

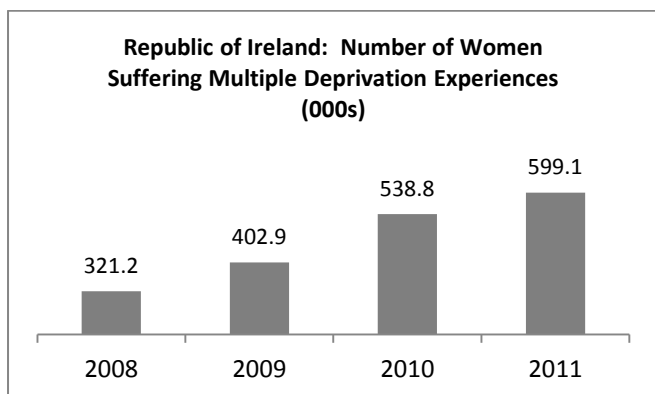
# Unite Notes: Poverty is a Feminist Issue



Austerity throughout the island of Ireland has hit women the hardest – in the workplace, in the community and the household.

## Deprivation and Poverty

In the *Republic*, 600,000 women suffer from multiple deprivation experiences.



The CSO defines deprivation as suffer at least two of eleven experiences which includes unable to afford a substantial meal, to heat the home, to afford waterproof shoes, etc. The number of women experiencing deprivation has nearly doubled between 2008 and 2011, the last year we have data for. There are more women than men suffering deprivation.

In *Northern Ireland*, more than one-in-five women are at risk-of-poverty.

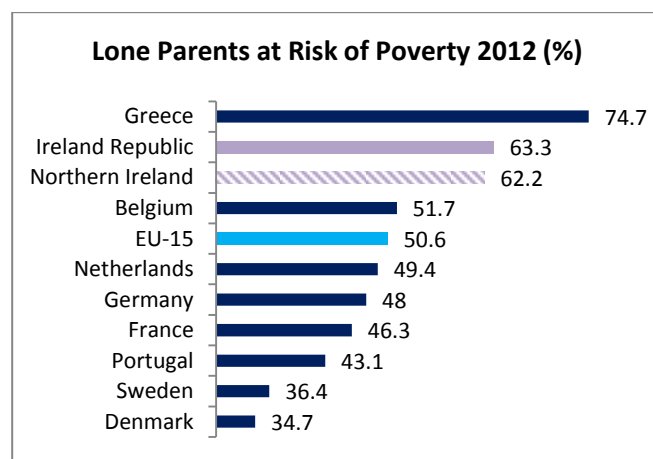


There is a higher at risk-of-poverty among women in *Northern Ireland* than in Britain, the EU-15 as a whole and even Portugal which is in a bail-out.

This represents approximately 193,500 women of all ages, living in households at risk-of-poverty.

## Lone Parents

Nearly all lone parents are women. Throughout Europe, lone parents face high levels of poverty risk – but in the *Irish Republic* and *Northern Ireland*, lone parents are particularly disadvantaged.



Over 60 percent of lone parents in Ireland – both the *Republic* and *Northern Ireland* – are at risk of poverty. This compares to an EU-15 average of 50 percent. Lone parents in Northern Europe – Sweden and Denmark – do not experience the same levels of poverty-risk owing to their strong social protection infrastructure.

However, the situation in *Northern Ireland* is in all likelihood worse. The figure above is for both Britain and *Northern Ireland*. There is no separate breakdown for *Northern Ireland* but it is likely to be higher

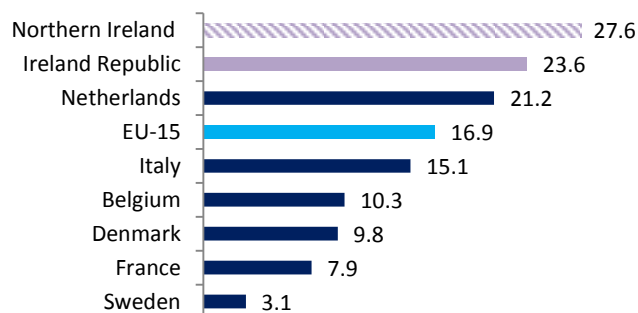
## Low Pay

Low pay among all workers in *Northern Ireland* and the *Republic* are some of the highest in the EU-15. Unsurprisingly, women are particularly affected by this – with low pay levels well above the average in other EU-15 countries.

# Unite Notes: Poverty is a Feminist Issue



**Low Pay among Women as a Proportion of all Employees 2010 (%)**



While the mean average of low-pay among women is less than 17 percent in the EU-15 countries, the proportion is much higher in the *Republic* and *Northern Ireland*.

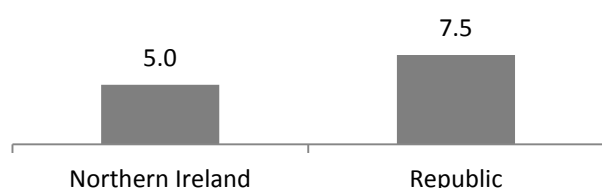
Again, the data above comes from the combined wage levels of Britain and *Northern Ireland*. In all likelihood it will be much higher for women in *Northern Ireland* as pay levels are lower. However, there is no question that women make up the greater proportion of low-paid in *Northern Ireland*.

59 percent of all workers in *Northern Ireland* paid less than £7 per hour (at the end of 2010) were women.

## Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay is wide and getting wider. In the *Republic* the gap has increased from 12.6 to 14.4 percent since the start of the crisis. In *Northern Ireland* the gap increased in the last year from 8.8 percent to 9.7 percent. In effect, this means that women work a large part of the year 'for free'; the amount of time they work to reach men's wages.

**Gender Pay Gap: Number of Weeks Women Work 'for Free' to Reach Men's Average Wages 2012**



## A Programme for Trade Unionists

High levels of deprivation, poverty and low-pay: these are the result of policy. We now need a programme to raise the incomes and living standards of women and all working people.

- **Increase the National Minimum Wage:** In the *Republic*, the minimum wage has not increased above its 2007 level while the recent proposed increase in the North doesn't even match the target set by the Tory/Lib Dem government.
- Establish **strong wage floors in the reconstituted Joint Labour Committees and establish similar sectoral bargaining committees in Northern Ireland.**
- Introduce in the *Republic* the **right to collective bargaining** to improve workers ability to negotiate higher wage and implement the **EU Directive on Part-time working** to give workers the ability to increase their working hours
- **End zero-hour contracts in Northern Ireland** by requiring minimum hours of work.
- **Roll out affordable childcare places** throughout the *Republic* and *Northern Ireland* – providing service at less than half the current market rates.
- **Substantially increase social protection payments** and reverse the most grievous cuts to lone parents in both economies.
- **Aggressively pursue a Living Wage** throughout the economies in both the public and private sectors; and insert Living Wage clauses in all Government procurement contracts.

These are some of the strategies UNITE will be campaigning for – to ensure that the recovery in the economics of the *Republic* and *Northern Ireland*, is not only a workers' recovery, but is a woman's recovery.

**Data:** Eurostat (Republic deprivation: CSO). Where extrapolated, this is stated in the text.