

STORIES OF STRUGGLE

EXPERIENCES OF LIVING BELOW THE MINIMUM ESSENTIAL STANDARD OF LIVING

A Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (VPSJ) research report, commissioned by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Report by:

Dr. Bernadette Mac Mahon D.C., Director
Olivia McEvoy, Researcher



Overwhelmed

Demands that cannot be met come from many areas

FOOD

HOUSING

HEALTH

EDUCATION

ENERGY

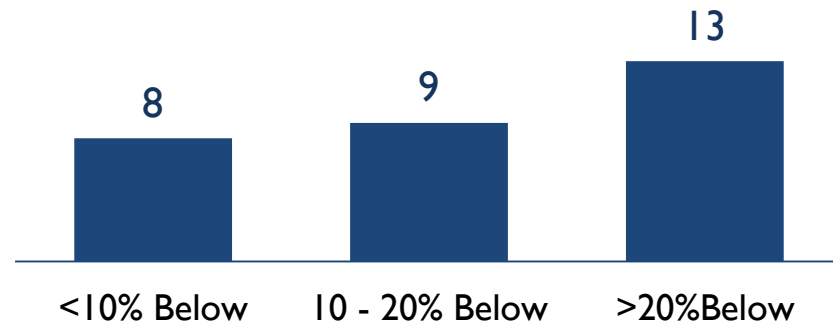
CLOTHING

TRANSPORT

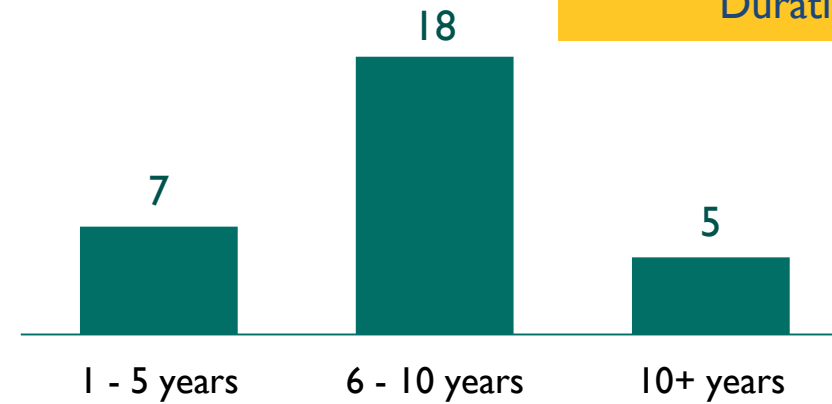
SOCIAL
INCLUSION

30 Households with Inadequate Income

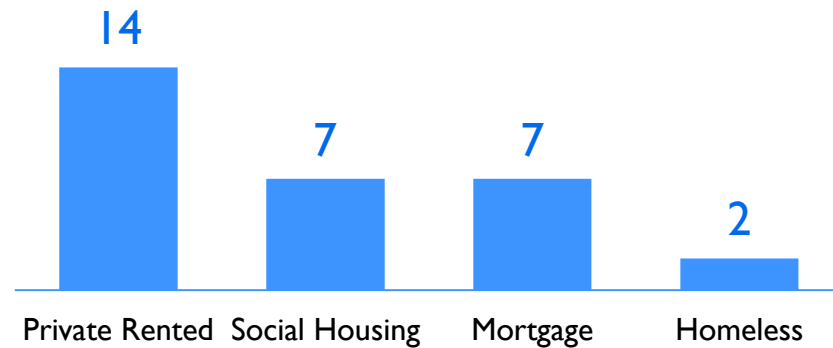
Adequacy Gap



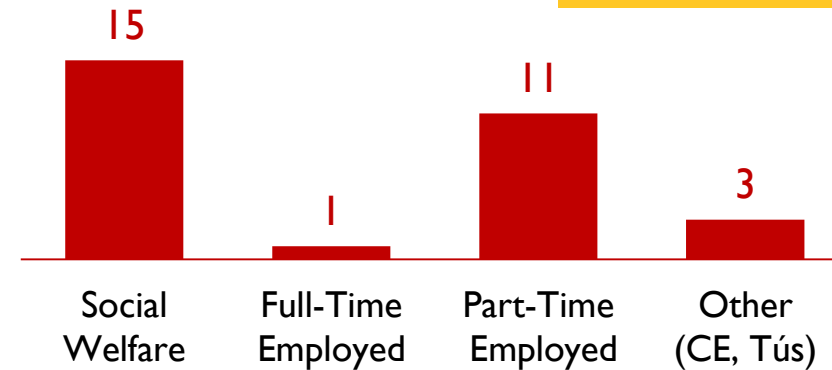
Duration



Housing Tenure



Income Source



MINIMUM ESSENTIAL STANDARD OF LIVING



FOOD



CLOTHING



HEALTH



HOUSING



CHILDCARE



PERSONAL
CARE



INSURANCE



SAVINGS



TRANSPORT



ENERGY



COMMS



EDUCATION



SOCIAL
INCLUSION



HOUSEHOLD
GOODS



HOUSEHOLD
SERVICES



PERSONAL
COSTS

- A standard of living which no one should be expected to live below
- Decided by members of the public, agreeing on what is needed to live at a generally acceptable standard and take part in the day-to-day life of Irish society
- A minimum standard for everyone, not just those in poverty
- The average weekly cost of the 2,000+ items needed for a minimum standard
- A unique benchmark, grounded in the lived experience of people, which complements other poverty measures

Interview Content

- Present experience, duration and cause.
- Coping strategies, including sources of support.
- Household expenditure - priorities, choices and substitutions.
- Dealing with the shortfall, including borrowing and the financial, emotional, physical and social impact of an ongoing weekly shortfall.
- Perceptions of the ways out of their current situation.
- Supports and resources considered most beneficial in the interim.

The experiences of families living below an MESL

A brief overview



Life below an MESL

IN ADDITION TO:

- Prioritising
- Going Without
- Developing Alternatives

OTHER ASPECTS

- Borrowing
- Supports
- The Impact of Income Inadequacy

Supports



During the cold period my Dad and my brothers phoned everyday about heating and food and my Dad sent money for oil

- Family, friends and neighbours
- The community and voluntary sector
- DEIS primary school supports

Impact of Income Inadequacy



My oldest son wouldn't go back to school before Christmas because he felt different, even though he's doing well and his teachers speak highly of him. He's been offered a soccer scholarship but he has to pass the Leaving Cert. so this is a big worry, his future is at risk

- Multi-faceted
- Stress and worry
- Health
- Education
- Isolation
- Impact over time

Finding a way out

Commonly sought methods of improving their situation:

- Access to social housing
- Employment
- Affordable and good quality childcare
- Education
- Improved relationship between social transfers and employment



I can't get control, we can't make plans, it's like being in a deep hole, no matter what we do we can't get out of it, we climb up and fall back in.

Consequences for households

- Parents 'do without' and give priority to children's' needs
- Pressure to meet immediate expenses, to the detriment of longer term needs
- Guilt of letting children down (peer group pressure, education potential)
- Strain of seldom or never having a break (evening or day out, a holiday)
- Constant stress & strain of always struggling to make ends meet and knowing that there was little prospect of being able to do so in the current situation
- Cumulative impact on quality of life when there is ongoing shortfall in all areas of household need

What the people are saying to us



Please don't judge us



Our children are our greatest concern and anxiety



We want to be independent and need employment

What we are saying to
them

Everyone is entitled to live a
life with dignity

As fellow citizens we
want you to have

An adequate income, with
improved child support

Access to services – e.g.
housing and childcare

Opportunities for
reasonable employment

STORIES OF STRUGGLE

EXPERIENCES OF LIVING BELOW THE
MINIMUM ESSENTIAL STANDARD OF LIVING

The full report is available at

budgeting.ie/publications/stories-of-struggle/

