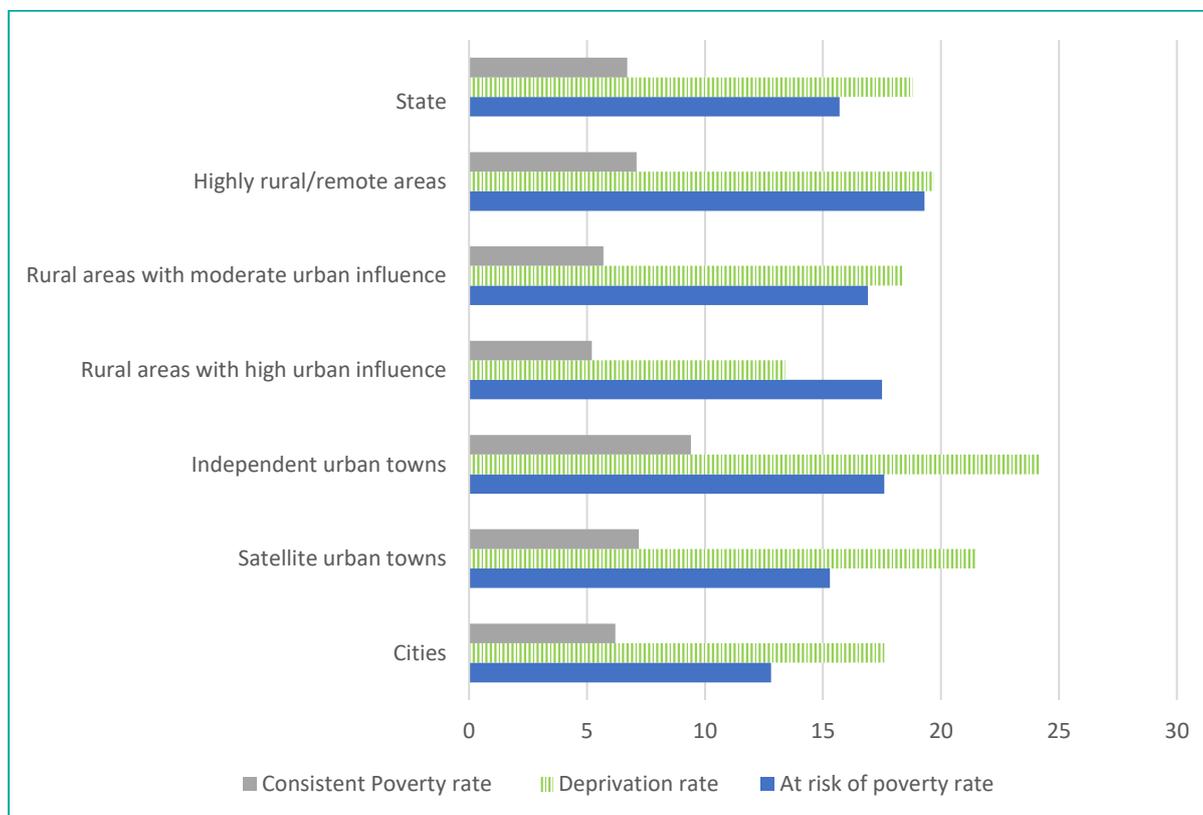


The present situation - a snapshot of some key issues

An older population, higher poverty rates and greater distances from every day services

- Rural areas generally have an older population, higher rates of part-time employment, lower median incomes, higher dependency ratios and higher poverty rates than the national average.
- The average distance to most everyday services for people in rural areas is at least three times longer than for people in urban areas. For supermarkets, GPs and pharmacies, the average travel distance was seven times longer for rural dwellings. This raises challenges for delivery of services.
- The driver of the rural economy in Ireland has moved from the primarily agricultural to a more diverse base involving services, manufacturing, tourism and others.
- Two out of every five jobs in Ireland are at high risk of automation with towns where employment is dominated by agriculture and manufacturing most exposed to the impact of automation on employment¹.
- Supporting rural households to ensure that they have sufficient incomes will be crucial to the future of rural Ireland.
- High quality and connected public transport links and sustainable regional employment opportunities are vital to the future of rural economies.
- Lack of quality broadband is a considerable barrier to the sustainable development of rural Ireland.

Chart 1: Key Indicators of Poverty by Area Type, 2017

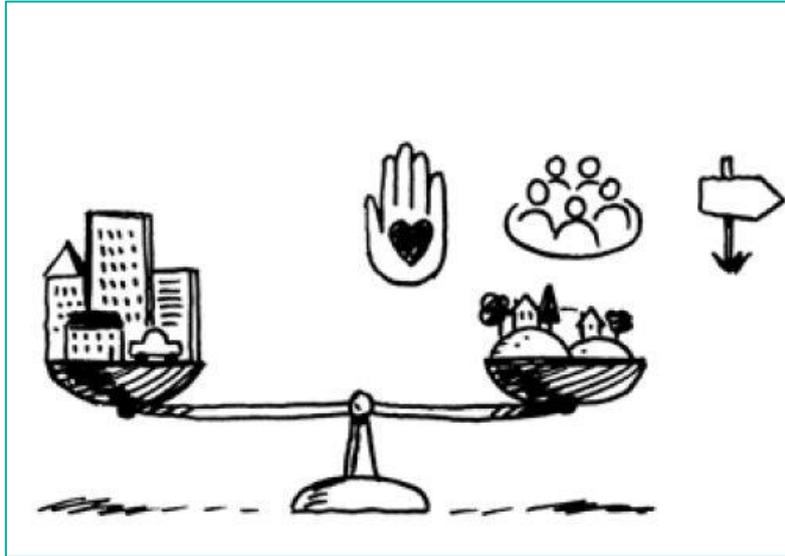


Source: CSO Statbank 2019

¹ https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/projectsandcentres/srerc/SRERCWP2019-1_upload.pdf

What type rural Ireland should we be planning for?

One where there are viable rural communities in all parts of Ireland where people have access to meaningful work, adequate income and decent services and infrastructure.



Things a new Government can do to build a thriving and viable rural communities

- Ensure that investment is balanced between the regions.
- Ensure rural development policy is underpinned by social, economic and environmental wellbeing.
- Prioritise rolling out high speed broadband to rural areas.
- Invest in an integrated, accessible and flexible rural transport network.
- Ensure that sustainable agriculture policy, sustainable land management, and short supply chains for farmers and consumers form the basis of future agricultural policy.
- Ensure that development initiatives resource areas which are further from the major urban areas to ensure they do not fall further behind.
- Invest in human capital through targeted education and training programmes, especially for older workers and those in vulnerable employment.
- Establish a Just Transition and Adaptation Dialogue to ensure rural areas are not disproportionately impacted by low carbon policies and are supported to meet the challenges posed by the future of work.
- Prepare for the potential impact of technology on the future of work by investing in the regions and ensuring the necessary social, infrastructural and human capital supports are in place to manage any upheaval.
- Provide integrated supports for rural entrepreneurs, micro-enterprises and SMEs.
- Ensure public service delivery in rural areas according to the equivalence principle and that rural proofing is an essential component of all Government policies.