

# Pharmacy Pulse

Analysis of the key trends in the Irish Community Pharmacy sector, prepared by Fitzgerald Power in partnership with the Irish Pharmacy Union

## Q1 2026



**Irish  
Pharmacy  
Union**



**Fitzgerald  
Power**  
ADDING VALUE.  
ALWAYS.

# Forewords

Fitzgerald Power is delighted to launch the first edition of Pharmacy Pulse in partnership with the Irish Pharmacy Union, marking the beginning of what we see as a valuable and ongoing collaboration to support the pharmacy sector across Ireland.

This report highlights a sector that continues to demonstrate resilience despite economic uncertainty. Growth in pharmaceutical sales and prescription volumes, alongside continued activity in the mergers and acquisitions market, points to strong underlying demand. However, rising operational costs remain a key challenge for pharmacy owners, reinforcing the need for careful planning and efficiency.

Encouragingly, the sector is evolving, supported by positive developments and strong engagement between stakeholders. As our partnership with the IPU develops, we look forward to sharing ongoing insights to help pharmacy owners make informed decisions.

We hope you find this report practical and valuable.



**Noel Winters**  
Corporate Finance Partner  
Fitzgerald Power

The IPU is delighted to partner with Fitzgerald Power in producing this comprehensive quarterly Pharmacy Pulse report. This publication provides a detailed overview of the key business trends shaping the community pharmacy sector, offering valuable insight into the current trading environment and highlighting emerging developments across the sector.

The report plays an important role in providing the IPU with a deeper understanding of both sector performance and the key concerns facing pharmacy owners and managers. In particular, it highlights the continued impact of rising operational costs, alongside broader economic pressures, and the resulting challenges for the sustainability and profitability of community pharmacies. These insights are critical in informing the IPU's advocacy and support efforts on behalf of the sector.

For IPU members, the report serves as a practical and valuable resource, enabling pharmacies to benchmark their performance against their peers and better understand cost trends and business sentiment within the sector.

As this report is published on a quarterly basis, it will provide an evolving picture of the sector, ensuring both the IPU and its members remain informed, prepared, and well-positioned to respond to ongoing changes in the business environment.



**Jim Curran**  
Director of Public Affairs  
and Communications  
Irish Pharmacy Union

# Summary Q1 2026

## Irish Economy

The Central Bank released its forecast for domestic economic growth over the next three years, with modified domestic demand (MDD) - a measure of economic performance that accounts for the distorting effects of multinational firms - estimated at 4.9% in 2025, and expected to grow by 2.4%, 2.8%, and 3.4% in 2026, 2027, and 2028 respectively.

## Medicine Supply and Pricing Agreement

The Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA) and Medicines for Ireland (MFI) have reached a new Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Medicine with the Government, replacing the existing framework agreement which has been in place since 2021. The new agreement will run until 31st December 2029.

## Mergers & Acquisitions

Fitzgerald Power released a pharmacy sector Mergers & Acquisitions Report in Q1 2026, which estimated 98 pharmacy sector transactions over the 36-month period from 2023 to 2025. Data from this report is included in a later section of this report and shows a healthy mergers and acquisitions market in the sector.

## Global Economy

A global energy crisis is developing following the closing of the Strait of Hormuz as a result of the war between the United States and Israel, and Iran. The conflict could impact up to 15%-20% of the global supply of oil, and potentially lead to a global oil supply shock, economic recession and food crisis.

# Revenue Pulse

## Value of sales

The value of pharmaceutical sales, as measured by the CSO, increased by 3.9% in value in March 2026 against the same period last year.

Value of Sales: CSO

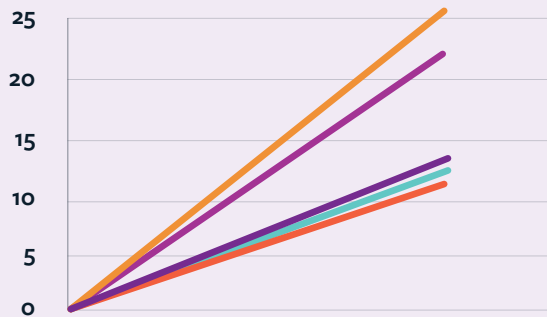
3.9%↑

SOURCE: CSO

## Rx Tracker

IQVIA data shows RX classes are up 9.5% in value and 5% in volume as against the same period last year.

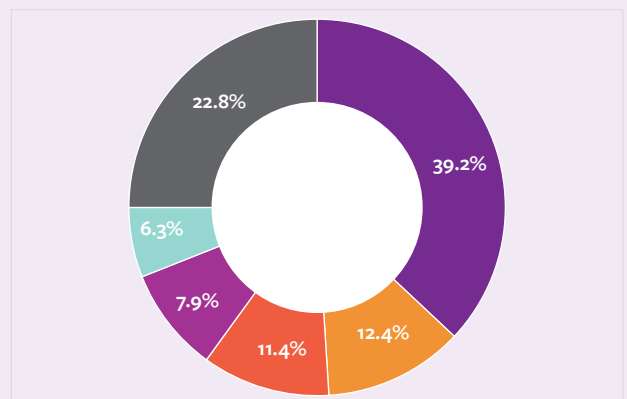
### Top RX Classes by Growth



- Dermatology 26%
- Anti Diabetics 22%
- GU 13.8%
- Oncology & Immunomodulators 12.8%
- Cardiovascular System 11.5%

SOURCE: IQVIA

### Top RX Classes by Value

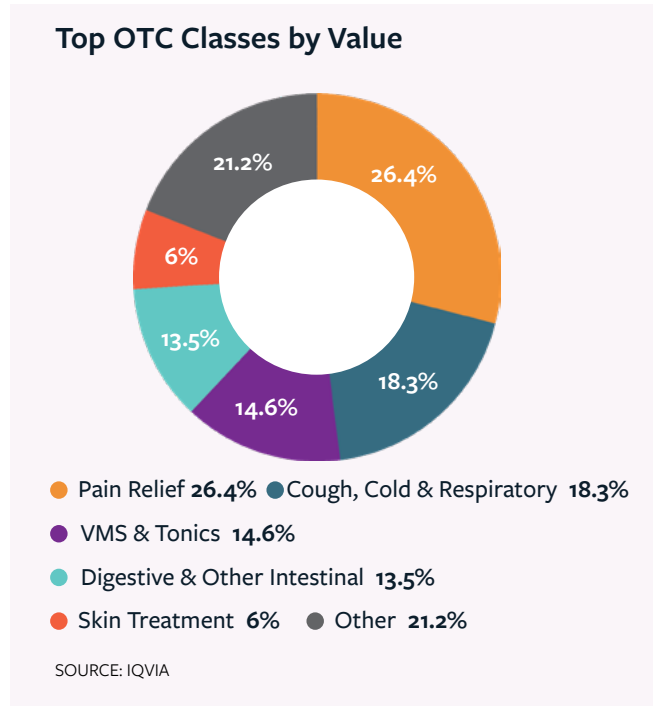
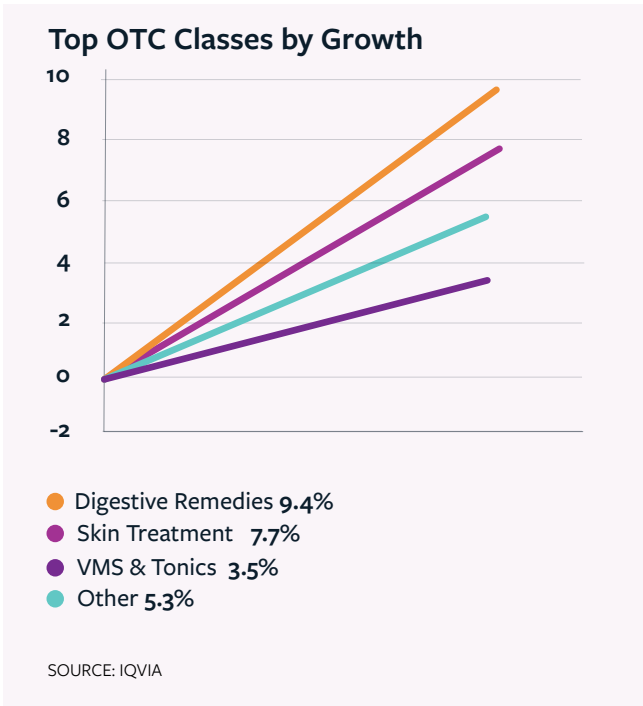


- Oncology & Immunomodulators 39.2%
- Anti Diabetics 12.4%
- Central Nervous System 11.4%
- Anti-Infectives 7.9%
- Cardiovascular System 6.3%
- Other 22.8%

SOURCE: IQVIA

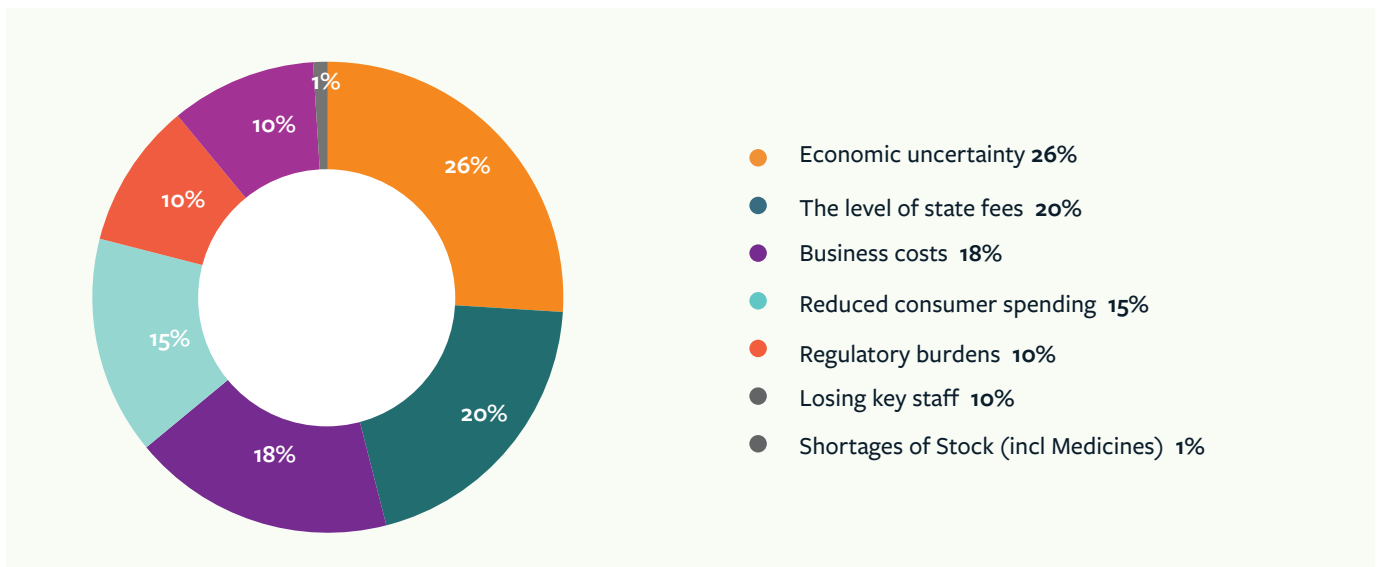
# OTC Tracker

IQVIA data shows OTC classes are up 1.5% in value and down 1% in volume, as against the same period last year.



# Cost Pulse

The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) quarterly survey was released to the pharmacy sector during Q1 2026, and found respondents main business concerns were economic uncertainty (26%) the level of State fees (20%) and business costs (18%).

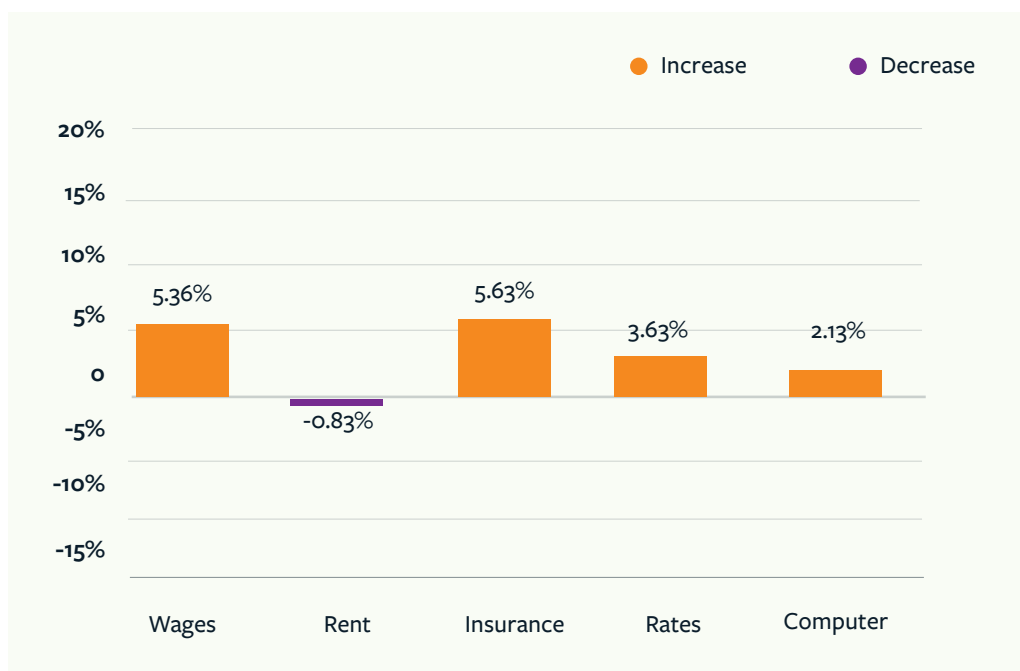


The IPU survey found 94% of respondents had seen operational costs increase over the previous 12 months. Respondents were asked which business costs increased, and by how much. The table below displays these responses, with energy and wage growth seeing the most significant increase.

	0-5%	6-10%	10%
<b>Rents</b>	63	27	10
<b>Energy Costs</b>	24	38	38
<b>Wages</b>	28	45	27
<b>Waste Charges</b>	55	33	12
<b>Commercial Rates</b>	74	20	6
<b>Insurance Costs</b>	47	37	16
<b>IT infrastructure</b>	34	45	21
<b>Banking</b>	72	25	3
<b>Security Costs</b>	63	23	14

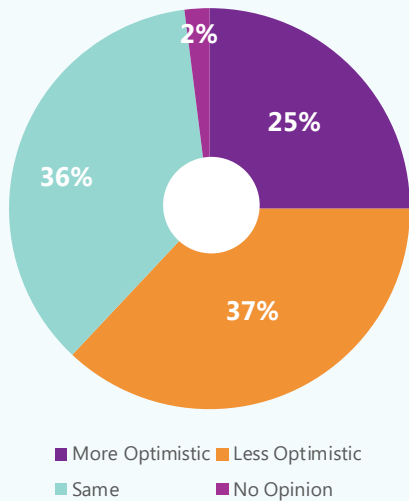
Note: Numbers in table above are percentage values.

Fitzgerald Power compared operational costs in Q1 2025 against Q1 2026. Over this period rental costs have remained mostly stable, which is expected year on year. The biggest increases can be seen in wages and insurance.

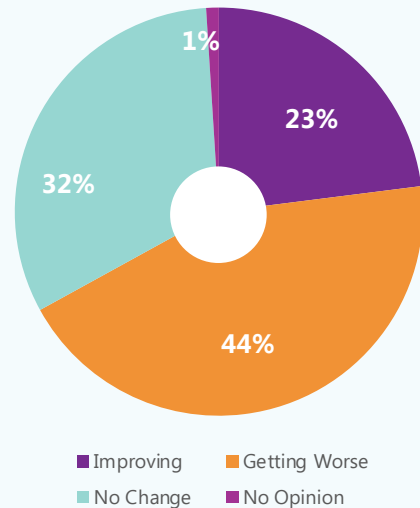


# Business Environment/Sentiment Pulse

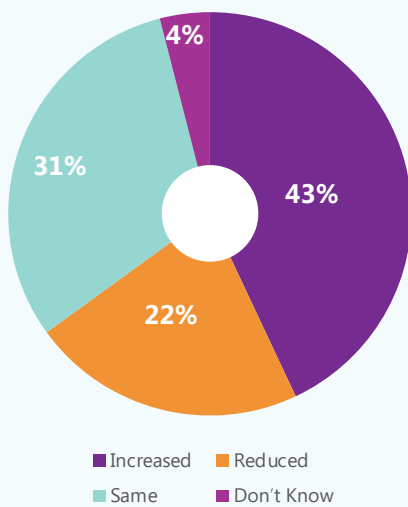
When asked how do pharmacy owners/managers see their business prospects now compared to 12 months ago respondents to the IPU survey indicated:



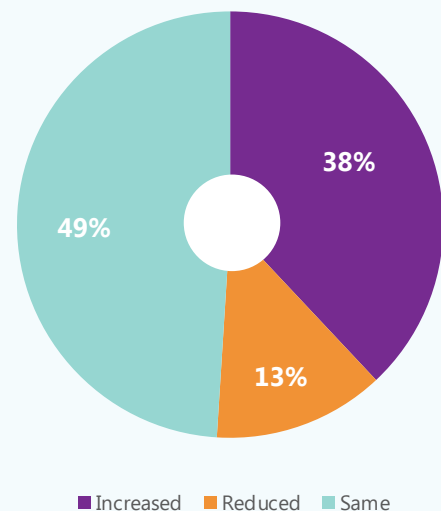
When asked how do pharmacy owners/managers view the business environment at present.



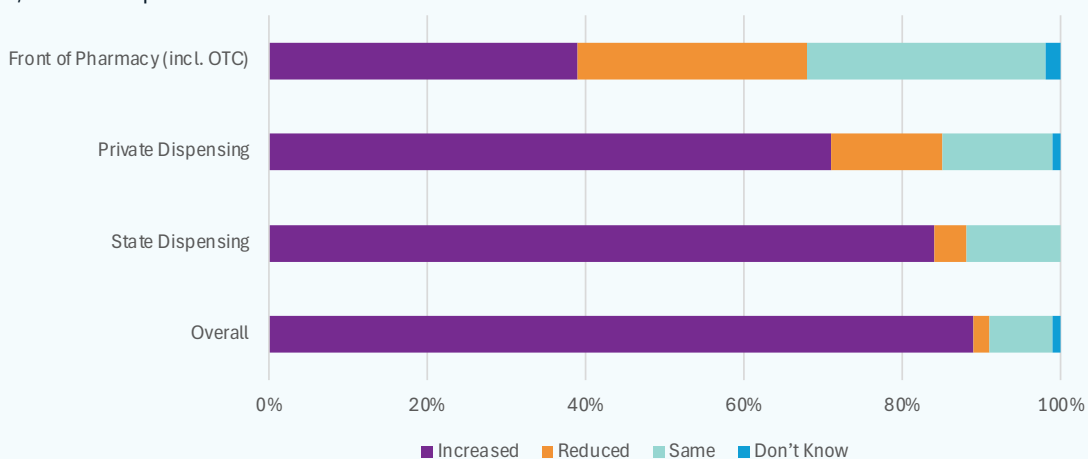
The level of pharmacy footfall in the last 12 months as reported by respondents.



The level of employment reported over the last 12 months.



Sales/turnover performance in the last 12 months



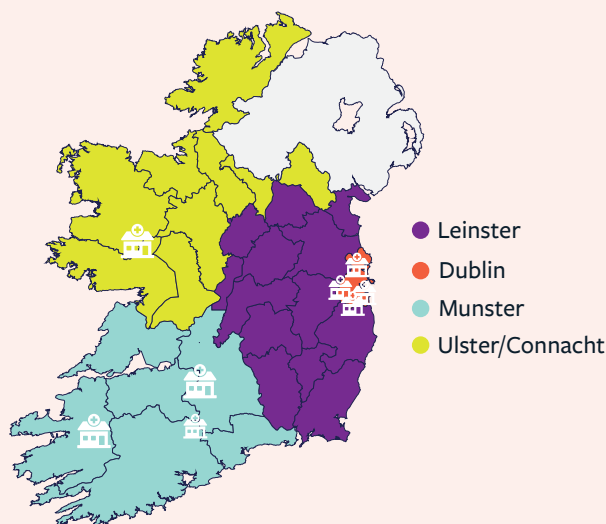
# Market Pulse

Fitzgerald Power estimate 8 transactions completed in the 1st Quarter of 2026. This shows no change from the same period last year, when there were also 8 transactions. In Q1 2026 there were more lower revenue pharmacies sold as against Q1 2025, a continuation of the trend seen in Q4 2025.

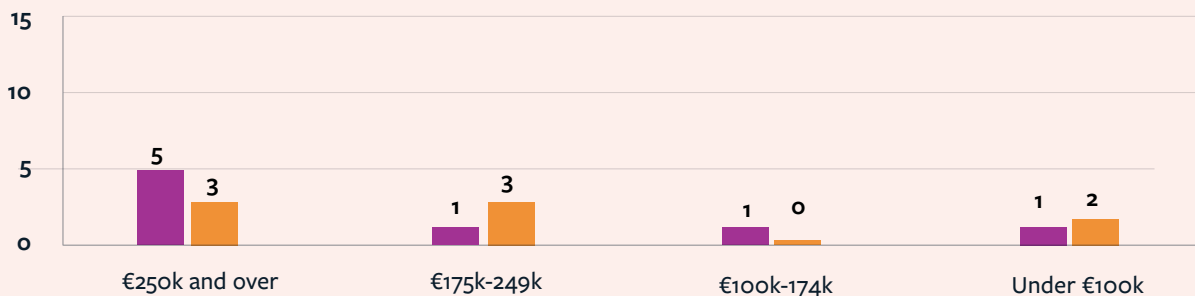
## Completed Deals in Q1 by Geographical Location

DUBLIN	4
REST OF LEINSTER	0
MUNSTER	3
ULSTER / CONNACHT	1

SOURCE: FITZGERALD POWER

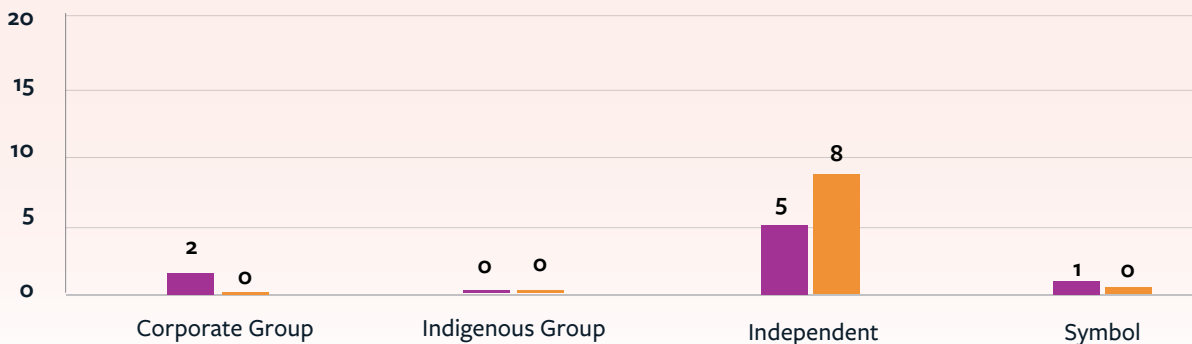


## Completed Deals in Q1 2025 and Q1 2026 by HSE Fees List Position



SOURCE: FITZGERALD POWER

## Completed Deals in Q1 2025 and Q1 2026 by Pharmacy Type



SOURCE: FITZGERALD POWER

PSI data suggests there have been no net openings / closings in the first 3 months of 2026, leaving the number of community pharmacies in Ireland at 1916

New Openings and Closures	
New Openings between 1st January 2026 – 31st March 2026	1
Closures between 1st January 2026 – 31st March 2026	1
<b>Net Openings between 1st January 2026 – 31st March 2026</b>	<b>0</b>

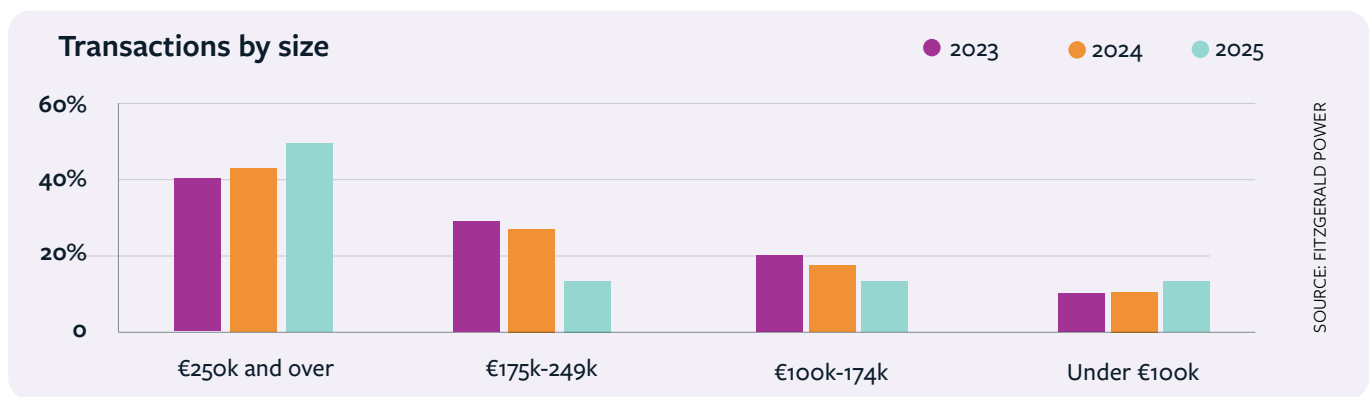
SOURCE: PSI

## M&A Pulse

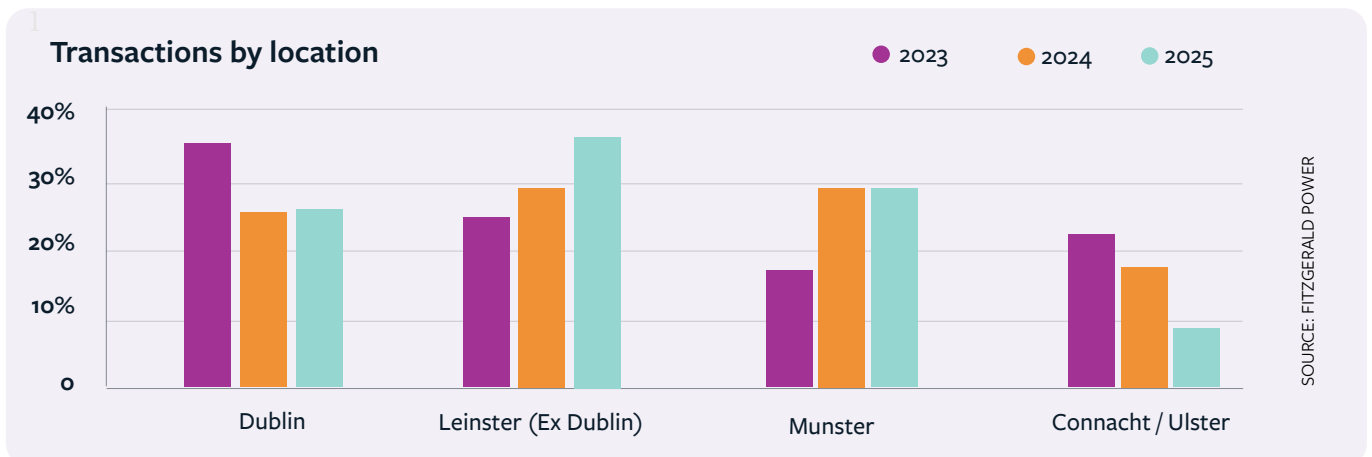
The market for pharmacy mergers and acquisitions has seen strong activity over the past 36 months. Fitzgerald Power released an M&A whitepaper in Q1 2026, which estimated 98 pharmacy sector transactions over the 36-month period from 2023 to 2025. Fitzgerald Power advised on 43 of these transactions.

In the below tables we analysed transactions over the review period based on annual State dispensing fee list and geography. The majority of transactions involved the sale of independently owned pharmacies.

Pharmacies receiving state fees  $\geq$  €250K accounted for the largest share of transactions every year over our review period. Mid-range deals (€175K–€249K) fell in 2025, while low-value deals (<€100K) increased in the past year. The increase in small pharmacy transactions suggests a stronger market in general over the past 12 months.



Over the three-year period, Munster experienced a significant increase in deal activity, rising from 17% to 29%, while Connacht/Ulster dropped proportionally the most from 23% to 9%. Connacht/Ulster also has the lowest share of transactions over the period.



# Maximising Pharmacy Value at Exit

Preparing a pharmacy for sale is not a short-term exercise; it is a process that should ideally begin several years in advance of a transaction. Buyers are increasingly sophisticated and place significant emphasis on the quality and sustainability of earnings, rather than simply headline turnover or dispensing volumes.

From our experience advising on pharmacy transactions, the most attractive businesses demonstrate strong operational controls, consistent profitability, and a clear growth story. Areas such as staffing structures, reliance on key individuals, and the balance between front-of-shop retail and dispensing income can materially influence valuation.

Equally, maintaining accurate, well-structured financial records and ensuring tax affairs are optimised ahead of a sale can significantly enhance outcomes. Even small improvements in EBITDA or operational efficiency can have a meaningful impact when applied to valuation multiples.

Ultimately, early planning allows pharmacy owners to position their business in the best possible light, reduce risk from a buyer's perspective, and maximise competitive tension in the sale process. Those who take a proactive approach are consistently better placed to achieve premium valuations and a smoother transaction process.

## Noel Winters

Corporate Finance Partner



Take a proactive step to unlock your pharmacy's full potential and maintain a competitive edge in your industry.

**Get in touch with Noel today: [nwinters@fitzgeraldpower.ie](mailto:nwinters@fitzgeraldpower.ie)**

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