

Furthest Behind First, or Falling Behind Further?

The human stories
that challenge Ireland's
claims to be leaving
no one behind.



Members of the four pillars of Coalition 2030:
Yvonne O'Callaghan, SIPTU; Louise Finan, Dóchas;
Karen Ciesielski, the Environmental Pillar; Paul Ginnell,
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland at pre-
budget gathering 2022.

Furthest Behind First, or Falling Behind Further?

Coalition 2030 is an alliance of civil society organisations across the international development, environment, domestic anti-poverty and equality and trade union sectors collaborating to ensure Ireland keeps its promise made in 2015 to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

This resource was developed by Sorley McCaughey (McCaughey Consulting) with support from Meaghan Carmody. We would like to thank all Coalition 2030 members and the Coalition 2030 Steering Committee who actively contributed to the development of this report. Additionally, we would like to thank our ally organisations who contributed, and all are listed at the end of the report.

The report findings reflect the views of Coalition 2030 and do not necessarily reflect the views of each of the members of the Coalition.

The document is not an exhaustive overview of Ireland's progress towards the SDGs. It uses a relatively small number of examples from different parts of Irish society to make its central point. Inevitably, more could have been added, but we believe that the content included serves to make a compelling argument for urgent action.

We would also like to extend a very special thank you to the people profiled in the case studies. We sincerely hope that this report helps to change Irish policy so that these people and the hundreds of thousands like them are no longer left behind.

Dublin, April, 2023

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Ann Kiernan p.4, 12, 20

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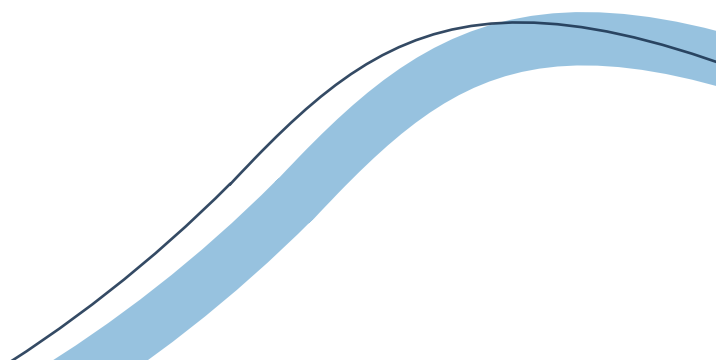
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Executive Summary

Coalition 2030 argues via this document that, although the State has been an influential advocate for the SDGs internationally,^{1 2} commitment and progress domestically is less apparent, and that this is most evident in how the State is failing to reach those who are in most need of the State's support; the *furthest behind*.

Reaching the furthest behind first is a core principle of the SDGs.³ However, it is our view that because the State has so far failed to effectively embed the SDGs across Government and provide the necessary political leadership for their achievement, that rather than reaching first the people who require the most support, instead the State has left these people behind. Without dramatic shifts in policy-making, we believe that the State will continue to struggle to reach the furthest behind first, rendering delivery on the SDGs categorically unachievable. This has led to the existence of a significant gap between the State's international rhetoric and its national action to reach the SDGs, and risks squandering the State's moral leadership.

We are therefore making a concerted call on the State to bridge the gap between international rhetoric and national action, and to unblock the structural obstacles that are contributing towards thousands of people in Irish society being left behind.

We offer a set of explicit structural recommendations which, if implemented, would enable SDG delivery to develop at pace. We follow these recommendations with an overview of the international and national contexts in which SDG delivery is taking place, provide a statistical overview outlining who is being left behind, and illustrate these statistics with a selection of human case studies. Following each case study are a selection of policy options which, if implemented, would enable the State to more effectively reach the furthest behind.

This document reaffirms and builds on the findings contained in a chapter submitted in April 2023 by Coalition 2030, included as part of the State's official submission to the 2023 Voluntary National Review process.⁴

1 <https://www.gov.ie/en/speech/09e24-tanaistes-lecture-to-ireland-at-fordham-humanitarian-lecture-series/> 6 references to reaching the furthest behind first in Taoiseach's speech in 2021

2 <https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/aboutus/abetterworldirelandspolicyforinternationaldevelopment/A-Better-World-Irelands-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf>

3 <https://www.undp.org/publications/what-does-it-mean-leave-no-one-behind>

4 The VNR process requires countries to report periodically to the UN on their country's progress towards the SDGs. When published, Ireland's 2023 will be visible here <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/ff4201-17-sustainable-development-goals/>

Introduction

In 2015, Ireland along with all 193 members of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to, by 2030, eradicate poverty, find sustainable and inclusive development solutions, meet everyone's human rights, and ensure that no one is left behind.⁵ The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets contained within Agenda 2030 are ambitious and wide ranging, and provide the only universally negotiated and applicable framework for global evidence-based policy-making, bringing much needed balance to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. They are also integrated, interdependent and indivisible - progress in one Goal contributes to progress in other Goals. Likewise, a lack of progress in one area has knock-on effects on others.

The SDGs were painstakingly negotiated over many years under Irish and Kenyan leadership. Since the agreement in 2015, Ireland has been a vocal advocate of the Goals on the international stage. Demonstrating Ireland's laudable reputation internationally is the fact that Ireland has been given the role of co-facilitating high-level negotiations on a Political

Declaration which will be unveiled at the SDG Summit in September 2023; a moment the UN Secretary General has coined "the centrepiece of 2023."⁶ Few countries can claim to have been quite as influential on the SDGs on the global stage as Ireland.

"The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to, by 2030, eradicate poverty, find sustainable and inclusive development solutions, meet everyone's human rights, and ensure that no one is left behind."

⁵ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/sustainable-development-goals_en

⁶ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2023-02-06/secretary-generals-briefing-the-general-assembly-priorities-for-2023>

Recommendations

With a General Election to be held by March 2025, and the Goals to expire in 2030, now is a critical juncture for the current government and opposition parties to put the necessary systems and structures in place, to help Ireland play its role in “ending poverty in all its dimensions, irreversibly, everywhere, and leaving no one behind,”⁷ and to bridge the gap between international rhetoric and national action.

Coalition 2030 offers five key actions for hardwiring the SDGs into Irish policy-making that, if implemented, would unlock progress towards the Goals.

Lead from the Top

Currently Ireland’s SDGs ministry is housed in the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications. In order to demonstrate the political ambition required for SDG achievement, the Department of the Taoiseach should have overall responsibility for SDG oversight and implementation.

We call on the Government to:

- Move the SDG Unit to the Department of An Taoiseach.
- Ensure Government departments are held accountable for the delivery of the SDGs at target level.
- Mandate Government ministers to report annually on their department’s progress towards the Goals to both houses of the Oireachtas and their respective Committees.
- Mandate Government ministers to report annually on their department’s progress towards the Goals to their respective Oireachtas Committees.

⁷ <https://SDGs.un.org/2030agenda>

The United Nations Development Programme advises that: “When SDGs become part of the country’s national policy framework, it is crucial that the process is then followed by SDGs integration into the countries’ budgetary frameworks. This is essential to ensure that the policy prioritizations are expressed in budgets as the latter is the strongest domestic legal basis that reflects countries’ commitments to 2030 Agenda and its related SDGs. If not integrated into the budgets, then it is very likely to expect disconnects between the strategic planning frameworks that have made commitments to the 2030 Agenda on the one hand, and public budgets that remain driven by “business as usual” on the other”.

Budget for the SDGs

The annual Budget process is arguably the most important policy event of the year – yet the SDGs have never meaningfully featured. We call for the SDGs to be hardwired into the planning and budgetary processes across the State, an important political signal in itself, but one that can also allow for more effective monitoring of progress towards the Goals.

In particular, we call on the Government to:

- Tag all national budget lines and reports to specific SDG targets.
- Create a 10 year policy programme on the funding and implementation of the SDGs, signed by all political parties both in Government and in opposition to ensure long-term commitment. This should include a review and re-commitment after 5 years.
- Invest at least €15 million in the 2024 Budget towards SDG disaggregated data collection, ensuring both the CSO⁸ and IHREC⁹ are sufficiently resourced to monitor national SDG progress.

SDG-proof policy

Coalition 2030 recommends all future financial and policy commitments in Ireland include mandatory SDG conditions to ensure progress across all sectors in Irish society, and enable Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.¹⁰ This would ensure that any new measures are aligned with the Goals. Such a commitment would also help the State avoid a situation whereby the policies of one government department undermine a Goal in another part of government. Alignment with the SDGs should be the driving objective of State policy from this point forward.

We call on the Government to:

- Create a national SDG Policy Impact Measurement Framework. This should include set criteria for all future regional and national policy in relation to the implementation and reporting of the SDGs.
- Guide local authorities on how to embed the SDGs in city and county plans.
- Enable the PPNs,¹¹ LENS,¹² ETBs¹³ and communities to be true partners in policy design and SDGs implementation.

8 Central Statistics Office

9 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

10 Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development <https://www.oecd.org/governance/pcsd/Note%20on%20Shaping%20Targets.pdf>

11 Public Participation Networks

12 Local Environmental Networks

13 Education and Training Boards

“Identifying inequalities and discrimination requires the generation of evidence and data collection and disaggregation that go beyond gender, geography and age, to include all grounds of discrimination prohibited under international law...”



Measure what matters

Identifying inequalities and discrimination requires the generation of evidence, data collection and disaggregation that go beyond gender, geography and age, to include all grounds of discrimination prohibited under international law, ensuring that all forms of discrimination and other root causes of inequalities are identified and addressed. The importance of being able to monitor progress in reaching the furthest behind first, and to hold power holders to account is reflected in the recommendation that the State develop indicators that cover **all** the State’s contributions towards the SDGs.

Only with relevant disaggregated data can policies be developed to reach the furthest behind effectively.

We call on the Government to:

- Ensure Ireland has a coherent set of indicators that covers all of its contributions and obligations to the achievement of the SDGs, both nationally and internationally.^{14 15}
- Resource the CSO to collect relevant, disaggregated, and timely data which would inform policies to reach the furthest behind first. This data should be published regularly.
- Ireland should also make use of comparative EU data and case studies on issues such as addressing child poverty, housing, disability which are widely available to Member State governments through EU Institutions and agencies.
- Considering the extensive overlap between human rights obligations and the SDGs,¹⁶ Ireland should integrate its measurement of and reporting on human rights obligations with its measurement of and reporting on the SDGs.
- Tied to this, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) should be adequately resourced to engage with questions of SDGs/human rights alignment.

¹⁴ At present, this does not exist. Amending this may involve adapting the Wellbeing Framework which does not account for transboundary effects of policies, and/or developing a set of nationally relevant indicators.

¹⁵ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6050a46343a94a74eb25ae61/t/63624c500ab-41b3ac12909d2/1667386456433/EN-Policy-Paper-Finland.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://SDGsdata.humanrights.dk/en/SDGs/report/country/886>



Establish a Future Generations Commissioner

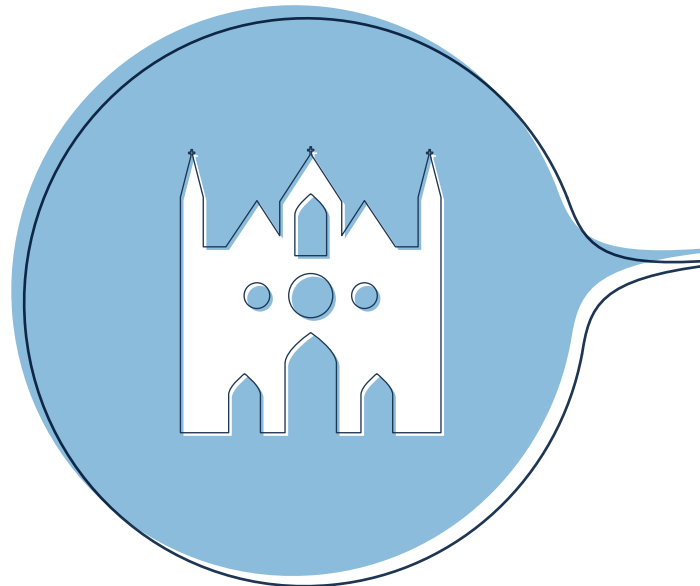
At the core of the SDGs is the very concept of sustainable development first articulated in the Brundtland Report:

“meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹⁷

However, the transformative action necessary from the State is constrained by short term political and economic thinking and planning. The biggest challenges the world faces today are shaped by deeply complex long-term social, economic, political, technological, and natural transformations that defy easy or quick solutions within a single budget or electoral cycle.¹⁸ We call on the State to be visionary and to think beyond the usual 3 to 5 year political cycle. The challenges the world faces demand responses that span decades, and require **‘cathedral thinking’** the collective mindset to plan and initiate large-scale projects which take a very long time to complete, and so which considers the future not as vague and abstract, but as something that matters as much as contemporary wants and needs.¹⁹

We urge the government to:

- Establish on a statutory footing the position of Future Generations Commissioner,²⁰ whose mandate will be to ensure that no actions today undermine the sustainable future of generations to come.
- Consider establishing an Oireachtas Committee for the Future.



17 Brundtland, G.H. (1987) Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Geneva, UN-Dokument A/42/427.

18 <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-future-generations-en.pdf>

19 <https://www.iema.net/articles/aspiring-vision-cathedral-thinking-in-the-modern-world> Use of this terminology is not an endorsement of a particular religion. The concept has been applied to space exploration, city planning and other long-term goals that require decades of foresight and planning so future generations can enjoy their full realization.

20 Welsh Future Generations Act



Reaching the furthest behind first

“The State’s obligation to achieve the SDGs simply cannot be at the mercy of international factors.”

International Context

The international context has posed a challenge for Ireland’s achievement of the SDGs and its efforts in contributing to their achievement abroad. A severe drought (exacerbated by climate change) combined with the global food insecurity crisis (compounded by the war in Ukraine) has worsened the situation in the Horn of Africa, pushing 22 million people into a hunger crisis not seen in the region for decades.²¹

Climate change is an existential threat for many communities in the Global South, despite them having done the least to create the climate crisis.²² Countries of the Global North, including Ireland, have so far failed to deliver on their climate finance commitments making it extremely challenging for Global South countries to adapt to the changing climate.²³

IMF-imposed austerity has also exacerbated a difficult situation in many low income countries, including some countries where Irish Aid is active, undermining progress on key SDGs such as health and education as public services have been slashed in an effort to reduce public wage bills.²⁴

National Context

We acknowledge that while the State’s capacity to deliver on the Goals has been challenged by Covid-19, the war in Ukraine, and a global cost of living crisis, the State’s obligation to achieve the SDGs simply cannot be at the mercy of international factors. While these crises have certainly made progress towards the SDGs challenging, the State’s struggle to address the structural impediments to achieving the SDGs - governance, data, accountability, policy coherence, political leadership, and crises preparedness (the solutions to which are outlined in ‘Recommendations’) - is equally regrettable.

Chronic factors such as the ongoing housing and accommodation crisis, meeting the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, and an overburdened health system, are demonstrative of the State’s inadequate SDGs progress to date, and were in train before recent crises emerged. Indeed, in March 2023, the government was awarded a score of 38% for its progress towards meeting the human rights commitments contained in the programme for government.²⁵

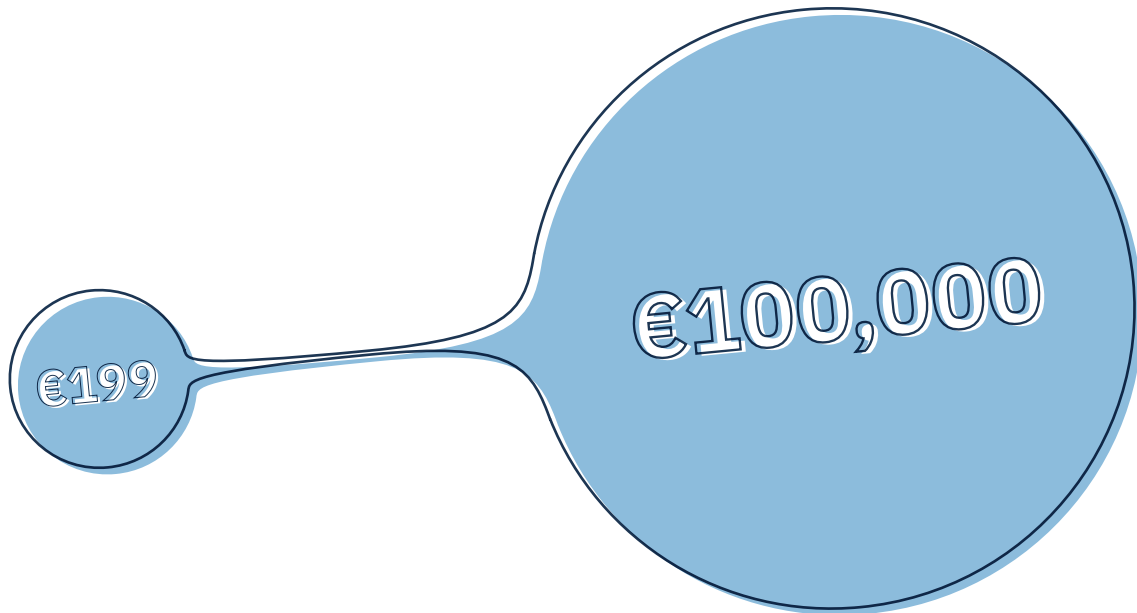
21 <https://www.wfp.org/stories/horn-africa-extreme-drought-deepens-hunger-region-beset-conflict>

22 Hicke, J. (2020) “Quantifying national responsibility for climate breakdown: An equality-based attribution approach for carbon dioxide emissions in excess of the planetary boundary,” *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 4(9). Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2542-5196\(20\)30196-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2542-5196(20)30196-0).

23 <https://www.christianaid.ie/resources/campaigns/inaction-irelands-responsibilities-global-climate-finance>

24 *The Public vs Austerity (Executive Summary)*

25 <https://www.iccl.ie/news/government-scores-just-38-on-human-rights-progress/>



The annual budget has also been consistently demonstrative of the State's lack of progress in reaching the furthest behind first. The last three national budgets were labelled regressive,²⁶ with tax breaks and expenditure benefitting the already wealthy over those living on the margins. Budget 2023 saw the gap between those earning €100,000 and those depending on core social welfare increase by €199, while the income of a single income couple on €50,000 improved by €192 compared to a couple on social welfare.²⁷ And perhaps most tellingly - of the €1.26bn in tax initiatives, 67% were allocated to higher rate taxpayers. Former UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights Professor Philip Alston, was clear in how important tax policy is in understanding government priorities when speaking in 2015 in Dublin he said:

“Tax policies reflect better than all of the ministerial statements and white papers the real priorities of a government. We can see clearly the activities that it chooses to incentivize, those that it opts to

disincentivize, the groups that it decides to privilege, and the groups that it decides to ignore or even penalise.”²⁸

The regressive budgets of recent years are consistent with an overall trend, where small increases in welfare contrast with more pronounced increases in earnings and reductions in income taxation for those on higher earnings. These trends are likely to widen income divides and increase poverty, increasing the 'rich-poor gap'.²⁹

Worryingly, the lack of State foresight and planning in responding to these issues, combined with the effects of cuts to services and the financialisation of housing, has enabled far right sentiment to take hold in some communities as certain actors exploit frustration and a sense of being left behind. This lack of foresight and appreciation of structural factors risks contributing towards a political and societal environment whereby progress on the SDGs becomes extremely challenging.

26 <https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-09/Budget%202023%20Analysis%20-%20Full%20Document.pdf>

27 <https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-09/Budget%202023%20Analysis%20-%20Full%20Document.pdf>

28 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/EPoverty/Alston-Tax_policy.docx

29 <https://www.socialjustice.ie/publication/budget-2023-analysis>

Who is furthest behind in Ireland?

To ‘Leave no one behind’ (LNOB)³⁰ is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. LNOB not only entails reaching the poorest of the poor, but requires combatting discrimination and rising inequalities within and amongst countries, and their root causes. LNOB compels us to focus on discrimination and inequalities (often multiple and intersecting) that undermine the agency of people as holders of rights. Many of the barriers people face in accessing services, resources and equal opportunities are not simply accidents of fate or a lack of availability of resources, but rather the result of discriminatory laws, policies and social practices that leave particular groups of people further and further behind.

Agenda 2030 specifies certain vulnerable groups who are at risk of being left behind; **children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants**. Coalition 2030 has assessed from a national perspective the impacts of certain policies on the majority of these cohorts, and has added additional categories relevant to Ireland.

Despite many people in Ireland prospering, in stark contrast, many sections of society are struggling. The State’s struggle to take the steps necessary to eliminate poverty in all its forms is ultimately a political choice, and one that leaves firmly in place discriminatory practices based on gender, status, race, and sexuality, designed to privilege certain groups over others.³¹

Lone parents, people living with disabilities, people seeking asylum, Travellers, people with chronic health conditions spending years on waiting lists, families living in temporary accommodation because of the absence of affordable accommodation, older people living in energy poverty, people - particularly children - spending years of their lives in Direct Provision. These are just some of the people furthest behind in Ireland, the people that should be prioritised as part of a commitment to reach the furthest behind first.

Coalition 2030 recognises the efforts the State has made and continues to make to reach the furthest behind. However it is the experience of Coalition 2030 members that the actions taken by the State are frustratingly incremental, and are rarely underpinned by the level of investment required. One member described government action as

“nibbling around the edges...unwilling to make the necessary fundamental changes to existing structures that would actually make a difference.”

This is consistent with other members’ experience who describe government action as being insufficiently ambitious, targeted or sustained.

What follows are statistical overviews of the people who need to be reached first in a number of key areas which shadow those assessed as part of Ireland’s Voluntary National Review.³² Human stories or ‘case studies’ follow.

³⁰ Shared Framework on Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development <https://www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/CEB%20equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf>

³¹ <https://chrgi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Alston-Poverty-Report-FINAL.pdf>

³² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bee68-april-2023-sustainable-development-goals-national-stakeholder-forum/>

Statistical Overview

Housing

Close to 270,000 households - or as many as 500,000 people - are either homeless, on housing waiting lists, in receipt of some form of housing or rental assistance or living in housing insecurity.³³ Children along with their families make up almost a third of all people homeless in Ireland,³⁴ while Travellers are strikingly over-represented in the homeless population. When overcrowding and unsuitable living conditions are taken into account, 13.5% of the homeless population are Travellers, despite accounting for only 1% of the general population.³⁵

13.5%

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Health

Ireland remains the only country in western Europe without universal primary healthcare,³⁶ while transgender healthcare in Ireland is the worst in the EU.³⁷ Roma and Traveller communities also experience poor health outcomes. Infant mortality rate for Travellers is 3.5 times the rate of the general population,³⁸ and the Traveller suicide rate is 6 times higher than the general population.³⁹ The 2016 Census highlighted that 27% of the homeless population have a disability, double the rate of the general population, while the incidence of mental health issues among this cohort is 3 times the State average.

27%

The 2016 Census highlighted that 27% of the homeless population have a disability.

33 Many commentators believe the official CSO figure of approximately 11,000 homeless to be significantly underestimated. Including those on housing waiting lists, in receipt of some form of housing or rental assistance and those living in housing insecurity, the figure is thought to be closer to 270,000 households - or half a million people- based on an interview with Rory Hearne, University of Maynooth, March 2023.

34 <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/80ea8-homelessness-data/?referrer=http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>

35 https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_key_issues_affecting_the_traveller_community/submissions/2021/2021-06-01_opening-statement-bridget-kelly-et-al-community-development-worker-national-traveller-women-s-forum_en.pdf

36 https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/419463/Country-Health-Profile-2019-Ireland.pdf

37 <https://www.irishtimes.com/health/2022/10/31/ireland-ranked-worst-for-transgender-healthcare-in-eu/>

38 www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Suicide-Facts-Figures-A0.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1676566268832937&usg=AOvVaw3c5h-CFK3nfSuL-599bABWn

39 Final Report of the Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_key_issues_affecting_the_traveller_community/reports/2021/2021-12-01_final-report-of-the-joint-committee-on-key-issues-affecting-the-traveller-community_en.pdf

Labour / Employment

Travellers, Roma, women, lone parents, people with disabilities, migrants, people seeking asylum, and refugees are all overlooked and underserved in the Irish labour market. According to a recent report from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC),⁴⁰ these groups are more likely to face restrictions in accessing the labour market; experience barriers in occupational attainment; have lower pay, reduced job security and poor working conditions; and are more exposed to work-related inequality and discrimination.

With the State having set necessarily ambitious national targets of reaching a 51% reduction in carbon emissions and reaching net zero by 2030, sustained efforts will be required to ensure that the transition to a greener economy is just. The transition needs to be especially mindful of the particular challenges some sections of society, such as those with disabilities, will face as part of that transition, and should not result in people being left further behind.⁴¹

300,000

It's estimated that more than 300,000 poorly insulated homes (60% of all homes with BER of E, F or G) are occupied by older persons.

Climate & Environment

The State is struggling to address the biodiversity crisis,⁴² while greenhouse gas levels in Ireland continue to rise⁴³ despite important climate legislation being recently introduced.

Energy poverty interlinks poverty, energy, housing and social inclusion and threatens over a third of Irish households.⁴⁴ However, despite attempts from the government to tackle this through an Energy Poverty Action Plan, systematic and holistic policy responses are lacking. Initiatives to retrofit homes risk leaving some people further behind, as the upfront costs make it inaccessible to many.⁴⁵ Moreover, the free energy upgrade scheme designed to target households in energy poverty is not accessible to tenants in the private rental sector.⁴⁶

Travellers experience significant levels of energy poverty, and are largely still dependent on the burning of fossil fuels.⁴⁷ Traveller families in trailers are excluded from access to retrofitting grants,⁴⁸ and current policies and structures make it difficult for Travellers and Roma to switch to using low-emission mobility.⁴⁹

It is estimated that more than 300,000 poorly insulated homes (60% of all homes with BER of E, F or G) are occupied by older persons, making them especially at risk of fuel poverty. More than half of an estimated 586,000 older person households have low home insulation. Many older persons cannot afford to keep their homes warm or the cost of retrofitting.⁵⁰

40 <https://www.ihrec.ie/documents/monitoring-decent-work-in-ireland/>

41 <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/oireachtas-tv/video-archive/committees/7463/>

42 <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorials/2023/04/07/the-irish-times-view-on-the-citizens-assembly-report-on-biodiversity-an-urgent-call-for-action/>

43 <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/ghg/latest-emissions-data/>

44 <https://www.esri.ie/news/energy-poverty-at-highest-recorded-rate>

45 <https://www.friendsoftheearth.ie/news/friends-of-the-earth-report-reveals-significant-barriers-to/>
46 *ibid.*

47 https://www.ntmabs.org/publications/development/2019/nt-mabs-energy-report-factsheet_.pdf

48 Blockages to Retrofitting and Heat-pump Installation in Ireland

49 Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024 | Dublin City Council

50 https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/age_action_energy_guarantee_for_older_persons.pdf

Education

Income levels affect children's education outcomes. For low-income families, the costs associated with returning to school increase financial pressures, restricting access to food, energy, and healthcare and acting as a barrier to children attending school at both primary and secondary levels.⁵¹ Experiencing poverty also significantly affects educational outcomes. A disproportionate number of young people who have experienced poverty become 'early school leavers'. They are 3 times more likely to be unemployed than others aged 18-24 who are not early school leavers.⁵²

Some children who require an assessment of need (AON) to determine the health or educational services they require are also faring poorly and are in danger of becoming among those left behind in the future. At the end of 2022, there were 9,836 children waiting more than 12 months for an assessment of need.⁵³ An assessment of need is the crucial first step for enabling the child to receive the supports necessary for them to achieve their full potential, and so, State failure to deliver AONs in the statutory timeframes is an interference with their rights under Irish law and could also be seen as an interference with their rights under the UNCRC and UNCRPD.⁵⁴

Poverty and Deprivation

Poverty levels remain high in Ireland, particularly among children with almost a third of those living in poverty under the age of 18.⁵⁵ 10% of older people are living in relative poverty, while lone parents experience the highest deprivation rate of any demographic at 45.4%.⁵⁶ In 2022, almost half (48.6%) of those who are unemployed were in deprivation⁵⁷ as were 44.3% of those who were unable to work due to long-standing health problems, while 2022 saw a marked increase in the number of people over the age of 65 living in poverty.⁵⁸

9,836

At the end of 2022, there were 9,836 children waiting more than 12 months for an assessment of need.

51 <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/education/2022/07/26/it-has-gone-beyond-crazy-large-majority-of-parents-worry-about-back-to-school-costs-amid-cost-of-living-crisis/>

52 [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Evaluation+of+the+National+Youthreach+Program-me%E2%80%9D+\(2019\)+Research+Series+Number+82.&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Evaluation+of+the+National+Youthreach+Program-me%E2%80%9D+(2019)+Research+Series+Number+82.&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar)

53 David Murphy, 'Close to 10,000 children waiting over 12 months for disability assessment – HSE' RTE (6 February 2023) <<http://bit.ly/3IdqzOv>> accessed 9 February 2023.

54 https://www.childrensrighs.ie/sites/default/files/submissions_reports/files/Report%20Card%202023_0.pdf

55 2021 CSO SILC as mentioned in <https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-10/2022-10-05%20SJI%20Poverty%20Focus%20October%202022%20PDF.pdf>

56 <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silced/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilcenforceddeprivation2022/>

57 Enforced deprivation refers to those who cannot afford two or more of the eleven items considered essential: Two pairs of strong shoes; A warm waterproof overcoat; Buy new (not second-hand) clothes; Eat meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day; Have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week; Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money; Keep the home adequately warm; Buy presents for family or friends at least once a year; Replace any worn out furniture; Have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month; Have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight for entertainment

58 <https://www.eapn.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Briefing-on-2022-Income-Poverty-and-Inequality-data.pdf>



Meeting Ireland's International SDG Obligations

Although Irish Official Development Assistance (ODA) continues to be well regarded for being poverty focused, untied, and fully grant based, the State is yet to live up to a long-standing commitment to contribute 0.7% GNI to ODA. Ireland's commitment under Agenda 2030 to reach a level of ODA that is 0.7% of national income by 2030 is separate and distinct from the commitment made in the Paris Agreement in 2015, in which countries of the Global North agreed to provide Climate Finance of \$100 billion to countries of Global South annually. However, the 2020 Programme for Government committed to double the Climate Finance proportion of ODA by 2025 and stated that 10.18% of ODA was Climate Finance.

The blurring of these two distinct agreements is unacceptable. We know that those who have done the least to cause climate change are the

ones who suffer its impacts the most. Ireland must continue to increase its climate finance contributions separately and in addition to increasing its ODA commitments, including financing the Loss and Damage fund.

What's more, the need for a mechanism to ensure government policies are coherent and align with the SDGs was highlighted again this year, when the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed 'serious concern' at the negative consequences of Irish international tax policy on children in countries of the Global South.⁵⁹ The importance of a policy coherence mechanism to avoid such contradictory policy objectives is repeated and developed further in this document's recommendations.

48.6%

In 2022, almost half (48.6%) of those who are unemployed were in deprivation.

0.7%

The State is yet to live up to a long-standing commitment to contribute 0.7% GNI to ODA.

⁵⁹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FIRL%2FCO%2F5-6&Lang=en: "Ensure that tax policies do not contribute to tax abuse by companies registered in the State party but operating in other countries, leading to a negative impact on the availability of resources for the realisation of children's rights in those countries."



Case Studies

The case studies that follow were contributed by members and allies of Coalition 2030. Contributors were asked to provide real life examples of people that could illustrate the particular challenges that certain sections of Irish society face. Where possible, contributions have been in the first person and are of similar length. Where additional words have been required to make a complete case study these have also been included. The identities of all the contributors have been kept confidential.

They each describe very different contexts, and articulate unique experiences of what it means to be left behind. But what is common to each is a failure of State policy to address their needs with adequate ambition, with measures that are appropriate and sustained and are grounded in human rights and aligned with the SDGs.

1. Disabled person

Ireland has the highest percentage (37.8%) of people with disabilities at risk of poverty in Western Europe.⁶⁰ This is one of the highest percentages in the EU, almost 10% higher than the EU average. 31% of working age disabled people were at work compared to 71% of those without a disability. Ireland's employment rate for disabled people is one of the lowest in the EU, 20% lower than the EU average.

John, 35, has a brain disorder. He is seeking part time employment.

I live alone so I'm on the living alone allowance, and I get the fuel allowance, and I'm on disability payment also, but a lot of that money goes very fast, living alone I'm using a lot of it every month on household bills and shopping and then money drains down too fast a lot of the time.

I'd like to get a part time job, but my disability doesn't help much - having a brain disorder, going for interviews, the person might say this person is not right, or anything.

I'd still be kind of worried, like, if I was going into something, they say, with that kind of disability we just can't take the risk.

And then sometimes with a disability a full time job can be difficult to manage but that doesn't mean that I don't want to work. I would love to have a permanent, meaningful job that can make allowances for someone like me with a disability.

I'd like the government to be more aware of people with disabilities, and give them more of a chance to get work, instead of brushing them aside, and I have a lot of friends who feel that's happening to them, that the government isn't taking any interest

Policy recommendations:

- Benchmark core social welfare rates to a level that is adequate to lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL).
- Introduce a cost-of-living disability payment.
- Introduce a living wage based on cost of living as per recommendations from the Living Wage Technical Group.
- Facilitate access through reasonable accommodations to further and higher education and transition to employment for persons with disabilities.

⁶⁰ <https://www.esri.ie/news/new-esri-ihrec-research-shows-people-with-disabilities-much-more-likely-to-experience>

2. Residents and former residents of the Direct Provision System

“I was like thinking about like leaving this life...is better like to die...I was even thinking to commit suicide.”

Ireland’s reception system for asylum seekers is known as Direct Provision. People are accommodated across the country in communal institutional settings or former hotel style settings. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties identifies that the system violates multiple human rights.⁶¹ Of the approximately 7000 residents in Direct Provision, approximately 30% are children. Children have been born and raised living in these conditions, the long-term developmental effects of which are still unknown.⁶² A government-commissioned independent report published in 2020⁶³ called for an end to direct provision while the Programme for Government commits to ending Direct Provision and replacing it with a human rights centred, not for profit model.⁶⁴

The following case studies were provided by Youth Work Ireland, and are directly from young people living in Direct Provision (DP) or that recently left DP.

“I found out a family had been in DP for 12 years, the youngest son had been there his whole life, I was not really feeling hopeful...I was like, if he has been here his whole life, what about our family, like, how is that going to work out?”

“Sometimes I feel like I live in an open prison, I’m not able to do whatever I want, I have no control, no power, no freedom.”

“I live in direct provision and I’ve lived there for almost five years. Sometimes we want to cook stuff and bake stuff and we can’t really do it there because we don’t have an oven. I am a very introverted person and I don’t go out in town a lot and I do feel lonely whereas when I go to school I have my friends. It really helps me with um just getting my mind off the negative things and just focusing on the positive...I want to be free, I want to be out. I’m going to have my own home, have my own kitchen, have my own living room... yeah I think that will feel a lot better.”

“I’m learning French in school. We were supposed to have trips where we were going around the world. We had one when we were supposed to go to France but I don’t have the right papers to go to France.”

“...I was like thinking about like leaving this life... is better like to die...I was even thinking to commit suicide.”

Policy recommendations:

- Follow through on the commitment in the Programme for Government to end Direct Provision and replace it with a not for profit system centred on human rights.

61 <https://www.iccl.ie/direct-provision/>

62 <https://doras.org/direct-provision/#:~:text=Children%3A%20c.,of%20which%20are%20still%20unknown.>

63 <https://nascireland.org/sites/default/files/Report%20of%20the%20Advisory%20Group%20on%20the%20Provision%20of%20Support%20including%20Accommodation%20to%20Persons%20in%20the%20International%20Protection%20Process.pdf>

64 This case study is taken from a video created by Youth Work Ireland highlighting young people’s experiences of the DP system <https://www.youthworkireland.ie/waiting-waiting-waiting/#:~:text=Young%20People’s%20Experiences%20of%20Direct,lived%20experiences%20of%20Direct%20Provision.>

3. Poverty

“This isn’t a life. It’s not one worth living.”

A shortage of homes strikes at the fabric of communities, affecting people’s health, damaging familial and societal cohesion, and undermining human rights.⁶⁵ The implications of this are felt not just in the lack of quality public housing and affordable homes, but also in mental health outcomes, levels of inequality, and uneven educational opportunities.⁶⁶

I am a Community Development worker, activist, and person of experience—Lesley

“When I was asked to give my experience of living in poverty, I was reluctant as it stirs up a lot of emotions: shame, stigma, embarrassment, failure. I have spent my life thinking, why me? Why am I struggling? Why are my children suffering? We work hard for low-income jobs. It takes a major impact on your mental health.

We live in social housing. We would never be in a position to afford or be considered for a mortgage. We pay our rent weekly by direct debit. If we did not pay each week we would be evicted from our home.

I feel let down by the system, I feel left behind, I feel it’s my fault I was not born into better circumstances to provide better for my children.

With the energy prices rising there have been nights where I’ve not slept because of the fear of what I will cut next from the tight budget we already live on. An

expense like the washing machine needing to be fixed, a car tyre, can mean no food shopping or no heating for a week. This isn’t a life. It’s not one worth living.

In Ireland and Europe, we are failing on the Sustainable Development Goals. It is the responsibility of the Irish government to fund the building of affordable and efficient housing. An adequate income is a million miles away. The money is there. The services are there. But if they are not held accountable nothing will ever change. They must live up to the pledges and promises made to a worldwide audience and actually achieve the targets they set themselves.”

Policy recommendations:

- Significantly increase investment in autonomous community development including further expanding the Community Development Pilot Programme.
- Benchmark core social welfare rates to a level that is adequate to lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.
- Increase the provision of direct build social and affordable housing as provided by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies, with a specific focus on housing units offering tenants a differential rent as opposed to market-based rent setting, particularly for the benefit of households on low incomes and living in poverty and those requiring special needs housing.⁶⁷

65 Many commentators believe the official CSO figure of approximately 11,000 homeless to be significantly underestimated. Including those on housing waiting lists, in receipt of some form of housing or rental assistance and those living in housing insecurity, the figure is thought to be closer to 270,000 households - or half a million people - based on an interview with Rory Hearne, University of Maynooth, March 2023

66 <https://www.into.ie/2022/11/22/housing-crisis-threatens-education-system-unions/>

67 https://www.eapn.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/EAPN_Watch_2022-Final.pdf

4. Housing

“Every single day I was ringing places up, and no reply, nothing.”

Ireland is experiencing a severe accommodation crisis with almost 12,000 people in emergency accommodation at the time of writing.⁶⁸ The failure to build enough social and affordable homes, a lack of a ban on ‘no-fault evictions’,⁶⁹ and policies that have encouraged the financialisation of housing have been significant factors in this.

Adam is in employment and is staying at Cork Simon’s Night Light emergency accommodation service. He cannot find a place to live.

“The situation was our landlord wanted us out of there. I was online looking for accommodation for over six months. It’s ridiculous. It can go from anything from €1200 to €3000. Every single day I was ringing places up, and no reply, nothing. This (Nightlight Emergency Accommodation) is great for me, seriously, but it’s no way to live. You know what I mean like, on the floor, sleeping on the floor. I know two people, other than myself, who are full time in jobs, that have to live here, like, you know. They’re stuck because they can’t get accommodation. We’ve got everything packed, everything’s packed away, except for the bare essentials - what we need day to day, so we’re ready to move.”

Policy recommendations:

- Build more quality social and affordable homes.
- Underpin housing policy with the recognition of housing as a human right.
- Ensure tighter regulation of the presence of vulture funds in Ireland, including a limit of the number in operation and their capacity to acquire residential debt, as well as closing any loopholes that facilitate tax avoidance.

- Improve protection for tenants at risk of eviction due to unaffordable rents, or the retrofitting of properties by landlords.
- Invest one-off windfall tax revenue into one-off investment in addressing our infrastructure deficits, starting with the social housing deficit.

The following case studies have been provided by Saint Vincent de Paul members:

“A family we helped attend summer camp in our local resource centre did not participate in an end of week outing to a leisure centre. Members found out later that the parent had no way of drying towels in the hotel room and felt embarrassed by this fact and didn’t send her children on the swimming trip as a result.”

“We supported a lone parent with 4 children in emergency accommodation. She had to leave the family home due to domestic violence. They were accommodated 26 miles from the children’s school. They missed breakfast in the hotel as they had to leave so early to make school on time.”

Policy recommendations:

- Urgently increase the number of social and affordable housing being built. And as well as direct builds by Local Authorities, funding should be made available to bring vacant properties back into use.
- Improve access to safe and stable housing across all housing types for victims of domestic violence.
- Urgently increase the number of refuge beds available to victims of domestic abuse in line with the State obligations under the Istanbul Convention.⁷⁰

68 <https://homelessnessinireland.ie/>

69 <https://www.thejournal.ie/how-irish-tenant-rights-compare-with-european-countries-6026428-Mar2023>

70 Istanbul Convention, or The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence https://www.safeireland.ie/policy-publications/#dfliip-df_9252/1/

5. Education

“His parents had no choice but to take him out of school completely.”

State failure to provide timely assessment of needs for children may be in contravention of the State's obligations under the Disability Act, 2005, and under UNCRC, and UNCRPD.⁷¹ Failure to provide timely assessments can also impact on a child's ability to access other supports such as speech and language therapy which can play a crucial role in the child's future development.

This case study was provided by a Junior Infants teacher in a DEIS primary school in Tallaght, Dublin.

“At the start of the school year I had a child in my class who had very clear signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD (non-verbal, hyper-sensitive and a flight risk). He had been waiting for four years for an assessment and his parents delayed him starting school for fear of his inability to cope within a mainstream class environment, as without a diagnosis he was not entitled to any official support. The school however was able to provide two hours a day of one-on-one support, meaning he had to be on a half day of school due to being a flight risk. Even with this extra support the child ended up having a psychotic breakdown due to his inability to cope within a mainstream school environment. Psychiatric professionals strongly advised that the child be enrolled in a Special Education Needs (SEN) school. However, as he has not received a diagnosis, no support can officially be provided for him, no SNA, no place in an ASD class in a mainstream school and no place in a SEN school. His parents had no choice but to take him out of school completely. The six-year old child has been waiting four years for an assessment, has had a psychotic breakdown which hospitalised him, and is now

currently receiving no education because he is still waiting for an assessment.

I see the backlog of assessments being compounded by the housing crisis. Children growing up in emergency accommodation experience developmental impacts which can manifest as poor gross motor skills and core strength due to not having enough space to run/crawl/play. Having weak core strength affects their fine motor skills, which affects their ability to hold a pencil. Noise in the emergency accommodation hubs means we're also frequently seeing children who are tired and not able to fully engage with learning and can often be in low or distressed moods.”

Policy recommendations:

- The Government should publish a workforce planning strategy to improve the staffing levels on the CDNTS,⁷² focusing on recruitment and retention. Pay disparity between section 38 and 39 health sector organisations⁷³ should be addressed, as well as issues of career progression and staff support.⁷⁴
- Children who have the most significant needs should be supported and prioritised. These include children with psychosocial disabilities and intellectual disabilities, children without a functioning communication system, and children who are out of school due to complex issues.
- Services should be based on children's needs, and not on whether a child is in a special school/ at home.⁷⁵

71 https://www.childrensrightrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions_reports/files/Report%20Card%202023_0.pdf

72 Children's disability network teams

73 Section 38 organisations are mostly funded by the State to carry out health services. Section 39 organisations are partly funded by the State, and have to raise additional money themselves.

74 <https://inclusionireland.ie/news-events/childrens-disability-network-teams-national-staff-census-and-workforce-review/>

75 Case study provided by Inclusion Ireland.

6. Older People

“They have cut back on socialising to reduce the cost of petrol.”

Most older persons are on modest or low incomes, and they will find it hard to cope with the severe price increases we are seeing now, on top of last year’s price hikes. In the past, the Government guaranteed a quantity of energy to every older person, to make sure that they could keep their homes warm. From 1968 to 2013, older persons were granted up to 2,400 units of electricity per year, or the equivalent of gas, which protected them from price rises, including the oil crisis of the 70s and other economic shocks. There is a need for the Government to return to a policy of giving older persons a guaranteed quantity of energy to meet their basic needs.

The following is a composite case study based on real people who have spoken to Age Action staff and/or who responded to Age Action’s pre-budget survey in 2022.

Joe and Marie are in their 80s and living in the same home they moved into when they married in 1963. At the time their house was modern, but by today’s standards, the house is poorly insulated and draughty. As they have gotten older they have struggled to keep their home warm. Since the cost of living crisis, their situation has worsened. They are also worried about the long term as they hear about other people reducing their energy costs by switching to renewables and wonder if they will be stuck with coal and oil.

Although they have no other income than the State Pension, they are not eligible for the Fuel Allowance payment because they have a niece living with them and the rules exclude households with additional adults, even if they are not making a contribution to the household’s expenses. Because Joe and Marie do not receive Fuel Allowance, they are not eligible for the free scheme of home insulation from the

SEAI. They also didn’t benefit from the lump sum payments that went to Fuel Allowance recipients in 2022, despite seeing the cost of home heating oil nearly double.

They rarely put the heating on now, and just have a small electric heater in one room. They added extra layers and rugs to keep warm during the winter. Joe and Marie are concerned that their second-hand car is coming to the end of its useful life, but there is no way they can meet the expense of replacing it. They are more than 2 km away from their nearest bus stop. They have cut back on socialising to reduce the cost of petrol. Joe and Marie are embarrassed to ask the niece who lives with them for a lift for what they feel are ‘frivolous reasons’ as she is studying hard for professional exams. They only ask for a lift for hospital visits and other unavoidable trips. Joe and Marie need help to insulate their home, and they need help to afford to replace their second-hand car. The cold and the lack of socialisation is having a negative effect on their physical and mental health.

Policy recommendations:

- Revise the rules for Fuel Allowance eligibility to create an energy guarantee for older persons.
- This should be a cash payment sufficient to cover both standing charges and a set amount of energy (with the cash amount rising and falling with energy prices).
- It should provide for tiered payments and extend eligibility to older persons in poorly insulated housing as well as to those on lower incomes.
- Unfair exemptions from Fuel Allowance should be removed, such as cases where additional adults live in a household but are not able to contribute financially.

7. Climate and Environment

At the root of energy poverty is the reality that too many households do not have sufficient income to meet their basic needs. Households are being forced to make a choice between eating or heating their homes. Lone parents are particularly vulnerable and have seen the most dramatic increase in energy poverty, with more than 1 in 5 households unable to keep their home warm enough (21.5% in 2022, rising from 7.9% in 2021).⁷⁶

The following case study was contributed by a Community Worker in a Family Resource Centre in the Midlands.

“Marie is a 24-year-old lone parent with one child aged six. She lives in a small rented house in a rural town of North Longford. She uses a solid fuel stove for heating and hot water. She spends a minimum of €42 per week on a bag of coal to keep her home warm. She does not own a car so she buys the coal in a local filling station. Her rent is €70 per week, which is already a significant portion of her income. Marie receives a lone parent’s allowance of €230 per week, which is not enough to cover all her basic needs, including food, clothing, transportation costs, pay as you go electricity metre, and other household expenses. Marie suffers with asthma and inflammation of the chest wall, realistically she knows she needs to move away from solid fuels for her health and the environment, but currently has no choice. The cost of heating her home is a significant burden for Marie. She often struggles to afford enough coal to keep her and her child warm during the colder months.”

Policy recommendations:

- Implement and ring fence a windfall tax on the profits made by energy companies and energy suppliers for the duration of the energy crisis, and put this directly into supporting those suffering from energy poverty.
- The eligibility criteria for the SEAI’s Warmer Homes scheme for 100% grants should be expanded to include tenants who receive Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).
- Local Community Energy Advisors should be introduced by the SEAI across all counties/local authorities to increase awareness amongst hard-to-reach energy users.
- Social welfare rates to be benchmarked against the Gross Average Industrial Earnings⁷⁷

“Marie suffers with asthma and inflammation of the chest wall, realistically she knows she needs to move away from solid fuels for her health and the environment, but currently has no choice.”

⁷⁶ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silced/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilcen-forceddeprivation2022/>

⁷⁷ <https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-09/Budget%202023%20Analysis%20-%20Full%20Document.pdf>

8. Lone Parents

*Lone parents are particularly affected by the housing crisis. Lone parents report some of the lowest rates of homeownership and some of the highest rates of private rented accommodation and Local Authority housing. Lone parent families were also overrepresented amongst homeless families, and in the housing waiting list.*⁷⁸

Single mother of one, Dublin. Case study supplied by One Family.

“I’m a single parent and I’m working full-time. After I pay my rent and bills, I have €42 left. I have no savings or safety net. I’m currently in an apartment, our second in six years. I’m currently in a HAP apartment but HAP doesn’t cover our rent and I must supplement it every month. We have a 2-year contract with the landlord, but he isn’t obliged to continue it after that so there’s a constant worry. Homelessness is a realistic alternative. Today rental properties are low and many landlords continue not to accept HAP.

I’ve been on the housing waiting list for 11 years and am still not close to being housed. I continue to be in the high hundreds on the lists. I had an

interview for an affordable home with a 25 year lease a few months ago. The interview was held in the middle of the day, so I had to take time off work. I was then asked very personal questions in an interview, and I’ve heard absolutely nothing back. When I contacted the housing association (Fingal) for an update, I was told it’s a process and to continue to apply for properties.”

Policy recommendations:

- Social welfare rates should be benchmarked against the Gross Average Industrial Earnings.⁷⁹

“I’m a single parent and I’m working full-time. After I pay my rent and bills, I have €42 left. I have no savings or safety net.”

⁷⁸ https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/BKMNEXT413_1.pdf

⁷⁹ <https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-09/Budget%202023%20Analysis%20-%20Full%20Document.pdf>

9. Meeting International SDG Obligations

Racial and ethnic discrimination is widespread in Latin America, but indigenous and Afro-descendent groups experience worse poverty levels and are excluded from access to quality basic services, land, decent employment opportunities and the political system. Understanding the ways in which different inequalities intersect and affect people's lives is vital to tackle effectively the root causes of inequality in the region, and to reach the furthest behind first.

Intersecting inequality in the Dominican Republic⁸⁰

The uneven economic and social development between the neighbouring countries of Haiti and Dominican Republic has led to a steady stream of Haitians migrating to the Dominican Republic, hoping that this relatively richer country will provide them with economic opportunities not available at home. Despite the contribution they make to the growing Dominican economy, Haitian migrants and their descendants represent the poorest of the poor. They are treated unequally and suffer widespread racism and discrimination because of their country of origin and the colour of their skin.

Although Goal 16 of the SDGs (peace, justice and strong institutions) is to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration by 2030, thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent (Dominico-Haitians) live without recognition of Dominican nationality and have no access to social services based on their perceived or actual lack of legal status in the country. The situation for Dominico-Haitian women is even worse than for men. Women who are poor, uneducated and black, often living in rural areas, face further discrimination and marginalisation due to the way these different inequalities intersect and impact on their lives. Often women will develop relationships with men to establish a male figure in their life who can protect them from local persecution and support them in obtaining their ID papers in the Dominican Republic. Persecution

against these women can take different forms. Some living alone were obliged to leave their communities to go to Haiti, a country they did not know much about, except that their grandparents came from there. In the bateyes (former sugarcane plantations), where many live, 43% of children under five have no birth certificate and 35% of over-16s have no identification papers. A lack of ID excludes them from senior school, formal work, marriage, university, opening a bank account and other civil activities.

Policy recommendations:

- Ireland should invest in the collection of disaggregated data required to track progress on the SDGs at an international level and support its partner countries to develop national 'leave no one behind' action plans.
- Ireland's international development programme should continue to prioritise spending on basic services and increase a focus on social protection programs if it is to ensure that those furthest behind are reached first.
- To meet its commitment to those who are furthest behind globally, Ireland needs to urgently meet the target of spending 0.7% of GNI on Official Development Assistance (ODA) and ensure that this spending is targeted to those least developed countries.
- To reach the furthest behind e.g. girls and women, people with disabilities, refugees and those who are displaced within their own countries, Ireland must invest in local and women-led organisations that can deliver effective, community led solutions in order to accelerate progress.
- Ireland should use its unique role as co-chair of the SDG summit, to lead and revitalise global cooperation on the SDGs. This is a significant opportunity for Ireland to communicate the country's commitment to multilateralism and the shared values of human rights, justice and dignity for all people.

Conclusion

The worsening of poverty rates, the destruction of the biosphere, and the continued marginalisation of certain groups is clearly never the intention of policy makers. Nevertheless, these are outcomes that are a result of policy choices, and are more likely to occur when policy decisions are not guided by principles such as sustainable development and human rights as provided for by the SDG framework.⁸¹

This document makes the case that Ireland's commitment to the SDGs internationally is not matched by comparable action at home. Structural impediments to effective implementation of the Goals have contributed to leaving sections of society struggling to live life to their full potential, and to a sense that they are being left behind.

The case studies profiled are examples of just some of those furthest behind in Irish society. While each person represents a very different context, what they all have in common is that an absence of targeted, adequate, sustained, and human rights-based policy-making has left them behind. We can not ever claim to have met the SDGs without those on the margins, those furthest behind, being included.

Encouragingly though, unblocking the obstacles impeding SDG implementation is within the State's gift, and the pathway for achieving rapid SDG delivery is outlined in our five key recommendations. Whether or not these recommendations are implemented however is a question of political will and political leadership. If poverty is a political choice, then the solution to poverty is also a political choice.

With only seven years until the expiry of the Goals, now is the time for Ireland to be ambitious, courageous and visionary. It is time to go beyond rhetoric, and to move rapidly to the implementation of policy choices underpinned by human rights and cathedral thinking that not only reach the furthest behind first, but create an environment in which Ireland really does play a leading role in creating a sustainable and equitable future for people in Ireland, and around the globe.

“With only seven years until the expiry of the Goals, now is the time for Ireland to be ambitious, courageous and visionary.”

⁸¹ Poverty is a political choice, is a point made by former UN Special Rapporteur Prof Philip Alston, in his final report to the UN Human Rights Council <https://chrgj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Alston-Poverty-Report-FINAL.pdf>

Contributing Organisations

Coalition 2030 Members

Domestic Anti-Poverty & Equality Organisations

80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World
Akidwa
Alcohol Forum
All Together in Dignity
AONTAS
Baby Feeding Law Group Ireland
Children's Rights Alliance
Community Work Ireland
Development Perspectives
Disability Federation of Ireland
European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland
Global Citizenship Schools
Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILM)
Irish Family Planning Association
Irish Rural Link
Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
National Adult Literacy Agency
National Women's Council of Ireland
(membership of over 160 member organisations)
National Youth Council of Ireland
(membership of over 50 member organisations)
Pavee Point
Simon Communities
Spun Out
Social Justice Ireland
TASC *(Think Tank for Action on Social Change)*
The Ladder
The Wheel
(membership of over 2,235 member organisations)
The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice

International non-governmental organisations

Aidlink
Action Aid
Childfund Ireland
Christian Aid
Christian Blind Mission (CBM)
Concern
Comhlámh
Dóchas *(membership of 60 Members and Associate member organisations)*
Fairtrade Ireland
Global Schoolroom
GOAL
Irish Development Education Association
Irish Forum for Global Education
Irish Forum for Global Health
Misean Cara
International Presentation Association
Self Help Africa
Sightsavers
Suas *(& its STAND programme)*
Trócaire
UNICEF
World Vision Ireland

Environmental organisations

Airfield
An Taisce
Carrig Conservation
Cork Environmental Forum
Cultivate *(Sustainable Ireland Cooperative)*
Environmental Pillar
(membership of 29 member organisations)
ECO-UNESCO
Forest Friends Ireland
Friends Of The Earth
Green Foundation Ireland
Global Action Plan
Good Energies Alliance Ireland
Irish Wildlife Trust
Rediscovery Centre
Roscommon Environmental Network
VOICE Ireland
Zero Waste Alliance Ireland

Trade unions

Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland
Fórsa
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
(consisting of 44 unions affiliated to Congress and representing over 800,000 workers)
Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

Academic institutions

Trinity International Development Initiative, Trinity College Dublin
National University of Ireland Galway
Centre for Youth Research and Development, Maynooth University.
UNESCO Chair - Munster Technological University

Allied organisations and individuals that contributed to this report

Age Action
One Family
Saint Vincent de Paul
Inclusion Ireland
Dr. Rory Hearne, Maynooth University
Threshold
Youth Work Ireland
Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland

