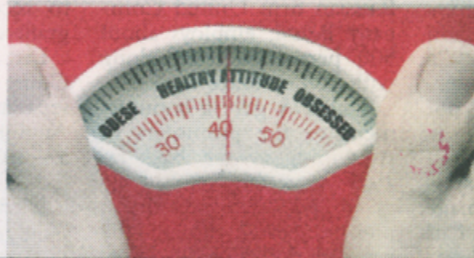


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Most workers back pay freeze if inflation halted

by Geoff Percival

MORE than 70% of private sector employees said that they would consider supporting a pay freeze if the Government took action to halt inflation by implementing a freeze on the prices of all goods and services, according to a new survey.

The study, undertaken by Berkley Recruitment and involving 25,000 people, said that "people are becoming less selfish and greedy in their attitude to jobs and are prepared to show realistic restraint with a long-term goal of keeping the economy competitive."

The survey follows on from last week's latest monthly CSO consumer price index showing that

while inflation fell marginally from 5.1% to 5% in May, it has averaged 5% for the last six months, well above the EU average of under 2%.

Indeed, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern has said that one of his priorities in the new Government — depending on him eventually forming it — would be to initiate talks with the social partners over how best to tackle inflation, which has been undermining the growth of the economy. A freeze on goods and services prices would be seen as being a way to bring a halt to most inflationary pressures.

The Berkley survey said in its findings that the Irish workforce was now more career focused rather than money focused and showed realism and restraint.