Marie Curie
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dying in Poverty 2025: The picture in Northern Ireland

November 2025

At any time of life, poverty causes challenges. At the end of life, it represents an additional strain alongside the emotional, physical, and psychological challenges of dying. Poverty is not inevitable for those in the last year of life. With some effort, we can ensure those who are impacted are supported to live their final days in comfort.

Marie Curie has gathered figures on the numbers of people dying in poverty between 2019 and 2024. These figures look at overall poverty and fuel poverty specifically. They also consider the prevalence and risk between those of working age and pension age. We also know from UK-wide data that certain groups are at highest risk of being in poverty in the last year of life. This includes those of non-white ethnicity, with a non-cancer diagnosis and those in private or rented accommodation.

Overall poverty – headline statistics

20%

The estimated proportion of people dying in poverty has risen from **13%** in 2019 to **20%** in 2024.

26% **18%**

Being in the last year of life increases risk of being in poverty. This is proportionally greater for those of working age (**26%**) compared to pension age people (**18%**).

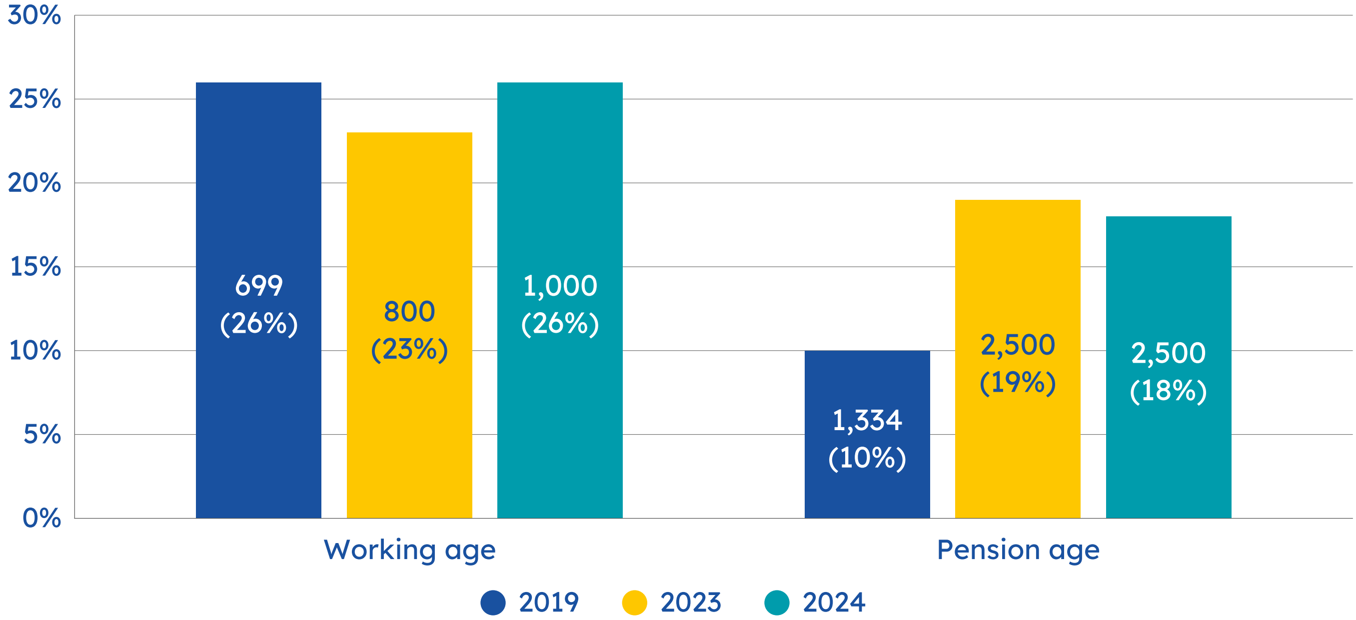
Poverty rates vary across regions of the UK and vary by council in Northern Ireland.

Estimated number and proportion of people experiencing poverty in last year of life 2019-2024

Year	Number in poverty in last year of life	Proportion in poverty in last year of life
2019	2,033	13%
2023	3,300	20%
2024	3,500	20%

UK average 2024: 20%

Estimated number and proportion of people experiencing poverty in last year of life by age group 2019-2024



UK average 2024: Working age - 29%; Pension age - 16%

Risk of poverty in last year of life compared to those not in last year of life 2024

27%
increase among people of working age

17%
increase among people of pension age

Four councils with highest rates of poverty in last year of life 2024

Derry City and Strabane	24%
Belfast	22%
Fermanagh and Omagh	22%
Newry, Mourne and Down	21%

Causeway Coast and Glens; Mid Ulster, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon 20%

Fuel poverty

Fuel poverty is a particularly devastating form of poverty at the end of life, given the need for heating or mains-powered medical devices at home after a terminal diagnosis. In comparison to other parts of the UK, Northern Ireland households have access to far less energy support schemes. For example, Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK where households do not benefit from the Warm Home Discount. Nearly half of homes in Northern Ireland rely on oil for heating (49.5% in 2021), which is significantly higher than any other part of the UK. There are no price caps on oil and prices can fluctuate quite considerably with no industry led support schemes.

> **“My son passed at the age of 47 from lung cancer. (..) It was awful not having the money for electric and heating oil to keep us both warm. We didn’t have anyone to help so we struggled on alone.**
>
> **- June, South Down**

Fuel poverty- headline statistics

27%

It is estimated that **27%** of those in the last year of life are in fuel poverty.

21%

Risks of fuel poverty are **21%** greater for those in the last year of life compared to those not in the last year of life.

24% **27%**

In the last year of life **24%** of working age people and **27%** of pension age people are in fuel poverty.

27% **20%**

Rates of pensioner fuel poverty are higher in Northern Ireland than any other part of the UK (UK average **20%**; NI average **27%**).

4 of 20

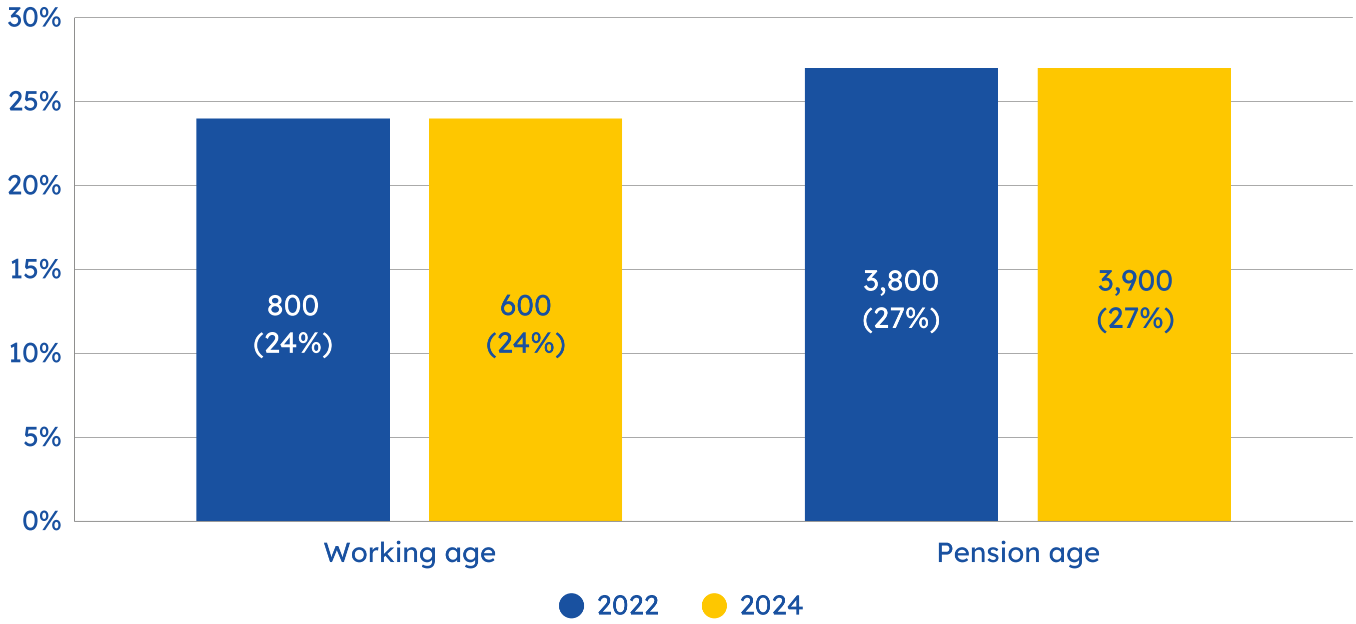
Four Northern Ireland councils are in the top 20 UK local authority areas for fuel poverty in last year of life.

Estimated number and proportion of people experiencing fuel poverty in last year of life 2022 - 2024

Year	Number in fuel poverty in last year of life	Proportion in fuel poverty in last year of life
2022	4,600	27%
2024	4,500	27%

UK average 2024: 21%

Estimated number and proportion of people experiencing fuel poverty in last year of life by age group 2022-2024



UK average 2024: Working age - 21%; Pension age - 20%

"My dad was diagnosed with cancer at 55 and had to come out of work. The money problems got so bad that he had to try and get another job, even though he could barely get around using a walking stick.

- Usilla, Strangford

Risk of fuel poverty in last year of life compared to those not in last year of life 2024

21%
overall increase

16%
increase among people of working age

5%
increase among people of pension age

Northern Ireland councils in top 20 across UK for highest fuel poverty rates in last year of life 2024

Derry City and Strabane	31.2%
Belfast	30.8%
Causeway Coast and Glens	28%
Newry, Mourne and Down	27%

"(..) I have maxed out many credit cards just on the basics I need to live. I cannot live on the amount of money I get from benefits (..) There are days I do not eat, as I need heat after chemo more than I need the food.

- Anon.

Conclusion

There is no single solution to ending deaths in poverty or fuel poverty. In many cases, deaths in poverty are a continuation of lives in poverty. In others, that poverty stems from a financial crisis caused by the impact of a terminal diagnosis. Marie Curie has made a number of recommendations that aim to address the gap in financial and practical support for those in this situation. These are summarised below, and a detailed outline is available in the main report.

The issues being repeatedly raised in Marie Curie's poverty reports deserve serious consideration and action by both Westminster and the Northern Ireland Executive, Assembly and local government. People at end of life deserve better.

We are calling for:

1. Improved identification, recording and sharing of information about people with a terminal illness, including those using medical devices at home.
2. Ensure a minimum income guarantee for those with a terminal illness. Measures include early access to the State Pension for those of working age and introduction of the self care element to Universal Credit to replace the Severe Disability Premium. Other steps should be considered to support terminally ill parents with the cost of childcare and financial support for carers.
3. Review housing support policies to ensure terminally ill people have sufficient income support to cover rent or mortgage.
4. Provide support with the cost of energy through a range of measures: introduction of a UK wide Social Tariff, introduction of Warm Home Discount scheme in Northern Ireland, extension of the Winter Fuel Payment to all people with terminal illness, introduction of an upfront rebate scheme for the use of all at-home medical devices and access to other emergency financial support schemes.
5. All relevant bodies should ensure they have plans in place to minimise winter deaths and the health impacts of cold homes or fuel poverty. This includes individual care plans and implementation and monitoring of NICE Guidelines (NG6).
6. The Utility Regulator in Northern Ireland should take account of the specific needs of people living with a terminal illness when setting standards and monitoring supplier practices.

Christine Irvine

Senior Policy Manager

Christine.Irvine@mariecurie.org.uk

Further information, including the UK-wide Dying in Poverty report and explanation of methodological approach is available at **mariecurie.org.uk/poverty**

November 2025

Marie Curie NORTHERN IRELAND