

# How children perceive poverty, relative deprivation and exclusion: research findings from Estonia

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# The Studies

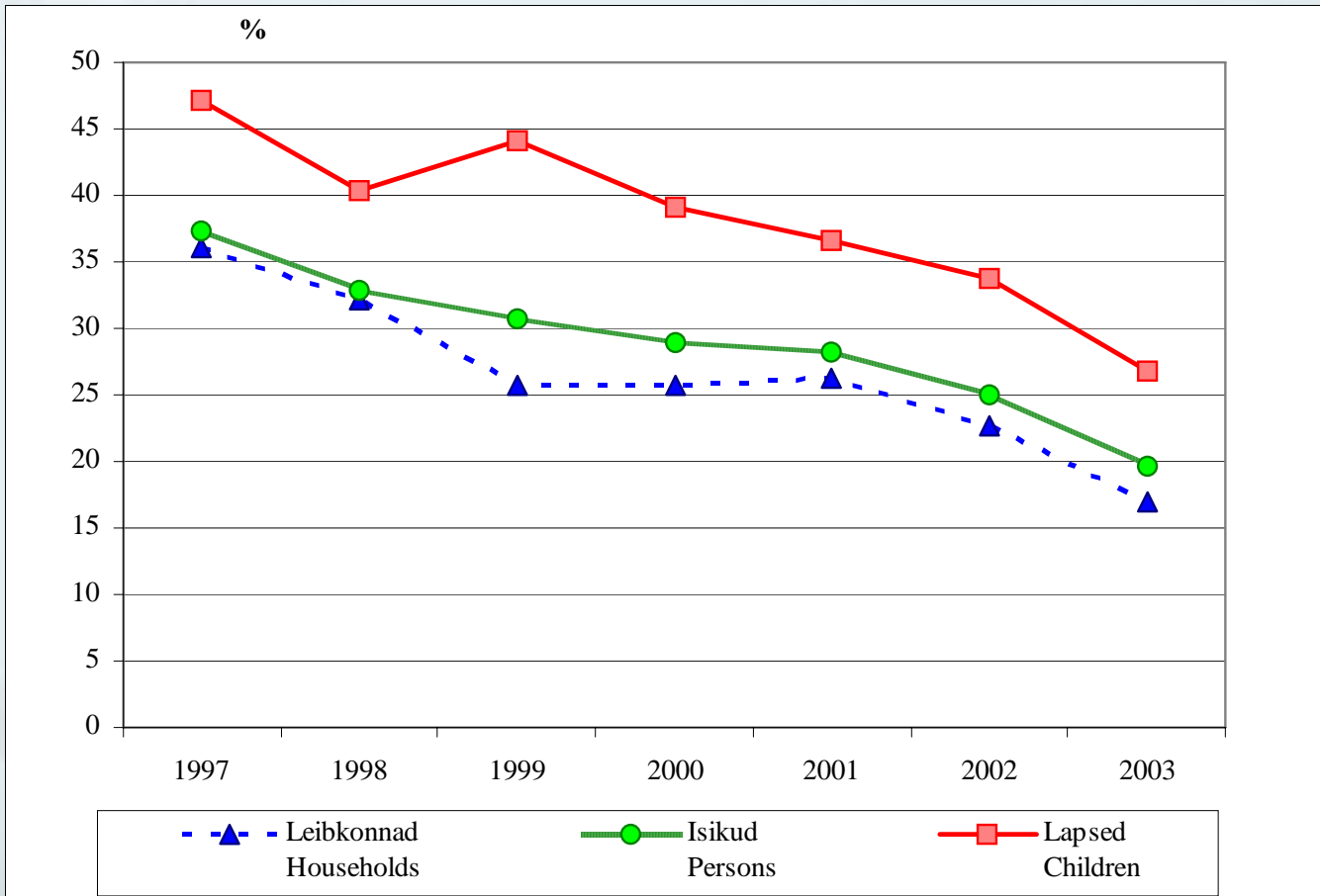
## Surveys among children:

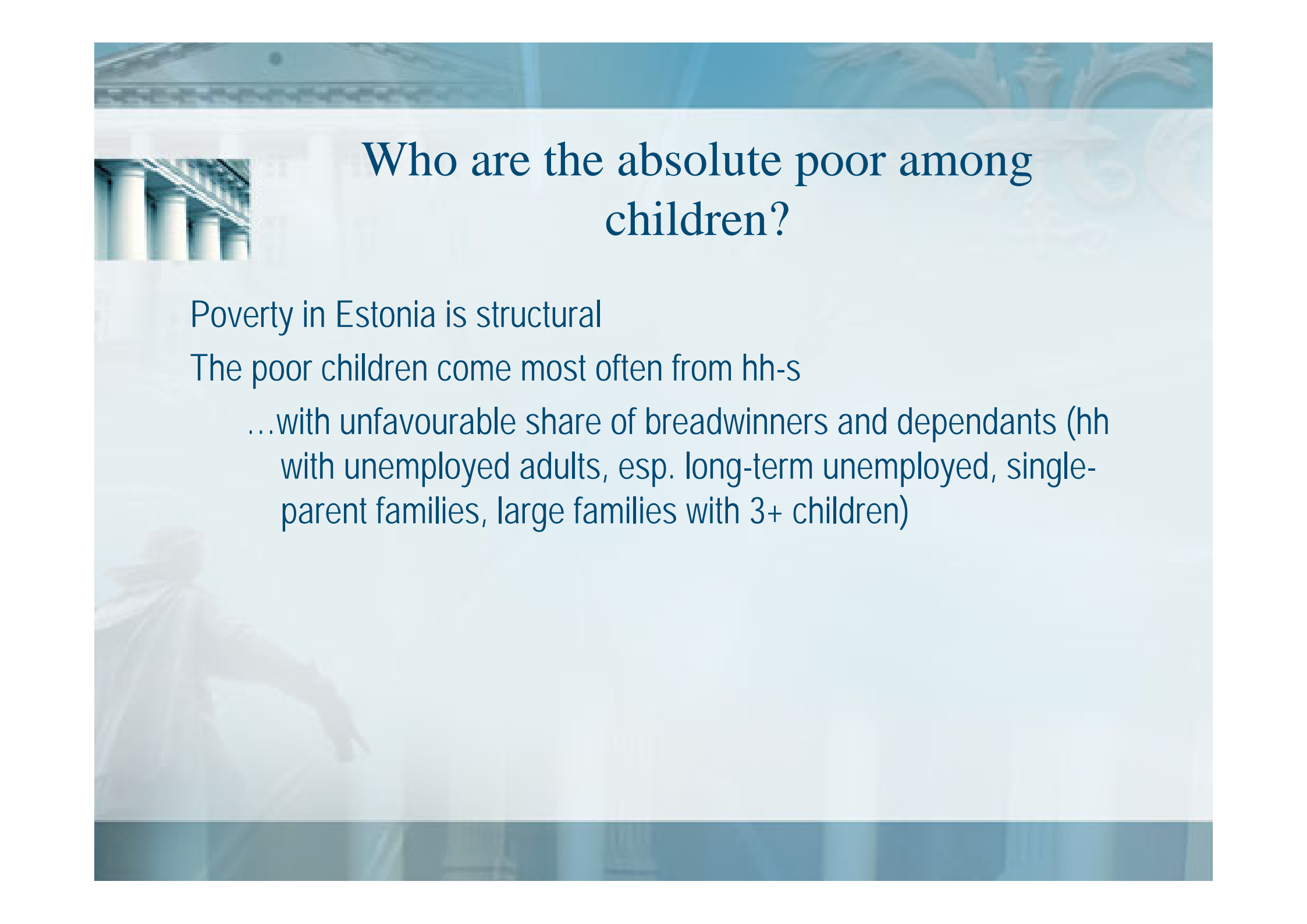
- Living Conditions Survey of Children, (*Kutsar&Harro, 1997*; 1568 resp, av 14 yrs old; carries the ideas of UN CRC ): a special focus: relative deprivation as perceived by a child
- A Study: Social exclusion of children from peers (*Kutsar&Vetemäe, 2004*; 330 resp, 12-13 yrs old)
- A Study on children's coping with economic deprivation (*Kutsar&Viira, 2005*; 291 resp, 12-13 yrs old)

## Other studies:

- Household Budget Surveys
  - Studies on poverty (income and expenditure structures, poverty structures; since 1992)
  - The cost of a child (since late 1990s)
- Retrospective childhood stories written by students (young adults)
  - Recalling situations of been excluded (withdrawn) and included
  - Important persons (negative and positive) from childhood impacting their further lives – related to social capital building of a child

## Absolute poverty of households, individuals and children (equiv scales 1:0.8:0.8)





## Who are the absolute poor among children?

Poverty in Estonia is structural

The poor children come most often from hh-s

...with unfavourable share of breadwinners and dependants (hh with unemployed adults, esp. long-term unemployed, single-parent families, large families with 3+ children)

## Expenditures on children

(Hh Budget Survey, 10,460 hh's; Stat Office of Estonia 2002;  
calculations of prof- emer E-M Tiit, 2004)

- lower income 5 deciles – “Poorer half”
- upper 5 income deciles - “Wealthier half”



*The difference in expenditures on children is about 2-fold*

*Ratio: 1.55 times on food, 1.86 times on eating out, 2.13 times on transportation, 3.12 times on clothing and footwear, 3.25 times on leisure*

**NOTE:** expenditure on clothes and footwear form up to 80% of that of the average adult in preschool age, and reach 1.5 by 18 yrs of age



# Conceptual model to approach social exclusion as perceived by a child

Three welfare dimensions by Erik Allardt (1975):

“Having” – what you have

“Loving” – where you belong

“Being” – who you are



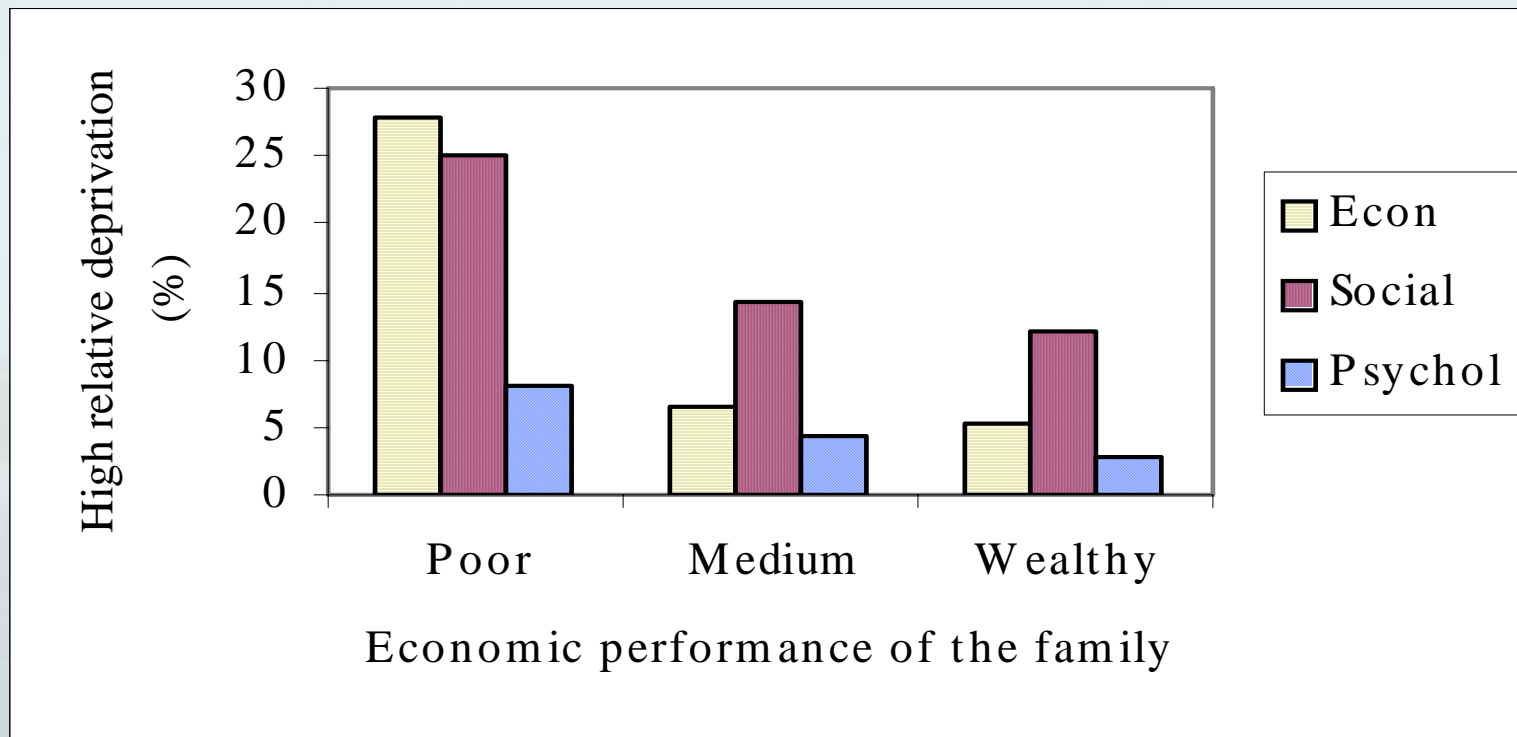
The conceptual model by Kutsar (1997):

Lack of welfare resources brings to diswelfare or accumulation of welfare deficits and to risk of being socially excluded:

- lack in *having* dimension → *economic deprivation*
- lack in *loving* dimension → *social isolation* (social deprivation)
- lack in *being* dimension → *negative self-image* (psychol deprivation)

# Relative deprivation as perceived by a child

(Living Conditions Survey of Children, 1997; *Kutsar, 2004*)





# Social exclusion from peers

(Kutsar & Vetemäe, 2004)

Exclusion from peers is determined first of all by lack of resources in “belonging” and “being” dimension of welfare

52% have experienced been withdrawn by peers, incl 12% often, 5% very often;  
17% also feel excluded;

Feeling excluded is not determined by gender, family form (nuclear, single-parent, large), type of settlement (town/village) - *multinomial log reg*;

Less pocket money does not determine the belonging to the group of excluded (also other material values lose importance);

Material values (incl the presence of decent amount of pocket money) determine the belonging to the group of non-excluded, also self-acceptance, owning more friends and perceived acceptance by the classmates;

Feeling excluded from peers is connected to feeling excluded from family members (not been heard and accepted; no interest towards their activities nor success; more arguments between parents; no wish to spend time with *father*)



# Child's coping with economic deprivation

*(Kutsar & Viira, 2004)*

- Compared to organised leisure, the time organised by the child him/herself is more important
    - 27% of the respondents feel deprived from self-organised activities due to the lack of opportunities - more children from families with unemployed parent(s) and from families with poor economic performance
  - Children from poorer households set lower standards to their needs
    - they express less interest in leisure activities
    - and are less active in looking for coping strategies with the unfavourable situation
    - 30% children from poor families, 10% of children from 'average' families and 3% children of well-off families are not active because of the lack of interest
- lack of financial resources (economic deprivation) not only determines decrease of personal standards but also loss of interests as a coping strategy of a child



# Policy implication

- Poverty research and new theoretical approach to children and childhood
  - Child as a unit of observation → children carry the highest risk of poverty
  - Children are 'multipliers' of poverty
  - Poverty has a real meaning for a child
- UN CRC: Pressure to hear children's voices, CRC Reports. Increasing awareness
- In politics:
  - Universal child benefit since 1992
  - Parental allowance (min salary – the lower limit ) since 2004, other family benefits
  - still "baby-kissing" during political rallies
  - Res projects funded by the Min of Soc Affairs; Min of Population and Family issues → policy-making more knowledge-based than earlier



# Conclusion

- Children are active social agents, and form a structural part of a society
  - Children are poor and excluded 'here and now'
  - Children at risk of poverty are at risk of losing choices and at risk of social exclusion from peers
  - Children at risk of poverty are at risk of losing interest in joint actions of children
  
  - Socially excluded children 'here and now' uncover risks of social exclusion for the next generation of children
- Keeping children as subjects on policy agenda may have unexpectedly powerful impact on poverty reduction of children and the social inclusion process of whole societies in a long run