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[GLOBAL POVERTY, HOMELESS, HOMELESSNESS, IRELAND](#)

# 5 FACTS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN IRELAND



Despite being among the wealthiest countries in the world, Ireland has struggled to address its homelessness crisis. Since 2008, when the country encountered a difficult economic crisis that struck the housing market with rising rent prices and ceased construction efforts to expand housing, Ireland's homeless population has only grown into a greater national problem. Protests have erupted across the country and the government has stepped in to address the housing crisis with its "Rebuilding Ireland" program designed to create additional housing units to protect people from homelessness. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, homelessness numbers are reflecting a decline that hasn't been seen in years.

## 5 Things to Know About Homelessness in Ireland

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**1. Lingering Effects of Ireland's "Lost Decade":** Similar to the 2008 financial crisis in the U.S., Ireland had its own housing bubble which burst in 2008, setting off a decade-long housing crisis [<https://www.svp.ie/about-us.aspx>]. With Ireland's housing market dropped in price by 54%, the housing construction was forced to a standstill and Irish banks were swarmed with debt. The effects of the crisis dubbed this period of recession [<https://www.independent.ie/business/irish/hell-at-the-gates-how-the-financial-crash-hit-ireland-36709945.html>], the "lost decade"—a time when rising rent costs turned many people to the streets, and unemployment and poverty rose. St. Vincent de Paul, the largest charity in Ireland which provides aid and shelter to the homeless, was fielding double their usual number of calls during the first two years after the crisis. More than a decade later, Ireland is still struggling to recover from the impacts of the housing crisis [<https://www.independent.ie/business/irish/st-patricks-day-massacre-of-2008-disaster-hits-financial-markets-36709981.html>].

**2. Housing is Not Affordable:** A report released by the Irish Homebuilders Association (IHBA) stated the time required for a potential homeowner to save a downpayment could take more than 15 years in some cities in Ireland, including Dublin and Galway. In fact, Dublin has become one of the most expensive cities in the world to pay rent. High rents that consume large portions of an individual's income tied with limited housing availability [<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/08/world/europe/housing-crisis-ireland.html?ref=oembed>], are two factors that contribute to the challenges of saving for future home-ownership. Rising rent prices [<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/consumer/people-in-irish-cities-can-take-15-years-to-put-house-deposit-together-1.4339149>], show no signs of slowing down, either, with a 17% rent increase predicted for the upcoming years. Although tenants may manage to pull together their monthly rents, homelessness does not elude all renters: The majority of people who become homeless previously lived in privately rented areas [<https://www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/about-homelessness/>].

**3. Homelessness Rates Shows Signs of Declining Amid COVID-19:** Homelessness has been rising for several years since the crisis, growing into a national concern [<https://www.irishpost.com/news/number-of-homeless-people-in-ireland-drops-to-lowest-level-since-2017-187738>], and reality for many people in Ireland. However, recently homelessness numbers dropped to their lowest levels since 2017. In May 2020, it was reported that 8,876 people were affected by homelessness,

the first time this number has fallen below 9,000 people [<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/homeless-figures-highlight-vulnerability-during-pandemic-charity-says-1.4217242>], in the last three years. This decrease is likely from the emergency accommodations recently implemented to support the most vulnerable of Ireland's population during the pandemic. Throughout Ireland, 600 places were made available that would allow people to self-isolate and maintain social distancing. However, once COVID-19 restrictions in Ireland are lifted, it is possible these numbers could rise to even higher rates as housing construction projects are delayed even further.

**4. Young Adult Homelessness Rates are High:** Young adults are one of the groups most impacted by the housing crisis in Ireland.

According to Focus Ireland, an organization that helps young people out of homelessness, the number of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 afflicted by homelessness has increased by 31% since June 2015. But Focus Ireland also points out this figure is likely an underestimate. Official homelessness figures don't account for the number of young people who seek out friends and family for a temporary place to stay rather than homeless shelters and services—"the forgotten homeless," as Focus Ireland classifies this group. Young adults who grew up in the aftermath of the housing and financial crisis now face steep rents that hinder their abilities to save for buying a home, an emblem of adulthood.

**5. Ireland's High Housing Demands:** One of the root causes of homelessness in Ireland stems from the country's inadequate supply of affordable housing

[<https://www.housing.eolasmagazine.ie/rebuilding-ireland-where-are-we-now-2/>]. The percentage of households renting privately owned homes has doubled in demand over the past decade, limiting available housing and causing rent prices to climb. Construction efforts to build additional housing are not keeping up with demand either. In response, Ireland's government installed the "Rebuilding Ireland" program in 2016, an initiative aimed at adding 25,000 housing units per year. According to the 2019 Housing Conference, the program met 74% of its 2018 annual target. However, Focus Ireland believes a solution to Ireland's housing crisis resides in providing affordable public housing, which the country currently lacks. Public housing can give families and individuals burdened by high rents or eviction notices a humane and affordable option. Although housing, a personal right in Ireland, is slim, supporting the expansion of public housing could be the solution to actualizing this right and creating a stable future for all those who live in Ireland.

As reflected in Ireland's recently reported figures, homelessness is on the decline. If the "Rebuilding Ireland" program fulfills its established

mission of building additional housing, homelessness in Ireland could be combatted even further. Combined with Ireland's successful response to sheltering the homeless during the COVID-19 pandemic, homelessness in Ireland is showing promising signs of being a resolved issue throughout the country.

– *Grace Mayer*

Photo: Flickr [<https://www.flickr.com/photos/devitogustavo/28066495805/in/photolist-Q3SXXs-JL98o6-87V8xM-eecb4j-dyJUGc-bN9dJB-EY5jd-K55AZu-hoRQMX-74awnX-JQNxS2-dBrBAAt-gp4xtC-rw7f8b-sGCJqv-C5SBdZ-bb3f8k-hiRfGo-hiRLpt-9iX4ph-o3wyqX-cbDo83-sefppE-8eGQD5-sef6Y7-svN5mc-8zZMGC-svQ2fc-8JW1F-kMKCEi-svDKLy-8JZq2f-8HJH8D-8GQZ3o-8zXLfT-8GQSiL-p9H4qRl>]

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JANUARY 9, 2021

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**ECONOMY, GLOBAL POVERTY, IRELAND**

# THE STATE OF POVERTY IN IRELAND

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Ireland joined the EU in 1973, after which the country enjoyed a period of rapid economic growth between 1995 and 2007

[<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ei.html>]. In 2008, however, Ireland suffered a recession. The effect of this recession still echoes through the state of poverty in Ireland.

During their time of prosperity, Ireland's GDP rose from 69.2 billion in 1995 to 275 billion

[<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=IE>] in 2008. During this period, Ireland's unemployment also fell from 11.7% to 6.7%

[<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.NE.ZS?locations=IE>]. Experts suggest that this rapid economic growth was possible because many tech firms poured into Ireland during the 1990s. Ireland's favorable tax rate, which was 20 to 50% lower than its neighboring countries, encouraged these tech firms. This constant investment by tech firms, international corporations and development in tourism further contributed to Ireland's economic growth.

In 2008, the [global financial crisis hit](#)

[<https://www.thebalance.com/what-caused-2008-global-financial-crisis-3306176>]. Ireland's unemployment rate spiked from 4.9% in 2007 to 6.7% in 2008. This employment rate peaked at 15.4% in 2012.

To remedy their economy, Ireland agreed to a 92 billion dollar loan package from the European Union and the IMF in late 2010. In March 2011, the Irish government further committed to meeting the deficit targets with Ireland's EU-IMF bailout program. Through multiple measures, Ireland became the first country of the European Union to [exit the bailout program](#)

[<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/dec/13/ireland-first-country-exit-eurozone-bailout>]. in 2013.

## Lasting Impact of the 2008 Financial Crisis

According to Social Justice Ireland's 2019 report of poverty in Ireland, [15.7% of Ireland's](#)

[<https://www.socialjustice.ie/sites/default/files/attach/publication/5763/2019-04-15-sjiipovertyfocus2019final.pdf?cs=true>], population, or 760,000 people, lived below the poverty line. Among this number, [202,000 are children](#) [<https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/more-689000-living-poverty-ireland-over-200000-are-children>], and 111,000 people living in poverty are in employment. Poverty can still be an issue for those individuals who are employed since many of these jobs are low-paying. Some estimates suggest that approximately [23% of Ireland's full-time workforce](#) [<https://www.thejournal.ie/workers-in-ireland-on-low-pay-4764896-Aug2019/>], worked in these low-paying jobs in 2019.

This is especially concerning since income disparity in Ireland is quite large. Researchers found that the top 10% of households have 24% of total disposable income while the bottom [10% only have three percent](#) [<https://www.thejournal.ie/poverty-ireland-2-2862501-Jul2016/>]. This further contributes to child poverty in Ireland.

Child poverty is also one of the most concerning aspects of poverty in Ireland. In their same 2019 report, SJI estimated that around 23.9% of impoverished people in Ireland are children. This leads to deprivation in material, cultural and social resources that can aid them to develop into a healthy adult. Child poverty has far-reaching consequences on

child development, education and future job prospect of those affected.

## Combating Poverty in Ireland

The Irish government is taking active measures to combat poverty. For example, a report from the Economic and Social Research Institute found that Ireland's tax system took most measures to reduce household income inequality [<https://www.thejournal.ie/irish-tax-system-inequality-4975546-Jan2020/>], among its European peers. In the ESRI report [[https://www.esri.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2020-01/Slides\\_1.pdf](https://www.esri.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2020-01/Slides_1.pdf)], researchers stated that, through broad-based Universal Social Charge and the early level that the income tax kicks in, the level of inequality in take-home income in Ireland is getting closer to the EU average.

To combat child poverty, the Irish government also devised a national policy in 2014, in which the government aimed to reduce children in poverty [<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2019-01-31/248/#pg-answers-248>] by two-thirds by 2020 by supporting families in poverty. Furthermore, the Irish government's Budget 2020 [<https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/how-will-budget-2020-affect-poverty-rates>] will increase the Living Alone Allowance and the Qualified Child Payment, which both aim to further assist those on social welfare. The Irish government estimates that the new budget could help 108,000 children [<https://assets.gov.ie/35763/9206518894af4256b111a078e01a84aa.Budget%2020%20to%20enroll%20in%20early%20childhood%20care%20and%20education%20programs.pdf>] to enroll in early childhood care and education programs.

Poverty in Ireland is a remnant of the economic turmoil that the Irish people suffered during 2008. However, as apparent in Ireland's economic growth after 2013, Ireland has proved its resilience. While income inequality and child homelessness are still an issue, the Irish government is more than cognizant of these problems. Many in Ireland have hope for a better economic future.

– *YongJin Yi*

Photo: Flickr [<https://www.flickr.com/photos/smemon/14330809876/in/photolist-nQn9uU-nSgCdW-7SFCUH-9rXqHa-nzUVSi-9s1dmG-nzVp3w-nzUWQR-nzVpWA-nzV8t3-nSpL6g-nSkfhf-nQneMY-7SJUQW-Wu32kc-nzV6Ey-nSpzTH-nQn6cb-nQn4ud-7SJXr3-7SFzGx-7SJSEN-7SJWQ3-nQnbWh-nSpKo4-nS7BXc-nzUTNP-nSkdfE-nzVTo6-nSgBDQ-nzVJJ2-nzVoTJ-nzVTUX-nSpLeT-nQndYy-2hRRsbr-ndxNmS-nzVLkt-nUc6N4-nSke3b-nzV2qb-nzV73C-nzVRrv-nzVSfe-nUc4GF-nzVdKs-nUc4Cx-nzVfsq-nzV63m-nSgwt9%E2%80%9D>]

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JUNE 18, 2020

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GLOBAL POVERTY, INEQUALITY, IRELAND

# THE TOP 10 NEED-TO-KNOW FACTS ABOUT POVERTY IN IRELAND

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In Ireland [<https://borgenproject.org/9-facts-hunger-in-ireland/>], the number of people living in poverty is steadily increasing. Since the beginning of the recession in 2008, the number has risen due to situational factors, such as unemployment and poor health, and exacerbated structural economic inequalities that perpetuate a cycle of poverty in Ireland. [<https://borgenproject.org/top-10-facts-about-poverty-in-ireland/>]

## Top 10 Facts about Poverty in Ireland

- **There are 790,000 people living in poverty:** According to the Irish National Anti-Poverty Strategy, people living in poverty in Ireland [<https://borgenproject.org/pa-10-facts-about-living-conditions-in-ireland/>], are unable to maintain a standard of living acceptable by Irish society due to their lack of resources.
- **Only 18 percent of adults in poverty hold jobs:** Despite working, these people do not earn salaries that allow them to cover basic costs of living for themselves and their families. They are called 'the working poor' by Social Justice Ireland.

- **There is a large income gap in Ireland:** Social Justice Ireland found that the bottom 10 percent of Irish households [<https://www.thejournal.ie/poverty-ireland-2-2862501-Jul2016/>] only received 3 percent of the country's total disposable income, while the top 10 percent of households received 24 percent of the income.
- **There are regional differences in poverty:** Poverty in the more developed southern and eastern regions [<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/almost-800-000-live-in-poverty-despite-improved-economy-think-tank-1.3348396>], of Ireland is 50 percent less per capita than in the rural border, midlands and west regions of the country.
- **Disadvantaged populations are more likely to be in poverty:** Sick or disabled people, and children younger than 18, are more likely to be at risk of poverty or in consistent poverty than healthy adults.
- **Single parent households are three times as likely to be in poverty:** Compared to two-parent households, families with only a single parent [<http://www.combatpoverty.ie/povertyinireland/whatispoverty.htm>] are three times as likely to be in consistent poverty and twice as likely to be at risk of poverty.
- **Rent prices are increasing:** Rent prices in Ireland are rising at six times the rate of European rates. When housing prices rise, the prices of other goods rise as well, causing poor families to stretch their resources to cover basic life necessities.
- **More than 8,500 people were homeless in Ireland in December 2017:** This number includes more than 3,000 children and represents a 17 percent increase in the number of homeless families [<https://www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/about-homelessness/>], since December 2016.
- **Despite the poverty, economic growth is occurring:** The Irish economy has moved past its recovery phase following the recession and into a time of growth. In 2017, 55,000 jobs were created, and in 2018, 4 percent growth of the economy is projected.
- **Specific policies are necessary to reduce poverty:** To combat poverty in Ireland, specific government policies to address the areas of structural inequality are necessary. For example, creating a minimum living wage so all workers can afford a basic standard of life.

Even though there are still many steps needed to overcome poverty in Ireland, the Irish people are highly resilient. The 2017 World Happiness Report found that Ireland is the 15th happiest country.



[<https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2017/>], in the world. Additionally, the report found only a small loss in happiness among the Irish people since the 2008 recession, and a high number of people reported they have someone to count on — strengths necessary to survive hardship.

– *Hayley Herzog*

Photo: [Flickr](#)

[<https://www.flickr.com/photos/giuseppemilo/17592569702/in/photostream/>]

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FEBRUARY 25, 2018

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**GLOBAL POVERTY, IRELAND**

# THE WORKING POOR: THE POVERTY IN IRELAND YOU DON'T SEE

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Despite a flourishing economy, poverty in Ireland

[<https://borgenproject.org/top-10-facts-about-poverty-in-ireland/>]

and deprivation rates are on the rise with an increasing number of employed Irish citizens living in deprivation

[<https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/16-cent-adults-living-poverty-ireland-have-job-%E2%80%93-these-are-working-poor>].

According to Social Justice Ireland, 16% of Irish adults living below the poverty line are employed and many more lack basic necessities.

## Ireland's Economy vs Deprivation Rates

Ireland's economy has all but recovered since the 2008 European economic crisis [<http://www.irishexaminer.com/business/irish-people-hit-hardest-during-financial-crisis-ecb-report-reveals-360532.html>] that resulted in Irish citizens losing more of their personal wealth than any other nation during that time, but people in Ireland still struggle remaining above the poverty line.

While Ireland's consistent poverty rate wavers around eight percent [<http://www.eapn.ie/eapn/training/poverty-in-ireland>], the "hidden" poverty in Ireland lies in Ireland's deprivation rate. The Central Statistics Office reports that Ireland's deprivation rate increased to nearly 30% [<http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/silc/surveyonincomeandliving>] from 13.8% in 2008.

Deprivation rates reflect those who cannot afford at least two basic items of the 11 on the deprivation index. According to the Department of Social Protection, the inability to afford to heat at some stage in the last year or two pairs of strong shoes is some of the index examples.

Despite the struggling deprivation rates, Ireland's GDP and the unemployment rate are on the rise. The country's GDP growth rate was 3.8% greater than the EU average in 2014, and unemployment currently rests at 7.8%, down from 9.2% last year.

## Ireland to Spain: The Deprivation Trend

Unfortunately, though, the rising poverty in Ireland and high deprivation rates mirror the poverty phenomenon occurring in Spain.

Just like Ireland, Spain received an economic resurgence after the European economic crisis. Also similar to Ireland, regaining economic footing was met with a volatile labor market and the prevalence of short-term labor contracts. Such unrest seems to directly counter Spain's rising unemployment and poverty rates, but as with Ireland, things are not always as they seem.

Both countries' increasing deprivation rates among the employed is an indicator that labor reform is essential towards reducing poverty in Ireland and Spain. In addition to increasing wages by 3.5% in 2014, Ireland is working to address high turnover rates and a critical shortage of skilled workers in sectors such as engineering, health and finance.

As both countries focus on restructuring their respective labor markets, restoring living conditions in Ireland is the second phase of recovery from the Eurozone crisis.

## Ways Ireland Can Reduce Poverty Rates

The World Alliance of Cities Against Poverty.

[<http://www.europeanmovement.ie/ymip-the-wacap-solution/>]  
(WACAP) highlighted three simple steps that Ireland could take to reduce poverty. These steps included increasing accessibility to education, eliminating violence and encouraging innovation and realization of potential.

In addition to implementing these changes, the Irish Times [<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/the-economy-is-growing-and-so-is-poverty-1.2077675>], offers a few more solutions that could further reduce poverty – protecting welfare rates, providing more financial support for single parents and investing in free and equitable access to healthcare for all children.

Even in a developed country such as Ireland, more work needs to be done to help uplift both the employed and unemployed who live below the poverty line or are at risk of living in poverty.

– *Daniela Sarabia*

Photo: [Flickr](#)

[<https://www.flickr.com/photos/sebastiandooris/6860223811/in/faves-136402229@N05/>]

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OCTOBER 2, 2016

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