out of four chooses to over- or under-dose.



Section 1: Consumers' habits when cleaning & washing at home

How do consumers store products safely?

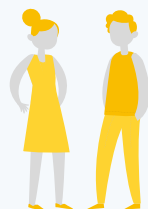
Consumers' perception of the safety of products overall has increased in the last decade. At home, people store laundry detergents as well as drain cleaners safely more often than unsafely.

Storing of laundry detergents

“Safe storage” means putting products on a high shelf or on a low but locked shelf

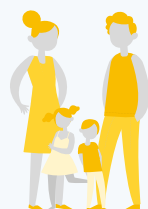


“Unsafe storage” means storing products on a low shelf or under the sink (unlocked) or elsewhere



55%

of families without children store laundry detergent safely. 43% store it unsafely



68%

of families with children store laundry detergent safely. 31% store it unsafely



The safe storage of all product categories has remained stable or has increased since 2020

Laundry detergent

Safe **62%**

Unsafe **37%**

Drain cleaners

Safe **57%**

Unsafe **31%**

Liquid laundry detergent capsules

Safe **54%**

Unsafe **26%**



Over the past decade consumers increasingly believe in the safety of cleaning and maintenance products

Detergents are safe for people who use them

60%
(49% in 2014)

Detergents are safe for the environment

35%
(26% in 2014)

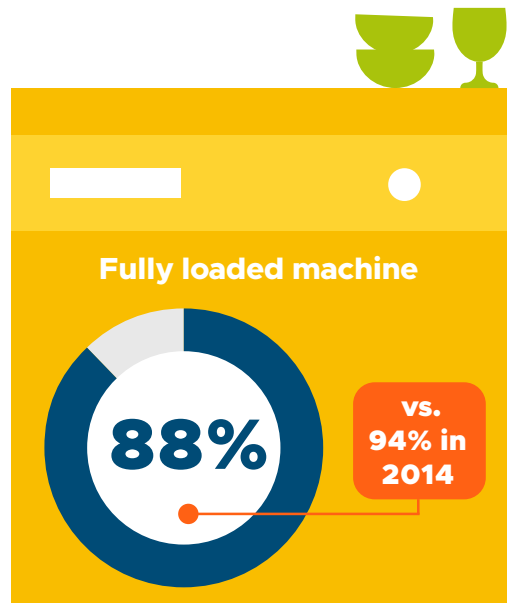
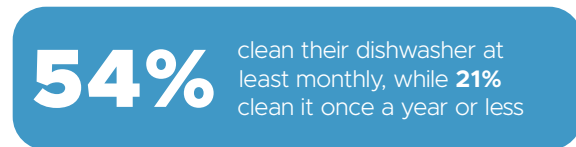
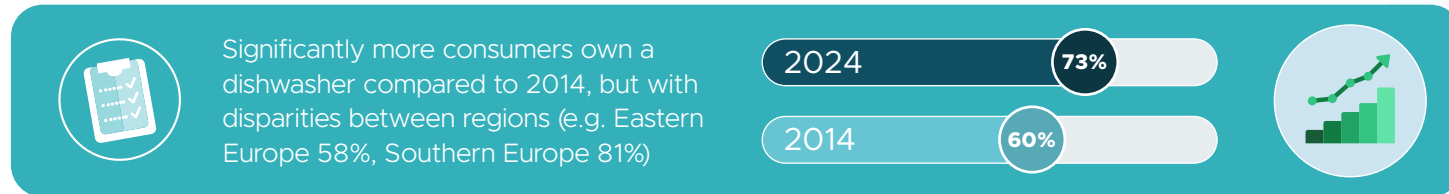


Of consumers have increasing confidence that EU legislation guarantees the safety of products (vs. **45%** in 2020)

Section 1: Consumers' habits when cleaning & washing at home

How do consumers take care of the dishes?

More consumers own a dishwasher today than a decade ago and run the machine less than five times per week. Dishwashers are typically used more often during the day across Europe than at night. More than half of people clean their machine and filter at least monthly, and prefer to use a special detergent to clean the machine.



Detergents are the preferred choice for cleaning the dishwasher

Special detergent for the machine	Machine cleaning cycle	High temperature program
62%	45%	28%
This is the preferred choice for 35-44 and 55-65 age group	This is the preferred choice for 25-34 age group	This is the preferred choice for 18-24 age group

Section 1: Consumers' habits when cleaning & washing at home

How do consumers access information on products?

Consumers' interest in digital information remains constant over the past decade. Packaging and the internet are currently the top two sources to access information on detergents and maintenance products. Although healthcare professionals are considered a reliable or very reliable source of information, less than one quarter of people use them as a source of information.

A steady preference for digital information

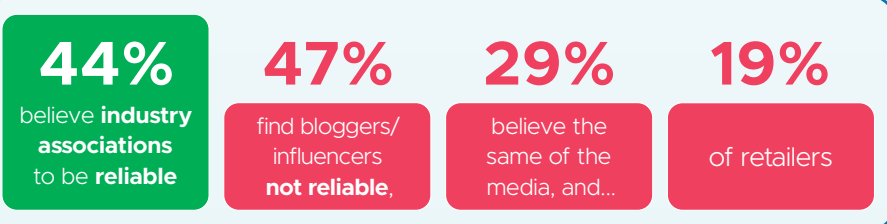
I believe that **digital technologies will offer me more opportunities** to access information on detergents and maintenance products

58%

If available, I would be inclined to **use more digital technologies** than on pack information to access information about detergent and maintenance products

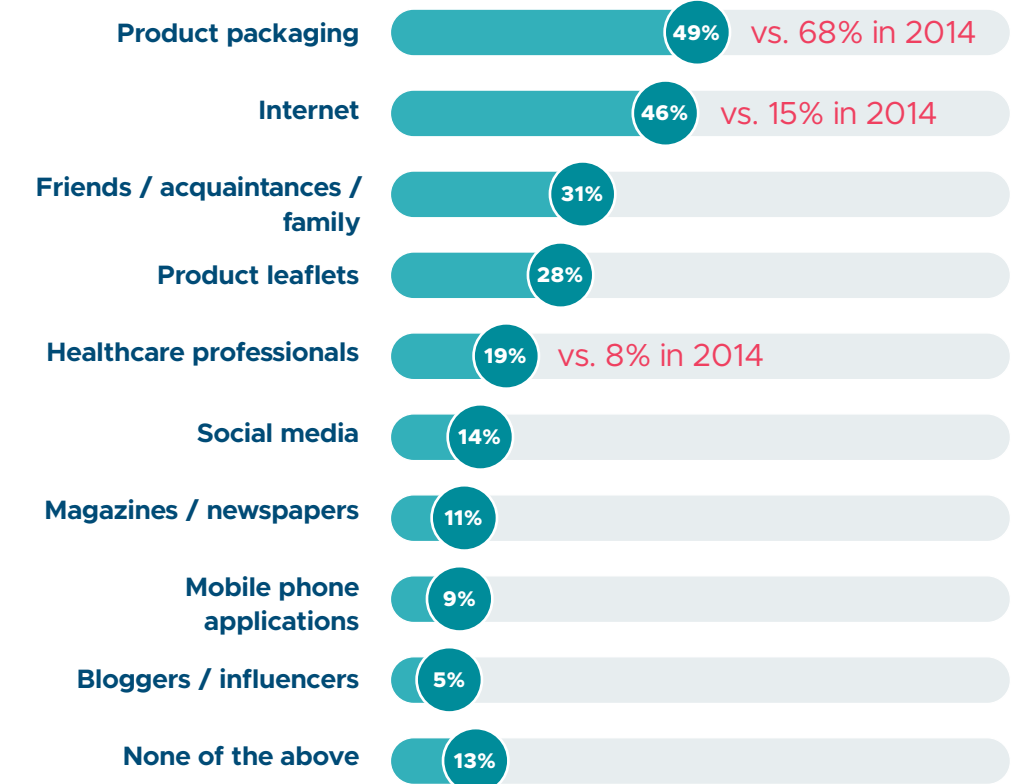
44%

Most reliable sources consumers trust



Only 14% of consumers currently uses an app related to household products. 43% of consumers would be interested in an app dedicated to detergents and maintenance products

Sources that consumers use



Section 1: Consumers' habits when cleaning & washing at home

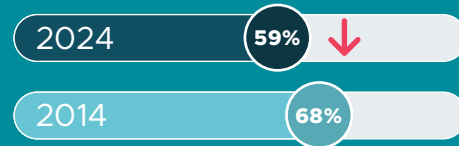
How sustainable are consumers' laundering and dishwashing habits?

Consumers' personal sustainability behaviours in doing the laundry and the dishes have declined over the years. Fewer consumers are using low temperatures programmes, purchasing sustainable detergents and avoiding underfilling the machine. However, the number of consumers doing the laundry less often has increased in the past decade.

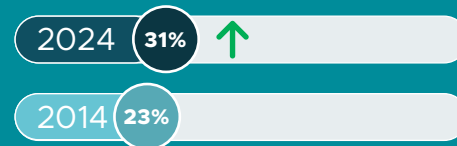
To clean more sustainably when doing the laundry, consumers indicate that they...



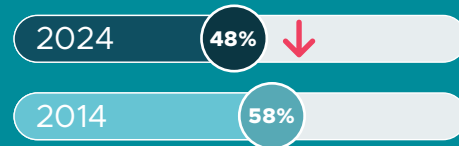
Avoid underfilling the machine



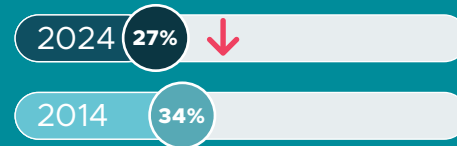
Do the laundry less often



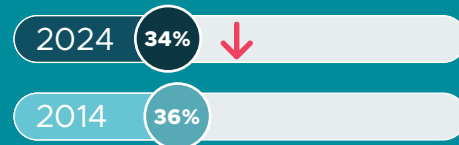
Do the laundry at lower temperatures



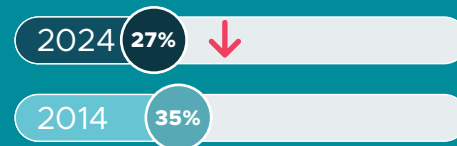
Use a low amount/less detergent



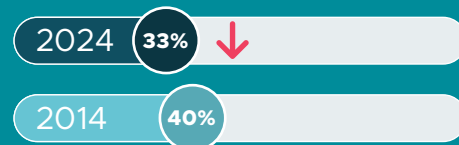
Avoid using a lot of water



Use concentrated detergents when doing the laundry



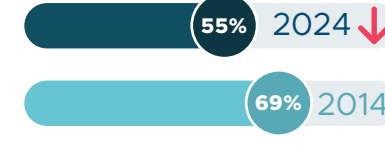
Purchase products they perceive as more sustainable



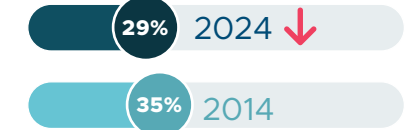
To clean more sustainably when doing the dishes, consumers indicate that they...



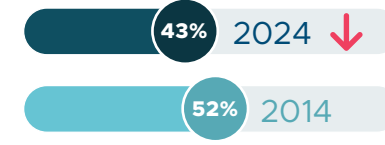
Avoid underfilling the machine



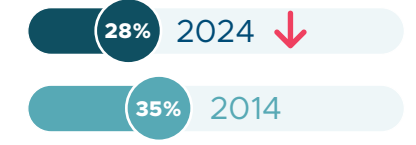
Use sustainable detergents when cleaning



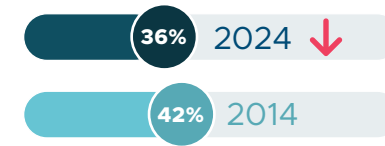
Use water saving programs in the dishwasher



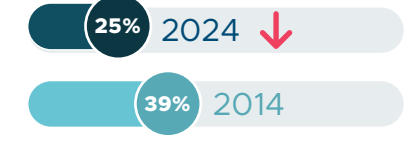
Purchase products they perceive as more sustainable



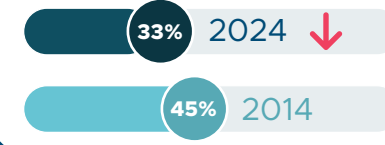
Avoid using a lot of water – not rinse under running water when doing dishes by hand



Use a low amount/less detergent



Do dishes at lower temperatures (55°C or lower)



Do the dishes less often



Section 1: Consumers' habits when cleaning & washing at home

How can industry brands drive sustainability?

When asked what brands could undertake to improve sustainability, nearly 50% of consumers mention packaging in their top three actions. Equally high is creating products that work well at low temperatures.

To improve sustainability, brands should...



Provide products in a packaging that is recyclable

2024

49%

Create products that use less water

2024

41%

Provide products in recycled packaging

2024

49%

Provide me with reassurance that the product is not going to harm the environment

2024

41%

Create products that work well at low temperatures

2024

48%

Provide more info on how to use the product in a sustainable way

2024

34%

Reduce the amount of packaging

2024

42%

Provide products with removable labels

16%

2024

Section 1: Consumers' habits when cleaning & washing at home

How do consumers consider sustainability labels?

Sustainability labels have a positive influence on consumers' choices when buying products. In addition, both the EU Ecolabel and the A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning are well understood to nearly half of consumers reading the label. Overall, more than half of consumers consider company / industry labels important - awareness of the A.I.S.E. Charter is stronger among the younger generations.

The extent to which a label is considered (very) important by consumers:

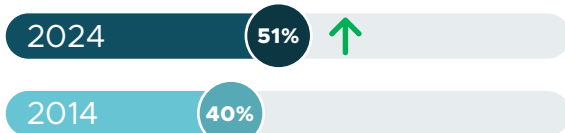
Labels with explanation on how the product can be used in a sustainable way



Official ecolabels



Labels provided by the company and/or industry



Label evaluation:



EU Ecolabel

45%
Awareness

48%
Clarity

50%
Positive influence on purchase decision



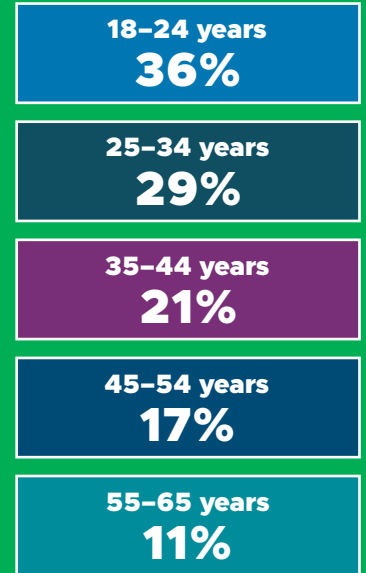
A.I.S.E. Charter label

21%
Awareness

46%
Clarity

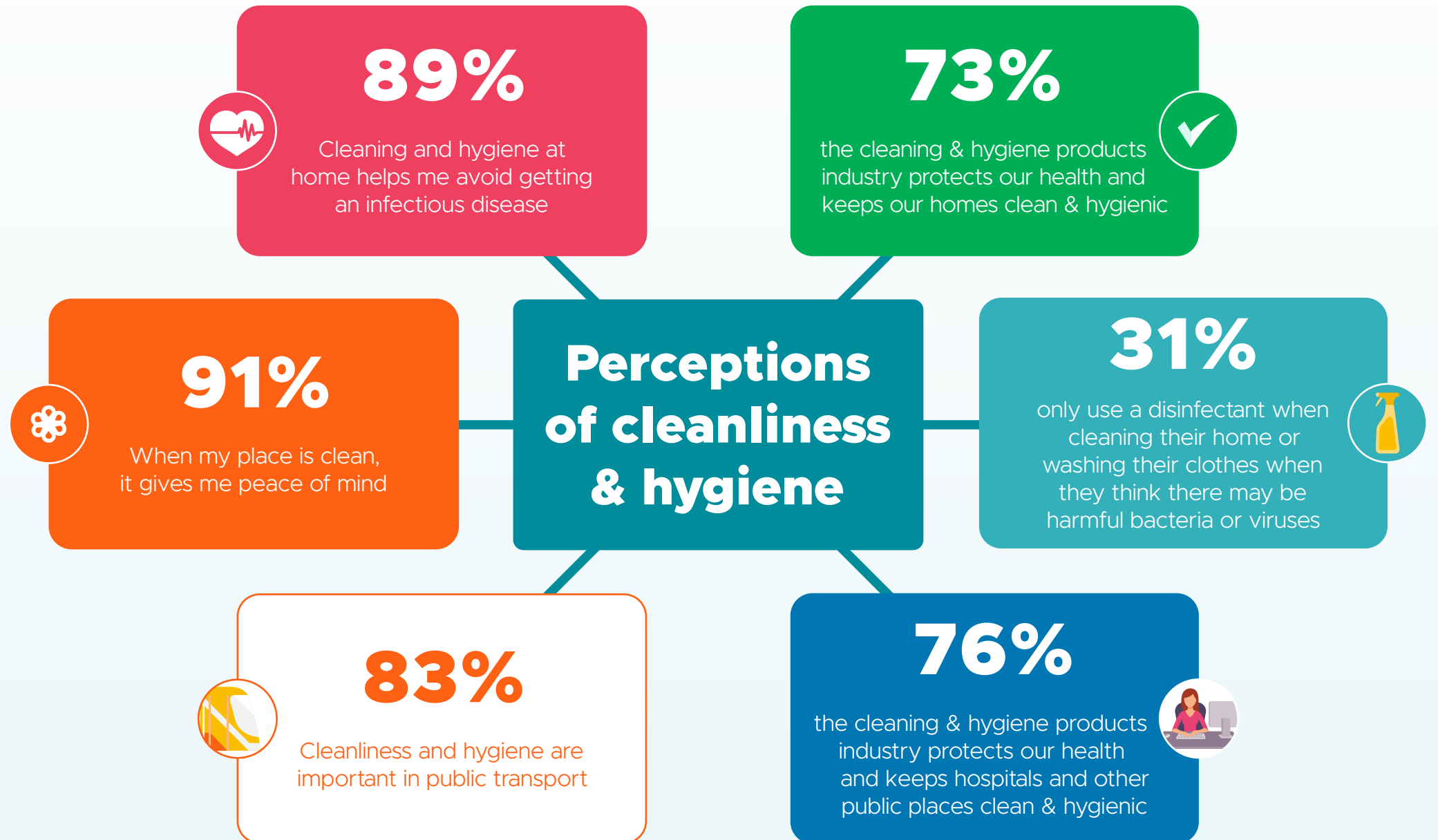
40%
Positive influence on purchase decision

Awareness of A.I.S.E. Charter (by age)



Section 2

Cleanliness & hygiene perceptions and habits – highlights



Section 2: Cleanliness & hygiene perceptions and habits

How do consumers perceive cleanliness & hygiene at home?

European citizens genuinely care about hygiene and cleanliness at home - this continues to have high importance since the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumers value the benefits of a clean home and understand that hygiene is important for their health by preventing the spread of infection.

Cleaning and hygiene **in my home** is important because it helps me and/or the people I live with **avoid becoming unwell** or getting an **infectious disease**.

2024 89%

2020 89%

It's important to prevent infections through **good hygiene practices**, but it is also important **not to be obsessive** about cleanliness in our homes.

2024 91%

2020 91%

My **own cleanliness** and hygiene is not just important for myself; it is also **important for the health of people around me**.

2024 89%

2020 90%

When my place is clean, it gives me **peace of mind**.

2024 91%

2020 89%

Living in a clean environment is a **mark of respect** for me and my family.

2024 90%

2020 89%

My **belongings last longer** if I clean them regularly.


2024 81%

2020 76%

Section 2: Cleanliness & hygiene perceptions and habits

How do consumers perceive cleanliness & hygiene outside the home?

COVID-19 has reinforced that cleanliness and hygiene in public spaces are important to European citizens, and they are eager to learn more about professional cleaning standards.




We should talk more about the importance of cleanliness and hygiene **outside the home** and the standards applied to ensure this.

2020	67%
2017	62%

Cleanliness and hygiene are important when I take **public transportation** e.g. in a metro, on a bus, in an airport or railway station

2020	83%
2017	77%




I feel uncomfortable and less inclined to buy something when I am in a **shop** or a **supermarket**, if I perceive the environment as dirty.

2020	79%
2017	79%



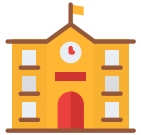
I work better in a **clean office** space.

2020	78%
2017	76%



I would like to be sure that the surroundings and the food my children eat when they are at **school** are in line with high quality hygiene standards.

2020	71%
2017	71%



There is no 2024 consumer data on this topic.



Section 2: Cleanliness & hygiene perceptions and habits

How do consumers perceive the cleaning & hygiene industry?

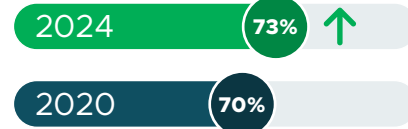
Overall, there is an increasingly positive perception of the industry. Despite regional differences, consumers believe that this industry supplies products that are important for their health.

The cleaning and hygiene products industry...

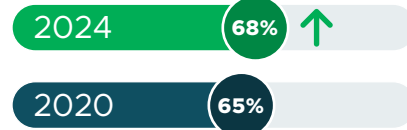
protects our health and keeps our offices, hospitals, restaurants and public places clean and hygienic



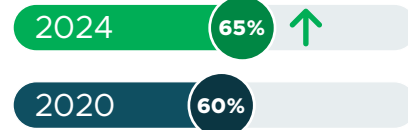
protects our health and keeps our homes clean and hygienic



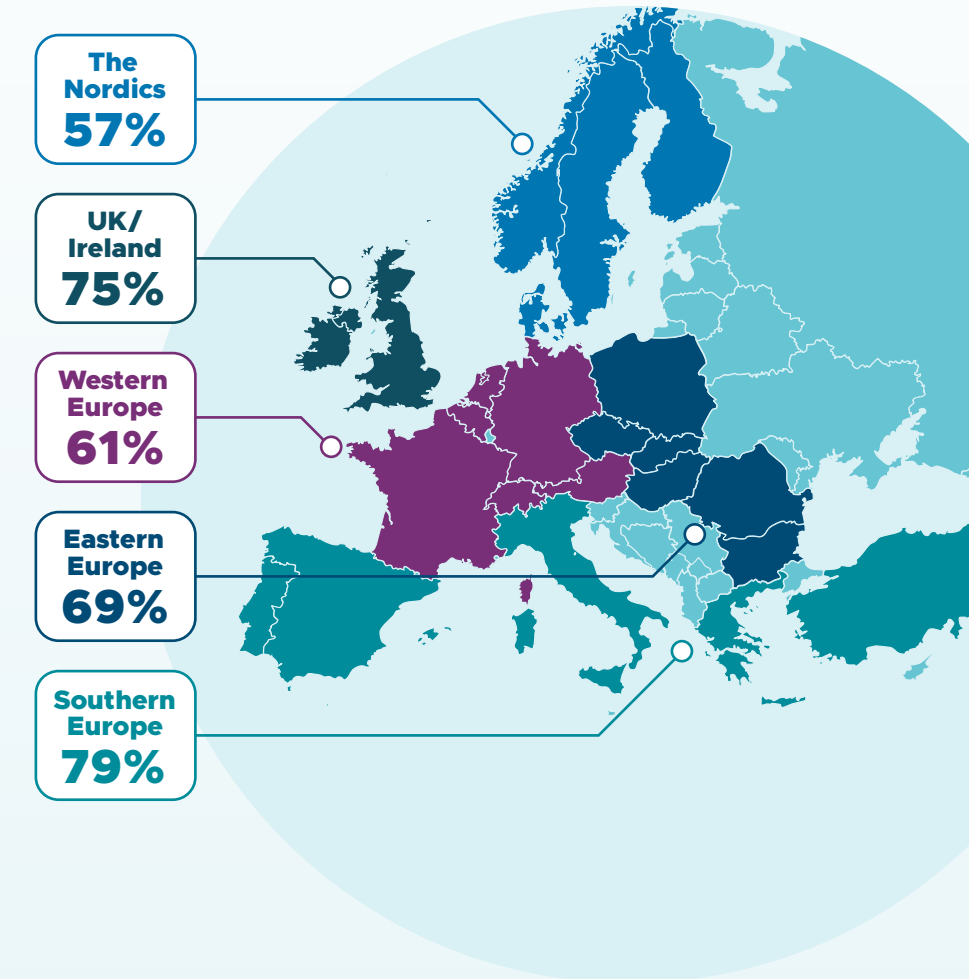
provides products that are important for my health



makes our lives more enjoyable and satisfying



...provides products that are important for my health



Section 2: Cleanliness & hygiene perceptions and habits

Do consumers understand how hygiene prevents infections?

The majority of consumers understand the purpose of cleaning to remove visible dirt and the role of a disinfectant to kill bacteria. However, there is confusion over the concept of hygiene, which is all actions that help prevent the spread of infection especially through cleaning, and under certain circumstances disinfection.

European citizens have different interpretations of the terms “cleaning” and “hygiene.”

“What does the word hygiene mean to you and how is it different from cleaning?”



When questioned about which statement they agree with, results below show that there is lack of proper understanding by EU citizens of how cleaning vs disinfection practices actually work to reduce contamination on risk surfaces.

Using a disinfectant when cleaning my home means I can get rid of more bacteria etc than if I just clean it:

40%

Cleaners get rid of bacteria etc by removing them from surfaces, disinfectants kill the bacteria etc on surfaces

40%

Cleaners and disinfectants do the same thing – they get rid of bacteria etc from surfaces

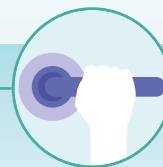
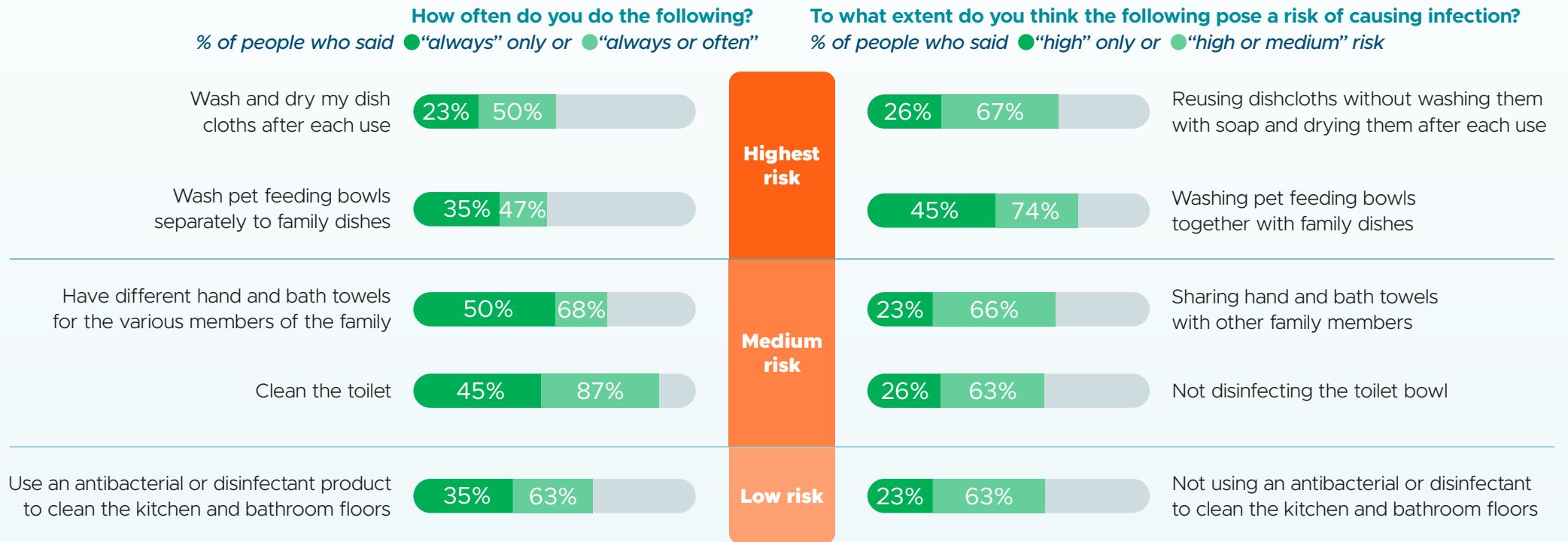
18%



Section 2: Cleanliness & hygiene perceptions and habits

To what extent do people's perceptions of infection risk dictate their actions?

People's behaviour is generally linked to their perception of risk: a situation that is considered a risk for infection often prompts consumers to a common cleaning action. However, consumers sometimes overestimate the risk of certain situations.



Section 2: Cleanliness & hygiene perceptions and habits

Do consumers correlate hand washing and infection prevention?

Hand washing is seen as a well-established routine, especially at times where a risk is perceived. Most consumers consider that not washing their hands at key moments poses an important infection risk.



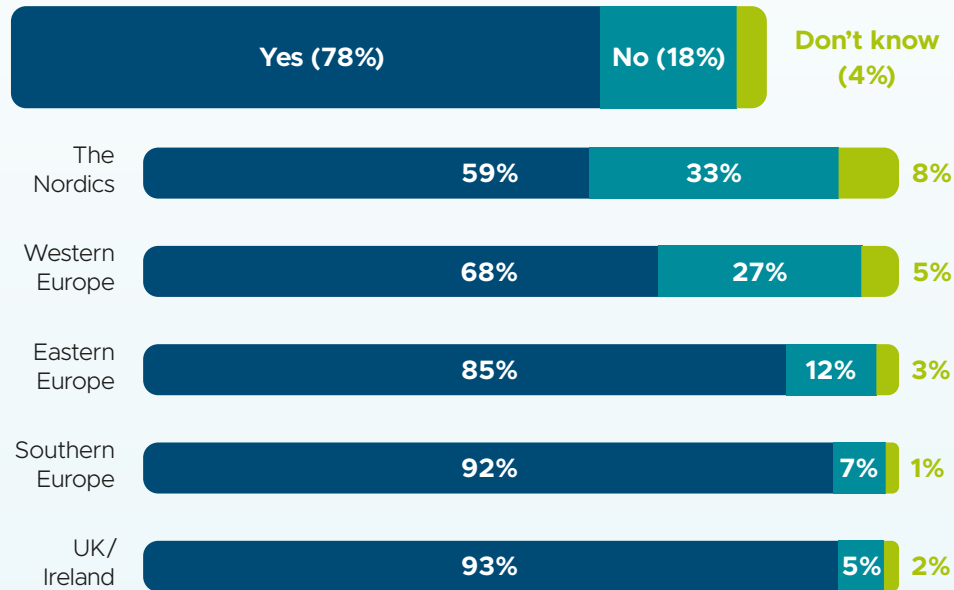
Section 2: Cleanliness & hygiene perceptions and habits

When do consumers perceive the need for a disinfectant product?

The use of disinfectant products at home is high but varies widely across regions. People do not always use a disinfectant in the highest risk moments e.g. after nappy changing, and do use this product in low risk moments like floor cleaning.

Consumers show significant differences in their attitudes to the use of disinfectants

Do you use a disinfectant/antibacterial or bleach product in your home i.e. a product that kills/gets rid of bacteria and other organisms?

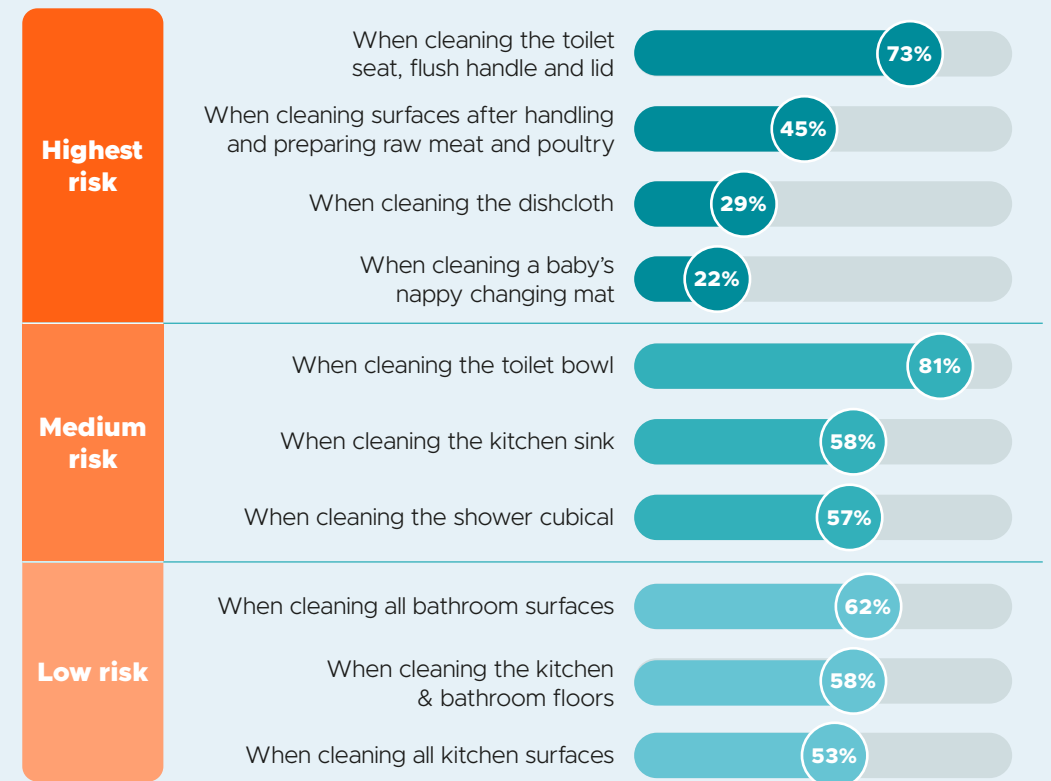


31%

of consumers tell us: *'When cleaning my home or washing my clothes, I only use a disinfectant when I think there may be harmful bacteria or viruses.'*

The 78% of consumers that use disinfectants in their homes do so as follows:

In what situations might/would you use a disinfectant product?



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A clean house and good hygiene habits at home make all the difference to our health and wellbeing.

For sound and expert advice on cleaning your home which products to choose and how to use them safely and sustainably, visit A.I.S.E's multi-lingual consumer portal www.cleanright.eu



Bathroom



Laundry room



Toilet



Kitchen



Living room



Bedroom