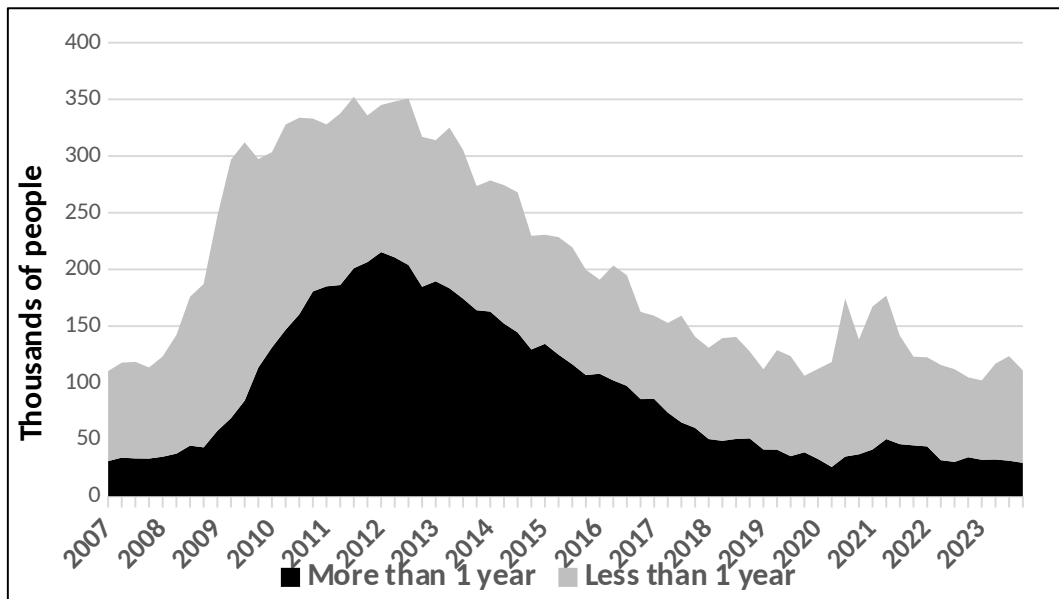


**Work**

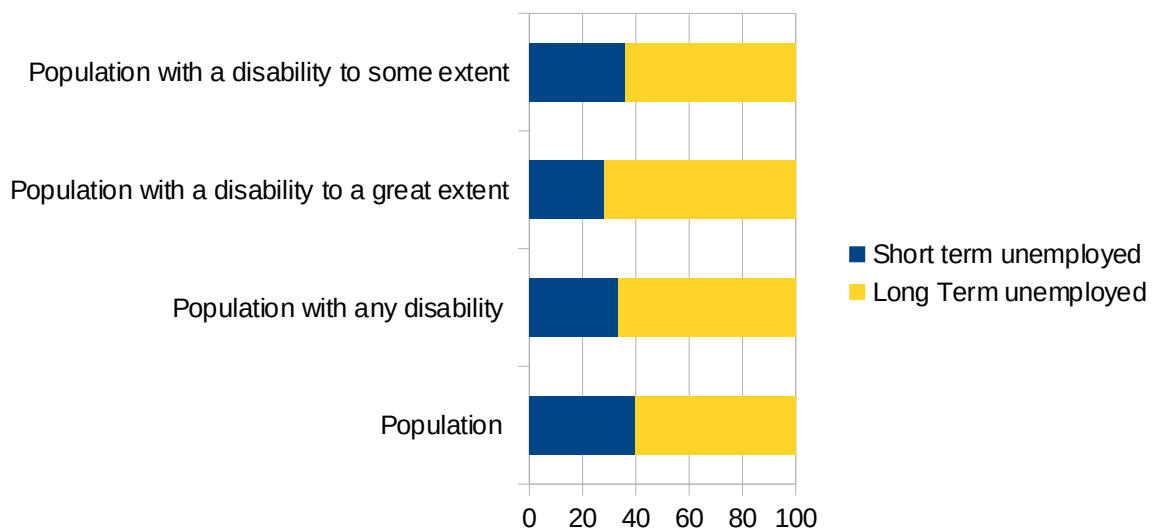
**Chart 5.1: Long-Term Unemployment in Ireland, 2007-2023**



Source: CSO, LFS on-line database.

Note: Long term unemployment is defined as those unemployed for more than one year

**Chart 5.2: Population aged 15 years and over experiencing a long-lasting condition or difficulty to any, some or a great extent by short and long-term unemployment, 2022**



Source: CSO, table/F4056

## Work

### Long-Term Unemployment

Given the current strength of the labour market, *Social Justice Ireland* believes that major emphasis should be placed on those who are trapped in long term unemployment – particularly those with the lowest education levels.

Previous experiences, in Ireland and elsewhere, have shown that many of those under 25 and many of those over 55 find it challenging to return to employment after a period of unemployment. This highlights the danger of long-term unemployment and the potential for the emergence of a structural unemployment problem. Given this, *Social Justice Ireland* believes that a major commitment to retraining and reskilling will be required in the years ahead.

The improvement in the number and rates of long-term (LT) unemployment are also highlighted in Chart 5.1. The number of long-term unemployed exceed 200,000 in 2011 but had fallen to less than 40,000 by late 2019. The 2023 figure, of 29,500, 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, *Social Justice Ireland* regrets that it is a policy area which receives limited attention. Addressing this ongoing issue remains an important challenge, and we outline our suggestions for targeted policy action later. However, 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 2023, 47 per cent of the unemployed had no more than second level

education, with 16 per cent not having completed more than lower secondary (equivalent to the junior certificate).

### Work and Disabled People

An ESRI report examined the employment transitions of people with a disability and found that among those of working age, most (82 per cent) had worked at some stage in their life but that 35 per cent had been without work for more than four years.<sup>1</sup>

It also found that were Government policy to facilitate the employment of people with a disability who want to work, some 35,600 additional people with a disability would join the active workforce; a figure equivalent to 1.5 per cent of the 2017 labour force.

This low rate of labour market participation among disabled people is of concern (Chart 5.2). Apart from restricting their participation in society, it also ties them into state-dependent low-income situations. It is not surprising that Ireland's poverty figures reveal that people who are ill or have a disability are part of a group at high risk of poverty.<sup>2</sup>

### Policy Priorities

- Recognise the challenges of long-term unemployment and of precarious employment and adopt targeted policies to address these.
- Reduce the impediments faced by disabled people in achieving and maintaining employment.
- Resource the up-skilling of those who are unemployed.

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS58\\_0.pdf](https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS58_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup><https://www.socialjustice.ie/article/more-559800-people-are-still-living-poverty-ireland-which-176912-are-children>