

# International Horizon Scanning and Learning Report: The cost of living crisis

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World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre on  
Investment for Health and Well-being, Public Health Wales, Wales, the UK  
*WHO European Regions for Health Network webinar, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022*



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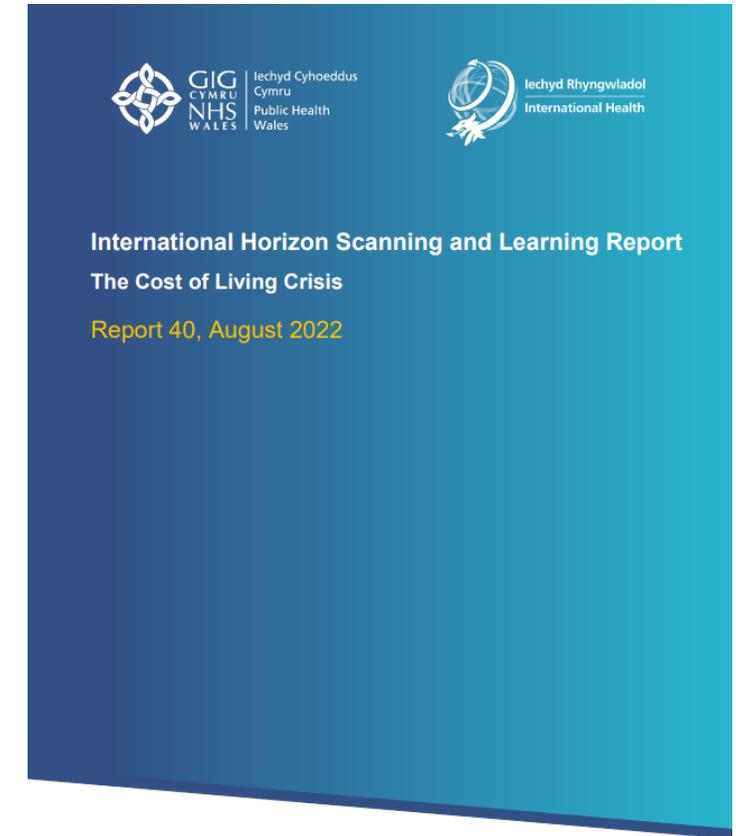


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## Introduction

- Initiated as part of the COVID-19 public health response
- Provide a high-level summary of learning from real life experiences from selected countries



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Iechyd y Byd ar Fuddsoddi  
ar gyfer Iechyd a Llesiant



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## Health impacts

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- Health implications include:
  - Increased cardiovascular mortality
  - Worsened mental health and infectious disease outcomes
- Low income households more likely pushed into poverty; risks:
  - Homelessness
  - Fuel poverty
  - Further negative physical and mental health impacts



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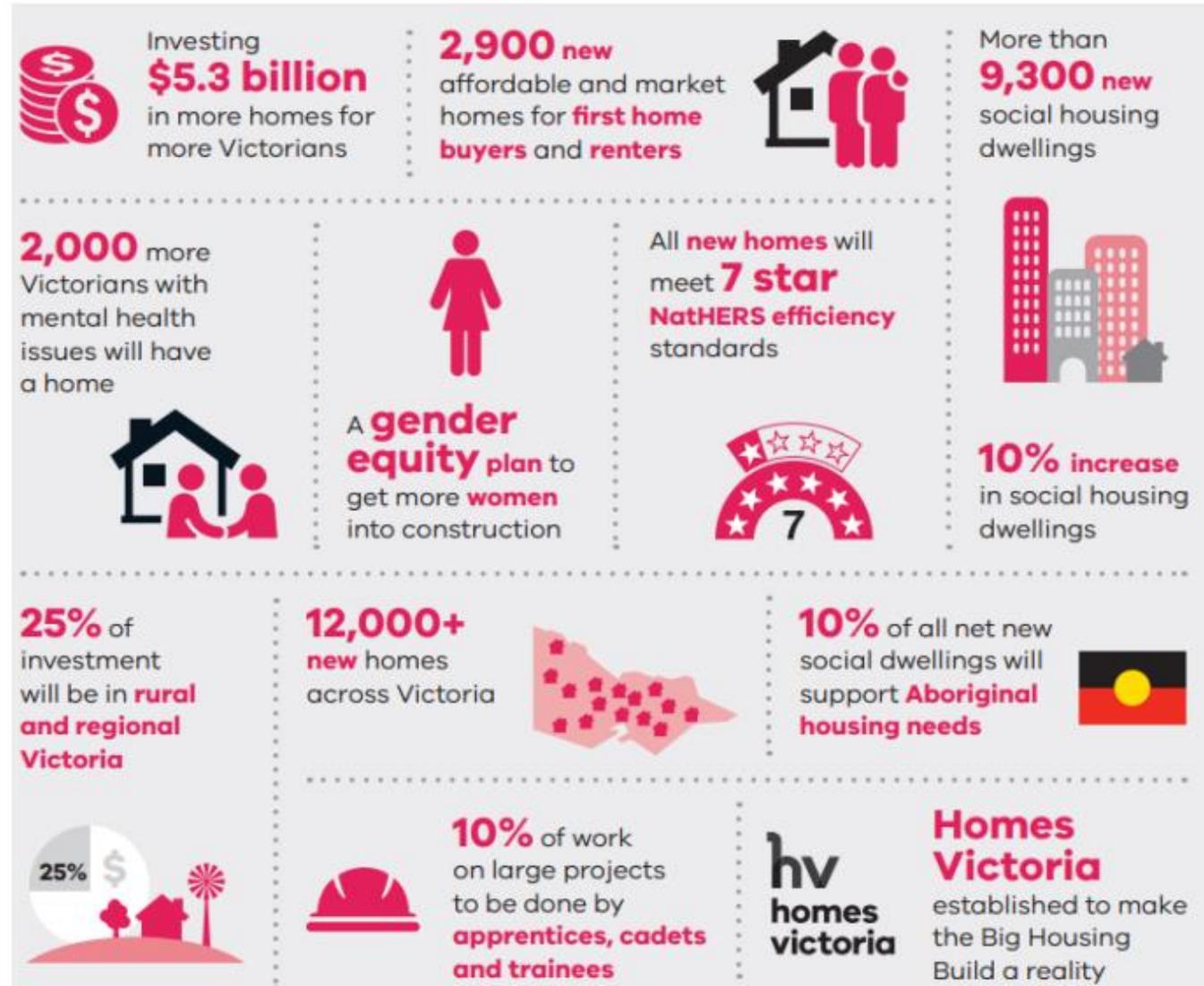
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## Housing

- Mitigation measures can be achieved through:
  - Taxation
  - Spending
  - Regulation
  - Urban planning

Figure 5. Victoria's (Australia) largest-ever investment in social and affordable housing, Homes Victoria, 2020<sup>31</sup>

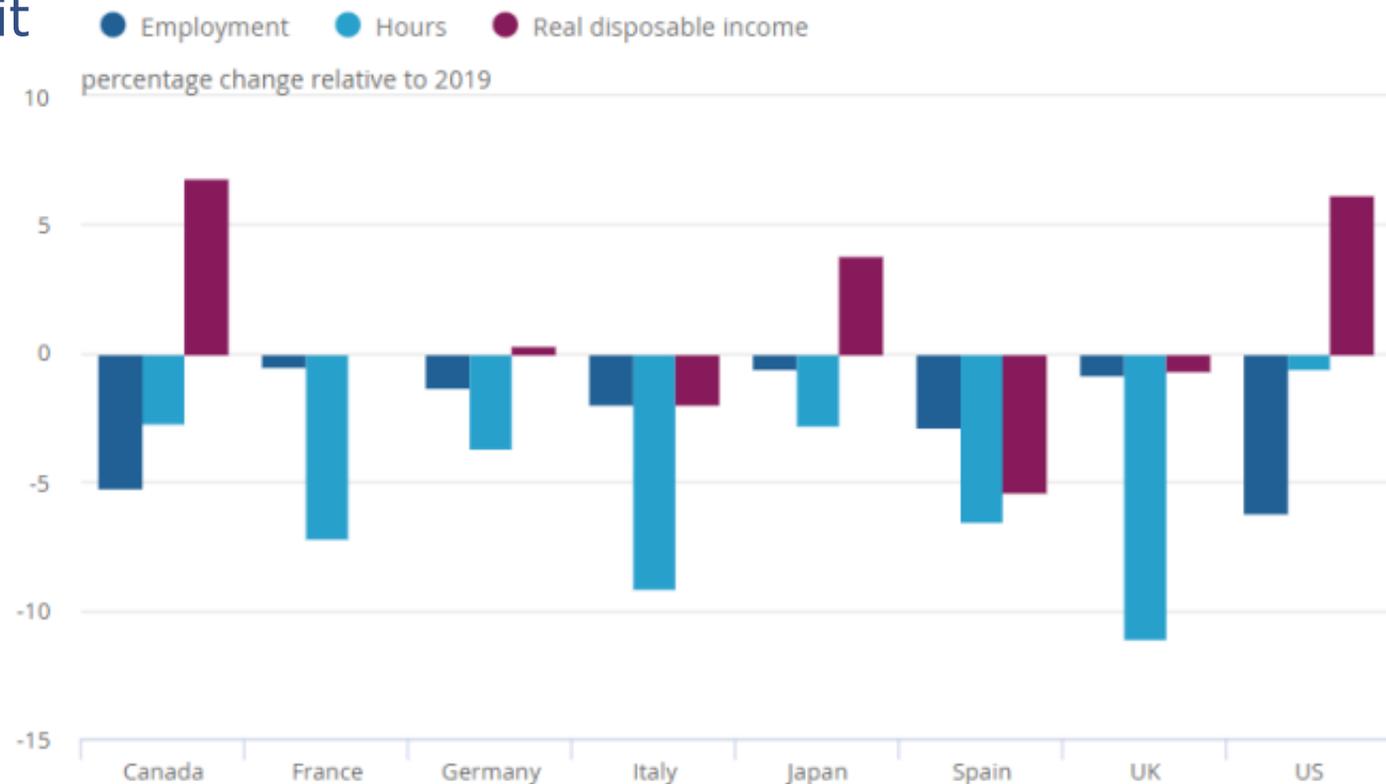


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## Employment and Social Protection

- Mitigation measures
  - Job retention schemes
  - Wage subsidy schemes, benefit payments, tax deferrals

**Figure 7. The impact of job retention schemes and household income support policies in 2020, G7 countries, Office for National Statistics, 2022<sup>44</sup>**



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## Food

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- Food insecurity:
  - Disproportionately more likely to affect pregnant women, children, elderly, and disabled people
- Mitigation measures include:
  - National food policy
  - Free school meal programmes
  - Reducing food waste: food banks



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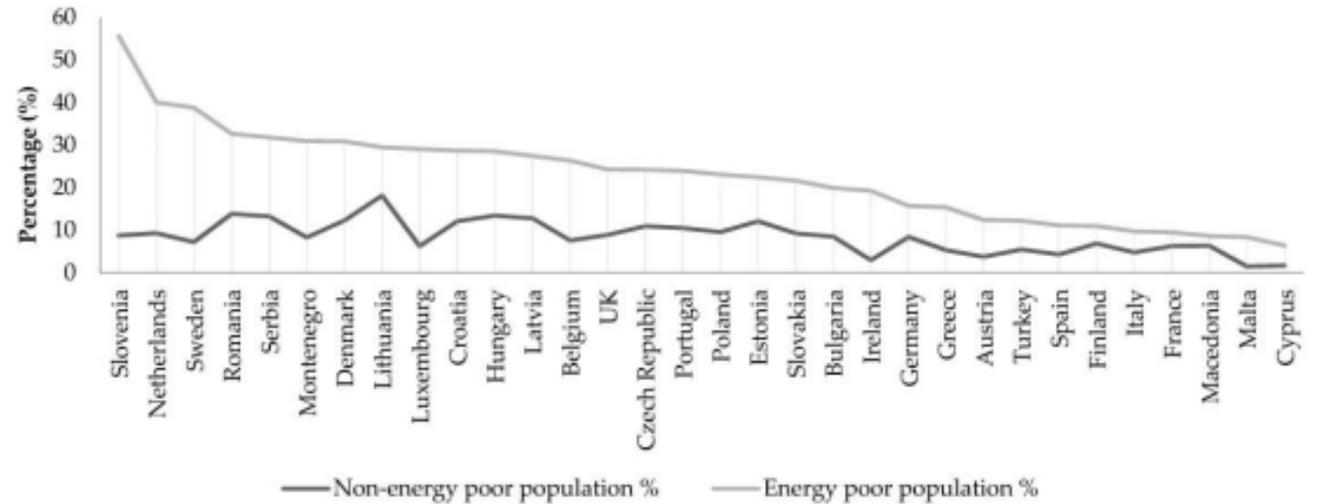
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## Fuel

- Mitigation measures include:
  - Affordability policies
    - Financial interventions
    - Consumer protection
  - Efficiency policies
  - Consumer information provision

**Figure 10. Prevalence of poor health in the energy poor population versus non-energy poor population, Thomson et al, 2017<sup>88</sup>**



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Thank you

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## Background

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- Cost of living crisis:
  - “the fall in ‘real’ disposable incomes (that is, adjusted for inflation and after taxes and benefits) [...] caused predominantly by high inflation outstripping wage and benefit increases and has been further exacerbated by recent tax increases”*
- The current cost of living crisis is complicated by:
  - Global economic shock due to the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigation measures
  - Rising inflation
  - Supply chain disruptions



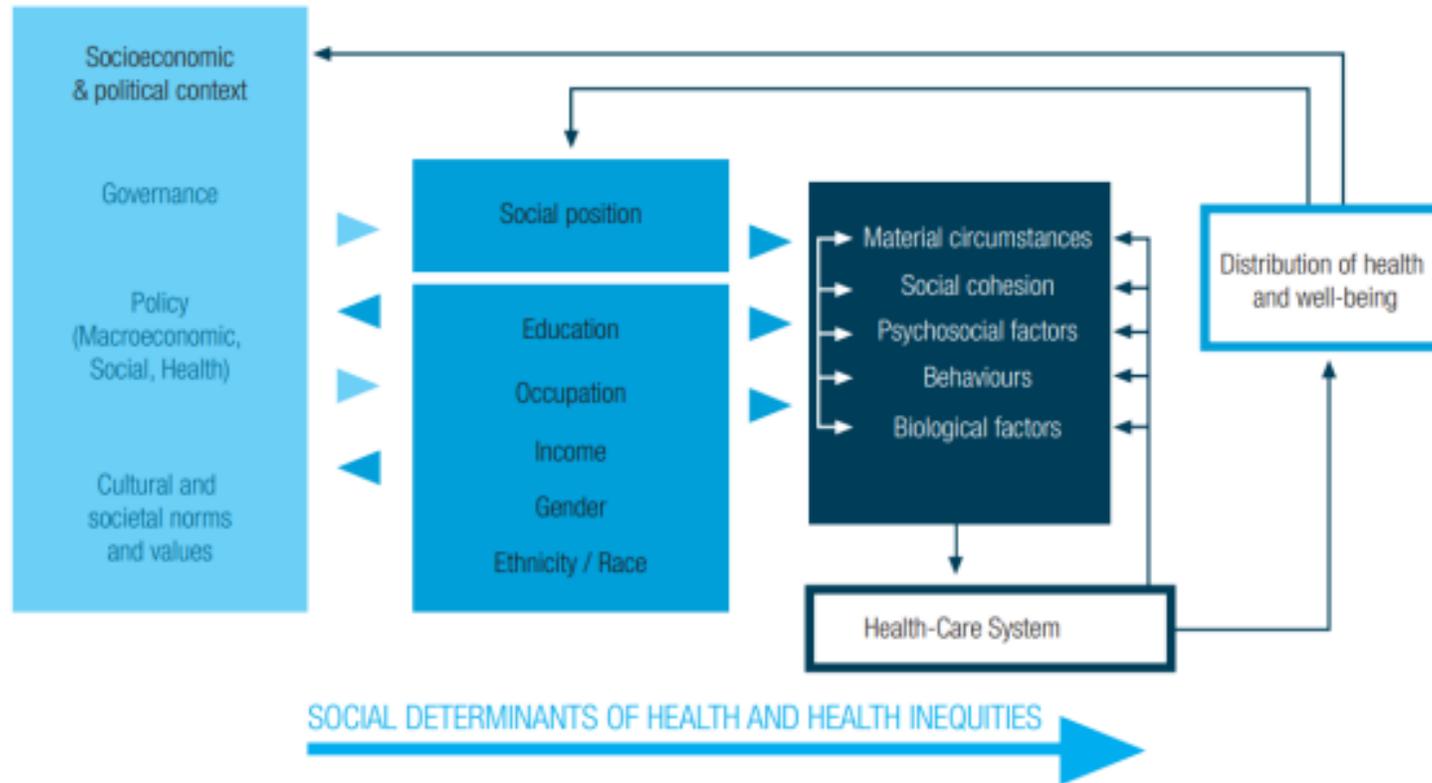
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## Health impacts

**Figure 1: Commission on Social Determinants of Health conceptual framework, World Health Organization, 2008<sup>7</sup>**



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## Health System Resilience

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1. Policies to promote public spending on social protection and health services
2. Maintenance of health service access
3. Identification of spending (in)efficiencies to guide decisions on (dis)investment



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