

Work

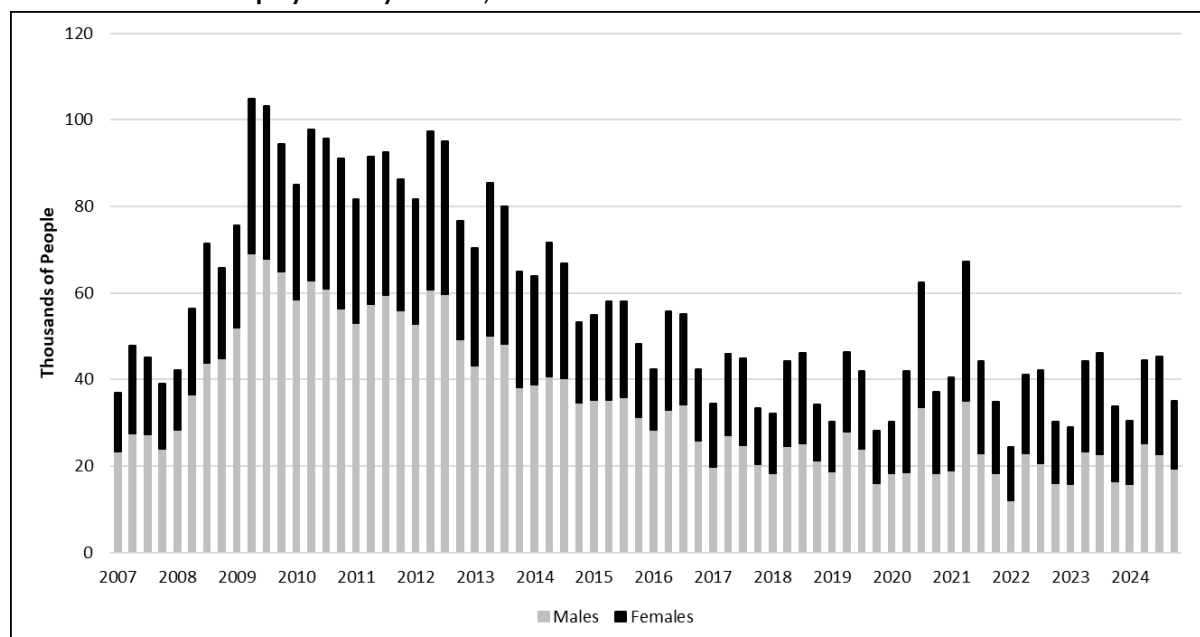
Table 5.1: Unemployment in Ireland, 2011 - 2024

	2011	2019	2024	Change 11-24
Unemployment	340,100	111,600	116,100	-224,000
Male	215,800	62,900	65,000	-150,800
Female	124,300	48,800	51,100	-73,200
Seeking FT work	289,100	80,000	75,300	-213,800
Seeking PT work	37,800	28,700	35,700	-2,100
15-24 years	86,300	28,200	35,000	-51,300
25-44 years	174,500	50,100	47,900	-126,600
45-65 years	78,700	32,300	32,100	-46,600
Border	n/a	7,100	11,400	n/a
West	n/a	9,600	10,800	n/a
Mid-West	n/a	11,100	9,700	n/a
South-East	n/a	14,500	9,200	n/a
South-West	n/a	13,300	12,800	n/a
Dublin	n/a	33,700	39,800	n/a
Mid-East	n/a	15,800	14,400	n/a
Midland	n/a	6,600	8,000	n/a
Unemp. less than 1 yr	129,200	67,400	84,400	-44,800
Unemp. more than 1 yr	206,500	38,800	28,200	-178,300
LT Unemp. as % Unemp	60.7%	34.8%	24.3%	

Source: CSO, LFS on-line database.

Note: All data is for Quarter 4 of the reference year. LFPR = ILO labour force participation rate and measures the percentage of the adult population who are in the labour market. Employment % is for those aged 15-64 years. Underemployment measures part-time workers who indicate that they wish to work additional hours which are not currently available. n/a = comparable data is not available. pp = percentage points LT = Long Term (12 months or more). LF = Labour Force.

Chart 5.1 Youth Unemployment by Gender, 2007- end 2024



Source: CSO, LFS on-line database.

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The commitment in PfG to create 300,000 new jobs by 2030 is ambitious. However, this must be complemented by policies to ensure workers have access to adequate and quality infrastructure, public services and housing to support these jobs. Job creation must prioritise high-quality employment with fair pay and conditions.

Long Term Unemployment

The improvement in the number and rates of Long Term (LT) unemployment are highlighted in Table 5.1. The number of LT unemployed exceeded 200,000 in 2011 but had fallen to less than 40,000 by late 2019. The 2024 figure, of 28,200, is the lowest LT unemployment count since the pandemic and implies that just one-quarter of all those currently unemployed are in that situation for more than one year.

While the improvements over the last decade are very welcome, the experience of the 1980s showed the dangers and long-lasting implications of large numbers of people trapped in long-term unemployment. While this remains a policy challenge, it is a policy area which receives limited attention.

It is clear that reskilling many of the unemployed, in particular those with low education levels, will be a key component of the response. Using data for the fourth quarter of 2024, 48 per cent of the unemployed had no more than second level education, with 14 per cent not having completed more than lower secondary (equivalent to the junior certificate).

Tackling Youth Unemployment

As Chart 5.1 illustrates, youth unemployment remains a major labour market policy challenge, albeit that the

picture is drastically better than a decade ago. The chart highlights the very rapid increase in the numbers unemployed aged 25 and under as the 2008-2013 economic crisis unfolded. The numbers in this group more than doubled between 2007 and 2009, peaking at almost 105,000 in Q2 2009. Since then, decreases have occurred, reaching 36,000 in 2019 before climbing during the 2020 and 2021 COVID-19 lockdowns.

By the end of 2024, 35,000 people under the age of 25 were unemployed – 19,300 males and 15,700 females – meaning that youth unemployment accounted for almost three in every ten unemployed people in Ireland. Experiences of unemployment, and in particular long-term unemployment, alongside an inability to access any work, training, or education, tends to leave a ‘scarring effect’ on young people (European Commission, 2014). It increases the challenges associated with getting them active in the labour market at any stage in the future. In the short-term, it makes sense for Government to invest in the ‘youth unemployed’ and *Social Justice Ireland* considers this to be a central and strategic priority.

Policy Priorities

- Adopt policies to address the worrying issue of youth unemployment. In particular, these should include education and literacy initiatives as well as retraining schemes.
- Resource the up-skilling of those who are unemployed and at risk of becoming unemployed through integrating training and labour market programmes.
- Develop a bespoke policy approach for older workers facing the pre-retirement years in unemployment.