



**Maynooth
University**

National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Household resilience and crisis in Ireland: *Evidence from the enabling resilience project*

Dr. Clíona Rooney

MUSSI Maynooth University
12th May 2017



An Roinn Coimírcé Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection
Helping you build a better life



IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn



rescue
citizens' resilience
in times of crisis



Topics

- Project aims and objectives
- Context and background
 - Activation strategies and resilience
- Research strategy
 - Narrative interviews and lifelines
- Findings
 - FIS and resilience in participant life paths
- Conclusion and implications

Resilience

- Question for this project
 - How does FIS enable capabilities for resilience?
 - Resilience is a term used by many research disciplines including hazards research, materials science, environmental studies and social science.
 - In the case of this current study resilience refers to a low-income family's ability to respond positively to shock or negative events such as becoming unemployed or reduced working hours.

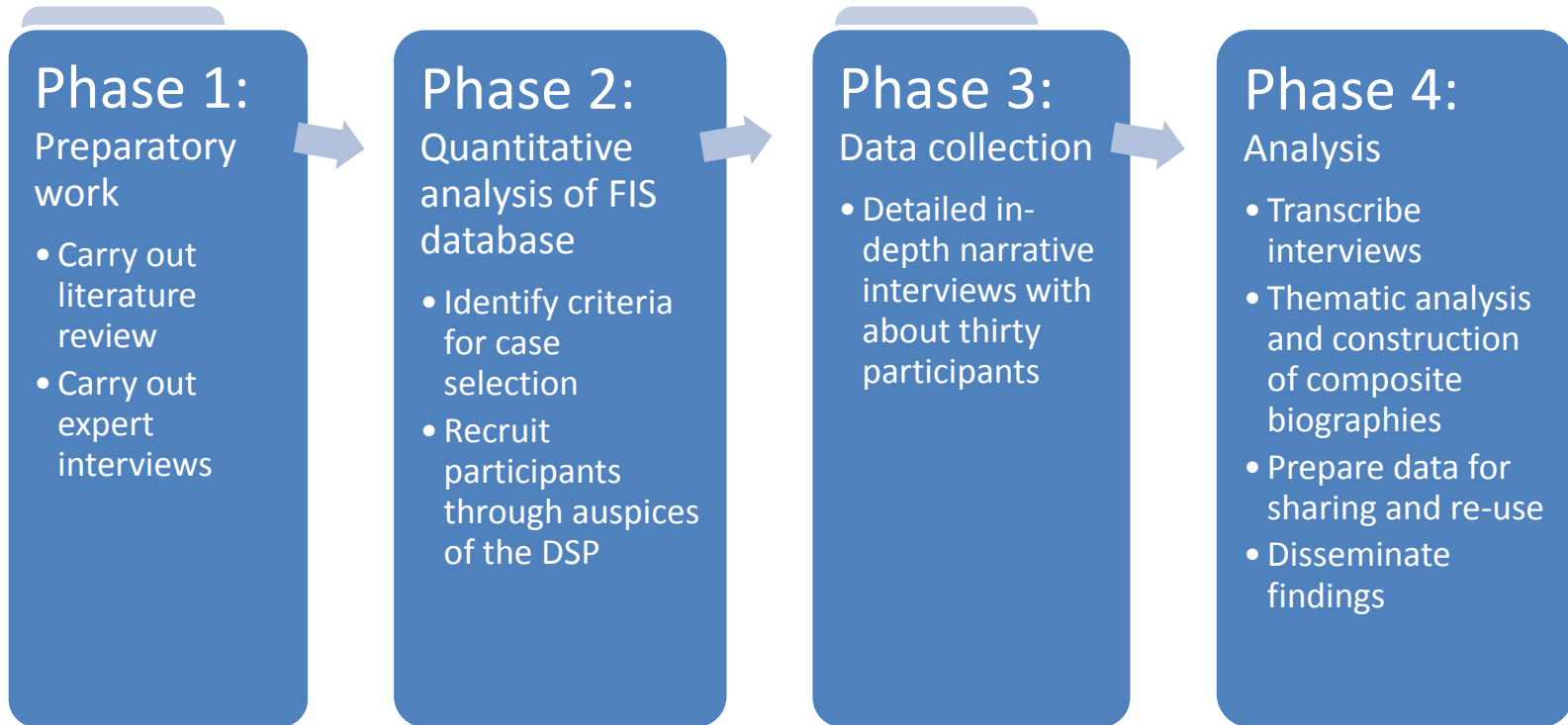
What is Family Income Supplement? (FIS)

- Family Income Supplement (FIS) is a means tested in-work and Child Income Support (CIS) introduced to Ireland in 1984.
- FIS aims to provide a financial incentive for low income families to work.

Key project objectives

- Examine the experiences and resilience practices of low-income families receiving FIS
 - To what extent does FIS promote resilience?
 - How do the experiences of FIS recipients compare with those of other families experiencing adversity?
 - Consider what additional supports may be necessary
 - Disseminate findings and develop international networks
 - Strategic collaboration with research team at ISCTE-IUL, Portugal

Research Strategy





**Maynooth
University**

National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Background

Activation policies and resilience



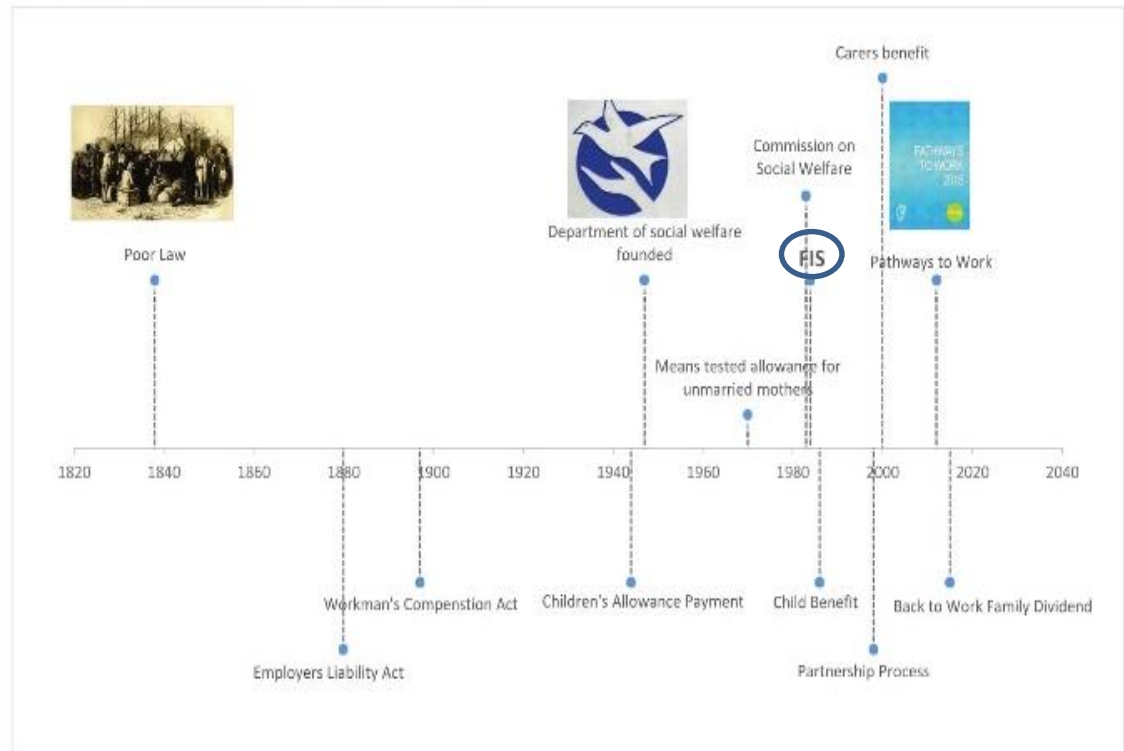
Activation policies

- Financial crisis has led to considerable debate about the impact of activation policies on citizens' resilience across Europe.
- In the 1990s the European Union (EU) encouraged its members to move from passive to active labour strategies.
- Labour market activation strategies seek to encourage or assist those who are relying on social welfare to commence employment.
- However this is only achievable when jobs are available.
- Conditionality.

FIS within the social policy timeline

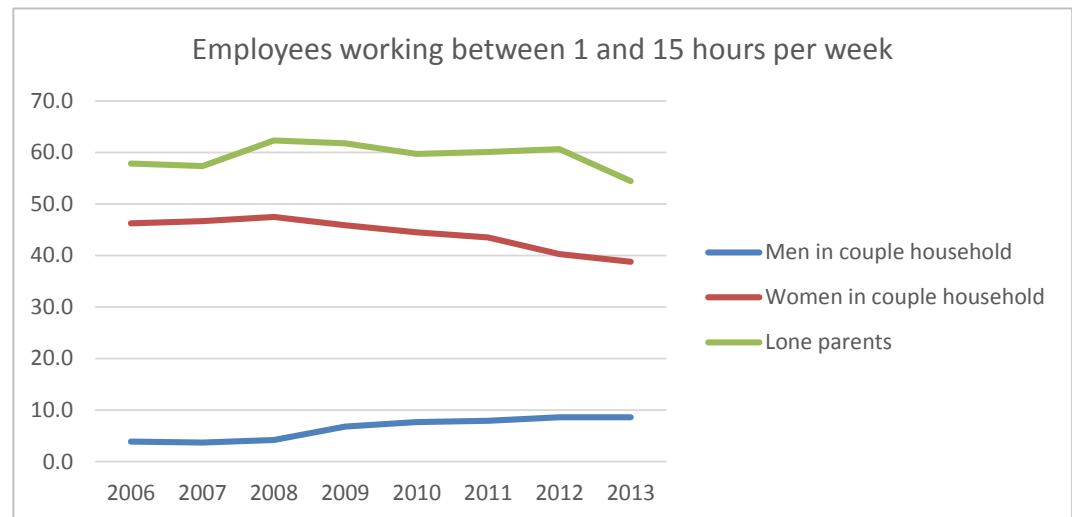
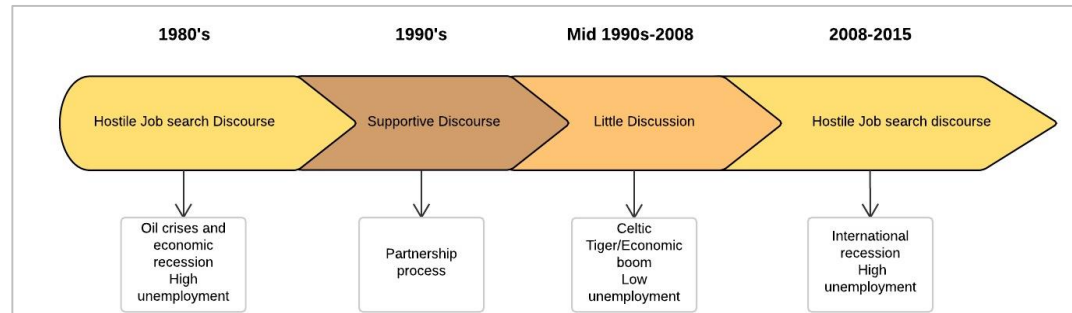
Contexts

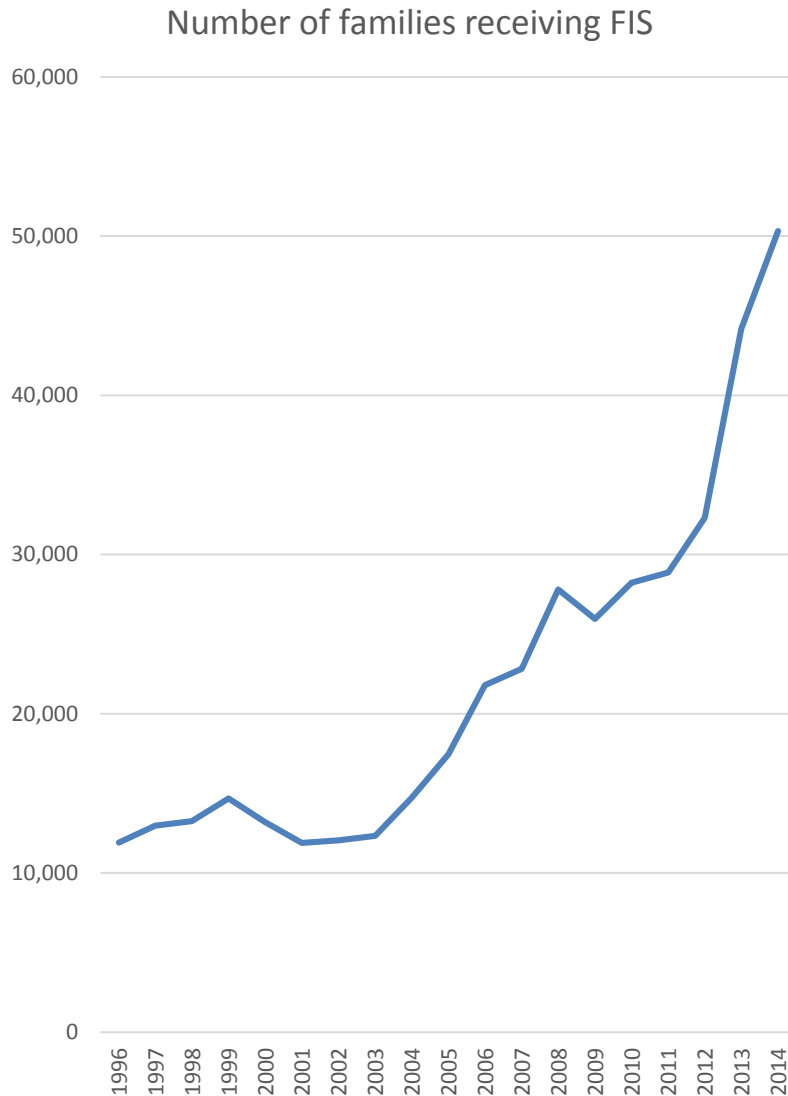
- Rising unemployment associated with 1980s recession
- Long-term shift in family 'policy paradigm' towards 'egalitarian individualism' and activation
- On the threshold of period of rapid change in Irish family life
- Does FIS enable resilience in changed family and policy contexts of the present?



Economic Recession

- Led to a rapid introduction of labour market activation strategies
- Dramatic job loss in male dominated professions was dramatic in comparison to employment in traditionally female sectors.

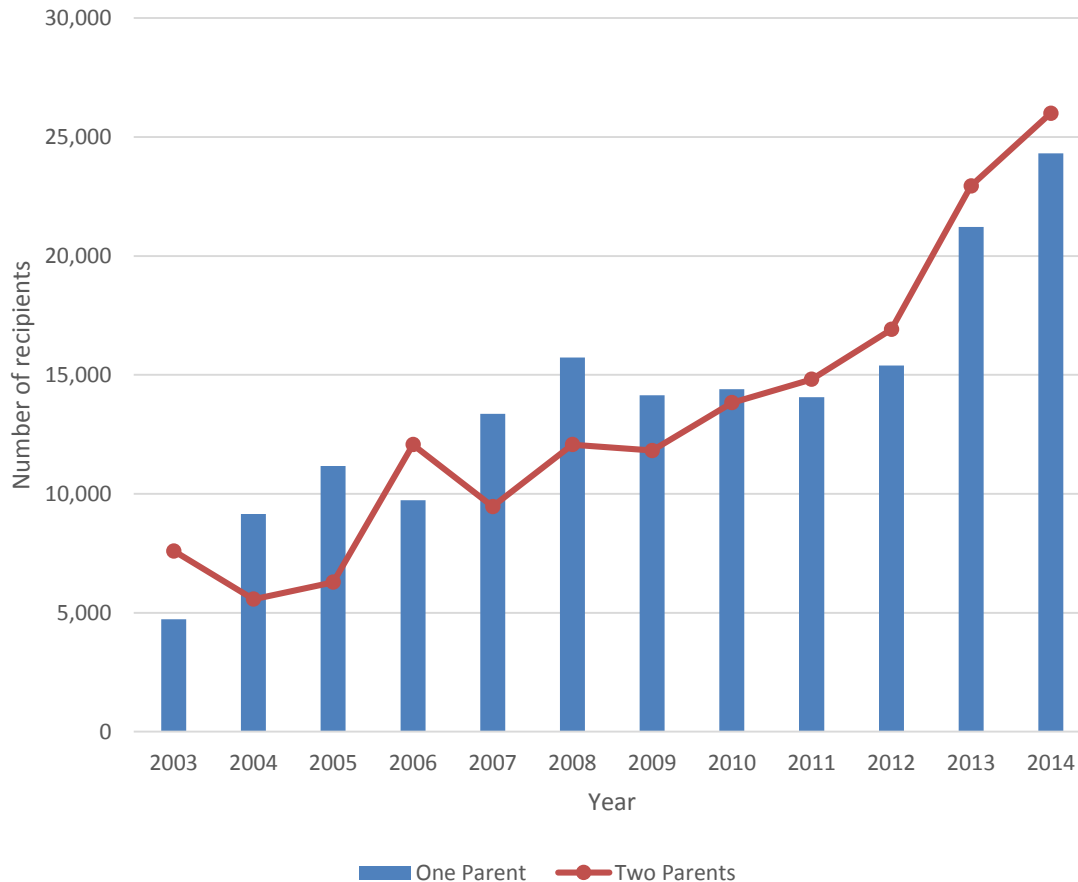




Number of families receiving FIS

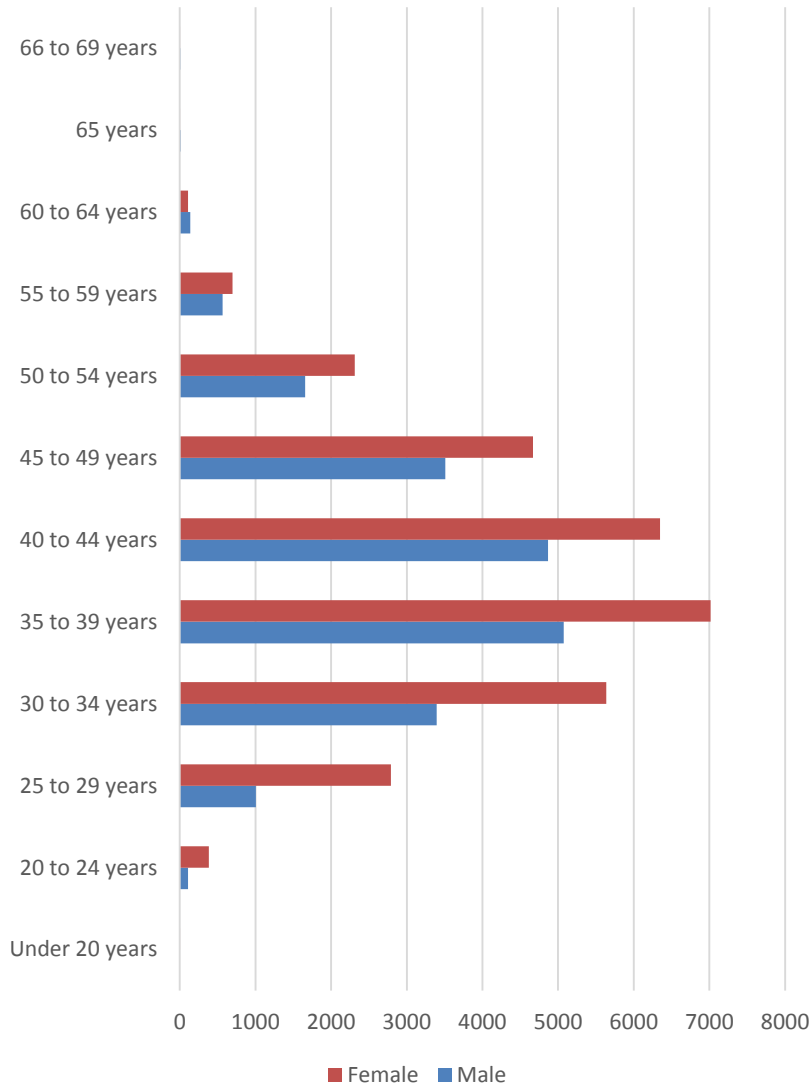
- Since 1996 the number of households receiving FIS nationally has risen from 11898 to 50306 in 2014.
- The number of child beneficiaries has increased from 29754 in 1996 to 111583 in 2014.
- In 2012 there was a marked increase in the overall number of FIS claimants.

Number of one parent & two parent families receiving FIS



- Since 2011 there are more two parent families receiving FIS payments than single parent households nationally.

FIS recipients gender & age



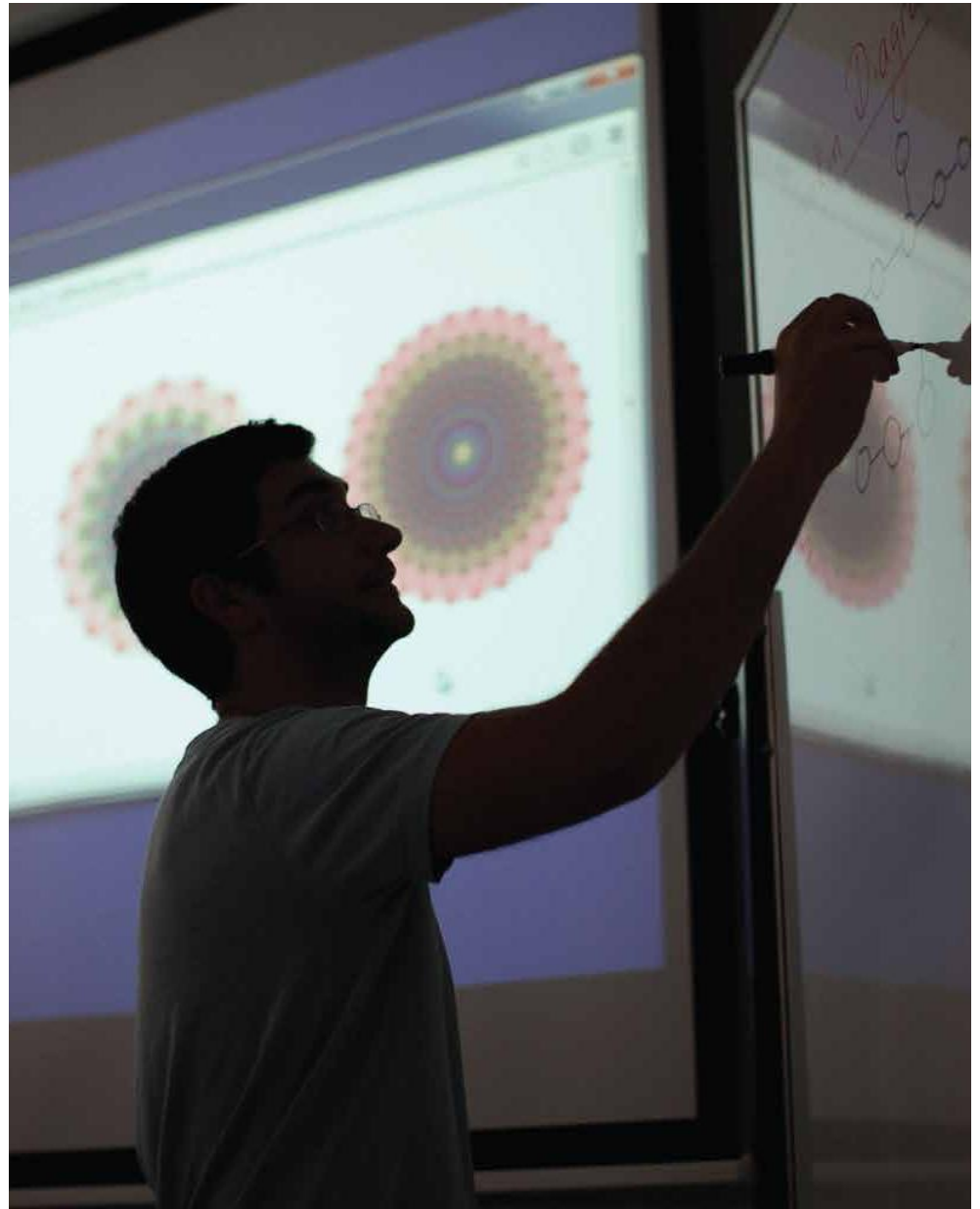
- Majority of recipients are aged between 35 to 39 years.
- Small number of recipients aged between 20 to 24 and 60 to 64.
- More female recipients of FIS in all age groups except 60 to 64.



**Maynooth
University**
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Narrative interviews

Sampling and methodology



Methodology

- Overall aim: ‘elicit participants’ changing experiences of coping on a low income over time, focusing on their practices, resources and requirements at different life stages and at the time of interview, including their experiences of transitioning in and out of FIS’
 - Sampling by range to maximize diversity
 - Narrative biographical approach
 - Co-construction of reflexive ‘lifelines’
 - Promote accurate recollection
 - Facilitate comparison across cases and studies

Who we interviewed

Age	Gender		No. children		Nationality		Relationship Status	
	M	F	1-3	4+	Irish	Non-Irish	Couple	Single
20-40	7	8	12	3	7	8	11	4
41-50	3	8	9	2	8	3	5	6
51-60	1	3	2	2	3	1	2	2
Total	11	19	23	7	18	12	18	12

Why the midlands?

- In order to develop a recruitment strategy we analysed data provided by DSP for NUTIII Midlands Region (Counties Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath)
- Evidence that region comparatively badly affected by recession
 - Includes parts of ‘outer’ commuter belt (NESC)
 - Demonstrated to have low level of resistance to recession (Breathnach et al. 2014)
- Maximize comparability with data collected for RESCuE project



**Maynooth
University**
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Narrative interviews Findings: lifelines and themes



Key themes 1: balancing care and work

- Both men and women described how FIS enabled them to balance working and caring obligations
 - Multiple forms of caring obligation (children, elderly, ill and disabled)
 - Employment practices framed within moral rationality of care

‘No. No, [my job is] part time....You couldn't do full time not with...no. I couldn't think about that at the moment especially with [my son's] not in big school and he is only starting nursery like properly the pre-school year this year and I wouldn't want to. You know I'd want to be there for him and for the children when they come in from school.’

Key themes 2: dignity of work

Interviewer: Have you ever considered what life would be like without FIS?

Interviewee: Um...it wouldn't be, it would be impossible. I'd be better off on the dole because with I do 32 hours which is 10.75 an hour, that's 320 quid and I was getting 340 on the dole. So you know that's basically it even though I want to work. I hated being on social welfare. It's embarrassing, I hated being on social welfare, I don't...Especially my son now is 14 he needs to see me going to work so give him, let him know. My father never wouldn't agree to that sort of thing you know. Taking tax payer's money to...you know. That's why, you know, you know I always want to work.

- Similarly to balancing work and care, the opportunity to work is framed within morally inflected narrative
 - Obligations to children
 - Also providing self-respect and social connection



**Maynooth
University**

National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Key themes 3: Broken Plans

“when the recession kicked in my work load dropped off....I suppose the hours cut down in work....we did very well to actually stay open the office.”

“The fact that I am in the construction industry we were probably hardest hit. Um...we were also the kind of slowest to start back up”

- Pre-recession plans included career ambitions, starting a new life and buying a new home.
 - Older children are unemployed due to the recession.
 - Struggling with mortgage repayments
 - Precarious work
 - Seasonal work

Key themes 3: Broken Plans

“I went in to just you know touch base with my boss.....so he was kind of hemming and hawing and saying...God...like you know...I might have to cut your hours”

“Where they can exploit a worker they will do it.”

- Precarious working arrangements
 - In some cases, dual-income households became single income households because of job loss.
 - Fewer hours
 - Agency work
 - Zero hour contracts
 - Part-time JSA

Key themes 4: resilient visions of the future

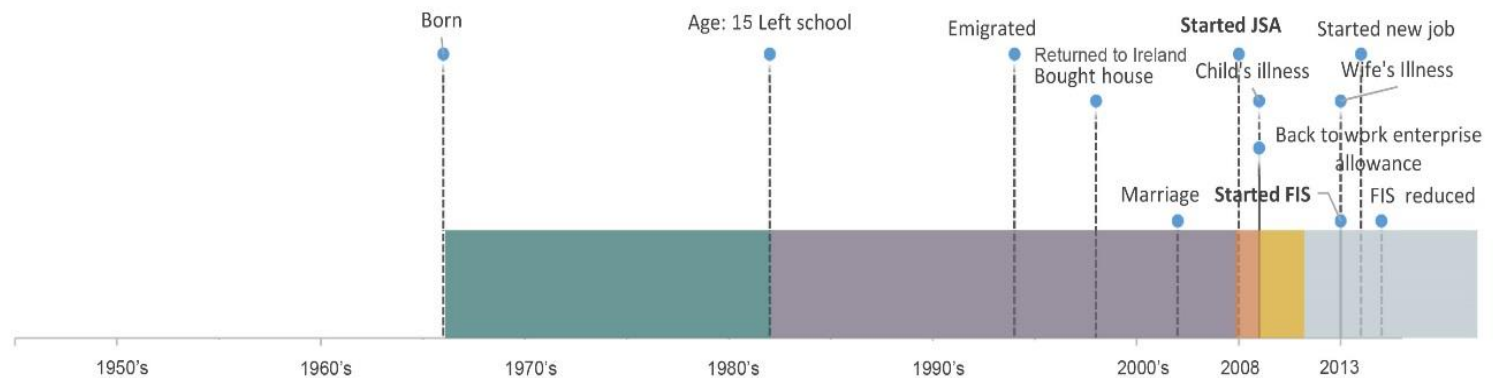
“In the next five to 10 years I would like to be working...I’d like Tom's job to be permanent, whatever he is doing”

“I will try to keep my work because I understand that it is hard to find something different. Lots of companies have closed”.

“I'd hope that I'd be still working and hopefully better than what I am and...earning enough that I'm not reliant on FIS”

“I don't see it improving not unless they tackle; they need to tackle the social welfare system...they need to tackle the childcare system...”

TIMELINE- IRISH MALE BORN 1960'S-1970'S



Key:

Fulltime work	Part-time work	
Fulltime education	Stay at home parenting	
Back to work course	Retirement	
Reduced hours		
JSA		

Conclusion

- FIS is enabling resilience by helping people who are coping with multiple challenges in their lives (lifeline analysis)
- FIS enhances families' ability to cope with recession by protecting them from severe poverty
- People are making decisions about family, care, work based on values
 - Family values
 - Values centred on work – dignity
- The prevalence of short-time, temporary and seasonal working conditions is a significant obstacle to full-time employment. Moreover, such jobs are not always conducive to managing caring obligations because of their unpredictability.
- This suggests that policies to address the proliferation of insecure working conditions may be desirable. A more flexible approach to calculating eligibility for in-work supports to take account of seasonal working and changes in family circumstances might also be considered.