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**Interviews, further briefing and stats available. Images** **available** [**here**](https://we.tl/t-E8fOJUFnRm) **(please credit Save the Children). Local authority and constituency data available below.**

**WELSH GOVERNMENT MUST MAKE CHILD POVERTY A PRIORITY AS NEW FIGURES SHOW THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE AHEAD**

* Wales now has the worst child poverty rate of all the UK nations, with 31% of children living below the poverty line.
* Even before the pandemic, almost 200,000 children were living in poverty in Wales, with a higher proportion of children affected than at any point in the past 5 years.
* In every local authority in Wales, at least one in five children are living below the poverty line.
* Cardiff is the local authority with the highest child poverty rate in Wales, with over a third (36%) of children in Cardiff South and Penarth living below the poverty line.
* Wrexham is the local authority area with the greatest growth in child poverty over the past five years - rates have risen at almost three times the Welsh national average.
* Three quarters (75%) of children living in poverty in 2019/20 were in households with at least one working adult; up from one third (61%) in 2014/15.

New figures released today reveal that even before the pandemic, in some parts of Wales, almost 4 in 10 children are growing up in poverty, once housing costs are taken into account.

The research carried out by Loughborough University for the UK End Child Poverty Coalition shows that parts of North and West Wales have seen the most dramatic rise in child poverty in the past five years, fuelled by stagnating family incomes. At the same time, high housing costs in Cardiff are pushing many families to the brink.

Of the UK nations, Wales has the highest percentage of children living in poverty nationwide (31%), followed by England (30%) then Scotland and Northern Ireland (24% each).

Over the years, the proportion of children living in poverty who are in a household with at least one working adult has also increased sharply across Wales, up from 61% five years ago to three quarters (75%) on the eve of the pandemic.

The new data also confirms that the three constituencies with the highest child poverty rates are in South Wales Central, with Cardiff South and Penarth showing a particularly steep increase in the number of children in poverty over the past 5 years. The data also exposes inequality within parts of Wales, with Cardiff constituencies occupying both the highest and lowest places on the constituency rankings. In the south of the city, almost 4 in 10 children are living below the poverty line, compared to 2 in 10 in Cardiff North.

Child poverty rates have continued to rise right across Wales, with 20 of Wales’ 22 local authorities seeing an increase over the past 5 years. Rural and coastal areas continue to see marked rises in the prevalence of child poverty, with Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion all seeing rates increase above the Welsh average. In Wrexham, the child poverty rate rose three times faster than the Welsh average, with over 1000 more children living in poverty in the county compared to five years ago.

The coalition is calling on the UK Government to recognise the scale of the problem and its impact on children’s lives and to create a credible plan to end child poverty which must include a commitment to increase child benefits. Given the extent to which families are already struggling, the planned £20 p/w cut to Universal Credit in October should be revoked. The support should also be extended to those still receiving financial assistance from the old benefit system, referred to as ‘legacy benefits’, before they are switched to Universal Credit.

The incoming Welsh Government also needs to prioritise reducing child poverty with the network in Wales calling for a delivery plan with clear measurable milestones and ambitious targets to ensure that no child is disadvantaged because of family income. They are also calling for further support for parents to be able to engage in their children’s learning and development at home and for the eligibility of free school meals to be extended to all children, including over the school holidays, where a parent or guardian is in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent benefits.

Organisations of the End Child Poverty Network in Wales have been hearing first-hand from families on how they have been impacted by the pandemic and their concerns for the future.

**Melanie Simmonds, Head of Save the Children in Wales** said: *“We’ve repeatedly heard from families living on low incomes how they have had to cut back on essentials such as food, heating and clothing for children and are sinking deeper into debt. Many parents also didn’t have the tools, resources and skills to adequately support their child’s learning and development at home which led to a lot of stress and anxiety.*

*“**Action needs to be taken at all levels of government. We are urging the UK Government to scrap plans to cut Universal Credit given parents and children are having a tough enough time as it is. The role of Welsh Government and local authorities will also be crucial to make sure we are going in the right direction in reducing child poverty.”*

**Ellie Harwood,** **Wales Development Manager at Child Poverty Action Group** added: *“The figures speak for themselves – the situation for children couldn’t be starker. An unacceptable number of children continue to grow up in poverty in Wales, even though the majority have parents who are in work. We can’t allow this situation to go on – poverty harms every aspect of a child’s development and has long-term consequences for our society as a whole.*

*‘While the main social security powers remain in Westminster, there are many things public bodies can do to reduce cost pressures on families in Wales. We need dedicated investment in all the services that help children to thrive, in order to reduce inequality across Wales.”*

**Sean O'Neill, Policy Director at Children in Wales concluded**: “*One thing is certain, is that unless urgent action is now taken to reverse this upward trend by all levels of Government, yet more children will be swept up into poverty in the months and years to come. Although the powers to tackle child poverty do not completely rest in Wales, this has to be the number one priority for the new Welsh Government. We will continue to call for an ambitious national Child Poverty Reduction Plan to help free children and families from the grip of poverty here in Wales*.”

The full report ‘Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2019/20’ as well as tables with Constituency and Local Authority data are available [here](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/local-child-poverty-data-2014-15-2019-20/).

**Changes in child poverty rates in Welsh Local authorities, after housing costs, 2014/15 – 2019/20**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Local authority** | **Rate in 2014/15** | **Rate in 2019/20** | **% point change** |
| Wrexham / Wrecsam | 28.2% | 31.9% | 3.8% |
| Ceredigion / Ceredigion | 29.1% | 31.8% | 2.7% |
| Cardiff / Caerdydd | 30.7% | 33.1% | 2.4% |
| Pembrokeshire / Sir Benfro | 30.3% | 32.4% | 2.1% |
| Carmarthenshire / Sir Gaerfyrddin | 29.3% | 31.3% | 2.0% |
| Blaenau Gwent / Blaenau Gwent | 30.8% | 32.8% | 2.0% |
| Neath Port Talbot / Castell-nedd Port Talbot | 28.7% | 30.5% | 1.8% |
| Denbighshire / Sir Ddinbych | 28.8% | 30.5% | 1.7% |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf / Rhondda Cynon Taf | 30.1% | 31.7% | 1.5% |
| Gwynedd / Gwynedd | 28.6% | 30.0% | 1.4% |
| Isle of Anglesey / Ynys Môn | 30.0% | 31.4% | 1.4% |
| Conwy / Conwy | 29.2% | 30.5% | 1.4% |
| Powys / Powys | 28.8% | 30.0% | 1.2% |
| Bridgend / Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr | 28.1% | 29.3% | 1.2% |
| Caerphilly / Caerffili | 29.8% | 30.9% | 1.1% |
| Merthyr Tydfil / Merthyr Tudful | 30.7% | 31.8% | 1.1% |
| Newport / Casnewydd | 31.5% | 32.5% | 1.1% |
| Swansea / Abertawe | 28.8% | 29.8% | 1.0% |
| Torfaen / Tor-faen | 30.1% | 30.8% | 0.7% |
| Flintshire / Sir y Fflint | 26.6% | 26.7% | 0.1% |
| Vale of Glamorgan / Bro Morgannwg | 25.5% | 25.0% | -0.5% |
| Monmouthshire / Sir Fynwy | 24.1% | 23.4% | -0.7% |

**Percentage of children below 60% median income (AHC) in Welsh Constituencies**

**2019/20**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Constituency** | **Senedd Region** | **% of children living below 60% median income, 2019/20** |
| Cardiff South and Penarth | South Wales Central | 36.1% |
| Rhondda | South Wales Central | 35.3% |
| Cynon Valley | South Wales Central | 34.5% |
| Newport East | South Wales East | 33.5% |
| Preseli Pembrokeshire | Mid and West Wales | 33.5% |
| Blaenau Gwent | South Wales East | 33.2% |
| Cardiff Central | South Wales Central | 33.0% |
| Montgomeryshire | Mid and West Wales | 32.8% |
| Ceredigion | Mid and West Wales | 32.7% |
| Carmarthen W and S Pembrokeshire | Mid and West Wales | 32.7% |
| Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney | South Wales East | 32.3% |
| Brecon and Radnorshire | Mid and West Wales | 31.9% |
| Clwyd South | North Wales | 31.9% |
| Ynys Mon | North Wales | 31.9% |
| Swansea East | South Wales West | 31.9% |
| Llanelli | Mid and West Wales | 31.7% |
| Cardiff West | South Wales Central | 31.6% |
| Swansea West | South Wales West | 31.6% |
| Torfaen | South Wales East | 31.5% |
| Dwyfor Meirionnydd | Mid and West Wales | 31.4% |
| Wrexham | North Wales | 31.2% |
| Aberavon | South Wales West | 31.2% |
| Carmarthen East and Dinefwr | Mid and West Wales | 31.1% |
| Vale of Clwyd | North Wales | 31.0% |
| Newport West | South Wales East | 30.9% |
| Caerphilly | South Wales West | 30.5% |
| Clwyd West | North Wales | 29.9% |
| Ogmore | South Wales West | 29.5% |
| Arfon | North Wales | 29.1% |
| Islwyn | South Wales East | 28.7% |
| Neath | South Wales West | 28.6% |
| Aberconwy | North Wales | 27.8% |
| Bridgend | South Wales West | 27.0% |
| Delyn | North Wales | 26.7% |
| Pontypridd | South Wales Central | 26.3% |
| Vale of Glamorgan | South Wales Central | 25.3% |
| Alyn and Deeside | North Wales | 24.1% |
| Gower | South Wales West | 22.5% |
| Monmouth | South Wales East | 22.3% |
| Cardiff North | South Wales Central | 20.0% |

**ENDS**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

* The research was carried out by Dr Juliet Stone and Professor Donald Hirsch at the Centre for Research in Social Policy, at Loughborough University based on the latest Before Housing Cost child poverty data from DWP published in March 2021.
* Report and data all available here [Local child poverty data 2014/15 - 2019/20 | Improving the lives of children and families (endchildpoverty.org.uk)](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/local-child-poverty-data-2014-15-2019-20/)
* For a family of one adult and one child, 60% of median income, after housing costs, in 2019/20 was £223 week
* For a family of one adult and two children, £280 week
* For a family of two adults and one child, £343 week
* For a family of two adults and two children, £400 week

**About End Child Poverty**

End Child Poverty is a coalition of organisations from civic society including children’s charities, child welfare organisations, social justice groups, faith groups, trade unions and others, united in our vision of a UK free of child poverty. For more details visit www.endchildoverty.org.uk.