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WOMEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

COUNTRY REPORT

IRELAND





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5.06 mil

Population

50.52%

Share of females

~3%*

Females' with low education level

66.10%

Females' with tertiary education level

4.60%

Females' unemployment rate

1.10%

Females' long-term unemployment rate

Development of social enterprises

Social enterprises have a strong history in Ireland as a pillar for strengthening the economy within Ireland and overseas through charitable organisations in Africa, South America and India. However, in recent years it has become a crucial element of the Irish government's plans for redeveloping the business economy, specifically following the COVID-19 pandemic. Awareness on social entrepreneurship has significantly grown with the appearance of advocacy organisations (see key stakeholders below) and government strategy (National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022). In general, there is a lack of awareness around social entrepreneurship and the ways in which a social enterprise differentiates itself from a charity or a commercial business.

Ireland's census on the social enterprise sector, published in May 2023, is the first comprehensive report on social enterprise in Ireland since 2013. An enormous 3.70% of workers in Ireland - 84,382 people - are employed in social enterprises. By comparison, 4.49% of workers in Ireland are employed in the agriculture sector. Despite social enterprises operating in a wide range of activities in both urban and rural areas, the concentration of social enterprises in specific sectors is greater in rural areas. 43% of social enterprises in Ireland are located in rural communities (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2023).

The main economic sectors for social enterprises:

Arts, Tourism and Leisure, Social Housing and Accommodation, Social Services, Environmental Services.

Ecosystem – women in social entrepreneurship

Due to varying definitions of social entrepreneurship and a gap in specific regulation, it is challenging to clearly measure the number of social enterprises in Ireland, including those led by women. As a result there is limited empirical evidence. Women represent 68.80% of the social enterprise workforce (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2023).

An updated census on social enterprises in Ireland published in May 2023 by SERI puts the number of active social enterprises in Ireland at 4,335 (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2023).

Key findings on women social entrepreneurship

Many women that engage with social entrepreneurship do so as a side-project or part time activity along with full time employment or caring responsibilities. There is a high proportion of women working in social enterprise focused on Childcare (90% of employees are women) and Health, Youth Services and Social Care (70% of employees are women) (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2023).

*Around 3% of people aged between 25-64 have only received a primary school education or no formal education. This includes men and women.

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Considering the type of employment contracts women engage with, 68.30% of the full-time workforce are women and analysis of the part-time workforce indicates that 69.70% of part-time employees are women (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2023).

Women account for only one-quarter of recipients of financial support provided by Local Enterprise Offices and local authorities. Partially due to programme restrictions on the eligible types of businesses, which exclude local service-based businesses that are often operated by women.

FEMALE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONTRIBUTES TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT IN IRELAND

Key obstacles

- lack of available time and knowledge on sustaining a business
- lack of start-up support
- inaccessible childcare (lack of support at a government level) - This is a major barrier for women and a systemic issue preventing the closing of the gender gap seen in the workplace. In Ireland, women still undertake the majority of unpaid work – 45% of women provide unpaid care for children and older adults on a daily basis, compared with only 29% of men.

While many possess the skills and knowledge to successfully establish and run a business, the societal, financial or emotional pressure is the most troubling barrier.

Key knowledge and skills need

- There is a need for training on the basic tax and legal obligations before starting a social enterprise, along with training and ongoing support for developing a personal brand.
- For those who are successful in sustaining their business, there is a requirement to continually upskill on financial requirements and the support available.
- Training for social entrepreneurs is not always accessible to women as there is a requirement to travel or time commitments, which clash with familial duties.

Drivers and opportunities

- Social enterprise in Ireland is supported mainly by not-for-profit organisations, with some additional support provided by Local Enterprise Offices and local authorities.
- Overall, Ireland has a supportive regulatory environment for entrepreneurship.
- Entrepreneurship is increasingly included in the formal education system.
- Business Development Courses focusing on social entrepreneurship have become increasingly available throughout Ireland.

Policy recommendation to empower women

Reviewing policies on childcare and healthcare for women. Childcare is noted as the 'full-time job' women undertake alongside other employment.



POLICY MAKERS AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

- [Department of Rural and Community Development](#)
- [Local Enterprise Office \(LEO\)](#)
- [Pobal](#) (implements support programmes under the LEO)

ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS REPRESENTING SE SECTOR

- [Irish Social Enterprise Network \(ISEN\)](#)
- [Social Entrepreneurs Ireland \(SEI\)](#)
- [Rethink Ireland](#) (previously [Social Innovation Fund Ireland](#))

DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS, PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE AND MENTORING

- [Social Enterprise Toolkit](#) (provided by Irish Social Enterprise Network)
- [Ideas Academy](#) – support at the starting point (by SEI)
- [Impact Academy](#) – support for development
- [Changing Ireland Accelerator](#) – transformational change (by SEI)
- [Start a Social Enterprise Business Course](#) (by Rethink Ireland)

MENTORING, incl. LEGAL ADVICE/CONSULTATIONS

- [Network Ireland](#) – mentoring scheme for women supporting
- [Endeavor Scale Up](#) – mentorships over the course of five months
- [Going for Growth](#) – support for females' entrepreneurs across all sectors to grow
- [Local Enterprise Office](#) – mentorship programme

KEY FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

- [Ashoka Changemakers](#)
- [Thank you, Coca Cola Fund](#)
- [The Women's Fund](#) (by [Community Foundation Ireland](#))
- [Community Services Programme](#)
- [Dormant Accounts Fund](#)
- [Social Enterprise Development Fund](#)

OTHER

- [Active Link](#) – free of charge vacancies on volunteering positions, jobs, news & other adverts
- [Social Enterprise Mark](#) – provides clear standards for accreditation
- [VAT Compensation Scheme](#) - Fiscal arrangements

Used sources:

- [Central Statistics Office Ireland \(CSO IE\)](#)
- Department of Rural and Community Development (2023), [Social Enterprises in Ireland. A Baseline Data Collection Exercise](#)
- European Commission (2020), [Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe – Ireland](#), Author: O'Shaughnessy, M.
- [Economic and Social Institute Ireland \(2019\)](#)
- Forfás (July 2013), [Social enterprise in Ireland: sectoral opportunities and policy issues](#)
- National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022
- U.POWER Country Report of Ireland (analysis of data and expert interviews) by Meath Partnership
- [We Start \(Mapping Women's Social Entrepreneurship in Europe\)](#)

Statistical data sources:

- Eurostat, [Population of Ireland, 2023](#)
- [CSO IE](#), [Education Level, 2021](#)
- [CSO IE](#), [Unemployment, 2022](#)



SUCCESS STORIES





IRELAND

CyberSafeKids Success Story



**ALEX COONEY
(CEO)**

www.cybersafekids.ie/
[@cybersafekidsie](https://twitter.com/cybersafekidsie)

LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

It's really important to have good stress management strategies in your life that can help alleviate pressure.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)

Triple Lock status for 2023 by the Charities Institute Ireland for upholding the highest standards in governance.

Since January 2016, CyberSafeKids have spoken to 38,614 children aged between 8 and 13 on the importance of digital safety.



INTRODUCTION TO THE CEO

Alex is an experienced programme manager from the not-for-profit sector. She has spent most of her career working in the international development sector. Since her return to Ireland in 2012, she worked for Move4Parkinson's Foundation Limited as a Programme Manager and in 2015, co-founded CyberSafeIreland CLG, of which she is currently the CEO, helping to build the organisation to a level where it is providing its services to thousands of children each year.

THE MAIN AIM

CyberSafeKids works to empower children, parents and teachers to navigate the online world in a safe and responsible manner. CyberSafeKids want children to embrace the opportunities for learning and enjoyment

that technology can deliver, but recognise that, as parents and educators there is a responsibility to equip them with the tools to stay safe and avoid harm.

QUOTATION FROM THE CEO

"BE TRANSPARENT WITH REPORTING, GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND FUNDING AVENUES."



IRELAND

Food Cloud Success Story



ISEULT WARD AND AOIBHEANN O'BRIEN (CEO)

Sector: Social and Environmental Services

www.food.cloud
[@foodcloudireland](https://twitter.com/foodcloudireland)

LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

In the early days, Iseult and Aoibheann spent a lot of time in-store talking to staff who would be donating and a lot of time speaking to charities who would be collecting the food to get an understanding of their needs.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)

FoodCloud now have over 6 local retailer partners including Musgraves, Lidl, Aldi and Tesco.

Engaging through community volunteering and corporate volunteering, FoodCloud work with approximately 542 corporate volunteers and 73 individual volunteers in 2021.



INTRODUCTION TO THE CEO

Iseult Ward, who was studying Business and Economics in Trinity College Dublin, met Aoibheann O'Brien, a postgraduate student completing a Master's Degree in Environmental Science, at an event. They shared a mutual love of food and a distaste for food waste, which is what led to the project that would later become Food Cloud.

THE MAIN AIM

Food Cloud is a social enterprise with a mission to transform surplus food into new delicious opportunities to make the world a kinder place. Iseult and Aoibheann were motivated to reduce the impact of food insecurity by targeting it at the source – food waste.

Applying what they knew through their studies, they prioritised having a positive social and environmental impact over profit when developing their business idea.

QUOTATION FROM THE CEO

“AS PART OF OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS, WE ENGAGED OUR TEAM THROUGH STRATEGY WORKSHOPS, BOARD STRATEGY MEETINGS, AND KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT.”



IRELAND

GrowRemote Success Story



TRACY KEOGH, CO-FOUNDER AND BOARD DIRECTOR

Sector: Employment Services

www.growremote.ie

@growremote

LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

Know what you can and cannot provide to the public. Focus on action that you can take that will make the most impact. Build a community early so that support can be replicated for times you cannot offer it.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)

Grow Remote has reached 230 communities, trained 1338 people and worked with 148 companies to support their remote workers. This number continues to grow each year.



INTRODUCTION TO THE CEO

Tracy is a co-founder of Grow Remote and a recognised international leader in the world of remote (working). Having 10+ years' experience in technology start-ups, Tracy spent the last few years in community development in regional and rural Ireland.

THE MAIN AIM

To prevent young people from having no choice but to move to urban centres i.e. cities or urban counties in the east of Ireland, Grow Remote wanted employment to be available and accessible to everybody, everywhere; and at scale, they wanted this freedom of choice to lead to sustainable, local communities across Ireland. In order to achieve their mission and turn their idea into action, Tracy and her co-founders developed what they call

their theory of change. It focused on the steps they needed to take to achieve their target impact of using remote work to enable people to live and work wherever they wish in Ireland, and to enable communities across Ireland to become more sustainable, socially and economically.

QUOTATION FROM THE CEO

"SOMETIMES, WE HAVE TO SAY NO."

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