Latest UK statistics (for 2023/24) show **4.5 million children (31%)** live in relative poverty. This means that **in a typical classroom of 30 children there are 10 children in relative poverty**.

source: HM Government. (2025). Our children, our future: Tackling child poverty.

Different measures of poverty used in the UK*



relative poverty =

The number of people earning below 60% of the median income for the current year. This shows how many people are in poverty compared to the rest of the country at that time. Unlike absolute poverty, this line might move up or down each year, because people's incomes change.

absolute poverty =

The number of people earning below 60% of the median income in 2010/11, adjusted for inflation. This means that we can look back and see how many people were in poverty each year compared to this fixed line.

The current government have also introduced a new metric called deep material poverty which considers the ability of the child's family to access essential goods and services.

60% of UK Median Weekly Income	Relative Poverty threshold £ per week	Absolute Poverty threshold £ per week
Couple with no children	£327	£299
Single with no children	£190	£173
Couple with two children aged 5 and 14	£530	£485
Single with two children	£392	£359
Source for these figures and the accompanying statistics: DWP March 2024 households below average income HBAI These figures are for income After Housing Costs (AHC) which is how they are most often reported		

"Poverty means not having enough money to buy the things your household needs and to participate fully in society."

Child Poverty Action Group

Poverty is an imperfect word, because it creates a sense of disconnect and 'other' for a problem that is all too present in our society and that we see the impacts of every day: not having enough money.

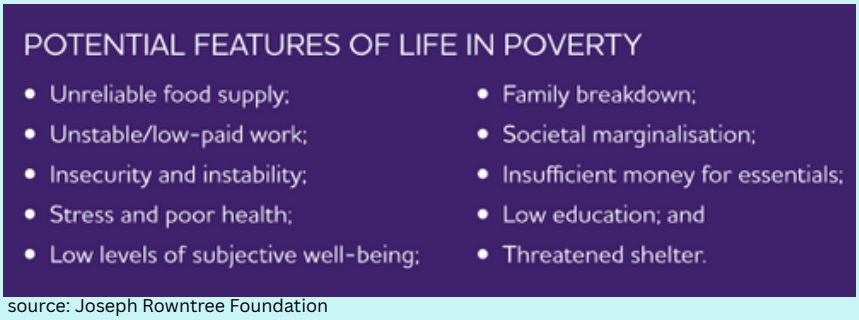
We use it because it is the best term to describe a complex social issue, and because it is the word used by policymakers, researchers and the media.

But let's be mindful that we are talking about individual people and families, living alongside us who, for a whole variety of reasons, can't access the standard of living we should all be able to expect.

*graphic and some wording taken with kind permission from London's Poverty Profile, Trust for London

Of the 4.5 million children living in relative poverty in 2023/24:

- 69% lived in working families
- 46% were in families with three or more children, up from 36% in 2011/12
- 36% were in families with a youngest child aged under five
- 47% of children in Asian and British Asian families were in poverty, 51% of children in Black/African/Caribbean and Black British families, and 24% of children in white families
- 44% of children in lone parent families were in poverty
- 34% of children living in families where someone has a disability were in poverty



source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

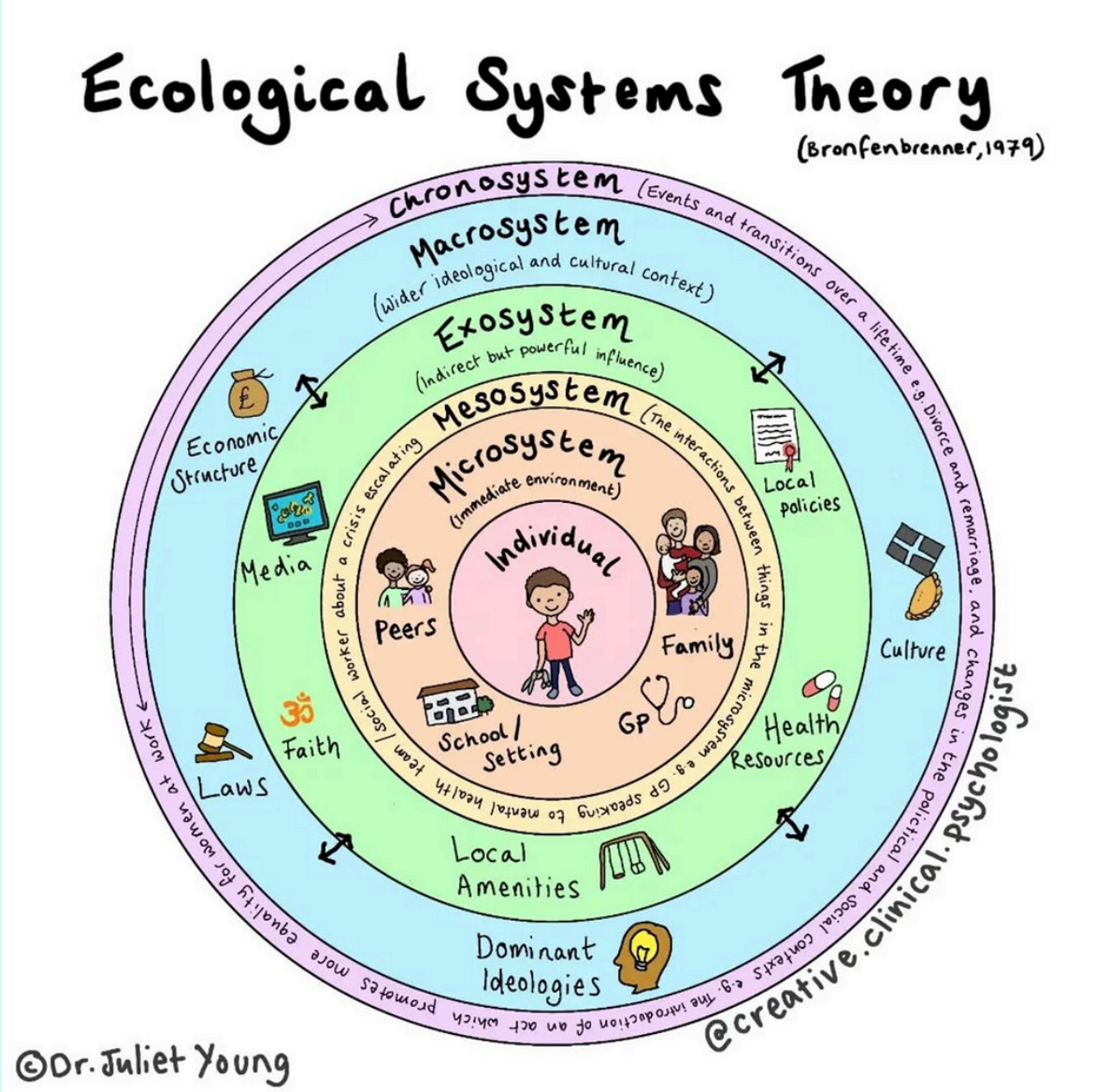
Historical and current context

Between 1997/98 and now, the relative child poverty rate has followed a U-shaped pattern, falling from 33% in 1997/98 to 27% in 2010/11, where it stayed until 2014/15. The rate has since risen to 31% in 2023/4.

The current government has produced a strategy which it describes as "The first step on our road to ending child poverty", and has made a commitment to lift 550,000 children out of relative poverty by the final year of the parliament. They have ended the two child limit for benefits and are prioritising action in 3 target areas:

- Boosting family income
- Driving down the cost of essentials
- Strengthening local support

Poverty in the Early Years through a Systemic Lens



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