

# National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030





# Table of contents

|                                                                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Foreword from the Minister                                                        | 2  |
| Vision                                                                            | 3  |
| Introduction                                                                      | 4  |
| Structure of the Strategy                                                         | 5  |
| Background and Context                                                            | 7  |
| Promoting Women's Equality in a Time of Change                                    | 8  |
| How the Strategy was Developed                                                    | 9  |
| Strategic Objectives                                                              | 11 |
| » Being Counted: The people who design our policies and laws take me into account | 11 |
| » Being Me: I can live free of harmful gender norms and stereotypes               | 12 |
| » Being a Leader: I can pursue my ambition and achieve my potential in any field  | 14 |
| » Being Safe: I can live free of violence and harassment                          | 17 |
| » Having a Fair Share: I have a fair share of economic and financial power        | 20 |
| » Being Well: I am enabled to enjoy wellbeing throughout my life                  | 23 |
| » Being Supported: I am supported when I give care and when I need care           | 26 |
| Implementation                                                                    | 29 |
| Monitoring                                                                        | 30 |
| Appendix: Legal and Policy Frameworks referred to in this Strategy                | 31 |

## Foreword from the Minister



I am pleased to present this National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030.

The position of women in Ireland has advanced greatly in recent times. Decades of

progress, enabled by changes in policy and law, and reflecting changing cultural norms, have led us to where we are today: an Ireland where women and girls have opportunities that were not available to previous generations. Much has been done to dismantle the barriers that prevent women from pursuing their ambition and achieving their potential in any field they might wish to, on a par with men. We see women in leadership positions across many sectors. We see girls following their dreams. I celebrate that.

But we know too that much remains to be done to achieve equality between women and men. Women earn less than men. Women do more unpaid caring work than men do. Many sectors of the economy are still male dominated, and even those that aren't tend to have fewer women than men in senior positions. Violence against women and harassment of women remain urgent problems to be addressed.

This Strategy is being adopted at a time when voices opposed to gender equality are growing louder. Particularly in online spaces, regressive attitudes are resurgent. This Strategy reaffirms our commitment to women's equality and our resolve to combat these attitudes, which undermine the rights of women and girls and are harmful to all of us.

This Strategy is for women and girls in all their diversity, and we consulted widely when we were developing it. I would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who took part in our

consultations. It is only through working together that we will realise the vision of the Strategy – an Ireland in which women and girls can thrive in a gender equal society. In the words of Malala Yousafzai, human rights activist, and the youngest-ever Nobel Laureate, “we cannot all succeed when half of us are held back”.

The work we will do across Government to achieve this will make a real difference in the daily lives of women and girls right across the country. Through supports for women to access employment; initiatives to encourage more girls to study STEM and business subjects; improvements to childcare and family leaves; programmes to support women's cultural, social, and sporting participation at all life stages; and measures to combat harmful stereotypes.

My Department, in collaboration with the National Women's Council, will now lead the development of the Strategy's first Action Plan, which will set out the detailed actions to be taken by Government Departments and Agencies in partnership with business and civil society organisations to achieve the Strategy's objectives.

The Ireland of 2025 is a better Ireland for women and girls than the Ireland of 1925. With the work we do now in this strategy, it is our hope and expectation that the Ireland of 2030 will be better still for women and girls. Let the work continue.

## Vision

An Ireland where women  
and girls can thrive in a  
gender equal society



# Introduction

Equality between women and men is a core principle of public policy and law in Ireland. Eradicating discrimination against women and supporting the full and equal participation of women in all areas of life are public policy objectives. The achievement of gender equality requires effort across all areas of public policy, at all levels of Government. This National Strategy for Women and Girls is Ireland's plan for advancing gender equality over the next five years.

In the Programme for Government - *Securing Ireland's Future* – the Government committed to develop a new National Strategy for Women and Girls. This work has been led by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, which is the Department with responsibility for the co-ordination of gender equality policy across Government. Other commitments in the Programme for Government that directly address aspects of gender equality are also included in this Strategy.

This Strategy has been developed in the context of a significant global push back against women's rights and equality, and the equality agenda more broadly. In this context, this Strategy reaffirms the Government's commitment to the advancement of gender equality and the creation of a more equal society.

Ireland's previous National Strategy for Women and Girls was implemented from 2017 to 2021. In developing this new Strategy, we have sought to build on the work carried out under the first Strategy. We have also taken on board lessons learned during the implementation of the first Strategy and findings from evaluations of it. Because of that learning, this new Strategy has a different structure to the previous one. We hope this new structure will make it easier to measure progress achieved under this Strategy. The structure is described below.



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## Structure of the Strategy

The National Strategy for Women and Girls has a single, simple vision:

### An Ireland where women and girls can thrive in a gender equal society

To realise this vision, the Strategy sets seven objectives, each corresponding to one or more areas of women's experience where public policy action is required to address gender inequalities.

- » Being Counted: The people who design our policies and laws take me into account
- » Being Me: I can live free of harmful gender norms and stereotypes
- » Being a Leader: I can pursue my ambition and achieve my potential in any field
- » Being Safe: I can live free of violence and harassment
- » Having a Fair Share: I have a fair share of economic and financial power
- » Being Well: I am enabled to enjoy wellbeing throughout my life
- » Being Supported: I am supported when I give care and when I need care

Detailed objectives are identified to support the achievement of these seven high level objectives. These are contained in the 'Strategic Objectives' section of this document.

The Strategy recognises that women's needs change over the course of their lives. This means that under most of the Strategy's objectives, different actions may be required to meet the needs of women at different stages of the life course. Illustrative examples of this 'life course approach' are given under these objectives.

The objectives will be achieved through actions carried out by public authorities across all areas of Government. This includes Government Departments, State Agencies, and Local Authorities. Two Action Plans will be adopted, one at the beginning of the Strategy period and one at the mid-way point. These Action Plans will set out the specific actions that will be taken to achieve the objectives of the Strategy. Some of these actions will be taken within existing sector specific frameworks, and where this is the case, these are referenced in this Strategy. More information can be found in the 'Implementation' section of this document.

The final section of this document – 'Monitoring' – describes how progress under the Strategy will be measured and reported.



This is a Government Strategy, so it focuses on public policy actions to address gender inequalities. However, it recognises that the achievement of gender equality requires action from all sectors of society, and that civil society organisations have a particular role in promoting it and will be supported to do so. The Strategy envisages that partnerships will be developed with civil society organisations, business organisations, trade unions, and others, to implement specific actions.

While the Strategy is largely focused on domestic policy, it incorporates also the promotion of gender equality as a core foreign policy priority for Ireland. This recognises gender equality as both a fundamental human right and a necessary condition for sustainable global development, in particular through the global Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

# Background and Context

Women's equality is protected in Ireland by law. The Equality Acts have made it illegal to discriminate against women. Ireland is a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which contains legally binding requirements to advance gender equality. As a member of the European Union, Ireland is also legally bound to uphold the fundamental right of women to equality and to implement the gender equality obligations contained in its Directives and funding programmes.

Ireland's previous National Strategy for Women and Girls was implemented from 2017 to 2021. During and since that time, some important steps have been taken to advance gender equality. These include:

- » Leave entitlements for parents were increased.
- » A new National Childcare Scheme was established.
- » *Balance for Better Business* – a partnership initiative of Government and the private sector – was set up to promote women's leadership in business.
- » Gender pay gap reporting was brought in through the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021.
- » The number of women in senior academic leadership increased and the number of women and girls studying STEM subjects grew.
- » Coercive control was made a criminal offence and so was sharing intimate images without consent.
- » A new state agency, Cuan, was established to combat domestic and gender-based violence.
- » Reproductive healthcare was expanded with the introduction of abortion services, and free contraception was rolled out for women aged 17 to 35.
- » The first dedicated Women's Health Action Plan was adopted and implemented.
- » Ireland's first National Policy on Women in Sport was launched.
- » The number of women qualifying for the State pension increased thanks to the introduction of the Total Contributions Approach.
- » MyFutureFund was established to provide for an automatic enrolment retirement savings system from 1 January 2026.

Notwithstanding this progress, data from various sources show that much remains to be done to achieve gender equality in Ireland. It is also clear that gender inequalities and discrimination intersect with other forms of inequality and discrimination in society. For many women and girls, the disadvantage and discrimination they face is made worse by these intersections. Recognising the need to address intersectional discrimination and disadvantage, the implementation of this Strategy will take an intersectional approach, working in tandem with other National Equality Strategies to ensure that specific action is taken to address issues arising for disabled women, LGBTIQ+ women, Traveller, Roma and migrant women, and all other women who face intersectional disadvantage.

# Promoting Women's Equality in a Time of Change

This Strategy recognises that societal and structural changes may pose difficult challenges for women's equality in the period to 2030.

It is possible that the workplace will change fundamentally over the period to 2030 because of artificial intelligence, technological and environmental change and changes in international economic structures and priorities. The Strategy recognises that policy on workplace equality may need to adapt to changing realities for workers, so to ensure that women's situation in the workplace is not disadvantaged.

The changing external environment may affect the economy and the availability and delivery of public and private services. Women and girls may potentially be affected as workers, as consumers and as service users. The Strategy recognises the need to ensure that a gender lens is applied to policy decisions on economic development, public service delivery and access to resources.

It is also possible that communication modes will change over the period to 2030. The Strategy recognises that the rights of women and girls to fair participation and representation in modes of communication will need to be safeguarded.

The Strategy has been developed at a time when voices that do not accept women's right to equality are growing louder as they seek to undermine gender equality and to spread misinformation about women's rights and inclusion. It will be necessary to challenge online discourses that seek to undermine women's rights to full equality. The Strategy recognises the need to communicate to Irish society, to old and young, female and male, rural and urban dwellers, why action on women's equality matters.

Demographic change will also have an impact on women's equality. As our society ages, it is likely that there will be increased pressures on carers, the majority of whom are women, as the percentage of those needing care and support increases.

Climate change has wide-ranging impacts for women and girls. Gender mainstreaming is essential to policy development in respect of climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental protection and nature restoration. Action to address climate change will have impacts on women and girls, with decisions on housing, transport and agriculture affecting their daily lives. Health (physical and mental), wellbeing and care are all strongly impacted by climate and environment.

These factors have helped to inform the development of this Strategy and the selection of its specific objectives.



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## How the Strategy was developed

The development of the Strategy was led by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality. As a National Equality Strategy, this Strategy is underpinned by the values of human rights, equality, and respect for diversity. We have been mindful of these values in our Strategy development process, in particular the need to hear from a diversity of voices when gathering evidence to inform the content of the Strategy.

We consulted with stakeholder groups and members of the public to find out what they felt were the most important issues to be addressed by the Strategy. This consultation offered several opportunities to contribute. These are briefly described below.

We commissioned research and polling company IPSOS B&A to conduct a stakeholder engagement to inform the development of the Strategy. This was carried out in 2024 and included both an online component and several in-person consultation sessions. Opportunities to participate were extended both to members of the public and to civil society stakeholder organisations.

A public online quantitative survey aimed to understand public perceptions of gender equality in Ireland. A series of stakeholder workshops (both online and in-person) provided qualitative evidence to inform the content of the Strategy. These workshops engaged a group of stakeholders, invited by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, that represented diverse perspectives within the field of gender equality. The workshops facilitated discussions on priority areas emerging from the online survey results with the aim of reaching deeper insights from stakeholders on priorities for the strategy.

A National Youth Assembly on Gender Equality was convened in September 2024 and was attended by 45 delegates aged 12 to 24, from across Ireland, representing a variety of youth organisations, Comhairlí na nÓg (Youth Councils) and other interested organisations. The assembly gave young people an opportunity to discuss how gender inequality affects their lives, explore solutions, and make recommendations to inform the development of the Strategy. Attendees represented a wide range of geographic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds, ensuring that a diverse range of experiences was captured in the consultation.

The National Women's Council was funded by Government to carry out a consultation among its nearly 200 member organisations to inform the development of the Strategy.

We also consulted extensively across Government Departments and Agencies through a series of bilateral engagements and in a specially convened Inter-Departmental Committee. The Strategy is also informed by the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality 2021, and 'Unfinished Democracy: Achieving Gender Equality', the final report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality 2022.

In addition to the evidence gathered through these consultative mechanisms, the Strategy is informed by a range of sources of information on gender equality in Ireland. It takes account of best practice both domestically and internationally in the development of strategy, policy and practice to advance gender equality. The objectives address Ireland's obligations under a range of EU and international frameworks for the promotion of gender equality. This includes the *Roadmap for Women's Rights* published by the EU Commission in March 2025 and the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029. This Strategy is also aligned with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, and its implementation will advance Ireland's

work under both these frameworks. During the development of the Strategy, Ireland received (in July 2025) the Concluding Observations and Recommendations from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's Eighth Periodic Report under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and these have also been considered in the content of the Strategy. We also drew on the *Core Components of National Equality Strategies* published by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in September 2025.



# Strategic Objectives

## I. Being Counted: The people who design our policies and laws take me into account

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting help to ensure that all Ireland's policies and laws are developed in a way that fully considers their impact on women's equality. The public sector equality and human rights duty requires all public bodies to address gender equality in their strategic planning, policies and practices. In practice however, despite initiatives supporting equality budgeting in recent years, gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting are still in their infancy and have yet to be fully integrated into policy development and budgeting processes. Most people involved in the design of public policy and in the allocation of budgets are not trained in gender mainstreaming or budgeting.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: EMBED GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING

#### In more detail:

- » Introduce mandatory training in gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting for public officials with a role in public policy making and budget allocation.
- » Collect and report equality data in a standardised, comparable way, adhering to equality monitoring principles, so that the data can meaningfully inform public policy and budget allocation.
- » Embed a gender equality perspective in the development and evaluation of all national policy frameworks, including in major cross-cutting areas such as climate change and economic development.
- » Strengthen the practice of gender budgeting across all Government departments.
- » Include gender equality as a specific funding objective for community-focused funding programmes across Government.
- » Develop mechanisms to ensure that public services are gender responsive.

#### Complementary National Policy Frameworks that will help achieve these objectives:

- » A Better World – Ireland's Policy for International Development
- » National Equality Data Strategy (forthcoming)
- » Ireland's Performance Framework
- » Policy Handbook: A 'Real World' Guide to Policy Development, Civil Service Management Board 2024

## 2. Being Me: I can live free of harmful gender norms and stereotypes

### PATRIARCHAL GENDER NORMS

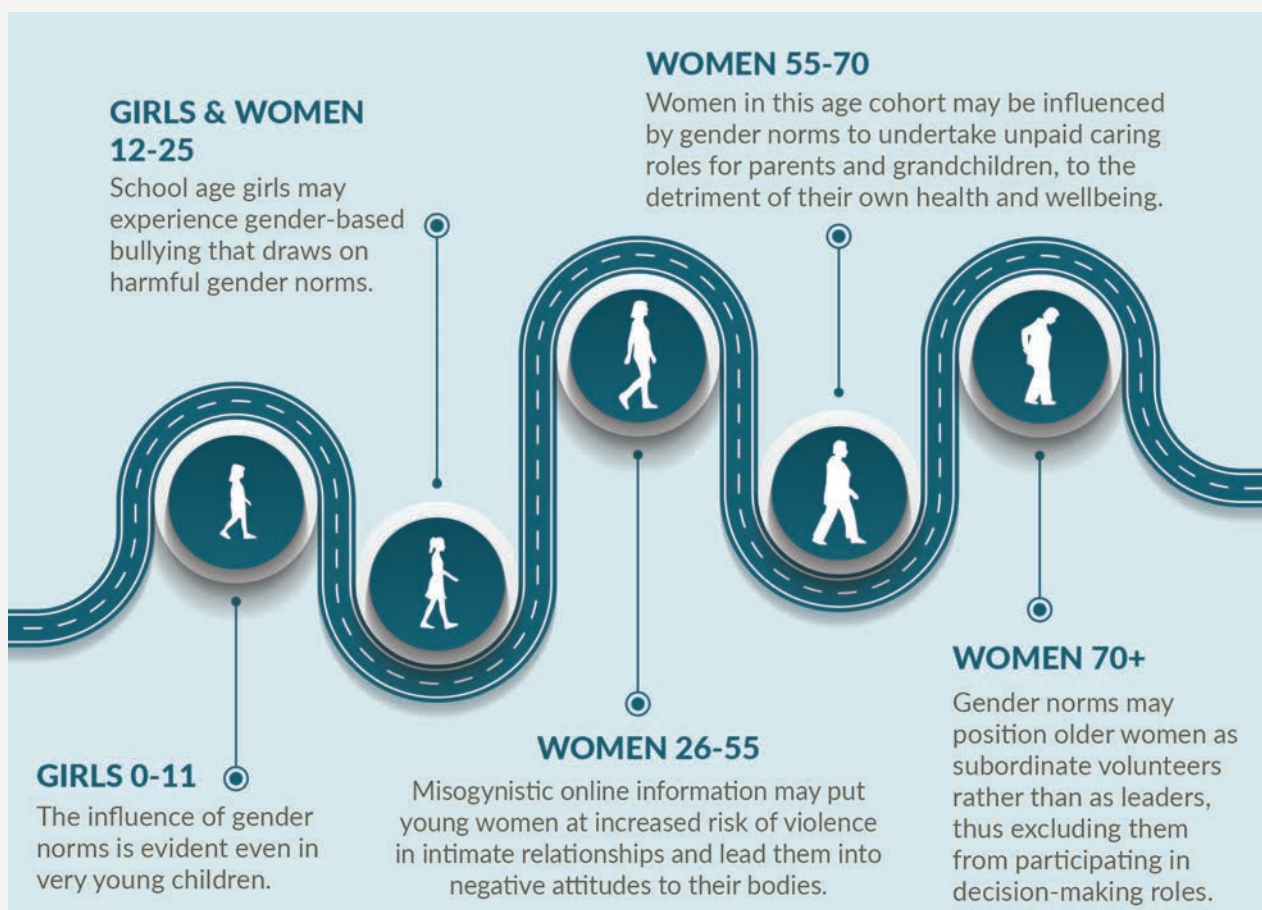
The situation of women and girls is adversely affected by the development and expression of patriarchal gender norms which create negative perceptions of women and girls. Gender norms are widely held societal beliefs about men and women which become ingrained at a young age and can have profound impacts both on how individuals view themselves and how they are treated by broader society. Patriarchal norms, often focused on men as decision-makers and breadwinners and on women as carers, uphold harmful stereotypes and limit life opportunities, preventing women from pursuing particular career paths and economic opportunities and inhibiting men's likelihood of engaging in caring roles for their children or dependants.

Adherence to patriarchal gender norms undermines progress on gender equality and therefore has wide-ranging adverse implications for society. Concerningly, anti-gender equality movements are now emerging alongside a notable rise in online hate speech and misogyny produced by male influencers who propagate misogynistic views in an online realm colloquially referred to as the 'manosphere'. By consuming such hateful rhetoric and misinformation, young men and boys are increasingly at risk of being indoctrinated into ideologies that do not accept gender equality and instead seek to normalise discrimination and violence against women. Other online influencers, colloquially referred to as 'tradwife' influencers, many of whom are women, seek to promote restrictive, stereotypical roles for women and girls.

Patriarchal gender norms are also particularly harmful for LGBTIQ+ people and anyone who is non-binary or gender non-conforming in any way.

The influence of harmful gender norms often intersects with other restrictive norms, such as for example those limiting disabled women's access to employment.

## Gender Norms across the life course:



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: REDUCE THE PREVALENCE AND POWER OF HARMFUL GENDER NORMS AND STEREOTYPES

### In more detail:

- » Provide gender equality education and education environments that directly counter patriarchal gender norms, including restrictive masculinities.
- » Increase the visibility of positive female role models, particularly in male-dominated fields, including political, sport, and business leadership.
- » Seek and avail of opportunities to communicate the continued importance of action on women's equality across all sectors.
- » Reduce people's exposure to harmful gender norms and stereotypes, including in online spaces.
- » Develop actions to counter harmful misinformation related to gender equality.
- » Develop policy to address the impacts of restrictive masculinities on women and girls.

**Complementary National Policy Frameworks that will help achieve these objectives:**

- » OECD “Man Enough?” Framework for Measuring Masculine Norms to Promote Women’s Empowerment
- » National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028
- » National Counter Disinformation Strategy
- » Online Safety Code
- » Online Health Taskforce Final Report (forthcoming)
- » Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023



### 3. Being a Leader: I can pursue my ambition and achieve my potential in any field

#### LEADERSHIP, VISIBILITY, PARTICIPATION

A gender equal society is characterised by visible female leadership, on a par with men, across all sectors.

Despite being over 50% of the population, women are under-represented in senior decision-making roles across society, including elected public office. Gender balance at the top of organisations in all sectors is essential, not just for equity, but for better decision-making.

Educational attainment among women is high. Currently girls and women represent 49.3 per cent of students in full-time education with women representing 53.8 per cent of those in bachelor's level education or equivalent. Rates of early school leaving have continued to fall to the current rate of 3 per cent for girls. Though overall levels of educational attainment are strong, a gendered pattern in the uptake of subjects persists, particularly in STEM and business subjects such as finance and economics. This trend may affect the range of options for women to become leaders in the workplace or as entrepreneurs.

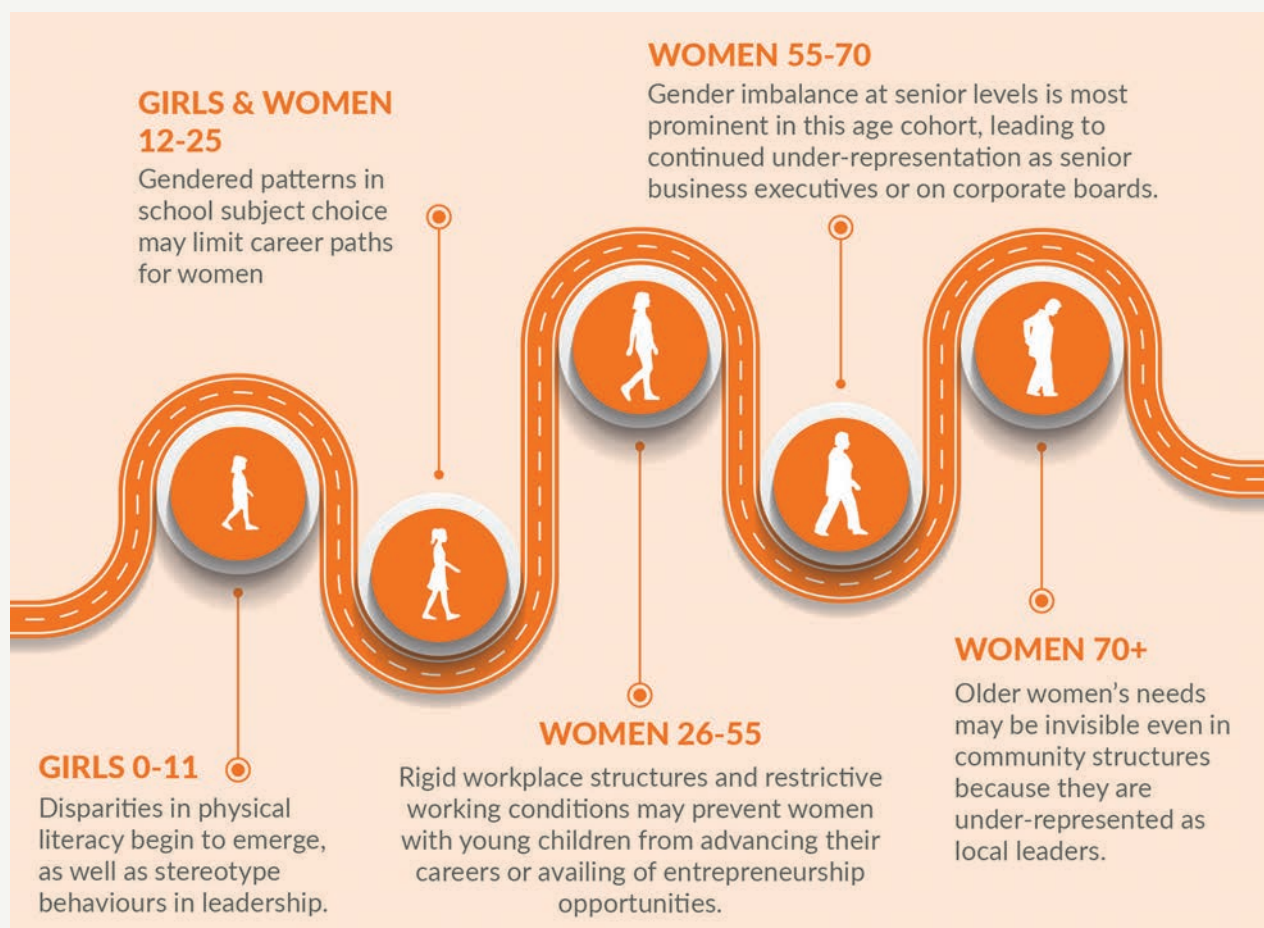
The impact of artificial intelligence on both education and the workplace in the years ahead may have implications for gender equality that require a policy response.

The opportunities for women and girls to become leaders is further reduced if they are members of Traveller, Roma or migrant communities or if they are disabled or marginalised in any other way.

Visibility in mainstream media, with genuine variety of roles, is also an important marker of gender equality. The participation of women in sport and the profile of, and investment in, women's elite sport, are also important.



**Leadership, Visibility and Participation across the life course:**



**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: ENABLE EQUAL LEADERSHIP, VISIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN**

**In more detail:**

- » Continue and expand supports to promote and improve gender balance at local government and increase opportunities for women to enter politics.
- » Improve the gender balance at board and senior executive levels in all sectors, including business, public administration, education, sport, and the voluntary sector.
- » Support women into leadership roles at local level, in particular women and girls from marginalised communities.
- » Address the imbalance of visibility between men and women in the arts and in media.
- » Increase the numbers of women serving in the Defence Forces, An Garda Síochána and the Irish Fire Service
- » Ensure the meaningful participation of women in the development and evaluation of climate action policy, both domestically and internationally.

- » Increase girls' and women's uptake of STEM and business subjects.
- » Remove barriers to women's equal participation in sport as participants,

sports club members, coaches, managers, and spectators; in the governance of sporting organisations; and in sports media representation and coverage.

**Complementary National Policy Frameworks that will help achieve these objectives:**

- » Coimisiún na Meán Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Audio and Audiovisual Media Sector 2024-2027
- » Enterprise Ireland Action Plan for Women in Business (forthcoming)
- » Equality Strategies
  - National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028
  - National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028
  - National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030
- » Ireland's Fourth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2025-2030
- » National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025
- » Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025
- » Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025
- » Traveller and Roma Education Strategy 2024-2030
- » STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026
- » Women in Sport Policy



## 4. Being Safe: I can live free of violence and harassment

### SAFETY

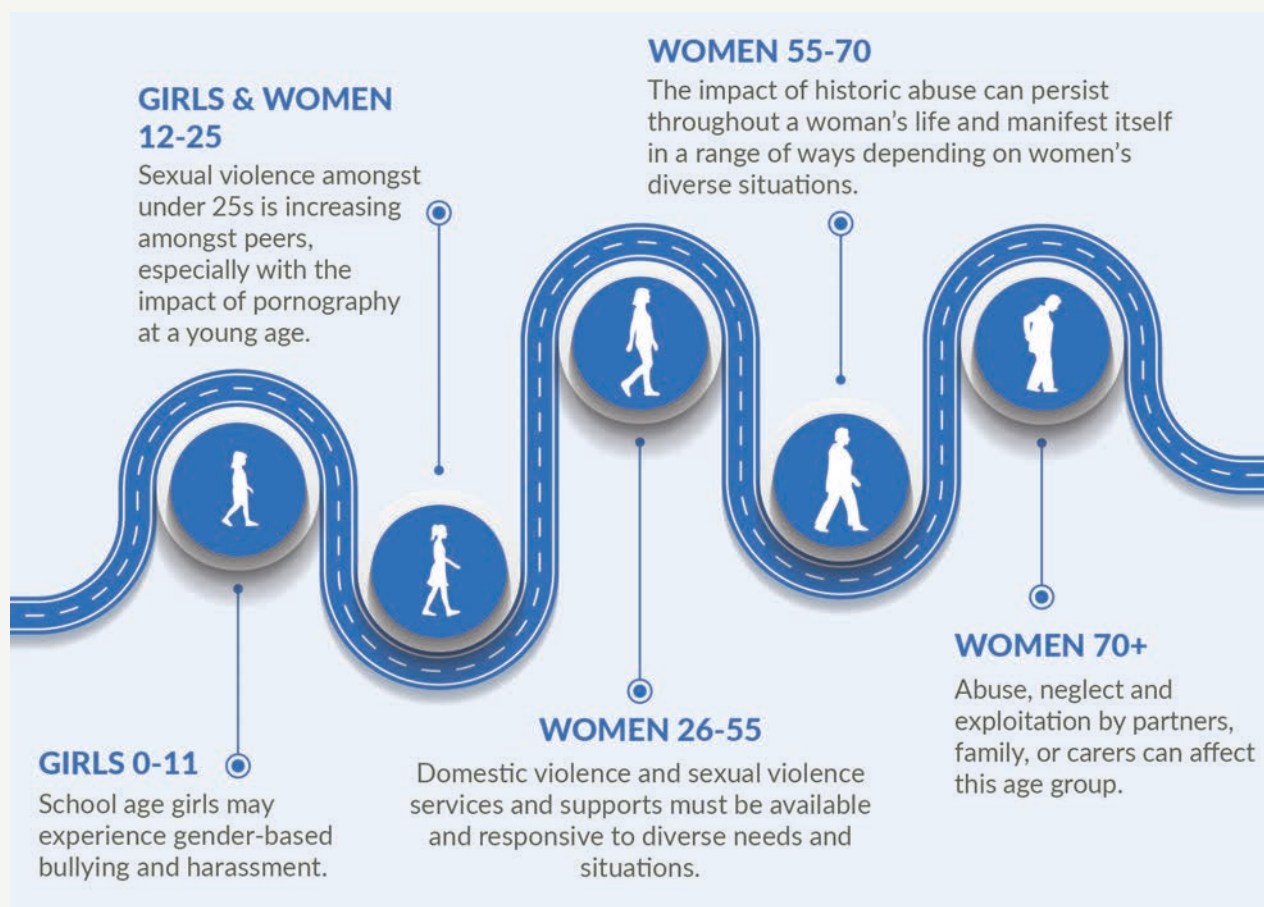
Women in Ireland experience high levels and multiple forms of violence. While both men and women experience crime, a gendered pattern is clear, with women more likely to experience domestic abuse, sexual assault and harassment related offences. In 2024, An Garda Síochána received more than 65,000 domestic abuse-related contacts, an average of approximately 1,250 per week.

In the CSO's 2022 survey on sexual violence, 52 per cent of women reported experiencing some form of sexual violence within their lifetime. In the same survey, 21 per cent of women reported experiencing non-consensual sexual intercourse at least once in their lifetime. Of the women who reported experiencing sexual violence at least once in their lifetime, 79 per cent reported that the perpetrator was known to them at the time of the incident. Estimating the true prevalence of sexual violence however remains difficult due to social stigma and high rates of non-disclosure. Of the women who reported experiencing sexual violence at least once in their lifetime, 53 per cent reported disclosing their experience to someone. Rates of disclosure are highest among women in younger age cohorts, steadily reducing with age.

Women also experience gender-based harassment, including in public spaces and online. Here too, a gendered pattern emerges from the survey data. Almost nine in ten adults (87%) who experienced sexual harassment reported that the perpetrator was male. Much of this behaviour appears targeted towards young people with half of young adults (those aged 18-24) experiencing sexual harassment in the last 12 months.

Being a member of a minority community can exacerbate experiences of violence, including for Traveller and Roma women, disabled women, those from migrant communities or LGBTIQ+ women and girls. Women from these groups may be reluctant to report instances of violence or may experience it in different contexts, with those from the LGBTIQ+ community at higher risk of violence from strangers in public spaces.

## Safety across the life course:



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: ERADICATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND HARASSMENT OF WOMEN

### In more detail:

- » Develop initiatives to prevent violence against women, and to identify and address its causes, taking account of the diversity of women's and girls' situations and needs.
- » Put in place effective measures to prevent the harassment of women in public spaces and online, and to identify and address its causes.
- » Deliver high-quality services to support women and children who have experienced domestic, sexual or gender-based violence or harassment.
- » Provide access to secure, long-term housing for women experiencing domestic violence.
- » Reduce people's exposure to violent and extreme pornography.
- » Provide effective education for children and young people on the impacts and harms of pornography.
- » Eliminate gender-based bullying and harassment in education settings.
- » Improve access to justice for women and girls.



- » Embed survivor experiences and voices into the justice system to make it more gender responsive.
- » Promote women's leadership in peacebuilding and an end to violence against women across the globe.

**Complementary National Policy Frameworks that will help achieve these objectives:**

- » Zero Tolerance – The Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2022-2026
- » Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying
- » Online Safety Code
- » Online Health Taskforce Final Report (forthcoming)
- » Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions

## 5. Having a Fair Share: I have a fair share of economic and financial power

### ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

The gender pay gap is a measure used internationally to illustrate the discrepancy between men's and women's average hourly earnings. In Ireland, the unadjusted gender pay gap in 2023 stood at 8.6 per cent (the EU average is 12 per cent). This is a reduction of over 8 percentage points since measurement of the pay gap began in 2007.

Women's participation in the labour market is at 60 per cent as of 2024. This means that 60 per cent of women of working age (15 to 64) in Ireland are in paid employment, either full or part time, or unemployed and actively looking for work. Though the overall rate of participation has continued to grow, employment is more prevalent in younger age cohorts. There is also a persistent gendered pattern across sectors, with health, education and retail showing strong participation by women while construction, agriculture and forestry show much lower rates of participation by women. Gendered patterns in the labour market shut women out of many careers and increase their likelihood of working in low-paid jobs. Women are less likely than men to be entrepreneurs. As of 2023 30.3 per cent of women were working part time with higher rates of caring and other types of unpaid labour. Women are also more likely than men to be in precarious work. These details are pertinent as sectoral segregation, and the allocation of unpaid labour have significant implications for lifelong earnings and pensions.

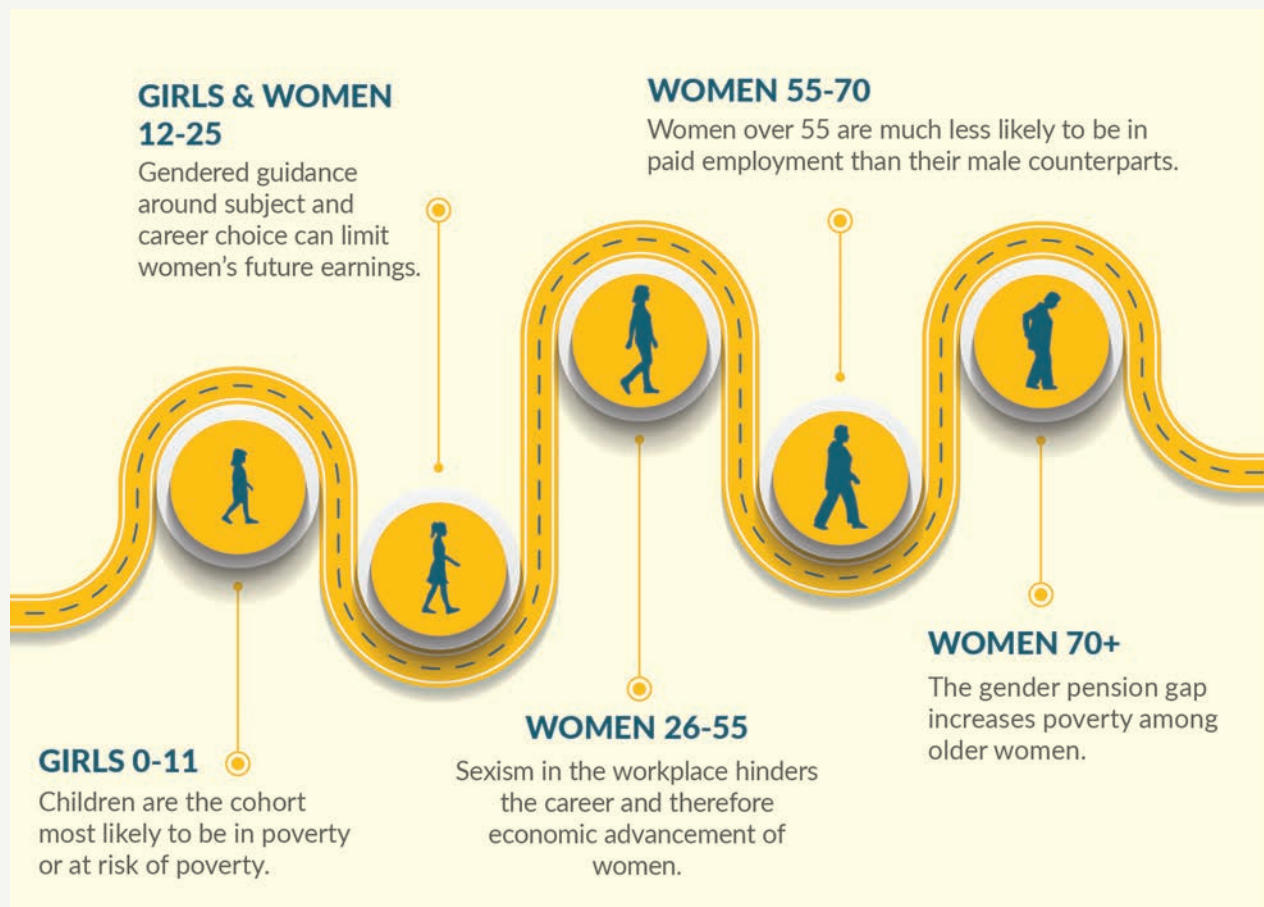
As of 2024, 4.8 per cent of women were living in consistent poverty and the 'at risk of poverty' rate for women was recorded at 11.3 per cent. Some groups, including Traveller women, lone parents, and disabled women, are more affected than others.

Progress has been made in lowering both figures largely due to the strong performance of Ireland's economy which has facilitated high levels of employment coupled with increases in social protection measures to support more equitable outcomes across society.

Lone parents, the large majority of whom are women, remain a group particularly vulnerable to economic insecurity and risk of poverty. This cohort is also the most impacted by energy poverty when living in private rental accommodation, as well as being disproportionately impacted by substandard housing quality.

For older women, the gender pension gap in supplementary pensions is significant, at 35 per cent. This has arisen because of periods spent out of the workforce, including in unpaid caring roles, and because of the barriers preventing women from career entry and progression in previous generations.

### Economic and Financial Empowerment across the life course:



### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: EMPOWER WOMEN THROUGH ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL EQUALITY

#### In more detail:

- » Remove barriers to labour market participation by women, with a focus on groups vulnerable to labour market exclusion, such as lone parents and women returning to the workforce.
- » Ensure equal work for equal pay through mandatory pay and pension transparency.
- » Support initiatives to make female students aware of opportunities in sectors where women are traditionally under-represented, including through developing partnerships with business.
- » Increase the proportion of Ireland's entrepreneurs who are women.
- » Provide affordable, high quality and accessible early learning and care and school age childcare nationwide, with increased public investment and public management of the sector, including the introduction of an element of State-led provision
- » Further enhance the scope of family leaves and increase benefit rates by introducing a pay related model.

- » Take steps to address issues, including low pay, that arise in sectors of the labour market that are dominated by women.
- » Develop initiatives to identify, measure and reduce sexism in the workplace.
- » Introduce a Family Friendly Workplace Certification Scheme.
- » Develop measures to address the Gender Pension Gap, and ensure appropriate protections for older women experiencing poverty.
- » Promote female succession of family businesses and farms, to help address property ownership disparities and reduce the gender wealth gap.

**Complementary National Policy Frameworks that will help achieve these objectives:**

- » Enterprise Ireland Action Plan for Women in Business (forthcoming)
- » Enterprise 2035 Strategy (forthcoming)
- » First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028
- » Ireland for Finance
- » Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025
- » National Women in Agriculture Action Plan



## 6. Being Well: I am enabled to enjoy wellbeing throughout my life

### WELLBEING

Wellbeing is a broad concept that encompasses not only physical and mental health over the life course, but also social connectedness and various measures of life satisfaction. The wellbeing of women and girls in Ireland is influenced by a wide variety of factors, both individual and societal. Structural inequalities and systemic barriers can reduce the likelihood of a woman enjoying health and wellbeing through her life course. This can particularly affect women with other protected equality characteristics, such as LGBTIQ+ women, minority ethnic women, disabled women, and others.

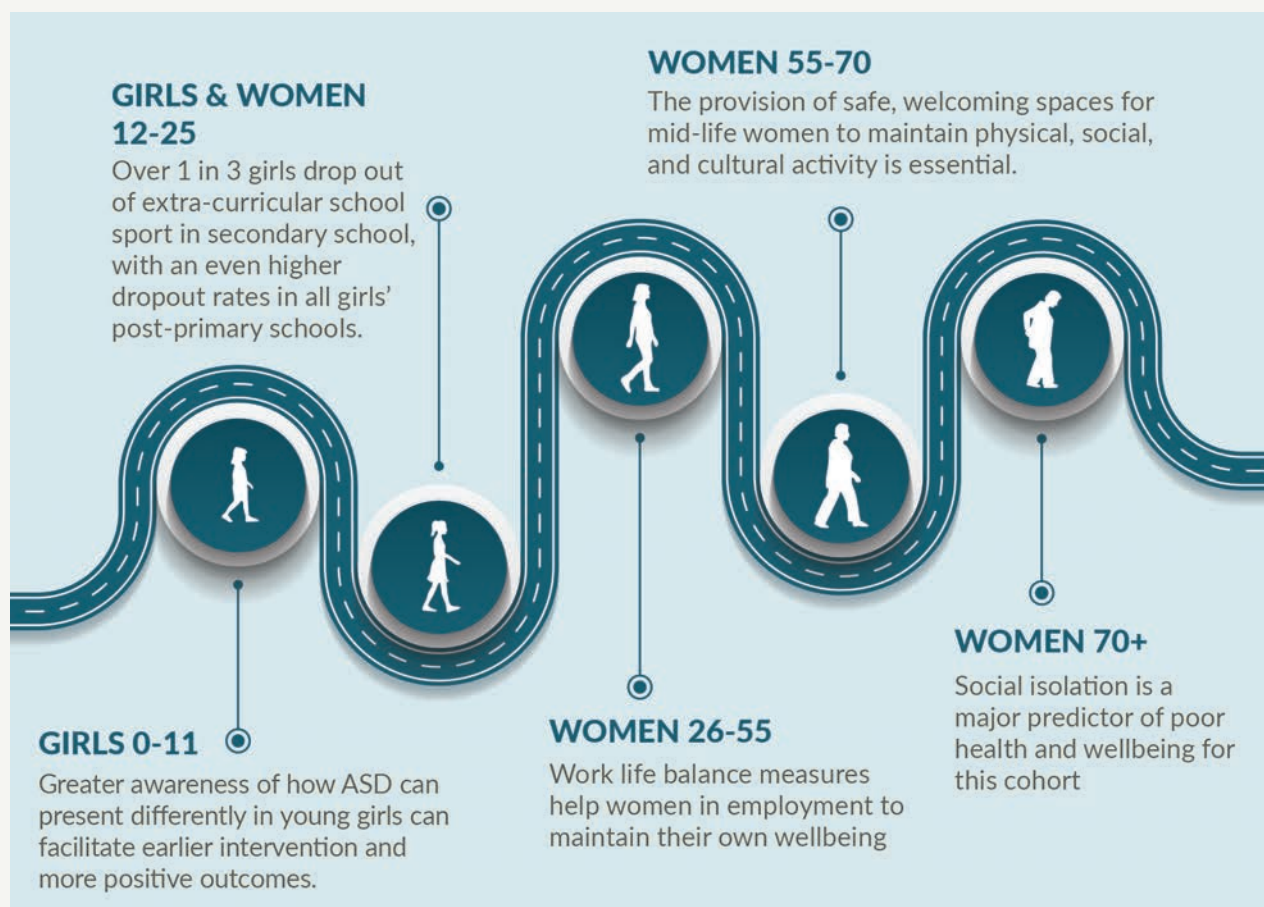
The determinants of health include: the social and economic environment, the physical environment, the person's individual characteristics, experiences, and behaviours and health and care services. The majority of what determines health and wellbeing resides outside of the health system and therefore requires a whole of Government and whole of society approach. Women and girls' physical and mental wellbeing, if enhanced and developed, will have consequential social, economic and environmental benefits across all of society.

Women's health and wellbeing can be supported by access to physical and mental health services, including those that address the particular health needs of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health.

Gendered patterns are evident also in mental health, with some cohorts of women particularly vulnerable to experiencing poor mental health. Life satisfaction is falling among young people in developed countries, including Ireland. Recent data from UNICEF show that more than one quarter of Irish teenagers now express low satisfaction with their lives and that this proportion who experience poor mental wellbeing is higher among girls. First generation migrant women may be socially isolated, with consequent impacts for their wellbeing and ability to participate in society. Similarly, disabled women may not have the supports needed to enable them to participate in social networks. Isolation is predictive of lower levels of wellbeing, and this is a particular risk for older women.

The benefits of a physically active society are numerous and profound. While some demographic groups of women and girls in society are more active than others, a significant scaling-up of physical activity levels is both possible and necessary across all age groups, geographical locations, cohorts of society and across urban and rural settings.

## Wellbeing across the life course:



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: ENABLE WOMEN TO MAXIMISE THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES

### In more detail:

- » Support initiatives that enable women to nurture and protect their health and wellbeing at all stages of their lives.
- » Enable women and girls to be physically active throughout their lives by creating safe, welcoming environments for active travel and for personal and organised sport and activity aimed at all levels and abilities.
- » Address unmet need in the provision of gender sensitive and trauma informed mental health services to women across the life course.
- » Advance the provision of sexual and reproductive healthcare and related leaves and benefits.
- » Expand services for women at risk of or affected by cardiovascular disease and increase awareness and education of gender specific symptoms.

- » Enhance the education, health literacy and build the awareness of girls and boys in relation to the full spectrum of menstrual health, including menopause.
- » Develop programmes to enable women to participate fully in social activity across the life course, including older women, women with caring responsibilities, and women who may be marginalised in any way.
- » Advance the representation and participation of women and girls in cultural life, including under-represented and marginalised groups.
- » Increase the range of choices available to older women living alone to remain living at home.
- » Support women and girls directly affected by environments changing due to climate change and develop initiatives to address the impacts of climate change on the physical and mental health of women and girls.



**Complementary National Policy Frameworks that will help achieve these objectives:**

- » Women's Health Action Plan 2024-2025 Phase 2: An Evolution in Women's Health
- » Connecting for Life – Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (next phase forthcoming)
- » Embedding Women's Mental Health in Sharing the Vision - A report prepared by the specialist group on women's mental health to support the implementation of Sharing the Vision
- » Healthy Ireland Framework (forthcoming)
- » National Maternity Strategy – Creating a Better Future Together 2016-2026
- » National Physical Activity Framework 2024 - 2040
- » National Sexual Health Strategy, 2025-2035
- » National Sustainable Mobility Policy
- » National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022-2027
- » Pathways to Wellbeing – National Mental Health Promotion Plan 2024-2030
- » Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone
- » Sláintecare 2025+
- » Women in Sport Policy

## 7. Being Supported: I am supported when I give care and when I need care

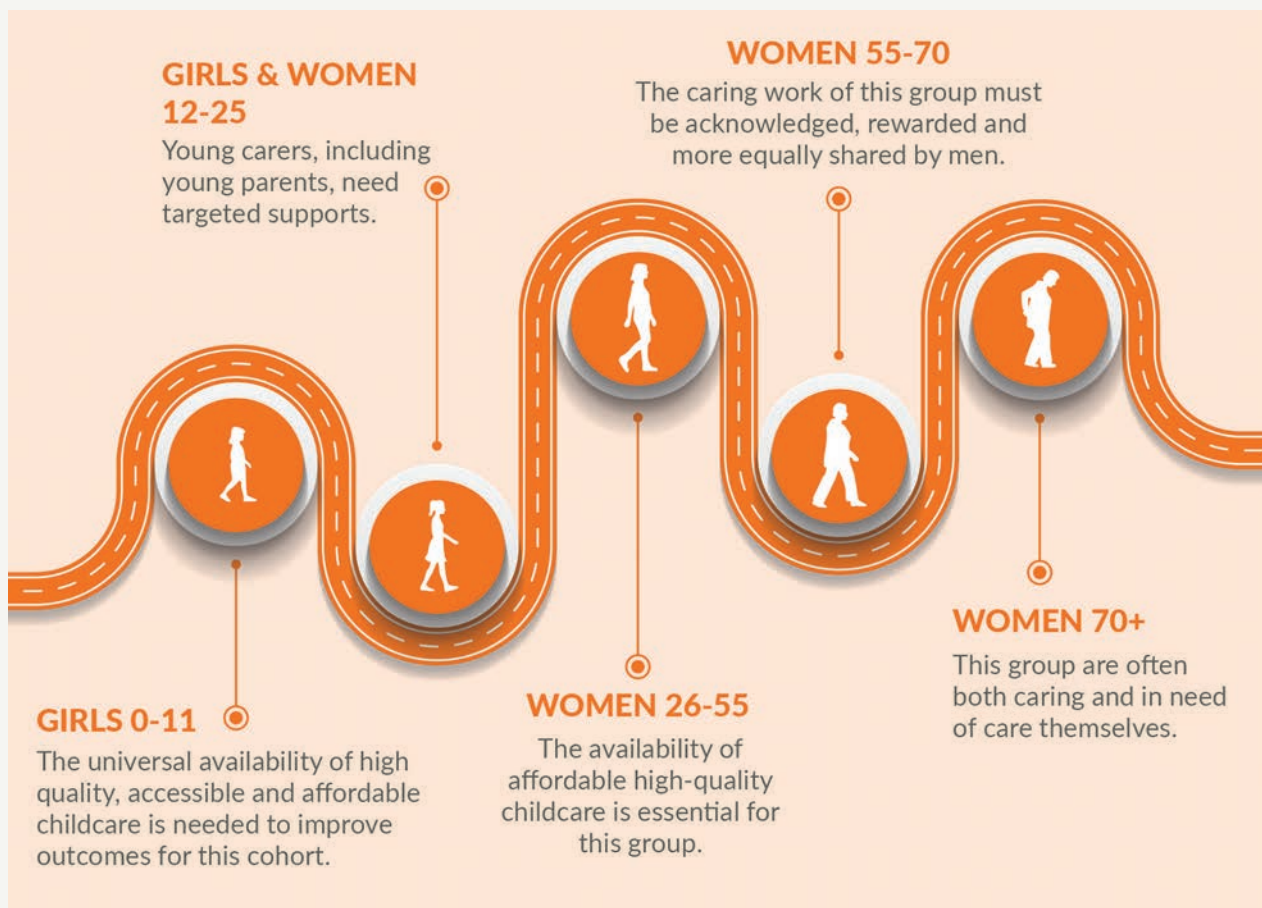
### CARE

Women provide a large majority of the paid and unpaid care on which society depends. This includes care for children, people experiencing health difficulties – either physical or mental, older people, disabled people, and anyone else who needs care. A more equitable sharing of care between women and men is key to the realisation of equality for women and girls. Care work needs to be valued and supported by society and the State and should be based on the autonomy and

dignity of the individual receiving care. Equally, women must be enabled to have access to the range of life opportunities and choices enjoyed by men and should not be prevented by caring roles from participating fully in Irish society and achieving their potential. While caring can be deeply rewarding work, it can, especially when it is unpaid, place a heavy responsibility on individuals, some of whom are children themselves (predominantly girls). Carers have an elevated risk of a range of adverse outcomes, including poor mental and physical health, poverty and isolation. Many women fulfil multiple caring roles – caring for children, grandchildren, disabled family members, and elderly parents in need of support. Caring responsibilities may give rise to additional needs where the carer is herself disabled, in an older age group or in a precarious life situation.



## Care across the life course:



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: ACKNOWLEDGE, REWARD AND MORE EQUALLY SHARE CARING

### In more detail:

- » Expand family leave entitlements to enable parents to take leave from the workplace to care for their children while the children are under one.
- » Support flexible working options, and one's right to avail of these, so that women and men are afforded greater choice in terms of how they manage the interaction between care and work responsibilities.
- » Provide affordable, high-quality, and accessible early learning and care and school-age childcare to allow parents with child caring responsibilities to thrive in work and education.
- » Challenge trends where women can be pressurised, particularly by online messaging, into particular care roles.
- » Support programmes to enable young caregivers, predominantly girls, to participate in play and recreation.

- » Further develop and expand supports for young parents under 25.
- » Seek ways to mitigate the negative resource and health impacts on women of time spent engaged in unpaid care for family members.
- » Develop a strategic approach to address instances of racism against care workers.
- » Take steps to recognise and mitigate the gender dimension to the care challenges faced by older women.
- » Continue to significantly increase the income disregards for Carer's Allowance with a view to phasing out the means test.

**Complementary National Policy Frameworks that will help achieve these objectives:**

- » First 5 A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028
- » National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027
- » National Carers' Strategy
- » Supporting Parents: A National Model of Parenting Support Services
- » Young Ireland National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028



## Implementation

The objectives of this Strategy will be achieved through actions carried out by public authorities across all areas of Government. This includes Government Departments, State Agencies, and Local Authorities. Two Action Plans will be adopted, one at the beginning of the Strategy period and one at the mid-way point. These Action Plans will set out the specific actions that will be taken to achieve the objectives of the Strategy, who will take these actions, and when they will be taken. Some of the actions will be taken within existing sector specific policy and strategy frameworks, and where this is the case, this will be specified in the Action Plan. This Strategy is a living document, and its implementation will be flexible enough to account for and adapt to newly emerging challenges and priorities.

A new Strategy Committee will be convened and one of its responsibilities will be to design the two Action Plans. The Committee will be formed of representatives of Government Departments and Agencies and Civil Society Organisations. The National Women's Council will work with the Strategy Committee to co-design the Action Plans. The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) will be requested to prepare a costing for the actions agreed in the Action Plans.

The Department of Children, Disability and Equality will provide a secretariat to the Strategy Committee and support it in its work. In line with its policy responsibility, the Department will also coordinate implementation of the Strategy, with ongoing engagement with relevant Departments, agencies and other stakeholders to support the implementation of the Strategy on schedule.

The Young Ireland Advisory Council will provide independent advice and support on the implementation of the Strategy in areas of relevance to young people. As part of our international obligations, Ireland has committed to ensuring the youth voice is included in policy formation. This underlines the importance of ensuring that the Strategy takes account of youth needs and perspectives.

### TASK GROUPS

Many of the issues creating inequality for women and girls are structural in nature and addressing them requires cross-departmental collaboration. Task Groups will be formed between specified Government Departments, Agencies, and Civil Society Organisations to devise ways to address issues that are structural in nature. These Task Groups will report back to the Strategy Committee with recommendations for actions to be included in the second Action Plan.



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# Monitoring

The Strategy Committee will monitor the implementation of the Strategy and progress achieved towards its objectives. The Committee will advise on the development of relevant indicators to support this monitoring. The Committee will also assist in identifying barriers to implementation and whether further objectives need to be added to the Strategy or if existing objectives need to be modified. In carrying out its monitoring work, the Committee will have due regard to the application of an intersectional approach to the implementation of the Strategy, where this is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Strategy.

Monitoring progress under the Strategy will take two distinct forms: Activity Monitoring and Gender Equality Monitoring

## ACTIVITY MONITORING

The Committee will monitor progress on the implementation of the Action Plans. In advance of each meeting of the Committee, action owners will send a written update on the progress of their actions to the Committee. These updates will be used to measure progress on the agreed activity and outputs of the Strategy. These updates will also be compiled into annual progress reports that will be published by the Department of Children, Equality and Disability.

## GENDER EQUALITY MONITORING

The Committee will monitor progress towards the objectives of the Strategy by reference to agreed, recognised indicators of gender equality, including those developed for measuring progress towards Sustainable Development Goal Five. An indicator set will be prepared by the Department of Children, Equality and Disability, with input from relevant stakeholders, for the agreement of the Committee. Progress against the indicators will be included in the annual progress reports. These indicators will enable the measurement of change in key areas addressed by the Strategy. The data sources for the indicators will be high quality, representative datasets such as those published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), which are updated regularly and publicly accessible.

Gender equality data from public sector organisations in Ireland is collated by the CSO on its Women and Men in Ireland Hub. This contains information relevant to many internationally recognised indicators of gender equality. The European Institute for Gender Equality also publishes gender equality data on all European Union Member States. The Committee will consider whether additional data and research is necessary to measure progress, and how any identified data or research gaps might be addressed.

## Appendix

### LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS REFERRED TO IN THIS STRATEGY

A Better World - Ireland's Policy for International Development

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying

Coimisiún na Meán Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Audio and Audiovisual Media Sector 2024-2027

Connecting for Life – Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (next phase forthcoming)

Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029

Enterprise Ireland Action Plan for Women in Business (forthcoming)

Enterprise 2035 Strategy (forthcoming)

First 5 A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028

Healthy Ireland Framework (forthcoming)

Ireland for Finance

Ireland's Fourth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2025-2030

Ireland's Performance Framework

Moving Together: A Strategic Approach to the Improved Efficiency of the Transport System in Ireland (forthcoming)

National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027

National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028

National Carers' Strategy

National Counter Disinformation Strategy

National Equality Data Strategy (forthcoming)

National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030

National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028

National Maternity Strategy – Creating a Better Future Together 2016-2026

National Physical Activity Framework 2024 - 2040

National Sexual Health Strategy, 2025 – 2035

National Sustainable Mobility Policy

National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 – 2021

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028

National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022-2027

National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025

National Women in Agriculture Action Plan

OECD "Man Enough?" Framework for Measuring Masculine Norms to Promote Women's Empowerment

Online Health Taskforce Final Report (forthcoming)

Online Safety Code

Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

Pathways to Wellbeing – National Mental Health Promotion Plan 2024-2030

Policy Handbook: A 'Real World' Guide to Policy Development, Civil Service Management Board, 2024

Programme for Government 2025 - Securing Ireland's Future

Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025

EU Roadmap for Women's Rights

Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions

Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone

Sláintecare 2025+

STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026

Supporting Parents: A National Model of Parenting Support Services

Traveller and Roma Education Strategy 2024-2030

UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018 – 2023

Women's Health Action Plan 2024-2025 Phase 2: An Evolution in Women's Health

Women in Sport Policy

Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

Young Ireland National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028

Zero Tolerance: Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2022-2026

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development





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