

Budget 2021

A Feminist Recovery Plan - Summary

10 Principles for a Feminist Economic Recovery

1. Champion a new economic model that takes account of equality, human rights and environmental sustainability and guarantees a decent quality of life for all
2. Gender and equality proof all decisions on expenditure and revenue raising, recognising the reality of intersecting forms of discrimination on women's lives
3. Reject austerity and fund investment through progressive, gender sensitive taxation
4. Deliver Universal Basic Services on the basis of need, not ability to pay. Begin with investing in the care economy, health and in housing
5. Reform the welfare state so that it counts women in by recognising and rewarding all forms of participation and work and providing individual access to income and supports
6. Challenge low paid and precarious work. Transition to a flexible work model, including options such as a four-day week to bring a proper balance to our lives and protect our fragile environment.
7. Address the economic equalities experienced by working class women, lone parents, women of colour, Traveller women, Roma, women seeking asylum, disabled women and carers.
8. Care jobs are green jobs. Recognise the role that care plays in a just transition and reorient our economy away from environmentally damaging and unsustainable practices
9. Recognise the economic and social impact of domestic and sexual violence and end the scourge of violence against women
10. Improve decision making by ensuring women in all our diversity are at the table in decisions regarding social and economic policy

Introduction

Budget 2021 is being implemented in the context of a global pandemic which has revealed and reinforced prevailing inequalities; our dependence on the underpaid and undervalued care labour of women; our reliance on institutions to house those society positions as problematic; the dangers and inefficiencies of privatised, essential public services; the inadequacies in our social welfare system; and the prevalence of low paid and precarious work.

We cannot have a repeat of the last financial crash, where policy choices resulted in long term social harm from which many communities have still not recovered. Women bore the brunt of austerity measures, with the greatest impacts on the most marginalised women. As we build towards a recovery, we must ensure that women do not continue to be disproportionately impacted as we try to live with the pandemic over the next year. **We need a feminist economic recovery plan if we are to build a society that is better for both women and men - a plan that is based on public services, fair taxation, valuing the care economy, equality and sustainability.**

Invest in an equal and sustainable future

Investment, provided for through borrowing and increasing our tax take, must take priority over reducing the deficit. Tax plays a key role in shaping Irish society through funding our public services and social infrastructure, supporting economic activity and progressively redistributing resources. Ireland needs to increase its tax take in a fair, progressive, sustainable and gender sensitive way.

- Introduce a wealth tax, a financial transaction tax and a minimum effective corporate tax rate
- Standard rate tax relief on pensions and invest the savings in a universal pension for all
- Remove fossil fuel subsidies and ensure tax policy matches our goals on a low carbon economy
- Ensure supports to businesses are conditional on improvements for workers

Embed gender and equality budgeting

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and marginalised groups underscores the need

for gender and equality proofing. Effective gender budgeting consider how intersecting oppression and discrimination impacts on the experience of a policy or budgetary decision.

- Gender and equality proof Budget 2021 and the National Economic Plan; publish an intersectional gender equality impact statement with the Budget
- Establish a training fund for government departments to support gender budgeting implementation and fund NWC & other civil society organisations to engage with the process

Create a new model of work and welfare

Our work and welfare systems were built for a different era on a male breadwinner understanding of the labour market and social welfare systems. A return to 'normal' will not support women. A new approach must focus on creating decent, sustainable well-paid jobs, not jobs at any cost.

Ensure active labour market policy works for women by:

- Ending the limitation rule for Jobseekers Allowance so both partners in couples have an individual payment and access to activation and educational supports
- Increase investment in labour market programmes; invest in care as a key element of this, helping to make care a more attractive career and address unmet need in a 'green' way
- Develop a gender and equality proofed labour market activation plan to address the challenges post- COVID-19 and provide targeted supports to Travellers, carers and disabled people
- Acknowledge care by allowing those working part time to be eligible for Jobseekers payments

Promote decent work by:

- Ensuring work provides a Living Wage. Start by introducing it for all Early Years Educators in 2020
- Regularising the situation of migrant workers
- Resourcing implementation of the Gender Pay Gap Information Bill and supporting collective bargaining as a key mechanism to address the gender pay gap and other inequalities.

Ensure work life balance and recognise care by:

- Increasing the rate of maternity, paternity and parents benefit to €295 per week
- Increasing the duration of paid parents leave to 12 weeks per parent, increase paid paternity leave to 4 weeks and converting existing unpaid parental leave to paid leave
- Resourcing a full Homecare Credit and introducing six paid days of carers' leave
- Examining the reorganisation of work, reduced working time and the 4-day week

End poverty by:

- Benchmarking social welfare payments to the minimum essential standard of living; Start by increasing payments by €8 and qualified child payments by €3 (under 12's) and €10 (aged 12 up)
- Implementing targeted supports for women most at risk of poverty: lone parents, disabled people, Travellers and Roma, carers and people seeking asylum

End the Gender Pensions Gap

Women are more likely to be in low paid, part time jobs on precarious contracts, making it difficult to collect sufficient PRSI contributions to be eligible for the full State pension. Our pension system does not address the inequalities and discrimination experienced by older women who were expected by Irish society to shoulder the full burden of caring responsibilities but who were equally expected to do this work for nothing.

- Introduce a universal State Pension system which will guarantee income adequacy in older age
- Establish the Commission on Pensions and work with the Stop 67 Campaign on the pension age
- Ensure all pensions reform is gender and equality proofed, including auto-enrolment schemes
- Deliver a full Homecarers credit that actively recognises the contribution of care

Deliver Universal Basic Services

The provision of Universal Basic Services (UBS) is the most effective way to meet society's collective needs and to tackle the underlying causes of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Provision of UBS would lessen the impact of high rent and childcare costs in particular, for low paid workers. UBS are not a cost; they are an investment in a properly functioning and equal society and economy.

Universal health

As a result of gender inequality in society, women experience inequalities in health outcomes and in access to services. Women live longer, but have more years of ill-health with chronic diseases. As women have lower incomes and provide the majority of care, they are more reliant on public health services. Some women have poorer health outcomes and less access to services, including lone parents, asylum seekers, homeless women, women in prison and in addiction, Traveller and Roma women, LGBTQI+ women and disabled women.

- Fund the implementation of Sláintecare to deliver universal health
- Support women's health by funding the work of the Women's Health Taskforce
- Increase funding for mental health, including perinatal services and ensure gender sensitive community-based services are available
- Improve sexual and reproductive health services by introducing universal contraception, investing in cancer screening, developing IVF centres and progressing abortion care

Universal care

Care work is essential for a functioning economy and society but care is deeply gendered and extremely undervalued. Workers are some of the lowest paid in the economy while the unmet need for social care services is a fundamental barrier to the dignity, autonomy and inclusion of disabled and older women.

Deliver public, early childhood education and care by:

- Increasing investment in early years to 1% of GDP over the next decade
- Funding national afterschool care, supports for childminding and the Childcare Ireland agency
- Introducing a Living Wage for all Early Years Educators in 2020

Deliver universal, adult social care by:

- Providing a statutory right to home care and a budget for a person-centred home care scheme as well as a range of public care options to enable people to live their older years with dignity
- Increasing funding for Personal Assistance Services as a step towards providing a statutory right to a Personal Assistance Service for disabled people

Housing and accommodation

The housing and homelessness emergency continues to have a devastating impact on women and families throughout Ireland. Ireland now has the highest rate of female homelessness in the EU, with lone parents particularly at risk. Rebuilding Ireland has no gendered analysis of homelessness policy, of homeless data or public housing waiting lists.

- Increase public & affordable housing by delivering 100,000 homes on public land over 5 years
- Develop an Irish model of affordable cost rental housing
- Gender proof all homeless and housing strategies & establish gender sensitive support services for women living in homelessness
- Increase security of tenure through legislation to prevent evictions, a rent freeze for 3 years and minimum 5 year tenant protection/lease length of security for homeless HAP tenancies
- Establish & resource a statutory Traveller Agency and end Direct Provision

Change Ireland's record on violence against women

Violence against women (VAW) goes to the heart of women's equality in our society. 1 in 4 women will experience domestic and/or sexual violence in Ireland and disabled women and girls are particularly at risk. While demand for frontline VAW services is high and has continued to grow, funding has not kept pace and additional funding is required to ensure Ireland can fully implement the Istanbul Convention.

- Establish a National Rapporteur on Sexual Domestic and Gender Based Violence.
- Provide funding to combat VAW and support women, including refuge spaces, paid leave, support for disabled women and women in prostitution
- Increase funding for frontline services including Higher & Further Education initiatives
- Resource the development and implementation of Domestic Homicide Reviews and full roll out of Divisional Protective Service Units

Ensure Access to Justice

Access to justice is a critical pathway for the achievement of gender equality. Women living in poverty are disproportionately impacted by barriers to accessing justice and the impact of unresolved or unfairly resolved disputes on their livelihoods can be devastating for them.

- Develop a purpose-built family courts complex, a comprehensive Court Welfare Service and a national programme for supervised contact centres
- Establish a statutory maintenance agency to take child maintenance out of the court system
- Provide full redress to all Magdalene survivors, resource a National Archive of Historical Institutional and Care-Related Records and resource a review of the Adoption Act
- Fund a review of the civil legal aid scheme to improve access to legal services

Enable Women's Participation and Decision Making

Prior to COVID-19, the women's community sector was already underfunded and had not recovered from the most recent period of austerity. The role of community & women's groups is crucial in supporting the participation of women from different backgrounds, and in particular women most distant from decision making processes, into political and public life.

- Increase funding to NWC and the women's community sector, including provision of multiannual funding for organisations working with communities experiencing poverty, inequality, discrimination and social exclusion
- Provide funding for the Women's Parliamentary Caucus and to develop local caucuses
- Fund young women's leadership programmes
- Invest in rural transport with a focus on disabled people, dispersed populations and women.

Deliver a Green New Deal

International research has established that as climate impacts increase, existing inequalities will be worsened, with the worst impacts on women. We must lay the foundations for a low-carbon future, ensuring a just transition and measures to ensure communities do not experience further inequality.

- Just Transition legislation policies & investment must be gender, poverty and rural proofed
- Ensure Ireland's climate polluting emissions reduce by a minimum of 8% annually
- Introduce 'polluter pays' environmental tax measures, remove fossil fuel subsidies, divest from fossil fuel investment and establish no new fossil fuel exploration licenses
- Prioritise rural and urban public transport infrastructure, including cycling, over roads building
- Invest in our natural heritage & biodiversity.

Read our [full pre-budget submission](#)