

TAKING STOCK²⁰²⁶

Is Government keeping its commitments to older people?

A REPORT FROM
THE ALLIANCE OF AGE
SECTOR NGOS

JULY 2026

Community
Foundation
Ireland

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What is the 'Taking Stock' Report and Score Card?

Our older adult population will be the fastest growing demographic of the 21st century.

In 2011, there were less than 550,000 people aged 65 or over living in Ireland, (11.4% of the population). By 2021, this had increased to almost 750,000. In the event that this Government serves out a full five-year term this population cohort will have grown, by 2030, to more than 1 million. The greatest increases will be in the over 80 years and over age group, where numbers are expected to increase four-fold.

The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs introduced the 'Taking Stock' Report *and* accompanying Score Card as a mechanism to review progress on key policy commitments to older people, given the absence of a State supported approach to monitoring or implementing the now fourteen-year-old *National Positive Ageing Strategy* (2013).

This year's Report and Score Card is the third edition in the series for the Alliance of Age Sector NGO's and covers key areas which, if addressed, could resolve major systemic issues for older people and our rapidly ageing population: healthy ageing, housing, financial security, ageism, policy coordination and monitoring, and mainstreaming ageing, among a range of other relevant domain areas.

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As in previous editions, our panel of experts operating at senior level across the age sector in Ireland have closely examined the promises made to older people and our ageing population and have graded the Government on its efforts to fulfil these commitments.

”

The Report tracks the progress (and where relevant, the lack of progress) made by Ireland in respect of its key pledges and policy commitments across 17 domain areas relevant to older people in Ireland.

In addition to this deep-dive analysis across 17 thematic areas, the Alliance has produced an accompanying Score Card to highlight key priority areas for Government action in the short-term. As part of this, the Alliance has rated Government on its efforts across 27 headline policy commitments made in respect of older people.

Who is the Alliance?

The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs (the Alliance) represents the collective thinking of eight significant NGOs working in the age sector.

Separately, we provide vital services for older people, support older people to contribute to and participate in community life and advocate for better policies, services and supports for older people at national and local level.

Together as an Alliance of eight organisations, we collaborate to combat ageism and to seek action on the specific issues that make older people's lives more difficult than they need to be. We work together to support Ireland in becoming a better place in which to grow older. The Alliance is committed to collaborative leadership and the pooling of our capacity and resources to maximise our collective impact.

The eight member organisations are; Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, ALONE, Alzheimer Society of Ireland, COPE Galway, Irish Hospice Foundation, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament and Third Age Ireland.



Introducing 'Taking Stock' 2026

As the fastest growing demographic of the 21st century, our older adult population must be centrally and explicitly catered for as part of any ambitions and priorities of Government, now and in the future.

The 'Taking Stock' Report and Score Card 2026 is the first for the coalition (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Independents) under the new Programme for Government: *Securing Ireland's Future*.

The member organisations of the Age Alliance have welcomed and, through relevant structures, supported the work of the Commission on Care for Older People. This Commission has the potential to play an important role in examining the care and support needs of older people.

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'Care' is one critical element of a breadth of determinants that enable people to age well. However, it is the view of the Alliance that a far wider range of factors, inclusive of, but not limited solely to 'care', will impact on our health and wellbeing as we age.

”

The Alliance believes that the findings highlighted across the 'Taking Stock' Report and Score Card will be relevant to all elected representatives as Ireland positions itself to respond to both the opportunities and challenges that come with an ageing population. In particular, the Alliance, informed by this most recent analysis of the policy landscape, would re-emphasise the following points:

- Older people have needs and rights far beyond the Departments of Health and Housing.
- Older people must not be viewed as a single group with homogeneous experiences, challenges and issues. In particular, policy for older people must not be considered solely through a 'care lens'.
- There has been a significant implementation deficit in relation to several of Ireland's key policy commitments relevant to ageing and older people.

In addition to the detailed policy asks and areas of deficit highlighted across both the Report and Score Card documents the Alliance would spotlight **four investments** which would make a real difference.

1. Develop a refreshed National, whole of Government Strategy to enable positive ageing – *with such a strategy supported by clear objectives, an implementation plan and an assigned budget.*

Arrangements for monitoring progress and an assigned budget are recognised as basic enablers for any strategy. No active implementation, monitoring or reporting plan would appear to be in place for the *National Positive Ageing Strategy* or Ireland's broader goals framed to support an ageing population.

Our Government must be supported to work on a cross-departmental basis to improve the delivery of programmes, services and supports for older people. The Alliance would therefore propose that any 'refreshed' *Positive Ageing Strategy* will, in particular, require:

- A top-level governmental commitment to older people. This would take the form of a Programme for Government Outcome which is actively monitored by a relevant Cabinet Committee.
- The allocation of specific responsibilities to government departments with such responsibilities underpinned by clear deliverables, timelines and performance indicators;
- Specified funding allocation tethered to each Strategic Outcome.

2. Establish an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People.

Almost every Government strategy and action plan, whether it is relating to health, transport, housing, finance, employment, volunteering, the environment, civic and social participation or connectivity, must be considered in the context of our ageing population and the ageing demographic they will serve.

Such an extensive set of boundary spanning issues can only be effectively addressed through a single body operating across a range of departments.

Our Minister of State for Older People and Housing is well positioned to oversee policy relevant to the health and housing related needs of our older adult population. An Independent Commissioner working in parallel, and indeed alongside the Minister, would have a remit to promote the needs of older people across *all* Departments, ensuring the needs of older people are met across the variety of services and departments they interact with.

Current structures do not make it easy to hold a range of Government departments to account or to work across boundaries on pressing issues relevant to the needs of an ageing population. An Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People would provide a resource for Government to work effectively on a cross-departmental basis to support positive ageing.

3. Develop a State led campaign in order to promote an age-balanced image of society and counteract ageism.

Ageism has been revealed as deeply institutionalised throughout our services and systems and across wider society. The World Health Organization (WHO) has set out the numerous and harmful effects of ageism: shorter lifespan, diminished mental and physical health, isolation, lost commitment to the workplace, cognitive decline and reduced quality of life.

Government is best placed to position this as an issue of real importance and to resource an appropriate nationwide campaign. The Alliance, having direct links with a broad diversity of older people living in Ireland, is more than willing and ready to play its part.

In short, this rapidly growing population group must be centrally catered for as part of any ambitions and priorities of government now and in the future – particularly so if we are to make meaningful progress towards Ireland’s stated goal that “older people will be supported and motivated to enjoy more active, healthy and connected lives and to age confidently and comfortably in their community” (*National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040*).

4. Recognise loneliness and social isolation as public health priorities and implement a fully resourced national action plan to address them.

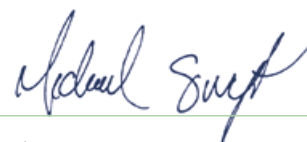
Research shows that Ireland has the highest rates of loneliness in the EU. The Alliance calls on Government to support the development and implementation of the long-awaited Action Plan to tackle loneliness and isolation particularly among older people, as previously committed to in the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025* and the 2020 Programme for Government (*Our Shared Future*, 2020).



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Foreword: Community Foundation Ireland

Community Foundation Ireland is pleased to partner with the Alliance on this third report in the Taking Stock series.

The absence of any formal Government-led plan or monitoring to support implementation of policy relevant to our growing older adult population is an area of real concern for the Foundation.

Successful whole-of-government work depends on clear objectives, political commitment, viable joined-up government structures, and incentives to collaborate – ingredient factors, based on the Alliance analysis, which would appear to be clearly missing when it comes to the implementation of policy relevant to positive ageing.

This latest Alliance ‘Taking Stock’ Report and Score Card highlights a number of deficit areas. Implementation continues to be slow with much, it would appear, being deferred to the work of the Commission on Care for Older People and, in particular, the role of a yet to be established cross-departmental group.

This is most concerning as we remember the 2013 *Positive Ageing Strategy* had committed “to produce inter-sectoral plans to promote positive ageing” and “coordinate specific initiatives in this regard through the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy”. Neither of these commitments were ever progressed.

Furthermore, the Citizens’ Assembly in 2017 recorded that “100% of the Members recommended that the Government urgently prioritise and implement existing policies and strategies in relation to older people i.e. the National Positive Ageing Strategy”. Yet, in the meantime, the 2013 *Strategy* itself appears to be only growing

older – occasionally dusted down by Departments for the purpose of spotlighting Ireland’s commitment to positive ageing as part of international reports.

The case, in particular, for the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People would appear to be only growing stronger.

We must position ourselves more effectively to ensure a cross-Government and coherent approach to positive ageing. An Independent Commissioner would be a real asset for Ireland and indeed the Government in supporting the required cross-departmental action.

The Foundation is particularly supportive of the Alliance recommendations for a **refreshed** national strategy for positive ageing and a dedicated campaign to combat ageism.

As a Foundation which believes in Equality for All, we are proud philanthropic partners of the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs and welcome the publication of this report. It should be studied and acted upon by all policymakers.

An ageing Ireland is something that we all have a stake in. We all want to age well. We will all want to die well.

Pursuing the recommendations proposed by the Age Alliance as part of ‘Taking Stock’ 2026 will ensure that Ireland is better placed to support positive ageing for us all.

Denise Charlton

Chief Executive, Community Foundation Ireland

Report Structure

Active and healthy ageing is a complex, multidimensional process which addresses longevity by integrating a range of relevant social, economic, physical, and cognitive dimensions rather than just focusing on medical care. This approach seeks to improve ‘healthspan’ - the number of years lived in good health rather than just ‘lifespan’.

In keeping with the whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach to health and wellbeing adopted by *Healthy Ireland*, the *National Positive Ageing Strategy* attempted to address the broader determinants of health and, was described at the time of its launch in 2013 as “a new departure in policy-making for ageing in Ireland that will address 13 priority areas”.

The Age Alliance has continued to use this set of 13 priority areas as a base structure for its rolling reviews of Government progress on policy commitments relevant to positive ageing in Ireland.

In addition to the 13 priority areas originally identified by Government, the Alliance has included assessment on a further four relevant areas – the importance of which was also emphasised in the 2013 *Strategy*: ‘ageism’, ‘policy coordination and monitoring’, ‘mainstreaming ageing’ and ‘research’. These are key enablers to bring about positive ageing.

The 17 areas included in this audit are therefore as follows:

- | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | Healthy ageing |
| 2. | Health and personal social services |
| 3. | Carers |
| 4. | Employment and retirement |
| 5. | Education and lifelong learning |
| 6. | Volunteering |
| 7. | Cultural and social participation |
| 8. | Transport |
| 9. | Financial security |
| 10. | Housing |
| 11. | The built environment |
| 12. | Safety and security |
| 13. | Elder abuse |
| 14. | Ageism |
| 15. | Policy coordination and monitoring |
| 16. | Mainstreaming ageing |
| 17. | Research |

A common template has been applied to each of the 17 priority areas setting out why each area is relevant, before providing a status description of the key policy issues and developments relevant to each priority area. Finally, the Alliance spotlights and grades either one, two or three ‘headline’ policy commitments for particular Government attention, in the short-term, in 16 of the 17 areas.

As part of the accompanying Score Card, the Alliance provides a rating of Government on its efforts across 27 headline policy commitments within these thematic areas to highlight key priority areas for Government action in the short-term.

This shortlist of 27 policy commitments was chosen based on several core criteria:

- That the commitment directly impacts older people.
- The commitment wording is clear and measurable.
- Achievement of the commitment is not subjective; it either has or has not been delivered.
- If delivered or achieved, the commitment has significant potential to improve (1) the environment for policy implementation relevant to ageing and older people or (2) the quality of life for people as we grow older in Ireland – or indeed both simultaneously.

N.B: The grades awarded by the Alliance relate directly to **each of the 27 specific policy commitments**, rather than the broader domain areas to which they may be attached.



01 Healthy Ageing

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Healthy ageing has been defined as the process of maintaining good physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing as we grow older. It includes promoting physical activity, proper nutrition, mental health support and access to healthcare and social services to ensure a high quality of life in older age.

As a signatory to the *Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing a Sustainable Society for All Ages* (2022), Ireland and other States have pledged to “Promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life”, to “strengthening mental health and well-being, especially among older persons” and to “adopt(ing) concrete measures to combat loneliness and social isolation among older persons”.

Access to primary and acute health services can play a key role. Approaches to health in later life must also recognise the importance of health maintenance and preventative approaches. Community participation, volunteering and social engagement are protective health factors.

The approach set out in *Sláintecare* prioritises early intervention, health promotion and community-based services to improve health outcomes and reduce pressures on acute healthcare services

Ireland holds the unique distinction in Europe of being designated by the World Health Organisation as the world’s first age-friendly country.



STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026

- **Decrease in healthy life years:** Ireland's ageing population is a positive sign of increased longevity. Although Ireland's population is ageing, the expected number of healthy life years at 65 has decreased from 13.6 years in 2019 to 11.6 years for men in 2024 and 11.9 for women (CSO, 2025)¹.
- **Significant unreported health concerns:** The number of people aged 65+ with at least one chronic disease is below the EU average (OECD, 2025)². However, research has indicated that significant numbers of older adults in Ireland are undiagnosed and undertreated for conditions including diabetes, osteoporosis and chronic pain. TILDA research found that 36% of older adults had undiagnosed hypertension and 45% had undiagnosed high cholesterol based on clinical thresholds, and that while 12% of older adults had clinically significant depressive symptoms, over 45% had not reported their symptoms to any healthcare provider (O'Connor, Hever, Scarlett and Kenny, 2025)³.
- **Hospital and health services face significant pressure:** In 2025, 63% of emergency departments (ED) attendees aged 75+ waited over six hours, the same level as 2024 (HSE, 2026)⁴. Delayed discharges caused 145,780 lost bed days in 2025, an increase from 142,460 in 2024. Just 4,382 InterRAI assessments were completed, fewer than the 4,407 completed in 2024, and less than 25% of the targeted 18,100.
- **Falls and the implications for older adults:** One in eight older people (70+, 12%) in Ireland require medical attention for a fall each year. However, more than one in five older people who required medical attention for a fall did not have access to a specialist falls assessment clinic (Briggs, Ward et al, 2026)⁵ and while clinical guidelines exist, there is no overarching national falls prevention strategy.

Falls are the most common cause of fractures among older adults and are a leading contributor to reduced mobility, loss of independence and hospital admission. Without appropriate intervention, individuals who fall once are at significantly increased risk of falling again.

1 Older Persons Information Hub, Central Statistics Office (2025). Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/hubs/p-opi/olderpersonsinformationhub/health/healthylifeyears/>

2 Health at a Glance: Europe 2025, OECD (2025). Available from: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/11/health-at-a-glance-2025_a894f72e/8f9e3f98-en.pdf

3 TILDA Wave 6 Report – Shaping the Future: Longitudinal Trends and Opportunities for Transformation in Health and Social Care in Ireland, O'Connor, Hever, Scarlett and Kenny, TILDA (2025). Available from: <https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/W6KeyFindings/TILDA-Wave6-Key-Findings-Report.pdf>

4 HSE National Service Plan 2026, HSE (2026). Available from: https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/HSE_National_Service_Plan_2026.pdf/

5 Determining the burden of falls amongst community-dwelling older people in Ireland to inform falls care delivery: secondary data analysis from the Irish longitudinal study on ageing – the defined study, Briggs, Ward, Scarlett, van der Velde, Hernandez, Romero-Ortuno, Tysinger, May, Ahern, and Kenny, BMJ Open (2026). Available from: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12863362/>

- **Mental health:** At present only 63 acute mental health beds have been allocated for people aged over 65. New figures released by the HSE show, per 100,000 people aged 65 and over, there are approximately 23.6 whole-time equivalent (WTE) occupational therapists, 36.9 social workers and 151.7 community mental health nurses in psychiatry of older age services, far lower than the numbers required by the Model of Care (Ryan, 2026)⁶. Additionally, 90% of referrals to psychiatry of later life community mental health teams were seen within 12 weeks, lower than the target of 98%, and 7,706 referrals were seen, lower than the target of 9,936 (HSE, 2026)⁷.
- **Social determinants of health, such as loneliness, continue to have significant impacts:** TILDA finds that 20% of older adults in Ireland feel lonely at least some of the time, with those reporting fair or poor health more likely to report feeling lonely (2025)⁸. Loneliness and poor social relationships are strongly linked to worse health outcomes, increasing the risk of all-cause mortality by 14%, Alzheimer's disease by 72%, type 2 diabetes by 24%, and cognitive decline by roughly 12–15%, according to multiple large meta-analyses.



6 *Major gaps in mental health services for older people, figures show*, Ryan, The Irish Times (2026).

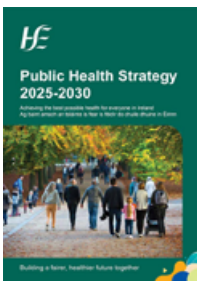
Available from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/health/2026/03/13/major-gaps-in-mental-health-services-for-older-people-figures-show/>

7 *HSE National Service Plan 2026*, HSE (2026). Available from: https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/HSE_National_Service_Plan_2026.pdf/

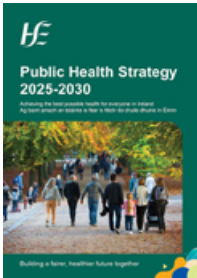
8 *TILDA Wave 6 Report – Shaping the Future: Longitudinal Trends and Opportunities for Transformation in Health and Social Care in Ireland*, O'Connor, Hever, Scarlett and Kenny, TILDA (2025). Available from: <https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/W6KeyFindings/TILDA-Wave6-Key-Findings-Report.pdf>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitments

For the theme of ‘Healthy ageing’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade three policy commitments for Government attention.

SCORECARD: HEALTHY AGING					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Deliver universal and targeted evidence-informed approaches to promote healthy behaviours and address loneliness, prevent ill-health, disability and early death, such as the Making Every Contact Count Programme and Chronic Disease Management Programme”. (Related Government commitment graded as part of previous Score Card exercises: “Develop a plan aimed at tackling loneliness and isolation, particularly among older people”. (<i>Programme for Government, 2020</i>))	 HSE Public Health Strategy 2025-2030	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Commitment to address loneliness as part of this Strategy appears to represent a dilution of previous more specific Government policy commitments relating to loneliness made in the <i>Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020</i>, the <i>Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025</i>, the <i>Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2025</i> and the <i>Sláintecare Strategy & Action Plan 2021-2023</i> – each of which included a commitment to “Develop a plan aimed at tackling loneliness, and isolation, particularly among older people”. ▶ Research shows that Ireland has the highest rates of loneliness in the EU. ▶ To date Government has not assigned funding or staff to develop such a plan despite passing of a Seanad motion in 2024 calling on Government to fulfil the <i>Programme for Government 2020</i> commitment to publish an Action Plan to Combat Loneliness and Isolation. ▶ Concerning that this specific priority was completely omitted from the <i>Programme for Government: Our Shared Future (2025)</i>.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

SCORECARD: HEALTHY AGING					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Design and implement preventive programmes and services (e.g. reducing falls, preventing and reversing frailty), that enable older adults to live and thrive with the best possible health”.	 HSE Public Health Strategy 2025-2030	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Evidence of localised pockets of good practice and time bound initiatives including the Irish Hip Fracture database, FaME Ireland Falls Management Exercise Programme, and the ExWell Medical programme. ▶ Census 2022 demonstrates a strong link between disability and age, with a marked increase in the prevalence of disability from age 75 onwards. ▶ Falls, in particular, are a major, rising health issue for older adults in Ireland, with one in eight people over 70 requiring medical attention for a fall annually, equating to roughly 62,000 people. ▶ Ireland currently has no funded national falls prevention strategy, despite strong international evidence that coordinated, multidisciplinary approaches can significantly reduce falls, fractures and pressure on emergency departments. Improving access to dedicated falls clinics, systematically reviewing medications that increase falls risk, and investing in strength, balance and cardiovascular prevention programmes should be central to planning services for an ageing population.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting.

D: Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people.

F: Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

SCORECARD: HEALTHY AGING					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Fund mental health supports across all Integrated Care Programme for Older People (ICPOP) teams”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► Some early-stage evidence of workforce growth and increased funding in this area during lifetime of this Government. ► Further work is needed, and a gap analysis is currently underway to identify additional staffing requirements to support implementation of the Model of Care across HSE health regions.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

02 Health and Personal Social Services

Area of focus; dying, death, bereavement and palliative care

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Although palliative care is most often associated with end of life, it is also about improving quality of life for people with life-limiting illness. In addition, it supports advance care planning and facilitates open conversations about treatment and care options. As a signatory to the *Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing a Sustainable Society for All Ages* (2022) Ireland and other EU member States have pledged to “Addressing the growing need for adequate palliative care services through their integration into the continuum of care and support, and ensuring an end of life with dignity”.



STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026

- **Hospice funding:** As of 2024, all adult hospices receive State funding (Department of Health, 2023)⁹. **However, hospitals are the most common place of death**, accounting for approximately 45% of deaths in the State (Matthews, Pierce, et al, 2021)¹⁰. There are still regions in Ireland without an adult hospice, namely the Midlands and North-East. Planning for these additional sites is underway and must be delivered without further delay.
- **Lack of awareness of Advance Healthcare Directives (AHDs):** Advance healthcare directives allow you to write down your wishes about healthcare and medical treatment decisions in case you are unable to make these decisions at some time in the future. However, a national survey by Safeguarding Ireland found that less than one in four people had heard of an Advance Healthcare Directive (2024)¹¹.
- **Support for people receiving end of life care:** A lack of out-of-hours support for people receiving end of life care may be leading to an increase in people attending an emergency department when medical intervention is required. Over a five-year period (2019-2023), almost 5,500 people died in or on the way to emergency departments (Irish Hospice Foundation, 2026)¹².
- **Dignified spaces for people at end of life in hospitals:** The National End of Life Survey found that, in 2022, 81% of people, whose loved one died in a single hospital room, said that they died in the right place compared with 51% of those whose loved one did not die in a single room (National Care Experience Programme, 2024)¹³.

9 Minister for Health announces all adult hospices to be state-funded, Department of Health (2023).

Available from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/press-releases/minister-for-health-announces-all-adult-hospices-to-be-state-funded/>

10 *Dying and Death in Ireland: What Do We Routinely Measure, How Can We Improve?* Matthews, Pierce, O'Brien Green, Hurley, Johnston, Normand, May; Irish Hospice Foundation (2021).

Available from: <https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Dying-and-Death-in-Ireland-what-do-we-routinely-measure-how-can-we-improve-2021.pdf>

11 *Safeguarding Ireland urges people to make an Advance Healthcare Directive*, Safeguarding Ireland (2024).

Available from: <https://safeguardingireland.org/safeguarding-ireland-urges-people-to-make-an-advance-healthcare-directive/>

12 *Dying, Death and Bereavement in Ireland*, Irish Hospice Foundation (2026).

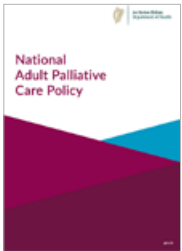
Available from: <https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Dying-Death-Bereavement-in-Ireland-Report-2026.pdf>

13 *Findings of the National End of Life Survey 2023*, National Care Experience Programme (2024).

Available from: <https://yourexperience.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/NELS-National-Report-2023.pdf>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitments

For the theme of 'Health and personal social services' the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade two policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: HEALTH AND PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
"Enabling people to die at home where appropriate".	 National Adult Palliative Care Policy 2024	'New' policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Whilst progress is being made and access to end of life care at home forms part of the work currently underway, out-of-hours care for people, regardless of geography, finances, or diagnosis, remains very challenging. ▶ Hospitals remain the most common place of death accounting for approximately 45% of deaths in the State. While 76% of people in Ireland express a preference to die at home, only about 23% currently do so.
"Continue to invest in palliative care to achieve full national coverage of hospice and community services".	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland's Future, 2025	'New' policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Development underway in key hospice projects; delivery of hospices for the Midlands and the North-East must, however, be prioritised.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people's lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people's wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

03 Carers

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing

Government policy is to support older people to live in dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Carers, both formal (professional) and informal (family), play a crucial role in supporting positive ageing by enabling older adults to maintain their independence, dignity, and quality of life in their own homes.

STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026

- **Health spending remains heavily centred on hospital and long-term care:** €11.8bn (38%) goes to hospitals and €5.2bn (17%) to long-term care. Meanwhile, only €1.6bn supports GPs and €1.03bn supports home care (CSO, 2025)¹⁴. This model has been deemed “unsustainable”, yet the funding balance remains largely unchanged.
- **Waiting lists for Home Support persist:** Demand for home support continues to outpace supply, and challenges with staffing, delivery, consistency, and equity of access persist. Although waiting lists have reduced from their peak of 9,000 in 2020 (Department of Health, 2021)¹⁵, at the end of January 2026, there were 5,310 people on the home support waiting list (O'Donnell, 2026)¹⁶, and waiting lists remain at similar levels to those recorded in 2025. 25.5m hours of home support were provided in 2025, higher than the target of 24m (HSE, 2026)¹⁷.
- **The majority of care is provided by family carers:** This includes care provided by older people themselves, with 3% of older men and 5% of women reporting being carers. Older adults providing more than 50 hours of care each week reported poorer mental health and wellbeing (TILDA, 2025)¹⁸. Key issues for carers include the continued under-resourcing of appropriate respite care, failure to publish a refreshed *National Carers' Strategy* and the impact of the continuing chronic shortage of home support workers on family carers.

14 *System of Health Accounts 2023*, Central Statistics Office (2025). Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-sha/systemofhealthaccounts2023/>

15 *Minister for Mental Health and Older People, Mary Butler, announces call for submissions on workforce challenges in home support and nursing homes sectors*, Department of Health (2021). Available from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/press-releases/minister-for-mental-health-and-older-people-mary-butler-announces-call-for-submissions-on-workforce-challenges-in-home-support-and-nursing-homes-sectors/>

16 *Home Care Packages – Dáil Eireann Debate*, O'Donnell, Oireachtas.ie (2026). Available from: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2026-03-05/16/>

17 *HSE National Service Plan 2026*, HSE (2026). Available from: https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/HSE_National_Service_Plan_2026.pdf/

18 *TILDA Wave 6 Report – Shaping the Future: Longitudinal Trends and Opportunities for Transformation in Health and Social Care in Ireland*, O'Connor, Hever, Scarlett and Kenny, TILDA (2025). Available from: <https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/W6KeyFindings/TILDA-Wave6-Key-Findings-Report.pdf>

- **Legislative gaps persist:** Many care services for older people have no legislative underpinning and are often unregulated (e.g., day care services). A regulatory framework for home support as part of a proposed statutory scheme is in progress, and the Health (Amendment) (Home Support Providers) Bill 2025 passed through the Houses of the Oireachtas in June 2026, which will ensure for the first time that all home support providers in Ireland are regulated. However, the statutory scheme has been committed to on multiple occasions, including ten years ago in 2016 (Loughlin and Ó Cionnaith, 2016)¹⁹, and still does not have a timeline for full implementation. There is a dearth of information available on day care services, which will support 15,800 older people in 2026 (HSE, 2026)²⁰.
- **Carers Guarantee funding shortfall:** The 2025 *Programme for Government* commits both to increase support for carers – providing training, establishing clearer pathways to services, and improving access to respite – and to fully fund the Carer’s Guarantee.
- **Commission on Care:** The Commission on Care was established in 2024, in fulfilment of the commitment in the 2020 *Programme for Government*, to examine the provision of health and social care services and supports for older people and make recommendations to the government for their strategic development. No report, as of July 2026, has been published by the Commission.
- **Long term residential care:** While there is evidence of investment in public nursing home beds, this is not to sufficient scale to meet future demand. At the end of 2025, there were 4,954 nursing home beds in public long-stay units. This is a slight reduction from the 4,982 beds at the end of 2024. The number of short stay beds in public units has reduced from 1,609 to 1,562 beds over the same period (HSE, 2026)²¹.
- The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) projects that Ireland’s long-term residential care bed requirements must increase by between 61% and 80% (an extra 15,000 to 23,000 beds) by 2040. This demand is driven by a doubling of the over-85 population, but risks are compounded by ongoing rural closures and rising demand for complex dementia care (2025)²².

19 Minister Simon Harris vows to establish statutory home help scheme, Loughlin and Ó Cionnaith, The Irish Examiner (2016). Available from: <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-20436828.html>

20 HSE National Service Plan 2026, HSE (2026). Available from: https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/HSE_National_Service_Plan_2026.pdf/

21 HSE National Service Plan 2026, HSE (2026). Available from: https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/HSE_National_Service_Plan_2026.pdf/

22 Projections of national demand and bed capacity requirements for older people’s care in Ireland, 2022-2040: Based on the Hippocrates model, Walsh and Kakoulidou ESRI (2025). Available from: https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS214_1.pdf

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitments

For the theme of ‘Carers’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade four policy commitments for Government attention.

SCORECARD: CARERS					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Design a Statutory Homecare Scheme to allow people to stay in their own home for as long as possible”. (Related Government commitment graded as part of previous Score Card exercises: “Introduce a statutory scheme to support people to live in their own homes, which will provide equitable access to high-quality, regulated home care”. (Programme for Government, 2020))	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Commitment to “Design a Statutory Homecare Scheme...” appears to represent a dilution of previous Government policy commitments to “Introduce a Statutory Scheme to support people to live in their own homes...” (Programme for Government, 2020) ▶ Difficulties with carer recruitment and retention together with pay disparities between public and private sector roles have resulted in variation in service availability across regions, reducing equity of access and creating an ‘Eircode lottery’. These workforce challenges have meant that provision has not been able to keep pace with increased demand. Home support waiting lists remain at similar levels in June 2026 compared to January 2025. ▶ The Health (Amendment) (Home Support Providers) Bill 2025 passed through the Houses of the Oireachtas in June 2026, which will ensure for the first time that all home support providers in Ireland are regulated. This will introduce HIQA quality standards for home support, a welcome step forward.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting.

D: Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people.

F: Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

SCORECARD: CARERS					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
"Fully fund the Carer's Guarantee".	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland's Future, 2025	'New' policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		C	▶ Evidence of commitment to include within this year's Estimates process.
"Taking account of the work of the Commission on Care, we will publish, resource, and implement a National Action Plan that will: Ensure long-term care is timely, comprehensive, and affordable. Examine and enhance the mix of professional care options, including homecare, community-based care, independent living options and long-term residential care facilities".	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland's Future, 2025	'New' policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		D	▶ Significant deliberation, consultation and research, on the part of the Commission on Care for Older People. However, no national action plan has yet been published. ▶ Meanwhile, demand for home support continues to outpace supply, and challenges with staffing, delivery, consistency, and equity of access persist. ▶ There has been significant withdrawal of community owned and not for profit nursing homes from the market. ▶ In addition, there is limited evidence of scale up of demonstrator Housing with Supports project or other good practice independent living options.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people's lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting.

D: Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people.

F: Fail, taking steps that undermine older people's wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

SCORECARD: CARERS					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Build more public nursing home beds”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Evidence of investment in public nursing home beds, but not to sufficient scale to meet demand. At the end of 2025, there were 4,954 nursing home beds in public long-stay units. This is a slight reduction from the 4,982 beds at the end of 2024. The number of short stay beds in public units has reduced from 1,609 to 1,562 beds over the same period. ▶ Significant withdrawal of community owned and not for profit nursing homes from the market. ▶ The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) projects that Ireland’s long-term residential care bed requirements must increase by between 61% and 80% (an extra 15,000 to 23,000 beds) by 2040. This demand is driven by a doubling of the over-85 population, but risks are compounded by ongoing rural closures and rising demand for complex dementia care.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

04 Employment and Retirement

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

When approached as a choice rather than a necessity, longer working lives can contribute to better physical health, mental stimulation, and social connection for people as they age. Remaining in the labour market can, where appropriate, provide a sense of purpose in addition to financial benefits.

Older persons can face a balancing act between their work and family commitments and choosing when the right time is for them to leave the workforce. Some people may choose to continue in employment after the age of 65 which can improve the financial well-being of some older persons who might not otherwise have an adequate income for their retirement.



STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **Working past 66 is increasingly becoming the norm:** Nearly one in nine of those aged 65 and older in Ireland are at work. The number of people aged 65 and over who are employed has surged, increasing by 70% from 78,100 to 133,000 between 2019 and 2026 (CSO, 2026)²³.
- **Cost of Living:** High living costs are a primary driver forcing employees to work longer, with 79% of employees feeling they are not financially prepared for retirement. 50% expect to work after retirement age for income reasons (The Financial Planning Standards Board Ireland et al, 2026)²⁴. In addition, the State pension has not kept pace with increased cost of living.
- **Gender Differences:** Expectations vary; research suggests men are more likely to believe they can retire before 66, while women are more likely to feel they will have to work until 70 (Royal London Ireland, 2026)²⁵.
- **Extended Working Life Policies** (i.e., increasing state pension age to 66) has unequally affected different sectors of the population and has been particularly challenging for certain groups such as those in physically demanding jobs, low-income jobs or precarious employment.
- **Older workers in Ireland often face particular challenges when it comes to engaging in training.** These can include the cost of courses, limited digital literacy, and in some cases, age-related bias that discourages employers from investing in their development.
- **Ageism in the Workplace:** Despite the shift towards working longer, research findings from the Say No to Ageism in the Workplace Project show that 87% of respondents in Ireland felt that stereotypes associated with age exist, and 48% felt that society does not value older workers (Say No to Ageism in the Workplace, 2024)²⁶.
- **Safety Considerations:** The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has noted that workers over 55 are at higher risk of workplace fatalities (Health and Safety Authority, 2026)²⁷.

23 *Older Persons Information Hub*, Central Statistics Office (2026).

Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/hubs/p-opi/olderpersonsinformationhub/employment/inemploymentaged65andover/>

24 *The New Retirement Reality*, The Financial Planning Standards Board Ireland, IOB, LIA and Retirement Planning Council of Ireland (2026).

Available from: <https://www.fpsb.ie/resource/the-new-retirement-reality-report.html>

25 *Gender Divide: Nearly Half of Men in Ireland Expect to Stop Working Before the State Pension Age, but Only 30% of Women Do*, Royal London Ireland (2026).

Available from: <https://www.royallondon.ie/siteassets/site-docs/press/2026/predicted-retirement-age-press-release-january-2026.pdf>

26 *European Report on Ageism in the Workplace: Survey Results*, SNAW (2024). Available from: <https://www.snawproject.eu/snaw-survey-results/>

27 *Health and Safety Authority reports sharp rise in work-related fatalities in 2025*, Health and Safety Authority (2026).

Available from: https://www.hsa.ie/news_events_media/news/press_releases_2026/health-and-safety-authority-reports-sharp-rise-in-work-related-fatalities-in-2025/

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitment

For the theme of ‘Employment and Retirement’, the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade one policy commitment for particular Government attention.

SCORECARD: EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Introduce the Auto Enrolment My Future Fund in September 2025 to provide workers with greater comfort and security regarding their retirement savings”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ My Future Fund has been launched, although later than originally anticipated, in January 2026. This was a commitment under the last Programme for Government, and it had originally been intended to be introduced in 2024. ▶ The Alliance notes that significant gaps remain in areas such as workplace ageism, training opportunities for older workers, and the severe gender pension gap, among others.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

05 Education and Lifelong Learning

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Engaging in education during later life provides significant benefits for cognitive health, emotional well-being, and social connectivity. Participation is linked to increased self-esteem, confidence, and a sense of purpose. Gaining new competencies—particularly digital literacy—allows older adults to navigate a fast-changing world and remain self-reliant, connected and fulfilled both in the workforce and throughout retirement.

STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate increased from 14% in quarter 4 2023 to 16% in quarter 4 2024, exceeding the national target of 15%. However, data is collected only from adults aged 18-64 (SOLAS, 2025)²⁸.
- **Lifelong learning participation rates decline with age:** Within the older age cohort surveyed, the rate for persons aged 55-64 years (11.4%) was less than half that of 25-34-year-olds (20.4%) (ibid).

- Ireland's current *Programme for Government* (2025) does not reference older people in relation to education and lifelong learning and despite timely representations by Aontas and Alliance members, **older adults were not included as a specific target group in the current iteration (2024-2028) of Ireland's Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)** which funds many education and lifelong learning opportunities.
- **Having reduced access to digital skills, devices, and digital literacy places older adults at a significant disadvantage when it comes to course access, retention, and completion.** This is particularly relevant in the context of remote and hybrid learning, where much tutor-led and self-directed learning relies on the use of digital devices and skills. Older adults' fears of exclusion due to digital skills gaps have been highlighted by AONTAS' research in recent years (AONTAS, 2021)²⁹.

28 *Lifelong learning amongst adults in Ireland*, SOLAS (2025). Available from: <https://a.storyblok.com/f/70398/x/f7897760f2/lifelong-learning-amongst-adults-in-ireland-q4-2024.pdf>

29 *CEN CENSUS 2020: Community Education in a Time of COVID-19*, AONTAS (2021). Available from: https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/AONTAS-Research/AONTAS_CEN_Census_REPORT_FINAL.pdf

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitment

For the theme of ‘Education and lifelong learning’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade one policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning”	 Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate increased from 14% in quarter 4 2023 to 16% in quarter 4 2024. ▶ Continued reliance on Local Government, community, and NGO provision. ▶ Data gathering and policy orientation in this field only encompasses those of working age. There is no strategy prioritising older people as a specific cohort.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people's lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people's wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

06 Volunteering

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Studies have found that engaging in voluntary work in later life is a strong predictor of better self-rated health, functioning, physical activity, life satisfaction, and contributes to decreases in depression, hypertension, and mortality among older people. In addition to health benefits, volunteering can enhance social support networks, increase social status, and reinforce knowledge and skills.

Volunteering can transform retirement years into a time of purposeful, active, and social engagement. Volunteering helps create new social circles and friendships based on shared interests and values. Volunteering post-retirement has been shown to have a positive effect on loneliness and depression. It allows older adults to connect with younger generations, which can promote mutual understanding, combat ageism, and help older people share their lifetime of experience.

Research from the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) has previously highlighted the magnitude and the importance of the contribution that the middle-aged and older population in Ireland make, both to their own families, through providing help and resources to both older and younger family members, and through volunteering and active social participation in society.

STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

Over one-third (38%) of all volunteers were aged between 45 and 64 years in 2022. Older volunteers aged 65 years and over are most likely to volunteer for a social or charitable organisation or in the community (CSO, 2022)³⁰.

- **Frequency of volunteering: 75,200 (17%) adults aged 70 years and over volunteer every week** (McGarrigle, Ward, Scarlett, Kenny, 2020)³¹.
- **Care provision – family and friends: 31% of adults aged over 70 (132,200 people) provide help and care for their spouses, relatives** (apart from grandchildren), **neighbours and friends**. 23,400 adults aged 70 years and over provided more than 40 hours ‘in the past month’ (ibid).
- **Care provision – grandchildren:** Overall, **29% (131,700) of the population aged over 70 provide childcare for their grandchildren**, with the median number of hours in the last month for those who provided care being 16 hours (ibid).
- **Volume of caregiving: 5% (21,100) of adults aged 70 years and over are caregivers who provide care for a median of 25 hours** (range 5 to 16 hours/month). However, there are a small number of people giving very high numbers of hours of care, with an average of 64 hours per month (ibid).
- Of note, development of a new *National Volunteering Strategy* is currently underway. The previous *National Volunteering Strategy* ran from 2020-2025.

30 Census of Population 2022 Spotlight Series: Volunteering in Ireland, Central Statistics Office (2024).

Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpsv/censusofpopulation2022spotlightseriesvolunteeringinireland/volunteeringinireland/>

31 The Contributions of the Over 70s to Irish Society: Results from Wave 5 of the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing, McGarrigle, Ward, Scarlett, Kenny, TILDA (2020).

Available from: https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/pdf/Report_Over70sContribution.pdf

07 Cultural and Social Participation

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Cultural and social participation is a human right as well as a cornerstone of positive ageing. It can enhance later years as a phase of continued growth, connection, purpose and self-fulfilment. Engaging in community, volunteer, and artistic activities directly impacts physical and mental health, reducing the risks of loneliness, cognitive decline, and depression while improving overall quality of life. Social networks forged through community activities also create a support system to navigate the stresses of ageing, such as the loss of a spouse or health challenges.

Social context: Census data shows that almost 190,000 people aged 65 and over in Ireland live alone, highlighting the importance of ensuring opportunities for social engagement and participation within communities. Accessible community infrastructure, transport, and inclusive local activities are therefore essential to support participation and prevent isolation in later life.

Rights-based approach: Participation should be recognised as a rights-based issue. Older people have the right to remain active citizens, to contribute their skills and experience, and to participate fully in the cultural, social and civic life of their communities. This perspective reflects international policy frameworks that recognise older people as rights holders and emphasise participation as a core component of healthy ageing and age-friendly societies.

STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS AT JULY 2026:

- **Older adults in Ireland who participate in arts, creative and cultural activities report higher quality of life** and lower levels of depression, stress, worry and loneliness (Hennelly, Ward, Scarlett, Hever, O'Connor, McGarrigle, Kenny, 2023)³².
- **Over half of older adults (53.5%) take part in creative activities** or hobbies at least weekly.
- **Women are more likely to participate in arts and creative activities than men**, with 62% of women current or past participants compared to 46% of men. Participation declines significantly after age 75 and is influenced by factors such as health limitations, transport access, education level, and income. Older adults in rural areas and those with fewer resources are particularly at risk of cultural exclusion (ibid).
- **Ireland's current *Programme for Government (2025)* does not refer specifically to older people in relation to participation in arts and culture.** It does however commit to continued support for community groups and increased investment in community facilities.
- **Older people are more disadvantaged by the increasing delivery of cultural opportunities online.** The Central Statistics Office have reported that while older people are using the internet more frequently, 34% of those aged 75 years and over in Ireland have never used the internet. This was in comparison to 0% of those aged 16–29³³.

32 *Creative activity in the ageing population: Findings from Wave 6 of The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing*, Hennelly, Ward, Scarlett, Hever, O'Connor, McGarrigle, Kenny, TILDA (2023). Available from: https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/pdf/Report_CreativeActivity_AgeingPopulationW6.pdf

33 *Internet Coverage and Usage in Ireland 2025*, Central Statistics Office (2025). Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-isshtc/internetcoverageandusageinireland2025/frequencyofinternetusage/>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitment

For the theme of ‘Cultural and social participation’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade one policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences and capacities” (2013)	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013				▶ Ongoing rollout of funding streams to support participation (e.g., grants for community halls and community groups). ▶ In addition, the Programme for Government Commitment to implement an e Inclusion Strategy was welcome. ▶ Rising cost of living and transport can limit participation by older adults. ▶ No older age based (65+) participation targets for arts, education or lifelong learning.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

08 Transport

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

The provision of a range of transport services that are responsive to older people's transport needs for health, social activities and functional needs can help sustain older people's physical, mental, emotional and cognitive wellbeing and allow older people to participate and contribute to the broader community for longer.

Older people can experience age-related changes in vision, hearing, and cognition, combined with chronic conditions such as arthritis, which may impact their confidence and ability to drive. Some older persons may limit their driving to local areas, some can become dependent on others for their transport needs, or some may become effectively restricted to walking distance.



STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **Availability of transport options differs by location:** Existing transport options include public transport, TFI Local Link, community and voluntary driver programmes, and health related transport options. While programmes such as TFI Local Link have expanded in recent years, availability of many options (such as community cars) varies depending on location.
- **Older people living in rural areas are most negatively impacted:** One-quarter of adults living in Dublin city and county rely mainly on public transport compared to just 2% of adults in rural areas, reflecting the vast difference in transport services available. Three in five adults in rural areas (58%) rate their public transport options as poor or very poor. 19% of rural adults over 75 report that poor transport options negatively affect their lifestyle (Donoghue, Orr, Leahy, Kenny, 2017)³⁴.
- **Older people report difficulties in accessing transport:** Around half of the older people supported by ALONE do not own a car, and only half have a family member or friend who can help with transport. In addition, 60% are unable to use public transport, and the same proportion struggle to attend their appointments (ALONE, 2025)³⁵.
- **Older people are most likely to travel by car:** Those aged 65+ are the age group most likely to travel by car at 76%; this increases to 85% of those 65+ in rural areas. However, they record the lowest average daily trip rate at 2.29 (National Transport Authority, 2024)³⁶.
- **Although access to public transport is improving, older people still experience significant barriers – including living further away from services:** Distance between home and health services is lowest among those aged 25-29, peaks among those aged 65-69 years, and declines slightly among the oldest cohort (Central Statistics Office, 2026)³⁷.

34 *Transport patterns in community-dwelling adults aged 50 years and over in Ireland*, Donoghue, Orr, Leahy, Kenny, TILDA (2017). Available from: https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/pdf/Report_TransportPatterns.pdf

35 *ALONE Pre-Budget Submission 2026*, ALONE (2025). Available from: <https://alone.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2025.6.20-ALONE-Pre-Budget-Submission.pdf>

36 *National Household Travel Survey 2023 Research Report*, National Transport Authority (2024). Available from: https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/NTA_NHTS2023_IpsosBA_Report_27August2024.pdf

37 *Measuring Distance to Services in Ireland 2026 – Health Services*, Central Statistics Office (2026). Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-mdsihs/measuringdistancetoservicesinireland2026-healthservices/ageandsex/>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitments

For the theme of 'Transport' the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade two policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: TRANSPORT					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
"Work with the NTA to allow flexible pickups on Local Link and other bus routes in rural communities, as appropriate, enhancing service accessibility"	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland's Future, 2025	'New' policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		C-	▶ Pockets of good practice in place which could usefully be scaled up. ▶ Pick-ups and set downs on other services will continue to occur only at sanctioned locations. Local Authorities have statutory responsibility for bus stop approvals. The NTA is working with Local Link to increase the number of official stops along routes, with funding allocated to the Bus Stop Enhancement Programme to deliver this. ▶ Therefore, it is unlikely that this precise commitment will be achieved – but other actions are underway.
"Work to integrate Local Link transport routes with health services to improve access for individuals seeking care".	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland's Future, 2025	'New' policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		C+	▶ Pockets of good practice in place which could usefully be scaled up, including a pilot programme in Leitrim. However, this pilot began in 2020. ▶ Other transport pilot programmes are in progress, such as the Smart Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) pilot in Achill, which could also support access to health services. ▶ Updates state that "discussions are underway" on how to further progress this action. Inconsistent evidence, however, of significant national progress to date on this commitment.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people's lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people's wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

09 Financial Security

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Financial security empowers older people to maintain independence, dignity, and a high quality of life while reducing stress and allowing for social connection.

Ireland's state pension provides a basic income to most older persons, although some people only receive a partial rate payment or else a secondary payment as the spouse or partner of a contributory state pension recipient. For many people, social protection provides their only income in older age. Financial security in older age can also be impacted by additional costs of ageing and disability, such as home adaptations.



STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **Income inequality among older people is now higher than among the general population** (Eurostat, 2026)³⁸.
- **Older people living alone have higher rates of poverty:** 30% of older people living alone, and 15% of all older people, were experiencing income poverty in 2024, while 10% of older people living alone experienced consistent poverty. However, without once-off cost of living payments provided in recent Budgets, income poverty would have affected 41% of older people living alone. In addition, older people living alone have the lowest median household income in the state (CSO, 2026)³⁹.
- **Older households are more likely to spend a higher proportion of their income on energy** than those households with only younger people (Tovar Reaños et al, 2023)⁴⁰. Older people can face higher risk factors for energy poverty due to factors including low income, high fuel costs, high levels of fossil fuel reliance and poorly insulated homes.
- **The absence of pension benchmarking and indexation leaves older people vulnerable** to inflation. Ireland is now the only country in the eurozone without a system of benchmarking the state pension (European Central Bank, 2022)⁴¹.
- **Social protection benefits are under-utilised due to informational barriers:** ESRI research (2025)⁴² on low-income households found that many social protection benefits are under-utilised due to informational barriers.

38 *Income quintile share ration S80/S20 for disposable income by sex and age group*, Eurostat (2026). Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_di11_custom_22258316/default/table

39 *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2025*, Central Statistics Office (2026). Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2025/>

40 *Fuel poverty and financial literacy: Evidence from Irish home owners*, Tovar Reaños, Curtis, Pillai, Meier (2023). Available from: https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/WP751_0.pdf

41 *Public wage and pension indexation in the euro area: an overview*, ed. Checherita-Westphal, European Central Bank (2022). Available from: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/scpops/ecb.op299~61d0565cfb.en.pdf>

42 *The response of low-income households to the cost-of-living crisis in Ireland*, Ó Ceallaigh, Martin, Timmons, Robertson, Lunn, ESRI (2025). Available from: <https://www.esri.ie/pubs/RS206.pdf>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitments

For the theme of 'Financial security' the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade three policy commitments for Government attention.

SCORECARD: FINANCIAL SECURITY					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
"Progressively increase weekly pension payments".	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland's Future, 2025	'New' policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Commitment to "Progressively increase weekly pension payments..." represents a dilution of a previous and more specific Government policy commitment to "Protect the incomes of older people through the delivery of the commitment to benchmark State pension payments". (<i>The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025</i>) ▶ Income inequality among older people, however, is now higher than among the general population. Older people living alone are one of the most financially exposed groups in the country. ▶ Although the rate of State Pension was increased in Budget 2026, the absence of pension benchmarking and indexation leaves older people particularly vulnerable to inflation. Ireland is now the only country in the eurozone without a system of benchmarking the state pension.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people's lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting.

D: Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people.

F: Fail, taking steps that undermine older people's wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

SCORECARD: FINANCIAL SECURITY					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Examine improvements to key ancillary benefits such as the Fuel Allowance, Household Benefits Package and Living Alone Allowance to support vulnerable groups”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► Vague and discretionary commitment with no specific target set. ► No movement or uplift, to date, on either the Household Benefits Package or the Living Alone Allowance since formation of Government. However, the rate of Fuel Allowance has been increased by €5, and a temporary extension to the season was provided in 2026.
“Examine what modifications or changes may be made to support women who currently fall outside the existing schemes to qualify for a State Pension”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► Evidence suggests work and “examination” underway but no changes introduced to date.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

10 Housing

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

The majority of older people will prefer to remain living in their own homes and communities. Appropriate housing allows them to do this safely as their needs change. Suitable, adapted housing reduces reliance on formal health and social care services, leading to better health outcomes and lower rates of admission to hospital and long stay care. Better heating systems and warmer, more energy-efficient homes improve both mental health and physical comfort, preventing illnesses associated with cold, damp, or poorly maintained housing.

Supporting people to age well therefore requires policies that enable people to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible, with appropriate health, housing and community supports. This approach is consistent with international policy frameworks such as the World Health Organization's Healthy Ageing framework.



STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **There is an increase in housing instability with, in particular, a notable rise in the number of older renters:** According to Census 2022, 3.5 per cent of people aged 65+ rent from the private sector. The number of households in this age-group renting in the private sector has increased by 83 per cent since Census 2016. Furthermore, there is a clear trend of insecure tenure situations among younger age groups. Census 2022 reveals 150,839 of those aged 50 to 74 are renting in some form from a private landlord, local authority or voluntary body⁴³.
- **The number of older people in need of social housing has also increased:** The number of people aged 70+ looking to social housing has doubled in a decade, with over 2,300 in this age cohort on social housing waiting lists in 2025 (The Housing Agency, 2026)⁴⁴.
- **There is an inadequate supply of suitable homes that meet the specific requirements of older people.** There is a lack of 1- and 2-bedroom housing stock that would permit older persons to trade down while retaining their social connections in their communities. Just one fifth of occupied housing stock has fewer than three bedrooms (CSO, 2022)⁴⁵.
- **Over 90% of Irish adults believe housing with supports for older people is urgently needed,** with nearly 60% saying very urgently (Sage Advocacy, 2025)⁴⁶. Only 6% of such respondents believe adequate independent living options exist. The construction of 'Housing with Support' units (which include models such as the Government Demonstrator Project in Inchicore) will offer a more affordable alternative to long-term residential care.
- **Applications for housing adaption grants are often oversubscribed, with long waiting times.** One third of Local Authorities were reported to be experiencing difficulties with operating the grants in 2025, and, by September of 2025, nine Local Authorities were understood to be closed to applications (ALONE, 2025)⁴⁷. Additional funding for these grants was provided in Budget 2026.

43 *Census of Population 2022 Profile 2 – Housing in Ireland*, Central Statistics Office (2022).

Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp2/censusofpopulation2022profile2-housinginireland/housingstock/>

44 *Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2025*, The Housing Agency (2026). Available from: <https://www.housingagency.ie/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/HA-7905-SSHA-English-AWv2.pdf>

45 *Census of Population 2022 Profile 2 – Housing in Ireland*, Central Statistics Office (2022).

Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp2/censusofpopulation2022profile2-housinginireland/housingstock/>

46 *Housing for Older People*, REDC, Sage Advocacy, Mayo Social (2025).

Available from: <https://sageadvocacy.ie/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/8214-2025-Sage-Housing-for-Older-People-Oct-2025-Full-Report.pdf>

47 *ALONE calls for extra €12.5m for Housing Adaptation Grants in Budget 2026*, ALONE (2025).

Available from: <https://alone.ie/alone-calls-for-extra-e12-5m-for-housing-adaptation-grants-in-budget-2026-to-give-older-people-independence-and-security/>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitments

For the theme of ‘Housing’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade three policy commitments for Government attention.

SCORECARD: HOUSING					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Mandate local authorities to find suitable sites for housing specifically designed for older adults, ensuring accessible options within local communities”. “Support AHBs in developing and managing senior housing with onsite support services, fostering safe, supportive communities”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ This mandate has yet to be applied to local authorities. ▶ No specific target has been set for provision of “suitable sites”. ▶ A commitment is in place to review cross-departmental funding mechanisms but awaiting delivery/completion of such a review. ▶ The demonstrator Housing with Supports project for older adults is now operational but no commitments have been made, as of yet, to support further scale up of this model.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

SCORECARD: HOUSING					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Progress an Action Plan on delivering housing for older people through: increased delivery of social housing for older people; increased delivery of more suitable homes and choice for older people in private housing; and increased choice for older people to support voluntary rightsizing”.	 Delivering Homes, Building Communities, 2025-2030	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ It is understood that development of the Action Plan is underway. This new Action Plan must, however, consider strong commitments made previously in <i>Housing Options for our Ageing Population</i>. ▶ The number of households in the 65+ age-group renting in the private sector has increased by 83 per cent since Census 2016. ▶ CSO report that nearly half of renters over 65 are spending more than 35 per cent of their disposable income on rent. ▶ Further increase in the numbers of older people on the waiting list for social housing in 2025. ▶ No national ‘rightsizing’ strategy.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

11 The Built Environment

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Research has indicated that the built environment plays a crucial role in ageing. Urban planning, accessible urban spaces and adaptable housing designs significantly impact older people's health, social engagement, and life satisfaction.

Accessible, safe, and well-designed surroundings which offer walkable streets and green space will reduce injury risks, promote physical activity, and enhance mental well-being. Walkable neighbourhoods with accessible services contribute to reduction in chronic disease risk and improved mental health. The design of public spaces affects opportunities for social participation, which is important for preventing loneliness and boosting emotional resilience.



STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **Walkability audits show mixed results:** A summary of 32 walkability audit reports conducted between 2013 and 2024 established that overall, crossings and junctions were rated 'Poor'; footpaths were rated between 'Ok' and 'Poor'; public spaces and facilities were 'Ok' overall; and the look and feel of towns were rated between 'Ok' and 'Good'. Problems related to footpaths were the most common issue raised, but reports also highlighted the lack of public seating, and feeling unsafe due to poor lighting. The audits were carried out in 32 areas across 14 counties, and 16 buildings across 12 counties (National Disability Authority, 2025)⁴⁸.
- **Uneven pavements cause avoidable falls for older adults in Ireland:** Data shows that 60% of outdoor falls for those over 65 are caused by uneven pavements. Such falls made up nearly one-third of personal injury claims in 2024, costing the state €3.1 million (Injuries Resolution Board, 2025)⁴⁹. In Cork, the city council received 583 complaints about dangerous footpaths between January 2023 and May 2024, many from older adults unable to risk leaving their homes (Campbell, 2024)⁵⁰.
- **Only 54% of older rural dwellers have access to public space within a ten-minute walk:** This is in contrast to 87% of older people in urban areas. More people (51%) who use outdoor space meet the HSE's physical activity guidelines for their relevant age group than those (34%) who do not make use of outdoor space (Age & Opportunity, 2022)⁵¹.
- **The absence of public toilet facilities has been identified as the biggest barrier to using public spaces for older persons** (ibid). Other barriers include lack of physical infrastructure such as benches and handrails.
- **Pedestrians over the age of 65 are over-represented among pedestrian injuries and fatalities:** However, neither older pedestrians nor drivers are aware that older pedestrians are at increased risk on the roads (Road Safety Authority, 2024)⁵².
- **Building users experience inconsistent levels of accessibility in public buildings** in Ireland (National Disability Authority, 2019)⁵³.
- **There is evidence of funding to support walking and cycling infrastructure:** €360m funding for the delivery of walking and cycling projects in villages, towns and cities was announced in 2026 (Department of Transport, 2026)⁵⁴.

48 *Walkability Audit Summary Report*, The National Disability Authority (2025). Available from: <https://universaldesign.ie/built-environment/walkability-auditing/walkability-audit-summary-report>

49 *Do outdoor falls impact all age groups equally?* Swan, Injuries Resolution Board (2025). Available from: <https://www.injuries.ie/eng/news-publications/news/research-spotlight-january-2025.pdf>

50 *Claims elderly people can't leave their homes as council receives nearly 600 footpath complaints since 2023*, Campbell, The Echo (2024). Available from: <https://www.echolive.ie/corknews/arid-41441731.html>

51 *Peer Research on Public Spaces*, Mullen, Age & Opportunity (2022). Available from: <https://ageandopportunity.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Peer-Research-on-Public-Spaces-September-2022.pdf>

52 *Serious injuries among pedestrians in hospital and An Garda Síochána data*, Castelló, Road Safety Authority (2024). Available from: https://www.rsa.ie/docs/default-source/road-safety/r2---statistics/analysis-of-road-users/pedestrian-report-on-serious-injuries-2014-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=71323f3f_3

53 *An Operational Review of the Effectiveness of Section 25 of the Disability Act 2005*, National Disability Authority (2019). Available from: <https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/an-operational-review-of-the-effectiveness-of-section-25-of-the-disability-act-20051.pdf>

54 *Ministers announce €360 million in capital funding for Active Travel and Greenways in 2026*, Department of Transport (2026). Available from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-transport/press-releases/ministers-announce-360-million-in-capital-funding-for-active-travel-and-greenways-in-2026/>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitment

For the theme of ‘Built Environment’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade one policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Provide a dedicated maintenance budget to each local authority to maintain active travel infrastructure, including footpaths”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► Problems related to footpaths were the most common issue raised in national walkability audits. ► Although further work is needed, there is evidence of significant funding allocations and local project delivery to support active travel.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

12 Safety and Security

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Older people's feelings of safety are shaped by how secure they feel at home, in their local communities, and online, and extend beyond the absence of threats to include feeling connected, valued, and supported. This sense of safety is vital to their quality of life and strongly influences behaviours and decisions.

A lack of perceived safety has been linked to poorer health and wellbeing, and research by the Housing Agency found that concerns about neighbourhood safety were the third most common reason older people consider moving to housing with care, following declining physical health and the need for access to supports and services (The Housing Agency, 2016)⁵⁵. The impact of being a victim of crime can be devastating and severely impact older people's quality of life and sense of confidence.

When older people feel safe, they are better placed to manage their own household affairs which is crucial for maintaining dignity and a sense of control.

As services become more digital, ensuring safety in the digital environment, avoiding phishing and hacking, is increasingly important for continued autonomy.

Safety and security is not just about avoiding accidents; it is essential for creating the confidence, trust, and peace of mind necessary for older people to remain active and engaged in society.

STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **15% of people aged 60+ worry “often” that they could be a victim of crime** causing physical injury, and 4% worry about this “all the time” (CSO, 2020)⁵⁶. Older people experience higher levels of worry than younger groups, despite not being at higher risk of being a victim of crime (CSO, 2025)⁵⁷. This higher level of worry may be due to individuals' self-perceptions of their own increased frailty or reduced ability to withstand an attack, but it can also reflect broader feelings of vulnerability and influences such as media exposure (Camacho Doyle et al, 2025)⁵⁸.

55 *Housing for Older People – Thinking Ahead*, Amárach Research, Lyons, Sirr, Innovation Delivery, Ireland Smart Ageing Exchange and the Housing Agency (2016). Available from: <https://agefriendlyhomes.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Housing-for-Older-People-Thinking-Ahead.pdf>

56 *How often persons worry they could be a victim of crime*, Central Statistics Office (2019). Available from: <https://data.cso.ie/table/CVS02>

57 *Recorded crime victims of selected offences by age of victim*, Central Statistics Office (2025). Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/hubs/p-opi/olderpersonsinformationhub/crime/victims/>

58 *Beyond Fear of Crime: Exploring the True Worries of Older Adults in the Context of Fear of Crime and Vulnerability in Sweden*, Carmacho Doyle, Bood, Frogner, Golovchanova, Hellfeldt, EUR J Crim Policy Res (2025). Available from: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10610-025-09631-2>

- **Over 70% of older people are concerned about scams and personal information misuse**, according to research by the Vodafone Foundation (2026)⁵⁹: Of note, however, participants in Ireland were noted as having particularly strong willingness to learn and engage with digital technologies, relative to other jurisdictions.
- **FraudSMART, the fraud awareness initiative led by Banking & Payments Federation Ireland (BPFI), has recorded an increase in the number of convincing investment scams targeting those over the age of 50** who may be looking for an opportunity to top up their finances ahead of retirement or to boost their current pension⁶⁰. More than three quarters (78%) of Irish adults are being targeted with scam text messages, emails, phone calls or online content at least monthly according to research undertaken by FraudSMART in 2025.
- **Older people feel more unsafe if they have fewer social contacts** (van Hoof et al, 2022)⁶¹. **Being a victim of crime has been shown to have adverse impacts on older people**, including depression and anxiety, increased risk of nursing home admission, and accelerated mortality (Satchell et al, 2022)⁶².
- **As of 2026, Community Safety Partnerships have been established** in every local authority area. Community Safety Partnerships will work locally to enhance community safety, with local action planning to follow (Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 2026)⁶³.

59 *Closing the Confidence Gap: How Older Adults Navigate the Digital World*, Vodafone Foundation Hi Digital Programme (2026). Available from: <https://foundation.vodafone.com/pdf-viewer.aspx?gid=514358169&src=%2F%7E%2Fmedia%2Ffiles%2FV%2Fvodafone%2Ffoundation%2Fdocuments%2Fclosing-the-confidence-gap-report.pdf>

60 *Over 50s warned to be on high alert for investment scams following marked increase in adverts featuring AI-generated celebrity endorsements*, Fraudsmart (2025). Available from: <https://bpfi.ie/investment-scams-alert-following-marked-increase-in-ai-generated-adverts/>

61 *Towards a Better Understanding of the Sense of Safety and Security of Community-Dwelling Older Adults. The case of the Age-Friendly City of The Hague*, van Hoof, Dikken, van Staaldin, van der Pas, van den Hoven, Hulsebosch-Janssen, Int J Environ Res Public Health 2022 (2022). Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/7/3960?>

62 *Psychological Distress and Interventions for Older Victims of Crime: A Systematic Review*, Satchell, Craston, Drennan, Billings, Serfaty, Trauma Violence Abuse (2022). Available from: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10594850/>

63 *Nationwide roll-out of Local Community Safety Partnerships*, Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (2026). Available from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-justice-home-affairs-and-migration/news/nationwide-roll-out-of-local-community-safety-partnerships/>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitments

For the theme of ‘Safety and security’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade two policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: SAFETY AND SECURITY					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Invest in the rollout of the Local Community Safety Partnerships and social and economic regeneration programmes to support communities experiencing high levels of crime, unemployment and social exclusion”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► Evidence of roll out of Partnerships across the country with local action planning to follow.
“Publish a new Rural Safety Strategy and support An Garda Síochána to expand successful approaches to tackling rural crime”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► <i>Rural Safety Plan 2025-2027</i> has been developed in conjunction with the National Rural Safety Forum. ► Four main priority areas to be targeted as part of same include: Community Safety and Engagement; Property Crime; Roads Policing and Animal & Wildlife Crime.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting.

D: Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people.

F: Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

13 Elder Abuse

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Elder abuse is often a largely hidden and dangerous issue that violates fundamental human rights, threatens public health, and causes severe physical, psychological, and financial harm to many older adults. Studies have estimated that elder abuse affects around 1 in 6 older adults globally (Yon, Mikton, Gassoumis et al, 2017)⁶⁴. Older people who have poor levels of community support or are socially isolated and those residing in care facilities are at elevated risk of experiencing abuse.

As the population ages, addressing this problem is essential for preserving the dignity, autonomy, and safety of a growing, vulnerable demographic.

Elder abuse is understood to contribute to premature death, severe injuries, and the exacerbation of existing health conditions. It leads to significant long-term psychological consequences, including anxiety, depression, and increased cognitive decline. Elder abuse also imposes heavy costs on healthcare, social services, and legal systems.



64 *Elder abuse prevalence in community settings: a systematic review and meta-analysis*, Yon, Mikton, Gassoumis et al, The Lancet Global Health (2017). Available from: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(17\)30006-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(17)30006-2/fulltext)

STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **A policy framework for adult safeguarding** in the health and social care sector was launched in December 2025. However, implementation structures and an implementation plan have yet to be published, and legislation to comprehensively address adult safeguarding remains outstanding.
- **There has been a steady increase in referrals relating to financial and psychological abuse of older people** since the Health Service Executive first published its report on elder abuse in 2008.
- **The HSE National Safeguarding Report 2024 showed a 7.5% increase in reported concerns**, and a 14% increase in reports of elder abuse (HSE National Safeguarding Report, 2025)⁶⁵. However, abuse and neglect is underreported in Ireland (Joint Committee on Disability Matters, 2024)⁶⁶.
- **Almost one-third of adults in Ireland have experience of financial abuse (30%)** with the vast majority (81%) of the abuse carried by someone well-known to the victim rather than online, or anonymously (Safeguarding Ireland, 2024)⁶⁷. Financial literacy helps protect older adults from fraud, scams, and financial abuse.
- **Most adults in Ireland say that have either never heard of (44%) or don't understand (16%) laws on Assisted Decision-Making** and just 15% say they know what is required as a result of the law (Safeguarding Ireland, RED C, 2025)⁶⁸.
- 46% of adults in Ireland either do not understand (13%) or do not know (33%) that health services, banks, utilities and Government services have a legal responsibility to take necessary steps to support at risk adults with their communication and decision-making (ibid).

65 *National Safeguarding Office Annual Report 2024*, HSE (2025).

Available from: <https://safeguardingireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/National-Safeguarding-Office-Annual-Report-2024.pdf>

66 *Ensuring rights based adult safeguarding in Ireland*, Joint Committee on Disability Matters, Houses of the Oireachtas (2024).

Available from: https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_disability_matters/reports/2024/2024-05-07_ensuring-rights-based-adult-safeguarding-in-ireland_en.pdf

67 *Adult Safeguarding Day 2024 – 30% of adults have experience of financial abuse*, Safeguarding Ireland (2024).

Available from: <https://safeguardingireland.org/30-of-adults-have-experience-of-financial-abuse/>

68 *Understanding of Assisted Decision Making in Ireland*, REDC, Safeguarding Ireland (2025).

Available from: <https://safeguardingireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/8147-2025-Safeguarding-Ireland-OCT-25.pdf>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitment

For the theme of ‘Elder abuse’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade one policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: ELDER ABUSE					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Publish a national policy on adult safeguarding for the health and social care sector”. “Explore the establishment of a National Safeguarding Body to ensure the health, safety and welfare of vulnerable adults.”	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ A National Policy Framework for the Health and Social Care sector was published in December 2025. This is to be welcomed, but gives rise to a number of limitations. In particular, for the provision of adult safeguarding to be effective, a National Safeguarding Policy covering all sectors across society is required rather than limiting such a policy solely to the health and social care sector. ▶ While work on a general scheme of a Bill on adult safeguarding is reported to be underway, this has not been completed. Such legislation would most usefully provide for an Independent National Adult Safeguarding Body. ▶ An Adult Safeguarding Bill, receiving all party support, was originally published in 2017. The Joint Oireachtas Committee stated at the time that the enactment of such legislation was an urgent matter.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

14 Ageism

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Ageism is defined as discrimination against older people because of inaccurate and negative stereotypes. It is directly relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing because it acts as one of the primary and most harmful barriers to achieving it. It is one of the last socially acceptable prejudices. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines it as referring to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age.

Ageism is crucial to address because it severely impacts mental and physical health, longevity and wellbeing while also having far-reaching economic consequences. It is associated with earlier death, reducing lifespan by an average of 7.5 years (World Health Organisation, 2025)⁶⁹. As a pervasive, often 'acceptable' prejudice, it limits opportunities for older adults in workplaces and healthcare.

For older people, ageism is linked to poorer physical and mental health, including increased cardiovascular events, depression, and higher risk of dementia. Negative self-perceptions of ageing can accelerate cognitive decline and reduce longevity. Finally, it wrongly portrays older persons as dependents, whereas many older people continue to work, volunteer and actively contribute to their communities.

The WHO and other advocates emphasise that to achieve positive ageing, it is necessary to move from a deficit-based model to a strength-based perspective. This involves challenging stereotypes and recognising that ageing is not a destructive force, but a diverse process, where many older adults remain active, productive, and healthy.

Yet ageism remains present in our society. As per the Central Statistics Office, more than one in ten (11%) of those aged 75 years and over report experience of discrimination in the past two years (CSO, 2025)⁷⁰.

69 *Ageing: Ageism*, World Health Organisation (2025). Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageism>

70 *Percentage of persons by their reported experience of discrimination in the past two years by age group*, Central Statistics Office (2025). Available from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/hubs/p-opi/olderpersonsinformationhub/attitudesandperceptions/experienceofdiscrimination/>

STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **Perceived Ageism remains an issue:** The majority (72%) of older adult respondents to an Age & Opportunity survey believe ageism is present in society, with 61% and 51% identifying it in private companies and government, respectively (Age & Opportunity, 2023)⁷¹.
- **Experience of Ageism:** Age & Opportunity's 2023 report *Rights and Duty: The Voice of Older Persons as Rights Holders* (ibid) found that just 35% of older people identify as "rights holders," nearly 40% reported experiencing age-based discrimination, and 72% acknowledged that pervasive ageism restricts older adults' ability to assert their rights.
- **Complaints in relation to age discrimination in the workplace remain high:** Referrals under the Equal Status Acts related to age increased from 37 in 2023, to 64 in 2025. Referrals under the Employment Equality Act increased from 176 in 2023 to 189 in 2025, but have decreased from 218 in 2024 (Workplace Relations Commission, 2025)⁷².
- **Surveys report ageism in the workplace:** A European report on ageism in the workplace found in a survey of employers and employees in Ireland, that 68% of respondents believe that the impact of stereotypes does affect the possibility of older workers getting hired or promoted. Over 20% witnessed age-based discrimination against older workers (Say No to Ageism in the Workplace, 2024)⁷³.
- **Ireland's statistical information about older people is often inadequate.** A common weakness is failing to disaggregate information into sub-categories of older age. It is misleading to place all older adults into the single age category of "65+" when some older persons are thirty or more years apart from one another in age. However, data is often unavailable on older persons except where they are defined as a single category.

71 *Rights and Duty: The Voice of Older Persons as Rights Holders*, Age & Opportunity (2023).

Available from: <https://ageandopportunity.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Rights-and-Duty-Final-Report-PDF-online.pdf>

72 *Annual Report 2025*, Workplace Relations Commission (2026).

Available from: https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/publications_forms/corporate_matters/annual_reports_reviews/annual-report-2025.pdf

73 *European Report on Ageism in the Workplace: Survey Results*, SNAW (2024). Available from: <https://www.snawproject.eu/snaw-survey-results/>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitment

For the theme of 'Ageism' the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade one policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: AGEISM					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
"Combat ageism through awareness campaigns and by encouraging the media and other opinion-making actors to give an age-balanced image of society" (2013)	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013				► No evidence of any Government awareness campaigns to combat ageism.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people's lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people's wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

15 Policy Coordination and Monitoring

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Policy coordination and monitoring are the much needed glue that keeps strategies from falling apart.

Without coordination, policies can operate in conflicting ways; for example, the Department of Social Protection might increase the State Pension, but the Department of Health and HSE might not increase the means threshold for the medical card – pushing some people out of the eligibility range and into a more difficult financial position.

Monitoring provides the data to see if policies are hitting their targets. If a programme aims to reduce housing difficulties but the data shows homelessness is rising, monitoring allows policymakers to pivot and adapt the strategy before more resources are wasted.

It is necessary (as highlighted in the *National Positive Ageing Strategy*) that programmes and policies designed to support and enable positive ageing are supported by timely and regular access to comprehensive information about the determinants of health, wellbeing and quality of life and the inter-relationships between them.



STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **Implementation gap:** While Ireland has many policies and plans relevant to the lives of older people, a lack of clear implementation plans, dedicated funding, and monitoring mechanisms often hinders progress. The *National Positive Ageing Strategy*, in particular, contains still-relevant approaches to eliminating ageism, ensuring that ageing is taken seriously, that older people's needs and preferences inform policy and practice, that most older people can age with dignity and die well close to family and community, get the supports they need, have options in their lives and can participate fully in all that is going on. **Despite this, it remains without an implementation plan, system of monitoring or annual reporting.**
- **Lack of monitoring:** Despite a commitment to do so, there is a continued absence of evidence of oversight of implementation of the *National Positive Ageing Strategy* by the relevant Cabinet Committee (originally listed in the 2013 *Strategy* as a responsibility for the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy). Annual reports on progress were never published.
- One-day National Positive Ageing Strategy Stakeholder Forums were last hosted by the Department of Health in 2017, 2018 and 2019 with no such forums being held in subsequent years.
- Further policy commitments relevant to an ageing population **have been set out as part of a range of public policy frameworks**, as highlighted throughout this report. While implementation reports are published on many of these policies individually, this report by the Age Alliance remains the only review which specifically considers whether commitments to older people are being met.
- **Older people have needs and rights far beyond the Department of Health:** Such an extensive set of 'boundary spanning' issues can only be effectively addressed through a single body operating across a range of departments. Almost every Government strategy and action plan, whether it is relating to health, transport, housing, the environment, or connectivity, must be considered in the context of our ageing population and the ageing demographic they will serve.

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitment

For the theme of ‘Policy Coordination and Monitoring’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade one policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: POLICY COORDINATION AND MONITORING					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Coordinate ageing-related policies across all levels of government”.	 Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing (2022), of which Ireland is a signatory at Ministerial level	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► Some evidence of increased coordination across the Departments of Health and Housing. ► The now 14 year old <i>National Positive Ageing Strategy</i> (2013) remains as the primary blueprint for age-related policy. An implementation plan for this Strategy, however, was never developed. No allocation of ring-fenced funding was ever provided.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

16 Mainstreaming Ageing

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Guidelines for mainstreaming ageing prepared by the United Nations (UN) define it as the “systematic integration of ageing issues across all relevant policy fields and at all levels of government” (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021)⁷⁴.

Ireland is a signatory, at Ministerial level, to the *Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing* (2022) which encourages “the establishment of independent bodies, for example, ombudspersons, at national, subnational, and local levels that can mediate the rights, needs and interests of older persons in all areas of society”. In adopting the 2022 Declaration Ministers, as signatories, pledged to:

- “develop or strengthen national frameworks for mainstreaming ageing and building capacity for implementing them.
- coordinate ageing-related policies across all levels of government.
- develop a participatory stakeholder engagement approach to mainstreaming ageing, involving all relevant actors, including older persons and their representatives”.

STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **Inconsistency as to the positioning and status of the 2013 *National Positive Ageing Strategy*.** On occasion, the Strategy has been described by the relevant Minister in the Dáil as “a set of principles...which will inform policies that affect older people into the future” (2019)⁷⁵.
- More recently, Government developed the ‘Ireland National Report 2017-2021’: *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (Regional Implementation Strategy)*⁷⁶. The 2022 report reaffirmed, at various points throughout, Government’s recognition and positioning of the National Positive Ageing Strategy as:
 - “a key pillar in the national progress to implement the main commitments and priorities set out in MIPPA/RIS”. (pg. 2)
 - “one of Ireland’s main policy achievements in the last 20 years as this has filtered across government increasing awareness of the specific needs of older people”. (pg. 13)
 - “a framework for cooperation to address age-related policy and service delivery across Government and society in the years ahead”. (pg. 25)

74 Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2022). Available from: <https://unece.org/population/publications/guidelines-mainstreaming-ageing>.

75 National Positive Ageing Strategy Implementation, Minister of State at the Department of Health, Oireachtas.ie (2019). Available from: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2019-12-17/326/>.

76 *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing: Regional Implementation Strategy. Ireland National Report 2017-2021*, Government of Ireland (2022). Available from: <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/mipaa20-report-ireland.pdf>.

- ▶ “(a means to) align and can support the guiding principles set out for the Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030”. (pg. 25)
- ▶ “The implementation of NPAS (and the establishment of the Commission on Care) are integral parts of the Government’s agenda to improve the lives of older people in Ireland”. (pg. 26)

Despite these descriptions, the NPAS remains without a budget, implementation plan, system of monitoring or annual reporting.

- **Lack of visibility:** There are minimal references to older people throughout the current Programme for Government (2025) - Securing Ireland’s Future. Notably, there is not one mention of older people throughout the section on ‘Investing in our Future’.
- **Absence of top-level Government actions which treat population ageing as a cross-cutting priority.** Public policy must support the additional needs that arise as more people live longer and as the demography of our population changes. This has been recognised through reports such as Future Forty, the establishment of the Commission on Care, and discussions at Joint Oireachtas Committee level on demographics. However, although the Programme for Government committed to “Establish a new Unit for Future Planning to forecast demographic changes and ensure accurate estimates of the demand for essential services and employment”, the status of this unit is unclear. In addition, as of yet there is no new cross-governmental plan or viable cross-governmental structures supporting policy relevant to an ageing population.

- There is a proven appetite for the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People: In a Red C poll commissioned by Sage Advocacy, 81% of respondents wanted to see the introduction of a Commissioner for Older People (Sage Advocacy, 2023)⁷⁷.
- Furthermore, the Citizens’ Assembly in 2017 recorded that “100% of the Members recommended that the Government urgently prioritise and implement existing policies and strategies in relation to older people i.e. the National Positive Ageing Strategy”⁷⁸.

77 Sage Advocacy, Red C, Sage Advocacy (2023). Available from: <https://sageadvocacy.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/red-c-poll-sage-advocacy-october-2023.pdf>

78 *Second Report and Recommendations of the Citizens’ Assembly: How we best respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population*, The Citizens’ Assembly (2017). Available from: <https://citizensassembly.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Final-Report-on-Older-People-Incl-Appendix-A-D.pdf>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitment

For the theme of ‘Mainstreaming Ageing’ the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade one policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: MAINSTREAM AGING					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Develop an implementation plan so as to translate Goals and Objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy into action on the ground” (2013) “The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, chaired by the Taoiseach, will oversee the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy” (2013)	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013	F	F-	F-	▶ No implementation plan ever developed for this 14-year-old Strategy. ▶ No allocation of ring-fenced funding ever provided. ▶ Despite a commitment to do so, there is a continued absence of evidence of oversight of implementation of the Strategy by the relevant Cabinet Committee (originally listed in the 2013 Strategy as a responsibility for the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy). ▶ Government, most recently, has proposed that a cross-departmental group, under the auspices of the Commission on Care for Older People, will “consider whether the supports for positive ageing across the life course are fit-for-purpose” and “prepare a detailed implementation plan for the selected options to enable positive ageing”. This work is currently scheduled as part of Module 3 of the work of the Commission on Care for commencement c. late 2026; 14 years post launch of the Positive Ageing Strategy.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting.

D: Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people.

F: Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

17 Research

Why this theme is relevant to the pursuit of positive ageing:

Research is essential for supporting policies for positive ageing. It ensures that policies are not based on assumptions, but on reliable data regarding the diverse needs of an ageing population, ultimately enabling individuals to live independently, remain engaged in their communities, and maintain their dignity.

Research highlights areas where knowledge is lacking, such as the specific health disparities in older age, which allows for better-targeted initiatives to tackle health inequities.

Research supports evidence-based policy making and provides the empirical data required to develop, implement, and evaluate policies that truly work, ensuring that governmental actions are effective rather than just reactive.

Research evidence is particularly important for designing effective, ‘whole-of-government’ policies that promote active, healthy, and age-friendly environments. It allows for the development of targeted interventions that address specific needs of older populations.

STATUS OR PROGRESS, ON KEY ISSUES, AS OF JULY 2026:

- **The Healthy and Positive Ageing Index’s** (HaPAI) most recent framework report was produced in 2019.
- **Funding allocated to The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA):** TILDA has received funding from the Department of Health to progress new rounds of data collection up to 2030⁷⁹.
- A review or evaluation of the now 14-year-old National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013) has yet to be conducted.

79 Ministers for Health announce €15 million investment in TILDA to support research on ageing well in Ireland, TILDA (2023). Available from: <https://tilda.tcd.ie/news-events/2023/2325-DoH-Funding/>

Alliance Grading of Government efforts on key Policy Commitment

For the theme of 'Research' the Alliance has chosen to spotlight and grade one policy commitment for Government attention.

SCORECARD: RESEARCH					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
"To support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland".	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013				▶ Evidence of additional investment in lived experience research and in general older adult/public consultation. ▶ Continued investment in key research initiatives; TILDA and PPI Ignite Network. ▶ Healthy and Positive Ageing Index's (HaPAI,) most recent framework report was produced in 2019. ▶ A review or evaluation of the now 14-year-old <i>National Positive Ageing Strategy</i> (2013) has yet to be conducted.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people's lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people's wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

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