



**European Anti-Poverty
Network Ireland**

Poverty Briefing 2018

**And proposals for a new
Anti-poverty strategy**

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“Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.”

Nelson Mandela

01

Introduction

2017 was an important year. It marked 20 years since Ireland’s first anti-poverty strategy when the Irish Government set its first target for poverty reduction. Over the past 20 years the Government has had mixed results in addressing poverty. Now, in 2018, the Government has committed to producing a new plan to address poverty and social exclusion.

There are now 394,900 people living in consistent poverty. This has a very negative impact on people, families and communities and is unacceptable in one of the wealthier countries in the world.

To make a decisive impact on poverty, any plan has to be ambitious and involve policy measures across a wide range of areas. It has to result in people being removed from poverty and social exclusion in a long-term sustainable way. The new plan therefore has to be rooted in a vision for a society free from poverty and inequality. It will not succeed unless there is a commitment from the highest level of Government to achieving it.

This poverty briefing gives an overview of poverty in Ireland today and how it is experienced by people across a number of different areas. It then makes proposals for a range of policies which are needed if the Government’s anti-poverty plan is to be comprehensive and effective not just in eliminating the consequences of poverty but also its causes.

02

What do we mean by poverty?

Experiencing poverty is not just about lack of income but also about barriers in access to services and opportunities which prevent people from participating

fully in society. It is very connected to the experience of social exclusion and to wider inequalities in society. This is captured in the national definition of poverty:

“People are living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities considered the norm for other people in society.”

Poverty is not inevitable but the result of policy choices. In Ireland poverty levels are officially measured using three main measurements: at-risk of

poverty, material deprivation and consistent poverty (see below and www.eapn.ie).

THE THREE OFFICIAL WAYS OF MEASURING POVERTY

Relative Poverty/At Risk of Poverty

Anyone with an income which is less than 60% of the median (or middle) income is referred to as being either relatively poor or ‘at risk of poverty’. Incomes in households are weighted depending on the number of adults and children to arrive at an equivalised disposable income² for each individual. This was €237.35 per week in 2016, and 16.5% of the population had incomes below this amount.

Material Deprivation

Not being able to afford at least two of the eleven goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living. 21% of the population experienced material deprivation in 2016. The current 11 indicators are shown opposite.

Consistent poverty

People who experience both of the above are considered to be in consistent poverty. 8.3% of the population were in consistent poverty in 2016.

11 INDICATORS FOR MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

1. Two pairs of strong shoes	7. Keep the home adequately warm
2. A warm waterproof overcoat	8. Buy presents for family or friends at least once a year
3. Buy new not second-hand clothes	9. Replace any worn out furniture
4. Eat meals with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day	10. Have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month
5. Have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week	11. Have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight, for entertainment
6. Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money	

03

National and EU commitments to reducing poverty

Ireland set its first poverty reduction target in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in 1997 and a new target in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016. This was updated for 2015-2017.

The poverty target under the National Action Plan for Social Exclusion 2007-2016, also called the ‘national social target for poverty reduction’, is to “reduce consistent poverty to 4 per cent by 2016 (interim target) and to 2 per cent or less by 2020, from the 2010 baseline rate of 6.2 per cent”.

Based on the commitment in the Programme for Government to ‘developing a new integrated framework for social inclusion, to tackle inequality and poverty’ the Government is now in the process developing a new anti-poverty strategy.

In addition to the commitments at national level, the Irish Government, along with all other EU member states, has also signed up to the Europe 2020 Strategy. This strategy contains five targets which they agreed to achieve by the year 2020. One of these targets is to “lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or social exclusion by 2020³”. When the target was set there were an estimated 115.9 million people in poverty or social exclusion in the EU’s 27 member states. The target is therefore to reduce this to 95.9 million people or less by 2020. However, in 2016 there were almost 117 million people in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion, almost 1 million more than when the target was set⁴. Croatia joined the EU since the target was set and there are more than 1 million additional people in poverty and social exclusion in that country.

National poverty reduction target
“Reduce consistent poverty to 4 per cent by 2016 (interim target) and to 2 per cent or less by 2020, from the 2010 baseline rate of 6.2 per cent”

In 2014 the Government also set a child poverty target. This target is “to lift over 70,000 children (aged 0-17 years) out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level⁵”. In 2016 there were around 141,700 children in consistent poverty, 34,700 more than when the target was set.

As an additional national commitment to reducing poverty, the Irish Taoiseach and President were among the world leaders of nearly 200 countries which signing up to the UN ‘Global Goals’ (Sustainable Development Goals) in September 2015 which include the overall goal of “ending of poverty in all its forms⁶”.

1. Government of Ireland 2007. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016. <http://www.socialinclusion.ie/documents/NAPinclusionReportPDF.pdf>
 2. Disposable income is based on income from work and welfare transfers minus taxes. To get the equivalised disposable income per person the disposable income is divided by the equivalised household size. The equivalised household size is calculated by adding the total weighting given to every person in the household. Weightings are as follows, the first adult (14 years and over) is given a weighting of 1, each additional person 14 and over a weighting of 0.66 and each child under 14 years a weighting of 0.33.

3. At risk of poverty or social exclusion, abbreviated as AROPE, is the calculation used at EU level for the Europe 2020 poverty target and refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (below the 60% poverty line), or severely materially deprived (lacking 4 of 9 items) or living in a household with a very low work intensity (aged 0-59 and the working age members in the household worked less than 20% of their potential during the past year.)

4. Eurostat. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_50&language=en
 5. Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020. http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/cypp_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf
 6. UN Sustainable Development Goals. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

As can be seen in Graph 1 below poverty levels in Ireland have increased dramatically since the crisis began in 2008. One in five of the population in 2016 could not afford 2 of 11 essential items and therefore experience material deprivation. This rises to one in two of those at risk of poverty.

In 2016 almost 16.5% of the population, or more than 785,000 people, were at risk of poverty (or relatively poor) because their disposable income⁷ was below the poverty line of 60% of the middle (median) income of all people in the country. This had grown from 14.4% in 2008. The poverty line in 2016 was €237.35 per week for an individual.

In 2016, 8.3% of the population (around 394,900 people) was in consistent poverty because they were both at-risk of poverty and experienced material deprivation. Despite a small falls in 2015 and 2016 the level is still double that of 2008. The Government has a commitment to reducing this to 4% by 2016 and to at least 2% or less 92,000 people by 2020⁸.

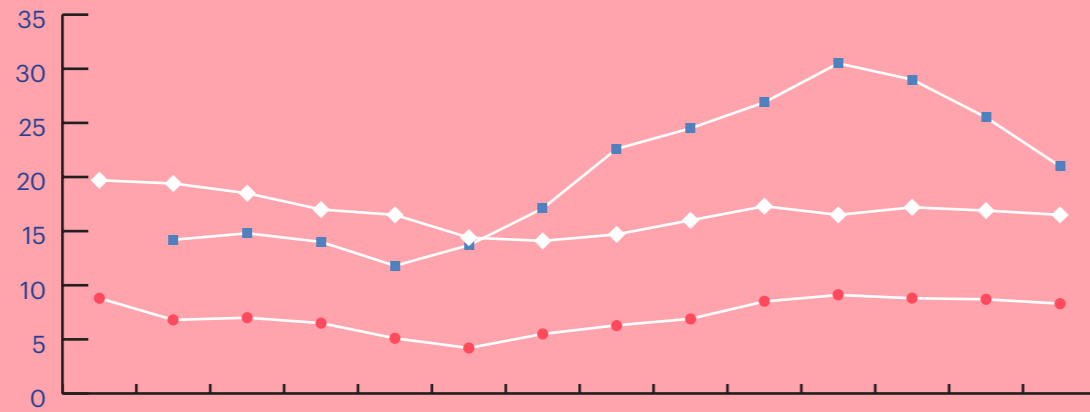
Vulnerable and marginalised groups in society experience higher levels of poverty than the general population. Some of these are captured in the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Survey of Income and Living Conditions add (See Graph 2 below).

There are other groups such as Travellers, homeless people and migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, who experience high levels of poverty but are not captured by official statistics. Poverty is also higher in some geographical areas such as disadvantaged urban areas and many remote rural areas⁹.

education, health, care and other services or face a range of barriers in access to these services and to employment. The Community Platform captures some of this reality through presenting the life stories of a range of people from across the country in 'Now You See Us'¹⁰.

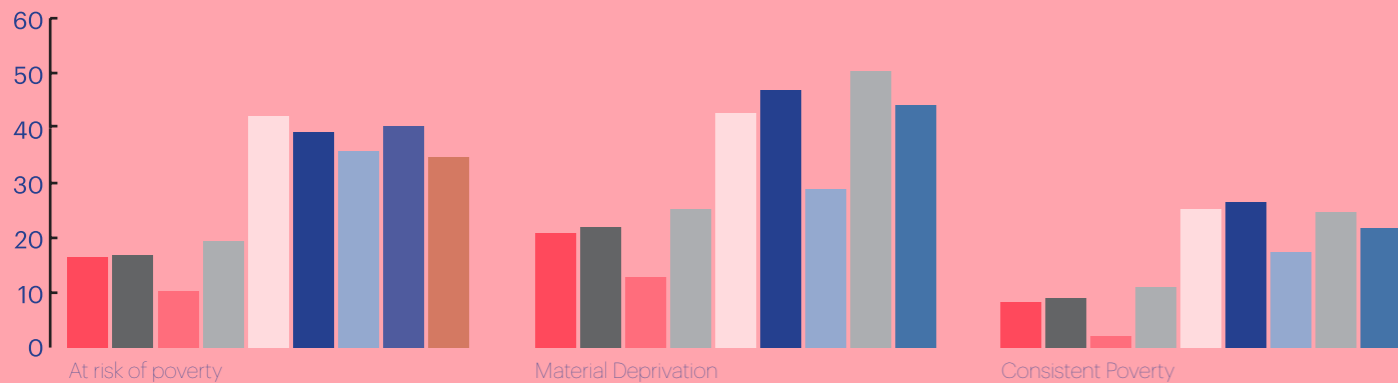
While statistics are important they can only provide a limited view of the reality for people living in poverty. Many people face complex issues linked to a lack of an adequate income, whether in or out of work, lack of access to an adequate level of accommodation,

Graph 1: Poverty levels in Ireland 2003-2016



At risk of poverty	19.7	19.4	18.5	17	16.5	14.4	14.1	14.7	16	17.3	16.5	17.2	16.9	16.5
Material Deprivation		14.2	14.8	14	11.8	13.7	17.1	22.6	24.5	26.9	30.5	29	25.5	21
Consistent Poverty	8.8	6.8	7	6.5	5.1	4.2	5.5	6.3	6.9	8.5	9.1	8.8	8.7	8.3

Graph 2: Poverty levels for selected groups in 2016



All	Women	Older People 65+
Children About <65	Unemployed	Not at work - illness or disability
	1 adult with children	Renting below market rate or rent free

THE CSO SURVEY OF INCOME AND LIVING CONDITIONS SAYS THAT IN 2016:

- » Of those covered in the Survey, single parent households, people not at work through illness or disability, unemployed people and people renting at below the market rate or rent free have the highest poverty levels (see Graph 2).
- » Despite a small decreases in level of the overall population below the poverty line between 2014 and 2016, around four in ten households headed by someone who is unemployed, not at work due to an illness or a disability and households with one adult and children were at-risk of poverty and one quarter of them were in consistent poverty.
- » 20% of the population, including half of those with incomes below the poverty line, are experiencing deprivation, (13.8% in 2008). This is 25.2% for children, 42.6% for those who are unemployed and 50.1% for single adult households with children.
- » One in eight of those at work experienced deprivation in 2016 compared to almost one in 14 in 2008.
- » Social welfare supports reduce at-risk of poverty from 44.9% to 16.3%.

7. Individual disposable income is worked out taking account of the number of people in the house and allocating an amount of the household income to each of them giving different weighting to the first (1.0) and subsequent adults (0.66) and to children under 14 (0.33). This is called the equivalised disposable income.

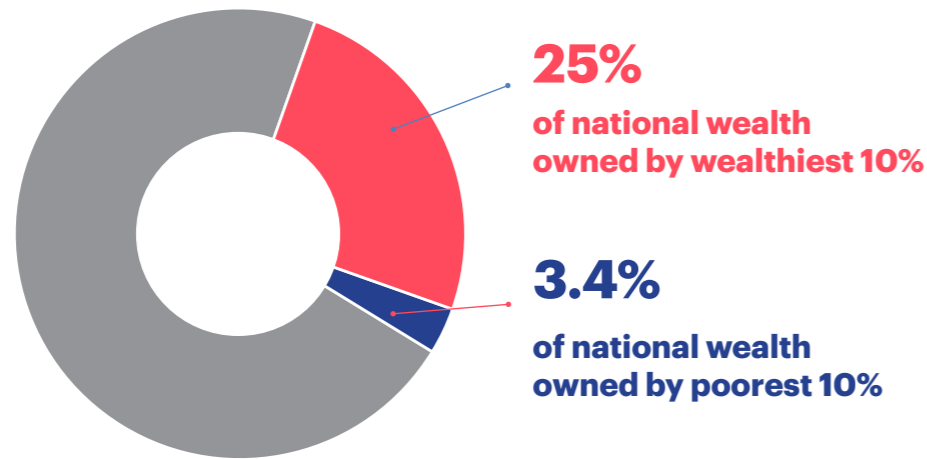
8. Department of Social Protection 2012. National Social Target for Poverty Reduction. <http://www.socialinclusion.ie/NPT.html>

9. Pobal Maps based on the Census data up to 2016 Census measure small geographical areas according to their levels of affluence and deprivation <https://www.pobal.ie/Pages/New-Measures.aspx>

10. Community Platform 2014, Now You See us: The human stories behind poverty in Ireland. <http://communityplatform.ie/now-you-see-us.html>

Poverty and social exclusion have many causes and impact on different people in different ways. This can be because of a lack of access to adequate income, quality services or a decent job. Many people who experience poverty and social exclusion are disempowered and have more limited say in the decisions that impact on their lives. This can have long-term impacts on the social and emotional well-being of people. Poverty and social exclusion are not inevitable but as the result of policies and can only be effectively addressed through tackling their structural causes. The following are some of the issues that face people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in Ireland.

How our national income is shared



INCOME

In 2016, over 785,000 people in Ireland had an income which put them at-risk of poverty. The full social welfare rate of €198 (from March 2018) is €39.35 below the 2016 poverty line of €237.35. The jobseekers rate for those under 26 years and for those 26 years of age are €129.65 and €84.55 respectively below the poverty line. According to the 2017 report on a Minimum Essential Standard of Living, excluding pensioner families, the other ten most common family types depending on social welfare will have a weekly gaps ranging from €15.87 to €229.38 between their income and what they need¹¹.

“It’s hard for people coming from disadvantaged areas where there are very little resources because they can’t access the same opportunities as people from more advantaged areas.”

Focus group participant 2017

INEQUALITY

It has been shown that inequality is bad for societies. While it is a root cause of poverty and social exclusion it not only impacts negatively on those on the lowest incomes but on almost everyone throughout society¹². In 2016 the top 20% of income earners have 4.7 times the income of the lowest 20%¹³. This shows a reduction from 5.1 times in 2014 and is now below the EU average. In 2016 the wealthiest 10% in Ireland had almost one quarter of the national income while the bottom 10% had than 3.4%¹⁴.

In relation to overall wealth, self-employed households had a median (middle) net wealth¹⁵ in 2013 of €307,000 (self-employed people make up 9.1% of all households and 23.3% of all net wealth) while those in the top 20% of households had €207,000. At the other end of the scale households with one adult and children had a net wealth of €1,400 (They made up 4.4% of the population and 0.6% of all net wealth). Those households headed by an unemployed person have a median net wealth figure of €7,200 (12.8% of the population and 3.9% of all net wealth)¹⁶.

The employment rate for lone parents was 56.4% compared to 74.4% for all adults



56.4%

Employment

74.4%



ACCESS TO QUALITY EMPLOYMENT

Employment continued to increase with 2,206,800 people in employment in the third quarter of 2017¹⁷. The employment rate for those aged 15-64 years of age was 68% but there is a large gender employment gap as 62.4% of women are in employment compared to 73.7% of men. There are 438,100 people working part-time. Of these about one quarter are underemployed and so willing and available to work additional hours if they were available.

Unemployment has fallen from over 15% in 2012 to 6.1%, or 143,700 people in January 2017¹⁸ compared to an EU rate of 7.3%. Of those who are unemployed about 4 in 10 are unemployed for more than a year, a fall from around 5 in 10 a year previously, and 34,300 are young people aged 15-24. This is 13.7% of this age group.

In comparing Ireland to the situation in the wider EU, in mid-2017 the employment rate for 15-64 year olds in Ireland was 67.4% compared to 67.7% in the EU 28 and the unemployment rate for those aged 15-74 was 6.9% compared to 7.4% for the EU28.

The overall increase in employment and fall in unemployment generally hides the fact that some groups in society are still being left behind and face particular barriers in accessing and remaining in employment. We know that persistent joblessness is more common for women, older adults, those with lower levels of education, Travellers, adults with a disability and in one-adult households with children. In mid-2016 the employment rate for lone parents was 56.4% compared to 74.4% for all adults in couples with children and 64.7% for the full population¹⁸. In 2011 just 11% of Travellers were in employment compared to a 66% rate for non-Travellers at the time¹⁹. Older and

“The unemployment rate is dropping, so that is good in one sense, but there is still a good number of people out there in the community who are looking for jobs, so jobs is still a big issue”.

Participant at Social Inclusion Forum preparation meeting

longer-term unemployed people are facing ageism in the labour market, even when they have the right qualifications and work experience.

Structural unemployment is an issue that faces many marginalised communities, an issue which needs to be addressed as part of the Action Plan for Jobs. This involves addressing the range of issues facing groups including access to services, discrimination and the deepening skills gap between people living in jobless households and the emerging job opportunities.

While the number of those at work is increasing there are ongoing concerns regarding the quality of employment, including the adequacy of pay. Almost 1 on 4 of those experiencing material deprivation is in work and 1 in 10 of those in consistent poverty²⁰. Before social transfers almost 20% of those in work in 2016 is at risk of poverty with transfers reducing this to 5.6%. While transfers such as in work welfare payments are important they hide the issue of inadequate pay. There is a major gap between the National Minimum Wage of €9.55 per hour and the hourly living wage for a single adult working full time of €11.70 in 2017²¹. The Government has committed to raising the Minimum Wage to €10.50 by 2021. In 2015 Ireland had the third highest proportion of low paid jobs in the OECD with 24% of workers estimated to be on low pay²².

There are also issues regarding the rise in precarious forms of work which have increased over the past number of years²³. These issues need to be addressed if Ireland is to have a sustainable recovery and those in work can earn a decent income.

11. Minimum Essential Budget Standards research Centre 2017. Minimum Essential Standard of Living 2017 Update Report. www.budgeting.ie/publications/mesl-2017-update-report/
 12. K. Pickett and R. Wilkinson 2009, The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better www.equalitytrust.org.uk/resources/the-spirit-level
 13. CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2016. www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditions2016/

14. CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2016.
 15. Net wealth is all forms of wealth including the family home minus any debt.
 16. CSO Household Finance and Consumption Survey 2013 www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/socialconditions/2013/hfcs2013.pdf

17. CSO January 2018. Labour Force Survey Quarter 3, 2017. <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/lfs/labourforcesurveyquarter32017/>
 18. CSO February 2018. Monthly Unemployment January 2018. <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/mue/monthlyunemploymentjanuary2018/>
 19. ESRI 2017. A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland. <https://www.esri.ie/pubs/RS56.pdf>
 20. CSO 2017. Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2016. <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditions2016/>

21. Living Wage Technical Group 2017. <https://www.livingwage.ie/>
 22. OECD. Wage Levels 2015 <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/wage-levels.htm>
 23. University of Limerick 2015. A Study on the Prevalence of Zero Hours Contracts. <https://www.labour.ie/download/pdf/studyontheprevalenceofzerohourscontracts.pdf> and ICTU 2017, Insecure and Uncertain – Precarious Work in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, https://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/precarious_work_final_dec_2017.pdf

In recent years the Government has introduced many measures to support the move from welfare into work. Under the Pathways to Work strategies it has reformed the National Employment Service with the establishment of Intreo offices throughout the country and through JobPath has introduced private companies to deliver employment services to those who are long term unemployed. Those most distant from the labour market however are still dependent on the Local Employment Service, where they exist, and the services delivered through the Social Inclusion and

Community Activation Programme or employability services for people with disabilities. EAPN Ireland's priority is to ensure that everyone who accesses any of these supports will get a quality person centred service that treats them with dignity and respect. The increase in negative conditionality, including cuts to welfare payments (penalty rates), is therefore of concern. From their introduction in 2012 until the end of October 2017 penalty rates have been applied to over 42,000 social welfare recipients. Penalty rates increased ten-fold between 2012 and 2017.

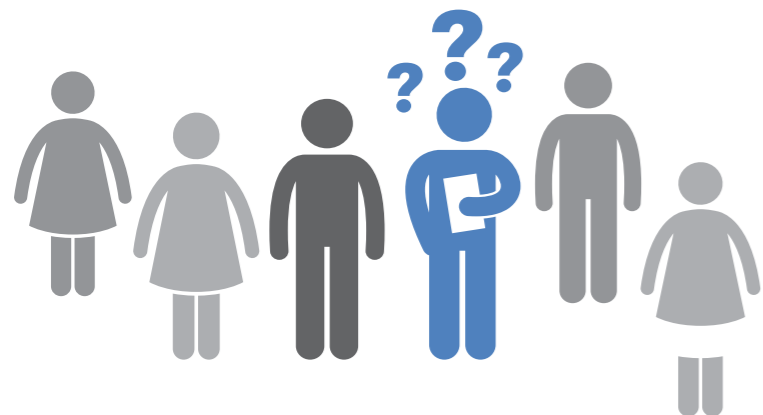
ADDRESSING ADULT LITERACY AND NUMERACY NEEDS

Unmet adult literacy and numeracy needs are a key concern for Ireland as they have devastating consequences for individuals, families, communities, society and the economy. Recent research²⁴ shows that one in six Irish adults (521,550 people) find reading and understanding everyday texts difficult: for example, reading a leaflet, bus timetable or medicine instructions. One in four (754,000 people) has difficulties in real world maths, from basic addition and subtraction to calculating averages.

Ireland's National Skills Strategy sets a target to upskill 165,000 adults with Level 1 or below in literacy, therefore reducing the level from 17.5% to 12% by

2025.²⁵ However, it is proving a challenge to increase the targeted numbers of adults up to level 3. To meet the target Ireland must urgently address the current gap in intensive and flexible adult literacy provision. We need a policy measure that offers all adults with literacy, numeracy and digital needs and less than a QQI Level 4 qualification a high quality and relevant learning programme with a local education and training provider. This would include intensive and flexible options; appropriate supports as required (income, transport, child and elder care), work placement where appropriate and progression opportunities.

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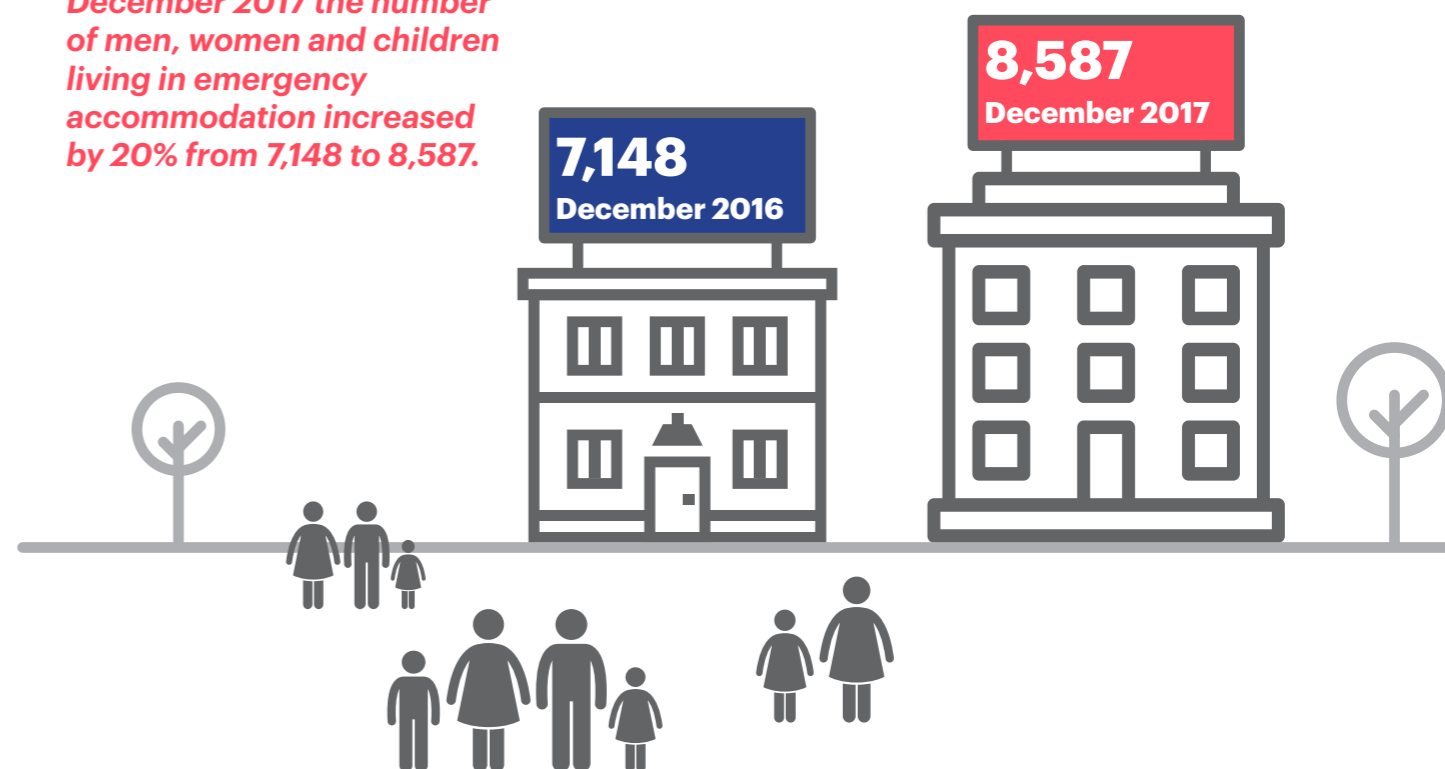
HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The ongoing shortage of affordable private and public housing is causing great difficulty for many individuals and families, directly resulting in homelessness. Delivery on Rebuilding Ireland, the Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness has been slow.

As the months and years progress the homelessness crisis has become much deeper. In the year to December 2017 the number of men, women and children living in emergency accommodation increased by 20% from 7,148 to 8,587. This includes 3,544 adults with no dependents in their care and 1,408 families with 3,079 children²⁶. Many thousands more are experiencing housing insecurity.

The rough sleeper count, which currently only takes place in the Dublin region, is carried out twice a year. The most recent count in April 2017 confirmed that there were 218 people without a safe place to sleep in Dublin City on that particular night. This included 161 people sleeping rough and 57 people sheltering at the Nite Café (DRHE 2017), a 35% increase on August 2016. While 84% of those sleeping rough are men²⁷. A higher proportion of homeless people in Ireland are women compared to other EU countries.

December 2017 the number of men, women and children living in emergency accommodation increased by 20% from 7,148 to 8,587.



According to a count by local authorities in 2016 there are 1,499 Traveller families living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions – 536 were deemed to be on unauthorised sites and 963 sharing houses.

Rebuilding Ireland is overly reliant on the private sector to provide housing. There are at least 90,000 households on Local Authorities housing waiting lists. This includes 7,600 people with disabilities. Rebuilding Ireland strategy only aims to deliver 47,000 social houses by 2021 and the majority of these will be in the private rental sector. Increases in Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment

thresholds in 2016 are welcome but the increase in rent levels, alongside a lack of available rental properties, increasingly makes this an unaffordable option for many families. On 1st February 2018 there were only 3,150 properties available to rent, 20% below the previous record for that time of the year²⁸. 91% of properties available to rent are beyond the reach of people dependent on state housing benefits²⁹. In 2017 Rents increased by 10.4% to €1,277 per month (€1,535 per month in Dublin). Rents are now at their highest levels ever and 19% above their previous peak in 2008³⁰.

DISABILITY

People with a disability face additional daily costs which are not experienced by the general population. These costs are not taken into account in Government policy.

In 2016 only 36% of people with a disability age 20-64 were working compared to 68.5% of the overall population³¹. In 2013 people with disability had a 22% unemployment rate compared to 16% for other adults³².



36%

Employment

68.5%



24. Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012 Survey Results for Ireland: CSO, Dublin
25. Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025

26. Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Homeless Data November 2017. <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>
27. Dublin Region, Spring Count on Rough Sleeping April 2017

28. The Daft.ie Rental Price Report Q4 2017 www.daft.ie/report/2017-Q4-rental-price-daft-report.pdf
29. The Simon Communities, 'Locked Out of the Market VIII: The Gap between Rent Supplement/HAP Limits and Market Rents' (August 2017)
30. The Daft.ie Rental Price Report Q4 2017 www.daft.ie/report/2017-Q4-rental-price-daft-report.pdf

31. CSO, Census 2016 <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=EZ043&PLanguage=0>
32. ESRI and Equality Authority, 2013. Disability in the Irish Labour Market: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Module 2010 <https://www.esri.ie/publications/disability-in-the-irish-labour-market-evidence-from-the-qnhs-equality-module-2010/>

CHILDCARE

Ireland spends 0.5% of GDP on early childhood care and education compared to an OECD average of just over 0.7% of GDP³³. UNICEF recommends a spend of 1% of GDP on childcare. The Government has begun the introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme,

with additional supports for those on low incomes, which could help increase affordability. This Scheme is facing some difficulties in implementation. There will need to be additional resources allocated to implement this Scheme over the coming years.

MIGRATION - ASYLUM SYSTEM/MIGRANT WORKERS

In 2015 the net income of non-Irish nationals in Ireland was 18% lower than that of Irish nationals, an increase from 16% in 2014. While in 2015 there were similar deprivation rates for Irish and non-Irish nationals, 24.1% of non-Irish nationals were at risk of poverty compared to 16.1% for Irish nationals. The consistent poverty levels for non-Irish nationals was 10.1% in 2015 compared to 8.6% for Irish nationals.

Migrants are overrepresented in low-paid sectors of employment, among minimum wage recipients and among those working part-time or unusual hours. Among the underlying factors which put migrants more at risk of poverty include a poorly managed labour migration policy, a lack of planning for economic integration and limited access to social protection.

Policies which limit the mobility of migrant workers or which do not promote the recognition of skills and education funnel migrant families into low-paid jobs and consequently leave them at risk of poverty. Access to social protection is conditioned on the category of immigration status a person has leaving large categories of the migrant population without access to certain basic services which act as a safety net against poverty. Furthermore, the misapplication of the Habitual Residence Condition which has been proven to disproportionately impact on migrant families has been pointed out as another factor leading to homelessness and destitution.

“Undocumented migrants want to be visible and want to participate in the community. We don’t want a barrier between the Irish and the undocumented. We are not criminals, we are human beings”.

Undocumented worker in Dublin

There are an estimated 26,000 undocumented migrants. There are a further estimated 5,500 children with undocumented parents (MRCI, 2014). The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) have identified nearly 200 cases of forced labour over the last decade and referred 30 cases for investigation since enactment of the Human Trafficking Act 2008.

The system of Direct Provision for asylum seekers and its detrimental impact on those who live there have been highlighted repeatedly as a breach of human rights. Asylum seekers in Direct Provision have to live on €21.60 per week.

On 9th February 2018 the Irish Government finally opted into the EU Reception Conditions Directive which will allow asylum seekers to work. This follows a ruling from the Supreme Court that the complete ban was contrary to the constitutional right to seek employment. However the new rules controlling access to employment for Asylum seekers are very strict and effectively continue to exclude the vast majority from employment.

PARTICIPATION

The community sector plays an essential role in providing supports to the most marginalised communities and in ensuring that they have the capacity to have a say in decisions which impact on their lives, resulting in more effective policy making. However, state supports to the community and

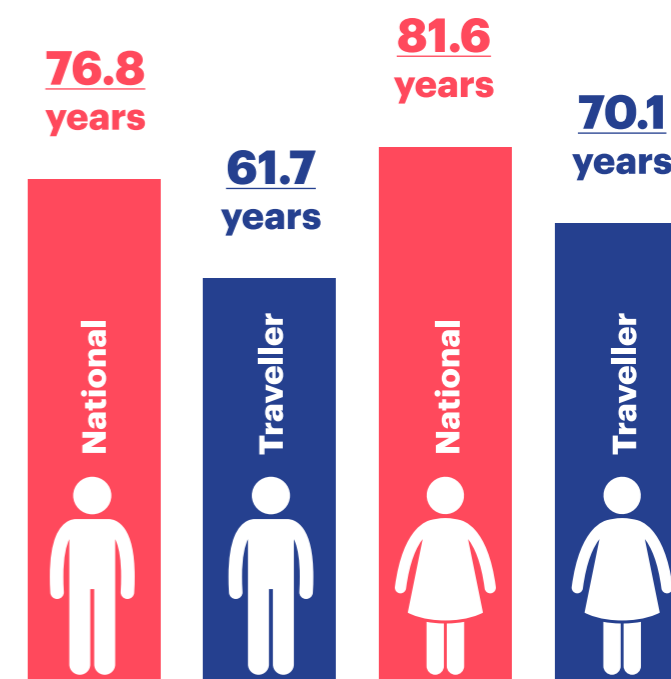
voluntary sector were cut by over 35% between 2008 and 2012. This continued in the subsequent years of austerity³⁴. This has all had a particular negative impact at local level where budgets have been cut and community organisations have lost their autonomy through changes in local structures.

HEALTH

There is a direct connection between poverty, social exclusion and inequality and the worse health outcomes experienced by those living on low incomes and in marginalised communities. This is exacerbated in Ireland by our two tier health system. Life expectancy for men in the most deprived areas is over 4 years shorter than those in the most affluent areas (73.7 compared to 78 years) while the difference for women is 2.7 years (80 compared to 82.7 years)³⁵.

Life expectancy at birth for male Travellers is 61.7 years and for females is 70.1 years compared to 76.8 and 81.6 years respectively for men and women in the population generally³⁶. People living in areas of deprivation have a 39% higher chance of dying of cancer than those living in affluent areas³⁷.

Life expectancy at birth for male Travellers is 61.7 years and for females is 70.1 years compared to 76.8 and 81.6 years respectively for men and women in the population generally



33. OECD, Public spending on early childhood education and care 2013

34. B. Harvey, Irish Congress of Trade Unions Community Sector Committee 2012. Downsizing the Community Sector. <http://www.ceeds.ie/files/resources/downsizingcommunitysector.pdf>

35. CSO 2010. Mortality Differentials in Ireland http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/Mortality_Differentials_in_Ireland.pdf

36. UCD 2010. All Ireland Traveller Health Study Our Geels. http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/AITHS2010_TechnicalReport3_HR_PartA.pdf

37. National Cancer Registry Ireland, 2016

The Government is committed to publishing a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. To be effective and make a serious impact on poverty as outlined above this strategy must be:

A COMPREHENSIVE AND AMBITIOUS STRATEGY

To ensure its implementation the strategy must involve strong political leadership from the top of Government and a commitment across all of Government, not just 'social' ministries, to end poverty.

The section of Government responsible for overseeing the implementation of the new strategy needs to have the capacity, resourcing and authority necessary to ensure its successful implementation across Government.

The poverty reduction target must be at least as ambitious as the current target and be a driver for the policies needed to achieve it.

The strategy must be consistent with and contribute to Ireland's commitment to achieving the goals set out under the Sustainable Development Goals which aims to end poverty in all its forms while 'leaving no one behind'.

Poverty impact assessment is a vital part of a comprehensive strategy. The Programme for Partnership Government commits to develop the process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights. This should build on existing policy which began with the NAPS in 1997, but has been weakly implemented. At the planning and implementation stages all major policies, including budget proposals, should be assessed for their impact on poverty and altered so as to contribute to policy reduction. This process must be open so as to bring it into public and political debate.

The strategy must be designed and implemented with the participation of people affected by poverty at all stages. It must provide resources to support the independent voice of people experiencing poverty and their organisations to develop and participate in decision-making.

A STRATEGY FOR A DECENT INCOME

The strategy must ensure that everyone, in work or out of work, has access to a guaranteed income which allows them to live with dignity. Minimum social welfare levels should be set at a level which is both above the 60% at-risk of poverty level³⁸ and provides people and families with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living³⁹. A new cost of disability payment needs to be introduced. Groups currently excluded from minimum welfare payments, such as asylum seekers, need to be brought into the system.

The strategy must also provide for an information campaign and well-resourced advice and advocacy services to ensure that people are aware of their rights.

See EMIN (EAPN led project): *Roadmap to an adequate minimum income system in Ireland*⁴⁰

A STRATEGY FOR QUALITY JOBS

The strategy must improve the quality of work, which has been eroded during the recession. This means ensuring that those at work are paid at least the Living Wage rate of €11.70 per hour⁴¹ (for an individual working full time) and addressing the causes of precarious work, including zero and low hour contracts. Intreo (welfare to work) and other employment activation services need to develop a supportive culture which empowers people to make positive choices for their futures. The Intreo service needs to be adequately resourced and staff given the level of training needed to provide a person-centred and inclusive service.

See: *EAPN Ireland submission to Action Plan for Jobs 2018, September 2017 and EAPN Ireland Position Paper on Positive Activation, July 2015*⁴²

A STRATEGY FOR QUALITY SERVICES

The strategy must plan for the development of quality services available to all, in areas such as health, housing, care, education, transport etc. All service should be assessed to ensure they are accessible and affordable for those in the most vulnerable communities and groups and those on low income and that issues of discrimination are addressed.

Investment in affordable, accessible and quality early childhood care and education must be increased towards the OECD average of 0.7% of GDP. We need a policy measure that offers all adults with literacy, numeracy and digital needs and less than a QQI Level

4 qualification a high quality and relevant learning programme with a local education and training provider.

The Government must also move to address health inequalities, a key element of which is the immediate implementation of the Slaintecare Report published by the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare.

See: *Community Platform Six principles for an inclusive health policy*⁴³.

A STRATEGY TO END HOMELESSNESS AND ENSURE HOUSING FOR ALL

Strategies to address the housing and homelessness crisis need to be effectively and urgently implemented so as to increase the supply of housing to a level which meets demand and ensures access to affordable housing for everyone. The only long term, sustainable solution to this crisis is to build more social and affordable housing. Local authorities should build and provide social housing in a planned way to meet future needs and approved Housing Bodies must be able to access finance in a way which enables them to play a key role as social housing providers.

Adequate resources must be provided to fully implement a Housing First approach to homelessness. People need to move out of emergency accommodation as soon as possible and not become trapped in homelessness longer than is necessary.

Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment must be maintained at levels which meet market rents so that people can stay in the homes they already have and those in emergency accommodation can move on.

In order to incentivise homeowners to sell, rent, or lease their empty homes back to the State the Repair and Leasing and Buy and Renew schemes need to be more ambitious with higher targets and more attractive to homeowners.

There must be a cross departmental National Homelessness Sub-Strategy, under Rebuilding Ireland, with ring fenced funding for implementation.

An independent Traveller Accommodation Agency must be established to oversee the provision of appropriate and quality accommodation, including Traveller specific accommodation that meets the needs of all Traveller families in a reasonable timeframe.

38. Based on the Survey of Income and Living Conditions this would have been €229.97 in 2015.

39. www.budgeting.ie

40. Roadmap to an adequate Minimum Income for Ireland 2015

41. www.livingwage.ie

42. EAPN Ireland Position Paper on Positive Activation, 2015.

43. Community Platform 2017. Six Principles for an inclusive health policy. <http://www.eapn.ie/eapn/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/community-platform-six-principles-for-an-inclusive-health-policy.pdf>

A STRATEGY BASED ON HUMAN RIGHTS, DIGNITY AND EQUALITY

The strategy must be built from an explicit human rights foundation. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 places a positive duty on public sector bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights, in their daily work. This duty must be supported from the top levels of Government and resources need to be provided to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and civil society organisations to support public sector bodies to implement their duty.

Measures must be taken immediately to hold a referendum on enshrining economic, social and cultural right into the Constitution, as proposed by the Constitutional Convention. Existing legislation on equality and human rights must be strengthened to recognise socio-economic status an additional ground for discrimination.

The strategy must introduce comprehensive legislation dealing with all aspects of immigration and residence, including a fair and pragmatic regularisation scheme for undocumented migrants in Ireland and a fair asylum system.

We must see an end to the direct provision system, a speeded up application process for refugee status and the right for asylum seekers to access adequate social welfare supports. The new rules allowing asylum seekers to work need to be immediately changed to allow asylum seekers a real chance to find employment.

A STRATEGY WHICH WE CAN AFFORD

The strategy must include a five-year plan to bring overall Irish taxation levels from around 30% of GDP per year at present towards the EU average, which is currently just under 40% of GDP. This additional revenue is necessary if we are to invest in the levels of quality public services and social protection we need and have the type of society we want.

This will also help reduce inequality and involve taxes on wealth and financial transactions, increasing employer social insurance contributions and introducing other forms of progressive taxation. Ireland should opt into the Financial Transaction Tax being developed by countries representing over 80% of the Eurozone.

EAPN IRELAND AND THE POLICY GROUP

Established in 1990, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is a network of groups and individuals working against poverty. It is the Irish national network of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN Europe), which has almost three decades of experience in lobbying for progressive social change at European level.

EAPN Ireland supports a network of over two hundred local, regional and national organisations and individuals' committed to tackling poverty through a range of actions including community development, policy analysis and lobbying, campaigning and participation. EAPN Ireland aims to build the capacity of its membership to engage with national and European policy making through training, information dissemination, collective action and networking.

EAPN Ireland convenes a Policy Group from among its members to coordinate our efforts in the fight against poverty and to connect this to EU policy development and their implementation in Ireland. It is made up of representatives of the following organisations:

- Age Action Ireland
- Congress Centres Network
- Disability Federation of Ireland
- EAPN Ireland
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
- National Adult Literacy Agency
- National Youth Council of Ireland
- National Women's Council of Ireland
- One Family
- Simon Communities of Ireland
- SIPTU



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