

FOR A TEENAGER POVERTY MEANS:

NOT BEING ABLE TO GO OUT WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Not being able to go to university **Having to get a job to help your parents get by**
Not having enough money **Feeling ashamed** **Feeling discriminated against**
People looking down on you because you can't afford what they have
Not experiencing the everyday things that other teenagers have in their lives
Being embarrassed when you're asked what presents you got for Christmas

While Ireland is one of the richest countries in the EU, almost 300,000 live in consistent poverty. That means they have very low incomes and are forced to go without new clothes, heating or suitable food because they cannot afford to pay for them.

- People in poverty are more likely to drop out of school early, suffer health problems and end up in low paid jobs.
- Poverty is often passed from generation to generation. Although many people do manage to escape from poverty during their lives.
- Children born into poor households are more likely to end up becoming poor adults because of the disadvantages they face from a very early age.

WHAT...IS POVERTY?

People are living in poverty if they don't have enough income and resources to have a standard of living that is the norm for the rest of Irish society. Poverty is relative – it is about that person's relationship to the rest of society. Access to wealth for a majority of people can leave the minority more excluded. If most children in a class at school have access to a computer at home, the child whose family doesn't have one is left out and likely to fall behind. There are different ways to measure poverty in Ireland.

AT RISK OF POVERTY (RELATIVE POVERTY)

This means having an income that is below 60% of the median income (the median is the mid-point on the scale of all incomes in Ireland). In 2006, that meant an income of less than €203 a week for an adult. Nearly one in six people in Ireland are at risk of poverty.

CONSISTENT POVERTY

People who are at risk of poverty and who are not able to afford basic necessities are said to be in consistent poverty.

WHO IS POOR?

Approximately 720,000 people are at risk of poverty and 300,000 people experience consistent poverty. However, some social groups have higher poverty rates than the rest of the population including children, lone parent families and unemployed people.

This table shows how these groups compare with the population as a whole:

	At Risk of Poverty	Consistent Poverty
Total Population	17%	7%
Lone Parent Families	40%	33%
Unemployed People	44%	23%
Ill or Disabled People	41%	20%
Children (under 16s)	20%	11%
Foreign Nationals	24%	9%
Older People (65+)	14%	2%

WHY?

Poverty is not inevitable. Poverty is caused by the way society deals out economic resources such as money, wealth, jobs and social resources like education, housing, healthcare and so on.

There are also other factors that make people more likely to be poor. One single factor might not be important on its own, but when these factors are combined they increase the risk of poverty. Factors contributing to poverty include:

- **Work:** being unemployed or in a low-paid job makes people more likely to be poor.
- **Age:** older people and children whose parents are poor are at greater risk of poverty than the general population.
- **Health:** people with long-term illnesses or who are disabled are at greater risk of poverty.
- **Education:** people who left school early or without qualifications are more likely to experience poverty.
- **Family:** one-parent families are more likely to be poor than two-parent families or single people.
- **Location:** living in a disadvantaged community or in an area with few employment opportunities increases the risk of poverty.

HOW ARE WE RESPONDING TO POVERTY?

The Irish Government has been working to lessen poverty in this country for many years. It set up the Combat Poverty Agency in 1986 to give advice on policies to reduce poverty in Ireland.

The Irish Government was also one of the first countries in the EU to establish a national anti-poverty strategy (NAPS) in 1997. The current strategy aims to eliminate poverty in Ireland by 2016.

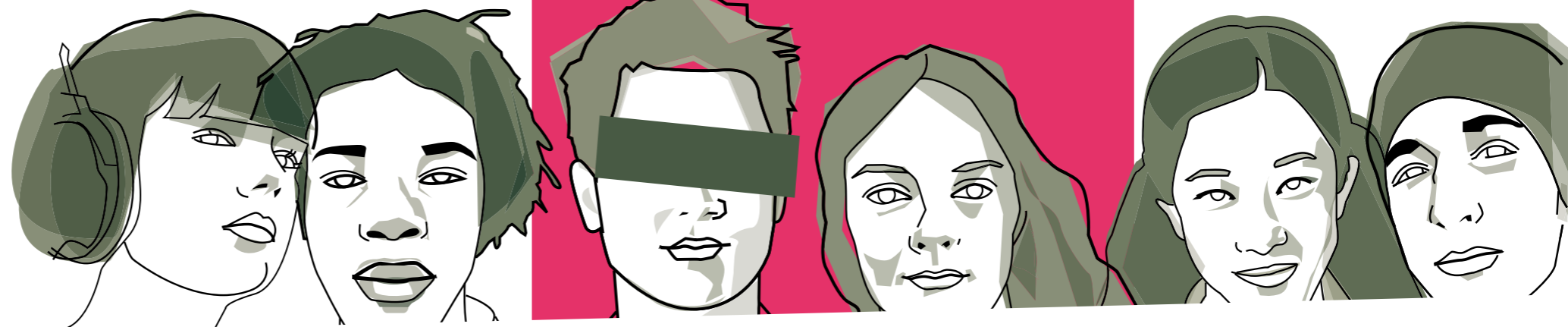
At a local level, local authorities play a major role in tackling poverty, for example, by providing social housing, libraries and other public facilities. Many community and voluntary groups also work to reduce poverty. Organisations such as the society of St Vincent de Paul and Barnardos are well known around the country because of their work in helping to fight poverty.

Government responses to poverty are important, but every one has a responsibility to help those who are affected by poverty.

DID YOU KNOW?

Children in Ireland are almost twice as likely as adults to be poor.

More than one in three people living in poverty are children.



CASE STUDIES

Pamela Pamela comes from a disadvantaged area

"People do things just to fit in. There is a scene here of young people robbing cars and drinking from when they are about 13. There is a lot of drugs. People sell their mother's tranquillisers, too. I never went to secondary school. I just didn't bother. I'm after quieting down a lot since. I'm getting counselling and I hope to get back happiness and the respect of my family."

John John is registered as homeless for the past 4 years and has been advised that the normal wait for a single man is up to 13 years.

"They aren't building any new places for the homeless and now there are homeless people coming in as refugees and you have to queue for things and there is a lot of conflict building up – it is the Irish against everyone else. There's a whole new generation of young homeless in this country now, boys, and girls as well. People get caught in a trap."

Case studies taken from Combat Poverty's publication: Silent People and Other Stories

MYTH-BUSTERS

"AREN'T ALL CHILDREN BORN WITH THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES?"

According to UNICEF, children from poor households are much more likely to do poorly in school, to become teenage parents, to spend time in prison and to have difficulty finding or keeping good jobs.

"SURE THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS POVERTY IN IRELAND..."

Although poverty in Ireland has decreased, almost 1 in 6 Irish people still are at risk of poverty. This prevents them from having a standard of living that other people take for granted.

"ARE THEY NOT JUST LAZY? THEY COULD FIND A JOB IF THEY WANTED TO..."

Not true. Many people don't have the skills or education to find and keep a good job. The jobs available to them are low paid and insecure and they may be better off on the dole. Also, many people are not in a position to work, ie older people, carers.

"DON'T REFUGEES GET HOUSES BEFORE IRISH PEOPLE?"

No. Refugees in need of social housing have to go through the same process to become housed as everyone else. They join the waiting list in the same way as other people.

All stats taken from EU-SLIC 2006