

## A BUDGET BOOST. A FUTURE STILL ON HOLD?

Wages rise. Rent relief increases. The harder test is whether young people can afford an independent life.



Leaving or staying? AI-generated illustration, not a photograph of an interviewee.

### THE COST OF GETTING STARTED

## More help on paper. Pressure at the front door.

Budget 2027 brings a higher wage floor, larger tax credits and a reduction in college fees. But the relief arrives in a country where finding a home and secure work remains a formidable hurdle for young adults. <sup>[2]</sup> <sup>[4]</sup>

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) says the package does not meet the scale of the pressures. Ministers point to income supports and investment in housing and skills. This edition examines both the measures and their limits. <sup>[7]</sup> <sup>[2]</sup>

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### ADULT MINIMUM WAGE

€14.94

Announced hourly rate from 1 January 2027, up 79 cent. <sup>[5]</sup>

### THE MONTHLY RENT GAP

€326

Difference between national standardised average new and existing tenancy rents, Q1 2026. <sup>[9]</sup>

### NEW-TENANCY RENTS

+9.1%

Annual growth in the national standardised average, Q1 2026. <sup>[9]</sup>

## The rent gap Budget day cannot close <sup>[9]</sup>

The latest RTB/ESRI index puts the standardised average rent for a new tenancy at €1,839 a month, compared with €1,513 for an existing tenancy. These are dwelling-level averages, not the price of a student room. They illustrate why entering the market is a different challenge from remaining in it.

A tax credit can lower the cost for an eligible renter. It cannot supply a room, remove a deposit requirement or guarantee that a landlord accepts an applicant. **Housing and the limits of relief → page 3.**

### THE GENERATION TEST

## Can you stay? Can you start?

Work, rent, college and the cost of leaving home. Our focus is the path to independence, not just the size of a Budget headline.

### YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: 12.5%

September estimate for the 15–24 labour force; not 12.5% of all young people. <sup>[10]</sup>

### 02 · EDITORIAL

Give young people a reason to build a life here.

### 03 · YOUNG IRELAND

What the increases mean; who can miss out.

### 04 · FUEL & PRACTICAL HELP

Fuel protests, heating changes and claim dates.

**SOURCES & READING** <sup>[2]</sup> Government: Your guide to Budget 2027 · <sup>[4]</sup> Department of Enterprise: Budget 2027 · <sup>[5]</sup> Grant Thornton: Budget 2027 payroll summary · <sup>[7]</sup> NYCI: Budget response, 6 October · <sup>[9]</sup> RTB/ESRI: Rent Index Q1 2026 · <sup>[10]</sup> CSO: Monthly Unemployment, September 2026

THE IRISH FUTURE • OUR VIEW AND THE EVIDENCE

# THE REAL TEST: A LIFE YOU CAN BUILD HERE

A little more money matters. So do a secure home, dependable hours and a route through education that does not depend on family wealth.

EDITORIAL • OPINION

## A future should not require a boarding pass

There is a familiar way of discussing young people in Ireland: praise their qualifications, celebrate their adaptability, then treat their departure as proof of an adventurous spirit. Some leave because they want to. Others would prefer a workable life closer to family and friends. A serious politics must make room for both truths.

This Budget contains measures worth having. Extra pay can cover an essential bill. Help with rent or college costs can matter to someone counting every euro. We should acknowledge that without asking readers to mistake a useful contribution for a complete answer.

The question is what happens after the announcement. Can a young worker find somewhere to live near the job? Can a student attend class without building the week around extra shifts and a long commute? Can someone who loses work stay afloat without depending on parents who may themselves be struggling?

Family help should be a kindness, not an unofficial condition of participation in adult life. When a deposit, an unpaid opportunity or a move for work is possible only with money from home, talent is not the only thing deciding who gets ahead.

Government should therefore be judged on outcomes as well as allocations: genuinely affordable homes occupied, youth services kept open, training completed and the quality of the jobs that follow. Publish those results clearly, with the people left out visible in the figures.

Employers have a part to play too. Predictable hours, paid learning and a credible path to progression are practical ways to value younger staff. An economy cannot keep asking for commitment while offering uncertainty in return.

Our position is simple. Staying in Ireland should be a realistic choice. Leaving should be an opportunity freely taken, not the only plan that balances. A Budget is a beginning; the test is the life it helps a person build.

## Who benefits from the tax changes?<sup>[4]</sup> <sup>[6]</sup>

The single-person standard-rate income-tax band is to rise from €44,000 to €46,500. Personal and employee tax credits each increase by €125. The benefit depends on earnings and tax already payable.

A worker earning below the old €44,000 threshold gets no saving from widening that band alone. Someone with little or no income-tax liability may be unable to use all of a higher credit. A headline maximum is not a payment to everyone.

€500

Maximum annual income-tax saving from the €2,500 band widening alone, for someone whose relevant income reaches the new threshold.

Our calculation: €2,500 × (40% – 20%). Excludes credits, USC, PRSI and changes in pay.

### “But it certainly doesn’t feel as though this budget was about me.”

Dermott Foy, HSE healthcare assistant, Donegal. Speaking to *The Irish Times*, 6 October 2026.<sup>[23]</sup>

## Youth services: the gap behind the grant<sup>[8]</sup>

NYCI welcomed €7 million in additional current funding for youth work, but said it had sought €13.5 million for day-to-day provision. That leaves €6.5 million between the increase announced and the organisation’s current-funding request.

Its wider request also included capital money for youth spaces. Those building costs should not be confused with the funding needed to pay staff and keep programmes running. NYCI says rising demand and costs are putting existing provision under strain.

### The Government’s case

The Department of Enterprise says the package combines support for earnings with business competitiveness. It highlights the higher minimum wage, tax changes and an increased employer PRSI threshold. The argument is that protecting jobs and improving pay must proceed together.<sup>[4]</sup>

SOURCES & READING  
[4] Department of Enterprise: Budget 2027 · [6] KPMG: Budget 2027 tax rates and credits · [8] NYCI: Youth work funding, 7 October · [23] Irish Times: Budget reactions, 6 October

# THE PRICE OF STARTING YOUR OWN LIFE

The pressures connect: a room determines where you can work or study; wages determine whether you can take it; family resources can decide who gets a choice.

€1,839

New-tenancy rent, national standardised monthly average. <sup>[9]</sup>

## A credit is not a spare room <sup>[9] [14]</sup>

RTB/ESRI figures show a €326 monthly gap between average new and existing tenancies in Q1. The index adjusts for the mix of properties. It is not a claim that every tenant moving house will face that precise increase.

The increased Rent Tax Credit offers help, but Revenue’s rules require income tax against which to set it. A student or low-paid worker with no such liability cannot turn the headline credit into cash. Qualifying conditions also apply to the tenancy.

For 2026, the existing single-person maximum remains €1,000. The announced €1,150 limit applies to 2027 and 2028; it does not add €150 to this year’s claim. <sup>[17]</sup>

## Deposits are still a separate hurdle

The Budget raises the maximum Help to Buy relief to €35,000. That headline should not be treated as a grant available to every young renter: Revenue’s scheme conditions and the buyer’s circumstances still govern access. <sup>[2]</sup>

€16.00

Living Wage benchmark for 2026/27. <sup>[12]</sup>

## More per hour; enough hours? <sup>[5] [12] [13]</sup>

The announced adult minimum wage of €14.94 from January is €1.06 below the €16.00 Living Wage benchmark. The Living Wage Technical Group calculates this benchmark for a full-time adult without dependants. It is not the legal minimum.

With paid hours unchanged, the 79-cent increase adds €15.80 gross weekly at 20 hours or €30.81 at 39 hours. These examples are before tax.

The Department of Enterprise also says the Budget removes the 2029 living wage timeline, presenting this as certainty for employers. <sup>[4]</sup>

## The under-20 question <sup>[11]</sup>

In 2026, the statutory hourly rates are €11.32 at age 18 and €12.74 at 19, compared with €14.15 at 20 and over. Sectoral rates and exceptions can apply; actual pay may be higher.

NYCI wants the lower youth rates abolished. Its objection is that younger workers buy the same essentials despite being entitled to a lower minimum. <sup>[7]</sup>

12.5% youth unemployment

The CSO’s September flash estimate was 12.5% for ages 15–24, against 5.0% overall. It measures unemployment within the labour force, excluding people outside the labour force. Recent estimates can be revised. <sup>[10]</sup>

€150

Announced permanent reduction in the student contribution fee. <sup>[16]</sup>

## A fee cut; the rest of the bill <sup>[16]</sup>

The announced €150 cut brings the maximum student contribution to €2,350. SUSI maintenance rates are to rise by 4.5% from January 2027. The contribution is one part of attending college; housing, food and transport remain separate costs.

“It’s not a lot, everything about college is so expensive, and we don’t have time to work. It’s too little.”

Aisling Dennehy, Food Science and Health student, University of Limerick. Speaking to *Limerick Voice*, 6 October 2026. <sup>[22]</sup>

NYCI warns that support arrangements continue to assume a family safety net. That matters for young adults whose parents cannot contribute, even when household income puts them outside a particular grant threshold. <sup>[7]</sup>

## An exit plan is not a departure <sup>[7]</sup>

NYCI’s RED C poll found 68% of 18–24-year-old respondents considering moving abroad. The age group contained 104 respondents within a 1,010-adult survey, fielded on 7–12 May 2026. This is a small subgroup and a pre-Budget snapshot of intentions, not a count of emigrants.

The question for policy is whether the options at home improve. A survey can signal anxiety; it cannot tell us which respondents will leave, or prove what this Budget will make them do.

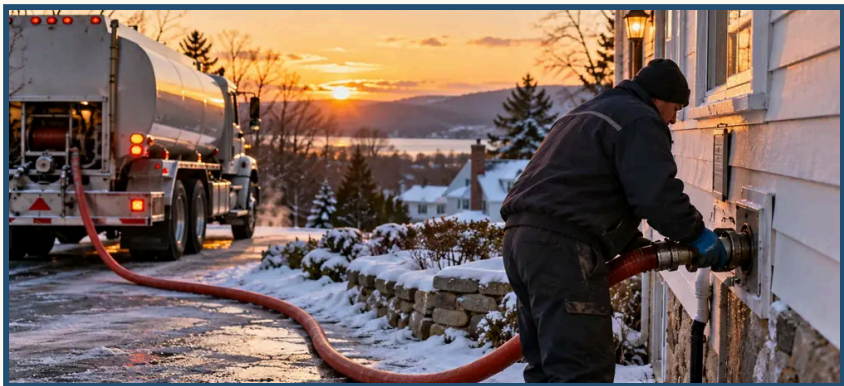
### SOURCES & READING

[2] Government: Your guide to Budget 2027 · [4] Department of Enterprise: Budget 2027 · [5] Grant Thornton: Budget 2027 payroll summary · [7] NYCI: Budget response, 6 October · [9] RTB/ESRI: Rent Index Q1 2026 · [10] CSO: Monthly Unemployment, September 2026 · [11] WRC: National Minimum Wage · [12] SVP: Living Wage 2026/27 · [13] Living Wage Technical Group: Method and purpose · [14] Revenue: Rent Tax Credit eligibility · [16] Irish Times: Student fees and grants, 6 October · [17] Irish Times: When changes start, 7 October · [22] Limerick Voice: UL students on college fee cuts, 6 October

FUEL PROTESTS • BUDGET FOLLOW-UP

# WINTER RELIEF. THE FUEL ROW CONTINUES.

The Budget eases some heating costs and extends temporary pump-tax cuts. Protest leaders say it has not delivered the price reductions they wanted.



AI-generated heating-oil illustration. Actual savings depend on purchases and prices.

## A postponement is not abolition<sup>[3]</sup>

The Government’s Budget in Brief says carbon tax on kerosene and natural gas will be reduced to €48.50 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>. Petrol and diesel remain at €71 until 1 May 2027, when the rate is scheduled to rise to €78.50.

A tax reduction or delayed increase also cannot set the final pump price: the underlying fuel cost can still move.

## Protest warning renewed<sup>[19]</sup> <sup>[24]</sup>

Fuel protest leaders told the Irish Examiner on 6 October that action would go ahead as soon as November. Spokesman James Geoghegan, a Westmeath farmer and agricultural contractor, had wanted petrol and diesel price cuts. A coordinated cross-sector protest was under consideration.

Temporary fuel-excite cuts continue until 28 February 2027, followed by restoration in four steps ending on 30 June.

No exact protest date or route was given.

**For young rural workers**, fuel is part of the cost of reaching a shift, training or college. Extra pay must be weighed against travel as well as rent.

### ALSO THIS MONTH

#### Violence against women: the call to act

By 7 September, nine women had died violently in the Republic in 2026. This September figure is not an updated October total.<sup>[1]</sup>

The Waterford-based Walkout for Women campaign called for a nationwide 15-minute walkout on 30 September to highlight violence against women.

**Support:** Women’s Aid’s free, confidential National Freephone Helpline is **1800 341 900**, available 24 hours a day.<sup>[25]</sup>

## What changes, and when?<sup>[17]</sup> <sup>[5]</sup>

### 1 JANUARY 2027

Adult minimum wage rises to €14.94. Income-tax changes begin; individual gains depend on earnings and circumstances.

### FROM JANUARY 2027

SUSI maintenance rates rise by 4.5%. The Fuel Allowance weekly rate rises by €5 to €43 for eligible recipients.<sup>[21]</sup>

### 2027 & 2028 TAX YEARS

Higher Rent Tax Credit limits apply. The new limit does not increase the credit for rent paid during 2026.

### 28 FEBRUARY 2027

End date announced for the extension of temporary fuel-excite reductions.<sup>[19]</sup>

### 1 MAY 2027

Petrol and diesel carbon tax rises from €71 to €78.50 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>[3]</sup>

Some Budget measures require legislation. Check current rules before claiming.<sup>[20]</sup>

## Help you can check now

### Rent Tax Credit for 2026

PAYE taxpayers can claim in-year through Revenue myAccount: PAYE Services → Manage your tax for the current year → Add new credits → You and Your family → Rent Tax Credit. Keep your rent records and provide tenancy details, including an RTB number where applicable.<sup>[15]</sup>

### College support

Use SUSI’s eligibility indicator and student portal for your own award. Its contact number is **0818 888 777**. A Budget headline is not an individual grant decision.<sup>[18]</sup>

### Pay and working hours

The Workplace Relations Commission publishes minimum-pay rules and sectoral exceptions. Check your age category, hours and payslip against the appropriate rules.<sup>[11]</sup>

### Tell us what the figures miss

Young workers, renters, students and apprentices: what is the biggest obstacle to building a life here? Send your experience, with documents where useful, to [cambling@proton.me](mailto:cambling@proton.me).

We will seek permission before identifying contributors in a published story.

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### SOURCES & READING

[1] Irish Times: Violence against women, 7 September 2026 · [3] Government: Budget in Brief 2027, pp. 16, 18-25 · [5] Grant Thornton: Budget 2027 payroll summary · [11] WRC: National Minimum Wage · [15] Revenue: How to claim the Rent Tax Credit · [17] Irish Times: When changes start, 7 October · [18] SUSI: Eligibility and applications · [19] Irish Examiner: Fuel protest response, 6 October · [20] Revenue: Budget proposals and legislation · [21] The Journal: Budget changes and start dates · [24] Irish Examiner: Fuel protest leaders, 3 October · [25] Women’s Aid: Support and helpline