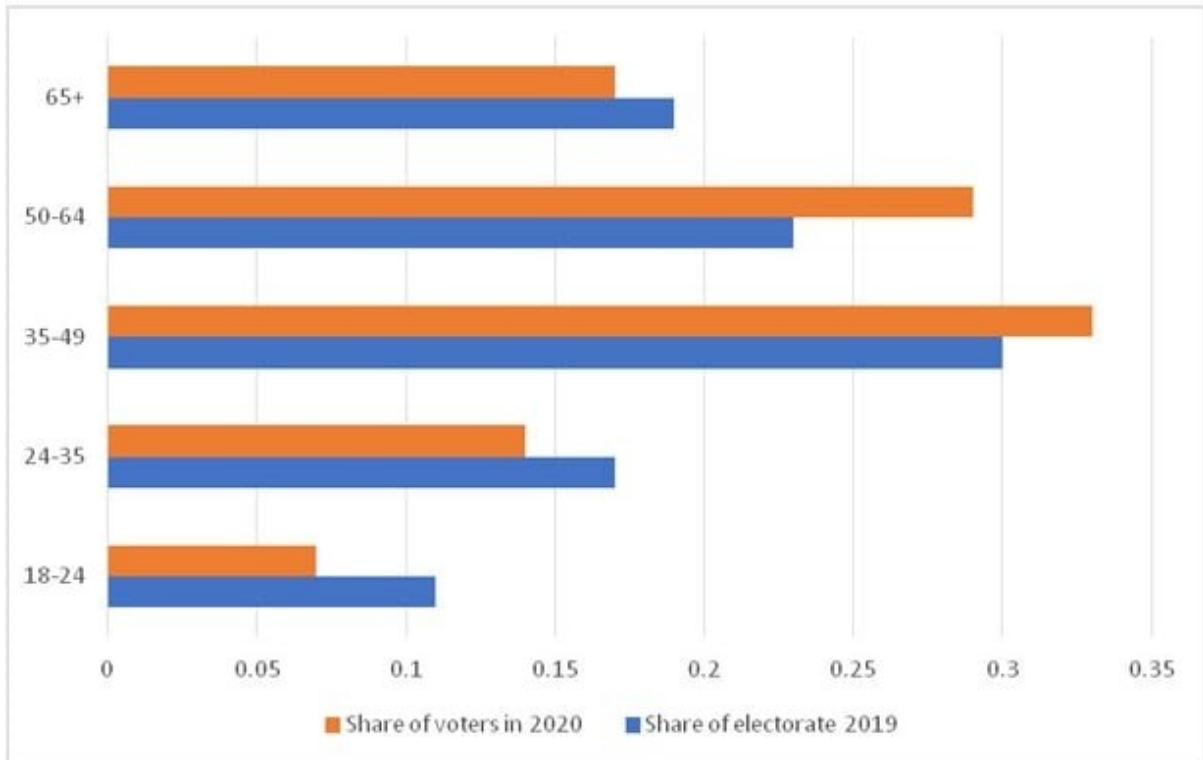


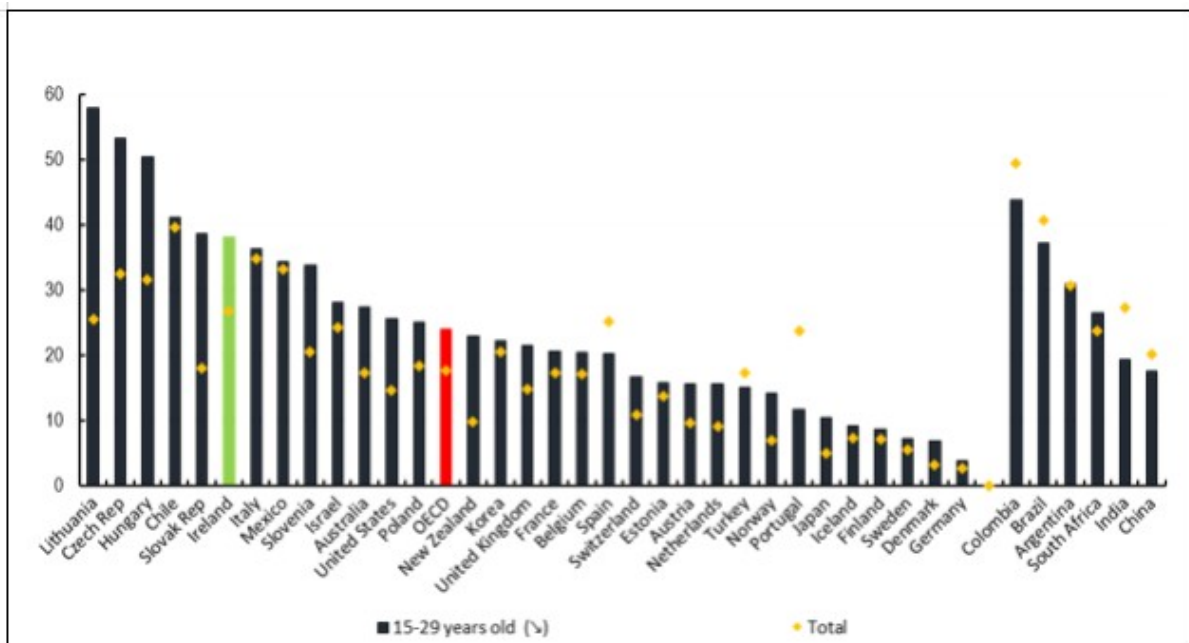
### Governance and Participation

Chart 6.1: Share of Voters in GE2020 by Age Group



Source: Marsh, M (2020): Did Turnout Make a Difference This Time?, Irish Times, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Chart 6.2: Proportion of people in OECD not at all interested in politics, young people and total



Source: OECD (2019): Society at a Glance, OECD: Paris

## Governance and Participation

The OECD points to an overall decline in electoral participation in most OECD countries between the early 1990s and late 2010s. Voter participation in Ireland fell from 73.7 per cent in 1992 to 58 per cent in 2016<sup>1</sup>, lower than the OECD average of 65.2 per cent.

According to a RED C / National Youth Council of Ireland survey in 2014, some 70 per cent of people aged 18-25 were registered to vote – 57 per cent of people aged 18-21, and 81 per cent of those aged 22-25.<sup>2</sup> While these data are nine years old, they do provide insight into the voting patterns observed in the 2020 General Election.

Chart 6.1 is taken from an RTÉ article by Professor Michael Marsh of Trinity College Dublin and seeks to compare voter turnout in General Election 2020 with the population (in 2019, as a proxy for an age breakdown of the electorate as a whole). In this Chart, where the orange line is shorter than the blue one a group is less likely to vote; where it is longer, that group is more likely to vote. It shows for those in the 18-24 and 25-34 groups, turnout was less than average, as for those 65+, while those in the 35-49 and 50-64 groups were more likely to vote in General Election 2020. It would, therefore, stand to reason that political parties who stood for election on platforms based on the interests and concerns of middle-aged voters would fare better than those whose election manifestos were aimed at younger (or older) voters.

Encouraging participation in representative democracy is not only about the immediate policy priorities of the party or parties who enter Government, interest in politics is also an

important factor in social cohesion.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore concerning that 1 in 4 young people (aged 15-29) in the OECD are 'Not at all interested' in politics, compared to 18 per cent of the total population. Ireland is again worse than the OECD average in this context, with 38 per cent of young people 'Not at all interested' in politics, compared to 27 per cent of the total population (Chart 6.2).

### *Social Dialogue*

Increasing interest in politics and voter participation are just the first steps in meaningful participation. A robust social dialogue process is urgently required to deal with the many multi-faceted and integrated challenges that Ireland faces. These challenges will not be resolved overnight, but real progress can be made through a social dialogue process where current and future challenges can be addressed in a positive manner, and where all stakeholders are included in the decision-making process.

Real Social Dialogue would also help Government to make progress in each of these areas and provide a structure where reasoned and evidence-based debate forms the basis for decisions about the most appropriate allocation of limited resources, ensuring that they are targeted at those most in need.

### **Policy Priorities**

- Invest in voter engagement initiatives.
- Implement real Social Dialogue involving all stakeholders, including young people.

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2019): Society at a Glance, OECD: Paris

<sup>2</sup> NYCI (2014): NYCI Briefing Paper 1, Voter Participation, Key Data from Red C / NYCI National Survey on Young People.

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2019): Society at a Glance, OECD: Paris