

## Safety concerns persist for women in Ireland despite growing optimism around gender equality

The **Worldwide Independent Network of MR (WIN)**, leading global association of independent market research and polling firms, has released its latest annual Worldviews Survey. This **International Women's Day**, WIN's latest findings shed light on the **persistent gap between perceived progress in gender equality and women's lived realities**.

### HEADLINES – IRELAND

- **Sexual harassment among young women is rising**

Young women remain the most exposed to sexual harassment in Ireland. Over a third (34%) of women aged 18–34 report experiencing sexual harassment in the past year, a significant increase compared to last year. This group was already the most vulnerable, and the rise in reported incidents raises renewed concerns about whether enough progress is being made to ensure women's safety in everyday environments.

- **Women feel significantly less safe in public spaces**

Perceptions of safety in public spaces also remain a challenge. More than half of Irish women (53%) say they do not feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhood at night - more than double the proportion of men who say the same (25%). Notably, women in Ireland report feeling less safe than the global and European averages, highlighting a persistent gender gap in how public safety is experienced.

- **Physical/psychological harassment is rising across society**

Experiences of physical and/or psychological harassment have also risen marginally in Ireland. While women continue to report similar levels overall, the increase in incidents is being driven by more men reporting such harassment. This is even higher among younger men. This suggests harassment is becoming a wider societal concern affecting multiple groups.

- **Perceptions of gender equality are improving**

However, at the same time, attitudes toward gender equality in Ireland are improving. Perceptions that equality has been achieved at home, at work, and in politics have risen noticeably over the past year, with improvements also evident among women. Increased visibility of female leadership including Ireland's female presidency may be contributing to this shift in public sentiment.

- **Progress on equality, but a perception gap remains**

Despite these positive perceptions, a gap remains. Women are still less likely than the overall population to believe gender equality has been fully achieved. Encouragingly, Ireland performs strongly compared with the global average in perceptions of equality at home and in the workplace, while views on equality in politics are broadly in line with global sentiment.

**Together, these findings highlight a country making progress on equality yet still facing clear challenges in ensuring women feel safe in their daily lives.**

## HEADLINES WORLD

- **Perceptions of progress in institutions contrast with women's lived experiences**

Overall, the findings suggest that perceptions of gender equality have improved globally, particularly in the workplace and politics. Two-thirds of people (66%) believe gender equality at work has been achieved to some extent, up from 59% in 2025, while 57% say the same about politics. The net index for perceived equality has also strengthened, rising from 25 in 2019 to 37 for the workplace and 20 for politics this year.

Local researchers attribute growing optimism in the workplace to visible institutional and policy developments, including anti-discrimination reforms and national initiatives aimed at improving women's access to employment. The APAC region and the Americas lead these perceptions, with around seven in ten people believing workplace equality has been achieved. However, opinion remains more divided in countries such as Japan, France, Turkey, and Peru, highlighting uneven global progress with the lower percentage of people believing equality has been achieved at work.

Much of this optimism is driven by men, as well as higher-educated and employed respondents, who consistently report more positive perceptions of gender equality across all areas.

However, women's lived experiences tell a more complex and concerning story. While in 43 out of 44 countries the percentage of women who believe equality has been achieved at home is higher than the respondents stating it has not been achieved, no remarkable improvement in perception has been observed this year compared to 2025. Côte d'Ivoire stands out in particular, where 72% of women say gender equality has not been achieved within the home.

At the same time, women's experiences of violence (17%), sexual harassment (around one in ten), and insecurity (with 45% of women reporting feeling unsafe walking alone at night vs 26% of men globally) remain persistently high. Crucially, amongst women who have experienced violence or harassment, perceptions of gender equality decline significantly across all areas of life.

This gap highlights a critical reality: while institutional progress and public optimism may be growing, true equality remains out of reach for many women, whose daily experiences continue to lag behind formal and perceived gains.

- **Increased public discourse does not translate into feelings of safety for women**

Despite growing global attention and efforts to combat violence against women, 45% of women globally report feeling unsafe at night, versus 26% of men – a gap that remains consistent in almost every country, except Pakistan, where the share is the same for both.

Moreover, one in four women aged 18 to 24 still experience violence, and 20% report sexual assault; the highest levels amongst all age groups, a pattern consistent since the WVS began in 2018.

Unsurprisingly, these experiences translate into feelings of insecurity. Over half (53%) of young women report feeling unsafe walking alone at night in their neighbourhoods (versus just 27% of men in the age group), illustrating a generation growing up in a context of heightened discourse on equality yet still facing the highest exposure to gender-based harm.

Amongst women over 65, 43% report feeling unsafe walking alone at night, compared with just 24% of men in the same age group.

The WVS findings also show that these figures have changed little since 2024, though some countries have seen increases. In Slovenia, for example, the proportion of women reporting insecurity at night rose from 17% in 2024 to 30% this year, influenced in part by media coverage of violent incidents and wider public debate. This underscores a critical insight: public discourse and awareness, while important, do not automatically translate into personal feelings of safety, even in countries that are relatively safe by international standards.

Moreover, in the Americas, a concerning 62% of women report feeling unsafe walking alone at night. Particularly in Latin America, where over half of women experience this insecurity, with Ecuador leading at 79%, followed by Mexico and Chile (75%), Brazil (70%), Colombia (65%), Argentina and Peru (64%), and Paraguay (55%). These findings highlight that insecurity in public spaces continues to act as a structural barrier to women's autonomy and mobility across the region.

- **Media visibility as a contextual factor to heightened perceptions of violence against women**

The global WIN network provides insight not only into the figures reported worldwide but also into the cultural and societal contexts behind them, helping to interpret and understand the numbers. For International Women's Day, WIN members from several countries examined reports of violence and sexual harassment against women, highlighting how intensified public debate and media coverage play a significant role in shaping both reporting and perceptions of these issues.

In Finland, reported sexual harassment rose from 9% in 2025 to 16% this year. Local researchers attribute this increase to sustained media investigations into sexual offences, including coverage of more than 100 suspected sexual crimes by taxi drivers following the 2018 deregulation of the sector, as well as higher levels of police reporting. They suggest that heightened public discussion may have increased awareness and lowered the threshold for recognising and naming harassment in surveys.

In the Netherlands, 55% of women report feeling unsafe walking alone at night compared to 18% of men. Analysts cite two widely publicised cases of sexual assault and murder involving young women as factors influencing the findings. These events triggered intense national debate and spurred the "Wij eisen de nacht op" (We claim the night) movement, raising awareness of women's safety in public spaces.

In Australia, the gender gap in perceived night-time insecurity is also pronounced, with 59% of women feeling unsafe vs 24% of men. Local members note the strong visibility of gender-based violence in national conversations, amplified by media coverage, advocacy movements, and the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032.

In Indonesia, public discussions around street harassment and safety in public transportation have grown more visible in recent years, shaping awareness and perceptions of risk.

These examples illustrate how media visibility and public discourse form a critical part of the context in which women's perceptions of safety and harassment are reported, demonstrating that awareness, coverage, and advocacy can influence both recognition and reporting of gender-based harm.

**Richard Colwell, President of WIN International Association, said:**

*"What we observe globally is a perception of institutional progress, particularly in workplaces and political spheres. Yet women's lived realities tell a different story: violence, harassment, and insecurity remain persistent and, in many cases, unchanging. This underscores a critical truth: equality on paper or in policy is not enough. Without physical safety and protection from gender-based harms, true equality remains incomplete, and efforts to close the gap between perception and reality must remain urgent and sustained."*

-ENDS-

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## NOTES FOR EDITORS

### Methodology:

The survey was conducted in 44 countries using CAWI / CATI / F2F/ TAPI /online survey methods.

### Sample Size and Mode of Field Work:

A total of 44,000 people were interviewed. See below for sample details. The fieldwork was conducted between : 27th November 2025 to 13th February 2026. The margin of error for the survey is between 4.4 and 2.5 at 95% confidence level.

The global average has been computed according to the covered adult population of the surveyed countries.

### About WIN:

The Worldwide Independent Network of Market Research (WIN) is a global network conducting market research and opinion polls in every continent.

### Our assets

- Thought leadership: access to a group of the most prominent experts and business entrepreneurs in Market Research, Polling and Consultancy
- Flexibility: tailor-made global and local solutions to meet clients' needs
- Innovation: access to the latest strategic consultancy, tool development and branded solutions
- Local experts: access to a network of experts that truly understand the local culture, market and business needs.
- Trust: highest quality of talented members in all countries covered

In the years, WIN has demonstrated wide competences and ability to conduct multi-country surveys following the highest standards requested by the market. The accumulated expertise of the Association is formidable: among others, researched themes are gender equality and young people, communication and media research, and brand studies.

## Methodology Sheet

	Country	Company Name	Methodology	Sample	Coverage	Fieldwork Dates
1	Argentina	Voices Research & Consultancy	CAWI	1007	NATIONAL	2-15 January 2026
2	Australia	Luma Research	CAWI	549	NATIONAL	29-30 January 2026
3	Brazil	Market Analysis Brazil	CAWI	1000	INTERNET POP	9-16 January 2026
4	Canada	LEGER	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	12-25 Dec 2025
5	Chile	Activa Research	CAWI	1095	NATIONAL	8-13 January 2026
6	China	WisdomAsia	Online Panel	1000	URBAN	14-19 January 2026
7	Colombia	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	CATI	500	NATIONAL	6-12 February 2026
8	Côte d'Ivoire	EMC	CATI	502	NATIONAL	24-30 January 2026
9	Croatia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana Fides	CAWI	591	NATIONAL	8-12 January 2026
10	Denmark	Opinion Denmark A/S	CAWI	1007	NATIONAL	13-21 January 2026
11	Ecuador	Centro de Estudios Y Datos - CEDATOS	CAPI	1104	NATIONAL	28-31 January 2026
12	Finland	Taloustutkimus Oy	Online Panel	1093	NATIONAL	31 Dec 25 – 7 Jan 26
13	France	Online Way	Online Panel	1007	NATIONAL	16-19 January 2026
14	Georgia	GORBI Eurasia LTD	F2F	2050	NATIONAL	31 Jan -13 Feb 2026
15	Germany	Produkt+Markt	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	19 Dec 25 – 6 Jan 26
16	Greece	Alternative Research Solutions	CAWI	502	NATIONAL	3 Dec 25 – 12 Jan 26
17	Hong Kong	Consumer Search Group (CSG)	Online Panel	500	TERRITORY WIDE	9-15 January 2026
18	India	DataPrompt International Pvt. Ltd.	Online	1000	NATIONAL	29 Dec 25 -21 Jan 26
19	Indonesia	DEKA	Online	987	INTERNET POP	16-31 January 2026
20	Republic of Ireland	RED C Research & Marketing Ltd	CAWI	1013	NATIONAL	8-13 January 2026
21	Italy	SWG S.p.a	CAWI	1002	NATIONAL	7-12 January 2026
22	Japan	Nippon Research Center, LTD.	CAWI	1100	NATIONAL	22-27 January 2026
23	Malaysia	Central Force International	CAWI	1001	INTERNET POP	27 Nov – 3 Dec 2025
24	Mexico	Brand Investigation S.A.de C.V	Online	1000	NATIONAL	7-12 January 2026
25	Morocco	Integrate Consulting	Online	500	NATIONAL	8-9 January 2026
26	Netherlands	Motivaction International B.V.	CAWI	1005	NATIONAL	6-20 January 2026
27	Norway	Opinion AS	CAWI	1029	NATIONAL	13-19 January 2026
28	Pakistan	Gallup Pakistan	CATI	1000	NATIONAL	6 Dec 2025 -14 Jan 2026
29	Paraguay	ICA Consultoría Estratégica	CATI	501	NATIONAL	2 Dec 25- 29 Jan 26
30	Peru	Datum Internacional	P2P	1202	NATIONAL	16-10 January 2026
31	Philippines	The Philippine Survey and Research Center (PSRC)	PAPI	1000	NATIONAL	9-26 January 2026
32	Poland	Mareco Polska	CAWI	530	NATIONAL	8-14 Dec 2025

33	Serbia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana Adria	CAWI	522	NATIONAL	8-15 January 2026
34	Slovak Republic	Go4insight	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	16-26 January 2026
35	Slovenia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana	CAWI	1018	NATIONAL	8-9 January 2026
36	South Korea	Gallup Korea	CAWI	1200	NATIONAL	21-28 January 2026
37	Spain	Instituto DYM	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	15-18 January 2026
38	Sweden	Demoskop AB	CAWI	1012	INTERNET POP	19 Dec 2025 – 23 Jan 2026
39	Thailand	INFOSEARCH LIMITED	F2F	500	NATIONAL	16 Dec 25 -15 Jan 26
40	Turkey	BAREM Research	CATI	725	TR Urban	30 Jan – 4 Feb 2026
41	United Kingdom	ORB International	Online	1194	NATIONAL	12-22 Dec 2025
42	USA	LEGER	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	12-25 December 2025
43	Venezuela	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	CATI	302	NATIONAL	1-5 February 2026
44	Vietnam	DXL Research & Consulting	F2F	900	URBAN	12-28 Dec 2025