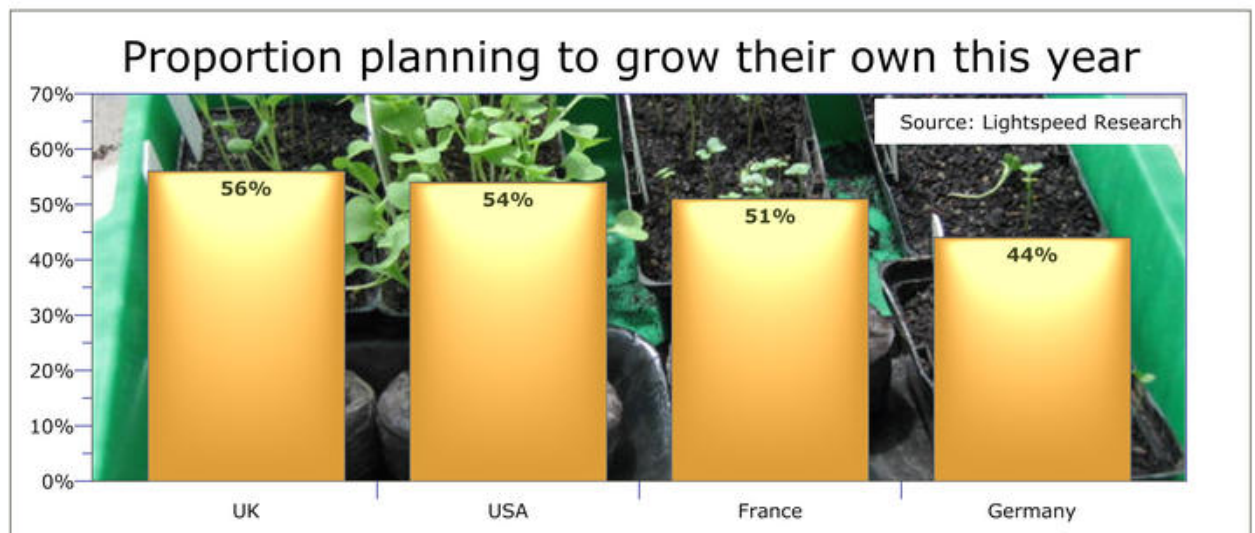


Back to the land: Consumers roll up their sleeves and get gardening as recession bites

(LONDON May 6 2009) A multi-country study released today by Lightspeed Research (www.lightspeedresearch.com), a leading online market research company, shows that consumers are increasingly turning towards the “Good Life” and growing their own fruit and vegetables. Around one third of respondents in the UK, US, France and Germany now grow their own fruit and vegetables. Many of them are new to gardening, increasingly driven to their spades and seed packets by rising prices and concerns over the use of chemicals in food production. Within the figures some interesting national differences can be found.



Cost and chemicals

Consumers in the UK are increasingly struggling with the cost of fresh produce at the supermarket with 65% believing that fruit and vegetables have become more expensive in the last six months. Another significant driver is concern over chemicals used in their production. Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents in the UK describe themselves as being “very concerned” about the use of chemicals and a further 31% are “concerned”. These figures are broadly similar in the US and Germany (28% of Americans are “very concerned” and a further 29% “concerned”; in Germany, 22% are “very concerned” and 31% “concerned”). The anxiety in France runs even deeper where 44% are “very concerned” and a further 28% “concerned”. When asked to cite their main motivation for growing their own, 41% of the British respondents chose ‘enjoyment’, 28% said to save money and 20% chose better quality produce.

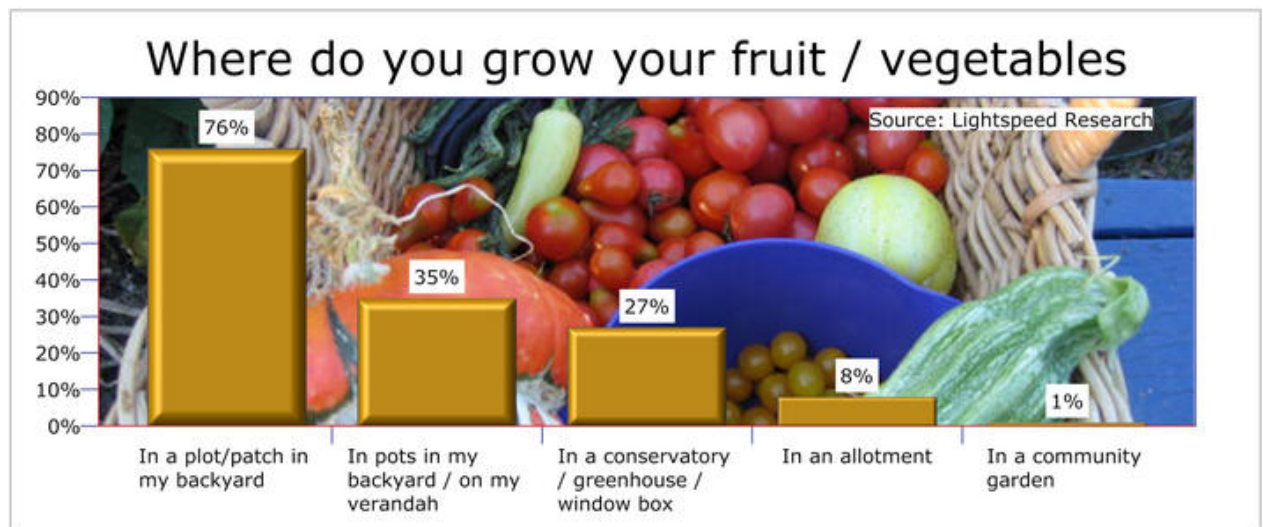
Brits and Americans most likely to take up gardening as recession bites

The trend for self-sufficiency is growing fastest in the UK and the US where over half (56% and 54% respectively) are planning to grow their own produce in 2009. The number previously growing their own is significantly lower, with about a third being seasoned gardeners (32% in the UK and 35% in the US) suggesting that the green-fingered trend is attracting lots of new converts.

62% of UK respondents believe that the move to growing their own will be a lasting change. By contrast, 45% of American respondents say that once the recession is over they will go back to buying their fruit and vegetables.

Not a lot of allotments

This research shows that the image of gardeners working on their allotment is outdated: only 8% of respondents cultivate one. The majority of British respondents are growing their produce in their back garden, in pots and even in window boxes. Over the past decade many allotment plots have been sold off for development, yet with the increasing move to grow your own it looks like waiting lists will continue to increase as the demand for space to grow produce increases.



Jam and Jerusalem

Although Britain's reputation for preserving food was made famous through The Women's Institute with its reputation for "jam and Jerusalem", the British are the second least likely to make jam out of their produce (just 39% compared with 70% of Germans and 53% of French). By contrast, at 43% UK growers are far more likely to make pickles or chutneys. This preserving method is considerably more popular amongst the British than the Americans (28%), French (12%) and Germans (14%). Traditional and often labour intensive techniques such as making cordials and drying are shunned in favour of the convenience of the freezer.

Vegetable vogues

When it comes to what's growing in the garden, tomatoes top the charts all round with 64% of British, 86% of American, 73% of French and 68% of German gardeners growing them. Salad greens are also popular with 47% of British, 39% of American, 54% of French and 47% of German gardeners growing leaves. While the Europeans favour soft fruits, (59% of Germans and 44% of French gardeners grow berries and currants), Brits are more likely to grow the sort of vegetables found in a good traditional casserole: just under half (45%) grow potatoes and at 43%, root vegetables are also a popular choice.

Commenting on the results, David Day, CEO of Lightspeed Research Europe said: "It's interesting to see how many people are growing their own produce. As the recession deepens and grocery bills rack up, more people are being motivated to get growing. Brits are reacting to the high price of produce in the supermarket and this, combined with health scares and concern over the use of pesticides, means that many are prepared to put in some hard graft and get digging."

- Ends –

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Note to editors

The survey has been carried out online among 1000 people each in the UK, France, Germany and USA in April 2009.

About Lightspeed Research

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