



SITUATING IRELAND IN THE OECD LANDSCAPE OF LONG-TERM CARE SYSTEMS

Social Justice Ireland, 12 November 2025

Jacek Barszczewski
Health Policy Researcher
Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs
OECD



How does Ireland's
long-term care system
compare with that
of the other OECD countries?

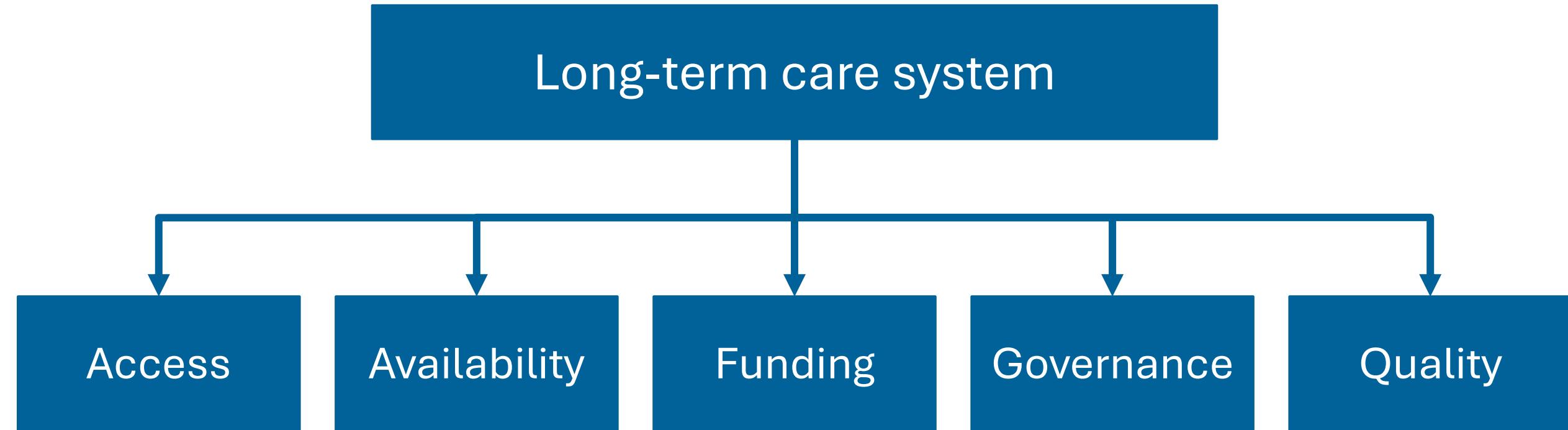


What is a long-term care system?

out-of-pocket payments
coverage
healthcare integration
inequality
availability
training
public provision
coordination
affordability
access
social protection
older people
supply of care
long-term care
needs-testing
in-kind services
staff ratios
care needs
formal care
eligibility
family responsibility
social care
institutional care
workforce
means-testing
demand for care
quality
decentralisation
funding
eligibility criteria
poverty risk
fragmentation
informal care
informal carers
cash benefits
cash-for-care
public funding
informal carers support
home care
residential care
governance
private provision
integration with health



Five pillars of long-term care systems



The OECD collected data on **20 indicators** describing **five pillars** of long-term care systems.



How to compare different systems?

OECD countries

Ireland vs

Austria	Belgium	Canada	Estonia	
Denmark	Sweden	Hungary	Italy	Finland
United Kingdom	United States	Latvia	Portugal	
France	Germany	Iceland	Slovakia	
Japan	Luxembourg	Malta	Lithuania	Poland
Slovenia	Spain	Greece	Croatia	
the Netherlands	Czechia			



Cluster long-term care systems

Compare Ireland's cluster with other clusters to identify general patterns

Compare Ireland with other countries that share similar features within the same cluster

Identify the strengths and challenges of Ireland's long term care system



In this presentation, I will answer..

1. How long-term care systems of the OECD countries are clustered?
2. What are the characteristics of Ireland's cluster?
3. How does the Ireland's system compare to other systems in its cluster?
4. What are three strengths and weaknesses of Ireland's long-term care system?



Clustering of long-term care systems

20 indicators
describing **five**
pillars of 29 long-
term care systems

Advanced
clustering methods



Four distinguish
models of long-
term care provision



Four models of long-term care provision

Cluster 1

Austria Belgium
Denmark Finland
France Sweden

Cluster 3

Canada Estonia
Hungary Italy **Ireland**
United States Latvia

Cluster 2

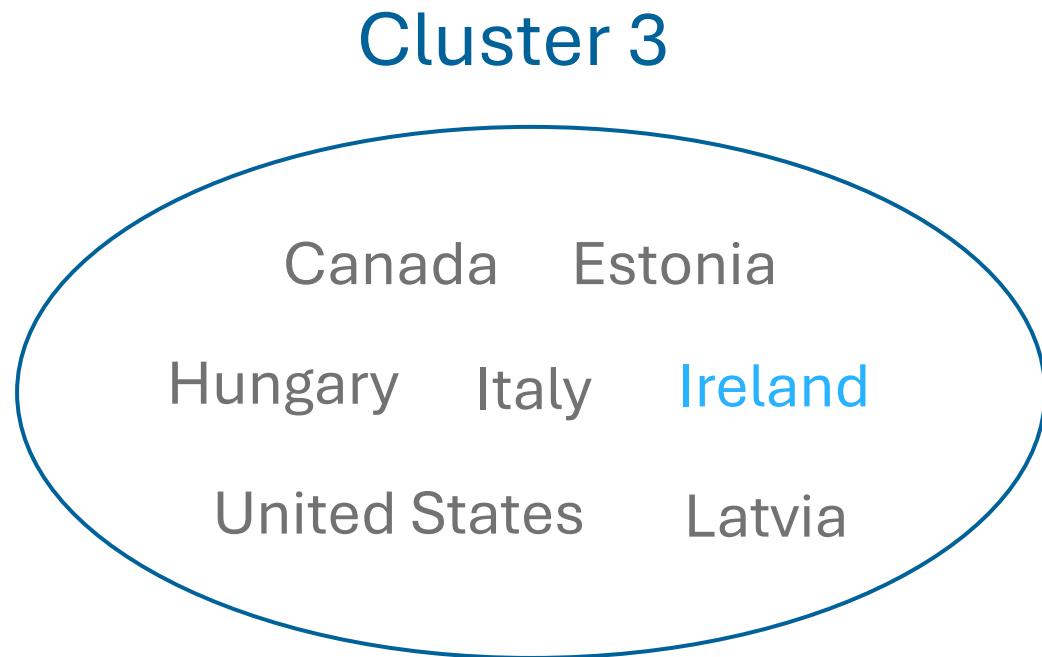
United Kingdom
Germany Iceland
Japan Luxembourg Malta
the Netherlands Slovenia

Cluster 4

Slovakia
Portugal Poland
Spain Lithuania
Greece Croatia
Czechia



Main characteristics of Cluster 3



- Use of means- and needs-testing
- Average coverage of formal care
- Low prevalence of informal care
- Average generosity of public social protection
- Fragmented long-term care legislation
- Decentralised governance
- Presence of staff ratio and quality assurance framework



Ireland vs other countries in Cluster 3

Ireland

- Use of needs- but no means-testing
- High coverage of formal care
- Low prevalence of informal care
- High generosity of public social protection
- Fragmented long-term care legislation
- Centralised governance
- Presence of quality assurance framework, but no staff ratio

Cluster 3

- Use of means- and needs-testing
- Average coverage of formal care
- Low prevalence of informal care
- Average generosity of public social protection
- Fragmented long-term care legislation
- Decentralised governance
- Presence of staff ratio and quality assurance framework

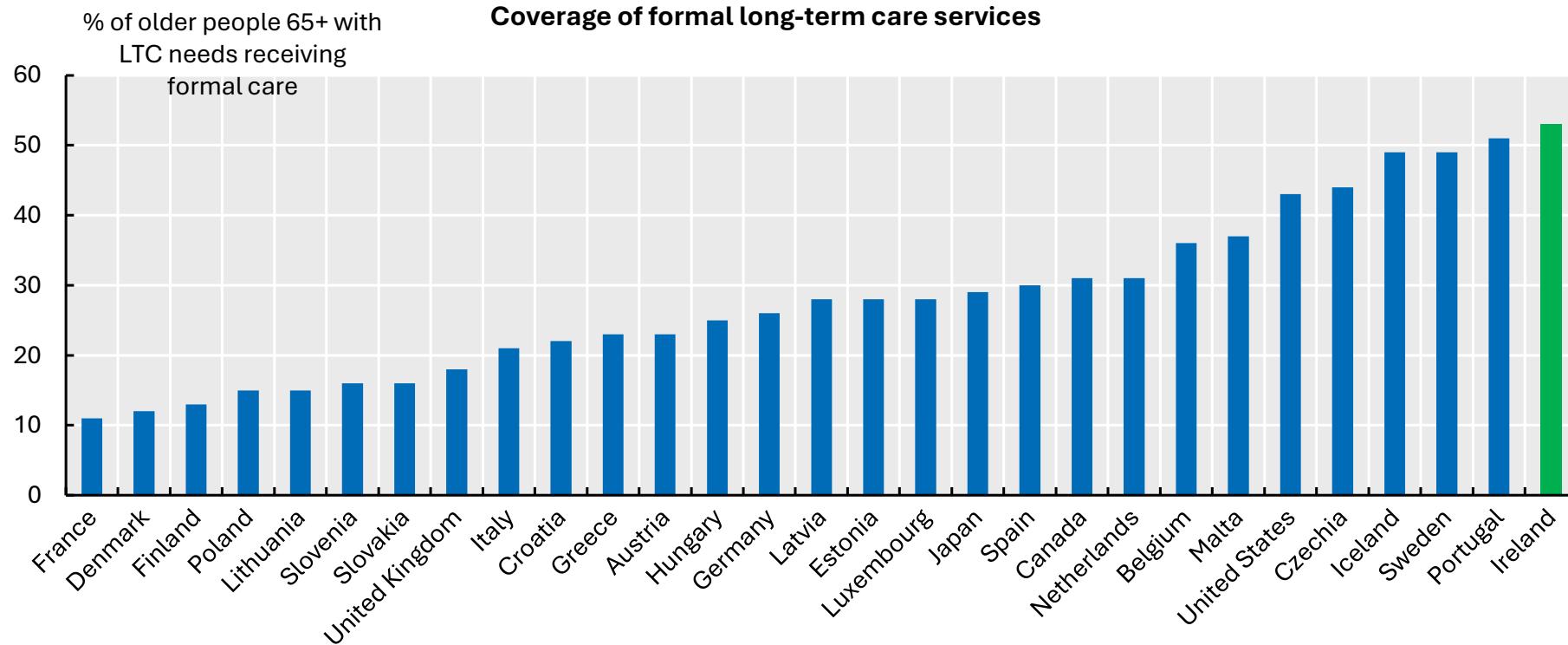


Three strengths of Ireland's system

**High coverage
of formal long-
term care
services**



High coverage of formal care services



In Ireland, more than 50% of older people (65+) with long-term care needs receive formal care – the highest share among all analysed OECD countries.



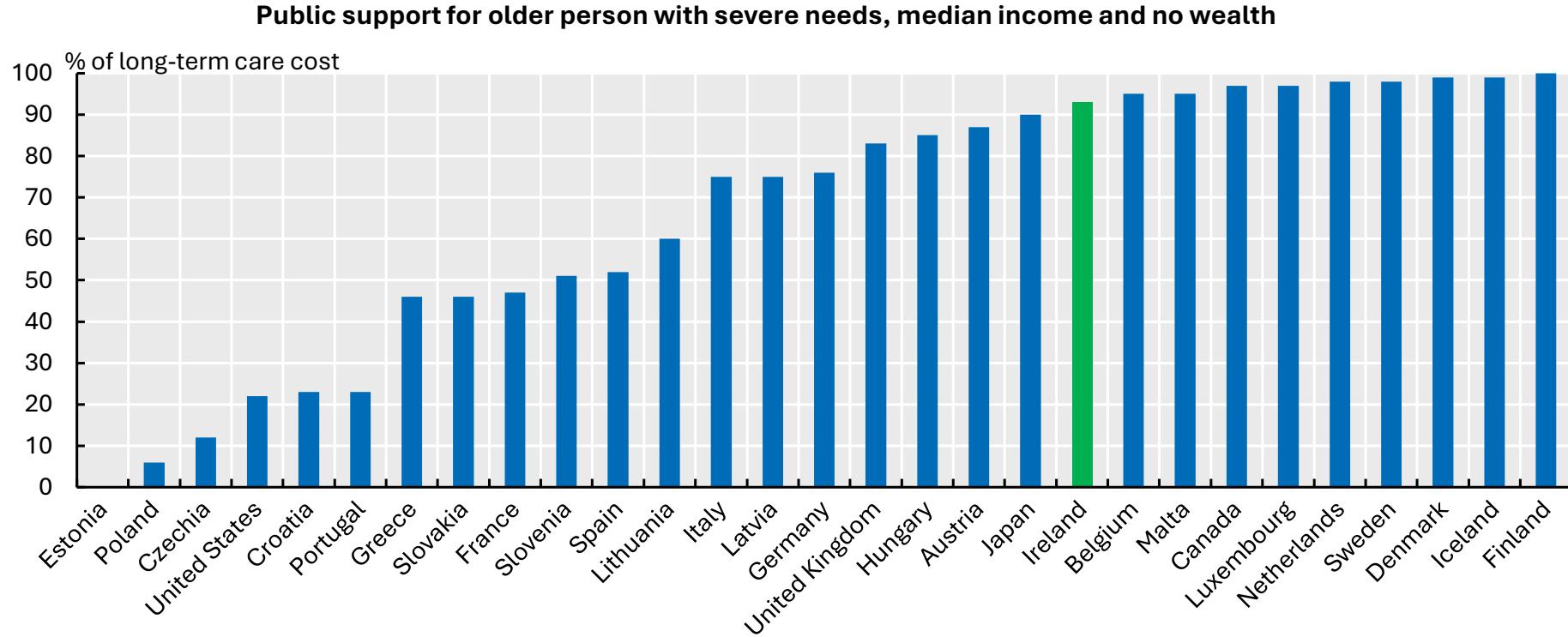
Three strengths of Ireland's system

**High coverage
of formal long-
term care
services**

**High
generosity of
public social
protection for
long-term care**



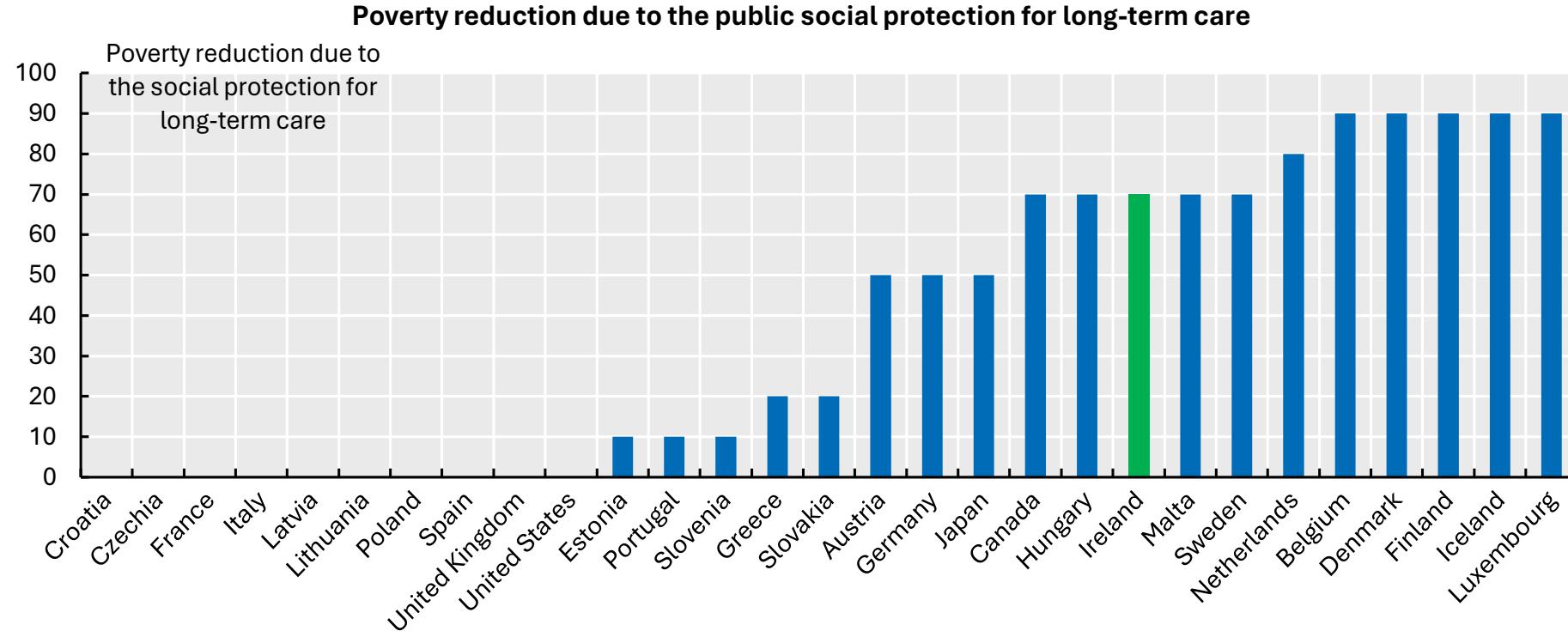
High share of care cost is publicly covered



In Ireland, more than 90% of care costs are covered by public social protection for older people (65+) with severe long-term care needs receiving home care, a median income, and no wealth.



Poverty risk is reduced for care recipients



The difference in poverty risk between care recipients receiving and not receiving public social protection is around 70 percentage points in Ireland, one of the highest among OECD countries.



Three strengths of Ireland's system

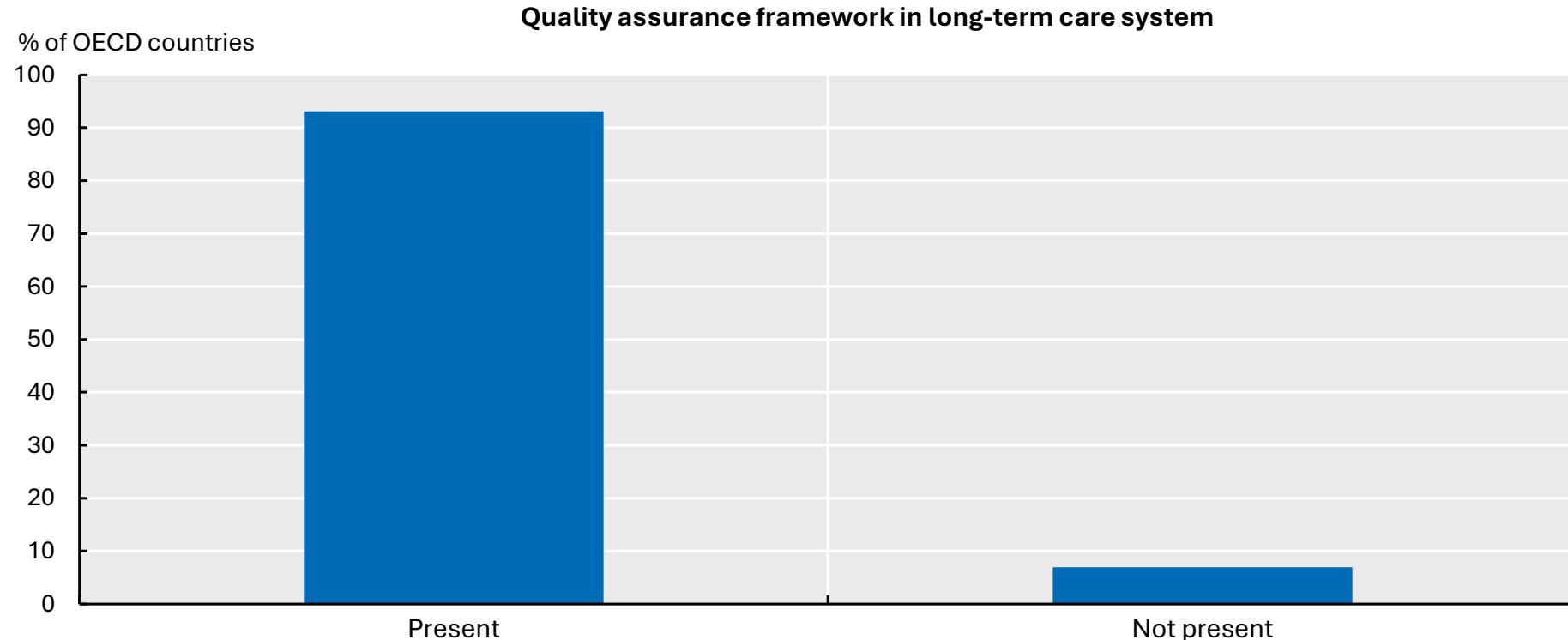
**High coverage
of formal long-
term care
services**

**High
generosity of
public social
protection for
long-term care**

**Presence of a
framework for
monitoring
quality of
long-term care
services**



Quality monitoring framework is common



Most of the analysed OECD countries, including Ireland, have a quality monitoring framework in their long-term care systems to ensure high-quality care.

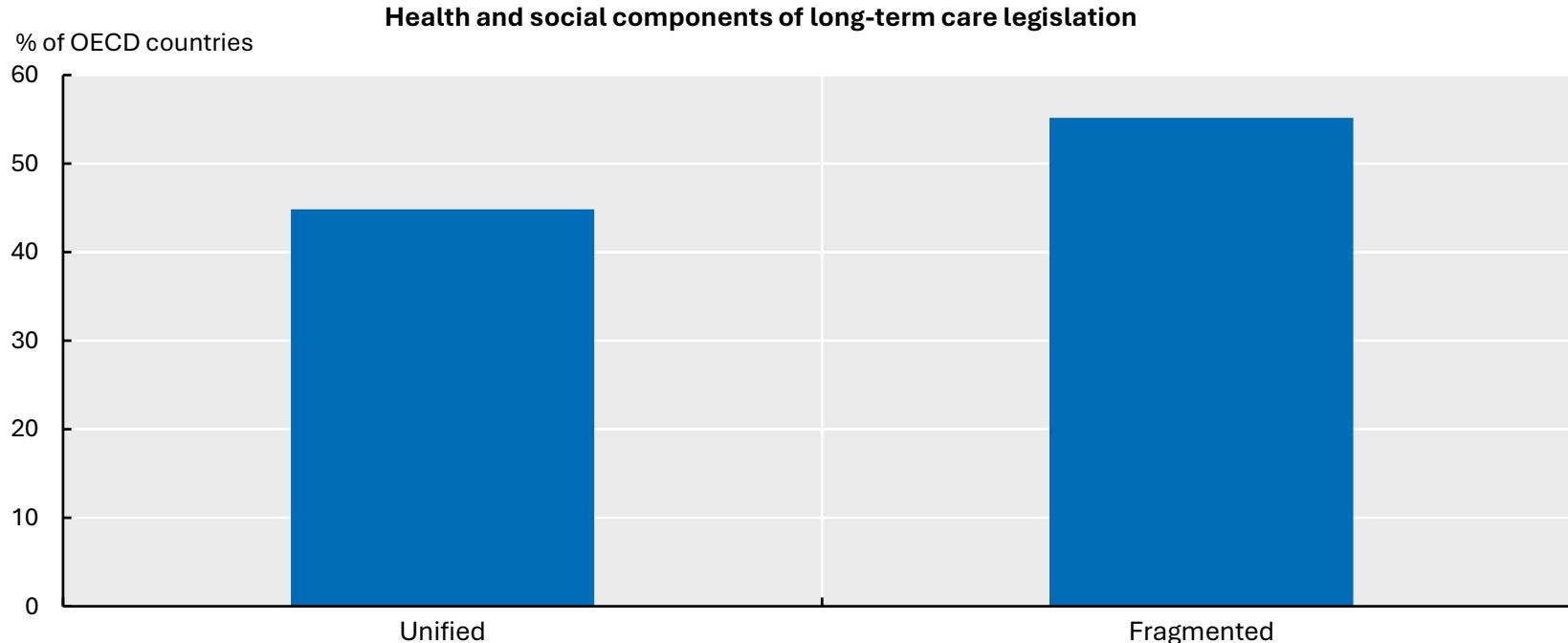


Three challenges of Ireland's system

**Fragmented
long-term care
legislation**



Fragmented long-term care legislation



Fragmented long-term care legislation might lead to inequities in access and coverage, unclear financing mechanism, and fragmentation of responsibilities.



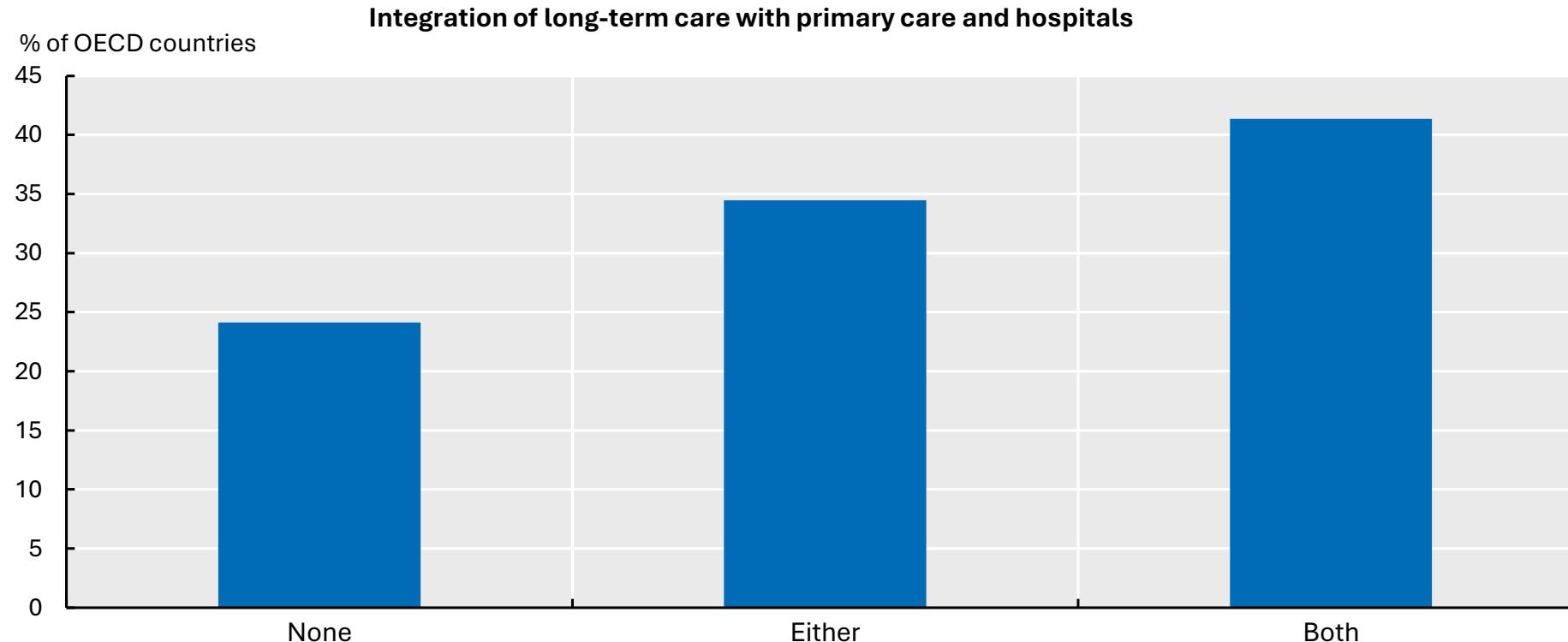
Three challenges of Ireland's system

**Fragmented
long-term care
legislation**

**Lack of long-
term care
integration
with hospitals**



Missing integration with hospitals



Long-term care system in Ireland is not integrated with hospitals, which might lead to fragmented care pathways, and misaligned incentives and financing.



Three challenges of Ireland's system

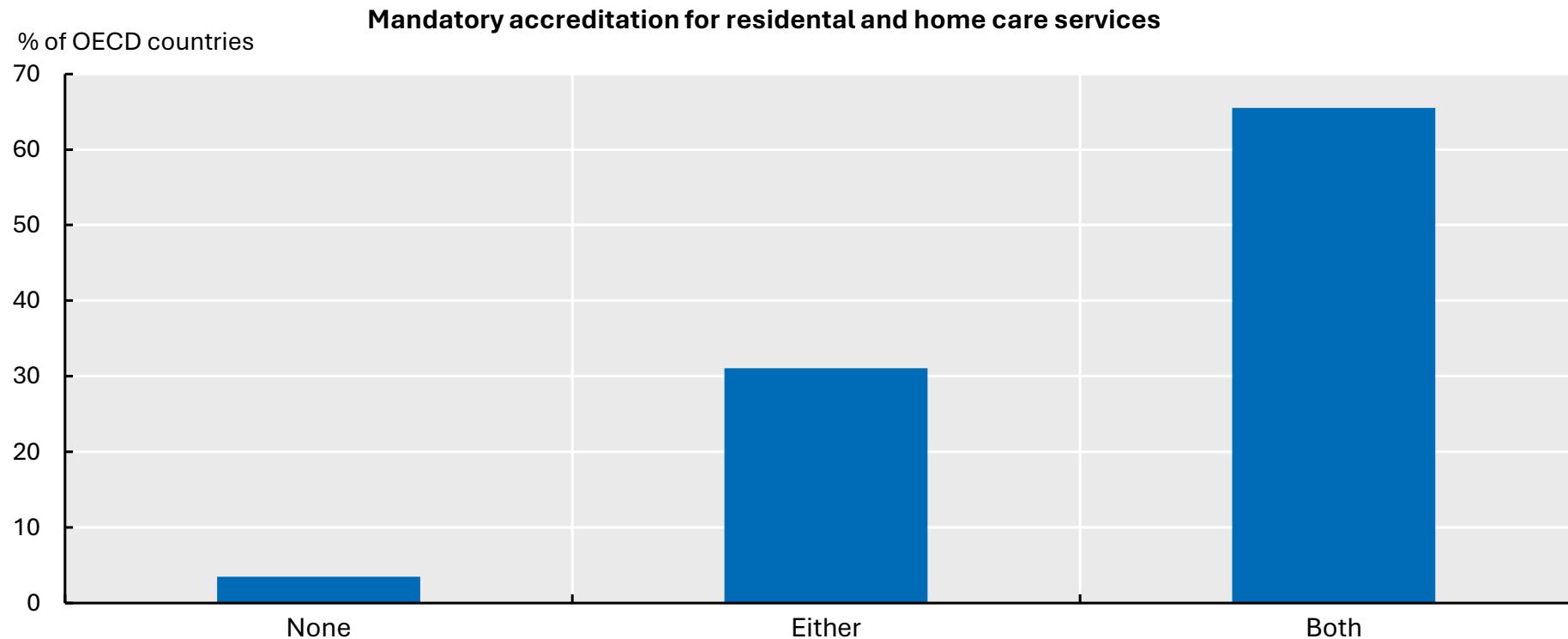
**Fragmented
long-term care
legislation**

**Lack of long-
term care
integration
with hospitals**

**Limited
requirements
for home care
providers**



Lack of standards for home care services



In November 2024, Health Information and Quality Authority issued a draft of National Standards for Home Support Services to ensure that all home care users are provided with high-quality services.



Key takeaways

International comparisons require a clear definition of what constitutes a long-term care system and the collection of a wide range of indicators.



Facilitate the comparison by grouping countries with similar system characteristics.



Ireland is grouped with Canada, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, and the US.



Ireland's key strengths lie in its generous public social protection and high coverage of formal care services.



Ireland has room for improvement in integration and long-term care legislation.



Find out more and get in touch

Find our publications online

Our website on
Ageing and Long-term care



Our working paper



Follow us on LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com/company/oecd-social/

Email us

Jacek.Barszczewski@oecd.org