

The dynamics of very deep poverty in the UK

Between 2017–18 and 2020–21, around 2.5 million people in the UK moved into very deep poverty each year. This included approximately 740,000 children, 1.5 million working-age adults and 300,000 pensioners. While a similar number of people – and around half of the total number who live in very deep poverty – move out of very deep poverty each year, 2.9% of the UK population experience persistent very deep poverty. This means that around 1.9 million people lived in very deep poverty for at least three out of four years between 2017–18 and 2020–21. This included around 480,000 children, 1.3 million working-age adults and 200,000 pensioners.

Many of the groups who face the highest risk of poverty more generally are also the most likely groups to move into, and stay in, very deep poverty. This includes children, people in large families, in young families and, in particular, in lone-parent families, with family breakdown being one of the biggest risk factors for moving into very deep poverty. People who live with a disabled adult or unpaid carer are also more likely to experience very deep poverty, but treating disability benefits as general income – and not as resources specifically designed to cover the additional costs associated with having a disability – underestimates the increased risks they face.

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Key findings

- Between 2017–18 and 2020–21, an average of around 2.5 million people moved into very deep poverty each year. A similar number moved out each year.
- People are more likely to experience short-term periods of very deep poverty, rather than persistent very deep poverty; 1.9 million people experienced persistent very deep poverty (lived in very deep poverty for at least three years out of four) between 2017–18 and 2020–21, but 10.4 million people experienced shorter-term very deep poverty (in either one or two years out of four).
- Children are more likely than working-age adults and pensioners to move into very deep poverty, with pensions appearing to offer strong protection against this for older adults. Pensioners are also much less likely than children and working-age adults to experience either persistent or short-term very deep poverty.
- Large families (with three or more children) and young families (with children under 5 years old) face a particularly high risk of moving into very deep poverty. Having more children, particularly in families already with children, also increases the risk of moving into very deep poverty.
- Single adult families, particularly lone parent families, are more likely to move into and less likely to move out of very deep poverty than couple families. Moving to a single parent family is a major risk factor for moving into very deep poverty. This means that lone parents in particular face a very high risk of experiencing persistent very deep poverty, as well as short-term very deep poverty.
- Families, particularly working-age families, with a disabled adult are more likely than those without to move into very deep poverty. Amongst families that newly report a disabled adult only, those who start to receive additional cost benefits are less likely to move into very deep poverty and more likely to move out of very deep poverty than those who do not. However, these benefits are designed to cover the additional costs of having a disability and may need to be diverted by these families to cover essential costs.
- Families with an unpaid carer are more likely to move into very deep poverty than those without. They also experience higher exit rates from very deep poverty, which likely contributes to the particularly high level of short-term very deep poverty amongst this group.

Key terms and measures:

Poverty – Living in a household with an equivalised income, measured after housing costs, that is less than 60% of the UK median.

Very deep poverty – Living in a household with an equivalised income, measured after housing costs, that is less than 40% of the UK median.

Less deep poverty – Living in a household with an equivalised income, measured after housing costs, that is between 40% and 60% of the UK median, so the household is in poverty, but not in very deep poverty.

Persistent very deep poverty – The experience of living in very deep poverty in at least three out of four survey waves, measured on a rolling basis. Respondents must have taken part in all four of the survey waves (and have no missing values) to be included in this measure.

Short-term very deep poverty – The experience of living in very deep poverty in either one or two out of four survey waves, measured on a rolling basis. Respondents must have taken part in all four of the survey waves (and have no missing values) to be included in this measure.

Entry rate into very deep poverty – The proportion of people not in very deep poverty who move into very deep poverty the following year. This entry rate is therefore based only on the subset of people who are not in very deep poverty each year, and not the whole population. To ensure only meaningful moves into very deep poverty are captured in this measure, only people who move into very deep poverty with a fall in their monthly equivalised household income of at least 20% and £10 are included.

Exit rate from very deep poverty – The proportion of people in very deep poverty who move out of very deep poverty the following year. This exit rate is therefore based only on the subset of people who are in very deep poverty each year, and not the whole population. To ensure only meaningful moves into very deep poverty are captured in this measure, only people who move into very deep poverty with a fall in their monthly equivalised household income of at least 20% and £10 are included.

Proportion of moves out of poverty completely – The percentage of people who move out of very deep poverty each year who move above the overall poverty line.

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In 2021–22, 14.4 million people across the UK lived in poverty (with an equivalised household income after housing costs that was less than 60% of the UK median), including 4.2 million children (DWP, 2023a). This was an increase of 1 million people, including 300,000 children, since the previous year. But experiences of poverty vary considerably within this huge group, with people on the very lowest incomes at greater risk of being unable to cover even the essential costs for themselves and their

families. By 2021–22, 9.0% of people (equivalent to about 6.0 million people across the UK) were living in very deep poverty, with an equivalised household income less than 40% of the UK median income, after housing costs.

The proportion of people in poverty who have been living in very deep poverty has increased over the past 20 years, meaning that overall poverty figures mask a worsening situation for many people in poverty. In the latest data, about two-fifths (41.5%) of people in poverty were in very deep poverty, compared with 35.0% 20 years earlier. These people on the very lowest income, particularly for extended periods of time, are much more likely to suffer worse life outcomes than those whose incomes remain closer to the poverty line or who experience deeper poverty on a more transitory basis.

While the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has estimated the number of people who move in and out of poverty each year, their work has focused on the wider group of people in overall poverty (with incomes less than 60% of the UK median, after housing costs). They estimate that 8% of people not in poverty moved into poverty between 2019–20 and 2020–21 (this is equivalent to around 4.2 million people) while 39% of people in poverty moved out of poverty (around 5.2 million people). They also found that 12% of the UK population (around 7.9 million people) had lived in poverty for at least three out of the four years up to 2020–21 (DWP, 2023b). But their analysis does not offer any insights into very deep poverty or the events that lead to it.

This series of reports therefore seeks to provide insight into whether very deep poverty is a transient or more enduring experience, and if this differs between different groups of people. In particular, it investigates:

- Which groups of people are most likely to enter and exit very deep poverty?
- What are the events that make entry to or exit from poverty more likely?
- Which groups of people are most likely to experience persistent very deep poverty?
- What types of support can protect people from the worst consequences of living in very deep poverty?

This report is the first in the series. It provides an overview of rates of entry to and exit from very deep poverty for different groups, and their likelihood of experiencing very deep poverty for a prolonged period of time. It concludes with an overview of the events that increase the chances of people entering or exiting very deep poverty, many of which are investigated in more detail in subsequent reports. These consider the economic factors that increase the risk of very deep poverty and the protection offered by strong social networks, and – in a forthcoming paper – look in detail at very deep poverty among different ethnic groups.

Data and methods:

This research builds on analysis published by the DWP and uses data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey, also known as Understanding Society (University of Essex, 2022), to investigate levels of and factors associated with persistent very deep poverty and moves in and out of very deep poverty on an annual basis. Understanding Society has been collecting data from individuals living in private households across the UK since 2010–11, with 12 waves of data currently available. The fieldwork for each survey wave is conducted over two calendar years (between January 2010 and December 2011), with a new wave starting each January, so the fieldwork period for consecutive waves overlaps. Individuals are interviewed at around the same time in each wave, meaning information is collected about them and their households at approximately annual intervals.

The analysis investigates the factors that are associated with people's likelihood of experiencing persistent very deep poverty over a rolling set of four-year periods and to move into and out of poverty between pairs of survey waves. These factors include household and individual characteristics as measured at the start of the relevant four-year period (for persistent very deep poverty) or two-year period (for entries and exits into very deep poverty). They also include events that occur between survey waves when looking at factors that predict moves into and out of very deep poverty.

All respondents who took part in all four rolling waves of the survey are included in the persistent very deep poverty analysis. When looking at people who move into very deep poverty, the analysis is limited to people with valid responses in pairs of survey years who had not been living in very deep poverty the previous year. Conversely, when looking at people who move out of very deep poverty, only people who had been in very deep poverty in the previous year are included in the analytical sample.

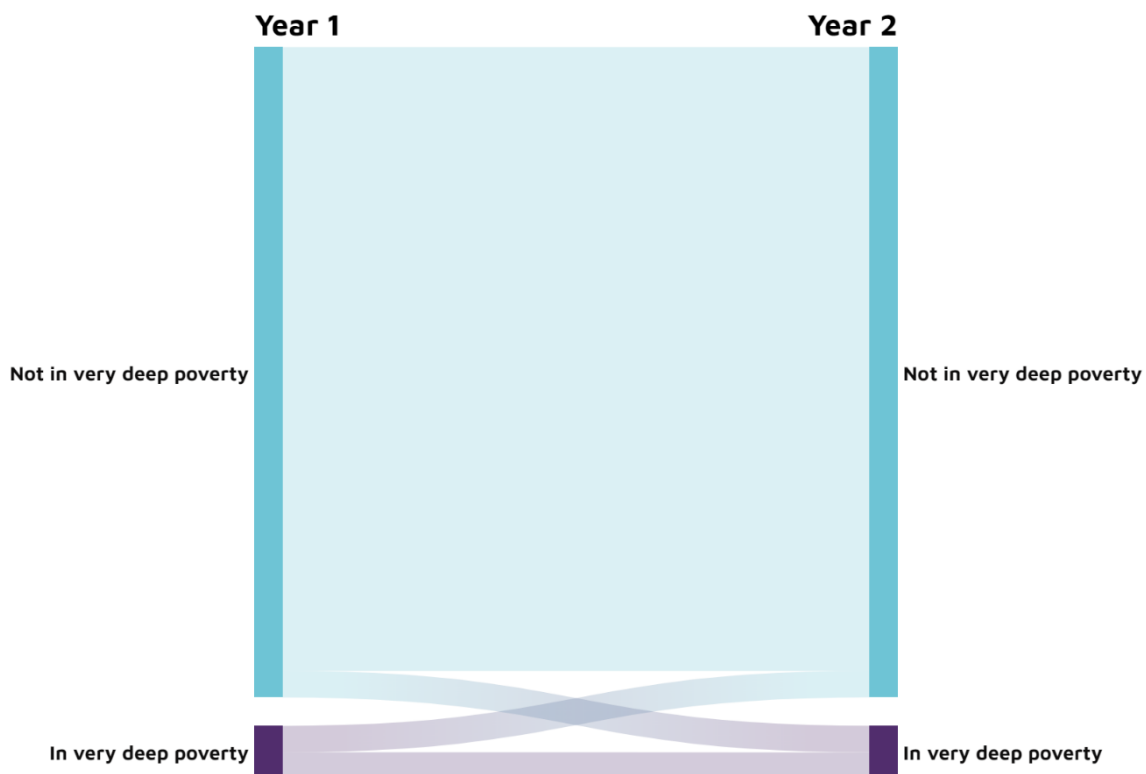
The figures reported from our analysis of Understanding Society data in these papers are rounded to one decimal place. Given that many of the values reported here, (particularly entry rates into very deep poverty and rates of persistent very deep poverty, are small) this additional detail helps to compare values effectively between groups. Small differences between groups should not be over-interpreted, though the key differences quoted in this analysis are statistically significant.

An average of 2.5 million people move into and out of very deep poverty each year

Between 2017–18 and 2020–21, an average of 2.5 million people moved into and out of very deep poverty each year. Therefore, the vast majority of the UK population lived out of poverty consistently, and even among the relatively small group of people in very deep poverty there was a large amount of churn between years (Figure 1).

Nonetheless, given that living on very low incomes for even a short period of time can have a long-term scarring effect, even the 2.5 million people who move out of very deep poverty every year will likely feel its impact for many years to come.

Figure 1: Average annual flows into and out of very deep poverty in the UK, 2017–18 to 2020–21



Source: Understanding Society, 2017–18 to 2020–21

However, while similar numbers of people move into and out of very deep poverty each year, the entry and exit rates (calculated as the percentage of people who do not live in very deep poverty who move into very deep poverty, and the percentage of people who live in very deep poverty who move out of very deep poverty) are very different. This is because over 10 times more people in the UK live in very deep poverty than live out of very deep poverty and so exit rates are much higher than entry rates because of the relative sizes of these groups. When taken as a percentage of people not living in very deep poverty 1 in 25 (4.1%) people move into very deep poverty each year, while around half of people living in very deep poverty move out of very deep poverty each year (50.5%).

Most people who moved into very deep poverty had previously been living above the overall poverty line (with a household income equal or greater than 60% of the UK median income) in the year before they moved into very deep poverty. In fact, about six in ten of the moves each into and out of very deep poverty see people move from above the overall poverty line into very deep poverty, or from very deep poverty out of poverty entirely.

Around 1.9 million people experienced persistent very deep poverty between 2017–18 and 2020–21

The high exit rates from very deep poverty likely help to explain why short-term periods of very deep poverty are much more common than persistent very deep poverty. Between 2017–18 and 2020–21, around 1.9 million people (2.9% of the UK population) experienced persistent very deep poverty with a further 10.4 million (15.5%) experiencing very deep poverty in one or two of these years. This means that over 12 million people experienced very deep poverty at any point between 2017–18 and 2020–21.

Figure 2: Rates of persistent and short-term very deep poverty in the UK, 2017–18 to 2020–21



Source: Understanding Society, 2017–18 to 2020–21

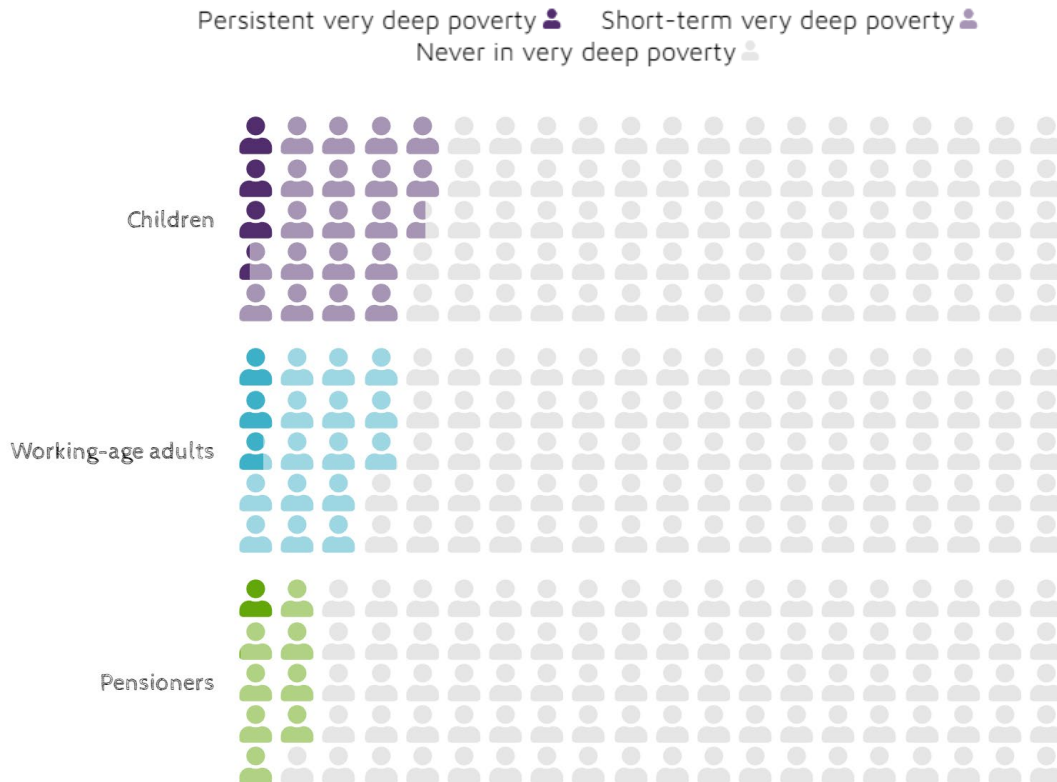
Children have the highest risk of entering very deep poverty and of staying there

Children face the biggest risk of moving into very deep poverty each year. More than one in twenty children (5.9%) not living in very deep poverty moved into very deep poverty each year between 2017–18 and 2020–21. This was more than two-and-a-half times the entry rate for pensioners (2.2%) and notably higher than the entry rate for working-age adults (4.2%). Children (53.0%) and working-age adults (48.7%) were also less likely to move out of very deep poverty than pensioners (54.6%). Therefore, pensioners are both the least likely group to move into very deep poverty and, if they are already in very deep poverty, the most likely to move out the following year.

Unsurprisingly this pattern translates into children and working-age adults being more likely to experience persistent very deep poverty than pensioners. Some 3.4% of children (equivalent to around 480,000 children) and 3.2% of working-age adults (equivalent to around 1.3 million working-age adults) experienced persistent very deep poverty between 2017–18 and 2020–21. Pensioners are half as likely to experience persistent very deep poverty, with 1.4% of pensioners (around 200,000) living in very deep poverty for at least three of these four years.

Pensioners are also much less likely to experience shorter periods of very deep poverty, with 8.4% of pensioners experiencing this in either one or two years out of four between 2017–18 and 2020–21. Working-age adults (16.4%) were almost twice as likely and children (20.0%) almost two-and-a-half times as likely to experience short-term very deep poverty as pensioners. Overall nearly a quarter of children and a fifth of working-age adults lived in very deep poverty in at least one year out of four, compared with one in ten pensioners.

Figure 3: Rates of persistent and short-term very deep poverty by age group, 2017–18 to 2020–21



Source: Understanding Society, 2017–18 to 2020–21

So far, the large sample size available for analysis in each wave of Understanding Society has allowed us to estimate the overall proportion, and number, of people who moved into and out of very deep poverty and who lived in persistent very deep poverty in the latest four waves of data only. However, to gain more robust insights into the experiences of smaller groups of people across the population, data from the past 10 waves of Understanding Society has been pooled for the following analyses.

Single adults and people living in large or young families face a higher risk of moving into very deep poverty

Larger families and families with young children

Living in a family with children, particularly large families and those with young children, brings a higher risk of entering very deep poverty. In families without children, 3.0% of people not in very deep poverty move into very deep poverty the following year, but this increases to 4.8% across all families with children. It is even higher in large families, as people in families with three or more children (7.2%) are more than one-and-a-half times more likely to move into very deep poverty than people in one-child (4.2%) or two-child (4.0%) families.

Figure 4: Average annual entry rates into very deep poverty by family size, 2011–12 to 2020–21



Source: Understanding Society, 2011–12 to 2020–21

Families with pre-school children are also more likely than those with older children to move into very deep poverty, though these differences are less pronounced. Nonetheless, families with a child under 5 years old have higher entry rates into very

deep poverty (5.4%) than families where the youngest child is 5–10 years old (4.5%), 11 to 15 years old (4.3%) or 16 to 19 years old (4.6%).

Many young children who live in families in persistent very deep poverty will have experienced very deep poverty for the majority of their short lives. Some 3.1% of children aged four or under live in families who have experienced very deep poverty in at least three out of the previous four years. This means that around one in thirty pre-school children live in families that have experienced very deep poverty for a period equivalent to more than half of their lives.

Lone parents

People living in lone-parent families have a very high risk of moving into very deep poverty. Among people not in very deep poverty, almost one in ten (9.1%) people in lone-parent families move into very deep poverty the following year. This is more than twice the entry rate for people in couple families with children (3.9%). Furthermore, once they are in very deep poverty, lone-parent families are less likely to move out of very deep poverty than couple families with children (51.5% compared with 58.3%).

These relatively high entry rates into and low exit rates out of very deep poverty translate into an exceptionally high persistent very deep poverty rate for people in lone-parent families. They are more than three times more likely than people in couple families with children to be in persistent very deep poverty (6.7% compared with 2.0%), and almost twice as likely to experience shorter periods of very deep poverty (29.7% compared with 15.1%). This means that, overall, more than a third of people in lone-parent families experience very deep poverty in at least one year out of four, compared with less than a fifth of people in couple families with children.

Single-adult households, even without children, face a higher risk of moving into very deep poverty

The higher entry rate into very deep poverty for single-adult families is not just limited to families with children. The entry rate into very deep poverty is much higher for people in single-adult families than in couple families (5.4% compared with 3.0%). Even among pensioners, who consistently face much lower entry rates in general, the pattern holds. Pensioner couples are the least likely group to move into very deep poverty (1.5%), but this rate is around twice as high for single female pensioners (3.1%), and single male pensioners (2.7%).

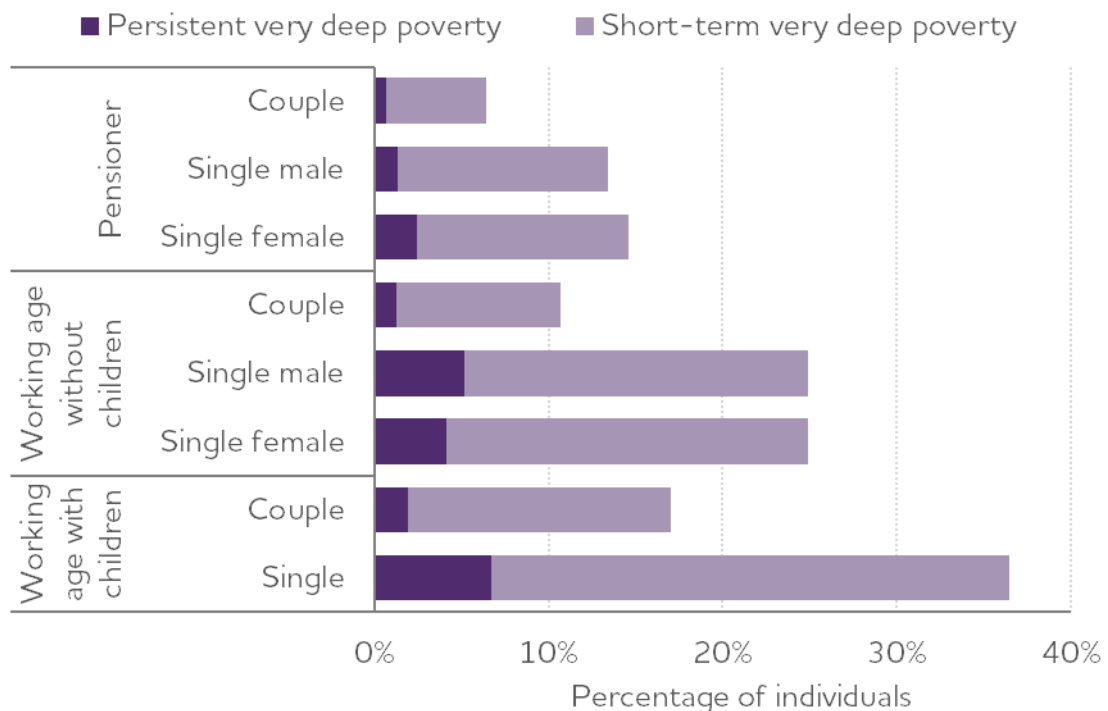
Among working-age families without children only, both single women and single men are more than twice as likely as couples to move into very deep poverty each year (5.3% and 4.7% compared with 2.3%). Although these entry rates are substantially lower than those for lone-parent families, they demonstrate that lone adults consistently face a higher risk of moving into very deep poverty than those living in a couple. Although our measure of income – and so of very deep poverty – is equalised to take into account the number and ages of people living in a household, the additional earnings potential and ability to split housing costs still likely helps to reduce the risk of people in couples moving into very deep poverty. This may also explain why

people living in couples are also more likely than people in equivalent single-adult families to move out of very deep poverty each year.

This combination of higher entry rates into and lower exit rates from very deep poverty also helps to explain the higher rates of persistent very deep poverty experienced by many types of single-adult families compared to equivalent couple families (Figure 5). While persistent very deep poverty rates are especially high for lone-parent families, as outlined above, it also holds for other family types. Working-age single men and women without children are both more than three times as likely as working-age couples without children to live in persistent very deep poverty (5.2% and 4.1% compared with 1.3%). They are also around twice as likely to experience short-term very deep poverty (20.8% and 19.7% compared with 9.4%). Therefore, a quarter of working-age single men or women without children experience very deep poverty in at least one year out of four, compared with only one in ten people in working-age couples without children.

Being working age, having children and being a single adult are therefore all significant risk factors for very deep poverty. Given lone parents experience all three risk factors, there is little surprise that they face a particularly high risk of moving into and staying in very deep poverty. But as working-age couple families with children still have lower persistent very deep poverty rates than both working-age single men and working-age single women without children, living in a lone-adult household appears to be a bigger risk factor than having children for experiencing persistent very deep poverty.

Figure 5: Rates of persistent and short-term very deep poverty by family type, 2017–18 to 2020–21



Source: Understanding Society, 2017–18 to 2020–21

People in families with a disabled adult or unpaid carer are more likely to move into very deep poverty

Disabled adults and unpaid carers often face additional obstacles to earning money through work, and so face a greater risk of living on low incomes. They also face a higher risk of very deep poverty (Clark & Matejic, 2022), even when benefits specifically designed (though not always sufficient) to cover the additional costs associated with having a disability are counted as general household income. Therefore, although we find that people who live with a disabled adult or unpaid carer are more likely to move into and out of very deep poverty than those who do not, using the established measure of income to identify people in very deep poverty likely underestimates the level of hardship they face.

Families with a disabled adult

People who live in a family with a disabled adult are more likely than those who do not to move into very deep poverty (4.0% compared with 3.6%), but the difference is even bigger when we look at working-age households who are 25% more likely to move into very deep poverty if they live with a disabled adult (5.0% compared with 3.9%). But exit rates from very deep poverty are also slightly higher in families with a disabled adult (54.3% compared with 51.3%), including when looking at working-age families only (53.7% compared with 51.0%).

People in families with a disabled adult are slightly more likely than those without to experience persistent (2.7% compared with 2.5%) and short-term (16.0% compared with 14.1%) very deep poverty, though once again the risk increases in working-age families. In these families, the persistent very deep poverty increases to 3.5% for people who live with a disabled adult (compared with 2.6% who do not) and the short-term poverty rate increases to 19.2% (compared with 15.1%). Therefore, in working-age families, more than a fifth of people who live with a disabled adult experience very deep poverty in at least one year out of four.

Families with an unpaid carer

People who live with an unpaid carer (who provides care for at least 20 hours a week) are also more likely to move into very deep poverty each year (4.9% compared with 3.7% who do not). Once again, this entry rate is higher in working-age families with an unpaid carer (5.8% compared with 4.1%). But exit rates are also notably higher for people in families with an unpaid carer (60.4% compared with 51.7% across all families, and 60.1% compared with 51.3% in working-age families only).

These high exit rates likely contribute to high levels of short-term very deep poverty, rather than persistent very deep poverty, among people living with an unpaid carer. People living in families with and without an unpaid carer experience similar levels of persistent very deep poverty (2.4%–2.5% across all families and 2.8%–2.9% in working-age families only), but people who live with an unpaid carer are more likely to experience short-term very deep poverty (17.0% compared with 14.5% across all families, and 19.6% compared with 15.9% in working-age families).

Changes to a family's size and makeup can make them more likely to move into or out of very deep poverty

As well as their personal characteristics, events that happen in a person's life can increase their chances of moving into or out of very deep poverty. Tables A1 and A2 in the annex to this paper show a series of life events that are most strongly associated with higher entry rates into and higher exit rates out of very deep poverty. These are very similar to the events that the DWP found to be associated with moves into and out of poverty overall, with the highest risk factors for moving into poverty and into very deep poverty relating to changes in a household's employment patterns and earnings, as well as family breakdown.

Two further reports in this series look in detail at the ways in which economic events and social support networks can impact people's experiences of very deep poverty. These explore the impact of moving into or out of work, working more or fewer hours and moving into more or less secure types of employment on people's experiences of very deep poverty, and if strong social networks can offer protection from it. The rest of this section highlights some of the other life events that are relevant to the groups discussed above.

Beginning to draw a pension protects people from very deep poverty

People reaching pensionable age are the least likely to move into very deep poverty and the most likely to move out of it. Almost six in ten (58.6%) 65–74-year-olds living in very deep poverty move out of very deep poverty the following year, compared with five in ten (49.0%) people a decade younger. At the same time, the entry rate into very deep poverty for 65–74-year-olds was half the entry rate for 55–64-year-olds (1.7% compared with 3.4%).

Looking in more detail at their different sources of income appears to confirm the importance of beginning to draw a pension to protect older adults from very deep poverty. Between 2010–11 and 2020–21, people aged 55 or over who lived in a household that reported starting to receive state pension income were less likely to move into very deep poverty (2.4% compared with 3.9%) and far more likely to move out of very deep poverty (72.5% compared with 45.0%) than those with no new state pension income. Very similar differences can be seen when looking at people over 55 in families who reported new income from a workplace pension. As most people who report new pension income say that they have started to receive either a state or a workplace pension (and not both), each appears to offer a protective benefit to older families.

Having an additional child increases the risk of entering very deep poverty

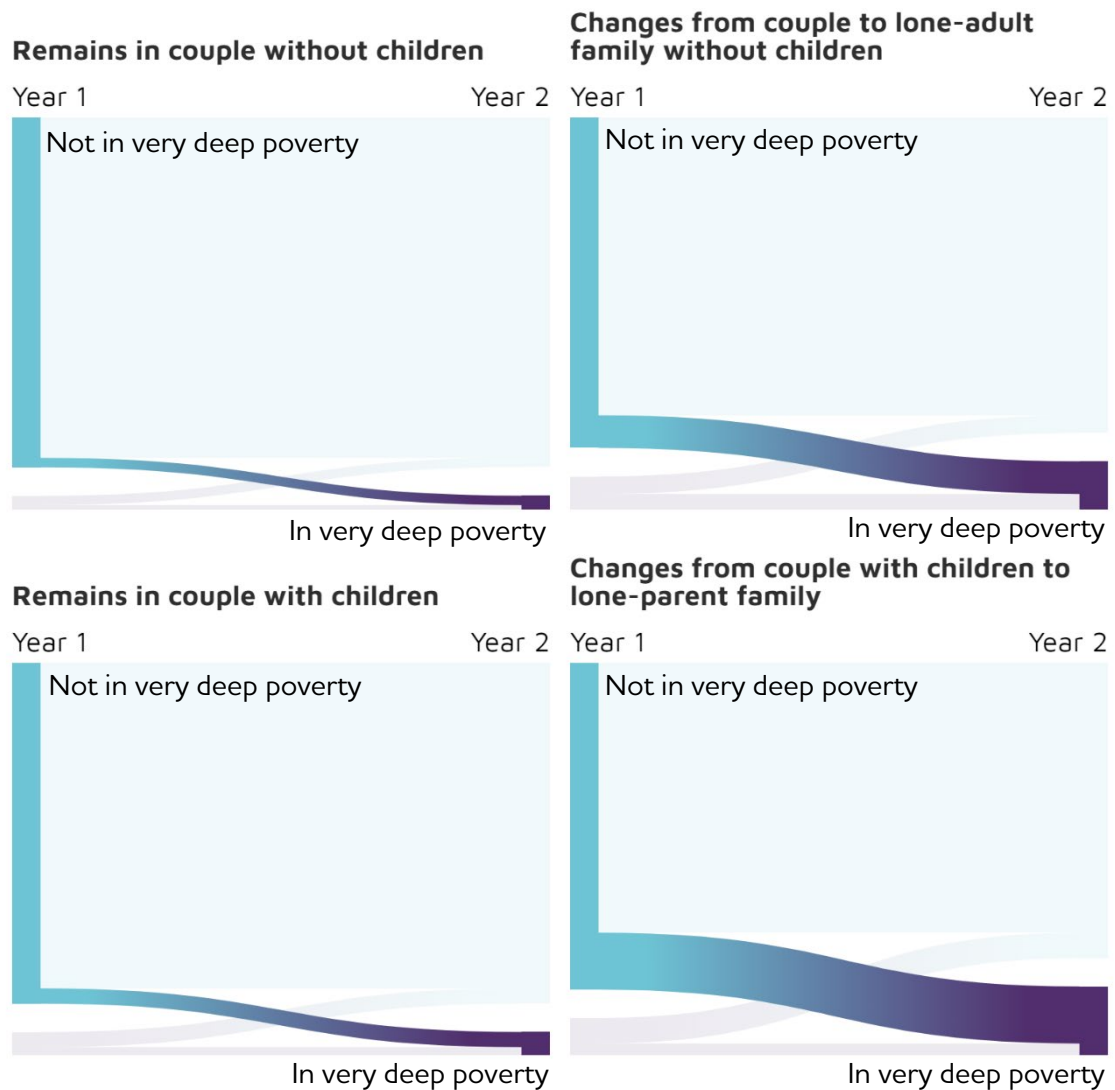
Having children – or having more children – appears to increase the risk of moving into very deep poverty. Among working-age families without children, having a child increases the risk of entering very deep poverty by around a third (from 3.4% to 4.6%). The difference is even greater in families who already have children, where about one in fifteen people in families who have more children moves into very deep poverty (6.7%) compared with around one in twenty people in families where the number of children does not increase (4.8%). Therefore, having additional children appears to increase the risk of moving into very deep poverty more than having a first child.

Relationship breakdown is a major driver of very deep poverty

In couple families, relationship breakdown more than doubles the chance of someone moving into very deep poverty. Among people not living in very deep poverty, 2.8% of people who remain in couple families move into very deep poverty, compared with 7.7% of people who move from a couple to a single-adult family (no matter if they have children or not).

The risk of moving into very deep poverty is even higher in families with children who experience family breakdown. Around one in seven people whose family status changes from living in a couple family with children to a lone-parent family the following year (14.1%) also moves into very deep poverty over this period. This is more than three-and-a-half times the entry rate for people who remained in couple families with children (3.7%). In families without children, 7.0% of people not in very deep poverty move into very deep poverty when they move from a couple to a single-adult family, compared with 2.1% of people who remain in a couple family.

Figure 6: Average annual entry rates into very deep poverty by changes to family status, 2011–12 to 2020–21



Source: Understanding Society, 2011–12 to 2020–21

People who live in a family where someone becomes disabled or a carer face a higher risk of moving into very deep poverty

By looking at the experience of people who live with adults who newly report a limiting disability or become unpaid social carers, we can investigate the impact of these changes in people’s families on their chances of moving into and out of very deep poverty.

Families with an adult with a new disability

People who live in a household where someone newly reports being disabled are more likely to move into very deep poverty. The difference in entry rates is slightly bigger for working-age families (5.1% compared with 3.7%) than across all families (4.3% compared with 3.5%). These differences are broadly in line with the differences we saw when we compared the entry rates of people who did and did not already live with a disabled adult earlier in this paper. However, when we look only at the people

who live in a household where someone newly reports a disability, families who started to receive additional costs benefits (Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance) were much less likely to move into very deep poverty than those who did not (2.1% compared with 4.3%). Therefore, even though the purpose of these benefits is to cover the additional costs associated with having a disability, this income may in fact need to be redirected by many families with a newly disabled adult to cover essential costs.

Exit rates from very deep poverty are very similar for people who live in families with an adult who newly reports being disabled, and those who do not (around half of people across all families and in working-age families only). However, when we look at the group of people who live in a family with an adult with a new disability only, people who live in a household that has started to receive an additional costs benefit are almost fifty percent more likely to be considered to move out of poverty than those who did not (73.7% compared with 49.9%).

Families with a new unpaid carer

Families where someone takes on unpaid caring responsibilities are more likely than those with no new unpaid carer to move into very deep poverty (4.6% compared with 3.6%). The entry rate for working-age families with a new unpaid carer is even higher (5.5%). But families where someone starts being an unpaid carer are actually more likely to move out of very deep poverty than other families, with an exit rate of 59.7% compared with 51.1% across all families, and 59.0% compared with 50.7% in working-age families only. When we look only at families with an unpaid carer who start to receive disability benefits, these exit rates increase even further (to 74.1% and 73.7% respectively).

The biggest risk factors for moving into, and staying in, very deep poverty are broadly the same as those for poverty overall

The 2.5 million people who moved into very deep poverty annually between 2017–18 and 2020–21 faced huge challenges to support their families, even if many managed to move out of poverty the following year. For the 1.9 million people who experienced persistent very deep poverty over this period, the challenges are even starker.

As shown above, single-adult families (particularly lone-parent families), large families and those with young children, a disabled adult or unpaid social carer face a higher risk of moving into very deep poverty, and of living in very deep poverty for a prolonged period of time. This is particularly true for recent lone-parent families, with family breakdown and disruption among the strongest risk factors for moving into very deep poverty. Many of these risk factors are the same events and characteristics that increase the risk of people moving into, and staying in, poverty more broadly.

Annex: Key life events associated with moves into and out of very deep poverty and poverty

Table A1: Top 10 events most strongly associated with moves into very deep poverty and into poverty

Experience of ...	Rank of entry rate	
	Very deep poverty (JRF analysis)	Poverty (DWP analysis)
A change from a working to a workless household	1	2
A change to a lone-parent household	2	1
A fall in household earnings	3	3
A fall in the number of full-time workers in the household and a change in household size	4	4
A fall in the number of workers in the household and a change in household size	5	5
A fall in the number of workers in the household	6	9
A fall in benefit income	7	7
A change from full-time to part-time work in the household	8	10
A change from living as a couple to single person status	9	6
A fall in the number of full-time workers in household	10	8

Note: Entry rate rankings into poverty are the average of the annual entry rates published by the DWP

Source: Understanding Society, 2011–12 to 2020–21

Table A2: Top 10 events most strongly associated with moves out of very deep poverty and out of poverty

Experience of ...	Rank of exit rate	
	Very deep poverty (JRF analysis)	Poverty (DWP analysis)
An increase in occupational pension income	1	2
An increase in the number of workers in household and a change in household size	2	4
An increase in household earnings	3	4
An increase in the number of full-time workers in household and a change in household size	4	1
An increase in the number of workers in the household	4	8
An increase in benefit income	4	9
A change from being a lone-parent household	7	15
An increase in the number of full-time workers in household	8	3
An increase in investment income	9	6
A change in household type	10	11

Note: Exit rate rankings out of poverty are the average of the annual exit rates published by the DWP

Source: Understanding Society, 2011–12 to 2020–21

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About the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) is an independent social change organisation working to solve UK poverty. Through research, policy, collaboration and practical solutions, we aim to inspire action and change that will create a prosperous UK without poverty.

We are working with private, public and voluntary sectors, and people with lived experience of poverty, to loosen poverty's grip on people who are struggling to get by.

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