

Social Welfare Employed (NMW)

2025 2026 f 2025 2026 f

Two Parent & Two Children (Pre & Primary School)



MESL	595.37	613.05	725.77	749.30
Income (Net)	573.69	609.37	845.36	895.85
Adequacy	-21.67	-3.68	119.59	146.55

Two Parent & Two Children (Primary & Second Level)



MESL	682.84	703.65	769.41	790.26
Income (Net)	591.17	631.77	850.84	898.25
Adequacy	-91.66	-71.87	81.43	108.00

One Parent & Two Children (Pre & Primary School)



MESL	468.03	482.20	682.51	711.72
Income (Net)	436.08	468.35	830.34	884.70
Adequacy	-31.95	-13.85	147.83	172.98

One Parent & Two Children (Primary & Second Level)



MESL	555.50	572.79	662.57	701.03
Income (Net)	453.79	491.13	769.29	817.36
Adequacy	-101.71	-81.66	106.72	116.32

Single Adult, Working Age



MESL	286.62	293.73	604.65	611.83
Income (Net)	244.00	254.00	473.74	491.22
Adequacy	-42.62	-39.73	-130.91	-120.61

Older Person, Living Alone



MESL	334.96	344.47		
Income (Net)	326.04	338.92		
Adequacy	-8.92	-5.55		

The MESL data examined in this briefing, is based on the annual 2025 MESL expenditure data and 2026f forecast estimate MESL costs for 2026.

See Notes for details of the income scenarios.

The 2026 income calculations are based on the information from Budget 2026, as published by the relevant Government Departments at this time.

Introduction

The annual budget presents the opportunity for taking substantive steps towards achieving a social protection system that ensures minimum income adequacy and enables a life with dignity. The MESL research provides an evidence base to inform policy decisions towards this goal.

This briefing analyses the impact of Budget 2026, assessing the announced measures against the MESL benchmark of minimum needs and income adequacy. This involves measuring the degree to which changes to incomes and services protect the real value of supports in the context of changes to living costs, and forecasting if progress will be made towards enabling a socially acceptable minimum standard of living in the coming year.

The briefing discusses inflation and the change in minimum living costs, on page 3. This gives important context to the analysis, as MESL costs have increased by an average of 18.8% from 2020 to 2025. Looking to the coming year inflation forecasts indicate the potential for further price increases, potentially bringing MESL costs to 21.0% above 2020 levels.

Budget 2026 brings a welcome focus on adjustments to core rates, after a reliance on temporary ‘cost of

living’ supports in recent years. The lasting impact of this, and the income adequacy change which may arise is examined on page 6.

The adequacy of core social protection rates for adults and children is examined against individual MESL costs on page 4 and 5. The assessment examines the potential impact of adjustments to these rates in 2026.

The position of a set of illustrative household cases is presented in Graph 4. While the overall pattern of income adequacy for 145 test cases is discussed on page 7, highlighting the effect of the significant increases to Child Support Payment.

A review of measures in relation to household energy is presented on page 8, examining the move from top-up ‘cost of living’ supports to an adjustment of the core Fuel Allowance rate.

The change to the National Minimum Wage is examined from page 9. The adjustments to Working Family Payment income thresholds are discussed on page 10. The result of not adjusting the earnings disregard for the One-Parent Family Payment, is also examined on page 10.

Area	MESL Recommendations	Budget 2026
Working Age Personal Rates	Adjust by €16 to €260 per week.	Adjusted by €10 per week.
Qualified Adult	Maintain current nominal rate.	Adjusted by €6.60 per week.
Child Support Payment (under 12)	Adjust by €6 to €56 per week.	Adjusted by €8 to €58 per week.
Child Support Payment (12 and over)	Adjust by €15 to €77 per week.	Adjusted by €16 to €78 per week.
Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance	No recommendation.	Eligibility extended to two and three year-olds in qualifying households.
Working Family Payment	Adjust thresholds in line with changes to NMW and forecast changes in net earnings.	Increased weekly income thresholds by €60 for all household sizes.
One-Parent Family Payment & Jobseeker's Transitional	Restore value of earnings disregard and implement system to maintain in future.	Earnings disregard not adjusted, retained at 2020 level.
Direct Provision	Introduce the International Protection Child Payment at the Child Benefit rate.	
Fuel Allowance	Restore purchasing power in line with energy inflation, applying a €9.50 adjustment to the weekly rate.	Weekly rate adjusted by €5, eligibility extended to Working Family Payment recipients.
Living Alone Allowance	Restore real value to ensure adequacy of State Pension for older people living alone.	Weekly rate remains at €22 for 5 th year.
National Minimum Wage	Evidence based rate, progressive realisation of the real Living Wage.	Minimum wage increased by €0.65 to €14.15 per hour.

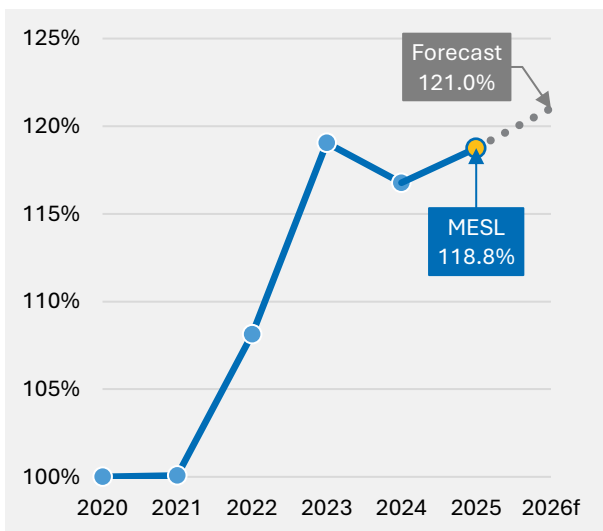
Inflation and changes in minimum living cost

2025 has seen a further increase of 1.8% in core MESLⁱ costs in the year to March 2025. This built on the previous increases in living costs, particularly in 2022 and 2023 driven firstly by the volatility in home energy prices and secondly increases in food costs. Cumulatively, since 2020, there was an increase of 18.8% in minimum living costs as measured by the MESL series.

Food and home energy continue to comprise a third of the core MESL basket of essential goods and services. Changes in the costs of these areas have a disproportionate impact on the overall change in the cost of the minimum basket.

Looking at the trend in minimum food and energy costs, it shows that from 2020 the MESL food basket has increased by 20.2% and the household energy basket has increased by 58.2%. This reflects both the increase in prices, and changes to what is required to meet minimum needs reducing potential expenditure in this area.

Graph 1 Change in MESL, forecast to 2026



The Central Bankⁱⁱ inflation forecasts for 2025 and 2026 currently predict continued growth in food prices this year by 3.6% and next year by 1.5%. While a slight decline in average energy prices of -0.5% is forecast for

2025, followed by an increase of 0.9% in 2026. The rate for core inflation, excluding food and energy, is forecast at 1.8% for 2025 and 1.4% for 2026.

Applying the Central Bank disaggregated HICP forecasts to the food and energy components of the MESL basket and the HICP Core forecast to the remainder of the basket, provides an estimate for the MESL costs for the remainder of 2025 and to the end of 2026. Forecasts indicate that food and energy costs will potentially increase by a further 3.9% and 1.0% respectively, from March 2025 through to the end of 2026. This brings the potential for a cumulative increase in minimum living costs of 21.0% when compared to 2020 levels.

This forecast for 2026 is 1.8 percentage points below the previous forecast presented in the MESL pre-budget submission, as the Central Bank inflation forecasts have moderated.

Inflation trend in 2025

The current year MESL is based on prices in the first quarter of the year. However, there has been further inflation over the course of the year, with the September CPI data indicating a 2.8% increase in prices from January to September. Of all sub-categories, food price inflation has been the highest at 3.5% in the year to date.

Fluctuations in food and home energy costs have a disproportionate impact on the cost of a minimum basket, as these basic elements comprise approximately a third of the MESL basket of essential goods and services.

The continued upward pressure on food prices is likely to have a disproportionate impact on the MESL baskets.

The volatility in prices, and particularly food prices, means that the forecast cost for 2026 should be treated with caution and may be a conservative estimate.

Minimum Essential Standard of Living

The MESL is decided on by members of the public, working together in deliberative focus groups to reach consensus on what people need to live and partake in Irish society. It is a standard of living which people agree no one should be expected to live below. It represents the minimum required to meet physical, social, and psychological needs, and enable a life with dignity.

The research works with multiple phases of deliberative groups, to reach a social consensus on the goods and services people need to have for a minimum, but socially acceptable, standard of living. The MESL provides the weekly cost of this set of essential goods and services that are required to meet minimum needs and enable people to live with dignity.

In this way the MESL is a tangible measure, grounded in lived experience and derived from social consensus, of what is required for participation, dignity and avoiding poverty. It operationalises a direct measure of poverty and a life with dignity, providing an evidence-based benchmark for assessing income adequacy.

Social Welfare

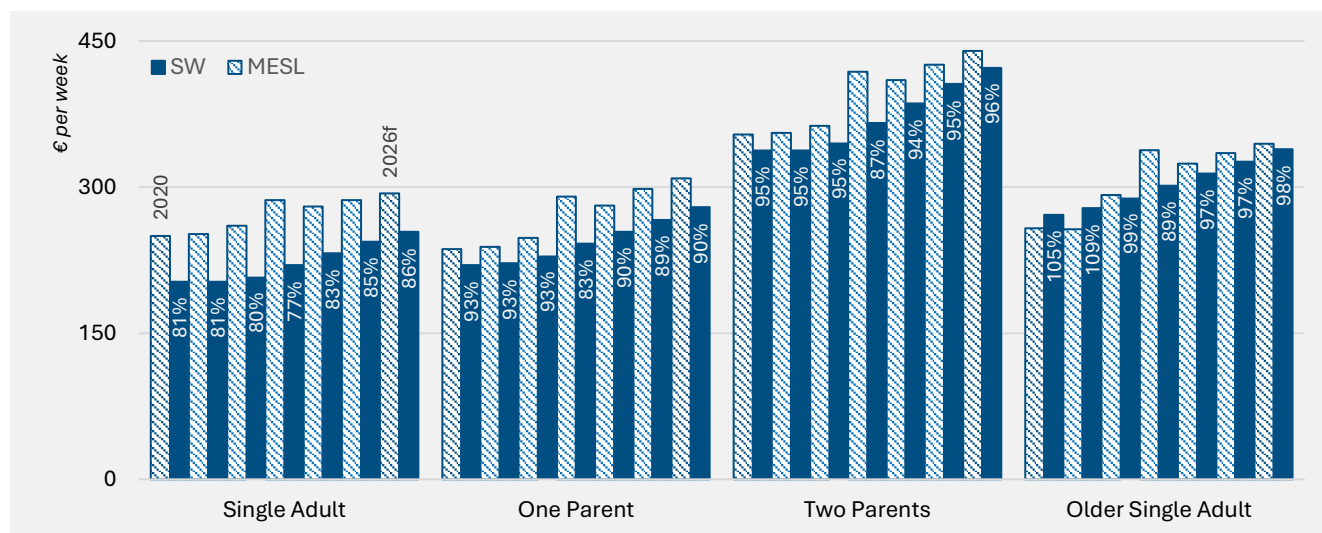
The real value of the core social welfare rate adjustments is examined here, relative to the 2026 forecast average weekly MESL needs of head of household adult(s) and children.

The analysis then examines a projection of the situation for a set of illustrative household types, to

provide an understanding of the impact of individual measures in the overall household context.

Finally, the adequacy trend for a series of test cases monitored in the annual MESL analysis is projected forward to 2026.

Graph 2 Core social welfare supports and proportion of MESL need met



Adult core rates

The MESL 2025 report found that the real value of standard social protection rates relative to MESL costs reached a low point in 2023, at the peak of the inflation shock. The proportion of MESL need met has improved in 2024 and 2025, however it remained at or below the levels reached in 2020 for parents and older adults living alone.

The analysis for 2026 indicates that the nominal increases to core social protection rates are projected to approximately maintain their current real value relative to MESL costs. There is the potential for supports to meet one percentage point more of MESL costs in 2026 relative to 2025.

For the two adults in a Two Parent household, the combination of the personal rate and increase for qualified adult is forecast to continue to meet 96% of

MESL needs in 2026. This is marginally above the 2020 level of need met.

For a lone parent in a One Parent household, the value of the personal rate, Fuel Allowance (and Christmas Bonus) is forecast to meet an estimated 90% of MESL need. This is three percentage points below the level of minimum needs met in 2020.

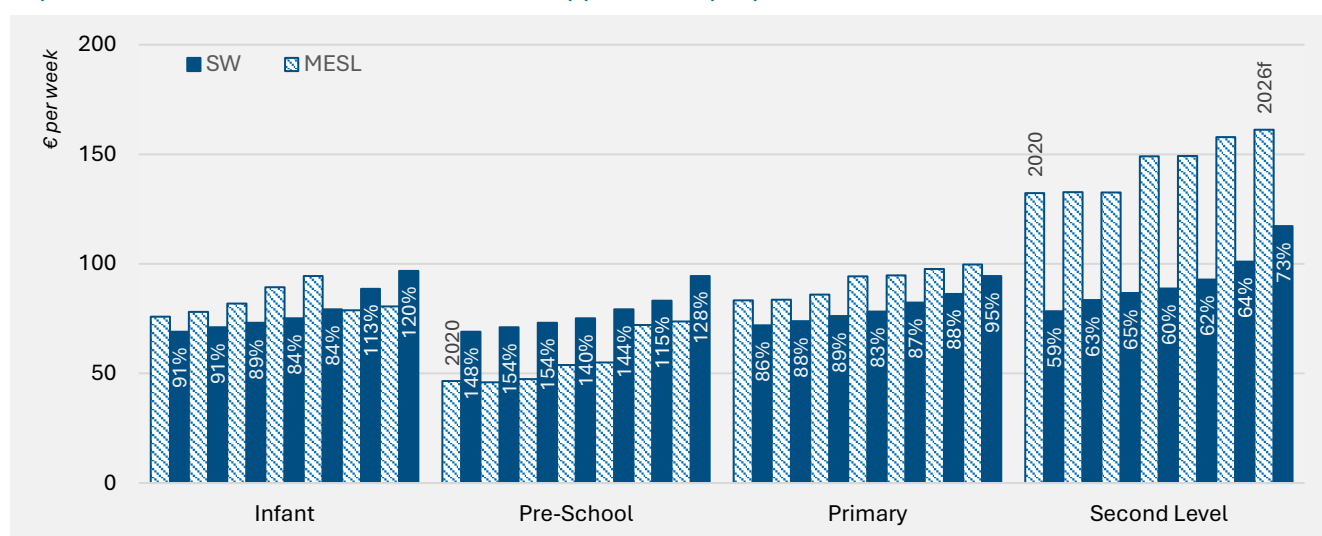
In the case of an Older Single Adult, the Non-Contributory State Pension and secondary supports met 105% of MESL need in 2020. In 2026 the relative value of these core social protection rates is forecast to meet 98% of MESL need. This represents a one

percentage point improvement from the position in 2025.

The Single Adult of working age has shown improvement in the level of MESL need met, from a low point of 77% in 2023 rising to 85% in 2025. Current forecasts indicate that this may improve marginally to 86% in 2026.

However, given the uncertainty regarding current price change forecasts for the coming year these forecast marginal improvements should be treated with caution.

Graph 3 Child related social welfare supports and proportion of MESL need met



Child rates

The Child Support Payment (CSP) is to be increased by €8 for children under 12 and €16 for those aged 12 and over, going further than recommended in the MESL pre-budget submission and reflecting the additional costs associated with older children. In 2026 the rate for children aged 12 and over is projected to be 34.5% (€20) above the rate for younger children. This progressively builds on the differential for older children and is welcomed. As outlined below, it is forecast that the improved rate for older children will meet the highest proportion of MESL needs met to date for this age group in 2026.

To examine the potential real value of the full set of core supports, the direct MESL cost of a child for each age group, are measured against core child related social welfare supports – Child Support Payment (CSP), Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA), Child Benefit, and the New Baby

Grant. The Christmas Bonus is also included in the assessment. This is presented in Graph 3.

The adjustments to the CSP and extension of other supports, i.e., BSCFA for preschooler, is forecast to result in core rates meeting a greater proportion of MESL need in 2026.

The extension of the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) to children aged two and three is welcomed, providing an additional €160 per year, and is responsible for four percentage points of the improvement from 2025 for the preschool child.

It is notable that the improved rate of CSP for children under 12 is expected to move the primary school child out of a position of deep income inadequacy, with social protection supports forecast to meet almost 95% of minimum needs in 2026.

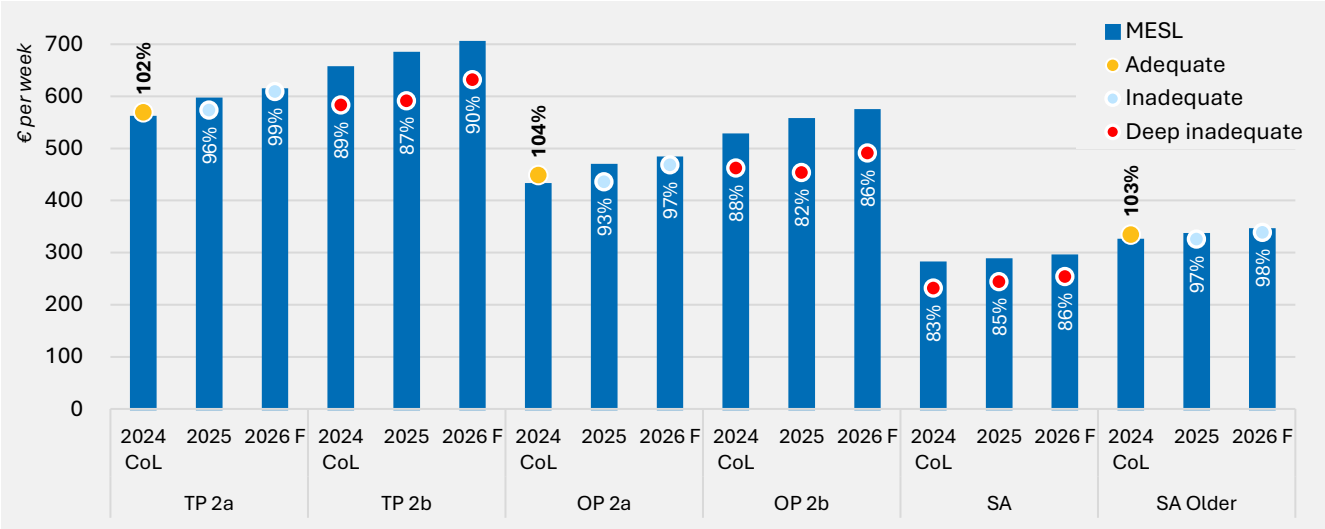
The MESL research has consistently identified older children as having additional and different needs distinct from children in younger age groups. The MESL

cost is highest for older children, aged 12 and over. This is projected to be €161 per week in 2026.

For the second level child, relevant income supports are projected to meet almost 73% of needs in 2026, a nine-percentage point increase from 2025 and the highest proportion of needs met for this age-group to date. It is hoped that subsequent budgets will continue

to build on the CSP differential for older children to make gradual progress towards the adequacy of social protection supports for different child age groups. However, when examined in the context of its impact on overall household income, it is regretful that the adjustments to the CSP is somewhat diminished by the inadequate adjustments made to the core adult rate.

Graph 4 Social welfare income adequacy, six illustrative household types, € per week



Household income adequacy

The potential impact of the adjustments to social protection rates are examined here at the household level, to enable an understanding of the interaction of adjustments to adult and child supports.

To assess the impact of the Budget 2026 measures on income adequacy, household income for the coming year is compared to the MESL 2026f estimate of potential minimum living costs. For context, the assessment for 2024 (with the full suite of cost-of-living measures) and for 2025 is included for each household case.

In recent years Budgets have included packages of supplementary cost-of-living supports. These were both universal (e.g. electricity credits) and targeted temporary top-up payments to recipients of particular social welfare supports. In many cases the announced measures were paid in the current year, as opposed to being part of the coming year’s budgetary measures.

This was the case in Budget 2025 which provided a range of additional temporary cost-of-living measures in the last quarter of 2024, and an electricity credit in 2025. The Budget 2025 measures provided significant additional support to households at the end of 2024, for example a lone parent with two children in receipt

of the One-Parent Family Payment and secondary supports received an additional €1,384 in direct payments in the last quarter of 2024. Similarly, an older person living alone received an additional €788.

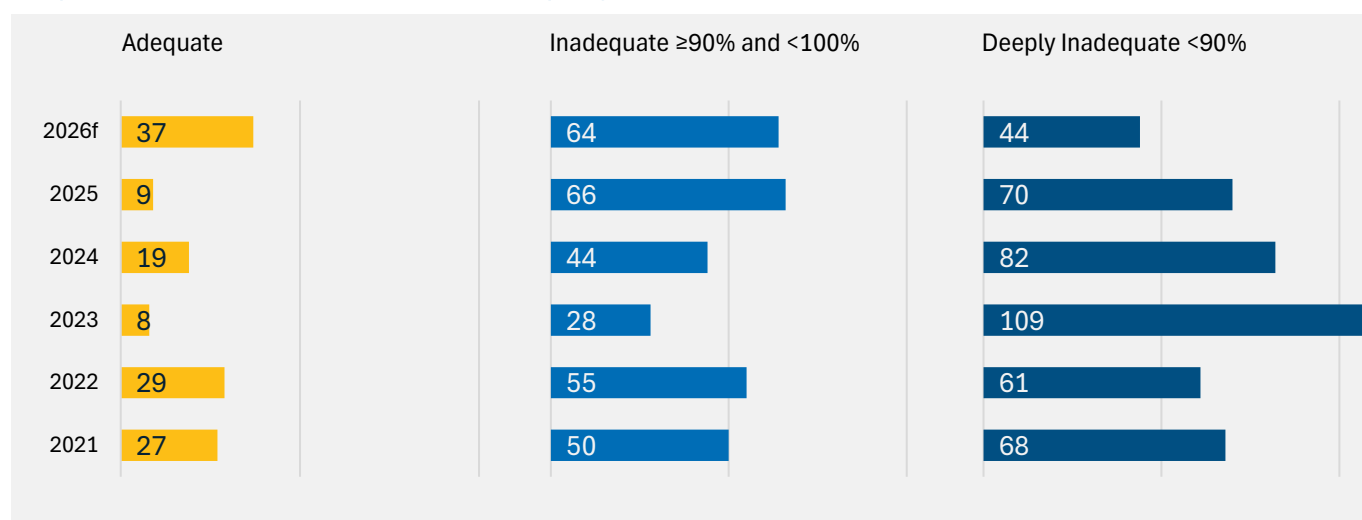
Budget 2026 has focused on permanent adjustments to social protection rates, and has not provided any supplementary payments.

The analysis in previous sections focused on the permanent changes to social protection rates. When the withdrawal of cost-of-living measures is also considered, the net change in household income is considerably more modest. Compared to the position of households at the end of 2024 (inclusive of the Budget 2025 measures), it is anticipated that in 2026 a lower proportion of MESL need will be met for family households and an older adult living alone.

Graph 4 illustrates cases demonstrating adequacy in 2024, due to cost-of-living measures supplementing core social protection rates. Those cases now demonstrate inadequate income in 2025, and this is forecast to continue in 2026.

With the exception of the working-age single adult household, all cases show a lower proportion of MESL need being met in 2026 than was met in 2024.

Graph 5 Social welfare income adequacy assessment, 145 test cases



Adequacy trends

The MESL analysis examines trends in social welfare adequacy for a set of 145 test household casesⁱⁱⁱ. The analysis identifies trends in income inadequacy with a focus on deep income inadequacy (income <90% MESL need). Patterns of income inadequacy are highlighted, identifying household characteristics and needs which are not properly supported by the structures of the current social welfare system.

Graph 5 presents the findings of this analysis to include the 2026 forecast, based on current estimates of MESL costs. The results from previous years are provided as a baseline for comparison.

2026 forecast adequacy assessment

As detailed above, the adjustments to core social welfare rates and secondary supports are assessed against the forecast MESL costs for the coming year.

The analysis forecasts a reduction of deep income inadequacy, from 48% of cases (70) in 2025 to potentially 30% of cases (44) in 2026. Deep income inadequacy, where social welfare supports meet less than 90% of MESL expenditure needs, is only evident in households with older children and single adult headed households (working-age single adult without children and one parent household types). 61% of the household compositions with older children continue to indicate deep income inadequacy in 2026.

The potential contraction in deep income inadequacy will see a cohort of cases move to a position of having an inadequate income which meets at least 90% of

MESL need. In 2026 it is forecast that 44% of cases (64) will be in this position, a decrease from the 46% of cases (66) in 2025.

Cases demonstrating adequacy are forecast to increase significantly to 26% (37) in 2026, from 6% (9) in 2025.

This potential shift in the level of income (in)adequacy is influenced by the changes in core and secondary social protection rates.

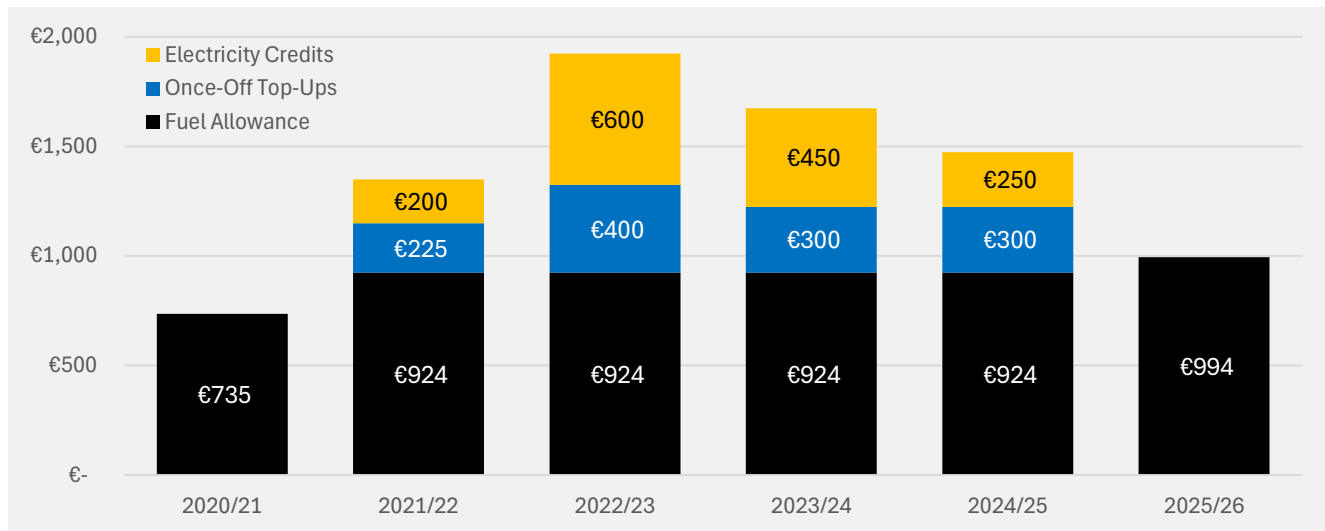
The influence of the €5 adjustment to the Fuel Allowance is found to be minimal in terms of overall income adequacy rates. If it were not provided the analysis would find 1 more case of deep income inadequacy, with a one parent household with younger children only moving to having an income which provides for less than 90% of MESL needs.

The impact of the adjustments to the Child Support Payment (CSP) are evident. In a counterfactual scenario where the payment was adjusted by the same 4.1% applied to the core adult rates, equating to €2.00 for children under 12 and €2.50 for children 12 and over, the situation would be significantly different. Deep income inadequacy would be 11 percentage points higher, and 19 percentage points higher amongst household compositions with older children.

In other words, without these measures deep inadequacy would have been evident in 41% of all cases examined in 2026, with 80% of older child cases demonstrating deep inadequacy. This shows the potential significant impact of the notable increases to the Child Support Payment, especially for households with older children.

Household Energy

Graph 6 Annual value of energy supports



While home energy costs have stabilized somewhat following the inflation shock in 2022 and 2023, they remain significantly above previous living costs levels. The MESL household energy basket has increased by an average of 58.2% in the five years to March 2025.

The revised forecasts from the Central Bank show a slight decline in energy prices for 2025 but predict energy price increases of 0.9% in 2026 and 1.4% in 2027.^{iv}

Given the projected energy price increases in 2026, combined with the removal of direct supports, i.e., universal electricity credits, the net energy cost in the MESL baskets is forecast to increase by an average of 6.1% in 2026.

Budget 2026 has increased Fuel Allowance from €33 per week to €38 per week, representing a €5 increase to the nominal weekly rate. While this is the first adjustment to the core rate since Budget 2021, recent years saw cost of living lump sum payments and universal electricity credits, temporarily supplementing the reduced purchasing power of the Fuel Allowance and somewhat mitigating the high cost of home energy.

The Research Centre's pre-budget submission recommended that the weekly value of Fuel Allowance be adjusted to align with energy prices, by €9.50 for the Fuel Allowance season (28 weeks), to restore the real value of the core rate to 2020 levels. The new rate falls short by €4.50 of the recommended increase and is not enough to offset the discontinuation of the cost-of-living payments and the continuing rise of home energy prices, as detailed in the proceeding section.

Graph 6 illustrates the annual value of Fuel Allowance, including any energy related lump sum payments made in recent years. It demonstrates that qualifying households will receive an estimated €480 less in energy support when compared to the previous winter season.^v This is particularly concerning given the uncertainty surrounding electricity and fuel prices and the predicted increases in energy prices over the forthcoming period.

It is expected that the improved core rate of Fuel Allowance will meet a higher proportion of MESL household energy needs in 2026 but will remain below the level of energy needs met by the support in 2020.

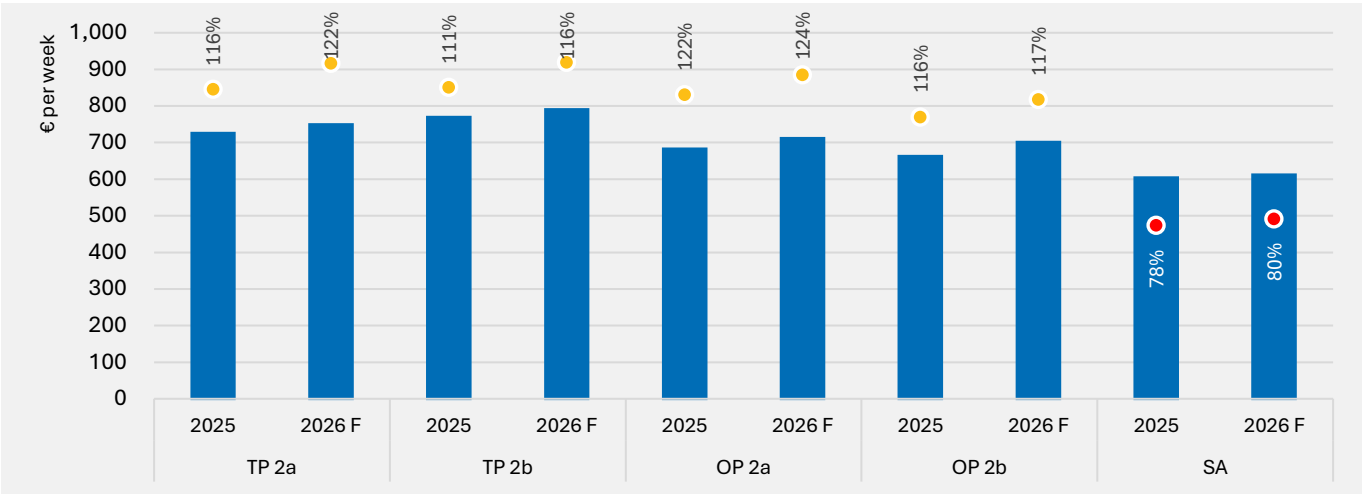
In 2026, Fuel Allowance is projected to meet 42.5% of minimum energy needs for a one parent household with two children (primary and second level age) in a C2 rated home.^{vi} This is a 5.5 percentage point improvement from 2025, but still remains almost three percentage points below the level of energy needs met in 2020.

The extension of the Fuel Allowance to Working Family Payment recipients is welcome. This will give approximately 50,000 households the support they need to help meet energy costs.

The reduced VAT rate of 9% on electricity and gas bills is to be extended to December 2030. The PBO's budget analysis argues that the measure is untargeted and will benefit those in the highest income decile, reducing average household expenditure by €159 per year compared to €98 per year for those in the lowest income decile.^{vii}

Income adequacy in employment

Graph 7 National Minimum Wage income adequacy, five illustrative household types, € per week

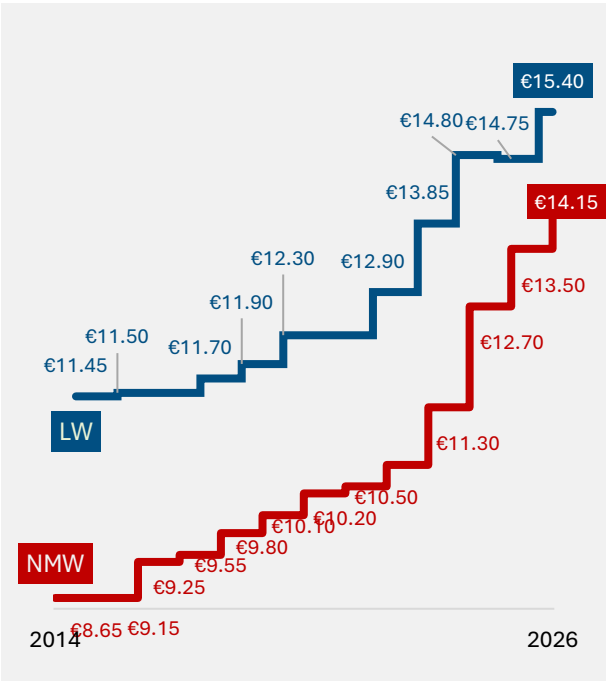


National Minimum Wage and Living Wage

Employment should enable people to have a Minimum Essential Standard of Living for themselves and their families. Having an income below this standard of living means doing without goods and services which are seen as vital for taking part in the norms of everyday life.

Budget 2026 has announced a €0.65 adjustment to the National Minimum Wage (NMW), bringing the NMW to €14.15 per hour in 2026. This is a 7.8% increase and represents a step towards Government’s aim of reaching 60% of median wages, now due by 2029.

Graph 8 Living Wage & National Minimum Wage



The Vincentian MESL Research Centre welcomes any improvement in wages for those on low pay. However, the use of a fixed threshold approach based on median wages, particularly when set at 60%, does not ensure employees can afford minimum living costs.

However, the 2026 NMW remains €1.25 per hour below the 2025/26 Living Wage rate of €15.40, as such it meets only 92% of the earnings rate required for a single adult in full-time employment to afford the goods and services needed for a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.

The Living Wage, as produced by the Living Wage Technical Group since 2014, is based on the MESL research. This approach provides an evidence-based rate which reflects the real living costs faced by employees. While earning the Living Wage rate will not guarantee an adequate income for individuals and households in all circumstances, it provides a base for social supports to build from.

Single adult

The net income from minimum wage employment will rise in 2026, due to the €0.65 increase in the National Minimum Wage (NMW) rate and related USC adjustments.

The Rent Tax Credit, maintained at €1,000 for a single person, reduces the PAYE payable on a full-time minimum wage salary for an employee in the private rented sector. However, this continues to be unavailable to a household in receipt of any housing support e.g., HAP.

Net income for a single adult in full-time (37.5 hour) NMW employment (if in private rented housing and eligible to claim the Rent Tax Credit), will increase by approximately €17 per week, a 3.7% increase.

It is estimated that a standard full-time NMW salary will meet 80.3% of MESL needs. Falling €121 short per week, for a single person living alone and renting a one-bedroom dwelling in the Dublin area.

Based on current projections, a single adult would need to work 51 hours of NMW employment per week to afford a MESL in Dublin in 2026.

Households with children

Working Family Payment

The earnings threshold for the Working Family Payment (WFP) is to increase by €60 under Budget 2026. This is a welcome adjustment to accompany the change to the NMW.

Additionally, under Budget 2026 eligibility for the Fuel Allowance is to be extended to recipients of the Working Family Payment.

The potential impact of these measures is examined for four family household composition in Graph 7. In each of the cases examined, when living in urban social housing, the combination of minimum wage employment, Working Family Payment and secondary supports is projected to provide an adequate income in 2026.

Furthermore, it is estimated that the degree of adequacy will improve compared to 2025. There is improvement of 1 to 2 percentage points in One Parent households, due to the changes to NMW and WFP. While for Two Parent households the improvement is greater, due to household income in 2026 including the Fuel Allowance.

For a two-parent household, with one adult in full-time and one in part-time NMW employment, net household income will increase in 2026 by 8%. For a household with a pre-school age child, the extension of the Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance to two and three year-olds will see a further improvement.

In the case of a one-parent household, with a pre-school and primary school child (OP 2a), in full-time NMW employment. The adjustments to WFP will see the level of support increase by €18 per week, to €117 per week. This in conjunction with the change to NMW, and adjustments to social protection rates, will see the 2026 net income increase by 6.5% compared to 2025.

One Parent Households

Unlike the adjustments for WFP, Budget 2026 did not adjust the earnings disregard for the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) or Jobseeker's Transitional (JST) payments. These have remained at €165 per week since 2020.

In the context of increases to the NMW the static earnings disregard has meant that the rate of OFP or JST payable to a minimum wage earner has fallen since 2020. As a result, in 2025 for a one parent household with two children the net support from One-Parent Family Payment and Child Support Payment is only €9 higher per week, compared to 2020, when in full-time NMW employment.

The static earnings disregard means that a OFP recipient in full-time minimum wage employment qualifies for a partial OFP personal rate payment of €89 per week in 2026, compared to €108 per week in 2020. This €19 reduction offsets a significant proportion of the adjustments to CSP.

In 2020 the earnings disregard of €165 equated to disregarding 16.3 hours of NMW employment and enabled a full-time NMW employed OFP recipient to receive 53% of the adult personal rate. In 2026 the disregard will equate to 11.7 hours of NMW employment and would enable a full-time NMW employed OFP recipient to receive 35% of the adult personal rate.

The cumulative erosion in the value of the earnings disregard has resulted in a full-time NMW worker qualifying for €19 less per week in the partial adult OFP personal rate compared to 2020.

To have restored the value of the earnings disregard in line with changes to the NMW, Budget 2026 would have needed to adjust the earnings disregard to €255. This would enable an OFP recipient in full-time NMW employment to receive the same 53% of the adult personal rate in 2026, as would have been the case in 2020.

Notes

Social welfare scenarios

Housing costs are based on social housing (differential rent), except for the Single Adult which is based on Private Rented and receiving Rent Supplement.

The social welfare income scenarios assume full entitlement to payments relevant to the household scenario:

Two Parents	JS Personal Rate + Qualified Adult + Child Support Payment, Child Benefit, Back to School Clothing & Footwear
One Parent	One-Parent Family Payment / Jobseeker's Transition + Child Support Payment, Child Benefit, Back to School Clothing & Footwear, Fuel Allowance, Christmas Bonus
Single Adult	JS Personal Rate, Rent Supplement
Older Adult	Non-Contributory Pension + Living Alone Increase, Fuel Allowance, Telephone Support Allowance, Christmas Bonus, Household Benefits Package

Assumed all social welfare dependent households are eligible for a full Medical Card.

Employed scenarios

Housing costs based on social housing (differential rent), except for the Single Adult which is based on 90% of average Dublin rent for a one-bedroom dwelling.

Two Parent households based on 1 adult in full-time (37.5 hours) and 1 in part-time (19 hours), One Parent & Single Adult households based on 1 adult in full-time (37.5 hours).

Childcare costs are net of the NCS and/or ECCE scheme as appropriate for child age and household eligibility.

Childcare costs, for a two parent household in a full and part-time employment scenario, are based on the use of a formal provider for a pre-school age child and informal care from a relative/friend for the primary school age child.

Childcare costs, for a one parent household, are based on the use of a formal provider for both pre-school and primary school age children, when the adult is in full-time employment.

The income scenarios examined here focus on broadly applicable situations. Therefore, the employed scenarios are not specific to return to work situations which may include limited term retention of secondary benefits.

Income is net household income, after tax (PAYE, PRSI & USC), and includes applicable social welfare supports e.g., Child Benefit. Means tested social welfare supports for households with children, e.g., Working Family Payment, One-Parent Family Payment, are included as applicable.

Medical card means test applied in each scenario, following HSE Medical Card guidelines.

ⁱ Core MESL basket excludes housing, childcare, and the effect of secondary benefits.

ⁱⁱ Central Bank (2025) Quarterly Bulletin No. 3 2025. <https://www.centralbank.ie/publication/quarterly-bulletins/quarterly-bulletin-q3-2025#subContent3>

ⁱⁱⁱ For a breakdown of the 145 test cases, see the [2025 MESL Annual Update report](#).

^{iv} Central Bank (2025) Quarterly Bulletin No. 3. 2025. <https://www.centralbank.ie/publication/quarterly-bulletins/quarterly-bulletin-q3-2025#subContent3>

^v The new rate of Fuel Allowance will be implemented in January of 2026. As such, the beginning of the Fuel Allowance season is based on the 2025 rate, and the second half of the season is based on the increased rate. This is reflected in the graph illustrated in this briefing.

^{vi} This is the standard energy rating applied in the MESL baskets.

^{vii} Parliamentary Budget Office (2025) Budget 2026 Flash Impact Analysis. https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBudgetOffice/2025/2025-10-07_budget-2026-flash-impact-analysis_en.pdf.

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