Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

National Financial Literacy Strategy

Financial Literacy in Ireland

Evidence Base for a National Strategy

Prepared by the Banking Division
Department of Finance
gov.ie/finance

Contents

1. Foreword

Michael McGrath TD
Minister for Finance

Financial literacy plays an essential role in financial consumer protection. It works alongside many other consumer protections in place to help consumers make the most of their money, make informed decisions and improve their financial resilience and wellbeing.

Many countries and international organisations have published reports indicating a need to develop financial literacy skills across their population in order to enhance financial wellbeing and ensure inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

In Ireland, the Retail Banking Review, published in November 2022, identified the development of a nationally coordinated financial literacy strategy by my Department as one of its recommendations. It further recommended that in developing such a strategy, all relevant stakeholders should work together so that Ireland is compliant with the OECD High Level Principles on Financial Consumer Protection and the OECD Recommendation on Financial Literacy.
In developing a national financial literacy strategy, the OECD guidance recommends that governments establish and implement national strategies that are evidence-based and coordinated with other strategies that foster economic and social prosperity and provide a framework for cooperation among all stakeholders on financial education.

This Mapping Report is a significant milestone in the development of a national financial literacy strategy in Ireland. It provides evidence, analysis and recommendations for the next stage of the design and development of a national financial literacy strategy for Ireland. On the basis of extensive stakeholder engagement, including responses to our stakeholder survey issued in August 2023, this report describes the various bodies currently involved in delivering financial education in Ireland, alongside potential gaps and themes to be addressed in a financial literacy strategy and stakeholder expectations of that strategy.

I am heartened by the level of engagement and enthusiasm of so many stakeholders in this process. I was also impressed by the wealth of work on financial education ongoing across the country from public bodies, the financial services industry, charities, NGOs and educational organisations. This is not the last opportunity to be involved in the national financial literacy strategy and my officials will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders as we work towards the development of the strategy and its implementation.

The next phase of our work will involve preparing a national financial literacy strategy, an action plan and an appropriate governance structure to ensure the successful implementation of the strategy. I aim to publish the national financial literacy strategy by the end of 2024. I look forward to engaging with stakeholders further in advance of publication.

National Financial Literacy Strategy

2. Executive Summary

Why does Ireland need a national strategy for financial literacy?

Ireland needs a national strategy for financial literacy to:

Protect consumers

Financial literacy and education is an important part of consumer protection. Financial literacy covers people’s awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour in relation to money.

Financial education is needed to make sure financial literacy is supported across all ages.

Achieve financial wellbeing

Financial wellbeing is the overall goal of financial literacy and education.

Better coordinate work on financial education

Organisations across Ireland are active in financial education. These organisations include:

- public bodies,
- the financial services industry,
- charities,
- non-profit organisations, and
- educational bodies.

It is important that these efforts are supported and are given a clear and coherent framework in a national financial literacy strategy.

There is widespread support for the development of a national financial literacy strategy. We have already received very positive engagement and contributions from stakeholders.

Ensure effective and efficient ways of working

A national strategy will:

- include strong government leadership,
- have a clear governance structure,
- take account of other government strategies in this area,
- seek to achieve common goals, and
- include coordination on research and shared metrics so we can measure its impact and success.

Do adults in Ireland have adequate financial literacy?

Overall, adults in Ireland have good levels of financial literacy compared to other countries. Around 57% of adults in Ireland meet the minimum OECD level of financial literacy. A minimum level of financial literacy means they can manage their money on a day-to-day basis with ease and can consider their long-term financial wellbeing.

On the flip side, about 43% of adults in Ireland do not have the minimum level of financial literacy they need. This means they may struggle with:

- money management,
- debt, and
- their long-term financial wellbeing.

It is clear there is still work to do to improve financial literacy in Ireland. At the moment, most financial education programmes are broadly aimed at the general population. There should be a greater focus on tailoring financial education, especially for certain groups who we know have lower financial literacy, such as:

- women,
- unemployed people,
- those on low incomes,
- those with lower levels of education, and
- older people (people aged 60 or older).

Also there are groups with specific needs when managing their finances, such as people with disabilities and migrants, who should be considered. There is currently very strong co-operation between different public and private stakeholders in delivering programmes for specific groups. This must be built upon and supported.

At what age should financial literacy education start?

Financial education about financial literacy learning should begin in early childhood, ideally in pre-school education. Currently, many financial education programmes for children and young people are aimed at senior cycle in secondary school (from about age 16 onwards). There are no programmes for early childhood education and few primary school programmes.

There are opportunities for financial literary learning at every level in the school curriculum. While many activities to support financial literacy in schools, particularly at post-primary level, connect financial literacy to subjects in business and related areas, financial education is also connected to other subjects. Opportunities to further support financial education in the curriculum should be explored, particularly in subjects that nearly all students take, such as Mathematics

What type of financial education is needed?

A wide variety of themes are covered in financial education programmes across Ireland.

Budgeting and saving

These are a particular focus of many programmes in trying to build people's basic skills.

Managing debt

This is an important skill particularly to manage:

- mortgage debt, and
- new types of credit, such as Buy Now Pay Later.

Further financial education to manage debt should be supported. Managing debt also includes having the confidence to be able to seek support when struggling with debt.

Digital financial literacy

This is also essential for people to manage their money. Over 44% of the adult population do not have the minimum level of digital financial literacy needed to navigate their finances. We need to make sure people have the skills and confidence to use digital tools such as mobile banking apps.

Integrating financial education into other topics

Financial education also needs to be integrated with other topics, such as:

- investing, and
- supporting small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

How did we develop this report?

This report collates the most recent data and feedback from stakeholders on financial literacy in Ireland. This includes data from research, including a stakeholder survey about financial education initiatives, and data from an event to get further feedback. Their feedback helped us to assess and map the need for financial literacy and education against what is currently provided.

What's next?

The report provides the evidence needed for the development of the national strategy.

The Department of Finance will work with stakeholders to develop a national financial literacy strategy for Ireland, including a governance structure and action plan. This will be published by the end of 2024.

3. Introduction

3.1 Background

Financial literacy is an essential skill for everyone so that all Irish citizens have the right knowledge and information available to them to enhance their financial resilience and their long-term financial wellbeing and is an important element of financial consumer protection. Financial literacy is a lifelong journey and a very important part of financial consumer protection and financial inclusion. Understanding the basics of how finance works, the increasing complexity of financial instruments, the digitalisation of financial services and how to protect yourself from scams and fraud are some of the reasons behind the need for individuals to have the knowledge and skills that will increase their financial resilience and their overall financial wellbeing.

The OECD Recommendation on Financial Literacy, adopted in 2020, recognised financial wellbeing as the ultimate goal of financial literacy[1]. The G20/OECD High-Level Principles on Financial Consumer Protection also include 'financial literacy and awareness' as a principle and financial wellbeing as cross-cutting theme. Over the last number of years there has also been a focus from the European Commission on promoting financial literacy in European citizens, including the publication of joint EU/OECD financial competence frameworks for adults and children and youth. Many OECD countries are ahead of Ireland in developing a national financial literacy strategy; indeed, Ireland is one of the last EU Member States that does not have such a strategy in place or well in development.

To address this gap, the Department of Finance is now, on foot of a Recommendation in the Retail Banking Review, published in November 2022, developing a national financial literacy strategy. The development of a new national financial literacy strategy in Ireland aims to support consumers in their day-to-day financial transactions and enhance consumers' overall financial wellbeing. The national financial literacy strategy will also help support financial inclusion and identify best practice at national and international level for all stakeholders invested in improving financial literacy levels in Ireland.

3.2 Purpose of this mapping report

In developing any strategy, a key component is to have a clear evidence-base of the issue in hand in order to identify relevant stakeholders, the current position, emerging gaps and potential initiatives and outcomes to include in a strategy.

As has been the case with many other countries with an existing national financial literacy strategy, this evidence-gathering phase, mapping existing financial literacy

[1] OECD (2020), Recommendation on Financial Literacy, see: https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0461

initiatives and identifying relevant domestic stakeholders, is a very important first phase in designing and developing an effective strategy.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Give a context for financial literacy, the current levels of financial literacy, and the need for a financial literacy strategy in Ireland;
- Outline who is currently involved in the delivery of financial education programmes and initiatives in Ireland, who those programmes are aimed at, the levels of cooperation between current providers and current plans for the further development of financial education programmes and initiatives;
- On the basis of feedback received to date, outline stakeholder expectations of a national financial literacy strategy, suggested new themes and target groups to be considered and how a new financial literacy strategy could be evaluated and measured in order to gauge its success.

All of these steps are considered best practice in the OECD Recommendation on Financial Literacy as key steps in the development of a national financial literacy strategy.

3.3 Work undertaken to develop this mapping report

A wide range of sources were used to develop this Report, including:

- The CCPC study *Financial wellbeing in Ireland: Financial literacy and inclusion in 2023;*

- The OECD's *International Survey of Adult Financial Literacy*, published in December 2023;

- A stakeholder survey, issued by the Department of Finance in August 2023, with the objective of gathering information on current financial education programmes and initiatives in place and seeking stakeholder input to the content of a national strategy. A total of 55 responses were received to the stakeholder survey representing public bodies, the financial services industry, charities, non-profit organisations and educational organisations.

- A stakeholder event, held in the Department of Finance in November 2023, where the preliminary results of the stakeholder survey were presented and discussed as well as seeking further stakeholder views on current gaps in financial education in Ireland and how such a strategy would be successful and the main challenges in developing and implementing a national financial literacy strategy. The OECD also attended this event and presented on best international practice in developing financial literacy strategies.

3.4 Definitions used in this report

There are a number of different interlinking concepts used in this paper. The below provides definitions for these and a reference for how they interact with each other.

The definitions are mainly drawn from the OECD as the global leader in guidance on financial literacy and financial education, but also use definitions from the work carried out by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) on financial literacy, financial capability and financial wellbeing in Ireland.

- The OECD defines **financial education** as:
  "the process by which financial consumers and investors improve their understanding of financial products, concepts and risks and, through information, instruction and/or objective advice, develop the skills and confidence to become more aware of financial risks and opportunities, to make informed choices, to know where to go for help, and to take other effective actions to improve their financial well-being"[2]

- The OECD defines **financial literacy** as:

  "a combination of financial awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours necessary to make sound financial decisions and ultimately achieve individual financial well-being"[3]

- The OECD is currently working on a shared definition of financial wellbeing, but it recognises it as "the ultimate objective of financial education". In its Financial Capability and Wellbeing in Ireland in 2018 study, the CCPC defined **financial wellbeing** as being:

  "the extent to which someone is able to meet all their current commitments and needs comfortably and has the financial resilience to do so"[4]

- The OECD considers the term **financial capability** and financial literacy to be used relatively interchangeably as they reflect the same concepts[5].

- The OECD define **financial resilience** as:

  "the ability of individuals or households to resist, cope and recover from negative financial shocks. Such negative financial shocks can result from various unexpected events, including those related to employment, health, changes in family composition, damage to household possessions, or other large unexpected expenses"[6]

[2] OECD (2005), Recommendation on Principles and Good Practices for Financial Education and Awareness, see: https://www.oecd.org/finance/financial-education/35108560.pdf
[3] OECD (2020), Recommendation on Financial Literacy, see: https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0461
[4] CCPC (2018), Financial Capability and Wellbeing in Ireland in 2018, see: https://www.ccpc.ie/business/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/12/Financial-capability-2018.pdf
[5] OECD INFE (2011) Measuring Financial Literacy: Core Questionnaire in Measuring Financial Literacy: Questionnaire and Guidance Notes for conducting an Internationally Comparable Survey of Financial literacy, see: https://www.oecd.org/finance/financial-education/49319977.pdf
[6] OECD (2021), G20/OECD-INFE Report on supporting financial resilience and transformation through digital financial literacy,
https://www.gpfi.org/sites/gpfi/files/documents/5_OECD%20INFE%20Report_Supporting%20resilience%20through%20digital%20financial%20literacy.pdf

- In relation to a definition of national strategy on financial literacy, the OECD Recommendation on Financial literacy recommends that Members and Non-Members establish and implement **national strategies** that take a sustained, coordinated approach to financial literacy which take:

  "a sustained, co-ordinated approach to financial literacy which:

  - recognises the importance of financial literacy - through legislation where appropriate - and agrees its scope at the national level, taking into account identified national needs and gaps;
  - is coherent with other strategies fostering economic and social prosperity such as those focusing on financial inclusion and financial consumer protection; involves cooperation with relevant stakeholders as well as the identification of a national leader or co-ordinating body/council;
  - includes the establishment of a roadmap to support the achievement of specific and predetermined objectives within a set period of time;
  - provides guidance to be applied by individual programmes implemented under the national strategy in order to efficiently and appropriately contribute to the overall strategy; and
  - incorporates monitoring and evaluation to assess the progress of the strategy and propose improvements accordingly."[7]

[7] OECD (2020), Recommendation on Financial Literacy, see: https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0461

4. Why is financial literacy important and relevant for Ireland?

4.1 Irish economic context

4.1.1 Macroeconomic developments

The Irish economy has faced numerous challenges over recent years. The onset of the global pandemic in 2020 had a profound impact on the economy, with the domestic economy contracting sharply by -6.1% in 2020. The Covid-19 shock had a disproportionate impact on labour-intensive service sectors where home-working was not possible. On the other hand, ‘knowledge-intensive’ sectors proved more resilient. At the start of 2022, the unwinding of pandemic related restrictions facilitated a strong and sustained recovery in the domestic economy.

Just as the economy was emerging from the pandemic, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine trigged a severe energy price shock. Inflation ultimately reached multi-decade highs in 2022, averaging 8.1% with a peak of 9.6% in the summer of 2022. Whilst the initial driver of this inflation pressure was a surge in global energy prices, price pressures subsequently spread throughout the economy. The ECB has now raised interest rates at a record pace, with the main refinancing rate at 4.5% as of March 2024. This is high relative to interest rates of zero for much of the past decade. Whilst this has been a necessary step, the increase in interest rates has increased financing costs faced by both businesses and households.

Despite these challenges, the domestic economy has proven to be remarkably resilient. This resilience is most clearly illustrated by the strength of the labour market, with the level of employment reaching an all-time high in Q4 2023 of 2.71 million. Remarkably, this growth has been driven almost exclusively by increases in the labour force, net inward migration, and increased participation among female workers.

Since the second half of last year, inflation has in eased back and averaged 5.2% for the year as a whole. The fall in energy prices from extremely high levels is a key component for the reduction in inflation. The latest data suggests the Irish economy has now turned a corner on inflation, with inflation falling to 2.3% in February of this year. The easing in inflation is expected to be sustained throughout the rest of the year.

As inflation loosens its grip, the real disposable income of households should recover and support consumer spending. On the other hand, the higher interest rate environment will create challenges for the domestic economy going forward, with higher financing costs inhibiting day to day expenditure and investment.

However, there remains substantial uncertainty around the outlook for the economy. The impacts from monetary policy tightening and from the general global economy could prove to be more severe than assumed. It is also possible that the ongoing wars in Ukraine, Gaza and other geopolitical tensions could escalate or broaden to other countries, increasing uncertainty and further weakening economic activity amongst our main partners.

4.1.2 Long-term risks to the outlook

Beyond short-term, evidence suggests that longer-term changes are underway which will have a profound impact on the Irish economy. These transformative trends are commonly referred to as the “4D’s”.

Demographics

In common with other advanced countries, population ageing is a key factor that will shape economic trends in Ireland in the years ahead. Longer-term trends such as increases in life-expectancy and falling fertility rates, means that the population aged 65+ is projected to grow significantly faster than the working age population (those aged 20-64).[8] Owing to these demographic changes, the Irish economy will face labour supply challenges over the medium to long-term, largely driven by the number of older persons retiring from the labour force vastly exceeding the number of young person’s entering the labour force.[9]

Digitalisation

The rapid rollout of digital technologies during the pandemic helped to boost the resilience of the domestic economy by facilitating remote working, online education, payment and e-commerce services.[10]

Advances in digital technology are continuing to re-shape the traditional nature of work as these processes are incorporated into the workplace. While these technological advances are likely to render some jobs as redundant, these will also simultaneously create new jobs. Indeed, there will likely be both winners and losers over the near to medium-term, although it remains to be seen whether these digital advancements will act as a complement for labour (i.e. boost productivity) or a substitute for labour (i.e. boost unemployment).[11]

[8] Population ageing and the public finances in Ireland, Department of Finance, 2021. Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6ba73-population-ageing-and-the-public-finances-in-ireland/
[9] Horizon Scanning – calibrating medium to long-term economic projections, 2023. Available at: Horizon Scanning – calibrating medium to long-term economic projections (www.gov.ie)
[10] Department of Finance, Economic Insights - Summer 2022. *We got locked down, but did we get back up again? High-frequency indicators post-Covid*, Economic Insights, Available at: gov.ie - Economic Insights – Summer 2022 (www.gov.ie)
[11] Department of Finance, Summer Economic Statement 2023, Annex 1; “The Irish economy in 2030 – enabling a sustainable future for all.” Available at: https://assets.gov.ie/262563/be1e0616-663e-43e1-98fe-065ff0e49ce9.pdf

Looking at the wider economy, Ireland's strong position in the information and technology sector suggests that the economy could be well-positioned to benefit from increased digitalisation. However, the concentration of this sector in a relatively small number of very large firms also brings considerable exposure.

On the other hand, if the dependence on digitalisation continues to increase at a domestic level, households without access to digital platforms such as broadband and online banking could face barriers in carrying out everyday tasks, with older cohorts and inhabitants of rural areas more likely to be disproportionally affected.

Decarbonisation

One of the main challenges facing the Irish economy is the need to accelerate emission reductions across all sectors of the economy. This includes altering Ireland's energy mix in order to reduce dependence on the fossil fuels that release CO2 into the atmosphere. This can be achieved by transforming the electricity system and by moving to more sustainable land use and agricultural practices. In facilitating the transition to carbon-neutrality, the government inevitably faces important trade-offs, including the need to ensure an energy supply that is cheap, reliable, and clean.

De-globalisation

The globally connected nature of Ireland's trade, technological and financial relationships means that, while Ireland is a beneficiary of global growth, it is always vulnerable to external shocks including sector-specific shocks.

Sector and product-specific developments this year highlight the concentration of economic activity in Ireland and the risk this poses. Indeed, increased economic fragmentation or tensions would be particularly negative for the Irish economy due to its reliance on MNE's and subsequent FDI.

Navigating these long-term, structural changes will be crucial for Ireland's continued economic advancement going forward. To boost resilience, there is clearly a premium on up-skilling and re-skilling workers, as well as enhancing the stock of physical infrastructure, including green infrastructure, which will help to cushion the impacts.

4.2 Financial system, consumer trends, increased digitalisation and financial consumer protection context in Ireland

4.2.1 Overview of the financial system in Ireland

A well-functioning financial system is vital as it supports the economy, businesses and consumers. However, the financial system is undergoing continuous change and the pace of change continues to increase as a result of innovation in financial services, increased digitalisation and new (particularly non-bank) players entering the Irish market. The Central Bank of Ireland ('Central Bank') is responsible for identifying and mitigating risks to financial stability in Ireland, as well as authorising and supervising banks and other financial entities under both EU and domestic legislation.

The Central Bank has a strategic vision to ensure the stability and resilience of the Irish financial system[12]. Their key objectives include:

1. **Risk Identification**: it actively identifies and assesses risks to the stability of the financial system, which helps it to issue timely alerts on emerging risks and inform appropriate actions to mitigate those risks.
2. **Safety of Payments Systems**: it plays a critical role in keeping national and European payments systems safe, ensuring smooth financial transactions.
3. **Currency Issuance**: it issues currency, through producing banknotes and coins.
4. **Climate Change Considerations**: Recognizing the impact of climate change on the financial system, the Central Bank includes climate risk assessments and sustainable financial initiatives in its work.
5. **Collaboration and Stewardship**: it works in partnership with other relevant parts of the Irish State, the Eurosystem and the European Union to effectively steward the Irish financial system in the public interest.

In summary, the Central Bank's vision is to maintain a stable, resilient, well-regulated and well-functioning financial system that serves the needs of Ireland's economy and its citizens. In its recently published Regulatory and Supervisory Outlook Report, the Central Bank sets out its perspective on the key trends and risks shaping the financial sector in Ireland and its consequent regulatory priorities over the coming two years[13].

In its 2022 Financial System Stability Assessment on Ireland[14], the IMF highlights that the Irish financial system has grown rapidly in recent years and in complexity, especially following Brexit. The IMF indicates that risks to financial stability in Ireland come from a now much larger and more complex financial system and legacy issues persisting from

12 For more information, see the Central Bank website: Financial System | Central Bank of Ireland
13 Central Bank of Ireland (2024), Central Bank of Ireland: Regulatory & Supervisory Outlook, see: Supervisory Outlook Report | Central Bank of Ireland
14 IMF (2022), Ireland: Financial System Stability Assessment, see: Ireland: Financial System Stability Assessment (imf.org)

the global financial crisis (such as restrictions on bank pay and bonuses, government shareholding in some retail banks, impediments to repossession of mortgage collateral that keep risk weights and the cost of credit high). This is in addition to emerging risks with non-bank lending, Fintech, and climate change. Brexit drove a large increase in the size and complexity of the financial system in Ireland, notably of international banks, for which Ireland has become an operations base for Europe. In contrast, retail banks have struggled with low credit demand, post-financial crises issues and low collateral recovery, which weigh on their performance. Despite global issues, Ireland exited the pandemic with strong economic growth and a highly capitalized and liquid banking system.

4.2.2 Consumer trends and increased digitalisation in Ireland

In recent years, the banking landscape in Ireland has changed significantly. According to the 2023 Consumer Banking Sentiment Survey[15], published by the Department of Finance in September 2023, while the two pillar banks continue to dominate the market in terms of market share of current accounts held, the survey results show that the use of ‘fintech’ (which includes a growing use of apps on smartphones and contactless payments by customers of traditional banks) has increased as has a rise in the market share of “digital only” banking providers, such as Revolut.

As at mid-2023, nearly 60% of Irish adults are multi-banked, almost all of the population hold some form of current account, nearly 70% possess a savings account, 1 in 3 own a credit card and just over 20% of Irish adults have a mortgage. In terms of FinTech providers, the Survey results show that the top features of such providers for consumers are instant money transfer, free banking and a great/user-friendly mobile app. This is followed by splitting bills, spending information, foreign exchange and saving vault, while investment opportunities are the least important. Switching of banking products is very low in Ireland with many citing a general perception of it being difficult to switch, but general inertia being the most prominent reason.

In terms of insurance, according to a 2023 Eurobarometer, 36% of Irish people currently have, or in the last two years have had, life insurance. This is above the EU average of 31%. 40% of Irish people currently have, or in the last two years have had, non-life insurance (e.g. household insurance, motor insurance). This is below the EU average of 46%[16]. A European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) Eurobarometer from 2023 showed that Irish consumers are increasingly engaging with insurance online, with 55% of Irish people having bought at least one product from an insurance providers’ website[17].

[15] Department of Finance (2023), Consumer Sentiment Banking Survey August 2023, see: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ff55f-consumer-sentiment-banking-survey-august-2023/
[16] Flash Eurobarometer 525 Monitoring the level of financial literacy in the EU, see: https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2953
[17] EIOPA (2023), Consumer Trends 2023, see: https://www.eiopa.europa.eu/publications/consumer-trends-report-2023_en

4.2.3 Financial consumer protection in Ireland[18] [19]

Financial regulation is a key element to ensuring the safety and soundness of the financial system and protecting consumers. It is essential to promoting trust and confidence in the financial system and to supporting consumers' overall financial well-being.

Financial regulation refers to the rules and laws regulated firms operating in the financial industry, such as banks, credit unions, insurance companies, financial brokers and asset managers must follow. From a consumer perspective, the purpose of financial regulation is to ensure the fair and responsible treatment of consumers of financial services, reduce information asymmetries between financial entities and their consumers, ensure that only suitable products are sold to consumers based on their affordability and risk appetite and generally to seek to prevent poor outcomes for consumers. Poorly regulated financial firms have the potential to undermine the stability of the financial system, harm consumers and potentially damage the prospects for the economy.

The Central Bank has a number of statutory Codes of Conduct and Regulations in place which must be complied with by regulated firms when dealing with consumers. These include:

- Consumer Protection Code 2012 and subsequent Addendums to that Code;
- Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears;
- SME Regulations;
- Licensed Moneylender Regulations;
- Code of Conduct on Switching of Payment Accounts; and
- Minimum Competency Rules.

In addition, financial consumer protection rules are included in various EU Directives and Regulations, including the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive II (MiFIDII), the Payment Services Directive, Consumer Credit Directive, Distance Marketing for Financial Services Directive and Markets in Crypto Assets Regulation (MiCAR), many of which have either recently or are being reviewed in order to strengthen their provisions and provide further protections to consumers of financial services. Work continues on the EU Retail Investment Strategy, which contains a package of measures for consideration including amending various EU Directives and Regulations, improving the way information is provided to retail investors, increasing transparency and comparability of costs through using standardised templates and terminology, banning inducements for 'execution-only' sales and seeking to protect retail investors from misleading information.

In addition, the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code is currently being reviewed and a Consultation Paper was published in March 2024, in advance of issuing a revised

[18] For more information see: Consumer Protection | Central Bank of Ireland
[19] Department of Finance (2023), Consumer Protection Roadmop, see: gov - Financial Consumer Protection Roadmap September 2023 (www.gov.ie)

Code in the form of Central Bank Regulations in by the end of 2024 with a 12-month implementation period.

There have been a number of recent developments in financial consumer protection in Ireland, including:

i) In April 2023, the Minister for Finance ('the Minister') commenced a large portion of the Central Bank (Individual Accountability Framework) Act 2023, which marks an important step forward in transforming the culture of the financial services industry in Ireland;

ii) In December 2023, the Minister launched a public consultation seeking views on a future National Payments Strategy for Ireland. The Terms of Reference for the development of this Strategy (published in June 2023), highlight that the goal of a new National Payments Plan is to 'enhance and build public trust in, and the effectiveness of, the payments system, based on:
    a. Access and Choice – promoting reasonable options for consumers and small businesses;
    b. Security and Resilience of the payments system and system operators;
    c. Innovation and Inclusion – future focus that enhances interoperability and inclusion;
    d. Sustainability and Efficiency – solutions that have regard to cost/benefit and the environment.

iii) In January 2024, the Minister published a General Scheme of the Access to Cash Bill, which stems from a recommendation in the Retail Banking Review published in November 2022. That Review highlighted the continuing importance of cash in ensuring that people do not experience financial exclusion, that consumers can budget efficiently, and that there is a safety net in the event of electronic banking or the payments infrastructure being impacted by outages or cyber-attacks. The purpose of this legislation will be to:
    a. Ensure the continuation of reasonable access to cash;
    b. Develop a framework to manage future changes in the access to cash infrastructure in a fair, equitable and transparent manner; and
    c. Bring ATM deployers and Cash in Transit companies under the regulatory remit of the Central Bank.

iv) The Credit Union (Amendment) Act 2023 provides for the extension of services which can be offered by credit unions and the setting of maximum interest rates on loans by credit unions;

v) The Central Bank's Insurance Regulations 2022 provided for a price walking ban for motor and home insurance and ends the 'loyalty penalty' insurance companies can experience for staying with the same insurer; and the

vi) 'Right to be Forgotten' Code of Practice issued by Insurance Ireland in 2023 provides for a cancer diagnosis to be disregarded where treatment has ended more than 7 years prior to that consumer's application for mortgage protection insurance (5 years, if under 18). A similar 'Right to be Forgotten' is included in the recently agreed revised EU Consumer Credit Directive (due to be transposed by end-2025) regarding insurance contracts relating to credit agreements.

As the financial services landscape continues to evolve and change, financial consumer protection policy will itself need to evolve to keep pace with and respond to the changing operating environment and the needs and expectations of consumers. As the trend towards digitalisation of financial services continues, stakeholders will need to ensure that consumers are not left behind and that there is no risk of financial exclusion.

In addition to this, the cross-sectoral Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 establishes a modern legal framework for adults who require, or may require, support in exercising their decision-making capacity. The Decision Support Service (DSS)[20] is the organisation charged with operating the provisions of the 2015 Act, and as such is required to respond to the complex decision-making needs of people with capacity difficulties. People can avail of different decision support arrangements by making an application for the appropriate tier of support.

A code of practice[21] has been developed to guide financial service providers on best practice when interacting with a person who may require support in the context of the Act. It also provides guidance on interacting with the person's decision supporters where applicable, as well as with the Decision Support Service and the courts.

4.3 Financial literacy levels of the population

4.3.1 Financial literacy levels of adults

The most recent measure of the level of financial literacy of Irish adults is a 2023 study from the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) - *Financial wellbeing in Ireland: Financial literacy and inclusion in 2023*[22]. The study was based on an OECD toolkit for measuring financial literacy and inclusion. It is the first time since 2010 that Ireland has contributed financial literacy data to an OECD study.

The main findings of the CCPC study were:

- **58% of respondents satisfied with current financial situation, though one in seven report too much debt.** However, there remain significant differences between groups, in particular, those with lower levels of education and young people report lower levels of satisfaction.
- **One in three respondents reporting that they are just getting by financially**. This rises to half of respondents with lower levels of educational attainment. Most respondents always (37%) or often (23%) have money left over at the end of the month.
- **One in eight can only cover their costs for a month or less in the event of an income shock**. Most people believe they can sustain their living expenses for three months or more in the case of a financial shock. Lone parents, those who

[20] For more information see: Decision Support Service
[21] Decision Support Service (2023), Code of Practice for Financial Service Providers, see: https://decisionsupportservice.ie/sites/default/files/2023-04/11.%20COP_for_financial_service_providers.pdf
[22] CCPC (2023), "Financial wellbeing in Ireland: Financial literacy and inclusion in 2023", see: https://www.ccpc.ie/business/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/07/2023.07.05-CCPC-Financial-Wellbeing-Report-2023.pdf

live with family and those in other households including house-sharing, are the least likely to have significant financial buffers in place.

- **86% households save, though men are more likely to engage in higher risk saving** such as through the purchase of stocks and shares or investing in crypto. The percentage of households who save is high overall (86%). The more passive forms of saving such as savings or deposit accounts is the most common form, though there are a range of savings vehicles that household use.
- **77% report access to the State pension, with 9% reporting only having access to State Pension or no pension arrangement at all**. Two-thirds of respondents have financial assets to fund retirement, while 73% plan to use a private or occupational pension in retirement. 9% of people do not have access to any assets other than state supports. Women report being more reliant on their spouse or children in retirement.
- **One in four respondents don't shop around before buying a financial product**. Just over half of respondents who had recently purchased a financial product shopped around before purchasing the product or service (54%). However, a significant portion also chose not to consider any other options apart from the first available option (23%).
- **Most respondents, including older consumers, use the internet and apps for banking and financial planning**. The most common uses are to check balances and transactions, pay bills online, and to buy goods and services online.
- **One in five were the victim of some type of financial fraud**. A similar proportion of respondents (one in five) reported a problem with a legitimate provider, such as difficulty in opening a bank account, accessing a loan, or making an insurance claim.
- **There is a good understanding of financial concepts, though key gaps exist**. While there is a broad understanding of many financial concepts, key gaps such as of the nature of contract signatures and the impact of risk remain. Men score higher on average than women, while older respondents score significantly higher than younger respondents.

The CCPC study also indicated that Ireland's scores will act as a baseline for future international comparisons. Such an international comparison, using the same data, was released by the OECD in December 2023.

OECD International Survey of Adult Financial Literacy

The OECD collected data from 39 countries and economies as part of its study, *OECD/INFE 2023 International Survey of Adult Financial Literacy*, published in December 2023[23]. The survey gathered information on each of the elements of financial

[23] OECD (2023), "OECD/INFE 2023 International Survey of Adult Financial Literacy", OECD Business and Finance Policy Papers, No. 39, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/56003a32-en

literacy according to the OECD definition (knowledge, behaviour, and attitude), allowing for the calculation of a globally comparable OECD financial literacy score[24].

Ireland's overall financial literacy score is shown in the table below. The table also shows the overall average scores for the study, OECD average scores and scores for other EU Member States that took part in the study[25]. This score acts as an important baseline and measurement for the impact of a financial literacy strategy.

Member State	Financial Literacy Score (out of 100)
Ireland	**70**
Croatia	62
Cyprus	56
Estonia	67
Finland	65
France	62
Germany	76
Greece	61
Hungary	58
Italy	53
Latvia	59
Lithuania	56
Luxembourg	68
Malta	68
Netherlands	64
Poland	62
Portugal	63
Romania	54
Spain	64
Sweden	66
Overall average	**60**
OECD average	**63**

Those scoring lower on financial literacy were those unemployed (61) or out of the labour force (64)[26], with low incomes (64), with less than secondary education (65) and aged 60 and over (66). Women scored lower than men on average with a score of 68 compared to 71 amongst men.

The OECD also set a minimum target score for overall financial literacy (70 out of 100). 56.9% of Irish adults achieved the minimum target score. This was above the overall average of 33.7% and the OECD average of 38.9%. It is also the second highest score

[24] The financial literacy score measures a set of basic financial skills, behaviours and attitudes and is calculated using the OECD scoring methodology. By responding correctly to particular knowledge, attitude and behavioural questions, individuals can achieve a maximum financial literacy score of 100. A maximum score would indicate that the individual has a basic level of understanding of financial concepts and applies some prudent principles in their finances.

[25] All the tables in this section include the Irish score, the scores of other EU Member States, the overall average score for the study and the OECD average. Overall 39 39 countries and economies took part in the study. The full list of countries can be found here:

[26] 'Out of the labour force' refers to people not in employment because they are not available to work, e.g. full-time students, carers, retired people and homemakers.

amongst EU Member States who took part in the survey. This is a positive performance, however, it also leaves just over 43% of the adult population without the minimum level of financial literacy needed for conducting their financial affairs on a day-to-day basis.

Member State	% of adults who achieved minimum target score for financial literacy
Ireland	**56.9**
Croatia	35.6
Cyprus	16.1
Estonia	48.4
Finland	45.8
France	38.7
Germany	75.5
Greece	32.1
Hungary	22.5
Italy	16.6
Latvia	32.6
Lithuania	23.3
Luxembourg	53.1
Malta	45.5
Netherlands	47.3
Poland	34.7
Portugal	37.4
Romania	20.4
Spain	39.2
Sweden	50.9
Overall average	**33.7**
OECD average	**38.9**

Financial knowledge

Scores out of 100 were also produced for financial knowledge, as well as financial behaviour and financial attitudes, in addition to the financial literacy score. According to the OECD, financial knowledge "can be considered as having a basic knowledge of financial concepts and the ability to apply numeracy skills in financial contexts". Financial knowledge scores were computed as the number of correct responses to the seven financial knowledge questions in the survey. These financial knowledge questions test knowledge of financial concepts such as inflation (the definition of inflation and the understanding of time value of money), the benefits of long-term saving/investing, interest and risk.

Ireland's financial knowledge score is 72 out of 100. This was above the overall average of 63 and the OECD average of 67. Ireland was in the upper range of EU Member

States for financial knowledge, behind Germany, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Cyprus and scoring the same as Sweden.

Member State	Financial Knowledge Score (out of 100)
Ireland	**72**
Croatia	70
Cyprus	73
Estonia	78
Finland	69
France	66
Germany	85
Greece	65
Hungary	74
Italy	53
Latvia	58
Lithuania	54
Luxembourg	71
Malta	69
Netherlands	65
Poland	73
Portugal	61
Romania	49
Spain	66
Sweden	72
Overall average	**63**
OECD average	**67**

Those who scored lower on financial knowledge were those unemployed (63) or out of the labour force (65), low income (66), less than secondary education (66), women (68) and younger people aged 18 – 29 (69).

65.1% of Irish adults achieved the minimum target score for financial knowledge (answering five out of seven financial knowledge questions correctly). This is comparable with many other EU Member States, but leaves some work to be done for those who did not meet the target score.

Member State	% of adults who achieved minimum target score for financial knowledge
Ireland	**65.1**
Croatia	66.5
Cyprus	72.2
Estonia	77.9
Finland	62.5
France	55.9
Germany	84.5
Greece	53.7
Hungary	74.8
Italy	39.4
Latvia	45.9
Lithuania	42.4
Luxembourg	65.4
Malta	46.3
Netherlands	58.8
Poland	67.8
Portugal	48.1
Romania	30.8
Spain	51.9
Sweden	64.8
Overall average	**50.1**
OECD average	**57.7**

In terms of the individual questions asked around financial knowledge, nearly all Irish adults understood the definition of inflation (97.8%). A very high percentage also understood interest on a loan (90.5%) and the concept of risk and return (88.8%).

While most people understand the meaning of inflation, fewer understand the impact of inflation on their savings, as 68.9% of adults could correctly answer the question on the time value of money.

Compound interest was the most difficult concept for Irish adults with only 44.6% being able to calculate compound interest correctly. the overall average for all countries and economies participating in the survey was 41.7% and the OECD average was 44.5%.

In addition to this, only 31.7% of people were able to answer the question on understanding simple and compound interest correctly. This was in line with the overall average for all countries and economies participating in the survey (26.2%) and the OECD average (31%).

Financial behaviour

The survey also included nine financial behaviour questions. The financial behaviour score was created by allocating one point for each financially savvy behaviour. These financial behaviour questions give an insight into individuals' actions that may positively affect their financial situation, including:

- Keeping track of money flows: do individuals keep a close watch on their personal finances, pay their bills on time and avoid falling into arrears?
- Saving and long-term planning: do individuals save actively, borrow or avoid borrowing to make ends meet in the event of a short-term financial shortfall and do they set themselves long-term financial goals?
- Making considered purchases: do individuals seek independent information or advice when considering making a purchase of financial products and service, consider multiple options when selecting a financial product or service, and look to make informed decisions by shopping around?

Ireland's financial knowledge score is 73 out of 100. This was above the overall average of 61 and the OECD average of 62.

Member State	Financial Behaviour Score (out of 100)
Ireland	**73**
Croatia	59
Cyprus	45
Estonia	61
Finland	62
France	61
Germany	74
Greece	62
Hungary	45
Italy	52
Latvia	61
Lithuania	63
Luxembourg	67
Malta	77
Netherlands	65
Poland	59
Portugal	66
Romania	56
Spain	60
Sweden	61
Overall average	**61**
OECD average	**62**

Those who scored lower on financial knowledge were those unemployed (65) or out of the labour force (68), on low incomes (68), aged 60 and over (68) and with less than secondary education (69).

The OECD also set the minimum financial behaviour score as displaying at least six of nine financially literate behaviours. 76.9% of Irish adults achieved this score. This was the second highest amongst EU Member States after Germany (77.5%).

Member State	% of adults who achieved minimum target score for financial behaviour
Ireland	**76.9**
Croatia	49.0
Cyprus	19.2
Estonia	49.1
Finland	53.7
France	52.2
Germany	77.5
Greece	49.6
Hungary	19.7
Italy	35.1
Latvia	53.7
Lithuania	54.3
Luxembourg	63.5
Malta	75.5
Netherlands	59.8
Poland	48.5
Portugal	62.2
Romania	42.5
Spain	46.5
Sweden	52.6
Overall average	**50.5**
OECD average	**52.4**

Financial attitudes

The OECD definition of financial literacy recognises that even if an individual has the knowledge and ability to act in a particular way, their attitudes towards money can also influence their decisions and behaviours. The survey includes questions and statements to measure respondents' attitudes towards money and planning for the future. Each of the questions focuses on preferences for spending money in the short term through "living for today." The questions ask individuals to use a scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- "I find it more satisfying to spend money than to save it for the long-term."
- "I tend to live for today and let tomorrow take care of itself."
- "Money is there to be spent." (optional)

Ireland's financial attitudes score is 58 out of 100. This was above the overall average of 56 and the same as the OECD average of 58. Many other EU Member States performed better on financial attitudes than Ireland, including Sweden (67), Germany (65), Luxembourg (63), Malta (63), Portugal (63), Finland (62), the Netherlands (62) and Estonia (61).

Member State	Financial Attitudes Score (out of 100)
Ireland	**58**
Croatia	54
Cyprus	50
Estonia	61
Finland	62
France	59
Germany	65
Greece	54
Hungary	57
Italy	57
Latvia	55
Lithuania	45
Luxembourg	63
Malta	63
Netherlands	62
Poland	51
Portugal	63
Romania	58
Spain	70
Sweden	67
Overall average	**56**
OECD average	**58**

Only 38.4% of Irish people disagreed with "I find it more satisfying to spend money than to save it for the long-term", compared to the overall average of 43.5% and the OECD average of 41.8%. In addition to this, only 25.7% disagreed with the statement "money is there to be spent", compared to the overall average of 27.8% and the OECD average of 26.3%.

Those who scored lower on financial attitudes were those out of the labour force (53), on low incomes (53), with less than secondary education (54) and aged 18 – 29 (57).

There was no minimum financial attitudes score set by the OECD.

4.3.2 Digital financial literacy

The OECD survey also looked at digital financial literacy through a small number of questions and have indicated that these findings should be seen as preliminary findings. Also it should be noted that Ireland's score was only based on those who have internet access.

Overall digital financial literacy scores are constructed in a similar way to the overall financial literacy scores and are based on three components: knowledge, behaviour, and attitudes. The digital financial literacy score for Irish adults with internet access is 66. This is the highest of the EU Member States included in the study. 55.9% of Irish adults with internet access achieved the minimum target score for digital financial literacy of 70 points out of 100 points, which is significantly higher than the OECD average of 35.9%.

Member State	Digital Financial Literacy Score (out of 100) across all adults	Digital Financial Literacy Score (out of 100) across adults with Internet access	% of adults who achieved minimum target score for digital financial literacy across adults with Internet access
Ireland	**-**	**66**	**55.9**
Croatia	49	-	-
Cyprus	44	45	11.2
Estonia	64	-	-
Finland	61	61	46.4
France	62	63	51.4
Germany	64	65	54.9
Greece	54	59	46.3
Hungary	48	50	18.6
Italy	-	46	20.2
Latvia	46	48	18.0
Lithuania	45	46	17.6
Luxembourg	59	-	-
Malta	-	-	-
Netherlands	56	56	36.0
Poland	50	-	-
Portugal	-	62	45.8
Romania	44	-	-
Spain	-	-	-
Sweden	52	52	26.0
Overall average	**53**	**55**	**32.1**
OECD average	**55**	**56**	**35.9**

Those who scored lower on digital financial literacy were those aged 60 and over (60), out of the labour force (61), with less than secondary education (62), low incomes (63) and the self-employed (64).

4.3.3 Financial wellbeing

The OECD also used the survey to produce a measure and score for financial wellbeing. The financial well-being score is based on twelve variables that cover the different components of financial well-being – four on financial resilience, which can be seen as objective ability to deal with financial shocks, and eight on subjective financial wellbeing¸ such as satisfaction with one's financial situation and feelings of stress around finances.

Ireland had the third highest level of financial wellbeing of the countries and economies that took part in the study with a score of 58, after Germany (73) and Hong Kong (61). The overall average score for all countries and economies was 42 and the OECD average was 47. Ireland scored highly in terms of financial resilience (32 out of 50) and subjective financial wellbeing (26 out of 50).

Member State	Financial Resilience Scores (out of 50)	Subjective Financial Wellbeing Scores (out of 50)	Financial Wellbeing Score (out of 100)
Ireland	**32**	**26**	**58**
Croatia	19	19	38
Cyprus	23	22	45
Estonia	24	17	41
Finland	24	18	42
France	27	15	42
Germany	39	34	73
Greece	17	15	32
Hungary	23	20	42
Italy	24	18	42
Latvia	24	19	43
Lithuania	30	14	44
Luxembourg	32	17	48
Malta	27	19	46
Netherlands	29	27	56
Poland	26	22	47
Portugal	28	23	51
Romania	16	18	34
Spain	36	18	54
Sweden	31	25	56
Overall average	**23**	**19**	**42**
OECD average	**26**	**20**	**47**

Those who scored lower on financial wellbeing were the unemployed (38), those on low incomes (48), those with less than secondary education (51) and younger people aged 18 – 29 (52).

4.3.4 Other research on adult financial literacy in Ireland

In 2023, a flash Eurobarometer on *Monitoring the level of financial literacy in the EU* was published. This looked at financial literacy levels across the EU, including in Ireland, through combining financial knowledge and financial behaviour scores[27]. From an Irish perspective:

- Ireland scored slightly better than EU27 average on financial literacy, with 19% of the population achieving a high score (EU27 average was 18%), 64% achieving a medium score (same as the EU27 average) and 17% achieving a low score (EU27 average was 18%).
- More Irish people scored higher on financial knowledge compared to the EU27 average, with 31% getting four or five correct answers out of five.
- However, Irish people had less high scores than the EU27 average in relation to financial behaviour. 60% of Irish people had a high score compared to an average of 65%.
- In terms of rating their own financial literacy, 30% of Irish people described their overall knowledge about financial matters as 'very high' or 'quite high' compared to other Irish adults. This is the same as the average across the EU.
- 32% of Irish people could continue to cover their living expenses for six months, without borrowing any money or moving house, if they lost their main source of income (33% was the EU average). However, 12% could last less than a month and 18% had no emergency savings (compared to 9% and 16% on average across the EU).
- Irish people had higher than average confidence in having enough money to live comfortably in retirement, with 13% being very confident and 37% somewhat confident (compared to 9% and 33% EU27 average).
- On investments, 18% of Irish people hold an investment product (funds, stocks or bonds), which is below the EU average of 24%. In addition, nearly half of Irish people are not confident in the investment advice they receive from their provider or adviser.
- 17% of Irish people have personal consumer loans, other than mortgages or home loans. This is above the EU average of 14%.

Bank of Ireland also released research on levels of Irish financial literacy in 2023 with its *Financial literacy score index*[28]. This research was closely modelled on the 2015 Global S&P Financial Literacy survey and found that:

- Ireland has an average financial literacy score of 54%, with just over half of test questions answered correctly.
- The Index also reveals a striking difference across gender and age, with women scoring almost 10% lower than men.
- Overall, 18-34 year olds score lowest (48%) with the highest score for over 65s (58%).

In addition to this, Bank of Ireland conducted research in 2021 which found gender differences in various aspects of financial wellbeing[29]. According to the research, 50% of women said they were confident managing money compared with 56% of men. Women reported being less satisfied with their financial situation (29% vs 33% for men) and less

---

[27] Flash Eurobarometer 525 Monitoring the level of financial literacy in the EU, see: https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/295

[28] See main findings on Bank of Ireland website: Ireland's financial literacy lags peers according to new national study - Bank of Ireland Group Website

[29] See main findings on Bank of Ireland website: Financial Wellbeing for Women | Bank of Ireland

knowledgeable about financial matters (28% vs 36% for men). The difference was greatest when it comes to having the confidence to choose investments (15% vs 27% for men) or pensions (16% vs 27%) without the help of a financial advisor.

In 2022, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) launched a report on *Financial Literacy in Ireland: Challenges and Solutions*[30]*.* This report consolidates existing research on financial literacy in the Irish context and highlights the lived experiences of people with unmet financial literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs and the challenges that they face when managing and accessing finance and financial services. The research identified that the shift towards digital financial services was disproportionately affecting certain groups, particularly the Travelling community. The report recommended that financial providers improve their online services and provide additional support to vulnerable consumers. It also called for the implementation of a national financial literacy strategy led by the Department of Finance and a state-led anti-fraud campaign.

In 2021, Moneysherpa conducted a survey to assess financial literacy in Ireland, testing knowledge of the same concepts explored in the Global S&P survey. The study estimated Irish financial literacy at 55% and highlighted that this was around 20% lower than some other European nations. In terms of differences across demographic groups, the survey found that financial literacy was around 20% lower in the 18-44 age group than the 45-64 age group and that Dublin trails the rest of the country by 5% in terms of financial literacy. It also found, unlike some other studies, that women had 15% higher financial literacy than men[31].

In 2021, Clúid Housing and the Housing Finance Agency released a report carried out by academics in UCC - *Financial Inclusion Among Social Housing Tenants*[32]. This research report examines access to and use of mainstream and alternative financial services by social housing residents in Ireland, with a focus on savings and credit. It also looked at the financial capability of social housing tenants and potential strategies to address this. Only 9% of residents were deemed to have good financial capability. 64% had some financial capability and 27% had poor financial capability. Residents were stronger in terms of making ends meet, than they were in keeping track of finances and planning ahead.

In 2019, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) published a paper on *Financial Literacy and Preparation for Retirement*. In this paper, the ESRI investigated the extent to which financial literacy is an important determinant of financial protection in the older pre-retirement population in Ireland. Using data from the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), the paper found significantly higher levels of financial literacy among men, those with higher levels of education and cognition, and the self-employed. Financial literacy was in turn associated with higher total household wealth, lower financial stress and higher than expected retirement income. It found little evidence that those with higher levels of financial literacy are more likely to have various forms of

[30] NALA, (2022), Financial Literacy in Ireland: Challenges and Solutions, see: ttps://www.nala.ie/research/financial-literacy-in-ireland

[31] Moneysherpa. (2021). Irish Women Lead in Financial Literacy, New Irish Money Guide Survey Shows, see: https://moneysherpa.ie/financial-literacy-survey-data/

[32] McCarthy, O., Faherty, M., Byrne, N. and Carton, F. (2021) Financial inclusion among social housing tenants, Dublin: Cluid Housing and the Housing Finance Agency, see: https://hdl.handle.net/10468/12394

supplementary pension cover however, which may reflect a limited role for financial literacy over and above other important determinants such as income and education[33].

In 2018, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC*)* published a significant piece of research on financial wellbeing, *Financial Capability and Well-being in Ireland in 2018*[34]. It examined the behaviours and circumstances that influence financial decision making and well-being, the extent to which Irish people are able to meet all of their current financial needs comfortably and their financial resilience for the future. The main findings were:

- People in Ireland fared well in terms of general financial well-being, with an average score of 64 out of 100.
- In terms of international comparisons, the overall score for Ireland was lower than Norway (77) but higher than Australia and New Zealand (both 59) and on a par with Canada, where the overall score was 65.
- Most people had the means to cover day to day costs and current commitments. However, financial well-being is also the ability to have financial comfort now and into the future.
- A significant number of people had little financial resilience beyond meeting current commitments and 52% of people were meeting current financial commitments, but had little provision against financial shocks.
- As a whole, people in Ireland were doing reasonably well in terms of general financial well-being but they have low levels of resilience for the future, including in retirement.

In relation to older people's digital financial literacy and experiences, South Leinster Citizens Information Service carried out a report *A Review of Older People's Capacity to Access Financial Services Online and to Independently Conduct their own Financial Affairs*[35]. This was undertaken in association with Co. Wicklow Older People's Council and South Leinster MABS and was grant aided by the Citizens Information Board Social Policy Grants Scheme. The report highlights the everyday barriers which prevent some older people from leading financially independent lives and presents a series of recommendations for action, in light of the increasing move to the online provision of services. The project actively engaged older people in researching the report, using focus groups and a survey facilitated by the partnership with the Co Wicklow Older People's Council. Many older people felt there was an increase in fraud and cybercrime and that they were at a disadvantage if they didn't have good digital skills. They also felt there was a loss of customer service with banks closing branches.

[33] A. Nolan and K. Doorley (2019), Financial Literacy and Preparation for Retirement, see: https://www.esri.ie/publications/financial-literacy-and-preparation-for-retirement#:~:text=Financial%20literacy%20is%20in%20turn,and%20higher%20expected%20retirement%20income.

[34] CCPC (2018), Financial Capability and Well-being in Ireland in 2018, see: https://www.ccpc.ie/business/research/market-research/financial-capability-and-well-being-in-ireland/

[35] J. Weafer and F. Rhatigan (2022), A Review of Older People's Capacity to Access Financial Services Online and to Independently Conduct their own Financial Affairs, see: https://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/downloads/social_policy/Accessing_financial_services_online_report.pdf

4.3.5 Other relevant research on consumer financial behaviour and confidence in Ireland

In addition to research on levels of financial literacy, there is also regular research undertaken by various stakeholders related to specific consumer financial behaviour and confidence. Such research could relate to behavioural research, such as the Department of Finance's work on switching or the CCPC's work on saving behaviour. There are also several regular studies on consumers' confidence and sentiment on banking issues and the banking industry itself.

Behavioural research

In 2023, a study conducted by the ESRI for the Department of Finance, *Who switches and why*, found most consumers miss out on better deals by not shopping around when buying financial products[36]. This study found that:

- When applying for bank accounts, credit cards, loans or mortgages, people rely on personal recommendations or a bank they use already, despite better value products usually being available elsewhere.
- When choosing their bank account, 73% of consumers did not shop around to compare different products. The figure was 68% for loans and 74% for credit cards.
- Even when getting a mortgage, 46% did not compare offers, despite differences in interest payments that can add up to tens of thousands of Euros.
- Once consumers have these financial products, the majority do not consider switching to better value ones. Switching rates across the four products ranged from 6-17% over five years.
- Most people are aware that switching is an option, but cite difficulty comparing offers, costs, time, uncertainty about the process, and worries about making a mistake. Results also showed that consumers are motivated to switch primarily by financial gain but are inhibited by switching hassle and low confidence in their ability to do so.
- Shopping around appears to be a habit. The same consumers who compare offers when initially purchasing financial products are also more likely to switch in future. The main motive is simply to save money, rather than to get new features or better service.
- The study also looked at levels of financial literacy and how this affects switching. It concluded that increased financial knowledge needs to be accompanied by increased financial confidence in applying the knowledge, to make a difference to switching behaviour.

The second stage of this ESRI work is the development and testing of framing techniques to design a tool to support switching. The results of the tests and the data from the original surveys were used to design and develop a web-based app which could be used to boost decision making in switching decisions. The app development

[36] McGowan, F., A. Papadopoulos and P. Lunn (2023). Who Switches and Why? A Diagnostic Survey of Retail Financial Services in Ireland, ESRI Working Paper 748, Dublin: ESRI, see: https://www.esri.ie/publications/who-switches-and-why-a-diagnostic-survey-of-retail-financial-services-in-ireland

was completed in August 2023 and will be tested in the field in order to collect data on its usage.

The CCPC also published behavioural research carried out with the ESRI in 2022, which looked at testing different interventions and find out what works when it comes to encouraging consumers to build a savings buffer. The interventions were tested on real-life consumers between May and end-November 2021 and the trial was facilitated by Bank of Ireland. The study is the first trial of its kind in Ireland and one of the first in Europe.

The main research results were that:

- Applying behavioural science to customer communications and the design of application forms can increase the uptake of savings accounts by over 25%.
- Detailed analysis also suggests the interventions have greater benefit among customers on lower incomes, who are most vulnerable to the negative effects of financial shocks.
- Consumers that were sent marketing emails with consumer-friendly infographics that illustrated financial shock statistics, for example; "*6 in 10 people face an unexpected expense each year*" – were 20% more likely to open a savings account than those who received standard marketing materials.

From the research, the CCPC and ESRI produced a guide for financial providers on how they can use the recommendations to help improve their customers' financial wellbeing through encouraging saving[37].

Consumer behaviour and sentiment

The Department of Finance has been carrying out its Consumer Banking Sentiment Survey annually since 2022[38]. The survey aims to capture an in-depth understanding of consumers' experiences and perceptions of the retail banking sector in Ireland.

- In 2023, in terms of satisfaction with their main financial provider, over 1 in 3 (34%) stated that they are very satisfied, an increase of three points.
- Overall satisfaction with their main financial provider remained steady at 82%, with dissatisfaction being expressed by 6%, similar to 2022.
- The use of 'fintech', which includes a growing use of apps on smartphones and contactless payments by customers of traditional banks, has increased, as has a rise in the market share of "digital only" banking providers.
- There is a belief that the levels of choice in the market is highest for savings accounts and lowest for mortgages (just 1 in 4 believe there is choice for the latter).

[37] CCPC (2022), Improving Financial Well-being through Short-term Savings a Guide for Financial Providers to Help Their Customer Save. See: https://www.ccpc.ie/business/research/market-research/savings-research/
[38] Department of Finance (2023), Consumer Sentiment Banking Survey August 2023, see: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ff55f-consumer-sentiment-banking-survey-august-2023/

PTSB carry out a quarterly research series, *Reflecting Ireland*, which explores attitudes to the economy and key issues of public interest[39]. The latest edition, published in early 2024, looked at gender differences in relation to financial planning, amongst other findings. The survey found that:

- Women tend to have far lower levels of confidence in their financial decision-making ability than men, with only 39% of women saying they feel confident about making investment decisions, versus 52% of men.
- Men are twice as likely as women to have financial investments (33% of men versus 15% of women).
- 48% of men have a clear long-term financial plan, versus 35% of women. The male-female gap is highest in the under-35 age group, where 54% of men and just 32% of women say they have a plan.
- Women take the lead on decisions about grocery shopping or day-to-day finances. 70% of women say they take the lead on grocery shopping and 59% on day-to-day financial decisions, versus 39% and 46% of men, respectively. In contrast, men are more likely than women to take the lead on utilities, home or car insurance, loans, and investments.
- Women and men feel equal levels of confidence in their ability to manage their household budget (approx. 70% each).

In relation to public trust in banking, the Irish Banking Culture Board (IBCB) carry out an annual *éist Public Trust in Banking Report*[40]. This study measures public sentiment towards the three retail banks operating in Ireland. The 2023 survey found that:

- Trust in the banking sector among the general population has improved by 10 points when compared to 2022.
- Trust in bank branches was found to be significantly higher than the collective industry.
- People's engagement with banks digital services remained high, with 81% of respondents saying they use digital banking services either 'Frequently' or 'Very Frequently'.

In addition to these specific studies, organisations like the CCPC and the Central Bank carry out regular research on consumer behaviour and understanding of specific financial issues, such as Buy Now Pay Later or pensions.

4.3.6 Financial literacy levels of children and young people

It is more difficult to get comprehensive, internationally comparable data on the financial literacy of young people in Ireland. Ireland's participation in PISA in the areas of reading, mathematics and science, have shown that Irish students are performing well compared to those in other countries.

[39] PTSB (2024), Stark differences in women's and men's approaches to work/life balance and finances, PTSB's Reflecting Ireland research finds, see: https://www.ptsb.ie/about-us/notices/2024/march/womens-and-mens-approaches-worklife-balance-finances-ptsb-reflecting-ireland/

[40] Irish Banking Culture Board (2023), éist 2023 Public Trust in Banking report, see: https://www.irishbankingcultureboard.ie/publications/eist-2023-public-trust-in-banking-report/

Financial literacy is an optional measure to be tested by countries and the OECD does not always include an assessment of financial literacy in every round of PISA. Ireland has not collected data on financial literacy in previous rounds of PISA where financial literacy has been included as a measure. Financial literacy will not be included in the next round of data collection for PISA 2025.

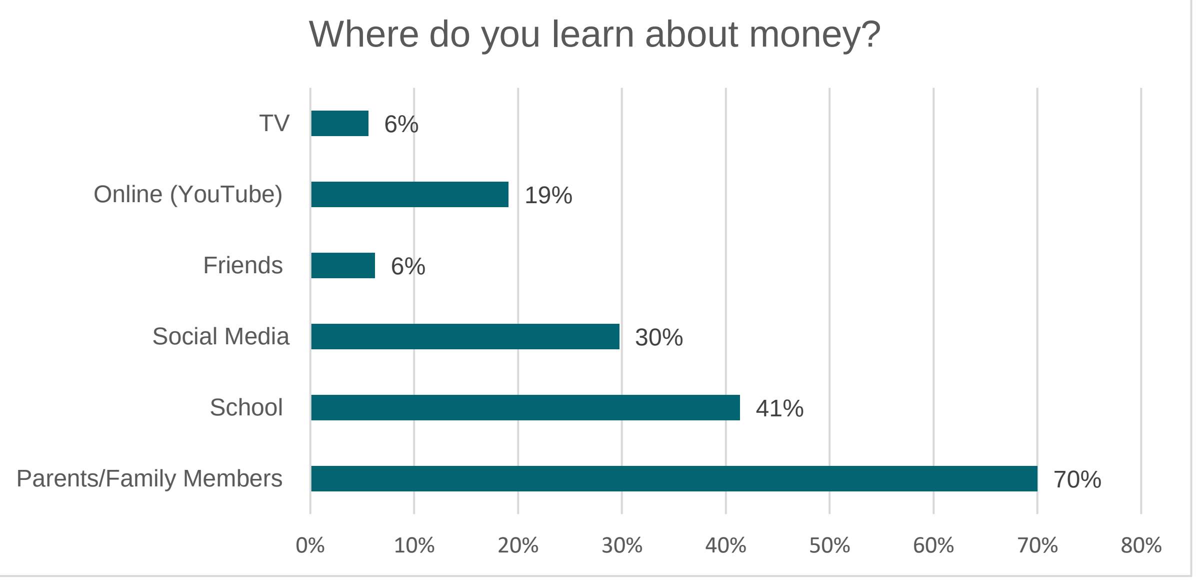
While there is this gap in our knowledge around young people's financial literacy, there are a couple of studies which give us an indication of young people's relationship with money.

MABS research on young people's money attitudes and behaviours

In 2024, MABS published a report on *Money Attitudes and Behaviours of Young People living in Ireland: Findings of the 'Money Matters' Financial Education Survey*. The report details the findings of the 'Money Matters' Survey collected by MABS during their international Global Money Week campaign in 2023. 1,850 young people, from around the country took part in the survey, with 97% of the participants aged 15-17[41]. This data is collected annually by MABS during Global Money Week since 2022.

The young people were asked questions about where they learn about money; access to personal bank accounts; how often they save; their confidence in using digital money tools and mobile apps; whether they shop online; and related personal finance topics.

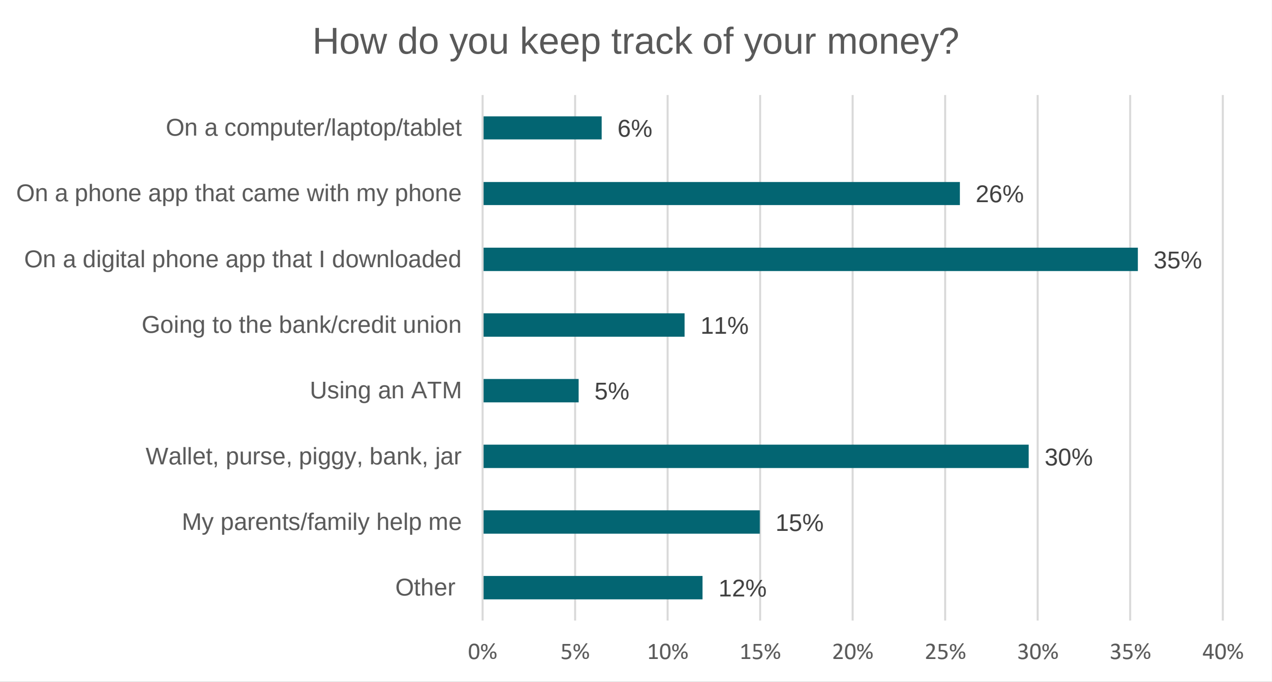
In terms of where they learn about money, young people indicated they mainly learn about money from parents and family members (70%) and school (41%). However, a relatively high percentage (30%) of responses are also learning about money from social media outlets, such as TikTok, Instagram and Twitter. The main social media used by young people to learn about money was TikTok.



[41] MABS (2024), Money Attitudes and Behaviours of Young People living in Ireland 2nd Edition: Findings of the 'Money Matters' Financial Education Survey, see: https://mabs.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/MABS-Money-Matters-Survey-2nd-Ed_March-2024.pdf

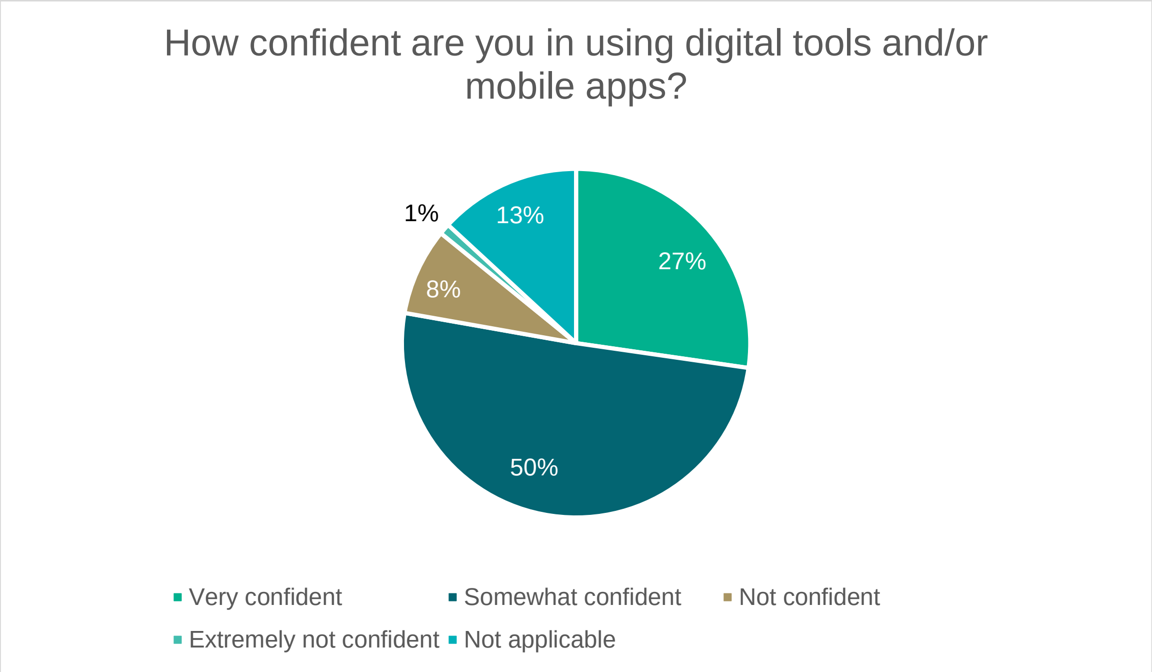
Many students were found to have experience of financial products in the survey. 75% of young people surveyed indicated they had a traditional bank account, such as with a retail bank, their Credit Union or An Post. 25% indicated that did not have a traditional bank account, however the report indicated there was some confusion amongst students as to what a traditional bank account was. 45% of students indicated they had a ‘digital only’ bank account, with Revolut or Revolut Junior being the most popular account.

The survey also collected data on how students manage and keep track of their money. Students did this mostly online, with over 60% using a downloaded app or a built-in app to track their money with their phones. The most common response was a digital app that students’ downloaded to their phones, most likely a banking app with their account provider. While online was by far the most popular method, students did also use cash. 30% of students kept track of their money with a wallet, purse, piggy bank or jar.



In terms of savings, which is an important behaviour in building financial resilience, students were asked how often they save and whether they have savings goals. 27% of students indicated that they “always” save, 40% saved “sometimes” and 22% saved “once in a while”. 11% of students said they “never” saved.

The survey also looked at students’ confidence using digital financial tools or mobile apps, which is important in terms of their digital financial literacy. Nearly half were “somewhat confident” (49%) and over a third (33%) reported being “very confident”. 10% were “not confident” and only 1% said they were “extremely not confident”.



In addition to their digital confidence, the survey looked at young people's confidence around money in general, whether they think it is important to talk about money and whether they feel comfortable asking for help if they have questions or concerns about money. 96% of young people felt it was important to talk about money and 4% felt it was not. 90% also said they felt comfortable asking for help with any financial questions or concerns.

Other evidence

Bank of Ireland indicated through their response to the Department of Finance's stakeholder survey that they have conducted school surveys and additional research on students' financial literacy and their confidence around money management. This research showed that:

- Over one third of those surveyed (13 – 18 year olds) feel they are not knowledgeable about managing money.
- Almost half (49%) of young people worry about managing money. Their main concerns are that they are not saving enough or spending wisely.
- 82% of young people identified money management as being important.
- Young people learn about money mostly through their parents (88%), but also from teachers (57%), grandparents (37%) and online/google searches (25%).

5. Financial education provision in Ireland

This section provides an overview of current financial education provision and of the stakeholders active in providing financial education (the financial education ecosystem) in Ireland. It also gives an indication of gaps in financial education provision. This overview has been mainly developed based on data gathered through the stakeholder survey conducted by the Department of Finance in August/September 2023. This data has been complemented by desk research, information gathered during the stakeholder event on financial literacy held in November 2023 and clarifications provided by survey respondents to the Department of Finance.

The stakeholder survey aimed to gather information on the organisations involved in financial education in Ireland and on how the implementation of these various programmes is achieving the ultimate goal of increasing the financial literacy of the Irish population. Some stakeholders included further information on policy and advocacy initiatives in relation to financial literacy or financial wellbeing. While some respondents included other useful information (and much of which has been referenced in other parts of this report), this section only deals with information received through the survey on actual financial education initiatives being delivered by stakeholders in Ireland. The OECD's definition of financial education programmes[42], are programmes that:

- Support individuals' decision-making about money management, saving, credit, insurance, investment, retirement and pensions
- Ultimately target the public, consumers or specific target groups
- Provide information, raise awareness, train or provide generic advice
- Focus on personal finance issues or at least some components of personal finance.

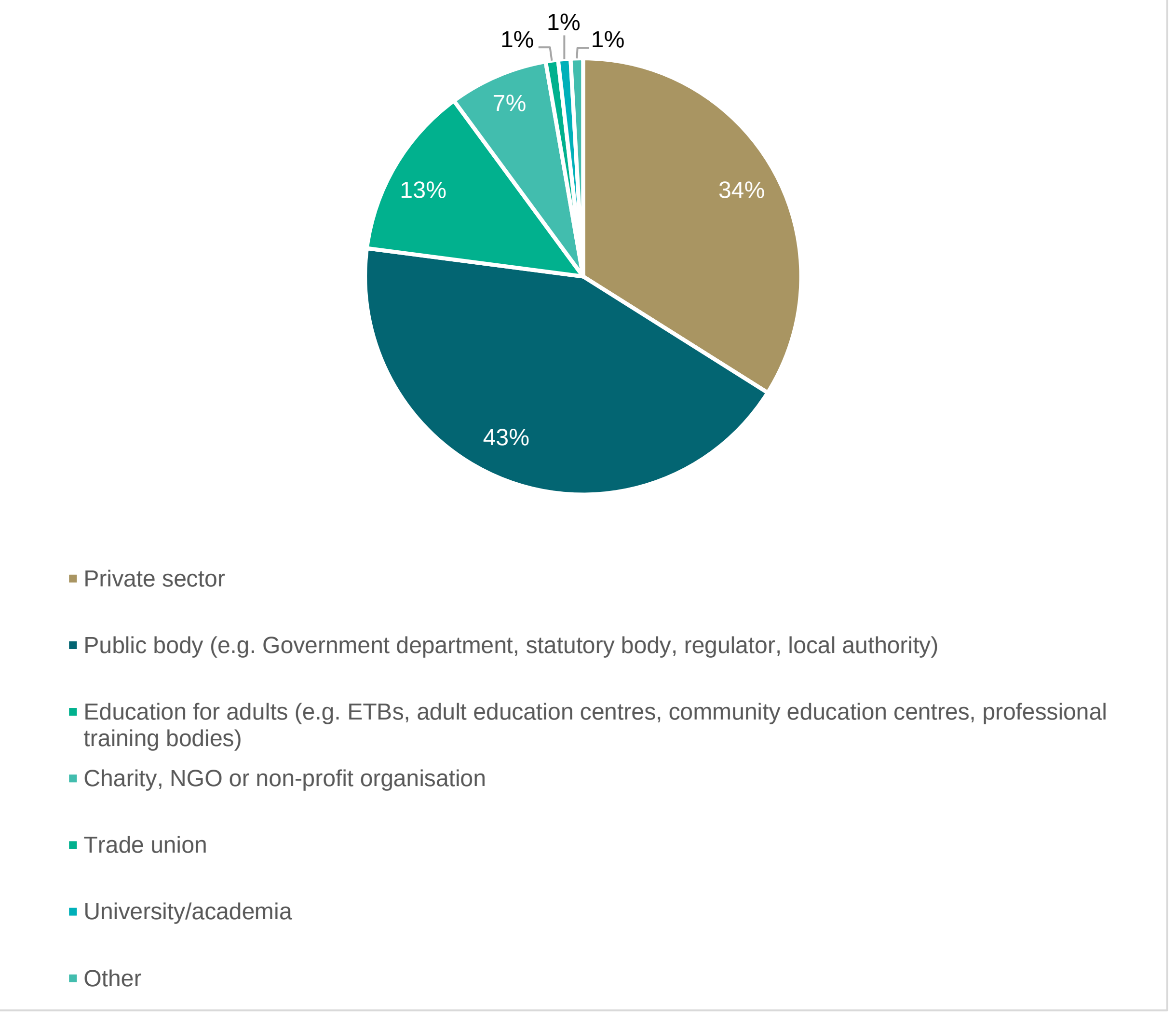
Purely research projects were not included as financial education programmes, but many research initiatives in relation to financial literacy or wellbeing that were submitted by stakeholders are covered in either Section 4.3 or Section 5.4.

There was a very positive response from stakeholders to the stocktaking survey (55 responses and 110 initiatives). While every effort has been made (through responses to the survey itself and subsequent follow-up engagement with many stakeholders) to include all financial education initiatives currently in place, there may still be some initiatives that we have not been made aware of. However, despite this word of caution, this report represents the most comprehensive and up-to-date overview of financial education provision in Ireland.

[42] OECD (2022), Financial Literacy in Poland: Relevance, evidence and provision, see: https://www.oecd.org/financial/education/Financial-Literacy-in-Poland-Relevance-evidence-and-provision.htm

5.1 Who is involved in the provision of financial education in Ireland?

A large number of stakeholders are involved in financial education delivery in Ireland. Of the 56 responses to the stakeholder survey, 44 organisations indicated that they deliver financial education programmes to a variety of target groups. These range from public bodies, adult education organisations, the financial services industry, charities and NGOs. Overall in Ireland the majority of financial education programmes are delivered by public bodies (42%) and the private sector (33%). Education organisations for adults make up 13% and charities, NGOs or non-profit organisations 8%.



5.1.1 Public bodies

Public bodies and publically-funded bodies are the largest providers of financial education in Ireland. Some public bodies directly provide financial education programmes. Eight different public bodies (as distinct from adult education organisations such as Education and Training boards, which are publically funded) responded to the stakeholder survey with details of their financial education programmes.

While there are also other public bodies who do not specifically run financial education programmes, they are involved in supporting the provision of financial education. For example, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science through the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy, implemented by SOLAS.

Public bodies usually carry out financial education due to a specific legal mandate (e.g. the CCPC's direct statutory remit in financial education and capability and the statutory responsibility of MABS to provide advice in relation to money management as part of and in addition to their work in providing advice to individuals for the purpose of the management, avoidance, reduction and discharge of personal debt) or it is related to their mandate (e.g. the Central Bank's consumer protection role). Others support the provision of financial education as part of their remit, but do not directly provide financial education programmes (e.g. the Department of Education supporting the teaching of financial literacy through the school curriculum, or the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science through the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy, implemented by SOLAS).

Public bodies involved in the provision of financial education in Ireland

- Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)
- Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) (funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board under the Department of Social Protection)
- National Traveller MABS (funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board under the Department of Social Protection)
- Central Bank of Ireland
- The Revenue Commissioners (Revenue)
- Public libraries (operated by local authorities and under the Department of Rural and Community Development)
- Skillnet Ireland

Public bodies supporting the provision of financial education in Ireland

- Department of Education
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- SOLAS (agency under the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science)
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
- Department of Social Protection
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- Local Government Management Agency (the national advisor on public libraries, and responsible for the implementation of the National Public Libraries Strategy)

The CCPC, as it has a statutory role in financial education, carried out the most financial education initiatives of any respondent to the survey. Its activities in financial education are funded by a levy on the financial services industry. Its activities in this area include:

- The CCPC's website which has a Money Hub covering a broad range of personal finance information, including managing your money, banking, budgeting, mortgages, saving, borrowing, insurance, pensions, credit cards, investing and dealing with debt. The website also includes Money Tools which help consumers compare different financial products.
- Regular large-scale public awareness campaigns which are usually focused on promoting switching of financial products and awareness of the CCPC's role.
- A dedicated consumer helpline which gives consumers information about their rights and personal finance products and services.
- Financial education programmes for adults and children and young people.
- Financial education through broadcasting and PR Media Campaigns.

MABS also have a strong role in financial education provision through eight regional companies, National Traveller MABS and MABS Support CLG. MABS primarily works with people experiencing over-indebtedness, working with clients who may have difficulties with a wide range of personal debts and help clients by reviewing their budgets, negotiating with their creditors and looking at opportunities to maximise income. It also has a role in supporting clients with mortgage arrears and those facing repossession. MABS money advisers also act as approved intermediaries under personal insolvency legislation for clients availing of a Debt Relief Notice. In addition to this, MABS has a remit in money management education by advising clients about budgeting and debt management. It has a strong role in working with local community groups and schools and delivering talks in relation to money management, good saving and spending habits, sources of credit and the avoidance of over-indebtedness. National Traveller MABS works specifically with Travellers with the aim of reducing poverty, discrimination and the financial exclusion. As part of this, it promotes and develops culturally appropriate financial education programmes for Travellers.

In addition to its role in consumer protection outlined earlier in this report and in Section 5.1.1.1 below, the Central Bank also carries out financial education and awareness initiatives. This includes the Consumer Hub on its website which has dedicated consumer information designed to support awareness and understanding of financial services, including explainers and warnings on developments in financial services markets. It also carries out digital public awareness campaigns on various topics, such as scams and short-term credit. In relation to children and young people, it has online educational resources, carries out outreach to 3rd level institutions and takes part in awards for second level students, such as the Generation Euro Award and the Young Economist of the Year.

Revenue, in their role in administration and collection of taxes and duties and the implementation of customs controls, does not have a specific mandate for financial education. However, it carries out tax education for a number of different groups, including a Transition Year programme on the basics of taxation for schools, outreach events which aim to educate current taxpayers on their rights and obligations around tax and how to self-manage their own tax affairs and comprehensive consumer information on the Revenue website.

Public libraries carry out financial education throughout the country through its network of local libraries and its role in wider literacy development in the community. These often take the form of talks or information sessions on general financial wellbeing or specific financial topics. This often involves partnering with other organisations such as the local MABS, Credit Union or ETB. They also often provide digital literacy sessions, which include digital financial literacy and fraud and digital safety.

Skillnet Ireland is the national agency responsible for spearheading workforce development for the enterprise sector on behalf of the Government of Ireland. This includes the design and delivery of financial education for SMEs through its MentorsWork programme, in partnership with the Small Firms Association, and supporting and funding financial education through its various networks nationwide.

5.1.1.1 Related government and public strategies and initiatives

In addition to the provision and support of financial education by public bodies, there are also a number of different strategies, legislative requirements and initiatives from other government departments and public bodies that relate to financial literacy and would interact with a national financial literacy strategy.

Wider literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

The *Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy* is an important strategy for the national financial literacy strategy to coordinate and link in with. The ALL Strategy is a 10-year adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy strategy led by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science with the implementation being rolled out by a dedicated programme office in SOLAS[43]. This whole-of-society strategy aims to equip all adults with the literacy skills they need to engage in society and realise their potential.

The ALL strategy sets out long-term commitments and actions to achieve the scale of improvement in skills and literacy levels required, including at least 80% of adults with basic digital skills, in alignment with EU targets. It covers different types of literacy and mentions financial literacy as a key adult literacy domain. The ALL Strategy recognises that financial literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills are needed in other parts of our lives such as family, work, health and wellbeing and social and community life. ALL is delivered through partnership structures and coordinating supports, such as regional literacy co-ordinators, and the establishment of the ALL Programme Office and an Innovation and Collaboration Fund.

Related to this, the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is currently developing a new *Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy* for early learning and care to post-primary level. The overall aim of the new strategy is that every child and young person in Ireland will have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills that are crucial to each person's ability to achieve their full potential, to live satisfying and rewarding lives and to participate fully in society. It is an aim of this strategy to align with strategies relevant to

[43] See full details of the strategy here:
https://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/f/120607/x/133e8d1481/15607_all_strategy_web.pdf

literacy, numeracy and digital literacy and to assist schools and early year's settings in understanding how to make appropriate linkages across different, but dependent, policy areas[44].

The *National Public Libraries Strategy 2023 – 2027* is a five-year strategy designed to support and strengthen Ireland's public library network developed jointly between the Department of Rural and Community Development, as policy lead, the Libraries Development Unit within the Local Government Management Agency, and the County and City Management Association on behalf of local authorities. One of the key elements of the plan is rollout of the national "Skills for Life" umbrella programme with a focus on digital skills, financial literacy, sustainable lifestyles and environmental awareness[45].

Wellbeing

First 5 is a whole-of-Government strategy to improve the lives of babies, young children and their families[46]. It is a ten-year plan (2019-2028) to help make sure all children have positive early experiences and get a great start in life. The First 5 Strategy uses evidence to identify goals, objectives and the specific actions required from across Government to support children (and their families) in the early years of life. First 5 commits to major initiatives on family leave, children's health services, parenting supports, child-friendly communities and Early Learning and Care services among a broad range of actions. The Strategy will significantly enhance early childhood and make a huge contribution to the lives of young children, society and the economy over the short, medium and long term.

Social inclusion

The *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025* is a Government strategy led by the Department of Social Protection with the aim of reducing the number of people in consistent poverty in Ireland and increasing social inclusion for those who are most disadvantaged. One of the seven goals of the strategy is "supporting workers and families – ensuring work pays". This includes an action on financial literacy to "review options for improving the financial management competence and literacy/access to financial management for people on low incomes and report to Government with a

[44] A literature review for the strategy was prepared by Dublin City University for the Department of Education in 2023, see: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3f341-towards-a-new-literacy-numeracy-and-digital-literacy/
[45] Department of Rural and Community Development, the City and County Management Association and the Local Government Management Agency (2023), The Library is the Place: Information, Recreation, Inspiration: National Public Library Strategy 2023-2027, see: https://www.lgma.ie/en/news/the-library-is-the-place.pdf
[46] For more information, see: https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/5d81e-about-first5/?referrer=https://first5.gov.ie/

proposed approach"[47]. The Department of Finance is reporting into the Roadmap in relation to progress on the development of the national financial literacy strategy.

Pensions

In relation to pensions, the introduction of an *Automatic Enrolment Retirement Savings System* is a Programme for Government commitment, and a key priority for the Department of Social Protection[48]. Ireland's supplementary pensions coverage rate has remained stubbornly low over the last 20 years, hovering at around 50% of the total working age population. This rate reduces to less than 35% when the private sector is considered in isolation. The aim of AE is to improve the pension coverage rate and strengthen income adequacy in retirement. The 750,000 or so people who are eligible for AE are employees who are aged between 23 and 60, who earn more than €20,000 and who do not have employment based pension savings arrangements. Any employee who is younger or older than the age thresholds or who earns below the earnings threshold and who is not participating in an employment based pension savings arrangement will be able to opt-in. Those who are auto-enrolled will have the choice to opt-out or suspend their contributions after six-months mandatory participation, but will be automatically re-enrolled after two years, after which they may opt-out or suspend again after a further six-months mandatory participation. Employers will match their employee's contribution, and the State will also pay a top-up. To help everyone adjust and get used to this extra cost, contributions will be phased in over a decade, starting at 1.5% for the employee and employer, and rising by 1.5% every three years until 6% is reached in year 10. When fully rolled out the overall contribution rate will be 14%. Contributions will then be invested and accumulated savings will become available for drawdown at State pension age. Implementation of the AE system has been gathering pace, with the first enrolments expected to begin in the latter half of 2024.

Consumer protection

As mentioned in Section 4.2.3, the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code is currently being reviewed. The Central Bank published a Discussion Paper on the Code Review in late 2022, seeking feedback from stakeholders across a number of consumer protection themes. The purpose of the Discussion Paper was to initiate a broad conversation with the Central Bank's stakeholders on important consumer protection issues facing consumers today. That paper included financial literacy as one of the eight specific discussion themes which the Central Bank was seeking views on, recognising that "financial literacy and education are very relevant to the Central Bank's consumer protection role"[49]. In the Central Bank's engagement update on the Discussion Paper, it

[47] Department of Social Protection (2023), Mid-term Review of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025, see: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ca8bf-roadmap-for-social-inclusion-2020-2025/
[48] For more information, see: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/576ac-automatic-enrolment-process-for-pensions/
[49] Central Bank of Ireland (2022), Consumer Protection Code Review: Discussion Paper, see: https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/regulation/consumer-protection/other-codes-of-conduct/consumer-protection-code-review/consumer-protection-code-review-discussion-paper.pdf

noted that responses under this theme demonstrate strong support for a national strategy and a multiagency approach to dealing with financial literacy. It was also recognised in a number of responses to the Discussion Paper that consumers can be empowered to better protect their own interests when dealing with financial matters by having clear and accessible information available to them. A Consultation Paper on the Code Review was published on 7 March. In the context of the Central Bank's engagement with other important consumer protection initiatives outside the scope of the Consumer Protection Code including the Financial Literacy Strategy, the consultation paper mentions the importance of financial literacy in empowering consumers to make sound financial decisions. The Central Bank intends to publish a revised Code in the form of Central Bank Regulations by end-2024 with a 12-month implementation period to end-2025.

Related Department of Finance strategies and initiatives

In addition to these, the Department of Finance is working on a number of initiatives that will interact with the national financial literacy strategy. The *National Payments Strategy* is currently being developed which will set out a roadmap for the future evolution of the entire payments system, taking account of developments in digital payments, cash usage and how future changes should be made to the legislative criteria relating to Access to Cash[50]. The strategy will look at inclusion within a rapidly changing payment system for vulnerable groups, including older people, lower income groups, migrants, people with intellectual disabilities, those with limited financial literacy or the unbanked. The strategy will be developed by the end of 2024 following stakeholder consultation.

The Department is also currently carrying out a review of the funds sector *Funds Sector 2030: A Framework for Open, Resilient & Developing Markets*. The review will seek to ensure that the funds sector in Ireland is resilient and that the regulatory and supervisory frameworks are future-proofed, supportive of macro-prudential stability, investor protection and consistent with international best-practice standards. A progress update on the review, which set out the main themes identified in the responses to the public consultation, was published in December 2023. Financial literacy was highlighted as an issue that many respondents referred to in their submissions, with the majority agreeing that financial literacy and education would be fundamental to growing Ireland's retail investor base, both from an investor protection perspective as well as raising awareness of savings and investment options[51].

---

[50] The Terms of Reference for the National Payments Strategy are available here: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4af00-national-payments-strategy-2024-terms-of-reference/

[51] The full progress update for the Funds Sector 2030: A Framework for Open, Resilient & Developing Markets is available here: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/22430-funds-sector-2030-a-framework-for-open-resilient-developing-markets-progress-update-responses-to-the-public-consultation/

In order to coordinate the existing 'whole of Government' approach to addressing the ongoing problem of long term mortgage arrears, and to see if any further or enhanced policy or operational measures should be considered, an inter-departmental Mortgage Arrears Group was set up in 2023. The Mortgage Arrears Group is chaired by the Department of Finance and comprises representation from the Department of Justice, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Social Protection together with input from the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), the Central Bank and the Insolvency Service of Ireland. A key objective for the Group will be to look at further fostering communication and engagement with consumers on mortgage arrears.

The Department of Finance is actively involved in EU initiatives which aim to address retail investor protection as well as encouraging financial literacy of retail investors. One of the European Commission's three key objectives of the *2020 Capital Markets Union (CMU) action plan* was to make the EU an even safer place for citizens to invest in the long term[52]. In 2022 and 2023 the Commission published two joint *EU/OECD-INFE financial competence frameworks for adults and children/youth*, which are available for voluntary uptake in the development of financial literacy policies, educational tools and tools to assess and monitor financial literacy levels by national public authorities and private bodies[53]. Further to this in May 2023, the Commission adopted the *Retail Investment Strategy* (RIS)[54]. The RIS aims to empower retail investors to make investment decisions that are aligned with their needs and preferences, while ensuring they are treated fairly and duly protected and promoting financial literacy. RIS is currently under negotiation with Member States at European Council.

Update to Ireland for Finance is the whole-of-government strategy for the further development of the international financial services sector in Ireland. It is implemented through annual Action Plans which are overseen by the Minister of State with responsibility for Financial Services, Credit Unions and Insurance at the Department of Finance[55]. One of the priority themes of the strategy is 'Fintech & Digital Finance'. Under this theme, recent *Ireland for Finance* Action Plans included actions on financial literacy in order to support the public to adapt to the growth of fintech in retail activity. This involved the development of educational consumer resources by the CCPC in cooperation with the Department of Finance and the Central Bank. Under the theme 'Diversity and Talent', *Ireland for Finance* Action Plan 2024 will include a reference to

[52] For more information, see: https://finance.ec.europa.eu/capital-markets-union-and-financial-markets/capital-markets-union/capital-markets-union-2020-action-plan_en
[53] For more information on the frameworks, both are accessible here: https://www.oecd.org/financial/education/financial-competence-framework-youth-european-union.htm
[54] For more information, see: https://finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/retail-investment-strategy_en
[55] See latest Action Plan here: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/95989-update-to-ireland-for-finance-strategy-action-plan-2023/

the development of the national financial literacy strategy as this will contribute to enabling a longer term pipeline of talent for the international financial services sector.

Digital skills and inclusion

In terms of digital skills, which are important for supporting digital financial literacy, the Government's national digital strategy, *Harnessing Digital: The Digital Ireland Framework*, includes a focus on Skills as one of its four key dimensions (in addition to Digitalisation of Enterprise, Infrastructure, and Digital Public Services). *Harnessing Digital* is a high-level framework to support Ireland's ambition to remain a digital leader, and it sets out a pathway to drive and enable the digital transition across the economy and society. It includes targets and workstreams to increase digital skills and digital literacy at all levels, from the early years and the schools system; to digital skills for the labour market, including higher-level skills; as well as digital and media literacy for society in general[56]. In 2023, the Government also launched Ireland's *Digital Inclusion Roadmap*. The goal of this Roadmap is to make Ireland one of the most digitally inclusive Member States in the EU and give all citizens the opportunity to use digital services, including digital public services, in a meaningful way[57]. In addition to this, in 2022 the Department of Education published a *Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027*. This aims to support the school system to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills they need to successfully navigate an ever evolving digital world[58].

5.1.2 Private sector

The private sector is the second largest provider of financial education in Ireland. 15 different private sector bodies responded to the stakeholder survey with 37 different financial education programmes. These included industry associations and representative bodies, individual financial providers and private companies carrying out financial education as a business activity. These are broken down below.

Industry representative bodies or member associations

- Banking and Payments Federation of Ireland (BPFI)
- Brokers Ireland
- Chartered Accountants Ireland
- Credit Union Development Association
- Insurance Ireland
- Irish Banking Culture Board
- Irish Funds
- Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU)

[56] Department of the Taoiseach (2022), Harnessing Digital: The Digital Ireland Framework, see: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/adf42-harnessing-digital-the-digital-ireland-framework/#the-plan
[57] Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform (2023), Digital for Good: Ireland's Digital Inclusion Roadmap, see: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b90af-digital-for-good-irelands-digital-inclusion-roadmap/
[58] Department of Education (2022), Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027, see: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/69fb88-digital-strategy-for-schools/

- Pensions Awareness Ireland

Financial providers and investment firms

- Allied Irish Bank (AIB)
- An Post
- Bank of Ireland
- PTSB
- GillenMarkets

Companies providing financial education as a business activity

- MoneyWhizz
- AllSkills Tech

Industry representative bodies and member associations are very active in financial education in Ireland. They often provide specific information or campaigns on topics that their members work on, for example Insurance Ireland's Understanding Insurance website and campaigns on shopping around for insurance and being insurance savvy and Pension Awareness Ireland's Pensions Awareness Week. Many are also involved in schools programmes or programmes for young people, such as the BPFI's Business Studies Teachers Association of Ireland (BSTAI) Achievement Awards, Economist Webinar and European Money Quiz and Irish Funds and Brokers Ireland's Transition Year programmes.

In terms of Credit Union financial education activities, the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) and the Credit Union Development Association (CUDA) responded to the survey, however no responses were received from individual Credit Unions detailing their work. From ILCU's response we can see there are coordinated financial education programmes for children across Credit Unions and CUDA gave information on financial education carried out by members for their customers as part of their regular business activities.

Individual financial providers are also very active in financial education in Ireland. In addition to aiming to make customer information accessible and supporting their customers in branches and online, all the main retail banks have financial education programmes and activities. Bank of Ireland have a financial wellbeing progamme, which as well as digital tools and content on its website, includes financial wellbeing coaches supporting consumers through educational seminars online and in person and financial literacy programmes for children and young people from primary school to third level education, Talking Cents with Ollie and Money Smarts. AIB also has a schools programme, Future Sparks, aimed at secondary school students and partner with Junior Achievement Ireland on a primary school programme, It's My Business. In addition to this, it provides financial planning tools on its website and easy-to-read banking information and Easy Banking Workshops. PTSB also have online tools and information for their customers, including mortgage and savings calculators and support on moving banks and financial fraud and crime. This education is also delivered through staff in branch.

In addition to the main retails banks, An Post are also active in financial education and has developed two tools to help consumers build financial confidence. For children there is An Post Money Mate, which is a junior account to help children learn good financial behaviours, while parents are in control of tranactions. There is also a free budgeting tool for Irish adults, An Post Money Manager, which allows consumers to manage their money across all of their current accounts and credit cards. GillenMarkets, as an investment firm, provide investor education through an investment training framework, which includes one-day investment training courses and online training materials.

There are also companies that provide financial education as a business activity. MoneyWhizz develops financial education content for schools and financial wellbeing in the workplace. For children and young people, MoneyWhizz works with Bank of Ireland on its schools programmes and have developed a financial wellbeing framework for these. It also has an online education platform for secondary school students and teachers and delivers in-class financial education seminars in schools across Ireland. Its workplace financial wellbeing programme for adults is delivered through partnership with employers. The MoneyWhizz website also has some free information for the public on financial education topics. At the time of the response to the survey, AllSkills Tech were developing a prototype website/information portal, Financial Life Map, for financial education for adults.

Given the private sector is such a large provider of financial education in Ireland, their involvement is essential in ensuring financial education has a wide reach in the population. They also contribute financial resources, specialist and up-to-date knowledge on financial issues and efficient communication. Through their interaction with the consumers, they can also leverage teachable moments for more effective delivery of financial education.

However, according to the OECD, their involvement in financial education initiatives should be carefully handled to avoid any potential conflict of interests or delivering financial education as a business activity. The OECD issued guidelines on the involvement of private and not-for-profit stakeholders in financial education[59].

The stakeholder survey asked whether respondents followed or applied any rules or codes of conduct in carrying out activities in the field of financial education. Of the private sector respondents, nine indicated they do apply some rules or codes of conduct for carrying out activities in the field of financial education, five did not and one did not answer.

Some industry representative bodies responded that they have certain principles that

[59] OECD (2014), Guidelines for private and not-for-profit stakeholders in financial education, see: https://www.oecd.org/daf/fin/financial-education/guidelines-private-not-for-profit-financial-education.pdf

guide their work in general, for example ILCU indicated the Credit Union Movement has adopted a common set of operating principles based on their ethos and philosophy.

Financial providers indicated they followed general principles and codes of conduct as regulated entities when dealing with customers, such as the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code and Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears. Others used specific guidance, for example Bank of Ireland, as a signatory to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking, used guidance on Financial Health and Inclusion to inform their work in supporting the financial health of their customers.

Some private sector bodies also mentioned particular frameworks for designing and implementing financial education, such as the Joint EU/OECD-INFE Financial Competence Frameworks or frameworks for financial literacy or financial wellbeing designed by the body themselves using internal expertise. Those that provided professional training indicated they comply with national legislative requirements and international standards in carrying out training and examinations.

5.1.3 Education for adults

Financial education carried out by adult education organisations were mainly carried out by Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The 16 ETBs across Ireland deliver Further Education and Training to 148,000 further education and training learners each year across over 500 further education and training providers, colleges and training centres. ETBs play a central role in the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships in partnership with employers. They also support, monitor, and deliver youth services. There were responses from seven ETBs to the stakeholder survey. ETB programmes featuring financial literacy cover:

- Everyday maths and numeracy
- Cookery (incorporating budgeting information)
- Communicating with confidence
- Managing the cost of living
- Online financial security
- Managing money in day-to-day life and budgeting

Individual courses related to financial literacy in ETBs generally have less than 100 learners per annum. Many of the programmes provided by ETBs are developed by tutors and are QQI[60] certified. Many ETBs also use material from MABS in their courses on financial literacy. However, there was feedback from ETBs that sometimes learners prefer shorter uncertified courses which may not be available to them.

In addition to the ETBs, the survey also captured adult education provided by two other organisations - a professional education body and a training company - The Life Insurance Association (LIA) and Complinet Ltd. The LIA is a professional education and

[60] Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is a statutory body responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education in Ireland. It validates programmes, makes awards and is responsible for the promotion, maintenance and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

membership organisation for those working in the insurance industry, but has expanded its role to educating those who have yet to enter the industry, so that they are compliant with industry requirements prior to seeking employment. Complinet Ltd is a compliance risk management and training company with a financial literacy learning dedicated platform.

5.1.4 Charities, NGOs and non-profit organisations

There are a number of charities, NGOs and non-profit organisations that carry out financial education in Ireland.

Responses to the survey were received by:

- Age Action
- Childminding Ireland
- Irish Mortgage Holders Organisation
- Junior Achievement Ireland
- National Adult Literacy Agency
- Microfinance Ireland
- Safeguarding Ireland

Of those that responded to the stakeholder survey, most are focused on advocating for and/or meeting the needs of particular groups, e.g. SMEs, mortgage holders and older people. Financial literacy is often connected to wider overall goals for these groups. For example, Age Action is a leading advocacy organisation on ageing and older people in Ireland. As well as advocacy work related to age-friendly, inclusive banking and digital exclusion, it also carries out learner-led sessions in digital skills through volunteers. Another example is Safeguarding Ireland, which promotes safeguarding of vulnerable adults to protect them from all forms of abuse by persons, organisations and institutions and to develop a national plan for promoting their welfare. While financial education is not a core objective of the organisation, it works to raise public understanding about issues such as financial abuse.

In relation to SMEs, Microfinance Ireland provides loans to small businesses that cannot access loans from the conventional banking market. As part of this, it also provides mentoring to businesses in relation to financial and non-financial matters.

Some respondents are focused on financial literacy or wider literacy as a main aspect of their work. National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), is an independent charity committed to making sure people with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs can fully take part in society and have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. As part of this aim, NALA carries out a specific programme for learners on managing personal finances. Junior Achievement Ireland, is a non-profit organisation focused on young people and delivering hands-on, experiential learning in entrepreneurship, employability, financial literacy and the value of STEM. Junior Achievement Ireland partner with different organisations, such as the CCPC and private sector companies, to deliver a number of different JAI-developed financial literacy programmes in schools.

5.1.5 Other providers of financial education

The other providers of financial education were trade unions (1%), universities/academia (1%) and other (1%), including a professional body and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland which is active in SME funding.

The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland SBCI was established in September 2014 following Ireland's exit from the EU/IMF programme, to ensure that businesses could access funding when the private sector could not or would not provide funding. It was established to offer low-cost credit to Irish SMEs, while driving competition and innovation in the Irish finance market. The SBCI provides training for professional in financial services on current SBCI Schemes and Guarantee structures.

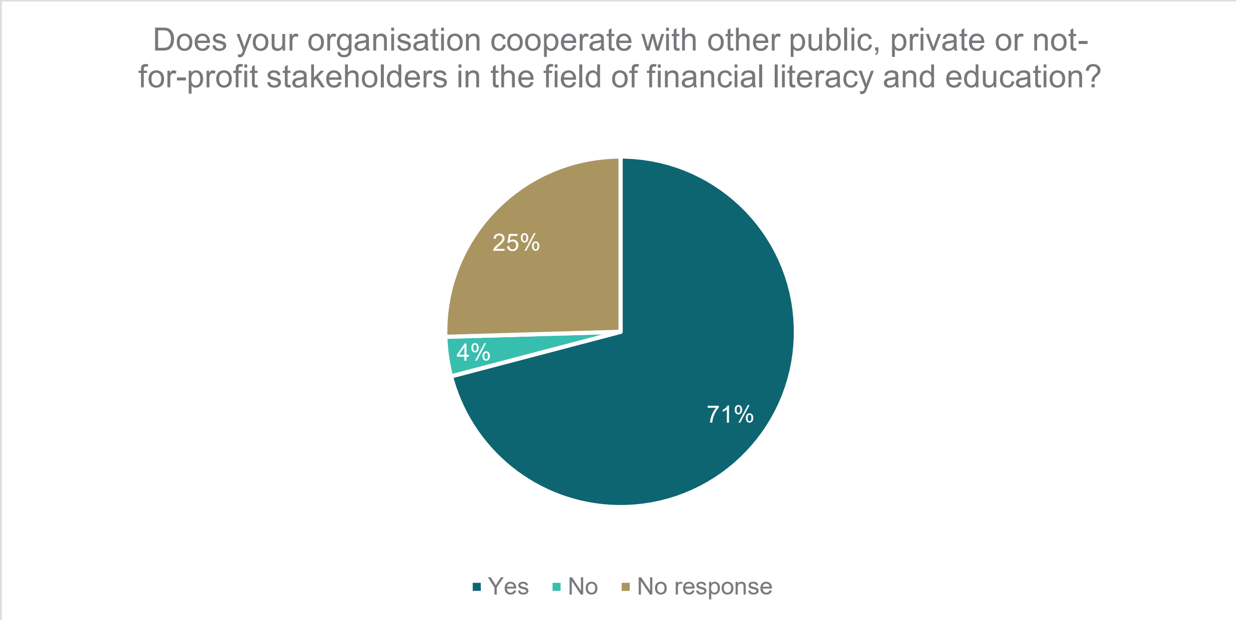
The Financial Services Union (FSU) is the leading Trade Union representing staff in the Financial Services, Fintech and Tech sectors. The FSU provides support and assistance on financial education to its members in relation to training and education through a dedicated training unit and through collaboration with other unions through a dedicated online training and educational service.

The Atlantic Technological University is involved in financial literacy for students through a first year module on personal finance in the Department of Business.

The Society of Actuaries in Ireland is the professional body representing the actuarial profession. It runs Leaving Certificate Higher Level Maths Tutorials, particularly for students who cannot afford to pay for private tutorials.

5.2 Cooperation between stakeholders

Based on the survey responses, it is clear there is strong ongoing cooperation among many stakeholders in providing financial education in Ireland. Of the 56 respondents, 71% indicated that they cooperated with other public, private or not-for-profit stakeholders in the field of financial literacy and education.



This cooperation could be formal or informal. 40% of those cooperating with other stakeholders had formal agreements or contracts in place for at least some of their partnerships. However, the majority did not have any type of formal agreement in place (58%).

Much of the existing cooperation occurs through the development of good working relationships with other organisations and is not formalised. For example, MABS work with a wide variety of different organisations and while some of these relationships are formalised, much is through requests at local and regional level from community groups, schools, colleges, local government offices and industries for MABS to give money management presentations.

CASE STUDY

Cooperation between stakeholders

Financial Resilience Training for victims of domestic violence (Irish Banking Culture Board with TASC (Think-tank for Action on Social Change) and Safe Ireland with assistance from MABS)

This project on financial resilience training for victims of domestic violence is an example of cooperation between the private sector, not-for-profit and public sector stakeholders in Ireland.

The Irish Banking Culture Board (IBCB) worked in partnership with TASC (Think-tank for Action on Social Change) and Safe Ireland, a charity supporting women and children living with or impacted by Domestic, Gender and Sexual Based Violence, to provide financial resilience training to victims of domestic violence. This was delivered through funding, subject matter expertise and support, in conjunction with member banks of the IBCB. The content was developed by TASC, with input from MABS, Safe Ireland, IBCB

CASE STUDY

and its member banks, covering topics such as opening a bank account, financial abuse/ fraud, and financial planning.

The programme aimed to benefit a significant number of women using domestic violence support services throughout the country. Safe Ireland, comprising 39 such support services with approximately 500 staff members, serves over 15,000 women annually. By providing financial resilience training to support staff nationwide, the programme enhances organisational knowledge in financial resilience and, consequently, has the potential to positively influence a substantial number of women and their families. The objective of the initiative was to deliver a 'train the trainer' programme to keyworkers, working with Safe Ireland, who support victims of domestic violence, with the intention of providing a lasting, nationwide impact. The training programme ran across four cycles from October 2022 to March 2023. 36 women working with Safe Ireland member organisations across Ireland completed the training online.

The content of the training for keyworkers covers the impacts of financial abuse on victims of domestic violence and covers key topics which impact victims financially, as well as covering topics to aid with financial recovery and literacy.

Over 75% of participants saw an increase in key skills, competencies and confidence related to financial resilience, including:

- Knowledge of what financial services in Ireland offer support to people who have experienced domestic abuse/financial coercion
- Confidence in ability to direct clients on where to get the information needed to open an individual bank account
- Confidence in ability to help clients progress towards their financial goals
- Confidence in ability to direct survivors to debt advice

An impact report was produced by TASC and the IBCB on the project with an evaluation of the initiative and recommendations for improvement . There is also a website where the training materials can be accessed.

5.3 Financial education by target group

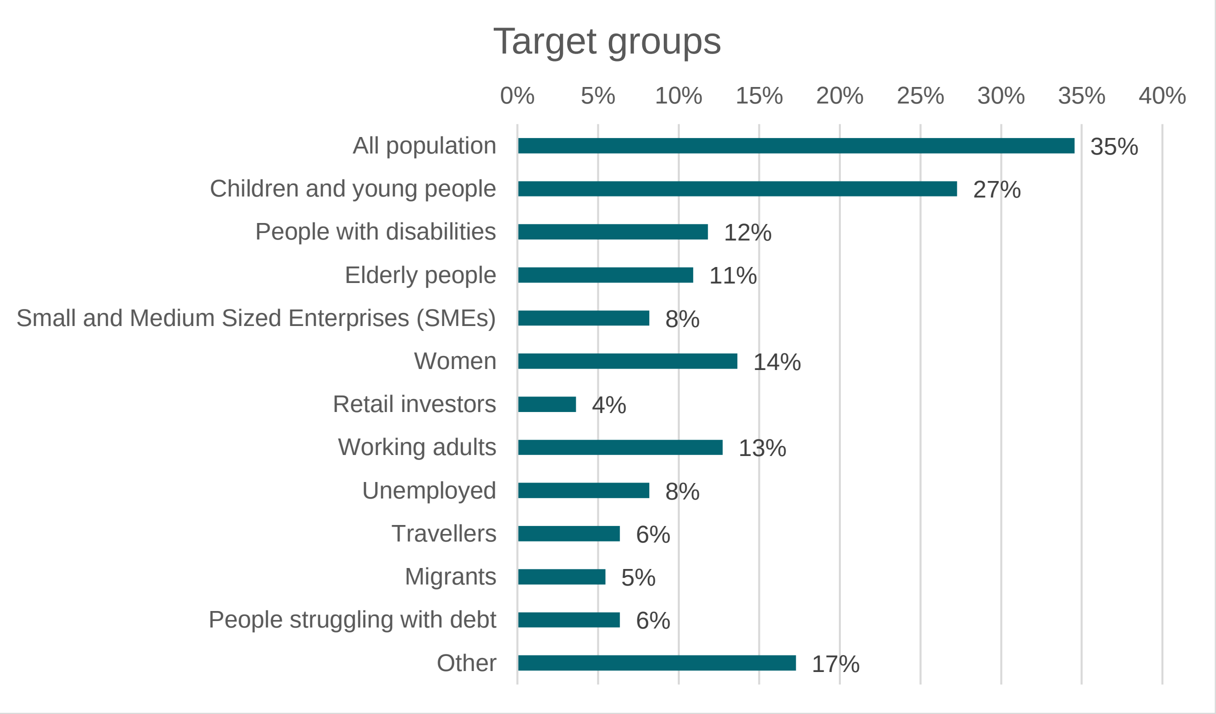
Of the initiatives identified in the stocktaking survey, 35% targeted the whole population. The second largest target group was children and young people at 27%. "Other" was the next largest group at 17%. This included:

- Victims of domestic violence
- Farmers
- Adults with literacy needs
- People starting their first job

[61] TASC (2023), An Evaluation of a Bespoke Financial Resilience Training programme for Domestic Violence Support Services, see: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6492bd8ae5e6134b83eb96e9/t/6501901ca4daf8383e846370/1694601244820/FRT+Evaluation+FINAL.pdf

- Parents and guardians
- Carers
- Athletes

Women were targeted by 14% of the initiatives. Working adults was the next largest group at 13%, followed by people with disabilities (12%) and elderly people (11%), followed by SMEs (8%), Unemployed people (8%), people struggling with debt (6%), Travellers (6%) and migrants (5%). All target groups can be seen in the chart below:



5.3.1 Financial education initiatives for the entire population

Financial education initiatives for the entire population are the most common type of initiative in Ireland. Although some also have other specific target groups as well as the general population. These were mostly delivered by public bodies (45%) and the private sector (39%). 11% were delivered by education organisations for adults. The rest were delivered by trade unions and universities.

Those carried out by public bodies were generally involved with the provision of information, such as the CCPC's website, which has its Money Hub and Money Tools, the CCPC's consumer helpline and the Central Bank website's Consumer Hub.

However, public bodies also delivered communication and awareness campaigns and instruction and training programmes, such as:

- The CCPC's Money Skills for Life programme, which provides adults (at the workplace and other settings) with quality and independent financial information and training on managing their personal finances more effectively.

- The CCPC's public awareness campaigns on various personal finance topics, such as the 'Moving Bank' campaign to encourage consumers with KBC and Ulster Bank to switch accounts given the imminent departure of these banks from the Irish market, 'Crypto' campaign to provide consumers with clear information about essential facts (such as risks) regarding Crypto and make them more aware of the precautions they must take before investing in these products and 'Money Clinic' campaign to provide consumers with information on personal finance topics using short videos. All these campaigns contained a digital aspect and digital content for consumers.
- The Central Bank's campaign on "How can I protect myself from financial scams?", sought to inform the public on how to recognise a potential scam, and provide them with information about how to protect themselves using the Central Bank's "SAFE" test.
- Libraries across Ireland also delivered instruction and training initiatives for the general population on specific topics such as scams and digital safety, energy saving tips, the Fair Deal Scheme, entitlements for carers and end of life and funeral planning.

In terms of private sector initiatives for the entire population, most of these took the form of provision of information, sometimes combined with campaigns or instructions and training. The majority are provided digitally (87%), however, this was often combined with face-to-face delivery.

Some of these initiatives for the entire population are provided by financial providers themselves, for example:

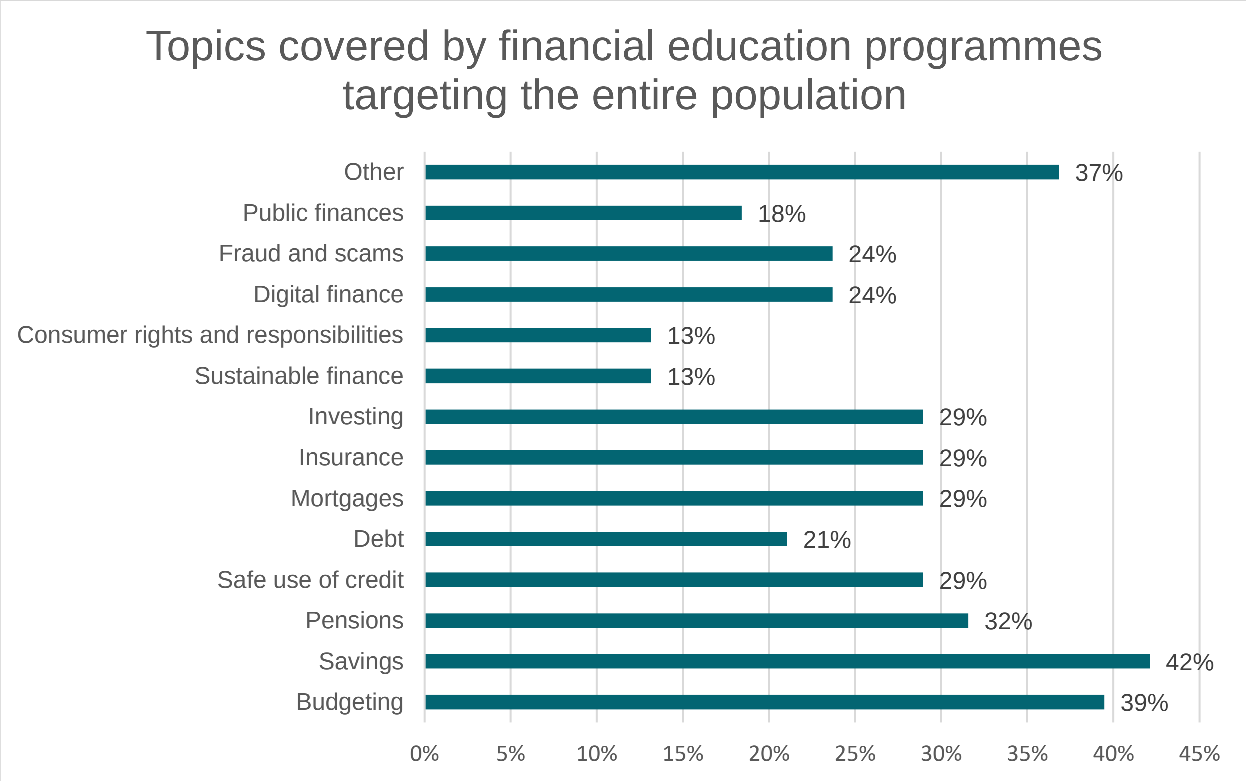
- Bank of Ireland's Financial Wellbeing Seminars, which cover a number of different topics and aim to equip and empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to make the most of their personal finances so they can be in control of their everyday spending, have a plan for the future, and the resilience to withstand the financial impact of an unexpected expense or a major life event. The programme is module based and can be tailored to suit different audiences. These seminars are delivered in person or virtually by a dedicated team of financial wellbeing coaches.
- AIB's 'Banking How to' guide is aimed at making banking easier for any adult that would benefit from information being provided in a simple user-friendly format. It continues to be a helpful tool to support financial inclusion for everyone, regardless of where they choose to bank, as it provides general banking information. The guide was originally developed at the request of the HSE for inclusion in a training course for adults with a learning difficulty. It is available for all consumers on the AIB website and a paper guide is also available.
- PTSB has "Enhanced Customer Support" for all customers. The goal of this is to enable and empower all customers to manage their financial independence with appropriate supports, recognising that customers may need extra supports at various times in their lives. This is rolled out through a dedicated phoneline for customers who need enhanced support, a webpage with guides and in branch through staff. As part of this initiative PTSB also utilises Jam Card - engagement

with NOW, a group a social enterprise that supports people with learning difficulties and autism.
- An Post's 'Money Manager' is a free budgeting tool that aims to empower people to manage their money across all of their current accounts and credit cards launched earlier this year. The digital app helps individuals categorise and analyse their spending, plan expenses, and set budgets to stay in control of their finances. This app is free and available to everyone in Ireland, whoever they bank with.
- GillenMarkets has an investment training framework, which includes one-day investment training courses and online training materials. This is targeted at the entire population, as well as retail investors.

Other initiatives are delivered by industry representative groups, often on specific issues targeting the entire population:

- The Banking and Payment Federation of Ireland (BPFI)'s FraudSMART initiative, which aims to raise consumer and business awareness of the latest financial fraud activity and trends and provide simple and impartial advice on how best they can protect themselves and their resources. Through a range of tools and channels including national campaigns, stakeholder partnerships, real time alerts and practical resources the FraudSMART programme seeks to empower consumers and businesses through education and close the gap which fraudsters exploit when targeting customers.
- Insurance Ireland provides information for consumers on its Understanding Insurance Website, which is accessible to anyone looking for insurance in Ireland. The website includes information on how to buy insurance; what is an insurance premium; how insurance works; and basic information on home, motor, life and pensions. Insurance Ireland also runs campaigns on specific consumer issues such as shopping around for insurance and its regular 'Be Insurance Savvy' campaign which focuses on a different issue each year. In 2023 the focus was on home insurance and life insurance, along with two sub-campaigns on Underinsurance for Home Insurance and the Retail Bank Exit.

The topics and content of the financial education initiatives targeting the general population vary based on specific goal of each initiative. The most common topic covered was savings (45%), followed by budgeting (42%) and pensions (34%). The least commonly covered topics are sustainable finance (16%) and consumer rights and responsibilities (16%). The majority of programmes covered more than one topic.



37% of financial education programmes for the entire population covered “other” topics. These include:

- Banking services
- Energy saving tips
- Planning for end of life
- Shopping around
- Cryptocurrency
- Inflation
- Financial regulation
- Specific schemes and entitlements, for example the Fair Deal Scheme or entitlements for carers.

Financial education programmes for the entire population were mostly delivered primarily digitally. Others mixed digital delivery with other forms, e.g. the BPFI’s FraudSMART initiative mainly consists of a website and digital campaigns, but they also produce leaflets.

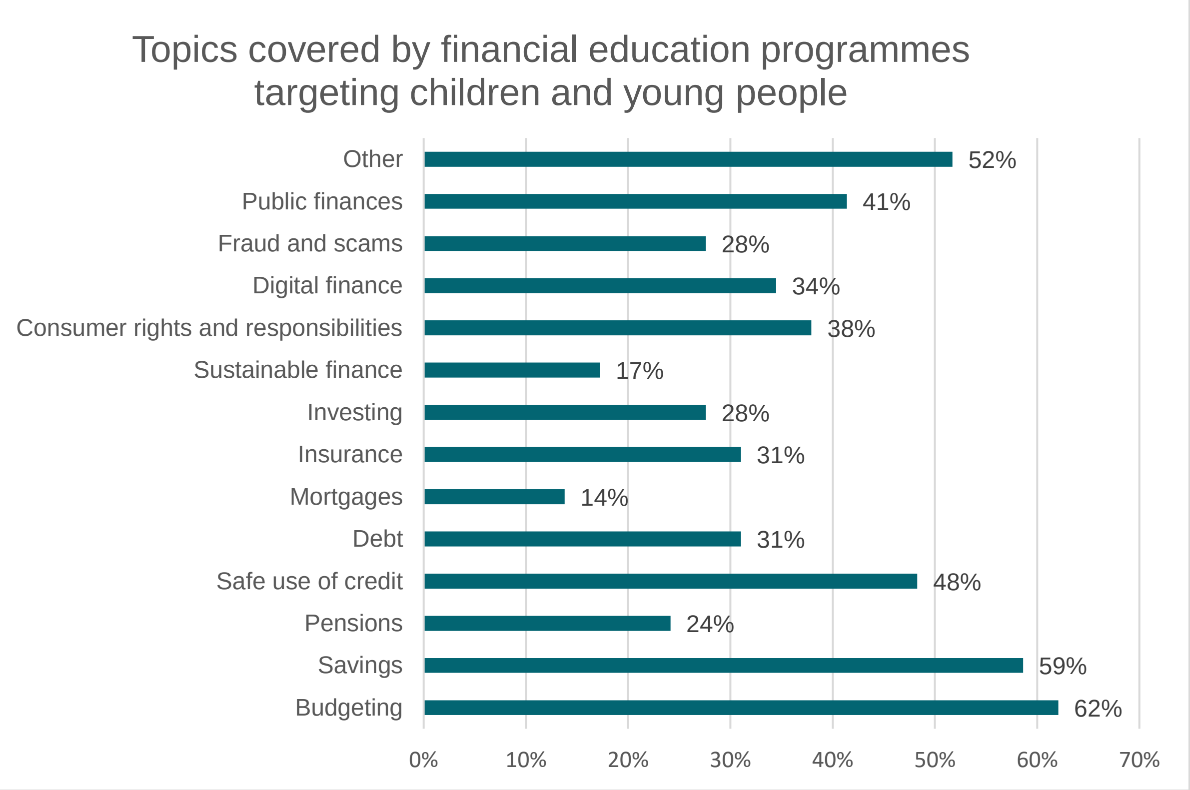
5.3.2 Children and young people

The second largest target group for financial education initiatives was children and young people (27%). These programmes were developed by various stakeholders and do not include the financial literacy elements within the curriculum which are described in detail in Section 5.3.2.1. 77% of the initiatives for children and young people were

Only 13% of these initiatives targeted primary schools and there were none targeting early childhood education (pre-school) or schools for children with special needs.

Of the overall initiatives for young people, there were few targeted at young people who had left secondary school. 10% were suitable for those in third level education, 10% for those in PLCs and 3% those in apprenticeships. However, there were no specific courses for those in apprenticeships. 13% targeted vulnerable young people as part of their target groups, however none were designed specifically for this group.

In terms of topics covered in these programmes, the most common were budgeting (62%) and saving (59%), safe use of credit (48%) and public finances (41%). Less common topics were pensions (24%), sustainable finance (17%) and mortgages (14%).



Over half of programmes for children and young people also covered “other” topics. Many of these covered some aspect of careers, employability and entrepreneurship. included:

- Mathematics
- Cryptocurrencies and crypto assets
- Cyber security
- Economic and monetary policy
- Accounting for business transactions, preparation of financial statements, basic budgeting and financial analysis, risk analysis

The majority of initiatives for children and young people have a mixed delivery method, with most using both digital and face-to-face means. 69% take place in schools and programmes are most commonly delivered by teachers or a mixture of teachers and experts or volunteers from the financial education provider.

Many of the programmes are aligned with school curricula, with Business and related topics at Senior Cycle (Economics and Accounting) being the most popular subjects to link financial literacy to. Some programmes are not directly aligned to Business studies curricula but cover similar topics. Schools programmes related to business and related topics included:

- AIB's *It's My Business*, in partnership with Junior Achievement Ireland (JAI), an entrepreneurial programme for primary school students
- The CCPC's *Me and My Money* Unit of Learning on its Money Matters website for Junior Cycle Business Studies and Home Economics students (also available in Irish - *Abhair Airigid*)
- The CCPC is sponsoring the adaptation of JAI's gamified programme *Finance Park* for use in Irish schools to complement the Junior Cycle Business curriculum. The Central Bank's *Young Economist of the Year* for secondary school students
- The Central Bank's *Generation €uro Students' Award*, which challenges Transition Year and 5th Year students to design monetary policy
- The BPFI's *BSTAI Achievement Awards* for Leaving Certificate Business, Accounting and Economics students
- The BPFI's *Economist Webinar* for Senior Cycle Economics and Business students
- Chartered Accountants Ireland's *Boot Camp* for Senior Cycle Accounting students
- JAI's *Economics for Success*, in partnership with Accenture, for secondary school students

The CCPC's *Money Matters* programme and ILCU's *Clued-In* programme are both suitable to be used with Junior Cycle Home Economics, although *Money Matters* was the only programme directly linked to the Home Economics curriculum. In relation to Mathematics, the Society of Actuaries in Ireland (SAI)'s Leaving Certificate Higher Level Maths Tutorials is directly related to the Senior Cycle Maths curriculum. ILCU's *Start Money Smart* resources for primary school also contains activities relating money to maths and incorporates maths problems in the content.

Financial education for children and young people is provided by public bodies (46%), the private sector (39%), Education for adults (7%), charities, NGOs and non-profit organisations (7%) and other organisations (4%).

There were limited initiatives in place for young people who had left secondary school and were in further education or training. Only 3% of programmes were suitable for those in third-level education and only one was specifically targeted at third-level students. The Atlantic Technological University runs a first year module on personal finance for students in the Department of Business, which is compulsory for accounting students and optional for business students. This takes the form of lectures, quizzes, case studies from the CCPC and videos from CCPC-sponsored TV programme How to be Good with Money. It covers budgeting, financial lifecycle, savings, investments, debt management, insurance and regulation.

4% were suitable for vulnerable young people (e.g. early school leavers or unemployed young people). Only one course was suitable for those doing apprenticeships, but was not specifically tailored for this group.

CASE STUDY

Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU)'s *Start Money Smart* programme for primary school

Start Money Smart is a free primary school resource developed by the ILCU, the ILCU Youth Committee and online educational company Twinkl Ireland. It is an all-island initiative and also is delivered in Northern Ireland and is promoted through ILCU member Credit Unions.

It is targeted at primary school students and is tailored for each level. It aims to explains finance in a fun, easy to follow, and engaging format and uses real-life scenarios, problem solving and story-telling. The topics covered at each level are:

- Money and maths
- Earning money
- Budgeting
- Spending and saving
- Impulse buying vs investing
- Financial literacy
- The history of a credit union and how it works

These areas are taught through interactive exercises such as planned activities, loop and prompt cards, word searches, quizzes, board games, fact files and worksheet challenges.

It is designed to be delivered by teachers in a classroom setting. Students are taken through the resource via a set of slides and accompanying notes guide the teacher through each one. Teachers are provided with display items for their classrooms, which include banners, posters, and word cards. Parents can also download resources from Twinkl.ie for activities to do at home with children.

CASE STUDY

JAI and CCPC's *JA Finance Park*

Junior Achievement Finance Park is a key initiative of Junior Achievement globally and has been successfully tested in the US). The CCPC is supporting Junior Achievement

CASE STUDY

Ireland (JAI) in adapting the content to an Irish context. JA Finance Park helps Junior Cycle students build a foundation for making intelligent, lifelong personal financial decisions, including issues related to income, spending, saving, and credit.

The programme consists of in-class learning and an interactive simulation. The five in-class lessons cover:

1. Careers and income
2. Where do my taxes go?
3. Savings and borrowing
4. Savvy shopper
5. Insurance

The lessons are which are delivered by JAI volunteers in classrooms with the support of the teacher. The JAI have developed a lesson plan guide to assist each volunteer in delivering the programme. The JAI have also developed a workbook for students to complete with the CCPC's feedback. This workbook contains interactive games that they can play such as the 'Savvy Shopper game'. The workbook also has worksheets and case studies for the students to review and complete.

This in-class learning is then applied in an interactive simulation in which students are assigned a persona which they have to budget and make financial decisions for, putting their learning into practice. This gamification initiative allows students to visualize the impact of adequate money management on their financial wellbeing. The programme complements the Junior Cycle Business curriculum, but can be used more widely.

5.3.2.1 Financial education in school curricula

According to the OECD, introducing financial education in the school curriculum can improve the quality, effectiveness and fairness of financial education, as it can reach all students in a setting where they are used to learning. In addition, it can reach those who may not have the opportunity to learn from their families[62] .

Fortunately, elements of financial education and opportunities to develop financial education already exist throughout the school curricula from early childhood to 6th year in Ireland. One of the purposes of a national strategy for financial literacy will be to leverage these opportunities in the curriculum and to promote and support the teaching of financial education for all ages.

The Department of Education and National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) provided a detailed account of the interactions between financial literacy and financial wellbeing with the various curricula through their interactions with the Department of Finance and their responses to the stakeholder survey. These are detailed below, including where elements of financial literacy are covered in core or optional subjects/programmes. This includes the available student numbers for certain subjects, provided by the Department of Education in April 2024.

[62] OECD (2020), PISA 2018 Results (Volume IV): Are Students Smart about Money? PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/48ebd1ba-en

Early childhood

Aistear is the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, which covers from birth to age six. Aistear acknowledges early childhood as a formative time when babies, toddlers and young children develop positive dispositions towards learning and skills. The Principles of Aistear are currently being updated and propose embedding an understanding of the importance of play-based and intentional learning experiences to consolidate, extend and enrich early learning and development. They also propose to embed an understanding of sustainability, including the economic pillar, and their emerging responsibility to care for themselves, others, and the environment. An example of learning around the economic pillar is presented as a resource supporting the understanding of Aim 4 of the theme Wellbeing which states that "Through nurturing relationships within a supportive environment, babies, toddlers and young children will explore and identify their place in the world and be empowered to live sustainably as agentic, respectful, caring, compassionate global citizens" [63]. According to the NCCA, in this way Aistear provides guidance on how to promote an intentional awareness of financial literacy in early childhood and continues to consult with the sector on what other supports or resources might be helpful for educators to engage with such concepts.

There is a continued focus on developing young children's understanding of numbers in the environment around them. Within the theme of Communicating, young children engage with numbers in their play including pricelists and money, thereby developing their awareness of money. As part of the learning goals within the theme of Exploring and Thinking young children are supported in developing an understanding of money as a concept of measure through using it in their play while young children develop an understanding of money in a meaningful way while young children use money in play transactions, in managing play shop orders and deliveries and in exchanging coins to understand value.

Primary school

A new Primary Curriculum Framework was published in 2023. This includes a set of seven key competencies which are designed to empower children 'to act and make decisions in relation to specific learning experiences, events, and situations'. Included amongst these competencies are 'Being an active citizen' which raises awareness of growing inequalities and develops capacity for meaningful participation in society while 'Being mathematical' supports the application of mathematical thinking and logic in the wider world.

[63] NCCA (2023), Draft Updated Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, see: https://ncca.ie/media/6362/draftupdatedaistear_for-consultation.pdf

2023 also saw the introduction of a new Primary Mathematics Curriculum where Money is a stand-alone strand unit, the learning outcomes for which can be seen in the table below:

Stage 1 (notionally 5-6 year-olds)	Stage 2 (notionally 7-8 year-olds)	Stage 3 (notionally 9-10 year-olds)	Stage 4 (notionally 11-12 year-olds)
Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences, children should be able to			
develop an awareness of money and its uses.	recognise the value of money and use euro and cent in a range of meaningful contexts.	transfer knowledge of the base ten system in number to monetary contexts and use for purposes of calculation.	solve and pose practical tasks to investigate and make informed judgements about transactions and financial plans.

These provide an opportunity for children to incrementally develop an awareness of money and its uses, recognise the value of money and use notes and coins in meaningful contexts, use their knowledge of the base ten system in monetary contexts and for calculation purposes and have the opportunity to solve and pose practical tasks to investigate and make informed judgements about transactions and financial plans[64]. The Money strand places a strong emphasis on children developing a sophisticated understanding of the value of goods and services and how to apply their understanding of this value in an increasingly cashless society. Children will also be encouraged to develop their understanding of how money is managed and distributed by the government in service of the needs of society.

The Primary Mathematics Curriculum places an increased emphasis on learning experiences which promote financial literacy and prudence and helps children to become familiar with financial terminology relevant to their daily lives. The new Primary Mathematics Toolkit has also been published on the Curriculum online website which contains a range of supports for learning, teaching, and assessing the Money strand of the new Primary Mathematics curriculum. These include list of key vocabulary, suggestions for the learning environment both indoors and outdoors, as well as supports for learning about money at home.

Junior Cycle

[64] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2023), Primary Mathematics Curriculum: For Primary and Special Schools, see: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/484d888b-21d4-424d-9a5c-3d849b0159a1/PrimaryMathematicsCurriculum_EN.pdf

The Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) outlines how learning in Junior Cycle will be informed by:

- Eight principles that underpin the entire Framework for Junior Cycle
- Twenty-four statements of learning that are central to planning for, the students' experience of, and the evaluation of the school's junior cycle programme
- Eight key skills that are required for successful learning by all students

The principles, statements of learning and key skills provide a structure for schools to design their Junior Cycle programme. Within the eight principles, there is a focus on the development of broader life skills as it is expected that the student experience connects with life outside the school and supports students in developing greater independence and in meeting the challenges of life beyond school. There is an explicit focus on financial wellbeing in Statement of Learning 14 where it refers to the student making 'informed financial decisions and developing good consumer skills'[65]. The eight key skills provide further opportunities for the development of financial wellbeing through a focus on being numerate, being literate and on setting and achieving personal goals and making considered decisions.

In addition to these principles, a number of Junior Cycle programmes and subjects also provide for the development of specific financial literacy knowledge, understanding and skills. These are outlined below:

Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes

Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes at Junior Cycle target a very specific group of students with general learning disabilities in the range of lower functioning moderate to severe and profound categories. The programmes can be personalised to suit the individual needs of the target group of students[66].

- **Level 1 Learning Programme**
  The Numeracy Priority Learning Unit (PLU) highlights numeracy as fundamental to daily living. A key aspect of learning in this area is in supporting students to participate in real-life situations where the use of mathematics is relevant. Within the Numeracy PLU students have an opportunity to participate in a shopping experience or in an activity where real money is used functionally. While in the Personal Care and Wellbeing PLU students engage in financial planning where they are asked to plan, shop for, and prepare personalised healthy food.

- **Level 2 Learning Programme**

  In 2024 there are 570 students doing Level 2 Learning Programme Units[67]. Level 2 Learning Programme also fosters student financial literacy. The L2 Numeracy PLU outlines how numeracy is a skill for daily living which is relevant to home and

[65] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2015), Framework for Junior Cycle, see: https://ncca.ie/media/3249/framework-for-junior-cycle-2015-en.pdf
[66] Guidelines and specifications for Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes at Junior Cycle are available on the NCCA website here: https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/level-one-and-level-two-programme
[67] Figure provided by Department of Education in January 2024.

community life. This unit draws on a broad range of real-life experiences, helping students develop knowledge and understanding in a range of topics such as number, shapes, space, money, time, and measurement. The Numeracy PLU includes a focus on managing money and supports students in developing the knowledge and understanding to:

- recognise frequently used Euro notes and coins,
- pay for an item correctly and count the change in a mock-up or real-life shopping transaction,
- explain a shopping receipt, in relation to what was bought, money tendered and correct change given,
- understand a common household bill in relation to the service provided, how much being charged and how it can be paid for,
- recognise the difference between using money to buy essential items and luxury items
- and to plan a personal budget for a week including a focus on the importance of saving.

There is also a focus on financial wellbeing in the Living in the Community PLU where students learn about organisations that provide consumer support and develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as consumers.

Junior Cycle Mathematics

In 2024 are 226,347 students doing Mathematics at Junior Cycle level[68]. Mathematics is a mandatory subject at Junior Cycle. Financial literacy and wellbeing is an important component of Junior Cycle Mathematics and teachers are empowered to provide opportunities for students to link mathematics to financial awareness and wellbeing. Classroom-Based Assessments in 2nd year and 3rd year provide opportunities to research a question students have about some financial phenomena of interest from the world around them or that they have come across in the course of their mathematical studies or their studies in other subjects[69].

Junior Cycle Business Studies

In 2024 there are 104,204 students studying Business Studies at Junior Cycle level[70]. Business Studies is an optional subject in most schools at Junior Cycle. In Junior Cycle Business Studies, there are three strands of study: Personal Finance, Enterprise, and Our Economy. Personal finance focuses on students developing a set of skills, knowledge and values that allows them to make informed decisions to manage their financial resources effectively and responsibly. Enterprise encourages students to identify opportunities and turn them into practical and targeted activities within business and wider society through the development and application of their understanding, skills, and values. It develops students' basic understanding of the financial, marketing, and

[68] Figure provided by Department of Education in January 2024.
[69] NCCA (2020), Junior Cycle Mathematics: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Task, see: https://curriculumonline.ie/Junior-Cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Mathematics/
[70] Figure provided by Department of Education in January 2024.

operational functions of an organisation. Our economy enables students to understand the dynamic relationship between the local, national, and international economic situation. It develops students' ability to identify and understand basic economic concepts as they relate to personal finance, enterprise, and the Irish economy[71]. Within both Classroom-Based Assessments, students can explore aspects of financial literacy and wellbeing.

Junior Cycle Home Economics

In January 2024 there were 80,908 students studying Home Economics at Junior Cycle level[72]. Home Economics is an optional subject in most schools at Junior Cycle. In Junior Cycle Home Economics there is also a focus on financial wellbeing where students have an opportunity to:

- apply consumer decision-making skills in the management of personal, family and household resources for everyday living
- debate consumers' rights and responsibilities
- examine how consumers are protected in Ireland by legislation, statutory and non-statutory agencies
- apply their financial literacy skills in the preparation and evaluation of a budget for independent living[73]

Senior Cycle

The following section details financial literacy and financial wellbeing elements that can be seen throughout the Senior Cycle[74]. Figures for the two-year programmes, Leaving Certificate Established (LCE), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), include both 5th and 6th year students.

- Transition Year[75]:
    - 58,700 students.

- Leaving Certificate Established and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme[76]:
    - Mathematics (122,600 students)
    - Accounting (15,300 students)
    - Economics (9,400 students)
    - Business (41,500 students)
    - Applied Mathematics (2,800 students)
    - LCVP Link Modules (43,000 students)

[71] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2015), Junior Cycle Business Studies: Curriculum Specification, see: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-Cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Business-Studies/
[72] Figure provided by Department of Education in January 2024.
[73] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2015), Junior Cycle Home Economics, see: https://curriculumonline.ie/Junior-Cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Home-Economics/
[74] Rounded student numbers provided by Department of Education in April 2024.
[75] The current overall TY population is 58,700 in the 2023/24 school year.
[76] The current overall Leaving Cert Established and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme population is 122,600 in the 2023/24 school year.

- Leaving Certificate Applied[77]:
    - Mathematical Applications (8,900 students)

Transition Year

Transition Year (TY) is an optional one-year programme within senior cycle. The TY programme gives schools the opportunity to devise their own programmes for the year, as well as core subjects like Mathematics. Many schools have developed programmes around enterprise education, business start-ups, law and consumer awareness which would incorporate aspects of financial literacy. Schools also use the TY programme to become involved in modules and specific programmes around financial literacy developed by financial institutions and other financial interest groups. An updated TY Programme Statement has been drafted for introduction in schools from the 2024/2025 school year. The draft Programme Statement is currently with the Minister for Education for her approval, which is anticipated shortly. The draft TY Programme Statement includes student and curriculum dimensions. The student dimensions include a focus on personal growth while the curriculum dimension provides for students to undertake a combination of core learning, subject sampling, TY specific modules and other components providing a balanced and broad set of experiences which encompasses the student dimensions.

Leaving Certificate Established Mathematics

Mathematics is a core subject for the LCE. LCE Mathematics aims to develop mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding needed for continuing education, life and work. By teaching mathematics in contexts that allow learners to see connections within mathematics, between mathematics and other subjects, and between mathematics and its applications to real life, it is envisaged that learners will develop a flexible, disciplined way of thinking and the enthusiasm to search for creative solutions[78]. Whilst there are a number of explicit references to financial mathematics in the syllabus that see students engage with problems involving interest, depreciation and loan repayments, the use of financial contexts offer ideal opportunity for students to develop financial literacy whilst making sense of finite and infinite geometric series. The revision of the LCE Mathematics curriculum is expected to begin in 2024. The new curriculum is expected to be implemented in schools from the 2027/28 school year.

Leaving Certificate Established Accounting

Accounting is an optional subject for the LCE. LCE Accounting is concerned with the preparation, recording, extraction, presentation and analysis of financial information for

---

[77] The current overall Leaving Cert Applied population is 8,900 2023/24 school year.
[78] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2015), Leaving Certificate Mathematics Syllabus: Foundation, Ordinary & Higher Level, see: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/f6f2e822-2b0c-461e-bcd4-dfcde6decc0c/SCSEC25_Maths_syll

the purpose of making economic decisions[79]. The subject has a dual role in education in that it has both a practical and theoretical aspect. Accounting equips students with a specific language and techniques relevant to many areas of everyday financial, business and social life. The specification for Leaving Certificate Established Accounting is currently under revision by the NCCA. The new curriculum is expected to be implemented in schools from the 2026/27 school year.

Leaving Certificate Established Economics

Economics is an optional subject for the LCE. A new LCE Economics specification was introduced into schools in September 2019[80]. It includes learning outcomes relating to supply and demand, creation of credit, interest rates and regulation in the financial markets and enhances student understanding of the impact of the economy on their own lives, on society and on government decisions. The LCE Economics curriculum is expected to be revised in the coming years and the new curriculum to be implemented in schools from the 2028/2029 school year.

Leaving Certificate Established Business

Business is an optional subject for the LCE. Units within the current LCE Business syllabus feature learning relevant to financial literacy and wellbeing[81]:

- Unit 4 'Household and business manager' has learning outcomes related to aspects of finance that include: basic cash flow, main sources of finance, cost of finance, current account, and applying for a loan.
- Unit 5 'Business development' learning outcomes include an understanding of main sources of finance available for business start-up.
- Unit 6 'Using skills for business' has learning outcomes exploring the explanation of the relevance of economic indicators such as inflation, employment rates, and interest rates, economic growth, national income and national debt for individuals and the economy.

The LCE Business curriculum is currently being redeveloped by the NCCA. A draft specification was consulted on in early 2024. The curriculum is currently being finalised and will be introduced into schools in the 2025/26 school year.

Leaving Certificate Established Applied Mathematics

Applied Mathematics is an optional subject for the LCE. In LCE Applied Mathematics mathematical modelling is the process through which applied mathematicians use mathematics to represent, analyse, make predictions, and provide insight into real-world phenomena. Mathematical models are ubiquitous, providing a quantitative framework for

[79] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1995), Leaving Certificate Accounting Syllabus: Ordinary and Higher Levels, see: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/1cc50fb4-90da-428c-83d4-df53c8f49dd9/SCSEC01_Accounting_syllab

[80] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2019), Economics Specification: Leaving Certificate Ordinary and Higher Level, see: https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/3342d8a2-1e22-4f17-b82b-a8134fe16eb3/LCEconomics_0219_EN.pdf

[81] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1996), Business Syllabus, see: https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/fb629c5b-f6e5-4193-ad4c-faf0e3c704c9/SCSEC08_Business_syllabus_Eng.pdf

understanding, predicting, and making decisions in nearly every aspect of daily life. The new specification introduced in September 2021 sees students engage with applications related to finance and economics such as interest that is compounded monthly/annually/continuously and supply and demand[82].

Leaving Certificate Applied

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is a two-year Leaving Certificate programme, available to students who wish to follow a practical or vocationally orientated programme. Financial literacy can be seen in the LCA through the modules Mathematical Applications, Social Education and Vocational Preparation and Guidance.

Mathematical Applications in the LCA is intended to prepare students for life, work, further education, and a world where skills and knowledge require constant updating. The course seeks to consolidate and improve students' mathematical knowledge, skills, and concepts through practical, analytical, problem-solving applications and through integration with other modules. This includes undertaking personal budgeting plans, understanding the implications of a financial commitment and examining relevant tax requirements. The revised module descriptor for LCA Mathematical Applications includes units on budgeting, planning and personal finance[83].

LCA Social Education features a module on Taking Charge. The primary focus of this is on planning, managing, and organising personal financial income and expenditure and students learn about saving, borrowing, budgeting and about relevant financial decision-making such as insurance and buying a home.

As part of the LCA Vocational Preparation and Guidance module on Enterprise students may engage in an enterprise activity which includes a focus on understanding the financial requirements of an enterprise. Students may also engage in managing the finances of a business as part of the Vocational Preparation and Guidance task. It is expected that, upon the approval of the new Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) specification, this specification will be made available to LCA students, replacing the existing LCA Social Education module.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is a Leaving Certificate programme with a focus on enterprise and preparation for working life. LCVP is linked to the LCE programme. LCVP students typically take six LCE subjects and two modules, called Link Modules, in the areas of Preparation for the World of Work and Enterprise Education in lieu of a seventh LCE subject. In the World of Work link module students experience work placement and develop an understanding of the working world, while in the Enterprise Education module they undertake an enterprise activity where must

[82] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2021), Applied Mathematics: Curriculum Specification, see: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/46931efd-8fa6-4c31-9ec3-dfb9e870fa1a/Leaving-Certificate-Specification-Applied-Mathematics_EN_1.pdf

[83] Module descriptors for the Leaving Certificate Applied available here: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-Cycle/LCA/

Link Modules are currently being revised by the NCCA, with a revised curriculum in these areas being introduced in schools in the 2026/27 school year.

5.3.3 Other specific groups

5.3.3.1 Investors

21% of the initiatives collected in stakeholder survey at least partly covered investing as a theme. Of the programmes that include investing as a theme, 48% are aimed at mainly adults and 35% are mainly aimed at children and young people. Only four of these initiatives specifically included retail investors as a target group. These were:

- Bank of Ireland's annual *Invested* series, which includes webinars on various aspects of investing and online support materials.
- GillenMarkets have an investment training framework, which includes one-day investment training courses and online training materials.
- CompliNet's *Digital Euros Digital Literacy* and *SmartStart Finance for All* programmes available on its Financial Literacy Learning Platform.

Other initiatives were directly related to investing, but targeted a broader audience, such as the CCPC's online campaign on crypto, which provided consumers with information about essential facts (such as risks) regarding crypto and make them more aware of the precautions they must take before investing in these products.

Broader financial education programmes for adults that cover investing are mainly provided by public bodies. The CCPC provides information on investing through its financial education programmes and initiatives such as its *Money Skills for Life* programme, the *Money Hub* on the CCPC website, its *Money Clinic* campaign and its consumer helpline. These all provide free, independent information on a variety of personal finance issues, including investing. The Central Bank also has a Consumer Hub on its website which has content for consumers on topics such as mortgages, credit provision, investing your money, banking services and dealing with financial distress.

MoneytWhizz, a company that provides financial education as a business activity, also runs a broader adult financial wellbeing programme, carried out in the workplace through employers, which covers investing, alongside a wide range of other topics. The MoneyWhizz website also has some free information for the public on investing.

The LIA (Life Insurance Association) also provide financial education programmes for specific groups, such as finance professionals and professional athletes, that cover investing amongst other themes. Chartered Accountants Ireland also run a *Financial Wellness 101* for young professionals which includes information on investing.

Many stakeholders from the financial services industry provide financial education on investing through schools' programmes, including:

- The BPFI's *European Money Quiz* for Junior Cycle students
- Bank of Ireland's schools' financial literacy programmes: *Talking Cents with Ollie* for primary school & *Money Smarts* for secondary school
- Irish Funds' *Financial Literacy Transition Year Programme*
- Brokers Ireland's *Future Financial Experts* for Transition Year

5.3.3.2 SMEs

The stakeholder survey was mainly focused on consumer financial education; however, it did also receive submissions in relation to SME financial literacy. 8% of programmes collected targeted SMEs as part of their overall target audience. There were fewer initiatives that were specifically tailored to SMEs. These usually included stakeholders working together to develop programmes and initiatives to meet SMEs' needs.

Programmes included:

- In 2023 there was an Enterprise Week Business Mentoring in Ballyroan and Castletymon public libraries in Dublin, carried out in collaboration with the Local Enterprise Office. This consisted of free one-to-one mentoring sessions.
- Microfinance Ireland carry out ongoing mentoring on financial matters for small businesses. This face-to-face and virtual mentoring is delivered by the Local Enterprise Office network. It covers all aspects of business finance. The mentoring is delivered to approximately 400 SMEs annually.
- The MentorsWork programme was developed by Skillnet Ireland in partnership with the Small Firms Association (SFA) in close collaboration with the SFA, Irish Business and Employers Confederation (Ibec), Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and MicroFinance Ireland. MentorsWork is a 12-week business support programme. It consists of one-to-one mentoring sessions, peer-focused workshops, expert-led masterclasses and an online learning platform. The programme supports over 600 companies on an annual basis.
- The Irish Banking Culture Board (IBCB)'s Financial Awareness for SMEs was a one-off initiative for SMEs, developed in collaboration with its member banks. Its aim was to develop financial awareness information for SMEs and to signpost and explain some of the financial supports available to SMEs from member banks and other organisations during the Covid-19 crisis. It also aimed to address recurring topics which are raised by SMEs with the IBCB. The initiative included a webinar series to share information from experts related to common issues raised by SMEs in their banking needs.

The SBCI also promotes awareness of its schemes for SMEs and guarantees amongst financial services professionals through the Institute for Banking.

5.3.3.3 Other consumers with specific needs

In terms of other target groups for financial education programmes, there were limited programmes for groups with specific needs, such as unemployed people, Travellers, elderly people, women and migrants. As well as the groups and programmes outlined below, many financial providers indicated a wider focus on supporting customers who may be in a vulnerable situation or who may have a greater need for support.

Only 8% of the initiatives collected were suitable for those who are unemployed and there were limited initiatives also for those not in the labour force, with low incomes and low levels of education. These were mainly delivered by the ETBs and NALA's online platform through QQI Level 2 or 3 courses on managing personal finances or related to online financial security or online banking.

The Money Made Sense training framework, developed by the TASC and carried out by North Dublin MABS and Northside Partnership, a local development company working with local people (programme details on page 65 in the evaluation case study), was also tailored to be delivered to lone parents and those with low incomes, including unemployed people. The participants in the training were mainly women.

There were other financial education initiatives targeting specific groups of women, such as those who took part in the Money Made Sense training or the Financial Resilience Training for victims of domestic violence, developed by the Irish Banking Culture Board with TASC and Safe Ireland with assistance from MABS (detailed in the case study on cooperation between stakeholders on page 45). However, only 14% of initiatives specified women as a target audience. This included public libraries running one-off events or courses for women on financial literacy, such as the Money Magic course in Blanchardstown Library. This was organised and delivered in partnership with Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB.

Programmes suitable for elderly people represented 11% of the initiatives collected. However, not all of these programmes were specifically tailored to elderly people. Those that were included the Getting Started programme from Age Action in which volunteers provide one-on-one learner-led lessons in digital skills. Public libraries also carry out financial education events for older people, including in relation to the Fair Deal Scheme, funeral and end-of-life planning. There were also digital literacy classes for older people.

Programmes suitable for people with disabilities represented 12% of programmes. However, there were none specifically tailored for their needs. In addition to this, only 6% of programmes targeted people struggling with debt and only 5% were suitable for migrants. There were no programmes that were specifically developed for migrants.

There are effective programmes in place for Travellers, designed with input from the Travelling Community, but these represent only 6% of those collected by the survey. National Traveller MABS was the main provider of financial education programmes for Travellers.

Victims of financial abuse was not an option in the survey for target groups, however Safeguarding Ireland has conducted some joint work with the BPFI on financial abuse. The primary objective of the campaign was to create awareness for the public they could be/become a victim of financial abuse, to stress the importance of reporting abuse/suspected financial abuse and to emphasize the importance of planning ahead. It also aimed to raise awareness amongst all professionals working with people who may be at risk of the nature and prevalence of financial abuse.

CASE STUDY

Financial education designed for Travellers

National Traveller MABS - A Way of Life programme

This money management programme was designed specifically to be delivered to Travellers by MABS money advisers or National Traveller MABS staff. It was initiated by North Galway MABS who developed the programme with a group in the Traveller Training Centre in Tuam, Co. Galway. National Traveller MABS have promoted and facilitated the use of this resource since 2008.

A Way of Life is delivered in person and is mainly discussion based. It provides an opportunity to build links between MABS money advisers and the Travellers participating in the course, and by demonstrating all the tools that are available, which in turn helps spread the skills to the wider community. National Traveller MABS support Money Advisers in using this programme, as a vehicle for explaining to Travellers the valuable work that MABS does, whilst at the same time imparting the skills and knowledge required for them to manage their money.

The programme is divided into five areas:

• Unit 1 Managing money

  o Each learner fully understands and subscribes to the ground rules for the programme

  o Each learner understands what MABS is and what MABS does

  o Each learner explores their attitude to money, considering feelings associated with this

  o Each learner can differentiate between things they need and things they want

  o Learners are able to prioritise their spending

  o Learners can maintain a spending diary for a one-week period

• Unit 2 Control and budgeting

  o Learners can reflect on their current practice in managing money

  o Learners understand what a budget is and the advantages of having one

  o Learners can use a budget sheet to draft a budget for a case study character

  o Learners are familiar with the common features of a generic household bill and the various payment options available to them

• Unit 3 Income maximisation

o Learners are aware of their sources of income and the need to maximise these

o Learners are aware of the entitlements which they may have and how to go about accessing these

o Learners know the importance of energy efficiency in minimising spending and know how to improve energy efficiency at home

o Learners understand what to consider when making decisions on switching utility provider

• Unit 4 Saving and banking

o Learners know the steps to take to open a bank account and to use an ML10 form

o Learners know the range of services they can access through a bank and how to go about doing so

o Learners understand what to consider when moving bank accounts

o Learners are aware of the advantages of saving

o Learners know how to save for a specific goal

• Unit 5 Borrowing

o Learners have considered the difficulties in meeting unexpected expenditure

o Learners are aware of the different reasons for and ways in which people borrow money or use credit

o Learners know the most common forms of credit open to them and the pros and cons of each

o Learners have considered the options open to them if they are using expensive credit at present

o Learners know what to consider if they are planning on applying for credit

o Learners know the steps they can take if they are struggling with debt

Through culturally-appropriate information, the programme aims to increase the financial literacy skills of participants, to help them avoid becoming over-indebted and to increase Travellers' engagement with MABS and Citizens Information services.

5.4 Evidence and sources used to develop financial education programmes in Ireland

Many stakeholders used evidence, frameworks and research to develop their financial education programmes. Below are examples of some of the main approaches:

- Financial education programmes targeting young people in school were mostly aligned to the curriculum and to particular learning outcomes outlined for the relevant subject. As mentioned, Business Studies and related subjects were the most common subjects for financial education programmes to be aligned to. Some consulted with educational stakeholders to ensure this alignment to the curriculum, such as the NCCA, professional development organisations for teachers and teachers' organisations. This approach was used by Revenue in the development of its Transition Year Introduction to Tax Module.

- Many programmes for children and young people also looked to use the views of teachers and young people themselves to inform initiatives. For example, Junior Achievement Ireland develops all its programmes through a co-creation process with volunteers, teachers and students. In informing its schools programme, Bank of Ireland also carried out school surveys asking young people about their financial literacy and attitudes to money management. It also carried out a survey of parents on financial education and focus groups with teachers.

- Financial service industry representative bodies and member associations often use information from their members to inform initiatives, this could take the form of surveys or other consultation methods.

- Many stakeholders used the EU/OECD-INFE financial competence framework for adults to guide the content of their programmes. At the time the survey was conducted the framework for children and young people had not been published yet, but it would be expected that stakeholders using the adult framework would also adopt the framework for children and young people.

- Some stakeholders carried out specific research which informed an initiative or campaign. This can be quantitative research, for example Bank of Ireland carried out a nationally representative financial wellbeing survey amongst adults which helped inform its Financial Wellbeing Seminars delivered online and in-person by financial wellbeing coaches across the country. It can also take the form of quantitative research, for example the IBCB conducted qualitative research in 2020 on the role of banks supporting society and communities, interviewing advocacy groups, along with bank customers and bank staff. This informed the development of its Guide to the Basic Bank Account.

- Some stakeholders took user experience into account when developing financial education initiatives, such as the CCPC carrying out specific user testing and user research in the development of its online Money Tools for comparing financial products.

- Plain English principles were also mentioned by stakeholders as being important when developing programmes, with some receiving guidance from NALA on their work in this area.

5.5 Programme evaluation and monitoring

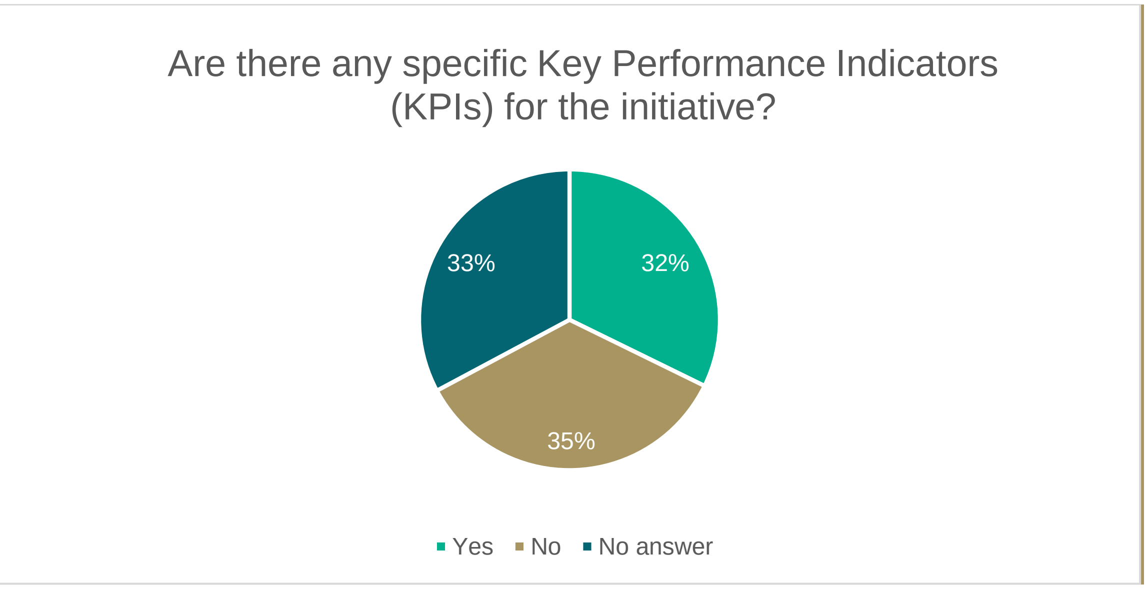
According to the OECD, tracking the implementation and impact of a financial education initiative or programme is fundamental to understand whether the programme is on track, whether it is achieving its intended results, whether its content and delivery methods are well adapted to its target audience, to identify areas for improvement and ensure that resources are allocated to the most effective programmes[84].

Programme evaluation and monitoring are distinct but interlinked processes. The monitoring of a programme tracks the implementation and provides answers to questions such as whether it is reaching enough people, or whether the resources are being used as intended. Monitoring can run continuously or be automated. This data can also be integrated in the evaluation of the programme. The evaluation of a programme refers to a process seeking to assess if the programme is meeting its objectives and achieving the desired impact on participants or the target group of the programme. According to the OECD, without an evaluation, no programme can claim success and proper evaluation should be one of the requirements for obtaining funding for any financial education initiative[85].

In the context of a developing and implementing a national strategy for Ireland, programme evaluation and monitoring is very important to track how programmes are contributing to the goals of the strategy. It can also be used to determine whether a programme would be included in any official national strategy information or repository of programmes.

Evolution and monitoring processes usually begin with setting Key Performance Indictors (KPIs) for a programme. Of the 111 initiatives mapped by this report, only 32% indicated they have specific KPIs. 35% of respondents indicated they do not have KPIs and 33% of respondents to the survey did not provide an answer to this question.

[84] OECD (2013), Evaluating Financial Education Programmes: survey, evidence, policy, instruments and guidance, OECD, Paris, http://www.oecd.org/daf/fin/financialeducation/G20-Evaluating_Fin_Ed_Programmes_2
[85] OECD (2013), Evaluating Financial Education Programmes: survey, evidence, policy, instruments and guidance, OECD, Paris, http://www.oecd.org/daf/fin/financialeducation/G20-Evaluating_Fin_Ed_Programmes_2013.pdf



These KPIs are usually attendance rates, completion rates, hours of financial education delivered, user engagement figures and number of people reached by an initiative. Some initiatives used survey feedback post-initiative as a KPI.

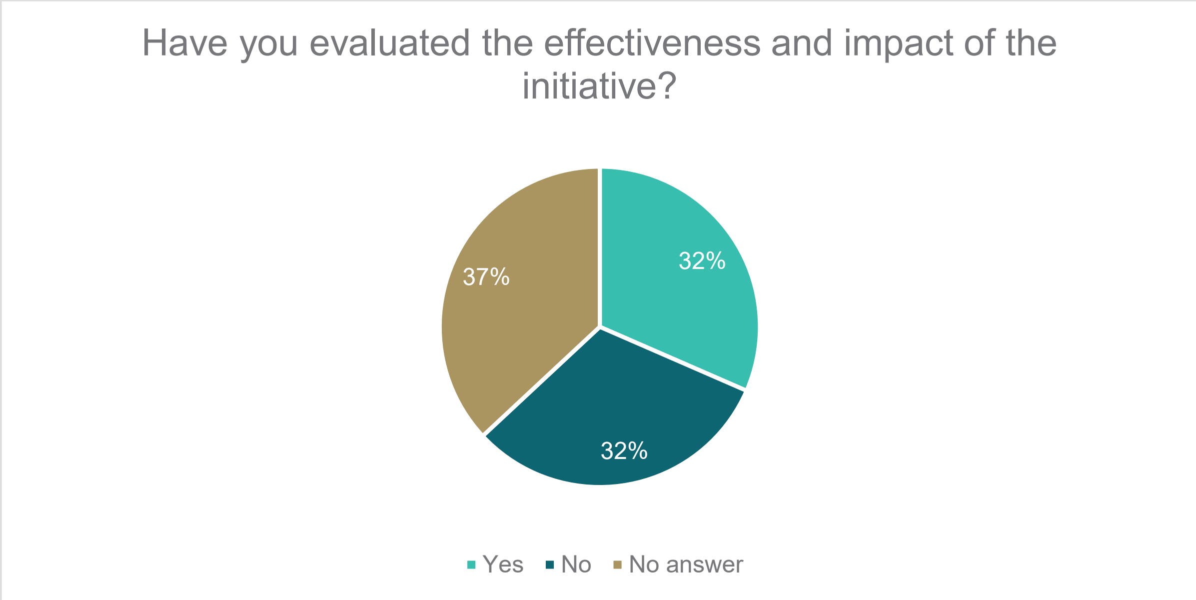
In terms of the numbers of people reached by initiatives, most respondents had figures for this. However, some of the figures were approximate. Most gave yearly figures for reach, but some used overall figures dating from when the programme began or gave the number of workshops or webinars provided rather than the number of people who took part in these. Other respondents do not provide publically available data on the number of people reached by initiatives or do not have a means of tracking. A standard method of tracking the reach of initiatives would be of benefit to the implementation of a national strategy.

Programme evaluation should be an integral part of the programme design, as it is important to collect accurate information and data even before the intervention begins. A successful evaluation process helps clarify if the financial education programme has caused some kind of change for the target audience. According to the OECD, when it comes to evaluation, ideally, a rigorous programme impact evaluation would follow an experimental or quasi-experimental design, which can address the problem of self-selection and allow for a more reliable assessment of causality of the effects of a specific financial education programme. However, this type of evaluation is often difficult to implement and is costly.

Evaluation should look to see if the knowledge or behaviours of the target group have changed because of the programme and how much of this was change was directly related to the programme. According to the OECD, the outcomes of programmes can generally can be divided into subsets: knowledge outcomes, attitude outcomes or behaviour outcomes. Knowledge and attitudes outcomes can be measured using pre and post-tests.

Through the stakeholder survey, respondents were asked if they had evaluated the effectiveness and impact of their initiatives. A third of initiatives had been evaluated (32%). This was usually feedback through surveys after initiatives with participants or those who had carried out the initiatives, e.g. teachers. Some respondents use their KPIs to evaluate the effectiveness of a programme. Some conducted full evaluation reports on initiatives and aimed to evaluate knowledge or behaviour change, however this was not as common an approach.

32% of initiatives mapped in this report had not been evaluated and for 37% of initiatives this question was not answered.



CASE STUDY

Evaluation

***Money Made Sense Financial Capabilities Framework* (TASC, North Dublin MABS and Northside Partnership)**

Money Made Sense is a training framework that was developed by the TASC and carried out by North Dublin MABS and Northside Partnership, a local development company working with local people, representatives from communities, the state, employers, trade unions and elected representatives. Evaluation was built into the programme model from the beginning and an independent evaluation was carried out on the programme.

The training initiative emerged from a study published by TASC in 2020 on 'Exploring Household Debt in Ireland' . The project was developed, with funding for TASC from JP Morgan, based on research which found that in Ireland single-parent households, low-paid workers and unemployed persons have consistently higher rates of

[86] TASC (2020), Exploring Household Debt in Ireland: The Burden of Non-Mortgage Debt & Opportunities to Support Low-Income Households, see: https://www.tasc.ie/assets/files/pdf/tasc_household_debt_report-exec_summary-web.pdf

overindebtedness and lower rates of financial capability than other household types. Problem debt or over-indebtedness occurs when households are over-burdened by debt repayments and do not have the means to meet essential living costs and debt repayments as they fall due.

The programme was designed to assist lone parents and low-paid workers or those considering returning to the workplace. The aims of the programme were, in addition to providing practical knowledge, to build self-confidence and to expand perspectives through understanding how structural factors shape decision-making. The purpose was to deliver life skills such that participants gained long-term economic empowerment and would be better able to plan financially and make decisions.

Following completion of the third cycle of Money Made Sense, in December 2021, TASC commissioned an external evaluation to assess the programme in terms of its operation, outputs, and outcomes - and to capture any lessons arising from the three cycles of the pilot. The evaluation included:

- Informal interviews with key staff of the three partner organisations, TASC, MABS and Northside Partnership.
- Two focus groups with relevant staff from the partner organisations, one with senior staff and one with staff involved in the day-to-day delivery of the programme.
- Survey data from participants, including baseline pre-programme data and follow-up, post-programme data.
- Secondary analysis of qualitative interviews of participants, carried out by TASC and anonymised data shared with researchers.

The evaluation report found that the programme positively impacted the financial skills of participants, including the ability to save, curbing spending, and increased confidence. While there were no major financial savings evidenced so soon after the course was completed, there was considerable evidence of enhanced awareness of spending and strategies to save – all of which are likely to benefit participants in the short to medium-term. It also came up with a set of recommendations for the improvements for the programme, including a recommendation on the baseline and follow-up surveys to better measure the long-term impact of the programme[87].

[87] S. Sheridan and M. Higgins (2022), Money Made Sense: A Programme Evaluation for TASC, see: https://www.northsidepartnership.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/MMS_ProgrammeEvalForTasc_Oct22.pdf

6. Stakeholder expectations of a national strategy

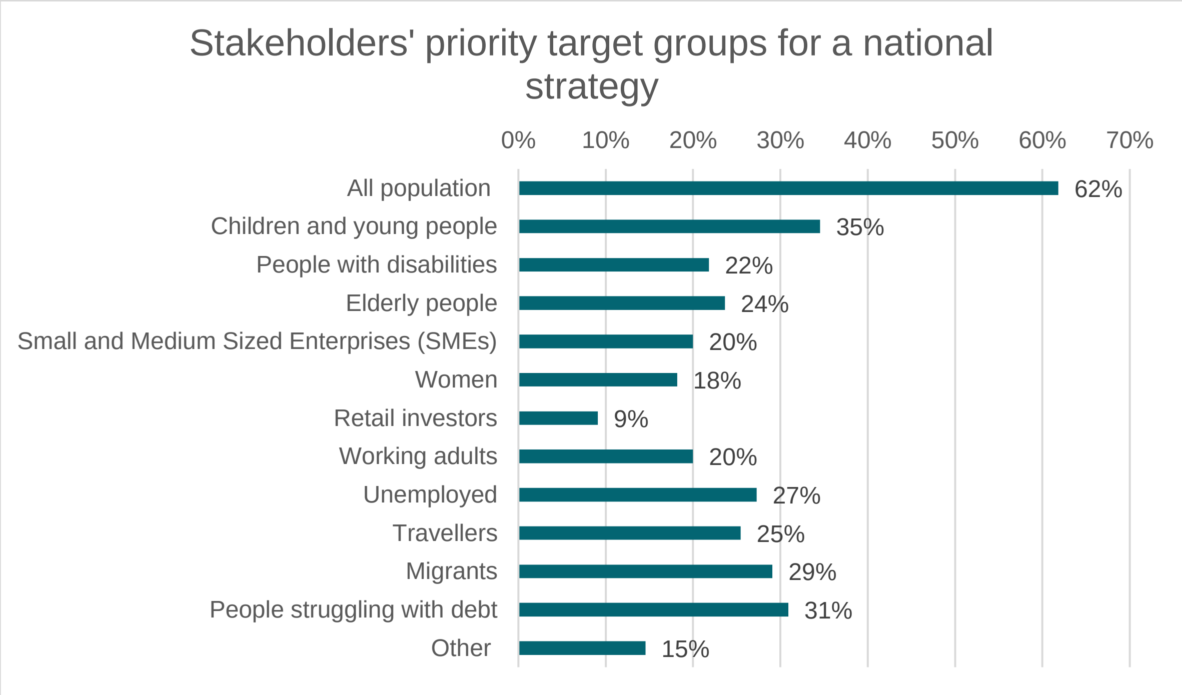
In addition to gathering information on the financial education initiatives implemented in Ireland, the stakeholder survey also gathered stakeholders' views on the development of a national strategy for financial education in Ireland including why they thought financial literacy was important, why a national strategy for financial literacy should be developed, their views on what specific financial education content areas and what target groups should be the focus of financial education programmes in Ireland. The findings from the survey were presented to stakeholders and discussed at the stakeholder event held in November 2023 with a large range of stakeholders. Insights from those discussions also form the basis for Section 5.

6.1 Target groups for a national strategy

Overwhelmingly stakeholders felt that every citizen in Ireland needs financial education and this not only came through in this question, but in comments on other questions throughout the survey. 62% indicated that "all population" was a target group that should be covered in a national strategy. However, stakeholders also emphasised the need for a tailored approach to each target group in their explanations of their choices. This was also reinforced by stakeholders at the stakeholder event, where a lifelong approach to financial literacy came through. Stakeholders felt this should start at an early age and should continue throughout life. It was also felt a "point in time" approach should be used – giving consumers appropriate financial education when they are making key decisions.

Children and young people were also seen as important, as can be seen in the chart below, 35% of stakeholders said they should be a target group. This also came through in lots of the comments on other questions throughout the survey. Many stakeholders felt young people should leave school with good financial literacy and the skills needed for their life ahead.

Other groups seen as being important are those struggling with debt (31%), migrants (29%), the unemployed (27%), Travellers (25%), elderly people (24%), people with disabilities (22%) and working adults and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (20% each). Although women were found to have lower financial knowledge than men in much of the research and data covered in Section 3, only 18% of stakeholders felt that the national strategy should specifically target women. In addition to this, only 9% of stakeholders specifically felt that retail investors should be a focus of the strategy.



15% of stakeholders felt other groups should be focused on, these included:

- Social housing tenants
- Those most at risk of poverty
- Older renters
- Parents
- Carers
- Prisoners and ex-offenders
- People with addiction issues
- Victims of domestic abuse
- Farmers
- People with English as a second language
- Those who need support making decisions under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015

At the stakeholder event, when asked about target groups, the importance of supporting “vulnerable” consumers and “marginalised” groups was emphasised, including those suffering from financial abuse. It was felt the national strategy could promote awareness of safeguarding around these issues.

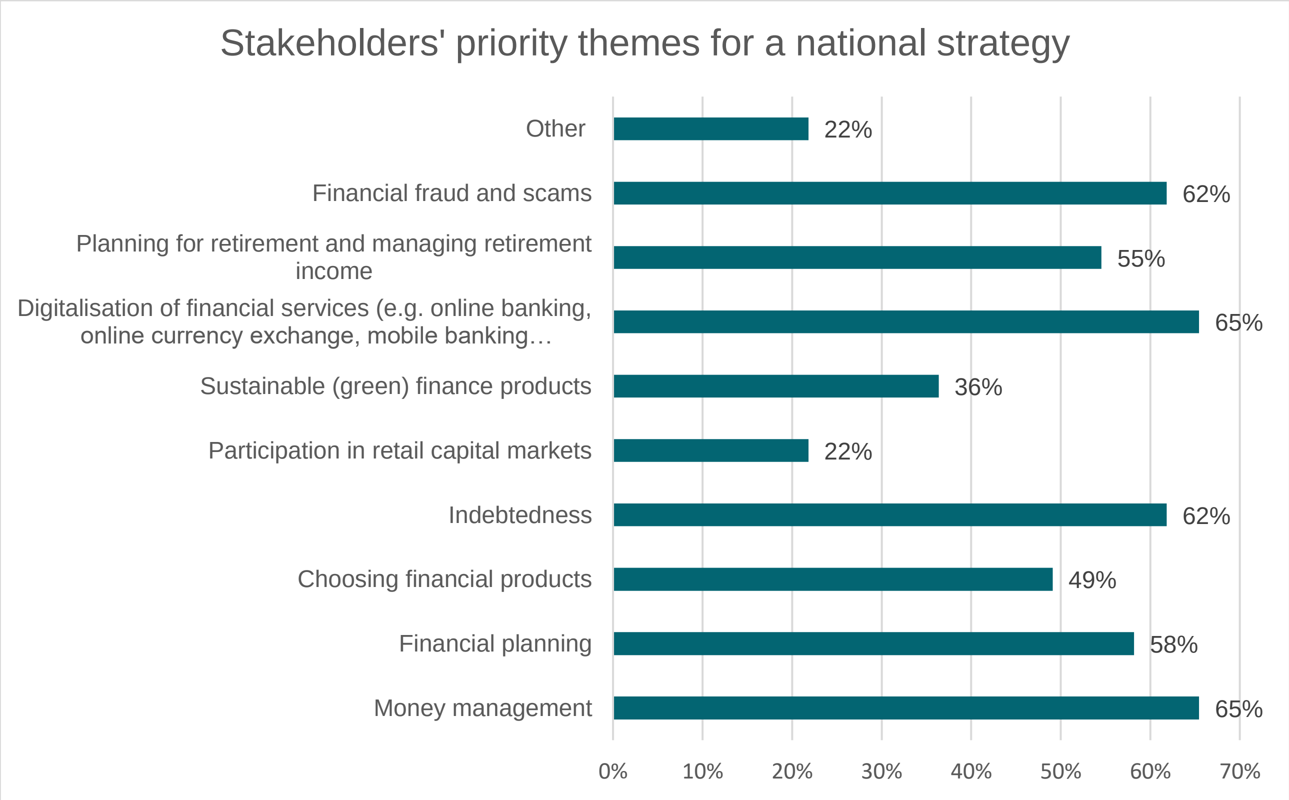
6.2 Themes for a national strategy

There was a broad consensus amongst stakeholders that all topics are interconnected and relevant for consumers. Stakeholders broadly agreed that financial education on these topics is needed throughout consumers' lives at various points, with money management as a basis for further skills to be developed. 65% of stakeholders in the survey indicated money management as being an important theme to address in the national strategy.

65% also chose digitalisation of financial services as an important theme. Digitalisation was also highlighted by stakeholders in their explanations of their choices and the risk of excluding consumers due to lack of digital skills and through stakeholder feedback at the stakeholder event.

The next most important themes for stakeholders were financial fraud and scams (62%) and indebtedness (62%). This was followed by financial planning (58%) and planning for retirement and managing retirement income (55%).

Some stakeholders saw participation in retail capital markets and green finance products as being less relevant as knowledge and skills in these areas might not be needed by consumers on a day-to-day basis. This was reflected in the survey results with 36% choosing sustainable (green) finance products and 22% participation in retail capital markets as being important themes for the national strategy.

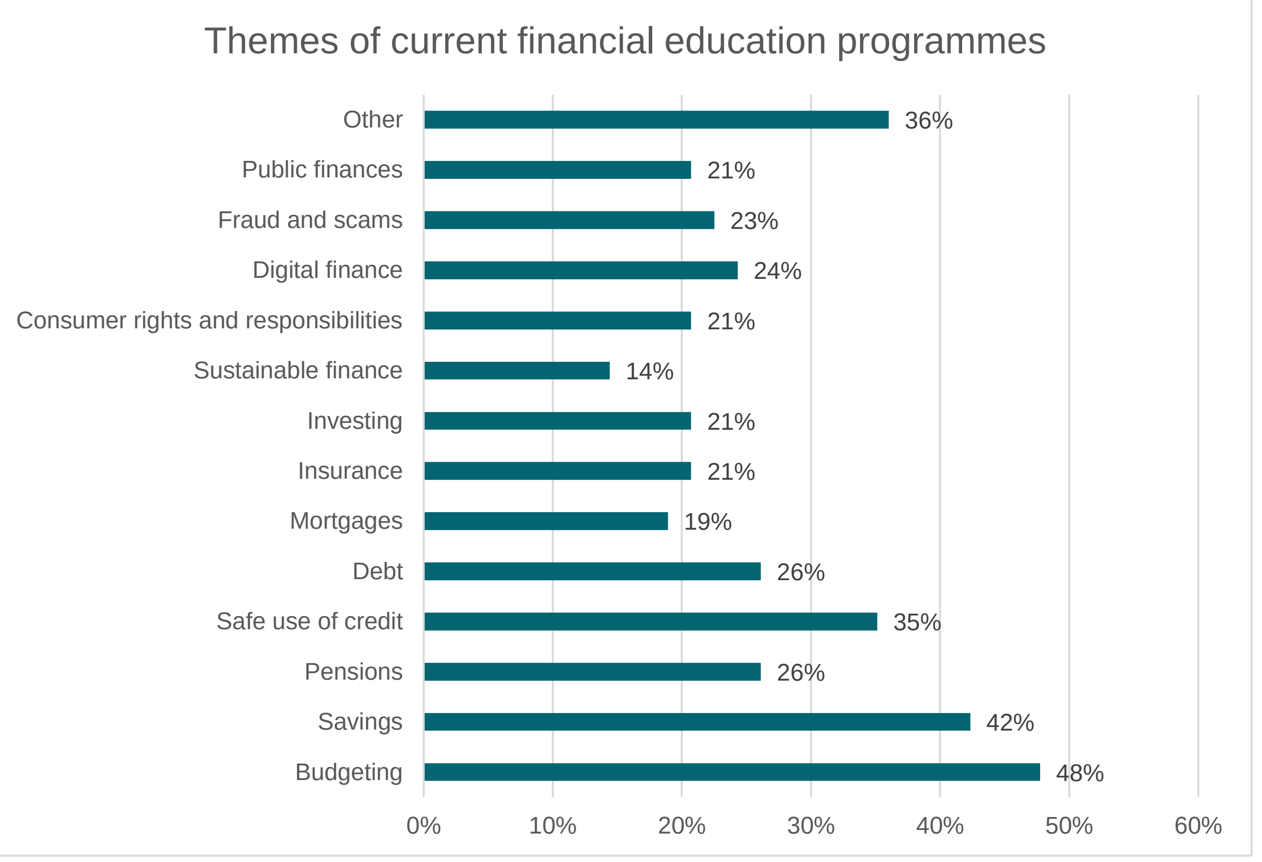


15% of stakeholders felt "Other" topics were important. These included:

- Accessing affordable credit
- Financial abuse
- Sustainability beyond “green” financial products
- Payments and cash usage
- Cryptocurrency, crypto assets and cybersecurity
- Understanding of the psychology of money

At the stakeholder event when discussing priority areas for the national strategy to cover, along with the above themes, taxation and entitlements to state benefits also came through as an important area. In addition to this, public services being able to support citizens’ financial literacy was a strong theme at the event. In choosing themes or topics to be covered by the national strategy, many stakeholders highlighted the importance of using data and research to identify priority topics.

When comparing stakeholder views of what themes should be covered in a national strategy and the financial education programmes that are currently in place, there is mismatch in some areas. 65% of stakeholders in the survey indicated money management as being an important theme to address in the national strategy and this is largely covered in programmes that cover budgeting (48%) and saving (42%). However, the next most important topic for stakeholders was digitalisation of financial services and in the current initiatives mapped in this document, digital finance was covered by only 24%. Indebtedness was also highlighted as being very important to stakeholders. Safe use of credit was covered by 35% of initiatives but other important topics related to indebtedness, such as debt (26%) and mortgages (19%) were less commonly covered. In fact, mortgages were the second least commonly covered theme in the survey, after sustainable finance (14%). Financial fraud and scams were also a priority area for stakeholders, but fraud and scams was only covered by 23% of current initiatives.



6.3 What would success look like for the strategy?

Through the survey and the event, stakeholders were asked about why a national strategy should be developed, what success would look like for the strategy and what challenges they could see for this success.

In terms of what successful outcomes for the strategy, stakeholders emphasised:

- **Improving the baseline financial literacy of the country –** Many stakeholders felt that an improvement in basic skills and financial literacy is very important, as well as improving financial resilience and financial wellbeing.
- **Improving decision making** – Particularly in an increasingly complex and digital financial environment.
- **Improving financial education access for vulnerable and marginalised individuals** – These initiatives should be targeted to the needs of these groups in terms of delivery channels and content. Financial abuse and safeguarding should also be considered in this.
- **Breaking the stigma around talking about money** – The stigma many feel in discussing money was mentioned by many organisations. It was felt a successful strategy could address this.

- **Providing financial literacy from a young age and throughout life** - Stakeholders strongly felt that a national financial literacy strategy would allow Irish people to access financial education from an early age and many stakeholders felt students leaving school should be financially literate and have the skills for their adult financial decisions. This came through very strongly through the survey and stakeholder event.
- **Providing information in Plain English –** Providing information in Plain English was suggested as a shared principle for the strategy.
- **Meeting people where they are at** – Financial education should not just be structured and formal programmes, but can also be provided as consumers are engaging in other activities, such as accessing public services.
- **Connecting with other Government strategies –** To be effective, the strategy must work in tandem with other Government strategies already in existence.

In terms of the how the strategy could be successfully run, the feedback was clear on the need for:

- **Government leadership –** There was a clear emphasis on government leadership and government support as being key to the success of the strategy.
- **Governance structure and opportunities to input into the strategy** - Many stakeholders mentioned a dedicated governance structure for the national strategy, for example Steering Groups or Committees. This would allow for opportunities to actively contribute to the national strategy as it develops.
- **Common goals and objectives** – Another element that came up frequently was the establishment of common goals and objectives in a national strategy, which could be segmented by type of organisation or target group. Many stakeholders also said "quick wins" as early goals for the strategy are important, establishing what can be done in first couple of years of the strategy to have early success stories. Common goals combined with governance structures were seen to be key to accountability within the strategy.
- **Evaluation and metrics –** Being able to evaluate the success of goals effectively, both qualitatively and quantitatively came up regularly in feedback. This included evaluation of behaviour and attitudes change.
- **Funding for initiatives –** Funding and resourcing were seen as being important to the development and roll out of new initiatives.
- **Opportunities for partnership –** Stakeholders saw the strategy as an opportunity to support building dialogue and partnerships between various financial education and service providers.
- **Standard guidelines for financial literacy activities and support developing materials –** Some of the ideas around this included the development of quality assured financial literacy programmes.
- **Training –** Stakeholders saw a need for a unified and standardised training for all educators in financial literacy education, including support for teachers in schools. There were also calls for training on using the European Commission/OECD financial competence frameworks and perhaps the development of an accredited qualification in financial literacy.

- **Financial education hub –** Stakeholders expressed that an easy-to-use hub for financial education initiatives in plain English would support the success of the strategy and awareness of financial education initiatives. This should be kept up to date. Stakeholders also called for help in promoting new initiatives.
- **Public services as touch points** – Stakeholders felt that citizens' interactions with public services should be explored as financial literacy opportunities and that financial literacy should be provided where people are already looking for information on public services related to finances.

6.4 Closer cooperation

On cooperation between stakeholders, there was strong support from the stakeholder survey for further cooperation between stakeholders, with 84% answering that there was a need for more cooperation among stakeholders on financial education issues. They saw the need for this for various reasons:

- As a way to prevent the fragmentation of financial education provision and increase the coordination of initiatives.
- As important for information and knowledge sharing, which would help share best practice and avoid duplication of effort.
- To help stakeholders make the most efficient use of their resources and pool resources for certain initiatives.
- To allow for partnership building between stakeholders and across different sectors
- To reach specific target groups and to partner with community organisations working with groups with specific needs.
- As a way of ensuring that financial service providers take on board the needs of specific target groups, but also that they can offer real-world insights into financial products sold to consumers.
- To set standards and combat conflicts of interest for financial providers.
- To support cooperation with community organisations and those dealing directly with those in need of financial education, to ensure their experiences are taken into account in financial education provision.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This report outlines the evidence available around current levels of financial literacy and financial education provision in Ireland and stakeholder views and priorities on the development of a national financial literacy strategy. On the basis of work undertaken to date, the below conclusions and recommendations are areas which the national financial literacy should aim to deal with; however, they are not exhaustive and further priority areas may emerge from ongoing stakeholder engagement on the development of the strategy and action plan.

Stakeholder activities

1 **Every stakeholder can play a role in improving the financial literacy and wellbeing of Irish people. The national financial literacy strategy should provide a framework for stakeholder involvement.**

There is a wide range of work being undertaken by stakeholders in financial education in Ireland at the moment. It is very positive to see the level of activity and engagement on financial education from stakeholders from across the public sector, the financial services industry, charities, non-profit organisations and educational organisations. The national strategy for financial literacy should provide a framework for all stakeholders to engage with the strategy in an appropriate manner. It should also provide for the financial services industry to continue to contribute to financial education in Ireland in a meaningful way. The national strategy should provide government leadership and a roadmap to guide stakeholders in supporting this ambition.

Adult education target groups and themes

1 **A large number of financial education programmes already in place are targeted at the entire population. Financial education for groups with specific needs or consumers in specific circumstances should be developed and implemented.**

Responses to the stakeholder survey indicate that there are already many financial literacy programmes and initiatives targeted at specific groups, such as victims of domestic violence, parents or carers. However, the largest target group of most programmes was ‘all population’ and there may still be certain groups who have a specific financial education need due to, for example, low levels of financial literacy, low levels of financial resilience, or their particular financial situation or life stage. These groups may also be seen as consumers in a vulnerable situation, depending on their circumstances.

Through the 2023 OECD/INFE 2023 International Survey of Adult Financial Literacy, we can see that those with lower levels of financial literacy and financial wellbeing are typically those who are:

- Unemployed
- Out of the labour force (e.g. retired people, carers etc.)
- On low incomes
- With less than secondary education

Only 8% of the initiatives collected were suitable for those who are unemployed and there were limited initiatives also for those not in the labour force, with low incomes and low levels of education.

In addition to these groups, those aged 60 and over were found to have lower levels of financial literacy and score lower on financial behaviour. Programmes for elderly people represented 12% of the initiatives collected.

Women also had lower financial literacy scores on average compared to men. This was mainly driven by lower financial knowledge. However, women were more than twice as likely to answer ‘don’t know’ to questions which explains part of the gender difference. From CCPC and ESRI research, it is also clear that women have less resilience for retirement and are more likely to rely on the State pension. There were some financial education initiatives targeting specific groups of women. However, only 14% of initiatives specified women as a target audience.

There are other groups, such as Travellers and migrants, who would benefit from tailored financial education resources. There are effective programmes in place for Travellers, designed with input from the Travelling Community, but as these represent only 6% of those collected by the survey, they could be further built on and supported. Programmes suitable for migrants represented only 5%, and there were no programmes that were specifically developed for migrants.

In developing financial education programmes for specific groups, it is important to tailor the content of the initiative to increase interest, engagement and uptake. Therefore, more in-depth research and studies on the needs of certain groups may be needed, in terms of programme content and delivery channels. Insights could be collected through surveys, consultations or qualitative studies such as interviews with representatives from these target groups. Based on this evidence, financial education providers could create programmes that combine the expertise of different organisations, to develop well-rounded financial education programmes. There are examples of such programmes already in place, but this approach needs to be more widespread to ensure appropriate programmes for certain groups.

2 There is a need for an increased focus on independent investor education, particularly for adults.

Although stakeholders did not prioritise investor education in their responses on priority groups for a national strategy, it is particularly important for adults making investment decisions. 21% of the initiatives collected in the stakeholder survey at least partly covered investing as a theme; however, only four of these initiatives specifically targeted retail investors.

According to a 2023 Eurobarometer on financial literacy in the EU, 18% of Irish people hold an investment product (funds, stocks or bonds), which is under the EU average of 24%. In addition, nearly half of Irish people are not confident in the investment advice they receive from their provider or adviser. Financial literacy was also highlighted as an issue by many respondents to the consultation on the review of the funds sector Funds Sector 2030: A Framework for Open, Resilient & Developing Markets. The majority agreed that financial literacy and education would be fundamental to growing Ireland's retail investor base, both from an investor protection perspective as well as raising awareness of savings and investment options.

Therefore, considering the complexity of many investment products and the new ways of investing provided by digitalisation, there is a clear need for independent information and education on investment products and making investment decisions.

3 Financial education on managing debt and to help those struggling with debt should be explored

Debt and mortgages were less commonly covered topics in financial education programmes, even though "indebtedness" was indicated as being an important topic for stakeholders in the development of a national strategy. In fact, mortgages were the second least commonly covered topic in the programmes collected by the stakeholder survey. As the largest debt most people will take on in their lifetime, it is important that consumers have the skills to be able to choose a suitable mortgage, understand it and be able to manage that mortgage over time. As regards other types of debt, safe use of credit was covered by 35% of initiatives, but only 6% of the initiatives collected specifically targeted people struggling with debt.

Information at key decision points, such as taking out a mortgage for the first time or looking at credit options is particularly necessary. Independent information, such as the tools and information available on the CCPC website on mortgages and loans, is important and should be highlighted as part of the national strategy. Many stakeholders mentioned Buy Now Pay Later and newer forms of credit as being important for financial education. Debt can also be closely linked to other issues such as problem gambling and mental health issues.

Consumers should also have an awareness of what supports are available should they find themselves in danger of or in arrears on their mortgage or are struggling with any other type of debt. A key objective for the Mortgage Arrears Group chaired by the Department of Finance will be to look at further fostering communication and engagement with consumers on mortgage arrears.

4 Financial literacy for SMEs should be addressed in comprehensive way.

Financial literacy initiatives specifically aimed at SMEs are currently limited. Stakeholders were clear on the need for financial education for smaller SMEs, farmers and family businesses. According to the Small Firms Association, the services industry, younger businesses and smaller businesses are associated with lower levels of financial literacy.

Only 8% of the initiatives collected in the stakeholder survey were targeted at SMEs. Expanding the reach and awareness of these current programmes should be explored, as well as developing tailored programmes for particular business types and needs.

Digital financial literacy

1 Digital financial literacy is essential to help consumers navigate their finances

Though Ireland performs well in terms of digital financial literacy in the OECD Report, there are still a significant amount of people without the required skills or confidence to manage their finances in an increasingly digital environment. 55.9% of Irish people were found to meet the minimum level of digital financial literacy in the 2023 OECD study on adult financial literacy. This means that over 44% of the adult population do not have the minimum level needed to navigate their finances. Those who scored lower on digital financial literacy were those:

- aged 60 and over
- out of the labour force
- with less than secondary education
- on low incomes
- who are self-employed

Stakeholders strongly identified digitalisation as being an important topic for the national strategy and warned against digital exclusion due to a lack of digital skills for certain target groups. Despite this, digital finance was covered by only 34% of current financial education initiatives collected by the stakeholder survey. Further support is needed for those with low digital financial literacy skills and financial education programmes and delivery channels should meet the needs of these specific groups, such as face-to-face workshops or specific coaching for those who need extra support managing their finances online.

Digital financial literacy should also address online scams. Financial fraud and scams was also a priority area for stakeholders, but fraud and scams was only covered by 23% of current initiatives collected in the survey. Education on scams is important to allow consumers to manage their money online with confidence.

Children and young people

1 Financial literacy opportunities within the curriculum should be supported. There are particular opportunities through Mathematics, which is a core subject from Junior Infants to 6th year. This should include teacher support and training.

There is a heavy focus in schools programmes, at post-primary level, on tying financial literacy into business-related subjects, which also includes related areas such as careers, employability and entrepreneurship. While these are important topics, not all students will take these subjects and they are focused on post-primary education.

There is scope, as it stands, to provide financial literacy through other existing elements of the curriculum. This could include Mathematics, which virtually all students take from Junior Infants to 6th year. The new Primary Mathematics Curriculum presents a particular opportunity to highlight financial literacy, as Money features as a stand-alone unit in the curriculum.

The elements of financial literacy present in the curriculum should be built on, through providing support to teachers on implementation. In practice, many financial education stakeholders already develop materials for teachers to use in class; however, these are often not linked to subjects other than business-related topics and often also depend on an existing relationship between the school and the financial education stakeholders.

2 Financial education should begin as early as possible in life and early childhood and primary level education on financial literacy should be developed.

There was widespread agreement amongst stakeholders, both in responses to the survey and at the stakeholder event, that financial education needs to begin early in life and carry on throughout.

There is provision for financial education in the current Aistear curriculum, throughout various themes, and the national financial literacy strategy should continue to support this. No financial education programmes or initiatives for early childhood education were collected as part of the stakeholder survey and therefore, it is unclear what materials or support is available for early childhood educators in this area.

While survey responses confirmed that there are programmes aimed at primary level students, it is unclear what the coverage of these programmes is. 14% of programmes collected in the survey for children and young people were targeted at primary level. However, as mentioned above, the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum presents a particular opportunity to highlight financial literacy at primary level.

Providing young children with age-appropriate financial education and encouraging the development of skills to enable them to engage with the world is an important foundation. Financial education opportunities for early learning and care settings should be explored and as well as further support for financial literacy in primary schools.

Young people who have left secondary education also need support in financial decision making.

3

Younger people aged 18 – 29 were shown to have lower levels of financial knowledge and financial wellbeing in OECD research. However, beyond schools programmes, initiatives specifically for young people were limited. Those who had left school and were in further education or training were targeted by a small number of programmes, but they are often not specific to their needs.

Those who are unemployed and those with lower levels of education were also shown to have lower levels of financial literacy and financial wellbeing. Only 4% of programmes collected were suitable for vulnerable young people, such as early school leavers and unemployed young people. There were some programmes for those beginning their careers in certain sectors, mainly financial services.

Young people need support making the transition from school education to either the working world or further education and training. While they are generally more digitally literate, they have less experience with financial services and lower levels of financial wellbeing. Further initiatives could be explored to support their financial knowledge and financial wellbeing.

More data is needed around children and young people's financial literacy, particularly internationally comparable data, such as the OECD data available for adults.

4

There is little data available on the financial literacy levels of children and young people (under the age of 18) in Ireland and no internationally comparable data. While Ireland participates in the OECD's PISA and has achieved strong results in comparison to other participating countries, to date Ireland has not taken part in the optional PISA measure on financial literacy. In order to gather improved national-level data and enable international comparison, Ireland could consider undertaking the optional measure on financial literacy for children and young people the next time it is available as part of PISA. In the meantime, alternative ways of measuring children and young people's financial literacy should be explored through the national financial literacy strategy to ensure appropriate KPIs and measures can be put in place for this target group.

1 Programme monitoring and evaluation should be promoted through the national strategy.

Most respondents to the stakeholder survey used different metrics for measuring the reach of their programmes. A common way of measuring reach under the national strategy would allow for greater visibility of how many people across Ireland are receiving financial education and what is the reach in certain target groups.

However, programme monitoring and evaluation also needs to go beyond counting numbers of participants at particular events or consumers reached but also capture change, whether behavioural, attitudinal or improvement in knowledge, as a result of financial education programmes. Evaluation should be built into programmes from the beginning and be able to show the impact of the initiative and what improvements can be made. Improved monitoring and evaluation of individual financial education initiatives would also support a more effective evaluation of the national strategy itself and whether the goals of the strategy are being achieved.

Guidance and support around programme monitoring and evaluation should be developed and provided as part of the national strategy for stakeholders. Adopting such guidelines will allow for analysis of which financial education programmes are effective in Ireland and to share good practice in terms of content and delivery channels.

2 Greater coordination is needed on research and data collection around financial literacy and wellbeing in Ireland

Several organisations are conducting surveys and research on financial literacy and consumer behaviour and understanding of consumer financial issues in Ireland. Better coordination on research, on the indicators collected and their use could lead to a more efficient use of resources. A national financial literacy strategy for Ireland could include mechanisms to better coordinate research efforts and share results. Better communication on the main results of research could also promote the use of research to inform financial education programmes, their target groups, themes and delivery channels.

Annex A - Respondents to the stakeholder survey

1. Adult Literacy Organisers' Association
2. Aflatoun
3. Age Action
4. Allied Irish Banks (AIB), p.l.c.
5. AllSkills Tech
6. An Post
7. AONTAS - The National Adult Learning Organisation
8. Association of Insurance & Financial Brokers trading as Brokers Ireland
9. Atlantic Technological University
10. Bank of Ireland Group
11. Banking and Payments Federation Ireland (BPFI)
12. Response from an individual consumer
13. Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board
14. Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board (Quality Assurance)
15. Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)
16. Central Bank of Ireland
17. Centre for Co-operative Studies, University College Cork
18. Chartered Accountants Ireland
19. Childminding Ireland
20. CompliNet Ltd
21. Cork Education and Training Board
22. Credit Union Development Association
23. Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
24. Department of Education
25. Financial Services Union
26. Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board
27. GillenMarkets
28. IDA Ireland
29. Insurance Ireland
30. Irish Banking Culture Board
31. Irish Funds Industry Association trading as ‘Irish Funds’
32. Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU)
33. Irish Mortgage Holders Organisation (IMHO)
34. Junior Achievement Ireland
35. Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board
36. LIA (Life Insurance Association)
37. Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency
38. MABS Support CLG
39. Microfinance Ireland
40. MoneyWhizz
41. Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board
42. National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

43. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
44. National Traveller MABS
45. Pensions Awareness Ireland
46. PTSB
47. Rehab Group
48. Revenue
49. Safeguarding Ireland
50. Skillnet Ireland
51. Social Finance Foundation (SFF)
52. Society of Actuaries in Ireland
53. South Leinster Citizens Information Service
54. Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI)
55. Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board

Annex B - Organisations represented at stakeholder event on 29 November 2023

1. Afanite
2. Age Action
3. AIB
4. An Post
5. Bank of Ireland
6. Banking and Payments Federation of Ireland (BPFI)
7. Brokers Ireland
8. Business Studies Teachers Association of Ireland (BSTAI)
9. Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)
10. Central Bank of Ireland
11. Chartered Accountants Ireland
12. CompliNet Ltd
13. Credit Union Development Association (CUDA)
14. Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
15. Department of Education
16. Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
17. Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
18. Department of Social Protection
19. Department of the Taoiseach
20. Financial Planners Ireland
21. Financial Services Union
22. Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)
23. Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO)
24. Ibec Financial Services Ireland Group
25. Institute of Banking (IOB)
26. Insurance Ireland
27. Irish Banking Culture Board
28. Irish Farmers Association
29. Irish Funds
30. Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU)
31. Junior Achievement Ireland
32. LIA (Life Insurance Association)
33. Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency
34. MABS Support
35. Money and Pensions Service (UK)
36. MoneyWhizz
37. National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)
38. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
39. Pensions Awareness Ireland
40. PTSB
41. Revenue
42. Revolut
43. Safeguarding Ireland
44. Sage Advocacy
45. Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI)
46. Skillnet Ireland

47. Social Finance Foundation
48. Social Justice Ireland
49. Society of Actuaries in Ireland
50. SOLAS
51. Spry Finance
52. St Vincent de Paul
53. Think-tank for Action on Social Change (TASC)
54. The Irish SME Association (ISME)
55. UCC Centre for Cooperative Studies

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

National Financial Literacy Strategy

Tithe an Rialtais, Sráid Mhuirfean Uacht, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 R583, Éire
Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2, D02 R583, Ireland

T: +353 1 676 7571 | @IRLDeptFinance
www.gov.ie/finance