

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul: Response to new poverty data **(<https://www.activelink.ie/node/109403>)**



Temporary measures supported incomes during cost of living crisis but an estimated 914,000 people going without basic necessities

Deprivation and financial difficulties data mirrors SVP experience in 2023

Responding to the latest data from the Survey of Income and Living Conditions, the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) says while temporary measures supported household incomes, far too many households are struggling to make ends meet given the scale of the cost of living crisis.

The at risk of poverty rate, which is based on median incomes, shows that just over 10% of the population were at risk of poverty - but this would have been 13% without the temporary cost of living measures. The temporary measures supported households incomes, meaning fewer people had incomes below the poverty line, but this has not translated into an easing of financial difficulties as the data shows deprivation has risen. This is because the scale of the cost of living crisis means households continue to have to cut back on essentials they simply can't afford.

The figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) show that just over 913,000 people were experiencing deprivation in 2023, up from 16.6% in 2022 to 17.3% in 2023. In addition, 6.4% of households had great difficulty in making ends meet in 2023, compared to 5.5% in 2022. This rises to 17.9% for one parent households and one in five one parent families have gone into debt to meet ordinary living expenses in 2023.

The data on deprivation and financial difficulties mirrors SVP's experience in 2023 when the organisation recorded over a quarter of a million calls for help, the majority of which were for very basic necessities like food, heating, electricity and clothing. Overall calls were up 10% compared to 2022. Almost half of calls to SVP comes from one parent families.

The CSO data shows the highest levels of deprivation for people out of work due to illness or disability (44.7%), one parent families (41.4%), those who are unemployed (37.8%) and renters (36.5%). Over one in five children in the state is now living in enforced deprivation (21.4%).

SVP points out that some of the most marginalised groups in Irish society including those living in Direct Provision, emergency accommodation and members of the Travelling community are not counted in official poverty statistics.

SVP Head of Social Justice, Tricia Keilthy said: *'This data must send a clear message to Government to redouble their efforts to tackle growing deprivation in our communities. Temporary measures have helped protect people from income poverty, but we must ensure that this level of support against rising living costs becomes permanent so that it has a sustained impact on deprivation rates and living standards.'*

Ensuring minimum wages and social welfare rates are benchmarked against the cost of a minimum standard of living and investment in services like housing, education and childcare is critical so that people can meet their basic needs.

She said that the recent focus on child poverty by Government is welcome, but the resources and remit of the Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme Office will need to be bolstered if we are going to make a long-term difference in the lives of children growing up in poverty. *"It is important to note that the last budget brought many targeted supports for children and this won't be picked up in this data, but we need a sustained focus on child poverty if we are to see long term results. Importantly, given the very high rates of poverty experienced by one parent families we need to see supports which tackle issues of low pay, inadequate social welfare support, unaffordable childcare and housing and an ineffective child maintenance recovery system."*

The data shows the clear impact of high housing costs on renters, and particularly low-income renters in receipt of housing supports. After paying rent, 58.6% of those in receipt of Housing Assistance Payment or Rent Supplement were at risk of

poverty, compared to 12% before rent is paid. This confirms the experience of SVP members who have seen housing costs as a key driver of poverty and financial hardship in recent years.

A third of those experiencing deprivation are at work (33.3%), demonstrating that employment doesn't always guarantee a decent standard of living. This rate has increased from 27% in 2021.

SVP's Chair of the National Social Justice Committee, Nesson Vaughan said: *'Nearly 30,000 people called SVP for the first time in 2023 and many of these people were working but unable to meet the costs of basics. The high cost of housing, energy, childcare and transport is pushing people to the brink and work is increasingly not a route out of poverty. Decent pay and conditions for workers and a strong system of quality public services is needed to make sure work pays and provides pathways to good jobs for those who are able to work.'*

Region

Nationwide

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