

Nearly half of Ireland sees inequality in both pay & career opportunity

The Worldwide Independent Network of Market Research (WIN) has released new findings for International Equal Pay Day 2026, revealing that while perceptions of pay equality have improved globally over the past seven years, women remain significantly less likely than men to believe equality has been achieved. Based on the responses from approximately 43,000 people across 43 countries, the research suggests that progress is being recognised unevenly, with women's experiences continuing to paint a more cautious picture.

HEADLINES – IRELAND

Ireland remains divided on equal pay, with women far more likely to see a pay gap

Nearly half of Irish adults (48%) believe men earn more than women for the same job, while 38% believe pay is broadly equal. This perception is much stronger among women, with 56% saying men earn more, compared with 39% of men; meanwhile, half of men believe pay is equal, compared with just 26% of women. Concern is highest among women aged 55+, where nearly two-thirds (62%) believe men earn more, rising from 50% among women aged 18–34 and 55% among those aged 35–54.

Internationally, Ireland sits between global and European sentiment: perceptions of a gender pay gap are higher in Ireland than the global average (48% vs. 44%), but lower than the European average, where more than half (55%) believe men earn more for the same job.

Five years on, perceived career inequality remains stubbornly unchanged in Ireland

Almost half of Irish adults (47%) believe women have fewer career opportunities than men, a view that has remained fundamentally unchanged since 2021, when the figure stood at 49%. Only 7% now believe women have more opportunities, reinforcing the sense that perceptions of a career opportunity gap remain deeply established. This view is particularly pronounced among women, with six in ten Irish women saying women have fewer opportunities than men, compared with around four in ten men.

Ireland also sits above the global average on perceived career inequality, with 47% of Irish adults seeing fewer opportunities for women versus 42% globally.

HEADLINES WORLD

Global improvement in equality perception hides widening gender divide

Globally, 45% of people now believe men and women earn about the same for the same job, up from 39% in 2019. At the same time, the proportion who believe men earn more has fallen from 50% to 44%, indicating gradual improvement in perceptions of pay equality worldwide. However, beneath the headline figures lies a widening gender divide, with more than half of men (51%) believing pay is equal, compared with just 38% of women. Conversely, a majority of women (51%) believe men still earn more for the same work, compared with only 36% of men. While men's perception of equality has increased considerably by 8% since 2019, women's views have changed

only marginally at just 3%, suggesting that we may still have a way to go before we can close the gender pay gap.

The research also finds that concerns extend beyond pay alone. Globally, 40% believe women and men have the same opportunities for career progression, while 42% believe women continue to face fewer opportunities. Once again, perceptions differ sharply by gender: 52% of women feel they are more disadvantaged than men, versus just 32% of men agree – a 20-point gap. This finding illustrates a trend the study has seen since 2021, with men's optimism around career opportunity growing from 42% to 46% this year, and beliefs that 'women have fewer opportunities' dropping by 5-points. The opposite has happened amongst women: perceived equality has barely moved (32% to 34%), and pessimistic views remain essential stagnant (54% to 52%). It's clear that men's outlook on the topic is improving noticeably faster than women's.

A generational and geographic divide in workplace equality

One of the study's most striking findings is that perceptions of equality become less positive with age. Belief in equal pay steadily declines amongst older generations, while women with higher levels of education are increasingly likely to believe men earn more and have greater career opportunities. The findings suggest that greater exposure to the workplace may reinforce perceptions of inequality rather than reduce them.

Regionally, Europe remains the most sceptical market. Just 34% of Europeans believe men and women are paid equally, while 55% believe men earn more for the same work. By contrast, perceptions of equality are highest in Vietnam (81%), Venezuela (79%), the Philippines (77%), Indonesia (68%) and Malaysia (64%) - with Southeast Asian countries taking 4 of the top 5 most optimistic countries from this study. The same pattern occurs in perception of career opportunities: 3 out of 5 countries with the highest equality perception are from Southeast Asia, while 4 of the 5 most critical countries are from Europe.

Richard Colwell, President of WIN International Association, said:

"The findings show that while perceptions of equality are moving in the right direction globally, there remains a substantial gap between how men and women view progress. Equal Pay Day is a reminder that discussions around equality do not end with pay alone. Career opportunities, advancement and lived workplace experiences continue to shape how people assess true workplace equality."

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

About the research

The findings are based on approximately 43,000 interviews conducted across 43 countries as part of the WIN Worldviews Survey 2026, exploring how people around the world perceive equality in pay and career opportunities, revealing a growing disconnect between overall perceptions of progress and women's lived experiences.

Please note: Latvia and Georgia not included in this report.

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