

Irish respondents worry about health – but are willing to pay to improve healthcare

The OECD's cross-national Risks that Matter survey examines people's perceptions of social and economic risks and how well they feel their government reacts to their concerns. The survey polled a representative sample of 25000 people aged 18 to 64 years old in 25 OECD countries to understand better what citizens want and need from social policy – particularly in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When looking forward to 2022 and then beyond the next decade, concerns about health are at the fore. Nearly six out of ten Irish respondents worry about falling ill or developing a disability in the next year or two, and nearly eight out of ten worry about their health in the long run (Fig. 1).

These concerns likely influence preferences for government spending. When considering the taxes they might have to pay and the benefits they might receive, 79% of Irish respondents say they would like government to spend more on healthcare. This share drops to 59% when respondents are primed to consider a specific cost – an additional 2% of their income in taxes and social contributions to

improve health care supports (Fig. 2). However this is still a large share of the population, in international perspective, expressing this willingness to pay 2% more of their income in taxes for better healthcare. (Cross-nationally, the rate is 45%.)

These health concerns correspond with feelings of economic insecurity. A large share (83%) of Irish respondents think that the country's economic situation is worse than it was in 2019 (Fig. 3.). Looking at their own household, around 67% of the respondents report that they are concerned about their household's finances and economic security. While this may seem like a large share, it is in fact in line with the OECD average – likely reflecting the widespread, global economic insecurity induced by the pandemic.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that 70% of the Irish respondents think that their government should be doing more to ensure economic and social security and well-being. This, too, corresponds with the cross-national average (68%) calling for more support from government.

Fig. 1. Percent concerned or very concerned about health in the long run

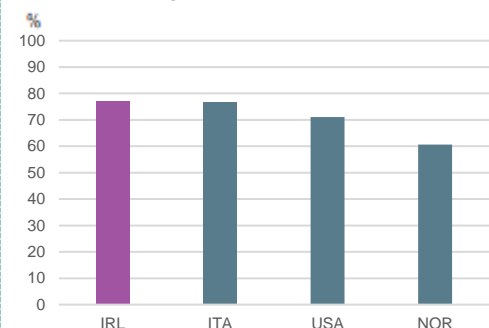


Fig. 2. Percent identifying 'health supports' as the top policy area for which they would pay an additional 2% of their income in taxes

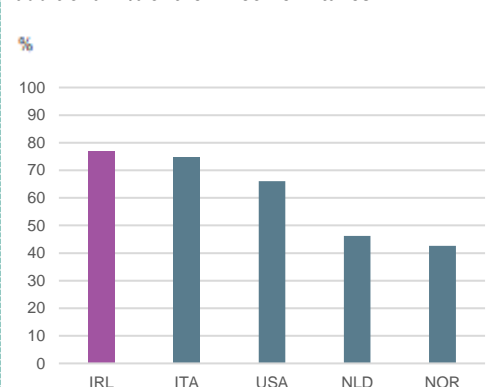
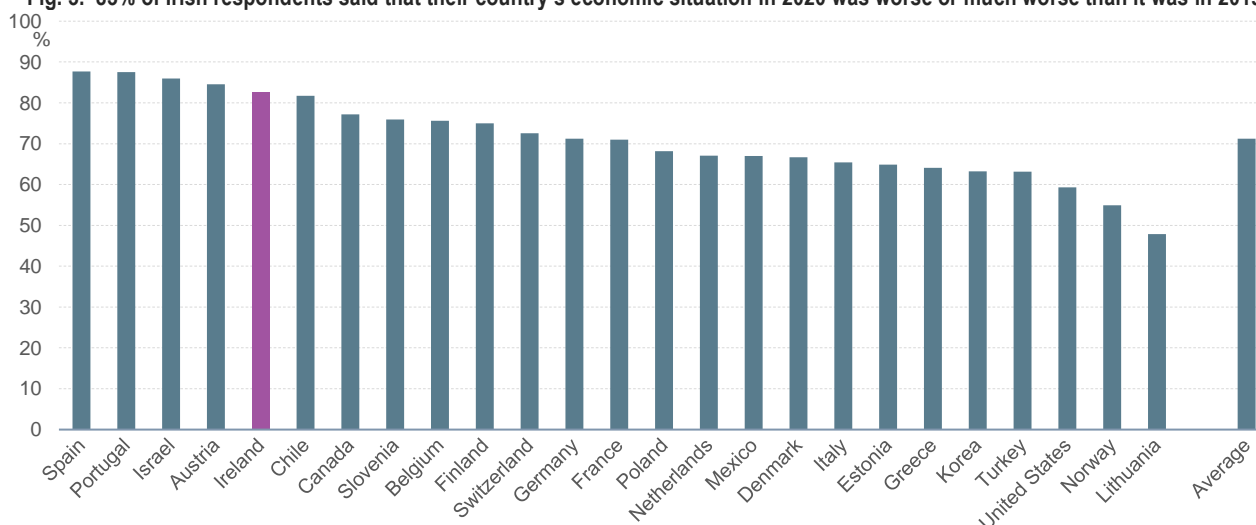


Fig. 3. 83% of Irish respondents said that their country's economic situation in 2020 was worse or much worse than it was in 2019



Note: Respondents were asked "Do you think that your country's economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was twelve months ago?" Answer choices were "much worse," "worse," "about the same," "better," "much better" and "cannot choose." The percentages here are an aggregation of the responses "worse" and "much worse."

Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on the OECD Risks That Matter 2020 survey, <https://www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm>

The OECD Risks that Matter (RTM) survey is a cross-national survey examining people's perceptions of the social and economic risks they face and how well they think their government addresses those risks. The survey was conducted for the first time in two waves in the spring and autumn of 2018. The 2020 survey, conducted in September-October 2020, draws on a representative sample of over 25 000 people aged 18 to 64 years old in 25 OECD countries: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States. Respondents were asked about their social and economic concerns, how well they think government responds to their needs and expectations, and what policies they would like to see in the future.