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Thematic Report on Persistent Income Poverty and Deprivation in Ireland

An Analysis of the Longitudinal Central Statistics Office (CSO) Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), 2015-2023

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Social Inclusion

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List of Abbreviations

AROP	At-Risk-of-Poverty
CSO	Central Statistics Office
EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
SILC	Survey on Income and Living Conditions

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Executive summary

This thematic report analyses how income poverty and material deprivation persistence changed between 2015 and 2023, taking into account fluctuations around the COVID-19 pandemic. Income poverty (or at-risk-of-poverty, AROP) is a relative measure that occurs when a household's disposable income, after taking into consideration the household size and composition, is below 60% of the national median. Basic deprivation implies that individuals are living in households that cannot afford basic goods and services, such as adequate food, clothing, heating of the house, and basic social participation such as an occasional meal or drink out with family and friends. The Irish Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) cross-sectional data is used to analyse general trends between 2016 and 2023. And the SILC longitudinal data between pairs of years 2015-2016 and 2022-2023 is used to measure poverty dynamics, namely the share of people entering poverty (i.e., those who are not poor the first year they are surveyed but become poor by the second); exiting poverty (i.e., those who are poor the first year but no longer by the second); and in persistent poverty (i.e., those who are poor during the two consecutive years).

Key findings

Trends in income poverty (AROP rate)

The at-risk-of-poverty (AROP) rate gradually declined from 16% in 2016 to 11% in 2023. However, a small post-COVID increase is observed as the AROP rate increased from 12% in 2021 to 13% in 2022, before falling to 11% in 2023. A larger post-COVID spike was visible amongst lone-parent families, single 30- to 65-year-old individuals, and older adults (66+), particularly those living alone. On average, 18% of individuals experienced income poverty in at least one year between 2015 and 2023. The exit rate from AROP ranged from 4% to 6%, while the entry rate ranged from 3% to 5%. The average rate of persistent AROP (i.e., income poverty over two consecutive years) in the period 2015-2023 was 9%, which is lower than the 10% found for the period 2004-2015 (Grotti et al., 2017).

Trends in material deprivation

Material deprivation rates fluctuated more with the economic cycle and inflation. There was a decline between 2016 and 2018, mostly explained by a drop in persistent deprivation, which fell from 14 to 10%. Subsequently, the share of people living in deprivation grew in 2018-2019, due to a rise in entry rate as well as a decrease in exit rate. The deprivation rate then fell the following year thanks to a drop in both persistent and entry deprivation. Finally, the deprivation rate increased gradually, from 14% in 2021 to 17% in 2023. This is explained by both a rise in persistent deprivation and in entry into deprivation.

On average, over the period, 22% of the population experienced deprivation at least once in two consecutive years; almost half of these were in persistent deprivation (10/22); slightly less than a third were exiting deprivation (7/22) and about a quarter were entering deprivation (5/22). Similar shares are observed in each pair of years. Vulnerable groups included lone parents and households with someone with a disability, while older adults (not living alone) consistently had the lowest deprivation rates.

Overlap between income poverty and deprivation

When aggregating all the years between 2016 and 2023, the cross-sectional data show that 5% of the population is both AROP and materially deprived (i.e., in consistent poverty). It also shows that 40% of the AROP population is materially deprived while only 13% of the non-AROP population is deprived. On the other hand, 10% of the non-deprived are AROP, while 32% of the deprived are AROP. While significant overlap is observed, the remaining disparities between the populations affected by each poverty measure suggests that the two measures capture different dimensions of poverty. For instance, permanent income, which refers to income over an extended period, may be more strongly associated with deprivation than income at a single point in time. Furthermore, certain types of income, such as self-employment income, can vary significantly over a short period of time and are difficult to measure particularly through household surveys, thereby potentially introducing measurement errors[1]. Lastly, some

[1] Self-employment tax returns submitted to Revenue are based on self-assessment, so it is likely that some income is misreported. For other sources of differences see: https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/methods/surveyonincomeandlivingconditions/Survey_on_Income_and_Living_Conditions_(SILC)_SIMS_2023.pdf

households may be just above or below the poverty line while being (or not being) materially deprived.

Location, socioeconomic, and demographic factors

We used multinomial logit regressions to examine whether other factors were related to persistent and transient poverty. We found that people living in the northern and western regions of Ireland are more likely to be at-risk-of-poverty or deprivation if they are in a household without any working adults, or if the household head had low education attainment and/or did not work. These were all factors associated with higher probability of being AROP and deprived, both transitory (i.e., during one wave) and persistently (during both). And while no significant difference is found between genders for the AROP rate, females are more likely to experience both transient and persistent deprivation. This corroborates with Papadopoulos and Tsakloglou's (2016) EU findings that before the crisis period, women formed a 'medium risk' group in chronic material deprivation in all countries, being 1 to 1.5 times more at risk of material disadvantage than the population average. It also relates to Mussida et al. (2023) who use EU-SILC Spanish data for the period 2014-2018 and find that the risk of falling into severe material deprivation for female heads of household is about 2.8 times higher than their male equivalent, across Spanish regions. Potential reasons for this could be that mothers are more likely to shield their children from deprivation by spending less on their own needs (Guio and Van den Bosch, 2019) or that women are more likely to face financial and economic fragility (Fabrizi et al., 2025).

Vulnerable groups

Lone parents and families of working-age adults with a disability faced the highest risks of being in transient AROP, and both transient and persistent deprivation. Large families had the highest persistent poverty rates, while older adults (especially those living with others) had the lowest rates for all these measures.

Policy implications

This report underscores the dynamic and multifaceted nature of poverty and deprivation in Ireland. The findings emphasise the need for nuanced policy approaches:

a. **Targeted support for vulnerable groups**: Policies should prioritise one-parent families, large households, households with a person with disabilities, and older adults living alone.
b. **Addressing structural disparities**: Findings suggest that investments in employment opportunities, education access, and regional development are critical to reducing poverty.
c. **Timely welfare adjustments:** Social welfare policies should account for inflation, average earnings growth and economic shocks to protect low-income households. Likewise, the sharp increase in AROP rate found amongst the single 66+ population shows how strongly and rapidly populations who tend to have incomes around the 60% national median income threshold can be affected when the state benefits, in this case pensions, are not index-linked, especially when the economy is experiencing significant inflation.

By addressing these systemic issues, policymakers can foster greater equity and resilience across Irish society. This study highlights the importance of combining income and material deprivation measures to fully understand and address economic hardship.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the paper

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the trends in the persistence of income poverty and deprivation between 2015 and 2023. We will focus on the Irish SILC data and consider the following questions:

1. What has been the extent of income poverty and deprivation persistence over the recent period and how does it compare with the 2004-2015 period outlined in Grotti et al. (2017)?
2. What is the relationship between income poverty persistence and deprivation persistence over time?
3. Who are the groups experiencing poverty persistence?
4. What other factors are associated with income poverty and deprivation persistence?

1.2 Concepts

The study builds on a previous report that analyses poverty transitions from 2004 to 2015 using pairs of SILC waves (Grotti et al., 2017). Following the latter, poverty is defined as ‘a reduced access to material resources to the extent that the person cannot participate in generally valued activities or have an adequate standard of living’.

In Ireland, the two main indicators for monitoring poverty are income poverty (or at-risk-of-poverty, AROP) and material deprivation. Consistent poverty is a combination of the two and is the main indicator used at national level. In terms of definition, income poverty is a relative measure that occurs when a household’s disposable income, after taking into consideration the household size and composition, is below 60% of the national median. Material deprivation implies that due to a lack of resources, individuals are living in households that cannot afford basic goods and services such as adequate food, clothing, heating of the house, and basic social participation like an occasional meal or drink out with family and friends (Grotti et al., 2017). While income poverty and material deprivation are both complementary, material deprivation provides a more nuanced and

effective measure of poverty as it directly assesses the impact of economic resources on individuals' quality of life, beyond just their income. Indeed, income poverty may not fully account for the actual living conditions individuals face, as it does not consider factors like the cost of living, access to services, or social participation for example.

Poverty research has defined persistent poverty differently, depending on the observable number of waves in the datasets used. The EU 'persistent at-risk-of-poverty' measure is defined as being at-risk-of-poverty in the current year and having been at-risk-of-poverty in at least two of the three preceding years[2]. However, there is no EU measure of persistent deprivation. In the present study, we follow Grotti et al. (2017) and classify an individual as persistently income poor or in persistent deprivation if they are income poor or deprived in two consecutive years, as this is the maximum number of consecutive years observed in the Irish SILC RMF from CSO that was available[3].

1.3 Poverty dynamics

Different datasets lend themselves to different types of poverty analyses. Cross-sectional datasets where individuals are observed at a single point in time only allow the study of static estimates of the poverty rate. Thus, should a rise in poverty rate be observed, cross-sectional data would not show whether this is more due to a rise in the number of people becoming poor or in the number of people remaining poor (Grotti et al., 2017; Burkhauser, 2001). This is where longitudinal data like the EU-SILC comes into use. By following the population over several waves, these data permit the analysis of poverty dynamics, namely entry, exit, duration, and events associated with poverty transitions. The data show that movements into and out of poverty are a great deal more frequent than had been supposed and that a far greater proportion of the population experience poverty at some point than is revealed by cross-sectional studies (Whelan et al., 2004; Layte and Whelan, 2003).

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:At-risk-of-poverty_rate
[3] Moreover, the longitudinal component of the Irish SILC lacks a sufficient sample size to apply the EU definition of persistent at-risk-of-poverty (AROP) when broken down by household socio-demographic characteristics.

Studies have shown that poverty is an experience of varying duration (Watson et al., 2018), with significant movement both into and out of poverty (Grotti et al., 2017; Whelan et al., 2004). The entry rate is usually calculated through the share of individuals entering poverty during an observed period out of the total number of individuals who were not poor in the previous period. The exit rate is the share of individuals exiting poverty in an observed period out of those who were poor in the previous period (Vaalavuo, 2015). Based on a pool of 26 EU countries, Iceland, and Norway, Vaalavuo (2015) estimated that the 2008-2012 average year-on-year entry rate into poverty was around 6.6%, 34.9% for the exit rate, 11% for the share that remained poor, and 77.6% for the share that remained non-poor.

Bane and Ellwood (1986) and Stevens (1994) found that the longer people are poor, the lower their chances of exiting poverty, thereby suggesting a potential entrapment into income poverty. Nonetheless, according to Baulch and Hoddinott (2000), Devicienti (2011), and Fouarge and Layte (2005), only a minority of people remain poor for long periods. Analysing persistent poverty is however crucial given its consequences on current and future labour market outcomes, family behaviours and decisions, health, wellbeing, and child development (Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1999; Power et al., 1999). As explained by Duncan et al. (1993), moving out of transitory poverty to avoid persistent poverty is possible if there are enough opportunities of upward economic mobility.

Looking at persistent deprivation across EU countries, Guio et al. (2017) estimate that between 2009 and 2012, the average proportion of people deprived at least once was 1.6 times the average proportion of people who have been persistently deprived throughout the period[4].

Amongst the drivers behind entry into poverty, Russell and Maître (2024) and Maître et al. (2021) find that partnership breakdown is an important trigger for moves into poverty, i.e. when one partner exits the household. Furthermore, Maître et al. (2021) find that job loss is another important trigger, while transition from either non-employment or part-time employment into full-time work increases the odds of exiting poverty.

[4] Guio et al. (2017) used the EU definition of persistent at-risk-of-poverty to measure persistent deprivation (i.e., being deprived in the current year and at least two of the preceding three years).

1.4 Drivers of persistent poverty

Various determinants of persistent poverty have been found in the literature. In this section, we separate them between those linked with individual and household characteristics, and those related to the local context.

Individual specificities

1. Initial poverty level

'State dependence' is a term used by economists to indicate how current poverty per se causes future poverty. Mussida and Sciulli (2022) found that state dependence grew in the EU following the Great Recession[5]. Individuals' initial poverty conditions, namely their poverty status at the first observed period, play an important role in countries' poverty rates during the following periods. Welfare poverty measures like cash transfers have thus become increasingly important in reducing persistent poverty. However, as the authors point out, access to social programmes may discourage individuals from engaging in activities that could help them escape poverty in order to maintain income support. Furthermore, experiencing poverty may give rise to loss of motivation and depreciation of human capital. As noted by Biewen (2009), evidence has shown that being poor in one period decreases the likelihood of being employed and of living with a partner in the next period.

2. Detrimental health

Past studies suggest a vicious circle between detrimental health and poverty. Poorer populations tend to have worse health, as notably evidenced by a lower life expectancy (Bernstein et al., 2018). One of the many reasons for this is highlighted by Laurence et al. (2023) who find that children in Ireland living in poor housing conditions are more likely to experience negative health outcomes such as respiratory problems due to living in damp or inadequately heated homes. This shows the importance of having adequate housing support, especially since the authors find that poor health outcomes lead to detrimental effects on children's cognitive development, which is likely to impact socioeconomic outcomes during adulthood. Those with poor health are also likely to find it more difficult to enter employment.

[5] They used EU SILC longitudinal data to compare poverty outcomes in 2015-2018 to 2005-2008.

3. Poverty duration

Past evidence has shown that the likelihood of exiting poverty decreases the longer a person has been poor, even after controlling for unfavourable background characteristics (Biewen, 2006; Stevens, 1999; Devicienty, 2011). In this case, the risk of being poor is said to be duration dependent. As explained by Biewen (2014), poverty duration dependence is rooted in similar processes as poverty state dependence, namely gradual demoralisation, habituation, and depreciation of human capital. Thus, all other factors being equal, a larger fraction of the currently poor will remain poor in the next period compared with those who are not currently poor (ibid.).

Household specificities

Household composition is likely to affect poverty outcomes. For instance, several papers find that the presence of older persons in a household reduces the persistent poverty rate, given their potential for a stable source of income, including through their pensions (Mussida and Sciulli 2022; Giarda and Moroni 2018). We further discuss household composition, including the presence of children and lone parenthood, in Section 1.6.

Meanwhile, other studies find that homeownership is associated with low rates of persistent poverty (Mussida and Sciulli 2022; Bosco and Poggi 2020; Fabrizi and Mussida 2020; Giarda and Moroni 2018).

Local context

1. Welfare regime

Jenkins and Van Kerm (2011) studied persistence in income poverty in 21 EU countries. They found that Nordic countries had relatively low persistent poverty rates, while Mediterranean countries had high rates. Watson et al. (2018) compared EU countries of different welfare regimes between 2004 and 2014. They found that social democratic countries like Sweden, Finland, and the Netherlands had the lowest levels of both cross-sectional and persistent material deprivation and income poverty. These welfare states are characterised by decommodification where entitlements are more universal and less tied to previous employment record and means testing. These countries were notably the most effective in protecting the living standards of the population from the impact of the recession. In Ireland, policies put in place to protect State Pension rates ensured that

older adults were protected from the worst effects of the recession (Watson and Maître, 2013). However, older adults are particularly vulnerable to even minor changes in the absence of adjustments to the State Pension. A significant number of individuals aged 65 and over have household incomes around the income poverty threshold, making them susceptible to moving in and out of income poverty. This was evident in 2021 and 2022 when poverty rates among this age group increased due to the freezing of social welfare payments between 2019 and 2021 (Roantree et al., 2024).

2. Neighbourhood poverty

Studying Chicagoans between 1995 and 2013, Perkins and Sampson (2015) talk about a 'cycle of deprivation' which can be generated by the concentration of poverty, female-headed families, joblessness, teenage pregnancy, and violence within a place. However, family poverty outweighs neighbourhood poverty when both conditions are simultaneously examined (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997a, 1997b). Thus, the authors introduce the notion of compounded poverty, which they define as poverty experienced simultaneously at the individual level (through low household income) and at the neighbourhood level. They find that adolescents who experienced compounded poverty at wave one had over seven times higher odds of experiencing it at later waves than adolescents who did not, suggesting a kind of 'poverty trap' that ensnares individuals for long periods. While findings related to highly segregated neighbourhoods in the US do not necessarily apply elsewhere, there is evidence of some neighbourhood effects for Ireland. Laurence et al. (2023) found that children living in neighbourhoods with higher levels of disorder experience more difficulties and exhibit less pro-social behaviour. Even when housing conditions are held constant, the authors find that living in social housing has an additional negative effect.

1.5 Policy implications

Several studies found that social benefits have a crucial role in minimising poverty rates and improving the exit rate from poverty. In the EU, Mussida and Sciulli (2022) find that cash transfers and support for families and children appeared to be the most effective measures. Using individual-level data on 11 EU countries, Kyzyma and Williams (2017) find that an increase in unemployment transfers received by individuals is associated with higher probabilities of exiting poverty when these transfers are combined with well-

developed active labour market policies. In Ireland, Watson and Maître (2013) find that social transfers played a crucial role in alleviating poverty from 2004 to 2011. During this time, the impact of social transfers on reducing poverty rates grew significantly, with these transfers making up a larger portion of household income, particularly during the economic recession. Their study shows that social transfers were especially effective in lowering poverty among older pensioners, children, and jobless households, and that Ireland's social transfers were among the most effective in the EU-15 for reducing poverty. More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland specifically, the Pandemic Unemployment Payment and the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme were crucial in preserving household income and preventing an increase in child poverty (Beirne et al., 2020; Reagan and Maître, 2020).

Using the EU-SILC data for 20 EU countries, Mussida and Sciulli (2022) find that employment stability and childcare have an important role in protecting families against persistent poverty. However, they find a reduced role of higher education following the Great Recession (2015-2018), potentially due to a reduction in returns to education. In an older US study, Ribar and Hamrick (2003) find that completing high school has a strong positive correlation with poverty exit, while the impact of college completion is not statistically significant. As Mussida and Sciulli (2022) point out, this type of result highlights the relevance of monitoring the effectiveness of higher education in avoiding unemployment and low-paying jobs. It also calls into question both the adequacy of educational systems and the functioning of labour markets (ibid.).

Longitudinal household data in the United States, Canada, and Europe show frequent transitions out of poverty following economically favourable events such as employment, and to a much lesser extent, marriage (Duncan et al., 1993). Transitioning to employment alone may not suffice, as the number of working hours is also crucial. Analysing lone parents in the Growing Up in Ireland panel data, Russell and Maître (2024) showed that only those who moved from non-employment to working more than 15 hours per week experienced a significant reduction in poverty. This effect was not observed in those moving to work fewer than 15 hours per week. Finally, Perkins and Sampson (2015) point out that when compound poverty is present, durable investment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is crucial.

1.6 Groups most vulnerable to poverty

Literature on vulnerable groups

As explained by Sprong and Maître (2023), when analysing poverty and social inclusion, it is important to explore how specific groups of the population fared rather than only considering the overall trends as those can hide inequalities between groups. For instance, Watson et al. (2018) found in their EU-wide analysis that lone parents and families of working-age adults with a disability experience higher deprivation and poverty rates in all countries. The ratio of deprivation rate to poverty rate is also highest for these groups, suggesting greater difficulty in translating resources (income level) into affordable goods and services. In Ireland, Grotti et al. (2017) found that, in 2004-2015, lone parent families had the highest rates of persistent income poverty and deprivation, followed by families affected by working-age disability. Tracking the same families with children across four waves of data in Ireland, from when the children were 9 months old to 13 years old, Russell and Maître (2014) found that 87% of lone parents experienced poverty at least once, compared to only 38% of two-parent families. Additionally, 17% of lone parents were poor in all four waves, whereas this was true for only 3% of two-parent families. Among the lone parents, those formerly married showed lower rates of deprivation compared to those who never married (although this significant difference was not found for income poverty).

In the EU, Whelan et al. (2003) found that lone parenthood is a greater predictor of deprivation than of persistent poverty. More generally, they found that, outside of Southern European countries, divorce or separation have a stronger impact on the odds of being deprived than on the odds of being persistently income poor. In the US, several studies found that individuals in households headed by females (which include the majority of lone parent households) were more likely to enter poverty, and less likely to exit (see Cellini et al. 2008 for a comprehensive review). They stay in poverty during longer periods when compared to married-couple households (Eller, 1996; Naifeh, 1998; Stevens, 1999). Ribar and Hamrick (2003) and McKernan and Ratcliffe (2002, 2005) also find that households with more children have a lower probability of exit.

Based on a pool of 26 EU countries, Iceland, and Norway, Vaalavuo (2015) found that children had the highest poverty entry rate and the lowest exit rate, making them the

most vulnerable age group. On the other hand, over 65s had the lowest entry rate while working-age adults had the highest exit rate, suggesting that transient poverty is more likely to occur at that age. Similarly, Mussida and Sciulli (2022) found that the presence of children in EU households increased the risk of persistent poverty. This impact almost doubles for households with children aged 0 to 3. This points to the importance of supporting families with young children in order to combat poverty. As explained by the authors, reducing child poverty is all the more important when considering its effects on cognitive and non-cognitive skill formation, and the possible long-term consequences throughout an individual's life.

Scottish statistics also show that children had the highest share of persistent poverty (18%) in 2017-2021, while working-age adults and pensioners had the lowest shares (10% for both) (Scottish Government Official Statistics, 2023). In Ireland, Russell et al. (2010) found that amongst children, poverty was concentrated in lone parent households during the boom years of 2004 to 2007. When focusing on the older age groups, the authors showed that living alone was associated with a higher risk of poverty.

In the US, studies have found that the probability of entering poverty is higher for Black and Hispanic people, women, and those with lower levels of education. On the other hand, poverty exit rates are higher for White people than for Black people (Cellini et al., 2008). In the UK, the Government Official Statistics show that between 2010 and 2021, individuals with a White head of household had lower rates of persistent low income than individuals from other ethnic groups. Likewise, the rates of persistent low incomes were higher for working-age adults with lower levels of educational qualifications, both before and after housing costs. Amongst families, those headed by couples tended to have lower rates of persistent low income than those headed by single adults. In addition, individuals living in the social rented sector were most likely to have persistent low income; as were children in families with three or more children in comparison with those in families with one or two children; working-age adults who rented their homes, particularly after housing costs (AHC); and working-age-adults with health problems or disabilities.

Whelan et al. (2003) found that self-employed individuals and those detached from the labour market were more likely to experience persistent income poverty than persistent

deprivation. Mussida and Sciulli (2022) found that temporary employment was associated with higher poverty rate, while Maître et al. (2011) found that unemployment and low education of the household reference person, as well as singlehood and high reliance on social transfers, were strong predictors of persistent poverty.

It is important to note that groups that are most vulnerable to transitory poverty are not necessarily the same as those most vulnerable to persistent poverty. For instance, evidence from Germany showed that the main risk factors for current poverty were unemployment, having multiple children, and being in a disadvantaged household type (especially lone parenthood), while economic inactivity and old age (mostly due to fixed incomes) were the most important risk factors for persistent poverty (Biewen, 2006). Thus, groups with a high risk of being poor in a particular period were not necessarily likely to suffer from persistent poverty, as many of the risks for current poverty are temporary (e.g., unemployment and lone parenthood). On the other hand, pensioners face below-average risks of cross-sectional poverty but are considerably overrepresented among the persistently poor (Biewen, 2014). Additionally, it is important to mention that groups most at risk of being income poor are not necessarily the same as those most at risk of material deprivation (Whelan et al., 2004).

Vulnerable group selection

As mentioned earlier, the risk of poverty varies across households with different characteristics. In this paper we explore persistent income poverty and deprivation across social risk groups building on the work of Grotti et al. (2017). Watson et al. (2016) define social risk groups as those experiencing a higher risk of poverty due to specific barriers to their labour market participation, summarised by Sprong and Maître (2023) as follows:

1. *Life-course stage: children and people older than 'working-age' are vulnerable to social exclusion due to reduced or no access to employment.*
2. *Personal resources: illness or disability may limit a person's capacity to work as well as involving additional costs associated with treatment, medication or disability-specific devices and aids (Cullinan et al., 2011). Disability may also be penalised in the labour market through discrimination or unaccommodating facilities.*

3. *Non-work caring responsibilities: responsibility for childcare or others who have an illness or disability is likely to reduce the person's capacity to engage in paid work.*

In this report, we focus on the following social risk groups:

- Children
- Lone parents
- Large families
- People with disabilities
- Older people
- Single people

1.7 Outline of the report

The remainder of the report is organised as follows. Chapter 2 describes the data and measurements. Chapter 3 analyses how income poverty and deprivation evolved between 2015 and 2023, analysing the overlap between the two, and using multivariate logit models to analyse how the pandemic affected poverty trends, and to distinguish the effects by social risk groups. Chapter 4 discusses the main observations and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Data and measurement

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we outline the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) used for the analysis spanning the years 2015 to 2023. Additionally, we detail the measures for income poverty and material deprivation employed, along with the specific social risk groups that are also the focus of our study.

2.2 SILC data

The Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) has been conducted annually by the CSO since 2003. SILC provides a comprehensive description of living standards, income distribution, and the extent of poverty of the population living in Ireland. The survey is designed to collect data on various dimensions of poverty, social exclusion, and quality of life, with a focus on household income and material deprivation. The purpose of SILC is to monitor poverty and social exclusion in Ireland and as such is a key instrument for policymakers and researchers. The SILC survey is a survey of private households and within households, every individual aged 16 and over is interviewed and detailed information is also collected on the household as a whole by the household reference person. The SILC survey collects data on education, health, housing conditions, labour market status, and income from all sources such as wages, social transfers and pensions.

In 2021, a new EU regulation established a unified framework for collecting European statistics on individuals and households, using sample-based, person-level data. To comply with this updated legislative framework, the CSO implemented several modifications to many SILC business processes. Due to these changes, there has been a break in the SILC time series for 2020[6]. For example, up to 2019, the income reference period was the 12 months prior to the date of interview and from 2020 onwards it is the previous calendar year. The income collection period changed also from a 12-month annual collection to 6 months (from January to June of the previous calendar year).

[6] See for more details: https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/in/silc/informationnote-breakintimeseriessilc2020/

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CSO suspended all household survey fieldwork activities in mid-March 2020. Before that, SILC information was collected from household members (16 years and older) by CSO interviewers, using Computer-Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) in the respondents' homes. In March 2020, the CSO developed instead a SILC data collection instrument suitable for conducting SILC longitudinal interviews by telephone (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI)). Consequently, there may be a mode effect between surveys conducted by CAPI compared with CATI interviews.

In this report, we use both the SILC cross-sectional and longitudinal data. In the cross-sectional data, a same household that may be interviewed over several years is given a different identification number and weight each time, such that only cross-sectional changes at the national level between two points in time can be observed. These data are thus only used to look at the general trends in poverty between 2016 and 2023. Meanwhile in the longitudinal data, the same households are interviewed two years in a row and given the same identification number and weight so that changes over time can be analysed at the household and individual level. These pairs of years go from 2015-2016 to 2022-2023. The 2020 break means that no data are included for the pair 2019-2020.

In aggregate, the SILC cross-sectional samples over the period 2016 to 2023 includes 92,188 individuals and 36,752 households. When using the longitudinal data, we restrict the sample to those present in at least two waves, amounting to 42,664 individuals and 17,809 households (see Table 2.1). To ensure representativeness despite attrition between waves, the study utilises longitudinal weights developed by the CSO. The SILC weights in the sample are calibrated to the total population, adjusted for sex, age, region, household composition, and tenure status[7].

[7] The calibrations have changed over time. See SILC 2023 for more details (https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2023/backgroundnotes/)

Table 2.1 Available observations by number of consecutive waves, 2015-2023

Waves	Individual observations	Households
2015-2016	4,885	2,033
2016-2017	8,528	3,527
2017-2018	3,911	1,634
2018-2019	6,092	2,460
2020-2021	6,440	2,663
2021-2022	7,053	3,030
2022-2023	5,755	2,462
Overall	42,664	17,809

Source: SILC 2015-2023, analysis by authors. Includes all persons, excluding cases with inconsistent age or sex across waves. No longitudinal data for 2019-2020 due to break in series.

2.3 Measures of income poverty and deprivation

The poverty transitions analysed in the report are based on the official measures of income poverty and material deprivation. Household income is determined at the household level, taking into account all sources at both individual and household levels. Gross household income includes market income and social transfers. Market income includes income such as employee and self-employment income, income from rental of property or land, interests / dividends, profits from capital investments, foreign social transfers. Social transfers include contributory and non-contributory payments such as old-age payments, family- and children-related payments, jobseeker payments, and housing allowances. The measure of at-risk-of-poverty is calculated with the household disposable income that is the gross household income less tax and social insurance contributions.

Households have different income needs based on their composition in terms of number of individuals and age. This needs to be taken into account when comparing household incomes. We thus adjust the latter through an equivalised household size. The national scale used gives a weight of 1 to the first adult, 0.66 to each subsequent adult (aged 14 and over) and 0.33 to each child aged less than 14. The equivalised household size is then the sum of these weights within each household, and the equivalised income is the household disposable income divided by the equivalised household size.

The measure of income poverty called the at-risk-of-poverty rate measures the proportion of individuals in the total population with an equivalised income below 60% of the national median equivalised income.

To reflect the broader social and material dimensions of poverty and going beyond the reliance of income alone, SILC collects a wide range of deprivation items to assess whether individuals and households lack access to essential goods and services due to financial constraints. Based on the work of Maître et al. (2006), we identified 11 deprivation items that can be used to construct a measure of basic deprivation. Households and their members are considered as materially deprived if they live in a household that cannot afford two or more items from the list below:

- two pairs of strong shoes
- a warm waterproof overcoat
- buy new (not second-hand) clothes
- eat a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day
- have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week
- had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money
- keep the home adequately warm
- buy presents for family or friends at least once a year
- replace any worn out furniture
- have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month
- have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight for entertainment.

2.4 Social risk groups

Social risk groups are individuals or groups within society who are at a higher risk of social exclusion. This is often linked to factors that limit their access to resources, opportunities, or participation in societal activities. They are typically characterised by vulnerabilities in areas such as employment, education, health, and income making them more likely to experience disadvantage or marginalisation.

In this paper, we follow the classification of individuals (both children and adults) proposed by Grotti et al. (2017) for the period 2004-2015. Grotti et al. (2017) identify 13

distinct categories, which are subsequently grouped into 6 broader categories, as outlined in Table 2.2[8].

Table 2.2 Definitions and average sizes across 2004-2015 of social risk groups

Aggregated categories	Total	Detailed categories	Total
1. Lone parent family	9.3%	**1a. Child of never married lone parent**	3.0%
		1b. Never married lone parent	2.0%
		1c. Child of formerly married lone parent	2.7%
		1d. Formerly married lone parent	1.6%
2. Families of working-age adults with disability	12.6%	**2a. Child of working-age adult with disability**	3.8%
		2b. Working-age adult with disability	8.8%
3. Young childless adults (18-29, no children)	12.6%	**3a. Young childless adults (18-29, no children)**	12.6%
4. Large families (3+ children)	10.7%	**4a. Children in large couple families (3+ children under 18)**	6.5%
		4b. Parents in large couple families	4.2%
5. Others under 66	44.0%	**5a. Children in small couple families (1-2 children)**	12.0%
		5b. Others under age 66 (including parents of small families and childless adults)	32.0%
6. Adults aged 66 and over	10.8%	**6a. Adult age 66+, not in a couple**	5.1%
		6b. Other adults age 66+, couple	5.7%
Total	100%		100%

Source: Grotti et al. (2017). SILC data for Ireland, 2004 to 2015, weighted cross-sectional data, analysis by authors. Note: due to rounding, the percentages may not add up to 100%.

We expand on this typology by distinguishing two groups of individuals that were previously combined with others. These two groups are single adults aged 30-65 (formerly included in the 'Others under 66' category) and single adults aged 66 and over (previously grouped under 'Adults aged 66 and over'). It is worth distinguishing these two groups of single individuals as they face particularly higher poverty rates compared to other members of the categories they were previously assigned to. For example, in 2023, the AROP and deprivation rates for single adults aged 65 and over were 15.4% and

[8] For a detailed description of each of these groups see Watson et al. (2016) and Grotti et al. (2017).

20%, respectively, while for two adults with at least one aged 65 and over, these rates were 8.4% and 7.2% (CSO, 2024)

We present the revised social risk groups, including the two newly distinguished groups, in Table 2.3. With a few exceptions, the sizes of the groups remain quite similar between the two periods. The main change is a decrease in the proportion of people in lone-parent families, which dropped from 9% to 5%, and in young childless adults, which fell from 12.6% to 8.6% between the periods 2004-2015 and 2016-2023[9]. Additionally, there is an increase in the proportion of couples where at least one person is aged 66 and over, rising from 5.7% to 10.1%. Lastly, both newly defined social risk groups, single adults aged 30-65 and single adults aged 66 and over, now account for approximately 5% and 4% of the total population respectively.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter we describe the Survey on Income and Living Conditions the official data source for monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Ireland. We describe briefly some of the SILC methodology as well as the poverty measures used in the report for the period 2015 to 2023. We present also the social risk groups that are the population more vulnerable to poverty and exclusion. We use a refined classification of the social risk groups in comparison to a previous study looking at poverty and deprivation dynamics over the period 2004-2015. The update includes two new categories: single adults aged 30-65 and 66+, reflecting their higher poverty rates. Overall, the size of the social risk groups is quite stable over time and the main changes from 2004-2015 to 2015-2023 include the reductions in the proportions of lone-parent families and young childless adults, alongside an increase in couples aged 66+.

[9] We note that we do not observe such change for lone parent families in the Census 2022 data.

Table 2.3 Definitions and average sizes across 2015-2023 of social risk groups

Aggregated categories	Total	Detailed categories	Total
1. Lone parent family	5.0%	**1a. Child of never married lone parent**	1.8%
		1b. Never married lone parent	1.1%
		1c. Child of formerly married lone parent	1.4%
		1d. Formerly married lone parent	0.7%
2. Families of working-age adults with disability	12.0%	**2a. Child of working-age adult with disability**	4.7%
		2b. Working-age adult with disability	7.3%
3. Young childless adults (18-29, no children)	8.6%	**3a. Young childless adults (18-29, no children)**	8.6%
4. Single adult (30-65)	4.7%	**4a. Single adult (30-65)**	4.7%
5. Large families (3+ children)	9.9%	**5a. Children in large couple families (3+ children under 18)**	6.0%
		5b. Parents in large couple families	3.9%
6. Others under 66	45.9%	**6a. Children in small couple families (1-2 children)**	11.0%
		6b. Others under age 66 (including parents of small families and childless adults)	34.9%
7. Single aged 66 and over (66+)	3.9%	**7a. Single 66+**	3.9%
8. Couples with at least one 66+	10.1%	**8a. Couples with at least one 66+**	10.1%
Total	100%		100%

Source: SILC data for Ireland, 2016 to 2023, weighted cross-sectional data, analysis by authors.
Note: Due to rounding, the percentages may not add up to 100%. Singles include divorced, widow(er)s, etc. While categories can intertwine, a surveyed household cannot be placed in two categories at the same time. So, for instance, if there is a large family (i.e., with 3+ children) with a working-age adult with a disability, the household is placed in category '2. Families of working-age adults with disability", but not in category '5. Large families'. And if a household is made of 3+ children, with a lone parent with a disability, the household is placed in category '1. Lone parent family', but not in either of the other categories.

Chapter 3: Income poverty and deprivation dynamics

3.1 Introduction

In this section, we describe how the share of the population who are at-risk-of-poverty and those who are materially deprived evolved over time. We then analyse the trends by social risk group, in order to understand which groups are worst off. We then undertake modelled estimations to go further in the comparison between social risk groups and to understand what other factors are associated with each type of poverty. Finally, we inspect the overlap between the at-risk-of-poverty population (AROP) and those living in material deprivation.

3.2 Income poverty dynamics, 2015-2023

Figure 3.1 illustrates how income poverty evolved, when using both the longitudinal data (exiting, entering and persistent poverty on the graph) and the cross-sectional data (point-in-time at Wave 2). With the longitudinal data, each individual is surveyed over two consecutive years. This enables us to distinguish:

1) Those who were not AROP in the first year (Wave 1) but became AROP by Wave 2 (i.e., those entering poverty);
2) Those who were AROP in Wave 1 but no longer by Wave 2 (i.e., those exiting poverty);
3) Those who were AROP in both consecutive waves (i.e., those in persistent poverty).

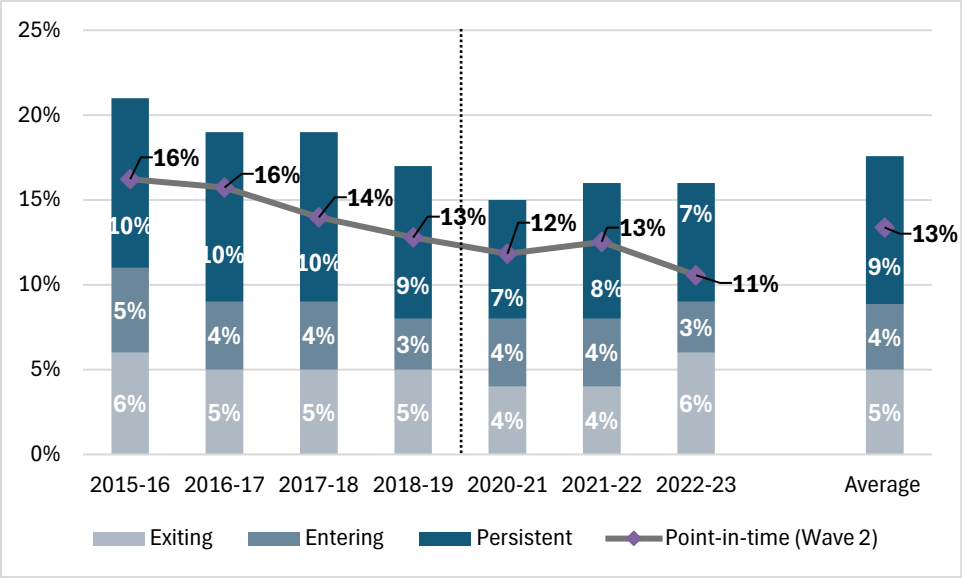
The combined height of the bars in Figure 3.1 (including those persistently poor, those entering and those exiting poverty) shows the share of the population that have been poor in either wave. The last bar in the graph shows the average figures throughout the 2015-2023 period. The longitudinal data show that on average, 18% of the population has been AROP in either one or both of the consecutive waves. Amongst them, half were persistently AROP (9/18), and about a quarter either entered (4/18) or exited (5/18) poverty by the second wave.

The line in the chart shows the overall AROP rate in the second wave from the cross-sectional data, thus starting from 2016. It is very close to the sum of the share of individuals entering poverty in Wave 2, and in persistent poverty (as they remain in poverty by Wave 2). The figures are not exactly the same due to a different number of observations in the longitudinal and cross-sectional data, as well as differing weights given to households and individuals in the two types of datasets. However, they follow the same pattern over time as the combined height of those AROP in both waves or in either wave; namely a slow decrease until 2021, followed by an increase around 2022. On average, the data show that the AROP share of the population at each second wave was 13%. This is slightly lower than the 16% average observed in the 2004-2015 period (Grotti et al., 2017).

Income poverty started at around the same levels as those observed in 2014-2015 by Grotti et al. (2017, Figure 3.1), with a 10% persistent poverty rate, a 6% exit rate and a 5% entry rate. In the first part of the period (2015-2018), while AROP slightly declined, there was no fall in the persistent poverty rate (10%). Thus, the decline in AROP was mainly driven by fewer people entering poverty. Poverty then generally declined throughout the observed period, with a small increase right after COVID (in 2021-2022) which was due to a 1 percentage point rise in persistent AROP[10]. The AROP exit rate rose from 4% in 2021-22 to 6% in 2022-23. In later sections we discuss these trends across social risk groups.

[10] The increase in cross-sectional AROP was statistically significant at the 10% level, while the increase in persistent poverty was significant at the 5% level.

Figure 3.1 Income poverty dynamics, 2015-2023



Source: SILC 2015-2023, analysis by authors. The vertical dotted line shows the 2020 break in SILC time series explained in Section 2.2. The grey line shows the cross-sectional rates for Wave 2 (estimates in black).

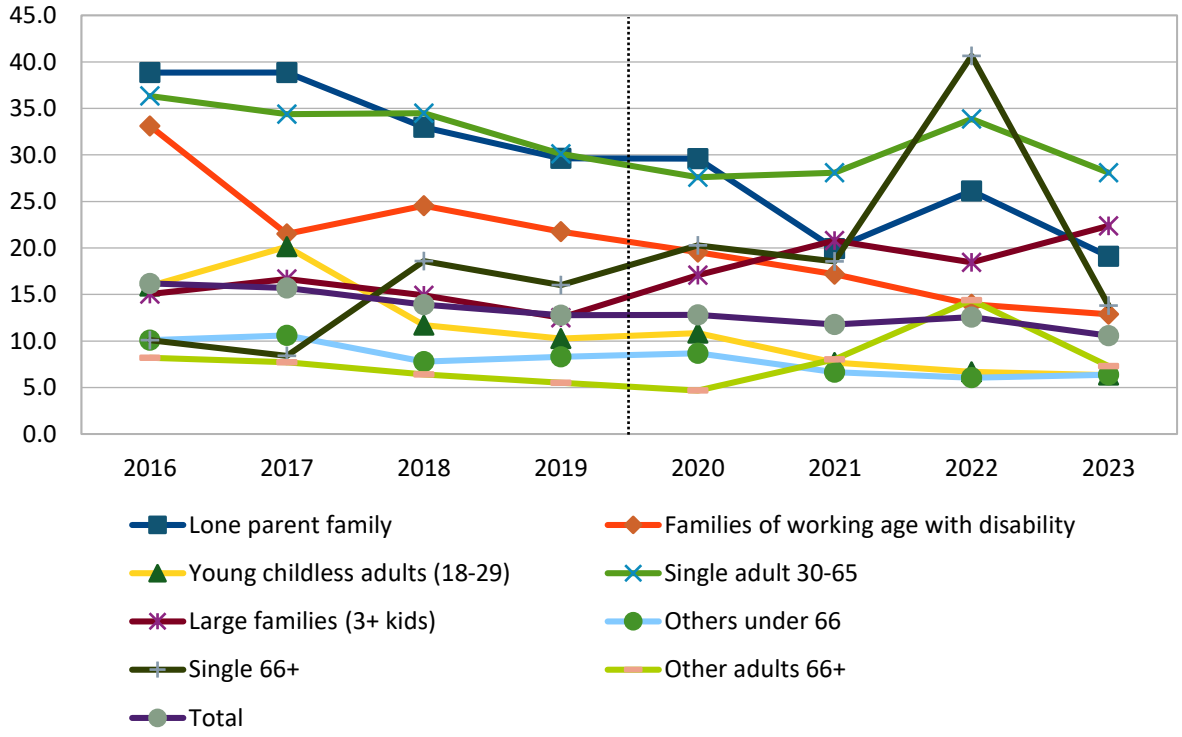
3.3 Income poverty by social risk groups

As previously mentioned, the AROP rate saw some fluctuations between 2016 and 2023. The cross-sectional data show that the rate gradually fell from 16% in 2016 to 12% in 2021, before increasing to 13% in 2022 then falling to 11% in 2023 (Figure 3.2).

This 2022 rise in the AROP rate is observed amongst lone parent families (with a 31% rise in AROP rate between 2021 and 2022), 30- to 65-year-old single people (21%), adults above 65 (79%), but especially amongst single people over 65 (119%). According to Roantree et al. (2024), this stronger effect for the older population can be explained by the fact that the State Pension was frozen in cash terms in 2020 and 2021. And as a large number of the 66+ population have (equivalised) incomes in and around 60 per cent of the median (Beirne et al., 2020), any small change to the State Pension can lead to large changes in that population's AROP rates.

Analysing general trends between 2016 and 2023, families of working-age with disability had the biggest drop in AROP rate (61%), followed closely by young childless adults (60%), and lone parent families (51%)[11].

Figure 3.2 At-risk-of-poverty rates by social risk groups 2016-2023

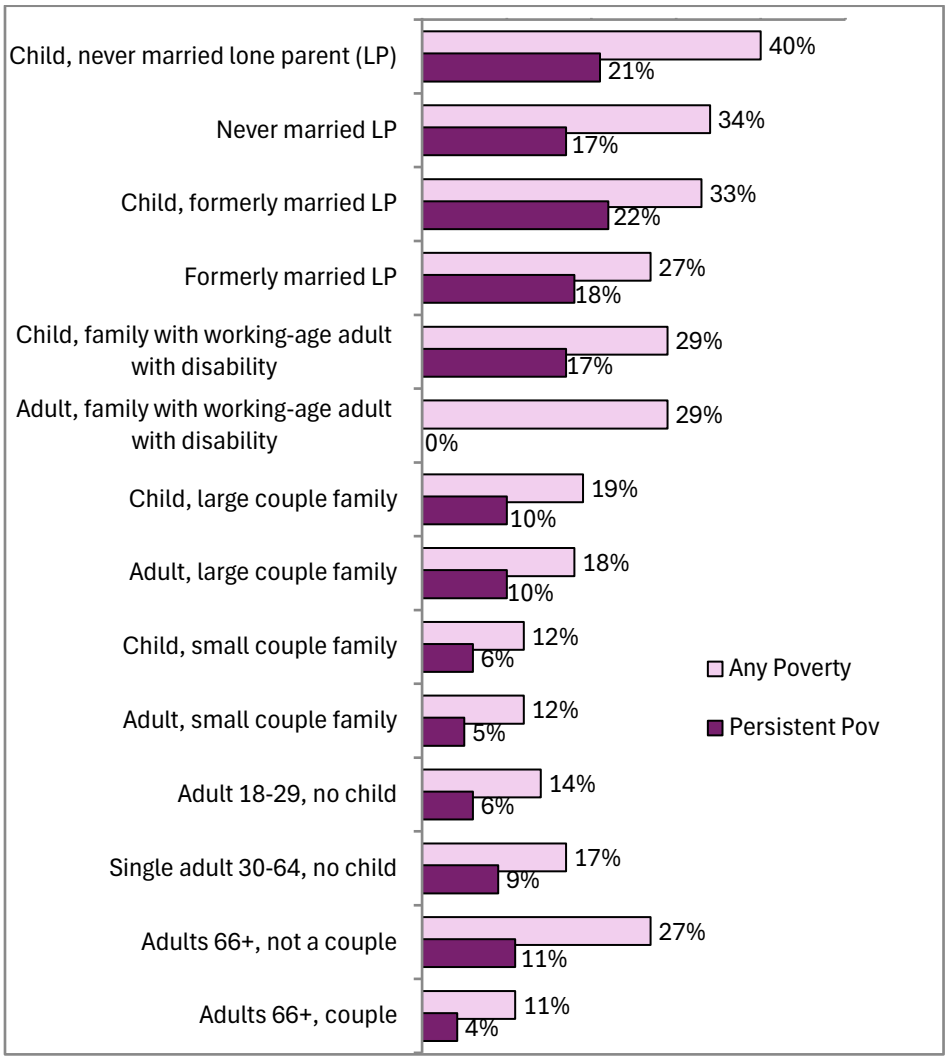


Source: Cross-sectional SILC data 2016-2023, analysis by authors. The vertical dotted line shows when the SILC break in series occurred, as explained in Section 2.2.

Next, we use the SILC longitudinal data to show the average share of AROP and persistently AROP by social risk group. Figure 3.3 shows that children of never married lone parents have the highest AROP rate (40%), followed by never married lone parents (34%) and children of formerly married lone parents (33%). On the other hand, non-single older adults, other adults below 66 (with 0 to 2 children), and children in small couple families (with 0-2 children) have the lowest AROP rate. Similarly, when looking at persistent poverty, lone parent families have the highest AROP rate, followed by families with a person of working-age with disability, while non-single adults above 65, adults with less than three children, and children in small couple families have the smallest rates.

[11] Determining the factors contributing to the reduction in AROP for these groups over time would require a detailed exploratory analysis which is beyond the scope of this report.

Figure 3.3 Income poverty in either wave and persistent income poverty by social risk group, 2015-2023



Source: Longitudinal SILC data 2015-2023, persons present in two consecutive waves. No longitudinal data for 2019-2020 due to break in series. Analysis by authors.
Note: 'Any Poverty' means exiting, entering, or persistently at risk of poverty (AROP). 'Persistent Pov' means AROP during two consecutive waves. Large family means 3+ children. Small couple family means 0 to 2 children.

3.4 Multinomial analysis of transient and persistent income poverty

We next undertake a multinomial logit analysis to depict whether the probability of being income poor changes when taking some location, socioeconomic, and demographic factors into account. For ease of presentation, we combine never married lone parents with those who were previously married, as similar results are found for both groups. Table 3.1 shows the predicted probabilities of three outcomes: 1) not being poor in either of the waves; 2) being poor in one wave; and 3) being poor in both waves. For each

outcome, we show the probabilities a) when only controlling[12] for whether the surveys took place before, during, or after the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., when surveyed the first time before 2020, in 2020, and after 2020, respectively) – this is the left sub-column; and b) when also controlling for other variables (namely gender, region, whether the head of the household works, whether anyone works in the household, and the educational attainment level of the head of the household) – this is the right sub-column. For each variable, we show the reference category (ref.). The stars next to the probabilities show whether each sub-category is significantly more (or less) at risk of transient or persistent poverty than the reference category[13].

Results firstly show that the predicted probability of being poor fell slightly during the COVID-19 pandemic, before returning to probability levels similar to those before the pandemic. When controlling for other variables, the probabilities of being poor – whether once or persistently – has increased by one percentage point post-COVID compared to pre-COVID; however, this increase is not statistically significant. Next, we see that whether we add controls or not, children tend to have higher probabilities of being poor than the adults from the same household types (i.e., households with a lone parent, those with a working-age adult with a disability, and large families). When we do not add the controls, lone parent families have the highest probability of being poor once, and persistently poor; closely followed by families with a working-age adult with disability. When adding the controls however, we see that large families (i.e. with more than two children) have the highest probability of being persistently poor (18% chances for the children and 17% for the parents). On the other hand, adults above 66 who do not live alone have the lowest chances of being poor in any of the observed settings. Furthermore, we see that the high probabilities of being poor once or persistently for the single 66+ group are largely accounted for by the controls, as they decrease substantially when those controls are included.

[12] Controlling means including additional variables (control variables) in the regression model to account for their potential influence on the dependent variable (here, income poverty). This allows the regression to isolate and estimate the relationship between the primary independent variable(s) of interest (namely membership to each social risk group) and the dependent variable, net of the effects of the control variables.

[13] For instance, the three stars next to the first 0.16 shows that children of lone parents are, at 95% significance level, more likely to be poor once than non-single 66+ people (the social risk groups' reference, or base category).

Table 3.1 Multinomial regression model – Predicted probability of being never poor, poor once, and persistently poor, by social risk group and other characteristics

	Never poor *(ref.)*		Poor once		Persistently poor	
	No control	Controls	No control	Controls	No control	Controls
Social risk groups						
Child, Lone Parent household	0.64	0.69	0.16***	0.14***	0.20***	0.17***
Lone Parent	0.69	0.71	0.15***	0.13***	0.17***	0.16***
Child, working-age adult with disability	0.73	0.74	0.13***	0.12***	0.15***	0.14***
Working-age adult with disability	0.71	0.79	0.12***	0.09***	0.17***	0.12***
Child, large couple families (3+ children)	0.80	0.69	0.09	0.11***	0.11***	0.20***
Parent, large couple families	0.81	0.71	0.08	0.10***	0.11***	0.19***
Child, small couple families (<3 children)	0.89	0.78	0.06	0.09***	0.06	0.11***
Parent, small couple families	0.88	0.79	0.07	0.10***	0.05	0.11***
Young childless adult (age 18-29)	0.86	0.79	0.08	0.10***	0.06**	0.10***
Single adult (age 30-64)	0.82	0.79	0.09	0.10***	0.09***	0.11***
Single adult (age 66+)	0.73	0.91	0.17***	0.06***	0.11***	0.03***
Other adult (age 66+), incl. couples ***(ref.)***	0.89	0.95	0.07	0.03	0.04	0.01
Other factors						
Gender, male		0.82		0.09**		0.09
Gender, female ***(ref.)***		0.81		0.09		0.09
Region, South		0.81		0.10		0.09***
Region, East and Midland		0.85		0.08***		0.07***
Region, North and West ***(ref.)***		0.75		0.11		0.14
Household head (HhH) working		0.87		0.07***		0.06***
HhH not working ***(ref.)***		0.76		0.11		0.12
0 worker in household		0.63		0.17***		0.20***
> 0 worker in household ***(ref.)***		0.87		0.07		0.06
HhH, No education/primary education		0.74		0.11***		0.15***
HhH, Secondary education		0.79		0.11***		0.11***
HhH, Post leaving cert./3rd non-degree		0.81		0.10***		0.09***
HhH, 3rd level ***(ref.)***		0.89		0.06		0.05
Period						
Pre-COVID (surveyed before 2020) ***(ref.)***	0.80	0.82	0.10	0.09	0.11	0.09
During COVID (2020/2021)	0.85	0.85	0.07**	0.08	0.07***	0.08**
Post-COVID (from 2021 onwards)	0.83	0.80	0.09	0.10	0.08**	0.10
Observations	36,978	36,978	36,978	36,978	36,978	36,978

Source: Longitudinal SILC data 2015-2023. No longitudinal data for 2019-2020 due to break in series.
Notes: (ref.) means the reference category. The stars show the level of statistical significance at which each sub-category is more (or less) at risk of being poor once or persistently, compared to their reference category (<.10 **<.05 ***<.01). 'Never poor' means not AROP in either of the two subsequent survey waves. 'Poor once' means AROP in one of the two subsequent waves. 'Persistently poor' means AROP in both subsequent waves. We combine formerly married lone parents with those who never were, for ease of presentation. We note that there are 36,978 observations, which is below the 42,664 individual observations noted in Table 2.1, as all observations with missing information in any of the variables taken into account are dropped.*

Analysing the control variables, we do not see any difference in probabilities of being poor between genders. Those living in the north and the west of the country, however, are significantly more likely to be poor once (11%) and persistently (14%) than other areas.

Households where the head does not work have double the risk of being persistently poor as those in which the head works (12% vs. 6%). Households where nobody works are more than four times as likely to be persistently poor as those where at least one person works (21% vs. 5%). And households where the head has no more than a primary education are three times as likely to be persistently poor than those where the head has a third level degree (15% vs. 5%).

3.5 Material deprivation dynamics 2015-2023

Moving on to material deprivation, we observe some similarities with the AROP rates, with a general drop in the share of the deprived population that had started in 2013-2014 (deprivation rates fell from 30.5% in 2013 to 25.4% in 2015; see Figure 3.1. in Grotti et al., 2017) and continued until 2017-2018. However, the AROP and deprivation rates then fluctuated differently. The cross-sectional data ('Point-in-time (Wave 2)' in Figure 3.4) show that the deprivation rate was 15% in 2018, then climbed to 18% in 2019, falling back to 14% in 2021, and increasing to 17% by 2023. The decrease in deprivation observed between 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 is likely attributable to the Government's COVID-19 income support measures. According to CSO statistics, the AROP rate in 2021 was 11.6% with these supports, compared to 19.9% without them[14]. Thus, while an increase is observed in the 2021-2022 period for the AROP rate (Figure 3.3), deprivation increased in 2021-2022 and then continued doing so in 2022-2023. This is explained by a rise in both persistent and entry into deprivation in 2021-2022, with a continuing rise in persistent deprivation in 2022-2023 while entry into deprivation started falling slightly. On the other hand, it was in 2018-2019 that a slight increase was observed in the deprivation rate. Given that the persistent deprivation rate remained at 10% during those years, the

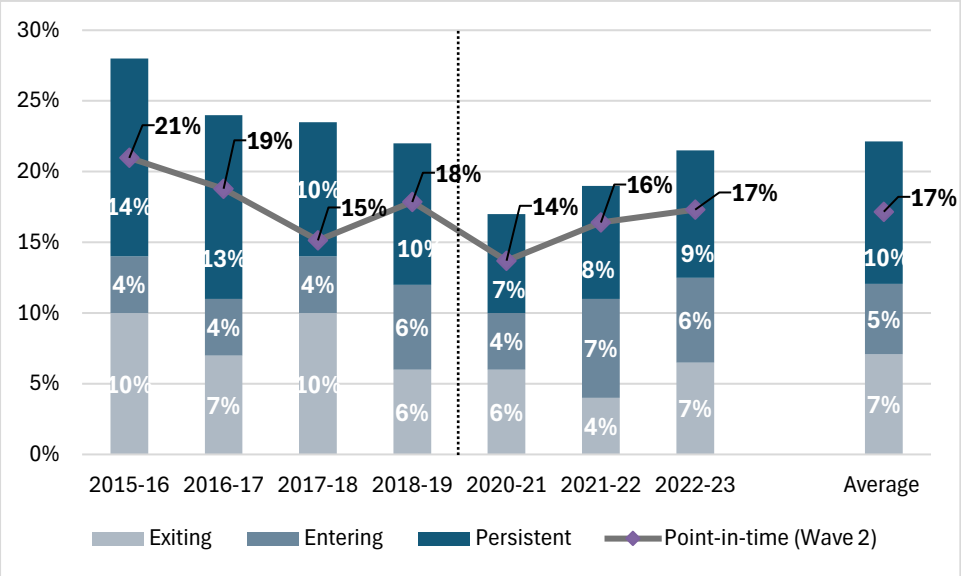
[14] For more details about the impact of COVID-19 income supports on poverty see https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2022/impactofcovid-19incomesupportsonpoverty/

rise is mostly explained by an increase in the share of people entering deprivation (which rose from 4 to 6%). The subsequent reduction in deprivation in 2020-2021 is explained by a decrease in persistent and entry into deprivation, while exit from deprivation remained at 6%.

These additional movements observed with material deprivation can be explained by the fact that it tends to be more sensitive to the economic cycle (Roantree at el., 2024). Thus, the recent rise in inflation which left some households unable to afford essentials included in the basic deprivation measures is reflected in the ongoing rise in deprivation since 2020. Furthermore, we note that since 2020, the reference period for the two measures has (further) diverged. Questions on material deprivation are always based on the point in time of the survey. However, the reference period for income (and thus income poverty rates) was the previous 12 months prior to the date of the interview before 2020, and the previous calendar year for the following years (ibid.). Nonetheless, the average figures throughout the period are quite close to the income poverty ones.

Overall, 22% of the population was either exiting, entering, or persistently experiencing basic deprivation by the second wave; almost half of these were in persistent deprivation (10/22); a bit less than a third were exiting deprivation (7/22) and about a quarter were entering deprivation (5/22). These average shares are slightly lower than those found by Grotti et al. (2017), who show in their Figure 3.1 that 28% of the population was either entering, exiting or persistently in deprivation in 2004-2015; 14% of the population was persistently deprived, 7% entered, and 7% exited deprivation during that period.

Figure 3.4 Basic material deprivation dynamics, 2015-2023

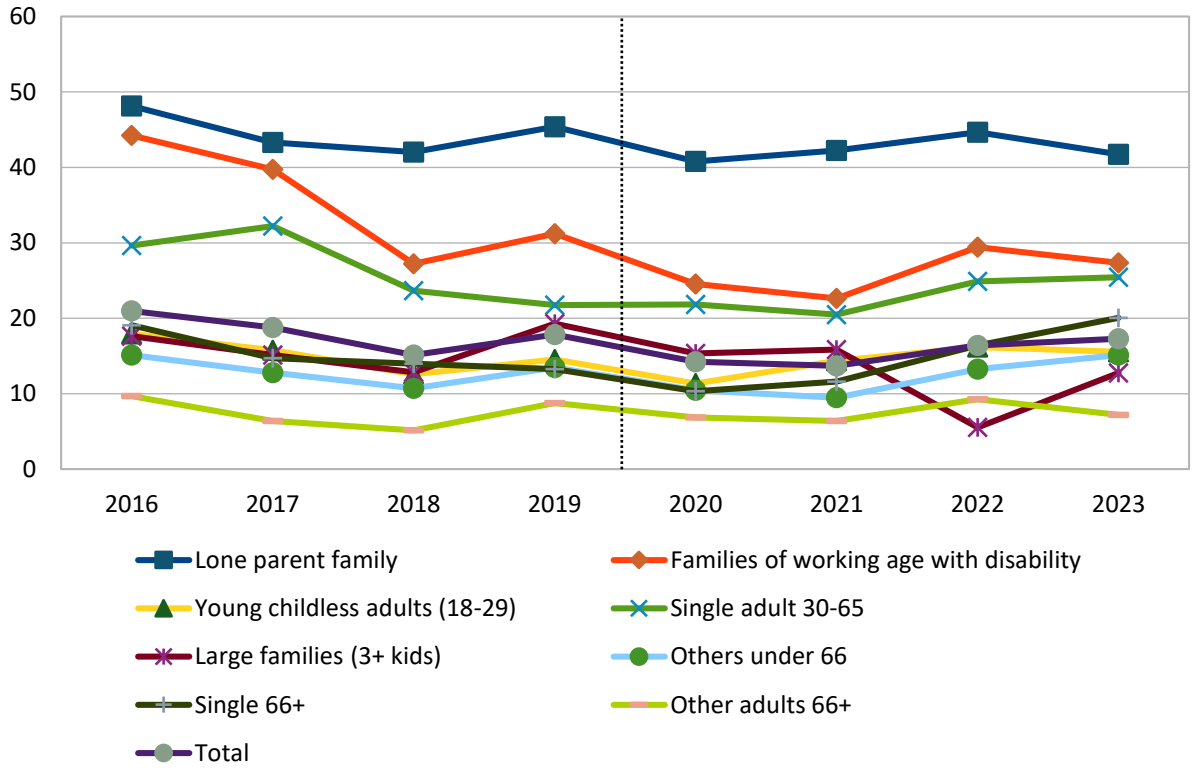


Source: Longitudinal SILC 2015-2023, analysis by authors. The vertical dotted line shows the 2020 break in SILC time series explained in Section 2.2. The grey line shows the cross-sectional rates for Wave 2 (estimates in black).

3.6 Material deprivation by social risk groups

When separating the population by social risk groups, Figure 3.5 shows that the deprivation rate decreased for all groups between 2016 and 2023, except for single adults above 65 (for whom it rose by 5%). When focusing on the period between 2021 and 2022, large families were the only category to see a large drop in deprivation rate before rising again in 2023. On the other hand, the group that saw the greatest rise in deprivation were those above 65 (whether single or not).

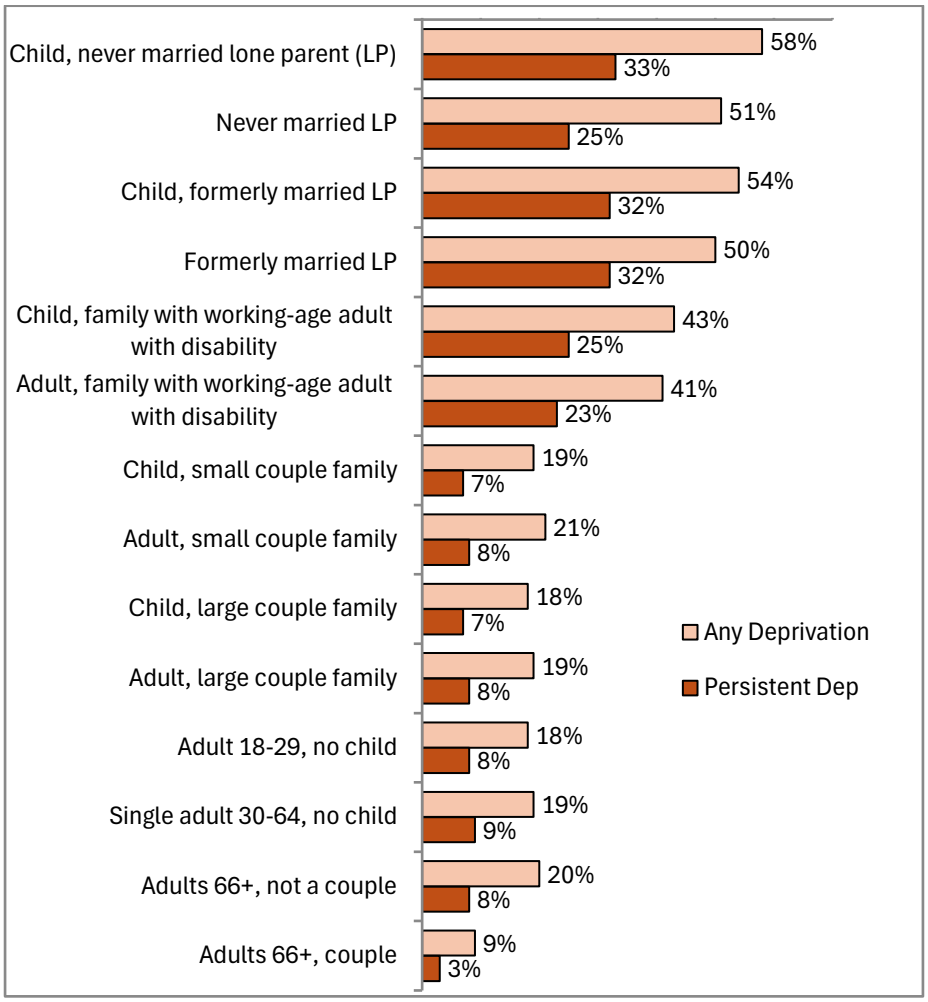
Figure 3.5 Basic Deprivation rates by Social Risk Groups 2016-2023



Source: Cross-sectional SILC data 2016-2023, analysis by authors. The vertical dotted line illustrates the 2020 break in SILC explained in Section 2.2.

Using the longitudinal data, we now show the average shares of deprived and persistently deprived population amongst each social risk group (Figure 3.6). As with the AROP rates, we see that the highest rates of both persistent and 'any' (either persistent, entering or exiting) deprivation is highest amongst lone parent families, followed by families with a working-age adult with a disability. On the other hand, those least affected by either type of deprivation are the non-single older adults.

Figure 3.6 Deprivation in either wave and persistent deprivation by social risk group, 2015-2023



Source: Longitudinal SILC 2015-2023, persons present in two consecutive waves. No longitudinal data for 2019-2020 due to break in series. Analysis by authors.
Note: 'Any Deprivation' means exiting, entering, or persistently deprived. 'Persistent Dep' means materially deprived during two consecutive waves. Large family means 3+ children. Small couple family means 0 to 2 children.

3.7 Multinomial analysis of material deprivation

We next undertake a multinomial logit analysis to depict whether the probability of being deprived changes when taking the same location, socioeconomic, and demographic factors into account as done previously in Table 3.1. Table 3.2 shows the predicted probabilities of three outcomes: 1) not being deprived in either of the subsequent waves; 2) being deprived in one of them (which we define as punctual deprivation); and 3) being deprived in both waves (which we define as persistent deprivation). As with the AROP analysis, we show the probabilities a) when only controlling for whether the surveys took place before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic; and b) when also controlling for other variables.

Table 3.2 Multinomial regression model – Predicted probability of being never deprived, deprived once, and persistently deprived, by social risk group and other characteristics

Variables ↓	Never deprived *(ref.)*		Deprived once		Persistently deprived	
	No control	Controls	No control	Controls	No control	Controls
Social risk groups						
Child, Lone parent household	0.44	0.47	0.23***	0.23***	0.32***	0.30***
Lone parent	0.49	0.51	0.22***	0.22***	0.28***	0.27***
Child, working-age adult with disability	0.59	0.60	0.17***	0.17***	0.24***	0.23***
Working-age adult with disability	0.58	0.66	0.19***	0.16***	0.23***	0.18***
Child, large couple families (3+ children)	0.81	0.73	0.11***	0.15***	0.08***	0.12***
Parent, large couple families	0.80	0.72	0.12***	0.15***	0.08***	0.12***
Child, small couple families (<3 children)	0.81	0.72	0.12***	0.16***	0.07***	0.12***
Parent, small couple families	0.80	0.72	0.12***	0.16***	0.08***	0.12***
Young childless adult (age 18-29)	0.81	0.77	0.10***	0.11***	0.09***	0.12***
Single adult (age 30-64)	0.81	0.79	0.10***	0.10***	0.09***	0.10***
Single adult (age 66+)	0.80	0.92	0.12***	0.05***	0.08***	0.03***
Other adult (age 66+), incl. couples ***(ref.)***	0.91	0.96	0.07	0.03	0.02	0.01
Other factors						
Gender, male		0.77		0.12		0.10***
Gender, female ***(ref.)***		0.76		0.13		0.12
Region, South		0.75		0.13		0.12
Region, East and Midland		0.78		0.12		0.10
Region, North and West ***(ref.)***		0.77		0.14		0.10
Household head (HhH) working		0.81		0.11***		0.08***
HhH not working ***(ref.)***		0.71		0.15		0.14
0 worker in household		0.67		0.17***		0.18***
> 0 worker in household ***(ref.)***		0.79		0.12		0.09
HhH, No education/primary education		0.61		0.21***		0.18***
HhH, Secondary education		0.71		0.15***		0.14***
HhH, Post leaving cert./3rd non-degree		0.76		0.14***		0.10***
HhH, 3rd level ***(ref.)***		0.87		0.07		0.06
Period						
Pre-COVID (surveyed before 2020) ***(ref.)***	0.74	0.77	0.13	0.12	0.13	0.11
During COVID (2021/2021)	0.81	0.80	0.11***	0.11	0.08***	0.09
Post-COVID (from 2021 onwards)	0.78	0.75	0.13	0.14	0.09***	0.11
Observations	36,977	36,977	36,977	36,977	36,977	36,977

Source: Longitudinal SILC 2015-2023. No longitudinal data for 2019-2020 due to break in series.
Notes: (ref.) means the reference category. The stars show the level of statistical significance at which each sub-category is more (or less) at risk of being deprived once or persistently, compared to their reference category (<.10 **<.05 ***<.01) . 'Never deprived' means not deprived in either of the two subsequent survey waves. 'Deprived once' means deprived in one of the two subsequent waves. 'Persistently deprived' means deprived in both subsequent waves.*

As with the AROP results, we see that the predicted probability of being deprived fell slightly during COVID, but increased from 2021, to similar probabilities as before 2020. While we note that when controlling for other variables, the predicted probability of being transiently deprived even increased from 12% pre-COVID to 14% post-COVID, this rise is not found to be statistically significant.

Looking at vulnerable groups, we see that children in households with lone parents and those with working-age adult with disability have higher deprivation rates than adults in the same households. Meanwhile, children in both small and large coupled families have the same deprivation rates as adults from the same household types. On the other hand, as with the AROP rates, adults above 66 who do not live alone are the least likely to be deprived of all household types.

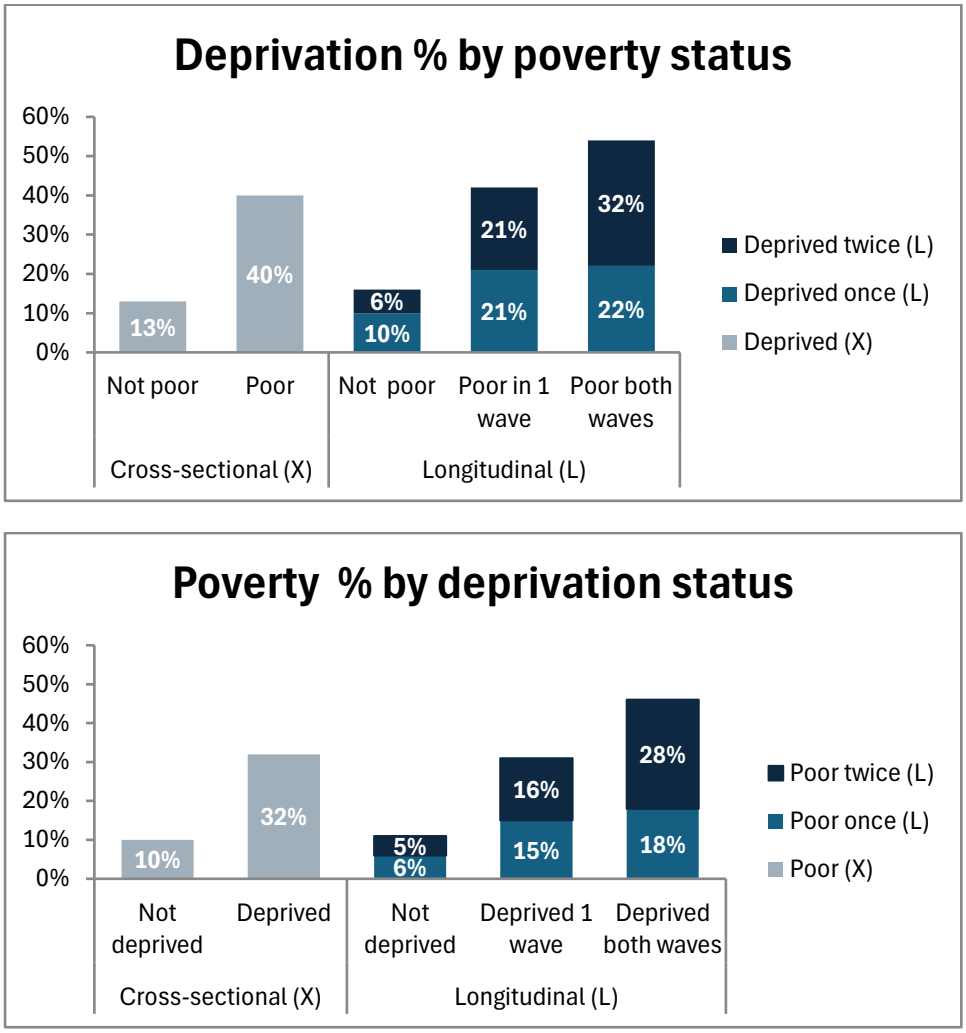
Regarding the control variables, we now see a difference in rates between gender, with women being significantly more likely to be persistently deprived than men (12% vs. 10% for men). Again, those living in the north and the west of the country have the highest transient deprivation rate (14%), however these differences are not statistically significant. Unsurprisingly, households where the head does not work have higher chances of being transiently (15%) and persistently (14%) deprived than other households (who have corresponding rates of 11% and 8%). Similarly, households where nobody works are almost twice as likely to be persistently poor as those where at least one person works (18% vs. 9%, respectively). And households where the head has no more than a primary education are three times as likely to be deprived transiently (21%) or persistently (18%) than those where the head has tertiary education (7% and 6%, respectively).

3.8 Overlap AROP and deprivation

Figure 3.7 shows the average overlap between populations who are AROP and those who are in material deprivation. The first graph shows the share of deprived individuals amongst the AROP and non-AROP (or poor and non-poor) population. The cross-sectional data shows that 40% of the AROP population is materially deprived (when aggregating all the years between 2016 and 2023), while only 13% of the non-AROP

population is deprived. On the other hand, the second graph shows that 10% of the non-deprived are AROP, while 32% of the deprived are AROP. Thus, it is more likely for households at-risk-of-poverty to be materially deprived as well, than for materially deprived households to be at-risk-of-poverty. Furthermore, a higher proportion (54%) of those AROP in two waves are also material deprived, compared to 42% of those AROP only once. This suggests that material deprivation is more closely related to persistent poverty than to transient poverty.

Figure 3.7 Overlap between basic deprivation and income poverty, 2015-2023



Source: Cross-sectional and longitudinal SILC data (2016-2023 and 2015-2023, respectively). No longitudinal data for 2019-2020 due to break in series. Analysis by authors.

Note: In the longitudinal data (L), the same households are interviewed two years in a row and given the same identification number and weight so that changes over time can be analysed at the household and individual level. In the cross-sectional data (X), a same household that may be interviewed over several years is given a different identification number and weight each time, such that only cross-sectional changes at the national level between two points in time can be observed, while households' entry, exit, or persistence in poverty cannot be observed.

When using the longitudinal data to observe the dynamics, we see that the share of those who are deprived once or during both waves, are higher amongst those who are poor (either once or persistently). And the highest share of persistent deprivation is found amongst the persistently AROP population (32%). The same trends are observed when looking the other way around, i.e., when observing the share of AROP individuals amongst the deprived population. However, we note that all shares are lower in the second graph, meaning that there seems to be fewer AROP individuals amongst the material deprived than materially deprived individuals amongst the income poor (or AROP) population.

Several factors can contribute to the discrepancy between income poverty and deprivation. Permanent income, which refers to income over an extended period, may be more strongly associated with deprivation than income at a single point in time (Fusco et al., 2010; Nolan and Whelan, 2011). This is something that we find with the longitudinal SILC data, when comparing the correlation between deprivation and income during the same survey round with deprivation during the second survey round and average income over the two observed rounds[15]. Furthermore, certain types of income, such as self-employment income, are difficult to measure particularly through household surveys and can introduce errors (Fusco et al., 2010; Nolan and Whelan, 2011). Lastly, some households may be just above or below the poverty line while still experiencing or not deprivation (Nolan and Whelan, 2011).

3.9 Summary

In this chapter, we provided an in-depth analysis of income poverty and material deprivation dynamics between 2015 and 2023, focusing on trends over time, variations across social risk groups, and the interplay between income poverty and deprivation.

Income poverty was found to decline overall between 2015 and 2023, with about 18% of the population experiencing poverty in at least one wave, half of whom were persistently poor. Entry into poverty and persistent poverty fluctuated during the period, generally

15 More specifically, the correlation between average income over the two waves and deprivation in the second wave is -0.2296, while the correlation between income in the second wave and deprivation in the second wave is -0.2156. Both correlations are statistically significant at the 1% level.

decreasing until 2018-2019, then increasing in 2021-2022, before falling again in 2022-2023. The opposite trend is observed in exit rates. The brief spike in poverty during the 2021-2022 period disproportionately affected lone parent families, single adults aged 30-65, and older adults, particularly those living alone, potentially due to stagnant State Pension payments. Multinomial regression analysis revealed that children in lone parent households and households with a working-age adult with a disability had the highest probability of experiencing income poverty in one wave, while large families had the highest rates of persistent income poverty[16]. Conversely, older non-single adults consistently exhibited the lowest income poverty rates across all measures.

Material deprivation mirrored the general decline in income poverty until 2017-2018 but exhibited more fluctuations, especially post-2020, reflecting economic cycles and inflationary pressures. Lone parent families and families with a working-age adult with a disability were most affected by deprivation, despite their AROP rate generally falling throughout the period. Regression analysis indicated a decline in persistent deprivation but a slight rise in transient deprivation post-2019.

Location, socioeconomic, and demographic factors were strongly associated with both transient and persistent poverty and deprivation, with higher risks observed for households in the northern and western regions, those with unemployed or low-educated household heads, and workless households. Notably, while income poverty and material deprivation overlap substantially, discrepancies highlight the different dynamics driving these measures, including the role of permanent income and proximity to the poverty line.

[16] This could be because when a group has a larger AROP rate (as is the case in households with a lone parent and those with someone of working age with a disability), this entails having more people susceptible to leave poverty by the next survey round.

Chapter 4: Conclusions and implications

4.1 Introduction

The goal of this paper was to analyse the trends in the persistence of income poverty and deprivation between 2015 and 2023 using the Irish SILC data. In the process, we also analysed how different social risk groups fared over time, what other factors seemed correlated with these poverty measures, and how income poverty and material deprivation intertwine.

4.2 Using Irish SILC data for poverty dynamic analyses

In order to analyse how persistent poverty and deprivation evolved over time, we use both cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys. The longitudinal data consist of pairs of subsequent survey years, in which the weights are determined in the second year to adjust for lost observations.

Poverty transitions analysed in the report are based on the official measures of income poverty and material deprivation. The measure of income poverty called the at-risk-of-poverty (AROP) rate measures the proportion of individuals in the total population living in a household with a nominal equivalised disposable income below 60% of the national median[17]. To reflect the broader social and material dimensions of poverty and going beyond the reliance of income alone, SILC collects a wide range of deprivation items to assess whether individuals and households lack access to essential goods and services due to financial constraints. Households are considered materially deprived if they live in a household that cannot afford two or more items from a list of 11 deprivation items.

17 Household disposable income is gross household income less tax and social insurance contributions. Gross household income includes market income and social transfers.
The equivalised income accounts for the number of adults and children within the household. For more information, see
https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/ep/surveyonincomeandlivingconditions/2023/factsheets/0127101_At_Risk_of_Poverty_Explained_Leaflet.pdf

4.3 Income poverty

Starting our analysis with income poverty (or AROP rate) using the longitudinal data, we firstly found that, on average, 18% of the population experienced poverty in at least one wave, with half of them being persistently poor. Both longitudinal and cross-sectional data showed a general decline in income poverty over the period, with a brief increase in 2021-2022. A post-COVID spike was observed amongst lone parent families, 30- to 65-year-old single people, adults above 65, but especially amongst single people over 65. This stronger effect for the older population could be explained by the fact that the State Pension was frozen in cash terms in 2020 and 2021. And as many older people have equivalised income close to the 60% median threshold, any small change to the State Pension can lead to large changes in that population's AROP rate.

Income poverty started at around the same levels as those observed in 2014-2015 by Grotti et al. (2017), with a 10% persistent poverty rate, a 6% exit rate and a 5% entry rate. In 2015-2018, while AROP slightly declined, there was no fall in the persistent poverty rate. Thus, the decline in AROP was mainly driven by fewer people entering poverty. Poverty then generally fell throughout the observed period, with a small increase right after COVID (in 2021-2022) which was due to a 1 percentage point rise in persistent AROP. We note however that there may be a mode effect between surveys conducted in person pre-COVID, and by telephone during the pandemic.

Using multinomial logit regressions, we saw that when controlling for other factors that may be correlated with poverty (e.g., being in a workless household or with a household head that has low education), the general probability of being AROP before or after the pandemic did not seem to change. We also saw that children living in lone parent households, followed by those living in households of working-age adults with a person with a disability, have the highest share of transient AROP (i.e., of people who are AROP during one of the waves). When looking at persistent poverty however, large families were found to have the highest rate, followed by lone-parent families. On the other hand, older adults (66+) who do not live alone had the lowest AROP rates (both transient and persistent), followed by older adults who live alone.

4.4 Material deprivation

In line with the findings of Grotti et al. (2017), material deprivation exhibited greater fluctuations than income poverty. The rate generally decreased from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018, mainly thanks to drops in persistent deprivation; then increased in 2018-2019 due to a rise in the share of people entering deprivation; followed by a drop during COVID, and then a rise again, due to both transient and persistent deprivation. Again, we note that there may be a mode effect between surveys conducted in person pre-COVID, and by telephone during the pandemic.

Similar to income poverty, lone parent families and families with a working-age adult with a disability were the most deprived, while older non-single adults fared better. When separating the population by social risk groups, the deprivation rate fell for all groups between 2016 and 2023, except for the singles above 65 (for whom it rose by 5%). When focusing on the period between 2021 and 2022, large families were the only category to see a drop in deprivation rate (by 65%). On the other hand, the group that saw the greatest rise in deprivation were those older than 65 (whether single or not).

When undertaking a multinomial regression analysis, we see that adding other control variables reveals a declining trend in persistent deprivation but a slight rise in transient deprivation (which increased from 12 to 13% after 2019). Whether analysing transient or persistent deprivation, lone parent families are found to have the higher deprivation rates, followed by families with a working-age adult with a disability. On the other hand, older adults (66+) have the lowest deprivation rates, followed by older adults that live alone. These varying results show the importance of controlling for other factors when analysing how social risk groups fare in terms of poverty.

4.5 Location, socioeconomic, and demographic factors

Analysing the correlation with other factors, we saw that households where the head does not work, where no working-age adults work, or where the head has lower education levels faced significantly higher risks of both persistent and transient poverty and deprivation. We also saw that the northern and western regions exhibit the highest poverty and deprivation rates. Finally, while no significant difference between genders is

found in the probability of being AROP, females are more likely to be deprived, both transient and persistently.

4.6 Overlap between income poverty and deprivation

There is a substantial but incomplete overlap between the income poor and materially deprived populations. Approximately 40% of the income poor were materially deprived (when aggregating all the years between 2016 and 2023), while 13% of the non-poor also experienced material deprivation.

Persistent poverty and deprivation often coincided, but disparities between the two rates highlight the varying influence of factors such as the economic cycle, permanent income, and proximity to the poverty line, on each poverty measure. Income poverty generally changes more rapidly than basic deprivation as the median income alters more frequently than the basic agreed sets of items deemed affordable in a society. However, during a period of recession, most incomes tend to go down, bringing the median income down with them. Thus, income poverty is less likely to adequately interpret changes in people's financial and living situation during those periods.

4.7 Concluding remarks

This paper underlines the multifaceted nature of poverty and deprivation, highlighting the importance of considering both income-based and material measures to capture the full spectrum of economic hardship, as well as transient and persistent poverty outcomes. Much higher shares of people were found to have been poor at least once over two consecutive years than point-in-time shares suggest. Indeed, the longitudinal data shows that on average, 18% of the population were AROP at least once within two consecutive years between 2015 and 2023 (and 22% were in material deprivation) while the cross-sectional data reveals a yearly average AROP rate of 13% (and 17% for material deprivation). In the words of Grotti et al. (2017, p.54) this shows that 'it does not make sense to speak of the "poor" or "deprived" as if they were a static group. Instead, income poverty and deprivation are consequences of low market power or barriers to market access which must be addressed by policy.'

While improvements were observed in AROP and deprivation rates over the study period, certain groups such as lone parent families, those with disabilities, and large families remain disproportionately affected. Regression analyses also show that children are more prone to poverty than adults, as are workless households and people with least education. Furthermore, the cross-sectional data show that single people above 65 faced an exceptionally steep rise in AROP in 2022, potentially due to the fact that the State Pension was frozen in cash terms in 2020 and 2021 (Roantree et al., 2024). And as a large number of the 66+ population have (equivalised) incomes in and around 60 per cent of the median (Beirne et al., 2020), any small change to the State Pension can lead to large changes in that population's AROP rates.

These results confirm past findings showing that factors related to poverty include personal ones (e.g., age, lack of qualifications, and health issues), but also labour market ones (e.g., local job availability and business stability) and other structural factors (e.g., availability of childcare, education, and the benefits system) (Goulden, 2010). Policy efforts should thus prioritise vulnerable groups, but also address such structural issues. Furthermore, the impact that inflation can have on pensioners and social benefit recipients underscores the need for timely adjustments to social welfare policies in order to protect such households from economic shocks.

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