Creating a Flourishing Society: Tackling socio-economic determinants of health inequalities

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www.tasc.ie
HUMAN FLOURISHING
Human Flourishing (examples)

• “A deeper sense of well-being, meaning and purpose”
• “A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being”
• “Positive psychology and the life well lived”
Towards a Flourishing Society...

1. A vision of the kind of society we want
   – ‘human flourishing’, and people developing their capabilities to live their lives to the full

2. Combined with ideas about social and economic policies to support people to flourish
A Healthcare Approach

Improve health and personal care services

Improve health status/outcomes

Achieve greater human flourishing
HEALTH INEQUALITIES
A Health Inequalities Approach

1. Improve health and personal care services
2. Improve health status/outcomes
3. Achieve greater human flourishing

Employment, taxation, and public services to lower socio-economic inequality
Health Inequality

“Health inequalities are preventable and unjust differences in health status experienced by certain population groups. People in lower socio-economic groups are more likely to experience chronic ill-health and die earlier than those who are more advantaged.”

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland reports inequalities:

- in mortality
- in physical and mental illness
- in child health
- in health services
- in health behaviours

http://www.publichealth.ie/healthinequalities/healthinequalities
“People with higher socioeconomic position in society have a greater array of life chances and more opportunities to lead a flourishing life. They also have better health. The two are linked: the more favoured people are, socially and economically, the better their health. This link between social conditions and health is not a footnote to the 'real' concerns with health - health care and unhealthy behaviours - it should become the main focus.”

Note from the Chair, Michael Marmot (p. 3)
Figure 2: Deviation of life expectancy at birth from average life expectancy by deprivation ranking

1st quintile (least deprived)  2nd quintile  3rd quintile  4th quintile  5th quintile (most deprived)

Male  Female
Figure 3: Life expectancy at birth by social class

The graph shows the life expectancy at birth for males and females grouped by social class. The social classes are categorized as Professional, Managerial, Non-manual, Skilled-manual, Semi-skilled, Unskilled, and Others. The data indicates a significant variation in life expectancy across these classes, with professionals generally having the highest expectancy and others having the lowest.
Spirit Level: epidemiological approach

Health and social problems are worse in more unequal countries

Index includes:
- Life expectancy
- Maths & literacy
- Infant mortality
- Homicides
- Imprisonment
- Teenage births
- Trust
- Obesity
- Mental illness (inc. drug and alcohol addiction)
- Social mobility


http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/resources/spirit-level
Correlations

• Higher **infant mortality** rates in more unequal countries
• Prevalence of **mental illness** is higher in more unequal rich countries
• **Drug use** is more common in more unequal countries
• More adults are **obese** in more unequal rich countries
• **Educational scores** are higher in more equal rich countries
• **Social mobility** is lower in more unequal countries

http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/resources/spirit-level
NURTURING HUMAN FLOURISHING
Nurturing Thought

• “Human flourishing is the end of all political, social, economic and political activity. ... It is, therefore, crucial to ensure the vision of human flourishing is articulated and kept clearly in view at all times.”

• “The capacity to think is inherent in the human person but must be nurtured: we need to develop opportunities for such fresh thinking by all citizens who wish to be free of received, unexamined beliefs.”
  – Fergus O’Ferrall (in Towards a Flourishing Society)
Attributes of Flourishing People?

- Confidence
- Work ethic
- Productivity
- Innovation
- Discernment
- Imagination
- Curiosity
- Self-reliance
- Moderation
- Rational decision making
  - Etc.

Innate or Acquired?
Nurtured?
Requires Willpower?

“Contains nicotine. Requires willpower. Always read the label.” [Link]

“It’s clinically proven that using NiQuitin Patches can double your chances of stopping smoking - compared with using willpower alone. [...] Requires willpower. Contains nicotine. Always read the label/leaflet.” [Link]

“Most people quit successfully after a few attempts, and while many go it along on will power, those quitters who use supports like our National Smokers’ Quitline, online help, smoking cessation services or medications are twice as likely to succeed.” (HSE) [Link]

“Willpower just means wanting something badly enough. Ask yourself if you really want to quit and if so... go for it!” (HSE) [Link]
Socio-Economic Determinants

Personal Attributes
- Willpower
- Personal Effort

Socio-Economic
- Educational Attainment
- Available Employment
- Income
Determinism v Personal Choice

- Economic assumptions about human nature and behaviour versus empirical evidence about the strong effect of socio-economic variables.
- Illusion that people can “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” to exit poverty or unemployment.
- Blaming the poor rather than looking at failure of economic system to provide jobs.
Information? Emotion?

Smoke during pregnancy and you leave your baby no choice

For advice and information to help you stop smoking, call 882 3408 to be put in contact with a trained smoking cessation counsellor.

Cigarette smoke contains over 4,000 toxic substances, many of which cause cancer. Smoking harms babies and children.
Incentives?
THE INDISPUTABLE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES
Economic Inequality

• Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium*

• “Urgent action needed to tackle rising inequality” (OECD)

• “Inequality Seriously Damages Growth, IMF Seminar Hears” (IMF)

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html


Economists on Economic Inequality

• “The most important problem that we are facing now today, I think, is rising inequality in the United States and elsewhere in the world,” Robert Shiller, Yale, when receiving Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics 2013
  http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/15/shiller-income-inequality-problem_n_4100509.html

• Joseph Stiglitz, The Price of Inequality (book), Nobel Prize for Economics 2001

• Robert Reich, Inequality for All (film)

• Thomas Piketty, Capital in the 21st Century (book)
  And many more…
Top 1% income share (USA, Ireland)

Sources: The World Top Incomes Database. http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/

http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/
Top 10% income share (USA, Ireland)

Sources: The World Top Incomes Database. http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/

http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/
Average income (Ireland)

Average incomes, Ireland. 1922-2009
Sources: The World Top Incomes Database, http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/
Nolan (2007)

NB Does not include households on welfare who do not appear in revenue data

http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/
Average income v. Top 1% (Ireland)

Sources: The World Top Incomes Database. http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/
Nolan (2007)

Average income per tax unit—break in 1999/2000
Average income per tax unit
Top 1% average income

http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/
Drivers of Inequality (UK)

- Family
- Childhood
- Globalisation
- Technology
- Political Systems and Institutions

http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/about-inequality/causesdrivers
Vast majority on State Pension
€11,975 single
€19,958 couple

Whole Population x Income

Average income (CSO)
€36,079
Min. wage
€17,542

57% of working age adults are employed
48% of all adults

25% of children (ESRI)
Child Benefit
€1,560/year
Welfare +€1,550/child

Child Benefit
€1,560/year

Older People

Children (family no employment)

Children (family with employment) 16%

Working Age (Employed)

Working Age (Unemployed or Inactive)

Weekly welfare is typically
€9,776 single
€16,266 couple
Income Distribution

1.9m people are pensioners, unemployed or ‘inactive’
Mostly low incomes (€10,000-20,000)

1.8m people are in employment
Avg. earnings €36,000
Minimum wage €17,542

Chart: NERI
Low Tax Base

- Ireland’s overall taxation was 29% of GDP in 2011
- Three-quarters of the EU average of nearly 36%
- Far less than high tax countries like Denmark on nearly 48% of GDP.

Taxation

Chart 7: Total Household Tax Contributions, % Gross Income

# Public Spending (% of GDP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Spending (% of GDP)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euro Area</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-15</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU-28</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>35.9 (lowest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>59.4 (highest)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Eurostat, COFOG data, 2012
Health Spending % GDP

- Ireland 7.1
- Euro Area 7.4
- EU-15 7.5
- EU-28 7.3
  - Romania 3.1 (lowest)
  - Croatia 9.2 (highest)
  - Netherlands 8.9 (second highest)
  - UK 7.9
## Education Spending % GDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% GDP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Euro Area</td>
<td>5.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU-15</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-28</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Romania</td>
<td>3.0   (lowest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Denmark</td>
<td>7.9   (highest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- UK</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Protection Spending % GDP

- Ireland 16.4
- Euro Area 20.5
- EU-15 20.3
- EU-28 19.9
  - Latvia 11.2 (lowest)
  - Denmark 25.2 (highest)
  - UK 17.9
NURTURING HUMAN FLOURISHING THROUGH ADEQUATE MATERIAL UNDERPINNINGS
Post-materialism
Subjective, quality of life values may predominate at relatively modest income levels.

Materialism
People require a sufficient level of objective material security, employment, housing, education, etc.

Source: R. Inglehart, 1997

http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder_published/article_base_56
The Four Pillars of Social and Economic Policy underpin a Flourishing Society that can nurture Human Flourishing.

- Health and Personal Care Services
- Education and Training
- Housing and Environment
- Incomes and Pensions

Image: BBC