

Coimisiún na hÉireann  
um Chearta an Duine  
agus Comhionannas  
Irish Human Rights and  
Equality Commission

**CEDAW  
Report  
2025**

# What is CEDAW?

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (‘CEDAW’) is the international treaty on the human rights of women and girls. It defines what discrimination against women is, and explains what countries need to do to end gender discrimination.

## **How does CEDAW impact Ireland?**

Ireland signed up to CEDAW in 1985. This means that the CEDAW Committee periodically reviews Ireland’s progress on eliminating discrimination against women and girls and assesses how the State is aligning its policies and laws with CEDAW.

## **What is Ireland doing to ensure equal treatment of women and girls?**

Government efforts have failed to have a tangible impact on improving the lives of women and girls. This is due in part to weak monitoring and implementation frameworks. Ireland’s National Strategy for Women and Girls expired in 2021, a new strategy is expected in 2025. The long delay in developing a new strategy highlights that gender equality is not being prioritised.

## **IHREC Recommendations**



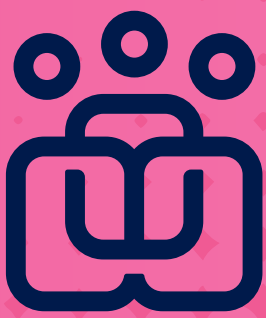
Ensure the new National Strategy for Women and Girls and its action plan are underpinned by resourced implementation and accountability structures, and prioritises evidence, collaborative governance and intersectionality.



Actively review and revise the new National Strategy for Women and Girls and its action plan to implement the CEDAW Committee’s concluding observations from its 2025 review.



Conduct an independent and comprehensive baseline study of Irish legislation with a view to designing and adopting all measures necessary to facilitate the full transposition of the rights within CEDAW into Ireland’s legal system.



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# Domestic Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV)

## Issues

### **Policy and Legal Framework**

Policy and legislative developments have failed to adequately support DSGBV victims and survivors.

### **Justice System**

Access to justice is difficult for victims and survivors because of the complexity of the court system. Systems are not centralised, so victims often have to go through multiple courts to vindicate their rights.

### **Support Services**

Specialist services continue to be inadequately resourced, so victims and survivors are left without accessible support and refuge accommodation.

## **IHREC Recommendations**



Urgently prioritise implementing the GREVIO baseline evaluation recommendations through the current and new National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.



Provide a wrap-around system of both court and non-court supports for DSGBV victims and survivors.



Significantly scale up providing accessible refuge accommodation and resourcing specialist support services for all DSGBV victims and survivors.



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# Poverty

## Issues

### **Poverty**

The majority of women living in poverty today have experienced intergenerational poverty. 4.8% of women live in consistent poverty. This persists due to the State's lack of consistent poverty reduction measures. Lone parent households, headed by women, and low-income families are more at risk of poverty.

### **Social Protection**

Women suffer disproportionately from an inadequate, arbitrary, and overly bureaucratic social welfare system, which is not benchmarked against the cost of living or indexed against national wages.

### **Homelessness**

Rates of women's homelessness remain persistently high. Lone parent families headed by women make up a large proportion of families in homeless accommodation.

## IHREC Recommendations



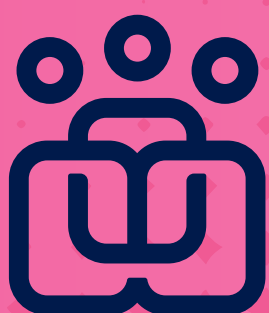
Gender-proof a national action plan to eradicate poverty, with targeted long-term supports for lone parents and low-income households.



Change from a charitable model of social protection to a rights-based model, which benchmarks social protection payments against rising cost of living or indexes them against national wage to lift people out of poverty.



Gender-proof the response to homelessness to ensure gender-sensitive and accessible prevention, support and housing services are available and appropriately resourced, and develop an action plan to end homelessness by 2030.



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# Health

## Issues

### **Access to Abortion Services**

Despite legalising abortion, significant barriers remain for many women to equitably access free, safe and legal abortion in Ireland. The recommendations of the Independent Review of legislation have not been addressed or implemented.

### **Maternal Health**

For every 100 women who become pregnant, approximately 31.2 will be hospitalised for one of the four main causes of maternal morbidity. Structurally vulnerable women are more at risk of being hospitalised.

### **Mental Health**

There is a lack of gender-sensitivity in mental health provision. There has been no analysis of the individual and group mental health impacts of discrimination, inequality and human rights abuses. There is also no understanding of the impact of the barriers faced by structurally vulnerable groups of women.

### **Transgender Women's Access to Health**

Transgender women and girls are forced to wait up to 10 years for accessible healthcare services.

## **IHREC Recommendations**



Implement the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018.



Ensure the new National Maternity Strategy delivers equal access to maternal healthcare and invest in preventing maternal morbidity and mortality amongst ethnic minority women.



Include intersectional targets and indicators on improving the mental health of structurally vulnerable women and girls across all relevant national equality and health strategies.



Provide rights-focused, evidence-based healthcare for transgender women and girls.





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# Public Participation

## Issues

### **Political Participation**

Ireland continues to face a gender imbalance in politics. The 40% Gender quota is being undermined in the political system. Only 25% of parliamentary representatives and 21.4% of cabinet ministers, are women, with 32.5% of constituencies having no women representatives at all. Women are only chairing 25% of Oireachtas Committees. There is a lack of transparency around candidate selection, party funding, funding of candidates and equality data on membership and candidates.

### **Barriers to Political Participation**

Childcare, cash, confidence, culture, and candidate selection processes, as well as gendered online hate-speech and political violence, continue to be the main barriers for women entering and remaining in politics.

### **Public and Private Leadership**

Women continue to be under-represented in leadership roles. Ireland is required to fully transpose the EU Directive on Gender Balance on Corporate Boards.

## IHREC Recommendations



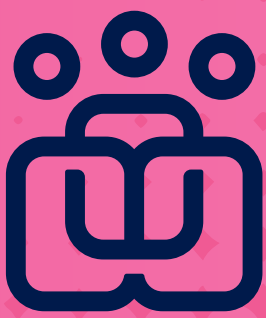
Increase the gender quota on political party candidate selection for general elections to 50%, extend the gender quota to Seanad and local elections, and take action against the undermining of quotas.



Ensure sufficient remuneration for women local councillors.



Ambitiously transpose the EU Directive on Gender Balance on Corporate Boards by introducing legislative quotas of at least 40% for corporate and State boards.



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# Hate-Speech

## Issues

### Hate Legislation

Reform of incitement to hatred legislation was excluded from the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 and the current legislation the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 is inadequate to tackle hate-speech.

### Online Hate

There is a rise in misogynistic and other discriminatory hate-speech online. There is evidence that attitudes towards gender equality in younger generations has regressed.

### Data

There is an incomplete picture of the prevalence of hate speech and crimes, due to low reporting by victims, inadequate data collection systems, reporting of hate offences by An Garda Síochána and across the justice system. This may lead to an underestimation of women and girls who have been targeted by hate.

## IHREC Recommendations



Increased leadership is needed from public and political representatives to condemn hate speech in all its forms and prioritise reform of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989.



The Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 needs to be aligned with the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 to address hate online.



Disaggregated equality data should be published on hate offences and incitement to hatred offences.



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# Education

## Issues

### **Stereotypes in Education**

Sustained gender norms and stereotypes create additional barriers to education for women and girls. The manosphere's amplification of stereotypes and toxic masculinity must be addressed through a co-ordinated societal response, including education.

### **Ethnic Minority Women and Girls**

A lack of language supports, digital exclusion, and resourcing of community education programmes create barriers to participation in education for ethnic minority women and girls.

### **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)**

The RSE curriculum is outdated and needs to be reformed. It should include and expand information on gender equality, misogyny, LGBTQIA+ relationships, family planning, fertility, pregnancy loss and reproductive health.

## IHREC Recommendations



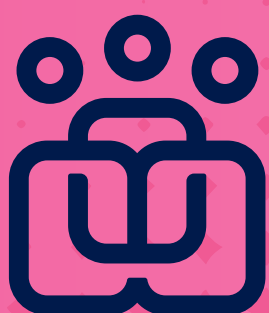
Gender norms and stereotypes should be eliminated from curriculums and tackled in the forthcoming National Convention on Education.



Adequate supports should be made available to all minority ethnic groups to enable them to continue education. Curriculums should adapt to reflect the diversity of Irish society.



Update the RSE curriculums and provide funding and support for continuous teacher professional development in RSE.



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# Climate

## Issues

### **Policy Framework**

The Climate Action Plan 2025 is not gender-proofed to make sure it has equal impacts on women and men. It contains no specific actions to address the impact of climate change on women and girls in Ireland.

### **Impact of Storms**

Storm surges and rising sea levels due to climate change have harmful impacts on women's and girls' rights. They decrease and restrict access to employment, education, transport, utilities and vital refuge accommodation and support services. This results in a potential increase in the rates of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

### **Participation**

Women and girls are often left out of climate decision-making processes at local, regional and national level. This particularly applies to disabled women and girls, women and girls in poverty, and women and girls in island, coastal and rural communities.

## **IHREC Recommendations**



Gender and poverty-proof all climate action and adaptation measures.

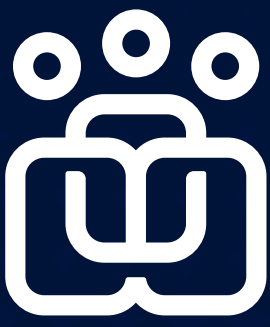


Include women and girls at all stages in decision-making processes on climate action and emergency planning.



Develop measures to ensure that refuge accommodation and support services are available and accessible to victims and survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in climate-related disasters.





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# Employment

## Issues

### **Gender Pay and Pension Gap**

Women are still paid less than men. The gender pay gap is currently 11.2%. The gender pension gap is 36%.

### **Access to Decent Work**

Older women, women seeking asylum, ethnic minority women and disabled women face additional barriers to decent work. These include inadequate supports, tokenism, international qualifications not being recognised, language requirements and zero-hour contracts.

### **Childcare**

Women continue to be disproportionately responsible for childcare. Ireland has a persistently poor track record on providing affordable public childcare, resulting in an overreliance on private providers to deliver care. Only a quarter of fathers take Parent's Leave, compared to two-thirds of mothers.

### **Sexual Harassment and Discrimination At Work**

Women face sexual harassment and gender and pregnancy-based discrimination at work which can have a devastating effect on the health, confidence, morale and performance of women affected by it.

## IHREC Recommendations



Ambitiously transpose the EU Pay Transparency Directive, broaden the gender pay gap legislation and mandate workplaces to publish disaggregated equality data on the gender pay gap.



Introduce a Universal State Pension.



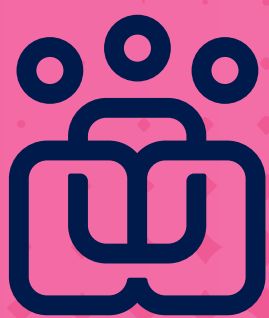
Proactively address institutional discrimination and structural barriers impacting women's access to decent work.



Transition to a public model of childcare by 2030.



Expand statutory parental entitlements and encourage take-up by men.



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# Institutional Abuse

## Issues

### Human Rights Abuses

The State's approach to addressing human rights abuses that occurred in hospitals, Mother and Baby institutions and Magdalene Laundries has failed women. This abuse is not 'historical'. Women and girls today still experience ongoing violations of their rights in Irish schools and residential institutions.

### Investigations

Investigations have been slow and not effective or accessible. This has furthered harm and rights violations for victims and survivors.

### Redress

Victims and survivors are entitled to hold the State to account and to receive trauma-informed and survivor-centred redress and reparations. Their voices have not been listened to. They have been denied justice and their right to an effective remedy. The unique needs of disabled women and girls who were abused have not been properly considered in redress and reparations.

## IHREC Recommendations



Overhaul the approach to investigations and reparations to ensure independent, survivor-centred, timely, accessible investigations and effective human rights compliant remedies for all survivors.



Remove arbitrary barriers to redress within the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme, including length of stay requirements.



Establish a new redress scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse in schools before 1991/1992.