



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Ireland

Report of the Comprehensive National-level Review

[Version to Government for Information]

Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World
Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing
Declaration and Platform for Action

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List of Abbreviations

AGS	An Garda Síochána
AHR	Assisted Human Reproduction
BOTP	Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection
BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CET	Community Engagement Team
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CHN	Community Healthcare Network
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth
DECC	Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DPENDPR	Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform
DSGBV	Domestic, Sexual & Gender Based Violence
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EBEAG	Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group
ELC	Early Learning and Care
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education and Training Board
FET	Further Education & Training
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HSE	Health Service Executive
IARF	Ireland Against Racism Fund
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IEG	Informal Expert Group
IHREC	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IP	International Protection
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation Services
JST	Jobseekers Transitional Payment
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPAR	National Action Plan Against Racism
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCS	National Childcare Scheme

NDCA	National Dialogue on Climate Action
NDP	National Development Plan
NGCCFP	National Gender and Climate Change Focal Points
NIMC	National Implementation Monitoring Committee
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
NSWG	National Strategy for Women and Girls
NTRIS	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
NTWF	National Traveller Women's Forum
NWCI	National Women's Council of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSMR	Online Safety and Media Regulation
PSN	Public Sector Network
PSPR	Public Service Performance Report
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
SAC	School-Age Childcare
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SONC	State of the Nation's Children
SPHE	Social, Personal, and Health Education
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TLAC	Top Level Appointments Committee
TSI	Technical Support Instrument
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
VOC	Victims of Crime
WHAP	Women's Health Action plan
WIGJ	Women's Initiative for Gender Justice
WPHF	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security
WRC	Workplace Relations Commission

Introduction

Ireland affirms its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to its implementation.

The present report addresses progress in Ireland's implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action over five-year period from April 2019 to April 2024, and looks ahead to the next five years, from April 2024 to April 2029.

The structure of the report follows the guidelines set out by UN Women. In preparing the report, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has consulted with a wide range of Government Departments and Agencies.

The Department also carried out a consultation with civil society related to the progress made in Ireland across the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and current and future priorities.

Gender equality has been promoted and advanced in Ireland under a whole-of-government policy framework provided by the outgoing National Strategy for Women and Girls. The overall goal for the Strategy has been "to change attitudes and practices preventing women's and girls' full participation in education, employment and public life, at all levels, and to improve services for women and girls, with priority given to the needs of those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes".

The Programme for Government, "Our Shared Future" (2020), includes a commitment to develop and implement a new Strategy for Women and Girls, the development of which is now underway.

A significant development since the last report was the work of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, chaired by Dr Catherine Day, which was tasked with examining the barriers to gender equality in Irish society. In its final report in June 2021, it made 45 recommendations. Subsequently, a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality was established in December 2021 to consider the recommendations contained in the Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality. The Committee concluded its work in December 2022, publishing its report "Unfinished Democracy: Achieving Gender Equality".

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality recommended an expanded list of 205 actions to give effect to these 45 recommendations. Of the 205 actions, 190 are either completed or in progress (172 of those actions are currently in progress and 18 completed). The recommendations of both the Citizens' Assembly and Joint Oireachtas Committee spanned a range of topics or themes, such as on care and social protection; on measures to address Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV); on the role that education can play in challenging gendered norms and stereotypes; on the impact of pay and workplace conditions on gender equality; on how to achieve gender equality in leadership, politics and public life; and on how the gender equality principle can be protected through law and policy, all of which will be further examined in this report.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth would like to acknowledge the contributions made by Departments, Agencies, the National Women's Council of Ireland and other civil society representatives and experts in the preparation of this Report.

Section One: Highlights

1. Since the last report on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Ireland has continued to progress robust policy measures to tackle gender inequality wherever it appears in Irish society.
2. In carrying out the country level review process, which covers the period from April 2019 to April 2024, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth consulted with a wide range of Government Departments and Agencies in the preparation of the report. In addition, a consultation with civil society was held to discuss the progress made across the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the BPfA.
3. Since 2019, progress has been made across a variety of areas, with the aim of creating a fairer and more sustainable society with the overarching aim of empowering women and girls.
4. Comprehensive steps have been taken to address Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Ireland. The new statutory agency, Cuan, was established in January 2024. Among its functions, it is responsible for coordinating and overseeing all actions set out in the Third National Strategy on DSGBV, delivering key services to victims of domestic violence and leading on awareness raising campaigns.
5. Progress has also been made in the area of women's health. The Women's Health Taskforce was established in 2019 to improve women's health outcomes and experiences of healthcare. The Women's Health Action Plan 2022-2023 laid the groundwork for significant progress in the area of women's health across a variety of areas including the introduction of the free contraception scheme, the opening of specialist menopause clinics, and the opening of Fertility hubs.
6. Gender equality has also been promoted in the workplace. The gender pay gap is a key measure of women's economic empowerment, and, through a suite of measures, the gender pay gap in Ireland has reduced from 14.4% in 2017 to 9.6% in 2022. Since 2022, organisations with more than 250 employees are required by law to report on their gender pay gap across a range of metrics, encouraging them to reflect on their gender pay gap and the drivers behind it. In 2024, this obligation was extended to organisations with more than 150 employees and will extend to organisations with over 50 employees in 2025.
7. Family leave entitlements have also been significantly expanded, with two-parent families now entitled to almost a full year of paid leave after the birth of the child. This is complemented by an expansion of unpaid leaves, both short and longer-term; a greater entitlement to breastfeeding breaks; and other amendments to ensure inclusion of all families, including rainbow families.
8. The state pension system gives significant recognition to those whose work history includes an extended period of time outside the paid workplace through measures such

as the award of PRSI credits, the application of the homemaker's scheme, and the application of home care periods. Since January 2024, the latest reforms to the contributory State pension system benefit carers by recognising caring periods of up to 20 years outside of paid employment.

9. Much of this progress has been aimed at addressing the needs of marginalised women and girls. Steps have been taken to empower women of diverse backgrounds to participate in politics, leadership and public life, at all levels of decision-making. In this regard, the statutory minimum gender quota for men and women candidates from political parties standing for election increased from 30% to 40% in February 2023. If this quota is not met, parties will lose 50% of their annual funding.
10. The development of the new National Disability Strategy has been intersectional by design to ensure a voice for women with disabilities. In particular, during consultation there was a focused effort on engaging with different intersections of Irish society. One way that this was achieved was by running targeted focus groups for women, children, Traveller and Roma people, and members of the LGBT+ community and other minority groups. The insights garnered through the consultation and are a key consideration in the ongoing development of the Strategy.
11. Ireland has ensured that a variety of career paths are open to students, regardless of gender. The Professional Development Service for Teachers Guidance teams have increased awareness of gender-neutral career paths, by, for example, putting a spotlight on women in STEM, and ensuring that unconscious biases are challenged through a range of workshops, webinars and newsletters.
12. Gender equality also continues to be advanced through law and policy. A review of Ireland's equality legislation, including the operation of the Equal Status Acts and the Employment Equality Acts, is currently being carried out. Furthermore, work to develop a National Equality Data Strategy, led by the Central Statistics Office, with support from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, is well advanced, and a Strategy will be ready for publication and in place by Autumn 2024.
13. In addition, equality budgeting, introduced in 2018, has provided an additional lens to performance budgeting, by assessing the impact of budgeting measures across a range of areas, such as income, health, and education, and how outcomes may differ across age, gender, ethnicity, and other equality grounds.
14. A notable development since Ireland's last report was the Citizens' Assembly and Joint Oireachtas Committee recommendation to amend the Irish Constitution in a number of areas. These included a recommendation to remove the reference to the woman's role 'within the home' in Article 41.2 of the Constitution and to replace it with language that is not gender specific, and which provides recognition for care.
15. A referendum was held on 8 March 2024 on proposals for amendments to the Constitution based on the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality. The proposed amendments to the Constitution were:

- to amend Article 41 of the Constitution to provide for a wider concept of Family; and
- delete Article 41.2 of the Constitution to remove text on the role of women in the home, and to insert a new Article 42B to recognise family care.

Neither proposal was accepted.

16. Ireland continues to take concrete measures to advance the empowerment of women and girls across all sectors of Irish society, as will be evidenced by the following report.

Section Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges, and setbacks (Q 1-5)

1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges, setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

Main achievements

17. Since 2019, Ireland has maintained and added to its comprehensive policy and legal framework to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Ongoing efforts to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls

18. A new statutory agency, Cuan, dedicated to tackling gender-based violence in all its forms, was established in January 2024. Cuan is responsible for coordinating and overseeing all actions set out in the Third National Strategy on DSGBV, delivering key services to victims of domestic violence, and leading on awareness raising campaigns.
19. Zero Tolerance, the Third National Strategy Domestic, Sexual, Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) was launched in 2022. The €363 million strategy is built on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention framework – Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy Co-ordination. The implementation plan contains 144 detailed actions assigned to relevant lead departments and / or agencies, overseen and coordinated at central Government level.
20. Actions to combat violence against women and girls were also included in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020, including with a view to enhancing legislative protections and supports for victims of gender-based violence.
21. Five days domestic violence leave paid at 100% of salary was introduced in November 2023, making Ireland one of the first countries in Europe to do so.

Women in leadership

22. There has been a focus in the period in question on increasing the representation of women in leadership and decision-making in many areas of Irish life – including in politics, corporate and business leadership, academia, the civil and public service, local communities, and sport.
23. Political parties have been required by law since 2012 to ensure that at least 30% of candidates for national elections are women. If this requirement is not achieved, the political parties incur penalties in terms of funding. As a consequence, women constituted 31% of the candidates for the last general election in February 2020. The percentage of women in the Oireachtas (the Irish Parliament) increased from 22% to

23% of the Dáil Éireann (lower house) seats and from 30% to 40% of Seanad Éireann (upper house) seats between the 2016 and 2020 elections.

24. Significant progress has been made on the representation of women in senior corporate leadership, as a consequence of the establishment by the Government in 2018 of Balance for Better Business, a business-led Review Group. Between 2018 and 2023, the representation of women on the boards of listed companies in Ireland increased by 21% and by 8% on leadership teams. For large non-listed companies, there were respective increases of 5% for boards, and 2% for leadership teams. This progress means that Ireland now performs well in international terms as regards the representation of women in management.
25. In the civil and public service, advances continued to be made towards gender balance in leadership. As of 2023, 39% of those who held the post of Secretary General, the most senior grade, were women compared to 5% in 1997.
26. The Government's 1992 target of 40% gender balance on State Boards, of which there are approximately 230, was met in July 2018 in respect of average board membership. In 2021, this had risen to 44.7%, with 50.74% of Boards reaching the 40% target. The Government established a public sector equality network in 2019 to maintain the focus on ensuring gender balance in public sector leadership and on State Boards.
27. Progress has been made in accelerating the progress in achieving gender balance at the senior academic level in Higher Education Institutions. First launched in 2019, the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI) forms part of a suite of initiatives to progress gender equality in higher education, as set out in the Gender Equality Taskforce Action Plan 2018-2020. Under the SALI, 30 posts have now been awarded to Higher Education Institutions with funding provided by the Government. In the University sector, the rates of women in Professor and Associate Professor posts have steadily increased from 26% and 35% respectively in 2018, to 31% and 40% respectively in 2022.
28. Action has also been taken to develop the gender awareness capacity of academic institutions, primarily through the Athena Swan accreditation system. There are currently 118 Athena Swan award holders in Ireland (113 Bronze; 5 Silver). 19 institutions hold awards, including 4 legacy awards. The Athena SWAN charter is a framework that is used across the globe to support and transform gender equality in higher education and research. These initiatives are referred to in more detail at Q13.

Supporting working parents and women's employment

29. A range of measures have been taken to promote gender equality in the workplace. Reducing the gender pay gap is key to promoting gender economic equality and, through a suite of measures, the gender pay gap in Ireland has reduced from 14.4% in 2017, to 9.6% in 2022.
30. Ireland introduced gender pay gap reporting in 2022, which requires organisations to report on their gender pay gap across a range of metrics, encouraging them to reflect

on their gender pay and the drivers behind it. Reporting began in 2022 for organisations with over 250 employees and the reporting obligation was extended to organisations with over 150 employees in 2024. A centralised reporting database is currently being developed, which will make information on organisations' gender pay gaps more accessible to the public.

31. Family leave entitlements have also been significantly extended. Each parent of a child under the age of 2 is now entitled to 9 weeks paid Parent's Leave – an extension of 7 weeks since the leave was introduced in 2019. With paid Maternity Leave at 26 weeks and paid Paternity Leave at 2 weeks, this means that a 2 parent family now has an entitlement to 46 weeks paid leave.
32. Unpaid parental leave has also been extended from 18 weeks to 26 weeks. The age of the relevant child was extended from 8 years to 12, or 16 if the child has a disability or long-term illness. A new short-term form of unpaid leave for medical care purposes has also been introduced, which enables parents and carers to avail of 3 days leave with no notice period.
33. In addition, breastfeeding breaks can now be taken for up to 2 years after the birth of the child, which is an important support for women returning to work after having a child.
34. The right to request flexible working for parents and carers, and the right to request remote work for all employees, have also been introduced and can support working families and those with caring responsibilities. Technical amendments to existing legislation to ensure that diverse families can access maternity and adoptive leave have also been made since 2019.

Access to healthcare

35. The response to Question 12 sets out in more detail the measures being taken to drive a more consistent, expert and committed attention to women's health issues within the health system.
36. The Women's Health Taskforce was established by the Department of Health in 2019 to improve women's health outcomes and experiences of healthcare to work collaboratively across Government and with civil society and relevant stakeholders to enhance the understanding of women's health needs and to identify best practice on meeting those needs.

Addressing legacy issues

37. The period since 2019 has seen a continued focus in Ireland on examining and resolving the legacy issues that have impacted women.
38. A Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters was established by Government in February 2015 to provide a full account of what happened to women in such institutions between 1922 and 1998. The Final Report of the Commission setting out its detailed analysis and findings was published in January 2021. The Irish Government immediately accepted its recommendations

and issued a full State apology to survivors and committed to a suite of 22 Actions aimed at addressing the needs and concerns of former residents, survivors and their families.

39. Key commitments that have been delivered to date include:
- The passing of legislation in June 2022 guaranteeing access to birth and early life information and an accompanying birth info and tracing service;
 - The opening in March 2024 of a payment scheme to provide financial payments and health supports in recognition of harms endured in these institutions;
 - The appointment of a Special Advocate for survivors of institutional abuse;
 - The provision of funding to support survivor-centred advocacy organisations in commemorating their experiences;
 - The appointment of a Director of Authorised Intervention to lead an intervention at the site of the former Mother and Baby Institution in Tuam;
 - The creation of a scholarship in memory of children who died in Mother and Baby Institutions, to fund research in the area of childhood disadvantage.
40. In addition, a key commitment concerns memorialisation and Government has approved plans to develop a National Centre for Research and Remembrance.

Equality budgeting

41. Equality budgeting, introduced in 2018, has provided an additional lens to performance budgeting, by assessing the impact of budgeting measures across a range of areas, such as income, health, and education, and how outcomes may differ across age, gender, ethnicity, and other equality grounds. This has been progressed over the past five years.
42. Ireland successfully applied to participate as a beneficiary authority in the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument (TSI) 2022 flagship project on "Gender Mainstreaming in Public Policy and Budget Processes". All beneficiary authorities (Portugal, Strasbourg, Germany, Greece, Ireland and Romania) participate in an umbrella module focused on the concepts involved and exchange of practice, followed by a second module tailored to each country's requirements. The project began in September 2022 and Ireland's project is to conclude in 2024.

Challenges and setbacks

43. While advances have been made in this period, it is acknowledged that particular challenges remain. These have included the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the delivery of Government commitments and the additional pressures on Government resources arising from responding to the Ukraine crisis.
44. The Government has organised a whole of Government response to address the needs of those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. To date, more than 109,000 beneficiaries of temporary protection have arrived in Ireland, with more than 85,700 of those being

referred to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to seek accommodation from the State.

45. Social media has amplified negative gender stereotypes during the period under review, exacerbating misogyny, trends towards use of pornography, and towards body shaming, particularly among younger women.

Q2. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your countries through laws, policies and/or programmes?

Eliminating violence against women and girls

46. Since 2019, Ireland has maintained and added to its comprehensive policy and legal framework to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. There has been a particular focus on eliminating violence against women and girls.
47. Zero Tolerance, the Third National Strategy Domestic, Sexual, Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) was launched in 2022. The €363 million strategy is built on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention framework – Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy Co-ordination. The implementation plan contains 144 detailed actions assigned to relevant lead departments and / or agencies, overseen and coordinated at central Government level.
48. The Strategy provided for the establishment of a statutory DSGBV agency under the aegis of the Department of Justice, which will drive this work and bring the expertise and focus needed.
49. The new statutory agency, Cuan, which is dedicated to tackling and reducing domestic, sexual and gender-based violence became operational in January 2024, following the enactment and commencement of the Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence Agency Act.
50. Cuan has responsibility for co-ordinating all Government actions set out within the Third National Strategy and reporting on these actions to the Cabinet Committee on Social Affairs and Equality. It is also committed to delivering services to victims of DSGBV, which includes delivering on the number of safe and accessible short-and long-term accommodation needs, as well as ensuring a robust set of national service standards and governance arrangements are in place to ensure adherence to appropriate standards for such supports.
51. In November 2023, Ireland also introduced five days paid domestic violence leave in any 12-month period for an employee experiencing any form of domestic violence, including coercive control. The leave can be taken to find new accommodation or to access legal or other supports. In order to ensure workplaces can support employees who are experiencing domestic violence, Ireland developed guidance for employers to create their own workplace policies around domestic violence.

52. Further details on the progress made to combat violence against women is detailed in the responses to Questions 15-21

Unpaid care and domestic work/work family conciliation

53. The Government expanded the range of family leave entitlements available and increased the rate of social welfare payments for maternity leave, paternity leave and parent's leave from €245 in 2019 to €274 in 2024.
54. See also the expansion of family leave entitlements set out above under Question 1 - Supporting working parents and women's employment.

Access to healthcare

55. The Women's Health Taskforce was established in 2019 to improve women's health outcomes and experiences of healthcare. The Taskforce provided an opportunity to draw existing and new initiatives together into a coherent women's health programme. The Taskforce is also a forum for advancing departmental commitments under the National Strategy for Women and Girls. The Taskforce has engaged and worked with over 2,000 individuals and organisations representing women since its creation.
56. The Women's Health Action Plan 2022-2023 was launched in March 2022 and laid the groundwork for significant progress in the area of women's health across a variety of areas including the introduction of the free contraception scheme, the opening of specialist menopause clinics, and the opening of Fertility hubs, among other initiatives that will be discussed further in the report.
57. In addition, various initiatives have been introduced to expand women's access to reproductive and sexual health services, and mental health services.

Political participation

58. Concrete measures have been taken to promote women's participation in public life and decision making. Part 6 of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 linked the provision of Exchequer funding to political parties under the Electoral Act 1997 to the achievement of a specified gender balance in candidate selection at general elections to the lower house of the Irish Parliament - Dáil Éireann. Under the Act, a general balance ratio of 30% first came into effect for the general election to Dáil Éireann held on 26 February 2016 and will rise to 40% for all general elections to Dáil Éireann held after the expiration of seven years from that original date, that is to say, from the next Dáil election onwards.
59. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, for the next Dáil election and for all future Dáil elections a quota of at least 40% women candidates and at least 40% men candidates will apply to qualified political parties who wish to receive full State funding under the Electoral Act 1997.

60. In 2022, a scheme was introduced to provide maternity leave for councillors. Provision made in the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended) to allow the possibility of the appointment by co-option of an individual as a temporary substitute for an elected member who takes a period of maternity-related absence under the Maternity Protection Act 1994 or is absent due to illness or in good faith for another reason under Section 18 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended). The Local Government (Maternity Protection and Other Measures for Members of Local Authorities) Act 2022 was subsequently signed into law by President Higgins in December 2022.
61. In parallel to this legislation, as part of a wider package of maternity-related supports for local authority elected members, Regulations signed in August 2023 provide for an allowance for councillors who are availing of maternity leave or who have recently given birth and choose not to avail of maternity leave to engage additional administrative support to assist them in their role. This allowance is one of a range of measures aimed at promoting the participation of women in local government and is made available in support of family friendly practices in local authorities.

Gender responsive budgeting

62. Introduced in 2018, equality budgeting brings an additional lens to performance budgeting, by providing greater information on the likely impact of budgetary measures across a range of areas, such as income, health, and education, and how outcomes may differ across gender, age, ethnicity, and other areas.
63. Ireland successfully applied to participate as a beneficiary authority in the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument (TSI) 2022 flagship project on "Gender Mainstreaming in Public Policy and Budget Processes".
64. Ireland's strand of this programme is focused on capacity-building to strengthen gender and equality proofing throughout the policy cycle. The expertise that Ireland are seeking to develop through this project, provisionally named the Better Policy Outcomes project, will enable Government Departments to identify gender and other equality impacts systematically and accurately, thereby enabling development of public policy that is more aware of the barriers that can lead to inequality in employment opportunities and progression.
65. The end product will be a toolkit of learning, case studies and practical resources that can then be rolled out civil service wide to ensure Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Budgeting is a key element of policy and budget development. It is intended that the tools being developed will be in place and in use by all Departments for the next budgetary cycle in 2025.

3. Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalised groups for women and girls

66. Ireland uses its equality legislation as the primary means of combating discrimination and promoting rights, including in relation to gender. The Employment Equality Acts

(1998-2015) and Equal Status Acts (2000-2018) prohibit discrimination in employment, accommodation and the provision of goods and services.

67. Ireland also provides State funding to a range of organisations supporting marginalised women and girls.

Community-level supports

68. The Scheme to Support National Organisation (SSNO) provides multi-annual core funding to a number of organisations that have a specific focus on the prevention of discrimination and promotion of the rights of marginalised groups of women and girls. In addition, other organisations funded under the SSNO, while not having a specific focus on preventing discrimination and promoting the rights of marginalised groups of women and girls, provide related supports and advocacy. The Department of Rural and Community Development delivers a number of programmes which provide supports to Women and Girls.
69. The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is Ireland's primary social inclusion intervention. This is a national programme that is delivered in both rural and urban areas by Local Development Companies to help those in the greatest need. It targets and supports those who are disadvantaged in Irish society and less likely to use mainstream services. 584 Women's groups received supports from SICAP (2018-2023) to support capacity building, support social inclusion and equality issues, and to support participation in community planning, among other priorities. 67,639 women received supports from SICAP (2018-2023) relating to subjects such as information about Lifelong Learning (LLL) opportunities, personal skills, wellbeing and capabilities supports, labour market supports and self-employment supports, among other topics.
70. The Community Development Pilot Programme (CDP) aims to trial community led interventions that address poverty, social exclusion and inequality and promote human rights.
71. There are ten CDPs under the Programme at the moment which all include elements to support women and girls from various marginalised groups, e.g. Travellers, LGBT Community, migrants, women and girls with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Two of the programmes which specifically focus on women are the Inner-City Organisations Network (ICON), which focuses on women's pathways into and out of homelessness and the right to adequate housing in the private rented sector in Dublin's north east inner city, and Amal Women Ireland, which provide culturally specific services for women and children from Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds in Ireland. It supports women to access the services they need and fully participate in society free from the threat of violence, from poverty, racism, discrimination and stigma.

Anti-racism measures

72. The Anti-Racism Committee's National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) was submitted to Government in March 2023 and launched on 21 March 2023, the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The plan is being implemented over the five-year period of 2023-2027. The NAPAR was developed by an

independent committee of representatives of civil society and experts on the basis of detailed engagement with stakeholders. It is a national level, State-led, co-ordinated approach to eliminating racism (including anti-semitism, Islamophobia and racism against Travellers, Roma and against persons of colour) in all its forms in Ireland, including against marginalised women and girls.

73. The Ireland Against Racism Fund (IARF), launched in May 2023, and is an important element in supporting the implementation of the NAPAR. The overall objective of this fund is to provide funding for national and regional projects, as well as local initiatives, that aim to combat racism and foster racial equality and community cohesion. The IARF reopened for funding for 2024 with €1M being made available for local and national projects to combat racism in Ireland. Two organisations have been awarded funding with the specific aim of assisting women. One to bridge the increasing divide between employers in (particularly smaller) towns across Ireland, and the migrant women who find themselves there for various reasons looking for jobs, and the other to provide interpreter services and English speaking classes for migrant women whom have experienced domestic violence/intimate partner abuse and are in need of crisis accommodation and/or support accessing services. In addition to this, the project also hope to provide cultural awareness training to Refuge and Outreach frontline staff who are working with marginalized families seeking crisis accommodation and/or community supports.

Disabled women

74. Work is ongoing to develop the next National Disability Strategy, in fulfilment of a Programme for Government commitment to deliver a plan for the further implementation of the UNCRPD in Ireland. A robust and extensive public consultation process has concluded which included a wide range of focus groups, interviews, as well as large-scale consultation events and a national survey. Engagement is ongoing across government and with disability stakeholders to determine actions under the strategy and independent living is an important area of policy action and incorporating intersectional concerns including gender. The Strategy is due for publication in 2024 and will advance supports for disabled people in Ireland to live independent, autonomous lives of their own choosing, including disabled women and girls.

Traveller and Roma Women

75. Following on from a commitment in the current Programme for Government, and after an evaluation of a number of Ireland's equality strategies, a new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy was developed in collaboration with relevant Government Departments and was approved by the Government and published in July 2024. Under the "Gender Equality" theme within the new Strategy, the strategic objectives are focused on empowering Traveller and Roma women in leadership and political positions, addressing DSGBV against Traveller and Roma women and supporting them in education, employment, and accommodation. Funding is provided to the National Traveller Women's Forum and other organisations to support and progress Traveller and Roma women's inclusion and equality in Irish society

Foreign policy

76. Promoting gender equality and the rights of women and girls is a foreign policy and development cooperation priority for Ireland. Ireland aims to avail of every relevant opportunity to promote the human rights of women and girls, whether through Human Rights Council, Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, or the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. We consistently reaffirm the universality of human rights and their application to all women and girls, in all their diversity. Ireland is concerned by the apparent pushback on these rights at a global level, and we are committed to safeguarding the progress that has been made with respect to the rights of women and girls.
77. In 2019, Ireland launched "[A Better World, Ireland's Policy for International Development](#)". This places gender equality as one of four policy priorities, in addition to climate action, reducing humanitarian need and strengthening governance. The policy highlights gender equality as fundamental for sustainable development and commits to ensuring that all partnerships and interventions in our development programme have an overarching focus on women and girls. Commitments include increasing allocations directly related to gender equality, and strengthening gender mainstreaming across the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs.
78. Ireland is consistently amongst OECD countries with the highest annual proportion of bilateral allocable official development assistance (ODA) invested in gender equality measures¹ in international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Bilateral ODA that targeted gender equality increased from €297 million in 2019 to €328 million in 2022. During this period, ODA to women's rights organisations (WRO) and movements, and government institutions has increased €5.7 million in 2019 to €12.3 million in 2022. While ODA to end gender-based violence (GBV) has ranged from €12.1 million to €13.7 million.
79. Examples of how Ireland has progressed its commitments and increased investments in gender equality include:
- In 2024, Ireland increased its support to feminist movements and women's rights organisations, including those active on climate issues, by €2 million.
 - A new Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Initiative was announced in 2023 with a particular focus on women and girls, including those in humanitarian settings. This builds on existing work on Sexual and Gender Based Violence, maternal and neo-natal health, and the prevention and treatment of HIV. The initiative includes a new focus on reducing unintended and adolescent pregnancies. It will scale up actions to address unmet need for contraception and increase access to comprehensive sexuality education/life skills. To deliver the initiative, €7.9 million was allocated in 2023, to facilitate increased contributions to UNESCO for comprehensive sexuality education, and new partnerships with the International Planned Parenthood Federation and UNFPA for family planning commodities and services.

¹ <https://web.archive.oecd.org/temp/2024-03-07/73550-development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm>

- As part of the Generation Equality Forum 2021, Ireland committed to increasing investments in ending GBV in emergencies and prevention and response to female genital mutilation (FGM) to €15 million by 2025. Ireland is on track to meet that commitment with a total of €13.8 million disbursed as of 2023.
 - In 2023, Ireland launched a new funding initiative of €2.5 million over 5 years to support women's economic empowerment. The initiative focuses on investments in gender transformative approaches to rural and agricultural development and women's empowerment in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Rwanda.
 - Ireland has a strong focus on education in emergencies and girls' education and has committed to spending €250 million on education in emergencies, particularly for girls, in the five years 2019-2024. Between 2019 and 2023, approximately €200 million has been spent on education bilaterally.
 - Ireland spends approximately €20 million annually on social protection, the majority of which is allocated at country level through gender responsive social protection programmes. Ireland promotes social protection as a key instrument for empowering women and progressing a gender transformative approach.
80. Ireland played a key role in the adoption of the 2019 OECD Development Assistance Committee recommendation on ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment and the 2024 recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance. Both are important milestones in ensuring gender equality is embedded across international development cooperation efforts.

4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPFA in your country and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls

81. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic proved a significant challenge. The disproportionate impact that the pandemic had on women and girls in Ireland was factored into the Government's robust policy response, to ensure an equal future and recovery from the crisis.
82. Notably, women are overrepresented in the health care sector, and this is the group who were most exposed to Covid-19 infections. According to an analysis prepared by the CSO in 2020, of the ten occupation groups with the greatest exposure to the disease, six were female dominated, and two were gender-balanced.²
83. The Women's Health Action Plan 2022-2023 was launched in March 2022, within the context of the experiences of the pandemic, and laid the groundwork for significant progress in the area of women's health. It acknowledged that female carers form the majority of carers in Ireland, are more likely to have worse health and to live with financial disadvantage than the general population; this group experienced disproportionate

² <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/br/b-cope/occupationswithpotential exposure to covid-19/>

challenges to their resources, resilience and human capital during the COVID-19 pandemic.

84. Furthermore, evidence has shown that the pandemic impacted women's participation in the labour market to a greater degree, as they were more likely to have reduced working hours, suffer job losses, or leave the labour market. A Labour Force survey for Q3 2020 showed that female unemployment rose from 5% to 7.6%, while male unemployment rose from 5.5% to 6.7%.³
85. Concrete actions were taken to support women in the labour market. Notably, Ireland is developing a new Pay Related Benefit support for Jobseekers which will closer align the rate of payment with previous earnings. The intention is to counter the cliff edges that individuals experience on becoming fully unemployed. The need for such a pay-related system became evident during the Covid emergency in Ireland whereby income specific supports had to be put in place.
86. The pandemic also posed difficulties for working families. The National Women's Council of Ireland published a report on Women's Experience of Caring in Covid-19 in November 2020.⁴ Of respondents, 71.5% were providing care within their own home and over 30% providing care outside their own home. 85% of the women surveyed indicated that their caring responsibilities had increased with COVID-19, and that responsibilities were not shared within their household.
87. To alleviate the pressures on working families and the disproportionate pressures on women, further actions were taken to increase family leaves to support working families. See section Two, Question 1 for more details.
88. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated domestic violence, which became more prevalent during the periods of lockdown, with Women's Aid highlighting that they had seen a 43% increase in access to their services in 2021, compared to the same period in 2019.⁵ The Government has taken a range of measures within the framework of the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence to address domestic and gender-based violence (see response to questions 1 and 2).
89. The pandemic also highlighted the obstacles that women with disabilities, as well as the wider disability population, face. The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) showed that Covid-19 outbreaks were common in congregated settings.
90. Women continued to be victims of trafficking during the period in question. In November 2023, a specialised accommodation centre (Rosa's Place) opened for referrals of female victims of trafficking supported and funded by DCEDIY. This is operating as a pilot programme in 2024. Rosa's place is a specialist accommodation centre for female victims of trafficking. It is an 8 bed accommodation unit, providing specialist, individualised support for women who are identified as victims of trafficking, including those trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition to the supports

³ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/lfs/labourforcesurvey/lfsquarter32020/>

⁴ https://www.nwci.ie/images/uploads/FINAL_Womens_Experience_of_Caring_During_COVID19_Survey_Report.pdf

⁵ [Pandemic has had 'unprecedented' impact on victims of domestic abuse – The Irish Times](#)

provided by the Health Service Executive Anti Human Trafficking Team, each service user will have an assigned case worker providing individualised assessment and psychosocial supports.

91. International Protection applicants who are eligible for accommodation via the International Protection Accommodation Service, who do not meet the criteria for Rosa's place are accommodated within the broader IPAS accommodation network. Accommodation is assigned to best meet the needs of individuals within the network, depending on availability at the time, particularly where the victim of trafficking is recovering from sexual violence.
92. The Ukraine war caused large numbers of Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTPs) to move to Ireland. The Irish Government had to develop a new accommodation system for this group of refugees. To date, more than 107,406 Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTPs) have arrived in Ireland. This includes the funding of Community Integration Fora (CIF) in each Local Authority and coordination of supports for any refugee or asylum seekers in accommodation centres. Women form the majority of BOTPs. As of June 2024, 65,005 female BOTPs arrived from Ukraine, compared to 42,401 males. 13,719 of the female arrivals were under 18 years of age.

5. *Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies, and/or programmes?*

93. Ireland's priority for the next five years is to develop and implement a new national strategy to promote equality for women and girls.

Successor to the National Strategy for Women and Girls, 2017 to 2020

94. The Programme for Government, "Our Shared Future" (2020), includes a commitment to develop and implement a new Strategy for Women and Girls. In 2022, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth commissioned an independent report (from the Centre for Effective Studies) to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the processes for the implementation of equality strategies, with a view to informing how the Department develops and implements a whole-of-government equality policy in the future with a strong outcomes-focused approach. The evaluation study was published in July 2023, and its recommendations are informing the development of the successor strategy.
95. Work is underway on the development of the successor Strategy to the National Strategy for Women and Girls beginning with a consultation exercise. The first in-person consultation will take place in the form of a National Youth Assembly in September, reflecting the importance of ensuring that the new Strategy is informed and shaped by the views of young people, particularly young women.

Gender Pay Gap and Pay Transparency

96. Building on the introduction of the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021, measures are planned to continue to tackle the gender pay gap and ensure equal pay for women. The transposition of the following EU Directives are among the key priorities over the next five years:

- Women on Corporate Boards Directive (*Directive (EU) 2022/2381 on improving gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures*);
- Pay Transparency Directive (*Directive (EU) 2023/970 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms*).

Maternity leave for members of the Oireachtas

97. Legislative proposals to allow members of the Oireachtas (Ireland's parliament) have been published. These would enable a female parliamentarian to take six month paid leave on giving birth, in line with the entitlement for employees. This measure is aimed at supporting more women to become members of Ireland's parliament.

Access to affordable healthcare

98. The Women's Health Action Plan 2024-2025 Phase 2: An Evolution in Women's Health was launched on 18th April 2024. This plan represents the next phase of evolution in women's health. It continues to build on the work undertaken over the previous Women's Health Action Plan 2022-2023, as well as having a focus on new and innovative developments. The services and initiatives will be embedded across the new HSE health regions. €11 million has been allocated in 2024 to support the implementation of this plan, bringing the total additional funding allocated towards women's health to over €140 million since 2020. In addition to embedding the initiatives introduced over the past two years, some of the developments which will take place in the lifetime of this Action Plan are:

- The expansion of the Free Contraception Scheme to include women aged 32-35 inclusive which was introduced in July 2024. The Scheme is provided by approx. 2,400 GPs and 2,050 pharmacists nationwide.
- Legislation providing for Safe Access Zones was signed into law by the President on 7th May 2024.
- The capacity of the endometriosis services will be increased in the supra-regional endometriosis centres and in the new endometriosis hubs.
- The capacity of the 6 Specialist Menopause Clinics has been enhanced to meet the increasing public demand.
- There will be additional Post-Natal Hubs opened in the community giving a total of 9 hubs across the country.
- An expansion of screening services (Diabetic Retina and BreastCheck).
- An expansion of Termination of Pregnancy services.
- Additional Ambulatory Gynaecology Clinics will be opened bringing the total to 21.
- The first public Assisted Human Reproduction Treatment Centre will be developed.

Section Three: Progress across 12 critical areas of concern (Q.6-32)

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

99. Over the past five years, various workplace policies and practices that encourage gender equality in the workplace have been introduced.

6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

Gender pay gap reporting

100. The 2020 Programme for Government, 'Our Shared Future', included a commitment to legislate to require the publication of the gender pay gap in large companies. The Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 meets this commitment and requires organisations to report on their gender pay gap across a range of metrics. The purpose of gender pay gap reporting is to encourage organisations to recognise and reflect on the drivers behind their gender pay gap and take action where possible, and to inform Government policy.

101. Reporting began in 2022 for organisations with over 250 employees and the requirement has been extended to organisations with over 150 employees in 2024. It will then be extended to those with over 50 employees in 2025. The report must include the gender pay gap metrics, an analysis of the reasons behind the gender pay gap, and measures which are or will be taken to address the gap. A centralised reporting database is currently being developed.

Working conditions

102. Improvements in conditions for employees also benefit women workers, who are often working in lower paid employment. The Sick Leave Act 2022 introduced employer-paid, medically certified, statutory sick leave for the first time in Ireland. Commencing on 1 January 2023, the initial statutory entitlement was to up to 3 days' sick leave, which increased to 5 days on 1 January 2024. Further rollout of the scheme is being considered, with the entitlement potentially increasing to 7 days in 2025 and reaching 10 days in 2026. Eligible employees who remain unfit to work can avail of Illness Benefit operated by the Department of Social Protection after they have exhausted their sick leave entitlement.

103. Statutory sick leave is primarily intended to provide sick pay coverage to those employees, often in low-paid, precarious roles who do not have access to a company sick pay scheme. As women form the majority of lower paid workers in Ireland it can be inferred that they are likely to benefit most as a cohort of workers from the introduction of basic employment rights such as statutory sick leave. The scheme does not interfere

with existing, more favourable, sick leave schemes and is also a valuable public health measure. Payment for statutory sick leave days is currently set at 70% of an employee's average gross earnings, up to daily cap of €110.

104. Introducing statutory sick leave is also seen as part of the “pandemic dividend”. It is a progressive measure by Ireland to develop a more inclusive, as well as a more competitive, economy and fairer society.
105. The Irish Government launched the National Remote Work Strategy in January 2021. The Strategy's objective is to ensure that remote working is a permanent feature in the Irish workplace in a way that maximises economic, social and environmental benefits. A right to request remote working has been introduced and a Code of Practice, developed by the Workplace Relations Commission, provides practical guidance for employers and employees on how to comply with the legislation.

Social Protection Benefits

106. Increases across various family leaves have also been reflected in increases in social protection benefits. The One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) is a payment for lone parents under 66, who are not cohabiting, and whose youngest child is under seven. The Jobseekers Transitional Payment (JST) is a special arrangement under the Jobseeker's Allowance scheme for lone parents under 66 who are not cohabiting and whose youngest child is between seven and fourteen years old. The majority of the recipients of these payments are women and 2022, 2023 and 2024 saw increases to both payments of €5, €12 and €12 respectively, bringing the 2024 personal rate of payment to €232 per week.
107. In addition, Child Benefit, a universal monthly payment made to families with children up to the age of 16 years, continues to be paid in respect of children until their nineteenth birthday if they are in full-time education, or if they have a disability. In 2023, recipients of Child Benefit received a lump sum payment of €100 in respect of each child and a double Child Benefit payment was also paid for one month. Most recipients continue to be mothers.
108. The Government has provided funding to cover the costs arising from the expansion of family leaves which involve the receipt of social welfare benefit payments. These include maternity leave, paternity leave and parent's leave. In addition to expanding the period of time for which such benefits are available, the Government also increased the weekly rate of payment from €245 in 2019 to €274 in 2024.

Women in Entrepreneurship

109. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has a broad and comprehensive range of initiatives to encourage, support and develop women in leadership in business and female entrepreneurship. These include, for example, Women in Business Networks run by the Local Enterprise Offices, the Competitiveness Start-Up Fund and the Fuelling Ambition Programme, both run by Enterprise Ireland, the Female High Fliers Programme at the DCU Ryan Academy, the Going for Growth programme, the Acorns programme, which has a particular focus on female-led start-ups in rural areas.

110. Since the introduction in 2013 of measures targeting women, the number of women who are setting up their own businesses has grown year-on-year. In 2012, just 8 out of 97 participating high potential start-ups were female-led (8%). This increased to 22% in 2019, with another large increase to 37% in 2022, when 34 of the 91 participating in the programme were female led.
111. In 2020, Enterprise Ireland published a six-year Action Plan for Women in Business, outlining a number of strategic initiatives to be progressed over the 6-year period. The Action Plan focuses on 4 objectives such as increasing women-led large companies, increasing women led high-potential start-ups, increasing women at senior leader level in companies and increasing the number of female entrepreneurs.

7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognise, reduce and or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life balance, and family balance, and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

Childcare services

112. Major improvements have been made in terms of childcare services during the period under review. Between 2019 and 2023, 1,064 services were opened (418 early learning and care services and 646 school-age childcare services) and in the year to date (January to June 2024), a total of 63 services were opened (23 early learning and care services and 40 school-age childcare services).
113. Investment in quality affordable accessible early learning in childcare has reached €1.1bn this year, building on the substantial investment in Budget 2023 and delivering a 70% increase in total State investment in the sector since 2020.
114. A key response to this policy objective is the investment in the National Childcare Scheme (NCS). One of the stated policy objectives of the National Childcare Scheme is to support labour market activation and participation, including female labour market participation.
115. The introduction of the NCS has substantially improved the affordability of early learning and care and school aged childcare for families. It is a system of progressive subsidies focusing the greatest investment on those with the highest level of need. Since the launch of the Scheme in 2019, there have been a number of improvements and enhancements to the Scheme and the increase in funding in Budget 2024 will further improve affordability for parents, availability of early learning and childcare places and additional supports for children.
116. From September 2024, all families accessing registered early learning and childcare will receive a minimum hourly universal NCS subsidy of €2.14 off their out-of-pocket childcare costs. This is a significant increase from the current hourly rate of €1.40. For families on the minimum or universal subsidy, this will mean up to €5,007 off their annual

bill per child. Work is also underway to allow all paid, non-relative childminders to register with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, responsible for the registration and inspection of early years services. This will allow more families using childminders to benefit from the NCS for the first time.

117. The National Childcare Scheme forms part of a wider funding model entitled Together for Better, the new funding model for early learning and childcare. This new funding model supports the delivery of early learning and childcare for the public good.
118. Together for Better brings together the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), Core Funding and the recently launched Equal Start. These schemes work to, inter alia, ensure children can access early learning and childcare at no or at significantly reduced out of pocket costs to parents.
119. The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a model of universal and targeted supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access and meaningfully participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. Since AIM was first launched in 2016, more than 28,000 children have received targeted AIM supports in over 4,400 settings nationally and many more children have benefited from its universal supports. Equal Start was launched in May 2024. Equal Start a funding model and set of universal and targeted measures to support access to, and participation in, early learning and childcare for children and their families who experience disadvantage.
120. A key enabler in the delivery of Nurturing Skills, The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare 2022-2028 objective was the improvement of pay and conditions in the sector. As the State is not the employer, it cannot set wage levels or determine working conditions for staff in the sector. However, there is now, through the independent Joint Labour Committee (JLC) process, a formal mechanism established by which employer and employee representatives can negotiate minimum pay rates for different roles in ELC and SAC services. It is estimated that the new Employment Regulation Orders delivered by the JLC process improved wages for over 52% of staff in the sector.

Home Care Sector

121. Actions have also been taken to further support paid care workers, 96% of which are women.
122. The need to expand the number of home carer workers and to ensure that workers can be recruited and retained in this area led to the establishment of the cross departmental Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Healthcare Assistants (SWAG), established in March 2022 to examine, and formulate recommendations in this regard. The Report of the SWAG, which contained 16 recommendations, was published on 15 October 2022. An Implementation Group, chaired by the Department of Health, is overseeing implementation of these recommendations. The Implementation Group meets quarterly and publishes progress reports thereafter.

123. Care workers enjoy the same protection under Irish employment legislation as all other legally employed workers. The rights of persons employed in private homes are set out in a Code of Practice published by the Workplace Relations Commission on their website.

Family leave entitlements

124. The increases to Family Leave entitlements and supports have been detailed under Section One and Section 2, Question 1 - Supporting working parents and women's employment.

8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

Women in STEM

125. A concentrated effort has been made to improve gender balance in the STEM talent pipeline, through an exemplar project entitled the STEM Passport for Inclusion Project, supported via the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Discover Programme. Led by Dr Katriona O'Sullivan at Maynooth University, this €1.2 million project is jointly funded by the Government and Microsoft Ireland to address gender inequalities among female pupils in socially disadvantaged communities by providing micro-credentials in STEM, through mentoring and engagement with STEM content knowledge. This now national programme will empower 5,000 Transition Year (15-16 year old) girls from unrepresented communities to gain a Level 6 STEM qualification, which may not otherwise be available to them, and go on to apply for STEM courses at Maynooth University, Munster Technological University and Atlantic Technological University.
126. The Government has set an ambitious target of attaining at least 35% women by 2025 as research leaders (within its Strategy 'Shaping Our Future 2025'), to ensure a more equal, diverse and inclusive research ecosystem, and to reflect the diversity of Ireland's Higher Education Institutions. In 2022, 29% of SFI grant holders, reflecting both Principal and co-Principal Investigators, were women, while 42% of SFI grant team members were women.
127. The six SFI Centres for Research Training which train postgraduate students in Ireland in areas such as machine learning, digitally enhanced reality, data science, genomics, artificial intelligence, and advanced networks for sustainable societies, have supported over 700 postgraduate students to-date. 42% of students are women researchers. 135 PhD students were recruited and €13.6 million was invested in the programme in 2023.
128. The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Guidance Team is also increasing awareness of career paths as being gender neutral in its supports, for example through highlighting females in apprenticeships and STEM careers, and challenging unconscious bias in a range of workshops, webinars and newsletters in 2023.

129. In August 2023, the Department Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform, following collaboration with a number of departments and external representative organisations, published Digital for Good: Ireland's Digital Inclusion Roadmap. The Roadmap addresses the digital inclusion aims set out in Harnessing Digital and Connecting Government 2030.
130. A key focus is to coordinate and integrate efforts to deliver the United Nations guiding principle of "Leave No One Behind". The Roadmap includes a commitment whereby public service bodies in the Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy – Better Public Services will identify and prioritise actions that support digital inclusion.
131. The Roadmap also seeks to build on the willingness of the business sector to contribute to digital inclusion initiatives. The Roadmap includes a commitment to introduce A Charter for Digital Inclusion as one way to recognise publicly the commitment of businesses in this area.
132. The Charter will suggest a set of commitments to which business and other organisations can sign up, and which will be aimed at promoting basic digital skills, building awareness and helping people to get online. Commitments in the Charter could include:
- Digital literacy programmes both within enterprises and working with local communities and customers;
 - Digital assistance training for staff to help others;
 - Provision by businesses of incentives, vouchers and subsidies;
 - Facilitating connectivity through access to broadband services; and
 - Partnerships to share ideas and co-ordinate activities in local areas.
133. The Roadmap also includes a commitment to support more people, especially those from marginalised and underrepresented groups to develop careers in digital, in line with the EU Digital Decade target.

9. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender equal economy?

134. Ireland used budgetary surpluses to cover the cost of the pandemic and to provide robust income support to workers, including in the hospitality sector where many workers are female, who were unable to work during periods of the pandemic response.
135. Ireland has introduced new budgetary approaches to enhance its understanding of the impact of budgetary expenditure on equality, particularly gender equality. Since 2018, when it was first piloted, significant work has been undertaken to develop the Equality Budgeting initiative. With an initial focus on gender, due to the availability of data, Equality Budgeting has since been expanded across multiple dimensions of equality including gender, socio-economic, disability and minority groups.

136. An Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group (EBEAG) has been established to guide the development of Equality Budgeting policy. Representing key stakeholders such as the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, the National Women's Council and the National Disability Authority, this group is chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery, and Reform and has met regularly since 2018.
137. To drive this important work forward in line with international best practice, in 2019 the OECD was requested by the Government to conduct a scan of Equality Budgeting in Ireland. The report supported the approach taken, and also provided twelve recommendations on how to drive this initiative forward.
138. In cooperation with the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform, the CSO conducted a data audit in 2020 to ascertain the availability of public service data that is disaggregated by equality dimension. This work was guided by the EBEAG and the audit findings were published alongside Budget 2021. The information is published on the CSO website and will continue to be updated as new data is identified.
139. Following the data audit, work is now underway to identify a data strategy that will identify what actions are needed to improve the disaggregation of data and identify actions needed to address data gaps. This work is led by the CSO and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).
140. A key OECD recommendation, that has underpinned overall implementation, was the establishment of an inter-departmental network of Equality Budgeting contact points. The inter-departmental network on Equality Budgeting was established in 2021 in order to facilitate the full implementation of Equality Budgeting across all departments, in line with this OECD recommendation. The inter-departmental network members are tasked with:
 - ensuring that policy makers in their departments are fully aware of, and implementing, Equality Budgeting policy where applicable and
 - bringing all relevant work within their department to the attention of the Equality Budgeting unit, to ensure that strategic direction of Equality Budgeting is fully informed.
141. The 2023 Public Service Performance Report was published in June 2024. The report included an update on Equality Budgeting, with all Departments reporting equality budgeting metrics. All Departments in Ireland continually review and refine these metrics each year to strengthen the reporting of this information and to provide greater insight into the progress that is being made within each sector on gender and the other nine equality themes.

Poverty eradication, social protection, and social services

10. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

142. Ireland has taken a series of measures to tackle poverty among women and girls, focusing in particular on addressing low pay and child poverty.

Low Pay Commission

143. The Government is committed to protecting and improving the incomes of low-paid workers and in 2021 asked the Low Pay Commission to examine and make recommendations on the Programme for Government commitment to progress to a living wage.

144. The Low Pay Commission's recommendations were received and considered and in November 2022, Government agreed that a National Living Wage would be introduced and set at 60% of hourly median wages in line with the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission. Government agreed that a National Living Wage will be in place by 2026, at which point it will replace the National Minimum Wage.

145. It was further agreed that the progression to a living wage would be achieved via incremental adjustment to the National Minimum Wage and that the Low Pay Commission will continue to make annual recommendations on the appropriate rate of the National Minimum Wage, and the increases required so that by 2026 the minimum wage will reach the target of 60% of hourly median wages.

146. The first step towards reaching a living wage was the €0.80 increase to the National Minimum Wage from 1 January 2023 to €11.30 per hour. This was followed with the significant 12.4% increase of €1.40 to the National Minimum Wage which came into force on 1 January 2024 and increased the minimum wage to €12.70 per hour.

147. Once the 60% threshold is reached, the Low Pay Commission will assess the impact of the progression to the 60% target and then advise on the practicalities of gradually increasing the targeted threshold rate towards 66% of the hourly median wage.

148. The work of the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office in the Department of the Taoiseach is to prioritise action across government in areas that have the greatest impact for children and families experiencing poverty. From Poverty to Potential: A Programme Plan for Child Poverty and Well-being 2023-2025 is the initial Programme Plan for the Office. It takes a focused approach on six key areas which have the potential to bring about significant change for children, including girls, and their families.

These include:

- i. Income Supports and Joblessness;
- ii. Early Learning and Childcare;

- iii. Reducing the cost of education;
 - iv. Family homelessness;
 - v. Consolidating and integrating Family & Parental Support, Health and Well-being;
 - vi. Enhancing participation in culture, arts and sport for Children and Young People affected by poverty.
149. The role of the Department of the Taoiseach is to co-ordinate and focus government action. To help facilitate this, the Office has established a Cross-Government Network on Child Poverty and Well-being, which meets regularly. The Taoiseach hosted the inaugural Child Poverty and Well-being Summit on Thursday 23rd May 2024 in Dublin Castle.
150. Increases have been made to various benefits to help support families, principally, the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) and the Jobseekers Transitional Payment (JST). Further detail on these payments can be found in the response to Question 6 – Social Protection Benefits
151. Since late 2022, the Department of Social Protection ceased applying a rule whereby applicants for the One-Parent Family and Jobseeker's Transitional Payments had to make "efforts to seek maintenance" from their child's other parent. This was done on an administrative basis initially until Regulations were changed during 2023. The 'Liable Relative Provisions', which also applied to One-Parent Family Payment whereby the Department could seek a contribution from the child's other parent, has also been revoked - and has not been applied to new claims since late 2022.
152. There have been several changes to these schemes since 2017 which have had a positive impact for those in receipt of the payments, the vast majority of whom are women. 2022, 2023 and 2024 saw increases to both payments of €5, €12 and €12 respectively, bringing the 2024 personal rate of payment to €232 per week.
153. Persons in receipt of the above two payments also receive an additional weekly payment for each child, called an 'Increase for Qualified Child' (IQC). This can be paid until the child turns 18 or to age 22 in certain circumstances where they are in full-time education. The weekly rate has increased a number of times since 2019 - for children under 12 from €34 to €46 per week and for children aged 12 and over from €37 to €54 per week as of 2024.
154. Other social protection payments have been outlined in Section Three, Question 6.

11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls

155. Ireland has taken measures to improve access by women to pension entitlements and to sick pay. New pension measures respond to the gender pension gap, and the conditions of many women in unpaid and caring roles. The Pensions Commission was established in November 2020 to examine sustainability and eligibility issues in respect

of the State Pension and the Social Insurance Fund, in fulfilment of a Programme for Government commitment.

156. The Pensions Commission's Report was published on 7th October 2021 and it established that the current State Pension system is not sustainable into the future and that changes are needed. It set out a wide range of recommendations, which were gender, equality and poverty proofed. The State Pension reforms introduced in response to the Pensions Commission's report were determined to have a positive impact on gender and poverty proofing, especially for women. These reforms included introducing a new flexible pension age model, enhanced State Pension provision for long-term carers, moving fully to a 'Total Contributions Approach' for calculation of individual pensions entitlements, providing people with the option to continue working up until the age of 70 in return for a higher pension and addressing the long-term sustainability of the State Pension system through gradual, incremental increases in social insurance rates over time.
157. In particular January 2024 saw the introduction of Long-Term Carers Contributions (LTCC). These State Pension reckonable contributions are provided to those, overwhelmingly women, who have spent 20 years or more providing full time care for dependent family members. The LTCCs can be used to satisfy the minimum required 10 years paid contributions to access the State Pension Contributory. LTCCs can be used in addition to other paid and credit contributions, including the Home Caring Periods available to parents, in order to reach the 40 years required for the full rate payment. Family Carers Ireland report that 61% of carers are women. Hence, the introduction of long-term carer's contributions will predominantly benefit women as carers and provide access to a State Pension (Contributory) payment that is reflected in their years of caring for an incapacitated dependent.
158. Furthermore, payments for carers, the majority of whom continue to be women, also continue to increase. From January 2024, there has been an increase in weekly social welfare payments, with the maximum rates of Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit also increase. Meanwhile, the income disregard for Carer's Allowance for both couples and single carers has also increased under Budget 2023.
159. In advance of settling the final design of the Automatic Enrolment (AE) Retirement Savings System, a gender impact of assessment was conducted to assess the policy objectives and outcomes for women in implementing the AE system. In terms of overall labour market participation, there are 1.3 million females in the Irish labour force, on a seasonally adjusted basis, the highest female labour force participation to date.
160. The Government introduced statutory sick leave in January 2023, with a current entitlement to 5 days sick leave. The entitlement is expected to benefit women working in the private sector who may often be in employment where paid sick leave is not provided by the employer. Sick pay is paid by the employer at 70% of the normal pay up to a maximum of €110 a day.

12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

161. Ireland has taken a series of measures to improve health outcomes for women and girls, starting with the Women's Health Action Plan.

Women's Health Action Plan

162. The Women's Health Action Plan 2022-2023 was launched in March 2022 and laid the groundwork for significant progress in the area of women's health. Under this Plan:

- A Free Contraception Scheme was introduced and was available to all women aged between 17 and 31 (inclusive). Further expansions to the Scheme were developed under the new Women's Health Action Plan 2024-2025;
- Six Regional Fertility Hubs operate and provide access to publicly funded AHR treatment (including IVF, ICSI and IUI) across the country;
- Sixteen 'See-and-Treat' Ambulatory Gynaecology Clinics were opened and fully operational with 4 more in development. Approximately 16,000 patients were seen in these same day see-and-treat clinics in 2023;
- Six Specialist Menopause Clinics have opened nationwide, one in each maternity network, for women who require complex specialist care;
- Two Specialist Endometriosis Centres for complex care have been established, along with 5 regional hubs. All hub and supra-regional sites are currently operational and receiving referrals;
- Five new postnatal hubs are now open, giving women access to postnatal care in community settings;
- A new National Perinatal Genomics Service has been established to ensure women have access to critical testing both during pregnancy, and in planning for future pregnancies;
- 17 of Ireland's 19 maternity hospitals are providing full termination of pregnancy services as prescribed in the 2018 Act, with services commencing in the final two hospital sites in 2024.

163. The Women's Health Action Plan 2024-2025 Phase 2: An Evolution in Women's Health was launched on 18th April 2024. This plan represents the next phase or evolution in the response with regard to women's health. It continues to build on the invaluable work undertaken over the previous Women's Health Action Plan 2022-2023, as well as having a focus on new and innovative developments. The services and initiatives will be embedded across the new HSE health regions. €11 million has been allocated in 2024 to support the implementation of this plan, bringing the total additional funding allocated towards women's health to over €140 million since 2020. In addition to embedding the initiatives introduced over the past two years, further important developments which will take place in the lifetime of this Action Plan.

Mental Health

164. The National Implementation Monitoring Committee (NIMC) Specialist Group on Women's Mental Health was established by the Department of Health in August 2021,

at the request of the NIMC Steering Committee, to progress recommendation 3 of Sharing the Vision (StV). This recommendation was that the Department of Health, the Women's Health Taskforce and the NIMC will undertake a joint project to outline an effective approach to the mental health of women and girls, ensuring that mental health priorities and services are gender sensitive and that women's mental health is specifically and sufficiently addressed in the implementation of the StV policy. To support the work of the Specialist Group, a diverse Consultation Panel was established, involving a wide range of professional and civil society perspectives to inform the process. The outcome of this work was the publication of the Embedding Women's Mental Health in Sharing the Vision report in March 2023 which emphasises that all health services need to take steps to strengthen gender awareness and contains details of proposals and an implementation plan to achieve these goals.

Reproductive Health

165. Ireland voted by Referendum to remove the constitutional ban on terminations in 2018. The final Report of the review of the operation of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 was submitted to the Minister in February 2023. The Report made a number of recommendations in relation to increasing access to services.
166. Termination services in early pregnancy (up to 12 weeks) are now provided in 17 of the 19 maternity hospitals, with the remaining two expected to come on board in 2024. There has also been a small but sustained increase in community providers, approximately an additional 20 in the last 12 months alone.
167. A revised model of care introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has now been approved as the enduring model of care. Under this blended approach, it is possible for one of the two consultations required for termination in early pregnancy to take place remotely. This will alleviate the time and expense involved in travelling to the GP surgery twice. The cumulative effect of these measures, now in place, will substantially reduce barriers and increase access to services for those who need it.
168. The Safe Access Zones Bill was signed by the President on the 7 May 2024. The Department of Health is currently engaging with relevant stakeholders in relation to the commencement of the legislation.
169. In September 2023, Ireland began the funding of assisted human reproduction (AHR) treatment. Eligible patients are now entitled to one full cycle of IVF (in-vitro fertilisation) or ICSI (Intracytoplasmic sperm injection) treatment, initially provided in HSE-approved private clinics of their choice ahead of the opening next year of the first public National Advanced AHR Centre.
170. Approximately 125 couples each month are now being referred through the Health Service Executive's (HSE) Regional Fertility Hubs, for publicly funded AHR treatment provided in approved private clinics.

171. Thousands of other patients have had their fertility-related issues resolved through the six Regional Fertility Hubs, in line with the Model of Care for Fertility, in order to ensure that issues are addressed at the lowest level of clinical intervention necessary.
172. Given the complex regulatory and clinical issues still to be addressed in respect of certain categories of AHR treatment, public funding of a number of specific services is being commenced on a structured and phased basis. While treatment involving the use of donated gametes (sperm and eggs) are not yet available for heterosexual or same-sex couples or single female patients, it is expected that this treatment will be made available as soon as possible.
173. Much has been done to support, implement and enhance menopause clinical care in the last five years. Six specialist menopause clinics, one in each maternity network, are now open. Specialist menopause clinics are designed to treat complex symptoms of menopause, however, the majority of women in menopause can manage their symptoms at home or with a GP.

Maternity healthcare

174. The National Maternity Strategy (2016-2026) provides a vision for Irish maternity services, where women and babies have access to safe, high-quality care in a setting that is most appropriate to their needs, including in terms of the physical environment. The Strategy ensures that women and families are placed at the centre of all services and are treated with dignity, respect, and compassion and that parents are supported before, during and after pregnancy to allow them to give their child the best possible start in life.
175. The relocation of the National Maternity Hospital (NMH), to a co-located site with an adult acute hospital, St Vincent's University Hospital, (as per international best practice) will be the greatest infrastructural investment by the Irish State, to-date, in the area of women's health. The relocated facility will provide a comprehensive model of maternity, gynaecological and neonatal care to the highest international standard, for women, girls and babies in Ireland for generations to come.
176. It is expected that the procurement process and the completion of the enabling works will be completed by mid-2025. This should allow construction of the main works to begin, subject to the conclusion of a successful tender process. Education on sexual health has also been improved, which will be outlined in the following question.

13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented.

177. Ireland has taken a series of measures to advance equality for women and girls in the education sector, focusing on increasing their participation in senior positions within higher education and in areas such as apprenticeships where they have historically been under-represented.

Higher Education

178. There is a statutory requirement for Irish higher education institutions to promote gender balance among staff and students, and for the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to promote the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education. Two policy documents were developed in recent years to inform the implementation of a gender equality framework in Irish higher education.
179. In December 2022 the Higher Education Authority's Second National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education was launched. Review contained a number of recommendations. Two issues within the process emerged as key to the advancement of gender equality in higher education: the need to take an intersectional approach when addressing gender inequality; and the impact of precarious employment on career development.
180. The third level sector has taken measures to improve the gender balance of senior academic posts. The Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI) was launched in 2019 and supports the creation of new and gender specific posts at appropriate levels. It creates rapid and sustainable change in the representation of women in the senior professor grade. In 2021 seven institutions were successful under the SALI call, securing an additional 10 senior academic posts. This brings the total number of posts awarded under SALI to 30. A total of 45 senior academic leadership initiative posts will be provided across sectors (e.g. university and institute of technology) over three cycles of awards. In the University sector, the rates of women in Professor and Associate Professor posts have steadily increased from 26% and 35% respectively in 2018 to 30.8% and 40.3% respectively in 2022.
181. Ireland has taken a series of measures to improve gender awareness capacity of its third level sector, using the Athena Swan process to develop such capacity. The objective of the Athena Swan Ireland 2021 charter framework is to support higher education institutions, academic departments, and professional units in impactful and sustainable gender equality work and to build capacity for evidence-based equality work across the equality grounds enshrined in Irish legislation. There are currently 118 award holders in Ireland (113 Bronze; 5 Silver). 19 institutions hold awards, including 4 legacy awards.
182. The HEA awarded funding under the Gender Equality Enhancement Fund 2023 to advance gender equality initiatives in Irish higher education. Awards were made across two areas:
 - research on or advancing gender equality initiatives in Ireland;
 - training programmes specifically addressing gender equality;
183. Projects were funded across several areas including the evaluation of leadership development programmes and gender equality during transformational change within institutions.
184. The 'Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions Implementation Plan, 2022-2024' (ESVH Implementation Plan), was developed to

address the recommendations that emerged from the National Surveys of Staff and Student Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish HEIs. Its development was facilitated by the HEA's Centre of Excellence for Equality Diversity and Inclusion, in close collaboration with the ESVH Advisory Group. The ESVH Advisory Group will maintain oversight of progress towards the delivery of the ESVH Implementation Plan, with the support of the Centre of Excellence for Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

185. The Plan also secured funding of an additional €1.5 million in Budget 2023 to support the appointment of 17 Sexual Violence and Harassment (SVH) Prevention and Response Managers in our HEIs.

Period Poverty in educational settings

186. The provision of period products in publicly funded educational settings is a Programme for Government commitment. DFHERIS has secured €500,000 in Budget 2024 to seek to address period indignity in further and higher educational settings. The funding is currently being provided to Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and publicly funded Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to assist with the delivery of free, sustainable period products and dispensers for students.

Apprenticeships

187. Ireland has taken measures to increase the historically low percentage of women in apprenticeships. In 2022, the Irish Government announced a gender-based apprenticeship bursary for employers. The bursary, worth €2,666, is available to employers who employ apprentices in the minority gender on any national apprenticeship programme with greater than 80% representation of a single gender.
188. Employers of 230 apprentices were deemed eligible for the gender bursary in 2023. This compares to 200 apprentices in 2022. As of end-June 2024, there were 2,156 female apprentices, approximately 8% of the overall apprentice population. This has almost doubled since 2021, when there were 1,321.
189. Women also feature more strongly in apprenticeships in the hospitality, healthcare, property, sales, biopharma and ICT sectors. Participation in industrial areas such as manufacturing and engineering is also increasing.

Secondary education

190. Concrete efforts have also been made to improve young peoples' education on gender equality, gender stereotypes, and sexual and reproductive health among other key issues. An updated Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) specification, incorporating Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE), was published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in May 2023 and was rolled out in schools last September for all first year Junior Cycle students. This followed on from an extensive public consultation on a draft specification, which took place in 2022.

191. The learning outcomes of the 'Understanding myself and others' strand include that students should be able to 'reflect on gender equity and how gender stereotypes impact on expectations, behaviour and relationships', and to 'discuss experiences/situations of bias, inequality or exclusion and devise ways to actively create more inclusive environments'. The 'Relationships and Sexuality strand learning outcomes include that students should be able to 'identify signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships' and to 'appreciate the importance of seeking, giving and receiving consent in sexual relationships, from the perspective of building caring relationships and from a legal perspective'.
192. There has also been improvement in the number of girls taking STEM subjects to Leaving Certificate Level, with 85.7% of girls in 2018 taking one or more STEM subjects (excluding mathematics as a mandatory subject) to 86.5% in 2022. For those taking two or more STEM subjects (excluding maths), the numbers have increased from 31.7% to 34.4%.

14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

193. Women's participation in the labour market has increased year on year, with the latest Labour Force Survey for Q2 2024 reporting the female participation rate as 61.4%, which is the highest recorded since the series began in 2007.
194. There is also a noticeable difference between the number of women with a third level degree at 50% compared to men at 42% according to figures from Q2 2023. The number of women in full-time higher education has also increased from 52.8% in 2018 to 54.6% in 2022.

Pay-Related Benefit

195. Ireland is developing a new Pay Related Benefit support for Jobseekers which will closer align the rate of payment with previous earnings. The intention is to provide a more effective cushion against the income shock when a person loses their employment and will counter the cliff edges that individuals experience on becoming fully unemployed. The need for such a pay-related system became evident during the Covid-19 emergency in Ireland where income specific supports were introduced.

Equality Budgeting

196. Ireland's progress in Equality Budgeting has been outlined in detail in response to Question 9.

Taxation policy

197. Ireland appreciates with the importance of integrating equality concerns into the design of policy including taxation. The Department of Finance's work in developing a process for equality budgeting in Ireland with respect to taxation policy was set out in *Equality*

Budgeting from a Tax Perspective, published as part of Budget 2022, which detailed the Department’s work in developing a process for equality budgeting in Ireland with respect to taxation policy.

198. Budget 2023 and 2024 documents included a publication called “Beyond GDP - Quality of Life Assessment. A chapter is included in this document advancing the work on equality budgeting from a tax perspective, analysing the effects of incremental budgetary policy and tax policy on a range of equality related metrics and societal groups.
199. In these publications, the Department examines tax expenditures through an equality lens. For example, in 2023, in chapter five of “Beyond GDP - Quality of Life Assessment”, the Department examined recent data from the CSO Labour Force Survey, finding that increased participation by women as well as younger and older age cohorts was driving growth in the overall participation rate following the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter also included an analysis of three tax reliefs in respect to the gender and age of the claimants, identifying that the rent tax credit and remote working relief have been primarily claimed by men and young people while the health expenses relief has been claimed by more women than men.

Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes

15. Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?

200. In April 2020, UN Secretary General, António Guterres, called for measures to address a “horrifying global surge in domestic violence” directed towards women and girls, linked to lockdowns imposed by governments responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many countries, Ireland has experienced an epidemic of domestic violence. For many reasons, tackling and reducing the prevalence of domestic violence presents significant challenges. Violence of this nature encompasses not only physical attacks but also coercive control, emotional and psychological abuse, intimidation and harassment.
201. Since 2018, there has been extensive legal reform around domestic abuse and sexual violence, including introducing an offence of coercive control under the Domestic Violence Act 2018. Since the commencement of this legislation, there has been a notable increase on the number of Domestic Violence incidents reported by an Garda Síochána (the police force), which are detailed in the following table. The incidents include coercive control, breaches of barring and protection orders, and other domestic violence related crimes:

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Incidents	9,306	11,001	12,800	15,505	17,531
Incidents with Prosecutions	4,514	5,589	7,304	8,110	8,312

202. In 2020 Ireland published the 'Supporting a Victims Journey' plan, to support victims of domestic violence and/or sexual offences. The nationwide roll-out of divisional protective services units within an Garda Síochána is complete. These units deliver a consistent, professional, and sensitive approach to the investigation of specialised crime types, in particular domestic abuse. The enactment of the Criminal Procedure Act 2021 introduces preliminary trial hearings for the first time in Irish law. The purpose of preliminary hearings is to reduce delays and increase efficiency in the running of our criminal trials. They will remove some of the uncertainties victims face about potential issues arising after a trial has started, which will help them run more smoothly.
203. The Department of Justice has also been running a six-year, two-part national awareness campaign to tackle domestic and sexual violence. It is designed to help identify instances or signs of domestic and sexual violence and make the public question the acceptance of certain unacceptable behaviours and attitudes.
204. A whole-of-government strategy to combat domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV), was published in June 2022. Entitled Zero Tolerance: Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence 2022-2026, the overarching purpose of the Strategy is to achieve zero tolerance in Irish society for DSGBV, to deliver an enhanced understanding of the root causes and impacts of DSGBV across society, to ensure significant and ongoing reduction in the incidence of DSGBV and to support changes in behaviour.
205. The Strategy also recognises and acknowledges the need to provide support for all victims/survivors of DSGBV so that Ireland becomes a place where victims and survivors receive quality supports and justice.
206. Central to delivering these actions will be the work of Cuan, the statutory DSGBV Agency, which opened in February of this year. Cuan has a mandate to drive the implementation of the strategy across Government, bringing the expertise and focus required to tackle this complex social issue.
207. Another focus of the actions on domestic violence has been the roll out of additional refuge accommodation, supports and services. Planning and engagement are under way for the delivery of 150 additional family refuge units within the lifetime of the strategy. This includes 18 projects that are already under way. Some projects are at different stages. The delivery of eight new family units in the Southeast will be complete by the end of summer 2024, as well as 25 additional refuge units across two different projects will be under construction by the end of the year, with a further two projects anticipated to be in construction by the beginning of next year.
208. Concrete actions have also been taken to target specific areas of violence against women, including the introduction of five days fully paid domestic violence leave in any 12-month period in November 2023. Women's Aid was commissioned to develop supports for employers to develop their own domestic violence workplace policies. The introduction of domestic violence leave is a commitment in both the Programme for Government 2020 and the Third National Strategy on DSGBV, which recognises that society wide efforts must be made to achieve concrete change.

209. In May 2023, a Taskforce on Safe Participation in Political Life was established to examine and propose how to safeguard and support participation and promote civil discourse in political life, while establishment of Coimisiún na Meán has laid the foundations for a new regulatory framework for online safety in Ireland. An Coimisiún will hold designated online services to account through binding online safety codes for how they tackle the availability of defined categories of harmful online content.

16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?

210. Since Ireland last reported on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, concrete actions have been taken to eliminate violence against women and girls (further information has been outlined in the response to Question 15). Particularly, in relation to sexual violence, a dedicated sexual offences unit was established in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Sex Offenders (Amendment) Act 2023 was enacted in April 2023 and has strengthened the management and monitoring of sex offenders in the community, including a number of amendments to the sex offenders register notification requirements. Furthermore, the Criminal Justice (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024 will strengthen the law around sexual offences and improves protections for victims of sexual offences and of human trafficking.

211. In addition, coercive control has become an offence. Section 39 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018 provides for an offence of coercive control where the defendant has knowingly and persistently engaged in behaviour that is (a) controlling or coercive (b) has a serious effect on a relevant person, and (c) a reasonable person would consider likely to have a serious effect on the relevant person. Relevant person includes spouses/former spouses, civil partners/ former civil partners and unrelated persons who are, or were, in an intimate relationship with the defendant. Creating a specific offence of coercive control sends a clear, consistent message to victims that non-violent control in an intimate relationship is criminal.

212. Ireland has also prioritised the introduction of domestic violence leave, as outlined in the response to Question 16.

213. The Third National Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy published in June 2022 recognises prostitution and sexual exploitation as a form of violence against women. Ireland's position is that prostitution is inherently exploitative of vulnerable persons, mainly women and girls, and that many people are forced into prostitution through trafficking, drug addiction, homelessness and poverty. This approach is supported by an Garda Síochána (Irish police force) in that they consider sex work and prostitution to be inextricably linked with human trafficking.

214. Pillar 2 of the Third National Strategy, Protection and Support, focuses on actions designed to protect the safety and meet the support needs of adults and children who have experienced DSGBV. One of the objectives for this pillar is to ensure those in prostitution have access to safety, health care, support and exit routes.

215. The HSE Women's Health Service (WHS) and Anti-Human Trafficking Team (AHTT) is a statutory service provided by the Health Service Executive. The WHS operates sexual health clinic services and outreach support to women/trans women involved in the sex industry. The AHTT has responsibility for care planning for both female/male victims of trafficking in all areas of exploitation.
216. In line with action 5c of the Women's Health Action plan (WHAP) the HSE is building the capacity of the HSE Women's Health Service to respond to the needs of marginalised women – especially sex workers – and strengthen the service's online presence to ensure reach to relevant groups.
217. In addition, the Department of Justice provides funding to Ruhama, an Irish NGO and registered charity that offers nationwide support to women impacted by prostitution, sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. This organisation has extensive expertise in providing a wide range of specialist, holistic support services. They offer a person-centred model of support based on each woman's personal needs and priorities.
218. In 2023, there was a total of 53 trafficking victims. Sexual trafficking victims, of which there were 28, were all female, with 2 under 18 years of age. In terms of victims of trafficking for labour, there were 16 victims (8 male and 8 female). In terms of forced criminality, there were 9 victims (6 female and 3 male).

17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender based violence?

219. As previously referenced, Zero Tolerance, the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual, Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) was launched in 2022.
220. In addition to the actions referenced in the responses to Questions 16 and 17, the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 introduced new stand-alone offences of stalking and non-fatal strangulation. Both of these offences are common ways in which abusers target victims. It has been shown that non-fatal strangulation can be an indication of future, lethal violence and is a risk factor for homicides against women in the home. The 2023 Act also doubled to 10 years the maximum sentence for assault causing harm, this being one of the most common offences in domestic violence cases. The Act also widened the scope of the existing harassment offence; harassment is defined as any persistent conduct without lawful authority or reasonable excuse that seriously interferes with peace and privacy or causes alarm, distress or harm to the other. Harm is broadly defined as meaning harm to body or mind.
221. It includes a non-exhaustive list of illustrative behaviours, such as:
- following, watching, monitoring, tracking or spying upon a person;
 - pestering a person;
 - impersonating a person;
 - communicating with or about a person;

- purporting to act or communicate on behalf of a person;
 - disclosing to other persons private information in respect of a person;
 - interfering with the property (including pets) of a person;
 - loitering in the vicinity of a person;
 - causing, without the consent of the person, an electronic communication or information system operated by a person to function in a particular way;
 - breaching a relevant court order.
222. Part 5 of the 2023 Act also introduces a new system of civil orders designed to prevent stalking and protect victims. These orders represent an important first step in addressing stalking behaviour by allowing for earlier intervention without requiring the level of proof needed to secure a criminal conviction. An affected person, or a member of the Garda Síochána acting on their behalf, can apply to the District Court for an order prohibiting another person from engaging in relevant conduct.
223. This new approach extends protections currently available to certain victims under the Domestic Violence Act 2018 to all victims of stalking behaviour, regardless of their relationship with the perpetrator.
224. In addition, Ireland has enacted the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (“Coco’s Law”) criminalising non-consensual distribution of intimate images, enforcement of legislation criminalising coercive control, and the allocation of additional funding for the provision of services. Further information has been provided in response to Question 18.
225. Ireland continues to expand the range of domestic violence behaviours which can be prosecuted so to strengthen the protections available to persons experiencing such behaviours. Making coercive control an offence has been pivotal in giving an increased number of victims of domestic violence the possibility to seek protection and redress against this type of domestic violence.

18. In the past five years, what actions have your country taken to prevent and respond to technology facilitated gender based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking and non-consensual sharing of intimate images)

226. The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco’s Law) was commenced in February 2021. This brings in a number of key developments relating to image based sexual abuse offences and threatening and offensive communications. It also made changes to the existing Harassment Offence. This Act also changes S10 of the Non-Fatal Offences against the person Act, by including in the existing Harassment offence communicating about a person (previously only communication with a person was included).
227. The Act itself provides for offences relating to the recording, distribution or publication of intimate images and for the anonymity of victims of those offences; and for an offence

involving the distribution, publication or sending of threatening or grossly offensive communications. It addresses the distribution or publication of an intimate image without consent with intent to cause harm to the victim. The Act makes it an offence to threaten to distribute or publish such an image. It also provides for a liability offence to engage in the recording, distribution or publication of an intimate image without consent, with no requirement to prove an intention to cause harm. In addition, making the threat to publish and distribute an intimate image without consent, even if the threat is not carried out, is also an offence under this Act.

228. The Act also sought to target other areas of harmful communications by creating a new offence of distributing, publishing or sending a threatening or grossly offensive communication with intent to cause harm and to extend the current offence of harassment to deal with communications about a person, as well as communications to a person.
229. Ireland was an active participant in the negotiations of the European Union's Violence Against Women Directive, which took place prior to its approval by the European Parliament in April 2024, and its adoption by the Council on 7 May 2024. Ireland chose to opt-in to this Directive and actively participated in negotiations. The Directive aims to ensure effective prevention of such violence, protection from violence, access to justice, victim support, and strengthened coordination across the EU. It includes offences specifically against technology assisted gender-based violence, including in relation to non-consensual sharing of intimate or manipulated material, cyber stalking, cyber harassment and cyber incitement to violence or hatred. The Directive, which has to be transposed by 2027, provides a framework within which Ireland will take action in this area.
230. The enactment of the Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Act 2022, and establishment of Coimisiún na Meán has laid the foundations for a new regulatory framework for online safety in Ireland. An Coimisiún will hold designated online services to account through binding online safety codes for how they tackle the availability of defined categories of harmful online content, including serious forms of cyberbullying. The first online safety code is expected to be adopted by Coimisiún na Meán later this year.
231. Coimisiún na Meán is responsible for Ireland's Online Safety Framework, which also includes the implementation of aspects of two EU Regulations; the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Terrorist Content Online Regulation (TCOR). Among other obligations, the DSA requires the largest online platforms to complete risk assessments and implement mitigation measures in respect of illegal content. This includes content related to existing criminal offences, like certain abusive, threatening, or offensive communications as detailed in Coco's Law (the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act, 2020). Coimisiún na Meán, as Ireland's Digital Services Coordinator under the DSA, will support the European Commission in enforcing these obligations.
232. In May 2023, a Taskforce on Safe Participation in Political Life was established to examine and propose how to safeguard and support participation and promote civil

discourse in political life, as evidence points to a significant increase in the level of abuse, including online abuse, and harassment experienced by those who participate in political life.

233. The Task Force published its report this year, which, among other measures, recommended increased support networks for women involved in political life, removing the requirement to publish the home addresses of candidates, and that Coimisiún na Meán should utilise its regulatory powers to protect political figures, including women, from harmful online abuse.

19. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women's organisations from working to prevent and respond to GBV?

234. A key aspect of the response to tackling domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV) has been a year-on-year increase in funding for support services. Prior to 2024, funding for organisations to prevent and respond to DSGBV was split between Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, and the Department of Justice.

- Tusla was the primary State funder of services supporting victims of domestic and sexual violence including, for example, by the provision of funding for rape crisis centres, refuges and other support service to victims of such crimes. In 2020, a total of €25.3m was made available to Tusla to fund DSGBV services. In 2021, a total of €30m was made available, €30m in 2022 and €38.5m in 2023.
- The Department of Justice provided funding for DSGBV Prevention initiatives and under supports for victims through the Criminal Justice system e.g. Court accompaniment. In 2020, a total of €4.5m was made available, in 2021, a total of €8.2m was made available, €13m in 2022 and €11.9m in 2023.

235. Organisations working with victims of crime apply for funding for the provision of support, information and advice on the rights of victims, court accompaniment and other support and advice services. Applications from relevant organisations may also be made to:

- minimise waiting times for the support needs of victims of crime and for the expansion of crime victim helplines;
- meet the increased demand of services following Victims of Crime (VOC) and Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (DSGBV) awareness raising campaigns;
- allow frontline NGO services to develop expansion plans for additional counties, extend to other counties and allow for additional emergency services;
- expand accompaniment service in the light of increasing numbers of victims and to ensure sufficiency of ongoing specialist support provision, support outreach work with victims of human trafficking and supporting those wishing to exit prostitution;
- allow NGO frontline services run recruitment campaigns for volunteers;
- assist all vulnerable witnesses navigating the criminal justice system across facilities, supports, information, and training.

236. Specialist organisations who run Domestic Violence Perpetrators programmes are also funded. Following an Audit of DSGBV structures, in 2021 the Irish Government agreed that the Department of Justice would be the lead Department with responsibility for policy, accommodation and services in relation to DSGBV.
237. In 2024, with the establishment of Cuan, the responsibility for funding for DSGBV services has been given to that Agency, with the Department of Justice retaining provision of funding for organisations who support non-DSGBV victims of crime.
238. Cuan's overall budget for 2024 is €59.049m. This is a significant increase of €30m in the last three years. The budget for funding DSGBV services and prevention measures in 2024 is €54.21 Million. It includes perpetrator programmes and awareness raising campaigns. Cuan provides funding to services for c.80 organisations in addition to funding for all Cuan actions in the Zero Tolerance Strategy.

20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and or gender bias in the media, including social media.

239. Coimisiún na Meán, Ireland's media regulator, has responsibility for regulating broadcasters and online media, and supporting media development. In September 2023, it published an Online Harms Evidence Review. This review collected information from various sources, including from a 2020 survey carried out by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, which reported the country-by-country levels of those who have experienced cyber harassment. Among other findings, the survey reported that 14% of women aged 16-29 said they had experienced cyber harassment in the past 12 months. Cuan has been engaging with Coimisiún na Meán prior to the submission of the Online Safety Code to the EU Commission.
240. Coimisiún na Meán has worked with sectoral stakeholders and NGOs to examine the current status of diversity strategies within the media sector and to develop and deliver appropriate monitoring mechanisms. Coimisiún na Meán published the first Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Irish audio and audio visual sector in July 2024. The Strategy is designed to encourage media service providers to take steps to facilitate greater inclusion in the sector, including facilitating the provision of training for staff on disability awareness and unconscious bias, enhancing the accessibility of workplaces and content, and examining the provision of paid internships and strategic mentorships for minority groups.
241. In December 2021, Ireland published a report on gender norms nationally. The report compiles data from a number of sources to track Ireland's progress on the indicators used to measure the 10 norms of restrictive masculinities, as outlined by the OECD Report "Man Enough? Measuring Masculine Norms to Promote Women's Empowerment".

242. The report includes indicators from the economic sphere; where restrictive masculinities undervalue women's economic contribution and support the view that men's labour is more important and valuable than women's work. The indicators produced will be incorporated into the next National Strategy for Women and Girls.

21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalised groups of women and girls?

243. While Ireland's Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence acknowledges the need to provide support for all victims/survivors of DSGBV, there is an emphasis on meeting the needs of women and girls as it is widely known that they are disproportionately affected by such violence. It further reflects the need to consider lived experiences of particular victims/survivor groups, including such as migrants, Travellers and Roma, people with disabilities, LGBTI+ people and older people. The DSGBV Strategy recognises the additional risk factors created by overlapping forms of discrimination and so takes an intersectional approach to DSGBV, recognizing that this is a problem that requires consideration of all parts of an individual's identity to ensure equality of outcome for all.

244. Making connections to other equality and inclusion strategies and related legislation that focuses upon socially excluded groups will ensure DSGBV services are inclusive and improve outcomes for socially excluded groups, whether adults or children and young people. Engaging with the wider DSGBV research community is intended to facilitate the consideration of intersectionality and understanding barriers faced by minority groups

245. Preventative actions include:

- Raising awareness of DSGBV across society and considering ways to encourage men and boys to contribute to actively preventing all forms of violence.
- Enhancing understanding of consent, gender equality and healthy relationships. Actions in this space were the launch of National campaign on the meaning of consent, roll-out of consent education in Higher Education Institutions and reform of our school curricula to embed understanding of healthy relationships from an earlier stage.

246. Furthermore, various policies have been implemented to eradicate violence against girls. A multi-agency operation (Operation Limelight) aimed at raising awareness around the practice of the trafficking of girls for female genital mutilation (FGM) overseas was held on 27 and 28 October 2023 at Dublin Airport. Members of An Garda Síochana (AGS) and the Border Management Unit and the AkiDwA NGO, a national network of migrant women living in Ireland, provided information on FGM, outlining the law in Ireland, and informing people what they can do if they are worried that a girl may be at risk of FGM. This two-day operation was conducted over the Bank Holiday weekend and reached high passenger numbers, which were in excess of 200,000 passengers. The officers involved also engaged with Airport and Airline Staff.

247. FGM has also been recognised as a form of gender-based violence in the Third National Strategy on Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence and the current implementation plan for the Strategy contains actions focused on improving the supports and services available to those who have been subjected to FGM.
248. In May 2021, the Government approved plans for a revised National Referral Mechanism (NRM). This will be responsible for putting a package of appropriate services in place for each individual, and access to services will depend on need. It will make it easier for human trafficking victims to come forward and be supported. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024, enacted on 17 July 2024, provides the legislative basis for the new National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The legislation will be underpinned by detailed Operational Guidelines and is expected to come into effect by the end of 2024.
249. The new NRM will make a significant difference to Ireland's capacity to identify and support harder-to-reach human trafficking victims. The majority of victims are from countries with weak state structures and a poor relationship between citizens and the police. They also tend to be from specific ethnic groups or minorities within those countries. The victims tend to be undocumented and in fear of contacting official bodies or reporting crimes committed against them.
250. Putting the new NRM on a statutory basis is a clear demonstration of Ireland's commitment to identify and support victims of this abhorrent crime and will also strengthen Ireland's international reputation in this area.

Participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions

22. Over the past five years, what actions and measures has your country taken to promotion women's participation in public life and decision making?

Women in Politics

251. Concrete measures have been taken to promote women's participation in public life and decision making. Part 6 of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 linked the provision of Exchequer funding to political parties under the Electoral Act 1997 to the achievement of a specified gender balance in candidate selection at general elections to Dáil Éireann (the lower house of the Irish Parliament). Under the Act, a general balance ratio of 30% first came into effect for the general election to Dáil Éireann held on 26 February 2016 and will rise to 40% for all general elections to Dáil Éireann held after the expiration of seven years from that original date, that is to say, from the next Dáil election onwards.
252. For all Dáil elections held since 2016, in order to receive full State funding under the Electoral Act 1997, a qualified political party must have at least 30% women candidates and at least 30% men candidates. In effect, these initial requirements applied to political

parties contesting the general elections to Dáil Éireann held on 26 February 2016 and on 8 February 2020 respectively. Now that the seven-year period set out in the Act has expired, these requirements will rise to at least 40% women candidates and at least 40% men candidates for the next Dáil election and to all future Dáil elections.

253. In respect of the 2020 Dáil elections, a total of 162 women stood for election, representing 31% of the 531 candidates. At this election, a total of 36 women were elected to the Dáil representing 23% of the total membership, compared with 35 women elected in 2016 or 22% of the total membership.
254. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, for the next Dáil election and for all future Dáil elections a quota of at least 40% women candidates and at least 40% men candidates will apply to qualified political parties who wish to receive full State funding under the Electoral Act 1997.
255. An Coimisiún Toghcháin (the Electoral Commission) was established on 9 February 2023 and now plays a central role in the administration and development of Ireland's electoral processes, and in safeguarding and strengthening democracy in the State. An Coimisiún plans to conduct research to inform its approach to its education and public engagement remit - to encourage the electoral participation of under-reached groups and increase representation of women, people with disabilities and those from diverse ethnic background.
256. Part 6 of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 was designed as an incentive mechanism to encourage political parties to apply a more equal gender balance in the selection of candidates that are put forward at a Dáil general election. It was envisaged that the measures would have a knock-on effect by providing an incentive to political parties voluntarily to apply similar arrangements, particularly at local election.
257. The funding of stakeholder groups has also been prioritised. In 2021, the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) were commissioned to develop a number of toolkits. The initial project examined what policies political parties currently have in place to manage social media abuse, including hateful, sexist and gendered content. Arising from the results, a set of common goals and guidelines on how political party structures can better respond to social media abuse was developed, as well as a toolkit for use by all political parties,⁶ which was launched in June 2022.
258. A second toolkit⁷ was developed in conjunction with a number of local authorities and relevant stakeholders and examines potential measures which would work towards making the role of a councillors more sustainable and manageable to individuals with family and caring commitments. The toolkit was launched in September 2022.
259. In late 2023, funding was allocated to NWCi for further research into women's experiences at local elections.

⁶ https://www.nwci.ie/learn/publication/toolkit_on_social_media_policies_for_political_parties

⁷ https://www.nwci.ie/learn/publication/a_toolkit_for_local_authorities_on_supporting_family_friendly_local_governm

260. The not-for-profit, non-partisan group Women for Election receives state funding for their activities, aimed at encouraging and supporting women in Ireland to engage in political life. Their work includes full-day training sessions called INSPIRE where political experts and female representatives take women through the skills they need to succeed in political life.
261. The group also run focused masterclasses on topics such as campaigning and canvassing. These activities have included training and supporting women candidates from all backgrounds through educational sessions, media training and online training.
262. In 2021 the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth made a joint application with Women for Election under the Department of Public Expenditure National Development Plan Delivery and Reform's Innovation Fund for a *Women in Politics National Data Hub*.
263. The project aims to provide cohesive historic and real time data which will make visible the participation of women in political life since the foundation of the state to current day. This innovative national data hub is the first of its kind in Ireland and will serve to inform strategies to engage a greater representation of a diversity of women in Irish politics while also raising public awareness of the need for more women to be elected to local and national government. The data hub was launched in May 2023.
264. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has provided funding to the SHE (See Her Elected) Project since its inception. The SHE Project is a collaborative project of both The Women's Manifesto Project and 50:50 North West. The Project aims to address the under-representation of women in local government in rural Ireland by engaging in the provision of targeted training and supports as well as implementing the project's long- term vision of ensuring a sustainable pathway for women in rural Ireland into local government.

National Traveller Women's Forum and Ethnic Minority Women and Local Politics in Ireland

265. Funding is provided to the National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) which seeks to empower Traveller Women in working towards full (gender) equality and to support them in taking leadership roles within their own and the wider community. Additional funding was provided for community projects that support and promote leadership roles for Traveller and Roma Women.
266. In 2022, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) supported NTWF and the national network for migrant woman living in Ireland, AkiDwa, collaborating with Maynooth University, in the development of the research report. The recommendations of the report aim to improve the participation of ethnic minority women in local politics.
267. Information on the report, *Different Paths, Shared Experiences: Ethnic Minority Women and Local Politics in Ireland*, was made available to all Departments, State Agencies and national Traveller and Roma organisations represented on the NTRIS Steering Committee. The report recommendations will be examined in the preparation of new

strategies being developed by DCEDIY to replace the three equality strategies currently under review: the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, the National Strategy for Women and Girls and the Migrant Integration Strategy.

268. Additional funding is being provided since 2022 to allow the NTWF to progress a number of specific report recommendations and to support the provision of training, both for Traveller women and for elected officials. The recommendations are wide-ranging and are relevant to a number of Government Departments, to political parties, local authorities, training organisations and wider civil society.
269. In the context of minority political representation, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community which published the Final Report of the Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community⁸ in November 2021, has been chaired by Senator Eileen Flynn, who is herself a member of the Traveller community.

Balance for Better Business

270. The improvement of the representation of women in senior leadership has also been a key achievement. Launched in 2018, Balance for Better Business is a business-led Review Group, supported by Government, which advocates, sets voluntary targets for, and monitors gender representation on the boards and senior leadership teams of leading private sector companies in Ireland. A variety of recommendations arose of the report, and a Senior Officials Implementation and Oversight Group will support the implementation of the Task Force recommendations.
271. Actions have also been taken to promote women's equal representation in senior leadership positions. Each year since its launch, the Balance for Better Business Review Group has published an annual report tracking the progress of private companies against its targets. The scope of this reporting has expanded over time, from an initial focus on listed companies, to include reporting on Large Irish-Owned Private Companies and Large Multinationals in Ireland. In addition to the annual report, the Balance for Better Business Review Group has conducted research, produced case studies, and issued guidance on effective actions to companies, and has organised private sector engagements to advocate for gender balance in business leadership, and to understand the challenges encountered by businesses.
272. In the five years between 2018 and 2023, Balance for Better Business has recorded that the representation of women on the boards of listed companies in Ireland has increased by 21 percentage points and has increased on leadership teams by 8 percentage points. For large non-listed companies, there were respective increases of 5 percentage points for boards, and 2 percentage points for leadership teams. This progress means that Ireland now performs well in international perspective for the representation of women in management. The European Institute for Gender Equality's Gender Statistics Database records that, for 2023, Ireland ranked 3rd in the EU for the representation of

⁸https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_key_issues_affecting_the_traveller_community/reports/2021/2021-12-01_final-report-of-the-joint-committee-on-key-issues-affecting-the-traveller-community_en.pdf

women executives, and 9th in the EU for the representation of women board members in its largest listed companies.

273. In 2024, Balance for Better Business launched a new five-year strategy through to 2028, with the support of Government. Under this strategy, Balance for Better Business has set targets for 40%+ female representation on boards and leadership teams for all company cohorts, to be achieved by the end of 2028.

23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)

274. The enactment of the Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Act 2022, and establishment of Ireland's first media regulator - Coimisiún na Meán - has laid the foundations for a new regulatory framework for online safety in Ireland. An Coimisiún will hold designated online services to account through binding online safety codes for how they tackle the availability of defined categories of harmful online content, including serious forms of cyberbullying. The first online safety code is expected to be adopted by Coimisiún na Meán later this year.

275. Coimisiún na Meán is responsible for Ireland's Online Safety Framework, which also includes the implementation of aspects of two EU Regulations; the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Terrorist Content Online Regulation (TCOR). Among other obligations, the DSA requires the largest online platforms to complete risk assessments and implement mitigation measures in respect of illegal content. This includes content related to existing criminal offences, like certain abusive, threatening or offensive communications as detailed in Coco's Law (the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act, 2020). Coimisiún na Meán, as Ireland's Digital Services Coordinator under the DSA, will support the European Commission in enforcing these obligations.

276. As previously indicated, the Taskforce on Safe Participation in Political Life has recommended in its 2024 that Coimisiún na Meán should utilise its regulatory powers to protect political figures, including women, from harmful online abuse.

24. Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and describe the measures that your country has taken over the past five years to strengthen it.

277. The Equality and Gender Equality Division is located in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), having been transferred from the then Department of Justice and Equality by transfer of functions in 2021.

278. The Division supports and coordinates ongoing policy development in relation to the achievement of de facto gender equality in Ireland and contributes to policy development and review on gender equality related matters at international level.
279. Overall, the tentative total annual expenditure for DCEDIY in 2023 was €7,145,182,000 (gross) and €7,113,976,000 (net), pending publication of the Appropriation Account figures for 2023 in September 2024. Of this, the portion dedicated to gender equality measures was 0.043%, which was the allocation for grants to national women's organisations, and measures on positive action for gender equality. However, as gender equality measures are mainstreamed across Government, this figure is not indicative of the total expenditure on gender equality and would reflect only a small proportion of the expenditure – it would not include, for example, the allocation to women's health measures, programmes to support women entrepreneurship, or to initiatives under the DSGBV Strategy. These are funded by the relevant Government Departments.
280. In addition, the Irish Houses of Parliament, the Dáil (the lower House) and the Seanad (the upper House) dedicate time for statement on International Women's Day each year, which the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth utilises as an opportunity to report on the progress made each year in gender equality matters.
281. The Cabinet Committee on Social Affairs and Public Services oversee implementation of Programme for Government commitments in the areas of social policy and public service reform, including gender equality and other equality issues. It is attended by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and seven Cabinet Ministers with relevant portfolios and receives detailed reports on identified policy areas and considers the implementation of commitments and reforms, including in relation to gender equality.
282. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) is Ireland's independent national human rights and equality institution. It is an independent public body that accounts to the Oireachtas, with a mandate established under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (IHREC Act 2014) to protect and promote human rights and equality. Additionally, it seeks to promote the development of a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the state and to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses, discrimination and prohibited conduct.

25. In the past five years, what other mechanism and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focus points in the executive, legislature, judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms, gender audits, consultations with women's organisations)

283. Over the past five years, Ireland has employed several mechanisms to improve and mainstream gender equality across various sectors, including regarding gender balance and female representation on State boards, in the civil service and in the judicial service.

This has included the use of targets, positive action measures and the establishment of networks to support better gender balance.

284. Ireland has a longstanding target since 1992 that at least 40% of members of State boards should be of the under-represented gender. In September 2020, the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform published an Annex to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies dealing with Gender Balance, Diversity and Inclusion on State boards. Key progress has been made, with an analysis carried out in June 2021 on the 203 non-vacant State Boards showed that there were 2,085 serving board members, and that the gender participation rates are 44.70% female (Dec 2018: 41.5%) and 55.34% male (Dec 2018: 58.50%), with 50.74% of Boards (Dec 2018: 47.6%) now meeting the 40% gender targets.
285. The Public Appointments Service provides regular reporting on gender disaggregate data in respect of recent recruitment campaigns for State boards and in respect of the composition of the individual State boards. These statistics are available at www.stateboards.ie.
286. Significant progress has also been made in relation to female representation in senior Civil Service positions. Notably, since the Beijing Declaration was adopted, the percentage of female Secretary Generals has risen from 5% to 39% in 2023. Further details on female representation in senior management grades in the Civil Service can be found in the table below.

Grade	1997	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Secretary General	5%	24%	28%	32%	40%	39%
Assistant Secretary General	10%	38%	37%	43%	44%	35%
Principal Officer	12%	45%	46%	48%	50%	47%
Assistant Principal	24%	51%	52%	53%	54%	53%

287. The Civil Service is committed to equality of opportunity. The Government has implemented positive action measures to promote gender balance for all senior appointments. In 2018, Government approved a policy for Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) competitions in support of a goal of attaining a 50/50 gender balance on Management Boards of Government Departments. Where candidates compete for such positions and are of equal merit at the final stage of a competition, priority is given to the female candidate should that gender be underrepresented on the Management Board of the Department/Office in question. In 2020, 59% of all appointments to TLAC positions at Assistant Secretary Level and above were filled by female candidates.
288. In the case of serving civil servants, DPENDR has introduced Executive Leadership Programmes at Assistant Secretary and Principal Officer levels to support participants

in developing the skills and confidence that they need for senior leadership positions. There is equal gender balance amongst participants on such Programmes.

289. Progress has also been made in terms of gender balance in terms of judicial appointments. The Judicial Appointments Commission Act 2023, once fully commenced, will reform the system of judicial appointment in Ireland. It will establish a new, independent Judicial Appointments Commission to select and recommend persons for judicial office in Ireland and in the EU and international courts. The Act includes a provision for the Commission to publish a Diversity statement relating to the objective that membership of the judiciary should reflect the diversity of the population as a whole. It also provides that, to the extent feasible, recommendations for appointment as judges should have regard to the objective of having equal numbers of women and men as members of the judiciary.

A current breakdown is below:

	Female	Male
Overall	81	109
Supreme Court	3	6
Court of Appeal	8	9
High Court	19	31
Circuit Court	19	25
District Court	32	38
Special Criminal Courts	9	10

290. Ireland uses networks as a means to raise awareness of the importance of gender balance and to develop capacity within the public and private sectors to promote gender balanced leadership. The 30% Club Public Sector Network (PSN) was established in 2019 as an initiative under the 30% Club Ireland, with the goal of promoting gender balance across civil and public service. The PSN aims to achieve this by sharing ideas and good practice, drawing on common opportunities and experiences while recognising the different challenges that exist in various sectors. It aims to engage both men and women and to work alongside formal and informal structures to promote shared aims around a good working experience for all staff.
291. The PSN 30% Club, since 2019, has completed a variety of successful in person and virtual events to continuously contribute to the delivery of the goals of Our Public Service 2020, to improve the talent pipeline in terms of recruitment and retention, and to ensure a good working experience for all, regardless of gender.
292. Similar networks have been established to promote better gender balance in business leadership. Since its launch in 2015, the Irish Chapter of the 30% Club (which began in the UK and now has a global reach) has a record of successful collaborative business-led initiatives aiming to achieve better gender balance at all levels in leading Irish businesses. It is a group of Chairs and CEOs committed to better gender balance at all levels of their organisations through voluntary action. There are no membership fees,

and members of the Club volunteer time and their organisations' resources to support Club activities.

293. Ireland has used taskforces such as the Women's Health Taskforce to bring together representatives of Government Departments, health experts and civil society organisations to work together to understand and address structural inequalities in relation to women's health. The Taskforce models 'open policy making' working in a collaborative way, involving policy makers, clinicians, international partners, advocates, health experts and the voices of women through workshops, research and outreach. The Taskforce has engaged and worked with over 2,000 individuals and organisations representing women since its creation.

26. If there is a national human rights organisation in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

294. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) is Ireland's National Human Rights and Equality Institution. It is an independent public body that accounts to the Oireachtas (Ireland's parliament), with a mandate established under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (IHREC Act 2014) to protect and promote human rights and equality. Additionally, it seeks to promote the development of a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the state and to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses, discrimination and prohibited conduct.

295. The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), established under the Workplace Relations Act 2015, is the body responsible for deciding on discrimination claims in Ireland in the first instance and hears claims relating to employment matters and to the provision of goods and services. Its roles include inspection, adjudication, conciliation, and information/outreach functions. With respect to employers equal pay obligations, the WRC Information and Customer Service provides information on equal pay obligations to employers (and employees) through its various information channels, including via telephone information line.

296. Complaints under the Equality Acts on Gender for the past five years are set out below:
- 2019: 431**
 - 2020: 278**
 - 2021: 316**
 - 2022: 286**
 - 2023: 322**

297. In 2023, 1,045 complaints were referred under the Employment Equality legislation citing 1,458 specific grounds of discrimination. It is possible for a complainant to choose more than one ground of discrimination. The majority of referrals were under the Gender ground (322) with 54 referrals under the Sexual Orientation Ground. The Employment

Equality Acts prohibit discrimination, both direct and indirect, on nine grounds. The WRC issues decisions which are available and searchable on the WRC website.

298. The Employment Equality cases are appealable to the Labour Court and the Equal Status cases are appealable to the Circuit Court. Gender discrimination claims can also be taken directly to the Circuit Court.
299. A review of the Equality Acts is currently being conducted. A public consultation was held in 2021 and a report summarising the submissions made to the consultation was published in July 2023. The review is examining the operation of the Acts from the perspective of a person making a claim under its redress mechanisms, as well as the level of awareness of the legislation and whether there are practical or other obstacles which deter people from taking an action. Legislative proposals to strengthen the equality legislation in light of the equality review are currently in preparation.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

300. In June 2019, Ireland launched its third NAP on WPS, which forms a central element of Ireland's commitment to gender equality for the period 2019 to 2024. Ireland has been a longstanding champion of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), and co-sponsored each of the ten resolutions which make up the WPS Agenda. Ireland has continued to demonstrate its commitment to the Agenda through its National Action Plans (NAPs).
301. The NAP commits various Government Departments to implementing policies domestically and internationally that promote the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in decision-making, protection against gender-based violence, and the integration of gender perspectives to different policy areas. Ireland's third NAP is based around the four WPS pillars: Prevention, Participation, Protection and Promotion.
302. The NAP also adopts an intersectional approach to WPS, recognising that women are not a homogenous group and face many and varied forms of discrimination, including on the basis of membership of religious, cultural, ethnic communities; for identifying as LGBTI+; or as a result of experiencing a disability.
303. The NAP's development was led by a Working Group appointed by the Tánaiste [Deputy Prime Minister] and Minister for Foreign Affairs and was comprised of 50% government representatives and 50% civil society.
304. Achievements over the lifetime of the third NAP include:
- Ireland's leading role on WPS during its term on the UN Security Council (2021 – 2022).

- Prioritisation of WPS in Ireland's overseas development programme. Ireland has consistently ranked amongst the top OECD members in terms of the shares of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for gender equality.
 - Additional support for women disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and at higher risk of GBV through Ireland's development assistance programme.
 - Support for other countries in the development of their own NAPs (Bulgaria, Colombia, Greece, Liberia, Lithuania, Malta, South Africa, Uzbekistan).
 - Establishment of 'Cuan', a government agency dedicated to tackling domestic and sexual gender-based violence (DSGBV).
 - Provision of a gender-sensitive response from Irish protection and integration services to the Ukrainian refugees who came to Ireland.
 - Implementation of gender reform mechanisms in the Irish Defence Forces.
 - Provision of medical, psychological, and educational services around FGM both in Ireland and abroad.
305. Women Peace and Security was a priority file during Ireland's 2021-2022 Security Council term. Ireland successfully focused on keeping WPS at the fore of the Security Council's agenda, including by mainstreaming WPS into discussions and in Ireland's statements at the Security Council. Ireland was amongst the first countries to address the Security Council on the differential impact of the war in Ukraine on women and girls, speaking at two Council briefings and an Arria formula meeting on accountability in Ukraine in April 2022.
306. With Mexico, Ireland co-chaired the Council's Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security, facilitating a record number of briefings on the situation of women and girls during Ireland's two-year term. IEG meetings addressed various fragile and conflict-affected country situations, as well as thematic issues such as women's protection advisers (WPAs), and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).
307. In June 2022, Ireland and Mexico led the first ever field visit of the IEG, to Lebanon. IEG members met with a diverse range of actors, including UNIFIL, UNSCOL, UN Women, the Lebanese Armed Forces Gender Department, the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, municipal authorities in Tyre, civil society organisations, women peacebuilders and women Members of Parliament. The IEG compiled recommendations made by various stakeholders to advance the WPS agenda in Lebanon.
308. In September 2021, Ireland, Mexico and Kenya committed to mainstreaming WPS across the work of the Council throughout respective presidencies, forming a WPS Presidency Trio. Ireland placed women civil society briefers at the heart of its presidency, bringing 17 civil society briefers in total to participate in council discussions on conflict countries on the agenda. 16 of these briefers were women, a level recognised by UN Women as a new record for women's participation at the Council.
309. The 'WPS Presidency Trio' aimed to help close the persistent gap between rhetoric and reality that has hampered the realisation of the WPS Agenda's full potential, especially on the ground. The trio committed to a set of tangible actions around the implementation

of the WPS agenda, prompting more concerted efforts towards gender parity at the UNSC and efforts to highlight WPS challenges in situations including Afghanistan, Colombia, Haiti and Yemen. This set of commitments, initiated by Ireland, has been built upon and adopted by more than 20 current and former Council members to date, now known as 'The Shared Commitments'.

310. Since 2021, Ireland has been a board member of the WPS Humanitarian Action Compact. The Compact was launched under the Generation Equality Forum, to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender equality. It comprises Member States, international organisations, civil society organisations and the private sector and calls for the redesign of peace and security and humanitarian processes systematically and meaningfully to include women and girls in the decisions that affect their lives. This includes peacebuilders, refugees, and other forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls.
311. Ireland committed to champion the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women, and the inclusion of gender-related provisions in all ceasefire and peace agreements. Ireland also pledged to provide regular funding for services, including sexual and reproductive health services, for survivors of SGBV. Ireland was appointed a Board member of the Compact in March 2021 in recognition of Ireland's strong international profile in humanitarian work and promoting the WPS Agenda. Since the launch, Ireland has engaged with UN Women and Compact members in developing a comprehensive implementation and accountability framework.

Gender and Disarmament

312. Ireland has been a long-time advocate for mainstreaming and integrating gender perspectives across disarmament and arms control processes. Ireland's focus on gender is reflected in our work in disarmament and non-proliferation, through encouraging participation in international bodies, providing support for research on gender and disarmament, and highlighting the distinct impact on women and girls, including of radiation and small arms and light weapons, and the dangers of bias. Ireland's leadership was key to the inclusion of the gender provisions in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear weapons, including with regard to gendered impact of nuclear weapons as well as equal participation by men and women in the work of the Treaty.

28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

313. Funding for WPS related activities is mainstreamed throughout the work of Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs, both through development programming but also through the activities of the Peace and Stability Unit, which leads Ireland's position on WPS globally and within the EU. As an example, Ireland is a founding member and core donor of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), a multi-partner trust fund

established in 2016 with the support of Ireland and Australia. WPHF mobilises direct and flexible funding for local women-led and women's rights organisations to prevent conflict and sexual and gender-based violence, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities. Ireland has committed \$1.5 million to the Fund as part of a multi-annual pledge from 2021 – 2025. In 2022, Ireland provided earmarked funding to WPHF for Haiti, and Ukraine, and in 2023 Ireland contributed to the Libya Floods Appeal.

314. Ethiopia was designated as a focus country in Ireland's third NAP, and WPS is a thematic priority for Ireland's Embassy in Addis Ababa. Ireland's Embassy supports women's participation at all levels in Ethiopia (locally, nationally and regionally) and connects the various levels for maximum effect. Its broader governance programme mainstreams gender across all partnerships such as those working to strengthen the capacity of civil society and human rights institutions.
315. Ireland's Embassy in Addis Ababa has supported peacebuilding through the work of its partners, Conciliation Resources and Catholic Relief Services, whose work in Somali Regional State focuses on building the agency and advocacy of women ex-combatants as well as strengthening the capacity of a Women's Dialogue Space, promoting women's participation and leadership in decision-making processes. The Embassy's local partner, Timran, hosts a coalition of about 52 CSOs that came together to give voice to women's agenda in Ethiopia's national dialogue process.
316. The Embassy's partnership with UN Women facilitates small grants to CSOs and Women's Rights Organisations working on WPS and peacebuilding, supporting their institutional capacity so that they are better equipped to advance the participation of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Additionally, it supported SGBV survivors in conflict and post-conflict settings in Amhara, Tigray and Afar region through Unicef, UNFPA and Trócaire.
317. In line with the NAP's commitment to put women and gendered perspectives at the centre of Ireland's multilateral diplomacy, Ireland has cooperated with the African Union (AU) Office of the Special Envoy (OSE) on WPS. This has included efforts to advance continental implementation of UNSCR 1325, increase development and implementation of regional NAPs, improve monitoring and evaluation against the Continental Results Framework, and enhance advocacy efforts in support of the WPS Agenda. Ireland has supported capacity building of the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and the OSE through staffing, and through the African Forum on WPS in 2022 and 2023. The Forum gathered women peacebuilders and leaders across the continent and called on the AU to adopt a policy framework to enhance women's leadership and participation in peace processes and introduce 30% quotas. This policy is expected to be endorsed by the last quarter of 2024 by the AU Peace and Security Council. Ireland will seek to support the implementation of the policy on the ground.
318. In addition, Ireland has a longstanding multi-annual strategic partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to respond effectively and with accountability to women and girls experiencing gender-based violence (GBV) in humanitarian settings. Between 2022 and 2024, a total amount of €6.8m was disbursed against the original

commitment of €5.4m. This strategic partnership works across five pillars to advance multi-level, mutually reinforcing gender transformative action in humanitarian crisis and fragile settings in East Africa. For example, pillar one focuses on strengthening GBV response, preparedness and recovery for women and girls in protracted humanitarian settings with service delivery to displaced and refugee women and girls and their communities in Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan. In 2023, Irish Aid funding enabled the IRC and local women's organisation partners to reach over 87,000 people across these five countries.

319. Through the partnership, women and girl survivors of violence and at-risk women and girls receive access to a range of quality survivor-centred services including visits to Women and Girls Safe Spaces, which form the backbone of the protection and empowerment activities. They also serve as an entry point for response services such as GBV case management, psychosocial support services, movement building, activism, and livelihood activities. Survivors are provided with dignity kits when needed. To strengthen the quality of groups providing psychosocial support to at risk women and girls, the IRC and local partners implemented Women Rise, a psychosocial framework and group curriculum, which aims to support women to strengthen and expand their own inherent resilience and empowerment through stronger connections with other women. Women are offered the opportunity to participate in economic and social empowerment initiatives, which includes Village Savings and Loans Associations and learning on financial management, entrepreneurship and savings. In 2024, Sudan was added to the list of participating countries as protection risks have heightened since April 2023.
320. As part of the GBV Learning Pillar, the IRC shares learning across the pillars of the Irish Aid funded Strategic Partnership and to wider GBV networks. The 2023 the Women's Protection and Empowerment Learning Forum was held in Nairobi, Kenya and brought together 80 team members and local partners from across the five countries of implementation as well as other IRC practitioners across GBV programmes worldwide. Thematic discussions at the Forum on feminist partnership were then disseminated to GBV practitioners through a Learning Brief in Arabic, English, French and Spanish and through online networks, such as the GBV Area of Responsibility (AOR) Community of Practice.

29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

321. Since 2015, Ireland has provided funding to Justice Rapid Response (JRR), an NGO which deploys a roster of specialised experts who partner with international, national and civil society organisations and institutions to strengthen accountability for international crimes and serious human rights violations. JRR's roster of experts consists of over 750 personnel covering 12 areas of expertise, such as child rights, restorative justice, crimes affecting the environment, security expertise, prosecutions and analysis. Addressing impunity, including for crimes of sexual and gender based

violence (SGBV) and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), aligns with one of the priority areas of Ireland's third NAP on WPS. Ireland has provided earmarked funding to JRR for its SGBV roster, which seeks to ensure that judicial processes effectively investigate SGBV crimes committed during conflict and under regimes with no recourse to justice, thereby increasing the likelihood of justice for victims. JRR has deployed over 700 experts since 2009.

322. Over the past five years, Ireland has provided €360,000 in funding to the Coalition of the International Criminal Court (CICC). Various CICC members monitor the work of the ICC from a gender perspective and for better accountability for sexual and gender-based crimes (SGBC), women's equal participation in decision-making processes, protection of women and girls from all forms of SGBV and specific relief for SGBC survivors in conflict and post conflict situations. The CICC Secretariat facilitates their advocacy, including a gender-sensitive approach with ICC representatives, representatives of states parties to the Rome Statute and other relevant stakeholders. Since 2021, the Women's Initiative for Gender Justice (WIGJ) has acted as the Secretariat of the CICC. The WIGJ works to promote access to justice for survivors and to advance global gender justice through legal advocacy and network building. Recent efforts by the CICC to enhance accountability for women and girls who have been the victim of international crimes include providing input into the development of an ICC gender strategy, providing input into the development of the recently published Office of the Prosecutor Policy on Gender Prosecution, and participating in training programmes on CRSV following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.
323. Through the Strategic Partnership with the International Rescue Committee, Irish Aid funding supports activities implemented by women's rights organisations/women-led Organisations to engage with the local communities in the refugee or internally displaced camps in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan and Somalia. For example, in South Sudan, local partners focus primarily on engaging the community through dissemination of GBV messages, legal awareness, community dialogues, capacity building through trainings targeting community leaders, advocacy through radio-talk shows, and group-based psychosocial support activities in the Women and Girls Safe Spaces. Both local partners also provided legal awareness and referrals to traditional customary courts, and psychosocial support and case management (including safe referrals to other service providers) for survivors and at-risk women and girls. Humane-aid for Community Organisation (<https://www.hacosouthsudan.rg>) reached a total of 2,121 participants and Crown the Woman (CREW <https://crownthewoman.org>) reached 1,122 people in 2023. These achievements exceeded the original target, because of an influx of returnees from the Sudan conflict who settled in Mangateen IDP camp, where local partners operate, triggering a higher need for GBV services and awareness in 2023.
324. The South Sudan programme offers referral services for survivors of rape and child sexual abuse at the "One Stop Centre", a small space allocated at the Juba Teaching Hospital funded under the Irish Aid Strategic Partnership. The service provided there includes psychosocial support and counselling, medical examination and includes free legal support for survivors who wish to pursue accountability through the Courts. The steps include an initial confidential discussion with a lawyer, support to report the crime, fill out forms and talk to the police. The lawyer explains the process from reporting to the

police through the police investigation, and when the survivor has to go to court, the Lawyer accompanies the survivor to help protect their legal rights. This aspect of the service sets an example for others to follow, raises awareness in communities that rape is a crime and perpetrators will be held accountable. The Family Protection Centre, which has a lawyer available on site to receive referrals from the Irish Aid funded One Stop Centre, is funded directly by the EU, UN Central Emergency Response Fund, UNFPA, the UN Mission in South Sudan and others.

30. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

325. In addition to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Ireland is committed to its compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth led a delegation of officials from Government Departments for the hearing before the Committee on the Rights of the Child, following the submission of Ireland's combined fifth and sixth periodic reports. Following this oral hearing, the UN Committee published its Concluding Observations. In the Concluding Observations, the Committee recognised the positive steps taken by the State since Ireland's last review in 2016. The UN Committee also set out areas of concern and provided recommendations under several topic areas.
326. In November 2023, Ireland launched 'Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People', setting out the policy direction and key priorities for cross government action in respect of children and young people to the end of 2028. The Policy Framework was launched at the Child Summit in Croke Park, and follows on from Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, which ran from 2014 until 2020. It is informed by the recommendations put forward by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.
327. 'Young Ireland' sets out current issues impacting children and young people, identified by them, and seeks to create an environment which ensures that children and young people are a central part of everyone's agenda. It includes a specific spotlight programme to focus on the most significant challenges for children and young people, with resources from across Government. These issues are presented in Young Ireland as Spotlights and the first three spotlights are on child poverty, mental health and wellbeing, and disability services.
328. 'Young Ireland' has been developed through extensive consultation and engagement with children and young people, the general public, civil society, service providers, practitioners, government departments and State agencies. The Framework includes a full indicator set to track progress, and was published along with the Framework in November 2023.
329. In terms of child poverty, the work of the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office within the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) is to prioritise action across

government in areas that have the greatest impact for children and families experiencing poverty. From Poverty to Potential: A Programme Plan for Child Poverty and Well-being 2023-2025 is the initial Programme Plan for the Office. It takes a focused approach on six key areas which have the potential to bring about significant change for children, including girls, and their families. These include:

- a. Income Supports and Joblessness
- b. Early Learning and Childcare
- c. Reducing the cost of education
- d. Family homelessness
- e. Consolidating and integrating Family & Parental Support, Health and Well-being
- f. Enhancing participation in culture, arts and sport for Children and Young People affected by poverty.

330. The role of the Department of the Taoiseach is to co-ordinate and focus government action. To help facilitate this, the Office has established a Cross-Government Network on Child Poverty and Well-being. Three Network meetings have taken place to date, with two further meetings planned in 2024. The inaugural Child Poverty and Well-being Summit took place on 23 May 2024. The Summit had three objectives: to increase the focus on child poverty and well-being across government, take stock of progress and learning to date, and to inform future considerations.

331. Furthermore, various policies have been implemented to eradicate violence against girls. The multi-agency operation (Operation Limelight) aimed at raising awareness around the practice of the trafficking of girls for female genital mutilation (FGM) overseas was held on 27 and 28 October 2023 at Dublin Airport, as referenced in the response to Question 21.

332. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024, enacted on 17 July 2024, provides the legislative basis for a new National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for victims of human trafficking. This legislation provides the legislative framework for action to combat trafficking of girls.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

333. Ireland recognises that gender inequalities mean there is an unequal distribution of climate risks across communities and society, and that the potential contribution of women to addressing the climate crisis is often overlooked and undervalued. Ireland's international action and its climate finance aim to strengthen women's voices and leadership in climate action. This recognition is embedded in Ireland's policy for

international development, 'A Better World',⁹ as well as in Ireland's Climate Finance Roadmap, published in 2022.¹⁰

334. The National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) is Ireland's national programme to engage, enable and empower stakeholders and citizens across society to take climate action. Through the NDCA, over 12,000 people (a majority of whom have been female) have been involved in the annual 'Climate Conversations' and the NDCA has engaged over 1,000 stakeholders through five National Climate Stakeholder Forum events, three National Youth Assemblies on Climate, and active engagement with populations most impacted by the transition to a carbon-neutral future.
335. The report, Climate Conversations 2023 - From Individual Action to Collective Engagement (CC23), identifies the importance of a just transition across all sectors in order to ensure that our response to the climate challenge is equitable and inclusive. The findings also identify where barriers differ by demographics; including gender. Understanding gender as well as generational and relationship dynamics is key in terms of identifying which groups are best at driving positive change in relation to climate action.
336. Findings from the Climate Conversations 2023, show that there are differences between men and women when it comes to taking climate action across different climate areas. In 2023, under the NDCA, specific focus groups and workshops with men and women were carried out to gather insights into the specific vulnerabilities that they may experience.
337. In 2024, the NDCA has expanded its programme to engage communities and groups across Ireland to scale-up the work that they are doing through the Climate Actions Work programme. This Climate Actions Work focuses on hearing from, and working with, local communities – talking directly to people to help combat climate change.
338. COP 25 in 2019 saw the adoption of the enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan (2019-2024). The mid-term review of the Gender Action Plan started in June 2022 and concluded at COP27 in November 2022. The EU's team of experts was led by Ireland's National Gender and Climate Change Focal Points (NGCCFP), who was appointed as the EU's negotiator on gender and climate by the French Presidency to the EU. In addition to ensuring a swift, forward-looking review with no regression on ambition, Ireland advocated for greater gender mainstreaming and human rights considerations within the final high-level decision. Ireland played an active role in ensuring gender mainstreaming in the finance, adaptation, and loss and damage negotiation rooms in particular. Despite lengthy negotiations, the final texts of recent negotiations (from COP26 to COP28) demonstrate an increased appreciation and understanding of these efforts. The current Gender Action Plan will conclude at the end of 2024 and work is underway to negotiate a new Plan.

⁹ [A-Better-World-Irelands-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf \(irishaid.ie\)](#)

¹⁰ [2022-Irelands-International-Climate-Finance-Roadmap-Digital.pdf \(irishaid.ie\)](#)

339. To increase Ireland's engagement in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, Ireland appointed an official of the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) as National Gender and Climate Change Focal Point (NGCCFP) in 2021. The NGCCFP mainstreams gender across Ireland's official policy position papers for the COPs, including sections on science, climate finance, adaptation, and the Global Stocktake. Between mid-2021 and mid-2023, 3 capacity-building workshops for civil servants and internal International Women's Day event on gender-transformative climate action were organised and participated in by the NGCCFP. These workshops explored how gender inequality manifested in the just transition, health impacts of climate change, and climate-related conflict and security.
340. The Climate Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs provides finance to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to support its work on gender mainstreaming in climate action.
341. Through the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, Ireland supports the project 'Feminist Communities for Climate Justice', a collaboration between the National Women's Council of Ireland and Community Work Ireland. An accredited training programme in collaboration with Maynooth University's Department of Applied Social Studies was created to train community workers in climate justice issues and feminist approaches to their work, and has established a peer-learning network, the Feminist Communities for Climate Justice National Network. Unique to the project is a feminist community work approach, which champions collective victories, identifies systemic structural issues as creators of inequality, focuses on women's representation in decision-making spaces, and recognises the value of care and caring work as low-carbon, green work.
342. Ireland also supports NGOs that work directly with grassroots and women-led organisations to strengthen women's participation and contribution to national and international climate discussions.

32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?

343. Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) aims to support developing countries to achieve compliance with the minimum weather and climate observation requirements of the Global Basic Observing Network (GBON). Through supporting countries in reaching climate observation requirements and enabling more accurate forecasting of climate patterns worldwide, SOFF contributes to disaster risk reduction and climate resilience.
344. Ireland has systematically advocated for an increased gender perspective programming by the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF). In November 2022, Ireland, as part of the Steering Committee to SOFF, directed requests to the SOFF Advisory Board for the following:
- 'Consider the suitability of including an indicator and corresponding target to reflect how SOFF promotes women leadership in hydromet governance and operations

in the future update of the Gender Action Plan after the First Implementation Period.’

- ‘Explore areas for collaboration with the InsuResilience Centre of Excellence for Gender-smart Solutions, including related to the aforementioned indicator.’
- ‘To ensure the target related to “50% of women participating in SOFF consultations with CSOs” is achieved through the participation of CSOs focused on women’s empowerment’¹¹

345. This Steering Committee meeting also saw the adoption of the SOFF Gender Action Plan. The integration of this gender-responsive focus is being monitored by Ireland via regular reports from SOFF.

346. Ireland aims to strengthen women's voices and leadership in climate action through its international development policy. This recognition is embedded in Ireland’s document ‘A Better World’, which sets out Ireland’s policy for international development,¹² as well as in Ireland’s Climate Finance Roadmap, published in 2022.¹³ Both of these documents indicate the importance of gender sensitive climate action as well as the sustainable inclusion of issues relating to gender and climate in international development partnerships as a whole.

347. In Ireland’s climate diplomacy and finance, we integrate a gender-transformative approach and work to support the inclusion and meaningful participation of under-represented groups, including women, youth and marginalised persons, in international climate decision-making processes. In 2023, Ireland contributed more than €600,000 to support the training and participation of women and other under-represented groups at international climate negotiations, including COP28.

348. Through its partnerships, Ireland prioritises a gender-transformative approach to climate action. Ireland also supports the inclusion of women and young people from vulnerable communities in international decision-making on climate issues, where it focuses on and advocate for their full, equal and meaningful participation in negotiation processes. In 2023, Ireland worked with partners including the International Institute for Environment and Development, and the Gender team at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, to support the participation of women and youth delegates from Least Developed Countries in the COP28 climate negotiations. Ireland also contributed €390,000 to the Women’s Environment and Development Organisation whose work supports disability inclusive development, in particular through supporting women with disabilities to participate in national and international climate processes.

349. In addition, Ireland has approved funding for the Gender Focal Point team, which works in the Action Empowerment Unit of the UNFCCC Secretariat. The funding supports the implementation of the 5-year Enhanced Lima Work Programme and its Gender Action Plan (GAP) agreed in 2019 at COP25. These programmes of work seek to advance knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action and effective gender

¹¹ [Decision-item-3.3-Adoption-of-the-SOFF-Gender-Action-Plan-Targets-for-the-First-Implementation-Period-1.pdf \(un-soff.org\)](#)

¹² [A-Better-World-Irelands-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf \(irishaid.ie\)](#)

¹³ [2022-Irelands-International-Climate-Finance-Roadmap-Digital.pdf \(irishaid.ie\)](#)

mainstreaming across the UNFCCC, Parties to the UN and across other UN entities. This project is entitled 'Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Change Action' and is administered by Gender Focal Point office.

350. Grants are awarded over a three-year partnership, agreed under a Memorandum of Understanding between Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs (Climate Unit) and the UNFCCC Secretariat (Gender Team). It follows a five-year partnership with the UNFCCC Gender Team and is consistent with levels of funding provided by Ireland since 2018. The goals of the 'Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Change Action' project are: to enhance the knowledge and capacity of stakeholders to effectively address gender in climate policy and action; to advance the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in UNFCCC and national processes; to strengthen the capacity of members of Constituted Bodies of the UNFCCC to integrate and address gender equality in their work; and to ensure gender-responsive implementation of the Convention and the Paris Agreement.
351. The ultimate beneficiary group of this funding is women in developing countries, including Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. This support will help them to advance full, equal and meaningful participation in the UNFCCC process and in climate policy and action at national and local levels.

Section Four: National Institutions and Processes (Q. 33-37)

33. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

352. Gender equality has been promoted and advanced in Ireland under a whole-of-government policy framework provided by the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 (NSWG), which was extended, due to Covid-19, for a further year to end 2021.

353. The National Strategy for Women and Girls provides the policy framework for the Government's agenda and priorities in relation to the advancement of equality for women and girls. It represents a whole of Government approach to improve outcomes for women and girls, recognises the shared responsibility for achieving these results, and the importance of taking measures to the maximum of available resources.

354. The overall goal for the Strategy was "to change attitudes and practices preventing women's and girls' full participation in education, employment and public life, at all levels, and to improve services for women and girls, with priority given to the needs of those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes".

355. The strategy had the following six high level objectives underpinned by 139 individual actions:

- Advance socio-economic equality for women and girls,
- Advance the physical and mental health and wellbeing of women and girls,
- Ensure the visibility in society of women and girls, and their equal and active citizenship,
- Advance women in leadership at all levels,
- Combat violence against women, and
- Embed gender equality in decision-making.

356. As the Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected the strategy's implementation, the Government extended the term of the outgoing strategy to the end of 2021 to enable the strategy's actions to continue to be implemented and to facilitate the preparation of a new strategic policy approach in this area.

357. The Programme for Government, "Our Shared Future" (2020), includes a commitment to develop and implement a new Strategy for Women and Girls. In 2021, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth commissioned an independent report (from the Centre for Effective Studies) to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the processes for the implementation of equality strategies, with a view to informing

how the Department develops and implements a whole-of-government equality policy in the future with a strong outcomes-focused approach. The evaluation study was published in July 2023.¹⁴

358. Work has now begun on the development of the successor Strategy to the National Strategy for Women and Girls, starting with a consultation exercise which is currently underway. A meeting of the National Youth Assembly is being held on 25 September 2024 to get the views of its youth representatives on the successor Strategy. This reflects the importance attached to ensuring that the successor Strategy takes account of youth needs and perspectives. Further regional and remote consultations will also take place later in the autumn.
359. The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 (NSWG) was developed to respond to women’s needs across a diversity of identities and situations. This Strategy has also served as the framework for Ireland’s implementation of certain goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly targets under SDG5 - Gender Equality, especially under **5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.c** and the central commitment in Agenda 2030 to ‘leave no-one behind.’¹⁵
360. The Policy Update on Ireland’s Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal Targets, published in October 2022, sets out the progress that Ireland has made on these goals.¹⁶ These include measures to tackle the gender pay gap, to eliminate all forms of violence against women, to recognise unpaid care and domestic work, eliminate harmful practices such as FGM, and ensure women’s full and effective participation in politics, among others, all of which have been referenced throughout this report.
361. Furthermore, many aspects of the Strategy also helped to progress targets under SDG1 - No Poverty; SDG3 - Good Health and Well-Being; SDG4 - Quality Education; SDG 8 – Decent Work for All; SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. The successor Strategy will also closely align with these targets.
362. While the NSWG was not costed, funding for actions included in the Strategy is provided under the voted moneys allocated in the annual Budget to the Government Departments with responsibility for each action.

¹⁴ Realising the promise of national equality policy: An evaluation of the processes of implementation of three national equality strategies, CES, (May 2023), <https://assets.gov.ie/263523/64481c7e-eeb8-46a0-b09f-8c27e3864978.pdf>

¹⁵ The targets under SDG5 are as follows:

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Targets under SDG 5) [shortened for ease of communication]
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices
5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work
5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels
5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
5a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources
5b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology
5c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality

¹⁶ www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/236508/60e1c947-af34-4f38-9296-92ec5c0a0186.pdf#page=null

34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

363. Ireland is using its Equality Budgeting initiative as the framework for assessing the gender impact of budgetary decisions. Since 2018, when it was first piloted, significant work has been undertaken to develop the Equality Budgeting initiative. With an initial focus on gender, Equality Budgeting has since been expanded across multiple dimensions of equality including gender, socio-economic, disability and minority groups.
364. It is the responsibility of each Department to implement and report on the equality impact of policies systematically. Each Department reports data on the achievement of equality goals in the annual Public Service Performance Report, to enhance transparency and accountability on the delivery of results. The 2023 Public Service Performance Report was published in June 2024. The report included an update on Equality Budgeting, with all Departments reporting equality budgeting metrics.
365. All Departments in Ireland continually review and refine these metrics each year to strengthen the reporting of this information and to provide greater insight into the progress that is being made within each sector on gender and the other nine equality themes.
366. The Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform continues to refine and develop Ireland's Equality Budgeting structures in line with international best practice, and work to embed this knowledge across all Departments.
367. Ireland is consistently amongst OECD countries with the highest annual proportion of bilateral allocable official development assistance (ODA) invested in gender equality measures¹⁷ in international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Bilateral ODA that targeted gender equality increased from €297 million in 2019 to €328 million in 2022. During this period, ODA to women's rights organisations (WRO) and movements, and government institutions has increased €5.7 million in 2019 to €12.3 million in 2022. While ODA to end gen (GBV) has ranged from €12.1 million to €13.7 million. This was further explored in Q3. der based violence

35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

368. There are various formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

¹⁷ <https://web-archiver.oecd.org/temp/2024-03-07/73550-development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm>

369. As previously indicated, the National Strategy for Women and Girls has served as the framework for delivery of obligations arising from the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2023 Agenda for Sustainable Development (as they relate to gender) during the period under review.
370. A Strategy Committee was established to monitor the National Strategy for Women and Girls, 2017-2020. The membership of the Strategy Committee includes representatives of employers (Ibec), trade unions (ICTU), local government, the farming sector (Irish Farmers Association), community and voluntary organisations (The Wheel, Community Platform, Children's Rights Alliance), women's organisations (the National Women's Council of Ireland and National Cooperative of Community-based Women's Networks), students (Union of Students in Ireland), and Traveller and Roma women's organisations (National Traveller Women's Forum).
371. The final report of the Strategy will be presented to the Strategy Committee shortly, with the Committee remaining in place until the successor strategy has been developed and finalised.
372. Funding of women's organisations is a key component of the Beijing Platform for Action and SDG 5 on Gender Equality. Ireland provides funding to a number of women's organisations to advance the objectives contained in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020. Core funding is granted to the National Women's Council of Ireland to support the advancement of gender equality as the national representative body for women in Ireland.
373. Funding to the National Women's Council of Ireland has been as follows over the past four years:
- 2024 - €678,000**
 - 2023 - €642,000**
 - 2022 - €611,000**
 - 2021 - €556,000**
374. Citizens' Assemblies are key exercises in deliberative democracy. They bring together citizens to discuss and consider important legal and policy issues in Ireland, and report back to the Oireachtas. Several Citizens' Assemblies have taken place since 2019, with the Citizens' Assembly on gender equality starting its work in 2019 and reporting its recommendations in April 2021.
375. In terms of the Sustainable Development Goals, the SDG National Stakeholder Forum is a key mechanism for discussing national implementation and for sharing learnings, examples of best practice and SDG relevant events from both a national and international perspective. The Forum was established to inform further development of the national SDG framework, and to provide a mechanism for stakeholders from all sectors to discuss and workshop innovative ideas and solutions for achieving the SDGs in Ireland. Each year an SDG Forum Committee will be appointed from a variety of sectors and backgrounds to develop the work plan for the Forum for that year and to design a well-publicised, accessible and inclusive National Stakeholder Forum format.

376. The SDG Champions Programme was developed to raise public awareness of the SDGs and to demonstrate, through the examples provided by the SDG Champions, that everyone in society can make a contribution to the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Following an open call for expressions of interest, 12 Champions were chosen to take part in Ireland's [first SDG Champions Programme](#). For the [2023-2024 Programme](#), 26 champions were chosen, consisting of 22 newly appointed organisations, along with four former SDG Champions who chose to continue the role cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their role is to advocate and promote the SDGs and sustainable development and to act as good practice examples of how an organisation or group can contribute to the SDGs.
377. For the 2024-2025 Programme, 20 champions have been selected from across the public, private, community, voluntary, youth and NGO sectors and are represented by larger, national organisations and smaller, community groups.

Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is included as a key priority in the national plan/strategy for SDG implementation.

378. To meet the ambition of achieving the SDGs by 2023, Ireland is adopting a 'whole-of-government' approach in the new National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024 was launched in October 2022. This builds upon and continues work from the Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan for 2018-2020.
379. Gender equality has been continually prioritised in the national plan for SDG implementation. The policy updates under SDG 5 are set out in the response to Question 40.

36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report

380. In preparing for the national report, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth consulted with a wide range of Government Departments, and Agencies, requesting detailed updates on their progress on various initiatives since Ireland's last report in 2019.
381. In addition, the Department carried out a stakeholder consultation on Tuesday 9 July 2024, related to the identification of key achievements, challenges and priorities for the future, grouped according to the 12 Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Declaration.
382. Key stakeholders and gender experts were invited to this event, including the National Women's Council of Ireland, the umbrella organisation for over 180 women's groups and organisations working for equality in Ireland.
383. Valuable responses were received across a wide range of issues and were subsequently summarised in a report. The responses were noted through open discussion from participants on each grouping. Other mechanisms for participation were

used such as mentimeter, the online tool for meeting contributions where participants who may not want to speak to the room, or remain anonymous, can participate. Contributions were also taken through written submissions where we used the mentimeter questions so those who were unable to access the online tool could provide a written response.

384. The report of the consultation was shared with all participants for their views and is available as an annex to this Ireland's national report.

37. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

385. In 2024, Ireland will submit its Eighth Periodic Report to CEDAW. In preparation for the successor Strategy to the National Strategy on Women and Girls, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth will begin consultations, starting with the National Youth Assembly in September 2024.

386. Further remote and regional consultations will take place, and discussions on the List of Issues for CEDAW for input into Ireland's national report will be incorporated into these consultations in preparation of the success Strategy.

387. Ireland last reported to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2016. All Government Departments were involved in preparing material for the report, and an all-day working consultation event hosted by the Department of Justice and Equality was held.

388. Ireland was examined by the CEDAW Committee in February 2017 for the review of its Sixth and Seventh Reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations against Women. This marked the first time the Committee had examined Ireland since 2005. In 2020, Ireland then provided further information to follow-up on CEDAW's Concluding Observations on Ireland's report.

389. The Committee has listed issues such as violence against women, political representation, education, employment and childcare, health, the economic empowerment of women, rural and minority groups of women, marriage and family relations, and legacy issues relating to women in institutions. Some of the responses to address the issues raised have been detailed in this report, such as:

- The development and publication of the Third National Strategy on DSGBV and the establishment of the dedicated agency, Cuan.

- Quotas are in place for the previous two elections to Dáil Éireann (lower house of Irish parliament) with current quota to increase to 40% of candidates put forward by political parties to be women, ensuring continued funding.
- Maternity leave provisions have been put in place for Councillors elected to local authorities, with legislation being progressed for maternity leave provisions for parliamentarians in the Oireachtas (National Parliament).
- The Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum within post-primary Education has been revised with greater focus on gender equity and the impact of gender stereotypes.
- Publication of the STEM Education Implementation Plan in February 2023, including recommendations to increase gender balance in STEM subjects.
- The Gender Pay Gap Information Act has brought a greater focus on the gender pay gap in Ireland, which stands at 9.6% in 2024. Since 2022, organisations with over 250 employees have been reporting on their gender pay gap. Organisations with over 150 employees will report for the first time in 2024.
- Family leaves have been increased to encourage the sharing of care responsibilities between men and women, and to support women in returning to the workforce.
- Following increases in public funding, a number of new childcare services have opened between 2019 and 2023 creating new places. The introduction of Core Funding in 2021 focusses on the sustainability and quality of services, as well as the retention of staff.
- The Women's Health Action Plan and its recent implementation reports responds to many of the issues raised by the Committee, including reproductive healthcare, mental health, menopause and gender mainstreaming.
- The new National Maternity Hospital has progressed, with planning permission received and a tender process now underway to appoint a contractor for the build.
- A Women in Business Action Plan was published in 2020 to support women in areas of leadership in business, entrepreneurship, and high potential start-ups.
- Equality budgeting has now been rolled out to all Government Departments, with reporting on Equality metrics including gender equality included in the annual Public Service Performance Report.
- Social welfare payments for lone parents and those on transitional jobseeker payments have been steadily increased over the past number of years, as well as revisions of earnings disregard thresholds.
- New Equality strategies are in development, or have been published, focusing on a number of groups such as Traveller and Roma, the LGBTI+ community, migrant integration and disability inclusion. All strategies are being developed with an intersectional lens and will be intrinsic to the development of the next National Strategy for Women and Girls.
- Changes to how Child Maintenance payments are considered in social welfare decisions, and other actions relating to the Review of the Enforcement of Child Maintenance Orders are in progress.
- In response to the legacy issues and the treatment of women in institutions, there has been a number of legislative actions in relation to access to birth information, an intervention at the site of the former Mother and Baby Institution in Tuam and redress and supports for those who spent a certain amount of time in mother and

baby institutions. A Special Advocate for survivors of institutional abuse has been appointed and Government has approved plans to develop a National Centre for Research and Remembrance.

Section Five: Data and Statistics (Q.38-41)

38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?

390. A census of population is carried out in Ireland at five-year intervals, with the most recent having taken place in 2022. The public consultation for this census was carried out in 2017. The submissions were considered by a Census Advisory Group, following which a Census Pilot Survey was held in 2018 to test the new and changed questions agreed by the Group.
391. In March 2024, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) launched a new platform for information on women and men. The Women and Men in Ireland Hub has been developed by the CSO to serve as a one-stop-shop for equality data related to Women and Men in Ireland.¹⁸
392. The Women and Men in Ireland Hub has been developed by the CSO using the latest data from the CSO and other public service bodies to provide comprehensive data on Women and Men in Ireland. The new Hub provides a wide range of information, broken down into six main themes: Gender Equality; Work; Education; Health; Safety and Security, and Transport. Users are able to find information on the differences in pay between men and women, detailed data on areas of study and work and how that differs between women and men, and hours spent caring and volunteering, among many other metrics. Thematic data categories include Gender Equality, Work, Education, Health, Safety & Security, and Transport. The data includes variables such as disability, at risk of poverty, employment, and life expectancy.
393. The Women and Men in Ireland Hub will provide more timely information than the Women and Men in Ireland publication, which it replaces. CSO data in the Hub is updated as new publications are released while data from other sources are automatically be updated once it becomes available. An annual snapshot of findings using the latest data from the Hub is to be published. The Hub uses an open data portal, data.cso.ie or PxStat, which allows users to search for data relevant to them, download it and create visuals in a way that suits them best.
394. Following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the CSO created an Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland series of releases to provide insights into Ireland's response to the Ukrainian crisis. It includes an analysis of Ukrainian arrivals who are availing of support and services from the Department of Social Protection (DSP); as well as providing insights into primary and secondary school enrolments overseen by the Department of Education; and enrolments in further education and training based on data provided by SOLAS. The data shows that women and men, aged 20 and over, made up 46% and

¹⁸ [Press Statement - CSO Launches Women and Men in Ireland Hub - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

23% respectively of arrivals to date, while 30% were people aged under 20. Of all arrivals to date aged 18 and over, 62% of males and 48% of females were married or cohabiting.¹⁹

395. The Gender Balance in Business Survey²⁰ aims to provide statistics on gender representation in top management teams and boards of directors in Ireland. 2019 marked the first statistical release of a new survey, the Gender Balance in Business Survey, providing the first official statistics from the CSO on gender representation in Senior Executive teams and Boards of Directors of large enterprises in Ireland. The survey was conducted in response to the Balance for Better Business initiative and aims to provide benchmark information on gender representation. The survey takes place every two years. The findings for 2023 showed that, of those enterprises which completed the survey:
- One in eight (13%) Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in large enterprises in Ireland in 2021 were women;
 - Three in ten (30%) Senior Executives were female compared to seven in ten (70%) for male;
 - More than seven in ten (72%) Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) were male;
 - Men accounted for 86% of Board Chairpersons, down from 93% in 2019;
 - Almost 22% of members of Boards of Directors were female, an increase from 20% in 2019.
396. The Healthy Ireland Survey has been carried out annually since 2014, with a break in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on in-person interviews. The most recent survey was carried out in 2023. 80% of respondents reported that they were in 'good' or 'very good' health, while 4% of respondents reported in being in 'bad' or 'very bad' health. The Survey was commissioned to enhance data collection and monitoring capacity track health behaviours and health service utilisation patterns across the nation, and to help evaluate progress related to "Healthy Ireland" policies and wider health-related initiatives. The Healthy Ireland Survey provides information on gender, geographic location, including deprivation status of the small area in which each respondent lives, employment status, age, education and marital status, country of birth and race, whether or not each respondent is disabled, any chronic conditions, carer status, and whether or not the respondent has a medical or GP visit card, or HEAHEA insurance.
397. From 2016, the Higher Education Authority has continued to publish annual Higher Education Institutional Staff Profile by Gender, providing information on key indicators contributing to the assessment of gender equality in Irish higher education institutions in receipt of annual core-funding from the HEA. The last available report at this point is for the year 2022.²¹
398. The CSO carried out an Equality Data Audit, which it published together with an accompanying report in 2020. The CSO Equality Data Audit 2020 found that in the Irish

¹⁹ [Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland Series 13 - Central Statistics Office](#)

²⁰ [Gender Balance in Business Survey 2021 - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

²¹ [HEI Staff Profiles | Policy | Higher Education Authority \(hea.ie\)](#)

system data on sex is well collected, as is age for working age persons, but significant gaps were identified, in the following areas:

- Age data on the older population is often limited to the grouping '65+' which does not allow disaggregation of older groups.
- Nationality is frequently collected; however, ethnicity and race are rarely collected. These three markers should be clearly distinguished as they each are a very different part of a person's identity and are not interchangeable.
- Irish Travellers have been formally recognised as a distinct ethnic group since March 2017. However, ethnic data, inclusive of Travellers is not collected or used consistently across the system.
- Data on disability is collected often but a standard definition is not used.
- Gender identity is not collected in a manner which reflects the broad complexity of gender identity.
- Sexual Orientation is not directly collected. However, it can sometimes be implied from questions on civil partnership or marriage if there is a same sex option when collected.

399. Reporting under the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 began in 2022 for employers with over 250 employees, and will extend to those with over 150 employees in 2024, and finally extending to employers with over 50 employees in 2025.

400. These reports have provided Government with key information regarding the gender pay gap situations in Ireland and will inform focus policy measures aimed at continuously narrowing the gap. At present relevant employers must publish their Gender Pay Gap report in December of each year. An online portal is currently being developed where employers will then submit the information they are currently publishing directly to the Department.

39. Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

401. Ireland is currently developing a National Equality Data Strategy. This Strategy aims to improve the collection, disaggregation and use of equality data in Ireland. It is intended that the Strategy will provide a general approach for identifying and filling current gaps in equality data, as well as develop standard practices in classification. The Strategy is intended to improve the collection of all equality data and will improve the ability of public bodies to monitor the impact of policies and initiatives and will complement the Equality Budgeting initiative. It is hoped that the Strategy will be published and in place by Autumn 2024.

402. Building upon the progress made in gender pay gap reporting, as detailed in Q38, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is currently developing a centralised database for employers to upload their gender pay gap reports, and to elaborate on the drivers behind any possible gaps and the actions that they are taking to resolve these gaps. Development of a centralised portal is a policy intention of

the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021, with Section 20A (5) of the Act providing that the regulations may prescribe the form and manner in which and the frequency with which information must be published. The legislative basis for a centralised portal is also contained in the Directive on Pay Transparency. This portal will provide policy makers, researchers and members of the public further information about the gender pay gap in Ireland, and aid in the development of tools to continuously narrow the gap.

40. What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

403. Responsibility for reporting on Ireland's progress towards meeting national SDG targets has been assigned to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC). DECC chairs the UN SDG Civil Service Senior Officials Group, charged with developing official reports on Ireland's progress. A national UN SDG Indicators Data Governance Board, established by the Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO) with representatives from Government Departments and agencies, meets on a quarterly basis and oversees data quality, metadata, lifecycle management and business glossaries.
404. The Central Statistics Office (CSO), in collaboration with Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) and Esri Ireland, have developed the SDG GeoHive, a collaboration platform for reporting on progress towards the goals and sharing information on related initiatives. Ireland's progress against each goal is measured using a set of United Nations (UN) global and European Union (EU) agreed targets and indicators.
405. Ireland uses 14 indicators for monitoring the implementation of SDG 5, and they are as follows:
- End Discrimination and Violence
1. SDG 5.1.1 - Whether or not Legal Frameworks are in Place to Promote, Enforce and Monitor Equality and Non Discrimination on the Basis of Sex
 2. SDG 5.2.1 - Proportion of Ever Partnered Women and Girls Aged 15 Years and Older Subjected to Physical, Sexual or Psychological Violence by a Current or Former Intimate Partner in the Previous 12 Months, by Form of Violence and by Age
 3. SDG 5.2.2 - Proportion of Women and Girls Aged 15 Years and Older Subjected to Sexual Violence by Persons Other Than an Intimate Partner in the Previous 12 Months, by Age and Place of Occurrence
 4. SDG 5.3.1 - Proportion of Women Aged 20-24 Years who were Married or in a Union Before Age 15 and Before Age 18
 5. SDG 5.3.2 - Proportion of Girls and Women Aged 15-49 Years who have Undergone Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, by Age
- Equality
6. SDG 5.4.1 - Proportion of Time Spent on Unpaid Domestic and Care Work, by Sex, Age and Location
 7. SDG 5.5.1 - Proportion of Seats held by Women in (a) National Parliaments and (b) Local Governments

8. SDG 5.5.2 - Proportion of Women in Managerial Positions
9. SDG 5.6.1 - Proportion of Women Aged 15-49 Years who make Their own Informed Decisions Regarding Sexual Relations, Contraceptive Use and Reproductive Health Care
10. SDG 5.6.2 - Number of Countries with Laws and Regulations that Guarantee Full and Equal Access to Women and Men Aged 15 Years and Older to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care, Information and Education

Empowerment

11. SDG 5.a.1 - Proportion of Total Agricultural Population with Ownership or Secure Rights Over Agricultural Land, by Sex; and (b) Share of Women Among Owners or Rights-Bearers of Agricultural Land, by Type of Tenure
 12. SDG 5.a.2 - Proportion of Countries Where the Legal Framework (Including Customary Law) Guarantees Women's Equal Rights to Land Ownership and/or Control
 13. SDG 5.b.1 - Proportion of Individuals who own a Mobile Telephone, by Sex
 14. SDG 5.c.1 - Proportion of Countries with Systems to Track and make Public Allocations for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
406. The CSO Report from 2019 on Indicators for Goal 5 can be found at the following link: <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/unsustainabledevelopmentgoals/unsdgsgoal5-genderequality/>

41. Which data disaggregations are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

407. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) is Ireland's national statistical institute. The CSO's Census sets the standard for data disaggregation in Ireland.
408. The Statistical Spotlight Series brings together information on a specific topic of interest. The publications often include a short commentary that details trends and outlines any relevant comparisons. All data in the statistical reports are disaggregated by gender, if available. Children and Youth Mortality in Ireland, The Mental Health of Children and Young People in Ireland and Young People's Participation in Youth Organisations are some recent publications from the Statistical Spotlight Series where data are disaggregated by gender.
409. The State of the Nation's Children (SONC) report provides a comprehensive picture of our children's lives. It presents key information on children's health, behavioural and educational outcomes, and their relationships with their parents and their friends. All data in SONC are disaggregated by gender, if available. The majority of the data from SONC are housed in the Central Statistics Office's (CSO) PxStat system where data are disaggregated by gender.
410. In Q4 2024, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) will publish a statistical report from our Statistical Spotlight series called 'The

State of the Nation's Women' which will compile and analyse data on women in Ireland. This report will assist policy makers in identifying areas of inequality between women and men. This report will provide demographic, education, employment, health and poverty statistics.

411. Our 6th Statistical Spotlight looked at gender norms in Ireland. The primary purpose of this publication was to explore where Ireland stood under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) framework of restrictive masculinities. In the Report "Man Enough? Measuring Masculine Norms to Promote Women's Empowerment", the OECD identifies ten norms of restrictive masculinities that hinder women's empowerment and greater gender equality. This Spotlight aimed to collate evidence of restrictive masculinities in the Irish context, in order to promote an evidence-based approach to policy making in the area of women's empowerment and gender equality.
412. Further information is gathered in terms of gender balance in business and higher education, and health in Ireland, and can be found in Q38.

Section Six: Conclusion and next steps

413. Ireland has been pleased to participate in the review process under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
414. Over the past five years, Ireland has worked actively to promote equality for women and girls. The National Strategy for Women and Girls was the framework for action in this area. The work done under its auspices was designed to address barriers and to empower women and girls to participate as fully equal members in society. This has encompassed many different things such as ensuring women have access to contraception, or fighting harmful stereotypes, or even something as basic as making sure women and girls are safe as they go about their daily lives.
415. In the last strategy, there was a large focus on the job market, leadership roles, and positive role models in industry. The need for more gender diversity in education was also highlighted, with a focus on STEM where on average just 35% of students are women. The strategy also looked at how we approach women's health in terms of period poverty, access to physical and mental health services and nutritional education. The strategy also explored families, lone parents and carer roles; seeking to address the large imbalance in this area with women on average spending double the time of men on caring. In the next strategy, we want to elevate the voices of young people and make sure their opinions and experiences are included when deciding how best to advance gender equality. The successor strategy will cover a period of years, in sync with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action review process.
416. The successor Strategy will encompass not only Ireland's obligations under the Beijing Platform for Action, but also the obligations under the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Ireland will also be taking account of the Gender Equality Strategies of the EU and the Council of Europe in the development of the successor strategy.

Priorities following Beijing+30 Review Process

417. For the coming five-year period, there are a number of areas which will be prioritised for action to advance gender equality.
418. The next National Strategy for Women and Girls will be developed with an intersectional lens and will incorporate the new and updated equality strategies currently being developed such as the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy, the National Migrant Integration Strategy and the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, all of which are being progressed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The Strategy will also harmonise with relevant policies and strategies from across Government such as the Third National Strategy on DSGBV, the Women's Health Action Plan, the Women in Sport Policy, the Rural Development Policy, the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and many others.

419. With the transposition of the EU's Gender Balance on Listed Corporate Boards directive, and the Pay Transparency directive, further emphasis will be placed on women in leadership posts and women in the workplace. The Pay Transparency directive will expand on the gender pay gap reporting by organisations, with the extension of the reporting obligations in 2025 to organisations with over 50 employees, and the publication of salary ranges so prospective employees can make informed decisions with job opportunities.
420. Further investment in early learning and childcare services will not only benefit children but will also support women's participation within education and employment. The roll out of Ireland's Equal Start model for early learning and childcare will further support those women and children from marginalised backgrounds and empower them to participate fully in society. With the rollout of maternity leave for elected members of local authorities now in place, Ireland will progress the legislation to ensure that parliamentarians who give birth are supported to reconcile work and family life.
421. The Equality Data Strategy, due for publication in the coming month, will be crucial in the monitoring and disaggregation of data on gender equality issues. Along with the draft Online Safety Code for designated video sharing platforms, published in December 2023, Coimisiún na Meán and the new Online Safety Commissioner will work with Government to address harmful content online, in particular hate speech against marginalised groups.
422. Work will also be progressed with the Child Poverty office within the Department of the Taoiseach to meet the targets set out in Young Ireland for the eradication of poverty for women and children. A greater focus on girls and young women will be given in the next National Strategy for Women and Girls, to address the reality of gender inequality in their everyday lives.
423. Women's Health measures will continue to be progressed in the coming years, with a focus on menopause and menstrual health supports, the expansion of free contraception schemes, and the gender mainstreaming in the clinical diagnosing and treatment of women.
424. Ireland remains committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality.

ANNEX
Report of the Stakeholder Consultation Forum
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth
9 July 2024

In 2025, the global community will mark the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), which sets out an agenda for women’s empowerment. It also marks ten years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims as one of its Sustainable Development Goals to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is leading work across Government on Ireland’s comprehensive national review to assess progress made since Ireland’s last report on the Beijing Declaration and Platform in 2019.

A stakeholder consultation was held on Tuesday 9 July in Dublin to inform Ireland’s Beijing +30 report and brought together civil society groups and gender equality experts. A list of attendees can be found on the final page of this document. The forum was a half-day event and used the world café dialogue methodology.

Views were invited on the objectives of the twelve critical areas of concern, the achievements over the last five years, and priorities for the next five years.

The list of objectives were grouped and discussed as follows:

- A. Women and poverty;
- B. Education and training of women + F. Women and the economy;
- C. Women and health + K. Women and the environment;
- D. Violence against women;
- E. Women and armed conflict;
- G. Women in power and decision-making + H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women + I. Human rights of women;
- J. Women and the media;
- L. The girl-child.

A range of responses was received. The responses were noted through open discussion from participants on each grouping. Other mechanisms for participation were used such as mentimeter, which is an online tool for meeting contributions where participants who may not want to speak to the room, or remain anonymous, can participate. Contributions were also taken through written submissions on the questions available through mentimeter, so

that those who were unable to access the online tool could provide a written response. All these contributions are outlined and summarised over the following pages. Furthermore, points from a written submission received from the Ombudsman for Children (OCO) have been included in the report, as a representative was unable to attend.

A. Women and Poverty

Points were raised under the following themes:

- Women, particularly disabled women, are at a higher risk of poverty. Ireland has the lowest rate of employment of people with disabilities in the EU.
- The gender pension gap, which currently stands at 37%, could be improved by equalising state pensions. Despite schemes such as home carer's contribution, a total contribution approach to determine a person's entitlements would be more beneficial for women.
- Lack of services, such as education, employment, transport and childcare, can lead to poverty, particularly for migrant women in rural areas.
- In agricultural settings, it was acknowledged that the male spouse or partner is often the one who is entitled to grants or schemes.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs was acknowledged as a strong role model for development funders due to their work to reach 'the furthest behind first'. This is often a female in a marginalised population.
- Issues exist in terms of income inadequacy and social protection for Traveller women and disabled women. Individualisation of income and taxation must ensure that women are meeting an adequate standard of living.
- A referendum on enumerating the right to adequate housing in the Constitution should be progressed, along with specific family and child homelessness strategies.
- Positive developments have been made in terms of family leaves, such as parent's leave, parent's benefit and parental leave, but women continue to face issues accessing adequately flexible childcare. In addition, the need for further support for one parent families was highlighted, as parental leave is based on the assumption of the two-parent family as the norm.
- Progress has been made in terms of understanding gender discrimination, as processes to collect data on women in politics and on sexual harassment have been established. There has also been increased understanding of the link between harassment and gender stereotypes. However, this data must be adequately disaggregated by sex and capture other intersectionalities.
- It is envisaged that the forthcoming Equality Data Strategy will provide further insights into how women are trapped in poverty through gender stereotypes.
- Social welfare services are difficult to access as entitlements are based on households.
- The establishment of the Child Poverty Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach was highlighted as a positive achievement to ensure that households can achieve adequate standards of living. The focus on child poverty as an area of concern in Young Ireland:

National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2023-2028 was also mentioned. Specific budget lines for children with ring-fenced funding should be introduced.

- The ongoing implementation of First 5: A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families, 2019-2028, the publication of the EU Child Guarantee National Action Plan and the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2023-2025, and the introduction of the Hot School Meals Programme, were given as examples of positive accomplishments.

Valuable responses were received via mentimeter, both online and written, acknowledging gender equality and gender transformative programming as key priorities of Ireland's 'A Better World Strategy'. As achievements, domestic violence leave and pension equality were highlighted - however, Traveller women have been largely excluded from pension equality at this point. Further achievements listed included the €1 billion investment in early learning and care.

Future priorities discussed included further support for older women and the evaluation of the potential for a universal pension. In addition, respondents called for increased support for marginalised women through programmes such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) Community Development Programme, and a review of the habitual residence condition and its impact on Traveller and Roma women. They also called for a whole of life measurement of employment-related differences, an extension of the jobseekers transition payment, and for all social welfare rates to be benchmarked to meet the minimum essential standard of living.

B. Education and training of women + F. Women and the economy

Points were raised as follows:

- One-to-one education and training plays a key role in helping people progress to full time employment, especially those who may have had negative experiences with education. Further government supports and multi-annual funding should be prioritised.
- Further focus is needed on lifelong learning, with literacy issues in the older cohort highlighted as a key topic, along with further training of marginalised women in the form of community education
- An education gap exists between people with disabilities and the general population in Ireland - the 2022 census revealed that up to 4% of people with disabilities per county receive no education.
- The positive achievements of the National Council for Curriculums and Assessment (NCCA) and the provision of SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) at Primary and Secondary levels were highlighted, embedding gender equality in Ireland's education system. Furthermore, the publication of the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications, including Wellbeing, by the NCCA, was mentioned.

- The development of an updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum should include a focus on young people’s right to sexual and reproductive health information.
- The economy and needs of women must be linked, as policy often centres on the needs of employers and the labour market.
- While there has been a huge advancement in terms of the framework for consent in education, training and funding must be prioritised for those in gendered occupations working with marginalised communities.
- The launch of the Equal Start Model in supporting access and participation in early learning and care (ELC) and school age childcare (SAC) for children and their families who experience disadvantage is an additional support to greater career success for women and girls. There should be further investment in similar initiatives to promote lifelong education and to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.
- Women entrepreneurs should be supported to overcome barriers such as unconscious bias.
- The impact on migrants and Traveller women should be particularly considered.

Via mentimeter, respondents noted that investment in early childhood education, and the right to remote working were key achievements. The publication of the National Framework for Lifelong Guidance in December 2023, and the Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutes were also highlighted, as well as the recommendations on Women in STEM from the Citizen’s Assembly on Gender Equality.

In terms of future priorities, respondents called for a national policy to provide out of school education for young women who fall out of mainstream education, with emphasis on a child and female centred approach and inclusive education for minority groups. In addition, a DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) plus model should be established for schools in areas experiencing intergenerational poverty.

C. Women and Health + K. Women and the Environment

Points were raised under the following themes:

- It was noted that the Health chapter of the Beijing Declaration was particularly difficult for Ireland in 1995, in the context of the country’s reproductive laws at the time. While the referendum to Repeal the Eighth Amendment took place in 2018, the legislation connected to it may be relevant to the Beijing +30 report.
- On this point, the enactment of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 and the subsequent enactment of the Health (Termination of Pregnancy) (Safe Access Zones) Act 2024 were highlighted as achievements.
- The Women’s Health Action Plan, the new Health Data Plan, the enactment of the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction Act) 2024, the roll out of free contraception (and its extension to 17 year olds), and fertility clinic access were cited as positive achievements. The Department of Health should consider extending the free

contraception scheme to those aged 16 and over, in line with children's rights considerations.

- There should be further provision of gender sensitive mental health services, in particular around perinatal care. Challenges around sufficient clinical programmes for eating disorder treatments and meeting the needs of marginalised groups were also acknowledged. The publication of *Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone*, was highlighted as a positive achievement.
- Maintain the progress made since the advent of Sláintecare, and fully implement its commitments.
- The aging process should be destigmatised, especially around menopause supports, the breakdown of stereotypes and sexual health in old age. It was also noted that the rates of malnutrition in elderly people are high as they may find it difficult to get a balanced diet.
- A successor strategy to the Sexual Health Strategy should be progressed without delay.
- Sexual violence and the threat of sexual violence in residential and healthcare settings must be addressed. A Strategy to address sexual violence in such residential settings was suggested.
- The reality of the structural issues that link health and class must be addressed. On this, community organisations play a crucial role to ensure this link is addressed in a holistic way.
- It was noted that while the National Women's Health Forum is a positive step forward, it only names Traveller women under two headings - period poverty and homelessness. Supports are more effective when groups are specifically named.
- There must be investment in a dedicated public health nurse for children and mothers, and the new breastfeeding strategy must be prioritised, particularly in marginalised communities and socio-economically disadvantaged groups.
- There should be a phased plan with sufficient funding to achieve universal access to home visits for all first time parents by 2026. There should also be continued evidence based reform of legislation concerning termination of pregnancy.
- The review of the Mental Health Act should be reviewed as soon as possible.

On mentimeter, the Review of the Transfer of Property Act was highlighted as an achievement, with the need to implement the review's recommendations noted.

The transformation of the international protection system in anticipation of climate displacement, women's role in addressing climate change, and improved articulation of the environmental challenges that Ireland faces were highlighted as priorities. The lack of gender-affirming trans healthcare in Ireland was also cited, along with the need to revise the income threshold for access to medical cards.

Respondents called for more focus on an intersectional approach to women's healthcare, with further focus on mental health, Roma maternal health and Traveller health in general.

There should be an independent review of abortion services and further focus on the issue of conscientious objections among practitioners.

In addition, deinstitutionalisation should be prioritised, with people moved out of congregated settings to services in the community.

D. Violence Against Women

- While the wording of the Beijing Declaration was progressive at the time, there is an absence of necessary data disaggregated by sex and age. The scope of the report should include people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual characterisation.
- Ireland's ratification of the Istanbul Convention was highlighted as a key achievement.
- There is also a need for the percentage of overseas development aid that Ireland provides to be tracked.
- The risk of digital violence should be added to the report, as the online sphere adds a further element to harassment and violence towards women.
- There should be further safeguarding in terms of sexual abuse in health and education settings.
- The Third National Strategy on Domestic and Gender Based Violence (DGBSV) does not have an independent monitoring system - participants noted the need for this in terms of ensuring transparency.
- The full implementation of the Third National Strategy on DGBSV should be prioritised. The Ombudsman for Children (OCO) should be provided with adequate funding in order to carry out independent oversight of this Strategy, as it includes a recognition of children as victims of domestic violence.
- Children should be allowed to apply for orders under the Domestic Violence Act 2018 in their own right.
- All survivors should have access to professionalised services with adequate funding. In addition, participants called for a reform of legal aid and family courts for survivors.
- Recent achievements were highlighted in terms of legislation, policy, and investment, including the launch of an effective strategy blueprint for tackling violence against women by the National Women's Council, and the launch of Cuan, the new statutory DGBSV agency. Cuan should engage comprehensively with civil societies and relevant NGOs. The Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 and intimate image abuse laws were also noted.
- The enactment of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024 was highlighted as an achievement.
- The publication and implementation of The Family Justice Strategy and the Youth Justice Strategy should be prioritised, and amendments to the Family Courts Bill should be published as soon as possible.
- The importance of statistics and data for older people experiencing sexual violence was noted. This is gendered violence and this intersectionality must be acknowledged.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) are working on a new safeguarding strategy on this issue.

- Coercive control should not be defined solely as intimate partner violence, as 50% of older people who experience abuse experience it at the hands of their children. Reference should also be made to stalking.
- Stereotypes must be overcome to allow people who have experienced abuse to receive the necessary care.
- The successor to the National LGBTBI+ Inclusion Strategy should be developed as soon as possible, and should adopt a children's rights-based approach.

On mentimeter, respondents acknowledged that adult safeguarding policies have been advanced in recent years. There has been an increased allocation in refuge accommodation spaces.

For future priorities, they called for increased funding to combat gender-based violence in humanitarian settings and the need for intervention for boys who are perpetrators. In addition, grassroots/low level initiatives on tackling anti-women attitudes and sexual ethics workshops were suggested. Recommendations from GREVIO-the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence- should also be implemented.

E. Women and Armed Conflict

- The Defence Forces are considering promotion strategies to remove barriers that may prevent women being retained or reaching positions of leadership, with a view to ensuring overseas missions have a 30% female gender ratio.
- Women and armed conflict must be viewed in terms of corporation tax policy - where Ireland receives and spends money must be acknowledged.
- A large proportion of people with disabilities in international protection accommodation have difficulties receiving support while awaiting protection claims. Further supports should be made available for women who have come from conflict zones and who have experienced trauma or sexual exploitation. New integration teams are currently being set up.
- The Children's Rights Alliance has commissioned research with TUSLA (the Child and Family Agency) on family supports for mothers and children in international protection centres.
- The Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence has carried out research on Ireland's recent seat on the UN Security Council and work around Women Peace and Security.
- The experience of women living in areas where antisocial behaviour and criminal activity was acknowledged, as they may often act as peacekeepers in these settings.

Responses received on mentimeter included the need to support older international protection applicants as a priority, acknowledging they may not be able to integrate into the labour force.

It was also noted as a point of concern that the auto-enrolment pension policy puts money in private pension systems that invest in areas of concern. Such investment of pension funds should be transparent.

For future priorities, respondents also called for targeted investment in core funding from DFA for women's led grassroots agencies in the global south to develop their capacities as peace negotiators.

G. Women in Power and Decision-Making, + H. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women + I. Human Rights of Women

Points raised during the discussion included the following:

- There is no stable funding pool to support advocacy groups to form.
- For those who experience DSGBV, the issues of custody and family law and how they clash as opposed to work together must be examined. Despite the establishment of the Law Reform Commission, these issues are not being addressed.
- It was noted that in 1996, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank had a large influence on social services and the global south, with a similar operating mode today. The Department of Foreign Affairs recently called for Ireland to encourage debt management reforms.
- Access to adequate childcare is a large aspect of gender equality. As an example, it is difficult for women who want to be TDs who do not live in Dublin. On this note, maternity leave for Oireachtas members must also be advanced as a priority.
- Equality law must provide improved rights on intersectionality and the various ways people may experience discrimination. An intersectional approach is particularly important to address Traveller women's issues in every aspect of life, as compared to their settled counterparts.
- In terms of support for civil society, consultations and multi-annual funding create a space for development funding.
- It was noted that the National Women's Council of Ireland have published research on women's access and retention in local government, acknowledging that women experience gendered abuse, both online and offline, and that women from minority backgrounds are largely underrepresented.
- Further efforts should be made to improve legal literacy, digital literacy, and financial understanding among women. Furthermore, while work is being done on the gender pay gap, the gender wealth gap and gender pension gap must be acknowledged.
- The new Equality Data Strategy and future strategies should address intersectionality, ensuring that the focus is also on implementation and equality budgeting.
- Further attention should be paid to women's burden of care, which can limit their ability to take part in politics and to engage in senior leadership.
- It was noted that the Department of Foreign Affairs support women defenders of human rights throughout the world.

On mentimeter, the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, the National Equality Data Strategy, and the Electoral Commission were cited as achievements.

In terms of future priorities, respondents called for representative democracy to be made more inclusive, with gender quotas introduced at the local level. There should be full implementation of the Public Sector Duty, and further funding for civil society, community development organisations, the Equality Strategies and for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in line with additional mandates. Legislation and policies should be crisis-proofed to ensure the protection of women and girls.

In addition, the impact of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act was highlighted as a future focus.

J. Women and the Media

Points were raised as follows:

- Hate speech and harassment against women in the digital space must be tackled, while ensuring freedom of expression. It was noted that gender will be not included as a ground in the proposed Hate Speech Bill.
- Improvements must be made within the media and political representation in terms of the perception of women.
- The media should be made accessible to people with disabilities, with the examples of large print newspapers and accessible websites cited.
- Publication of the Online Safety Code was cited as an achievement.

On mentimeter, respondents noted the establishment of Coimisiún na Meán (Ireland's media regulator) and the Electoral Commission, and civil society campaigns targeting stereotypes in the media such as #FixedIt as achievements.

Respondents called for the implementation of the AI Act, for Coimisiún na Meán to establish guidelines to prevent the spread of hate and issue specific guidance during elections, and called for due consideration to be given to the regulation of social media platforms in terms of the engagement of women in the public sphere and decision-making.

L. The Girl-Child

Points raised include the following:

- The risks that come with children spending a large amount of time online must be acknowledged. Online Safety Regulations have been drafted and the Children's Rights Committee of the Council of Europe is bringing a focus to the scale and impact of pornography on real life attitudes of young people.

- There is a need for greater gender awareness among families in the agricultural sector that inheritance should be gender balanced, as it is often the son who is expected to take over.
- There is increasing sexual violence against the girl child and there are gaps in specialist services for this age cohort. On the other side, there are no interventions in terms of the boy child where he is a perpetrator. Education on consent must be prioritised.
- The Defence Forces has been engaging experts on sexual ethics and respectable relationships-language relating to this can be given to children to help them to discuss sensitive topics.
- It was noted that the Criminal Justice (Female Genital Mutilation Act) 2012, makes the performance of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or taking a girl out of Ireland to perform FGM a criminal offence. Migrant communities and international protection applicants must be made aware of this. Statistics on FGM in Ireland should be tracked.
- The Equality Acts Review should be completed as soon as possible, with due regard to children's rights, as many children stated, in the recent OCO 'Pieces of Us' report, that they experience gender discrimination in the form of gender stereotyping.
- The targets identified in Young Ireland, with a particular focus on cohorts of children who are most at risk of poverty and social exclusion (e.g. Roma and Traveller children, children in one-parent families, and children in Direct Provision), should be advanced as a priority.
- The successor strategy to the National Strategy for Women and Girls should explicitly address the needs and vulnerabilities of children.

Examples included in mentimeter responses in terms of achievements were the areas of education and the new curriculum and laws around consent, while concerns raised include the need for greater overseas development aid investment in combatting FGM in the global south, and investment in services in Ireland for survivors of FGM.

In terms of future priorities, respondents called for greater regulation of social media and platforms to protect girls and children online, the modernisation of guardian payments, and less monitoring, policy and stigmatisation of mothers, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Attendees:

Organisation	Representative
Age Action	Mary Murphy
Children's Rights Alliance	Margaret Gallagher
Disability Federation	Dr Meredith Raley
GOAL	Mary van Lieshout
IHREC	Kieran Timmons
IHREC	Roisin Putti
Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence	Roisin Gallagher
Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed	Bríd O'Brien
Irish Rural Link	Louise Lennon
National Traveller Women's Forum	Lauren May
National Women's Council	Kate Mitchell
Rape Crisis Network Ireland	Cliona Saidlear
Self Help Africa	Mary Sweeney
Social Justice Ireland	Susanne Rogers

Department Representatives

Department	Representative
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)	Carol Baxter
DCEDIY	Allayne Cassidy
DCEDIY	Hannah Gaden Gilmartin
DCEDIY	Dairíne Hoban (Notetaker)
DCEDIY	Lisa Hughes
DCEDIY	Aoife Lawlor (Notetaker)
DCEDIY	Aisling O'Callaghan (Notetaker)
DCEDIY	Linda O'Sullivan
DCEDIY	Valeria Sofia
DCEDIY	Victoria Swiredowsky
DCEDIY	Slawomir Szymczyk
DCEDIY	Louise Ward
Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)	Roisin Leonard
DFA	Saidhbh Houlihan
Defence Forces	Flight Sergeant Denise English
Department of Housing, Local Government, Heritage and Reform	Eoin Colleary
Department of Rural and Community Development	Kevin Holmes