



Labour: Working for Women

March 2021



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- Organisation of Working Time (Reproductive Health Related Leave) Bill 2021.
- [Health and Social Care Professionals \(Amendment\) Bill 2016.](#)
- [Period Product \(Free Provision\) Bill 2021.](#)

Labour's Vision for Women's Health

1.1. Cervical Cancer: Labour would fully implement the recommendations of the reports in response to the Cervical Check scandal and invest in specialist after-care clinics for women who are living with the lifelong aftereffects of gynaecological cancers.

1.2. Assisted Reproduction: Labour would provide public funding to ensure equality of access to IVF and other fertility treatments, and pass the long delayed Assisted Human Reproduction Bill.

1.3. Gynaecological Services: Labour would ensure funding for obstetric and gynaecological care is ringfenced, and that these essential health services are fully resourced to reduce waiting lists.

1.4. Provide for Free Contraception: Labour would ensure that comprehensive, free-of-charge reproductive healthcare is available for all, including long-term contraceptive options.

1.5. Enhance Early Screening: Labour would provide additional resources to clear the BreastCheck backlog and reverse the screening interval extension; and extend bowel, ovarian and uterine screening for the early detection of cancer.

1.6 HPV Vaccine Catch-up: Labour would roll out a 'catch-up' vaccination programme to provide the HPV vaccine to those yet to receive it.

1.7. Sexual Health: Labour would improve contraceptive consultations and screening for Sexually Transmitted Infections and make Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) more widely available.

1.8. Transgender Healthcare: Labour would improve access to healthcare for people who are transgender, and ensure all services and aspects of transgender care are accessible, comprehensive, and of high-quality.

1.9. Abortion: Labour would implement Safe Access Zones, ensure the widespread provision of abortion services around the country, and retain telemedicine that has been made available during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.10. Support for Survivors of the Mother and Baby Homes and Adopted Persons: Labour would ensure medical cards are provided to all survivors, and continue to engage with groups representing survivors of institutional abuse to ensure that they receive sufficient redress and that their human rights are vindicated.

1.11. Fund Mental Health and Primary Care Centres: Labour wants women centred mental health services and adequately resourced primary care services.

2. Workers' Rights: Women at Work

Labour's Action: Legislation for Women in the Workplace

- [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission \(Gender Pay Gap Information\) Bill 2017](#)
- [Student Nurses \(Pay\) Bill 2020](#)
- [Working from Home \(Covid-19\) Bill 2020](#)
- [Principles of Social Welfare Bill 2021](#)

Labour's Vision for Women in the Workplace

2.1. A New Childcare Model to support

workers: Labour will introduce a public childcare scheme and a Sectoral Employment Order to guarantee a minimum floor for wages in the sector, while developing a professional career pathway in recognition of the number of graduates in the sector.

2.2. Support for Carers: Labour will support carers, implement a Carers Strategy, and improve pay and conditions for those working in home help.

2.3. Recognition for Informal Carers: Labour would start the process of introducing paid Carer's Leave, in line with the new Work-Life Balance Directive and increase State caring support for older people to remove pressure from women to undertake unpaid caring roles.

2.4. Flexible Working Options: Labour would introduce a legal right to flexible working hours to facilitate work-life balance for parents and carers.

2.5. Pay for Teachers: Labour will end the two-tier pay system for teachers and school secretaries in primary and secondary education.

2.6. Combat Poverty Agency: Labour will restore the Combat Poverty Agency, which was twice abolished by Fianna Fáil and previously restored by Labour.

2.7. Diversity in the Workplace: Supporting People with Disabilities: Labour would fully implement the employment strategy for people with disabilities and develop incentives and supports so that more employers take on workers with disabilities.

2.8. Making Work and Retirement Pay: Labour would initiate a new process to ensure our tax and welfare systems are aligned and address the specific pension issues that impact on women.

2.9. Women in Leadership Roles: Labour would introduce a legally binding minimum quota of 30% for non-executive directors on the boards of listed companies and require businesses to publish the gender breakdown of company directors in their annual reports.

3. Support for Women with Children

Labour's Vision for Women with Children

3.1. Better Maternity Services: Labour would implement the National Maternity Strategy, retain the new National Maternity Hospital in State control, and ensure all maternity services in Ireland are safe, well-resourced and sensitive to the varied needs of women.

3.2. Breastfeeding support for new Mothers:

Labour would develop and expand services for breastfeeding mothers to both encourage and support mothers to breastfeed.

3.3. End poverty risk for single mothers and their children: Labour will increase the Qualified Child Payment for Social Welfare payments and create a dedicated Departmental team focused solely on eradicating child poverty.

3.4. Increased Parental Leave: Labour would ensure the extra three weeks of parental leave from Budget 2021 is introduced and continue to expand this entitlement over time so that combined with other benefits it covers the first year of a child's life.

3.5 A New Childcare model: Labour would develop a universal public childcare system that will support women's ability to engage in the workforce and reduce costs for parents.

3.6. Cut education costs for parents: Labour would make education *truly* free for parents.

3.7. Assessment and Early-Intervention for Children: Labour would redirect resources towards early intervention for young children who have disability and special needs, including neurodiversity, to reduce waiting times and improve outcomes.

3.8. End Gender Segregated Schools: Labour would analyse the benefits of mixed-gendered education and phase out the development of single-gender schools.

3.9. Supporting Women in Addiction with Children: Labour will support women with children by ensuring timely access to safe, non-judgemental, and high-quality addiction services.

3.10. Mothers in Prison: Labour would ensure that non-custodial sentences will be presumed for those convicted of minor non-violent offences. We will provide more non-custodial sentences and rehabilitation programmes and tighten probation structures.

4. Domestic and Gender Based Abuse Supports

Labour's Action: Protecting Against Domestic and Gender Based Abuse

- [Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020](#) (Coco's Law)

Labour's Vision to Protect Against Domestic and Gender Based Abuse

4.1. Paid Leave: Labour would provide up to two weeks of statutory Domestic Violence Leave to victims of abuse.

4.2. Support for Migrants and Asylum Seekers: Labour would regularise undocumented children, young people and adult workers.

4.3. Roma and Traveller Women: Labour will maintain a zero-tolerance stance on racism and xenophobia, including anti-Traveller prejudice and gender-based abuse.

4.4. Housing Supports for Women Experiencing Domestic Abuse: Labour would amend social housing rules to better support women experiencing domestic violence.

5. Housing

Labour's Vision for a Housing System that Supports Women

5.1. Fairness for Renters: Labour would introduce long-term leases for renters with rent certainty, and we will stop unfair evictions.

5.2. Make Housing Affordable: Labour would hold a referendum on a right to housing.

5.3. Housing Supports for Roma and Traveller Women: Labour would require local councils to achieve targets for specialised forms of housing and require the full use of grants for Traveller accommodation.

6. Women in Sport

Labour's Vision for Women in Sport

6.1. Disparity in Sport Funding: Labour has welcomed the announcement by the Chair of the Oireachtas Sport Committee that the committee will examine the funding disparity in sports funding.

6.2. Representation in Sport: Labour would require at least 40% representation of women in sport governing bodies, and will set targets for greater participation in sport by women and girls.

6.3. Pay Ireland's Female Players: Labour wants Ireland to follow in the footsteps of the Brazilian and English FA to ensure female players are paid the same as their male counterparts.

6.4. Football Inclusion and Community

Grassroots: Labour would implement an ambitious strategy to save community grassroots football and to strengthen football's role in social inclusion, following the serious financial problems in the Football Association of Ireland (FAI).

7. LGBT+

Labour's Action: Legislating for LGBT+ Equality

- [Criminal Law \(Sexual Offences\) Act, 1993](#)
- Same-Sex Marriage Referendum 2015
- [Gender Recognition Act 2015](#)

Labour's Vision for a LGBT+ Friendly Ireland

7.1. LGBT+ Strategy: Labour would develop a stronger national LGBT+ strategy, to focus on tackling hate crimes, discrimination in schools and workplaces, and improving the mental and sexual health of LGBT+ people such as introducing LGBT inclusive sexual education.

7.2. Ban Hate Crime: Labour would make hate crime illegal, such as racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

7.3. Gender Recognition Act 2015 Reform: Labour would amend our Gender Recognition Act 2015 to address identified shortcomings, such as lack of recognition of non-binary people.

7.4. Inclusion: Labour would promote greater inclusivity in the Defence Forces, including recruitment and retention of more women, members of minority communities and members of the LGBT+ community.

8. Women in Politics

Labour's Action: Amplifying Women in Politics

Senator Ivana Bacik's report on '[Women's Participation in Politics](#)' for the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice identified obstacles to women's equal participation in politics.

Labour's Vision: We Need Female Representation

Labour is committed to amplifying the female voice in Irish politics. Women are significantly outnumbered in our elected institutions and the Irish Government, and are therefore underrepresented in the decision-making processes.

8.1. Remove Barriers for Women in Politics:

Labour will continually call for 50:50 principle in Cabinet appointments and for the right to maternity and parental leave for women in politics.

9. International Solidarity

Labour stands in solidarity with women all over the world who suffer from any form of discrimination, abuse and mistreatment. Labour will stand in solidarity with and support the campaigns of women's rights movements in every country that seek to end such discrimination.

Introduction

For more than 100 years, the Labour Movement has championed feminist campaigns, but much remains to be done to vindicate women's rights, especially in the context of the pandemic. Covid-19 has exacerbated gender inequalities here in Ireland. The Labour Party wishes to mark International Women's Day 2021 by shedding light on the inequalities and difficulties faced by women in Ireland. Labour will tackle these realities head on through evidence based policies in the hope of bettering life for *all* women in Ireland.

Women perform the bulk of unpaid work in Ireland. Looking to pre-Covid-19 times, 2019 figures from the Economic and Social Research Institute found that, on average, **women spend double the time of men on caring and more than twice as much time on housework**. Along with this, women in Ireland spent about 20 hours more per week on care and housework than men. This 'double day' additional burden for women has become more pronounced with the closure of schools and childcare facilities – and with reduced access to support systems such as friends and grandparents – during the pandemic. **For single parents, about 86% of whom are women**, the demands of quarantine are amplified further.

There is a danger that this inequity, mirrored by an **under-representation of women in senior decision-making roles of Government**, could result in an uncritical acceptance of the Status Quo and a 'new normal' that leaves women behind.

The reopening of childcare facilities and schools may alleviate some of the inequities at home, but the pandemic has reinforced the connection between a weak childcare model and gender inequality across workplaces. The female dominated early childhood education and care professions are one of many hard-working, low-paid, precarious workforces that have made enormous sacrifices to keep Ireland going through this unprecedented time. Part-time women workers with insecure contracts in hospitality, care work, and retail also come to mind; overwhelmingly female industries, with women clustered at the lower levels. Labour's Vision of a **Public Childcare System** will not only ensure high quality childcare is accessible to all, but employees within this area are paid a living wage.

The failure of successive governments to take responsibility for a **national childcare policy** has resulted in the emergence of a piecemeal, laissez-faire system with the highest proportion of private providers in the OECD.

93% of early years professionals who responded to a recent survey carried out by SIPTU's Big Start Campaign said that they will leave the sector within 5 years if there is no change in their pay and conditions, while 38% are already actively seeking work in another sector. **The Labour Party has a plan to introduce a living wage paying, universal, public childcare scheme, with fees pegged at the EU average – a third of what parents currently pay.**

The world is dependent on women's work and women are eager to get involved. Research from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) shows that 48.6% of women would like to return to their place of work after Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, compared to 31.7% of men. Yet in Ireland, **women still earn 14.4% less than men on average. Labour's Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (Gender Pay Gap Information) Bill 2017**, which has already passed through all stages of the Seanad and Second Stage of the Dáil, would compel companies with more than 50 employers to publish data on their gender pay gap, as well as introducing fines for those which did not take action to meet their obligations under the legislation.

In recognition of the complexities of life for many women workers, **Labour's Organisation of Working Time (Reproductive Health Related Leave) Bill** will provide a period of paid leave for

those who have suffered miscarriage, or who need to miss work to avail of reproductive healthcare, such as IVF.

Our appreciation for frontline and essential workers must manifest through improved working conditions, not platitudes about heroism. **Labour's Student Nurses (Pay) Bill 2021** would pay student nurses and midwives – a large percentage of whom are women – at the same rate as healthcare assistants, in recognition of the vital work they do. All workers deserve security, union recognition, and fair remuneration. Intersectional inequalities, not only of class but also of gender, must be addressed.

We need a feminist vision for the future.

Labour believes that all women deserve timely and equitable access to high-quality healthcare. **Early intervention and screening must be prioritised**, as well as the provision of **free, safe, legal and accessible reproductive healthcare and abortion**. Labour has fought, and will continue to fight, for the many women in the country **impacted by the CervicalCheck scandal**; we will never give up the fight for the women affected to be fairly treated.

Labour is committed to combatting the multitude of difficulties faced by women in poverty including period poverty.

Over 50% of young women and girls struggle to afford period products, women experiencing homelessness struggle to access sanitary products regularly, and women in direct provision have to fight to get adequate products. Recognition for period poverty is well overdue. Having pioneered the issue at a local Government level for years, **Labour's Period Products (Free Provisions) Bill would make period products freely available in schools, education institutions and public service buildings to ensure that nobody is caught out.**

In 1990, Labour's Mary Robinson rocked the system instead of rocking the cradle by becoming Ireland's first woman president. Today, on International Women's Day 2021, the Labour Party restates its unflinching commitment to fighting for women's rights and feminist causes.

Sign up, sisters!





Alan Kelly TD
Labour Party Leader

Foreword

Equality is a founding principle of the Labour Party. For decades, we have fought in government and outside of it for greater female representation and stronger gender equality throughout Irish society.

Ireland is a different country to that of our mothers and grandmothers. It has been gradually transformed with greater parity between women and men. We need to do so much more to tackle the gender disparity that exists within our society. It is wrong that women earn 14% less than their male colleagues. It is wrong that there is still not enough women in senior leadership roles. It is wrong that childcare costs are so prohibitive that many mothers are choosing between their career and their children.

Covid has been a disruptor in so many ways, especially for the women of Ireland, in the last year we have seen vital health screening such as CervicalCheck and BreastCheck suspended; childcare services were cancelled for many frontline workers at the height of the pandemic; maternity services became a lonely journey for many women with partners not being allowed to attend appointments.

As we still grapple with the pandemic and contemplate life after Covid, the Labour Party has produced a set of innovative proposals to deal with the challenges of life for women in an Ireland changed by Covid.

There is still much work to be done to deliver a truly equal Ireland and the Labour Party has the ambition to deliver this.





Ivana Bacik

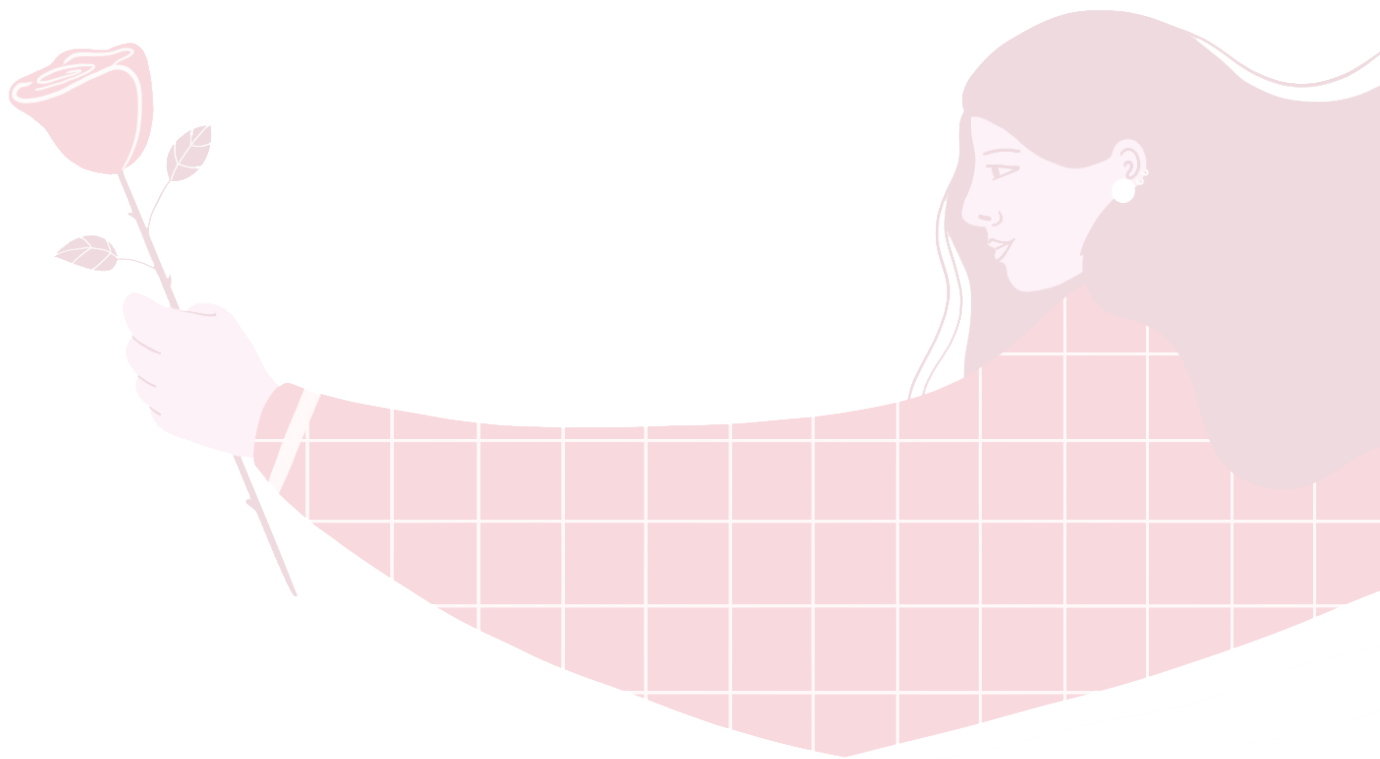
Labour Party Seanad
Group Leader

International Women's Day has a long and proud history, since its origins in the Socialist and labour movements of America and Germany during the first decade of the twentieth century. Formally adopted by the United Nations in 1977, the designated date of 8th March has been marked worldwide in many different ways over the decades. Here in Ireland, for many years it was a day of protest; a date upon which feminist campaigners would draw attention to the multiple discriminations and injustices faced by women in this country; like our lack of access to contraception, abortion and childcare; the glaring gender pay gap and absence of women in public life.

In more recent years, and particularly since the successful repeal of the Eighth Amendment in 2018, International Women's Day has become more of a celebration, both for and of women in Ireland. Across different workplaces, employers and firms have recognised it as a good way to acknowledge the immense contribution of women workers.

This year, the day will be marked very differently due to Covid-19 restrictions. While offices remain empty and many women in Ireland and elsewhere bear the brunt of the pandemic effect, it is time to return to seeing the 8th day of March as a date for protest and for positive action. It is time, in particular, to address the many structural gender equality issues in the workplace that have become increasingly visible as a result of Covid-19. We know that women are much more likely than men to have to juggle 'home-schooling' while 'working from home'; those women who remain in work as frontline workers often face immense difficulties in accessing childcare; and many more women previously working in hospitality, retail or related sectors remain out of work for the foreseeable future.

Labour, and the Labour Women section within the Party, has a strong track record on women's rights in the workplace. We put forward the first gender pay gap legislation, we initiated the gender quota policy which led to increased numbers of women elected to the Dáil, we have led on laws to tackle discrimination on grounds of gender, and we were at the forefront over campaigns for women's right to access contraception and abortion. This year, in keeping with our history, Labour is proposing another measure to advance women's employment rights, by providing for access to leave for matters relating to reproductive health. In this document, we outline a full set of the policies and initiatives which Labour has taken over many years – and will take in years to come – to advance the cause of women's rights in Ireland.



Women in the Labour Party

Our Elected Representatives:

Senator Ivana Bacik ★ Senator Annie Hoey
Senator Rebecca Moynihan ★ Senator Marie Sherlock
Cllr Maura Bell ★ Cllr Fiona Bonfield
Cllr Anne Breen ★ Cllr Aoife Breslin
Cllr Martha Fanning ★ Cllr Angela Feeney
Cllr Anne Ferris ★ Cllr Mary Freehill
Cllr Ciara Galvin ★ Cllr Alison Gilliland
Cllr Michelle Hall ★ Cllr Jane Horgan Jones
Cllr Pamela Kearns ★ Cllr Mary McCamley
Cllr Lettie McCarthy ★ Cllr Elaine McGinty
Cllr Marie Moloney ★ Cllr Juliet O'Connell
Cllr Elena Secas ★ Cllr Carrie Smyth
Cllr Joanna Tuffy ★ Cllr Seána Ó Rodaigh

Labour Legislating for Equality



Coco's Law

Student Nurses (Pay) Bill 2020

The Period Products (Free Provisions) Bill

Labour's Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2021

Sick Leave and Parental Leave (Covid-19) Bill 2020

Measuring Quality of Life in Ireland Bill

Working from Home (Covid-19) Bill

**Organisation of Working Time
(Reproductive Health Related Leave) Bill 2021**

**Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
(Gender Pay Gap Information) Bill 2017**



Labour's Vision for Women in Ireland: Policies for Change

1: Women's Health.

Labour believes that all women deserve timely and equitable access to high-quality healthcare. For too long, women's health and wellbeing have come second in Irish healthcare. There are countless healthcare tragedies in our recent history that disproportionately affect women in Ireland. To name a few; the CervicalCheck Scandal, the death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012, the failure of the Government to provide warnings over [Thalidomide](#), involuntarily subjecting women to the life changing symphysiotomy procedure in past decades, and the Mother and Baby homes.

Women today still feel that they are not listened to by healthcare professionals. Healthcare largely leaves women out of discourse, clinical trials, and research. [Studies](#) have shown that health related issues as experienced by men are considered the 'norm' and so if experienced differently by women are considered an 'irregularity'; this is a dangerous rhetoric that perpetuates the risk of healthcare issues for women including delayed diagnosis, misdiagnosis, and maltreatment. The Labour Party is committed to developing a [sustainable healthcare system](#) and we want to ensure that the needs of women are at the forefront of our policies.

Labour's Action: Legislating for Women's Health

Organisation of Working Time (Reproductive Health Related Leave) Bill 2021: Currently, workers, and their partners, are required to use up annual leave if they require time off for early miscarriage or for fertility and other reproductive health related treatment. The Labour Party's Bill will provide an entitlement to reproductive leave of up to 20 days for workers who suffer a miscarriage, and up to 10 days for those seeking treatments like IVF. Aside from the practical supports for employees that this Bill would provide if enacted, it would also mark another step towards opening up conversations around reproductive health in Ireland, and information campaigns about the introduction of this new leave entitlement would encourage greater public awareness about this hidden issue.

Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2016: Labour condemns rogue crisis pregnancy services that mislead women on the facts of abortion and actively misinform in an attempt to force women past the 12-week limit. Nobody who is misled by these clinics should be forced to carry a pregnancy. Labour feels very strongly about this and have been advocating on the matter for many years. In 2016, Brendan Howlin introduced the aimed to ban rogue crisis pregnancy agencies.

Period Product (Free Provision) Bill 2021: Labour have consistently led in the area of free period products and will continue to push for a scheme providing universal access to free period products at national level. In January 2021, Labour Senator Rebecca Moynihan introduced the to the Seanad. As a Dublin City Councillor, Senator Moynihan's successfully campaigned to allocate council funding for the provision of free period products in all Dublin City Council Buildings.

If enacted, Senator Moynihan's Bill will oblige the Minister for Health to ensure that period products are freely available in all schools, colleges, educational facilities and public institutions to anyone who needs them.

Labour's Vision for Women's Health

1.1. Cervical Cancer

Labour is committed to supporting every woman who has been affected by the Cervical Check Scandal and ensuring access to a safe and reliable cervical cancer screening service in the future. Women affected by the scandal are fighting for their cases in the courts, for life saving medication like Pembro, and for medical cards. Although a tribunal has been set up to avoid court cases, it is clearly not fit for purpose. Labour would fully implement the recommendations of the comprehensive Scally, MacCraith, and Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists reports in response to the Cervical Check scandal, with oversight from the CervicalCheck Steering Committee.

Labour would also invest in specialist after-care clinics for women who are living with the life long aftereffects of gynaecological cancers.

We want to ensure every woman can access their free Cervical Check, but the pandemic has made this difficult for so many. Labour called on the Irish Health Service to publish an updated list of GPs and practices offering Cervical Checks. In the interim, Dr. Doireann O'Leary reached out to help us publish a starting list available on Instagram: [@alan_kelly_td](https://www.instagram.com/alan_kelly_td)

1.2. Women's Reproductive Health

The Labour Party would provide public funding to ensure equality of access to IVF and other fertility treatments. This has been delayed for too long and a timeline must be published by the Department of Health.

The Assisted Human Reproduction Bill still has not passed and there seems to be no timeline for its enactment. As a result, the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 only applies to couples where a female partner is to be the birth mother, that is, heterosexual and lesbian couples.

Labour would ensure that the proposed Assisted Human Reproduction Legislation is amended in line with the recommendations made by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health, giving particular attention to the inclusion of international surrogacy that meets the relevant criteria and standards, and changing the designation of a surrogate as the legal mother of a child born via surrogacy. This will ensure access to information on their genetic heritage in future years.

1.3. Gynaecological Services

Gynaecological services are often the poor relation of the health service and are frequently defunded due to budget over runs in hospitals. Women in some parts of the country are waiting two years or more for the diagnosis and treatment of serious gynaecological disorders such as uterine prolapse and endometriosis. Endometriosis alone is thought to affect approximately 100,000 people in Ireland. Labour would ensure funding for obstetric and gynaecological care is ringfenced, and that these essential health services are fully resourced to reduce waiting lists.

1.4. Provide for Free Contraception

Cost is a major barrier to contraception for women. The most common form of male contraception (the male condom) is also the only form of contraception that is available without a cost through some colleges, GP clinics, and STI clinics. According to the Department of Health's 2019 Report of the [Working Group on Access to Contraception](#), they are also the cheapest to buy at an annual cost of nearly €70. Female contraception is notably more expensive. According to the Working Group, the cheapest form of contraception for women is the Diaphragm, with an annual cost of €155. More common forms of female contraception have an even greater annual cost, such as oral contraceptive (€191), the IUD (€245), and the implant (€284).

The Programme for Government commits to providing free contraception over a phased period starting with women aged 17-25. While this is a welcome development, it is not acceptable that only a certain cohort of women would receive free contraception. There is still no timeline or dedicated national budget to deliver on this commitment despite the previous government saying it would be in place by 2021. Labour have been at the forefront of contraception matters for years. In 1993, as Minister for Health, Labour's Brendan Howlin legislated for the legal sale of condoms in Ireland. Labour would ensure that comprehensive, free-of-charge reproductive healthcare is available for all, including long-term contraceptive options.

1.5. Enhance Early Screening

Early detection is vital in the battle against cancers. BreastCheck screenings fell by two-thirds in 2020 and it could take up to three years to clear the backlog that has built up during the pandemic. Labour would provide additional resources to clear the backlog and seek to reverse the recent extension of the screening interval to three years, bringing it back to the recommended two years. There is also a general backlog in cancer services that will have to be addressed post-Covid.

We would also extend bowel screening to ages 55-74 in order to enhance early detection, save lives and ensure cost-effective treatment. We would also expand ovarian and uterine screening for early detection of cancer.

1.6. HPV Vaccine Catchup

The HPV vaccine, which protects against the Human Papilloma virus, is currently widely available through the school vaccination programmes. The virus can lead to cervical and other cancers if it exists in the body for a prolonged period of time. Labour wants to ensure that cancer preventing measures are available to a wide range of the population. Labour have campaigned heavily for the extension of the HPV vaccine to women and men up to age of 45 through a catch-up vaccination programme.

1.7. Sexual Health

Labour would improve contraceptive consultations and screening for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), particularly for at-risk groups, and pilot a scheme of mobile screenings in rural areas. We will make Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) more widely available as part of an initiative to tackle the increase in HIV/AIDS cases.

1.8. Transgender Healthcare

Labour will improve access to healthcare for people who are transgender, to speed up access to treatments such as hormone replacement therapy.

Labour supports the recommendations of the [Final Report of the Steering Committee on the Development of HSE Transgender Identity Services](#) which will ensure all services and aspects of transgender care are accessible, comprehensive, and of high-quality.

1.9. Abortion

Repealing the Eighth Amendment in May 2018 was a historic moment in Irish history. It is nearly three years since the monumental referendum, and the Government is due to review the operation of the abortion law in 2021. Labour will make a comprehensive submission when that review takes place.

Labour would implement Exclusion Zones so that women have safe access to abortion services and ensure the widespread provision of abortion services around the country. Women coming and going into hospital should not be subjected to protestors. Former Labour TD, Jan O'Sullivan, supported the launch of the *Together for Safety* campaign in February 2021 which champions legislation for safe access zones around the country.

Labour would retain telemedicine that has been made available during the lockdowns as it is needed to remove physical and financial barriers to abortion access. Labour would also ban rogue crisis pregnancy agencies and in 2016 introduced legislation to regulate this area. s needed to remove physical and financial barriers to abortion access.

1.10. Support for Survivors of the Mother and Baby Homes and Adopted Persons

The publication of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission report underlined Ireland's appalling treatment of women and children over many decades. Now that the report is published, we must stand with the survivors and ensure that their voices are heard and needs are met.

The Labour Party was successful in securing a commitment from the Government to provide survivors of Mother and Baby Homes with a full medical card. The Labour Party will continue to engage groups representing survivors of institutional abuse to ensure that they receive sufficient redress and to ensure that their human rights are vindicated.

In January, the Labour Party published the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2021 which will provide improved information and tracing access for adopted people. If enacted, this Bill will amend the Adoption Act 2010 to provide adopted persons with the right to access their birth certificates. We also introduced the Informal Adoptions (Regularisation) Bill 2018 to provide legal certainty for informal and illegal adoptions.

1.11. Fund Mental Health and Primary Care Centres

According to research from the [National Women's Council](#) and the HSE, women are more likely to seek mental health support through their primary health care and community services.

Labour will redirect funding to local primary care centres, which will bring health services closer to communities including medical tests, early intervention/prevention of illness, disability supports, eldercare and mental health services. They will also help people to manage long-term disease like diabetes.



2: Workers' Rights: Women at Work

Overall, women in Ireland earn less than men. Women are over represented in insecure, low paid and temporary work which places them at a greater risk of poverty than their male counterparts. Along with this, societal expectation increases women's caring roles which limits employment opportunities, results in less opportunity for fulltime employment, and can limit women's ability to advance to higher paying roles. According to EU figures, Ireland's pay gap currently sits at 14.4%. Simply put, for every €100 earned by a man, a woman will earn €85.60. An analysis of median incomes for men and women from the CSO's [Women and Men in Ireland 2019](#) report shows that, before adjusting for hours worked, women earn on average 78.3% of what men earn. This has proven true across comparisons between men and women with similar education attainment and similar occupation:

- In education, the lowest gender difference in pay accounted for those with a Ph.D. The median earned income for women with an Ph.D was €53,091, 77.2% of the male income of €68,773.
- The most drastic gap exists in those with Lower Secondary as their highest educational attainment: women's median income (€13,834) is 57.5% of men's median income (€24,077)
- This is despite women having a higher level of education overall.
- Men had higher earned incomes across all occupations with the prime gap in financial managers and directors, where women's median earned income was 63.6% (€60,126) of men (€94,500).
- The lowest gender difference was for Primary and nursery education, where the median earned income for women was 97.1% of the male median.

Women are under-represented in senior roles which greatly limits their earning potential. In 2019:

- Only one in four (26%) senior roles in large enterprises were held by women.
- Women occupied just 11.5% of CEO positions and 28.3% of Senior Executive roles.
- Women held one in five positions on Boards of Directors (19.6%) and 7.4% of Chairperson roles.

Equality and high workforce standards are central to Labour's core beliefs. During his time as Minister for Business and Employment, Ged Nash established the Low Pay Commission which has led to yearly increases in the National Minimum Wage to improve the wages and conditions for ordinary workers while also reducing inequality in our society. Labour will continually stride towards ending the gender pay gap in Ireland. Labour will improve working conditions, ensure better pay, and reduce insecurity risk for women in all sectors, but particularly in sectors that are largely female dominated. In 2018, the top four employment sectors favoured by women were:

- Human health and social work activities 22%
- Wholesale and retail trade 13.7%
- Education 11.9%
- Accommodation and food service activities 9.2%

Labour's Action: Legislation for Women in the Workplace

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (Gender Pay Gap Information) Bill 2017: Labour's Gender Pay Gap Bill is currently before Dáil Éireann at Committee Stage, meaning it has completed around 70% of the process needed to enter into legislation.

If enacted, it will require employers with 50 or more employees to publish information relating to the pay of employees for the purpose of showing whether there are differences in the pay of male and female employees. The Bill will enable the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) to take action against employers where a gender pay gap is disclosed; employers may be required to take certain actions to address the pay gap. Labour are the first Irish political party to promote a gender pay gap bill.

Student Nurses (Pay) Bill 2020: Incredibly, student nurses and midwives are still not compensated for their unbelievable work and contribution to the Healthcare System. Unpaid placement limits women in this area to earn for up to 12 weeks during their studies, perpetuating their risk of poverty. Labour's Student Nurses (Pay) Bill 2020 will, if passed into legislation, guarantee student nurse and midwife pay at the same rate as healthcare assistants for the hours they work during placement.

The Government have openly stated that they plan to allow this Bill to go into the 'ether', meaning they are directly inhibiting its success. Labour will continue to push for the implementation of this Bill and ensure student nurses and midwives get paid for their hard work.

Working from Home (Covid-19) Bill 2020: Remote working is the new norm for many since the pandemic hit. Labour's Working from Home (Covid-19) Bill addresses the urgent need for reform following the huge increase in remote working caused by the pandemic. The new Bill provides for the legal right to switch off and would also require employers to provide suitable home workstation and flat rate payment to cover costs now shouldered by workers.

Principles of Social Welfare Bill 2021: This Bill, which was introduced in February 2021, provides for a social welfare charter, imposes a duty on the Department of Social Protection to promote the take-up of social welfare entitlements, to set out certain rights to information, advocacy and support for social welfare applicants and recipients.

Labour's Vision for Women in the Workplace

2.1. Labour's Gender Pay Gap Bill

Women are central to the Irish childcare sector. Labour would develop a universal public childcare system in which every childcare worker is paid a living wage and is entitled to sick pay. We would continue the additional supports provided to childcare providers and staff for the duration of the pandemic.

Labour will raise the pay floor in childcare through a Sectoral Employment Order, while developing a professional career pathway in recognition of the number of graduates in the sector. Those working in the public scheme will be paid at the very least a Living Wage and Labour will implement a programme to raise qualifications of at least 60% of staff in the early years sector to degree level (Level 7 on the NFO) by 2025. The service will include early drop-off times and late collection to reflect modern work practices and commute times, and will be based on best practice education, play and early learning.

More information about Labour's Universal Childcare Model can be found in Section 3.5 and on the [Labour Party Website](#).

2.2. Support for Carers

It is time we cared for our carers. Carers are estimated to save the State €10 billion every year, yet they are continually taken for granted. Almost 2 in 3 carers are providing more than 100 hours of care per week. Over 70% of carers have no access to respite and are worried about not having enough money for the future.

Labour will support carers, implement a Carers Strategy, and improve pay and conditions for those working in home help. We will start by increasing the Carer's Allowance income disregard and increase the Carer's Support Grant by €100.

2.3. Recognition for Informal Carers

Women are more likely to provide informal care to family members with a disability or family members who are elderly:

- In 2018, 79,914 people receiving Carer's Allowance in 2018, of whom more than three-quarters (76.5%) were women.

- 195,263 careers in 2016 were providing unpaid caring help; 61% of these were female. About 31% of female carers and about 26% of male carers provided 29 hours or more of unpaid help each week in 2016.

Considering our ageing and growing population, it is likely that more and more people in Ireland will require informal care from family and friends. Evidence shows that [women are more likely to reduce paid working hours](#) to facilitate unpaid care (not that women with reduced working hours take up caring responsibilities), thus further increasing women's risk of poverty.

Labour will start the process of introducing paid Carer's Leave, in line with the new Work-Life Balance Directive.

Labour will increase State caring support for older people to remove pressure from women to undertake unpaid caring roles. Labour will develop and implement a national strategy for age-friendly villages, and bespoke retirement villages in larger towns and suburbs, so that older people can enjoy independent living in close proximity to all the shops and services they might require.

2.4. Flexible Working Options

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been rapid improvements towards flexible and remote working possibilities. Flexible working options can be hugely beneficial to women with children, and in particular single mothers and lone parents. Labour wants to ensure that this is solidified in a post-Covid Ireland.

Labour has previously called for a right to flexible working, and would implement a National Flexible Working Strategy, working with trade unions and employers. The strategy would develop good practice standards for permitting people to work from home or from other locations. The strategy will pay particular attention to the gender dimension of work-life balance, given that women still are disproportionately likely to be the primary caregiver for children.

Labour has already proposed a Working from Home Bill to provide a right to switch off, and ensure employers have to provide adequate equipment and compensation for the costs of remote work.

Labour would also introduce a legal right to flexible working hours where an employer only has to make a reasonable adjustment to allow for them, to reduce stress and wasted time from commuting, and to facilitate work-life balance for parents and carers in particular.

2.5. Pay for Teachers

Women make up 85.8% of classroom teachers and academic staff in primary schools and 70.3% in secondary schools in Ireland (2017). Since the introduction of the two-tier pay system, teachers recruited since 2011 will earn €110,000 less over their career than their colleagues who were recruited earlier according to the [Teacher's Union of Ireland, \(TUI\)](#). This needs to be rectified in order to minimise women's risk of poverty.

Labour would end the two-tier pay system for teachers and school secretaries in primary and secondary education.

2.6. Combat Poverty Agency

Labour will restore the Combat Poverty Agency, which was twice abolished by Fianna Fáil and previously restored by Labour. The remodelled agency will have a strong focus on research, and will help government to develop economic and social policies that reduce poverty and economic inequality. Ireland's market income inequality is the highest in the OECD before taxes and social welfare. The welfare system is under significant strain to correct this market inequality.

A major task of the agency will be to help design an economic model for Ireland that alleviates market inequality by ensuring higher pay for those currently underpaid in the economy, and to reduce the number of jobless households, while also seeking to develop a high productivity, high wage economy like small, open North European countries such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden.

2.7. Diversity in the Workplace: Supporting People with Disabilities

There are over 300,000 women in Ireland with disabilities, and employment is an important indicator of social inclusion. Unfortunately, Ireland fails to ensure equal opportunity to all members of our society in the workplace. According to the [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#), participation in the labour market for people with disabilities remains lower than participation rates for the general population: for those aged 15 and over, 22% of people with a disability were at work compared with more than half (53 %) of the overall population. Along with this, when people with disabilities are looking for work, or in the workplace, the odds of experiencing work-related discrimination was twice as high compared to those without disabilities.

Labour will fully implement the employment strategy for people with disabilities, and will develop incentives and supports so that more employers take on workers with disabilities. These measures will include grants for work space adjustments and training. This policy has the potential to immensely improve people's quality of life and their financial independence, while also reducing poverty and the need for social protection payments. This strategy will include specific measures on neurodiversity.

2.8. Making Work and Retirement Pay

Making the transition into the employment sector leaves women at a risk of losing social welfare payments. Labour wants to ensure that work pays. We also want to address the specific retirement and pension issues that impact on women because they are more likely to take time out from paid work to care for children or family members.

To make work pay, Labour would initiate a new process of aligning the tax and welfare systems. This has the potential to allow innovative policies that will make it easier for people to return to work while still relying on some welfare payments. It will also assist those returning to work who may have a disability, large families or other ongoing need for social protection.

The highest at risk of poverty rate in 2018 was for those aged 65 and over, with 15.2% of men and 24.6% of women in this age group at risk of poverty. The ESRI also reported in 2019 that Ireland has a gender pension gap of 35%. Women are also more likely to rely on the state pension as their only source of income in retirement. This will persist unless we address the underlying issues of childcare and family care as previously outlined. Public policy on state and occupational pensions also must be adapted to address the historical gender pension gap and ensure it is resolved for future generations.

2.9. Women in Leadership Roles

Labour ensured that a minimum of 40% of State Board appointees are women. That has been successful, with women representing 54% of persons appointed in 2020. However, more action is needed. There are still more men in senior and leadership positions across many sectors; more needs to be done to amplify the female voice and presence in positions of power.

Labour would introduce a legally binding minimum quota of 30% for non-executive directors on the boards of listed companies and require businesses to publish the gender breakdown of company directors in their annual reports. Labour will also require at least 40% representation of each gender in sport governing bodies.

3: Support for Women with Children

Having children is an exciting experience for many women in Ireland. Women are having less children and at a later stage in life. This population dynamic shift and the overall needs of women must be taken into consideration by Government policies. Labour wants to ensure that women in Ireland with children have a strong support system to ensure their journey through parenthood is a positive one.

Labour's Vision for Women with Children

3.1. Ensure adequate maternity services in Ireland

Women and babies deserve access to safe, and high-quality healthcare. The [2016-2026 National Maternity Strategy](#), along with supporting reports, showed deficits and failings within the maternity service including a lack of choice for expectant mothers, inadequate emphasis on general health and wellbeing, ageing infrastructure, poor staffing ratios by international standards and geographic variation in services.

Labour would ensure the implementation of the National Maternity Strategy and that the new National Maternity Hospital remains under State ownership and control to allow for the best quality of care for expectant mothers and their new-borns.

Labour would ensure all maternity services in Ireland are safe, well-resourced and sensitive to the varied needs of women. This will facilitate families to make informed choices about their birth options, whether at home, in the community or in a hospital setting.

3.2. Breastfeeding support for new Mothers

Breastfeeding has countless benefits for both mother and baby. However, the number of babies in Ireland that are being breastfed are quite low compared to other countries;

- Nationally, 63.8% of woman initiate breastfeeding at their baby's first feed, compared to 90% in Australia and 81% in the UK
- On discharge, just 37.3% of mothers are breastfeeding in Ireland
- 13% of Irish babies are breastfed after 6 months, compared to an EU average of 25%. the WHO recommends that half of all new-borns should be exclusively breastfed after six months.

In 2017 Labour published a policy paper 'Supporting Mothers and Babies: A new Approach to Breastfeeding' and we will continue to back the development of services for breastfeeding mothers to both encourage and support mothers to breastfeed, with the aim of increasing the currently low rate of breastfeeding in Ireland and supporting women to breastfeed where possible.

3.3. End poverty risk for single mothers and their children

Women represent a huge majority of lone parent households in Ireland. The number of one parent families stood at 218,817 in 2016, of which 189,112 were mothers. Single-mothers and their children are at a huge risk of poverty due to a woman's reduced earning opportunities.

Labour will continue to campaign to reduce child poverty with targeted social welfare increases for children. Labour will increase the Qualified Child Payment for Social Welfare payments by €10 for children aged 12 and over, and by €3 for children aged under 12.

Labour will also fund the creation of a dedicated Departmental team focused solely on eradicating child poverty.

3.4. Increased Parental Leave

Children perform best when they remain within the home with their parents for the first 12 months of life. This is simply not attainable for far too many parents. In 2016 Labour introduced two weeks of paid paternity leave for fathers, and we had outlined a long-term plan to extend shared parental leave up to six months to cover the first 12 months of a child's life, inclusive of 6 months of paid maternity leave. Labour called for additional parental leave in our 2020 Manifesto and recent Alternative Budgets, and we welcome that the government responded to our calls with an additional three weeks of parental leave allocated in Budget 2021, allowing for five weeks in total. Labour will ensure that this is introduced and continue to advocate for increased paid parental leave.

3.5. A New Childcare Model that supports women

Ireland has the second highest [OECD](#) household spend on childcare costs, with couples spending an average of 24% of income and single parents spending 29% of their wage on childcare costs.

Childcare cost is a major barrier for low- and middle-income families that perpetuates poverty cycles. Caring and childcare responsibilities still fall predominantly on women in Ireland which limits women's employment opportunities. A cost effective, accessible childcare model will give women the chance and the choice to work.

Starting with a €96 million investment in the first year, Labour will develop a [universal public childcare system](#) that will support women's ability to engage in the workforce. Labour's scheme will first target

parents who cannot work because of the prohibitive cost of childcare. The service will include early drop-off times and late collection to reflect modern work practices and commute times, and will be based on best practice education, play and early learning.

More information about Labour's Universal Childcare Model can be found in Section 2.1 and on the [Labour Party Website](#).

3.6. Cut education costs for parents

We want a fair start for every child. Labour will make education *truly* free for parents by introducing:

- Free of charge books at primary and secondary level
- Universal Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance
- Rollout of Hot School Meals to every school over 10 years
- Ensure a bus place for every child that needs one under the school transport scheme.

3.7. Assessment and Early-Intervention for Children

Some parents are currently waiting over 3 years for their child to be assessed and to access disability services, despite the critical importance of early interventions.

Labour will redirect resources towards early intervention with young children who have disability and special needs, including neurodiversity, to reduce waiting times and to improve outcomes. This has been shown internationally to be more cost effective, as well as much better for children and their families.

3.8. End Gender Segregated Schools

In Ireland, 17% of Irish primary school children attend single-gender schools while one-third of second-level schools are separated on the basis of gender. Labour believes that separating children from a young age based on gender is problematic. It perpetuates gendered stereotypes, reinforces dated ideas of gender, and limits availability to certain subjects and sporting activities; all during the formative years of a child's life.

Labour will analyse the benefits of mixed-gendered education and phase out the development of single-gender schools.

3.9. Supporting Women in Addiction with Children

Women with children face greater levels of stigma and judgement when accessing addiction services or supports. According to [DrugNet Ireland](#), Women who use drugs are often portrayed as villains rather than victims, and are viewed as victimisers of others, especially their children. Custody becomes a concern and therefore a barrier for women accessing treatment services.

Labour recognises that the recovery from addiction for women with children can be more complex given their often-central role in the family unit. Women accessing addiction supports should not be punished, shamed, or stigmatised against in a way that will hinder her road to recovery. This is especially poignant considering the correlation between traumatic incidents such as domestic abuse and addiction in women. Labour will support women with children by ensuring timely access to safe, non-judgemental, and high-quality addiction services

Labour will increase funding to the Drug and Alcohol Task Forces, as part of a process to strengthen their community development role to address the root causes of substance misuse.

Labour will ensure that Ireland's first overdose prevention centre operates successfully, and this model will be rolled out to other areas and to cover a wider range of substances of addiction. We will expand the availability of addiction treatment services across the country, recognising that substance misuse is now prevalent in every part of the country. We will expand public access to anti-overdose drugs such as Naloxone, for example so that first responders can carry it.

3.10. Mothers in Prison

Labour would ensure that non-custodial sentences will be presumed for those convicted of minor non-violent offences. We will provide more non-custodial sentences and rehabilitation programmes. We will tighten probation structures. For example, we will reduce the incidence of people, especially for women in prison for minor offences such as debt, to end the harm that custodial sentences do to their children and others who rely on them for care.

4. Domestic and Gender Based Abuse Supports:

Domestic violence and abuse are traumatic experiences that can be experienced by both men and women in Ireland. However, women are predominately affected by this serious issue. Domestic abuse can exist in many forms: physical, emotional, financial, mental, sexual, psychological, neglect, elder abuse, and stalking including cyber bullying. According to [Safe Ireland](#), 1,970 women and 411 children received support from a domestic violence service each month since the onset of the pandemic (March to August inclusive). Lockdowns, particularly level 5 restrictions, have been a dangerous time for women and children living with their abuser. According to Safe Ireland, Covid-19 has increased barriers for women in domestic abusive situations:

- **Lockdown:** Women feel that they are unable to travel to seek support
- **Risk:** Difficulties in contacting services as there is an increased risk of being over-heard while sharing space with the abuser
- **Isolation:** Women reported being cut off from support systems including family, friends, services
- **Court Access:** Difficulty accessing safety or barring orders

Labour welcomes Ireland's ratification of the Istanbul Convention, but greater supports are needed for people who have experienced, or who are currently experiencing, any form of domestic abuse.

Labour's Action: Protecting Against Domestic and Gender Based Abuse

[Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020](#): Also known as Coco's Law.

Labour brought forward the Bill following the tragic death of Nicole Fox who experienced years of bullying online. Coco's Law introduces two new offences to deal with the non-consensual distribution of intimate images with a penalty of an unlimited fine and/or up to seven years imprisonment.

Labour's Action: Protecting Against Domestic and Gender Based Abuse

4.1. Paid Leave

Labour recognises the mental and physical torment that can be experienced by a victim of domestic abuse. Time is needed to promote wellbeing and ensure there is space to access structured support.

Labour would provide up to two weeks of statutory Domestic Violence Leave to victims of abuse.

4.2. Support for Migrants and Asylum Seekers

Labour would regularise undocumented children, young people and adult workers, including migrants fleeing domestic violence who are reliant on their partner's residency status. Labour will support those brought into Ireland by human traffickers, not least those traumatised by the experience of forced prostitution.

4.3. Roma and Traveller Women

Labour will maintain a zero-tolerance stance on racism and xenophobia, including anti-Traveller prejudice and gender-based abuse. All of our candidates and elected representatives will be required to uphold the highest standards, not just of respect for diversity but active anti-racism. Similar standards will apply with respect to all the grounds of equality.

4.4. Housing Supports for Women Experiencing Domestic Abuse

If a woman lives with her abuser, escaping a domestic abusive relationship often means facing into homelessness. Victims of domestic abuse exist in a hidden form of homelessness that is not addressed in national homeless figures. Domestic abuse refuges offer amazing support to women and children facing into these situations, but spaces are limited. Between March and August 2020, 441 women were admitted to a domestic abuse refuge, Safe Home, or Supported Housing. However, there were an additional 1,351 unmet requests for refuge due to a lack of space. Many women may feel pressure to remain in an abusive home in order to avoid homelessness.

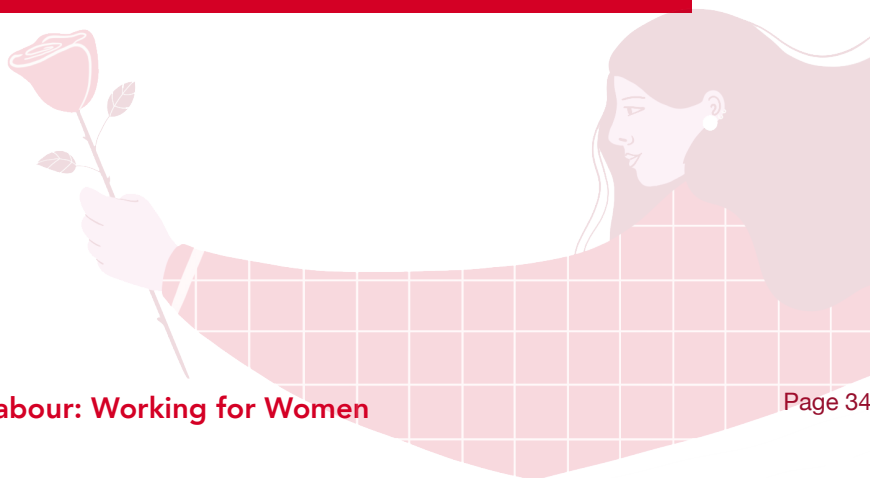
Roma and Traveller women are particularly vulnerable here. According to [Pavee-Point](#), Traveller and Roma women are at high risk of re-victimisation and are highly vulnerable to being forced to remain or return to a violent relationship, or risk becoming homeless. Traveller women account for the largest group in

admissions to refuges with 49% of refuge admissions being Travellers and 57% of Traveller women recorded as repeat admissions in 2017.

Labour would ensure that victims of domestic abuse are given access to accommodation and housing supports – regardless of their tenure status or home ownership status – in situations where the abuser is a joint tenant or co-owner of the property, until such a time as the victim’s tenancy or ownership is resolved. If a woman has a joint interest in a home shared with a violent partner, Labour would ensure that she is entitled to social housing or financial supports, without having to have proof of judicial separation if they have engaged with domestic violence service providers.

Labour will ensure that enforcement of barring orders is possible in social housing. Labour will also require Local Authorities to treat those escaping domestic violence as emergency cases for the purpose of housing supports. We believe that it should also be possible for those fleeing domestic violence to be able to easily move social housing lists, to move county and to swap position onto another list once certain criteria are met.

If you are experiencing any form of domestic abuse and need help, support, or advice, please visit: [Safelreland.ie](https://safelreland.ie) (or click [HERE](#)) to access information about a local service.



5: Housing

Our dysfunctional housing market has let down too many people. Accessing affordable, secure housing is impossible for too many people. It hinders the ability to take up work or to start a family. Everyone should have security about keeping their home, regardless of whether they are renters or owners. There is no easy solution, but there is no doubt that the only solution is for the State to be at the forefront of actions to deliver affordable housing for all. The private market has failed us too many times. Labour's core housing values as laid out in our policy, [Affordable Housing for All](#):

- Everyone has the basic right to be able to afford a safe, secure home. It is a human right. It is the benchmark of a decent society.
- It is the duty of the State to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that everyone can afford a home.

Labour's Vision for a Housing System that Supports Women

5.1. Fairness for Renters

Labour believes that secure, long-term renting should be a viable option. Labour would introduce long-term leases for renters with rent certainty, and we will stop unfair evictions. We will look to ensure security of tenure for those coming to retirement age at risk of falling behind with rent payments.

Ireland's population is also ageing due to improvements in healthcare and standards of living. Housing needs to adapt to ensure housing needs of older people are met. Women represent around 54% of people in Ireland over the age of 65 and have a longer life expectancy than men.

Additional supports are needed by some to maintain their home, whether due to illness (including mental illness or addiction), disability, or for any other reason. At present, personal supports to tenants are mostly associated with people recovering from homelessness. Labour's goal is to expand this type of service to additional groups such as those at risk of homelessness, or our ageing population who may need support that will allow them to live independently at home. It makes sense to plan housing with supports on a more universal and less segregated basis than has been done to date. Labour will facilitate community and voluntary groups that help people to overcome loneliness in old age.

5.2. Make Housing Affordable

Many women and families across the country are living in insecure, overcrowded accommodation. Labour are aware that women, as previously mentioned, earn less than men, have a higher risk of poverty, and therefore may experience increased difficulty navigating Ireland's unaffordable housing market. Rents are unaffordable and home ownership is declining due to enormous costs. Many adult children are still living with their parents due to the lack of affordable houses to rent or to buy.

Labour supports the campaign to introduce a Right to Housing to the Constitution. In February 2014, Ireland's Convention on the Constitution strongly recommended amending the Constitution of Ireland to provide 'that the State shall progressively realise economic, social and cultural rights, subject to maximum available resources and that this duty is cognisable by the Courts'. Labour will initiate the process of a referendum to implement the recommendation of the Convention of the Constitution, specifying housing among other specific rights to be acknowledged under the heading of economic, social and cultural rights.

5.3. Housing Supports for Roma and Traveller Women

According to [Pavee-Point](#), Traveller women spend more time at home and bear the brunt of the impact of poor and unsafe accommodation conditions. Almost 1 in 3 Traveller households living in mobile or temporary accommodation have no sewerage facilities and 1 in 5 have no piped water source.

Overcrowding is a significant issue with 24% of Roma living in households of 8 or more people and 7% with 10 or more people. A further 45% report not having enough beds in their accommodation. 6.6% of Roma women report to be currently homeless and 52% of women have been homeless at some stage. Inadequate and insecure housing, sanitary, and living conditions expose many Roma women and children to further health and safety hazards and interruptions in school attendance.

Labour will require local councils to achieve evidence-based targets for specialised forms of housing, including accessible social housing for people with a disability along with Roma and Traveller-specific housing, and will require the full use of grants for Traveller accommodation. Labour will develop a holistic strategy to improve the conditions of the Traveller Community and to eliminate prejudice against Travellers, with a focus on creating economic opportunities.

****See Section 4.5. for Labour's housing policies relating to domestic abuse.***

6: Women in Sport

Covid-19 poses major barriers to the sporting world as fixtures were cancelled or postponed in line with public health advice. The pandemic is feared to have stalled the already slow progress towards gender equality in Irish sport. Women in Sport experience a disparity of funding allocated and media coverage in comparison to men. The [20x20 If she can't see it, she can't be it](#) campaign aimed to shift the public's perception about women in sport by making more visible;

- By the end of 2019, women's sport coverage had grown by just 2%, up to 5% for online and 6% for print. Overall TV coverage of women's sport meanwhile saw a 40% decrease in the same period; although notably, coverage of women's sport grew across both RTÉ and TG4.
- Audience of women's sport on TV grew from 7% in 2018 to 18% in 2019. Participation grew by 13% while attendance in women's sport increased by 17% during this period.

Change is needed to eradicate gendered inequality in sport. Data gathered by the [Workplace Equality Champions Work180](#) showed that the starkest inequality between men and women came in the Six Nations, where the winners of the men's event were set to receive £5million in 2020, with nothing available for victorious women's team. Women make the same life sacrifices for their sport, play the same game, and work just as hard in training and matches; Labour wants to ensure that this does not continue to go unrecognised.

6.1. Disparity in Sport Funding

Gender inequality is a massive issue in sport and the Government should be actively seeking to close the gap by significantly ramping up the funding for female GAA players and teams instead of facilitating this discrimination. Female players and teams are relying on fundraising such as lotteries, GoFundMe campaigns, and church gate collections to pay for essential gear and transport while their male counterparts do not.

There is no excuse for the €3 million spent by Government in 2020 to support male GAA players while providing only €700,000 to support female players. Labour has welcomed the announcement by the Chair of the Oireachtas Sport Committee that the committee will examine the funding disparity in sports funding.

6.2. Representation in Sport

Labour would require at least 40% representation of women in sport governing bodies, and will push for greater participation in sport by women and girls.

6.3. Pay Ireland's Female Players

Female sports players need to have the same incentives and supports as their male counterparts and should not feel disenfranchised on account of their gender. Senator Mark Wall has campaigned for equality between male and female players on the Irish football team. Labour wants Ireland to follow in the footsteps of the Brazilian and English FA to ensure female players are paid the same as their male counterparts.

6.4. Football Inclusion and Community Grassroots

Labour would implement an ambitious strategy to save community grassroots football and to strengthen football's role in social inclusion, following the serious financial problems in the Football Association of Ireland (FAI).

Funding would focus on social inclusion, gender equality, anti-racism and integration. The state's role will be to support the model emerging from the football community, rather than initiate and develop it. Part of the goal of the new grassroots underage football organisation would be to tackle low education levels within the domestic game and to encourage school completion. A pilot programme would involve five DEIS secondary schools to provide football academies, along the lines of Stephen Elliot academies in the UK, where schools provide intensive football coaching in tandem with regular schoolwork and progress towards qualifications. The new funding would allow for an increase in the number of Football Development Officers co-funded with local authorities.



7: LGBT+

- Ireland has made large strides towards LGBT+ equality in recent years and Labour are proud to have played a central role in this but we still have a long way to go. Too many LGBT+ people in Ireland experience an array of unacceptable challenges in their day-to-day lives. According to [BelongTo1](#) 1 in 4 transgender and intersex people have been punched, hit or physically attacked in public, and 1 in 3 have had hurtful things written about them on social media.
- 1 in 4 intersex people and 1 in 5 transgender people have experienced sexual violence.
- Only 1 in 3 LGBTI people felt safe showing affection to, or holding hands with a partner in public
- Approximately 60% have had someone use the wrong pronoun to refer to their gender (40% in past year). Only 40% felt safe expressing their gender identity in public with 1 in 10 saying they would never do it
- This form of discrimination is severely damaging to a person's mental health:
- 20% of LGBT+ people experience severe/extremely stress, 23% experience severe/extremely anxiety, and 20% experience severe/extremely severe depression.
- 60% of LGBTI people had seriously thought of ending their own life; 60% of whom related their self-harm to their LGBTI identity. Within the LGBT+ community, intersex, transgender and bisexual people were most likely to consider ending their own life
- Labour will continually fight for the inclusion, voice, rights and equality of all LGBT+ people in Ireland.

Labour's Action: Legislating for LGBT+ Equality

[Criminal Law \(Sexual Offences\) Act, 1993](#): Labour in Government ensured homosexuality was decriminalised in the 1990's.

Marriage Equality Referendum 2015: Labour in Government in 2013 established the Constitutional Convention and ensured that the marriage equality referendum was put to the people in 2015.

[Gender Recognition Act 2015](#): Labour in Government brought through this law that allowed transgender people to be formally recognised in their preferred gender for all purposes by the State for the first time.

Labour's Vision for a LGBT+ Friendly Ireland

7.1. LGBT+ Strategy

Anti-LGBT+ bullying and discrimination remains rife in Irish society. A [2019 BelongTo report](#) highlighted the extent of the issue, as LGBTI+ students avoided certain spaces and activities due to safety concerns:

- 73% of LGBTI+ students felt unsafe at school. 47% because of their sexual orientation and 27% because of their gender expression.
- 3 in 10 LGBTI+ students missed at least one day in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

Similar experiences were reported by LGBT+ people in the workplace, some of whom have expressed concerns that their gender identity or sexual orientation would negatively impact on their career progression. A [2017 study](#) showed that 17.4% of LGBT+ people had experienced bullying and one in five (21.3%) had witnessed LGBTI bullying in their workplace:

- 6.4% of the working sample reported that they missed or skipped work to avoid receiving negative treatment due to being LGBT+.
- 13% considered leaving work and 4.5% actually did leave work due to negative treatment.

No one should experience bullying and abuse based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or on any other basis.

Labour would develop a stronger national LGBT+ strategy, to focus on tackling hate crimes, discrimination in schools and workplaces, and improving the mental and sexual health of LGBT+ people such as introducing LGBT inclusive sexual education.

Labour would commence all sections of the Children and Family Relationships Act.

7.2. Ban Hate Crime

Labour would make hate crime illegal, such as racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia. The Gardai will be tasked with keeping accurate statistics on hate crime, as is done in Northern Ireland.

7.3. Gender Recognition Act 2015 Reform

Labour would amend the Gender Recognition Act 2015 to address those shortcomings, such as lack of recognition of non-binary people, identified in the 2018 report on the operation of the Act. 7.4. Inclusion Labour will promote greater inclusivity in the Defence Forces, including recruitment and retention of more women, members of minority communities and members of the LGBT+ community.

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Labour would promote greater inclusivity in the Defence Forces, including recruitment and retention of more women, members of minority communities and members of the LGBT+ community.



8: Women in Politics

It is over 100 years since women in Ireland achieved the right to vote in December 1918. The female voice has made waves in Irish politics since then, but more work is needed to safeguard gender equality in politics.

As of [January 2021](#), there are only two countries – Rwanda and Cuba – in the world where the Lower or ‘Single House’ Government (equivalent to the Dáil) have a majority of women holding seats. Out of the 193 countries examined, Ireland ranks 101st for gender balance in Lower Government.

Globally only one quarter of parliamentary seats are held by women. Women serve as Heads of State or Government in only 21 countries, and 119 countries have never had a woman leader. According to the [United Nations](#), at the current rate, parity in the highest decisions of power will not be reached for another 130 years.

In Ireland, there are 160 TDs in the Dáil, and 60 Senators in the Seanad. Following the February 2020 General Election, there are now 36 women out of 160 TDs in the Dáil (22.5%) and 24 women out of 60 Senators (40%). A minimum of 30% is needed for either gender to make significant impact.

Labour’s Action: Amplifying Women in Politics

In 2009 Senator Ivana Bacik authored a report on [‘Women’s Participation in Politics’](#) for the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice which found identified obstacles to women’s equal participation in politics through ‘the five Cs’ – **Cash, Childcare, Confidence, Culture and Candidate selection procedures**.

A key recommendation in the Report was the introduction of positive action legislation to require political parties to select a minimum proportion of women candidates for each election (an electoral gender quota). This had been a Labour Women policy for some years, and informal quotas are in place within the Labour Party. The National Women’s Council and NGOs such as *50:50 by 2020* and *Women for Election* campaigned nationally for a gender quota. The gender quota recommendation became part of Labour’s Programme for Government in February 2011.

The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Bill was introduced in the Seanad in February 2012, and became an Act in July 2012. For the first time, the Act introduces an electoral gender quota into the Irish political system. Section 42 provides that any political party which does not have at least 30% of its

candidates of each gender in a General Election (starting with the GE held on February 26th 2016) would have its State funding cut by half. The quota rises to 40% seven years after 2016, that is, by 2023.

This provision has already had a transformative effect on Irish politics, with the percentage of women elected in GE2016 rising to 22% - a significant increase on the previous high of 16% achieved in 2011. The percentage of 22% has been maintained in the most recent election, GE2020, and it is to be hoped this will rise in future elections.

Labour's Vision: We Need Greater Representation of Women

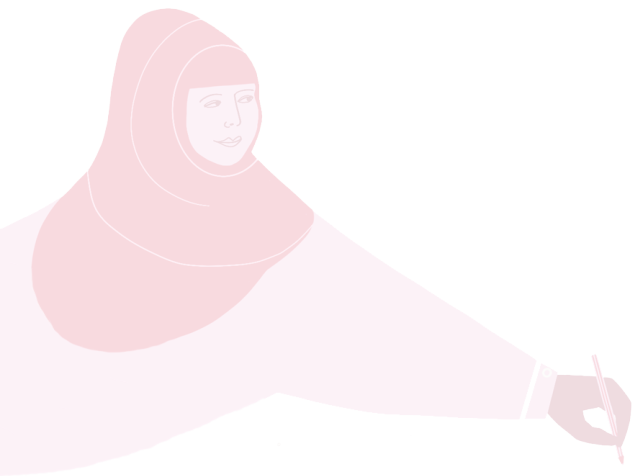
Women are significantly outnumbered in our Oireachtas and the Irish Government and are therefore underrepresented in the decision-making processes. Women legislators bring their own experiences, needs, and historical narrative to the table. Ensuring women are at the table will allow Ireland to shape policies for the advancement of all.

Including women's representation is a matter of equity and human rights – both of which are cornerstones of a democratic society and central to Labour values. Stronger representation of women in Government will impact positively on the issues raised and on how policies are shaped. Embracing women's pivotal role in politics creates room to reform discriminatory practices against girls and women. Labour is committed to amplifying women's voices in Irish politics.

8.1. Remove Barriers for Women in Politics

Labour calls for the Government to adopt a 50:50 principle in Cabinet appointments and to allow for an entitlement to maternity leave for our elected representatives. Labour will ensure that Irish politics is a welcoming space for all women, including those who wish to have children.

Article 28.12 of the Constitution provides that: "The following matters shall be regulated in accordance with law, namely, ... the discharge of the functions of the office of a member of the Government during his temporary absence or incapacity". Since maternity or parental leave is a temporary absence, legislation would be sufficient to address this. There is no need for any constitutional referendum to provide for such leave, or indeed for parental or paternity leave for our elected representatives. Labour will continually call for the Government to move swiftly to address this matter.

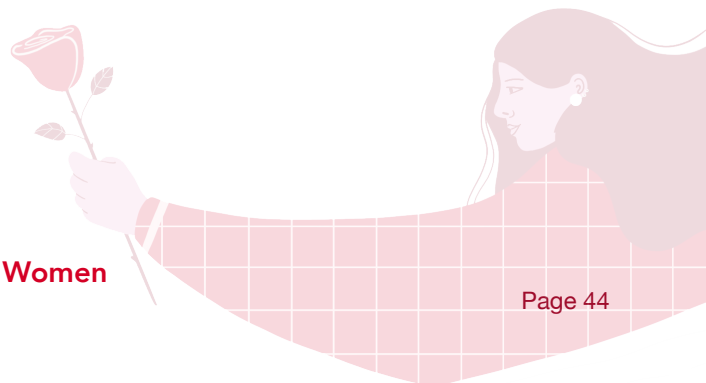


9: International Solidarity

Labour's fight for gender equality and feminist causes does not end at our shores. In many countries around the world, women suffer appalling treatment, horrific abuse, and unrelenting discrimination. Labour stands in solidarity with women all over the world who suffer from any form of discrimination, abuse and mistreatment.

Labour will stand in solidarity with and support the campaigns of women's rights movements in every country that seek to end such discrimination.

Labour stands with women internationally.



Conclusion

Labour will continue to advocate, promote, and legislate for women's rights and gender equality in politics. Women must have an equal place at the decision-making table, and in all aspects of life. As stated by Labour's Mary Robinson; in a society where the rights and potential of women are constrained, no man can be truly free. He may have power, but he will not have freedom.

For 109 years, Labour has made Ireland a fairer society, and we will continue to fight to achieve equality and justice.

**SIGN
UP
A
SISTER**

Come join us and be part of our continuing movement for change.

www.labour.ie/iwd

Women's Manifesto



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