

Young Social Innovators releases new research into the aspirations and concerns of Generation Z.

A significant portion of young people in the Generation Z age group in Ireland would consider getting involved in politics, civic activism and social innovation, with social media playing a crucial role in helping them make their views and opinions heard. That's according to the findings of a new poll of 16-27-year-olds, conducted by Amárach Research on behalf of Young Social Innovators, published today (23.09.24)

Nearly one in three (31 per cent) Gen Z individuals across Ireland would consider getting involved in politics, while an additional 34 per cent might consider it, according to the Amárach Research survey, which was completed by 1,002 16-27-year-olds across Ireland between March and July this year. Overall, one third (33 per cent) would like to become a civic activist or social innovator and a further 40 per cent might consider this.

The poll found that Gen Z females (27 per cent) are less inclined towards getting involved in politics than Gen Z males (35 per cent), with non-binary individuals showing the highest level of interest (41 per cent). Nearly half (46 per cent) of those who identify as non-binary would like to become a civic activist or social innovator.

Further insights show that social media is the most important method for Gen Z in Ireland to express their opinions and engage in civic matters, with the majority (55 per cent) having made a social media post sharing their views or opinions in their own words. Among those who identify as non-binary, 71 per cent have made such a post. The vast majority (81 per cent) have re-posted someone else's post on a social media platform about something related to their views or opinions, with this rising to 92 per cent among those who identify as non-binary.

Instagram is the most widely used platform among Gen Z (76 per cent), followed by TikTok (39 per cent) and Snapchat (33 per cent). Besides social media, discussions (78 per cent) and petitions (64 per cent) are also important methods for Gen Z to express their opinions and engage in civic matters

With the Dáil having just resumed for its new term and with speculation that a general election may be happening in the coming months, it's encouraging to see the strong interest that many young people in Ireland have in being involved in politics. Generation

Z is made up of our future changemakers and leaders, and it's inspiring to see that so many of them have a desire to contribute to positive change for society. YSI gives young people a platform to advocate for the issues they care about and trains them in skills to help them bring about the change they want to see. We're very proud to support young people for whom active citizenship is an important aspiration and who want making-a-difference to be part of their journey through life.

Roger Warnock, CEO, Young Social Innovators

Gen Z - current issues and concerns.

The poll findings show that climate change is the major concern for Gen Z individuals in Ireland, overshadowing other social issues, such as peace and justice, and ending poverty and inequality, while they believe that older generations prioritise economic and infrastructural development over the climate crisis.

Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of the Gen Z individuals surveyed currently describe the mood of their generation as anxious or stressed, an increase of 17 per cent on five years ago when Young Social Innovators commissioned the first wave of research into the age group. 55 per cent rate the amount of stress in their life over the past year as high, while 38 per cent rate it as moderate.

The poll also highlights significant dissatisfaction with affordable housing and job opportunities among 16-27-year-olds, with housing being a particularly pressing issue, especially for those in the 21-27 age group. When asked about what indicates a successful life to them personally, 63 per cent of 21-27-year-olds said owning their own home, the same number answered having good friends, while being financially secure was their top answer at 75 per cent.

Also commenting on the findings, communications intern with Young Social Innovators Natalia Sobkowicz, who at age 19 is a member of Gen Z, said:

Young people are acutely aware of the issues and challenges society is faced with, from sustainability and biodiversity to identity, gender equality and mental health, and they have the drive and creativity to develop solutions. Young Social Innovators is about empowering them to create innovative solutions to these social challenges.

Our values-based education and training programmes that are run in schools and community settings across Ireland and beyond are specially designed to support people in the Generation Z age group by teaching them innovative, practical and creative skills in social activism and leadership. I encourage young people who are interested in making a difference and educators across Ireland to become involved.

Natalia Sobkowicz