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ALONE Submission to the
EU Anti-Poverty Strategy
European Commission
October 2025



ALONE Policy Brief: Addressing Poverty and Energy Poverty Among Older People in Ireland

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Summary

Older people in Ireland face rising poverty and energy poverty, threatening their dignity, health, and independence. One-third of the 44,000 older people supported by ALONE in 2024 reported financial difficulties. Insufficient income supports, lack of pension benchmarking, and rising living and energy costs are pushing many into hardship. This brief outlines evidence, analysis, and recommendations to address both income and energy poverty among older people as part of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Context and Background

Poverty among older people is driven by fixed or low incomes, declining homeownership, and growing reliance on insecure rented housing. Those living alone are at the highest risk, with 26% in Ireland in income poverty in 2024, rising to 46% without temporary supports¹. Energy poverty compounds this issue: older households are 1.8 times more likely to experience it than younger ones.² Many older people live in energy-inefficient homes and depend on fossil fuels for heating. They face higher risks of illness, functional decline, and premature death linked to cold or damp housing³. Living in poverty undermines healthy ageing, affecting nutrition, cognition, and emotional well-being. These conditions must therefore be addressed not only as financial issues but as major public health challenges.

Policy Analysis

ALONE identifies overlapping structural barriers:

- **Income Insecurity:** Absence of pension benchmarking and indexation leaves older people vulnerable to inflation.
- **Complex Access:** Administrative burdens, digital-first services, and complex eligibility rules prevent many older adults from accessing supports.
- **Energy Inefficiency:** Many older homes are poorly insulated or dependent on oil heating, with limited take-up of retrofit grants due to high upfront costs and complex application processes.
- **Fragmented Policy Response:** Lack of cross-departmental coordination on poverty, energy, housing, and health reduces policy impact.

¹ Society Measuring Ireland's Progress 2023 - Central Statistics Office

² Energy poverty prediction and effective targeting for just transitions with machine learning - EconBiz

³ https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/pdf/Report_HousingConditions.pdf



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Policy Recommendations

1. Strengthen Social Protection and Income Supports

- Promote the implementation of benchmarking/indexation of the State Pension and related payments (e.g., Fuel Allowance, Living Alone Allowance in Ireland)
- Ensure ease of access to entitlements for older people, with single application processes and improved in-person supports.
- Encourage Member States to develop a Cost of Ageing Index which reflects the true cost of living for older people so that policy interventions are informed by evidence.

2. Reduce Energy Poverty and Improve Home Energy Efficiency

- Ensure that national grant schemes supporting home energy retrofits are fully accessible and free to all older people (e.g., such as those receiving a state pension)
- Ensure that member states establish emergency energy funds for those struggling with bills.
- Ensure that older people or those with lived experience are represented in national energy poverty advisory groups or equivalent, to ensure a Just Transition approach in all climate and energy policies.

3. Improve Cross-Departmental Coordination and Research

- Ensure that EU Commission recommendations on energy poverty are implemented, embedding a multisectoral approach in member states, and promoting definition of energy poverty in national law.
- Collect and publish annual data on older people's income and energy poverty, excess winter deaths, and energy-related health impacts.
- Invest in research on the links between poverty, ageing, and energy transition impacts.

Conclusion

Ireland's ageing population makes it urgent to secure adequate income and energy supports for older people. Addressing poverty and energy poverty together will not only safeguard health and independence but also contribute to Ireland's commitments under the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy. ALONE urges coordinated action to ensure every older person can age with dignity, warmth, and financial security.

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