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Beyond the Household: Child-Centred Multidimensional Deprivation and Household Income in Ireland

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Introduction

Studies have shown that in higher-income countries, lower household income does not always overlap with child deprivation e.g. (Chzhen et al., 2018; Main & Bradshaw, 2012).

This study examines the degree of overlap between low household income and multidimensional child deprivation in Ireland.

Objectives:

1. To develop a child-centred multidimensional deprivation index with GUI '08 Cohort data, using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) as a guide to select indicators of deprivation.
 2. To use this index to gain a new perspective on the association between household income and multidimensional child deprivation in Ireland.
- By using a child-centred measure, this study addresses the limitations of Ireland's official household-based measure of deprivation (SILC).
 - Although it provides a strong tool in predicting child-specific deprivation (C. T. Whelan & Maître, 2012), it cannot capture the specific items that deprived children go without, nor considers the potentially unequal distribution of resources within households (Kerrins et al., 2011).

Theoretical Background

- This study is grounded in a relative conceptualisation of poverty emerging from Peter Townsend's (1979) definition:

“Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities” (p. 31)
- It conceptualises poverty as multidimensional and best captured at the individual level.
- Using the CRC to select child deprivation indicators
 - Acknowledges that poverty denies children their internationally enshrined rights (Gordon et al., 2003).
 - Means that the final indicators are important to any child's development, regardless of their socio-economic status, culture, or country of residence (De Neubourg et al., 2013).

Existing Literature

International studies

- Some studies employ participatory approaches to developing child-centred deprivation indices e.g. (Main & Bradshaw, 2012; Sollis, 2019).
- Others rely on alternative methodologies e.g. UNICEF's Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) approach (de Neubourg et al. 2013) e.g. (Chzhen et al., 2018; Chzhen & Ferrone, 2017).
- These studies found that not all deprived children lived in income-poor households (Chzhen et al., 2018; Chzhen & Ferrone, 2017; Main & Bradshaw, 2012).

Existing Literature

Irish studies

Many Irish studies employ the existing 11 item household-level deprivation measure with SILC or GUI data e.g. (Gibbons et al., 2023; Li & Chzhen, 2024; Regan & Maître, 2020; Russell et al., 2025; C. T. Whelan & Maître, 2012).

Others have developed new child-centred multidimensional deprivation measures emerging from GUI data:

- ‘Multi-Dimensional Deprivation Among 9-Year-Olds in Ireland: An Analysis of the Growing Up in Ireland Survey’, Williams et al. (2014)
 - Used a cross-section of GUI data (‘98 cohort at age 9)
- ‘The Dynamics of Multidimensional Poverty in a Cohort of Irish Children’, Madden (2022)
 - Longitudinal approach, using data from the ‘98 cohort at 9, 13, and 17.

Methodology

'08 Cohort at ages 9 (Wave 5, 2017/18) and 13 (Wave 6, 2021/22)

- Captures the transition from primary school to secondary school, and the transition from childhood to adolescence.
- Final sample consisted of 5,442 children.

Dimensions and Indicators

- Six dimensions were identified using the CRC: nutrition, access to healthcare, protection from violence, access to information, leisure and housing.
- Inconsistencies in the variables available at each wave mean indicators are not identical between waves.
- Each dimension is composed of two indicators.
- Union approach- if a child is deprived according to one indicator in a dimension, they are deprived in that dimension.
- Multidimensional deprivation rate = % of children deprived on 2+ dimensions

Corresponding
UNCRC Article

Article 24

Table 1 Deprivation Dimensions and Indicators

Dimension	Age 9 (Wave 5)			Age 13 (Wave 6)		
	Indicator Question(s)	Deprivation Threshold	Respondent	Indicator Question(s)	Deprivation Threshold	Respondent
<i>Nutrition</i>	In the last 24 hours has Child had fresh fruit? / In the last 24 hours has Child had cooked vegetables? / In the last 24 hours has Child had raw vegetables or salad?	Deprived if answered "Not at all" to each question.	M	How many portions of fruit or vegetables would Child usually have in a day?	Deprived if answered "None."	M
	Does child usually have something to eat before going to school?	Deprived if answered "No."	M	How often do you have breakfast (either at home or at school)?	Deprived if answered "Less than once a week/Never."	C
<i>Access to Healthcare</i>	Which of the following best describes how regularly child visits the dentist?	Deprived if answered "Never/ Almost Never."	M	Which of the following best describes how regularly Child visits the dentist?	Deprived if answered "Never."	M
	Is child covered by a medical card? / Is child covered by private medical insurance?	Deprived if answered "No" to both questions	M	Is Child covered by a medical card? / Is Child covered by private medical insurance?	Deprived if answered "No" to both questions	M
<i>Protection from Violence</i>	Has child been victim of bullying in last year?	Deprived if answered "Yes."	M	Has child been a victim of bullying in last 3 months?	Deprived if answered "Yes."	M
	How often do you do the following when child misbehaves? - Shout or yell at him/her?	Deprived if answered "Regularly/ Always".	M	When you misbehave, how often do your parents shout at you?	Deprived if answered "Always".	C

Article 24

Article 19

Corresponding UNCRC Article Articles 13 & 17

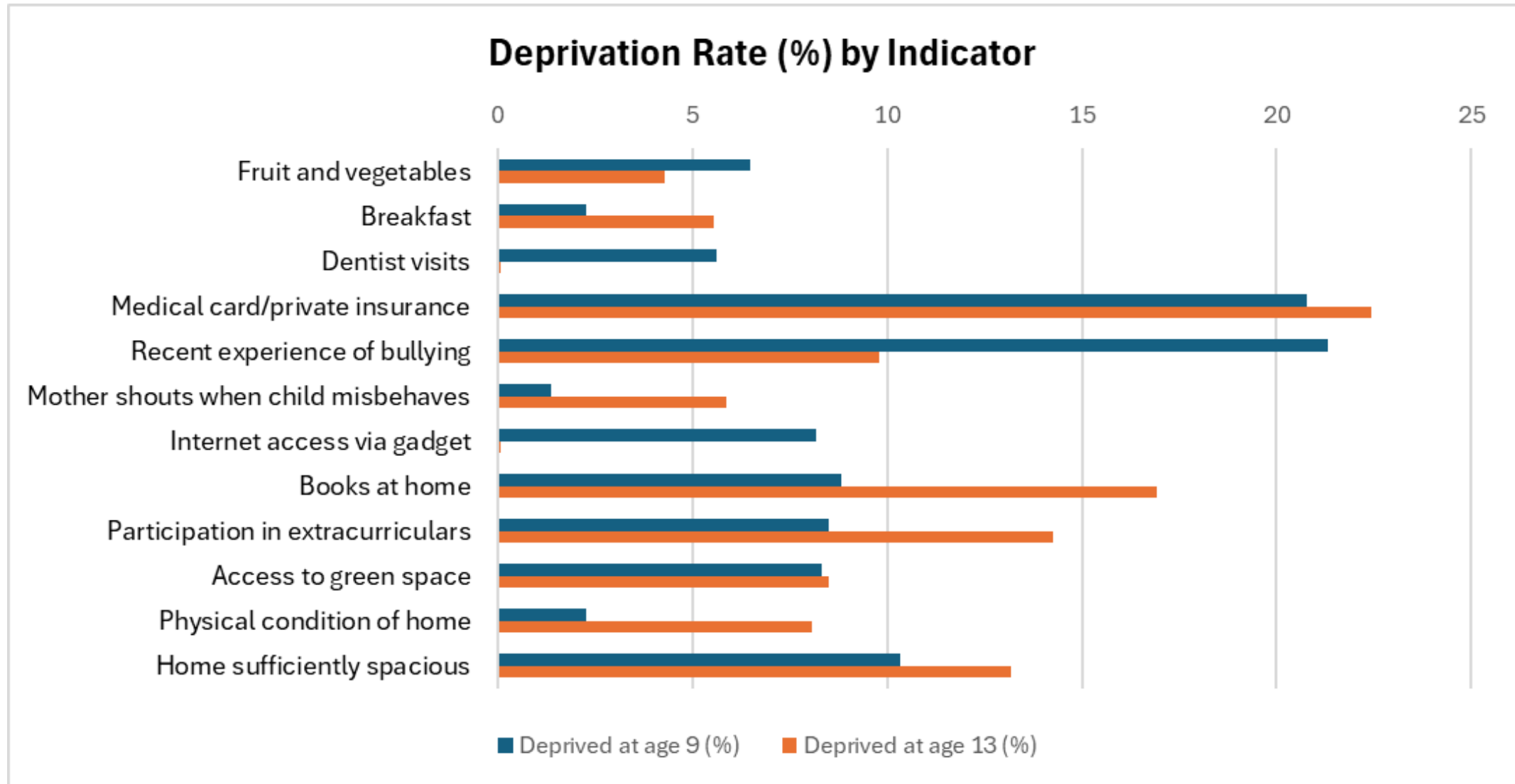
Article 31

Article 27

Table 1 Continued

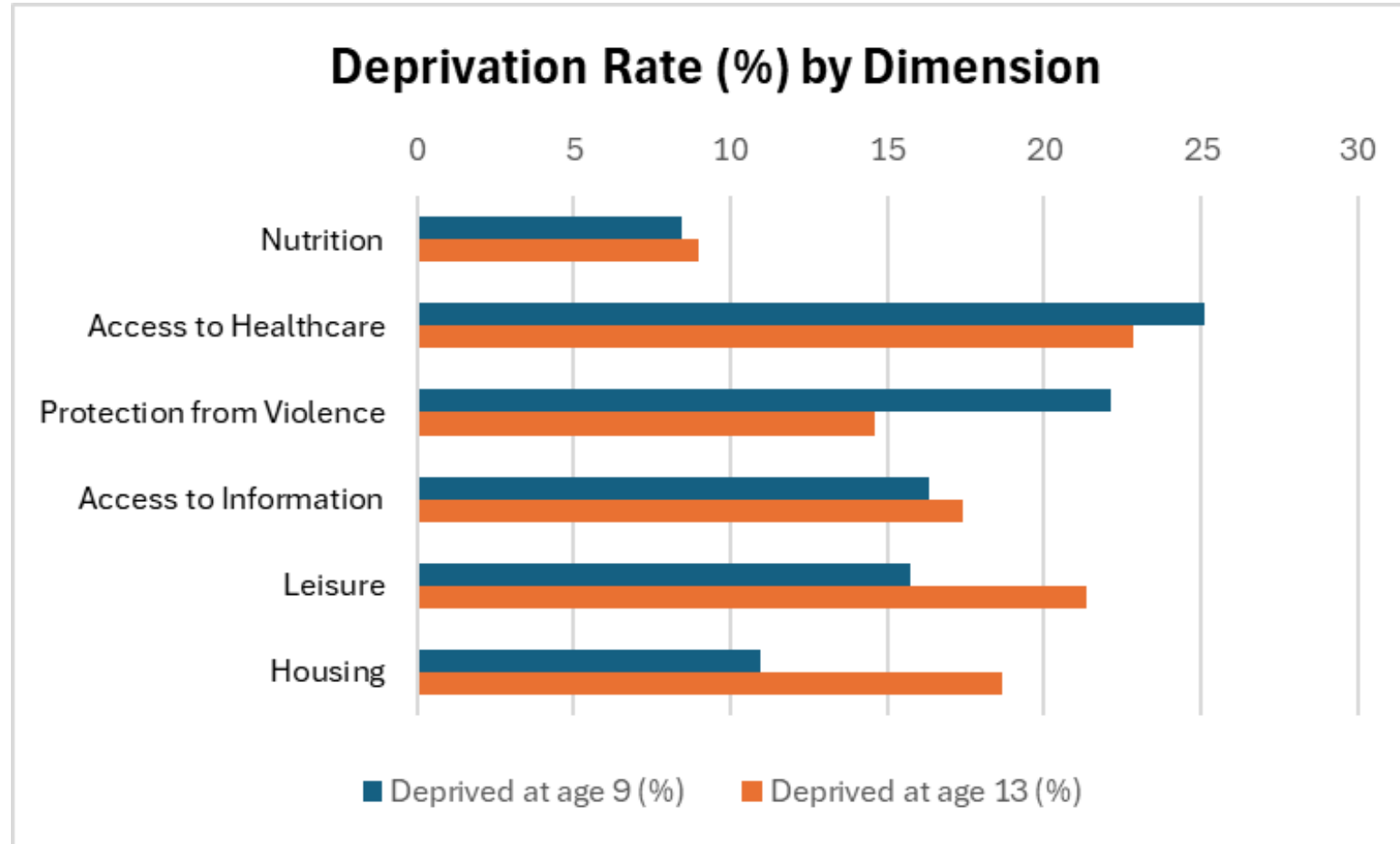
<i>Access to Information</i>	Do you have a computer, iPad, smartphone, or other gadget at home that you can use to access the internet?	Deprived if answered "No."	C	Does Study Child have access to the internet through a smartphone, tablet, laptop or other computer?	Deprived if answered "No."	M
	About how many children's books does child have access to in your home now, including any library books? Would you estimate:	Deprived if answered "None", or "Less than 10."	M	How many books (including e-books) does Study Child have access to in the home?	Deprived if answered "None", or "1 to 10."	M
<i>Leisure</i>	During an average week, does child participate in... Team sports / Individual sports / Drama classes / Arts and craft / Youth club / Religious club/group/ Music/dance / Scouts/guides/ boy's brigade/ girl's brigade / Other activities?	Deprived if answered "No" to all.	M	How often do you play sports with a coach or instructor, or as part of an organised team? / How often do you take part in dance lessons? / How often do you take part in art, crafts, drama or music lessons, clubs or rehearsals? / How often do you take part in clubs or groups (e.g. Guides, Scouts, youth club, community, church groups)?	Deprived if answered "Less often or never" to all.	C
	There are safe parks, playgrounds and play spaces in this area.	Deprived if answered "Strongly disagree."	M	Is there a park, beach or green space within 2 kilometres of home	Deprived if answered "No."	M
<i>Housing</i>	Accommodation: Poor conditions in the home (damp, drafts, leaks etc.)	Deprived if answered "Yes."	M	Leaking roof/ damp walls /rot in windows or door frames - Problems with your accommodation	Deprived if answered "Yes."	M
	Accommodation: Too small	Deprived if answered "Yes."	M	Too small, not enough space - Problems with your accommodation	Deprived if answered "Yes."	M

Findings: Deprivation Rates



Note: N=5,442

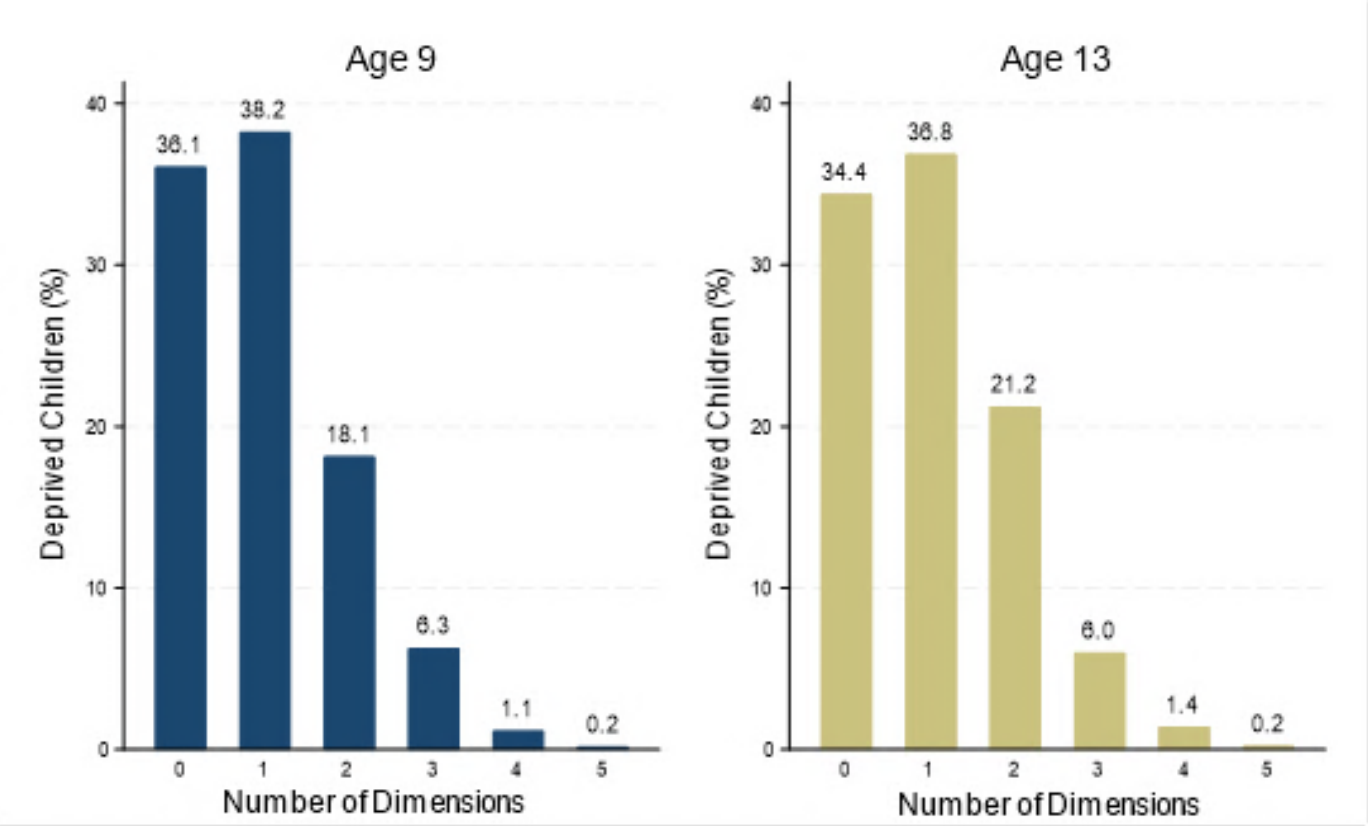
Findings: Deprivation Rates



Note: N=5,442

Findings: Deprivation Rates

Distribution of dimensional deprivations at ages 9 and 13



Note: N=5,442

Table 2 Deprivation Rate at Each Wave		
	Rate (%) at Age 9	Rate (%) at Age 13
Multidimensional Deprivation (2+)	26	29

Note: N=5,442

Key Takeaways

- At both age 9 and 13, over one fifth of children did not have either private health insurance or a medical card.
 - Inclusion of older children in the free GP visit card scheme could be beneficial.
- At 13 there were much higher shares of children deprived on the leisure and housing dimensions than at age 9.
 - Deprivation in the leisure dimension at 13 could have increased due to the higher costs associated with teenage children or reflect lower participation in the aftermath of COVID.
 - Increased housing deprivation could reflect overcrowding due to the addition of siblings.
- The multidimensional deprivation rate varied slightly (26% at age 9, 29% at age 13).
- Varying deprivation indicators mean we cannot know if findings represent real change over time or are artefacts of measurement.

Findings: Income and Deprivation

Share (%) of Multidimensionally Deprived Children within each Income Quintile

Income quintile	Age 9		Age 13	
	Deprived (%)	Not Deprived (%)	Deprived (%)	Not Deprived (%)
1 st	37	63	36	64
2 nd	30	70	35	65
3 rd	25	75	31	69
4 th	22	78	27	73
5 th	15	85	17	83

Note: Income category “1st” denotes the lowest income quintile. Since shares of multidimensionally deprived children in the “Missing” income category are excluded from this table, N =5,016 at age 9 and N=4, 937 at age 13.

Average marginal effects from logistic regression of multidimensional deprivation status on income quintile.

	(1)		(2)	
	Age 9	Age 13	Age 9	Age 13
Income quintile (ref: 5 th quintile)				
1 st	0.22***	0.19***	0.10**	0.10**
2 nd	0.16***	0.18***	0.08**	0.10**
3 rd	0.10***	0.14***	0.05*	0.09**
4 th	0.07**	0.10***	0.05	0.07**
Missing	0.09**	0.09**	0.05	0.05
Child's gender (ref: Male)				
Female			-0.02	0.04*
Mother's age group				
(ref: 50 or older)				
20-39 years			0.08	0.17***
40-49 years			-0.02	0.04*
Family status (ref: Couple family)				
Lone parent family			0.09**	0.06*
Mother's highest educational level				
(ref: Postgraduate)				
School			0.21***	0.21***
Higher Education			0.07***	0.11***
Mother's employment status				
(ref: Employed)				
Studying/Training			0	0.10
Not in work			-0.02	-0.05*
N	5,442	5,442	5,442	5,442

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. The dependent variable in logistic regression (1) without controls and (2) with controls is a binary indicator variable for multidimensional deprivation status. Income category "1st" denotes the lowest income quintile. Reference categories are included in brackets.

Policy Implications

- Supplementing existing household deprivation and income measures with a child-specific deprivation index at the national level would provide policy makers with comprehensive information on children's personal and household circumstances.
 - This data could be used to better target policy interventions in combatting and preventing child poverty and deprivation.
- Since not all multidimensionally deprived children live in low income households, non-monetary policy interventions in Ireland have the potential to be effective in meeting immediate needs.
- The dimensions of deprivation identified in this study highlight areas where interventions could be beneficial in improving children's well-being e.g. GP visit cards, subsidised leisure activities, etc.

Thank you!