

# Election 2024 Briefing

## PEOPLE AND PARTICIPATION



### The present situation

#### *On Demographic Change*

- There are currently 5.2 million people living in Ireland.
- Fertility rates are declining, while life expectancy has increased, reaching 80.5 (males) and 84.3 (females) in 2021 (both higher than the EU 27 average).
- The dependency ratio is increasing, so that by 2050, there will be just over 2 people of working age for every one person aged 65+.

#### *On Diversity and Migration*

- 20% of those usually resident in Ireland were born elsewhere.
- 1 in every 5 persons employed is a non-Irish national and migration has been responsible for much of the post pandemic economic growth.
- Net migration has been positive since 2015, with more people entering the country than leaving it.
- 18% of total immigrants to Ireland in 2023 were from within the EU (excluding Ireland and the UK), and 57% were from the rest of the World.
- Just under two-thirds of immigrants to Ireland have a third-level education.
- The traveller community in Ireland still has some of the worst outcomes in longevity, educational attainment, mental and physical health, employment and financial inclusion.

#### *On Social Exclusion, Racism and Human Trafficking*

- Membership of an ethnic minority presents a barrier to social inclusion.<sup>1</sup>
- Despite recent improvements, Ireland needs to address hate speech and hate crimes; ethnic profiling; gender identity; the needs of Travellers;

asylum seeker application processes; and discrimination against those in seeking International Protection.

- The Garda Síochána Human Trafficking Investigation and Coordination Unit (HTICU) who are tasked with investigating human trafficking in 2023, reported opening 53 new investigations. 28 for sex trafficking, 16 for labour trafficking, including seven for forced criminality and two for forced begging, and nine for unspecified forms of trafficking.

#### *On Asylum and Direct Provision*

- Between January and June 2024, there were 8,296 applications for international protection received to Ireland's International Protection Office, an increase of 75 per cent on the same period in 2023.
- 32,460 people, 8,824 of whom are children were living in 321 International Protection Accommodation Centres as of 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024.
- As of 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024, there were 2,805 eligible male International Protection Applicants waiting an offer of accommodation.

#### *On Participation and Democracy*

- The Community & Voluntary Sector is the only one not to have funding restored since the Recession.
- The estimated value of volunteering work is €2.5 billion (using the average wage), based only on organisations required to register with the Charities Regulatory Authority.
- Public Participation Networks (PPNs) have been established in every Local Authority area and now have over 18,000 member organisations.
- The National Economic Dialogue is welcome, but insufficient to address the full range of issues.

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<sup>1</sup> McGuinness et al. (2018): *Profiling Barriers to Social Inclusion in Ireland, The Relative Roles of Individual Characteristics and Location*, ESRI, Dublin

## How can we become a more inclusive society?

A society which ensures that all people from different cultures are welcomed in a way that is consistent with our history, our obligations as world citizens and with our economic status, and that every person has a genuine voice in shaping the decisions that affect them.



## Things a new Government can do to develop and support a just and inclusive society

- Invest in the retention of young graduates and programmes to assimilate skills obtained while abroad.
- Fully implement the recommendations of the Commission for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination within a reasonable timeframe.
- Resource each Local Authority with the assistance of the Public Participation Networks to deliver a Voluntary Local Review of the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030.
- Research and resource Financial Literacy programmes aimed at marginalised communities.
- Fully implement the recommendations of the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report.
- Reinstate funding for Traveller-specific initiatives.
- Adequately resource the Public Participation Network (PPN) structures for participation at Local Authority level and ensure capacity building is an integral part of the process.
- Promote deliberative democracy and a process of inclusive social dialogue to ensure there is real and effective monitoring and impact assessment of policy development and implementation using an evidence-based approach at local and national level.
- Increase funding to the Community and Voluntary Sector.
- Implement the Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities Strategy.
- Resource an initiative to identify how a real participative civil society debate could be developed and maintained.
- Fund mis and dis-information training at the earliest educational level.
- Ensure resourcing to deliver on the Day Report as a matter of urgency.
- Resource Local Integration officers across every local authority to provide integration supports across the community.