



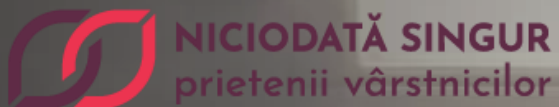
KANTAR

Measuring Loneliness among seniors

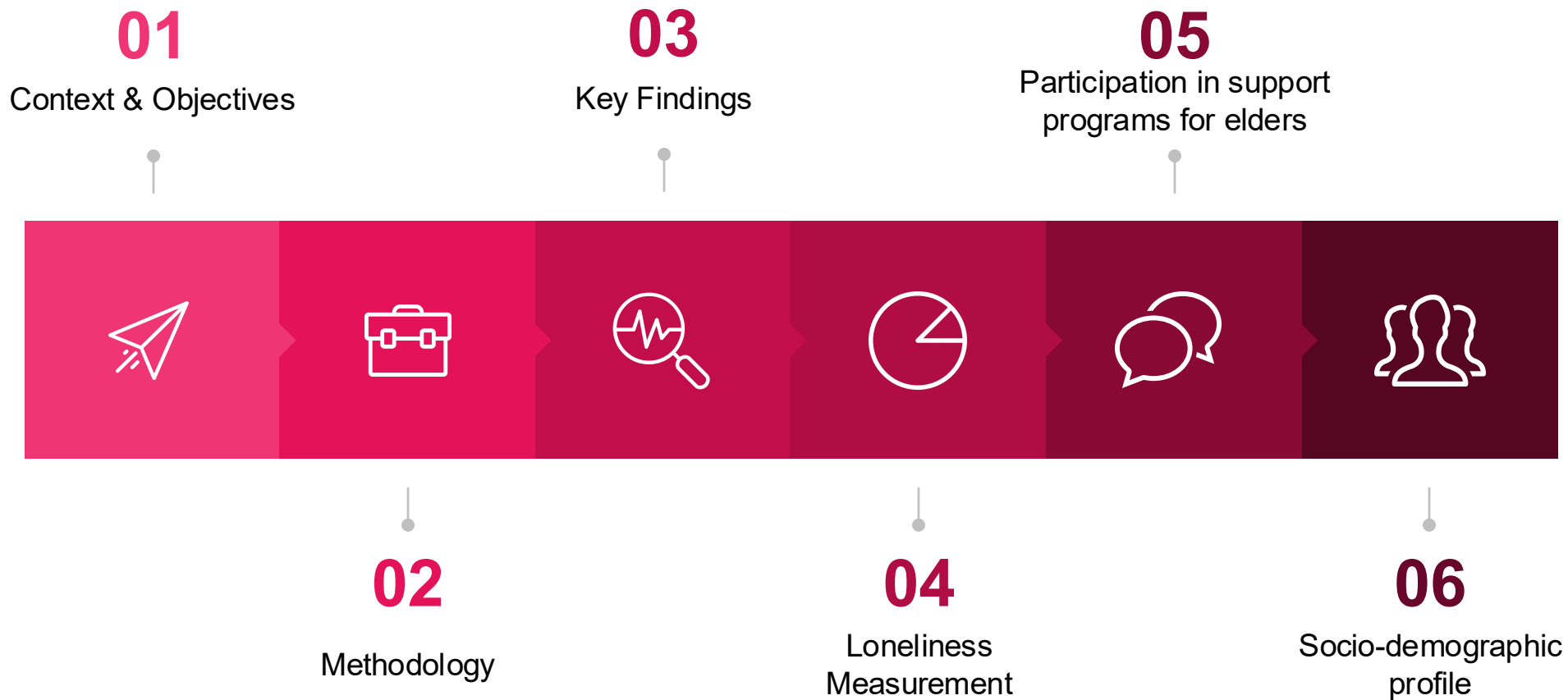
Quantitative study for

Niciodata Singur

September 2025



Contents



Context & Objectives

This year, the association **Niciodată Singur** celebrates 10 years since it embraced its mission of "being together" - together in addressing the issue of loneliness among the elderly.

To mark this milestone, the association aims to replicate the study conducted in 2021, **Exploring and measuring loneliness among seniors in Romania**. The purpose of this new edition is twofold: to track the evolution of loneliness levels among Romania's elderly population and to gather new insights that are essential for shaping the association's future communication strategies and outreach efforts.

Comparison versus 2021:

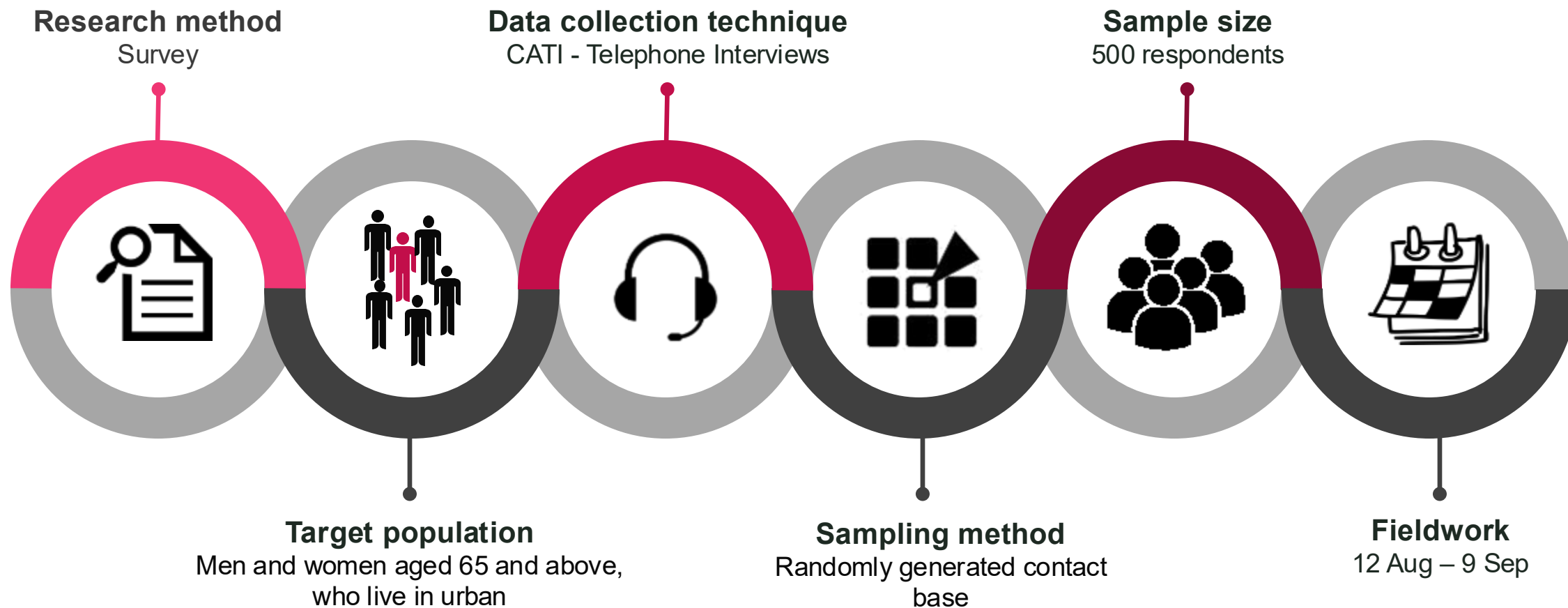
- Incidence of people 65+ yo which feel alone;
- Socio-demographical profile of lonely people;
- Measuring loneliness;
- Barriers and facilitators for participating in support programs for elders.

New in 2025:

- Holiday loneliness;
- Living situation of children;
- Digitalization among seniors.



Methodology



How to read data



Significant Differences (computed at 95% confidence level):

▲/▼ = significantly **HIGHER/LOWER** score than Total

↑/↓ = significantly **HIGHER/LOWER** score than previous wave



Key Findings



Although the proportion of seniors experiencing severe loneliness has declined to 1 in 7 since the pandemic levels seen in 2021, moderate loneliness continues to affect a significant majority - 3 in 5 older adults still report struggling with it. This suggests that, despite overall improvements in mental health, loneliness remains a persistent and widespread concern among the elderly population.



Social support among seniors improved, with children remaining the main- and increasingly active source of care. Yet, this support is often distant: 60% of older adults live far from their children, limiting regular contact. Most strikingly, around 300,000 seniors spend holidays alone.



Elders who are highly digitalized experience less loneliness, engage more in social interactions, and demonstrate better mental health overall. Digital connectivity bridges physical distances and plays an important role in enhancing emotional well-being.



Openness to support programs has grown overall, driven by fewer perceived barriers - even though actual participation remains steady. The most mentioned benefit that would convince seniors to join support programs is the opportunity to engage in social activities.



Elders with a poor health mention they would like to receive more practical and material support. They also mention their physical problems as a barrier in joining support groups.



Recommendations

- Continue distributing flyers in places seniors frequent (pharmacy, clinics, churches, markets).
- Collaborate with family doctors to recommend support groups to vulnerable/ alone patients.
- Target communication on their children as well, since they have a major influence.
- Encourage intergenerational activities, where students and younger volunteers interact with seniors, helping fill the emotional gap.
- Offer digital literacy workshops tailored for seniors, including training on video calls, social media, and online communities.
- Create WhatsApp groups or simple phone call chains through which they can be quickly informed about events.
- Continue communicating about the social activities that are being organized. Organize social clubs (chess, tea, lecture, music, movie nights).
- Use positive, inviting language “Come meet new friends, share stories and enjoy activities together”.
- Position yourself as a community hub for joy and belonging, not as a “provider of help”.
- In addition to home support for seniors with physical challenges, offer remote group chats (by phone or video) on relaxing topics, moderated by a volunteer to help foster community.
- Arrange small workshops, comparable to those held at the support centre, in their own homes. (cook together, paint, knit..



Research results



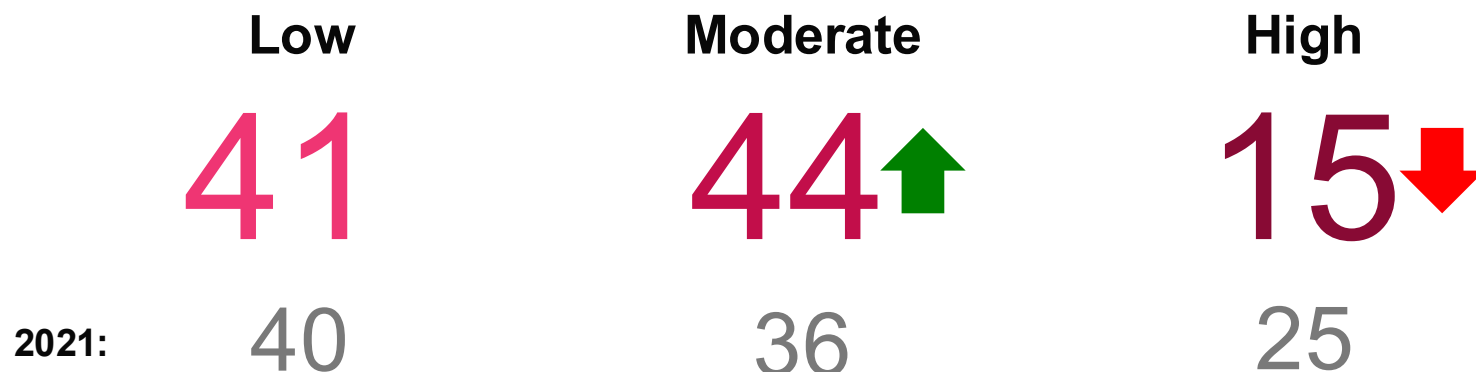


Loneliness measurement

Severe loneliness among seniors has declined since 2021, yet 1 in 7 continue to experience it at high levels – and nearly 3 in 5 still struggle with loneliness overall.

Loneliness level

%



The respondents have been asked how often they feel alone, excluded, or isolated from the ones around them. The answer options for all three of those questions had different scores, as follows:

“Almost never (never)” = 1 point, “Sometimes” = 2 points, and “Often” = 3 points.

The loneliness level of a responded is calculated by summing up the scores that they received from each of the questions. The respondents have been assigned a category based on their total loneliness score.

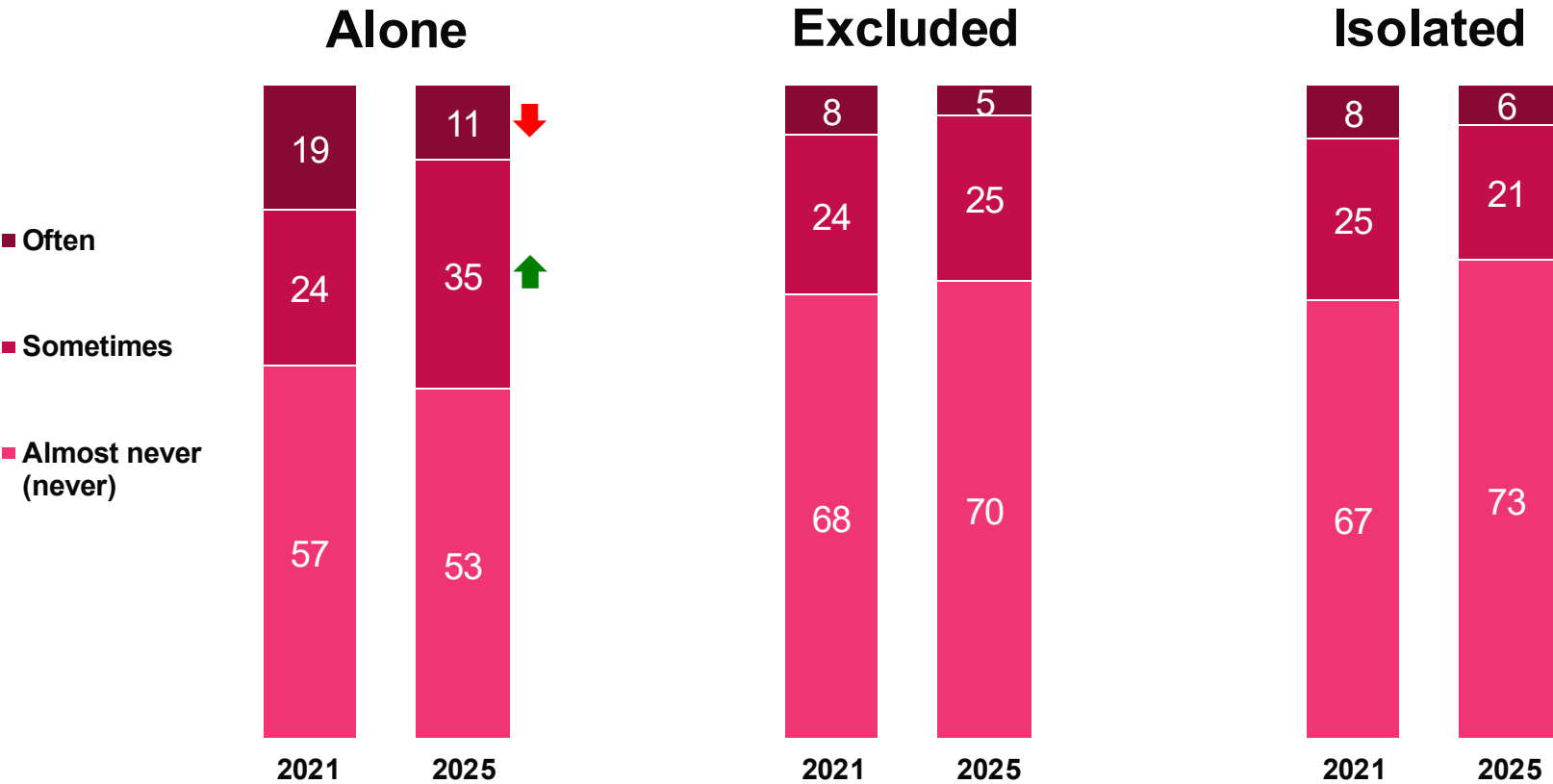


Seniors are now less likely to frequently feel lonely compared to four years ago , which explains the drop in reports of high levels of loneliness. However, the overall situation hasn't improved significantly - many have shifted to experiencing loneliness occasionally, with 35% reporting they sometimes feel alone.

Loneliness dimensions

%

Seniors declare they feel...

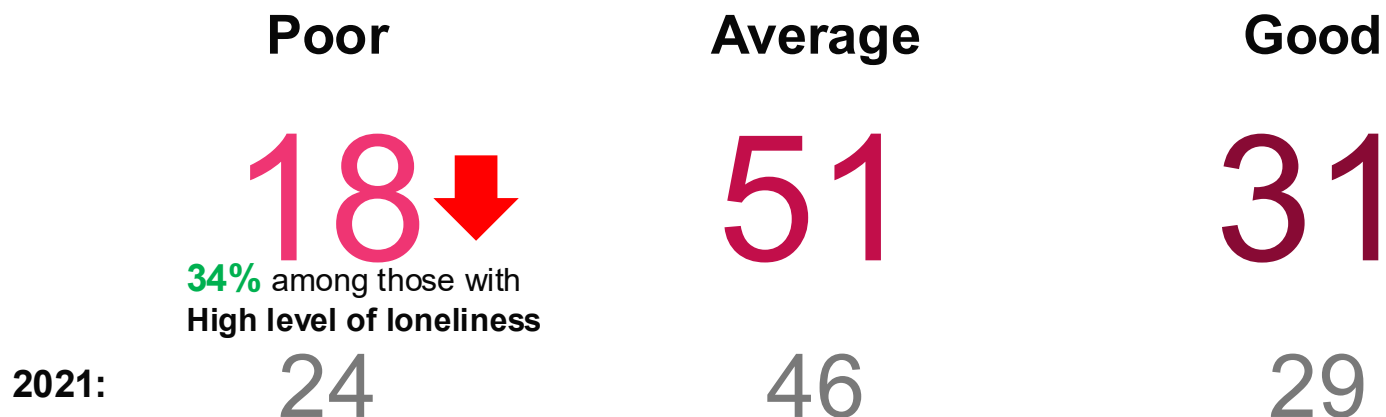


↑↓ Significantly above/below previous wave (95% confidence level)

The proportion of seniors reporting poor health has dropped since 2021, showing signs of improvement. However, 1 in 5 older adults still face significant physical or mental health challenges.

Health level

%

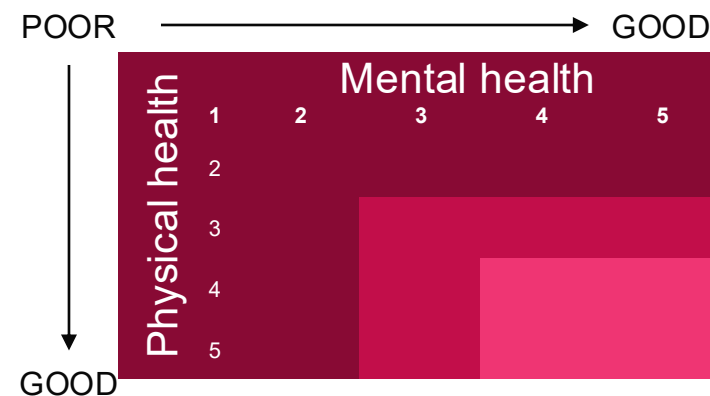


The respondents have been asked how healthy they feel, mind and body. The answer options for these questions had different scores, as follows:

“Not healthy at all”=1; “Not healthy”=2, “So and So”=3; “Healthy”=4;
“Very healthy”=5

The health level of a responded is calculated by the scores that they received from each of the questions.

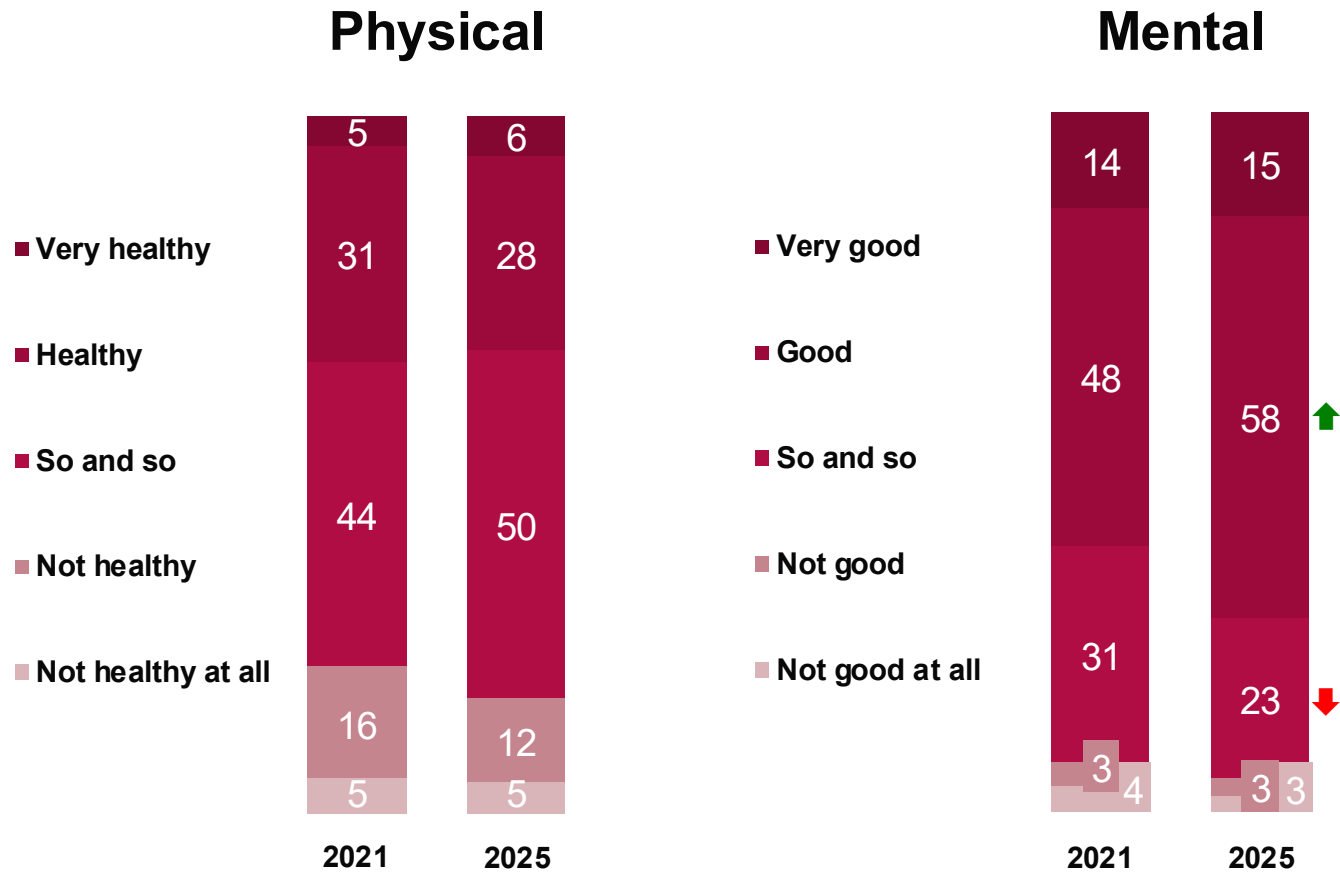
The respondents have been assigned a category based on their position in the grid.



Health improvements among seniors are largely driven by better mental health, with 7 in 10 reporting good or very good mental well-being. Physical health remains stable.

Physical | Mental health

%



↑↓ Significantly above/below previous wave (95% confidence level)

Seniors are now engaging socially more than they did four years ago, as reflected by a decline in the low social engagement index. Still, 1 in 4 older adults continue to experience low levels of social interaction, highlighting persistent barriers to connection.

Individuals with less social interaction tend to experience higher levels of loneliness.

Social network level

%

Low

25↓

58%↑ among those with
High level of loneliness

Average

31

High

44

2021:

31

29

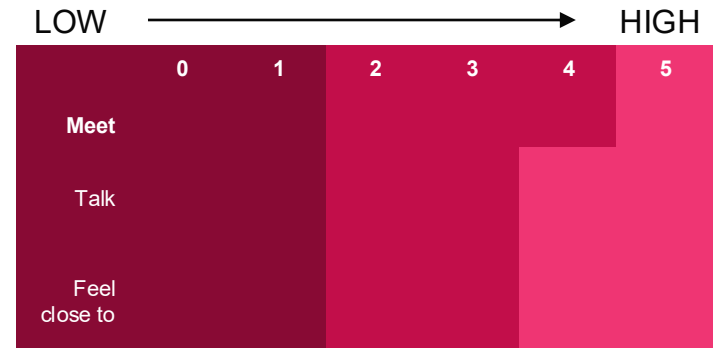
41

The respondents have been asked with how many people meet/ talk and feel close to in an ordinary month. The answer options for these questions had different scores, as follows:

“No one”=0; “One person”=1, “2 people”=2; “3-4 people”=3;
“between 5 and 8 people”=4, “9 or more”=5

The social network level of a responded is calculated by the scores that they received from each of the answers.

The respondents have been assigned a category based in their position in the grid.



The average number of people seniors interact with - whether through conversation or emotional closeness - has slightly increased over the past four years. However, the change is modest and not yet significant enough to reflect a major shift in social connectedness.

Social network

%

With how many people...	No one		One person		2 people		3 - 4 people		5 - 8 people		9 or more people		Mean	
	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025
do you meet?	1	1	2	2	5	4	20	14↓	21	24	51	55	4.1	4.2
are you close enough?	7	6	9	7	16	15	28	30	23	23	17	19	3.0	3.1
can you easily talk?	9	8	18	11↓	19	22	29	30	17	16	9	13	2.6	2.7

Support for seniors has increased compared to 2021. However, **one-third of older adults continue to receive minimal or no support and are more likely to struggle with feelings of extreme loneliness.**

Social support level | Moral and Practical

%



The respondents have been asked from how many people they receive emotional and practical support. The answer options for all questions had different answers, as follows:

“Yes” -> Who they are? (How many?)
“No”.

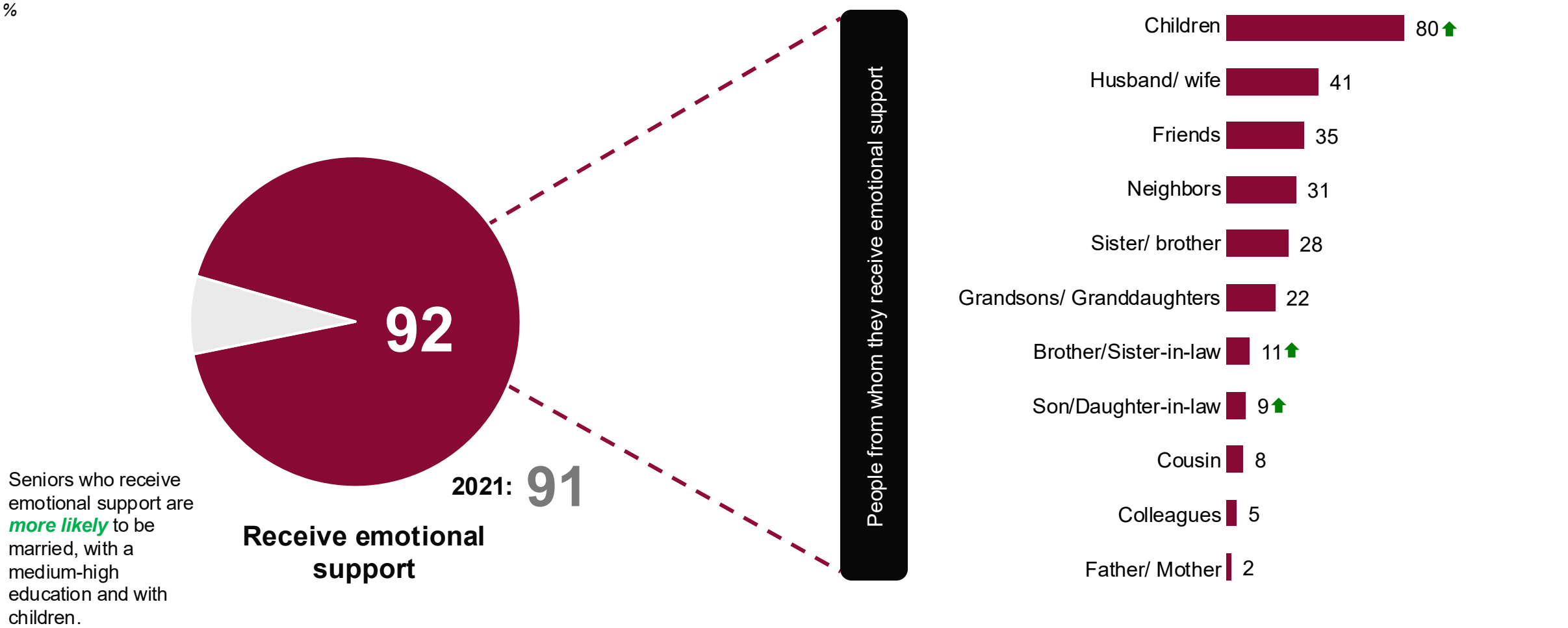
The social support level of a responded is calculated by summing up the no. of people they receive help from.



Most seniors continue to receive emotional support at levels similar to 2021. Their children remain the primary source of support, playing an even more prominent role than four years ago, followed by partners and friends. Notably, in-laws are now perceived as offering more emotional support compared to 2021.

Social support | Emotional

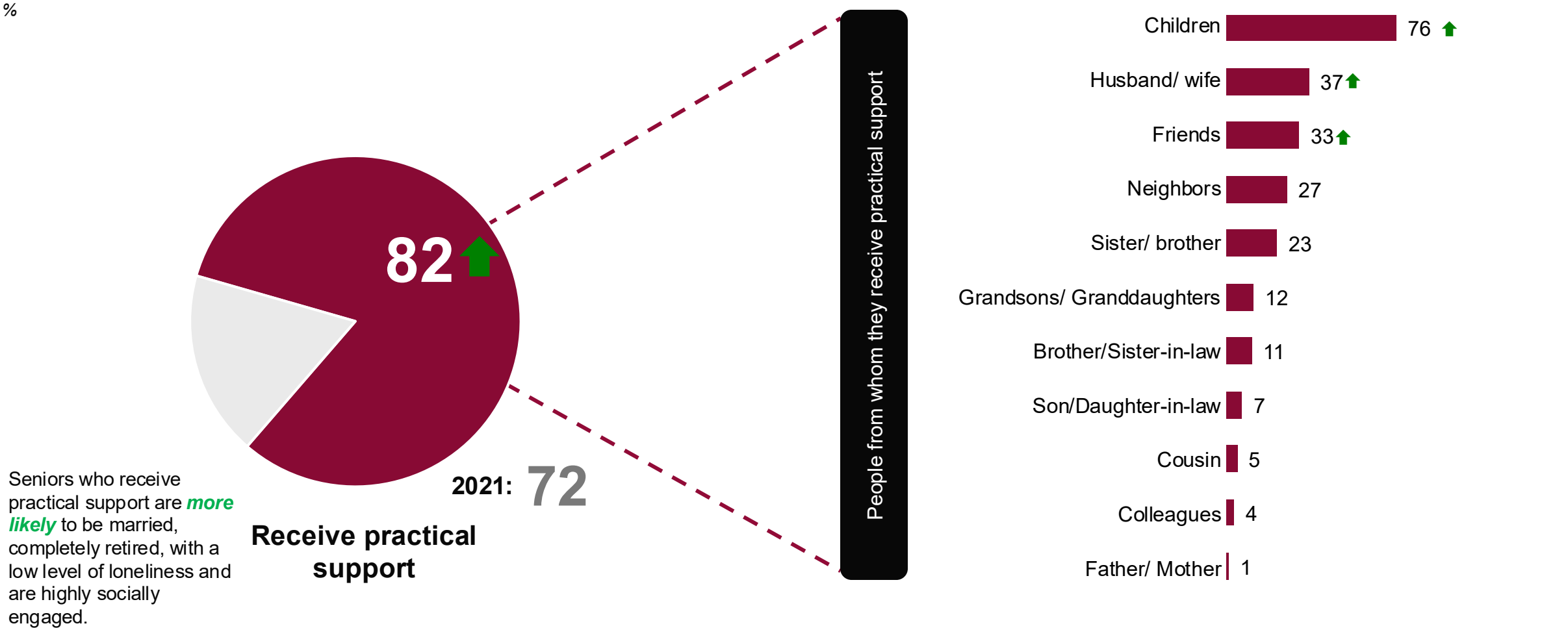
%



As for the practical support, it has improved notably since 2021, with more seniors receiving help in their daily lives. Once again, children remain their main source of support, followed by partners and friends - all perceived as more involved than four years ago.

Social support | Practical

%

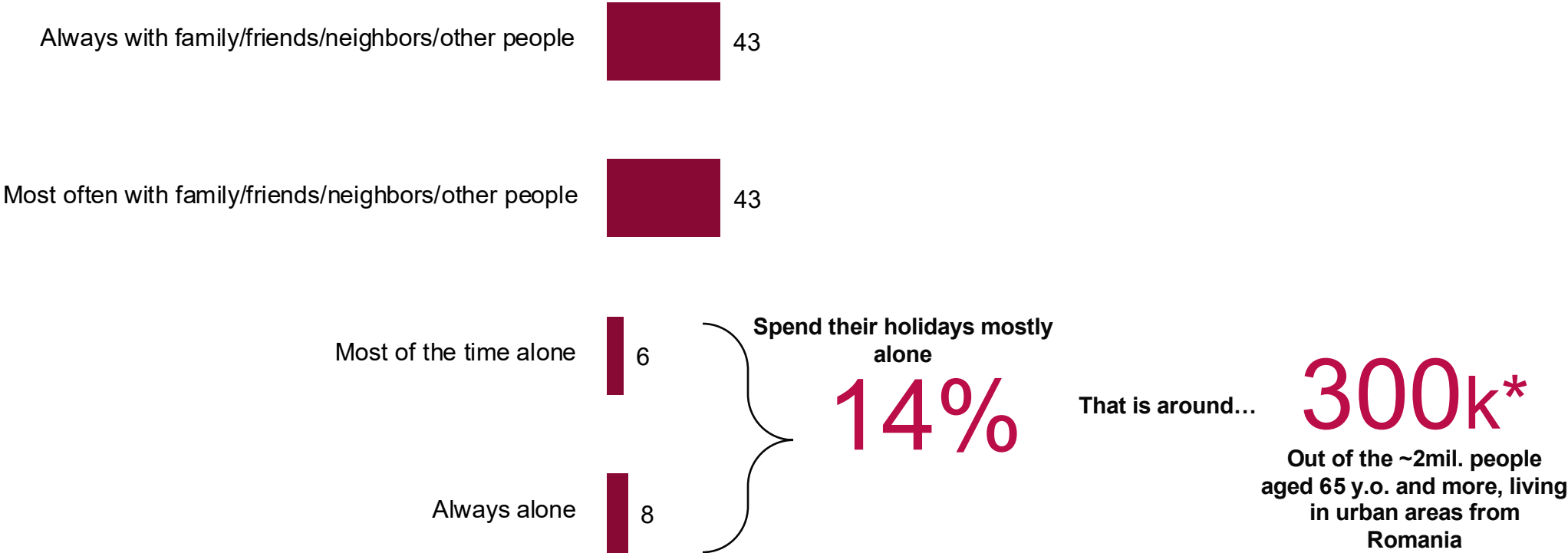


While many seniors in Romania enjoy the warmth of family and companionship during the holidays, a sobering reality persists: **1 in 7 people over the age of 65 living in urban areas spend the festive season mostly alone**. This translates to an estimated 300k elderly individuals who spend Christmas dinner in solitude - without gifts and most importantly without the company and comfort of human connection.

Holiday Loneliness

%

Holidays Loneliness

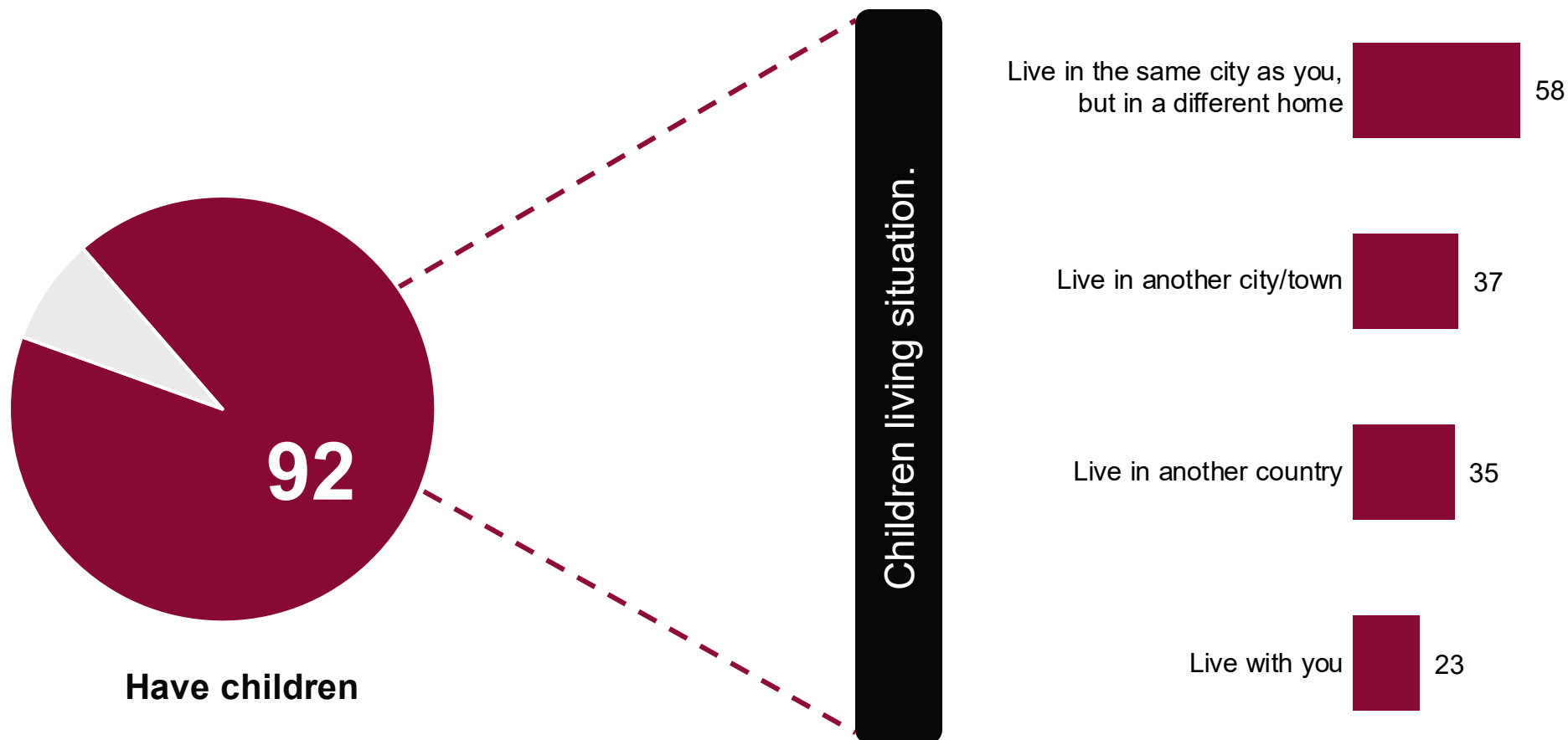


* populatia totala urban 65 y.o. +, INSS, 2024	marja de eroare statistica ±4.4%	limita inferioara (14.1-4.4)	limita superioara (14.1+4.4)
	4.4	9.7	18.5
2028839	286066	196797	375335

60% of the seniors don't have their children living nearby, as many have moved to other cities or even abroad.

Living situation of children

%



60%
Exclusively live away from their children
(in either another city or another country)
Without having a child living in the same city/home with them



Loneliness measurement highlights



1. Severe loneliness persists for 1 in 7 seniors despite post-pandemic improvements

The loneliness crisis from 2021 has eased somewhat, with fewer seniors reporting high levels of loneliness. However, the overall emotional landscape remains fragile - nearly 3 in 5 continue to struggle with loneliness, and 35% report feeling lonely occasionally.

2. Mental health is improving, but physical remains unchanged

Seniors report better health overall, largely due to improvements in mental well-being - 7 in 10 say they feel mentally well. Yet, 1 in 5 still face serious physical or mental health issues.

3. Social engagement is growing, but isolation still exists

Compared to four years ago, seniors are more socially active, and the number of those with low social engagement has dropped. Still, 1 in 4 older adults continue to experience limited interaction.

4. Social support strengthens for seniors, with family playing a central role

Emotional and practical support from family has improved, especially from children, partners, and even in-laws. Yet, 1 in 3 seniors still receive minimal or no support - and they are more likely to suffer from extreme loneliness.

5. Distance from family deepens isolation

60% of seniors don't have their children living nearby, often due to relocation to other cities or countries. Around 300k elders spend their holidays alone most of the time.

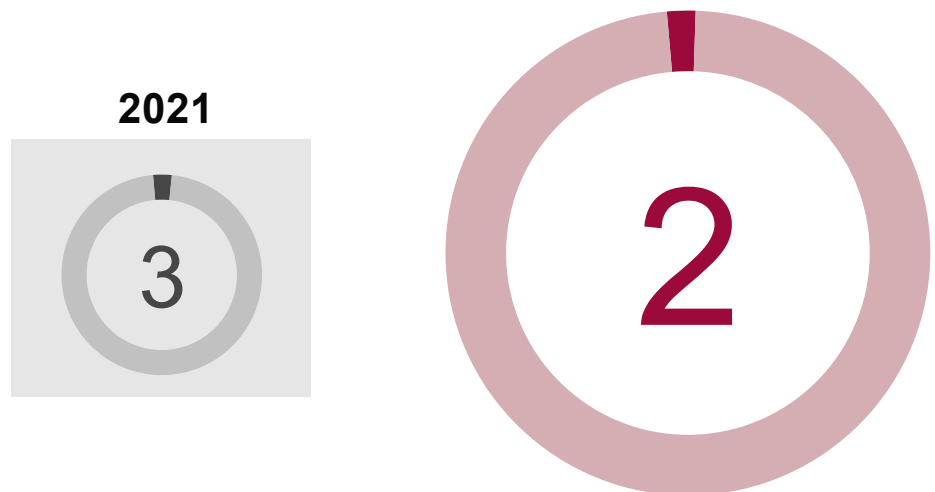


Participation in support programs for elders

Participation in support programs for seniors has remained unchanged. However, there are growing signs of openness and interest compared to four years ago, suggesting a slow but positive shift in perception.

Participation to programs | Attitude & Participation

%



People who participate in support programs for seniors

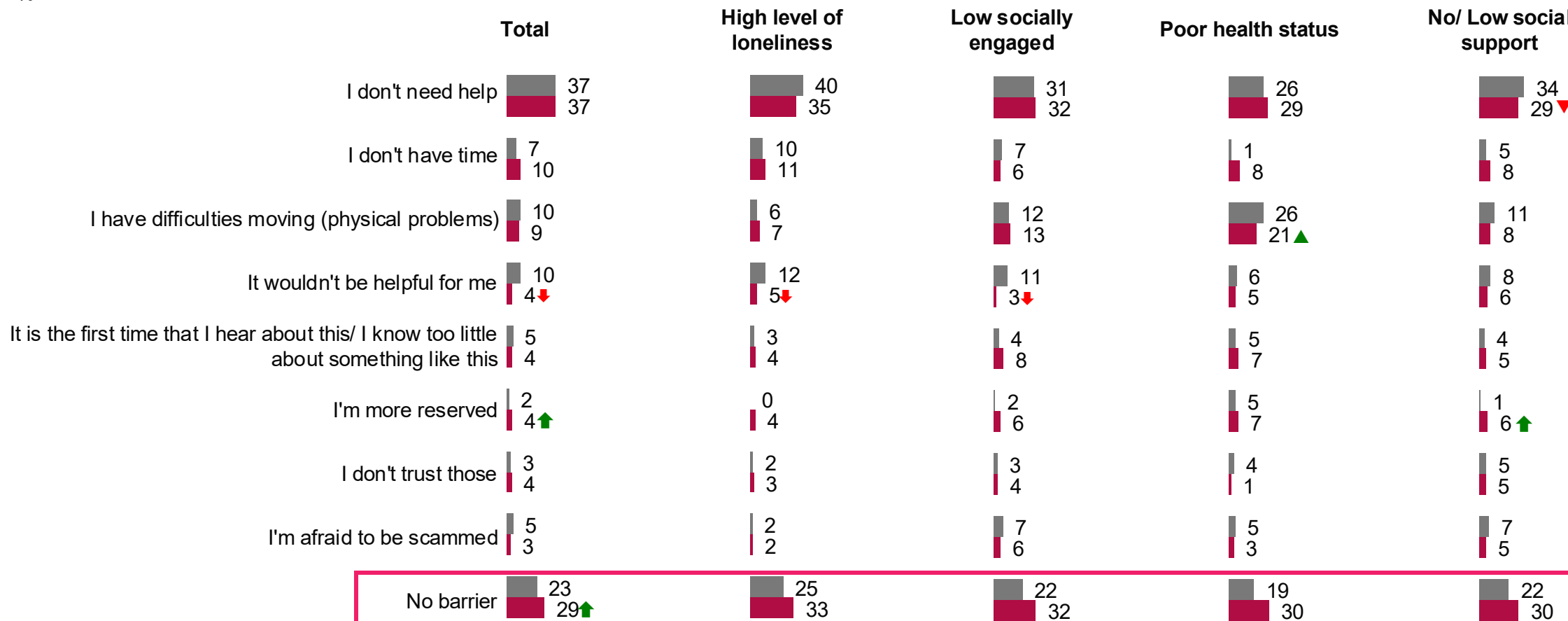
Attitude towards programs



A greater number of seniors report no barriers to considering support programs, explaining the slight increase in openness to participation. The main reasons for not joining are **not needing help and lack of time**. Additionally, seniors with a **poor health status find their physical limitations as obstacles** to engaging with these programs more than the others.

Support Programs | Perceived barriers

%



The benefits that motivate seniors to consider support programs have become more clearly defined. **Social activities now stand out as the strongest driver**, reflecting a deepening need for connection and engagement. Practical support follows closely, especially among those in poor health, who also value material assistance.

Support Programs | Perceived benefits

%





Summary



1. Stable participation, growing openness

While usage levels in senior support programs have remained unchanged since 2021, there's an increase in openness and interest towards them. This suggests a slow but positive shift in perception, even if actual engagement hasn't yet followed.

2. Fewer barriers reported

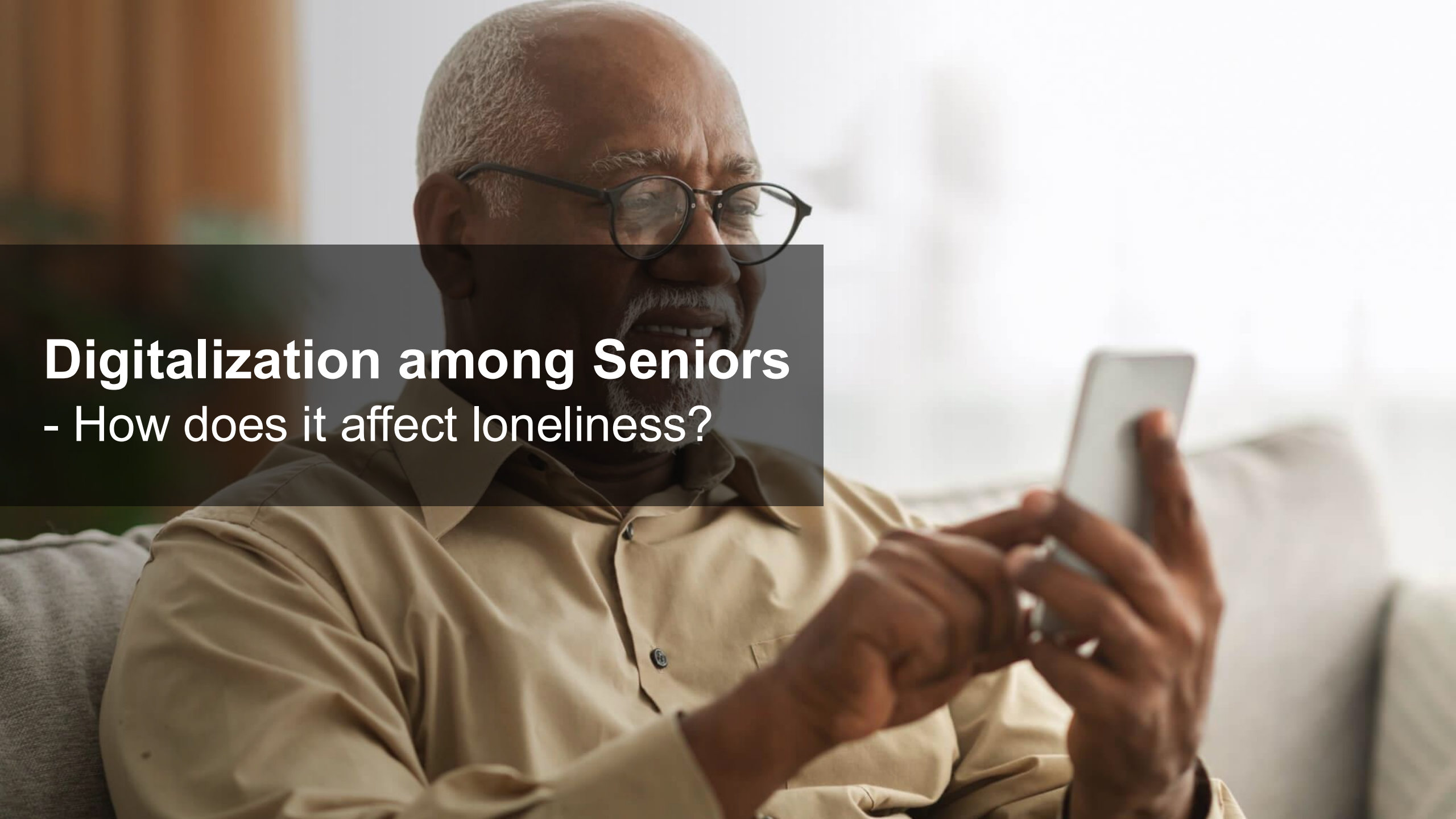
3 in 10 elders now report having no barriers in participating to such programs, a significant increase from 4 years ago. This reflects a growing comfort and familiarity with these programs, possibly due to better outreach or changing attitudes.

3. Motivators are becoming clearer

The main driver for participating in support programs is the need for social interaction, followed by practical and material assistance. This shift highlights a deeper desire for connection and tangible help, especially among those facing health issues.

3. Health influence engagement

Those with poorer health levels mention more frequently that physical problems represent a barrier in participating. Their strongest drivers are related to receiving practical and material support.

A close-up photograph of an elderly man with grey hair and a goatee, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a light-colored button-down shirt. He is sitting on a couch, holding a smartphone in his hands, and looking at the screen with a pleasant expression. The background is softly blurred, showing a window with light coming through. A semi-transparent dark grey box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

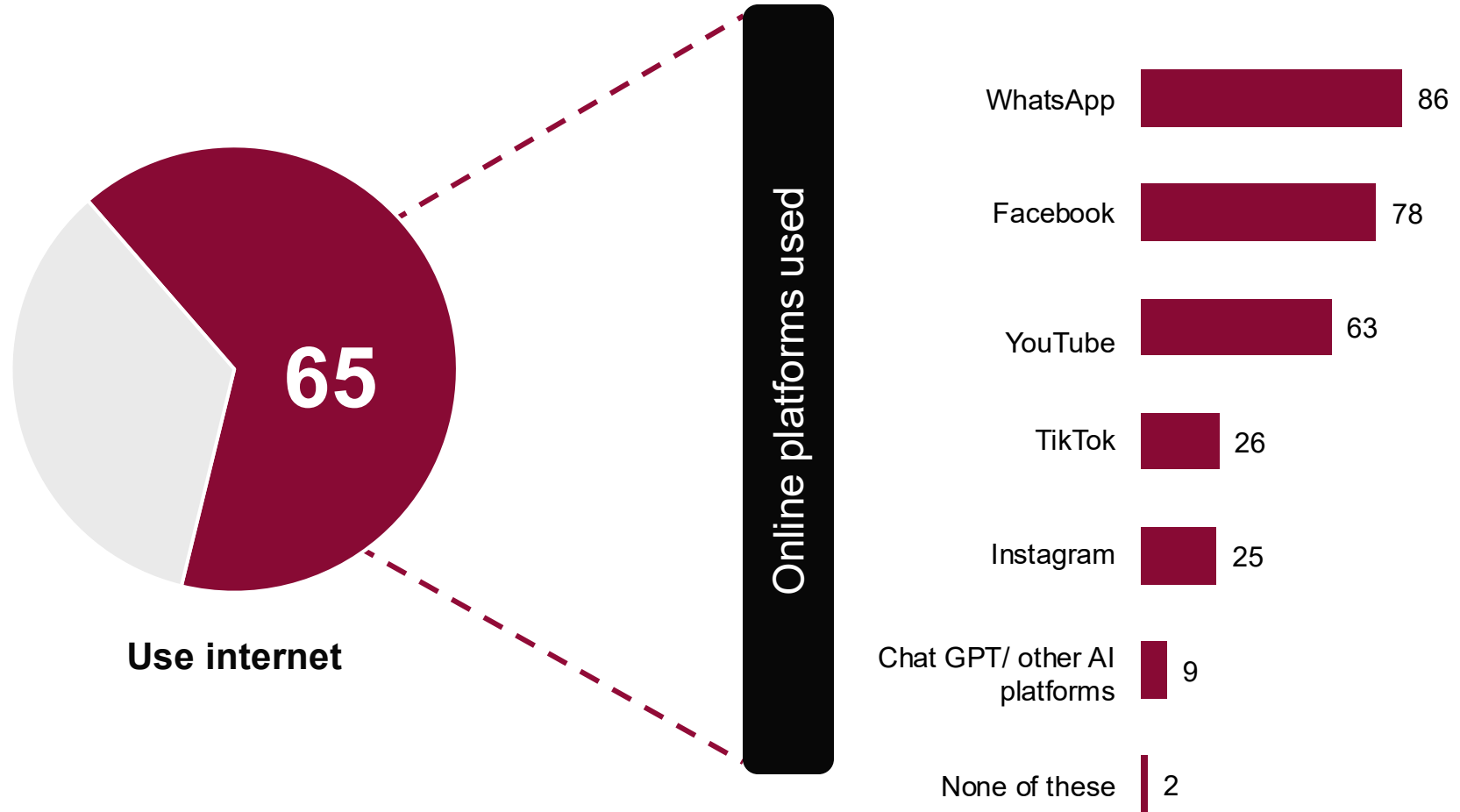
Digitalization among Seniors

- How does it affect loneliness?

Seniors are **highly digitalized**. With nearly **4 out of 6 elders using the internet**, the most used online platforms are WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube. Moreover, **1 in 10 people also use ChatGPT and other AI platforms**.

Online platforms usage

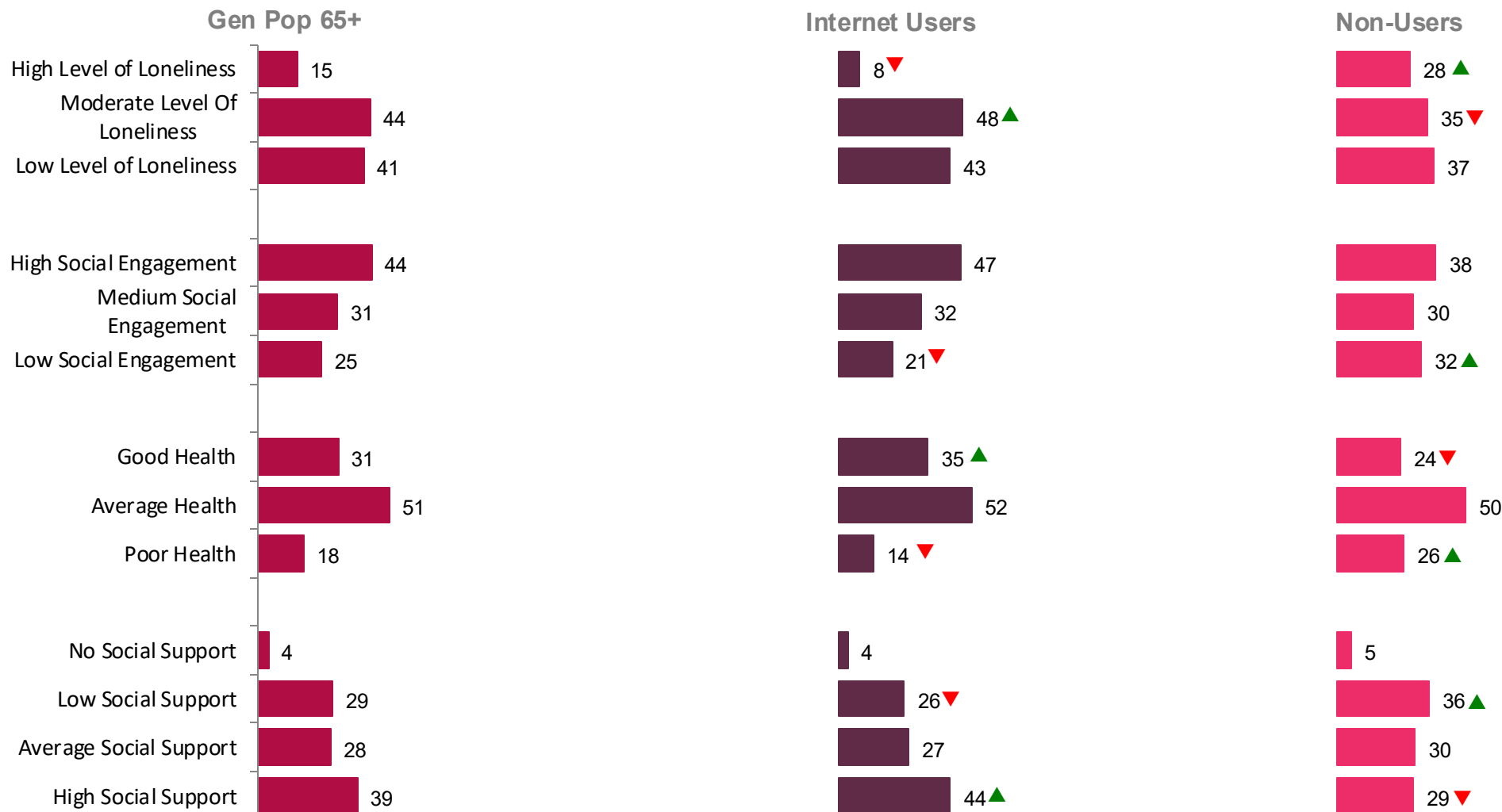
%



Seniors who use the internet are **more likely** to be younger than 75 y.o., are married, with a high education and income, **tend to have lower loneliness levels, a higher support and are healthier.**

Seniors who use the internet tend to experience lower levels of loneliness, maintain stronger social connections and support, enjoy better overall health - highlighting a positive impact of digital engagement on their well-being.

How Internet influences Loneliness



▲ ▼ Significantly above/below Total (95% confidence level)

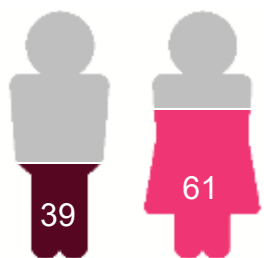


**Socio-demographic
profile**

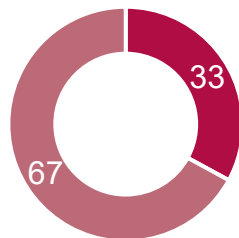
Socio-demographic profile | General population over 65 yo, urban

%

 Gender

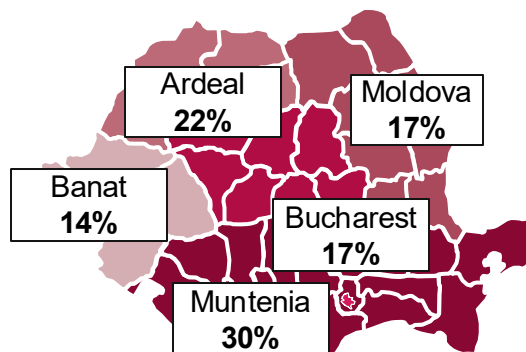


 Age

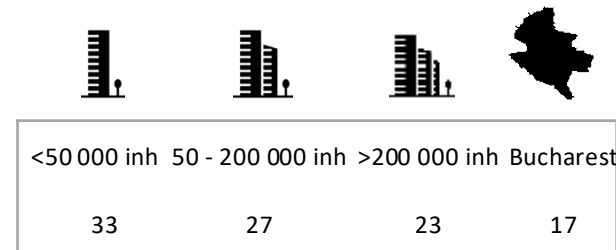


- Over 75 y.o.
- Between 65-75 y.o.

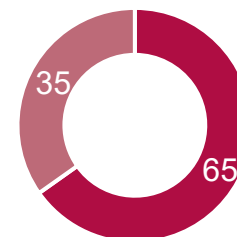
 Region



Urbanization Degree



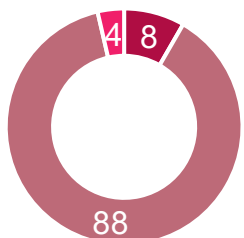
 Internet Usage



- Internet Users
- Non-users



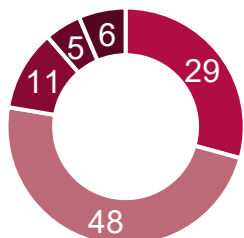
Occupation



- Retired and working
- Retired
- Other



Household size

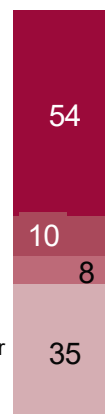


- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more



Marital Status

- Married/ Living with my partner
- Not married
- Divorced
- Widow/Widower



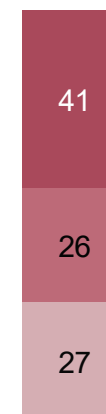
Education

- Post University
- College/ University
- Post-secondary school
- High school
- 10 grades or vocational school
- 8 grades or less



Personal income

- High (above 3501 RON)
- Medium (2501 - 3500 RON)
- Low (below 2500 RON)

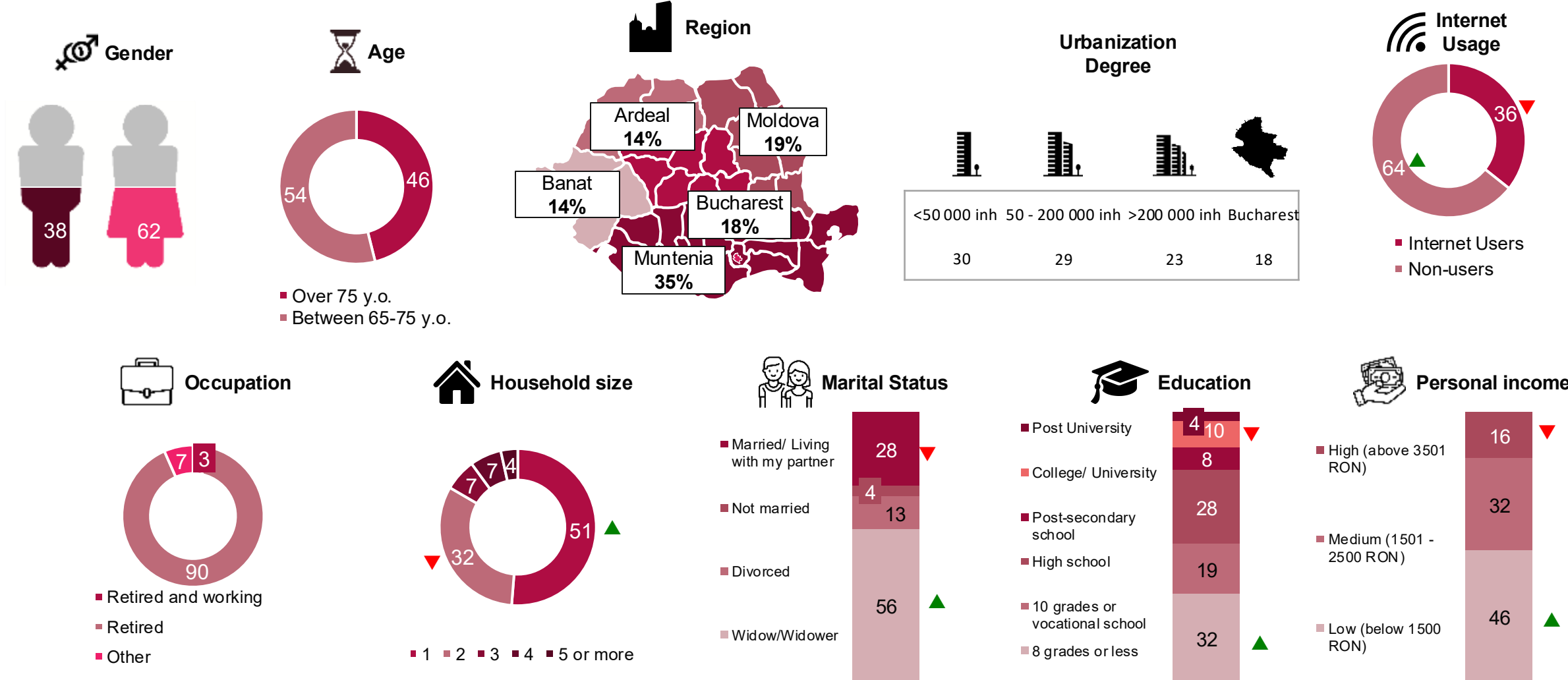


▲ ▼ Significantly above/below Total (95% confidence level)

Lonely seniors are more likely to not use the internet, they live alone, are widowed, have low education and income.

Socio-demographic profile | People with high level of loneliness

%



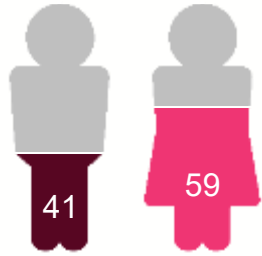
▲ ▼ Significantly above/below Total (95% confidence level)

Elders with a low social engagement are more likely to be from Moldova, do not use the internet and have a low education

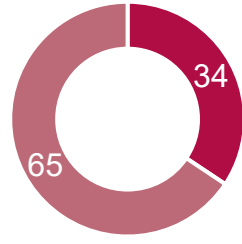
Socio-demographic profile | Low socially engaged people

%

 Gender

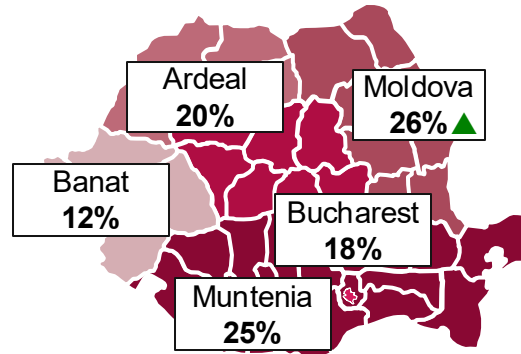


 Age

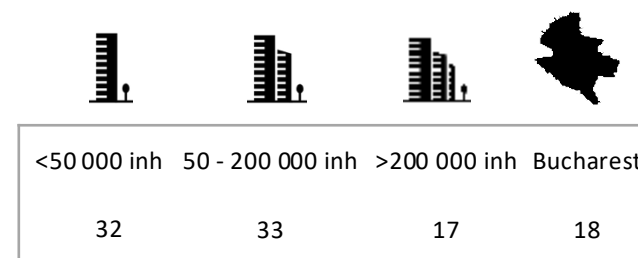


■ Over 75 y.o.
■ Between 65-75 y.o.

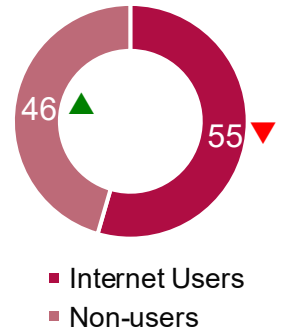
 Region



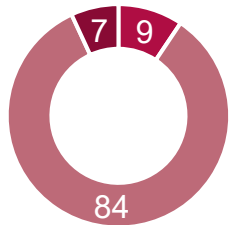
 Urbanization Degree



 Internet Usage

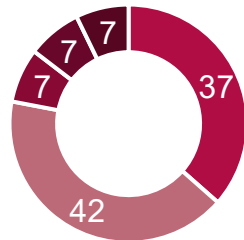


 Occupation



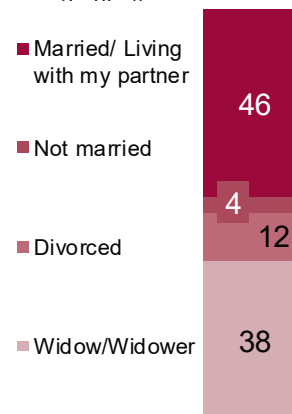
■ Retired and working
■ Retired
■ Other

 Household size

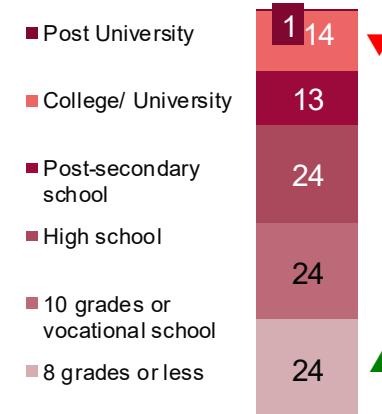


■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 or more

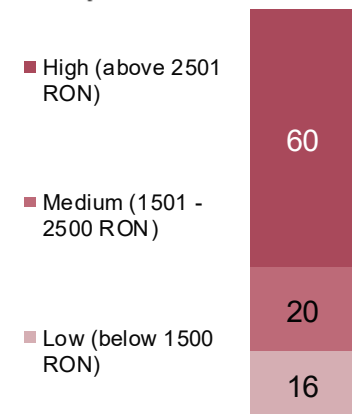
 Marital Status



 Education



 Personal income

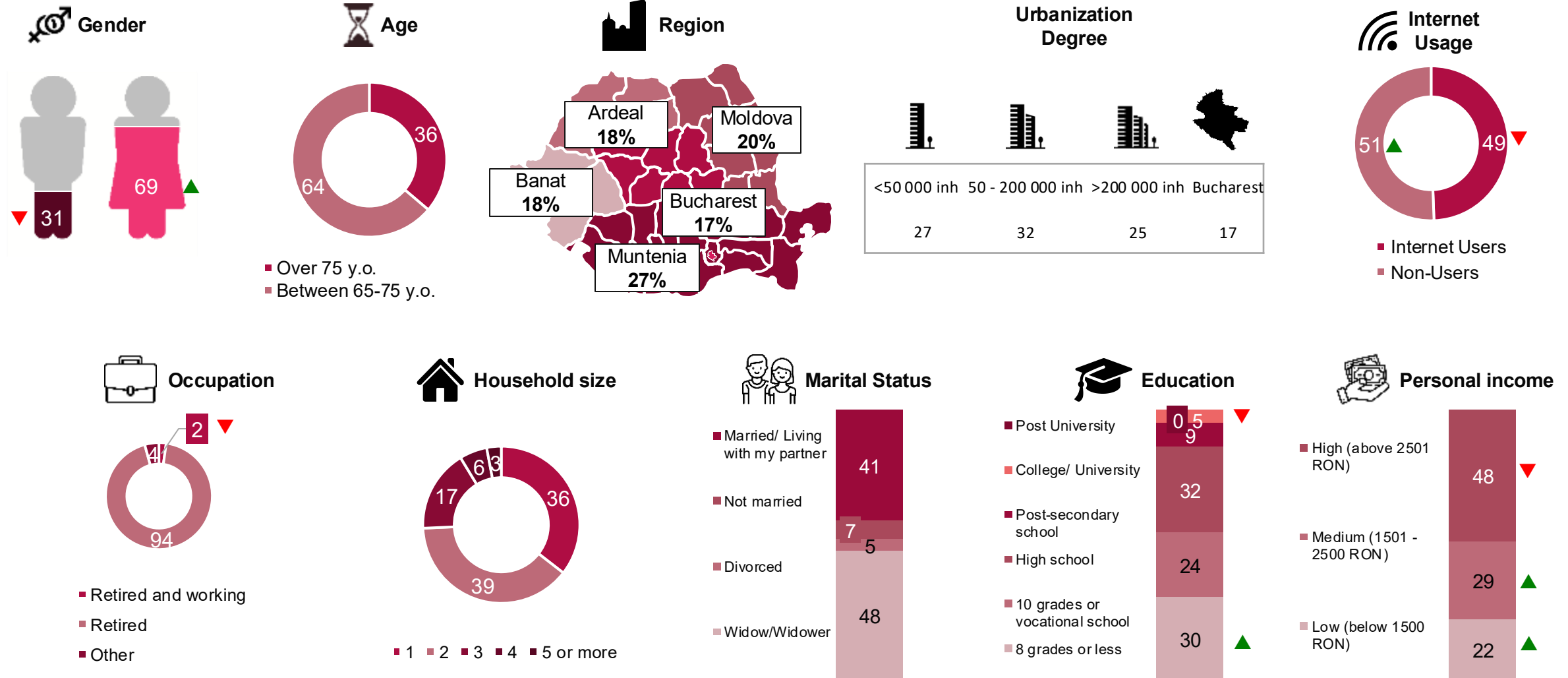


▲ ▼ Significantly above/below Total (95% confidence level)

Seniors with a poor health status are more likely to be women, do not use the internet, have a low education and low to medium incomes.

Socio-demographic profile | People with poor health status

%



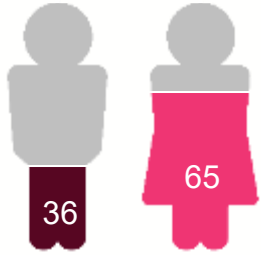
▲ ▼ Significantly above/below Total (95% confidence level)

Elders with low or no social support are more likely to not use the internet, live alone, are widowed, with a low education.

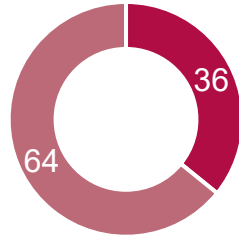
Socio-demographic profile | People with no/ low social support

%

 Gender

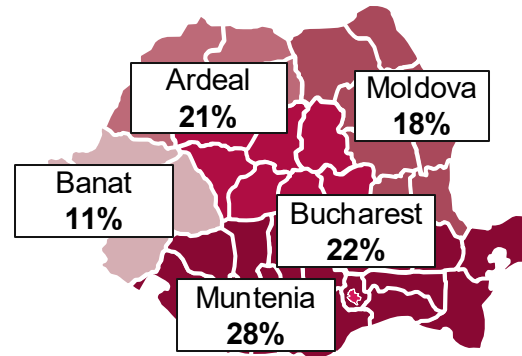


 Age

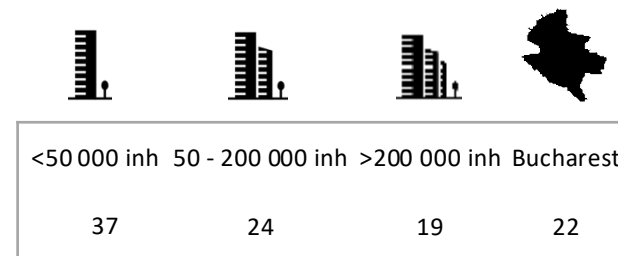


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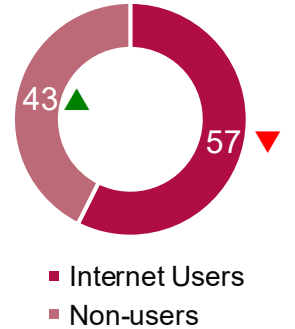
 Region



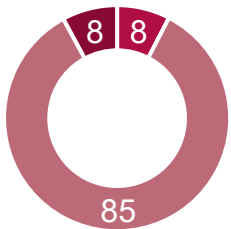
 Urbanization Degree



 Internet Usage



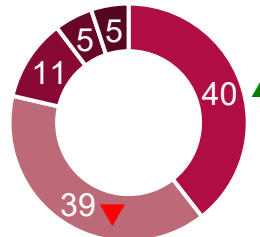
Occupation



■ Retired and working
■ Retired
■ Other



Household size

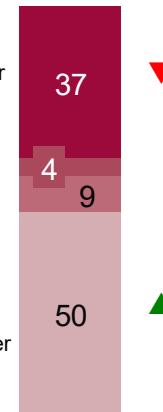


■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 or more



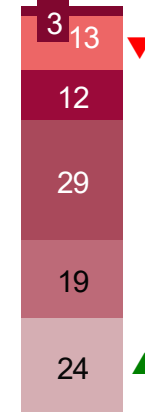
Marital Status

■ Married/ Living with my partner
■ Not married
■ Divorced
■ Widow/Widower



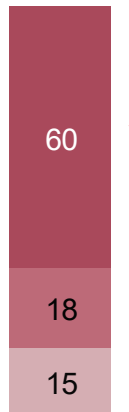
Education

■ Post University
■ College/ University
■ Post-secondary school
■ High school
■ 10 grades or vocational school
■ 8 grades or less



Personal income

■ High (above 2501 RON)
■ Medium (1501 - 2500 RON)
■ Low (below 1500 RON)



▲ ▼ Significantly above/below Total (95% confidence level)

The Kantar logo, featuring the word "KANTAR" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A vertical yellow bar is positioned to the left of the letter "K".

KANTAR

Thank you!

For more details, please contact:

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catalina.stefanescu@kantar.com

The logo for "NICIODATĂ SINGUR", consisting of two interlocking red and white shapes that form a stylized "S" or infinity symbol.

NICIODATĂ SINGUR
prietenii vârstnicilor