

Child Poverty: Perspectives from SVP

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Measuring and understanding child poverty



Child Poverty in Numbers

- **188,600** children were living below the poverty line (2022 CSO data)
- Nearly **238,000** children were experiencing enforced deprivation - an increase of almost **37,000** children in one year
- **89,000** children living in consistent poverty – **27,000** more than 2021.
- Almost half of one parent families (**43.5%**) living in deprivation

What is missing from this data?

- The **impact of services** on the children's well-being and living standards.
- The lived experience of children and families
- Poverty experienced by **very marginalised groups** – those in homeless accommodation, direct provision and members of the Traveller or Roma Community.
- The adequacy of wages or social welfare in meeting families' minimum needs.

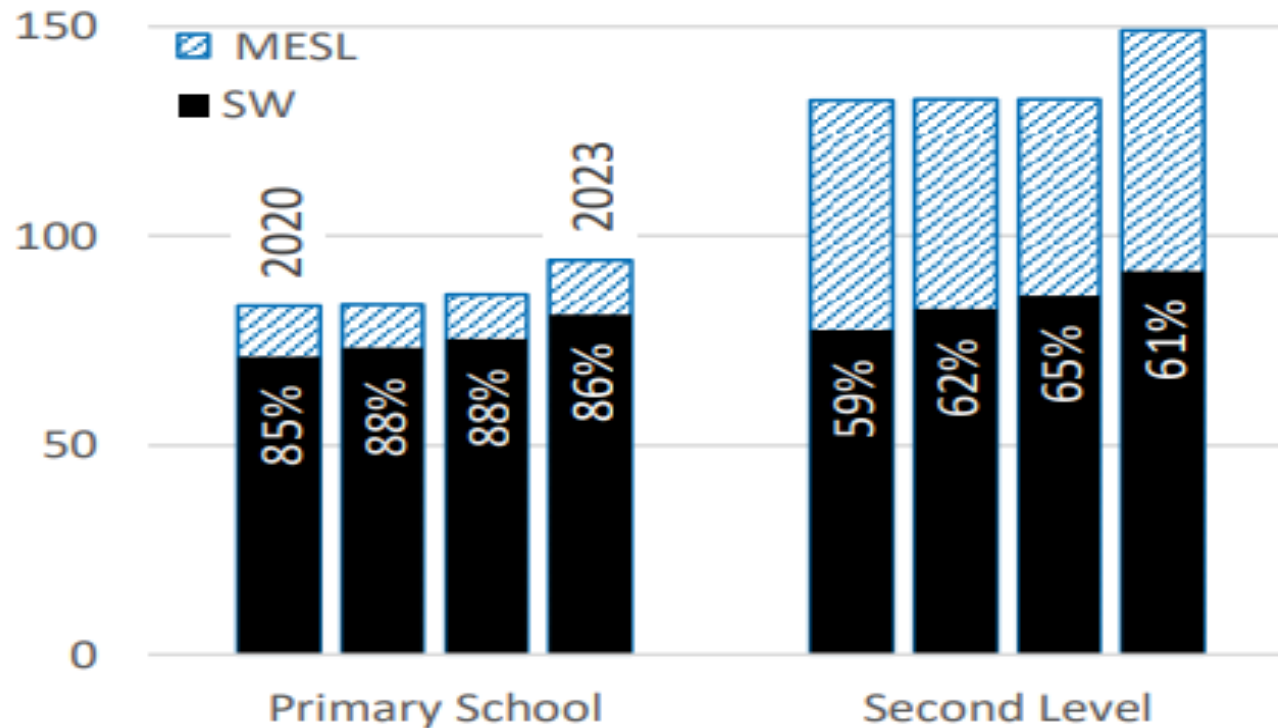
Minimum Essential Standard of Living

- A standard of living which no one should be expected to live below which is decided by members of the public.
- A minimum standard for everyone, not just those in poverty.
- The average weekly cost of the 2,000+ items needed for a minimum standard.
- A unique benchmark, grounded in the lived experience of people, which complements other poverty measures.



Adequacy of Social Welfare: Minimum Needs of Children

Graph 2 Child related social welfare compared to child MESL costs, 2020 - 2023

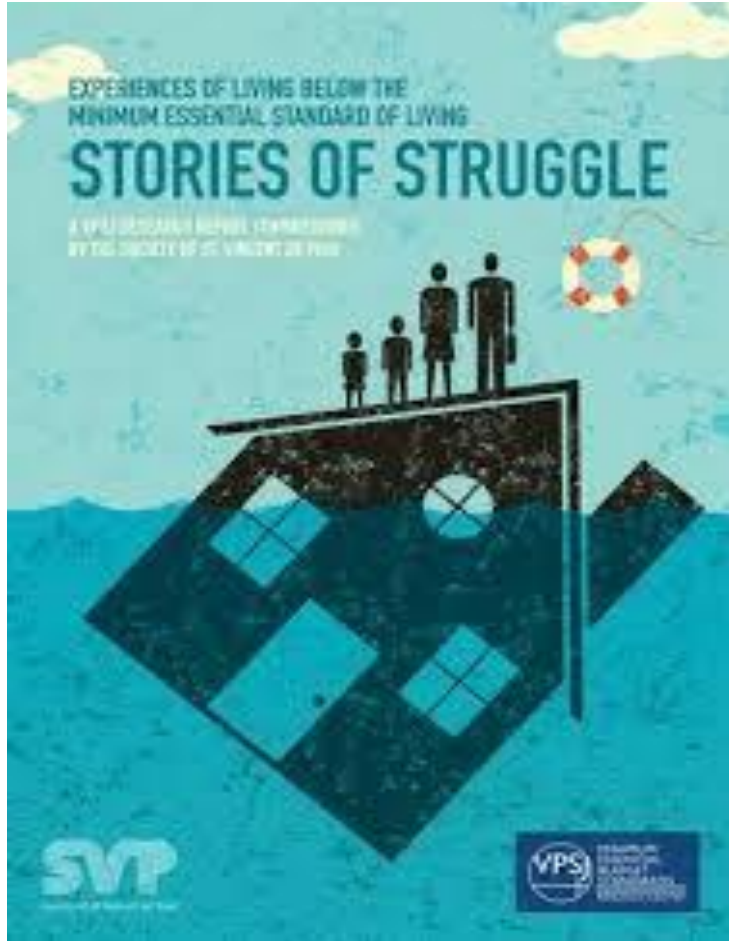


Vincentian MESL Research Centre:
https://www.budgeting.ie/download/pdf/vincentian_mesl_research_centre_-_pre-budget_2024_submission.pdf

Life on a low income: what do parents tell us?



Stories of Struggle



Qualitative research with 30 families

- Present experience, duration and cause of income inadequacy.
- Coping strategies, including sources of support.
- Dealing with the shortfall, including borrowing and the financial, emotional, physical and social impact of an ongoing weekly shortfall.
- Supports and resources considered most beneficial in the interim.

Main drivers of poverty

- The high cost of housing was the single most cited driver of income inadequacy.
- As well as the inability to access affordable and good quality childcare
- Specific events - the death of an immediate family member, being 'let-go' from a job or having hours reduced, rent increases, the birth of a child with additional needs, a family separation or a parent's illness.

I do as much budgeting and planning as I can. I'm happy if the rent, ESB and food bills are paid. I wish I could plan for the future

Consequences for families

- Parents 'do without' and give priority to children's needs.
- Pressure to meet immediate expenses, to the detriment of longer term needs.
- Guilt of letting children down (peer group pressure, education potential).
- Strain of seldom or never having a break (evening or day out, a holiday).
- Cumulative impact on quality of life when there is ongoing shortfall in all areas of household need.

Life's not easy... I can't see a way out.. When I get paid I immediately pay rent, bills and anything that is urgent.. When I'm struggling, which is most of the time, I feel down, sad and depressed.

What do people want?

I'd like to go back to work now the kids are in school for longer. So some training or help getting a job would be great

More women like me would work full-time if there was free or more accessible childcare

So I thought, when you're not earning, you should be learning..so I went back to education and just it completely changed my life

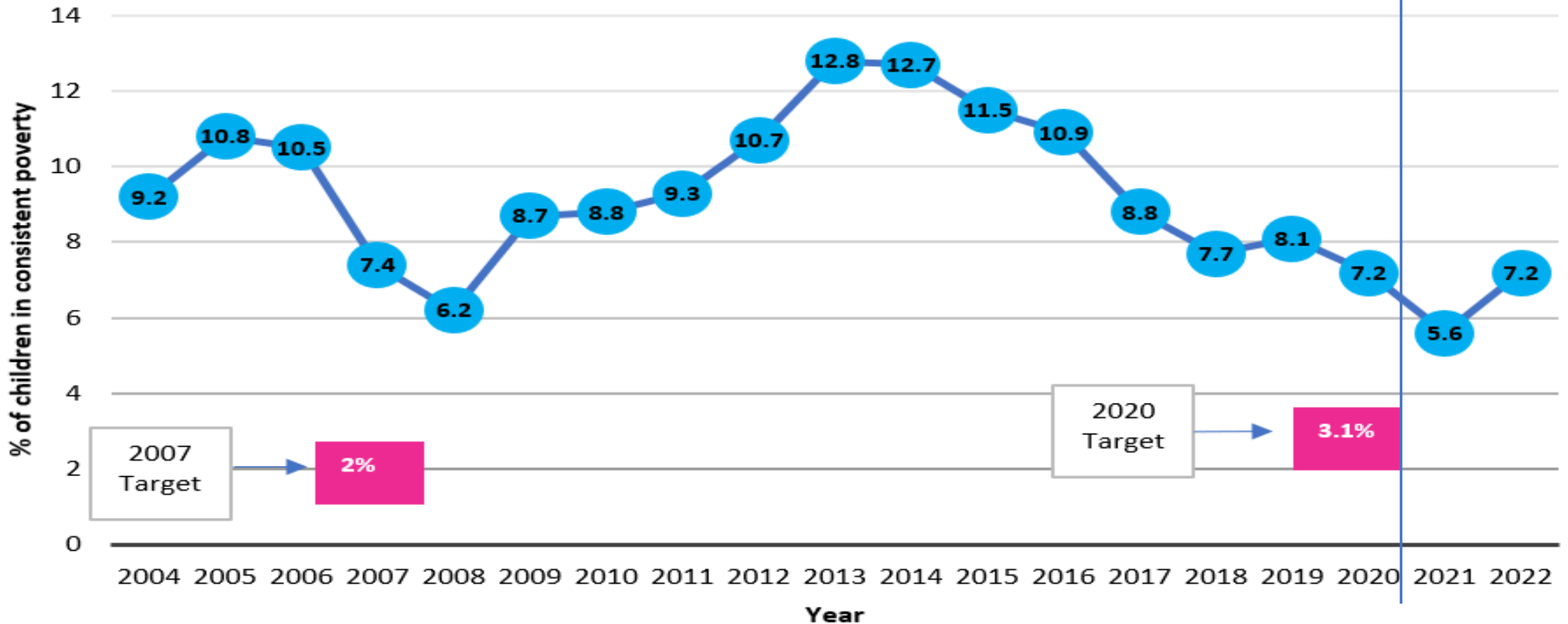


National responses to child poverty: SVP perspectives



Trends in Child Poverty & Poverty Targets

Consistent Poverty Rate 0-17 Year Olds



Real progress

- ✓ Introduction of a higher rate of Qualified Child Payment to children over 12
- ✓ Improvements in-work income supports to lone parents
- ✓ Commitment to introduce a living wage
- ✓ Increased provision of school meals
- ✓ Increased investment in early years care and education
- ✓ Removal of means testing of child maintenance by DSP
- ✓ Free schoolbooks for primary school children

Barriers to systematic change

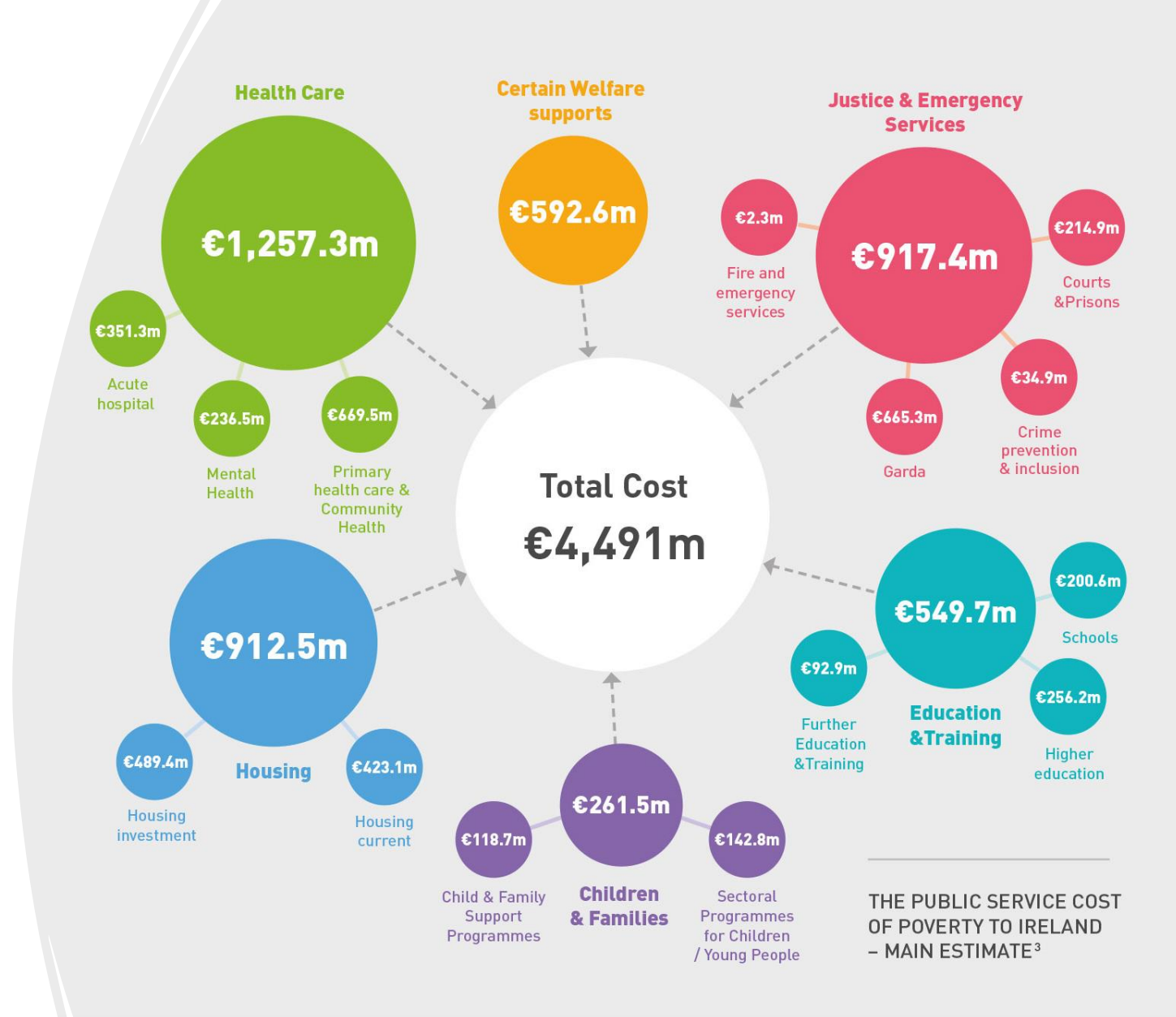
- Welfare increases not keeping track with cost of living nor adequacy levels.
- Siloed departmental working.
- Poverty proofing not fully implemented.
- Competing pressures and interests at budget time; struggle with short term pressures and longer- term goals (i.e. Brexit, COVID-19, energy crisis).
- Poor public attitudes to low-income families especially social welfare recipients.



Potential of Child Poverty Unit

- High level focus on issue of child poverty
- Coordination and cross-departmental approach – integrated approach
- Embedding child poverty into budgetary cycle
- Monitoring implementation of EU Child Guarantee
- New child poverty target (with sub-targets) should drive action

The cost of poverty: why we need to invest to save



³ The report establishes a main, low and high cost of poverty estimate for each category of public expenditure. Uncertainty coupled with data limitations means that the determination of an accurate point estimate for the public service cost of poverty would be difficult. Using a more conservative set of costing assumptions the low estimate determines a cost of €3bn per annum. As an attempt to determine the likely upper limit of these costs the high estimate provides a value of just over €7.2bn per annum.

Figures have been rounded for the purpose of presentation.

Thank you

