

IPSOS PRESS RELEASE:

MALAYSIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS EQUALITY

Thurs, 4th September 2025

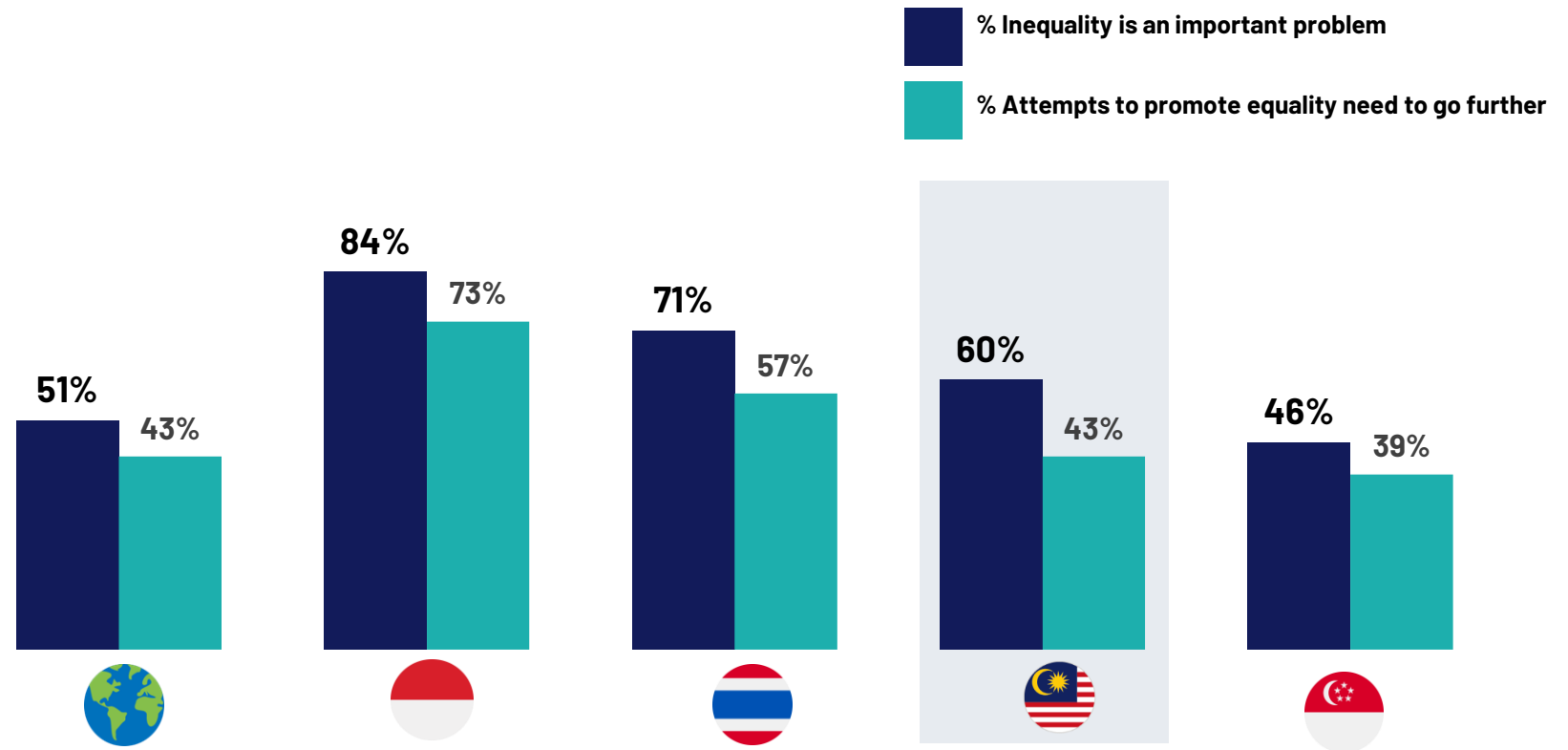


6 in 10 Malaysians see inequality as one of the most pressing national issues, a level above the global average, though not as intense as in Indonesia and Thailand.

Nearly half of Malaysians believe more must be done to promote equality, echoing the global call for stronger action.

INEQUALITY CONCERN IS HIGH IN MALAYSIA, PUBLIC CALLS FOR MORE ACTION

1. Compared to all the other problems facing your country, would you say that inequality is...?
2. Thinking about attempts to promote equality for all groups of people in your country, do you think that, overall...



Base: 23,228 online adults under the age of 75 across 31 countries, interviewed 21 February and 7 March 2025.
Malaysia base: 500 online adults under the age of 75

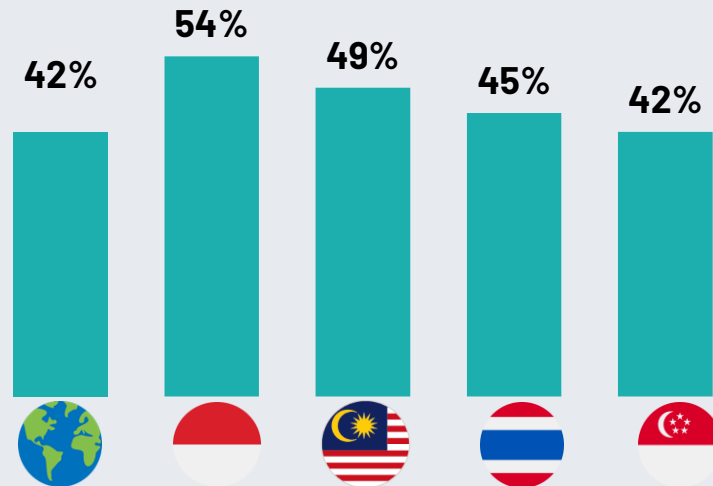
A majority of Malaysians believe success depends on one's own effort, consistent with a meritocratic mindset both globally and across Southeast Asia.

This confidence in personal agency is notably stronger than the view that structural barriers dictate outcomes.

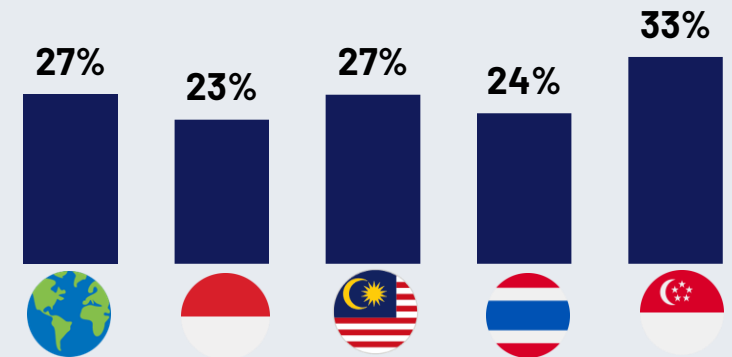
HALF OF MALAYSIANS STILL BELIEVE HARD WORK PAYS OFF

With which of these two statements do you agree more?

People's chances of success in your country depend mostly on their own merit and efforts



People's chances of success in your country depend mostly on factors beyond their control



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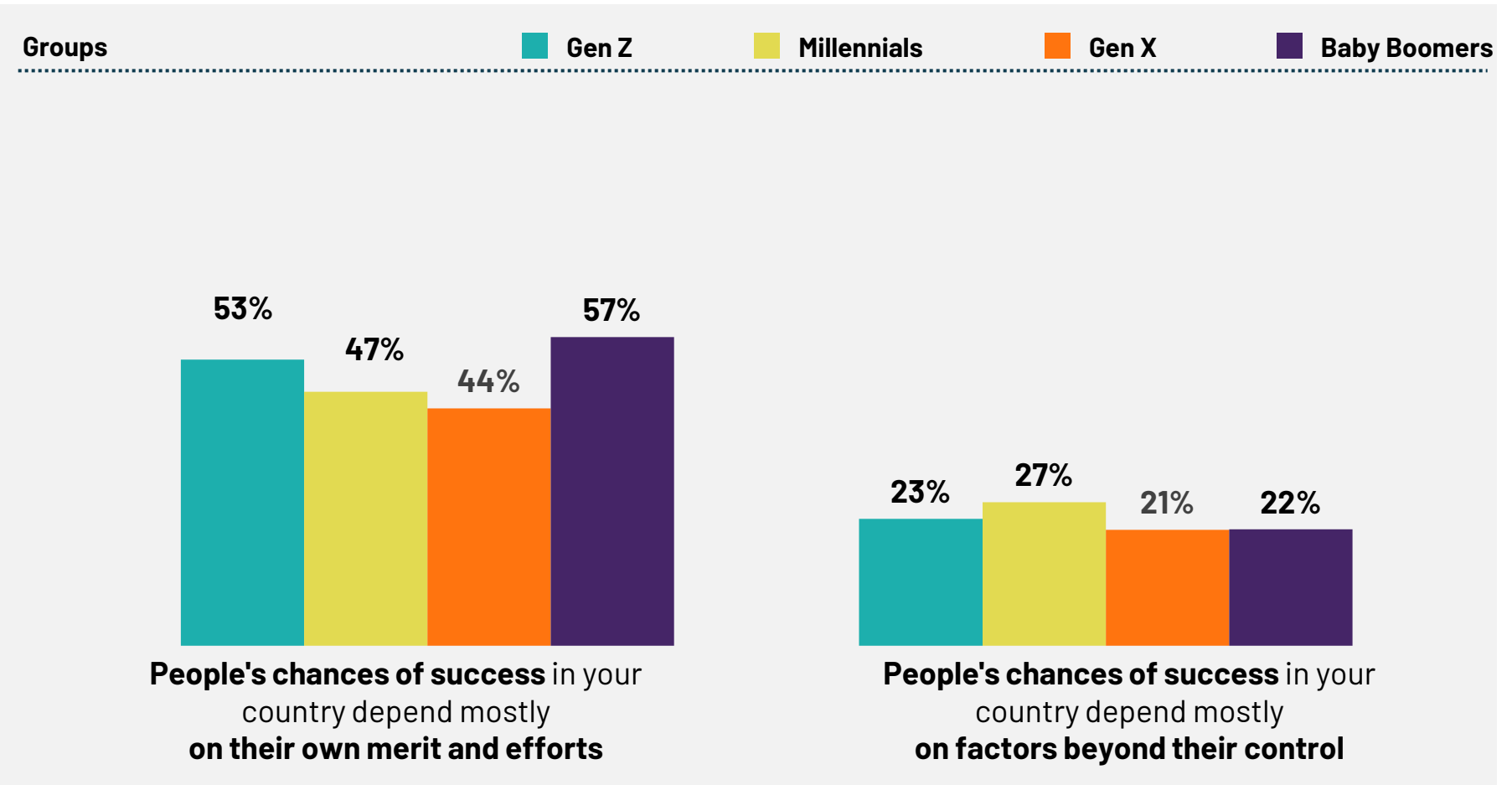
Malaysia base: 500 online adults under the age of 75

Gen Z and Baby Boomers show the strongest belief in meritocracy, while Millennials and Gen X are more likely to highlight barriers beyond their control.

This reveals a risk which the core workforce segments are most skeptical about equal opportunity.

'MIDDLE GENERATIONS' IN MALAYSIA LOSE FAITH IN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

With which of these two statements do you agree more?



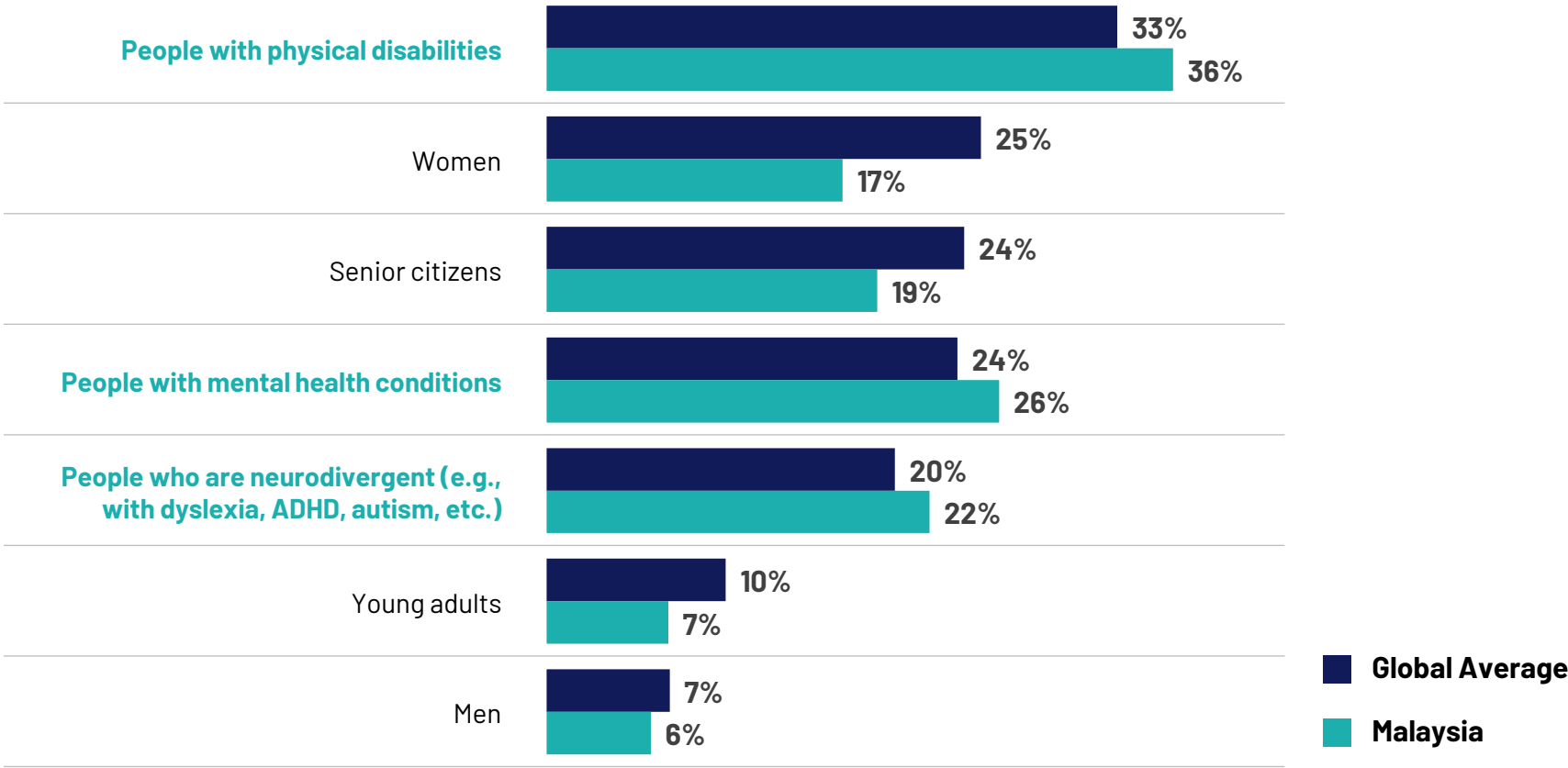
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Disabilities are perceived as the most significant area of unequal treatment in Malaysia, at levels higher than the global average.

Malaysians also express strong concern about unfair treatment of people with mental health conditions and who are neurodivergent, highlighting areas where inclusion policies are most needed.

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES TOP INEQUALITY CONCERNS, BUT MENTAL HEALTH AND NEURODIVERGENT ALSO IN FOCUS

Which of these groups of people, if any, do you think most experience unequal or unfair treatment in your country today?



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All generations agree that people with physical disabilities and mental health conditions are the most impacted groups.

Younger Malaysians, however, also point to neurodivergent individuals, while older generations highlight women and senior citizens.

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS SEE SIMILAR EQUALITY GAPS

Top 3 Most Affected Groups by Generation

All figures in %

Gen Z



People with physical disabilities

39

People with mental health conditions

27

People who are neurodivergent

26

People with physical disabilities **Millennials**

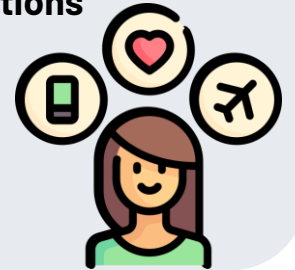
35

People with mental health conditions

26

People who are neurodivergent

24



Gen X



People with physical disabilities

34

People with mental health conditions

24

Women

20

People with physical disabilities

28

People with mental health conditions

25

Senior citizens

21

Baby Boomer



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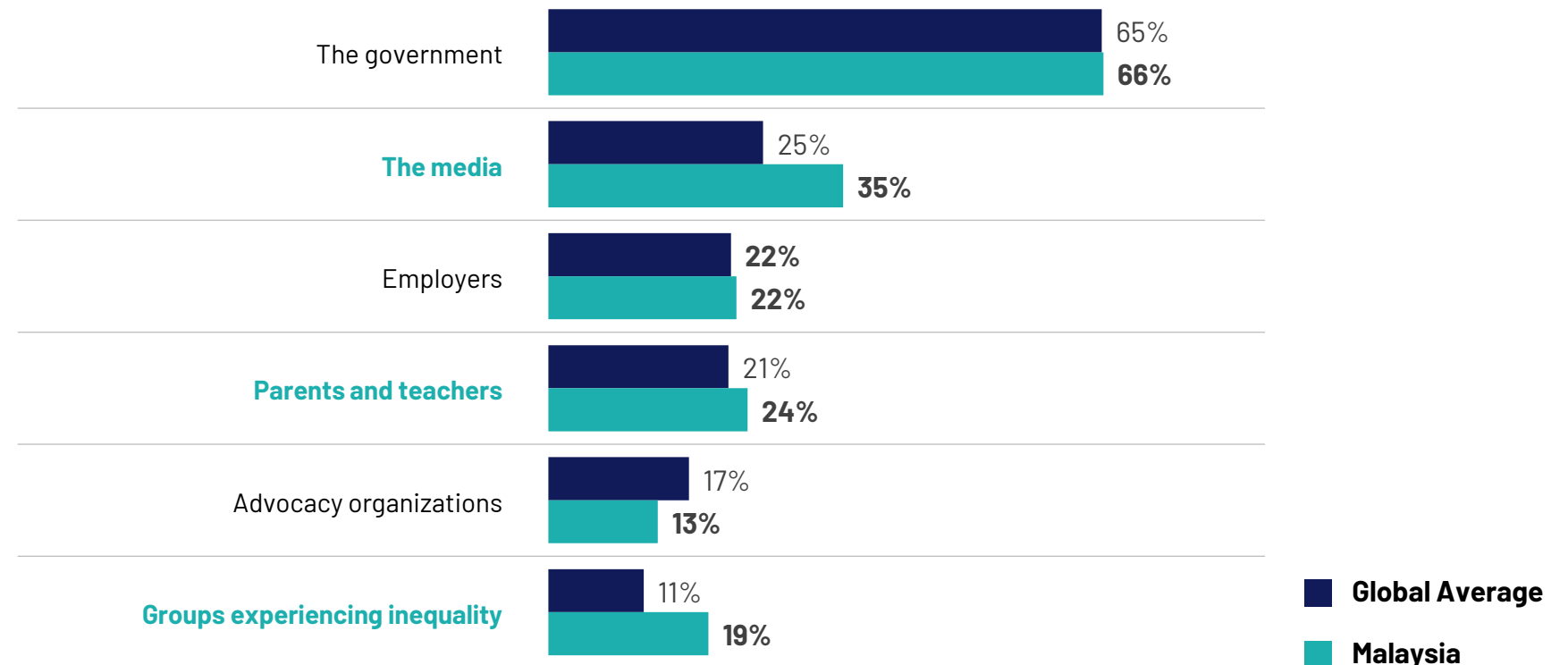
Malaysia base: 500 online adults under the age of 75

Two-thirds of Malaysians expect the government to lead, and the media comes next as the second most important actor.

This places the media ahead of employers and educators, showing the public sees it as a powerful voice in shaping fairness and public debate.

GOVERNMENT MUST LEAD, BUT MEDIA ALSO KEY TO CHANGE

Which of these, if anyone, do you think should be primarily responsible for taking action to try to reduce inequality in your country?



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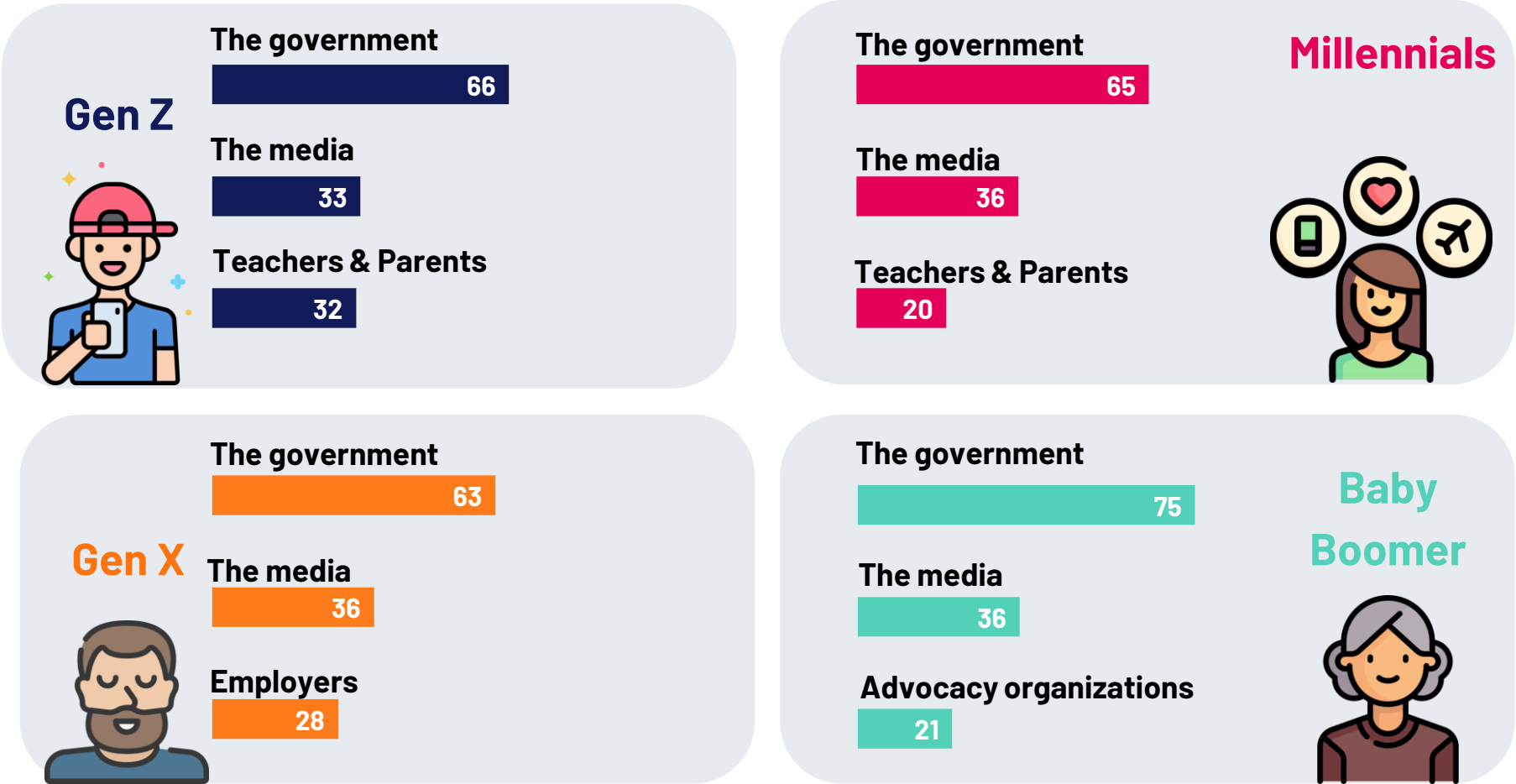
Baby Boomers place responsibility mainly on government. Younger Malaysians spread it wider, calling on parents, teachers and the media to act.

Gen X highlight employers alongside government, showing that each generation sees a different mix of actors driving change.

YOUNGER GENERATIONS EXPECT WIDER SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Top 3 Primarily Responsible Group by Generation

All figures in %



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Malaysian Attitude towards Equality



Across 31 countries, half of people identify inequality as one of the most important problems facing their society. **Malaysia is no exception with 6 in 10 identifying it as an important national issue and almost half say more must be done to address it, in line with global expectations for stronger action.**

While many Malaysians still believe success comes from individual effort, **Millennials and Gen X are more likely to feel structural barriers limit opportunities, a contrast to the optimism of Gen Z and Baby Boomers.**

Malaysians agree that people with disabilities face the most unequal treatment, but younger generations place more weight on mental health and neurodivergence, while older groups emphasize senior citizens and women.

Two-thirds of Malaysians expect government to lead, with media second ahead of employers and educators. Younger Malaysians call for wider responsibility, while older groups focus mainly on government. **This strong expectation on government signals a clear mandate for ministries such as the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, together with NGOs and advocacy groups on disability and mental health, to step up and drive progress.**

These findings underscore a generational divide in how equality is perceived and how responsibility should be shared. **To maintain trust in opportunity, Malaysia must strengthen inclusion for disability, mental health and gender fairness, while ensuring responsibility is shared between government, media and civil society. Equality is not just a political demand; it is essential for Malaysia's social cohesion and long-term prosperity.**



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