



Irish Cancer Society
Women and Smoking: Time to Face
the Crisis

Sinéad Pentony

4th July 2012



Eliminating Health Inequalities
A Matter of Life and Death

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TASC report highlights the link between economic and health inequalities.



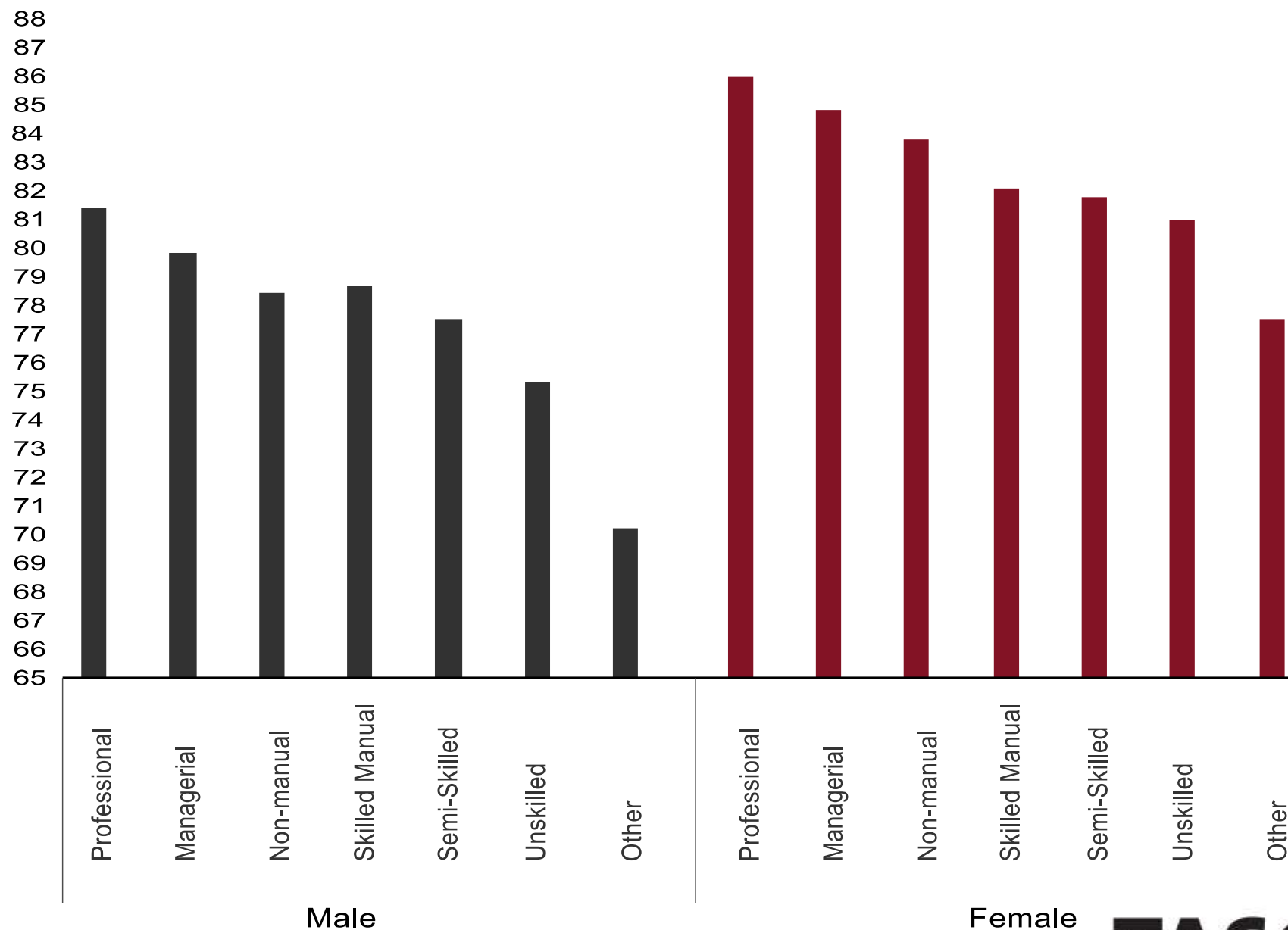
Social determinants of health

- Income, wealth, housing, environment, education, life opportunities, inequality impact most on health.
- Unequal health system exacerbates health inequalities. Focus on treatment rather than prevention.

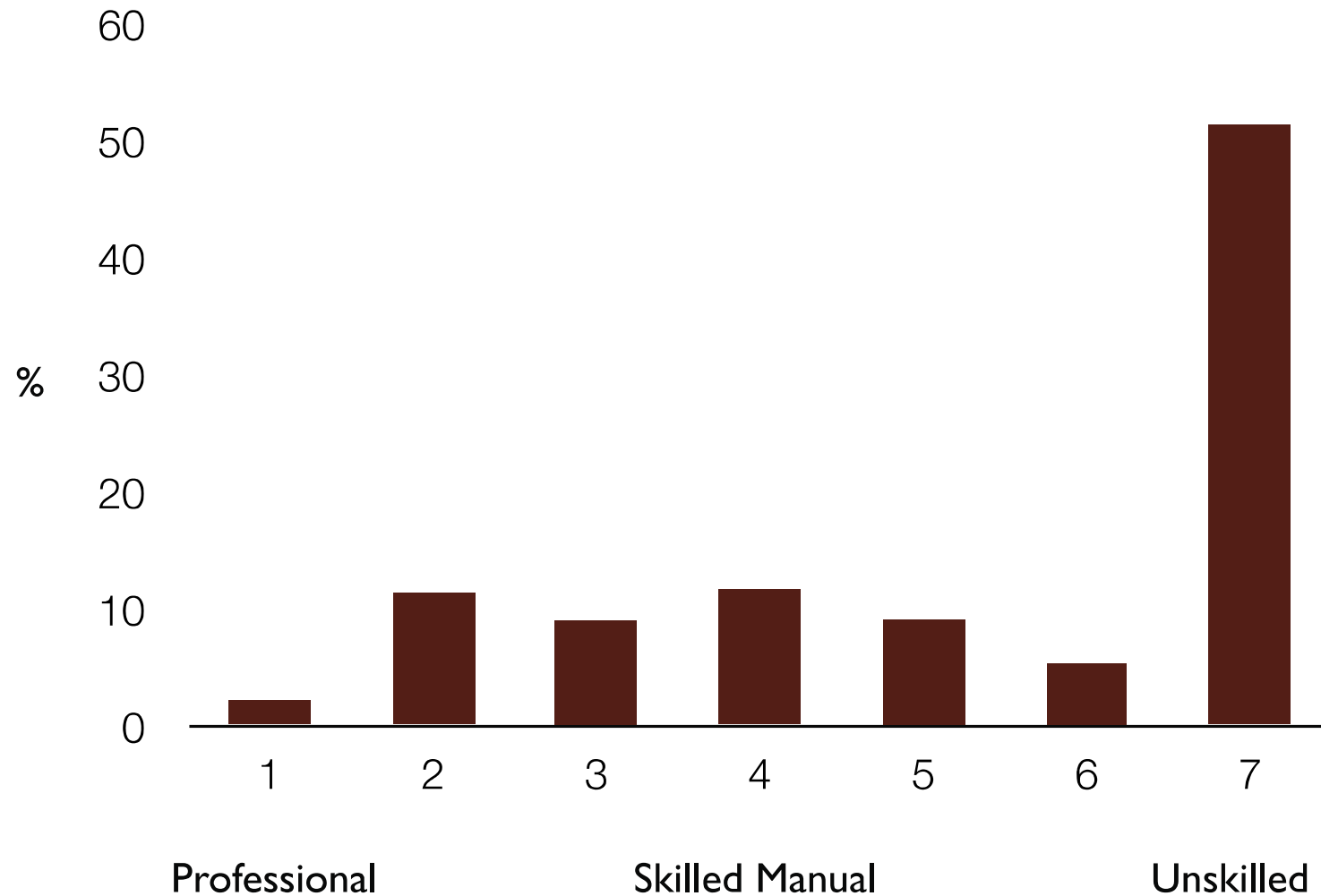
Social determinants of health

- Overall levels of wealth and income are not as important as the **distribution** of wealth and income.
- We have made progress on health (in general), **BUT** little or no progress on reducing health inequalities.

Life Expectancy at Birth by Social Class (CSO, 2010)



CSO 2012: Breakdown by social class of individuals that described their general health status as 'very bad'



Professional

Skilled Manual

Unskilled



Central Statistics Office

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Income	€	€	€	€	€
Disposable income	21, 229	23, 610	24, 380	23, 326	22, 168
Poverty	%	%	%	%	%
At risk	17.0	16.5	14.4	14.1	15.8
Consistent	6.5	5.1	4.2	5.5	6.2
Indicators of income equality					
Gini coefficient	32.4	31.7	30.7	29.3	33.9
Income distribution	5.0	4.9	4.6	4.3	5.5

Policy Context

- **Council of European Union** (Dec. 2011) adopts conclusion “closing health gaps within the EU through concerted action to promote healthy lifestyle behaviours.”
- **European Public Health Alliance** – Council conclusion “doesn’t go far enough.” Critical of over-emphasis on ‘downstream’ policy solutions instead of addressing ‘upstream’ issues – social determinants.
- **Wilkinson and Pickett** – *The Spirit Level: Why more equal societies almost always do better.*

Policy Context

- Programme for Government – commitment to free GP care and greater health equity through universal health insurance.
- *Your Health is Your Wealth: A Policy Framework for a Healthier Ireland 2012-2020.*
- Terms of reference aim to address:
 - **Wider determinants of health and health inequalities**
 - Chronic disease and lifestyle
 - Inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral approaches at policy and practice level
 - Protection from and responses to public health threats

TASC Submission on new Public Health Strategy

Public health policy should aim to protect the whole population from ill-health; facilitate people to live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives; and reduce health inequalities by improving the health of the poorest, fastest.

TASC Submission on new Public Health Strategy

- Public health policy should reflect all aspects of people's lives – early years; children and young adults; employment and working conditions; healthy communities; health and wellbeing in old age.
- Provision of high quality, publicly funded and universally accessible public services with a strong focus on preventative measures.

Eliminating Economic and Health Inequalities

- Different **economic model** – based on productive activities, job rich, maximising natural advantages.
- **Fiscal policy** – direct impact on income equality. Need to equality-proof the budget – distributional analysis of proposed budgetary measures.
- Gradual move towards Western European levels of taxation to fund the types of **public services** we want.
- Increased **investment** targeted at early childhood education and public health.
- BUT..... we're in a EU/IMF bailout fund!
- AND we still have choices.

Public Health - Focus on Primary Care and Funding on basis of solidarity

- Primary care – ‘the poor relation.’
- If we get it right, we will make a lot of progress – preventative measures, less costly, accessible...
- Financing healthcare –
 - What outcomes do we want to achieve?
 - Financing mechanisms – designed on the basis of solidarity is the most critical factor.



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