



## **Press Release**

### **Health overtakes money as the Irish public's biggest concern in 2021**

#### **Worry about loneliness has doubled in 12 months**

Three out of ten people in Ireland say that health is their biggest worry in 2021. This is the primary finding of the latest survey from leading protection specialist Royal London (see Appendix 1), conducted in January of this year. The nationwide survey of 1,000 people was undertaken by iReach and sought to ascertain, for the sixth year running, what is the greatest cause for concern amongst the Irish public for the year ahead. While money topped the poll in surveys conducted from 2016 to 2020, health is, unsurprisingly given the ongoing pandemic, the most common source of worry in 2021 (see Appendix 2).

Joe Charles, Head of Proposition at Royal London commenting on the survey findings said, *“Given the ongoing pandemic and all that we have seen and experienced over the last 12 months, it’s not at all surprising that people say they are most worried about their health in 2021. It’s gone from being the biggest worry for 19% of people surveyed in 2016, to 30% this year. Covid-19 and the lockdowns have completely changed everyday life for most of us, and additionally highlighted to us all the importance of our health. So, it’s to be expected that it’s top of peoples’ concerns this year, and for the first time ever in our annual nationwide survey.”*

Mr Charles went on to say,

*“While money worries have dropped down from pole position this year, it’s still the biggest source of concern for almost a quarter of respondents. Many people throughout the country, as we know, will have experienced the financial impact of Covid-19 to varying degrees, through job losses and income reductions. A change in financial circumstance like this can be a major source of stress and concern, which then can have a knock-on impact on a person’s health.”*

## **The Pandemic Effect**

When contrasted with the Royal London survey that was conducted in 2020 pre-pandemic, this year's survey results show how the experience and impact of Covid-19 have changed what the Irish public are worrying about. The number of people who reported that money was their main worry has dropped considerably from 40% in 2020 to 24% in 2021, while the proportion of respondents who said health is their number one concern has increased from 21% last year to 30% this year.

The number of people citing loneliness as their biggest source of worry for 2021 (18%) more than doubled when compared to 2020 (7%). The survey results reveal that loneliness and social isolation affect the youngest cohort of respondents the most, as it is the top concern for people aged 18 to 24 (39%). The Royal London findings echo a NUI Galway survey undertaken as part of a UNESCO study last year which showed that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused persistent loneliness and social isolation in young people\*. In the survey, teenaged respondents reported high levels of anxiety about their future and how their education, careers and family would be impacted by the pandemic.

The Royal London survey revealed:

- Money is a greater worry for male (28%) than female (21%) respondents. The younger generations are also more likely to be concerned about money: it is the biggest source of worry for 32% of respondents aged 18 – 24 and 35% of respondents aged 25 – 34.
- Loneliness and social isolation affect the youngest cohort of respondents the most, as it is the top concern for people aged 18 to 24 (39%).
- The older people get, the more health is a worry for them. It is the biggest concern for 30% of 45 – 54-year-olds and 44% of respondents aged 55 and over, but just 14% of 18 – 24-year-olds.
- Women (19%) worry more about family when compared to men (13%).
- Respondents from Munster were the most likely to worry about work, with 11% citing it as their top concern for 2021.
- Relationship/love is a greater source of worry for respondents age 25 – 34 (6%) than any other age group. Likewise, worries about friends affect younger people the most: 4% of 18 – 24-year olds and 4% of 25 – 34-year olds compared to 1% of each of the older age brackets.

Mr Charles observed,

*“The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are clearly evident in our 2021 survey results, with health now the number one source of worry. Concerns about loneliness have also increased quite dramatically. We hope that in 2022, and with an expected return to ‘normality’, these mostly pandemic-driven concerns will have alleviated.”*

**ENDS**

## Notes to editors

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## **Appendix 1:**

	All Adults	Male	Female	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55+	Dublin	Rest of Leinster	Munster	Connacht	Ulster (ROI)	ABC1	C2DE
<b>Money</b>	24 %	28 %	21 %	32 %	35 %	30 %	21 %	13 %	29 %	28 %	18 %	25 %	21 %	24 %	25 %
<b>Loneliness / Social isolation</b>	18 %	19 %	17 %	39 %	14 %	15 %	13 %	17 %	16 %	21 %	19 %	13 %	19 %	19 %	17 %
<b>Family</b>	16 %	13 %	19 %	4 %	15 %	13 %	22 %	19 %	15 %	12 %	16 %	22 %	22 %	16 %	16 %
<b>Work</b>	7 %	8 %	6 %	7 %	9 %	7 %	10 %	4 %	6 %	4 %	11 %	7 %	3 %	9 %	5 %
<b>Health</b>	30 %	29 %	31 %	14 %	16 %	30 %	30 %	44 %	27 %	30 %	32 %	30 %	33 %	26 %	33 %
<b>Friends</b>	2 %	2 %	2 %	4 %	4 %	1 %	1 %	1 %	4 %	2 %	1 %	0 %	0 %	2 %	2 %
<b>Relationship / love</b>	3 %	2 %	4 %	0 %	6 %	4 %	3 %	1 %	4 %	3 %	3 %	2 %	2 %	4 %	2 %

## Appendix 2:

<b>Biggest Worry for the year ahead</b>	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Health	30	21	19	15	18	19
Money	24	40	39	46	37	46
Family	16	14	15	15	22	14
Work	7	11	13	11	8	10
Loneliness	18	7	7	6	8	4
Relationship/ Love	3	4	5	5	6	5
Friends	2	3	2	2	1	2

\* <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/global-pandemic-has-led-to-chronic-loneliness-in-young-people-study-finds-39806945.html>

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