

Irish youth remain hopeful despite growing challenges faced

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 International Youth Day. Based on insights from over 45,000 people across 45 countries, the data focuses on young people aged 18 to 24 and reveals a striking paradox: they remain the most hopeful age group when it comes to their personal future, yet they are notably more cautious than their elders about whether their generation enjoys greater opportunities than the one before it.

HEADLINES – IRELAND

Irish youth question whether opportunities have improved between generations

For much of modern Irish history, there has been an expectation that each generation would enjoy greater opportunities and a better quality of life than the one before it. However, today's young adults appear less certain that this progress can be taken for granted. Just 42% of Irish 18–24-year-olds believe their generation has more opportunities than their parents had, compared with 76% of those aged 65 and over.

While many young people remain positive about the opportunities available to them, Ireland sits below the global average on this measure, suggesting a growing sense that progress may not be reaching today's youth in the same way it benefited previous generations.

Home ownership feels increasingly out of reach for Irish youth

Few issues illustrate the challenges facing young people in Ireland more clearly than housing. While home ownership has traditionally been viewed as a key milestone of adulthood, many young adults are increasingly uncertain that it is achievable.

17% of Irish 18–24-year-olds believe they will be able to afford a home of their own in the future, placing Ireland second last among the 45 countries surveyed. This level of pessimism is substantially below both the European and global averages and points to the profound impact Ireland's housing crisis is having on how young people view their future prospects and financial security.

Many young Irish adults are looking beyond Ireland for opportunity

Ireland has long been shaped by emigration, and the findings suggest the appeal of opportunities abroad remains strong among today's youth. Around six in ten Irish 18–24-year-olds say they would consider moving abroad for better opportunities, significantly higher than the European average.

While this reflects a generation that is ambitious and outward-looking, it also raises questions about whether some young people believe their aspirations may be easier to achieve elsewhere. Viewed alongside concerns around housing affordability and generational opportunity, the findings suggest many young adults are keeping an open mind about where they ultimately build their future.

Despite growing pressures, hope for the future endures

Perhaps the most striking finding is that despite concerns around opportunity, housing affordability and future prospects, young Irish adults have not lost faith in their future. More than half of those aged 18-24 remain hopeful about what lies ahead, placing Ireland above the European average on this measure.

The findings paint a picture of a generation that remains resilient, ambitious and forward-looking, balancing a realistic assessment of the challenges it faces, with a continued belief in its ability to succeed. In many ways, this optimism may be the defining characteristic of Irish youth today.

HEADLINES WORLD

Optimism for opportunities holds amongst young people, but the margin is thinner than previous generations

Globally, 47% of young people believe their generation has more opportunities than their parents, 28% believe they have fewer opportunities and 20% equal. Optimism therefore still wins out, but it is a softer verdict than the one older generations have. For example, six in ten adults aged 65 and over believe their generation had more opportunities than their parents did.

Still, that confidence holds up even when the picture is broken down by country. In 28 of the 45 countries surveyed, more young people see greater opportunity than fewer. Optimism runs strongest in countries such as Vietnam and Georgia where at least eight in ten young people believe their generation is better off. Elsewhere, the mood tips the other way: pessimism outweighs optimism across the remaining 17 countries, led by South Korea (71%), followed by Slovenia (57%), Italy (55%), Spain (54%) and Sweden (51%), while in the United States 45% believe their generation has fewer opportunities than their parents. China offers a more balanced picture, split almost evenly between those who see more opportunity (47%) and those saying opportunities are about the same (45%).

Taken together, the findings feed into the wider debate on social mobility and whether each generation can expect a better standard of living than the last. They also point to something broader: there is no single, global youth experience. Perceptions of opportunity vary sharply from one country to the next, shaped by each nation's own economic, social and political context.

Home ownership remains a major aspiration, but affordability doubts are rising

While just 8% of young people aged 18-24 already own a home, the majority (56%) who don't already own one are still hopeful that they will in the future. Yet, that leaves more than one in four (27%) who do not believe they will ever be able to afford one, a pessimism that runs deeper amongst young women than young men (30% vs. 24%) and among those with lower educational attainment.

That doubt is far from evenly spread. In some countries with more developed economies, more than half of young people believe they will never own a home: South Korea (58%) and the United States (58%).

The stakes go beyond the housing market itself. Across many countries, home ownership is a powerful symbol of economic security, independence and the transition to adulthood, so young people's expectations of owning one offer a useful window into how they view their long-term economic prospects.

Most young people remain hopeful about their personal future, though the optimism is not shared equally

Despite their reservations that they have more opportunities than their parents, young people have not lost hope in their own prospects. 63% are still hopeful about their future in their own country, against 33% who feel pessimistic, making them the most optimistic age group in our study compared to others other age groups, with pessimism growing with age (44% of those over 65 are not hopeful of their own future). That optimism is not shared equally, though: young men are more hopeful than young women (67% vs. 59%), and hope rises with educational attainment.

Here too, the national picture varies widely. In 13 of the 45 countries, including European countries such Germany, France, Spain and Italy, pessimism outweighs optimism amongst young people. At the other end of the scale, Vietnam (98%), and China (97%) are the most optimistic countries, while Slovakia (75%) and Serbia (72%) are some of the most pessimistic.

The gender gap is worth noting. Young women consistently express lower levels of optimism than young men, both about their future and about their ability to one day own a home, a pattern that may reflect the different opportunities, as well as different economic and social expectations placed on young women and men.

Most young people would consider emigrating to find better opportunities, though Japan, Malaysia, and India tell a different story

Young people (18-24) are the age group most willing to move abroad, with the willingness increasing with educational attainment. Overall, two-thirds of young people (66%) would consider moving to another country for better opportunities: 51% would do so if they could migrate legally, and 15% would do so regardless of the circumstances. Just 27% would not consider emigrating at all. This is significant as the willingness decreases with age, with 53% of 35-44-year-olds, 33% of 55-64-year-olds, and only 22% of those over 65 willing to move abroad.

There are only nine countries where a majority of young people would choose to remain: for instance China, Denmark, Japan, Latvia, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden and Vietnam. Willingness to migrate peaks in countries such Spain (91%) and Ecuador (90%),

Perceived opportunity at home and willingness to move abroad tend to move together, though there are exceptions. Japan is a clear example: young people there are relatively pessimistic about their opportunities in the country yet show little appetite for emigrating. Malaysia and India are cut the other way, where positive views of domestic opportunity coexist with high willingness to move abroad.

A similar disconnect shows up between outlook on the future and expectations of owning a home. In some countries, optimism about the future remains high even where expectations of home ownership are low, suggesting home ownership does not carry the same weight as a marker of personal success across all cultural contexts.

Richard Colwell, President of WIN International Association, said:

"Young people remain hopeful about their own future, even though they're less convinced than older generations that their generation has more opportunities than the one before it. That may be one of the most compelling findings of this study; optimism about your own path can coexist with real caution about progress more broadly. Their economic outlook reflects that same realism: it's sobering that more than one in four don't believe they'll ever own a home. But overall, this remains a generation that believes in its own future, even as it takes a clear-eyed view of the conditions that will shape it."

**Only one country from Africa and two from the MENA region took part in the survey, which should be considered when interpreting regional patterns.*

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Media enquiries:

IRELAND DATA

Ciara Clarke, Group Director, RED C Research

Lauren Bryne, Research Project Manager, RED C Research

+35318186316

info@redcresearch.ie

WORLDWIDE DATA

Elena Crosilla, WIN Coordinator

+39 335.62.07.347

E-mail: coordinator@winmr.com

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 February 2026
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 '26
11	Ecuador	Centro de Estudios Y Datos - CEDATOS	CAPI	1104	NATIONAL	28-31 Jan '26
12	Finland	Taloustutkimus Oy	Online Panel	1093	NATIONAL	31 Dec '25 – 7 Jan '26
13	France	OpinionWay	Online Panel	1007	NATIONAL	16-19 Jan '26
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 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	Latvia	Marketing and Public Opinion Research Centre SKDS	CAWI	1005	NATIONAL	17-19 Jan '26
24	Malaysia	Central Force International	CAWI	1001	INTERNET POP	27 Nov '25 – 3 Dec '25
25	Mexico	Brand Investigation S.A.de C.V	Online	1000	NATIONAL	7-12 Jan '26
26	Morocco	Integrate Consulting	Online	500	NATIONAL	8-9 Jan '26
27	The Netherlands	Motivaction International B.V.	CAWI	1005	NATIONAL	6-20 Jan '26
28	Norway	Opinion AS	CAWI	1029	NATIONAL	13-19 Jan '26
29	Pakistan	Gallup Pakistan	CATI	1000	NATIONAL	6 Dec '25 -14 Jan '26

30	Paraguay	ICA Consultoría Estratégica	CATI	501	NATIONAL	2 Dec '25- 29 Jan '26
31	Peru	Datum Internacional	P2P	1202	NATIONAL	16-10 Jan '26
32	Philippines	The Philippine Survey and Research Center (PSRC)	PAPI	1000	NATIONAL	9-26 Jan '26
33	Poland	Mareco Polska	CAWI	530	NATIONAL	8-14 Dec '25
34	Serbia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana Adria	CAWI	522	NATIONAL	8-15 Jan '26
35	Slovak Republic	Go4insight	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	16-26 Jan '26
36	Slovenia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana	CAWI	1018	NATIONAL	8-9 Jan '26
37	South Korea	Gallup Korea	CAWI	1200	NATIONAL	21-28 Jan '26
38	Spain	Instituto DYM	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	15-18 Jan '26
39	Sweden	Demoskop AB	CAWI	1012	NATIONAL/ INTERNET POP	19 Dec '25 – 23 Jan '26
40	Thailand	INFOSEARCH LIMITED	F2F	500	NATIONAL	16 Dec '25– 15 Jan '26
41	Turkey	BAREM Research	CATI	725	TR Urban	30 Jan – 4 Feb '26
42	United Kingdom	ORB International	Online	1194	NATIONAL	12-22 Dec '25
43	USA	LEGER	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	12-25 Dec '25
44	Venezuela	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	CATI	302	NATIONAL	1-5 Feb '26
45	Vietnam	DXL Research & Consulting	F2F	900	URBAN	12-28 Dec '25