This article presents statistical data on the situation of children (aged 0–17) in the European Union (EU) who were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE).

The analysis compares them with adults (18–64) and the elderly (65 or over), and also takes a look at the impact of the household type, employment situation, parents’ educational level, migrant background and severe material deprivation. All figures are based on EU-SILC (Statistics on income and living conditions).

**General overview**

In 2018, an estimated 23.4 % of children in the EU27 were AROPE compared with 22.1 % of adults (18–64) and 18.4 % of the elderly (65 or over).

**Factors influencing the risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) were:**

- The type of household: single parents with dependent children (42.8 %), single persons (31.7 %) and two adults with three or more dependent children (27.6 %) had the highest AROPE rates.

- Monetary poverty: 73.4 % of the population aged 0–59, living in very low work intensity households with dependent children were at risk of poverty.
- Level of education: 51.5% of children whose parents’ level of education was low were at risk of poverty compared with 7.4% of children whose parents’ level of education was high.
- Migrant background: children with a migrant background were at a greater risk of poverty than children whose parents were native born (33.7% compared with 16.2%).
- Living conditions: 11.6% of single-parent households were severely materially deprived compared with 6.2% of all households with dependent children.

Figure 1: Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion, 2010-2018 (Share of children <18 years)
Source: Eurostat (ilc_peps01)

Children growing up in poverty and social exclusion

Children growing up in poverty and social exclusion are less likely to do well in school, enjoy good health and realise their full potential later in life, when they are at a higher risk of becoming unemployed, poor and socially excluded.

The AROPE indicator is defined as the share of the population in at least one of the following three conditions:

1. at risk of poverty, meaning below the poverty threshold,
2. in a situation of severe material deprivation,
3. living in a household with a very low work intensity.

From 2010 to 2018, the AROPE rates for children rose in 7 EU Member States (see Figure 1).

The largest increases in the AROPE rates since 2010, with 2 percentage points (pp) or more were observed in Cyprus (3.7 pp) and Greece (4.6 pp). Decreases were recorded in 18 EU Member States, with major falls recorded in Poland (–13.6 pp), Hungary (–14.9 pp), Bulgaria (–16.1 pp) and Latvia (–19.7 pp).

Regarding the overall situation in 2018 (see Infographic 1), the share of children living in a household at risk of poverty or social exclusion ranged from 13.1% in Slovenia, to 38.1% in Romania; the EU-28 rate was 23.4%.

The AROPE rates differ for different age groups. In 2018, 23.4% of children (aged 0–17) in the EU-27 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared with 22.1% of adults (aged 18–64) and 18.4% of the elderly (aged 65 or over). Children were the age group with the highest at risk of poverty or social exclusion rates in nearly half of the EU Member States. In Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Croatia, Malta, Slovenia and Czechia the elderly were most at risk, while in Greece, Denmark, Poland, the Netherlands and Finland, adults were the age group with the highest risk. Despite the fact that the elderly and adults, respectively, had the highest AROPE rates of these two groups of countries, child poverty ranked second highest in nearly all of them.

The largest differences between the AROPE rates of children and the total population were found in France,
Romania and Slovakia at more than 5.0 pp, while Italy, Spain, Belgium, Malta, Austria and Hungary had rates of more than 3.0 pp higher for children than for the total population. At the other end, in some EU Member States, the AROPE rates for children were below those of the total population, with more than 5 pp in Latvia (– 5.9 pp) and Estonia (– 6.5 pp).

The main factors affecting child poverty, after taking account of the effect of social transfers in reducing child poverty, are the composition of the household in which the children live and the labour market situation of their parents, also linked to their level of education.

The highest risk of poverty or social exclusion

The household structure has a significant effect on the total household disposable income (see Figure 2).

In fact, different types of households have different at-risk-of-poverty profiles. When defining household types, the concept of dependent children (individuals aged 0–17 and 18–24 years if inactive and living with at least one parent) is used instead of the concept of children (aged 0–17) as a reference population.

In the case of single-person households with dependent children, 42.8 % were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, compared with 15.6 % of households with two adults and one dependent child.

More generally, the AROPE rate for a single person with dependent children was 20.9 pp higher than for households with dependent children (42.8 % vs 21.9 %). Furthermore, 27.6 % of households with two adults and three or more dependent children and 24.6 % of households with three or more adults with dependent children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The AROPE rate for households without dependent children was nevertheless higher for single-person households (31.7 %) than for all households with dependent children (21.9 %).

![Figure 2: Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by household type - 2018](Source: Eurostat (ilc_peps03))

Very low work intensity households with dependent children – highest risk of poverty or social exclusion

Around 73.4 % of the very low work intensity households with dependent children and 44.8 % of the low work intensity households with dependent children in the EU-27 were at risk of poverty in 2018 (see Figure 3).

Labour is the most important source of income for most households and thus has an impact on the people at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

However, jobless households are not the only ones at risk of poverty. That is why the relationship between
employment and risk of poverty at household level is used to assess the concept of work intensity. Work intensity reflects how much working age adults in a household worked in relation to their total work potential in a year. For example, dependent children who live in households with very low work intensity (less than or equal to 0.2) are those living in households where, on average, the adults worked less than or equal to 20% of their time in a year.

In the EU-27, the highest AROPE rate was recorded for very low work intensity households with dependent children (73.4%).

Compared with households without dependent children, households with dependent children were at a greater risk of poverty across all levels of work intensity. In addition, the gap between households with and without dependent children tended to increase when work intensity decreased (except for the medium work intensity class). This difference in the at-risk-of-poverty rate ranged from around 1 pp for very high work intensity households to nearly 19 pp for very low work intensity households.

![Figure 3: Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by work intensity of the household - 2018(Share of population < 60 years)](Source: Eurostat (ilc_li06))

Impact of parents' education on risk of poverty

More than half of the children whose parents did not attain upper secondary education were at risk of poverty (see Figure 4).

Education affects the type of job an individual can access. Indeed, the risk of poverty rises as the level of education diminishes. In the EU-27, in 2018 around 51.5% of children (aged 0–17) living in households in which the highest level of education attained by the parents living in the same household was lower secondary level (0–2 ISCED) were at risk of poverty, compared with 7.4% for parents with a high level of education (5–8 ISCED).

The difference between households with parents having achieved a high level of education (5–8 ISCED) and those with a low level of education (0–2 ISCED) is 44.1 pp.

At country level, the difference between the AROPE rates for children with parents with low and high levels of education ranged from 18.4 pp in Poland to over 70 pp in Lithuania, Slovakia and Romania.
Country of birth of the parents and the risk of poverty - migrant background also matters

At EU-27 level, children with a migrant background tended to be more exposed to poverty than the total child population.

Overall, in 2018 (see Figure 5), children (aged 0–17) with at least one foreign-born parent were at greater risk of poverty (17.5 pp higher) than children with native-born parents. The greatest differences between children with foreign and native-born parents were recorded in Belgium (+28.5 pp), Spain (+29.5 pp), Sweden (+29.9 pp) and France (+30.3 pp). For 7 other EU Member States for which data is available, the difference was more than 15.0 pp.

The highest AROPE rates for children with at least one foreign-born parent were recorded in Spain (49.2 %), France (43.6 %) and Italy (40.2 %), while the lowest rate was observed in Czechia (10.5 %).

However, in some EU Member States, having a migrant background did not result in more exposure to poverty than the native-born population. Latvia, Portugal and Lithuania (−5.6 pp, −4.2 pp and −1.3 pp, respectively) were the only EU Member States (for which data are available and reliable), where children with at least one foreign-born parent had a noticeable lower at-risk-of-poverty rate than children of native-born parents1.

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1 Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania were not taken into consideration given the low reliability for ‘foreign country’ data.
Material deprivation at household level

In 2018, 11.6 % of children living with single parents in the EU-27 were severely materially deprived, compared with 6.2 % of all households with dependent children (see Figure 6).

Indicators of material deprivation provide a complementary view of children’s well-being and living conditions (see Ad hoc modules on Material deprivation).

With respect to types of households, at EU-27 level, households with dependent children (6.2 %) are more at risk of severe material deprivation than households without dependent children (6.0 %). However, households of two adults with two dependent children (4.0 %) were slightly less at risk than in the case of households of two adults with one dependent child (4.1 %). For children living in households of two adults with three or more dependent children, the share was 6.6 %.
Source data for tables and graphs

- Children AROPE Excel file

Data sources

EU-SILC is the main source of information used in the European Union to develop indicators monitoring poverty and social exclusion.

At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE): This indicator is the headline indicator to monitor the EU2020 Strategy poverty target. It reflects the share of the population which is either at risk of poverty, or severely materially deprived or lives in a household with very low work intensity.

Children with migrant background: A child is considered to have a migrant background if at least one of the parents living with him/her was foreign born. On the other hand, a child is considered to be native-born if both parents living in the household are native-born or, if there is only one parent in the household, that parent is native-born.

Highest level of education attained by parents living in the child’s household: The classification of educational activities is based on ISCED — the International Standard Classification of Education — UNESCO 2011 version. It has the following categories:

- ISCED 0 — early childhood education
- ISCED 1 — primary education
- ISCED 2 — lower secondary education
- ISCED 3 — (upper) secondary education
- ISCED 4 — post-secondary non-tertiary education
- ISCED 5 — short-cycle tertiary education
- ISCED 6 — Bachelor’s or equivalent level
- ISCED 7 — Master’s or equivalent level
- ISCED 8 — Doctoral or equivalent level

EU average: EU aggregates are computed as the population-weighted averages of national indicators.

Context

EU-SILC (EU Statistics on income and living conditions) is the reference source for statistics and indicators on income and living conditions. It is regulated under the Framework Regulation (EC) No 1177/2003.

Other articles

- Living conditions in Europe - housing quality
- Housing statistics
- Income poverty statistics
- Living conditions in Europe - material deprivation and economic strain
- Living conditions in Europe - poverty and social exclusion

Tables

- Income and living conditions (t_ilc)
Database

- **Income and living conditions (ilc)**, see:

  People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Europe 2020 strategy) (ilc_pe)
  
  Main indicator - Europe 2020 target on poverty and social exclusion (ilc_peps)

  Income distribution and monetary poverty (ilc_ip)
  
  Monetary poverty (ilc_li)

Dedicated section

- **Employment and social inclusion indicators**
- **Europe 2020 indicators**
- **Income, social inclusion indicators and living conditions**
- **Quality of life indicators**

Publications

- Can you afford to pay all your bills? - News
- Young people in work and at risk of poverty - News
- Young people living with their parents - News
- Higher poverty risk for children with foreign parents - News
- Almost half the unemployed at risk of monetary poverty in the EU - News
- In-work poverty in the EU - News
- Downward trend in the share of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU - News release
- International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- Living conditions in Europe — 2018 edition

Methodology

- **Income and living conditions** (ESMS metadata file — ilc_esms)
- Measuring material deprivation in the EU — Indicators for the whole population and child-specific indicators Methodologies and working papers

Methodology

Legislation

- Summaries of EU Legislation: EU statistics on income and living conditions
- Regulation (EC) No 1791/2006 of 20 November 2006 adapting certain Regulations and Decisions in the fields of ... statistics, ..., by reason of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania
External links

- Employment and Social Developments in Europe - Annual Review 2018
- OECD — Better Life Initiative: Measuring Well-being and Progress
- OECD — StatExtracts — Income distribution — Inequality: Income distribution — Inequality — Country tables
- Social Investment