

8. What counts when it comes to Wellbeing?

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Introduction

The Programme for Government acknowledged that our “existing measures of economic performance fail to measure matters such as damage to the environment and voluntary work. They also overlook equality of opportunity, distribution of wealth and income and only value public expenditure on the basis of the inputs used, not the outcomes achieved.” and committed to introducing a series of indicators that would more accurately measure wellbeing to provide a “holistic view of how our society is faring” (Government of Ireland, 2020a).

As a move towards the development of these indicators, the Government of Ireland published the *Wellbeing and the Measurement of Broader Living Standards in Ireland* paper as part of the documentation accompanying Budget 2021 (Government of Ireland, 2020b). This paper sought to examine the development of wellbeing standards internationally and investigate the options open to Ireland to implement something similar.

In February 2021, under the auspices of the Department of the Taoiseach and jointly sponsored by the Department of Finance, the Government established an inter-Departmental Working Group to develop a set of key indicators utilising the OECD Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress as a “starting point”. The Working Group was Chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and delivered its First Report in July 2021 (Government of Ireland, 2021). The report provided an overview of the work conducted to date together with a brief review of existing Government plans and strategies and how they might complement the work on the Well-being Framework.

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) Stakeholder and Expert Consultation Sub-Group was established at the same time as the Inter-Departmental Working Group to consider how best to consult and engage the public on the Framework. The First (and only) Report of this Sub-Group was also published in July 2021 and referred to three “overarching and inter-linked” priorities in this area – Equity, Agency, and Sustainability (NESC, 2021). The focus on equity referred the need to ensure that the Well-being Framework would result in fairer policies on areas such as income (including the eradication of poverty), distribution of wealth, fairness, access to services, and equality

amongst different groups, and respondents to the survey conducted by NESC called for “robust indicators” relating to equality including in relation to access to services, amenities and opportunities (2021, p. 43). The reference to “agency” in the NESC priorities focused on the need to ensure meaningful citizen engagement when determining policy priorities and the need for “deliberative and deep dialogue” with citizens. The final priority related to “sustainability” and the need to view policy through a “futures perspective”, balancing current wellbeing with long-term sustainability. Ensuring the proper balance is achieved can be difficult as we look at the trade-offs between current economic policies and our ecological future and is described by NESC as “a relatively weak area in the OECD framework” (2021, p. 44).

The First Report of the Inter-Departmental Working Group set out the stages in progressing the development of the Wellbeing Framework as follows (Government of Ireland, 2021, pp. 11-12):

Step 1: The Development of an Overarching Well-being Framework.

Step 2: Utilising the Framework to Report Progress.

Step 3: Help set the agenda and high-level priorities in order to inform efforts to improve the overall impact of public policy on people’s lives.

Step 4: Utilising the framework over time to better understand complex policy challenges, including as part of the budgetary process, in order to inform, consider and examine the design, implementation and evaluation of more effective public policies and programmes.

The Overarching Well-being Framework consists of 11 Dimensions:

1. Subjective Well-being
2. Mental and Physical Health
3. Knowledge and Skills
4. Income and Wealth
5. Housing and Local Area
6. Environment, Climate and Biodiversity
7. Safety and Security
8. Work and Job Quality
9. Time Use

10. Community, Social Connections and Cultural Participation

11. Civic Engagement and Cultural Expression

These were then further grouped to show interconnectedness under the headings ‘Person’ (Income and Wealth, Knowledge and Skills, Mental and Physical Health, and Subjective Well-being), ‘Place’ (Housing and Local Area, Safety and Security, and Environment, Climate and Biodiversity), and ‘Society’ (Work and Job Quality, Time Use, Community, Social Connections and Cultural Participation, and Civic Engagement and Cultural Expression) (2021, p. 17).

A ‘Wellbeing Dashboard’ was then developed to provide a snapshot of progress. In developing the Dashboard, the Inter-Departmental Working Group established a list of 35 indicators chosen to be balanced, add value or be of policy relevance, provide for aggregation and dis-aggregation, be readily available and of sufficient quality, and be internationally comparable (p. 35).

In October 2021, the Government of Ireland also launched a public conversation on the Wellbeing Framework for Ireland to “create awareness, test the framework, and get a sense of people’s priorities”¹. This was followed by the development of the Well-being Portal² and the CSO’s Wellbeing Information Hub³.

The Second Report on the Wellbeing Framework in Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2022) refined the overarching vision and goals of the Framework “to emphasise mental health, broader skills across the life cycle (rather than formal education), protection of Ireland’s environment, climate and biodiversity and a focus on open government with which citizens can meaningfully engage.” (p.14).

The Overarching Vision and Goals are now stated as follows:

- Enable people to have purposeful lives that support good physical and mental health, enabling the development of skills across the life cycle and providing a good standard of living;

¹ [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - Public Conversation - Well-being Framework (www.gov.ie)

² <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/1fb9b-a-wellbeing-framework-for-ireland-join-the-conversation/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/wellbeing-framework/>

³ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wbhub/well-beinginformationhub/>

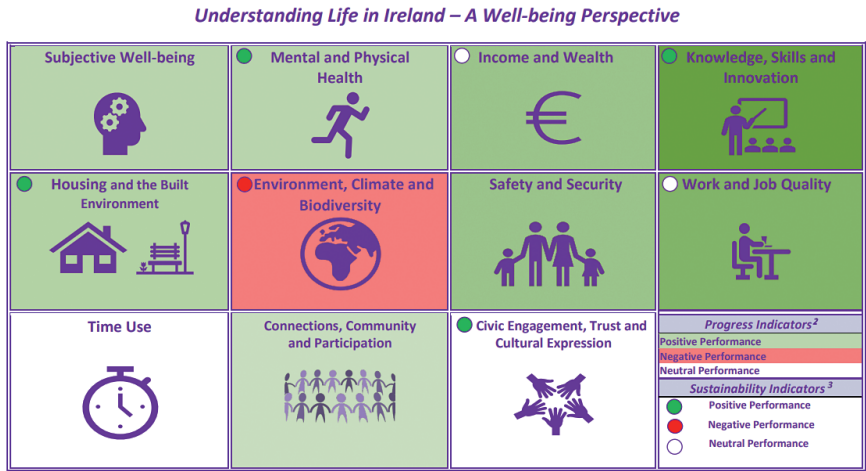
- Ensure a sustainable sense of place, including an appropriate and safe place to live and protection of Ireland’s environment, climate and biodiversity;
- Preserve balance, inclusivity and equality of opportunities across society with open and effective government, empowering families, friends and communities to grow, connect and meaningfully engage.

(Government of Ireland, 2022, p. 14)

Wellbeing Dashboard

It is the Report on the Well-being Dashboard that we will focus on in this paper which is understood to present a “generally positive picture of quality of life in Ireland” (Government of Ireland, 2022a, p. 3), while pointing to areas that need improvement. The Dashboard itself is based on the 11 dimensions referred to above and the 35 indicators selected from the range of CSO datasets using the criteria set out in the First Report.

Figure 1: Well-being Dashboard



² The colour indicates how overall the 35 indicators perform over time (generally 5 years) and compared to the EU average, depending on data availability.

³ A subset of the indicators (14) have been identified as particularly important for sustainability (Economic, Environmental, Social). The circle shows performance of these indicators.

Source: *Understanding Life in Ireland: The Well-being Dashboard 2022*, p.5

Figure 1 contains the snapshot of the Well-being Dashboard contained in the 2022 Report (Government of Ireland, 2022a, p. 5), which gives a clear overview of where the data suggest progress has been made and where improvements are needed. There are two types of indicators, the Progress Indicators, denoted as colours in each box, refers to how the indicators perform over a 5 year period and compared to the EU average, depending on data availability; while the Sustainability Indicators, denoted as coloured circles in the top-left of each of seven boxes, refers to a subset of the 35 indicators (consisting of 14 indicators) which have been identified as particularly important for sustainability. The indicators are then colour-coded: green as positive, red as negative, and white as neutral.

At first glance it appears that Ireland is doing extremely well, with Positive Performance recorded for eight of the 11 Performance Indicators, Neutral Performance for two, and Negative Performance for just one. Of the seven Sustainability Indicators, Positive Performance is recorded for four, Neutral Performance for two and Negative Performance for just one.

Anyone engaged in work on health, poverty, educational disadvantage or housing might find these indicators surprising.

What is included in the Indicators?

The Report on the Well-being Dashboard provides the information behind each of the indicators used to determine progress on each of the dimensions. Taking each one at a time, we begin to get a better understanding of how progress is being recorded in this way.

Subjective Well-being

Three indicators were used to assess progress under this dimension: Population Rating their Overall Life Satisfaction as High; Population who did not Feel Depressed or Downhearted in the Last 4 Weeks; and School Aged Children who report being Happy with their Life at Present.

The data relating to the proportion of the population rating their overall life satisfaction as high relates to 2018. At 44.4 per cent, Ireland's rate was much higher than the EU-average of 25 per cent. From an Irish perspective, between 2013 to 2018, the proportion increased from 30.8 per cent to 44.4 per cent. Therefore, this indicator is coded green for progress. So far, so positive. However, these data are taken from a Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) module that was last published four years ago, before the pandemic and cost of

living crisis, and the comparative data is from 2013, when the impact of austerity following the 2008 crash was keenly felt.

The proportion of the population who did not feel depressed or downhearted in the last 4 weeks has also increased between 2013 and 2018 (with similar caveats regarding timing as the previous dataset). This indicator was, therefore, also coded green. The CSO provide an additional analysis of this dataset on the Wellbeing Hub, with a breakdown by poverty status for each year. This shows that the gap between the proportion of people who were not at risk of poverty who did not feel depressed or downhearted and those who were at risk of poverty and experiencing the same feelings has widened. This gap was 6.6pps in 2013, compared to 15.3pps in 2018. This indicates that the experience of those in poverty worsened in 2018 comparative to those who were not. In a comparison with other EU-28 countries⁴, Ireland comes third for the proportion of the population who did not feel depressed or downhearted in the previous 4 weeks, behind Slovenia and the Czech Republic, and ahead of Malta and Latvia as the top 5 countries (European Commission, 2020). In fact, Ireland is an outlier compared to the EU-15, having a proportion of the population who had not felt depressed or downhearted in the past 4 weeks which was 5.8pps higher than the next highest ranking EU-15 country (61.2 per cent compared to Denmark with 55.4 per cent).

The final indicator in the Subjective Well-being dimension relates to school aged children who report being happy with their life. The number of children aged 10-17 who reported feeling happy with their life at present decreased between 2010 and 2018, particularly among girls. This indicator is coded red. It is also interesting to note that the CSO dataset for this indicator includes data for 2014 and shows a reduction in happiness among boys between 2010 and 2014, before increasing again, while the proportion of girls who reported being happy with their lives reduced each period. Looking at individual ages (11-17) within the dataset, girls in mid-high teens experienced the most significant decreases in happiness (Table 1).

⁴ European datasets that pre-date 2020 will include the UK

Table 1: Girls who report being happy with their lives at present, by age 11-17, 2010 to 2018

Age	2010	2014	2018
11 years	94.0	95.0	93.7
12 years	95.6	96.0	91.9
13 years	93.8	92.2	85.7
14 years	90.1	91.9	78.3
15 years	88.9	90.1	77.8
16 years	91.8	89.4	77.6
17 years	91.6	91.0	80.9

Source: CSO SCA16 – Well-being and Life Satisfaction of Children 10-17

Overall, because two of the three indicators were coded green, this dimension was coded green for progress being made.

Mental and Physical Health

This is also an area that has been coded green for progress on the basis of three indicators, albeit the narrative does refer to “a mixed picture” (p.7). The indicators used here are Healthy Life Years; Population reporting depression; and Unmet need for medical attention.

Healthy life years measures how long, in years, a person is expected to live a healthy life. In 2020, Ireland had the sixth highest healthy life years in the EU, at just over 66 years. In 2019 (when we ranked fifth in the EU), the number of healthy life years was 69.6. A break in time series in the EU-SILC⁵ means that a direct comparison between 2019 and 2020 cannot be made, however it is likely that the impact of Covid-19 will result in a reduction. Therefore, we would suggest that this indicator should be coded white for neutral rather than green for progress.

The next indicator relates to the proportion of people aged 15+ reporting mild, moderate or severe depression was 14 per cent in 2019. This is marked white for neutral as there is no EU comparator dataset. The Irish Health Survey 2019, from which this dataset is taken, breaks these data down by employment status and

⁵ That is, a change in the methodology used in the EU SILC Survey for 2020.

finds that people who are unemployed are more than twice as likely to report feeling mild, moderate or severe depression (21 per cent) than people who are in employment (9 per cent) (CSO, 2019).

And finally, the proportion of people aged 15+ with self-reported unmet need for medical attention. This is referenced in the report as “unmet need for medical examination or care due to financial, geographic or waiting time reasons” taken from the EU-SILC database⁶ which refers to just 2 per cent in 2020. The proportion reported by Eurostat has remained static since 2018 and is the same as the European average in 2021. This indicator is coded yellow as it performed positively over time, but compared negatively against the EU average. However, the Irish Health Survey 2019 indicates that while 2 per cent of the population reported an unmet need for health care due to transport or distance, 14 per cent of the population reported an unmet need due to waiting times (CSO, 2019). The proportion for people who were classified as “very disadvantaged” increases to 18 per cent, almost double that of “very affluent” people (10 per cent).

The number of people currently⁷ awaiting outpatient treatment in Ireland is 625,679 compared to 568,769 in September 2019, and 438,267 in September 2016. An increase of 43 per cent in outpatient waiting lists would suggest that this indicator should be red.

Income and Wealth

The next dimension is Income and Wealth. This dimension contains four indicators: median real household income; median net wealth; households making ends meet with great difficulty; and Government net wealth. The overall dimension is coded green.

Median real household income, again using EU-SILC data, increased by 22 per cent from 2014 to 2019. While not comparable due to a break in the time series, there was also an increase in median real household income between 2020 and 2021, from €43,915 to €46,627. At an EU level, the indicator is median equivalised household income. In 2021, Ireland ranked third in the EU at €28,130, behind Denmark (€32,088) and the Netherlands (€28,431). This indicator is coded green.

⁶ [sdg_03_60]

⁷ As at 29th September 2022, www.ntpf.ie

The median household net wealth increased between 2013 (€102,600) and 2018 (€178,400) and again in 2020 (€193,100) based on the Household Finance and Consumption Survey (CSO, 2020). Not included in the report, but again of relevance to Wellbeing, is disparity of household wealth depending on household characteristic. For example, rented households had a median household net wealth of just €5,300 compared to owner occupied households with a net wealth of €303,900. Two adult households with at least one aged 65+ had the highest median household net wealth at €361,800, while one adult households with children had a median household net wealth of just €4,000.

At an EU level, Ireland is reported to have the fifth-highest median net wealth across the Eurozone countries in 2017. This indicator is coded green.

The proportion of people having difficulty making ends meet has decreased to 7.5 per cent in 2019 (and to 5.6 per cent in 2021) and compared favourably to the EU average in 2020 (6.1 per cent compared to 7.6 per cent). As with other indicators, this varies considerably depending on household type. In 2021, the proportion of the population experiencing difficulties making ends meet was 5.6 per cent, compared to 15.9 per cent of households with one adult and children under 18. This indicator is coded green.

Finally in this dimension, we move on to Government Net Wealth. This indicator is based on the Government's financial position which worsened from -€152,110m in 2016 to -€169,158m in 2021, much of which is being attributed to increased spending on the pandemic response. *Social Justice Ireland* have argued that pandemic-related debt should be warehoused on a long-term basis, which would keep servicing costs low (Social Justice Ireland, 2020). This indicator is coded red.

Knowledge, Skills and Innovation

This dimension has three indicators: reading and maths performance in 15-year-olds; lifelong learning rate; and Research and Development personnel.

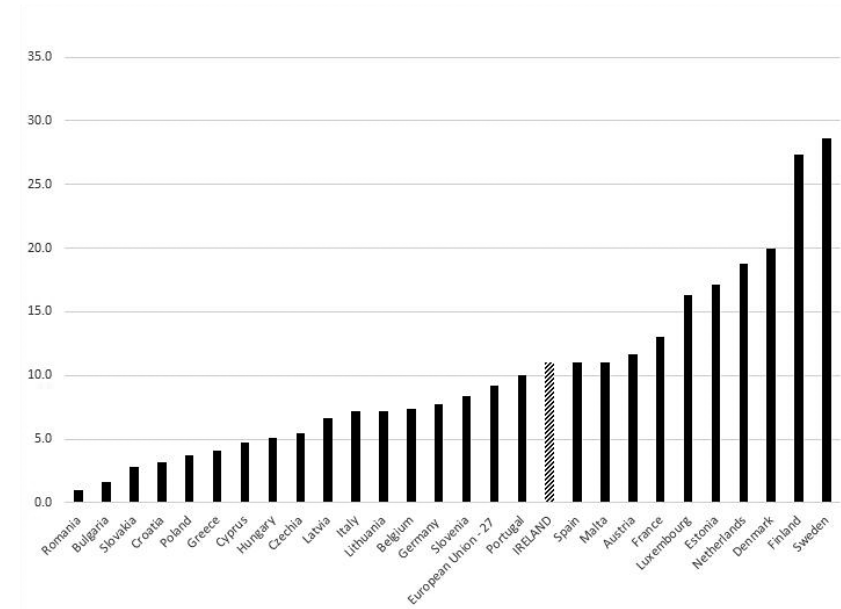
Data on the reading and maths performance in 15-year-olds is taken from the OECD PISA⁸ scores. While Ireland consistently ranks among the highest in these tests, this masks lower performance by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. An analysis of trends in PISA achievement indicates that

⁸ The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

in reading, mathematics and science, students in DEIS schools have consistently achieved significantly lower average achievement than students in non-DEIS schools across all PISA cycles examined (Gilleece, 2020). This indicator is coded green.

Participation in lifelong learning has improved between 2016 and 2021 as indicated in the report, however the participation rate of 11.5 per cent in 2021 is 1.5pps below the 2019 level of 13 per cent, and is 3.5pps below the national target of 15 per cent by 2025. At an EU level, Ireland ranked joint 9th with Spain and Malta in 2020 (Chart 1). This indicator is coded green.

Chart 1: EU-28 Lifelong Learning Participation Rates, 2020



Source: Eurostat (2022), *Social Justice Ireland Socio-economic Review: a 2022 guide to a fairer Irish society*.

Finally under this dimension, the report refers to the number of people working in research in business, education and public service, which has increased by 5.8 per cent between 2015 and 2019. At an EU level, Ireland has a higher proportion

of the population engaged in research as a proportion of total employment than the EU average. This indicator is coded green.

Housing and the Built Environment

This dimension contains four indicators: new dwelling completions; A or B domestic dwelling energy rating; at risk of poverty rate after rent and mortgage interest; and average distance to everyday services. Overall, this dimension is coded green for progress.

The first indicator, new dwelling completions, has shown improvement in the past five years, increasing from 14,319 in 2017 to 20,570 in 2021, however it has been decreasing since 2019 (when it was 21,147). However, the report also refers to the target of 33,000 set out in Housing for All being missed. The indicator is coded green.

The number of BER rated buildings with a rating of A or B has increased from 12,650 in 2016 to 31,571 in 2021. This indicator is coded green.

Housing affordability is considered on the basis of the at risk of poverty rate after rent or mortgage interest which has remained relatively static between 2021 (19 per cent) and 2020 (19.3 per cent) and below the EU average of 30 per cent. However there seems to be a discrepancy in how the data is presented here. The rates for Ireland are taken from the CSO SILC release (CSO, 2022) which refers to rent and mortgage interest only, whereas the EU average is extracted from on a Eurostat database⁹ which refers to housing costs, and according to which Ireland's at risk of poverty rate in 2021 was 25.3 per cent. As shown in our *Housing Costs and Poverty 2022* briefing (Social Justice Ireland, 2022a), there is a large difference between the poverty rates of renters and owner occupiers after rent and mortgage interest has been paid. Among renters, those in receipt of a housing subsidy have the highest poverty rate at 59.1 per cent. This indicator is coded green.

The dataset on average distance to everyday services is taken from Census 2016, only relates to Ireland, and has no comparative historical data. This indicator is coded white.

⁹ [Eurostat - Data Explorer \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

Environment, Climate and Biodiversity

This dimension also contains four indicators: pollution, grime or other environmental problems; water bodies assessed as ‘High’ or ‘Good’; Greenhouse gas emissions; and Proportion of waste to landfill. This dimension is referred to within the report as the “only overall negative picture across the dimensions of the dashboard” (p.10). The overall code for this dimension is red.

The proportion of people who experience pollution, grime or other environmental problems in their area, according to EU-SILC, increased between 2014 (4.7 per cent) and 2019 (6 per cent) and, with a break in the time series of the data, rose again to 8.2 per cent in 2020. This compares to an EU average of 13.7 per cent. This indicator is coded yellow.

The proportion of rivers assessed as having high or good ambient water quality has decreased between the periods 2010-2012 (60 per cent), 2010-2015 (57 per cent), and 2013-2018 (53 per cent). This indicator is coded red.

Greenhouse gas emissions are also increasing, by 1.7 million tonnes between 2014 and 2019 according to the report and are high by EU standards (second only to Luxembourg). While there was a short-term reduction in emissions because of restrictions on travel due to the pandemic, Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions increased by 4.7 per cent in 2021 compared to 2020 and are now 1.1 per cent above 2019 pre-Covid 19 restriction levels¹⁰. This indicator is coded red.

And finally, under this dimension, the proportion of waste to landfill has shown significant improvement between 2009 (58.4 per cent) and 2019 (15.3 per cent). While estimates show an increase in 2020 to 22.5 per cent, this is in line with the EU average and this indicator is coded green.

Safety and Security

The next dimension relates to safety and security based on a set of three indicators: murder rate per 100,000 of the population; persons killed or injured on the roads; and population who worry they could be a victim of a crime. The overall code for this dimension is green.

The report points to a reduction in the rate of murder per 100,000 of the population from 0.7 in 2006 to 0.46 in 2021; a reduction in the number of people killed on the roads between 2014 (192) and 2019 (140) (while the number

¹⁰ [News Releases 2022 | Environmental Protection Agency \(epa.ie\)](#)

injured has remained relatively static); and the proportion of people who worry that they could be the victim of a crime (15 to 23 per cent, depending on the crime) taken from the CSO's Crime and Victimisation Report 2019 (CSO, 2019). The first two indicators are coded green while the last is coded white as there is no comparative data available.

This is an interesting selection given that the most prevalent type of crime ("offence group") reported in the latest statistics was Theft & Related Offences, with 57,229 offences in the year to Q2 2022 and an increase of 22.6 per cent on the previous year (CSO, 2022)¹¹. Of the 14 offence groups detailed in the CSO release, just three have decreased between Q2 2021 and Q2 2022: Homicide & Related Offences (-37.5 per cent); Controlled Drug Offences (-26.8 per cent); and Weapons and Explosives Offences (-11.2 per cent). All other offence groups increased in the period, with the highest proportionate increase reported in Fraud, Deception and Related Offences (43.1 per cent) (Table 2).

¹¹ These statistics are published "under reservation" by the CSO due to data quality issues with the PULSE system. For more information, see <https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/crime/statisticsunderreservationfaqs/>

Table 2: Recorded crime incidents¹ classified by offence group, annualised² total to Q2 2021 and 2022

ICCSq Offence Group	Annualised total to Q2			
	2021	2022	Change	% Change
01 Homicide & Related offences	64	40	-24	-37.5
02 Sexual offences	3,312	3,499	187	5.6
03 Attempts/Threats to Murder, Assaults, Harassments & Related offences	18,872	22,765	3,893	20.6
04 Dangerous or Negligent Acts	8,460	8,790	330	3.9
05 Kidnapping & Related offences	124	169	45	36.3
06 Robbery, Extortion & Hijacking offences	1,694	1,917	223	13.2
07 Burglary & Related offences	9,008	9,828	820	9.1
08 Theft & Related offences	46,670	57,229	10,559	22.6
09 Fraud, Deception & Related offences	11,325	16,202	4,877	43.1
10 Controlled Drug offences	22,851	16,718	-6,133	-26.8
11 Weapons & Explosives offences	2,811	2,497	-314	-11.2
12 Damage to Property & to the Environment	19,231	20,714	1,483	7.7
13 Public Order & Other Social Code offences	27,879	30,632	2,753	9.9
15 Offences against Government, Justice Procedures & Organisation of Crime	10,919	12,498	1,579	14.5

¹These statistics are categorised as Under Reservation. This categorisation indicates that the quality of these statistics do not meet the standards required of official statistics published by CSO.

²The annualised figure for a given quarter is the total number of crimes recorded in the 12 months prior to end of that quarter.

Source: Central Statistics Office (2022) Recorded Crime Q2 2022, www.cso.ie

Work and Job Quality

This dimension consists of three indicators: labour underutilisation rate; employment rate; and mean weekly earnings. While the explanation of the dimension refers to “The productive activities (both paid and unpaid) that shape

how an individual progresses through their life...”, the indicators refer only to labour market participation. The overall coding for this dimension is green.

Labour underutilisation refers to the “number of persons classified as unemployed, plus those classified as part-time under employed, plus those outside the labour force who are available for work but not seeking work as a percentage share of the total labour force” (p.12). This indicator is coded yellow as the rate in Q4 2021 (12.4 per cent) was approximately the same as Q4 2016 (12.2 per cent) and the EU average.

The employment rate has rebounded from the pandemic and now stands at 72.8 per cent as at Q1 2022, increasing from 66.9 per cent in Q1 2017. This is 3.6pps above the EU average (69.2 per cent). While this is very welcome, labour force participation rates are still lower than ideal, particularly in relation to female labour market participation which is well below the levels it should be reaching. The gender gap, of ten percentage points in 2021, illustrates this outcome clearly (Table 3). This indicator is coded green.

Table 3: Labour Force Participation Rates by Gender, 2011-2021

	2011	2019	2021	Change 11-21
Both sexes	61.8	62.6	65.1	+3.3
Males	69.2	68.9	70.3	+1.1
Females	54.7	56.5	60.1	+5.4
Gender Gap*	14.5	12.4	10.2	

Source: CSO, LFS on-line database.

Note: * the gender gap is the difference in percentage points between male and female participation levels.

And finally in this dimension, mean weekly earnings. These have increased from €717.52 in Q4 2016 to €863.70 in Q4 2021. However, average figures conceal inequality. For example, in Q2 2022, average weekly earnings were €871.62, with a range from €404.80 in the Accommodation and Food sector (19.5 per cent below the Living Wage of €503.10 for a 39-hour week) to €1,442.80 in the Information and Communication sector¹². This indicator is coded green.

¹² CSO Px Stat EH003

It is disappointing to note that in the context of a wellbeing dimension on work and job quality, that there is no indicator to measure other types of work (that is, not derived from paid employment) or the quality of employment.

Time Use

This is the first of two dimensions to be coded white overall as having ‘neutral’ progress. The indicators here consist of long working hours in main job; providing at least 20 hours of care per week; and population satisfied with leisure time.

According to the report, the proportion of people who work 49 hours per week or more increased from 8.6 per cent in Q4 2016 to 11.1 in Q4 2017, before decreasing to 9.5 per cent in Q4 2021. Eurostat also uses the threshold of 49 hours per week or more in its dataset on the proportion of people working “very long hours in main job”. According to that dataset, 8.6 per cent of Irish people worked very long hours in their main job in 2021, compared to an EU-27 average of 7.4 per cent. This indicator is coded red.

The indicator for carers providing at least 20 hours of care per week is coded white due to lack of comparative data. According to the CSO’s Irish Health Survey 2019 – Carers and Social Supports (CSO, 2019), 31 per cent of people aged 15+ provided at least 20 hours of care. There is both a gender and age-related dimension, with a higher proportion of women (37 per cent) than men (23 per cent) providing this level of care, and 51 per cent of people aged 75+: the highest proportion across all age groups. This indicator is coded white.

The final indicator under this dimension relates to the population satisfied with leisure time. This is coded green due to the slight increase between 2013 and 2018 (from 7 per cent to 7.5 out of 10), and the favourable comparison at a European level, where Ireland ranks third highest. While the data accompanying this indicator on the CSO Wellbeing Dashboard also indicates an improvement in the proportion of the population with a high score (9-10) regarding satisfaction with leisure time use, from 29 per cent of people in 2013 to 34.7 per cent in 2018, it also highlights some causes for concern. The gender gap has increased from 1.1pps in 2013 to 3.5pps in 2018, and households with children (both one and two adult households) continue to have the lowest proportion.

Connections, Community and Participation

This dimension contains just two indicators: Population who feel lonely; and Population with at least two people they can rely on. Overall, the dimension

is coded green notwithstanding the fact that the report refers to difficulties in assessing high-level progress as both are only available for one reference period (p.13).

The proportion of the population who reported feeling lonely at least some of the time was 16.6 per cent in 2018. Due to a lack of comparative data, this indicator is coded white.

The second indicator in this dimension relates to the proportion of the population with at least two people they can rely on. In 2019, the only year for which this data was gathered to date, the rate was 77 per cent. This indicator is coded green on the basis of an indicator in the OECD Better Life Index which measures the proportion of people who believe they can rely on their friends in case of need where Ireland (96 per cent) ranks joint third with Finland and Norway behind Iceland and the Czech Republic.

The text underpinning this dimension refers to connection to the community through volunteering or other community activities yet contains no indicators to measure this.

Civic Engagement, Trust, and Cultural Expression

The eleventh dimension relates to civic engagement, trust, and cultural expression. Specifically, the “rights and opportunities an individual has to impact the political functioning of their society, the existence of institutional arrangements that foster cooperation and freedom of expression of identity and non-discrimination, and trust in those institutions and across broader society” (p14).

The overall coding for this dimension is white based on the “mixed picture” presented by the three indicators: Persons who experienced discrimination in the last two years; satisfaction with how democracy works in Ireland; and perceived social inclusion.

The proportion of the population who experienced discrimination in the previous two years increased by 50 per cent between Q1 2014 (12 per cent) and Q1 2019 (18 per cent). The proportion of people of “other stated religions” who experienced discrimination in Q1 2019 (29 per cent) was more than twice that of Roman Catholics (14 per cent) and 11pps higher than the general population (18 per cent). Unemployed people were most likely to experience discrimination (30 per cent) and almost twice as likely as people in employment (17 per cent).

And the proportion of non-Irish nationals experiencing discrimination was 11pps higher than Irish nationals and 9pps higher than the general population. This indicator is coded red.

The proportion of people who stated that they were satisfied with how democracy works in Ireland was 76 per cent in Spring 2021, which was fifth highest in Europe. However, there is a significant difference between this and the proportion of the population who responded positively to the questions “How much trust do you have in the national Government / national Parliament?” asked on behalf of the European Commission as part of the Standard Eurobarometer in Summer 2022. Just 46 per cent responded that they “tended to trust” the national Government, compared to 49 per cent who tended not to; while 44 per cent tended to trust the national Parliament, compared to 49 per cent who did not (European Commission, 2022). European comparison is also available within this dataset. Ireland (at 46 per cent) ranks comparatively highly (8th) and is 12pps ahead of the EU-27 average in terms of trusting national Government and ranks 9th in terms of trusting the national Parliament, 10pps above the EU-27 average. This indicator is coded green.

Finally, we turn to perceived social inclusion, where Ireland scores 7.5 out of 10. Students have the highest social inclusion score (8), while people who are unable to work due to permanent sickness / disability (6.3) and the unemployed (6.4) had the lowest. This data is extracted from the SILC Wellbeing Module which contains data for 2018 only. Therefore, this indicator is coded white.

What Counts?

The number and selection of indicators was an attempt not to complicate the Dashboard and to give a ‘snapshot’ of Well-being in Ireland generally. The Central Statistics Office has a vast collection of datasets that could apply to the dimensions, many, we would suggest, would provide proximation of real Well-being, that is, how policies are being experienced.

To gauge public opinion on what matters, and what should therefore be counted as an indicator of Well-being, *Social Justice Ireland* produced a survey asking people to rank a set of six indicators under each of the Well-being Framework dimensions from one to six, with one being the least important and six being the most important. The six indicators included the indicators used in the Dashboard and datasets readily available from the CSO and other reputable sources.

This survey was circulated over the Summer months through our social media channels, our Weekly Digest, and our Members Bulletin. Some 236 responses were received. Using these responses, we have selected a series of alternative indicators under each of the 11 dimensions. The Second Report on the Wellbeing Framework, referred to earlier in this paper, also identified equality as the “central pillar of the Wellbeing Framework”(p.16) and our analysis of the data will be through an equality lens.

Subjective Wellbeing

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Overall life satisfaction; Social Inclusion; and Access to Public Services.

The data relating to the proportion of the population rating their overall life satisfaction as high was referenced earlier. Overall, Ireland, with a rate of 44.4 per cent in 2018, increasing from 30.8 per cent in 2013 and comparing well to the EU average, appears to be doing well. The CSO dataset is further broken down by age group and self-perceived health status. Using health status as a proxy for marginalisation, we look at the gap between the proportion of those who reported their health as ‘Very Good’ and those who reported it as ‘Fair/Bad/Very Bad’ with an overall life satisfaction rating of ‘High’. Between 2013 and 2018, the gap increased from 19.7pps to 34.7pps¹³. Those with poorer health are falling further behind. At a European level, the data may be disaggregated by educational attainment level. Using lowest and highest educational attainment as a proxy (there is a strong correlation between educational attainment and reduced poverty risk), Ireland compares well, having the highest rate of life satisfaction among the population with the lowest educational attainment, and the sixth lowest gap between lowest and highest educational attainment. This indicator is therefore coded white.

On social inclusion, we noted earlier the data which scores 7.5 out of 10 and its limitations in this context. At a European level, Ireland compares well for the proportion of the population with some or severe self-perceived long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems at 16.4 per cent in 2019, the fourth lowest across the EU 28¹⁴, down from 17.6 per cent in 2014¹⁵. This indicator is coded green.

¹³ <https://data.cso.ie/table/WBA38>

¹⁴ Data unavailable for the UK for 2019

¹⁵ [HLTH_SILC_12] - Eurostat

Finally under this dimension we turn to access to public services. This data is based on the CSO Trust Survey which includes a rating of satisfaction with public services (CSO, 2022). While this indicator must be coded white as it relates to one year only, the proportion of the population who are satisfied with the Administrative Services and Education System are quite high (at 63 and 70 per cent respectively), while just 32 per cent were satisfied with the Health System.

Overall, this dimension is coded white.

Mental and Physical Health

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Inability to afford adequate healthcare; Outpatient and In-patient Waiting Lists; and Self-reported unmet need for medical attention.

As stated above, the Irish Health Survey 2019 indicates that while two per cent of the population reported an unmet need for health care due to transport or distance, 14 per cent of the population reported an unmet need due to waiting times (CSO, 2019). The proportion for people who were classified as “very disadvantaged” increases to 18 per cent, almost double that of “very affluent” people (10 per cent). On the basis of equality, this indicator is coded red.

The number of people currently¹⁶ awaiting outpatient treatment in Ireland is 625,679 compared to 568,769 in September 2019, and 438,267 in September 2016. An increase of 43 per cent in outpatient waiting lists over six years. A similar pattern emerges in respect of inpatient waiting lists, with 26,509 people awaiting treatment in September 2022 compared to 22,197 in September 2019 and 17,984 in September 2016, a 47 per cent increase between 2016 and 2022. This indicator is coded red.

The final indicator in this dimension is as per the Wellbeing Dashboard. As stated above, the proportion of people aged 15+ with self-reported unmet need for medical attention is just 2 per cent in 2020 overall, and has remained static since 2018, and is in line with the EU average. This indicator is coded yellow.

Overall, this dimension is coded red.

¹⁶ As at 29th September 2022, www.ntpf.ie

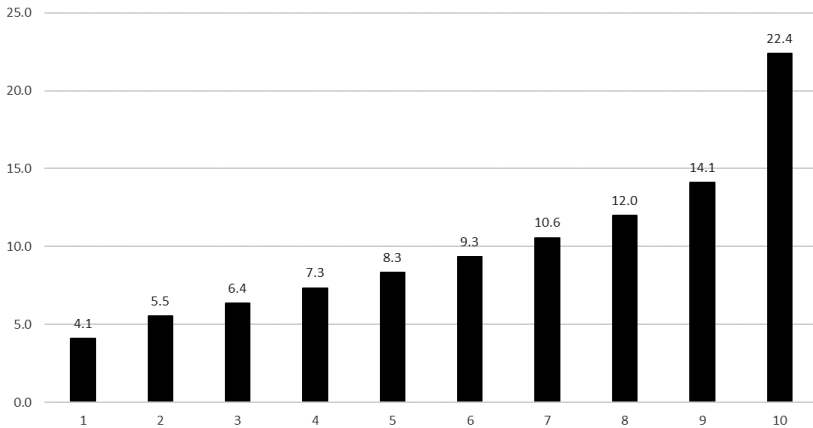
Income and Wealth

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Poverty Risk of the population; Income Equality / Inequality; Median real household disposable income.

The period from 2016 onwards has been one of notable decline in the level of poverty. This has seen the proportion of the population in poverty fall from 16.2 per cent in 2016 to a 11.6 per cent in the latest SILC survey. *Social Justice Ireland* warmly welcomes this progress. It reflects a dividend from Budget policy over the period from 2016 which, for the most part, distributed resources more generously to welfare dependent households. Our consistent message in advance of these Budgets was to reverse the regressivity of previous policy choices and to prioritise those households with the least resources and the most needs. We therefore regret choices made in more recent Budgets where increases to core welfare rates did not keep pace with inflation. From a European perspective, Eurostat produces comparable ‘at risk of poverty’ figures (proportions of the population living below the poverty line) for each EU member state. The data is calculated using the 60 per cent of median income poverty line in each country. Comparable EU-wide definitions of income and equivalence scale are used - note these slightly differ from national definitions. The latest data available for all member states is for the year 2021 when the average risk of poverty in the EU-27 was 16.8 per cent. Ireland has a below average risk of poverty when compared to all other EU member states. Eurostat’s 2008 figures marked the first time Ireland’s poverty levels fell below average EU levels. This indicator is coded green.

The most recent data on Ireland’s income distribution, from the 2021 SILC survey (published in May 2022), is summarised in Chart 2. It examines the income distribution by decile starting with the 10 per cent of individuals with the lowest income (the bottom decile) up to the 10 per cent with the highest income (the top decile). The data presented is equivalised, meaning that it has been adjusted to reflect the number of adults and children in a household and to make it possible to compare individuals located in households of different sizes and compositions. It measures disposable income which captures the amount of money available to spend after receipt of any employment/pension income, payment of all income taxes, and receipt of any welfare entitlements. In 2021, the top 10 per cent of the population received more than one fifth of the total income while the bottom decile received just 4.1 per cent. Collectively, the poorest 50 per cent of households received a lower share (31.7 per cent) to the top 20 per cent (36.5 per cent). Overall, the share of the top 10 per cent is almost 6 times the share of the bottom 10 per cent.

Chart 2: Ireland's Income Distribution by decile (or 10% group) in 2021



Source: CSO SILC (2022)

Income distribution data for the last few decades suggested that the overall structure of that distribution has been largely unchanged. One overall inequality measure, the Gini coefficient, ranges from 0 (no inequality) to 100 (maximum inequality) and has stood at approximately 30 for Ireland for some time. In 2021 it stood at 27. This indicator is coded red.

As stated above, median real household income increased by 22 per cent from 2014 to 2019. While not comparable due to a break in the time series, there was also an increase in median real household income between 2020 and 2021, from €43,915 to €46,627. Not included in the report, but of relevance to Well-being, is how income is distributed by household type. A one adult household had a median real household income of €23,233 in 2021 (down from €23,628 in 2020), while a household with three or more adults had a median real household income of €77,732 (up from €75,285)¹⁷. At an EU level, the indicator is median equivalised household income. In 2021, Ireland ranked third in the EU at €28,130, behind Denmark (€32,088) and the Netherlands (€28,431). This indicator is coded white.

¹⁷ CSO PxStat SIA64

Overall, this dimension is coded white.

Knowledge, Skills and Innovation

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Early School Leavers; Lifelong learning rate; and Digital Literacy.

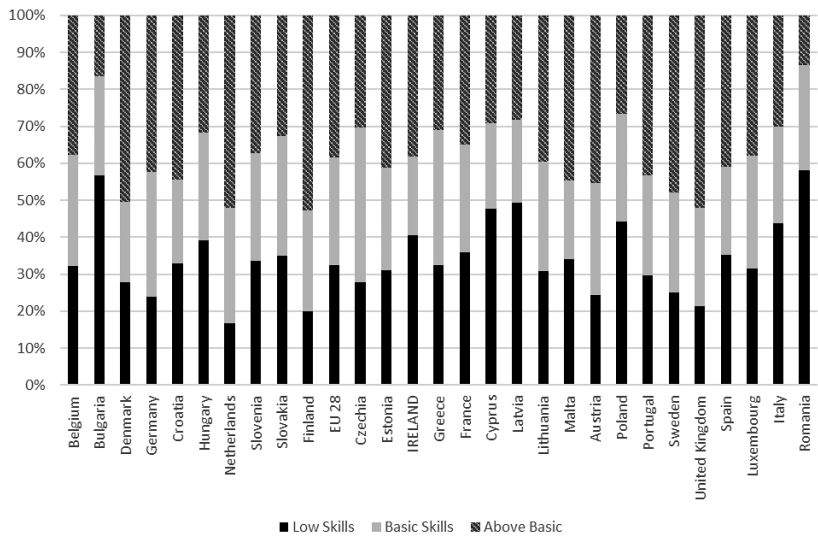
Ireland has the fourth lowest early school leaving rate in the European Union at five per cent and Ireland ranked second in the European Union for the percentage of people aged 20-24 with at least upper-second level education at 94 per cent (CSO, 2019). This downward trend of early school leaving is a welcome development and Ireland has surpassed the national target set under the Europe 2020 Strategy. This indicator is coded green.

On lifelong learning, as stated earlier, this has improved between 2016 and 2021 as indicated in the report, however the participation rate of 11.5 per cent in 2021 is 1.5pps below the 2019 level of 13 per cent and is 3.5pps below the national target of 15 per cent by 2025. At an EU level, Ireland ranked joint 9th with Spain and Malta (not 10th as stated in the report) (Chart 1 above). This indicator is coded green.

Ireland's performance on digital skills is concerning (Chart 3). Over 55 per cent of the population have low or basic digital skills. Over one third of the adult population (36 per cent) has low digital skills, well above the EU average (28 per cent). Only one fifth of the population have basic digital skills. This general gap in digital skills is also confirmed by the OECD PIAAC¹⁸ survey of adult learning. Clearly one implication is that expenditure on training will have to increase, especially if we are to meet our digital literacy target. Across the OECD average spending on training for the unemployed and workers at risk of involuntary unemployment is only 0.13 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). This indicator is coded white.

¹⁸ The OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is a programme of assessment and analysis of adult skills.

Chart 3: EU-28 Digital Skills Levels, 2019



Source: Eurostat (2021), Social Justice Ireland Socio-economic Review: a 2022 guide to a fairer Irish society.

Overall, this dimension is coded green.

Housing and the Built Environment

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Housing Affordability; At risk of poverty rate after rent and mortgage interest; Mortgage Debt Burden.

Housing affordability has worsened in recent years, becoming less affordable between 2013 and 2019, before recovering slightly in 2020 (Parliamentary Budget Office, 2022). However, it must be noted that an affordability calculation based on earnings in 2020 will be distorted as average earnings increased in response to lay-offs in lower-paid jobs during the pandemic. Between 2012 and 2020 house prices increased by 77 per cent, compared to wage growth of 23 per cent in the same period (Parliamentary Budget Office, 2022) and asking prices have increased by 14.4 per cent in the year to December 2021, just 10.3 per cent below the 2007 peak (Central Statistics Office, 2022). This indicator is coded red.

After accounting for mortgage interest and rent payments on the home, the overall poverty rate in 2021 increased to 19 per cent or 952,185, including 286,242 children. This is almost one million people, one in five of the total population, living below the poverty line, 370,851 of which are in poverty because of housing costs (Social Justice Ireland, 2022a). This indicator is coded white due to lack of comparative data to date.

Mortgage debt burden for those who are most at risk of homelessness refers to borrowers in mortgage arrears for over 10 years. The latest data indicates that 7,870 home mortgages were in arrears for over 10 years in June 2022 (5,860 primary dwelling house (PDH) mortgages and 2,010 buy to let (BTL)) (Central Bank of Ireland, 2022), an increase from 6,962 (4,701 PDH and 2,261 BTL) in June 2020. At a European level, Ireland had the second highest rate of arrears on mortgage or rent payments in the EU in 2021 (7 per cent), second only to Greece (8.5 per cent)¹⁹. This indicator is coded red.

Overall, this dimension is coded red.

Environment, Climate and Biodiversity

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Access to reliable, affordable and sustainable energy sources; Biodiversity loss; Proportion of the population able to keep their homes adequately warm; and Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

Ireland's fuel mix for electricity generation is still dominated by carbon-based fossil fuels, but the share of renewables is improving, reaching 42 per cent in 2020 (SEAI, 2021). However, Ireland is highly dependent on imported fossil fuels for energy, our import dependency was 72 per cent in 2020. This runs contrary to our targets of reducing emissions, increasing renewable energy, and eliminating our dependence on fossil fuels. In 2020 renewables made up 13 per cent of final energy consumption, well short of the 2020 target of 16 per cent. At a European level, Ireland ranks 7th from last for the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption. This indicator is coded red.

In terms of biodiversity, Ireland has had the same number of Natura2000 sites (consisting of both Special Protected Areas (SPAs) under the EU Birds Directive and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the EU Habitats Directive) between 2014 and 2019 (923,000 hectares). The common and farmland bird

¹⁹ Eurostat: [ilc_mdes06]

indices both improved between 2014 and 2019. While at a European level, Ireland had the fourth lowest proportion of total land area designated as terrestrial SPAs under the EU Birds Directive (at 6.2 per cent) and the eighth lowest rate of total land area designated as terrestrial Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the EU Habitats Directive at 10.2 per cent (CSO, 2021). This indicator is coded red.

The proportion of the population unable to keep their home adequately warm decreased from 8.9 per cent in 2014 to 4.9 per cent in 2019. While not comparable due to a break in the time series, the proportion decreased slightly between 2020 and 2021 (from 3.3 to 3.2 per cent). In European terms, Ireland ranks 17th in terms of proportion of the population unable to keep the home adequately warm at less than half the EU-27 average. This indicator is coded green.

Finally under this dimension, greenhouse gas emissions. As discussed earlier, greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, and this indicator is coded red.

Overall, this dimension is coded red.

Safety and Security

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Incidences of gender-based violence; Incidences of racism and/or discrimination; and Persons killed or injured on roads.

There is no standard recording of “gender-based violence”, however the number of recorded crime instances related to sexual offences increased by 38.5 per cent between 2016 and 2021 (from 2,521 to 3,491), while Fraud and Theft Offences, including financial control, increased by 247 per cent (from 4,972 to 17,122)²⁰. In a European context, data available from the European Institute of Gender Equality indicates that Ireland ranked 9th for the number of sexual assaults on women in 2021 and 6th for rape. This indicator is coded red.

As stated above, there has been a 50 per cent increase in the proportion of the population who experienced discrimination between Q1 2014 and Q1 2019. With non-Irish nationals, people from religions other than Roman Catholic, and the unemployed experiencing higher levels than the general population. This indicator is coded red.

²⁰ These statistics are published “under reservation” by the CSO due to data quality issues with the PULSE system. For more information, see <https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/crime/statisticsunderreservationfaqs/>

As also stated above, the reduction in the number of people killed on the roads between 2014 (192) and 2019 (140) has decreased, while the number injured has remained relatively static. This indicator is coded green.

Overall, this dimension is coded red.

Work and Job Quality

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: In-work poverty; Mean weekly earnings; and No. of long-term unemployed.

The proportion of people in employment and at risk of poverty decreased from 5.69 per cent in 2014 to 4.4 per cent in 2019. While not comparable due to a change in time series, in 2020 this rate was 6.2 per cent, decreasing to 4.4 per cent in 2021, based on EU-SILC data. This indicator is coded green.

As noted above, mean weekly earnings have increased from €717.52 in Q4 2016 to €863.70 in Q4 2021. However, given the disparities in incomes highlighted, this indicator should be coded red in line with the emphasis on equality contained in the revised Wellbeing Framework.

The rate of long-term unemployment (over 12 months) decreased from 3.2 per cent in Q2 2017 to 1.1 per cent in Q2 2022 (CSO, 2022). This indicator is coded green.

Overall, this dimension is coded green.

Time Use

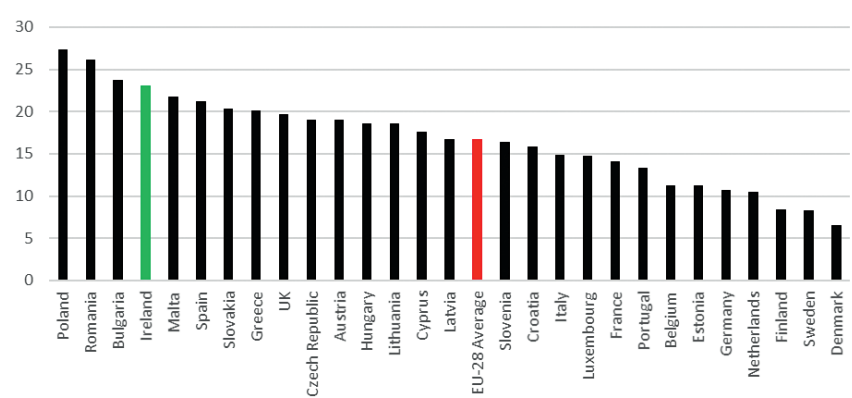
The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Long working hours in main job; Commuting Times; and Providing at least 20 hours of care per week.

As noted above, the proportion of people in Ireland working long hours in their main job increased between Q4 2016 and Q4 2021, and Ireland has a higher rate than the EU average. As with other aspects of the labour market included in the Wellbeing Framework, the average proportion conceals inequalities, with proportions ranging from 4.2 per cent of people employed in the Human health and social work activities sector to 46.6 per cent of people employed in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. This indicator is coded red.

Average commuting times increased from 27.5 minutes in 2011 to 28.2 minutes in 2016 (CSO, 2017). At a European level, Ireland is joint third (with Belgium) in terms of length of average commuting time, at 28 minutes. While these datasets will likely have been impacted by changes to work arrangements resulting from the pandemic, based on these results this indicator is coded red.

While the data on caring relates to just one year, the gendered and age-related dimension must be considered. The Government’s Wellbeing Dashboard report contains no data on the European level, however an article in the International Journal of Health Policy and Management, published in 2022 and based on data from 2016, contains some detail on the average weekly caregiving hours per carer and indicates that Irish carers were fourth in the EU-28 in terms of average weekly caregiving hours per carer (Chart 4) and had the highest Annual non-Professional Caregiving Value per Carer at €15,002 (followed by Luxembourg at €14,702 and the United Kingdom at €13,470) (Peña-Longobardo & Oliva-Moreno, 2022, pp. 2280-2281). We therefore code this indicator red.

Chart 4: Average Weekly Caregiving Hours per Carer, EU-28, 2016



Source: Extracted from Peña-Longobardo & Oliva-Moreno, 2022, pp.2280-2281

Connections, Community and Participation

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Population who feel lonely; Access to green / recreational space; and Population who have at least two people they can rely on.

As noted above, the proportion of the population who reported feeling lonely at least some of the time was 16.6 per cent in 2018. Studies on loneliness in Ireland have tended to concentrate on older people aged 50+ using data from the TILDA study²¹, and indeed the CSO Report on this aspect in the SILC 2018 Module suggests that loneliness increases with age (with the exception of 16-24 year olds who have the second highest rate of loneliness). However learnings in respect of differences in social isolation among people living in urban or rural areas; loneliness by highest education achieved (Ward, May, Normand, Kenny, & Nolan, 2021) the impact of loneliness on health outcomes and mortality risk (Donovan & Blazer, 2020) (Burns, Leavey, & Ward, 2022), would be worthy of study at a population level. This indicator is coded white.

The CSO's Household Environmental Behaviours – Visits to Nature Areas Report Q3 2021 found Urban green spaces were the most popular type of green and natural space visited by Irish households in Quarter 3 of 2021, with 32 per cent of households visiting most days and a further 34 per cent visiting most weeks. The figure was higher for urban households with 74 per cent visiting most weeks. Fields, farms and countryside, and woodland or forest areas were each visited by 31 per cent of households most weeks (CSO, 2021). At a European level, data from the European Environment Agency on urban green spaces places Dublin in the bottom half of EEA countries in terms of total green infrastructure; second for urban green space; and the bottom third for urban tree cover (EEA, 2022). While the data presents a positive picture, due to lack of comparable data, this indicator is coded white.

As noted above, the rate of people with at least two people they can rely on was 77 per cent in 2019. This indicator is also coded green here based on an indicator in the OECD Better Life Index which measures the proportion of people who believe they can rely on their friends in case of need where Ireland (96 per cent) ranks joint third with Finland and Norway behind Iceland and the Czech Republic.

Overall, this dimension is coded white.

²¹ www.tilda.tcd.ie

Civic Engagement, Trust, and Cultural Expression

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Trust in National Government; Satisfaction with how democracy works in Ireland; and Voter turn-out in National Elections.

As referenced above, the proportions of the population who responded positively to the questions “How much trust do you have in the national Government / national Parliament?” asked on behalf of the European Commission as part of the Standard Eurobarometer in Summer 2022 were 46 and 49 per cent respectively, compared to 49 per cent who tended not (European Commission, 2022). European comparison is also available within this dataset. Ireland (at 46 per cent) ranks comparatively highly (8th) and is 12pps ahead of the EU-27 average in terms of trusting national Government, and ranks 9th in terms of trusting the national Parliament, 10pps above the EU-27 average. This indicator is coded green.

As also stated above, the proportion of people who stated that they were satisfied with how democracy works in Ireland was 76 per cent in Spring 2021, which was fifth highest in Europe. This indicator is coded white due to lack of comparable data.

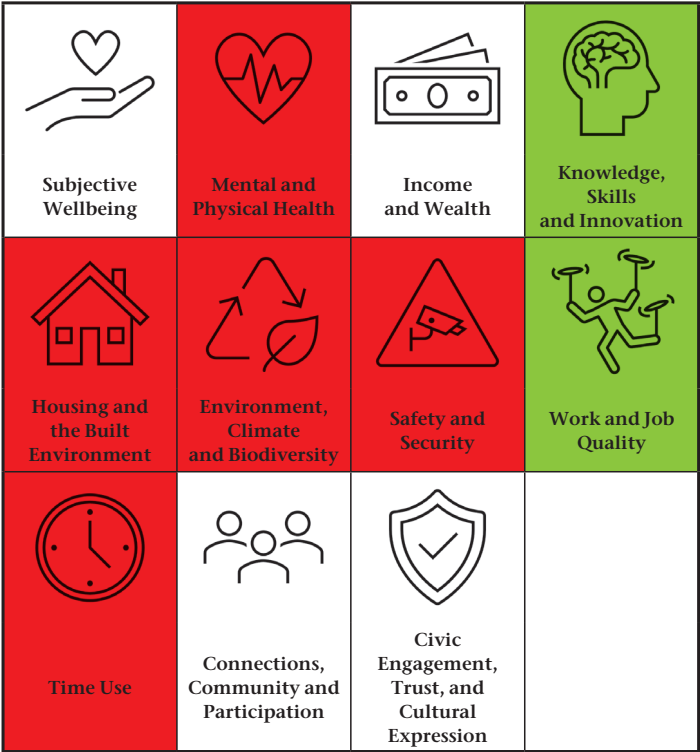
Voter turnout for General Election 2020 was 62.9 per cent. This is a decrease of 2.2pps on General Election 2016 (Oireachtas Library and Research Service, 2020). This indicator is coded red.

Overall, this dimension is coded white.

Alternative Dashboard

Once all of the data is coded, the alternative Well-being Dashboard indicates that there is considerable room for improvement if the Vision and Goals are to be achieved. Just two dimensions showed positive progress – Knowledge, Skills and Innovation; and Work and Job Quality, while four showed neutral progress – Subjective Wellbeing; Income and Wealth; Connections, Community and Participation; and Civic Engagement, Trust, and Cultural Expression; and the remaining five showed negative progress (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Social Justice Ireland Alternative Well-being Dashboard














The Well-being Framework and the Social Contract

Social Justice Ireland has consistently proposed a policy framework for a new Social Contract that identifies five key policy outcomes: a Vibrant Economy; Decent Services and Infrastructure; Just Taxation; Good Governance; and Sustainability (Bennett, Healy, Murphy, & Murphy, 2020). Each of these five key policy outcomes must be achieved if a new Social Contract is to be achieved. It is not enough to have three or even four of the five, while neglecting other areas. All five must be worked on simultaneously. It is not a question of getting the economy right and everything else will follow. That approach has led us from boom to bust to boom to bust. However, when we look at the wellbeing dimensions in the context of the Social Contract Framework, we see that is happening again (Figure 3). The two dimensions on which positive progress have been made relate to the economy.

If Government is serious about its commitment to the Well-being Framework and to ensuring policies that support a social contract, it must strive for progress across all five pillars.

Figure 3: Well-being Framework and the Social Contract

Vibrant Economy	Decent Services and Infrastructure	Just Taxation	Good Governance	Sustainability
 <p>Work and Job Quality</p>	 <p>Subjective Wellbeing</p>	 <p>Income and Wealth</p>	 <p>Safety and Security</p>	 <p>Environment, Climate and Biodiversity</p>
 <p>Knowledge, Skills and Innovation</p>	 <p>Mental and Physical Health</p>		 <p>Civic Engagement, Trust, and Cultural Expression</p>	 <p>Time Use</p>
	 <p>Housing and the Built Environment</p>			
	 <p>Connections, Community and Participation</p>			

Counting What Counts

The Wellbeing Framework presents an opportunity for policymakers. Done well, the Framework has the capacity to build-in a series of checks and balances in the development of policies which ensure that they look beyond economic metrics to meet the stated Overarching Vision and Goals. Measuring progress toward these Vision and Goals is critical to the success of the Wellbeing Framework. Such measurement must be meaningful and take a stakeholder approach to ensure that no one, but particularly the most marginalised, is left behind.

Social Justice Ireland therefore calls on Government to establish a Working Group, consisting of representatives from Government and State agencies; Local Government; Employers; Environmental Groups; Trade Unions; Farmers; and the Community and Voluntary Sector to keep the indicators under review to ensure that they are fit for purpose and providing an accurate, and comprehensive, picture of Ireland's progress on Wellbeing.

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