Society Integration Foundation
Republic of Latvia

SOCIAL COHESION RADAR

2026

# SOCIAL COHESION RADAR

## Analysis of Changes and Indicators of Social Cohesion in Latvia

29 indicators · 3 thematic dimensions · changes from 2023 to 2026

**Society Integration Foundation**
Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS
Survey data: SKDS Research Centre
Riga · 2026

# Summary

## Summary of the 2026 Results

The 2026 Social Cohesion Radar results show diverging trends: some social cohesion indicators have improved, while others have worsened. Residents help one another and participate in civic activities more frequently, and they are less likely to report barriers to accessing services and opportunities. At the same time, disillusionment with Latvian politics is growing, while the proportion of residents who feel accepted in Latvia or who have no objections to any of the neighbour groups mentioned in the survey is declining.

**Everyday mutual assistance (or practical solidarity) is one of the areas showing the most positive results.** The proportion of residents who have not helped a stranger even once during the previous year decreased from 27% in the Radar baseline measurement[1] to 13% in 2026. 79% of residents feel that they have social support, compared with 75% in the Radar baseline measurement. Meanwhile, the proportion of residents who had not participated in any of the civic activities mentioned in the survey during the previous three years fell from 81% to 61%.

**After declining in 2024, the sense of togetherness has almost returned to the Radar baseline level.** In 2024, 43% of respondents felt a sense of togetherness with all residents of Latvia, compared with 52% in 2026. Trust in other people remained almost unchanged between 2024 and 2026, at 34% and 35%, respectively. It is still 4 percentage points lower than in the Radar baseline measurement (39%).

**At the same time, disillusionment with Latvian politics has increased, and trust in the fundamental institutions of democracy remains low.** 72% of residents are disillusioned with Latvian politics, compared with 59% in the Radar baseline measurement. Meanwhile, 39% do not trust any of the fundamental institutions of democracy included in the survey.

Only 42% believe that everyone in Latvia can express their political views freely and without fear. The assessment of whether one's voice matters did not change between 2024 and 2026. The 2026 survey results indicate that political disillusionment is associated with resentment towards the Latvian state and distrust of the fundamental institutions of democracy.

[1] In this report, the Radar baseline refers to the initial results for each indicator compiled in the Radar report published in 2023. Some of these results were obtained in 2023, while others were obtained between 2019 and 2022. The 2024 results are used as an interim comparison.

**Sixty-one per cent of residents feel accepted in Latvia, 7 percentage points fewer than in the Radar baseline measurement.** The feeling of being accepted is associated with a sense of belonging to Latvia, trust in other people and perceptions of equality of opportunity.

The proportion of residents who have no objections to any of the neighbour groups mentioned in the survey also decreased, from 34% to 25%. Residents would most often prefer not to have people from South Asian countries (48%), Muslims (42%) and Roma (41%) as neighbours.

**Residents continue to assess equality of opportunity critically.** Only 36% believe that there are equal opportunities to get ahead in life in Latvia, while 83% believe that income differences in Latvia are too large.

At the same time, assessments of access to several services and opportunities have improved. Compared with the Radar baseline measurement, fewer residents report that they lack access to the internet and technology, cultural events and institutions, high-quality education, as well as education or retraining opportunities. The proportion of residents who believe that people in society do not have equal opportunities to access medical services has also declined, from 38% to 34%.

## Indicator Trends

The table summarises the most significant examples of change.

**Table 1.1. Summary of Key Changes**

| Key finding | Results |
|---|---|
| **Improvements compared with the Radar baseline measurement** | The proportion of residents who had not participated in any of the civic activities mentioned in the survey in the last two years fell from 81% to 61%. Meanwhile, the proportion of residents who had not helped a stranger during the previous year decreased from 27% to 13%. |
| **Deterioration compared with the Radar baseline measurement** | 72% of residents are disillusioned with Latvian politics, compared with 59% in the Radar baseline measurement. The proportion of residents who feel accepted in Latvia fell from 68% to 61%, while the proportion who have no objections to any of the neighbour groups mentioned in the survey decreased from 34% to 25%. |
| **Increase following the decline in 2024** | The sense of togetherness indicator increased from 43% to 52%, almost reaching the Radar baseline level of 53%. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Limitation on comparability** | Because of differences in the age and citizenship coverage, the Eurobarometer results used as the Radar baseline values for certain indicators are not directly comparable with the results of the 2024 and 2026 Radar surveys. |

*For Indicator No. 23, the wording of the question was refined in 2026. Consequently, the 2024 and 2026 results are not directly comparable, and the 2026 measurement marks the beginning of a new time series.*[2]

## Main Directions for Action

Based on the Radar results and expert assessments, the report puts forward seven recommendations for strengthening social cohesion. They call for:

- involving residents in the design of cohesion projects and reducing barriers to participation in them;
- promoting regular cooperation between different groups in society;
- making it easier for residents to obtain support for their own initiatives;
- involving residents in the preparation of decisions and explaining how their proposals have been used;
- supporting media content that reflects the experiences and views of different groups in society;
- providing clear information and practical assistance in accessing public services;
- preparing residents to provide mutual assistance during crises and to participate in national defence through non-military means.

Where implementation of the recommendations requires amendments to legislation or additional central or local government funding, they are also addressed to policymakers.

# Introduction

The Social Cohesion Radar is a monitoring instrument developed by the Society Integration Foundation. The first Radar report was published in 2023 to systematise the available data on social cohesion in Latvia and establish a set of indicators for documenting and monitoring future changes.[3]

The Radar comprises 29 indicators: 24 core indicators and 5 optional indicators. They cover three thematic areas: identity and belonging, social relations, and economic solidarity and equality of opportunity.

The Radar's conceptual framework encompasses several interrelated aspects of social cohesion: belonging, social ties, interpersonal and institutional trust, and participation. The 2026 report analyses changes in the indicators over time and assesses the relationships between them. In-depth studies and structural background indicators provide additional context for interpreting the results and assessing possible explanations.

## Measurement Cycle: 2023–2026

The Radar baseline consists of the initial results for each indicator published in the 2023 report. Some of these results were obtained in 2023, while others were obtained between 2019 and 2022. The earlier results have also been retained as the Radar baseline.

For certain indicators, the Eurobarometer results for Latvia were used as the Radar baseline. The Eurobarometer sample for Latvia covers EU citizens residing in Latvia aged 15 and over, whereas the 2024 and 2026 Radar surveys cover all permanent residents of Latvia aged 18 to 75, irrespective of citizenship. Results were also calculated separately for Latvian citizens aged 18 to 75. Because of differences in age and citizenship coverage, the Eurobarometer results are not directly comparable either with the overall Radar result or with the result for the subsample of Latvian citizens. They have therefore been used only as a contextual reference point.

Approximately half of the indicators were reassessed in the 2024 interim measurement. These were mainly indicators whose initial results had been obtained before 2023, as well as indicators for which the Radar baseline consisted of Eurobarometer results covering a different target population. In this report, the 2024 results are used as an interim point of comparison, while the Radar baseline continues to consist of the initial results for each indicator published in the 2023 report.[4]

[4] Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS. (2024b, November). Interim Values of the Social Cohesion Radar. Riga: Society Integration Foundation. Available at: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/media/7899/download

[3] Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS. (2023). Social Cohesion Radar Report: 2023. Riga: Society Integration Foundation. Available at: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/media/5598/download.

## Breakdowns by Region and Age Group

In the regional analysis, urban areas were compared only with other urban areas, and rural areas only with other rural areas.

**In the comparison of urban areas, several results are more favourable in the cities and towns of Vidzeme:** a larger proportion of residents feel a sense of belonging to Latvia, feel accepted in Latvia and trust other people. The sense of togetherness is lower in Riga. In the cities and towns of Kurzeme, the proportion of residents who have no objections to any of the neighbour groups mentioned is smaller, and trust in other people is lower. In the cities and towns of Latgale, residents are less likely to believe that everyone in Latvia can express their political views freely and without fear, and they are also less likely to express a willingness to defend Latvia through non-military means.

**In the comparison of rural areas, the results for several indicators are more favourable in the rural areas of the Riga region and Vidzeme.** In the rural areas of Zemgale, residents are less likely to believe that their voice matters, that political views can be expressed freely in Latvia and that equal opportunities exist in society. At the same time, they are more likely to express disillusionment with Latvian politics.

**Differences are also observed between age groups.** Among respondents aged 30 or younger, the results for several indicators are more favourable than among respondents aged 50 or older. Younger respondents are more likely to believe that their voice matters in Latvia, are more likely to perceive equal opportunities to get ahead in life and are less likely to report barriers to accessing services. The in-depth study also indicates that a desire to spend part of one's life abroad can coexist with a sense of belonging to Latvia.

The results differ not only by age but also by the language spoken in the family. The differences are particularly pronounced in assessments of the freedom to express political views and of equal opportunities.

Among respondents who speak Russian in the family, 37% in the youngest age group believe that everyone in Latvia can express their political views freely and without fear, compared with 17% among respondents aged 50 or older. Equal opportunities to get ahead in life are perceived by 41% and 17% of these groups, respectively. Among respondents who speak Latvian in the family, the differences between the two age groups are not as pronounced.

[2] The 2024 interim value was obtained using the previous wording of the question, while the 2026 value (21.1%) was obtained using the refined wording. The effect of the question wording is analysed in greater detail in the methodological study (PROVIDUS, 2025b).

**The most pronounced differences between women's and men's responses concern their willingness to defend Latvia.** Men are also slightly more likely to report having experienced or witnessed an instance of corruption. Differences in the remaining indicators are less pronounced.

## Additions to the 2026 Report

The survey was conducted by the SKDS Research Centre from 13 to 25 March 2026. It involved 2007 permanent residents of Latvia aged 18 to 75. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews at respondents' places of residence and through an online survey. The face-to-face survey was conducted at 123 sampling points across all regions of Latvia.[5]

**Table 2.1. Main Additions to the 2026 Radar**

| Addition | Analytical benefit |
|---|---|
| **Measurement of all 29 indicators** | Enables the 2026 results to be compared with the Radar baseline and the available 2024 interim results. |
| **Analysis of the full survey dataset** | Enables the statistical relationships between indicators to be assessed and determines whether they persist after accounting for respondents' demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. |
| **Analysis by region and age group** | Describes differences in the 2026 results between regions and age groups. Urban and rural areas are analysed separately, while the analysis of age groups also takes account of the language spoken in the family. |
| **In-depth studies** | Help interpret the results on belonging, the sense of togetherness, trust, attitudes towards the neighbour groups mentioned in the survey, and equality of opportunity, as well as assess the results of the wording test for Indicator No. 23. |
| **Refined wording of Indicator No. 23** | The 2026 measurement begins a new time series for measuring acceptance of unofficial payments. The new result is not directly comparable with the earlier results. |

*Compared with the Radar report published in 2023, the position of one indicator in the report structure has been revised: Indicator No. 7, "Resentment towards the Latvian State", has been moved from the section "Identity and Belonging" to the section "Social Relations".*

[5] SKDS Research Centre. (2026). Technical Information and Results Dataset of the March 2026 Sociological Survey. Unpublished materials. Fieldwork: 13–25 March 2026; n = 2007.

## International Experience in Measuring Cohesion: Developments since 2023

**The OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust** analyses how public trust in public institutions relates to their responsiveness, reliability, fairness and openness, the quality of public services, and people's assessment of their ability to influence political decisions. The 2026 OECD report also analyses public trust in the use of artificial intelligence in public administration.[6]

**The United Nations World Social Report 2025** distinguishes interpersonal trust from trust in the state, public institutions and the political system, emphasising that trends in these forms of trust may differ. The report also analyses their relationship with economic insecurity, inequality, political participation and perceptions of corruption.[7]

**Australia's long-running Mapping Social Cohesion study** has assessed belonging, participation, perceptions of fairness, trust, social inclusion and attitudes towards diversity since 2007. Approximately 8,000 respondents participated in the 2024 measurement. The questionnaire contained more than
100 questions, and the measurement was supplemented by 40 in-depth interviews. A stable core of indicators is complemented by changing modules on current issues, including economic pressures, migration and polarisation.[8]

**Estonia's integration monitoring** has been conducted since 2000. It covers language proficiency, citizenship, political participation, the information environment, identity and the economic situation. Using cluster analysis, residents belonging to ethnic minorities were divided into five groups based on language use, trust in institutions and social contacts. In 2023, 18% of respondents of other ethnicities belonged to the "fully integrated" cluster, while 28% belonged to the "unintegrated, passively oppositional" cluster.[9] The approaches used internationally are also consistent with the Radar's core principles: maintaining a stable core of indicators, analysing different aspects of trust and participation separately, and supplementing the core measurement with in-depth research on specific issues.

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[6] OECD. (2024). OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9a20554b-en; OECD. (2026). OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions 2026 Results: Navigating Rising Expectations and New Horizons. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9eb63fec-en. On the use of artificial intelligence in public administration, see the chapter "Trustworthy artificial intelligence in the public sector".

[7] United Nations. (2025). World Social Report 2025: A New Policy Consensus to Accelerate Social Progress (ST/ESA/381). New York: United Nations. Available at: https://desapublications.un.org/publications/world-social-report-2025-new-policy-consensus-accelerate-social-progress; Justino, P., and Samarin, M. (2024, December). Trust in a Changing World: Social Cohesion and the Social Contract in Uncertain Times (World Social Report 2025, Thematic Paper 2, version 2). UN DESA / UNU-WIDER. Available at: https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/World%20Social%20Report_Dec2024.pdf.

[8] O'Donnell, J., Guan, Q., and Prentice, T. (2024). Mapping Social Cohesion 2024. Melbourne: Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. Available at: https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2024/.

[9] Kantar Emor. (2023). Eesti ühiskonna lõimumismonitooring 2023 [Estonian Integration Monitoring 2023]. Commissioned by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia. Available at: https://www.kul.ee/EIM2023.

# Methodology

The Radar analyses changes in the indicators over time and the relationships between them in the 2026 survey data. Findings from the in-depth studies were also used to interpret the results. This chapter sets out the methodological principles essential for interpreting the results.

## Survey

**Table 3.1. Key Information on the 2026 Survey**

| Parameter | Description |
|---|---|
| **Research organisation** | SKDS Research Centre |
| **Target population** | Permanent residents of Latvia aged 18–75 |
| **Sample size** | 2,007 respondents |
| **Data collection** | Computer-assisted face-to-face interviews at respondents' places of residence and an online survey |
| **Sampling approach** | A stratified random sample was used for the face-to-face component, while quota sampling was used for the online component |
| **Geographical coverage** | All regions of Latvia; 123 sampling points in the face-to-face component |
| **Fieldwork period** | 13–25 March 2026 |

*The survey data were weighted to align the sample structure with the population structure of permanent residents of Latvia aged 18–75 by region, type of settlement, gender, ethnicity and age. The report analyses weighted data; when interpreting the results for small subsamples, the unweighted number of respondents was also taken into account.*

## Comparability and Interpretation of Changes

**Table 3.2. Principles for Comparing Measurements**

| Data category | Principle of interpretation |
|---|---|
| **Directly comparable measurements** | Measurements are considered directly comparable where the wording of the question, the response scale and the target population have not changed and there are no other material differences in the measurement procedure. In such cases, the 2026 result is compared with the Radar baseline and, where available, the 2024 interim result is also reported. |
| **Radar baseline result obtained before 2023** | Results obtained between 2019 and 2022 retain their status as the Radar baseline if they were published in the 2023 Radar report. |
| **Different age and citizenship coverage** | Because of differences in age and citizenship coverage, the Eurobarometer and Radar results are not directly comparable. The Eurobarometer results are used only as a contextual reference point. |
| **Indicator No. 23** | Because the wording of the question was refined in 2026, the 2026 result is the starting point for a new time series; the earlier results are not directly comparable with it. |

*The magnitude of change is grouped in the report as follows: 0 pp (percentage points) indicates a stable result, 1–2 pp a minor fluctuation, 3–4 pp a moderate change, and at least 5 pp a marked change.*

*All 29 indicators are analysed separately because they describe different aspects of social cohesion and may change in different directions. Consequently, no overall cohesion index is calculated.*

## In-depth Analysis

To identify which assessments are related, respondents' answers to different questions in the 2026 survey data were compared. These relationships were first examined using weighted cross-tabulations. Binary logistic regression models were then used to test whether the relationships persisted after accounting for respondents' gender, age, language spoken in the family, education, income, region and type of settlement.

For topics covered by the in-depth studies, findings from these studies were used to interpret the survey results.

The refined wording of Indicator No. 23 was tested using a split sample; the resulting figure of 21.1% is the starting point for the new time series.

## Studies Used to Interpret the Results

To complement the regular measurements of the Social Cohesion Radar and refine the interpretation of individual indicators, the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS prepared six thematic and methodological studies between 2024 and 2026. Their topics were young people's sense of belonging, the Radar interim values, the sense of togetherness and trust, measurement methodology, tolerance, and equality of opportunity.

### Young People's Sense of Belonging to Latvia

The study *Young People's Sense of Belonging to Latvia*, prepared in November 2024, analysed young people's sense of belonging and its relationship with plans to live in Latvia or abroad. It compared Latvian survey data from 2023 and 2024, considered the results in the context of the Baltic States, and analysed two focus group discussions with young people.[10]

### Interim Values of the Social Cohesion Radar

The study *Interim Values of the Social Cohesion Radar*, prepared in November 2024, remeasured approximately half of the Radar indicators using a survey of Latvia's residents conducted in August 2024. The study covers the dimensions of identity and belonging, social relations, and economic solidarity; Eurostat data were used to describe the structural context and for international comparison.[11]

### Sense of Togetherness in Latvian Society and Trust in Others

The study *Sense of Togetherness in Latvian Society and Trust in Others*, prepared in September 2025, analysed trends in the sense of togetherness and generalised trust. It compared survey data from 2023 and 2024 and analysed two focus group discussions held in August 2025.[12]

### Methodological Effects

The study *Methodological Effects: The Impact of Question Wording and Response Scales on Social Cohesion Radar Measurements*, prepared in November 2025, tested how question wording and response scales affect five Radar indicators.

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[10] Public Policy Centre PROVIDUS. (2024a, November). Young People's Sense of Belonging to Latvia. An In-Depth Study of the Social Cohesion Radar. Available at: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/media/9786/download?attachment

[11] Public Policy Centre PROVIDUS. (2024b, November). *Interim Values of the Social Cohesion Radar*. Interim Study of the Social Cohesion Radar. Available at: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/media/7899/download?attachment

[12] Public Policy Centre PROVIDUS. (2025a, September). *A Sense of Togetherness in Latvian Society and Trust in Other People*. An In-Depth Study of the Social Cohesion Radar. Available at: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/media/8639/download?attachment

The study used split-sample experiment with two equivalent subsamples, comparing the original and alternative versions of the Radar questions.[13]

### Undesirable Neighbours?

The study *Undesirable Neighbours? Stagnation of Social Tolerance in Latvia (2020–2024)*, prepared in November 2025, analysed trends in the tolerance indicator and attitudes towards different groups in society. It compared survey data from 2020 and 2024 and analysed two focus group discussions held in October 2025.[14]

### Two Latvias?

The study *Two Latvias? The Subjective Experience of Latvia's Residents Regarding Equality of Opportunity and Income Gaps*, prepared in 2026, examined how residents experience equality of opportunity and income differences and how they assess access to essential services. The study combined Radar data from 2023 and 2024, data from the 2022 Fairness Eurobarometer, and focus group material from 2025.[15]

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[13] Public Policy Centre PROVIDUS. (2025b, November). *Methodological Effects: The Impact of Question Wording and Scale on the Social Cohesion Radar Measurements*. A Methodological Study of the Social Cohesion Radar. Available at: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/media/9789/download?attachment

[14] Unpublished material.

[15] Public Policy Centre PROVIDUS. (2026). *Two Latvias? Latvian Residents' Subjective Experiences of Equality of Opportunity and Income Gaps*. An In-Depth Study of the Social Cohesion Radar. Available at: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/media/9792/download?attachment

# Conclusions

## Overall Picture of Social Cohesion

The 2026 Radar results do not indicate that social cohesion in Latvia has changed in a single direction. The situation has improved in some respects and deteriorated in others.

Positive changes are evident in everyday solidarity and civic activity, as well as in assessments of access to certain services and opportunities. Following a decline in 2024, the sense of togetherness increased to 52%, almost reaching the Radar baseline level of 53%.

At the same time, disillusionment with Latvian politics and distrust of the fundamental institutions of democracy have increased. Fewer residents believe that political views can be expressed freely and without fear. The proportions of residents who feel accepted in Latvia and who have no objections to any of the groups mentioned in the survey as neighbours have also declined. Meanwhile, more residents perceive ethnic tensions.

Indicators of everyday mutual assistance and assessments of politics have moved in opposite directions. 79% of residents feel that they have social support, while the proportion who had not helped a stranger during the previous 12 months fell from 27% to 13%. At the same time, 72% of residents are disillusioned with Latvian politics, 39% do not trust any of the fundamental institutions of democracy included in the survey, and only 42% believe that everyone in Latvia can express their political views freely and without fear. Thus, mutual assistance has become more frequent, while attitudes towards politics and institutions have become more critical.

A similar picture emerges in the area of economic solidarity and equality of opportunity. Compared with the Radar baseline measurement, fewer residents report barriers to accessing the internet and technology, cultural events and institutions, high-quality education, and education and retraining opportunities. Meanwhile, 34% of residents believe that not everyone in society has equal access to medical services.

At the same time, only 36% believe that they have equal opportunities to get ahead in life, while 83% consider income differences in Latvia to be too large. Thus, practical access to several services and opportunities has improved, but residents continue to assess their personal opportunities and the distribution of income critically.

## Key Changes

**Table 8.1. Key Changes and Their Interpretation**

| Area | Results | Conclusion |
|---|---|---|
| **Everyday solidarity** | The proportion of residents who had not helped a stranger during the previous 12 months fell from 27% to 13%. Seventy-nine per cent of residents feel that they have social support, compared with 75% in the Radar baseline measurement. | The decrease in the proportion of residents who had not helped a stranger is a marked favourable change. The 4-percentage-point increase in the social support indicator is a moderate favourable change. |
| **Civic activity** | The proportion of residents who had not participated in any of the civic activities mentioned in the survey during the previous two years fell from 81% to 61% compared with the Radar baseline measurement. Between 2024 and 2026, it decreased from 63% to 61%. The indicator measuring the importance of parliamentary elections increased from 44% to 49% over the same period. | Compared with the Radar baseline measurement, the 20-percentage-point decrease in the proportion of civically inactive residents is a marked favourable change. The 2-percentage-point decrease between 2024 and 2026 is considered a minor fluctuation. The 5-percentage-point increase in the indicator measuring the importance of parliamentary elections is a marked favourable change. Because of the different target population, the Eurobarometer results are not directly comparable with the Radar survey results. |
| **Belonging and togetherness** | The sense of togetherness increased from 43% to 52% between 2024 and 2026 and is 1 percentage point below the Radar baseline measurement. The sense of belonging increased from 70% to 73% between 2024 and 2026, but remains 3 percentage points below the Radar baseline measurement. | The increase in the sense of togetherness since 2024 is a marked favourable change, and the indicator has almost returned to the Radar baseline level. The increase in the sense of belonging since 2024 should be interpreted with caution. |

| Area | Results | Conclusion |
|---|---|---|
| **Feeling of being accepted and intergroup relations** | The proportion of residents who feel accepted in Latvia fell from 68% to 61%. The proportion who have no objections to any of the neighbour groups mentioned in the survey fell from 34% to 25%. Meanwhile, the proportion who perceive ethnic tensions increased from 52% to 57%. | All three are marked unfavourable changes. However, attitudes towards the neighbour groups mentioned in the survey and perceptions of ethnic tensions describe different aspects of intergroup relations. The result of one indicator cannot be used to draw conclusions about the other. |
| **Assessments of politics and institutions** | Disillusionment with Latvian politics increased from 59% to 72%. The proportion of residents who believe that political views can be expressed freely and without fear fell from 47% to 42%. Meanwhile, the proportion who do not trust any of the fundamental institutions of democracy included in the survey increased from 35% to 39%. | The 13-percentage-point increase in disillusionment with Latvian politics is the largest unfavourable change in the social relations dimension. The 5-percentage-point decline in the assessment of freedom to express political views is a marked unfavourable change, while the 4-percentage-point increase in institutional distrust is a moderate unfavourable change. |
| **Practical accessibility** | The proportion of residents reporting barriers to accessing the internet and technology fell from 11% to 5%, barriers to accessing cultural events and institutions from 13% to 6%, barriers to accessing high-quality education from 19% to 13%, and barriers to accessing education and retraining opportunities from 25% to 18%. The proportion who believe that not everyone in society has equal access to medical services fell from 38% to 34%. | The 6- or 7-percentage-point decreases in the first four accessibility barrier indicators are marked favourable changes. The 4-percentage-point decrease in perceived inequality in access to medical services is a moderate favourable change. |

| Area | Results | Conclusion |
|---|---|---|
| **Equality of opportunity** | The assessment of personal equality of opportunity remained at 36% between 2024 and 2026, although several indicators of access to services and opportunities improved. At the same time, 83% of residents believe that income differences in Latvia are too large. | Improvements in practical accessibility have not been reflected in assessments of personal equality of opportunity. This indicates that access to services and residents' assessments of their opportunities to get ahead in life describe different aspects of experience. |

*Note. Differences in percentage points were interpreted only for directly comparable measurements. Source: 2023 Radar report, 2024 interim measurement, and the SKDS/PROVIDUS survey of March 2026.*

## Differences by Region and Age Group

No area has uniformly better or worse results across all indicators. Each area has both strengths and risks. Moreover, urban areas were compared only with other urban areas, and rural areas only with other rural areas.

### Urban Areas

In the cities and towns of Vidzeme, several identity and social relations indicators are comparatively more favourable. At the same time, this area has the largest proportion of residents who had not helped a stranger during the previous 12 months (26%).

Compared with other urban areas, Riga has the smallest proportions of residents who feel accepted in Latvia (54%) and who feel a sense of togetherness with all residents of Latvia (44%).

The cities and towns of Kurzeme and the Riga region have the smallest proportions of residents who have no objections to any of the neighbour groups mentioned in the survey. The figure is 17% in both areas. The cities and towns of Kurzeme also have the lowest level of trust in other people (27%).

The cities and towns of Latgale have the smallest proportions of residents who believe that political views can be expressed freely and without fear in Latvia (28%) and who are willing to defend Latvia through non-military means (40%).

### Rural Areas

In the rural areas of the Riga region, Vidzeme and Zemgale, 82% of residents feel a sense of belonging to Latvia. Several indicators of political agency and economic opportunity are also comparatively favourable in the rural areas of the Riga region and Vidzeme.

The rural areas of Zemgale have the smallest proportion of residents who believe that their voice matters (29%) and the largest proportion who are disillusioned with Latvian politics (82%). There, 45% also do not believe that a poor person in Latvia can become financially secure through hard work, while 46% believe that not everyone in society has equal access to medical services.

In the rural areas of Latgale, several indicators relating to connections with the state and politics are lower than in other rural areas. At the same time, these areas have the smallest proportions of residents who perceive ethnic tensions (44%) or unequal opportunities to access medical services (20%).

The rural areas of Kurzeme have the smallest proportion of residents who feel resentment towards the state (18%). At the same time, they have the smallest proportion of residents who have no objections to any of the neighbour groups mentioned in the survey (20%) and the largest proportion who had not helped a stranger (28%).

### Age Groups

The 2026 results show that several indicators are more favourable among respondents aged 18–30 than among respondents aged 50 or older.

Younger respondents are more likely to believe that their voice matters (55%, compared with 39%) and that they have equal opportunities to get ahead in life (45%, compared with 30%). They are also more likely to have no objections to any of the neighbour groups mentioned in the survey (33%, compared with 21%) and less likely to lack education and retraining opportunities (7%, compared with 23%). The proportion of civically inactive residents is also smaller in the youngest group, at 52%, compared with 67%.

At the same time, 63% of the youngest respondents perceive ethnic tensions, while 38% trust other people. This shows that the more favourable assessments of the youngest group in certain areas do not imply uniformly positive results across all aspects of cohesion.

### Interaction between Age and Language Spoken in the Family

In assessments of the freedom to express political views and of personal opportunities, the difference between respondents who speak Latvian in the family and those who speak Russian is considerably larger in the oldest group than in the youngest group.

In the youngest group, 55% of Latvian-speaking and 37% of Russian-speaking respondents believe that political views can be expressed freely and without fear in Latvia. In the oldest group, the corresponding figures are 53% and 17%.

Equal opportunities to get ahead in life are perceived by 46% of Latvian-speaking and 41% of Russian-speaking respondents in the youngest group, compared with 39% and 17%, respectively, in the oldest group.

In both age groups, the responses of Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking respondents also differ substantially regarding the sense of belonging, willingness to defend Latvia and the feeling of being accepted.

## Unanswered Questions

The 2026 results show that several cohesion indicators are interrelated. Residents who feel accepted in Latvia are more likely to feel a sense of belonging to Latvia and a sense of togetherness with other residents, trust other people more, and are more likely to believe that their voice matters, that political views can be expressed freely and that they have equal opportunities to get ahead in life. Meanwhile, those who are disillusioned with Latvian politics are more likely to feel resentment towards the Latvian state and to distrust the fundamental institutions of democracy.

These relationships show which indicators vary together, but they do not establish causality. Nor do they explain why the specific indicators have changed over time.

Further in-depth research is needed into:

- why the proportion of residents who feel accepted in Latvia has declined;
- why disillusionment with Latvian politics has increased;
- why more residents perceive ethnic tensions;
- why fewer residents believe that political views can be expressed freely and without fear in Latvia;
- why more residents report personal exposure to or observation of corruption.

Some apparently similar indicators nevertheless describe different aspects of cohesion. For example, trust in other people does not differ substantially depending on whether a person helped a stranger during the previous 12 months. Nor is the sense of togetherness closely associated with participation in civic activities. Similarly, attitudes towards different groups as potential neighbours and perceptions of ethnic tensions describe different levels of perception, as do assessments of personal opportunities and views on income inequality. The first indicator in each pair reflects the individual's own attitude or personal situation, while the second reflects their perception of society as a whole. Consequently, the results or changes in one indicator do not allow direct conclusions to be drawn about trends in the other indicator.

# Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Social Cohesion

These recommendations set out practical steps that public institutions, local authorities, civil society organisations, media support bodies and community groups can take to strengthen participation, mutual trust, a sense of belonging and cooperation across society. They emphasise meaningful public involvement, accessible opportunities to participate and sustained cooperation rather than one-off activities.

### 1. Co-design social cohesion initiatives with residents and remove barriers to participation

Residents should be involved from the earliest stages of planning social cohesion initiatives, particularly those whose views are often underrepresented. They should have opportunities to identify the issues that matter to them, help shape activities and explain what practical support they need to take part fully.

Before submitting a project application, organisers should discuss their plans with the intended participants and explain how their input has shaped the proposal. Depending on the scale of the initiative, this could involve focused conversations, joint discussions or trying out planned activities.

Organisers should also work with potential participants to identify barriers to participation. These may include inconvenient times or locations, complicated registration procedures, unclear information, transport difficulties or a lack of childcare. Practical support should reflect participants' needs, while project application and reporting requirements should be proportionate to the scale of the initiative.

**Expected outcome:** Initiatives better reflect participants' needs and are accessible to people who might otherwise be unable to take part.

**Relevant findings from Latvia's Social Cohesion Radar**

- 61% of residents feel accepted in Latvia, down from 68% at the Radar baseline.
- 73% of residents feel a sense of belonging to Latvia.

The decline in the proportion of residents who feel accepted highlights the importance of involving different groups in designing initiatives and understanding their specific needs.

### 2. Support regular cooperation between different groups in society

Social cohesion initiatives should give people from groups that rarely interact in everyday life regular opportunities to work towards shared goals. Participants may differ in age, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic background or life experience.

Participants should help define the shared goal and take responsibility for specific tasks, such as improving a neighbourhood, organising a cultural event or addressing a community need. The emphasis should be on sustained, meaningful cooperation rather than one-off encounters.

Where participants have different levels of proficiency in Latvian, activities should be organised so that everyone can take part and use the language at a level appropriate to their skills. Facilitators should offer practical support and encourage those who feel less confident speaking Latvian.

Project evaluation should assess both what participants achieve together and how well they cooperate, including whether their collaboration is likely to continue after the initiative ends. Where language practice is an objective, evaluation should also consider participants' opportunities to use the language and how confident they felt doing so.

**Expected outcome:** Participants gain experience of working with people from other social groups, build mutual trust and develop relationships that can continue beyond the initiative. Those who need language practice have opportunities to use and improve their Latvian through meaningful interaction.

#### Relevant findings from Latvia's Social Cohesion Radar

- 52% of residents feel a sense of community with all residents of Latvia, up from 43% in 2024 and close to the Radar baseline of 53%.
- 35% of residents say they trust other people.
- 61% feel accepted in Latvia.
- 7% say they never use Latvian when communicating with residents of Latvia from other ethnic backgrounds.

The sense of community has recovered since 2024. However, trust in other people remains limited, and the proportion of residents who feel accepted is below the Radar baseline. These findings support the case for sustained interaction and practical cooperation between groups that have little contact in everyday life.

### 3. Make it easier to access support for resident-led initiatives

Small community initiatives can offer an important first experience of civic participation. Support should be available not only to established organisations but also to informal groups of residents without formal registration or experience of preparing project applications.

Residents themselves should decide what they want to achieve and how to carry out their initiative. Depending on their needs, support may include access to

premises, equipment or materials, expert advice, administrative assistance or small grants.

Application and reporting procedures should be simple and proportionate to the support provided. Where informal groups cannot receive funding directly, an intermediary organisation or public authority can help them manage the administrative and financial arrangements.

**Expected outcome:** More residents can put shared ideas into practice to improve their neighbourhood or community, including those who do not belong to a formal organisation and have no experience of applying for funding.

**Relevant findings from Latvia's Social Cohesion Radar**

- 61% of residents have not taken part in any of the civic activities covered by the survey in the previous two years, compared with 63% in 2024.
- Only 42% agree that their voice matters in Latvia.

The findings show that many residents have not taken part in the civic activities covered by the survey. Making support for small, resident-led initiatives easier to access could offer a practical first step towards wider civic engagement.

### 4. Involve residents in shaping decisions and explain how their input is used

Residents should have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions that directly affect their daily lives. Their involvement should begin before key decisions are made, while alternative options are still open for consideration.

Institutions should identify which groups will be affected and actively involve people who rarely take part in formal consultations. Their practical experience should inform the choice of solutions and help identify difficulties that proposed changes could create.

Participants should receive clear information about:

- the decision being considered;
- the groups likely to be affected;
- the alternative options under consideration;
- how participants can influence the decision;
- how and when to submit proposals.

Consultations should allow participants to express critical or unpopular views within the limits of the law.

After the consultation, institutions should provide clear, accessible feedback explaining which proposals were taken forward, which were not and why. Once a decision has been adopted, they should explain how it will affect different groups and how the transition to the new arrangements will be managed.

**Expected outcome:** Decisions draw meaningfully on the experience of those directly affected. Participants can see how their contributions have been considered, whether they have influenced the outcome and why some proposals were not accepted.

### Relevant findings from Latvia's Social Cohesion Radar

- Only 42% of residents believe that their voice matters in Latvia, little changed from 41% in 2024.
- 42% believe that everyone in Latvia can express political views freely and without fear.

The findings underline the need not only to invite residents to participate, but also to show how their input is considered and how it can influence decisions.

### 5. Support media content that reflects diverse experiences and viewpoints

The media can help audiences understand the experiences of groups with whom they have little direct contact. Media support should encourage content that reflects diverse social experiences and gives a voice to people whose perspectives are less often heard in public debate.

Media content supported with the aim of strengthening social cohesion should foster evidence-based, respectful discussion. It should allow differing views, including critical and unpopular opinions, to be expressed within the limits of the law.

Funding and evaluation criteria may encourage a diversity of voices and experiences. However, decisions about topics, sources, editorial approaches and conclusions must remain with the media themselves.

**Expected outcome:** A wider range of people can contribute to public discussion, and audiences gain a better understanding of experiences and perspectives beyond their immediate social circles.

### Relevant findings from Latvia's Social Cohesion Radar

- Only 42% of residents believe that everyone in Latvia can express political views freely and without fear.

This indicator measures public perceptions of the freedom to express political views; it does not identify the experiences or circumstances behind those perceptions. The finding nevertheless highlights the importance of opportunities for diverse views to be expressed and discussed respectfully in public.

### 6. Provide clear information and practical assistance with accessing public services

People may be unable to access services to which they are entitled because application procedures are unclear, overly complicated or reliant on digital tools they cannot use.

Public service providers should explain in plain, accessible language:

- what people need to do to receive a service;
- what information or documents they must submit;
- where and how to get help;
- what they need to do next.

Information should be shared through channels that reach those most likely to need the service. Providers should work with community organisations and local contacts where this can improve access.

Information should also be tested with service users. Brief conversations or user testing can establish whether people understand the instructions and know what to do next.

People who cannot use digital services independently should have access to help by telephone or in person. Assistance should address the specific barrier they face, whether this is limited internet access, a lack of a suitable device, insufficient digital skills or difficulty understanding and completing the application process.

Providers should check not just whether help has been offered, but whether it has enabled the person to complete the process and receive the service.

**Expected outcome:** People understand how to obtain the services to which they are entitled and receive the practical help they need to complete the process.

#### Relevant findings from Latvia's Social Cohesion Radar

- 5% of residents report that they lack access to the internet and technology needed to use digital services in daily life.

Although this affects a minority of residents, reliance on digital processes can prevent them from accessing essential public services. Digital services should therefore be accompanied by clear information and readily available help by telephone or in person.

### 7. Prepare residents to help one another in crises and to contribute to national defence in non-military roles

Helping others in everyday life does not necessarily mean knowing how to respond to a major crisis. Public authorities, emergency services and community organisations should establish clear procedures for requesting, offering and coordinating assistance.

Preparedness plans should specify:

- how people can request help;
- how volunteers can offer support;
- who records and coordinates requests and offers of assistance;
- how volunteers' activities are coordinated with professional services;
- how help will reach people with health problems, limited mobility or other vulnerabilities.

These arrangements should form part of existing civil protection and crisis preparedness plans and be tested regularly in practical exercises. Exercises should assess communication channels, volunteer coordination, cooperation between the responsible institutions and whether support reaches those who need it most. Procedures and plans should then be updated in light of the lessons learned.

Public authorities should also provide clear information and practical training on non-military roles in national defence, including practical support for the armed forces in the event of a military attack. Participants should be helped to identify tasks suited to their skills, health and personal circumstances. They should receive clear information about how to prepare, how to register and whom to contact.

Authorities should identify which groups are not being reached by preparedness information and what prevents them from participating. Communication methods, training formats and locations should be adapted accordingly.

**Expected outcome:** Residents know where to seek help, how to support others and how to coordinate their actions with the responsible services. Volunteer coordination procedures are tested in practice rather than existing only on paper. Participants also understand which non-military tasks they could undertake in the event of a military attack and how to prepare for them.

### Relevant findings from Latvia's Social Cohesion Radar

- 57% of residents say they would be willing to defend Latvia in a non-military capacity in the event of a military attack by providing practical support to the armed forces.
- 79% say they have people they can rely on when facing serious personal problems.
- Only 13% report not having helped a stranger in the previous 12 months.

The findings show widespread experience of everyday mutual assistance and a willingness among a majority of residents to contribute to national defence in a non-military capacity. These indicators measure experience and stated willingness, not practical preparedness. Clear procedures, defined roles and regular exercises are needed to translate that willingness into effective, coordinated action.