

Appendix A: Debt Sustainability Analysis

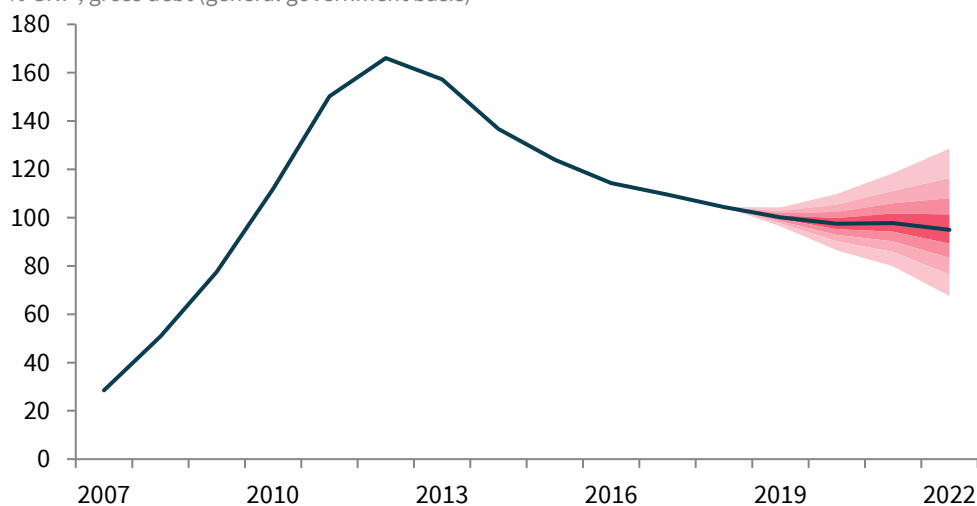
This appendix looks at the sustainability of Irish debt by considering (1) the probability range for debt outcomes based on historical forecast errors, and (2) a number of common stress scenarios. Estimates are produced using the Council’s Fiscal Feedbacks Model (Fiscal Council, 2012) and the baseline scenario is taken to be that produced in the Department’s latest set of forecasts.

Probability Distribution for Debt Forecasts

A useful way to illustrate uncertainty and the impact of alternative growth paths on the government debt ratio is through the use of a fan chart. Figure A1 takes the Department of Finance’s latest debt forecasts as the central line. The width of the fan represents the range of possible outcomes for the debt-to-GNI* ratio based on the Department’s past observed forecast errors.⁸⁶ For example, according to this, there is an estimated 40 per cent probability that the debt ratio would not fall below current levels by 2022, in the absence of offsetting policy adjustments (this is on the basis of the Department’s forecasts, which assume a disorderly Brexit scenario).

Appendix Figure A1: Probability Outcomes for Government Debt

% GNI*, gross debt (general government basis)



Source: Department of Finance; and Fiscal Council workings.

Note: Line shows outturns and central forecasts, while bands show 20 per cent, 40 per cent, 60 per cent, and 80 per cent likelihood ranges, respectively, as one moves outward from the central forecasts. Forecast errors are based on 2001–2007; 2011–14 sample for Department of Finance forecasts.

⁸⁶ While there are some limitations with these charts, as described in Annex A of Fiscal Council (2012), they do serve to highlight the uncertainty surrounding the fiscal position.

Stress Scenarios

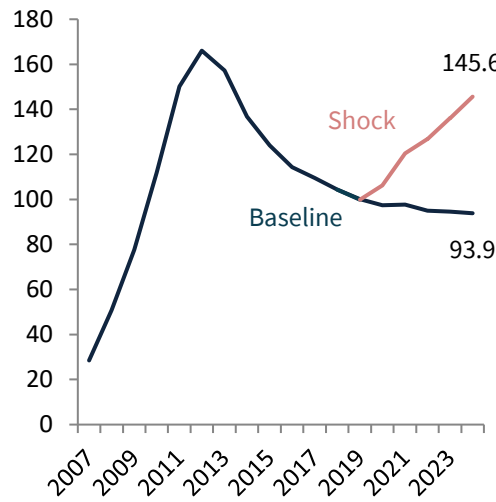
Another useful way to examine debt sustainability is by exploring a number of common stress scenarios (see IMF 2018, for example). All scenarios assume that policy settings are not adjusted in response to the shock. We consider six stress scenarios and their impact on the forecast debt ratios (Figure A2) and annual gross funding requirements (Figure A3) below:

1. **“Growth” shock:** A shock equivalent to one standard deviation of the historical nominal GDP growth rate over the period 2000–2017 (excluding 2008–2009 and 2015) is considered for two consecutive years (-4.6 percentage points per annum relative to baseline).
2. **“Primary Balance” shock:** A shock to the primary balance equivalent to half of the historical standard deviation of the underlying primary balance in per cent of GDP over the period 2000–17 (excluding 2008–2009 and 2015) is considered for the full forecast period (-2.4 percentage points). An increase in average effective interest rates of 0.25 percentage points is assumed for every 1 per cent of GDP worsening in the primary balance.
3. **“Interest” shock:** A standard 2 percentage point shock is applied to the marginal interest rate on government debt over the entire forecast period.
4. **“Combined Macro-Fiscal” shock:** Combines the three shocks above.
5. **“Contingent Liability” shock:** This extends the “Growth” shock above with a one-off increase in public spending equal to 10 per cent of domestic bank assets (i.e., the “Irish-Headquartered Group” of credit institutions as defined by the Central Bank of Ireland). This can be considered a tail risk as domestic banks have strengthened their capital buffers.
6. **“Custom” shock:** This draws on the analysis outlined in Box C of Fiscal Council (2018a) and assumes that five large, foreign-owned multinational enterprises exit Ireland at the same time. A primary balance deterioration of €1.7 billion is assumed along with the “Growth” shock above.

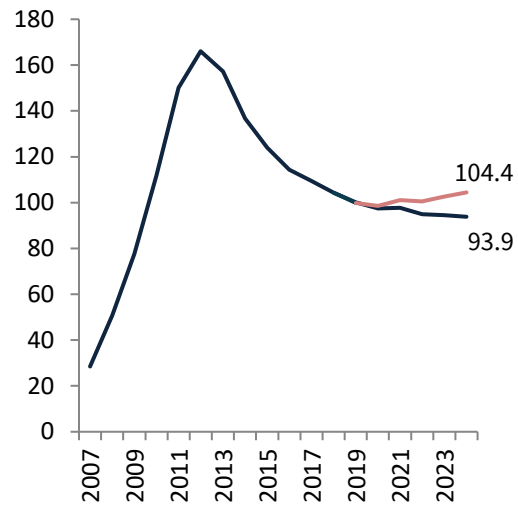
Appendix Figure A2: Stress Scenarios for Government Debt

% GNI*, gross debt (general government basis)

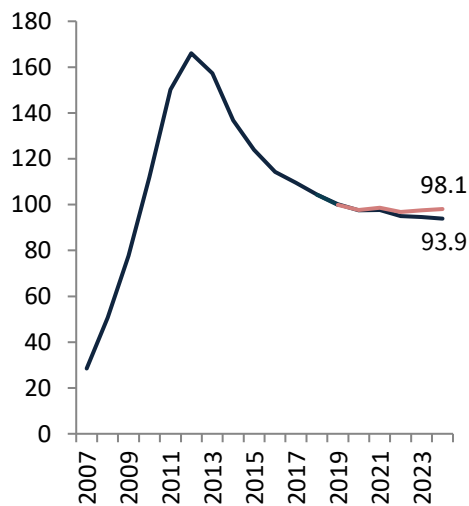
1. "Growth" shock



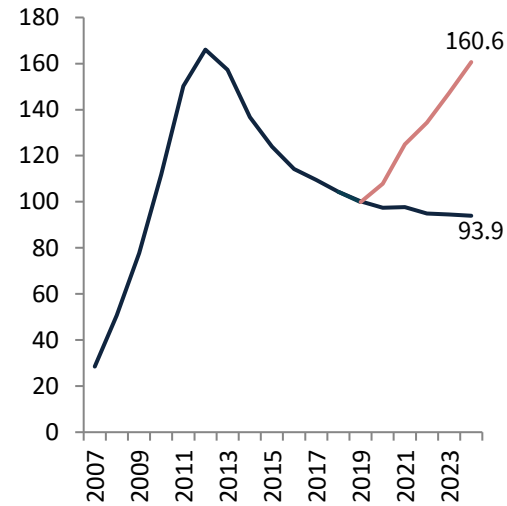
2. "Primary Balance" shock



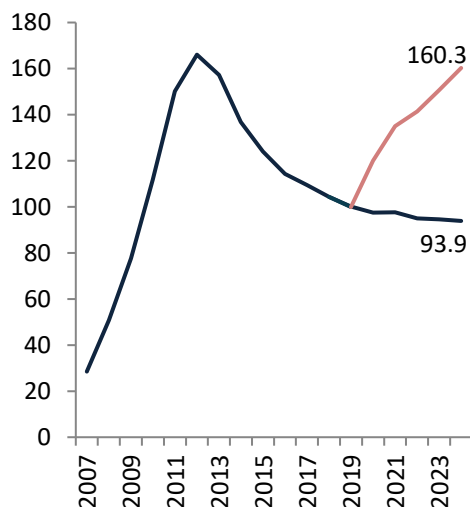
3. "Interest" shock



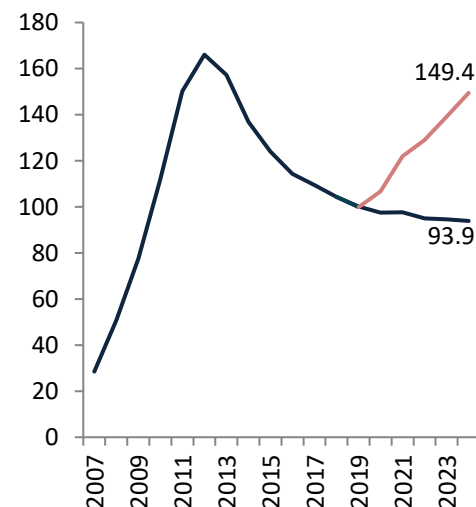
4. "Combined Macro-Fiscal" shock



5. "Contingent Liability" shock



6. "Custom" shock

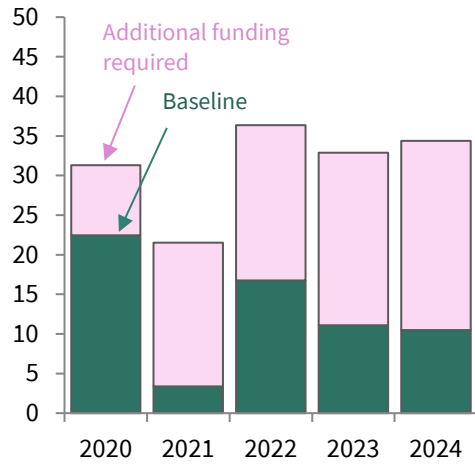


Sources: CSO; Department of Finance; and internal Fiscal Council calculations.

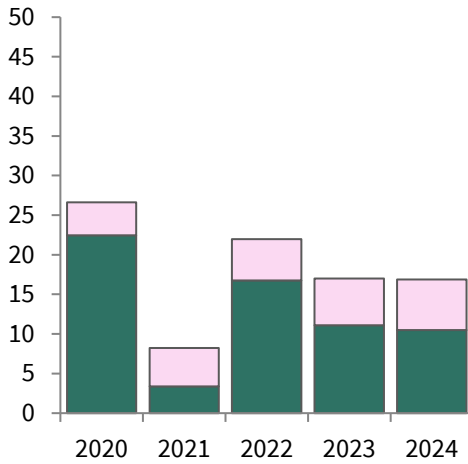
Appendix Figure A3: Stress Scenarios for Funding Requirements

€ billions, estimated annual gross funding requirements

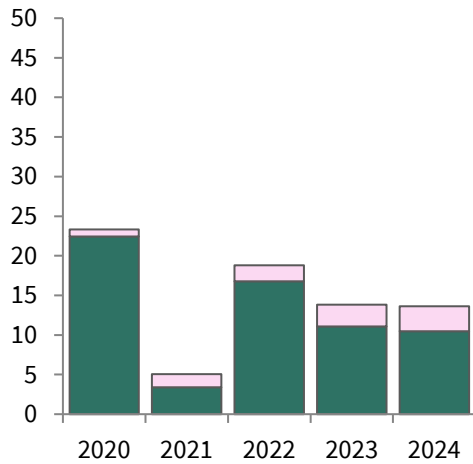
1. "Growth" shock



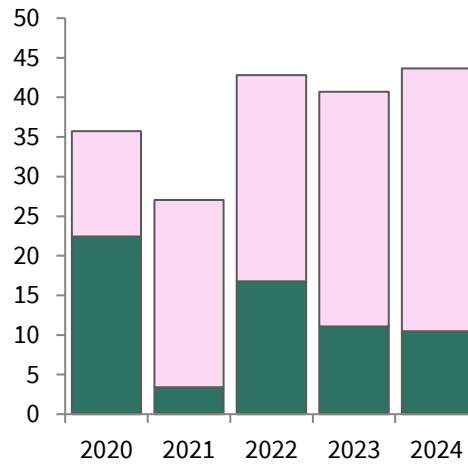
2. "Primary Balance" shock



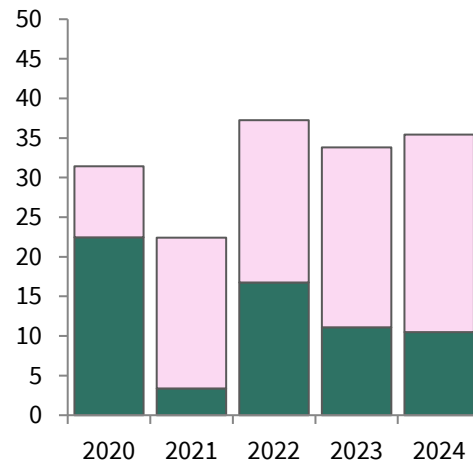
3. "Interest" shock



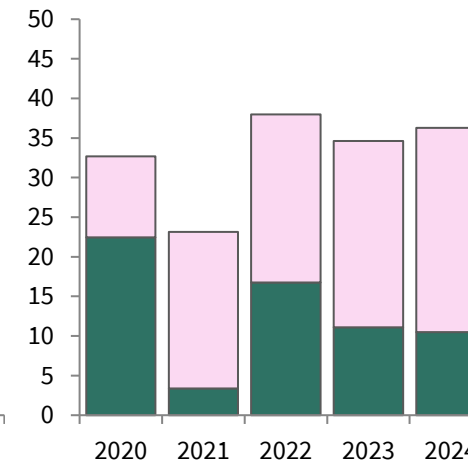
4. "Combined Macro-Fiscal" shock



5. "Contingent Liability" shock



6. "Custom" shock



Sources: CSO; Department of Finance; and internal Fiscal Council calculations.

Notes: Gross funding requirements estimated as rollovers plus Exchequer borrowings.