

ANNUAL REVIEW 2026

Summary for All

Annual Review 2026: Summary for All

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What is the Annual Review?

The Climate Change Advisory Council is an independent advisory body tasked with assessing and advising on how Ireland is making the transition to a climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral economy.

Each year the Climate Change Advisory Council reviews Ireland's performance for the previous year in:

- reducing greenhouse gas emissions,
- meeting Ireland's EU and international obligations,
- complying with the carbon budget and each sectoral emissions ceiling for that period,
- moving towards achieving the National Climate Objective and preparing Ireland for the adjustments needed to be ready for the impacts of climate change.

The Review summarises the most recent greenhouse gas emissions data and projections for each sector of the economy and makes recommendations for sector-specific actions to support compliance with the sectoral emissions ceilings. The Annual Review 2026 is published in ten parts:

- Our Changing Climate in 2025,
- Electricity Sectoral Review,
- Transport Sectoral Review,
- Built Environment Sectoral Review,
- Agriculture and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Sectoral Review,
- Preparing for Ireland's Changing Climate,
- Industry and Waste Sectoral Review,
- Biodiversity Review,
- Cross-sectoral Review.

This Summary for All represents the tenth and final part of the 2026 Annual Review. It summarises the key findings for each part of the Annual Review and includes a summary of the key recommendations arising.



Ireland's climate is changing, with impacts for people, places and nature

Ireland's climate is changing. 2025 was the second warmest year on record, with 7 of the 10 warmest years having occurred since 2005. Spring 2025 was the warmest on record, while summer 2025 was the warmest recorded at that time, with both seasons drier than average and average summer temperatures almost 2°C above the 1961–1990 long-term average. A total of 49 public water supplies across 15 counties were declared to be in drought status by Uisce Éireann, leading to prolonged water shortages and water conservation orders. Autumn 2025 was the fourth wettest on record and six of the ten wettest autumns have now occurred since 2001.

Storm Éowyn brought record-breaking winds in January 2025 and was the most expensive storm-related insurance event in Irish history, with claims exceeding €301 million. An attribution study[a] found that rainfall during Storm Claudia in November 2025 was nearly 12% more intense than it would have been in a cooler pre-industrial climate.

Extreme conditions have continued into 2026. In the lead-up to Storm Chandra on 26 and 27 January 2026, parts of the south and east of Ireland recorded three to four times their average rainfall, leaving catchments saturated and rivers already elevated, and resulting in severe flooding in parts of Dublin and Wexford. For the second year in a row, Ireland experienced what was provisionally its hottest summer since records began in 1900. The average temperature in summer 2026 was 0.09°C higher than in 2025 and 2°C above the 1961–1990 long-term average. Heatwaves and droughts are becoming an increasingly impactful climate risk in Ireland.

While the impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly evident, Ireland is continuing to strengthen its understanding of climate risks and its capacity to respond. Significant advances are being made in climate monitoring, forecasting and climate services, including the expansion of Met Éireann's weather radar network, climate attribution studies through the WASITUS[b] project, the publication of the National Climate Change Risk Assessment, and the development of high-resolution climate projections through the TRANSLATE programme.

Globally, from 2015 to 2025 the world recorded the 11 warmest years in 176 years of observation, and the last 3 years were the 3 warmest. Ocean warming has rapidly increased over the past two decades and ocean temperatures in 2025 were among the highest on record. Rising ocean temperatures are intensifying storms and accelerating sea ice loss and sea level rise. The capacity of the planet's natural carbon sinks to sequester carbon from the atmosphere is decreasing under the stress of rising temperatures, drought and deforestation. In 2025, the ten most costly extreme weather events caused damage costing in excess of €100 billion. Concentrations of major greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide – have reached their highest ever recorded levels. Global emissions reduction efforts are failing, leading to continued warming and further increasing the likelihood and intensity of extreme events.

a An attribution study is an analysis that helps determine how climate change is influencing the likelihood and severity of significant weather events.

b Weather Attribution Science Irish Operational User Service.



Annual Review 2026

In the 2026 Annual Review, the Council warns that continued reliance on imported fossil fuels leaves Ireland exposed to successive international fossil fuel crises and threatens energy security. Changes to the carbon tax in Budget 2027 and continued fossil fuel subsidies weaken incentives to move away from fossil fuels and risk the loss of Ireland's ETS2[c] derogation, which could increase costs for consumers and businesses and reduce funding for climate action.

Ireland is not on track to meet its national and EU climate commitments. Delays to publication and implementation of Climate Action Plans, and in transposing EU legislation undermine planning and investment and weaken confidence in the Government's climate commitments. Failure to submit multiple national plans required under EU law risks jeopardising access to substantial EU funding.

Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions inventories are continually improved to reflect the latest scientific understanding, while carbon budgets remain static, making direct comparisons between the two increasingly problematic. Provisional emissions inventories suggest compliance with the first carbon budget, largely due to revised, lower emissions estimates for Agriculture and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry. However, Ireland is projected to significantly overshoot the second carbon budget and its 2030 EU targets, even in the most optimistic scenario, risking substantial EU compliance costs.

Overall recommendations

Policy delivery

The Government should express carbon budgets as percentage reductions and restore the original carbon tax trajectory in order to maintain effective price signals, provide a reliable revenue stream for decarbonisation and protect Ireland's ETS2 derogation. Behavioural science should be integrated into climate policy, using evidence on public attitudes and behaviours to support effective and targeted interventions.

Climate adaptation and resilience

The EU Framework for Climate Resilience sets out a common approach to adaptation planning, based on reference warming levels of 1.5°C by 2030, 2°C by 2050 and 3°C by 2100. To safeguard lives, livelihoods and the economy, the Government should adopt a national reference warming trajectory to guide adaptation planning in Ireland and assess adaptation investment costs to inform a long-term adaptation finance strategy that mobilises both private and public funding.

Planning for communities and people

The Government should urgently finalise Ireland's Social Climate Plan to secure access to EU funding and deliver additional and targeted supports for households and businesses, particularly those experiencing energy poverty. To revitalise and strengthen the resilience of rural communities, the Government should ensure that rural housing policy reinforces compact growth, reduces car dependency, supports access to services and reduces vulnerability to adverse climate impacts such as extended power outages.

c The Emissions Trading System 2 is a new EU carbon trading scheme to address carbon dioxide emissions arising predominantly from road transport and the built environment. A derogation means that parts of the law do not apply to Ireland as long as certain conditions are met.



Recommendations for the Electricity sector

First published 13 May 2026

Electricity grid

To accelerate delivery of renewable energy and a more efficient electricity system, the Government should ensure that the implementation of the Critical Infrastructure Act 2026 prioritises electricity grid reinforcement projects, with clear timelines and accountability. The Council supports the acceleration of critical infrastructure for renewable electricity; however, enabled infrastructure must not undermine Ireland's ability to meet the National Climate Objective. Private wires legislation should also explicitly exclude fossil fuel infrastructure in all circumstances.

Planning

The Government and its agencies should accelerate the key planning and policy reforms needed in 2026 to deliver renewable energy. These include adoption of Regional Renewable Energy Strategies, transposition of the amended EU Renewable Energy Directive and designation of renewables acceleration areas, finalisation of the revised National Ports Policy and development of a coordinated process to support onshore wind repowering within protected areas.

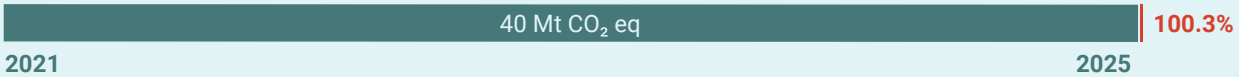
Resilience

The impact of Storm Éowyn highlights future climate risk and the need to treat electricity resilience as a core element of the national climate adaptation strategy. The Government should urgently increase investment in electricity resilience across critical infrastructure, households and communities. This should include large-scale low-emissions backup electricity solutions for water, telecommunications and health infrastructure; community support centres; and targeted grants for domestic battery storage and installation of changeover switches. The Government should also urgently approve the Electricity (Supply) (Amendment) Bill to support the establishment and nature-friendly management of forestry corridors.

Key facts: Electricity sector

Sectoral emissions ceiling 2021–2025

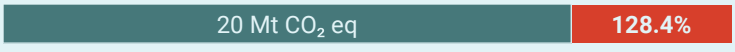
Progress based on provisional emissions



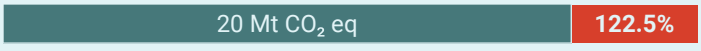
Sectoral emissions ceiling 2026–2030

Projected overshoot based on current action:

With existing measures



With additional measures





Recommendations for the Transport sector

First published 17 June 2026

Fossil fuel crisis

The Government should replace untargeted components of the emergency measures introduced in response to the fossil fuel crisis with temporary measures targeting the most vulnerable in society, while restoring planned carbon tax increases and using the revenue to support climate action and a Just Transition.

Public transport

Funding for existing public transport services and priority projects, including DART+ South West, Luas Finglas and the National Transport Authority's Park and Ride Investment Programme, should be increased, and delivery accelerated, to improve capacity, reliability and frequency of services, enabling people to shift to public transport and reducing congestion.

Electric vehicle uptake

The Government should ensure sustained and targeted supports are introduced to make electric vehicles (EVs) more affordable for lower-income and car-dependent households and actively promote the switch to EVs in the School Transport Scheme. The Government should also ensure that public EV charging information is accessible, reliable and up to date, and that clear industry service standards are introduced to improve public confidence in charging infrastructure.

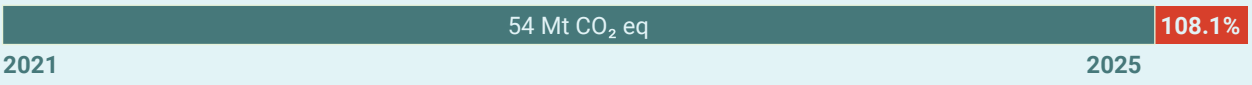
Resilient transport network

Climate risk and adaptation considerations should be built into all major transport planning and investment decisions, including the updated National Ports Policy, the annual programme of Regional and Local Road Grant Allocations, drainage-related asset management guidance and design manuals for national roads, and major projects prioritised under the Rail Project Prioritisation Strategy.

Key facts: Transport sector

Sectoral emissions ceiling 2021–2025

Progress based on provisional emissions



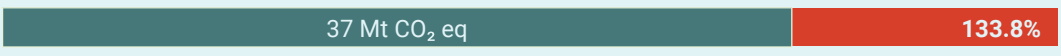
Sectoral emissions ceiling 2026–2030

Projected overshoot based on current action:

With existing measures



With additional measures





Recommendations for the Built Environment sector

First published 29 July 2026

Reduce fossil fuel dependency

The Government should restore the planned trajectory and ring-fencing of the carbon tax in order to support vulnerable households to transition away from costly fossil fuels for home heating. Any additional cost-of-living supports introduced during the fossil fuel crisis should be temporary and targeted towards the most vulnerable. Longer-term action on energy affordability should include accelerating the adoption of solar photovoltaics for rented and social housing.

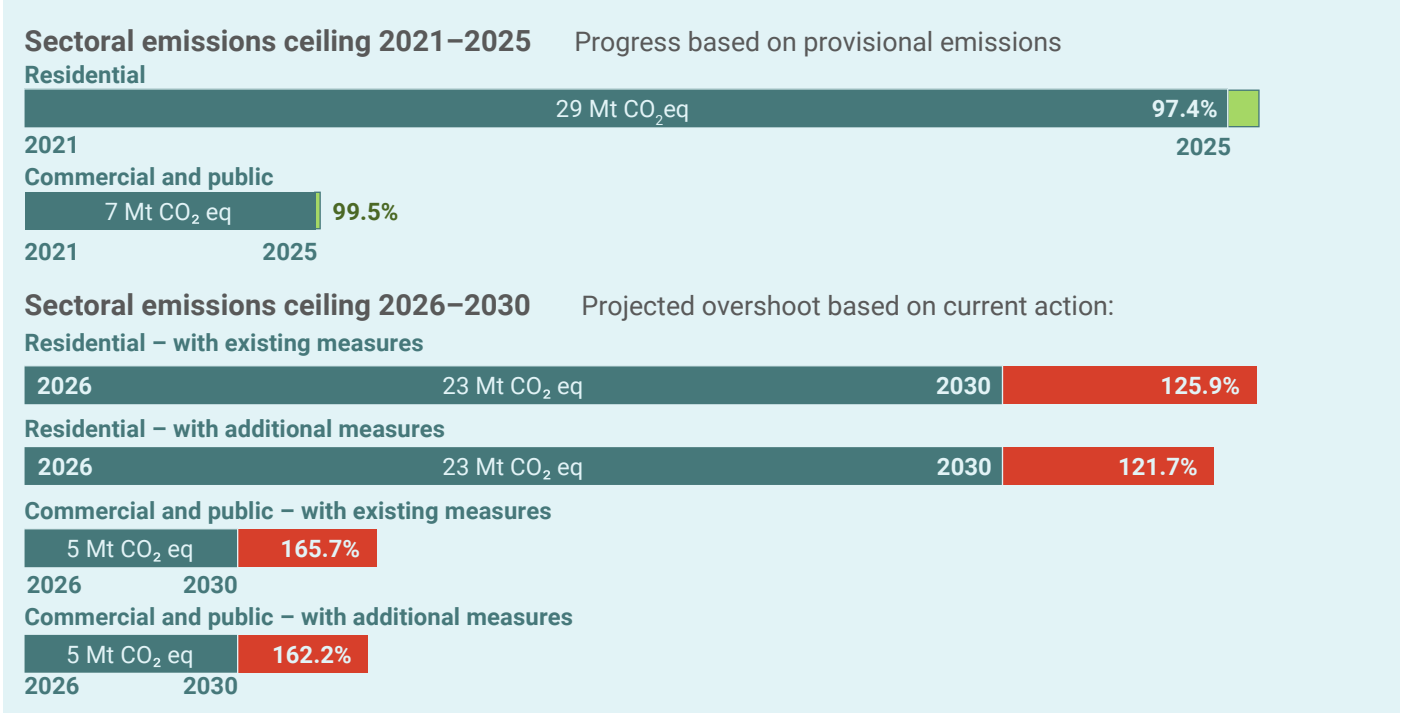
Accelerate low-carbon heating and retrofitting

The delayed National Building Renovation Plan should be urgently published and include a clear plan to phase out fossil fuel boilers by 2040 or sooner, as required by the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. Approximately 90% of current heat demand is met by fossil fuels, so a clear policy framework for decarbonising heat should be established, including the implementation of a national heat strategy and urgent finalisation of both the Heat Bill and the Geothermal Energy Bill. The Government should provide sustained and increased funding to accelerate the retrofitting of social housing, and existing retrofit funding schemes should be reviewed to identify barriers, improve accessibility and increase participation.

Enhance building resilience

The National Building Renovation Plan should integrate resilience into building renovations, including flood protection, water use efficiency and improved thermal regulation measures. The Government should revise the Built Environment and Planning sector scoping exercise and put a clear programme of work in place so that the sector is prepared to deliver and implement a dedicated sectoral adaptation plan in the next cycle. The Government should also expedite the development of coastal change management plans in priority vulnerable areas, including strategic and proactive consideration of planned relocation where necessary.

Key facts: Built Environment sector





Recommendations for the Agriculture and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sectors

First published 9 September 2026

Governance and policy design

The Government should strengthen the evidence base for climate action and implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures across the Agriculture and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sectors. This should include effective and structured dialogue with stakeholders such as farmers, rural communities and workers to inform policy design, funding and training needs. An evidence-led paper on carbon pricing is recommended to support informed decision-making on a national and EU approach to carbon pricing. A national land use framework that integrates the findings of the Land Use Review is necessary.

Progressing mitigation and resilience actions

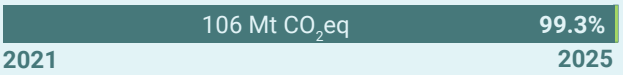
Within the next year, the Government should resource and accelerate implementation of the key mitigation measures identified in the Climate Action Plan for the Agriculture and LULUCF sectors. The Government should also finalise a digital support tool, tailored to individual land parcels, to help farmers understand future climate impacts, risks and opportunities and to support on-farm management options. The next Forestry Programme should set clear targets for increasing forest cover and address barriers for landowners and farmers.

Renewable energy

The Government should accelerate implementation of the Biomethane Strategy to support energy security and emissions reductions, and enable diversification within the Agriculture sector. Advancing the Renewable Heat Obligation is urgently required to support investment in biomethane production. The National Planning Statement on Solar Energy should set out best practice for sustainable solar development that supports agriculture, soil health and biodiversity.

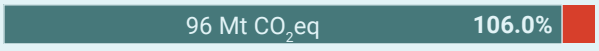
Key facts: Agriculture sector

Sectoral emissions ceiling 2021–2025*
Progress based on provisional emissions

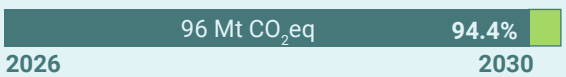


Sectoral emissions ceiling 2026–2030
Projected overshoot/undershoot based on current action:

With existing measures



With additional measures



*Revisions to Environmental Protection Agency emissions inventories have substantially reduced estimated agricultural emissions since the ceilings were established in 2022, meaning that the sector may meet its legally binding emissions ceiling without having achieved the required percentage emissions reduction.

Key facts: LULUCF sector

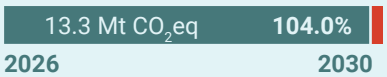
Estimated EU LULUCF emissions budget (2026–2030)*

Projected overshoot based on current action:

With existing measures



With additional measures



*No sectoral emissions ceiling has been set for LULUCF; however, the EU LULUCF Regulation sets a 2030 reduction target of 0.626 Mt CO_2 eq in net emissions relative to the 2016–2018 average.



Recommendations for climate adaptation and resilience

First published 29 September 2026

Adaptation planning

The Government should promote flexible approaches within the planning system so that decision-makers can adapt as understanding of emerging risks improves. Sectors should expedite the development of adaptation outcome indicators and systems to assess whether adaptation measures are improving resilience. The Government needs to move from reactive to proactive adaptation and develop a standardised method of costing actions, including delayed actions and inaction, so that investment needs can be assessed and actions prioritised. The three coastal change management pathfinder projects included in the Programme for Government should be expedited and serve as exemplars for addressing critical resilience issues for vulnerable communities.

Flood resilience

The Government should strengthen resources and technical expertise across all organisations involved in flood risk management in Ireland. The Office of Public Works and local authorities need the expertise and staffing necessary to accelerate delivery of major flood relief schemes and the expanded Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. Regular updates on project implementation should be provided to improve transparency and shared learning across local authorities and communities. The Government should also strengthen capacity for flood forecasting and early warning systems, and establish permanent community resilience programmes covering prevention, preparedness, protection and recovery. The Government should move beyond pilot projects and scale up nature-based approaches across rural catchments and urban and coastal areas.



Recommendations for the Industry and Waste sector

First published 14 October 2026

Industrial heat decarbonisation

An indigenous biomethane supply is critical to decarbonising high-temperature industrial processes that are difficult to electrify. The Government should urgently finalise the Renewable Heat Obligation to kick-start biomethane production and, in parallel, introduce a separate, EU-compliant support scheme for indigenous biomethane generation. The Government should reduce the delays and costs associated with electricity grid connections, which are constraining the electrification of low- and medium-temperature industrial processes.

Low-carbon cement and concrete

The National Standards Authority of Ireland should urgently develop new standards and accelerate the approval process for low-carbon cement and concrete technologies, and the Government should provide the necessary legal and policy frameworks to enable carbon capture, transport and storage in Ireland, with a particular focus on applications in cement and lime production.

The circular economy and timber in construction

The Government should accelerate the implementation of the Circular Economy Strategy 2026–2028, including publishing a construction sector circularity roadmap by the end of 2026 and the timely transposition of the Waste Framework Directive by June 2027. The Government should also establish a permanent wood knowledge development and innovation facility, supported by a national industry forum, to address technical and commercial barriers to the use of Irish timber in higher-value construction products.

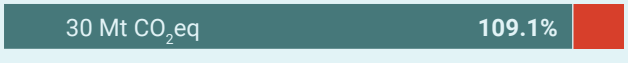
Climate resilience

The Government should expand guidance and financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises to assess climate risks, implement adaptation measures and adopt water-efficiency measures. The Government should also commission an economy-wide assessment of Ireland's exposure to transboundary climate risks, including risks to overseas supply chains.

Key facts: Industry sector

Sectoral emissions ceiling 2021–2025

Progress based on provisional emissions

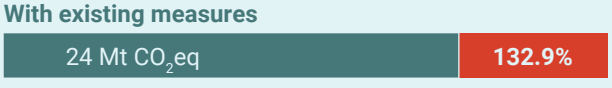


2021 2025

Sectoral emissions ceiling 2026–2030

Projected overshoot based on current action:

With existing measures



With additional measures



2026 2030

Key facts: Other sector*

Sectoral emissions ceiling 2021–2025

Progress based on provisional emissions



2021 2025

Sectoral emissions ceiling 2026–2030

Projected undershoot based on current action:

With additional and with existing measures



2026 2030

*The Other sector covers emissions from F-gases, waste and petroleum refining. The with existing and with additional measures scenarios are identical, as no additional mitigation measures are assumed for the Other sector.



Recommendations for biodiversity

First published 4 November 2026

Public sector delivery and investment

To enable delivery of the National Restoration Plan, the Government needs to commit long-term, multi-annual funding and develop a strategy to mobilise private sector finance for conservation and restoration. The critical biodiversity skills gap should be urgently addressed by adding biodiversity-related professions to the Critical Skills Occupations list. The biodiversity duty reporting obligation should be expanded to enable monitoring and verification of the biodiversity initiatives of public bodies, and public bodies should scale up nature conservation and restoration on state lands.

Nature-based measures and land management

To support landowners to deploy nature-based measures, the Government should develop a funding stream, identify priority locations and prepare an implementation plan by Q1 2028. Ambition and support for results-based agri-environment schemes under the next phase of the Common Agricultural Policy should also be increased and the protection of hedgerows should be strengthened. The Government should map existing green space and canopy cover in urban areas by Q3 2027, to inform targets for 2050.

Coastal and marine resilience

To strengthen coastal resilience, the Government should expand and restore semi-natural coastal habitats and test nature-based measures in priority areas. The Government should also strengthen the governance of marine Natura 2000 sites and forthcoming Marine Protected Areas to maximise biodiversity and climate benefits.

What are Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions targets?

Ireland is one of 190 countries that signed up to the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global warming to well below 2°C and to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

Carbon budgets proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council support the National Climate Objective of pursuing and achieving a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral economy by 2050. The first two carbon budgets (2021–2025 and 2026–2030) target a reduction in emissions of 51% by 2030 compared with 2018 levels. In December 2024, the Council proposed a finalised third carbon budget (2031–2035) and a provisional fourth budget (2036–2040) in support of the achievement of climate neutrality by 2050. These were informed by the latest emissions data, scientific advice and international best practice, and they aim to maximise economic benefits while considering climate justice. The third carbon budget and the provisional fourth carbon budget are still awaiting Government approval.

What is a carbon budget?

A carbon budget represents the total amount of emissions that may be released during an agreed 5-year period. This is measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent and is calculated on an economy-wide basis. If Ireland exceeds one of its carbon budgets, the excess must be accounted for in the next period. This aims to set Ireland on a pathway to achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

What is a sectoral emissions ceiling?

Sectoral emissions ceilings refer to the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions that each sector of the economy is allowed to produce during a specific period. In Ireland, the sectoral emissions ceilings set out the maximum emissions permitted from each sector to ensure that Ireland remains within its carbon budgets. The sectors are:

- Electricity,
- Industry and Other,
- Transport,
- Built Environment (residential, commercial and public sector),
- Agriculture,
- Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry.[d]

d No sectoral emissions ceiling has been set for LULUCF; however, the EU LULUCF Regulation sets a 2030 reduction target of 0.626 Mt CO_2 eq in net emissions relative to the 2016–2018 average.