

## Spotlight on Child Poverty: Ireland's Silent Crisis



Society of St Vincent de Paul

### Key Features Summary: **CHILD POVERTY**



#### AT RISK OF POVERTY (AROP) RATES

General population	<b>11.7%</b>
All children	<b>15.3%</b>
2 parent households	<b>12.6%</b>
1 parent households	<b>24.2%</b>



#### CONSISTENT POVERTY RATES

General population	<b>5.0%</b>
All children	<b>8.5%</b>
2-parent households	<b>6.0%</b>
1-parent households	<b>11.0%</b>



#### ENFORCED DEPRIVATION RATES

General population	<b>15.7%</b>
All children	<b>21.2%</b>
2-parent households	<b>16.2%</b>
1-parent households	<b>46.3%</b>



#### INCOME ADEQUACY FOR CHILDREN IN SOCIAL WELFARE- DEPENDENT HOUSEHOLDS

Infant	<b>90%</b>
Pre-school	<b>146%</b>
Primary school	<b>92%</b>
Secondary school	<b>67%</b>

\*Two-parent households with 1-3 children



#### CHILD HOMELESSNESS (MARCH 2025)

**4.675** children were recorded as homeless.

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Despite our collective commitment to making Ireland one of the best places in the world to raise a child, the hard truth is that children remain the group most at risk of poverty and homelessness. In a nation of increasing wealth and technological progress, thousands of children are being left behind—disproportionately affected by poverty, housing insecurity and a lack of targeted supports. This is not just a policy failure—it is a moral one.

Recent data from the *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2024* paints a stark picture. The consistent poverty rate in the general population stands at 5%. But for children, this rises dramatically to **8.5%**—making them the most vulnerable group in our society. When family structure is taken into account, the inequality deepens: children in two-parent households have a consistent poverty rate of **6%**, while children in one-parent families experience consistent poverty at an alarming **11%** (CSO, 2024).

Poverty is not just about income. It is about deprivation, exclusion, and daily struggles to meet basic needs. The 2024 CSO child-specific deprivation module reported that **13.8% of children under 16** were living in enforced deprivation—lacking essentials like adequate clothing, a warm home, or access to nutritious meals.

Homelessness figures amplify this national emergency. As of **March 2025**, there are **15,418 people** officially recorded as homeless in Ireland. **Shockingly, 30% of them are children**—a total of **4,675 children** living in emergency accommodation, hotel rooms, or family hubs. These conditions are not just uncomfortable—they are harmful, stripping children of their stability, their education, their health, and often, their dignity.

The cost of poverty is long-term. The *Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL)* analysis of **Budget 2025**, published in November 2024, revealed that children of secondary school age living in households dependent on social protection had only **67% of their minimum essential needs** met. This means that, even with existing state supports, their families fall far short of what's needed to maintain a basic, dignified standard of living.

### A Call to Action: Policy Recommendations

To reverse this trajectory and protect children's futures, Ireland must act urgently and decisively. We recommend:

- **Establishing Statutory Child Poverty Targets:** Introduce legally binding targets to reduce child poverty, as Scotland has done, to create accountability and long-term political commitment.
- **Benchmarking the Child Support Payment** (formerly Increase for a Qualified Child): Ensure that supports reflect the real cost of raising a child and are adjusted annually against inflation and needs.

- **Protecting Income Thresholds and Disregards:** Safeguard work incentives by ensuring families in low-paid or part-time employment are not penalised through loss of supports.
- **Investing in Housing for Families:** Dramatically increase the supply of appropriate, affordable housing and improve the speed and transparency of allocations for families experiencing homelessness.
- **Introducing Child Support Workers for All Children Experiencing Homelessness:** Ensure every homeless child has access to a dedicated support worker to safeguard their education, mental health and social development.

## Conclusion

Poverty and homelessness in childhood are not just policy issues—they are personal tragedies with life-long consequences. No child in Ireland should grow up cold, hungry, or without a stable home. If we are serious about building a fair and compassionate society, we must start by ending child poverty and homelessness. Not someday—now.

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## References

- Central Statistics Office. (2024). *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2024*. Retrieved from <https://www.cso.ie>
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