

Gender

Women occupy more part-time and lower paid jobs. Women get paid less for the same work. Women are expected to stay at home and care for their children; therefore they cannot earn a wage. Childminding costs can also be very expensive. Any woman married or living with a man claiming social welfare is his dependent. The social welfare payment for a dependent is less than for the main claimant.

Age

Some retired or elderly citizens may have low pensions. They may find it hard to find employment due to their advanced age.

Ownership or Rental of Home

Some people cannot afford a mortgage and have to rent. The rent of a house can fluctuate and some people may not be able to afford it. There is a lack of public housing to meet public housing needs.

Discrimination

We prejudge when we form an opinion of someone based on issues such as gender, social status, disability, cultural background or religious beliefs. We discriminate when we treat someone unjustly because of our prejudice. Many companies choose to employ people from their own country even though a foreign person applying for the job may be just as qualified. Sometimes because of discrimination based on a person's race, they have difficulty finding jobs which can lead to financial difficulties.

Sexual orientation

In modern society there is some discrimination against homosexuals. Some employers discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation and this can cause problems in the workplace and even unemployment, resulting in poverty.

CONCLUSION

The causes of poverty are many and varied. The above are among the main causes of poverty in Ireland. They cover a broad range of situations and all contribute to people being in poverty. Many are also effects of poverty, showing the cycle works both ways. If poverty is to be eliminated, these causes must be tackled.

This leaflet is one of four, written by students in Blackrock College Dublin, Mount Temple Comprehensive School Dublin, St. Leo's College Carlow and Tallaght Community School Dublin. The Combat Poverty Agency funded this initiative.

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 **Combat Poverty Agency**
working for a poverty-free Ireland

why are
people
poor?

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty is not inevitable. Poverty is an outcome of the way society allocates resources such as money, wealth, jobs, education, housing, healthcare and so on. The political system, the labour market, the social welfare system and the taxation system all influence the allocation of resources in society.

THE MAIN CAUSES OF POVERTY

There are many different causes of poverty. The main causes include:

- ☒ Employment status
- ☒ Social circumstances and social class
- ☒ Education
- ☒ Size and type of family
- ☒ Ill health
- ☒ Disability
- ☒ Gender
- ☒ Age
- ☒ Ownership or rental of a home
- ☒ Discrimination
- ☒ Sexual orientation

Employment status

Many people who are unemployed or who have low paying jobs have serious financial difficulties. These people find it difficult to pay for basic needs such as food and housing costs such as high rents or mortgages.

Social class

A social class refers to a group of people having similar social status. Some people consider society to be organised like a ladder with some groups or classes at the top and others at the lower end or bottom. People's risk of poverty may be linked to their social class or where they are on the 'ladder'.

Educational experience

Leaving school early, not going to college or other negative educational experiences often results in unemployment or having a lower paid job when people are adults. The lack of educational qualifications can cause poverty.

Size and type of family

A large family may have to cope with extra large expenses e.g. grocery bills. School expenses can also cause large families many financial problems. A large foreign family may find it harder to get by due to racial persecution. Lone parent families experience a high risk of poverty.

Ill health

A poor quality of health can hinder your chances of employment. Poverty and unemployment can also cause ill health. Large medical bills can mean ill people slip into poverty.

Disability

Often, disabled people are unable to find jobs due to discrimination and a lack of facilities in workplaces. These contribute to a high rate of unemployment for disabled people and contribute to poverty.

