



Annual Report 2024

ABOUT THE ESRI

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) advances evidence-based policymaking that supports economic sustainability and social progress in Ireland. ESRI researchers apply the highest standards of academic excellence to challenges facing policymakers, focusing on ten areas of critical importance to 21st Century Ireland.

The Institute was founded in 1960 by a group of senior civil servants led by Dr T.K. Whitaker, who identified the need for independent and in-depth research analysis. Since then, the Institute has remained committed to independent research and its work is free of any expressed ideology or political position. The Institute publishes all research reaching the appropriate academic standard, irrespective of its findings or who funds the research.

The ESRI is a company limited by guarantee, answerable to its members and governed by a Council, comprising up to 14 representatives drawn from a cross-section of ESRI members from academia, civil services, state agencies, businesses and civil society. Funding for the ESRI comes from research programmes supported by government departments and agencies, public bodies, competitive research programmes, membership fees, and an annual grant-in-aid from the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform.

Further information is available at www.esri.ie.

The role and responsibilities of the Council are set out in the ESRI's Articles of Association. The following key matters are reserved for Council decision: approval of the organisation's long-term objectives and operational strategy; approval of significant acquisitions and investments; approval of major contracts; approval of the annual operating and capital expenditure budgets; approval of the Annual Report and financial statements; appointment and remuneration of the Director. The Council meets quarterly and is supported by its three sub-committees: Audit and Risk, Business and Operations, and Governance and Nominations. Section 6 provides a short biography of Council Members.

The Council

MEMBERS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024



***Mr S. O'Driscoll,
President and Chairperson***



***Professor A. Barrett,
Director***

MR SEAN O'DRISCOLL, President and Chairperson

PROFESSOR ALAN BARRETT, Director, Economic and Social Research Institute

MR SHAY CODY, former General Secretary, Fórsa

PROFESSOR KATY HAYWARD, Queen's University Belfast

PROFESSOR THIA HENNESSY, University College Cork

PROFESSOR BRIGID LAFFAN, Emeritus Professor, European University Institute

MR GABRIEL MAKHLOUF, Governor, Central Bank of Ireland

PROFESSOR SANDRA McNALLY, University of Surrey, UK

MR DAVID MOLONEY, Secretary-General, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform

PROFESSOR CIARÁN Ó hÓGARTAIGH, President, University of Galway

MS ANNE O'LEARY, Head of Meta Ireland and VP, Global Business Group, EMEA

MS ANNE VAUGHAN, former Deputy Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection and current Chair of the National Statistics Board

** DR ORLAIGH QUINN, former Secretary General of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, stepped down from the Council in May 2024.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>The Council</i>	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
1. INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Independence and Funding	2
1.2 Research Outputs in 2024	2
1.3 Corporate Governance and Sustainability	4
1.4 People	7
2. SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024	8
2.1 Research Excellence	8
2.2 Comprehensive Research Agenda	8
2.3 Effective Communications	8
2.4 Impactful, Ethical Engagement	8
2.5 Organisational Objectives	8
3. RESEARCH IN 2024	9
3.1 Behavioural Science	9
3.2 Climate	10
3.3 Competitiveness, Trade and FDI	11
3.4 Education	12
3.5 Energy and Environment	13
3.6 Health and Quality of Life	14
3.7 Housing	15
3.8 Labour Market and Skills	17
3.9 Macroeconomics	18
3.10 Migration, Integration and Demography	21
3.11 Social Inclusion and Equality	22
3.12 Tax, Welfare and Pensions	23
4. RESEARCH AREA COORDINATORS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024	25
5. STAFF AT 31 DECEMBER 2024	26
6. ESRI COUNCIL – BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION	28
7. WHITAKER PATRONS AND CORPORATE MEMBERS	31

1. INTRODUCTION

The year 2024 marked the first year of the implementation of the Institute's new Strategy 2024–2028. The strategy aims to ensure the achievement of our overarching mission of providing independent, robust research to inform policy development, while ensuring the financial sustainability of the Institute. The Council of the Institute supports this mission by setting and overseeing the Institute's strategic direction, ensuring that the highest-quality standards are maintained and that the research agenda remains relevant to the economic and social issues facing policymakers in Ireland. As the Institute has full academic independence, the Council does not control or have influence on the research output.

The Institute ensures transparency and accountability in its governance arrangements through continued adherence to the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The following sections outline the Council's view of the effectiveness of the Institute in achieving its mission as well as its view on the Institute's environmental, social and governance (ESG) arrangements.

1.1 INDEPENDENCE AND FUNDING

It is the policy of the Institute that all research reaching the appropriate academic standard is published, irrespective of its findings or who funds the research. This independence and objectivity are ensured through the implementation of the Institute's policies and through contractual arrangement with funders. Robust peer review processes are implemented which ensure that research meets the highest academic standards. The Council monitors the implementation of the Institute's policies and processes. Additionally, the Institute undergoes an independent peer review process every five years, to ensure adherence to these principles. The most recent peer review was carried out in 2022, and the report is available on our website (www.esri.ie).

The Council is pleased to report that the funding of the Institute is more secure than in previous years. The annual grant-in-aid (GIA) from the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR) was increased in Budget 2024, and GIA funding made up approximately 30 per cent of total income in 2024. In addition, the multi-annual research programmes with government departments and state agencies broadened. The Council acknowledges and greatly welcomes the support provided by DPENDR and other government departments and agencies. Other funding streams included that provided by the Institute's Whitaker Patrons and Corporate Members. The Council recognises and acknowledges the commitment of Patrons and Members in supporting the Institute's independent, policy-focused research.

1.2 RESEARCH OUTPUTS IN 2024

In 2024 the ESRI continued to produce evidence for policy formation on a wide range of issues, publishing 61 articles in peer-reviewed journals, 44 ESRI Research Series reports, and 11 books and report chapters. In addition, we published 24 ESRI Research Bulletins on research themes and journal articles, and published work in progress in 27 ESRI Working Papers.

The housing crisis continued to be a dominant issue, with the supply of housing well below estimated needs. In 2024 research themes included measuring the structural demand for housing and analysing household size, the sustainability of housing prices, improving the monitoring of rental trends, and energy efficiency for rented properties. Researchers also examined the impact of poor housing on family well-being.

Research on social inclusion and equality investigated topics such as poverty, social exclusion and living standards, gender equality, and disability prevalence. One study investigated how the gendered nature of care and its consequences for access to employment remains a common feature. Research on the equality impact on the labour market of the COVID-19 pandemic found that, while employment recovered post-pandemic for all groups, the pattern of inequalities that prevailed before the pandemic remained. Another study found that lone-parent families faced higher economic vulnerability than two-parent families, with the risk more than doubling when moving from a two-parent to a one-parent family. Factors that help lone parents exit economic vulnerability include employment, re-partnering and higher education.

Immigration remained a widespread issue of debate in Ireland. A report investigating attitudes to immigration found that, while the salience (or importance) of immigration in Ireland had increased sharply, population support for immigration and refugees was largely positive, both compared to other EU countries and previous years in Ireland. There was some decline in support for immigration towards the end of 2023, and variation in attitudes to particular migrant groups was found. Other research found that Travellers and Roma face the highest levels of prejudice of any ethnic group in Ireland. A study on access to autonomous housing for beneficiaries of international protection highlighted that barriers to moving out included severe shortages in the supply of social and rental housing, and inadequacies in supports.

The Institute's climate research provides evidence on the macroeconomic and equality impacts of climate policies. Research on the impacts of carbon taxation, the EU emissions trading scheme (ETS) and the Ukraine crisis was undertaken using the Institute's Ireland Environment, Energy and Economy (I3E) model. Further research investigated how climate taxation can be combined with other compensating policies to ensure decreased emissions and increased economic output and equity. Economic modelling of climate change showed that the economic impacts of a changing climate could be considerable for Ireland.

Ireland's healthcare system remained under pressure, as evidenced by long waiting lists for in-patient procedures and certain assessments, and by overcrowding in A&E departments. Research on health service reform focused on capacity requirements in the healthcare system and population-based resource allocation. Public health research examined the impact of environmental conditions on health and wellbeing, pornography use in young adults, and sexual violence.

Summaries of the research outputs in 2024 are provided in section 3 of this document, on our website (www.esri.ie) and in our annual *Review of Research*, which will be published in Q2 2025.

1.3 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Institute integrates environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles into its business practices with the aim of improving its environmental impact, ensuring ethical decision-making, enhancing its reputation with stakeholders and the wider community, and increasing operational efficiencies.

Council membership

The Institute's statutory ruling body is the ESRI Council, comprising up to 14 members including the Director (Alan Barrett) and Chairperson (Sean O'Driscoll). ESRI Council members are elected at the Institute's AGM for a three-year term, which can be extended by a further three years. Council members represent a cross-section of ESRI members: from academia, civil services, state agencies, business and civil society.

In 2024 it was a pleasure to welcome new Council member Ms Anne Vaughan, former Deputy Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection and Chair of the National Statistics Board. Dr Orlaigh Quinn, former Secretary General of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, retired from the Council during the year. We thank her for her contribution to the Council.

During 2024, Thia Hennessy, Brigid Laffan, Sandra McNally and Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh served on the Audit and Risk Committee (sub-committee of the Council). Anne O'Leary, Katy Hayward, David Moloney, Shay Cody and Alan Barrett served on the Business and Operations Committee (sub-

Alan Barrett will be stepping down as ESRI Director on 31 May 2025 on the conclusion of his term as Director. Martina Lawless was appointed ESRI Director in April 2025. This appointment follows an extensive search and a rigorous selection process, supported by PwC Executive Search. Prof Lawless will formally take up the position on 1 June 2025. Oversight of the recruitment process was provided by the Governance & Nominations Committee, comprising of Sean O'Driscoll (Chair), Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, David Moloney, Thia Hennessy and Brigid Laffan.

Gender pay gap

The Gender Pay Gap Act 2021 requires organisations to publish a Gender Pay Report. While the reporting requirement will not apply to organisations of our size until 2025, we have published our results on our website [<https://www.esri.ie/publications/esri-gender-pay-gap-report-2024>] to reflect our commitment to gender equality. The results show that the mean pay gap is in favour of men at 1.4%. If the Director's hourly rate is excluded, the gap flips in favour of women at 3.3%. The median, not as affected by extremes, is significantly higher in favour of women, at 22.9%. This reflects not just the higher proportion of females in senior roles but also the fact that pay scales are wider at senior levels.

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

The Institute is committed to implementing policies and actions which are consistent with the duties conferred on public bodies by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. The Institute's work in this area, as set out in the EDI Action Plan: 2023 – 2027

[<https://www.esri.ie/publications/esri-diversity-and-inclusion-action-plan-2023-2027>] was recognised when it was awarded the Athena Swan Bronze award in November 2023. This quality charter accreditation scheme is underpinned by a framework for higher-education and research institutes to implement impactful and sustainable gender equality work and to build capacity for evidence-based equality work across the equality grounds enshrined in Irish legislation.

Implementation of the action plan is overseen by the EDI Committee. An annual progress report is provided to the ESRI Council. To date, five of the seven priority issues identified have been addressed. In 2025, the EDI Committee's remit will be expanded to include a further assessment of the duty in relation to ESRI service users.

Environmental sustainability

The ESRI recognises its obligations to contribute to Ireland's climate goals under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and is committed to taking action to reduce our impact on the environment. ESRI research on issues such as climate and energy makes a substantial contribution in these areas.

In accordance with public sector requirements, the ESRI works towards achieving the following targets: reduce GHG emissions by 51% by 2030; improve energy efficiency from the 2020 target of 33% to 50% by 2030; update our Climate Action Roadmap annually, within six months of the publication of the Climate Action Plan.

The ESRI complies with the requirements of public sector bodies by reporting annually on its energy efficiency and greenhouse-gas emissions performance to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The ESRI's performance in 2024 is as follows:

- Greenhouse gas emissions: fossil CO₂ was 50.3% below the baseline. To achieve the target, the ESRI must reduce fossil CO₂ by another 1.5% from 2024 level within 6 years. Total CO₂ was 60% below the baseline. To achieve this target, total CO₂ must reduce by another 25% within 6 years.
- Progress towards the 2030 energy efficiency target: Energy performance has improved by 40.7% since the baseline. To achieve the efficiency target, the ESRI must improve its energy performance by another 9.3 percentage points within 6 years.

In May 2025 the ESRI published its Climate Action Roadmap 2025, which set out our plans to achieve our decarbonisation and energy efficiency targets, per the National Climate Action Plan. In addition, the ESRI reported on the implementation of the Climate Action Mandate using the SEAI's Public Sector 'comply and explain' system. The ESRI will continue to report via the SEAI system annually.

The ESRI continues to implement local projects which promote energy-saving actions. However, the ESRI is cognisant of the challenges in achieving the public sector targets due to its ageing building and plant nearing end of life and considering the ESRI's hybrid working environment and related reduction in office occupation. In 2024, the ESRI's Council and Management Committee progressed two key projects related to these concerns. A property services procurement process was begun, which included a detailed technical survey of the building and

advisory on options, and a procurement process for integrated FM services was begun, which includes sustainability criteria. The outcomes of both projects are expected in Q2 2025.

Other sustainability activities

Procurement: It is ESRI policy to implement Green Public Procurement (GPP) using as resources the EPA Green Public Procurement Guidance and criteria, and the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) online Green Public Procurement Criteria tool. In 2024, sustainable and environmentally friendly criteria were included in procurement processes, where relevant; the Institute's procurement policy was redrafted to include green criteria in procurement and will be published in 2025; the ESRI availed of Office of Government Procurement (OGP) and HEAnet frameworks wherever relevant. ICT hardware was purchased using HEAnet Frameworks which included award criteria for environmental and energy characteristics. ESRI building utilities continue to be procured via the OGP Energy Framework Agreements. Procurement of integrated facilities management services was begun in 2024, using the OGP Framework and included green criteria.

Waste: The ESRI endeavours to reduce its environmental impact through waste reduction projects, segregation and recycling. In 2024, waste collection services continued to be segregated by general waste, recycling waste and organic/biowaste. In addition, electrical and electronic equipment waste (WEEE) was disposed of responsibly; 135 kgs of IT and WEEE were recycled in 2024 compared to 544 kgs in 2023 (in accordance with directive 2002/96/EC of the European Parliament); 0.28m3 of food (compost) waste was produced in 2024. Confidential waste was shredded, certified and sent for recycling; 1062 kgs of confidential paper waste were shredded in 2024, compared to 1051 kgs in 2023, per the Institute's ongoing project to dispose of paper files where possible.

Paper use: ESRI research reports are disseminated digitally first; few reports are printed. The ESRI uses recycled paper in printers. ESRI staff are encouraged to reduce printing; personal printers are not replaced and in 2025 multifunction printers with print management will help reduce waste.

Sustainable travel / business travel: The ESRI implements policies which support sustainable travel. Under the ESRI Travel Policy, staff are required to use public transport wherever possible for business travel; the ESRI offers the Cycle to Work and TaxSaver schemes and provides secure bike parking. In 2024, the ESRI began its application for the Smarter Travel Mark and joined the Smarter Travel Programme in early Q1, 2025. As a Smarter Travel Partner, the ESRI is committing to developing and implementing actions which promote sustainable and active travel initiatives and will work towards achieving the Smarter Travel Mark certification.

The future: Looking ahead, the ESRI commits to adhering to the requirements of the Climate Action Mandate by continuing to focus on our environment, social and governance agenda in the coming years, striving to achieve our targets in terms of energy, waste and other sources of environmental impact and ensuring the highest levels of ethical and effective governance.

Protected Disclosures Act

There were no protected disclosures made to the ESRI, or to other relevant bodies in relation to the ESRI, in 2024. The ESRI is committed to upholding the highest standards of transparency, integrity and accountability. We support and comply with the provisions of the Protected Disclosures Act. To ensure compliance with the Act, we have put in place a policy and procedures that outline the process for making protected disclosures, either through designated internal channels or via external channels as prescribed by the legislation. A copy of the ESRI's Annual Protected Disclosure Report is available here [<https://www.esri.ie/publications/protected-disclosure-annual-report-2024>].

Official Languages Act 2003

The Institute complies with the Official Languages Act 2003 where possible. Such compliance includes 5% of the advertising spend being allocated to Irish language media, 20% of advertising content in Irish and the availability of key corporate reports in both English and Irish. The Institute's Head of Governance and Corporate Resources is the Irish Language Officer.

1.4 PEOPLE

The Council recognises the expertise and commitment of the staff of the ESRI, who are highly trained, professional and dedicated. Many researchers are internationally recognised for their expertise and excellence. The researchers are supported by an equally dedicated team in Corporate Resources.

The Council would also like to thank the government departments and state agencies, Whitaker Patrons and corporate and individual members who support critical research programmes, and the many stakeholders who engage with the work of the Institute. Such support enables the Institute to work towards realising its vision of being a 'world-class research institute supporting the achievement of a more inclusive, prosperous, sustainable and decarbonised Ireland'.



Sean O'Driscoll
President and Chairperson



Alan Barrett
Director

2. SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024

The year 2024 marked the first year of the implementation of the strategic actions as outlined in the Institute's new Research Strategy 2024-2028. In the year, the Council oversaw progress on achieving the overarching strategic goals of: Research Excellence, Comprehensive Research Agenda, Effective Communications, and Impactful, Ethical Engagement, and actions under Organisational Objectives, via quarterly, six-monthly and annual reports to its sub-committees.

Below we report on some of the areas of progress in the first year of the strategy, under the overarching goals.

2.1 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

One of the key indicators of research excellence is the capacity to have papers published in peer-reviewed journals where the review process is completely outside the Institute and is blind (often double-blind). In 2024, ESRI researchers published 61 papers in peer-reviewed journals – a substantial increase on the 2023 figure of 46.

2.2 COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH AGENDA

Our research agenda expanded in two ways in 2024. First, we added a new research area: domestic and gender-based violence. A programme of research was agreed with the newly created agency Cuan and the first reports should appear in 2025. Second, we expanded a number of research areas to draw in a broader set of funders and broader sets of ESRI researchers. One example is work on immigration where the Department of Justice has agreed to join the Department of Integration in expanding the latter's existing research programme with the ESRI.

2.3 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Recognising the ever-increasing tendency for people to consume information via social media, our Communications and Dissemination team updated our communications strategy to prioritise in-house multimedia production, which puts ESRI researchers at the centre of our messaging. We now post clips from news coverage and radio interviews directly on social media. We are also producing in-house short videos where ESRI researchers give short overviews of recently published research.

2.4 IMPACTFUL, ETHICAL ENGAGEMENT

ESRI researchers engage with stakeholders through many routes. In recent years, appearances before Oireachtas committees have been one such route. In 2024, we made eight appearances where there was an opportunity to communicate our results, and the implications of those results, to Oireachtas members. We also held 32 conferences, webinars and workshops where research was presented and discussed.

2.5 ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The Institute adheres to the standards required of public sector organisations regarding governance and compliance. The Institute ensures effective, efficient and ethical operations, and compliance

with legal and regulatory requirements through policies, procedures and clear roles and responsibilities.

3. RESEARCH IN 2024

This section provides an overview of our research activities and outputs in 2024, with brief summaries of research across the 12 research areas. Further details on the research and the researchers involved are available on the ESRI website (www.esri.ie).

3.1 BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

The **Behavioural Research Unit (BRU)** uses controlled laboratory, online and field experiments to investigate decisions and behaviours across multiple policy areas. Most of the BRU's work centres on environmental, health and financial outcomes.

Research highlights and findings

In work commissioned by the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**, published in May, the BRU used a day reconstruction method to measure people's understanding of how their everyday behaviours generate greenhouse-gas emissions that cause climate change. One in five who travelled by car did not identify driving as a source of carbon emissions. Almost half did not list home energy use. Just 1 in 25 mentioned their diet as contributing to their carbon footprint.

Also in May, the BRU published a paper describing an experimental test of cervical screening materials, in research funded by the **National Screening Service**. Information materials improved trust and reduced blame in the service. Subsequent experiments have tested behaviourally informed changes to the materials.

In June, the BRU posted a paper describing the results of a randomised controlled trial of a behaviourally informed app designed to help people to switch to better-value mortgages, loans, credit cards and bank accounts. This research, funded by the **Department of Finance**, found that the app increased the likelihood that users switched financial products.

Also during 2024, the BRU published several other studies commissioned by the **EPA**, including a measure of the public perceptions of risk from electromagnetic fields, a review of how to promote collective climate action, and a study showing how communicating climate change as a generational issue can hinder climate action.

An analysis of survey data for the new **Gambling Regulatory Authority of Ireland** found that exposure to gambling as a child increases the likelihood of experiencing harm from gambling as an adult. A study for the **Department of Health** tested the role of fairness and effectiveness in public support for policies designed to reduce obesity. In 2024, the BRU continued a research programme with the **National Transport Authority** on promoting active travel and began new research programmes in collaboration with the **National Immunisation Office** and the **Department of Transport**.

3.2 CLIMATE

The climate research area provides evidence on the macroeconomic and equality impacts of climate policies. Climate research is funded by the **Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)**, **Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR)**, **Department of Finance (DFIN)**, **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)**, the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** and **Research Ireland**.

In 2024, the climate team focused on enhancing their analytical Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model, known as Ireland Environment, Energy and Economy (I3E). This updated version facilitates more in-depth analysis of the transition to a low-carbon economy. With funding from DECC, DFIN and DPENDR, the model now includes detailed renewable energy sources and decarbonisation options for different producers. Estimates underpinning the economic and energy emission projections were submitted to the EPA to support its projections, which it reports to both the EU and the UN.

Research highlights and findings

- The impacts on energy prices and the Irish economy of carbon taxation, the EU emissions trading scheme (ETS) permit price increases and the Ukraine crisis were modelled. This research, funded by **DETE** and published in April, found that the costs of not transitioning to low-carbon alternatives in the current energy climate are high.
- Further research investigated how climate taxation can be combined with other compensating policies to ensure decreased emissions, increased economic output and equity. A journal article published in June based on work funded by **DECC** and **DFIN** shows that using carbon revenues wisely can improve the negative impacts of carbon taxation and even reverse them.
- New estimates show that Irish consumption-based emissions are larger than production-based emissions, making Ireland a net importer of emissions. This **EPA**-funded work, published in August, examined a novel approach to calculating consumption-based emissions. Further work compared Ireland's emissions with those of similar countries. Work creating a yearly estimate of consumption-based emissions for Ireland will continue in the coming years.
- Economic modelling of climate change shows that the economic impacts of a changing climate could be considerable for Ireland. Work undertaken for the **Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC)** funded by the **EPA** examined several climate-change impacts for Ireland. Implementing these impacts into the I3E model allowed for an analysis of total impacts. The results, published in September, show that secondary impacts are large, and Ireland can reduce impacts through adaptation. Continued work on this topic includes estimating climate impacts related to extreme weather impacts.

Researchers in this area continue to engage closely with policymakers and other stakeholders, forming part of the CCAC working group on the Carbon Budgets and the Department of the Taoiseach climate modelling group. Strong partnerships with the DECC, DFIN and DPENDR have allowed the climate research area to significantly develop their modelling infrastructure over the past year. In 2024, Dr Kelly de Bruin participated in presentations to the Oireachtas Committee on Budgetary Oversight on the priorities for the National Development Plan.

3.3 COMPETITIVENESS, TRADE AND FDI

ESRI research in this area focuses primarily on structural and microeconomic factors and policies underlying competitiveness and economic growth in Ireland and other European countries in the context of international economic integration. In 2024, research in this area addressed the following overarching themes: foreign direct investment (FDI) and associated economic, social and spatial effects; artificial intelligence, digital technologies and productivity; artificial intelligence and digital skills; digitalisation and sustainability across enterprises.

Research highlights and findings

Research funded from the **European Commission's Horizon Europe Programme part of the ESSPIN project** found that large multinational firms with dominant market shares – international superstar firms – contributed, over and above other factors, to increased wage and productivity inequality between firms across European regions. Another research strand of this project examined individual, school and spatial variation in digital learning of secondary school students in Ireland, and highlighted the persistent influence of social and school contexts on students' access to digital technologies, contributing to social inequality in digital technology experiences.

Research funded from the **European Commission's Horizon Europe Programme part of the EFFEct project** examined the effectiveness of investment in employee training on productivity growth in EU countries. Research results indicated that labour productivity growth over the period 2008–2020 was mainly explained by the accumulation of physical and intangible capital. The impact of intangible capital accumulation on labour productivity growth was stronger in more training-intensive industries.

Research on linkages between digitalisation and sustainability funded by the **Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg)** and the **Department of Environment, Climate and Communications** published in November found that digitalisation and sustainability were complementary business objectives across enterprises in Ireland. Results indicated an uneven adoption of information and communication technologies (ICT)-related sustainability measures across enterprises, sectors and regions. Another research strand found that firms using ultra-fast broadband in Ireland had better output, employment and productivity performance compared to the rest of the firms. Results indicated that higher firm-level usage of ultra-fast broadband was associated with higher between-firm labour productivity inequality.

Research on artificial intelligence (AI) and firm-level productivity found that firms using AI generated substantially more value-added than firms that did not use AI. Estimates obtained with a production function model indicated that firms using AI more intensively across business areas were significantly more productive. This research was presented in August at **the 2024 Econometric Society Interdisciplinary Frontiers Conference on Economics, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning**, hosted by Cornell University, Ithaca, USA.

Research on the availability and development of digital skills in the context of an increasing diffusion of AI and other digital technologies within the economy and the wider society identified important digital skills gaps among the younger population in Ireland relative to other EU countries. Drawing on in-depth data across secondary schools in Ireland, the results highlighted that teacher skills, a culture

of student democracy and a holistic, inclusive school ethos were associated with better digital skills development. This research was presented in September at the **10th International Workshop on Efficiency in Education, Health and other Public Services**, Milan, Italy.

3.4 EDUCATION

The ESRI education research area covers all levels of the Irish educational system, including early childhood education, primary, second-level, and further and higher education. Research in 2024 focused on policy and provision for students with additional needs, student wellbeing policies, school gender and social mix, educational inequality, digital technologies in education, the impact of COVID-19 and comparative analyses. The work spanned cross-national research and studies focusing on education in Ireland.

Research highlights and findings

Education researchers are centrally involved in a number of comparative European studies, and one researcher is the Irish National Expert at the **European Commission** Independent Experts on Education and Training. As part of this framework, research explored wellbeing and mental health difficulties among young people in Ireland and the Department of Education *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice in 2018*, which aims to improve wellbeing initiatives in Irish schools. Results indicate that stakeholders were positive about the benefits of having a framework for future directions and decisions. However, several stakeholders reiterated the same challenge in translating the policy into effective school practices, often underpinned by a lack of teacher professional development and competing demands on resources.

New research on access to private tuition among students in preparation for the Leaving Certificate exam shows that it is socially stratified, accessible to those with greater family resources, and those attending schools with higher socio-economic student intakes. Such tuition is viewed as an investment, particularly among students with average and above-average levels of prior attainment, while high-achieving students and those scoring higher on conscientiousness measures are less likely to participate. Other comparative analyses of such tuition in the PIONEERED project showed how it plays a different role across countries and at primary and secondary level. Taking private tuition was linked to higher Leaving Certificate grades for lower-achieving students but not for other groups.

Work was published on a large-scale mixed-method study for the **Joint Managerial Body** looking at what voluntary secondary schools provide to students and the community across different contexts and settings. Results show a growing trend of students missing school post-COVID-19 – posing far-reaching consequences for academic engagement, school completion and future prospects. The findings also show that students, regardless of attending single-sex or coeducational schools, favoured coeducational settings, while staff and parents expressed diverse preferences. Gender differences persist in the subjects available to students and in terms of their actual subject choices, as well as in the extent to which different subjects are seen as interesting or difficult. Only a small minority of students find learning Irish interesting, raising implications for the national language.

Research published in May, for the **Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth**, showed an increase in subject engagement in the wake of junior cycle reform. However, girls have become less positive about school due to greater emotional difficulties since the pandemic.

Using data from the nationally representative *Growing Up in Ireland* study, research published in October as part of a programme of research with **DCEDIY** showed an increase in the prevalence of disability over time and a gap between those with disabilities and others in their engagement with school and school subjects. Other research shows disparities between disabled and non-disabled students, as well as among disabled students in school support for self-determination in post-school decision-making, with gender, socioeconomic background, cultural capital and early educational experiences also important in perceived support. Positive school engagement and student-teacher relationships, as well as high self-expectations, emerge as protective factors, indicating that fostering supportive environments and self-concept may enhance students' self-determination skills.

Other research

Work was completed for the **National Council for Special Education** on a large-scale study looking at the post-school pathways among young people with special educational needs. The results will be important in shaping provision for students with additional needs in special and mainstream schools and across the post-school landscape.

A study was also completed for the **Tusla Education Support Service** reviewing the School Completion Programme, which provides supports for children and young people at risk of school disengagement.

Work continued on the **ESSPIN** study, a **Horizon Europe**-funded study on social, economic and spatial inequalities in the European Union in the context of increased global challenges. In addition, the **EFFEct** study, a four-year Horizon Europe-funded study, focused on enhancing the quality of education across the EU. ESRI researchers are focusing on addressing inequality in educational achievement and the role of digital technologies in education.

3.5 ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Core funding for energy research at the ESRI comes from the ESRI's Energy Policy Research Centre, whose members comprise the **Commission for Regulation of Utilities**; the **Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)**; **EirGrid**; **Energia**; **ESB**; **Gas Networks Ireland**; and **SSE Ireland**. Additional projects are funded by the **European Commission (EU Horizon)**, **Taighde Éireann/Research Ireland** (formerly, Science Foundation Ireland) and the **Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)**. Research related to the environment is funded by the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**, while research on electronic communications networks and services is funded by DECC and the **Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg)**.

Research in the area spans topics such as residential energy efficiency, energy poverty, electricity market design, and the interface between the environment and human health.

Research highlights and findings

- In January, EPRC colleagues contributed to the ESRI's report on priorities for the National Development Plan, finding that, within energy infrastructure, there are likely to be considerable capacity constraints to meet stated targets, and that the number of personnel likely to be required will be large relative to the size of the construction sector.
- Analyses using smart thermostat data quantified the extent to which a Building Energy Rating (BER) captures energy performance, finding that the difference in energy use attributable to the BER scales is modest and not substantially different in magnitude to what is attributable to minor behavioural interventions.
- In October, research analysing the impact of planning and regulatory delays for energy infrastructure found that regulatory delays associated with the delivery of energy infrastructure have substantial impacts on electricity prices, system emissions and system costs. Many of the policy recommendations arising from this work aligned with those implemented by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities in Q4 2024.

The **EPA** research programme, which was extended for a further two-year period at the end of 2024, has ongoing research covering topics related to health, behavioural science, regulatory policy and climate change. New energy research projects commencing in 2024 include the **SEAI**-funded FlexECon (Maximising the Flexibility of Energy Consumption in Ireland) and SOCERGY (Social comparison for energy efficiency investment) projects, which will involve collaboration with ESRI's Behavioural Research Unit, the University of Galway, the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Climate Change, and EPRC partners **Energia**. These projects will explore the use of behavioural interventions to guide more efficient energy investment and consumption decisions.

Presentations to Oireachtas committees during 2024 covered research on energy poverty, presented to the Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands in February, as well as discussion of priorities for the National Development Plan with the Oireachtas Committee on Budgetary Oversight.

The research area held several conferences during the year, including in January in collaboration with energy researchers from UCD; featuring guest speaker Prof. Ben Hobbs from Johns Hopkins University on electricity markets in May; on the impediments to everyday climate action, also in May; the 12th MaREI Climate & Energy Research Seminar in June; and finally, a conference on energy poverty in November.

3.6 HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

In 2024, health and quality of life research focused on the areas of health service reform and public health. Health service reform research focused on capacity requirements in the healthcare system and population-based resource allocation. Public health research examined the impact of environmental conditions on health and wellbeing; pornography use in young adults; and sexual violence.

Research highlights and findings

- A report published in January highlighted significant changes in the long-term residential care sector since the COVID-19 pandemic. Funded through the **Research Collaborative in Quality**

and Patient Safety initiative, the research found that, between February 2020 and December 2022, almost one in five smaller private long-term residential care (LTRC) homes closed, while there has been a consolidation of private (for-profit) LTRC home operators driven by recent entrants into the Irish market.

- In March, a report on pornography use in young people was launched. This research, funded by the **HSE Sexual Health Programme**, used data from *Growing Up in Ireland* and found that those who used online pornography were significantly less likely to use condoms when having sex.
- In July, two papers from the **EPA** research programme were published. The first, using data from the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing linked to long-term air pollution measurements, found that air pollution is associated with poorer mental health. A second paper, using data on Census small areas linked to air pollution measurements, found that those living in more disadvantaged rural areas of Ireland had higher levels of air pollution than those living in more advantaged rural areas.
- Funded through the **Department of Health Research Programme on Healthcare Reform**, a paper published in December examined the determinants of acute psychiatric inpatient length of stay in Ireland. It found that longer length of stay is associated with older age, being female, and having an involuntary admission. Clinical diagnosis was also found to affect the length of stay, with diagnoses such as schizophrenia being associated with significantly longer stays than, for example, depressive episodes.

Other research outputs

In 2024, work continued on the capacity review of the Irish healthcare system; associated reports are to be published in 2025. A number of new programmes and projects commenced in 2024, including a programme funded by **Cuan** to examine patterns of victimisation and service use among those who have experienced adult sexual violence in Ireland, and a **Health Research Board**-funded project, in collaboration with colleagues from Trinity College Dublin, to write a Health Systems in Transition profile for Ireland.

Throughout the year, presentations were made to a wide range of academic conferences, stakeholders and policymakers, including the European Health Economics Association conference, the Dublin Economics Workshop, the Business Post Health Summit, and Minister Mary Butler.

3.7 HOUSING

Access to and affordability of housing is one of the most critical current social and economic issues in Ireland and across the globe. The ESRI's Housing Research Area focuses on a range of topics to provide evidence to support housing policy decisions. Our research topics include house price modelling, measuring housing affordability, analysing the rental sector, supply-side and land market analysis, and social aspects of housing. In 2024, our overarching research themes included measuring the structural demand for housing and analysing household size, exploring the sustainability of housing prices, improving the monitoring of rental trends, and exploring energy efficiency for rented properties.

Research highlights and findings

- Analysis of new rental data showed that most sitting tenants did not face rent hikes in 2023 and provides insights for policymakers understanding the impact of rent controls.
- Research highlighted strong underlying demand for housing on the back of demographic pressures and inward migration.
- Household size in Ireland, driven by population age structures, other demographic factors and housing supply constraints, is high in an international context.
- Research covering Ireland, Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK highlighted the importance of government investment to expand social and affordable housing.
- Analysis exploring the link between credit and house prices identified the re-emergence of credit effects in putting upward pressure on prices.

New insights on rental inflation

Research funded by the **Residential Tenancies Board** in 2024 focused on conducting Ireland's first comprehensive analysis of property-level rental inflation. This provides greater understanding of how individual households experience rent changes and the impacts of and adherence to Ireland's Rent Pressure Zone legislation. Work found rental growth to be low on average for properties tracked from one year to the next, with the majority seeing no change. This work also identified some high inflation rates, including properties above the caps; for the first time, the regulator has been able to contact these landlords regarding compliance.

Strong underlying demand for housing identified

Supported under the long-standing research programme with the **Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage**, research in 2024 exploring the underlying structural demand for housing was undertaken. This research produced demographic scenarios based on natural increases in the population and net migration flows. Combining these data with assumptions on headship rates (number of persons per household) and obsolescence rates of the existing housing stock, researchers produced a range of estimates for the flow of new households in Ireland. Taking the average over all scenarios, structural housing demand is projected to be around 44,000 per annum (p.a.) from 2023 to 2030, and around 39,700 p.a. over the 2030–2040 period. This research was informed by further research on household size which explored the size of Irish households relative to other European countries. This research found that household size in Ireland was high due to the population age structure, other socio-demographic factors and housing supply trends.

Testing the credit-house price link suggests the re-emergence of upward pressure

A period of 17 years has passed since the financial crisis first affected the Irish housing market. Given the persistent increase in Irish house prices since 2012, a re-examination of the interrelationship between credit availability and house price movements was conducted in 2024. It aimed to explore how the residential and financial markets are evolving, and developed a model of the Irish housing and credit sector. More specifically, the research assesses the contribution of changing credit standards to recent house price developments. The developments in the Irish market offer lessons

for other EU member states. The research found a re-emergence of credit effects in driving house prices.

Government investment key to delivering social and affordable housing

Given the difficulties experienced by the supply side of the domestic housing market, it is informative to contrast housing supply in the Irish market with that of Ireland's nearest housing markets; in particular, the Northern Irish, English, Scottish and Welsh markets. These markets share many of the characteristics of the Irish market in terms of planning and regulatory regimes as well as cultural preferences for certain property types compared with continental housing markets. This research, funded by the Department of the Taoiseach's **Shared Island Unit**, builds on ESRI research to assess the dynamics of housing supply across the different Irish and UK markets. This serves as an important benchmark to evaluate the performance of the supply side of the Irish residential market.

Other research outputs

In 2024, activity in the housing research area also covered numerous other topics. Funded under the research programme with the **Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage**, studies focused on linking residential housing developments and healthcare demand, an examination of land prices and their determinants, an exploration of the energy efficiency investment requirements for rental properties, and an ongoing examination of the impact of short-term letting activity on the rental sector. Our ongoing rental monitoring funded by the **Residential Tenancies Board** produced four Rent Index publications, reports which provide underlying data to inform the rent control policy of Rent Pressure Zones in Ireland.

Furthermore, as part of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Real Estate Market Advisory Group, the ESRI took part in a large cross-country study of housing affordability across UNECE member countries. The results were presented to the UNECE annual conference in Geneva in September. Collaborations with Trinity College Dublin and NUIG produced research on rent controls and housing supply.

Regarding external engagements, ESRI housing researchers presented to a range of stakeholders including the Irish Council for Social Housing, the Oireachtas Budgetary Oversight Committee, and a range of other public sector bodies. The impact of the ESRI's housing research can be seen in the recent Housing Commission report, published May 2024, which cites seven ESRI housing publications.

3.8 LABOUR MARKET AND SKILLS

In 2024, research was undertaken covering a diverse range of topics, resulting in several newly released or finalised publications. The team launched the first report under a new research programme with the **Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science** examining the skill requirements for emerging technologies in Ireland. A study, funded by **Pobal**, was published examining the link between the health impacts of COVID-19, specifically infection rates and intensive care unit (ICU) admission rates, and social disadvantage.

Researchers published a study, funded by the **Department of Rural and Community Development**, and an accompanying implementation guide, on the identification of key indicators for monitoring welfare levels in rural areas and the effectiveness of policy interventions. The team continued to research North-South issues; a paper was published on cross-border workers, funded under the ESRI's joint research programmes with the **Department of Finance**; work progressed on differences in cross-border inactivity rates, funded under the ESRI's joint research programmes with **Ibec**, and a study providing a high-level comparison of the economies of Ireland and Northern Ireland commenced, funded under the ESRI's joint research programme with the **Shared Island Unit**.

Work began on a **Department of Finance**-funded study on the incidence and characteristics of green and brown jobs in Ireland. Finally, research was completed, under the research programme with the **Low Pay Commission**, on two papers examining the implications of different measurement approaches to minimum wages, and estimating regional variations in the incidence of minimum wage. In 2024, a paper funded by the **Low Pay Commission** was accepted for the journal *Economica*.

In 2024, researchers began working on two **Horizon 2023** projects on the topics of skills mismatches: **TRAILS** and **SkillsPULSE**. In December 2024, researchers completed the first major deliverable for the **TRAILS** project, which included three papers examining issues relating to skills mismatch in Europe, the impact and incidence of vocational education and training, and the changing skill requirements within occupations. For the **SkillsPULSE** project, a new indicator of potential skills shortages was created. This involves an innovative approach that merges information from different datasets to create a measure that can be adopted at EU member state level.

Research highlights and findings

- Research carried out for the was the first of its kind in Ireland. The research investigated labour market demand, supply and skills for artificial intelligence (AI), automation and blockchain-related jobs in Ireland. The study uses data from a range of sources, including online job vacancies and a workshop conducted with employers for this research, and aims to inform policymakers in the education and skill development fields so that they can act proactively to ensure that provision meets future labour market needs gaps.
- A study on the health impacts of COVID-19 and social disadvantage indicated that COVID-19 infection rates were more than a third higher in the most deprived areas (as measured by the HP Deprivation Index) relative to more affluent areas. Infection rates were also higher in non-deprived areas located in border counties. This latter finding has particularly significant policy ramifications given the porous border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. In terms of ICU admission, deprivation is not correlated directly with high ICU admission rates due to COVID-19; however, it appears to be having an indirect impact through other area-level characteristics.

3.9 MACROECONOMICS

The ESRI's Macroeconomics division researches key issues in the Irish economy including short-term economic fluctuations, the long-term drivers of economic growth, and the relationship between the macroeconomy and the financial sector. Key themes in macroeconomic research in 2024 included assessing long-term economic growth, investment among Irish small and medium-sized enterprises, and the relationship between the general economy and the housing market.

While 2024 saw housing officially listed as a separate research area in the ESRI, there is a strong overlap between housing and the macroeconomy.

Key findings

- Long-term growth forecasts anticipate moderate growth in the medium term and emphasise the need for greater investment in the next decade.
- The ESRI's *Quarterly Economic Commentary* discusses recent developments in the Irish economy, including the continuing themes of the dual economy and a strong labour market.
- Modelling of economic activity was refined and applied to better understand the Irish economy and the potential impact of deglobalization and population ageing.

Detailed research on Ireland's long-run growth path applied a traditional growth accounting methodology using ESRI population projections. It concluded that growth is likely to moderate in the medium term, largely driven by demographic changes. However, long-term growth rates could be increased by boosting investment rates in the next decade. In addition, three migration scenarios were developed to evaluate the effect on output growth.

The ***Quarterly Economic Commentary (QEC)*** has three primary goals. First, it provides analysis of recent developments in output, inflation, the public finances and the labour market. Second, it contains a short-term forecast of key economic variables. Third, it facilitates more technical analysis through the accompanying Special Articles and Research Notes.

In 2024, work conducted for the QEC included the development of a new short-term forecasting model, an analysis of the sustainability of public spending increases and consideration of the potential effects of deglobalisation in 2025 on the Irish economy. Special Articles and Research Notes accompanying the QEC included an analysis of expectations of house prices, household size in Ireland, and the labour share of income in Ireland.

The short-term forecasts in the QEC are informed by the ESRI's monthly Nowcast model. The ESRI's Nowcast uses an econometric model with a series of real-time indicators to estimate Modified Domestic Demand before the official CSO numbers are available. In addition, in November 2024, the MDD Nowcast was incorporated into the Nowcasting Lab. This is an automated code-database-website environment that forecasts economic activity in 14 individual European countries, the Eurozone, and the US. It is hosted by a team of researchers and developers at KOF Swiss Economic Institute, ETH Zurich.

Research conducted under the joint programme with **Ibec** (Irish Business and Employers Confederation) continued to focus on interlinkages between the Irish and Northern Irish economies. An all-island macroeconomic model is being developed in collaboration with the National Institute for Economic and Social Research in the United Kingdom.

Work conducted under a programme of research with the **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment** studied investment in Irish businesses, focusing on investment in digitalisation.

The joint research programme between the Department of Finance and the ESRI on *The Macroeconomy, Taxation and Banking* continued throughout 2024. Research projects completed or in progress over the year included:

- **A Study of Cross-Border Working:** This project estimates the number of cross-border workers in Ireland, to describe their socio-demographic characteristics as well as to provide information on the motives, opportunities and barriers to cross-border employment.
- **Assessing the Potential Impact of Population Ageing on the Public Finances:** This project uses both the ESRI's macroeconometric model COSMO and demographic model to generate alternative macro scenarios from which the implications of ageing for the evolution of the public finances can be analysed.
- **The Role of Firm Dynamism in Aggregate Productivity Growth:** This project uses CSO microdata on services and manufacturing firms to examine the patterns of growth of newly entered firms and the pre-exit patterns for declining firms to give a deeper understanding of the dynamics of growth and exit at the firm level.
- **Monitoring SME Investment in Ireland:** This research project proposes to examine how these combined external shocks are affecting SME investment activity and how it is financed.
- **Assessing the Labour Market Impact of the Green Transition in Ireland:** The project aims to assess Ireland's employment trends in green and brown jobs, comparing them with the EU average and EU member states. It will use the Irish Labour Force Survey (LFS) to map job distribution by worker and other characteristics, and use the 2022 European Jobs and Skills Survey to identify key tasks and competencies involved in both green and brown jobs in Ireland.
- **COSMO Research Module:** This research module, begun in 2024, involves two main work strands:
 - **Strand I:** Maintaining and developing COSMO
 - **Strand II:** A focused research project
- **The Impact of Deglobalisation on a Small Open Economy – The Case of Ireland:** This project is part of the COSMO research module (see Strand II above) and examines the impact on the Irish economy of a slowdown in world trade due to developments such as increased protectionism.

In addition to these structured research projects, ad-hoc macroeconometric work using COSMO has been carried out for the Department of Finance throughout 2024. This has included:

- Consulting on macroeconomic scenarios for the risk analysis section of various Budget documents as well for background risk analysis in the Summer Economic Statement;
- Consulting on simulations applied in COSMO to estimate the impact on inflation of government transfers to households;
- Providing simulations and analysis of the impact on the Irish economy of an escalation in global protectionism in the wake of the US election.

3.10 MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

Research in this area focuses on the integration of migrants as well as migration trends and policy. In 2024, research examined attitudes to immigration and immigrant groups, irregular employment of non-EU nationals, and the situation of both protection applicants and beneficiaries and arrivals from Ukraine. The Irish National Contact Point of the European Migration Network (EMN Ireland) is located in the ESRI and, in July 2024, a sub-unit was also set up in the Department of Justice. EMN Ireland is funded by the **European Commission** and the **Department of Justice**.

Research highlights and findings

In the context of increasing debates on immigration in Ireland, a report investigating attitudes to immigration was published in March. It found that, while the salience (or importance) of immigration in Ireland had increased sharply, population support for immigration and refugees was largely positive, compared to both other EU countries and previous years in Ireland. There was some decline in support for immigration towards the end of 2023, and variation in attitudes to particular migrant groups was found. The report was funded by the **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth** under the research programme and launched at an event in March.

A report published in December 2024 found that Travellers and Roma face the highest levels of prejudice of any ethnic group in Ireland. Notably, people living in affluent areas were less comfortable with having Travellers as neighbours or in a relationship with their child than those living in disadvantaged areas. Attitudes to Travellers were particularly negative in the West, Southwest and Midlands regions of the country.

In June, EMN Ireland published a study on access to autonomous housing for beneficiaries of international protection which highlighted that over 6,000 people with status remained in accommodation for applicants. Barriers to moving out included severe shortages in the supply of social and rental housing, inadequacies in supports such as the Housing Assistance Payment, constraints among frontline workers in public services, and a lack of coordination between agencies or departments. At its annual conference in June, EMN Ireland brought together national policy and local government representatives to discuss access to housing pre- and post-status determination, as well as presenting international good practices from EMN research.

Research on the application of the Temporary Protection Directive by EMN Ireland found that, by end-2023, almost 75,000 beneficiaries were in state-provided accommodation. However, the report, published in April, noted that many faced challenges in finding employment, mostly due to inadequate language skills, and accessing supports such as healthcare and language classes.

Other research outputs

A working paper published in September investigated, for the first time in Ireland, community-level drivers of immigration attitudes. It found that those living in disadvantaged areas, particularly those that had seen a recent increase in immigrants, were less supportive of immigration. Higher levels of residential segregation of immigrants were also associated with more negative attitudes. Researchers presented this study to the International Migration Research Network (IMISCOE) annual conference in Lisbon in July.

In December, EMN Ireland published a report on non-EU nationals in irregular employment, which showed that irregular employment occurs across a variety of sectors, particularly in food service activities, potentially exposing workers to poor conditions and exploitation. However, the number of employment inspectors was found to be low, with just 63 operating nationally.

In a new initiative, EMN Ireland launched a series of ‘EMN Ireland Migration Memos’ – short accessible summaries of EMN EU-level information and ESRI research, designed to provide up-to-date information on migration and asylum policy. Four were published in 2024, covering topics such as housing for protection applicants, family reunification for refugees, and reasons for the increase in protection applicants.

Following a successful six-year research programme on integration, a new research programme was agreed with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in July. This programme, Research on Migration, Integration and Equality (RIME), includes an expanded focus on migration, with the Department of Justice joining as co-funders from January 2025. Projects that commenced in 2024 were a Monitoring Report on Integration 2024, and a project investigating attitudes to immigration using behavioural experiments.

3.11 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

Research on social inclusion and equality investigates factors influencing access to the material and other resources required to participate in economic and social life, and the processes that lead to inequalities in opportunities and outcomes for adults and children. In 2024, researchers investigated a diverse range of topics, including poverty, social exclusion and living standards, gender equality, disability prevalence among children, and the impact of inadequate housing on children’s wellbeing.

Research highlights and findings

A collaborative study with the **Shared Island unit at the Department of the Taoiseach**, published in April, investigated gender and social inclusion across the island of Ireland. The report found that the gendered nature of care and its consequences for access to employment, especially high-quality jobs, remains a common feature of both settings. Labour market participation was lower for women than men in both jurisdictions, especially among lone mothers; women were more likely to work part-time and in low-paid jobs across the island.

In April, a report funded by the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission** explored the equality impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market, comparing the situation pre- and post-pandemic. While employment recovered post-pandemic for all groups, the pattern of inequalities that prevailed before the pandemic remained. The study argues that the rapid recovery was likely facilitated by large-scale state intervention during the pandemic in terms of employment and social welfare supports.

A study published in May, funded by the **Housing Agency Research Support Programme**, examined the impact of poor housing on family wellbeing. Using data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) study, it found that mothers in inadequate housing and poorer neighbourhoods report more depression, higher parenting stress, and greater conflict with their children. Their children also face more social and emotional difficulties at age nine.

An October study by the ESRI and the **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)** examined family trajectories, economic vulnerability and employment among lone-parent households, using data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* 08 Cohort. It found that lone-parent families faced higher economic vulnerability than two-parent families, with the risk more than doubling when moving from a two-parent to a one-parent family. Factors that help lone parents exit economic vulnerability include employment, re-partnering, and higher education.

Other research outputs

In May 2024, Prof. Selina McCoy took part in a panel discussion at the **University of Galway** that focused on fostering and supporting effective public policy in Ireland, and the best ways to use data and research evidence for key policy decisions throughout the life course.

In July the second annual report on the Women in Finance Charter, funded by **Banking & Payments Federation Ireland, Financial Services Ireland/Ibec, Insurance Ireland, and Irish Funds**, was published and presented at an event in Dublin Castle. The charter is an initiative that seeks to improve female representation in financial services firms operating in Ireland.

In October 2024, researchers presented work on gender and labour market inclusion on the island of Ireland, funded by the **Shared Island unit in the Department of the Taoiseach**, to a joint informal meeting of the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for the Economy and the Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands at Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

Work also continued on a research programme for the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission**. One project is on adjusting estimates of poverty for the cost of disability; a second investigates the uptake of child-related leave in Ireland. Both reports are due to be published in early 2025.

In February 2024, a renewed research programme on Poverty, Inequality and Living Standards began in collaboration with Dr Barra Roantree from Trinity College Dublin, with funding provided by **Community Foundation Ireland**.

3.12 TAX, WELFARE AND PENSIONS

This research area examines the design of the tax, welfare and pensions system, with a focus on the effect it has on redistribution, poverty, inequality and incentives to work. Much of this work uses SWITCH, the ESRI tax and benefit model, to simulate the impact of reforms on households. Many of the outputs mentioned below are part of the Tax, Welfare and Pensions (TWP) work programme, supported by funding from the **Departments of Social Protection; Health; Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; and Finance**, as well as through the grant-in-aid provided by the **Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform**.

Research highlights and findings

- Further reform to Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) is likely to be needed beyond 2028 to combat the rising state pension bill.

- The new Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to pension calculations will see more women qualifying for the maximum rate.
- Measures announced as part of Budget 2025 will result in small income gains, on average, next year, compared to a budget indexed to forecast income growth.

June saw the annual Budget Perspectives conference, which has been organised by the TWP team for nearly three decades. A report on the winners and losers of the move to a Total Contributions Approach in the Irish pensions system was launched at the event. The report concluded that this would result in a large increase in the proportion of women qualifying for the maximum pension rate but that a relatively small proportion of men and women would be worse off as a result.

A second report launched at the Budget Perspectives conference examined the incidence and effectiveness of increasing PRSI to fund the state pension. This report found that the reforms proposed by the Government will result in revenue gains of €1.6bn per annum by 2028. The reforms are progressive, affecting high-income more than low-income households. However, further reform to PRSI is likely to be needed beyond 2028 to combat the rising state pension bill.

In October, the team held their annual post-Budget briefing. This work showed that measures announced as part of Budget 2025 will result in small income gains on average next year, compared to a budget indexed to forecast income growth. However, variation was found by household income level, with smaller gains for middle-income households. This work was published in more detail as a special article in the ESRI's *Quarterly Economic Commentary* in December.

The team also published a variety of articles throughout the year in peer-reviewed journals. These related to the effect of unemployment benefits on labour supply and income distribution, the take-up of in-work benefits in Ireland, gender differences in household expenditure, and unemployment benefits for atypical workers. Other research published during the year covered the topics of equivalence scales in poverty measurement, the gender dimension of the cost-of-living crisis, and the drivers of income inequality in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The work of the TWP team continued its strong policy focus. The SWITCH model continued to be used in a range of government departments to feed into policy decisions. Members of the team gave evidence to the Budgetary Oversight Committee and delivered presentations at important international policy-relevant events such as the European Commission's Mutual Learning Event on Distributional Impact Analysis, and the World Bank Conference on Pensions and Social Insurance. Finally, in May, it was announced that a publication by team members in the *Economic and Social Review*, 'Childcare in Ireland: usage, affordability and incentives to work', had won the Brendan Walsh Prize.

4. RESEARCH AREA COORDINATORS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

Research Area	Coordinator
Behavioural Science:	Professor Pete Lunn
Climate:	Professor Kelly de Bruin
Competitiveness, Trade and FDI:	Professor Iulia Siedschlag
Education:	Professor Selina McCoy and Professor Emer Smyth
Energy and Environment:	Dr Niall Farrell, Dr Muireann Lynch and Professor Anne Nolan
Health and Quality of Life:	Dr Sheelah Connolly and Professor Anne Nolan
Housing:	Professor Conor O'Toole
Labour Markets and Skills:	Professor Seamus McGuinness
Macroeconomics:	Professor Adele Bergin, Professor Martina Lawless and Professor Kieran McQuinn
Migration, Integration and Demography:	Professor Frances McGinnity and Dr Emma Quinn
Social Inclusion and Equality:	Professor Frances McGinnity and Bertrand Maître
Taxation, Welfare and Pensions:	Professor Karina Doorley and Professor Claire Keane

5. STAFF AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

DIRECTORATE		
Alan Barrett (Director)		
ECONOMIC ANALYSIS	SOCIAL RESEARCH	CORPORATE RESOURCES
Simachew Alemu	Maryam Afzal	Eleanor Bannerton (Operations & Strategy Manager)
Marta Alvaro	Anousheh Alamir	Samuel Baugh
Miguel Tovar Reaños	Aoife Brick	Claire Buckley (HR Manager)
Conor Banahan	Evan Carron-Kee	Sarah Burns
Adele Bergin	Sheelah Connolly	Bernice Clancy
Luke Brosnan	Ciára Dalton	Liz Coyle
Philip Carthy	Merike Darmody	Louise Creagh
Daniel Cassidy	Caoimhe Dempsey	Lliana D'Emidio
John Curtis (Head of Division)	Karina Doorley	Jennifer Downey
Kelly de Bruin	Shane Dunne	Julianne Flynn
Çağaçan Değer	Celine Fox	David Gorman (Acting IT Manager)
Seraphim Dempsey	Michele Gubello	Adrienne Jinks
Kate Devane	Ada Sophia Hahn	Ross Kelleher
Anne Devlin	Theano Kakoulidou	Francis McEvoy
Luke Doyle	Claire Keane	Josh Nevin
Juan Duran Vanegas	Aislin Lavin	Clare O'Neill (IT Manager)
Paul Egan	Maria Lee	Charles O'Regan (Head of Finance)
Andrés Estévez	Pete Lunn	Fiona O'Sullivan
Kirsten Everett	Bertrand Maître	Fiona Owens
Niall Farrell	Lucie Martin	Fionnuala Quinn
Elish Kelly	Selina McCoy	Stephen Sammon
Lorcan Kelly	Frances McGinnity	LeAnnie Wilson
Janez Kren	Ellen McHugh	
Akhilesh Kumar Verma	Keire Murphy	
Clement Kweku Kyei	Anne Nolan	
Martina Lawless	Diarmaid Ó Ceallaigh	
Muireann Lynch	Richard O'Shea	
Samuel McArdle	Dervla Potter	
Seamus McGuinness	Emma Quinn	

Kieran McQuinn	Deirdre Robertson	
Gretta Mohan	Helen Russell	
Rafael Nunes	Simona Sándorová	
Donal O'Shea	Adam Joachim Shier	
Conor O'Toole	Agathe Simon	
Paul Redmond	Eva Slevin	
Iulia Siedschlag	Emer Smyth	
Rachel Slaymaker	Shane Timmons	
Elisa Staffa	Dora Tuda	
Chi Tran	Michael Vallely	
Shiwani Varal	Brendan Walsh	
Anita Vollmer	Iris Wohnsiedler	
Brendan Wade		
Adele Whelan		
Aykut Mert Yakut		

6. ESRI COUNCIL – BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Sean O'Driscoll, President and Chairperson, ESRI

Mr Sean O'Driscoll was appointed President and Chairperson of the ESRI on 27 May 2020. He joined the Council of the ESRI in February 2017. He is the current Chair of the Governing Authority of University College Cork, a former Chair and Chief Executive of the Glen Dimplex Group, a former Partner in KPMG, and a member of the Trilateral Commission and of the National Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce. He is a former Director of Allied Irish Banks, of the National Competitiveness Council of Ireland and of a number of other government-appointed advisory groups. Mr O'Driscoll is the recipient of an OBE and a Légion d'Honneur Award.

Alan Barrett, Director, ESRI

Professor Alan Barrett joined the ESRI in 1994 and became Director of the Institute in July 2015, at which point he joined the Council. During his time with the Institute, he was seconded to the Department of Finance (2001–2003) and to the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) at Trinity College Dublin (2011–2013). He was a member of the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council from 2011 to 2015. He is a member of the Royal Irish Academy, a Research Fellow with IZA (Institute for Labor Economics) in Bonn, Germany and an Honorary Fellow of the Society of Actuaries in Ireland. He is also a member (ex officio) of the Climate Change Advisory Council.

Shay Cody, former General Secretary, Fórsa

Mr Shay Cody joined the Council of the ESRI in February 2023. He was General Secretary of Fórsa, Ireland's second largest trade union. He served on the Executive Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Union's Executive and also on its General Purposes Committee. As Chair of the ICTU Public Services Committee he was the lead negotiator in several rounds of public service talks. He has served as a member of the National Economic and Social Council and the National Competitiveness Council and was also a member of the Board of the Workplace Relations Commission. He is currently a member of the Central Bank Commission.

Katy Hayward, Professor of Political Sociology, Queen's University Belfast

Professor Katy Hayward joined the Council of the ESRI in September 2021. She holds a Chair in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast, where she is also a Fellow in the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute and Co-Director of the Centre for International Borders Research. She is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

Thia Hennessy, University College Cork

Professor Thia Hennessy joined the Council of the ESRI in February 2023. She is Head of School, Head of the Department of Food Business and Development and Chair of Agri-Food Economics at Cork University Business School. She is also a board member of the Irish Management Institute and Teagasc. Her research interests include the sustainable development of the agri-food sector with a particular interest in the impact of public policy on the farm sector. Prior to joining UCC in September 2016, she was employed by Teagasc, where she managed the agricultural and environmental economic research programme.

Brigid Laffan, Emeritus Professor, European University Institute

Professor Brigid Laffan joined the Council of the ESRI in February 2023. She is Emeritus Professor at the European University Institute. She was Director and Professor at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and Director of the Global Governance Programme and the European Governance and Politics Programme at the European University Institute (EUI), Florence until her retirement in August 2021. Previously, she was Professor of European Politics at the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIRe), University College Dublin (UCD), and Vice-President of UCD and Principal of the College of Human Sciences from 2004 to 2011.

Sandra McNally, Professor of Economics, University of Surrey

Professor Sandra McNally joined the Council of the ESRI in September 2021. She is a Professor of Economics at the University of Surrey and Director of the Centre for Vocational Education Research at the London School of Economics.

Gabriel Makhoul, Governor, Central Bank of Ireland

Gabriel Makhoul joined the Council of the ESRI in May 2020. He is Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland, chairs the Central Bank Commission, is a member of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank and of the European Systemic Risk Board, and is Ireland's Alternate Governor at the International Monetary Fund. Before joining the Central Bank of Ireland, he was Secretary to the New Zealand Treasury and the government's Chief Economic and Financial Adviser. In addition, he was New Zealand's Alternate Governor at the World Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Asian Development Bank, and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. He was also co-chair of the Trans-Tasman Banking Council. Previously, he worked in the UK civil service where his roles ranged from policy on domestic and international tax issues to large-scale operational delivery. He has also chaired the OECD's Committee on Fiscal Affairs and was responsible for the UK's Government Banking Service.

David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform

David Moloney joined the Council of the ESRI in November 2010. He is the Secretary General of the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform. Prior to this, he was head of the Labour Market and Enterprise Division of the Department, with responsibility for various expenditure areas, including Social Protection, Housing, Enterprise and Agriculture, and for the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES). Over the course of his career in the Civil Service, David has also served in the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Finance and the Department of Health.

Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, President, University of Galway

Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh joined the Council of the ESRI in September 2021. He served as the 13th President of University of Galway from 2018 to 2024. Previously, he was Professor of Accounting and Dean of Business at UCD. He is an experienced board member in both the private and public sector. A Chartered Accountant, having trained with Arthur Andersen and with a PhD in Accounting from the University of Leeds, he chairs the Institute's Audit & Risk Committee and previously chaired the Audit Committee at, for example, the Department of Communications,

Marine & Natural Resources and at Avolon, one of the largest aircraft leasing companies in the world.

Anne O’Leary, Head of Meta Ireland, Vice-President Global Business Group, EMEA

Anne O’Leary joined the Council of the ESRI in 2022. She is currently Head of Meta Ireland and Vice-President of Meta’s Global Business Group, EMEA. She was previously CEO of Vodafone Ireland and President of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce. She is also on the boards of Meta Platforms Ireland Ltd, WhatsApp Ireland, IBEC and Greencore, and is a former Chair of GOAL Global.

Anne Vaughan, former Deputy Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection and current Chair of the National Statistics Board

Anne Vaughan joined the Council of the ESRI in September 2024. She is a non-executive director of a number of charitable bodies and is a member of the Audit Committee of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) and a board member of Taighde Éireann – Research Ireland. She is a former Deputy Secretary of the Department of Social Protection and a former Chairperson of the National Statistics Board. She was a member of the Commission on Taxation and Welfare (2022) and the Commission on Pensions (2021). During her civil service career she also worked in the Department of Finance and in the Department of the Taoiseach.

7. WHITAKER PATRONS AND CORPORATE MEMBERS

The Institute's Strategy 2024–2028 highlights the role of the Patronage/Membership programme in supporting the long-term financial sustainability of the Institute. In 2024, membership and patronage subscriptions directly supported the delivery of high-quality research on important issues for Ireland. A series of breakfast briefings was held with high-profile industry and government leaders, reflecting the high esteem in which the Institute is held across Irish society.

ESRI Whitaker Patrons and Corporate Members as of 31 December 2024
Davy
EirGrid
ESB
Google

ESRI Corporate Members
AbbVie
ABP Foods
Aer Lingus
AIB
An Garda Síochána
An Post
Avolon
Bank of Ireland
Bord Bia
Bord Gáis Energy
Bus Éireann
CCPC
Central Bank of Ireland
Coimisiún na Meán
Cork City Council
Cork County Council
DCC plc
Deloitte
Department of Agriculture
Department of Defence
Department of Education
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Department of Foreign Affairs
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
Department of Transport
Dublin Bus
Dublin City Council
Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council

Enterprise Ireland
EY
Fáilte Ireland
FBD
Greencoat Capital
Higher Education Authority (HEA)
HubSpot
Ibec
Icon
IDA
Irish Institutional Property (IIP)
Institute of Bankers
Intertradelreland
Irish Farmers' Association
Irish Life
Irish Rail
Jacobs
Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine
Kerry County Council
Kerry Group
KPMG
LGMA
Limerick County Council
Louth County Council
Malin plc
Mason Hayes & Curran
Mater Hospital
Matheson
Meath County Council
Mercury
Musgrave Group
Norbrook
National Transport Authority (NTA)
NTMA
OHM Group
PTSB
PwC
Rexel
Ryanair
SIPTU
Sisk
Tesco
Tirlán
Uisce Éireann
Workday



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**An Institiúid um Thaighde
Eacnamaíochta agus Sóisialta**

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