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Department of Children, Disability and Equality

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STATISTICAL SPOTLIGHT

#19

The First Five Years of Life in Ireland – Update 2026



**DATA +
ANALYTICS**



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Introduction

The aim of this Spotlight is to update the 2022 edition that collated available data that illustrates key trends in relation to the goals and objectives of First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028 (First 5).¹ & ² First 5 is a whole-of-Government strategy to improve the lives of babies, young children, and their families. It is a ten-year plan to help make sure all children have positive early experiences and get a great start in life.

First 5 was first published in 2018 and was a constituent strategy of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020 (BOBF).³ Since the previous spotlight was released in 2022, the First 5 strategy has been included as a constituent strategy of Young Ireland, the national policy framework for children and young people up to the age of 24 covering the period 2023-2028. The vision of Young Ireland is to make Ireland a country where the rights of all children and young people are fully recognised and respected. It is focused on tackling the biggest challenges that affect children and young people in Ireland today and sets up robust structures to ensure that children and young people's rights are foremost whenever we make decisions that affect their lives.

First 5 uses evidence to identify the goals, objectives and the specific actions that will be taken across Government to support babies, young children, and their families.

Four main goals are identified in the Strategy:

- **Goal A: Strong and supportive families and communities**
- **Goal B: Optimum physical and mental health**
- **Goal C: Positive play-based early learning**
- **Goal D: An effective early childhood system**

¹ To read the Strategy, visit

https://first5.gov.ie/userfiles/pdf/5223_4966_DCYA_EarlyYears_INTERACTIVE_Booklet_280x215_v1.pdf#view=fit

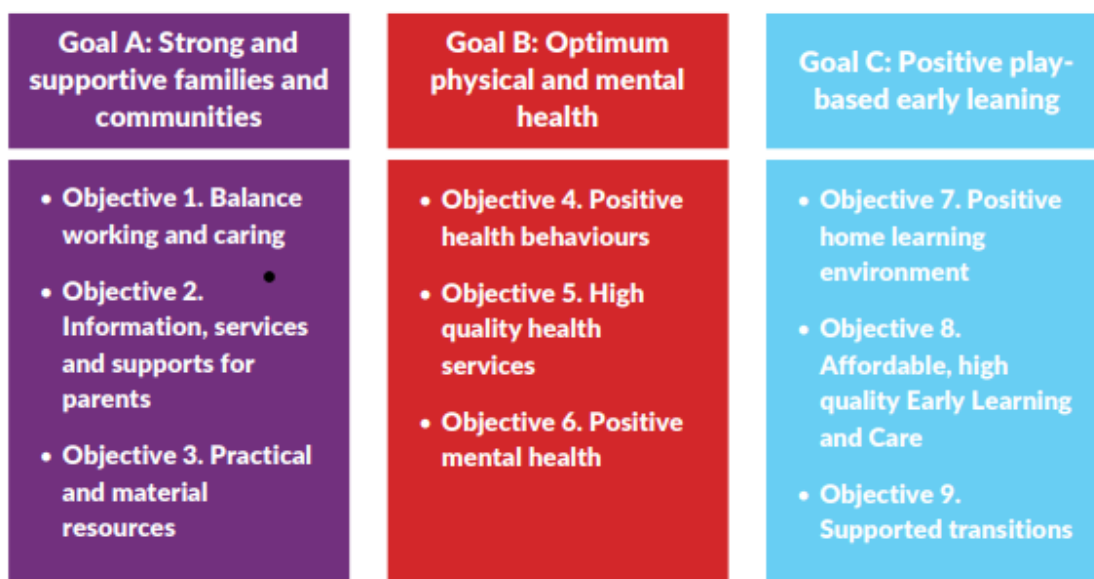
² To read report, visit <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/publications/the-statistical-spotlight-series/>

³ BOBF was the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014-2020). For more information, see <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/775847-better-outcomes-brighter-futures/>

The Strategy identifies nine main objectives to achieve the Goals as well as five building blocks to assist with the implementation of Goal D. The nine Objectives relate to: helping parents to balance working and caring responsibilities; providing information, services and supports for parents; providing practical and material resources to parents; promoting positive health behaviours; providing high quality health services; supporting positive mental health; supporting a positive home learning environment; providing affordable, accessible and high quality Early Learning and Care (ELC); and supporting transitions to primary school.

This Spotlight is structured into three sections corresponding to Goals A, B and C in the First 5 Strategy. There are three sub sections in each, resulting in nine sub sections that mirror the nine objectives in the First 5 Strategy (see Figure 1). A summary table is included for each of these three goals to highlight the key statistics for each objective and their trends over time. Several statistical tables are then presented under each section, which provide data that can help to illustrate the most recent progress under each Objective. Note that in many cases, there are other data sources that could also have been selected but were not repeated in this Spotlight due to their inclusion in recent DCDE publications such as the State of the Nation's Children reports (SONC) and the Children and Young People's Indicator Set. See Table 1 for more information.

Figure 1: First 5 goals and objectives



The main sources of data in this report includes the following:

- Central Statistics Office: Census of Population; General Household Survey (GHS), Labour Force Survey (LFS), and Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC);
- Educational Resource Centre (ERC);
- Eurostat's Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC);
- Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration: International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS);
- Department of Education and Youth;
- Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO);
- Health Service Executive Disability Services;
- Local Government Management Agency (LGMA);
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE);
- National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS);
- National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF);
- Pobal; and
- Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

The majority of the data used in this report are on children aged 5 years and under. In some cases, the only data available were for children aged 4 years and under. The data in this report can be read with reference to broader data presented in other DCDE publications, such as the State of the Nation's Children reports (SONC) and the Children and Young People's (CYP) Indicator Set, which is the successor to the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures Indicator Set. These are usually updated annually.

SONC provides recent data on the National Set of Child Wellbeing indicators, presenting key information the health, behavioural and educational outcomes of children living in Ireland and benchmarking progress in Ireland relative to other countries. The CYP indicator set helps to track progress in the lives of both children and young people aged 0-24 over time, using the framework of the five national outcomes outlined in Young Ireland, the national policy framework for children and young people 2023–2028. These publications contain more detail on a number of indicators in this Spotlight and present data on additional indicators that can

complement those presented in this Spotlight. The complementarity between this Spotlight and these broader data sets is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Indicator overlap with State of the Nation's Children (SONC) and Children and Young People (CYP)

Indicator theme	Indicator present in SONC	Indicator present in CYP
Indicators that can provide more detail on the data in this Spotlight		
Child population	Table 1 - 3	Demographic table
Children living in jobless households	N/A	Indicator 45
Children in care	Table 144 and 145	Demographic table
Children in direct provision	N/A	Demographic table
Poverty rates among children	Table 123	Indicator 44
Social housing need	Table 124 and 125	N/A
Uptake of antenatal care	Table 135	N/A
Breastfeeding rates	Table 63 and 64	Indicator 1
Birth weight	Table 61 and 62	Indicator 2
Childhood hospitalisation	Table 65 - 68	N/A
Patient wait times	Table 142 and 143	N/A
Parental mental health	N/A	Indicator 7
Access to parent and family support services	N/A	Indicator 35
ELC participation	N/A	Indicator 23
Class size	N/A	Indicator 23
Additional indicators that can complement the data in this Spotlight		
Infant mortality rates	Table 4, 6 and 7	Indicator 4
Births to teenage mothers	Table 96 and 97	Indicator 14
Public Health Nurse visits	Table 136	N/A
Health and development checks for infants	Table 137	N/A
Vaccine uptake among children	Table 138-141	Indicator 3
Engagement of children in pre-school numeracy and literacy activities	N/A	Indicator 20
Homelessness among children	N/A	Indicator 47
Obesity among children	Table 69	Indicator 2

Demographic information

The data in this section are mainly derived from the Census of the population for the years 2016 and 2022 with some additional population estimates data from the CSO Population and Migration Estimates. In Census 2022, there were 359,441 children aged 5 and under in Ireland, some 7% of the population (see Table 2).⁴ In this cohort, 184,092 of the children were male (51.2%) and 175,349 were female (48.8%).

Table 2: Children aged 5 and under by sex, 2016 and 2022

	2016	2022
Male	206,562	184,092
Female	197,357	175,349
Both Sexes	403,919	359,441
Total all ages	4,761,865	5,149,139

Source: Census, 2016 and 2022

It is estimated that there were 352,524 children aged 5 and under living in the State in 2025, a decrease from 360,066 or 2.1% from the 2022 estimate. Apart from the number of three-year old children, which is estimated to have increased slightly from 60,596 to 60,787 from 2022 to 2025, this downward trend was consistent across years of age within this group. The steepest decrease over the period was seen in the number of children aged less than one year (-4.35%) reflecting the trend of lower births.

Table 3: Population estimates of children aged 5 and under by single year of age, 2022-2025

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Under 1 year	57,684	55,716	55,453	55,172
1 year	56,631	58,637	57,372	56,126

⁴ This figure is the number of 0-5 year olds recorded on Census night 2022, which includes visitors. When examining children by population group and other variables, the number of children aged 5 and under will not always total 359,441. This is because a certain number of these children were not usual residents; were not living with their parents; or were living in a communal establishment (such as a hospital or hotel) on Census night. This meant that these children were not categorised as children within a family unit, and therefore further analyses of information such as their nationality and ethnicity could not be conducted on these children.

	2022	2023	2024	2025
2 years	59,250	57,598	60,018	58,145
3 years	60,596	60,245	58,724	60,787
4 years	61,673	61,573	61,602	59,835
5 years	64,232	62,747	62,956	62,459
Total 0-5	360,066	356,516	356,125	352,524

Source: CSO Population and Migration Estimates, 2022 - 2025

Table 4 uses Census data (2016 and 2022) to examine the number of children aged 5 and under by minority population group, drawing on the data for nationality, Traveller ethnicity, and disability status. In Census 2022, there were 41,356 children with Non-Irish nationality, accounting for 11.6% of the 0-5 population. This was an increase from 2016 when 34,177 (8.8%) were recorded with Non-Irish nationality. The number of children aged 5 and under identifying as Irish Travellers was 5,190, accounting for 1.3% of the 0-5 population in 2016. This number decreased to 4,498 in 2022, however the overall proportion remained that same at 1.3%. There were 13,026 children aged 5 and under with a disability, accounting for 3.4% of the 0-5 population in 2016. This number increased to 17,781 (5%) in 2022. There were 1,482 children who identified as Roma aged 5 and under in 2022. This represented 0.4% of the 0-5 population in 2022. Census 2022 was the first time that Roma was included as a category, and as a result there was no comparable Census information on Roma children aged 5 years or under prior to this.

Table 4: Children aged 5 and under by minority population group, 2016 and 2022

	Number of children, 2016	Percentage of the 0-5 population, 2016	Number of children, 2022	Percentage of the 0-5 population, 2022
Non-Irish*	34,177	8.8	41,356	11.6
Irish Traveller	5,190	1.3	4,498	1.3
Disabled	13,026	3.4	17,781	5.0
Roma	n/a	n/a	1,482	0.4

*This is calculated by subtracting Irish citizens from all citizens. Therefore, it may include some multiple/dual citizens of Ireland and another country/other countries.

Source: Census, 2016 and 2022

Family Composition

About one third (29%) of all families with children had at least one child aged 5 and under in 2022 (see Table 5). This included: 27.7% of married couples with children, 47.3% of cohabiting couples with children, 22.8% of one parent mothers with children, and 18.5% of one parent fathers with children.

The composition of families with children aged 0-5 in 2022 shows that of those with at least one child aged 5 and under: 67% were married couples with children; while 19% were cohabiting couples; 13% were one parent mothers; and 1.0% were one parent fathers (Table 5b).

Table 5a & 5b: Children aged 5 and under by family type, 2016 and 2022

Table 5a: 2016	Number of households with children aged 0-5	Number of households with children of all ages	Percentage of families with children that had children aged 0-5	Breakdown of families with children aged 0-5 by family type
Married Couple with children	191,190	568,317	33.6	66.9
Cohabiting couple with children	48,446	75,587	64.1	17.0
One parent mother with children	43,482	189,112	23.0	15.2
One parent father with children	2,538	29,705	8.5	0.9
All families with children	285,656	862,721	33.1	100.0
Table 5b: 2022	Number of households with children aged 0-5	Number of households with children of all ages	Percentage of families with children that had children aged 0-5	Breakdown of families with children aged 0-5 by family type
Married Couple with children	224,142	809,252	27.7	67.3
Cohabiting couple with children	62,529	132,244	47.3	18.8
One parent mother with children	43,206	189,112	22.8	13.0
One parent father with children	3,389	18,625	18.2	1.0
All families with children	333,266	1,149,233	29.0	100.0

Source: Census, 2016 and 2022

Tenure Status

Looking at housing tenure status, 9.8% of all those living in a residence that was owned with a mortgage/loan in 2022 were aged 5 and under, and 2.7% of those

living in an owner-occupied residence without a loan/mortgage were aged 5 and under (see Table 6). This figure was 9.1% in the case of those living in a residence rented from a private landlord; 7.2% in the case of those living in a residence rented from a Local Authority; and 7.8% in the case of those living in a residence rented from a voluntary/co-operative housing body; while 9.6% of those living in a residence free of rent were aged 5 and under.

Among children aged 0-5 years living in Ireland, 49.4% lived in a residence owned with a mortgage/loan, and 12.1% lived in an owner-occupied residence without a loan/mortgage. A further 22.8% of children aged 0-5 years lived in a residence rented from a private landlord; while 8.5% lived in a residence rented from a Local Authority; in total 1.6% lived in a residence rented from a voluntary/cooperative housing body; and 1.9% lived in a residence free of rent.

Table 6: Nature of occupancy of children aged 0-5, 2016 and 2022

2016	Number of 0-5 year olds in each occupancy type	Percentage of 0-5 year olds in each occupancy type	Breakdown of occupancy type among 0-5 year old population
Owned with mortgage/loan	207,574	11.5	51.6
Owner occupied without loan/mortgage	33,100	2.3	8.2
Rented from private landlord	107,464	12.9	26.7
Rented from Local Authority	35,831	9.1	8.9
Rented from voluntary/co-operative housing body	3,590	9.2	0.9
Occupied free of rent	5,344	9.6	1.3
Not stated	9,364	7.2	2.3
All types of occupancy	402,267	8.6	100.0

2022	Number of 0-5 year olds in each occupancy type	Percentage of 0-5 year olds in each occupancy type	Breakdown of occupancy type among 0-5 year old population
Owned with mortgage/loan	175,688	9.8	49.4
Owner occupied without loan/mortgage	43,053	2.7	12.1
Rented from private landlord	80,974	9.1	22.8
Rented from Local Authority	30,295	7.2	8.5
Rented from voluntary/co-operative housing body	5,852	7.8	1.6
Occupied free of rent	6,644	9.9	1.9
Not stated	12,924	6.2	3.6
All types of occupancy	355,430	7.1	100.0

Source: Census, 2016 and 2022

Maternal Education

In Census 2022, the majority (60.2%) of children aged 5 and under had mothers with third level education as their highest education level (see Table 7). Third level education was also the most common highest level of education achieved by mothers of non-Irish children aged 5 and under (49.8%) and by mothers of children with a disability (50.4%), while it was the least common highest level of education achieved by mothers of children aged 5 and under from the Traveller community (3.2%). Primary education (including no formal education) was the least common highest level of education achieved by mothers of all children aged 5 and under (1.7%), by mothers of non-Irish children (2.4%) and by children with a disability (2.5%). However, this was the most common highest level of education achieved by mothers of children aged 5 and under from the Traveller Community, with 23.8% of these mothers having either no formal education or primary education as their highest level of education.

Table 7: Highest level of education attainment of mothers of children aged 0-5 by population group, 2016 and 2022 (%)

2016	All Children	Traveller Community	Non-Irish	Children with a Disability
Primary Education (including no formal education)	2.7	46.0	3.3	4.2
Lower Secondary	6.3	29.5	4.2	10.6
Upper secondary	33.9	14.8	33.1	39.0
Third level	54.6	1.6	54.7	43.7
Not stated/Not available	2.5	8.2	4.8	2.4
2022	All Children	Traveller Community	Non-Irish	Children with a Disability
Primary Education (including no formal education)	1.7	23.8	2.4	2.5
Lower Secondary	3.6	23.4	3.0	6.2
Upper secondary	20.4	13.8	16.6	26.8
Third level	60.2	3.2	49.8	50.4
Education not Ceased*	12.6	29.1	25.6	13.2
Not stated/Not available	1.5	6.7	2.5	0.9

Source: Census, 2016 and 2022

*Data on 'Education not ceased' for 2016 was unavailable at the time of writing

Health of Children

The 2022 Census data shows that the vast majority (89.7%) of children aged 0 to 5 years were in good or very good health, with 78.7% reported to be in very good health and 11% reported to be in good health (see Table 8). This is higher than the percentage of the general population (82%) that reported that they were in good or very good health in 2022.



Table 8: Percentage of children aged 5 and under in good and very good health, 2016 and 2022

2016	Very good	Good	Good and very good
Number of 0-5 year olds	328,739	46,502	375,241
Percentage of 0-5 year olds	81.4	11.5	92.9
2022	Very good	Good	Good and very good
Number of 0-5 year olds	282,650	39,589	322,239
Percentage of 0-5 year olds	78.7	11	89.7

Source: Census, 2016 and 2022



Goal A: Strong and supportive families and communities

Table 9: Summary table of key statistics under the objectives of Goal A⁵

Objective	Theme	Key statistic	Baseline (2018)	First Statistical Spotlight (2022)	Second Statistical Spotlight (2026)	Change
1. Balance working and caring	Low work intensity households	Percentage of children aged 0-5 living in very low work intensity households, by educational attainment level of their parents	(i) 4.6% had parents with tertiary level education (2018)	(i) 4.4% had parents with tertiary level education (2020)	(i) 2.2% had parents with tertiary level education (2024),	↓
			(ii) 70.5% had parents with less than primary, primary, and lower secondary education (2018)	(ii) 52.3% had parents with less than primary, primary, and lower secondary education (2020)	(ii) 58.7% had parents with less than primary, primary, and lower secondary education (2021) ⁶	↓

⁵ The data in the column titled 'Baseline (2018)' is typically the data that was included in the 'First Value' column in the Statistical Spotlight on First 5 which was published in 2022, and the data in the column titled 'First Statistical Spotlight (2022)' is typically the data that was included in the 'Second value' column in the that first Spotlight. However, there are some exceptions, for example where updates have been made to the original source data, we have included the more recent version of this data. Additionally, if data has since become available for a more appropriate year for the column, then in some cases that data has been used instead.

⁶ There is data available for other EU 27 countries in years 2022, 2023 and 2024, however 2021 is the most recent year to include data for Ireland.



	Children living in jobless households	Percentage of children aged 0-5 living in a jobless household	12.1% (Q4 2018)	9.1% (Q4 2020)	7.7% (Q4 2024)	↓
	Maternity and paternity benefit uptake	Maternity and paternity benefit uptake rate by sector (per 100 employees) ⁷	(i) 5.8 per 100 employees used maternity benefit across sectors (2017)	(i) 5.3 per 100 employees used maternity benefit across sectors (2019)	(i) 5.5 per 100 employees used maternity benefit across sectors (2022)	↓
			(ii) 3.2 per 100 employees used paternity benefit across sectors (2017)	(ii) 3.1 per 100 employees used paternity benefit across sectors (2019)	(ii) 3.3 per 100 employees used paternity benefit across sectors (2022)	↑

⁷ The rates of maternity and paternity benefits were calculated using the number of recipients of a benefit divided by the relevant target population. This figure was then multiplied by 100 to achieve a rate per 100 employees from each target population



		Maternity and paternity benefit uptake rate: Maternity and Paternity Benefit Claims awarded as a percentage of births ⁸	(i) 67.9% of mothers of newborns availed of Maternity benefit (2018)	(i) 71.5% of mothers of newborns availed of Maternity benefit (2021)	(i) 74.2% of mothers of newborns availed of Maternity benefit (2024)	↑
			(ii) 39.5% of fathers of newborns availed of Paternity benefit (2018)	(ii) 43.8% of fathers of newborns availed of Paternity benefit (2021)	(ii) 51.3% of fathers of newborns availed of Paternity benefit (2024)	↑
Households that availed of flexible working arrangements	Number of parents to children aged 0-5 that availed of some form of remote working	116,099 (Q4 2019)	435,350 (Q4 2021)	318,435 (Q4 2024)	↑	

⁸ This indicator is being included here for the first time, it was not included in the earlier Spotlight published in 2022



2. Information, services and supports for parents	Support for Parent & Toddler groups	Number of Parent & Toddler grants approved by local County Childcare Committee	414 (2019)	229 (2021)	395 (2024)	↓
	Family Support Services and Child and Family Support Networks	(i) number of children referred to family support service	(i) 37,024 (2019)	(i) 32,473 (2021)	(i) 48,443 (2024)	↑
		(ii) Number of operating Child and Family Support Networks	(ii) 115 (2019)	(ii) 122 (2021)	(ii) 114 (2024)	↓
	Children in care by placement type	The number of children aged 0-5 in care	1096 (2018)	978 (2020)	985 (2024)	↓
	Reason for being in care	The percentage of children aged 0-5 in care by primary reason for being in care	(i) 3.5% physical abuse	(i) 5.9% physical abuse	(i) 4.3% physical abuse	↑
			(ii) 5.3% emotional abuse	(ii) emotional abuse	(ii) 12.9% emotional abuse	↑
			(iii) 1.4% sexual abuse	(iii) 1.4% sexual abuse	(iii) 1.1% sexual abuse	↓



			(iv) 52.6% neglect (v) 37.3% welfare (2018)	(iv) 52.6% neglect (v) 33.0% welfare (2020)	(iv) 65% neglect (v) 16.8% welfare (2024)	↑ ↓
	Children in direct provision ⁹	(i) The percentage of children in direct provision aged 0-5	(i) 52.7% (2019)	(ii) 32.4% (2021)	(ii) 34.6% (2024)	↓
		(ii) The number of children in direct provision aged 0-5	(i) 883 (2019)	(ii) 675 (2021)	(ii) 3,030 (2024)	↑
	Children in refuges and safe homes	The number of children aged 0-4 who accessed safe accommodation	(i) 874 children accommodated in refuges (ii) 14 children accommodated in safe homes (2017)	(i) 594 children accommodated in refuges (ii) 13 children accommodated in safe homes (2019)	(i) 594 children accommodated in refuges (ii) 13 children accommodated in safe homes (2019)	↓ ↓
3.	Poverty rates	Percentage of children aged 0-5 at risk of	(i) 6.4% consistent poverty rate	(i) 2.8% consistent poverty rate	(i) 7.6% consistent poverty rate	↑

⁹ This data does not include children from the Ukraine who are Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection



Practical and material resources		poverty and experiencing consistent poverty	(ii) 11.9% at-risk of poverty rate (iii) 19.4% deprivation rate (2017)	(ii) 8.4% at-risk of poverty rate (iii) 15.3% deprivation rate (2021)	(ii) 14.3% at-risk of poverty rate (iii) 17.6% deprivation rate (2024)	↑ ↓
	Food and energy poverty	Percentage of households with a child aged 0-5 experiencing food and energy poverty	(i) 1.8% food poverty (ii) 3.8% energy poverty (2017)	(ii) 1.6% food poverty (ii) 6.1% energy Poverty (2019)	(ii) 2.7% food poverty (ii) 6.1% energy poverty (2024)	↑ ↑
	Housing quality	Percentage of children aged 0-5 by quality of their household dwelling	(i) 8.6% live in a household considering their dwelling as too dark (ii) 10.1% live in a dwelling with a	(i) 7.9% live in a household considering their dwelling as too dark	(i) 8.2% live in a household considering their dwelling as too dark	↓ ↑



			leaking roof; damp walls, floors, or foundation; or rot in window frames or floor (2017)	(iii) 0% have neither a bath nor shower in their dwelling (iv) 12% live in a dwelling with a leaking roof; damp walls, floors, or foundation; or rot in window frames or floor (2019)	(ii) 16.7% live in a dwelling with a leaking roof; damp walls, floors, or foundation; or rot in window frames or floor (2020)	
	Social housing need	Percentage of households in need of social housing with a child aged 0-5	23.1% (2019)	18.4% (2021)	16.1% (2024)	↓

↑ Data increasing ↓ Data decreasing = Data show broadly constant or no significant movement/relatively static

Objective 1: Balance working and caring

Parents will be assisted to balance working and caring to contribute to optimum child development and to best suit their family circumstances.

Objective 1a: Low work intensity households

This section looks at evidence that can illustrate how parents balance their work and caring responsibilities. Table 10 examines the percentage of children aged 5 and under living in households with very low work intensity across the EU, by the highest educational attainment level of their parents. Very low work intensity households are defined in this context as households where members of the working age population living in the household worked for 20% or less of their total work-time potential during the previous year. Only the “Tertiary education” category is reported in the table below for 2022 to 2024 as the number of respondents for the categories of less than primary, primary and lower secondary education was too low to meet CSO publication thresholds.

Table 10 includes data from 2020 to 2024 on households where the highest level of education among parents of children aged 5 and under was tertiary level. In 2020, the percentage of 0-5 year olds who were reported as living in very low work intensity households, ranged from 0% in Romania, to 4.7% in Latvia. The average rate for the EU-27 in 2020 was 2.3%, while the rate in Ireland was 4.4%. In 2024, Romania and Hungary both reported that 0% of children aged 0-5 where the highest level of education among parents was tertiary level, were living in very low work intensity households. Germany and Denmark both reported the highest rate of 4.7% in 2024, while Ireland reported a rate of 2.2% that year – a reduction of 2.2 percentage points since 2020 (from 4.4% to 2.2%). However, the EU-27 average increased during this period, from 2.3% in 2020 to 2.5% in 2024.

Table 10 also examines households where the highest level of education among parents of children aged 5 and under was “less than primary, primary and lower secondary education”. Data for Ireland is not available for 2022 to 2024 and is not included for other countries here. In 2021, the country with the lowest percentage of children aged 5 and under living in very low work intensity household was

Luxembourg (0%), and the country with the highest level was Czechia, with 72.6% of children in this age group living in a very low work intensity household. In 2020, Luxembourg also held the lowest percentage position with 3.5%, and Czechia held the highest percentage position with 76.5%. The percentage in Ireland increased significantly during this time, from 52.3% in 2020 to 58.7% in 2021. The average for the EU-27 also increased between 2020 and 2021 from 27.5% to 30.1%.

Table 10: Percentage of children aged 0-5 living in very low work intensity households, by educational attainment level of their parents, EU 27 2020-2024

	2020		2021		2022	2023	2024
	Tertiary education	Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education	Tertiary education	Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education	Tertiary education	Tertiary education	Tertiary education
Austria	3.5	30	7.0	31.7	2.8	2.6	2.7
Belgium	2.6	37.8	1.8	42.9	1.4	1.4	2.4
Bulgaria	2.5	40.6	2.2	35.4	1.8	1.3	1.6
Croatia	1.4	16	1.4	n/a	0.0	1.2	1.5
Cyprus	0.5	19.9	2.4	29.8	0.4	0.7	1.1
Czechia	1.2	76.5	2.7	72.6	1.6	0.7	3.2
Denmark	2.5	61.9	2.8	32.2	3.5	5.1	4.7
Estonia	3.2	22.9	2.8	32.4	2.7	2.2	2.9
EU 27	2.3	27.5	3.0	30.1	2.9	2.6	2.5
Finland	3.6	56.1	4.0	n/a	5.9	3.6	5.1
France	1.9	37.7	3.7	38.2	4.2	3.7	1.8
Germany	3.9	39.3	4.9	46.1	4.2	4.5	4.7
Greece	2.8	11.2	2.5	17.6	1.7	1.0	0.8
Hungary	1.9	17.5	3.0	11.8	0.9	1.6	0.0
Ireland	4.4	52.3	4.2	58.7	3.1	3.3	2.2

	2020		2021		2022	2023	2024
	Tertiary education	Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education	Tertiary education	Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education	Tertiary education	Tertiary education	Tertiary education
Italy	1.7	17	2.8	18.1	2.4	0.6	1.1
Latvia	4.7	13.7	3.6	16.5	5.5	3.8	3.5
Lithuania	3.9	n/a	3.0	n/a	2.0	3.7	3.9
Luxembourg	0.3	3.5	1.5	0.0	2.1	0.0	0.9
Malta	0.1	15.8	0.5	14.9	0.3	1.6	0.0
Netherlands	1.5	32	2.3	44.0	4.7	2.4	2.4
Poland	0.6	15.9	0.6	29.3	0.6	0.7	1.1
Portugal	1.5	11.4	1.5	14.3	0.7	1.1	0.8
Romania	0	17.8	0.0	5.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Slovakia	0.6	34.5	1.0	37.8	0.7	1.2	0.5
Slovenia	0.8	27	0.1	n/a	0.4	0.6	0.5
Spain	2.1	15.4	2.6	19.7	2.4	2.5	2.1
Sweden	4.2	43.1	3.1	44.0	3.1	2.5	3.2

Source: Eurostat

*There is 'Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education' data available for other EU 27 countries in years 2022, 2023 and 2024. However, the CSO advised that 2021 is the most recent year for which data is available for Ireland

Objective 1b: Children living in jobless households.

Table 11 examines the percentage of children aged 5 and under living in jobless households in Ireland, from Q4 2018 to Q4 2024.¹⁰ This figure was highest in Q4 2018, with 12.1% of these children living in jobless households, and was lowest in Q4 2023, with 7.6% of children in this age group living in jobless households.

¹⁰ Note that this figure is based on households where all person's 15+ are classified as either unemployed or inactive according to ILO definitions (i.e. nobody in the household is classified as employed). This differs from the unemployment definition in the Census, which does not include those who are looking for a job, those who are a student, those looking after home/family, those who are retired, and those who are unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability.

Table 11: Percentage of children aged 5 and under living in jobless households, Q4 2018 - Q4 2024

	2018Q4	2019Q4	2020Q4	2021Q4	2022Q4	2023Q4	2024Q4
Percentage living in a jobless household	12.1	10.3	9.1	8.0	9.8	7.6	7.7
Number living in a jobless household	46,500	38,900	33,700	28,600	35,400	26,900	27,000

Source: Source: CSO Labour Force Survey, 2018-2024

Objective 1c: Maternity and paternity benefit uptake

Looking at the maternity and paternity benefit uptake rates by sector,¹¹ both maternity/ paternity benefit uptake rates are higher in 2021 and 2022 compared with 2018 (see Table 12a). Maternity benefit uptake rates increased from 5.4 per 100 female employees in 2018 to 5.5 per female 100 employees in 2022, meanwhile paternity benefit uptake rates increased from 2.9 per 100 male employees in 2018 to 3.3 per 100 male employees in 2022.

The Accommodation and Food Service Activities sector had the lowest maternity and paternity benefit uptake rates in 2018 (2.7 per 100 female employees and 1.1 per 100 male employees) and 2022 (2.5 and 1.1 respectively). Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing had the lowest uptake rates in 2021 (2.9 and 1.4). The Education sector had the highest rate of maternity benefit uptake in 2018, with 7.8 in every 100 female employees taking up maternity leave that year. The Administrative and Support Service Activities sector had the highest rate of maternity benefit uptake in 2021 (9.2), while the Human Health sector had the highest rate in 2022 (7.0). The Public Administration and Defence sector had the highest rate of paternity benefit uptake in 2018, 2021 and 2022 (4.8, 6.2, 5.3). Please note that this is the latest data published by the CSO Labour Force Survey as of time of writing.

Another lens through which to look at take up of maternity benefit and paternity benefit is as a percentage of the number of births each year. From 2018 to 2022, the

¹¹ The rates of maternity and paternity benefits were calculated using the number of recipients of a benefit divided by the relevant target population. This figure was then multiplied by 100 to achieve a rate per 100 employees from each target population

annual number of maternity benefit claims awarded fell from 41,429 claims to 40,897. There was a significant reduction in the number of births during this period, with 61,022 live births recorded in 2018 and 54,483 recorded in 2022. While not all women who have given birth are eligible for maternity benefit, based on this data, this measure suggest that the rate of uptake increased between 2018 and 2022; with maternity benefit being claimed at a rate of 67.9% of births in 2018 up to a rate of 75% of births in 2022. Regarding uptake of Paternity benefit, in 2018 there were 24,080 Paternity benefit claims awarded in 2018, representing a rate of 39.5% of births, while in 2022 this increased to 27,375 claims awarded representing a rate of 50.2% of births. Note that maternity and paternity benefit awarded in 2018 and 2022 could also relate to births in 2017 and 2021, and similarly to maternity benefit, not all fathers/non-birthing partners will be entitled to Paternity benefit.¹²

Table 12a: Maternity and paternity benefit uptake rate by sector (per 100 employees) 2018 - 2022

	2018		2021		2022	
	Maternity	Paternity	Maternity	Paternity	Maternity	Paternity
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	3.8	1.5	6.2	1.8	2.5	1.5
Administrative and Support Service Activities	6.5	4.7	9.2	5.8	5.9	4.5
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3.2	1.3	2.9	1.4	2.6	1.5
Construction	10.5	2.9	7.7	4.2	6.4	3.5
Education	8.6	6.1	7.6	5.6	6.8	5.0
Financial and Real Estate	10	4.8	7.9	5.0	5.8	3.8
Human Health and Social Work Activities	7.1	4.5	7.6	5.7	7.0	3.9
Industry	5.4	3.6	5.4	4.0	4.4	3.5
Information and Communication	5.8	2.8	7.6	3.1	5.8	2.7
Other NACE Activities	4.7	1.8	8.5	3.0	5.3	1.8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	6.6	3.5	7.6	4.7	6.0	4.4
Public Administration and Defence	7.7	5.6	7.6	6.2	6.0	5.3

¹² <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/organisation-information/social-protection-annual-statistics-report-archive/>

	2018		2021		2022	
	Maternity	Paternity	Maternity	Paternity	Maternity	Paternity
Transportation and Storage	6.1	2.9	5.6	3.2	4.7	2.5
Wholesale and Retail Trade	5.9	3.4	5.8	3.1	4.8	3.5
Total maternity/paternity benefit rate	6.7	3.4	7.2	3.9	5.5	3.4

Source: CSO Labour Force Survey, 2018, 2021-2022

Table 12b: Maternity and paternity benefit uptake rate: Maternity and Paternity Benefit Claims awarded as a percentage of births 2018 – 2024

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Maternity Benefit Claims awarded	41,429	43,188	40,293	43,283	40,897	40,657	40,121
Uptake rate: Maternity Benefit Claims Awarded as a percentage of births	67.9%	72.1%	70.9%	71.5%	75.1%	74.4%	74.2%
Paternity Benefit Claims Awarded	24,090	27,295	24,076	26,539	27,375	27,111	27,729
Uptake rate: Paternity Benefit Claims Awarded as a percentage of births	39.5%	45.5%	42.4%	43.8%	50.2%	49.6%	51.3%
Number of births	61,022	59,924	56,812	60,575	54,483	54,678	54,062
Birth rate per 1,000 population	12.6	12.0	11.4	11.9	10.5	10.4	10.0
Total Period Fertility Rate*	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.5

Sources: Department of Social Protection Annual Statistics Reports, Vital Statistics Yearly Summary CSO 2025

*The total period fertility rate (TPFR) is derived from the age specific fertility rates in the current year. It represents the projected number of children a woman would have if she experienced current age specific fertility rates while progressing from age 15-49 years. A value of 2.1 is generally considered to be the level at which the population would replace itself in the long run, ignoring migration.

Objective 1d: Households that availed of flexible working arrangements

Table 13 looks at the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the uptake of remote working among parents with children aged 5 and under. The number of people who had children aged 0-5 and worked from home pre-Covid was 116,099 in Q4 2019, this number jumped to 318,147 in 2024, peaking in 2021 at 435,350. The number of people who had children aged 0-5 and sometimes worked from home pre-Covid was 203,577 in Q4 2019, this number rose to 262,583 in Q4 2024. In the most recent



quarter for which data is available (Q3 2025) the number of people who have children aged 0-5 and usually work from home stood at 318,435 while the people who sometimes work from home with children aged 0-5 stood at 260,074. Nevertheless, the number that are reported as not working from home exceeds those working from home by some margin. Looking at the combined figures for those usually or sometimes working from home with children aged 0 to 5 years there is an increase from 13% to 21% between 2019 and 2024; compared with an increase for those without children aged 0 to 5 years of 8% to 14% over the same period.

Table 13: Number of people that availed of some form of remote working per 4th quarter, 2019-2024

	2019 Quarter 4	2020 Quarter 4	2021 Quarter 4	2022 Quarter 4	2023 Quarter 4	2024 Quarter 4
Person usually works at home*						
Have children aged 0-5	116,099	418,375	435,350	325,895	318,079	318,147
Does not have children aged 0-5	78,507	255,687	294,787	243,430	225,892	221,716
Total	194,607	674,062	730,138	569,326	543,972	539,864
Parents of Children aged 0-5 as % of Total	59.7%	62.1%	59.6%	57.2%	58.5%	58.9%
Person sometimes works at home**						
Have children aged 0-5	203,577	131,063	142,245	204,278	240,796	262,583
Does not have children aged 0-5	112,525	62,600	70,763	124,799	148,414	170,223
Total	316,102	193,663	213,008	329,077	389,211	432,806
Parents of Children aged 0-5 % of Total	64.4%	67.7%	66.8%	62.1%	61.9%	60.7%
Does not work from home						
Have children aged 0-5	1,227,478	1,003,090	1,090,332	1,153,440	1,209,763	1,220,187
Does not have children aged 0-5	633,418	427,396	508,106	552,329	552,411	571,172
Total	1,860,897	1,430,486	1,598,438	1,705,770	1,762,175	1,791,359
Parents of Children aged 0-5 % of Total	66.0%	70.1%	68.2%	67.6%	68.7%	68.1%

Source: CSO Personal and Work-Life Balance Survey, 2025

*This refers to people who work from home more than half of the time

**This refers to people who worked from home for at least one hour during the reference period

Table 14 examines the types of barriers facing parents with children aged 5 and under in taking both paid and unpaid leave during the post-Covid period. Being short staffed was the main barrier to taking paid leave, with 64.5% of parents with children

aged 5 and under who reported that they experienced barriers to taking paid leave, reporting that they faced this barrier. This was also the main barrier faced by parents with children aged 5 and under who reported experiencing barriers to taking unpaid leave (65.1%). A lack of flexibility in the workplace in relation to taking leave was the second most common challenge experienced by those facing barriers to taking paid leave (33.8%) and the fourth most common barrier experienced by those facing barriers to taking unpaid leave (24%). Being too busy in work to take leave was the second most common challenge facing those who experienced barriers to taking unpaid leave (26.2%) and the fourth most common for those experiencing barriers to taking paid leave (24.6%). Other common challenges for those experiencing barriers to taking paid leave included the build-up of work while on leave, with 26.6% facing this barrier, while financial loss was another common challenge faced by those experiencing barriers to taking unpaid leave (24.7%).¹³ Please note that this is the latest data published by the CSO Labour Force Survey as of time of writing.

Table 14: Percentage of parents with children aged 0-5 that experienced barriers to taking paid and unpaid leave by barrier type, Q3 2020 - Q3 2021

	Barriers to taking paid leave	Barriers to taking unpaid leave
Short staffed/lack of staff to cover work	64.5	65.1
Lack of flexibility of taking leave/lack of flexibility in workplace	33.8	24
Work builds up while on leave	26.6	n/a
Too busy in work to take leave/work is too busy to allow leave	24.6	26.2
Other	15.7	17.9
Need to keep leave for school holidays	9.5	n/a
Not sure how many holidays entitled to/unsure of leave available	5.1	1.7
Not enough leave	4.9	n/a
Harmful for career	4.3	8.8
Need to keep leave if children get sick	2.6	n/a
Unsure of entitlements to unpaid schemes	n/a	1.7
Financial loss	n/a	24.7

¹³ [Personal and Work-Life Balance 2021](#)



	Barriers to taking paid leave	Barriers to taking unpaid leave
Lack of job stability	n/a	5.8
Not available in workplace	n/a	15.7

Source: CSO Personal and Work-Life Balance Survey, 2021

Objective 2: Information, services and supports for parents.

Parents will benefit from high-quality, evidence-based information and services on various aspects of parenting to support child development and positive family relationships along a continuum of need.

Objective 2a: Parent & Toddler grants

In addressing Objective 2, this part of the Spotlight presents data on parenting supports and services that are available to support child development and positive family relationships. One such support is the Parent & Toddler grant, which is administered to non-profit Parent & Toddler groups by Pobal and local County Childcare Committees (CCCs). The funding can be used for expenses including play and educational equipment (e.g. toys and books); activities for the children (e.g. arts and crafts, music); and training for parents (e.g. paediatric first aid, committee skills, parenting courses). Table 15 looks at the number of Parent & Toddler grants approved by local CCCs from 2019-2025. The total number of grants approved decreased from 414 in 2019 to 171 in 2020, presumably related to Covid 19 restrictions affecting demand. Since 2020 the number of grants has increased each year, remaining slightly below the 2019 until 2025 (461). The highest number of grants approved in period 2019-2025 by local authority area was from Cork County in 2019 and 2025 (41), which also had the highest number in 2024 (29).

Table 15 Number of Parent & Toddler grants approved by local County Childcare Committees, 2019-2025

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Carlow	5	2	2	4	6	7	7
Cavan	9	4	7	11	11	13	11
Clare	6	1	4	12	12	11	13
Cork City	7	7	6	8	8	9	8
Cork County	41	10	16	20	31	29	41
Donegal	29	16	21	23	33	25	28
Dublin City	26	18	12	11	18	24	26



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown	4	1	5	9	8	9	16
Fingal	13	0	4	8	9	10	15
Galway	26	14	13	20	20	23	24
Kerry	17	4	9	20	17	18	18
Kildare	14	5	7	13	14	19	20
Kilkenny	6	0	3	5	5	3	7
Laois	4	2	1	6	3	4	4
Leitrim	7	14	3	10	12	13	12
Limerick County	26	0	14	22	27	26	31
Longford	5	2	4	9	1	3	5
Louth	10	16	6	9	11	11	10
Mayo	23	4	13	16	16	14	22
Meath	20	17	9	11	17	16	22
Monaghan	8	2	7	10	8	7	7
Offaly	12	0	6	11	8	11	13
Roscommon	11	9	7	8	11	9	7
Sligo	5	2	4	6	7	9	8
Tipperary	28	9	11	14	11	11	15
South Dublin	14	8	12	10	9	14	17
Waterford	10	2	8	7	9	12	14
Westmeath	8	0	6	6	7	8	14
Wexford	13	2	7	13	16	20	17
Wicklow	7	0	2	8	7	7	9
Totals	414	171	229	340	372	395	461

Source: Pobal, 2019-2025

Objective 2b: Family support services

Table 16 examines the number of children referred to a Family Support Service (FSS), which is an umbrella term for a diverse landscape of responsive community, and

home-based services and supportive relationships designed to promote family functioning. These services range in complexity according to presenting need and focus on early intervention in promoting and protecting the well-being and rights of children and families. Particular attention is given to those who are vulnerable or at risk, with the early intervention focus of FSS aiming to protect against risk escalation. FSS are provided through Family Resource Centres, (targeted) Family Centres, in-home services, home visiting, counselling and therapy services, and parenting programmes. Table 16 shows how the number of children (ages 0-17 years) referred to a FSS increased from 37,024 in 2019 to 48,443 in 2024, while the percentage of referred children who received a service during the year increased from 67% in 2019 to 68% in 2024.

Table 16 also examines the number of operating Child and Family Support Networks (CFSNs) in a given year. CSFNs are established across the country to provide services that can provide integrated and comprehensive interventions for vulnerable children and their families. This can involve local statutory child and family service providers (e.g. psychology, public health nurses, social work, justice, education and welfare) and local voluntary and community children and families' services (Family Support Centres, agencies currently funded through the HSE/CFSA children and families services & organisations funded through other sources e.g. Pobal, Department of Education). The number of operating CFSNs decreased slightly during this time, from 115 in 2019 to 114 in 2024.

Table 16: Children referred to Family Support Services, 2019-2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of children referred to family support service	37,024	31,267	32,473	40,510	47,260	48,443
Percentage of referred children that received a service	67%	72%	73%	66%	64%	68%
Number of operating Child and Family Support Networks	115	121	122	120	120	114

Source: Tusla, 2019-2024

Objective 2c: Children in care

Objective 2c examines the State's provision of Alternative Care services, such as the placement of children in care when parents are not able or available to provide the necessary care. Looking at the number of children aged 5 and under in care from

2018 to 2024, the numbers have decreased slightly over time, from 1,096 in 2018 to 985 in 2024 (see Table 17). The vast majority these children were in foster care, while a small minority were in other types of care,¹⁴ and children were rarely placed in residential care.

Table 17: Number of children aged 0-5 in care by placement type, 2018-2024

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Residential Care	0	0	*	*	*	7	15
Foster Carer	1092	1074	973	935	883	908	959
Other	4	7	5	12	12	14	11
Total	1096	1081	978	947	895	929	985

Source: Tusla, 2018-2024

While the reasons children can be placed in care are varied, they are typically broken down into five categories (see Table 18). From 2019 to 2024, the primary reason for being in care among children aged 5 and under was neglect, with over half of children in this age group placed in care due neglect across the four years (52.4-65%). This was followed by welfare concerns (16.8-35.8%); emotional abuse (6.0-12.9%); physical abuse (4.3-5.9%); and sexual abuse (0.8-1.5%).

Table 18: The number of children aged 5 and under in care by primary reason for being care, 2019-2020, 2023-2024

	2019		2020		2023		2024	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Physical Abuse	52	4.8	58	5.9	44	4.7	42	4.3
Emotional Abuse	65	6.0	75	7.7	130	14.0	127	12.9
Sexual Abuse	11	1.0	8	0.8	14	1.5	11	1.1
Neglect	566	52.4	514	52.6	576	62.0	640	65.0
Welfare	387	35.8	323	33.0	165	17.8	165	16.8
Total	1081	100.0	978	100.0	929	100.0	985	100.0

Source: Tusla, 2019-2020, 2023-2024

¹⁴ Other types of care include children in supported lodgings, at home under a care order, in a detention school/centre, other residential centre (e.g., disability unit or drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre).

Objective 2d: Children in direct provision (IPAS)

Looking at the number of children in direct provision from 2019 to 2024 (International Protection Accommodation Services), the number of children aged 5 and under have increased from 883 in 2019 to 3,030 in 2024 (see Table 19), as overall IP numbers increased. Children aged 5 and under accounted for 52.7% of all children in direct provision in 2019, which reduced to 34.3% in 2023 and increased to 34.6% in 2024.

Table 19: Children aged 5 and under in direct provision, 2019-2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Percentage of children aged 5 and under in Direct Provision	52.7%	37.0%	32.4%	34.6%	34.3%	34.6%
All children aged 5 and under	883	734	675	1,233	1,852	3,030

Source: DOJ International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS), 2019-2024

Objective 2e: Children in refuges and safe homes (DSGBV)

Since the publication of the previous edition in 2022, the provision of Domestic, Sexual, and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) services has transferred from Tusla to An Ghníomhaireacht um Fhoréigean Baile, Gnéasach agus Inscnebhunaithe, or Cuan. This is a new agency established in 2024. As of time of writing, the previous report has the most recent data available, as provided to DCDE from Tusla (2019).

Refuges and safe homes are types of emergency domestic violence accommodation needed for safety in times of crisis. While refuge accommodation usually consists of individual units or in a large building or shared campus, safe homes are usually provided as a separate unit of accommodation (e.g. a flat or a house) at a community or local level that generally suits those at low to medium risk of serious harm. The number of children aged 0-4¹⁵ accommodated in refuges has decreased over time, from 874 in 2017 to 594 in 2019 (see Table 20). The number of children aged 0-4 accommodated in safe homes has slightly decreased over this time, from 14 in 2017 to 13 in 2019, despite an increase to 23 in 2018.

¹⁵ Data for 0-5 years are not available as data are collected in specific age groups (e.g. 0-4 years, 5-9 years)



Table 20: The number of children aged 0-4 who accessed safe accommodation, 2017-2019

	2017	2018	2019
Number of children accommodated in refuges	874	682	594
Number of children accommodated in safe homes	14	23	13

Source: Tusla, 2017-2019

Objective 3: Practical and material resources

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Objective 3a: Poverty rates

This section aims to get a better understanding of how many children aged 5 and under may not have the necessary resources to support positive development in the early years. The consistent poverty rate¹⁶ among this age group increased from 6.4% in 2017 to 7.6% in 2024, while the at-risk of poverty rate¹⁷ increased from 11.9% in 2017 to 14.3% in 2024¹⁸ (see Table 21). However, the deprivation rate¹⁹ was lower, with SILC reporting 19.4% in 2017 and 17.6% in 2024.

Table 21: Percentage of children aged 5 and under at risk of poverty and experiencing consistent poverty, 2017-2024

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Consistent Poverty Rate	6.4	4.8	5.9	4.7	3.9	5.3	3.7	7.6
At Risk of Poverty Rate	11.9	8.9	10.7	11.8	10	11.3	12.1	14.3
Deprivation Rate	19.4	17.9	22.6	15.8	15.6	18.2	20.1	17.6

Source: CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions, 2017-2024

Table 22 looks at the percentage of households with a child aged 5 and under that were experiencing food poverty²⁰ and energy poverty²¹ from 2017-2024. The percentage experiencing food poverty was highest in 2024 (2.7%) and lowest in 2023 (0.8%). The percentage experiencing energy poverty was highest in 2024 (6.1%) and lowest in 2021 (2.2%).

¹⁶ The consistent poverty measure looks at those who are defined as being at risk of poverty and experiencing enforced deprivation.

¹⁷ The at-risk-of-poverty rate is the share of persons with an equivalised income below a given percentage (usually 60%) of the national median income.

¹⁸ Caution should be taken when looking at 2020-2021 SILC data, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated impacts of temporary financial supports, as well as the operational and methodological changes that were made introduced to the running of the survey from 2020 onwards. For more information, see <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2021/backgroundnotes/>

¹⁹ The deprivation rate captures those experiencing two or more of the eleven basic deprivation indicators.

²⁰ Food poverty is defined as the percentage of households with at least one child aged 5 and under that have an inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish, or vegetarian equivalent every second day. For more information, see <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/socialconditions/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc/>

²¹ Energy poverty is defined as the percentage of households with at least one child aged 5 and under that have an inability to keep home adequately warm. For more information, see <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/socialconditions/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc/>

Table 22: Percentage of households with a child aged 5 and under experiencing food and energy poverty, 2017-2024

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Food poverty	1.8	2.1	1.6	1.3	1.9	1.1	0.8	2.7
Energy poverty	3.8	4.3	6.1	3	2.2	8.1	4	6.1

Source: CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions, 2017-2024

Objective 3b: Housing quality

Table 23 looks at the share of children aged 5 and under living in a household that may be deemed to be of insufficient quality for their needs and compares the data from Ireland with the EU average.

In the case of the percentage of children aged 5 and under living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames or floor, this figure ranged from 11.4% in 2018 to 16.7% in 2020 in Ireland, while the EU average figure ranged from 14% to 16.3%. The percentage of children aged 5 and under living in a household considering their dwelling to be too dark was higher in Ireland than the EU average from 2018-2020, ranging from 5.1% to 8.2% in Ireland compared to a range of 5.1% to 6.8% across the EU.

Table 23: Children aged 5 and under by quality of their household dwelling, 2017-2020

		2017	2018	2019	2020
Percentage of children aged 0-5 living in households considering their dwelling as too dark	Ireland	8.6	5.1	6.9	8.2
	EU	5.4	5.1	5.1	6.8
Percentage of children aged 0-5 living in a dwelling with a leaking roof; damp walls, floors or foundation; or rot in window frames or floor	Ireland	10.1	11.4	12.5	16.7
	EU	14.3	15.3	14.0	16.3

Source: Eurostat Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), 2017-2020

Objective 3c: Social housing need

Table 24 looks at households with a child aged 5 and under that are in need of social housing from 2019 to 2024. This figure decreased from 15,891 in 2019 to 9,639 in



2024. The share of all households in need of social housing that had at least one child aged 5 and under was 23.1% in 2019 but dropped to 16.1% in 2024.

Table 24: Households in need of social housing with a child aged 0-5, 2019-2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total number of households in need of social housing	68,693	61,880	59,247	57,842	58,824	59,941
Number of households with a child aged 5 and under in need of social housing	15,891	12,745	10,897	10,929	10,637	9,639
% of households in need of social housing with a child aged 5 and under	23.1	20.6	18.4	18.9	18.1	16.1

Source: Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), 2019-2024



Goal B: Optimum physical and mental health

Table 25: Summary table of key statistics under the objectives of Goal B

Objective	Theme	Key statistic	Baseline (2018)	First Statistical Spotlight (2022)	Second Statistical Spotlight (2026)	Change
4. Positive health behaviours	Antenatal care	Share of maternities who received antenatal care in the first trimester (0-14 weeks) by occupation	20.8% lower professional (2017)	22.8% lower professional (2019)	26.8% lower professional (2023)	↑
		% of maternities who received antenatal care in the first trimester by occupation	88.3% of total (all occupational groups) (2019)	89.4% of total (all occupational groups) (2021)	90.7% of total (all occupational groups) (2024)	↑
	Antenatal care	Share of maternities who received antenatal care in the first trimester (0-14 weeks) by age group	36.1% 30-34 age group (2017)	35% 30-34 age group (2019)	35.5% 30-34 age group (2023)	↓



		% of maternities who received antenatal care in the first trimester by age	82.0% of total (all ages) (2018)	89.4% of total (all ages) (2021)	90.7% of total (all ages) (2024)	↑
	Births by occupation	Percentage of births by mother's occupation	19.9% lower professional (2017)	21.5% lower professional (2019)	25.5% lower professional (2023)	↑
	Preterm births	Percentage of live births that were preterm	6.7% (2017)	6.7% (2019)	7.4% (2023)	↑
	Length of maternity hospital stay	Mean length of maternity stay in hospital	2.7 days (2018)	2.7 days (2019)	2.6 days (2023)	↓
	Breastfeeding rates	Exclusive breastfeeding rates at discharge, by birth country of mothers living in Ireland	43.5% of mothers born in Ireland (2017)	41.8% of mothers born in Ireland (2019)	41% of mothers born in Ireland (2023)	↓



5. High quality health services	Reason for hospital admissions	Top principal diagnoses for in-patient discharges aged 0-5 years, as a share of top 10 principal diagnoses that year	(i) 16% diagnosed with acute bronchiolitis	(i) 8% diagnosed with acute bronchiolitis	(i) 15% diagnosed with acute bronchiolitis	↓
			(ii) 14% diagnosed with disorders related to short gestation and birth weight (2018)	(ii) 19% diagnosed with disorders related to short gestation and birth weight (2020)	(ii) 12% diagnosed with disorders related to short gestation and birth weight (2024)	↓
	Children on out-patient waiting lists	Number of children aged 0-5 on out-patient waiting lists	(i) 9,503 waiting more than one year (26.2% of all 0-5s waiting)	(i) 10,611 waiting more than one year (30.9% of all 0-5s waiting)	(i) 4,545 waiting more than one year (17.7% of all 0-5s waiting)	↓
			(ii) 36,269 waiting in total (December 2019)	(ii) 34,312 waiting in total (December 2021)	(ii) 25,586 waiting in total (December 2024)	↓
	Children on in-patient waiting lists	Number of children aged 0-5 on in-patient waiting lists	(i) 391 waiting more than one year	(i) 718 waiting more than one year	(i) 696 waiting more than one year	↑
			(ii) 2,813 waiting in total (December 2019)	(ii) 3,168 waiting in total (December 2021)	(ii) 3,545 waiting in total (December 2024)	↑



	Assessment of Need	Percentage of completed applications for Assessment of Need that were for children aged 0-5	57% (2019)	62% (2021)	44% (2024)	↓
6. Positive mental health	Children with parents that entered treatment for problem alcohol use in the past year	Number of children aged 0-5 with parents treated for alcohol as a main problem	1,115 (20%, 2019)	856 (19%, 2020)	1,318 (21%, 2024)	↑
	Children with parents that entered treatment for problem drug use in the past year	Number of children aged 0-5 with parents treated for drugs as a main problem	1,987 (29%, 2019)	2,255 (29%, 2020)	3,090 (28%, 2024)	↑

↑ Data increasing
 ↓ Data decreasing
 = Data show broadly constant or no significant movement/relatively static

Objective 4: Positive health behaviours

Parents, families, and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Objective 4a: Antenatal care

This section examines the different kinds of supports and services used by families to support positive development and health behaviours in young children. Table 26a looks at the share of maternities who received antenatal care²² in the first trimester from 2017-2023, by occupation²³. The most common occupation was “Lower professional,” ranging from 20.8-26.8% of maternities; followed by “Intermediate non-manual workers” (17.1-19.0%); followed by “Other non-manual workers” (14.3-15.7%) and “Home duties” (9.9-16.9%).

Table 26b shows the percentage of women in each occupational category who accessed antenatal care in the first trimester from 2019 - 2024. The average across all occupational groups was 90.7% in 2024. “Salaried employees” were the most likely to access antenatal care in the first trimester (94.8%), while women whose occupation was “not stated” were the least likely to access antenatal care in the first trimester (73.1%).

Table 26a: Share of maternities who received antenatal care in the first trimester (0-14 weeks) by occupation, 2017-2023

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Employers & managers	7.3	7.3	8.2	8.1	7.6	7.7	8.8
Farmers & farm managers	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
Higher professional	7.3	7.8	8.6	8.6	8.7	8.6	9.0
Home duties	16.9	14.3	14.0	13.2	12.0	12.3	9.9
Intermediate non-manual workers	19.0	18.3	18.4	17.4	17.4	18.2	17.1
Lower professional	20.8	22.5	22.8	23.9	24.3	25.0	26.8

²² Antenatal care includes the following options: ‘1. Hospital/Obstetrician’, ‘2. GP only’, ‘3. Hospital or GP combined’ or ‘5. Midwife only’.

²³ Occupations are coded and grouped, with minor modifications, according to the system of socio-economic groupings as used by the Central Statistics Office in the 1991 Census of Population, Volume 6.



	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Not classifiable	3.2	3.4	3.1	2.9	2.6	2.5	2.6
Not stated	0.4	1.2	1.4	1.5	2.5	1.5	1.5
Other agricultural occupations & fisherwomen	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Other non-manual workers	15.1	15.2	14.9	15.2	15.7	15.3	14.3
Salaried employees	1.1	1.1	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.8
Semi-skilled manual workers	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.3	1.7	2.0	1.8
Skilled manual workers	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.8	1.9	1.7
Unemployed	4.5	4.8	3.8	4.0	4.4	4.0	5.2
Unskilled manual workers	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO), 2017-2023

Table 26b: Percentage of pregnant women attending antenatal care in the first trimester (0-14 weeks) of pregnancy, by occupation 2019 – 2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Employers & managers	92.6	93.9	92.7	93.4	93.6	94.2
Farmers & farm managers	0.0	82.6	90.3	87.0	92.8	90.2
Higher professional	91.3	92.0	90.7	91.9	90.8	93.1
Home duties	81.7	84.1	82.8	82.4	82.2	81.7
Intermediate non-manual workers	91.2	94.1	92.7	93.7	92.9	94.1
Lower professional	91.2	94.2	92.6	93.1	93.0	94.4
Not classifiable	0.0	87.5	86.4	86.0	84.6	84.0
Not stated	0.0	75.3	76.0	77.3	71.9	73.1
Other agricultural occupations & fisherwomen	87.5	87.5	91.7	88.5	89.8	91.8
Other non-manual workers	89.8	93.3	92.0	93.5	91.2	93.2
Salaried employees	91.8	95.2	92.6	90.3	92.1	94.8
Semi-skilled manual workers	87.3	90.0	87.2	87.8	86.6	90.0
Skilled manual workers	89.5	95.3	92.3	93.0	91.7	92.9
Unemployed	77.3	82.5	81.6	81.6	76.4	75.2
Unskilled manual workers	0.0	77.8	89.5	95.7	66.7	89.3



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	88.3	90.9	89.4	90.6	89.5	90.7

Source: Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO), 2019-2024

Table 27a looks at the share of maternities who received antenatal care in the first trimester by age group. From 2017-2023, this was most common among the 30-34 age group, ranging from 34.2-36.1% of maternities; followed by the 35-39 age group (30.9-33.0%), followed by the 25-29 age group (15.9-17.3%).

Table 27b shows the percentage of women in each age group who accessed antenatal care in the first trimester. In 2024, women aged 35-39 were the most likely to access antenatal care in the first trimester (92.6%), while girls and women aged 15-19 were the least likely to (75.1%).

Table 27a: Share of maternities who received antenatal care in the first trimester (0-14 weeks) by age group, 2017-2023

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Under 20 Years	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.2	0.9	1.2	1.0
20-24 Years	7.7	8.0	7.2	6.9	6.4	7.4	6.9
25-29 Years	17.3	16.9	16.5	16.5	15.9	16.4	16.2
30-34 Years	36.1	35.0	35.0	35.4	35.6	34.2	35.5
35-39 Years	30.9	31.3	32.1	31.9	33.0	32.0	31.4
40 Years and Over	6.5	7.5	8.0	8.1	8.2	8.8	9.0

Source: Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO), 2017-2023

Table 27b: Percentage of pregnant women attending antenatal care in the first trimester (0-14 weeks) of pregnancy, by age (2018–2024)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
15–19 years	67.9	75.8	75.5	73.0	77.0	73.5	75.1
20–24 years	77.3	81.3	84.1	82.8	85.5	84.0	83.8
25–29 years	80.3	86.2	89.3	88.2	89.1	87.4	88.3
30–34 years	83.6	89.9	92.6	90.6	91.7	90.7	92.2
35–39 years	83.2	89.9	92.4	90.9	92.0	91.2	92.6
40–44 years	82.3	88.8	90.7	88.4	90.9	89.7	91.4
45 years and over	77.4	87.7	88.3	84.8	86.4	90.4	88.8
Total	82.0	88.3	90.9	89.4	90.6	89.5	90.7

Source: Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO), 2018-2024

Objective 4b: Births by occupation

Table 28 examines the percentage of births²⁴ by mother’s occupation, from 2019–2021. The highest percentage of births was in the “Lower professional” group, ranging from 21.4–22.7% of births during this time; followed by “Intermediate non-manual workers” (16.3–17.5%) and “Other non-manual workers” (14.2–15%).

Table 28: Percentage of births by mother's occupation, 2017-2023

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Employers and Managers	7.3	7.4	7.6	7.6	7.2	7.6	8.4
Farmers and Farm Managers	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
Higher Professional	7.4	7.8	8.1	8.4	8.2	8.4	8.8
Home Duties	18.7	16	15.0	14.4	13.0	13.8	11.0
Intermediate Non-Manual Workers	18.4	17.5	17.5	16.5	16.3	17.5	16.3
Lower Professional	19.9	21.1	21.4	22.7	22.7	24.1	25.5
Not Classifiable	3.4	3.5	3.1	3.0	2.6	2.6	2.9
Not Stated	0.5	2.4	4.1	3.3	5.7	2.0	2.1

²⁴ In accordance with the WHO guidelines, only births weighing 500 grams or more are included in any analysis of NPRS data.



	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Other Agricultural Occupations	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Other Non-Manual Workers	14.3	14.3	14.2	14.6	15.0	14.7	13.9
Salaried Employees	1.1	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.8
Semi-Skilled Manual Workers	2.8	2.5	2.4	2.3	1.8	2.1	2.0
Skilled Manual Workers	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.7
Unemployed	4.7	4.9	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.4	6.3
Unskilled Manual Workers	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO), 2017-2023

Objective 4c: Preterm births

The percentage of live births that were preterm ranged from 6.7% in 2017 to 7.6% in 2022. This ranged from 4.8% to 5.5% of live singleton births, to 56.3% to 60.0% of live multiple births (see Table 29 and Figure 2).

Table 29: Percentage of live births that were preterm, 2019-2023

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
% of all live births	6.7%	6.9%	6.7%	6.7%	6.9%	7.6%	7.4%
% of live singleton births	4.8%	5.0%	4.9%	4.8%	5.0%	5.5%	5.5%
% of live multiple births	56.3%	55.1%	56.7%	58.0%	59.5%	63.5%	60.0%

Source: Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO), 2019-2023

Figure 2: Percentage of all live births that were preterm, 2019-2023

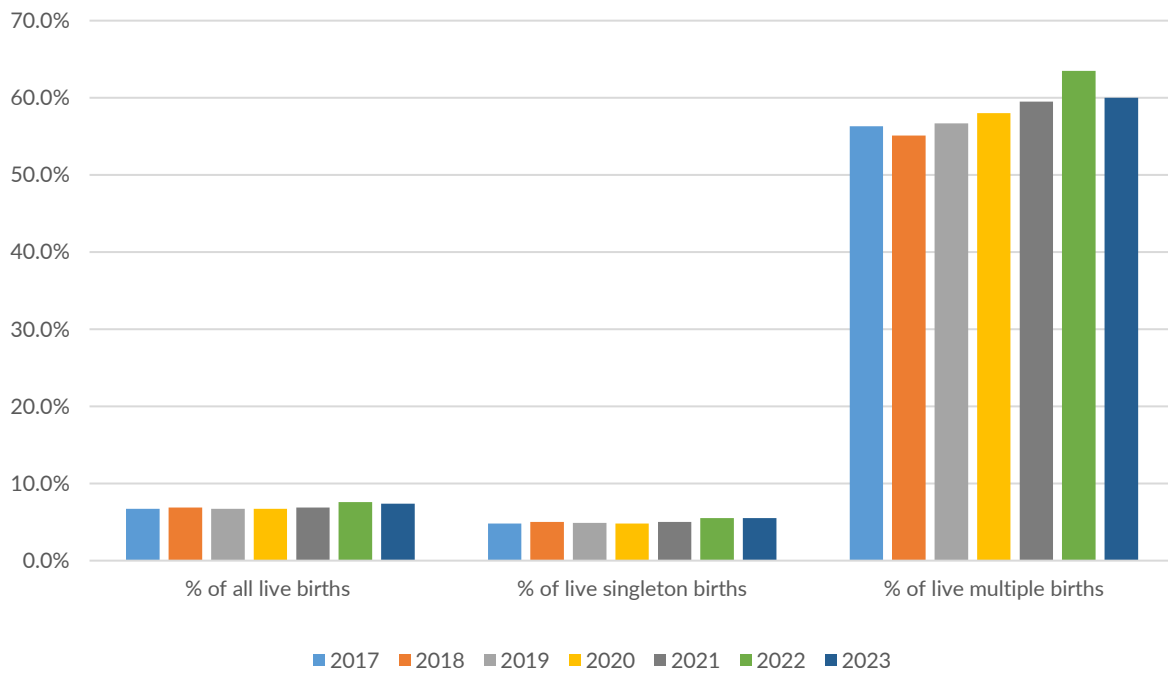


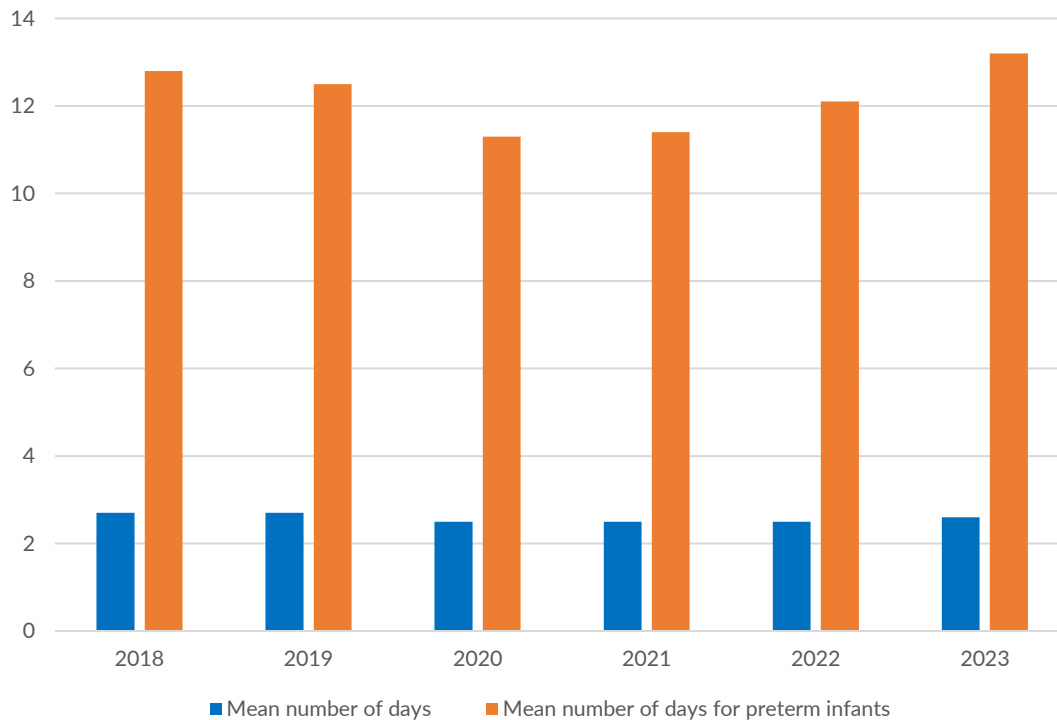
Table 30 and Figure 3 examine the mean length of stay for newborn babies in hospital from 2018-2023. There was a slight decrease in the mean number of days spent in hospital, it was 2.7 days in 2018 and 2.6 days in 2023. The mean number of days for maternities for preterm infants ranged from 11.3 to 13.2 days.

Table 30: Mean length of newborn baby stays in hospital, 2018-2023

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Mean number of days	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.6
Mean number of days for preterm infants	12.8	12.5	11.3	11.4	12.1	13.2

Source: Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO), 2018-2023

Figure 3: Mean length of maternity stay in hospital, 2018-2023



Objective 4d: Breastfeeding rates

Table 31 examines the percentage of mothers living in Ireland that exclusively breastfed at discharge from 2017-2023, analysed by the mother's birth country. Mothers born in the EU15 (excluding Ireland and the UK)²⁵ had the highest rates of breastfeeding during this time, ranging from 76.5 in 2017 to 65.9% in 2023. This was followed by mothers born in the rest of Europe (64.8% (2019) to 76% (2017)); mothers born in all other EU27 countries (55.2% (2023) to 72.2% (2017)); and mothers born in the Americas (61.7% (2022) to 70% (2017)). Mothers born in Ireland had the lowest exclusive breastfeeding rates at discharge, ranging from 41% in 2022 and 2023 to 46.3% in 2020. Across all the birth country categories the report rates of breastfeeding at discharge seem to decrease over the period 2017 to 2023. Caution should be taken for the year 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19.

²⁵ The EU15 (excluding Ireland and the UK) is comprised of the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.

Table 31: Exclusive breastfeeding rates at discharge, by birth country of mothers living in Ireland, 2017-2023

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ireland	43.5	42.7	41.8	46.3	42.6	41.0	41.0
UK	50.7	48.3	50.3	37.2	46.9	46.5	46.5
EU15 (excluding Ireland and the UK)	76.5	73.3	72.2	11	70.8	64.7	65.9
EU15 to EU27	72.2	67.5	63.7	16.4	59.4	57.2	55.2
Rest of Europe	76	69.1	64.8	8.8	64.9	65.4	65.9
Africa	49.9	44.5	45.8	13.1	49.6	46.3	48.2
Asia	54.7	48.8	47.6	12.2	48.6	46.4	47.2
America	70.0	69.2	65.8	8.7	66.2	61.7	64.7

Source: Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO), 2017-2023

Objective 5: High quality health services

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative, and specialist healthcare services.

Objective 5a: Reason for hospital admissions

This section focuses on data that can illustrate if children have access to safe and high quality healthcare services, as well as data on disease prevalence. Looking at the top 10 principal diagnoses²⁶ for in-patient discharges among children aged 5 and under²⁷ (see Table 32), “acute bronchiolitis” was the most common diagnosis among this age group in 2018 and 2019 and from 2021 to 2024 ranging from 15% to 22%, while “disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight; not elsewhere classified” was the most common in 2020 (19%) and second most common in 2022 (13%), and 2023 (13%). Respiratory distress of newborn and “Disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight; not elsewhere classified” were the second most common in 2024 (12%).

²⁶ Principal Diagnosis is the diagnosis established after study to be chiefly responsible for an episode of admitted patient care, residential care, or an attendance at the health care establishment, as represented by a code.

²⁷ This data is based on hospitalisations which may include multiple admissions for the same patient. Therefore, it is not possible to use the data to examine certain parameters such as the number of hospital encounters per patient, or to estimate incidence or prevalence of disease.

Table 32: Top 10 principal diagnoses for in-patient discharges aged 0-5 years (percentages expressed as a share of top 10 diagnoses for each year), 2018-2024

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Acute bronchiolitis	16%	17%	8%	18%	20%	22%	15%
Disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight; not elsewhere classified	14%	13%	19%	16%	13%	13%	12%
Acute upper respiratory infections of multiple and unspecified sites	10%	9%	7%	10%	10%	8%	8%
Viral and other specified intestinal infections	10%	8%	N/A	N/A	9%	N/A	7%
Viral infection of unspecified site	9%	9%	6%	7%	8%	7%	8%
Medical observation and evaluation for suspected diseases and conditions	9%	8%	8%	6%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Abnormalities of breathing	8%	8%	9%	10%	11%	10%	11%
Respiratory distress of newborn	7%	9%	15%	11%	9%	10%	12%
Unspecified acute lower respiratory infection	7%	7%	N/A	5%	N/A	8%	10%
Other disorders of urinary system	7%	N/A	9%	8%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other gastroenteritis and colitis of infectious and unspecified origin	N/A	6%	N/A	N/A	8%	7%	10%
Neonatal jaundice from other and unspecified causes	N/A	N/A	9%	8%	6%	8%	7%
Transitory disorders of carbohydrate metabolism specific to foetus and newborn	N/A	N/A	6%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Acute tonsillitis	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6%	7%	N/A

Source: Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO), 2018-2024

Objective 5b: Children on waiting lists.

Table 33 looks at children aged 5 and under on out-patient waiting lists from 2019 to 2024. The total number of children in this age group on out-patient waiting lists decreased from 36,269 in 2019 to 25,586 in 2024, as measured on a specific date in December of each year. The number waiting for more than one year has also decreased over the same period, from 9,503 in 2019 (26.2% of the total) to 4,545 in 2024 (17.8% of the total).

Table 33: Children aged 5 and under on out-patient waiting list, 2019-2024

	19/12/2019	23/12/2020	23/12/2021	22/12/2022	28/12/2023	19/12/2024
% waiting > 1 year	26.2	36.6	30.9	24.6%	17.9%	17.8%
Waiting > 1 year	9,503	12,423	10,611	7,043	5,062	4,545
Total waiting	36,269	33,986	34,312	28,616	28,249	25,586

Source: National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), 2019-2024

Looking at children aged 5 and under on in-patient waiting lists, this number has increased from 2,813 in 2019 to 3,545 in 2024, as measured on a specific date in

December of each year (see Table 34). The numbers waiting more than one year have increased during this time, from 391 in 2019 (13.9% of the total) to 696 in 2024 (19.6% of the total).

Table 34: Number of children aged 5 and under on in-patient waiting list, 2019-2024

	19/12/2019	23/12/2020	23/12/2021	22/12/2022	28/12/2023	19/12/2024
% waiting > 1 year	13.9	25.1	22.7	16.8	16.9	19.6
Waiting > 1 year	391	740	718	616	682	696
Total waiting	2,813	2,952	3,168	3,667	4,027	3,545

Source: National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), 2019-2024

Objective 5c: Assessment of need

An assessment of need (AON) is a short screening assessment to identify if a child has any particular health needs related to a disability (Disability Act 2005). Table 35 examines the share of AON applications that are completed for children aged 5 and under. The share of completed AON applications that applied to children aged 5 and under was 57% in 2019 but has decreased to 44% in 2024.

Table 35: Percentage of completed applications for Assessment of Need for children aged 0-5, 2019-2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Under 1 Year	1	1	2	0	1	1
1	4	8	7	6	4	3
2	13	14	13	15	13	10
3	13	14	13	12	11	9
4	14	11	13	12	10	10
5	12	14	14	12	11	11
All 0-5	57	62	62	57	50	44

Source: Health Service Executive (HSE) Disability Services, 2019-2024

Objective 6: Positive mental health

Babies, young children, and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Objective 6a: Children with parents that entered treatment for problem drug and/or alcohol use.

This section presents data that can shed light on the mental health of parents and young children. While there is very little mental health data on children aged 5 and under, there is data some data on mental health and addiction among parents of children in this age group. Table 36 looks at children aged under 5 years whose parents have entered treatment for problem alcohol use in a particular year. In 2019, 19.7% of children with parents who entered treatment for problem alcohol use were aged under 5 years, which has increased to 21.3% in 2024.²⁸

Table 36: Children with parents treated for alcohol as a main problem, 2019-2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total number of children aged under 5 years	1,115	856	1,003	1,120	1,212	1,318
% of all children (aged < 18 years) that were aged under 5 years	19.7%	18.7%	21.8%	21.5%	20.9%	21.3%

Source: National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS), 2019-2024

Table 37 examines children aged under 5 years whose parents have been treated for problem drug use in a particular year. In 2019, 28.5% of children with parents who entered treatment for problem drug use were aged under 5 years, which has decreased to 27.6% in 2024.

Table 37: Children with parents treated for drugs as a main problem, 2019-2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total number of children aged under 5 years	1,987	2,255	2,447	2,705	2,923	3,090
% of all children (aged < 18 years) that were aged under 5 years	28.5%	28.7%	28.8%	29.0%	27.4%	27.6%

Source: National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS), 2019-2024

²⁸ Please note that NDTRS data are case based, which means there is a possibility that individual children are counted more than once in the figures above, where a service user (parent) received treatment at more than one centre in a calendar year. The figures are based on cases entering treatment and do not include cases continuing in treatment from preceding years.



Goal C: Positive play-based early learning

Table 38: Summary table of key statistics under the objectives of Goal C

Objective	Theme	Key statistic	Baseline (2018)	First Statistical Spotlight (2022)	Second Statistical Spotlight (2026)	Change
8. Affordable, high-quality Early Learning and Care	Quality of ELC settings	Percentage of ELC staff with the highest qualification level of level 7 and above	25% (2018/19)	33.2% (2018/19)	33.9% (2024/25)	↑
	Affordability of ELC settings	Average (mean) weekly fees by age range of children and type of ELC provision	(i) €184.78 full time (ii) €112.97 part-time (iii) €75.83 sessional (2018/19)	(i) €186.84 full time (ii) €110.92 part-time (iii) €74.20 sessional (2020/21)	(i) €200.22 full time (ii) €115.36 part-time (iii) €75.00 sessional (2024/25)	↑ ↑ ↓
	Capacity in ELC settings	(i) Number of 0-5 year olds enrolled in ELC settings	(i) 131,592	(i) 124,971	(i) 136,650	↑



		(ii) Number of 0-5 year olds on waiting lists ²⁹	(ii) 16,447 (2018/19)	(ii) 37,568 (2021/22)	(ii) 64,931 (2024/25)	↑
	Parental ELC	Percentage of children cared for only by their parents by age group	(i) 43.1% of 0-3 age Group (ii) 3.1% of 3-6 age group (2018)	(i) 56.4% of 0-3 age group (ii) 5.4% of 3-6 age group (2020)	(i) 62.5% of 0-3 age group (ii) 3.7% of 3-6 age group (2024)	↑ ↓
	Formal ELC	Average number of weekly hours of formal childcare by age group	(i) 21.6 hours for 0-3 age group (ii) 25.1 hours for 3-6 age group (2018)	(i) 23.7 hours for 0-3 age group (ii) 28.7 hours for 3-6 age group (2020)	(i) 29.7 hours for 0-3 age group (ii) 23.7 hours for 3-6 age group (2024)	↑ ↓

²⁹ There is the potentially double counting as children may appear on multiple waiting lists



	Diversity in ELC settings	(i) Number of children supported under AIM ³⁰	(i) 3,179	(i) 4,244	(i) 8,152	↑
		(ii) % of services in receipt of AIM support	(ii) 41%	(ii) 45%	(ii) 59%	↑
		(2017/18)	(2020/21)	(2023/24)		
	Diversity in ELC settings	(i) Number of children with additional needs attending ELC services	(i) 11,636	(i) 8,370	(i) 14,822	↑
	(ii) Number of children with a diagnosed disability attending ELC services	(ii) 9,798	(ii) 4,637	(ii) 6,706	↓	
		(2017/18)	(2019/20)	(2022/23)		

³⁰ Access to AIM targeted supports does not require a diagnosis of disability



	Diversity in ELC settings	(i) Percentage of services providing care to children with additional needs	(i) 75%	(i) 74%	(i) 80%	↑
		(ii) Percentage of services providing care to children with a diagnosed disability	(ii) 65%	(ii) 61%	(ii) 61%	↓
			(2017/18)	(2019/20)	(2022/23)	
Diversity in ELC settings		(i) Number of Traveller children enrolled in ELC services	(i) 2,633 (2017/18)	(i) 2,831 (2019/20)	(i) 2,533 (2022/23)	↓
		(ii) Participation rate of Traveller children in ELC services	(ii) 77.3% (2019/20)	(ii) 73.5% (2021/22)	(ii) 77.1% (2023/24)	↓
		(iii) Number of Roma children enrolled in ELC services	(iii) 688 (2017/18)	(iii) 1,209 (2019/20)	(iii) 907 (2022/23)	↑
		(iv) Participation rate of Traveller children in ELC services	(iv) 68.3% (2019/20)	(iv) 61.0% (2021/22)	(iv) 65.1% (2023/24)	↓



	Diversity in ELC settings	(i) Percentage of services with Traveller children attending (ii) Percentage of services with Roma children attending	(i) 16% (ii) 7% (2021/22)	(i) 18% (ii) 9% (2019/20)	(i) 17% (ii) 8% (2022/23)	↑ ↑
9. Supported transitions	Source of entrants to primary school	Percentage of children in mainstream junior infant classes who came from an ELC setting or pre-primary education	93.1% (2018/19)	94.2% (2020/21)	94.1% (2024/25)	↑
	Age of entrants to primary school	Percentage of children in mainstream junior infant classes by age group on 1st January, 2015-2021	(i) 19.5% aged 4 and under (ii) 80.5% aged 5 and over (2019/20)	(i) 16.5% aged 4 and under	(i) 15.5% aged 4 and under (ii) 84.5% aged 5 and over (2024/25)	↓ ↑



	Class size	Share of junior infants in mainstream classes by class size	(i) 34.5% of classes had 20-24 pupils (ii) 20.9% of classes had 10-19 pupils (2019/20)		(i) 39.1% of classes had 20-24 pupils (ii) 37.2% of classes had 10-19 pupils (2024/25)	↑ ↑
	Special needs school programmes	Percentage of 5 year olds with special needs by school programme type	(i) 74.7% in mainstream national schools		(i) 84.3% in mainstream national schools	↑



			(ii) 25.3% in special national schools (2019/20)		(ii) 15.7% in special national schools (2024/25)	↓
	Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)	Number of SNAs allocated to mainstream primary classes	7,900 (2019/20)		9,639 (2024/25)	↑

↑ Data increasing ↓ Data decreasing = Data show broadly constant or no significant movement/relatively static

Objective 7: Positive home learning environment

Parents, families, and communities are supported to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children's early learning, starting from birth.

Objective 7a: Engagement in early literacy and numeracy activities

This section presents available information on the frequency with which parents support a nurturing and stimulating environment for children's early learning. The previous edition looked at numeracy, and this edition considers literacy as well. A brief comparison on numeracy results from the previous edition follows below and the previous tables are included in the datasheets accompanying this report. Table 39 - 42 presents data from the 2023 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which examines parents' recollections of how frequently they engaged in early numeracy and literacy activities with their child before they entered the first grade of primary school. This data is analysed by gender and by the quantity of learning resources in the home, which can be used as a proxy indicator for socioeconomic (SES) status. Categories are reported as higher/medium/lower to measure SES. The categories overlap with previous years to a degree, but direct comparisons should not be made.

Parents were much more likely to report engaging in "play with building blocks or construction toys" with boys in both the 2015 study (see table 39) (75% engaged in this activity with boys, versus 60% with girls) and the 2023 study (78% with boys versus 70% with girls). Smaller gender differences were observed for the other numeracy activities included in the study: in 2023 parents were slightly more likely to report engaging in "play with building block or construction toys"; "count different things"; and "play games involving shapes" with girls, and slightly more likely to report engaging in "play with building block or construction toys" and "counting different things" with boys. Except for "play with building blocks or construction toys", parents in the 2023 study were more likely to engage in all other numeracy activities with girls than with boys.

Table 39: Frequency of parental engagement in early numeracy activities with their children, by gender and access to home resources , 2015-2023

	2015		2023	
	Never/almost never engaged	Often engaged	Never/almost never engaged	Often engaged
Boys				
Say counting rhymes or sing counting songs	8	58	9	56
Play with number toys (e.g., blocks with numbers)	9	50	7	56
Count different things	2	68	2	70
Play games involving shapes (e.g., shape sorting toys, puzzles)	4	62	3	65
Play with building blocks or construction toys	3	75	1	78
Play board games or card games	6	49	5	53
Average	5	60	5	63
Girls				
Say counting rhymes or sing counting songs	6	65	7	63
Play with number toys (e.g., blocks with numbers)	9	53	6	59
Count different things	2	70	1	72
Play games involving shapes (e.g., shape sorting toys, puzzles)	2	65	2	68
Play with building blocks or construction toys	8	60	4	70
Play board games or card games	6	51	5	53
Average	6	61	4	64

Source: Educational Research Centre (ERC)

Table 40 examines numeracy activities of children before they start First Class by socioeconomic class (SES). Children with a higher socioeconomic class were more likely to “often engage” in each literacy activity specified than children in homes with a middle or lower class background. This was the case with 81.9% of pupils from a higher socioeconomic background who played with building blocks or construction toys in 2023. This contrasts with parents from a middle-class background, where 68.8% reported that they often engaged in the same activity, and to parents of a lower economic background where the average was 50.1%.

Table 40: Percentage of Fourth Class pupils whose parents report engaging in various early numeracy activities before they started First Class, by home socioeconomic status

2023				
	SES	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
Play with building blocks or construction toys	Higher	81.9	16.4	1.5
	Middle	68.8	27.3	3.7
	Lower	50.1	39.9	9.8
Count different things	Higher	79.8	19.3	0.8
	Middle	65.1	32.9	1.8
	Lower	55.7	37	7.2
Play games involving shapes (e.g., shape sorting toys, puzzles)	Higher	74.1	23.9	1.8
	Middle	60.9	36.2	2.9
	Lower	51.3	38.3	10.4
Say counting rhymes or sing counting songs	Higher	66.8	27.0	6.0
	Middle	54.5	35.6	9.7
	Lower	45.8	36.9	17.1
Play with number toys (e.g., blocks with numbers)	Higher	62.7	31.4	5.8
	Middle	54.5	38.0	7.4
	Lower	47.6	37.5	14.8
Write numbers	Higher	62.4	34.4	3.1
	Middle	50.8	43.0	6.1
	Lower	54.5	35.3	10.1
Draw shapes	Higher	61.7	34.1	4.1
	Middle	48.	45.3	5.8
	Lower	43.5	44.3	12.0
	Higher	60.3	37.3	2.4

2023				
	SES	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
Play board or card games	Middle	48.5	44.1	7.3
	Lower	38	47.3	14.7
Measure or weigh things (e.g., when cooking)	Higher	29.5	52.7	17.7
	Middle	15.9	49.8	34.2
	Lower	16.3	40.6	42.9

Source: Educational Research Centre (ERC)

Engagement in literacy activities

Parents were much more likely to report engaging in “reading books” with girls in the 2023 study, see table 41, with the results showing that 75% engaged in this activity with girls, versus 67% with boys. Girls also were also reported to be more engaged in “write letter or words” (58% for girls, versus 50% for boys). Smaller gender differences were observed for the other literacy activities included in the study: in 2023 parents were slightly more likely to report engaging in “read aloud signs and labels”; “play with alphabet toys”; and “play word games” with girls. Across the 2023 study parents were more likely to engage in all literacy activities with girls than with boys.

Table 41: Percentage of Fourth Class pupils whose parents report engaging in various early literacy activities before they started First Class, by pupil gender 2023

2023				
	Gender	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
Talk about things you had done	Female	78.9	20.4	0.7
	Male	77.6	21	1.4
Read books	Female	75.6	22.8	1.6
	Male	67.3	29.8	2.9
Tell stories	Female	66.5	31.5	1.9
	Male	61.3	36	2.7
Sing songs	Female	68.7	26.4	5
	Male	56.9	35.4	7.7



	2023			
	Gender	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
Play with alphabet toys (e.g. block of letters of the alphabet)	Female	61.9	31	7.1
	Male	58.3	35	6.8
Write letters or words	Female	58.5	37.3	4.1
	Male	50.5	43.7	5.8
Read aloud signs and labels	Female	55	37.4	7.6
	Male	51.4	38.3	10.3
Talk about what you had read	Female	45.7	46	8.4
	Male	42.8	48	9.2
Play word games	Female	43.3	47	9.7
	Male	42.3	47.6	10.1

Source: Educational Research Centre (ERC)

Looking at socioeconomic class for literacy activities in 2023 (see table 42), children with a higher socioeconomic class were again more likely to “often engage” in each literacy activity specified than children in homes with a middle or lower class background (see Table 42). This was the case with 87.6% of pupils that have a higher socioeconomic background and who often read books. This contrasts with parents with a middle socioeconomic background, where 59.1% reported that they often read books, and to parents of a lower economic background where the average was 31.5%.

Table 42: Percentage of Fourth Class pupils whose parents report engaging in various early literacy activities before they started First Class, by home socioeconomic status 2023

2023				
	SES	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
Talk about things you had done	Higher	84.6	15	0.4
	Middle	73.1	25.3	1.6
	Lower	64.5	32.5	3
Read books	Higher	87.6	12.2	0.3
	Middle	59.1	38.4	2.5
	Lower	31.5	53.6	15
Tell stories	Higher	74.8	24.1	1.2
	Middle	55.2	41.8	3
	Lower	39.4	54.4	6.2
Sing songs	Higher	68	27.5	4.6
	Middle	58.2	34.2	7.6
	Lower	53.7	35.6	10.6
Play with alphabet toys (e.g. block of letters of the alphabet)	Higher	64	30.2	5.8
	Middle	57.8	35.3	6.9
	Lower	45.7	38.9	15.3
Write letters or words	Higher	61	35.9	3.1
	Middle	47.6	46	6.4
	Lower	48.6	41.8	9.6
Read aloud signs and labels	Higher	61.7	32.6	5.7
	Middle	45.5	44	10.5
	Lower	38.8	38	23.2
Talk about what you had read	Higher	53.5	40.9	5.6
	Middle	35.7	53.5	10.7
	Lower	29.6	50.7	19.6
Play word games	Higher	49.6	43.4	6.9
	Middle	36.3	52	11.7
	Lower	34.1	46.5	19.3

Source: Educational Research Centre (ERC)

Objective 8: Affordable, high quality Early Learning and Care (ELC)

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Objective 8a: Quality of Early Learning and Care settings

In addressing First 5 Objective 8, this Spotlight looks at data that can illustrate if young children have access to high quality ELC that can respond to a diversity of needs. A key target in First 5 is to ensure that half of all Early Years educators have a level 7 degree³¹ or above by 2028. Table 43 examines the progress on this target by presenting the percentage breakdown of ELC staff members³² from 2018/19-2024/25 by the highest qualification level achieved. The most common highest qualification level during this period was level 6, however the percentage of ELC staff members with level 6 as their highest qualification level decreased from 41.8% to 34.8% of staff members from 2018/19 to 2024/25. The percentage of staff members with level 8 or above as their highest qualification level increased during this time, from 17.5% in 2018/19 to 23.9% in 2024/25.³³

Table 43: Percentage of ELC staff by highest qualification level, 2018-2024

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
NFQ level 7 & above	25	26.6	33.2	34.9	35	34	33.9
<i>Qualification levels:</i>							
<i>NFQ Level 9/10</i>	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.6
<i>NFQ Level 8</i>	16.1	16.5	18.2	20	21.5	22.3	22.3
<i>NFQ Level 7</i>	7.5	8.5	13.6	13.3	12	10.1	10.1
<i>NFQ Level 6</i>	41.8	42.2	36.9	35.3	34.6	34.8	34.8
<i>NFQ Level 5</i>	26.8	25.7	24.9	24.3	24	23.2	23.2
<i>NFQ Level 4</i>	0.6	0.4	0.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>No relevant qualification</i>	5.8	5.1	4.6	5.5	6.5	8.1	8.1

Source: Pobal, 2018-2024

The average weekly fees charged by ELC and SAC services varies depending on the age of the child and the type of service provision received, i.e. whether the child

³¹ Level 7 or higher on the [National Framework of Qualifications \(NFQ\)](#) refers to an ordinary bachelor degree or higher.

³² Figures only refer to staff working directly with children. Note that this includes staff working in SAC-only services, for which there is no minimum qualification requirement.

³³ This data can be found at <https://www.pobal.ie/childcare/workforce-qualifications-and-wages/>

receives full day, part-time, or sessional care (see Table 44). The following data refers to the average weekly cost before State subsidies. From 2018-2024, the most expensive fees were charged for full day care, which ranged from an average³⁴ of €184.78 in 2018/19 to €200.22 per week in 2024/25, while the least expensive fees were charged for sessional care, which ranged from an average of €75.83 in 2018/19 to €75.00 per week in 2024/25. Across full and part-time service provision, the most expensive fees were charged for children under 2 years of age, and the least expensive fees were typically charged for children aged over 4 years.

Table 44: Average weekly fees by age range of children and type of ELC provision, 2018-2024

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Full day							
Up to 1 year	€195.51	€187.87	€192.06	€198.00	€199.53	€190.00	€200.00
1-2 years	€189.68	€183.17	€190.28	€192.50	€192.00	€192.50	€201.68
2-3 years	€186.01	€180.54	€187.62	€190.00	€190.00	€190.00	€200.00
3-4 years	€184.39	€177.72	€185.52	€187.53	€187.50	€187.55	€200.00
4-5 years	€183.43	€176.99	€184.61	€187.55	€185.00	€187.00	€200.00
5-6 years	€169.64	€177.87	€178.64	€182.00	€180.00	€185.00	€199.65
Average	€184.78	€180.69	€186.46	€189.60	€189.01	€188.68	€200.22
Part-time							
Up to 1 year	€122.33	€116.31	€117.97	€113.00	€115.00	€110.00	€115.00
1-2 years	€116.83	€112.08	€116.48	€116.50	€115.00	€113.00	€118.50
2-3 years	€112.97	€108.69	€113.19	€115.00	€112.50	€112.50	€115.00
3-4 years	€110.48	€106.57	€110.72	€111.25	€110.00	€110.00	€114.50
4-5 years	€109.73	€106.57	€110.13	€112.00	€110.00	€110.00	€114.50
5-6 years	€105.50	€108.88	€107.91	€110.00	€107.25	€110.00	€114.65
Average	€112.97	€109.85	€112.73	€112.96	€113.29	€110.92	€115.36
Sessional							
Up to 1 year	€81.21	€79.55	€81.76	€75.00	€75.00	€75.00	€75.00
1-2 years	€79.16	€77.58	€78.71	€75.00	€75.00	€75.00	€75.00
2-3 years	€74.92	€74.40	€75.42	€75.00	€75.00	€75.00	€75.00
3-4 years	€73.14	€72.92	€73.96	€75.00	€73.42	€74.50	€75.00
4-5 years	€73.03	€73.46	€73.94	€75.00	€74.00	€75.00	€75.00
5-6 years	€73.49	€75.76	€74.34	€75.00	€75.00	€75.00	€75.00
Average	€75.83	€75.61	€76.36	€75.00	€74.57	€74.92	€75.00

Source: Pobal, 2018-2024

³⁴ Refers to the median weekly fees before subsidies of early learning care and school age childcare.

Objective 8b: Capacity in ELC settings

Table 45 examines at the number of children aged 5 years and under enrolled in ELC settings, and the number on waiting lists.³⁵ The number enrolled has increased from 124,971 in 2021/22 to 136,650 in 2024/25. The number on waiting lists has increased from 37,568 in 2021/22 to 73,658 in 2024/25. The most commonly enrolled age group across the three years was the 4-5 age group (ranging from 46,945 (2021/22) to 51,596 (2024/25)). The most commonly number on waiting lists was the 1-2 age group (ranging from 8,841 (2021/22) to 19,536 (2024/25)). It is worth noting that children may be on multiple waiting lists.

Table 45: Numbers enrolled and on ELC waiting lists by age group, 2021-2024³⁸

	2021/22		2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
	Number	Number on	Number	Number on	Number	Number on	Number	Number on
	enrolled	waiting lists	enrolled	waiting lists	enrolled	waiting lists	enrolled	waiting lists
0-1 year	2,494	5,023	2,220	6,663	1,801	6,648	1,560	7,830
1-2 years	10,740	8,841	11,581	13,208	11,586	16,849	12,456	19,536
2-3 years	19,398	8,954	21,400	13,448	22,228	16,485	22,362	18,875
3-4 years	45,394	8,850	47,341	11,658	47,854	13,830	48,676	14,570
4-5 years	46,945	5,900	51,938	10,145	51,206	11,119	51,596	12,847
Total 0-5	124,971	37,568	134,480	55,122	134,675	64,931	136,650	73,658

Source: Pobal, 2021-2024

Table 46 looks at the extrapolated ELC capacity³⁶ for children aged 5 and under.³⁷ This increased from 166,401 in 2021/22, to 170,829 in 2024/25. Among the 1-5 age group, children aged 4-5 accounted for the greatest share of total capacity (39% over the period 2021/22 to 2024/25).

³⁵ Note that children can be on multiple waiting lists at the same time.

³⁶ Extrapolated capacity is a combination of the total number enrolled in ELC settings and the total number of vacancies, extrapolated to the national level.

³⁷ 0-1 year age group data unavailable. This is due to high statistical error attached to extrapolation of the small number of children/vacant places under 1 year of age.

Table 46: Extrapolated ELC capacity by age group, 2018-2024

	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Capacity	Capacity	Capacity	Capacity	Capacity	Capacity
1-2 years	13,127	6,081	13,591	14,134	13,910	14,801
2-3 years	23,886	13,204	26,370	27,167	28,401	28,117
3-4 years	61,332	34,531	62,172	61,588	61,944	61,479
4-5 years	58,385	12,525	64,275	67,643	66,884	66,434
Total 1-5	156,730	66,341	166,408	170,532	171,139	170,831

Source: Pobal, 2018-2024

Objective 8c: Parental and formal ELC attendance

Table 47 examines the percentage of children cared for only by their parents across the EU 27. Among the 0-3 age group, the country with the highest percentage was Slovakia in 2022 (75.5%); 2023 (76.3%); and in 2020 (74.6%). The country with the lowest percentage for this age group was the Netherlands in 2022 (16.2%); 2023 (17.8%); and in 2024 (12.5%). The percentage in Ireland was 66% in 2022; 58.2% in 2023; and 62.5% in 2024.

From age 3 to the minimum compulsory school age, the country with the highest percentage of children cared for only by their parents was Romania in 2023 (22.8% and 17.7); and Poland in 2022 (17%). The country with the lowest percentage for this age group was Greece in 2022 - 2024 (0%). The percentage in Ireland was 4.3% in 2022; 5.5% in 2023; and 3.7% in 2024.

 Table 47: Percentage of children cared for only by their parents by age group, EU 27, 2021-2024⁴²

	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age
Austria	53.3	7.5	51.4	5.0	50.5	6.7	49.3	4.0
Belgium	37.2	1.9	35.1	n/a	33.8	n/a	34.1	n/a
Bulgaria	68.4	6.7	71.7	3.2	72.9	4.5	71.1	6.8



	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age
Croatia	51.2	18.8	52.7	15.7	49.2	12.5	50.3	9.2
Cyprus	40.4	8.8	36.4	12.4	37.8	8.8	25.8	6.8
Czechia	71.6	25.9	65.4	16.6	67.9	12.4	65.5	11.8
Denmark	31	9	21.0	5.9	28.9	2.9	34.6	0.0
Estonia	56.2	6.6	52.9	4.0	47.5	3.9	49.5	1.9
EU 27	48.4	8.	48.7	7.2	50.3	8.7	47.6	8.1
Finland	55.3	7.	53.9	6.2	52.2	5.2	49.3	3.4
France	35.7	:	39.0	n/a	39.3	2.4	35.6	3.3
Germany	62.0	9.8	67.3	9.1	71.8	13.0	70.4	14.1
Greece	34.6	7.8	39.2	11.2	40.8	6.5	43.9	4.6
Hungary	61.6	9.6	58.8	0.0	58.8	0.0	49.5	0.0
Ireland	65.8	17.9	66.0	4.3	58.2	5.5	62.5	3.7
Italy	45.9	7	43.4	5.6	45.9	4.3	38.3	6.3
Latvia	61.7	12.9	59.6	9.7	59.5	4.9	64.0	3.0
Lithuania	66.2	7.7	65.8	6.0	70.2	6.6	51.5	4.4
Luxembourg	29.3	4.3	41.1	4.9	37.0	14.8	39.8	15.0
Malta	46.9	8.2	32.6	6.7	39.3	5.8	43.6	2.4
Netherlands	13.8	1.9	16.2	2.9	17.8	3.2	12.5	3.6
Poland	52.2	15.6	52.2	17.0	57.3	17.4	58.4	11.8
Portugal	21.7	7.9	35.0	8.4	37.4	11.3	25.2	3.3
Romania	76.8	25.9	55.6	10.6	64.3	22.8	60.7	17.7
Slovakia	76.1	15.5	75.5	10.9	76.3	14.7	74.6	15.7
Slovenia	35.1	7.7	33.3	2.3	30.0	2.8	26.9	1.6
Spain	35.0	0.9	37.3	3.5	35.3	1.4	34.5	1.5

	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age
Sweden	39.6	1.2	40.9	2.2	37.0	1.0	38.7	1.1

Source: Eurostat Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), 2021-2024

Table 48 looks at the average number of weekly hours of formal ELC across the EU 27, among children who receive at least one hour of formal ELC. For the 0-3 age group, the country with the highest number of weekly hours of formal ELC was Austria in 2024 (40.3 hours), Croatia in 2023 (39.8 hours) and Austria in 2022 (38.4 hours). The country with the lowest number of weekly hours for this age group was Sweden, with 18.1 hours in 2024, 18.4 hours in 2022, and 19 hours in 2023. The average number of hours of formal ELC in Ireland among this age group decreased slightly, from 31.3 in 2022 to 29.7 in 2024. From age 3 to the minimum compulsory school age, the country with the highest number of weekly hours of formal ELC was Hungary in 2024 (43 hours), and Latvia in 2023, 2022 (40.3, 39.7 hours). The country with the lowest number of weekly hours for this age group was Ireland in 2022 and 2024 (22.5 and 23.7 hours), and Romania in 2023 (22.9 hours). In contrast, the EU27 average decreased from 31.5 hours to 30.9 hours.

Table 48: Average number of weekly hours of formal ELC by age group, Euro area, 2022-2024⁴³

	2022		2023		2024	
	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age
Austria	24.1	26.2	22.5	26.2	22.0	26.5
Belgium	30.9	33.6	30.8	33.6	30.5	33.2
Bulgaria	32.8	35.1	36.2	34.3	35.5	35.1
Croatia	37.0	33.2	35.3	32.7	37.4	33.2
Cyprus	34.4	32.5	35.0	32.7	36.6	32.8



	2022		2023		2024	
	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age	0-3 years	From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age
Czechia	21.0	30.4	24.0	30.4	21.4	30.0
Denmark	34.5	35.4	34.0	33.6	34.4	34.5
Estonia	29.7	36.3	32.1	34.8	32.7	34.5
EU 27	30.4	31.5	30.6	30.6	30.7	30.9
Finland	33.6	34.0	33.3	35.3	35.2	36.2
France	32.5	33.0	33.3	33.1	33.4	34.6
Germany	30.5	32.6	29.4	26.9	28.4	26.8
Greece	31.2	29.5	31.2	30.8	31.6	29.5
Hungary	29.9	33.9	32.8	34.7	36.1	43.0
Ireland	31.3	22.5	29.5	23.8	29.7	23.7
Italy	30.1	33.1	29.2	34.0	31.9	33.9
Latvia	38.4	39.7	38.2	40.3	40.3	40.4
Lithuania	38.3	36.9	36.9	38.5	38.6	39.0
Luxembourg	36.2	37.8	36.1	35.6	35.4	37.6
Malta	26.5	27.6	28.9	30.9	28.2	30.3
Netherlands	18.4	24.4	19.0	26.3	18.1	26.8
Poland	35.8	32.8	35.3	33.3	36.6	33.7
Portugal	38.1	38.9	39.2	38.0	38.9	38.8
Romania	27.9	23.7	31.6	22.9	31.3	27.4
Slovakia	32.8	34.1	39.8	35.1	38.0	33.2
Slovenia	36.5	36.8	36.7	35.7	36.0	36.1
Spain	25.1	28.0	26.8	29.9	25.7	29.8
Sweden	31.8	32.3	32.3	32.9	32.3	32.7

Source: Eurostat Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), 2022-2024

Objective 8d: Diversity in Early Learning and Care settings

Table 49 looks at children and Early Learning and Care (ELC) services in receipt of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support, which is provided to assist pre-schools in creating a more inclusive environment for children of all abilities. ELC services in receipt of AIM support rose from 41% in 2017/18 to 59% in 2023/24. The number of children being supported also rose from 3,179 in 2017/18 to 8,152 in 2023/24.

Table 49: Children and services in receipt of AIM support, 2017-2023

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number of children supported under AIM	3,179	2,388	5,708	5,648	7,217	8,152
% of services in receipt of AIM support	41%	58%	47%	53%	58%	59%

Source: Pobal, 2017-2023

Table 50 examines at the number of children with additional needs or a diagnosed disability attending ELC services, and the percentage of services providing care to these children. In 2020/21, the number of children with additional needs was 7,284, which increased to 15,729 in 2024/25. The number of children with a diagnosed disability increased from 3,677 in 2020/21 to 7,052 in 2024/25. The percentage of services providing care to children with additional needs also increased during this time, from 75% to 85%, while the percentage of services providing care to children with a diagnosed disability increased from 55% in 2020/21 to 63% in 2024/25.

Table 50: Children with additional needs/a diagnosed disability enrolled in ELC services, 2020-2024

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of children with additional needs attending ELC services	7,284	11,837	14,822	14,230	15,729
Number of children with a diagnosed disability attending ELC services	3,677	5,520	6,706	6,498	7,052
Percentage of services providing care to children with additional needs	75%	77%	80%	81%	85%
Percentage of services providing care to children with a diagnosed disability	55%	56%	59%	60%	63%

Source: Pobal, 2020-2024

Table 51 looks at the number of Traveller and Roma children attending ELC services and the percentage of services with Traveller and Roma children. The number of

Traveller children attending ELC services slightly decreased from 2,601 in 2018/19 to 2,404 in 2024/25, and the number of Roma children increased from 681 to 802 during this time. The percentage of services with Traveller children attending was 19% in 2024/25, while the percentage of services with Roma children attending was 7% in 2018/19, which rose to 9% in 2024/25.

Table 51: Traveller and Roma children enrolled in ELC services, 2018-2024

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*	2024/25*
Number of Traveller children attending ELC services	2,601	2,831	1,866	2,146	2,533	2,187	2,404
Participation rate (%) of Traveller Children in ELC	NA	77.3	81.4	73.5	74.5	77.1	NA
Number of Roma children attending ELC services	681	1,208	507	609	907	920	802
Participation rate (%) of Roma Children in ELC	NA	68.3	65.6	61.0	64.5	65.1	NA
Percentage of services with Traveller children attending	17%	18%	17%	16%	17%	18%	19%
Percentage of services with Roma children attending	7%	9%	7%	7%	8%	9%	9%

Source: Dept. of Education and Youth, 2018-2024

Note: Participation rates for Traveller and Roma children are calculated once children start school. This is the percentage of new entrants in mainstream schools who started Junior Infants having come from childcare setting / pre-primary education / early start programme / junior school associated with the school.

*Excludes SAC only services (is based on Tusla registrations where services are categorised according to whether they are registered to provide ELC only or combined services that are registered to provide both ELC and SAC. This categorisation was not available prior to 2023/2024.)

Objective 9: Supported transitions.

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary schooling.

This section presents data to illustrate how children are supported in transitioning from Early Learning and Care to primary school. Table 52 shows how the percentage of children in mainstream junior infant classes who came from an early learning and care setting or pre-primary education was 93.1% in 2018/19; and increased to 94.1% in 2024/25. This percentage was typically slightly higher among female children.

Objective 9a: Profile of entrants to primary school

Table 52: Percentage of children in mainstream junior infant classes who came from a ELC setting or pre-primary education, 2018-2024

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Male	92.8	93.4	93.1	94.1	93.0	93.5	94.0
Female	93.3	93.3	94.3	94.3	93.2	93.7	94.2
Both sexes	93.1	93.3	94.2	94.2	93.1	93.6	94.1

Source: Department of Education, 2018-2024

Table 53 examines the percentage of children in mainstream junior infant classes by age group. The proportion of entrants to junior infants aged 4 and under decreased from 19.5% in 2019/20, to 15.5% in 2024/25, while the proportion aged 5 and over increased from 80.5% in 2019/20 to 84.5% in 2024/25.

Table 53: Percentage of children in mainstream junior infant classes by age group on 1st January, 2019-2024

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
4 and under	19.5	16.9	16.5	16.9	16.3	15.5
5 and over	80.5	83.1	83.5	83.1	83.7	84.5

Source: Department of Education, 2019-2024

Looking at the ethnicity of entrants to junior infant classes from 2022 to 2024, the majority (46%-49.5%) had a “White Irish” background (see Table 54). This was followed by entrants with “Any other white background” (6.3%-7.1%) and

“Asian/Asian Irish and other Asian background” (2.9%-3.9%). The least common ethnicity across all years was “Asian/Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi” (0.0%-0.1%); followed by “Roma” (0.3%-0.4%); and “Black/Black Irish - any other Black background” (0.4%).

Table 54: Entrants to junior infant classes in mainstream national schools by ethnicity, 2022-2024

Ethnic or Cultural Background Description	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
White Irish	31,024	49.5	29,221	47.5	27,651	46.0
Not Provided	14,362	22.9	15,002	24.4	14,545	24.2
No Consent	7,217	11.5	7,105	11.6	7,915	13.2
Any other White Background	4,434	7.1	4,219	6.9	3,773	6.3
Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background	1,833	2.9	2,245	3.6	2,358	3.9
Irish Traveller	1,022	1.6	899	1.5	845	1.4
Black or Black Irish - African	727	1.2	741	1.2	790	1.3
Other, including mixed background - all others.	915	1.5	1,036	1.7	1,309	2.2
Other (inc. mixed background)	365	0.6	137	0.2	0	0.0
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	359	0.6	394	0.6	400	0.7
Roma	216	0.3	261	0.4	267	0.4
Black or Black Irish - any other Black background	246	0.4	246	0.4	212	0.4
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	3	0.0	8	0.0	34	0.1
Other, including mixed background - Arab	0	0.0	1	0.0	4	0.0
Total	62,723	100.0	61,515	100.0	60,103	100.0

Source: Department of Education, 2022-2024

Objective 9b: Junior infants class size

Table 55 and Figure 4 illustrate the percentage of children in mainstream junior infant classes by class size. In 2019/20 and 2020/21 the most common class size was between 25 and 29 pupils with a share of 36.1% in 2019/20 and 35.2% of classes in

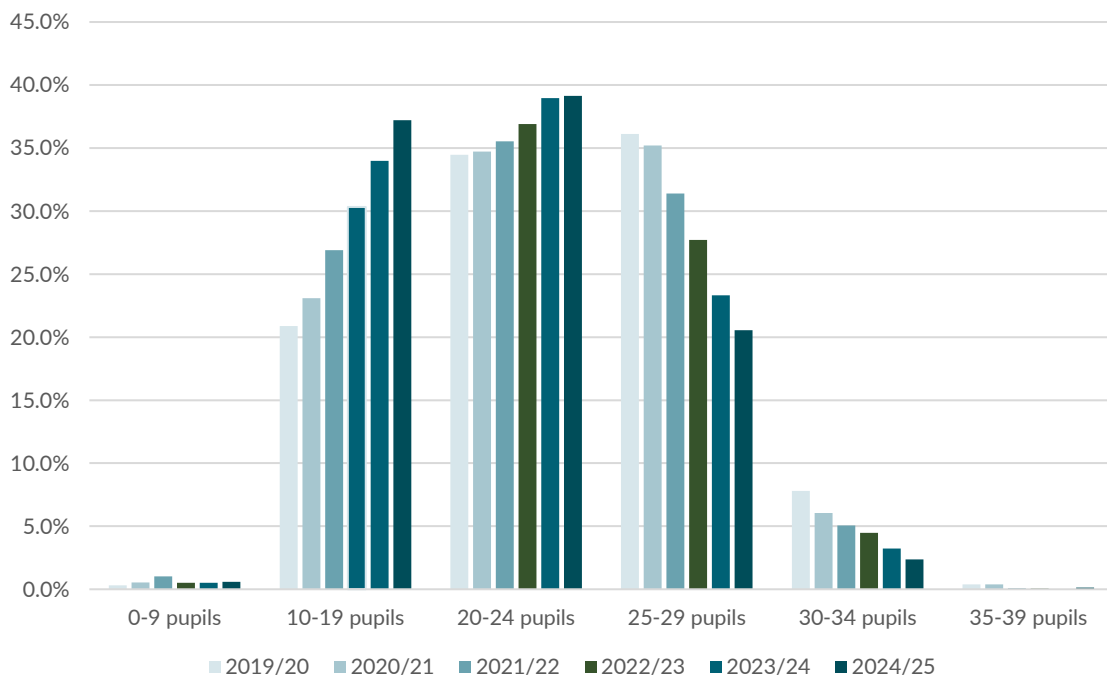
2020/21, reducing to 20.6% in 2024/25. After the 2020/21 school year the most common class size was 20 to 24 pupils with 35.5% in 2021/22 moving to 39.1% in 2024/25. The least common class size was 35 to 39 pupils which went from 0.4% for 2020/21 to 0.1% by 2024/25.

Table 55: Share of junior infants in mainstream classes by class size, 2019-2024

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
0-9 pupils	0.3%	0.5%	1.0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%
10-19 pupils	20.9%	23.1%	26.9%	30.3%	34.0%	37.2%
20-24 pupils	34.5%	34.7%	35.5%	36.9%	39.0%	39.1%
25-29 pupils	36.1%	35.2%	31.4%	27.7%	23.3%	20.6%
30-34 pupils	7.8%	6.0%	5.1%	4.5%	3.2%	2.4%
35-39 pupils	0.4%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%

Source: Department of Education, 2019-2024

Figure 4: Share of junior infants in mainstream classes by class size, 2019-2024



Objective 9c: Special needs school programmes

Table 56 examines the percentage of 5 year olds with special needs engaged in primary schooling by school programme type. The majority of these children attended mainstream national schools from 2019-2024, ranging from 74.7% to 84.3% of enrolments. A minority attended special national schools during this time, ranging from 15.7% to 29.5% of enrolments.

Table 56: Percentage of 5 year olds with special needs by school programme type, 2019-2024

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Percentage of pupils with special needs in mainstream national schools	74.7%	70.5%	75.9%	81.3%	82.8%	84.3%
Percentage of pupils with special needs in special national schools	25.3%	29.5%	24.1%	18.7%	17.2%	15.7%

Source: Department of Education, 2019-2024

Although data on the number of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) allocated to junior infants is not available, data available on the number of SNAs allocated to all primary school classes can give an indication of trends in this area (see Table 57). The number of SNAs allocated to all classes in mainstream primary schools increased from 7,900 in 2019/20 to 9,639 in 2024/25. However, it is worth noting that this does not reflect recruitment numbers, as the allocation of one SNA post may be filled by two SNAs working part-time.

Table 57: Number of SNAs allocated to mainstream primary classes, 2019-2024

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of SNAs	7,900	8,496	8,609	8,804	9,176	9,639

Source: National Council for Special Education (NCSE), 2019-2024

Summary

In 2022, there were 359,441 children aged 5 and under living in Ireland, accounting for 7% of the population. This figure is 44,478 fewer than the equivalent total reported for 2016. It is estimated that this figure may have dropped to 352,524 children in 2025. Census 2022 results for 0-5 year olds reported that 11.6% were non-Irish, 1.3% were from the Irish Traveller community, and 5% had a disability.

Reflecting Objective 1 of First 5, this Spotlight has presented the available evidence that can illustrate how parents are balancing their work and caring responsibilities. Some of the data relevant to Objective 1 indicates that the percentage of children aged 0-5 living in a very low work intensity household with parents with tertiary education has decreased from 4.4% in 2020 to 2.2% in 2024. The percentage of children aged 5 and under living in jobless households has decreased from Q4 2018 (12.1%) to Q4 2024 (7.7%). For persons with children aged 5 and under, some form of remote working remains significant in the 2024 post-Covid environment but has decreased compared with 2020 and 2021.

Objective 2 in this Spotlight presents data on parenting supports and services that are available to support child development and positive family relationships. Looking at government support for parent and toddler groups, the number of parent and toddler grants approved by local County Childcare Committees increased from 2022 to 2024. The number of children referred to a Family Support Service also increased (approx. 20%) from 2022 to 2024. The percentage of referred children who received a family support service increased during this time, while the number of Child and Family Support Networks decreased during the same period.

Objective 3 of this Spotlight aims to get a better understanding of how many children aged 5 and under may not have the necessary resources to encourage positive development in the early years. The at-risk of poverty rate; consistent poverty rate; and deprivation rate among this age group all experienced an increase from 2020 to 2024 from 11.8% to 14.3%, 4.7% to 7.6% and 15.8% to 17.6% respectively. The share of children aged 5 and under experiencing food and energy poverty also increased between 2020 and 2024 from 1.3% to 2.7% and 3.0% to 6.1%. The

percentage of households reported as in need of social housing with a child aged 5 and under decreased from 21% approx. in 2020 to just over 16% in 2024.

Objective 4 of this Spotlight examines the different kinds of supports and services used by families to support positive development and health behaviours in young children. In 2024, 90.7% of pregnant women accessed antenatal care during the first trimester, up from 89.5% in 2023. Looking at the number of pregnant women who received antenatal care in the first trimester from 2017-2023, the most common occupation group was “Lower professional” which ranged from 20.8% in 2017 to 26.8% in 2023, the most common age group during this time was the 30-34 age group. The majority of mothers who gave birth from 2019 to 2023 were also from the “Lower professional” occupation group. The percentage of live births that were preterm ranged from 6.7%-7.6% from 2019-2023, with 7.4% reported in 2023. Preterm births accounted for over half of all live multiple births during this time. The mean length of a maternity stay in hospital from 2019-2023 ranged from 2.5-2.7 days for maternities with non-preterm infants and ranged from 11.4-13.2 days for maternities with preterm infants. Mothers born in the EU15 (excluding Ireland and the UK) and the Rest of Europe areas had the highest rates of exclusive breastfeeding at discharge during this time, while mothers born in Ireland had the lowest rates at just over 40%.

Objective 5 of this Spotlight focuses on data that can illustrate if children aged 5 and under have access to safe and high-quality healthcare services. Acute bronchiolitis was the most common in-patient diagnosis among this age group in 2018 and 2019, and the period 2021 to 2024. Disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight were the most common in 2020. There were fewer children aged 5 and under on in-patient waiting lists in 2024 (3,545) compared to 2022 (3,667) and 2023 (4,027) but remains higher than the 2019 figure (2,813); the number waiting more than one year increased by over 10% between 2022 and 2024, rising from 616 in 2022 to 682 in 2023 and 696 in 2024. The number of children in this age group on out-patient waiting lists decreased from 2022 (over 28,000) to 2024 when there were 25,586, and the number waiting for more than one year also decreased during this time. The

share of AON applications for children aged 5 and under decreased from 2021 to 2024, reducing from 62% in 2021 to 44% in 2024.

Objective 6 of this Spotlight presents data that can shed light on the mental health of parents and young children. From 2021 to 2024, there was an increase from 1,003 to 1,318 in the number of children with parents who entered treatment for problem alcohol use that were aged under 5 years, but the percentage involved remained similar at around 21%.

Objective 7 of this Spotlight presents information on the uptake of services that are provided to families to support a nurturing environment for children's early learning. This report considered a 2023 literacy study. Parents were much more likely to report engaging in "reading books" with girls in the 2023 study (75% engaged in this activity with girls, versus 67% with boys). Smaller gender differences were observed for the other literacy activities included in the study. Across the 2023 study parents were more likely to engage in all literacy activities with girls than with boys. Children with a higher socioeconomic class were more likely to "often engage" in each literacy activity specified than children in homes with a middle or lower class background.

Objective 8 of this Spotlight looks at data that can illustrate if young children have access to high quality ELC that can reflect diversity of need. The percentage of ELC staff with a NFQ level 7 or above qualification increased from 25% in 2018/19 to 34% in 2023/24. The percentage of ELC staff with a level 8 qualification or higher increased from 17.5% in 2018/19 to 23.9% in 2024/25. Before subsidies and supports are taken into account, the figures indicate that the average weekly ELC fees charged to parents decreased slightly from 2020/21 to 2023/24 and were highest for children under 1 year and lowest for children over 4 years. The number of children enrolled in ELC settings have both increased from 2020/21 to 2023/24, as did the extrapolated ELC capacity. The percentage of children aged 0 – under 3 cared for only by their parents in Ireland was higher than the EU 27 average in 2022, 2023, and 2024; 66%, 58.2%, and 62.5% respectively, while the percentage of children aged 3 years to minimum compulsory school age cared for only by their parents was consistently lower than the EU 27 average from 2022-2024. The average number of

weekly hours of formal ELC in Ireland used by both the 0-3 and 3 to minimum compulsory school age groups were lower than the EU 27 averages from 2022 to 2024.

Data under Objective 8 also show that the percentage of ELC services that were in receipt of AIM support increased from 53% in 2021/22 to 59% in 2023/24, and the number of children supported under AIM also rose during this time from, 5,648 to 8,152. The number of children with additional needs attending ELC services increased from 2020/21 when it was 7,284 to 15,729 in 2024/25, the number of children with a diagnosed disability decreased. The percentage of services providing care to children with additional needs increased during this time while the percentage of services providing care to children with a diagnosed disability slightly decreased during. The number of Traveller children attending ELC services increased from 2,146 in 2021/22 to 2,404 in 2024/25, and the number of Roma children increased during this time from 609 to 802. The percentage of services with Traveller children attending and the percentage of services with Roma children attending both increased between 2021-2024, from 16% to 19% and 7% to 9% respectively.

Objective 9 of this Spotlight looks at data to illustrate how children are supported in transitioning from ELC to primary school. The percentage of children in mainstream junior infant classes who came from a ELC setting, or pre-primary education increased from 93.1% in 2022/23 to 94.1% in 2024/25. The proportion of entrants to junior infants aged 4 and under decreased from 16.9% to 15.5% between 2022-2024, while the proportion of entrants that were aged 5 and over increased from 83.1% to 84.5% during this time. The most common ethnicity among entrants to junior infant classes from 2018 to 2024 was “white Irish” at nearly 50%, while the least common was “Other including Mixed Background, “Other including Mixed Background- Arab” and “Asian/Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi” at less than 1% for all categories. The most common class size was 20-24 pupils in 2022/23 to 2024/25. The proportion of five-year-olds with special needs who were attending mainstream national schools increased from 81.3% in 2022 to 84.3% in 2024, while

the remainder were attending special national schools. The number of SNAs allocated to mainstream primary classes increased from 7,900 in 2019/20 to 9,639 in 2024/25.

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Background Notes

This is an updated 2026 edition of the spotlight report first published in 2022. A statistical spotlight is a short publication focused on a different topic, gathering together available statistical data highlighting trends or patterns in the data. These are intended to be short, statistical-based publications bringing together available information for interested users. The publications include some commentary detailing (where relevant) trends and comparisons as appropriate (e.g. comparisons between sex, region, age group etc.).

The primary purpose is to gather together the most relevant data, highlight those most recent, and draw attention to the most evident features or trends. Therefore, although it could serve as the basis for such further research, none of the information contained therein should in and of itself be used to ascribe cause and effect between any two variables. In any case, much of the data considered in the Spotlight is insufficiently detailed to give anything other than to give a high-level snapshot of the experience of children aged 5 and under living in Ireland.

Sources

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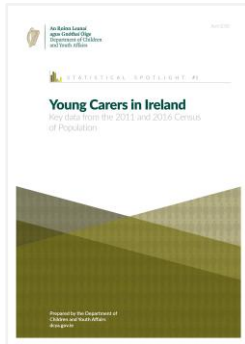
Pobal

<https://www.pobal.ie/research-analysis/early-years/>

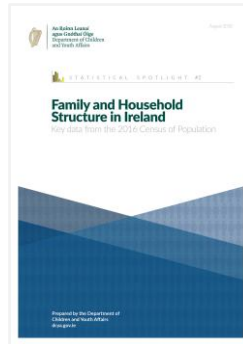
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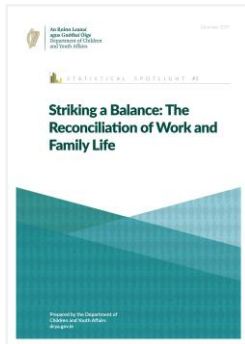
Previous Statistical Spotlights included in the series



Statistical Spotlight #1
Young Carers in Ireland
 Published
 April 2018



Statistical Spotlight #2
Family and Household Structure in Ireland
 Published
 August 2018



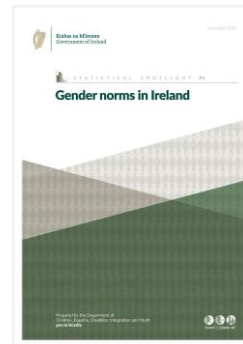
Statistical Spotlight #3
Striking a Balance: The Reconciliation of Work and Family Life
 Published
 December 2019



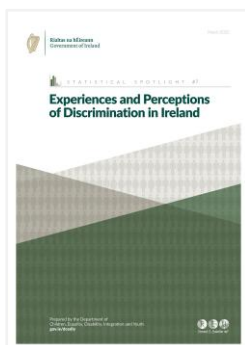
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Young Travellers in Ireland
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 April 2020



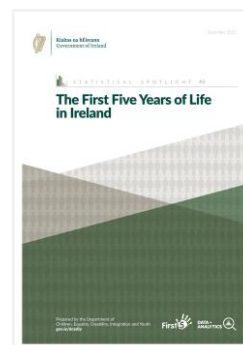
Statistical Spotlight #5
Profile of Parents in Ireland
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 May 2021



Statistical Spotlight #6
Gender Norms in Ireland
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Statistical Spotlight #7
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 Published
 March 2022

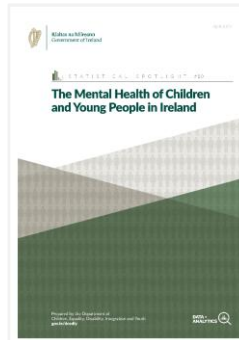


Statistical Spotlight #8
The First Five Years of Life in Ireland
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Statistical Spotlight #9
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Published
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Statistical Spotlight #10
The Mental Health of Children and Young People in Ireland

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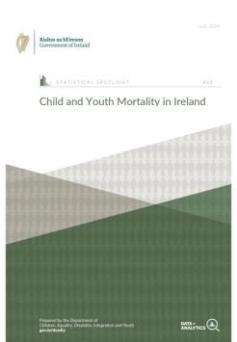
Statistical Spotlight #11
Children and Young People's Indicator Set: Outcome "Active and Healthy", An international Comparison.

Published
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Statistical Spotlight #12
Children and Young People's Indicator Set: Outcome "Economic Security and Opportunity", An international Comparison.

Published
July 2024



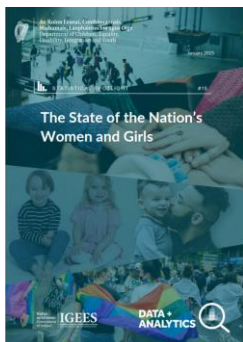
Statistical Spotlight #13
Child and Youth Mortality in Ireland

Publication Date
July 2024



Statistical Spotlight #14
Roma in Ireland

Published
December 2024



Statistical Spotlight #15
State of the Nation's Women and Girls

Published
January 2025



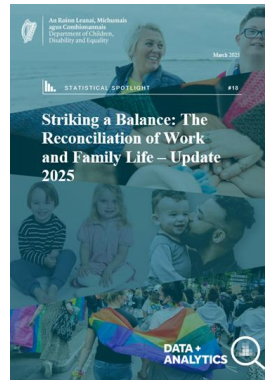
Statistical Spotlight #16
The Health and Wellbeing of Parents in Ireland

Published
March 2026



Statistical Spotlight #17
Travellers In Ireland

Published
March 2026



Statistical Spotlight #18
**The Reconciliation of
Work and Family Life**

Published
March 2026