



**National Women's Council of Ireland**  
**Pre-Budget Submission 2020**

**Department of Employment Affairs**  
**&**  
**Social Protection**

## Introduction

Established in 1973, the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) is the leading national women's membership organisation in Ireland. NWCi seeks full equality between men and women and we draw our mandate from a membership of over 180 groups and organisations across a diversity of backgrounds, sectors and locations. We also have a growing, committed individual membership.

We actively support and work with government to implement the National Strategy for Women and Girls (NSWG) to secure full participation in education, employment and public life at all levels, and to improve services for women and girls. NWCi actively works to prioritise the needs of those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest social and economic outcomes.

## Overview

Our submission to the Dept. of Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform outlines the broader macroeconomic framework that this submission takes as its context and will therefore only highlight key points relative to this department's responsibilities.

We welcomed the 2019 Budget focus on child poverty from the **Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection** (DEASP) and the restoration of some income disregards for lone parents, the modest increases in other carer, disability and benefit payments. The importance of adequate social protection and social welfare for preventing deprivation and poverty continues to be highlighted by the fact that without the social welfare system 43.8% of the Irish population would have been living in poverty in 2017. Persistent poverty, including that of children, is heavily concentrated in lone parents, the vast majority of whom are women. NWCi believes a concerted programme of gender aware and gender proofed investment is needed to realise the current potential shift towards a more equal economy and society, particularly for those women and families most at risk of poverty and inequality.

Budget 2019 delivered welcome moderate increases to the minimum social welfare payment. Further increases of social welfare payments should be benchmarked at a level which is adequate to both lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.<sup>1</sup>

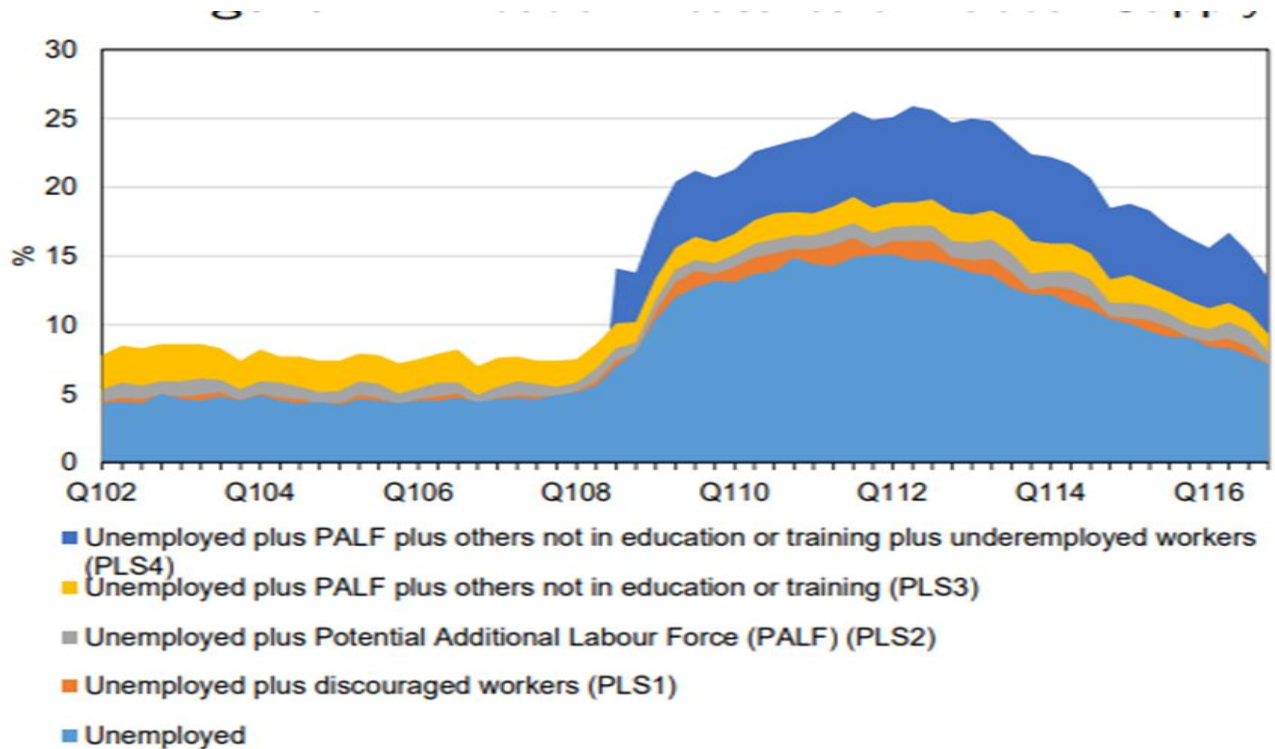
Although the official level of employment is close to its highest level ever, NWCi argues we are not approaching what could be called 'full employment' as long as women's participation rates remain low and so many women are underemployed. The NESc report in 2018 on low work intensity households<sup>2</sup> estimates that 150,000 qualified adults are either unemployed or under employed and a significant proportion of these are women. The graphic below shows the gap between those officially unemployed and other groups that are not at work, and this also includes a significant proportion of women.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NWCi welcomes the commitment to consultation on the benchmarking of social welfare payments The Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Act 2018

<sup>2</sup> NESc Low Work Intensity Households 2018

<sup>3</sup> SJI Budget Choices 2020



(Non employment index +2.5% above unemployment rate in 2016<sup>4</sup>)

Ireland 2040 is biased towards infrastructural investment and Budget 2020 must focus on the potential benefits of more immediate social investment especially for those without access to a market income. This is particularly the case with investment in early childhood education and care (ECEC), where there are well documented multipliers in relation to employment and local economic development, which both EU and national evidence demonstrates provides a clear social gain on such investment. NWCI know the lack of investment will inevitably keep, or transfer back, personal, health and community care needs to the unpaid, undervalued and often invisible labour of women.

## Gender budgeting

NWCI works with the Dept. of Public Expenditure & Reform on the Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory group to advance the integration of gender (and progressively other equality budgeting processes) into the annual budget process and the delivery of public services. An Equality Impact Statement published alongside Budget 2020 should be the next step in this process.

For DEASP the Equality Impact Statement should emphasise fiscal policies which include

- Full individualisation of the tax and welfare system
- Continued increases to social welfare payment levels-an additional €8 in Budget 2020<sup>5</sup>
- Progressive benchmarking of payments and stronger link to a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL)
- Ensuring adequate investment for affordable quality childcare & secure work force
- Providing for increased parental leave
- Supporting a secure, flexible working environment
- Progression to standard rating of pension tax reliefs

<sup>4</sup> A non-employment index for Ireland Byrne, Conefrey 2017

<sup>5</sup> SVP Investing in A just Society 2019-Progress to a MESL rate

## **Social Protection**

The submission will outline opportunities to enhance women's economic independence through labour market participation. We will equally emphasise and welcome the important role of the social welfare income support system and its relative effectiveness at reducing market income poverty and inequality. It is time to fully individualise the tax and welfare system and to more systematically review current payment levels, and plan for increases to progressively benchmark payments to a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL).

## **Social insurance**

We welcome the NESC working group on social insurance and believe that this has potential to realise the objective of enhancing social insurance policy. We ask that this group has the resources and skills to gender their analysis. It is clear that the Irish social Insurance model was built for a different era on a largely male breadwinner understanding of both the labour market, social welfare and taxation system. An enhanced social insurance system has some advantages from the perspective of gender, opening up options for individualisation, pay related payments and high levels of payment relative to minimum income payments. However, research also shows social welfare systems based on rewarding economic participation do not always work for women. Further pre and post crisis changes have increased social insurance eligibility and entitlement criteria and reduced pro-rata payments for part time workers, mainly women. We welcome the extension of social insurance to the self-employed, but we ask that the impact of this reform be monitored for its gender impact. A gender sensitive reform of social insurance needs to factor the reality that women have lower levels of economic participation and work more part-time hours.

## **Affordable Childcare**

We recognise it is not the responsibility of DEASP, however affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) remains one of the most significant barriers to women's equal participation in all aspects of society, particularly employment, education and training. NWCI also highlights to DEASP how inadequate investment in ECEC is creating a poorly paid, un-pensionable female dominated workforce, many of whom are dependent on summer month social welfare supports and other income supports. We further highlight recent concerns of potential negative consequences of inadequate funding for lone parents, moving from the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme to the National Childcare Scheme.

We ask that the DEASP & Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) continue and broaden how they work together to ensure that investment in this key social infrastructure meets the needs of women and children, particularly those most at risk of poverty and exclusion.

## **Women, vulnerability and poverty**

### **Specific social welfare issues for the most vulnerable women**

#### **Women who are Asylum seekers**

- The value of the rate of €38.80 Direct Provision Allowance secured in Budget 2019 should not be eroded by ordinary costs of living increases
- Grant Child Benefit to all children irrespective of the status of the parents
- Extend Free Travel Scheme to people in the protection process

## Young Women

- NWCI welcomes the YESS programme, however in light of the direct link between increased rates of poverty and homelessness, and the very high rate of severe deprivation amongst young people 18-24, the full rate Jobseekers Allowance must be restored as a matter of urgency.

## Traveller women

- Develop a fully gender proofed national Traveller employment strategy as part of the National Action Plan for Jobs, and Pathways To Work (PTW) to take account of barriers to participation of Traveller women, such as access to culturally competent affordable childcare.

## Women with a disability

- Deliver a cost of disability payment, minimum €20 per week<sup>6</sup>

## Lone parents

Lone parents, 84% are women, in Ireland are almost 5 times more likely to experience in-work poverty than other households with children. 84% of lone parents in Ireland were unable to meet unexpected expenses and almost 60% of lone parents reported that they could not access childcare services due to cost. In terms of purchasing power, lone parents in Ireland have the fourth lowest household income among EU-15 countries. While the household income of the general population in Ireland has recovered to pre-crisis levels, the income of one parent households was lower in 2017 than in 2007.<sup>7 8</sup>

The Indecon 2017<sup>9</sup> & ESRI 2018<sup>10</sup> reports confirmed that lone parents in work have been penalised by changes to lone parent social welfare supports. We welcome the reversal of income disregard and the child maintenance disregard for the Working Family Payment (WFP) is a particularly positive step towards the recognition of child maintenance as a separate and independent income for children. However, persistent reductions in the income disregard for lone parents receiving the One Family Payment (OFP) have resulted proportionally significant losses each week. Gradual reductions to the OFP age threshold have moved significant numbers of lone parents onto the replacement unconditional Jobseekers Transition Payment (JST). Though lone parents in receipt of the JST are not required to seek full-time work and more flexible part-time work patterns are accommodated, those who do work are not entitled to the Working Family Payment. NWCI repeats its call for the net exchequer savings of €45.08m from the OFP reforms identified in Indecon 2017, to be utilised in a programme of supports for the 48% of lone parents who have not increased earnings since the reforms.

As recommended by the Joint Committee on Social Protection there is an urgent need to establish a Statutory Maintenance Authority to reduce the burden on women to litigate for child maintenance order; there is a significant rate of non-compliance with child maintenance orders, significant delays in the courts system and a high cost involved in engaging a litigious route.

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<sup>6</sup> NWCI welcomes DEASP commissioning research to establish real cost of disability & €20pw is an interim recommendation

<sup>7</sup> Society of St. Vincent de Paul (2019) Working Parenting and Struggling

<sup>8</sup> Research from Europe shows that this pattern is not unique to Ireland & that increases in the labour market attachment of lone parents does not necessarily reduce their poverty risk. (Jaehrling, K., Kalina, T. and Mesáros, L. (2015)

<sup>9</sup> A paradox of activation strategies: *Social Politics*, Vol 22

<sup>9</sup> Independent Review of the Amendments to the One-parent Family Payment since January 2012

<sup>10</sup> ESRI Lone-parent incomes and work incentives

## NWCI Recommends

### **Reinforce commitments to reducing deprivation and child poverty levels, particularly in lone parent families as a priority in Budget 2020.**

- Restore income disregards to all categories of lone parents on OFP and JST to €165pw
  - Increase the income disregards for lone parents on OFP and JST to support take up of increased working hours
  - Reduce the hours requirement for the Working Family Payment for lone parents to 15 hours per week
  - Allow lone parents to receive both the JST and WFP. Extend the cut off for the Jobseekers Transition Payment until their youngest child reaches the age of 18
  - Ensure lone parents on JST have access to SUSI grants for part-time study
  - Exclude the Working Family Payment from the income assessment for the Differential Rent Scheme across Local Authorities
  - Introduce comprehensive financial support to cover the full costs of attending a training course, including childcare and transport
- **Establish and resource a Statutory Maintenance Authority**

## Careful Activation - Low work intensity households

The number of people living in households with low work intensity remains one of the highest in the EU, highlighting the need for more integrated and targeted activation strategies to support this particular group.<sup>11</sup> *Moving from Welfare to Work (NECS 2018)* highlights the importance of household based strategies to address welfare to work barriers for low work intensity families who face a disproportionately high risk of poverty and deprivation. Enabling women in these households to access employment is vital to address high poverty associated with low work intensity.

*Pathways to Work (PTW)* is a male bread winner activation model which presently demands full-time work availability and a strong emphasis on mandatory over voluntary activation, this impacts directly on access to support and opportunity for many women. Qualified Adults, 90% of them are women, often live in jobless households yet they cannot access training or supports without committing to full time availability. The new iteration of PTW due in 2020 must assess the gender impact of all proposed changes.

We believe that with unemployment low and the number of qualified adults in job seeker households declining, that there is an historic and affordable opportunity to abolish the limitation rule and open up the prospect of individualised rights to social security and labour market supports for women.

## NWCI Recommends

- **End the limitation rule and promote administrative Individualisation at first point of contact**

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<sup>11</sup> 2019 European Semester: Country Report - Ireland

- **Widen access to the Job Seekers Transitional Payment for qualified adults to enable access to quality part time education, training and employment opportunities as well as childcare supports**
- **Change eligibility rules to enable qualified adults access a range of active labour market policies (ALMPs), without such access there will be little incentive for them to participate in pilots**
- **Resource a national survey to ascertain skills education, health, care and employment experience of qualified adults**
- **Resource community based organisations to work with the economically & socially excluded**

## Labour Market: The Gender Dimension

A gender aware understanding of full employment will draw attention to the reality of the gap between male and female labour market participation. Irish female labour force participation rates are lower than average European rates with a rate of 56.1 % Q1 19<sup>12</sup> that maintains greater differences between male and female participation rates in Ireland compared to the EU. The employment rate for Irish females with children is below the EU-15 average and the gap to the EU-15 average widens with the movement from 1 to 2 children.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 1**

### Labour market participation rates (%)

State	Female			Male		
	1971	1991	2016	1971	1991	2016
All ages	27.9	32.9	53.6	80.7	70.9	67.8
15 - 19years	47.3	21.1	19.5	54.1	29.3	19.1
20 - 24 years	65.1	73.3	63.3	88.7	81.1	69.6
25 - 34 years	28.3	57.4	82.5	96.1	96.2	87.5
35 - 44 years	18.8	35.4	83.1	96.3	95.9	91.8
45 - 54 years	20.4	28.8	78	86.9	91.6	87.7
55 - 59 years	21.5	22.1	70.7	92.1	78.8	80.7
60 - 64 years	20.5	14.0	50.2	86.9	59.4	61.2
65 years and over	11.3	3.0	11.0	43.9	15.8	16.9

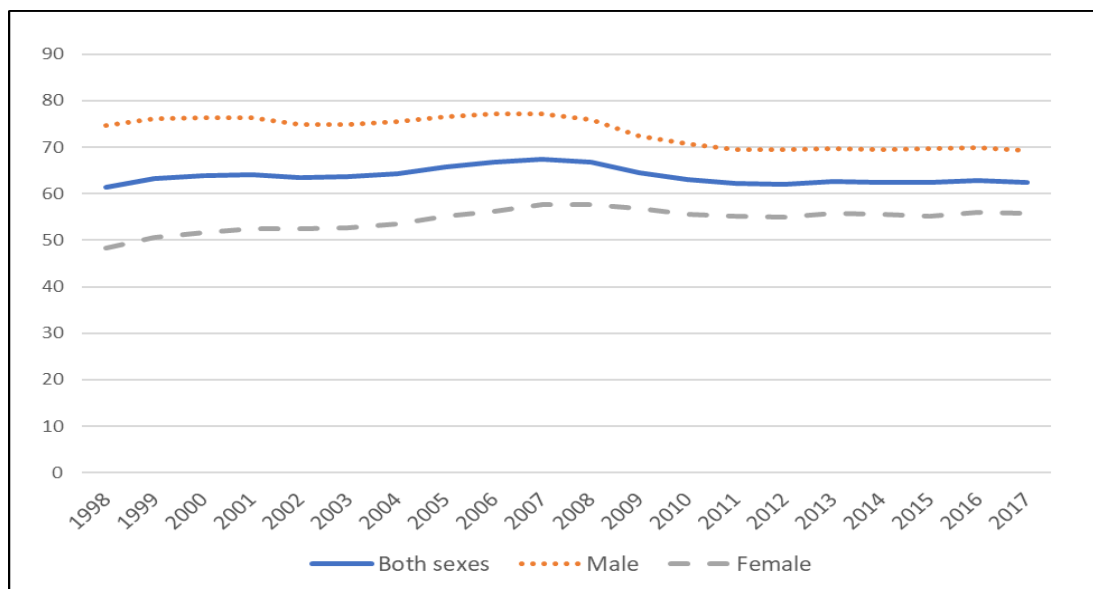
Source: CSO

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/lfs/labourforcesurveyquarter12019/>

<sup>13</sup> Social Impact Assessment, Female Labour Force Participation(2018) Department of Public Expenditure and Reform



**Chart 1: Gender divides in labour force participation, Ireland 1998-2017**



Females accounted for 70% of PT workers in Q4 2017 (321,600 workers), 69,000 of these female workers classified themselves as involuntary part time or underemployed (three-in-five or 60% of all underemployed PT workers). Women who are presently unattached or marginally attached to the labour market including those voluntary or involuntary underemployment need to be a specific target of any national productivity strategy. The insufficient provision of childcare is a central cause of high female inactivity but so too is the cultural gap between male and female participation in household work, elder care and emotional labour. In 2017, 54.2% of inactive Irish females reported caring responsibilities as the main reason for inactivity, against an EU average of 31%.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 2: Employment by gender, full time and part time**

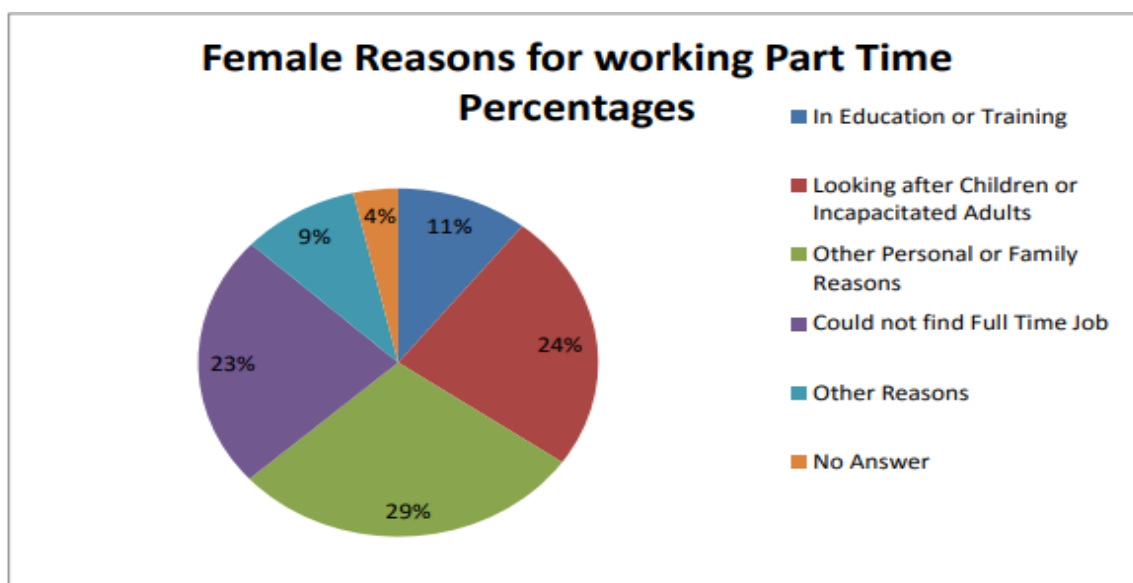
		2016Q4	2017Q4	Change	% Change
<b>In employment</b>		2,164.2	2,231.0	66.8	3.1
	Full-time (FT)	1,680.0	1,770.1	90.1	5.4
	Part-time (PT)	484.2	460.9	- 23.3	- 4.8
<b>Unemployed</b>		167.5	144.1	-23.4	-14.0
<b>Part-time - <u>Not</u> underemployed</b>		384.5	345.7	- 38.8	- 10.1
<b>Part-time - Underemployed</b>		99.7	115.3	15.6	15.6
<b>Potential additional labour force<sup>1</sup></b>		32.0	111.1	79.1	247.2

(Source: CSO (2018), Labour Force Survey)

<sup>14</sup> 2019 European Semester Ireland Country Specific Report



**Chart 2: Reasons for women working part time**



**Source:** Derived from CSO QNHS Q2 2016

NWCI welcome the increased investment in apprenticeship schemes<sup>15</sup> however analysis indicates that in 2018, Irish apprentices are almost exclusively (85%) young men under 25 years of age. Of 14,953 apprentices completing training in October 2018, just 332 or 2% were women.<sup>16</sup>

A gender analysis of Budget 2019 investment in AMLP shows clear gender bias in end-recipients of ALMP investment including the high profile apprenticeship programme.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 3: Gender analysis of women’s access to budget 2018 ALMPs**

Budget 2018 ALMP	Eligibility	% Women	% Men
Youth development	YGS-JSA/JB/	50	50
Rural Social Scheme	JSA/JB	20	80
JobsPlus	JSA/JB	33	67
Springboard	Wide	31	69
Apprenticeship	Wide	1	99
Average	Restrictions	27	73

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.fine Gael.ie/government-announces-e7-5-million-capital-funding-to-support-apprenticeship-programmes/>

<sup>16</sup> Solas-Pathways Apprenticeship Review Nov 2018

<sup>17</sup> NWCI-No Feminist Budget, Dr. M. Murphy

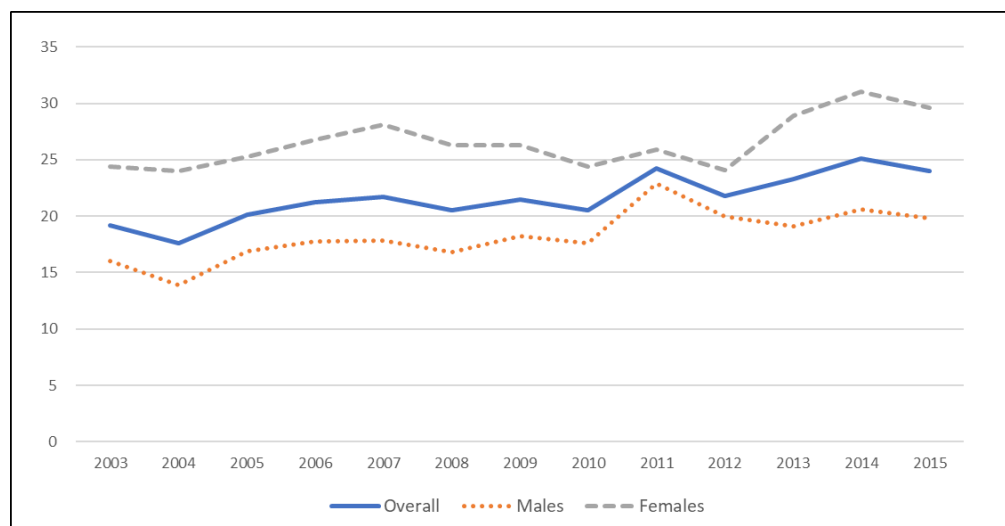
## Gender pay gap and low pay

The economic cost of being a woman, the gender pay gap, (GPG) stands at 14%.<sup>18</sup> This reality has serious implications for a woman’s lifetime earnings, her career decisions and her ability to live in older years with a decent income. We know the GPG almost trebles between 30’s and 40’s, when women are stepping away from the workforce for caring responsibilities (children or broader families).

The ‘unexplained’ part of the gender pay gap, actual pay discrimination will be significantly challenged by the new Gender Pay Gap legislation and we welcome its introduction. However, this must be matched by well-resourced monitoring and reporting structures.

Women make up a higher percentage of the low paid in Ireland. The LPC 2016 found 60% of minimum wage workers were female while the NERI (2015) report “*A Profile of Those on The Minimum Wage*”, found that 64.7% of minimum wage workers were women, while in 2014 50% of women workers earned less than 20,000 pa<sup>19</sup>. Part-time workers account for over 50% percent of all National Minimum Wage employees and approximately 80% of these are female. Women dominated employment sectors have been subject to aggressive casualisation and the erosion of pay and security. Research from the US and across the EU shows that collective bargaining mechanisms are critical to closing the gender pay gap<sup>20</sup> and DEASP should publicly support the development of these instruments in these female dominated sectors.

**Chart 2: Low pay by gender in Ireland 2012-2015**



Workers represent 14.3% of all those in poverty.<sup>21</sup> Without social transfers and in-work payments such as WFP many households would not be able to survive. The cost to DEASP of these in-work supports is up to €2b, essentially a subsidy for poor quality employment. These workers face

<sup>18</sup> The GPG widened from 12.6% in 2006 to 14.4% in 2012. The decrease to 13.9% is welcome but hardly substantial

<sup>19</sup> LPC (2016) The preponderance of women on the national minimum wage

<sup>20</sup> The Gender Wage Gap:Blau Kahn (2016) IZA

<sup>21</sup> SJI Poverty in Focus 2019

unpredictable schedules and can find themselves penalised by payment structures and rules based on daily work patterns that are outside their control.

Despite the existence of protective laws, the ESRI study *Pregnancy At Work: A National Survey* found that 30% of those who worked while pregnant experienced discrimination. A similar figure reported problems relating to maternity leave.<sup>22</sup>

## NWCI recommends

- **Gender-proof new labour activation initiatives and review their gender impact before scaling up**
  - Ensure a gender sensitive monitoring of the activation initiatives and ensure workers are not pressured to increase hours while maintaining care obligations
  - Ensure no-one required to accept insecure, non-fixed hour jobs as 'reasonable offer of work'
  - Recognise atypical work patterns by calculating unemployment on hours rather than days per week
- **Champion Quality, Decent work**
  - DEASP publicly support collective bargaining instruments
  - Improve take home incomes at source by supporting raising wages and taking action against precarious, low paid work
  - Support additional legislation and regulation to tackle if and when contracts, bogus self-employment contracts and support banded hour contracts
  - Attach social criteria, clauses and conditionality to Employer incentive schemes
  - Advocate for adequate resourcing of government procurement processes to proactively ensure living wage social clauses in key sectoral procurement processes in female dominated sectors.
- **Actively champion an increase in Minimum Wage and an LPC focus on In-Work poverty**
  - Drive Cross-Departmental cooperation to promote 'Living Wage' through policy and practice.
- **Make NWCI a full member of the Low Pay Commission**
- **DEASP & DCYA work together to ensure the National Childcare Scheme supports women to return to learning, training and work**
- **Resource the commissioning of an independent nationwide study on the prevalence and nature of pregnancy discrimination and disadvantage in the workplace.**

## Gender sensitive pension reform

Ireland's gender pension gap stands at 26% and gender-sensitive pension reform is a priority for NWCI and our members. We welcome the government's response to gender-based inequalities and anomalies in the state pension system through the introduction of a Home Caring Period in

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<sup>22</sup> *Pregnancy At Work: A National Survey*, which was undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI 2011)

combination with a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) <sup>23</sup>. However, the approach remains piecemeal, with government tinkering on the edges of the system rather than making transformative changes to achieve greater coverage and greater equality.

All women must have direct individual access to the state pension which takes into account the important role women play in providing unpaid care<sup>24</sup>. Budget 2020 should deliver a full home caring credit with retrospective application. This practical recognition of the social and economic contributions of care should also serve as a re-entry credit. Longer periods of caring than currently envisaged, must be recognised in the final design of the TCA to recognise carers of adults and children with disabilities who may require a lifetime of care. It is critical that the contribution requirement is not extended to 40 years, which would have significant detrimental impacts on women in retirement, in particular migrant women and women with disabilities.

NWCI is increasingly concerned about the emphasis on increasing occupational, second tier pensions through the development of the auto-enrolment scheme. Resources devoted to the development of this will be diverted from first tier pensions without a clear analysis of how this will impact women and workers in low-paid, part-time and precarious employment, predominantly also women<sup>25</sup>. Women are less likely to benefit from occupational<sup>26</sup> or private<sup>27</sup> pensions in old age. National pension policy must explicitly recognise and address this without disregard for the fundamental importance of the first pillar.

## Universal State Pension

NWCI concurs with Social Justice Ireland (SJI)<sup>28</sup>, Age Action Ireland (AAI), and the Pension Policy Research Group (PPRG) that a universal pension system which gives women equal access to a comprehensive pension guarantee is that the best way to support equality in older age. NWCI continues to call for the introduction of a universal pension based on residency, which would guarantee equal access to a comprehensive pension for all. NWCI rejects the idea of substantial cuts on the rate of payment to fund a universal pension. A significant proportion of the €2.39 billion<sup>29</sup> currently spent on private tax relief, 70% of which goes men as the highest earners, should be reinvested in first tier state pension. We note that this funding option is not considered to fund a universal pension in the DEASP 2018 Total Contributions Approach (TCA) consultation document.

## NWCI Recommends

- **Initiate the introduction of a universal state pension**
- **End Tax reliefs on private pensions**
  - Begin by removing marginal rate tax reliefs

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<sup>23</sup> We are concerned by recent data from the DEASP that indicates that of the 58,979 review decisions flowing from these changes that have been made, 33,738 have received no increases, a rate of just over 57pc

<sup>24</sup> The State will continue to depend on Non-Contributory Pensions which requires women to undergo a means test, and the Widows Pension, which does not provide for women in their own right, but rather due to their status as a wife or civil partner.

<sup>25</sup> Insecure & Uncertain'; Precarious Work in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, ICTU 2017

<sup>26</sup> The gender gap in occupational pensions is at 13.1%, which is relatively high by EU levels

<sup>27</sup> ESRI figures show private pension coverage at 94% in the highest income decile and as low as 18% in the lowest deciles

<sup>28</sup> A Universal State Social Welfare Pension: Recognising the Contribution of all our Senior Citizens SJI 2018

<sup>29</sup> Collins, Supporting Pension Contributions Through the Tax, System Outcomes, Costs and Examining Reform

- **Resource & publish a gender impact assessment (GIA) of the TCA & Auto-enrolment<sup>30</sup>**
- Resource a GIA on projected increases in state pension age & subsequent pension reforms
- **Deliver a full Homecarers credit that actively recognises the contribution of care and also serves as a re-entry credit**
- Apply to women born before 1946
- **Ensure the TCA is limited to 30 years for the maximum pension**

## Value care work and Support women's economic independence

NWCI welcomes the Council of the EU majority adoption of a Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers. Care work is essential to the common good and performs vital social and economic functions, but it is neither prioritised nor sufficiently supported. Ireland's care policies and services for children, dependents, and older people, and statutory supports including maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions, lags behind many of our EU partners. Women continue to provide the majority of unpaid care hours, 98% of those looking after the home/family were women in 2016.<sup>31 32</sup> 13.1% of those classified on home duties are poor and this group is disproportionately female.<sup>33</sup>

### Family Care Provision

We welcome recent additional support in training, support and grants from DEASP. Family carers, predominantly women should have certainty that basic supports will be in place to maintain their own health, to obtain respite support and to have access to financial support while they undertake care.

Homecare has been progressively privatised in Ireland to a largely unregulated home care industry, with high fees, varied quality and standards of homecare provision, and poor terms and conditions for workers. Domestic and personal care workers are often migrant women workers, and women of colour, subject to the most extreme instances of precarious work and exploitation. NWCI is particularly concerned that we must not become dependent on the exploitation of some of the most vulnerable women workers to meet our personal, familial and community care needs.

The Department of Health's plan to establish a statutory homecare scheme by 2021 is welcome, but interim measures are required.

### NWCI Recommends (DEASP)

- **Increase Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit to 2009 levels (minimum)<sup>34</sup>**
- **Increase carer study/work hrs while receiving a carer payment from 15 to 18.5 hours.**

<sup>30</sup> NWCI understands a form of GIA may have been undertaken for TCA development by KPMG as part of its actuarial review of the Social Insurance Fund-if this is so we request release of the department's assessment, conclusions, etc.

<sup>31</sup> CSO (2017) *Women and Men in Ireland*

<sup>32</sup> See Pension Section for NWCI recommendations on Homecare credit

<sup>33</sup> SJI Poverty in Focus 2019

<sup>34</sup> Family Carer's Ireland PBS-2019 Carer's Allowance of €219 is €1.50 less than in 2009, equalised value at 7.5% to CPI is €237 in 2019.

- **Increase the earnings disregard for Carer's Allowance so that all those on average industrial incomes can qualify**

## **Invest in work-life balance policies**

There is a distinct failure of the Irish social security system to recognise care work - a person is deemed to be a new entrant if they have not contributed to the social insurance system for the previous two years. Those that may wish to combine care work with part-time waged work, predominantly women, find that they are not eligible for social welfare payments (i.e. Jobseekers Allowance), are not registered as unemployed and are, therefore, discriminated against in terms of welfare income and opportunities to participate in training programmes.

### **Parental Leave**

NWCI acknowledge the introduction of paid parental leave for a period of two weeks that is planned to extend on a phased basis over time. Budget 2020 should further resource the progressive introduction of this leave. NWCI recommends that the provisions of the Act give one-parent families the same leave entitlements as two-parent families to transfer part of the leave to other designated persons.

### **Paternity Leave**

NWCI welcomed the introduction of two weeks paternity leave was an important step to recognising the role of fathers and the need to achieve a greater distribution of care between women and men. NWCI calls for a progressive increase in the period of paid paternity leave which would allow more fathers to care for their young children and push this out of the domain of 'women's work' for good.

### **Carers Leave**

In Ireland, there is an entitlement to full-time' carer's leave, rather than an annual allocation of days as per the proposed EU Directive on Work-Life Balance. Balancing caring responsibilities with work is a growing problem for many workers, in particular women aged over 40.

## **NWCI Recommends**

- **A full & retrospective Homecare Credit**
- **Introduce four months' paid parental leave**
- **Extend paid paternity leave to 1 month**
- **Introduction of six paid days of carers' leave**

[www.nwci.ie](http://www.nwci.ie)