

Feeling Left Behind: How the World Views Social Care Across Generations

The Worldwide Independent Network of MR (WIN), the leading global association of independent market research and polling firms, has released new findings from its Worldviews Survey ahead of World Population Day. Based on insights from over 45,000 people across 44 countries, the data highlights a striking global consensus: majorities across three of society's most vulnerable groups, the elderly, people living with disabilities, and the youth, feel that society does not do enough for them. At the same time, two-thirds of the world's population view age discrimination as a serious issue, raising urgent questions about inclusion, protection, and intergenerational solidarity as the global population continues to age.

HEADLINES – IRELAND

- Irish society is widely seen as failing to support key groups**
Perceptions of social care in Ireland remain consistently low, with only around one in four people believing that key groups - including young people, older adults and those living with disabilities - are adequately supported. This lack of confidence spans all demographics, pointing to a broader sense that societal systems are not delivering for those most in need. Ireland also consistently falls behind global averages, reinforcing a perception that other countries are doing more to support vulnerable populations.
- Young people are viewed as the most underserved group**
Young people emerge as the group most clearly perceived to be struggling, with 62% of Irish adults saying the youth are not supported by society, and just 26% believing they are well supported. This concern is even more pronounced among older generations, who are more sceptical than younger cohorts. Ireland also trails the global average of 37% who believe youth are supported, highlighting a significant perception gap.
- Perceptions of support for older people are improving - but concerns remain**
There are signs of progress in perceptions of support for older people, with the proportion who feel the elderly are supported rising from 15% in 2021 to 24% in 2026. However, this still leaves fewer than 1 in 4 believing older people are adequately supported, and Ireland remains below the global average of 36%. Alongside this, concerns about fairness persist, with 61% of Irish adults saying age discrimination is a serious issue, indicating that while improvements are recognised, significant concerns remain about how older generations are treated.
- Ireland trails global confidence in support for people living with disabilities**
Confidence in how Irish society supports people living with disabilities is similarly low, with only 25% of Irish adults believing adequate support is in place. This again places Ireland below the global average of 35%, reinforcing a consistent pattern across all groups where Ireland is seen to underperform internationally. Perceptions also vary by age, with younger adults more positive (44%) compared to older groups, suggesting that while there are pockets of

optimism, the overall view remains that support systems are falling short.

The findings point to a consistent perception that Irish society is not adequately supporting its most vulnerable groups, with confidence falling behind global standards and concerns cutting across all generations.

HEADLINES WORLD

The majority of people globally do not believe vulnerable groups are socially cared for

As the global population ages amidst sociopolitical and economic uncertainty, debates about intergenerational solidarity, inclusion, and social protection are becoming increasingly central. Looking across three demographic groups, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the youth, and one message emerges clearly: the majority in all three groups feel that society does not do enough for them. What is particularly striking is how closely aligned these proportions are: 59%, 57%, and 56%, respectively.

Globally, 44% of the population believes society fails vulnerable groups, with women being the most critical, a pattern consistent across the WVS study, while only 1 in 5 people (21%) believe the three groups are sufficiently cared for.

Taken together, these findings suggest that inadequate care is not confined to any one vulnerable group, but reflects a broader perception that societies are struggling to provide sufficient protection and inclusion to people at different stages and conditions of life. The remarkably similar levels of concern across youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities point to a systemic issue rather than a group-specific one, a widespread sense that social support structures are falling short.

Perception of elder social care varies and depends on cultural norms and welfare expectations

While 36% of people globally believe the elderly are sufficiently cared for, a modest improvement from 31% in 2018, the majority (59%) do not share that view.

Concern intensifies with age: 71% of those over 65 believe society does not adequately care for older adults, compared to just 47% amongst young adults. Critical views also increase with education level, and women tend to be more pessimistic than men (62% vs. 56%).

Most regions view elder care as insufficient, with Europe and the Americas the most critical and Croatia the most pessimistic country globally. APAC is the notable exception; the only region where a majority holds positive views on elder care. This contrast may reflect differing family structures, welfare expectations, or cultural norms around ageing and intergenerational responsibility.

To contextualise the findings, WIN members from countries where perceptions of elder care improved, including the UK, Vietnam, Mexico, and the Netherlands, pointed to greater public awareness of loneliness, wellbeing, and family bonds following the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as healthcare improvements and reforms aimed at supporting older adults.

In countries where perceptions worsened, such as Paraguay and the Philippines, members attributed the shift to dissatisfaction with pension systems, inadequate healthcare access, insufficient public support programmes, and broader political debates around ageing and retirement.

Concern for disability care transcends borders, with APAC as an exception

A 57% majority believe that insufficient social care is available for people with disabilities, and women, older adults, and those with higher levels of education are the most pessimistic.

Countries with the most positive perceptions include Vietnam (84%), China (77%), and Indonesia (70%), followed closely by the Philippines (66%) — a country whose population otherwise holds negative views of social care for the elderly and the youth.

These findings reinforce a picture of care for people with disabilities as a critical concern globally, widely perceived as inadequate, with significant worries surrounding protection and inclusion.

Older adults are especially concerned about the lack of social support for the youth

A 56% global majority believe that society does not sufficiently care for the youth, while 37% believe it does, a slight improvement from 34% in 2018.

As with elder care, women are more critical than men (59% vs. 53%), and concern increases with education level. However, younger people themselves are notably less critical; it is older generations who express the greatest dissatisfaction on this front. This may reflect an awareness amongst older adults of the mounting pressures facing young people today, like housing costs, employment uncertainty, mental health challenges, digital pressures, and diminishing future opportunities, leading them to judge current support as inadequate.

Regionally, the picture mirrors that of elder care: the Americas and Europe are the most pessimistic, while APAC and parts of Africa take a more positive view.

WIN members from countries where perceptions of youth care have worsened since 2018, including Denmark, Canada, the United States, Peru, the Philippines, India, and the Netherlands, most frequently cited rising cost of living, housing access difficulties, declining public services, mental health pressures, the pandemic's impact on education and socialisation, and the anxiety amplified by social media environments.

By contrast, analysts from countries where perceptions improved, such as Mexico, suggested that the pandemic fostered a stronger appreciation of family ties, close social networks, and emotional support systems, contributing to a more positive view of how society cares for younger generations.

Several analysts also noted that perceptions around youth care appear highly sensitive to the visibility of public debate, media attention, and government policy in areas such as education, mental health, and future opportunity.

Ageism is seen as pervasive globally, even where family care networks remain strong

66% of the global population consider age discrimination a serious issue, a concern that rises with age, reaching 69% amongst those over 65. Several Latin American countries rank amongst the most concerned globally, including Colombia (90%), Peru (86%), Brazil (86%), Chile (83%), Ecuador (82%), Mexico (82%), Paraguay (81%), Venezuela (81%), and Argentina (79%). Notably, concern about age discrimination runs higher than concern about elder social care across most countries. This gap is especially pronounced in Latin American countries such as Mexico, Ecuador and Colombia.

This divergence suggests that perceptions of "care" and "discrimination" operate along different dimensions. A WIN member from Argentina explains that Latin American cultures continue to maintain strong family and intergenerational bonds, where older adults often receive emotional support, daily assistance, and close contact within family networks. As a result, people may be less inclined to characterise older adults as entirely "uncared for."

At the same time, there is strong recognition that older adults face discrimination in broader social life, including exclusion from the labour market, stereotypes around productivity and autonomy, lack of representation, barriers in increasingly digital societies, and forms of institutional and social invisibility. In other words, private care and public inclusion do not necessarily go hand in hand.

Hong Kong, China and Norway, followed by Denmark and Malaysia, are amongst the least concerned about ageism.

Richard Colwell, President of WIN International Association, said:

"These findings send a clear and consistent message: across the world, people do not feel that society is doing enough for its most vulnerable. What makes this data so compelling is not just the scale of concern, but its uniformity; whether we are talking about the elderly, young people, or those living with disabilities, majorities in every group feel left behind. Add to that the fact that two-thirds of the global population see age discrimination as a serious issue, and it becomes clear that this is not a challenge confined to any one country or culture. As our populations age and pressures on social systems intensify, governments, institutions, and communities will need to move beyond awareness and commit to meaningful, inclusive action."

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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 45,000 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

Over 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 Jan 26
2	Australia	Luma Research	CAWI	549	NATIONAL	29-30 Jan 26
3	Brazil	Market Analysis Brazil	CAWI	1000	INTERNET POP	9-16 Jan 26
4	Canada	LEGER	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	12-25 Dec 25
5	Chile	Activa Research	CAWI	1095	NATIONAL	8-13 Jan 26
6	China	WisdomAsia	Online Panel	1000	URBAN	14-19 Jan 26
7	Colombia	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	CATI	500	NATIONAL	6-12 Feb 26
8	Côte d'Ivoire	EMC	CATI	502	NATIONAL	24-30 Jan 26
9	Croatia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana Fides	CAWI	591	NATIONAL	8-12 Jan 26
10	Denmark	Opinion Denmark A/S	CAWI	1007	NATIONAL	13-21 Jan 2026
11	Ecuador	Centro de Estudios Y Datos - CEDATOS	CAPI	1104	NATIONAL	28-31 Jan 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 Jan 2026
14	Georgia	GORBI Eurasia LTD	F2F	2050	NATIONAL	31 Jan -13 Feb 26
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 Jan 26
18	India	DataPrompt International Pvt. Ltd.	Online	1000	NATIONAL	29 Dec 25 -21 Jan 26
19	Indonesia	DEKA	Online	987	INTERNET POP	16-31 Jan 26
20	Republic of Ireland	RED C Research & Marketing Ltd	CAWI	1013	NATIONAL	8-13 Jan 26
21	Italy	SWG S.p.a	CAWI	1002	NATIONAL	7-12 Jan 26
22	Japan	Nippon Research Center, LTD.	CAWI	1100	NATIONAL	22-27 Jan 26
23	Malaysia	Central Force International	CAWI	1001	INTERNET POP	27 Nov – 3 Dec 25
24	Mexico	Brand Investigation S.A.de C.V	Online	1000	NATIONAL	7-12 Jan 26
25	Morocco	Integrate Consulting	Online	500	NATIONAL	8-9 Jan 26
26	Netherlands	Motivaction International B.V.	CAWI	1005	NATIONAL	6-20 Jan 26
27	Norway	Opinion AS	CAWI	1029	NATIONAL	13-19 Jan 26
28	Pakistan	Gallup Pakistan	CATI	1000	NATIONAL	6 Dec 2025 -14 Jan 26
29	Paraguay	ICA Consultoría Estratégica	CATI	501	NATIONAL	2 Dec 25- 29 Jan 26
30	Peru	Datum Internacional	P2P	1202	NATIONAL	10-16 Jan 26

31	Philippines	The Philippine Survey and Research Center (PSRC)	PAPI	1000	NATIONAL	9-26 Jan 26
32	Poland	Mareco Polska	CAWI	530	NATIONAL	8-14 Dec 25
33	Serbia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana Adria	CAWI	522	NATIONAL	8-15 Jan 26
34	Slovak Republic	Go4insight	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	16-26 Jan 26
35	Slovenia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana	CAWI	1018	NATIONAL	8-9 Jan 26
36	South Korea	Gallup Korea	CAWI	1200	NATIONAL	21-28 Jan 26
37	Spain	Instituto DYM	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	15-18 Jan 26
38	Sweden	Demoskop AB	CAWI	1012	INTERNET POP	19 Dec 25 – 23 Jan 26
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 26
41	United Kingdom	ORB International	Online	1194	NATIONAL	12-22 Dec 25
42	USA	LEGER	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	12-25 Dec 25
43	Venezuela	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	CATI	302	NATIONAL	1-5 Feb 26
44	Vietnam	DXL Research & Consulting	F2F	900	URBAN	12-28 Dec 25