

Tackling Child Poverty

Overview of the priority families

October 2021

Introduction

- This evidence pack highlights key issues for the six priority family types identified as being at highest risk of child poverty:

Lone parent families

Minority ethnic families

Families with a disabled adult or child

Families with a young mother (under 25)

Families with a child under one

Larger families (3+ children)

- These families continue to be at a higher risk of poverty and future policies should continue to focus on them. There is a need for an individual, holistic approach, within a framework of understanding structural barriers, in order to avoid perpetuating stereotyping and stigma.
- Families often belong to more than one priority group. For example, among children in relative poverty: 40% of children in lone parent families also have a disabled person at home; over half (54%) of children in a family with a younger mother are also in a lone parent household; half (50%) of children in a 3+ child family are also in a family in which someone is disabled.
- The aim of this pack is to inform policies and programmes to reduce child poverty and inform discussions on options for the next tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (2022-2026).
- Findings presented here are based on the focus reports published for [lone parent families](#), [minority ethnic families](#) and [families with a disabled person](#) and complemented with a quick evidence review on the other three priority groups (families with young mothers, families with a baby under 1 and families with 3+ children). This pack covers:

Overview of child poverty targets

Overview of each priority group:

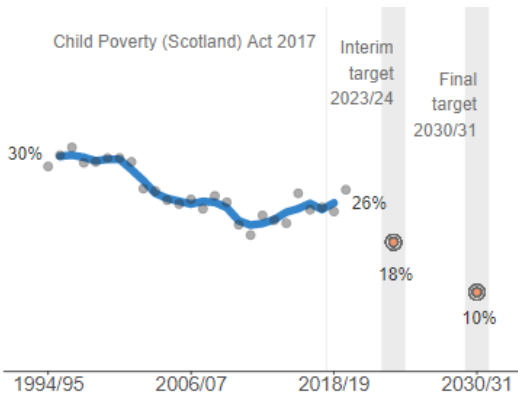
- Key demographics
- Specific challenges around each of the drivers of poverty (income from employment, cost of living and income from social security)

Consideration of broader and overarching issues affecting priority families

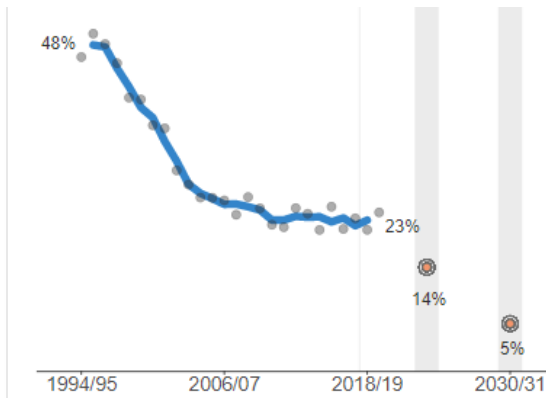
Progress towards child poverty targets in Scotland

Significant progress needs to be achieved to get closer to the 2030 targets. Latest statistics cover up to March 2020, providing a picture of poverty pre-COVID.

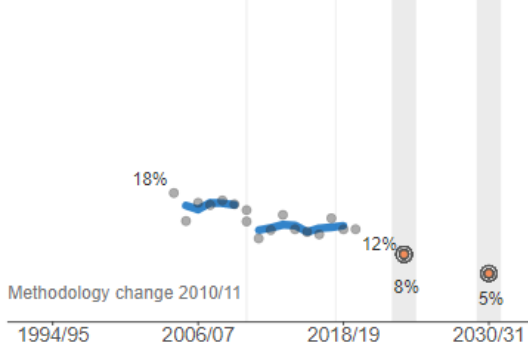
Relative poverty



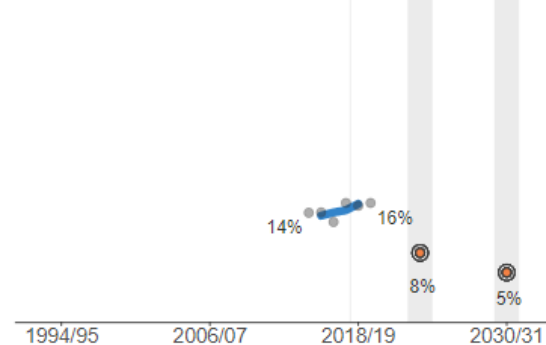
Absolute poverty



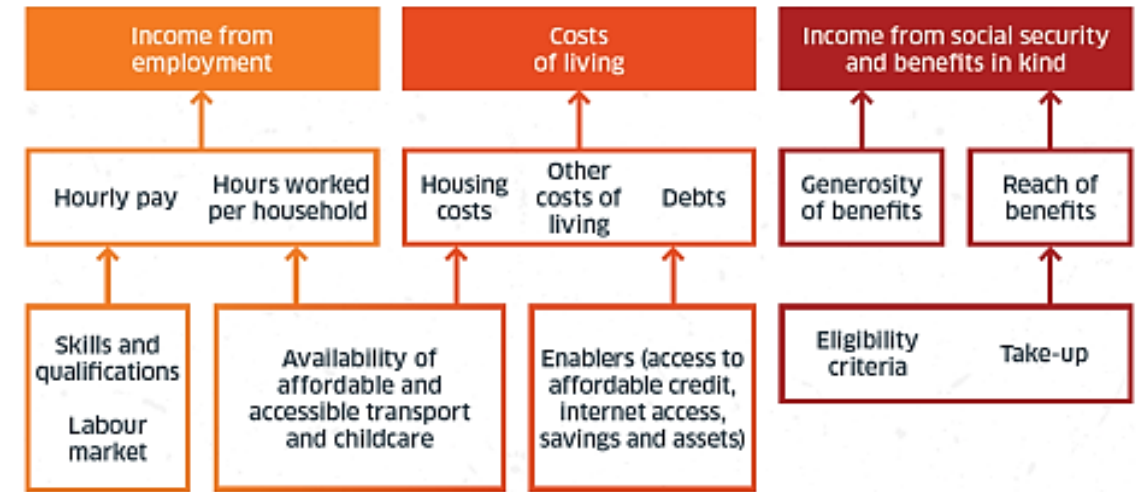
Combined low income and material deprivation



Persistent poverty



Drivers of child poverty



The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets statutory ambitious targets to reduce levels of child poverty, including fewer than 10% of children living in relative poverty, by 2030. This means fewer than one in ten children living in households on low incomes, compared to the average UK household.

The [first Delivery Plan](#) outlines action Scottish Government is taking to meet the 2030 targets and covers the period 2018-22. The [latest progress report](#) highlighted that significant progress needs to be achieved in the years ahead to deliver upon the 2030 targets.

Some drivers show positive improvements, including key employment indicators, skills and childcare availability. Housing costs and other costs of living remained relatively stable, although they may now be rising, and evidence suggests that lower housing costs can be credited with lower poverty rates in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK.

The priority family types identified continue to be at highest risk of child poverty

Priority family group	Proportion (and number) of children in this group in <u>relative poverty</u>		Proportion (and number) of children in this group in <u>absolute poverty</u>		Proportion (and number) of children in this group with <u>low income + material deprivation combined</u>		Proportion of this group in <u>persistent poverty</u>
	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
All children	24%	240,000	22%	210,000	13%	120,000	16%
Lone parent families	38%	90,000	35%	80,000	26%	60,000	^
Minority ethnic families	38%	60,000	34% *		17% *		^
Families with a disabled person	29%	100,000	26%	90,000	20%	70,000	14%
Families with younger mothers (<25)	55% *	-	49% *	-	26% *	-	^
Families with child under 1	34% *	-	30% *	-	13% *	-	27%
Families with 3+ children	32% *	-	29% *	-	19% *	-	33%
In none of the priority groups	10% *		9% *		2% *		-

Source: Relative, absolute and CMD: Family Resources Survey 2017-20 , except for young mothers figure which is based on 2015-18. Persistent poverty: Understanding Society survey 2015-19.

* Treat with caution, sample size is too small for robust estimates

^ Sample size too small to allow estimates

- No data available

Having paid work can be an effective way out of poverty, but having a job is not always enough. Priority groups more likely to still be in poverty despite working (UK data)

Priority family group	Proportion of children in this group who live in a working household (UK)	Share of children in working households who are in relative poverty (UK)
All children	89%	25%
• Lone parent families	65%	35%
• Minority ethnic families	90%	39%
• Families with a disabled person	79%	29%
• Families with younger mothers	67%	38%
• Families with child under 1	85%	32%
• Families with 3+ children	83%	39%
In none of the priority groups	99%	11%

Source: UK level data from Family resources Survey 2017-20. Note: "Working household" refers to someone in the household being in paid work.

Minority ethnic families

Key demographics

- Minority ethnic adults make up 12% of the adult population (7% white minority, 5% visible minority)
- The average age of ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) is younger than the average age of the white population (27 and 42 years old)
- Families from some minority ethnic groups are more likely to have three or more children

Income from employment

- While minority ethnic school leavers tend to outperform other pupils, this doesn't translate into better work outcomes.
- Can face discrimination when applying for a new job or promotions, and women may face additional barriers in accessing and navigating quality employment.
- May be more likely to work irregular hours so accessing suitable childcare can be a challenge.
- Tend to be paid less per hour, and are more likely to be underemployed.

Costs of living

- 13% of minority ethnic households with children in the UK are in unmanageable debt, compared to 9% for all households with children.
- Minority ethnic households with children in Scotland are overrepresented in the private renting sector and spend a higher proportion of their income on housing costs than other families.

Income from social security

- UK data suggests that reliance on benefit income varies widely by ethnic group*
- Asian Pakistani and Bangladeshi families have the highest reliance on benefit income of all ethnic groups.
- Asian Indian and Chinese households have a lower reliance on benefits than white households.
- Take-up of benefits may be an issue, but there is a lack of evidence.

Issues to consider

Actions to target child poverty must reflect the particular barriers faced by minority ethnic individuals

Driving and encouraging an inclusive and diverse workforce

Acknowledging and tackling structural racism

*There is a lack of comprehensive data on how ethnicity interacts with income from social security in Scotland

Lone parent families

Key demographics

- Make up 25% of all families, and 92% are headed by women
- 9% children are born into single parent households, and a further 11% experience parental separation in first 5 years
- 40% of children in lone parent households in relative poverty also have a disabled person at home

Income from employment

- Less likely to be in paid work than other groups.
- Those who work tend to work fewer hours and have a lower hourly wage, reflecting the gender pay gap.
- More likely to have low or no qualifications, and those with degrees more likely to work in low or medium skilled occupations.

Costs of living

- Least wealthy household type in Scotland, probably translating into less disposable income.
- More likely to be in unmanageable debt than two-parent households (9.1% compared to 3.1%).

Income from social security

- High anxiety and uncertainty when looking to claim benefits.
- Disproportionately impacted by cuts, freezes and benefits caps and limits, particularly those who also have a disabled adult or child in the household, partly because of a higher reliance on benefits.

Issues to consider

Challenges around balancing work and childcare commitments with a lack of access to flexible working

Impact of precarious financial situation on health and mental wellbeing

Potential impact of non-payment of child maintenance

Helping lone parents who want to gain qualifications through tailored employability/ training initiatives

Families with a disabled person

Key demographics

- A third of all families in Scotland. Around a fifth (18%) of parents are disabled
- Disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to experience domestic abuse (particularly women)
- Of children in this group in relative poverty, 37% are also in lone parent households, and 36% in homes with 3+ children
- Often other family members take on a caring role, but children in families with an unpaid carer are not at higher risk of poverty

Income from employment

- Disabled parents are generally less likely to be in paid work, and if in paid work, more likely to be underemployed.
- Additional barriers accessing employment (including transport, application processes, discrimination).
- More likely to have low or no qualifications.

Costs of living

- Overall, disabled families face higher costs of living than non-disabled.
- Families with long term conditions find it harder to afford childcare.
- Barriers around finding the right childcare to support children's needs.
- Less likely to have savings (among families with long term conditions).

Income from social security

- Disabled people experience a range of difficulties with benefits currently delivered by the UK social security system, including a lack of advice and support, lack of trust in the system, and a complex, inflexible or unsuitable application process.
- Disproportionately impacted by cuts, freezes and or changes to eligibility criteria, partly because of a higher reliance on benefits.

Issues to consider

Scottish Government is working to address the problems disabled people experience with the current benefits system

Additional costs faced by disabled families making some basic necessities harder to afford

Consideration of carers and additional challenges depending on disability

Families with 3+ children

Key demographics

- 11% of all families have 3 or more children
- More likely to live in a family that is in more than one priority group. Of children in this group who are in relative poverty:
 - Half (50%) also have a disabled person in the household
 - A quarter (25%) are also in a lone parent household

Income from employment

- The challenges of organising and paying for childcare increase with more children, potentially making it less financially viable to work or limiting hours worked.
- Less likely than parents with fewer children to be in paid work, although at least one adult is in paid work in the majority of families in this group.

Costs of living

- The risk of relative poverty increases with number of children.
- Overall, larger families require higher levels of income to achieve an adequate standard of living.
- Cost of childcare and other living costs higher with more children.

Income from social security

- Since 2013, changes to the UK benefits system have reduced both the real value of social security benefits paid to low-income larger families and restricted access to the benefits system.
- There is a 2 child cap on some benefits such as Child Benefit but this does not apply to Scottish Child Payment.

Issues to consider

Support for lone parents and disabled families could help this group

Impact of current social security restrictions on large families

Flexibility in both paid work and childcare may be key for this group

Supporting parents who want to develop skills and qualifications while they are out of the labour market

Families with child under 1

Key demographics

- More likely than other family types to enter poverty
- 35% children in this group in relative poverty also have a mother aged under 25, 33% are in a lone parent household, and 33% live in a household with a disabled family member
- Mothers who stop paid work after having a child and do not return by time child is 5 are more likely to be younger and single mothers

Income from employment

- Families often see a significant reduction in income while relying on maternity/paternity pay or benefits.
- The most common reason for mothers who are seeking paid work not being able to find it is a lack of suitable jobs, particularly part-time jobs.

Costs of living

- Limited choice/ availability of childcare for younger children is an issue, especially for parents working non-standard hours, and for single parents who are often their child's sole carer.
- There is a difference in funding for childcare by age, with less support for children younger than 2, which may be a barrier to work for new parents.

Income from social security

- Insecure and unpredictable work can affect women's entitlement to, and take-up of, Statutory Maternity Pay/ Maternity Allowance.
- Although Statutory Maternity Leave is available for 52 weeks, statutory Maternity Pay is only payable for 39 weeks.

Issues to consider

Need to balance welcoming new parents into paid work while also supporting those who want to stay at home

Gender imbalance in early childcare, with mothers forming the majority of parents not returning to paid work

Consideration of further gender neutral parental leave policies to maximise flexibility on return to work

Families with younger mothers (<25 yrs)

Key demographics

- Likely to be a relatively small group
- More likely to be in other priority groups: over half (54%) are in a lone parent household, 40% have a baby under 1 in the household, and 35% have someone disabled in the household
- Younger mothers are more likely than other mothers to experience domestic abuse

Income from employment

- Less likely to be in paid work.
- Women and young people are at higher risk of in-work poverty and have a lower average hourly rate of pay.
- Strongly affected by social isolation and the absence of childcare to allow them to work or study during the pandemic.
- 17% mothers under 20 have a qualification at Higher Grade or above compared with 50% early twenties and 80% 25 or older.

Costs of living

- Adults under 25 are less likely to have savings, which, combined with low paid jobs, make it harder to meet living costs.
- Pregnant young women and young mothers (under 21) make up about 1 in 25 of all applications for homeless assessments in Scotland.
- UK data highlights that younger people spend a higher proportion of their income on housing and food than older people.

Income from social security

- People under 25, including those who are lone parents, are entitled to a lower allowance of some benefits than people aged 25 and over.
- Mothers under 20 are considerably more reliant on state benefits and tax credits than are older mothers, making them disproportionately impacted by cuts or changes to eligibility criteria in benefits or support services.

Issues to consider

In-work poverty particularly relevant for this group

Consideration of social security benefits for <25s

Issues around housing costs and availability

Overarching challenges across all priority groups...

68% of children in poverty in Scotland live in working households. This highlights the need for good quality, well paid, flexible jobs.

Cost, flexibility and availability of childcare, including for babies and disabled children, is important across all priority groups.

Priority family groups may experience challenges navigating social security systems, and are disproportionately impacted by cuts, freezes and or changes to eligibility criteria for social security.

...and additional pressures as a result of the pandemic

Increased struggles to cover costs of essentials because of economic impacts of pandemic – including food. The proportion of households with children using foodbanks is higher (10%) than amongst all households (5-6%)

Economic effects are likely to disproportionately affect those on low incomes with limited savings (i.e. priority groups). Lone parents in particular – more exposed to impacts of earning reductions.

Projections suggest poverty rates are going to rise once pandemic support schemes are removed. Therefore, child poverty targets will be even more challenging to achieve.

Those working in 'shutdown' sectors were already almost twice as likely to be in poverty – emphasising the additional economic hardship for the priority groups.

Women have been disproportionately disadvantaged by the economic effects of the pandemic. Housework and childcare has fallen more on women than men.

Any increase in poverty may lead to widening educational inequalities. Rises in unemployment levels larger for those aged 16-24 – long term impact on poverty rates for younger households.

As the economy recovers, a comprehensive support package focusing on priority family groups is required.

Sources

Introduction, Progress towards Child Poverty Targets in Scotland, The priority family types identified continue to be at highest risk of child poverty (Slides 2-5)

- [Child poverty statistics - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Tackling child poverty: third year progress report 2020-2021](#)

Minority ethnic families, Lone parent families, Families with a disabled person (Slides 6-8)

- [First year Progress Report 2018-19 Annex C Child Poverty In Minority Ethnic Families](#)
- [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan Second year progress report 2019-20 Annex C – Child poverty among lone parent families](#)
- [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan Third Year Progress Report 2020-21 Annex B: Child Poverty in Families with a Disabled Adult or Child](#)
- [What do we know about in-work poverty in Scotland? Interim findings, SG 2019](#)
- [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2019](#)
- [Freeing low-income single parents from in-work poverty's grip, JRF 2021](#)
- [Ethnicity and poverty in Scotland analysis and reflection on the impact of Covid-19, CRER 2020](#)

Families with 3+ children (Slide 9)

- [NHS Health Scotland: Child poverty in Scotland: priority groups – larger families 2019](#)
- [Scottish Household Survey, 2019](#)
- [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22 Annex 2 – Technical Annex](#)
- [Child poverty transitions: exploring the routes into and out of poverty 2009 to 2012, Barnes, M., Lord, C. and Chanfreau, J. 2015](#)

Authors

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Families with child under 1 (Slide 10)

- [Gender and Work in Scotland: Findings from Understanding Society, 2019](#)
- [Growing Up in Scotland: Patterns of Maternal Employment and Barriers to Paid Work 2017](#)
- [Cost of childcare, Pregnant Then Screwed 2020](#)
- [Joint briefing on the impact of COVID-19 on women's wellbeing, Close the Gap and Engender 2021](#)
- [Insecure Labour the realities of insecure work for pregnant women and new mothers Maternity Action 2020](#)
- [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22 Annex 2 – Technical Annex](#)

Families with younger mothers (Slide 11)

- [Joint briefing on the impact of COVID-19 on women's wellbeing, Close the Gap and Engender 2021](#)
- [GUS The Experiences of Mothers Aged Under 20, 2014](#)
- [Prevalence and Social Inequality in Experiences of Domestic Abuse Among Mothers of Young Children: A Study Using National Survey Data from Scotland, Skafida, V., Morrison, F., Devaney, J., 2021](#)
- [Babies in Lockdown - Listening to parents to build back better, Home-Start 2020](#)
- [Weathering the Storm, Poverty Alliance 2021](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - experiences of vulnerable children, young people, and parents, SG 2021](#)
- [Personal and economic well-being in Great Britain: January 2021](#)

Overarching challenges across all priority groups (Slide 12)

- [The Living Standards Outlook, Resolution Foundation 2021](#)
- [The impacts of Covid 19 on Equality in Scotland, SG 2020](#)
- [Covid-19 Consumer Tracker, Food Standards Scotland 2020](#)
- [Covid-19: the impacts of the pandemic on inequality, Institute for Fiscal Studies 2020](#)