



## Eliminating Health Inequalities – A Matter of Life and Death

### Summary

#### **Health inequalities in Ireland - the facts**

*TASC's findings include the following:*

- Evidence shows that more unequal societies fare worse across a range of outcomes – including health
- Inequality is endemic in Ireland: in 2009 the income of the top tenth of the population was 11 times that of the bottom tenth
- Children are more likely than any other group to be 'at risk of poverty', with one in six – or 205,000 children – falling into this category
- There is a strong correlation between income and educational levels
- Ireland experiences serious socio-economic mortality differentials: men living in the poorest areas live on average 4.5 years less than men living in the most affluent areas, while the differential for women is 2.7 years
- Unskilled men will, on average, die six years earlier than their professional counterparts
- Health improves and life expectancy increases in line with social class, income and education
- Previously unpublished research by the Institute of Public Health indicates that, if socio-economic mortality differentials in Ireland were eliminated, Irish people would, over an extended period of time, gain over 13.5 million extra years of life. Equality foundations laid today will, therefore, reap benefits for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

#### **Eliminating health inequalities in Ireland - TASC's recommendations**

*TASC looked at a range of factors affecting health inequalities and proposes (among other recommendations):*

- The establishment of an Independent Review of Health Inequalities, to report within 12 months
- The Review's recommendations to form the basis of a new population health strategy
- An Equality Statement to be published as part of the annual budgetary process, examining the distributional impact of proposed taxation and spending measures on all income levels and on specific demographic groups (women, children, the elderly, ethnic groups ....)
- Taxation to be gradually raised to Western European levels through the further and accelerated curtailment of tax expenditures, increases in CAT/CGT and the introduction of new taxes on immovable assets; increased revenue to be used for higher health and education spending, both of which have been shown to have the greatest impact on income distribution (and, thus, also on health inequalities).
- Increased and targeted investment in early childhood care and education, which has been shown to play a critical role in addressing health inequalities by breaking the links between early disadvantage and poor outcomes in adulthood
- Implementation of a universal social health insurance model funded by increased employer and employee social insurance contributions combined with general taxation to provide social health insurance benefits to all Irish residents.
- That the forthcoming White Paper on Financing Universal Health Insurance evaluate the merits of a single social health insurance fund alongside the option of competing public and private insurers