

# Poor children in rich countries: why we need policy action <sup>[1]</sup>

Policy brief on child well-being

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**Source:** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**Format:** Report

**Publication Date:** 30 Sep 2018

## AVAILABILITY

PDF available online <sup>[2]</sup>

## Summary

On average across the OECD, almost one child in seven lives in income poverty – defined as living on a disposable income that is at most half the national median.

Child poverty rates increased in almost two-thirds of OECD countries following the Great Recession. The share of children living below the pre-crisis poverty line (as measured by ‘anchored’ poverty rates) has increased sharply in Greece, Italy and Spain.

In many countries, the depth as well as breadth of poverty has increased in recent years. The income of children in low-income families has dropped, with the largest declines for children in families with the smallest incomes.

Stable, full-time parental employment is central to efforts to protect children from poverty. If all parents from poor families were in paid employment, the poverty rate for individuals in households with children would fall from 11% to less than 6% on average.

Promoting work among low-income parents requires strengthened support for affordable childcare services. Moreover, parents from the poorest families often face multiple obstacles to their return to work, which requires both appropriate and intensive assistance.

A budget-neutral redistribution of family and housing benefits to poor families can help reduce child poverty. But children in poor families experience multiple deprivation (including poor housing conditions and a lack of educational opportunities), which calls for a comprehensive strategy combating poverty in all its dimensions.

**Region:** International <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** poverty <sup>[4]</sup>

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