

Jobcentre 'hit squads' set up benefit claimants to fail, says former official

Bosses accused of setting targets for sanctions, while unscrupulous staff targeted weak and vulnerable customers

Patrick Butler, social policy editor

The Guardian, Tuesday 20 January 2015 22.40 GMT



Jobcentre staff were threatened with disciplinary action for missing sanctions targets, according to former official John Longden. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

Jobcentre bosses set up "hit squads" to target benefit claimants for sanctions and put pressure on them to sign off the dole, according to evidence presented to an inquiry by MPs.

The written statement, by a former jobcentre official, [John Longden](#), says frontline staff were ordered to "agitate and inconvenience" customers so they fell foul of the rules, enabling staff to stop their benefits payments.

Staff who failed to meet sanctions targets each month were threatened with disciplinary action, he claims.

Longden says he was told by a manager that the message with regard to customers was: "Let's set them up from day one."

He adds: "Customers were being deliberately treated inappropriately in order to achieve [staff] performance [targets] without regard for natural justice and their welfare."

Longden's evidence covers events he says he witnessed at Salford and Rochdale jobcentres between 2011 and 2013. It has been lodged with the [Commons work and pensions select committee](#), which is investigating benefit sanctions policy.

A sanction involves the stopping of claimants' benefit payments for at least four weeks – equivalent to almost £300 – as a penalty for breach of benefit rules and conditions, typically failure to look for work or attend jobcentre appointments.

Ministers introduced tighter rules for claiming benefits in October 2012, saying sanctions were a "last resort" that would encourage claimants to "engage" with jobcentres. However, [critics say](#) jobcentres are increasingly neglecting to help claimants find jobs and are instead focusing on finding ways to impose financial penalties on them.

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In further written evidence to the committee, another former Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) official accuses jobcentres of "bullying people off the [unemployment] register".

Ian Wright, a former personal adviser at a Leicester jobcentre, says he was ordered by managers to send more claimants for sanction, and was threatened with disciplinary action when he questioned the policy.

Unscrupulous staff would target weak and vulnerable claimants for sanctions, he states. In one case a customer who could neither read nor write was formally directed to put their CV on a job match website. "Unsurprisingly they did not manage this task and were sanctioned."

The PCS union, which represents jobcentre staff, said the evidence chimed with its own straw poll of members, which found almost two-thirds had experienced pressure to refer claimants for a sanction inappropriately, while more than a third had been placed on a formal performance improvement plan for not making enough referrals.

PCS is one of a number of witnesses [giving evidence to the committee](#) on Wednesday morning.

Longden claims that staff used several tricks to set up claimants. On several occasions jobcentre advisers purposefully booked job appointments without informing the claimant, ensuring they could be sanctioned when they failed to attend.

Claimants would be set unreasonable job search targets, referred for jobs for which they were clearly unsuited, or ordered to sign on every day in the hope they would fail in a task, miss an appointment or be late.

"The aim was to find an opportunity to make a referral to the decision maker [an official who decides whether to sanction a claimant] with the possibility of getting the customer sanctioned.

"It was distressing to see so many customers treated in such a way," states Longden.

"One customer was made to attend daily for two months and eventually broke down and wept in the office."

He adds: "Staff were threatened by the cluster manager that their jobs would be taken by other people if they didn't do what they were told."

Longden says he raised objections with his line manager more than once after witnessing staff take inappropriate action, but no action was taken.

He says staff "were being asked to behave in a manner that was against the [DWP's] values of integrity and honesty". The confrontational approach caused arguments with customers and sometimes police would have to be called to restore order.

Longden, who says he spent 23 years as a jobcentre adviser, states: "Sanctions of customers were encouraged by managers daily, with staff being told to look at every engagement with the customer as an opportunity to take sanction action.

"I was personally told by a manager to 'agitate' and 'inconvenience' customers in order to get them to leave the register."

A DWP spokesman said: "Mr Longden's allegations were thoroughly investigated and no evidence was found to substantiate them. Furthermore, the people named in the allegations strongly refute them.

"The reality is, sanctions are a necessary part of the benefits system but they are used as a last resort in a tiny minority of cases where people don't play by the rules. Jobcentre Plus advisers work hard every day to help people into work. There are no targets for sanctions."

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John Longden –Personal Adviser

A Statement on events witnessed by me at Salford Jobcentre Plus and Rochdale Jobcentre Plus between 2011 and 2013

Summary

1.0 Managers at both district level and in the local office created a culture which encouraged staff to view the customer (benefit claimant) as an obstacle to performance. The Jobcentre operations became wholly performance led. Sanctions of customers were encouraged by managers daily, with staff being told to look at every engagement with the customer as an opportunity to take sanction action. I was personally told by a manager to “agitate” and “Inconvenience” customers in order to get them to leave the register. The staff performance management system was used inappropriately in order to increase submissions to the Decision Maker and therefore to increase sanctions on customers. Senior HR managers condoned this behaviour by refusing to issue guidelines on appropriate time limits on performance, which encouraged managers to look at short-term targets above staff development, fairness to customers and appropriate behaviour as set out in the departments own values.

Detail

2.0 Managers at Salford Jobcentre, created an environment where every action with a customer could lead to loss of benefits. They made the decision to mandate customers to all job programmes regardless of their suitability. They did this by applying a benefit direction on the customer to make them attend. The purpose was to increase the opportunity to sanction a customer, should they fail any part of the direction. My line manager reporting back from the district managers meeting stated that the message from the District Manager with regard to customers was –“let’s set them up from day 1”. Managers’ actions and words didn’t reflect the values and behaviours set down by department, they set the wrong examples and acted without any accountability.

2.1 There was an unhealthy and unprofessional working environment for staff. Managers created and encouraged a confrontational approach towards the customer and the office manager at Salford set up “DMA hit squads” to target customers for sanction action. Customers dealt with by these squads had their job search scrutinised at an almost forensic level in order to get a suspension of benefit. The Office manager would call the customer record of a job applications a “micky Mouse” job search and customers would often break down and cry or argue because they felt that they were being treated unfairly.

2.2 The office manager and her management team asked advisers to set unreasonable targets for customers to find work as part of their jobseekers agreements. This included asking customers to apply for a minimum of 6 jobs per week, regardless of their skills or experience. The aim was to find an opportunity to make a referral to the decision maker with the possibility of getting the customer sanctioned. It was distressing to see so many customers treated in such a way. The actions of the managers put the safety of staff at risk with arguments and incidents by customers a daily occurrence. Security was called frequently to restore order as were the police. Staff were asked to double the number of daily interviews they conducted in order to achieve targets and inconvenience the customer. This put stress on staff well-being and health.

2.3 Challenging targets for individual performance were used to cover ghost targets for Decision Maker. This led to perverse behaviour, such as making customers attend the jobcentre daily in the hope they would miss an appointment or be late. This would result in benefit being suspended or the claim closed. This was setting customers up to fail in order to reach targets. Changes in the Personal Development rules gave scope for managers to threaten disciplinary action on staff who failed to make sufficient referrals to Decision Maker, rather than address any real issues about training. The Cluster manager at Rochdale Jobcentre issued office wide Performance Improvement Plans (PiP) to all staff in order to improve monthly performance figures on DMA, Programme referrals and MFA (More Frequent Attendance). I was issued with one of these PiPs to get more MFA referrals despite myself being an excellent performer. In my 23 years I had never had any PiPs or questions about my performance. I felt let down and demoralised as this was an insult to my efforts. I was required to hit the same level of referrals to a Decision Maker each week – regardless of circumstances, or i would be marked as a poor performer. As an experienced adviser I would expect my referrals to go down over time, not go up, or stay at the same level.

2.4 Staff was told not just to increase referrals to the Decision Maker but also to focus on particular conditionality questions –such as Actively Seeking Employment, and Fail to Attend Adviser appointments as this would cause the maximum discomfort to the customer. I noticed that my own and other adviser appointments that were being booked where the customer was not informed. These interviews had been booked by the office manager [name deleted] and by her assistant under her instruction, with the intention of closing down the claim and claiming an off-flow performance target or in order to take DMA action against the client. She had indicated clearly in the conversation box that the interview had been booked and the customer notified in person with a letter by hand, even though this could not have been the case. These fake interviews were clearly illegal action and gross

misconduct. There were many instances of this happening with other advisers. I informed my line manager, [name deleted] but was accused of lying – even though I presented him with the evidence. No action taken and the bookings continued.

2.5 Staff were threatened by the cluster manager that their jobs would be taken by other people if they didn't do what they were told. Staff were regularly told by managers to "agitate" and "inconvenience" customers. I notified the Whistleblower of these activities on more than one occasion but nothing changed.

2.6 Customers were being deliberately treated inappropriately in order to achieve performance without regard for natural justice and their welfare. Daily signing was introduced across the board initially to anyone claiming over 6 months but gradually to include new claimants. This was done to inconvenience the customer. One customer was made to attend daily for two months and eventually broke down and wept in the office. Staff were being asked to behave in a manner that was against the departments' values of integrity and honesty. An environment was created where staffs' own safety was at risk, and their respect, and professionalism was diminished.

A Timeline of some Events

3.0 **Apr 2011** – summary of my personal development identified in my personal review states "John to apply DMA appropriately to attain 4% target on ASE, Availability, RE & MFA, to achieve minimum standard of 4% referral rate".

3.1 **06/05/11** – Team meeting was informed by [name deleted] (team Leader) that DMA referral target across the team was now to be 2.4% per month.

3.2 **17/06/11** – Team Meeting was informed by [name deleted] that each adviser must do 2 Mandatory Work Activity referrals per month. Staff were asked to mandate customers to training by giving a direction. This was done to increase the prospect of sanctioning customers.

3.3 **13/07/11** – attended culture workshop at Regional Office held by the Transformation Team. Issues raised by staff within the District were

- Staff are expected to play the game and not rock the boat
- Make sure all boxes are ticked rather than analyse the work we do
- Good work is not recognised if it is not performance
- No transparency or consistency in management behaviour

3.4 **22/07/11** – managers at Salford office decide to withdraw flexi-credit for medical appointments for staff, in breach of well-being guidelines. Staff are told by Office manager [name deleted] that they are stealing money for time they are not working. This measure was confirmed by cluster manager [name deleted].

3.5 **22/07/11** – spoke with my line manager [name deleted] about customer interviews that were being booked where the customer was not informed. These interviews had been booked by the office manager [name deleted] for the intention of closing down the claim and claiming an off-flow performance target or to take DMA action against the client. She had indicated clearly in the conversation box that the interview had been booked and the customer notified in person with a letter by hand. This was clearly illegal action and gross misconduct. There were many instances of this happening with other advisers. [name deleted] accused me of lying – so showed him the evidence. No action taken and the bookings continued.

3.6 **23/07/11** – I challenged the withdrawing of medical flexi-credit by raising the matter with the Senior HR Business Partner. She investigated it and found in my favour. Although she notified the district operations manager that the flexi-credit had to be restored, it was never notified to staff by any of the managers and I had to send an office communication to inform staff.

3.7 **26/07/11** – Phoned the whistle-blower hotline to report the inappropriate booking of customer interviews. This action has now been assigned by [name deleted] to a member of staff whose purpose is to look at all adviser interviews across the office and rebook them at short notice for customers to attend on dates which may only be a couple of days after their last attendance – again with the intention of getting a Fail to Attend and closure of claim – to achieve high Off –Flow targets.

3.8 **05/08/11** – team meeting [name deleted] reports back from the district managers meeting that DMA is falling behind the 2% target and in regard to our customers that we must "set them up from day one".

3.9 **24/08/11** – Office manager [name deleted] tells staff that any customer who attends late on their signing day is not to be signed but booked to come back in on the next day. This is to punish the customer –regardless of the reason for their late attendance- by delaying their payments sometimes by as much as 3 days

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Union says benefits sanctions destroyed trust between jobseekers and jobcentres

Public and Commercial Services union renews calls for an independent inquiry into the policy

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Frances Perraudin

The Guardian, Wednesday 21 January 2015 16.00 GMT

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The PCSU renewed calls for an independent inquiry into the benefits sanctions policy. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

Union representatives have told MPs that benefits sanctions have destroyed the relationship of trust between jobseekers and jobcentre advisors.

Giving evidence at the work and pensions select committee inquiry into benefits sanctions on Wednesday, Mark Serwotka, general secretary, and Helen Flanagan, vice-president of the Public and Commercial Services union said that benefits sanctions "pit the advisers against the claimants" and renewed calls for an independent inquiry into the policy.

Serwotka said the system that has developed "overemphasises the pressure on staff to make sanctions referrals and adverse decisions rather than emphasising their key function, which should be to build up a relationship and help people back into work".

Serwotka and Flanagan said they could provide evidence from staff surveys and extracts from people's performance improvement plans that jobcentre staff were being pushed to make more sanctions referrals. They said that, while staff are rewarded for sanctioning claimants, there is no facility for people to be reprimanded for doing it too much.

"Assaults on staff have increased dramatically since the regime was

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tightened up and what we now see is civil servants, many of whom are fantastically low paid – 40% would be entitled to universal credit – becoming a target because people think they're to blame," said Serwotka.

Flanagan said that an investigation conducted by Neil Couling, a senior official at the department for work and pensions, into reports that targets and league tables are being used to encourage sanctioning, was flawed.

She said the investigation had only taken into account evidence from press reports, a brief discussion with the union, information they supplied, and discussions with senior managers. "I don't think anybody would consider that a full investigation into the situation," she said.

In June 2011, the coalition government introduced a series of welfare reforms that included sanctions on benefits claimants who do not meet government conditions for actively seeking work, cutting their benefit payments for a minimum of four weeks.

Research published on Wednesday and presented to the select committee by co-author Prof David Stuckler found that hundreds of thousands are leaving unemployment benefit without finding employment because of benefit sanctions, though the report's authors did not provide an estimated figure.

Official data analysed by academics at Oxford University and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine shows that between June 2011 and March 2014, over 1.9m sanctions were imposed on people receiving jobseeker's allowance, with 43% of those receiving sanctions then ceasing to claim the benefit altogether. Only 20% of those who left gave their stated reason as that they had found work.

Work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith welcomed **news on Wednesday** that unemployment had fallen 58,000 to 1.91 million, its lowest level for more than six years, describing it as "a really, really important moment to mark".

Defending the policy of benefits sanctions, Smith said: "It is only right that in return for government support – and in return for their benefits – jobseekers are expected to do all they can to find work. Although on benefits, they still have a job: the job is to get back into work.

"The claimant commitment, which is deliberately set to mimic a contract of employment, makes this expectation explicit. It has created a real change in attitudes. Already more than a million people have signed up to – and are benefiting from – this new jobseeking regime."



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7 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



ally07

21 January 2015 4:29pm

35

Although on benefits, they still have a job: the job is to get back into work.

So lets get this right - they now have a job albeit not a job in the technical sense of the word!

There was me thinking that the definition of the word 'job' was: 'a paid position of regular employment', or 'a task or piece of work, especially one that is paid'.

Perhaps we've underestimated IDS given what appears to be his hidden talent for making-up new definitions for words ready for inclusion in the latest edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. Is there no 'end' to this man's talents or should that be 'beginning'?



Ikonoclast ▶ ally07

30

21 January 2015 4:45pm

What's next, all those on jobseekers counted as employed, therefore the claimant count is nil?



ennisfree ▶ Ikonoclast

12

21 January 2015 5:08pm

IDS has got a whole section in a basement somewhere working on just that.



AntonZ ▶ ally07

19

21 January 2015 5:13pm

It's a very oddly reverse use of language, where IDS can describe

8 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



JohnBea

37

21 January 2015 4:33pm

What do people live on when their benefit is sanctioned? Some no doubt would say 'who cares' - but given that many are sanctioned through mistakes, maybe their own or maybe the official's, what sort of society leaves people and poor families with nothing?



good2go ▶ JohnBea

34

21 January 2015 4:40pm

.....what sort of society leaves people and families with nothing?

Well, it seems the society this government is developing would have no qualms about treating people this way. A few years ago it would have been inconceivable, but this current rabble have taken callousness to a whole new depth.



BARONVONRATMUNCH ▶ JohnBea

6

21 January 2015 4:42pm

What do people live on when their benefit is sanctioned?

They probably go on to carers allowance (if they have an elderly relative or friend or know someone on DLA), or sickness benefits or are encouraged by the jobcentre to be self employed, often self employed in name only in a pretend business, i.e. selling 2 issues of the Big Issue a week opens the UK benefit system up to the self employed Big Issue seller, (as many Eastern Europeans in the UK know) as it gets the unemployment figures down.



Ikonoclast ▶ JohnBea

17

21 January 2015 4:51pm

They struggle, big time. Especially given that crisis loans are very much a

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



BARONVONRATMUNCH

18

21 January 2015 4:34pm

The jobcentre has a difficult task trying to get those on benefits into jobs that pay the same or even less than benefits (if you take housing benefit & council tax etc into account). I am afraid all those posters in jobcentre windows of overjoyed plebs, ecstatic because they have a zero hours, minimum wage job cleaning toilets fool no one. Employers don't want the resentful, uninterested potential staff that are sent to them from the jobcentre, who would rather have root canal surgery, than slave for them for no additional financial gain than they already get on benefits. Employers would rather recruit staff from overseas for whom the UK minimum wage will buy a house back home after they have saved for a few years working for minimum wage in the UK.

The only way the politicians can think of getting those on benefits into these low quality, poorly paid jobs is to sanction them and stop their benefits.

In reality few sanctioned people find jobs. Probably far more turn to crime in order to survive than find employment.

We are governed by fools!!!!

www.spectator.co.uk/features/9116701/britains-dirty-secret/



Ikonoclast ▶ BARONVONRATMUNCH

10

21 January 2015 5:43pm

The main problem is that there really isn't many worthwhile full time jobs available at any given time for the Job Centres to offer, that's why the vicious bosses in the DWP spend their time inventing strategies and other bullshit to obfuscate and park the unemployed. Despite the tory propaganda the jobs market hasn't budged since the 2008 recession.

The TUC estimates only one in forty jobs advertised are full time and we've sleepwalked into a jobs situation/landscape were close on half of jobs in the UK are now only full time PAYE.

We've record numbers of self employed, record numbers of part timers and record numbers of a casualised workforce. It's a total clusterfukc but a compliant and supportive MSM has failed to take the Tories to take on their failure.



CaptainBlack ▶ Ikonoclast

4

21 January 2015 7:32pm

IBS tells us that all the self-employed are signs of a new entrepreneurial spirit, No, slaphead, given the choice between sanctions/harassment and tax credits, many are plumping for the latter - even if £53 is all you'll get.



bifess ▶ BARONVONRATMUNCH

6

21 January 2015 8:35pm

In reality few sanctioned people find jobs. Probably far more turn

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Triops99

25

21 January 2015 4:41pm

Although on benefits, they still have a job: the job is to get back into work

...and so therefore presumably have employment rights, entitlement to minimum wage, legal redress against discrimination, protection from workplace bullying, etc....?

I think IDS is demonstrating in his concept of "job" the very kind of employment conditions he favours for everyone - in work or out of it



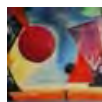
CaptainBlack ▶ Triops99

6

21 January 2015 7:33pm

Perhaps he could offer some people the same sort of job he offered his wealthy wife. You know, the one that fiddled taxpayer money for her salary.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



petercs

21

21 January 2015 4:43pm

benefits sanctions have destroyed the relationship of trust between job-seekers and job-centre advisers.

...I was unemployed briefly a couple of years ago and the threat of sanctions was the constant refrain from the "advisers". I concluded these civil servants were useless and unlikely to help me find a job.

a1exn1987 ▶ petercs

14



21 January 2015 4:48pm

I concluded these civil servants were useless

Several of the civil servants I interacted with could not even type. Literally, they would take 5 mins to write a simple job description. Bizarre and outdated skillsets for an equally bizarre institution.

I mean good god man! Typing!

22



a1exn1987

21 January 2015 4:45pm

Anyone commenting been on the dole recently? You should share some tales. I was on the dole a few years back just out of university so I have some insight.

Let me tell you now, **the JobCentre is a filing cabinet**. It's not a helpful way to find a job. It's bureau of bureaucracy and the people working there were so completely dulled to new policies.

It's retarded. I remember getting an internship and being very excited, and they said I couldn't do it and receive JSA as it would be more than X hours per week. I was still looking for work for god's sake, but nope. And without the JSA it would have been impossible to travel to and from the internship each day.

In the end, I had to ask family to help me out. I am one of the lucky ones who had family who could help.

They were not bad people there, but they were slaves to a centralised system that just does not work - if by "work" you mean find people jobs. I felt sorry for them in a way, I saw a few incidents of abuse towards them.

It's a damn shame. I am glad I am out of it though, I can only have sympathy for the people still there - especially long termers.

22

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



amelijaneagain

21 January 2015 4:46pm

IDS is an extraordinarily odious man who famously 'employed' his wife as his 'aide', though nobody had ever seen her at the office, charged the taxpayer for his underwear and haircuts, lied so extensively on his CV that in any other position than MP he would have been sacked on the spot, was given a house by his father in law, with heated pool, after leaving the army, because he was too pathetic to get a job and support himself and to be honest would probably have been sacked years ago if the laziest man alive Cameron wasn't his boss. All this sanctioning is a way of massaging the figures to impress the short sighted. We all know that.

34



Schiehallion ▶ amelijaneagain

21 January 2015 6:34pm

I believe he also claimed £100 for 60 of what must be the most expensive wet wipes in the world <http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ObF7QY3uwt0>

7

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Quinnicus

21 January 2015 4:48pm

Work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith welcomed news on Wednesday that unemployment had fallen 58,000 to 1.91 million

Please tell me IDS, how many of those 58,000 have been sanctioned?

22



Ikonoclast ▶ Quinnicus

21 January 2015 4:55pm

If 900,000 sanctions were issued in 2014 then IMHO circa 300,000 are on 'live' sanctions at any one time. Based on the length of the average sanction I think it's a safe estimation.

11

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Andy Rymarz

21 January 2015 4:53pm

27

Working conditions for DWP staff certainly haven't helped. I spent three years answering ESA enquiries from the ill and vulnerable. During that time, more and more targets and constraints were introduced on staff, pushing us to take more calls, spend less time in between calls and cut down on how many 'call-backs' we handed off.

The call-back target was especially telling as these are enquiries which needed further investigation/explanation of which us folk weren't equipped to deal with; Payments for instance. Of course in real terms, this resulted in some shameless fobbing off of customers, as staff were scared of failing to meet targets, rather than failing to help customers.

Essentially it's bred a culture of staff fear which of course leads to more customer fear, a deliberate pitting of one against the other.

It's all so so so wrong, but somewhat inevitable when you try to treat a 'Service' and people as simply a business.

Rather castrate myself in a bath of vinegar than work for the DWP again.



CaptainBlack ▶ Andy Rymarz

21 January 2015 7:38pm

2

The whole department needs an axe taking to it, starting from the top.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Vordermont

21 January 2015 5:13pm

16

IDS the Underpants Claimant is the Pin Up Boy on Conservative Home. He has been voted best cabinet minister a few times. Just goes to show the Right Winged mindset when a Serial Liar is judged the best.

A few articles on Captain Mannering bullying Billy Liar Smith.

Lies, damned lies and Iain Duncan Smith.

When you see rotteness in a system you must ask: does it come from one bad apple or does the whole barrel stink?

The rank smell emanating from the coalition is impossible to miss. At first sniff, it appears to come from the blazered figure of Iain Duncan Smith. It has taken me some time to identify its source, because appearances deceive. From his clipped hair to his polished shoes, Duncan Smith seems to be a man who has retained the values of the officer corps of the Scots Guards he once served. Conservative commentators emphasise his honour and decency. They speak in reverential tones of his Easterhouse epiphany: the moment in 2002 when he saw the poverty on a Glasgow estate, brushed a manly tear from his eye and vowed to end the "dependency culture" that kept the poor jobless.

Source:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/may/12/iain-duncan-smith-fiddling-figures>

The conservative case against Iain Duncan Smith.

Labour held a debate on Iain Duncan Smith's stewardship of the welfare state today. Tory MPs backed their man, as did the Conservative journalists, who have told their readers that despite the many disappointments of the Cameron administration, Duncan Smith's welfare reforms make the excruciating experience worthwhile.

If Conservatives were sincere, they would want him out of office now. They would suspect, as I suspect, that he has a Napoleon complex. Once the poor chap saw himself as a potential Prime Minister. Now he sees himself as a great reformer. As he no more has the capacity to be the latter than the former, Duncan Smith is engaging in crimes Conservatives fool themselves into believing are only committed by the left.

Source:

<http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/nick-cohen/2014/06/the-conservative-case-against-iain-duncan-smith/>

Incompetent briefing exposes Iain Duncan Smith lies to parliament.

Having presided over one of the biggest IT disasters of recent years — £34 million down the Swanee — Iain Duncan Smith has done the honourable thing and ... knifed his department's top civil servant in public.

In the wake of a report slamming the delivery of his flagship Universal Credit policy, non-departmental "sources close to the Work and Pensions Secretary" were in touch with Telegraph columnist Isabel Hardman, briefing that:

"it was only because it was "his baby" that he began to notice the chasm between what officials were telling him and what was really happening."

Hardman continues:

"I'm told that "it took until February before Iain completely lost patience with his team", and brought in outsiders to clean up the project."

So having having "completely lost patience with his team" by February, the following month he told the Commons — in response to a question on the impact of changes to Universal Credit on the already "drastic delays" and "deliverability of the IT":

"What we are talking about will have no practical effect on the implementation of universal credit, which, by the way, is proceeding exactly in accordance with plans."

And more lies followed. In May IDS was invited to explain why some pathfinders weren't going ahead because the IT had been botched, with Jobcentre staff resorting to pen and paper to record details:

"The hon. Gentleman is fundamentally wrong. All the pathfinders are going ahead. The IT system is but a part of that, and goes ahead in one of the pathfinders ... All that nonsense the hon. Gentleman has just said is completely untrue."

"This system is a success. We have four years to roll it out, we are rolling it out now, we will continue the roll-out nationwide and we will have a system that works—and one that works because we have tested it properly."

Even as late as July his fantasy continued. Discussing "the successful launch of the pathfinder in Greater Manchester, on time":

"The pathfinder exercise has shown that the IT system works."

Iain Duncan Smith told parliament that the system was "a success" that was "going according to plan", dismissing an MPs' concerns as "nonsense", while all along Tory sources now admit — in a briefing to Hardman — he had personally "lost patience with his team" because he knew it had gone tits up.

Source:

<http://politicalscrapbook.net/2013/09/incompetent-briefing-exposes-iain-duncan-smith-lies-to-parliament/>



cynosarge ▸ Vordermont

21 January 2015 7:10pm

Having presided over one of the biggest IT disasters of recent years — £34 million down the Swanee

Are you **really** unaware of the cost of [Labour's failed NHS patient record system](#)? Over 10 billion!



QueenBoadicea ▸ cynosarge

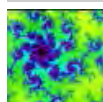
21 January 2015 10:19pm

And the Tories are seeking to sell our confidential data to anyone.

How much has IDS lost in his consistent persecution of the sick, disabled and unemployed, how much has been wasted on Atos and now Maximus profitus how much lost on the universal car crash?

2

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



AntonZ

21 January 2015 5:18pm

Interesting fact emerged on a radio 4 programme. You're one and a half times **more** likely to be sanctioned and left with no income, on the governments Work Programme than get a job through it. Indeed it might be better to call it the 'Sanctions Programme'.

24



CaptainBlack ▶ AntonZ

21 January 2015 7:39pm

4

Similarly, Jobcentres don't actually have jobs anymore.



hoddle1

21 January 2015 5:28pm

12

The Tory/IDS mantra since May 2010 has been "Get them off benefits in whatever way you can"

As far as they are concerned anyone claiming benefits is a cheat and a neer-do-well leeching off the state.



good2go

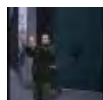
21 January 2015 5:34pm

9

Headline says.... Benefit sanctions destroyed trust between job seekers and job centres.

I suppose it was inevitable with this most divisive of governments, pitting different sections of society against each other.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



josephinireland

21 January 2015 5:39pm

14

Sanctions don't help or encourage people into work. What PR tosser (aka government adviser) dreamed that one up? Sanctions only make vulnerable people so desperate they are forced to steal or beg.



kontiki ▶ josephinireland

21 January 2015 7:12pm

7

They clearly make it harder to get a job. How do you find a job when you can't afford train fare to get an interview? How do you pass an interview when you can't afford breakfast?

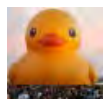


Elephantmoth

21 January 2015 5:50pm

14

One day this whole dismal episode will be revealed and people will realise how they were manipulated to hate their less fortunate neighbors, and thus ignore the undeserved suffering this government has heaped upon them. In the 6th richest country in the world, there was no necessity to punish the disabled or sick (whose incapacity is not a 'lifestyle choice'; or to deny subsistence to people who are unable to find work (when there are no proper jobs). There are many other ways of dealing with structural problems but this government **chose** to focus on blaming people who had no part in creating the mess.<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/feb/05/benefit-cuts-fuelling-abuse-disabled-people>



2ndSkin

21 January 2015 5:57pm

10

"It is only right that in return for government support – and in return for their benefits – jobseekers are expected to do all they can to find work. Although on benefits, they still have a job: the job is to get back into work."

And what about if you've paid in all your life but when you ask the state for a little help while you look for work they try to find any reason to sanction you? Offering JC staff rewards to sanction people will result in more sanctions and how ia anyone expected to look for work properly without money. You can apply for hardship while

sanctioned and will be paid JSA at 60% if you meet the criteria - but not for the first two weeks. As it's paid in arrears that means you have four weeks without any payment and then you may receive a payment of £86 to cover the next two weeks. £86 to cover six weeks. And during that time you still have to travel to the JC and sign on and prove you're looking for work.

It's degrading and demoralising people deliberately to remove them from JSA. The brief is to get them off the books and who cares what happens to them. Just make the unemployment figures look halfway respectable while bleeding the state dry and cutting tax for the rich. A huge con going on all the time under all of our noses.



ID90470524

21 January 2015 6:23pm

2

Benefit fraud by DWP

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/20/jobcentre-hit-squads-benefit-claimants-sanctions>



ID90470524

21 January 2015 6:28pm

6

A minority can only become substantially richer if the majority can be forced into poverty and substantially poorer, the right wing propaganda is that wealth trickles down from parasites to workers, when instead it trickles up from workers to parasites. Meritocracy serves the aristocracy, always has, but a new conscience is evolving and the establishment don't like what they see.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



CaptainBlack

21 January 2015 7:42pm

7

Why don't JCP staff all get together and walk out? They can't sack everybody.



Jonathan Wilson ▶ CaptainBlack

21 January 2015 8:26pm

5

One would assume not.. but we are talking IDS here, he wouldn't hesitate to close down DWP+ with nothing to replace it, after all is only the feckless who would suffer and I personally think he gets a massive buzz from being nasty.



bifess

21 January 2015 9:09pm

7

Personally i find the whole ethos of IDS and others like him to be very very worrying and wrong.

This whole idea of tough live is counter productive in some many ways that it should really be rather obvious.

First and foremost are the benefit sanctions where people are sanctioned deliberately despite doing nothing wrong. I have seen friends targeted in this way so know it happens.

When you remove a job seekers income you also remove their ability to look for work and sanctions are supposed to make the job seeker take the activity of looking for work more seriously and not less seriously. Benefit sanctions are not fit for purpose

I posted more on that in this thread from following link if anyone is interested.

<http://discussion.theguardian.com/comment-permalink/46463235>

Then there is also the fact that job centers are supposed to help people back into work rather than hinder the process. One thing is abundantly clear to me. Under the current climate where the fear of being sanctioned rules the day job seekers are not encouraged to place trust in the system or the employees of that system. All it does is breed mistrust and suspicion. It breeds an us and them mentality that is not good for either side.

What should be happening is that job advisers should be supporting their clients. Job advisers should be building trust and confidence rather than tearing trust and confidence down. People who lack confidence are far less likely to get a job than those who are brimming with confidence. At this current moment in time the whole ethos appears to be blatantly missing the point. It appears to be doing far more damage than anything else as far as i can see.

On top of all that there is also the rhetoric that is coming from people like IDS and sections of the right wing press. Rarely are we given access to the full facts. In fact in some instances blatant misrepresentations appear to be going on. We have seen people like IDS state that they believe they are correct when they have been presented with evidence that refutes their claims.

Then we can move onto the way that we have never really seen or been given an accurate context given during the welfare debate and reforms. An example of what i mean by this is the abuse rate of benefits. According to the governments own figures the benefit fraud rate is running at less than 1%. When presenting the public with information the main stream press and MP's have not really gone to any real great length to inform the general public of this. We do not see 99 stories of genuine benefit claimants for every one story we see of a benefit cheat. Polls have shown that the general public has the view that benefit fraud is a lot lot higher than it actually is and the only reasons that this misconception can happen is as a result of the message that is being fed to the public.

Then there is also the fact that we all pay national insurance when we are in work and that national insurance is supposed to cover us in times of need. We do not pay this to ensure that we are penniless in the unfortunate event of becoming jobless.

Some people in our society appear to believe that there are lots and lots of feckless people who do not want to work. These people seem to ignore the rationality of what they are saying. The level of income that benefits provide are tiny. They practically ensure that you are living with a poverty level of income. I do not know a single person who dreams of living in poverty. In fact we all dream of being financially secure. With that being the case the idea that there are masses and masses of people who do not want to work looks like nothing more or less than a misnomer to me. Each and every time i see someone make a comment about people not wanting to work i ask them the same question and despite several years of asking i have still not had an adequate answer from a single person

If these so called feckless really do exist why is it that not a single newspaper, a single politician, a single think tank or a single governmental department has been able to provide even a rough estimate of people who do not want to work let alone an accurate number.

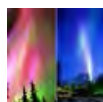
I find the whole ethos coming from the likes of IDS and his department to be very damaging to our society. It is not bringing us all closer together. It is seeking to divide our society and in the long term that will not be good for our society as a whole.

In many ways we do not appear to be on the way to becoming more civilized. To end my post i will ask a few questions in order to stimulate a little thought

Just what message do we send to our citizens and other counties when we treat the jobless as we are?

How can we expect people to have pride in their country when their country has no pride in them?

How can we expect people to have pride in their country when they see so much inequality and unfairness all around them?



gizmo5290

21 January 2015 9:48pm

5

I am a job seeker, I can tell you from personal experience Jobcentre Plus is not fit for purpose.

I am trying to go self-employed as a taxi driver and go to Uni. So put in for finance from JcP about 2 weeks ago with all the coatings and all paperwork completed from local authority.

So being made to wait, I was told by a Careers Advisor based in the Jobcentre that I hadn't done a labour market analysis nor was there vacancies on Universal Jokematch (sic). All I require is about 3 weeks JSA and I'm off the books for good. But IDS' doesn't want to help you get into work he wants to punish and humiliate job seekers till either they find a job or sign off.

IDS' is a Narcissistic Sociopath, he clearly enjoys harming people.

His hypocrisy knows no bounds, once on the dole himself and no doubt claiming whilst living rent free courtesy of his generous Father in law Baron Cottesmore.

Enjoy Hell, IDS along with your sidekick Esther McVey ...



21 January 2015 10:01pm

Unsurprisingly, scum bag Smith Doesn't ever talk about sanctions or his jobseekers regime negatively, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that is a) doesn't work, b) creates a climate of fear, b) had led to DWP staff victimising the more vulnerable, c) DWP staff breaking the Civil Service code <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/civil-service-code-2010.pdf> , d) a drastic rise in food-bank use, which the rest of us pay for in donations, e) suicides, deaths, depression and greater ill-health that has played a part in the "surprise" drop in life expectancy.

But IDS will prattle on about getting the unemployment figures down and never, ever, say sorry.



satsuma27

21 January 2015 10:31pm

I hear shoplifting is the new growth industry. I wonder why?.

3

1 PERSON, 2 COMMENTS



tradeunionismtamed

22 January 2015 12:01am

Union says benefits sanctions destroyed trust between jobseekers and jobcentres Public and Commercial Services union renews calls for an independent inquiry into the policy

Brilliant! The leadership of the PCSU educates us all in regard to the Gestapo-type approaches of the DWP/ATOS. The PCSU should be informed that claimants knew all this decades ago. Because they were always at the sharp end of it.

Millions who have claimed JSA, etc over the years could have told the Union leaders this in 1980 or even earlier.

Follow and Spread the SIP : The Socialist Internet Protocol -

No-Reply to the Right



tradeunionismtamed ▶ tradeunionismtamed

22 January 2015 12:21am

S I P : N R > R



rxg723

22 January 2015 10:23am

Dear Guardian staff (or anyone else that can help) - I was looking online for the research referred to in the article by Oxford University. Searched select committee papers and elsewhere but no luck. Would like to look at the evidence for a piece of research I am doing on sanctions.

Can anyone help?

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Press release

Benefit sanctions figures published

From: [Department for Work and Pensions](#)
First published: 20 February 2014
Part of: [Helping people to find and stay in work,](#)
[Employment and Welfare](#)

JSA payments to claimants who haven't stuck to the rules have been suspended 818,000 times since we introduced new rules in October 2012.

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who failed to do enough to find work, failed to attend appointments or have turned down job-offers, have had their benefits payments suspended 818,000 times since new tougher rules were introduced in October 2012, new figures published today show.

The new JSA sanctions regime, which was introduced in October 2012 as part of the government's long-term economic plan, encourages people to engage with the support being offered by Jobcentres by making it clearer to claimants what they are expected to do in return for their benefits – and that they risk losing them if they don't stick to the rules.

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith said:

“ This government has always been clear that in return for claiming unemployment benefits jobseekers have a



responsibility to do everything they can to get back into work. As part of the government's long-term economic plan, we are ending the something for nothing culture and supporting those who want to work hard and play by the rules.

“ People who are in a job know that if they don't play by the rules or fail to turn up in the morning, there might be consequences, so it's only right that people on benefits should have similar responsibilities. However, sanctions are used as a last resort.”

In each month sanctions only make up to 6% of the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.

The new sanctions regime also makes sanctions more proportionate: with shorter sanctions for minor offences and tougher ones for repeat offenders. Repeat offenders can now lose benefits for up to 3 years.

People who are in genuine need can apply for hardship payments.

Today's publication details the number of sanctions imposed from when the new regime was introduced in October 2012 up until September 2013.

They show that:

- there has been a rise in the number of sanctions compared with last year – between November 2012 (the first full month of the new sanctions) and September 2013 there were 789,000 sanctions. This compares to 705,000 between November 2011 – September 2012
- the number of the most severe sanctions (refusing employment, leaving employment voluntarily or losing employment through misconduct) has reduced – there were a third less high level sanctions in the 3 months July to September 2013, compared to the same period in 2012
- the most common reason for a JSA sanction (36%) was a failure on the part of the jobseeker to actively look for work
- 30% were sanctioned because they failed to participate in employment programmes (including the Work Programme) designed to help people back to work
- 19% were sanctioned because they didn't have a good reason for missing a meeting at the Jobcentre

The government is also introducing the Claimant Commitment for anyone making a new claim for JSA. The commitment will see jobseekers having to account more clearly for their efforts to find work in order to receive their benefits.

Read the [statistics on Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance sanctions](#).

More information about sanctions

Sanctions are used as a last resort and the DWP has put in place a comprehensive monitoring regime to ensure that sanctions are always and only applied where appropriate to do so.

The decision to impose a sanction is taken by an independent decision maker – and everyone has the right to appeal. Crucially, people are always made aware of their right to appeal before any sanction is imposed.

People who are in genuine need can apply for hardship payments.

Contact Press Office

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Published:

20 February 2014

From:

Department for Work and Pensions

Part of:

Helping people to find and stay in work

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PATRICK BUTLER'S CUTSBLOG



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Benefit sanctions: they're absurd and don't work very well, experts tell MPs

Sanctions cause distress, hunger, and can make it harder for unemployed claimants to get a job. It is time to review the system, an MPs inquiry heard.

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The government's controversial "sanction first, investigate later" system of punishing social security claimants for apparent breaches of benefit rules and conditions should be overhauled, MPs have been told.

And not just by the usual suspects.

The current [benefits](#) conditionality regime is bureaucratic, capricious and crude; it disproportionately impacts vulnerable clients, particularly those who are disabled, often leaving them distressed, impoverished and reliant on [food banks](#). Sanctioning does not help clients into work; indeed, it is more likely to make it harder to get a job.

Who delivered this devastating critique? Hand-wringing liberal food bank volunteers? Lefty [welfare](#) advisers? No. It was the body representing the [180 organisations](#) paid hundreds of millions by ministers to get long-term unemployed people back into work, including big corporates like Serco, A4E, Ingeus, and G4S.

The bottom line, according to the people that deliver the government's Work Programme is this: the current sanctions regime, introduced two years ago, makes the job of getting people off benefits and into work harder.

As Kirsty McHugh, the chief executive of the work programme providers representative group, the [Employment Related Services Association](#) (Ersa), put it:

For a minority of people, receiving a sanction can be the wake-up call they need to help them move into work. However, for the vast majority of jobseekers, sanctions are more likely to hinder their journey into employment.

There were, it seemed, no enthusiasts for the current benefits sanctions regime giving evidence at Wednesday's [Work and Pensions select committee inquiry session](#). All 10 witnesses agreed conditionality in welfare was necessary; but all also said - including the Department for

Posted by [Patrick Butler](#)
Thursday 8 January 2015
17.00 GMT
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British thriller is the debut feature of music-video director Daniel Wolfe

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Work and Pensions' (DWP) independent reviewer of sanctions, Matthew Oakley - that it was time to review the effectiveness of the current arrangements.

Conditionality had always existed for employment benefits, the committee heard: to qualify, you had to be out of a job, able to work, and seeking employment. But in recent years conditionality had evolved into an ever more complex and demanding set of often arbitrary requirements, involving regular jobcentre appointments and job application targets. Failure by claimants to meet the conditions would be punishable by sanctions - the stopping of benefit payments for weeks or months, or even in some cases years.

Dr David Webster of the University of Glasgow suggested this ever-tighter conditionality was getting out of hand:

What the DWP is doing is sanctioning people willy and nilly for not doing arbitrarily-imposed things. They say you have to apply for 30 jobs in a fortnight and you only apply for 29 and they sanction you. This is completely absurd.

Peter Dwyer, professor of social policy at the University of York, told MPs that the new tighter benefits conditionality had unbalanced the role of jobcentres; they were neglecting their duty to support claimants into work, and instead were geared increasingly towards imposing financial penalties. As Ersa pointed out, this approach in many cases was "counter-productive" in terms of employment outcomes. The net human impact, as the Trussell trust pointed out, was distress and misery.

At least the Treasury, it seemed, was benefiting from the tighter sanctions regime. The committee heard independent estimates (committee member Debbie Abrahams MP said the DWP will not give or does not have figures) that since late 2012 sanctions had resulted in £275m being withheld from benefit claimants (the comparable figure for 2010 was £50m).

But surely, asked committee member Tory MP Graham Evans, it was necessary to have a tough conditionality and sanctions regime to stop abuse of the system?

Webster said that it wasn't. If people defrauded the benefits system a judicial process was in place to punish them. Most claimants didn't abuse the system and wanted to work. It was "not necessary to run a system on the assumption that most people do not want to work". There was no evidence that compelling claimants to perform arbitrary tasks (such as applying for target numbers of jobs each week) as a condition of receiving unemployment benefit (on the wrong assumption they would otherwise be cheating the system) helped them get jobs.

But there were bigger philosophical questions here too, said Webster. The progressive tightening of benefit conditionality and the growth of sanctions over the past 20 years had amounted to the creation of a "parallel, secret penal system for benefit claimants."

Asked by a clearly sceptical Evans to explain what he meant, Webster replied:

It [the sanctions regime] is a secret penal system because the decisions [to stop benefit payments] are made in secret, by officials; the claimant is not present; they are not legally represented; the punishment is applied before there is any hearing; if they get a hearing it is only long after the punishment has been applied. The scale of penalties is greater than the scale of penalties that are available to the magistrates courts... You are talking unmistakably about a penal system which has a set of characteristics which I would suggest are totally unacceptable in a democratic society.

Webster added:

We need to stand back and look at the system as a totality



Seaprincess, 47



jamesem, 36

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that we have now got and say: is this kind of system actually acceptable?

There are plenty of stories to suggest the current sanctions system is unacceptable (the Labour MP Chi Onwurah gave a few choice examples in a separate Commons debate on Wednesday). Arguably the current sanctions system sustains, however absurd and brutal, because of a political calculation that the public - softened by "scrounger" rhetoric - have high sympathy thresholds for unemployed claimants arbitrarily pitched into poverty by Jobcentre officials.

But what if "hard-working" people were sanctioned? The committee heard that written into Universal Credit legislation is the principle that working people in receipt of in-work benefits can have those benefits sanctioned if they are deemed not to be trying hard enough to get higher-paid work.

No-one at the committee had heard of such a sanction yet being applied (Universal Credit being in its infancy). But it is clear that if and when it is, the flimsy, implicit moral justification of ever more aggressive and inappropriate sanctions - that they affect the "undeserving" poor who are not trying hard enough - would collapse.

Professor Dwyer suggested ministers might be wary of going down this route :

Quite frankly if the government was to put the focus on low-paid poorer citizens who are doing their best in paid work, and was to start sanctioning them or threatening them with fines, or requiring them to look for better paid employment, it would probably be an error.

In other words: if you think sanctions are controversial now, you 'aint seen nothing yet.



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6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



LJBDDTHF

08 January 2015 5:08pm

121

Not only are sanctions 'absurd' and ineffective, they are incredibly cruel. A minimum of 4 weeks with no income whatsoever to replace the bare minimum to survive that is normally paid out in benefits, is nothing more than legal starvation. The benefits system is now the modern version of a work house, designed to force people into extremely low-paid work, including workfare with pay of around £2 an hour, or starve and live on the streets.



TerribleLyricist ▶ LJBDDTHF

08 January 2015 6:21pm

48

Yup.

You are talking unmistakably about a penal system which has a set of characteristics which I would suggest are **totally unacceptable** in a democratic society.



MutantNinjaThinktank ▶ LJBDDTHF

08 January 2015 9:27pm

2

Not only are sanctions 'absurd' and ineffective, they are incredibly cruel

I have a friend who was sanctioned by his benefit office. I warned him it would happen because he would not apply for jobs as directed to. I don't blame the staff because Jobseekers Allowance is what it says it is, but having lost his business and house, he was not actually in a fit state to be employed by anyone. A year later, he has got his act together, and is on one of these dubious self-employed schemes that allows him to get his rent paid while working. Its not perfect, but if allowed to sign on indefinitely under no pressure he might not be doing anything.



taurusdrycider ▶ MutantNinjaThinktank

08 January 2015 11:40pm

20

dubious self employed schemes unemployment figures fiddle

8 PEOPLE, 18 COMMENTS



Archimboldo

08 January 2015 5:12pm

76

What the DWP is doing is sanctioning people willy and nilly for not doing arbitrarily-imposed things. They say you have to apply for 30 jobs in a fortnight and you only apply for 29 and they sanction you. This is completely absurd.

Well what can you expect when the system is devised and run by an half wit like IDS

Stupid, vicious, cruel and now we have it from the horses mouth...ineffective.

AND...All those suicides!



NicholasB ▶ Archimboldo

08 January 2015 5:20pm

9

60 suicides over 2 years is 60 too many. BUT the suicide rate in the UK is

about 12 per 100,000 inhabitants, and people on benefits are more likely to have mental health problems than the general population.

Being unemployed and isolated is also a big factor in suicide, so the 600,000 reduction in unemployment will have prevented a great many suicides as well.



taurusdrycider ▶ NicholasB

08 January 2015 5:25pm

60

you forgot the tens of thousands of disabled and people suffering mental health problems hounded to their deaths by DWP changes.



CloudFairy ▶ NicholasB

08 January 2015 5:35pm

89

I work as a community psychiatric nurse, and I can tell you personally that I



traineeanarchist

08 January 2015 5:13pm

90

Cannot remember any sanctions being applied to MP's pay when they were merrily fiddling their expenses.

7 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



NicholasB

08 January 2015 5:17pm

3

Although there clearly needs to be some sensible link between effort to find work and receiving benefits it's also clear that the present arrangements are seriously dysfunctional (like the rest of the "benefits system").

It's great that the Work and Pensions Select Committee is looking to make major improvements. Let's hope they happen quickly.

BUT it is difficult to believe that the astonishing progress in reducing unemployment has had nothing to do with the sanctions regime. And the damage to their health and wellbeing of having people "rot" on benefits is very serious - so the hardship caused by sanctions is not the *only* consideration, though it is of course an important one.



CloudFairy ▶ NicholasB

08 January 2015 5:45pm

54

Do you have any actual evidence that sanctions have any effect on the figures? And as for 'major improvements' when they can sort out a Personal Independence Payment application in under 9 months let me know, I've been around this system for quite some time now and this is the shoddiest and most punitive I've ever known it, IDS deserves to rot in hell for the grief he's caused



Yoolanderscribbens ▶ CloudFairy

08 January 2015 9:14pm

17

I recognise the pressures you face and wish you and your team well - NickB isn't interested in facts - just trying to paint the rosier picture s/he can about the rate that Poverty related suicides have increased.....Food Banks exist only because they give stuff away for free etc



Yoolanderscribbens ▶ NicholasB

08 January 2015 9:19pm

16

But it is difficult to believe that the astonishing progress in reducing

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



traineeanarchist

08 January 2015 5:18pm

38

All these well paid people coming to this conclusion?
It's been going on for a few years and it has only just been noticed?

How many people have paid with their lives for these immoral and punitive sanctions?
Anyone asked IDS for his opinion?



dermaptera ▶ traineeanarchist

08 January 2015 9:19pm

9

That's unfair. The two academics have been studying this for some time, gathering evidence. We also heard from a chap from the Scottish CAB and from Chris Mould of the Trussell Trust. The Chris Mould, you remember, whom IDS won't talk to and says is just a publicity seeker.



traineeanarchist ▶ dermaptera

09 January 2015 8:14am

2

On reflection I think you are right dermaptera.
I am aiming at the wrong people aren't I.
Regards
Peter



ally07

08 January 2015 5:28pm

17

There were, it seemed, no enthusiasts for the current benefits sanctions regime giving evidence at Wednesday's Work and Pensions select committee inquiry session.

IDS must be in Verbier.



barefootreporter

08 January 2015 5:34pm

69

benefits sanctions have nothing to do with either saving money or getting people back into work

they have a twofold effect: firstly, to make JSA stressful and a ritual humiliation, so as to deter some people from claiming; secondly, to create a real threat of destitution so the workforce becomes biddable

and to probably to satisfy Iain Dug & Shit's appetite for sadistic bullying of people who can't fight back too



NZUK22NL

08 January 2015 5:37pm

49

But the system was never meant to "work" but was put in place as another strategem in the Tory war against the poor.



ally07

08 January 2015 5:41pm

47

the public - softened by "scrounger" rhetoric - have high sympathy thresholds for unemployed claimants arbitrarily pitched into poverty

DWP's very own version of The Hunger Games.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Vordermont

08 January 2015 5:48pm

49

Welfare reform suicides must not be overlooked

A website seeking to collate stories of suicides linked to the coalition's welfare reforms is a valuable resource.

Last week, it was reported that a jobseeker in Selly Oak tied himself to railings outside a jobcentre and set fire to himself. It is alleged that he was driven to such desperate actions because of the non-payment of a benefit - as Deborah Padfield has outlined here, many people struggle when they fall into the gap between being refused for Employment Support Allowance and starting to receive Jobseekers' Allowance. For those living on the very edge, a delay of days can be enough to leave them with nothing. Waiting weeks while computers process applications can be too long.

A document was distributed to jobcentre employees last April that contained a "six-point plan" to help them deal with claimants who threaten suicide. It states:

Some customers may say they intend to self-harm or kill themselves as a threat or a tactic to 'persuade', others will mean it. It is very hard to distinguish between the two ... For this reason, all declarations must be taken seriously.

The source of this leaked document - a long-term DWP employee - explained that they had not seen guidance like this before, leading them to draw the conclusion that "it has been put together ahead of the incapacity benefit and disability living allowance cuts".

A website called "Calum's List" is seeking to collate the stories of those who have committed suicide as a result of hardship caused by the coalition's welfare reforms. The fully-referenced list currently comprises 21 cases where either a suicide note or the testimony of family or health professionals cites an aspect of the welfare reforms as the main cause for the suicide.

It includes cases such as that of Martin Rust from Norwich, a schizophrenic who had been found fit to work by a DWP assessment, and committed suicide two months later. The Coroner cited the "distress" caused by the DWP's decision as a contributory factor in his decision to end his life. And that of Elaine Christian, who was found dead in Holderness Drain after self-harming and taking an overdose. The inquest heard that she had had to stop work because of poor health and was worried about a medical appointment to assess her eligibility for disability benefits she was due to attend the next day. Vicky Harrison, a 21-year-old who took an overdose after being rejected by what her family estimated to be around 200 jobs in two years. Her case is one of the few on the list to have been reported by the national press.

A secondary register, named "Peter's List", has also been started to record deaths "where the primary cause of death or hospitalisation cannot exclusively be laid at the door of the current welfare reforms, but where there is no doubt that welfare reform has, or had, some culpability", the site's owner states.

Suicide is never a simple matter of a single cause, so of course all of these cases must be kept in the context of the myriad pressures each individual faced, rather than isolated to fit into a particular narrative. This list exists for a transparent campaigning purpose - the site includes resources to submit Freedom of Information requests to the DWP and for a letter-writing campaign to Iain Duncan Smith.

But it also provides a rare and more comprehensive glimpse of what is happening across the country. Many of these stories are reported by local press but few filter up to national media organisations and as such, parallels and comparisons are lacking. As the coalition's welfare reforms cause benefits to be withdrawn or changed and claimants are reassessed, individuals are struggling and suffering. They must not be forgotten. Without a body of evidence, making the case for a different approach to welfare is that much more difficult.

Source:

<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2012/07/welfare-reform-suicides-must-not-be-overlooked>



Cloudfairy ▶ Vordermont

08 January 2015 5:57pm

59

The fact that these tragic cases do not filter up to the national media is quite sinister, there is a scandal at the heart of the DWP, Iain Duncan Smith has wreaked havoc upon so many vulnerable people, yet our press, who never tire of telling us how much they stand for the little people, remains silent. Possibly because most of it is owned by rabid ideologues who share the same desire to destroy the welfare state as the Tories



FelisLunartik ▶ Vordermont

09 January 2015 9:24am

3

Thank you for your diligent and informative post. This sort of thing needs to be spread far and wide so people can see what's going on.

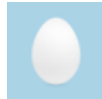


MagpiesView

08 January 2015 6:30pm

41

The number of benefit sanctions that lead to people's deaths makes that Rosemary Healy retweet (she didn't tweet the original parody) about where the Tories want to take the country frighteningly prophetic. Remember the Nazi's didn't start by loading people onto cattle trucks and delivering them to gas chambers - no they started by propoganda and demonization of their chosen victims and built up to that point. A scenario that should certainly seem familiar to anyone living in Britain today.



MagpiesView

08 January 2015 6:37pm

36

The Silent Purge

The vulnerable are dying
Of starvation and cold and despair
The poorest in a rich society
Whose leaders do not care

These leaders believe it is essential
That we do not count the cost
In misery and suffering
Of those whose lives are lost

They'd rather we blame each other
For our individual plight
And blame our own poor neighbours
And amongst ourselves fight

And so the purge continues
With elderly and disabled
Dying hungry and desperate and cold
Whilst our so-called 'betters'
Live lives of luxury
With riches greater than gold

Then they tell us it's 'necessary'
It's what the country needs
As money is poured into corporate pockets
And Government feeds their greed.

Causing death is not essential
Nor causing hunger and despair
As our country can afford to prevent it
But our leaders refuse to care.

David Chalk



BahBunny

08 January 2015 7:08pm

30

They are not absurd but CRUEL and they are working exactly as intended ...
KILLING people or pushing them into homelessness and out of the benefits system

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



geneer

08 January 2015 7:38pm

14

Ids: I don't choose to believe that.



Herblover ▶ geneer

08 January 2015 9:19pm

14

Glad I'm not the only one who can see the man has signs of being a Sociopath, always denying the real and apparent effects of Policy is.



Bill Edmunds ▶ Herblover

09 January 2015 9:04am

1

I think that I would even vote tactically for UKIP if it meant that IDS was dumped out at the General Election.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Preshous

08 January 2015 7:49pm

15

Oh well another pile of facts for IDS to ignore.



CaptainBlack ▶ Preshous

09 January 2015 10:30am

4

Just as long as he BELIEVES he is right, that's all that matters.



Andy Mitchell

08 January 2015 7:57pm

31

For JSA claimants at least it is not *"sanction first, investigate later"* it is *"sanction first, only investigate later if we really have to"*



good2go

08 January 2015 9:01pm

15

Sanctions don't want to be given the dignity of a 'Review'. They want dumping. They are an unworkable mess, thought up by dumb morons and they have caused misery, hardship and a lot worse.



Elkapan

08 January 2015 9:02pm

41

You lock a dog in a closet, starve it, bang on the door, make sure it suffers the utmost anxiety, exclude it from social contact. You bet that dog is going to emerge shaking, terrified and mentally deranged. Humans, however, they apparently excel in such an environment. The bourgeoisie are lunatics, actual psychopaths; they only feel secure in their vast wealth when they reduce us to cripples. It's no use appealing to them; it only excites them.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



samuelm7

09 January 2015 2:11am

34

Benefit claimant 'stitching-up' needs to be recognized as a criminally indictable offense and I will advocate for this matter to be referred to law enforcement. Not only are Jobcentre staff and managers criminally culpable for this malfeasance, but so are the DWP ministers because it's being done at their behest.

Full disclosure: Since January 2012, I have been reporting voluntarily to the UN's human rights office, in Geneva, on the welfare crisis for Britain's sick and disabled.

(Montreal, Canada)



Mel Morris ▶ samuelm7

09 January 2015 3:34am

11

Samuelm7 you're my hero of the day. Thank you for reminding me, why I work 18 hour days to help clients, patients and professionals struggling with this crisis. My team of #ATOSers work diligently to support #dwp claimants and tribunal cases, which they don't get legal aid for, are not entitled to fees for McKenzie Friends, if they represent themselves and will be charged a fee in the future to apply for an appeal when they have no money and are criminalised as they lose their council tax benefit and are taken to magistrates court for plus they lose their housing benefit so make

themselves intentionally homeless! Take note the form to complete is an EX160 fee remission when the fees come in!
Thank you for your wonderful post.
Kindest thoughts
Dr Mel Morris
Chief executive
Sanctuality cic
@SanctualityUK @DrMelMorris



Mel Morris

09 January 2015 3:39am

9

When is the UK going to wake up and realise what the unelected coalition are doing?
Here's my reply to Samuelm7:
Samuelm7 you're my hero of the day.
Thank you for reminding me, why I work 18 hour days to help clients, patients and professionals struggling with this crisis.
My team of #ATOSsers work diligently to support #dwp claimants and tribunal cases, which they don't get legal aid for, are not entitled to fees for Mckenzie Friends if they represent themselves and they will be charged a fee in the future to apply for an appeal when they have no money and are criminalised as they loose their council tax benefit and are taken to magistrates court, plus they loose their housing benefit so make themselves intentionally homeless by default, leaving them Disabled/sick, without benefits and homeless which means the coalition has more #dwp money and more social housing to play with now!
(Take note claimants, the form to complete is an EX160 fee remission when the fees come in!)
Thank you for your wonderful post.
Kindest thoughts
Dr Mel Morris
Chief executive
Sanctuality cic
@SanctualityUK @DrMelMorris

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



slcrun

09 January 2015 7:28am

15

This is showing the system as not only unfair but extremely sinister. The suggestion that low paid in work may lose benefits if they are not trying to get better paid work is utterly appalling if it is true. As I said yesterday, Third Reich anyone?



RadioJammar ▶ slcrun

09 January 2015 11:50am

7

It is true. It is part of Universal Credit. The Tories on the Committee made out that it was "theory" that this could happen, as there are no examples, but the panel pointed out that Universal Credit is only now being implemented, so it's too soon.

But as it has been written into the legislation, what on Earth is it doing there, if as the Tories were trying to claim, that it is "theory" and may not happen? What is the point of it being there, then?



Peter Millar

09 January 2015 8:13am

8

One of the problems with sanctions is the effect that they have on people other than those being sanctioned. This could be additional pressures placed on friends, family, desperation charities, and services such as the Police.

It becomes very apparent if you are trying to run Job Clubs or Confidence Coaching for people with additional problems that the private sector does not want to bother with.

I know this because I have been working for a charity trying to do just that. We are closing this month due to unacceptable pressures.

ButtHurtLocker

8



09 January 2015 8:41am

Sanctions! call it what it really is: the bankers bonus fund.

6



Bill Edmunds

09 January 2015 9:01am

But as Cameron explained austerity and the cuts are forced on us so that the Government can cut Taxes for the higher paid in 2018. Those receiving the Tax Cuts will thank the Tories for taking tough decisions on Welfare.

6

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



FelisLunartik

09 January 2015 9:19am

Can't see this being reported anywhere else. Quell surprise. I'm glad this despicable regime is actually being discussed and rightly discredited but given IDS's ideological zeal and 'belief', I dont think he'll listen to reason and will happily carry on with his persecution of the poor, the vulnerable and the disabled.

He really needs karma to kick him up the arse big time.

7



toffer9 ▶ FelisLunartik

09 January 2015 11:37am

I'm sure it will be reported fully in the Daily Mail (!). After all, its the years of relentless campaigning for revenge on the poor by Dacre and Rothermere that have brought us to this benighted system.

4



FelisLunartik

09 January 2015 9:53am

Let's not forget than even if someone successfully appeals against their sanction, the first two weeks of money is not paid back under any circumstance. Multiply that by the hundreds of thousands (and rising) of people being sanctioned and you have a nice way for the DWP to claw back money, presumably so it can go towards tax breaks for the super rich. It's not about getting people into work - it's about punishment and money.

15



Julia Whatley

09 January 2015 10:15am

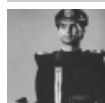
A sanction on the way for me then! I haven't applied for a job over Xmas, got a bit distracted by the loss of a friend. Now I have the flu.

All the jobs on universal job match have complicated titles not sure about the language they use. There's non to apply for given 48% of jobs are lost through mechanisation and technology.

At 59 and loosing my house because of bedroom tax rent arrears. I don't want to do fuck all to bow down to the job centre, there's no help from them. Give me a job with decent living wage and I will sign off.

Work doesn't pay, get me out of here!,

9



CaptainBlack

09 January 2015 10:37am

Policies devised by a spiteful fuckwit prove unworkable. I could have told them that when they were first proposed. But then I do have experience of signing on, unlike these remote millionaires.

Maybe we have to get rid of the Tories first, but can we get back to Jobcentres that, y'know, help you get a job? That's opposed to hinder you, starve you, make you jump through pointless hoops and generally treat you like you've committed a crime for having little money?

10



RadioJammor

09 January 2015 12:03pm

13

The panels also gave evidence (and there is plenty of it out there on the Net anyway) that arbitrary sanctions were far from the "last resort" that the likes of Esther McVey and Ian Duncan Smith keep claiming they are.

Jobcentreplus staff are clearly under unofficial pressure to sanction as many people as they can, and those that are first in the firing line are the more vulnerable who don't have the wherewithal to complain or go through the appeals process.

But let's not beat about the bush. This system is about The Government demonising the out-of-work to draw attention to their failure to wilful failure to provide suitable paid work that gets people off benefits and instead force people into accepting ever-lower paid jobs and to cut the amount of money paid out by the DWP, so they can cut its budget and claim they are making the welfare state and the civil service more efficient.

Screw the fact that in doing so they are ruining people's lives, creating an underclass, and literally killing people.



RadioJammor ▶ RadioJammor

09 January 2015 12:10pm

3

My Kingdom for an edit button...

Third paragraph should read, "draw away attention from their wilful failure..."



BadGodesburg

09 January 2015 1:41pm

4

Good to see the Labour Party banging on about this has been vindicated. Oh no! My mistake! I'm hallucinating



arx86

09 January 2015 2:20pm

8

Along with people getting further into debt and resorting to food banks and soup kitchens, homelessness caused by sanctions is another major issue - especially in the case of the outrageous THREE YEAR sanctions for anyone (particularly childless single people who councils don't have to help) without family or friends who will take them in.

For instance, if I didn't have my family to protect me, a three month sanction would exhaust my available credit and lead to homelessness (and bankruptcy) long before I ran out of food. (I'm a lodger so could be locked out without a court order).

I'm aware you can I declare no income and eventually get Housing Benefit back. But I hear a sanction often leads to automatic HB suspension. And many - indeed most under 35s - need both JSA and HB to cover their rent any way.

Presumably the Tories will one day explain how - even for those with just about enough to eat - rough sleeping or living in a filthy dosshouse are conducive to finding work?



arx86

09 January 2015 2:38pm

9

Personally I'd oppose sanctioning on moral grounds anyway, but even in financial terms I don't see how they make sense - especially without hardship payments as was previously the case and now the time periods have increased.

If a single, childless man is thrown onto the street as a result of a sanction in winter and breaks a window to get himself imprisoned so he doesn't freeze to death, doesn't that cost rather more in public funds than leaving him on JSA & Housing Benefit?

And if a single mother of two kids over 5 is evicted due to a sanction, the council will often have to pay insane amounts (often hundreds a week, far more than she previously received) to either convince a private landlord to take her, or to place her and kids in a room in a dosshouse.



TheElfishGene

09 January 2015 2:38pm

11

I felt like standing and applauding Dr David Webster, he was absolutely right and his quiet and well explained reasons why benefit sanctions are draconian, probably illegal and cruel absolutely infuriated the Tory cretin sat on the board.

David Webster's statements need to be printed across the front of every decent newspaper in the country.



Ganapathi

09 January 2015 2:42pm

13

Couple of things about this article:

Firstly, thanks to Patrick Butler for writing it, this is the first article I've read that really starts to put the horror of sanctions into the perspective they deserve. As mentioned in the article they are literally an attack on all of civil society on many different levels. This article should have been on the front page of The Guardian.

I have to take my hat off to Dr. David Webster - as an academic he really does understand the depth of what is going on over the issue of sanctions. It can be quite unusual to hear of academics so grounded in reality - at long last someone who actually gets what is at stake here and the monstrosity that DWP policies, lead by IDS, have morped into. I nearly cried when I read Dr. comments. Thank you Dr. Webster for your understanding.

The one misgiving I have about the content of the article, and this isn't the fault of Patrick Butler who is accurately portraying what is going on, concerns the Work Programme Providers part in this. While it is good to see that they, in part, can see how wrong and counter-productive sanctions are I'm disturbed by the notion of how their involvement in this playing out. Because of their part in this we seem to be developing a Social Security system in this country which is, by stealth, in the early days of being corporatised. If that corporatised system is allowed to develop we will have successfully allowed a system to be introduced in which a civic good is removed out of the social sphere and into the private - this is a chilling thought and one that all citizens should be very afraid of. What are we if, as a society, we no longer in the civic sphere look after one another?

In any case, in the longer run we really need to be looking to the introduction of an unconditional universal citizen's income scheme. This at a stroke would get rid of all this brutality that has been pursued by governments of whatever stripe in these last few decades.

Thanks again for a great article Patrick!

P.S. For anyone that is interested there is [a petition regarding sanctions](#) on the go. Please sign up.



Ganapathi

09 January 2015 3:08pm

4

For anyone that is interested here is [Dr. David Webster's written submission](#) to the Work and Pensions Committee.



CurAvon

09 January 2015 7:15pm

7

I wish the UK was a democracy, but sadly it isn't, the establishment government do the opposite of what the people want, according to 3 major opinion poll organisations, most people want transport and utilities renationalised, most people want rogue bankers jailed and most people want sanctions aimed at the poor stopped. But while political parties are bought by big business and their 'donations' democracy is the last thing the UK will ever have.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

Marcel LeSinge

09 January 2015 8:26pm

4



Time for the Labour party to stand up and be counted!...But I'm not holding my breath!



DeeDee1957 ▶ Marcel LeSinge

10 January 2015 1:12am

2

They should bring this up daily in the House but they get far to comfortable picking up their salary and looking after their own bums, not all of them, but most.



DeeDee1957

10 January 2015 1:02am

2

A bit of honesty would help, sanctions are used to reduce the welfare bill.



Melanie Melons

10 January 2015 2:28pm

3

I thought capricious cruelty was the entire point



Elizabeth Deighton

10 January 2015 7:18pm

As have mentioned before I have had personal knowledge of sanctions. Lets hope as hope is a virtue that this will happen. however I won't be holding my breath



JayneL62

11 January 2015 12:23pm

Yet another of #IDS 'beliefs' in practice - the demise of DLA because The cost of PIP= £35 less per week, Thanks #DWP! – This is A CALL OUT for Info <http://wp.me/p27z4t-1H8>



Mark Blackburn

11 January 2015 12:37pm

2

this is all based on the fact that the MP's even care... Iain Duncan Smith has made his stance clear that he is just after killing off the benefits population by any means necessary. weather it be distress caused by his SS team ATOS or just forcing people to commit suicide due to being brought to the point of no return or just starving people to death. this man is a monster. and the fact they refuse to officially look into this harm is disgusting. when this man is brought to justice for murder the better.



Steven Dixon

11 January 2015 11:06pm

4

We constantly hear Government spin about sanctions being used as a last resort. This is totally untrue. I live on Teesside and Middlesbrough has one of the highest sanction rates in Britain - a massive 60%. If this isn't target-driven, I don't know what is. Job centres are no longer places to find employment, they are centres to bash the unemployed into submission. Unpaid work schemes, childish courses how to construct buildings from rolled up newspaper, interview techniques how to wash your armpits before an interview. Someone is getting rich creating these schemes and you can bet it isn't the unemployed. Billionaire multinational companies creaming as much money as they can. The Tories should be ashamed of themselves. The only salvation is the election clock is ticking down and hopefully that will be last we ever see this truly horrid

government.



DeeDee1957

12 January 2015 7:54am

1

Guardian you should be on this every week as an issue, people are suffering and they are dying, some the most vulnerable who cannot fight back...you say you are a left wing paper, so nothing should matter more to you.



CurAvon

12 January 2015 2:45pm

1

Sanctions are designed to remove people from the claimant count, so is Workfare and even Universal Credit, with 20+ JC plus offices which have now switched over to UC not counting their unemployed customers who are on UC instead of JSA, there are also nearly 1 million unemployed not claiming JSA due to government abuse ... All of the above dutifully ignored by the mainstream media and the 'churn'alists that have been bought and paid for by the establishment.

I am an ex-employee of the Department for Work and Pensions and between Sept 13 and Aug 14 worked as a Personal Advisor/Works Coach at a busy inner-city Jobcentre in Leicester. It was my task to send Claimant's payments to the Decision Makers for sanction.

1. There is a very significant and onerous difference between what the Department (DWP) states are their methods and objectives and local policy.
2. Local policy differs from Statute, Regulation and the Department's own Guidance and according to that guidance is stated to be "Not legal". I believe this is done so that Local Management can increase their off-flow performance by bullying people off the register.
3. The Department refuses to put local policy in writing even in disciplinary decisions. I personally have had 3 such decisions and in each the points raised about the illegality of their policies were totally ignored.
4. I refused to work outside the guidance or to carry out acts that the guidance stated were not legal.

Email the Department's own Decision Makers to staff:

***The direction isn't reasonable** – guidance states that JSD's should be issued, where the customer won't do something voluntarily. If you issue the direction immediately then you need to convince the DM why it was reasonable to issue it to the customer without first asking him to do it voluntarily. As well as convincing us why and how it will help him to get back into work.*

From the Department's own guidance:

However, for legal reasons, you **cannot issue** a Jobseeker's Direction to mandate a claimant to create a profile and public CV unless a DWP IAD service is reasonably available to them should they need to use one - for example, because they do not want to accept cookies and therefore need to have access to a device on which cookies have already been accepted

5. According to the Civil Service code I should inform my Manager. I did. As a result I was put on a Personal Improvement Plan (PIP) and threatened with disciplinary action. A request for the local policy in writing was refused as was a request for a written refusal. I know of two other staff that suffered similarly. At the year end my performance was deemed to be unsatisfactory and I was denied a £500 bonus. This was appealed against but in their decision rejecting the appeal management refused to respond to any issues but stated solely that their original decision was correct. I can send documents currently with the Union if required as this is going to an Industrial Tribunal.
6. I was told that I had to:
 - Issue a Jobseekers Direction (JSDs) at every meeting with a claimant. I pointed out that the guidance states they should only be issued where there is a reasonable expectation that the claimant won't take a reasonable action and that it was contrary to the Dept's stated 'Claimant Commitment' Coach/Athlete rather than Parent/Child policy.
 - Issue Jobseekers Directions to Claimants to open a Universal Jobmatch Account and add their CV. I pointed out that according to the Dept's guidance this was not legal.
 - Send more claimant's off for even though there were no targets or benchmarks I was told that I was not meeting "Expectations" in a disciplinary I asked what the difference was between the three words. I was not told that I was doing anything technically wrong just that I had to 'find more'.

Those Coaches who most successfully carried out the Dept's new Claimant Commitment ethos and got their Claimants to engage in a realistic and achievable path to work would logically have hardly any Claimants who were not complying to the criteria for receiving JSA. As such they would not need to stop their money and would then end up in disciplinary for not stopping their enough peoples money. It was a catch 22

situation in that those most successful in carrying out the Dept's Claimant Commitment policy would end up in disciplinary.

I received no answer at the disciplinary meetings or in the written decisions were all these issues were ignored. I have written to my MP Mr Andrew Robathan who has taken this case up for me and is arranging to speak to the head of Jobcentre Plus.

7. According to figures that I have downloaded from the DWP Stat-Xplore and the Office of National Statistics in October 2013 Loughborough Jobcentre sanctioned 29% of their JSA register number, Corby 30% and Market Harborough sanctioned a staggering 42%. Is it really the Department's contention that such large significant proportions of people are;

- Not actively seeking employment **and** are too unintelligent to follow DWP staff instructions and do enough to appear to be looking for work? During this same period the Birmingham Jobcentre of Yadley had a total of 8%.
- Is it really Parliament's expectation that sanctions should be used as a last resort or on a basis that will catch out around 1 in 3 JSA Claimants?

8. The number of sanctions dramatically increased by the universal and indiscriminate use of JSDs. In the Leics/Northants region this was pioneered at Loughborough Jobcentre and the Jobcentre managers of all the region's other Jobcentres were sent there to learn how to do it. I can send figures or you can extract yourself from the two databases mentioned above. A freedom of information act requested how many JSDs were issued by Jobcentre by Month over the last two years in Leics/Northants. The response was given in total (an internal review had been requested). Even the total figures are instructive:

| | |
|---------|-------|
| Sept 12 | 980 |
| Oct 13 | 5,570 |
| Aug 14 | 2,120 |

These figures have been increased by the application of the 'Loughborough Method' throughout the region. They have fallen because the Claimants are getting wise to the tricks used on them by unscrupulous Advisors and the staff themselves are refusing to follow the instruction to issue a JSD at every meeting as they are sickened by the injustice of it.

If the Department had fulfilled its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act I would be able to show the spread of this pernicious policy.

9. I was unable to collate the % of Claimants sanctioned across the whole Leics/ Northants region as the Office of National Statistics identify Leicester's Jobcentres as Leicester A, B and C. One of these appears to have almost no Claimants whilst South Wigston, which has been shut for five years has allegedly 4,000.

10. From the figures available it is clear that the percentage of claimants sanctioned started to increase in May 2013 across all Leics/Northants Jobcentres peaking in October 2013. It is no coincidence that this is the same date when the percentage of those JSDs peaked too.

11.

To Summarise:

Staff are being bullied with the threat of disciplinary action into following unwritten local policy that is against the Department's own published guidance and according to that guidance is illegal.

The number of Claimants being sanctioned has increased due to a deliberate policy of management, a policy they know to be wrong as they refuse to put it in writing.

Imagine you are a member of staff who for financial reasons cannot afford to lose your bonus never mind your job.

You know that you have to meet unwritten 'expectations' in sending payments off to be sanctioned or you will be disciplined. Which Claimants do you decide to pick on? The strong and articulate or the weak and vulnerable? The answer is obvious. There are staff with few scruples who will set up claimant's to fail by failing to give out information or giving false information. I know of a case in which a person who could neither read nor write was given a JSD by a "Signer" to put their CV on the Universal Jobmatch website. Unsurprisingly they did not manage this task and were sanctioned by their "Signer". Fortunately, when the Claimant next attended the office, the original "Signer" was off on leave and as the Claimant, in tears, told her temporary new "Signer" what had happened. Happily the temporary new "Signer" was a good person and wrote an appeal for the Claimant and a formal complaint for them. If her original "Signer" had been in that day, the Claimant would have been told there was nothing they could do and he would have received another sanction (financial penalty) which would have been a direct punishment for their lack personal skills.

Claimants are paid JSA three working days after they sign on. If this day falls on a Bank Holiday great efforts are made to make payment before the holiday rather than a day afterwards. I don't know whether this is to meet statute law or through a realisation that many Claimants are living hand to mouth and need the money by the day it's due. If a Claimant's payment is sent to the Decision Makers it is stopped immediately until they make their decision, this could take 6-8 weeks. To seriously aggravate the situation, is that as soon as JSA payment is suspended, the Claimant's Housing Benefit also stops. For many of the most vulnerable this can lead to homelessness, which I suggest does not assist either their health or job prospects in any way.

28 November 2014

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'Jobs revival' in spotlight as most of those who lose benefits fail to find work

Coalition's claims under scrutiny after research shows only a fifth of 2m people find employment after losing jobseeker's allowance

Frances Perraudin and Patrick Wintour

The Guardian, Tuesday 20 January 2015 20.59 GMT

Jump to comments (1123)



Iain Duncan Smith, the work and pensions secretary, said a million people were benefiting from the new regime. Photograph: Dave Thompson/PA

Coalition claims that it has presided over a jobs revival have come under fresh scrutiny with research showing that as few as a fifth of the 2 million jobless people whose benefit has been taken away are known to have found work.

The research, due to be presented at a Commons select committee inquiry into welfare sanctions on Wednesday, suggests that hundreds of thousands are leaving jobseeker's allowance because of benefit sanctions without finding employment, though the report's authors decline to provide an exact figure.

Written by academics at the University of Oxford and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, the report raises questions about why so many of those losing their benefit then disappear from the welfare system – possibly to rely on food banks.

Prof David Stuckler, of Oxford University, said that benefit sanctions "do not appear to help people return to work. There is a real concern that sanctioned persons are disappearing from view. What we need next is a full cost-benefit analysis that looks not just narrowly at employment but possibly at hidden social costs of sanctions.

"If, as we're finding, people are out of work but without support –

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disappeared from view – there's a real danger that other services will absorb the costs, like the NHS, possibly jails and food support systems, to name a few. Sanctions could be costing taxpayers more."

However, the Department for Work and Pensions, which is expected to hail a further rise in UK employment on Wednesday, countered that it was proud that 1 million jobless people were now subject to the "claimant commitment", which sets out tougher requirements on the jobless to find work or risk losing their benefit payments.

Iain Duncan Smith, the work and pensions secretary, said: "It is only right that in return for government support – and in return for their benefits – jobseekers are expected to do all they can to find work. Although on benefits, they still have a job: the job is to get back into work.

"The claimant commitment, which is deliberately set to mimic a contract of employment, makes this expectation explicit. It has created a real change in attitudes. Already more than a million people have signed up to – and are benefiting from – this new jobseeking regime."

The Oxford-based research showed that between June 2011 and March 2014, more than 1.9m sanctions were imposed on people receiving jobseeker's allowance (JSA), with 43% of those sanctioned subsequently ceasing to try to claim the benefit. Only 20% of those who left gave as their stated reason that they had found work.

The Department for Work and Pensions conducts no systematic research into what happens to those sanctioned, so the new findings start to fill an evidential gap in what has been one of the biggest but least publicised changes to the welfare system since the government came to power.

The 1.9m benefit removals between June 2011 and March 2014 represent a 40% increase compared with the previous seven years. The figures are based on official monthly and quarterly data from databases covering UK local authorities between 2005 and 2014.

The highly emotive dispute about a central aspect of government welfare reform centres on whether jobcentre staff, driven by senior management, are following arbitrary and poorly communicated rules that punish not just the feckless but some of the most vulnerable in society, including mentally ill and disabled people. Many independent witnesses have urged the DWP inquiry at least to suspend the sanctions regime for those claiming employment support allowance, the main disability benefit .

Study author Dr Rachel Loopstra, from Oxford University, said: "The data did not give us the full picture of why sanctioned people have stopped claiming unemployment benefit. We can say, however, that there was a large rise in the number of people leaving JSA for reasons that were not linked to employment in association with sanctioning. On this basis, it appears that the punitive use of sanctions is driving people away from social support."

The study also shows widespread variation in how local authorities used sanctions. In Derby, Preston, Chorley and Southampton, researchers found particularly high rates of people being referred for sanctions. In some months, more than 10% of claimants in these areas were sanctioned – the highest rates nationwide.

Co-author Prof Martin McKee, from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said: "There is a need for a cost-benefit analysis of sanctioning, looking at it not just in narrow terms of unemployment benefit, but also the bigger picture, focusing on employment, health, and other social costs."

He added: "The coalition government has embarked upon an unprecedented experiment to reform social security. I hope policymakers will be informed by these findings and see the value of investigating the consequences."

Separate evidence in front of the DWP select committee inquiry includes witness statements from former jobcentre staff suggesting senior management threaten staff if they do not take a harsh approach to claimants. There is also cumulative evidence that many of those sanctioned have little or no knowledge of why they are being punished.

The main union representing jobcentre staff, PCS – also due to give

claimant numbers, critics claim

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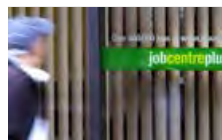
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7 comments

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evidence on Wednesday to the select committee inquiry – suggests: “While there is considerable anecdotal evidence about the inappropriate use of sanctions, there is a lack of empirical evidence. We believe that DWP should publish a more detailed breakdown of sanctions, and specifically more detailed explanations as to why they were imposed. PCS’s survey of our adviser members showed that 61% had experienced pressure to refer claimants to sanctions where they believed it may be inappropriate to do so.”



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DWP select committee inquiry member Debbie Abrahams said: “This government has developed a culture in which Jobcentre Plus advisers are expected to sanction claimants using unjust, and potentially fraudulent, reasons in order get people “off-flow”. This creates the illusion the government is bringing down unemployment.”

The government counters that its policies are turning the UK into the jobs factory of Europe, and dismisses the idea that the unemployment figures are being subverted by sanctions.

A DWP spokesman said: “As the authors admit themselves the data does not give a full picture. What we do know – according to independent figures from the Office for National Statistics – is that we now have a record number of people in employment in this country and there are two million more people in private sector jobs compared to 2010.”

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71 PEOPLE, 86 COMMENTS



Jaaaaaaaamie

20 January 2015 9:11pm

370

Well...who'd a thunk it.



strategem ▶ Jaaaaaaaamie

20 January 2015 9:19pm

40

though the report's authors decline to provide an exact figure.

Assertions and anecdotal evidence .

When will the left stop making up excuses for people to get benefits?



WhetherbyPond ▶ strategem

20 January 2015 9:20pm

568

Pull the chain somebody.....

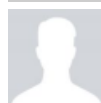


maximilienrobespiere ▶ strategem

20 January 2015 9:23pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our

6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



Troy Chapel

20 January 2015 9:12pm

92

And so the unravelling began and great fear was seen to be the last hope....



BuckHucklebuck ▶ Troy Chapel

20 January 2015 9:19pm

317

Hope means nothing if these chisellers get into power again in 2015. Osbourne's planning to cut the welfare budget down to the point jobseekers won't get anything but a glass of weak lemon squash and a stern talking to about personal responsibility once a month.



carl allen ▶ BuckHucklebuck

20 January 2015 10:34pm

39

There is no doubt the Tories love the working poor and do everything to have more working poor, and more of the working poor inherit the earth and nothing else.

Indeed their election poster of a paved dirt track shows that we are well on the path to becoming a Christmas country and not a Christian country.



KBS1956 ▶ BuckHucklebuck

20 January 2015 10:39pm

47

And IDS will do away with the FSA WRAG so that people already identified

10 PEOPLE, 13 COMMENTS



badbohemian

20 January 2015 9:13pm

86

Quelle surprise



carl allen ▶ badbohemian

20 January 2015 10:21pm

43

The great job search:

University education now results in two people fighting for one canteen at the oasis in the middle of a desert.

The fight winner gets to walk out of the desert into a land of green fields, milk and honey.

The loser remains at the oasis and has a limited supply of food rations from occasional air drops by a food bank.



Gripemeister ▶ badbohemian

20 January 2015 11:06pm

167

This is what else IDS has been up to over the last 5 years, he is a criminal and should be hauled off to the Hague for his crimes against humanity.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/20/jobcentre-hit-squads-benefit-claimants-sanctions>



alanomaly ▶ badbohemian

20 January 2015 11:07pm

39

There's a huge surprise here, the figures are insane - "at most a fifth of the ?

8 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



lasershark

20 January 2015 9:13pm

88

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04yk7h6>



Troy Chapel ▶ lasershark

20 January 2015 9:15pm

96

Thank you Lasershark. A horrifying expose on the state of our nation.



WarRocketAjax ▶ lasershark

20 January 2015 9:53pm

126

Oh dear, did they run this by John Humphrys?

He will not be pleased after his fact free, anecdote riddled drivell demonstrated (in his head) that the welfare state should be scrapped because everyone on the dole is a scrounging bastard.



lasershark ▶ WarRocketAjax

20 January 2015 10:00pm

7

this programme was produced in selford

8 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



LadioGaga

20 January 2015 9:14pm

158

I'm picking those kicked off the benefit that fail to find work are statically counted as being fully employed.



bobsyouruncle1 ▶ LadioGaga

20 January 2015 10:06pm

18

doubt it, but they're almost certainly not in the claimant count, by definition.



CaptainBlack ▶ LadioGaga

20 January 2015 10:25pm

100

Perhaps the people of Eastleigh might want to confront Esther McVeigh about these claims on Question Time this Thursday. Don't let her get away like IBS did.



Philip Carlos Bembridge ▶ CaptainBlack

15

21 January 2015 12:21am

Esther McVey is just as delusional as IDS. If IDS can get away with, then so

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



burningbush

169

20 January 2015 9:14pm

No doubt 100% zero hour bully fodder contracts....



Wifeandthreekids ▶ burningbush

66

20 January 2015 10:43pm

I would love to be "zero hour bully fodder".
Self employed house husband, industrial estate across the road...
Signed up in Feb last year and warned by a mate who works on the industrial estate that I wouldn't get employment as I didn't speak the language (Polish).
How I laughed. Still no shifts. Not laughing now.

PS: If you want a job in Kent, there's loads going. Just have to visit a job centre in Bucharest, Sofia, Warsaw...



CaptainBlack ▶ burningbush

77

20 January 2015 10:43pm

Or bogus self employment. Many people (like me) think trying to get by on lesser tax credits is preferable to be treated worse than a criminal. The useless Work Programme 'providers' like this too as they get a bounty for whoever they palm off on HMRC.

12 PEOPLE, 14 COMMENTS



Mobysick

352

20 January 2015 9:15pm

Odd how people who have paid National Insurance for decades and built up a giant surplus are being persecuted by these fascist bastards... Oh I've just answered my rhetorical question.



Kamals ▶ Mobysick

380

20 January 2015 9:30pm

I found myself unemployed after 30 years of continuous work and my experience of jobcentre plus was awful, its a system not designed to help you but a system designed to trip you up and then penalise.

Thankfully I did find work after a few weeks, let hope a full enquiry is launched post May 7th and the incompetence of IDS is fully exposed



Mobysick ▶ Kamals

143

20 January 2015 9:32pm

Permanent mass unemployment is state policy so the Jobcentre has a propaganda of helping and a practice of blaming the victim.



nocausestoadopt ▶ Kamals

29

20 January 2015 9:39pm

Good luck to you mate

7 PEOPLE, 16 COMMENTS

gfpdiehn

326



20 January 2015 9:15pm

Psychotic, lying Tory scum caught at it again. May 7 can't come soon enough.

13



Mobysick ▶ gfpdiehn

20 January 2015 9:16pm

You won't be voting Liarbour then....



BuckHucklebuck ▶ Mobysick

20 January 2015 9:22pm

What's your plan, then? Vote green in a Lab/Con marginal? UKIP (what's their welfare policy? I assume it's either national service, deportation to the colonies or forced labour until death)? Liberal (who's welfare policy is "Oh, that's a shame. We're really sorry you're starving") or... what?

On social security there is a real difference between Labour and Conservative. If you believe otherwise, you aren't paying attention.

161



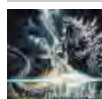
Mobysick ▶ BuckHucklebuck

20 January 2015 9:29pm

I only vote in democratic elections so I will abstain again. On social security

4

12 PEOPLE, 14 COMMENTS



BuckHucklebuck

20 January 2015 9:15pm

When Dunkies' done with it the whole DWP will have to be dynamited and rebuilt from scratch.

Work programmes that cost millions and have lower success rates than doing nothing, the unemployed nudged into sub-poverty "self-employment", sanctions targets that exist in a schroedingeresque state of existing until the DWP are questioned about the directly, an ending stream of bilge and blatant falsehoods masquerading as statistical data, and the outright naked lies, suicides and lives destroyed.

And he calls himself a fucking Christian.

359



LadioGaga ▶ BuckHucklebuck

20 January 2015 9:28pm

I'm always weary of people that either claim to have the backing of God or claim to behave like God.

129



Snowtintrough ▶ BuckHucklebuck

20 January 2015 9:37pm

If this man is a f----- Christian he is the most evil politician that ecer set foot in Westminster

89



Prabhakari ▶ LadioGaga

20 January 2015 9:45pm

Agree

6

8 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



siff

20 January 2015 9:16pm

That face ! That horrible face !

168



lasershark ▶ siff

20 January 2015 9:32pm

50

terry gilliam designed that mouth, i'm sure of it - i can almost hear the organ music.



lasershark ▶ lasershark

20 January 2015 9:43pm

7

[reference](#)



StinkEye71 ▶ siff

20 January 2015 10:00pm

21

I can't look at that picture without automatically assuming he's experiencing

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



Mumsche

20 January 2015 9:16pm

249

Prof David Stuckler, of Oxford University, said that benefit sanctions "do not appear to help people return to work.

Well, because there are *no* jobs.

Everyone gets this. Everyone. Not Tories, though.



Ikonoclast ▶ Mumsche

20 January 2015 10:35pm

70

And the MSM have allowed the Tories to peddle the lie that employment is higher than it actually is. The jobs market in the UK is Fubar. Their idea of full employment is all those on the dole working for it cleaning public toilets.



Lara Oude Alink ▶ Ikonoclast

21 January 2015 11:49am

2

Even those jobs are probably nonexistent. Try asking for cleaning jobs at job agencies. Good luck finding them.



DrBarnowl ▶ Ikonoclast

21 January 2015 2:22pm

6

Surely there aren't enough public toilets left for this to work.

Unless you mean the new line of Public-Private toilets where you pay the "reasonable" price of £1 (£1.50 during peak times).

9 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



kristinezkochanski

20 January 2015 9:16pm

167

It's about time the ridiculous claims or lies as they are generally known put forward by IDS were put to the test. The sorrow is it has taken so long.



Prabhakari ▶ kristinezkochanski

20 January 2015 9:47pm

51

No-one can get near him because of his machine-gun carrying guards.



mundayschild ▶ Prabhakari

20 January 2015 9:53pm

46

Snipers mate, snipers.....



showmaster ▶ Prabhakari

20 January 2015 10:01pm

54

He ran away from half a dozen protesters and called in the police to protect

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



unpleasantmilk

20 January 2015 9:17pm

76

Maybe he can dig out some more stats from findaproerty.com to dig him out of *yet another* fine mess.

The guy is a disgrace, and that is saying something compared to our other MP's.



Prabhakari ▶ unpleasantmilk

20 January 2015 9:48pm

17

In theory, he is supposed to be a gentleman.
In theory...

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



LudwigsLughole

20 January 2015 9:18pm

153

IDS caught lying? Again? My flabber is officially gasted!!!



EgilSkallagrimson ▶ LudwigsLughole

21 January 2015 6:52pm

2

Just caught the BBC News headline, as usual simply recycling the government press release without offering any kind of counter-view or analysis of the figures.

10 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



ArthurTheCat

20 January 2015 9:18pm

213

Iain Duncan Smith should be sanctioned, as a repeated liar who used his lying to work his way into a job for which he is not qualified.

Although, to be fair, he isn't actually qualified for any job at all except for idle, wasteful scrounger.



Brandybuck ▶ ArthurTheCat

20 January 2015 9:30pm

95

Just like Gidiot Osborn is not qualified to be Chancellor. Towel folding doesn't qualify.



BuckHucklebuck ▶ ArthurTheCat

20 January 2015 9:47pm

85

Iain Duncan Smith should be sanctioned

I read "sectioned" initially, which I agreed with.

He's clearly a danger to others, although not, sadly, to himself.



annesmt ▶ ArthurTheCat

20 January 2015 9:48pm

27

Maybe he has been sanctioned as we never see him on the TV nowadays

8 PEOPLE, 12 COMMENTS

Gaz Hunter

20 January 2015 9:18pm

219



What's the difference between IDS & Harold Shipman ?

One's the biggest serial killer in the UK, and the other is Dr Shipman.

FACT.

96



slcrun ▶ Gaz Hunter

20 January 2015 9:58pm

96

Shipman tried to hide what he had done - this lot applaud IDS and pat him on the back!



WhirledNews ▶ Gaz Hunter

20 January 2015 10:22pm

10

Straw poll: IDS or IBS?



Mad Monk ▶ Gaz Hunter

20 January 2015 10:35pm

26

Harold Shipman also had a genuine CV...



ALGENONTROTSVILLE

20 January 2015 9:19pm

138

We all know that the Tories claim about creating jobs is false, in that a number of them are zero hours or low pay jobs. They are more concerned about creating figures that look good rather than creating real jobs. Anything to get re elected, sod the effect on people's lives.

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



WhetherbyPond

20 January 2015 9:19pm

189

Duncan Smith proven serial liar and fantasist, Walter Mitty has more credibility than this morally retarded, sociopathic, baboon.



considerphlebas ▶ WhetherbyPond

20 January 2015 9:24pm

59

The Tory hordes lap it up regardless



epinoa ▶ WhetherbyPond

20 January 2015 9:48pm

56

Walter Mitty has more credibility than this morally retarded, sociopathic, baboon.

Walter Mitty clearly didn't have a copy of the files that relate to parliamentary paedophilia. I can't think of any other way that a man so incompetent can stay in power.



WhetherbyPond ▶ epinoa

20 January 2015 10:07pm

26

Quite

5 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



mundayschild

20 January 2015 9:20pm

91

Arbeit Macht Frei, as the Daily Heil would say....



Snowtintrough ▶ mundayschild

35

20 January 2015 9:29pm

Mr Duncan Smiths most famous quotes



Ikonoclast ▶ Snowtintrough

38

20 January 2015 10:37pm

And he did actually clumsily say something close to that horrific phrase.



Snowtintrough ▶ Ikonoclast

13

20 January 2015 10:52pm

Ask the survivors of his hate campaign against the most vulnerable people

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



MoonMoth

20 January 2015 9:22pm

120

Might help explain why tax receipts have been lagging so far behind expectations.

Massive electoral deception if true.



Troy Chapel ▶ MoonMoth

32

20 January 2015 9:49pm

Again.

Where is the toothless Electoral Commission....?



Germ__ ▶ Troy Chapel

4

21 January 2015 7:28am

No. The problem is daft marginal tax rates. Du to the withdrawal of child tax allowance I have more than 80% deductions over £50,000. If I put the cash into a pension I get more in tax relief back 25% than I would otherwise take home.

Lots of people are doing this.

Daft tax rates result in no tax being paid

7 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



bewolf

20 January 2015 9:23pm

149

Like the man who had a heart attack when undergoing an ESA interrogation and was sanctioned for not completing his medical!!



Snowtintrough ▶ bewolf

69

20 January 2015 9:33pm

Mr Duncan Smith said having a heart attack was not a good enough reason for not completing his interrogation



WicInThead ▶ bewolf

103

20 January 2015 9:43pm

Or indeed, the amputee was turned away from an ATOS interview for disability benefit because he was in a wheelchair.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-30893163>

ally07 ▶ bewolf

41



20 January 2015 9:53pm

Those who died during the two year Work Programme were classed as

9 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



misunderstood65

20 January 2015 9:23pm

140

If you lie on a c.v. or make false claims when obtaining a job you would probably be dismissed and I suppose, could possibly even be prosecuted for fraud.

Why oh why is it not the same for those in power

There should be a quicker route to impeachment for the political classes



johnZtone ▶ [misunderstood65](#)

20 January 2015 9:36pm

85

For the same reason the Commons is burying an inquiry into paedophile in their ranks.



SinbadSailors ▶ [misunderstood65](#)

20 January 2015 9:38pm

95

Indeed.

IDS has been caught lying about his educational background on more than one occasion.

He's also been a bit iffy on his Army career although it should be well known by now that he managed to 'misplace' his rifle when on duty.

The man is a charlatan amongst a host of charlatans.



MsGodard2 ▶ [SinbadSailors](#)

20 January 2015 11:26pm

8

Got any links to stuff about his 'interesting' career/ CV?

9 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



SoundAndImage

20 January 2015 9:24pm

164

Duncan Smith is the biggest bastard in a whole cabinet of bastards.



misunderstood65 ▶ [SoundAndImage](#)

20 January 2015 9:26pm

73

that's a tall claim...

there's so much competition



Snowtintrough ▶ [misunderstood65](#)

20 January 2015 9:31pm

24

Yes its trying to work out who is the biggest b---- in this government



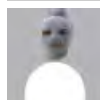
Troy Chapel ▶ [misunderstood65](#)

20 January 2015 9:48pm

3

They're all about competition remember

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



SinisterLord

20 January 2015 9:26pm

179

The employment and welfare reform myth is finally unravelling for the Tories and what many have been saying for some time is being shown to be correct. Namely that sanctions are being used punitively in a top-down cultural shift within Job Centres.

Here is parliamentary evidence to that effect:-

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/work-and-pensions-committee/benefit-sanctions-policy-beyond-the-oakley-review/written/16165.html>

IDS has failed big time. These reforms have cost billions of pounds, mental deterioration, breakdowns, general suffering to families as well as individuals and numerous suicides.

And for what? Is the national debt reduced? Are people more likely to find work as a result of being starved and have to concentrate their energy on survival? Of course not.

Anyone who votes for these sociopaths has had an empathy bypass.



OldObserver ▶ SinisterLord

30

20 January 2015 9:48pm

well giving large tax cuts to business is unlikely to reduce the fiscal deficit but that did not stop them in each budget.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



jibber1975

32

20 January 2015 9:27pm

What a an absolute shock.

Said no one anywhere.



CaptainBlack ▶ jibber1975

15

21 January 2015 12:52am

The fact that we are not in shock says much about how far we have fallen as a society.

6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



PoductionWest

10

20 January 2015 9:28pm

Winston Churchill on the subject of Government statistics is reported to have said that, "*There are lies, there are damned lies and there are statistics...*" Governments have always played with the figures to prove whatever point they wished to make. The public are too much sophisticated to believe such misinformation.



northernlout ▶ PoductionWest

12

20 January 2015 9:42pm

It was Disraeli that said that..



MissingInActon ▶ PoductionWest

24

20 January 2015 9:48pm

Not DM readers.
They lap it up.



Cymrucyntaf ▶ PoductionWest

13

20 January 2015 11:55pm

Are you sure? An awful lot of the public seem to believe the tory lie that

13 PEOPLE, 19 COMMENTS



Themiddlegound

8

20 January 2015 9:28pm

Is there not a simple answer to this....

Study author Dr Rachel Loopstra, from Oxford University, said: "The data did not give us the full picture of why sanctioned people have stopped claiming unemployment benefit. We can say, however, that there was a large rise in the number of people leaving JSA for reasons that were not linked to employment in association with sanctioning. On this basis, it appears that the punitive use of sanctions is driving people away from social support."

That a large part of the sanctioned people were at it and committing fraud ?



Themiddlegound ▶ Themiddlegound

8

20 January 2015 9:31pm

I'm only asking because where have they all gone if they are not working ?

On the rob ?

Dealing drugs ?

Cash in hand work ?

Dead ?

In prison ?

Retired ?



Brandybuck ▶ Themiddlegound

150

20 January 2015 9:32pm

Or they died, or relied on friends and family, killed themselves or are living lives of poverty and quiet desperation. ? Equally simple and probably more likely. You are aware that welfare fraud is miniscule aren't you?



Jon Hartley ▶ Themiddlegound

34

20 January 2015 9:32pm

No



Giffard Sercombe

42

20 January 2015 9:29pm

lies, damed lies and ids



hammond

65

20 January 2015 9:30pm

Sick evil dysfunctional uncaring system. We should be ashamed of ourselves, there is no such thing as full employment. In fact people make money out of the unemployment system via shody employment agencies. who take taxpayers money but fail to find the unemployed sustainable employment.

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



inthewest

60

20 January 2015 9:30pm

I sincerely hope Iain Duncan Smith will be joining the unemployed very soon, though what sort of job he would actually be capable of doing is beyond my imagination.



LiquidSnake ▶ inthewest

60

20 January 2015 9:32pm

Not with the fabulous CV that I'm sure his imagination will furnish him with. Former general in the Rebel Alliance and the PhD in Unicorn Training from the University of Perugia is not to be sniffed at, you know.



MissingInActon ▶ LiquidSnake

35

20 January 2015 9:51pm

You omit his Nobel Prize for being the most wonderful life form in any known galaxy.
And his cub scout badge for lying.



LiquidSnake ▶ MissingInActon

14

20 January 2015 10:01pm

And the Vidal Sassoon award for most luscious locks of the year



LiquidSnake

34

20 January 2015 9:31pm

The shadow under Iain Duncan Smith's nose looked fittingly like a Hitler moustache on first sight.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Jon Hartley

88

20 January 2015 9:31pm

The victimisation of the unemployed is a national disgrace that can only begin to be remedied by a complete refutation of a public perception fostered by liars and hypocrites like IDS.

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/may/30/hugh-muir-diary-iain-duncan-smith>

"the farm business operating off the country estate part-owned by Duncan Smith's son – with the minister's wife as a trustee – has received well over a million pounds in taxpayer subsidies"



Themiddlegound ▶ Jon Hartley

36

20 January 2015 9:34pm

It's the same the land over.

The UK is making plenty of cash. The more income they can take off us the more they can give to themselves.



CareersPartnershipUK ▶ Jon Hartley

5

20 January 2015 10:07pm

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/may/30/hugh-muir-diary-iain-duncan-smith>

4 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



slumpy

11

20 January 2015 9:32pm

Google IDS and see the quality of his clothes. Talk about taking the piss.



LiquidSnake ▶ slumpy

7

20 January 2015 10:02pm

You want to check out the customer reviews of his novel on Amazon!



slumpy ▶ LiquidSnake

15

20 January 2015 10:34pm

Always read the reviews. Interesting that he's the MP for Chingford. Tebbit country. Is there something in the water?



slumpy ▶ slumpy

20 January 2015 11:06pm

Should have said Ian Duncan Smith. That way you'd avoid all the techie



ID1669274

20 January 2015 9:33pm

66

I was led to believe the fact that citizens paid tax gave them access to the benefits if the welfare state. This govt. is just attacking the poor because they can't fight back, so much easier than getting the rich to part with their ill-gotten gains



Karl Winnett

20 January 2015 9:33pm

38

noooooo surly not Iain Duncan Smith telling porkies again?, surly not the Tories telling out right lies again?, what has the world come to tut tut. Seriously do this bunch of public school gangsters believe that the people take anything they say to be the truth?, of course they dont.



ally07

20 January 2015 9:33pm

22

Prof David Stuckler, of Oxford University, said that benefit sanctions "do not appear to help people return to work

Who said that they ever were such. Given the Tories 'friend' when it came to 'masking' the true level of structural unemployment in the country was and always had been "the Sickie"; post-2010 they have had to become 'more creative' when it came to finding solutions to the metaphorical version of 'sweeping the problem under the carpet'. Like hospitals and GP's look at influenza as "the old man's friend" sanctions and food banks fill the same role.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



chris1949

20 January 2015 9:33pm

60

Have not lived in UK for 25 years or so, and really quite pleased. There are things I miss about England, but the present government really is something. They're so used to lying they no longer care if the public knows they're lying. And as for the face at the top of this article, say no more. Vote Labour. They may have faults but they do CARE.



epinoa ▶ chris1949

20 January 2015 9:44pm

26

In the 25 years you have gone Labour has morphed beyond recognition. I am a free market capitalist yet they have shot so far to the right of me they are but a dot on the horizon.

The only thing they care about is self-enrichment and directorships.



TotalBigot ▶ epinoa

20 January 2015 10:36pm

3

Don't vote for people who started on the left and moved to the right. Vote for those that started on the right and moved further. You may get nasty people but you get the ones that have always been nasty. A much clearer world that way?



Brandybuck ▶ chris1949

21 January 2015 3:05pm

There is precious little to choose between them these days, Tories and Tory Lite. Gone are the days when the political parties actually stood for something different, now they are pretty much all the same shade.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

johnZtone

20



20 January 2015 9:33pm

So doesn't the anti-terrorism laws have something to say about causing social unrest. After all the man has lied to vilify millions of disable and unemployed people.



shebunkin ▶ johnZtone

21 January 2015 6:27am



something akin to the laws of thermodynamics applies to public spending on social security, imo. if you spend less on social security, you will have to spend more on social insecurity problems, including national security. cut real social security, and every social ill you can think of increases, and is far more challenging to remedy than finding the right levels of social security benefits, because the resultant problems are far nastier in terms of human suffering than the supposed ills of 'languishing on benefits'.

anyone who has ever attempted to 'sail' on a roughly constructed raft without getting their feet wet will know that it crucial to find the right balance point - too far on either side will overturn the craft. the rationality of the social security benefit system and the skills of government actuaries were far more sophisticated than many people realize. the social security system in its entirety is more subtle and sensitive, and vaster, than non-experts can conceive, and even then specialists are expert in only a segment or two. tinker with one part of it, and you can guarantee a new problem will appear somewhere else.

i understand that even norman fowler, the last tory reformer, learned that when he was Sec. of State and tried to warn IDS how it works, but his warnings, like all the others, were ignored, and IDS set about the warp engines with a lump hammer. and the only regard he had for anybody's health and safety was to wear a pair of ear plugs all the time he was demolishing the engine room, and which he hasn't taken out since...

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



thedoctorand

20 January 2015 9:34pm



"only a fifth of 2m people find employment after losing jobseeker's allowance"

Apparently, there are only 588,000 vacancies. There aren't enough jobs for everyone to have one.



hamstrung ▶ thedoctorand

21 January 2015 2:17am



Details, details. You must learn to ignore the details just as this Govt. chose to on a daily basis.



Scousescot ▶ thedoctorand

21 January 2015 12:13pm



These "vacancies" have also been shown to be bogus.

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



eagleitalia

20 January 2015 9:37pm



- IDS is a nasty, spiteful bastard. He's in the right party.



Snowintrough ▶ eagleitalia

20 January 2015 9:38pm



He is in The Nasty Parrry

epinoa ▶ eagleitalia





20 January 2015 9:41pm

Raechel Reeves is just as bad. Mind you she is Labour so that fits.

5



lonelysoul72 ▸ epinoa

20 January 2015 10:37pm

no she isn't

5

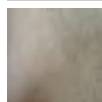


kyfegte

20 January 2015 9:37pm

This is the economic success story of the Tory phantacists: food banks, sub-standard wages, zero-hour contracts, people without any entrepreneurial qualities or experience being pushed into self-employment. While the bankers ... Anyway, what can you expect from a former PR-man (with no further qualities than that) becoming our PM-man. Never forget who it was whole sneakily stole away from the cameras on black Wednesday 1992 (while Norman Lamont was on camera explaining away the run on the pound) when the same Tory party had created the until then greatest economic catastrophe in British history. And we believe that he is the one to save the British economy? We'r having a laugh, aren't we?

50



Barry Chadwick

20 January 2015 9:38pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



HelgiDu

20 January 2015 9:38pm

The Graun really should throw open a Picture Caption Comp on published pics of politicians. No prize money, just a voting system that actually works.

3



OldObserver

20 January 2015 9:39pm

It is not the first time Governments have disguised the real level of unemployment by statistical deception.

They did it in the 1930s and the 1980s. Each time by tory governments.

Those who forget their history are doomed to relive it.

This time round forcing people to starvation is worse then Thatcher or Baldwin.

52



epinoa

20 January 2015 9:40pm

Known liar ith a documented track record of lying found to be lying about job creation. Coo that's a shocka!

19

6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



RolloSnook

20 January 2015 9:40pm

Sanctions are just the tip of the iceberg. DWP can remove someone from the JSA list, simply by questioning evidence, questioning a claim or "deciding" that something needs investigation. Either way, the person just lost their credit history, yet the "advisor" is not even reprimanded where a person went without JSA for perhaps four months, while something was "investigated".

A police officer has to run through a series of legal hoops before the person can be prosecuted, yet a DWP staff member can put someone in hospital, ruin their credit history WITHOUT a shred of real evidence, simply a refusal to accept evidence or agree with evidence and the person then goes into "investigation" which means 2-4 months without benefits, only intermittent hardship payments.

80

This almost always comes as the result of a meeting which became heated or disputed.

Where else in the UK do individuals wield the power of life, death, credit history and welfare over another person, without witnesses, proper surveillance, compliance, legal and lawful procedure.

Labour invented mandatory activities in 2002, but the Coalition has used this as a weapon indiscriminately.



apollonium ▶ RolloSnook

20 January 2015 9:45pm

4

The DWP control credit ratings?



WarRocketAjax ▶ apollonium

20 January 2015 10:14pm

46

No, but they can leave people in a position where getting into debt is the only way to feed themselves and pay their bills.

The sick, disabled and mentally ill are being sanctioned (losing a minimum of a months money at least) despite being found by the DWP's own system to be not fit for work.

What else are they supposed to do besides get into debt? Get a job?



showmaster ▶ apollonium

20 January 2015 10:20pm

8

Oh yes

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



retrorik

20 January 2015 9:41pm

17

A photograph of a man who really cares. You can see it in his eyes.



Troy Chapel ▶ retrorik

20 January 2015 9:45pm

37

Cares about the benefit of his wife's inheritance.



retrorik ▶ Troy Chapel

20 January 2015 9:53pm

36

I think it's even worse than that. This is a dinosaur mentality of old empire, a true believer that the strongest are the richest and are *entitled*. This is to hell with the vulnerable; they deserve their lot.

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



pauledwards1000

20 January 2015 9:42pm

4

"The data did not give us the full picture of why sanctioned people have stopped claiming unemployment benefit."

So they don't know, in other words. Of course it could be that these are all the people painting our houses and fixing the plumbing, and working cash in hand.



SinbadSailors ▶ pauledwards1000

20 January 2015 9:43pm

64

Or living off family handouts, forced into homelessness, committing suicide.....



pauleddwards1000 ▶ SinbadSailors

20 January 2015 9:50pm

11

The people writing the report have confirmed they don't know - obviously they should have consulted you first.



grh23 ▶ pauleddwards1000

20 January 2015 9:56pm

49

See my post above. Food bank numbers have been described as having



SinbadSailors

20 January 2015 9:42pm

55

So now you pay your National Insurance and you get totally stiffed on the actual 'Insurance' part of the system.

It's a Tory wet dream writ large.



Unrepresented

20 January 2015 9:42pm

20

The Tories fiddling the figures, who's ever heard of such a thing. I am not prepared to believe it.

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1 2 3 ...8

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Reforming a failing jobs market is more important than reforming welfare

Benefit sanctions target the most vulnerable workers, and do nothing to tackle the real problem – poor labour laws and a lack of skilled roles

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Anne Perkins

theguardian.com, Wednesday 21 January 2015 12.04 GMT

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Union says benefits sanctions destroyed trust between jobseekers and jobcentres
Public and Commercial Services union renews calls for an

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'Three suns' appear over Mongolia
Three suns appear in the horizon over Mongolia, in an rare optical illusion known as anhelion



Elephant calf rescued from deep pit in China
An elephant calf makes an escape after it fell into a water storage pit



'From 1996 to 2008 ... Britain began to morph into a world of baristas and warehouse operatives.' Photograph: Bloomberg via Getty Images

There will be more good news on jobs today: another rise in the number of people in work, another fall in the numbers claiming benefit. The Office for National Statistics' [datasheets on employment are one of the government's triumphs](#).

Meanwhile, in the House of Commons, at about the same time as the jobs figures come out, a group of academics will present to MPs the findings of their research into [what happens to 1.9 million people whose jobseeker's allowance has been sanctioned](#).

The researchers, from the University of Oxford and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, studied a period from June 2011 to March 2014 and found that nearly half of the sanctioned claimants, 43%, stopped claiming altogether. But of the roughly 800,000 people who had been sanctioned and stopped claiming, around 80,000 had not got a job, they had just disappeared off the DWP's radar.

The MPs on the Commons work and pensions committee have done a [good job of interrogating the miserable impact of welfare reform](#) over the past five years. They have uncovered and amplified jaw-dropping tales of bungling incompetence and, worse, target-driven zealotry which has overridden humanity. Jaw-dropping to read, unimaginable to experience.

There was another telling bit of research on Monday (there are plenty of people who are beginning to worry about where this is all going). This was about the disappearance of skilled work. Looking at the labour market through the prosperous decade that ran from 1996 to 2008, it found that for every 10 medium skilled jobs (secretaries, machine operators) that disappeared, only 5.5 of the replacement jobs were at an equivalent level. The rest were unskilled or semi-skilled. Slowly, Britain began to morph into a world of baristas and warehouse operatives.

One of the researchers, Craig Holmes, told the Financial Times that one explanation was that [flexible labour laws and a relatively low minimum wage made it easy to create low-paid jobs](#). Low levels of [unionisation and workplace protection](#) make it even easier to lose them again. Quantity won over quality, churn over skill – and when you look at the permanent high levels of youth unemployment in, say, France, it can look like the better of two bad choices.

But now, to add to the shortage of middle-skilled jobs, there is another assault on work. Agencification – where [employees all too often end up on zero-hours contracts without job protection or income security](#), let alone paid holiday – is turning once perfectly decent, relatively low-skilled jobs into a form of living nightmare.

People have to take these jobs because they have to work. They offer no training, no opportunity to skill your way out of low pay, because that's not the way the system is set up. Any job, any job at all, is better than no job. And because people who do have skills also struggle to find appropriate work and end up doing jobs that are less demanding and lower paid, it gets harder for those at the bottom of the skills heap.

The most common kind of family poverty, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports time and again, is in working families. Their latest estimate is that [8 million people are now living below the minimum income standard](#).

Now consider this: if the Conservatives are back in power after 7 May, George Osborne, who wants to stay on as chancellor to “finish the job”, has factored in another £12bn of welfare cuts. That can only be done by meting out more punishment to blameless and vulnerable people.

But it will do nothing at all to tackle the cause of the problem, because the government doesn't recognise it as a problem at all: the regime of labour laws that makes it so much easier for employers to have an easy-come, easy-go attitude to workers than it is to take them on, train them and then retrain them is considered one of Britain's best selling points. How much research will it take to join the dots, and see that reforming welfare when the jobs market is bust isn't a solution. It's just a way of creating another problem.



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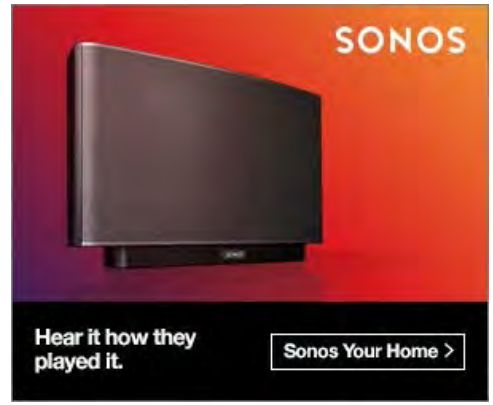
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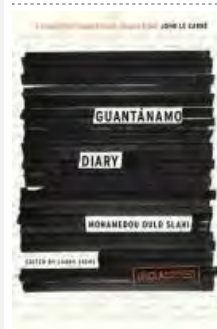
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20 PEOPLE, 32 COMMENTS



worldsworstposter

21 January 2015 12:22pm

19

It's not as simple as reform welfare or reform labour laws. The fundamental problem is that the UK doesn't have a strong enough economy to generate enough well paying jobs. Without a strong economy you can't afford high levels of welfare spending, and government can't wave a magic wand to conjure decent jobs into existence either. I'd postulate that the economy is sluggish because of the dead weight of excess debt (public and private) but there's more than one view on that.



GoldMoney ▶ worldsworstposter

21 January 2015 12:27pm

18

Without a strong economy you can't afford high levels of welfare spending, and government can't wave a magic wand to conjure decent jobs into existence either.

Spot on!

There also comes a point when an out of control welfare state reduces incentive for human capital to flourish.

We need capital intensive, highly productive, highly skilled jobs and not too many domestic low paid service jobs.

Welfare reform is important but must go hand in hand with raising the levels of skills the workforce have.



TheGreatRonRafferty ▶ worldsworstposter

21 January 2015 12:31pm

66

According to the Tories, Britain is booming, the cash is rolling in, the housing market is going stratospheric, and the rich are richer than they have ever been in history.

So, using our skill and judgement, where can ALL the cash be going and why are the tax receipts not flowing in like the Red Sea after Moses had crossed?



HaveyouseenEd ▶ worldsworstposter

21 January 2015 12:32pm

8

I don't disagree in principle, but (much as I hate to tap into a leftist meme)

11 PEOPLE, 13 COMMENTS



bojimbo261

21 January 2015 12:26pm

27

It would be interesting to see what would happen if MPs had their expenses taken away and had to pay for everything themselves .



GoldMoney ▶ bojimbo261

21 January 2015 12:29pm

5

It would be interesting to see what would happen if MPs had their expenses taken away and had to pay for everything themselves .

That would price many MPs who can't afford it or force them to do backhand deals to fund their expenses such as Lobbying.

Lets not divert from the main problem though - we need welfare reform.

The UK's welfare system is out of control and not sustainable with access to free movement from poorer eastern european countries.



TheGreatRonRafferty ▶ GoldMoney

21 January 2015 12:33pm

52

Eh? MPs need over £70K AND expenses, because if they didn't have expenses, they'd be destitute on £70K?



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I wonder how folks on £6.50 an hour manage are they on £200K expenses too?



ConfusedPeasant ▶ GoldMoney

21 January 2015 12:33pm

25

The UK's welfare system is out of control and not sustainable

9 PEOPLE, 12 COMMENTS



at87

21 January 2015 12:31pm

18

What happens to those sanctioned? Our Government don't care

Decrease the surplus population!



ID5569068 ▶ at87

21 January 2015 12:47pm

10

What happens to those sanctioned? Our Government don't care

Anybody that is sanctioned has no-one to blame but themselves.

I am on JSA and you sign a contract, which states that you will actively look for work, what's the problem with that and what's so difficult about proving it.

And also in my experience it is a last resort to sanction someone. And as I have said if you are sanctioned it is no-ones fault but yours.



Giggidy ▶ at87

21 January 2015 1:03pm

12

What happens to those sanctioned? Our Government don't care

Hang on - are you saying that not one person sanctioned is being rightly sanctioned? Are you sure about that one?



akardygain ▶ ID5569068

21 January 2015 1:28pm

21

I lter bollocks

13 PEOPLE, 36 COMMENTS



Aconspiritor

21 January 2015 12:35pm

11

"Any job, any job at all, is better than no job. "

Exactly right. And while you are working you can be training in your spare time, doing evening classes etc. and looking for the job you really want.



at87 ▶ Aconspiritor

21 January 2015 12:39pm

41

You can't commit to a class if you're on a zero hours contract. At the drop of the hat you could be told to do more shifts, and if you refuse? Look forward to not working at all for the next month



ConfusedPeasant ▶ Aconspiritor

21 January 2015 12:39pm

20

Oh bollocks. Work hard and you can become PM.

A far more relevant and pertinent theory is "dinosaurs are thin at one end, fat in the middle, and thin at the other", by Anne Elk.

oommph ▶ Aconspiritor

20



21 January 2015 12:46pm

Really. Let us in on your secret of how to do a rubbish job, and then retain

6 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



FactPatrol

21 January 2015 12:36pm

11

Anne Perkins may be right, but her article contains no practical proposals, unless she is simply suggesting that it should become unlawful to offer jobs that don't feature state-stipulated training and so forth. Looking to the advanced world at large including Europe, which is facing the same issues as the UK but with generally less or much less success in reducing unemployment, which approaches/schemes in which countries does Anne broadly favour adoption of in the UK? If, however, this is in truth a world-wide situation without any easy resolution, would it not be fair and reasonable for her to acknowledge the global scale of the challenge?



CityBoy2006 ▶ FactPatrol

21 January 2015 1:32pm

12

Indeed. Anne's proposals (such as they are) seem to favour the French model - unionised, large public sector and significant worker rights.

That's fine for those who are in a job but its a massive disincentive to employers (especially small ones) to create jobs.

My best guess is that the left (for want of a better word) see that high unemployment as a price well worth paying as its a more tangible measure of economic failure that they can use to attack the incumbent government.



andrewdoddsuk ▶ FactPatrol

21 January 2015 2:06pm

10

As a world wide problem it really could be a case of Technology displacing jobs.

The problem being that the whole world of semi-skilled mass employment that characterized much of the 20th century is on its way out; the remaining jobs are those where it would currently be too expensive to replace people with computers, or the higher skill levels that are yet to be reached.

Emphasis on 'yet'. Driving jobs (Taxis, HGV, delivery, etc) will probably vanish within 20 years. The legal and Financial services are on borrowed time. Mid level retail is going. Retail banking is vanishing.

We are not far from the point where we could have near-completely automated factories, combined with automatic warehousing and distribution, online ordering and automatic delivery. In some ways, this is great - lots of boring, dirty, dangerous jobs will never need to be done by humans. But it gives us the huge paradox - given that very few jobs need to exist, who is going to buy the stuff? At the moment we have this faith based idea that the jobs will just keep existing, and somehow we can just push people into them.

In fact, all we will see is increased misery, along with perma-deflation, low demand, low returns on investment, and stagnation.

The answer is a Citizen's income of one sort or another. Ironically, we already have something similar, between Child Benefit, Tax credits and the State Pension. But because of this perceived need to shove people into work, it is made horribly complex, punitive and resentful. It shouldn't be. Give people a basic income (and access to housing affordable on that basic income) and many of the problems vanish. Seasonal, variable or part time work.. that's OK, it won't lead to a nightmare of benefit claims or withdrawal. Set up your own business? Again - you'll be able to survive whilst getting it off the ground. Hideous employer? walk out without starving.

A citizen's income means that getting off your backside and doing something is always beneficial. It also has the practical effect of allowing people to buy the products that are made abundant by automation.



FactPatrol ▶ andrewdoddsuk

21 January 2015 2:24pm

2

V interesting post. Whether we are at or close to reaching the point - off

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

groberts407

11



21 January 2015 12:38pm

Why is it that MP's can continue to enjoy there work, expenses and remuneration but the rest of us are expected to take work with no security, no defined hours of work and piss poor pay?



BostonLager ▶ groberts407

21 January 2015 4:56pm

there's a strong incentive to become an MP there...

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



MrMoritz

21 January 2015 12:38pm

Perhaps if previous governments had taken a long term approach we would have re trained and invested in the British workforce. Instead a series of quick fix approaches were adopted (increased immigration and off shoring) that have had long term negative effects.

To reverse this process in the short term is not possible



slapmatt ▶ MrMoritz

21 January 2015 3:05pm

Why is it the Government's responsibility to ensure workers have the right skills? Why aren't individuals responsible for that?



MrMoritz ▶ slapmatt

21 January 2015 4:02pm

Do you not think it's in the best interest of the country? or is it better to ignore and marginalise them.



martford

21 January 2015 12:42pm

using the barista picture is not a good way to make the argument.

My daughter works for Costa in her uni holidays and therefore gives a good insight. The majority of staff are students or people in some sort of training or other role. Only a few look at Costa as a career choice. My daughter has always been able to agree shifts with the manager and in fact the company has been very flexible. They pay fairly well and treat her fairly.

the flexibility of zero hours contract is just what she needs and wants - being a student there are times when she wants as much work as possible and others when studies means she cannot spare any hours. Her position is typical of their staff.



Ian Batch

21 January 2015 12:43pm

This will be a vote-less recovery because despite what the big picture may point to, people know through their own experience what new jobs have been created and how wages have stalled whilst the cost of living has risen. It's fine for Tories to say "a job is better than no job", but if you're working poor then it really isn't a consolation, the debt just keeps rising and nothing is being done to make companies pay a living wage. This is the first generation of people who will be worse off in every way than the generation that came before them - that will lead to mass instability in politics and the economy for a long time to come. My only real fear is that enough people will vote for the Green party hoping for a genuine left wing party, only for that to result in a minority Tory government, propped up by the lunatics of UKIP.



2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS





Busch

21 January 2015 12:48pm

11

My experience of a lifetime working in industry is a real failure to invest in quality training. The problems it causes must have cost this country countless billions.



BostonLager ▶ Busch

21 January 2015 5:01pm

My experience of 15 years in banking, start-ups, life sciences is piss poor management. Due to globalisation, promotion means management.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



Axel22

21 January 2015 12:48pm

16

If 43 % of sanctioned claimants stopped claiming altogether then it can only mean one thing: that they rightly felt that their claim was not justified or fraudulent. Good on them to recognise that and move on!



ConfusedPeasant ▶ Axel22

21 January 2015 12:56pm

9

If 43 % of sanctioned claimants stopped claiming altogether then it can only mean one thing:

That Tories are scum, happy to punish the unemployed so they can outsource the state to their mates while they lie about the consequences?



Peter Tanczos ▶ Axel22

21 January 2015 1:19pm

3

or alternatively they can earn more from begging than they're likely to get from welfare.



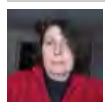
MickGJ ▶ Axel22

21 January 2015 3:27pm

2

It can mean any number of things, but obviously people will recruit any unknown quantity to suit their own narrative.

3 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



FrancesSmith

21 January 2015 12:53pm

9

We need to improve training for adults. The lack of skilled jobs can be put down to a number of things, like the easy money to be made from government outsourcing contracts. How much easier it is to run a business to fulfil a government cleaning contract, than to run a business doing something more high tech, and requiring greater skill.

But there is, and has been for a long time, a massive failure in helping adults to gain skills.

there is this bizarre mindset that seems to permeate our metropolitan elite, that every time a problem is found the solution is to make things better in schools, and the fact that there is an adult population that could do with help in, perhaps learning to programme, for example, is forgotten, or conveniently ignored.

Unless we address this strange problem of politicians and policy wonks who try to solve every problem by changing the school curriculum, and encourage retraining for adults we won't get anywhere.

Its worth remembering that people who run their own businesses tend to do it as part of a career progression, so most will do it once they are older. I would suggest that the middle aged adults who now look to run their own businesses have not had the sort of training they need to set up businesses that require more skilled employees.

and please.....no one suggest this problem can be solved by teaching children better. its the adults that need the training, many of them have long careers

ahead, and already have a quite large knowledge base, than can be improved through better training.



CforCynic ▶ FrancesSmith

21 January 2015 1:28pm

3

How much easier it is to run a business to fulfil a government cleaning contract, than to run a business doing something more high tech, and requiring greater skill.

But the cleaning still needs to be done. The problem with much of the argument over jobs is that a lot of people seem to forget that the basic, low skilled, jobs still need to be done.



BostonLager ▶ FrancesSmith

21 January 2015 5:14pm

As a retrained adult, I assume that 1) you don't really want to be a programmer 2) you may not have an aptitude for programming. This is going to make it very tough to compete with kids in the UK who probably expect to earn less than you and can code better, and with developers overseas who certainly do get paid less and sometimes code better.

A retrained adult might still be able to make average wage or more - but those making much more are really good at coding and have a background in maths and science (of course there will be exceptions).

Lastly, your career path is into management unless you are content to earn the same year after year and worry about being replaced.

If you were to aim to code in a specific sector - say health care - you need a lot of background knowledge as well as learning to code.

In other words it's tough!

'You' in my comment does not mean You Frances.

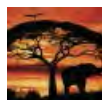


BostonLager ▶ FrancesSmith

21 January 2015 5:16pm

I like the idea of training to start a business very much.

2 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



SausageBeansAndChips

21 January 2015 12:54pm

3

80,000 people went missing and more than likely those are some tough stories with lots of incompetence that we need to learn from, but what about the 740,000 people that didn't go missing?

We need to address the huge issue of businesses using tax credits to prop up terrible salaries and using zero hours contracts to abuse people's willingness to work, but there is an element of general fairness that means it's simply not acceptable to sweep under the carpet the implication that huge numbers of people (740,000) may have been unfairly or excessively taking from the state that those who work (even on low salaries) help to fund.



SausageBeansAndChips ▶ SausageBeansAndChips

21 January 2015 12:54pm

720,000, before the pedants get in there.



Paidenoughalready ▶ SausageBeansAndChips

21 January 2015 5:52pm

2

Nonsense.

Companies pay what is economically affordable and take no account whatsoever of any government provided benefits. It's a lie perpetrated by Guardian writers are part of their worker-good, employer-bad dogma.

Jobs pay what the market will stand, and if you are a shelf stacker or a toilet cleaner, under no circumstances are you going to get a decent wage, as the job requires no skill, no qualifications and nobody is going to pay more for goods and services to fund a generous salary.

Sorry, but that's the way it is.

It's not a race to the bottom as some suggest, but a race to stop the entire economy being dragged into the abyss by an uneconomically dead weight attached.



SausageBeansAndChips ▶ Paidenoughalready

22 January 2015 7:55am

You're assuming the market is working (i.e. lower wages at the bottom perfectly correlate perfectly to the lack of skills or aspiration to do better of people working there). What if the bottom rung of the labour market has overcorrected and the prevalence of zero hours and part time work is a cost of politicians' urgency in reducing unemployment that has gone too far? You're right that companies won't change it alone, but there's little evidence interventions such as increase to minimum wages have the predicted adverse affects.

I worked as a shelf stacker to put myself through University, so it's not like those low paying jobs are only taken up by uneconomical dead weight.

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



Giggidy

21 January 2015 1:01pm

10

But of the roughly 800,000 people who had been sanctioned and stopped claiming, around 80,000 had not got a job, they had just disappeared off the DWP's radar.

"Disappeared" - or didn't exist in the first place?



ppode ▶ Giggidy

21 January 2015 1:55pm

8

How could they not exist if they had been sanctioned?



Giggidy ▶ ppode

21 January 2015 2:14pm

7

My suggestion was fraud.



23rdturnoff ▶ Giggidy

21 January 2015 2:29pm

10

My suggestion was fraud



heretodaygone2morrow

21 January 2015 1:10pm

8

Reform the government!

Heads should roll for the agenda set by dwp managers. Are academics doing this research independent of all/ any political arm twisting?

The real evidence of crime and this continuing insidious and disgusting agenda toward those most vulnerable within the system, kicked around by it until they die or "disappear" will of course be cleaned up and made narratively acceptable. Or, the spin anthem "lessons will be learnt" shall be set to automatic repeat on the turntable of political records we all loathe.

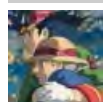
Meanwhile IDS and his team of sociopathic liars and frauds, will all be let off scott free from accountability to inflict more destruction by propaganda methodology, and population reduction ideology - Real ideology - Despair and desperation leads those in bad health or waiting for proper support while without savings or any income, job or family to help commit suicide or "drop off the radar"

The officials and workers in the system who let this agenda carry on unchallenged or who don't whistleblow, are every bit as accountable as their "higher up's"

What particularly disgusted me in this latest story of dwp failure, was the evidence of

men or women unable to read or write being set up to fail and then being sanctioned by "workers" who likely enjoyed humiliating those people. Just how low behaviour is that to receive a pay cheque?

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



aestite

21 January 2015 1:15pm

7

"Reforming a failing jobs market is more important than reforming welfare"

Totally agree. What is the government actually doing to get people into work beyond cutting benefits? As if people are simply lacking the incentive.

How about government sponsored internships and training?
How about the government directly employing people who are struggling to find work instead of contracting out to profit-driven private companies?
How about funding more community programmes/charities designed to help people who are lacking in skills or experience?



geordie85 ▶ aestite

21 January 2015 5:15pm

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-grant-for-employers-of-16-to-24-year-olds>



arkley

21 January 2015 1:16pm

6

Simple fact - employers work to retain people only when the alternative, taking on new staff when the need is there, is more expensive. It's only when the skill levels required are such that a new worker is not fully productive for weeks or even months that employers start to worry about retention. That's the reason why City workers with extensive contacts get big bonuses and people who fill cardboard boxes with other cardboard boxes are on zero hours contracts.

The solution is more skilled jobs, but to get those skilled jobs employers will need business that requires those skills. Now if you can figure that out you will have a solution.



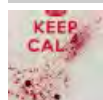
Peter Tanczos

21 January 2015 1:17pm

5

The simple solution is to force companies outsourcing labour to cheaper markets to pay a decent amount of redundancy pay (enough for them to be self supporting through start up or other initiatives) to the indigenous labour thrown onto the scrap heap for our social welfare to pick up the slack. If the true cost to society of outsourcing was met by the companies doing the outsourcing (rather than the public purse) there would be no financial incentive to outsource.

7 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



dr_sam_bhuka

21 January 2015 1:22pm

16

My firm recently advertised for job positions starting at £14k with pension and other benefits and chance of promotion within two years to positions paying £22k. Location was in England and outside of the SE. 45 applications were invited to interview by telephone and letter and said they would attend.

28 showed up. 18 got offers. Some could not remember what their past convictions were for. Some had not even bothered to read the About Us page of the company website. Some did not know the name of the CEO nor why they wanted the job other than 'the money'.

Basically unemployable.

And that's for an interesting enough job in a FTSE250 firm making decent profits and expanding.

Next time it will be an agency in Poland/Latvia and we'll have a full course of keen well prepared recruits.

There is no meaningful unemployment in Britain. If you don't work it's because you either don't want to or you are not capable of being employed because you're utterly useless.



RightBlockhead ▶ dr_sam_bhuka

8

21 January 2015 1:53pm

We were a medium sized company but had similarly depressing experiences in a region some years ago when we organised hiring days etc. So it appears not much has changed.

But I will say that while we had horror stories even after employment started, we were able to build a good operation, with decent and partly excellent staff who, whether with us or in a next position, did well for themselves.

On the down side, many of the best tended to find their next opportunity in London, which if a common story would tend to illustrate why the North South divide persists.



oommph ▶ dr_sam_bhuka

16

21 January 2015 2:00pm

14k is a poverty line wage job.

Why should they know the name of your CEO for that money? You'd not expect a cleaner or shopworker or other worker on a similar wage to know the name of their CEO. If I was earning 14k, I'd not bother to learn it either.

If you are offering 14k and rejecting applicants on that ground, actually, it is you (the employer) that is the problem. Your selection process is inadequate.

I'm paid a heck of a lot more but I don't know the name of the CEO of my latest client. I don't need to know it.

Perfectly OK for the likes of me - only poor people should be perfect, of course.



Aconspiritor ▶ oommph

7

21 January 2015 2:30pm

So doing a bit of research before you go to a job interview is a bad thing ?

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Self

4

21 January 2015 1:25pm

My understanding is that there are quite a few vacancies for skilled employees, but not enough people with the skills to fill them. That aside, you cannot simply conjure up 'skilled roles' just like that. The fact is that the great majority of jobs will never be 'skilled'. All you can do is ensure that those who fulfill 'unskilled' roles are treated properly and fairly, something the UK has failed to do for some time, as the politicians are blinded by the so-called skills (which are actually crimes) over the financial sector, private equity, A4E etc.



RogerINtheUSA ▶ Self

5

21 January 2015 2:53pm

Wages for the low-skilled are kept down by having lots of people coming in who are willing to work hard for wages higher than those in their own country



dfreelancerz

21 January 2015 1:25pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS

Richard Down

6

21 January 2015 1:30pm



Ebola 8,400+ Deaths . DWP victims 45,000 + official figures now stopped by DWP. Sounds like genocide .



edpennington ▶ Richard Down

21 January 2015 1:40pm



I think that number includes all the people who died due to other causes anyway, the criticism of the DWP was they were making these people's final days less pleasant.

Thr DWP probably has directly caused some people's deaths but I would anticipate this number to be a bit lower.



Giggidy ▶ edpennington

21 January 2015 1:58pm



Thr DWP probably has directly caused some people's deaths but I would anticipate this number to be a bit lower.

Yes - zero.

6 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



Serracional

21 January 2015 1:36pm



The thing is Anne Perkins isnt an economist nor has she ever run a business.

As it happens UK unemployment by European standards (except Germany) is not as bad as most.

The thing is with so many jobs now done in countries like China or India where workers with comparable skill to workers elsewhere in the world are happy to do more for less, and consumers are very pleased to buy these goods 'Made in China'.

Please do not post a response to me unless you have nothing 'Made in China' within 10 feet of you! That will eliminate most of the people reading, and 'out' the fibbers.



oommph ▶ Serracional

21 January 2015 1:56pm



That's the neo-con lie you have been sold, though.

That stuff does not make nations money. Losing it does not matter - and neither does us buying it. Just the economics of comparative advantage.

China should be producing that stuff, not the UK. The UK should be in high margin industry - like Germany, Norway et all. That's what it has to get rich.

Cheap bits of plastic are not relevant.



Giggidy ▶ oommph

21 January 2015 1:59pm



That's the neo-con lie you have been sold, though.

What happened to neo-liberal?



thriftnot ▶ oommph

21 January 2015 2:53pm



I think you ll find china is producing a lot more than cheap bits of plastic

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



edpennington

21 January 2015 1:37pm



As much as I hate to say this, David Starkey was on to something on Question Time when he said we will need to make a choice between global free trade and some

element of protectionism.

Clearly a lot of the service sector jobs cannot be offshored but how can we have a different minimum wage for these and those which could be?



RogerINtheUSA ▶ edpennington

21 January 2015 2:48pm

3

global free trade and some element of protectionism.

OK, but then other countries do things to protect themselves against imports of British products such as cars and booze

6 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



Giggidy

21 January 2015 2:00pm

20

Reforming a failing jobs market is more important than reforming welfare

Number of suggestions for actually reforming the market: zero

Part 94 in the Guardians "we must DO something!" series.



iOpenerLo114Lat51 ▶ Giggidy

21 January 2015 2:32pm

8

You forgot to add "...and what we must DO, is raise taxes and further micro-regulate the economy. More taxes! More laws!"



CityBoy2006 ▶ Giggidy

21 January 2015 2:37pm

9

I thought Ed Milliband had some sort of suggestion around predators / producers? As far as I can see it basically involves Ed deciding which businesses should be allowed and which banned or regulated out of existence.

What can possibly go wrong is my view!



RogerINtheUSA ▶ Giggidy

21 January 2015 2:46pm

5

"we must DO something!" series

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



stanblogger

21 January 2015 2:20pm

1

the government doesn't recognise it as a problem at all: the regime of labour laws that makes it so much easier for employers to have an easy-come, easy-go attitude to workers than it is to take them on, train them and then retrain them is considered one of Britain's best selling points.

Very true.

The extraordinary thing is that it appears from polling data that a large proportion of decent people in the UK actually prefer an employer friendly government.

Life within a capitalist economy is only tolerable for people with little or perhaps negative capital, if there is a government which is prepared to defend them against the abuse of power by those who have large amounts. It is nonsense to pretend that measures designed to help the haves will also necessarily help the have nots.

Not surprisingly, the proportion of have nots under recent haves-friendly governments has increased rapidly. How long do we need to wait before have nots realise that their insecurity and poor living standards are to a large extent the result of the policies of these governments and vote accordingly?



RogerINtheUSA ▶ stanblogger

21 January 2015 2:43pm

Perhaps what is needed is a Junche type system whereby outsourcing is forbidden and the government provides jobs for all.



RogerINtheUSA ▶ stanblogger

21 January 2015 2:45pm

3

The extraordinary thing is that it appears from polling data that a large proportion of decent people in the UK actually prefer an employer friendly government.

One would think that they would want to have more skilled jobs by having policies that hamper new firm creation by bourgeois entrepreneurs and that make it very hard for existing firms to compete with foreigners.

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



nelsonrn

21 January 2015 2:28pm

7

We ban smoking in public places, yet MPs are allowed to carry on as normal in the House of Commons bar. We sanction benefit claimants, even innocent ones and take money from them. We are constantly told that hard working taxpayers are sick of paying welfare to cheats. So how come, an MP once elected has no obligation to fulfil any duties. Has no obligation to attend parliament, has no obligation to do anything whatsoever to serve the people who elected him or her. Even more disgraceful, he or she will be paid in full until another election or by election is called. The hypocrisy and contempt for the people of this country beggars belief. Politicians are the biggest "benefit" cheats.



RogerINtheUSA ▶ nelsonrn

21 January 2015 2:42pm

2

You just don't understand.

For those with less than uni-level advanced mathematical skills it is very hard work and extremely time-consuming to fiddle expenses



ID90470524 ▶ nelsonrn

21 January 2015 3:06pm

2

Not just politicians but other members of the Establishment also get huge amount of taxpayers money and the banksters who lobby them and donate to them



geordie85 ▶ nelsonrn

21 January 2015 5:11pm

We ban smoking in public places, yet MPs are allowed to carry on

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



WiltshireIndy

21 January 2015 2:42pm

4

Huge shortage in engineering.

How about the guardian advertise some of those vacancies?



oomph ▶ WiltshireIndy

21 January 2015 2:58pm

2

Every nation has that though. Nobody seems to be able to solve that.

No point advertising them - most engineers can find work (including outside their specialism).

The problem would only be if there was a surplus of unemployed engineers, wouldn't it?

CforCynic ▶ WiltshireIndy



21 January 2015 4:59pm

I know what you mean. A business contact of mine up north has been trying to recruit mechanical engineers (and I mean *proper* engineers, not the bullshit misuse of the term used to describe the person who comes to fix the photocopier), and he's having serious problems finding the right people.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



thriftnot

21 January 2015 2:46pm

3

So what is the minimum income in terms of earnings. I was thinking the other day of a family member own house car earning way under national average has just been on a weeks sking holiday..... And still has savings and no debts . I think sometimes we have to see where people prioritise their spending.

As you say medium skills jobs are becoming scarce . Of course they are labouring jobs are outsourced to the cheapest labour on the globe so we in the west can have cheap consumer products.

All we have left are service jobs or high tech jobs. Thats globalisation for you Ann. You want higher pay secure pensionable employment you will be buying your services at much higher prices.....!



oommph ▶ thriftnot

21 January 2015 2:56pm

4

Travel has sunk in price. Cheaper than ever. It's not a marker of being privileged or a high earner in the way it was 20 or 30 years ago. (Buying the house would be the big expense now).



ID90470524

21 January 2015 3:02pm

3

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/20/jobcentre-hit-squads-benefit-claimants-sanctions>

Another Guardian headline: 40% of British families too poor to partake in Society, the other on Benefit fraud, not by claimants but by those running DWP deliberately setting out to make vulnerable people fail



CheshireSalt

21 January 2015 3:10pm

6

when you look at the permanent high levels of youth unemployment in, say, France, it can look like the better of two bad choices.

No it doesn't. The point is that almost no one starts his working life with a good, well paid, secure job. You have to have some sort of a job to prove you can do a better job. There are some perceptive points in this article although no real ideas about how things could be different. People are caught between the fires of technology / automation, outsourcing to Asia and immigration. No potential new government in May is planning to do anything about any of those things.

Maybe we do have to think seriously about just paying people for existing. That applies particularly to those with mental or psychological problems. The value of their labour is so low that it is rather cruel to expect them to find self-sustaining employment.



torvald

21 January 2015 3:16pm

there is little respect for skilled worker and also training for skilled work is too shallow.... welder, electricians, car mechanics and cooks should be made to take evening classes to learn basic science.

edmundb

3



21 January 2015 3:27pm

3

No government of any persuasion has understood the problem, since Thatcher declared that having a decent manufacturing base was unnecessary in a world of unbridled capitalism and entrepreneurship. Hardly surprising given the backgrounds of the people who rule us. When the sum total of actual working experience of our leader and shadow leader, is 6 months as a PR (something) and sometime researcher for the Labour Party what hope is there. Some would regard it as criminal that in the last 5 years our governments have made no progress in creating real jobs based on the skills that we have spent millions on developing in an education system that continues to fail and rewarding the fraudsters of the social elites who have grown fabulously rich off the backs of zero hours contracts and all the other assaults on working people. When engineers, real risk taking entrepreneurs and bankers with a social conscience are valued by the community, then there might be a chance of a fairer society, - don't hold your breath.

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS

**worried**

21 January 2015 3:30pm

1

As usual ...another ignorant at! but very well written of course.
But please do read it, twice if necessary. Within are all the attitudes that govern press coverage of the UK labour market .ie no thought referenece or discussion whatsoever of the professional information about why we are where we are and what needs to be changed to get out of it .
Because it is all about redirecting mass manufacturing of basic capital goods for national consupction back from overseas and into local.
The press just has to pick up on the fact that the problem today is not repeat not investment but simply the need to bring production back in house for national consumption. And then investment maybefor there is capacity already . This takes LEGISLATION which may be against international trade rules (!!)
Clearly banks that are up to their eyebrows in financing overseas manufacturing activities because they also finance the national distribution and purchase of the imported goods would need a legislated crowbar to turn them round into financing home industry.

I have already floated the idea that banks and finance houses in general should be required by law to hand over 50 % of their WW profits to the UK govt as soon as unemployment (the result of trade rules and finance) exceeds 3%.
As a gentle incentive to support home industry that isyou and me . While continuing to make a buck of course.

**BenedictAtLarge** ▶ worried

21 January 2015 4:19pm

The problem with your proposal is that it's everyone's solution ... Bring manufacturing from somewhere else to back home. Presumably we are talking third world, and we don't care about them (I'm not saying that's the case, merely that it would have to be for this to work), because otherwise we're just talking about a zero-sum trade of jobs, which helps only the ones who are most willing to bargain away their wages to get the jobs.

No, what we need is a real increase in jobs, and jobs that pay living wages at that. And the only way that happens is if we get over this irrational fear of inflation and get to printing up some (a lot) of new money. The case for inflation simply doesn't hold water when examined with any rigor, and is only clung to by the elites as a method of keeping our democratic voice out of fiscal/monetary aspects of running the government.

**geordie85** ▶ BenedictAtLarge

21 January 2015 5:09pm

No, what we need is a real increase in jobs, and jobs that pay living wages at that. And the only way that happens is if we get over this irrational fear of inflation and get to printing up some (a lot) of new money.

Of course wages need to rise, but we also need to keep a lid on prices. The problem is that if you inflate wages and prices, then it doesn't do much good. If your wage doubles but the price of everything also doubles, then you're not any better off.

**Bo Sanchez** ▶ geordie85

21 January 2015 5:50pm

One of the big problems is huge personal debt. Which constrains spending

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



aprescoup

21 January 2015 4:13pm

6

The people who need help are the young trying to get onto the jobs train, and the old who are kicked prematurely off the private sector (but not the public sector) jobs train.

The jobs market gets worse every year and the reason is very simple: the private sector is free to hire as many 30-40 year-olds from wherever, and is free to get rid of over-50 year-olds, and is free not to bother to train 17-30 year-olds. Interestingly, the people doing this dirty work are themselves in their 30s and 40s, and do not seem to realise that come 50, they too will be dumped.

What is happening to over-50 year-olds has similarities with the deportations of Jews to concentration camps.



birney ▶ aprescoup

21 January 2015 4:41pm

4

No it really hasn't, our over 50s don't get gassed on losing their jobs they just go onto an appropriate benefit and unfortunately a drop in income rather than killed. Its very different to nazi Germany



geordie85 ▶ aprescoup

21 January 2015 5:06pm

1

What is happening to over-50 year-olds has similarities with the deportations of Jews to concentration camps.

Yes, of course it has.



nappers ▶ birney

21 January 2015 5:17pm

1

I heard the over fifties get rounded up and shot to death by laser cannons



jakedog

21 January 2015 4:16pm

3

The development of flexible labour markets was one of the central tenants of neo-liberal economic reform, begun by Thatcher and continued, with varying degrees of zeal, ever since.

We have, in the process, begun to see an 'hour glass' shape to the job market - an expansion of technical, professional and highly skilled work, a growth in low pay/ low skill/no skill jobs, often self employed, of which the bar tending and warehouse work mentioned in the article are good examples, and a contraction in middle income managerial, clerical and administrative work.

One of the consequences of this is that labour productivity has declined - we have an economy about the same size as in 2007, yet a labour force of some 1.5million larger - many more workers, no more output!

Low productivity, a slow and sluggish recovery from the recession, growth largely based on a housing price bubble and increased personal debt - not a good position to be in.

2 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



Bluejil

21 January 2015 4:31pm

2

Sanctioned, sounds horrible, demeaning in the word. We could do so much better. Not only should low minimum wage be a top discussion coming into the election but the horrible tiered wages. Our young don't stand a chance and alongside all of the next generation are the 50's and over.

It's a disgrace. IF we began with education and actually taught for the 21st century, we would be further ahead. IF we looked down the line and saw what would be needed in the future and planned, via skills and adapting educational programmes for what will be required. There are new industries that will be crying out for skilled labour, just as currently we are crying out for GP's and nurses. But we do none of that, we remain constipated in conservative ideology that isn't fit for purpose in a modern society.

The current government has done more to dismantle the future for us all, we have a chance to change this and hope that after May there just may be a bit of vision for

the future, doubtful but we can only hope.



CaptainSarcasm ▶ Bluejil

21 January 2015 5:01pm

The current government has done more to dismantle the future for us all

Not really true.

The problem of a badly educated population has plagued this country for a very long time. Royal Commissions and government enquires **since the 1850s** have complained about the ignorance of the population, particularly the working classes. Other countries did things about it - the best example perhaps being Bismarck's three-tier selective school system still used in Germany.

To fix this you need academically selective education. You need to stop sending half of school leavers to university just because - you need instead to be providing free university education for mathematics, engineering and the hard sciences whilst letting arts students find their own money to pay for their courses because they frankly are not a priority. You need to make school exams consistent and more difficult, not easier every year. You have to accept people are different, some are smart but most aren't and some people will fail - you need to let them fail.

Since you don't want that because it is hard and it requires people to make an effort if they want to succeed and even then there's no guarantee, it won't happen and this country will continue its long descent into the third world.



Bluejil ▶ CaptainSarcasm

21 January 2015 5:54pm

I have to disagree, the ideologies of the past do not work, we must think forward. Selection is not the key.

The creative industries is one of our largest industries, currently bringing in billions, so I would not set artist aside.

Da Vinci, Michael Angelo and their peers understood the value of arts and sciences together, we forget what history has shown us.

Looking forward we should be looking at the industries that will prosper, robotics, space, bio technologies, sustainable and renewable energy, just to name a few. Skills and academics are not a separate entity, it is how we deliver education for the future that matters and we are currently stuck in some quaint antiquated ideology that won't serve us well.

Further, of course students should go on to University, the choices today are few and far between. However, it is a global market, an English student is up against all those that have received excellent education, why would we continue to make it a race to the bottom?

Simple, change education to reflect the growing needs of the future and not the past.



CaptainSarcasm ▶ Bluejil

21 January 2015 6:22pm

Selection is not the key

7 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



HerbGuardian

21 January 2015 4:57pm

5

No matter your political persuasion or employment status , I think most right minded people will agree that what is going on under the Tories , regarding Welfare (eg. sanctions etc.) is totally out of control and truly ,truly wicked stuff !



CaptainSarcasm ▶ HerbGuardian

21 January 2015 5:03pm

1

In reality, this government's welfare reforms are their most popular policy by a considerable margin. Most people recognise that the current welfare system is in dire need of radical reform, even if you don't want them to.



HerbGuardian ▶ CaptainSarcasm

21 January 2015 5:32pm

2

In reality ,some people are as thick as two short planks and haven't a clue, as to just what the Tories are up to and never will do because they either callously simply don't care or because the stupidly believe themselves immune and will not be effected by the Tories, policies .

Not effected , that is until a crisis hits them (which can happen to anybody at any time) and they then experience the utter nightmare that the Tories have deliberately created for them and which virtually the entire country has been warning them about !

However, for some people in the country ,the famous line in Forrest Gump ..."Stupid is as stupid does" will always be apt for them , won't it !



edpennington ▶ CaptainSarcasm

21 January 2015 6:01pm

2

Some very vulnerable people have suffered appallingly due to this

7 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



grundrisse

21 January 2015 5:34pm

1

The elephant in the room here is that many of the comments - and most particularly those from the right - continue to subscribe to the fantasy of a work based economy.

All of the rhetoric around the private sector creating jobs, and what we need to do to stimulate this and that, including reducing benefits, ignores that fact that globalization and, increasingly, automation will ensure that there is not enough work to go around. Forget the much trumpeted 'luddite fallacy' that all new tech brings new forms of employment, as the labour replacing capabilities of current new technology are far outstripping the potential for new forms of employment.

Add to that the lack of demand and investment generated by the downward pressure on wages and associated siphoning off of profits to the few, and the reasons for the growing problems identified here become clear.

We are then left with a choice as to whether we support the casualties of this process with welfare - even an enhanced form of welfare via a citizens wage - or we cast growing numbers adrift in a mad Darwinian scramble over diminishing scraps. It is clear that our politicians and their cheerleaders here enthusiastically support the latter, and will continue to do so until the dire social and political consequences come home to roost.



edpennington ▶ grundrisse

21 January 2015 5:59pm

Indeed.

We need to look at reducing average work hours if we're to have full employment. Why right wingers just assume the market will always create enough jobs I don't quite know.



CaptainSarcasm ▶ grundrisse

21 January 2015 6:26pm

2

We are then left with a choice as to whether we support the casualties of this process with welfare - even an enhanced form of welfare via a citizens wage

In order to do that, the state needs money.

To get money, the state needs to levy tax.

To levy tax, there must be a productive wealth-generating economy that can pay tax.

To have the productive wealth-generating economy, it is necessary to have people working at jobs which are valuable. A work-based economy, in other words, where the work is doing things that are wanted and saleable.

petercookwithahook ▶ CaptainSarcasm

21 January 2015 6:32pm



"To get money, the state needs to levy tax "



grundrisse

21 January 2015 5:40pm

Apologies, I hadn't seen andrewdoddsuk's post above - He's spot on and I resoundingly second that.



TobyEaster

21 January 2015 6:44pm

"a group of academics will present to MPs the findings of their research into what happens to 1.9 million people whose jobseeker's allowance has been sanctioned."

Err, no. Did you read it?

There have been 1,9m sanctions, that doesn't mean 1.9m people sanctioned. There are only 800k on JSA now.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



TobyEaster

21 January 2015 6:45pm

of the roughly 800,000 people who had been sanctioned and stopped claiming, around 80,000 had not got a job, they had just disappeared off the DWP's radar.

Quite. Because the primary justification is anti-fraud. It moves hardly anyone into a job. The same phenomenon was found in Germany (where New Labour copied our current regime from).

1



geordie85 ▶ TobyEaster

21 January 2015 8:37pm

It moves hardly anyone into a job.

Maybe I've misread your post, but since the quote says that 80,000 people didn't get a job, it would be logical to assume that the other 720,000 did.



indul1

21 January 2015 7:44pm

That's basically correct, the benefit system has very little to do with the problems of the British job market (though IDS would not grasp that), take for example the government's current work programme, (another coercive tool to attack the unemployed) its not built on a modern national jobs programme for the UK since its basic premise (there are jobs out there is comprehensively wrong, there is a national jobs shortage, a lack of sufficient industries creating adequate numbers of jobs, paid sufficiently well to support job seekers and their families. Sheffield Hallam University has done excellent analysis of the problems of national unemployment, coastal areas, Wales and other regions of the nation which simply show that they don't have the economic base to support a broad based employment strategy, (this is underpinned by the impact of technology and the reality of superior low wage competition in low end manufacturing sectors)...typical of the Tories to further undermine the social security system that supports the unemployed people of this country (JSA has lost a third of its value since 1979, a nice little earner?, I think not....

4



szwalby

22 January 2015 8:26am

We are on the way to becoming a low wage, low tax take country with basic level of public services, which is what the Tories want. Then, they think, private firms can come in and make money from people having to top up the state services. But they have forgotten one thing: There has to be enough people on good paying jobs to be able to afford to pay. The way we are going, the market will not be lucrative enough for private providers to bother. So we will be left a poor country with poor level of public services. A downward spiral.

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40% of British families 'too poor to play a part in society'

8 million lacking required income level, says charity, as rising figure reflects cost of living and benefit cuts

Patrick Wintour, political editor

The Guardian, Monday 19 January 2015

[Jump to comments \(168\)](#)



Almost two out of five families with children don't have enough money for a socially acceptable standard of living, according to a new report. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Nearly four out of 10 households with children, or 8.1 million people, live below an income level regarded by the public as the minimum needed to participate in society, according to new research commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The number of those on less than the so-called minimum income threshold in 2012/13 was up by more than a third from 5.9 million in 2008/09, the charity says.

The research finds families headed by lone parents are under the greatest pressure, with 71% (2.3 million individuals) living below the required level, up from 65% (2.2 million).

The findings will fuel the debate about British economic growth, and whether it is feeding through to better living standards for most families. David Cameron will on Monday pledge to make full employment a priority if he wins in May.

The definition of minimum income threshold assumes a single person of working age needs an income of £16,284. It suggests in the case of a couple with two children, each needs to reach an income threshold of £20,400. It does not pretend to be a poverty measure, or act as a substitute for the government's half-abandoned child poverty measure of the numbers earning 60% below median earnings. It is instead a

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Union says benefits sanctions destroyed trust between jobseekers and jobcentres
Public and Commercial Services union renews calls for an independent inquiry into the policy

Jobcentre 'hit squads' set up benefit claimants to fail, says former official

'Jobs revival' in spotlight as most of those who lose benefits fail to find work

Reforming a failing jobs market is more important than reforming welfare

UK unemployment falls but hiring spree stalls to a 15-month low

Benefits sanctions overused to reduce claimant numbers, critics claim

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The Guardian's online dating site

definition of the income required to have not just food, shelter and clothes, but also to be able to be a participant in society.

The definition, reached in discussion with the public through focus groups, looks at what a household needs to be integrated in society and has been used in the past as a benchmark for the living wage.

It includes, for instance, the ability to pay for a week's holiday in the UK, or a second-hand car for families with children. It assumes no cigarettes or visits to the pub.

Although the definition of the minimum income level may prove controversial with some, the trend towards more people falling below the threshold is significant. It reflects both the increasing cost of living relative to earnings and benefit cuts for households in and out of work.

The report finds that of the 3.7 million individuals living in single working-age households in the UK, 1.4 million lacked the income required for an adequate standard of living in 2012/13. This was 37% of single working-age households, up from 29% in 2008/09.

It suggests that among the 9.3 million individuals living in couple working-age households without children in the UK, 1.6 million lacked the income required for an adequate standard of living in 2012/13. This represents 17% of couple working-age households, up from 10% in 2008/09.

London remains the part of the UK where households face the greatest risk of being below the minimum income standard, influenced by high housing and childcare costs.



But in some other regions, notably Wales and the north-east, there has been a particularly sharp increase in this risk, to levels close to London's. Households with members aged under 35 are now more than four times as likely to be below MIS than pensioners.

The report suggests that as employment rates for younger adults recover, their prospect of having an adequate income may improve. Working families with children, on the other hand, will continue to feel the effects of stagnating wages and benefit cuts because they are reliant on benefits to top up their low pay.

The report's findings have been endorsed by Alan Milburn, chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission.

He called the report "further evidence of the impact stagnating wages and fiscal consolidation is having on living standards of poor families. Despite very strong employment growth and record low worklessness, the number of people in families with children who are unable to attain what the public believe to be a minimum standard of living has increased by 2.2 million – more than a third – since the start of the recession, with the majority of the increase in working households".

To tackle this, the next government would need to take action to recouple earnings growth with economic growth, he said. "Forging a new settlement to make Britain a living wage country by 2025 and ensuring that the working poor are protected from the impact of continued austerity in the next parliament."

Mike Kelly, head of Living Wage at KPMG, welcomed the report saying: "Childless working households are the worst affected when it comes to low pay – and for them it's getting worse, not better.

"For far too long, low income households have been struggling to make

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Let's not muddy the language of poverty

There's poverty in the UK, but we are better off calling it inequality

One in five UK families can't afford seaside day out

Poverty hits twice as many British households as 30 years ago

Number of UK youth living in poverty could reach 5m by 2020, says charity

'The welfare state is not about dependency: it is about opportunity'

Welfare cuts drive UK's poorest families deeper into poverty, says Oxfam

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Even renters who work should be worried about housing benefit changes

Extended benefit sanctions push up numbers seeking advice on paying bills

George Osborne to announce tough new benefit curbs for EU migrants

Tom Clark: How the Tories chose to hit the poor



ArdaghCelticSpirit, 52



nick_of_time, 39

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ends meet and for young people who are trapped in low-paid jobs, with little prospects, it's an even bleaker situation.


"The fact remains that more than 5 million people are earning less than they need to live on. Too many families still struggle to afford the basics, meaning we face a scenario that, in 2015, should have long been consigned to the footnotes of history."

Katie Schmuecker, policy manager at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, said: "There has been a turnaround in who is suffering most as a result of the economic crisis and government measures to reduce the deficit.

"While last year's monitoring report showed a sharp rise in young single people struggling to make ends meet, this year's report shows a rapid widening of the gap between the incomes and costs of families with children."

To alleviate the squeeze on working-age poor, JRF has called for:

- Reform of the markets for essential goods and services such as energy, financial services and transport, to ensure they provide good value for money and those on low incomes do not pay more than better-off households for services.
- National minimum wage rates to be set with regard to the changing cost of living and average earnings.
- Employers to pay the living wage where they can afford to.
- Changes to the design of Universal Credit so low earners keep more of the money they earn before benefits are withdrawn.



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7 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS

**Singapore101**

19 January 2015 5:52am

65

A reduction of VAT back to a sensible 10% would immediately help the poorest in society. VAT hits the poor because they have to spend everything they earn.

This can be compensated for by a 0.5 % tax on stock and equities purchase.

**spinnyspace** ▶ Singapore101

19 January 2015 7:49am

70

There is no way they will drop the cost of VAT in favour of adding half one percent onto anything that the 1% might be buying, after all they tell us we need these rich people to aid our recovery.

The front pay headline news tells us that the 1% owns 99% of the wealth, that's pre 1936 levels.

The last thing I will see in my lifetime anyway, is a move for those wealth to start redistributing, Thatcher's boom and bust politics was the beginning of the end for the rest of us.

We have become a country that prizes charisma and 'easy on the eye' politicians, they look prettier on the news. We have forsaken intellectual and ethical. You only have to see how the British media jump all over Ed Miliband to know we will get more of the same in future of the public don't wake up.

**Briar** ▶ spinnyspace

19 January 2015 11:18am

33

This didn't just happen. The neoliberals took over everything from the privatised companies to the media corporations to education and made their free market dictatorship the unquestioned consensus from which no mainstream party dares deviate on pain of being declared "unelectable". Hence the vanishing of the Greens.

**JustsayNO1954** ▶ Singapore101

19 January 2015 12:14pm

VAT is set by EU @ 15% anything over that goes to government pockets?

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS

**Barbacana**

19 January 2015 6:16am

33

a single person of working age needs an income of £16,284

What absolute bollocks. I wish I had that much.

I don't have a car, and nor did my parents until I was 18, but they were (and I am) able to be "participants in society" as far as I understand that gobbledegook.

**Briar** ▶ Barbacana

19 January 2015 11:21am

32

We must take it on trust that you understand it at all - which I take leave to doubt since you provide no evidence. For all I know you think society doesn't exist. As for your "participation" - that too you leave to the imagination.

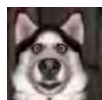
**JustsayNO1954** ▶ Barbacana

19 January 2015 12:09pm

12

Barbacana, can you afford to go on Holiday in the UK? I couldn't, when I was earning £300 a week and the wife earning £150? We could just about afford a holiday in Greece, which we haven't been able to afford for a long time now! If you read between the lines JRF are telling Government that as a Society that they perceive, these are the figures needed to attain it!

19 PEOPLE, 38 COMMENTS



John Wood

19 January 2015 6:22am

36

Where do they get these figures from? My son is a lone parent on jobseekers with two children and manages easily. He runs a car and even saves money every month.

I do have other members of my extended family in a similar position who struggle but in every case it's 100% their own fault because they aren't prepared to live within their means.

For example the first thing my niece does when she gets money is to go straight down the chippy for herself and her kids. My son can feed himself and his kids for four days on what she spends on one meal yet people are always feeling sorry for her when she whines on Facebook how poor she is.



spinnyspace ▶ John Wood

19 January 2015 7:41am

116

Then you need to get your son to publish just how he is doing it. Because unless he started his time on jobseekers with no savings and had not been out of work for more than 6 months, he can be considered a miracle worker.

After energy bills the extra he would be paying in rent and running a phone line, what isn't he spending his money on?



Christine63 ▶ John Wood

19 January 2015 8:17am

33

So why is he still on job-seekers and not working? Didn't you just say "Do you think society should look after everyone regardless of how little effort they put in helping themselves?"



Myra Fuller ▶ John Wood

19 January 2015 8:19am

78

I'm surprised that more people aren't questioning you on this. There is

11 PEOPLE, 16 COMMENTS



garrie8516

19 January 2015 6:28am

45

Yet Cameron, Osborne & co., back-slapped by the free market IMF, will still stand up & tell these 8.1 million people that the economy is growing; that their policies are working; that austerity is working.

These 8.1m, and the rest of us, are being lied to on a regular basis by these out-of-touch, self-interested, power focused posh-boys who'd sooner blame the poor than give them a helping hand.

The quicker they're kicked out and we have a government with at least some semblance of thought for these 8.1m, the better.

Shameful for 21st century UK. Shameful.



John Wood ▶ garrie8516

19 January 2015 7:03am

11

The economy is growing without a doubt. There is evidence everywhere.

Do you think society should look after everyone regardless of how little effort they put in helping themselves?

How many chances should someone get?



Paidenoughalready ▶ garrie8516

19 January 2015 7:52am

8

The quicker they're kicked out and we have a government with at

least some semblance of thought for these 8.1m, the better.

How about some semblance of thought for the 52M+ who are actually paying for them ?

Do we not get say or are we just some cash cow to fund others ?



Christine63 ▶ John Wood

19 January 2015 8:13am

30

"Do you think society should look after everyone regardless of how little

3 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



CanadaChuck

19 January 2015 6:41am

16

This sounds like progress, the plan is working. Hopefully these people will move into smaller accommodations, give up on any thoughts of a vehicle, use less electricity and set their thermostats at 17C, especially today. It is most important that you achieve the goals of your Carbon Budgets. Hypothermia can be progressive.



Myra Fuller ▶ CanadaChuck

19 January 2015 11:53am

21

1. It is only working in that it is forcing people into unacceptable living standards, unable to afford decent housing, food or fuel costs.
2. If you're referring to the 'spare room subsidy' - many of 'these people' cannot move into smaller accommodation because there isn't any available. Any number of recent reports have highlighted this.
3. Guess what? People need their cars in order to look for work!
4. The very poorest do not have ANY budget for heating if they want to feed themselves this winter.

But I guess you knew all this already.



ID8742197 ▶ Myra Fuller

20 January 2015 9:40am

5

I believe CanadaChuck was being satirical? At least, I hope so.



Myra Fuller ▶ ID8742197

20 January 2015 1:47pm

1

HappyChickie in disguise?

8 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



uberdonkey5

19 January 2015 7:00am

26

Like with most of their policies, the Tories will get a vote if they can manage to convince the supporter that things in the UK are completely different to the evidence they can see with their own eyes.



John Wood ▶ uberdonkey5

19 January 2015 7:04am

5

I see new businesses appearing, people getting jobs and businesses with full order books.



Thegreatescapee ▶ John Wood

19 January 2015 8:07am

53

Not able to employ your son though?



Christine63 ▶ John Wood

19 January 2015 8:11am

33

I see more and more people fighting over part-time, low wage and zero

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



WalterBMorgan

19 January 2015 7:11am

14

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation proposals seem sensible. Something does need to be urgently done to raise wages. It seems that only more regular significant increases in the minimum wage is likely to have the desired effect. The living wage idea is noble enough but on incomes only plenty of carrot and stick can replace what unions can no longer largely deliver. It is a nonsense that low pay is tolerated whilst tax funds are used to subsidise cheap labour. The economy cannot grow properly unless money is in the hands of those most likely to spend it. Why are folks surprised that Black Friday promotions simply brought forward purchases in aggregate from Christmas and the January sales. If money is only created for and through banks too little of it ends up in the majority of pockets.



Philbg ▶ WalterBMorgan

19 January 2015 8:19am

5

You all forget that our main competition in the West is low paid, badly treated workers in places like China, Vietnam, South Korea.



JustsayNO1954 ▶ Philbg

19 January 2015 11:35am

21

And you forget it was the Corporates and Banks, who are controlling this and every government, who placed the work there, for big profits!

This is why they want the TTIP, it will transfer all Public Service rights to Corporates, creating slaves of us all!

There's going to be a crash soon as the 'petrodollar' is collapsing! Countries around the world are moving away from the dollar, hence the wars in Middle East and Ukraine, as Russia and China set up a Eurasian Trade Bloc. The war in Iraq was just such a war, as Saddam was selling his Oil in Euros, US went in, lynched Saddam and placed the oil back on the market in Dollars. They did exactly the same in Libya, as Gaddafi advertised his Oil, for sale, but only for Gold-Dinar. Gaddafi was murdered and gold placed back on the market for dollars. They still haven't found the gold?

<http://www.silverdoctors.com/jim-willie-dollar-will-severely-crack-by-mid-february/>



arx86 ▶ Philbg

20 January 2015 2:13am

3

Even the virtual slaves of the Far East will eventually be mostly replaced by

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Jim Johnson

19 January 2015 7:14am

29

The Government will never admit fault nor will the stop the English Gestapo led by Adolf Duncan Smith we are destined to live in abject poverty under this Government



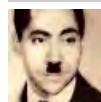
pbentley ▶ Jim Johnson

20 January 2015 12:44am

4

Ah! IDS.
Herr Dunkomf Schitz himself.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



StopTheOutbists

19 January 2015 7:39am

26

'too poor to play a part in society'

Working paid or unpaid to serve others depends not on wealth.

...but I agree with 3 of the 4 JRF recommendations. An "employer" that cannot afford to pay a living wage should not be an employer.



John Wood ▶ StopTheQutbists

19 January 2015 8:39am

5

All the time the benefit system is the way it is no employer is going to pay out more than they have to.

The tax credit system is a total mess and needs overhauling.

Not to mention of course that consumers won't pay what goods would cost if the wages were born totally by the employers but that's another can of worms entirely.



Myra Fuller ▶ John Wood

19 January 2015 8:55am

24

Not necessarily more than they have to...some can pay more but don't want to. Tax credits certainly do need overhauling - if more people were earning enough not to need them in the first place. Employment has to pay more than benefits - however benefits should not be so low as to leave people essentially penniless.



JustsayNO1954 ▶ John Wood

19 January 2015 11:26am

17

If the 'consumer' actually paid for goods 'cost + profit', they would be cheaper? As it is prices are set by 'what the market will stand', based on wages! Why do you suppose, in bad times they can knock 75% off an item and still make a profit?



bcnteacher

19 January 2015 7:48am

15

Just as the Establishment want it.



SaltedHashed

19 January 2015 8:02am

4

Beware of charities with their own agendas. Who exactly were 'the public' who think such an exact figure as £16,284 is what a single person needs to participate? Are all the people earning £16,283 a year who the Foundation wants to have thrown out of work going to be able to participate more on the dole, which could just possibly be less than £16,283? Presumably this article also means the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has no staff on less than £16,284? I think we should be told.

10 PEOPLE, 11 COMMENTS



Fuedallandlord

19 January 2015 8:35am

24

The trap for the 5 million leaseholders is set and making the 'feudal' freeholder landlords super rich.

Average wage 1995 £17,500 and house price £50,500.
and 20 year on

Average wage 2015 £26,900 and house price £190,000.

Radical reform is needed and abolition of a system in the last two countries that put up with it England and Wales.



John Wood ▶ Fuedallandlord

19 January 2015 8:42am

7

Who are these super rich landlords then? I rent out two houses and it's a long way from making me super rich I can tell you!



JustsayNO1954 ▶ John Wood

27

19 January 2015 11:18am

The Tory ex 'councillors', who took charge of Right to buy? Who now own vast estates of ex council property.

Then there's the present MP's? <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/quarter-of-tory-mps-are-landlords-says-research/6524104.article>



Deesis ▶ Fuedallandlord

2

19 January 2015 1:43pm

Yes leasehold is peculiar and really should only apply short term of business

8 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



SandGrown

19 January 2015 8:41am

38

One of the problems facing the government is that despite the 'increases' in those in work the tax base has not risen accordingly. The reasons are simple, and can be resolved by legislative change.

- 1) People are employed on very low wages (minimum wage) and part time, they do not pay tax
- 2) People (like my daughter) are employed but their employer treats them as self-employed. This means many do not bother to register for tax and NI (my daughter does, but most of her colleagues do not). As a result they have no rights to sick pay, holiday pay, maternity leave or a workplace pension and their pay is not regulated under the minimum wage laws.
- 3) Many people on benefits are sanctioned or are on workfare schemes and no longer count as unemployed, this artificially raises the numbers in work

The problem is that a country where people are too poor to participate in society is one that does not grow effectively. Poor people do not consume and consumption is the engine of growth. I would suggest the Universal Basic Income might be a lot easier than IDS Universal Credit and might help with reducing poverty but in fact a package of measure are needed. These would include taxing the 1% very much more (they own most of the wealth and it needs redistributing), banning self-employed work where the individual works for a single employer, banning zero-hours contracts and regulating casual forms of working more effectively and increasing the minimum wage. If an employer cannot afford to pay a living wage then the employer should claim a subsidy (having to prove they cannot afford, rather than will not pay), not the employee; this would help reduce the stigma of claiming benefits.



John Wood ▶ SandGrown

1

19 January 2015 8:43am

How does the employer get away with treating her as self-employed? If she only works for him then as far as the Inland Revenue is concerned she is employed by him and must be treated as such.



Posadist ▶ John Wood

22

19 January 2015 9:41am

Happens loads.

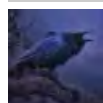


JustsayNO1954 ▶ John Wood

12

19 January 2015 11:14am

Because the employer isn't an employer?

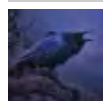


Noutopia

19 January 2015 8:46am

24

And another 5 years of Tories and this will be 60%.



Noutopia

19 January 2015 8:50am

23

And the Tories promising more extreme cuts and austerity god knows what this percentage will reach.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Holby

19 January 2015 9:02am

5

A controversial report in my opinion. The definition of what is required to participate in society is absolute nonsense.



Myra Fuller ▶ Holby

19 January 2015 11:56am

22

How can a low income family participate if they cannot afford to use public transport or to run a car? Or have access to the internet in order to search for jobs? What's your definition?



stderr2 ▶ Myra Fuller

20 January 2015 11:38pm

> Or have access to the internet

>

How many don't have mobiles and gigs of data?



cpp4ever

19 January 2015 9:14am

23

If you're reliant on any sort of government welfare then anything other than surviving, working, and finding work will incur a penalty. So playing a part in society is actively discouraged for the poor by government policy and also by the majority of the news media in the UK based on the many articles effectively demonising poverty that are published.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



ID236815

19 January 2015 10:05am

12

well its because they are chavs innit and spend all their money on booze fags and betting, then they go n have 7 kids all on the dole when they should be out working up chimneys....



stderr2 ▶ ID236815

20 January 2015 11:33pm

> then they go n have 7 kids all on the dole when they should

> be out working up chimneys...

>

You mean chimbleys, London needs to return to coal, everything was fine in the good olde days.

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Quaestor

19 January 2015 10:10am

2

Minimum income level certainly is controversial, because of the way these ideas from focus groups have been translated into figures.



ID8742197 ▶ Quaestor

20 January 2015 9:45am

3

...When we all know that the state elite's idea of what is needed to participate in society is the only correct idea, right?



Quaestor ▶ ID8742197

20 January 2015 10:18am

Not really. I know some members of this so-called elite - no party issues, Mandelson is fully paid-up - and they are interested in personal control and influence. Not really bothered about anyone else.



richard farrell-adams

19 January 2015 10:39am

26

As this 40% are not going to contribute taxes due to Osbornes poverty wages policies, which create false figures for employment, guess what. He will cut all the services the poor rely on to live. Buses, council services, health, walk in centres, tax credits.
Persecution of the poor because of economic incompetence.



AngeloFrank

19 January 2015 12:41pm

10

Wage stagnation under an oligarchy does take an increasing toll on the populace. This figure will gradually rise in the near future.

3 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



tjhvaliants

19 January 2015 1:16pm

13

The country is definitely struggling. I am staggered at how expensive it is to have kids these days. I work as a social worker and it used to be those families who did not work who could not afford the basics.

Today, I have middle class parents on my caseload who both work who struggle to enjoy luxuries I took for granted when growing up. No holidays and when I ask if they have ever taken their kids to a football or rugby game, they say it is a pipe dream.

I was born in 1985 in a one wage family until 1995 when my mother went back to teaching. My Dad was/is a probation officer and he always took me to football and we had a holiday.



northernlout ▶ tjhvaliants

19 January 2015 8:37pm

1

Pity she did not teach you how to spell "definitely".



ID8742197 ▶ northernlout

20 January 2015 9:57am

8

Wow. What an amazing response. So much thought about the whole issue must have gone into that.



tjhvaliants ▶ northernlout

20 January 2015 11:19am

9

What a crass response. This is a throw away comments page typed with a I pad. Proof reading is not something that would be worthwhile. You're definitely a sad pedant.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Deesis

19 January 2015 1:38pm

14

There is a solution. Educate British people and don't import workers from other nations especially developing nations. These nations need their home grown professionals and could probably be assisted by other richer nations training them in

their own countries. The problem is the British working classes for various reasons are not helped, encouraged or employed. Capitalism which discriminates in favour of exploiting to make money is alive and well. The EU, British ethnic identities and domestic priorities are sacrificed to the EU and in creating a multiethnic empire within Britain rather than concentrating upon harmony, unity and social stability. The Empire is gone !

The solution is expatriation of foreigners with incentives. These would free up the labour market and reverse tendencies to pay cash in hand and low wages. It would even remove fat cats who have more than they need.

Britain needs to set its priorities so that it looks after its own.

Britain is known as soft touch when it comes to social housing and benefits. There is a type of induced dependency where many don't try or aspire as they will lose the minimal comforts they have. The middle class are taxed to pay for it. The rich get around taxes. Foreigners exploit the situation displacing all classes and using the ideology of tolerating everything and claiming victim hood to their advantage.



Ovahere ▶ Deesis

19 January 2015 4:43pm

4

Agreed.



tdangdang ▶ Deesis

20 January 2015 8:17am

5

Are you totally retarded? "Expatriation of foreigners"?? How?

"There is a type of induced dependency where many don't try or aspire as they will lose the minimal comforts they have... Foreigners exploit the situation."

No. No they don't. But racists like you do.



Alice38

19 January 2015 1:51pm

22

Many many people who are buying their own homes fit into this category.

Truth is many seemingly "middle class " people actually don't have two pennies to rub together once they have paid the mortgage, fed the kids, paid the gas, bill, Council tax , water rate, and home insurance.

So to talk about the "poor" as the somehow down and out low lifers on benefits on council estates, or students up to their eyeballs and debt and no job as being the ones who can't afford a holiday or a car are misleading. Totally misleading.

Truth is also of course that those who would indeed not have a holiday in Benidorm, or get a clapped out Ford fiesta often get these things on credit cards. 8 million is a very very low figure.

It is much much more than this if you count the huge numbers of people who simple replace the words

"Can't afford" by " Borrow" "Credit cards", "Overdrafts " and lifetime debt.

By the millions buying bread and milk, or that cappuccino at Costa on a Barclaycard! !!!!!

Not to get the nectar points or cashback bonus on the card, but because they just don't have any free cash til a fortnight Friday.

It is all relative.

A place to live is costing millions dear very dear.

Renting or buying.

Until we get housing renting to affordable levels (which ain't gonna happen) modern poverty will persist forvthose who should not be the middle class baked beans on toast brigade

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Denny O'Connor

19 January 2015 5:39pm

5

I have an idea. Let's raise taxes on those who are productive and give it to those who are not.

The whole country will be lifted by the rising financial tide, eh.

dr. o



GrendelHalfBreed ▶ Denny O'Connor

19 January 2015 10:56pm

16

One of the biggest myths ever cooked up was 'wealth creation'. Utter bollocks. Every bit as nonsensical as 'energy creation'. You don't create wealth. You exchange capital. Those with the most wealth are not the most 'productive' - they are simply the most effective at being able to hoard money that was paid by other people for goods or services frequently carried out by those who were paid less than they should.

The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists was part play and part political rant, but one thing Tressel got spot on was his description of the Great Money Trick.



Denny O'Connor ▶ GrendelHalfBreed

1

20 January 2015 4:22pm

Well then, perhaps the productive should be stripped if everything and imprisoned. That will by your thesis produce an instant economic paradise.

Oh wait, Lenin and Marx tried that, didn't they.

Cheers, eh wot.
dr. o



djhworld

7

19 January 2015 8:33pm

> Mike Kelly, head of Living Wage at KPMG

I'm struggling to understand what this guy does, in relation to the company he works for.

Does he advise companies how to avoid paying the living wage or something?

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



heiankun

6

19 January 2015 10:06pm

There is a myth that raising the threshold on income tax takes low paid workers out of tax. Let's not forget VAT and excise duties which must also be paid and the burden this imposes is huge. VAT should be reduced to 5% and the tax burden moved to wealth holders with effective land taxes and company taxes which might be paid for in kind with schools, hospitals and social housing.



stderr2 ▶ heiankun

20 January 2015 11:28pm

> land taxes and company taxes

>
Oh great, tax away someone's land and their company too.



aporiac ▶ heiankun

21 January 2015 2:52am

But increasing bureaucratic and tax burdens on businesses increases their costs, which they then pass on in prices, and can also harm their productivity, making it harder for them to pay good wages.

To quote Churchill, "for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle."

We already have a state that consumes over 40% of national income. There is a question to be asked whether a) its redistributive efforts are effective, and b) the opportunity cost of tying up so much capital and labour in potentially non-wealth-creating activities is to the detriment of the commonwealth.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

Robin Smyth

18

19 January 2015 10:34pm



I just been reading through some of the comments. Yes society should look after each other. No matter what. If you treat people poorly and with no respect then they will act poorly and disrespectfully.
 The age of selfishness has reached a fever pitch level. The super rich have become extremist in this sense. How can ninety percent of society expect to make achievements if the resources of society remain in the hands of the few and over privileged. A society can only function well if the wealth, resources and prosperity of that society is shared more equally.
 This Great British society shall become so embittered by inequality that in may well spill over onto the streets in the form of riots and violence, that the rich may scarper as quickly as they came.

19



hamstrung ▸ Robin Smyth

20 January 2015 1:21am

Your observations are absolutely correct.

I lived in Denmark for eleven years and it is hard to believe that our two countries exist on the same planet, never mind the same continent. It was not utopia but they've made a pretty good stab at it and, more importantly, will continue to improve upon the model.

Apart from any other (human impact) consideration, keeping the majority of people scratching hither and thither to make ends meet is, in the end, self defeating for any group of people, or nation for that matter.

(Excluding the Dragons) How do you hope for people with brave, new ideas to move beyond the dream stage - be entrepreneurial - when their every waking moment is preoccupied with how to pay the bills, put food on the table, keep a roof over the head and the bailiffs at bay? The effort just to keep mind and body together is so all-consuming, there won't be much left to give up for new ideas to progress. To keep whole swathes of the population in absolute penury is, in the long term, self-defeating.

I won't be around to see it but in the not too distant, students of modern history will look back at this post-war period, post 1979 and view with growing disbelief how this neo-liberalist "experiment" was allowed to (a) be adopted in the first place and (b) allowed to "flourish" to the detriment of almost the entire population. I feel sure that those students will be as aghast as I am right now.

It is like living through a modern-day Hogarth sketch - why do the British never learn from their history - why do we continue to compound mistake upon mistake? Is it really because the best this country has to offer in terms of leadership is wealthy, know-little (or nothing at all) autocrats?

shakes head in disbelief

7



SpecialRX

19 January 2015 11:43pm

I always suspected I was fucked - but seeing the figures makes it so much worse. I am, apparently, in a new and special category of trouble; earning well under the 16k minimum.... Little bit painful for a pre-work read.

Im not a bad person, nor am I particularly stupid... And I am pretty-bloody good at my job. I fear, I'm just a prize example of the fecklessness that seems to cause so much strife. Tricky. Tricky. Tricky.

3 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS

7



skipsdad

19 January 2015 11:59pm

The last Labour government said they would wipe out child poverty, in 10 years.

Instead, they wiped out the Banks' losses, in 10 minutes.

1



stderr2 ▸ skipsdad

20 January 2015 11:27pm

> Instead, they wiped out the Banks' losses, in 10 minutes.

>

So you'd prefer Great Depression II?



aporiac ▶ skipsdad

20 January 2015 11:59pm

Funnily enough, the crash of 2007/8 was largely caused by the efforts of the US government to wipe out child poverty. It seems governments aren't very good at doing this, nor at predicting the consequences of their actions.



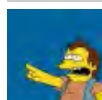
aporiac ▶ skipsdad

21 January 2015 12:04am

You might find this discussion interesting: -

1

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



robsandiego

20 January 2015 3:49am

I manage to "participate in society", even when I was unemployed, volunteering at a local museum, community events, and my church. I realise those in power think buying more is what's important but I'd rather participate in society than just consume.

4



Jus_sayin ▶ robsandiego

20 January 2015 8:17am

Many people would struggle to do that due to; type of clothes needed, phone, travel (commute), any lunch or drink out (often need to buy a warm drink in winter).

Stop thinking you arr so fantastic and others are just thick.

7



Liz Smith ▶ Jus_sayin

21 January 2015 2:29pm

As a charity worker in a centre that provides volunteering and social opportunities, we do our best to help people to be able to access these opportunities, including providing free tea, coffee and biscuits, discounted food in the community cafe (free for those working in the cafe itself), and we pay their bus fares. Most charities will do this, in order to offset the costs of volunteering and make it accessible, so I actually don't think you're correct about that.

We don't make any demands about clothing, we provide all protective clothing required (we are, mostly, an outdoor volunteering centre) and we provide waterproofs and gloves, so all people need is enough warm clothes that are suitable for being outside.

A lot of people are now starting to cotton on that the consumer lifestyle is unsustainable, so while you might think robsandiego sounds a bit sanctimonious, he's not alone in starting to reconsider the things we value in life, and what constitutes happiness, and for a lot of people, that isn't buying lots of stuff. I'm not talking here about going without things people actually need, but actually rethinking our relationship with our stuff, our possessions, and figuring out what we really do need to make us happy.



richard farrell-adams

20 January 2015 4:44am

40% of society are too poor to pay an invoice for 15 quid to a stuck up mum, thats for sure.

3



Daisee

20 January 2015 5:33am

8 million? Expect destabilization, tension, crime, home violence even disease. While the Billionaires and politicians gathering in Switzerland to discuss it. This doesn't happen by accident, it's their very policies that have created this mess.

6

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

**Sei_Shonagon**

20 January 2015 9:51am

4

If an employer 'can't afford' to pay a living wage, then the business is either failing or is run on exploitation.

**stderr2** ▶ Sei_Shonagon

20 January 2015 11:25pm

1

> If an employer 'can't afford' to pay a living wage, then the
> business is either failing or is run on exploitation.

>

Are you willing to give up jobs to people in the 3rd world because you make it illegal to pay what people will accept but is below your idea of what they should be paid?

**declan21**

20 January 2015 10:30am

2

Boris has prepared us for all eventualities, should the proletariat get uppity he has purchased a water cannon, play here ...

<http://games.usvsth3m.com/the-water-cannon-boris-johnson-game/>

**declan21**

20 January 2015 10:31am

<http://games.usvsth3m.com/the-water-cannon-boris-johnson-game/>

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS

**Simon311**

20 January 2015 1:03pm

7

Employers must pay living wages full stop. Otherwise they do not have a business and are being subsidised by their staff.

That this even has to be said is bizarre.

**stderr2** ▶ Simon311

20 January 2015 11:24pm

1

> Employers must pay living wages full stop. Otherwise they
> do not have a business and are being subsidised by their staff.

>

That's a bizarre notion.

**bilejones** ▶ Simon311

21 January 2015 3:38am

Businesses cannot pay more than employees add in economic value.

That this has to be said is a bizarre function of the of parroting government parasites, who know not how to add any value at all

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS

**friedaechorlton**

20 January 2015 1:23pm

7

I don't know how politicians can be so pompous and proud of themselves when, collectively, over the past ten years all parties have contributed to Britain becoming closer to a third-world country. Charles Dickens would have a field day writing about the poor and oppressed of 21st century Britain. I hope the election is so HUNG that legislation will have to be put in place to reflect what the electorate REALLY wants. Times are a-changing and the ostriches who have their heads in the sand will not

know what has hit them.



stderr2 ▶ friedaechorlton

20 January 2015 11:23pm

> Charles Dickens would have a field day writing about the poor
>
If he comes back, I bet he'll write about space aliens or something this time:
"Please, sir, I want some mo' rocket fuel."



bilejones ▶ friedaechorlton

21 January 2015 3:36am

All you need to do to become "closer to a third-world country." is fill the place up with third world citizens.
Not too tough for you to understand, surely?



OlaNorskman

20 January 2015 2:14pm

It seems a recipes to full up the prisons... but of course they are being outsourced too... this is how Cameron and Osborn square the circle no less...

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



stderr2

20 January 2015 11:20pm

> the minimum needed to participate in society,
>
I kind of read the article but I couldn't really understand what the above quote means. Does it really take money to participate in society? Do you have to pay to play on vote day? If you can vote, isn't that participating?



Rozina ▶ stderr2

21 January 2015 12:46am

1

You certainly need a certain level of money coming in on a regular basis (daily, weekly, monthly or otherwise) to be able to buy food and clothes, own or rent accommodation, and to at least pay for transport that takes you to work.

Also if you vote, you need to have an address in the electoral district where you vote, which usually means you own or are paying for a property (through mortgage or rent payments) in that area.

Capisce?



aporiac

20 January 2015 11:51pm

I'm not sure how meaningful this research really is. For example, a lone parent with one child is reckoned to "need" £144 per week to spend on a car (£47), leisure activities (£40), personal items (£28), clothing (£19) and alcohol (£6.50). Realistically, people "need" to pursue a lifestyle they can afford, or perhaps decide what they need and then make plans to fulfil those needs (e.g. not having children in the case of lone parents, and focus on building their human capital instead!)

What the Joseph Rowntree Foundation doesn't provide is a guaranteed prescription for how to fix this perceived gap between expectations and incomes. Somehow I don't think it has one or it would certainly be awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics - probably each and every year in perpetuity. It does have some ideas, which basically involve increasing state benefits and the minimum wage, but unfortunately this is likely to have other consequences that may well result in the people it's trying to help being worse off at the end of it. Economics is tricky like that.



bilejones

21 January 2015 3:25am

And the same bollocks is dribbled in the US, but we find this:

1. America is capitalist and greedy – yet almost half of the population is subsidized.
2. Half of the population is subsidized – yet they think they are victims.
3. They think they are victims – yet their representatives run the government.
4. Their representatives run the government – yet the poor keep getting poorer.
5. The poor keep getting poorer – yet they have things that people in other countries only dream about.
6. They have things that people in other countries only dream about – yet politicians (mostly progressive socialists) claim they want America to become more like those other countries.

And consider these following three observations about the direction of our current government and cultural environment:

1. We are advised not to judge ALL Muslims by the actions of a few lunatics, but we are admonished to judge ALL gun owners by the actions of a few lunatics. Funny how that works, as we see the liberal progressives already jumping on the tragedy from Santa Barbara California. So what about the three victims who were stabbed to death, should we ban knives?
2. We constantly hear about how Social Security is running out of money. How come we never hear about welfare or food stamps on the verge of running out of money? Maybe the first group "worked for" their money, but the second didn't. It is a simple case of printing money for political bribery and extortion.
3. Why are we cutting benefits for our veterans, giving no pay raises for our military and cutting our forces to a level lower than before WWII, but are expanding and increasing the benefits to illegal aliens? It is all about pandering for votes – and who cares about national security or veterans dying at the hands of their own Veterans Administration?

<http://www.peakinthewell.net/blog/six-conundrums/>



bilejones ▶ bilejones

21 January 2015 3:29am

I disagree by the way with the crap about "veterans" but it was right, I thought, to include it.



cpp4ever ▶ bilejones

21 January 2015 5:38am

The simple answer, all human beings are by nature hypocrites, and that includes both you and I.

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Benefits sanctions overused to reduce claimant numbers, critics claim

Work and pensions committee hears that sanctions have seen millions withheld from claimants since coalition tightened conditions

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Patrick Butler, social policy editor

The Guardian, Tuesday 20 January 2015 20.35 GMT

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Union says benefits sanctions destroyed trust between jobseekers and jobcentres

Public and Commercial Services union renews calls for an independent inquiry into the policy

Jobcentre 'hit squads' set up benefit claimants to fail, says former official

'Jobs revival' in spotlight as most of those who lose benefits fail to find work

Reforming a failing jobs market is more important than reforming welfare

UK unemployment falls but hiring spree stalls to a 15-month low

40% of British families 'too poor to play a part in society'

The estate we're in: how working class



Some Jobcentres have been criticised for allegedly setting up 'hit squads' to target vulnerable claimants. Photograph: Philip Toscano/PA

There is a broad political consensus that job seekers must fulfill certain obligations as a condition of receiving unemployment benefit. This consensus is breaking down, however, over how harsh this conditionality should be and whether it is effective in getting people back into work.

Ministers claim that benefits sanctions [send a clear message](#) to the tiny minority of claimants who abuse the system, making them more likely to look for jobs, and ending the so-called "something-for-nothing" culture. They have said sanctions are a "last resort" imposed on people unwilling to work.

Critics, however, say that the sanctions system has spiralled out of control since the coalition tightened benefit conditionality in autumn 2012. Ten years ago, typically a thousand people a month would be sanctioned; by October 2013 that figure hit 12,000 and currently stands at around 7,000. In some areas up to 10% of all unemployment benefit claimants were sanctioned.

Sanctioning is no longer a last resort tactic aimed at the stubbornly workshy, say critics, but a crude way of pushing down claimant numbers and cutting back on the benefits bill. The work and pensions committee has heard estimates that sanctions have seen £275m withheld from claimants – who are already living on the breadline – over the past two years. The biggest impact has been on vulnerable individuals, such as

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The Guardian's online dating site

people with mental illness, who are unable, rather than unwilling, to comply with the benefit conditions.

Food banks and local authority crisis welfare schemes report that sanctions account for the increasing number of penniless people who come to them in desperation. One of the most shocking aspects of the sanctions regime has been the number of stories of people who have been driven to crime or destitution – in some cases with fatal consequences – after having their benefits stopped, often for spurious reasons.

Some Jobcentres have been criticised for allegedly setting up “hit squads” to targeting vulnerable claimants – including those with learning difficulties, or with mental illness – for sanctions to enable staff to meet monthly targets.

Perhaps the most damning criticism is the lack of evidence that sanctions make people more likely to get into employment. The government’s work programme providers admit the poverty caused by sanctions makes vulnerable job seekers less likely to find work.



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GoodPersona, 35

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7 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



RadioJammor

20 January 2015 8:41pm

158

In other words, this is everything claimants have said it was, and the opposite that Ian Duncan Smith and Esther McVey said it was.



Jack Jazz RadioJammor

20 January 2015 8:44pm

98

Yes but we knew that already. Tories are deceitful liars who will do anything to hurt the lower orders of society and profit from it!



Alan Smith RadioJammor

20 January 2015 8:44pm

42

Absolutely correct. I can't believe these are the only comments on such an odious subject.



DrAnanda Alan Smith

20 January 2015 8:51pm

16

Because

13 PEOPLE, 13 COMMENTS



Johnnytwosticks

20 January 2015 8:45pm

4

Ignore this tosh, the benefits system here has long needed tightening up and the vast majority of hard-working taxpayers fully support that action, keep at the good work

IDS !



FelisLunartik ▶ Johnnytwosticks

20 January 2015 8:48pm

87

Daily Heil over there...



TheSquealer ▶ Johnnytwosticks

20 January 2015 8:50pm

88

Johnnynobrain more like.



Bob_Iddy ▶ Johnnytwosticks

20 January 2015 8:51pm

11

What about the ticking pensions timebomb? 1/2 roughly of welfare spending



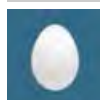
Scurra

20 January 2015 8:46pm

48

Perhaps the most damning criticism is the lack of evidence that sanctions make people more likely to get into employment.

Well that's not a problem because Duncan Smith believes it, so it must be so.



Bob_Iddy

20 January 2015 8:46pm

22

I thought this had been known for years.

5 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



unpleasantmilk

20 January 2015 8:46pm

3

This countrys benefits systems are a bloody joke. We give to those who haven't worked a day in their life, and deny people who have.

People who know the system, play it like a fiddle. Those who don't, lose out.

Cheats do prosper.



Brandybuck ▶ unpleasantmilk

20 January 2015 9:07pm

27

Name me a system in this country where cheats don't prosper. It is not just confined to welfare.



unpleasantmilk ▶ Brandybuck

20 January 2015 9:10pm

13

Don't get me started on MP's and their fiddling ways.
Don't get me started on postal voting...

And more.



captainbeefheart ▶ unpleasantmilk

20 January 2015 9:17pm

35

Yes IDS's family get £millions in farming subsidies



scunnerapig

20 January 2015 8:47pm

76

The most vulnerable and easy targets getting bullied, harried and having their

already pittance levels of subsistence reduced further - a complete disgrace..



Wscad

20 January 2015 8:47pm

1

Hell & Buckshot. Now that is a surprise.

9 PEOPLE, 13 COMMENTS



cowgirl

20 January 2015 8:48pm

63

In local Jobcentre with a friend, I saw a chart on the wall behind some desks labelled 'Green Team off-ometer' with congratulatory stars, and obvious sanction targets to be reached. Wish I'd taken a pic as I went back and it had been moved



Joe_Bungles ▶ cowgirl

20 January 2015 9:00pm

4

Maybe it was reward for getting people into work and off benefits.

But that would spoil your story, I think.



Brandybuck ▶ Joe_Bungles

20 January 2015 9:08pm

38

You can believe if it you like, do you also believe in the tooth fairy and Santa Claus?



Joe_Bungles ▶ Brandybuck

20 January 2015 9:46pm

3

Believe what?



FelisLunartik

20 January 2015 8:48pm

43

No. Shit. Sherlock.

A bit late for the dead maybe, but the depths of this scandal needs to be spread far and wide. A cull of 'figures' and a cull of people. Great Britain. Jesus...

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



DrAnanda

20 January 2015 8:49pm

83

I know two patients who were recently discharged from healthcare, only to have to rely on foodbanks as they were not allowed a single penny when they were discharged. It took one of them 3 months to receive any benefits, and what little she did get was utterly meagre.

How dare the coalition tell the EU we do not need foodbank subsidy. Wankers.



unpleasantmilk ▶ DrAnanda

20 January 2015 9:05pm

17

This is what you get in Camerons caring Britain



hamstrung ▶ DrAnanda

20 January 2015 11:53pm

10

I know two patients who were recently discharged from healthcare, only to have to rely on foodbanks as they were not allowed a single penny when they were discharged. It took one of them 3 months to receive any benefits,

and what little she did get was utterly meagre.

Which just goes to illustrate the hypocrisy of the recent "zero suicide" utterance from one member of the Coalition government in charge of the policies creating optimum conditions for doing the precise opposite.



MickGJ ▶ DrAnanda

21 January 2015 8:54am

I know two patients who were recently discharged from healthcare, only to have to rely on foodbanks as they were not allowed a single penny when they were discharged.

Why not? What do you mean by "discharged from healthcare"?



Leslie Bribges

20 January 2015 8:49pm

Is this item news!

It's bloody history - we've all known this for I don't know how long!

Get with it Gaundian!

9

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



NuitsdeYoung

20 January 2015 8:49pm

It should be illegal to leave people with no income whatsoever. Sanctions are killing people.

81



Bob_Iddy ▶ NuitsdeYoung

20 January 2015 9:45pm

But, but what about them *terrorists*! We need the government to have more powers to spy on everyone, spending countless money in the process.

4



AntonZ ▶ NuitsdeYoung

21 January 2015 4:52pm

A citizens income would address that, but you'd have to vote Green.

2

5 PEOPLE, 12 COMMENTS



HardHeadedLefty

20 January 2015 8:50pm

The only way you're going to get this to stop is by biting the bullet and voting Labour.

Acting like an emotionally unbalanced, overgrown child and yelling "ILLEGAL WAR" every time Labour is mentioned is likely to hand the Tories the next election. Even though they were the main party that voted for said "illegal war".

35



DrAnanda ▶ HardHeadedLefty

20 January 2015 8:53pm

Indeed. Depressing to read the comments on the thread about Labour losing votes to the Greens.

Vote Green - get Tory.

17



EspritDeCorpse ▶ HardHeadedLefty

20 January 2015 9:44pm

Or... How about Labour do some long overdue 'triangulation', become a

11

party that has courage, a conscience, principles, actually stands for something more than 'not as bad as the Tories'. Why do you think people would even consider voting Green, *knowing* that it might be a 'wasted' vote?

And it's not simply about the past and "ILLEGAL WAR" and other brickbats you may consider cliché, but about what is happening now and what is likely to happen, how they will approach these things if they do win power. Even on this general issue, there have been recent craven betrayals both in and out of parliament and people are already rather concerned with what they are hearing from Rachel Reeves, Kate Green, Stephen Timms, etc.

Really, it's not a hard message to get.



EspritDeCorpse ▶ HardHeadedLefty

20 January 2015 9:53pm

7

And really, being a 'hardheadedlefty' it was rather remiss to fail to mention

5 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



WonhandTide

20 January 2015 8:51pm

56

First priority: these people who have been sanctioned inappropriately need financial compensation for the hardship and distress endured.

Unfortunately, some 60 are said to have taken their own life in direct response to a benefit sanction. So we need an Inquiry too.



kitbee ▶ WonhandTide

20 January 2015 9:05pm

22

So we need an Inquiry too.

Actually we need some show trials and justice.



utopiandreams ▶ WonhandTide

20 January 2015 10:55pm

7

Well that's the 60 cases the DWP claim they're not investigating, WonhandTide, which is likely the tip of the iceberg.



hamstrung ▶ utopiandreams

21 January 2015 12:01am

14

Those 60 that the DWP *have had to investigate as the Coroner's Courts*

5 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



Stumppumpy

20 January 2015 8:52pm

40

How can this statement:

Ministers claim that benefits sanctions send a clear message to the tiny minority of claimants who abuse the system

correlate to this fact:

In some areas up to 10% of all unemployment benefit claimants were sanctioned.

Since when was 10% of anything a "tiny minority"?

The Government can't count or won't count, and don't believe the poor count either.



Joe_Bungles ▶ Stumppumpy

20 January 2015 8:56pm

2

In some areas. If those areas account for only 5% of the total, 10% adds only 0.5%.

Best think before trying to be a smarty. Maybe try to suspend your prejudices.



SinisterLord ▶ Joe_Bungles

20 January 2015 9:18pm

14

So are you saying that the current level of benefit sanctions is acceptable?



Joe_Bungles ▶ SinisterLord

20 January 2015 9:48pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



UnahaClop

20 January 2015 8:52pm

66

The File on Four report that's just finished said that 100 people a day who have been declared unfit for work due to mental health are being sanctioned.

No one from the DWP was available to explain.



CaptainBlack ▶ UnahaClop

20 January 2015 10:06pm

12

Because they have no defence aside from the rigid PR line.



Joe_Bungles

20 January 2015 8:53pm

16

The biggest impact has been on vulnerable individuals, such as people with mental illness, who are unable, rather than unwilling, to comply with the benefit conditions.

If that is true, there is a urgent need to rectify it. It is as pointless as it is reprehensible to target those unable to change.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



alexplypin

20 January 2015 8:55pm

3

The long term economic plan is working.



siff ▶ alexplypin

20 January 2015 9:08pm

24

It's not economic, it's ideological.



tichchurch

20 January 2015 8:55pm

41

Another example of how this government has bullied the weakest members of society, and like bullies in the school yard they do it purely because they can and no-one is standing up to them.



Jayson Carmichael

20 January 2015 9:02pm

2

Unemployment so high cant be seen by naked eye



Jayson Carmichael

20 January 2015 9:03pm

9

At least Labour has a go at those who can fight back ie James Blunt . Tories bully

those that cant



yumymummy3

20 January 2015 9:04pm

29

Subsistence benefit levels should be paid as a right to all British citizens. This would ensure no one is left destitute and increase the wages and conditions of workers. The reality of innocent British citizens including children being left with less than convicted criminals is shocking. Why has this been allowed to happen?



Jonnie1

20 January 2015 9:04pm

13

Wankers.



siff

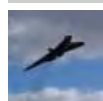
20 January 2015 9:07pm

46

"Some Jobcentres have been criticised for allegedly setting up "hit squads" to targeting vulnerable claimants – including those with learning difficulties, or with mental illness – for sanctions to enable staff to meet monthly targets."

Nearly half of those sanctioned had either mental health problems or learning difficulties. Shameful.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



badger28

20 January 2015 9:07pm

19

The works and pensions committee have taken their time catching up with what normal people have known for a long time. Come to that surely MPs' must have known this? What are these well paid people on the committee and in Parliament doing for their state handouts?

dermaptera ▶ badger28

20 January 2015 9:29pm

15

They have known, and some have been shouting about it for some time. They even managed to get a debate on it in Parliament, but the media didn't cover it. This inquiry is just a procedural way of getting evidence and getting it reported.



EUROPRAT

20 January 2015 9:09pm

I blame the french tart for the inhumane Tory policies who told the peasants revolting to eat cake.

11 PEOPLE, 16 COMMENTS



Northcountryboy

20 January 2015 9:09pm

1

I do think we need to maintain robust sanctions. In my work I come across claimants in personal injury claims who are fraudulently off work following an alleged injury when in reality there is nothing wrong with them. When checking their DWP records it is apparent that they have easily pulled the wool over the eyes of DWP doctors and assessors and been assessed as disabled in order to claim benefits. Covert surveillance shows a completely different picture of the alleged "disabilities". What often concerns me is how easily DWP assessors appear to be fooled by these people. Millions of pounds of tax payers money is wasted on these fraudsters as a result every day. Controls should not be relaxed.



Brandybuck ▶ Northcountryboy

20 January 2015 9:16pm

46

So because a few people abuse the system (and name me any aspect of life where people are not pulling fast one) the vast majority of law abiding citizens have to be punished? Obviously you subscribe to using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. How do you sleep at night?



LettySpoggetti ▶ Northcountryboy

20 January 2015 9:17pm

9

Where there's blaim there's a claim, and your not helping by encouraging people to claim, you get your cut isn't that enough.



Brandybuck ▶ LettySpoggetti

20 January 2015 9:24pm

18

Indeed someone dealing with personal iniury blames calling someone else a



shelltune

20 January 2015 9:09pm

13

How much did it cost to produce that report? I could have done it for free.



Glen Pierce

20 January 2015 9:13pm

25

This is no surprise, but it is a travesty. People are being sanctioned into even greater depths of poverty, debt, ill health, helplessness and anger. Come the day of reckoning, at the polls, lets hope there is some form of retribution for all those responsible. It is long overdue.

As the sandwich boards use to say, "The end is nigh".....



Josh Graver

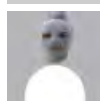
20 January 2015 9:13pm

14

Thank goodness, no DWP's robotic bullshit statement in the article for a change.

No surprise, the stick; a crude tactic used by morons. IDS might as well out signs underneath with words "Tremble as you're here, ye may find you're fucked truly as you leave"

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



SinisterLord

20 January 2015 9:14pm

45

The employment and welfare reform myth is finally unravelling for the tories and what many have been saying for some time is being shown to be correct. Namely that sanctions are being used punitively in a top-down cultural shift within Job Centres.

Here is parliamentary evidence to that effect:-

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/work-and-pensions-committee/benefit-sanctions-policy-beyond-the-oakley-review/written/16165.html>

IDS has failed big time. These reforms have cost billions of pounds, mental deterioration, breakdowns, general suffering to families as well as individuals and numerous suicides.

And for what? Is the national debt reduced? Are people more likely to find work as a result of being starved and have to concentrate their energy on survival? Of course not.

Anyone who votes for these sociopaths has had an empathy bypass.



UnahaClosp ▶ SinisterLord

20 January 2015 9:23pm

22

It is a mechanism for transferring public money to Tory donors, while

providing gratification for Dacre's band of misanthropes.



HowardBeale ▶ SinisterLord

21 January 2015 9:12am

8

Anyone who votes for them is complicit in barbarism, and brings shame on the country.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



dermaptera

20 January 2015 9:25pm

34

All true. So when McVey and IDS (and Cameron too, I think) say in the HoC that "sanctions are only used as a last resort" they are deliberately lying. I thought it was a heinous offence for an MP to lie in Parliament. Apparently not any more.



epinoa ▶ dermaptera

20 January 2015 10:38pm

1

Oh come on I think Blair Blair pants on fire thoroughly trashed that one.



MalaclypseTheYounger

20 January 2015 9:28pm

19

I find this terribly, terribly sad.

Shortly after the new benefits regime was introduced, with cuts in provisions to disabled people, a student's disabled sibling tried to commit suicide because they were afraid of being a burden to the family. When the student told me, I didn't know what to say.

Here is a link to DWP's annual report and data recording and monitoring benefits overpayments: "Fraud and Error in the Benefits System"

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fraud-and-error-in-the-benefit-system#history>

2014/15 figures will be available in May.

For 2013/14, benefits overpayments from fraud and error (including DWP error) come to 2.1% of the total benefits bill. That has remained constant, give or take 0.1% here or there, since 2005/06; ie fraud and error have consistently come in at 2.0%-2.2% over nearly 10yrs. Regardless of the benefits regime. So what have the sanctions achieved?

The overpayments are broken down into three categories:

* Fraud (2013/14: 0.7%; historically, 2005-2013: 0.6%-0.8%)

* Claimant error (2013/14: 0.9%; historically, 2005-2013: 0.8%-1.0%)

* Official error (2013/14: 0.4%; historically, 2005-2013: 0.5%-0.8%)

It looks as if the sanctions haven't done anything to materially target fraud, or reduce the likelihood of claimant errors.

Could it be that the sanctions are being used to reduce some of the cost of "official errors"? ie DWP finding a way to make a "saving" on some of its own administrative errors and make itself look better?

The £275m withheld in sanctions (quoted in the article as reported to the work and pensions committee) would amount to c0.16% of the £1.64b benefits bill. If that £275m/0.16% were to be added to the "official error" category of overpayment, it would bring the 2013/14 "official error" rate to 0.56% - much closer to the higher rate of previous years.

Maybe not. Maybe DWP under IDS has simply been more successful than ever before at reducing official error in benefits overpayments.



LekkerDing

20 January 2015 9:36pm

25

What I find sinister is the lack of information the DWP carry about how much money they're saving themselves by sanctioning so many people: the last available figures (2012) said sanctions were £10 million per month, as opposed to £1 million per month before this government's new rules. Esther McVey stands up in Parliament and says the DWP does not collate figures on sanctions or deaths caused by sanctions: this is patently lying or fundamentally slack bureaucracy. When will this government be held accountable for its many violations of the rights of its

unemployed, vulnerable and disabled citizens?

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



Nottodaymate

20 January 2015 9:38pm

Surprise surprise. They would be wailing about that if 1 person lost benefits for being a lazy leecher who flatly refused to go to interviews instead of just finding an excuse not to go ...'please miss my dog ate the bit of paper with the address on'.....



epinoa ▶ Nottodaymate

20 January 2015 10:40pm

9

a lazy leecher who flatly refused to go to interviews instead of just finding an excuse not to go ...'please miss my dog ate the bit of paper with the address on'.....

Are you talking about that lying lazy incompetent IDS?



HowardBeale ▶ Nottodaymate

21 January 2015 9:16am

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see our [FAQs](#).



Brandybuck ▶ Nottodaymate

21 January 2015 2:35pm

3

Excuse me you are on disability benefits, so by your reckoning you are a scrounger and a skiver right? Or doesn't it apply to you. Nothing I detest more than a hypocrite.

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



illeist

20 January 2015 9:43pm

19

Thank you France and Patrick for a well-researched article that did not include a final paragraph that included a shameless and unsubstantiated blanket statement of exactly the opposite of the facts by some faceless government bureaucrat.



LekkerDing ▶ illeist

20 January 2015 9:46pm

23

Yes, it was a relief. Although the Radio 4 File on 4 programme tonight could not find anyone from the DWP to comment. Maybe, at last, they have stopped trying to justify the unjustifiable.



illeist ▶ LekkerDing

21 January 2015 12:13am

4

Maybe they are very busy extinguishing other fires.



TownCalledMalice

20 January 2015 9:52pm

14

'Believe' your way out of that IDS, you sad excuse for a member of the human race & God fearing Christian to-boot.

Now only if there was divine justice

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



peterthegardener

20 January 2015 10:01pm

10

At last the truth is coming out benefit sanctions are a true scandal,all ministers involved should hang their heads in shame.



hamstrung ▶ peterthegardener

21 January 2015 12:25am

9

all ministers involved should hang their heads in shame.

Correction - all Ministers (responsible) should be hung.



FrancesSmith ▶ hamstrung

21 January 2015 12:19pm

4

prosecuted and sent to prison for a long time, not hung. loathsome as they are, and tempting as it is, we don't want to bring capital punishment back, not even for tories.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



lonelysoul72

20 January 2015 10:06pm

13

IDS and mcvey and that little lib dem lackey steve webb are destroying people's lives and they don't care a jot.



CaptainBlack ▶ lonelysoul72

20 January 2015 10:31pm

5

McVile is on Question Time. Chances of this coming up?



Ikonoclast ▶ CaptainBlack

20 January 2015 11:54pm

15

Chances of us throwing up? She's my local MP, the fukcin brazen witch..I'm doing my bit to have her booted out.



showmaster ▶ Ikonoclast

21 January 2015 5:02am

3

See if you can find the picture that used to be on her website with the costumed nutters of Father's For Justice then get the ones of those same guys invading Buckingham Palace.

That should sort out the blue rinse vote for you.



chickenboy

20 January 2015 10:09pm

2

By Jove I Think they've Got it !!!



WicInThead

20 January 2015 10:09pm

18

No surprises here then?

This confirms what many have said all along; benefit sanctions are designed to get people off benefits and not into employment....

**CaptainBlack**

20 January 2015 10:12pm

44

Basically, already poor people can be fined a minimum of £290 by a DWP desk jockey told to hit a target. No judge or jury, just summary justice and instant punishment. Even if you can win an appeal, it will be several months after the damage has been done.

Spiteful, vindictive and totally unacceptable.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS

**Steven Dixon**

20 January 2015 10:46pm

35

One of the biggest ways the DWP bully people off benefits include schemes such as Community Action Programme(CAP).6months unpaid full-time work six days a week,including weekends. Iain Duncan Smith may get away with trying to claim £39 for a freebie breakfast on expenses, but if you are a jobseeker on £57.35(18 - 24 rate)you will have no chance claiming for a hot meal whilst slugging away outdoors for no pay.

Slavery is still alive and kicking in Britain today and it is a scandal schemes like the CAP one are allowed to continue.

In my area - Teesside - the CAP scheme is beginning to roll out.The Redcar job centre alone armies of hit squads are sending hundred of claimants onto these schemes.

**illeist** ▶ Steven Dixon

20 January 2015 11:01pm

17

Thank you for that Steven.

It is more than shameful, more than scandal. Hard physical labour requires more caloric intake and higher nutritional content than sedentary work. The ages of 18 to 24 are a time when young people are not fully grown and their bodies still developing, and sound nutrition during this last developmental phase is the foundation stone for optimal health in the decades ahead and indeed the ability to work into later decades of life.

The government is not doing the youth of the country any favours by ignoring this; ill health and chronic illness, and a less able work force will be a legacy that the next generation will have to pay for through increased demands and costs to NHS services and disability assistance (if disability benefits are still available to those that need them in twenty years time).

**Ikonoclast** ▶ Steven Dixon

20 January 2015 11:34pm

15

That's just fuckin outrageous. I wonder how many are hidden/parked on this scheme/scam? It's hard to keep up with all the scams irritable dunce syndrome (IDS) and Esther McVile get up to.

**Martyn Butler**

20 January 2015 11:00pm

16

At Election time we should all go read the original The National Assistance Act 1948, an Act of Parliament passed in the United Kingdom by the Labour government of Clement Attlee. It formally abolished the Poor Law system that had existed since the reign of Elizabeth I,

It sets out very clearly by a post war government how the UK would rebuild our country, we certainly had no money to burn and every penny counted.

We learned that while there was poverty, hunger, poor health and slums then we had not truly won the peace- we need that "can do" spirit now - making people go cold and hungry while needing a hand up seems to me to be something from the dark ages.

#timeforchange

**Martyn Butler**

20 January 2015 11:02pm

8

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reign of Elizabeth I,
It sets out very clearly by a post war government how the UK would rebuild our country, we certainly had no money to burn and every penny counted.
We learned that while there was poverty, hunger, poor health and slums then we had not truly won the peace- we need that "can do" spirit now - making people go cold and hungry while needing a hand up seems to me to be something from the dark ages.

#timeforchange



Ikonoclast

20 January 2015 11:32pm

15

Where the fuck are these figures from? The real level of sanctions is 900,000 in 2014. At any one time there's approx 300,000 - 400,000 removed from the unemployment figures because of this 'rolling' figure.

11 PEOPLE, 18 COMMENTS



Alice38

20 January 2015 11:32pm

21

Apparently PIP is to be abolished after the election.
DLA is to be retained, but under a different name for damage, imitation.
New PIP claimants are now being sent out DLA application forms because ATOS and CAPITA can't cope.
Current DLA claimants on fixed term DLA awards are having their terms extended for the same above reasons.
DLA claimants who have been on indefinite/lifetime awards since DLA began are now being covertly reassessed for DLA not PIP.
Some new PIP claimants are getting telephone interviews instead of face to face assessments.
PIP is costing three times as much as DLA to administer and the costs are spiralling exponentially upwards all the time.
PIP claims take a year to complete as opposed to 11 weeks for DLA
PIP claimants who were granted fixed one year awards are having their terms extended as they re enter the PIP Fiasco.
Many respected independent analysts and politicians from ALL parties agree that it would take over 40 years to process all 4 million DLA/PIP claimants old and new in the light of reassessment rates thus far.
DLA claimants who recently won indefinite/lifetime awards will keep receiving the payment, provided their claim was won by sufficient supporting /medical evidence under the Coalition's tightening up of granting benefits, and provided there is no change in their condition/circumstances.
The recommendations for reform of PIP that have already been made would in themselves take even more time to implement adding to the 40 year clearance of the backlog, new claims, and reassessing old DLA claimants.
The above information was provided by a very recently retired/about to retire DWP official who leaked these facts on a discussion forum recently.
Oh and Ian Duncan Smith will be dismissed as work and pensions secretary should therefore be Tory led Coalition again.
There is a strong possibility that he will lose his parliamentary seat additionally.
Any comments please punters



Ikonoclast ▶ Alice38

20 January 2015 11:38pm

21

I hope IDS gets a real kicking by the electorate, but he's in Chingford isn't he?

I also have no qualms in stating that I hope he gets a horrible illness and dies an excruciating death, like some of the ill claimants whose lives he's ruined (at their lowest point) and also those he's driven to suicide.



Alice38 ▶ Ikonoclast

21 January 2015 12:20am

16

Yes
Unfortunately his seat is relatively a safe Tory stronghold.
The only way he could be ousted is by a UKIP candidate in effect.
IDS is a disgusting, incompetent, heartless and utterly flawed man who has caused misery to so many.
He has blood on his hands, and at least will be sacked in one way or another from the appalling mess he has made of his pitiful and failed life as a failed career politician.
What do you make of the revelations/leaks from this DWP official then Re

PIP/DLA?



hamstrung ▶ Alice38

21 January 2015 12:33am

11

All well and good (thanks for the info Alice38) so far as it goes

3 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



Ikonoclast

20 January 2015 11:46pm

9

More than 900,000 jobseeker's allowance (JSA) claimants have been subject to a benefit sanction decision in the last year, the Department of Work and Pensions said on Monday in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/dec/08/900000-claiming-job-seekers-allowance-subjected-benefit-sanctions>

So it's not 7,000 a month. Could the journo who penned this article get his facts right eh?



Mick Readdin ▶ Ikonoclast

21 January 2015 11:46am

You're right it's not! It's actually 7,500!

Divide the 900,000 by 12.

"More than 900,000 jobseeker's allowance (JSA) claimants have been subject to a benefit sanction decision in the last year,"



Ikonoclast ▶ Mick Readdin

21 January 2015 12:25pm

2

Er...I'm thinking maths isn't your strong point is it? Try again, or just add a 'nought' on the end of your calculation.



Judge_Smile ▶ Mick Readdin

21 January 2015 12:31pm

3

Err... sorry, but 900,000 divided by 12 is 75,000

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



peregrinesmythe

21 January 2015 1:58am

17

Not forgetting this tyrants bedroom tax

decent people are being removed from their long standing homes/neighbours

the only escape is to have MORE KIDS!

People will be removed from their homes to make way for you even invalids

or have MORE KIDS to keep your home

this is the reality of this mans social engineering project



ropeadope ▶ peregrinesmythe

21 January 2015 3:51am

3

are there no workhouses?



TomRainsborosGhost ▶ ropeadope

21 January 2015 4:46am

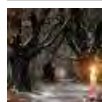
20

Of course not. Horribly expensive things workhouses. I mean, the pampered inmates were clothed, fed and sheltered for a start.

A sanctioned claimant on the other hand has no means to obtain any of those things.

George I D Smith, a man who got nowhere in life until he married money, yet is proud of treating people in need worse than the workhouse system.

8 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



stephenholmes

21 January 2015 7:41am

21

Ian Duncan Smith and his Cohorts at the DWP should be standing trial for crimes against humanity
It is no good staff at JCP saying "We Were Only Following Orders"
The buck stops with those behaving in such a ghastly fashion
They should bow their heads in shame



Ray Wood ▶ stephenholmes

21 January 2015 8:25am

9

I agree and I wouldn't be able to sleep at night if I had to follow orders like that. Starving people and feeling no pity. Karma will come back to them.



oreilly62 ▶ stephenholmes

21 January 2015 9:07am

7

Dwp policy to front line staff.If you don't beat them,join them.



2Springers ▶ stephenholmes

21 January 2015 11:30am

7

I know two people working for the local job centre (run by a private

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The estate we're in: how working class people became the 'problem'

My study of St Ann's in Nottingham where I lived for many years shows how pernicious the idea of the feckless poor has become. I will continue to fight against these stigmatising views

Lisa McKenzie

The Guardian, Wednesday 21 January 2015

[Jump to comments \(574\)](#)



Lisa McKenzie at St Ann's estate, Nottingham: 'the middle class were boring and the upper class were cruel - they hurt animals and sent their children away.' Photograph: David Sillitoe for the Guardian

I am the daughter, granddaughter, and great granddaughter of Nottinghamshire miners. My mother worked at the Pretty Polly hosiery factory her whole life and I followed her at the age of 16 after leaving school in 1984 during the miners strike. We were a striking family and, to be honest, apart from following in the footsteps of my mother and aunts I hadn't thought much further about what life might have to offer me. We needed the income that I would bring in as the strike hit my family hard and devastated my community forever.

I left Sutton-In Ashfield, the mining town where I grew up in 1988, as many young people started to do. As the mines, the factories, and hope left - so did we. I moved into the St Ann's estate in the inner city of Nottingham and I had my son when I was 19.

Returning to Nottingham last week to launch my book *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain*, has been difficult. Although I have been happy to see my friends and family, returning as a local woman made good has been unsettling. Being held up as "beating the odds", "done good", or "escaped" does not make me happy. It only compounds what I know about the brutal stigmatisation, and the devaluing process of working class people.

Unfortunately, offhand and casual comments relating to class prejudice

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Voluntary Sector Network

and snobbery are very common. Now "I have made it", I am not supposed to react angrily to it, I am supposed to know my place, and be grateful for getting out. However, I am angry and so are other working-class people when we have to deal with and hear these simplistic and stigmatising views of our lives. I have written about how working class life is misunderstood, and reduced to simplistic one-dimensional narratives from both the prurient poverty porn, but also the middle class do-gooders. We are not expected to attempt to defend our choices, become angry, or resist. Getting By was written to tackle this type of prejudice, and stereotype, and to explain the complexity of working-class life, and life on council estates.

The Sutton-in-Ashfield estate I grew up in, a mining town a few miles from Nottingham city centre, was a tight-knit community where almost everyone on the estate worked and lived in close proximity. I didn't know that we were no good; I didn't know that living on a council estate devalued you as a person. I understood my position in society as working class but I thought that was the best class to be. The middle class were boring, and the upper class were cruel – they hurt animals and sent their children away. This is how I thought about my family and my community during the 1970s. I was really thankful to be a working-class child.

During the late 1980s I felt very differently – almost ashamed of who we were. We were ridiculed, we were old-fashioned, poor, and didn't know what was happening in the cool world of the "yuppie" and "loadsamoney" – a catchphrase made up by a middle-class comedian about working class people made good. I managed to get a council flat in St Ann's because I had a baby and was homeless. Around the same time, John Major decided that young, working-class mothers were having babies purposefully to get a council house – this didn't make me feel any better.

After my mother's death in 1999, I knew that I wanted to do more with my life, perhaps be able to work in my community and give something back. Like many working-class women my community was important to me. I knew the difficulties of getting somewhere to live, negotiating the housing system, the benefits system, and the prejudices you can face. Especially from sometimes well-meaning authority figures working in these structures who can hold deep prejudices about working-class women. I remember meeting housing officers when my son was a baby and I needed somewhere to live and being told I should have thought about that before having sex. A midwife asking me what I had ready for the baby seeing as he didn't have a father.

Eventually, aged 30, I enrolled on an Access to Social Work course. It was free because I wasn't earning much money (now it would be £3,000). After a few months, I realised that I loved the learning. Instead of sitting at the back of the classroom messing about, which I had done at school, I was on the front row putting my hand up every five minutes. I went to the University of Nottingham because of a book I had found in the library: Poverty: The Forgotten Englishman, by Ken Coates and Bill Silburn – a community study carried out by the University of Nottingham's adult education department with students in the mid 1960s. I didn't know you could go to university to study the place where you lived, especially the places where I lived. To cut a long story short, exactly 10 years later, after an undergraduate degree, a master's degree, and a doctoral thesis, I had told the story of working class families in St Ann's from a working-class perspective and in our own words.

Getting By is the outcome of eight years' ethnographic study, based on both theory and practice. Working-class people, and the communities where they live have been devalued to such an extent that they are known simply as "problematic" and in need of making better. It is the deficit model that working class people have something wrong with them, which needs putting right by intervention, by carrots and sticks. They are misrepresented and devalued. This is damaging and painful at best, and dangerous and vicious at worst.

I have seen, experienced and written about how thought becomes action. How the Thatcher government's rhetoric of "underclass" and "the enemy within" became an attack on working-class communities, despising them, destroying families and identities. New Labour did little better with its social exclusion model, where it took the concept of social justice from France that tried to explain how groups of poorer, working-class people were becoming excluded from society. New Labour subverted it into

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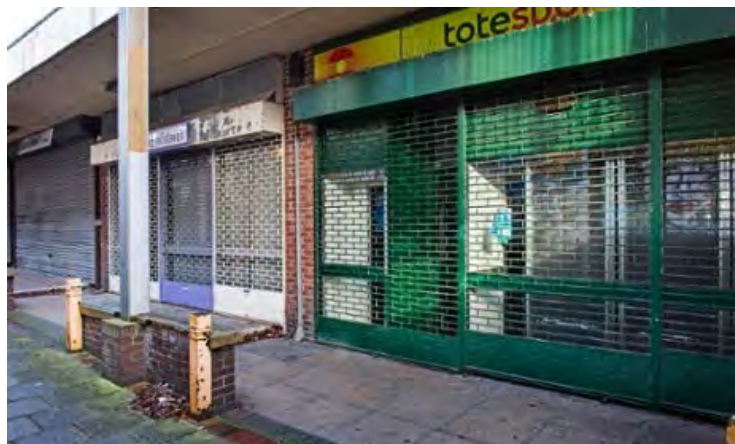


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something about how poorer families were excluding themselves with their "wrongness", their bad culture and bad practices. This led to almost 13 years of top-down middle-class philanthropic social work culture.

The consequence was an open door for the Centre for Social Justice thinktank and my nemesis, [its founder and now work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan-Smith](#), to walk through and justify cruel austerity measures that are devastating and hurting poorer families. I see the Tories laughing as they argue in Westminster that "the free ride" is over for the "shirkers". I am now a 46-year-old working class woman with a PhD. Although I have lived in council housing for all of my life and I have relied upon welfare benefits at many points in my life, and probably will again, I have never had a free ride.



Boarded-up shops on the St Ann's estate, Nottingham. Photograph: David Sillitoe/The Guardian

My estate in Nottingham is in decline. The one Co-op supermarket has gone and in its place are corner shops that sell no food – only cheap alcohol, electric cards, and lottery tickets. There isn't one single pub left on the estate, and local people sit on the walls where they once were with cans of cheap cider. This is perhaps one of the saddest things I have seen.

[My estate in the mining village where I grew up is devastated](#); no work, no hope, pound shops and charity shops have replaced the local bakers, butchers and toy shop I remember as a child, although there is an enormous Asda superstore. And London, where I have lived for the last 18 months, is truly terrifying because of the callous ways working class people are treated, at any time you could become street homeless.

Even now when I have supposedly made it, I know that even a small rent rise on my privately rented ex-council flat in Tower Hamlets will see me out of the capital, where the super-rich and the politicians who bow to them are not even aware that we are here. A Labour council and a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government all seem to have the same opinion – that the poorest and most vulnerable people in our society are worthless.

However, my research, my book, and my own journey as a working-class woman who has earned a career at the London School of Economics, shows how wrong the mainstream politicians have got this. I have fought hard to get to a place with the networks that will allow me to have a platform to speak and to be heard. And I will continue to fight.

Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain by Lisa McKenzie, published by Policy Press is available at the Guardian Bookshop, priced £14.99



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10 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



DrDinsmoor

21 January 2015 7:56am

473

Sounds like an unmissable book. Brilliant article. Let's have more like it, GUARDIAN. I congratulate you, Ms McKenzie. Would you ever consider a career in politics? The UK badly needs your voice!



ambrosium ▶ DrDinsmoor

21 January 2015 9:01am

149

Dr McKenzie....



ID2494006 ▶ DrDinsmoor

21 January 2015 9:52am

58

she's standing against I.D.S. in Chingford for class war.



Lobma Thundrup ▶ DrDinsmoor

21 January 2015 1:05pm

27

Whilst this is an interesting article which does portray the grim reality of

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS

JayneL62

21 January 2015 7:59am

156



This is a tale that resonates with me, tells my early years - Never thought I'd be there again! Disability can do this to you

72



LekkerDing ▶ JayneL62

21 January 2015 10:00am

Me too. How many of the 'Not Yet Disabled' will be smug about how they've 'bettered themselves' if they have to subsist on ESA?



jessthecrip ▶ LekkerDing

21 January 2015 4:13pm

Disability can be an ace route to downward mobility, that's for sure.

And this book looks really interesting. Next on the list to order from my local library - while I still have one

23

18 PEOPLE, 19 COMMENTS



LouSnickers

21 January 2015 8:03am

You have to wonder why England is still a class-ridden society!

Is it just the Guardian which is so obsessed with class?

The rest of the world isnt like this.....

67



DasInternaut ▶ LouSnickers

21 January 2015 8:45am

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



whood ▶ LouSnickers

21 January 2015 9:01am

You sure about that?

56



DasInternaut ▶ Grimscribe

21 January 2015 9:26am

That's the real problem. We all know the subtle and not so subtle give-

18

21 PEOPLE, 34 COMMENTS



johnfrank77

21 January 2015 8:07am

I Think the class system is fudged and misguided now.

You mention "problematic" family's etc with no work and on benefits.

Then they are not in work?,and are long term benefit claimants? I my self would not class them as "working class" as they do not work. There has not been an accurate term coined for the class below what was classed as "Working Class"

2015's real working class own there own homes,work or own there own businesses. These are success brought from the capital of there labour i.e. work.

Please do not disrespect the real working classes by stereotyping us as all as living on council estates,on benefits and with in dysfunctional family units.

143



MisterSteed ▶ johnfrank77

21 January 2015 8:21am

You mention "problematic" family's etc with no work and on benefits.

126

Then they are not in work?,and are long term benefit claimants? I my self would not class them as "working class" as they do not work. There has not been an accurate term coined for the class below what was classed as "Working Class"

Exactly so. And in fact the greatest antagonism towards the "Non-Working Class" is often actually from the Working Class themselves.



ID6219391 ▶ johnfrank77

21 January 2015 8:34am

152

The movement between your definitions of a working and non working class are very fluid.

Zero hours, min wage, short term and casual contracts make it so.



VegMeUp ▶ johnfrank77

21 January 2015 8:35am

177

You have completely missed the point

6 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



SeargentFury

21 January 2015 8:11am

257

Access courses saved many a young man and woman in Britain in the 1980s. A whole world of university opened up before you, as Lisa so elegantly wrote, and another world was possible. Not now. Local Authority funding cuts makes this avenue of escape impossible. Shame on them.



lescarpe ▶ SeargentFury

21 January 2015 9:35am

47

Erm, if you are over 24 in England you can receive a loan to cover your access course fees. And if you go on to complete a higher education course the loan is written off by the government. Sounds like a good deal to me. What's the problem?



KennyCarwash ▶ lescarpe

21 January 2015 12:57pm

36

I don't think you understand the risk-averse nature that's so common among the working class. If you complete the course, then chances are it is a good deal, but what if you can't? What if you fall ill, or someone in your family does and you need to go back into work? What if you can't do it? The government doesn't write off the debt then and you're left with a millstone that could drag your whole family under.



toriesarefarts ▶ lescarpe

21 January 2015 12:57pm

9

Erm, if you are over 24 in England you can receive a loan to

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



StevenJP

21 January 2015 8:13am

99

Brilliant article.



Gelion ▶ StevenJP

21 January 2015 2:00pm

7

Nothing new under the sun - the Victorian elite and middle classes and their predecessors thought that the workers were feckless.

Fran Nustedt

43

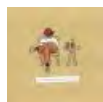


21 January 2015 8:14am

I can only reiterate what drdinsmoor said. Your book needs to be heard and widely read.



2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Barry Quinnell

21 January 2015 8:15am

The class divide, plus the wealth gap is not good. Only international corporations are winners these days. Western governments are too scared to legislate against them.



carl allen ▶ Barry Quinnell

21 January 2015 12:57pm

A Christmas country and not a Christian country from a study of Christmas day.



KirstenL

21 January 2015 8:16am

Excellent and hugely necessary article, so much of the world is denied proper consideration. Can we ever leave our class roots behind? I hope not.



4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



BeachedShrek

21 January 2015 8:18am

Superb article. Well done girl.



bernardcrofton ▶ BeachedShrek

21 January 2015 8:46am

Well done Dr. McKenzie.



SybilSanderson ▶ bernardcrofton

21 January 2015 11:28am

I recommended your answer but then kept thinking about this little exchange in regards to a small word.

To be perfectly honest, if my grandfather would be still alive, I would be more proud if he would say "Well done girl" than "Well done Dr.

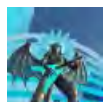
Sanderson". A PhD is not to be used as a divider, underneath it you are still the same human being.



geordie85 ▶ SybilSanderson

21 January 2015 4:21pm

Since a friend of mine finished his PhD last year, I sometimes call him 'Doc'



alazarin

21 January 2015 8:20am

Right on, sister. You tell it.



3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



wladber

21 January 2015 8:20am

Couldn't get a copy of the book at local library on my *sink estate* as it closed down -- similar to many housing estates' libraries which were built over coal pits. These



'estates' are the slums of the future? No they are the slums of today.. would like to read not at Guardian's SP of £14.99 @£11.99 online.

I also ordered a dictionary as words such as pernicious, feckless, stigmatise, prurient etc I didn't learn at my now demolished State school.

It's little wonder that Labour is getting a caning in the backwaters by Ukip/EDL. Class Culture *misconceptions* have made Labour the new Tories to many estate dwellers. Ms McKenzie's book should be recommended reading in the ornate, gilded and well-heated Library at Westminster.



guardianaccount1 ▶ wladber

8

21 January 2015 10:03am

Class Culture misconceptions have made Labour the new Tories to many estate dwellers.

This.



Nimbus020 ▶ wladber

14

21 January 2015 10:09am

Maybe walk to the next closest library and order it through inter library loans if they don't have it there?

Or buy it cheaper in an online version.

I assume the price is so that the author can get a fair wage for her labour in writing it?

13 PEOPLE, 15 COMMENTS



jamesconnell

21 January 2015 8:21am

25

Great piece, there's just one thing Guardian readers won't empathise or have experience of... Just about every single word you've written. Best.



ID6219391 ▶ jamesconnell

17

21 January 2015 8:31am

This one has experienced several years of living in Stanns.



ID6241782 ▶ jamesconnell

51

21 January 2015 8:42am

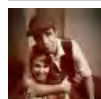
What and you do have experience and empathy and everyone else here is a unrelenting a\$\$hole who lives in a golden palace and got their butler to read them this?



speccymcspawnee ▶ jamesconnell

21 January 2015 9:09am

i



Euan Stewart

21 January 2015 8:23am

3

So THATS what Joanie did after Mad Men.



Karlyau

21 January 2015 8:25am

53

Lovely article, very well written. I agree with a previous comment. Your voice should be heard in politics.



NiallSr

21 January 2015 8:28am

51

Brilliant and chilling article. Hugely inspiring story and devastating at the same time. Really struck by the idea of "thought becoming action". Reminds us that the current state of capitalism was not an accident and that new thought & new ideas can become new action.

6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



leno

21 January 2015 8:33am

63

"The middle class were boring, and the upper class were cruel – they hurt animals and sent their children away."

Doing a great job fighting "simplistic one-dimensional narratives" and stereotypes there...



ryan burke ▶ leno

21 January 2015 8:44am

150

You've cleverley taken that out of context or didn't read the article closely enough. They were the reasons the author was grateful for being working class as a child.



Darren Smithson ▶ leno

21 January 2015 8:49am

51

Be interesting to hear your thoughts on the class system as a child



westdan ▶ leno

21 January 2015 8:53am

61

Yeah. 9 year old girls are know for their dynamic thinking



DjangoF

21 January 2015 8:34am

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



Gonebush

21 January 2015 8:38am

30

Great article. I totally agree, and look forward to reading *Getting By*. Social mobility is a good thing, but the most important thing is for people of whatever social situation, whether they're there by default or by choice, to be valued, given rights to education, employment and community, and embraced as respected members of the broader society. Respect for the working class was destroyed under 'Thatcher and Sons', and the 'White Van Dans' are clearly still despised by our leaders. I hope *Getting By* will be only one of a growing number of moves to correct this.



Lobsterino

21 January 2015 8:42am

18

Completely correct to point out how toxic thatcherism and neo-liberalism has been but much of the damaged thinking predates even that.

Social democracy in the uk has been just as toxic. Centrally planned approaches designed by caring people with good intentions often view the poor as broken people needing to be fixed. I've heard too many left wing public health professionals in traditional labour councils talk about the need for them to change the behaviour of the poor to just be complacent enough to view this as a problem of neo-liberalism. That establishment view was there before thatcher.

Winding back the last couple of decades won't solve many of these issues. Whoever is in power it's the power imbalance itself not the philosophy of the powerful that is corrosive. Developing collective control of institutions at a more local level is a necessity. That's a threat to many politicians on the left (and the larger unions) who

have no interest in bringing power to the people but just want their go at the controls of the machine.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



Mike Ballard

21 January 2015 8:43am

29

The sheer passivity of the working class can be depressing in itself until you realise that passivity is linked to the castration of class consciousness amongst the producers of wealth.



Mawhrin ▶ Mike Ballard

21 January 2015 10:00am

32

The blame can't just be laid at the quick-buck city boys. The intellectual left certainly needs to accept some responsibility.

Academia and teaching professions have for years, absolutely loathed the 'jobs for life' working class culture too. They can't bare the idea of their profession existing to babysit generations of capitalist wage slaves. (Careers Advisor: "You don't want to work as a hairdresser all your life?" Why did teachers get to define the 'good' jobs? If people on the left are slagging off your mum's job just as badly as the newspapers then no wonder people lose hope in their towns)

In their efforts to 'liberate' the working class the educated left forgot that not everyone is *defined* by their jobs. Community, friends, happy children, stability and predicatability are vital too.



ronmor ▶ Mike Ballard

21 January 2015 11:14am

46

The sheer passivity of the working class can be depressing in itself until you realise that passivity is linked to the castration of class consciousness amongst the producers of wealth.

See, when you've got no money and no job and no prospects and you come from an area where everyone is in the same poverty, you tend to lose the will to do anything much.

It is painful to think too much and developing class consciousness just makes you feel more impotent and angry in a world dominated by a culture that despises you.

A lot of working class people end up despising education, imagination and information, because it makes them feel even more excluded and devalued. That reaction is perfectly understandable, it is sort of comforting, but traps you even more. Booze, heroin, porn, betting, crap food, run down environments.

I grew up in the East Midlands a decade before Lisa, at Ilkeston. The pits were open, the Steelworks was a massive employer and there was huge community pride in the working classes that compensated socially for the dangerous conditions and frugal wages. The East Midlands was also a place where highly skilled working class artisans with strong trade unions made opportunities for technical education available and a lot of young working class people were advantaged by it. Self improvement was a big part of working class culture. There was also greed, snobbery and inverted snobbery, drunkenness, violence, despair, stupidity, suffering, enterprise, humour, arse-lickers, rebellion, brilliant conversation and moronic political apathy.

The working class is not one thing, never has been, never will be. That is why it has always been so hard to unite against the injustices that poverty inflicts on the human spirit.



GordonDidlt ▶ ronmor

21 January 2015 4:37pm

A lot of working class people end up despising education, imagination and information, because it makes them feel even more excluded and devalued. That reaction is perfectly understandable, it is sort of comforting, but traps you even more. Booze, heroin, porn, betting, crap food, run down environments.

How do you have time to fit all that in if you're 'working'?

8 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



erminea

21 January 2015 8:47am

67

I needed somewhere to live and being told I should have thought about that before having sex.

It's not a totally unreasonable statement, is it? Making a massive lifestyle change that is generally meant to be rewarding but damages your ability to earn money in the short-term and [costs over a hundred grand](#)?



boye ▶ erminea

21 January 2015 9:44am

38

I agree. Although it might seem 'impertinent (although the person was a housing officer, "being told I should have thought about that before having sex" seems entirely reasonable. The old fashioned term is 'family planning'. If you can't afford something, don't buy it ...



antonyob ▶ erminea

21 January 2015 10:05am

37

Wow its a good job your viewpoint wasn't prevalent for 99.9% of mans history or no-one would've been born.



password ▶ erminea

21 January 2015 10:12am

12

We seem to have turned full circle from being very disapproving of such

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



queequeg7

21 January 2015 8:47am

56

"The middle class were boring, and the upper class were cruel – they hurt animals and sent their children away".

This is exactly what I thought. The cruelty of the upper classes in particular was totally beyond my capacity to understand as a child. Still is. Brilliant.



bobskiT ▶ queequeg7

21 January 2015 10:44am

28

Being sent away as a child to an entitlement brainwashing facility helps to hone cruelty rather nicely.



rolandino

21 January 2015 8:49am

12

Great article.



Fatigued

21 January 2015 8:50am

19

To be honest I think that the 'boom' was particularly detrimental to social solidarity as many who had acquired a house suddenly began to think of themselves as 'rich' and clever rather than simply fortunate. The bust that inevitably followed lead many to hold tenaciously to what advantage they had gained. So many 'homeowners' became all too ready to stigmatise the working class and support actions that hurt the poor if they believed it would help secure their personal advantage. On a personal note I know all too well the sense of dislocation you speak off that accompanies a climb up the social ladder. It can make one feel both angry and very lonely.

3 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



vonZeppelin

21 January 2015 8:51am

40

You don't just need to attend uni to escape. Hard work, initiative and luck help too. I went to a ropey boys comprehensive but the vast majority of my peers have done well in life. A couple are millionaires. I recently moved to an affluent suburb. However to keep the pennies flowing I am now washing dishes in a restaurant. My wife works for the child protection team of the council so the horrors of usually poor children are well known to us (equally such horrors occur in middle class households too). My old high street is much as described above, cheap alcohol, charity shops and easy gambling. I miss what it used to be although traces of that time can still be felt as you walk along it. I never have and never will feel truly comfortable among my smug moneyed neighbours. My dish washing colleagues are far more worthy human beings.



tosh79 ▶ vonZeppelin

21 January 2015 10:12am

23

I never have and never will feel truly comfortable among my smug moneyed neighbours. My dish washing colleagues are far more worthy human beings.

This illustrates nicely that a lot of the time, class is a nebulous hook on which to hang your anecdotal prejudices and preconceptions.



vonZeppelin ▶ tosh79

21 January 2015 11:07am

13

Thus illustrating the patronising smugness of that type perfectly.



tosh79 ▶ vonZeppelin

21 January 2015 11:22am

12

as opposed to the broad strokes of calling all those around you smug that

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



kjelllak

21 January 2015 8:53am

43

"Being held up as "beating the odds", "done good", or "escaped" does not make me happy. It only compounds what I know about the brutal stigmatisation, and the devaluing process of working class people."

So well said.



GCday ▶ kjelllak

21 January 2015 9:03am

79

I grew up on a council estate and I am now an academic - I have the same issues when I visit home, people think that I did it all on hard work and merit - well that and a Degree, Master's and PhD I didn't pay a penny for - my nieces would rack up more debt in their first year of University than I did all the way through.

Moreover, when I went to University, you could pick up a stable job alongside to earn more, now it is all three hour zero hour contract crap for the young of today.



Steve Ascott ▶ kjelllak

21 January 2015 10:32am

14

I have had this hung round my neck all my life-people say "well you did all right" or "you got out so why doesn't everyone else do it" What they are saying is that it is just laziness and fecklessness that keeps people poor-that it is a lifestyle choice.

Because they haven't ever experienced it they find it almost impossible to empathise

So many of my childhood friends and their families didn't do alright though and I sometimes feel ashamed that I did.as it was more by luck than judgement.



geordie85 ▶ Steve Ascott

21 January 2015 4:28pm

So many of my childhood friends and their families didn't do alright though and I sometimes feel ashamed that I did.as it was more by luck than judgement.

Don't beat yourself up. I believe that we make our own luck. Maybe we are in the right place at the right time, but that is often due to a good decision we have previously made, and we still need to know we are in the right place to take advantage of it.



mhenri

21 January 2015 8:54am

Thank you, Ms McKenzie....

Henri

6



nomoreviolence22

21 January 2015 8:54am

This article resonates with me here in Australia - which 'pretends' to be an egalitarian society where anyone who draws attention to their wealth is at least quickly cut down to size with humour - if not with serious system-changing critique. Fact is - here -like everywhere else 'poor' people are still often regarded as somehow pathological - as not smart enough to negotiate the system and 'survival' is still considered to be (self-evidently) of the 'fittest'. When my partner told me about her childhood in overcrowded Glasgow tenements I was shocked at the conditions and the 'poverty' but envious of the close family relationships in her community - something middle-class individualists are less likely to experience in the acquisitive hours devoted to being 'the fittest'.

28

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



VoterColonel

21 January 2015 8:55am

I was born and brought up on a council estate in Nottingham as well, and I totally agree with this ladies comments, over the last 30 years the working class have been vilified and demonized by the ruling elite as the problem but in a way we are our own worst enemy because the ruling elite know that there is more of us than them so they divided us and pushed some down into the under class, much easier to control, and pushed some up to a perceived middle class where debt and mortgages made us fall into line. It's our own fault, every working person who votes Tory is a traitor!

The equation is easy...take jobs away...take amenities away...give them takeaways and cheap alcohol and that equals obesity alcoholism and hopelessness...generation after generation. Result.

64



Dunbarshoutin ▶ VoterColonel

21 January 2015 12:06pm

I found myself agreeing with your phrase "every working person who votes Tory is a traitor", but after a few moments' thought I realised you might just as well have said "every person", considering the devastation visited on the UK by Tory ideology and policies, as described in the article and most of the comments.

A more positive, but rather desperate formulation would be: Now is the time for every true Briton to say No more!

7

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



sebastianspades

21 January 2015 8:56am

You blame Thatcher for calling you out as the feckless enemy within so you took to messing around in school and getting pregnant to spite her? Do they owe us a living? Course they fucking do.

22



VoterColonel ▶ sebastianspades

21 January 2015 9:22am

67

Nobody owns anybody a living, but the working class provided the cannon fodder that kept us free, the factory workers that provided goods and kept the country running...I used to work in a factory making telephones...3,000 people were employed there, people on the production line earned a good living but they didn't need to read and write to make a good living and bring up their families...those jobs have gone. What happens to those people. I'm angry about this when tossers like you spout about stuff you know nothing about.



bassmunter ▶ sebastianspades

21 January 2015 9:27am

35

Could you please clarify what exactly you are banging on about? Thanks.



hertsman ▶ VoterColonel

21 January 2015 9:21pm

But please tell us what should happen when another country can offer illiterates for 10% of the same cost? I don't have an easy answer - if you do, the please tell us.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



northernlout

21 January 2015 8:56am

18

Class is defined by father's occupation. Or at least it was when I did my Psychology degree through the Open University. We did a module on this. The elasticity of the term has become laughable. Doctors, Lawyers, Judges. Surgeons et al were deemed to be middle class and therefore their offspring too. Now anybody that earns over about thirty grand a year goes around calling themselves middle class as they have an aspirational view that it is somehow "better" than working class. Only In England...



bassmunter ▶ northernlout

21 January 2015 9:28am

5

and, from my experience Northern Ireland. I would imagine some people in Scotland and Wales may also think this way.



MikeBarnes ▶ northernlout

21 January 2015 8:30pm

3

How about "if you need to work for a living" you're working class.

Always thought that made the most sense, don't know why it never caught on.



hertsman ▶ northernlout

21 January 2015 9:17pm

Don't understand this mad occupation with class-description, I don't think any job applications say "middle-class only" and you don't get any tax-relief for it, so why the hell are you still hung up on it

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Alex42

21 January 2015 8:59am

36

This whole thing of conflating the working class and the underclass seems to be completely muddying the waters. I know loads of people who describe themselves as working class, and it's because they *work*. They certainly don't sit on walls

drinking cheap cider of an evening.

I don't think anyone actually looks down on the working class, just the small minority who don't work and aren't likely to.



BoiledOwl ▶ Alex42

21 January 2015 11:36am

6

I understand where you are coming from: I know loads of people who would describe themselves as working class and they are successful and affluent - more so than me! They work with their hands, and largely run their own businesses and charge a premium for their hard-worked-for skills.

However, I do think in this, context is everything: I live in a semi-rural area close to Cambridge and London - whilst not Essex the working classes round here have that 'feel' - they are self-made and discrete, continuing small family firms or similar, so crucially if a firm goes bust the fallout is limited to one family, rather than an entire town as in Dr McKenzie's experience (the hollowing out of industry).

So, the working class experience does differ from area to area. And sadly, vicious cycles, once begun, seem hard to break: as an example, my brother-in-law (a mellowed hard lefty) spoke of a particular mining town hit by pit closure, and some HR types being parachuted in to tell the workers about a new call centre they could train to work in. Six months after it began operating, the call centre closed...

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



GCday

21 January 2015 9:05am

85

The thing about Council houses can be a bit of a joke - my parents have lived in the same council house since 1965 - it's superior in pretty much every way to the new builds down the road. The question shouldn't be "why are people in council houses?" but "why are modern houses so inferior to old stock council houses?"



hastings6 ▶ GCday

21 January 2015 11:17am

32

All thanks to state regulation of public housing quality post-war: i.e., Parker Morris standards. Leave housing to the free market and look what you get - £300 ks worth of plasterboard nail-gunned to poorly laid blockwork.

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



viciouscycle

21 January 2015 9:08am

19

You bemoan the fact that these areas where you grew up are regarded as 'problematic' by the state authorities and then you grieve their decline describing them as having no hope, no work, charity shops everywhere where there used to be bakers and butchers etc - i.e. there is a problem. So is it just that you're the only one qualified to use that word because you've 'escaped' from those problems you describe?

Separately, if you're looking for the working classes, then haven't their livelihoods moved to China.



Nimbus020 ▶ viciouscycle

21 January 2015 10:17am

11

Point quite well made.

The author says the trad shops have closed to be replaced by pound shops but a new ASDA has opened.

You can go to many communities of all social and wealth groups and trad shops have closed in favour of large supermarkets. I presume this is because people prefer shopping there - but in rich areas the small shops turn into boutique clothes shops / branches of Jack Wills / antique shops and delis. Not so much of that in St Ann's!

But those shops have not closed due to the attack on poor people, it's

because low to middle income people seem to prefer the supermarket. And the co-op is seen as expensive.



viciouscycle ▶ Nimbus020

21 January 2015 11:58am

4

Yes, I was going to add your point that the decline in town centre shops is not restricted to poor areas. She does, to be fair, point to the lack of work and of hope in addition to the lack of butcher and bakers. This may well be true but she thereby opens herself up to the charge of labelling these areas as 'problematic' a charge which she is so adamant to level at the state authorities.

Further inconsistency is that she doesn't like the view apparently held by many in the media and in 'offhand and casual comments relating to class prejudice and snobbery' that she has 'made it' and 'done good'. Then at the end she says this:

"I have fought hard to get to a place with the networks that will allow me to have a platform to speak and to be heard. And I will continue to fight". This is so close to saying that she has done good and she's made it. Too close for comfort.

Personally I commend her fighting spirit. But then I'm probably a snob and full of class prejudice.



Marly53

21 January 2015 9:09am

8

Class discrimination is still not protected by our equality legislation and yet, as the book shows, as a group the working class continue to be stigmatised and discriminated against.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



JohnCMcAllister

21 January 2015 9:09am

35

The middle class never understands that working class is not obsessed by money. I look at the House of Commons and know it is not made up of common people but a rather sad class of would be altruists who easily succumb to venal posturing and greed for expenses. Working class life is rich in family values and care for one another. The obnoxious bigotry of the Bullington mob is a sad spectacle. I have yet to met a banker who can do anything useful for my life and I do not buy into the myth that they are necessary



GOLD MEL ▶ JohnCMcAllister

21 January 2015 9:34am

31

I "made it" by qualifying as a teacher, but I found professional middle class life to revolve around work rather than family. I was working 60+ hour week and had no time for my young family. I also felt as though I did not really belong and was being somehow disingenous about who i really was. When I quit to return to my old low paid job many people did not understand that life is about more than the blind acquisition of money and status. Even though we are poor I've never regretted it.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



pthomas72

21 January 2015 9:11am

6

Social mobility destroyed the estates and mining village I grew up in. Every hard working person left.



password ▶ pthomas72

21 January 2015 10:28am

19

Maybe they didn't want to work down the pit? Who would? I grew up in a mining village and wild horses wouldn't drag me down there. I saw what id

did to my granddad - dead at 59.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



irishaxeman

21 January 2015 9:11am

58

As someone who has worked both as a social worker and a teacher in both the areas described, I would say to some posters on here - you haven't got a clue about the staggering destruction wrought upon all these places by Thatcher and her minions (I include BLiar in there). In the mid 1970s St Anns was struggling upwards - it had a strong community centre built in part by the efforts of Ray Gosling and similar activists. By the mid 1980s it was beginning to wither as the jobs went - and that has continued. The story of the coalfields and the truth of the wanton destruction of the UK's infrastructure by Thatcher has been well documented. 20% of industrial capacity gone in 5 years. No wonder working class communities north of Watford hated her.



Nimbus020 ▶ irishaxeman

21 January 2015 10:21am

8

Is that why Nottingham East (the constituency where St Ann's is located) elected a Tory MP in 1983?



Steve Ascott ▶ irishaxeman

21 January 2015 10:48am

15

Totally agree, I worked in St Annes and in The Manor estate in Sheffield through the 80s and 90s
I used to hear the people I worked with saying "They go everywhere by taxi"
But how else were you to shop if you have toddlers and there are no bus services, you get a giro once a fortnight and you have to buy all your food at once. All the local shops have closed down apart from a few corner shops which are prohibitively expensive, Owing a car would be out of the question too.
"They can afford to drink and smoke" should these paltry pleasures be denied people who are living in hopelessness?



slapmatt ▶ irishaxeman

21 January 2015 11:03am

14

I hate to point this out, but manufacturing has been in decline across all western economies.

Are you going to blame Thatcher for the reduction of industrial capacity in Germany and the US as well?

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



londonpaule

21 January 2015 9:11am

8

not exactly clear what you actually - precisely want. What is wrong about trying to "educate" people in the labour "good-doer" sense a bit more and getting rid of dysfunctional behaviours that you describe yourself: "...corner shops that sell no food - only cheap alcohol, electric cards, and lottery tickets"

Lots of (probably justified) complaining but not offering any solution / alternative...???

(West) European countries don't have these problems - at least not nearly at that scale. Sth to think about when complaining about the EU; sth must be going right there...



watchingfromthewings ▶ londonpaule

21 January 2015 10:02am

17

(West) European countries don't have these problems

Western European countries never had Thatcher, either, with her determination to destroy the unions by closing coal pits and exporting manufacturing jobs

abroad.



Steve Ascott ▶ londonpaule

21 January 2015 10:49am

7

The corner shops don't sell food as it is impossible to compete with the supermarkets

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Paultoo

21 January 2015 9:14am

4

Are working classes represented politically by working class MP's ? It seems to me an area is best served by a person of the people where they are from. The Tories do this magnificently, do Labour ?



hertsman ▶ Paultoo

21 January 2015 12:25pm

10

I think Labour are now best known for parachuting in anointed sons of previous generations - Blair, Straw, Prescott etc.

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Quaestor

21 January 2015 9:18am

21

In working-class Glasgow in the thirties, my grandparents put all they had into their daughter's education, and it was the way, gradually, to a better life through acquiring skills, initially as a shorthand-typist. This was still the Nab End generation, where people did not go to grammar schools because they couldn't afford the uniform. I'll read your book, though it appears that you see people as trapped, with no control over their own lives, and the path you took yourself not open to them. It seems bleak.



GCday ▶ Quaestor

21 January 2015 9:24am

28

I'll read your book, though it appears that you see people as trapped, with no control over their own lives, and the path you took yourself not open to them. It seems bleak.

I saw it more as 'holding up atypical examples doesn't solve structural issues' - especially since the support that she received (and me) has disappeared.



Quaestor ▶ GCday

21 January 2015 11:03am

5

What, then, are the structural issues? The collapse of the coal industry, the absence of work opportunities are clearly elements. When there was no work in the thirties, people literally came close to starvation, and the parents in Nab End were at one time down to their last twopence, which they spent on a bottle of beer to share. And work, to give people a future, has to be skilled work.



LarryDavid

21 January 2015 9:20am

21

Those of us born in the 60s and 70s who grew up in council housing and who got free education and earned degrees masters and PhD like the author, several of the commenters and myself should form a pressure group. It is sad to go home and find the estates we left decimated compared to what they once were.



Marionfrombristol

21 January 2015 9:24am

23

I rose "through the ranks" from slum via council estates to being a research chemist via university. Only in old age did I find the answer to the great divide to banish loneliness was to be passionate about something both rich and poor can share. In my case it was gardening, fuelled as a teenager by Dig for Victory. My best friend in my eighties was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and had royalty for godparents. We met in the Botanic Garden. I have found that many of my contemporaries made more money throughout their lives by not going to university but having an apprenticeship or their own business built up on a shoestring. But my alertness and health at 86 I put down mainly to my education.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



1banna

21 January 2015 9:26am

7

An interesting and thought provoking article. The thoughts that it provokes in me are that looking back to the past will not provide solutions for the future, and there undoubtedly are problems to be solved. Where are the realistic proposals to solve them? Just throwing more money at them will do no good as the Blair/Brown years conclusively showed and sterile class vitriol has never provided solutions. Then, I wonder why more of those who were 'sitting on walls drinking cheap cider' have not found the writer's or similar routes out of their situations?



scouser58 ▶ 1banna

21 January 2015 12:00pm

9

Not everyone has the intelligence or determination to go through higher education, or the support, or a stable home life. It is very expensive now. Not everyone wants to do it, either. Why should they? You can't have the whole of society working in so-called professional occupations. There needs to either be a change of attitude i.e. not everyone needs to work as there are not enough jobs, so provide a citizens' income and stop demonising the unemployed or provide more work/projects for people who are unskilled or sem-skilled. Everyone doesn't need to go to university, they just need hope and a future and to be able to pay their way, bills, food and rent.



SnackPot

21 January 2015 9:26am

24

Top stuff Lisa. Will be getting the book. Grew up in a very similar environment and would now would be considered a 'professional'. One thing I've discovered is that the sneering Mail reading 'middle' are not fit to the lick the boots of the people that raised me and the community I grew up in

3 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



artvandalay316

21 January 2015 9:30am

11

There is a one simple way to help avoid the truly feckless poor sponging and the needy poor being unnecessarily penalised: train job centre staff properly, and fully staff job centres. In my experience, well trained staff could clearly tell who were trying to play the system and those actually looking for work and enthusiastic to work. The government at the same time should be working on ways to find tax fraudsters.



ivanovitch57 ▶ artvandalay316

21 January 2015 9:56am

10

And what exactly does your comment have to do with the article?



artvandalay316 ▶ ivanovitch57

21 January 2015 10:27am

1

The word feckless brings up the usual criticism of the poor, that many are

feckless and do not want to work, only sponge off the system. Clear enough for you now?



hertsman ▶ ivanovitch57

21 January 2015 9:07pm

I would say that it in terms of the real world it's worth a hell of a lot more than this pathetic bleating from a late entrant to state-financed navel-gazing on the "precariat"



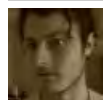
sandalphon

21 January 2015 9:34am

Looking forward to hearing more from Lisa Mckenzie - great article

9

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



Crofto

21 January 2015 9:35am

A compelling article, and I applaud the author's genuine grievances with politicians', the media's, and the middle-class' attitude towards the working class poor.

I am also from a working class village from a declined industrial region in the north. The devastation is much the same as the author outlined in her own hometown (no hope, people loitering with cans of larger, etc.), so I know the authenticity of her words.

I would be interested to know, however, how the author managed to fund her master's and PhD? I am also undergoing the process of moving from underachieving in school, working in low-paid dead end jobs, towards passing an Access courses (which was, staggeringly, still free for me even at 25 years old) and then university (my third year now). I have no idea, however, how a man of my meagre means could afford to move onto a master's degree - in hopes to achieve much the same as the author, particularly based on the inspiration found in this article - so would be interested to know how she did it?

Regardless, though, brilliant article.

12



Nimbus020 ▶ Crofto

21 January 2015 10:24am

I think her web pages indicate she received support from her university and then a foundation. Good on them for backing her.

6



Luna Glucksberg ▶ Crofto

21 January 2015 11:37am

there isn't much funding for masters, that's true, but if you want to do a PhD like Lisa did, the ESRC does fund them. It's hard and competitive, but it is possible. I did it that way, and no way I come from money either. good luck!

7



hertsman ▶ Crofto

21 January 2015 9:04pm

"A compelling article,

I have to disagree with you. I found it facile and with no base. She (vaguely) talks about her childhood, adolescence and connection into career-academia with asides about her life. Please tell me what is compelling about that.

1

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



LekkerDing

21 January 2015 9:36am

Good article, look forward to reading the book. Social stigma has become so all-

24

pervasive and so poisonous that it scarcely registers. It used to be that living in council housing labelled you as lacking aspiration. Now it seems poor people living in council housing are being classified as depriving 'hardworking strivers' of a place to live. Hence social cleansing in many London boroughs.

I got an education because I loved the intellectual challenge of learning: I don't appear to have 'bettered' myself as I now live in the council house I grew up in and disability has meant living in poverty. As my studies made me lean towards Victorian working class lives, I will never use the term 'Underclass' to categorise the working class, whether they're working or not. This neo-liberal ideology is leading to very dangerous conclusions about how we view our fellow humans. I'm glad to see I'm not the only one refusing to buy into it.



CforCynic ▶ LekkerDing

21 January 2015 5:52pm

1

The "working class" and the "underclass" are two *entirely* different things.

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Why shame is the most dominant feature of modern poverty

Poor people now seem to accept responsibility for what was previously seen as fate. And this is reinforced by the Tories' welfare cuts



Jeremy Seabrook

theguardian.com, Tuesday 30 September 2014 08.00 BST

[Jump to comments \(472\)](#)



A food bank in Hull. 'The advent of consumer society was accompanied by a profound psychological change in poor people, which predisposed them more readily to accept a proposition they had previously resented and rejected.' Photograph: Gary Calton

With the renewed attack on welfare by the Conservative party, [poverty increases](#). Yet people have become reluctant to acknowledge that they are poor. This has been brought home forcefully to me in the West Midlands. "I'm ashamed I can't provide for my children." "I don't like people seeing me go to the food bank." "I feel I'm doing something wrong." "I find myself apologising all the time." "Falling into debt is like drowning." "I'm humiliated waiting for items that have reached their sell-date."

Shame is the most persistent attribute of contemporary poverty. This is a relatively new development since poor people have traditionally been proud, dignified, stoical; they have showed solidarity, even defiance, facing the condition of being poor. Why should shame be the particular inflection of poverty in this late enlightened age?

The [Oxford English Dictionary](#) defines [shame](#) as "a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behaviour". The operative word in this context is "consciousness". They have become aware of their own bad conduct or faulty actions. And this is precisely what the government intends people to experience, since punitive policies enhance a sense of guilt. It seems the poor have internalised the assessment of – who? Their betters, the rich, legislators,

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moralists? – and are ready to accept responsibility for what has, through the ages, been seen as a visitation by chance, fate, even God, but not necessarily, at least until the industrial era, as evidence of their own failings.

How has this ideological fiction passed into everyday acceptance? While the poor remained in the majority, despite being constantly told that poverty was their lot, that it was determined elsewhere than in the social and economic system in which it was located, this view of their condition was fiercely resisted because they knew that no matter how hard they worked and tried to adhere to the values of their society, they could not attain sufficiency for themselves and their dependants.

Direct experience disconfirmed for most of them the sad fable that they were victims of their own folly, idleness or improvidence. Indeed, this was the basis of much of the resistance to capitalism: the idea that we are simply individuals who must make our own private accommodation with wealth and power was vehemently repudiated by those who knew otherwise, and recognised the role of a society that withheld from them the necessities for survival.

The labour movement was founded on just this recognition. Accordingly, the malignant assertion that poverty was a personal failing was negated by the power of people to negotiate collectively for a decent level of living, an honourable livelihood or, in a more ancient formulation, a fair day's pay for a far day's work.

No wonder it has been the objective of governments – not all of them avowedly reactionary or Conservative; indeed the [Labour party](#), sometime defenders of the poor, has abandoned them in search of elusive majorities among squeezed middles and hard-working families – to weaken the power of collective resistance, to undermine institutions created by the poor for self-defence. This task has been assisted in recent decades by a spectacular rise in prosperity. The advent of consumer society was accompanied by a profound psychological change in poor people, which predisposed them more readily to accept a proposition they had previously resented and rejected.

When the good times came – in the 1950s and 1960s especially – most were swift to accept personal responsibility for this happy development. They were content to link growing affluence with their own merit: just rewards were at last conceded to those working in industries that were fast disappearing. Such rewards might be taken as a retrospective recompense for past suffering, want and exploitation. People were complicit in seeing the better times as a consequence of their own hard work, thrift and husbandry. They did so under a cacophony of hymns to commodities, paeans of praise to goods and services, hosannas to market freedoms, and to a disorientingly dazzling embarrassment of riches in the display windows of the world.

In such a context, the corollary was that those who neglected to take advantage of the ubiquitous abundance must be suffering from some moral defect. So eager was capitalism to pour its riches into our lap that you would have to be very incompetent indeed not to take advantage of its pressing desire to help you to the good life.

In this environment, belief that the poor were culpable found new listeners and eager converts; particularly when the poor could so readily be assimilated to many other social groups – drug addicts, alcoholics, deviants, thugs, vandals, yobs, scroungers, spongers, parasites and all the other moral outlaws of plenty, obligingly brought to our attention by the friends of the people in the popular press.

So it is that the majority, the no longer poor, now turn against those who have not availed themselves of all that capitalism innocently wishes to shower upon them; and under the barrage of resentment and loathing this incapacity incurs, is it any wonder that poor people faithfully echo the dominant view of their condition? Since they are now a minority – although substantial – they no longer pose any electoral threat to the wellbeing of the rest and can be treated with the punitive disdain they

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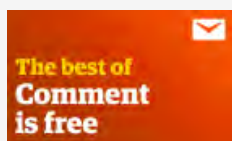
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now deserve.

Shame, then, is the measure of acceptance by the poor of their own responsibility for their outcast state. Deprived, impoverished, non-participants in the epic party-time that is too-late capitalism, they seek to conceal themselves, hide their wounds, dissimulate their shabbiness and ill-nourishment. At the same time, they afford the well-to-do an opportunity for self-righteous defamation – a practice of which right-thinking majorities are not slow to take conspicuous advantage.



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paulacocoza

01 October 2014 11:26am

9

"poor people have traditionally been proud, dignified, stoical; they have showed solidarity, even defiance, facing the condition of being poor.

Am troubled by this line. I don't see how it is possible to describe 'poor people' in terms of coherent, defining characteristics. I find the word 'traditionally' difficult too. Have poor people really always been proud etc, or is that traditionally the way that better off people have seen them, or that poor are often romanticised in literature? Anyhow, I don't know if I would have counted as poor growing up, but we didn't have much money, and the obviousness of us not having it was a source of huge shame in the playground. That was the 70s. So the idea that the austerity policies of the current govt are to be held accountable for a monolithic emotional shift towards shame feels farfetched to me. (Much as I hold them accountable for other woeful outcomes.)

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There's poverty in the UK, but we are better off calling it inequality

If you think the world is too divided into those who have the cream and those who don't, you ain't seen nothing yet



John Lanchester

The Guardian, Friday 5 September 2014 17.30 BST

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'Rising levels of inequality are going to be the central focus of politics and economics pretty much everywhere in the world for the next decade.' Photograph: Sara Morris for the Guardian

We all think we know what we're talking about when we discuss poverty. We have a clear mental image for the poverty of the developing nations. One of the targets for the millennium development goals, announced by the UN in 2000, was to halve the global proportion of absolutely poor people by 2015. At the time the target was announced, the definition of an absolutely poor person was anyone living on an income of less than \$1 a day. That criterion has been nudged upwards, in response to new data about prices and purchasing power, to \$1.25. There has and continues to be astonishing progress towards and beyond this target, which was achieved in 2010, five years ahead of its deadline – a fact that went eerily uncelebrated.

How to Speak Money by John Lanchester

It is true that 1.2 billion people still live below the \$1.25 threshold, but the proportion of humanity in that desperate condition is lower than it was. In 1980, more than half the world's population was living below this line; now, the number living below it is just over a fifth. This achievement is all the greater because it is relatively simple for small populations to improve their standard of living quickly; it is easier to move something small than it is to move something big. As the numbers grow, the

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achievement gets harder, which makes this transformation one that I don't think has any precedent in human history. We shouldn't get carried away: 1.2 billion absolutely poor people is still 1.2 billion too many, and the concentration of extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, combined with a rapidly growing population, has meant that the number of people in poverty there has gone upwards, even as the proportion has gone down.

It's when we bring the idea of poverty closer to home that it gets more complicated. In fact, if I could, I would ban the word poverty from use in a UK context. That's not because there are not deprived and excluded people in this country, and it is also not because being relatively poor is not a serious predicament – there are, and it is, and the position of the relatively poor in the UK is growing worse. The problem, as I see it, is to do with the word poverty and its associations.

The first, and subtlest, of the difficulties is something that you could say was at least partly Jesus's fault. Three of the four Gospels tell the same story: a woman gives Jesus some expensive ointment, he uses it, and his disciples protest. They tell him that he could have sold the oil and given the money to the poor. Jesus disagrees, because, "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me." This is often paraphrased or misremembered as "The poor are always with us," a sentence that returns more than half a billion Google hits. The original phrase "with you" isn't dismissive; there is something companionable, perhaps even necessary, about the permanent presence of the poor. This idea has penetrated deep into the collective consciousness: the idea that poverty is somehow inevitable, ineluctable, a given condition for a significant proportion of humanity.

Added to this is the fact that, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, poverty is close to being a virtue. Pretty much every saint is poor, and poverty is often a kind of holy USP, a defining characteristic. The chief Jesuit [Pedro Arrupe](#) said in 1968 that the Catholic church had "an option for the poor", and the fact that the Catholic church has a special interest in the poor is especially evident in the ministry of the current pope. Members of religious orders take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. We can half-consciously think that, if poverty isn't so bad spiritually, maybe it isn't so bad in other ways as well. The idea that poverty is inevitable, added to the idea that poverty has a link with virtue, complicates things. It is striking that the foundational document of the modern welfare state, [the Beveridge report](#), doesn't use the word poverty, but sticks to "want", a term with much less value-baggage.

The difficulties don't end there. There is just as big a proportion of poor people in the UK as there is in the rest of the world: according to official statistics, one in five of us is poor. But when we talk about poverty in the UK, we aren't talking about the same kind of poverty as in the developing world. The definition of poverty generally used in the UK, as in the rest of the developed world, is set at 60% of median income. But these people aren't poor in the same way as those 1.2 billion living on less than \$1.25 a day, obviously; they are poor in relation to the person who is in the middle of the income distribution, with half the country above them and half below. That median UK household income at the moment is £23,200, which means the official threshold for poverty in the UK is £13,920.

The first difficulty with this number is that many people simply don't believe it. They don't think that what is called poverty constitutes *actual* poverty. They don't think it is true to say that 13 million UK citizens are poor. Beveridge defined want as the lack of "what is necessary for subsistence", a much stricter criterion than the one that defines modern British poverty. Plenty of people agree with him. It is a secret thought, not

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much expressed in public, but summed up in [Philip Larkin's poem Toads](#): "No one actually starves." This is one of those ideas that run strongly through modern Britain, without being as forcefully expressed as it is felt.

But it is there in polls showing the response to the coalition government's narrative about [austerity](#). Have a look at [the YouGov economy tracker](#): its polls show that a clear majority think austerity and cuts are "necessary" – at the moment, 58%, more than double the number who think they're unnecessary, at 27%. The number of people who think that cuts are good for the economy has been going up slowly but steadily for three years, from 34% in August 2011 (with 51% opposed) to 46% today (with 35% opposed). What these numbers imply, I think, is a lack of belief in narratives about poverty and hardship in the UK. The Great British Public doesn't really think times are as difficult as people say they are.

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'Poverty' has distracting moral associations; 'inequality' doesn't.' Photograph: Sara Morris for the Guardian

There is some evidence that this is because hearts in general have hardened. [A recent report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) pointed out that the public expects levels of poverty to get worse, while at the same time "support for welfare spending... is at a historical low". Part of this resistance to helping the poor is because people don't believe in their poverty; and some of that is due to a confusion over, or disagreement with, that word "poverty". A person living on less than \$1.25 is unarguably poor, in every sense. A person living on £13,000 a year is only arguably poor, because the threshold of 60% of median income is a definition of relative poverty. It is a measure only of how far the poor have fallen behind everyone else – a measure of inequality.

I don't for a second think that inequality is unimportant: rising levels of inequality are going to be the central focus of politics and economics pretty much everywhere in the world for the next decade. But I do think it's not quite the same thing as what is generally understood by the word poverty. Professionals discussing poverty know perfectly well that what they are talking about is relative poverty; they are fully aware of the nuances. But most of the rest of us aren't. People look around the UK and just don't believe in the existence of genuinely poor people.

This is why I would ban the word "poverty". ("Relative poverty" is too much of a mouthful.) Let's call it what it is – inequality. This would begin to iron out some of the oddities that emerge from the current framework. For instance, when lots of people lose their jobs and are suddenly in desperate financial straits, cutting their expenditure to the barest bones, lying awake at night sweating over bills and an uncertain future, even making their first tormented visits to the local food bank – this is all good news from the point of view of the poverty statistics. Rising [unemployment](#) means falling median income, which in turn means falling numbers of people below the poverty line – not because they're better off, but because the line has moved.

Real median income fell sharply during the Great [Recession](#) – by 8% in four years, an unprecedented amount – so the official poverty line fell, too. This fall has helped to conceal the way life has grown much harder for the people at the bottom. A family could have been in poverty in 2008, then risen out of poverty – even though it was struggling by on exactly the same income – just because the statistical goalposts had moved.

The current figure of 20% in relative poverty around the world may seem shockingly high, but it's the second lowest percentage since good data became available in the mid-90s. The pros regard these anomalies as a

not too serious glitch, an irony of nomenclature. It seems to me more problematic than that. Calling the thing we're talking about by its real name would be a useful first step. To most of us, it makes no sense to say that having less money makes us less poor. But the idea that, because a majority of people have less money, we are now less unequal: that, I think, we can get our heads around.

An example of the way inequality risks being permanently baked into our societies is the current phenomenon of excessively low pay. It's an astonishing indictment of the current order that, of those 13 million at the bottom of the UK's income distribution, more than half are in work. What this means is that the tax and benefits system, which props up the incomes of the relatively poor, are also propping up the incomes of the shareholders in the companies that pay too little. Money that could and should go to employees in return for their labour instead goes to owners in return for their capital.

This is straight out of the pages of Thomas Piketty's [Capital In The 21st Century](#): capital using its bargaining power to force down the price of labour – and then having the bill picked up by the state. I'm not sure there has been a precedent in British history for this arrangement, and it only really makes sense if you see it in a very sinister light: as preparation for a system of permanent inequality, in which most of us, in most jobs, are certain to be relatively poor. It's a basic premise of the social contract that work is the route out of deprivation. If that is no longer true, we need to take a hard look at the social contract, and start thinking about drawing up a new one.

"Poverty" has distracting moral associations; "inequality" doesn't. We may have taken on board the idea that the poor you will always have with you. That's very different from accepting the notion that rising inequality is a fact of life, a given that we'll all have to get used to. And by the way, although no politician I know of has had the guts to say that in public, that's what a lot of politicians and economists privately think. This is what they foresee: trends in globalisation, the hollowing out of both working- and middle-class employment, and the commodification of most skills (available at a fixed price from anywhere you want: a Polish builder, a data analyst in Bangalore) are going to create a permanent, and permanently widening, gap between the people at the top and everyone else. The people at the top will then do everything in their power to make sure that their children inherit their privileges – which they are very likely to do: the evidence shows that the more unequal a society, the more likely you are to inherit your life chances from your parents. If we think that the world is already too much divided into winners and losers, we ain't seen nothing yet.

The prospect is one of a society such as the one we live in, only more so. Nobody, in the Beveridge sense of the term, is lacking the means of subsistence: nobody is "poor". But it is a society that is also starting to look uncomfortably feudal, and many economists think it is overwhelmingly likely to be our future. I know, because they've told me. But this is a conversation we need to be having out in the open, because keeping quiet about it makes it more likely to happen.

This may sound grim, but I am not pessimistic. Rising inequality is not a law of nature – it's not even a law of economics. It is a consequence of political and economic arrangements, and those arrangements can be changed. Inequality in the developed world fell for most of the 20th century; we can make it fall for most of the 21st century, too. But it won't happen without sustained pressure on politicians from electorates. So let's get on with it. Let's start to make them hear what we're saying: it's about the inequality, stupid.



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25 PEOPLE, 28 COMMENTS



PeterS378

05 September 2014 6:14pm

64

Rising inequality is not a law of nature – it's not even a law of economics. It is a consequence of political and economic arrangements, and those arrangements can be changed. Inequality in the developed world fell for most of the 20th century; we can make it fall for most of the 21st century, too.

To a significant degree, the rising inequality we have been seeing in developed economies in recent years is a consequence of:

- a) increasing levels of cross-border trade, with competition from workers in developing economies
- b) increasing levels of automation

Both tend to displace middle income work in developed economies, but have much less impact on high income and low income work. A Chinese worker can't make frothy coffee for a London resident.

Both are very difficult to mitigate or reverse. Let's not forget, for example, that cross-border trade is what made the UK one of the wealthiest countries on the planet in the first place.



Hugejohnson ▶ PeterS378

05 September 2014 11:09pm

169

Not just cross border trade but capital fleeing to the most generous offshore havens. Part of the problem is going to continue to be lack of inward investment and the inevitable fallout. This is not just a UK problem but we seem to be the whoremasters in this game.



Jack Jazz ▶ PeterS378

05 September 2014 11:21pm

343

Both tend to displace middle income work in developed economies, but have much less impact on high income and low income work. A Chinese worker can't make frothy coffee for a London resident.

He can once theyve worked out how to freeze the coffee complete with froth, package it in some new innovative carton which when the customer in London buys it from the vending machine in the street she just rips the lid off and the coffee reheats itself automatically and the froth is still frothy! Dont knock it, it will happen one day. We only have the jobs we have now until the elite's invent a machine to do it for them!

Heres how they have been arranging the world for decades..

Destabilise 3rd world countries so the people there are starving and afraid and will work for peanuts in harsh or slave conditions. Out source your business and manufacturing work to these 3rd world countries for minimum costs and sell any goods made to western countries for maximum profit.

Allow economic downturns/crashes/recessions in the west to gradually reduce the standard of living by lowering or freezing wages for a few years. If the workforce take action to fight to regain said standard of living simply outsource more work to poorer countries thus creating higher unemployment in the west.

Use high unemployment as a weapon against workforce to keep wages low and use a hostile media to drive a wedge between the 'haves' and 'have nots' vilifying the poor so that no reasonable level of support can be achieved in order to seriously question the status-quo.

And there you have it. The elite have got it sussed!



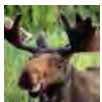
George Cholmondeley ▶ PeterS378

05 September 2014 11:25pm

112

Rv far the greatest accelerator of inequality has been the culture of

14 PEOPLE, 24 COMMENTS



MOKent

05 September 2014 8:37pm

58

Let's start to make them hear what we're saying: it's about the inequality, stupid.

The stupidity lies in thinking that a 80.6bn hours per year workforce can earn a living from less than 10bn hours of marketable, necessary, unautomatable work and that we can therefore continue to pursue governance through mass taxation based on full employment in a market economy according to the authority of the present distribution of wealth and ownership.

It is the stupidity of the tumbril.



CustardLemon ▶ MOKent

05 September 2014 11:07pm

14

Where're you getting your stats from. I'm just interested.



Captain_Smartyants ▶ MOKent

05 September 2014 11:16pm

106

Ford II: Walter, how are you going to get those robots to pay your union dues?

Reuther: Walter Reuther: Henry, how are you going to get them to buy your cars?



MOKent ▶ CustardLemon

05 September 2014 11:28pm

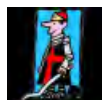
11

Where're you getting your stats from. I'm just interested

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

NinthLegion

23



05 September 2014 10:13pm

Cross-border trade tempered by annexation, invasion and violence.



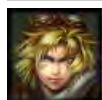
Vectron ▶ NinthLegion

06 September 2014 8:05am

10

Is there a proposition behind these words? They could be a description of some aspects of 19th century colonisation, or the expansion of the Japanese Empire in the 30s and 40s but it's unclear how they add to this discussion.

12 PEOPLE, 12 COMMENTS



Ezreal

05 September 2014 10:55pm

85

The word 'relatively poor' doesn't mean much. The Tory cabinet would be 'relatively poor' at a billionaires club, but they're not hard done by at all.



LouSnickers ▶ Ezreal

05 September 2014 11:47pm

73

I would be 'relatively poor' at a meeting of the Guardian Editorial Committee!



TheHandsomeCrab ▶ Ezreal

05 September 2014 11:53pm

70

I thought about the "relatively poor" concept and decided it was meaningful to a certain extent: it defines how much you can interact with your surrounding society. A relatively poor British person may, in spite of not being in immediate material danger, not be able to afford learning to drive, or recreation, or eating out, attractive clothing, and things like that which make can make life a hell of a lot better.



DeunanKnut ▶ LouSnickers

06 September 2014 2:19am

5

I would be 'relatively poor' at a meeting of the Guardian Editorial



BigChap

05 September 2014 10:55pm

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10 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



GuillotinesRUs

05 September 2014 10:57pm

36

Let me guess the cat on the left works in the city.



Radardodah ▶ GuillotinesRUs

05 September 2014 11:19pm

50

No, it's either big boned or has thyroid problems.



digit ▶ Radardodah

06 September 2014 12:04am

60

It's the poor one. It lives in a food desert and has too much sugar and fat in its diet.



captainbeefheart ▶ GuillotinesRUs

06 September 2014 12:52am

11

All wrong ~ the fat cat should be c 150x the average size NOT c TWICE !!

8 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



bigredroo

05 September 2014 11:00pm

166

One drawback of using the word inequality is that there is not a polar opposite... Unless it is to say some are more equal than others.

Where you have the poor, you also have the rich, so perhaps it is time to start examining the staggering wealth and privilege of the more than equal?

The sheer scale of the wealth which resides in the hands of so few, is largely ignored, or lauded, both of which have to change.



DeleteThisPost ▶ bigredroo

06 September 2014 12:52am

24

The sheer scale of the wealth which resides in the hands of so few, is largely ignored, or lauded, **both of which have to change.**

I disagree. The great increase in wealth of those few at the top is relatively unimportant. In fact, the increase in income inequality itself is largely not an issue. The really important thing is that those with the least continue to experience an increase in income and standard of living.

That's not to say that those with the most shouldn't be held to account. They should definitely not be allowed to skirt on paying their fair share (meaning quite a lot) in taxes. But the fact that there are those at the top with outrageous amounts of wealth is not a problem that has to be remedied.

I don't have an example of the effects of income inequality, or rich vs. poor, for the UK. [But here is an interesting article](#) about such things as relates to the US. A lot has been made of how the richest Americans are getting much richer much faster than the poorer Americans, but one interesting stat in the article is that despite the increase in income inequality, the poorest 5% of Americans are richer than 70% of everyone else in the world.

Of course, when we talk about income inequality, the diminishment of the middle-class is important. But the idea that a relatively few number of people at the very top are getting "too rich" doesn't make any sense.

Who cares if 10,000 out of a population of 300m are stupendously rich? I care about whether or not the bottom 10-30% are enjoying improvements to their quality of life. And all the statistics, divorced from hyperbole, show that they are.



romantotale17 ▶ DeleteThisPost

06 September 2014 7:32am

143

Who cares if 10,000 out of a population of 300m are stupendously rich?

Because it affects democracy. The article focuses on purely economic definitions of poverty - there are other measures of disenfranchisement, such as inability to meaningfully participate in decision making about changes in society.

When the author talks about feudalism, he is talking about a society in which we rent our property from oligarchs, rather than own it outright, or that our cities and public spaces are privatised playgrounds of the wealthy, that the police, army and judiciary become the tools of robber barons, Think Venice in the C14th. Pretty buildings, and plenty of crumbs for the plebs.

Empson reminds us that 'a Renaissance state was a thoroughgoing police terror.' Who are the new Borgias?

The narrative which has been sold to us since 2008 has been that we are in a state of 'economic crisis', which demands an economic solution, encouraging us to forget about other kinds of 'deficit'- democratic, ecological, cultural. What has happened is that we have entered a kind of permanent economic war which eclipses every other function of society. We aren't facing a future in which, eventually, 'prudence' will bring about good living standards for all and we can somehow relax and enjoy the fruits of our 'common sense': the narrative is written so as to guarantee we will never reach that stage, that any attempt to rebuild public life will be seen as detrimental to the economic health of the country. Permanently, and forever. Like Orwell's neverending war between Oceania and Eurasia, only between ourselves, our neighbours, our families, our planet and our bodies.



outfitit ▶ bigredroo

06 September 2014 10:30am

11

Totally agree!



GuillotinesRUs

05 September 2014 11:01pm

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9 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



jeddanova

05 September 2014 11:02pm

70

Hearing the politicians referring to people "the Poor" really gets my back up. "The Poor", no mention mention of people or community, might as well call us peasants!, how about the great unwashed? Not so surprising when we look at who is running the country! I look forward to the headline "The Poor are revolting!"



wiganwill ▶ jeddanova

05 September 2014 11:25pm

33

I know what you mean but I still prefer 'the poor' to 'the less well off' which is such a weasely phrase.



ShanMorgain ▶ wiganwill

06 September 2014 3:54am

77

It's this article which is weaselly - and ignorant.

Poverty means not enough to eat. There's plenty of that in Britain - think food banks which shouldn't exist, and don't fill the gap. Parents are not eating meals so their kids get fed. Not eating enough means weaker immune systems, shorter lives, and less strength to challenge those in charge.

Poverty in a cold country is not being able to heat yourself in winter. There's plenty of that in Britain. Elderly people are dying every winter because of it.

Poverty is basic survival. Inequality is much more luxurious - one car, two cars, no car. Sausages or steak. Shiftwork stress or jetlag.

I agree there is an entrenched belief that the poor are always with us. Whether that is true or not they don't need to starve and they don't need to freeze. Any Government which rules over starving freezing people is totally failing at their job. Austerity isn't working because it cuts the employed people so less taxes have to cover more benefits. Madness. But austerity is also not working because it's deliberately killing people. Evil.

End starvation and freezing. End poverty. Then we can look at inequality.



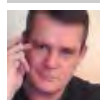
NotAPickyWoman ▶ wiganwill

06 September 2014 9:20am

4

I know what you mean but I still prefer 'the poor' to 'the less well off' which is

22 PEOPLE, 25 COMMENTS



Rabiesx15

05 September 2014 11:04pm

394

I left Britain in 1992, under John Major. I was a graduate 2:1 Civil Engineer, who paid nothing for the degree. I was 25. 20 years later I return to a country I no longer recognise. Zero hours contracts, high prices, low pay, government that not only does not stand for it's people, but unashamedly stamps on, them as they excuse the very richest everything. Rubbish wages, lies, statistics and prices that are shocking. Young people without any hope for their future at all, and the most lying degraded media one could imagine. For me, it is like asking someone to paint my room as I was away, when I returned it was not white emulsion, the walls were covered in shit. This country is dreadful



jeddanova ▶ Rabiesx15

72

05 September 2014 11:33pm

! left UK also I describe myself as a **refugee from thatcherism**.
Little did i know that it would eventually come to Australia :(



bateleur ▶ Rabiesx15

190

05 September 2014 11:36pm

Like you, I left Britain to work in Africa ... 'Got On My Bike' as the saying was ... many years ago.

I fully planned, some day, to return. It is my home and, physically, it is a beautiful country.

But, socially, whilst I have been away it has changed so dramatically that I no longer recognise the place when I return to visit family and friends.

The trouble is, like that apocryphal frog in slowly heating water, many of Brits don't notice the changes. I have now returned to Europe, but have no intention whatsoever of going back to UK. It's rushing headlong as fast as it can go to emulate the ghastly US model of society.

Good luck. I'm staying away.



huzar30 ▶ Rabiesx15

32

05 September 2014 11:39pm

Frankly I think this country is excellent

16 PEOPLE, 20 COMMENTS



categorical

118

05 September 2014 11:04pm

I'm no leftie, but I simply don't understand how anyone is worth >100k a year.



jackhugh ▶ categorical

24

05 September 2014 11:10pm

i don't think that be a question you'd be asking if its what you were getting



jessthecrip ▶ categorical

129

05 September 2014 11:19pm

And the staggering thing is some think themselves worth far far more than that. Like the FTSE 100 CEOs who receive 200x the pay rate of the average worker. And even more, the uber-wealthy whose millions or billions are stashed in tax havens so that they are effectively taxed at a far lower rate than the worker on the minimum wage.

That photo at the top gives a ridiculously mild impression of the extreme and widening gap between those who have lots and those who have little.



Hubrit ▶ categorical

8

05 September 2014 11:25pm

That's probably because you don't fully understand the concept of value

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



IllusionOfFairness

63

05 September 2014 11:05pm

The problem with using the word inequality is that most people think inequality is not necessarily bad, because they don't factor in how the rich skew the prices of things upwards (for example, the continuous climbing of house prices increasing everyone's cost of living).

Kaitain ▶ IllusionOfFairness

77



05 September 2014 11:58pm

Part of the problem is that there are no fiscal constraints or disincentives against using land to extract wealth from other people. That's why it's become so valuable.

I don't have any problem with the richest guy on the street owning the *best house*. It's much more problematic when the richest guy on the street owns *all the houses*.

31



inkyblob ▶ Kaitain

06 September 2014 12:19am

I don't have any problem with the richest guy on the street owning the best house. It's much more problematic when the richest guy on the street owns all the houses.

Which is further compounded, of course, when those who do not own houses are also probably unable to ever own one, forcing them to live in a permanent fear of losing their job in case it means being unable to pay rent.



rogerccanada ▶ Kaitain

06 September 2014 12:25am

Street? Check this out (U.S. data)...

<http://www.redfin.com/research/reports/special-reports/2014/us-cities-that-billionaires-could-buy.html#.VApGEVcXO3M>

5

14 PEOPLE, 28 COMMENTS



noeldarlow1

05 September 2014 11:05pm

Nobody, in the Beveridge sense of the term, is lacking the means of subsistence

Actually rather a lot of people are - as we can see in the shocking rise in food bank use.

120



huzar30 ▶ noeldarlow1

05 September 2014 11:39pm

And do you see emaciated waifs on the streets? Has the obesity crisis vanished?

30



QueenElizabethII ▶ huzar30

05 September 2014 11:45pm

"The obesity crisis" is the result of people being too poor to afford decent food.

94



huzar30 ▶ QueenElizabethII

05 September 2014 11:52pm

Obese people do not need food banks

18

4 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



Captain_Smartyants

05 September 2014 11:06pm

that most of us, in most jobs, are certain to be relatively poor

You can see this in central Europe and, to some extent, all the way in Asia, how they're coming for us comfortable, office-working bean counters next. Yes, even us who get the odd perk, business trip with 5-star accommodation, and managerial position so that we feel like our interests is aligned with those at the very top...

21



Scurra ▶ Captain_Smartypants

06 September 2014 12:37am

66

Revolutions aren't generally started by the poor. They are started by the middle classes when they become unable to aspire upwards any longer. It's getting closer and closer here.



ID6147342 ▶ Captain_Smartypants

06 September 2014 1:19pm

1

But there is wage inflation in Central Europe and Asia too. These regions can live off the fat off lower relative wages for a time but the middle income trap awaits unless they build an innovative and creative culture.



Captain_Smartypants ▶ ID6147342

06 September 2014 3:33pm

2

I didn't refer to increasing wages in CE and Asia. I referred to how

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



hydriotaphia

05 September 2014 11:07pm

91

"There is some evidence that this is because hearts in general have hardened." Now there is the real poverty of humanity.



worldgirl ▶ hydriotaphia

06 September 2014 12:06am

41

It's strange. Because many of these hard hearts are going to find themselves in the same position.



rosemary152 ▶ worldgirl

06 September 2014 8:40am

39

And still the turkeys vote for Christmas. Even as their living standards go down and their kids refuse to go to Uni for fear of the debt, some of my family still believe the coalition has it right!



rosemary152 ▶ rosemary152

06 September 2014 8:41am

12

Tory propaganda worked

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



Shrekll

05 September 2014 11:07pm

25

It has never been different and never will be... What is changing are the tools and organisational capabilities the rich have to their advantage, and of course the stage has become global, diverse and easier for them to manipulate.



InternetDemocrats ▶ Shrekll

05 September 2014 11:21pm

24

Not true.

Democracy and the rule of law are significant human achievements.

We just need to grow into them.



digit ▶ InternetDemocrats

06 September 2014 12:08am

22

God I wish I shared even your level of optimism.



inkyblob ▶ InternetDemocrats

06 September 2014 12:25am

8

I agree but it is, alas, these very things that are being eroded (or taken away

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



duerson

05 September 2014 11:08pm

46

I agree with the sentiment of this article, but I do think it's been recognised as a problem. Even the CBI have said that low pay in the UK is holding the country back. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/jul/03/cbi-jobs-market-recovery-disadvantaged-skills-young-minorities>

I work for a big bad financial institution and even there it's recognised that inequality is a problem. It's a fact that massive stimulus in the form of QE has helped inflate asset prices, but only those that already own assets (companies and the wealthy) have benefited from this. It's made most other people worse off.

If this economic recovery is to be maintained it needs to broaden and workers in the "real economy" need to start seeing the benefit. Otherwise people won't start buying goods again, corporate profits will stagnate and everyone will lose out, including fat cat investors, pensioners, workers, everyone really.

So there is a will to do something about this, even from a purely selfish perspective from those in the upper echelons of the corporate world.



Helen121 ▶ duerson

05 September 2014 11:12pm

11

Quite a good article on that here - written by a self-acknowledged plutocrat: http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/the-pitchforks-are-coming-for-us-plutocrats-108014_Page4.html#.VAo1FUtH1FI

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Helen121

05 September 2014 11:08pm

6

<http://www.channel4.com/news/malnutrition-health-emergency-dwp-british-medical-journal>



suomilainen ▶ Helen121

05 September 2014 11:31pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



Dailymale666

05 September 2014 11:10pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



royroy

05 September 2014 11:12pm

36

"Poverty" has distracting moral associations; "inequality" doesn't

It's not ideal though. I'm perfectly prepared to accept that there are unequal distributions of merit and effort and the combination of the two, and so I'm OK with there being haves and have mores as a result.

The problem for me is when there are mechanisms put in place to protect wealth in the absence of either merit or effort.

That's about abuse of power and lingering archaic systems of organising society (such as our unfit method of taxation) that need addressing.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

FalseDichotomies

05 September 2014 11:16pm

39



As long as you support a central-bank fractional-reserve system as the sole currency, printing money to an oligarchic system, you will have increasing inequality until nearly everyone is paying rent to a selective few for the use of every item in the world.

Say it isn't so in face of this trivial example: most people to buy a house need to take debt equivalent to decades of their work from a bank that does not have that money but prints it at the spot using the fractional reserve system. This increases the price for the next one in the pyramid. The finance world gets rent from you out of nothing and don't talk about the banks taking risk because the government won't even let the financiers fail and will incentivate the debt taking.

That is where the 0.1% is pushing the 99.9% down.

"Austerity is bad/good" and other things of the sort are a circus.



epinoa ▶ FalseDichotomies

05 September 2014 11:43pm

35

What we need to do is solve the currency and housing issue in one fell swoop.

Take housing out of the capitalist arena and tie median incomes to median rents/prices. The rent/price levels are then controlled by the BoE in a similar way interest rates and money supply are controlled now. If the economy heats up rents rise. If it cools rents fall. Thus discretionary income is used to control the temperature of the economy. Discretionary income levels of the masses is what drives mature economies.

This has the added bonus of -

1. Deflating the housing bubble slowly. It is going to be one hell of a bang otherwise.
2. Making housing affordable.
3. Reinflating the equity markets by increasing cash liquidity.
4. Tying the value of a currency to a tangible (the strength of the economy) rather the intangible fiat free float. It really would be Bretton Woods 2.

The only people that would be pissed off will be property speculatorsand my heart really isn't bleeding there.



KallisteHill

05 September 2014 11:16pm

10

When you can't call a spade a spade you may not be dead and buried, but you are in a deep hole and still digging. You need to stop!

7 PEOPLE, 11 COMMENTS



Helen121

05 September 2014 11:17pm

53

Personally, I think hunger and cold feel the same whether you live in China, Russia, Africa or West Wales. 9 out of 10 of the poorest regions in Northern Europe are right here in the UK: <http://inequalitybriefing.org/brief/briefing-43-the-poorest-regions-of-the-uk-are-the-poorest-in-northern>- as well as the richest. But people are still going hungry. Its time we started measuring absolute poverty in the UK as well as relative poverty, especially with sanctions now being imposed for months on end for tens of thousands? Hundreds of thousands?



huzar30 ▶ Helen121

05 September 2014 11:41pm

9

You've obviously never been to Latvia.



QueenElizabeth11 ▶ huzar30

05 September 2014 11:44pm

44

That will now become my all purpose response to any point made by anyone at any time, anywhere: "You've obviously never been to Latvia."



huzar30 ▶ QueenElizabethII

9

05 September 2014 11:50pm

Yawn

7 PEOPLE, 13 COMMENTS



InternetDemocrats

75

05 September 2014 11:19pm

One day we'll appreciate that it's as immoral to own land as it is to own a person.

After that, we'll make some progress.



nondescript ▶ InternetDemocrats

8

05 September 2014 11:42pm

Nicely said.



inkyblob ▶ InternetDemocrats

13

06 September 2014 12:40am

But, sadly, not as simple as all that. Surely you want to feel

ownership

of some sort over the land your house is on. Otherwise somebody might come along and use it for a purpose you don't agree with. In that event you would hope there is some recourse to legal protection (or, if you're in the US, you would just shoot them - kidding... but only just).

Once you allow ownership (of some sort) over people's homes, you need to define how big a home or plot of land somebody is *allowed* to have. Then it gets real messy. What if said somebody is a farmer who needs a large area of land in order to feed his family - or if the person lives in a city (most people live in cities) but wants a large garden in order to make home-made honey? The possible permutations start to multiply and you get a headache so you start allowing people to 'buy' land with currency. Then some people come along who want to 'rent' land rather than 'own' it and suddenly you've got a load of landowners and you start thinking about changing your surname to Thatcher.



greenholly ▶ InternetDemocrats

1

06 September 2014 12:44am

You've got that right! Why do most people not see it? We could all do

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Phil Smith

17

05 September 2014 11:20pm

Capitalism - in this, it's global structure, is a zero sum game - it is a simple race to the bottom. Change the game or have a 1% versus 99 % sort of a problem, imho, which of course adding the 'transparency' the internet affords us - seems to be what is happening. Is it so difficult to see that this isn't going to work?



huzar30 ▶ Phil Smith

21

05 September 2014 11:42pm

in this, it's global structure, is a zero sum game

SO you failed GCSE Economics then?



SteveRP ▶ Phil Smith

37

06 September 2014 12:06am

Capitalism isn't a zero sum game. Real capitalism has created a huge amount of wealth. The problem we now have is that those who call themselves capitalists aren't, they are gamblers. Gambling is a zero sum game and that is what financial 'services' spent most of their time doing prior to the crash. They then learned their lesson which was that if you can get the taxpayer to underwrite your risks you have a win-win situation and

you can carry on gambling.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



capitalismsmells

05 September 2014 11:21pm

13

It's difficult to take a critique of capitalism seriously if you are unprepared to talk about its insistence on importing and outsourcing cheap labour.

You can't be anti capitalist while you are banging the drums of open borders.



jochebed1 ▶ capitalismsmells

07 September 2014 10:15am

Open borders have nothing to do with it. The Continent has had open borders for decades. Through the EU, it has also had minimal workers' protection, environmental protection, and minorities protection.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



gizmo1990

05 September 2014 11:22pm

46

A very scary article and one which paints a picture of a society we can all, sadly, see around us now.

I believe we'll need some very strong politicians to take drastic actions if we're to pull ourselves back from the brink. That and the population needs to be educated about the fate that awaits us if we don't.

Most of all though we need a strong socialist voice to clearly get these views across and enable the public to find its conscience again.

Depressing though isn't it because I can't see those things happening any time soon..



titterstone ▶ gizmo1990

07 September 2014 12:32am

4

Having over 90% rightwing media does not help.

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Calimocho

05 September 2014 11:25pm

70

There is some evidence that this is because hearts in general have hardened. A recent report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation pointed out that the public expects levels of poverty to get worse, while at the same time "support for welfare spending... is at a historical low"

Hardened, more like calcified. Cameron told people at the height of the floods in January that 'we're a wealthy country' - yet we've got more people using food banks as a means to live? Sanctions are applied to welfare claimants that create huge problems, no more crisis loans but 4 figure interest loan sharks are allowed to proliferate. An acquiescent media supports Smith's War on Welfare yet doesn't question, or demand, evidence for the statistics he produces to validate his performance despite millions of taxpayers' money wasted on his vanity project.

Deciding to sanitise poverty by substituting 'inequality' isn't an alternative proposal, it just gives those with more affluent lifestyles a reason to turn their heads away as it doesn't appear to be of grave concern. Unfortunately it doesn't mean the situation is going to conveniently disappear or that they're protected from any future fallout.



Vicc ▶ Calimocho

06 September 2014 12:24am

37

Yes the narrative that is being pushed at people is all about benefit scroungers without identifying that the real scroungers are those who have their income supplemented by their tenants' housing benefit or the employers whose profits are undiminished as tax credits cover up the low

pay their workers exist on.
I do wish people would question what they are told instead of accepting that austerity is the only solution. Given that the only people genuinely experiencing austerity are at the bottom of the heap, it makes a mockery of "we're all in it together".
Inequality exists but it is not another name for lack of resources where that lack causes housing problems, fuel debt, lack of food and so on. I quite agree with your last paragraph: we cannot and should not sanitise poverty. It's a disgrace that this allowed to continue.



Calimocho ▶ Vicc

06 September 2014 8:25am

15

The [High Pay Centre](#) reported in July that median salaries for 100 FTSE CEO's has increased from £1mil in the '90's to around £5mil. The pay gap continues to widen yet the government prefers to stigmatise those on the lowest wages by capping housing benefit rather than regulate the private rental sector, and continues to pay working tax credits bolstering companies profit margins than push for a living wage.

Now welfare claimants will have to take [attitude tests](#) - what happens if they don't have the 'right' attitude and computer says no?

11 PEOPLE, 15 COMMENTS



MissLanaHunt

05 September 2014 11:26pm

96

My main problem with capitalism is that people are valued as units of productivity, rather than as, well, human beings. Which means when we are feeble in mind or body in some way, we are devalued.

We are not widgets. I want to live in a society that affirms the worth of every human being. Yes, even the ones who steal my umbrellas from coffee shops.

Capitalism prizes property and the accumulation of material goods over human feelings and human needs. It's destroying the souls of the people who live in such societies, which is why the suicide rate is rising everywhere. Capitalism is also responsible for the ongoing destruction of Mother Earth's ecology, because once it's unleashed, it is damned difficult to put back in its cage.

Capitalism literally means 'accumulation of wealth'. So long as that is our society's only value, we will be less than human. I don't think I'll live long enough to see the world change to something better, but I have hope.

Well, actually I don't have any hope. I just thought I'd say that to cheer you up.



digit ▶ MissLanaHunt

06 September 2014 12:12am

15

Actually, your joke at the end cheered me up more. Ta.



diogenesagogo ▶ MissLanaHunt

06 September 2014 12:28am

10

No, people are responsible for the destruction of Mother Earth's ecology. They keep breeding, you see. They bred you (& me) in fact. Capitalism (which doesn't exist - it's an ad hoc attempt to describe how the West, which has the best record of getting people out of poverty, works economically speaking) has worked better than anything else thus far at producing the most people in the least poverty.

I would argue that the main reason for this is it produces the best environment for science & technology to flourish. One of the unfortunate consequences of this, however, is that most of us are no longer required.

This a conundrum that needs solving. Fast.



Voltaire21 ▶ MissLanaHunt

06 September 2014 3:31am

13

Yes, even the ones who steal my umbrellas from coffee shops

xxxRichxxx

05 September 2014 11:29pm

7



If we don't change direction we'll end up where we're headed !

10

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Fomalhaut88

05 September 2014 11:29pm

10

If you ask the Scottish nationalists, the solution to inequality is to draw a border, tell us all how different (and unequal) we are either side of it, how jolly similar we all are north of it, and dump the proletariat south of it. Scottish nationalism is so, like, socialist, isn't it?



gogs67 ▶ Fomalhaut88

06 September 2014 1:45am

5

I don't believe in Nationalism, yet I'm voting 'Yes'. How does that work?



thebeanstalk ▶ Fomalhaut88

06 September 2014 11:14am

6

I have a border between myself and my neighbor. I make my decisions. My neighbor makes their decisions. Its called being independent.

Many of the most equal societies in the world are small. No idea where you get this idea that being ruled by a global government would be a socialist utopia.

4 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



epinoa

05 September 2014 11:29pm

58

A person living on less than \$1.25 is unarguably poor, in every sense. A person living on £13,000 a year is only arguably poor, because the threshold of 60% of median income is a definition of relative poverty.

Oh really? So after tax and national insurance They would be getting about 11.5k Now let's look at somewhere to live. [These shoeboxes in London](#) work out at over 1k a month. Already we can see that this flies past the take-home salary without taking into account council tax, utilities, commuting costs. This isn't relative poverty it is poverty.



kinyo ▶ epinoa

05 September 2014 11:54pm

16

No. True poverty means you struggle to stay alive, and are risking starvation.

Someone earning £13,000/year is not in that position, even in London. They might have to share a room in a dive suburb and be unable to head out drinking in Shoreditch for lack of funds, but that isn't the same thing!



epinoa ▶ kinyo

06 September 2014 12:00am

46

Um did you even read what I wrote? Someone in London would not even be able to afford to live in a 9m square room as their salary would not cover it. The days where you could use the line "move somewhere cheaper" are gone.



diogenesagogo ▶ epinoa

06 September 2014 12:15am

11

Move out of London then

GordonDidIt

15



05 September 2014 11:30pm

The cat on the left in the photo looks obese and will put pressure on the state to fund its self-induced health issues

6



moz66

05 September 2014 11:32pm

Somebody one told me money was nothing more than an exchange. But what a sour exchange it can be. In a global world the walls money created in the past, seem to now be blown apart by the by-products of greed. It should never be about who owns what, but more about who takes care, who picks the pieces up and makes the world better. If you think poverty will go on then what good is an economic system if the very system itself stagnates and doesn't move on. Change the measures of success and seek different values for a new door to open on a better world.

6

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Slo27

05 September 2014 11:34pm

The problem with a more feudal world is that it cannot exist in a democratic society. This means that democracy will destroy the feudal lord, or the feudal lord will destroy democracy.

Either way, it is not a stable and sustainable solution.

We may safely assume that the destruction of democracy is the feudal lord's vision of a favourable outcome. However, even that solution might get stuck in his throat.

Democracy was not established for its ethical values, not really, it was established because stability is in the interest of the wealthy. Some have quickly forgotten how destructive revolutions tend to be. What is the point of destroying everything we have created?

15



ID0126833 ▶ Slo27

06 September 2014 12:06am

Democracy, seriously? Where?

11



Janette Fraser ▶ Slo27

06 September 2014 9:02am

What representative democracy has done is remove the natural process of revolution from society. Like Macaque monkeys - human beings have a natural cycle of revolution which limits the psychopathic element in the gene pool but the illusion of democracy was a temporary pacifier.

However - nobody believes rep dem works anymore and I see a future coming where having a house, a car or wearing decent clothing will be like wearing a sign on your back that says "Please remove me from the gene pool" because even the nicest man and woman will join the revolution if we're pushed too far. And it's the quiet ones you have to worry about...

6



nondescript

05 September 2014 11:39pm

Jesus, reading that was like having a tooth out.

Anyway, we know people are suffering terrible poverty all over the world but that hardly makes a visit to the local food bank any easier. I know people who work in food banks and they say the emotional distress of some of the users is heartbreaking.

Maybe it would help if they knew they weren't poor, but just suffering from inequality!

After thirty years of Thatcherite propaganda, allied to the increasingly harsh aspect of life these days, no wonder people have become more callous.

It's what she would have wanted.

59

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



QueenElizabethII

05 September 2014 11:42pm

32

Middle class British writer "does" poverty. Decides poor elsewhere in world are really poor, "poor" in Britain not so much. Gotta love the British middle class; how they fear and loathe the chav underclass the BBC tells them to fear and loathe.



epinoa ▶ QueenElizabethII

05 September 2014 11:49pm

18

He really is massively out of touch.

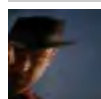


seasicksailor

05 September 2014 11:42pm

9

this is a brilliant essay; thank you



phantlers

05 September 2014 11:43pm

28

How to eradicate poverty - ban the word. Only in the Guardian.



Wolfbone

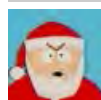
05 September 2014 11:44pm

11

The number of people who think that cuts are good for the economy has been going up slowly but steadily for three years, from 34% in August 2011 (with 51% opposed) to 46% today (with 35% opposed). What these numbers imply, I think, is a lack of belief in narratives about poverty and hardship in the UK. The Great British Public doesn't really think times are as difficult as people say they are.

Why "a lack of belief in narratives..." rather than a surfeit of belief in the false [household budget](#) model of the economy? And, simultaneously but separately, a lack of sympathy for the poor because, as you also pointed out in that article, "right-wing mythopoesis on the subject of welfare seems to have worked"?

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



TheSan TaClaus

05 September 2014 11:46pm

19

The two cats represent Eric Pickles and Ed Milliband.....a true picture of poverty in the UK would be a third flea ridden, patchy fur, underfed and generally decimated cat....which would represent the majority.....who are otherwise referred to as the poor.



epinoa ▶ TheSan TaClaus

05 September 2014 11:51pm

7

That 3rd cat has been photoshopped out by our prof at the Guardian.



GuillotinesRUs ▶ TheSan TaClaus

05 September 2014 11:55pm

1

Eric pickles is only so fat because he ate Eamonn Holmes.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

blueba

05 September 2014 11:47pm

16



The logical outcome of Neoliberal economic policy is a world of workers such as we see in Bangladesh today plus slavery. How long do you think it will be before 12 hour shift clothing factory work at \$3.00 a day will start showing up in Liverpool or Birmingham? Sooner than you think.

19



greenholly ▶ blueba

06 September 2014 12:52am

There are already sweat shops and slavery in the UK, we've seen them on the news. Unfortunately, too few EHOs to find and prosecute the owners and often the workers are migrants who don't know their rights and are too fearful to complain.



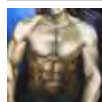
jackhugh

05 September 2014 11:49pm

It's all engineered to be this way and is primed to get much, much worse

17

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



Keith Rowley

05 September 2014 11:49pm

And how this to be solved? I have become so utterly bored and irritated in equal measure by the mordant wailing of journalists who lack the creativity and acumen to propose solutions; they rant and wail and weep and heap ashes on their heads and then expect someone else to come up with the solutions required to build their Utopia. It's a cheap trick, and to paraphrase the Bard, such rantings are replete with sound and fury yet signify - nothing.

18



digit ▶ Keith Rowley

05 September 2014 11:58pm

It's true. This is way too easy.

Rising inequality is not a law of nature – it's not even a law of economics. It is a consequence of political and economic arrangements, and those arrangements can be changed.

But how? This is the thing that's never ever broached. How do you change a corrupt and destructive system sewn up by the wealth of vested interests, that repeatedly shows itself to be utterly resistant to reform? The journalistic blind spot about this question never ceases to amaze me.

15



Colin Campbell ▶ Keith Rowley

06 September 2014 12:20am

I think rather they might signify a disturbing trend of "Shoot the messenger", eh? Journalists don't have solutions - others shall. Whether those solutions involve dismembering and eating the upper class remains to be seen.

8



hamstrung ▶ Keith Rowley

06 September 2014 1:08am

Of which your post is the mirror image

5



mrsogre

05 September 2014 11:53pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

artcrit

05 September 2014 11:54pm

6



We will eventually eat the rich



jackhugh ▶ artcrit

06 September 2014 12:14am

eh?

2



digit

05 September 2014 11:55pm

I think the problem you're really wrestling with here is the complexity of the situation and how to communicate that in a culture conveniently, for some, oriented around fatuity. I'm sorry, but I don't think you've cracked it. You only need to spend a day or two BTL here on CiF to see that 'inequality' isn't going to cut it with the defenders of the status quo. 'Politics of envy' is the first rebuttal I can already imagine. Also, various versions of 'meritocracy' and accusations that 'lefties' like you just want to usher in authoritarian states to kill innovation and entrepreneurialism and make everyone 'the same.'

10

4 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



THX123123

05 September 2014 11:55pm

At no other point in human history have we had the resources and capability to feed, house, and employ every person. We could do this. It isn't a communist pipe dream. It is simply a matter of greed versus need. No single person should ever go hungry or homeless but they do because of price and the need to squeeze a profit. It should be - but likely never will be - the worlds mission to feed, clothe, give access to clean water, house, provide good decent medical provision, fair hours of employment and compensation for labour, etc, etc.

In the Age of Abundance we should all feel ashamed that there are people who have nothing and whose wants will curtail and eventually finish them off.

We have been conditioned to believe that everything is a competition, that it's dog-eat-dog! Government's should be far more sophisticated than what they are today, nothing more than tax collectors without a heart or soul, who are helping out vested interests in dragging us into a neo-feudal world.

Greed is just one of the Seven Sins, so when the hell did sharing get such a bad rap??

Why stop at calling it inequality, why not call it exploitation or serfdom? Until we get governments in the West who are not servants to the global banking cartel then nothing, nada, zilch, will change!

You know the other day I spoke to a guy who drives an Ambulance - he is in Band B and earns just about £15,000 per year!! A guy who potential saves lives every-fucking-day compared to a slime-ball that skims on the financial markets and makes millions!! Think about it.

The only people who can change this is You.

68



THX123123 ▶ THX123123

06 September 2014 12:07am

The only people who can change this is You.

Which includes me btw!! ;)

4



diogenesagogo ▶ THX123123

06 September 2014 12:13am

Not so simple I'm afraid. Two paramedics have treated my 90 year old mum like a piece of shit, so they're not all angels, & I know some well off people who are compassionate & caring; I'll wager a lot of Guardian readers are a long, long way off being poverty stricken.

In fact my income is £5-10k p.a., but I consider myself well off - I'm lucky because I'm able to keep my outgoings to a minimum, which is obviously

11

not possible if you've a young family to keep.

Whatever, the point is poverty is absolute. It's not having food, shelter & warmth. And you'll never eradicate it completely, just as you'll never eradicate murder. All you can do is keep trying to reduce it to an absolute minimum.



hamstrung ▶ diogenesagogo

10

06 September 2014 1:15am

Whatever, the point is poverty is absolute. It's not having food, shelter &



ID7784845

2

06 September 2014 12:01am

I think both poverty and inequality have distracting, if not disturbing, associations. To put it mildly.



ID0126833

8

06 September 2014 12:04am

Land mafias probably ahead.

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One in five UK families can't afford seaside day out

Barnardo's finds 'no-frills' bank holiday trip costs up to £172 and demands urgent action on child poverty

Rebecca Smithers, consumer affairs correspondent

The Guardian, Monday 25 August 2014

Jump to comments (784)



One in five British families can no longer afford a day trip to the seaside, according to research by the charity Barnardo's, which found the cost for a family of four was up to £172. Photograph: Mark Boulton / Alamy/Alamy

The traditional "bucket and spade" August bank holiday outing to the seaside is now out of reach for one in five UK families, the Barnardo's children's charity warns on Monday.

It calculated the cost of a no-frills day at the seaside for an average family of four could be as much as £170 in some areas and was £41 at the very least.

The research was based the cheapest train fare, using a relevant railcard, for two adults and two children aged between five and 15 from a range of cities and county towns to their nearest coastal resort. It also includes the price of staple items such as sun cream, fish and chips and ice cream.

Barnardo's found a day trip could cost up to £172 from Aylesbury to Bournemouth; £127 from Leicester to Skegness; and £96 from London to Margate. The research does not include swimwear, towels, buckets and spades, arm bands or inflatables or extra drinks, snacks and meals.

The UK's poorest families have too little money to cover basic weekly living costs, let alone a trip to the beach, the research found. Their incomes have declined in recent years, due to what the charity condemns as a "toxic mix" of rising living costs and cuts to working and non-working benefits. Welfare changes have included measures that break the link between benefits and inflation.

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40% of British families

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An elephant calf makes an escape after it fell

One in five families have less than £423 a week coming in, based on the government's 2011-12 statistics for households below average income.

Barnardo's said its calculations reveal that a family of four on this income could not afford a seaside trip in any of the popular locations it surveyed. Minimum disposable weekly income for the poorest families is £39.

Barnardo's chief executive, Javed Khan, said: "Family holidays have a special place in the childhood memory box and every child deserves to have a day out once in a while, no matter what their circumstances. Whatever the weather, a day at the seaside with the family is a day to treasure. It is an opportunity for children to spend a healthy, happy time and experience a British cultural tradition; to play on the beach, splash in the sea and build sandcastles. It is an opportunity every child should enjoy."

Khan said prime minister David Cameron had put family life at the heart of government and promoted the "staycation", holidaying with his own family in Cornwall, "yet for hundreds of thousands of families struggling to make ends meet this weekend – a trip to the pier is but a pipe dream".

Barnardo's is calling on the government to the link between benefits and inflation, it says, while ensuring that low income families can keep more of their earnings as the universal credit system is gradually rolled out.



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'too poor to play a part in society'

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48 PEOPLE, 89 COMMENTS



nomenklatura44

25 August 2014 6:09am

147

That's pretty bad - a trip to the seaside, even if it includes miserable British weather, is any child's birthright, but why does everything have to be so expensive? Train tickets especially?



kvix387 ▶ nomenklatura44

25 August 2014 7:00am

208

why does everything have to be so expensive? Train tickets especially?

The alternative is to travel by coach - two adults and two children on a 300 mile round trip would typically cost £40 to £50.

Also, a trip to the seaside is not a 'right'. If you can afford a trip to the seaside then you can go, if you can't then you can't.

Like everyone else, I'm also constrained by what I can afford to do.



etrece ▶ kvix387

25 August 2014 7:11am

439

True, but the fact that so many people can't afford this in the 6th largest economy in the world and birthplace of the industrial revolution is sad.



nomenklatura44 ▶ kvix387

25 August 2014 7:16am

138

Actually, we do have a right to leisure, including holidays - Article 24 of the

9 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



Twisted Stone

25 August 2014 6:12am

20

As soon as universal credit comes out, all that tempting cash in one place....



LearyBiscuitBarrel ▶ Twisted Stone

25 August 2014 12:33pm

13

'All that cash'. Yeah right.



VikingDevil69 ▶ Twisted Stone

25 August 2014 1:05pm

32

... universal codswallop

One in five UK families can't afford seaside day out

Day Out at the ... park?

Day Out at the ... river?

Day Out at the ... anywhere?

Furthest place from the sea in the UK is 70 miles.

Hardly Mao's "Long March" is it.

If people can spend money on excessive mobiles calls, gambling drink, cigarettes and drugs ... they can put a bit away for a "Day Out – beach or anywhere else.

btw – school trips to the coast DO NOT cost £172 per person.



SirCoxoneDodd ▶ VikingDevil69

25 August 2014 1:25pm

7

You old mania

26 PEOPLE, 27 COMMENTS



teaandchocolate

25 August 2014 6:28am

154

Barnardo's finds one in five can't manage a 'no-frills' bank holiday trip

But...but... I thought the recession was over and we were all in it together.....?



mygreatgiddyaut ▶ teaandchocolate

25 August 2014 6:39am

99

One in five families have less than £423 a week coming in

If these families can't look after their children well on that kind of income their children should be taken into care and the parents sterilised/neutered...



plasmoid ▶ mygreatgiddyaut

25 August 2014 6:40am

148

You know that includes housing costs don't you?



55DegreesNorth ▶ mygreatgiddyaut

25 August 2014 6:48am

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



VedVVV03

25 August 2014 6:29am

90

Mark my words. England is slowly turning into India, where a huge section of the

population are allowed to sit, stand straight, are addressed in pejorative part of the language, a minor part is maintained as holy cows, many jobs and professions (especially the manual ones) are seen as dirt and stink jobs, corruption and nepotism is the way to manage successful businesses &c.

Unless some extremely drastic measures are brought into position, there will be no more England. Current day policymakers are quite daft and irresponsible. There is the posterity which has no votes as of now, but has to be protected from encroaching diabolic social systems.



RonJB ▶ VedVVV03

25 August 2014 6:54am

108

Current day policymakers are quite daft and irresponsible.

You think this is an accident? The policy-makers know exactly what they are doing, and who benefits from their actions. Don't equate evil self-interest with bumbling foolishness (did someone say Boris Johnson?).



williamsmpiper ▶ VedVVV03

25 August 2014 7:06am

13

sadly you are correct -possibly its too broken to fix



OxfordDon ▶ VedVVV03

25 August 2014 9:20am

6

Education is one area that UK has gone into the same sink hole that India



mygreatgiddyaut

25 August 2014 6:40am

32

There is the posterity which has no votes as of now, but has to be protected from encroaching diabolic social systems.

Gibberish. Was this written by Google Translate?



TheDecameron

25 August 2014 6:41am

69

And all the time, the rich are getting richer with the connivance of the present government. Trickle down wealth and social Darwinism. Scotland: run while you can! The English are too in thrall to their property boom and busts, their royalty and their soap operas to fight back.

7 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



Vinny Nufc Fries

25 August 2014 6:46am

33

Surely fish and chips is a meal? And a very expensive one these days for a family of 4.

And while I am on thew subject of fish and chips, why do they give you so many chips these days? No wonder there is an obesity epidemic.

Half of mine always end up going to the seagulls.



youmustbejokinghaha ▶ Vinny Nufc Fries

25 August 2014 7:57am

31

The chipshops in some South Coast towns charge 5-6£ for cod and chips. Take sandwiches! I got charged 28£ in one place for 4 x small cod and chips (2 large 2 small). Had it not been an outing for elderly relatives I would have seriously thought twice. Paid a more reasonable £3.70 on Barry Island quite recently.

Fraud ▶ Vinny Nufc Fries

9



25 August 2014 10:23am

With global dwindling fish stocks, fish and chips should not be encouraged, surprised the Guardian have not mentioned this.

3



lufc44 ▶ youmustbejokinghaha

25 August 2014 10:38am

Wembley is worse £10.00 for a pie and a pint

3

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



stoneface1

25 August 2014 7:02am

on our estate we have a thriving food bank....and in the summer holidays we also have a sandbank

28



Cfury ▶ stoneface1

25 August 2014 7:17am

As a nation, we've had our chips.

22



Huples ▶ stoneface1

25 August 2014 10:42am

What a load of old cods whollop :-)

11

20 PEOPLE, 23 COMMENTS



Clive Sinclair

25 August 2014 7:06am

Some very poor people exist in the UK. However, just go to any airport during school summer holidays and see the number of people on benefits going on holiday.

Prices and facilities in UK seaside resorts are atrocious. Many poor people rightly so spend money wisely and do the all in package tour.

Any money left will be well invested in tablets, game consoles...

80



nyasgold ▶ Clive Sinclair

25 August 2014 7:17am

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



ID0238357 ▶ Clive Sinclair

25 August 2014 7:26am

How could you possibly know who is on benefits?

198



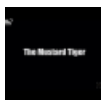
oldships ▶ ID0238357

25 August 2014 7:31am

They are wearing the chav's universal uniform, you know the one that

30

4 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



Theproowler

25 August 2014 7:06am

Did they factor in the price of bringing a packed lunch? (Admittedly unlikely to save a huge amount).

In my experience (Southend) a large number of poor families live in and around the area.

Bernardos conduct research for poor families and suggest a meal of fried fish, chips

24

and ice cream. Is this a typecast or have I been reading the guardian for to long? My next suggestion is to forage for berries as a snack so perhaps I have.



Cynic24 ▶ Theproowler

25 August 2014 10:29am

22

Bernardos conduct research for poor families and suggest a meal of fried fish, chips and ice cream. Is this a typecast or have I been reading the guardian for to long?

I think you are reading too much into that! It's probably fair to say that fish and chips and ice cream are the norm for a large number of people going for a day at the beach - irrespective of how much money they have.



Puppyséal ▶ Theproowler

25 August 2014 10:44am

25

True. Poor people should not be living like the rest of society, that's just immoral. They should be made to catch their own fish if they want to go to the beach, and like you'd suggest, their children should "forage for berries" instead of getting ice cream.



Theproowler ▶ Cynic24

25 August 2014 11:19am

1

Absolutely! To be fair I think the alternative to fish and chips at the sea side

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



nyasgold

25 August 2014 7:07am

76

The NHS has seen a massive increase in cases of malnutrition in children. The Trussel Trust has repeatedly warned this shambolic coalition, that their welfare reforms are linked to the fact that they face unprecedented demand at their food banks. Shelter have warned that the new changes in housing benefit and the likelihood of an interest rate rise, will lead to an explosion in homelessness. There are now an estimated 6 million families with one working parent, living below the poverty line. Every time these facts are highlighted to the coalition, it is denied, or an attempt is made to smear the organisation who have presented the evidence. Carney has just admitted that there is no real evidence that wages are likely to rise with inflation. This is the real effect the Tories long term economic plan, is having on millions of people in this country. Enthusiastically aided and abetted by the pointless Lib Dems, this so called progressive paper continues to endorse.



Marie ▶ nyasgold

25 August 2014 8:25am

25

Very true; coupled with the vast impact government cuts have had on public services like the NHS and local councils, as well as the situation of pay cuts while prices soar...the UK is no longer such a great place to live for ordinary families.



arabeska ▶ nyasgold

25 August 2014 1:57pm

7

Why are children obese, then? They have enough money for food, but instead the parents buy sweets, alcohol and cigarettes.



Brandybuck ▶ arabeska

25 August 2014 2:31pm

11

And you know this how? It amazes me how many CIF contributors have x-ray vision or psychic powers and know the minute details of other people's lives. They either spend all their time spying on other people or it's bullshit.

6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS

M H

68



25 August 2014 7:21am

£423 a week? Most people I know manage on a lot less than that.

41



KingOfMyCastle ▶ M H

25 August 2014 9:31am

£323 goes to a landlord each week.



GrandMoffTanner ▶ KingOfMyCastle

25 August 2014 11:30am

That must be a massive house they are renting then...

11



clouty ▶ GrandMoffTanner

25 August 2014 11:59am

That must be a massive house they are renting then

20

7 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



onajiyane

25 August 2014 7:22am

The only time I got to the beach as a child was on school-outings. Are the days of the school-trip over? I'm pretty sure we kept our clothes on. I didn't own a swim-suit. As for sun-cream, it was never bought in my family. The school-trips were highly exciting days out.

39



hotchalot12 ▶ onajiyane

25 August 2014 8:27am

Them's were the day's....and we were appy!

7



Marie ▶ onajiyane

25 August 2014 8:29am

Health and safety probably wouldn't allow it nowadays...

As a kid in the 70s I can remember being allowed to swim in the sea on a school trip for the first time ever, aged about 8 - fantastic! Don't know if kids go on trips to the cast with school anymore, let alone being allowed near the sea?

12



brendon1 ▶ onajiyane

25 August 2014 9:51am

They certainly do have school trips, but they are usually voluntarily funded

7

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



oldships

25 August 2014 7:26am

It is certainly true as others have said that these seaside resorts have priced themselves out of the market, when far superior locations and weather abroad is available for the same price. No doubt also many of these poverty stricken families that Barnardos mentions are also immigrants, who feel unwanted if they go to places where the indigent people of these Islands go on holiday. So no doubt there are other factors at play here, than those that Barnardos uses in it's propaganda.

21



nysagold ▶ oldships

25 August 2014 7:42am

Yes its the immigrants fault.And of course its propaganda from that well known far left childrens charity, Dr Barnados.

52



youmustbejokinghaha ▶ oldships

8

25 August 2014 8:40am

A day trip to Torremolinos could be done for about £80 London to Malaga plus Gatwick train plus train from Malaga to Torremolinos (about 1.90€ each way.) Ice cream about 2€.....mind you for an extra few cents on the train you could go to Fuengirols. I once had some brilliant fish and chips there. Mind you it was the middle of winter and nowhere else was open. So you could have a day out for a family of 4 for about £450. Less if you drop lucky and book very early. A lot more if you book late in the high season.

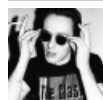


youmustbejokinghaha ▶ youmustbejokinghaha

5

25 August 2014 8:42am

Fuengirols :Qué tantol



Cfury

25 August 2014 7:27am

58

Blimey. How far is this going to go then? Billions/trillions of untaxed income, laws that don't apply to the rich, zero hour contracts, a declining health service and a working class living in poverty. Is it too late to do something about this?

3 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



SugarPlumpFairy

25 August 2014 7:30am

57

Sorry, but this is no change. The nearest we got to a holiday as children in a one-parent household in the 70s was a bus trip (no car) to a town 5 miles away. Nana paid for us to go to Hopton-on-Sea one year, but we never went anywhere in the 70s at all. We did, however, have free school milk, free school dinners and free school uniforms.



pitsmoorian ▶ SugarPlumpFairy

13

25 August 2014 10:59am

Same here, I was one of two kids in a one parent family back in 70's/80's, a rarity back then, we rec'd no money from my dad and my mum was on disability. Holidays were what other kids at school did, tho we did go to blackpool for the day once per year, but that was because back then trains were cheap



dragonbaby ▶ pitsmoorian

5

25 August 2014 1:14pm

Wow eye opener. I was also from a single parent family in the 70s and my mum worked part time in an office job. We had lots of day trips, albeit with packed lunches, and a week holiday at the coast every year, again though this was renting cheaply via a friend. I have always believed things were easier back then, cheaper, better job availability. Guess I was just lucky.



SugarPlumpFairy ▶ pitsmoorian

25 August 2014 2:56pm

Yes, and there were fewer one-parent households. You really stood out in

9 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



Northumbriana

25 August 2014 7:31am

63

It calculated the cost of a no-frills day at the seaside for an average family of four could be as much as £170 in some areas and was £41 at the very least.

What?

My closest beach would cost less than £5, but if I wanted to head up to a nicer beach like Bamburgh or Warkworth with a castle in the background I can do it for £10.

You don't need to buy lunch, you can take a packed-lunch with food that is already in your house. As for ice-cream and gift shops, you don't have to do that either. Keep the kids entertained by taking a football or Frisbee etc, and play with them in the

sea.

£180 for a day out is not no-frills!



LThorn ▶ Northumbriana

25 August 2014 7:57am

23

You are extremely fortunate to live where you do. Try it from where I live in Cheltenham. By the way I lived on Tyneside and in Northumberland for forty years before moving to Cornwall for the next 20 where prices for a day out are even higher due to the holiday clientele.



youmustbejokinghaha ▶ Northumbriana

25 August 2014 8:19am

21

A day on the beach costs me nothing. It's 15 mins walk. A day in London costs 59£ arriving after 10 a.m. Fish and chips are not so easy to find in Westminster, but say £15 for a sandwich meal deal in Tesco Express. £7.50 for 4 ice creams and a trip to a free museum. Kids are now starving so call it £100. Of course I could have taken a picnic and found a shady spot in the park. I could also have driven to a convenient place and taken local transport into town..... There are always ways and means to have a fun day out for a small cost. We always went on camping holidays but someone told me recently that that was very middle class....



Zamindar ▶ LThorn

25 August 2014 8:32am

8

As you are fortunate enough to live in Cheltenham I would presume there



ChrisD58

25 August 2014 7:33am

24

Surely isn't this JUST what this Tory lead, excuse for a 'national government' want? ..to keep the masses poor and desperate, prepared to slog out their guts for part time/zero hours contracted minimum wage to merely survive?!!

6 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



briggstom1984

25 August 2014 7:33am

49

The price of rail travel is scandalous. I need to go from Cheltenham to Heathrow with my wife in November. To drive will take a little over 2 hours. Train will take longer.

Driving will cost approx £40 there and back and £40 to park. So around £80. The train will cost £140 return for us both.

Government says to go 'green' and use the trains, but not for a £60 odd surcharge!



Miamijim ▶ briggstom1984

25 August 2014 7:54am

6

My uncle had an appointment at the Royal London, he wanted to go from Tower Hill to Whitechapel.... two stops, he is disabled and has a degenerative muscle condition, he is also the holder of a free bus pass..... he was quoted a fare of £9, he ended up leaving the tube in search of a bus, which he could get for free.



MarmK13 ▶ Miamijim

25 August 2014 8:15am

20

Sorry, but that is rubbish. A single from Tower Hill to Whitechapel would be £2.80 using an Oyster Card during peak hours as it is a Zone 1-2 journey, or free on a 205 bus from Aldgate.



youmustbejokinghaha ▶ MarmK13

25 August 2014 8:26am

9

Not being a Londoner I arrived recently and needed to get a single ticket and

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



Simon1602

25 August 2014 7:34am

26

This is so true.....you have to factor in all the cost elements.....petrol, food, ice creams etc etc.....to be fair you there's always the option to go on a budget....you can choose a location closer, you can take a packed lunch....but the real point here IMHO is that society is becoming more and more polarised! And that is really not healthy.....I am more concerned about children's access to educational trips....you think the beach is expensive try taking them to London to visit the museums etc...the cost goes up even more....



whood ▶ Simon1602

25 August 2014 9:52am

5

at least (for the moment) the museums are free.



dragonbaby ▶ Simon1602

25 August 2014 1:20pm

5

So true. I grew up on London and regularly visited the museums. Cost tube fare and a packed lunch. We now live in a commuter town just half an hour from central London but for a family of four it costs around 60 pound minimum in train fares. Even if you forego treats such as a pencil from the gift shop to remember the day that's a lot of money for many families.

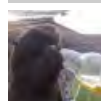


fishplate ▶ dragonbaby

25 August 2014 1:40pm

We now live in a commuter town just half an hour from central

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



briggstom1984

25 August 2014 7:35am

11

Depends how close you live to the beach doesn't it? From where I live it would cost, when using public transport, around the figure quoted above just to get to the seaside.



brituser ▶ briggstom1984

25 August 2014 11:43am

6

Barnardo's found a day trip could cost..... £127 from Leicester to Skegness

Except it isn't.

You can buy a family rail card for £30 (which you can use for a whole year against other family trips)

Then the price of trip to Skegness is £56.10.

Even if you don't use the rail card again, the total for everyone would work out at £86.10p.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



penguinbird

25 August 2014 7:36am

13

I have within the past two weeks in August taken my 9 year old son to both Scarborough and Blackpool for a day at each resort. Sunny and hot on each occasion - yet the beaches were deserted. I suspect that the 'traditional' bank holiday at the seaside does not exist anymore.



Fraud ▶ penguinbird

25 August 2014 10:24am

2

As I live in one of the towns you mention I say not true, the beach is pretty full each good day.

6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



Bunty O'Reilly

25 August 2014 7:37am

47

I think it's sad. We have four children, we both work and yet we're only earning just enough to scrape by and wouldn't survive without our tax credits and other benefits. Where's the dignity in that?



macisadog ▶ Bunty O'Reilly

25 August 2014 7:49am

18

So socialism works then? Dignity is yours and cannot be taken away, enjoy your four children they are the source of your happiness and dignity



MarmK13 ▶ Bunty O'Reilly

25 August 2014 8:22am

70

Children are expensive creatures to keep going, you had free choice to have four nobody forced you. Being quite blunt if you couldn't afford them you should have used 'family planning'.

We stopped at one and did manage to afford to take him on days out.



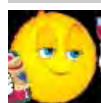
Mick Readdin ▶ macisadog

25 August 2014 10:11am

14

So working hard, yet needing the support of other (Taxpayers, ie you)

9 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



JUDASISCARIOT

25 August 2014 7:37am

49

Just wonder how many people in the "poor families" have a mobile phone and pay the costs? How many smoke?. How many drink? It all adds up. No doubt there are very poor families but..they do got help from the government.....

Poor was 1930s depression.....



Bluejil ▶ JUDASISCARIOT

25 August 2014 7:48am

114

I hate this argument, not poor enough? Hard to get by without a mobile phone today, they are used for everything from school to work, to finding work. Applications are all on line. This isn't the 1930's any more, it is 2015. The attitude where only the wealthy may have things in life, the ability to have a drink, to have children, a home and land is a very poor one.



nyasgold ▶ JUDASISCARIOT

25 August 2014 7:59am

37

1930s Depression were luxury.Im talking Dickensian London.And fancy poor people having the nerve to own a mobile phone,and enjoy a drink and a smoke.Its outrageous.



szwalby ▶ JUDASISCARIOT

25 August 2014 8:07am

56

Wake up. Mobile phones, pay as you go are used by the poorest, because it



toohard

25 August 2014 7:38am

9

It's probably a good job, otherwise the beach in the photo would be even more packed and parking would cost twice as much.



Sunshine88

25 August 2014 7:40am

11

Depending where you live you have to pay to get to a train station. Where I live it would cost family of four with school age children an extra £23 in return bus fare - but you couldn't have a full day trip today as there are only 3 buses today each way.

Can't say that I have ever been to a beach on August Bank we always avoid going anywhere on bank holidays so not a 'tradition' with my family.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



moreorless2

25 August 2014 7:41am

28

Has anyone looked at the weather today? That's the real scandal. Call this a Bank Holiday. Prime Minister should get his finger out.



JUDASISCARIOT ▶ moreorless2

25 August 2014 7:43am

24

With any lick its pissing down over him in Cornwall then.....



trebell ▶ JUDASISCARIOT

25 August 2014 9:23am

6

it is.



claretjimmy ▶ JUDASISCARIOT

25 August 2014 10:00am

3

how childish

12 PEOPLE, 17 COMMENTS



Sasha Fellows

25 August 2014 7:45am

55

I went to the seaside a few weeks back and was shocked at how few people were there compared to a few years ago.

I am no economist, however, you don't have to be to see that this governments Neoliberal-austerity policies are bringing this country to it's knees. Wage cuts, no pay rises, the minimum wage, zero hours and the brutal welfare reforms have destroyed the economy and very few people can afford luxuries. One by one, I've seen the shops in my town become a victim of austerity, leaving only Tescos & Aldis, which is no help if you want a tin of paint or some knitting needles (the lady at our local haberdashery shop brokedown crying when she had to close.) The government's too dumb to realise that the economy will never recover with their austerity policies, when millions can't afford to live. Suffice to say, David Cameron will be one of the select few that is able to visit the seaside and even he can't buy enough ice creams to boost the economy.



Dean Bainbridge ▶ Sasha Fellows

25 August 2014 8:01am

15

And your answer is that the government spends more money? Brilliant and simple, perhaps all countries can do so. No more austerity, plenty of money for everybody, no more poor people.



plakias ▶ Sasha Fellows

25 August 2014 8:04am

33

Most of the "missing" millions are on the beaches in Portugal, Italy, Greece or Spain.



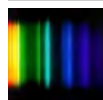
WoodwardRobert ▶ Sasha Fellows

25 August 2014 8:09am

23

Quite right

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



FreddySteadyGO

25 August 2014 7:46am

5

Its an E.U idea.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/fast_track/9644082.stm

I could weep but not tears of pity or joy ...resentment and frustration more like. In common I suspect, with many of the hidden homeless and working poor, the burden will once again fall upon our shoulders to stump up more cash and fall even further down the social pecking order. Families huh? holidays huh? gimme a break! no really, whats this holiday thing? Its something I see other people doing when I get the chance to watch someone elses telly in someone elses home. Poor poor them. So they didnt realise you need to buy things in life before they started breeding....well welcome to the world....welcome to my world and how about a bit of gratitude that at least you can leapfrog the hidden homeless and working poor on the social housing list 'cos childrens innit.



Zamindar ▶ FreddySteadyGO

25 August 2014 8:36am

22

Try being self employed and then ask yourself where the holidays are and can you afford them.

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



BoredwithLabour

25 August 2014 7:47am

6

Perhaps the Guardian should give your job (and that of whoever edited this piece) to one of the 'poor' so they could earn some extra money for a holiday.



leslie48 ▶ BoredwithLabour

25 August 2014 9:08am

3

But your Britain would still have millions of other poor low paid people while others have high pay packages, wealth and capital. The solution has to be at a political, sociological and economic level. Not hand outs. Are you a tabloid reader by any chance (sorry about that)



BoredwithLabour ▶ leslie48

25 August 2014 9:17am

6

This piece is poorly written with errors that should have been corrected before publication. Two 'poor' people should be given chances to do better.



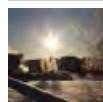
willieb

25 August 2014 7:48am

17

Tories - snobs and their snopsuckers - care nothing for ordinary people.

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



Miamijim

25 August 2014 7:49am

6

I feel very lucky to have grown up in the 70's and 80's near Southend, we had plenty of beach days and many holiday trips to Pontins Camber Sands and even Further afield to Brean, Hemsby, Prestatyn and Brixham, we were not a rich family, my mum had to clean houses to make ends meet, but we never let that stop us from enjoying life to the full.

I feel very fortunate now to live where I do (Northern Finland) surprisingly, we have

beaches no further than 3km from our house, and spent this summer down the beach most days at zero cost except for pack lunches.



macisadog ▶ MiamiJim

25 August 2014 7:52am

6

So on your bank holidays do you go to Birmingham? Your point is what exactly?



leslie48 ▶ MiamiJim

25 August 2014 8:48am

5

I bet Finland does not have many poor people as you seem to have a society like the Danes which is more inclusive. Discuss (maximum 20 marks)



MiamiJim ▶ leslie48

25 August 2014 9:14am

5

Yes we have a very inclusive society. I feel happy that I have had the

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



jonbean

25 August 2014 7:50am

22

How about going to the local park to play? Most local parks are half empty on bank holidays and often have great equipment the kids love. And you can have fun there every day for free.



missfritton ▶ jonbean

25 August 2014 11:43am

9

Nothing is wrong with the park but this is about just how many families can no longer enjoy a simple day out at the seaside. The getting there takes up so much of the cash. Being able to move about your own country at an affordable price should be a right enjoyed by all.



jonbean ▶ missfritton

25 August 2014 12:03pm

2

In the example they were highlighting, the getting there will take up all the day dragging the kids there and back (8 hours round trip!!).

If anyone is that stupid then money is probably not their main problem!

People need to be realistic that travel is expensive and time consuming. Why waste your bank holiday sitting on a train?

4 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



Arty1

25 August 2014 7:50am

29

Skegness in the rain. No thanks.

Very few people live further than a few minutes walk from a park or countryside. Why not try a walk. Take a few sandwiches. It doesn't have to cost a fortune.



Greggrant ▶ Arty1

25 August 2014 8:01am

40

Think you are missing the point of the article. It is not a polemic for going to the beach or selling Skegness, it is to highlight the poverty that exists in the UK today and the effect of that.

They are using the Bank Holiday to highlight it!

Duh



jonbean ▶ Greggrant

25 August 2014 11:11am

13

I think you missed their point. There is plenty of free fun to be had in the local park or woods. Barnardos look stupid to suggest that anyone would want to spend 170 quid stuck with the kids on the train in the middle of the summer instead!



Greggrant ▶ jonbean

25 August 2014 11:45am

2

Please refer to my previous post

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



tomkun

25 August 2014 8:00am

10

Going by coach would save u a bomb.



whood ▶ tomkun

25 August 2014 9:55am

10

And take the whole day.

6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



plakias

25 August 2014 8:01am

25

It is wonderful that 80% of the families in Britain CAN afford a trip to the seaside.



nyasgold ▶ plakias

25 August 2014 8:09am

38

Is that you Jack. And are you alright.



leslie48 ▶ nyasgold

25 August 2014 8:40am

22

Lets hope he does not join the bottom 20% - say if he is made redundant, has to do a very low paid job, part-time work only, has a state pension only, or has a serious road accident, disability, chronic or acute illness or has a family member who needs constant home care- all of these scenarios will reduce his income and put him at the mercy of the Tory government which if re-elected will continue to cut services for another 5 long years.



claretjimmy ▶ plakias

25 August 2014 10:04am

4

I bet all the teachers, fire fighters, LG workers etc can afford it and have the

5 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



Ya_Basta

25 August 2014 8:03am

6

It's tragic really, but appealing to the government hardly seems like the right response.



BoredwithLabour ▶ Ya_Basta

25 August 2014 8:34am

5

'appeal'? The headline says that they're *demanding* action.

itsamadmadworld ▶ Ya_Basta

21



25 August 2014 8:44am

18

What is tragic is that Barnardo's which was once a charity providing practical help for children has now become yet another pressure group spouting nonsense.

As many people have pointed out it is possible to travel far more cheaply by bus or coach. So rather than producing dodgy statistics perhaps Barnardo's should return to its original purpose.



leslie48 ▶ itsamadmadworld

25 August 2014 8:59am

18

So who should do research on the poor? They know the issues which affect

7 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



sacala

25 August 2014 8:04am

34

As a kid in the 70s, we'd go to the seaside by coach, taking our own sandwiches and squash. I don't recall feeling that we lived in poverty - it was just a great day out.

The headline cost of £172 for a day trip from Aylesbury to Bournemouth could be more than halved with a little bit of thought.



michael98 ▶ sacala

25 August 2014 8:13am

8

It would be £100 if booked today for next Saturday on the Nationalrail website for a family of four using a family railcard. Not quite half but nobody should just turn up at the station to buy a ticket unless it is an emergency.



minivanman ▶ sacala

25 August 2014 8:16am

20

I hear you.

As a 60s teenager we would cycle from Croydon to Brighton and back on the old A23.

Bottle of pop and some sarnies made by my old Mum, brilliant



sacala ▶ michael98

25 August 2014 8:21am

1

It would be £100 if booked today for next Saturday on the

8 PEOPLE, 13 COMMENTS



BoredwithLabour

25 August 2014 8:04am

6

One in five UK families can't afford seaside day out

You think poverty is bad here? How many families in North Dakota can afford a seaside day out? Not many at all. That's where you'll see real poverty...



minivanman ▶ BoredwithLabour

25 August 2014 8:10am

11

At around what, 1500 miles to the nearest beach?
Not many I imagine!



hundredhander ▶ BoredwithLabour

25 August 2014 8:13am

19

Oh great, so that's ok then. What are we all complaining about...?!



BoredwithLabour ▶ hundredhander

25 August 2014 8:18am

2

If you really cared about child poverty, you would be concerned. But I guess

3 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



minivanman

25 August 2014 8:06am

20

Rail fare? Nobody can afford rail fares!

How about taking a bus, that's what my single mum daughter did when she took her two little ones to the beach last Saturday. Granted it was only about twenty miles away and granted there was no train link, but still.

Barnardo's must have barnacles for brains.



leslie48 ▶ minivanman

25 August 2014 9:52am

10

But why does UK have the highest rail fares in Europe and the World?



minivanman ▶ leslie48

25 August 2014 11:21am

7

Maybe a mixture of city fat cats, privatisation, and a failure to invest in new rolling stock and infrastructure.

Like many of the old school I'm a great believer in the nationalisation of essential services. Pigs might fly of course.



fishplate ▶ minivanman

25 August 2014 11:48am

1

and a failure to invest in new rolling stock and infrastructure

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Mike Lawn

25 August 2014 8:06am

23

I know it was different then but I remember in the 60s going by bus to Southend from north London which before the m25 took at least 2 hours either way as mum and dad had no car. Things certainly haven't returned to the 60's yet but with the UK's industrial decline it is entirely possible. Is going to the seaside a right? I think the current trip to Southend would cost 10 pounds each by coach and take sandwiches so you could probably do it for far less than barnados figure. Obviously things have moved on since I was a child and peoples expectation levels are much higher. What I am saying is I don't see this as a sign of real poverty.



number1958 ▶ Mike Lawn

25 August 2014 11:40am

3

Please could you tell me, as I would find it genuinely helpful, if you could define your definition of "real poverty" for me, with reference to diet, accommodation, education, clothing, sanitation and heating. Could you describe the exact conditions of life that would qualify as "real poverty" and, more importantly, what you think society should do when that level of poverty has been reached. Many thanks.



michael98

25 August 2014 8:08am

30

I have just checked the Nationalrail website. A family of four could book a trip from London to Southend for next Saturday using a family railcard for £20.90 return. I expect that many could afford this, plus a ticket for the pier and take out fish and chips for all, if not a packed lunch.

ID5088152

25 August 2014 8:23am

11



If you were on Javed Khan's salary of course you would've assume the journey would be via rail, he's probably never been on a coach !

25



Sandmaennchen

25 August 2014 8:32am

25

Alternative headline: train tickets are expensive.



Mrdaydream

25 August 2014 8:35am

20

You can't measure poverty by the cost of the occasional trip to the seaside.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



fran71

25 August 2014 8:38am

9

From Bedfordshire to Bournemouth we drive 134 miles both ways. It cost me £30 in petrol. We took our own food, much healthier than the overpriced crap you can get there. Sorry, no sympathy with those who cannot splash £140 on a day out. I would, however,



Her_Outdoors ▶ fran71

25 August 2014 8:50am

15

Agree on taking your own food and you can entertain yourself for very little money if you avoid the fair and amusements and from my own experience of previously owning a car then petrol and parking costs are much cheaper than public transport. However not everyone has a car due to the purchase and basic running costs.



Brandybuck ▶ fran71

25 August 2014 11:54am

3

Not everyone has a car and not everyone wants to sit in traffic jams all day either.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



43bikeguy

25 August 2014 8:39am

21

Well Cameron went to the seaside and he could afford it, his wages haven't increased. He understands what it's like for us commoners, he's feels the pinch like the rest of us. I'll take my meds now nurse.



B2deuxieme8611K2 ▶ 43bikeguy

25 August 2014 9:22am

2

Where did Satan IDS bring his family for the long weekend? Southend-on-Sea??



sensationnuts ▶ 43bikeguy

25 August 2014 6:08pm

Hope the jellyfish get him



sensationnuts

25 August 2014 8:41am

14

how many of these so called poor people have sky tv, drink , smoke and their poor children wear expensive trainers and have an xbox.



GilbertGoliath ▶ sensationnuts

25 August 2014 8:44am

31

And how many don't? Have you ever asked yourself that question?



merielc ▶ sensationnuts

25 August 2014 8:44am

22

why don't you find out and let us know.



MarmK13 ▶ sensationnuts

25 August 2014 8:48am

12

And how many of them steal the oxygen from your lungs eh?



MadWorld

25 August 2014 8:46am

11

Yet we are told in Tory government propaganda that inequality has come down since 1986 - the ONS back them up.

More people should be able to afford a seaside day out.

We all know this greater equality is a lie - the actual fact of the matter is that inequality has gone up year on year. Compound percentages on fat-cat salary makes a mockery of workers pay rise of a couple of percent (if lucky).

These greedy bosses increase their own wage whilst holding down the workers that make that money.

Indeed, it is beyond greed now - it is avarice - insatiable greed.

I wrote to the CEO & DG of the ONS but they evaded my questions e.g. about the Gini coefficient simply measuring frequency distribution and not the widening gap between poorest and richest.

Needless to say - they evaded my questions. Well, they do work for the Tories.



BritinHK

25 August 2014 8:48am

26

But they can afford dvds, smokes, loads of booze, disposable fashion, expensive brands like Burberry, pets, ready cooked meals, fast food , candies and sugery soft drinks.

It is a matter of choice.



Hottentot ▶ BritinHK

25 August 2014 8:54am

18

What? where precisely is your evidence for that?



MarmK13 ▶ BritinHK

25 August 2014 9:06am

14

You may have a virus on your computer.

It appears that you typed in the address for the Daily Mail but got redirected here.



leslie48 ▶ MarmK13

25 August 2014 9:15am

2

.....Would all correspondence about the Daily Mail please insert the term 'the

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Poverty hits twice as many British households as 30 years ago

The UK economy has doubled in size since the early 1980s – yet the number of those suffering below-minimum living standards has grown by more than twice, a study claims

Steven Morris

The Guardian, Thursday 19 June 2014

Jump to comments (1476)



Basic needs ... the research suggests that one in three Britons live in inadequately heated homes. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

The number of British households falling below minimum living standards has more than doubled in the past 30 years, despite the size of the economy increasing twofold, a study on poverty and deprivation in the UK claims .

According to the study, 33% of households endure below-par living standards – defined as going without three or more "basic necessities of life", such as being able to adequately feed and clothe themselves and their children, and to heat and insure their homes. In the early 1980s, the comparable figure was 14%.

The research, billed as the most detailed study ever of poverty in the UK, claims that almost 18 million Britons live in inadequate housing conditions

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and that 12 million are too poor to take part in all the basic social activities – such as entertaining friends or attending all the [family](#) occasions they would wish to. It suggests that one in three people cannot afford to heat their homes properly, while 4 million adults and children are not able to eat healthily.

Having someone in the household in work does not prevent British families from facing tough living conditions, according to the research, undertaken by the [Poverty and Social Exclusion project](#) (PSE). It found that many households that were struggling had at least one adult in work.

Experts who produced the research, which will be discussed at a conference in London on Thursday, are calling on the government to take action to counter the problems they have pinpointed.

Their findings will be seized on by opponents of the coalition, who argue that good news about the economy does not mean living standards are improving for most people. This will be a key Labour message in the run-up to next year's election.

Other figures being published include the claims that 5.5 million adults go without essential clothing; that 2.5 million children live in damp homes; that 1.5 million children live in households that cannot afford to heat them; that one in four adults have incomes below what they themselves consider is needed to avoid poverty, and that more than one in five adults have to borrow to pay for day-to-day needs.

[Prof David Gordon](#), from the [Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research at the University of Bristol](#), said: "The coalition government aimed to eradicate poverty by tackling the causes of poverty. Their strategy has clearly failed. The available high-quality scientific evidence shows that poverty and deprivation have increased. The poor are suffering from deeper poverty and the gap between the rich and poor is widening."

Led by the University of Bristol and funded by the [Economic and Social Research Council](#), the PSE project's research will be presented to the conference and published in full this week. Gordon said he had been shocked by some of the findings. "In the early 1980s we assumed life was going to get better. For many it has, for many it hasn't."

According to the research, which also involved universities in Glasgow, York, Oxford and Northern Ireland, 21% of households are behind with household bills, against 14% in the late 1990s. More than one in four adults (28%) have skimmed on their own food so that others in the household might eat.

The PSE project argues that its findings dispel the idea that poverty in general and child poverty in particular is a consequence of a lack of paid work. It found that the majority of children who suffer from multiple deprivations live in small families with one or two siblings, with both parents, have at least one parent who is employed and are white.

However, the situation is not all bad, according to the research. Usage and adequacy of some universal services such as buses, trains, corner shops and most children's services has risen in recent years.

The findings will be discussed at the [Peter Townsend memorial conference](#) beginning in London on Thursday.



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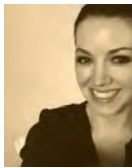

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ishouldbewriting

19 June 2014 1:41am

264



They say it's worse than in the 80s. It is. I was only a kid but I don't remember food banks being around back then. Shops letting you have things 'on the slate' with the debt often not settled until months or even years later, paying so much off per week in the meantime, yes. Food banks, no.

One thing I do remember about the 80s is seeing the look on my dad's face after he'd been made redundant (again). I also remember them going without food so my sister and I could share the tin of soup that was all they'd been able to get from the shop.

I remember sitting in the dark with my coat on, with only a couple of candles to see by, and going to bed very early to save them. I remember being taken to sleep at my

grandparents' flat because it was too cold and damp to keep us at home, and my mother being warned/threatened with social services because I was pretty badly underweight.

I remember the days stretching between 'pay' days, sitting in the DSS and going to the Jobcentre with my dad during the school holidays, and the relief they felt when he was finally able to land another job, which in at least one case must have taken almost a couple of years (and then all the worry because the pay was even lower than in the last one, as oversupply of workers pushed wages for "new" jobs down). I'd say I know real fucking poverty, all right, and if it's worse for people now than it was for us then, I feel as sorry for them as I am ashamed of 21st Century Britain.

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Number of UK youth living in poverty could reach 5m by 2020, says charity

Save the Children accuses main parties of treating Child Poverty Act as 'window dressing' while cutting welfare spending

Patrick Butler, social policy editor

The Guardian, Wednesday 28 May 2014

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The number of children currently living in poverty is 3.5 million, but could rise to 5 million if no action is taken, says Save the Children. Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

The number of British youngsters living in poverty will reach 5 million by the end of the decade unless politicians take their promises to eradicate child poverty seriously, the charity Save the Children has warned.

In an outspoken attack on the political establishment the charity accuses all the main parties of lacking the credibility and willpower to deliver on their shared legal requirement to radically cut child poverty levels.

It says 5 million children – up from 3.5 million currently – will be living in poverty by 2020 if planned welfare spending cuts go ahead and no action is taken to alleviate the growing cost of living pressures on Britain's poorest families.

All the mainstream political parties treat the Child Poverty Act as "window

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dressing", the charity says, and none have a viable strategy to achieve it.

Save the Children chief executive Justin Forsyth said: "Our political class is sleepwalking towards the highest levels of child poverty since records began while promising to eradicate it completely."

Although the three main parties are committed to eradicating poverty by 2020, none of these commitments are "credible" the charity says, because none of the parties has a coherent plan to avoid the crisis.

Save the Children, which is best known for its poverty relief schemes in Africa and developing countries, accuses politicians in Westminster of focusing too much on the pressures faced by middle-income households, and calls for a "renewed focus" on the spread of poverty.

Its report, A Fair Start for Every Child, published on Wednesday says: "Politicians have a choice. Either they should recommit to the 2020 targets and outline the necessarily radical strategy for how they will be achieved.

"Or they should admit the targets won't be met and introduce an ambitious interim plan, outlining what can be achieved by 2020, while keeping the longer term plan of eradication with an achievable but ambitious target date.

"To reiterate the rhetorical commitment while having no credible strategy of achieving it is disingenuous and prevents a real conversation about what political parties will do to help children being left behind."

If Britain fails to reach child poverty targets by 2020, at a time when the economy is recovering, the charity warns we "will have to question our values as a nation".

Save the Children's last significant intervention on domestic poverty came nearly two years ago, when it came under fire from Conservative MPs for launching a fundraising campaign to raise money for its UK poverty programme. Households in poverty are defined as living on incomes that are below 60% of the UK average. The Child Poverty Act sets a target for the eradication of all child poverty in the UK by 2020.

The Save the Children figures take existing Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) projections of a third more children in poverty by 2020 and factor in planned welfare cuts, a calculation which it says could add 325,000 children to the IFS figure.

Welfare spending cuts – which all three main parties are committed to – will exacerbate child poverty levels, the charity argues. However, it points out that child poverty in the UK is also caused by low pay, and that two-thirds of poor children now live in working households.

Save the Children says progress had already stalled on tackling child poverty before the 2008-09 recession as wages failed to keep pace with the rising costs of energy, food and other basic goods.

The charity says that behind the headline figures are stories of real suffering. It says millions of children are living in cold and damp homes, and do not have regular access to healthy food.

Poor children are more likely to have poor physical health, worse emotional wellbeing and impaired cognitive development, the charity claims, all of which have negative impact on educational development.

"We're increasingly worried that unless there is a dramatic change of course we're at risk of writing off the future of millions of British children, giving them an unfair start in life," said Forsyth.

A government spokesman said:

"The government is committed to ending child poverty by tackling its root causes as part of our long-term economic plan. Our reforms will improve the lives of some of the poorest families in our communities by promoting work and helping people to lift themselves out of poverty.

"With the economy growing we have just seen the largest rise in employment for over 40 years and unemployment is falling, with 100,000 fewer children living in workless poor families. Universal Credit will make

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around 3m households better off and lift up to 300,000 children out of poverty"

The shadow work and pensions secretary Rachel Reeves said: "The last Labour government lifted over 1 million children out of poverty, built children's centres and introduced child tax credit. Under David Cameron child poverty is set to rise, not fall, and the cost-of-living crisis has left millions of families struggling to make ends meet."

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3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



numinous

28 May 2014 12:40am

16

Go ask Iain Duncan Smith and George Osborne about it - they're responsible.



socialistnotnlabour ▶ numinous

28 May 2014 12:46am

1

They are only part of the problem.



HeadsGone ▸ socialistnotnulabour

7

28 May 2014 5:59am

A huge part of the problem and a continuing cause of child poverty

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



socialistnotnulabour

5

28 May 2014 12:44am

Welfare cuts have to be reversed but they are only a sticking plaster.

We need to sort out all the causes of poverty and that will mean liberals facing up to their mistakes as well as the right-wing.



RNRDOCTOR ▸ socialistnotnulabour

1

29 May 2014 2:12pm

The liberals have never been in power or had any say, so don't try to drag them into this! If people weren't voting for these right-wing idiots, then there wouldn't be these problems for children who are at the mercy of a merciless capitalist junta!



socialistnotnulabour ▸ RNRDOCTOR

29 May 2014 2:18pm

Liberals took over the Labour Party under Blair.

Liberal views have also had an influence on society.

Some liberal views do help society but they do push individualism as much as the right wing.



ameliaposte

10

28 May 2014 12:59am

Its report, A Fair Start for Every Child, published on Wednesday says:
"Politicians have a choice. Either they should recommit to the 2020 targets and outline the necessarily radical strategy for how they will be achieved.

"Or they should admit the targets won't be met and introduce an ambitious interim plan, outlining what can be achieved by 2020, while keeping the longer term plan of eradication with an achievable but ambitious target date.

"To reiterate the rhetorical commitment while having no credible strategy of achieving it is disingenuous and prevents a real conversation about what political parties will do to help children being left behind."

If Britain fails to reach child poverty targets by 2020, at a time when the economy is recovering, the charity warns we "will have to question our values as a nation".

There are so many arguments in favour of meeting the original targets. Aside from it being the morally right thing to do even if you take a purely economic view of things, the outcomes for children left in poverty will be worse and this will cost the state money.

I find it disgusting the case has to be made again for helping children born to poverty in such a rich country as this one.



hammond

13

28 May 2014 1:04am

There is a time bomb insidiously building up with all this greed and blame by the political class. Inequality will lead to a social breakdown, unless the banks are finally brought to heel, nationalised, along with the power and railways and education. Then

we can start dealing with the appalling social issues this corrupt system has left us with.



TylerBurden

28 May 2014 1:05am

9

Youth poverty, working poverty, living poverty. They are all the same. The back of this country has been broken under the guise of the 'financial crisis'. America recovered from the depression because it was a genuine rookie mistake it would seem, and politicians cared. Where is our recovery? They spout diatribe of 'growth', but I see it nowhere. Yet as long as people can afford to go out of a weekend and keep their phone and internet running, they're not arsed.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Zarathustra2012

28 May 2014 2:26am

4

Could the Child Poverty Act include the provision that prospective parents (haha) might consider whether they might have the funds to bring a child into the world? Just a thought.



AlexCheshire ▸ Zarathustra2012

28 May 2014 1:23pm

5

Bringing up a child is a commitment for twenty years or more. How many of us have a job, that we know will be there in five years never mind twenty. Ill health can strike anyone, at any time. That's why we pay taxes. Or do you suggest that only the rich should be allowed to breed?



negociatrice

28 May 2014 4:35am

12

Shame on Britain.



HeadsGone

28 May 2014 5:57am

10

"political parties treat the Child Poverty Act as "window dressing""

Sums Westminster up totally -

make a promise

enshrine it law

Ignore it totally - just trick the voters.

And this Government should be prosecuted



leslie48

28 May 2014 8:02am

3

Labour should be getting the 18 yrs to 21+ registered to vote. But I expect they are not clever enough for that. Obama got the young registered in his key Swing states which helped beat the powerful Republicans. So its not such much the middle class or students - its working class/unskilled who need to grasp the realities of power. In my Herts suburban area the elderly middle class caused a traffic jam outside the polling stations in their endeavour to vote last week. Contrast that with the less well off, less educated youngsters interviewed on TV in down town Bradford or Leeds who said they do not vote, do not understand it and its boring to them. It's not in the Tory areas. The alienation and ignorance of politics of less educated lower working class youth is a triumph of the power of our wealthy classes.



HarryManchy

28 May 2014 8:03am

2

Save the Children. Save them from a love poverty , same them from Gove and the education industry, save them from the entertainment industry, save them from the pharmaceutical corporations industry, save them from the mass fat-food industry, save them; for the love of god, save them..



JezKeen

28 May 2014 9:58am

2

Labour took one million kids out of poverty and the Tories and their LibDem enables have quickly reversed this.

Labour are being repeatedly savaged by the pernicious right wing media and being cowed into talking the same evil Tory language.

When in power Labour will reverse this trend,they just cannot shout about it too loud until they are over the line.

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'The welfare state is not about dependency: it is about opportunity'

In her new book, *Austerity Bites*, Mary O'Hara argues that Cameron's dismantling of state support betrays future generations of poor children



Mary O'Hara

The Guardian, Wednesday 28 May 2014

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The social safety net is a vital economic tool: 'We all do better if our poorest citizens do better'. Photograph: Christopher Thomond

On a freezing cold day in the winter of 2012 I was driving around an English inner city with the chief executive of a small voluntary organisation who was explaining how the area she worked in – one of longstanding deprivation with well above average levels of child poverty – had seen some improvements prior to 2010 thanks in part to cash injections from government neighbourhood renewal programmes. There were physical indicators of development such as well maintained public spaces and also less visible (but no less vital) proof of how government grants had helped to cultivate projects, including the youth services run by her organisation with the help of local volunteers. She was immensely proud of what had been achieved.

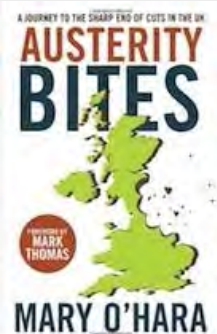
Austerity bites: A Journey to the Sharp End of Cuts in the UK

When the conversation moved on to what was happening under the government's

Today's best video



by Mary O'Hara



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unprecedented [austerity](#) programme, she choked up. She asked not to be put on camera for her interview: "because I will cry".

This was a person with a long and accomplished career in the voluntary sector, who had worked with people in poverty for many years. Tough times were nothing new to her. But the fact that the community organisation she was running had to terminate some of its most effective services and lay off staff owing to cuts in government grants was clearly getting to her.

"It's different this time," she said of the government's austerity masterplan. "It's deliberate. We are doing the best we can, making what we have stretch as far as possible, but I'm not sure how much longer we can keep doing that."

By the time David Cameron stood up in London at a lord mayor's banquet in front of the financial elites in November 2013 and ostensibly admitted (from an ornate golden throne, no less) that austerity was not an emergency response to testing economic times after all, but a [permanent disassembling of the state](#), neither longstanding critics nor the people at the sharp end of three and a half years of cuts were surprised. Bombastic and buoyed by the recent news of an economic upturn, Cameron revealed his true colours. He talked of forging "a leaner, more efficient state", and uttered the words many felt he had been holding back since 2010, when he claimed that he was imposing cuts out of necessity.

"We need to do more with less. Not just now, but permanently," he said. There it was – a declaration of permanent austerity. It was the dream even Margaret Thatcher hadn't dared to dream.

As I travelled across the UK in 2012 and 2013 conducting interviews with people living with the effects of austerity and examining the ways in which it has scarred individuals, families and communities, I encountered a kind of anger and resistance. These weren't people going on marches or waving placards or joining campaigns. These were people working on the front line or silently existing, who, when someone finally put a microphone in front of them and sought their opinion, grasped the opportunity, because otherwise they were too busy day-to-day coping, caring and providing, to speak out. But they were still ardent in their opposition. They could see what was happening to themselves, their neighbours and their communities and were crying out for a voice.

Many had constructive ideas to put forward for how things could be improved, and many were adamant that if things did not change for the better soon – especially for young people – serious episodes of social unrest like the riots of 2011, where hundreds of people primarily from disadvantaged areas took to the streets during days of violence and looting, could happen again. As one person in Birmingham told me: "All it will take is one long, hot summer."

In Glasgow, David Martin expressed the views of a number of interviewees: "We have the bankers' pay rises of millions and the super rich's cut in tax rates. This seems to the people on the street [as] the government looking after its own. People are angry at this and I think if things keep going the way they have been and the anger rises there may very well be people out on the streets."

What the myriad opposition to austerity represented was something much bigger than the sum of its parts. The groups and individuals speaking out held up a moral mirror to the politicians who were the architects of austerity, and to those in society who remained silent or complicit as injustice grew. Most importantly, they were a reminder, with each interview, each campus upset, each arrest, each petition and each wheelchair chained to another, that the belts being tightened were not those of the rich but of the poorest, most marginalised and most vulnerable in society. We were not all in this together. We never were. And if austerity was to be allowed to become a permanent fixture of the British state, then what was at stake was that we never would be.

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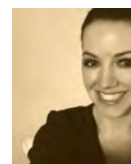
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If there was one overriding message from the journey I made around "Austerity UK", it was this: people are only prepared to take so much. The women I interviewed in Croxteth, Liverpool, such as Debbie, a local community worker, were resolutely of this view. "If Mr Cameron thinks he's getting away with this he's got another thing coming," she said. "It may take people to hit rock bottom, but we'll fight him. We'll end up fighting him – definitely. We can't constantly let him do that to us. We are good people. We're nice people. We want our children to have the best. We bring our children up with good values. None of us is lazy. If he thinks he's getting away with it he's not. End of."

When I go into deprived communities and talk to people who are struggling, it feels almost like going home. I don't have to put myself in their shoes because those were my shoes until, at the age of 18, I escaped "the poverty trap" thanks in part to outstanding teachers and visionary schools that taught my fellow pupils and myself that we had as much right to aspiration and achievement as people from wealthier backgrounds. I was the first person from my family to go to university, and the first in my inner-city comprehensive to get to Oxbridge. Because of this it matters deeply to me that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are given opportunities on an equal footing with their wealthier counterparts.

It matters to me that current and future generations of poor children are not relegated to the margins of society and made to feel that they or their families are skivers – as was so vigorously being preached by "austerians" and neoliberal elites in Austerity UK.

When I was 10, my father, a 36-year-old bricklayer who had worked every day since he left school at 14, became unemployed due to health difficulties within the family. Despite our family's misfortune, thanks to the [welfare](#) state I was able to live in a home fit to be lived in because we were provided with a council house that meant we had basic amenities like an indoor toilet and bathroom. Thanks to the welfare state I had libraries to go to and a nutritious free meal at school every day. I had free eye tests and a subsidised school uniform. I was able to fulfil my potential because the welfare state provided me with some of the essentials in life. It gave me a fighting chance.

What is so rarely understood – and what has been under direct attack during austerity – is that the welfare state is not about dependency: it is about opportunity. Done well, it is a life raft when times are tough and a springboard to better things.

The social safety net envisaged at the end of the second world war, and supported and upheld by successive governments over many decades, was designed for that purpose. It was a potent signal that we had moved on from less enlightened times, and that fairness and justice had a central place in our government and our society.

I consider myself to be a graduate of the welfare state – and I am proud of it. I know the crippling shame of poverty and what it feels like to internalise that shame, but I also know the liberation of moving beyond it and, therefore, why supporting those less fortunate within our society is not just desirable, but necessary. We all do better if our poorest citizens do better – it is the most fundamental riposte to neoliberal individualism and to austerity.

In the course of researching and writing my book and observing the impact of the systematic dismantling of the welfare state, I have become more convinced than ever of its importance, its nobility and its role as a force for good. Yes, it could be improved. Yes, it needs to adapt. But to lose it? That would be an indictment of us all, and an inexcusable betrayal of future generations.

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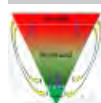
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13 PEOPLE, 22 COMMENTS



wesg

28 May 2014 8:24am

270

this needs to be shouted from every rooftop, be plastered on every bill board.

austerity was only ever a spiteful attack on the most vulnerable is society, because that group was least able to protect what little capital it had access to.

thanks for the time you have put in addressing these crimes.



CaptCrash ▶ wesg

28 May 2014 12:49pm

236

Without an NHS I would be dead at a few hours old.
Without an NHS I would be disabled at the age of 21.
Without child benefit and unemployment benefits I would have starved.
Without Housing Benefits I would have spend much more time homeless
Without a Comprehensive school education I would never have seen a computer in 1981.
With industry geared up to receive youth, I have been continuously employed since 1984
If I had taken advantage of university... I might have had an even wealthier time.

As an adult, I earn £60,000 a year an am proud to pay tax and NI to provide the same opportunities I had.

I am asahamed of those who are pulling that ladder away from our youth.



gtegte ▶ CaptCrash

28 May 2014 3:46pm

20

So other countries don't have the NHS. Must be swathes of dead people across Europe.



lecturer23 ▶ gtegte

28 May 2014 4:09pm

69

every country in Northern Europe has a health care system that covers poor

20 PEOPLE, 28 COMMENTS



Mizzentop

28 May 2014 8:26am

96

"Done well, it is a life raft when times are tough and a springboard to better things".

I don't think many will disagree with this comment and its exactly this ethos the Government is following. The Welfare State was designed as a safety net to catch those in need and push them back into productive life. However, in recent decades it has become a permanent state of affairs for too many people in this country. Making people dependent is cruel and wrong; giving them a hand up to make the life better themselves is absolutely right.

And please - can we stop with the "Cameron dismantling Welfare State" nonsense - it just isn't true. Complain about the fact that benefits are rising at a rate that is less than inflation by all means - that's what's happening. But if you feel your argument on the actual facts is too weak, please don't make up straw men to knock over. None of the main parties are dismantling, abolishing or doing away with (choose your own exaggerated term) the Welfare State. The Government is carrying out reform to return it to the ethos of its founding fathers in the 1940's Labour Party. It is truly progressive.



jessthecrip ▶ Mizzentop
28 May 2014 10:54am

223

It is truly progressive

No it isn't. Certainly not where disabled people are concerned. This government is cutting funding for so much support for disabled people - Access to Work, DLA (both of which help disabled people hold down jobs), the Independent Living Fund, plus care support is being badly affected by cuts to Local Authority budgets. The Tories closed down the last Remploy factories and next to none of those workign there have found alternative sustainable employment. And we all must know by now about the extreme trauma suffered by those disabled people being put through the iniquitous Work Capability Test and losing desperately needed income. In fact disabled people, already one of the poorest groupings in society, are losing an estimated £28 billion over the life of this parliament. And at the same time the richest 1000 saw their assets rise by £70 bn in the last year. Progressive? Don't make me choke.



grundrisse ▶ Mizzentop
28 May 2014 11:22am

210

What utter rot. The specious argument, accompanied by moralising crocodile tears, that making poor people even poorer is somehow helping them is nothing more than mendacious ideological claptrap. There are numerous reasons as to why people need state support, particularly where they are increasingly exposed to the chill winds of rampant globalised turbo capitalism, that treats the workforce as a highly disposable commodity.

1. This government is on an ideological crusade to turn the clock back to an era where the rich can cast of their obligations to society as a whole, while continuing to benefit from its shared resources while freely use their market power to exploit their poorer fellows without restraint.
2. As we are now aware, the wealthy in the UK are increasingly composed of parasitical rentiers, from bankers to Buy to Letters, a constituency that is likely to expand over time if left unchecked or, as is the case at present, vigorously supported by the state..
3. Automation and outsourcing means that the capacity for many to find work that provides anything beyond bare subsistence will be an increasing problem in the future, in spite of what our wholly misleading employment statistics suggest.
4. Why is it that the right wing constantly hand wring about the 'cruel and wrong' situation of those who are provided with a pittance by the state, while at the same time they are wholly relaxed, in fact vehemently in favour, of tax concessions, subsidies and vast inheritances (which the current government is looking to extend) providing unearned windfalls for successive generations of the already privileged? Is it that the poor are 'corrupted' by the least concession, while the 'morally superior' rich remain uncorrupted by financial dependency?

What hypocrisy. .



grundrisse ▶ grundrisse
28 May 2014 11:24am

6

Apologies for the typos!



mickchampion
28 May 2014 8:27am

35

This government has learned nothing from history they are deliberately sowing the seeds of revolution, witch with technology will leave no ware in the world for the parasitic bosses to hide as in the past, a never ending nightmare with any luck.



FluffyKitten

28 May 2014 8:28am

133

'The welfare state is not about dependency: it is about opportunity'

Beautifully put. We must reclaim the argument on this before it's too late.



MutantNinjaThinktank ▶ FluffyKitten

28 May 2014 8:42am

68

'The welfare state is not about dependency: it is about opportunity'

Beautifully put. We must reclaim the argument on this before it's too late.

Its not about opportunity if you find yourself supporting successive generations of the same families; in that case its about permanent dependency. Far better IDS's tough love than that.



Wolfbone ▶ MutantNinjaThinktank

28 May 2014 9:08am

97

IDS is a ~~deluded~~ ideologue and, like many a dangerous quack, he may well genuinely love the people he is grievously harming with his social policy snakeoil, but it certainly isn't "far better".



traineeanarchist ▶ MutantNinjaThinktank

28 May 2014 9:32am

93

I know exactly what you mean

10 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



ToryFTW

28 May 2014 8:31am

81

Whereas bankrupting the entire country would have worked out so well for the poor.

Looks like the lefts faith in the magic money tree remains strong.



FluffyKitten ▶ ToryFTW

28 May 2014 8:34am

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



traineeanarchist ▶ ToryFTW

28 May 2014 9:29am

154

The bankers showed great faith in the magic money tree and it worked a treat for them as their faith was rewarded by the billions it produced.



RainyDayWoman7and25 ▶ ToryFTW

28 May 2014 11:32am

101

In ToryFTW's world of ultra-right myopia, moral bankruptcy, cognitive

9 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



Korkie

28 May 2014 8:36am

60

While I'm law abiding, I can't help hoping you are correct about the unrest that may come, as I feel it is the only thing that will stop cameron & co ... can't see any political party truly standing up to the rich, the tax dodgers, and those who prefer to preach division and hate.

ToryFTW ▶ Korkie

28 May 2014 8:52am

48



as I feel it is the only thing that will stop cameron & co

The only thing? What about the general election in less than 12 months?

Democracy doesn't seem to suit many lefties unless their own party is in power... which kind of undermines the entire point doesn't it?



traineeanarchist ▶ ToryFTW

28 May 2014 9:22am

59

There is a saying that if by voting you could change anything then it would have been banned by now.



Billlogan ▶ ToryFTW

28 May 2014 11:40am

20

Proper socialists don't believe in democracy. If nothing else, history has

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



MutantNinjaThinktank

28 May 2014 8:39am

18

Evil Tories on austerity;

We need to do more with less. Not just now, but permanently," he said. There it was – a declaration of permanent austerity. It was the dream even Margaret Thatcher hadn't dared to dream.

Labour white hats from their Zero Based Spending review document; same policies but with added empathy

First, building on the ideas in this document each Labour shadow ministerial team will prepare a report on Public Service Reform and ReDesign setting out how we now deliver better public services with less money, involving employees, charities, and the voluntary sector in our deliberations, as well as business and public providers, employer groups and trade unions

This is what the future looks like, for better or worse.



angryboy ▶ MutantNinjaThinktank

28 May 2014 12:46pm

14

Yep, no matter whose in power the arithmetic stays the same.



karleker ▶ MutantNinjaThinktank

28 May 2014 2:34pm

5

So Labour wish to carry on with austerity if they win the next election.



Adrian Whiteley ▶ karleker

29 May 2014 2:01am

I predict a tie between Tory and Labour.

11 PEOPLE, 14 COMMENTS



rustinpeace

28 May 2014 9:02am

63

The usual tripe about 'evil Tories' is already spewing out below the line. I fail to see how propping up several generations of the same families gives them 'opportunity', aside from the opportunity to live for free on someone else's dime.

For the Left, 'opportunity' and 'equality' means 'being given a larger slice of someone else's money'.



traineeanarchist ▶ rustinpeace

28 May 2014 9:27am

109

We propped up the bankers by giving them a 'large slice of someone else's money'.



rustinpeace ▶ traineeanarchist

28 May 2014 9:37am

52

Ah yes, the 'two wrongs make a right' argument, also known as 'but, but, the bankers!'. I won't get in to the debate about whether or not bailing out the banks was the right thing to do, but just yesterday Mark Carney spoke of a need to end the era of 'too big to fail' – i.e. banks must be allowed to go bust, rather than be propped up with our money. It appears we will *at least* break even on Lloyds, if not realise a profit on the state's investment. That said, RBS is going nowhere fast.

However, none of this relates in any way to welfare reform. Crowing about 'The bankers! The bankers!' seems to be a convenient way for people to try and change the subject and avoid having to confront the actual subject at hand.



MartyMcFlytipper ▶ traineeanarchist

28 May 2014 10:49am

21

A necessary evil or perhaps you would rather have seen your pensions and



ally07

28 May 2014 9:04am

77

What is so rarely understood – and what has been under direct attack during austerity – **is that the welfare state is not about dependency: it is about opportunity**

Exactly why the Conservatives want it dismantled.

11 PEOPLE, 18 COMMENTS



Robin7

28 May 2014 9:09am

41

So the left continues to believe in the magic money tree and its ability to cure all ills. Not content with thirteen years of tax credits, housing benefit, disability allowance, it appears the left wants more.

When will the left understand that state handouts do not work, never have worked and never will work? The sooner the left follows the examples set by the private sector the better. The sooner there are more NHS hospitals being run by Circle the better. The sooner the NHS turns a profit the sooner the service will improve, morale will improve and the people who work for it will feel empowered rather than entitled.

But, naturally, I don't expect you all to come around at once. After all, the millions on the left who spent decades shouting about how awful was the plight of miners, steel workers and dockers are now the same p[er]ople shouting about how much these were real jobs and they want them back. You don;t really know what you want, do you? Which is why you need the Tories to stay in government and tell you how to do it for quite a long time until you have learned your lesson that the state delivers nothing except defeatism, despair and delusion.



traineeanarchist ▶ Robin7

28 May 2014 9:20am

65

The example set by the private sector?.....what that seems to imply is that we all just go out and grab what we can regardless of who we rob....and perhaps that is exactly what is going to happen if we live our lives by the moral compass used by the private sector.



Robin7 ▶ traineeanarchist

28 May 2014 9:41am

34

and the 'moral compass' provided by the public sector?.. so far all I see are hospital infections, whines about A&E closures, whines about the ripping up

of Blair's absurd GP contract, whines about people being so inconsiderate as to fall ill at the weekend and require treatment, whines about money; there is never enough of it.

The so called 'moral compass' to which you refer has never existed in the public sector. Its self righteous posturing should have told you that years ago. Had this very compass existed we would never have had Blunt, Burgess and Maclean, we would never have had MPs expenses and labour politicians hurled into jail, we would not have had lobby gate, nor the scandalous degradation of the education standards in the UK after a plea for 'education, education, education. Indeed, it appears that every time we make the public sector responsible for upholding a public good it responds by kicking us in the nuts and asking for more money.

So, no, I don't believe the example set by the private sector is merely to go out and grab what we can; it is to go out and stand on our own two feet rather than appear on reality TV shows boozing it up in Magaluf while pleading inability to perform any kind of work offered. The morality of the private sector is a protestant morality of self reliance and support not the deadening statist morality of defeat and dependency.



rustinpeace ▶ Robin7

28 May 2014 9:44am

19

Great post: spot on

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



traineeanarchist

28 May 2014 9:16am

51

Why should any of the spoon fed politicians in our parliament concern themselves with poor children....they don't know any and have isolated themselves from the real world.

They believe that 'poor children' are the product of skivers, immigrants and those not of their class who bring it on themselves.

The only way to tackle the self-inflicted poor is by austerity, austerity and more austerity and blame them for all the inequalities which arise from a nation of two halves which gets worse by the day.



Adrian Whiteley ▶ traineeanarchist

29 May 2014 1:57am

The haves and the have-nots.



peterberesford

28 May 2014 10:14am

47

Great article, looking forward to the book. of course what is a problem for most of us, is a solution to this government and its friends. They clearly want us all to return to the Days of Downton Abbey. Trouble is people think they'll be the nobs upstairs. more likely they'll be grubbing for a job below stairs. Keep up the good work!!

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Sasha Fellows

28 May 2014 10:17am

65

If you want to see the true measure of a man, watch how he treats his inferiors, not his equals **JK Rowling**

Sadly, the treatment of the poor by the top 1% is unconscionable and you don't have to be a prophet to see that there's big trouble on the horizon, because people are just

[Nine Meals Away from Anarchy](#)



gtegte ▶ Sasha Fellows

28 May 2014 3:57pm

12

Quite. With 30% only having enough cash to last a month before hitting that barrier, its frightening.

After all people have been paying tens, hundreds of thousands of pounds in

NI for such eventualities.

Care to guess how well the investments are doing?



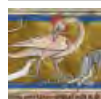
Adrian Whiteley ▶ Sasha Fellows

29 May 2014 1:56am

1

Who is to judge who is inferior anyway? Only those who have broken the law would I look down on but I don't spend my whole day doing so.

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



JimmyLoser

28 May 2014 10:20am

28

Ah, this reads like it *wasn't* written by a London-based Guardian staffer who went to nice schools. It smacks of authenticity. Eloquently done.



MartyMcFlytipper ▶ JimmyLoser

28 May 2014 10:37am

9

Why the cynicism? I am sure The Guardian retain a few state educated writers for articles such as this.



Sasha Fellows ▶ MartyMcFlytipper

28 May 2014 12:49pm

10

having empathy for your fellow man isn't restricted to the "lower classes" there are some very rich philanthropists, however, they are as rare as rocking horse manure I grant you.

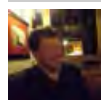


DrHfuhrurr ▶ MartyMcFlytipper

28 May 2014 1:56pm

2

Not many mate not many



Colin McCulloch

28 May 2014 10:27am

9

Well said.



MartyMcFlytipper

28 May 2014 10:35am

49

The liberal elite who privately educate their children and then make sure they have a nice little job lined up on graduation are just as guilty of denying opportunities to the poorest in society.

4 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



MIAsin

28 May 2014 10:37am

48

And lest we forget, David Cameron and Samantha Cameron (earl's daughter) were **both very grateful** for the aid given by the public welfare organisation known as the **NHS**, for helping them during the difficult time with their disabled son, Ivan.

They didn't use the superior private medical services although they were more than able to afford such superior medicine

Here are some choice quotes from David Cameron:

"The **NHS is vitally important to every family** in this country. It certainly is to mine. When your family relies on the NHS all the time – day after day, night after night – **you know how precious it is**. So for me **it's not just a question of saying the NHS is safe in my hands**. My family is so often in the hands of the NHS. So I want them to be safe there."

David Cameron 2006

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/feb/25/david-cameron-on-ivan>

Bruised by the transatlantic row over the health service, in which a Tory MEP dismissed the NHS as a "60-year mistake", Cameron described it as a "fantastic and precious fact of British life"

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/aug/20/david-cameron-defends-nhs-ivan>



silver12345 ▶ MIA sin

28 May 2014 11:26am

35

They also claimed DLA which they were entitled to do even if it was morally wrong.



MIA sin ▶ silver12345

28 May 2014 11:33am

20

silver12345 said:

They also claimed DLA which they were entitled to do even if it was morally wrong.

Cameron would have too many bedrooms in his house to claim it now, surely?

He banged shut that stable door after he and the wife had already bolted, it seems



MIA sin ▶ silver12345

28 May 2014 12:07pm

7

silver12345 said:

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



MartyMcFlytipper

28 May 2014 10:43am

44

The welfare state is not about dependency, its about opportunity

So why did Labour leave a whole underclass to rot on benefits rather than grasping the nettle and investing in creating opportunities for the poorest?

Despite the hot air I suspect the elite from across the political spectrum don't really want Jordan, Jayden and Kai competing for Oxbridge places with Lex, Libby and Bea.



Vandervekken ▶ MartyMcFlytipper

28 May 2014 3:04pm

14

Can you please explain exactly how Labour, the party that has done more to introduce savage levels of conditionality into the social security system than any other, encouraged welfare dependency during a time of massive economic growth?

According to [this graph](#), The UK unemployment rate fell lower under New Labour than it had been under any of the Tory governments since 1979 and it's pretty obvious that high unemployment generally correlates pretty well to recession/boom cycles, and has bugger all to do with party politics. How does this fit in with your bizarre worldview?



Tim999 ▶ MartyMcFlytipper

28 May 2014 3:06pm

Is that the job of government?

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

nameless

28 May 2014 10:44am

14



No-one should be ashamed of the life they are born into. Only the actions they do or don't take.

25



MartyMcFlytipper ▶ nameless

28 May 2014 10:52am

25

Unless their surname is Windsor, Cameron, Osborne, Johnson or anyone else not on the approved list.

6 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



NizwaNed

28 May 2014 11:08am

34

"The welfare state is not about dependency: it is about opportunity. Done well, it is a life raft when times are tough and a springboard to better things." Therein lies the problem, it is not being done well. Open your daily newspaper and you are bombarded with stories of people who openly declare they have no intention of ever working because the present structure of welfare allows an alternative lifestyle to live free at taxpayer expense. Tell me about the "poor" when you have sorted that out.



icouldbewrong ▶ NizwaNed

28 May 2014 11:37am

49

Hmm open any paper? Right that's a truly representative sample then? Not daily mail express etc backing their political masters. Interesting how i have yet to open a paper with exposes on the lives of bankers who caused and now profit from the crisis on 45billion of taxpayers money... Sigh. Undoubtedly a few people exist with these attitudes but they are a minority. Please try to understand how editors of mail etc work. And yes i know someone who works there...



AlexCheshire ▶ NizwaNed

28 May 2014 11:48am

45

Just because some abuse the welfare system, it does not mean that it is not failing many of the people it was designed to help. The basic rates of some benefits are very low. The JSA for a couple is only £113 p/w, which is hardly a lifestyle choice. In many cases they are the cause of health problems, such as when people can't afford to heat their homes. We are in danger of making the poor so unhealthy that they will never work.



KallisteHill ▶ NizwaNed

28 May 2014 1:08pm

16

No - help the poor now, and sort of the few later because they'll be a lot

7 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



watchingfromthewings

28 May 2014 11:14am

37

I see the trolls are out in force today, it must be a slow day at Party HQ!



NellieOleson ▶ watchingfromthewings

28 May 2014 11:42am

36

Yeah this sort of article always brings out the usual knuckle dragging fkwiits. I constantly see the same sad usernames over and over again, they seem to seek out articles such as these to post their bile on. Some of them post tens of comments, day after day, you can't help wondering if that's all they have in their sad little lives, they certainly can't be working.

PhillipLawler ▶ NellieOleson

28 May 2014 12:10pm

8



Was that a tongue in cheek comment?

10



angryboy ▶ NellieOleson

28 May 2014 12:49pm

10

"Yeah this sort of article always brings out the usual knuckle dragging fwits

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



silver12345

28 May 2014 11:26am

60

47% of the welfare budget is spent on pensions only a small percentage is spent on out of work benefits. The vast majority of people claiming benefits are working.



theytookallmymoney ▶ silver12345

28 May 2014 12:09pm

14

Which of course would be interesting if this article was not about out of work benefits.



TeddyFrench ▶ theytookallmymoney

28 May 2014 2:48pm

20

Er, last time I looked in the bingo hall most of the pensioners were not in work i.e. they are receiving a benefit even though they are not working. You'd better watch out - your state pension will have been obliterated by the time you reach retirement age if you support cuts to benefit - unless of course you want to forego your state pension out of principle?



Adrian Whiteley ▶ silver12345

29 May 2014 1:48am

Most people should know that by now, except for the people with their head in the sand.

8 PEOPLE, 11 COMMENTS



Isabel Sensier

28 May 2014 11:31am

70

Sadly, what the writer fails to realise is that the government has not just introduced austerity, but at the same time spun highly successful lies about people in poverty and on benefits. So the very people she's talking about don't get mad at Cameron and the like, they get mad at other people like them. No one wants to be called a 'scrounger', so people deal with this by looking around for someone less fortunate than themselves to label as one. It's very sad, but Cameron's cleverly taken people's propensity to scapegoat and manipulated it, until the people that we're scapegoating are essentially ourselves, or those just a little bit less well off than us. It's so sad.



CaptainBlack ▶ Isabel Sensier

28 May 2014 11:33am

63

This and the recent rise of UKIP demonstrates how easily people are manipulated by the media. It's really quite depressing.



theytookallmymoney ▶ CaptainBlack

28 May 2014 12:11pm

22

This and the recent rise of UKIP demonstrates how easily people are manipulated by the media. It's really quite depressing.

You mean the Media who have just spent the last month dragging up any piece of dirt they could find on UKIP.

Great Logic.



Spoonface ▶ theytookallmymoney

28 May 2014 12:50pm

25

By 'dragging up any dirt' presumably you actually mean 'report stuff that

14 PEOPLE, 37 COMMENTS



steavey

28 May 2014 11:53am

19

Welfare exists to support those who received a shocking and quite appalling education from the state, that's why they are poor and in need in the first place.

All those that I know who have been properly educated don't need to live off benefits.

An educated mind does not need handouts.



RainyDayWoman7and25 ▶ steavey

28 May 2014 12:07pm

47

Ill educated worthless platitudinous post, gleaned from the back of a corn flake packet. Your meaningless anecdotal comment - "All those I know"- would embarrass any forth former attending a remedial class.

The Junior Politics Primer is in the post with easy to understand graphics and large type.



PhillipLawler ▶ steavey

28 May 2014 12:08pm

31

An educated mind does not need handouts. Correct to a point but as the author's personal example shows, it is also for the unfortunate who find themselves out of work for reasons beyond their control. Social security benefit is an important safety net to help people get back on their feet (Ok, there are those who abuse it) before getting back into work.



Rageagainst ▶ steavey

28 May 2014 12:31pm

34

Thats not true. Im educated and i rely on benefits as a single parent to get

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



zavaell

28 May 2014 11:57am

18

The big spanner in the works is UKIP - the people who vote UKIP would, for the most part, support Cameron's disassembling of the state. So many previously voting Labour don't seem to have hoisted that in.



angryboy ▶ zavaell

28 May 2014 12:51pm

14

Several opinion polls have shown widespread support for welfare reforms, including large numbers of Labour supporters.



DrHfuhruhrr ▶ angryboy

28 May 2014 2:03pm

15

60% of the public support the renationalisation of the railways. So much for the success of right wing ideology.



maple5 ▶ angryboy

28 May 2014 3:20pm

27

Yes and several more opinion polls and surveys have shown that these

3 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS

PhillipLawler

12



28 May 2014 12:05pm

A successful society is one where we all get the chance to be winners.



HappyChickie ▶ PhillipLawler

28 May 2014 12:22pm

19

Everyone does have that chance, many choose not to take it.



tilw ▶ HappyChickie

28 May 2014 7:56pm

15

Really? So everyone has an equal chance of having a £250,000 a year trust fund to support them when they are a student?

Everyone has the chance to be as wealthy as the Duke of Westminster, his inherited hundreds of millions not swinging things in his favour in the slightest?



HappyChickie ▶ tilw

02 June 2014 9:15am

A bit OTT again. Give it a rest!

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



ellatynemouth

28 May 2014 12:17pm

50

Any government that uses hunger or homelessness against its own people has no moral authority to govern.



HappyChickie ▶ ellatynemouth

28 May 2014 12:22pm

23

Still spouting that? How can people be hungry in the UK when they want to send people to slimming classes.

No hunger in the UK - quite the opposite.



tilw ▶ HappyChickie

28 May 2014 8:01pm

14

And how can there be homelessness, when builders keep building new houses?

No homelessness in the UK - quite the opposite.

How can there be unemployment when there are still employers?

No unemployment in the UK - quite the opposite.

How can there be ill people when there are so many hospitals?

No illness in the UK - quite the opposite.

I could get to like this posting right wing bullshit lark. Pick two superficially related premises, stick a question mark on the end, add a completely disconnected "conclusion" and pick up recommends from the logically challenged.

Money for old rope.



Adrian Whiteley ▶ HappyChickie

29 May 2014 1:43am

4

All the fat people I know drink Coke and have cars. There must surely be a

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



bEdwards

28 May 2014 12:25pm

23

I like every other UK citizen my age had a free state education until I was 18, and then guaranteed investment to continue that education. Our teachers drummed into us at every opportunity that this education was ours and only us could take advantage of it. Our teachers offered to help us in any way we required. I, and those in my circle of friends, took advantage of this, and spend that time working. Others chose not to. I now have absolutely no sympathy when I hear those individuals cannot get jobs. They made their bed from the same starting point as me.

The welfare state has never failed to provide these opportunities, it falters because some do not choose to take them. This can only be solved by a conscious decision by the individual to take those opportunities.

As William H Johnson said:

"If it is to be it is up to me"



Tim999 ▶ bEdwards

28 May 2014 3:52pm

19

Do you think everyone has the same abilities? Can everyone become a doctor if they just apply themselves hard enough?



Joan Margaret Evans ▶ bEdwards

28 May 2014 4:09pm

22

Lots of well educated people are struggling to get work now, particularly older people who have been made redundant. It's very difficult for people over 55 especially if their skills are now out of date due to technological changes. Many employers have ageist attitudes.



tilw ▶ bEdwards

28 May 2014 8:04pm

10

So when a programmer, or an engineer with a PhD is made redundant and

11 PEOPLE, 13 COMMENTS



SneydReid

28 May 2014 12:26pm

31

Surely, after decades of a welfare state, the costs of welfare should be dropping as the supposed benefits of having a welfare state are delivered.

This would be seen in better parenting, behavioural changes, increased appreciation of education and health issues and, importantly, a change in the way in the real aims of a welfare state by those that need it.

Unfortunately this isn't the case as the left use the welfare state as its main populist vote grabber. They can't be seen to be spending less on the welfare state so maintain the welfare lifestyle that many 'users' enjoy and depend on.

Increases in welfare spending have delivered very little, if anything, other than ongoing support for a Labour Party whose initial reason for being has been diminished by improved working practices and rights.

We've had 'free' education for all for decades but generations of many families have ignored and abused it. They continue to do so but the left continue to maintain the myth that if we spend more the attitude of these families will change. It won't. The same can be applied to other 'free' services and the 'free' benefits that many who rely on welfare receive.



Spoonface ▶ SneydReid

28 May 2014 12:49pm

18

Unfortunately this isn't the case as the left use the welfare state as its main populist vote grabber ... the welfare lifestyle that many 'users' enjoy and depend on ... Increases in welfare spending have delivered very little, if anything, other than ongoing support for a Labour Party

How many people vote for Labour because of the welfare state? Where is your evidence for this?

We've had 'free' education for all for decades but generations of many families have ignored and abused it

Evidence?

The same can be applied to other 'free' services and the 'free' benefits that many who rely on welfare receive

Evidence?



SneydReid ▶ Spoonface

28 May 2014 1:02pm

13

What a laughably poor response. It seems that you haven't the faintest idea as to how many users of the welfare state abuse the system.

And, using your skill and imagination, can you hazard a guess as to why the welfare state is more of a catch for Labour votes?

Jesus wept.



Spoonface ▶ SneydReid

28 May 2014 1:13pm

21

Asking you to provide evidenced for your unevidenced assertions is a



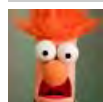
glenshaky512

28 May 2014 12:35pm

16

I would like to know when a journalist is going to investigate government minister shareholdings? I am certain they are all cashing in on this through shares. It is not hard for them to achieve knowing where cuts are going to fall next.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



MammysLittleSoldier

28 May 2014 12:45pm

5

Has this turned into another tax bores forum? MAGIC MONEY TREE THEY'VE TAKEN MY MONEY I'M JOHN GALT....

Probably...I haven't bothered to read the comments, or in fact do much more than skim the article.



Vandervekken ▶ MammysLittleSoldier

28 May 2014 2:48pm

13

You missed that we found the 'magic money tree' flourishing out in the Cayman Islands? Watered and nurtured by generations of tax-dodgers.

6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



Happytobeasocialist

28 May 2014 12:45pm

35

Its quite simple - AUSTERITY = CLASS WAR



Robin7 ▶ Happytobeasocialist

28 May 2014 1:04pm

22

it's quite simple - AUSTERITY = clearing up labour's mess.



Anne26 ▶ Robin7

28 May 2014 1:38pm

4

Are you a Baby Boomer?

DrHfuhrurr ▶ Robin7



28 May 2014 2:06pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our

5 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



apmeredith

28 May 2014 1:02pm

20

Another article about how evil austerity is without even mentioning the £168,000,000,000 p/a budget deficit New Labour straddled the country with.



Spoonface ▶ apmeredith

28 May 2014 1:18pm

19

I'm not surprised it doesn't mention it. [Our deficit was never that much.](#)



DrHfuhruhrr ▶ apmeredith

28 May 2014 2:06pm

27

Or the £1.4 TRILLION spent on bailing out our corrupt bankers.



Vandervekken ▶ apmeredith

28 May 2014 2:42pm

16

Pre-recession deficit was well under 40Bn. Citing the peak mid-recession



JoeP

28 May 2014 1:06pm

44

A great piece.

The welfare state has been a great redistribution of wealth in this country.

I was 13 when the NHS was created and I'm well aware that my comfortable old age today would have been non-existent if I'd had to find cash to pay insurance or direct to a hospital or doctor, because before 1948 most people didn't get health care, it couldn't be afforded.

My wife has been receiving treatment for a heart condition which I couldn't possibly afford without selling the house.

I'm appalled by the sheer ignorance of the people I see interviewed on TV supporting UKIP.

Farage is keen to get people back to the forelock tugging peasants of my youth - but the peasants then reared up and demanded decent way of life for all, by voting for a government that gave a damn and cared about them.

The ignorant working class of today are condemning their kids to grinding poverty, because a smooth talking conman is knocking on the door and offering to renew their roof, when it only needs a few tiles replaced.



Nicholas88

28 May 2014 1:16pm

I don't see why the article was written because social stratification is how we will and a fair one do you think people are blind to see what the reality of life is in uk ie what they have and everything around them

5 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



NAGrist

28 May 2014 1:17pm

12

When I spend more money than I earn in a month it is not been an austere one.

The UK State spends more money than it receives each year and the government has been trying to reduce that *overspend*.

If previous governments believed all their spending was justifiable they would have increased taxes accordingly, but they did not have the courage to do so.

That is why the Conservatives are having to make politically difficult decisions now,

and why there is genuine hardship for some Britons as government spending is reduced to levels closer to income.

We should show compassion for those now struggling and consider the Labour cause, rather than the Conservative messenger.



MammysLittleSoldier ▶ NAGrist

28 May 2014 1:42pm

10

When I spend more money than I earn in a month it is not been an austere one.
The UK State spends more money than it receives each year and the government has been trying to reduce that overspend.
If previous governments believed all their spending was justifiable they would have increased taxes accordingly, but they did not have the courage to do so.
That is why the Conservatives are having to make politically difficult decisions now, and why there is genuine hardship for some Britons as government spending is reduced to levels closer to income.
We should show compassion for those now struggling and consider the Labour cause, rather than the Conservative messenger.

Your argument would be stronger if you left the Conservative/Labour distinction out of it...because the UK government has run a deficit most years since at least WW2.



MammysLittleSoldier ▶ NAGrist

28 May 2014 1:55pm

18

...and you could easily spend more than you earn and still live an austere life.

Say, for example, you couldn't work because of illness so your income collapsed... but you still had a family to support.

Luckily, we have system of social security to insure us all against this kind of thing.



DrHfuhrhrr ▶ NAGrist

28 May 2014 2:08pm

4

You clearly have little notion of the advantage of the National Debt without

5 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



AdrianH10

28 May 2014 1:37pm

10

The problem with the welfare state surely is that in many cases it does create dependency rather than opportunity. Many people end up in a ridiculous situation of being better off doing nothing than out working - while this is the case, you can't blame people for taking what's best for them and their family



Vandervekken ▶ AdrianH10

28 May 2014 2:35pm

20

The vast majority of people who are 'better off on benefits' are better off *because they have children to support* and therefore are receiving various child-related benefits and probably a larger slice of Housing Benefit.

Call me crazy, but I think bringing up the next generation is a valuable investment. The parents of most of the Cabinet seemed to think so too.



Catwaffles25 ▶ AdrianH10

28 May 2014 3:16pm

23

If that were true why are there so many people who work claiming benefits?

People talk about dependency; based on what? How are you defining this?

Make work pay enough so people can live- it's pretty simple.

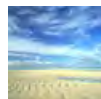


AdrianH10 ▶ sophieclarke1987

28 May 2014 3:46pm

2

I don't think the current system is helpful in the long term to the 'poor' as



HerbGuardian

28 May 2014 1:38pm

16

The majority of the individuals who we are lumbered with as politicians in the UK , have not got the slightest idea what to do, in regard to the ever growing complexities of this modern world.

The Tories, who are by a country mile the most odious and vacuous of the entire sorry lot in the UK and who naturally react when confronted with such complexities by protecting their own , i.e.the privileged and rich in the UK, as they regard this as the best thing to do and therefore they seek to demonise everybody else as method of achieving this.

Therefore, for them all those who don't have much or anything, are of no value what so ever and are either to be tagged as parasites or scroungers and have anything they receive from the state reduced or stopped altogether or they are to be made to work until they drop and to be taxed to the hilt and to pay through the nose for absolutely everything.

For when the going gets tough, the only thing that matters for the Tories , is that they conserve the good life for themselves and their ilk at all costs and that those costs are paid for by those who are of no consequence or worth to the Tories , i.e . everybody else who isn't rich and privileged!

4 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



Anne26

28 May 2014 1:44pm

18

I find it incredible that people still blame Labour. Thatcher brought in Family Credit which Brown then renamed Tax Credits. It was far easier to claim with the Tories, claimed every six months and if your income went up in that six months nothing had to be paid back unlike Brown's version. Remember also that Thatcher, to manipulate unemployment figures transferred people from the dole to sickness benefits.



Billlogan ▶ Anne26

28 May 2014 3:47pm

3

The main difference was that under The Tories credits, you had to be working to receive them, whereas in Labour's, work wasn't required.



Ross Allan ▶ Billlogan

29 May 2014 1:21am

2

You didn't have to work to claim Working Tax credits?

How does that work then, Ted?

I'd have thought the rather obvious clue was in the name.



Billlogan ▶ Ross Allan

29 May 2014 2:20am

1

Who mentioned Working Tax Credits? We were discussing family credits

5 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



elivir

28 May 2014 1:52pm

29

I was furious when I read in the Metro this morning that 'a government spokesman' claimed 'Our reforms will improve the lives of some of the poorest families in our communities by promoting work and helping people to lift themselves out of poverty'. He added that a rise in employment means 100,000 fewer children are living in 'workless poor families' while the new universal child benefit system will make around 3 million households better off.'

This is reprehensible on so many levels.

Firstly, no government spokesman should be speaking to the press anonymously, because they can't be questioned on figures that appear to be drawn out of the air.

Secondly, did anyone actually speak to the press or do Conservative Office encourage journalists to make quotes out of propoganda? Because that is clearly what this is.

Thirdly, the welfare state has not been 'reformed' it has been changed. Reform suggests improvement from a poor state of affairs.

Lastly (I could go on but am aware of boredom levels) the rise in employment has not been prolonged or even extensive enough to make anything like the impact claimed. There has been a drop in benefit claims, not a rise in employment.



MammysLittleSoldier ▶ elivir

28 May 2014 2:05pm

7

Our reforms will improve the lives of some of the poorest families in our communities by promoting work and helping people to lift themselves out of poverty

You almost have to admire the chutzpah



Catwaffles25 ▶ elivir

28 May 2014 3:14pm

15

He added that a rise in employment means 100,000 fewer children are living in 'workless poor families'

He just forgot to add that they're moving from 'workless poor' to 'working poor'



Billlogan ▶ sophieclarke1987

28 May 2014 3:24pm

6

As someone who was brought up in a "working poor" household in the 50s

4 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



sazzle123

28 May 2014 1:58pm

14

Very good article.

I was reading that the rate of social mobility in the UK one of the lowest in the developed world.

I came from a blue collar family, but ended up at university. I didn't question taken out a student loan and managed to scrape rent from it. My headmaster once gave came into class in secondary school and told every kid they were good enough for university, and as good as anyone from a public school.

I never bought into the British class system.

We need more funding. But I think it's also about installing in kids a belief that they are good enough. That they don't have to fit into the class system and they can aspire to apply for opportunities high up in society. And it doesn't matter what accent they have, or what their parents do for a living.

In this country, more than others, we are too defined by perceived class. We assume someone's profession and education by the way they speak. Inverted snobbery is as damaging as conventional snobbery.

In high up places in society, nepotism and a closed social circle dominate things too much. Too many people in the media, politics and other professions are from a certain club.

I speak to some teenagers, and they refer to themselves as "common". They don't believe people with posher accents would ever claim benefits or be a plumber, or people with their accents could rule the country.

We need funding, but we need to change children's perceptions of success.



Catwaffles25 ▶ sazzle123

28 May 2014 3:12pm

5

We need funding, but we need to change children's perceptions of success.

I'd agree with that, and it follows on from this outdated obsession with class.

Improving your lot in life seems to involve going to university and getting a

degree; which has been to the detriment of skilled trades. We need to be encouraging kids to look at apprenticeships and vocational routes to professions- university isn't the be all and end all.

Countries like Germany have 60% of young people going into vocational routes of higher education, which is something I think we should emulate.



Billlogan ▶ sophieclarke1987

28 May 2014 3:17pm

4

I agree but just try and persuade the education establishment about that and your suggestion will fall on deaf ears.



sazzle123 ▶ sophieclarke1987

28 May 2014 4:19pm

8

When I grew up, there was a snobbery in society about choosing a trade as

5 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



nacom

28 May 2014 2:13pm

14

Labour have bankrupted our country, morally and financially.



geoffk ▶ nacom

28 May 2014 2:27pm

29

No..The greedy and the reckless debt junkies did...People who could not afford things but wanted them at all costs...Then walked away...

The National Audit Office has today revealed the full extent of the UK government's bailout operation with regards to the UK banking sector and money markets. A total of £850 billion has been used to bail out the sector

At least blame the people responsible..



Billlogan ▶ geoffk

28 May 2014 3:13pm

6

"The greedy and the reckless debt junkies did...People who could not afford things but wanted them at all costs...Then walked away."

They didn't walk away, the electorate threw Brown and his cronies out at the last election, after paying the bankers a fortune for both of them making an arse of our economy.



geoffk ▶ Billlogan

28 May 2014 4:42pm

10

Errm... America. I think you will find that all roads lead to

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



freespeechoneeach

28 May 2014 2:13pm

7

Well said.
Government is either on our side or it's against us.



Adrian Whiteley ▶ freespeechoneeach

29 May 2014 1:27am

They are just interested in feathering their own nests, apart from maybe politicians like Frank Field who seems to care about the poor.

DrHfuhruhrr

28 May 2014 2:15pm

30



This crisis was not caused by the welfare state. That is putting the whole issue on its head. It was caused by a financial crisis in the markets brought about by crap and corrupt bankers. History shows it has happened roughly every 10-15 years. The welfare state is a necessary safety net to manage the adversity these crises create for the bottom half of society. Without it you will find the top half of society will become far less comfortable largely due to people throwing bricks and petrol bombs.

12



Jeshher

28 May 2014 2:17pm

Excellent article. The Guardian used to do this stuff very well.

12



Vandervekken

28 May 2014 2:30pm

Hear, hear.

Our socialist social security systems are ultimately the foundation of so much of our post-war wealth. Don't let the right get away with the claim that we have capitalism and only capitalism to thank for our current standard of living, rhetoric they will ultimately use to take it away from so many.

14

5 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



ozzie8

28 May 2014 2:31pm

Where the hell is the Labour Party? Why aren't they saying all of this?

18



karleker ▶ ozzie8

28 May 2014 3:05pm

There just thinking of copying tory policy and hoping no one will notice.

6



Billlogan ▶ ozzie8

28 May 2014 3:39pm

The Benefits Party are just glad that the Coalition had to make the "cuts greater than Thatcher's", which they promised, but don't ever believe that they will reintroduce the cuts in benefits that have been made, as those days are probably gone forever.

5



CumaCroppa ▶ Billlogan

28 May 2014 6:45pm

And on Camerons watch the benefits bill has risen dramatically so you can

7

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



maple5

28 May 2014 3:02pm

.... *crying out for a voice.*

All outreach workers in poorer communities should first make sure all people are registered to vote AND motivated to use it.

The next election is in my opinion the last chance to undo the inequalities tearing society apart. If the Tories win, there will be no welfare state, no chance to climb out of poverty via education, no NHS for all.

If Labour don't pull their finger out and speak up in the way this article has and show the benefits to society as a whole of a safety net, they will be obsolete as a political party.

If voting fails to address the hidden misery and exclusion of millions, brought about in spades and at record speed by this government, then the people in the article are right: anger will spill over into the streets. People with nothing to lose, no stake in

19

society and years of blame for a situation they did not create will not be controllable by a few water cannon.



Brandybaby ▶ maple5

28 May 2014 5:47pm

1

"All outreach workers in poorer communities should first make sure all people are registered to vote AND motivated to use it."

Will they be guiding them on who to vote for as well?

Very worrying.



skipraider ▶ maple5

28 May 2014 7:34pm

2

All outreach workers in poorer communities should first make sure all people are registered to vote AND motivated to use it.

Why should they? Is it their job to do this? Do you not think they might have enough on their plate already?



tilw ▶ maple5

28 May 2014 8:26pm

2

All outreach workers in poorer communities should first make sure all people are registered to vote AND motivated to use it.

Any discussion of politics with their clients/the public at all by a public sector worker is generally grounds for disciplinary action and possibly dismissal.

A specific voter registration drive, that simply contacts people/knocks on their doors and tries to get them to register but without discussing politics or political issues at all might be one way forward. But to expect people who's job is non-political and required to be so to push voter registration isn't a very workable idea.

4 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



Billlogan

28 May 2014 3:06pm

18

Nobody objects to help being given to those who have been unfortunate to fall on hard times after being contributors to the system but ordinary people are now fed up witnessing people on long-term benefits having higher standards of living than themselves, despite the fact that they are working, "white Dee" being a prime example.

"The social safety net envisaged at the end of the second world war, and supported and upheld by successive governments over many decades, was designed for that purpose."

Not so long ago, a TV programme took some benefit claimants back to the days of post-war Attlee government standards of assistance and they didn't like it. White Dee's lifestyle and lack of responsibility would simply not have been tolerated up until very recently and many people believe that it shouldn't be, including many ordinary working-class people on low wages.



Bobmex ▶ Billlogan

28 May 2014 3:19pm

21

But this is the fault of the establishment. Dragging people down to the lowest level. What should happen is those in work earn more. Too much wealth goes into the pockets of the rich and not enough for the workers.



Billlogan ▶ Bobmex

28 May 2014 3:33pm

8

The recent recession did not lead to the normal level of job losses, simply because wages stagnated in order to allow firms to survive. Do you think

that it would have been better to lose more jobs? Only an increase in growth will bring higher wages.

BTW, "White Dee's" are the fault of the establishment, simply because they allowed too many irresponsible people to live on benefits without ever contributing. Name me any other country that allows it?



HiFlight ▶ Billlogan

28 May 2014 4:37pm

19

There are comparatively few benefit cheats in the scheme of things. Just as

7 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



RobinFrance

28 May 2014 3:32pm

11

Questions :

Why should working folk in rented housing get part of their rent paid by the taxpayer ,while those who are paying a mortgage receive nothing ?

They could be both living in the same street ?

Are those in rented accomodation more deserving ?

Secondly : the maximum benefit level is £26,000 pa. The equivalent of £34,000 gross before tax.

Is this not enough ? How much is enough ?



Cappuccinofreak ▶ RobinFrance

28 May 2014 4:15pm

14

Why should working folk in rented housing get part of their rent paid by the taxpayer ,while those who are paying a mortgage receive nothing ?

Because those who have taken on a mortgage take on a **loan** to buy property that they will then eventually **own**. Might not seam fair, but in 25 years, mortgage payers typically end up with something of value - their home. Those paying rent don't; they keep paying rent.



Joan Margaret Evans ▶ RobinFrance

28 May 2014 4:23pm

12

Only people who are eligible for Housing Benefit get help with rent i.e. their income is below a predetermined level and other conditions are met. I rent and I'm a pensioner and I don't get any help with rent. I think once people paying mortgages have been unemployed for a certain amount of time they get help with their mortgage. You can initially only get a mortgage if you can afford it based on your income, so why would you need financial help with it?

Re the 26K, a very small number get that as their RENT is very high, so most goes to the landlord. You don't get it to spend on what you want. It's a total of all benefits - Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Child Benefit. If everyone got that much, who the hell would work for minimum wage?



TheLastClassWarrior ▶ RobinFrance

28 May 2014 8:00pm

9

Are those in rented accomodation more deserving.?

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Welfare cuts drive UK's poorest families deeper into poverty, says Oxfam

Survey points to effect of overall cut in value of benefits as well as changes to housing benefit and council tax support

Katie Allen

The Guardian, Tuesday 22 April 2014

[Jump to comments \(730\)](#)



The report says people are turning to food banks and struggling with rent, council tax, childcare and travel costs to job centres. Photograph: David Jones/PA

The coalition's [welfare](#) cuts have pushed 1.75 million of the UK's poorest households deeper into [poverty](#), leaving more families struggling to cover food and energy bills, according to a report.

The report by [Oxfam](#) and the [New Policy Institute](#) highlights a drop in the overall value of [benefits](#), which rose by less than inflation, as well as changes to housing benefit and council tax support that have forced some families into paying housing costs they were previously deemed too poor to pay.

It finds that together those changes mean about 1.75 million of the poorest families have seen an absolute cut in their income in the past three years.

The report warns that the shape of welfare support has changed dramatically just as people have struggled with rising living costs, and that many jobseekers, carers, single parents and those with disabilities unable to work have become worse off.

"We are already seeing people turning to food banks and struggling with rent, council tax, childcare and travel costs to job centres," says Oxfam chief executive Mark Goldring. "At a time when the five richest families in the UK have the same wealth as the bottom 20% of the population it is unacceptable that the poorest are paying such a heavy price."

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Union says benefits sanctions destroyed trust between jobseekers and jobcentres
Public and Commercial Services union renews calls for an independent inquiry into the policy

Jobcentre 'hit squads' set up benefit claimants to fail, says former official

'Jobs revival' in spotlight as most of those who lose benefits fail to find work

Reforming a failing jobs market is more important than reforming welfare

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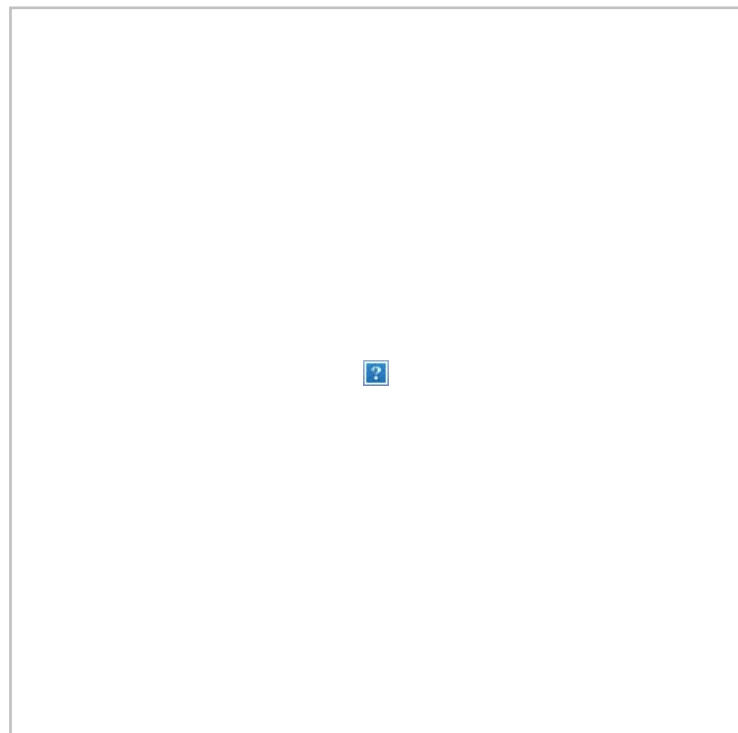
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The Guardian's online dating site

The report found that 300,000 households have experienced a cut in housing benefit, 920,000 a reduction in council tax support and 480,000 a cut in both.

In the past year 400,000 households have been pushed further into poverty by cuts to housing benefit or council tax support and households affected by both of those cuts typically lose about £18 per week.



The report follows figures last week that suggested that [more than a million Britons have been helped by food banks in the past year](#).

The Trussell Trust, the UK's biggest food bank network, revealed that more than 900,000 people received food parcels in 2013-14, a 163% increase on the previous year. Its figures understated the likely level of people going hungry, it said.

Oxfam is urging the government to determine what the absolute minimum level of support should be for households. "It must be high enough to mean that those reliant upon it are not forced to walk the breadline," said the charity.

The Department for Work and Pensions said it was making the welfare system "fair to claimants and taxpayers" and insisted a strong safety net remained.

40% of British families 'too poor to play a part in society'

Benefits sanctions overused to reduce claimant numbers, critics claim

The estate we're in: how working class people became the 'problem'

Why shame is the most dominant feature of modern poverty

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There's poverty in the UK, but we are better off calling it inequality

One in five UK families can't afford seaside day out

Poverty hits twice as many British households as 30 years ago

Number of UK youth living in poverty could reach 5m by 2020, says charity

'The welfare state is not about dependency: it is about opportunity'

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My job cut shows the 'tough choices' of austerity are only really tough for some

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Channel 4 Benefits Street producers struggle to cast second series

Guardian Professional
Even renters who work should be worried about housing benefit changes

Extended benefit sanctions push up numbers seeking advice on paying bills

George Osborne to announce tough new benefit curbs for EU migrants

Tom Clark: How the Tories chose to hit the poor



Kitty83, 31



stephenwatershed, 51

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CarrotsRus

22 April 2014 12:33am

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14 PEOPLE, 16 COMMENTS



bobsyouruncle1

22 April 2014 12:48am

Getting my watch out for that tory propaganda. Oh its here already!

178



Tarantella bobsyouruncle1

22 April 2014 2:03am

Quick, aren't they? On Tory propaganda: of course 'we're all in it together!' Thanks,Oxfam, for revealing the fallacy of this particular piece of Tory lies and spin.

190



kevessex Tarantella

22 April 2014 2:14am

But we mustn't forget the role labour and mass immigration have played in this crisis.

65

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Surely with increases in poverty. The policy too flood the labour market has surely backfired.



DeunanKnute ▶ kevessex

22 April 2014 2:55am

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our

6 PEOPLE, 16 COMMENTS



Stantom

22 April 2014 12:49am

55

What is the heritage for the future of the children and long term prospects of these 1.75 million households? While these career politicians feather their own nests, polishing their media profiles with their professionally crafted soundbites and tweets, living the jetset playboy lives, of their high caste lifestyles, manufactured from the Sunday supplement media. Kids that struggle to get a healthy diet, man doesn't live by bread alone, but our children are not getting the 3R's, never mind a 21st century education, for the sake of our Christian ancestors we cannot escape our past history because of the false pagan philosophies of the likes of marx and freud. Remember Christ this Easter....Christian Social Democrat Party...



smifee ▶ Stantom

22 April 2014 4:23am

55

"...for the sake of our Christian ancestors we cannot escape our past history because of the false pagan philosophies of the likes of marx and freud."

What have Marx, Freud or Christ himself got to do with career politicians feathering their on nests?



marukun ▶ smifee

22 April 2014 5:27am

170

Cameron is into Christian stuff these days.

It just amazes me how he can combine together so much greed with so much hypocrisy.

Greed from favoring the rich and the bankers every single time. Hypocrisy from professing his Christian views while still driving millions of poor people into even more dire poverty.

Truly an outstanding performance.



Stantom ▶ smifee

22 April 2014 8:39am

3

Go to a Christian Church regularly and find out, you will be welcome

20 PEOPLE, 38 COMMENTS



SonofCy

22 April 2014 1:14am

260

From the cradle to the grave, that is what was promised my parents and grandparents. It seems that those in power now want many of us to go from one straight to the other, missing out the middle bit.



Ursultana ▶ SonofCy

22 April 2014 3:49am

22

Oh no, they want millions to not even make the cradle. Straight into the void of the vacuum. Maybe they will turn pagan cannibal, so as not to waste any human resources.



thephon ▶ SonofCy

22 April 2014 6:00am

20

How about people supporting each other without the need for a central

expensive government to do it for us?



Paganview ▶ SonofCy

22 April 2014 7:03am

18

Yes but the problem is some people expect to be looked after from the

10 PEOPLE, 20 COMMENTS



socialistnotnlabour

22 April 2014 1:14am

142

I wonder if the BBC will cover this story.



MichaelMaggs ▶ socialistnotnlabour

22 April 2014 2:11am

136

Well the BBC don't really give it too much time at all. They seem more insistent on telling us how well we are all doing under the Tories.

I managed to capture an interesting moment when they touched on this subject in 'The Papers' on BBC News 24.

What was actually pretty comical was, the woman from the Times, when she was confronted with the suggestion that the Times might cover it.

Let's just say she was speechless. Lost for words.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Aj5ACvwE0c>



hagarhorrible ▶ socialistnotnlabour

22 April 2014 7:24am

12

Story or propaganda by big business charities which are wholly owned subsidiaries of the labour party?



Sickbag ▶ hagarhorrible

22 April 2014 7:36am

61

or the mad ramblings of a Tory apologist either too stupid or wilfully

5 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



BWhale

22 April 2014 1:16am

235

This is by design.

This is where 'recovery' comes from. More work, for less money. Its coming out of our standard of living and off our backs and the poorest are bearing the brunt of increasing profit for the bosses.

And its all cheered on by aristocrats in the house of commons.

disgusting



socialistnotnlabour ▶ BWhale

22 April 2014 1:21am

88

The thing is all this is obvious.

We all know the economic uplift has favoured the richest and the Guardian and BBC don't have the balls to say this.

No they hide behind presenting a balanced view on the real state of the UK.



jayant ▶ socialistnotnlabour

22 April 2014 2:08am

42

No they do not want to offend their paymasters, or there will be cuts in their budget. So they are essentially protecting their pay and perquisites.



Colin Morris ▶ BWhale

22 April 2014 8:56am

12

that is it in a nutshell it is ideology driven and whilerver tories are in power it

5 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



RecantedYank

22 April 2014 1:24am

150

This should come as no surprise. The poor were always just a couple of inches from the brink...so obviously it never took much to push them over the cliff's edge. The only difference now is that instead of a gentle push, they are using bulldozers to do the job.



JohnBea ▶ RecantedYank

22 April 2014 7:28am

38

'Oxfam is urging the government to determine what the absolute minimum level of support should be for households.'

I fear this might encourage the Bullingdon boys to see if they can cut deeper.

What is the pleasure they get by taking from families who are really hurt rather than those who use money as a game?



GreatGrandDad ▶ RecantedYank

22 April 2014 10:15am

6

...*The poor were always just a couple of inches from the brink...*

That is only true for the poor in industrialised 'developed' regions---and so many going over the brink into destitution in Britain is a symptom of how it now is 'over-developed'.

Today I am reading *The Post-Development Reader* and have just highlighted: "Helena-Norbert-Hodge shows ...how the preservation of the cultural sap had enabled another society, this time in Ladakh to continue enjoying a good life until development broke in forcefully.... shows how a population, internationally labelled as one of the poorest and least developed in the world can still give the most 'developed' lessons of wisdom and virtue in every walk of life."

That fits with my observation here in rural SE Asia (in Isaan, up near the Mekong). The 'happy poor', with a resilient basically-self-sufficient economy have greater well-being than the 'unhappy rich' in the industrialised 'West'.

After 250 years of waxing, industrialism with its concomitant consumerism and its handmaiden capitalism is now at the stage of starting to wane and its welfare structures need to transition along with many more aspects of its economies.

I recommend the downloading and reading of the four essays on De-growth by Serge Latouche that have just been made available by [The Simplicity Institute](#).



RichardScanlon ▶ GreatGrandDad

22 April 2014 11:14am

6

The one big difference in this comparison is the different COMPIII SORY

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



gaytheism

22 April 2014 1:26am

167

Undoubtedly Oxfam are a politically motivated organisation with a left wing ideology that must now be lambasted by the sociopathic right wing greed-freaks in whichever rag will publish their brand of bullshit.

This government should be fucking ashamed of itself.



ridesally ▶ gaytheism

22 April 2014 11:07am

8

I agree that sociopaths vilify their detractors, and will use any attempt to marginalise, diminish, discredit opposing views; often sociopaths will simply state the opposite (no matter how illogical) to any criticism of their actions,

methods or motives. But, sociopaths (by definition) do not experience or feel shame. Neither do they experience or feel guilt, remorse, self-recrimination or compassion. Instead they perceive the world in terms of their own needs, putting themselves first before all else including consequences to others; they often fabricate elaborate justifications for their actions and perceive themselves to be vastly superior and deserving than everyone else; when they do not get their way, they blame others or suggest that others are somehow less deserving than themselves. Pointing fingers at sociopaths, name calling, and calling into dispute their ethos and tactics is a useless waste of time and effort; they are constitutionally incapable of seeing other viewpoints that exclude their own faulty and self-centered perceptions. Sociopathy is the purest form of mental illness, it cannot be remediated with drugs, reversed by Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, cured with electroshock therapy or excised by surgery.

I well understand emotions of exasperation, outrage and disgust at those who wield power and influence to the disadvantage and harm of others, but really it is a waste of time and effort to do so. The only way to stop a sociopath from influencing one's life is to sever all connections with them, full stop. It is very difficult to do so, many are the tentacles that they use to hold fast to their victims because they play for high stakes -personal gain, and will go to any length to achieve it. Look at how many sociopaths are embedded in corporate and political systems; the numbers of sociopaths in positions of influence and decision-making is alarming and the acceptance, encouragement of and normalcy of sociopathy in these career fields is becoming more common. With the lines between politics/government and corporate interests becoming more blurred they are almost inseparable and evince a deep dysfunction in many western societies. This may be one reason that many western countries are seeing a rise in demonstrations and violent protests against or ousting of their governments, and the increase in the militarism of civilian policing may be preemptive. One concern I have about this growing and potential tinderbox of civilian unrest is the number of nuclear weapons that have gone missing over the past 1+ decade; there are quite a few nuclear and non-nuclear warheads that have vanished without a trace; very worrying.



wantscredibleparty

22 April 2014 1:27am

132

Unnecessary austerity equals poverty, sickness, insecurity and death.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



DonKastre

22 April 2014 1:32am

133

The Department for Work and Pensions said it was making the welfare system "fair to claimants and taxpayers" and insisted a strong safety net remained.

I take it that this comes from the deluded mind of George Iain 'Nosferatu' Duncan Schmitt, or is it one of his disciples?



gaytheism ▶ DonKastre

22 April 2014 1:40am

164

It does make you wonder what strong safety net there actually is!?

The social fund is no more.
Millions underspent by local authorities in the scheme designed to replace it.
Food banks routinely running out of food to supply the neediest with a few days of sustenance.
People dying because of benefit sanctions, claims in limbo because of decision reviews and appeals.
Additional burden on scant finances from the bedroom tax, council tax reduction-reduction and cost of living increases.

If any of those represent a strong safety net it's a tightrope I'm going nowhere near.

But so long as GIDS believes something it's all okay. He's a fucktard of the first order.



Colin Morris ▶ gaytheism

22 April 2014 9:24am

24

you have listed most of the attacks on the sick/working poor /unemployed and ive been thinking what the rich/privelidged upper classes who i might add caused the crash have had to sacrifice for the good of the nation and guess what i came up with fkc all they got tax reief offshore banking and yet they owe us billions in unpaid taxes so i think its fair to say that its a bit of a one sided situation we have here"ALL IN IT TOGETHER"bolcks

2



jochebed1 ▶ DonKastre

22 April 2014 11:04am

5

They should show us where the "strong safety net" is, now that they have cut or arbitrarily redefined to our detriment every component of it.



OneTop

22 April 2014 1:46am

108

Welfare cuts drive UK's poorest families deeper into poverty

That's exactly what the Tory policy was designed to do.

Well done lads, once again punishing those with the least in society.

[Elect the Tories again and witness further assistance for the poor](#)

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



garfield08

22 April 2014 1:54am

54

The obvious result of voting in M.P.'s who haven't a clue what its like to live in the normal world. When will we learn?



Getdemocraticethical ▶ garfield08

22 April 2014 2:22am

34

A start, admittedly a small one, will be to get Ed Miliband to listen to the people at the receiving end of the DWP's Hunger Project and then relay those both at PMQs as well as through the PLP MPs and via the Labour Party's Media channels.

The Greens could do a significant and original next thing after Caroline Lucas' court experience over the tracking.

Lucas could aim to become the MP to represent the truth about how the DWP IS the causer of the main Poverty.

Others could do the same.

They could thus join the people on the ground and start the movement that has been long overdue.



Emilyisobel ▶ Getdemocraticethical

22 April 2014 11:19am

10

Caroline Lucas, along with Dennis Skinner and one or two other MPs do regularly stand up for the poor and vulnerable in parliament. Mr Skinner also took part in a march alongside disabled campaigners just after he had a hip operation. These things don't get the publicity but there are an odd few MPs who have integrity and stand up for the hardest hit.



kooljeff ▶ Getdemocraticethical

22 April 2014 5:19pm

A start, admittedly a small one, will be to get Ed Miliband to listen

9 PEOPLE, 11 COMMENTS

kevessex

22 April 2014 1:54am

43



Squeezed between welfare cuts and mass immigration , the poor are driven into deeper poverty.

And , what is most unfortunate for them. There isn't light at the end of the tunnel.

44



DeunanKnute ▶ kevessex

22 April 2014 2:56am

The shibboleth of mass immigration exists only in your tiny little mind.

Change the bleedin' record because it's just childish nonsense.



thephon ▶ DeunanKnute

22 April 2014 6:03am

There is a link.

More people need more resources.

The population gets bigger with mass immigration but the island does not.

31



CultureJudge ▶ kevessex

22 April 2014 7:52am

Certainly not when Cameron has proclaimed permanent austerity

15

6 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



ROFLMFAO

22 April 2014 2:01am

Welfare cuts prompted because the exchequer is unable or unwilling to collect taxes due from free loaders who set up "Limited Companies", corporations that pay for influence and the elites who exploit the tax loop holes left open (on purpose) and are sniggering into their champers, laughing at all the honest plebs.

100



thephon ▶ ROFLMFAO

22 April 2014 6:04am

Lots of those limited companies who work for the BBC

10



BobToronto ▶ ROFLMFAO

22 April 2014 6:17am

I hope you are joking. Limited liability corporations where shareholders are limited to losing their investment and not their whole wealth is one of the greatest financial inventions since compound interest. I think you are joking but so many weird leftists write commenting in the Guardian, one cannot be absolutely certain

14



Trebor1975 ▶ BobToronto

22 April 2014 7:45am

I think it was a comment on MPs etc who put expenses through limited

20

18 PEOPLE, 37 COMMENTS



NicholasB

22 April 2014 2:02am

This assumes that the families in question are 100% dependent on handouts. Very very few are really in this position for any length of time. The massive increase in employment in the UK and the reduction in taxes for low earners are not being considered in this report. With over 1.5m more people in work than when the coalition came to office the net effect of their policies is far more positive than these selective statistics suggest.

21

kevessex ▶ NicholasB

106



22 April 2014 2:04am

You really walk around with your eyes closed.

101



socialistnotnulabour ▶ NicholasB

22 April 2014 2:05am

Shameful comment.

101



DisabledScapegoat ▶ NicholasB

22 April 2014 2:07am

The massive increase in employment in the UK

75

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



DisabledScapegoat

22 April 2014 2:04am

The Department for Work and Pensions said it was making the welfare system "fair to claimants and taxpayers" and insisted a strong safety net remained.

Bullshit.

82



thephon ▶ DisabledScapegoat

22 April 2014 6:22am

Same happened under Labour, why the short memory?

12



Kazzy1974 ▶ thephon

22 April 2014 10:04am

We are talking about what's happening NOW! Saying it happened under Labour isn't going to put food on people's tables.

27



DisabledScapegoat ▶ thephon

22 April 2014 10:07am

Same happened under Labour, why the short memory?

11

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



PlayaGiron

22 April 2014 2:10am

No doubt part of Cameron's "Christianity" in action.

"God bless us, everyone". (Especially the banksters and warmongers)

42



DisabledScapegoat ▶ PlayaGiron

22 April 2014 2:12am

"God bless us, everyone".

Feck the poor and disabled. Cameron mantra.

28

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Getdemocraticethical

22 April 2014 2:14am

The truth is that for DECADES the UK central Govt bureaucracy now called DWP (backwardly called DSS, DHSS before) has been the most efficient machine for creating newer poverty daily and for making the previously created poverty be blamed on the victims, the targets of the deliberately created poverty programmes. That has been the KEY purpose of the DWP.

It is a part of the Capitalist Project that the UK state has been serving the Agenda of. And the "Labour" Governments have been just as much loyal to it as their so-called rivals the Conservatives of all shades.

38

The core aim has been to Maintain a quota of poor, hungry destitute who are then employed as slaves as well as scapegoats.
The MPs committees that have featured in the published proceedings as having (on the records) said said the most about the DWP are the ones chaired by Anne Begg & Margaret Hodge.
Despite the Hodge committee (PAC) drawing news bytes, there has been no real rigorous audit of the behaviour of the DWP.
So what we have is a machine that is a mammoth operation daily churning out poverty creation, deprivation and literally deadly attacks.
No audit.
No outcry.
No stopping the machine.
No intervention by the courts or he judiciary.



kooljeff ▶ Getdemocraticethical

22 April 2014 6:24pm

2

now called DWP (backwardly called DSS, DHSS

Iain Duncan Smith is changing it to the plain SS now. He loves black uniforms with silver esses on the collar.



Gingertomcat ▶ Getdemocraticethical

22 April 2014 7:08pm

3

Yes and not only that but this mass exercise of persecution is costing a fortune, far more money than the measly savings made by destituting some of the most vulnerable.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



DisabledScapegoat

22 April 2014 2:18am

77

Welfare cuts drive UK's poorest families deeper into poverty, says Oxfam.

It really is a cluster fuck of misery. For those at the very bottom of the economy.



Yoolanderscribbens ▶ DisabledScapegoat

22 April 2014 3:28am

18

It really is a cluster fuck of misery. For those at the very bottom of the economy.

Now that is a really good summation.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



DisabledScapegoat

22 April 2014 2:26am

67

Welfare cuts drive UK's poorest families deeper into poverty, says Oxfam

David Cameron the Christian.

Vilification and pauperisation of the disabled and the unemployed.
Making the whole of society poorer.



hamstrung ▶ DisabledScapegoat

22 April 2014 2:44am

45

Indeed. If this is his 'vision' of Christianity I'm very glad to call myself an atheist.

I would call *his* version of Christianity, Barbarism.



thephon ▶ hamstrung

22 April 2014 6:21am

16

So would most Christians in Wrexham

10 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS

**WoodHolm**

22 April 2014 2:28am

30

Of course, what we are witnessing is their policy :

It's the politics of spite!

**DisabledScapegoat** ▶ WoodHolm

22 April 2014 2:29am

29

It's the politics of spite!

Hate!

**Emmm** ▶ WoodHolm

22 April 2014 2:52am

36

Actually, no - not the politics of spite or hate. These creatures don't do emotions very much - they are only interested in power and therefore control. They are relentlessly following their agenda, which is to have a compliant layer of society that they can manipulate to their best advantage. A lot like farmers really, who normally don't hate the cattle that they rear, but which they will eventually slaughter for profit.

So if you want to know what your lords and masters are really like, just look at how the food industry produces the steak and the pork chop - you won't find any sentimentality, but a simple determination to become ever more 'efficient' at raising and slaughtering.

Chilling, eh?

**JKMarsters** ▶ Emmm

22 April 2014 3:20am

30

Not far away from the truth really, when IDS said that "we" as in he and his

5 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS

**Emmm**

22 April 2014 2:37am

35

Whilst it is impossible to be too abusive to this crappy government, I do have to ask: where is the Opposition? Any opposition, but especially Labour? What the hell are you doing to and with each other around the shadow cabinet table? And can you stop it for long enough to at least try and do your jobs, and engage in a bit of vocal opposing, even if you have the talent of Eddie the Eagle?

The Cons have a semi-sentient cabinet, yet Labour, obviously determined to go one better, are doing a more than a passable imitation of a bunch of ME-stricken zombies! Shame on you - and yes, I know that you'll have to look the word up in a dictionary.

These pointless 'people' are this country's future - surely you don't want to uncouple yourselves from it, Scotland?

Hang on there, Braveheart, wait for me...

**Yoolanderscribbens** ▶ Emmm

22 April 2014 3:07am

27

In answer to your question " where is the opposition" - you have to accept the bitter truth - we are on our own in this and WE have to be the opposition - no good relying on others like those who run the Labour Party - they are still trying to figure out which is the best way to look and sound - rather than just stand up and scream " STOP IT CAMERON".....Labour or Green..?...one of them is still quite committed to to social justice and fairness but doesn't have the same support as Labour..I want to see someone I can BELIEVE in.

**Emmm** ▶ Yoolanderscribbens

22 April 2014 3:27am

13

You are right - and on the face of it, the Greens have the moral high

ground...but then there is the problem of seeing someone you can 'believe' in, because what is shown to you by virtually all the politicians is the product of smoke and mirrors...
The 'system' is rigged...and very difficult to accept and live with, for anyone with a bit of compassion and conscience...but one has to try. :-)



Yoolanderscribbens ▶ Emmm

22 April 2014 3:36am

22

Caroline Lucas has my respect - she wasn't afraid to protest and risk her

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



ObiDanKinobi

22 April 2014 2:49am

21

What is happening is a forcing of ideologies here. And its massively wrong. Basically theres the "get a job and don't think about the moral or long-term consequences" brigade. The "get a job, it doesn't matter who your working for, as long as your working" ideology. People with good hard working ethics are being capitalized upon here, this positive trait is being seized upon and exploited for the benefit of oneself, but usually to the detriment of ones society.

However this is a fundamentally flawed ideology, as a) there are not enough jobs for everyone to have meaningful employment and b) chances are if you do choose to work, that you are working for a large multinational that is avoiding tax and bleeding money from the local economy to overseas tax havens.

I've said it before and i'll say it again, many more times no doubt.

We need to take on and severely regulate large multi-national corproations, and instead encourage small businesses.

How do we go about this? For starters,

C181 private employment agencies convention 1997.

This piece of legislation allows the regulation of job recruitment agencies.

Set this to a maximum of 5% of the entire job market (not the currently ramapantly abused labour market that is about 90% comprised of these entities).

This will have the effect of forcing corproate responsibility, in that agencies are no longer a cost-cutting/ corporate mobility option, and instead corproations are forced to employ people directly, this would be helped by increased rules and regulations with regard to zero hours contracts. Again perhaps 5% of labour market for any niche zero hours work.

Close tax-loopholes and increase penalties for those corporations who are not abiding by these new laws.

I believe that we need to enter an era of social responsiblity and long term thinking, those who have tried to raise their heel against their fellow man in whatever crafty ways they thought they could, will be corrected, but i believe they will be corrected by their own children, for they will have a conscience and they will say, why do we have this, and yet our fellow man has nothing?

And they will rebel against their own parents, and realise that there is far more to life than the possessions of a man/woman. They will rebel, and will pick up the torch that has been carried by those who still care and who still love. Who value life more than anything else.

And they will lead the way.

Such is my faith in the next generation.



Ursultana ▶ ObiDanKinobi

22 April 2014 3:57am

2

nothey won't, they will get a i pad and notebook and tsake overseas holidays and rent if their parents dont leave them a house, unless they are well paid to represent the establishment ,in which case they will live very well.And the less advantaged will just party their youth away with recreational drugs music and fashion chasing sex and then be middle aged



Mason46 ▶ ObiDanKinobi

22 April 2014 9:14am

2

Millions of people come form all over the world to work here. There is work. Get off your backside and work! Or will you wait until we tax all businesses

so much they leave.



jochebed1 ▶ Mason46

22 April 2014 11:19am

11

How many more times ?

7 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



Yoolanderscribbens

22 April 2014 2:52am

77

I have deleted quite a long post - it was full of my anger and despair at how "the public" are being manipulated into accepting the lies and distortions pumped out by Tory Loving Media etc.

All I have to say is that the sooner a Mob storms Parliament and drags Holy Dave and the Rev IDS to a Peoples Court - the better.

But it won't happen, Holy Dave will live a carefree privileged life with the tax payer paying Mr Plod to keep the likes of me away from him - while tens of thousands will eek out a miserable existence, hating him with the same visceral intensity as I do.



DisabledScapegoat ▶ Yoolanderscribbens

22 April 2014 2:59am

58

hating him with the same visceral intensity as I do.

On behalf of the disabled community. I hate him more than you.



Yoolanderscribbens ▶ DisabledScapegoat

22 April 2014 3:18am

61

We have common cause - my partner had their DLA taken away - they didn't take the disability though -still in constant pain with limited mobility, gee, thanks Dave for all that Christian Love and Compassion.

I don't want to hate him but he just keeps on saying that doing bad things "is the right thing to do"....oh how I want to do the right thing to him....



Ursultana ▶ Yoolanderscribbens

22 April 2014 3:59am

8

let it go dont hate its too self destructive .just have your say calmly .They

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



skipsdad

22 April 2014 3:06am

24

The poor will always be with us. The poor ensure that prices are kept low, inflation is kept low, that workers compete for low wages, and this ensures that the value of inherited wealth is not only maintained, but also enhanced.

The last thing a Capitalist needs, is a well educated workforce. The last thing a Tory, or now even a millionaire 'Socialist' Labour Government needs, is a well educated population.

Percentages - That's what you need to know. These bastards will do anything to prevent the majority from knowing the key to accumulating any degree of wealth, as the more people know about it, and more importantly, understand it, then the more these bastards will have to find and 'work' harder in order to maintain their wealth, and their Fathers, the wealth they pass on in inheritance to their offspring.

Make 3,5,8,17, 20, 30% here, there and everywhere, buying and selling, or offering a service, and you'll soon accumulate wealth. Once you've got wealth, the interest compounds, not much at first, but considerably there after.

On the bright side, capitalism is for everyone, not just for the rich. Try it, you'll surprise yourself at how easy it is to 'make money'. Too many people try it the old fashioned way - through hard work and endeavour. That's why I'm poor.



Ursultana ▶ skipsdad

22 April 2014 4:00am

25

Old saying ,very true though If there was any profit in hard work ,the rich

wouldnt leave it for the poor.



kooljeff ▶ skipsdad

22 April 2014 6:50pm

4

When a rich man says he got there by hard work. Ask him "Whose?"

9 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



Dunscore

22 April 2014 3:14am

25

The revolution will come from this. It is only waiting for the leader to emerge.



AnnaKizzed ▶ Dunscore

22 April 2014 3:46am

6

His name is Nigel Farage...



JKMarsters ▶ AnnaKizzed

22 April 2014 4:11am

53

You think Nigel Farage cares about the poor? Really? UKIP is just as fond of workfare and "community programs" as the Government is. They're just as happy to refer to claimants as lazy - more demonisation. Same old, same old...



AnnaKizzed ▶ JKMarsters

22 April 2014 4:30am

5

On an incredibly basic level, at least he'll stop millions being nixed away

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



JKMarsters

22 April 2014 3:15am

69

I see it in my own area. Council tax bills, rent not fully covered... all of a sudden people have to find £40 or more a month out of what little they have to live on. It may not sound much, and I have no doubt that the wealthy consider it a negligible amount, but it is a lot when you have to count every penny in order to survive.

What people receive in benefits is supposed to be the minimum amount the law says a person needs to live on. These benefits don't take these new expenses into consideration. So, the sums don't add up.

The extra money that people have to pay out would have gone towards food, or travel expenses for job interviews. Fuel bills are high, and these days a person has to have the Internet and a telephone which also needs to be paid for.

The DWP call this "making work pay", and "lifting people up", whilst instead they are making it harder for people to survive, make it harder for people to find work if they lose their Internet or can't travel to interviews. Instead of lifting people up, they're being dragged down further and further.

Who is standing up for the poorest members of society? For those with disabilities and people with mental and physical health problems? The Tories waffle on about the "something for nothing culture". The Lib Dems are either in favour or if they're not, they're certainly not trying to stop it, so they're just as responsible. Labour thinks "tough love" is an excellent idea. All around, the silence is deafening...



Ursultana ▶ JKMarsters

22 April 2014 4:01am

4

pretenders to the Throne usurpers of power all .



EyeNEye ▶ JKMarsters

22 April 2014 11:27am

1

Then we have scum telling us that 1.5m are in work now....okay.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Yoolanderscribbens

22 April 2014 3:20am

15

I am getting interested in full bore shooting



ephemerid ▶ Yoolanderscribbens

22 April 2014 10:42am

10

Ho hum.

For obliteration purposes, that's an interesting hobby.

Personally, I'm very keen on public trials. I like a bit of ritual humiliation for those who impose the same on those less fortunate.

I'm thinking Nuremberg-style, with live streaming on the BBC. Like the Pistorius trial for the Bullingdon Brainless.

That would be fun.

(You could target practice after...)

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



pacart

22 April 2014 3:40am

56

The Tories want it both ways. They introduce policies which they state are aimed at making it untenable for anyone to exist on benefits for any length of time, that is their stated policy. Then when decent people point out that this will mean, and does mean that people, families and children being made destitute, that the policy depends on the ultimate sanction of hunger and homelessness for "shirkers" the Tories trot out their paid liars to deny it is happening. I think that IDS is a genuinely evil person, I think that Osborne is a genuinely evil person, a self serving smirking sociopath who would not give a damn if people were starving on the streets, just as long as his class can accumulate more wealth.



ephemerid ▶ pacart

22 April 2014 10:48am

21

Everything they have done points to what they want.

They do not want a welfare state. So they're getting rid of it bit by bit.
They do not want workers' rights. So they're getting rid of them too.
They do not want to have their rights and privileges. So they remove them.

What they want is more money for themselves and their friends.
What they want is a cowed and dependent workforce in fear.
What they want is control over it all and they use classic divide and rule tactics to achieve it, aided and abetted by a compliant media.

You and I and the hoi polloi are just collateral damage in the war this government is waging against its own people.

12 PEOPLE, 21 COMMENTS



AnnaKizzed

22 April 2014 3:43am

22

Oxfam still take 90 pence of every Pound donated for administration costs... yet have the audacity to whine????



tom666 ▶ AnnaKizzed

22 April 2014 3:47am

59

Thank you for the contribution from Conservative Central Office.



hamstrung ▶ AnnaKizzed

22 April 2014 3:50am

22

Go whistle.



AnnaKizzed ▶ tom666

22 April 2014 4:14am

9

Tom666



tom666

22 April 2014 3:44am

53

"At a time when the five richest families in the UK have the same wealth as the bottom 20% of the population it is unacceptable that the poorest are paying such a heavy price."

It's class warfare, pure and simple, as the Eton-educated, multi-millionaire elite inflict untold misery on the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society while they themselves just keep getting richer and richer.

But thank goodness we have such devout and evangelical Christians as David Cameron and IDS in charge of things. I'm sure their prayers offer great consolation to those waiting the queue for the food bank.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Ishmael Pierson

22 April 2014 3:48am

22

Unconditional Basic Income.



Ursultana ▶ Ishmael Pierson

22 April 2014 4:04am

6

In Australia is called "a living wage" Their guarantee for prosperity and independence .To pay a living wage as minimum It means enough to eat,so you don't die on them,before they have got value out of you, and have a roof over head so can sleep to go to work and maybe enough for a bus fare,just to make sure you get there.



LadyKorenwolf ▶ Ursultana

24 April 2014 10:21am

The Living Wage is not the same as an Unconditional Basic Income (also called Citizen's Income). Living Wage sets the minimum wage at a level deemed to be that a person requires to survive and pay the appropriate bills. The UBI is an amount that would be paid to ALL adult citizens (qualification could probably involve being permanently resident in the country as well) regardless of status. There would be NO benefits/pensions/allowances - though likely Child & Disability components would be likely. It would not be means tested. But any income one received above the UBI would be taxed at a set rate - such income would NOT affect the UBI.

This would allow parents who with to "parent" to do so without pressure to employ someone else to do it while they go and work for someone else. It would allow people to study regardless of status. It would allow artists & crafters to create more. It would allow people with an idea for a small business to try it out without risking everything. It would allow people to keep a level of pride and self-respect that current governments would like to see stamped out.

How to pay for it? Force the payment of tax being evaded by corporations. Remove all loopholes that allow corporations with profits into the billions from a country's citizen to pay less tax than the lowest paid workers. There are so many sources of revenue that are being ignored by governments because their donors would be upset.



fadingsun2020

22 April 2014 4:28am

7

Another obvious story. We know this already. It's up to us to change this.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



moosejaw12999

22 April 2014 4:28am

7

I can get you folks tickets on a rusty unmarked cargo ship heading for India , the land of opportunity .
I can hardly what for the first waves of refugees to hit their shores



Deeplyconcernced ▶ moosejaw12999

22 April 2014 7:15am

6

Best news I have heard in ages. Good bye. The rest of us in Uk will start to have our country/money back and decency levels restored.



yesfuture ▶ moosejaw12999

22 April 2014 8:56am

17

False dichotomy. Northern Europe has many countries with less total wealth, but higher average standard of living than the UK. This is why so any ex-pats now live in places like France and Germany - so they can have a decent life on incomes that just don't buy a decent life here any more.

This is about income inequality, pure and simple. We're one of the richest nations in the world, but that wealth is concentrated into too few hands.



Mason46 ▶ yesfuture

22 April 2014 9:20am

3

Housing is cheaper in France because they have 4 times the land area and the same population as the UK. Good for OAPs from the UK with some money.

On the other hand there are hundreds of thousands of young French people living in the UK because they cannot get work in France. In contrast there are a thousands of moaning Guardian readers who cannot get off their backsides and find a job.



David_Campbell99

22 April 2014 4:28am

18

David the Devout has it all in hand.
He is about to forgive the poor.



FelisLunartik

22 April 2014 4:55am

30

Don't forgive them Lord for they know what they do.

14 PEOPLE, 15 COMMENTS



useronthenet

22 April 2014 5:32am

21

Funny, I have spent half my life in countries where there is no welfare at all. When I tell them that my country gives out free money to their citizens they just laugh and say how can this be ? I just shrug my shoulders and say this is how the system is. They say, so they get free money for nothing, whilst the others have to work their day to give it to others who don't ? I said yes, that is the system. They say my country is mad .. I tend to agree with them.



surpluspop1 ▶ useronthenet

22 April 2014 6:06am

44

If this country is so mad why did you come back?

Is it because you're afraid that one day you yourself might need the 'madness' of the welfare net?



Bret Tom O'Hawks ▶ useronthenet

10

22 April 2014 6:14am

What countries were you in?



Deeplyconcerned ▶ useronthenet

40

22 April 2014 6:51am

what rubbish are you spreading abroad? IT is not Free money, the vast

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



grimaldi442

57

22 April 2014 5:49am

It doesn't have to be like this. Thatcherism and a right wing think tanks have been trying to brainwash us for wearily decades into believing there are no alternatives. Meanwhile, we have the obscenity of billionaires from all over the world flocking here to take advantage of our sycophantic Government. This get rich quick merry-go-round cannot go on forever, if the country cannot afford proper welfare for the poor it equally well cannot afford billionaires and their hangers on, or the Politicians that suck up to them.



thephon ▶ grimaldi442

13

22 April 2014 6:14am

Agreed



Brian Milne

35

22 April 2014 6:41am

IDS will sit in his office and stamp his feet like a four year old with hands over ears and tell us it is not true. I often find it hard to decide whether Dave, Clegg, Gideon, Gove, Hunt or May top my list for who I dislike most. One little impetuous outburst and IDS is back up there. The country is in a mess and none of them will look at it and accept what they see or hear. So yet another report, another denial expected and business as before. Roll on May 2015.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



Deeplyconcerned

43

22 April 2014 6:47am

I want the name of that person who keeps speaking for DWP? Perhaps if they were forced to give a name, then we might get less pompous sanctimonious comments.



ephemerid ▶ Deeplyconcerned

13

22 April 2014 10:56am

The DWP spokesperson is probably one of IDS' SPADS.

He employs them, at our expense, on salaries not unadjacent to £90,000 PA and he gets them from his very own think-tank, The Centre for Social Justice. Lots of them.

People like the unlvely Phillippa Stroud, who is a true believer in all things IDS, and thinks you can "pray away the gay". This is what passes for Christian charity on Planet IDS.

Perhaps it's not a real person at all. Perhaps it's some sort of bot. A bit like Fester McVile, who cannot possibly be real.....



Feiryred ▶ ephemerid

5

22 April 2014 12:02pm

Fester McVile? I'm still trying to work out which species of tick she belongs to. Hard to tell when you see her amongst the rest of those blood sucking parasites....



kooljeff ▶ ephemerid

22 April 2014 7:10pm

1

Didn't these SPADs enjoy a champagne party and a bonus for killing the disabled and throwing poor into destitution?

5 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



puljon

22 April 2014 6:50am

1

Im a Tory, who bloody cares.....



HeadsGone ▶ puljon

22 April 2014 7:48am

14

IDS cares - he keeps telling us hes helping the poor!

Don't think they want his help



puljon ▶ HeadsGone

22 April 2014 9:05am

15

IDS, is that the chap who abused the young Cait Reilly who was used for slave labour for POUNDLAND. A catholic as well.



Mason46 ▶ puljon

22 April 2014 9:22am

1

Dreadful being asked to do immigrants work poor Cait Reilly

8 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



Jose Martinez

22 April 2014 6:59am

13

Welfare benefits must be permanent? Can the UK government accept that some people have decided to live on public welfare? What about those EU citizens who have settled in the UK in search of welfare benefits?



Deeplyconcernced ▶ Jose Martinez

22 April 2014 7:03am

4

at the moment they only have to pay about three months worth of tax (if they are paid enough), then they are entitled.....sucks eh?



ID1174659 ▶ Jose Martinez

22 April 2014 7:15am

30

Yes because £72 a week single rate JSA. Is soooooo generous.



Worried9876 ▶ ID1174659

22 April 2014 7:54am

5

What about those EU citizens who have settled in the UK in search of

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



ID1174659

22 April 2014 7:12am

27

The LibDems enable this. Remember pimping for them in 2010 Guardian? Time for an apology.



Circra ▶ ID1174659

22 April 2014 8:13am

21

To be fair, there was no indication that the Lib Dems were going to do this. That's mostly why everyone is so angry with them. They betrayed what they stood for, everyone who voted for them and broke a whole bunch of promises.



DailyMailHater ▶ ID1174659

22 April 2014 8:28am

11

They hoodwinked everyone. No point harping on about it.

At the time they seemed to many as the best of a bad lot.

(No, I didn't vote for them either.)



ephemerid ▶ Circra

22 April 2014 11:03am

12

"To be fair"?



CultureJudge

22 April 2014 7:15am

34

And there came an elder that was called IDS unto Jesus and Jesus said to him: 'Implement thou welfare cuts that the poorest families shall be driven deeper into poverty. For I and my Father in heaven care not for them.'

And he that was called IDS did smile, saying, 'Great! And my riches - it's OK for me to keep them all?'

And Jesus did reply: 'Gather ye as many riches unto yourself as you can; surround yourself with luxury and give not of it to others, certainly not those who have not, for I say unto you again it is easier for a rich empathy-free man to get into Heaven than it is for a camel to pass through the widest gate of the city'.



JohnBea

22 April 2014 7:19am

20

'Oxfam is urging the government to determine what the absolute minimum level of support should be for households.'

I fear this might encourage the Bullingdon boys to see if they can cut deeper. What is the pleasure they get by taking from families who are really hurt rather than those who use money as a game?

13 PEOPLE, 14 COMMENTS



Joffly

22 April 2014 7:26am

12

Poverty is a relative concept. The poor of only 50 years ago would not recognise the "poverty" of today. Too many people have an entitlement mentality. The truth is that only those who are permanently disabled should get permanent welfare. Everyone else should be put on notice that that welfare is temporary. The plain fact is that spending more than a quarter of the national income on welfare is no longer sustainable and everyone has to contribute. A life on welfare is no longer acceptable.



szwalby ▶ Joffly

22 April 2014 7:34am

43

Too many people have an entitlement mentality

I so agree! So let's stop all subsidies to MPS, who eat, drink and travel at our expense.



SpaGirl ▶ Joffly
22 April 2014 7:38am

35

The plain fact is that spending more than a quarter of the national income on welfare is no longer sustainable

Do you understand that the headline 'Welfare' budget numbers include pensions?



silver12345 ▶ Joffly
22 April 2014 7:54am

19

Most of the benefits budget is claimed by working people and 47% is spent



szwalby
22 April 2014 7:28am

14

The report warns that the shape of welfare support has changed dramatically just as people have struggled with rising living costs, and that many jobseekers, carers, single parents and those with disabilities **unable** to work have become worse off.

That's how IDS makes work pay.

5 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



Brynzin2
22 April 2014 7:31am

22

This is outrageous. The scary thing for me is that many of the younger members of society believe it is a waste of time voting. This myth I believe is being encouraged by the Tory party because they know the blue rinse brigade will vote for them and the youth will not bother, giving them the edge. How can we convince the younger voters that it is important to vote. Having a say once every five years is not enough. MP,s are not accountable and often self serving. No wonder people think it is a waste of effort :(



Mason46 ▶ Brynzin2
22 April 2014 9:26am

1

Dear God when did you last see a woman with a blue rinse. This is sexist ageism.



RichardScanlon ▶ Mason46
22 April 2014 10:43am

3

I agree, the most common colour these days is red



Artechs ▶ Mason46
22 April 2014 11:42am

4

Perhaps it was a generalisation. You know, like your 1m people not

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



m909
22 April 2014 7:35am

33

For those keen to stop the "life on benefits" whiere would you like the savings to come from as.....

- 47% of UK benefit spending goes on state pensions of £74.22bn a year
- housing benefit is £16.94bn
- Disability living allowance of £12.57bn
- Jobseekers' allowance- £4.91bn

(all 2011-12,)

So - should we reduce the 74bn spent on pensioners (47% of spending) or the 5bn from JSA? or from disabled people?



silver12345 ▶ m909

25

22 April 2014 8:03am

Well said.

Reading many of the posts it shows how ignorant people are and they have very little idea where the budget is really spent. The press and Government have to be commended for alienating and creating hatred towards anyone claiming benefits.



DailyMailHater ▶ m909

23

22 April 2014 8:24am

Last time I looked the Treasury took in around Six Hundred Billion, so JobSeekers Allowance represents less than One Per Cent.

Hardly worth IDS getting his knickers in a twist, really.



ephemerid ▶ DailyMailHater

11

22 April 2014 11:19am

But but but

9 PEOPLE, 12 COMMENTS



gazzahall2002

79

22 April 2014 7:39am

After spending 16 months on the dole, and losing my home and spending 4 months sleeping in my car, I am pleased to announce I have a job and am able to afford broadband now, so I may reply to these posts.

Starving from one day to the next is not fun. Food, petrol, Phone credit (to apply and reply to jobs) is not easy when once a fortnight I received the equivalent of the average dinner bill. £105 per fortnight is quite ridiculous to survive on, especially when you need it to top up for your rent. By the time you get a job, you are in so much debt, when you receive your wage.... you are still no better off.

Regardless of Labour or Tory policy, there are millions of people in Britain starving right now as you read this They are a soft touch to save budget, because there is no one there to support them.

Food banks, are a God send to someone who is starving..... The UK is becoming a Third World Country.



ID1174659 ▶ gazzahall2002

36

22 April 2014 8:00am

Good luck with the job. This post is spot on and tells it like it is



Brandybuck ▶ gazzahall2002

21

22 April 2014 8:36am

Good luck, I am really pleased things are looking up for you. Please continue to post and inform people of how it really is.



Mason46 ▶ gazzahall2002

3

22 April 2014 9:28am

In Germany you do not get benefits if you have a car.....

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Councils sit on £67m in emergency help for poor

Record numbers of families have pleas for help rejected even though councils in England are failing to spend allocated cash

[Patrick Butler](#), [George Arnett](#), [Sarah Marsh](#) and [Samir Jeraj](#)

The Guardian, Sunday 20 April 2014 20.00 BST

[Jump to comments \(853\)](#)



The Bromley borough food bank in Orpington, part of the Trussell Trust. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

A fledgling scheme to provide emergency help to the poorest in the country is in chaos, with £67m left unspent and record numbers of families being turned away.

Figures released in response to Freedom of Information Act requests indicate that by the end of January councils in England were sitting on £67m of the £136m that had been allocated to local [welfare](#) schemes. Half of local authorities had spent less than 40% of their funds.

An analysis by the Guardian shows that under the new local welfare assistance schemes, four in 10 applications for emergency funds are turned down, despite evidence that many applicants have been made penniless by [benefits](#) sanctions and delays in processing benefit claims. Under the previous system – the social fund – just two in 10 were. In some parts of the country, as few as one in 10 applicants obtain crisis help.

The schemes were designed to help low-income families in crisis, such as those in danger of becoming homeless or subjected to domestic violence. Charities and MPs have warned that those denied help are turning to [food banks](#) and loan sharks.

Gillian Guy, chief executive of Citizens Advice, which offers debt and legal advice, said the emergency financial support system was in chaos. "When the safety net fails, people are left with no way of putting food on

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the table, paying the rent or keeping the lights on. Confusion over what help is available and who to approach means that people who need support are left high and dry.

"People are in danger of being pushed into the arms of payday lenders and loan sharks by the chaotic emergency support system. Citizens Advice bureaux see people in desperate need of support who have nowhere else to turn when jobcentres and the local council don't give out support."

Under the new system, emergency funds are no longer ringfenced, meaning that councils can divert unspent cash to other budgets. Local welfare assistance schemes were created a year ago in 150 English authorities, alongside national schemes in Wales and Scotland, following the abolition of the social fund.

Most schemes do not offer cash or loans, but support in kind, such as food parcels and supermarket vouchers. The social fund provided loans repayable against future benefit payments – typically about £50 – and larger capital grants to destitute families who needed help to furnish flats or replace broken domestic appliances.

Despite charities reporting that demand for help has rocketed as a result of economic hardship and welfare cuts, some councils spent more money setting up and administering their welfare schemes than they gave to needy applicants.

Councils told the Guardian they had provided less in emergency funding than in the past because there was a lack of public awareness of the new system. Some had failed to advertise their schemes, while others set such tight eligibility criteria that many applicants – typically including low-paid working families, benefit claimants and those deemed to have not lived in their local area for long enough – were turned away.

Simon Danczuk, the Labour MP for Rochdale, who has repeatedly raised the issue of local welfare in parliament, said his constituents frequently reported struggles to get crisis help. Constituents he has helped include:

- A low-wage family with three children, including an 11-month-old baby, who applied for £35 to pay for gas, electricity and baby food to help them until payday. The council scheme initially referred the family to a food bank. After lobbying by Danczuk, they were given £20 for energy costs, but were refused money for baby food.
- A pregnant mother and her partner, who after benefit changes were left with £7 a week for food after rent and council tax. They were told that they could not apply as the scheme was for "genuine emergencies" such as fires and flood.

In each case Danczuk believes the families would have qualified for emergency support under the social fund. "Central and local government are pushing people into the hands of payday loan companies and food banks. They have in effect privatised the lender of last resort," he said.

A spokesman for the Department for Work and Pensions, which funds local welfare schemes run by 150 local authorities across England, said: "In contrast to a centralised grant system that was poorly targeted, councils can now choose how best to support those most in need. It is for local councils to decide how they spend their budgets."

But a Conservative council leader has called on the government to reinstate local welfare assistance funding, calling it a "cut too far". Louise Goldsmith, leader of West Sussex county council, [said the proposed cut would leave many low income families without vital support](#) when they were going through a "tough patch in their lives".

A [briefing note prepared by the council](#) found that 43% of 5,582 individuals and families helped by the local welfare fund to the end of February had applied because they had been left penniless by benefit sanctions and delays.

The Local Government Association has called upon the ministers to

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Extended benefit sanctions push up numbers seeking advice on paying bills

George Osborne to announce tough new benefit curbs for EU migrants



lina979, 35



nick_of_time, 39

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I am a Man Women
 Seeking Men Women
 Aged to
 In
 Within miles
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reverse the cut, and it is understood a number of councils and welfare charities are preparing to seek a judicial review of the government's decision to cut local welfare assistance funding in April 2015.

Tom Clark: How the Tories chose to hit the poor

Many councils are using part of their welfare assistance allocation to provide financial support for local food banks, which provide penniless applicants with charity food parcels.

Lady Stowell, a local government minister, told the House of Lords in January that local authorities were "doing a good job of supporting people in times of crisis and are doing it without using all the funding that has been provided so far from DWP". But Centrepoint, the homelessness charity said that local welfare assistance underspending meant many homeless youngsters could not get vital support when they moved from hostels into independent living. "Councils need to start using these funds to address urgent need now and ensure that young people have access to it," said Seyi Obakin, Centrepoint's chief executive. Two local authorities – Labour-run Nottinghamshire county council and Tory-run Oxfordshire – have **scrapped local welfare assistance** altogether and plan to divert the money into social care services..

Conservative-run Herefordshire had county council spent less than £5,000 of its annual £377,000 allocation by the end of December last year, equivalent to 1% of its local welfare budget. It said its spending reflected low demand for crisis help, a claim disputed by Hereford Citizens Advice and Hereford food bank, which said they had been inundated with requests.

Labour-run Islington council had spent 80% of its emergency funds budget by the end of December last year and had spent all its emergency funds by April. It said it had encouraged its frontline staff to refer individuals to its local welfare scheme to ensure they got crisis help and assistance with any underlying problems, such as debt.

Local authorities are anticipating further problems over local welfare in 2015 when the DWP **scraps funding for the schemes**. **Councils**, charities and **MPs** have called on the government to restore and ringfence the crisis support allocation.

Councils say that in some cases they have refused emergency help because benefit claimants have been wrongly referred to local authority welfare schemes by jobcentres. Some councils have refused to accept applications from those who ought to have been offered a short-term benefit advance from their local jobcentre.

Scotland and Wales have their own welfare assistance schemes and these have higher applicant success rates than in England. In Northern Ireland, which still has the social fund, 70% of applicants received help.

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19 PEOPLE, 26 COMMENTS



RecantedYank

20 April 2014 8:17pm

324

You have to love it...NOT. Between ATOS and the councils...the poor are screwed and tattooed.



kevessex RecantedYank

20 April 2014 9:10pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



Crookes RecantedYank

20 April 2014 9:19pm

167

Yet again, **Local** Government are made to look like the bad guys - whilst central Government are sitting on *billions* (Quantitative Easing and what not...).

With even more cuts to Local Government on their way, I can understand why some Town Halls are hanging on to reserves at the moment - if Westminster wanted to help the poor this much then it could either stop their cuts or start spending money.



VSLVSL Crookes

20 April 2014 9:34pm

113

Crookes RecantedYank

7 PEOPLE, 15 COMMENTS



lindalusardi

20 April 2014 8:18pm

289

the council leaders probably get bonused on keeping this untouched

wouldn't surprise me.

crazy world.

poor, sick and hungry people everywhere and 5% of the people with 95% of the resources



Jack Jazz lindalusardi

20 April 2014 8:27pm

183

the council leaders probably get bonused on keeping this

untouched

wouldn't surprise me.

Well they it's rife in the benefits agencies and AOTOS why not everywhere else? These private companies are making a killing. Taxpayers money, supposedly for the poor but syphoned off by the rich!



Jack Jazz ▶ Jack Jazz

20 April 2014 8:29pm

11

oops ignore the typo!



olderiamthelessiknow ▶ lindalusardi

20 April 2014 8:34pm

16

"the council leaders probably get honused on keeping this untouched"

17 PEOPLE, 17 COMMENTS



louiscooper

20 April 2014 8:19pm

319

what a massive fail the DWP has been under the Tories - IDS - it does stink....



Sickbag ▶ louiscooper

20 April 2014 8:33pm

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gilesjuk ▶ louiscooper

20 April 2014 8:42pm

45

The DWP has given the money to local councils, it is the local councils who decide who gets the money.



arabeska ▶ louiscooper

20 April 2014 8:54pm

4

They cannot give that money to anyone that wants it thta would be lawless

13 PEOPLE, 17 COMMENTS



Mandinga1976

20 April 2014 8:20pm

186

A truly awful sign of the corruption of the British authorities. Interesting that unspent funds can be diverted to other pots. People are in despair - people are killing themselves.



fearlessfox ▶ Mandinga1976

20 April 2014 9:09pm

135

A woman jumped of the bridge in Newcastle last week. Another was going to jump off a different bridge the next day. People are being under to much pressure.



mickyfong ▶ Mandinga1976

20 April 2014 9:09pm

135

yes yes if people are killing themselves then the Tories won't have to open death camps but the ideology is the phucking same



Mandinga1976 ▶ mickyfong

20 April 2014 9:40pm

42

That's exactly what it is - Nazi-ism. Britain is too clever at spin to need death

10 PEOPLE, 15 COMMENTS



lorimerhotshot

20 April 2014 8:20pm

138

'No longer ringfenced'
Explains a lot.



DisabledScapegoat ▶ lorimerhotshot

20 April 2014 8:22pm

88

No longer ringfenced.

Unlike state pensions, which is the largest part of the Welfare Bill.



roganis ▶ lorimerhotshot

20 April 2014 8:41pm

40

some councils spent more money setting up and administering their welfare schemes than they gave to needy applicants.

Some things are more ring-fenced than others.



sturcol ▶ roganis

20 April 2014 11:17pm

2

Some things are more ring-fenced than others

12 PEOPLE, 15 COMMENTS



gilesjuk

20 April 2014 8:20pm

49

But I thought the public sector was so great and can't do anything wrong?



Sickbag ▶ gilesjuk

20 April 2014 8:30pm

348

This is the fault of the Conservative party once again, a shower of fucking dullards who should be nowhere near power, over privileged, venal animals sucking the public tit dry while people go hungry, they fucking disgust me



SirJoshuaReynolds ▶ gilesjuk

20 April 2014 8:38pm

41

Central government did it competently enough.

What's happened here is that it's been "devolved" so someone else gets the blame.

Not that I think they've done too much wrong. Are they supposed to have spent all of it by the end of January?



gilesjuk ▶ Sickbag

20 April 2014 8:44pm

14

Is it? the money has been given to the councils to spend, the councils are

8 PEOPLE, 16 COMMENTS



notwired

20 April 2014 8:20pm

49

you elected the Tories, what do you expect? clowns!



RCS22864 ▶ notwired

20 April 2014 9:35pm

72

Hello notwired, I am not a tory or a kipper (ex-union rep mate). You need to

look at the spread-sheets that, this report is based on (follow the welfare link at the top of the report).

Unless you live in Tory held Herefordshire (98% of their welfare budget remaining), or Medway (91%) then (as much as it really fucking pains me to say this), you cannot pass the entire blame on to the tory bastards.

Labour Councils, especially in the Midlands, North East, Yorkshire, and some in the North West seem to be the ones that also deserve our anger (Stoke council still had 95% left, Merton 93%, Tyneside and Calderdale both 90% - all Labour).

This would appear to be a scam/travesty that, has no real political boundaries.



keith1612 ▶ RCS22864

28

20 April 2014 10:24pm

notwired's statement does seem to be a bit general and sweeping...however, he's right in many respects. The country should be ashamed of itself for allowing these psychopaths into power. What were the people thinking? Just because it's ingrained in us to own our own piss pot plot of land; which in turn further ingrains into people to look down their noses at those who don't - and suddenly this mass populace feels that they are a conservative now! Only about one percent of the population are in a privileged position to be a cheap labor conservative; yet it's only now perhaps, that people realize this.



RCS22864 ▶ keith1612

8

20 April 2014 10:50pm

Hello Keith I agree absolutely that anyone who voted tory should be fucking



DisabledScapegoat

51

20 April 2014 8:20pm

Councils sit on £67m in emergency help for poor.

Morally wrong.

IDS is :-)

4 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



WhetherbyPond

256

20 April 2014 8:22pm

Shameful, we are governed by unspeakable bastards who put their ideological fantasies before the welfare of the people whom they are supposed to represent.



Gelion ▶ WhetherbyPond

148

20 April 2014 8:52pm

And don't forget, Cameron's father made his money by creating tax havens for the rich ...



artyboy ▶ Gelion

18

20 April 2014 11:40pm

What relevance does this have to Labour councils sitting on funds distributed by central government Gelion?



Gelion ▶ artyboy

27

21 April 2014 8:27am

Probably that the Tories are the ones who have seen £100s of BILL I ONS

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS

Strummered

160

20 April 2014 8:22pm



I get the (IDS) thinking, in order to prove you really need help it will become necessary to die first.

84



crasspymctabernacle ▶ Strummered

20 April 2014 8:44pm

This is a plague spread by foetid Pickles and his Samuel Smiles Tory ideology. He would like to have a kind of 'float - you're a witch, sink - you're innocent' test. I really think this should be applied to him first, just as a demonstration of its infallibility, you understand.



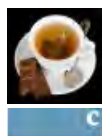
Buzzbatter ▶ Strummered

21 April 2014 12:16pm

Did you actually read the article?

1

7 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS



teaandchocolate

20 April 2014 8:24pm

Let food banks and Wonga take the strain, seems to be the idea, because the destitute are someone else's problem.

Well, this is what they wanted all along.

Neoliberal debt... we're just a skip away from another POP!

115



snakeoilssalesman ▶ teaandchocolate

20 April 2014 8:41pm

It's called The Big Society

39



GreatGrandDad ▶ teaandchocolate

21 April 2014 2:36am

we're just a skip away from another POP!

This failure to have an effective system to assist those who fall on hard times and become destitute is one more symptom of capitalism being now in what John McMurtry describes as *The Cancer Stage of Capitalism*.

Compare the measly 136 million (if it was all disbursed) to the billions of bankers' bonuses reported in the last few weeks----and those bonuses were 'earned' by seeking out ways to rent out capital that were often harmful to life (cancerous) rather than supportive of life.

But capitalism is only the monetary system that arose to support industrialisation and its concomitant consumerism. The root problem is that, in the over-developed industrialised regions such as Britain, there is now no longer the ever-increasing supply of 'winnings' from within Earth (to which industrialisation, urbanisation and citification was the response) coming forth.

I compare what I read in this article to what I see here in rural SE Asia (in Isaan, up near the Mekong) in a region that has never industrialised.

Here each village has its own very effective system of assisting those who fall on hard times. The supporter of first resort is the extended family and the other supporter (for those without family, or where a whole family is hit) is the temple.

Each year there are two special occasions when those of us who are doing OK 'make merit' by taking donations of food that will keep (packets of biscuits etc) and coins and standing on the outside of a square of tables set up in the temple grounds.

The monks in order of seniority walk round in procession inside the square and we place something in each one's alms collecting bowl. When a bowl is full, it is taken by a lay helper who empties it in the centre of the square with the food going into pickups and the coins into cash boxes.

12

Thus the temple kitchens can always feed any who are in need.

As things go POP! in the industrialised regions and we go through the transition into post-industrialisation, folk there will have to develop similar localised support systems.

I recommend the downloading of the four essays by Serge Latouche that have just been made available by the [Simplicity Institute](#) on the subject of "De-growth".



jochebed1 ▶ GreatGrandDad

21 April 2014 8:28am

10

People are hungry NOW and whatever the merits of South East Asia here

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



jecjec

20 April 2014 8:24pm

46

Probably saving it so they can offset it against future council tax rises and win brownie points for being thrifty.

If our councils were run by brighter people with some sense of moral responsibility it couldn't happen. So; not surprising then.



siff ▶ jecjec

20 April 2014 9:08pm

14

If our councils were run by brighter people with some sense of moral responsibility it couldn't happen. So; not surprising then.

You should see who's running our local council, and how he got there. Democracy ? Don't make me laugh.



David Hancock ▶ siff

20 April 2014 10:12pm

19

Sadly the councils are run by faceless, unelected, civil servants - and it's they who take these decisions rather than anyone who is actually publicly accountable.



doseofrealism ▶ jecjec

21 April 2014 9:36am

2

If our councils were run by brighter people with some sense of moral responsibility
Obviously bright (ie..f.....ng greedy)enough to grab some of the highest salaries in the land 'running council depts'

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



m1ta

20 April 2014 8:26pm

137

Ian Duncan Smith and the DWP are utterly incompetent. A couple of years down the line we will all be saying - 'Just what were they doing?' That will include the mainstream media, who at the moment seem to be giving him carte Blanche to make as many balls-ups as he wants.



Sheila Jones ▶ m1ta

20 April 2014 8:33pm

76

They aren't balls ups, these are the intended consequences.



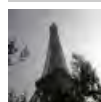
Buzzbatter ▶ m1ta

21 April 2014 12:19pm

2

Did you actually read the article?

4 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



wutheringshite

20 April 2014 8:27pm

99

The councils have no money of their own. The headline should read :-

Councils sit on £67m of **taxpayers money** in emergency help for poor.



atom13 ▶ wutheringshite

20 April 2014 9:00pm

112

I'd tried to get help from a council North of the river Tyne for a client of mine and was told to sod off. This council was given several hundred thousand pounds and was happily taking bedroom tax (25%) and council tax from his £71 pw JSA.

The poor bastard was starving and they wouldn't give him some food vouchers. And no he didn't smoke and couldn't afford a drink.



wutheringshite ▶ atom13

20 April 2014 10:41pm

32

What steps can be taken to make them act as they ought to? It's an absolute disgrace money is being held back from people who not only deserve it but who it is intended for.



TechnicalEphemera ▶ wutheringshite

20 April 2014 11:03pm

18

Easy, the bastards in Tory Government HQ could simply mandate that the



ellatynemouth

20 April 2014 8:27pm

124

Most of these problems could be eradicated if the DWP scrapped their politically motivated arbitrary sanctioning of job seekers, and if there was a hint of an attempt to reverse the growing inequality by our politicians, there might be some hope.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



CultureJudge

20 April 2014 8:28pm

145

A pregnant mother and her partner, who after benefit changes were left with £7 a week for food after rent and council tax.

I can hear IDS groaning with pleasure as the waves of ecstasy roll through his body.



ThornburyBoy ▶ CultureJudge

20 April 2014 8:31pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



Buzzbatter ▶ CultureJudge

21 April 2014 12:25pm

1

Sad case...and I do not mean the couple.

Very hard to see how they do not qualify for 100% council tax reduction.

DisabledScapegoat

20 April 2014 8:29pm

53



Councils sit on £67m in emergency help for poor.

Council tax up ,Bedroom Tax imposed while sitting on money.

10 PEOPLE, 19 COMMENTS



ThornburyBoy

20 April 2014 8:29pm

20

Perhaps the truth of the matter is that although the funds are available if required, some claimants are not in genuine need and hence not eligible. I suspect that there are many reasons including political motivation whereby the needy are refused help (probably by labour administrations) in a futile attempt to discredit a system with wide public support. Should this be the case, sacrificing the interests of needy people on the alter of political advantage is as despicable an act as it gets.



LongDanSweeney ▶ ThornburyBoy

20 April 2014 8:31pm

160

i suspect you have never been homeless, truly without work or poor.

I sincerely hope that one day you experience all these things at once.



DisabledScapegoat ▶ ThornburyBoy

20 April 2014 8:37pm

85

in a futile attempt to discredit a system with wide public support. Should this be the case, sacrificing the interests of needy people on the alter of political advantage

You should write spy stories.

The benefit claimant that came in from the cold.



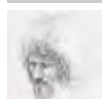
roganis ▶ ThornburyBoy

20 April 2014 8:47pm

54

sacrificing th interests of needy people on the alter of political

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



LongDanSweeney

20 April 2014 8:29pm

113

get rid of the system which was already poor but at least functional and then cut it and dump the remainder on local authorities that you have already decimated with staffing cuts and blame them when they can not handle the workload.

Straight out of the Pickles guide to hiding responsibility.

Meanwhile the poor suffer.

Tory/Lib Dem scum



shebunkin ▶ LongDanSweeney

21 April 2014 1:09am

25

the worst thing is they got rid of the independent social fund review service. they were exemplary in terms of efficiency, and clearly needed in a switch over from DWP to local authorities... but too generous from the government's point of view, overturning many of the crap decisions made in the first instance. the government didn't want the devolved funding to operate generously - they wanted LA's to be tough, do things like issue vouchers instead of cash, and the fact that the funding is not ring-fenced speaks volumes. hardly anybody knows about this funding, and it is impossible to challenge refusals. the only mechanism is judicial review, a legal action which is prohibitively expensive when measured against the amount of financial help applied for.

IDS once more is the culprit.



LongDanSweeney ▶ shebunkin

21 April 2014 7:52pm

4

very true

9 PEOPLE, 10 COMMENTS



GilbertGoliath

20 April 2014 8:30pm

174

"...but were refused money for baby food."

What a vile, heartless, utterly disgusting place this country is becoming. Disgraceful.



DisabledScapegoat ▶ GilbertGoliath

20 April 2014 8:31pm

66

is becoming. Disgraceful.

It is.

It's feck the poor.



snakeoilssalesman ▶ GilbertGoliath

20 April 2014 8:50pm

70

And yet according to most of our media we've got foreigners rushing here because of our 'over generous' benefit system



ameliaposte ▶ snakeoilssalesman

20 April 2014 9:56pm

5

I think this is the stealth plan to tackle perceived mass immigration until we



Sheila Jones

20 April 2014 8:30pm

30

Fascism in action, we're all natives now.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



charles Johnston

20 April 2014 8:33pm

74

But billions given away each year to despots and dictators.....



DisabledScapegoat ▶ charles Johnston

20 April 2014 8:40pm

63

Cameron and his arms deals.

Bribery.



StrawBear ▶ DisabledScapegoat

20 April 2014 8:41pm

35

Arms or the Poor rather than Alms for the poor.

4 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



SirJoshuaReynolds

20 April 2014 8:34pm

12

Hang on, £67m unspent, in the whole country, 2 months before the year end? You're

saying they should have spent it all?

Well done, Guardian.



atom13 ▶ SirJoshuaReynolds

60

20 April 2014 8:52pm

This money replaced crisis loans which was a shit system made even shitter by this government. How much money have we the taxpayers saved from all this government's bollocking around with the benefit system?

Not a bean so maybe you're ire should turn in their direction.



Rhiaden ▶ SirJoshuaReynolds

15

20 April 2014 9:14pm

They had £136m to start with...in the whole country.



SirJoshuaReynolds ▶ atom13

3

20 April 2014 9:21pm

Not a bean so maybe you're ire should turn in their direction

8 PEOPLE, 11 COMMENTS



UltraNationalist

8

20 April 2014 8:34pm

Give us a £67 million tax cut.



StrawBear ▶ UltraNationalist

67

20 April 2014 8:40pm

What will you spend your £1 on?

I'm gonna get a Kitkat.



atom13 ▶ UltraNationalist

20 April 2014 8:48pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



UltraNationalist ▶ StrawBear

4

20 April 2014 9:17pm

Being a kind, generous person I'll get a can of carrots or something and

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



autocord

93

20 April 2014 8:35pm

No wonder there's been a significant rise in the numbers becoming homeless and/or living in food and fuel poverty.

I have no doubt funding was organised this way so that if it failed IDS could apportion blame elsewhere.



snakeoilsalesman ▶ autocord

33

20 April 2014 8:52pm

More and more of us can no longer afford to live in houses



autocord ▶ snakeoilsalesman

9

21 April 2014 4:51pm

More and more rely upon Housing Benefit to help pay for a roof over their head; taxpayers are subsidising private landlords instead of funding council housing which would pay for itself over time.

5 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



justamentalpatient

20 April 2014 8:38pm

70

ESA stopped due to a DWP error over Christmas. The only official help available was a voucher to top up electricity (which my landlord and his estate agent would not accept and I can only buy top up cards from them).



StrawBear ▶ justamentalpatient

20 April 2014 8:43pm

75

You can only buy electric meter cards from your landlord?

Is that even legal?

If so, it shouldn't be.

That's a monopoly situation, something this freemarket obsessed govt are supposedly against.



CrypticMirror ▶ StrawBear

20 April 2014 9:03pm

47

Even if it is illegal, how many tenants would feel able to complain? You'd pretty much guarantee a retaliatory eviction.



justamentalpatient ▶ StrawBear

20 April 2014 9:04pm

25

Yes. It was a coin meter, but too many folk ripped their meters off. Now a

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



LakumbaDaGreat

20 April 2014 8:39pm

78

Me thinks the World is due a revolution of sorts.....how much more do they honestly think people can take??



snakeoilsalesman ▶ LakumbaDaGreat

20 April 2014 8:58pm

50

That's what they must be getting scared of in Brazil.They are planning 'anti-terrorist' laws.We all know who they plan to use this against.Protesters protesting against the cost of staging the World Cup while mass millions languish in poverty.It does not stop there because they've also the Olympic Games to prepare for.

10 PEOPLE, 12 COMMENTS



Vyse

20 April 2014 8:40pm

16

Im with ThornBuryBoy on this, theirs a limit to which the taxpayer should subsidise the lives of people. 1-2 kids fair enough but after that people need to accept if they have sexy fun time and don't terminate the pregnancy then they need to logically plan and squirrel away for its long term cost implications! some people cannot be helped, cannot be fixed and should just be left to their own demise quite frankly.



blairsnemesi ▶ Vyse

20 April 2014 9:27pm

70

And for those that have more kids and then suddenly find themselves unemployed or in a lower paying job or unable to pay bills for other reasons

or at the mercy of greedy loan sharks? Meanwhile we have a layer of obscenely rich people grabbing ever more of the cake and laughing in our faces. What a thoroughly pleasant person you are.



Vyse ▶ blairsnemesis

20 April 2014 9:57pm

9

Tough sh*t. Darwin baby. The government isnt their as a catch all boo boo repair kit, its their for necessaries, police, health, fire. Benefits for those who are in the most dire of straights. Besides if they were unemployed they would receive benefits... enough to live happily? probably not, but some, which is how it should be. This strife pushes them to get re-employed. Wake up and smell the coffee.



ameliaposte ▶ Vyse

20 April 2014 10:10pm

37

It's not nearly that simple. Also you are punishing children for the mistakes

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



StrawBear

20 April 2014 8:40pm

68

It also makes you wonder how much we're spending simply checking if people are worthy.

If we just let people turn up and take what they need we'd probably be better off financially and morally.

I think it's about time some politicians dug out a copy of *It's a Wonderful Life* and realised that most people aren't money grabbing cheats.



SwordOfJustice ▶ StrawBear

20 April 2014 9:00pm

58

Ah, but they judge us by their morals and standards so therefore we all must be money grabbing cheats end of.

Parasites all of them!



climbertrev1 ▶ StrawBear

21 April 2014 5:41am

5

If we just let people turn up and take what they need we'd probably be better off financially and morally.

I think you would become disillusioned very quickly.

Just put a sign up saying you have money to give away to those that really need it, place the money on a table outside your house and see how long it lasts.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



ID820968

20 April 2014 8:43pm

45

Its not coincidence this issue has cropped up now. Art works are becoming currency amongst the rich. This attempt to prize open the nations treasures chests in local authority hands is designed to release them into the market. If that happens a few people will make a killing on the sales and it wont be councils that benefit.



Clive Joynson ▶ ID820968

20 April 2014 9:31pm

20

Well the rich have got to find something to do with that Quantitative Easing windfall we pay them (to bail out their bad investments). £375bn is a hell of a lot of council artworks.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



Parminter47

20 April 2014 8:45pm

55

Won't be long now until they start railroading the poor and needy to the gas chambers.



nearfieldpro ▶ Parminter47

20 April 2014 9:01pm

39

One could argue metaphorically this is already happening.



Clive Joynson ▶ Parminter47

20 April 2014 9:04pm

52

Won't need to. They'll die cold and hungry on the streets after being benefit sanctioned and evicted for 'bedroom tax' arrears.



DisabledScapegoat ▶ Clive Joynson

20 April 2014 9:05pm

17

Sounds like a plan.



ID8274188

20 April 2014 8:49pm

84

Welfare cuts: Not economic necessity but ideological bullshit designed to punish the poor for being poor.



mrsifter63

20 April 2014 8:49pm

23

Honestly father, that money is just "resting" in my account! Bastards.

2 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



brendon1

20 April 2014 8:50pm

9

I'm a little skeptical about this. Sure, the council's accounts for the social fund may show +£67 million, but what do their other accounts show? My local council, on the last accounts, had a cash balance of £143 at the end of the previous financial year and have over £220,000 of debt.



brendon1 ▶ brendon1

20 April 2014 8:52pm

3

Sorry, those values should be £143,000 and £220,000,000.



Rhiaden ▶ brendon1

20 April 2014 9:16pm

10

If that is the case, then they are moving funds allocated for one thing to another thing.

If you are allocated X for your social emergency fund, and instead spend it on Y, whilst rejecting the majority of cases, is that what the social emergency fund is meant for?

brendon1 ▶ Rhiaden

20 April 2014 9:21pm

18



It allows the government to cut council's budgets and say "look, it didn't affect them". While in parallel, they have made it legal for money allocated for the 'poor' to be spent however councils like. Very convenient. However, the government is to blame here, not local councils -- the councils have had a very hard time of it, with central government funding being cut by up to 40% and restrictions of council tax increases of 2%.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Batcow

20 April 2014 8:53pm

10

Those council pension schemes obviously need topping up... again.



ian allan ▶ Batcow

21 April 2014 10:07am

5

What a nasty batcow you are! Council workers pay for their pensions like the rest of us and the Council puts a small amount in instead of paying it as wages. You are trying to justify the Tories wicked policies by deflection. Troll

5 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



Clive Joynson

20 April 2014 8:54pm

63

These are the replacement funds for crisis loan and emergency grant that devolved from the DWP to the councils. Typically giving councils half of the money in 2013 that the DWP spent in the same area in 2012.

Not ring-fencing them in council budgets was a cynical move by the government. Especially at a time of cuts in grants to labour councils and cuts, sanctions and caps in benefits. It puts councils in the worst kind of dilemma, between the needs of maintaining services and the needs of their poorest citizens, since the 'Poll Tax'.

I expect most will have been swallowed up making Discretionary Housing Payments to those tens of thousands in each council affected by the 'bedroom tax'. That misery is also not ring-fenced.

Over 18,000 people in my council's area are in arrears serious enough to trigger eviction. I keep telling people to expect tent cities in our local parks and they laugh, for now.



snakeoilsalesman ▶ Clive Joynson

20 April 2014 9:04pm

32

I'am one who is certainly not laughing. At the moment the number of homeless has in most area's been successfully hidden but for how much longer. Increasingly more and more people cannot afford to live in houses.



lisalane ▶ snakeoilsalesman

20 April 2014 9:14pm

33

But everything is wonderful! Didn't the BBC and most other media outlets, report this week about all the extra people in work and wages rising ahead of inflation? Mmmmm.....



snakeoilsalesman ▶ lisalane

20 April 2014 9:29pm

9

Ah the BBC that Marxist Metropolitan Flitist broadcaster

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS

Seereversefordetail

20 April 2014 8:55pm

35



Under the new system, emergency funds are no longer ringfenced, meaning that councils can divert unspent funds to other budgets

I think that answers the question why funds are really not being spent on emergency help for the poor.

10



DisabledScapegoat ▶ Seereversefordetail

20 April 2014 9:04pm

The head of the council/councils needs an annual pay rise.



000a000 ▶ Seereversefordetail

20 April 2014 11:18pm

This is good news, and right. Thankyou for highlighting it.

1

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



zarathusa

20 April 2014 8:56pm

Soylent Green. Actually I am just re-reading Frank Herbert's God Emperor of Dune. I find the similarities of the Worms criticisms of government, beaurocracy and aristocracy and the current political elite simply frightening.

13



Bob1974 ▶ zarathusa

20 April 2014 10:33pm

Soylent Green

Can we just have one article on here where someone doesn't mention Soylent Green!

5



zarathusa ▶ Bob1974

21 April 2014 9:18am

No.



fearlessfox

20 April 2014 8:56pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Chris Icarus

20 April 2014 8:59pm

I can only look with envy at the American welfare system so carefully structured to hurt the poor unlike ours which is designed to drive them to despair and a carefully baited trap from which there is no escape.

25



DisabledScapegoat ▶ Chris Icarus

20 April 2014 9:03pm

Blair copied the American welfare system

And made it much worse, the Tories are running with that particular ball.

31

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



severnboar

20 April 2014 9:00pm

18

Councils have probably kept this in reserve just in case Eric Pickles urgently demands more car-parking places or more frequent wheelie bin collections.



meles ▶ severnboar

20 April 2014 9:07pm

19

or a few more dinners.



dreamer06

20 April 2014 9:04pm

24

"An analysis by the Guardian shows that under the new **local welfare assistance schemes**,"

Sickening, just the term conjures up the parish/town relief that people had to go to cap in hand that we thought had gone for ever.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



richard farrell-adams

20 April 2014 9:07pm

13

These councils need to be brought to book. How many have they turned down? And what have they spent this money on? Reducing council tax rises? Roads? What. This is just disgusting. Coupled with vaults full of art worth millions, they dont give a toss about those they are supposed to serve. This needs proper investigation. Now.



charminggal ▶ richard farrell-adams

20 April 2014 10:09pm

13

Massive wage amounts mainly,councillors on over 200 k a year..and swanky new offices...the poor will suffer as intended by this Tory government...that's their wish.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



richard farrell-adams

20 April 2014 9:09pm

54

God, this country has gone to the dogs under this government. Talk about heartless, soulless desert. Its just unbelievable.



charminggal ▶ richard farrell-adams

20 April 2014 10:33pm

12

It must have similar tones,to 1945,when people wondered would anything ever stop hitler.



meles

20 April 2014 9:10pm

16

There's £67m that can be better spent on the rich in tax cuts.

Trickle down.

Or piss on.

Much the same thing, really.

James Deco

20 April 2014 9:10pm

5



why not give it to the new facist ukranian govt

66

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



Bluejil

20 April 2014 9:11pm

66

This is disgusting. When are people going to get angry enough to demand that we stop this nonsense and begin to build a decent society? Today as Dave the 'Christian' sat down for his meal, did he spare a thought for the homeless and hungry that he is driving further into the ground? I am ashamed at this country.



richard farrell-adams ▶ Bluejil

20 April 2014 10:16pm

15

Vote. Now in the euros. Then in 2015. Nil tory vote in the eu elections. Then watch them panic.



000a000 ▶ richard farrell-adams

20 April 2014 11:23pm

4

A UKIP vote should do it...



jochebed1 ▶ 000a000

21 April 2014 9:07am

9

On the contrary, they too don't want anyone to have employment rights, and they're even more corrupt than the Tories

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



shadowgem

20 April 2014 9:11pm

87

My benefits were stopped for a period of time and I applied to the local Council for financial help, and was referred to a food bank. I was told that there was no cash available at all and no other help for bills, and in addition, when I went to the food bank was told that I could only use it three times in a year.

When I did get food, whilst I was relieved to get something to eat, there was no fresh food - it was about six cans, a packet of pasta and a packet of cereal and two litres of long-life milk. There was no bread or butter or washing up liquid.

Thankfully, in the town where I live a drop-in had been opened by a small local charity where a support worker was kind enough to help support my case and my benefits were reinstated relatively quickly - within three months.

I only managed because I cancelled all direct debits, had a very small float in my account,, and got some free food from the charity that was helping me. In the meantime, my rent went unpaid.

It was one of the most stressful times that I've been through, and it must be absolutely awful for families with children, pregnant women or other vulnerable people.



DisabledScapegoat ▶ shadowgem

20 April 2014 9:16pm

33

shadowgem.

Venal Tory bastards.



charminggal ▶ shadowgem

20 April 2014 10:05pm

29

Sadly they care not...that's the whole sickening feature of Tories,the party

for the rich...been like it for centuries.
Not about to change anytime soon,it will be a shock to many,they are not used to being treated in this fashion,worse then animals...incidentally you would go in front of a court,for allowing this to happen to a animal.

This government ,are evil beyond a doubt.
May they all meet their maker ,who I'm sure will hand out copious amounts of punishment to them of which they deserve .

5 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



numinous

20 April 2014 9:12pm

57

The Tories - a Warning from History.



Andrew Fox ▶ numinous

20 April 2014 9:38pm

13

Its all right blaming the tories but how many of these councils are Labour controlled?



richard farrell-adams ▶ Andrew Fox

20 April 2014 10:15pm

14

How many are tory? Tell us.



good2go ▶ Andrew Fox

20 April 2014 10:32pm

9

but how many of these councils are Labour controlled?



queequeg7

20 April 2014 9:13pm

54

This really is criminal. Inexcusable. Encouraged by a government-led and media sponsored demonization of the poor.

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If it was a 'tough choice' to cut my job, then come and tell the children why

Thanks to austerity, many kids in Enfield will now be missing my songs and stories – but it's the poorest who will miss them most



Dave Pickering

theguardian.com, Thursday 1 May 2014 09.00 BST

[Jump to comments \(277\)](#)



One of the leaving cards for Dave Pickering made by a pupil

For the past five years I have been working as an early years library outreach worker, delivering stories and songs to children under the age of five in children's centres across the London borough of Enfield on behalf of the library service. Last month the team of five people that I was a part of was reduced to a team of one person.

The government says this is down to necessary austerity measures; the council calls it "leaner working"; the press call it [the cuts](#); and activists call it "the war against the welfare state". For me it's a job lost, but many of the children just thought it was my birthday because everyone was giving me presents and cards. During my last week of work I documented the goodbyes in pictures and words [on my blog](#). The gifts and goodbyes offered by the children and families I worked with are, I think, startling evidence of how much they valued this important service.

But the public valuing a public service isn't always enough to save it. The rhetoric of the cuts is that it's all about tough choices – but they're not tough on everyone, and they're not choices being made by everyone. Where are the choices for the communities I served? Many of them are struggling day to day, and every resource they find that offers them help may be cut tomorrow. They know about tough choices and they know who they're toughest for.

I worked with children and parents across Enfield. The Guardian is

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currently tracking the "Enfield Experiment". Like many parts of London, it is a place where you will find shocking disparities between the wealth and lifestyles of people in one area compared to those in another. I moved around the borough, working both in communities you might describe as affluent and those you might see as deprived.

My service was valued in both places, but the impact of its loss – and the loss of other even more essential and life-enhancing services – will be felt most keenly by the poorest and most at risk, rather than by people who can pay for private children's services and who don't need the extra help to combat the social conditions they find themselves in. We're not all in it together, because the impact of each cut is vastly different for each person depending on their situation.

The government is literally taking things away from children; it is dividing and dismantling communities and claiming that this is an unfortunate reality. There are different ways to save money, there are different ways to raise money. But if they're going to insist on this approach of taking things away from the people who most need them, the least they could do is explain to them why, talk to them, involve them in their own lives.

I would like the coalition government to look into the eyes of the children and mothers and fathers and carers who are losing these services the way I have. I want them to really take a moment on a human level, not as a statistic on a page or a line in an article, to understand what they are doing. It shouldn't be me struggling not to cry as I sing a final goodbye song to groups of children; it should be them.



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gordonstru
01 May 2014 10:37am

95



They must have done something very naughty indeed if it warrants getting rid of the guy who sings songs to children in the library.

When i was growing up in Glasgow, three of the things that made life massively less of a drudge and introduced a bit of something better were Hagsgs Castle, the transport museum at the Tramway, and the Citizens theatre - all massively subsidised so that the first two could be free, and the last one very cheap.

Haggs Castle has now closed, the transport museum moved to Partick (we couldn't have gone nearly as often due to the bus fares), but the Citizens Theatre still stands proud, putting on the best Christmas plays for kids that you'll ever see.

Scotland has cut these kinds of things much less than England, from what I can see. But there have still been huge cuts, because we don't get to decide how much money we can spend - Whitehall hands us our allowance each year. It's just cultural and social vandalism by people who don't need those services and couldn't give the teeniest, tiniest fuck about those who do.

Life in the poorest groups in Britain has never been more degrading, more humiliating, more alienating, more depressing and more limiting than it is now.

And people just mock the things that make life livable.

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Housing Network

Even renters who work should be worried about housing benefit changes

If you lose your job, benefit changes mean your home is no longer safe. The social safety net is disappearing



Previously people could rely on the safety net should they lose their jobs. Not anymore. Photograph: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

Hannah Aldridge, New Policy Institute

Tuesday 15 April 2014 08.30 BST

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A series of subtle changes to housing benefit mean the safety net for people renting their home is shrinking fast

The necessity of housing makes housing benefit a crucial part of the safety net. It ensures that if someone loses their job, they don't immediately fall behind on their rent and risk losing their home as well. It also allows job-seekers to focus on securing a new job rather than where they are going to sleep that night.

Research by Shelter found that a quarter of UK workers responding to its survey had no savings at all and would immediately find themselves [struggling to keep up with housing costs if they lost their job](#). If someone loses their job and needs support – as millions every year do – their home is no longer safe.

For tenants in the private rented sector, housing benefit provides money to help cover the rent. There are rightly conditions on what can be claimed. Entitlement is based on the number of rooms required (not the size of the property they live in) and the typical cost of renting in their area. But since 2011, the government has made a series of changes that have tightened these conditions much further.

The broadest change is a reduction in the maximum amount that can be claimed in housing benefit. Previously it was capped at the median rent for local properties (a rent level typical for that area). But in April 2011 the amount was changed to only be enough for the cheapest 30% of properties in the area.

For ministers this was an easy policy to justify: why should the state subsidise families with unnecessarily high housing costs? But in 136 of England's 326 local authorities more than 30% of private rented households claim housing benefit, making it impossible for everyone claiming to find accommodation. By comparison, only in eight local authority areas do more than half of private renters claim housing benefit, so the former cap meant the safety net could catch almost everyone in need of it.

There is another change coming too. At the moment the housing benefit caps only affect those making a new claim after 13 weeks. This means that when someone loses their job they still have that period of security in which to find a new job before worrying about finding a new home. But under the government's new benefits system, universal credit, this grace period will be withdrawn – and with many tenants having no significant savings, many would instantly find themselves struggling to pay rent.

This is just one of a number of recent changes to housing benefit that could affect

private renters. The national housing benefit cap all but excludes claimants from much of inner London and failing to link increases in housing benefit with increases in local rent prices mean that, over time, fewer and fewer properties will be available.

For some people it is impossible to meet these new housing benefit constraints and for others it is becoming increasingly difficult. As a result it is much harder for those hitting hard times to get back on their feet – they now face the prospect of having to simultaneously look for a new job, a new home or face mounting debt. What kind of safety net is that?

Hannah Aldridge is a senior researcher at the [New Policy Institute](#)

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Extended benefit sanctions push up numbers seeking advice on paying bills

Citizens Advice Bureau reports 60% spike in people wanting help since period JSA is withheld increased to four weeks

Patrick Wintour, political editor

theguardian.com, Monday 14 April 2014 17.17 BST

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The Citizens Advice Bureau says: 'People are struggling to pay their bills, rent and put food on the table. Many clients are forced to turn to food banks and even payday loan companies.' Photograph: Ian Canham/Alamy

There has been a 60% spike in the number of people seeking advice about paying bills as a result of increases in the length of benefit sanctions, according to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

It came as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) published a new survey showing that women make up four in five people losing money from the £500-a-week benefit cap. Almost all have dependent children and 83% have three or more.

A year after the limits were introduced, Ipsos Mori research found a third of people affected have been forced to cut back on essential items. Around 25% have looked for a job after being hit by the cap, while 45% plan to do so in future. The survey looked at 1,000 people out of more than 38,600 households that have been caught by the new rules.

The government extended the period jobseeker's allowance (JSA) is withheld from one week to four weeks last October. There have been repeated reports that JSA claimants feel they have suddenly lost benefit on the basis of arbitrary decisions for which they have been given no warning or little explanation.

An independent review of the sanctions regime commissioned by DWP is yet to be published, but the latest CAB figures suggest there is an

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urgency to the issue that ministers have yet to grasp. Polls suggest the DWP would feel under little pressure to soften any aspect of the [welfare](#) regime.

The CAB – which is a free advice service – said that since the sanctions regime was toughened, it has helped clients with over 15,000 JSA sanction problems. The increase in the numbers seeking help is disproportionate to the increase in the number of sanctions being applied by the DWP.

Under the previous one-week sanction claimants could cope, the CAB said, but a four-week withdrawal of access to benefit led people into desperate measures including approaching loan sharks.

Publishing its research, the CAB said: "People are struggling to pay their bills, rent and put food on the table. Many clients are forced to turn to food banks and even payday loan companies. With all this on their plate people are distracted from looking for a job, so they're less likely to get into work."

The CAB said: "From October to December last year one in four Citizens Advice clients with a JSA sanction problem had dependent children, one in four identified as being disabled or suffering from a long-term health condition, one in six also had a debt problem, and one in 10 had issues with rent arrears or threat or reality of homelessness."

The chief executive of CAB, Gillian Guy, said: "The minimum four-week sanction is setting people up to fail and creating a barrier which can stop them from looking for work. Four weeks is a long time to go without money to get by and people are struggling to make ends meet.

"The success rate of sanction appeals reveals a culture of 'sanction first and ask questions later'. This is not only ineffective and a huge waste of money but also has a devastating effect on thousands of people's lives.

"People need a system that can take into account their situation, set suitable work search requirements and, where necessary, apply sanctions at a level that won't limit their chances of employment.

"To date, work programme contractors have been responsible for twice as many sanctions on the people referred to them as they have successfully helped people find work. Combined with CAB's latest figures this paints the strongest picture yet that the system is not working as it should."

CAB pointed out that under universal credit – the new benefit integrating many existing [benefits](#) including JSA – Jobcentre staff are to be given greater flexibility in deciding the length of benefits. The CAB asked how it was possible to give staff flexibility for the incoming benefit system, but not for the current one.

Case study

Ian is a 43-year-old single father of two (aged nine and 12) living in Hastings. He has been on long-term sick leave for depression but, following a work capability assessment by Atos, was told he did not have enough points and was moved onto JSA.

Ian was put on to the work programme, though due to a staff mix-up by Pertemps he has not been receiving support to find work. He has been filling in his work-search forms and giving them to the Jobcentre. Then last Thursday Ian was told he had been given a four-week sanction for not giving enough work-search detail. He was told there were six cleaning jobs for which he could have applied, but he said that they were early morning jobs that did not fit with his responsibilities to his children.

He was given no notice or warning that he was doing anything inadequate about his work search. The money – £72 a week – just didn't appear.

"I've been left high and dry. I filled in the work-search form as usual, but this time they've said it's not enough. Thursday/Friday I was at rock

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bottom, I was in a total state. I was just thinking, where am I going to get money from?

"I had a water bill due on Friday, but the direct debit bounced as no money had gone in. I'm worried about my rent, as I don't know if my housing benefit will come in now I've been sanctioned. Then at 5pm on Friday I got a hardship payment through so I can look after my kids. The crux of the issue is that they should give you some warning or notice that they are going to deduct some money. Otherwise the only two options at the end of the day are to borrow money or commit a crime."

He adds that he took out a £100 emergency loan that will require repayment of £160. Ian is appealing his sanction, as he has a letter from Pertemps stating he has not been getting the support he should have due to an administrative mix-up.

migrants

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SusanEP

14 April 2014 5:24pm

90

Benefit sanctions are morally wrong. Given all the land was parceled up and sold off long ago, so people no longer have the ability to live off the land, the least any country owes its citizens is the right to food and shelter - no exceptions.

shaun2 ▶ SusanEP

14 April 2014 6:32pm

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You are quite right. However, don't expect any humanity from Ian Duncan Smith, the man is a festering sore, constantly stealing off the poorest in society, one might say he is your typical Tory. The Lib-Dems have empowered the Tories to act like this. Shame on them, and shame on the Guardian for supporting them in 2010.



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ephemerid ▶ SusanEP

15 April 2014 9:11am

23

There have been sanctions on unemployment benefits for decades.

There has been some sanction on new claims since Major's day - if you are judged to have left a job voluntarily or committed misconduct that led you to be sacked, for example. People who didn't show any effort to look for work could be sanctioned too; same applied to people who did not participate in one of the mandatory activities in New Deal.

Under Labour, those sanctions referrals were in the region of 130,000 a year; the minimum was 1 week and the maximum 6 months. Not all sanctions ended up with a disallowance, and claimants could appeal. There have always been conditions for claiming any benefit.

What IDS has done is extend the term of a sanction - the minimum is now 4 weeks and the maximum is 3 years - and increase the number of sanctions overall about tenfold. There were 890,000 referrals in just 8 months of last year. The average length of a disallowance is 3 months.

The DWP guidance for decision makers is that when the jobcentre or WP provider refers a claimant for sanction, the benefit payment is immediately suspended until the decision is made.

If the decision is a disallowance, for however long that is, the claimant can't appeal any more and has to wait for a Mandatory Consideration of Review for which DWP has no time limit and the benefit will not be paid for the duration.

If the decision is not changed, only then can the claimant appeal.

There is provision in the guidance for claimants to "re-engage" with whatever it is they've been told to do. If the sanction was referred for failure to take up a workfare placement, say, the claimant can say they'll do it and ask for the suspension or disallowance to be lifted. There is no guarantee that they'll get their benefit - decision makers can withhold payment until they have gauged the claimants' "seriousness".

At the moment, the system IS, as you say, morally wrong. Whilst I think it's right that claimants should be expected to meet certain conditions for JSA, those conditions must be reasonable.

All other social security payments are based on conditions which are based on evidence - often from a third party - of age, sickness, etc.

JSA relies on evidence from the claimant that they have fulfilled their obligations, which is perfectly reasonable.

What is manifestly not reasonable is the way these jobcentre clerks and WP providers are imposing conditions that are either totally impossible to satisfy or which the claimant knows nothing about until the sanction is applied.

As long as there are more people without jobs than there are jobs for them to do, this system is as unfair as it is draconian.

2 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



szwalby

14 April 2014 5:31pm

43

contractors have been responsible for twice as many sanctions on the people referred to them as they have successfully helped people find work

People are off the books when sanctioned, so do the workfare company get its payment by result for sanction?



ephemerid ▶ szwalby

15 April 2014 9:34am

13

That's not quite right.

If the sanction is a "low-level" one, ie. 4 weeks, the claim stays open even

though no benefit is paid; the claimant continues to sign on.

If the sanction becomes a disallowance of 3 months or more, the claim is usually closed down and the claimant has to re-apply for JSA once the sanction has run its course.

The claimant can keep the claim open if they "re-engage" with whatever they've been told to do, although there is no guarantee they'll get any benefit if they do.

All claimants on the Work Programme are signed up for 2 years.

Whether sanctioned or not, whether they find some work for a while or not, if they have done 3 months on the WP and their claim is closed for any reason, when they sign on again the remaining 21 months has to be done. There's no escape.

WP providers get payments for "off-flows" - they get paid for any claimant going to training, workfare, another government scheme, an apprenticeship, self-employment, or....even..... a real job.

I can't find any evidence in the guidance that they get a payment for a sanction - that doesn't mean they don't!

There are some documents about provider guidance for what DWP calls "raising a compliance doubt".

In one of them, and I quote, "Do not ask the participant for a good reason to determine whether to raise a WP08" (that's a compliance doubt) and "You have no option but to raise a doubt once the participant has failed to participate in a mandated activity, irrespective of whether or not they have offered a good explanation afterwards".

The guidance goes on to say that reasons are not the business of the WP provider, and if in doubt they must refer for sanction and the DWP decision makers will decide what constitutes "good reason".

Of course, what that means is that benefit is suspended at once; the claimant then has to wait to be informed in writing that the sanction has been referred, waits again for the decision to be made, and meanwhile has no right of appeal and will get no benefits.

It suits WP providers to refer people for sanction, even if they don't get paid for it, as they don't have to explain why they've failed to help the claimant get a bloody job!



szwalby ▶ ephemerid

15 April 2014 11:20am

2

Thanks for that. My comment was a question rather than a statement, but I have seen how payment by result is abused by private firms, the DWP cannot possibly ring every claimant and every employer when the workfare company send details of a claimant having been placed in a job. So if claimants are off the book for longer sanction, I wouldn't be surprised if payment is claimed for placing that claimant.



ephemerid ▶ szwalby

15 April 2014 2:08pm

4

I suspect you're right.

Of course, we'll never find out.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



DonKastre

14 April 2014 5:38pm

73

And the Tories still argue that there is no link between sanctions and food banks & debt. They simply don't care about the lives they are wrecking.



CheGuevar ▶ DonKastre

15 April 2014 1:50am

10

That's because they are the epitome of all that is evil in the world!
They Tories do not deserve to live!

ephemerid ▶ DonKastre

28



15 April 2014 9:54am

It's beyond ridiculous.

Trussell Trust were incensed last year when DWP removed the part of the referral form where the food bank could write the reason for referral. So they kept their own figures.

The last set of figures they published showed that of 614,000 parcels issued, 49% were due to benefit changes, benefit delays, and benefit sanctions.

Trussell Trust supply 52% of all emergency food aid in the UK which comes from food banks (this doesn't include soup kitchens or provision for homeless people etc.) so the real figure of food bank parcels issued is likely to be more than a million.

Therefore it follows that half a million food bank supplies went to people who have been affected by problems with benefits. Some of the recipients will get more than one parcel, obviously - but it's still a staggering number of people.

Last month, DWP re-wrote all its' guidance for staff on food bank referrals. The guidance now reads "signposting" where it used to read "referral" - so now they can deny referring people to food banks.

This is what some people might call plausible deniability. Me, I call it lying.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



UnahaClosp

14 April 2014 5:39pm

53

I recommend making covert recordings of all interactions with the DWP and its contractors. They are all doing a fine job of giving the impression of being institutionally dishonest.



BARONVONRATMUNCH ▶ UnahaClosp

14 April 2014 5:51pm

11

With the police as well, as Andrew Mitchell MP found out recently!!!!



Adrian Whiteley ▶ UnahaClosp

16 April 2014 10:07am

2

Yes you are allowed to take audio recordings, but not video ones.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 5:40pm

35

Sanctions - Evictions - £700 a week in a B & B well over the £500 cap. London needs it's high rents so ship people off to Newcastle because it's cheaper. Figure fiddler - because most B&B & temporary houses cost more like £900 a week. COSTS COSTS COSTS It is al contradictions.



CheGuevar ▶ Stepping Razor

15 April 2014 1:54am

12

It's being done, to ethnically cleanse Labour Voters!
When will the Labour Party wake up to what's going on???
These evil ba5trads, are trying to rig the election, even if that means driving tens of thousand s to suicide!
They should be tried for abuse of power and treason.....and hanged!
All of them!!!!!!

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 5:44pm

30



Being sanctioned means you are an employment figure in work !! Or perhaps everyone is thick & stupid !! WORK PAYS IN FRAUD !!

19



BARONVONRATMUNCH ▶ Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 6:00pm

19

www.spectator.co.uk/features/9116701/britains-dirty-secret

Well , as the politicians tax those in benefits at up to 100% if they take a job, "WORK DOES NOT PAY".

Perhaps the politicians should deal with this slight problem!!!!



Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 5:47pm

7

Well done the Contradiction Policy is working better than anyone expected.



shaun2

14 April 2014 5:50pm

47

Ian Duncan, I don't give a sod about the poor, Smith, the thief who has twice fraudulently claimed parliamentary expenses, is stealing from the poor again. What a set of thieving prats this coalition is, and to think the Guardian supported the Orange book Tories at the last election. Shame on the paper!!!

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



MERAK355

14 April 2014 5:52pm

2

500 quid a week.....Cap ?.....So the price of a good tradesman for doing sweet FA ?



showmaster ▶ MERAK355

15 April 2014 9:57am

9

"On the housing benefit problem, I think it's also common ground you have to reform housing benefit but what I was able to do if you may remember when the reform was first proposed, I said I wouldn't have the Kosovo-style social cleansing because of it and we will not have that.

"We are going to make sure that people who need to stay near their place of work, whose kids are in the local school, ... let me tell you directly is that the idea of persuading Londoners or helping Londoners to migrate the city is wrong."

Boris Johnson, another Tory liar and thief.



Turmeric ▶ MERAK355

15 April 2014 8:22pm

3

Most of that £500 goes to the landlord. If a working parent loses their job through sickness or redundancy there is no point in moving until they know where their next employment will be and they will have difficulty finding the deposit and cost of moving.

5 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS

BARONVONRATMUNCH

14 April 2014 5:54pm

35



The Government is sanctioning 100,000's, in an attempt to bully them into slave labour jobs that wouldn't even pay the bills.

The Work House would be an improvement for many, than the current situation, as many sanctioned people are unemployable , even for slave labour jobs.

At least people in the Work House got fed!!!!



Stepping Razor ▶ BARONVONRATMUNCH

14 April 2014 6:32pm

Shame - All the workhouses have been closed down - Don't You know !!



BARONVONRATMUNCH ▶ Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 6:51pm

Shame - All the workhouses have been closed down - Don't You know !!

It is a shame. There is now nowhere for the truly desparate to turn to.

At least the workhousse did not turn people away, as the Food Banks do !!!!.



shaun2 ▶ BARONVONRATMUNCH

14 April 2014 8:06pm

You would not talk like that if you had ever been in the workhouse



silentmist

14 April 2014 5:55pm

Polls don't mean much in a nation where the people enjoy harming one another.



hilltop

14 April 2014 6:11pm

If you, a British citizen born, educated and previously employed in this country, take a job abroad to escape unemployment here, you will have to wait three months on your return before claiming JSA.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 6:17pm

Might as well go the fall hog & scrap the Welfare State because Tax credit is bleeding it dry. Civil servants now do Capita's job.



ephemerid ▶ Stepping Razor

15 April 2014 9:41am

This is the stupid thing - we spend more on benefits for people who work than we spend on benefits for those who don't or can't.

Excluding pensions, we spend about £108 Billion a year on social security.

Tax credits and housing support for people who work - £42 Billion.
Child support for families, most of whom work - £37 Billion.

Benefits for the sick and disabled, combined, including children and pensioners with entitlement to DLA/PIP - £31 Billion.

JSA - £5 Billion.

A living wage and fair rents would save nearly half the current costs of social security for working-age people.

3 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



darvit

14 April 2014 6:17pm

32

Nigel Evans take note and then take action.

This another change your party has introduced, more people whose lives you cannot begin to imagine because you have been nowhere near them.

These people are not spending their life savings, they don't have life savings. However you feel, you cannot imagine what everyone of these individual people is feeling.

You admit that you didn't understand the effects of the changes to legal aid until you walked a mile in someone else shoes.

You can do great good and become a champion of those who aren't lucky enough to have your voice.

Listen to what these stories tell you and act.



Stepping Razor ▶ darvit

14 April 2014 6:30pm

15

£145,000 he wants in legal aid. Go & pay your bills like everyone else !! There is no more legal aid apart from MPs having legal aid.



Stepping Razor ▶ Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 6:31pm

4

Careful, it's becoming fraud.



KarenBarbara ▶ darvit

15 April 2014 3:33pm

3

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it." — Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird- my favourite lines of the book.

Let us hope Nigel Evans gains wisdom and does become a champion of legal aid.



Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 6:34pm

13

DWP loan sharks & at a higher rate £100 loan pay back £160. DWP fraud.

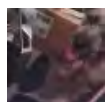


Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 6:35pm

9

Where's IDS & Mike Penning - Involved with DWP fraud cover ups.



conservativemadness

14 April 2014 7:11pm

16

It just goes to show what they think in general about the working people of this country..... that they don't care because it won't affect them, so anything goes. They wouldn't be doing this otherwise.

Preshous

14 April 2014 7:14pm

23



Extended benefit sanctions push up numbers seeking advice on paying bills

Shoplifting and robbery is rife now. Well done IDS.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 7:26pm

8

Why not scrap the welfare state like a third world country with 10th class citizens !! But that will effect the employment figures with low paid jobs getting topped up with working tax credit. Slaves in slave labour in slavery. Yes that's the UK today.



Adrian Whiteley ▶ Stepping Razor

16 April 2014 10:00am

2

Let's all go to prison and get shelter, 3 meals a day and a shower, possibly TV.



Stepping Razor

14 April 2014 7:29pm

10

All heading for another recession - The bubble is bursting again. Confidence tricksters.

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



Vordermont

14 April 2014 7:58pm

25

Iain Duncan Smith's 100 Biggest Failures.

Source:

<http://www.greenbenchesuk.com/2014/01/the-cost-of-ids-100-ways-iain-duncan.html>



Yoolanderscribbens ▶ Vordermont

14 April 2014 9:20pm

13

Many thanks V for that excellent link....if I painted a hand-grenade white then wrote "Aspirin" on it - D'ya think IDS might be conned into swallowing it - minus pin of course...?



Adrian Whiteley ▶ Vordermont

14 April 2014 10:55pm

6

Thank you. I will send that to my sister who thinks he is great.



good2go ▶ Vordermont

14 April 2014 11:21pm

8

Thanks for that link---- the truth , as opposed to Smith's 'truth' as he believes it.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Yoolanderscribbens

14 April 2014 8:19pm

33

I suppose those smug shits who endorse the "fuck the poor - make 'em suffer"

attitude fostered by that other smug shit who runs the DWP - are just that - smug little shits who would excel as Concentration Camp Kapos.....same need for indifference and callousness.

None of them worth the steam from a skunks piss.



good2go ▶ Yoolandersscribbens

14 April 2014 9:02pm

18

None of them worth the steam from a skunk's piss.

Perfect imagery , I think that they looked at the length of sanction time and thought 'hold on, these people are struggling but not as much as they could be'. So to get the max sadistic pleasure they decided to turn the screw considerably more. 'There, that's better, now they're really suffering, life is good'.

1 PERSON, 2 COMMENTS



Yoolandersscribbens

14 April 2014 9:10pm

17

Don't get wrong - I have nothing against skunks, compared to Tory Vermin, they smell great....



Yoolandersscribbens ▶ Yoolandersscribbens

14 April 2014 9:21pm

5

Don't get ME wrong.....

4 PEOPLE, 4 COMMENTS



maximilienrobespierre

14 April 2014 9:13pm

26

for all his faux-chutzpah, Incessant Dole Snatcher will, rightly, spend the rest of his sorry existence living in fear and looking over his shoulder for what he has done. This evil, sociopathic, bastard should be dragged, kicking and screaming to The Hague and charged with crimes against humanity; in fact, corporal punishment would be too good for this odious reprobate.



Yoolandersscribbens ▶ maximilienrobespierre

14 April 2014 9:23pm

14

Mr InaneDumconShit is none of those horrible things you called him - he is simply a Tory - which is FAR worse.



ephemerid ▶ maximilienrobespierre

15 April 2014 10:01am

24

He already IS living in fear.

His last few outing to Select Committees involved members of the public being subjected to increased security measures. Disabled people who attended were frisked and X-rayed before they could go in to the committee hearings. IDS was accompanied by his usual security AND and armed police escort. Some of the people present said afterwards that the guns were held in a way that looked as though they were being pointed at them.

Of course, you never know when a wheelchair-bound person might attempt an assassination by waving a placard, do you?
I mean, who knows when a person whose legs don't work might go completely beserk and attack gun-toting coppers?

Scary, is what it is.

**KallisteHill** ▶ ephemerid

15 April 2014 9:32pm

5

No worries. The latest theory suggests JFK was shot in the head by his bodyguard - so IDS shouldn't just be looking over his shoulder!

5 PEOPLE, 7 COMMENTS

**good2go**

14 April 2014 10:45pm

27

Also running in equal nastiness is the 'self employed con trick. Since the last general election 40% of jobs created have been self employed. But most are doing odd jobs, part time work or are pensioners. Only a tiny fraction run their own businesses. The vast majority work for themselves or another employer -- often with fewer rights, less pay and no job security. While some choose to be self employed, many people are forced into it. Workers aged 50-plus account for 50% of the rise in self employment while over 65s are the fastest growing group in the labour market. More than 40% of the self employed jobs that have been created since 2010 are part time. Yet Cameron tells us with his earnest face turned towards the cameras that they are not taking the piss.

**showmaster** ▶ good2go

15 April 2014 10:11am

16

The reason for self-employment is ostensibly to reduce the unemployment figures but IDS has set a trap which could destroy the whole "freelance" thing in the UK.

Under Universal Credit DWP has the right to mandate self-employed Tax Credit claimants to "seek more or better paid work". The worst case scenarios, in ascending order, are;

A) DWP places the self-employed worker onto Jobsearch to increase hours and income.

B) DWP places the claimant on to the Work Programme and they have to do X hours per week stacking shelves to get their Tax Credits, or

C) DWP tells the claimant that their business is "unsustainable" and has the power to close it down if the claimant wishes to get Tax Credits which, of course, they then fail to qualify for.

**ephemerid** ▶ good2go

15 April 2014 10:24am

19

The latest ONS figures on employment make interesting reading too.

Total number of people claiming JSA for 10 years - 930.

Out of a working-age population of 33 million.

That's "hundreds of thousands languishing on benefits" that is.

Cameron lied about that.

Households where no-one has ever worked fell under Labour - and they include people with disabilities and their carers, 3 million of them.

The figure was 19% of the working age population in 1997, and by 2009 the figure was 17%. Cameron lied about that too.

Total number unemployed in 2010 - 2.5 million. Now - 2.3 million.

On JSA for 5 years in 2010 - 4,375. Now, 11,295. More than double.

On JSA for 3 years in 2010 - 5,090. Now - 57,340. More than tenfold.

Cameron says there have been 1.7 million "new private sector jobs" since the coalition took office. In the FE sector alone, 200,000 jobs have been moved from the public sector to the private; NHS staff are being moved in the same way; and as you say, self-employment is rising all the time, as is part time work, and the ONS figures show that the lowest figure of all is permanent full-time work.

So Cameron lied about that too.

I don't understand why nobody has challenged the Tories on the most shocking figure of all - the 3-year unemployment rate.

It has gone from 5,090 when Labour left office to 57,340 now. That's absolutely dreadful - and I think I know why.

If you sign on, after 6 months you can be sent to the Work Programme on a mandatory basis. You are signed up for 2 years.

We know that the overall WP "success" rate is just 4% (jobseekers left alone find work at a rate of 22%) so it makes matters worse.

So if you have been out of work for more than 6 months, then on the WP for

a further 2 years, by the time you're back signing on as normal you will be out of work for best part of 3 years.
The Work Programme is therefore partially responsible for the tenfold increase in people staying out of work for 3 years.

Now we know that the people the WP is routinely failing are being punished with sanctions for the WP providers' uselessness.
It's just disgraceful.

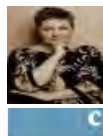


good2go ▶ showmaster

7

15 April 2014 10:55am

It makes you wonder if Smith and his accomplices hatred of fellow



jacqui56

33

14 April 2014 10:54pm

This happened to my friend who although unwell with entail health problems, was deemed fit for work by ATOS. After only three weeks on JSA it was stopped without warning as they said he wasn't seeking work hard enough. He had been offered no help even though he was long term unemployed. The system is inhuman at best, criminal at worst. I worked in a Job Centre in the early 80s and we spent time with each client helping and supporting them. It is very very scary now and there is no safety net. The CAB are doing a wonderful job and I am worried that with cuts to council budgets, we will lose them as they lose funding.



CheGuevar

28

15 April 2014 1:40am

IN direct violation of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Articles; 22, 23 and 25 A and B!

So why isn't the CAB and all these other Charities such as MIND, SCOPE etc etc, getting off their backsides and doing something about it???

I call for the Job Centres union to be expelled from the TUC, as their actions are an affront to what Union stand for!

As for the CAB! For every day that issue another pointless press statements, hundreds more have died in this act of genocide!

All those being persecuted by the DWP and Job Centres contact; srhousing@ohchr.org AND sgcentra@un.org

These UN organisations WANT to hear from every single one of you that have suffered at the hands of this monstrous government that hates the poor enough to ethnically cleanse them!

Let the world know, of how evil the Tories and Lib Dems are!

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



TrevNN6

3

15 April 2014 8:28am

It might be useful if CAB started replying to those who complete their volunteer application form !!!



AgentC ▶ TrevNN6

2

15 April 2014 10:45am

CABs are independent groups that work under a national brand, with some nationwide lobbying/back office support.



BeckyP ▶ TrevNN6

3

15 April 2014 3:15pm

I am sure that, if the CAB started to pay their administrative staff a salary, rather than restrict their Salary Budget to paying Salary/Expenses to Senior Managers, whilst conversely rely on volunteers to carry out the mundane

work that is otherwise left, they would soon address the administrative backlog.



steffworthington

15 April 2014 7:44pm

9

These DWP animals don't care about people so exposing them does little. We need action. I love that the Guardian cover it but govt just ignores the press these days. Who can help the people? All the major parties think the same re: benefits.

It's time we armed ourselves.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



steffworthington

15 April 2014 7:53pm

7

Can we hang them yet?



DonKastre ▶ steffworthington

15 April 2014 10:08pm

5

I assume you are talking about George Iain 'Nosferatu' Duncan Schmitt and co in which case don't forget the 'drawing and quartering' too!



thefrecklepuny

15 April 2014 9:42pm

12

The issues with benefit sanctions are not just to do with the severity of them, but also their sheer inconsistency and utter futility. One JC adviser could say one thing regarding a jobseekers activities which could contradict what another colleague says next week within the SAME JC! Most here have no doubt seen lists of ridiculous sanctions. Such as:

You're on a workfare placement, and your jobcentre appointment comes round. The jobcentre tells you to sign on then go to your placement which you do. The workfare placement reports you for being late and you get sanctioned for 3 months.

You get given the wrong forms, get sanctioned for not doing the right forms. (Source: Adventures in Workfare blog)

You don't apply for an IT job that needs skills you don't have so you get sanctioned. (Source: Geminisnake on Urban75 forums)

Thus we see jobseekers increasingly toe tipping and playing the DWP's silly games of box ticking and chasing numbers simply to avoid being sanctioned. When instead they should be using their energies finding suitable employment and re-skilling.

Congrats to Smith! You have transformed a dysfunctional system into a broken one. Well done!



Vordermont

16 April 2014 8:21pm

3

Citizens Advice Bureau reports 60% spike in people wanting help since period JSA is withheld increased to four weeks.

Ah, the With Finder General, Lame Dummkopf Schmidt's underlings have been busy. He must be getting them a Easter Egg for a bonus.

For everyone sanctioned, the underlings will get one Cream Egg, for ten you get a dozen Cream Eggs, I wonder if CMD will throw in a tin of Ronseal, he does seem to advertise it quite a lot.

Apparently it does what it says on the tin, it sticks CMD's hair together with a thick varnish to cover the ever growing Bald Patch.

samgilchrist

1



17 April 2014 11:11am

This DWP tool for searching Sanctions figures was launched in Feb 2014. The figures are shocking (e.g. around 12,500 JSA Sanctions a month just in the North East) and dont seem to match up to recentley announced JSA claimant figures.(e.g. 125,000 people are currentley claiming JSA in North East announced on BBC Look North last night)

Is their 'a rat off?'
Check it out for yourself

<https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/dataCatalogueExplorer.xhtml>

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How the Tories chose to hit the poor

George Osborne claims to have cut inequality. But look behind the figures and it's clear the Conservatives can't take any credit



Tom Clark

The Guardian, Wednesday 2 July 2014 18.41 BST

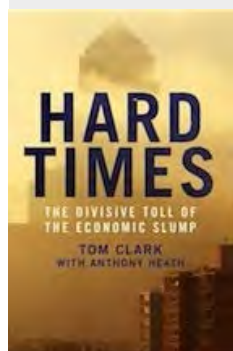
Jump to comments (499)



'Frightening signs of hardship emerge, tied closely to the early cuts to incapacity payments and housing benefits.' Photograph: Neil Hall/Reuters

Have you heard the one about inequality falling? Top-tax-cutting baronet-to-be George Osborne **boasted in his budget** that "under this government, income inequality is at its lowest level for 28 years". It's a line we can expect to hear recycled between now and May 2015, after this week's **official figures** – the last that will see daylight before polling day – recorded a decline on some measures of relative poverty, and again failed to register any widening in the overall income gap.

Hard Times: The Divisive Toll of the Economic Slump
by Tom Clark, Anthony Heath



In a land where **Barclays' bonuses and bedroom taxes** compete for column inches, many will suspect the books are being cooked. But having once been employed to run independent checks on these figures, I can vouch for their integrity. There's nothing wrong with the numbers – and the smallprint contains ample evidence of coalition-induced hardship. The shortcoming is that the data only appears deep in the rear-view mirror, and so the consequences of a government that has lurched to the right remain disguised.

What the data demonstrates beyond doubt is the importance of social security in addressing inequality. It confirms the depth of the recent recession, with family incomes now down

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Union says benefits sanctions destroyed trust between jobseekers and jobcentres
Public and Commercial Services union renews calls for an independent inquiry

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around 10% since Lehman Brothers' implosion in 2008. Wages tumbled across the range, but at the bottom end this was often compounded by enforced reductions in hours, so the poor could easily have suffered most. But things did not initially turn out that way. Instead, for a time, those with the broadest shoulders really did bear the burden.

Why? Because the Labour government of the day protected the safety net, even nudging benefits payments up slightly when inflation turned negative during the crisis. And this, as Robert Joyce of the Institute for Fiscal Studies explains, is "the chief reason why inequality declined with the recession: as wages dipped sharply, benefits were more stable, and benefits go mostly to those on lower incomes".

"Frightening signs of hardship emerge, tied closely to the early cuts to incapacity payments and housing benefits"

Regime change in 2010 did not immediately unravel this progressive pattern, because – for a time – the coalition also showed some regard for the poor. After all, on these very pages in opposition, [Oliver Letwin](#) had made the Tory embrace of Labour's child poverty promises a plank of Cameronian modernisation.

In Osborne's [first budget](#), even as he began to cut, the chancellor found the money to raise family tax credits so he could guarantee that his austerity would "not increase measured child poverty". The next year he reneged, and cancelled some of his own ameliorative measures – but the Liberal Democrats were not yet ready to fold. With the cost of living rocketing in autumn 2011, Nick Clegg fought to ensure that families relying on benefits would be fully compensated, and benefits (or at least those not already being cut) rose by 5.2% the following spring.

This week's data only takes us up to this point, the financial year that began in April 2012. Even so, frightening signs of hardship emerge, tied closely to the early benefit cuts. In line with the first restrictions on incapacity payments, there's a sharp rise in poverty for disabled people. As the first housing benefit restrictions bit, on the breadline that adjusts for rising rent, 600,000 people sank into absolute poverty. Among children, so-called material deprivation – that is, families who can't afford things such as birthday parties and warm winter coats – also edges up, as does the coalition's new measure of "severe poverty". And overall, the incomes of the poorest fifth are already faring worst.

But the true statistical picture of foodbank Britain will have to wait. For it was not until April 2013, at the very same time the 50p tax rate was chopped for the richest, that the poor were landed with a new household benefit cap which could leave children in London [being raised on 62p a day](#). Poor families nationwide were then also faced with the reinvention of something [very like the poll tax](#), as the national council tax rebate scheme was axed, and a three-year programme of holding benefits below inflation began. Clegg was just as craven in accepting this as he had been brave over indexing for living costs the year before.

Joyce says: "Just as benefits that outpaced wages led to reduced inequality immediately after the slump, government plans to reduce welfare spending in the next few years – while workers' pay stabilises – are likely to push inequality back up." The links between the coalition's direct decisions and prospects for poverty are clear. There is no rise at all in hardship among pensioners, which fits with a whole series of special exemptions from the cuts. But a [separate official survey](#) revealed how overall taxation was rising for the poorest, even as it fell for others.

So when the truth finally outs, what will be the response? One option is to plead inevitability. This, however, is a hard sell. The vast total of around £25bn in benefit cuts already set in train by the chancellor brings in less than he has freely given away in personal tax allowances, petrol duties and corporation tax cuts. To govern is to choose.

into the policy

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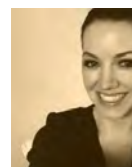
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The alternative, which seems to be Iain Duncan Smith's preference, is denial. His administrative overhaul of benefits has descended into a shambles: he wastes court time trying to keep papers documenting the mess secret. Even if it had all worked smoothly, it would still have been a sideshow next to such historic cuts. But last week Duncan Smith published an anti-poverty "strategy" claiming that his welfare reforms would transform "the lives of the most vulnerable". In the IDS war on poverty, the first casualty is not hardship, but truth.

Tom Clark is author of *Hard Times: The Divisive Toll of the Economic Slump*



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strategem

02 July 2014 6:54pm

241

Because the Labour government of the day protected the safety net,

Hahahaaaaa..... the Labour government protected which safety net? they bought votes and the rest of the tax payers got the bill.

What non sense.

Gordon Brown put an arbitrary definition of poverty and £1 either way defines you as rich or poor.



TomClark ▶ strategem

02 July 2014 7:04pm

234

You can draw a poverty line at 50%, 60% or 70% of median income or mean income, and – at least in Labour's early years – the number of poor children went down. So it really wasn't just a case of people being pushed over some arbitrary line



Mizzentop

02 July 2014 6:58pm

86

Of course, the 45p tax rate brings in MORE tax revenue than the 50p rate did.

What's more important - extra money to spend on public services or a symbolic attack on the wealthy?

Remember attacking the wealthy is Not the same as helping the poorest.



TomClark ▶ Mizzentop

02 July 2014 7:06pm

166

If it's bringing in more it might very well be that Osborne abolished it so quickly that rich people had notice to shift their income from 2012/13 to 2013/14. Not hard to do if you are a company director or whatever – hence the tax base for post-abolition is inflated.



jessthecrip

02 July 2014 7:04pm

140

I haven't looked at the study which apparently shows income inequality dropping, but there seems no doubt whatsoever that wealth inequality is continuing to rise. The wealth of the 1000 richest individuals in the UK soared by £69 billion last year, whilst that of the richest 100 rose by £40 billion. At the same time homelessness rose and three times as many of the poorest had to rely on foodbanks.

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TomClark ▶ jessthecrip

02 July 2014 7:07pm

37

Wealth inequality is a weird one statistically. Can go down if house prices boom and the stock market depressed (e.g. early 2000s) which can be a bit misleading.



MichaelRosen

02 July 2014 7:28pm

15

Do Tom Clark's figures for personal wealth include assets valued at sale value, income derived from dividends, money salted away in tax havens and income derived from rents?



TomClark ▶ MichaelRosen

02 July 2014 7:37pm

65

All these numbers (govt's, not mine!) are about INCOME rather than wealth ... so big assets out, but dividends should be in ...

I say "should be" because in the end this is a survey, and the super-rich will not be inclined to give full details. Govt tries to correct for this using tax data, but that only captures what the taxman is told about.

In sum, it is meaningful data, but almost certainly under-states the seriously rich's position



Berlinerkerl

02 July 2014 9:18pm

109

Old Fart here.

We've had the word "Welfare" bandied about, and more drivel about multi-generational "dependency".

We all (apart from rich, lying bastards who hide their often ill-gotten gains in Tax Havens) pay tax and National Insurance - so we're (supposedly) INSURED against hard times which, let's face it, can hit all of us. I didn't know and couldn't foresee that I would have become a diabetic some 12 years ago - nor that I would have had a stroke last year. Shit happens. One way or another, shit happens to many - possibly most of us - eventually.

I'm already semi-retired (on a small occupational pension) and in a couple of years I receive my Old Age Pension.

Idiots! That's not "**welfare**" but something I've bloodywell *paid* for throughout my working life. Ever looked at the deductions on your payslip??

Tory trolls on here - you could so easily become (and indeed probably already are) turkeys voting for Christmas. You've got private health insurance? - Great - until the money-grubbing bastards remind you of restrictive clauses regarding "pre-existing conditions".

Long live "The State". It's looked after me and, whether you can see it or not, it's still looking after you.

Those who want small government and small state - watch out. There'll be NOTHING to fall back on.



TomClark ▶ Berlinerkerl

02 July 2014 9:47pm

50

abs agree -- "social security" much better phrase than welfare: will try!

difficulty is when even the official bills and so on are called "welfare reform" you are fighting against the system even over the language ...



Sue Fewster

02 July 2014 9:29pm

18

Measuring the poverty level based on median incomes when the majority of incomes are actually declining, apart from those at the top of course, hides the fact that those at the bottom are actually very much worse off than they were 10 years ago.



TomClark ▶ Sue Fewster

02 July 2014 9:41pm

17

the article (and the govt report) refers to both relative and absolute poverty numbers. broadly speaking, relative was stable this year, while absolute got worse



youlot

02 July 2014 9:31pm

3

This is rubbish, but Osborne is also talking crap. We have (thankfully) a redistributive tax and welfare system. In such a system a recession leads to a reduction in inequality. That's all that has happened, and the system hasn't really changed, whatever Gideon and the Guardian would have you believe.



TomClark ▶ youlot

02 July 2014 9:44pm

37

I actually agree that the main reason why inequality fell in slump is simply that the redistributive system automatically kicked in. It was, nonetheless, pretty important that the govt of the day decided not to cut it as it did so.

The Osborne cuts are now the equivalent to almost a quarter of pre-existing benefit entitlements for non-pensioner claimants. That's a big chunk - and means a lot less redistribution is going on than it otherwise would be, even though of course the system still redistributes overall



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PSE research

In this section you will find full details of the current Poverty and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom research project (PSE UK), including background working papers as well as final reports, key summaries and an opportunity to investigate some of the key survey data. It also provides summary details of the predecessor research projects in Britain in 1999, 1990 and 1983 and in Northern Ireland in 2002/3.

These research projects all use relative deprivation to examine poverty and, in particular, the [consensual method](#). The key concept underlying the consensual approach is to identify what items are necessities on the basis of the public's perceptions of minimum needs and then to examine who is forced to go without these necessities. This research series therefore provides a unique insight into those who fall below the minimum standards set by society and how this has changed over time.

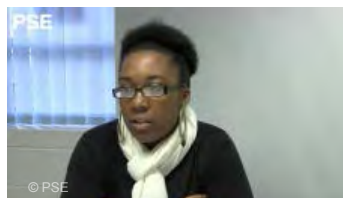
Detailed findings from the PSE research were presented at the [Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference](#) held in June 2014. The twenty six presentations covered all aspects of the PSE research and are now available to download [here](#). The first report from the PSE UK team 'The impoverishment of the UK', was published in March 2013. The PSE research findings present a detailed picture of the extent of deprivation and inadequate living standards in the UK today and the impact this has on people's lives.

Many countries across the world, and in particular the European Union, have taken up and developed the idea of publicly-perceived necessities. Brief details of this research can be found under [International](#).

Featured PSE Research



Child poverty and social exclusion
The final report into child poverty and social exclusion finds 30% of children lack two or more of the child necessities and that child deprivation would be much higher if parents were not sacrificing their own living standards for their children's sake.



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The PSE team presented the findings of their research at The 3rd Peter Townsend Memorial Conference: Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK, held in June 2014. Download the presentations.

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Child poverty and social exclusion

Author/s: *Gill Main and Jonathan Bradshaw*

This paper presents an analysis of child poverty and social exclusion in the UK, drawing on data from the 2012 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey and is the final report on this element of the PSE project. It advances the measurement of child poverty by using three different measures: a child deprivation measure based on socially perceived necessities, the conventional income poverty measure (but with a more realistic equivalence scale) and a PSE measure which combines deprivation and low income. It finds the rates of child poverty for each measures are similar at 30%, 33% and 27% respectively. It also finds, from a new analysis of intra-household distribution, that child deprivation would be much higher if parents were not sacrificing their own living standards for the sake of their children. Analysing the characteristics of poor children it confirms that now a majority of poor children are living in households with someone in employment.

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Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Child poverty and social exclusion: Final report of 2012 PSE study

Gill Main and Jonathan Bradshaw

November 2014

ESRC Grant RES-060-25-0052



Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Overview

The Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK Project is funded by the Economic, Science and Research Council (ESRC). The Project is a collaboration between the University of Bristol, University of Glasgow, Heriot Watt University, Open University, Queen's University (Belfast), University of York, the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The project commenced in April 2010 and will run for three-and-a-half years.

The primary purpose is to advance the 'state of the art' of the theory and practice of poverty and social exclusion measurement. In order to improve current measurement methodologies, the research will develop and repeat the 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey. This research will produce information of immediate and direct interest to policy makers, academics and the general public. It will provide a rigorous and detailed independent assessment on progress towards the UK Government's target of eradicating child poverty.

Objectives

This research has three main objectives:

- To improve the measurement of poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and standard of living
- To assess changes in poverty and social exclusion in the UK
- To conduct policy-relevant analyses of poverty and social exclusion

For more information and other papers in this series, visit www.poverty.ac.uk

This paper has been published by Poverty and Social Exclusion, funded by the ESRC. The views expressed are those of the Author[s].

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UNIVERSITY OF YORK
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Poverty and Social Exclusion Study 2012

CHILD POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION
Gill Main and Jonathan Bradshaw

Introduction

This paper presents an analysis of child poverty and social exclusion in the UK, drawing on data from the 2012 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey. It is effectively the final report on this element of the PSE project. A previous paper (Main and Bradshaw, 2014) established the necessities of life for children. Here, we analyse the prevalence of lacking individual socially perceived necessities; rates of poverty based on low income, deprivation, and combined measures; the characteristics of poor children; intra-household sharing; and child poverty and social exclusion. We also (in Appendix A) provide some sensitivity testing for children's items and activities, comparing the enforced lack approach to children lacking items and activities for any reason.

Socially perceived necessities

Table 1 shows the proportion of children lacking each of the socially perceived necessities. It shows the proportion lacking each item and activity due to not wanting, due to being unable to afford, and due to other reasons. For reference, the second column shows the proportion of adults viewing each item/activity as a necessity for children. For most items and activities, less than 10% of children lack them due to their families being unable to afford them; exceptions are enough bedrooms (11%), pocket money (16%) and money to save (33%) for items, and day trips (21%) and holidays (26%) for activities.

Table 1: Socially perceived necessities (%)

| Items | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| | % saying necessity | Has | Does not have, does not want | Does not have, can't afford | N/A | |
| A warm winter coat | 97 | 97 | 1 | 1 | 0 | |
| Books at home suitable for their ages | 91 | 97 | 1 | 2 | 0 | |
| Three meals a day | 93 | 97 | 2 | 1 | 0 | |
| Indoor games suitable for their ages | 80 | 95 | 2 | 1 | 1 | |
| Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day | 96 | 95 | 2 | 3 | 0 | |
| Some new, not second hand, clothes | 65 | 95 | 1 | 4 | 0 | |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least once a day | 90 | 94 | 1 | 3 | 1 | |
| New, properly fitting shoes | 93 | 94 | 2 | 4 | 1 | |
| At least four pairs of trousers | 56 | 93 | 1 | 5 | 1 | |
| A garden or outdoor space nearby | 92 | 92 | 2 | 5 | 1 | |
| A suitable place at home to study or do homework | 89 | 92 | 2 | 5 | 1 | |
| Computer and internet for homework | 66 | 90 | 2 | 6 | 2 | |
| Enough bedrooms for every child of 10 or over of a different sex | 74 | 84 | 4 | 11 | 1 | |
| Outdoor leisure equipment | 58 | 81 | 11 | 6 | 2 | |
| Construction toys | 53 | 70 | 23 | 5 | 3 | |
| Pocket money | 54 | 69 | 13 | 16 | 2 | |
| Money to save | 54 | 60 | 6 | 33 | 1 | |
| Activities | | | | | | |
| | % saying necessity | Does | Does not do, does not want | Does not do, can't afford | Does not do, other | N/A |
| Celebrations on special occasions | 91 | 97 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| A hobby or leisure activity | 88 | 86 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 0 |
| Going on a school trip at least once a term | 55 | 79 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 0 |
| Toddler group, nursery or play group once a week | 87 | 73 | 13 | 4 | 10 | 0 |
| Children's clubs or activities | 74 | 71 | 11 | 9 | 8 | 1 |
| Day trips with family once a month | 60 | 66 | 8 | 21 | 5 | 0 |
| A holiday away from home at least one week a year | 52 | 64 | 6 | 26 | 2 | 1 |

Shaded cells indicate fewer than 20 unweighted cases.

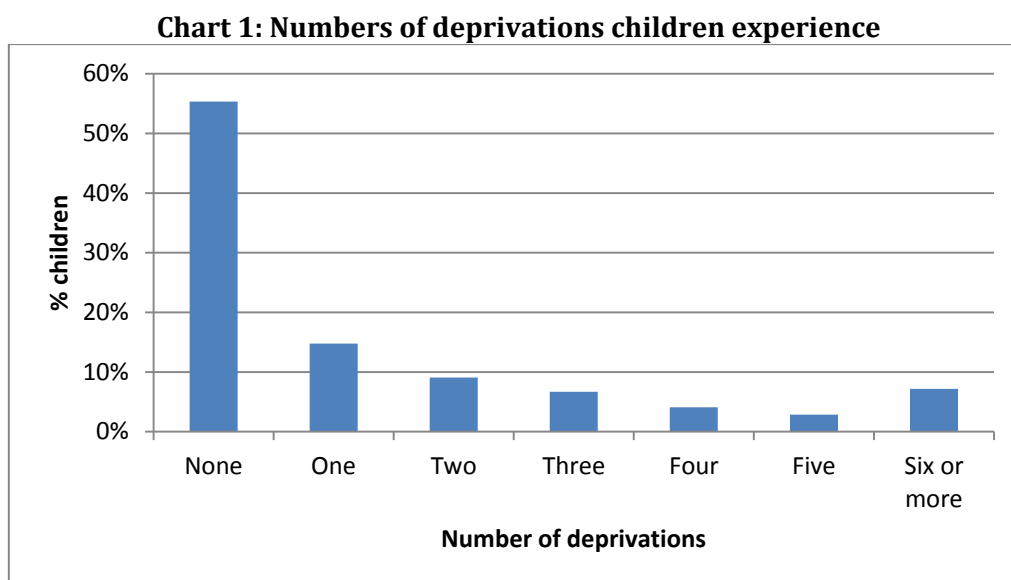
Poverty: deprivation, low income and combined measures

The PSE2012 asks a range of questions relating to objective material well-being, including measures of income and deprivation. This allows a comparison of deprivation and income based poverty measures, and also their amalgamation into a combined measure (see Gordon and Nandy, 2012, for details of the methodology used to create a combined poverty measure).

Here, findings are presented based on deprivation and low income poverty measures, followed by the combined poverty measure.

Deprivation

Chart 1 shows the number of deprivations experienced by children. Over half – 55% - lack none of the socially perceived necessities identified in table 1. 30% of children lack two or more, and 7% lack six or more.



The socially perceived necessities can be grouped in order to identify deprivations in specific domains of children's lives¹. These include food², clothes³, participation⁴, development⁵; environment⁶, finance⁷, family⁸ and individual⁹. Children are considered deprived within a domain if they experience an enforced lack (i.e. their family cannot afford) at least one item or activity within that domain.

Chart 2 shows the proportions of children deprived in each of these domains. The fewest children – around 5% - are deprived in the food domain. 35% of children are deprived in the participation domain.

¹ These indices, as evident below, are not independent – i.e. they contain overlapping items.

² Comprising 3 meals; fruit; meat.

³ Comprising coat; shoes; clothes; trousers.

⁴ Comprising celebrations; hobby; clubs; day trips; holiday; leisure.

⁵ Comprising books; study; games; computer; lego; school trips.

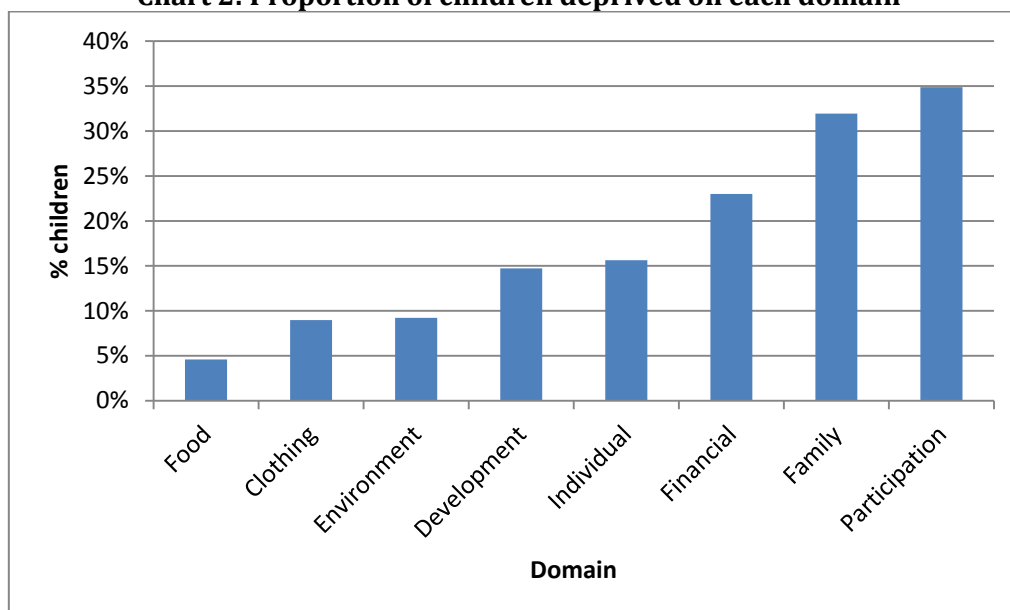
⁶ Comprising garden; bedroom.

⁷ Comprising pocket money; saving money.

⁸ Comprising holiday; day trips; celebrations.

⁹ Comprising hobby; clubs; school trips; leisure.

Chart 2: Proportion of children deprived on each domain



Low income

Household income was measured in the PSE2012 survey and equivalised using a scale derived from the UK Minimum Income Standards (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/crsp/mis/>). Table 2 shows the median household incomes - first for individuals (overall, for adults, and for children), and then for households (overall, for households without children, and for households with children). Based on both before and after housing costs measures of income, children, and households containing children, have lower equivalent incomes than adults and households not containing children.

Table 2: Median £ per week household incomes for different people and household types

| | After housing costs | Before housing costs |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Individuals | 316 | 386 |
| Adults | 337 | 398 |
| Children | 262 | 346 |
| Households | 326 | 384 |
| Households without children | 347 | 392 |
| Households with children | 279 | 371 |

As would be expected based on the findings presented in table 2, income poverty rates (defined as living in a household with an income below 60% of the PSE equivalised median) in Table 3 are substantially higher amongst children and households containing children, than amongst adults and households containing only adults. The income poverty rate for children is 33% compared to 23% for adults, and is 31% for households containing children, compared to 22% for households not containing children.

Table 3: Income poverty rates for different people and household types (%)

| | At risk of poverty rate |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Individuals | 25 |
| Adults | 23 |
| Children | 33 |
| Households | 25 |
| Households without children | 22 |
| Households with children | 31 |

Low income and material deprivation

The combined PSE poverty measure incorporates both an income threshold and a deprivation threshold (see Gordon and Nandy, 2012, for details on the methodology used in calculating the measure). In addition to the child-specific deprivation items detailed above, the measure includes household deprivations. The measure allows for the creation of a single poverty indicator for adults and for children, but setting age-specific deprivations to 0 for those outside the relevant age group or category (i.e. adult-specific items are set to 0 for children, and child-specific items are set to 0 for adults, while household-specific items can be counted for both adults and children). The four household items, along with the proportion of children who have them, do not have and the responding adult does not want them, and do not have them because the responding adult cannot afford them, are shown in table 4.

Table 4: Household items included in the combined poverty measure (%)

| | Has | Does not have, does not want | Does not have, can't afford | N/A |
|--|-----|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|
| Damp-free home | 71 | 7 | 19 | 3 |
| Home insurance | 73 | 8 | 18 | 1 |
| Curtains or window blinds | 97 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Table and chairs at which all the family can eat | 90 | 4 | 5 | 1 |

Shaded cells indicate fewer than 20 unweighted cases.

In addition to these four items, adults were asked to report whether their household could afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £500. This was also included in the combined poverty measure for children, and responses were provided in a yes/no format. 50% of children lived with adults who reported being unable to afford such an expense.

The combined low income and material deprivation measure allows for an assessment of who among the non-poor are likely to be vulnerable to poverty (experiencing low income but not deprivation), and those who are likely to be rising out of poverty (experiencing deprivation but not low income). These classifications are intended to capture the time lag between income and living standards – i.e. having a low income but not being deprived may indicate a recent drop in income which has not yet impacted living standards but may do so if not addressed; and being deprived but not having a low income may reflect a recent increase in income which may if sustained result in improved living standards (see Gordon, 2006 for more details). Table 5 shows the combined poverty rates for individuals, adults and children; and for households, adult-only households and households containing children. As for the previous poverty measures, rates of poverty among children (27%) and households containing children (33%) were higher than among adults (21%) and adult-only households (17%). Similarly low levels of 'rising' and 'vulnerability' were found amongst adults and children.

Table 5: Combined poverty rates for individuals and households (%)

| | | All (individuals) | Adults | Children | All (households) | HH only adults | HH with children |
|----------|------------|-------------------|--------|----------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Poor | | 22 | 21 | 27 | 22 | 17 | 33 |
| Not poor | Overall | 78 | 79 | 73 | 78 | 83 | 67 |
| | Rising | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Vulnerable | 10 | 9 | 13 | 10 | 11 | 8 |
| | Not poor | 67 | 70 | 59 | 66 | 70 | 57 |

Table 5 shows overall poverty rates and compares adults and children. However, an advantage of the PSE poverty measure is that it allows for comparisons not only between households, but between individuals in the same household. So while it is established in table 5 that PSE poverty rates are higher among children than among adults, it is not clear whether rates differ for adults living in households with children compared to those living in households which do not contain children. This is examined in table 6. Here, the poverty rate for adults living in households without children is found to be much lower – at 15% - than the rate for adults in households with children – 32%. The rate for adults in households with children is higher than for children themselves (27%). This suggests that household-level poverty rates may obscure variations in how resources are shared within households, explored in the later section on intra-household sharing.

Table 6: PSE poverty rates for children, adults living in households without children, and adults living in households with children (%)

| | PSE poverty |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Overall | 22 |
| Adults (all) | 21 |
| Children | 27 |
| Adults (no children in HH) | 15 |
| Adults (children in HH) | 32 |

Summary

Based on low income and PSE poverty, table 7 summarises child poverty rates. These are fairly similar, but the rate is highest for low income (33%), second highest for child-specific deprivation (30%); and lowest for PSE poverty (27%).

Table 7: Low income and PSE poor child poverty rates (%)

| | Children | Households with children |
|---|----------|--------------------------|
| Low income | 33 | 31 |
| PSE poverty | 27 | 33 |
| Deprivation (child SPNs only, lacking 2+) | 30 | - |

Subjective poverty

In addition to the objective measures of poverty detailed above, the PSE survey included several questions assessing subjective poverty. Adults were asked to report whether they felt they:

- Had a household income below the minimum necessary to avoid poverty
- To rate their standard of living (from much higher than average to much lower than average)
- Were generally poor these days (always, sometimes or never)

- Had ever felt embarrassed as a result of having a low income
- Had ever felt small as a result of having a low income

Table 8 shows the proportions of children living in households where adults reported subjective poverty on these measures overall, and among the deprived, those in low income households, and those in PSE poverty. Where questions were asked of all adults in the child's household, the household was considered to be in subjective poverty if half or more of the adults reported subjective poverty on the measure.

The proportion of children in households where adults report subjective poverty ranges from 19% living in households reporting that their standard of living is lower than average, to 49% living in households reporting that they are generally poor these days. Children who are deprived, living in households on a low income, and in PSE poverty are significantly more likely to live in households reporting subjective poverty on all of the measures. For most measures of subjective poverty, the strongest association is with PSE poverty (feeling their standard of living is lower than average; feeling generally poor these days; feeling embarrassed due to low income). For feeling their household income below the minimum necessary, the strongest association is with deprivation; and for feeling small due to a low income the association is equally strong for low income and PSE poverty. This lends credibility to the PSE poverty measure as the one which best reflects respondents' lived experiences of poverty.

Table 8: Subjective poverty rates (for households with children) and associations with objective child poverty measures

| | % overall | % if deprived | Odds if deprived | % if low income | Odds if low income | % if PSE poor | Odds if PSE poor |
|--|-----------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Household income below minimum necessary | 31 | 62 | 9.3* | 54 | 4.8* | 64 | 8.4* |
| Standard of living lower than average | 19 | 47 | 7.2* | 38 | 5.6* | 44 | 7.5* |
| Generally poor these days | 49 | 84 | 8.0* | 76 | 5.8* | 85 | 9.9* |
| Embarrassed due to low income | 34 | 65 | 5.3* | 54 | 3.6* | 63 | 5.6* |
| Feel small due to low income | 23 | 42 | 3.5* | 40 | 3.9* | 41 | 3.9* |

* indicates statistical significance at p<0.05 level.

Characteristics of the poor

The characteristics of the poor were assessed by examining rates of poverty and the composition of the poor across a range of socio-demographic variables, and using bivariate logistic regressions establishing who is at a significantly greater risk of poverty.

Household employment status

Deprivation rates were significantly higher among children in households where all adults work part-time (37%), and those where no adults work and the majority are either unemployed (42%) or inactive (42%). All household employment statuses other than all adults working full time represent a greater risk of low income, with the highest rates amongst children in households where no adults work and the majority are unemployed (77%) or inactive (57%). Similar household employment statuses predict an increased risk of PSE poverty as of deprivation, with those in households where all adults work part-time (43%), where no adults

work and most are unemployed (47%), and where no adults work and most are inactive (60%) experiencing a significantly greater risk.

In terms of poverty rates, then, statistically significant associations exist between household worklessness and the chances of experiencing poverty, and between part-time working and poverty. Looking at the composition of poor children, however, on all measures the majority of children in poverty live in households with at least some paid work (63% of deprived children, 65% of children in households on a low income, and 60% of children in PSE poverty). Between two fifths and a half of children living in poverty live in households with at least one adult in full time work – 45% of deprived children, 47% of children in low income households, and 43% of PSE poor children.

Family type

Compared to lone adults with one child, the deprivation rates among children living in households with two adults and one child (8%), two adults and two children (18%), or in 'other' family types (8%) were significantly lower. The same groups were at lower risk of low income – with rates of 24% amongst children in households with two adults and one child, 24% in households with two adults and two children, and 21% in 'other' household types. Whilst trends were similar for PSE poverty (statistically significant associations and rates of 18% for two adults and one child, 18% for two adults and two children, and 15% for 'other' household type), lone parents with three or more children were at a greater risk of PSE poverty, with a poverty rate of 80%.

The above findings indicate that children in lone adult families are at higher risk of poverty, and evidence based on the PSE poverty measure suggests that children in lone adult families with larger numbers of children (three or more) are at higher risk. However, the majority of poor children by all measures of poverty live in households containing two or more adults (62% of the deprived, 67% of those in low-income households, and 60% of those in PSE poor households); and the majority live in households containing only one or two children (at least 55% of deprived children, 54% of children in low-income households, and 52% of children in PSE poor households; children in 'other' household types excluded from these calculations).

Child's age

Children aged 5-10 (rate of 25%) and 11-15 (26%) face a significantly higher risk of deprivation than children aged 0-1. Age is not significantly associated with low income or PSE poverty.

Ethnicity

Children of Black Caribbean (rate of 45%), Black African (47%) and Pakistani/Bangladeshi (37%) ethnic origins were more likely than White British children to be deprived. Those from Asian Indian ethnic backgrounds (4%) were less likely. Black African children (52%) and Pakistani/Bangladeshi children (54%) were more likely to be in low-income households. Black Caribbean (44%) and Black African (44%) children were more likely to be in PSE poverty, and Asian Indian children (9%) were less likely.

Across all poverty measures, White British children formed the bulk of poor children – 77% of the deprived, 75% of those in low-income households, and 78% of those in PSE poverty.

Tenure

Across the poverty measures, children living in socially (43% deprivation rate; 59% low income rate; 57% PSE poverty rate) or privately (25% deprivation rate; 49% low income rate; 42% PSE poverty rate) rented accommodation were at higher risk than those in owner-occupied housing.

The majority of deprived children (55%) and PSE poor children (55%) lived in socially rented accommodation, as did nearly half of children in low-income households (47%).

Results are shown in table 9.

Table 9: Poverty rates, compositions, and logistic odds of being poor, for different poverty measures (%)

| | | Deprivation | | | | Low income | | | | PSE poverty | | | | Total composition |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------|-----|------------|-------------|------|-----|-------------|-------------|------|-----|-------------------|
| | | Rate | Composition | Odds | Sig | Rate | Composition | Odds | Sig | Rate | Composition | Odds | Sig | |
| Household employment status | All adults work FT | 15 | 18 | 1.0 | | 11 | 8 | 1.0 | | 13 | 12 | 1.0 | | 23 |
| | Some FT and some PT work | 11 | 8 | 0.7 | NS | 25 | 12 | 2.6 | * | 21 | 12 | 1.7 | NS | 15 |
| | Some FT work, no PT work | 12 | 19 | 0.8 | NS | 27 | 27 | 3.0 | * | 16 | 19 | 1.3 | NS | 30 |
| | All adults work PT, no FT work | 37 | 11 | 3.2 | * | 43 | 9 | 5.9 | * | 43 | 11 | 5.0 | * | 6 |
| | Some adults work PT, no FT work | 17 | 7 | 1.1 | NS | 35 | 9 | 4.3 | * | 18 | 6 | 1.5 | NS | 8 |
| | Primarily unemployed (no work) | 42 | 7 | 4.0 | * | 77 | 8 | 27.1 | * | 47 | 6 | 5.8 | * | 3 |
| | Primarily inactive (no work) | 42 | 30 | 4.1 | * | 57 | 27 | 10.5 | * | 60 | 34 | 9.8 | * | 14 |
| Family type | One adult, one child | 36 | 9 | 1.0 | | 51 | 9 | 1.0 | | 44 | 9 | 1.0 | | 6 |
| | One adult, two children | 32 | 12 | 0.8 | NS | 45 | 10 | 0.8 | NS | 39 | 11 | 0.8 | NS | 7 |
| | One adult, 3+ children | 49 | 17 | 1.7 | NS | 67 | 14 | 2.0 | NS | 80 | 20 | 5.1 | * | 7 |
| | Two adults, one child | 8 | 6 | 0.2 | * | 24 | 12 | 0.3 | * | 18 | 10 | 0.3 | * | 16 |
| | Two adults, two children | 18 | 28 | 0.4 | * | 24 | 23 | 0.3 | * | 18 | 22 | 0.3 | * | 32 |
| | Two adults, 3+ children | 24 | 24 | 0.5 | NS | 40 | 25 | 0.6 | NS | 30 | 22 | 0.5 | NS | 21 |
| | Other | 8 | 4 | 0.2 | * | 21 | 7 | 0.3 | * | 15 | 6 | 0.2 | * | 11 |
| Age of child | 0-1 | 10 | 5 | 1.0 | | 31 | 10 | 1.0 | | 22 | 9 | 1.0 | | 11 |
| | 2-4 | 15 | 13 | 1.7 | NS | 36 | 20 | 1.2 | NS | 28 | 18 | 1.4 | NS | 18 |
| | 5-10 | 25 | 39 | 3.1 | * | 36 | 35 | 1.3 | NS | 30 | 36 | 1.6 | NS | 32 |
| | 11-15 | 26 | 34 | 3.3 | * | 32 | 27 | 1.0 | NS | 29 | 29 | 1.4 | NS | 28 |
| | 16-17 | 19 | 9 | 2.1 | NS | 23 | 8 | 0.7 | NS | 19 | 7 | 0.8 | NS | 11 |
| Ethnicity | White British | 19 | 77 | 1.0 | | 31 | 75 | 1.0 | | 27 | 78 | 1.0 | | 80 |
| | White other | 19 | 4 | 1.0 | NS | 27 | 3 | 0.8 | NS | 30 | 5 | 1.2 | NS | 4 |
| | Black Caribbean/mixed | 45 | 4 | 3.4 | * | 45 | 3 | 1.9 | NS | 44 | 3 | 2.1 | * | 2 |
| | Black African/mixed | 51 | 6 | 4.4 | * | 52 | 4 | 2.4 | * | 44 | 5 | 2.1 | * | 3 |
| | Asian Indian | 4 | 0 | 0.2 | * | 38 | 3 | 1.4 | NS | 9 | 1 | 0.3 | * | 3 |
| | Pakistani/Bangladeshi | 37 | 5 | 2.5 | * | 54 | 6 | 2.7 | * | 43 | 5 | 2.1 | NS | 3 |
| | Asian other | 16 | 2 | 0.8 | NS | 34 | 3 | 1.2 | NS | 16 | 2 | 0.5 | NS | 3 |
| Other | 26 | 2 | 1.5 | NS | 48 | 2 | 2.1 | NS | 28 | 2 | 1.0 | NS | 2 | |
| Tenure | Owner | 10 | 26 | 1.0 | | 17 | 30 | 1.0 | | 10 | 22 | 1.0 | | 58 |
| | Social renter | 43 | 55 | 7.2 | * | 59 | 47 | 6.9 | * | 57 | 55 | 11.7 | * | 26 |
| | Private renter | 25 | 18 | 3.2 | * | 49 | 23 | 4.7 | * | 42 | 23 | 6.2 | * | 15 |
| | Other | 11 | 0 | 1.1 | NS | 4 | 0 | 0.2 | NS | 10 | 0 | 1.0 | NS | 1 |
| Total rate | | 21 | | | | 33 | | | | 27 | | | | |

Shaded cells indicate fewer than 20 unweighted cases; * indicates statistical significance at the p<0.05 level.

Intra-household sharing

A strong advantage of deprivation and the PSE poverty measure over income are that they allow for an examination of intra-household distributions of resources. As noted above, whilst poverty rates for children are higher than those for adults, using these individualisable measures poverty rates are high for children but even higher for adults living in households containing children.

That poverty rates are higher for adults in households containing children suggests intra-household distributions which favour children. One way of testing this is to explore the proportion of households in which adults are poor and children are not poor; and the converse of this – shown in table 10. While the deprivation and PSE poverty measures are individual, because of the data collection method (adults were asked to class all children as lacking items and activities which any child in their household lacked) it is not possible to distinguish the poverty status of different children within the same household. Age adjustments (mentioned above) mean that such children may have different classifications to one another, but this is an artefact of post-hoc adjustments rather than a reflection of genuine difference. Children within a household are therefore classed as poor if 50% or more of the children within their household are poor. For adults, because the measure is genuinely individual, two approaches are taken. Firstly adults are classed as poor if any adults in the household are poor; and secondly only if all adults in the household are poor.

Using these classifications, it is possible to identify four categories of children: those living in congruous non-poor situations (they are not poor and the adults they live with are not poor); congruous poor situations (they are poor and the adults they live with are poor); incongruous protected situations (they are not poor but the adults they live with are poor); and incongruous exposed situations (they are poor but the adults they live with are not poor).

Based on the PSE poverty measure, the majority of children live in congruous non-poor situations, and the second largest group in congruous poor situations. A substantial group of children (16%) are not poor and live with at least one adult who is poor; this drops to 7% of children who are not poor but all the adults they live with are poor. A very small proportion of children – 1% - are poor and live with no poor adults; slightly more, but still very few – 5% - are poor and live with any adults who are not poor.

The PSE poverty measure includes household income, reflecting the fact that household resources will impact children's living environments even though the extent of this impact is mediated by parental choices and behaviours. To test for the effect of this, similar analysis was conducted using the deprivation indicator. Based on this, the largest group of children were still congruous non-poor, but the second largest group were incongruous protected. Only 1% of children lived in incongruous exposed situations, even based on an adult poverty threshold whereby all adults had to be poor for adults in the household to be classed as in poverty. This may suggest that the inclusion of income in the PSE poverty measure obscures some of the efforts that adults make to protect children in their households; however it should be noted that even non-deprived children are likely to experience some of the disadvantages and stress associated with living on a low income and with parents who are going without.

Table 10: PSE poor/deprived children and PSE poor/deprived adults (%)

| | Children not poor | Children poor |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| PSE Poverty | | |
| No adults poor | 56 | 1 |
| Any adults poor | 16 | 27 |
| Any adults not poor | 65 | 5 |
| All adults poor | 7 | 23 |
| Deprivation | | |
| No adults deprived | 45 | 1 |
| Any adults deprived | 33 | 21 |
| Any adults not deprived | 53 | 1 |
| All adults deprived | 25 | 20 |

What is clear from this is that 16-25% of children (22-32% of children who are not poor) live with at least one adult who goes without themselves, whilst children do not go without. One explanation for this, supported in qualitative findings (for example see Ridge, 2002; Middleton et al, 1997), is that adults living with children prioritise children's needs and sacrifice their own to help meet these. Given that this group of adults has been very difficult to identify in previous research, and certainly in such large-scale surveys, the characteristics of adults who are themselves poor but who live with children who are not poor merits further exploration.

The characteristics of 'sacrificing' adults were examined through logistic regression analyses examining the associations between a range of characteristics and being a poor adult living with (a) non-poor child(ren), shown in table 11. 74% of adults living in households where children were not PSE poor but where at least one adult was PSE poor, were themselves PSE poor; the comparable rate for deprivation was 84%. Whilst most of these adults were parents, women, in employment, and White, the only statistically significant associations were that for PSE poverty, those aged 30-39 were more likely to sacrifice than those in other age groups (2.8 times, a rate of 86%); and for both PSE poverty (odds: 4.6; rate: 88%) and deprivation (odds: 3.2; rate: 92%), main carers were more likely to sacrifice their own needs.

Table 11: Characteristics of 'sacrificing' adults (%)

| | | Poverty | | | Deprivation | | | Total composition |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------|-------------|--------|-------------|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| | | Rate | Composition | Odds | Rate | Composition | Odds | |
| Parent | No | 55 | 8 | 1.0 | 70 | 8 | 1.0 | 50 |
| | Yes | 76 | 92 | 2.6 NS | 86 | 92 | 2.5 NS | 50 |
| Sex | Male | 68 | 43 | 1.0 | 81 | 41 | 1.0 | 48 |
| | Female | 80 | 57 | 1.9 NS | 87 | 59 | 1.5 NS | 52 |
| Age group | 18-29 | 70 | 28 | 1.0 | 83 | 32 | 1.0 | 25 |
| | 30-39 | 86 | 36 | 2.8* | 90 | 35 | 1.9 NS | 33 |
| | 40-49 | 68 | 30 | 0.9 NS | 79 | 25 | 0.7 NS | 32 |
| | 50-59 | 77 | 6 | 1.5 NS | 87 | 7 | 1.3 NS | 9 |
| | 60+ | 19 | 0 | 0.1 NS | 52 | 1 | 0.2 NS | 2 |
| Main carer | No | 63 | 47 | 1.0 | 78 | 49 | 1.0 | 75 |
| | Yes | 88 | 53 | 4.6* | 92 | 51 | 3.2* | 25 |
| Employment status | Full time work | 76 | 40 | 1.0 | 79 | 46 | 1.0 | 50 |
| | Part time work | 89 | 18 | 2.6 NS | 88 | 14 | 1.9 NS | 16 |
| | Self employed | 68 | 4 | 0.7 NS | 82 | 5 | 1.2 NS | 5 |
| | Unemployed | 85 | 12 | 1.7 NS | 92 | 11 | 2.9 NS | 7 |
| | Looking after family | 87 | 19 | 2.1 NS | 91 | 16 | 2.7 NS | 13 |
| | Other | 90 | 7 | 2.8 NS | 91 | 8 | 2.7 NS | 8 |
| Ethnicity | White | 75 | 76 | 1.0 | 85 | 81 | 1.0 | 79 |
| | Not white | 72 | 24 | 0.9 NS | 80 | 19 | 0.7 NS | 21 |
| Total rate | | 74 | | | 84 | | | |

Shaded cells indicate fewer than 20 unweighted cases; * indicates statistical significance at the p<0.05 level.

The inclusion of some similar socially perceived necessities for adults and children allows a further exploration of how resources are allocated within households. Table 12 shows the proportion of households with children in which children lack the item/activity. Next, the proportion of households within which at least one adult lacks the item/activity, and within which most adults lack the item/activity, are shown. The last four columns show the proportion of households in which at least one adult lacks items/activities if children lack them and the odds of at least one adult lacking the item/activity if children lack it; and then the same for if most adults lack the item/activity.

For all comparable items and activities, more households with children contain adults who lack them than contain children who lack them. Similar results are found for most adults in the household lacking items and activities, although the proportions of households in which most adults lack two/three meals, meat/fish, and celebrations are similar to the proportions of households in which children lack these. Proportions of households containing one adult who lacked the item/activity, and in which most adults lacked the item/activity, increased substantially when children in the households faced comparable deprivations. All associations were statistically significant – i.e. households containing children deprived of the items/activities were significantly more likely to contain adults lacking the items/activities.

Table 12: Child and adult deprivation: specific items/activities (%)

| | Children lack | At least one adult lacks | Most adults lack | At least one adults lack if children lack | Odds of at least one adult lacking if children lack | Most adults lack if children lack | Odds of most adults lacking if children lack |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Two/three meals | 1 | 2 | 1 | 57 | 99.9* | 43 | 96.2* |
| Fresh fruit/veg | 4 | 9 | 5 | 78 | 50.5* | 50 | 35.5* |
| Warm coat | 1 | 9 | 5 | 75 | 34.5* | 65 | 41.4* |
| Meat/fish | 3 | 6 | 3 | 54 | 83.5* | 52 | 83.6* |
| Hobby | 6 | 18 | 8 | 70 | 14.0* | 40 | 9.4* |
| Two pairs shoes | 3 | 15 | 8 | 56 | 8.6* | 47 | 12.6* |
| Celebrations on special occasions | 2 | 4 | 2 | 31 | 15.5* | 29 | 43.1* |
| Annual holiday | 23 | 40 | 28 | 96 | 92.4* | 81 | 32.4* |

Shaded cells indicate fewer than 20 unweighted cases; * indicates statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level.

In addition to overall PSE poverty and deprivation rates, and individual deprivation items/activities, a suite of questions were asked of adults about economising behaviours. Respondents were asked, 'In the last 12 months to help you keep your living costs down have you...':

- Skipped on food yourself so that others in the household would have enough to eat?
- Bought second hand clothes for yourself instead of new?
- Continued wearing clothes/shoes that had worn out instead of replacing them?
- Cut back on visits to the hairdresser/barber?
- Postponed visits to the dentist?
- Spent less on hobbies than you would like?
- Gone without or cut back on social visits, going to the pub or eating out?

Answer options were 'often', 'sometimes' or 'never'.

Adults in households containing children who were PSE poor or deprived were significantly more likely than adults in households containing non-poor children to engage in all of these economising behaviours, shown in table 13. Economising on social visits was almost universal in households containing poor children (92% of adults in households containing PSE poor children, and 91% in households containing deprived children). Over a third of adults in households containing poor children skipped on their food 'sometimes' or 'often' to ensure others had enough (69% in households containing PSE poor children, 67% in households containing deprived children).

Table 13: Economising behaviours of adults in households with children (%)

| | | Often | Sometimes | Never | Any | Odds (any) |
|---|-----------------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----|------------|
| Skimped on food so that others would have enough | Children not poor | 7 | 23 | 69 | 31 | 1.0 |
| | Children poor | 27 | 42 | 31 | 69 | 5.0* |
| | Children not deprived | 8 | 25 | 67 | 33 | 1.0 |
| | Children deprived | 29 | 38 | 33 | 67 | 4.0* |
| Bought second hand clothes instead of new | Children not poor | 9 | 22 | 69 | 31 | 1.0 |
| | Children poor | 24 | 32 | 44 | 56 | 2.8* |
| | Children not deprived | 11 | 23 | 66 | 34 | 1.0 |
| | Children deprived | 22 | 32 | 46 | 54 | 2.3* |
| Continued to wear worn-out clothes | Children not poor | 13 | 44 | 43 | 57 | 1.0 |
| | Children poor | 43 | 39 | 18 | 82 | 3.3* |
| | Children not deprived | 16 | 44 | 40 | 60 | 1.0 |
| | Children deprived | 40 | 40 | 20 | 80 | 2.7* |
| Cut back on visits to hairdresser/barber | Children not poor | 21 | 33 | 46 | 54 | 1.0 |
| | Children poor | 45 | 21 | 10 | 66 | 4.3* |
| | Children not deprived | 24 | 33 | 43 | 57 | 1.0 |
| | Children deprived | 54 | 27 | 18 | 82 | 3.4* |
| Postponed visits to dentist | Children not poor | 16 | 21 | 62 | 38 | 1.0 |
| | Children poor | 35 | 23 | 41 | 59 | 2.3* |
| | Children not deprived | 18 | 21 | 61 | 39 | 1.0 |
| | Children deprived | 35 | 24 | 41 | 59 | 2.2* |
| Spent less on hobbies | Children not poor | 26 | 44 | 30 | 70 | 1.0 |
| | Children poor | 60 | 27 | 13 | 87 | 2.9* |
| | Children not deprived | 27 | 43 | 30 | 70 | 1.0 |
| | Children deprived | 65 | 22 | 12 | 88 | 3.0* |
| Cut back on social visits, going to the pub or eating out | Children not poor | 33 | 42 | 25 | 75 | 1.0 |
| | Children poor | 68 | 24 | 8 | 92 | 3.6* |
| | Children not deprived | 36 | 41 | 24 | 76 | 1.0 |
| | Children deprived | 66 | 26 | 9 | 91 | 3.3* |

* indicates statistical significance at the p<0.05 level.

Child poverty, child social exclusion and children's outcomes

Access to children's services was covered in the PSE survey. Table 14 shows the proportion of children lacking services overall, amongst those in PSE poverty, and amongst the deprived. Lacking access to services was significantly associated with PSE poverty for all but public transport to school, and with deprivation for all but youth clubs and public transport to school. The strongest association was with lack of access to nurseries, playgroups or mother and toddler groups.

Table 14: Access to services for poor children (%)

| | % lack overall | % lack if poor | Odds of lack if poor | % lack if deprived | Odds of lack if deprived |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Facilities to safely play/spend time nearby | 27 | 41 | 2.6* | 47 | 3.1* |
| School meals | 12 | 17 | 1.9* | 19 | 2.2* |
| Youth clubs | 26 | 34 | 1.8* | 33 | 1.6 NS |
| After school clubs | 12 | 20 | 2.4* | 20 | 2.4* |
| Public transport to school | 13 | 15 | 1.3 NS | 16 | 1.4 NS |
| Nurseries /playgroups /mother and toddler groups | 6 | 17 | 11.4* | 23 | 11.2* |

* indicates statistical significance at the p<0.05 level.

Four negative outcomes for children were included – having had an injury or accident at home requiring A&E treatment; having been bullied; having special educational needs; and having been excluded from school. These questions were asked about all children within the household rather than about each child, so associations were explored between child poverty and living in a household where at least one child had experienced these outcomes. PSE poverty and deprivation were significantly associated with being bullied and being excluded from school, but not with requiring A&E treatment or having special educational needs. Results are shown in table 15.

Table 15: Child poverty and negative child outcomes (%)

| | % overall | % if poor | Odds if poor | % if deprived | Odds if deprived |
|--|-----------|-----------|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| Injury or accident at home requiring A&E | 20 | 23 | 1.2 NS | 23 | 1.2 NS |
| Child has ever been bullied | 34 | 44 | 1.8* | 46 | 1.8* |
| Child has special educational needs | 16 | 17 | 1.2 NS | 20 | 1.6 NS |
| Child has ever been excluded from school | 8 | 13 | 2.6* | 15 | 3.0* |

* indicates statistical significance at the p<0.05 level.

Almost no significant associations were found between child poverty and a range of problems with schools which adults were asked to report on. Deprivation was significantly associated with reporting school buildings in a bad state of repair, but no other school problems were significantly associated with either PSE poverty or deprivation. Results are shown in table 16.

Table 16: Child poverty and school problems (%)

| | % lack overall | % lack if poor | Odds of lack if poor | % lack if deprived | Odds of lack if deprived |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Missed classes due to teacher shortage | 6 | 6 | 1.0 NS | 6 | 1.0 NS |
| Problems in obtaining school books | 1 | 1 | 0.6 NS | 1 | 0.7 NS |
| School does not have enough computers | 2 | 2 | 1.1 NS | 2 | 1.0 NS |
| Large class sizes (more than 30 pupils) | 11 | 10 | 0.9 NS | 11 | 1.0 NS |
| School buildings in bad state of repair | 6 | 3 | 0.4 NS | 2 | 0.3* |
| Inadequate school facilities | 3 | 2 | 0.4 NS | 1 | 0.3 NS |
| Poor teaching | 5 | 7 | 1.5 NS | 8 | 1.8 NS |
| Other problems with school facilities | 5 | 7 | 1.5 NS | 8 | 1.8 NS |
| More than one problem reported | 11 | 11 | 1.0 NS | 13 | 1.2 NS |

Shaded cells indicate fewer than 20 unweighted cases. * indicates statistical significance at the p<0.05 level.

Several parenting activities were asked about, and are examined in much more detail by Dermott and Pomati (2014). Significant associations were found with PSE poverty and deprivation for attending parents' evenings, doing sporting activities with children, and watching TV with children. Poor children were more likely to have parents who did not do sporting activities with them, but were less likely to have parents who missed parents' evenings or did not watch TV with them. Results are shown in table 17.

Table 17: Child poverty and parenting activities (%)

| | % lack overall | % lack if poor | Odds of lack if poor | % lack if deprived | Odds of lack if deprived |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Attending parents' evening once a term | 4 | 8 | 0.3* | 4 | 0.4* |
| Reading with children | 15 | 17 | 0.8 NS | 16 | 0.9 NS |
| Playing games with children | 21 | 19 | 0.8 NS | 21 | 1.0 NS |
| Doing sporting activities with children | 31 | 39 | 1.6* | 38 | 1.5* |
| Watching TV with children | 6 | 3 | 0.3* | 3 | 0.4* |
| Eating a meal with children | 5 | 2 | 0.4 NS | 2 | 0.5 NS |
| Helping children with homework | 10 | 9 | 1.0 NS | 10 | 1.0 NS |

Shaded cells indicate fewer than 20 unweighted cases. * indicates statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Child poverty and adult/household social exclusion

In addition to associations with child-specific exclusion and outcomes, the wider environment within which children (including poor children) live impacts their well-being and well-becoming. Associations between child PSE poverty and experiences of exclusion within the child's household were examined, using the Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix as a framework. The results are summarised in Table 18.

Resources

The resources domain of the B-SEM includes material and economic resources, access to public and private services, social resources, and education and skills.

Material and economic resources

Unsurprisingly, given that indicators of exclusion from material and economic resources in the B-SEM framework are not independent of those used to construct the PSE poverty measure, significant associations were found between child poverty and children's experience of exclusion on all indicators in this sub-domain. These incorporate income poverty, deprivation, arrears and debt, poverty over time, and subjective poverty.

Access to public and private services

Significant associations were found between children living in poverty, being excluded from public and private services specific to children's needs, and living in households with adults who were excluded from public and private services.

Social resources

Of the 'resources' domain, social resources showed the least convincing associations with child poverty. Poor children were more likely to live in households where the majority of adults completed full-time education at or before 16; where the majority of adults had less than monthly contact with relatives; and where the majority of adults had low levels of social support. However no evidence was found for links with other aspects of social resources, including adults having limited contact with friends and being dissatisfied with their personal relationships.

Table 18: Child (PSE) poverty and social exclusion: resources domain (%)

| | % children | % poor children | Odds if child is poor |
|---|------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Material and economic resources | | | |
| At risk of poverty (<60% PSE-equivalised median income) | 33 | 67 | 8.1* |
| At risk of poverty in PSE and FRS | 23 | 48 | 6.0* |
| Majority of adults cannot afford 5+ SPNs | 36 | 82 | 20.2* |
| Family cannot afford 5+ child SPNs | 10 | 31 | 34.6* |
| HH in arrears on bills over the last year | 34 | 68 | 7.8* |
| HH falling behind with bills | 11 | 25 | 5.2* |
| HH had to borrow money from friends, family or elsewhere | 40 | 77 | 10.2* |
| HH cannot afford unanticipated expense of £500 | 50 | 94 | 32.8* |
| HH does not own their home | 42 | 78 | 9.0* |
| Majority of adults genuinely feel poor all the time | 14 | 33 | 6.3* |
| Majority of adults say living standards below average | 19 | 44 | 7.7* |
| Majority of adults have been poor mostly/often | 15 | 32 | 4.7* |
| Child Poverty Act combined low income and material deprivation | 12 | 40 | 36.2* |
| Child Poverty Act severe poverty | 4 | 13 | 20.2* |
| Child Poverty Act deprived | 22 | 65 | 28.4* |
| Access to services | | | |
| Adults lack access to three or more adult services | 38 | 45 | 1.5* |
| Children lack access to two or more child services | 14 | 23 | 2.6* |
| Social resources | | | |
| Majority of adults completed FT education aged 16 or less | 54 | 73 | 3.1* |
| Limited language skills (non-native speakers) | 10 | 12 | 1.5 NS |
| Majority of adults have less than monthly contact with friends | 7 | 8 | 1.2 NS |
| Majority of adults speak to fewer than 3 friends per month | 7 | 6 | 0.7 NS |
| Majority of adults have less than monthly contact with relatives | 32 | 38 | 1.5* |
| Majority of adults speak to fewer than 3 relatives per month | 36 | 36 | 1.0 NS |
| Majority of adults have less than monthly contact with friends or relatives | 0 | 0 | N/A |
| Majority of adults speak to fewer than 3 friends or relatives per month | 2 | 3 | 1.7 NS |
| Majority of adults are not satisfied with their personal relationships | 12 | 16 | 1.6 NS |
| Majority of adults have low levels of social support | 7 | 11 | 2.1* |

Participation

Economic participation

Significant links existed between children being in poverty and the work status and job satisfaction of adults in their household; but no significant links existed between child poverty and adults in children's households providing unpaid care.

Cultural participation

Child poverty was significantly associated with living in a household in which adults did not participate in common cultural activities.

Political and civic participation

Children living in poverty were more likely to live with adults who were not members of any social organisations, and who took no local or national action. Associations with living with adults with a low sense of political efficacy were less clear: there was no significant association between being in poverty and living with at least one adult with a low sense of political efficacy, but there was a significant association with living with adults who all had a low sense of political efficacy.

Social participation

Significant associations existed between child poverty and children or the adults they live with lacking one or more common social activities. However, the indicators in this sub-domain are not independent from those used to assess child poverty.

Results are shown in table 19.

Table 19: Child (PSE) poverty and social exclusion: participation domain (%)

| | % children | % poor children | Odds if child is poor |
|---|------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Economic participation | | | |
| No adults in paid work | 18 | 40 | 5.9* |
| At least one adult not in paid work | 41 | 68 | 4.7* |
| At least one adult unemployed >12 months in past 5 years | 20 | 43 | 6.2* |
| All adults unemployed >12 months in past 5 years | 10 | 24 | 6.3* |
| At least one adult gives unpaid care (not child care) | 27 | 27 | 1.0 NS |
| All adults give unpaid care (not child care) | 13 | 15 | 1.2 NS |
| At least one adult gives unpaid care (child care) | 82 | 81 | 0.9 NS |
| All adults give unpaid care (child care) | 73 | 70 | 0.8 NS |
| At least one adult gives unpaid care (all) | 85 | 84 | 0.9 NS |
| All adults give unpaid care (all) | 76 | 73 | 0.8 NS |
| At least one adult not satisfied with job | 7 | 13 | 2.3* |
| All adults not satisfied with job | 3 | 6 | 4.2* |
| Cultural participation | | | |
| No participation in common cultural activities | 10 | 16 | 2.0* |
| Political and civic participation | | | |
| At least one adult not a member of any social organisations | 57 | 81 | 4.5* |
| All adults not members of any social organisations | 38 | 62 | 4.1* |
| At least one adult taking no local or national action | 42 | 63 | 3.2* |
| All adults taking no local or national action | 28 | 47 | 3.2* |
| At least one adult has low sense of political efficacy | 24 | 30 | 1.5 NS |
| All adults have low sense of political efficacy | 13 | 20 | 2.3* |
| Social participation | | | |
| Child lacks one or more common social activities | 32 | 81 | 27.1* |
| At least one adult lacks one or more common social activities | 31 | 62 | 7.0* |
| All adults lack one or more common social activities | 15 | 38 | 8.7* |

Quality of life

Health and well-being

Poor children were more likely to live with adults with fair or bad health, and to live with adults with a limiting illness.

Living environment

Problems with accommodation and neighbourhood were all significantly more likely to affect children in poverty.

Crime, harm and criminalisation

Children in poverty were more likely to live with adults with a criminal record; evidence on adult experiences of harassment and discrimination was less clear: poor children were more likely to live with all adults who had experienced harassment or discrimination, but no more likely to live with only one adult with such experiences.

Table 20: Child (PSE) poverty and social exclusion: quality of life domain (%)

| | % children | % poor children | Odds if child is poor |
|---|------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Health and well-being | | | |
| At least one adult has fair, bad or very bad health | 27 | 42 | 2.6* |
| All adults have fair, bad or very bad health | 12 | 23 | 3.5* |
| At least one adult has a limiting illness | 18 | 29 | 2.6* |
| All adults have a limiting illness | 0 | 0 | N/A |
| Living environment | | | |
| Multiple problems with accommodation | 41 | 63 | 3.3* |
| Home not in 'good' state of repair | 38 | 60 | 3.6* |
| Adults dissatisfied with accommodation | 9 | 18 | 3.8* |
| Adults dissatisfied with neighbourhood | 9 | 17 | 3.1* |
| Experiencing 3+ neighbourhood problems | 35 | 50 | 2.4* |
| Crime and social harm | | | |
| At least one adult experienced harassment or discrimination | 22 | 26 | 1.4 NS |
| All adults experienced harassment or discrimination | 10 | 16 | 2.4* |
| At least one adult has a criminal record | 9 | 15 | 2.5* |
| All adults have a criminal record | 3 | 7 | 3.7* |

Overall, it is evident that poor children were more likely to experience themselves and live in households where adults experienced a range of social exclusions.

Conclusions

We were responsible for the child poverty in the PSE 2012 survey. This paper is the final summative analysis of child poverty in the PSE 2012 survey. There will be other outputs by us and others in the team related to child poverty in the UK and by the project members in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

It is already well established that child poverty is a serious problem in the UK. It had been getting better slowly. But after 2010 it has begun to get worse again as austerity has had the biggest impact on families with children – real reductions in income and living standards, less than real terms uprating in cash benefits and tax credits, unemployment and cuts in local

services – all recently analysed in the Equality and Human Rights Report (Reed and Portes 2014).

The PSE survey was carried out early in the life of this Parliament and being cross-sectional cannot contribute to discovering what has happened to child poverty since 2008 or 2010. So what does it show?

It advances the measurement of child poverty by using a child deprivation measure based on socially perceived necessities, the conventional income poverty measure (but with a more realistic equivalence scale) and the PSE measure which combines deprivation and low income. In the appendix it also responds to the criticism of the socially perceived necessities method as applied to children by an analysis of children lacking necessities whether or not the parents say they lack them because they cannot afford them.

Then there is clear evidence that all these objective poverty measures are strongly related to parent's own assessment of their subjective poverty.

The analysis of the characteristics of poor children is familiar, including the fact that now a majority of poor children are living in households with someone in employment.

The analysis of intra-household sharing is new and confirms using quantitative data the findings from qualitative studies that child deprivation would be much higher if parents were not sacrificing their own living standards for the sake of their children.

Finally the paper explores the associations between poverty and deprivation and a large number of indicators of social exclusion. Child and social exclusion are strongly associated in almost all domains. The most interesting exception is that there does not appear to be an association with social relationships. This was found in the previous PSE survey in 1999 and we suspect it has to do with employment – people who are less likely to work are more likely to have time to sustain social relationships. In almost all other respects the association between poverty, deprivation and social exclusion is strong and dire.

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Appendix A: Enforced lack sensitivity testing

The enforced lack approach – i.e. that lacking a socially perceived necessity is only considered a deprivation if the reason for lacking is inability to afford the item/activity – was instigated by Mack and Lansley (1985) in response to criticisms of Townsend’s (1979) approach from Piachaud (1981) that counting all items lacking irrespective of the reason for the lack may miscount those who lack items/activities through personal preference as poor. However, complications arise with this approach when child, rather than adult, poverty is the issue of concern. Such complications (not all of which are relevant to the PSE survey, but which are relevant to deciding on an approach) comprise:

- Where adults are respondents, how suitable and accurate is it to rely on them as proxies for reporting children’s preferences?
- Where children are respondents, can an adequate knowledge of household finances be assumed to enable trust in ‘can’t afford’ responses’?
- Further to the above, if child reports are used and indicate the child lacks and wants an item/activity, is the ability of adults to afford this item a relevant factor in whether the child is deprived or not, given that the child’s preferences are not being met whether or not adults can afford it?
- Where children’s preferences (or adults’ reports of children’s preferences) indicate that a child does not want items/activities widely believed to be instrumental in development towards successful adulthood (e.g. educational and developmental resources), what does a non-enforced lack indicate?

UNICEF¹⁰ have taken the view that if a child lacks a socially perceived necessity regardless of whether an adult says they lack it because they cannot afford it then it is an abrogation of child rights and should be treated as a deprivation. These issues require careful theoretical consideration, but practical implications of analytical decisions are also important. These can be tested through comparing the kinds of children determined to be in poverty when alternative deprivation criteria are used – i.e. when all lacks, rather than just enforced lacks, are counted as deprivations.

Table A1 shows the proportions of children experiencing enforced lack and any lack of socially perceived necessities, and the difference in these proportions. For most items, differences are very small (<5%), indicating that few adults report children as lacking these for any reason other than being unable to afford them. Exceptions include outdoor leisure equipment (difference of 10%), construction toys (23%), pocket money (14%) and money to save (6%). For activities, all but celebrations on special occasions have comparatively high rates of non-enforced lack – hobby (7%), school trip (13%), toddler group (23%), clubs (19%), day trips (13%) and holidays (9%).

Table A1: Enforced vs. any lack (%)

| Items | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| | Does not have, can't afford | Does not have, any reason | Difference |
| A warm winter coat | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Books at home suitable for their ages | 2 | 3 | 1 |

¹⁰ <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/710> <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/744>

| | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Three meals a day | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Indoor games suitable for their ages | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Some new, not second hand, clothes | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least once a day | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| New, properly fitting shoes | 4 | 5 | 2 |
| At least four pairs of trousers | 5 | 6 | 1 |
| A garden or outdoor space nearby | 5 | 7 | 2 |
| A suitable place at home to study or do homework | 5 | 7 | 2 |
| Computer and internet for homework | 6 | 8 | 2 |
| Enough bedrooms for every child of 10 or over of a different sex | 12 | 15 | 4 |
| Outdoor leisure equipment | 6 | 16 | 10 |
| Construction toys | 5 | 27 | 23 |
| Pocket money | 16 | 30 | 14 |
| Money to save | 33 | 39 | 6 |
| Activities | | | |
| | Does not do, can't afford | Does not do, any reason | Difference |
| Celebrations on special occasions | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| A hobby or leisure activity | 6 | 14 | 7 |
| Going on a school trip at least once a term | 8 | 20 | 13 |
| Toddler group, nursery or play group once a week | 4 | 27 | 23 |
| Children's clubs or activities | 9 | 28 | 19 |
| Day trips with family once a month | 21 | 33 | 13 |
| A holiday away from home at least one week a year | 26 | 35 | 9 |

A potential reason for the differences noted above may be misspecification of age adjustments – i.e. where items and activities have been assumed to be relevant to one age group, in reality their relevance may be to a smaller or different age range. To test this, the ages of children experiencing an enforced lack of the items and activities was compared to that of children lacking them for other reasons. Results are shown in table A2. Only for construction toys – where the mean age of children experiencing an enforced lack was 7, while the mean age of children experiencing a lack for other reasons was 12 – was there a statistically significant difference in age.

Table A2: Differences in age for enforced vs. other lacks

| | Mean age (enforced lack) | Mean age (other lack) | Sig |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Leisure | 8 | 9 | NS |
| Construction toys | 7 | 12 | * |
| Pocket money | 11 | 10 | NS |
| Saving money | 11 | 11 | NS |
| Hobby | 10 | 11 | NS |
| School trips | 11 | 12 | NS |
| Nursery | 1 | 1 | NS |
| Clubs | 8 | 9 | NS |

| | | | |
|-----------|---|----|----|
| Day trips | 9 | 10 | NS |
| Holiday | 8 | 7 | NS |

To further explore differences, indices of child deprivation were calculated based on enforced and any lack, and thresholds set where similar numbers of children would be classed as deprived. The resulting classifications were then tested to see if they identified the same children as deprived, and whether similar kinds of children were identified as deprived.

Table A3 shows the numbers of deprivations experienced by children based on enforced and all lacks. Thresholds with similar numbers of children are identified for the purposes of comparison – 30% of children experience an enforced lack of two or more necessities, compared to 31% of children experiencing any lack of four or more necessities; and 21% of children experience an enforced lack of three or more necessities, compared to 22% of children experiencing any lack. These thresholds were therefore selected for further examination.

Table A3: Number of enforced and any lacks (%)

| Number of deprivations | Don't have, can't afford | Don't have, all |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| None | 54 | 22 |
| 1 | 15 | 21 |
| 2 | 9 | 15 |
| 3 | 7 | 10 |
| 4 | 4 | 9 |
| 5 | 3 | 6 |
| Six or more | 7 | 16 |

Table A4 shows the proportions of children whose deprivation status is similar or different based on enforced versus all lacks, using the thresholds detailed in table A3. For both thresholds, most children are in the same groups (i.e. they are not deprived according to both thresholds – 63% or 74%; or they are deprived by both thresholds - 21% and 15%). That is, a total of 84% or 89% of children are classified in the same manner based on enforced lack or any lack approaches. Neither is the direction of difference predictable based on which approach is used – similar proportions are classified as deprived by the enforced lack threshold and not by the any lack threshold, as are vice versa.

Table A4: Classifications of children by enforced lacks and all lacks thresholds (%)

| | | All lacks (4+ threshold) | |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|----------|
| | | Not deprived | Deprived |
| Enforced lack (2+ threshold) | Not deprived | 63 | 8 |
| | Deprived | 7 | 21 |
| | | All lacks (5+ threshold) | |
| | | Not deprived | Deprived |
| Enforced lack (3+ threshold) | Not deprived | 74 | 6 |
| | Deprived | 5 | 15 |

As a further check whether the different approaches result in fundamentally different kinds of children being categorised as deprived, logistic regressions examining associations between demographic characteristics and deprivation were run on each of the four classifications. Overall, associations were few and were in similar directions.

- Household employment status and the child's age retained significant links to deprivation when enforced lack definitions were used, but not when all kinds of lack were counted.
- Differences based on family type were few and were not consistent across the different types of measure, perhaps suggesting noise in the data rather than genuine differences based on how deprivation is counted.
- Differences based on ethnicity were not always consistent – for example black children were more likely to be deprived based on all lacks at the 4+ threshold, and enforced lacks at the 3+ threshold, but not based on the other thresholds. However, Pakistani/Bangladeshi children were more likely to be deprived when all lacks were counted, an association which was not statistically significant when only enforced lacks were included.
- Children in socially or privately rented accommodation were more likely to be deprived than children in owner-occupied accommodation irrespective of the method for calculating deprivation.

Results are shown in table A5.

Table A5: Logistic regressions examining risk factors for deprivation based on enforced and any lacks

| | | Enforced lack, 2+ threshold | All lacks, 4+ threshold | Enforced lack, 3+ threshold | All lacks, 5+ threshold |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | Odds | Odds | Odds | Odds |
| Household employment status | At least one adult works full time | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | At least one adult works part time (no FT) | 1.1 NS | 0.9 NS | 1.4 NS | 1.2 NS |
| | All adults workless or inactive | 2.0* | 1.5 NS | 2.1* | 1.4 NS |
| Family type | One adult, 1-2 children | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | One adult, 3+ children | 3.0* | 1.4 NS | 1.5 NS | 1.3 NS |
| | Two adults, 1-2 children | 0.8 NS | 0.8 NS | 0.8 NS | 0.7 NS |
| | Two adults, 3+ children | 1.4 NS | 1.3 NS | 1.3 NS | 1.1 NS |
| | Other | 0.5 NS | 0.5 NS | 0.3* | 0.5 NS |
| Age of child | 0-1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | 2-4 | 1.3 NS | 0.7 NS | 1.4 NS | 0.7 NS |
| | 5-10 | 2.6* | 0.9 NS | 2.6* | 1.0 NS |
| | 11-15 | 2.8* | 1.5 NS | 3.3* | 1.6 NS |
| | 16-17 | 2.4 NS | 1.6 NS | 2.6 NS | 2.3 NS |
| Ethnicity | White | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | Black | 1.7 NS | 2.1* | 2.3* | 1.8 NS |
| | Asian Indian | 0.5 NS | 1.7 NS | 0.2* | 1.7 NS |
| | Pakistani/Bangladeshi | 1.5 NS | 2.7* | 2.0 NS | 2.5* |
| | Other | 0.9 NS | 1.2 NS | 0.9 NS | 1.2 NS |
| Tenure | Owner | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | Social renter | 5.2* | 2.9* | 5.2* | 3.9* |
| | Private renter | 2.9* | 2.1* | 3.2* | 2.7* |
| | Other | 0.8 NS | 0.7 NS | 1.6 NS | N/A |

On the whole, the different methods for calculating deprivation require careful consideration, and must be informed by conceptual decisions and by the purposes of the research. However, no major differences appear to arise in analysis of the PSE data based on whether an enforced lack or any lack approach is used.

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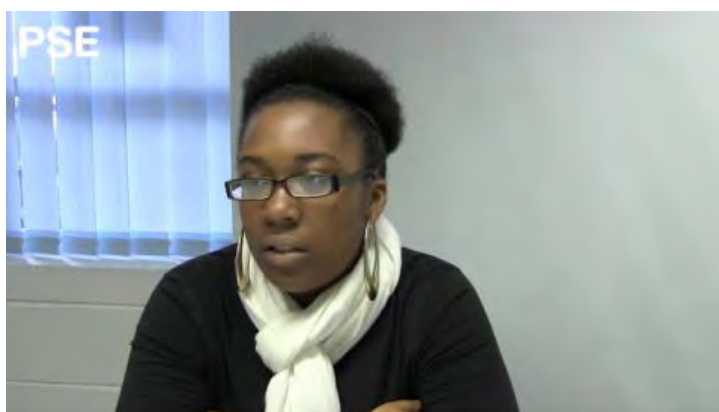
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Life on a low income in austere times

Author/s: Simon Pemberton, Eileen Sutton, Eldin Fahmy and Karen Bell

This report aims to document the reality of life on a low income during the recent recession and the beginnings of austerity, by affording primacy to the 'voices' of those living in poverty. It is based on 62 testimonies collected in 2012-2013 in Birmingham, Glasgow and Gloucestershire. Through these insights into the lived experience of poverty, the report explore poverty as a material phenomenon, including the deprivation of the necessities of life, as well as a relational phenomenon, that incorporates the related psycho-social impacts of life on a low income. It seeks to understand the ways in which the lived experience of poverty has changed as a result of recession/austerity and conversely, the ways that it remains constant. Watch the four films on '[Life on a low income in austere times](#)'.

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Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Life on a Low Income in Austere Times

Simon Pemberton, Eileen Sutton, Eldin Fahmy, Karen Bell

September 2014

Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Overview

The Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK Project is funded by the Economic, Science and Research Council (ESRC). The Project is a collaboration between the University of Bristol, University of Glasgow, Heriot Watt University, Open University, Queen's University (Belfast), University of York, the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The project commenced in April 2010 and will run for three-and-a-half years.

The primary purpose is to advance the 'state of the art' of the theory and practice of poverty and social exclusion measurement. In order to improve current measurement methodologies, the research will develop and repeat the 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey. This research will produce information of immediate and direct interest to policy makers, academics and the general public. It will provide a rigorous and detailed independent assessment on progress towards the UK Government's target of eradicating child poverty.

Objectives

This research has three main objectives:

- To improve the measurement of poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and standard of living
- To assess changes in poverty and social exclusion in the UK
- To conduct policy-relevant analyses of poverty and social exclusion

For more information and other papers in this series, visit www.poverty.ac.uk

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We are indebted to the participants who gave up their time and demonstrated considerable courage to openly discuss their lives and experiences. We hope this report and the short films that accompany it will powerfully and accurately reflect our participants' lives, struggles and achievements during the era of austerity.

Rationale, Scope and Aims

Following the ‘credit crunch’ 2007-2008, the UK entered the deepest recessionary conditions in living memory. As the liquidity from the financial services sector came to an abrupt halt, the investment ‘life blood’ of the economy in short supply, numerous companies, including long established high street businesses, ceased trading and consequently, unemployment rates rose to the highest levels since the 1980s. After the initial ‘bailout’ of the banking sector, political attention turned to the growing public deficit and the spectre of public sector austerity came to dominate the policy agenda. This agenda swiftly moved from how best to regulate the financial services industry to the question of the ‘welfare bill’ and the growing problem of ‘worklessness’. From this point, particularly as the Universal Credit Scheme passed through parliament and came to be implemented in various phases, much was said in political and policy debates about the lives of the ‘poor’ and many ‘common sense’ assumptions informed these discussions. However as is often the case, omitted from these discussions were the voices of those people living of low income.

To redress this imbalance, the report aims to document the reality of life on a low income during this period, by affording primacy to the ‘voices’ of those living in poverty. Given the relatively short timeframe that exists between the recession and initial phases of austerity to the present day, it is unsurprising that there is paucity of academic research mapping the lived experience of poverty through this time. However, there are a handful of academic studies published in the initial phases of the credit crunch and recession that begin to detail the experiences of those living on low income, yet little has been written academically in relation to austerity (Athwal, et al., 2011; Batty and Cole, 2010). Having said this the emergent ‘grey literature’ adds more to our understanding of the challenges that people face in relation to specific aspects of disadvantage, such as food poverty and fuel poverty (Cooper and Dumpleton, 2013). Significantly from this literature, a handful of notable studies have begun to document the initial consequences of the public spending cuts (O'hara, 2014). However, it remains that we know little in social science terms, about what it was like living through this period and how the experience of low income differed at this point in time and continues to do so.

‘Life on a Low Income in Austere Times’ sought to provide insights into the lived experience(s) of poverty during the recent recession and the initial throes of austerity and is based on 62 testimonies collected in 2012-2013 in Birmingham, Glasgow and Gloucestershire. In particular the report focuses on the specific features of this period, both political and economic, and how these came to be manifest in the experience of low income. In doing so, we have sought to explore poverty, as a material phenomenon, the deprivation of the necessities of life, as well as a relational phenomenon, that incorporates the related psycho-social impacts of life on a low income. The report draws on ‘what we already know’ about poverty and seeks to

understand the ways in which the lived experience of poverty has changed as a result of recession/austerity and conversely, the ways that it remains constant. Consequently, the report addresses three key themes and in doing so focuses on the following research questions:

Impoverishment: We seek to explore the ways in which the economic context and changing modes of welfare impact processes of impoverishment. Particular attention is paid to the roles of indebtedness, rising costs of living, increasing conditionality and joblessness have either reconfigured or intensified impoverishment.

1. What are the processes of impoverishment in the current context? How are these processes related?

Agency: Within this context, to develop an understanding of the coping strategies households have developed to manage meagre budgets and the constraints placed on these responses through rising prices, debt and the scaling back or loss of public/voluntary services.

2. What coping strategies have been deployed by those living on low incomes in response these processes of impoverishment? To what extent has the resilience of low income groups been compromised by external factors, such as cuts to services, reduction in benefits, the scarcity of credit? What are the emotional consequences of ‘coping’ or ‘resilience’?

Symbolic: In an increasingly hostile policy environment to examine the implications of political rhetoric and media coverage for low income groups, in particular to understand how the stigmas and instances of disrespect impact on individuals.

3. To what extent have the relational aspects of poverty and exclusion been reconfigured? Have these processes been intensified through political and social discourses, everyday interactions and attitudes of others towards those living on low incomes?

Whilst the data presented in this written report takes the form of anonymous quotations, 53 of the 62 participants provided video testimonies. The material collected from these video testimonies has been used to create [four short films](#) that accompany this written report. The use of video methods in academic poverty research is rare and is fraught with technological and ethical issues, yet we believe it offers additional benefits to traditional methods of presentation (Fahmy and Pemberton, 2012). First, video methods are potentially a more powerful means of conveying the lived reality of low income rather than textual and numeric accounts traditionally generated by poverty research. Thus, testimonies offer a means to engage the public and policy makers in the results of poverty research that have not existed to date. Second, whilst a great deal is said about poverty in public debates, the voices of those living on low incomes are rarely heard. Video testimony allows the ‘real experts’ on poverty,

people living on low incomes, an opportunity to voice their experiences and perspectives. Third, recent political and media discourses about poverty and welfare reforms have tended to present those living on low incomes in a negative manner. By presenting participants in video testimony, the immediacy and authenticity of these accounts can challenge popular stereotypes.

It is hoped that the written commentaries presented in this report provide further insights, depth and analysis to complement the vivid testimonies contained in these films. The report is divided into five parts. The first part outlines the research design, including data collection, sample and data analysis – ethical issues relating to the use of video testimony are also discussed. Part two examines the process of impoverishment, particular the pressures exerted through rising prices and falling incomes, and the sense of insecurity that this pressure has given rise to. Part three examines the lengths that our participants go in order to make ends meet; they are engaged in a perpetual struggle to make meagre budgets stretch and eventually this takes its toll on their lives. Part four investigates the ways that our participants are treated by others in mainstream society as a result of their financial status and the impacts these interactions have on their sense of self worth. The fifth and final part discusses the conclusions that can be drawn from the research. Principally we consider the ways in which the lived experience of poverty may have been reconfigured.

Research Design

The research design was informed by the research questions and aims outlined in the previous section. In particular, the research design sought to not only capture the uniformity of

experience amongst our participants, but to offer a range of insights from different social groups impacted by poverty in order to understand the potentially uneven impacts of austerity and recession on these groups. It is also important to note, that the research design does not purport to offer a definitive statement of the continuities and changes in the experience of poverty at this time, but is able to comment on the perception of these dynamics held by the research participants. With these caveats in mind, the research design is presented in four parts: data collection; sample; the consent process; and data analysis.

Data collection

Semi structured testimonies were conducted with sixty-two participants between 2012 and 2013. Each testimony followed a semi structured topic guide. The topic guide was informed by several stages of development. The first drew key themes in relation to the topics of impoverishment, coping strategies and the relational dimensions of poverty from a [literature review](#) of 102 qualitative studies of low income conducted by the authors (Pemberton, et al., 2013). The second, the formulation of questions, prompts and probes were informed by the topic guides of previous studies identified through the literature review. Finally, the topic guide was subject to expert review from members of the PSEUK research team who were not directly involved in this part of the research. Consequently amendments were made to the wording of existing questions and one further question added to the guide.

The final topic guide comprised of five sections (see Appendix One). First, participants were asked to give a biographical account that served to consider the key reasons for their current financial position, in doing so they were prompted to take into account the impacts of the recession, alongside any key life events that they chose to discuss. The second part, encouraged participants to document their day-to-day lives and the issues and challenges that they face in making ends meet. In the third part, participants were given an opportunity to discuss the ways they are perceived and treated by others and how this made them feel. Probes were developed that encouraged participants to identify and discuss particular incidents where they felt stigmatised, disrespected and so on. The fourth part offered participants an opportunity to discuss future plans and aspirations. Finally, participants were given the chance to comment on any issues that had not arisen during their testimonies.

The testimonies were collected in three distinct areas of the UK, in order to capture the potentially uneven and geographically varied impacts of austerity and recession that have shaped the lived reality of low income: Gloucestershire (sub-city with urban and rural centres), Glasgow (devolved policy-making, post-industrial city with high unemployment) and Birmingham (post-industrial city with high unemployment). Twenty-one interviews were carried out in Gloucester with participants from four community organizations providing support for vulnerable families, sheltered housing, debt advice, and neighbourhood support – including help for people living in rural areas. In Glasgow twenty-three participants were recruited from the six participating organizations, which included housing associations,

projects providing support and work shadowing for refugees and asylum seekers, information and support for one parent families, and the national anti-poverty network. Eighteen participants were interviewed from three organizations in Birmingham that were involved with working with people experiencing homelessness and alcohol misuse, preventing youth homelessness by providing accommodation and support services, and helping families to live healthier lives, develop skills and career opportunities and to access statutory support.

As indicated above, recruitment for the study was facilitated through community and voluntary organizations working with people living on a low income in the three fieldwork areas. Participating agencies were purposefully selected as they worked with specific social low income groups and were identified through existing databases, membership listings and other local information. These 'gatekeepers' were contacted by a member of the research team and sent further details about the project and fieldwork procedures (see Appendix Two). Written information about the project was then cascaded to potential candidates as well as an opportunity to discuss the parameters of their involvement with a member of the research team (see Appendix Three). As part of the recruitment process, participants were required to complete a recruitment questionnaire that collected basic demographic details, alongside information about their accommodation and income (see Appendix Four). Eligibility to take part in the study was determined through questions that determined the level of household income and/or the reliance on particular benefits.

Research sample

The data collection was drawn from a purposive heterogeneous sample, so designed in order to capture a variety of perspectives from different low income groups. Details of this sample are summarised in Table One. Sixty-two people made contributions to the study with fifty-three providing video testimonies and nine audio testimonies; of these participants thirty eight (61%) were female and twenty four male (39%). This gender imbalance reflects more generally the difficulties experienced in accessing and recruiting, in particular low paid male workers. In terms of age there is fairly even representation across the age categories used – however, difficulties were experienced with recruiting from 65+ age groups, which may be explained by the intensity of stigma attached to poverty for older people (Scharf, et al., 2002). Finally, in relation to ethnicity, the sample had representation across the minority British ethnic categories, with 15 (24%) participants drawn from non white British groups.

Through the recruitment survey participants also provided basic details on their material and social circumstances. In terms of net monthly household income 37% (23) of participants had an income of less than £500; 26% (16) between £501 and £750; 11% (7) between £751 and £1000; 19% (12) between £1001 and £1500; and just 2% (1) between £1501 and £2000 (3 participants did not complete the income question). Forty-four per cent of participants informed us that a member of their household was in receipt of Housing Benefit; 39% Council Tax Benefit; and 21% received Income Support. Job Seekers Allowance was received by 26%;

Working Tax Credit by 8% and Child Tax Credit by 31% - the same proportion receiving Child Benefit. Sixteen per cent were in receipt of State Retirement Pension and 8% Pension Credit. Disability Living Allowance was received by a member of the household for 18% of participants; 11% received Incapacity Benefit, but only 6% received Attendance Allowance.

Participants were asked about the kind of accommodation they lived in and how they occupied that accommodation. Twenty-nine per cent of participants lived in flats (less than 5 stories); 18% lived in semi-detached houses; 10% terraced houses; 10% in maisonettes; 5% in flats (5+ stories); 5% in bungalows; and just 3% in detached houses. The remaining 17% of participants lived in sheltered accommodation, hotels or supported housing, with one participant (recruited via the organization supporting refugees and asylum seekers) stating that they moved from “home to home”. The majority of participants (63%) were renting their accommodation from a Local Authority or Housing association; and 13% were renting privately. Just 10% of participants owned their home outright, or were paying for it by a mortgage/loan. The remaining 14% were living in supported or temporary accommodation.

The majority of participants (53) were inactive in terms of paid work for a variety of reasons: in full time education, full time carer, unemployed, long term ill, or they were retired. In total, 9 (14%) participants were in full or part time employment. It is not unusual to experience difficulties in recruitment of low paid workers; in the main due to issues of accessibility without obvious services or organisations that this population group draw on. Although it should be noted that a number of participants lived in households where their partner worked in the low paid sector, these participants were also able to offer insight into the phenomena of ‘in-work’ poverty.

Table 1: Sample Composition

| Location | | Glasgow | Gloucestershire | Birmingham | Total | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| Gender | Female | 12 | 17 | 9 | 38 | (61%) |
| | Male | 11 | 4 | 9 | 24 | (39%) |
| Age | 18-24 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 16 | (27%) |
| | 25-34 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 11 | (18%) |
| | 35-44 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 12 | (19%) |
| | 45-54 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 12 | (19%) |
| | 55-64 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 | (6%) |
| | 65-79 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 5 | (8%) |
| | 80+ | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | (3%) |
| Ethnicity | White British | 17 | 18 | 12 | 47 | (76%) |
| | E European | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | (2%) |
| | African | 4 | 2 | 0 | 6 | (10%) |
| | Afr Carib | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | (6%) |
| | Asian | 1 | | 3 | 4 | (6%) |
| Work Status | Full time | 3 | 0 | 4 | 7 | (11%) |
| | Part time | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | (3%) |
| | Inactive | 19 | 20 | 14 | 53 | (86%) |
| Hhold type | Single person | 14 | 7 | 12 | 33 | (53%) |
| | Couple no child u18 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | (6%) |
| | Couple child u18 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 6 | (9%) |
| | Single parent no child u18 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | (3%) |
| | Single parent child u18 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 15 | (24%) |
| | Other | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | (5%) |
| Total participants | | 23 | 21 | 18 | 62 | |

Consent process

A two stage consent process was designed to ensure participants had an opportunity to review their video testimony prior to public release. All participants prior to interview were provided with an 'Information Sheet' that detailed the aims of the project, the data that would be collected and the ways in which this information would be stored (see Appendix Three). In the first stage, participants who were providing video testimonies gave written consent via the study consent form for the testimonies to be collected and analysed by the research team, with the explicit understanding that they would be offered an opportunity to view and withdraw any video material selected by the research team in a follow up meeting (see Appendix Five).

Following the initial analysis and coding of the video material by the research team, footage selected for future use in the dissemination of the project findings was returned to the participants. Footage deemed to be harmful to third parties or to the participants was removed prior to the follow up visits. Participants were re-contacted via the recruiting organizations and invited to view the selected clips from their interview. This gave participants the opportunity to retract any sections of the recording that they were not comfortable with, so that they could be deleted in their presence. Participants then completed a final consent form which offered them the opportunity to identify the ways in which their footage could be used (i.e. academic publication; project website, reports to policymakers etc.) (see Appendix Six). The research team were able to make contact with forty-two of the fifty-three participants who provided video testimonies. These participants all viewed their edited clips, with only two participants opting to retract specific clips that they deemed too sensitive. Data collected from the remaining eleven participants and that were not viewed by the contributing participant, appear as anonymous quotations in this report and future publications.

Data Analysis

All video and audio testimony were uploaded into the Atlas TI CADAQS package and analysed using a thematic framework approach (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). A coding frame was developed initially from the themes identified in the literature review and organised into codes and sub codes (Pemberton et al., 2013). It should be noted that the findings of the literature review, which comprised of – albeit with a few exceptions – studies conducted prior to the recession acted as a resource against which analytical comparison could be drawn between pre and post recession experiences. Through the initial coding process, a number of coding categories were amended and removed, as well as others added in particular in relation to the recession (e.g. rising prices; falling incomes; removal of services; intensification of stigma). Following the initial coding process, descriptive summaries of the coding categories were produced, as part of this process some codes were moved into different thematic categories (e.g. powerlessness, insecurity, anxiety and stress were moved from the relational category into the impacts category). A deviant case approach was applied to identify participants who had divergent experiences and perspectives to the ‘majority’ of participants – so that the complexity of lived reality of low income in its varied manifestations could be captured as accurately as is ‘humanly’ possible. Finally, as part of the explanatory phase of analysis, connections between the themes, codes and sub codes were made to produce an overarching and holistic account of the lived reality of low income during this period. In the following sections we present a summary of this analysis that highlights the key findings in relation to the impacts of the recession and austerity on the lives of our participants

Impoverishment in Recessive and Austere Times

Before directly addressing the experiences of our participants in relation to the recession and austerity, it is important to provide some context to these experiences. All participants were asked to detail their personal biographies and in particular to explain which events in their lives most significantly impacted on their current financial situation. These discussions revealed the different trajectories and directions from which our participants enter this period from, thus they are located in contrasting 'vantage points'. All of the participants, with the exception of one, have some experience of either full or part time paid work and many have extensive work histories, almost predominantly in low paid jobs, with a few having worked in relatively well paid skilled manual or clerical jobs. The majority of our participants entered into the recession without work, due to a host of reasons but principally life limiting illness, disability or caring roles; with relatively fewer losing their jobs as a direct result of the recession or the subsequent public spending cuts. This is perhaps unsurprising given the sampling method used, recruiting from voluntary organisations and community groups that work with low income groups. Therefore our sample does not necessarily capture those who have had a dramatic descent into low income, as a result of job loss, house repossession or indebtedness precipitated by the credit crunch. Our sample, consequently, is in the main comprised of participants who were already on the margins, in so far as they were reliant on benefits or worked within low wage jobs – and are likely to have oscillated at various points just above and below the poverty line. Therefore the insights offered from these testimonies reflect these experiences and standpoints. Ultimately, they are well positioned to comment and provide insights into the changes and continuities within the lived experience of low income and the key impacts of austerity and the recession.

The Rising Cost of Living

Life on a low income demands a detailed knowledge of the cost of basic goods and services and our participants were acutely aware of rising prices – as with other studies carried out during this period (Athwal, et al., 2011; Batty and Cole, 2010). Therefore a recurring theme in the testimonies we collected was the impact on already fragile household budgets of the rising cost of living. Without exception participants acknowledged the pressure that was exacted on these budgets through the increases in prices for essential items, basic foodstuffs and in particular fuel. Existing on meagre weekly budgets means that participants are not only more likely to be impacted by rises in such basic items but the cumulative impact of these rises across a number of items represents a significant exogenous shock to household budgets:

'A can of beans when I came in 2007 cost 14 pence, now it costs 33 pence. It has more than doubled in five years...Nothing goes down...'

(Unemployed, Male, Glasgow)

'The cost of living in general has gone up. Obviously fuel...that has had a big impact because I can't afford to heat my home sometimes. We have had times where we have had to sit with no heat, because that's how bad things are. In general it is pretty tough because of what is happening out there and you just can't seem to get by.'

(Lone Parent, Female, Birmingham)

'A lot of things have got worse out there, the prices of things have gone up. Everything is just diabolical. Bus fares have gone up, if it wasn't for these paying for my bus pass, I wouldn't be going anywhere. Food has gone up. It is a bad day when I have to go up there at 10 o'clock before the shops shut every night to get the cut price food that is about to go out of date. I have to go to the pound shops and a lot of people have to, because everything is so dear.' (69:7 103-106)

(Unemployed, Male, Gloucestershire)

As the above quotes highlight the rising cost of living presents households with stark budgetary choices, often referred to as 'heat or eat' – which will be explored more fully in the next section. The pressures created by rising prices have been compounded by a corresponding fall or stagnation in the value of benefits and wages:

'Things have always been hard, but since January of this year, it has not been hard it has been impossible, absolutely impossible, I don't know how people survive...it's all benefits, the money has stayed the same, but the cost of living has gone out of the roof.'

(Lone parent, Female, Birmingham)

'Fuel goes up constantly, about 6 months ago it was going up every couple of days when I was going in the garage, our fares don't go up, they stay the same, they go up every three years...maybe 5 years ago, I was clearing £400, £500 a week, now I am down to £200 now.' (Low wage worker, Male, Glasgow)

'Food has gone up, I remember you used to be able to get a tin of corned beef for 95p, and now it has gone up to £1.89. Prices are going up and up, we are struggling to get what we need to get, we are surviving by just keeping our heads above water...My income, they are taking money out of my income, so it is going down...'

(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

For many participants, this created a sense of endless and unremitting pressure that has been brought to bear on household budgets, necessitating seemingly never-ending set of decisions to go without or to cut back on areas of often essential expenditure – to which we return in the following section.

Cuts to Services

Despite testimonies being collected in the initial throes of austerity, the impacts of public funding cuts to services were already felt by our participants. For our participants, many of whom are heavily reliant on services, it was commonplace for them to refer to the reductions in both the level and quality of services they access. Many of our participants made use of the services offered by voluntary sector organisations, it is these services in particular that they

observed that had been forced to reduce their activities to a core set of functions, meaning that additional educational courses or advice services were being removed or had already disappeared. Testimonies articulated a picture of contracting provision; it was exceptional that they reported the withdrawal of entire services:

‘With the CAB, its opening times round by us...a lot of the services have gone down.’
(Long term ill, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘I have noticed that they are struggling a lot here, it has not affected me, because they are not letting it affect the clients...’
(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘They are crucial to a number of people, it is quiet today, but you wait to 12 o’clock and this place will be packed...you get a lot of that here, the sorts of things you used to be able to do but can’t anymore because of the funding...but they do their best.’
(Unemployed, Male, Birmingham)

‘Some of them have closed...I remember that we had a law centre in the city centre...there you could get immigration advice, absolutely free...I know that three months ago this service shut’.
(Part time low wage worker, Female, Glasgow)

A number of our participants observed the pressures created by the increasing numbers of people resorting to these services and in particular those experiencing acute hardship accessing ‘emergency’ services. As demand rises and services close, these pressures have become greater for those remaining services:

‘There are quite a few places that went...like the Salvation Army, you get could a few clothes or something to eat if you were stuck...Birmingham City Mission, opposite the law courts where you could get a meal...that went a few months ago...there are quite a few that have gone recently...In here now, the one day there were 160 that came here at dinner time just for something to eat, and they really struggled.’
(Unemployed, Male, Birmingham)

Participants acknowledged the very fragile nature of many voluntary sector services that continued despite the scarcity of resources largely to the dedication and ingenuity of the staff delivering them. However, many were unsure about how long these situations could be sustained – this caused our participants a great deal of anxiety about the future.

Our participants identified the many ways in which services provided relief and support. In the most basic terms, as prices of basic items have risen, many voluntary services have stepped in to provide ‘crisis packages’ of basic foodstuffs and toiletries or meals at points of acute need. But they also provide opportunities to meet others and for people to create and sustain social networks that offer support and companionship which are often deleteriously impacted by low income. Indeed it is these friendships that for many groups, particularly lone parents and older people counteract the marginalising impacts of poverty:

‘It did effect this place, because we didn’t know if it was going to close down...for some of the mums, they class this as their second home...because you can sit down and relax, your children

can make friends with the other children, you can have an adult conversation you're not talking to your own children all the time, there is always someone you can talk to...whenever one of us has a problem there is always someone to help...it is an emotional service.'

(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

Moreover, voluntary services provide an important role in advising low income households to realise their entitlements to benefits and services, as well as enhancing personal development through courses and pastoral support that facilitates many in the return to paid work:

'We have lost an advice worker, we lost him. The cuts have hit everybody. It has had a big impact, because for people like myself, wondering who we can go to and what we can do and all that...'

(Unemployed, Female, Gloucestershire)

'We used to have Connexions almost all over Birmingham, but the last one, I am not sure it is there anymore, was in Five Ways, Broad Street. I was seeing in several different ways that Connexions was helping people, like straight from after school and now they are no longer there anymore, that leaves a lot of young people out there not knowing where to go, because when you leave school to be honest not a lot of young people know what the next step should be...'

(Young Unemployed, Female, Birmingham)

Work

With the exception of one participant, all participants had work histories – these were often extensive. However, many participants found themselves in a cycle of 'no pay, low pay' (Shildrick, et al., 2012), with fewer having fallen out of relatively well paid skilled manual labour or clerical work, as a result of illness, deindustrialisation or to raise a family and were looking to return to work. For many of our participants, they have at various points from 2008 onwards been engaged in job searches and therefore, have direct experience of the difficulties associated with finding paid work during this period. A common experience for those seeking work, was the fierce competition they encountered for low paid work – with a number of participants observing that they were competing against university graduates for the same positions. It was common for participants to apply for numerous positions in a week, often without receiving responses from potential employers:

'When I first lost my job it did, I didn't even get an interview, I was on jobseekers allowance for about seven months, I applied for about 16 jobs a week and I had one interview actually and that was it...but then it was confirmed I was pregnant and I went over to income support, it wasn't great, it was very depressing.'

(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

'The lack of work, because it is the recession and a change of government, no-one wants to hire young people, because they don't have the experience and they will show up and not do anything...I have applied for so many jobs and no-one has bothered, no-one has the decency to say 'sorry this time round'... This year, I have applied for 50 positions...cleaning, retail, any job I see in a window I go in and apply...it is just about getting that job.'

(Young Unemployed, Male, Birmingham)

For those participants, who held full time employment, competition for jobs had frustrated their attempts to escape low paid and insecure work they found themselves in. Thus, the ability to move up the ‘career’ ladder into more secure, better paid work, with improved conditions was not a realistic possibility:

‘The company I left, before I came to this one. I tried to get a job, I phoned up about a job it was just a delivery driver, it was just in the Job Centre the day before and I rang up and said to the boy, ‘how many applicants have you got in’ and he said ‘only 150 so far’, in one day do you know what I mean! There is no absolutely no chance getting a job you know, especially when you have done the same job for 12 years...’

(Low wage worker, Male, Glasgow)

Given the level of competition for jobs and the position that most employers find themselves in, being able to choose between numerous applicants – those who are already vulnerable within the labour market, with criminal convictions, interrupted work histories, young people with little experience - have unsurprisingly struggled to secure full time paid work. For many excluded from the labour market, the transition back into work is often frustrated by the inflexible nature of the labour market and the form paid work takes. Therefore for those participants with long term health problems, disability, drug and alcohol addiction the contemporary labour market is often unable to provide work that is suited to their individuals needs (Flaherty, 2008a; Scharf, et al., 2002). Moreover, as identified in previous studies (Crisp, et al., 2009; Gloster, et al., 2010), for parents, particularly lone parents the lack of flexible working arrangements, combined with the expense of childcare resulted in their continued exclusion from paid work:

‘They are like (the Job Centre), ‘there are jobs there with full hours’, that is no good to me, because I am on my own with the three boys...there are nae jobs there with the hours that you need, I have just got to watch because of the wee one... I cannae it has got to be part time.’

(10:12 202_101)

(Lone parent, Female, Glasgow)

‘There is an idealism, come and get into work, get into work, get into work... but we are not going to help you with childcare, so you are going to get nothing’ (14:9 202_104)

(Low wage worker, Male, Glasgow)

Perhaps more fundamentally, the most significant obstacle for re-entry in to the labour market are the current wage levels, with many participants suggesting that low waged work does not pay a ‘living wage’ (Crisp, et al., 2009; Fletcher, et al., 2008). A ‘living wage’ for many participants means one that is capable of meeting the costs of private rented accommodation, rising food prices, rising heating costs and transport. Thus many participants who are unemployed and actively seeking work reported being forced to calculate whether they could afford to return to work, by comparing the loss of income from social security payments, housing benefit, council tax discount and so on with the wage offered:

‘That is what frightens me, if I work it has got to be sustainable, it has to be enough that I can pay for everything...you need a proper living wage, a real one’. (Part time worker, Female, Gloucestershire)

'I have to make sure the job I am applying for, the money isn't less than I am getting from benefits, I have to make sure it is more than the benefits that I am receiving...'
(Young Unemployed, Male, Glasgow)

'I have gone out and looked for work, but the money that they are offering would just throw me into debt, it wouldn't cover my rent is £450 a month, that is just my rent, the water people they want £1000 a year, council tax whatever that is, and we haven't started living yet, at the moment as we speak my gas is £600 a year, because it is £50 a month, the same as my electric. (Lone Parent, Female, Birmingham)

'Either the money is too low, too low for me to survive on, or they are temporary, or they are out of Gloucester... There are loads out of Gloucester...you want one in your area, so yes I am being flexible, when I say I will travel 10 miles from where I live, but if it is upto 10 miles from where I live, the money has got to match it. I have seen a job in Cheltenham, which is right up my street, only two days a week... and when I weighed it up for the pro rata money, I thought 'no, it is not going to be worth my while'...because of the travel costs...so these are the deciding factors'.
(Part time worker, Female, Gloucestershire)

Whilst many of our participants expressed an overwhelming desire to return to paid work; they also feared the financial consequences. The transition from benefits to paid work represents a risk with dire consequences for those with meagre household budgets, benefits become a 'life raft' to which individuals cling (Daly and Leonard, 2002). The perception of risk is heightened and substantiated by the difficult experiences of insecure low paid work that many of our participants held.

Summary: Insecure Lives

Life on a low income inevitably is precarious; without sufficient income it is difficult for individuals to assert control over important aspects of their lives. Yet, living through recession and the initial phase of austerity has only served to heighten these feelings. A pervasive sense of insecurity was without exception a recurrent theme amongst participant's testimonies. These anxieties could be directly linked to material features of the recession and austerity, with participants increasingly required to operate on the finest of financial margins due to the rising cost of living and falling incomes, meaning that there is little opportunity to build 'contingency' funds to deal with unexpected expenses. The precarious financial situations that our participants find themselves in are further exacerbated by the removal of services that they once could rely on for support and advice. For those reliant on benefits, the threat of sanctions and re-assessment, combined with the political rhetoric and reforms to the social security system was a constant source of anxiety and uncertainty. Similarly, for those in low paid work, the temporary nature of this work, and in particular for those on 'zero hours' contracts contributed to the sense of insecurity that dominated their lives. As one participant remarked '*security isn't being gradually taken, it is being ripped away...*' (Low Paid Worker, Male, Glasgow).

‘Making Ends Meet’: Coping strategies in austere times

The previous section identified the pressure points that have been brought to bear on those living on low income, as a result of rising costs, falling incomes and cuts to services. With this context in mind, in the following section we seek to understand the ‘coping strategies’ that are deployed to make meagre budgets stretch as far as possible, with a specific focus on the ways that recession and austerity have hampered these strategies. Naturally, our discussion focuses in the main on the financial decisions people are forced to make in relation to expenditure and household resources, however, we also note the importance of networks, as well as emotional resources that are deployed to deal with life on a low income. Thus, ‘coping strategies’ are viewed here not simply as ‘getting by’ financially but as a means to deal with the emotional strains exerted by low income. The discussion of ‘coping strategies’ is somewhat stylistically presented in a linear fashion to best convey the processes of financial decision making, yet social reality is more complex and messy than this, where possible these complexities are acknowledged. Moreover, it is important to remember that our participants have very different life histories and trajectories into low income, and, consequently for some of our participants’ particular budgetary strategies are simply not an option for them. Therefore, we seek to draw out some of these commonalities, whilst noting divergence in resources and social capital that influence the ‘coping strategies’ selected.

Budgetary strategies

We found very little that differed from previous research in terms of the kinds of budgeting strategies that our participants deployed to ‘get by’, for example ‘bill juggling’, ‘minimising expenditure’, ‘going without’ were all commonplace (Flaherty, 2008b; Kempson, 1996; Kempson, et al., 1994; Saunders, et al., 2006). What is striking about our findings are the extent to which people are ‘cutting back’ and ‘going without’ some of the most basic items in order to make ends meet. Moreover, we also highlight the ways in which these strategies have been frustrated by the meagre budgets people are required to manage, the removal of services and the lack of crisis loans to offer assistance at points of unexpected or unavoidable expense.

As with previous research, the testimonies revealed that some people are better than others at managing their finances, however, living on a low income necessitates ‘financial literacy’ in ways that those living on higher incomes are not required to demonstrate (Kempson, 1996). Thus, the testimonies of our participants demonstrate the inventive and strict financial management that is required to live on a low income. Participants were often able to recount forensically the prices of basic goods and the expenses they incur down to the exact penny.

Quite simply, life on a low income necessitates adept financial management and restraint, otherwise the consequences are severe.

Participants demonstrated a variety of ways to manage their income and expenditure. Some reported fastidiously documenting expenses; whilst others allotted particular sources of income to specific expenditure (e.g. income support to food shopping, child tax credit to bills). However, a number of participants reported that the meagre and uncertain nature of their incomes means that 'planning ahead' is not possible, instead they are forced to exist from 'day to day':

'I don't go to big supermarkets anymore...Mostly, I get it a day or two days at a time, but I am eating meals that I shouldn't be...I am going into shops and I am looking at prices and I can't afford that.' (Long term ill, Male, Glasgow)

'I go to the local shop, where they have the cheapest offers on and that is how I live, I do not have the money to do a bulk buy, I literally live for the day' (Retired, Male, Glasgow)

To put this into context, it was commonplace for participants with children to report after bills having £40 a week to spend on food shopping, with single participants reporting having £10 a week remaining to buy food. This means that for many of our participants, 'there is no slack' in weekly budgets, nor room for error or the ability to plan ahead. Living from 'day to day' made many feel as if their lives were unnecessarily chaotic and out of control, yet they had little choice to do anything other than exist on this short term basis.

Minimising expenditure

Many of our participants referred to striving to reduce all forms of expenditure to the 'bare minimum' or the 'basic necessities'. The 'bare minimum' often equated to those necessities that were required for effective physiological functioning. Therefore, in many cases expenditure was reduced to a point where it could not be cut any further:

'I can't minimise them anymore (expenses) than I have. I very rarely buy clothes because I can't afford them. Food, is a bare minimum, I live on my own anyway, so I have a roll in the morning and a meal at night. My living costs aren't that dear, £140 that takes in gas and electricity and that sort of thing, so my outlay from my wages is for a meal and a roll in the morning.'
(Low Paid Worker, Male, Glasgow)

Many participants described themselves as a 'bargain hunter' or admitted to 'shopping around' for the cheapest items, more often than not relying on discount or charity shops. This necessarily involves going to great lengths to minimise expenditure. In the supermarket, participants talked about buying the 'cheapest brands', buying food that is reduced as it is about to go out of date, or waiting for 'two for one' deals. At various points, for a number of our participants even deploying these strategies, they still could not afford to buy food and they were forced to rely on food packages from food banks or community organisations. Few participants were able to spend on leisure activities, in particular parents reported having to

be inventive to ‘entertain’ the children, using public amenities to organise activities that incur minimal or no costs at all:

‘I always have to go for cheap options...I have an Asda club card and collect the points. I tend to go when they are doing a sale...sometimes they do buy one get one free and I will get a lot. I go when they do the promotions...’
(Unemployed, Male, Glasgow)

‘I shop differently, I buy supermarket own brands rather than brands, if things are reduced because they are on their sell buy dates and put them in my freezer (Unemployed, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘I buy my clothes from a second hand shop, because I can’t go out and buy new clothes, because everything is too dear’
(Unemployed, Male, Gloucestershire)

‘Taking the Kids out and stuff, I have been just, when it was warm, getting the paddling pool out and picnics outside, I either take them to the park with their bikes and take a picnic, going for long walks, instead of going to places that cost, which we can’t do because we haven’t got the money. I just alternate doing these things.’ (Working family, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘I do go to car boots and I do buy them presents if I have got extra money at the car boots, and put them away for their birthdays’. (Working family, Female, Gloucestershire)

A further aspect of minimising expenditure is cutting out or reducing waste to the bare minimum. Participants talked about having to ensure they do not throw food away, making sure they turn lights off or not heating rooms that are unused:

‘We make sure there is no waste, we don’t waste anything...’
(Retired, Male, Gloucestershire)

‘I tend to go for things in tins because they have got a long life on them. Otherwise I buy things that if I don’t use, then they go in the bin. They installed the gas central heating four or five weeks ago, and since then I have only switched it on once’
(Long term ill, Male, Gloucestershire)

‘The electricity...You make sure that every switch is off in the house. Energy saving bulbs... For one, if I leave the house, it is very unlikely that I will forget to switch a light-switch off, because I have got so use to saving the electricity... Say travel, I will pick out how I buy my bus pass on the days, to make sure I am not wasting any days’
(Young Unemployed Female, Birmingham)

From the testimonies we collected, it is clear that minimising expenditure requires organisation and planning. This includes fastidiously collecting supermarket ‘loyalty points’, retaining receipts that have discounts off future purchases, waiting to buy from the supermarket when the discounted food is on display or buying birthday presents from car boots in advance of Christmas or a birthday.

Going Without

Without exception participants reported having to go without things that others in society take for granted in order to ‘make ends meet’. Participant’s testimonies illustrate the real choices that present themselves for those living on a low income today, particularly against a backdrop of rising food costs and energy prices and static/falling incomes. Many participants described the basic nature of the necessities that they went without, reporting that at specific times of the year they are forced to decide whether to ‘heat or eat’.

Testimonies revealed how difficult it is to maintain a healthy diet on a low income. Participants described being unable to afford to buy fresh food and for many the advice to ‘eat five portions of fresh fruit and vegetables a day’ was an aspiration they could not achieve. Instead they were reliant on frozen or tinned processed foods that were cheaper and kept for longer, minimising the potential for waste. For some participants with long standing health conditions that required a specific diet were unable to afford the foodstuffs necessary to manage these conditions:

‘I can’t buy the nice branded stuff...basic budget brands...I tend to go to Iceland a lot because they do a lot of things for a pound...it tends to end up being a lot of rubbish food, processed stuff, things I don’t want to be eating and things I don’t want my kids eating, but we have no choice really because it is cheaper’.

(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘They say you should eat 5 a day, I am lucky if eat two a day I will admit it, because everything is so dear in the shops today’.

(Unemployed Male, Gloucestershire)

‘I eat crap and I have caffeine to keep me going, that is very much the way it is on benefits’.

(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘With the health issue I have got, I need a special diet, I cannot afford to have that diet...’ (Lone Parent, Female, Birmingham)

It was not uncommon for participants to report routinely ‘going without’ a meal in the day, usually lunch in order to cut food expenditure maps onto the picture of food poverty detailed in other studies (Cooper and Dumbleton, 2013). A few participants suggested that they maintained their energy levels through the consumption of caffeinated energy drinks – which unsurprisingly had led to a series of adverse health consequences.

Many participants were unable to buy new clothes, for those who were able to buy clothes they were invariably reliant on budget brands, such as Primark or Asda, which they reported to be poor quality. In most cases, testimonies suggested that participants were reliant on family/friends ‘hand me downs’ or on buying clothing from charity shops. A number of participants went without shoes that were waterproof, as they were not able to afford replace shoes that had developed holes or splits. Therefore, these participants were forced to use carrier bags to line their shoes or reported avoiding going out when it was raining:

‘Clothes is a big thing, the kids are always growing and they need shoes and things, that is hard. So they go without that... they just have to make their other clothes last, although they may be short or tight, they have to make them last...’

(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘Simple things like clothing. I don’t buy new clothing, it comes from donations here or the charity shop’ (Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘Stupid things...I was walking around with my boots they had holes in them, so I had to put carrier bags in them, because I couldn’t get new ones.’ (Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

For some of our participants not being able to afford to present themselves in new clothes and maintain a level of appearance that they were comfortable with, served to erode their confidence in social situations and many reported this as a reason for not socialising.

For many, cutting back inevitably meant being unable to socialise or take part in ‘customary’ social events and activities, many participants were able to recount the few times in recent memory that they were able to afford to go out with friends and family. Whilst this was common across most social groups, lone parents in particular, reported the most severe examples with many not having been out socially for several years, due to the availability and costs of babysitting:

‘I don’t go out...the last time was probably eight years ago, that I went out socially’

(Lone Parent, Female, Birmingham)

‘..when you have no job and obviously you have very little money in your pocket it affects you in every field. When I was working I would go down the pub and have a couple of pints and a laugh with my mates. You would feel happy in the morning and you go to work. Now, I can’t do that anymore, so I have lost all of my mates. I can’t afford to go to the pub’.

(Unemployed Male, Birmingham)

‘I used to like going down the football, to watch the Villa, but I can’t do it on jobseekers. I need to keep away from thinking about going to watch the football and think about other stuff....and there are other things when my mates phone me up and ask whether I am going up Broad Street and I can’t afford it...I probably last went out 4 months ago’.

(Young Unemployed Male, Birmingham)

Being unable to go out socially made it difficult for our participants to sustain relationships, many reported a deterioration of the quality and frequency of social contacts as a consequence. Thus for a number of our participants, life on a low income is an isolating and lonely experience.

For those participants who were parents, many reported that their children went without items or activities that their peers took for granted. In fact many testimonies suggested that children went without toys or activities/hobbies that they felt were fundamental to their child’s cognitive and social development

‘I don’t get to take him to the cinema or out bowling or anything like that because I don’t have the money. Wilfie’s life is pretty much stuck in; we play games and things like that. But when

he hears what his friends have done, they have gone to the cinema last night or they have done this or that, it's like 'sorry son we cant'.
(Lone Parent, Female, Birmingham)

'My daughter has never been on holiday, in fact she has only had two day trips to Weston'
(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

Despite the fact that parents talked about the items/activities that their children went without, in order for them to have at least some of the toys or to participate in the hobbies that their peers take for granted, many parents reported 'going without' basic necessities:

'I will do myself without anything to give my wee'uns, because they are my wee'uns, they are my world'.
(Lone Parent, Female, Glasgow)

'I do make sure she doesn't go without. I go without everyday for my daughter, if it means me not buying something, so that she can have something...'
(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

'I don't eat in the day, so that I know that I have got enough money at the end of the week to buy food, my boy can eat all the time. I have dinner with him, because I can't not eat with him, it is not fair.' (Lone Parent, Female, Birmingham)

'I have been in the situation, where I have had only so much food that I can only feed my daughter for so many days and I have accounted for that, and I have thought 'well I can't because she will go without'...I have been in that situation, you know going without clothes, basic essentials, really personal essentials that I have needed. (Lone Parent, Female, Birmingham)

As the quotes above suggest parenting on a low income requires significant sacrifices that encompass often foregoing basic necessities, so that their children may have items or participate in activities that otherwise household budgets would not be able to meet.

Ultimately, to exist on the bare necessities, to constantly strive to minimise expenditure, takes self discipline. Many of our participants' testimonies made reference to the necessity of discipline and the struggle to avoid breaches of self restraint, as expressed in terms such as 'treating yourself' 'or 'buying yourself a luxury' that may compromise fragile budgets:

'I rarely go into town, and if I do go into town, I know what I am going for, I don't 'shop'...I know what I am getting and I won't get any more than that...I even ensure that I have the correct amount of money with me...I try to avoid having too much money on me... I am boringly disciplined, but you have to be, you can't afford to go out and fill the basket, you have to be sensible about it...' (Retired, Male, Glasgow)

'The bare minimum, you do have to budget and plan ahead a lot more, you can't buy things that you fancy buying in terms of food and you can't buy toiletries, the branded stuff that you would like. I think just getting to grips with the reality that you do just need to buy the bare minimum and only buy stuff when you need to buy it.' (186:8 303:104)

'Going without' is often a painful and difficult process. In order to manage going without items/activities that many within society take for granted, participant's testimonies reveal strategies, whether they are conscious or unconscious, that serve to mitigate or manage the

reality of going without. Most commonly, it is clear from these testimonies that participants shape their preferences and choices to match their financial circumstances – as identified in previous studies (Hill, et al., 2009; Scharf, et al., 2006). Thus, for some participants, particularly older people this involved some form of ‘denial’, when they claimed that they had ‘never wanted for anything’, despite the very basic nature of the items and activities that they went without and the regularity with which they went without them. For others, the fact that ‘going without’ had become a common and seemingly permanent feature of their lives led them to resolve themselves that it no longer affected them, with participants insisting they had ‘got used to it’. Similarly, some parents seemed to suggest that their children acknowledged and accepted the restrictions that low income imposed on their lives, often not requesting items/activities that they might ordinarily have done, with one parent remarking that her children ‘don’t know any different’ if they receive Christmas or birthday presents that are bought at a car boot sale, rather than new.

Unexpected or Unavoidable Costs

It is certainly the case that even the most carefully planned and managed household budgets are susceptible to exogenous shocks (Hill, et al., 2009; Naji and Griffiths, 1999). As our participants testimonies demonstrate an unanticipated expense, and not necessarily a large expense, can place already fragile budgets under extreme pressure. A number of participants identified instances where household finances were stretched to breaking point, particularly when vital household items required repair or needed to be replaced:

‘I like to be quite organised...I have everything written down (expenses)...obviously there are things that get in the way, like emergency things, like the washing machine breaks down or things like that, I don’t have anything to fall back on, I have to move it all around...maybe cut back on the food shopping.’ (Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘I am dreading the day my deep freeze packs up, I have had it 15 years and it does tend to ice up occasionally, they are not that expensive probably over £100 but you can’t guarantee it will break down when you can afford it.’ (Unemployed, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘Well I am struggling, different things have cropped up, my iron has packed up, I have got to find the money for a new iron...the digi-box is not working as it should, I have to get another digi-box for the telly’ (Unemployed, Male, Birmingham)

Participants’ testimonies not only referred to the difficulties of managing unanticipated expenses, but also highlighted the times of the year that placed greater pressure on their finances. Perhaps predictably Christmas was identified as a particular pressure point, but other points in the year bring additional expense included for example, friends/family birthdays, the beginning of the school year or the summer holidays:

‘My son is starting pre-school, so he is going to need a school uniform, so I will get cheap ones from Asda...My nephew is also going to senior school, so for example when we went for the induction day, I could only get one jumper because they were £20 a jumper, and you had to pay

£20 for a rugby shirt, I think it worked out as £65 for a tie, jumper and a rugby shirt...’ (Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘Every year, it comes to the summer and your expenses are more...because my children are at home and they want to go outside, go to the cinema and other things...’ (Unemployed Male, Glasgow)

‘It does get stretched at Christmas and Birthdays, special occasions, when I have got to fork out money...it can be a very tough time’ (Young Unemployed Male, Glasgow)

Inevitably managing unanticipated expenses or points of increased expenditure involved minimising expenditure in other areas and going without. For a few participants who had some slack in their weekly/fortnightly budgets, they were able to put aside small amounts of money in anticipation of periods of additional cost, such as Christmas or Birthdays. Yet for many participants this was not possible, so at points where pressure was exerted on budgets, they were required to find alternative sources of income, usually in the form of borrowing money.

Numerous testimonies made reference to borrowing money in order to make ends meet, to smooth out shortfalls when living expenses rise or unanticipated costs occur. Without exception high street bank lending is not an avenue open to our participants and therefore, none of our participants had access to lower cost commercial loans (Harris, et al., 2009; Stewart, 2010). Instead, where participants were unable to access ‘crisis’ loans – which many reported to be increasingly difficult to obtain – left with no other option but to turn to high cost forms of lending pay day lenders, catalogues, and Provident loans. Others if they had the opportunity would borrow from friends and family, although a number of participants observed that this had become increasingly difficult given the hardship experienced by others that they knew:

‘I went to Provident, high interest...to be honest most places are the same. I am lucky to have a loan being on benefits, a lot of loan companies with cheaper rates, when you are on benefits don’t want to know.’ (Lone parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘I have used a payday loan... I was quite impressed, it didn’t cost as much as I thought it would. Although, it was a large chunk out of my money when it was taken out...It was for my MOT.’ (Long term ill, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘I did try going to the social for a loan once and I got turned down, after that I struggle, I have to go into someone’s catalogue and buy a washing machine from there...it is all credit.’ (Retired, Female, Gloucestershire)

‘For the first 5 years of her life that is how we lived, it was like get a Provident loan and then pay that back, and then borrow from family until you get paid. Looking back it was a shambolic way to live your life, but obviously you don’t see it at the time, you are just trying to get by day by day you are not thinking about the big picture, the big picture is the last thing on your mind. Tarding money was a big part of my life’. (Low wage worker, Male, Glasgow)

'I borrow money from my mom... it is difficult...they said make sure you give it us back. They are struggling as much as I am struggling, my dad is working all hours god sends, he is doing night shifts, he is getting up at 4'o clock in the morning just to do the lorry driving, and coming back at half two in the afternoon and he is exhausted. He said that the money he is getting is not enough to cover the bills and fuel and everything, 'we are struggling as much as you'.
(Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

Borrowing money is a key coping strategy for those on low income to enable them to manage shortfalls in income and to meet unexpected expenses; yet, this period of time has seen low cost opportunities to borrow money – particularly through crisis loans and friends and family – reduce, whilst high interest forms of borrowing have proliferated to fill this void. Inevitably for some participants borrowing money solved one problem, whilst creating another when they had to meet repayments set with high interest rates. Testimonies revealed the 'vicious circle' that ensued from a cycle of borrowing and missed repayments:

'I take it to the red letter all the time. It has got to the point now, that I was so busy trying to juggle, it ended up that it wasn't happening and I was getting into more and more debt. I am now just starting a DAS scheme, right now, it is at the approval stage at the minute to get all the debt out the road...I am drowning... you pay that one you can't pay that one or if you pay that one you can't pay that one, that is just the way it goes on constantly...'
(Low wage worker, Male, Glasgow)

Summary: The constant struggle to 'make ends meet'

Life on a low income requires a constant energy to manage to make ends meet, as well as an emotional resilience to deal with the pressures it creates. Arguably, these pressures have only intensified as a result of the rising cost of living and the meagre household budgets our participants are expected to manage. Participant's testimonies gave a sense of steadily being worn down by the daily grind of life. Testimonies made reference to 'thinking' or 'worrying about' making ends meet. For many, life is perceived to be unrelenting, with many referring to their lives resembling a 'constant struggle' or 'battle'. Participants testimonies highlighted the continual sacrifices that are required to 'go without' coupled with the seemingly perpetual necessity for self-restraint and the perception that there is no 'respite'. This contributed to many of our participants feeling that they were living compromised lives that prevented them from realising their potential; that they were 'existing' rather than enjoying their lives:

'It's a struggle. It's an effort. I get up in the morning and it is the first thing I think of and I go to bed at night and it is the last thing I think of. That's the impact it has, it is difficult'. (Lone parent, Female, Birmingham)

'I am not really able to enjoy life, I am just living at the moment...life is for enjoying, this is the real thing, it is not a test run...and I am not having any fun.' (Lone Parent, Female, Birmingham)

'If you want a wee luxury, even if I am not working I deserve a wee luxury once in a while, everyone needs something to brighten you up, come Christmas time, at my daughter's birthday or granddaughter's, you want to give them a wee something, there is nothing better than giving

someone a present, nothing nicer, but when you have not got the money, or you are scratching around, it is hard.' (Long Term Ill, Male, Glasgow)

These pressures ultimately take their toll. Many of participants reported that their financial situations left them feeling 'stressed' or 'anxious' and that this culminated in a number reporting that they were suffering from depression for which they were prescribed antidepressants. As one of our participants succinctly summarised the deleterious impact of struggling to 'make ends meet' at this point in time:

'Sometimes I can pay my bills and sometimes I cannae, if I have got more than one bill to pay I panic and I don't know what I am doing. I have got tons of paperwork of hundreds of bills and I just seem to get myself into more debt... it all builds up and leads to insanity...People say money burns a hole in your pocket, I say it burns a hole in my head.' (Long term ill, Male, Glasgow)

Symbolic Injury: Stigma and Disrespect

Our participants' testimonies not only made reference to the material aspects of life on a low income, but also referred to the symbolic injury that they experienced in their daily lives. Participants identified the many disrespectful ways in which they are treated and talked to by others, as well as how they are portrayed by politicians and the media, as hurtful and humiliating. Testimonies referred to the many discourses and interactions that serve to stereotype and demarcate them as 'Other', and in so doing creating distance between them and those who have the means to participate in society (Lister, 2003). Again, these findings in one sense are unremarkable, as a growing number of poverty studies identify the stigmatising features of life on a low income (Beresford, et al., 1999; Hooper, et al., 2007; Naji and Griffiths, 1999), yet the testimonies of participants reveal the sense that 'things are getting worse'. More specifically that during this period, the fact that the 'welfare bill' and de facto 'welfare claimants' came to be seen as the definitive social problem of the era of austerity, only served to further heighten the stigma that surrounds 'poverty'. Thus, testimonies reflected on both the frequency and the corrosive nature of the pejorative rhetoric in political debates and how this impacted on the increasing instances of disrespect they encountered.

Stigma

Participants reported many aspects of life on a low income that they found to be stigmatising and made reference to the very 'normal' aspects of daily life that serve to distinguish them as 'other'. The inability to partake in the routine daily activities sets our participants apart from others that they meet. Participants made constant reference to not being able to 'fit in' as a consequence of being unable to afford the latest consumerist trends which play a fundamental part in the 'lifestyles' and 'consumerist identities' that are viewed to be the 'norm' in contemporary British society:

'my boy since he has started high school, he was like can I have this before I go back to school, they want all the designer stuff, I can't do it, the trousers I can get from Asda or whatever, but when it comes to the jacket or the shoes, they want the expensive stuff...I think he feels out of place, he has to conform to what everyone else is wearing, which I don't agree with at all, but obviously he is at that age...' (Low wage worker, Female, Glasgow)

'I don't really dress that nice, because I need the food for my boys, so I think I get treated different maybe because of the way I dress...' (Lone parent, Female, Glasgow)

Many participants' testimonies made reference to the stigma that attached to particular social groups such as lone parents, young people or the long term ill/disabled. Assumed membership of these groups carries pejorative connotations and participants reported feeling 'stereotyped' as a result:

'You always get looked on, 'oh she's a single parent on benefits, oh she is just having children so she can have benefits, or she is just doing it so she can get a council house'. People always look at the negative side of things. I never chose to be a single mom, it is just the way things happened...people still look at you as that stereotype 'oh, she is just a single mum on benefits' and I hate being stereotyped'. (Lone parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

'When you hear about young people, it is always negative, you are stereotyping every young person into one category where they are trouble makers... but it is not always the case, there are positive examples...' (Young Unemployed Male, Birmingham)

It is certainly the case that these group identities are compounded by the most stigmatising identity of all; 'benefit claimant'. Testimonies made frequent reference to the 'stigmas' that attach to claiming, in particular, means tested benefits, that infer recipients are 'lazy' or 'layabouts'. These 'stigmas' were most acutely felt in the act of claiming benefits and services, most commonly through interactions at the 'Job Centre':

'I noticed it the first time I went in the Job Centre. Here is me, a respectable married women and I felt like...I just felt like they thought I was a 'layabout'...' (Part time low wage worker, Gloucestershire)

'My experience of the Job Centre... I was put on the Work Programme and the advice I got there, I was basically told that 'I am one those people who don't want to work' straight to my face...' (Young Unemployed Male, Birmingham)

At this particular point in time, considerable public scrutiny came to be focused on those in receipt of sickness and disability benefits, which led a number of our participants to comment that felt as though they were viewed with greater suspicion by others:

'I think I was I quite lucky with my illness, although you can't see it, I have x rays and angiograms, that show people that 'Yes! He is ill, he may not look it, but inside he is ill'...but if I was getting on the bus with my bus pass you see people looking at you thinking 'another dodger'. Or, if you meet someone for the first time, they go 'what do you do for work? Oh no I am on the sick', they look at you and are thinking 'well lose a couple of pounds and you might be alright'. There is a stigma about being on the sick, if I only had one leg or something like that people would see it and think 'it is a shame the man cannot get a job'. But people are looking at me and think he is healthy enough, he should be working'. (Long term ill, Male, Glasgow)

As alluded to above, the 'stigmas' that surround low income are a complex interaction between everyday experiences - in the interpersonal interactions of our participants with others at work, in the street and in the Job Centre – and, wider societal discourses in political debates and media that promote a series of moral evaluations to frame pejorative social judgements. Testimonies made reference to the selective and distorted portrayal of life on a low income within political and media discourses. In particular, participants made reference to the 'sneering' tone that accompanied media portrayals of the 'poor':

'I think the channel 4 programme about the scheme, I think that was for the rich people to laugh at the underclass...they still follow up the stories in the Daily Record, the girl is pregnant again, the guy is back in jail. It is a circus.' (Long term ill, Male, Glasgow)

'Sometimes it is fine, they understand it is difficult, but their general perception of people, single mothers especially, because the general perception is that they want everything, trying to get an easy life on benefits.' (Lone parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

'When I became a single parent, it was always 'you're a single parent, you're a scrounger, you sit at home doing nothing'. That used to really get to me. We are not all the same...It used to make me feel like I wasn't worth anything...It was through the media, you would read things about it people would be judgmental because you're on benefits.' (Lone parent, Female, Birmingham)

Such testimonies reveal that our participants are not immune to the pejorative identities that media and political discourses ascribe to them – in fact, they were very conscious of the ways that they may be perceived by others. Participants went to great lengths to distance or disassociate themselves from the stereotypes that frame populist understandings of poverty, otherwise when internalised such stigmas can be painful and injurious for individuals sense of self worth.

Disrespect

Alongside 'stigma' participants testimonies revealed the varying instances of disrespect that they encountered in their daily lives. Testimonies made reference to the ways they are spoken and treated as citizens of 'unequal worth' (Lister, 2003). In contrast to the behaviours and groups that are heavily stigmatised, 'worth' in these interactions appears to be constructed through participation in paid work and contributions made as a 'taxpayer', as well as the ability to consume in the ways that are commonplace within mainstream society.

Participant testimonies revealed numerous examples of often painful interactions with friends and family or with strangers in public spaces, which range from a perception that they are being 'looked down on' through to extreme instances of direct verbal abuse:

'I have had it when out and about or going to different places, maybe meeting someone who considers themselves to be one or two rungs up the ladder of the class system...you can get people who work in shops or restaurants and they look at you like, 'what the hell are you doing in here? It's horrible.' (Low wage worker, Male, Glasgow)

'The church gave me a voucher so that I could do some food shopping. The women on the till looked at me as though I was disgusting'. (Lone Parent, Female, Birmingham)

'They look up and down you all the time... you see people coming out of a job, a working area, and you are walking down the road with your cheque and you are going to the post office or whatever and you see them look at you... you get abuse off kids in the street, 'oh your on the social'. (Unemployed Female, Gloucestershire)

'People think she is on benefits she will be alright. The guy who fitted my T.V. to the wall, charged me £70 even though he is my friend...I did try and say can you do it any cheaper, he said 'no sorry, I need it'. He said 'you are alright anyway, it is not your money anyway, it is benefits money, it is my tax money anyway'. (Lone parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

Similarly participants discussed varying instances of disrespect that they experience when claiming benefits and accessing services. Some participant's testimonies revealed extreme

forms of verbal abuse and bullying behaviours that they had either experienced themselves or had witnessed other claimants experience at the hands of those in authority:

‘I went to sign on when I was 16, when I lost my first job....It was an older man mid fifties, he called me ‘one of the wee fucking scumbags hanging around sponging off the social’ ...that was my first ever experience of the social at the time...for just giving my details...if you had a tracksuit or a cap that was you labeled straight away’ (Low wage worker, Male, Glasgow)

‘Everyone is treated like dirt at the employment agency...I have seen people treated with absolute contempt, because of the way they are dressed, but those people are homeless. I have seen people told that they have to go to a different office, miles away, when they are stood there trying to explain they have no mode of transport or bus fare, ‘but that is not our problem’. I have seen people bullied, and the worse thing is that you can’t even speak up because you’ll be next. It has been an education.’ (Lone parent, Male, Gloucestershire)

A more pervasive and common experience is the sense that our participants are being ‘processed’ through the social security system without real recognition of their situations and views. A number of participants made reference to being made to feel like ‘number’ rather than a ‘citizen’:

‘You are treated like shit, you are treated like dirt, they get their money at the end of the month, they do not care about you, you just sign on, you are just a number to them.’ (Unemployed Female, Gloucestershire)

‘There was some work being done on the front of my building and they were paying me by giro cheque at the time...This particular giro hadn’t turned up, what I hadn’t realised was they hadn’t been able to access the door. So I phoned up and told them it hasn’t come and would they like to cancel it. The next day it came...bearing in mind it was nine days late and I was on my arse. I thought what I will do is take it to the office and walk into town, I will take the baby in the pram, she is 6 months old. I took it to the guy on the desk, he took the giro cheque, I asked if there was any chance they could arrange payment that day, he kept me all day waiting and said ‘you won’t be able to cash your cheque today, because we didn’t send an email and so on’, I said ‘but it has been ten days, I need to buy baby milk’...but do you know what he really enjoyed that’. (Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

It should be noted that whilst the testimonies of our participants revealed disrespect to be a near universal experience, a few participants discussed more positive experiences. These participants perceived that they presented themselves in a very different way to other claimants, in particular that they attempted to be ‘professional’ in their dealings with Job Centre staff. Such an approach requires confidence and self believe that many of our participants suggested that they lacked.

Dissolving Empathy: The intensification of stigma and disrespect

It is difficult to state with any certainty whether or not during the era of recession and austerity that the stigmatising features of life on a low income or instances of disrespect have worsened. However, it is certainly the case that it is the perception of our participants that the stigmas relating to poverty and the disrespect they have experienced intensified as a result of this period – a claim given greater credibility by similar findings in previous studies (Baumberg, et al., 2012). The testimonies of our participants alluded to a ‘perfect storm’,

whereby the pejorative images and stigmatising features that circulate not only in the news media, but also on ‘entertainment’ television shows such as the ‘Secret Millionaire’, ‘Wife Swap’ and ‘Jeremy Kyle’ combined with the tone of the political debates at this time around the introduction of Universal Credit and the ‘Bedroom Tax’, had filtered into the public conscience and impacted their daily lives. Some of our participants noted that this coverage and these debates appeared to give ‘licence’ or ‘permission’ for those within mainstream society to ‘hate’ or ‘denigrate’ the ‘lifestyles’ of those living on low income:

‘It has got worse, you can tell it has got worse...because of the recession, because of the media, they make things so out of context...they focus so much on the ‘lazy’ people, they do not show the positive outcomes...’ (Low paid worker, Male, Birmingham)

‘I think it is gradually getting worse and worse. For example, the Universal Credit and stuff coming in, it has given the public who don’t understand the benefits system the pedestal to say ‘oh look they are finally capping this because of how much people are sponging’... Some media voices or outlets are using that and that is already giving some people the soap box to say ‘they are finally doing something’... I think that is changing the way people talk about it and making it worse. (Low wage worker, Female, Birmingham)

‘The way society looks at it if you are on certain benefits or on a low income, you are not as equal to everyone else. You are put into a category, that person is on benefits, so the moment you walk through the Job Centre door, they don’t have to respect you...’ (Young Unemployed Female, Birmingham)

More specifically, the ‘workers vs the shirkers’ rhetoric that has dominated media coverage of issues relating to low income and political debates surrounding Universal Credit has entered the lexicon of daily life. Many of our participants’ testimonies referred to instances of verbal abuse that they were subject to, which appear to be framed by this rhetoric with reference to ‘taxpayers’ paying for the benefits that our participants receive. Some participants referred to the divisive nature of this rhetoric, serving to exacerbate existing fault lines within their own communities that they had personally observed:

‘It has got really bad. Some neighbours opposite they are in exactly the same situation as you are, but they still stick their nose up at you. You are just fighting a dead battle... It has got worse, it has got really bad now, wherever you go now you hear people say look at these ‘dole bums’...’ (Unemployed Female, Gloucestershire)

Our participant’s testimonies reveal a sense that the empathy demonstrated for those living on low income is being rapidly eroded – and that this contributes to the increasing levels of disrespect they experience. Many participants perceived the growing levels of inequality to further detach the ‘haves’ from the reality of the lives of those on a low income. This detachment, as our participants perceive it, has seen understanding for the struggles and challenges faced by those living on a low income dissipate:

‘This is how the other half live, I would like to get one of these people and just say ‘look, this is how the other half live’. I don’t think they would last a day. They don’t realise what is happening in the real world. They are in a little world of their own.’ (Unemployed Male, Gloucestershire)

'They don't realise that some people are actually starving themselves because they have no money.' (Young Unemployed Female, Gloucestershire)

'It depends on the individual...some don't appreciate what they have got, they do take it for granted...They don't realise how bad it is for some people on low income, they think that these people get by, that they manage. It seems to me that they do not think too much about it, I think they think that 'I am ok' sort of thing...not everyone is the same, it is just in general that is the impression I have had from people'. (Lone Parent, Birmingham, Female)

Thus individualisation from the point of view of our participants, means that mainstream society becomes focused on their own lives and concern for others has steadily evaporated and is replaced with an indifference towards the plight of the 'poor'.

Summary: The emotional injuries of life on a low income

The stigma and disrespect endured by our participants were internalised resulting in a variety of emotional injuries. Perhaps the most insidious feature of stigma and disrespect is that people on low incomes are made to feel they are to blame for the situations in which they find themselves. Almost universally, our participants expressed the 'shame' they experience as result of not being able to fulfil the social expectations that attach to particular roles, such as parent, partner or sibling. Moreover, testimonies demonstrated the palpable emotional 'pain' felt through the 'embarrassment' that results from ordinary day to day encounters when shopping, when out with friends or at family occasions:

'I do get embarrassed, because half way through I always have to say to the check-out lady, 'can you tell how much it is?'. That is quite embarrassing. I have had to put a couple of things back, that is really embarrassing, because I have not had enough in the bank. But I tend not to make eye contact when I know that I am going to get embarrassed, I tend to look elsewhere and keep my head down, I am not looking at their facial expression.' (Lone Parent, Female, Gloucestershire)

In order to manage the injury caused by embarrassment, many of our participants withdrew from social networks to avoid having to admit publically that they could not afford to participate in particular activities - this serves to further marginalise and isolate those living on low incomes.

Many participants talked about feeling degraded or demeaned by many aspects of life on a low income – particularly their reliance on the financial assistance friends and family, especially the receipt of means tested benefits and services. A constant process of degradation culminates for many of our participants in a sense that they are worth 'nothing'. A process clearly explained by one of our participants:

'I was out with my brother, his granddaughter and her friend, and we were in some shops. The two girls were getting things and he said to the girls 'buy whatever you want', and he was buying things. I was standing at the back. Later he said to me, 'I am sorry about that' and I said 'what?', he said 'I didn't realise how bad you felt, they were buying and I was buying, I didn't mean to make you feel bad that you didn't have the money' I tried to make him feel better, I said 'It

doesn't matter, it's one of these things, it's not your fault that I have got the bad health and cannot work'. Inwardly, I was shattered, I felt really, really low. I thought have I sunk to this, I have worked all my life, and I have sunk to the level that I have to stand back and I can't get anything' (Long term ill, Male, Glasgow)

The point is there are numerous instances in their daily lives that our participants referred to where they are 'shattered'; ultimately these experiences serve to erode self esteem. The continual denigration that our participants report militates against developing the confidence and emotional reserves required to change the circumstances that impact their lives.

It would logically follow that the intensity of the emotional injuries that are a feature of everyday life on a low income intensified as a result of the increased stigmatisation and disrespect our participants reported. It is not possible to reach a definitive conclusion in this regard. Nevertheless, it is clear that our participants testimonies reveal a further pressure, albeit an emotional rather a material one, that they sought to navigate at this point in time alongside the practical struggle to make ends meet.

Conclusion

When we pose the question of 'what changed?' in relation to the lived experience of low income during the era of austerity, these changes are perhaps best summarised as being qualitative rather than quantitative in nature. Indeed, it is important not to overstate the extent to which the lived experiences of poverty have changed. As one would expect much of what our participants report in their testimonies resonate with previous studies. The nature

of poverty has not changed, but the extent of deprivation and the intensity of the associated emotional injury seems to have increased. Our participants' testimonies suggest that the lived experience of low income has manifested in three specific ways during this time: pressure; insecurity; marginalisation.

First, life on a low income austere times has brought even greater material pressures, as the cost of living rose at a point where wages and benefit rates either stagnated or in many cases, fell in real times. Unbearable pressures have been exacted on already fragile household budgets – there is often 'no slack' in these budgets to deal with the unexpected, the only choice left is to 'go without' and our participants reported regularly being deprived of the very basic necessities. The point is many of our participants have found themselves caught in a 'pincer'; at the point where they have needed them the most, the social networks and services that our participants would ordinarily rely on as a means to deal with the realities of low income are unravelling. Thus, the friends and family that once were able to loan money are facing similar hardship, or, the voluntary services that provided support and assistance are either creaking under the pressure of demand or being withdrawn as result of funding cuts. It is understandable that many of our participants referred to the seemingly constant pressure that is brought to bear on their lives.

Second, our participants' testimonies made constant reference to the sense of insecurity they felt. The meagre nature of our participants' household budgets means there is no reserves to build in contingency funds that may be drawn on times of crisis. The precarious nature of their financial situation dominates their overarching sense of insecurity. This is compounded by the fact that our participants are unable to exercise influence over the fundamental aspects of their lives and the key decisions that affect them, feeding the sense that they have lost control. For those receiving benefits and services, the continual threat of sanction and re-assessment provoked continual anxieties and concerns, which was overlaid with the constant speculation over 'welfare reforms' that circulated in the media at this point. Similarly, for those in low paid work the precarious nature of their tenure and the lack of workplace representation further feed the sense of insecurity. Many of our participants, have moved between the low pay sector and the benefits system, and therefore their lives are perpetually impacted by the uncertainties these fields produce.

Third, the pejorative political and media portrayals of life on a low income significantly impact the lives of our participants. These serve to shape attitudes towards our participants and influence instances of disrespect they are subject to on a daily basis. Increasing economic inequality is accompanied by a spiritual separation, where the empathy and understanding displayed to those living on low income continues to erode, giving rise to a greater sense of dislocation for our participants from the rest of society. This is further compounded by the need for many living on low income to withdraw from social relationships to avoid the shame

that results from the public revelation of their poverty. The raised intensity of stigma at this point has only served to further marginalise those living on low income.

Our participants provided testimonies that articulated biographical accounts, yet presented together, structural narratives emerge that reveal the underlying dynamics that shape the lived experience of low income at this point in time. It is accounts such as those included in this report, from the ‘real experts’ that should shape our understanding of poverty and offer the means to address the structural issues that determine processes of impoverishment. Current policy approaches focussed on behavioural change are far removed from the reality of Austerity Britain articulated here.

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Appendix One: Topic Guide

2012 Living Standards in Britain Survey

Phase II Qualitative Research

‘Understanding experiences of low income during recession’

TOPIC GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

My name is XXX and I am a researcher at the University of Bristol. Firstly I would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in an interview for our study. Before we begin I'd like to start by saying a little more about the research. There's a lot of talk about poverty, deprivation and social exclusion in the media and politics. Journalists and politicians have a lot to say about it, but we want to find out more about what life is really like for people who are living on a low income, especially as we are going through a period of recession at the moment. So today I'd like to ask you about your day to day life, the everyday problems that you face and the way that you cope with these problems.

I understand that some of the issues you might want to talk about today might be quite personal or sensitive but I want to assure you that we will treat this discussion as confidential. We will be putting together a report based on what is said in the interviews but we will not use your real names anywhere in the transcripts or report.

If you want to stop the interview at any time just let me know.

PART I: Processes of Impoverishment

Life History and Significant Life Events

I'd like to start by asking you to tell me about your life up to now.

Q I:

a) So if you could first tell me about how you came to be living here in XXXXX?

b) Could you tell me about the most significant “life” events that have happened to you in your life so far?

c) Could you tell me about events that have had an impact on your financial position?

d) How has the recession impacted on your life?

Prompts (such as...):

Education (qualifications; problems/difficulties; training opportunities)

Employment (redundancy; job loss; retirement; unemployment; cut in job hours; cut in salary/wages; lack of jobs in area; moving for employment reasons)

Finance/income (benefits changes; benefits disputes; debt problems; credit problems)

Bereavement (loss of partner/child/parent/sibling/close friend)

Relationship breakdown (divorce/separation; adjustment to living alone; disagreements with family/partner/ friends)

Health/disability (illness; longstanding/chronic illness; disability; accident/injury)

Caring responsibilities (child/partner/family member; difficulties with childcare/getting help with caring responsibilities)

Crime (Victim of crime/attack; involved in/accused of crime; convicted of crime/imprisonment/on remand)

PART 2: Coping Strategies

I would now like to ask you more about the kind of things that you do in your day to day life to be able to ‘get by’ financially.

Q2: What kind of things do you need to do to make sure that you make ends meet?

- a) Do you have a weekly budget? Can you tell me about how you make these decisions?**

- b) How do you minimise your living expenses?**

- c) Do you ever prioritise which bills you pay?**

- d) Have you ever had to borrow money? Who did you borrow from?**

- e) Have you found it much harder recently to be able to manage? (job loss/redundancy; higher costs; benefit changes/cuts; service cuts; servicing debt;)**

- f) How does it make you feel that you manage to live on such a low income? (proud that you are able to budget; constant struggle)**

- g) Do you always feel like this? (is it easier sometimes than others? if so why?)**

Q 3: Do you ever go without things that most people take for granted?

| |
|---|
| Prompts (such as....) |
| <i>Clothing</i> |
| <i>Meals</i> |
| <i>Electrical appliances (TV, CD player, home computer, refrigerator)</i> |
| <i>Heating your home</i> |
| <i>Leisure and social activities (visit friends and family, a meal out, exercise, going to the pub)</i> |
| <i>Saving for a “rainy day”/emergency</i> |

Q 4: Do you ever have problems in meeting your responsibilities to your parents, children, partner or friends as a result of a lack of money?

| |
|--|
| |
| Probe (Are you able to?): |
| <i>Visit your parents/relatives as often as you would like?</i> |
| <i>Visiting or helping your parents/relatives during a crisis?</i> |

Q 5: Do you think people underestimate what it takes to 'get by' on a low income?

| |
|--|
| Prompts (for example...) |
| <i>What is involved in budgeting scarce resources?</i> |
| <i>The level of benefit payments you receive</i> |
| <i>The things you go without</i> |

Q 6: Do you think that having to get by on a low income has had an impact on your well being?

| |
|-----------------------------|
| |
| Prompts (such as...) |
| <i>Physical ill health</i> |
| <i>Stress</i> |
| <i>Anxiety</i> |
| <i>Depression</i> |
| |

Q7: Who would you turn to in a crisis?

| |
|--|
| Probe |
| <i>Who would help (Family/friends/neighbours/organisation)</i> |
| <i>Kinds of support: (Lend money to you?; Childcare?; Give you a lift to an appointment? Practical support around the house/garden?)</i> |
| <i>Do you find it difficult to ask for help? (differences – family/friends/Local Authority services/charitable organisations?)</i> |

Q 8: Are there services or agencies here locally where you can get help if you need it?

Probe:

Have there been cuts in your local services recently? What impact have these cuts to services had on your life?

PART 3: Relational Aspects

I would now like to ask you some questions about how you feel personally about living on a low income and about the way that you are treated by other people.

Q 11: Do you ever feel that you are treated differently by other people because of your financial situation?

Q12: How are you treated by people who are in positions of authority ? (benefits officers, employers etc.)

Q 13: Do you ever feel embarrassed in front of others because of a lack of money?

Prompts (such as...)

The clothes you wear (you, your children)

The brands you buy (you, your children)

An inability to participate in social events

An inability to buy things for your children that their friends have

Inviting family/friends around to your home

Q 14: How do you [did you] feel when you receive [received] services or benefits payments?

Probe

Have these services or receipt of benefits ever made you feel embarrassed?

Contributed to low self-esteem?

Q 15: Do you feel you have any control over decisions affecting your life?

Prompt

Can you think of examples when others have made decisions which affect your life?

Your housing situation

The benefits/services you receive

Your child's education

The healthcare you receive

How does that make you feel? (stressed, anxious, worried about the future, insecure)

Q 16: Do you think that people living on low incomes are fairly represented in the media or by politicians?

Prompt

Lazy?

Feckless?

Benefit scroungers?

Responsible for their own situation?

Level of benefits?

Have these become more negative recently?

How does that make you feel?

PART 4: Summing up

Q 17: What are your hopes for the future? Do you think your aspirations have changed over time?

Q 18: Could you tell me the aspects of your life that you are most proud of?

PART 5: End of Interview

Thank you very much for agreeing to speak with me today. Hearing about your experiences and your views is very important for our project.

Q 19: So before I go is there anything else that you think is important that we should consider when we are making our report?

So thank you once again for taking part in a research interview for our study. The information that you have provided will be very useful when we put together our report. Just to remind you we won't be using your real name anywhere in the report. We will send you an invitation to the event that we will be holding when we launch the findings and I'll look forward to seeing you again then.

Appendix Two: Agency Recruitment Information

Project Outline for Agencies

This research will document the experience of low income by enabling a cross-section of less well-off people to document their experiences or record testimonies.

Aims and objectives

The research aims to raise the profile of poverty and social exclusion in local, regional and national policy making.

By working with local partners the research seeks answers to the following questions:

- What are the main issues faced by less well-off people living in different areas in Britain during the current economic recession?
- What are the routes into and out of poverty?
- What are the strategies adopted by people to be able to cope with living on a low income?
- What are the consequences of poverty for people living in Britain today?

Why participate?

Although a lot of research has been done on measuring poverty in the UK, much less is known about people's personal experiences of living on a low income. More focus is especially needed on the views of those living in poverty themselves – for example, in relation to lack of voice, disrespect, assault on self-esteem, shame, stigma, and denial of rights. The project team are sensitive to these issues, very experienced and able to operate with high integrity.

By gathering testimony on these topics directly from those living in poverty, this project will challenge the invisibility of poverty in public debates, and in decision-making and service provision.

How your organisation can help

The project team is contacting a wide variety of community and voluntary organisations working with client groups vulnerable to poverty in three areas of the UK (Gloucester, Birmingham & Glasgow). We are hoping that your organisation will be able to support this project in the following ways:

- By providing a means of access in recruiting potential participants - either directly or indirectly as appropriate
- By providing follow-up advice as appropriate to research participants in order to help them access further services, opportunities and support

In return we will of course acknowledge the support and co-operation of all organisations associated with the project. Your organisation will also receive an invitation to the launch event as well as a complimentary copy of the study report and DVD.

Cont over...

What happens next?

A member of the project team will aim to talk to you soon to determine if your organisation may be able to take part in this research undertaking.

In the meantime it may be worth considering whether this research may be relevant to any of your clients – and perhaps ‘sounding out’ the project with them.

How will the research be done?

The project team will seek participants through various community and voluntary organisations and service providers who have relevant experience of working with people vulnerable to poverty. These include:

- Older people
- Families with children
- Young adults (18-24)
- People with disabilities or limiting illness
- Unemployed and under-employed people
- Minority ethnic groups

The fieldwork will consist mainly of one to one interviews with participants. These interviews will document participants’ life histories and their everyday experiences of living on a low income. We are especially interested in their day to day coping strategies; the impact of the current economic climate and in particular cuts to services, reduction in benefits and the scarcity of credit. We will also ask participants to talk about their personal feelings and the way that they feel that they are perceived by others.

We hope that the majority of participants will agree to their interview being recorded by video camera. They will then be given the opportunity to review their personal footage before it is included in the study DVD.

A number of participants living in the Gloucester area will be invited to record a video diary of their experiences. They will first be instructed in how to make a diary by a member of the research team.

When all the material has been edited participants will be offered the opportunity to view the selected clips from their interview/diary and give them the opportunity to tell us if they would like us to take out any sections of the recording.

The main research output will be a DVD multi-media report, which will be distributed to local, regional, and national policy makers. A launch event will also be hosted to disseminate the findings.

Contacts:

University of Bristol:

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University of Bristol
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T: +44(0)117 9546772

The *Living Standards in Britain* Survey is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (Ref: RES-060-25-0052). The Principal Investigator is Professor David Gordon (University of Bristol).

Appendix Three: Participant Information Sheet

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS VIDEO TESTIMONY

What is the purpose of the study?

In May 2010, the UK's largest ever research project on this topic was launched. The project aims to update and develop our understanding of living standards in our society today. The survey will increase our understanding of living standards and poverty and social exclusion in the UK and how these have changed over time.

Who is funding and conducting the study?

The study is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council. The project is a partnership between the University of Bristol, Heriot-Watt University, The Open University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Glasgow, the University of York, the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

How will the study be carried out?

The study involves two surveys. First, a sample of UK households were surveyed in Spring 2011 about their views on the necessities of life in our society today. The main Living Standards Survey will then be conducted with a sample of 4,000 households. Both surveys will be conducted by the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

As well as the survey we will be carrying out around 70 interviews with people living across the UK. In these interviews we would like to find out more about what life is like for people who are living on a low income in the UK today. We would like to ask people about their day to day lives, the everyday problems that they face and the way that they cope with these problems.

This is where you come in.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to take part in this study because we want to get the opinions of members of the general public aged 18 and over who are living on a low income. We think that it is important to hear about the experiences of people from different parts of the UK so your views are very important for our research. The project will produce a DVD report that will be

Do I have to take part?

Taking part is entirely voluntary. If you agree to take part in one of the interviews for our study we will ask you to sign a consent form to show that you have agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part in the study you will be asked to complete a face-to-face interview in a location convenient to you. The interview will last around one to one and a half hours. We would like to record the interview on a digital camcorder, so that your experiences can be included in the DVD report. You will be asked to agree to the interview being recorded on the consent form.

In the interview you will be asked to think back and tell us about your life so far and about your experiences of living on a low income. We will also ask you to tell us about how you cope with everyday problems. We understand that some of the questions might cover sensitive issues, but our researchers are very experienced and have worked on projects of this kind before, but you can ask to stop the interview at any time if you wish.

When all the material has been edited you will be offered the opportunity to view the selected clips from your interview. This can be done in two ways, either: i) a member of the research team visits you and shows you the edited footage: ii) a copy of your edited interview will be sent through the post. The researchers will then check that you have been able to review your footage and give you the opportunity to tell us if you would like us to take out any sections of the recording.

As a way of thanking you for your participation you will receive a one-off of £20 in the form of a supermarket gift voucher. This gift will not affect your other income or any state benefits you may receive.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

When we are analyzing the data from the study it will only be seen by the research team and it will be stored securely according to the regulations of the University of Bristol and the Data Protection Act. You will be given the opportunity to see the edited footage that we may use in the study DVD and to take out any sections that you do not wish to be included. At the end of the study video footage will be made publicly available and there will be a link to DVD footage on the project website. A copy of the DVD footage will be stored at the archives of the Economic and Social Data Service: <http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/>. In accordance with current data sharing practices all personal data will be removed, in addition to any sections which the researchers regard as sensitive.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Bristol Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any concerns or queries about any aspect of this study please do get in touch with: Dr Eileen Sutton, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, 8 Priory Road, Bristol, BS8 1TZ (Tel: 0117 3310931)

Where can I get more information?

Further information about the surveys will be made available via the project website. If you would like to be kept in touch about this study please visit: www.poverty.ac.uk/

Appendix Four: Recruitment Survey

ABOUT YOURSELF

Before you take part in our research, we'd like to ask you some questions about yourself so that we know something about the people taking part. *What you tell us will be confidential at all times. Your name and address will not be given to any third parties and will not be used in any work arising from this project.*

1.1 Could you tell me about who lives in your home?

Please fill in the grid below for ALL adults and children usually living at your address.

| Person | Sex | Age | Relationship to you |
|------------|-----|-----|---------------------|
| 1 Yourself | | | Not applicable |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | | | |

1.2 Could you tell me about what kind of accommodation you live in?

Please tick ONE only.

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| House - Detached | <input type="checkbox"/> | Flat - less than 5 storeys) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| House - Semi-detached | <input type="checkbox"/> | Flat - 5 storeys or more) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| House - Terraced | <input type="checkbox"/> | Maisonette | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bungalow | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

1.3 How do you occupy this accommodation?

Please tick ONE only.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------|
| Own outright or buying with mortgage/loan | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Renting from council or housing association | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Renting privately | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

1.4 Could you look at the list below and tell me whether anyone in your household gets any of these benefits at the moment

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Disability Living Allowance | <input type="checkbox"/> | Maternity Allowance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Attendance Allowance | <input type="checkbox"/> | Child Benefit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| State Retirement Pension | <input type="checkbox"/> | Housing Benefit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pension Credit | <input type="checkbox"/> | Council Tax Benefit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jobseekers Allowance | <input type="checkbox"/> | Working Tax Credit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit | <input type="checkbox"/> | Child Tax Credit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Incapacity Benefit (incl. ESA) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other NI or State benefit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Income Support | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

1.5 Please look at the list below and tell me which group your net household income comes into each month. By 'net income' we mean after tax, national insurance and other deductions but before you spend anything.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| A Less than £500 | <input type="checkbox"/> | D £1,501 to £2,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B £500 to £750 | <input type="checkbox"/> | E £2,001 to £2,500 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C £751 to £1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | F £2,501 to £3,500 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D £1,001 to £1500 | <input type="checkbox"/> | G More than £3,500 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

1.6 Do you have a current UK bank or building society account which you have access to? Please tick ONE only.

- Yes No

REVIEWING YOUR FILM

When we have edited the video footage from your interview or diary we want to give you the opportunity to have a look at your film so that you can ask us to take out any sections that you are not happy with. We can do this in two ways:

- 1) We can send you a DVD copy of your video footage by post so that you can watch it at home. One of our researchers will then telephone you to check if you are happy with the footage.
- 2) We can come and visit you in your home to show you the footage and you can tell us about any sections that you are not happy with and we will take them out.

Could you please tick one of the boxes below to let us know how you would like to review your video footage and complete your details so that we can contact you?

Please send my DVD by post

Please arrange a visit to my home so that I can review my DVD

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Post Code

Telephone number

Appendix Five: Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – VIDEO TESTIMONY

Please tick the boxes below to show that you consent to the following:

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 1. | I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet about the above study. I have had the opportunity to think about the information, ask questions and have them answered satisfactorily | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my rights to access services being affected | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | I agree to take part in making video testimony for this project and consent to the University of Bristol keeping a record of and processing my personal data for research purposes, for so long as this research is being undertaken. Once the research is complete, the University will destroy my personal data | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | I understand that the personal data provided by me will not be used for any other purpose and that the University of Bristol will not disclose my personal data to any third parties | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | I confirm that I am willing for the research team at Bristol University to look at the footage I have recorded and decide which sections should be included in the project. I will be given the opportunity to view and comment on my own video recordings and decide if I am willing for my contributions to be included in the DVD | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | I understand however there will be no obligation on the part of the University of Bristol to include any part of my recordings if the editors deem the results are in some way unsuitable for the project | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. | I understand that DVD footage may be made publicly available and there will be a link to DVD footage on the project website | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. | I understand that at the end of the study copies of the DVD footage will be stored at archives of the Economic and Social Data Service. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. | I understand that I will receive a £20 shopping voucher as a one off gift payment as thanks for my participation in the project | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------|-----------|
| Name of participant | Date | Signature |
| Name of person taking consent | Date | Signature |

Respondent ID (office use only):



3rd Peter Townsend Memor...

2nd Peter Townsend Memori...

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The percentage of households who fall below society's minimum standard of living has...

Benefits bill capped at £119 billion

Total spending on most benefits and tax credits will be capped at £119.5 billion in 2015-16,...

3rd Peter Townsend Memorial Conference

Author/s: David Gordon

Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

19 - 20 June 2014**Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL**

Today 33% of the UK population suffer from multiple deprivation as defined by the UK public; in 1983 this figure was 14%.

This free 2-day Peter Townsend Memorial Conference 2014 was funded by the ESRC as part of Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK. The conference presented the findings of the PSE 2012 research project, the latest in the series of UK Poverty surveys carried out since 1983. The research uses the consensual approach to measuring poverty now adopted by both developed and developing countries.

PROGRAMME AND LINKS TO PRESENTATIONS

The presentations were given by members of the Poverty and Social Exclusion research team, from eight UK universities. Download each presentation as a PDF or (where available) as a powerpoint slide presentation from the links in the Programme. The Press Release, Programme and 'zipped' collections of all presentations for [Thursday 19 June](#) and [Friday 20 June](#) are also available to download below. Please credit the named author(s) and the ESRC PSE research project for any use of this material.

Thursday 19 June 2014

First Session 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK: Advancing the State of the Art'

Chair: Stewart Lansley

'Introduction: Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK'

Dave Gordon

[Download slides as PDF](#)[Download slides as powerpoint](#)

'Developing Measures of PSE in the 21st Century: Focus Groups, Cognitive Testing and Expert Review'

Eldin Fahmy

[Download slides as PDF](#)

'Life on a Low Income in Austere Times: Precarious budgets and diminishing services'

Simon Pemberton, Eldin Fahmy, Eileen Sutton and Karen Bell

View the films on [Life on a low income in austere times](#)

Second Session 'The Necessities of Life in the UK'

Chair: Jonathan Bradshaw

'The Changing Necessities of Life: 1983 to 2012'

Stewart Lansley and Joanna Mack

[Download slides as PDF](#)[Download slides as powerpoint](#)

'What do Children Need?'

Gill Main

[Download slides as PDF](#)[Download slides as powerpoint](#)

Third Session 'The Extent of Poverty in the UK'

Chair: Joanna Mack

'How Many People are Poor and Deprived and How Do We Know?'

David Gordon
[Download slides as PDF](#)

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'Social Exclusion in the UK'
Ruth Levitas
[Download slides as PDF](#)

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'How Many Poor and Deprived Children are there in the UK?'
Jonathan Bradshaw
[Download slides as PDF](#)

[Download slides as powerpoint](#)

'Poverty and Exclusion in Scotland'
Nick Bailey, Glen Bramley and Maria Gannon
[Download slides as PDF](#)

'Poverty and Exclusion in Northern Ireland'
Mike Tomlinson
[Download slides as PDF](#)

[Download slides as powerpoint](#)

Fourth Session 'How bad is poverty for your health?'

Chair: Ruth Levitas
'Poverty, Exclusion and Disability in the UK'
Pauline Heslop
[Download slides as PDF](#)

Friday 20 June

Fifth Session 'Why Don't People Just Stop Being Poor?'

Chair: Dave Gordon
'Every Penny Counts: Family Life on a Low Income'
Mary Daly and Grace Kelly
[Download slides as PDF](#)

'Life on a Low Income in Austere Times: Impact on relationships'
Simon Pemberton, Eldin Fahmy, Eileen Sutton and Karen Bell

View the films on [Life on a low income in austere times](#)

'Explaining Poverty to the Public'
Joanna Mack
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'Community Engagement in Challenging Times'
Gabi Kent
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Sixth Session 'Living Standards in the UK'

Chair: Christina Pantazis
'A UK Living Standards Index'
Demi Patsios, Paddy Hillyard and Marco Pomati
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'Poverty and Services, Neighbourhoods and Housing'
Glen Bramley and Kirsten Besemer

'Poverty, Employment and Working Conditions'
Nick Bailey
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Seventh Session 'Family Poverty'

Chair: Mary Daly
'Poverty and Gender'
Esther Dermott and Christina Pantazis
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'Poverty and Parenting'

Esther Dermott and Marco Pomati

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Eighth Session 'Demography of Poverty'

Chair: Nick Bailey

'Poverty and Ethnicity'

Christina Pantazis and Saffron Karlsen

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'Poverty and Youth'

Eldin Fahmy

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'Poverty and Older People',

Demi Patsios

[Download slides as PDF](#)

Ninth Session: Key Issues

Chair: Mike Tomlinson

'Rural Poverty in Scotland'

Maria Gannon, Nick Bailey and Glen Bramley

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'Poverty, Debt and Financial Exclusion'

Glen Bramley and Kirsten Besemer

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















'Fuel Poverty'

David Gordon

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Subjects: [Poverty forecast](#)

Publication date: Jun 23 2014

Comments

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Pauline 44

Wed,
16/07/2014 -
3:31pm[permalink](#)

“I was so sorry to have

Comment:

I was so sorry to have missed the conference, but grateful that the presentations are made available, so I can read and digest at my own pace! The PSE is doing some excellent work in keeping poverty and inequality at the top of the political agenda – where it belongs. We need to mobilise and work with the trade unions and claimants' organisations and maybe get fliers into foodbanks so that everyone is aware of the true facts. The facts and figures presented give really useful ammunition for challenging some of the myths and negative stereotypes of those who are surviving poverty today. Well done everyone who organised and took part in the conference.

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PSE:UK is a major collaboration between the University of Bristol, Heriot-Watt University, The Open University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Glasgow and the University of York working with the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. ESRC Grant RES-060-25-0052.



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Introduction

Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

David Gordon
Professor of Social Justice
Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research
University of Bristol



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



The Problem

“The government’s draft child poverty strategy is a missed opportunity. The farce of ministers proving unable to agree on how to measure poverty after rubbishing existing measures is particularly lamentable.

The government’s approach falls far short of what is needed to reduce, yet alone end child poverty in our country. Our new research shows that the gap between the objective of making child poverty history and the reality is becoming ever wider.

This is not just an issue for the current government. Politicians from all parties say they are committed to the 2020 targets. Willing the ends without the means today merely becomes a broken promise tomorrow.”

Alan Milburn – Chair of the independent Social Mobility and Child Poverty (SMCP) Commission (9th June 2014)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-and-child-poverty-commission>

Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference

Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Programme

Thursday 19th June

10.00 *Registration and Tea/Coffee*

First Session: *Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK: Advancing the State of the Art*

10:30 Introduction: Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK David Gordon

10:50 Developing Measures of Poverty & Exclusion in the 21st Century: Focus Groups, Cognitive Testing & Expert Review [Eldin Fahmy](#)

11:10 Life on a Low Income in Austere Times: Precarious budgets and diminishing services [Simon Pemberton](#), [Eileen Sutton](#), [Eldin Fahmy](#) and [Karen Bell](#)

11.40 *Tea/Coffee*

Second Session: *The Necessities of Life in the UK*

12.10 The Changing Necessities of Life: 1983 to 2012 [Stewart Lansley](#) and [Joanna Mack](#)

12:35 [What do Children Need?](#) [Gill Main](#)

13:00 *Lunch*

Third Session: *The Extent of Poverty in the UK*

14:00: How Many People are Poor and Deprived and How Do We Know? David Gordon

14:20 Social Exclusion in the UK [Ruth Levitas](#)

14:40 How Many Poor and Deprived Children are there in the UK? [Jonathan Bradshaw](#)

15:00 Poverty and Exclusion in Scotland [Nick Bailey](#), [Glen Bramley](#) and [Maria Garmon](#)

15:20 Poverty and Exclusion in Northern Ireland [Mike Tomlinson](#)

15:45 *Tea/Coffee*

Fourth Session: *How bad is poverty for your health?*

16:15 Poverty, Exclusion and Health and Disability in the UK [Pauline Heslop](#)

16:40 Concluding Remarks

17.00 *Finish*

Friday 20th June

9.30 *Arrival and Tea/Coffee*

9.50 Welcome

David Gordon

Fifth Session: *Why Don't People Just Stop Being Poor?*

10:00 Every Penny Counts: Family Life on a Low Income

Mary Daly and Grace Kelly

10:20 Life on a Low Income in Austere Times:
Impact on relationships

Simon Pemberton, Karen Bell,
Eldin Fahmy and Eileen Sutton

10:40 Explaining Poverty to the Public

Joanna Mack

11:00 Community Engagement in Challenging Times

Gabi Kent

11:20 *Tea/Coffee*

Sixth Session: *Living Standards in the UK*

11:50 A UK Living Standards Index

Demi Patsios, Paddy Hillyard
and Marco Pomati

12:10 Poverty and Services, Neighbourhoods & Housing

Glen Bramley and
Kirsten Besemer

12:30 Poverty, Employment and Working Conditions

Nick Bailey

12:50 *Lunch*

Seventh Session: *Family poverty*

13:40 Poverty and Gender

Esther Dermott and
Christina Pantazis

14:00 Poverty and Parenting

Esther Dermott and Marco Pomati

Eighth Session: *Demography of Poverty*

14:20 Poverty and Ethnicity

Christina Pantazis and
Saffron Karlsen

14:40 Poverty and Youth

Eldin Fahmy

15:00 Poverty and Older People

Demi Patsios

15:20 *Tea/Coffee*

Ninth Session: *Key Issues*

16:00 Rural Poverty in Scotland

Maria Gannon, Nick Bailey
and Glen Bramley

16:20 Poverty, Debt and Financial Exclusion

Kirsten Besemer and Glen Bramley

16:40 Fuel Poverty

David Gordon

17:00 Concluding Remarks



PSE UK

Web Site <http://www.poverty.ac.uk>

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

**Townsend Centre
for International
Poverty Research**



SECOND UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR THE
eradication of poverty
(2008 – 2017)

Web Site <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/poverty>



PSE UK

Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK





Many people have worked on the PSE Project



People to thank...

UK and International
Advisory Groups

| | |
|--|--|
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PSE Research Team



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The research grant

- Funded by the ESRC
- The UK's largest ever research project on poverty, social exclusion and living standards
- Started April 2010
- Ended March 2014

The research aims

1. To improve the measurement of poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and standard of living.
2. To measure the change in the nature and extent of poverty and social exclusion over the past ten years.
3. To produce policy-relevant results about the causes and outcomes of poverty and social exclusion.

Background

Every decade since the late 1960s, UK social scientists have attempted to carry out an independent poverty survey to test out new ideas and incorporate current state of the art methods into UK poverty research.

- 1968-69 *Poverty in the UK* survey (Peter Townsend and colleagues),
- 1983 *Poor Britain* survey (Joanna Mack, Stewart Lansley)
- 1990 *Breadline Britain* survey (Joanna Mack, Stewart Lansley)
- 1999 *Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey* (Jonathan Bradshaw and colleagues) and its 2002 counterpart in Northern Ireland (Paddy Hillyard and colleagues)
- 2012 *Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK*



Survey Data

Omnibus Survey: Necessities of Life – A systematic random achieved sample of adults (16+) of over 1,900 interviews in Britain and Northern Ireland.

Main Survey: Poverty & Social Exclusion – A follow-up survey to the 2010/11 Family Resources Survey (circa 47,000 households). The main survey in Britain has an achieved sample of over 4,000 households and 9,500 individuals – with approximately 1,000 households in the ‘ethnic’ strata and 1,000 households in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, the achieved sample was just under 1,000 households and over 2,000 individuals.

The survey was divided into a household questionnaire which was answered by the Household Reference Person (HRP) and an individual questionnaire which was answered by all adult household members (aged 18 and over).



Qualitative Data

British Impoverishment Study, The qualitative study, Life on a Low Income in Austere times sought to provide insights into the experiences of poverty during the recent recession and ongoing programme of austerity. The project collected 62 video/audio testimonies during 2012-2013, in Birmingham, Glasgow and Gloucestershire.

Northern Ireland Family Solidarity Study, a qualitative survey of 50 parents to explore the role of family in coping with poverty.

The study had a material focus – examining the extent to which resources are transferred among family members (both nuclear and extended) - and it also explores family cultures and relationships as factors affecting poverty and social exclusion. This helps to understand the extent and limits of family solidarity



Dissemination

A major website – www.poverty.ac.uk

Full results of the 2012 Survey

Comparisons with the earlier surveys in 1983, 1990 and 1999

Development of new graphic visualisation tools enabling access to more complex datasets and richer comparisons between datasets across time

Video clips of what it means to live in poverty for key groups in 2012 (e.g. young, elderly, unemployed, disabled) and comparisons from the two broadcast documentary series accompanying the 1983 and 1990 surveys (*Breadline Britain* and *Breadline Britain in the 1990s*) to illustrate changing circumstances and attitudes

Survey Development

Rigorous qualitative & quantitative methods were used in developing and analysing the survey questionnaire;

- 1) Systematic literature reviews
- 2) Focus groups
- 3) Expert review
- 4) Cognitive interviews
- 5) Survey pilots
- 6) Behaviour coding

As far as possible comparability was maintained with UK & EU official poverty measures.

The Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix (B-SEM)



Social Mobility and
Child Poverty
Commission

What we do

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty (SMCP) Commission monitors the progress of government and others in improving social mobility and reducing child poverty in the United Kingdom.

SMCP Commission is an advisory non-departmental public body, sponsored by the [Department for Education](#), the [Cabinet Office](#) and the [Department for Work and Pensions](#).

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Breaking the link between demography and destiny in Scotland

14 November 2014 Speech

State of the Nation 2014

14 November 2014 Speech

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Bids invited for research into access to top jobs

5 December 2014 Closed consultation

Bids invited for social mobility research

5 December 2014 Closed consultation

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How the key players outside central government can tackle child poverty and promote social mobility

19 December 2014 Research and analysis

Commission publishes new research on low pay

11 November 2014 Research and analysis

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PSE UK

Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Developing poverty and social exclusion measures: focus groups and cognitive interviews in the 2012 PSE-UK survey

Eldin Fahmy¹, Simon Pemberton and Eileen Sutton

Presentation at 3rd Peter Townsend Memorial Conference: 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK', London - 19th-20th June 2014





Web links to PSE-UK development work

- **Public Perceptions of Poverty, Social Exclusion and Living Standards: Preliminary Report on Focus Group Findings**
<http://poverty.ac.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/WP%20Methods%20No.12%20-%20Focus%20Group%20Findings%20-%20Preliminary%20Report%20%28Fahmy%2C%20Pemberton%20%26%20Sutton%29.pdf>
- **Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion: Final Report on Focus Group Findings**
http://poverty.ac.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/WP_Analysis_No3_Focus-groups_Fahmy-Pemberton-Sutton.pdf
- **Cognitive Testing of the 2011 UK Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey**
<http://poverty.ac.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/WP%20Methods%20No.17%20-%20Cognitive%20Testing%20Report%20%28Fahmy%2C%20Pemberton%2C%20Sutton%29.pdf>



PSE UK

Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Aims and objectives

AIMS:

- To contribute to question development in the *NatCen Omnibus* (spring) and *PSE Main Stage* (autumn) surveys using qualitative piloting methods
- To update and advance the 'state of the art' in the measurement of PSE beyond the *1999 PSE*

OBJECTIVES:

- **Focus groups:** To explore public perceptions of deprivation, living standards and social exclusion in the UK today to inform the *NatCen Omnibus* and *PSE Main Stage* surveys
- **Cognitive interviews:** To undertake qualitative pre-testing of selected indicators for potential inclusion in the *PSE Main Stage* survey



Focus group sampling

Sampling considerations:

- 1999 ONS Omnibus showed variation in public perceptions of 'necessities' by:
 - household income
 - household type
 - age
 - gender
 - ethnicity*
- Important to take account of these social differences in public perceptions of necessities in recruiting study participants

Quota sample design:

- Separate groups recruited by:
 - household income
 - household composition
 - ethnic origin (min ethnic booster)
- Within groups, respondents were then recruited by: gender; age; tenure; and; (where relevant) employment status and; age of oldest child
- In total, 14 focus group interviews with 114 participants were conducted in: Bristol, Cardiff, London, Glasgow and Belfast

* Pantazis et al., 2000, 2006.



Focus group research design

Format:

- Groups comprised 6-10 participants lasting 2.5 hours each. Research comprised two phases...

Phase One:

- Unstructured approach using *brain-storming* methods
- Aims to elicit participant suggestions on basis of group consensus
- All participants' asked to consider situation of hypothetical couple with two children

Phase Two:

- Sought to 'test' items agreed by Phase I groups, and also explore wider indicators of living standards based on *card sort* methods
- Participants sorted items into three groups:
 - **Necessities:** essential things which everyone should be able to afford if they want them
 - **Desirables:** things which many/most people have but which are *not* essential
 - **Luxuries:** things which are costly and exclusive and which fewer people have



Necessities of life items: Items agreed (non-99 PSE items)

ACCOMMODATION

- A damp free home
- Heating to warm living areas of the home
- Insurance of home contents
- Money to keep home in decent state of decoration
- Separate bedrooms for boys and girls aged over 10
- **Separate bedrooms for all adults and for parents/children**
- **A communal area for whole household**
- **Adequate natural light**
- **Enough space for all household members**
- **Bath or shower facilities**
- **Sole use of household facilities**
- **Adequate ventilation and insulation**
- **Draft free windows**
- **Smoke/carbon monoxide alarm**

CHILDREN'S ITEMS

- Three meals a day for children
- Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily for children
- A garden for children to play in
- Books for children of their own
- Toys (e.g. dolls, teddies)
- Friends round for tea/snack fortnightly
- Leisure equipment for children
- School trips at least once a term
- **Access to a safe outside area to play**
- Fresh fruit or veg. at least daily/twice daily
- **Milk daily**

DIET AND CLOTHING

- Two meals a day for adults
- Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily
- Fresh fruit and veg. on a daily basis
- **An adequate balanced diet (including meat, fish, vegetables and carbs)**
- Money for a week/month's household food budget
- Warm waterproof coat
- Two pairs of all weather shoes
- New, not second hand, clothes
- An outfit for special occasions
- **Three complete outfits for every household member**
- **Adequate nightwear**
- **Clothes in good/clean condition**
- **Adequate clothing and footwear for all seasons**
- **Non prescription medicines**

Family outings

- New, properly fitted shoes for children
- Some new, not second-hand clothes for children

School uniform for children

- Hobby or leisure activity
- **Toys for personal development/education**
- Toys (e.g. dolls, teddies)
- **Sports equipment for children**
- A mobile phone for older children
- **Money for after school clubs**
- **Treats for children on special occasions**
- **Money for children's clubs, societies and related activities**

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Washing machine
- Mobile phone
- Access to internet
- Microwave
- Fridge/freezer
- **An iron**
- **Kettle**
- **Hairdryer**
- Money to replace/repair broken electrical goods
- **Sofa and/or easy chairs for household members**
- **Dining table and chairs for all household members**
- Money to replace worn out furniture
- Bed, bedding, mattress for all household members
- **Curtains/blinds**
- **Access to an outdoor space within accommodation**
- Books within the home
- Home computer
- TV
- Radio or music player

FINANCIAL

- Paying rent/mortgage and household bills without getting into debt
- Regular savings for rainy days
- Small sum of money to spend on self weekly
- **Life insurance for mortgage-holders**
- **Regular payments into a private or occupational pension plan**



Focus group findings: definitional issues

“Necessities: Things which are essential and which everyone should be able to afford if they want them in our society today”

Conceptual issues:

- Defining ‘necessities’:
 - *cannot vs. should not*
- Participants’ living standards & views:
 - ‘me’ vs. ‘everyone’
- Changing norms and preferences:
 - ‘taken for granted’ items:
‘an indoor toilet’
 - ‘non-salient’ items:
‘cooked breakfast’ (‘fresh fruit & veg. daily?’)

Contextual factors:

- Household/personal circumstances and perceptions of *need*: ‘a hairdryer’
- Affordability and availability: ‘local amenities and services’
- Affordability and social resources: networks, support, care

Caveats:

- Overt vs covert response problems
- Investigating interview effects



The pitfalls of survey design: a cautionary example

Drinking Water Perception Survey

11 If a bottle of water costs you three times more, would you continue buying it?

12 If not, what would you do?
 I will drink regular tap water
 I will drink filtered tap water
 Other, please specify

13 Are you aware of the steps used to process a generic bottle of mineral water?

14 Do you believe that bottled water can be more expensive than oil?

15 When travelling overseas, do you find it easy to find your preferred bottled water brands?

If no, please explain.

20 How much importance do you give to drinking water on daily basis?
Select 1(low)-10(high)

21 How concerned are you that there may be water problems, including water shortages, around the world? Select 1(low)-10(high)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22 Please specify any global water issues or concerns you are aware of?

23 Have you taken any steps to help alleviate any water problems around the world? Please specify

24 Thank you for your participation. Please share any additional comments related to bottled water, tap water, and global water issues.



Cognitive interviewing: strengths and weaknesses

STRENGTHS

- Reveals overt and covert problems
- Identifies cognition problems (task, syntax, words)
- Identifies recall problems
- Identifies problems of respondent judgment and response
- Can improve layout and sequence of survey items
- Can help clarify research objectives

WEAKNESSES

- Not based on random sample methods:
 - Cannot indicate extent or severity of problems
 - Cannot identify all potential problems that may exist
- Cannot fully replicate survey conditions (context, item ordering)
- Identifies problems not solutions: revised wording may generate further survey response problems!
- Does not fully encompass assessment of *interviewer* effects



Cognitive testing of PSE-UK question items

Cognitive methods in question testing

- Investigates *covert* problems of cognition retrieval judgement and response
- Based on respondent verbal reports using
 - ‘*think aloud*’ method
 - (interview) ‘*prompting*’ methods
- Qualitative analysis of transcripts

Fieldwork schedule

- Summer 2011: 20 one-to-one interviews in Bristol to inform PSE2011 Main Stage survey
- Inter-locking quota sample by age/sex, income and household type
- 60-70 min interviews covering a *sub-set* of PSE-UK Q items
- Qualitative framework analysis of interview transcripts



Cognitive testing of PSE-UK question items: concluding remarks

“Even after years of experience, no expert can write a perfect questionnaire...If you do not have the resources to pilot-test your questionnaire, don't do the study”

Sudman S, Bradburn N, 1982: 283

- Findings based upon small sample of interviews. Generalizability of sample is uncertain
- Problems with question wording can be identified but it is not always obvious that a better alternative is available.
- Any suggested changes may result in new item response problems which may be more serious than the original problem being addressed
- Other considerations such as comparability with existing sources, and time implications of question revisions, should be considered



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The changing necessities of life: 1983 to 2012

Stewart Lansley and Joanna Mack

www.poverty.ac.uk



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social exclusion in the UK



The necessities question

Using shuffle cards participants were asked for each item and activity to distinguish between:

items which you think are necessary – which all adults should be able to afford and which they should not have to do without and items which may be desirable but are not necessary.



Deciding what to test

- Focus groups: in 2012 in five locations across the UK
- Literature review
- Cognitive interviews
- Pilot interviews

The items and activities tested

- Many items and activities are the same in all years.
- Some have been excluded as no longer seen as important or ownership nearly 100%
- Some have been introduced to reflect changing the priorities



The 2012 findings

- 25 of the 46 items and activities for adults were seen as necessary
- Highest heating - 96%
- Lowest dishwasher - 10%

<http://www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research/attitudes-necessities-uk-2012>

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Heating | 96 |
| Damp-free home | 94 |
| Two meals daily | 91 |
| Family visits | 90 |
| Repair electrics | 86 |
| Fruit and veg daily | 83 |
| Washing machine | 82 |
| Dental treatment | 82 |
| Celebrations | 80 |
| Family occasions | 79 |
| Warm coat | 79 |
| Phone | 77 |
| Meat or fish | 76 |
| Curtains or blinds | 71 |
| Hobby | 70 |
| Household insurance | 70 |
| Home decorated | 69 |
| Interview clothes | 69 |
| Table and chairs | 64 |
| Sport or exercise | 56 |
| Unexpected costs £500 | 55 |
| Two pairs shoes | 54 |
| Regular savings | 52 |
| Television | 51 |
| Pension payments | 51 |
| Family and friends visit | 46 |
| Replace worn clothes | 46 |
| Presents annually | 46 |



<http://www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research/attitudes-necessities-groups-uk-2012http>

Is there a consensus?

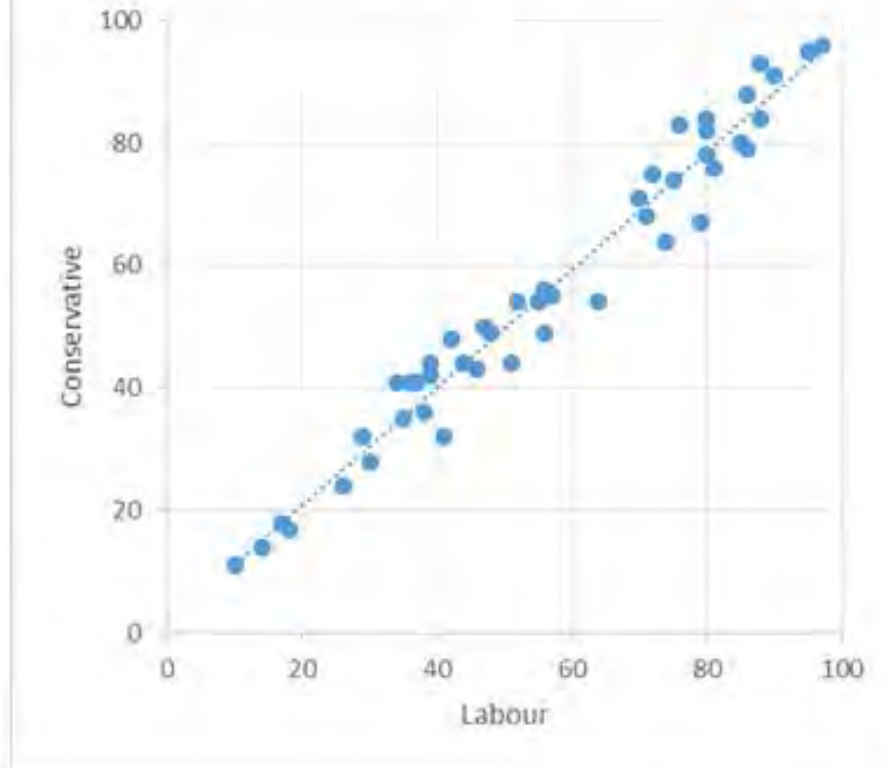
All previous surveys found high levels of consensus.

Does this still hold?

www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research/attitudes-necessities-groups-uk-2012

| | Overall | Male | Female | Younger (16-24 years) | Older (65+ years) | Married/civil partnership | Single/separated | White | Non-white | No limiting long-term illness | Has limiting long-term illness | In employment | Economically inactive | Managerial and professional | Semi-routine | Non-routine | Degree or higher | No qualifications | No dependent children in household | Household with dependent children | Renter | Top 40% households | Bottom 40% households | Conservative/upper | Labour support | | |
|--------------------------|---------|------|--------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-------|-----------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------|----|----|
| Heating | 96 | 95 | 96 | 94 | 97 | 95 | 96 | 96 | 96 | 96 | 93 | 97 | 94 | 97 | 95 | 97 | 95 | 97 | 95 | 96 | 96 | 95 | 98 | 93 | 97 | 96 | |
| Damp-free home | 94 | 94 | 95 | 92 | 97 | 95 | 94 | 95 | 88 | 95 | 94 | 95 | 93 | 97 | 93 | 97 | 92 | 95 | 94 | 96 | 92 | 96 | 93 | 95 | 95 | | |
| Two meals daily | 91 | 90 | 93 | 96 | 90 | 91 | 94 | 92 | 88 | 91 | 91 | 92 | 90 | 91 | 93 | 91 | 92 | 94 | 89 | 90 | 94 | 90 | 93 | 92 | 90 | 91 | |
| Family visits | 90 | 88 | 91 | 93 | 86 | 90 | 92 | 90 | 87 | 90 | 87 | 91 | 87 | 91 | 88 | 91 | 88 | 91 | 85 | 89 | 92 | 89 | 89 | 91 | 89 | 88 | 93 |
| Repair electrics | 86 | 84 | 89 | 85 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 86 | 91 | 87 | 86 | 86 | 85 | 88 | 85 | 88 | 87 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 85 | 88 | 85 | 87 | 86 | 88 | |
| Fruit and veg daily | 83 | 80 | 86 | 69 | 83 | 86 | 80 | 83 | 84 | 84 | 78 | 84 | 82 | 88 | 76 | 88 | 77 | 89 | 79 | 82 | 84 | 87 | 77 | 86 | 77 | 88 | 84 |
| Washing machine | 82 | 80 | 85 | 80 | 81 | 83 | 82 | 82 | 83 | 83 | 82 | 82 | 83 | 79 | 84 | 79 | 85 | 77 | 85 | 83 | 81 | 80 | 85 | 78 | 83 | 80 | 84 |
| Dental treatment | 82 | 78 | 85 | 85 | 79 | 81 | 83 | 82 | 78 | 81 | 84 | 82 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 81 | 81 | 82 | 80 | 81 | 83 | 84 | 82 | 82 | 83 | 85 | 80 |
| Celebrations | 80 | 78 | 83 | 91 | 77 | 79 | 85 | 81 | 78 | 81 | 79 | 81 | 78 | 81 | 82 | 81 | 80 | 79 | 78 | 80 | 82 | 77 | 82 | 82 | 82 | 80 | 82 |
| Family occasions | 79 | 77 | 80 | 85 | 76 | 77 | 82 | 79 | 78 | 78 | 80 | 79 | 77 | 76 | 81 | 76 | 80 | 79 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 78 | 80 | 77 | 82 | 76 | 83 |
| Warm coat | 79 | 76 | 82 | 69 | 89 | 83 | 74 | 80 | 67 | 79 | 81 | 78 | 83 | 85 | 76 | 85 | 76 | 85 | 78 | 81 | 75 | 86 | 75 | 84 | 73 | 86 | 79 |
| Phone | 77 | 74 | 79 | 75 | 89 | 82 | 70 | 76 | 83 | 75 | 81 | 73 | 84 | 77 | 75 | 77 | 76 | 77 | 84 | 77 | 76 | 83 | 71 | 75 | 77 | 80 | 78 |
| Meat or fish | 76 | 76 | 76 | 72 | 75 | 78 | 74 | 76 | 78 | 76 | 75 | 77 | 74 | 84 | 67 | 84 | 68 | 84 | 68 | 76 | 76 | 78 | 70 | 79 | 71 | 81 | 76 |
| Curtains or blinds | 71 | 71 | 71 | 75 | 76 | 71 | 71 | 71 | 72 | 70 | 77 | 69 | 75 | 72 | 72 | 72 | 71 | 74 | 72 | 70 | 74 | 72 | 71 | 71 | 75 | 74 | |
| Hobby | 70 | 74 | 66 | 71 | 76 | 70 | 72 | 70 | 68 | 70 | 71 | 68 | 73 | 72 | 64 | 72 | 67 | 73 | 68 | 73 | 64 | 74 | 70 | 73 | 69 | 71 | 68 |
| Household insurance | 70 | 65 | 74 | 51 | 86 | 77 | 58 | 71 | 59 | 68 | 74 | 69 | 74 | 70 | 66 | 70 | 68 | 70 | 75 | 73 | 62 | 80 | 53 | 72 | 60 | 79 | 67 |
| Home decorated | 69 | 68 | 71 | 61 | 79 | 72 | 63 | 69 | 79 | 68 | 79 | 65 | 76 | 68 | 71 | 68 | 72 | 65 | 82 | 69 | 71 | 75 | 68 | 67 | 70 | 72 | 75 |
| Interview clothes | 69 | 72 | 66 | 81 | 52 | 66 | 76 | 69 | 71 | 72 | 63 | 75 | 59 | 74 | 65 | 74 | 66 | 73 | 59 | 68 | 70 | 63 | 69 | 74 | 67 | 70 | 71 |
| Table and chairs | 64 | 64 | 64 | 56 | 77 | 71 | 53 | 64 | 64 | 63 | 64 | 62 | 68 | 72 | 58 | 72 | 59 | 68 | 69 | 63 | 66 | 73 | 54 | 65 | 61 | 74 | 64 |
| Sport or exercise | 56 | 59 | 52 | 60 | 45 | 57 | 59 | 55 | 63 | 59 | 46 | 61 | 51 | 60 | 51 | 60 | 51 | 62 | 44 | 54 | 60 | 54 | 55 | 61 | 53 | 55 | 54 |
| Unexpected costs £500 | 55 | 58 | 53 | 52 | 68 | 61 | 49 | 55 | 59 | 55 | 56 | 54 | 58 | 60 | 52 | 60 | 53 | 54 | 59 | 57 | 52 | 69 | 47 | 56 | 50 | 64 | 54 |
| Two pairs shoes | 54 | 48 | 59 | 47 | 71 | 55 | 50 | 54 | 56 | 52 | 63 | 50 | 60 | 54 | 56 | 54 | 55 | 54 | 63 | 58 | 45 | 61 | 54 | 51 | 54 | 57 | 55 |
| Regular savings | 52 | 56 | 49 | 57 | 54 | 52 | 54 | 51 | 67 | 53 | 52 | 53 | 53 | 55 | 53 | 55 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 54 | 48 | 57 | 50 | 55 | 49 | 56 | 49 |
| Television | 51 | 53 | 49 | 33 | 70 | 54 | 40 | 50 | 62 | 48 | 65 | 46 | 61 | 45 | 57 | 45 | 56 | 43 | 71 | 52 | 48 | 56 | 52 | 41 | 51 | 56 | 56 |
| Pension payments | 51 | 52 | 50 | 56 | 51 | 53 | 53 | 51 | 52 | 54 | 42 | 53 | 48 | 57 | 47 | 57 | 48 | 56 | 41 | 53 | 46 | 54 | 45 | 59 | 47 | 52 | 54 |
| Family and friends visit | 46 | 41 | 50 | 53 | 44 | 44 | 49 | 44 | 64 | 46 | 46 | 45 | 45 | 42 | 48 | 42 | 46 | 44 | 49 | 45 | 47 | 44 | 46 | 44 | 47 | 42 | 48 |
| Replace worn clothes | 46 | 52 | 41 | 51 | 48 | 45 | 48 | 45 | 54 | 46 | 48 | 46 | 45 | 43 | 51 | 43 | 51 | 45 | 50 | 47 | 44 | 47 | 44 | 44 | 52 | 47 | 50 |
| Presents annually | 46 | 47 | 45 | 46 | 62 | 46 | 43 | 46 | 51 | 44 | 56 | 43 | 51 | 44 | 48 | 44 | 49 | 44 | 56 | 48 | 43 | 50 | 45 | 41 | 49 | 48 | 49 |

Figure 4.1: Percentages thinking item a necessity by political affiliation, Britain, 2012



The necessities of life

- Do the public take an absolute or relative view of poverty ?
- Trends since 1983 and what they tell us about public attitudes

Relative v absolute

‘visiting friends/family in hospital’ (90%)

‘celebrations on special occasions` (80%)

‘being able to afford to attend a wedding/funeral or other such occasions’ (78%)

‘enough money to keep home in decent state of decoration` (69%)

Trends: 1983 to 2012

Rising support:

washing machine: up from 67% in 1983 to 82% today,

phone: up from 43% to 77% today

computer: up from 5% in 1990 to 11% in 1999 and 40% today

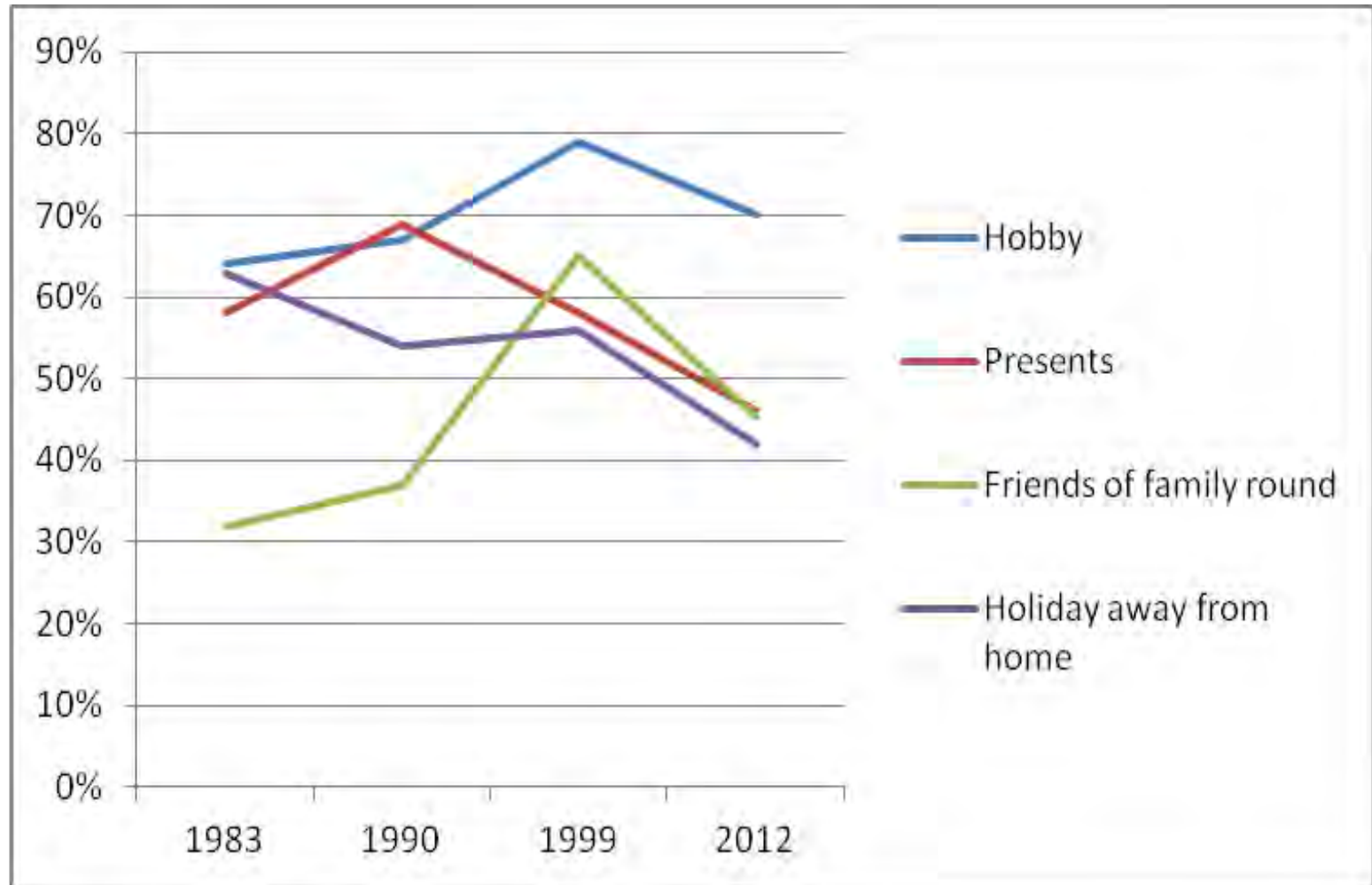
Falling support:

two pairs of all weather shoes (down from 67% to 54%)

a roast joint/veg equivalent (down from 67% to 36%)

<http://www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research/trends-attitudes-necessities-1983-2012>

Rise and fall in support for leisure and social activities



What determines change?

- the emergence of new products and services (eg a computer)
-
- shifts in customs and culture (eg roast joint/ equivalent)
-
- wider trends in incomes and in overall living standards

Conclusions

- Strongly shared views across all groups as to what a minimum standard should contain
- There is a core minimum standard that has remained consistent across the years
- Minimum standards reflect the society in which we live and change over time

What do children need?

Jonathan Bradshaw and Gill Main

Conway Hall, London

19-20 June 2014



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK





PSE method

Selection of indicators

Previous PSE

Comparability with FRS

Items identified by children

Adults (aged 16+, not just parents) asked to indicate whether item/s activities were necessities for children

Items deemed necessities if 50%+ of adults say children need them

Child items – high support

| | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (2012) | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (1999) |
|---|--|--|
| A warm winter coat | 97 | 95 |
| Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day | 96 | 93 |
| Three meals a day | 93 | 90 |
| New, properly fitting, shoes | 93 | 94 |
| A garden or outdoor space nearby where they can play safely | 92 | 68 |
| Books at home suitable for their ages | 91 | 89 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least once a day | 90 | 77 |
| A suitable place to study or do homework | 89 | - |
| Indoor games suitable for their ages | 80 | 83 |

Child items – medium support

| | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (2012) | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (1999) |
|--|--|--|
| Enough bedrooms for every child of 10 or over of a different sex to have their own bedroom | 74 | 78 |
| Computer and internet for homework | 66 | 41 |
| Some new, not second hand, clothes | 65 | 70 |
| Outdoor leisure equipment | 58 | 60 |
| At least four pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms | 56 | 69 |
| Money to save | 54 | - |
| Pocket money | 54 | - |
| Construction toys | 53 | 62 |

Child items – not necessities

| | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (2012) | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (1999) |
|---|--|--|
| A bicycle | 45 | 54 |
| Clothes to fit in with friends | 31 | - |
| A mobile phone for children aged 11 or over | 26 | - |
| An MP3 player | 8 | - |
| Designer/brand name trainers | 6 | - |

Child activities – high support

| | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (2012) | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (1999) |
|--|--|--|
| Celebrations on special occasions | 91 | 92 |
| A hobby or leisure activity | 88 | 89 |
| Toddler group or nursery or play group at least once a week for pre-school aged children | 87 | 88 |

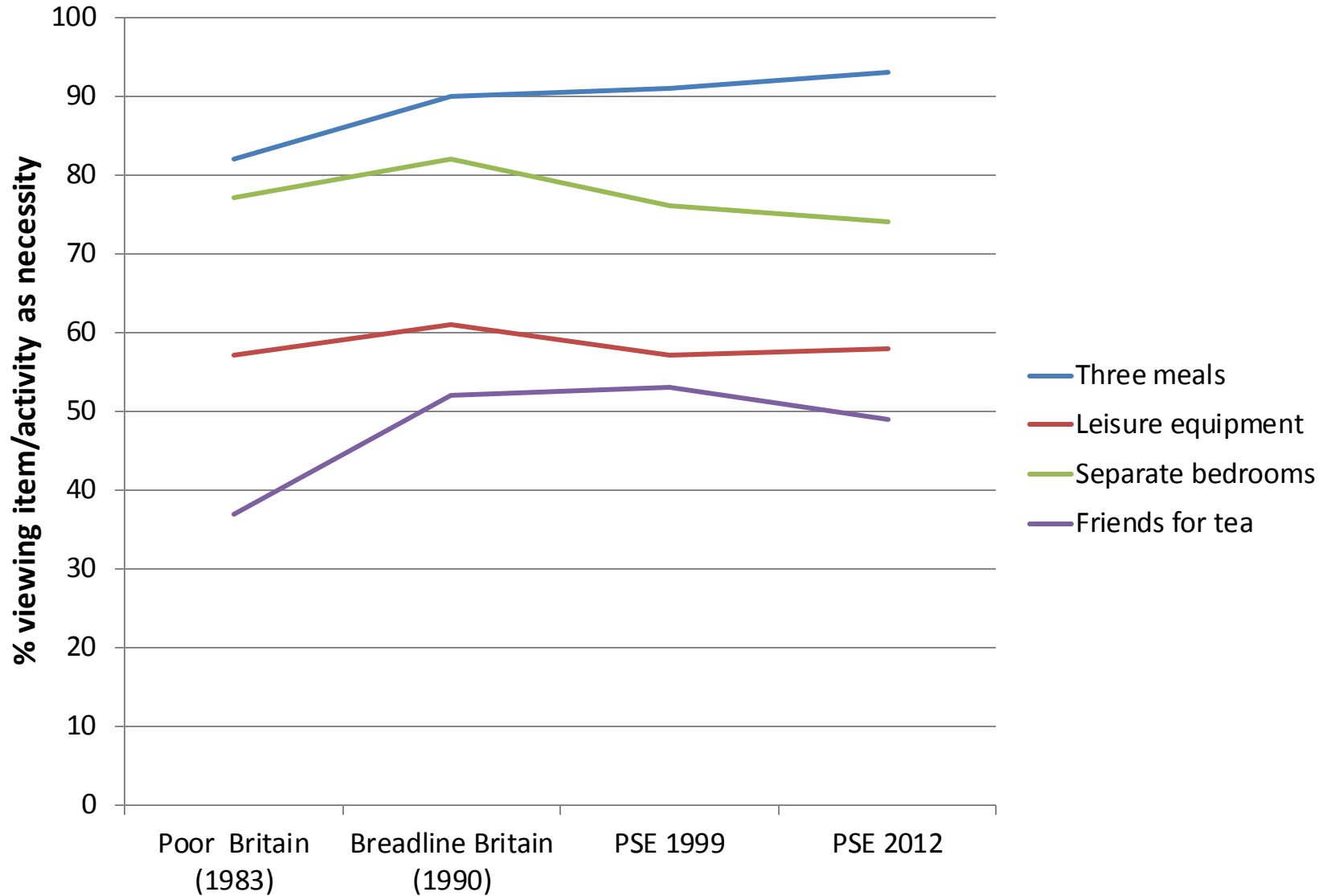
Child activities – medium support

| | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (2012) | Proportion viewing item/ activity as a necessity (1999) |
|---|--|---|
| Children’s clubs or activities such as drama or football training | 74 | - |
| Day trips with family once a month | 60 | - |
| Going on a school trip at least once a term | 55 | 74 |
| A holiday away from home for at least one week a year | 52 | 70 |

Child-identified items and activities

| | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (2012) |
|---|--|
| A garden or outdoor space nearby where they can play safely | 92 |
| Day trips with family once a month | 60 |
| Money to save | 54 |
| Pocket money | 54 |
| A holiday away from home for at least one week a year | 52 |
| Clothes to fit in with friends | 31 |
| An MP3 player | 8 |
| Designer/brand name trainers | 6 |

Changes in perceptions over time





Differences by sub-group

Tested based on confidence intervals and relative risk ratios

Differences examined based on:

Age

Gender

Ethnicity

Country

Marital status

Presence of children

Being a lone parent

Number of children

Income

Social class

Education level

Tenure type

Subjective health

Objective health

Political affiliation



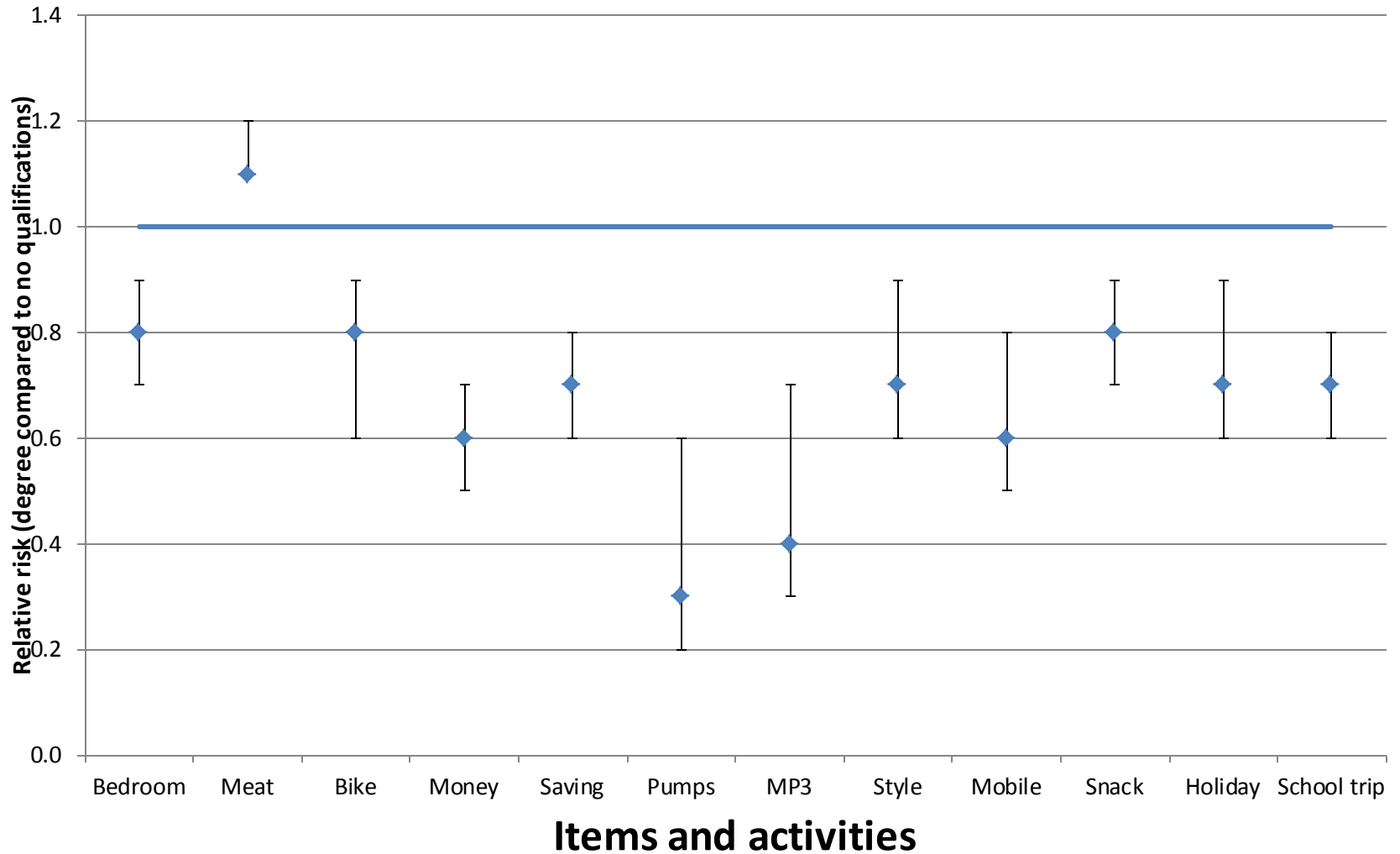
Differences by sub-group

For 12 items/activities, no significant differences by sub-group; a further 7 only 1-2 differences

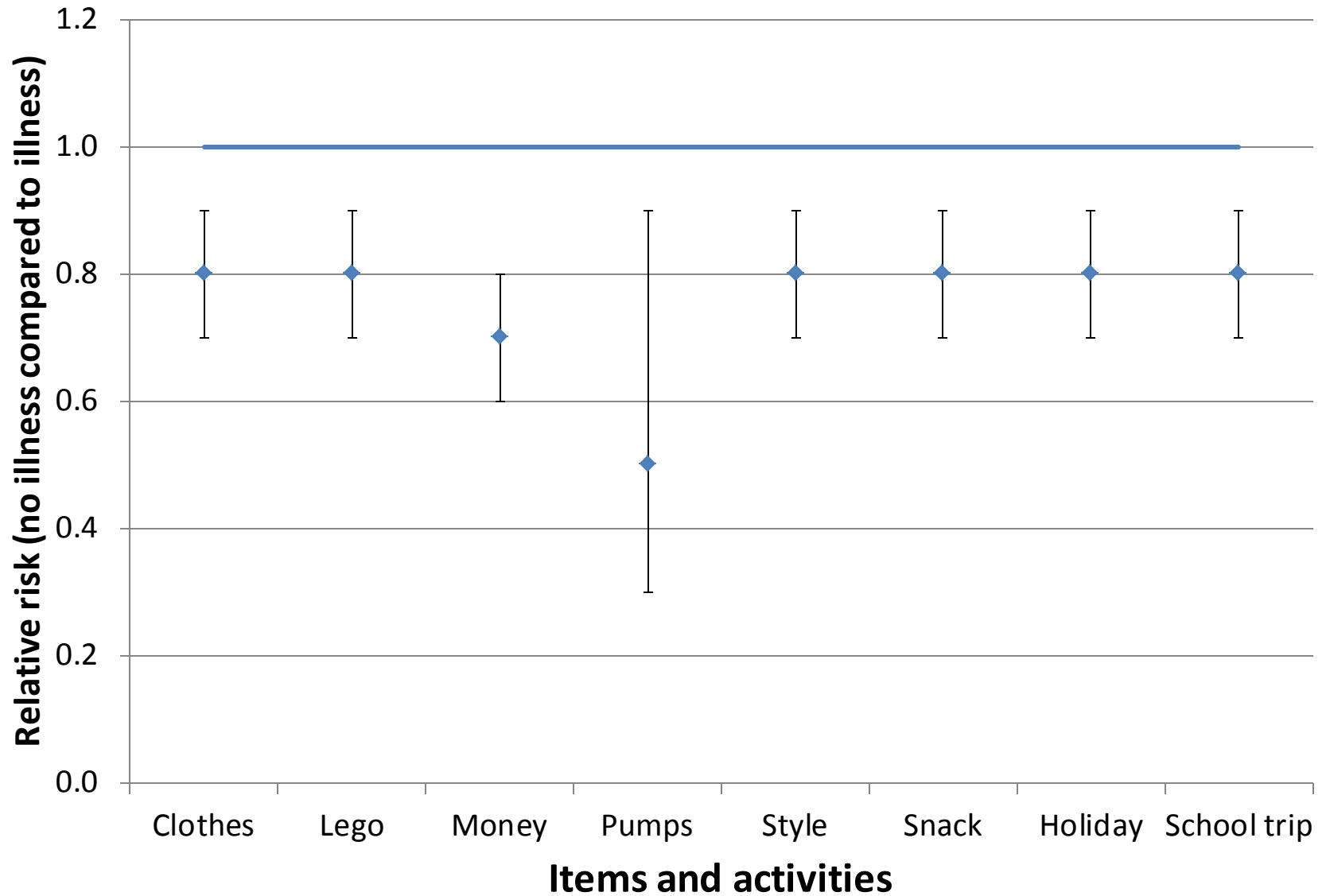
Trousers, money, MP3, trainers and snack all 5+ significant differences

Education, objective health and income related to the most items/activities

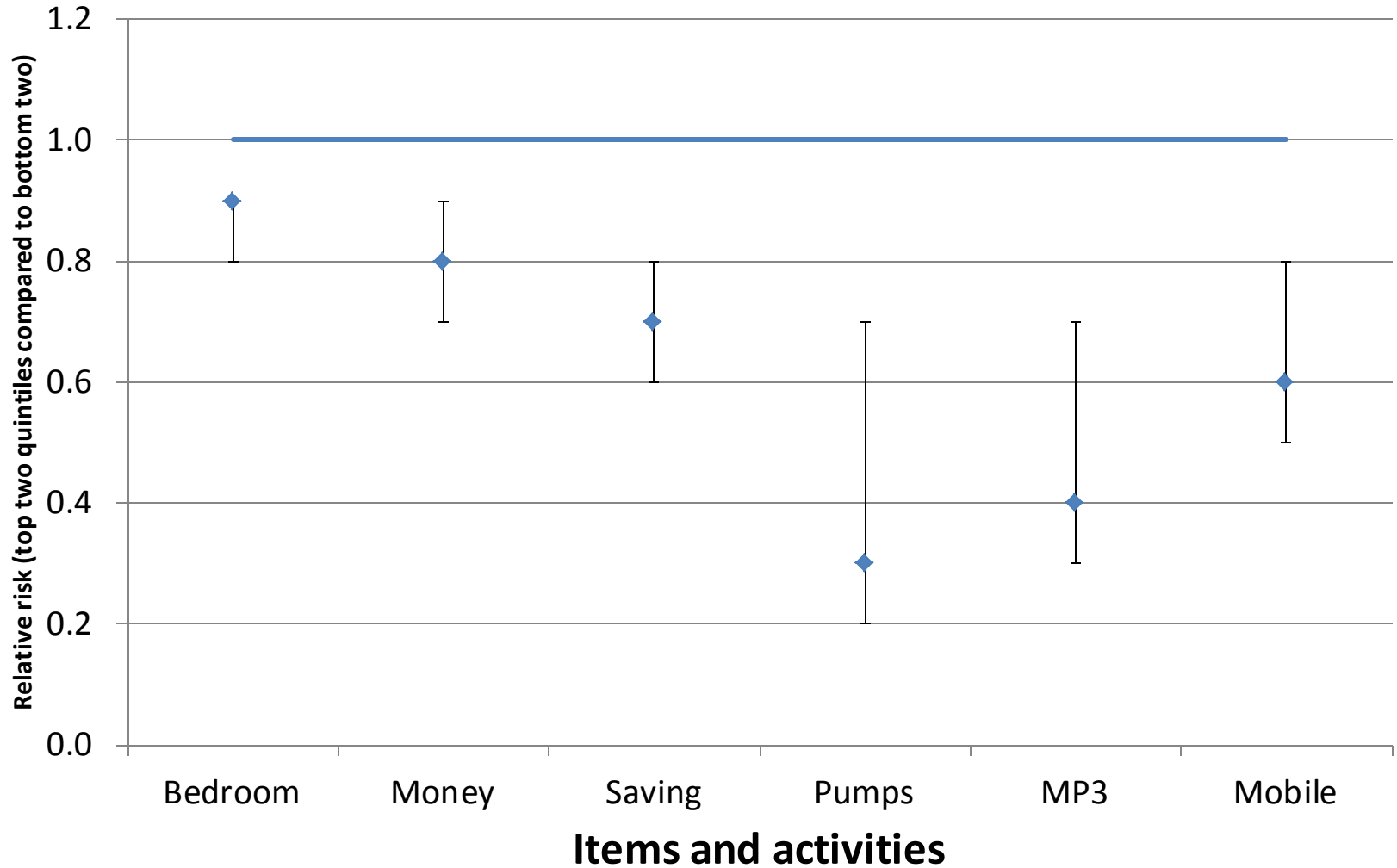
Education



Limiting illness/disability



Income





Differences by sub-group

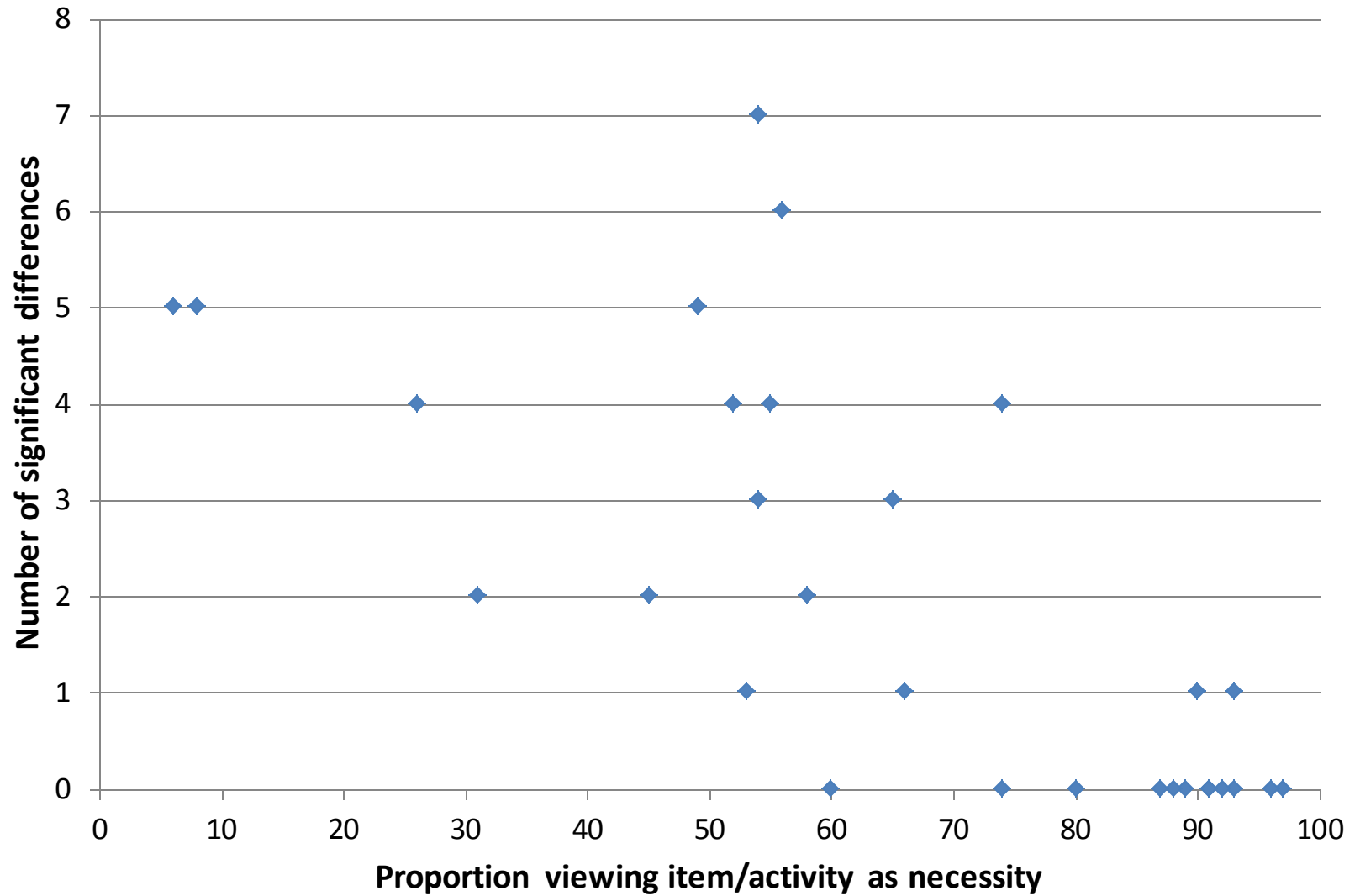
Generally fewer significant differences between sub-groups of the population for items and activities where support was stronger

Very few items, and no activities, with strong (>75%) support and any significant sub-group differences

- Three meals – difference base on age group

- Meat – difference based on educational level

Differences by sub-group



Differences by sub-group

Some sub-groupings with non-linear associations to % seeing items/activities as necessities

Significant U-shaped relationship with age for four items and activities:

Bedroom (lowest % at age 45)

Save (lowest % at age 47)

Style (lowest % at age 37)

Snack (lowest % at age 42)

Most likely age group to be parents of children who these items are relevant for?

But presence of children in household not significantly associated with differences for any of these items/activities



Differences by sub-group

Significant, inverted-U shape associations with income quintile (ie. richest and poorest least likely to see as necessity) for:

Clothes

Money

Holiday

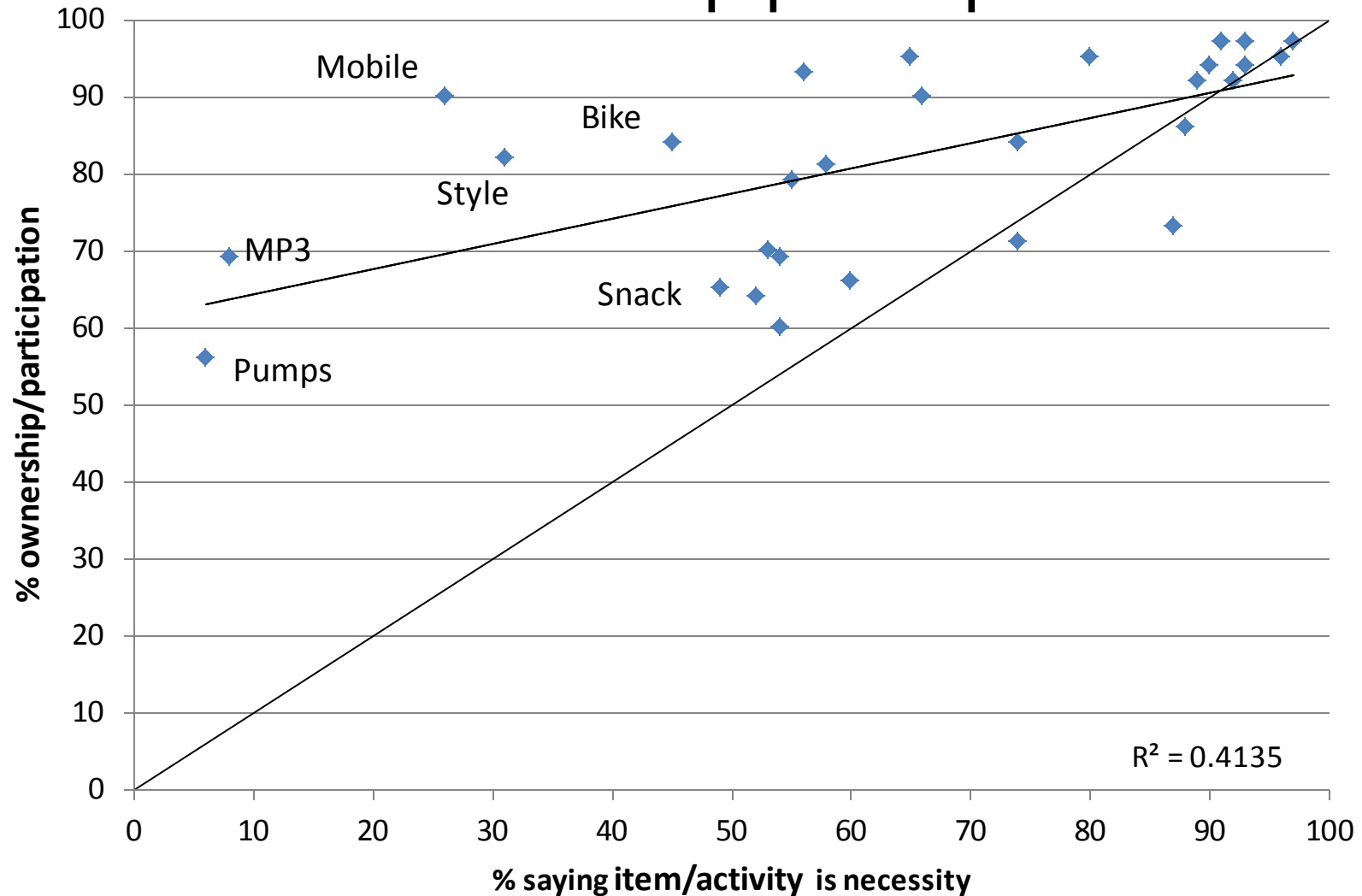
All with moderate levels of support:

Clothes 65%

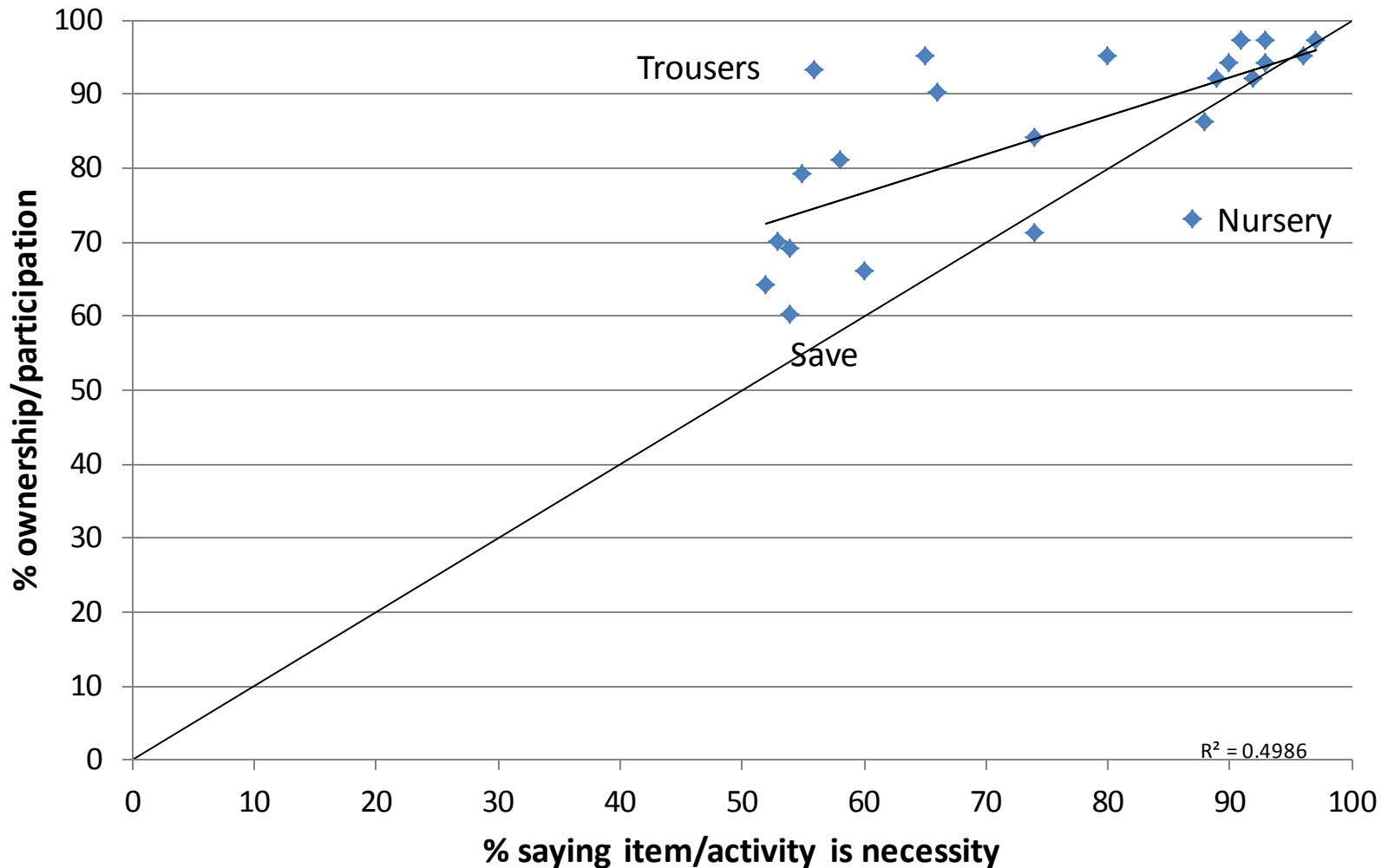
Money 54%

Holiday 52%

Perceptions of necessity by ownership/participation – all



Perceptions of necessity by ownership/participation – just necessities



Protecting children – perceptions of necessities

| | % say necessity for adults | % say necessity for children |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Two/three meals a day | 91 | 93 |
| Fresh fruit/veg daily | 83 | 96 |
| Celebrations on special occasions | 80 | 91 |
| Warm coat | 79 | 97 |
| Meat/fish | 76 | 90 |
| Hobby | 70 | 88 |
| Two pairs shoes | 54 | 93 |
| Annual holiday | 42 | 52 |

Protecting children – adults and children in households with children

| | % adults in hh with children have | % children have |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Two/three meals a day | 97 | 97 |
| Fresh fruit/veg daily | 89 | 95 |
| Celebrations on special occasions | 93 | 97 |
| Warm coat | 90 | 97 |
| Meat/fish | 93 | 94 |
| Hobby | 63 | 86 |
| Two pairs shoes | 85 | 94 |
| Annual holiday | 55 | 64 |

In 93% of households where children go without adequate food, at least one adult skimped on their food ‘sometimes’ or ‘always’ to ensure others have enough to eat.

Conclusions

Perceptions of necessities for children have for the most part remained relatively stable between 1999 and 2012.

- Some items – eg. computer and internet – more important.

- Some items identified as important by children meet criteria for SPNs

- Poverty evidently viewed as a relative issue

Perceptions of necessities very stable across sub-groups

- Most differences based on education, income and health

- Worse-off more likely to see items/activities as necessities

- Sub group differences greater where there is less strong agreement that item/activity is necessary

Perceptions of necessity are somewhat related to prevalence of ownership

- Stronger relationship amongst necessities

- Not all items/activities which are owned by a (substantial) majority seen as necessities

Adults and parents are protective of children

- Stronger support for items/activities as necessities for children

- Adults in households with children go without to provide for children

The Extent of Poverty in the UK

How Many People are Poor and Deprived and How Do We Know?

David Gordon
Professor of Social Justice
Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research
University of Bristol



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK





PSEUK Headline findings

Almost 18 million people cannot afford adequate housing conditions; 12 million people are too poor to engage in common social activities; one in three people cannot afford to heat their homes adequately in the winter and four million children and adults aren't properly fed by today's standards.

One in every six (17 per cent) adults in paid work are poor

The percentage of households who fall below society's minimum standard of living has increased from 14 per cent to 33 per cent over the last 30 years, despite the size of the economy doubling.



Hunger in the UK

There is widespread public agreement on what constitutes a minimally acceptable diet. Over 90% agree that, for children, this means: three meals a day; fresh fruit and vegetables; and meat, fish or a vegetarian equivalent at least once a day.

Yet well over half a million children live in families who cannot afford to feed them properly.

*'I go without for the children so they have proper meals.
I can live on one meal a day.'* Jennie, single parent of 3 children

Our research shows that, in households where children go without one or more of these basic food necessities:

In 93% at least one adult skimp on their own food 'sometimes' or 'often' to ensure others have enough to eat.

Drawing the Poverty Line

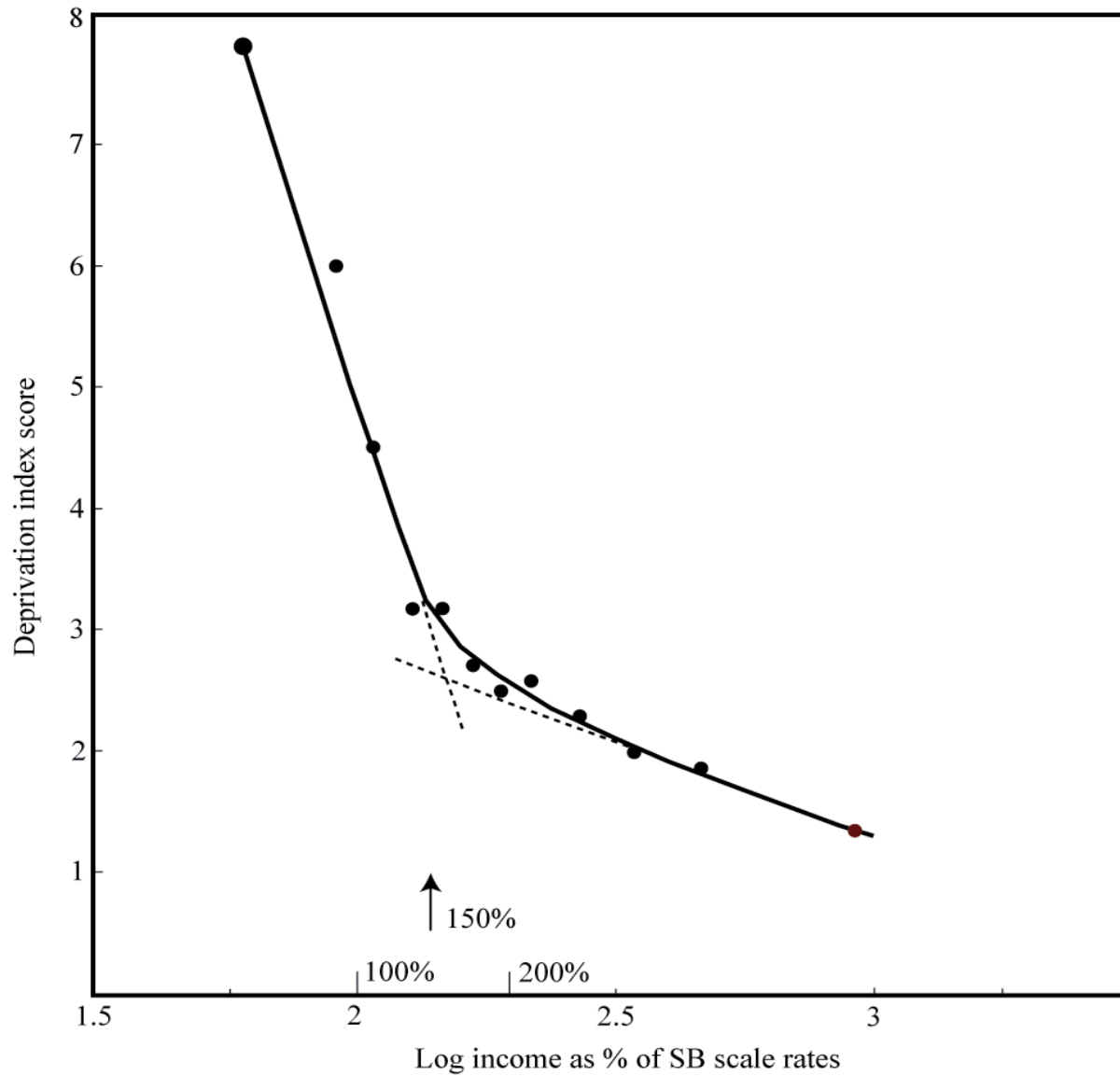
Townsend's Scientific Definitions of Poverty

Poverty can be defined as;

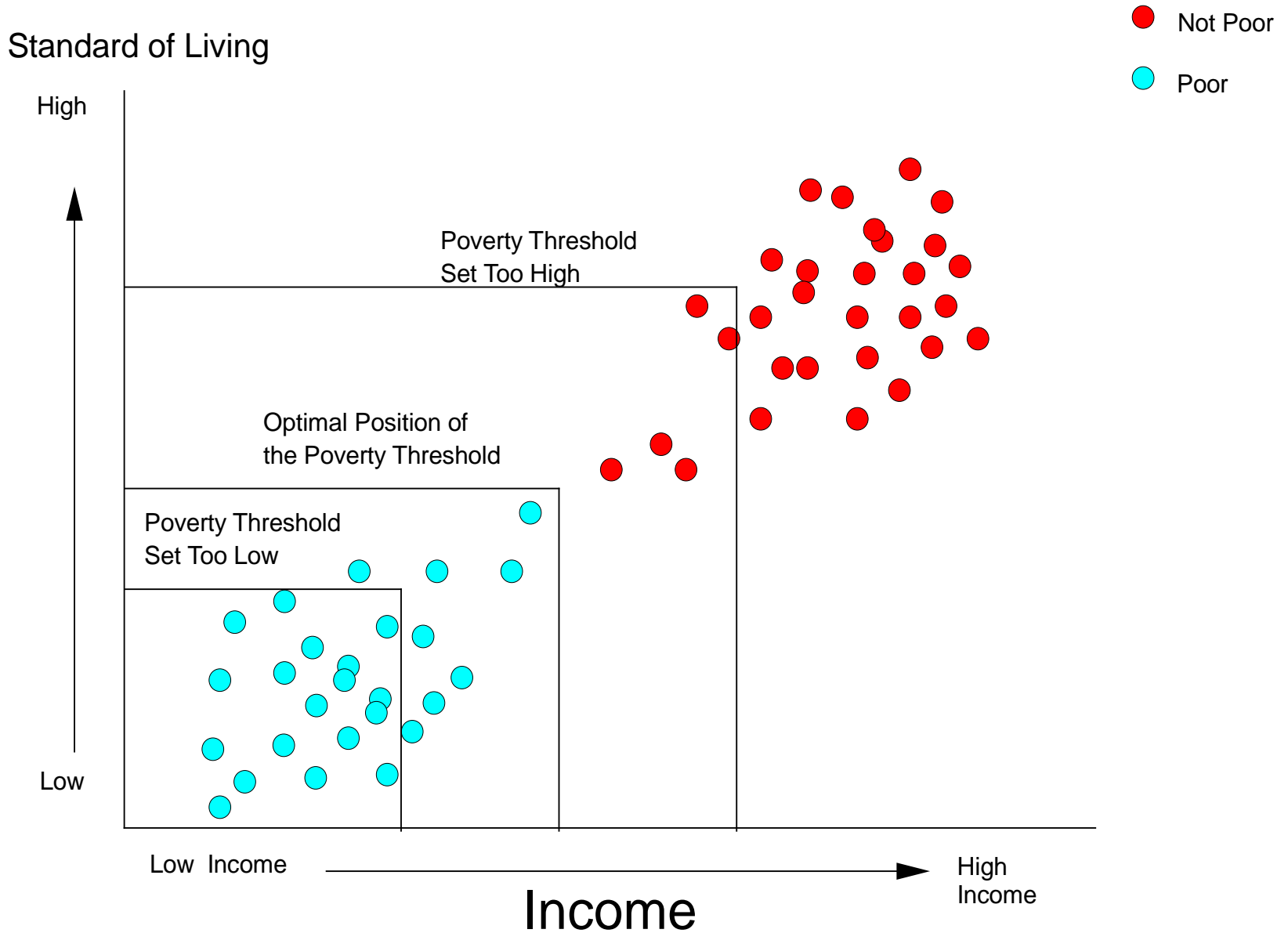
Command over insufficient resources over time

The result of poverty is *deprivation*

Modal Deprivation by Logarithm of Income as a Percentage of Supplementary Benefit Scale Rates (Townsend, 1979)



Definition of poverty



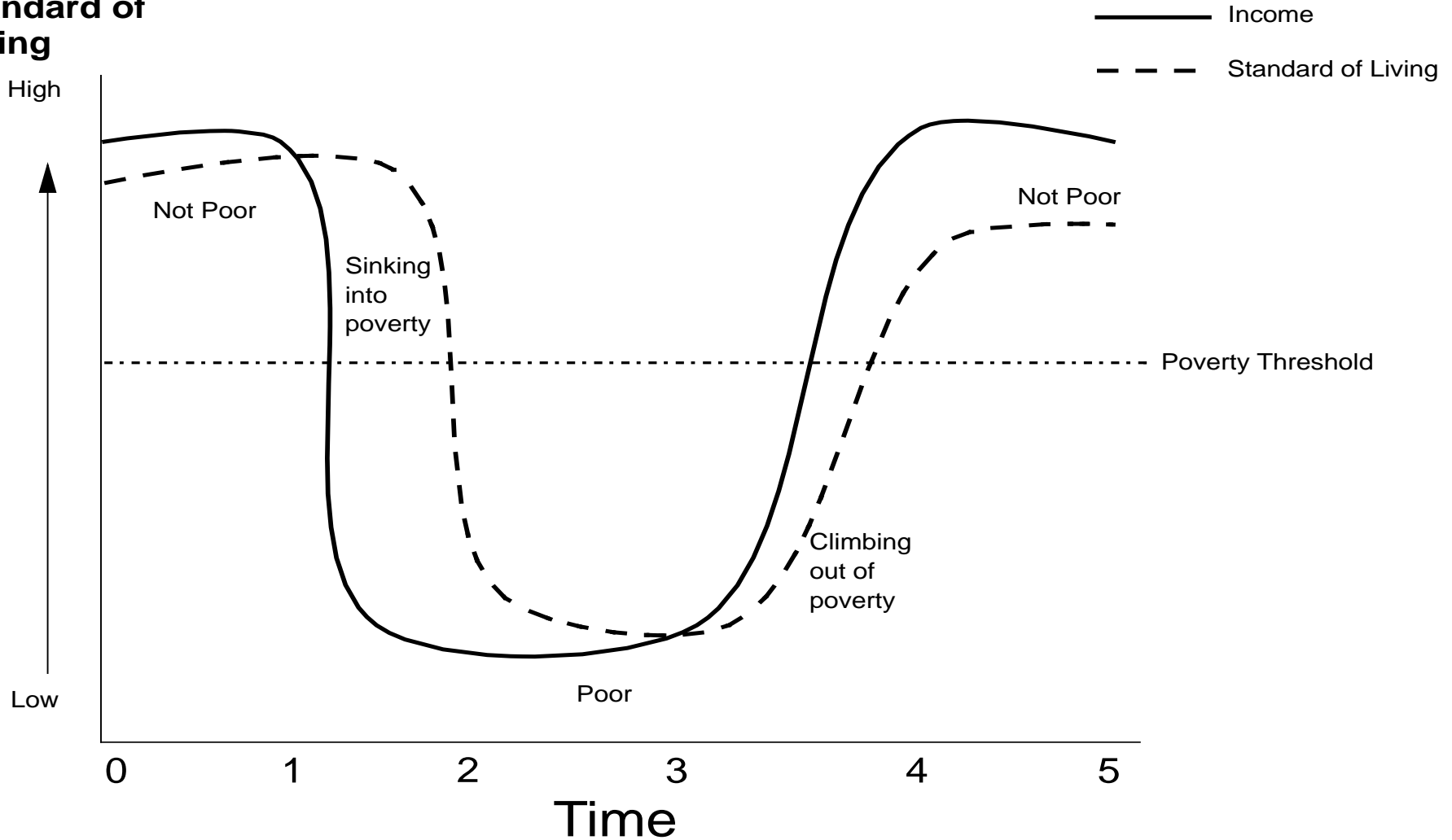
Peter Townsend's concept of dynamic poverty

“poverty is a dynamic, not a static concept... Our general theory, then, should be that individuals and families whose resources over time fall seriously short of the resources commanded by the average individual or family in the community in which they live . . . are in poverty.”

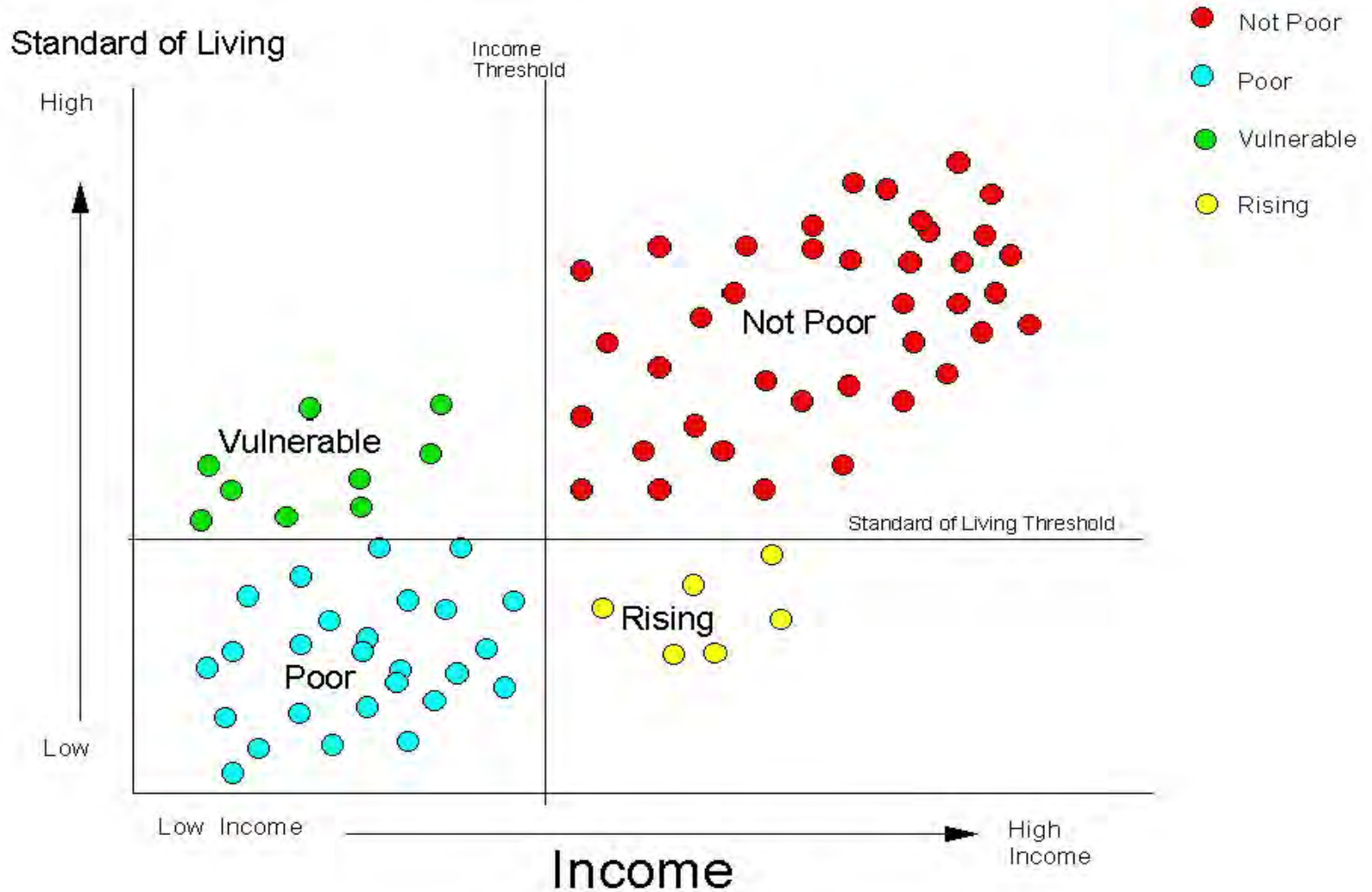
Townsend (1962, p 219)

Theoretical model of the dynamics of poverty in rich societies

**Income and
Standard of
Living**



Poverty Groups



Poverty Rate in the UK (PSEUK 2012 Survey)

| | % |
|-------------------|----|
| Poor | 22 |
| Rising | 1 |
| Vulnerable | 10 |
| Not Poor | 67 |

Subjective poverty in the UK (2012)

| | | % |
|---|----------------------------|-----------|
| Household income needed to avoid poverty | | |
| | Above that level of income | 54 |
| | About the same | 21 |
| | Below that level of income | 25 |
| Felt embarrassed because of low income | | |
| | Yes | 22 |
| | No | 77 |

Measuring Deprivation

Primary Analytical Aim

To identify one optimal deprivation index with age and gender appropriate measures to allow comparisons of living standards between and within households – a single all persons deprivation index (age 0 to 80+)

Each deprivation measure needs to be;

1. Widely approved (50+% - democratic/consensual threshold)
2. Valid
3. Reliable
4. Additive

Widely Approved – More than 50% consider the item/activity to be a necessity

Validity – Logistic Regression of each deprivation indicator by Subjective Poverty (3 measures) and General Health (controlling for age & gender)

Reliability – Classical Test Theory and Item Response Theory

Additivity – first order and second order interactions of deprivation items by equivalised disposable household income

A common analytical framework was agreed based on an updating of the 1999 Poverty & Social Exclusion Survey deprivation index construction methodology (Pantazis *et al*, 2006) as modified by Guio *et al* (2012).

| Adult Items | % | Adult Activities | % |
|---|----------|--|-----------|
| Heating to keep home adequately warm | 96 | Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions | 90 |
| Damp-free home | 94 | Celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas | 80 |
| Two meals a day | 91 | Attending weddings, funerals and other such occasions | 79 |
| Replace or repair broken electrical goods such as refrigerator or washing machine | 86 | A hobby or leisure activity | 70 |
| Fresh fruit and vegetables every day | 83 | Taking part in sport/exercise activities or classes | 56 |
| Washing machine | 82 | Friends or family round for a meal or drink at least once a month | 46 |
| All recommended dental work/treatment | 82 | A holiday away from home for one week a year, not staying with relatives | 42 |
| A warm waterproof coat | 79 | Going out socially once a fortnight | 34 |
| Telephone at home | 77 | Attending church, mosque, synagogue or other places of worship | 30 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day | 76 | Visits to friends or family in other parts of the country 4 times a year | 27 |
| Curtains or window blinds | 71 | A meal out once a month | 25 |
| Household contents insurance | 70 | Holidays abroad once a year | 18 |
| Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration | 69 | Going out for a drink once a fortnight | 17 |
| Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews | 69 | Going to the cinema, theatre or music event once a month | 15 |
| A table, with chairs, at which all the family can eat | 64 | | |
| To be able to pay an unexpected expense of £500 | 55 | | |
| Two pairs of all-weather shoes | 54 | | |
| Regular savings for rainy days | 52 | | |
| Regular payments into an occupational or private pension | 51 | | |
| Television | 51 | 20 items above 50% threshold | |
| Presents for friends or family once a year | 46 | 5 activities above 50% threshold | |
| Replace worn out clothes with new ones | 46 | | |
| Car | 44 | | |
| A small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family | 42 | | |
| Internet connection at home | 41 | | |
| Mobile phone | 40 | | |
| Home computer | 40 | | |
| Replace any worn out furniture | 39 | | |
| An outfit to wear for social or family occasions such as parties and weddings | 38 | | |
| A roast joint once a week | 36 | | |
| Hair done or cut regularly | 35 | | |

Validity

Odds Ratios for Can't afford Necessities by Poor Health Variables

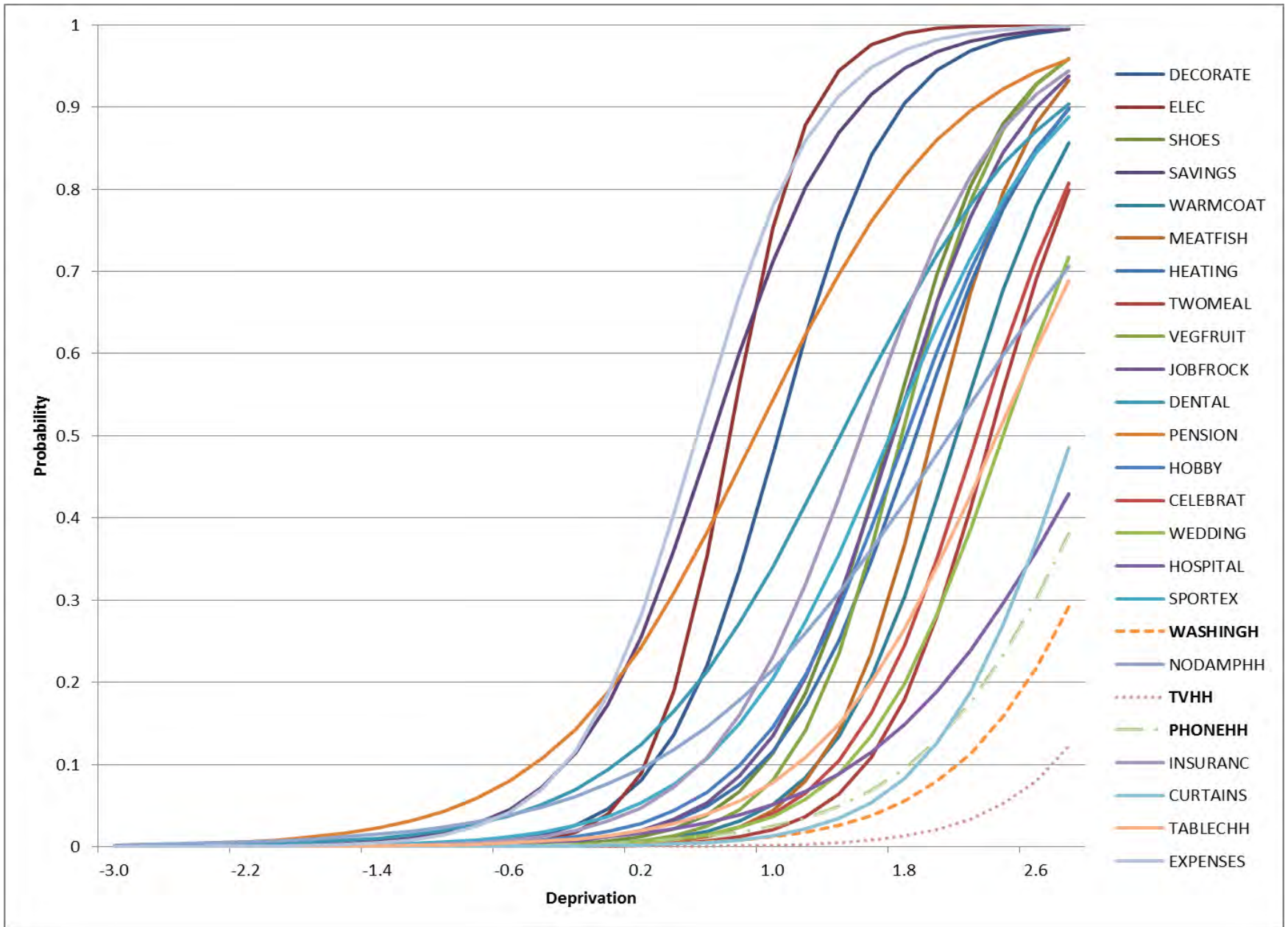
| Item/Activity | General Health | Long Term Illness |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day | 7.5 | 3.2 |
| Attending weddings, funerals and other such occasions | 7.1 | 3.9 |
| Fresh fruit and vegetables every day | 6.8 | 3.6 |
| Two pairs of all-weather shoes | 6.7 | 3.1 |
| Presents for friends or family once a year | 6.6 | 2.5 |
| Heating to keep home adequately warm | 6.4 | 3.4 |
| Replace worn out clothes with new (not second hand) ones | 5.7 | 2.9 |
| Two meals a day | 5.6 | 3.1 |
| Curtains or window blinds | 5.6 | 2.4 |
| A table, with chairs, at which all the family can eat | 5.3 | 2.8 |
| A warm waterproof coat | 5.3 | 2.7 |
| Celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas | 5.2 | 4.0 |
| Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews | 5.2 | 2.7 |
| Washing machine | 5.1 | 3.4 |

Reliability

Classical Test Theory Model

| Deprivation Items for Adults and Children | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Enough money to replace or repair broken electrical goods such as a fridge or washing machine | .823 |
| Could your household afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £500? | .824 |
| Enough money to keep home in a decent state of decoration | .825 |
| Regular savings (of at least £20) for rainy days | .828 |
| Home Insurance | .828 |
| Two pairs of all-weather shoes | .829 |
| Appropriate clothes for job interviews | .829 |
| Heating to keep home adequately warm | .830 |
| Fresh fruit and vegetables everyday | .830 |
| A hobby or leisure activity. | .830 |
| Taking part in sport/exercise activities or classes | .830 |
| All recommended dental work/treatment | .831 |
| A warm waterproof coat | .832 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day | .832 |
| Regular payments into an occupational or private pension | .832 |
| Celebrations on special occasions, such as Christmas | .833 |
| Damp-free home | .833 |
| Table and chairs at which all the family can eat | .833 |
| DEPRIVATION SCALE ALPHA | .837 |

IRT Item Characteristic Curves for Adult and Household Deprivations



Cluster 1 – Four deprivation which asked about financial deprivation i.e. the ability to make regular payments/savings and afford to repair broken electrical goods/decorate.

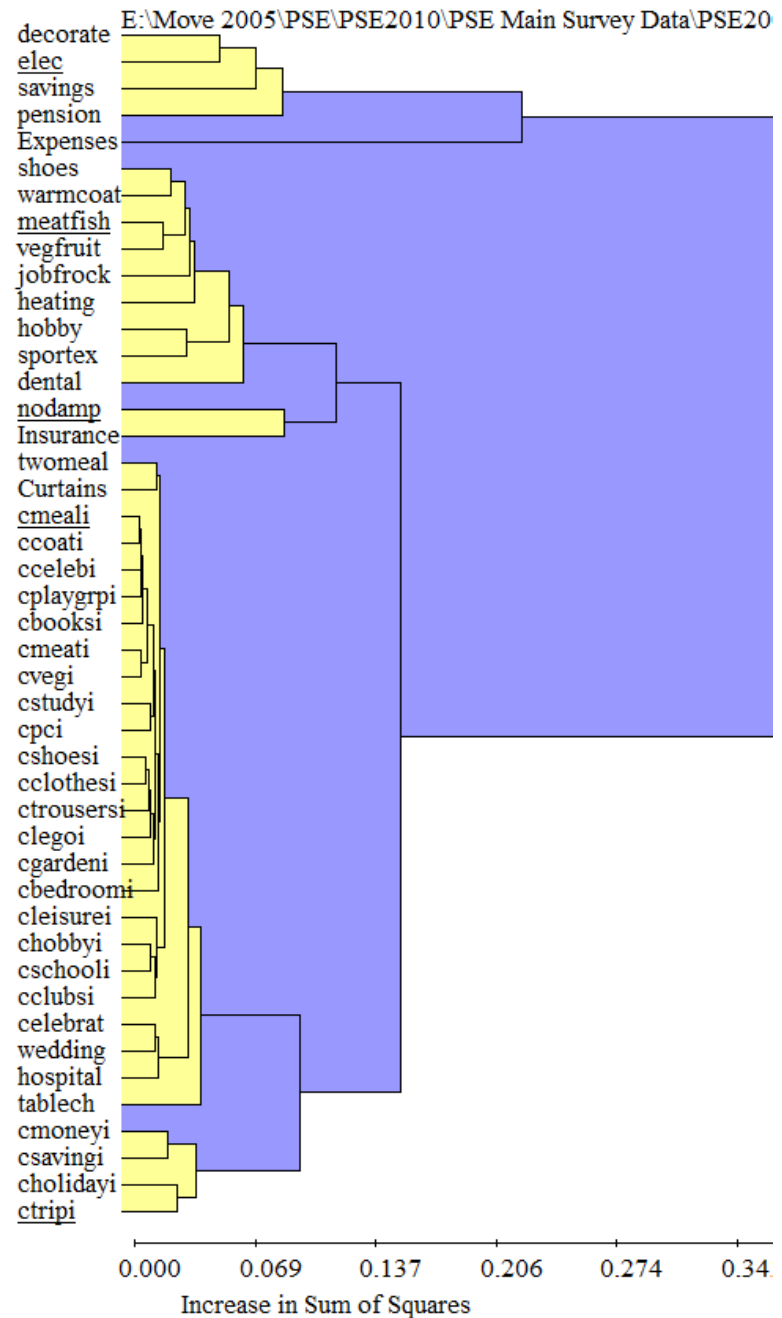
Cluster 2 – only contains the item ‘Expenses’ and it is associated with the Cluster 1.

Cluster 3 – this cluster contains nine deprivation questions answered by all adults in the household which relate to personal deprivations e.g. diet, keeping warm, dental care, etc

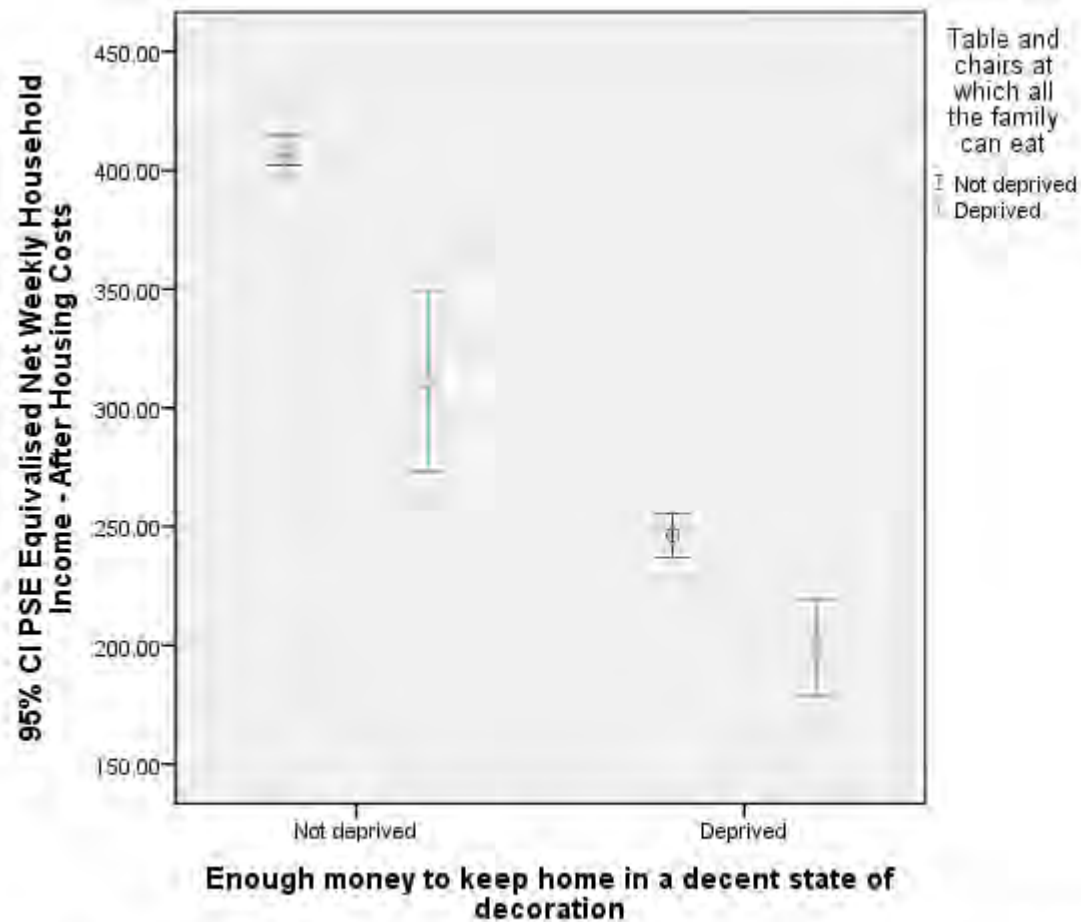
Cluster 4 – contains two housing items – no damp and contents insurance

Cluster 5 – contains 25 children’s and family life deprivation items

Cluster 6 – contains children’s financial deprivation (pocket money and savings) and two leisure items (school trips which cost money and holidays).



Additivity



Cases weighted by Normalised PSE Individual weight - use this weight for individual level analyses

Deprivation Items which failed the tests

Five out of 49 deprivation items which received 50% or more support from the population (consensual deprivation) have been excluded from the final deprivation index for the following reasons;

Validity & Reliability Criteria

Television

Validity Criteria

Indoor games suitable for their ages

Reliability Criteria

Washing machine

Telephone

Additivity Criteria

Construction toys such as Lego

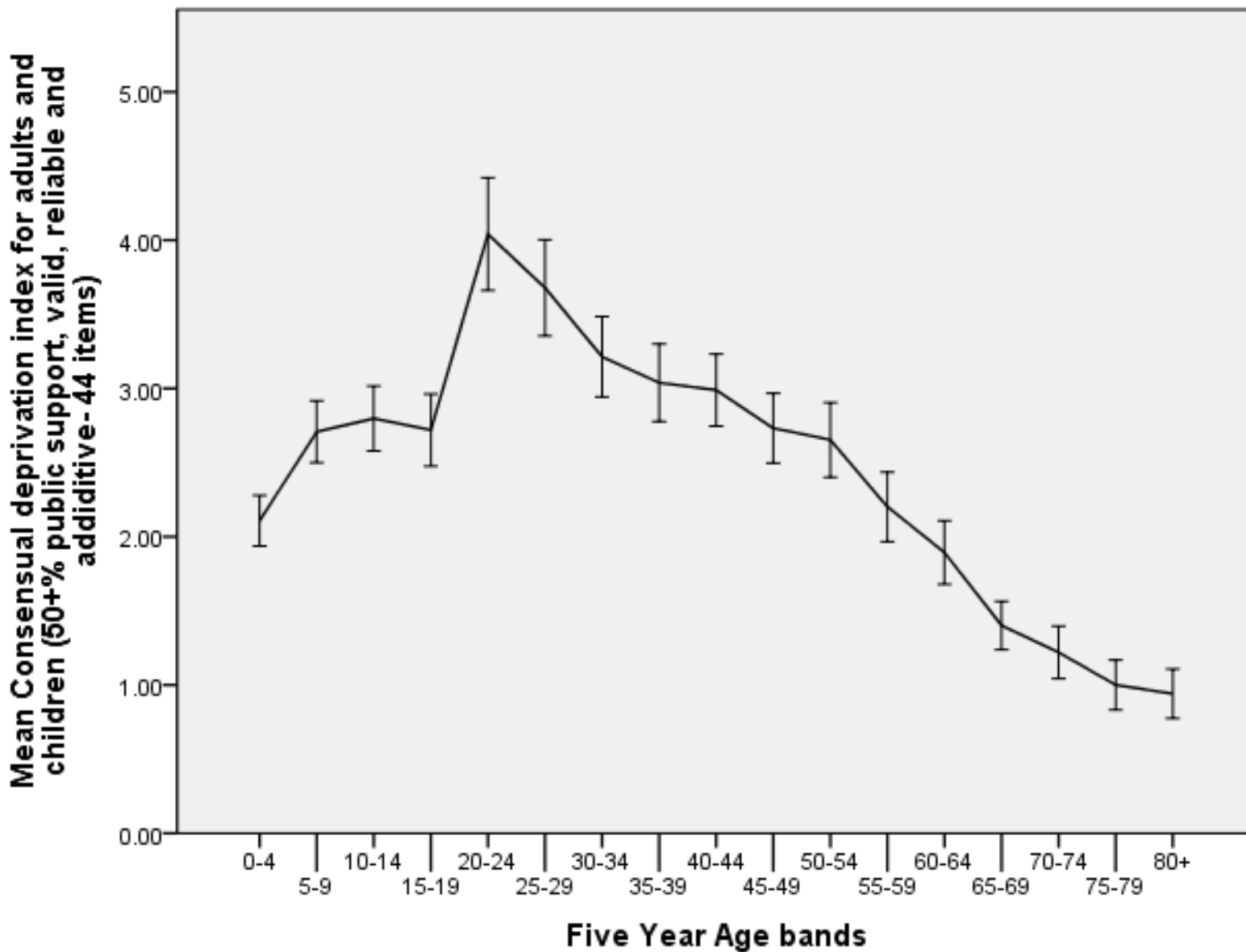
The final index includes 22 adult and household deprivation items and 22 children's deprivation items. Adults score zero for all children's deprivation items and vice versa. Both adults and children can suffer from all household deprivation items (e.g. a damp home). The following age appropriate criteria were used for the children's deprivation items

- 10-17 for Bedrooms for every child of different sex 10 or over.
- 5-17 for Place to study, Computer & Internet for homework, Hobby or leisure activity, Going on a school trip, Savings and Pocket money.
- 2-17 for Suitable books for age and Children's clubs/activities.
- Under 5 for Toddler/nursery or playgroup.
- All other child deprivations are 0-17.

Thus, the theoretical maximum possible deprivation index score by age group was;

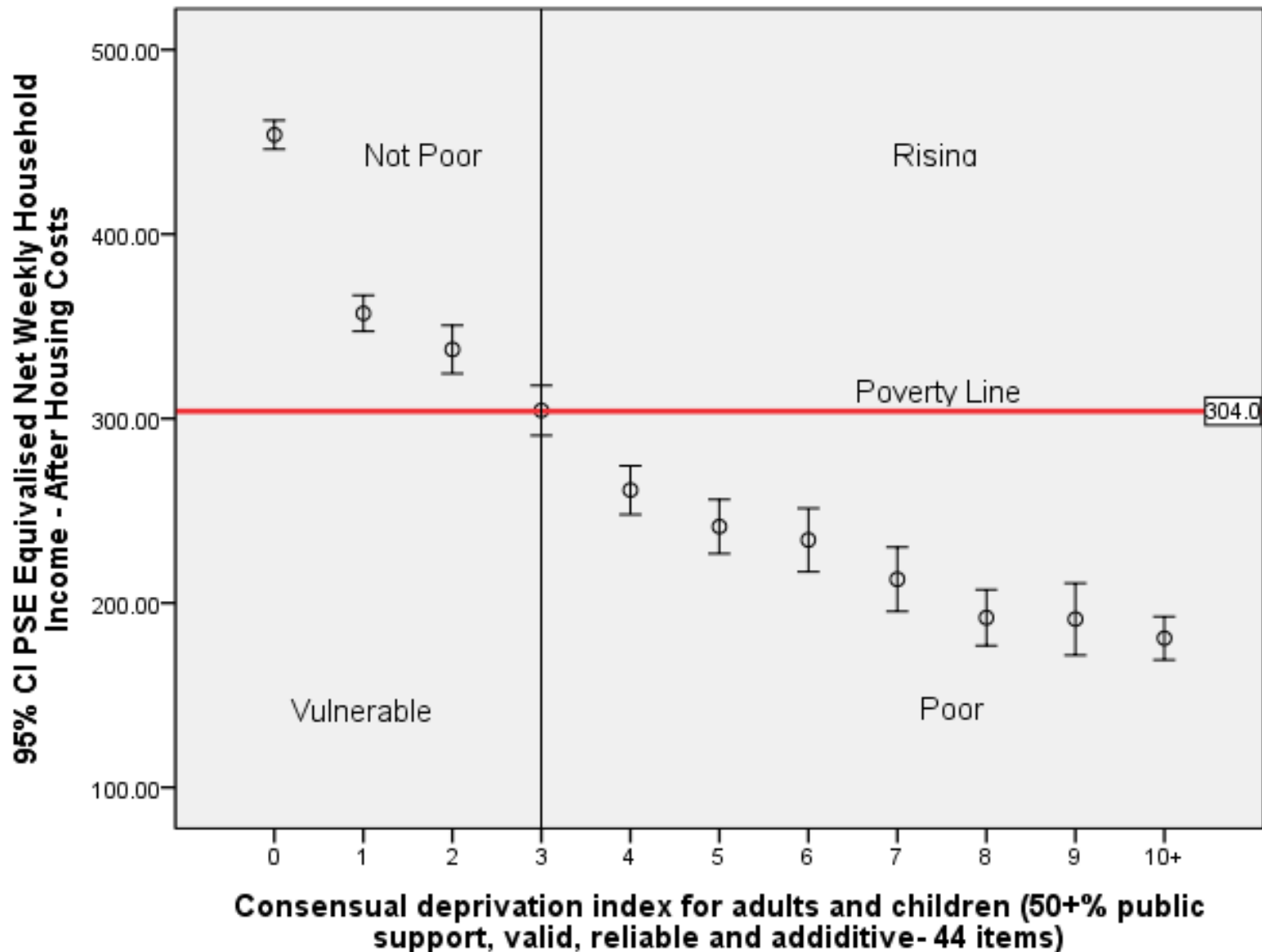
| Age Group | Max Score |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Adults (18+) | 22 |
| Children (10 to 17) | 26 |
| Children (5 to 10) | 25 |
| Children (2 to 4) | 21 |
| Children (0 to 1) | 19 |

PSEUK: Average Deprivation Score by Age



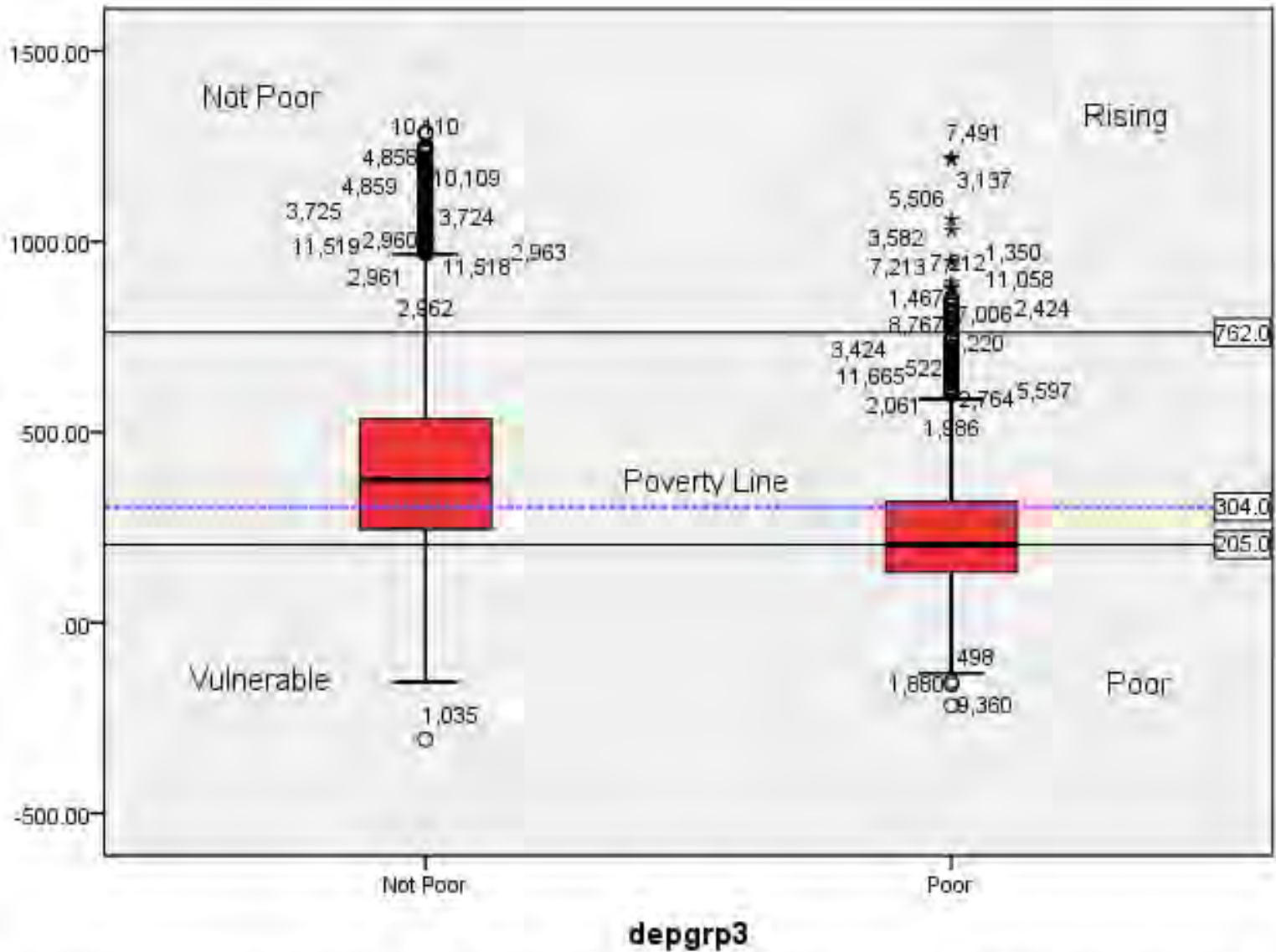
Error Bars: 95% CI

PSEUK: Optimal Poverty Line and Deprivation Thresholds



Cases weighted by Normalised PSE Individual weight - use this weight for individual level analyses

Refining the Income Thresholds for the Poverty Groups



Cases weighted by Normalised PSE Individual weight - use this weight for individual level analyses

Child Poverty is Increasing

CPA poverty measure results for children (under 18)
PSE2012 compared with HBAI 2011/12

| CPA Measure | PSE2012 % | HBAI 2011/12 % |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| Relative income | 20 | 17 |
| Absolute income | 25 | 20 |
| Combined low income and material deprivation | 12 | 12 |
| Severe low income and material deprivation | 4 | 3 |

Note: the PSE2012 children are a subsample from the HBAI 2011/12
i.e. except for new babies they are mostly the same children one year older.

Poverty and Social Exclusion in Scotland

Nick Bailey, Kirsten Besemer, Glen Bramley & Maria Gannon
University of Glasgow/Heriot-Watt University



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



The Scottish Question

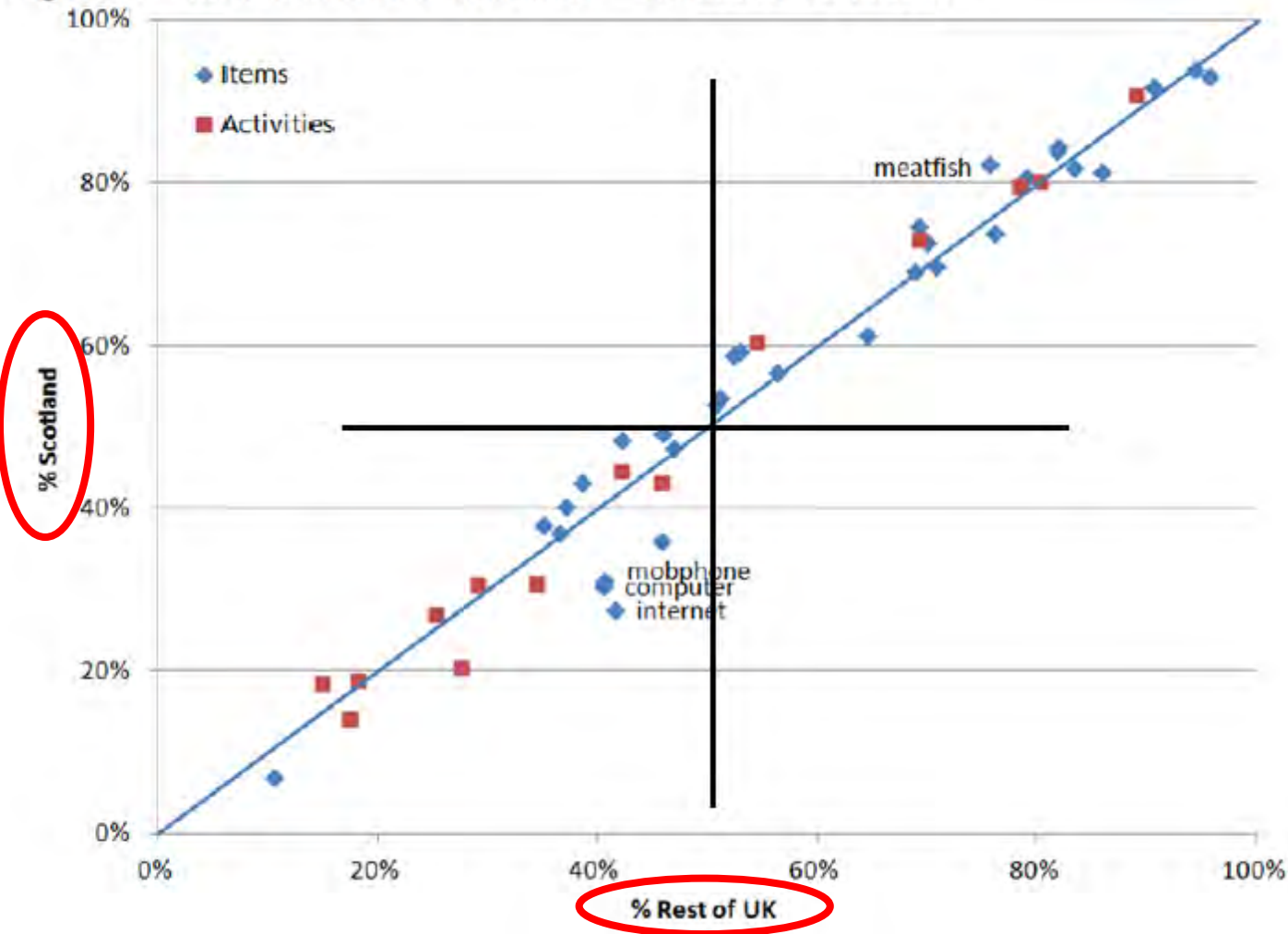
“Should Scotland be an independent country?”

1. Do Scots have a different view of the ***‘necessities of life’***?
2. Is ***poverty*** higher in Scotland and, if so, for who and why?
3. Is ***social exclusion*** more or less severe in Scotland – on which aspects or domains? Is the ***nature of exclusion*** different?



1. Setting the poverty standard

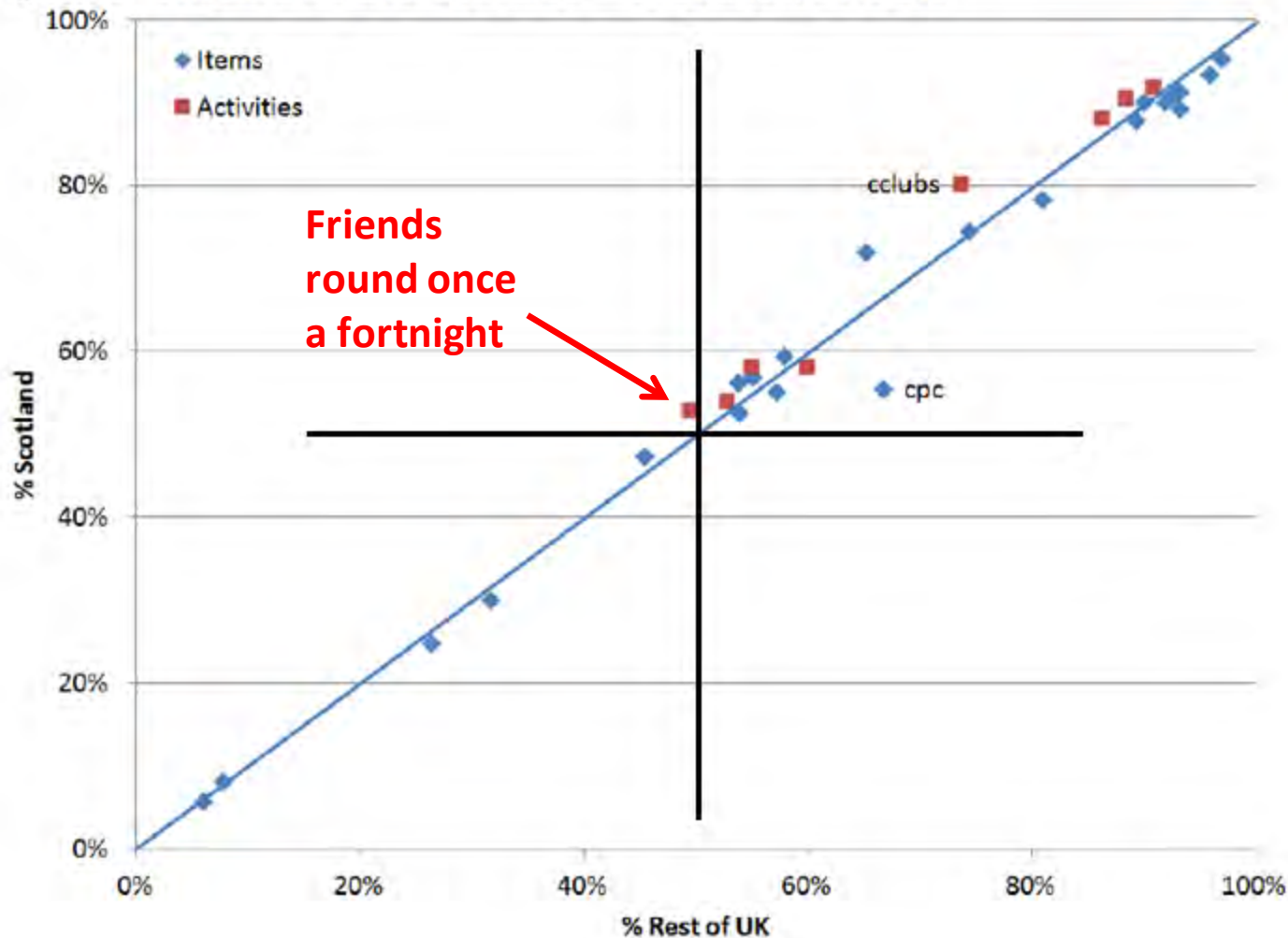
Figure 1: Adult items and activities – Scotland vs RoUK



Gannon & Bailey
(2014) *Social
Policy & Society*
13 (3), 321-36

1. Setting the poverty standard

Figure 2: Child items and activities – Scotland vs RoUK



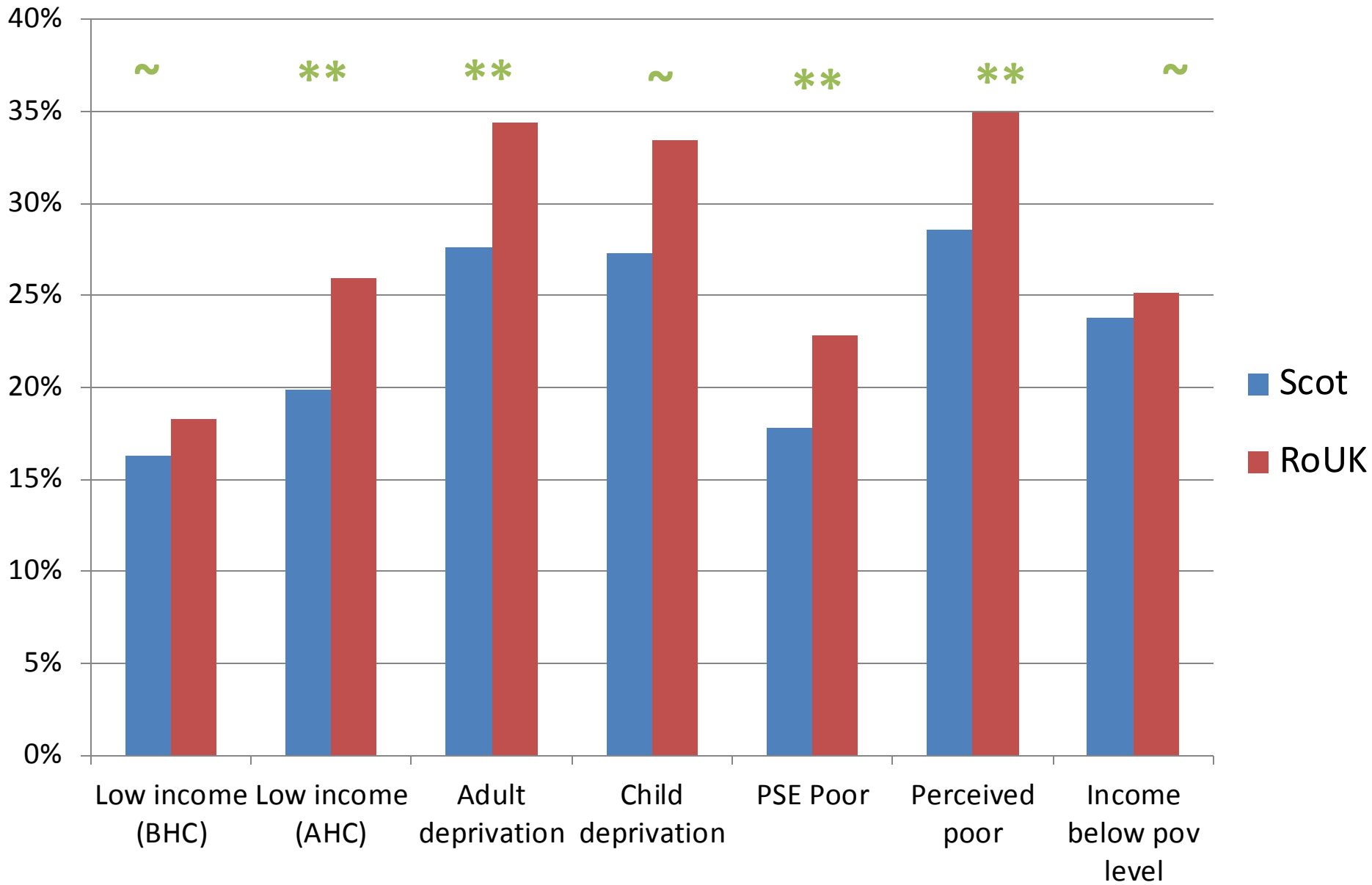
1. Setting the poverty standard

- Views about necessities virtually identical
 - Confirms results from 1999 (Pantazis *et al.*, 2006)
- Fits with wider research on social and political attitudes
 - Image of Scotland as more 'progressive' tends to be over-stated

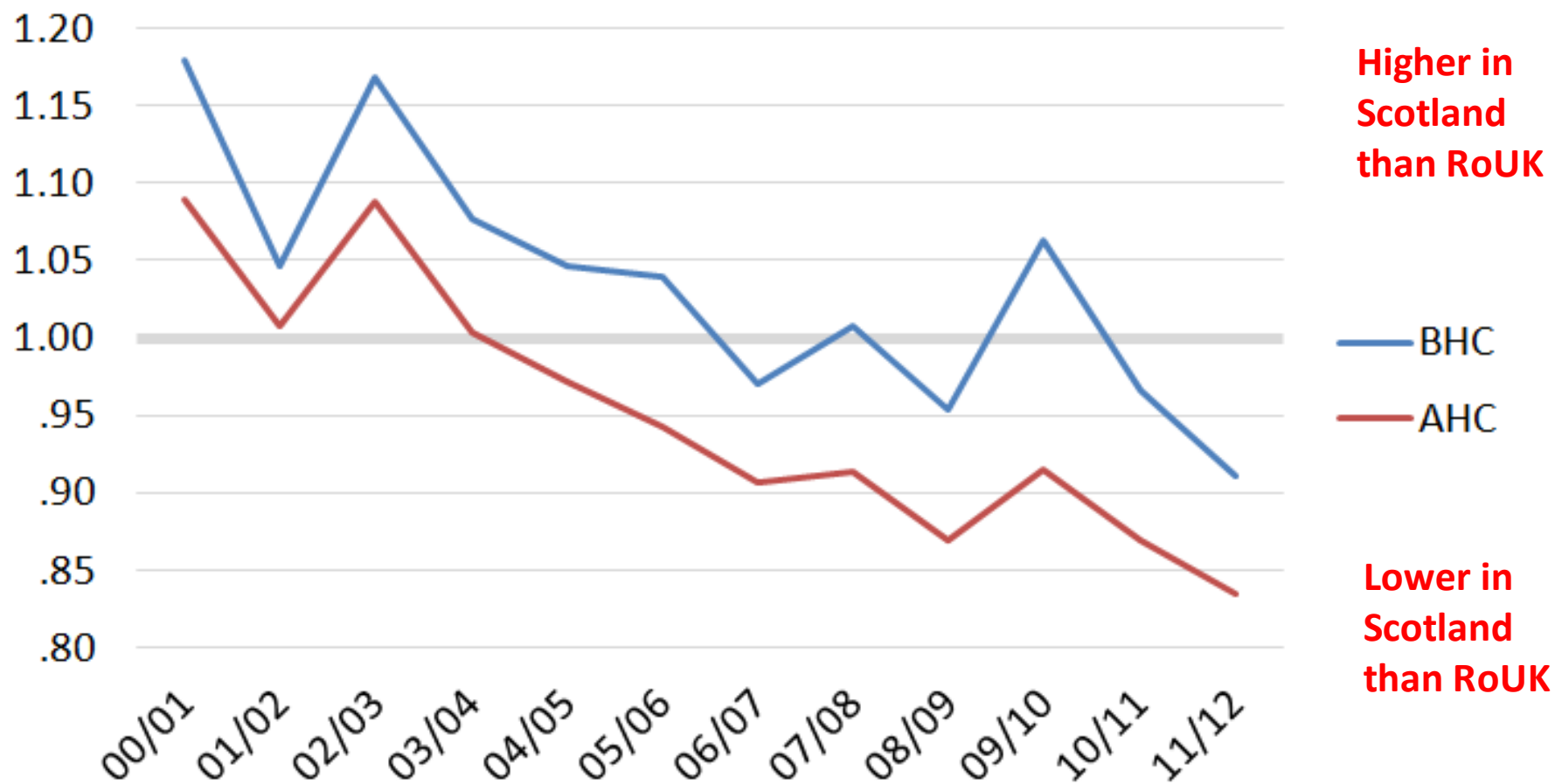
2. Poverty in Scotland

- Low income x 2
 - 60% of median, BHC and AHC
- Deprivation x 2
 - Adult (3+ from 22) and child (2+ from 22)
- PSE poverty
 - Deprived (3+) AND low income (below median)
- Subjective poverty x 2
 - Perceived poor; income below poverty level





Relative Risks of low income poverty – Scotland vs RoUK (BHC and AHC) – 2000/1 to 2011/12

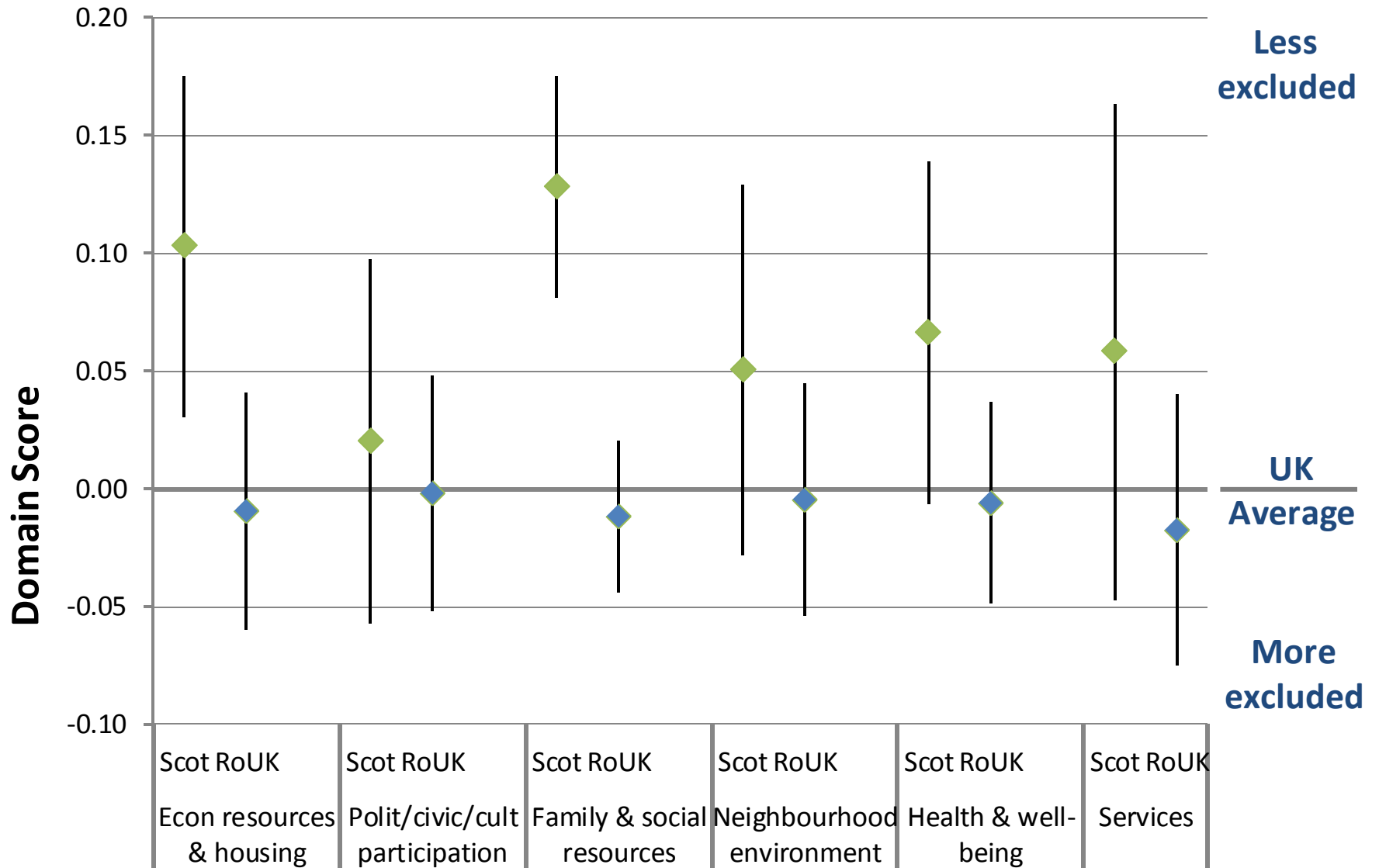


Source: Bailey (2014) - FRS/HBAI series.

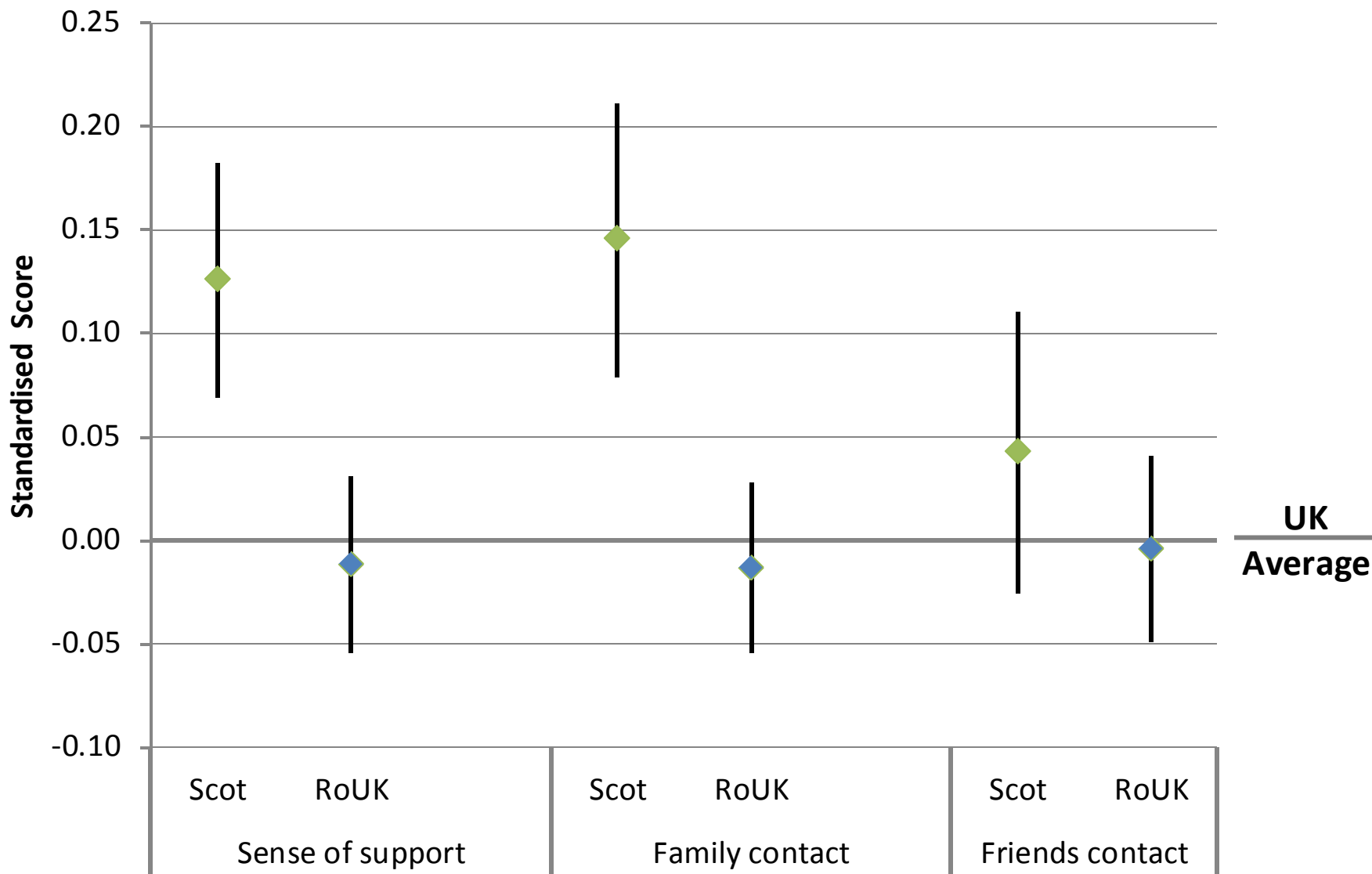
3. Social exclusion in Scotland

| Domain Groups | Elements |
|---|--|
| Economic resources, housing | Income, quality of goods, deprivation, financial stress, housing problems. |
| Political, civic, cultural participation | Political activities, sense of political efficacy, civic organisations, activities, education, cultural activities |
| Family & social resources | Social networks – family & friends, sense of support |
| Neighbourhood environment | Neighbourhood problems |
| Health & Well-Being | General health, mental health, subjective well-being, limiting illness or disability |
| Access to services | Services unavailable/inadequate |

Domain Group scores – Scotland vs RoUK



Family and Social Resources – Scotland vs RoUK



Conclusions

- UK consensual poverty measure can be applied to Scotland – attitudes no different
- In general, poverty and social exclusion in Scotland no different or a bit better
 - Poverty around one fifth lower in Scotland on several measures
 - 200,000 fewer in poverty than if UK rates had applied
- Poverty shift in last 10 years difficult to attribute to policy ‘made in Scotland’

Social Exclusion in the UK

Ruth Levitas and Eldin Fahmy

University of Bristol

19 June 2014



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Social Exclusion in the UK

- The approach to social exclusion in the PSE – multidimensional poverty and the BSEM
- Some headline figures for BSEM indicators
- Social resources and participation



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Defining Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole. (Levitas et al. 2007)



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Social Exclusion in the 1999 PSE

- Impoverishment, or exclusion from adequate resources and income
- Labour market exclusion
- Service exclusion
- Exclusion from social relations



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The Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix (BSEM)

- Resources
 - Economic
 - Access to Services
 - Social
 - Cultural (Education and Skills)
- Participation
 - Economic
 - Social
 - Cultural
 - Civic and Political
- Quality of Life
 - Health and Well-being
 - Living Environment
 - Crime, harm and criminalisation



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Material and Economic Resources

| | % all adults |
|--|--------------|
| Less than 60% PSE median hhld income | 25.5 |
| Income less than 60% threshold in FRS and PSE | 18.5 |
| Cannot afford 5+ social and material necessities | 27.7 |
| In arrears on any bills last year | 23.0 |
| Falling behind with bills | 21.6 |
| Had to borrow money from friends, family or elsewhere | 16.2 |
| Cannot afford unanticipated, necessary expense of £500 | 36.8 |
| Not a home owner | 33.7 |
| Genuinely feels poor all the time | 8.7 |
| Has (well) below average living standards | 12.7 |
| Has been often/mostly poor across lifetime | 10.1 |



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Access to Services

- Lacks adequate access to 3 or more services % all adults
21.3



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Cultural Resources

| | % adults |
|---|----------|
| • Completed full-time education aged 16 or less | 52.2 |
| • Limited language skills (non-native speakers) | 2.9 |



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Social Resources

| | % all adults |
|--|--------------|
| • Less than monthly contact with friends | 5.6 |
| • Speaks to less than 3 friends monthly | 24.4 |
| • Less than monthly contact with relatives | 6.3 |
| • Speaks to less than 3 relatives monthly | 29.8 |
| • Less than monthly contact with friends or family | |
| • Speaks to less than 3 friends/relatives monthly | |
| • Not satisfied with personal relationships | 16.8 |
| • Low social support (score less than 15) | 15.5 |



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Economic Participation

% all adults

- No working age adults in household in paid work 17.0
- Not in paid employment 40.6
- Unemployed more than 12 months in last 5 years 8.0
- Gives any unpaid care (incl. childcare) 47.4
- Not satisfied with current job (in employment only) 14.0



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Common Social Activities

| | % doing activity |
|--|------------------|
| • A hobby or leisure activity | 71 |
| • A week's holiday a year | 59 |
| • Friends and family for a meal or drink once a month | 62 |
| • Going out socially once a fortnight | 54 |
| • Celebrations on special occasions | 92 |
| • A meal out once a month | 59 |
| • Holidays abroad once a year | 42 |
| • Visits to friends and family in other parts of the country | 41 |
| • Going out for a drink once a fortnight | 41 |
| • Attending weddings, funerals | 88 |
| • Visiting friends and family in hospitals/ other institutions | 64 |
| • Attending church, synagogue, mosque or other places of worship | 25 |
| • Going to the cinema, theatre or music event once a month | 35 |
| • Taking part in sport/exercise activities or classes | 44 |



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Social Participation

% adults

- Participates in 5 or fewer common social activities 18.5



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Cultural Participation

- Does not use any listed social and cultural facilities 19.6
(Libraries, public sports facilities, museums and galleries, evening classes, public or community hall)

% adults



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Political and Civic Participation

| | % adults |
|--|----------|
| • Not a member of any listed organisations (e.g. sports, leisure or social club, trade union, campaigning group) | 43.4 |
| • Taken no local or national action (including voting) | 32.0 |
| • Low sense of political efficacy | 23.1 |



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Health and Well-Being

| | % all adults |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| • Fair/bad or very bad general health | 27.2 |
| • Limiting longstanding illness | 22.3 |
| • Poor mental health | |
| • Low life satisfaction | 20.0 |



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Living Environment

| | % all adults |
|--|--------------|
| • Multiple problems with accommodation | 21.6 |
| • Home not in 'good' state of repair | 31.2 |
| • Dissatisfied with accommodation | 11.1 |
| • Dissatisfied with neighbourhood | 14.0 |
| • Experiencing 3+ neighbourhood problems | 24.1 |



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Crime and Social Harm

| | | % all adults |
|--|-----|--------------|
| • Experienced harassment or discrimination | | 15.3 |
| • Has criminal record | 5.1 | |



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Exclusion from Social Relations

Individuals, families and groups can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least are widely encouraged and approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities.

(Townsend 1979: 32)



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Common Social Activities

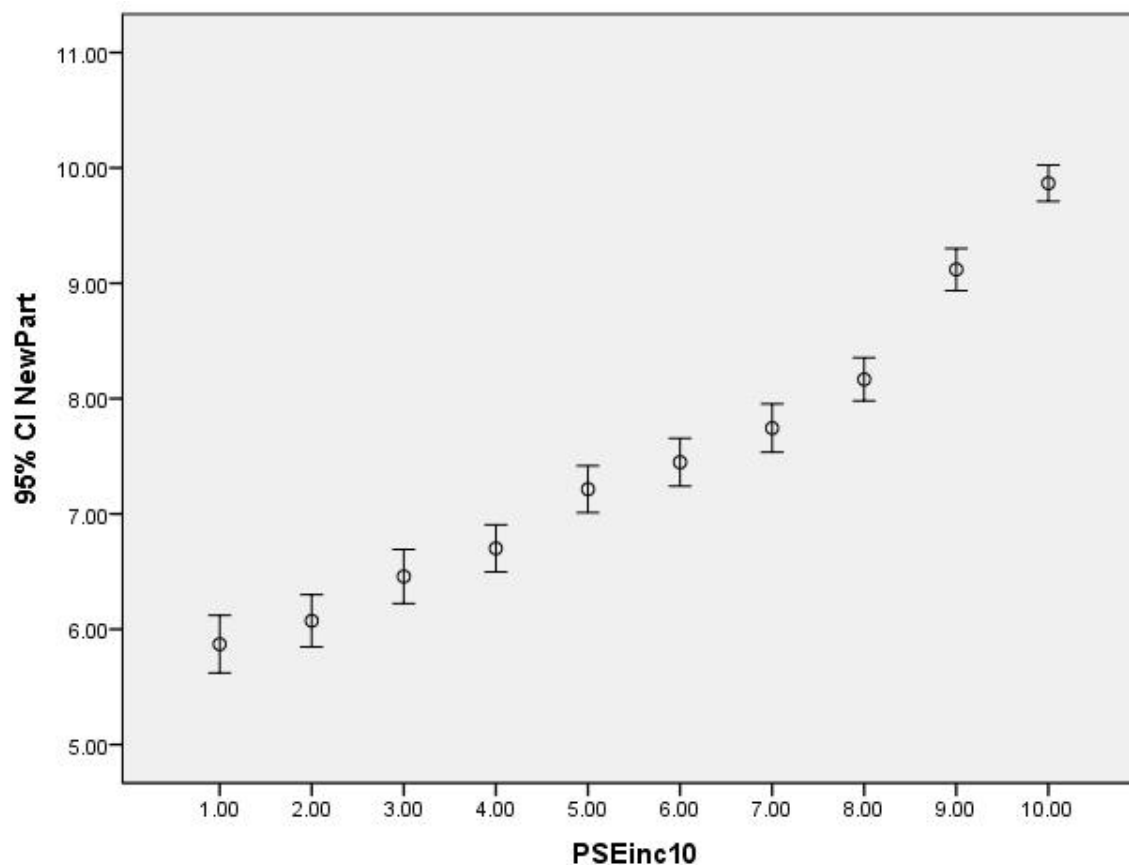
| | % doing activity |
|--|------------------|
| • A hobby or leisure activity | 71 |
| • A week's holiday a year | 59 |
| • Friends and family for a meal or drink once a month | 62 |
| • Going out socially once a fortnight | 54 |
| • Celebrations on special occasions | 92 |
| • A meal out once a month | 59 |
| • Holidays abroad once a year | 42 |
| • Visits to friends and family in other parts of the country | 41 |
| • Going out for a drink once a fortnight | 41 |
| • Attending weddings, funerals | 88 |
| • Visiting friends and family in hospitals/ other institutions | 64 |
| • Attending church, synagogue, mosque or other places of worship | 25 |
| • Going to the cinema, theatre or music event once a month | 35 |
| • Taking part in sport/exercise activities or classes | 44 |



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Social Participation by Income Decile



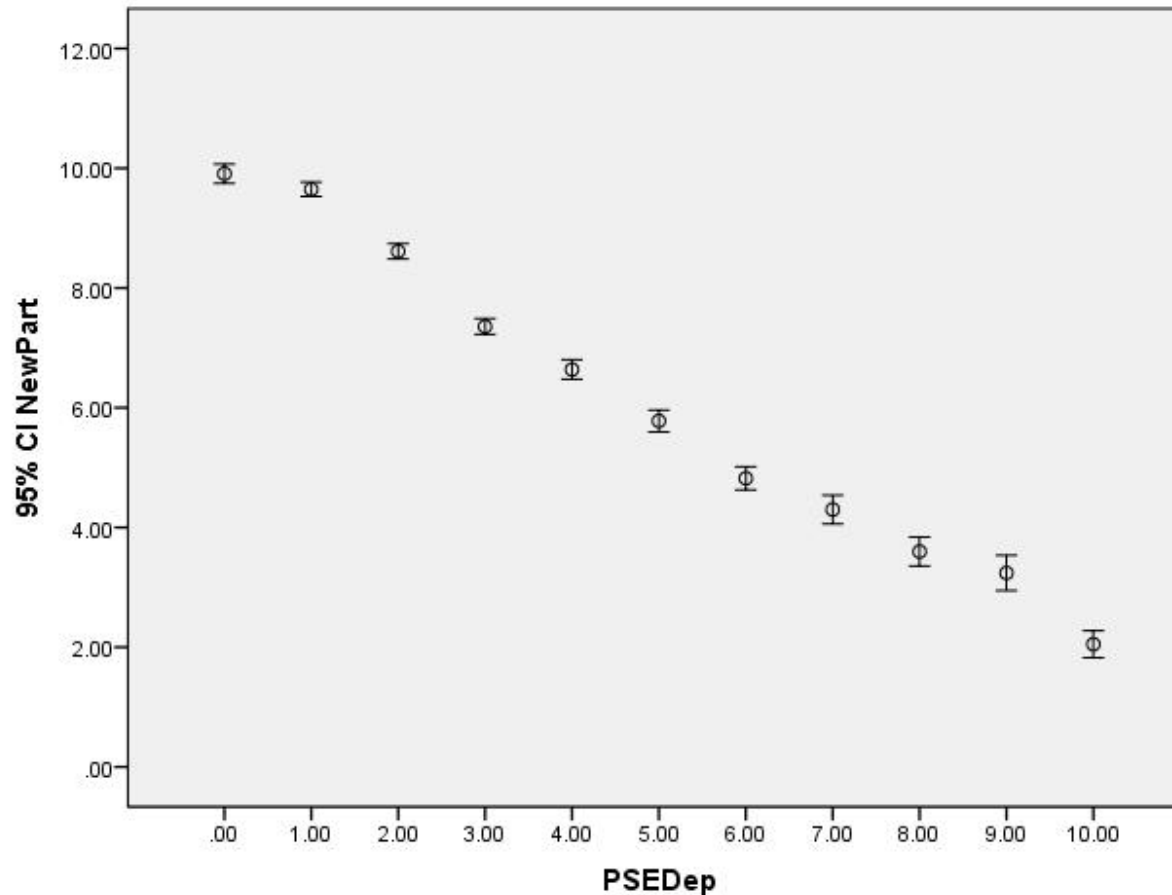
Cases weighted by Normalised PSE Individual weight - use this weight for individual level analyses



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Social Participation by PSE Deprivation



Cases weighted by Normalised PSE Individual weight - use this weight for individual level analyses



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Social Resources

| | % all adults |
|---|--------------|
| • Less than monthly contact with friends | 5.6 |
| • Speaks to less than 3 friends monthly | 24.4 |
| • Less than monthly contact with relatives | 6.3 |
| • Speaks to less than 3 relatives monthly | 29.8 |
| • Not satisfied with personal relationships | 16.8 |
| • Low social support (score less than 15) | 15.5 |



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Social Support

Respondents were asked how much support they would get on 7 items: a lot, some, not much, none at all:

Practical

- Being ill in bed and needing help around the home
- Needing practical help around the home such as moving heavy furniture
- needing someone to look after home or possessions while away
- Needing a lift somewhere in an emergency

Emotional

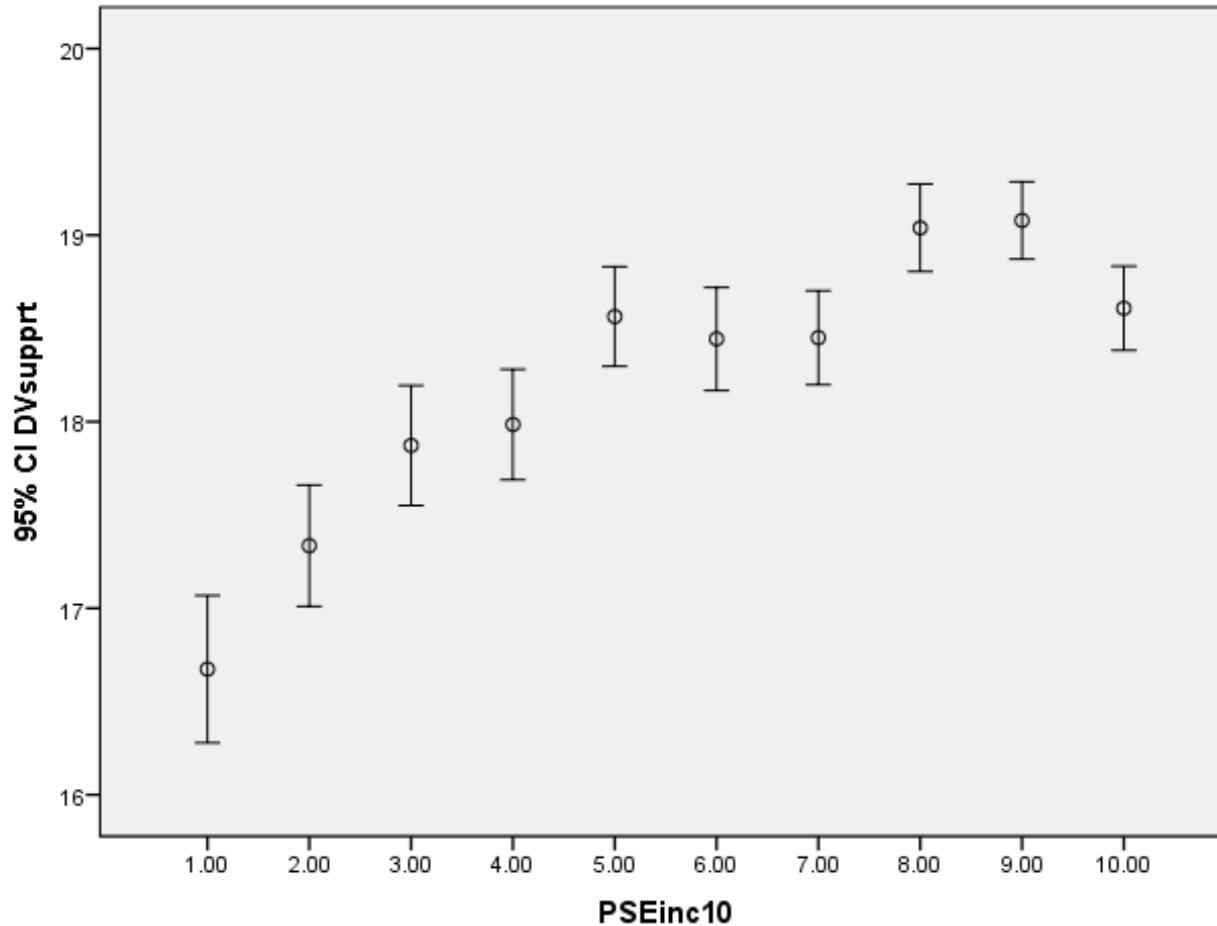
- Needing advice about an important life-change
- Being upset because of relationship problems or feeling depressed
- Serious personal crisis



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Social Support by Income Decile



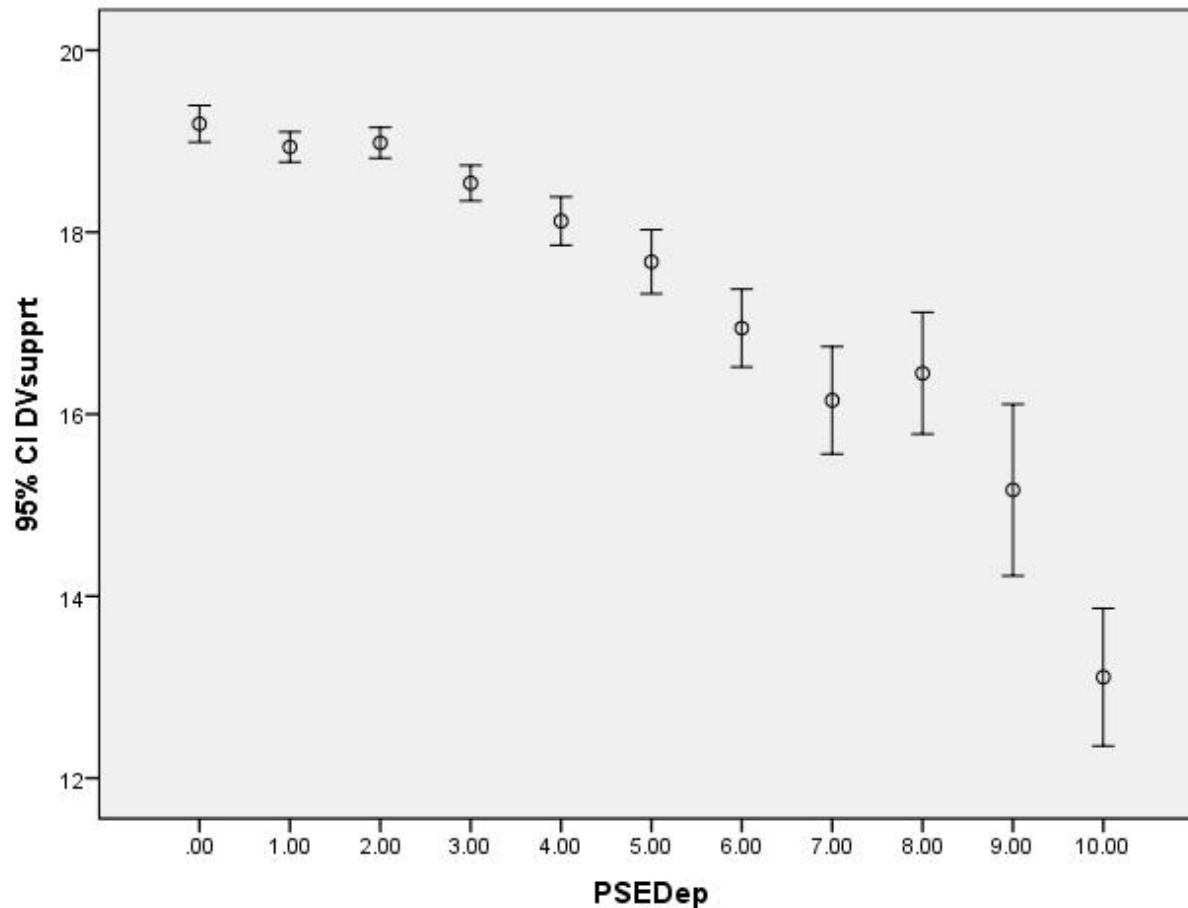
Cases weighted by Normalised PSE Individual weight - use this weight for individual level analyses



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Social Support by PSE Deprivation



Cases weighted by Normalised PSE Individual weight - use this weight for individual level analyses



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Social Support and Satisfaction with Personal Relationships by Household Type

| | % Low support | % Low satisfaction |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Pensioner Couple | 10 | 6 |
| Single Pensioner | 17 | 15 |
| Couple with children | 16 | 13 |
| Couple without children | 8 | 7 |
| Lone Parent | 34 | 43 |
| Single without children | 24 | 36 |



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CHILD DEPRIVATION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN 2012

Gill Main and Jonathan Bradshaw

Social Policy Research Unit

University of York

19-20 June 2014



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Outline

- Omnibus survey established socially perceived necessities for children
- How we established a child deprivation index – Gordon method
- Fixing thresholds
- Who lacks (2 and 5) items
- How does deprivation overlap with other elements of social exclusion



Child socially perceived necessities: 18/23 items and 7/8 activities included

| | Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (2012) | CI (2012) |
|--|--|-----------|
| A warm winter coat (coat) | 97 | 96-98 |
| Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day (veg) | 96 | 95-97 |
| Three meals a day (3 meals) | 93 | 91-94 |
| New, properly fitting, shoes (shoes) | 93 | 91-95 |
| A garden or outdoor space nearby where they can play safely (garden) | 92 | 91-94 |
| Books at home suitable for their ages (books) | 91 | 90-93 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least once a day (meat) | 90 | 88-91 |
| A suitable place to study or do homework (study) | 89 | 87-91 |
| Indoor games suitable for their ages (games) | 80 | 78-82 |
| Enough bedrooms for every child of 10 or over of a different sex to have their own bedroom (bedroom) | 74 | 71-77 |
| Computer and internet for homework (computer) | 66 | 63-69 |
| Some new, not second hand, clothes (clothes) | 65 | 62-67 |
| Outdoor leisure equipment (leisure) | 58 | 55-60 |
| At least four pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms (trousers) | 56 | 54-59 |
| Money to save (save) | 54 | 51-57 |
| Pocket money (money) | 54 | 51-57 |
| Construction toys (toys) | 53 | 50-56 |
| A bicycle (bike) | 45 | 42-48 |
| Clothes to fit in with friends (style) | 31 | 28-34 |
| A mobile phone for children aged 11 or over (mobile) | 26 | 24-28 |
| An MP3 player (mp3) | 8 | 6-10 |
| Designer/brand name trainers (pumps) | 6 | 5-8 |
| Celebrations on special occasions (celebrations) | 91 | 89-92 |
| A hobby or leisure activity (hobby) | 88 | 87-90 |
| Toddler group or nursery or play group at least once a week for pre-school aged children (nursery) | 87 | 84-88 |
| Children's clubs or activities such as drama or football training (clubs) | 74 | 71-76 |
| Day trips with family once a month (family trip) | 60 | 56-63 |
| Going on a school trip at least once a term (school trip) | 55 | 52-57 |
| A holiday away from home for at least one week a year (holiday) | 52 | 49-55 |
| Friends round for tea or a snack once a fortnight (snack) | 49 | 47-52 |



Validity analysis

| | Most adults say they are generally poor | | | Household in relative income poverty | | |
|-------------|---|-------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| | Estimate | 95% Confidence Interval | | Estimate | 95% Confidence Interval | |
| | | Lower | Upper | | Lower | Upper |
| 3 meals | 2.1 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.0 | 3.4 |
| Shoes | 2.2 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.1 | 3.0 |
| Clothes | 2.1 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 2.8 |
| Veg | 2.0 | 1.8 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 1.6 | 2.9 |
| Leisure | 1.9 | 1.6 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 2.9 |
| Bedroom | 1.7 | 1.4 | 2.1 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 2.2 |
| Coat | 2.1 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 3.4 |
| Books | 2.1 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 2.8 |
| Garden | 1.8 | 1.6 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 2.8 |
| Meat | 2.1 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 1.6 | 2.9 |
| Study | 1.7 | 1.4 | 2.1 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 1.9 |
| Games | 2.0 | 1.8 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.0 | 3.4 |
| Trousers | 2.0 | 1.7 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 1.4 | 2.6 |
| Lego | 1.9 | 1.6 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 3.0 |
| Money | 2.0 | 1.7 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 1.4 | 2.3 |
| Savings | 2.1 | 1.8 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 2.5 |
| PC | 1.7 | 1.3 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 2.4 |
| Hobby | 2.0 | 1.8 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 2.7 |
| Celebrate | 2.1 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 1.5 | 3.1 |
| Holiday | 2.3 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.2 | 3.4 |
| Playgroup | 1.3 | 0.7 | 2.7 | 1.9 | 0.9 | 3.8 |
| School trip | 1.8 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 2.3 |
| Day trips | 2.1 | 1.8 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 1.8 | 2.7 |
| Clubs | 1.8 | 1.6 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 1.8 | 2.8 |

For each item lacking adults are more likely to say they are generally poor and are also more likely to be income poor.



Reliability analysis $\alpha=0.826$ very satisfactory

| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Three meals a day (children) | 1.5205 | 6.134 | .369 | .822 |
| New, properly fitting shoes (children) | 1.4948 | 5.856 | .489 | .816 |
| Some new, not second-hand clothes (children) | 1.4906 | 5.916 | .396 | .819 |
| Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day (children) | 1.4987 | 5.960 | .397 | .819 |
| Outdoor leisure equipment, e.g. roller skates, skateboard, football, etc. (children) | 1.4735 | 5.788 | .440 | .817 |
| Enough bedrooms (10+) | 1.4817 | 6.054 | .221 | .825 |
| A warm winter coat (children) | 1.5202 | 6.127 | .379 | .822 |
| Books (2+) | 1.5137 | 6.090 | .350 | .822 |
| A garden or outdoor space nearby where they can play safely (children) | 1.4839 | 5.990 | .290 | .823 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least once a day (children) | 1.5013 | 5.965 | .410 | .819 |
| Place to study (5+) | 1.4949 | 6.053 | .269 | .823 |
| Indoor games suitable for their ages (e.g. building blocks, board games, computer games, etc) (children) | 1.5185 | 6.165 | .281 | .823 |
| At least four pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms (children) | 1.4856 | 5.852 | .436 | .817 |
| Construction toys such as Duplo/Lego etc (children) | 1.4890 | 6.023 | .277 | .823 |
| Pocket money (5+) | 1.4196 | 5.469 | .521 | .812 |
| Savings (5+) | 1.3022 | 5.127 | .543 | .812 |
| Computer & internet (5+) | 1.4893 | 5.981 | .321 | .821 |
| Hobby (5+) | 1.4889 | 5.900 | .404 | .818 |
| Celebrations on special occasions, e.g. birthdays, Christmas or other religious festivals (Children) | 1.5180 | 6.165 | .277 | .823 |
| A holiday away from home at least one week a year (Children) | 1.2680 | 5.097 | .526 | .814 |
| Play groups, etc. (under 5) | 1.5206 | 6.293 | .065 | .828 |
| School trips (5+) | 1.4790 | 5.877 | .379 | .819 |
| Day trips with family once a month (Children) | 1.3247 | 5.136 | .565 | .810 |
| Clubs/activities (2+) | 1.4545 | 5.756 | .399 | .818 |

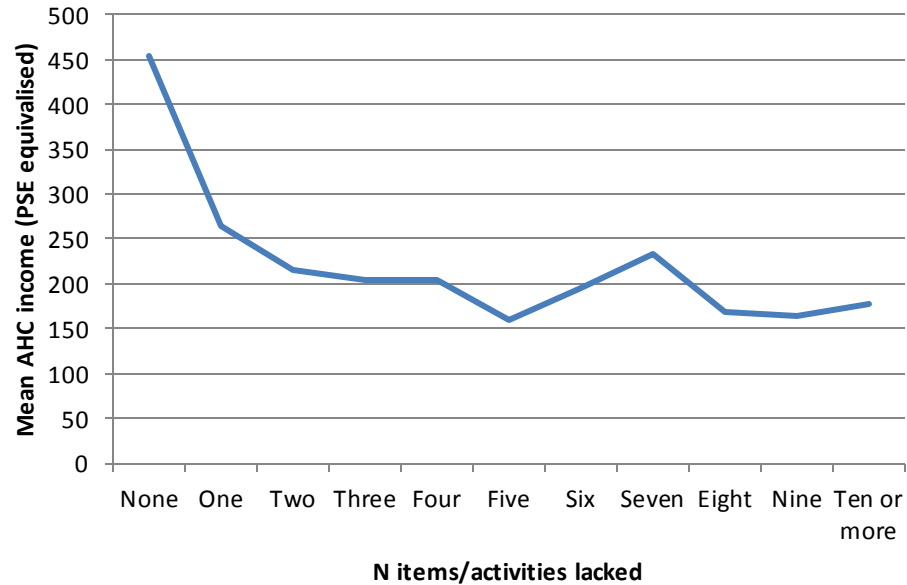


Results

| | Has | Does not have, does not want | Does not have, can't afford | Not allocated |
|-------------|-----|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Coat | 97 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Veg | 95 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Meal | 97 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Shoes | 94 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Garden | 92 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| Meat | 94 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Games | 95 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Clothes | 95 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Trousers | 93 | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| Lego | 70 | 23 | 5 | 3 |
| Leisure | 81 | 11 | 6 | 2 |
| Bedroom | 84 | 4 | 11 | 1 |
| Study | 92 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| PC | 90 | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| Money | 69 | 13 | 16 | 2 |
| Savings | 60 | 6 | 33 | 1 |
| Books | 97 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Celebrate | 97 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Holiday | 64 | 6 | 26 | 2 |
| Day trip | 66 | 8 | 21 | 5 |
| Play group | 73 | 13 | 4 | 10 |
| School trip | 79 | 5 | 7 | 9 |
| Hobby | 86 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Clubs | 71 | 11 | 9 | 8 |



Mean income (AHC) by items lacking



Number of items lacking

31% lacking 2+

11% lacking 5+

| | % Child ren | % Househ olds with children |
|----------------|-------------------|---|
| None | 53.1 | 55.2 |
| One | 15.7 | 15.6 |
| Two | 9.0 | 8.4 |
| Three | 6.9 | 6.3 |
| Four | 4.2 | 3.7 |
| Five | 3.3 | 2.9 |
| Six | 2.1 | 2.2 |
| Seven | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| Eight | 1.3 | 1.2 |
| Nine | 1.3 | 1.2 |
| Ten or more | 1.8 | 1.9 |



Higher deprivation rates

- unemployment,
- living with a lone parent,
- having a low equivalent income,
- living in a large family,
- being black or other Asian (Pakistani/Bangladeshi),
- being a social tenant and
- living in England.

Majority of deprived were/had

- someone in employment (50% full-time),
- couple families,
- are in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution,
- have only one or two children,
- are white.
- Nearly a third of deprived children are owners and of course
- most live in England.

Overlaps between income poverty and deprivation

?protected by parents, gifts, new income poor not yet deprived

| | Not deprived 2+ | Deprived 2+ |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Not income poor AHC | 54 | 13 |
| Income poor AHC | 15 | 18 |
| | | |
| | Not deprived 5+ | Deprived 5+ |
| Not income poor AHC | 64 | 4 |
| Income poor AHC | 25 | 7 |

?puritan parents, recently moved out of poverty

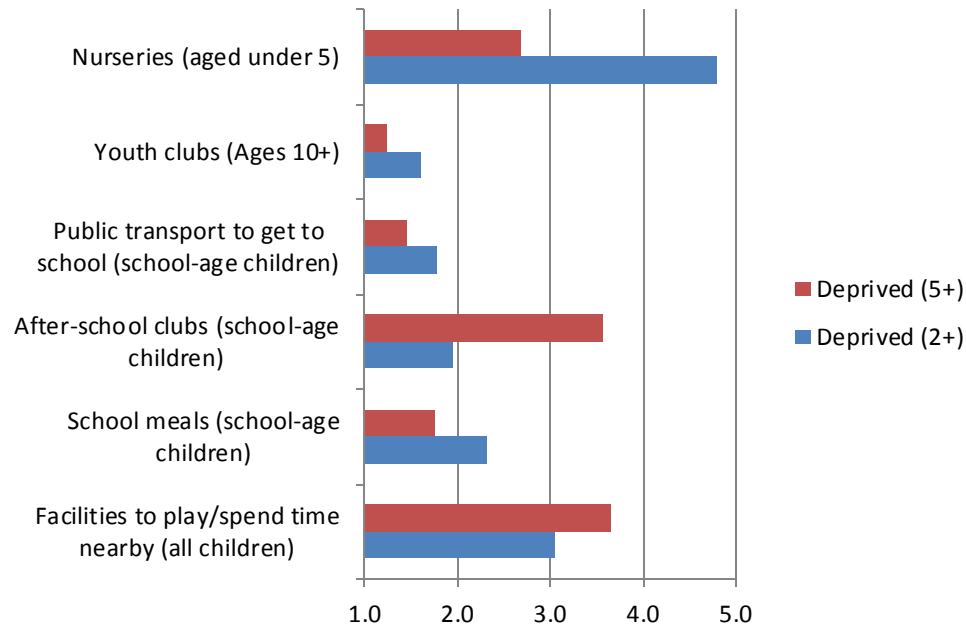


Overlaps between household and child deprivation

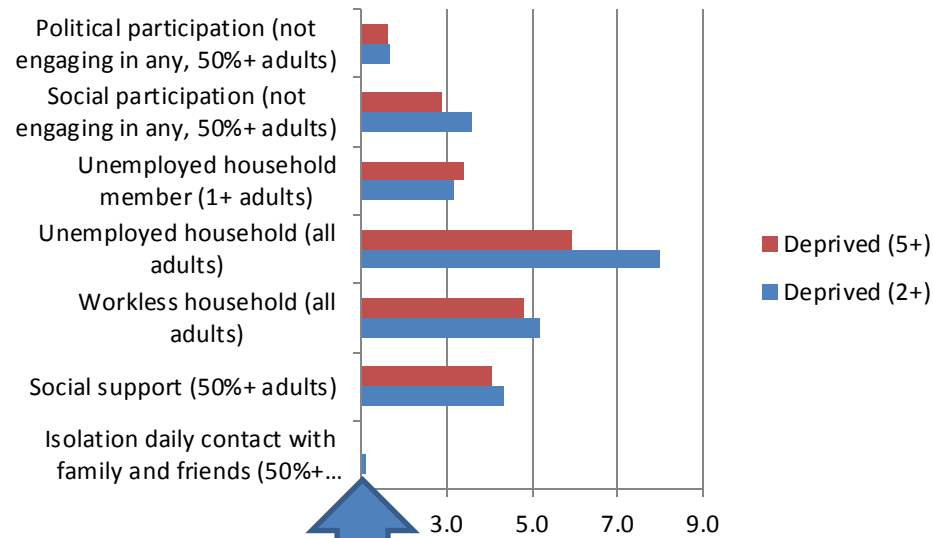
| | Child not deprived 2+ | Child deprived 2+ |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Household not deprived | 45 | 2 → Very few |
| Household deprived | 24 | 29 |
| | | |
| | Child not deprived 5+ | Child deprived 5+ |
| Household not deprived | 47 | 0 |
| Household deprived | 42 | 11 |

Protected by parents →

Deprived children more likely to lack services (odds non deprived=1.0)



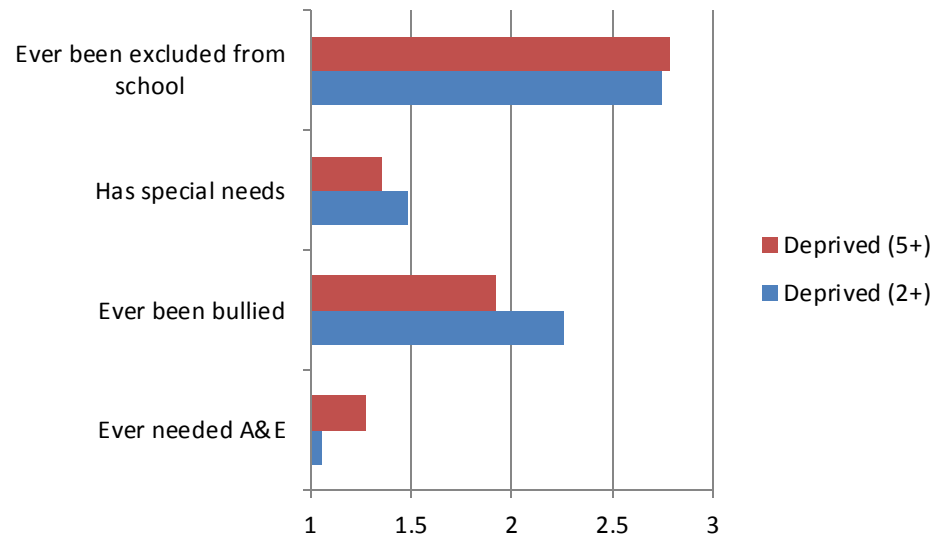
Deprived children more likely to have socially excluded adults: (odds non deprived=1.0)



Except
isolation



Deprived children more likely to suffer poor outcomes: (odds non deprived=1.0)



End

Suggestions welcomed

Jonathan.bradshaw@york.ac.uk



Poverty and Social Exclusion in N. Ireland

Legacies of Conflict

Mike Tomlinson
Queen's University Belfast
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Introduction to the Troubles section

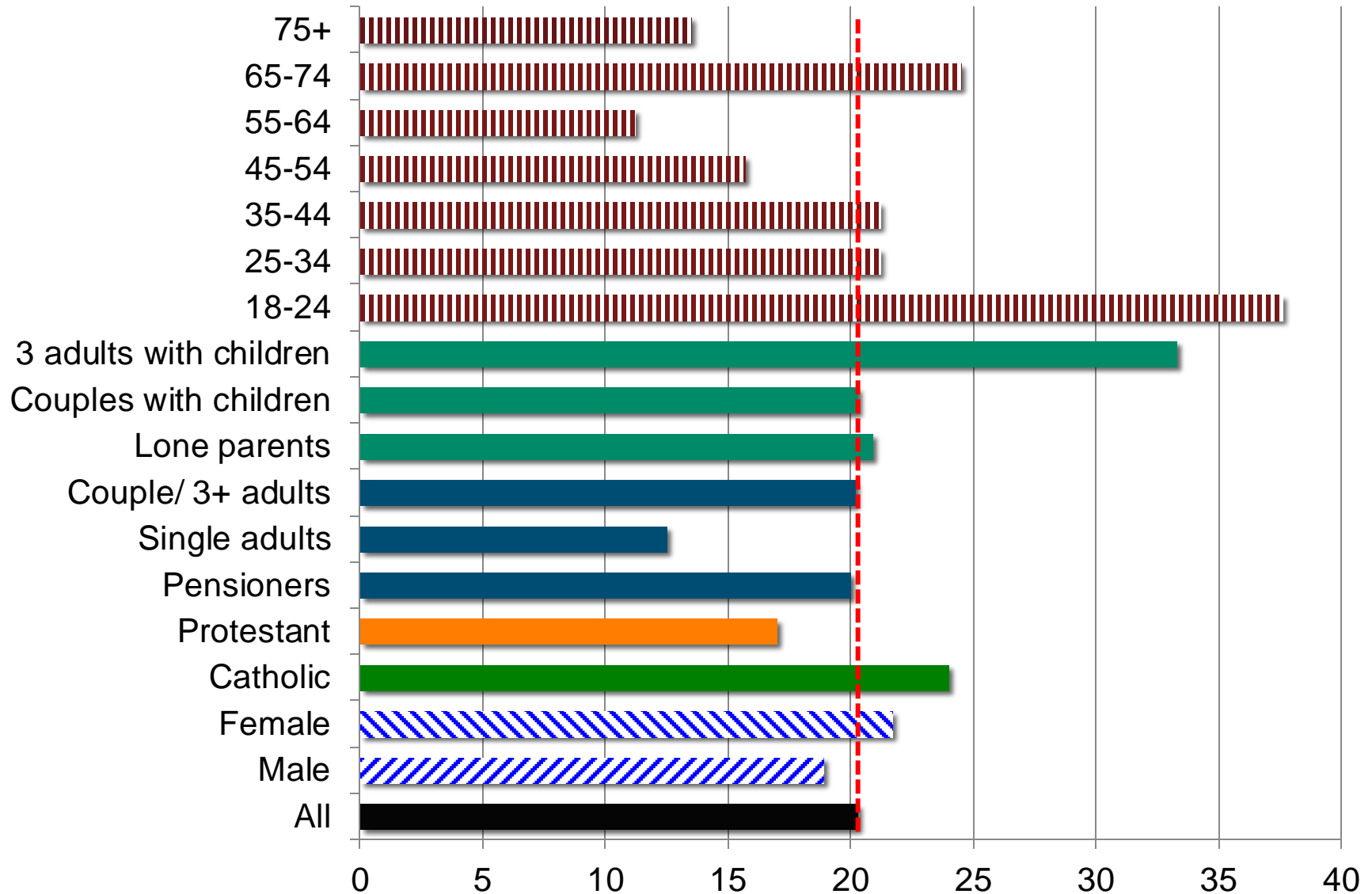
“The next set of questions is about your experience of the Troubles. This includes questions about physical injury you personally experienced or the injury or death to a close friend or relative. Questions about imprisonment are also included. If you feel uncomfortable answering these questions, then you do not need to answer them. All answers will be kept strictly confidential.

Are you willing to answer questions about your experience of the Troubles?”

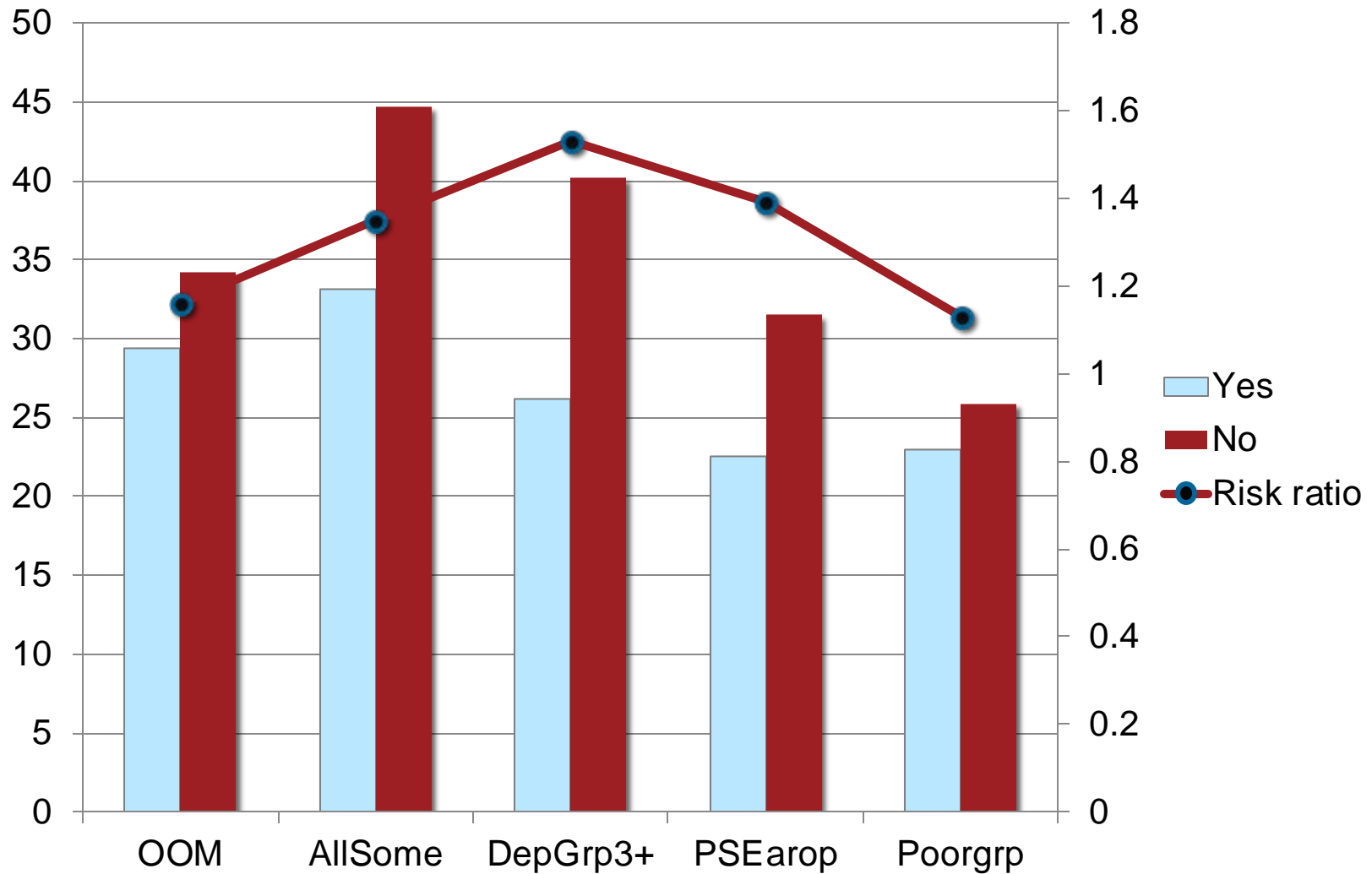
1. YES 79.7% **2. NO 20.3%**

1165 cases

Declined to answer Troubles questions



Poverty by willingness to answer Troubles questions



EPV Index 21 Items

1. Death and Injury



| <i>Did you experience...? Someone killed (3)</i> | % of adults |
|--|-------------|
| A close friend was killed | 10.6 |
| A close relative was killed | 9.9 |
| Someone else you knew personally was killed | 24.9 |



| <i>Did you experience...? Someone physically injured (4)</i> | % of adults |
|--|-------------|
| I was injured | 3.9 |
| A close friend was injured | 10.3 |
| A close relative was injured | 11.6 |
| Someone else you knew personally was injured | 20.7 |

EPV Index 21 Items

2. Witnessing violence



| <i>Did you witness...? Violent event (6)</i> | % of adults |
|--|-------------|
| A bomb explosion | 33.0 |
| Rioting | 35.5 |
| A murder | 3.0 |
| Gunfire | 22.6 |
| Someone being assaulted | 19.6 |
| Other serious violence | 10.0 |

EPV Index 21 Items

3. Prison

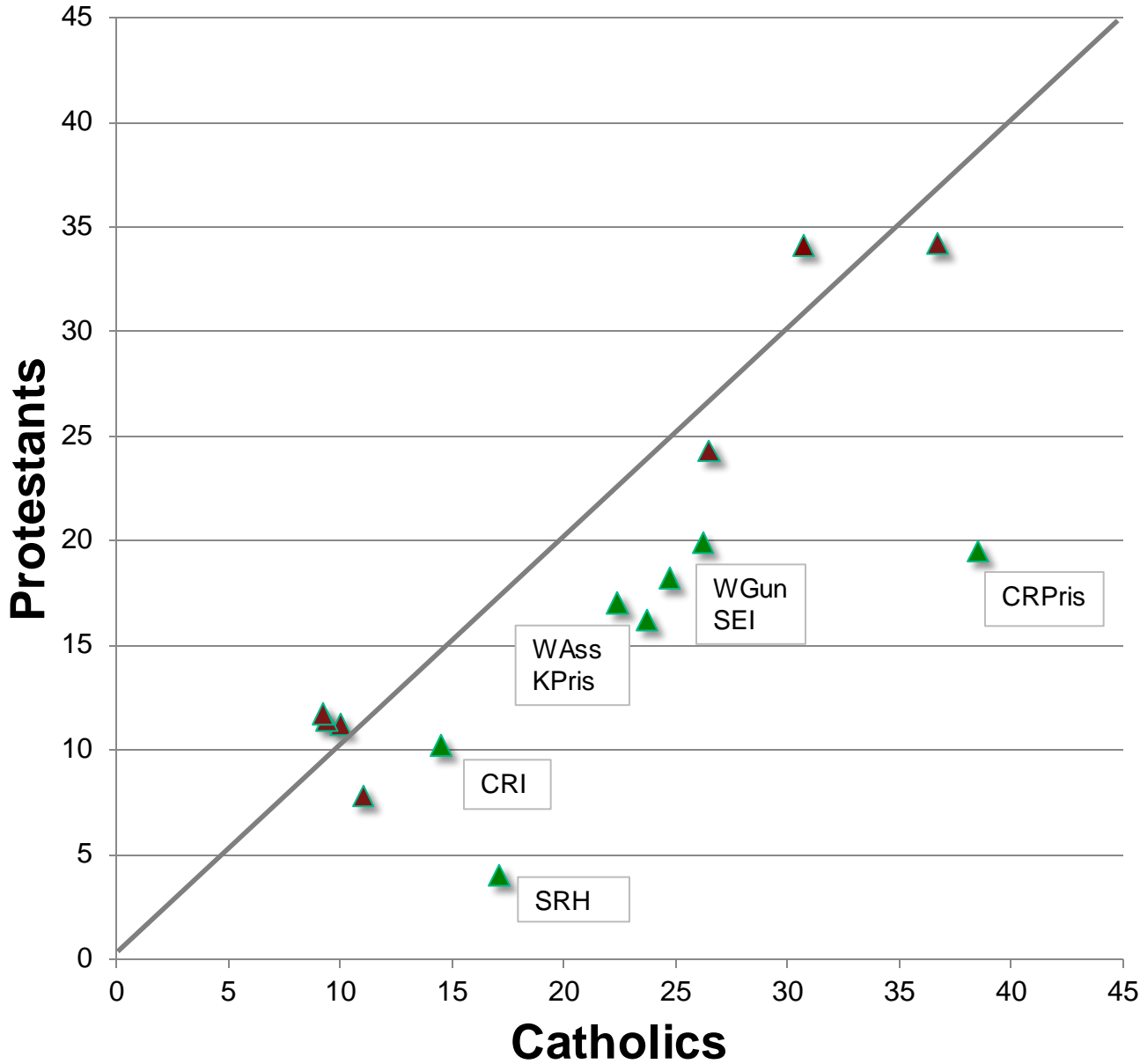


| <i>Knowing who spent time in prison...? (5)</i> | % of adults |
|---|-------------|
| [Knowing anyone who spent time in prison] | [19.1] |
| Spent time in prison: yourself | 0.7 |
| close friend | 5.0 |
| close relative | 5.3 |
| other relative... | 4.5 |

EPV Index 21 Items

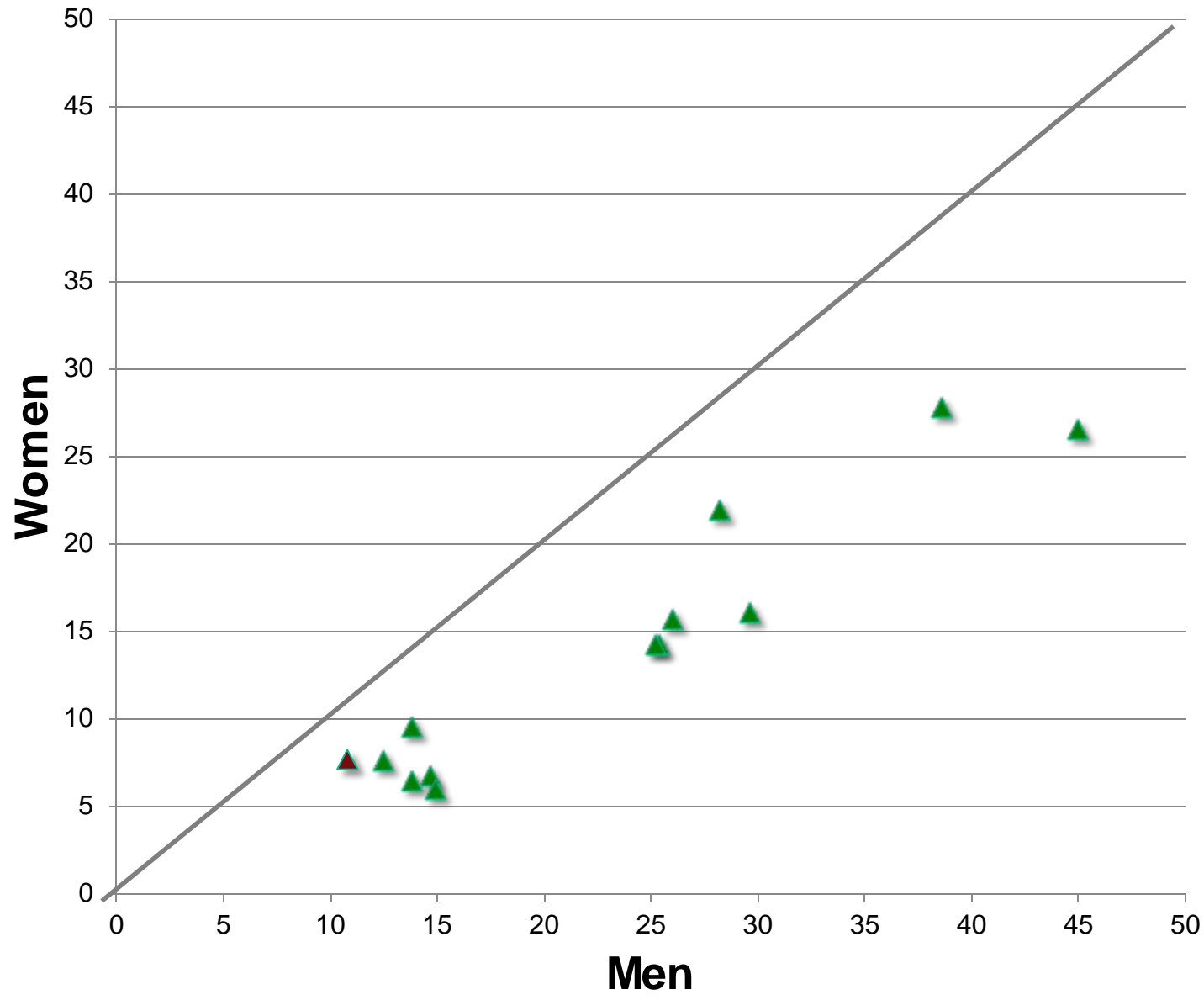
3. Other events

| <i>Other events...? (3)</i> | % of adults |
|---|-------------|
| Moved house due to attack, intimidation, threats... | 4.4 |
| Left job due to attack, intimidation, threats... | 3.7 |
| House searched by police/army (frequency) | 9.2 |



14 items, 7 sig.

- Close friend killed
- Close relative killed
- Someone else killed
- Close friend injured
- Close relative injured**
- Someone else injured**
- Witnessed bomb
- Witnessed gunfire**
- Witnessed rioting
- Witnessed assault**
- Witnessed other serious violence
- House searched**
- Known prisoner**
- Close relative prisoner**



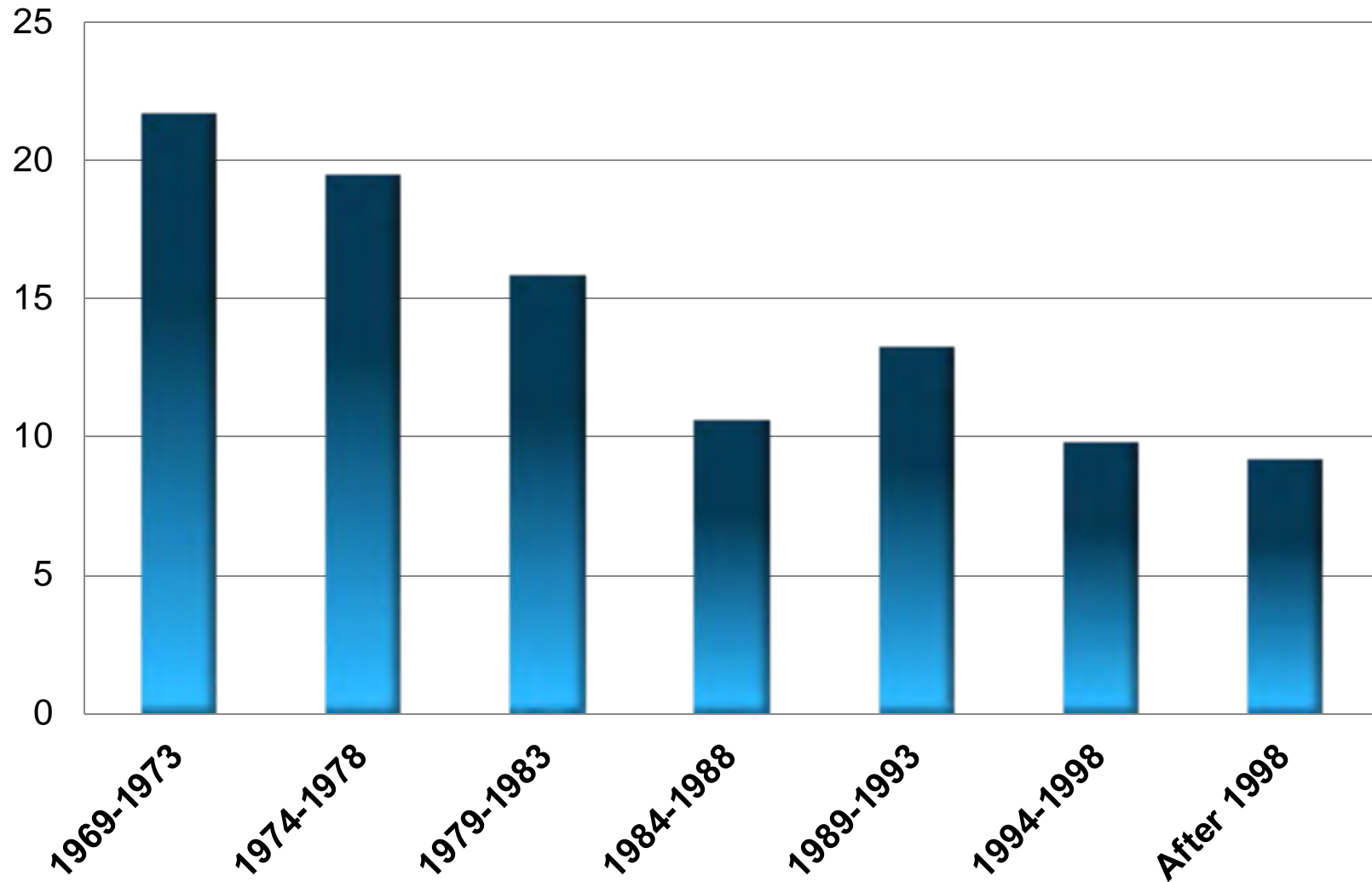
13 items, 12 sig.

- Close friend killed**
- Close relative killed**
- Someone else killed**
- Close friend injured**
- Close relative injured**
- Someone else injured**
- Witnessed bomb**
- Witnessed gunfire**
- Witnessed rioting**
- Witnessed assault**
- Witnessed other serious violence**
- Known prisoner**
- House searched

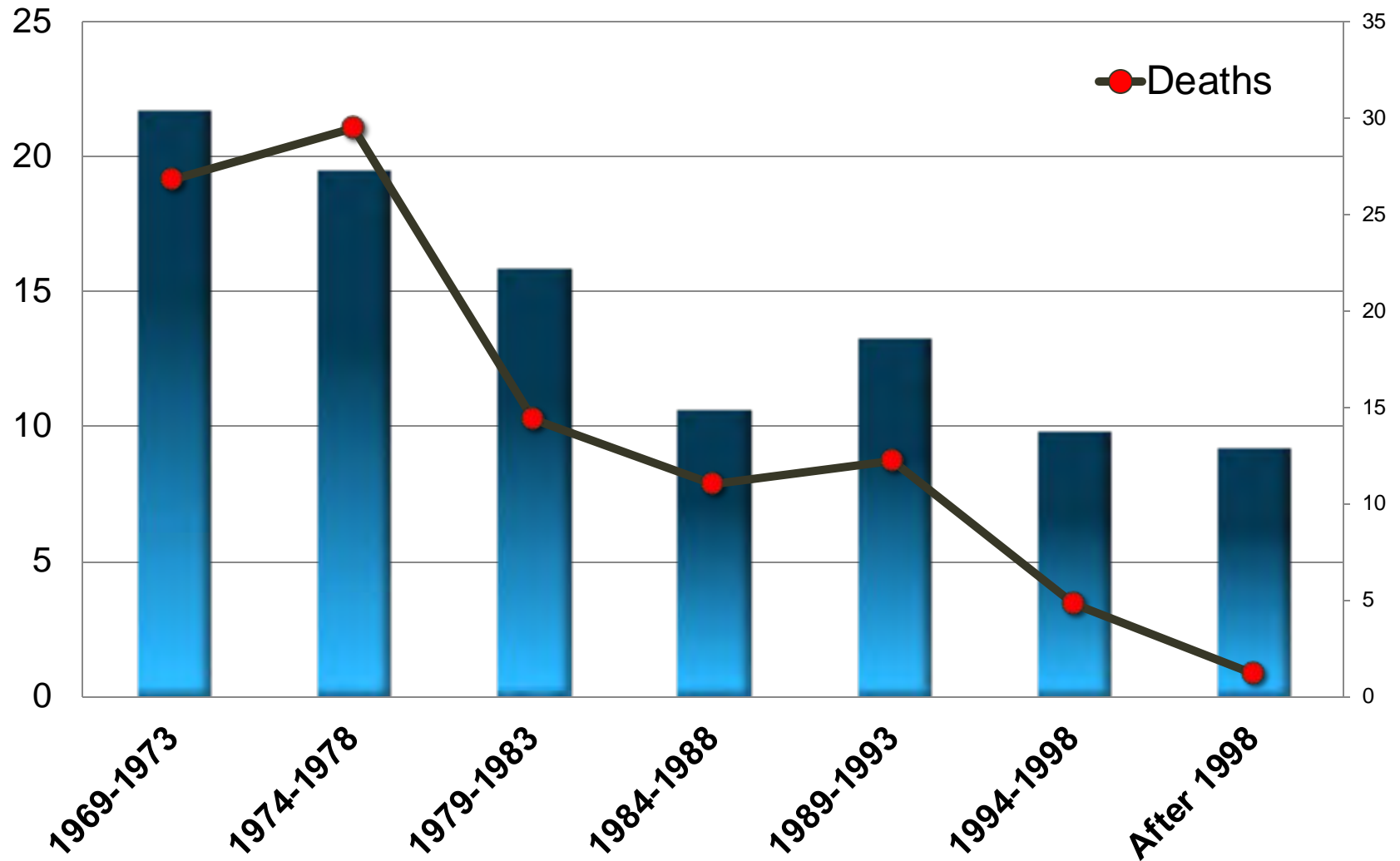
Deprivation (3+) rates for Troubles events

| | |
|--|----|
| All adults (%) | 26 |
| Close friend killed | 36 |
| Close relative injured | 38 |
| Witnessed an assault | 43 |
| Close relative was in prison | 45 |
| House searched by police or army (at least once) | 56 |
| Moved house due to attack, intimidation, threats or harassment | 58 |

Distribution of 'worst events' by time period (%)



Distribution of 'worst events' by time period (%)



Creating Experience of Political Violence Index (EPV)

Which items?

Reliability: 21 items – Chronbach's Alpha = .820

Validity:

**Risk of
longstanding
illness or disability.**

| EPV item | Risk ratio |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Moved house due to threat... | 1.8 |
| House searched by police/army | 1.7 |
| Close friend killed | 1.6 |
| Who in prison? Close friend | 1.6 |
| Witnessed gunfire | 1.5 |
| Close friend injured | 1.5 |
| Self injured | 1.5 |
| Someone else injured | 1.5 |
| Someone else killed | 1.5 |
| Witnessed bomb explosion | 1.4 |
| Witnessed assault | 1.3 |
| Close relative injured | 1.3 |
| Witnessed rioting | 1.3 |
| Witnessed other serious violence | 1.3 |

14 items,
statistically
significant

Creating Experience of Political Violence Index (EPV)

Which items?

Reliability: 21 items – Chronbach's Alpha = .820

Validity:

How to combine?

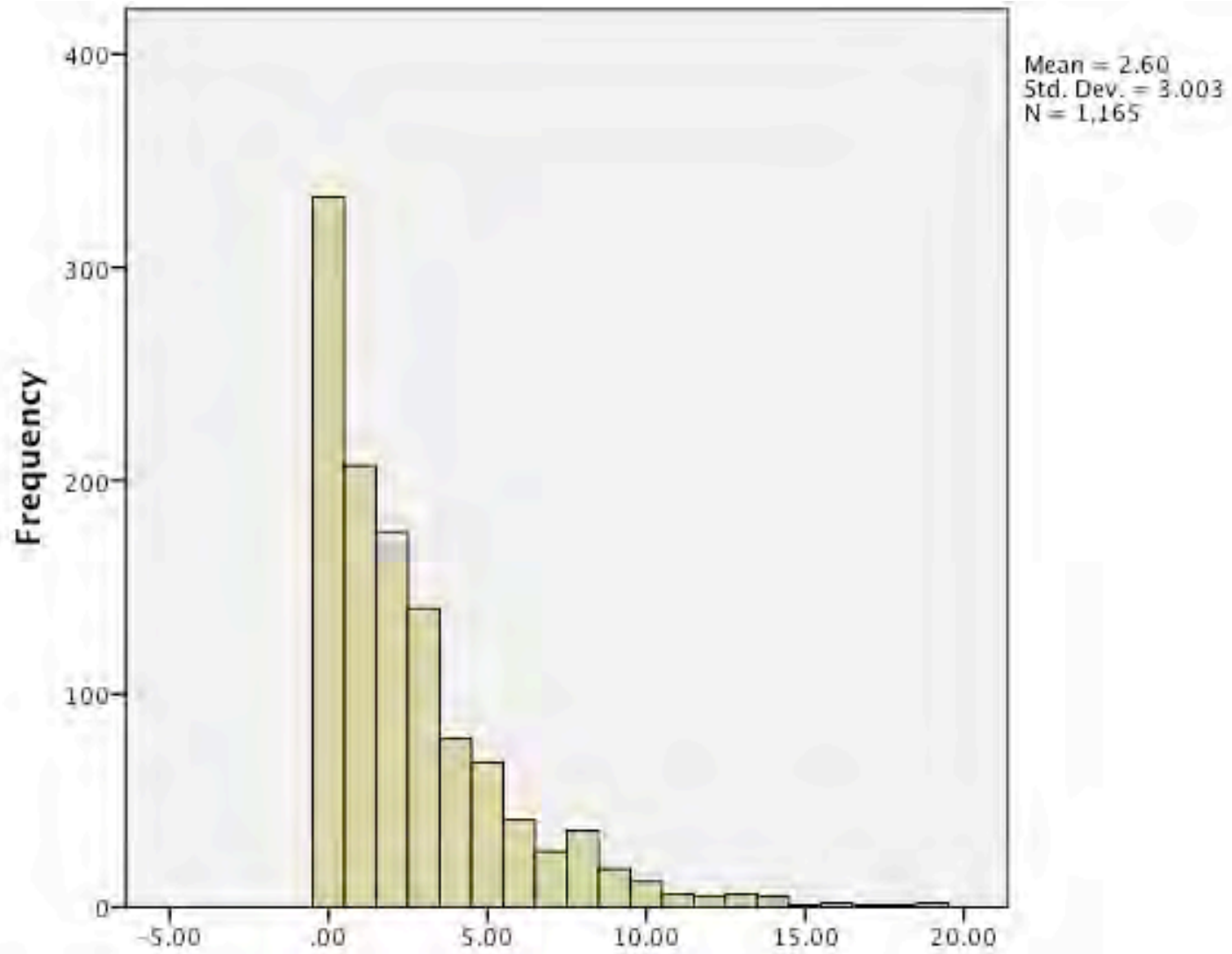
Weight by established scales?

Prevalence weight?

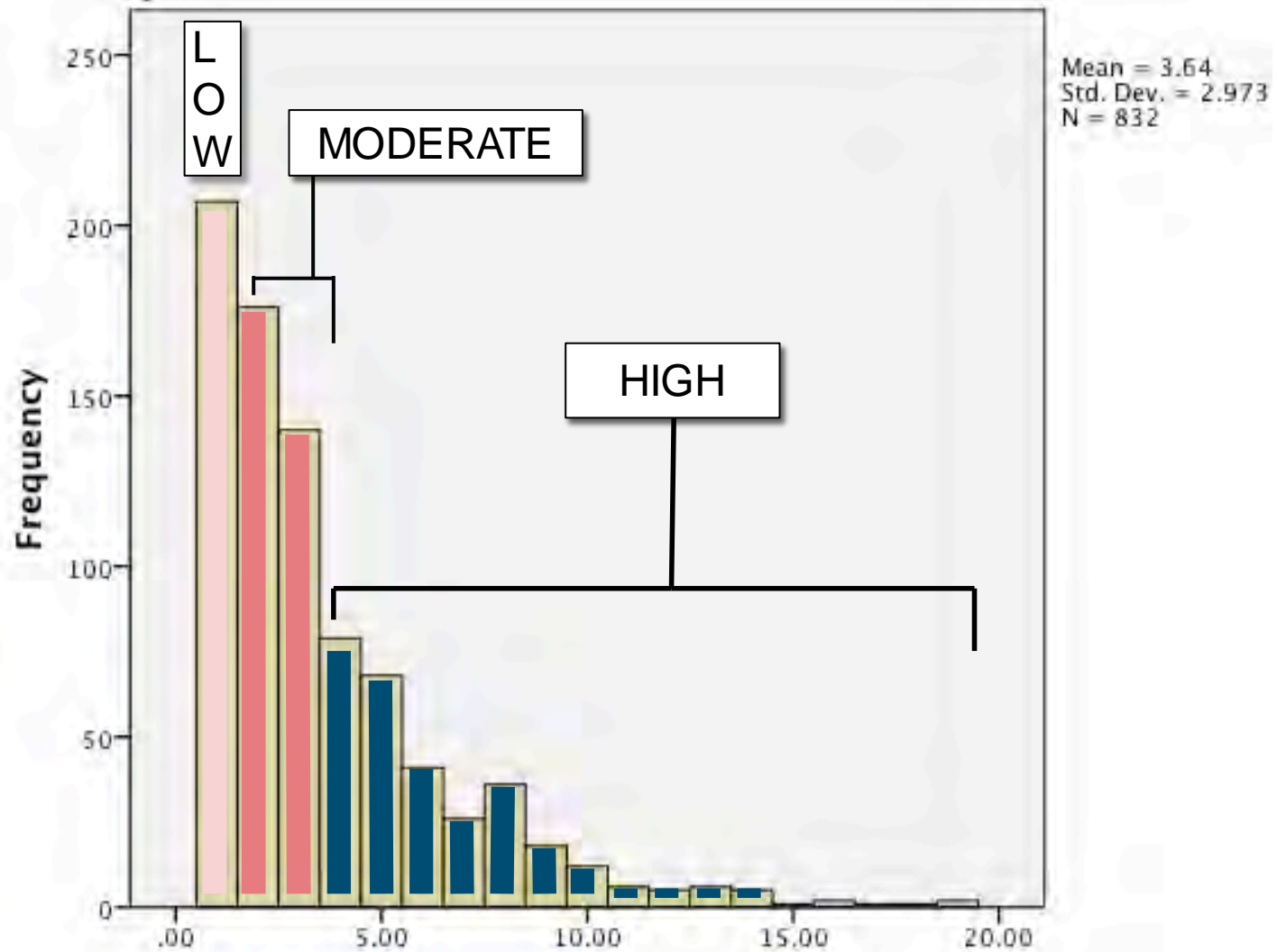
Simple yes/no addition

How to band scores?

Experience of Political Violence: intensity scores (21 variables)



Experience of Political Violence: intensity scores, banded



Profile of EPV bands

| EPV band | % Adults | EPV selected items | | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|--------------------|-----|------|---------|-----|--------|--------|-------|
| | | CRK | CRI | Bomb | Assault | Gun | Search | PrisCR | MvHse |
| High | 18.9 | 29 | 39 | 79 | 58 | 75 | 32 | 18 | 14 |
| Moderate | 19.0 | 11 | 13 | 48 | 24 | 30 | 13 | - | - |
| Low | 31.9 | 8 | 0 | 28 | 13 | 9 | 2 | - | - |
| None | 30.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

CRK – Close Relative Killed

CRI – Close Relative physically Injured

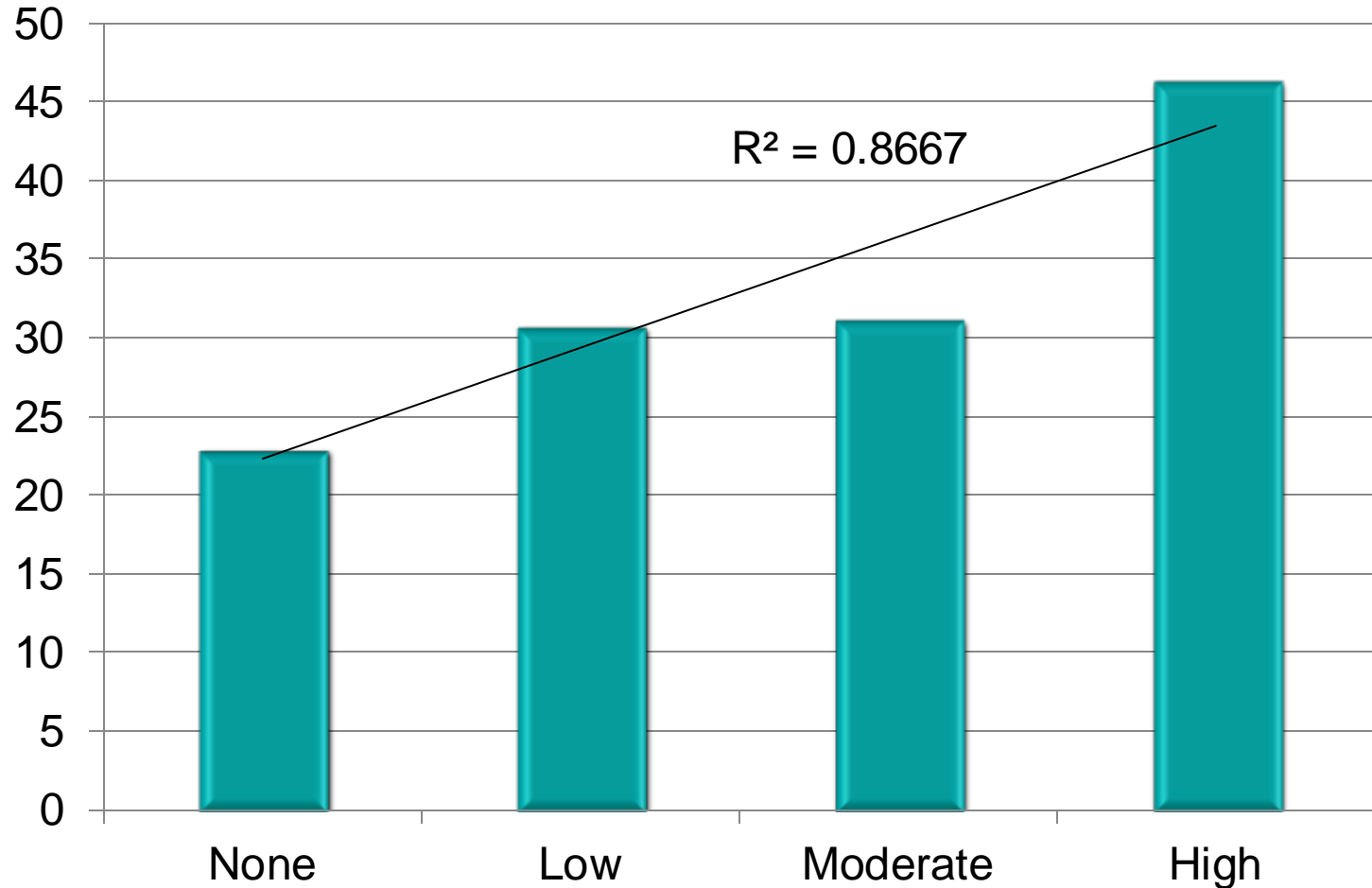
Bomb, Assault, Gun – Witnessed a bombing, assault, gunfire

Search – House was searched by police/army

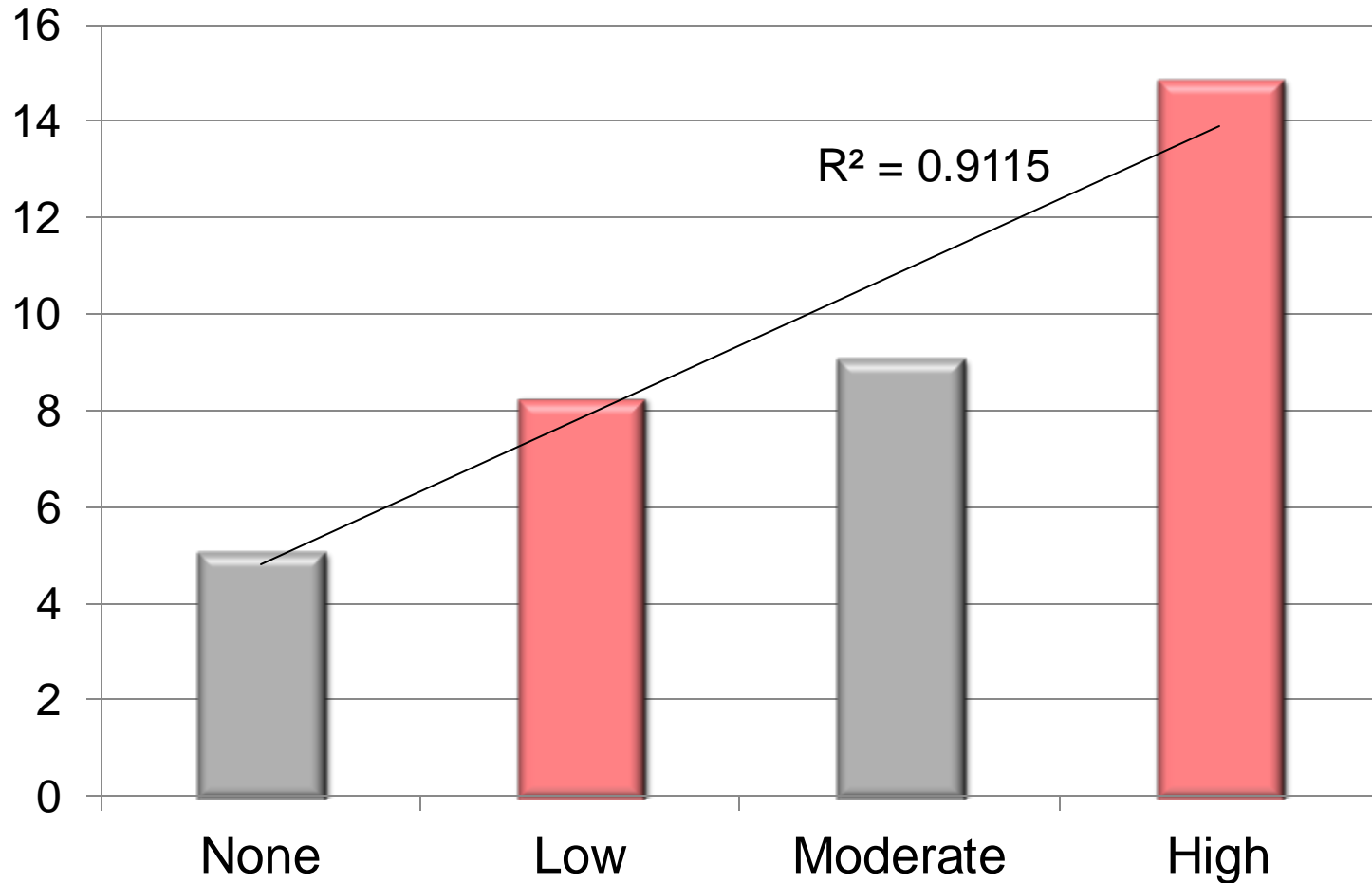
PrisCR – Close Relative was in Prison

MvHse – Moved house due to attack, intimidation, threats or harassment

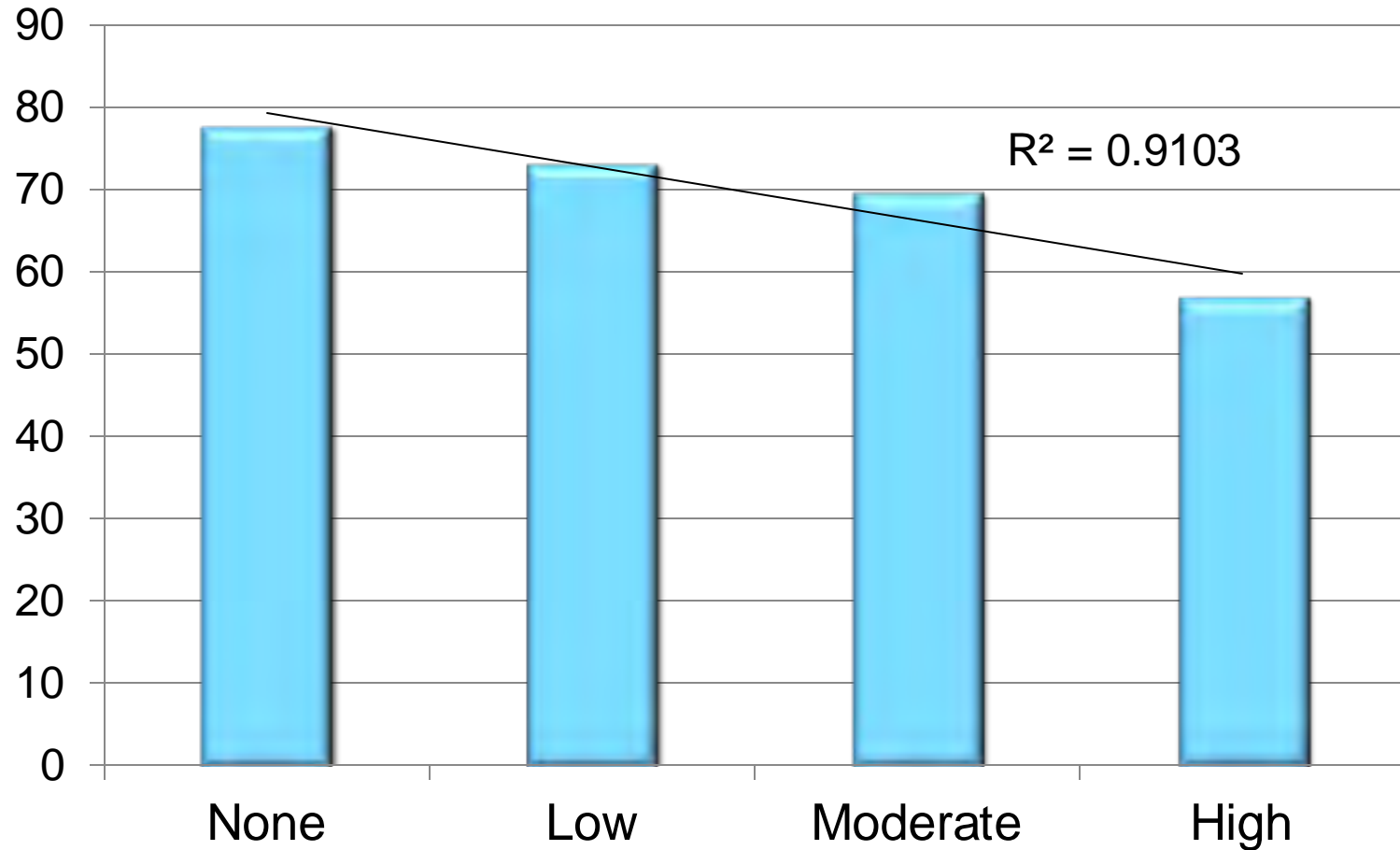
EPV by reported longstanding illness or disability



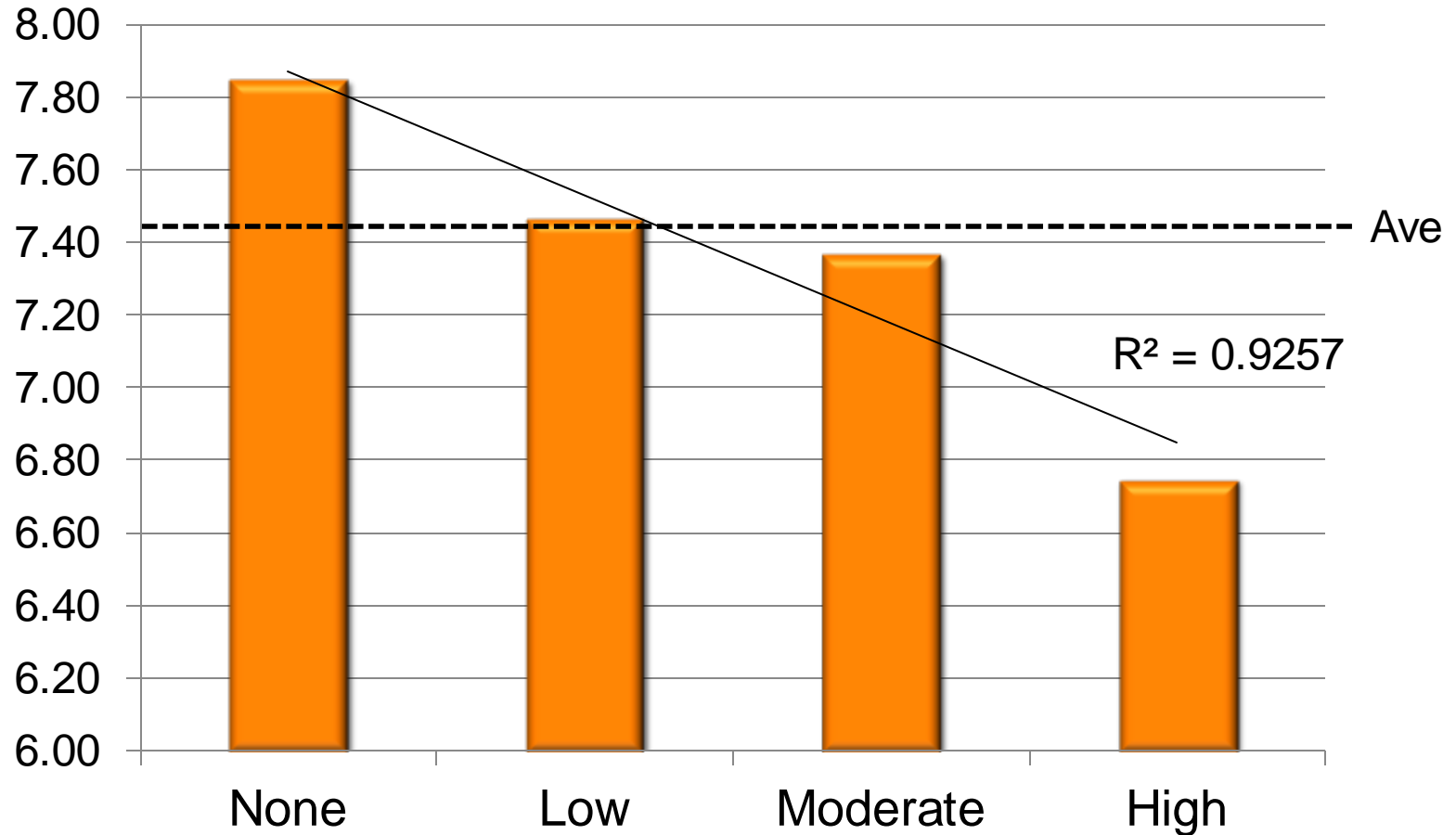
EPV by self-reported health, 'bad' and 'very bad'



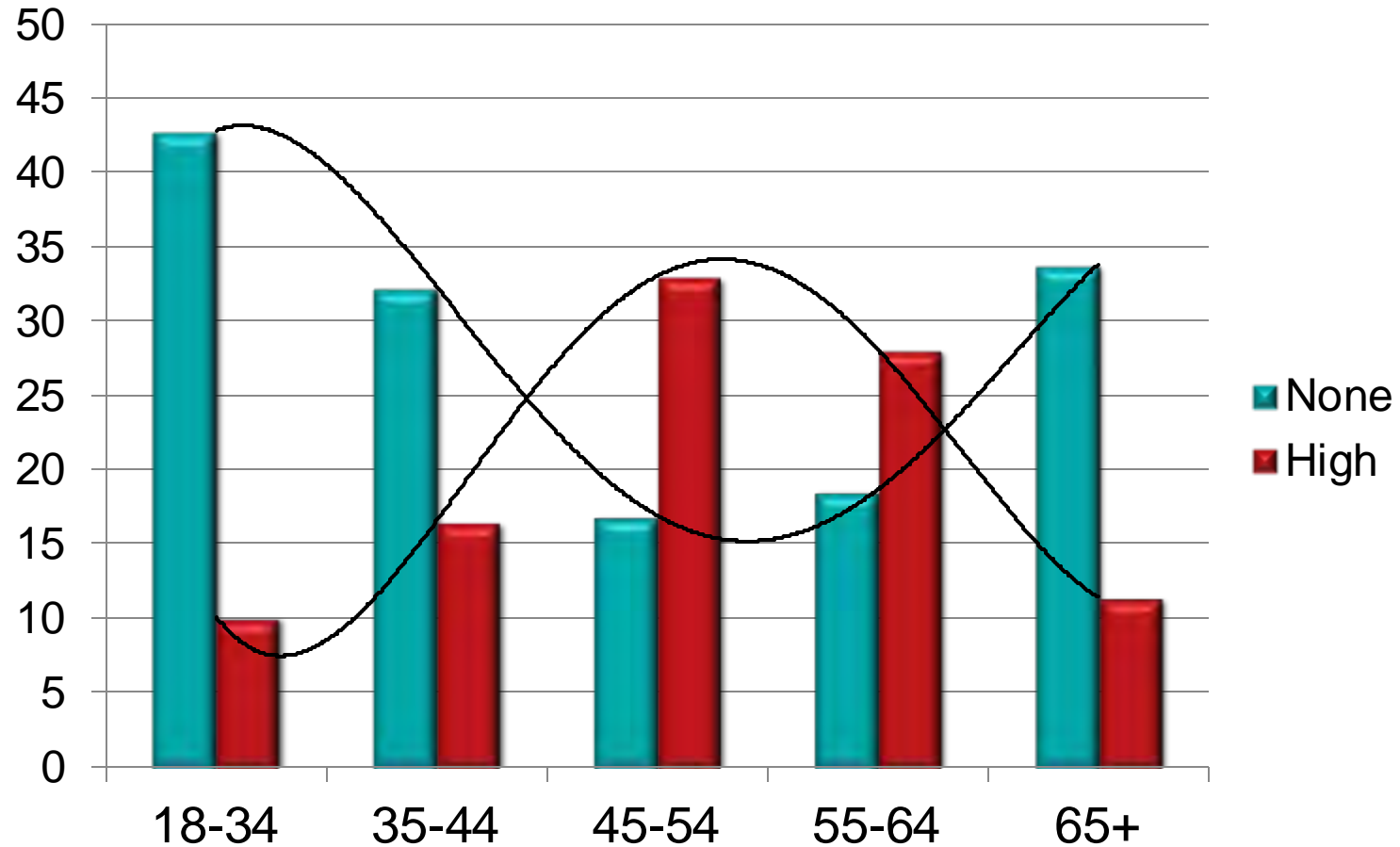
EPV by self-reported health, 'good' and 'very good'



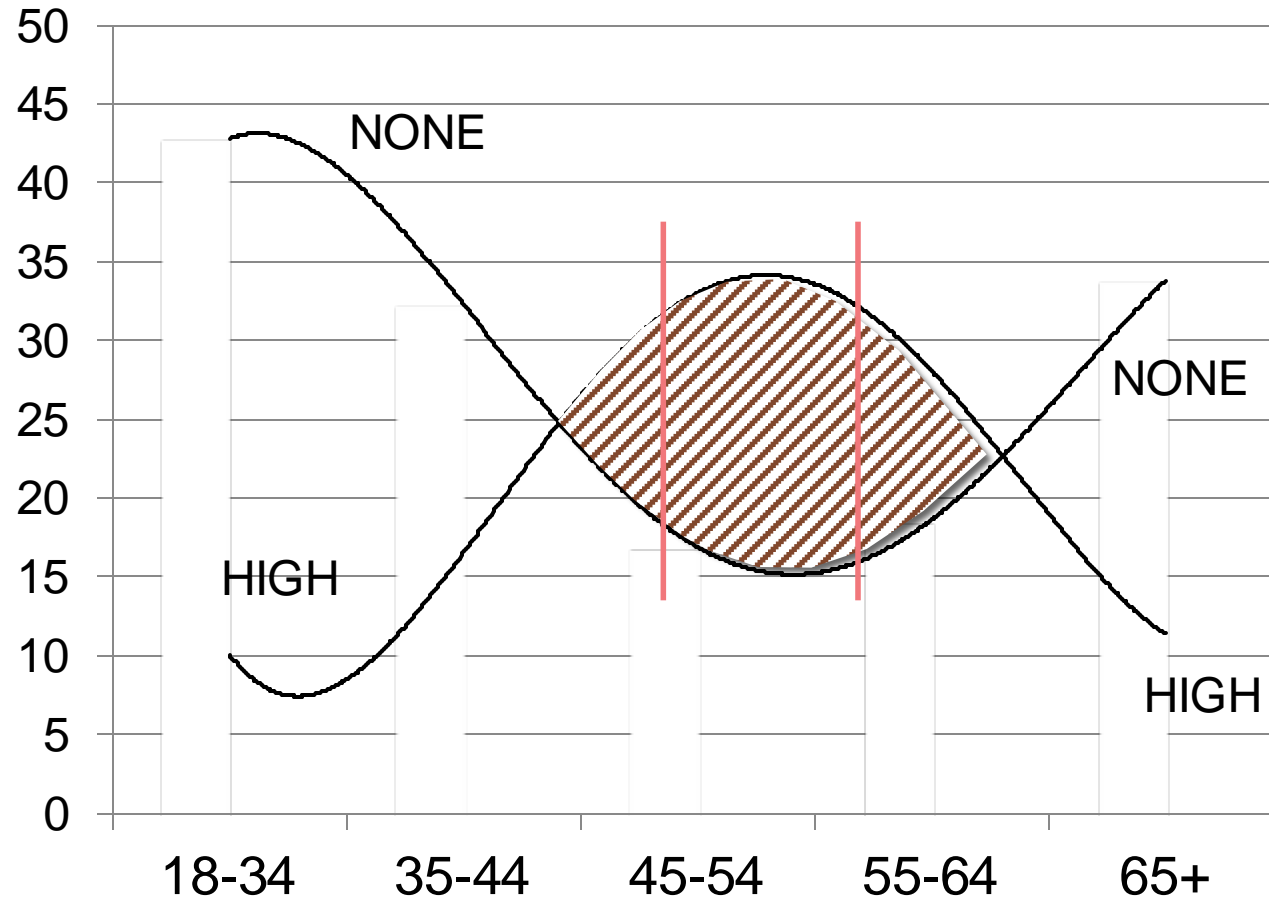
EPV by life satisfaction (average scores)



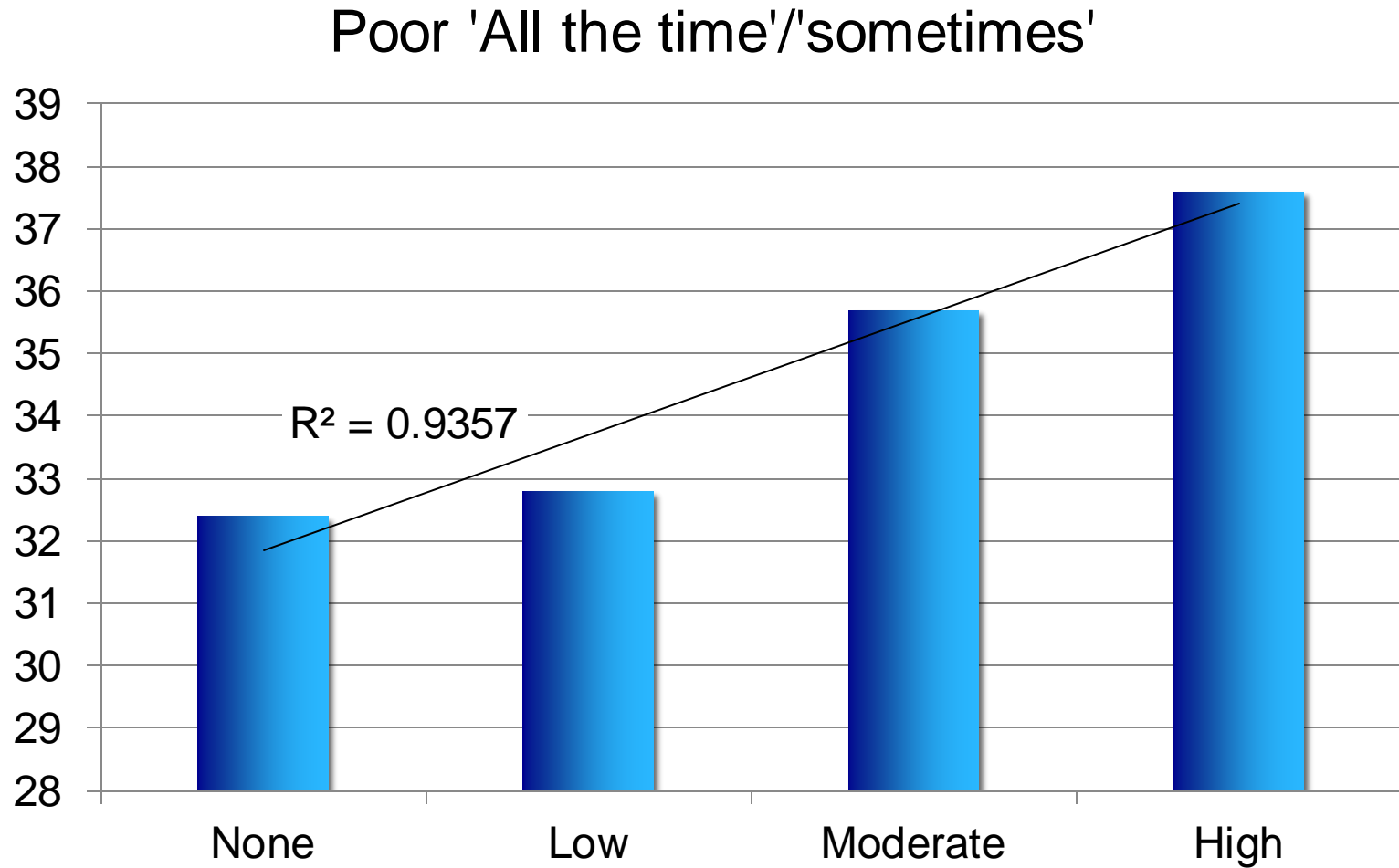
Age bands by EPV 'None' and 'High'



Age bands by EPV 'None' and 'High'

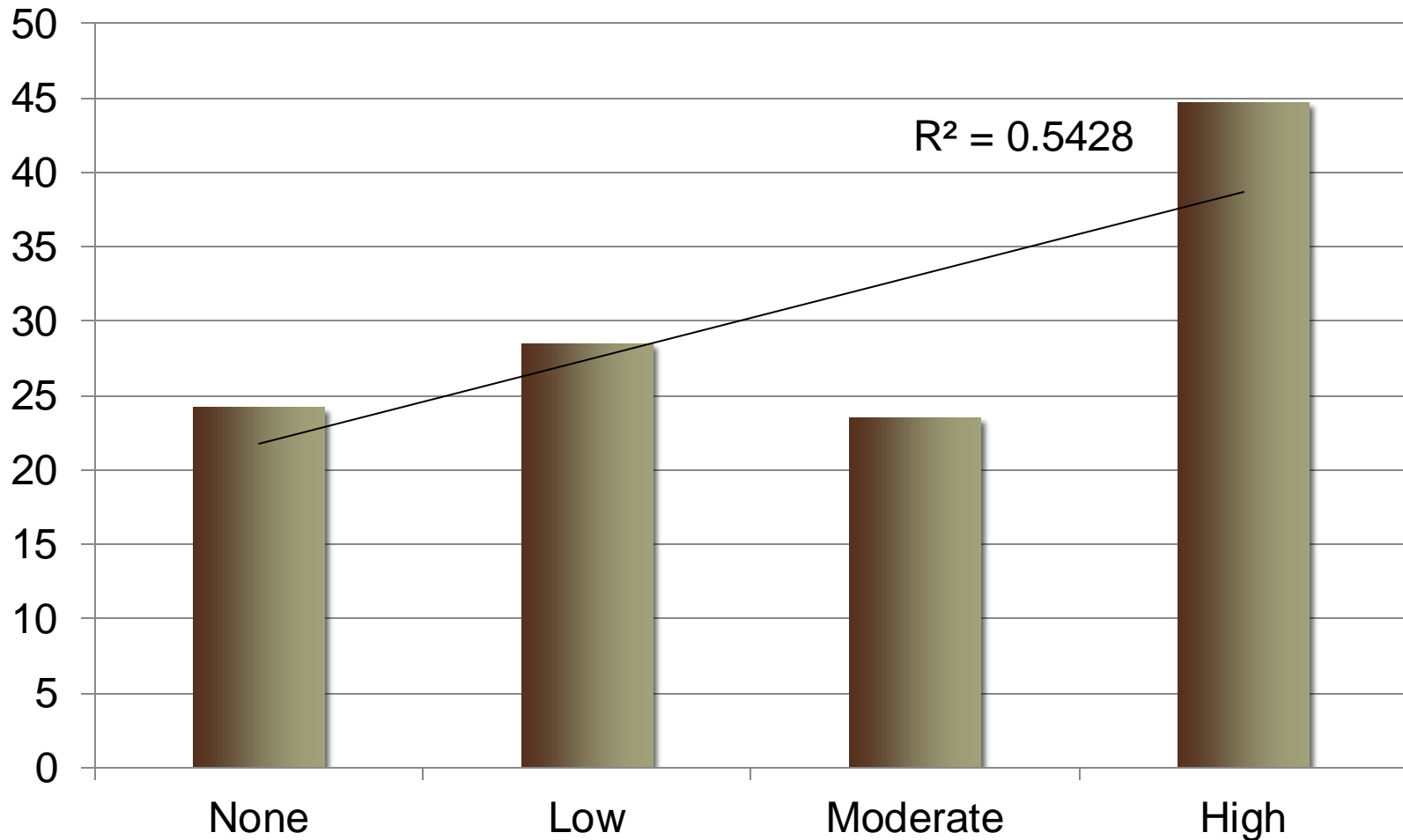


EPV by perceived poverty

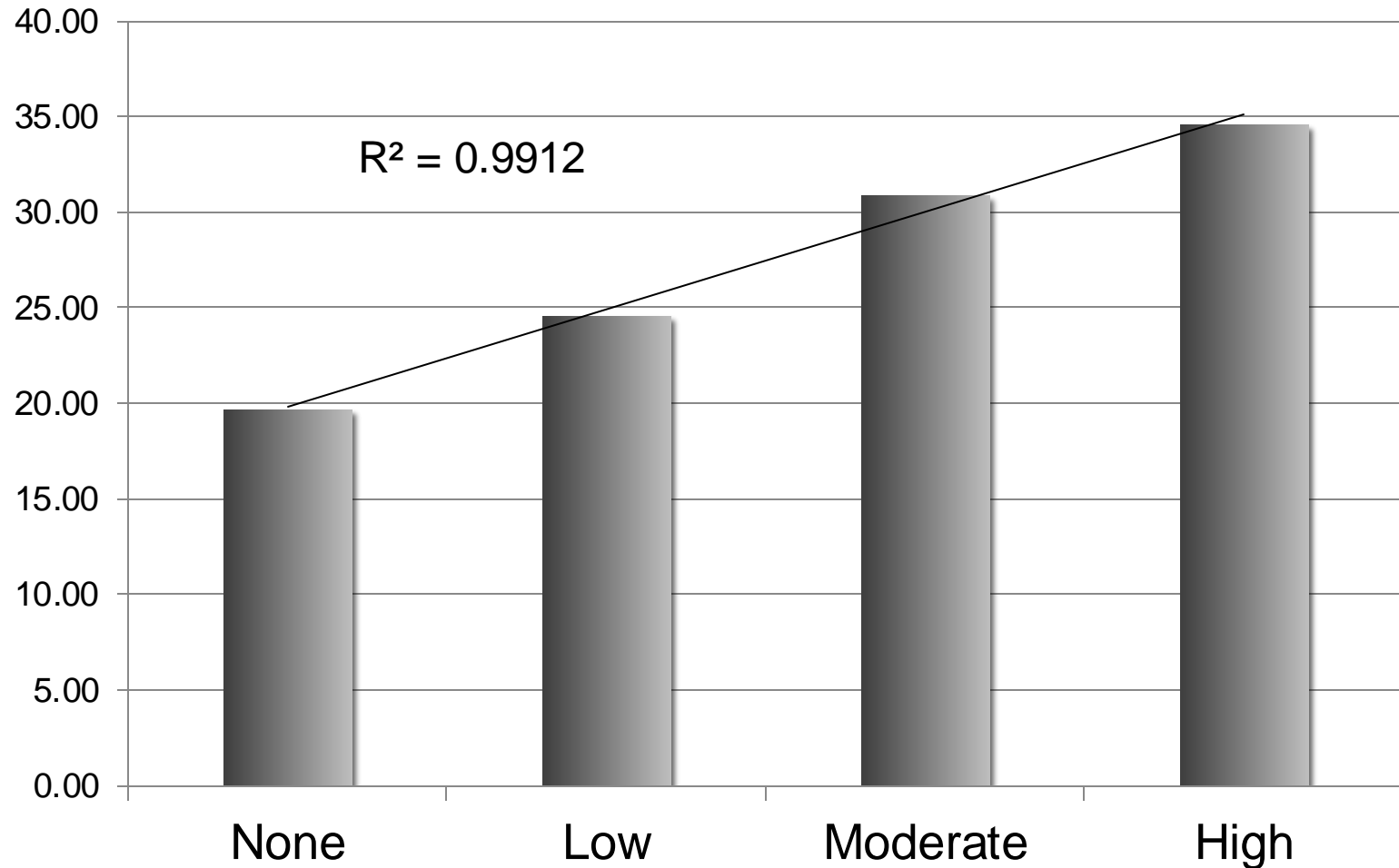


EPV by 'lived in poverty in the past'

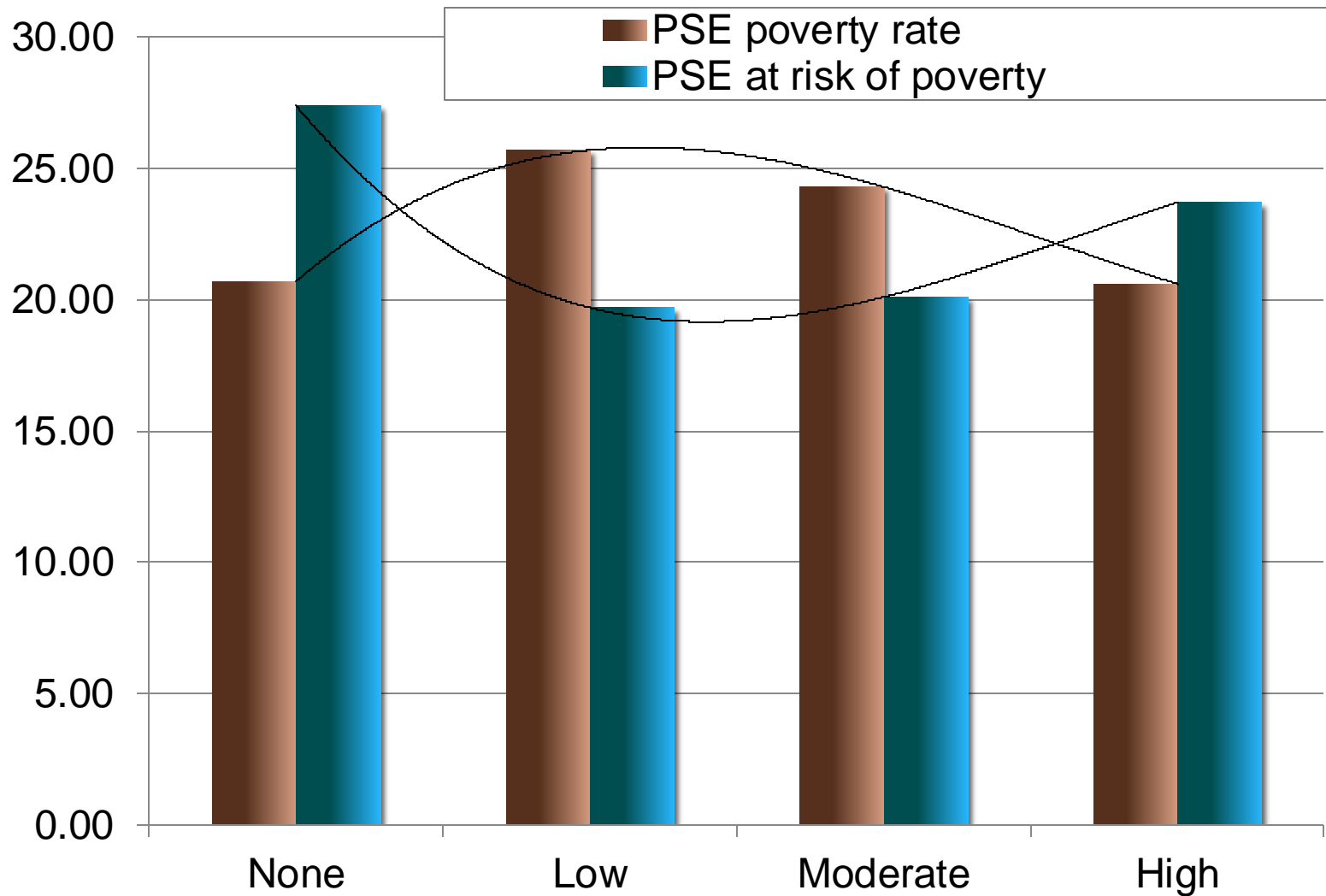
'Occasionally', 'often' and 'most of the time'



EPV by enforced lack of 3 or more necessities



EPV by PSE 'poverty' and 'at risk of poverty'



Logistic regression shows:

Age, gender, household type and religion have statistically significant effect on the likelihood of moderate/high EPV (but model is weak – Nagelkerke R square 0.16)

45-54 age band is 4.9x more likely to have a moderate/high EPV than the 18-35 age group (controlling for the other factors)

Men are 2.4 times as likely to have a moderate/high EPV than women (controlling for the other factors)

Couples with children are less likely than pensioners to have a moderate/high EPV but lone parents are 2.5 times as likely (controlling for the other factors)

Catholics are 1.4 times as likely to have moderate/high EPV than Protestants (controlling for the other factors)

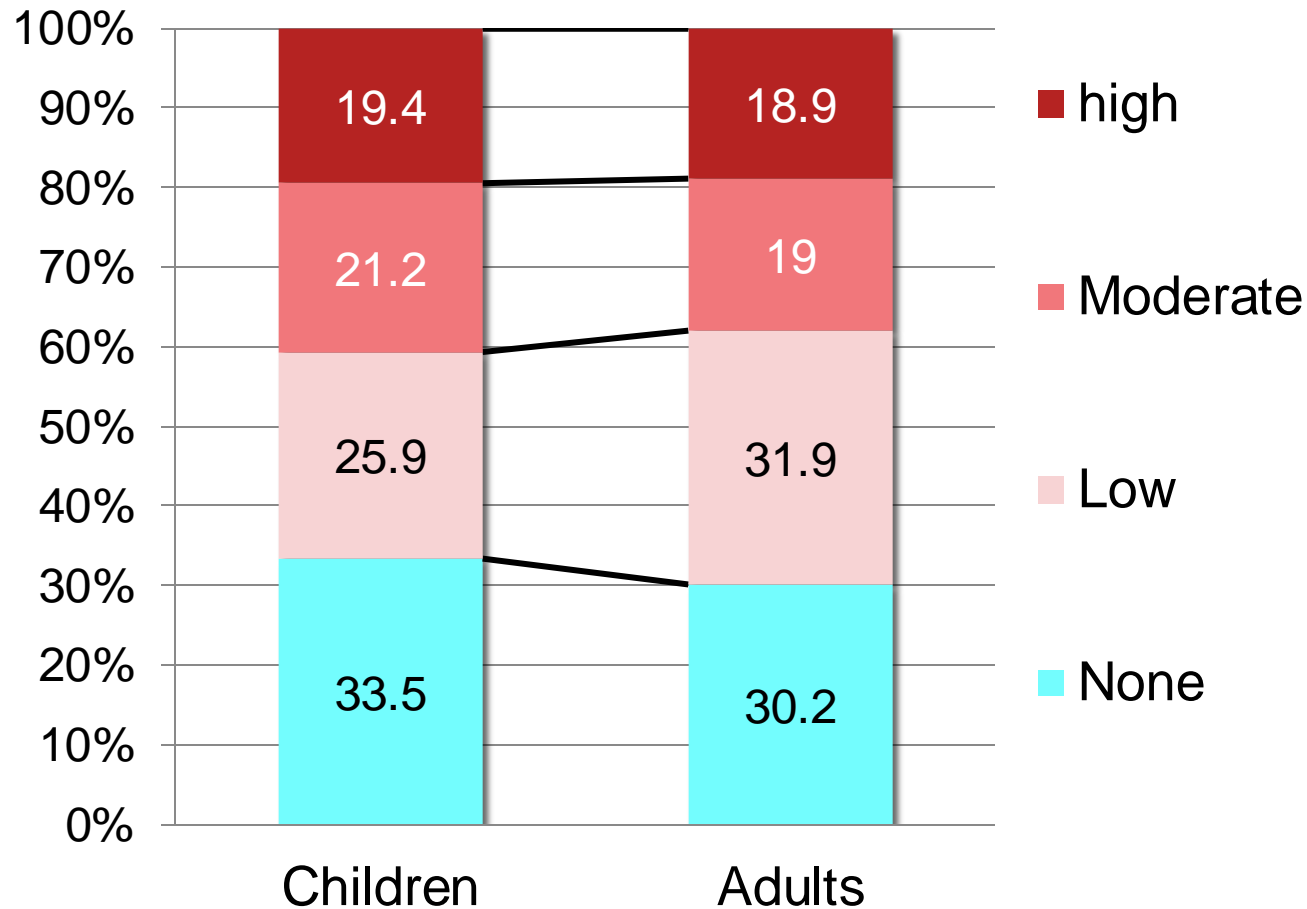
Logistic regression models with poverty variables:

Those who said they lived in poverty in the past ('occasionally', 'often', 'most of the time') are 1.3 times as likely to have a moderate/high EPV than those who 'never' lived in poverty (controlling for age, gender, religion and household type)

Deprivation (lacking 3 or more necessities) increases the likelihood of moderate/high EPV by 1.8 times (controlling for age, gender, religion and household type)

The PSE poor have significantly higher odds of having a moderate/high EPV than the non-poor (controlling for age, gender, religion and household type) (but the factor is low at 1.13)

Proportion of children and adults by EPV bands



The next generation

- 1 in 5 children are growing up households with an adult who has 'high' EPV
- 26.6 per cent of children in N. Ireland are in PSE poverty (N= 120,000)
- 31 per cent of children in PSE poverty live with an adult with 'high' or 'moderate' EPV
- 1 in 4 children in 'high' EPV households are in PSE poverty (N=22,000)

The next generation

- 40 per cent of children in N. Ireland are in households lacking 3 or more necessities*
- 13 per cent of all children in N. Ireland live with an adult with 'high' or 'moderate' EPV and lack 3 or more necessities*
- 37 per cent of children in 'high' EPV households lack 3 or more necessities* (N=30,000)

*44 adult and child items

Every Penny Counts: Family Life on a Low Income

Mary Daly and Grace Kelly



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



Focus and Design

Two Main Research Questions:

What is the significance of family in the context of poverty?

What is it like to be in this family situation?

51 families on low income in Northern Ireland

Interview covered 6/7 main themes:

resources/capacities, family support, family patterns, culture, nature and meaning of familial ties



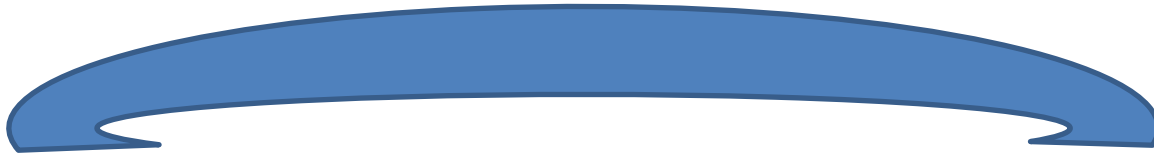
Theorising Family and Poverty

Family as structural/organisational unit

Family as a set of relations

Family as culture and value

Family as object of public representation



All of these affect access to and
use of resources

Family as Structural Unit

Family structures effect a lower level of resources

A family/familial economy – a unit of budgeting

Strong sense of resources as collective

However family economy is neither undifferentiated nor completely rational

Generational divisions (also gender)

Children come first

Almost two economies: a rational one and a moral one



I would rather sit with a jumper on when the kids are at school than turn my heating on 'cos that's just wasting it. It's different if the kids are in, I need it on then. But me and him can put jumpers on and layer up. I wouldn't have it blasting now if it was just us two in the house.



Family as a (Potential) Source of Resources

A complex array of money, goods, tasks, emotional support – micro finance and care-related favours/services are the most common
Stretches over time and generation but it's very carefully negotiated

Mainly between children, parents, siblings and in-laws – and quite gendered

But it is tricky to negotiate and sustain



Yeah, so I'd go down to my mammy's about 3 in the afternoon and then we'd sit and have a wee cup of tea and a wee chat and then she'd say 'Do you want to stay for dinner' and I'd be 'yeah sure [starts to laugh and puts on a funny voice] 'that's what I'm here for, I'm not going to tell you that's what I'm here for but it is, you think I'm here to see you but I'm not at all, I'm down to raid your fridge' [laughs again].



Family as Set of Relations

Discourses of love and affection but also of constraint especially around the parent role

Normative underpinnings are of duty and obligation

Creating 'oases' for building and sustaining family relationships/togetherness – 'in here/out there'

Broader chains of relationships as well

Many examples of binding children to family



Family as Culture and Value

There are no cultural deficits here – family is very evocative for people

Strong narratives of ‘this family’ (not necessarily positive)

Family is a major way in which people achieve meaning – the parent role and relationship especially important (a source of skill)

Also an ideal or myth to which they aspired



I'm not ashamed.. I'd be embarrassed because I don't go nowhere, the kids don't go anywhere really. But I'm not ashamed because still inside my four walls we are all happy. Do you know what I mean? We're happy with ourselves.... And we are not starving you know.



Representing Self and Family

Embarrassment and shame are widespread

Among the responses: accommodation, resistance, rejection

Quite continuous and local and may involve a form of theatre

One way of resisting is concealing

Another is for people to construct situations where they are givers

People engage in 'othering' also

Children also mobilised – mini ambassadors



My kids can go anywhere ... and they're the most polite kids you'll ever meet and everyone comments on it. ... I can take them and leave them anywhere and they'll not let me down.



Conclusions

Not just 'making do' but 'making family'

Several alternative 'economies' but none that straightforward (have to be contextualised)

One way in which they have to be contextualised is through the availability and meaning of family

Family is significant but it's differentiated, riven with contradictions and ambivalences

Family life and ties may be strengthened by situations of poverty but they are also placed under pressure



Poverty, exclusion and disability in the UK

Pauline Heslop
University of Bristol



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

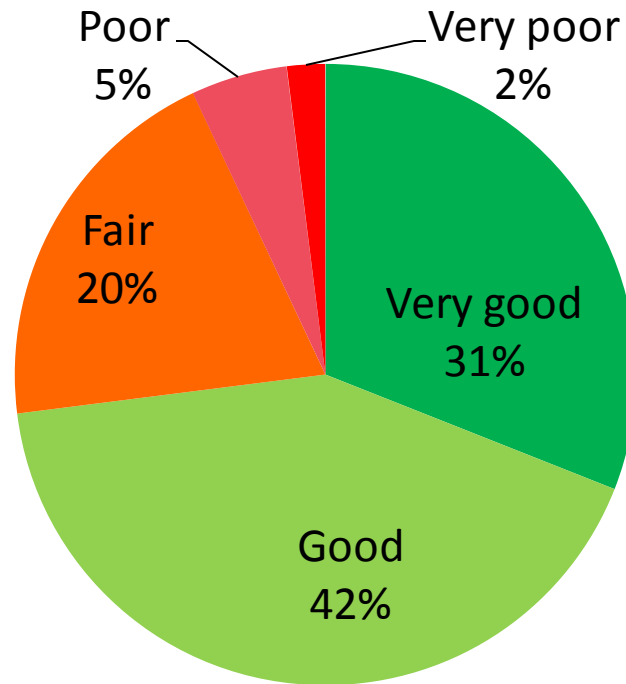


How bad is poverty for your health in general?

Theoretical explanations

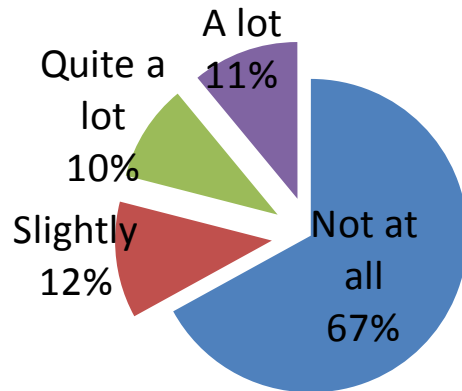
- Materialist – money buys health-promoting goods and social activities.
- Psychosocial – the stress of not having enough money affects health.
- Behavioural – living in disadvantaged circumstances may be more likely to have unhealthy behaviours.
- Poor health can affect education and employment opportunities.
- The assumed pathway is circular
....poor health... loss of income...more health problems.

General health of individual respondents (n= 8,404)

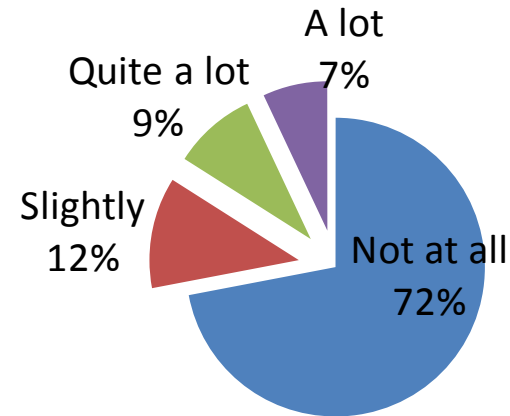


The association between general health and poverty

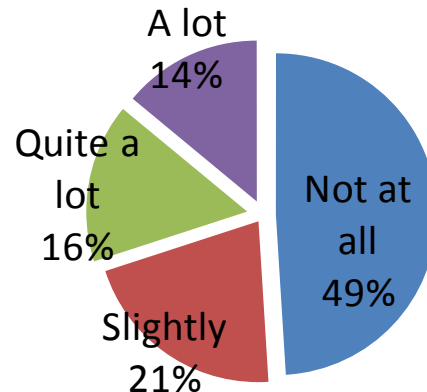
Has health had an impact on financial situation?



Has health been affected by a lack of money?



Has health limited ability to participate in society?



Defining 'disability'

- Disability is hard to define and measure.
- Theoretical definitions have moved from individual 'medical' model to 'social' model.
- In policy terms, the Equality Act (2010) definition enables a broad interpretation.
- Prevalence estimates in different surveys depend on variability in survey design and process.
- A final set of standardised questions was agreed for use in national surveys in 2011 by the ONS.
- To be recorded as disabled, a person would have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity which limited their activities in some way.



Disabled individuals in the PSE

- 17.7% (n=2,005)

This is a slightly smaller proportion of disabled people than in census data.

59% female.

Proportion disabled increased with increasing age.



Households with a disabled person

| Household composition | Percent | Number |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| One disabled adult in household, no disabled child | 27.7 | 1,439 |
| Two or more disabled adults in household, no disabled child | 4.3 | 222 |
| One or more disabled child(ren) in household, no disabled adult | 1.6 | 82 |
| At least one disabled adult and at least one disabled child in household | 0.6 | 30 |
| Households with disabled adult and/or child(ren) | 34.2% | 1,773 |
| No disabled people in the household | 65.8% | 3,420 |

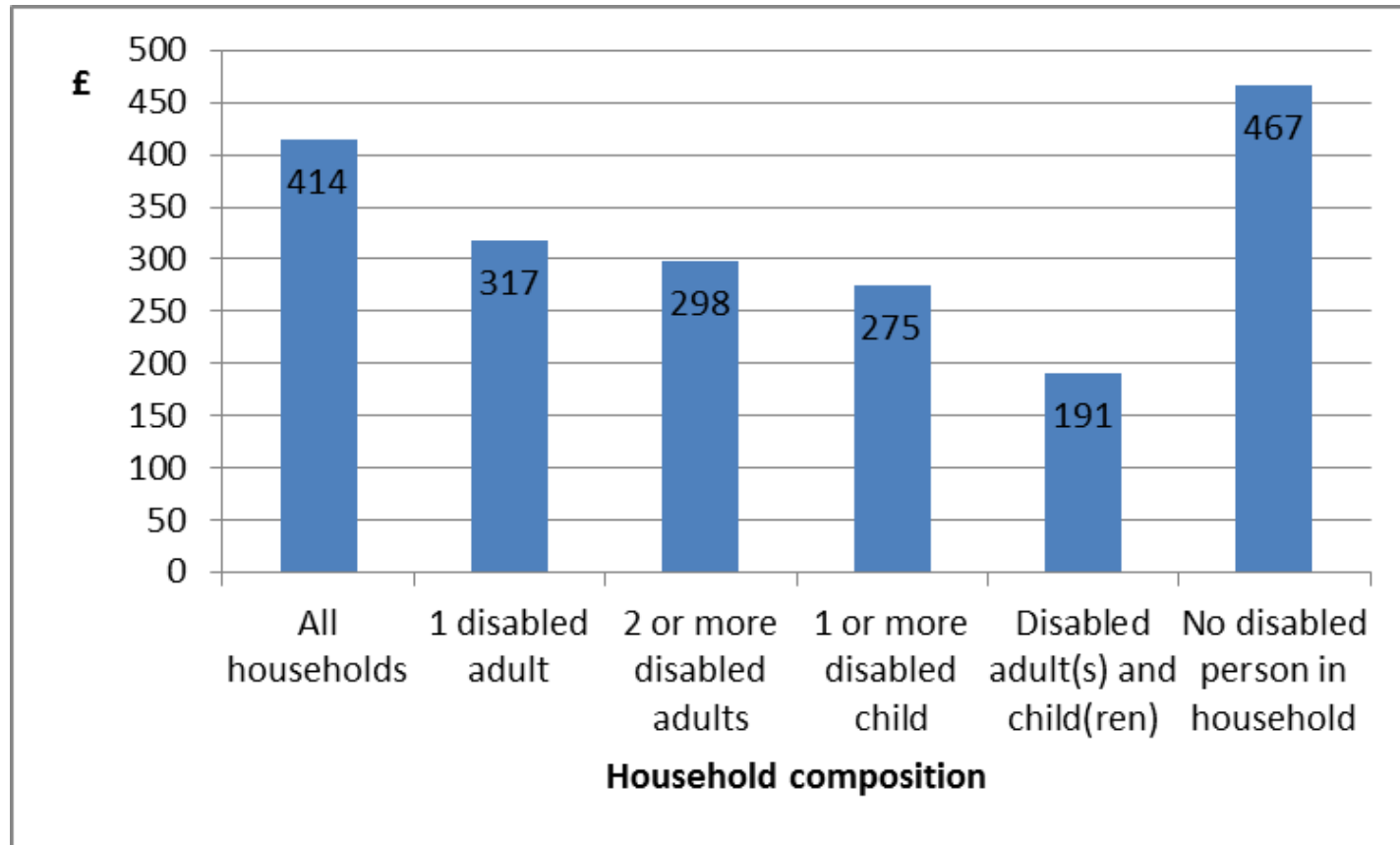


Equivalised net weekly income

- Using 'after deducting housing costs' measure - housing costs are effectively a 'given' and must be met; it is the money left over after that that is the measure of standard of living.
- Equivalised scale

| | |
|---|------|
| Head of household | 0.65 |
| Partner | 0.35 |
| Each additional adult (16 and over) | 0.40 |
| Child (under 16) | 0.25 |
| Any person has a limiting long term illness | 0.30 |

Equivalised net weekly household income - after housing costs (n=1,487)

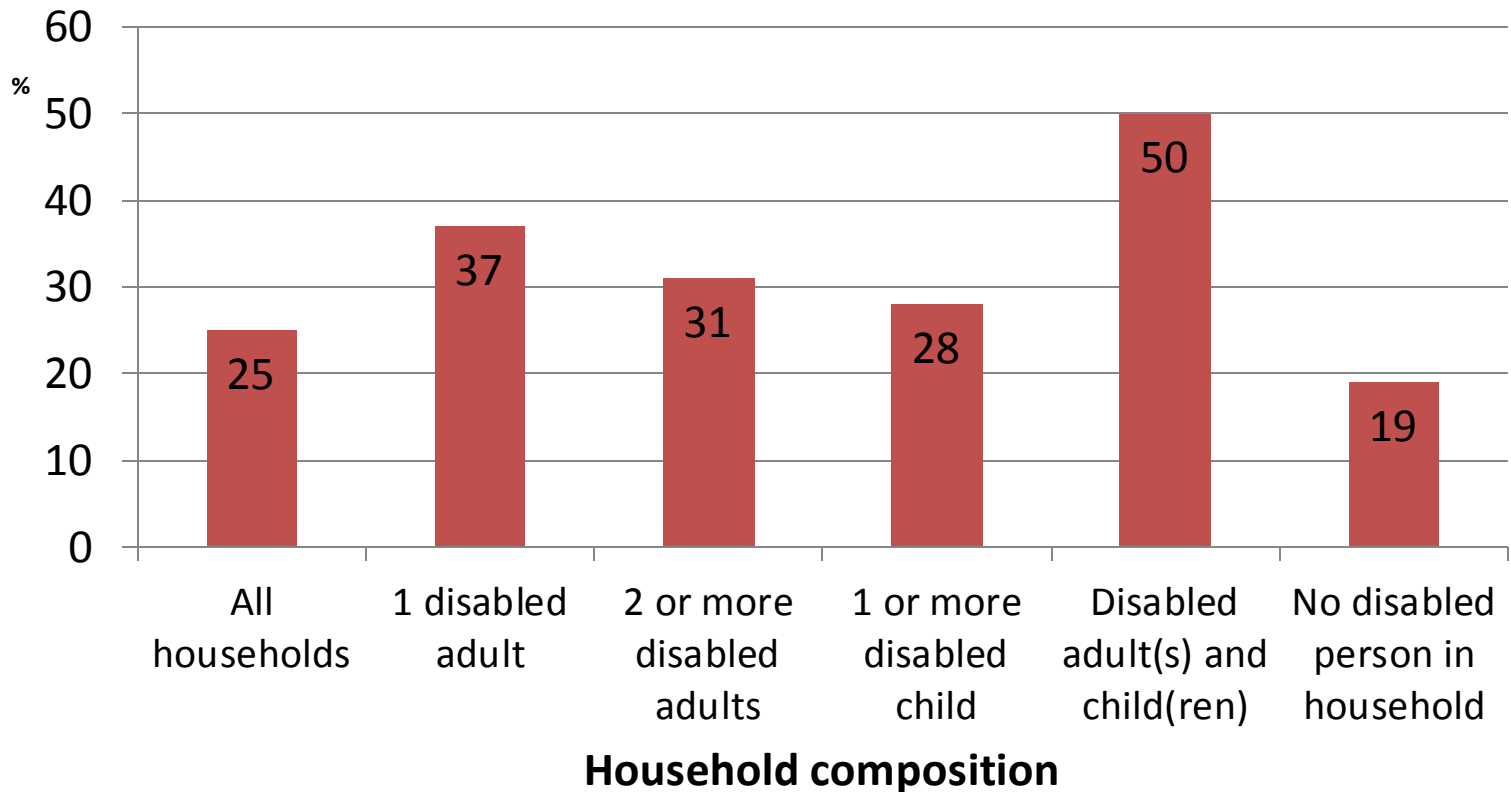


At-risk-of-poverty rate

The proportion of people with an equivalised disposable income (after housing costs) below 60% of the national median



At risk of poverty – 60% AHC (PSE Equivalisation) (n=5,170)



Summary of income data

- Any household with a disabled person has a significantly lower equivalised net weekly household income compared with all households.
- Those with the lowest income are households with a combination of disabled adult(s) and child(ren).
- Half of households with a combination of disabled adult(s) and child(ren) are at-risk-of-poverty with equivalised disposable income (after housing costs) below 60% of the national median.

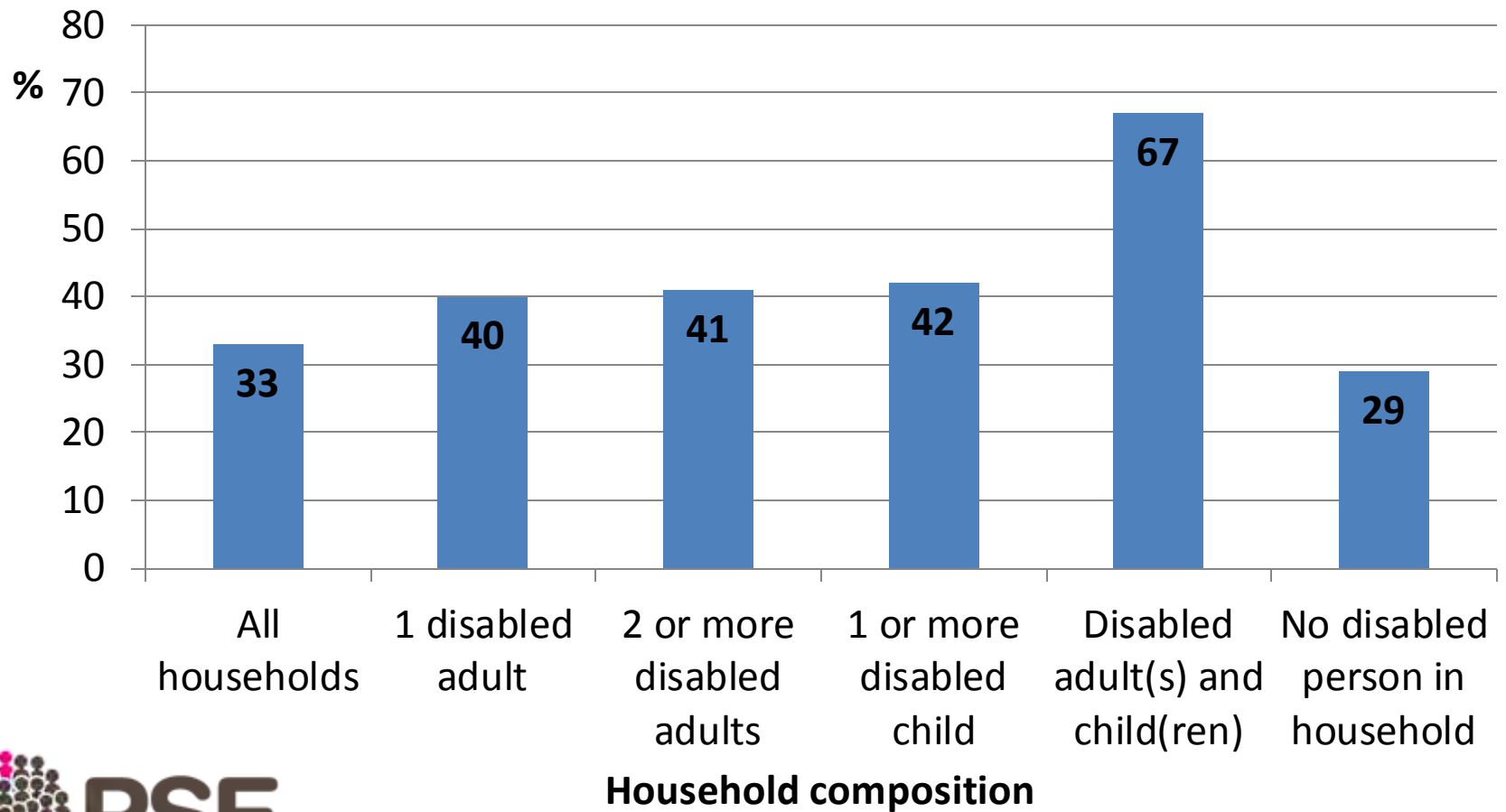


PSE deprivation index

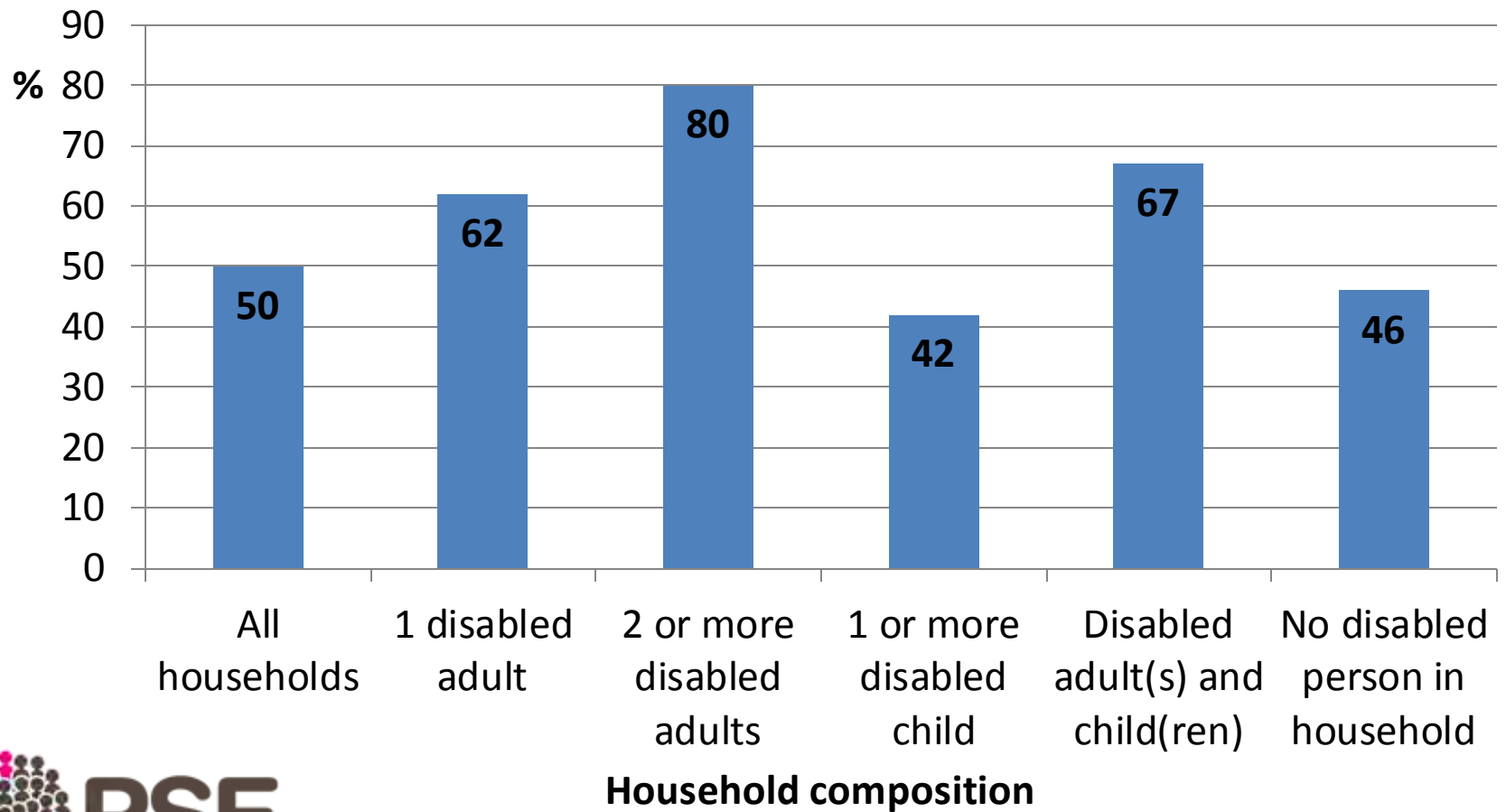
- PSE UK Omnibus Survey 2012
- Items that 50% of the population agree are *'necessities of life that everybody should be able to afford'*
- 22 adult and household items
- 44 adult and household, and child items.



Unable to afford 3 or more perceived 'necessities' for adults/household (n=5,110)



Unable to afford 3 or more perceived 'necessities' for adults/household and children – households with dependent children only (n=1,502)



Summary of household deprivation data

- Any household with a disabled person more frequently reported not being able to afford 3 or more items for adults/households than all households.
- This was particularly the case for households with a combination of disabled adult(s) and child(ren).
- When items for children were added a different pattern emerged:
 - where there are disabled children in the household, the household protected them from deprivation items or activities for children.
 - in households with disabled adults but non-disabled children, the proportion of households unable to afford items increased, particularly so for households with two or more disabled adults.



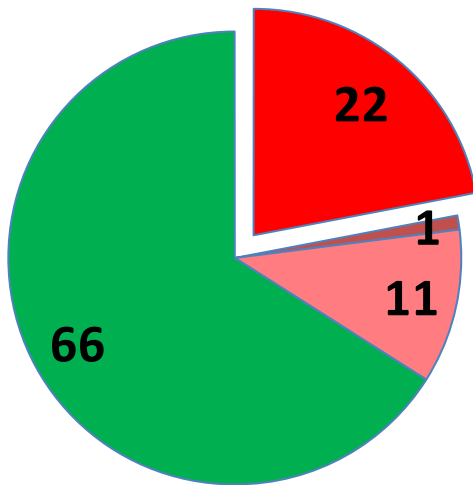
Poverty measure: PSE

- **Poor** - households reporting 3 or more deprivations and low equivalised income (under £295/week).
- **Rising** - households reporting 3 or more deprivations but with high equivalised income (above £745 per week).
- **Vulnerable** - households with a low deprivation (less than 3 deprivations), who also have a low income (below £204 per week).
- **Not Poor** - households that have not been classified as 'poor', 'rising' or 'vulnerable'.

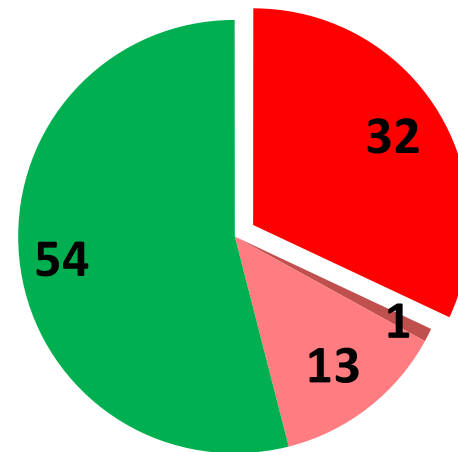


Poverty and households with disabled people (n=5,169)

All households



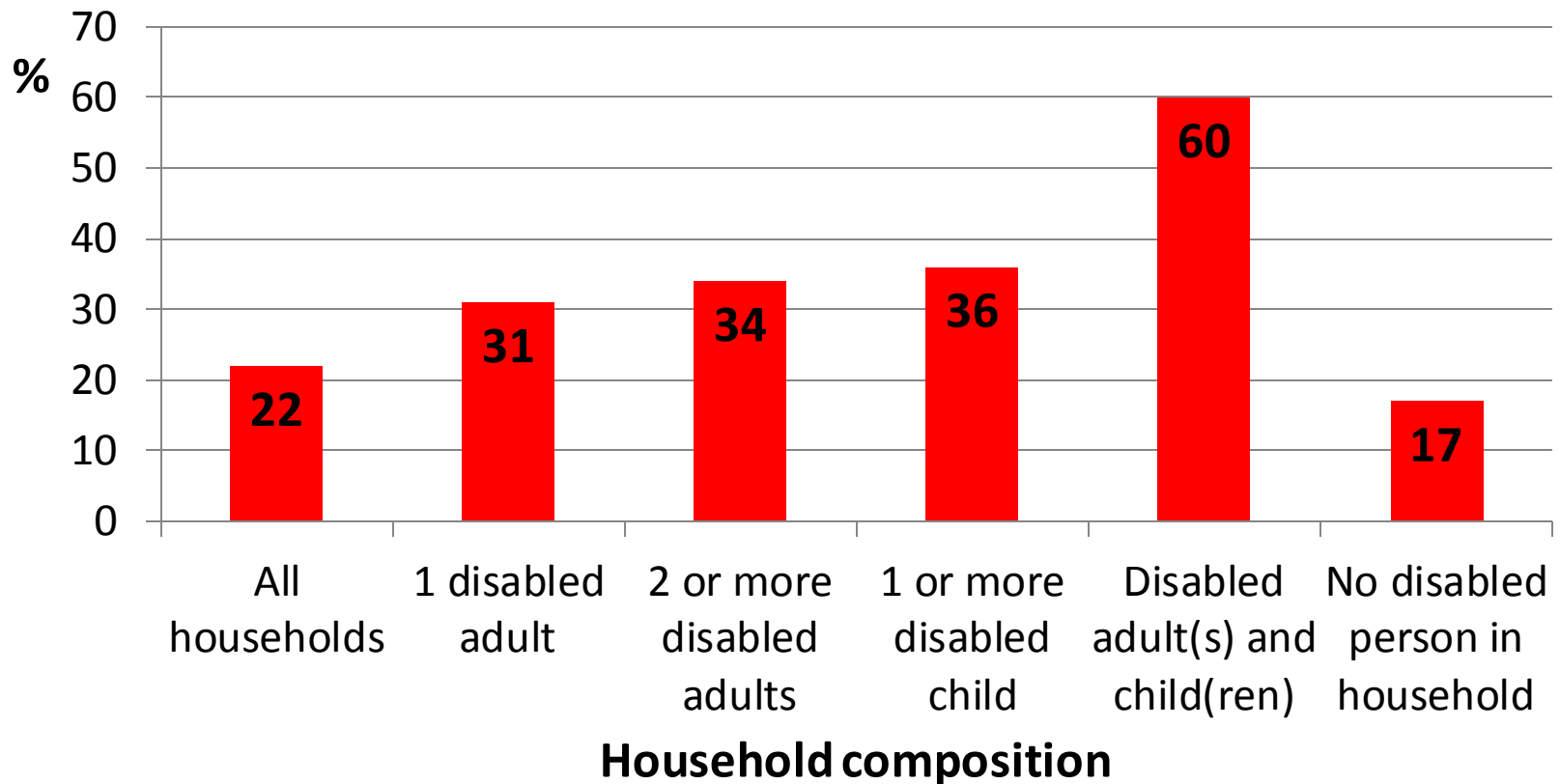
Households with disabled person(s)



- Poor
- Rising
- Vulnerable
- Not poor

Disabled people in 'poor' households

(n=1,143)



Changing times?

So has the situation for households with a disabled person changed over time?



Comparison between 1999 and 2013 PSE data

Review of areas of poverty-related disadvantage directly comparable in 1999 and 2013:

- Satisfaction with accommodation (3).
- Area/neighbourhood satisfaction (1).
- Debts and ability to pay essential bills (1).
- Social networks and support (4).
- Subjective assessments of living standards (3).
- Going without items when money is short (19).



In 1999

The odds of a household having 3 or more of these indicators of disadvantage compared with households with no disabled person:

- 3.8 times greater for households with disabled adult(s) and child(ren).
- 2.2 times greater households with one or more disabled children.
- There was no difference for other household compositions.

In 2013

The odds of a household having 3 or more of these indicators of disadvantage compared with households with no disabled person:

- 3.6 times greater for households with disabled adult(s) and child(ren).
- 3.0 times greater households with one or more disabled children.
- 1.7 times greater for households with two or more disabled adults.
- 1.5 times greater for households with one disabled adult.



Conclusions

- A third of households had one or more disabled person.
- A third (32%) of households with a disabled person are 'poor' i.e. low equivalised net weekly household income (AHC) and lacking three or more 'necessities' of life.
- Households with disabled adult(s) and child(ren) are 'the poorest of the poor'
 - half of these households (50%) have an equivalised disposable income (AHC) below 60% of the national median.
 - two-thirds (67%) are unable to afford 3 or more perceived 'necessities' for adults/household and children.
 - 60% are 'poor'.
- There is a convincing picture of worsening disadvantage for households with disabled people from 1999 to 2013, and the current welfare reforms (that have not been fully assessed for their cumulative impact) offer little hope of their amelioration, let alone improvement.



Explaining poverty to the public

Joanna Mack, The Open University

www.poverty.ac.uk



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social exclusion in the UK



The 'scrounger' narrative



Re-framing the debate: PSE press coverage

The Daily Mirror, front page, 19 June 2014

Mirror-p1-20140619.pdf - Google Chrome
file:///C:/Users/jo/Downloads/Mirror-p1-20140619.pdf

INSIDE
Your complete
2014-15 football
fixtures guide

Every club, every game

PRES GUIDE
It's a... But who will be 2014...

PLUS
Brilliant
World Cup
pullout

SHOCK REPORT SHAMES BRITAIN

POVERTY TRAPPED

DESPERATE
Millions of kids
are suffering

BY JASON BEATTIE
THE number of Britons living in poverty has soared to one in three, a shock report reveals.
Almost 18 million cannot afford adequate housing and 2.5 million kids live in damp homes.
It also shows that poverty has more than doubled in 30 years, as David Cameron allows the gap between rich and poor to become a chasm.
Furious Labour MP Frank Field branded the rise "horrendous".
FULL STORY: PAGES 6&7

» One in three on breadline as the rich get richer
» 2.5 million children forced to live in damp homes

FAILING
Under fire
Mr Cameron

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Metro-p6-20140619.pdf
Independent_i-p5-20...pdf
Independent_i-p5-20...pdf
Mirror-p6-20140619.pdf
Mirror-p6-20140619.pdf
Guardian-p4-20140619.pdf
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Iraq needs our support

DAVID Cameron's warning that Islamist terrorists in Iraq could attack Britain is a reminder that we are not insulated from the carnage thousands of miles away.

We have a vested interest in the elected Government in Baghdad, whatever its failings, beating back the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

The best strategy is to support Iraq financially and diplomatically and to share intelligence.

Returning jihadists are unlikely to slip into their old lives and may pose a danger. Tackling them without alienating the wider Muslim community requires tact and sensitivity.

We hope the threat isn't used as a smokescreen for another crackdown on the civil liberties of the law-abiding majority.

Shameful truth

THE majority of children scarred by poverty live in homes in which at least one parent has a job.

Today's Bristol University report explodes myths peddled by a Government presiding over an explosion in misery.

The number of Britons living below the headline has soared to one-in-three of the population.

And smearing the poor as skivers, as Tory Ministers regularly do, adds insult to injury as the coalition blames the victims of free market failures and a callous political creed for their own plight.

Doctor's orders

TAKING a drink for medicinal purposes is an old excuse transformed by the blessing of a doctor who advises patients to enjoy red wine.

Forget that old tale about an apple - because now it's a glass of red wine a day that keeps the doctor away.

Keizer and Black

ENGLAND v URUGUAY: THE NATION SUPREMELY CONFIDENT



DEMAND Mr Field called for action
By JASON BEATIE
Political Editor

SMUG ministers keep saying they are helping people out of hardship - but their claims have been shot to pieces today by shocking evidence.

In a damning verdict on the Coalition, a report has revealed that 33% of people in Britain are living below the headline.

It means poverty has more than doubled since 1983 when the figure stood at 14%.

Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary Rachel Reeves said: "David Cameron's government has completely failed to tackle poverty and deprivation."

"Child poverty is set to rise, not fall under his government. And there are more people in poverty in work than out of work."

And Labour MP Frank Field added: "Tackling the causes of poverty is clearly the right strategy - this report shows that the Government's strategy isn't working."

"Here there is the most major

“Ministers aimed to tackle poverty - they have failed”

PROF DAVID GORDON ON THE SHAMEFUL FIGURES

challenge to all our political parties: what is your manifesto going to say to reverse the horrendous rise in the numbers of people in poverty detailed in this report?"

The major study, led by Bristol University, revealed a string of shameful findings.

■ Almost 18 million cannot afford adequate housing conditions

■ 1.5 million children live in households that cannot afford to heat the home

■ 2.5 million kids live in properties that are damp

■ More than half a million children live in families who cannot afford to feed them properly

■ 12 million people are too poor to

POVERTY TRAPPED: SCANDAL OF UK'S GREAT DIVIDE

1983

14% of Brits living below headline

2014

33% below headline

- 18 million live in inadequate houses
- 12 million too poor to have a social life
- 1 in 6 adults in paid work is poor
- 2.5 million kids live in damp homes



Worth £8.5bn... up £700m
The Duke of Westminster

Worth £9.75bn... up £2.35bn
Ernesto & Kirsty Bertarelli

Worth £3.75bn... up £1.45bn
Mike Ashley

Forget fair play - we are example of how inequality ruins a nation's prospects

BY DUNCAN EXLEY
Director, The Equality Trust

THE UK today is one of the developed world's most unequal countries. Far from being a beacon of fair play, we are now an example of how inequality can ruin a nation's prospects.

A High Pay Centre report says this week that the poorest fifth in the UK now have incomes closer to the poorest in former Eastern bloc countries than to those in Western Europe. And today we learn from the Poverty and Social Exclusion study one in three Britons cannot afford the basics of a decent life.

In contrast, the wealth of the richest 100 people rose last year to £297 billion - more than the wealth held by 30% of the population. This rise in wealth could pay the energy bill for all 26.4 million UK households for over a year.

People from the Pope to the International Monetary Fund have warned us excessive inequality has negative consequences. So why is the UK so unequal? Many justifications are made for the extraordinary increase in wealth of the richest. But can 100 people really have as much value as almost 19 million people?

Others say it doesn't matter because the economy is on the up. But our recovery is only being led by those at the top. Polling this week found only one in five think the recovery is anything to do with the average Brit.

100,000 fewer children in workless poor families. As part of our recovery, the number of families who have lost a job has risen by 1.5 million. Despite the size of the economy doubling in the past 30 years, the number of families who have lost a job has risen by 1.5 million.

blamed on worklessness. Government figures show us that a majority of children in poverty are in working families. This is largely a low-pay crisis. As bosses have bargained for higher and higher pay, ordinary workers are left with stagnating or even falling real wages. While the poor can't take the blame for their poverty, the rich can't take all the credit for their fortunes. Those who manage our biggest companies are typically paid over £1 million a year - far more than is typical in Europe. Others in the UK's top 1% own their increasing riches to the lack of the stock markets. Studies have shown how more unequal countries have worse life expectancy, health, educational outcomes, social mobility and crime.

“Wealth rise of the UK's richest could pay everyone else's annual energy bills”

It is also raising our economy, because the majority of people have little spare cash to spend in the shops, while a minority are using their spare millions to speculate on the housing market, making homes unaffordable for others. The UK is a country where sales of luxury handbags for dogs are booming while working people are in poverty. These are the conditions in which extremist political movements traditionally flourish. If this country is not to become a political, social and economic basket case, the Government must take action.



Apology... Mrs May

Passport row May: I'm sorry

By STEVE HAWKES

HOME Secretary Theresa May told MPs yesterday amid the battle to clear a backlog of half a million passport applications: "I am sorry and the Government is sorry." She said staff were struggling with a workload that has hit a 12-year high. Labour said that she had previously refused 15 times to say sorry to the thousands left in the lurch over travel plans. Shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper insisted Mrs May "hasn't had her eye on the ball". She predicted summer-long chaos - and said Brits' holidays were "being wrecked by her incompetence".

DOUBLE ACT

Nigel Farage has struck a pact for his 24 Ukipp MEPs to join forces with the 17 from Italian comic Beppe Grillo's party.

DESPERATE ED GETS TOUGH

MILIBAND ON DOLE FOR U21s

DESPERATE Ed Miliband will today pledge to axe benefits for jobless young people in a bid to save his political skin.

By KEVIN SCHOFIELD
Chief Political Correspondent

David was leader. It put Mr Miliband behind David Cameron by 33 per cent to 23 per cent when voters are asked who would be the better PM.

However, when David Miliband was put up against Mr Cameron, he won by 25 per cent to 23 per cent.

Another poll yesterday showed 43 per cent of Labour members say Ed should be dumped as party leader.



The Labour leader will also say the unemployed should receive no dole unless they have worked for at least five years beforehand.

The frantic attempt to woo Right-wing voters comes as he tries to cling on to Labour's thin poll lead over the Tories - and boost his rock-bottom personal ratings.

In a further blow, a YouGov poll last night suggested Labour would be more likely to win next year's General Election if his brother

Poll blows... Miliband

Allowance from jobless 18 to 21-year-olds. It would be replaced with a means-tested "youth allowance" - if they join a training scheme.

He will also say ISA payments could go up from £71 to £100 for those who have paid more taxes. The jobless would also not be eligible for dole unless they have worked for five years, rather than two as they do at present.

Mr Miliband will say: "We must reshape our social security system so it does everything to get people into the world of work, not a life on benefits."

Former Labour minister Alan Johnson admitted Mr Miliband was unable to "connect" in the way his brother could. He said: "I can't pretend people are really enthusiastic about Ed."

Tory chairman Grant Shapps last night condemned the ideas, adding: "Ed Miliband has no economic plan."

Kevin.schofield@news.co.uk

The Sun Says - Page Eight

lems - had launched a civil damages claim. However, Mr Hancock can remain as an independent MP for Portsmouth South at least until the General Election. And Parliament has no right to investigate or punish him. A spokesman for Mr Hancock - now at the Priority rehab hospital in Southampton - had repeatedly insisted there was no case to answer. "Annie" claims the Lib Dems had ignored her when she contacted them.

CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS

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'33% of families are poor'

MINISTERS were blasted last night for deserting the "working poor" - as a report claimed millions now live on the breadline. A major study of modern day poverty said 33 per cent of households fall below "society's minimum standard of living". While employment is at a record high, millions are trapped in low paid jobs with no chance of promotion. The Poverty and Social Exclusion report said 3.5million adults go without essential clothing and one in six "in paid work are poor".

SAT! DO NICELY

Saturday's Lotto prize is a £5-million rollover as no one won last night with 10, 11, 18, 23, 26, 37. Bonus number 6.

Wash in buckets

EXCLUSIVE BY JACK LOSH

PATIENTS had to wash from hospital hazardous waste buckets - filled with hot water from a tea machine.

One woman being treated at London's Charing Cross Hospital said some elderly patients were not washed for days after a boiler broke down. The NHS trust apologised and said the heating problem left three ward patients without hot water.



£2bn NHS BLACK HOLE

HOSPITAL patients will suffer longer waiting times, cancelled ops and poor care as the NHS battles with an £2billion black hole next year, campaigners have warned. Health experts predict soaring costs will outstrip NHS funding from April 2015 - just as it faces increased demands from a growing and ageing population.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has insisted next year's £100billion budget will be

By EMILY ASHTON
Whitehall Correspondent

enough to cover costs. But pressure groups yesterday urged him to get a grip before it is too late.

Patients Association chief Katherine Murphy said a lack of finances means "sub-standard, unsafe and undignified care" is imminent. The

Warned... Hunt



King's Fund think tank said there was a "real risk" of hospitals running out of cash next year.

Chief Chris Ham said: "The impact is already being felt on patient care."

Health watchdog Monitor predicted a shortfall of at least £1.6billion in hospital and mental health service budgets. And Anita Charlesworth, chief economist at the Health

Foundation think tank, warned: "We're not going to find this money behind the sofa, so it really would mean the Treasury stepping in."

The Department of Health last night insisted it was confident the NHS is "on track to make £20billion savings this Parliament".

MEDICAL jargon leaves baffled, a survey has found.

43 per cent of patients

The Sun Says - Page Eight

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The Guardian, page 4, 19 June 2014

Guardian-p4-20140619.pdf - Google Chrome

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...is a pretty unconvincing argument. "A lot of these issues go beyond legal questions, they bring in moral, ethical and social considerations."

Lincoln became chief inspector with the surveillance watchdog after a 28-year career spent mostly in military intelligence where he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

He served on the Defence Intelligence Staff and was commanding

...tapping, would ensure that Anglo-German relations are not damaged.

Der Spiegel last year revealed that Merkel's phone had been tapped after an investigation based on the NSA files leaked by Edward Snowden. **Nicholas Watt**

...ing to explain and engage with the public: "The approach of 'why are you challenging us, we are the good guys' doesn't wash ... The 'looking for a needle in a haystack' argument has so far been unconvincing. I haven't been convinced."

"National security", the justification for mass surveillance revealed by Snowden, needed better definition.

Leader comment, page 34»



One of the many striking hats worn by racegoers on the second day of the Royal Ascot race meeting in Berkshire Photograph: Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images

Poverty doubled in 30 years, study shows

Steven Morris

The number of British households falling below minimum living standards has more than doubled in the past 30 years, despite the size of the economy increasing twofold, a study on poverty and deprivation in the UK claims today.

According to the study, 33% of households endure below-par living standards - defined as going without three or more "basic necessities of life", such as being able to adequately feed and clothe themselves and their children, and to heat and insure their homes. In the early 1980s, the comparable figure was 14%.

The research, billed as the most detailed study ever of poverty in the UK, claims that almost 18 million Britons live in inadequate housing conditions and that 12 million are too poor to take part in all the basic social activities - such as entertaining friends or attending all the family occasions they would wish to. It suggests that one in three people cannot afford to heat their homes properly, while 4 million adults and children are not able to eat healthily.

Having someone in the household in work does not prevent British families from facing tough living conditions, according to the research, undertaken by

the Poverty and Social Exclusion project (PSE).

The findings will be seized on by opponents of the coalition, who argue that good news about the economy does not mean living standards are improving for most people. This will be a key Labour message in the run-up to next year's election.

Other figures being published include the claims that 5.5 million adults go without essential clothing; that 2.5 million

33% The percentage of households going without 'basic necessities', such as heating, compared with 14% in the early 1980s

children live in damp homes; that 1.5 million children live in households that cannot afford to heat them; that one in four adults have incomes below what they themselves consider is needed to avoid poverty, and that more than one in five adults have to borrow to pay for day-to-day needs.

Prof David Gordon, from the Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research at the University of Bristol, said: "The coalition government aimed to eradicate poverty by tackling the causes of pov-

erty. Their strategy has clearly failed. The available high-quality scientific evidence shows that poverty and deprivation have increased. The poor are suffering from deeper poverty and the gap between the rich and poor is widening."

Led by the University of Bristol and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the PSE project's research will be published in full this week. Gordon said he had been shocked by some of the findings. "In the early 1980s we assumed life was going to get better. For many it has, for many it hasn't."

According to the research, which also involved universities in Glasgow, York, Oxford and Northern Ireland, 21% of households are behind with bills, against 14% in the late 1990s. More than one in four adults have skimped on food so that others in the household might eat.

The PSE project argues that its findings dispel the idea that poverty in general and child poverty in particular is a consequence of a lack of paid work. It found that the majority of children who suffer from multiple deprivations live in small families with one or two siblings, with both parents, have at least one parent who is employed and are white.

The findings will be discussed at the Peter Townsend memorial conference beginning in London today.

Labour to cut benefits for young jobless

« continued from page 1

to redistribute income without making painful choices. Even with a different economic agenda, there is little prospect of any government elected in 2015 spending its way to greater equality."

Pearce urges Labour to reject a business as usual path in which the government "would tax a little more and cut a little

untouched and the current framework of services and social security in place".

Milliband will also back proposals for local councils to be given more control of the ballooning housing benefit budget. The report suggests the housing benefit bill will reach £25.4bn, with real terms rises expected for the next five years.

Milliband argues the IPPR report shows that even when there is no money to spend radical reform can be started in the fields of health, child care, welfare, social care and housing. But he is going to be cautious about embracing some of its specific plans drawn up over the past 18 months, including a £2bn child care package, funded through scrapping plans for a marriage tax allowance, freezing child benefit and reducing pension tax reliefs.

to be a switch of government resources from tax transfers and credits to delivering services, something that might require abandoning the expensive target to eliminate child poverty.

In probably the biggest proposal, the IPPR will argue that the left has to restore the contributory principle in the welfare system. Pearce argues social security for the unemployed has become a liability for social democrats.

There is frustration among some Labour policy leaders at Milliband's reluctance to embrace more of the report, designed to show how the left set out a redistributionist agenda in the post-crash world. It has had the support of Jon Cruddas, head of the Labour policy review.

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SOCIETY

Number in poverty has soared since Thatcher

By Chris Green
SENIOR REPORTER

The proportion of impoverished households has more than doubled to 33 per cent in the 30 years since Margaret Thatcher was prime minister, the largest study of deprivation ever conducted in the UK has concluded.

The research found that rises in the cost of living meant a full-time job was no longer enough to prevent some people from falling into poverty. One in every six adults in paid work is now defined as poor.

Last night the Government's poverty tsar, Frank Field, said the study's stark findings proved the Coalition's approach to the problem "isn't working" and called for the leaders of all political parties to make manifest pledges to reverse the trend.

The Poverty and Social Exclusion project, based on interviews with more than 14,500 people in Britain and Northern Ireland carried out by eight universities and two research agencies, found that 18 million people cannot afford adequate housing while about 5.5 million adults go without essential clothing and 2.5 million children are living in damp homes.

The survey showed that the percentage of UK households which lacked "three or more of the basic necessities of life" has increased from 14 per cent (about three million) in 1983, the year that Margaret Thatcher was re-elected, to 33 per cent (8.7 million) in 2012, despite the size of the

economy doubling in that period. Researchers used the "three or more" formula as it is directly comparable with methods used in 1983.

Academics said the findings dispelled the myth that poverty was caused by a lack of work or by people shirking. Almost half the "employed poor" were clocking up 40 hours a week or more.

According to separate research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, about half of the UK's 13 million people in poverty are in a household where someone works. Between 2008 and 2014 the cost of essentials such as childcare, rent, food and energy have driven up the amount needed by almost a third, it said.

Professor David Gordon of the Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research at the University of Bristol, which led the project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, said the Government's strategy to tackle the root causes of poverty had "clearly failed".

Mr Field, the Labour MP who was tasked by David Cameron in 2010 to examine poverty, said the study "sadly emphasises that working doesn't now eliminate a family's poverty".

He added: "Tackling the causes of poverty is clearly the right strategy. This report shows that it isn't working. Here, then, is a most major challenge to all the political parties - what is your manifesto going to say to reverse the horrendous rise in the numbers of poor?"



The survey found that 18 million people cannot afford adequate housing GETTY

A Department for Work and Pensions spokesman said: "There is strong evidence that incomes have improved over the last 30 years, despite the misleading picture painted by this report. The independent statistics are clear, there are 1.4 million fewer people in poverty since 1998."

Jonathan Bradshaw, professor of social policy at the University of York, said that "in many households parents sacrifice their own welfare" to try to keep their children insulated from the effects of poverty.

Poverty by numbers

18m People cannot afford adequate housing conditions

12m Are too poor to engage in common social activities

5.5m Adults go without essential clothing

4m Children and adults are not properly fed by today's standards

2.5m Children live in damp homes

1.5m Children live in households that cannot afford to heat their home

1 in 3 People cannot afford to heat their homes adequately in the winter

1 in 4 Adults have incomes below what they consider is needed to avoid poverty

17% Of adults in paid work are defined as poor

21% Were in arrears on their household bills in 2012

DIPLOMACY

Libya demands US



EDUCATION

Gove approves 38 new



Ed Miliband to announce radical changes to encourage young jobless back to work or training

ANDREW GRICE
POLITICAL EDITOR

Jobless young adults would lose their automatic right to some state benefits under a Labour government in a bid to encourage them to find work, Ed Miliband will announce today.

The 18-21 age group would no longer qualify for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and income support if they have skills below Level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework – which includes A-levels, AS-levels, and their vocational equivalents.

If they undertook training to try to reach that level, they would qualify for a £57-a-week allowance, the JSA rate under-25s. Even then, it would be means-tested and paid only if their parents' joint income was less than £2,000 a year.

In addition, unemployed young adults would normally be expected to live with their parents rather than claim housing benefit.

The "tough love" plan is aimed at tackling the problem of almost one million "Neets" – young people not in education, employment or training. It would affect about 100,000 people, seven out of 10 of the 18-21 group claiming JSA. Current benefit rules prevent them training while looking for work. Labour claims the move would save at least £65m a year in lower benefit payments and much more in the long run because a "Neet" costs the Government more than £2,000 a year for the rest of their working lives.

Although denying benefits is bound to cause controversy, Mr Miliband will describe the move as "progressive not punitive". It would not apply to peo-

WHAT'S GOING WRONG
MILIBAND'S HEADACHES

Lack of a big offer Measures, such as a 20-month energy price freeze, are popular in the opinion polls but have not been knitted into a positive vision.

The economy, stupid Labour's lead in the opinion polls is being eroded as the economy improves. Some Labour MPs fear Miliband's "cost of living" agenda is past its sell-by date.

His personal ratings Voters do not yet see Miliband as a Prime Minister-in-waiting. The Tories will present next year's election as "a choice between two PMs".

Unforced errors Critics are worried his inner circle lacks experience and political nous – and that there is too much internal rivalry.

ple with young children or disabilities that prevent them preparing for work. He will say the present system is unjust for young people not at university because they get no state support if they do more than 16 hours a week of training or further education. The proposal forms part of a blueprint published today by the IPPF think tank on how to create a fairer society in an age of austerity. The *Condition of Britain* report will shape the policies on which Labour will fight next year's general election.

Mr Miliband will also endorse the IPPF's plan to restore the contributory principle to the heart of the welfare system. Under Labour, the higher rate £71-a-week JSA, currently paid to people who have been in work for two years, would kick in only after five years in work, but the level would be raised by

The Labour leader will also back the IPPF's proposal to switch spending from housing benefit to house building. Local authorities would keep some of the savings from negotiating lower rents with landlords to spend on building new homes, bringing down the £2.8bn annual housing benefit bill in the long term.

Labour hopes the new policies will tackle its image as "the welfare party" and boost its economic credentials. Launching the report, Mr Miliband will commit Labour to "big changes" without "big spending". He will say: "We face an economy where inequality is rising, year after year, and where so many people feel locked out of the chances that previous generations enjoyed. Turning that round is the mission of the next Labour government."

Editorial, p2



Clegg finds new gears

Nick Clegg greeted Sheffield schoolchildren at a four-day reception in London yesterday. The race starts in Yorkshire next month, not in Germany.

RAF fighters intercept 'multiple Russian aircraft'

RAF Typhoon fighters were scrambled to intercept "multiple Russian aircraft" as part of the Nato mission to police the Baltics, the Ministry of Defence has said. Four groups of aircraft were detected in international airspace on Tuesday. The MoD said the aircraft seemed to be carrying out "training".

Ukip forms alliance with French far-right MEP

Ukip has formed a new group in the European Parliament, including an MEP elected as a member of France's far-right Front National. Joëlle Bergeron, now an Independent, was elected as a member of Marine le Pen's party in May but quit days later, claiming "their philosophy is no longer mine".

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Poverty doubles in 30 years as work fails to cover costs

CHRIS GREEN
SENIOR REPORTER

The proportion of impoverished households has more than doubled in the 30 years since Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, the largest study of deprivation ever conducted in the UK has concluded.

The research found that rises in the cost of living mean a full-time job is no longer enough to prevent some people from falling into poverty. One in every six adults in paid work is now defined as poor.

Last night, the Government's poverty czar, Frank Field, said the study's stark findings proved the Coalition's approach to the problem "isn't working" and called for the leaders of all political parties to make manifestos pledge to reverse the rise.

The Poverty and Social Exclusion project, based on interviews with more than 14,500 people in Britain and Northern Ireland carried out by eight universities and two research agencies, reported:

- More than 500,000 children live in families who cannot afford to feed them properly;
- 18 million people cannot afford adequate housing;
- 12 million people are too

poor to engage in common social activities;

● About 5.5 million adults go without essential clothing.

The survey showed that the percentage of UK households which lacked "three or more of the basic necessities of life" has increased from 14 per cent in 1983, the year that Margaret Thatcher was elected, to 33 per cent (around 8.7 million) in 2012, despite the size of the economy doubling in that period. Researchers used the "three or more" formula as it is directly comparable with methods used to study poverty and deprivation in 1983.

Academics said the findings dispelled the myth that poverty is caused by a lack of work or by people shirking work. Almost half the "employed poor" were clocking up 40

hours a week or more. According to separate research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, around half the UK's 13 million people in poverty are in a household where someone works. Between 2008 and 2010, the cost of essentials such as childcare, rent, food and energy have driven up the amount needed by almost a third.

Professor David Gordon, of the Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research at the University of Bristol, which led the project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, said the Government's strategy of tackling the root causes of poverty had "clearly failed".

Mr Field, the Labour MP who was asked by David Cameron to examine poverty in 2010, said the study "sadly emphasises that working doesn't now eliminate a family's poverty".

A Department for Work and Pensions spokesman said: "There is strong evidence that incomes have improved over the past 30 years, despite the misleading picture painted by this report. The statistics are clear, there are 1.4 million fewer people in poverty since 1998, and under this Government we have protected the poorest from falling behind."

POVERTY IN THE UK IN NUMBERS

- 33%** Households living below the poverty line
- 500,000** Children whose families cannot feed them properly
- 18 million** Cannot afford adequate housing

poor to engage in common social activities;

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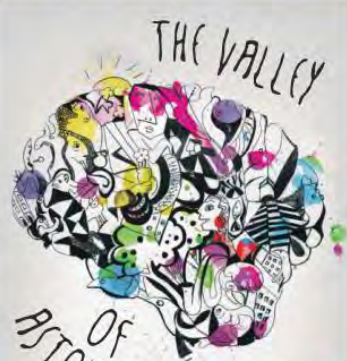
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Wreckage: Two men in their 20s suffered serious injuries when their car almost crashed into a house and was left impaled on a tree. They were taken to Brighton hospital after the smash early yesterday in Bewbush, West Sussex PICTURE: EDDIE MITCHELL

'Chink in armour' can end superbug threat

THE threat posed by antibiotic resistant superbugs could be tackled in the nick of time now the deadly bacteria's 'Achilles heel' has been discovered by scientists.

Just months after the World Health Organisation claimed an alarming rise of drug-resistant bacteria posed a huge threat to the human race, researchers claim they have found a way to fight back.

Scientists have discovered

by **AIDAN RADNEDGE**

the bug responsible for E.coli and MRSA builds up an impenetrable wall to keep out antibiotics.

They believe that drugs can be developed to stop bacteria building a protective barrier around cells, rather than attacking the bugs directly.

This would prevent bacteria from building up a resistance to antibiotics. Prof Changjiang

Dong, whose research team at the University of East Anglia made the discovery, said: "This is really important because drug-resistant bacteria are a global health problem.

"The number of superbugs is increasing at an unexpected rate, but this research provides the platform needed for urgently-needed new-generation drugs," he added.

Prof Mark Fielder, from the Society for Applied Micro-

biology, called the findings 'a welcome piece of news'.

"If we fully understand the workings and construction of structures that help bacteria function we can hopefully exploit weaknesses and kill the organism," he said.

England's chief medical officer, Prof Dame Sally Davies, warned last month that routine operations could be deadly in 20 years if we lose the ability to fight infections.

Childhood crimes 'are in the past'

JOB applicants should not have to disclose minor childhood convictions, the supreme court confirmed yesterday. A worker's right to a private life was breached when he was forced to reveal a caution for stealing a bicycle aged 11, said five judges, as they upheld an appeal court decision. The equality and human rights commission said people should not be haunted by 'minor childhood offences'.

MP sorry for 'degrading' woman

AN MP has apologised for an 'inappropriate relationship' he had with a constituent. Mike Hancock (pictured) said he did not treat 'Annie', a vulnerable single mother, 'with sufficient respect'. His apology was part of an out-of-court settlement after she sued the Portsmouth MP.



Poverty 'getting worse' for poorest

THE number of households which fall below the minimum standard of living has increased sharply in the past 30 years, experts have said. One in three people cannot afford to heat their homes properly in winter, with 4million Britons not sufficiently fed. This proves full-time work isn't enough to escape poverty, the University of Bristol said. 'The coalition's strategy has clearly failed', author Prof David Gordon added.

Pitt and Capaldi back fire appeal

ACTORS Brad Pitt (pictured) and Peter Capaldi are backing a £20million fundraising campaign to restore a fire-damaged part of the Glasgow School of Art. The pair have agreed to be trustees of the institution's appeal after the Mackintosh building was engulfed by flames last month.



Every little helps to fight the flab

TESCO is launching a diet service which will feature personalised eating plans and a new range of calorie-controlled meals for customers. The supermarket will unveil 'my fit lifestyle' zones in 50 shops across London and online. Products include a superfood salad, Moroccan chicken, wholemeal flatbread and a Mediterranean graze box. It is following a US trend for personalised eating plans.

and finally...

A THIEF dressed in a Homer Simpson onesie is wanted by police after a raid on a supermarket. He was one of four men who targeted the Sainsbury's store in Newhall, Derbyshire, in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

MERADISO Kids' Renforce Reversible Bedlinen Made from soft, pure cotton

£8.99

Thursday Highlight

Ministers' fury over claim that poverty has doubled

THE proportion of families living below the poverty line has more than doubled over the past 30 years, according to a controversial taxpayer-funded report.

One in three homes now has a standard of living below the minimum level, it said, adding that millions have had housing, no social lives, too little heating and too little food.

But it was dismissed as 'misleading' by the Government and con-

By **Steve Doughty**
Social Affairs Correspondent

trary to evidence that the number of people facing poverty has fallen substantially in the past 15 years. One of the surveys on which the report was based involved just 1,500 individuals.

It was produced by Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK - a group headed by academics at Bristol University - and paid for through the government's Economic and Social Research Coun-

cil. Instead of using the official definition of poverty, the researchers used their own 'minimum standards of living', a level worked out from surveys in which people are asked which of a basket of goods and services are necessary.

'The percentage of households who fall below society's minimum standard of living has increased from 14 per cent to 33 per cent over the last 30 years, despite the size of the economy doubling,' said the researchers.

According to their report, 5.5 million adults go without essential

clothing, while 2.5 million children live in damp homes. Around 1.5 million children live in households that cannot afford to heat their home.

One in four adults has an income below what the researchers consider is needed to avoid poverty, while one in every six adults in paid work is poor. More than one in five had been forced to borrow in the past year to pay for day-to-day needs.

More than one in five adults and children were poor at the end of 2012, the report said, because they had a low income and were 'multiply deprived' - suffering from three or more deprivations such as a lack of food, heating and clothing due to not having enough money.

It added that 'the majority of children who suffer from multiple deprivations live in small families with one or two siblings, live with both parents, have at least one parent

Statistics tell another story

THERE are a number of areas in which the report's claims are disputed. They include:

■ It ignored the official poverty line - those living on less than 60 per cent of average income - and substituted a measure worked out by asking people which of a basket of goods and services are necessary.

■ State surveys say there are 1.4 million fewer individuals and 1.1 million fewer children in relative poverty since 1998/99.

■ Official figures show incomes of the poorest fifth rising 19 per cent in real terms since 1995.

■ The most recent Whitehall housing survey found 970,000 damp homes - down from 2.6 million in 1996.

'Misleading picture'

who is employed, are white and live in England.'

The report was based on a series of specially-commissioned surveys, one in 2012 involving fewer than 1,500 adults, and another in the same year that involved just over 5,000 homes. Professor David Gordon of Bristol University said: 'The coalition government aimed to eradicate poverty by tackling the causes of poverty. Their strategy has clearly failed.'

'The available high-quality scientific evidence shows that poverty and deprivation have increased since 2010, the poor are suffering from deeper poverty and the gap between the rich and poor is widening.'

The claims drew a scathing response from Whitehall. 'There is strong evidence that incomes have improved over the last 30 years, despite the misleading picture painted by this report,' said a source

close to Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith.

'The independent statistics are clear, there are 1.4 million fewer people in poverty since 1998, and under this Government we have successfully protected the poorest from falling behind, with a reduction of 300,000 children living in relative income poverty and 100,000 fewer children in workless poor families.'

'As part of our long-term economic plan, the Government is committed to tackling the root causes of child poverty.'

Last week Tory MPs accused Oxfam of supporting the Labour Party after it published a poster on poverty that read: 'The perfect storm... starting zero hours contracts, high prices, benefits cuts, unemployment, childcare costs.'

Weekly Offers

Thursday 19th to Wednesday 25th June

HAZELMEADE FARM
10 Back Bacon Rashers
Choose from Smoked or Unsmoked
400g
£4.98/kg, Chilled

Save 30%

£1.99 per pack

Holy Grail of stamm

.....meanwhile on p29 of The Daily Mail, 19 June 2014

Mail-p29-20140619.pdf - Google Chrome

file:///C:/Users/jo/Downloads/Mail-p29-20140619.pdf

newspaper: 'I'd say no, if that's all she aspired to.' She went on: 'You know, I get a lot of girls who say, "I just want to be a model so badly". And I think, "You can do better".'

It is not the first time Miss Delevingne has given the impression she is tiring of life on the catwalk. She made her acting debut in Anna Karenina in 2012, and has also designed a range of accessories for Fendi.

Last year she was reportedly dropped by fashion chain H&M after images emerged of her dropping a bag of white powder outside her London flat.

Mulberry would not disclose how much Miss Delevingne's bags cost. But a comparable design sells for £1,100 at Selfridges.



I feel naked without a bag. Cara and her Mulberry satchel

side of the brain causes spatial awareness problems on the opposite side of the body.

The two participants in the study were taught how to play the chime bars. As the pair improved, the team at Goldsmiths, University of London, increased the distance between the bars to encourage them to play in the space on the affected sides of their bodies.

Following four sessions, the authors said that both participants showed 'significant improvement' in clinical tests.

Researcher Dr Lauren Stewart said: 'It would be great to invite more patients to participate in future studies, as well as see if the music intervention has the capacity to translate to improvements in everyday tasks.'

This lonely nation

By Steve Doughty
Social Affairs Correspondent

BRITAIN is a fractured and lonely country compared to the rest of Europe, official indicators say.

We are less likely to have anyone to turn to in times of trouble than people almost anywhere else in the EU, they showed. We are equally unlikely to feel at home with our neighbours.

The uncertainties and isolation of life in Britain were thrown up by the Government's new happiness and wellbeing measures, introduced by David Cameron to try to find a way of checking the country's progress beyond traditional financial and population statistics.

The results, compared to similar findings from the same exercise carried out across the other 27 EU nations, show cracks in the wellbeing of the country behind the encouraging economic statistics showing recovery from recession and falling unemployment.

Britons, it found, are more satisfied with their family lives than people in most other countries. But when it comes to having someone to stand by them, things are different.

Only in Denmark and France were people less likely to say they could rely on someone to support them if they needed advice about a serious personal or family matter. More than 11 per cent of Britons had no one, against a seven per cent EU average, leaving us 26th on the continental table.

Britons were also less satisfied with their social lives than the average European and were frequently uncomfortable about their neighbours.

The European wellbeing report from the Office for National Statistics said: 'Looking at whether people feel close to each other in the area where they live can give a sense of whether they feel a belonging to their neighbourhood.'

It found that fewer than six out of ten in Britain say they feel close to their neighbours, a return that put

lives are, and anxiety. It also took into account existing European surveys and statistics.

There was no official analysis of why Britain does so poorly in key areas of wellbeing.

But there is widespread speculation that the support provided by extended families has been eroded by the rise of single parenthood and cohabiting relationships in which the partners have not chosen to make a legal commitment.

Rapid changes in neighbourhoods and the undermining of their long-standing relationships are often cited as effects of the large-scale immigration that has led to about four million people from abroad coming to live in Britain over the past 15 years.

The report said: 'The quality of social connections with people around us and a correct balance between working and social life may be beneficial to an individual's wellbeing.'

It found, however, that Britons rated their life satisfaction higher than the EU average.

s.doughty@dailytmail.co.uk

We have no one to turn to and don't get on with neighbours

1 in 5 can't cope financially

MORE than one in five people living in Britain can't make ends meet, ONS numbers suggest.

The study says that 20.2 per cent of the population find it difficult to cope financially.

But this compares with an EU average of 27.7 per cent - meaning Britons are much less likely to be poor the rest of Europe.

The figure puts Britain on a par with France, which spends more of its national budget on social welfare - but below Nordic countries such as Sweden and Finland, where fewer than one in 10 can't meet their bills.

The country was just below the average ranking for 'social exclusion', which counts poverty measures, material deprivation and worklessness.

Among the wealthier EU countries, Belgium, Germany, France, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands all ranked worse than Britain by this measure.

We're Europe's unhealthiest

PEOPLE in the UK are more likely to say they are sick or disabled than almost every other EU country, says the ONS report.

This is despite the fact we live longer than the EU average.

Someone in Britain can expect to live to nearly 65 without a major health problem, compared to less than 62 years as the European average.

But nearly a third of the population said they had a long-standing illness or health problem, compared to an EU average of 31.5 per cent.

Some 62.7 per cent of people here said they thought their health was good, a level below every other western EU country except Portugal.

The study said: 'There is a two-way relationship between wellbeing and health: health influences wellbeing and wellbeing influences health.'

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...the ONS figures back the PSE findings derided on p26

ITV Tonight, March 28, 2013 – 3.4 million viewers

TONIGHT

BREADLINE BRITAIN

A special edition based on the PSE findings



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Edward Harkins @EdwardHarkins 43m
#itvtonight Scenes of 'workless' people keeping themselves busy 'doing work'. Scroungers? Where? #BreadlineBritain
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The Breadline Britain report on #itvtonight is soul-destroying. The UK is broken. And then you read about banker's bonuses. It's so wrong.
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Gary Rae @gary_rae 46m
#breadlinebritain on #itvtonight Here's @jrf_uk look at this jrf.org.uk/topic/austerity #ukpoverty #ukausterity
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#itvtonight poverty and misery and social exclusion amongst the working classes. Yip, it's a Tory government alright.
Followed by Channel 4 News
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Annie Rose Price @annieroseprice 48m
#itvtonight too many in this country living hand to mouth, what do eton educated politicians know about that?
Expand

[Profile] stigmatising of the kind of people we saw; not a jib at politicians
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Jacko @bigballs54 24m
#itvtonight
This is what the people should see the truth the hidden depravation. There not scroungers there how children
Expand

William @williamgray_ 26m
@mykkym1 @PSE2010 Thanks for the link to the real report good to read the truth not #itvtonight 's interpretation to gain viewing figures
View conversation

Statweestics @statweestics 26m
#itvtonight is getting popular, +700% the last hour : statweestics.com/793272/
Expand

Sir Muppet of Smegg @QUaNTRoN_X 27m
#itvtonight has done my head right in. nothing has changed. nothing. some folk got rich in a southern property bubble... that's it.

The programme gained a considerable support on social media



The website: impact objectives

- Increase public understanding
- Contribute to poverty debate
- Provide teaching materials
- Support community and other groups

The website - the challenge of a diverse audience

Specialist

Need to know

Delving deep

At home with stats

Non-specialist

Passing interest

Top level results

Frightened of numbers

The web – a busy world

Google

- Over 1 trillion unique urls
- 20 billion unique pages
- 1.5 billion images
- 100 trillion words

You Tube

- 72 hours of video are uploaded every minute
- Content ID scans over 100 years of video every day

The holding page, 2010

www.poverty.ac.uk



Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



What is poverty

What is poverty? How poor is too poor? What does a person need to participate in society in Britain in the twenty-first century? What is the minimum standard of living to which everyone should be entitled? Who falls below?

This website is being developed to report the findings of a major new ESRC research project into poverty and social exclusion in the UK. This important research project will provide new understandings of what it is like to live in poverty in the UK today and how this interacts with social exclusion through a large scale survey to be carried out in 2011. It is a major collaboration between the University of Bristol, Heriot-Watt University, The Open University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Glasgow and the University of York working with the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

This website will be making accessible new data from the 2011 survey and data from the earlier surveys. We will enable you to interrogate this data and to track changes over time.

Are you interested in following this research and joining in? In the next few months, we'll be putting up more information and briefing papers.

We'd be interested in gathering people's views on necessities for living in the UK today and so we'll be putting up a survey which you can join in.

We launch June 2010. See you then

Register your interest

Your information will be used to make accessible new data from the 2011 survey and data from the earlier surveys. We will enable you to interrogate this data and to track changes over time.

Name

Email

Institution

Submit



The Open University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Glasgow and the University of York working with the National Centre for Social Research



Launched January 2011



The screenshot shows the homepage of the PSE UK website. At the top left is the PSE UK logo, which consists of a circular arrangement of stylized human figures in black and pink, followed by the text 'PSE UK'. To the right of the logo is the title 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK' in a bold, black font. Below the title is a subtitle: 'This website is to report the findings of a major new ESRC research project into poverty and social exclusion in the UK.' Below the subtitle is a horizontal navigation bar with seven buttons: 'Home', 'What is poverty?' (highlighted in pink), 'Research', 'Necessities Survey', 'Conference', 'News', and 'About us'. Below the navigation bar is a large banner area. On the left side of the banner, the text 'What is poverty?' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. On the right side of the banner, there is a photograph of an elderly woman with white hair and glasses, looking upwards and to the right. Below the banner, there are two smaller buttons, both containing the text 'What is poverty?'. The first button is on the left and the second is on the right.

PSE UK Poverty and Social Exclusion in the **UK**
This website is to report the findings of a major new ESRC research project into poverty and social exclusion in the UK.

Home **What is poverty?** Research Necessities Survey Conference News About us

What is poverty?

What is poverty? What is poverty?



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poverty Government
 cuts Low pay Poverty
 forecast Inequality Europe
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Wilshaw and Gove blame the feckless parents – as long as they're poor | Zoe Williams gu.com/p/3q7ct/w

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Benefits bill capped at £119 billion

Definitions of poverty

Definitions of poverty really matter. They set the standards by which we determine whether the incomes and living conditions of the poorest in society are acceptable or not and are essential for determining questions of fairness. From these definitions follow all actions to help the poorest.

In the UK these definitions are being hotly debated as the Coalition government seeks to change the criteria currently used to monitor and measure child poverty (see the PSE: UK team's response to these proposals in [Tackling Child Poverty and Improving Life Chances](#) and [Social Mobility and Child Poverty Review](#)). This section sets out different ways to define and measure poverty and outlines recent key developments. The PSE: UK research project uses the 'consensual method', which defines poverty as those whose lack of resources forces them to live below a publicly agreed minimum standard.

In the film below you can hear how key speakers at the [Second Peter Townsend Memorial Conference](#) defined poverty.



What is poverty?



www.poverty.ac.uk

Stage two

- Give people and communities a voice
- Personal stories
- Provide details of the research
- Be topical and relevant
- Authored pieces
- Make it searchable

Case studies



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Reporting research, examining policy, stimulating debate

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Life stories

A young jobseeker

A single parent >

A disabled couple

A low-paid worker

A single pensioner

A single parent

Jennie is 39 and unemployed. She lives with her three sons, all of whom have disabilities, in Redbridge, outer London. The family has lived in temporary accommodation for the last 12 years.

Meet Jennie and family in the following three videos recorded in autumn 2011.

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Full details of PSE research



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PSE research

In this section you will find full details of the current Poverty and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom research project (PSE UK), including background working papers as well as final reports, key summaries and an opportunity to investigate some of the key survey data. It also provides summary details of the predecessor research projects in Britain in 1999, 1990 and 1983 and in Northern Ireland in 2002/3.

These research projects all use relative deprivation to examine poverty and, in particular, the [consensual method](#). The key concept underlying the consensual approach is to identify what items are necessities on the basis of the public's perceptions of minimum needs and then to examine who is forced to go without these necessities. This research series therefore provides a unique insight into those who fall below the minimum standards set by society and how this has changed over time.

The first report from the PSE UK team '[The impoverishment of the UK](#)', was published in March 2013. It paints a shocking picture of the extent of deprivation and inadequate living standards in the UK today.

Many countries across the world, and in particular the European Union, have taken up and developed the idea of publicly-perceived necessities. Brief details of this research can be found under [International](#).

Featured PSE Research



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If you think we've missed an important report or you are interested in writing an article, do [contact us](#).

Featured news



'Troubled Families' in a spin

The Department of Communities and Local Government claims that the Troubled Families Programme is 'on track at the half-way stage'. Ruth Levitas unpicks the figures and argues this is far from the truth.



Impact of the recession on child...

Jonathan Bradshaw and Gill Main provide an update, 31 January 2014, on their analysis of available data on child poverty. This article discusses trends in child poverty in the UK and urges us all to 'watch this space'.



Would an independent Scotland set...

Would an independent Scotland choose a significantly different social settlement with a more generous social minimum than the rest of the UK? Drawing on the PSE UK findings into attitudes to necessities, Nick Bailey investigates.

All news and views

You can filter all the News stories, Reports and Articles in this section by subject in 'All news and views' below. When you've filtered by Subject, open stories you wish to view in a new tab to keep the subject term by which you've filtered.

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[Bedroom tax – just 6 per cent of tenants move](#)

28/03/14

Only about 6 per cent of social housing tenants affected by the coalition government's 'bedroom tax' have moved home, according to...

[Paying bills a struggle for 1 in 8 in Wales](#)

27/03/14

As many as one in eight people in Wales are finding it a 'constant struggle' to keep up with their bills, according to the latest findings...

[Child poverty commission – government responds](#)

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'Troubled Families' in a spin

... in the both print and broadcast media, claiming that the **Troubled Families** Programme (TFP) was 'on track at the half-way stage'. It was ...

Mar 11 2014 - 15:49

Flaws in the government's troubled family strategy

... social justice hinges on the claim that there are 120,000 '**troubled**' **families** in Britain but this is deeply flawed, argues Professor Ruth Levitas in ...

Apr 10 2013 - 14:35 0 comments

Still not listening

... by Ruth Levitas On 18 July, Louise Casey, head of the **Troubled Families** Programme, published a report called Listening to **Troubled** ...

Oct 24 2012 - 16:37 0 comments

Troubled families programme 'on course'

... government's target for turning around the lives of '**troubled**' **families**, according to the latest progress report. The government has ... programme, local councils were working with more than 35,000 **troubled families** – up from 22,000 in December 2012. Councils had also ...

May 18 2013 - 15:33

Troubled families scheme 'making good progress'

Good progress is being made in implementing the '**troubled families**' programme, according to the coalition government. Figures gathered ...

Apr 10 2013 - 14:35 0 comments

'Troubled Families': parallels with the past

... would 'get to grips' with England's alleged 120,000 'most **troubled families**'. Yet the label is hardly new.

www.poverty.ac.uk

Final stage

- Making results accessible
- Making data interactive
- Providing detailed analysis papers
- And onwards...

Promoting key findings



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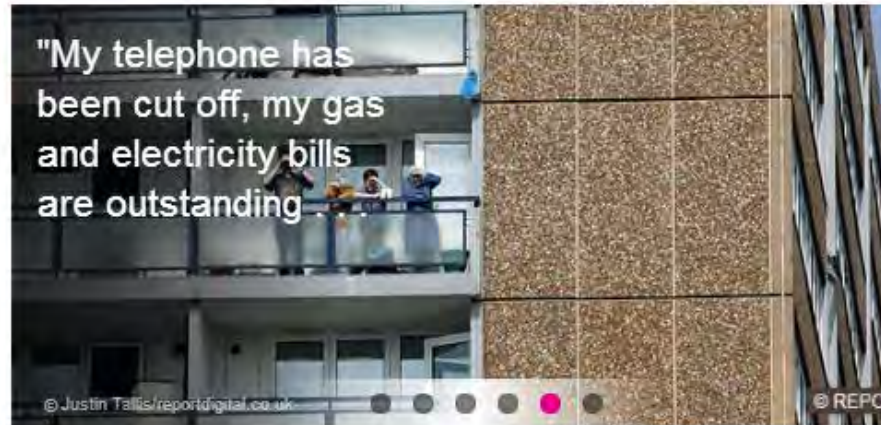
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18%

of households have a constant struggle to keep up with their bills or have fallen behind.

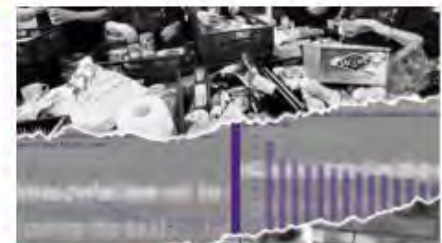
[Download the annotated 2012 living standards questionnaire](#)



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Hard times: 2014

The Hard Times reports provide evidence gathered by communities themselves on the impact of austerity and cuts on families and young people across Northern Ireland. Watch the accompanying films on home

3rd Peter Townsend Memorial...

Today 33% of the UK population suffer from multiple deprivation as defined by the UK public; in 1983 this figure was 14%. The 3rd Peter Townsend Memorial Conference: Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK will be held in London, 19 - 20

Poverty in Scotland 2014: The...

The latest edition of Poverty in Scotland, 2014, sets out to inform the independence debate in Scotland, providing the latest facts and figures and looking at how other regions and nations have tackled the problem. Gerry Mooney gives an overview...

Making key findings accessible to general audience

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Falling below minimum standards

At a glance

PSE UK 2012 is the most comprehensive survey of poverty and social exclusion ever undertaken in the UK. The research finds that about a third of households in the UK today face significant difficulties, specifically:

- Around 4 million people are not properly fed by today's standards.
- Around 2.5 million children live in homes that are damp.
- Around 2.3 million households cannot afford to heat the living areas of their homes.
- Over 30 million people suffer from financial insecurity.

The public sets the minimum living standard



The Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) research measures the numbers of people who fall below what the population as a whole think should be a minimum standard of living.

This is the only measure looking at both: what the majority think are necessities for life in the UK today, and actual living standards (rather than just income).

The PSE 2012 survey builds on similar surveys carried out in 1983, 1990 and 1999 in Britain and 2002/3 in Northern Ireland.

This first PSE Facts and Findings

looks at the numbers lacking necessities in 2012. PSE Facts and Findings

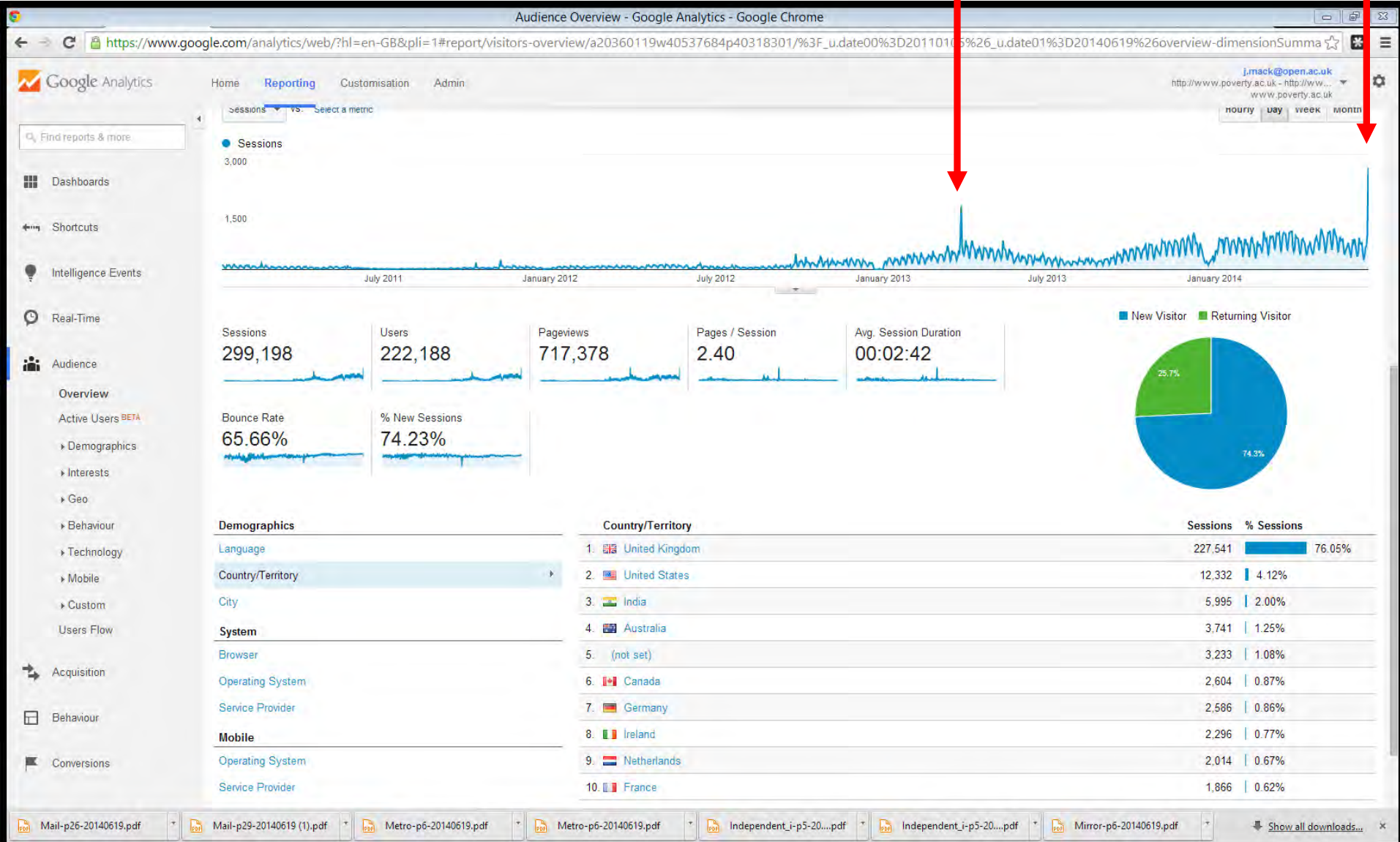
Making data interactive and visual

| | 1983 | 1990 | 1999 | 2012 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Heating | 97 | 97 | 95 | 96 |
| Damp-free home | 94 | 98 | 94 | 94 |
| Warm coat | 87 | 91 | 87 | 79 |
| Three meals daily | 82 | 91 | 90 | 93 |
| Enough bedrooms | 77 | 82 | 76 | 74 |
| Celebrations | 69 | 74 | 83 | 80 |
| Washing machine | 67 | 73 | 77 | 82 |
| Two pairs shoes | 67 | 74 | 67 | 54 |
| Weekly family meal | 67 | 64 | 58 | 36 |
| Two meals daily | 64 | 90 | 91 | 91 |
| Hobby | 64 | 67 | 79 | 70 |
| Replace worn clothes | 64 | 65 | 50 | 46 |
| Meat or fish | 63 | 77 | 81 | 76 |
| Annual holiday | 63 | 54 | 56 | 42 |
| Presents annually | 58 | 69 | 58 | 46 |
| Television | 51 | 58 | 58 | 51 |
| Phone | 43 | 56 | 72 | 77 |
| Friends round fortnightly | 37 | 52 | 53 | 49 |
| Go out fortnightly | 36 | 42 | 41 | 35 |
| Family and friends visit | 32 | 37 | 65 | 45 |
| Car | 22 | 26 | 36 | 44 |
| Family visits | | | 92 | 90 |
| Repair electrics | | | 86 | 86 |
| Fruit and veg daily | | 88 | 87 | 83 |
| Family occasions | | | 81 | 78 |
| Home decorated | | 88 | 80 | 69 |
| Household insurance | | 92 | 83 | 69 |
| Interview clothes | | | 70 | 69 |
| Some savings | | 68 | 67 | 52 |
| Money for self | | | 61 | 42 |

Building an audience

ITV Tonight tx

PSE conference



17 June 2013 – 17 June 2014



Visitors use the site during the week for work!



Find reports & more

- Dashboards
- Shortcuts
- Intelligence Events
- Real-Time

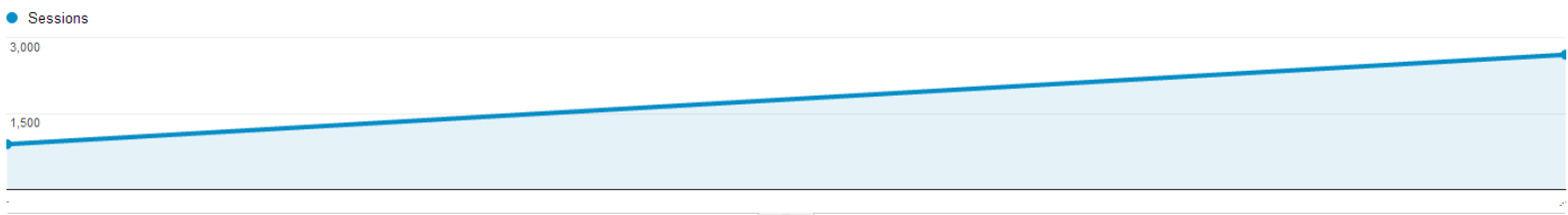
- Audience
 - Overview
 - Active Users BETA
 - Demographics
 - Interests
 - Geo
 - Behaviour
 - Technology
 - Mobile
 - Custom
 - Users Flow

- Acquisition
- Behaviour
- Conversions

Overview

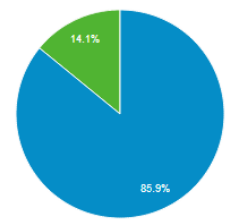
Sessions vs. Select a metric

Hourly Day Week Month



| | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Sessions 3,553 | Users 3,236 | Pageviews 8,222 | Pages / Session 2.31 | Avg. Session Duration 00:02:32 |
| Bounce Rate 58.29% | % New Sessions 85.87% | | | |

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor



Demographics

- Language
- Country/Territory
- City
- System
 - Browser
 - Operating System
 - Service Provider
- Mobile
 - Operating System

Country/Territory

| Country/Territory | Sessions | % Sessions |
|-------------------|----------|------------|
| 1. United Kingdom | 1,908 | 53.70% |
| 2. Germany | 744 | 20.94% |
| 3. Italy | 112 | 3.15% |
| 4. United States | 105 | 2.96% |
| 5. Netherlands | 104 | 2.93% |
| 6. France | 46 | 1.29% |
| 7. Switzerland | 45 | 1.27% |
| 8. Canada | 39 | 1.10% |
| 9. India | 38 | 1.07% |



Coming up

BOOKS

To be published by:

One World – an overview of last thirty years. To be published start 2015

Policy Press – detailed series of books on findings



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A UK Living Standards Index (UK-LSI)

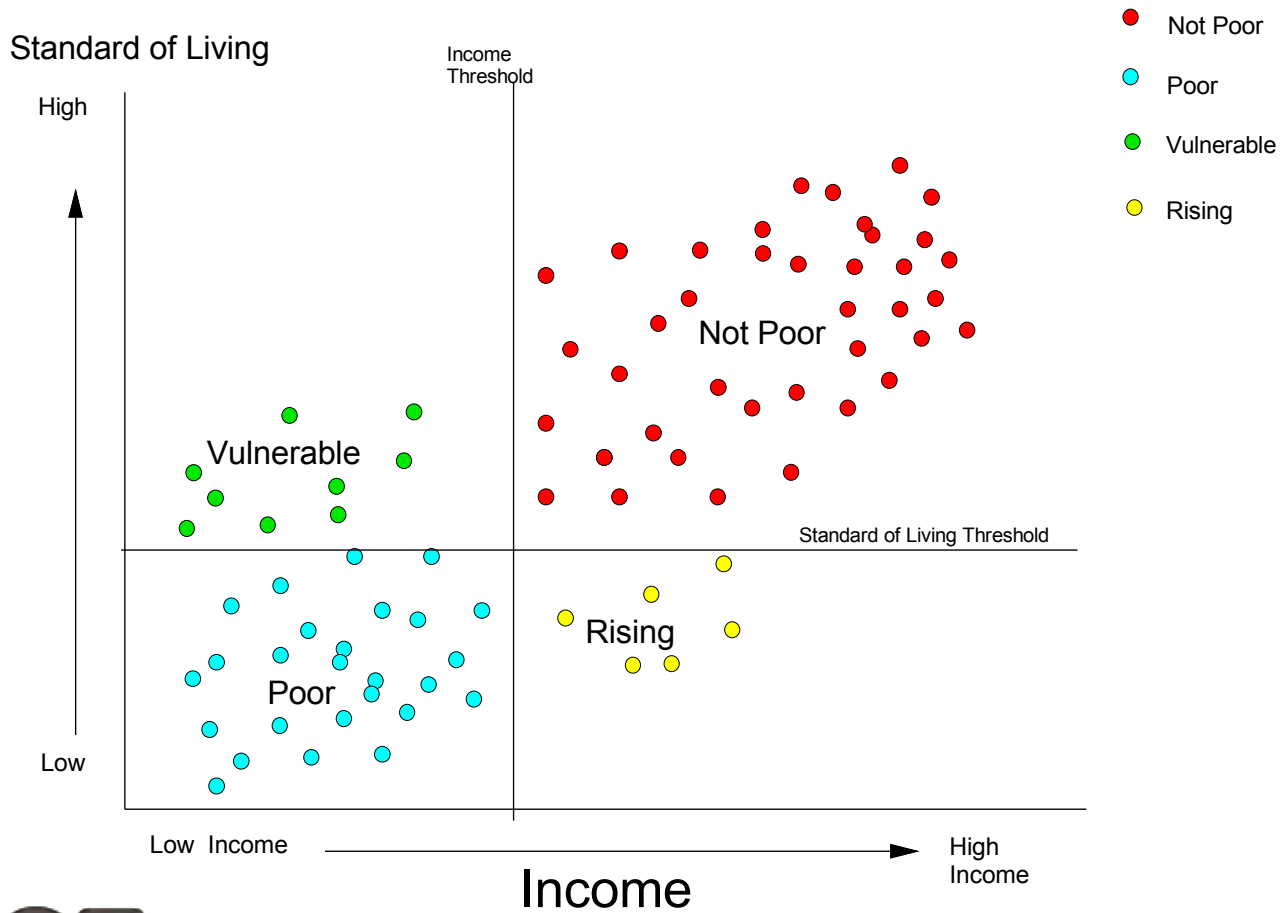
Demi Patsios (Bristol), Paddy Hillyard (Queen's)
and Marco Pomati (Bristol/Cardiff)



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Dynamics of Poverty Model (Gordon 2000)



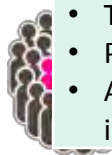
Definition of living standards

*“Living standards measure **what we have, what we do and where we live**”.*



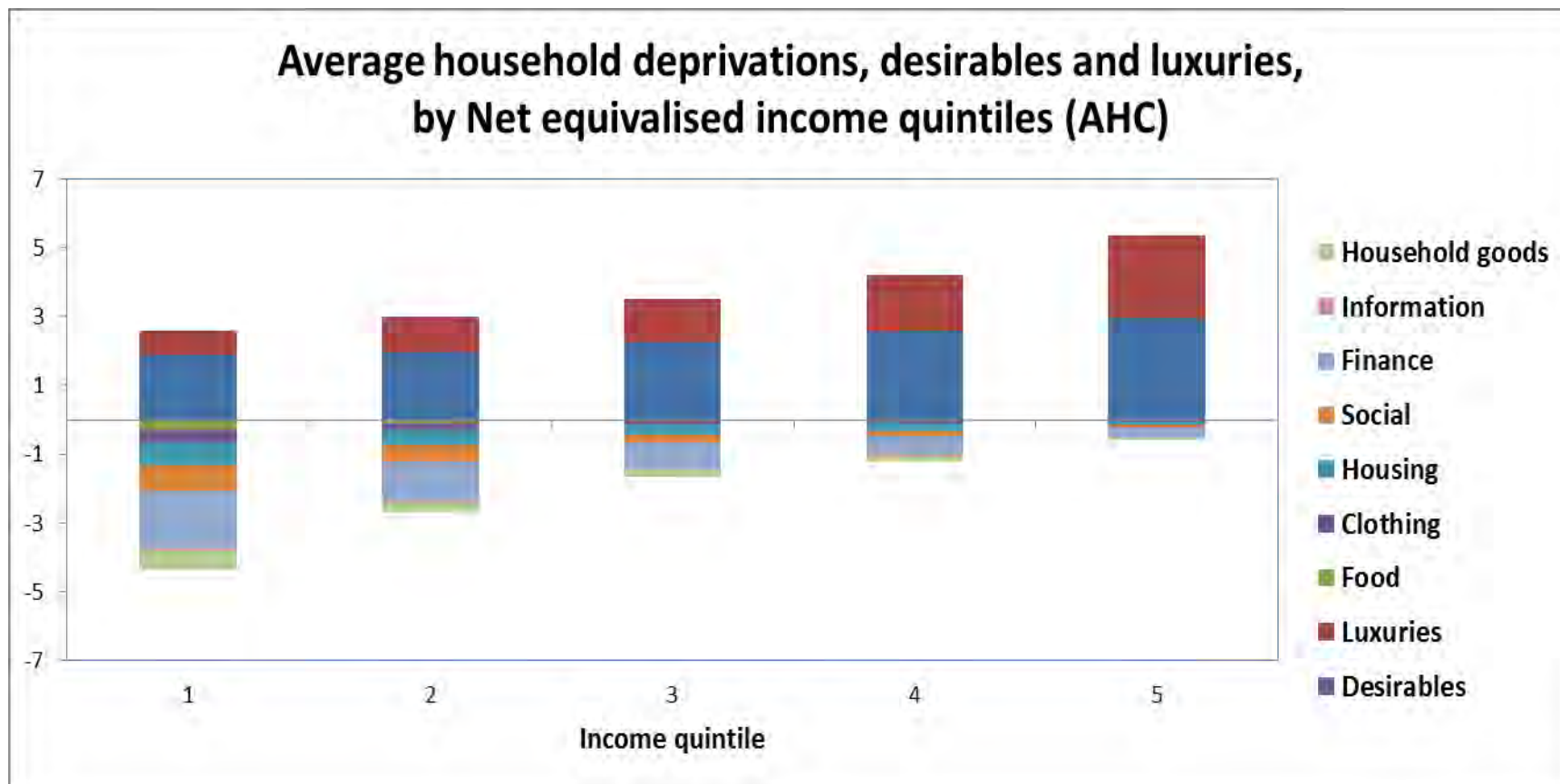
UK LSI conceptual model: dimensions and sub-dimensions found in PSE / FRS Surveys

| What we have? | What we do? | Where we live? |
|---|--|---|
| Objective living conditions | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer durables • Consumption items • Wealth (value of home, assets) • Financial & other types of assistance from friends and family • Finances (and debts) • Economising behaviours • Health (LSIs, Type of illness) • Social networks • Critical/stressful life events (e.g. moved, lost job etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid work • Unpaid work • Participation in common social activities • Social and political engagement participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing tenure • Type of accommodation • Number of bedrooms • Bedroom standard • Council tax band • Years lived in area • Physical barriers to entry • Problems with accommodation • Fuel poverty • Local Services (available/suitable) • Problems in areas |
| Subjective assessment of objective living conditions – domain specific | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Goods • Spot purchases • Impact on standard of living of receiving/giving financial & other types of assistance • Financial difficulties (keeping up with bills, unexpected expenses) • Self-rated health • Time crunch (scarcity) • Perceived social support • Anything happened which improved/reduced standard of living | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with day-to-day activities • Quality of work (number of positive aspects) • Satisfaction with feeling part of a community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with housing • State of repair of home • Level of warmth in accommodation • Satisfaction with local area |



What we have?

Objective living conditions

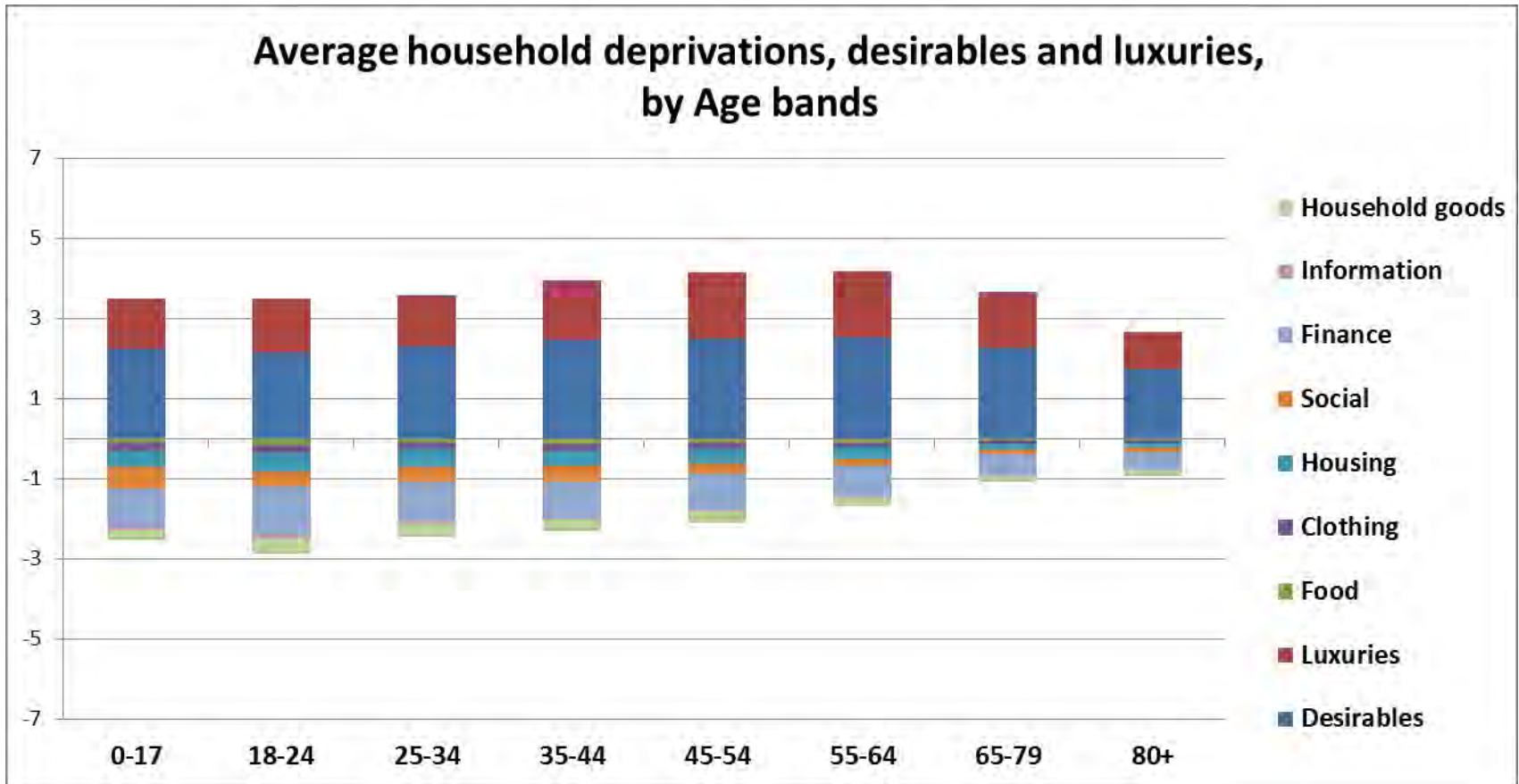


Luxuries = Second car (HV33% CA21%), second bath (HV30% CA26%), home alarm (HV28% CA25%), second home (HV7% CA42%), private health insurance (HV17% CA35%), holiday abroad (**OMN** 18%, HV41% CA32%)

Desirables= HDTV (HV75%), Pay TV (HV58%), Spare bedroom (HV55%), Dishwasher (HV47%)

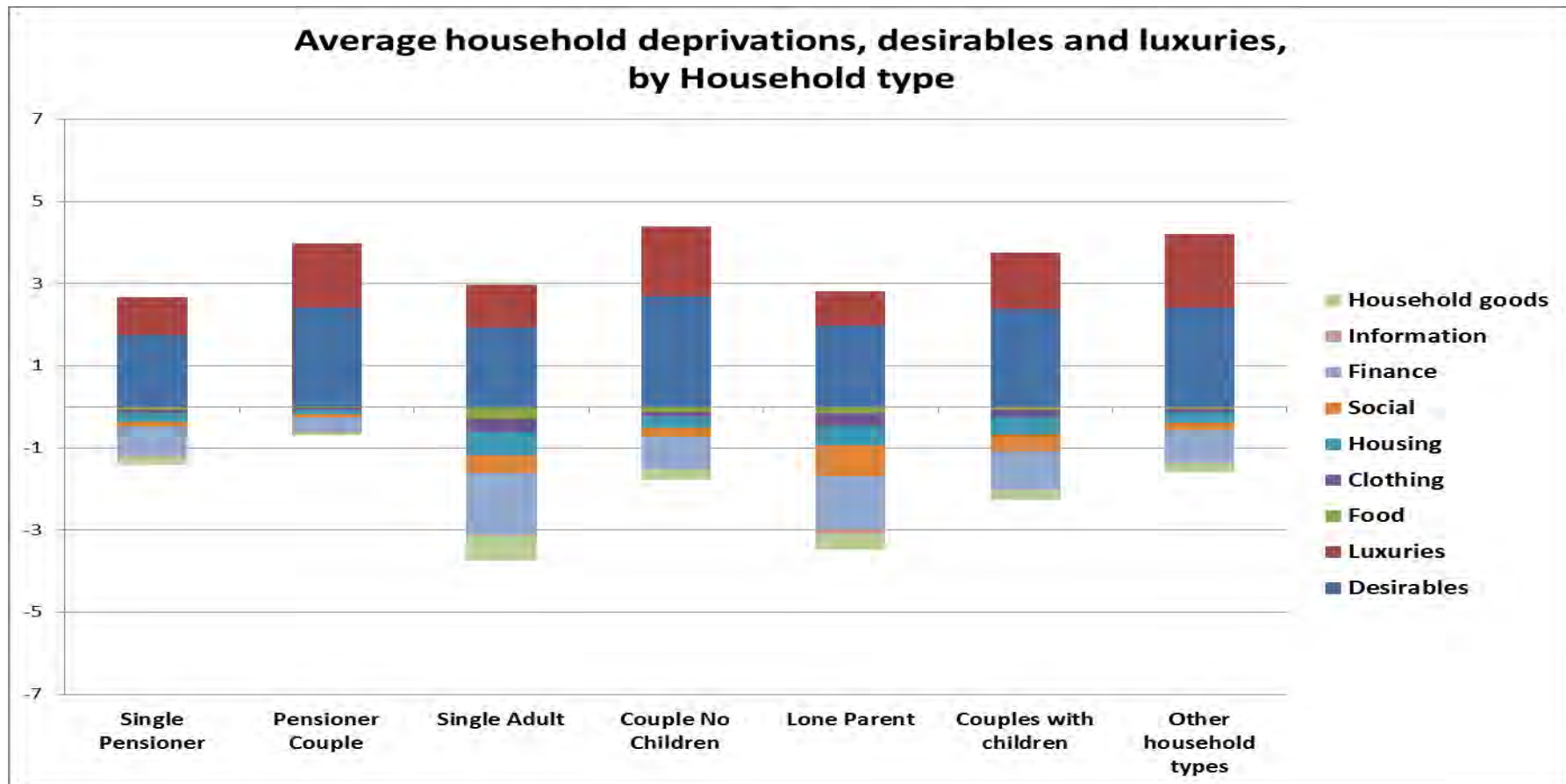
What we have?

Objective living conditions



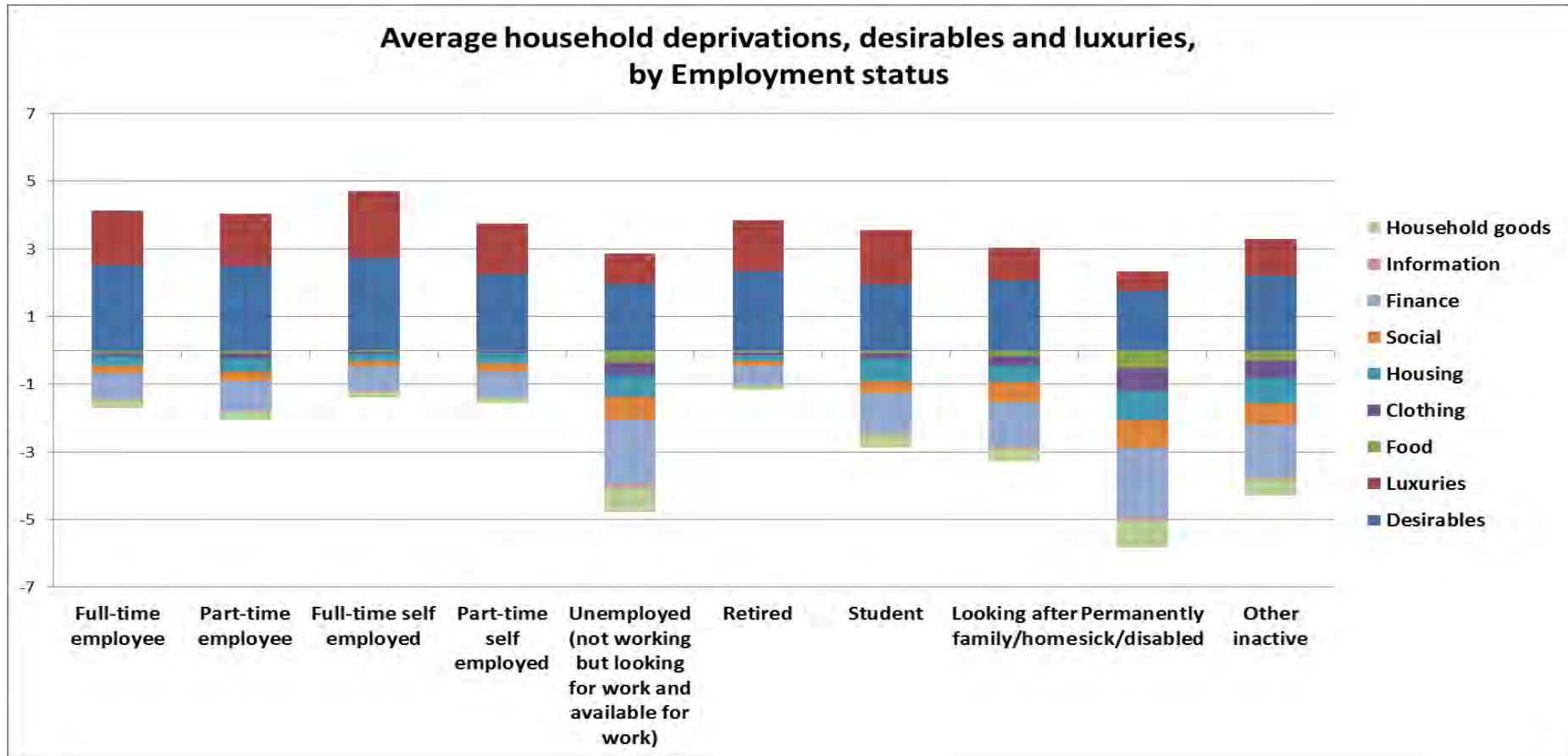
What we have?

Objective living conditions



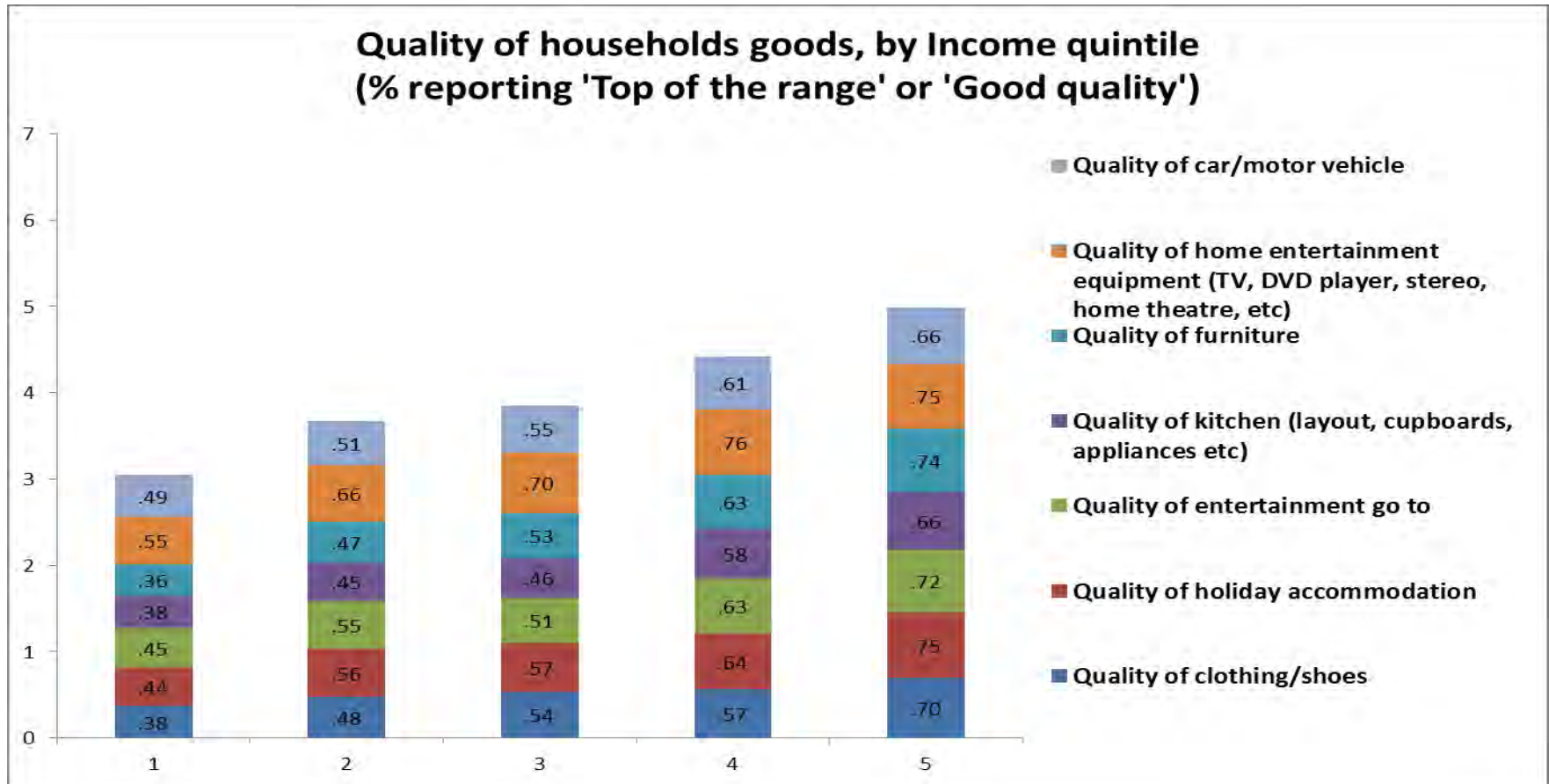
What we have?

Objective living conditions



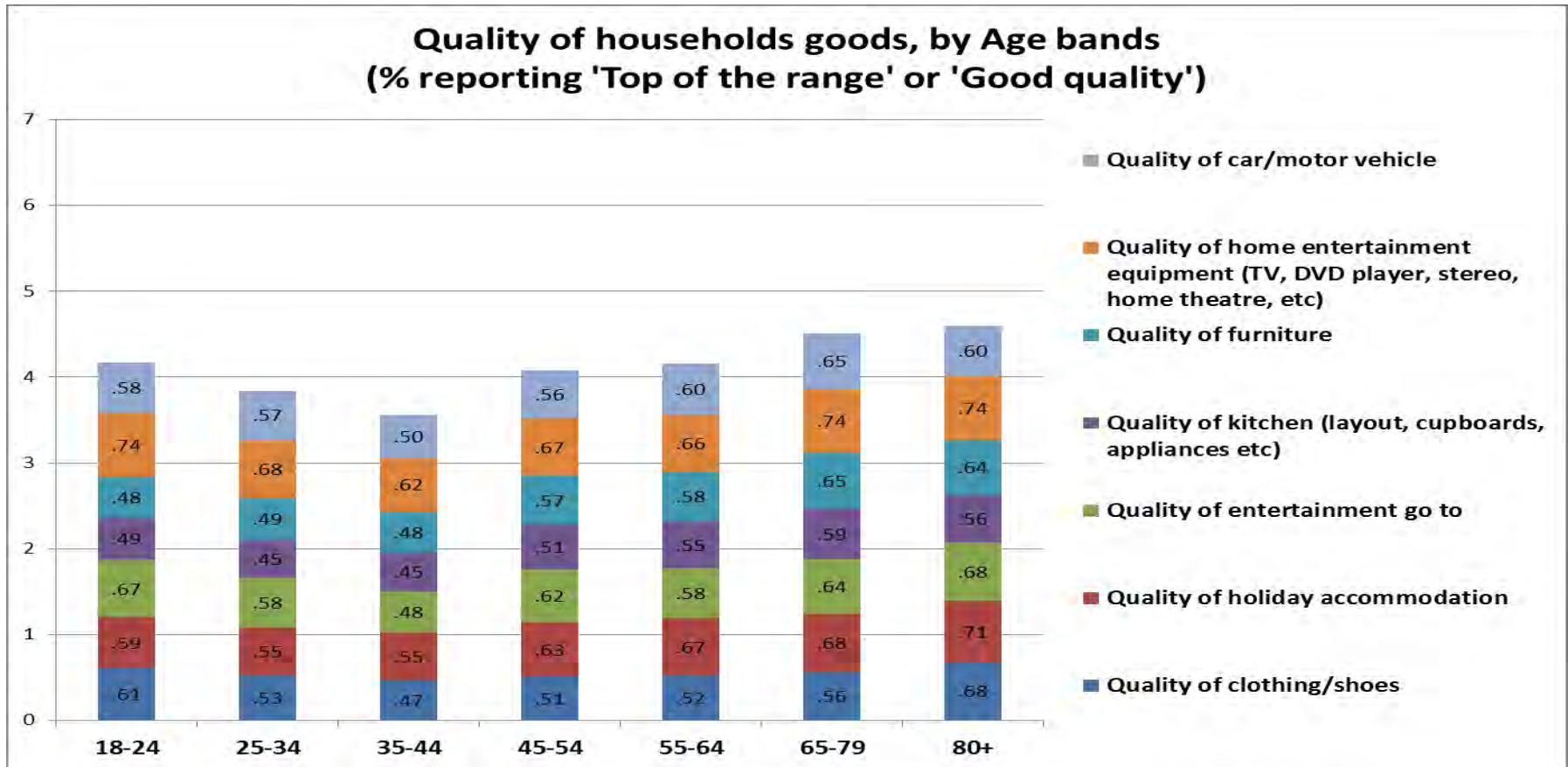
What we have?

Subjective assessment of Objective living conditions



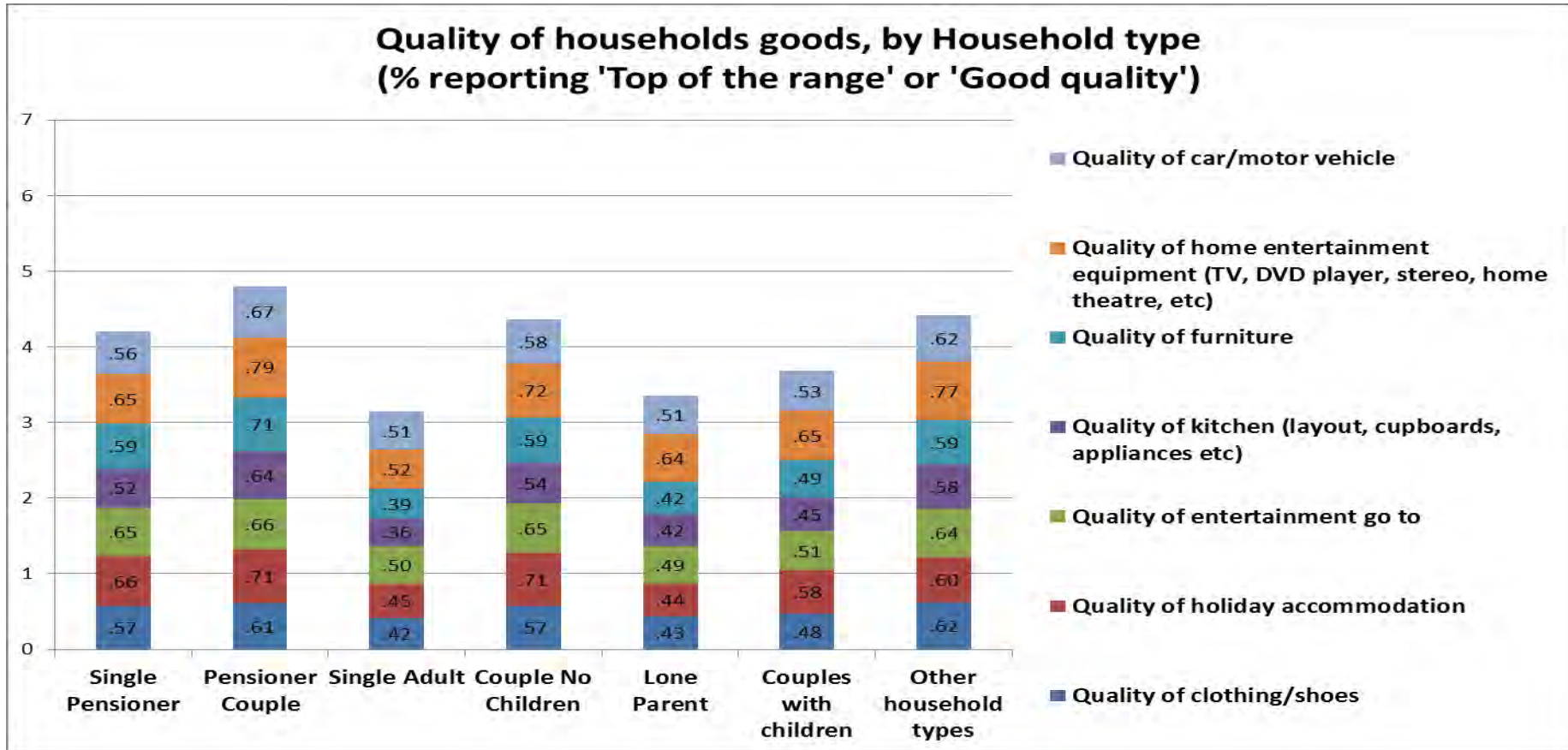
What we have?

Subjective assessment of Objective living conditions



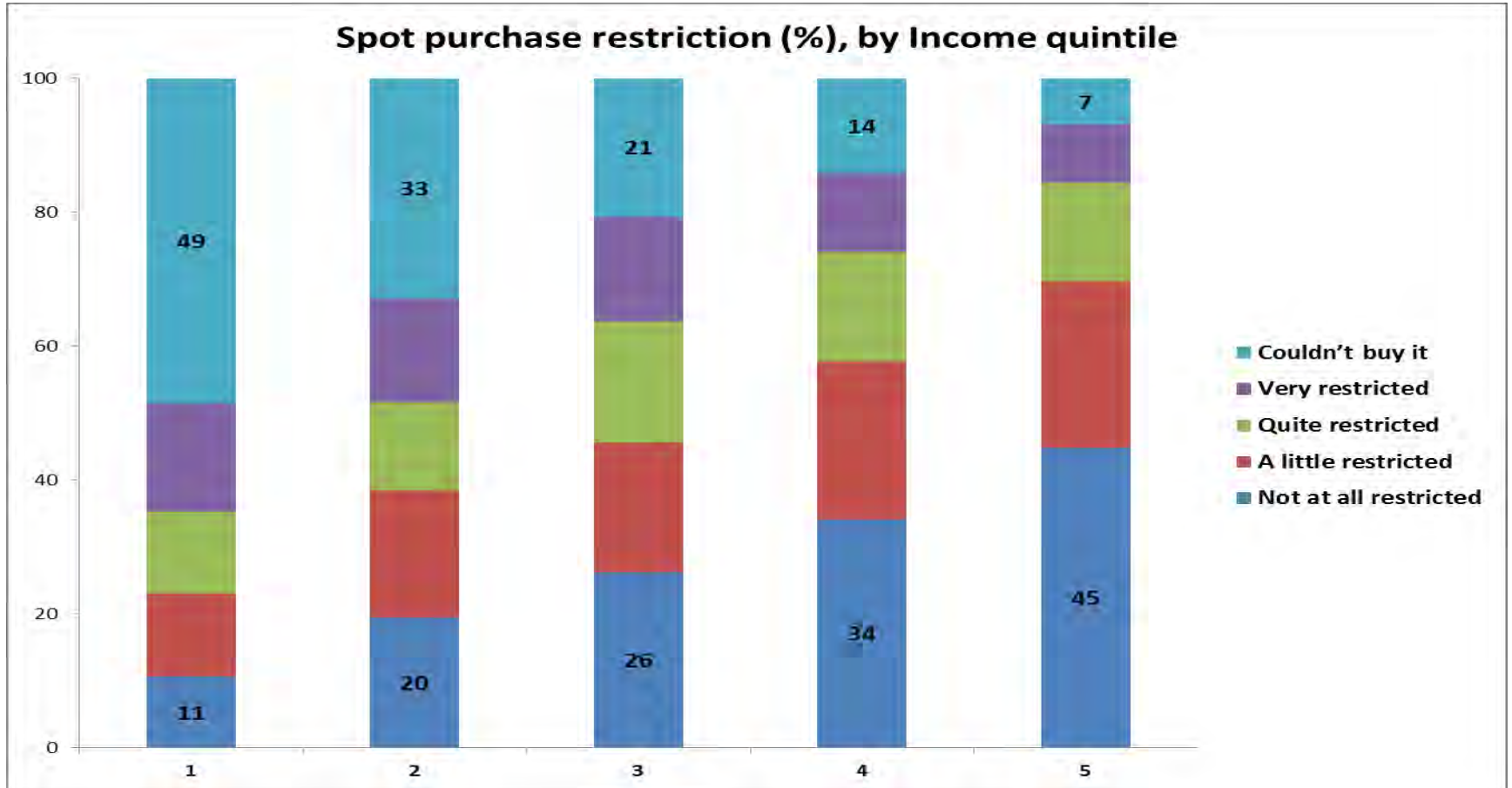
What we have?

Subjective assessment of Objective living conditions



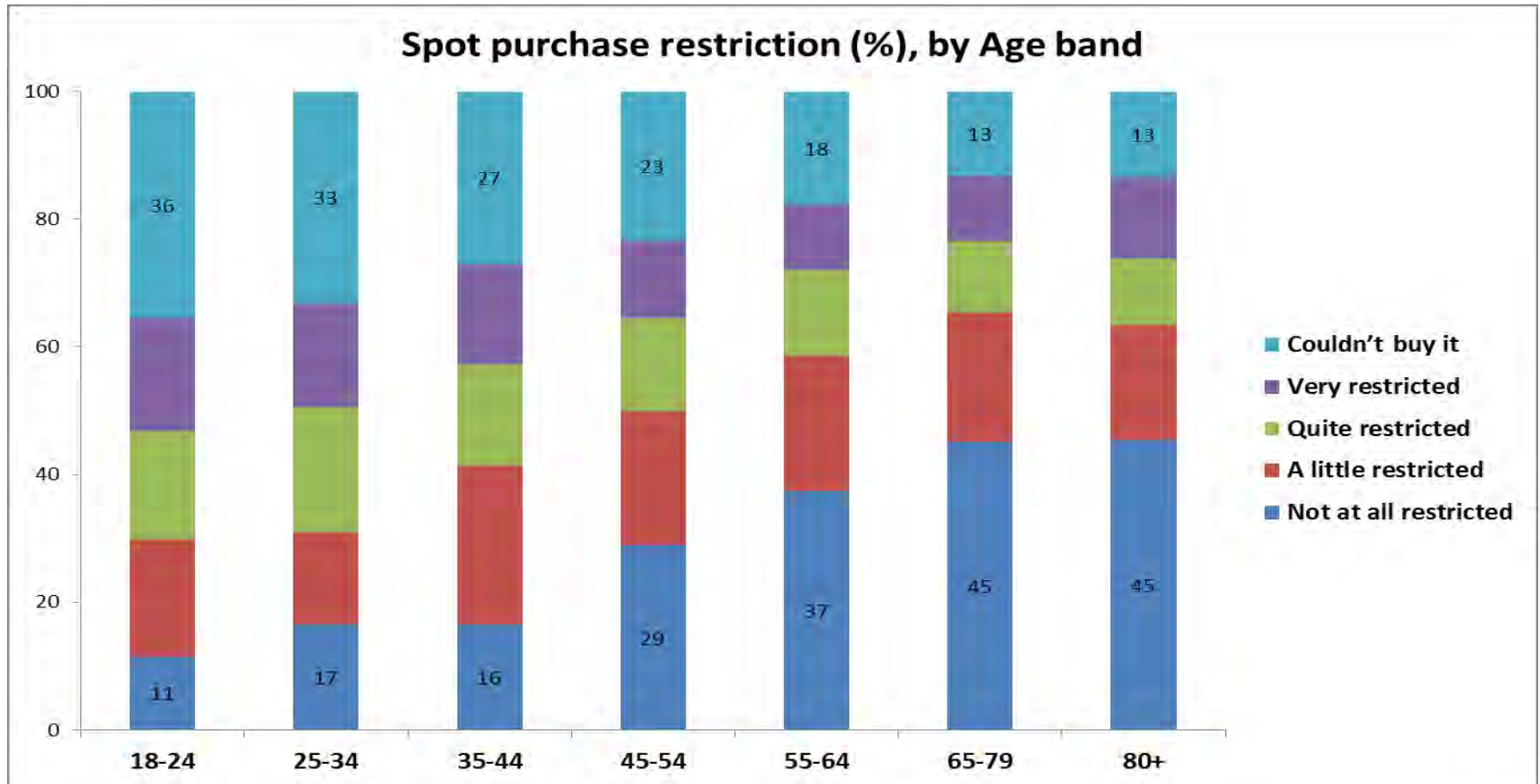
What we have?

Subjective assessment of Objective living conditions



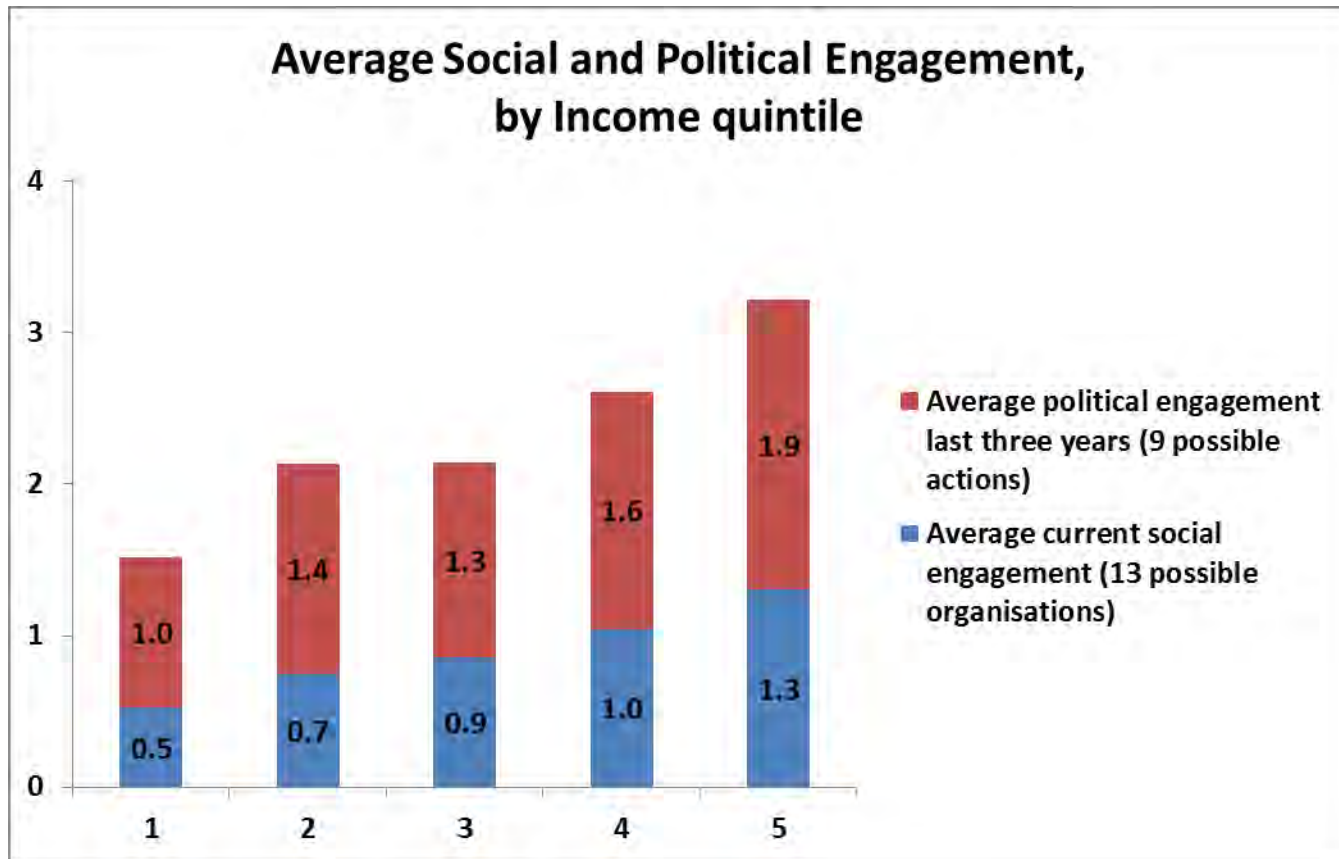
What we have?

Subjective assessment of Objective living conditions



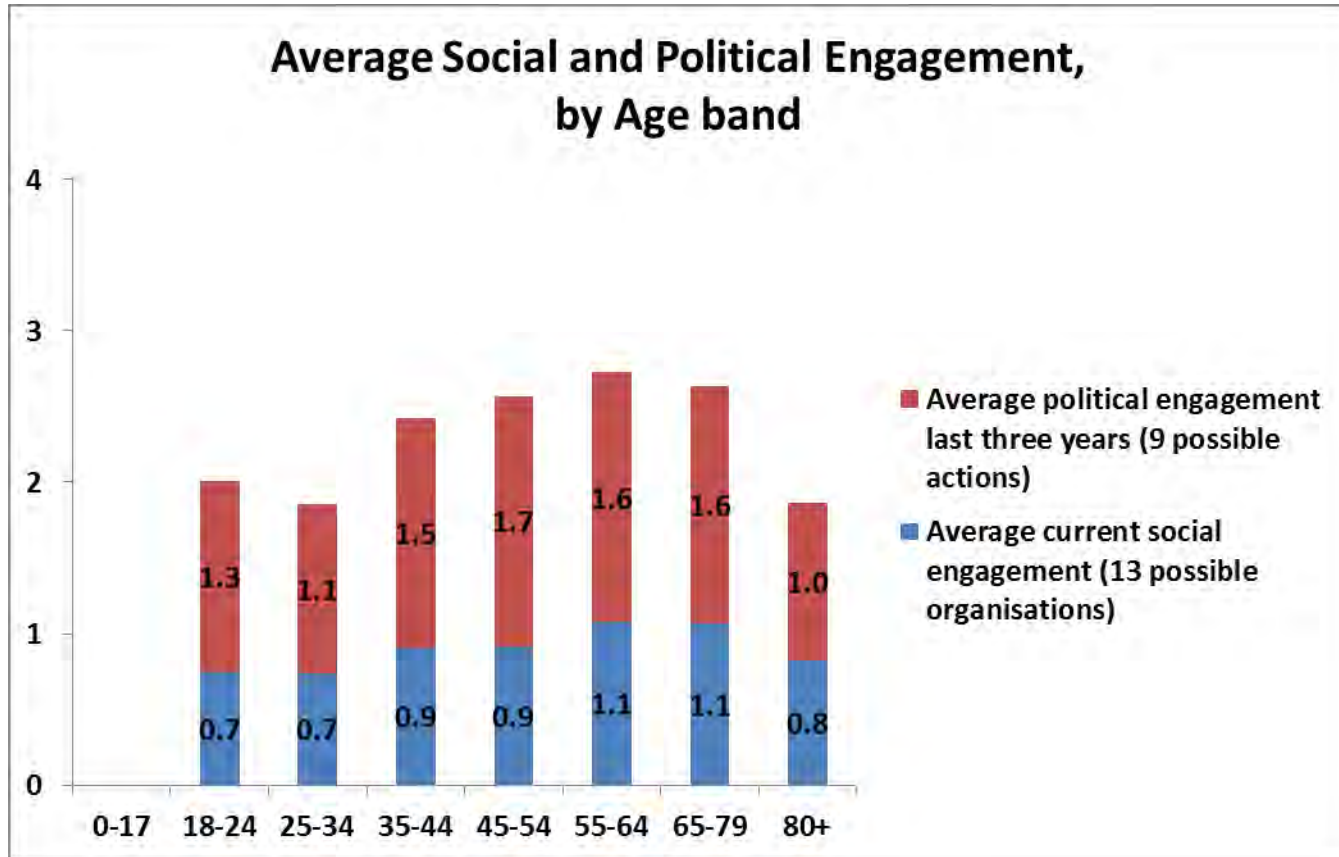
What we do?

Objective living conditions



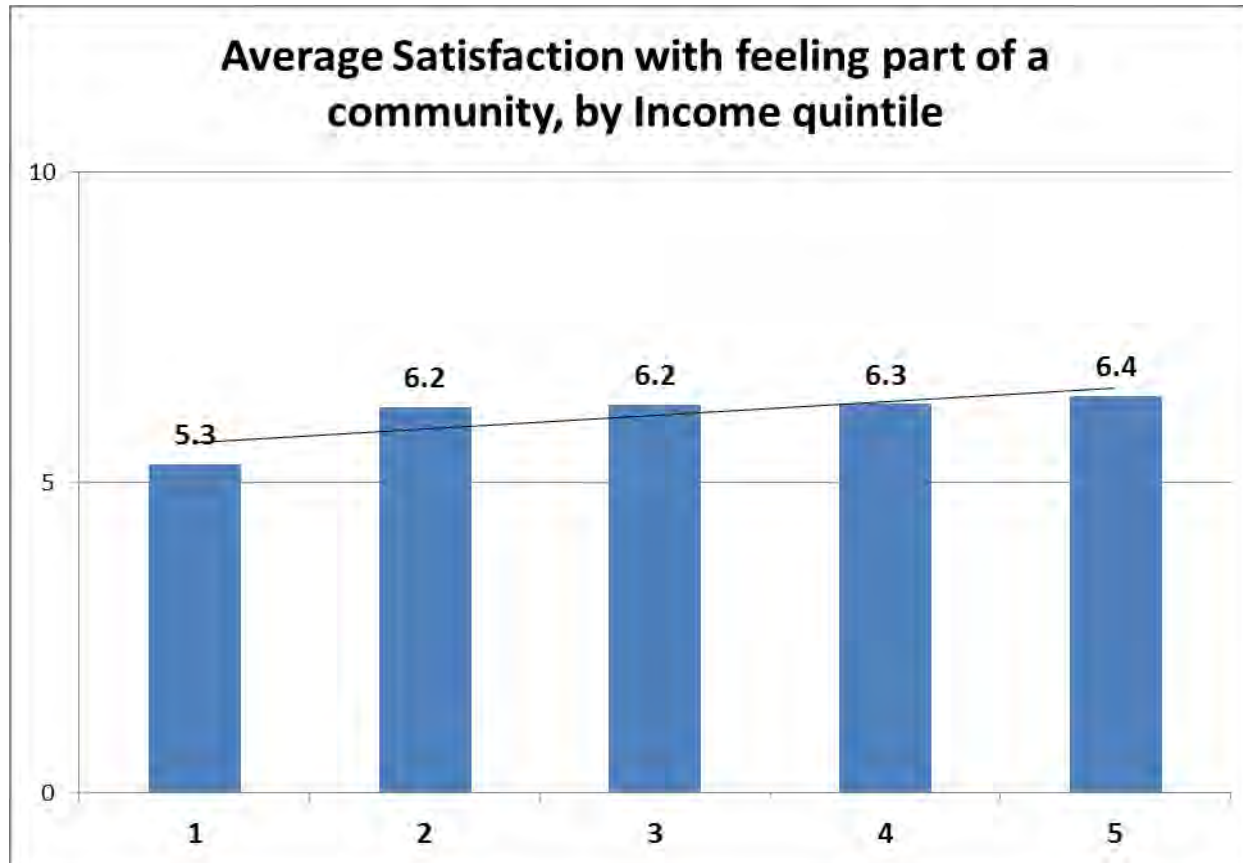
What we do?

Objective living conditions



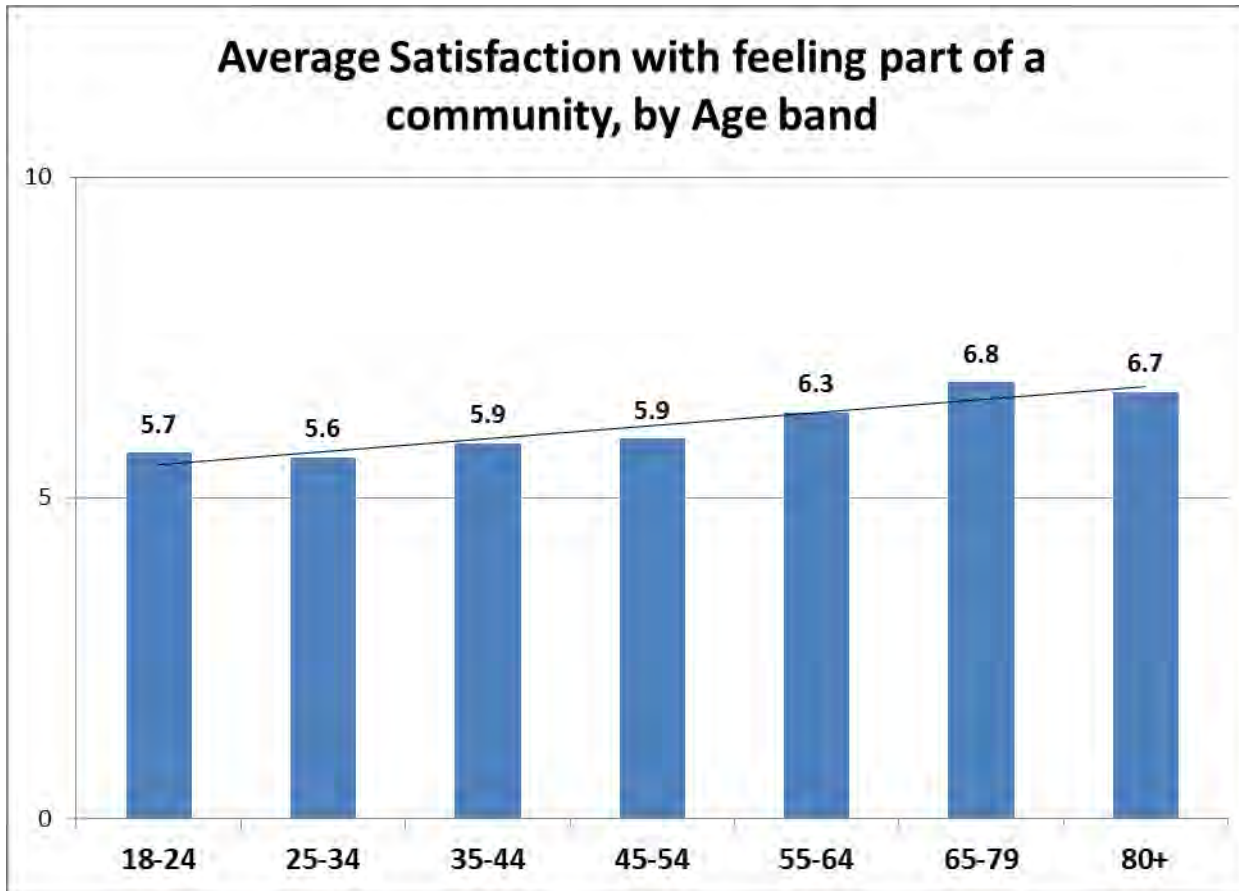
What we do?

Subjective assessment of *Objective living conditions*



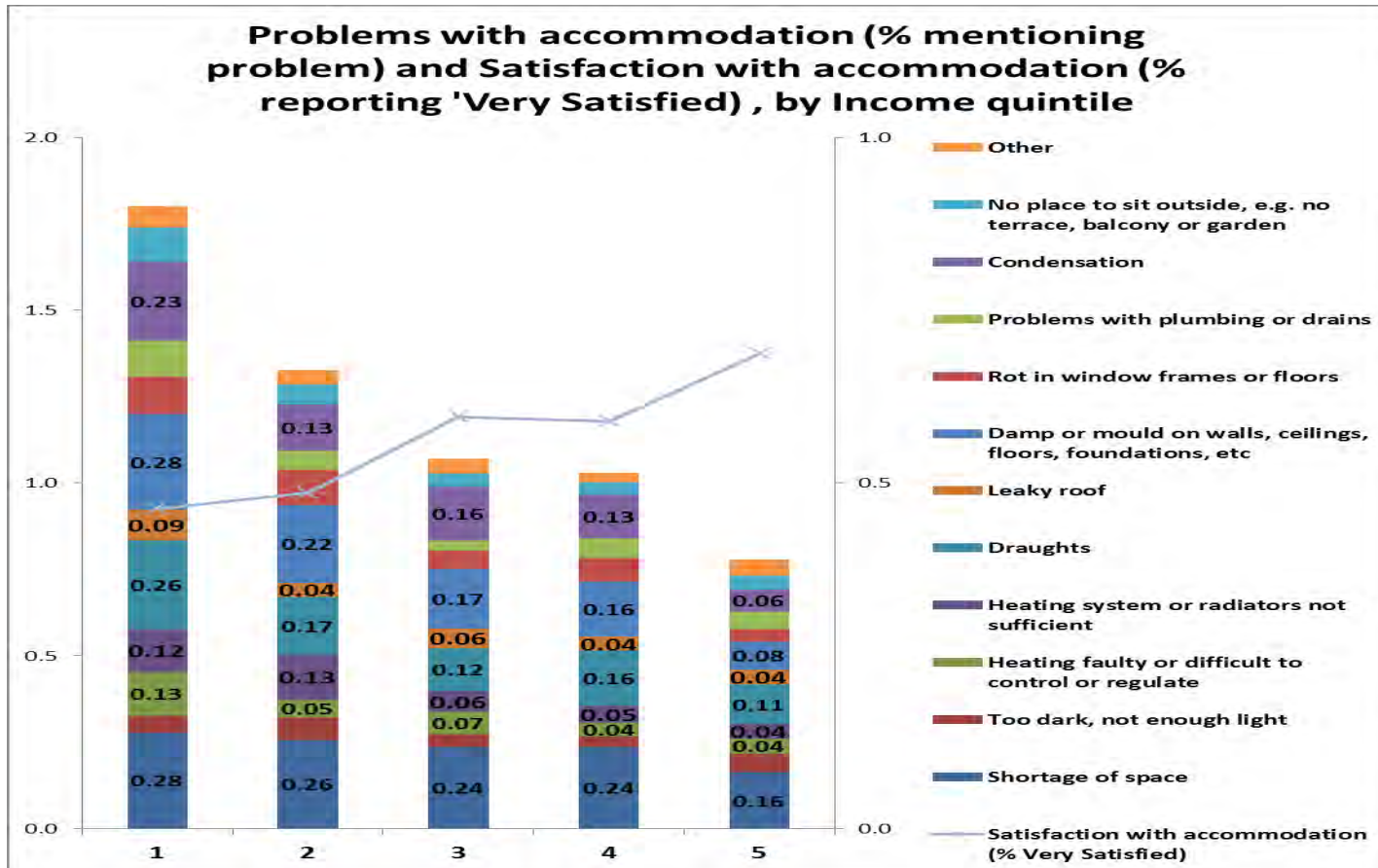
What we do?

Subjective assessment of *Objective living conditions*



Where we live?

Objective living conditions and Subjective assessment of objective living condition (combined)



Next steps

- Item/domain/sub-domain scoring protocols
- Measure validity and reliability
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Classical Test Theory (CTT), and two-parameter Item Response Theory (IRT) models will be tested.
- Comparison of these various methodological and statistical approaches (and outcomes) will add greater insight into living standards research.

Implications for poverty research and public policy

- Alternative/new approach to measuring poverty, deprivation, living standards, quality of life- do we need another?
- Extent to which this alternative method fits/overlaps with government indicators/policy – ONS well-being/happiness?
- Findings from the Living Standards research has the potential make a significant contribution to that knowledge base, to assist with the development of sound policy by measuring what matters most to people (**what we have, what we do and where we live**), not necessarily policy makers.
- Living Standards research complements/supplements the monitoring work based on household incomes (HBAI) and FRS material deprivation, Child Poverty Act, and PSE Surveys.



Employment, poverty and social exclusion

Nick Bailey

University of Glasgow



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

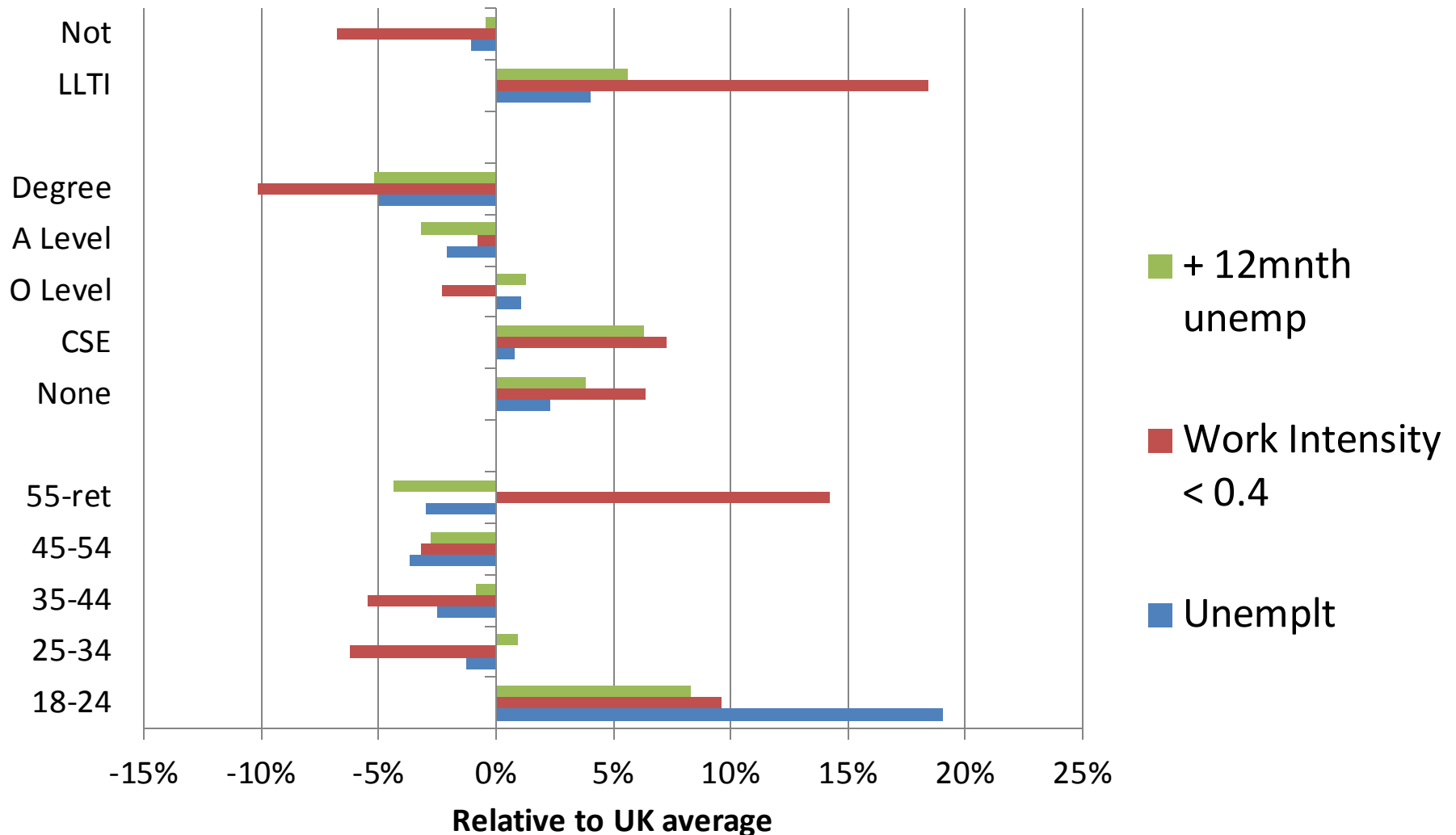




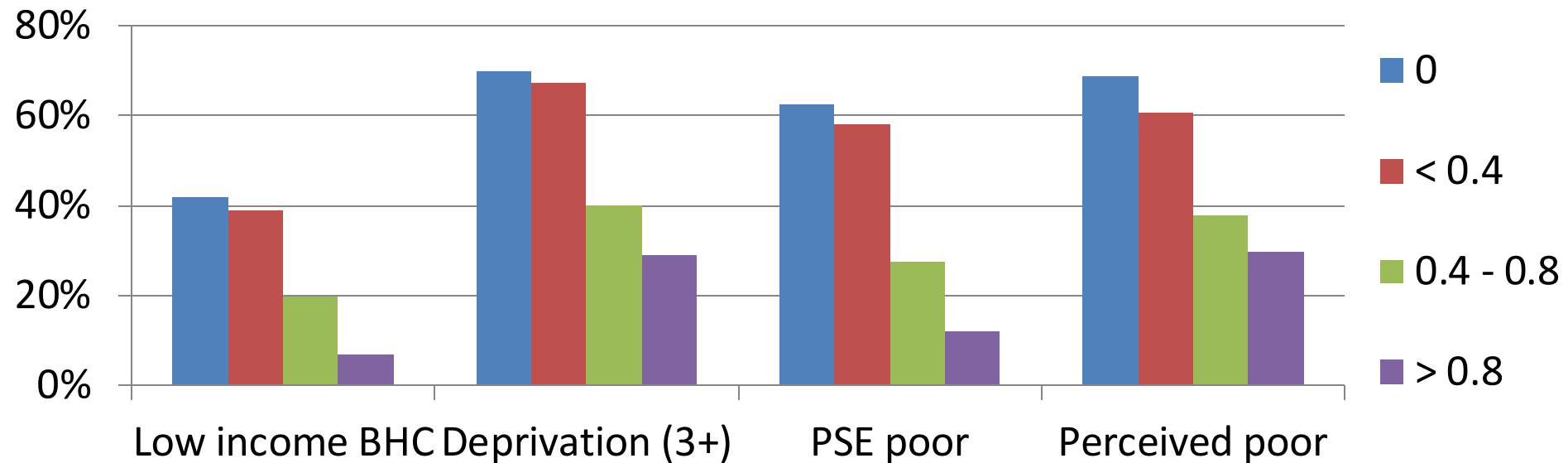
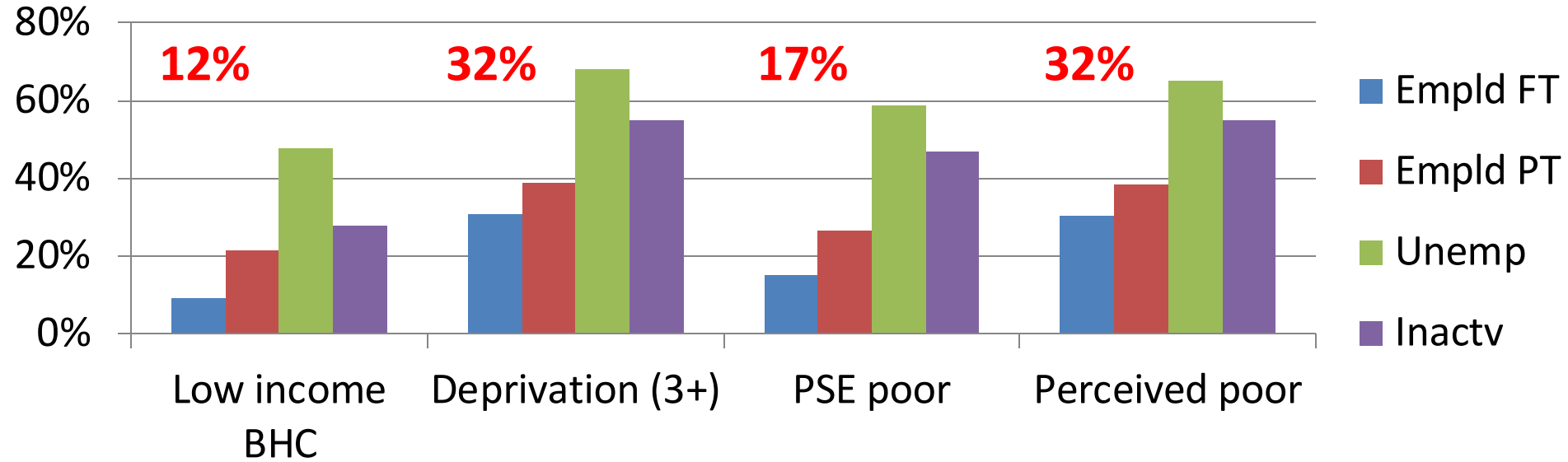
Labour market & policy context

- Long-term restructuring
 - More unequal returns, increasing ‘flexibility’
 - Recession reinforces this
- Policy
 - Minimum wage and tax credits BUT
 - Welfare reforms, sanctions AND
 - Absence of labour market regulation
- Drives rise of in-work poverty
 - 52% of low income poor in work in 2011/12 [40% in 1996/7]
 - 61% of working age poor in work in 2011/12 [53% in 1996/7]

1. Access to employment

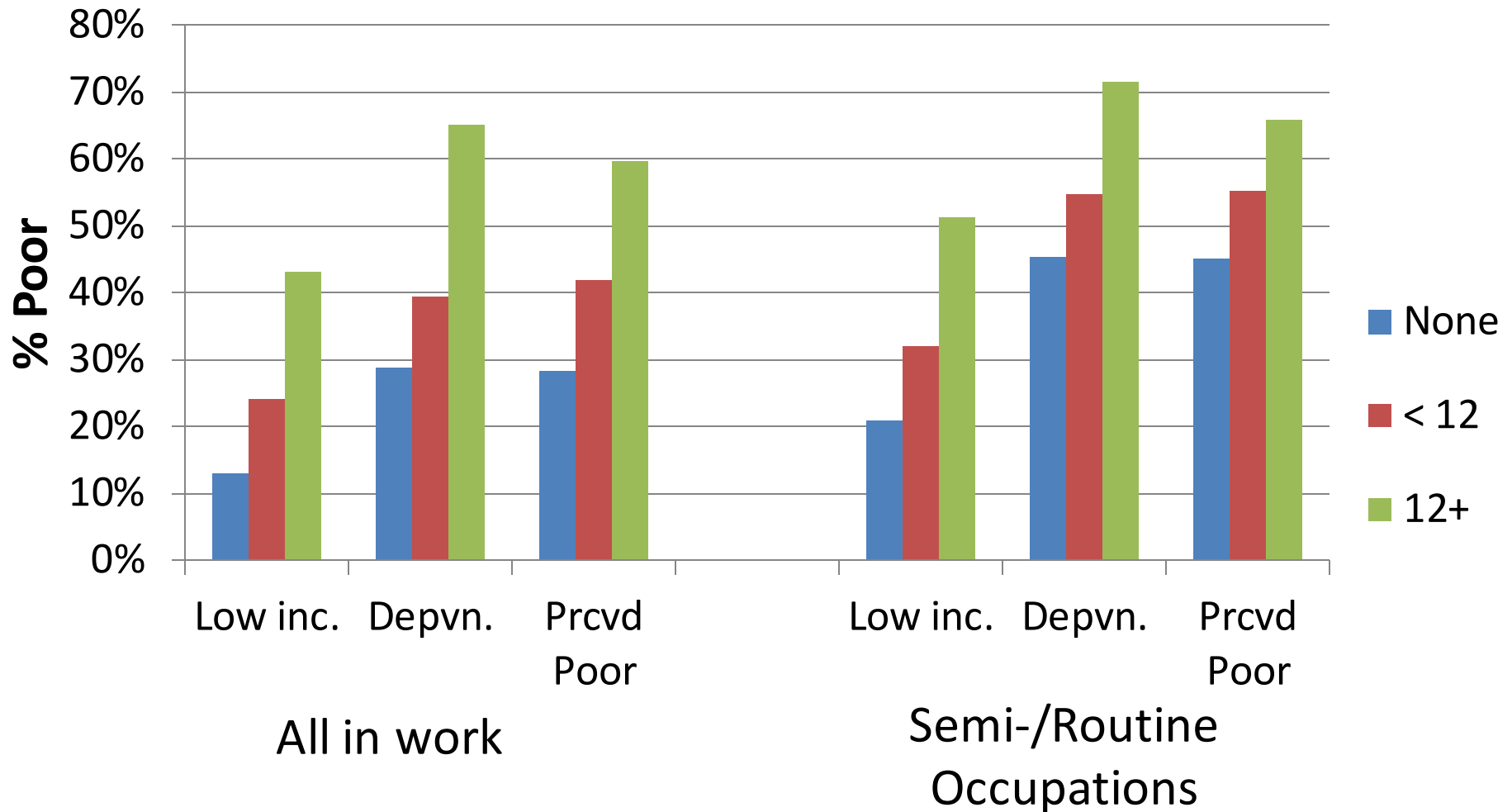


2. Employment and poverty



2. Employment and poverty

Poverty risks by employment history



2. Employment and poverty

- Factors raising risks of in-work poverty
 - Hhld with **children** or **single** person x 2
 - Semi-/routine and lower supervisory **occupations** x 2.5
 - **Work intensity** less than 0.4 x 2.5
 - **12+ months unemp.** in last five years x 3
- BUT for many people, problem is NOT lack of access to employment
 - 46% of working age adults who are poor are in work
 - 44% of working poor work 40+ hours a week
 - 50% of working poor in households with Work Intensity > 0.8

3. Employment, Health & Well-being

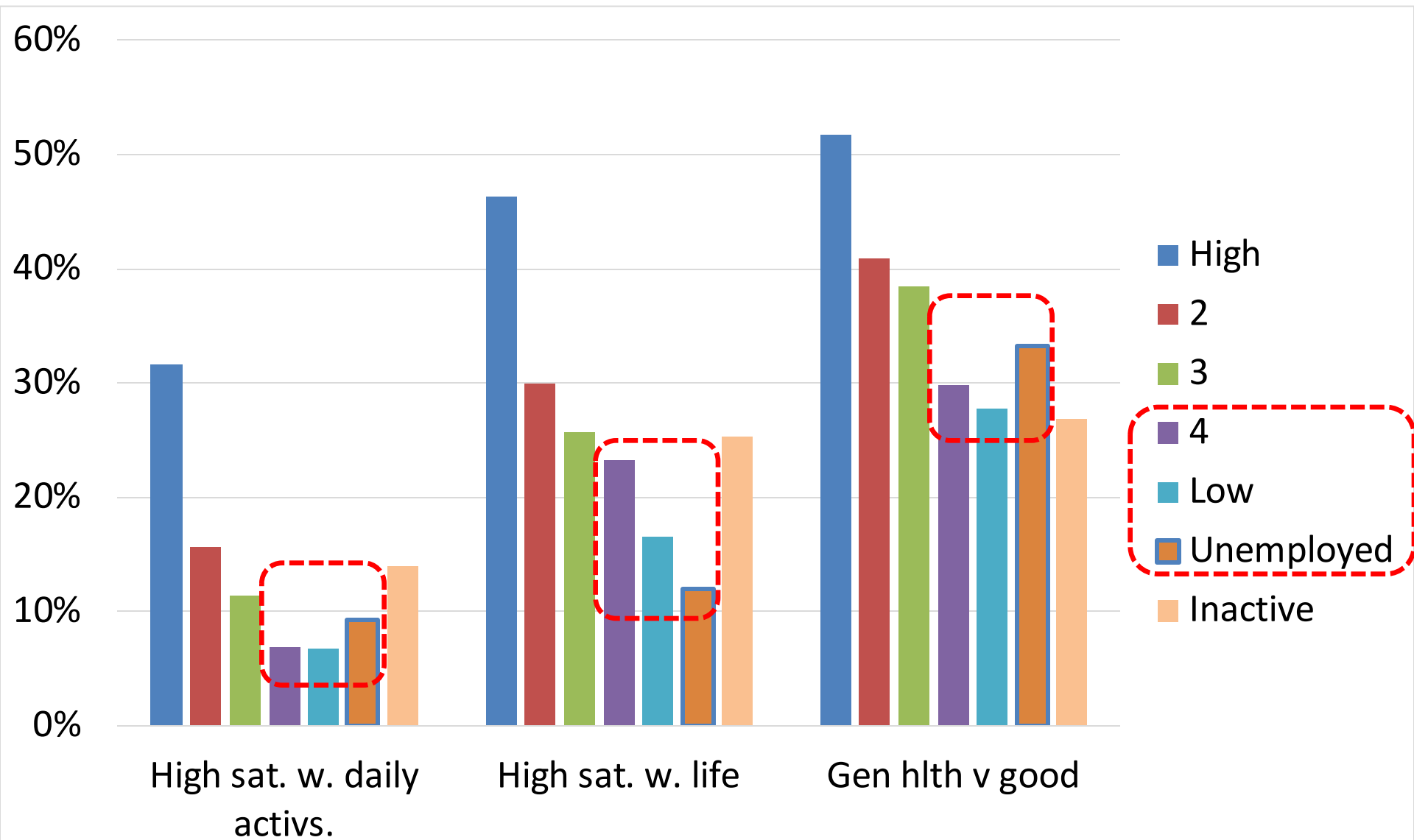
- Impacts of employment on health & WB
 - Status, identity, routine, structure
 - Material or economic resources
 - Quality of work
 - Physical demands, hazards
 - Psychosocial environment
- Two-way relationships



3. Employment, Health & Well-being

- **Employment quality – sum of five scores**
 - Satisfaction/sense of value (satisfaction, interesting, useful)
 - Low stress (NOT stressful, NOT tight deadlines)
 - Control/flexibility (task control, control start/finish, time-off)
 - Good physical conditions (temperature, smoke/dust/noise, NOT physically demanding)
 - Security (job secure)

3. Employment, Health & Well-being

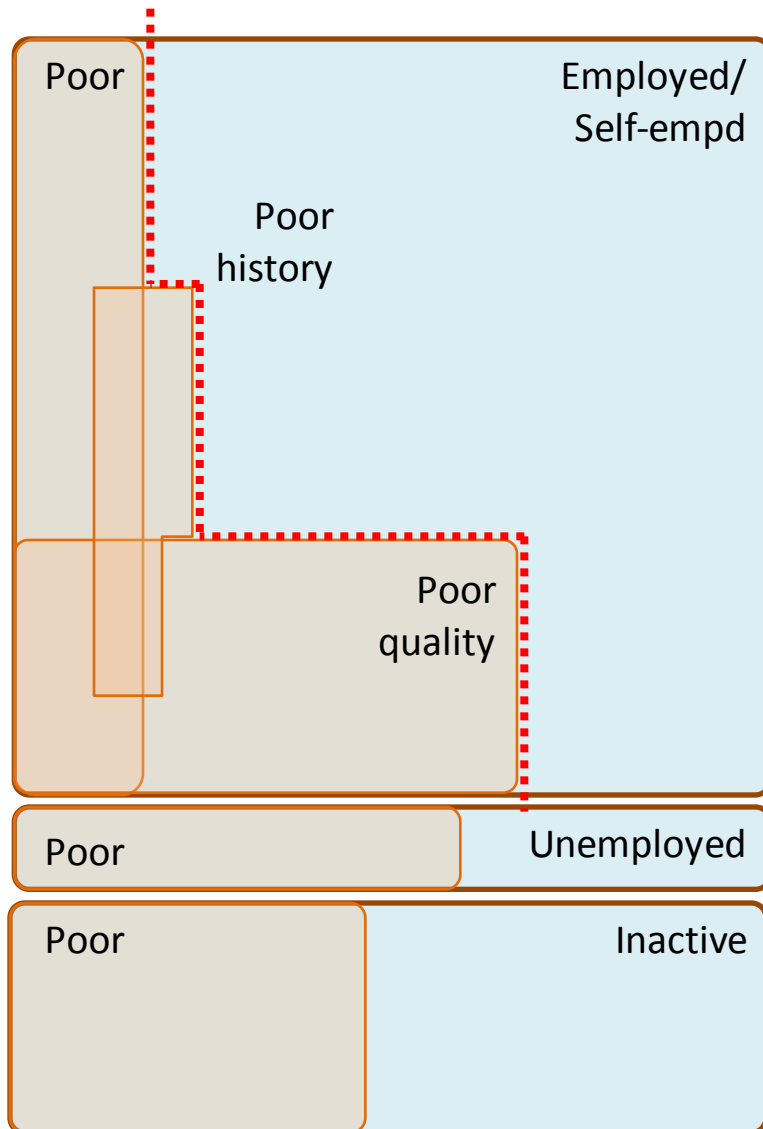


3. Employment, Health & Well-being

- People in **lowest quintile for job quality** have health/well-being no better than unemployed
 - After controlling for gender, age, physical health, income and deprivation, occupation, education
- Not evidence of causal link but consistent with other work which shows such a link
- Poor quality work, like low paid work, does not lead to social inclusion



Summary: Employment & social exclusion



8%
22%

| | % empd | % WA |
|-----------------|--------|------|
| Work+poor | 17% | 12% |
| Work+poor qual | 22% | 16% |
| Work+poor hstry | 6% | 4% |

Exclusionary employment

| | | |
|-------|-----|-----|
| Any 1 | 36% | 26% |
| 2+ | 8% | 5% |

ONE THIRD of those in **exclusionary employment** have made **no progress in employment over last five years**

- 44% of those with 2+ disadvs

4. Conclusions

- One-in-six (17%) in work is poor
 - Half (46%) of working age poor are in work
 - Almost half (44%) of working poor are working full-time
- Policy needs focus on “inclusionary employment”
 - Employment status, hours and pay rates
 - Quality – satisfaction, control, security, stress, physical
 - Stability and continuity
 - Progression

Poverty and Gender: Initial Findings PSE 2012

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Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



Overview

- Gender and Poverty
- Economic and Political Context
- Data Analysis
 - PSE poverty
 - Deprivation scores
 - Subjective poverty
 - Change over time
 - Multivariate analysis
- Conclusions



Gender and Poverty

- Feminisation of poverty

Focus on lone parents and older single women (e.g. Goldberg et al.2010)

Lack of attention to men and couple+ households

- Previous research

Poverty rates – women have slightly higher level than men

Experience of poverty – women more likely to go without

Bennett, F. and Daly, M. (2014) *Poverty Through a Gender Lens*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation “A focus on gender is long overdue in anti-poverty strategies in the UK” p13



Economic and Political Context

- Recession - ‘Mancession’?

Loss of male jobs / rise in male unemployment

Construction and manufacturing initially hardest hit

- Austerity - ‘Womancection’?

Loss of female public sector jobs / rise in female unemployment

Public sector pay freeze

Cuts in public services

- Welfare Reform

Wide-ranging cuts - including freezing of child benefits, reduced eligibility for child tax credit and working tax credit, reduction in childcare element of Working Tax Credit, cap to housing benefit.

Increased eligibility childcare support for parents and extended nursery provision



Headline Findings

- Women are marginally poorer and more deprived than men
- Women economise more than men
- Looking at the broad categories of men and women disguises the extent of within group differences
- Over the last decade the gendered pattern of poverty has declined
- The situation of older women has improved; the position of male single adults has declined.



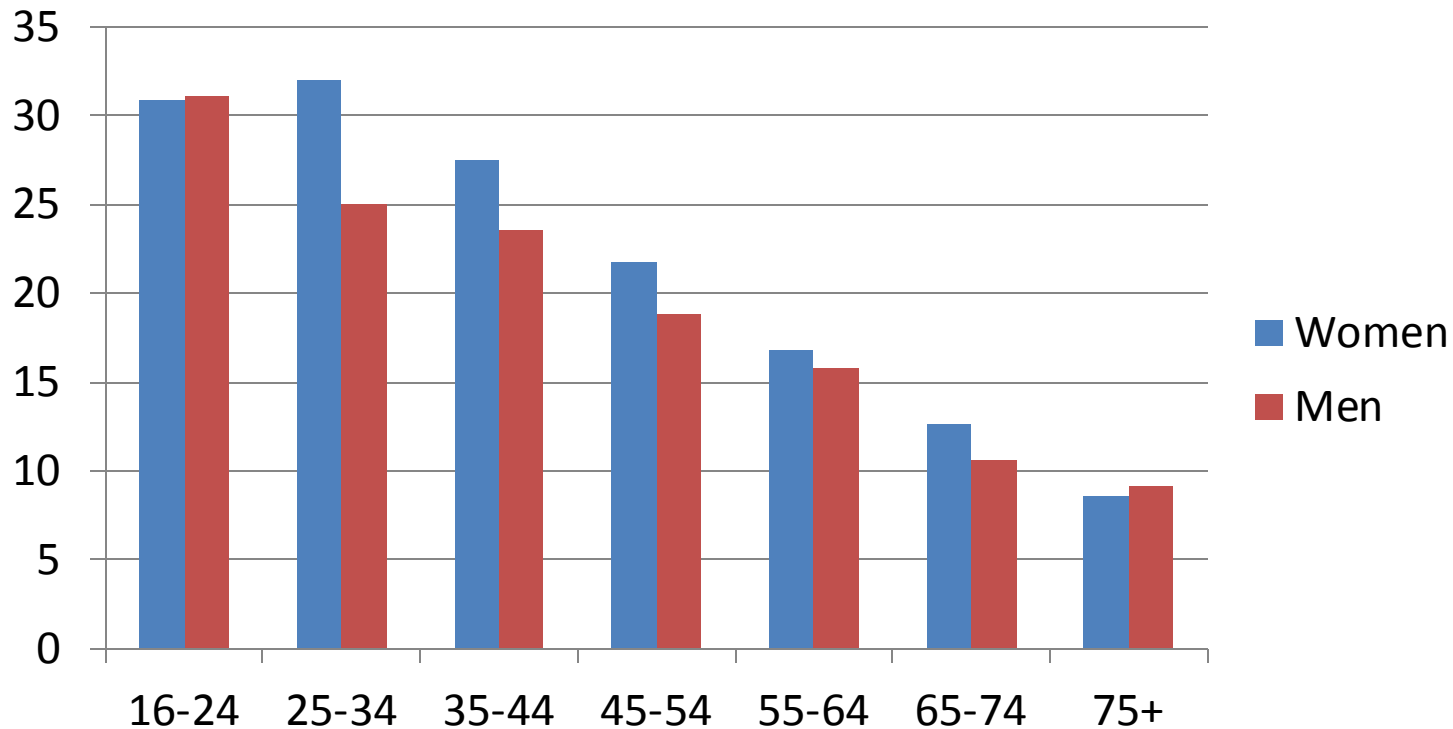
Poverty

- Women are marginally poorer than men
- PSE Poverty
Men 20% Women 22%
- Income Poverty
Men 25% Women 26%
- Subjective Poverty
Men 33% Women 36%
(always & sometimes feel poor)



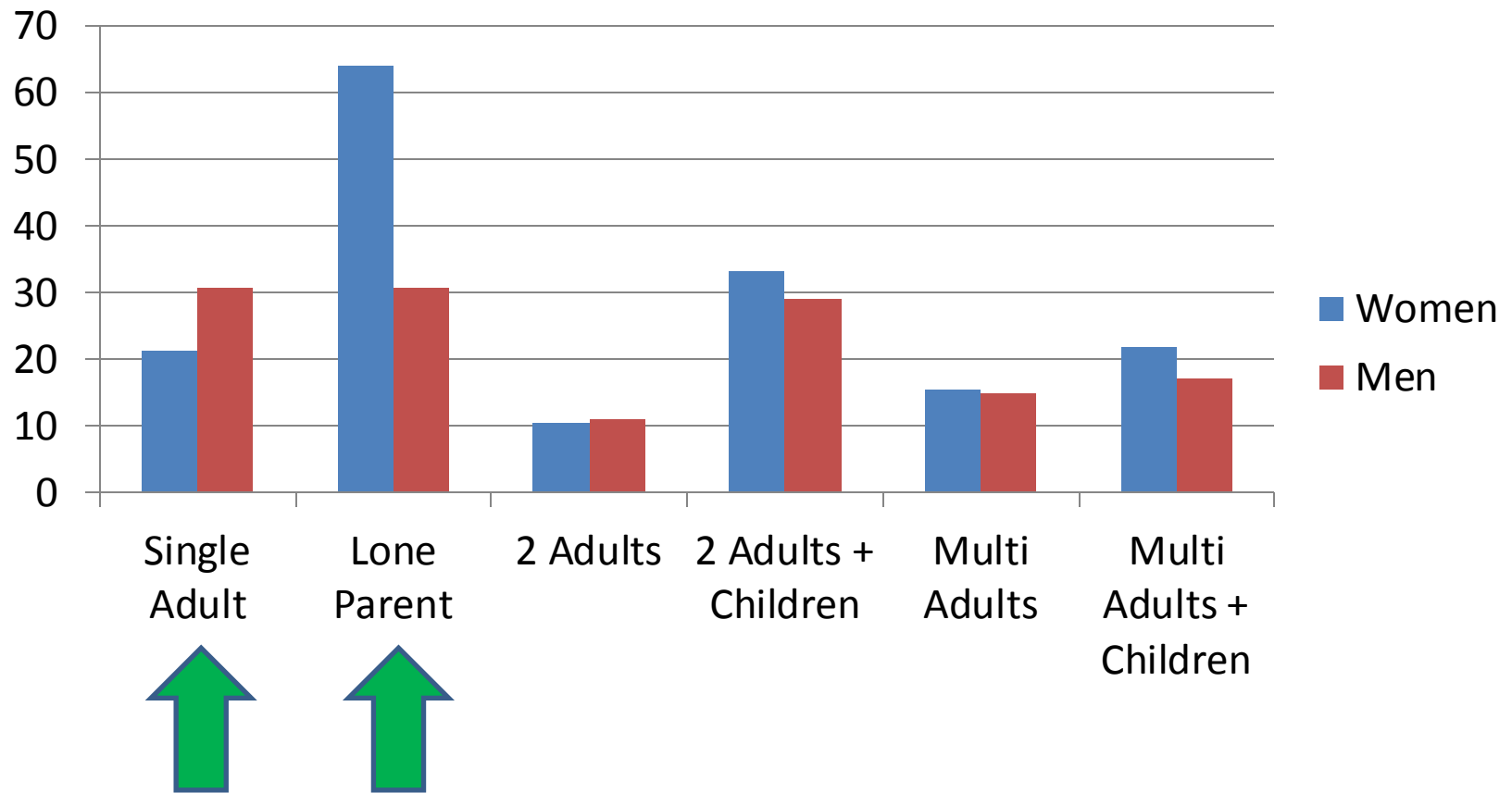
PSE Poverty and Gender: significance of age

Percentage of women and men experiencing poverty (PSE measure) by age group



PSE Poverty and Gender: significance of household composition

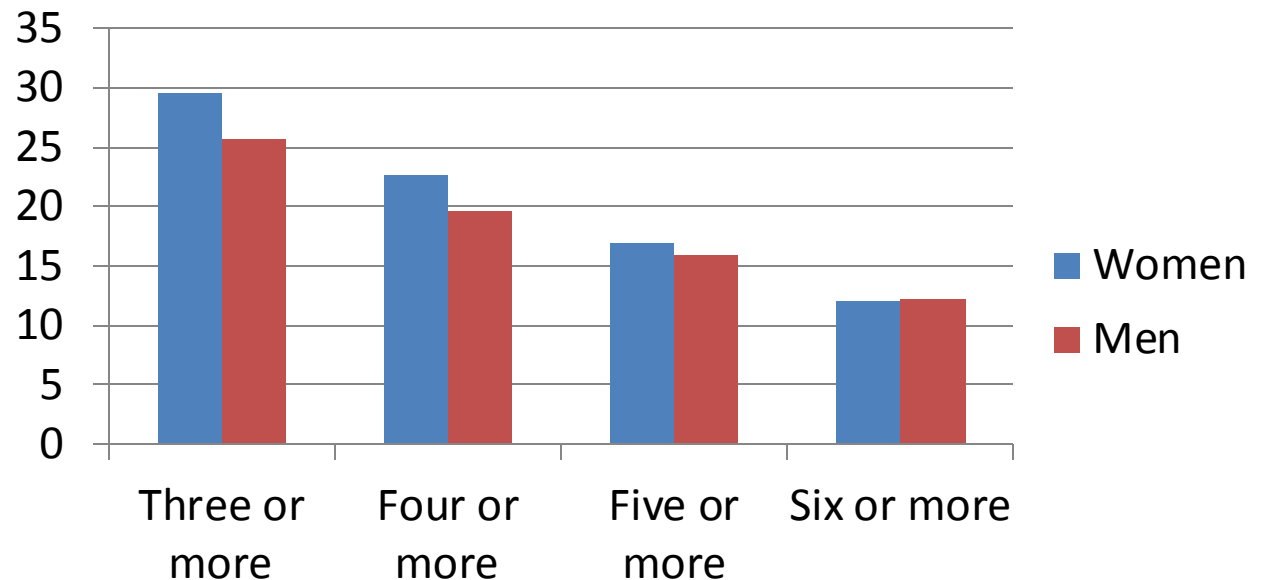
Percentage of women and men experiencing poverty
(PSE measure) by household composition



Deprivation Thresholds

- Looking at consensually agreed necessities, women are slightly more likely to experience deprivation (2.1 compared to 1.9 items)
- The gender gap narrows as deprivation increases

Percentage of women and men lacking necessities due to affordability



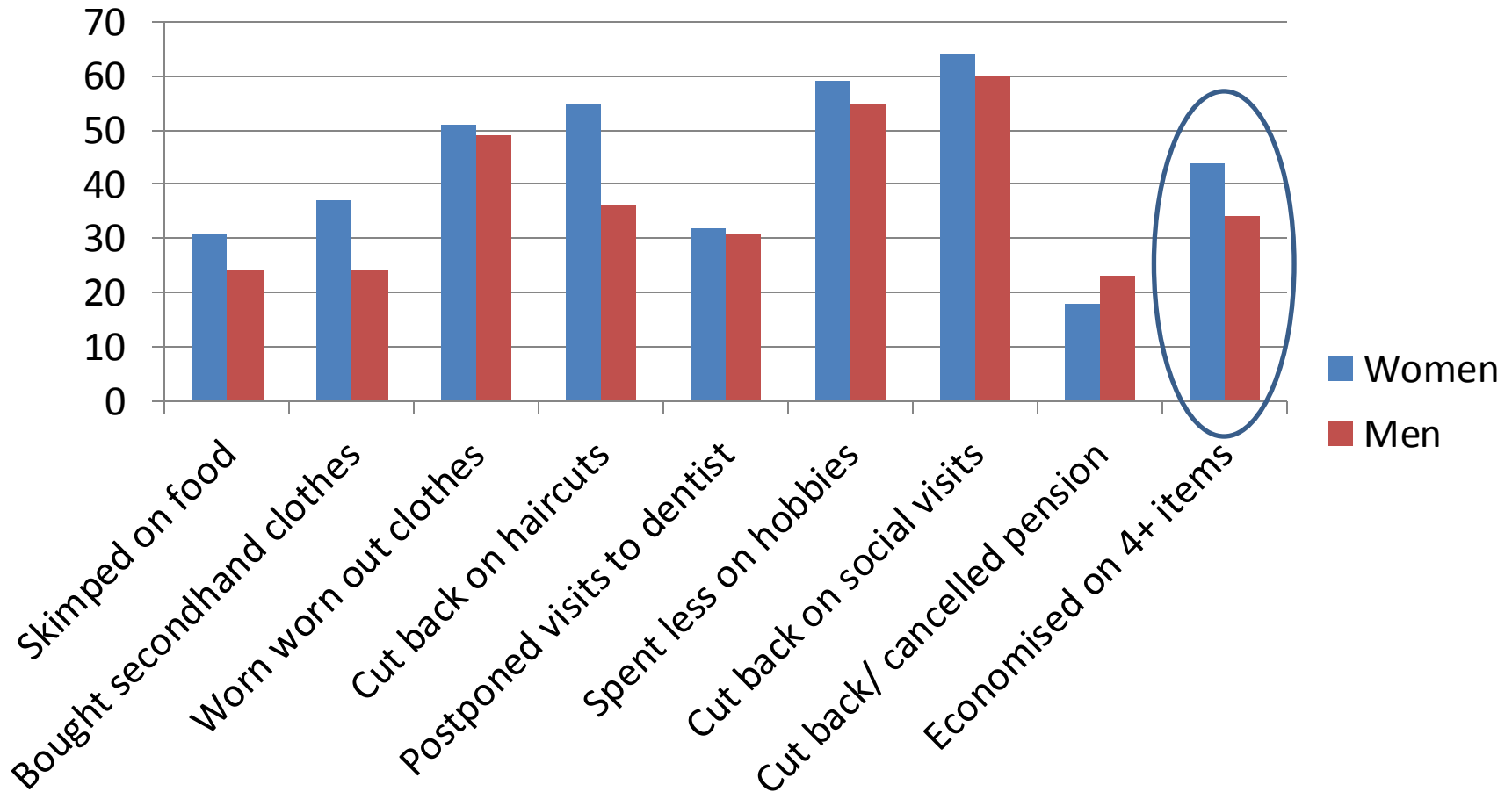
Deprivation Thresholds

- Significance of age and household composition
- For *men* and *women* deprivation is similar for all age groups from 16 up to 54, and then decreases
- The oldest age groups have the lowest levels of deprivation (among men and women)
- *Women* in lone parent households have the highest levels of deprivation averaging 5 (compared to 2.1 for all women)
- *Men* in single adult households have the second highest level of deprivation averaging 2.9 (compared to 1.9 for all men)



Economising Behaviour

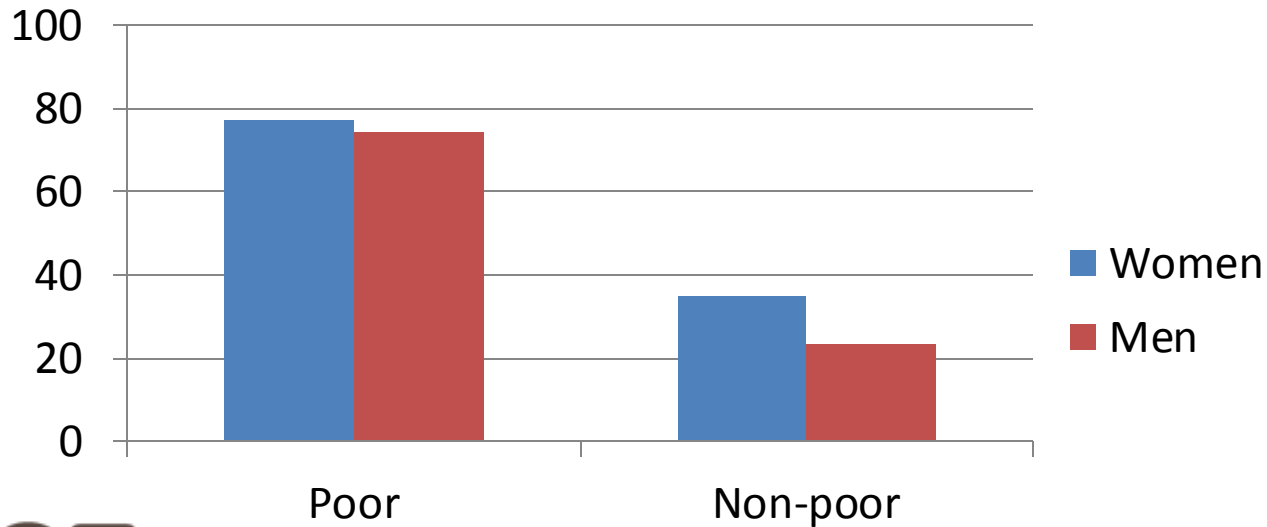
Percentage of women and men who had economised on items to keep living costs down in the previous year



Economising

- The gender gap in economising behaviour emerges largely among the *non-poor*

Percentage of women and men who had economised on items to keep living costs down in the previous year



Changes Over Time – Older Women

- PSE poverty rates for older women have improved
 - 2012 13% of 65-74 and 9% of 75+ were poor
 - 1999 21% in 65-74 and 28% of 75+ were poor
- Deprivation scores for older women have improved
 - 2012 1.1 for 65-74 and 0.7 of 75+
 - 1999 1.5 for 65-74 and 1.6 for 75+



Changes Over Time – Single Men

- Single adult men have emerged as a poor group
- PSE poverty
 - 2012 31%
 - 1999 27%
- Deprivation scores
 - 2012 2.9
 - 1999 1.7
- Subjective poverty
 - 2012 16%
 - 1999 7%



Multivariate Analysis

- Poor general health is associated with higher levels of poverty (men & women)
- Working full-time is associated with lower levels of poverty (men & women)
- Being younger is associated with higher levels of poverty (men)
- Being younger or middle-aged is associated with higher levels of poverty (women)
- Living in a single adult household or in a couple with children is associated with higher levels of poverty (men)
- Living in a lone parent family or in couple with children is associated with higher levels of poverty (women)
- Having a non-resident child is associated with higher levels of poverty (men)



Conclusions

- Women are marginally poorer and more deprived than men
- Women economise more than men
- Looking at the broad categories of men and women disguises the extent of within group differences
- Over the last decade the gendered pattern of poverty has declined
- The situation of older women has improved; the position of male single adults has declined.



Poverty and Parenting: Initial Findings PSE 2012

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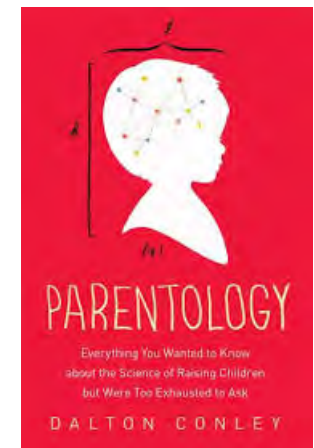
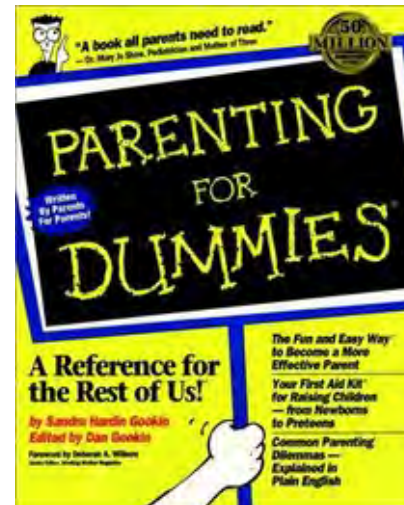
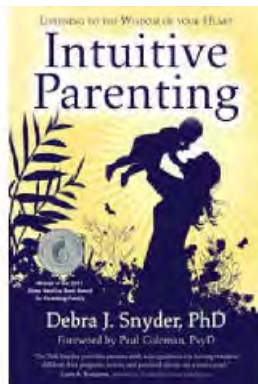
Overview

- Parenting Culture
- Parenting in Political Context
- Parenting and Poverty
- Measures of parenting
- Data - Relationship with poverty, education and time
- Conclusions



Parenting Culture

- Increased profile of parenting: ‘tiger mothers’, ‘feckless fathers’, ‘helicopter parents’
- Intensive motherhood (Hays 1996)
- Paranoid parenting (Furedi 2001)



Parenting in Political Context

- Cycle of deprivation (1970s)
- Focus on family structure (1980s)
- Shift to parenting practices (1990s)
- Individualised discourse (current)



Parenting *versus* Poverty

- “the right kind of parenting is a bigger influence on their [children’s] future than wealth, class, education or any other common social factor” (Allen 2011: pxiv)
- “It is family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development...that together matter more to children than money” (Field 2010:p5)
- *Troubled Families* programme (launched 2011). Directed at 120,000 families with ‘troubled and chaotic lives’



Measuring Parenting

- “We all know what good parenting looks like” (David Cameron 2010)



- Parenting includes:
 - Parenting style
 - Quality of parent-child relationship
 - Direct parent-child activities
 - General caring activities

Parenting Practices

- “Activities that parents undertake with their child(ren) which have a positive effect on their development, such as reading with their child, teaching songs and nursery rhymes, painting and drawing, playing with letters and numbers, visiting the library, teaching the alphabet and numbers, and creating regular opportunities for them to play with their friends at home” (Field 2010:93)
- Five “small, manageable steps”: Talk to your child (with the television off) for 20 minutes; play with your child on the floor for 10 minutes; read to your child for 15 minutes; provide good nutrition; offer positive praise (Paterson 2011:6)



Parenting Practices

Education: Reading
Homework
Attend school parents' evenings

Leisure: Television
Sports
Games

Food: Family meals

Every Day

Most Days

Some Days

Never

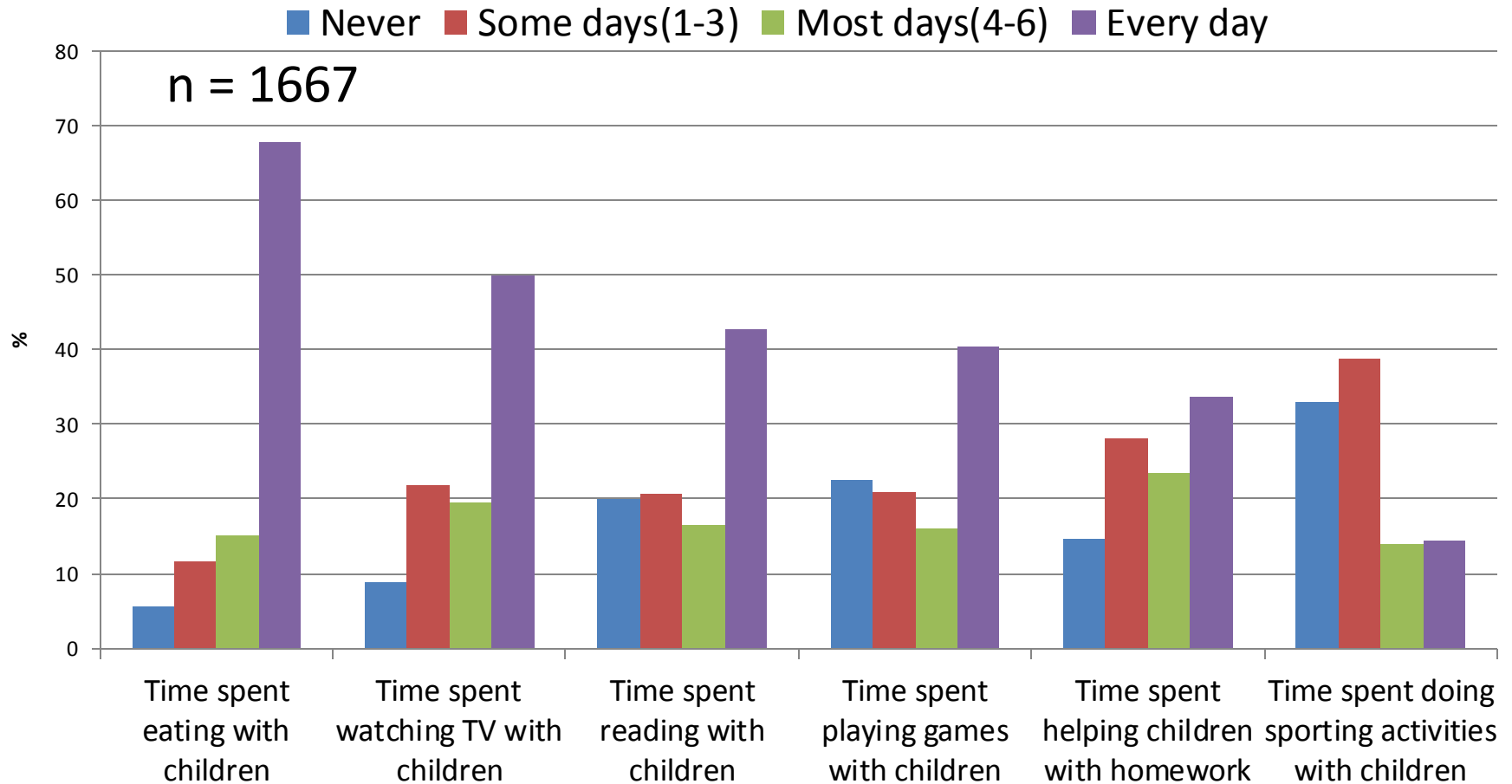


Influences on Parenting Practices

- Poverty
 - Income poverty (< 60% median)
 - Subjective assessment of poverty
- Education
 - Educational qualifications
- Time
 - Employment status (anyone unemployed / all adults in employment)
 - Perceived time pressure

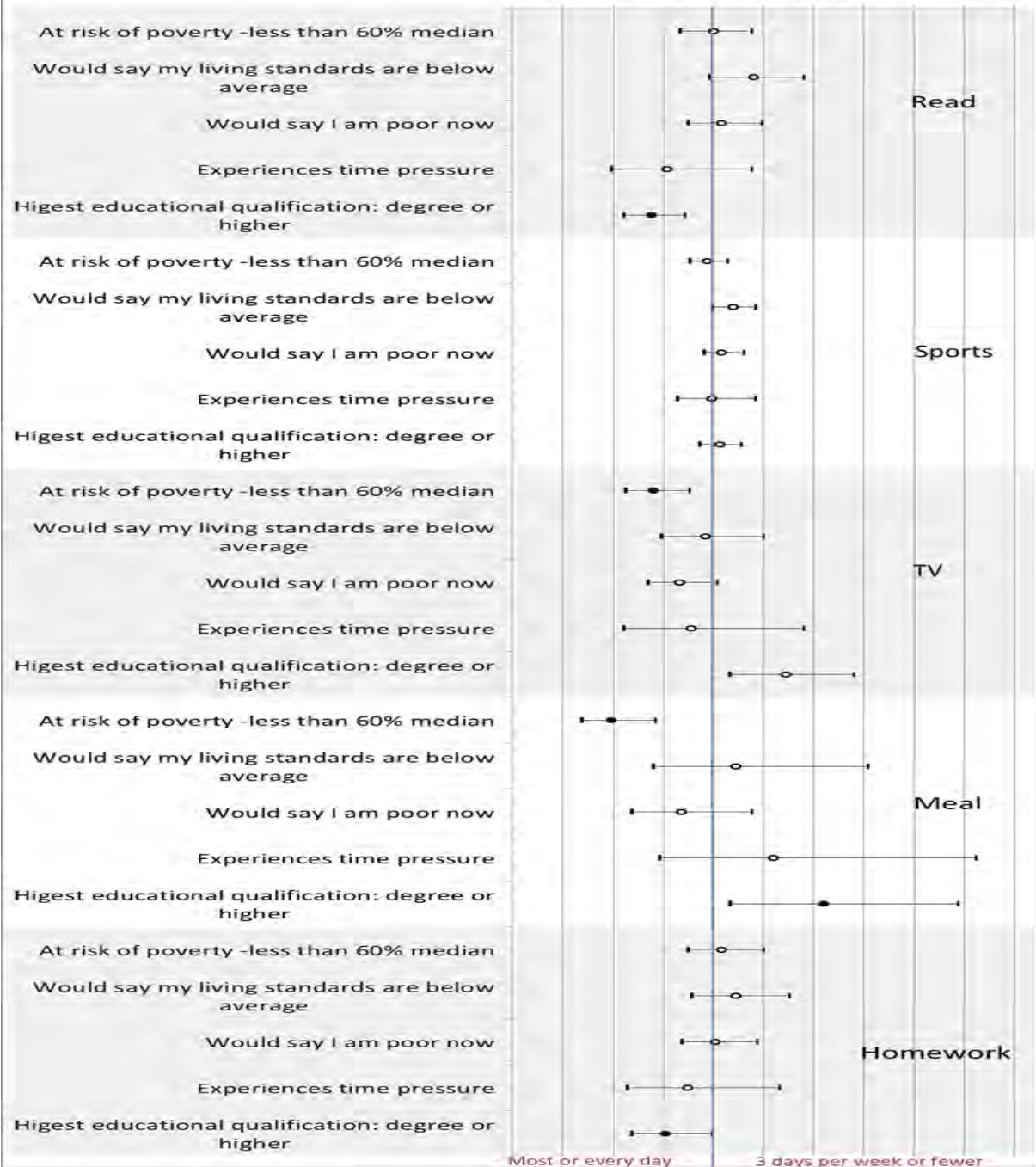


Frequency of Parenting Practices



Relative Risk

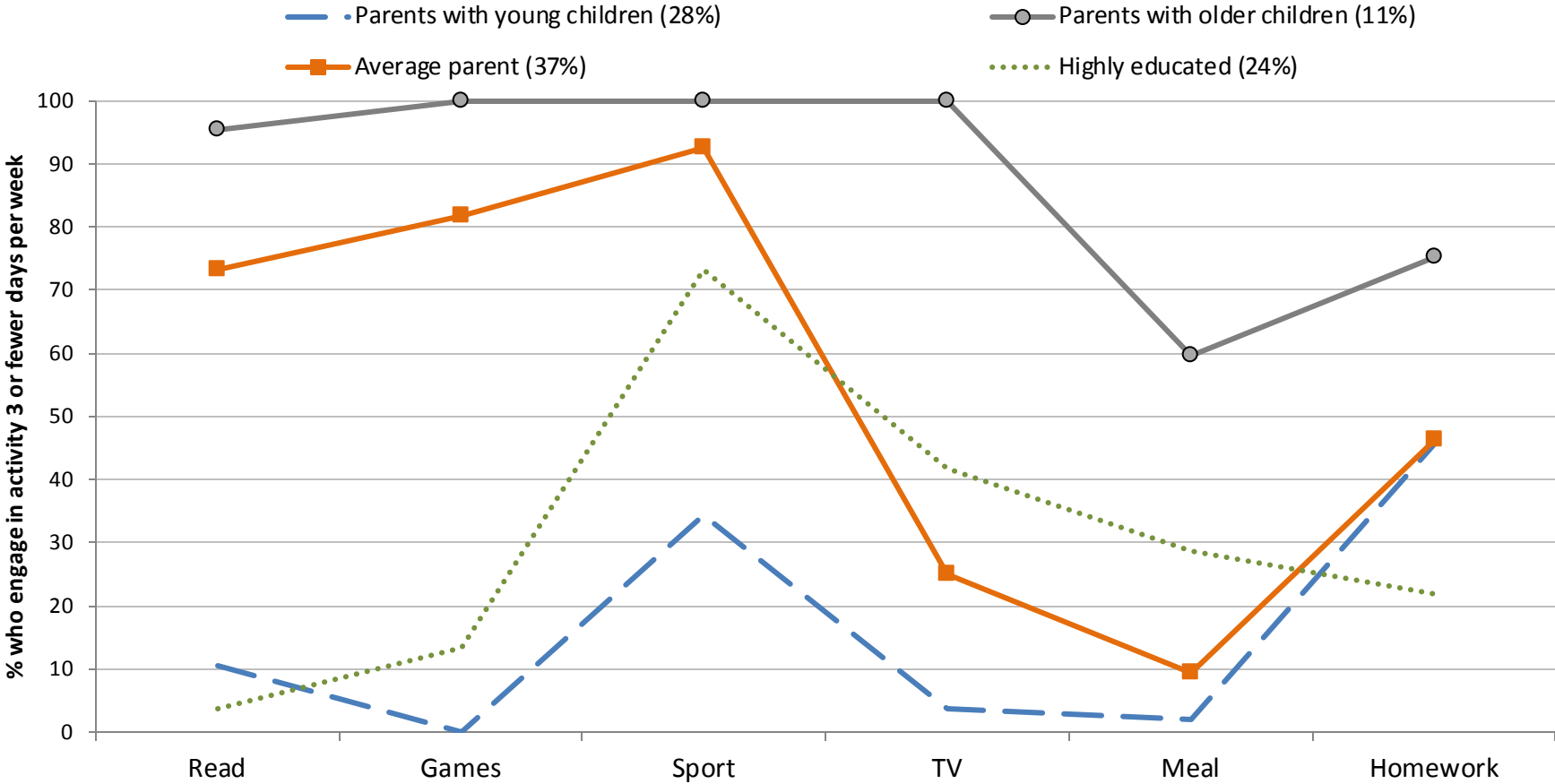
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25 1.5 1.75 2 2.25 2.5



Most or every day

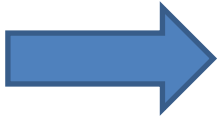
3 days per week or fewer

Latent Class Profiles



Conclusions

- No evidence for group of parents who fail to participate in high profile parent-child activities



- Rethink assumptions about existence of group of 'poor parents' doing 'poor parenting'
- Focus analysis on the top of the social scale and the 'unusual' practices of these parents

Poverty and Parenting: Initial Findings PSE 2012

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Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



Youth, Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK First results: The UK 2012 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey¹

Eldin Fahmy (University of Bristol)

Presentation at 3rd Peter Townsend Memorial Conference: 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK', London - 19th-20th June 2014



www.poverty.ac.uk/pseresearch

Funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council
(Ref: RES-060-25-0052)

¹ All figures are provisional and may be subject to small changes



Tackling youth marginalisation: Some key research questions

- What constitutes minimally acceptable living standards for youth in the UK today?
- How many young people are experiencing poverty in the UK today according to these standards?
- How does youth vulnerability to poverty vary using different measures?
- How does youth vulnerability to poverty compare with the situation for older adults?
- How have rates of youth poverty changed over time compared with (e.g.) 1999?
- How many young people are experiencing wider forms of social exclusion?



Youth, poverty and deprivation: first results

Deprivation of socially-agreed necessities

- Young people mostly share similar views to the wider public on what it takes to avoid poverty in the UK today
- Young people are consistently more vulnerable to deprivation than older adults
- Since 1999, deprivation has become *much* more widespread amongst young people

Wider measures of poverty and exclusion

- On **every** measure of poverty UK youth fare worse than older adults
- The situation today is consistently worse for UK youth today compared with 1999
- Financial strain, unemployment, poor housing and neighbourhood quality are esp issues for youth



Perceptions of the necessities of life in the UK today differ somewhat between young and old

Perceptions of necessities items in 2012: comparing young and old (%)

| | ALL | 16-24 | 65+ | RR |
|--|-----|-------|-----|------|
| Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews | 69 | 81 | 52 | 1.6* |
| Taking part in sport/exercise activities or classes | 56 | 60 | 45 | 1.3* |
| Celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas | 80 | 91 | 77 | 1.2* |
| Two meals a day | 91 | 96 | 90 | 1.1 |
| Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions | 90 | 93 | 86 | 1.1 |
| All recommended dental work/treatment | 82 | 85 | 79 | 1.1 |
| Attending weddings, funerals and other such occasions | 79 | 85 | 76 | 1.1 |
| Regular savings (of at least £20 a month) for rainy days | 52 | 57 | 54 | 1.1 |
| Regular payments into an occupational or private pension | 51 | 56 | 51 | 1.1 |
| Heating to keep home adequately warm | 96 | 94 | 97 | 1.0 |
| Replace or repair broken electrical goods | 86 | 85 | 85 | 1.0 |
| Washing machine | 82 | 80 | 81 | 1.0 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day | 76 | 72 | 75 | 1.0 |
| Curtains or window blinds | 71 | 75 | 76 | 1.0 |
| Damp-free home | 94 | 92 | 97 | 0.9 |
| A hobby or leisure activity | 70 | 71 | 76 | 0.9 |
| Fresh fruit and vegetables every day | 83 | 69 | 83 | 0.8 |
| A warm waterproof coat | 79 | 69 | 89 | 0.8* |
| Telephone at home (landline or mobile) | 77 | 75 | 89 | 0.8* |
| Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration | 69 | 61 | 79 | 0.8* |
| To be able to pay an unexpected expense of £500 | 55 | 52 | 68 | 0.8* |
| A table, with chairs, at which all the family can eat | 64 | 56 | 77 | 0.7* |
| Two pairs of all-weather shoes | 54 | 47 | 71 | 0.7* |
| Household contents insurance | 70 | 51 | 86 | 0.6* |
| Television | 51 | 33 | 70 | 0.5* |

* p<.05

Deprivation of minimum living standards is widespread amongst UK youth in 2012

| | <i>Don't have</i> | | <i>Can't afford</i> | |
|--|-------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
| | <i>18-29</i> | <i>30+</i> | <i>18-29</i> | <i>30+</i> |
| An unexpected but necessary expense of £500 | .. | .. | 48 | 30 |
| Enough money to replace or repair broken electrical goods | 57 | 27 | 43 | 23 |
| Regular payments into an occupational or private pension | 79 | 64 | 38 | 25 |
| Regular savings (of at least £20 a month) for rainy days | 46 | 40 | 38 | 30 |
| Enough money to keep home in decent state of decoration | 38 | 22 | 26 | 18 |
| All recommended dental work/treatment | 35 | 23 | 25 | 15 |
| Damp-free home | 28 | 17 | 20 | 10 |
| Household contents insurance | 33 | 17 | 20 | 10 |
| Taking part in sport/exercise activities or classes | 45 | 59 | 16 | 10 |
| Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews | 16 | 29 | 12 | 7 |
| Two pairs of all-weather shoes | 19 | 10 | 12 | 6 |
| A hobby or leisure activity | 26 | 30 | 10 | 8 |
| Fresh fruit and vegetables every day | 18 | 11 | 9 | 6 |
| A table, with chairs, at which all the family can eat | 14 | 10 | 8 | 4 |
| Heating to keep home adequately warm | 12 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| A warm, waterproof coat | 12 | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day | 8 | 7 | 4 | 4 |
| Attending weddings, funerals and other such occasions | 17 | 11 | 4 | 2 |
| Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions | 34 | 36 | 3 | 3 |
| Celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas | 7 | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| Two meals a day | 3 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Curtains or window blinds | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |

Deprivation of necessities has increased substantially amongst UK youth since 1999

| Deprivation of social and material necessities amongst respondents aged 18-29 | % lacking item for any reason | | |
|---|-------------------------------|------|------------|
| | 1999 | 2012 | Diff (b-a) |
| Enough money to replace or repair broken electrical goods | 25.9 | 56.5 | 30.6 |
| Enough money to keep home in decent state of decoration | 16.0 | 38.4 | 22.4 |
| Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions | 14.5 | 34.1 | 19.6 |
| Household contents insurance* | 16.0 | 33.0 | 17.0 |
| Regular savings (of at least £20 a month) for rainy days* | 30.5 | 46.4 | 15.9 |
| Damp-free home | 12.3 | 27.9 | 15.6 |
| A hobby or leisure activity | 15.8 | 25.6 | 9.9 |
| Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews | 7.5 | 16.4 | 8.9 |
| Heating to keep home adequately warm* | 4.0 | 11.9 | 7.9 |
| Two pairs of all-weather shoes | 12.4 | 19.4 | 7.0 |
| Attending weddings, funerals and other such occasions | 10.3 | 17.1 | 6.8 |
| Celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas | 2.2 | 6.5 | 4.4 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day | 7.8 | 8.4 | 0.6 |
| Fresh fruit and vegetables every day | 17.7 | 18.1 | 0.4 |
| A warm, waterproof coat | 11.9 | 12.3 | 0.3 |
| Two meals a day | 3.0 | 3.4 | 0.3 |

The necessities of life are less affordable for UK youth today than in 1999

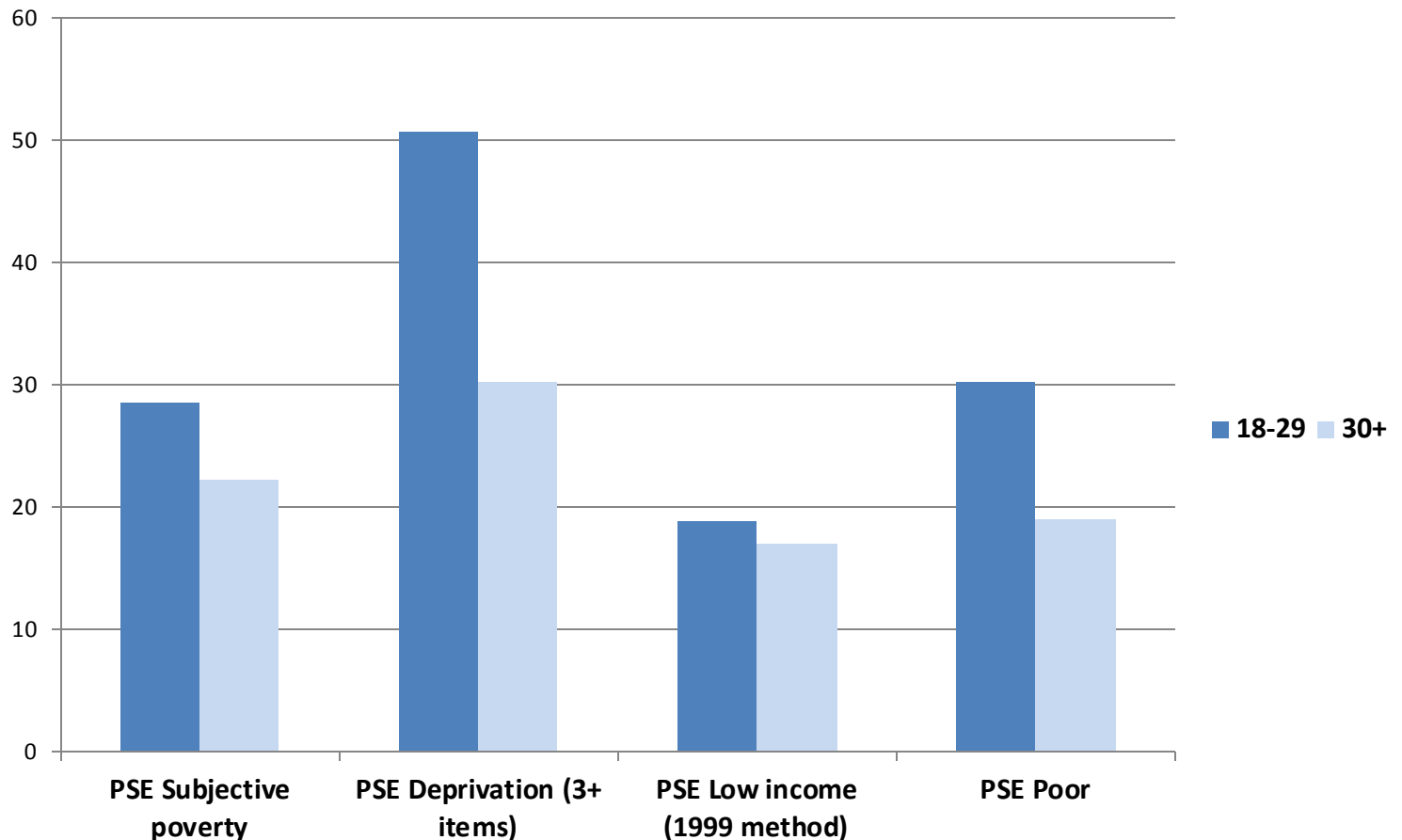
| Deprivation of social and material necessities amongst respondents aged 18-29 | % cannot afford | | |
|---|-----------------|------|------------|
| | 1999 | 2012 | Diff (b-a) |
| Enough money to replace or repair broken electrical goods | 16.9 | 43.1 | 26.2 |
| Damp-free home | 7.4 | 20.0 | 12.6 |
| Regular savings (of at least £20 a month) for rainy days* | 25.8 | 37.7 | 11.9 |
| Enough money to keep home in decent state of decoration | 15.1 | 26.3 | 11.2 |
| Household contents insurance* | 9.9 | 19.8 | 9.9 |
| Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews | 5.3 | 11.8 | 6.5 |
| Heating to keep home adequately warm* | 3.1 | 7.5 | 4.4 |
| Two pairs of all-weather shoes | 7.7 | 11.6 | 3.8 |
| Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day | 1.1 | 4.4 | 3.4 |
| Fresh fruit and vegetables every day | 5.9 | 8.6 | 2.6 |
| A hobby or leisure activity | 7.7 | 10.1 | 2.4 |
| Two meals a day | 0.1 | 2.4 | 2.3 |
| A warm, waterproof coat | 4.7 | 5.6 | 0.9 |
| Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions | 2.2 | 2.9 | 0.8 |
| Celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas | 1.9 | 2.6 | 0.8 |
| Attending weddings, funerals and other such occasions | 4.3 | 4.3 | 0.0 |



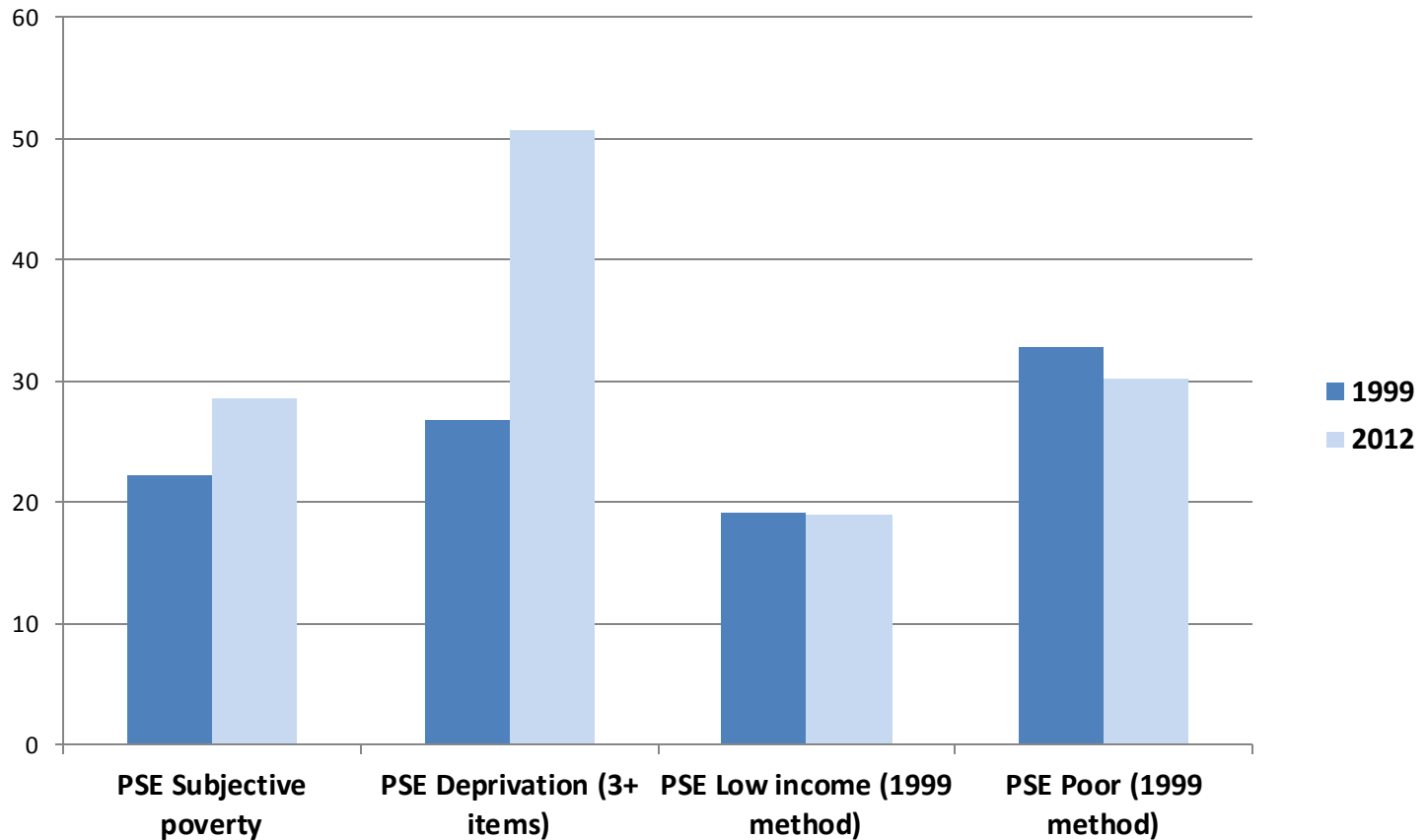
PSE UK

Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

More young adults experience poverty than older adults according to every PSE measure



Youth poverty in the UK has increased since 1999 on every PSE measure except low income

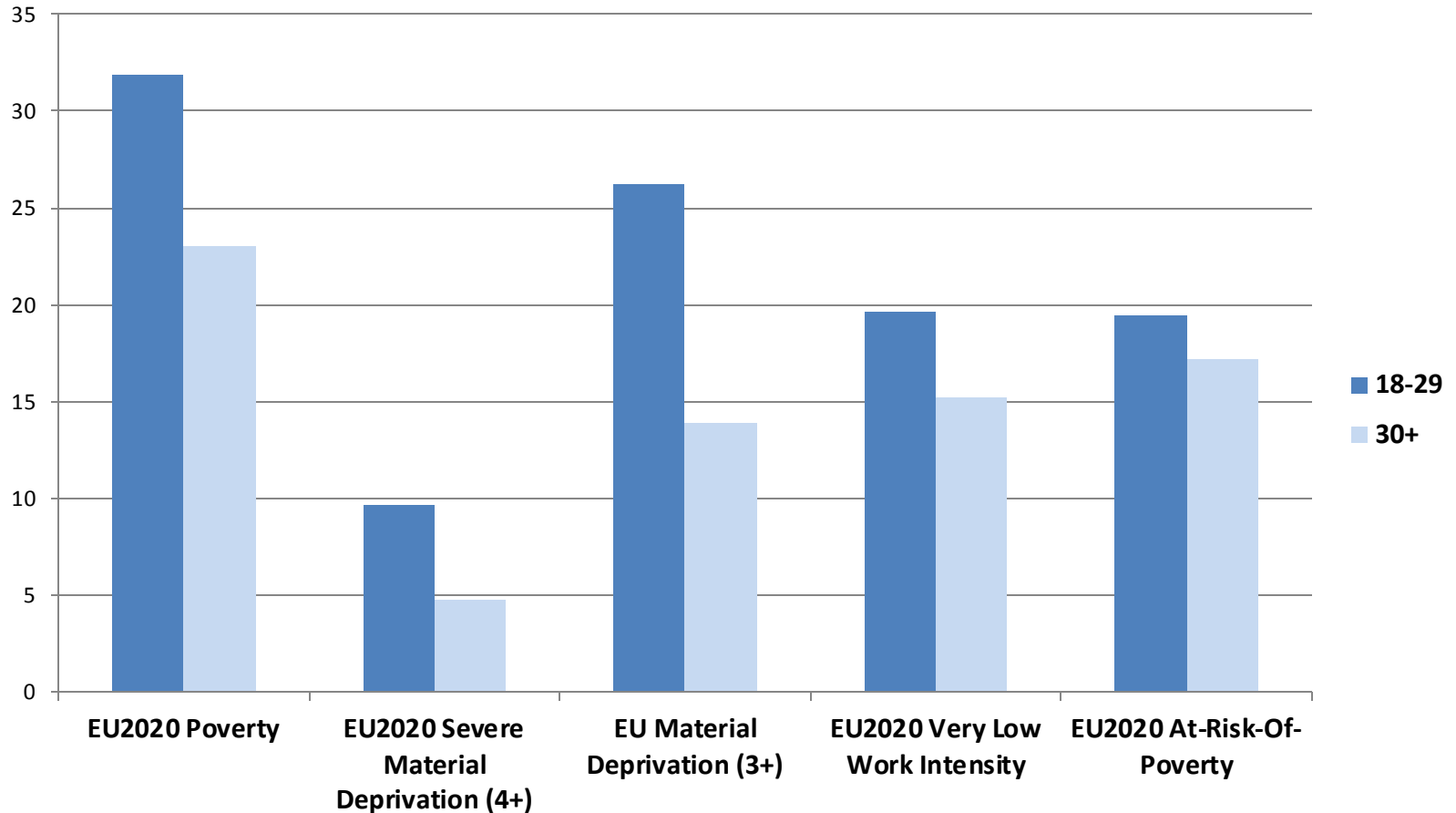


Young people in the UK are more vulnerable to social exclusion than older adults

| Indicators of social exclusion by age group, 2012 | | 18-29 | 30+ | |
|---|--|-------|-----|-------|
| | | % | % | RR |
| RESOURCES | In arrears on any bills in last year | 36 | 16 | 2.2 |
| | Had to borrow money from friends, family or other source | 41 | 18 | 2.3 |
| | Cannot afford unanticipated, necessary expense of £500 | 48 | 30 | 1.6 |
| | Not a home owner | 48 | 28 | 1.7 |
| | Has (well) below average living standards | 13 | 13 | [1.0] |
| | Lacks adequate access to 3+ local services | 21 | 22 | [1.0] |
| PARTICIPATION | Speaks to less than 3 relatives monthly | 19 | 26 | 0.7 |
| | Speaks to less than 3 friends monthly | 25 | 31 | 0.8 |
| | Not satisfied with personal relationships | 23 | 16 | 1.5 |
| | Low social support (scores \leq 15) | 16 | 15 | [1.0] |
| | No working age adults in <u>hhld</u> in paid work | 21 | 16 | 1.3 |
| | Unemployed more than 12 months in last 5 years | 14 | 7 | 2.1 |
| | Not satisfied with current job (in employment only) | 17 | 14 | 1.3 |
| | Does not participate in 9+ common social activities | 47 | 55 | [0.9] |
| | Not member of any listed organisations | 46 | 43 | 1.1 |
| Took no action about local or national issue (<u>inc</u> voting) | 49 | 28 | 1.7 | |
| WELL-BEING | Poor mental health (GHQ \geq 24) | 46 | 37 | 1.3 |
| | Low life satisfaction (ONS \leq 6) | 21 | 20 | [1.1] |
| | Multiple problems with accommodation | 29 | 17 | 1.7 |
| | Dissatisfied with accommodation | 17 | 8 | 2.1 |
| | Neighbourhood dissatisfaction | 19 | 12 | 1.6 |
| | Experiencing 3+ neighbourhood problems | 27 | 22 | 1.3 |
| | Experienced harassment or discrimination for any reason | 28 | 13 | 2.2 |



Poverty rates in the UK are higher for youth than older adults for all Europe 2020 measures



Social inequalities in poverty vulnerability are pronounced for UK youth

| Composition of PSE Poor population: young adults aged 18-29 | | % of PSE Poor group | % PSE Poor |
|---|---|---------------------|------------|
| Sex | Male | 43 | 27 |
| | Female | 57 | 34 |
| Family Type | Couple with children | 40 | 48 |
| | Couple without children | 7 | 11 |
| | Lone parent | 18 | 59 |
| | Single without children | 35 | 23 |
| Employment status | Working | 34 | 21 |
| | Unemployed | 23 | 59 |
| | Not econ active | 43 | 55 |
| Household work intensity | All working age adults in paid work | 23 | 17 |
| | At least 1 working age adult in paid work | 32 | 23 |
| | No working age adults in paid work | 45 | 63 |
| Ethnicity | White British | 81 | 29 |
| | Mixed | 1 | 16 |
| | Asian | 7 | 29 |
| | Black | 5 | 56 |
| | Other | 7 | 33 |
| Occupational class | Professional and managerial | 10 | 10 |
| | Intermediate | 24 | 21 |
| | Small employers and own account | 6 | 34 |
| | Lower supervisory and technical | 9 | 31 |
| | Semi-routine | 29 | 24 |
| | Routine | 23 | 40 |
| Settlement type | urban areas | 90 | 33 |
| | rural/sparsely populated areas | 10 | 19 |
| Tenure status | Owner occupier | 15 | 9 |
| | LA/HA renter | 52 | 59 |
| | Private renter | 33 | 50 |
| ALL | | 100 | 30 |

Youth, Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK First results: The UK 2012 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey¹

Eldin Fahmy (University of Bristol)

Presentation at 3rd Peter Townsend Memorial Conference: 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK', London - 19th-20th June 2014



www.poverty.ac.uk/pseresearch

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¹ All figures are provisional and may be subject to small changes

Ethnicity and Poverty: Initial Findings PSE 2012

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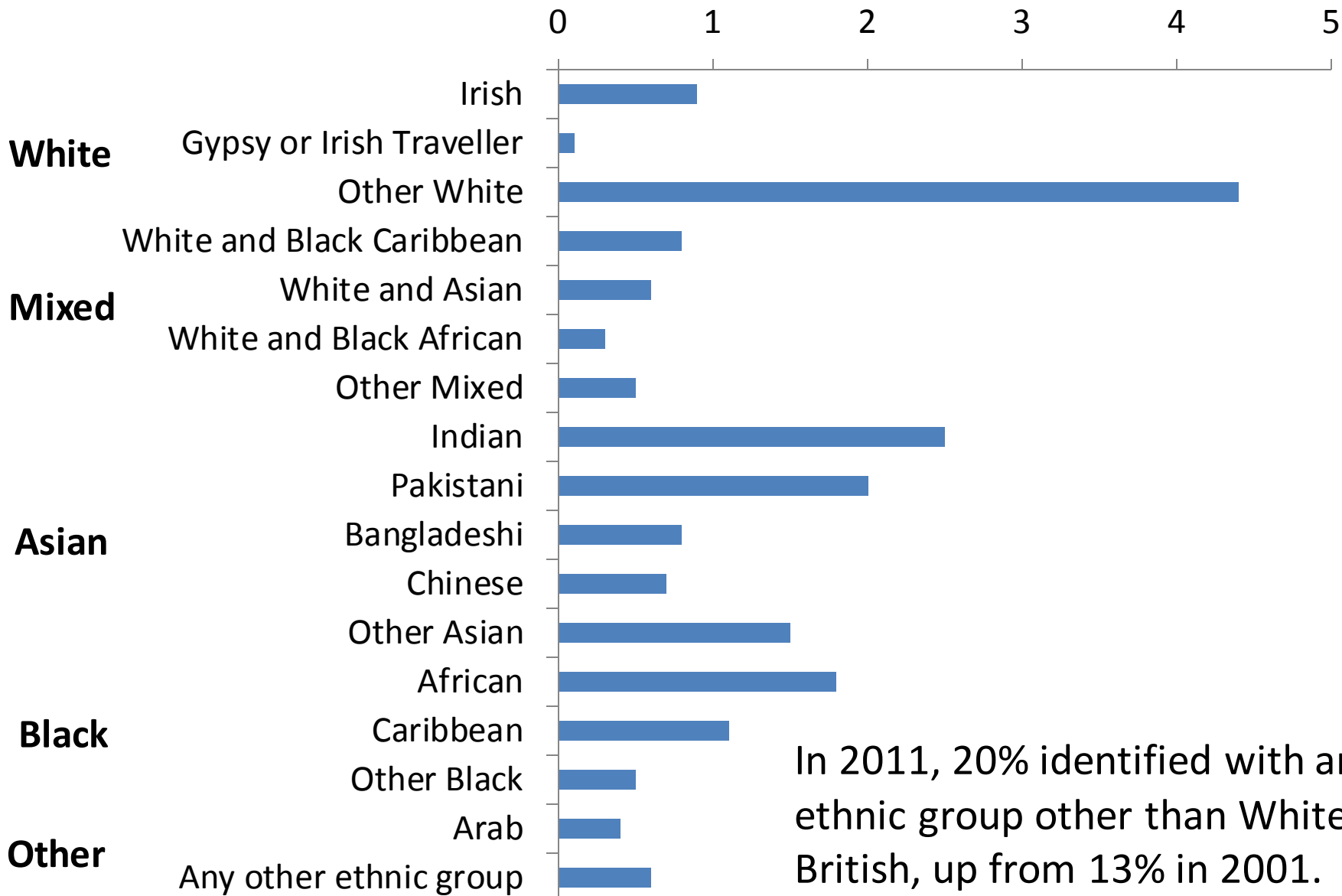
Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



Overview

- Ethnic diversity in Britain
- Poverty and Ethnicity: existing evidence
- PSE Dataset
- Analysis – PSE poverty
 - Deprivation
 - Income
 - Subjective poverty
 - Employment and in-work poverty
- Conclusions

Ethnic diversity in England and Wales



Existing survey evidence

The general picture is also of ethnic diversity:

- Bangladeshi and Pakistani people are much more likely to be poor, Black Caribbeans and Black Africans are also disadvantaged but Indian and Chinese people are more affluent.

But there are methodological issues:

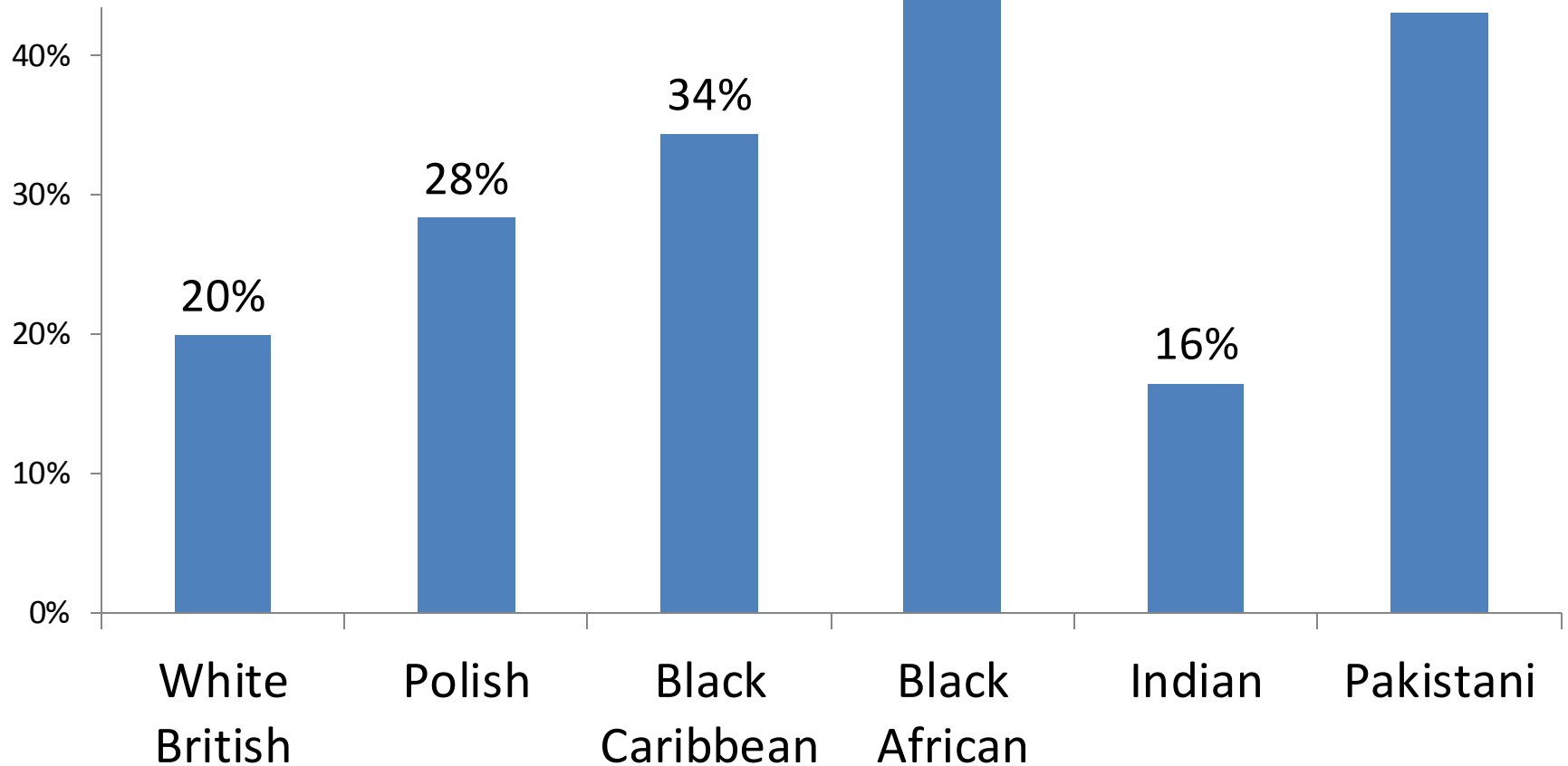
- There is little recent analysis
- The measures used are often income-based
- There is more limited evidence on Black African and minority White groups.

PSE Dataset

- The PSE dataset over-sampled FRS households which included at least one individual (adult or child) with an ethnic minority background.
- Response rate: 49% for the ethnic boost (58% overall)
- Ethnicity was self-defined using the 2011 Census categories. The 'Other' categories provide unique opportunities to examine a range of groups not included in other surveys e.g. Polish.
- The GB sample, and sample sizes, for these analyses are:
White British (N=5821); Polish (93); Black Caribbean (174); Black African (162); Indian (297); and Pakistani (183).

PSE Poverty

Black Africans, Black Caribbeans and Pakistanis are significantly more likely to be in poverty than white British and Indian people.



Average deprivation score

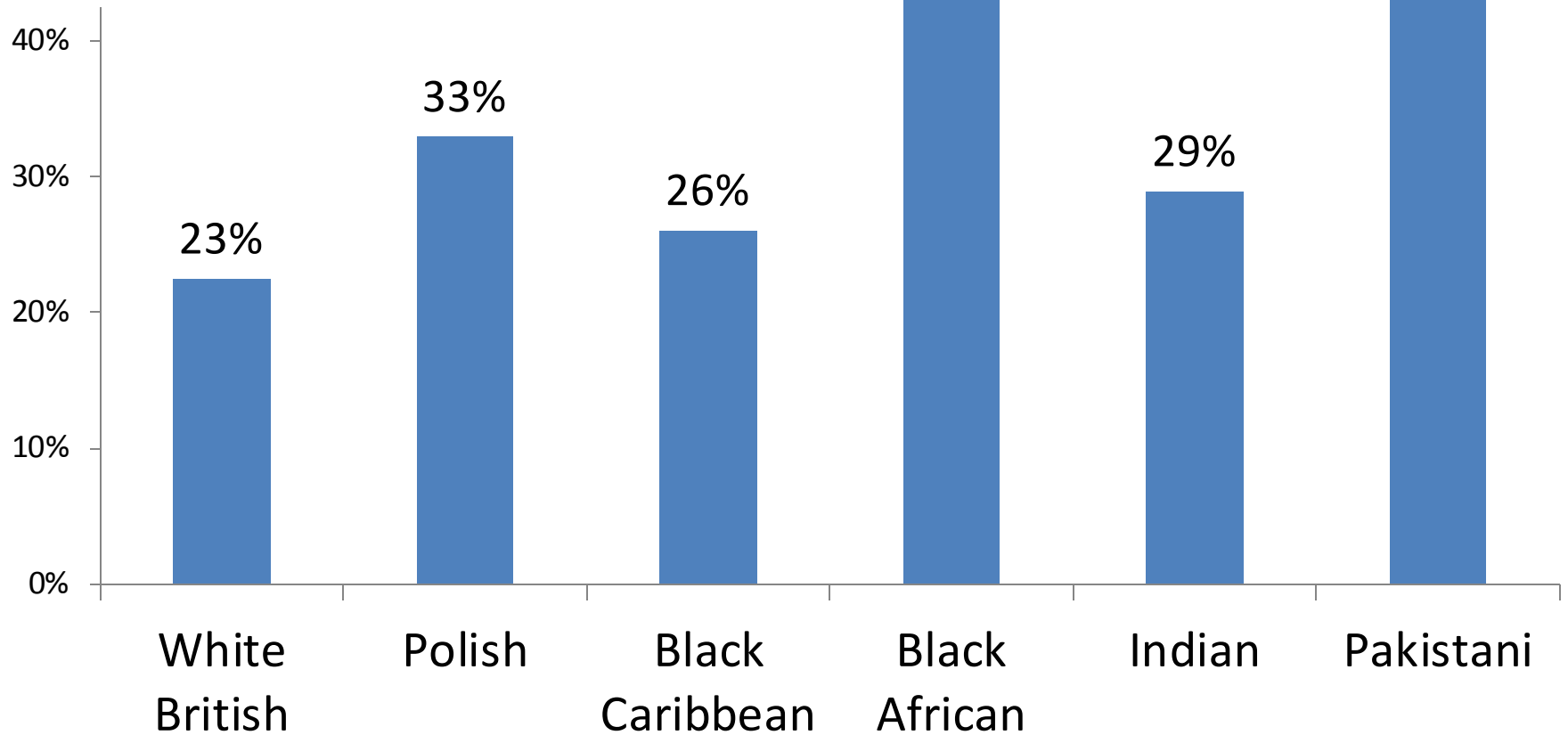
| Ethnic group | Consensual deprivation all item index for adults (Mean) |
|-----------------|---|
| Black African | 5.1 |
| Black Caribbean | 3.7 |
| Pakistani | 3.2 |
| White British | 2.3 |
| Indian | 2.2 |
| Polish | 2.1 |

Black Africans living in poverty:

- 5% cannot afford two meals a day (compared to the overall PSE average of 2%)
- 15% do not have enough money to have two pairs of all-weather shoes (compared to 8% overall)
- 18% reported having four or more housing-related problems and 15% cannot afford to heat their home (compared to 8% overall)
- 21% cannot afford a hobby or a leisure activity (compared to 8% overall)
- 55% don't have enough money to keep home in a decent state of decoration (compared to 32%)
- 77% cannot afford to pay for an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £500 (compared to 33% overall)

Income poverty

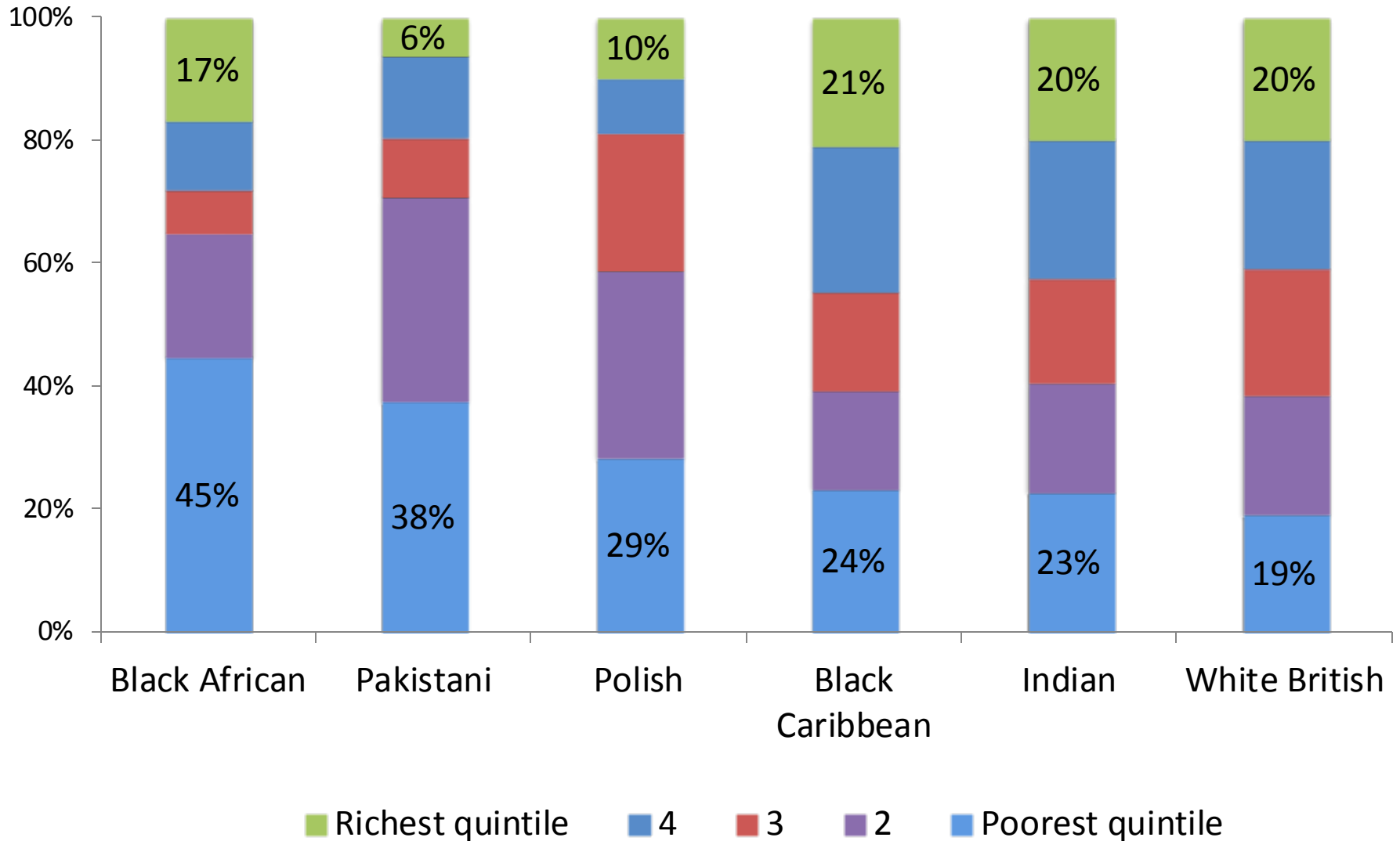
Black African and Pakistani people are significantly more likely to experience income poverty than white British, Black Caribbean and Indian people.



Average weekly income

| Ethnic group | Equivalised Net Weekly Household Income (AHC) |
|-----------------|---|
| Pakistani | £273 |
| Polish | £296 |
| Black African | £332 |
| Black Caribbean | £396 |
| Indian | £421 |
| White British | £425 |

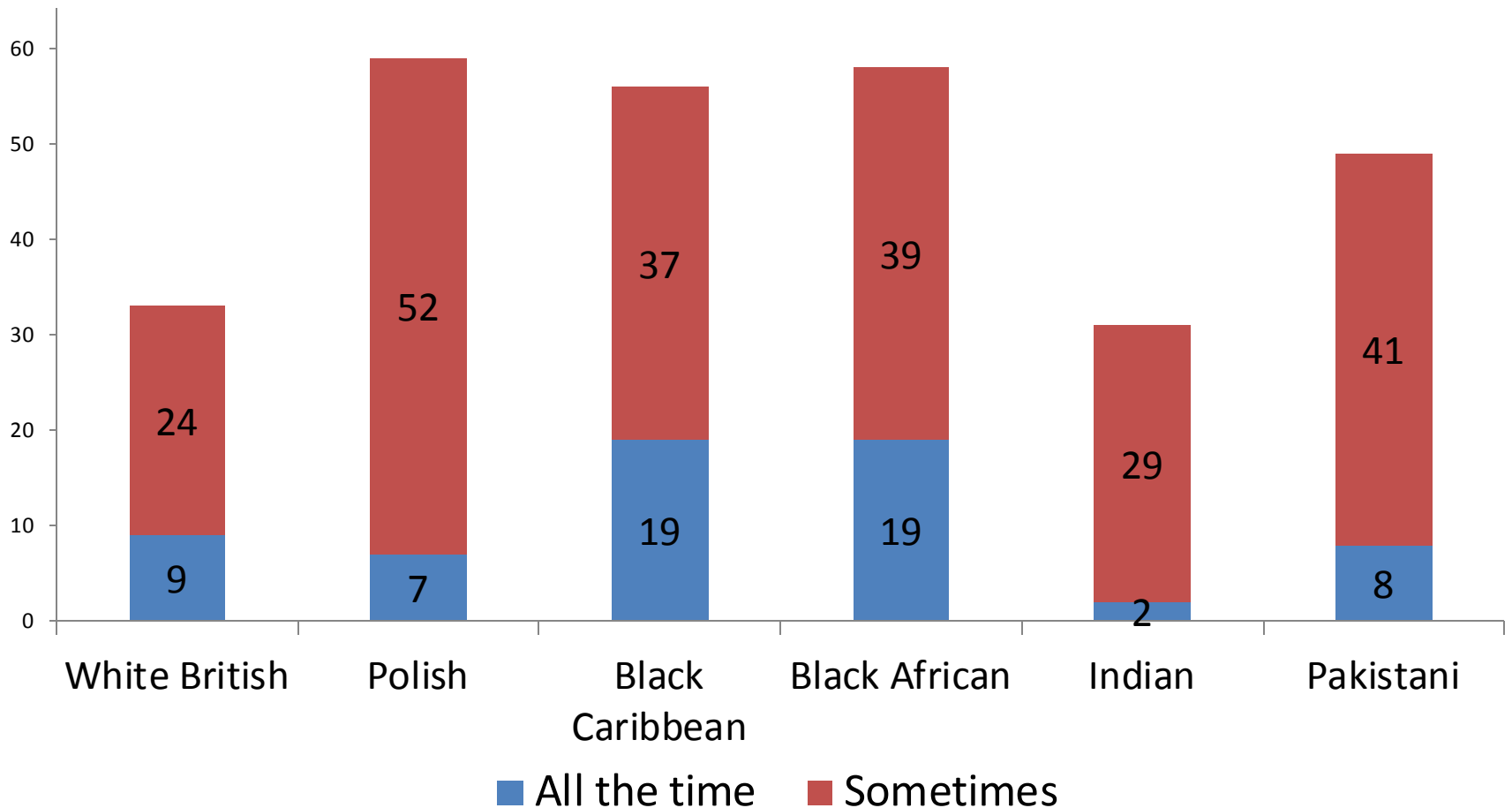
Distribution of Income



Subjective Poor: Do you feel poor now?

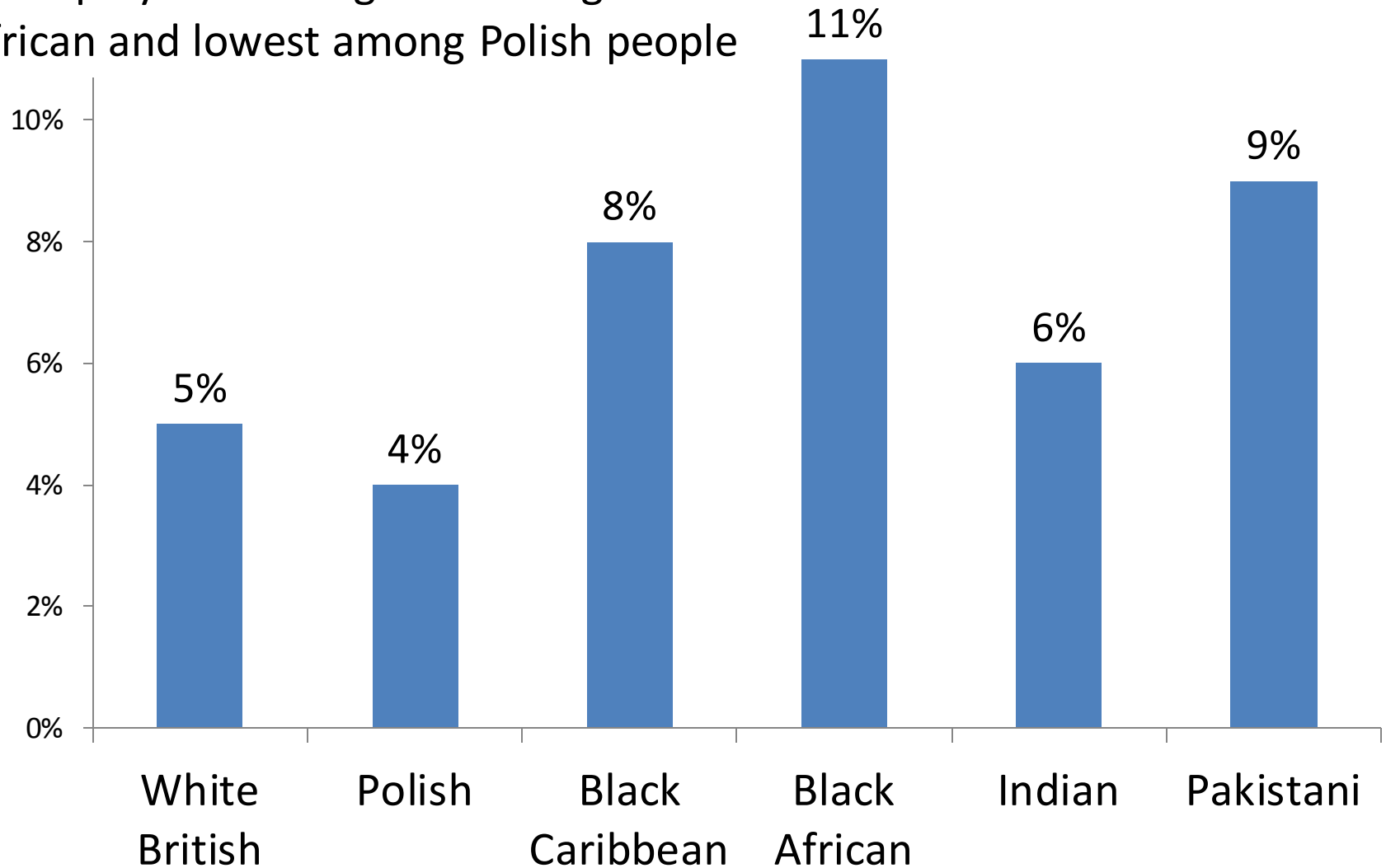
Similar proportions of Polish people report feeling poor to other disadvantaged groups.

Black Caribbean and African people were significantly more likely to feel poor 'all the time'



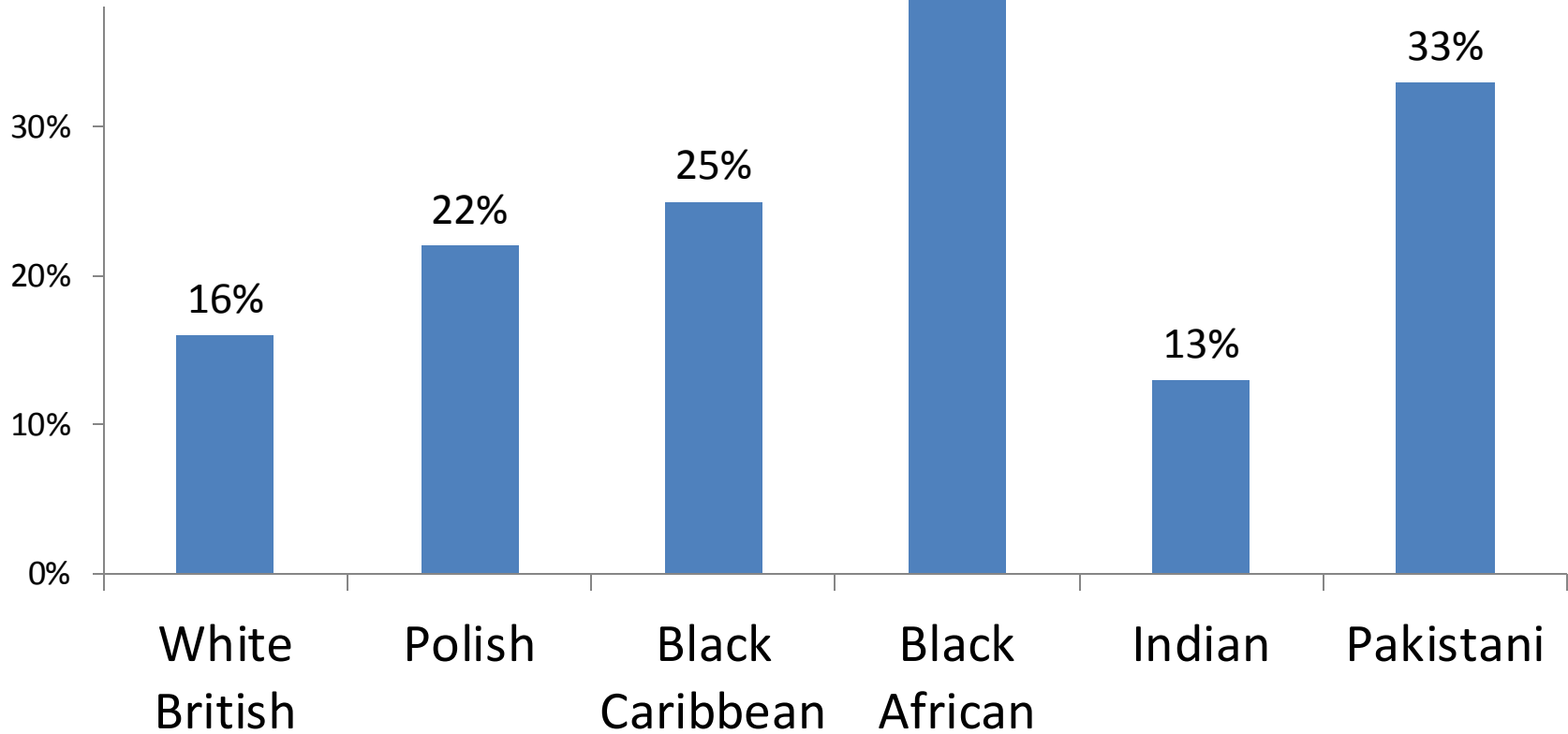
Unemployment

Unemployment is highest among Black African and lowest among Polish people



In-Work Poverty

Almost half of Black African and a third of Pakistani people in work are in poverty.



Conclusions

- The experience of poverty varies across ethnic groups.
- The opportunity to look at additional groups offered by the PSE provides important new insights into the experiences of poverty among people with different ethnicities in Britain.
- There is also further evidence of the need to look at variations within groups

“Name any group whose poverty causes national concern - pensioners, disabled people, one-parent families, the unemployed – Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were poorer.”

(Berthoud 1997:768)

Pensioner poverty and social exclusion: Selected findings from PSE 2012 Survey

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Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



Setting the stage for the results - *the good, the bad....*

- *The good news...*
 - Proportion of pensioners living in poverty is at its lowest for almost 30 years
 - Just one in eight of all those in poverty in the UK are pensioners
 - Material deprivation (FRS pensioner deprivation) has gone down
- *The bad news...*
 - Still about 1.6 million pensioners living in relative poverty in the UK, 900,000 of which are living in severe poverty, i.e. living on incomes below 50 per cent of median income
 - Many pensioners still cannot afford items and activities necessary for a decent standard of living in the UK



Pensioner estimates - Census 2011 vs. PSE 2012 Mainstage

Census 2011 figures

State Pensionable Age (SPA)

- 12.3 M SPA Usual resident population (19.5% of UK population)(63% female), of which:
 - 11.9 M Living in private households (19.2%) (62% female)

Pensioner households

- 4.4 M single pensioner households (one adult over pension age) (16% of all UK households)
- 4.4 M pensioner couple households (two adults, one or both over pension age) (17% of UK households)

PSE data (PSPW weighted)

State Pensionable Age (SPA old*)

- 12.2 M SPA (19.3% of PSE sample) (62% female), of which:
 - 11.8 M Living in Private households (19.1%) (62% female)

Pensioner households

- 4.4 M single pensioner households (one adult over pension age) (16% of all PSE households)
- 4.4 M pensioner couple households (two adults, one or both over pension age) (17% of all PSE households)



*Uses SPA for women as 60 years of age for comparative purposes with PSE 1999 survey

Changes in pensioners falling into combined income-deprivation group

| | Poverty group* | | | | | | Poor group | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----|------------|----|-----------|----|------------|------------|------------|----|
| | Poor | | Vulnerable | | Not poor | | Poor | | Not Poor | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Single female pensioner | 510,000 | 17 | 490,000 | 17 | 1,950,000 | 66 | 510,000 | 17 | 2,440,000 | 88 |
| Single male pensioner | 130,000 | 12 | 200,000 | 19 | 750,000 | 70 | 130,000 | 12 | 950,000 | 83 |
| Pensioner couple (one/both SPA) | 560,000 | 8 | 830,000 | 12 | 5,360,000 | 79 | 560,000 | 8 | 6,190,000 | 92 |
| Pensioners in other household types | 100,000 | 10 | 90,000 | 9 | 830,000 | 81 | 100,000 | 10 | 920,000 | 90 |
| Total | 1,290,000 | 11 | 1,610,000 | 14 | 8,890,000 | 75 | 1,290,000 | *11 | 10,510,000 | 89 |



Notes: **Rising group omitted due to very low cell sizes.
**** Compared with 21% of all GB pensioners in 1999 and 25% of NI pensioners in 2002.**

Material deprivation categories

Number and proportion of pensioners not able to afford one or more SPNs, by deprivation category (ranked)

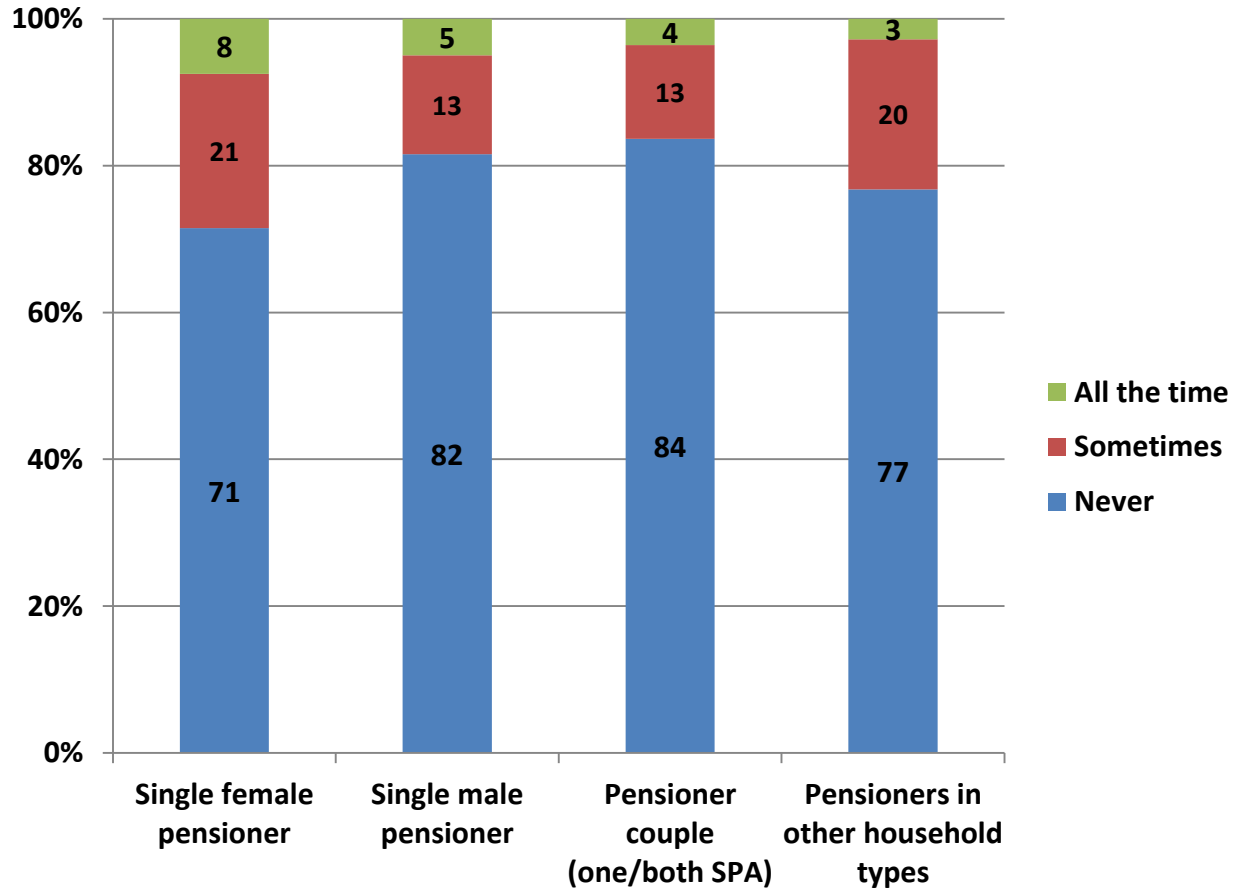
| Category | Single female pensioner | | Single male pensioner | | Pensioner couple (one/both SPA) | | Pensioners in other household types | | Total | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Finance | 1,330,000 | 45 | 380,000 | 34 | 1,890,000 | 28 | 420,000 | 41 | 4,010,000 | 34 |
| Household goods | 550,000 | 19 | 130,000 | 12 | 630,000 | 9 | 120,000 | 11 | 1,430,000 | 12 |
| Housing | 540,000 | 18 | 100,000 | 9 | 680,000 | 10 | 110,000 | 11 | 1,420,000 | 12 |
| Social | 270,000 | 9 | 110,000 | 10 | 510,000 | 8 | 90,000 | 9 | 990,000 | 8 |
| Clothing | 230,000 | 8 | 60,000 | 5 | 350,000 | 5 | 70,000 | 6 | 700,000 | 6 |
| Food | 190,000 | 7 | 60,000 | 5 | 200,000 | 3 | 10,000 | 1 | 460,000 | 4 |

Note: Household goods exclude the following items: washing machine, telephone and TV.
Dental work included in local services section (to follow)



Poverty over time

Do you think you could genuinely say you are poor now..?



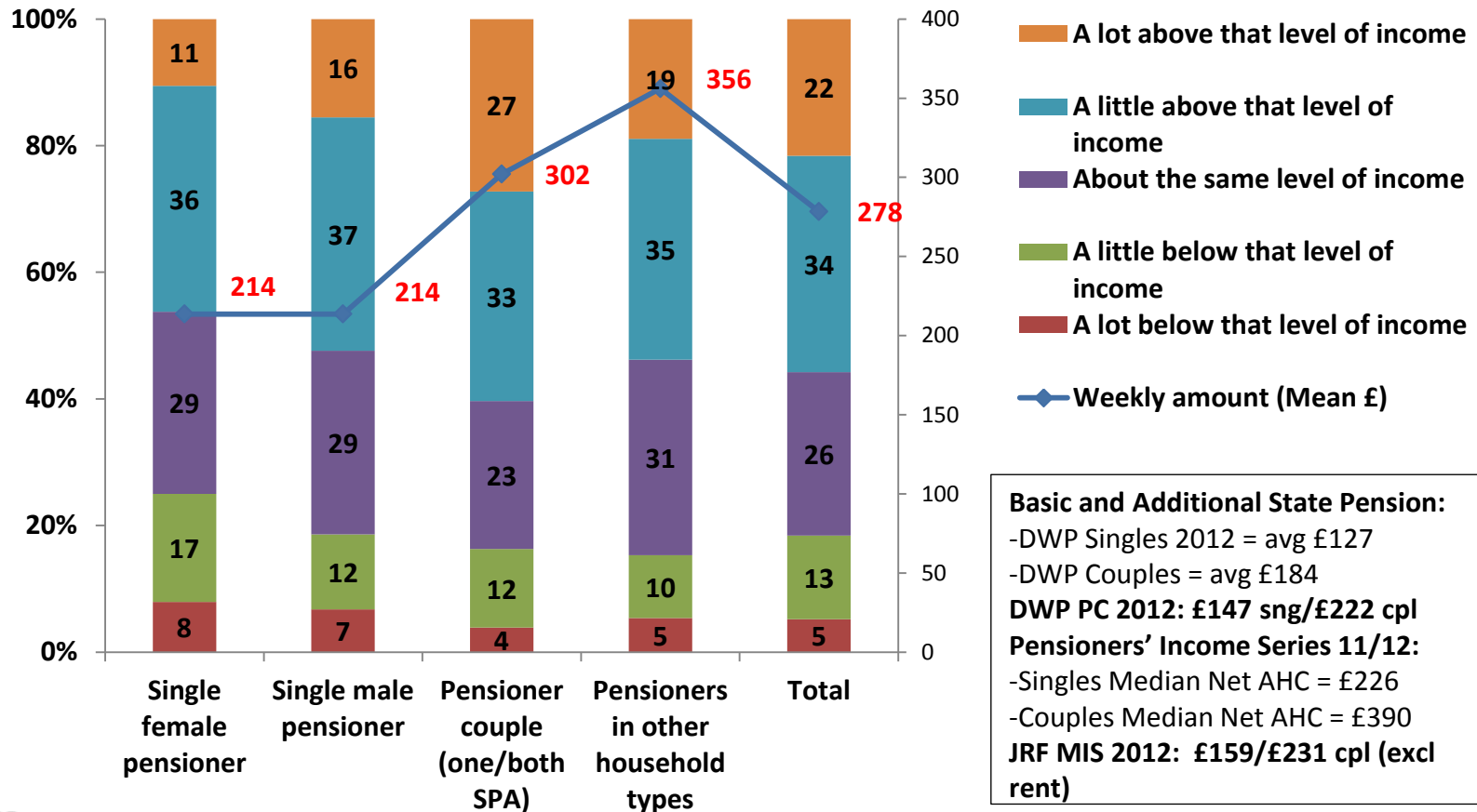
Poverty over time

Looking back over your life, how often have there been times in your life when you think you have lived in poverty by the standards of that time?



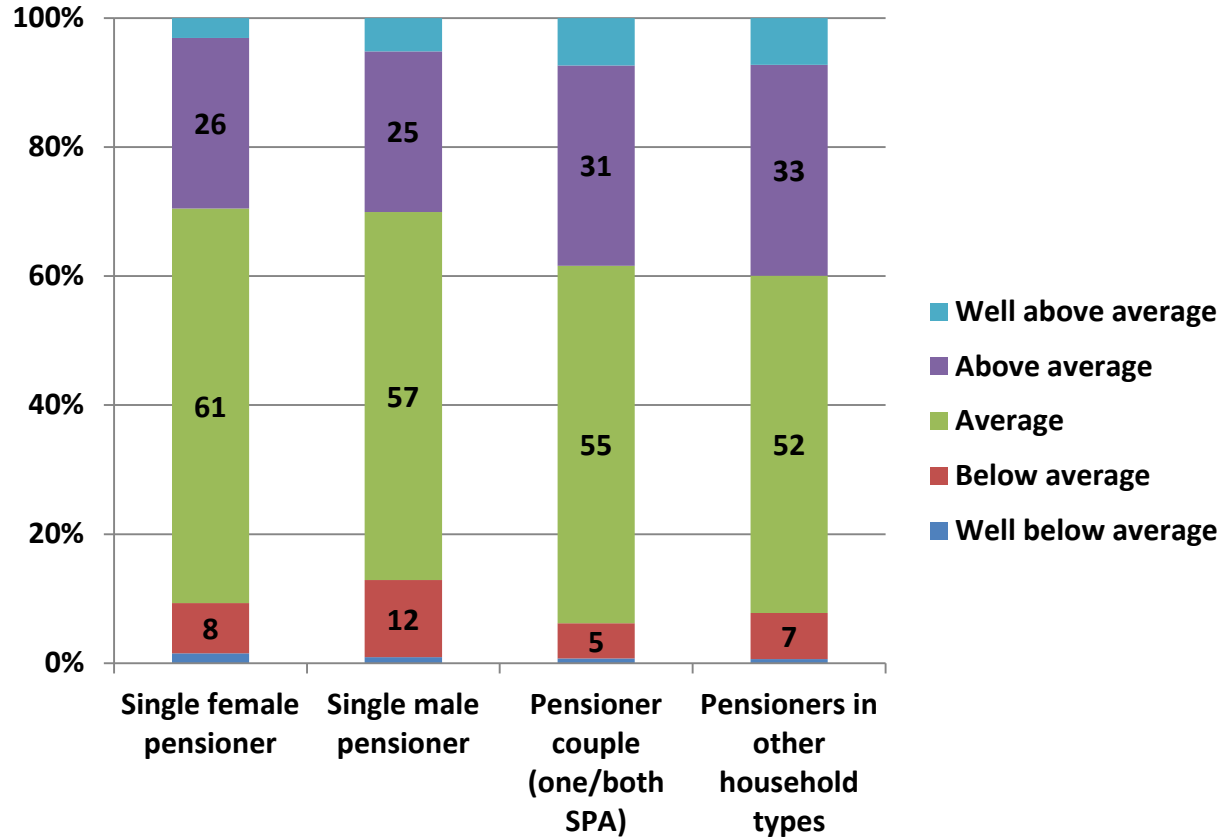
Subjective poverty

How many pounds a week, after tax, do you think are necessary to keep a household such as the one you live in, out of poverty?



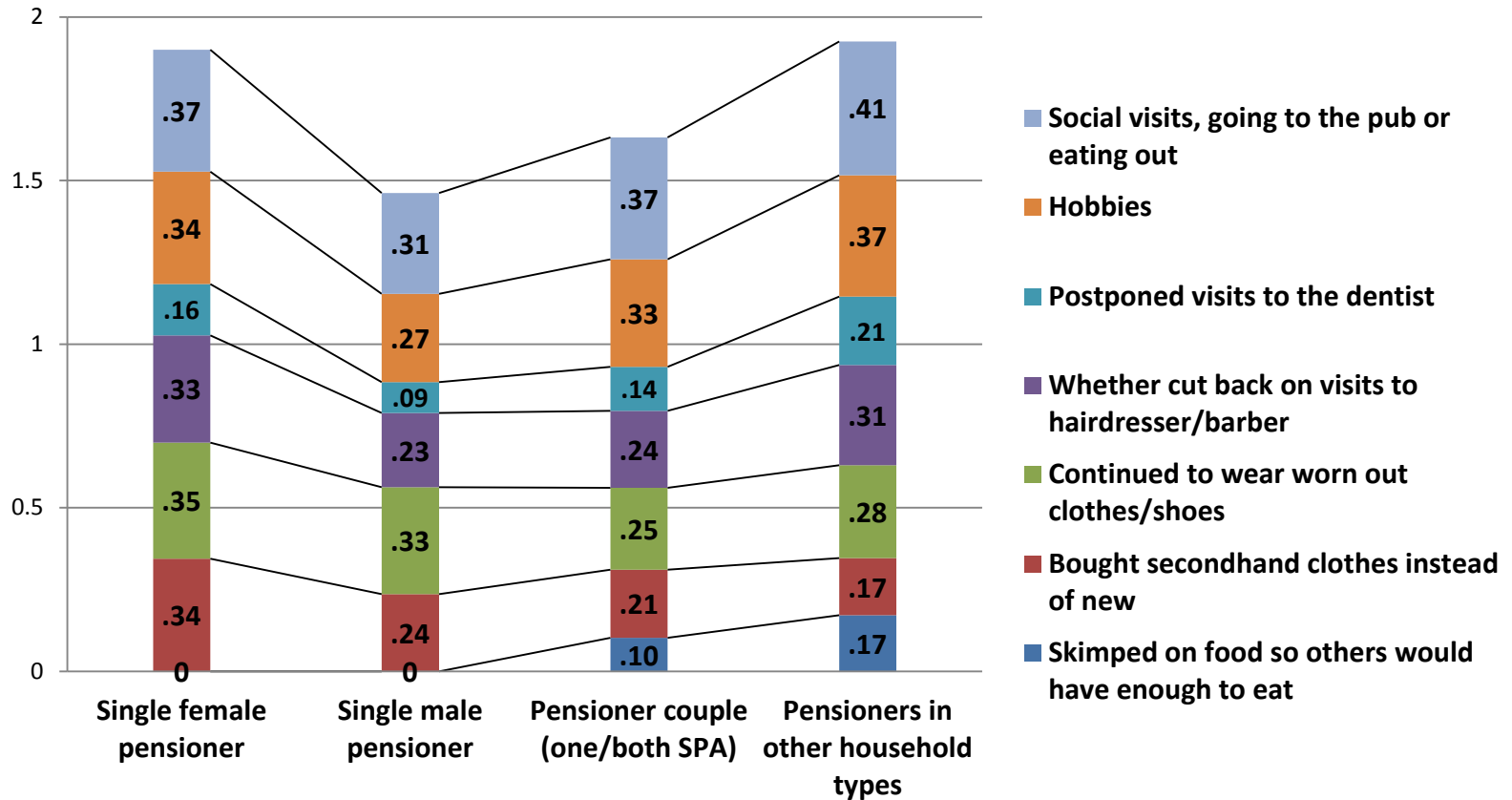
Subjective poverty

Generally, how would you rate your standard of living?



Economising behaviours

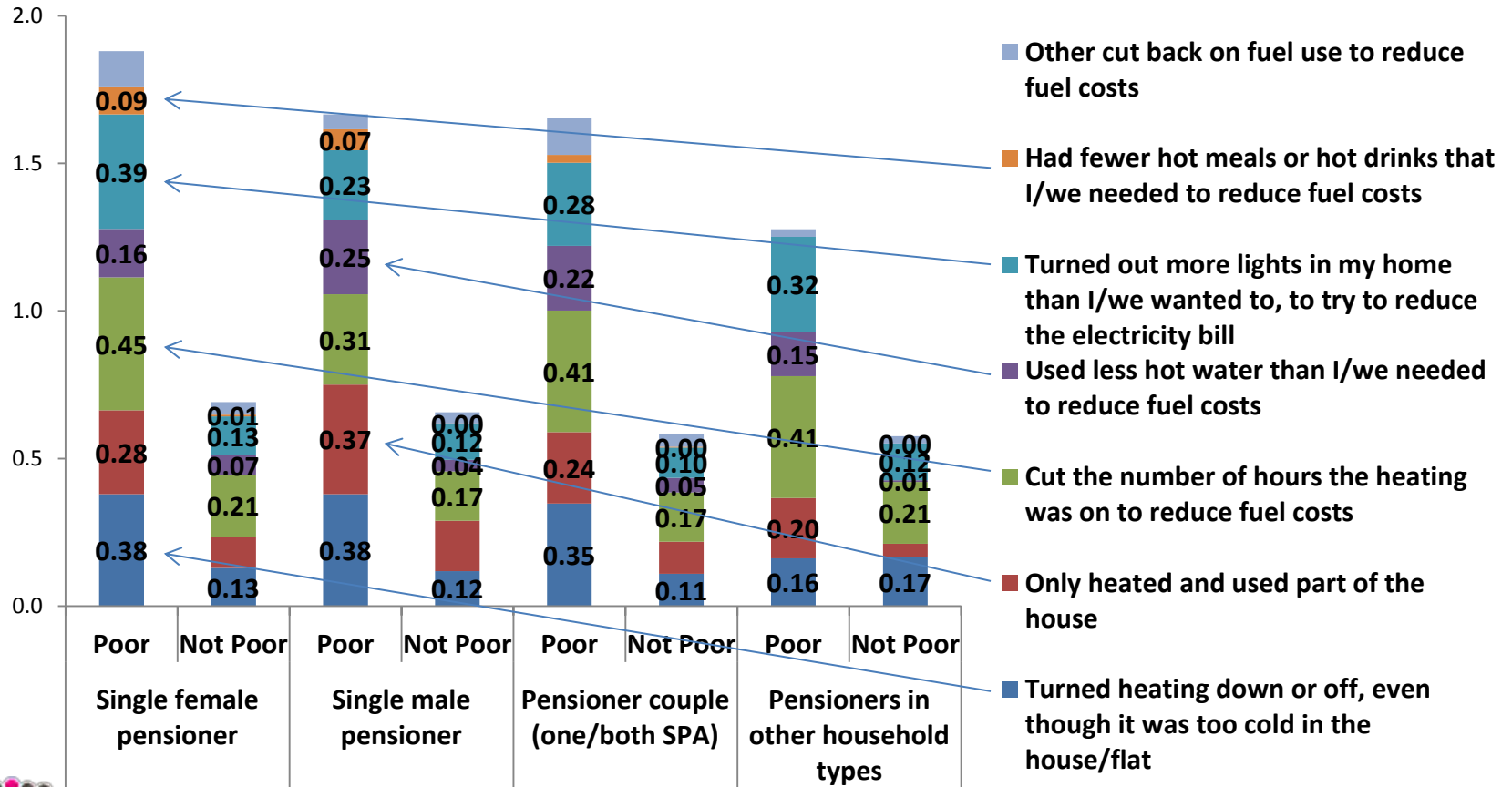
In the last 12 months, to help you keep your living costs down, have you... (proportion Sometimes/Often=1 vs. Never=0)



Note: does not include "Cut back on or cancelled pension contributions"

Fuel poverty

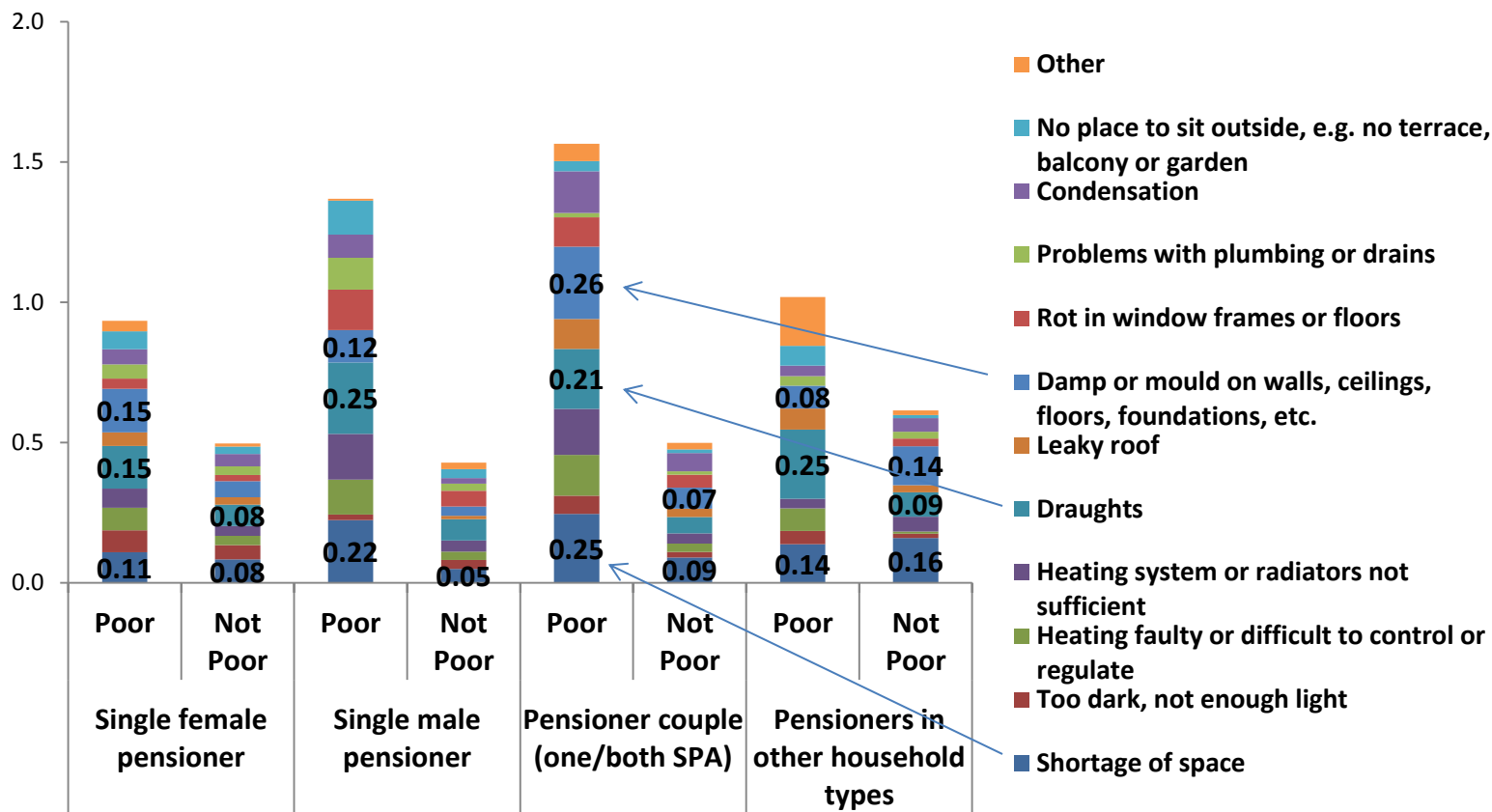
Did your household cut back on fuel use at home in any of these ways last winter, because you could not afford the costs? (proportion mentioned, 0=not mentioned 1=mentioned)



Housing problems

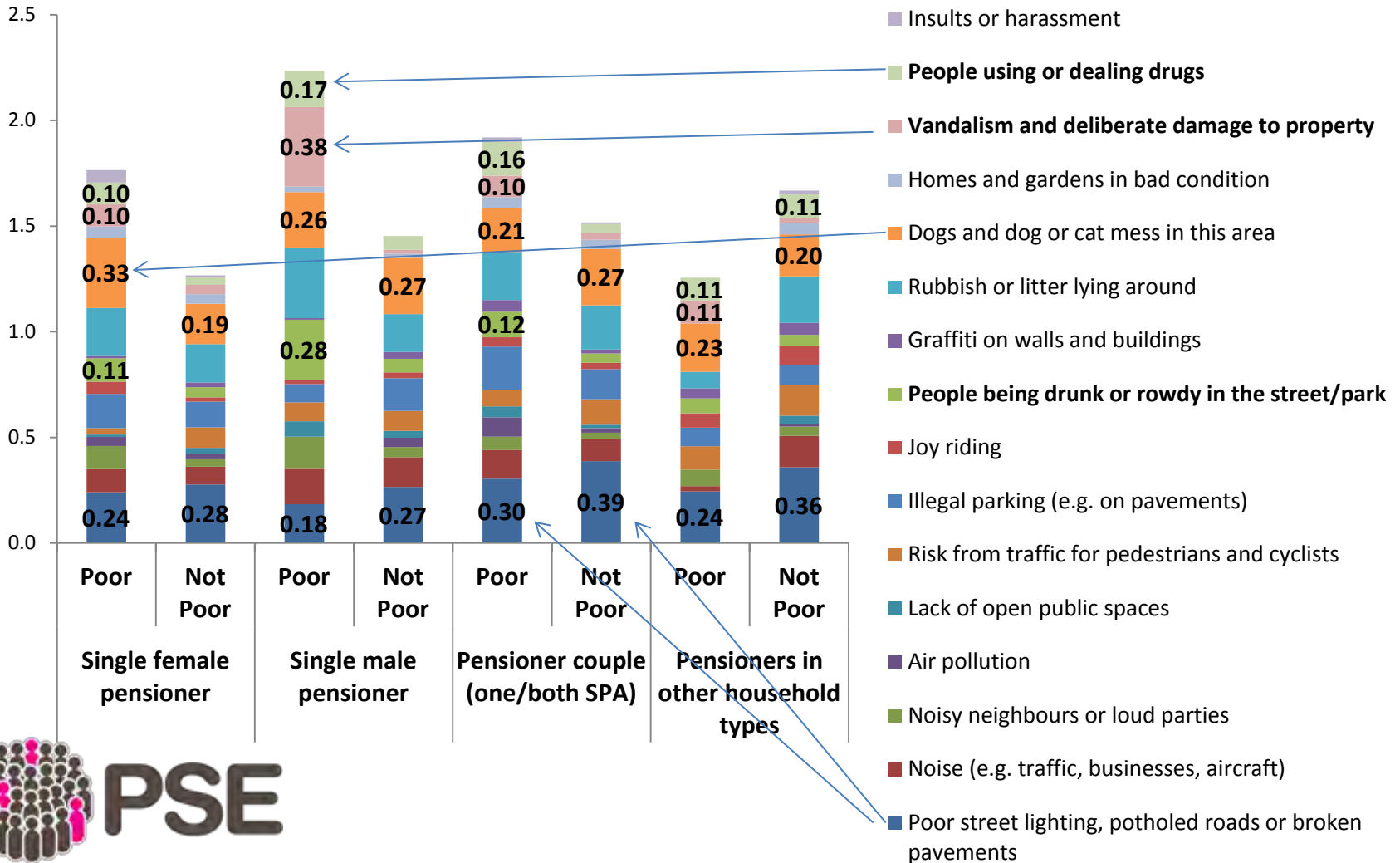
Do you have any of these problems with your accommodation?

(proportion mentioned, 0=not mentioned 1=mentioned)



Area deprivation

Do you think that any of the things on this card are a problem in this area? (proportion mentioned, 0=not mentioned 1=mentioned)



Local Services

Do you, or a member of your household, use.....

(Don't use – can't afford)

| | Home Help / home care | Meals on Wheels | Day Centres /lunch clubs/ social clubs | Chiropodist | Special transport for those with mobility problems | Dental work* |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--|-------------|--|----------------|
| Single female pensioner | 74,000 | 23,000 | 18,000 | 45,000 | 23,000 | 194,000 |
| Single male pensioner | 13,000 | 27,000 | 9,000 | 8,000 | 9,000 | 76,000 |
| Pensioner couple (one/both SPA) | 93,000 | 31,000 | 14,000 | 45,000 | 16,000 | 421,000 |
| Pensioners in other household types | 3,000 | 3,000 | 3,000 | 2,000 | 14,000 | 36,000 |
| Total | 183,000 | 84,000 | 44,000 | 100,000 | 62,000 | 727,000 |

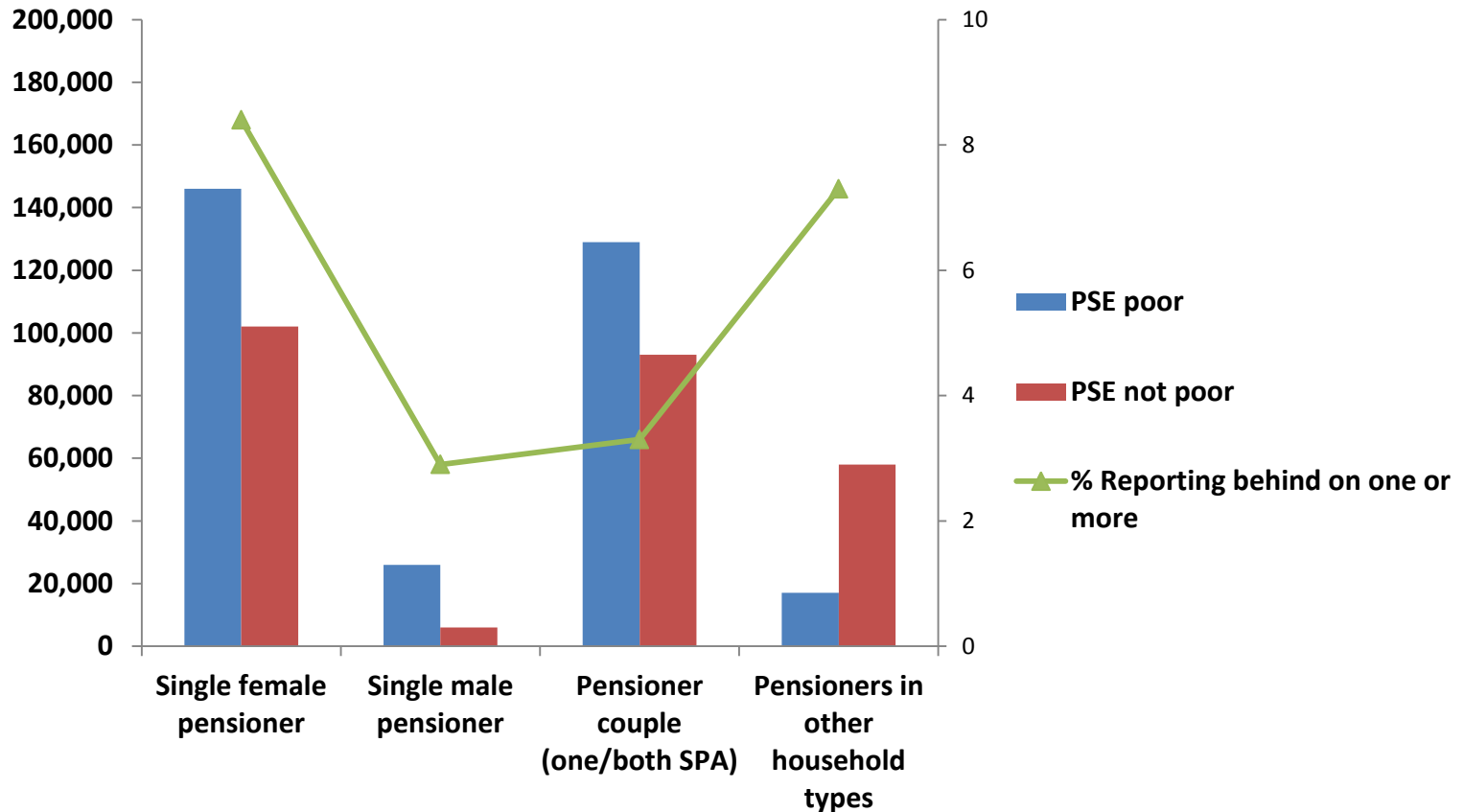
990,000 pensioners 65+ do not use one or more of these services because they cannot afford to



* Dental work/treatments asked in adult deprivation section, but reported here as considered a local service

Finance and debts

Arrears (In debt)



Poor single female pensioners: water/sewerage 16%, electricity/gas 8%
 Poor pensioner couples: Loans from banks etc 10%, electricity/gas 7%

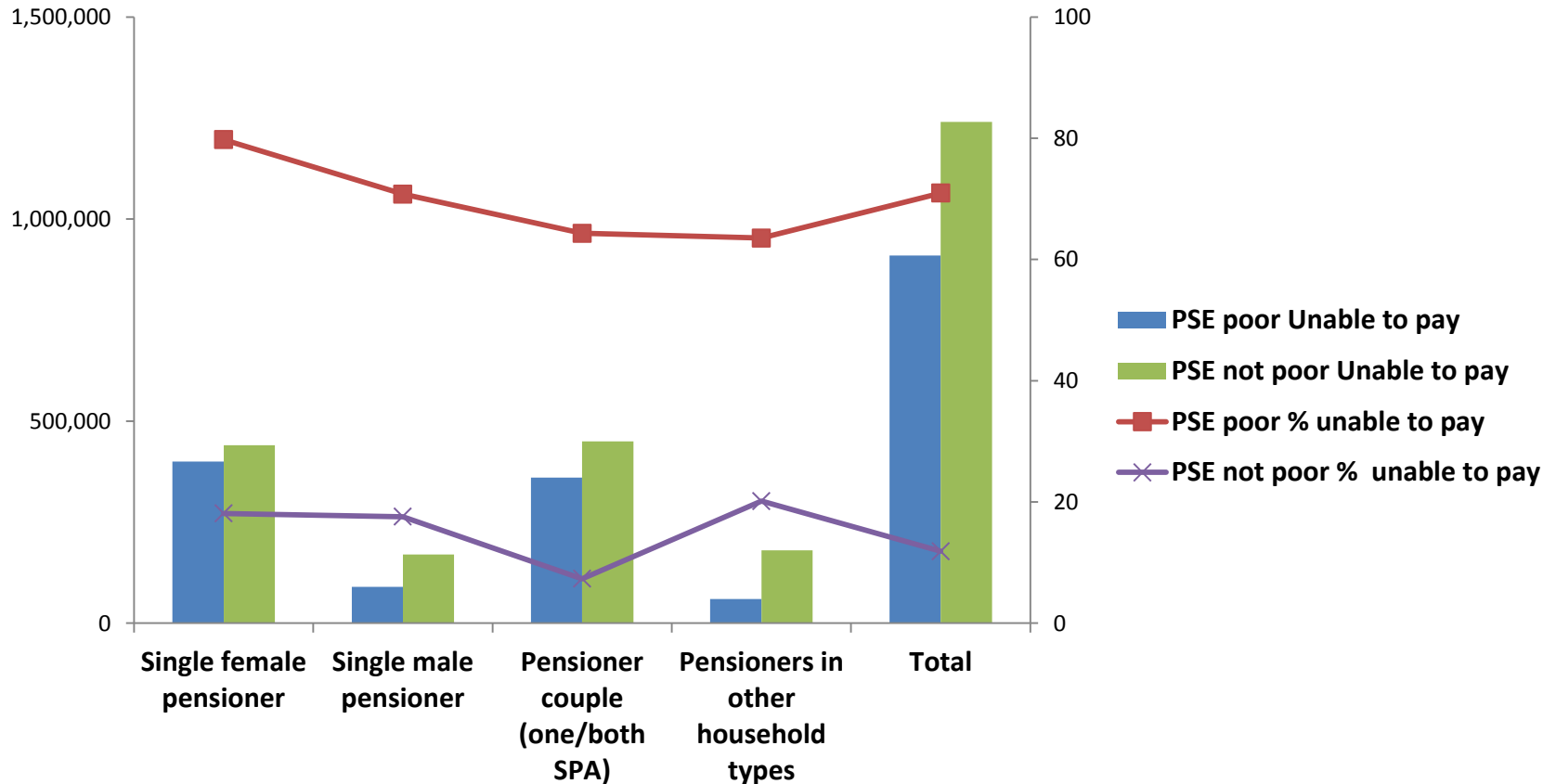
Finance and debts

Keeping up with bills and credit commitments

| | Keeping up with all bills - without any difficulties | Keeping up with all bills - struggle time to time/constantly | Not keeping up with all bills - fallen behind some/many |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Single female pensioner | 1,943,000 | 916,000 | 60,000 |
| Single male pensioner | 768,000 | 307,000 | 14,000 |
| Pensioner couple (one/both SPA) | 4,666,000 | 2,036,000 | 62,000 |
| Pensioners in other household types | 544,000 | 420,000 | 43,000 |
| Total | 7,921,000 | 3,678,000 | 179,000 |

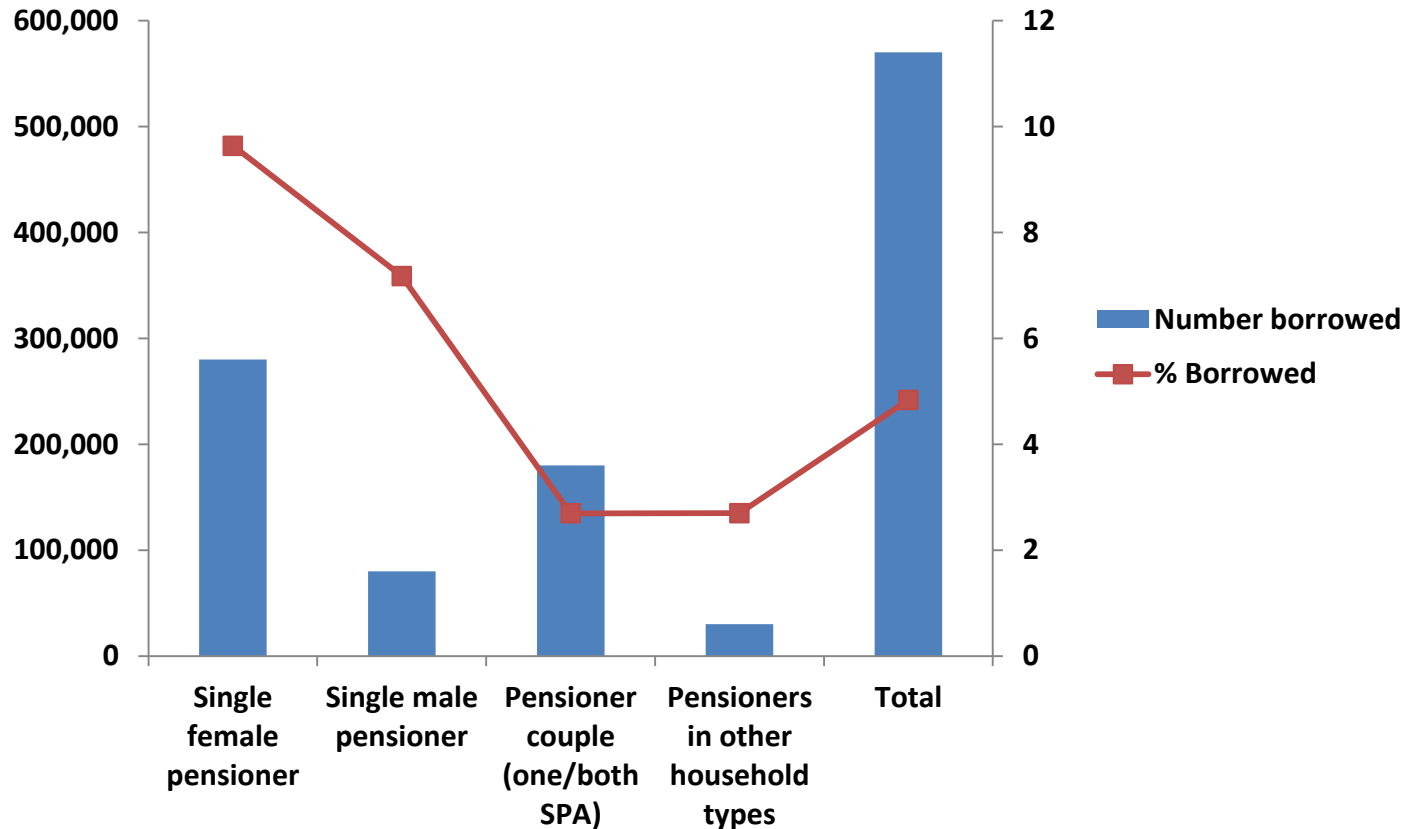
Finance and debts

Unexpected, but necessary, expense of £500



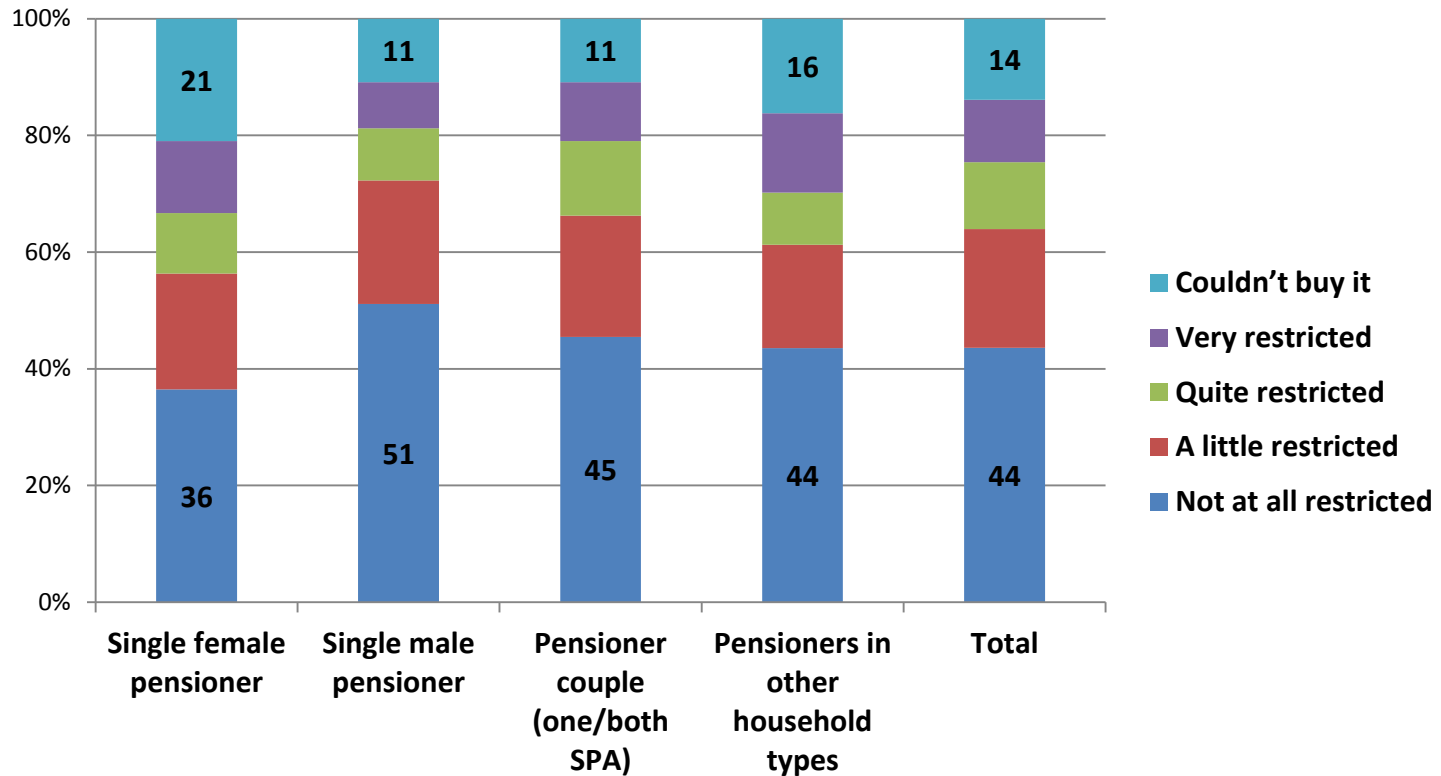
Finance and debts

Borrowed to pay for day-to-day needs



Spot purchase

How restricted would you feel about buying an item with a price tag of £150?



Single female pensioners: 600,000 couldn't buy it
Single male pensioners: 120,000 couldn't buy it
Pensioner couple: 700,000 couldn't buy it

Health Affects Poverty

...your health has had an impact on your financial situation?

...health has been affected by a lack of money?

...health has limited your ability to participate in society?

| | Health affected poverty | | Poverty affected health | | Health affected participation | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Single female pensioner | 170,000 | 10 | 150,000 | 9 | 660,000 | 40 |
| Single male pensioner | 60,000 | 8 | 40,000 | 5 | 240,000 | 35 |
| Pensioner couple (one/both SPA) | 230,000 | 7 | 180,000 | 5 | 790,000 | 23 |
| Pensioners in other household types | 50,000 | 10 | 20,000 | 4 | 110,000 | 21 |
| Total | 510,000 | 8 | 390,000 | 6 | 1,800,000 | 29 |



Disability and Poverty

| | Disabled | | | | Not disabled | | | | Total | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----|--------------|-----------|-----------|----|-----------|----|------------|----|
| | Poor | | Not Poor | | Poor | | Not Poor | | Poor | | Not Poor | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Single female pensioner | 300,000 | 23 | 1,010,000 | 77 | 210,000 | 13 | 1,430,000 | 87 | 510,000 | 17 | 2,440,000 | 83 |
| Single male pensioner | 90,000 | 19 | 370,000 | 81 | 40,000 | 6 | 580,000 | 94 | 130,000 | 12 | 950,000 | 88 |
| Pensioner couple (one/both SPA) | 320,000 | 14 | 2,040,000 | 86 | 230,000 | 5 | 4,150,000 | 95 | 560,000 | 8 | 6,190,000 | 92 |
| Pensioners in other household types | 50,000 | 14 | 320,000 | 86 | 50,000 | 7 | 600,000 | 93 | 100,000 | 10 | 920,000 | 90 |
| Total | 760,000 | 17 | 3,740,000 | 83 | 530,000 | 7 | 6,770,000 | 93 | 1,290,000 | 11 | 10,510,000 | 89 |



Risks of poverty

Single disabled female pensioners: **1.8 times as likely to be poor as non-disabled**

Single disabled male pensioners: **3.3 times as likely to be poor**

Disabled pensioner living in pensioner couple: **2.6 times as likely to be poor**

Disabled pensioner living in other household type: **1.9 times as likely to be poor**

Poverty and social exclusion in urban and rural areas of Scotland

**Nick Bailey¹, Kirsten Besemer², Glen Bramley²
and Maria Gannon¹**

¹ University of Glasgow

² Heriot-Watt University



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Poverty and social exclusion in urban and rural areas of Scotland

Persistent urban bias?

- measuring rural poverty (undercounting)
- different nature/characteristics of rural poverty

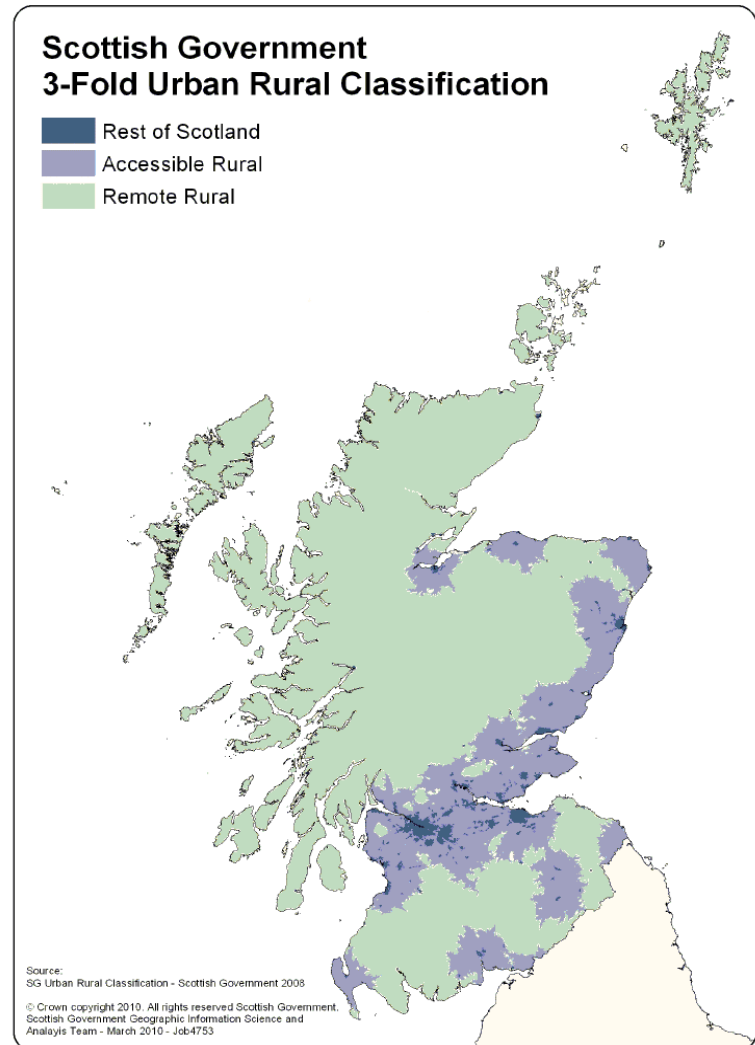
Scotland

- Rural & remote areas



Urban-rural classification for Scotland

| Category | Share of population | % of sample |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1 Large Urban Areas | 39% | 27% |
| 2 Other Urban Areas | 30% | 26% |
| 3 Accessible Small Towns | 9% | 13% |
| 4 Accessible Rural | 12% | 4% |
| 5 Remote Small Towns | 3% | 18% |
| 6 Remote Rural | 7% | 12% |
| N | 5,299,900 | 2,047 |



1 Rural poverty – do we have an accurate picture?

1. Do low income measures undercount rural poverty due to hidden costs of living?

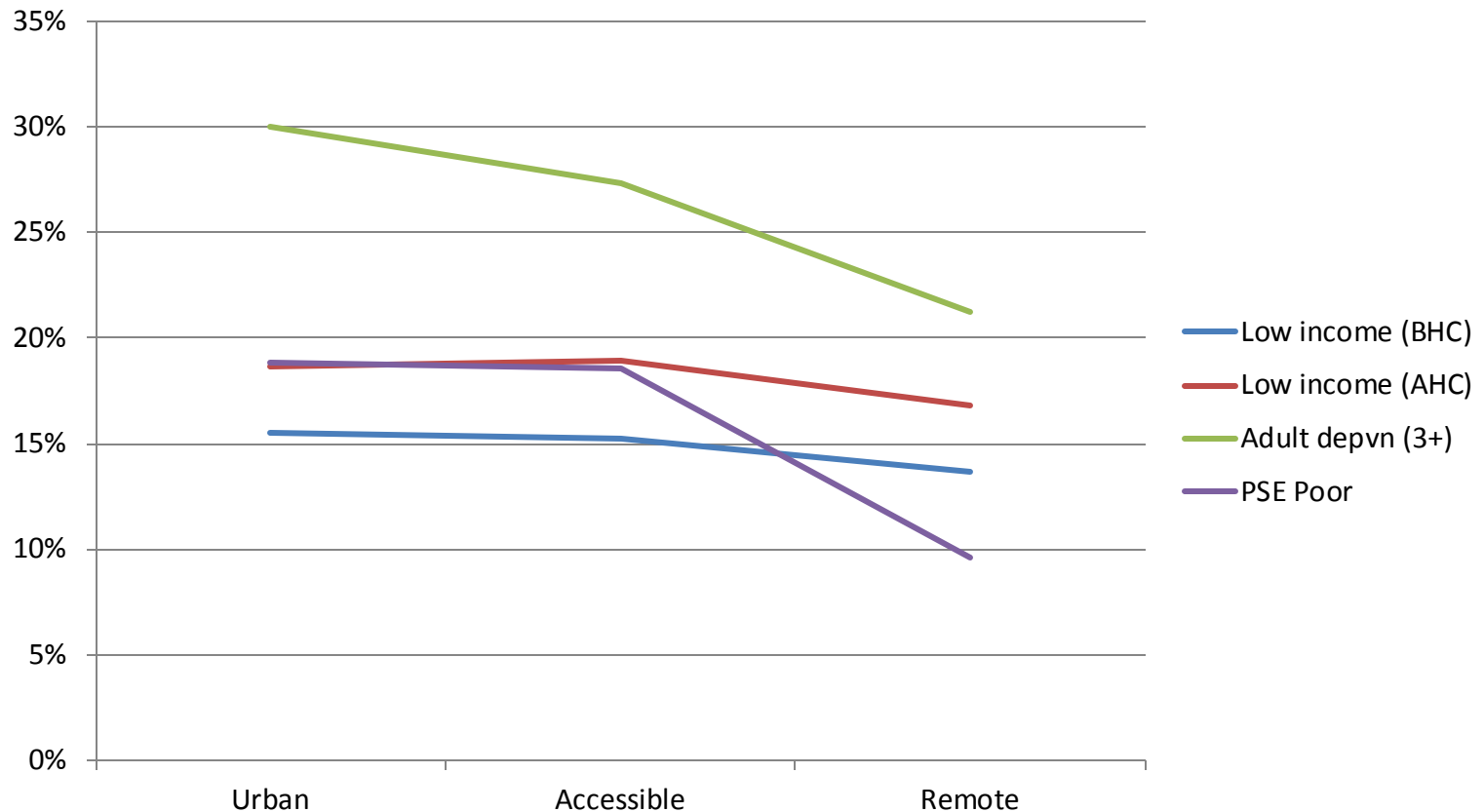
1. Low income BHC vs. AHC
2. Low income vs. deprivation

2. Do measures based on benefit /tax credit claiming undercount rural poverty

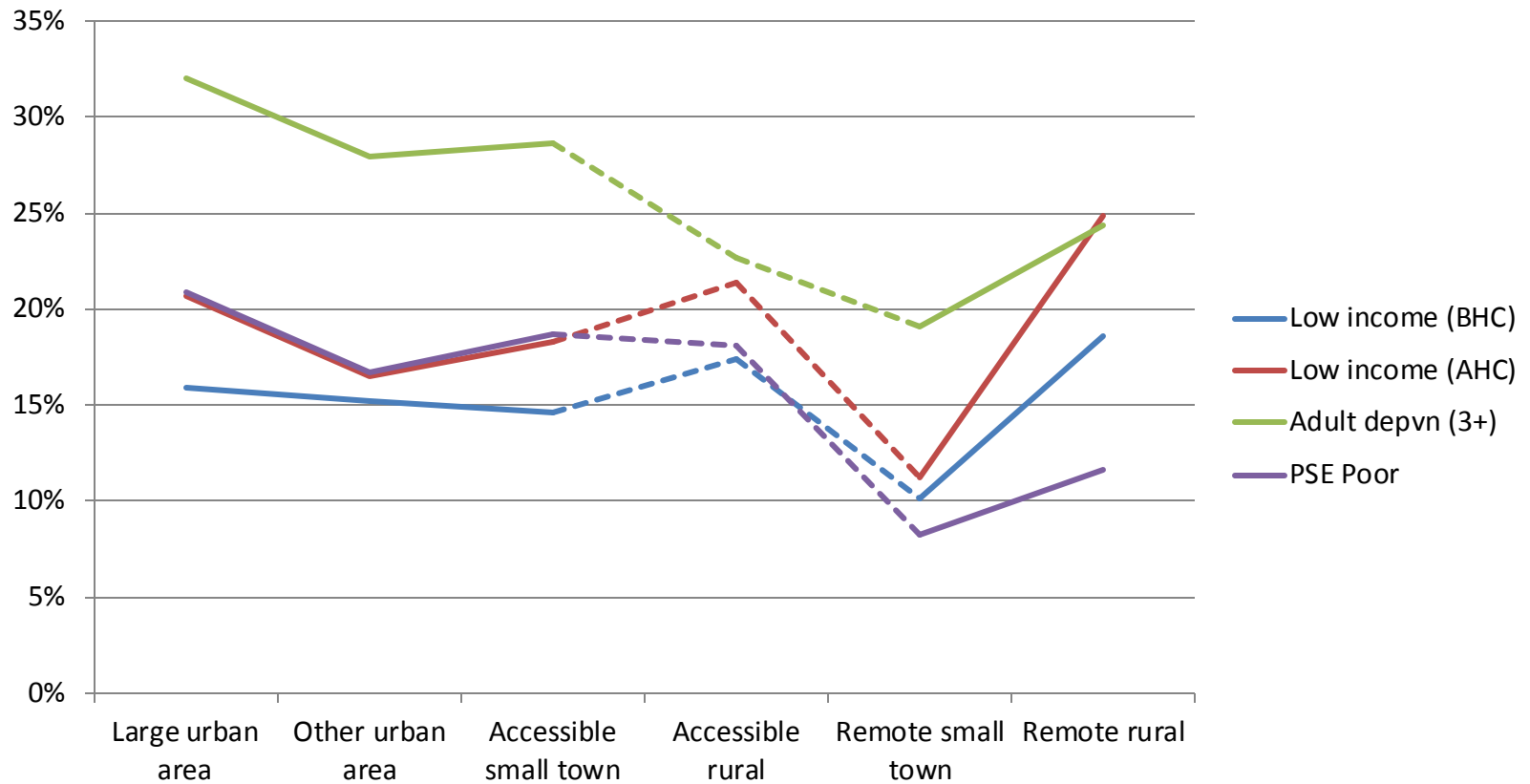
Low income and deprivation measures vs. SIMD Income deprivation score



Low income poverty and deprivation rates by urban-rural location



Low income poverty and deprivation rates by urban-rural location - detailed



Summary

1. Do low income measures undercount rural poverty due to hidden costs of living?

Data do not support the idea that low income poverty measures lead to undercounting

2. Do measures based on benefit /tax credit claiming undercount rural poverty

Data shows no undercounting





Exclusion in rural areas

Family and social resources, social participation

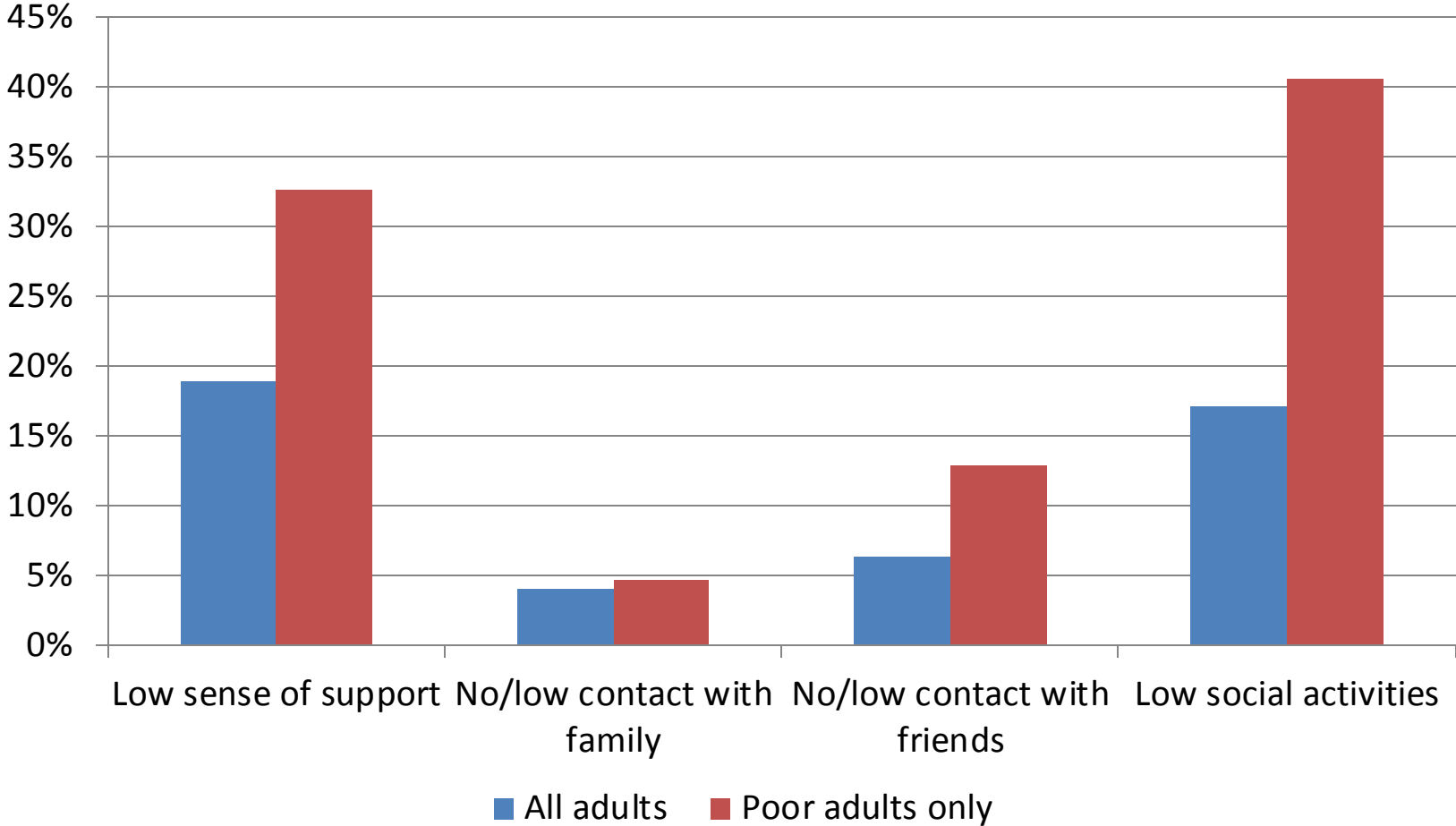
- greater stability, and stronger social connections and sense of community
- culture of 'self-reliance'

PSE measures:

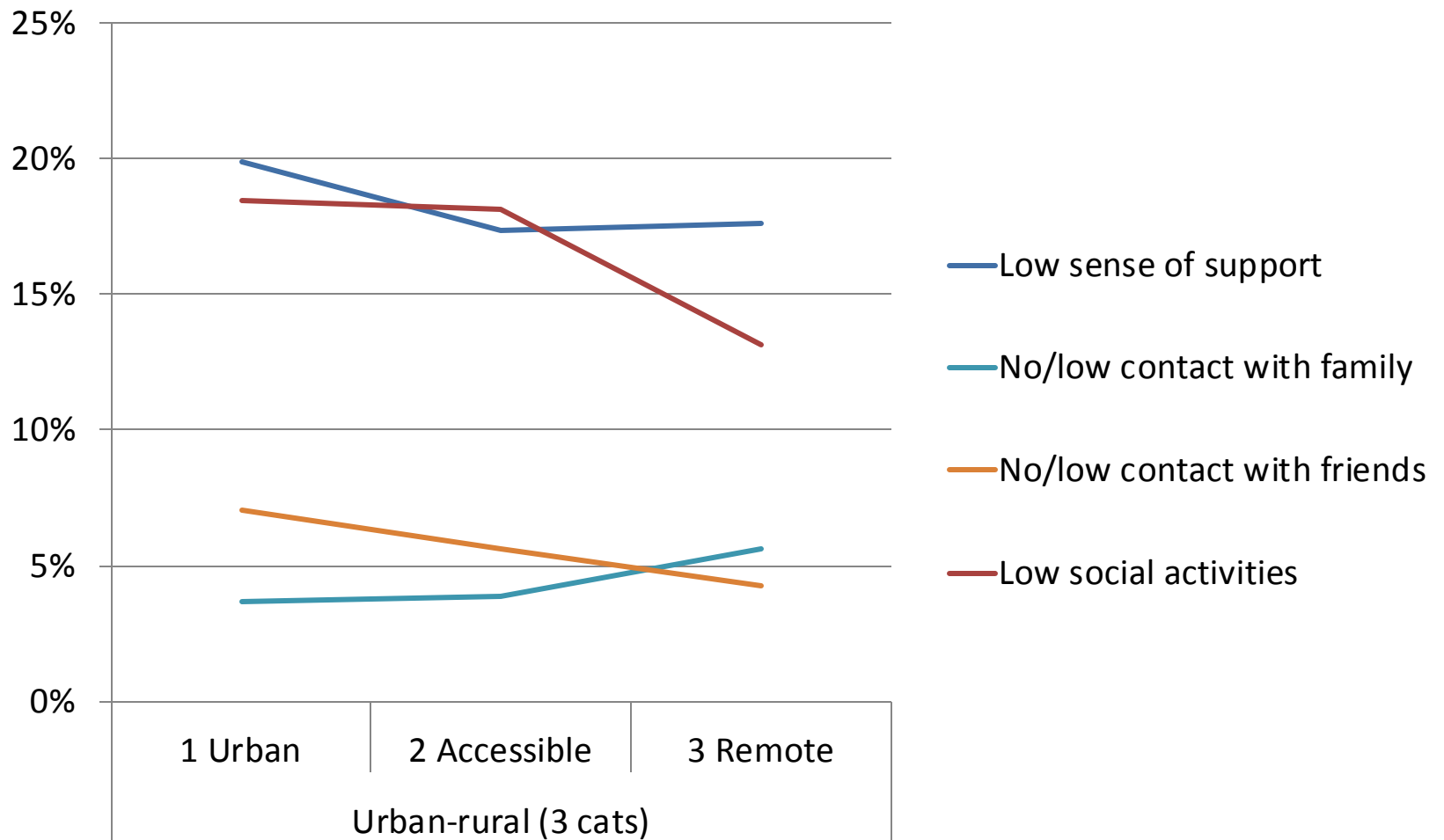
- Perceived levels of social support (7 questions)
- Contact with family (2 questions)
- Contact with friends (2 questions)
- Social activities (13 activities)



Low social support, contact and participation – all adults vs. poor adults



Low social support, contact and participation – all adults vs. poor adults



Exclusion in rural areas

Access to services and transport

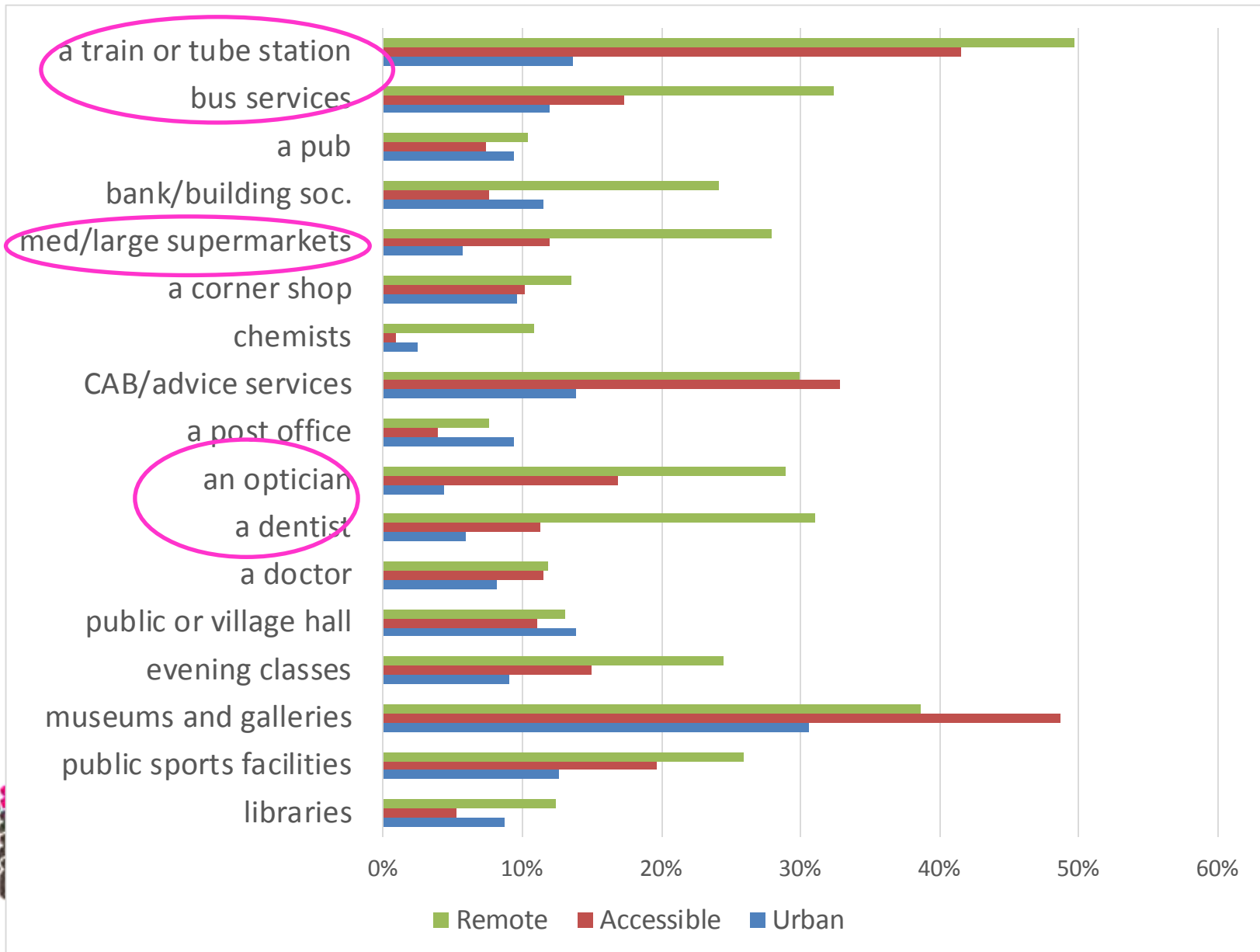
- Public transport not fit for purpose
- Access services

PSE data on seventeen general services used by the whole population, public and private, and including transport services

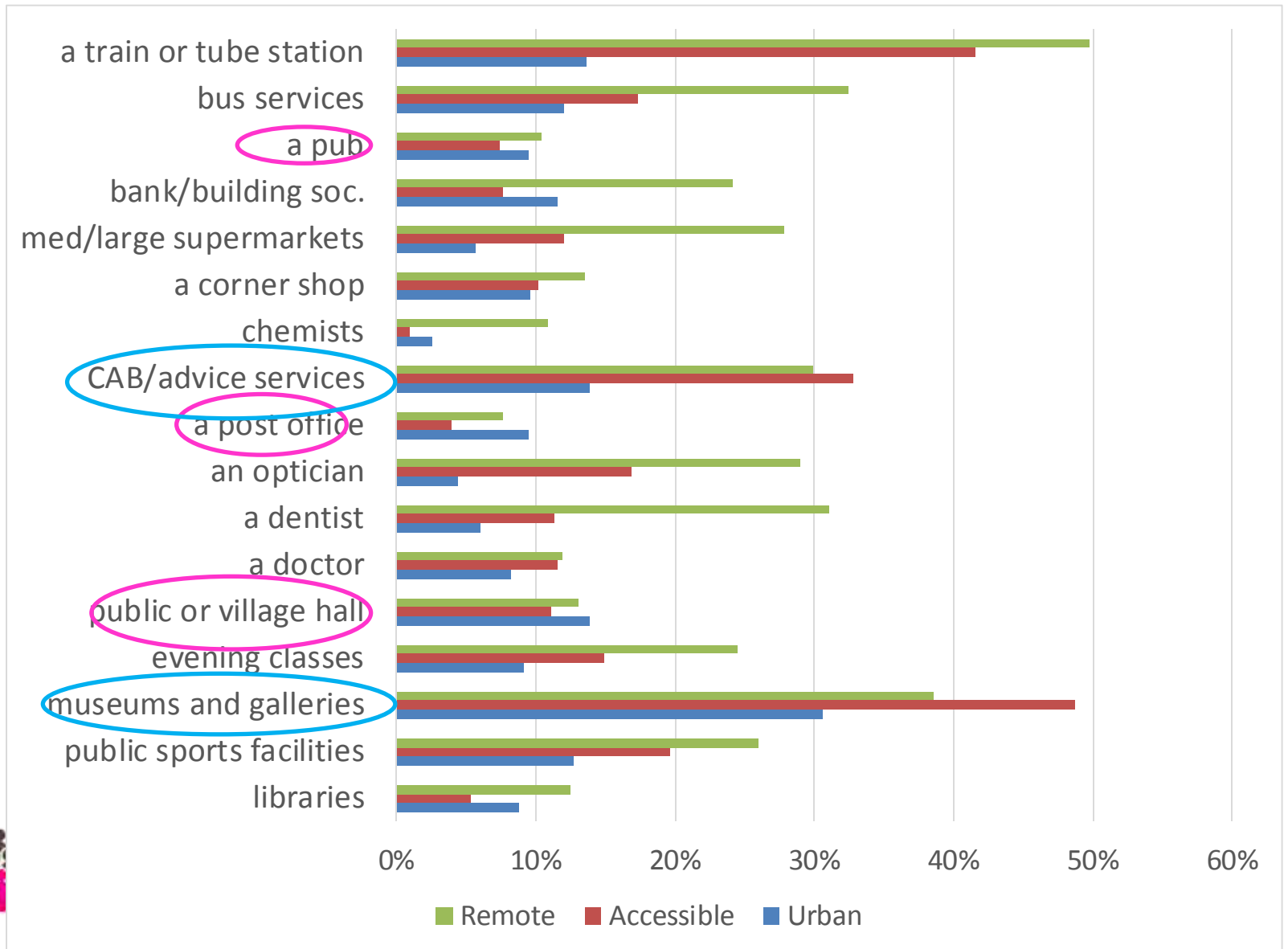
- Combined results for ‘use but inadequate’ with ‘don’t use – inadequate or inaccessible’



Inadequate or inaccessible general services by urban-rural location



Inadequate or inaccessible general services by urban-rural location



Exclusion in rural areas

Living environment

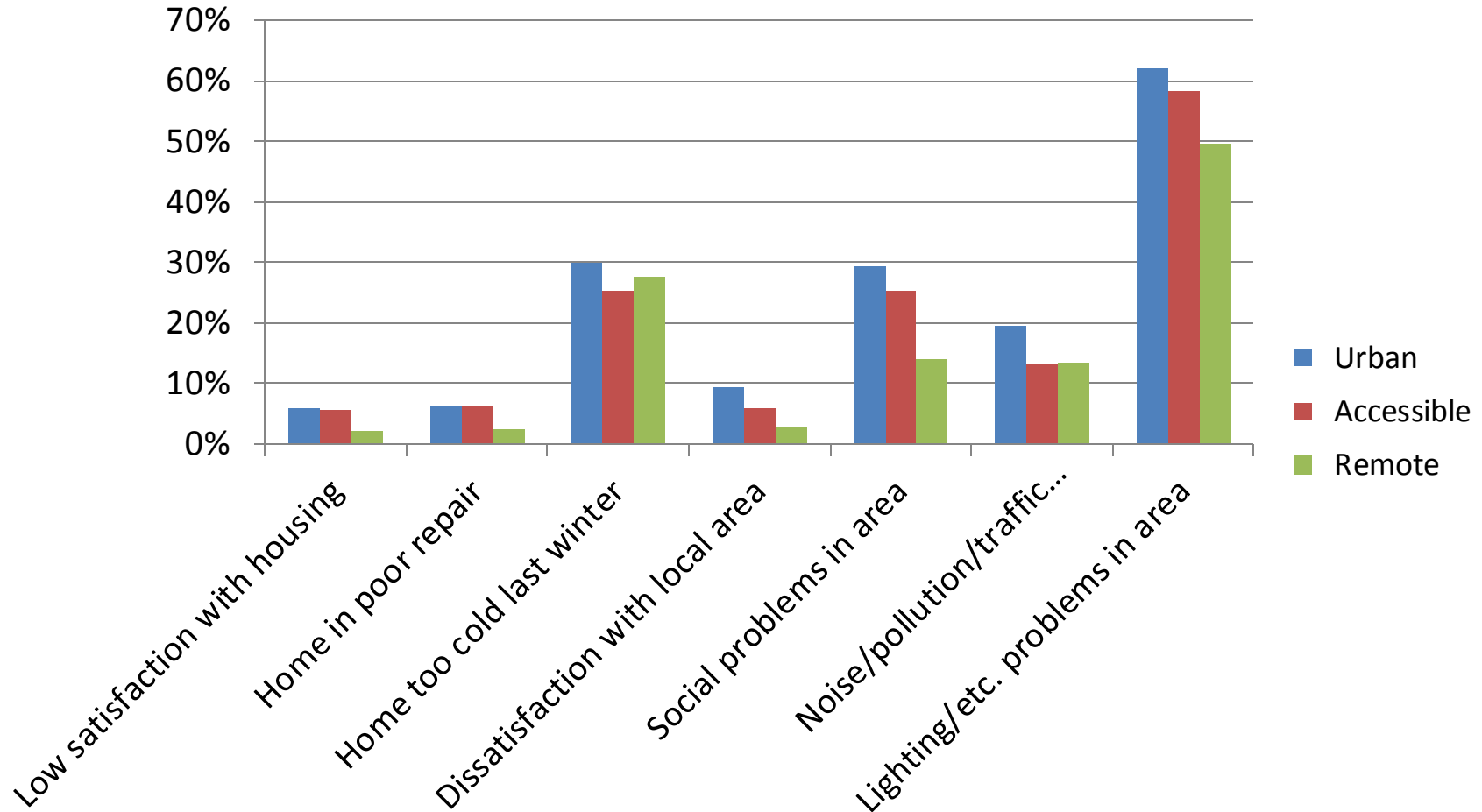
- housing (affordability, supply and quality)
- neighbourhood environment

PSE data:

- Satisfaction with housing (1 question)
- Housing quality (score out of 8)
- Neighbourhood environment



Housing and neighbourhood ratings by urban-rural category



Exclusion in rural areas

Health and well-being

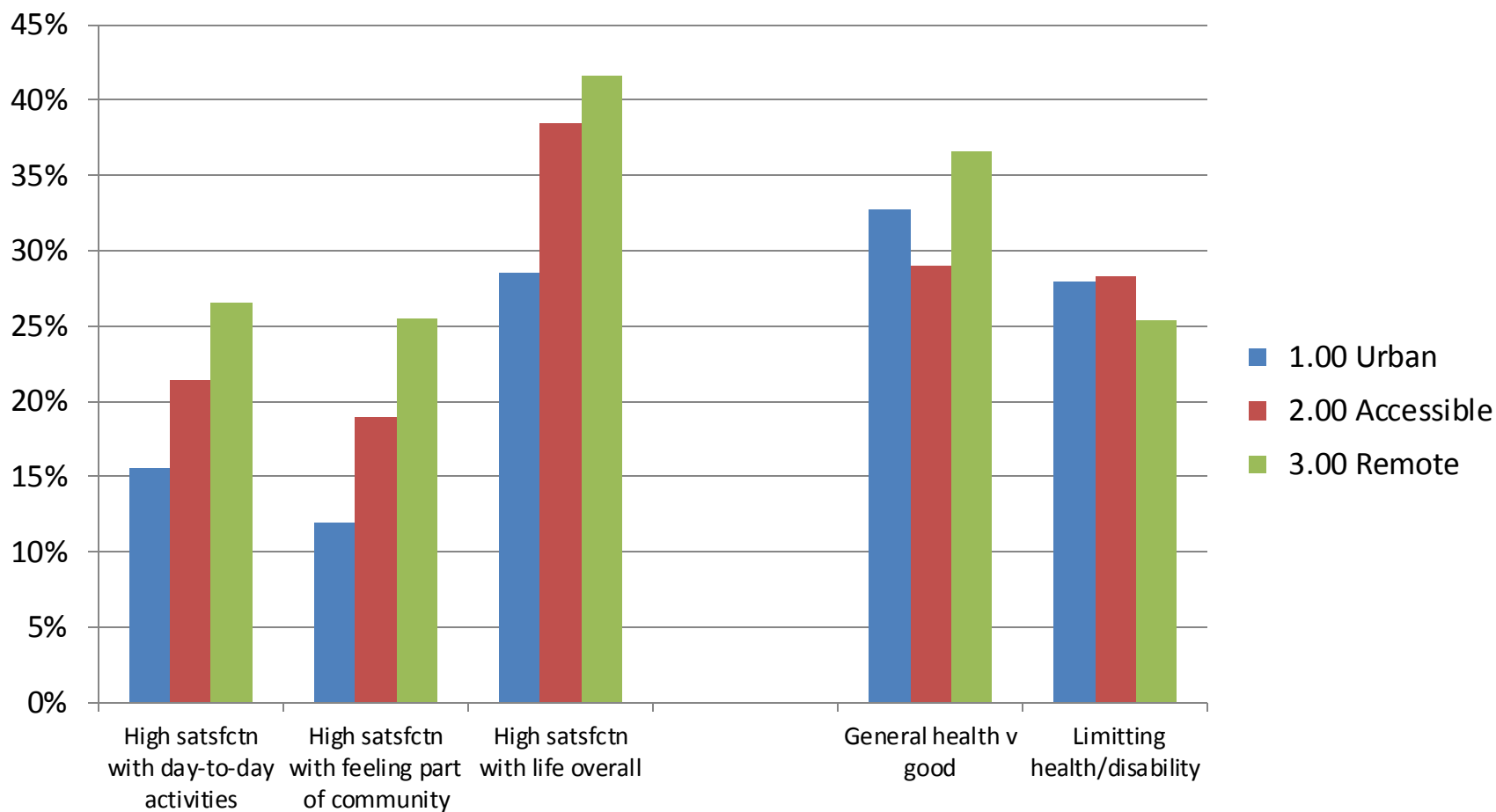
- greater sense of community and support vs. isolation
- environmental benefits (green space)

PSE measures:

- General health
- Limiting health problem or disability
- Subjective well-being



Measure of health and well-being by urban-rural classification



Conclusions

Households in poverty across the urban-rural spectrum in Scotland

No clear bias in low income measures

Exclusion in rural areas similarities greater than differences

- Employment, social support & participation (no differences)
- Health and well-being, nhd environment (better in rural areas)
- Access to (certain) services, public transport (worse in urban areas)



Poverty, Debt and Financial Exclusion

Glen Bramley & Kirsten Besemer
(Heriot-Watt University)

- Use of financial services – banking, insurance
- Use of informal credit
- Problem debt and arrears
- Experience of financial pressures
- Coping strategies
- Wider impacts of financial pressures



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Financial Services Exclusion

- In 1990s concern rose about two dimensions of problem
 - exclusion from financial services e.g. banks
 - 'problem debt', partly linked thru' forced use of informal lenders
- Social & technological change led to rapid shift to use of banks, credit cards, on-line payment, & away from cash-based economy
- Also raised concerns about 'digital exclusion' and about financial awareness & management skills (aspect of 'financialisation')
- 2012 PSE has some comparable indicators with 1999

Changes in Financial Service Exclusion

- Static picture overall on *bank accounts*, but poor have converged on overall pattern – few now have no account
- Overall more people now find *banks' services* inadequate, unavailable or unaffordable (!); but again the poor have seen a relative improvement/convergence
- There has been a worsening in ability to afford home contents *insurance*; although poor are much less likely to be able to afford HCI, their position is static; whereas for nonpoor many more now cannot afford HCI

| Financial Services Exclusion indicators | All | | Poor Arop AHC | | Poor PSI |
|--|------|------|---------------|------|----------|
| | 1999 | 2012 | 1999 | 2012 | 2012 |
| No Bank Account (Indiv) | 5 | 5 | 16 | 6 | 7 |
| Limited/Inadequate Banks | 13 | 16 | 19 | 15 | 13 |
| Cannot Afford HCI | 8 | 13 | 30 | 31 | 44 |



Use of Informal Lenders

| Type of loan | Percent of all using | | PSEPoor | Not Poor |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 1999 | 2012 | 2012 | 2012 |
| Pawnbroker/A&B/ Cash | | | | |
| Conv | 1 | 2 | 8 | 1 |
| Money Lender/Payday/ | | | | |
| Doorstep | 2 | 5 | 15 | 2 |
| Unlicensed (loan shark) | | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| Social fund loan | | 4 | 14 | 1 |
| Credit union | | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Friends | 5 | 7 | 22 | 2 |
| Family | 8 | 17 | 44 | 9 |
| Any of 'these' | 11 | 22 | 60 | 11 |

Patterns with Informal Borrowing

- Quite strong growth in use of informal lenders since 1999
- This includes pawnbrokers etc. and money lenders (inc payday loans)
- Notable increase in use of loans from family
- Increase for both poor and nonpoor, but latter increase greater
- Nearly all informal loans much more likely to be used by the poor – risk ratios of 13 for pawnbrokers, 9-10 for moneylenders, credit unions & friends, and 5 x for family
- Unlicensed lender use appears rare with lower risk ratio
- Families with children are 7-8 times more likely to use most of these than older households, but 22 x more likely to use moneylenders
- Social renters are 7-10 times more likely than owner occupiers to use most of these, and private renters 6-8 times.
- Association is stronger with PSE poverty than AHC low income, and even stronger with perceived poor 'most of the time'.

Problem Debt and Arrears

- Most types of debt/arrears have increased since 1999
- Most notable increases are for mortgage/rent, energy/fuel, consumer credit, credit card and TV license
- Noteworthy that quite a lot of these bills are directly or indirectly governed by public policies
- Mortgage arrears despite record low interest rates

| Type of arrears | 1999 | 2012 |
|--------------------------|------|------|
| Mortgage / rent* | 2 | 7 |
| Council Tax | 6 | 7 |
| Electricity, gas, fuel** | 3 | 7 |
| Water Rates | 5 | 7 |
| Phone bills | 5 | 5 |
| Income Tax / VAT | - | 1 |
| Hire purchase | 1 | 3 |
| Bank Loan | - | 3 |
| Credit card | 3 | 5 |
| Other loans | 2 | 2 |
| Tv license | 2 | 5 |
| Private educ / health | - | 0.2 |
| Child Support/Maint | - | 0.2 |
| Any arrears | 14 | 21 |

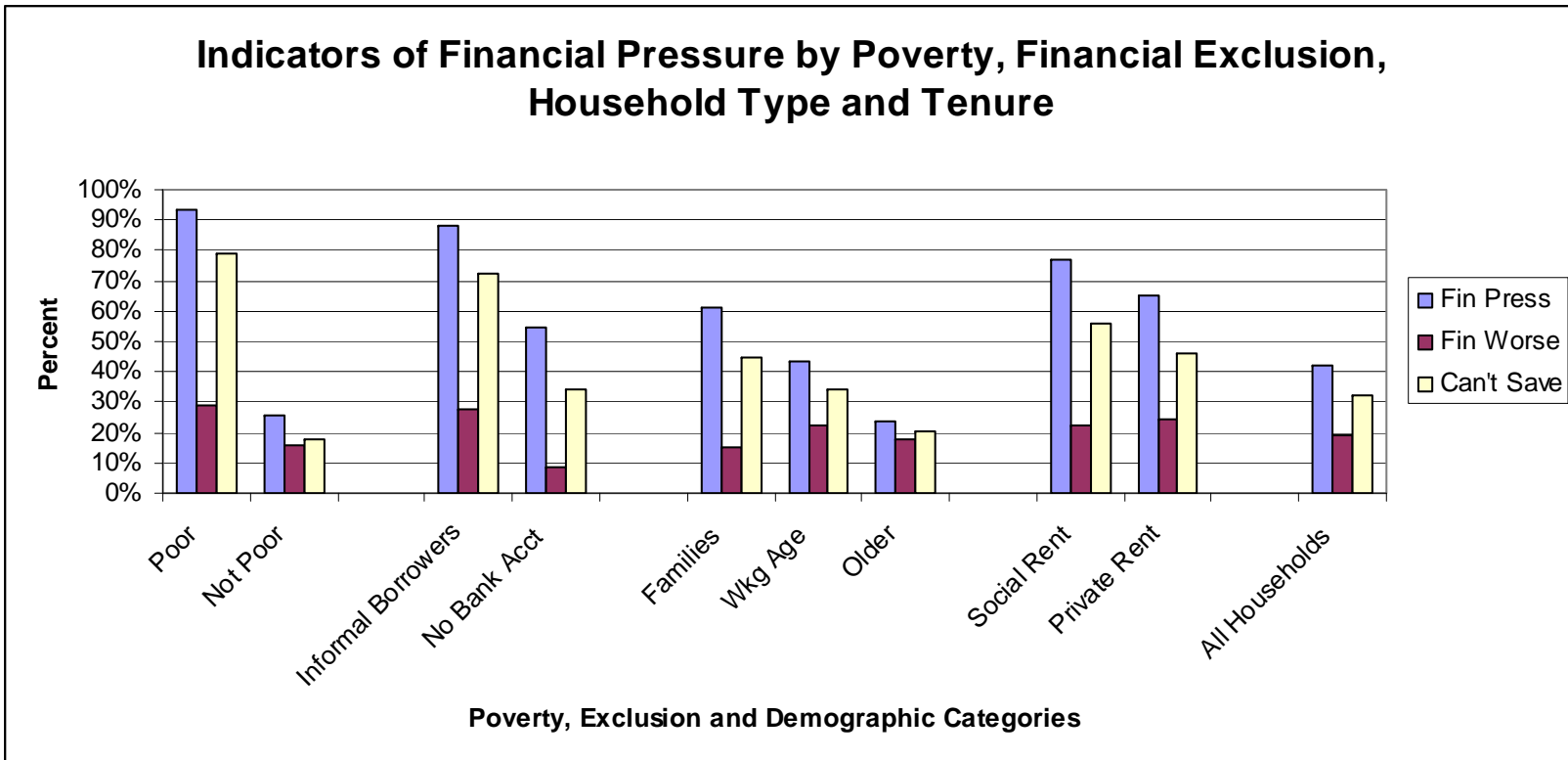
Problem Debt Risks by Poverty Measures

| Type of Bill in Arrears | PSE Poor | Not Poor | Risk Ratio | AROP AHC Poor | Risk Ratio | Feel Poor all the time | Risk Ratio | All House- holds |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Mortgage / Rent | 20% | 3% | 7.2 | 14% | 3.0 | 26% | 21.3 | 6.8% |
| Council Tax/Local Rates | 18% | 3% | 6.1 | 14% | 3.3 | 21% | 15.5 | 6.6% |
| Electricity, gas, fuel bills | 21% | 3% | 7.3 | 17% | 4.1 | 27% | 21.1 | 7.3% |
| Water Rates | 23% | 2% | 12.3 | 16% | 4.1 | 30% | 25.2 | 6.8% |
| Telephone bills (inc mob, b-b) | 14% | 1% | 10.1 | 11% | 4.7 | 21% | 24.4 | 4.5% |
| Income Tax, VAT | 1% | 1% | 2.3 | 1% | 1.8 | 3% | 12.2 | 0.7% |
| Hire purchase, cons credit | 10% | 1% | 15.3 | 7% | 4.1 | 11% | 31.8 | 2.9% |
| Loans from Banks, B S or C I | 9% | 1% | 8.3 | 6% | 3.0 | 12% | 22.7 | 3.1% |
| Credit card payments | 10% | 3% | 3.4 | 7% | 2.0 | 14% | 12.5 | 4.6% |
| Other loans/bills | 7% | 1% | 10.1 | 5% | 3.4 | 10% | 25.9 | 2.3% |
| TV Licence | 18% | 1% | 15.7 | 12% | 4.7 | 23% | 54.9 | 5.0% |
| Private education, health bills | 1% | 0% | 6.8 | 1% | 6.7 | 1% | 10.6 | 0.2% |
| Child Support, Maintenance | 1% | 0% | 85.3 | 0% | 3.1 | 1% | 5.0 | 0.2% |

Problem debt & poverty

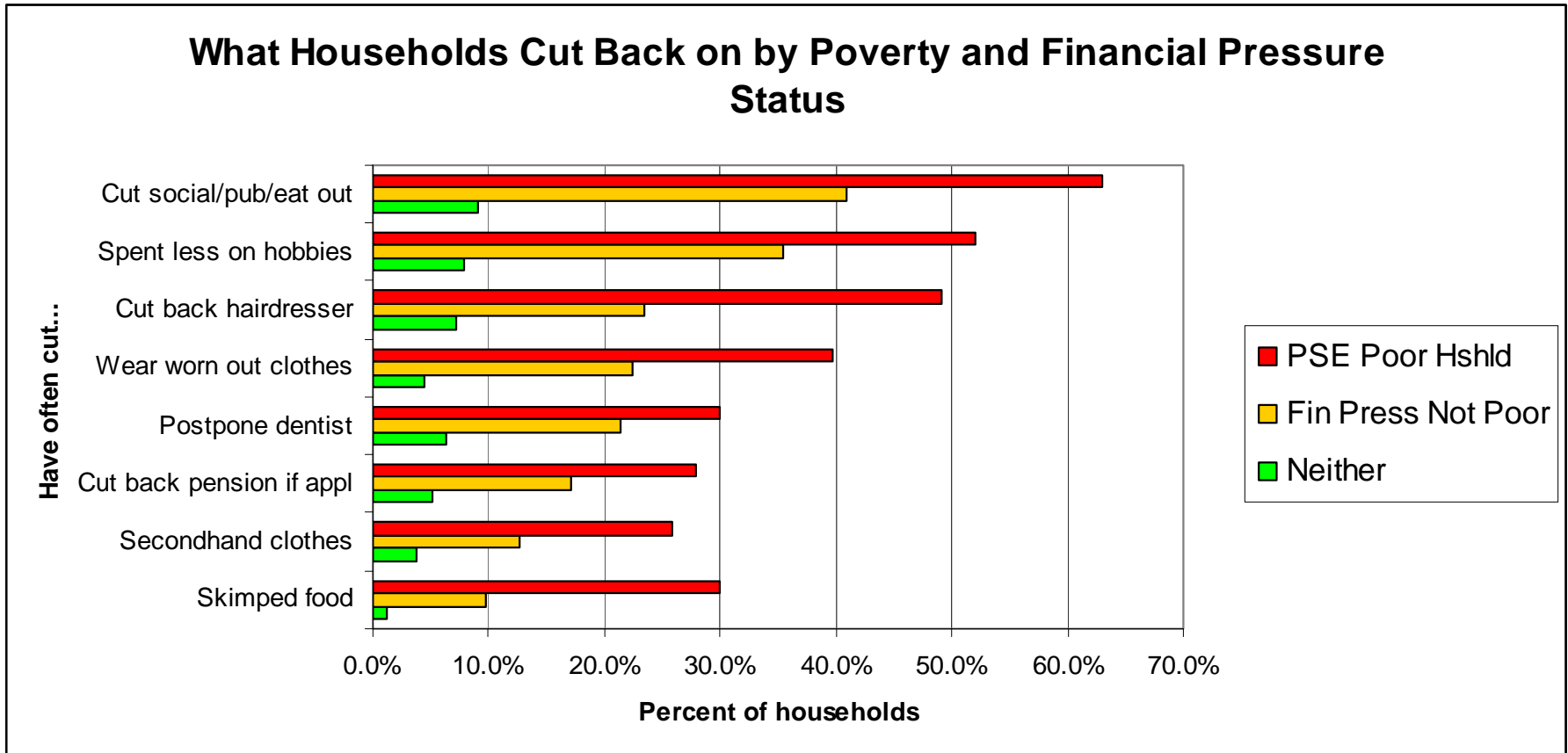
- The risk of experiencing problem debt/arrears is greatly magnified if your household is in *poverty*
- This is more true using PSE poverty than using low income 'at risk of poverty' (even after housing costs)
- It is even more true using *subjective* perceived poverty 'most of the time'
- Risk ratios for poor vs nonpoor particularly *high* for TV license, HP/CC, water rates, phone & other bills; relatively *low* for credit cards.
- Problem debts are *strongly related* to having any *informal borrowing*
- Problem debts are *not much related* to having no bank account or limited bank service
- *Families* with children are much more likely than older or other households to have problem debts in most categories
- *Social renters* more likely than owners to have most types, but *private renters* even more likely to have Council Tax or fuel debt

Overall financial pressure and change



* Financial pressure if constant struggle or not keeping up, or could not meet major expense £500; or cannot spend money on self, or income a lot below amount needed to avoid poverty.

Household responses



Household responses - comments

- The patterns of response are broadly as expected
- PSE Poor households have to make stronger responses – 25-30% skimp food, cut clothes, dentist, pension contribn; 50-60% cut hairdresser, hobbies, social life/pub/meals out
- Financially stressed households who are not PSE poor still have to make similar adjustments, although the proportion making these is rather less than those who are PSE poor as well.
- Financially pressured households account for 43% of whom 23% are PSE poor and 20% are not. This is a key group whose position appears to have deteriorated quite a lot.

Key Issues

Fuel Poverty

David Gordon
Professor of Social Justice
Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research
University of Bristol



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Fuel Poverty: A Matter of Life & Death

In 2003, George Bates, 89, died from hypothermia and his wife Gertrude, 86, suffered a heart attack. Their bodies were found in October in a house they had shared for 63 years. Two months earlier their gas had been disconnected by British Gas due to non-payment of a £140 bill.

After the gas was cut off the couple's details were not passed to social services by British Gas - because of restrictions they thought were imposed by the Data Protection Act.

A British Gas spokesman said *"It is tragic that no one including the caring services recognised how vulnerable the Bateses were before it was too late"*.

The Coroner recorded verdicts of death by natural causes.

British Gas residential reported a profit of £169m in 2003

Fuel Poverty: A Matter of Life & Death

In January 2010, Mayan Coomeraswamy, 59, froze to death in an unheated "hovel" after social services failed to care for him or clean his home. Despite being visited every fortnight by mental health workers – staff did not intervene as they thought it would violate his human rights.

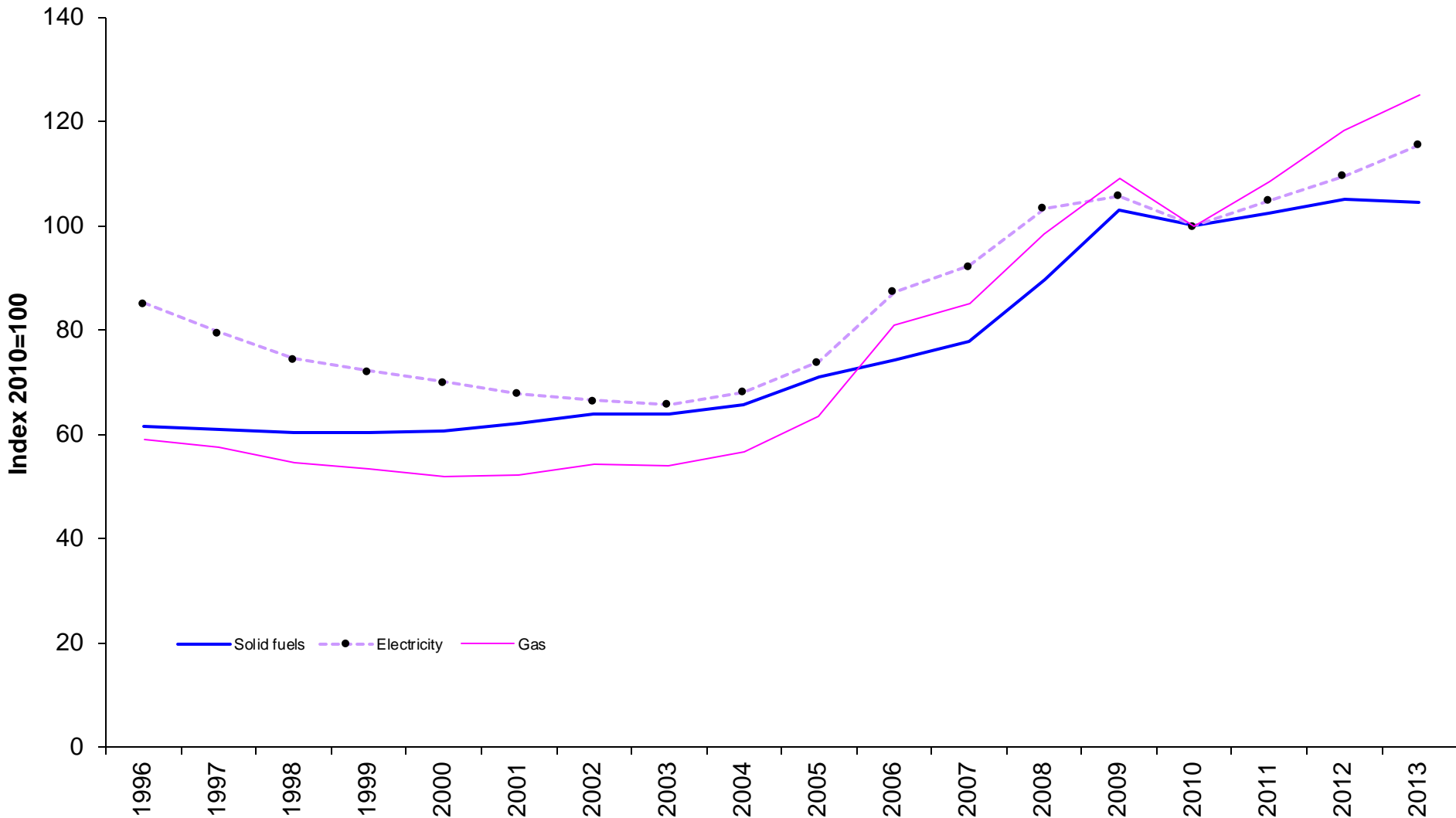
Excess Winter Deaths

An estimated 31,100 excess winter deaths occurred in England and Wales in 2012/13 – a 29% increase compared with the previous winter.

Between 2011/12 and 2012/13 male excess winter deaths increased from 10,590 to 13,100, and female deaths from 13,610 to 18,000.

The majority of deaths occurred among those aged 75 and over; there were 25,600 excess winter deaths in this age group in 2012/13 compared with 5,500 in people aged under 75.

Fuel price indices in the domestic sector in real terms 1996 to 2013



Source: DECC *Energy Price Statistics*

http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/energy_stats/prices/prices.aspx

Old Definition of Fuel Poverty

A Household is fuel poor if they need to spend more than 10% of their income on fuel (heat, light, etc.)

The energy required to heat the home to a reasonable temperature. Typically defined as 21°C in living room and 18°C in bedrooms

A standard heating regime is assumed for weekdays and weekend

Weekday 9 hours

Weekend 16 hours

Problem: Incomes are not equivalised i.e. adjusted for household size. Heating regimes are guesstimates, etc.

New Fuel Poverty Definition

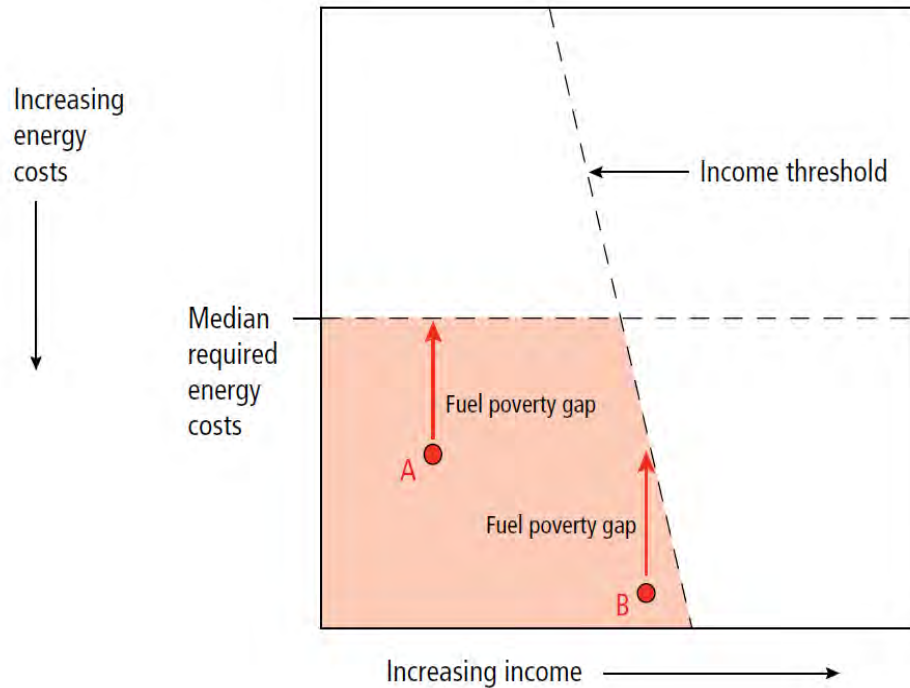
Fuel poverty in England is measured by the Low Income High Costs definition, which considers a household to be in fuel poverty if:

1. they have fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)
2. If they were to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line (AROP BHC)

The broad concept: Hills Review

Problem: Economists like the Poverty Gap – but it a bad poverty indicator. It not only ignores the number of poor people, but it also ignores the distribution among the poor. In addition, when the income of a person just below the poverty line increases such that she is no longer poor, poverty according to the poverty gap (average income shortfall) will *increase* instead of decline.

Figure SR.1: Recommended indicators of the extent and depth of fuel poverty

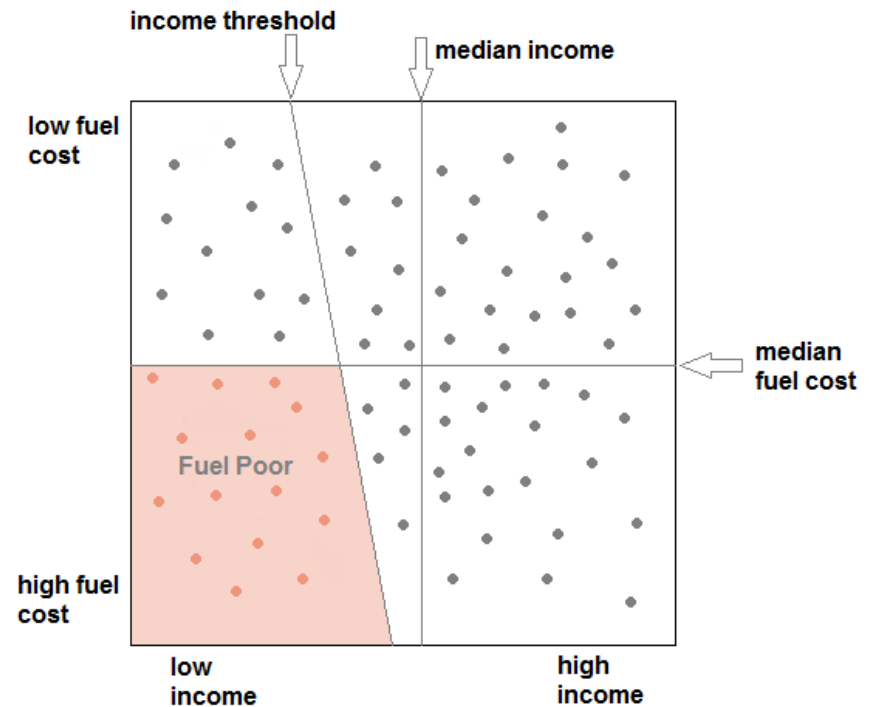


Example: Fuel cost threshold

New definition

The graph shows a sample of 80 households, each represented by a dot.

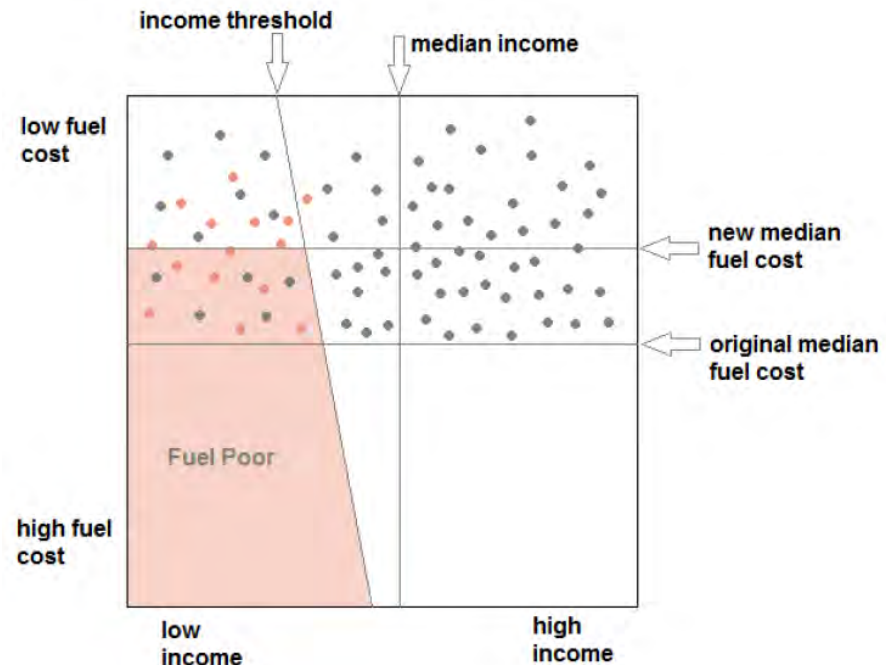
- Those who have incomes below the income threshold, and required fuel costs more than the median are classified as fuel poor; these households are shown in pink and there are 15 of them (19% of the sample).
- The medians divide the sample in half, so there are 40 households either side of the median lines.



Example: Strange Results

Insulate everyone

- After all households have improved energy efficiency the median line must be re-drawn so that it sits at the new half-way point.
- This causes the pink area to grow and incorporate more households. There are now 12 households in fuel poverty, or 15%.



Source: Ian Preston, CSE.

PSE Fuel Poverty Module

[Cutback] Did your household cut back on fuel use at home in any of these ways last winter, because you could not afford the costs? ¶

| CODE ALL THAT APPLY | → | % ¶ |
|---|---|------|
| ¶ | | |
| 1. <u>Turned heating down or off, even though it was too cold in the</u> ¶ <u>house/flat</u> | → | 21%¶ |
| 2. Only heated and used part of the house | → | 14%¶ |
| 3. Cut the number of hours the heating was on to reduce fuel costs | → | 29%¶ |
| 4. Used less hot water than I/we needed to reduce fuel costs | → | 8%¶ |
| 5. Turned out more lights in my home than I/we wanted to, to try ¶ <u>to reduce the electricity bill</u> | → | 21%¶ |
| 6. Had fewer hot meals or hot drinks that I/we needed to reduce ¶ <u>fuel costs</u> | → | 2%¶ |
| 7. Other cut back on fuel use to reduce fuel costs | → | 6%¶ |
| 96. SPONTANEOUS ONLY: None of these | → | 54%¶ |



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PSE Fuel Poverty Module

[Comfort] Describe the overall level of warmth in your home last winter?¶

CODE FIRST TO APPLY¶

¶

| | | |
|--|---|------|
| 1. Much colder than you would have liked | → | 10%¶ |
| 2. A bit colder than you would have liked | → | 24%¶ |
| 3. <u>About</u> right | → | 62%¶ |
| 4. <u>A</u> bit warmer than you would have liked | → | 2%¶ |
| 5. <u>A</u> lot warmer than you would have liked | → | 1%¶ |
| 6. Both too warm and too cold | → | 0%¶ |



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PSE Fuel Poverty Module

[HseEft] You said that you had problems with [AccProb] and that your home was warmer/colder [Comfort] than you would have liked. Did this affect you or other members of your household in any of the following ways? ¶

¶
CODE ALL THAT APPLY¶

- ¶
- | | | |
|--|---|------|
| 1. Made an existing health problem or problems worse | → | 17%¶ |
| 2. Brought on a new health problem or problems | → | 9%¶ |
| 3. Made me/us feel miserable, anxious or depressed | → | 36%¶ |
| 4. I/we did not feel able to invite friends or family to the house | → | 17%¶ |
| 5. I/we spent as much time as possible away from the house | → | 10%¶ |
| 6. I/we stayed in bed longer than we wanted to keep warm | → | 22%¶ |
| 96. SPONTANEOUS ONLY: None of these | → | 46%¶ |

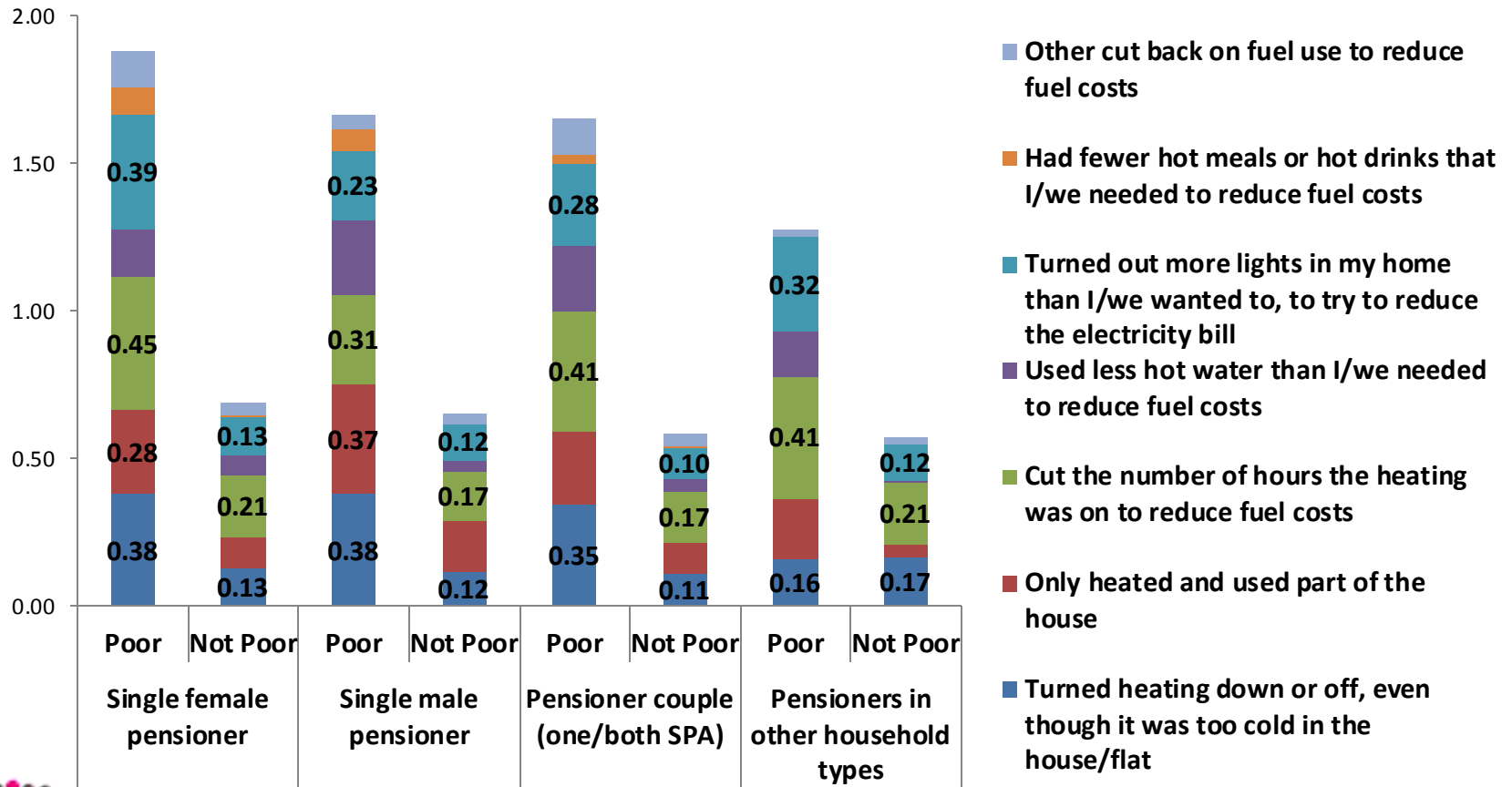


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Fuel poverty: Older People

Did your household cut back on fuel use at home in any of these ways last winter, because you could not afford the costs



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK
19th - 20th June 2014
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL

Programme

Thursday 19th June

10.00 *Registration and Tea/Coffee*

First Session: *Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK: Advancing the State of the Art*

10:30 Introduction: Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK David Gordon

10:50 Developing Measures of Poverty & Exclusion in the 21st Century:
Focus Groups, Cognitive Testing & Expert Review Eldin Fahmy

11:10 Life on a Low Income in Austere Times:
Precarious budgets and diminishing services Simon Pemberton, Eileen Sutton
Eldin Fahmy and Karen Bell

11.30 *Tea/Coffee*

Second Session: *The Necessities of Life in the UK*

12.00 The Changing Necessities of Life: 1983 to 2012 Stewart Lansley and Joanna Mack

12:25 What do Children Need? Gill Main

13:00: *Lunch*

Third Session: *The Extent of Poverty in the UK*

14:00: How Many People are Poor and Deprived and How Do We Know? David Gordon

14:20 Social Exclusion in the UK Ruth Levitas

14:40 How Many Poor and Deprived Children are there in the UK? Jonathan Bradshaw

15:00 Poverty and Exclusion in Northern Ireland Mike Tomlinson

15:20 Poverty and Exclusion in Scotland Nick Bailey, Glen Bramley
and Maria Gannon

15:40 *Tea/Coffee*

Fourth Session: *How bad is poverty for your health?*

16:10 Poverty, Exclusion and Health and Disability in the UK Pauline Heslop

16:30 Poverty and Mental Health Sarah Payne

17.00 Concluding remarks

Friday 20th June

9.30 *Arrival and Tea/Coffee*

9.50 Welcome

David Gordon

Fifth Session: *Why Don't People Just Stop Being Poor?*

10:00 Every Penny Counts: Family Life on a Low Income

Mary Daly and Grace Kelly

10:20 Life on a Low Income in Austere Times:
Impact on relationships

Simon Pemberton, Karen Bell,
Eldin Fahmy and Eileen Sutton

10:40 Explaining Poverty to the Public

Joanna Mack

11:00 Community Engagement in Challenging Times

Gabi Kent

11:20 *Tea/Coffee*

Sixth Session: *Living Standards in the UK*

11:50 A UK Living Standards Index

Demi Patsios, Paddy Hillyard
and Marco Pomati

12.10 Poverty and Services, Neighbourhoods & Housing

Glen Bramley and
Kirsten Besemer

12:30 Poverty, Employment and Working Conditions

Nick Bailey

12:50 *Lunch*

Seventh Session: *Family poverty*

13.40 Poverty and Gender

Esther Dermott and
Christina Pantazis

14:00 Poverty and Parenting

Esther Dermott and Marco Pomati

Eighth Session: *Demography of Poverty*

14:20 Poverty and Ethnicity

Christina Pantazis and
Saffron Karlsen

14:40 Poverty and Youth

Eldin Fahmy

15:00 Poverty and Older People

Demi Patsios

15:20 *Tea/Coffee*

Ninth Session: *Key Issues*

16.00 Rural Poverty in Scotland

Maria Gannon, Nick Bailey
and Glen Bramley

16.20 Poverty and Debt

Glen Bramley

16.40 Fuel Poverty

David Gordon

17:00 Concluding Remarks

poverty and exclusion?

and deprivations since 1999

ness, and poverty

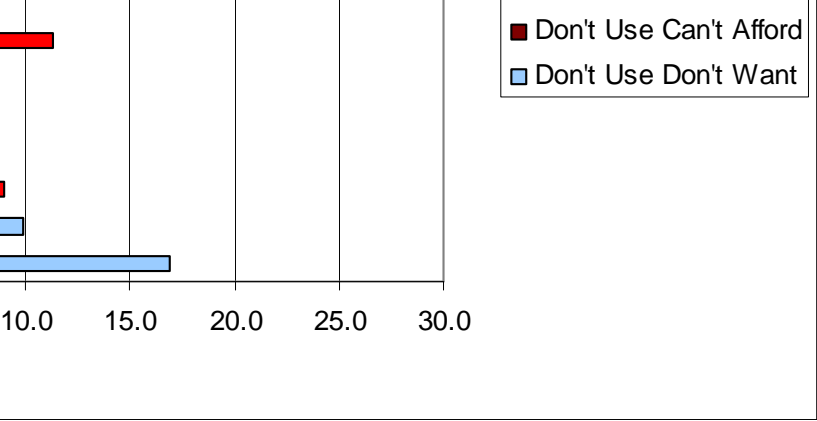
the common neighbourhood problems

and Memorial Conference

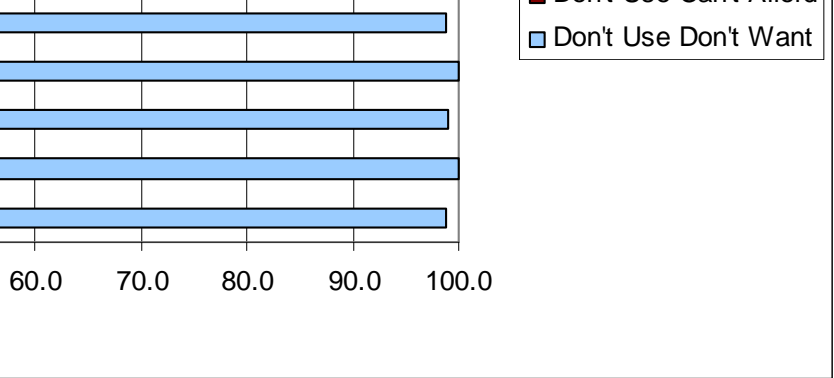
Exclusion in the UK



| | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| Evening Classes | 52% | 46% |
| Public/Community Hal | 59% | 53% |
| Doctor | 99% | 99% |
| Dentist | 93% | 95% |
| Optician | 85% | 84% |
| Post Office | 93% | 85% |



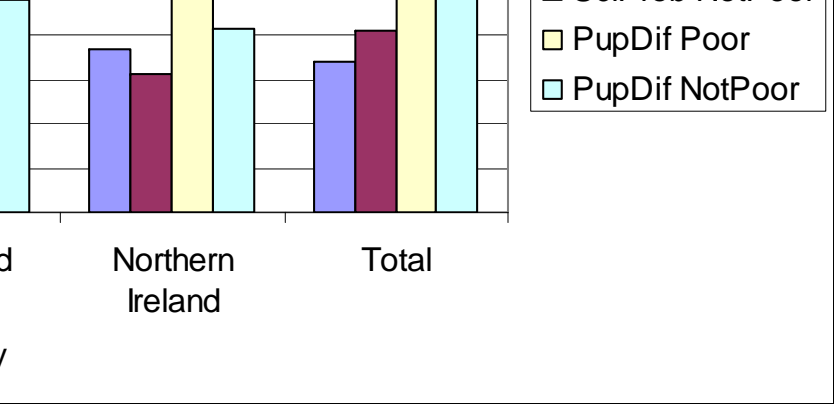
**Public services has declined since 1999,
preferences and reduced availability
and corner shops saw big increases.**



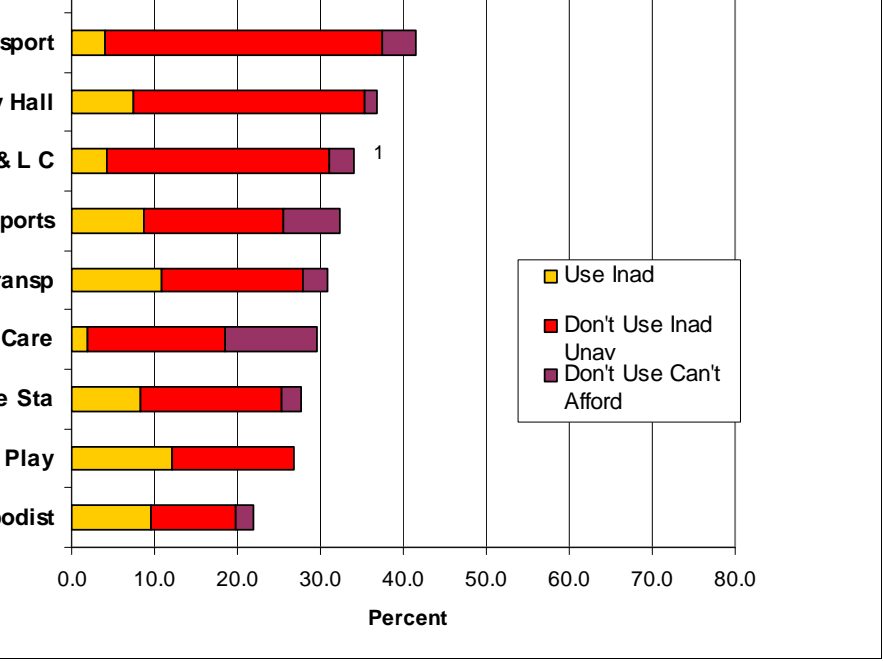
increase in the proportion

**smaller preschool provision,
2000s**

falls remain – play, ASC, YC



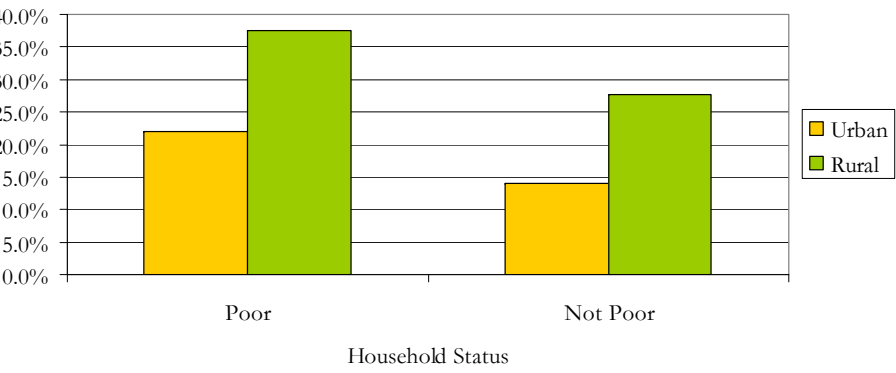
...y between 1999 and 2012, although pupil difficulties reported by households not strongly related to poverty, esp more strongly related to poverty, esp in Scotland



Poor
Household Status

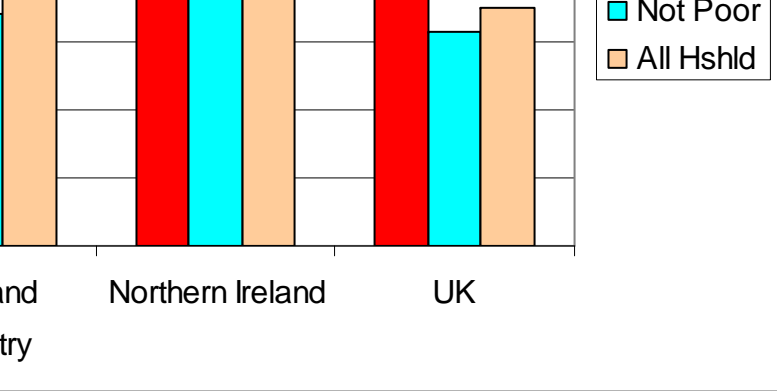
Not Poor

Service Exclusion by Urban-Rural Location by Household Poverty



| | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----|-----|
| 3 | School Meals | 1.0 | 1.4 |
| 5 | Meals on Wheels | 0.9 | 1.4 |
| 5 | School Transport | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| 5 | Post Office | 0.8 | 0.9 |
| 4 | Chiropodist | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| 5 | Supermarket | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| 9 | Bank, BS | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| 2 | Corner Shop | 0.7 | 0.9 |
| 1 | Special Transport | 0.5 | 0.8 |

be excluded from include some childrens services
n-related services; services which poor are no
eral commercial retail + some social care related



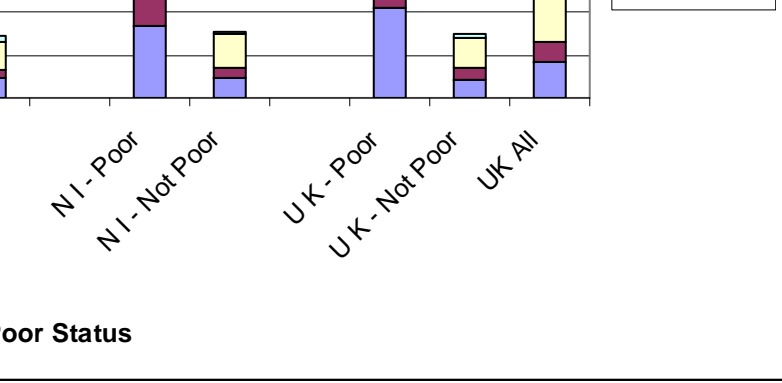
nt in N Ireland and Scotland, and with greater
es appears to show the least difference between

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 10 Crime-Victim | 50.3% | 61.6% |
| 8 Health | 43.2% | 61.5% |
| 4 Employment | 34.9% | 55.2% |
| 3 Social Suppt-Contac | 34.5% | 48.0% |
| 9 Area | 34.6% | 47.3% |
| 6 Education | 30.3% | 32.7% |
| 2 Services | 24.9% | 30.1% |
| 7 Civic partic | 18.5% | 25.4% |

| | <i>1983</i> | <i>1990</i> | <i>1999</i> | <i>2012</i> |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 5% | 3% | 3% | 9% |
| | 6% | 2% | 7% | 10% |
| | 10% | | 7% | 9% |
| | | | 15% | 20% |

portion who lack item because they cannot

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| - too dark, not enough light | 5.2% | 4.6% |
| - inadeq heating + | 6.6% | 7.7% |
| - leaky roof | 3.7% | 5.6% |
| - damp | 8.3% | 14.6% |
| - rot | 11.1% | 6.7% |
| - mould/condensation + | 5.9% | 11.1% |
| - no place to sit outside | 6.7% | 5.6% |
| | | |
| Five or more of accom problems | 1.4% | 3.9% |
| In debt for rent, mortgage | 3.8% | 6.8% |
| In debt for utility bills | 4.2% | 7.4% |
| Disconnected from utils | 0.7% | na |
| <u>Cutting down on gas, elect</u> | <u>10.3%</u> | <u>21-45%</u> |

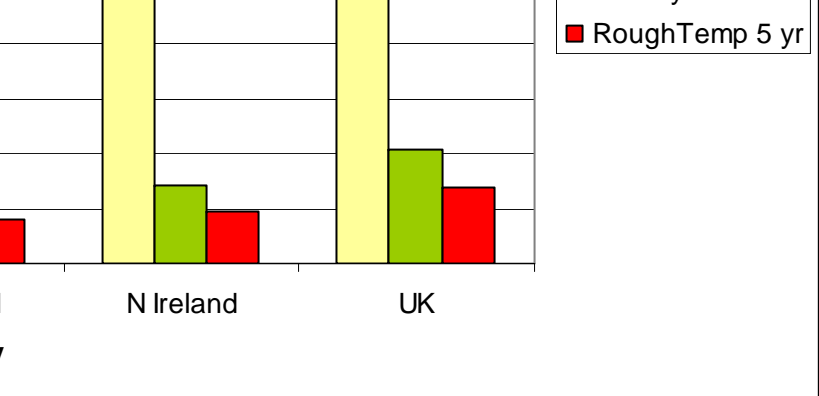


Relationship between housing needs and poverty

ow supply (even before, but



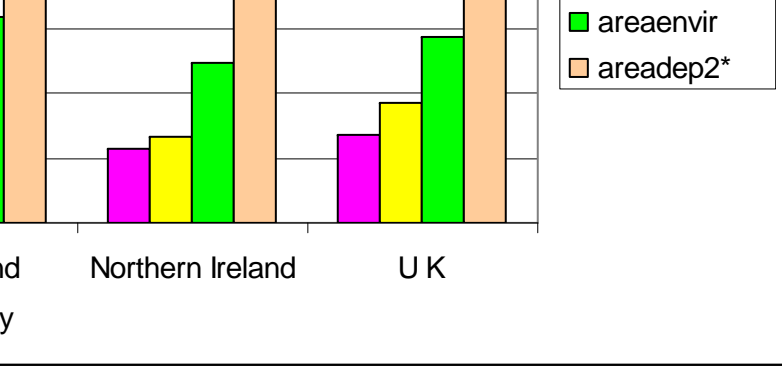
& poverty, despite fall in BHC poverty risk.
 affordy pressures, and greatest increase in poverty.
 poverty risk and in PSE poverty
 number of families in private renting is a key factor.



of homelessness provide valuable new way of
 enced this in the last five years in England ,

on

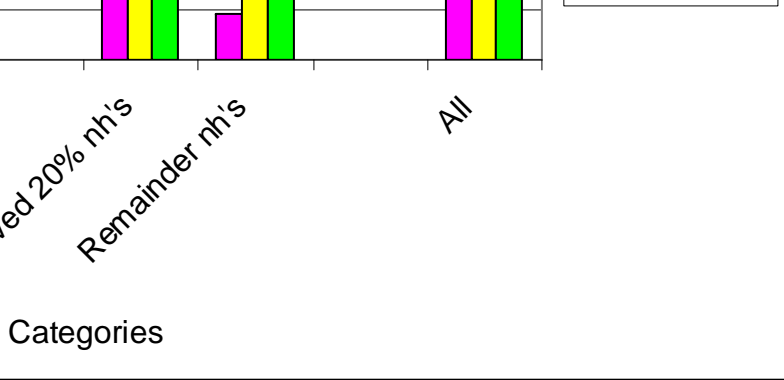
urhood or an urban area



mental or social problems are common.

ons.
 ns, or being very dissatisfied with area

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 4.0% | 4.4% | 3.6% | 5.3% | 4.0% |
| 11.8% | 15.2% | 10.3% | 10.4% | 11.8% |
| 13.8% | 11.7% | 14.3% | 9.6% | 13.6% |
| 4.5% | 6.0% | 4.0% | 3.8% | 4.5% |
| 12.2% | 9.4% | 15.7% | 10.3% | 12.3% |
| 4.5% | 1.2% | 4.9% | 5.7% | 4.4% |
| 23.0% | 19.1% | 17.9% | 17.3% | 22.2% |
| 28.0% | 26.4% | 31.6% | 30.7% | 28.3% |
| 6.0% | 6.1% | 7.1% | 4.8% | 6.1% |
| 8.2% | 3.6% | 7.5% | 8.2% | 7.9% |
| 10.8% | 8.3% | 11.5% | 6.7% | 10.6% |
| 3.7% | 2.9% | 3.1% | 2.2% | 3.6% |
| 2.7% | 1.8% | 2.8% | 2.2% | 2.7% |



order problems, are much more prevalent in urban
by poor households.
poor area.

Community engagement for challenging times

Gabi Kent

The Open University

gabikent.gk@gmail.com

gabi@gkcreativesolutions.com



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



Pilot questions

How can we make poverty research more meaningful to low income communities?

How can we support the emergence of alternative narratives from those living in poverty?

How can we link these local experiences to national research?

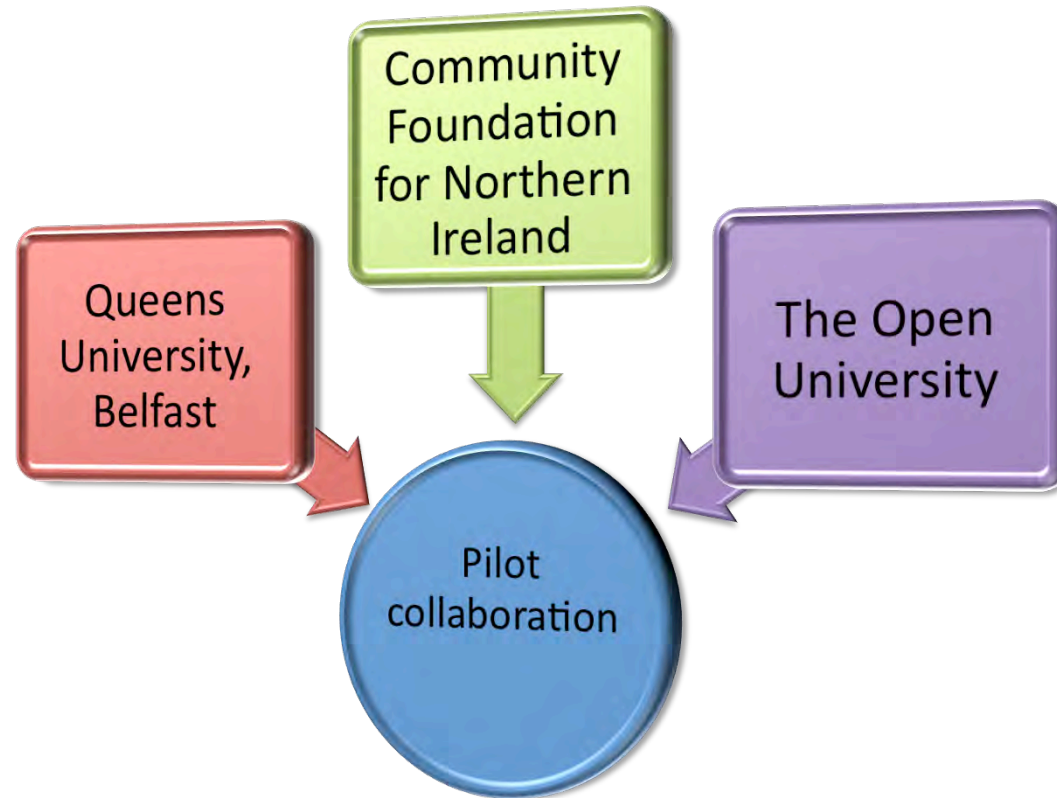


Overview: PSE engagement project in Northern Ireland

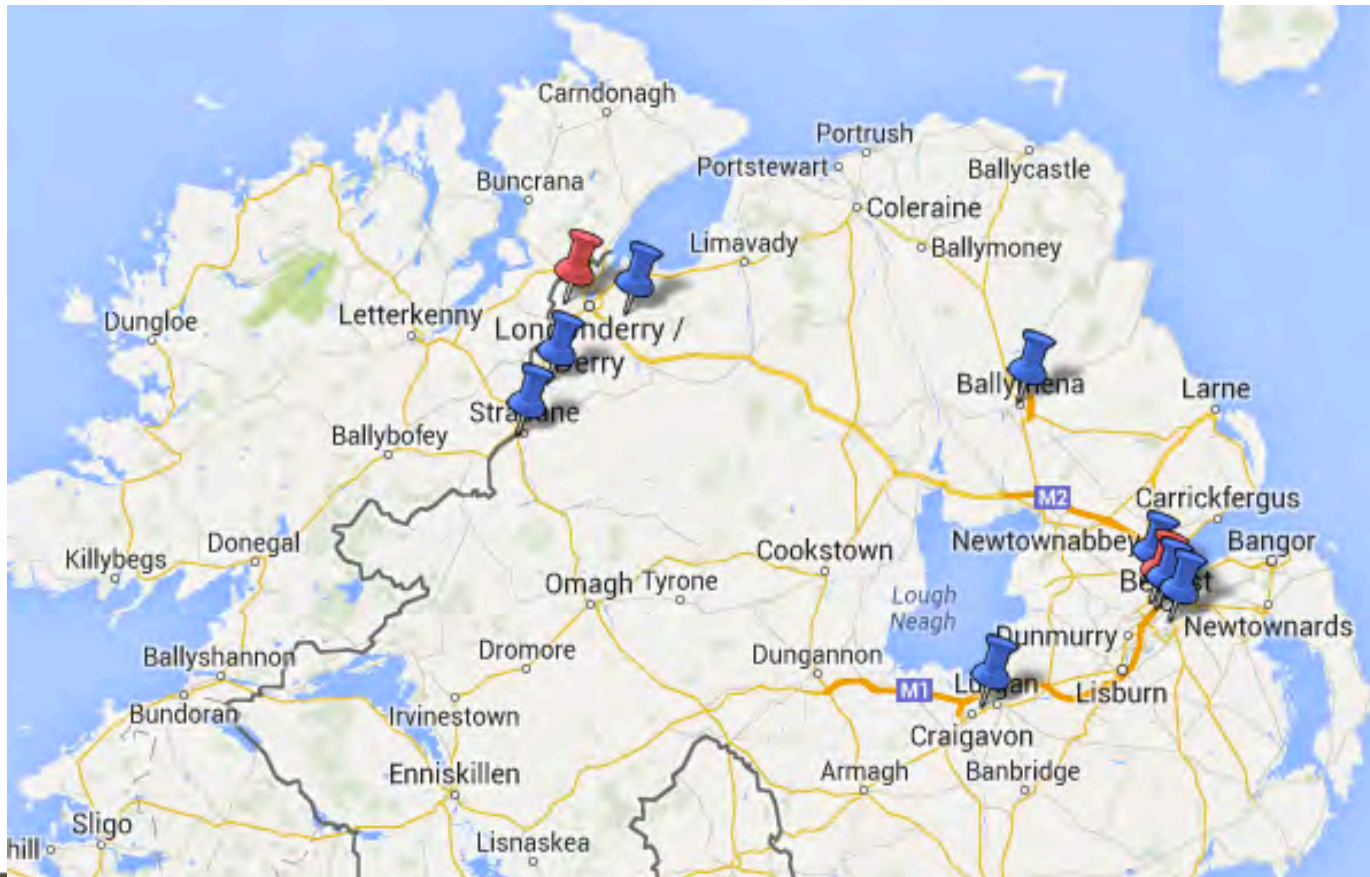
- Partners
- Context
- Process
- Outcomes
- Lessons learned



Engagement Partners



8 communities located in areas of high deprivation



A cross community project



Context

Legacy of sectarian conflict

Segregated communities

Divisions in employment/ unemployment

Social isolation

Area stereotyping



36% of households in Northern Ireland are multiply deprived (PSE UK:2012)



Stigma, fear and isolation

Policies of shame (Walker et al 2013)

Over a quarter of a million adults in Northern Ireland (19%) have felt embarrassed because of having a low income (PSE NI)

“People have a lot of pride, so they won’t talk about their situation”

(Community practitioner, Country Antrim, 2012)



Community activist expectations

“If it’s just a wee community group doing a bit of research, it is not going to go anywhere. My hope is that with this our voices will be heard”

(Community practitioner, County Armagh, 2012)



Engagement challenges

Practitioners concerns

- Local reluctance and suspicion about formal research - people not wanting to talk
- Expectations and fears: 'We can't make films/ No-one will agree to share their stories....
- How will it lead to action/ change

Different methodological approaches:

- Participatory Action Research v Traditional research project



**“I think universities and academia forget
people don't have the literacy skills.
Older generations don't like to write and worry
about spelling”**

(Community practitioner Belfast)



Co-developed methodology

- Anonymity and confidentiality paramount
- Community gathered qualitative data
- Focus group questions areas linked to PSE national living standards survey
- A process to lead to action and change



Step 1: Collecting community evidence

Systematic qualitative 'evidence and experience' gathering supported by:

- Focus group training
- Digital recorders and transcriptions
- Question sets linked to the PSE national Living Standards surveys



Data gathered between 2012 and 2014

60-80 participants

3 rounds of questions sets covering:

- Living standards (income, housing, bills etc)
- Necessities questions (items and activities)
- Debt and financial insecurity

Opportunities for gathering longitudinal data

27 transcripts produced



Step 2. Purposeful storytelling



Methods co-developed to be: accessible, engaging and adaptable



4 x community produced films

Community identified themes and priorities.

Different context specific approaches used.

Photo based films of illustrative objects and places
(rather than people)

- **Surviving on the edge** (Debt)
- **Going backwards** (Housing repossession)
- **The forgotten estate** (Area deprivation)
- **Hopes and Dreams** (Digital divide)



For example: Hopes & Dreams

Emerging issues from focus group:

- The legacy of the troubles (and no escape for young people from ongoing tensions)
- Area deprivation
- Stigma (benefits; single parent families)
- Digital divide:** (*22% of households with children in Northern Ireland do not have a computer with internet access (PSE NI 2013).*)



**The youth produced film *Hopes & Dreams*
can be viewed at:**

A blurred background image of a 'Free WiFi Spot' sign. The sign is yellow and white, with the word 'Free' at the top, 'WiFi' in large letters in the middle, and 'Spot' at the bottom. There are also some faint, illegible text and graphics around the sign.

**[www.poverty.ac.uk/community/
northern-ireland/ardoyne](http://www.poverty.ac.uk/community/northern-ireland/ardoyne)**

Step 3: Linking local with national

- Sharing findings via PSE website:
www.poverty.ac.uk
- Supporting groups to produce webpage material
- Making links between local experiences and PSE national findings



www.poverty.ac.uk



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Community collaboration

The PSE: UK research team collaborates with community groups, pressure groups, organisations and networks of people working on the frontline of poverty across the UK.

In [Northern Ireland](#) we are actively involved in a project called [Communities in Action](#), which is working with community groups from some of Northern Ireland's most disadvantaged areas. In this project we are drawing on the PSE national surveys to help communities research what is happening in their own area and to track the impact of the economic recession and changes to the benefits system and public service.

In the [North East of England](#) we're developing close links with networks of community practitioners and researchers, to exchange information and resources. We have also linked up with community participatory research projects in [Scotland](#) and will be adding further information on these as well as new collaborations elsewhere over the coming months.

Community updates

Tweets

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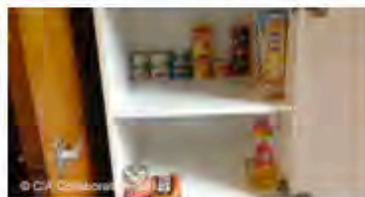


PSE2010Team
@PSE2010

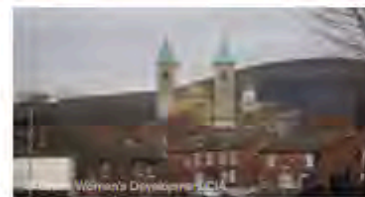
2h

How bad is poverty for your health in General? Pauline Heslop explains - and you may be surprised [@#PSE](#) Conference [poverty.ac.uk](#)

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[Hard times: 2014](#)



[Money worries: 2013](#)



[Poverty Alliance: challenging...](#)

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Communities in Action

Findings

>Hard Times: 2014

>Money worries: 2013

Ardoyne

Bready

Cregagh

Donegall Pass

Doury Road

Fountain Street

Lettershandoney

Taghnevan

Methods

Northern Ireland

In this section you will find information about our work in Northern Ireland, including our work with an innovative participatory research project, Communities in Action (CiA). This collaboration is between the PSE team, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) and eight community groups. These groups represent a number of communities across the region, facing social and economic deprivation.

In 2012 Queen's University and the Open University teamed up with the CFNI to support people living in deprived communities to document life on low income and to make short films based on their local research. Watch some of the Community produced films [here](#) and visit the [CFNI Communities in Action section](#) for more films and information about the projects and themes.

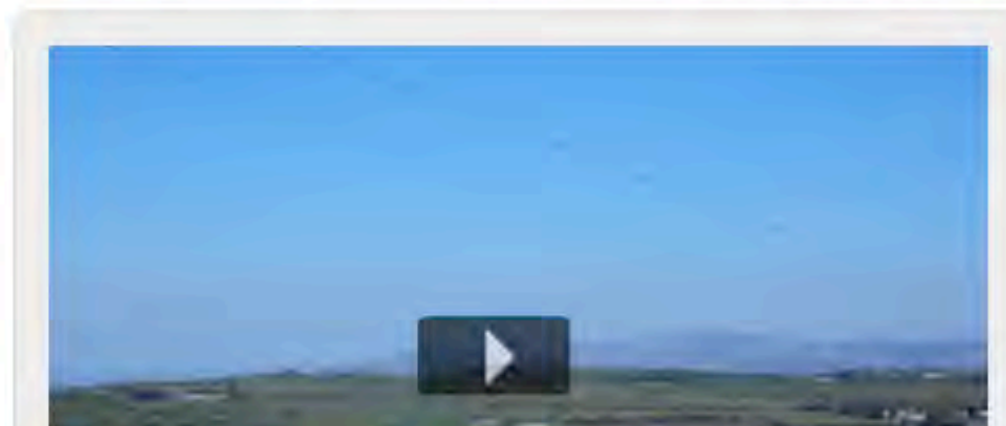
36%
of households cannot afford three or more basic necessities

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Methods

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Hard times: 2014

Author/s: Communities in Action and PSE team members



The latest Communities in Action **Hard Times** reports, provide evidence gathered by communities themselves on the impact of austerity and cuts on families and young people across Northern Ireland between July 2012 and February 2014. Many of these findings are supported by PSE national statistics. The four **Hard Times** reports also highlight examples of community resilience and set out recommendations for action.

Outputs: April 2012-Sept 2013

- 27 community conversations
- 5 community findings reports
- 4 community produced films
- 2 CiA presentations in Stormont
- Community presentations to local decisions makers, MEPs and their local community
- Presentation at the Mayor of Belfast working group on poverty
- CiA funded projects to address identified needs
- First steps in creation of a shared knowledge bank



Impact for participants

- Solidarity through an understanding of common issues
- An empowering process - kindling peer support and enabling collective community led responses
- Amplifies voices and experiences of those living in poverty
- Promotes alternative discourses in the public and policy realm



“Before no one wanted to talk. Now we have people knocking on the door to join a discussion group and take pictures.”

(Community practitioner, County Antrim)



Collaboration Legacy

- A pool of skilled local researchers
- A network of focus groups
- A collective lobbying power
- A body of evidence produced by communities (e.g. Hard Times reports)



Lessons learned

- Aim high: being aspirational can be inspirational...
- Importance of dedicated worker(s) with practical expertise to nurture process and maintain momentum
- Importance of linking with and support existing programmes (in this case CFNI's communities in Action programme)
- Importance of partnerships
 - Each with different individual and institutional roles/ expertise
 - Project is the sum of our collective skills, expertise and networks.



But...

- Time, labour and resource intensive
- Local leadership, internal politics and skills of local community workers may determine levels of local success
- More support needed on analysis and how to use data effectively – opportunities for future academic/community work in this area



“Being part of this collaboration means we are sitting with the big people now.

People know we exist.”

(Community practitioner, Lettershandoney, Country Derry
2013)



Acknowledgements

With thanks to the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, the Communities in Action programme and all the community groups and local participants from Ardoyne, Cregagh, Donegall Pass, Doury Road, Fountain Street and Springhill Park, Lettershandoney, Taghnevan and The Villages Together.

The collaboration team:

CFNI (CiA project worker Geraldine Wilkins)

Open University (PSE Community engagement Gabi Kent)

Queens University (PSE NI academic team Mike Tomlinson, Grace Kelly, Paddy Hillyard and Mary Daly)

Thanks also to Joanna Mack (Open University) for supporting this pilot engagement project as it continued to evolve and expand over the past two years.



Please visit the **communities** section on the PSE website

**[www.poverty.ac.uk/community/
community-collaboration](http://www.poverty.ac.uk/community/community-collaboration)**

And CFNI's Communities in Action programme website:

**[www.communityfoundationni.org/Programmes/
Communities-in-Action-](http://www.communityfoundationni.org/Programmes/Communities-in-Action-)**



Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK





Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

[EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 hrs on Thursday, 19 JUNE 2014](#)

Largest UK poverty study calls on government to tackle rising deprivation

The percentage of households who fall below society's minimum standard of living has increased from 14 per cent to 33 per cent over the last 30 years, despite the size of the economy doubling. This is one of the stark findings from the largest study of poverty and deprivation ever conducted in the UK.

Other key figures reveal that almost 18 million people cannot afford adequate housing conditions; 12 million people are too poor to engage in common social activities; one in three people cannot afford to heat their homes adequately in the winter and four million children and adults aren't properly fed by today's standards.

[The Poverty and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom \(PSE\) project](#), led by the University of Bristol and funded by the [Economic and Social Research Council \[ESRC\]](#), has shown that full-time work is not always sufficient to escape from poverty and calls on the government to take action.

Experts will discuss the findings, looking at trends from the past 30 years, and how best to tackle the problems at the [3rd Peter Townsend Memorial Conference](#) which begins in London today [19 June].

Researchers from the University of Bristol, Heriot-Watt University, the Open University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Glasgow, University of Oxford, University of Birmingham, University of York, the National Centre for Social Research and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency found that:

- About 5.5 million adults go without essential clothing.
- Around 2.5 million children live in homes that are damp.
- Around 1.5 million children live in households that cannot afford to heat their home.
- One in four adults have incomes below what they consider is needed to avoid poverty.
- One in every six (17 per cent) adults in paid work are poor.
- More than one in five adults have had to borrow in the last year to pay for day to day needs.

The PSE standard of living survey results show that more than one in every five (22 per cent) children and adults were poor at the end of 2012. They had both a low income and were also 'multiply deprived' - suffering from three or more deprivations such as lack of food, heating and clothing due to a lack of money.

Professor David Gordon, from the [Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research](#) at the University of Bristol, said: "The Coalition Government aimed to eradicate poverty by tackling the causes of poverty. Their strategy has clearly failed. The available high quality scientific evidence shows that poverty and deprivation have increased since 2010, the poor are suffering from deeper poverty and the gap between the rich and poor is widening."

Far more households are in arrears on their household bills in 2012 (21 per cent) than in 1999 (14 per cent). The most common bills in arrears now are utility bills, council tax and mortgage/rent.

Results from the PSE project dispel the myth, often conveyed by government ministers, that poverty in general and child poverty in particular is a consequence of a lack of paid work – a result of shirking rather than striving.

It found that the majority of children who suffer from multiple deprivations – such as going without basic necessities, having an inadequate diet and clothing - live in small families with one or two siblings, live with both parents, have at least one parent who is employed, are white and live in England.

More than one in four adults (28 per cent) have skimped on their own food in the past year so that others in the household may eat. Despite this over half a million children live in families who cannot afford to feed them properly.

In 93% of households where children suffer from food deprivation, at least one adult skimped on their own food 'sometimes' or 'often' to ensure others have enough to eat. Women were more likely to cut back than men - 44 per cent of women had cut back on four or more items (such as food, buying clothes and social visits) in the last 12 months compared to 34 per cent of men.

Professor Jonathan Bradshaw, from the University of York, said: "The research has shown that in many households parents sacrifice their own welfare - going without adequate food, clothing or a social life - in order to try to protect their children from poverty and deprivation."

Wages are low and working conditions are bad in many parts of the UK. One in every six (17 per cent) adults in paid work are poor – they suffer from both a low income and cannot afford basic necessities.

For a large number of people, even full-time work is not sufficient to escape from poverty. Almost half of the working poor work 40 hours a week or more. One third of adults currently in employment (35 per cent) are in 'exclusionary work' - in poverty, in low quality work and/or have experienced prolonged periods of unemployment in the last five years.

Nick Bailey, from the University of Glasgow, said: "The UK government continues to ignore the working poor; they do not have adequate policies to address this growing problem."

Although more people today see a range of public services as 'essential' than in 1999, including libraries, sports centres, museums, galleries, dentists and opticians, the use of many services has declined since 1999 primarily due to reduced availability, cost or inadequacy.

Professor Glen Bramley, from Herriot-Watt University, said: "It is worrying that in the 21st century more than 40 per cent of households who want to use meals on wheels, evening

classes, museums, youth clubs, citizens' advice or special transport cannot do so due to unavailability, unaffordability or inadequacy."

The situation is of course not all bad. Usage and adequacy of a few universal services such as buses, trains, corner shops and most children's services has risen since 1999.

Northern Ireland, [Legacies of the Troubles](#)

In Northern Ireland, the PSE living standards survey had a special section on people's experience of violent events during the 'Troubles'. This looked at death and injury of close friends and relatives, witnessing violence such as bomb explosions or assaults, imprisonment and other events such as moving house because of threats, attack or intimidation.

Experience of violent events in the past increased the chances of suffering from 'multiple deprivation' in the present.

Overall, more than a quarter of adults in Northern Ireland (26 per cent) lacked three or more necessities but for those who lost a close friend, the deprivation rate is 36 per cent.

- For those who had a close relative injured the rate is 38 per cent.
- If someone witnessed an assault, the deprivation rate is 43 per cent.
- If a close relative had spent time in prison, the deprivation rate is 45 per cent.
- Those who had their house searched by the police or army have a deprivation rate of 56 per cent.
- The deprivation rate for those who moved house due to attack, intimidation, threats or harassment is 58 per cent.

Professor Mike Tomlinson, from Queen's University Belfast, said: "Research in many parts of the world has shown that violent conflicts can result in long term problems of poverty and deprivation. This is what has happened in Northern Ireland. The evidence is clear. 'Dealing with the past' needs to include tackling the deprivation of those whose lives are most blighted by the years of conflict."

-ENDS-

Notes to the editor:

The media are welcome to attend the [3rd Peter Townsend Memorial Conference](#), which takes place at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL on 19 and 20 June.

Interviews can be arranged in advance via Philippa Walker in the University of Bristol's press office on 0117 9288086 and Philippa.walker@bristol.ac.uk. PLEASE NOTE: it will be tricky to arrange interviews during the conference itself due to a packed schedule. If possible, we'd like them to be done in advance on Wednesday, 18 June.

Many of the findings are available online: www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research

Details of the PSE survey

The PSE study is based on two surveys conducted in 2012. The 'Necessities of Life' survey was carried out between May and June 2012 and is based on a sample of 1,447 adults aged 16 or over in the Britain and 1,015 in Northern Ireland. The living standards survey interviewed 5,193 households (4,205 in Britain and 988 in Northern Ireland) comprising 12,097 people (9,786 in Britain and 2,311 in Northern Ireland).

The full living standards questionnaire can be [downloaded](http://www.poverty.ac.uk) from the PSE website: www.poverty.ac.uk.

The PSE: UK research was financed by the Economic and Social Research Council. It is a major collaboration between the University of Bristol, Heriot-Watt University, The Open University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Glasgow, University of Birmingham, University of Oxford, and the University of York working with the NatCen and NISRA.

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Benefits bill capped at £119 billion

Total spending on most benefits and tax credits will be capped at £119.5 billion in 2015-16,...

Legacies of the Troubles

At a glance

The PSE research in 2012 finds that the 'Troubles' had a deep impact on people's lives in Northern Ireland:

- 10% of adults lost a close relative
- 11% of adults lost a close friend
- 33% witnessed a bomb explosion
- 3% of adults had witnessed a murder

The study finds that these experiences are associated with a higher risk of poor mental and physical health and higher levels of unemployment and deprivation.

The PSE research

Evidence of the impact of 'the Troubles' on people's lives across the population of Northern Ireland is almost entirely absent from most discussions of the legacies of the conflict. The Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) study carried out in 2002/03 was the first attempt to gather such evidence and this has now been repeated in the current PSE research in a slightly modified set of Troubles questions in the 2012 PSE living standards survey.

The questions cover the death and injury of close friends and relatives, and asked if people had directly witnessed particular events such as a bomb explosion, gunfire, rioting and so on. There were questions on house searches carried out by



the police or army, and on whether people had had to move house or a job because of attack, intimidation, threats or harassment. People were asked whether they, or anyone they knew had spent time in prison because of the Troubles. They were also asked to think about the worst thing that had happened to them because of the Troubles and to say when this was. Finally they were asked if they had followed up the worst experience by taking action of some kind, such as joining a support group or seeing their GP.

Prevalence of experience

The 2002/3 survey found that 14% of adults had lost a 'close relative' and almost 8% had been physically injured, a half of these on more than one occasion. Nearly 9% of respondents had had to move house due to attack, intimidation or harassment and 4% had been forced to leave a job for the same reasons. Almost a quarter had themselves spent time in prison or knew someone else who had.

The 2012 survey found that the prevalence of these experiences remains high. More than a third of adults (35%) knew someone who was killed. Nearly 11% lost a 'close friend' and 10% a 'close relative'. And a third of adults knew someone who was injured and a similar pattern of who they knew emerges as can be seen in Figure 5.1: Experience of injury to others in the Troubles.

Overall, just under a half of all adults (45%) experienced either the death or injury of someone they knew personally.

Looking at other types of violent events such as rioting, bomb explosions, gunfire, assaults, murder and other serious violence, overall, more than half the adult population (57%) have witnessed one or other of these events.

45%
of all adults
experienced either the
death or injury of
someone they knew
personally

Figure 5.2 'Did you witness?' (below) illustrates the high percentages witnessing these other events.

According to the survey an estimated 41,000 people had witnessed murder, which means that an average of eleven people witnessed each of the Troubles-related killings.

Community experience

Experiences of these events by the 'protestant' or 'catholic' community in which people were brought up, or with which they identify, were very similar. For most of the experiences there are no statistically significant differences between Catholics and Protestants.

The most striking and statistically significant differences concerned having your house searched and imprisonment. Overall, 9% had had their house searched and 19% know someone who had spent time in prison. But Catholics were 4.4 times as likely to have experienced a house search by the police and/or army, 1.5 times as likely to know someone imprisoned because of the conflict than Protestants. They were also 1.4 times as likely to have had a close relative injured and 1.3 times as likely to have witnessed gunfire and an assault.



Explore the data

Explore the scatter plot [Experiences of the Troubles by groups](#).

The impact of these experiences

Injury to self stands out as having the highest risk ratios across the board. Experience of injury – to self, close friend or relative – is also associated with greater risk of a number of circumstances. Those who have these experiences of injury are 1.8 times as likely to have had a spell of unemployment for up to 12 months in the last five years compared to those with no experience (of injuries or killings). The deprivation rate (deprived of 3 or more of 22 items) of those with injury experience is 40% compared to a rate of 30% for those with no experience of injury or killings. Those with a close relative injured are 2.3 times as likely to report 'bad or very bad health' than those with no such experience, and they are 1.5 times as likely to have a mental illness.

Losing a close friend or relative are both associated with higher reporting of bad health and illness though losing a close friend appears to be more important to adverse health than losing a close relative.

Witnessing a murder, assault and other serious violence are all associated with high risk ratios, as are moving house, moving job and house searches (though less so).

All of the conflict experiences are associated with a higher risk of poor mental and physical health except one: those who said they had been in prison were slightly less at risk (a risk ratio of 0.9) of mental illness. They are, however, 2.7 times as likely to be in bad or very bad health. For some conflict experiences, the risk of poor health is only marginally increased. Those witnessing a bombing have 1.2 times the risk of bad/very bad health; those who lost a close relative are only 1.1 times more likely to have a long-standing illness than those who did not.

Conflict-related experience is also associated with low 'life satisfaction'. Over eighty per cent of those with no experience of witnessing Troubles events have high life satisfaction scores. This compares with 63% of those who lost a close friend in the Troubles, the same low average score as reported by disabled people across Great Britain. Exceptionally low life satisfaction scores were found for those witnessing murder – using an 11-point scale, almost a quarter (23%) have a score between 0 and 4 (5.8% is the GB average). Those with no Troubles experience have higher life satisfaction scores than those for the GB population as a whole.

Conclusion

While some events are more associated with the past, others, such as assaults and rioting, are an enduring part of conflict experience post-1998. The strong imprinting of a number of experiences on sections of the adult population in terms of physical and mental health show a deep and lasting legacy of the Troubles.

“

I've lived through the Troubles, took part in the Troubles. For me, it's like there's nothing for people.

”

long-term unemployed and disabled man, Belfast

Further details

In the PSE research, [Northern Ireland](#) section: see Legacies of Conflict: evidence from the 2012 PSE survey, [paper](#) and [presentation](#) by Mike Tomlinson to the Northern Ireland Assembly, Knowledge Exchange Seminar, 24th October 2013.

For details of 2002/3 findings see Hillyard, P., Kelly, G., McLaughlin, E., Patsios, D. and Tomlinson, M. (2003) [Bare Necessities: Poverty and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland](#). Belfast: Democratic Dialogue. The conflict data was further analysed in Hillyard, P., Rolston, B. and Tomlinson, M. (2005) [Poverty and Conflict in Ireland: An International Perspective](#). Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency/Institute of Public Administration.

About the survey

The PSE NI 2012 living standards survey gathered evidence from a representative sample of 988 households with 2,311 individuals – 624 children (under 18 years old) and 1,687 adults. Of the adults, 80 per cent agreed to answer the ten Troubles questions.

Author/s: *Mike Tomlinson*

Publication date: Thursday, November 28, 2013

Attachments:

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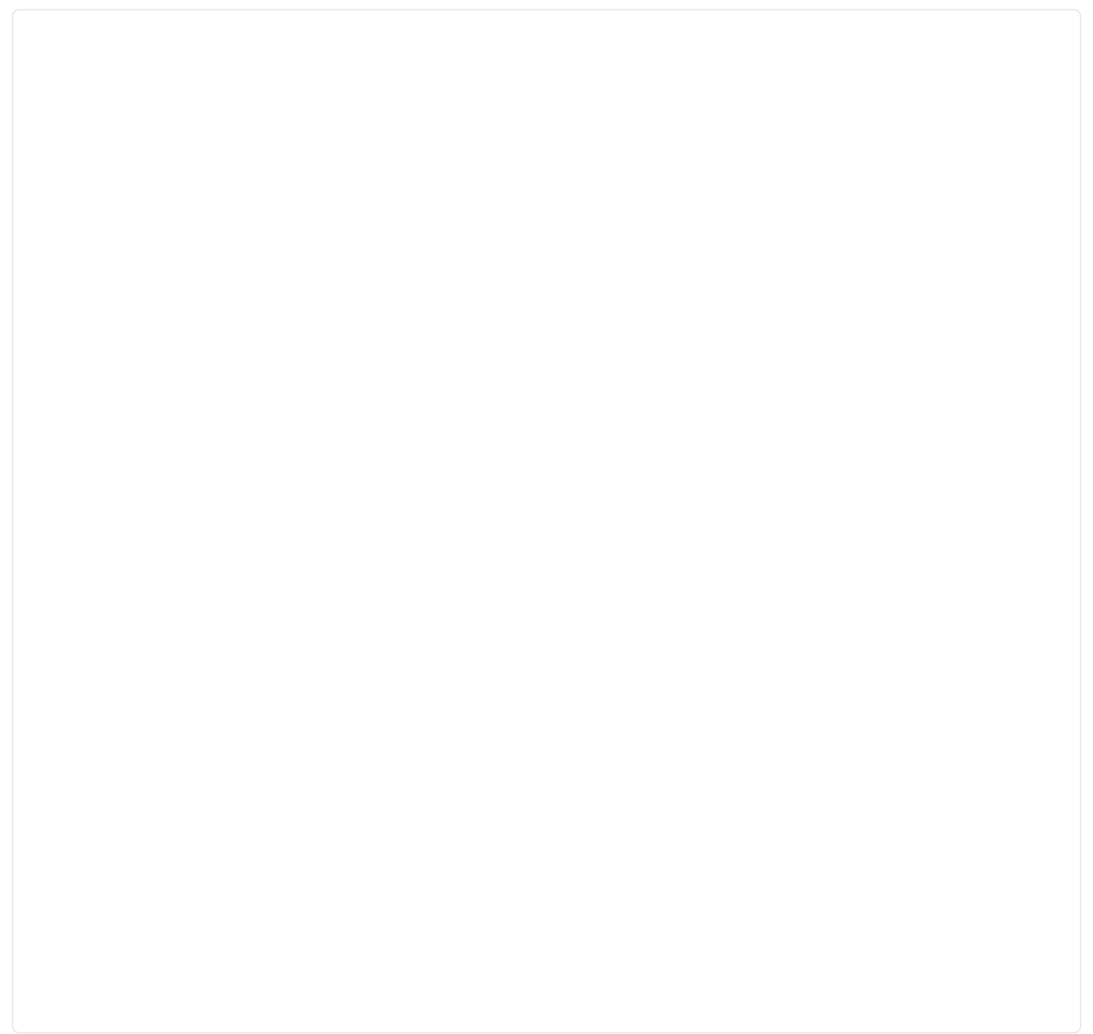
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NI 2012: Experience of Troubles by groups

This scatter plot allows you to compare the experiences of the Troubles by 'community background', i.e. by the 'Protestant' or 'Catholic' community in which people were brought up, or with which they identify. On a scatter plot, the x axis of the graph relates to one group and the y axis to the other. On the graph, each point the percentage with this experience and its position on the graph is determined by the percentage of each of the groups being compared who have had these experiences. Points above the straight line running at an angle of 45° indicate that the group on the y axis (in this case Protestants) are more likely to have had this experience and points below this line indicate that the group on the x axis (in this case Catholics) are more likely to have had this experience.



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Overview

There are 17 data points on the chart (a close friend injured and a close relative killed are both at the same point, 11% Protestants and 9% Catholics). Four of these, Protestants are slightly more likely than Catholics to have experienced the following events: a close friend killed, a close relative killed, a close friend injured, and to have witnessed a bomb explosion, but these differences are not statistically significant. In fact, for ten of the 17 experiences there are no statistically significant differences between Catholics and Protestants. The most striking

and statistically significant differences are that Catholics were 4.4 times as likely to have experienced a house search by the police and/or army, 1.5 times as likely to know someone imprisoned because of the conflict, 1.4 times as likely to have had a close relative injured and 1.3 times as likely to have witnessed gunfire and an assault. [Catholics are 2.3 times as likely to have been injured themselves but this result cannot be regarded as statistically valid because of small cell sizes.]

Survey details

The Northern Ireland PSE living standards survey gathered evidence from a representative sample of 988 households with 2,311 individuals – 624 children (under 18 years old) and 1,687 adults. Of the adults, 80% agreed to answer the ten Troubles questions.

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KarenS

Thu,
05/12/201
3 - 6:55pm
[permalink](#)

The Troubles in Northern Ireland

The Catholics population was obviously terrorised by the State at that time, no doubt because of IRA bombings etc, but what about the poverty levels pre and post 1988 – has peace brought a better standard of living for either/both communities? Could you direct me to these figures please?

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Sasha

Wed,
01/01/201
4 - 9:38pm
[permalink](#)

You will find these figures

You will find these figures here: <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research/going-backwards-1983-2012>.

Sasha (Moderator)

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Sunday, 20 April 2014

A Week of Goodbyes

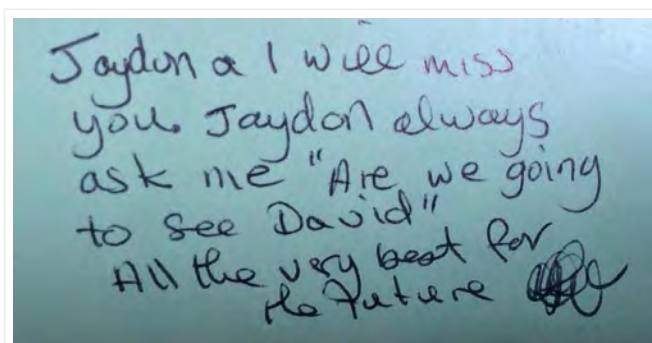


Goodbye No. 8

I'm so relieved the goodbyes are over.

For the last 5 years, I've worked as an Early Years Library Outreach Worker, delivering story and song times to children under 5 in children's centres across the London Borough of Enfield on behalf of the library service. On the 5th of April 2014, the team of 5 people that I was a part of was reduced to a team of 1 person.

The government says this is down to necessary 'austerity measures'; the council call it 'leaner working'; the press call it the impact of 'The Cuts'; activists call it 'the war against the welfare state'; for me it's a job lost. But many of the children just thought it was my birthday.



During my last week of work, I documented the goodbyes in pictures and words. This blog post is formed of selected extracts from those days. The gifts and goodbyes offered up by the

Some quotations:

"There are trivial truths and there are great truths. The opposite of a trivial truth is plainly false. The opposite of a great truth is also true."

Niels Bohr

"Forgiveness means giving up all hope for a better past."

Lily Tomlin

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."

Audre Lorde

Art exists in order to recover the sense of life, in order to feel objects, to make the stone stony"

Viktor Shklovsky

"And we'll keep working on the problem we know we'll never solve
Of Love's uneven remainders, our lives are fractions of a whole.
But if the world could remain within a frame like a painting on a wall.
Then I think we would see the beauty.
Then we would stand staring in awe at our still lives posed like a bowl of oranges,
like a story told by the fault lines and the soil."

Conor Oberst

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children and families I worked with are, I think, startling evidence of how much they valued this important service, and what it was about it that they valued.

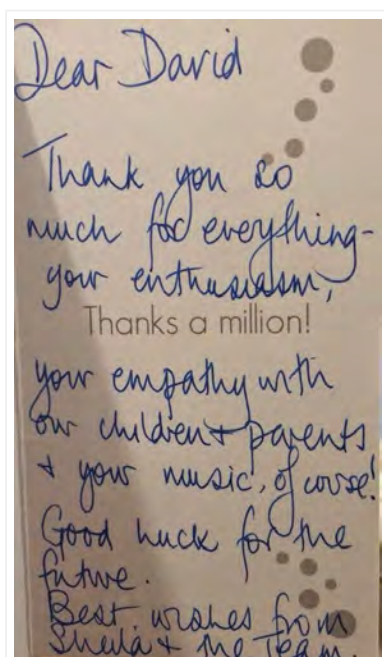
For me, this job loss is an opportunity to try and to do some of the things I do outside of children's work as a freelancer. It's not *my* job I'm mourning; it's *the* job I'm mourning, and the jobs of so many other people providing our public services.



The Last Week

As I approach the last week, the thing I'm finding the hardest is dealing with other people's sadness: having to navigate so many other people's feelings about me having my job cut when I've already got so many of my own. I feel sad because I'm leaving a job I've loved for the last 5 years. I feel lost, scared of the free-fall that is freelance. I'm also sad for the children and parents losing the service my team and I provided. And on the personal level, I'm saying goodbye to so many people I've worked with, the children I've seen growing up, the colleagues and parents I've come to know.

At every centre, when I tell my groups I'm going, everyone wants to share with me how sad they feel about it. Everyone wants to tell me how much they value what I do, the effect that my team and I have had on them and their children. People tell me how angry it makes them. They ask me what I'm going to do. They have so many suggestions about what I might do. Everyone offers advice and sympathy. Next week I expect they'll also be offering presents and goodbye speeches.



I'm overwhelmed by all the love and the sadness. I'm overwhelmed by the scatter-gun advice. I'm overwhelmed by the powerlessness of all concerned. I know it's all meant well. I mostly manage to take it in good grace and save my tears for the walk home.

The worst thing is that when the kids are sad, their eyes are so big, their hearts so exposed. The worst thing is imagining the ones who look forward to seeing me every week arriving at

the centre to find I'm not there. Too young to understand why; so young that in the future they probably won't remember I was ever there at all. Young enough to feel the loss but too young to remember the joy we had when they look back.



Goodbye No. 1

These pictures are the emotional punches from this morning's sessions.



This proves they paid attention to my jelly preferences during recent 'Jelly on a Plate' miming!



There was also a box of chocolates and one group of parents and carers gave me £70 in Amazon vouchers. I was not expecting such kindness and I felt very awkward accepting it.

Goodbye No. 2

I've just said goodbye to a group of children with severe special needs that I've been working

with for 5 years.



Goodbye No. 3

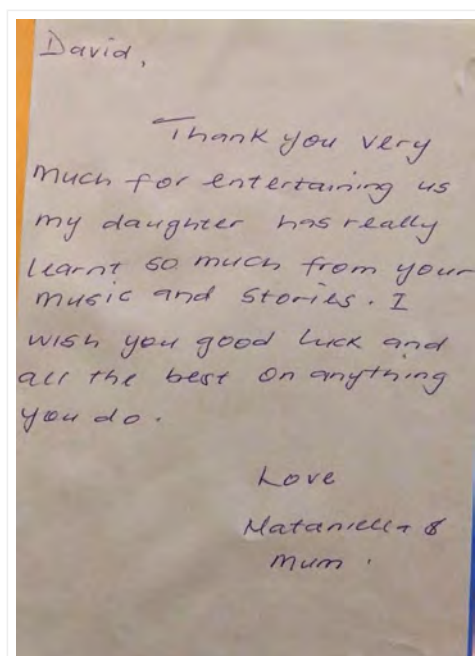
The send-off at the third centre was very different to the other two, which reflects (in my view) some of the social issues surrounding that particular centre. The staff presented me with this present. "We would have wrapped it and we were going to make cards, but we had Ofsted this week and we haven't had a chance."



The parents there are understandably more focused on scouring the job notices put up on the walls and taking down the details of the next food bank than they are the disappearance of the middle class white boy that sings songs with their kids. Many of them didn't know I was leaving, but they still wished me well, and at the end of my session they all lined up to take pictures of me with their children.

Goodbye No. 4

A nursery group (which includes a child called Hope) and a community group (where I first met Hope as a baby). The nursery children were chanting my name as I entered the room. That group have always treated me like a rock star. Dzifa was so sad that she insisted on hugging me mid-'Wind the Bobbin Up'. It's quite hard to play a ukulele, comfort a child and stop yourself from bursting into tears, but I just about managed it. At the end they collectively mobbed me for hugs as they normally do. Hope ran to the door and tried to stop me leaving. Her smiling face was the last thing I saw of the nursery room. The nursery teacher told me how angry she was at the government for cutting a valuable service. "The children love you. So many of them will never sit still and listen, but for you they do. Even the ones with special needs."



Then, with tears behind my eyes, I left for my session with the community group, which again was full of beautiful and heartbreaking sweetness. The deputy head dropped by to thank me and pass on her frustration. I thanked her for taking time out to do so. "You're part of the furniture here... In a good way!" she said. I know what she means and yet it surprises me how valued a person who drops by one morning a week can become. Who would have thought I would become a familiar and safe thing in the lives of so many children? Certainly not me. But I was. For a short time.





Goodbye No. 5

I missed yesterday's session at this children's centre due to a train-line power failure, so I was glad to be going back today. The management were very nice and gave me £25 worth of iTunes vouchers and a card full of sincerity. The group I used to do there on Wednesdays was a childminder's group until, in mid-February, like most of the childminder's services in children's centres across the borough, it was closed down and replaced by a community group who I delivered story-times to for a few short weeks. Of all the groups to fail to say goodbye to that was probably the best as I'd known them for the shortest time.



The session I've just said goodbye to was run for children and families currently in temporary accommodation. The service that runs it offers these children the opportunity to play with toys they don't have, connecting their families up with other services and helping them to parent and live in a culture that often sees them through a nasty tabloid lens. It helps them through tough times. It also allows a community to grow, creating friendships and support networks across a diverse group of people. The mums there are warm and tough. They are making the best out of hard times. I provided a song-time at the end. Have done for years. I've seen that community and its children grow and change. I've watched the team supporting them, winning their trust, being super-inspiring, kind people.

That service has also been decimated by this round of cuts. Now, out of a full roster of sessions, they only have the funding to run one a week, and that's currently only sustainable for less than a year. They're seeking out new funding options, and they're canny and committed so perhaps they'll find some. If they don't, it will cease to be entirely. It will no longer be providing these things for people in temporary accommodation. Families who have no homes will be missing this essential lifeline. Future communities will not grow. The reduction of this service and its possible demise is so much sadder than the loss of mine.

At the end of today's song-time, I was presented with gifts. The group of 50 or so parents had clubbed together and bought me a box of biscuits in a red bus tin (a reference to my most popular song request), a mug with a D on it, and £30 worth of M&S vouchers. I was humbled and guilty as I received these and a big card full of carefully crafted messages written out by people who generally do not speak or write English. (One of the things they get in the session is help filling in all the barriers disguised as forms that they're expected to complete.)

Gifts sincerely given are not things you should refuse. And so this middle class man with a relatively stable existence accepted these moving expressions of appreciation from a group of poor people with unstable lives.

As I was about to begin 'The Goodbye Song', one of the mums said, "Let us not sing goodbye. We don't want you to go. We hope you come back. No goodbye today."

But I sang goodbye anyway because I won't be coming back.



Goodbye No. 6

The nature of life means there was always going to be at least one session where the majority of the regular parents and children just happened to not be in, and that was the case for my community group at this centre. So the sadness there was about who I couldn't say goodbye to rather than the goodbyes to the kids in the room, many of whom were new.

Luckily, last week I said goodbye to Maya and her mum. I've known Maya since she was 2 months old. She's now coming up for 4 and is one of the most delightful children I've met. Her mum does an amazing job of bringing her up, and also does great (unpaid) work supporting the other parents at the group (not that she'd see what she does as work). This centre is another one in a deprived area with lots of complicated issues affecting the people who attend the sessions. The staff and parents like Mia's mum do an important and tough job with little thanks and increasingly dwindling resources.

The craft activity that the Stay and Play worker ran today was making goodbye cards. More children's drawings to add to the pile. I could put on an exhibition with the amount I've been given. From the staff, I got booze and chocolates. I got a bottle of wine this morning too. It's felt a little counter-intuitive walking around the schools and the church where today's centres are based carrying hootch.



Then I did my sessions with the daycare groups (0-2's and 3-5's). I've seen those children grow up. Some of them I knew as babies, and helped contribute to their first experiences of stories, songs and socialising with their peers. All the younger nursery children kept saying, "See you next week." They couldn't get their heads round it.



When I arrived in the 3-5's room with my bags of presents, this was how it went:

"Are you going to read us that bright coloured book?"

"Um... No. That's not a book it's a card."

"What's in the shiny bag?"

"It's a present."

"David, it's my birthday on Saturday!"

"That's nice. Well, you know what, it's not even my birthday but everywhere I go this week people keep giving me presents. I don't know why."

"That's because it's your last day at nursery, David!"

"I guess it is."

"Tyrell gave me a spaceman when it was his last day at nursery. He was a good friend."

Well, I didn't give them any spacemen but I did sometimes read stories about them. And imaginary spacemen are more reliable than plastic ones. You can't lose them or break them and they can fly anywhere you like.



I was presented with a box of Milk Tray by Jesse, who I first met when he was attending the community group. When he started, he had behavioural issues, and I've seen him grow from a disruptive and aggressive presence to a calm, thoughtful and warm one in the time I've known him. That's got a hell of a lot to do with the staff of the children's centre and the nursery, and the work they've done with him and his family.

I told Jesse that I'd known him as a baby and that now he was big. He grinned all the way across his face and stood up to show me that he's now by far the tallest in his class. The amount of change a human body goes through in the early years is so extreme. It always shocks and awes me when I pay attention to it.

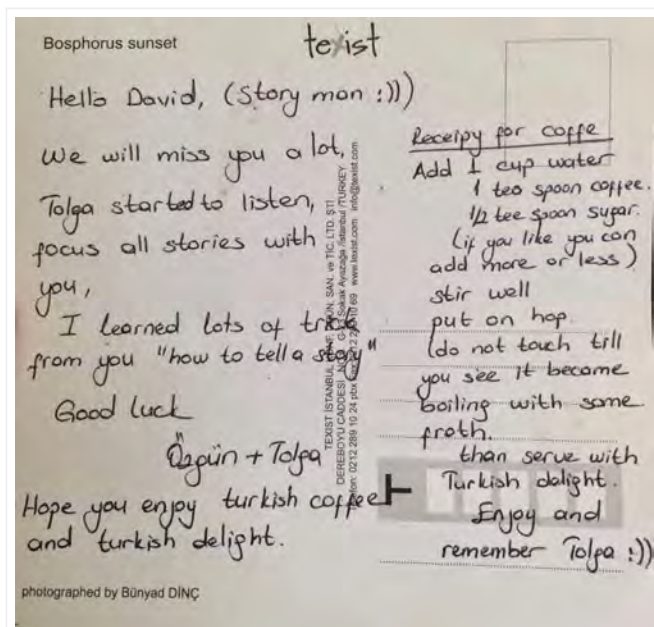
As I left the room, he called out, "Have a lovely day, David."

Goodbye No. 7

My last visit to the first children's centre I did a story-time in back in 2008. One of the mums made me a cake.



From Tolga and his family, Turkish Delight and a Turkish coffee making set with carefully written instructions on how to use it and good luck charms attached to the bag.



Heartbreakingly, one family gave me a card with a photo of their two boys on the front holding up a sign saying 'thank you'. Inside their mum put her email in case I need testimonials from parents in the future.



From the centre, more booze and another giant, brightly coloured card full of messages and hand prints.



In the middle of the song-time, the parents stopped me singing so that their children could take turns singing their songs to me: Turkish, Polish and French songs sung by tiny people with shaking voices. Then afterwards, more photos, all the staff and mums hugging me tightly. "We will remember you, David."


Just one more punch in the heart left to go.

Goodbye No. 8

And this is where we started. Two weeks later, and I'm still relieved the goodbyes are over. I still feel overwhelmed and honoured and guilty to have received so many tokens of love. But those tokens are not really for me. They aren't really even about me. I'm not the story. The communities are. It's those communities that have lost out. I don't want to have my old job back, but I want that job and jobs like it to exist again. The communities I served were diverse and varied; they have different issues and different circumstances, and they all valued the service my team provided. We weren't cut because we were failing to hit our targets. We weren't cut because our service didn't work and wasn't valued. We were cut because working, functional important services are being cut across the country.

Some people see these cuts as unfortunate but inevitable. Others see them as avoidable and objectionable. However you see it, I hope that this record will show that the services we're losing were valuable.

Posted by [goosefat101](#) at 03:39

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2 comments:



InfoCourier 20 April 2014 at 08:46

@splurgg here. Wonderful read. Tore me up. What freelance service will you offer?

[Reply](#)



goosefat101 20 April 2014 at 09:07

Tore me up a few times writing and living it too! You can find the sort of stuff I'll be doing over here: <https://dave-pickering.squarespace.com/hire-me-to-tell-stories/> I'm really glad the piece touched you. It isn't my loss that's the big loss here though, it's the loss of services. Thanks so much for reaching out.

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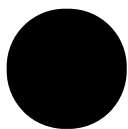
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Cities The Enfeld Experiment

The Enfeld Experiment: London's fortunes distilled into a single borough

The Guardian's senior economics commentator kicks of a new series looking at the challenges facing the London suburb where he grew up – and the ideas that might offer a radical fix



Aditya Chakraborty

Monday 3 February 2014 07:00 GMT



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How do you fix a broken economy? No bigger question faces post-crash Britain. Yet after six years of pledges of virtue – of borrowing less, exporting more, greater investment, factories not banks – the Westminster classes have led us back to their favourite diversion: blowing hard into a balloon marked "house prices".

Meanwhile, the existential problems of how Britain pays its way in the world, and how its people earn a decent living, without depending on credit or welfare, go ignored. Indeed, the most intriguing answer I've seen lies not in the beartraps George Osborne and Ed Balls set for each other – but 10 miles north of parliament, in Enfeld.

"The first requisite to happiness is that a man be born in a famous city," said Euripides. Easy for the old Athenian to say; he didn't know Enfield. Hardly anyone does – take it from me, born and brought up in the eastern half of the borough, an area called Edmonton. When mentioning my home turf, I have got used to the look of puzzlement that settles on the faces of cosmopolitan journalists or government folk, more familiar with the souks of Marrakech than this unglamorous patch of north London.

More fool them: Edmonton played a vital part in Britain's recent history; it is troublingly representative of the state we're in, and it just might offer us a glimpse at how to fix things. Let's start with the past. Down the road from where I grew up, John Ambrose Fleming in 1904 invented the diode valve – and thus paved the way for the electronic devices we know today. His neighbour, Charles Belling, came up with the infrared fire bar, which begat the electric stove and the electric heater.

Edmonton designed and made the Lee rifle and Bren gun; it gave the BBC its transmitters; and British households their first solid-state colour TVs and dishwashers. It was home to the names that defined 20th-century light industry: Belling, Ferguson, Mazda, EMI, Glover and Main, Thorn, MK Electric. Their factories tended to cluster around the Great Cambridge Road, a hub which industrial historian Jim Lewis [calls Britain's equivalent to Silicon Valley](#), so profound was its technological innovation and manufacturing.

Between them, the property developers, commercial landlords and PR agencies have turned London into shorthand for banks, unaffordable fats and restaurants serving caramel-coated bricks ([yes, bricks](#)). But places such as Edmonton (and Croydon and Acton) remind us of the capital's role as a site of production, not just exotic consumerism. With all this industry came thousands upon thousands of jobs. Not jobs as we now know them: minimal training, zero hours, here-one-minute-gone-the-next-and-don't-you-even-dream-of-asking-for-a-payrise. These were careers.

Right around the corner from where Belling used to make cookers is [St Catherine's House care home for the elderly](#), where, after lunch, you might find Reg Searles in the TV lounge. Now 83, Reg joined a local furniture maker at the age of 14 on sixpence-a-halfpenny an hour – not much, but enough to keep him and his widowed mother. In his time, Enfield wasn't an obscurity but somewhere people commuted to from all over north London. By the end, he was the R&D engineer, in charge of buying machinery and

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equipment for an 11-acre site. Sounds a good gig, I think. "It does, dunnit?"

There you have it: a tale of working-class social mobility, which has nothing to do with the usual clichés mourning the end of grammar schools but relies instead on hard work and a steady job. The point about that way of life is that it was only recently snuffed out. Ask Dean Barclay. In 1980, he joined the Royal Small Arms Factory – home of the Lee Enfield – as an apprentice, one of 30 it took on every year. So many worked there that at clocking of "it would take half an hour, easy" to nose your car down its mile-and-a-half slipway.

Neil Rousell, a senior council executive who came to work here three decades ago, remembers industrial eastern Enfield as a place of working-class "prosperity". Today, he says, its residents are "working poor". The area has fallen from prosperity to poverty within two generations.

Suburban problems, city problems

So how does a suburb like Edmonton turn into the kind of post-industrial fotsam that residents of Rochdale and Byker might also recognise? How does it go from a place of opportunity to being nicknamed "Shanktown" on account of its street violence and stabbings?

Well, first, any semblance of a strong local economy must be killed. Blame whoever you like for the demise of manufacturing – dopey bosses not checking their rearviews for the foreign competition, the three recessions of Thatcher and Major, New Labour writing of industry to chase the [mirage of a "knowledge economy"](#) – the outcome has been a manmade disaster. Some wards in Enfield now rank among the 10% most deprived in England. While the national unemployment rate has dropped to just above 7%, almost 30% of the workforce around my old home in Edmonton Green is out of a job. When Spain hit similar levels of unemployment a couple of years ago, the story was judged big enough for BBC bulletins and Westminster anguish. In an ignorable corner of north London, it doesn't merit a mention.

Edmonton's decline is made starker by the way London sticks the poor at the end of the rich's driveways. The borough cleaves in two along the Great Cambridge: east is where the industry was and the deprivation is; while the further west you go, the more stockbroker-belt things get. On one side of a dual carriageway, you're in Surrey; on the other, Sunderland.

Distilled in a single borough is all the pathology and injustice of the British economic model. Statistics suggest that a woman living in the poorest parts of Edmonton can expect to die 14 years earlier than one in the leafy west. Yet they'll live just a 15-minute drive apart. The second way to destroy a place like Edmonton is to starve it of everything from political engagement to nightbuses.

A couple of years ago, I met a Labour councillor in a break from the weekend doorknocking. When had his constituency party last been addressed by a frontbencher? A long pause: before Tony Blair was made PM.

I nagged a shadow cabinet member to come over. When she turned up, the atmosphere was somewhere between the reveal on the Secret Millionaire and a Stone Roses reunion. One attendee looked dangerously close to asking if she could heal his scrofula.

Eastern Enfield is also handicapped by some of the worst public transport links anywhere in north London, with no tube and only two trains from some stations into the city every hour. Graduate Antony Blacker can tell you what that's cost him: he was rejected from a post in the borough next door, Barnet, because it wasn't practical for him to commute by bus.

The final nail is to stick your failing economy in a city where housing is scarce and rocketing in price. Edmonton was once part of the classic urban cycle: a first move for immigrants heading out of inner London with a bit of money and a yen for a garden; a last-but-one move for the white working class, already eyeing up a retirement bungalow in the home counties. But when the economy went south, most people with a bit of money scattered. Now the area (where you can still get [flats for under £100,000](#)) gets poorer residents displaced by gentrification or forced out by benefit cuts, as well as immigrants just arriving in the UK. It's used as a dumping ground by inner-London councils stuck with people they can't house. The social tensions this has created might have been better managed: only, previous council administrations had neither the cash nor the will to do so. In 2006, the deputy leader of the then-Tory council, a charmer called Michael Lavender, compared Edmonton to "[a UN feeding station](#)". What was once a home for families escaping inner-city grime is slowly turning into a B&B for those out of options.

Midway through my chat with Reg, 72-year-old Daphne Bergin barges in to discuss her first job as a dressmaker. "The school lined up the work for us." Youth worker Sarah Edoo says that the only recruiters now outside schools are gangs, and drug dealers looking for runners. She walks me round a housing estate, sometimes referred to as "Junkieville", and points out a recent drug bust: the garden fence is pulled down on all sides, a board is nailed over the doorway.

A lack of employment doesn't mean everyone falls into gangs or drugs. I know plenty of hardworking Edmonton residents, some doing two or three jobs to get by. But conversation after conversation with locals over the last few months has touched on how the cratering of the labour market has left a vacuum, filled in part by an economy of despair.

Community activist [Bernard Rees](#) can tell you about a neighbouring car garage, where last year he noticed mattresses and washing hanging up, as a group of people began living there. He'll also point out the Tesco opposite, where the toilets get flooded

because rough sleepers from the park use them to wash.

Or listen to [Mick Lees](#), police inspector turned youth worker, recall the time he showed a recruitment ad to a local boy, only to be told jobs paying £10,000 a year weren't for Edmonton people and that "I know my place". Statements like that will no doubt prompt the glib to accuse locals of living in an aspiration-free zone: a mental Benefits Street. But do what I did one evening and go for a drink with Antony and two of his mates. They're more enterprising than Iain Duncan Smith could ever ask: all graduates, all working and using their evenings to develop a [smartphone app](#).

Does being in Enfield hold them back? Instantly and unanimously: yes. Antony describes how he came out of the train station the night before, only for a car to pull up and those inside to jump out and bottle a passerby. Colin Sougrin tops that: a few years ago, he was coming home after a soft drink at the local pub, only to get stabbed by strangers seven times. Right on cue, a man lurches up to our table, snorts a line of cocaine, then tries to start a fight. He apparently didn't appreciate our chat about job interviews.

Once that's broken up, Aaron Safrey finishes his thought: "No one ever comes to Enfield scouting for talent, offering uni places or good jobs. Nothing happens here."

A change is gonna come?

Safrey, a 24-year-old sociology graduate, might just be wrong about that. A series of shocks have forced the council to try new ways to turn Edmonton around. First, there was the spate of youth killings in 2008-9, in which [five Edmonton men were murdered within just a few months](#). Then came the riots of summer 2011, in which Enfield [shops were looted and the Sony warehouse torched](#).

On top of all that, the local council (now in Labour hands) faces year upon year of coalition-dictated spending cuts, so that by 2017 it will be nearly half the size it was in 2010. The lesson local politicians took away was that either eastern Enfield finds new ways of earning a crust, or economic decline will turn into something far nastier.

What happened next is an object lesson in how a government gets radicalised. First the council called in an expensive consultancy, who produced a glossy report that offered the standard failed prescriptions of luring in more investment. Then it turned to a cheaper thinktank, whose pamphlet showed the depths of social deterioration. Finally, one councillor, Alan Sitkin, cajoled two business school academics, [Karel Williams and Sukhdev Johal](#) (pdf), to take a look. They did so for free; the only proviso being that the local authority should stage a conference to discuss findings.

So now you have a Californian-origin local politician consulting a Welshman living in Manchester and a Punjabi from Essex on how to rescue an economy in north London. It sounds like the setup for a joke; instead, it's yielded a series of radical ideas. Bundle them up and call them the Enfield Experiment.

One of the academics' arguments goes like this: if Tesco/EDF/Lloyds/AN Other big business make millions each year from the custom of local households, businesses and the council, why shouldn't they plough some of that back into Enfield, by giving more business to local suppliers or hiring local staff to do skilled jobs?

The way Sitkin tells it, he and another councillor called in the big six energy firms and played good cop-bad cop, asking each company representative to give more of their local work to local contractors with local staff – or run the risk of being named and shamed in the local press. "Some just walked out; others said, 'It's not me, guv, talk to my supplier.'" But two bit, including British Gas. That story has, I suspect, been somewhat seasoned over time – and BG might not play as nicely as the council hope. But there remains a prospect that thousands of houses in Edmonton could be insulated by BG under its green obligations and using local companies with local workers.

If that comes of, the beneficiaries might include Steven (he's asked us not to publish his surname): 52 this year, open-faced and about as keen to work as anyone I've ever met. Going by his career history, Steven is an all-round grafter – or was, until his father died and his life got a bit out of control. He ended up sleeping in railway stations and lugging around his stuff for so long that he developed a double hernia. "I used to walk the streets crying and wondering why this had happened to me when I'm not a bad man."

Steven's settled down; he's a fat (furnished entirely by his friends) and won custody of his teenage son. He's also got an exercise book full of jobs he's applied for in the past four months, but has been in talks with a company that might end up getting some of the BG work. What would a steady job mean to him? "I could give my son some experiences, taking him to the rockclimbing centre, maybe on holiday for the first time."

Sitkin is now fixing up meetings with banks, to hassle them into lending more to local companies. By this summer, the civic centre will launch its own energy company, taking the heat produced by a giant local waste incinerator, and flog it to businesses in the area. It is about to start its own market-gardening company, which will grow and sell vegetables across the borough and north London – just like the Lea Valley used to do. Rather than pay extortionate sums to private landlords to shelter those in need of emergency accommodation, it's setting up a property company to buy and do up homes.

All this, I think you'll agree, is a long way from collecting bins, filling potholes and translating leaflets into Farsi. Some of these ideas are being tried elsewhere, but I haven't come across any other council pulling on so many different levers so hard and all at once. Some of it has a whiff of [Joe Chamberlain and his gas-and-water socialism](#) (no bad thing in my book). But I think it's driven less by idealism than by a necessary realism.

[Communities](#) such as Enfield have been let down repeatedly over the past three decades by Westminster myopia and by big businesses sucking cash out of their areas and offering only sops of community social responsibility in return. No gelled frontbencher or fush local employer will ride in and save a place like Edmonton; its representatives have to play whatever cards they have.

"You could bring in IT firms from Korea or Japan, as happened in Scotland and Wales – it'd last for 10 years and then they'd move on and the employment would die out," says Rob Leak, council chief executive. "But if you actually root the activity and embed the companies in the area and its history, you could create sustainable industries".

There are plenty of reasons to believe at least parts of the Enfield experiment could go wrong. This is uncharted territory for the council, which already has its hands full trying to deal with cuts and the fallout from benefit changes. And local councils have long been the punchline in the joke that is British democracy.

That's why the Guardian will track the Enfield Experiment for the next couple of years: to see at which hurdles it falls, what lessons get learned and how many successes chalked up. Perhaps it's in the overlooked places such as Enfield – [or Salford, setting up a local bank](#) or Preston, concentrating its council spending on neighbourhood businesses – that the really interesting ideas are generated on how to mend a busted economy. We'll judge them by whether Steven gets a job; whether Antony and Aaron feel less trapped in their own neighbourhood.

It's either that or spend the next two years listening to Miliband and Cameron bicker over who's got the bigger peashooter to aim at the banks. I know which I'd rather follow.

If you know Enfield and would like to share your thoughts, experiences or photos please email enfield.experiment@theguardian.com, leave a comment below or tweet us at @guardiancities, using the hashtag #EnfieldExperiment

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Save our safety net

Losing your job or falling ill shouldn't mean losing your home.

But with more and more of us finding it hard to make ends meet, we need a safety net now more than ever.

Join us in calling for no more cuts to our safety net!



Save our safety net

Losing your job or falling ill shouldn't mean losing your home.

Help should be at hand for ordinary families to keep their home while they get back on their feet. However, many of us remain at great risk of spiralling into homelessness if we lose our job or get ill.

Please join our campaign to:

- stop any further cuts to the housing safety net
- make sure there is enough help so families don't lose their homes while they're

22,972 have signed so far

21st Jan 2015

amy has signed

20th Jan 2015

David has signed

19th Jan 2015

getting back on their feet

- fix the root causes of our housing crisis by building more affordable homes

I agree that people who've hit hard times through no fault of their own deserve to know there will be some decent help to stop the worst happening.

Matt has signed

16th Jan 2015

ATIF has signed

15th Jan 2015

Natalie has signed

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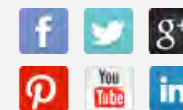
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Cuts to children's services like 'Armageddon'

Vulnerable children at risk as services countrywide struggle with post-Baby P increase in referrals, and the coalition government's 25% spending cuts

Patrick Butler

theguardian.com, Wednesday 8 September 2010 11.59 BST

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Barnet council faces cuts of up to 50% in grants, and up to 20% in its core budget over next three years. Photograph: Rex

"Armageddon." Not my words, or those of an irate opposition politician, but those reportedly used by Barnet council's head of children's services, Robert McCulloch-Graham, to describe the financial position faced by his department. It's looking at cuts of up to 50% in grants, and up to 20% in

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its core budget over the next three years.

At the same time as its resources begin to dwindle rapidly, Barnet children's services has been grappling with a doubling of demand - a 50 per cent increase in the number of referrals to its children's social care department in the past two years. This is what I call, in [my Society Guardian piece today](#), the overheating post-Baby P economy of children's services.

Barnet is not alone in the "armageddon" zone. Here's Anthony May, director of children and young people's services at Nottinghamshire county council, writing for the Nottingham Post:

"We have seen a 56 per cent increase in referrals over the last year, an 83 per cent increase over the past two years in the number of children subject to [child protection](#) plans and a 24 per cent increase in the number of children coming into council care over the same period."

Nottinghamshire said in February it was [having to spend an extra £1.7m a year for the next three years on children's safeguarding](#), at a time when the council needs to [take £150m out of its budget](#) over the next three years. That looks very much like child protection is one of the very few areas of council business to enjoy a spending increase.

What of Haringey, which is where the recent crisis in child protection originated? The council [needs to make savings of £60m](#) over three years. Yet its children and young people service is a big contributor to the council's overall projected revenue £6m overspend as it struggles to cope with increasing numbers of referrals, and children taken into care.

Other councils reportedly contemplating cuts to children's services include: [Birmingham](#) (£13m, 1,500 jobs to go); [Somerset county council](#) (£17m); and [Hampshire county council](#) (£24m, 180 jobs)

So how do councils pull back from Armageddon and reshape services? Here's McCulloch-Graham:

"We will be doing much more targeted early intervention work, enabling families to support themselves and reducing the demand on the acute specialist and more expensive provision," he said. "In order to achieve this, we will absorb the reduction of resources in our more universal and general services."



Early intervention is the Holy Grail for child protection: getting to at risk families before they become fully-fledged and expensive "problems" requiring safeguarding intervention. The trick is how you invest in early intervention without divesting in crisis intervention.

Barnet says it will pay for it by taking money from its "universal and general services": this is likely mean cuts to children's homes, connexions careers advice and other youth projects.

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mrnonnymouse

08 September 2010 12:25pm

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Eric Pickles has freed up local government to spend their money as they want, rather than central government deciding what gets spent where.

If the councils want to keep spending on child services they will need to cut elsewhere. If they don't do this then it is the councils who are failing our children, not central government.



Bjerkley

08 September 2010 12:28pm

3

No wonder the Coalition are starting to like local government so much.



cloudgroover

08 September 2010 12:44pm

2

The system of Government funding local council has been fundamentally underfunded for a couple of decades. Hence a slow and constant decline in local council services.



slowreader

08 September 2010 1:36pm

7

If the councils want to keep spending on child services they will need to cut elsewhere. If they don't do this then it is the councils who are failing our children, not central government.

Isn't this a bit like cutting the state pension in half, then claiming that if people die from hypothermia because they chose to eat instead of heat their home, that it's their own fault?

So much for a progressive budget. The tragedy is that there will probably be more cases of serious abuse due to the budget cuts, and that in contrast to Baby P, people will become resigned to it and offer a collective shrug in response.



byebyelabour

08 September 2010 1:51pm

1

Thanks Labour, and everyone who voted to keep them in power. The suffering is

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Flashingblade

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In some respects - not all but some - there is an argument that local authorities have relied on central government for too much funding and too much direction when it comes to safeguarding children.

Local authorities should now do what they should have started doing decades ago, that is, asking their public what they are prepared to spend to both support and protect children. Local public services can only do the best they can with what they've got so if children's services (which are massively overstretched anyway) are going to take a big hit then it's up to the local taxpayers to stump up the difference themselves or drastically lower their expectations and accept that even less children who need it will be supported or protected.



Bjerkley

09 September 2010 1:44pm

1

Flashingblade

local taxpayers to stump up the difference themselves or drastically lower their expectations and accept that even less children who need it will be supported or protected.

The problems with doing that (and this is what councils will have to be doing anyway) is that who is the council's first duty to - those who vote for them or the children who need protecting? Obviously they need to be accountable to their the electorate and taxpayers, but there are always going to be some issues that override that to an extent. I would say that child safety is one of them.



pro139

09 September 2010 2:18pm

6

I have, as yet, no idea what this government's priorities are, it certainly dosnt seem to be people

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Care for the elderly will be hit hard by local council cuts

Anna Bawden looks at how harsh spending cuts will hit those who use frontline services



Anna Bawden

The Guardian, Wednesday 8 September 2010

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Pam Edmonds, right, at the Clyst Day Centre for the elderly in Broadclyst, Devon. Photograph: Jim Wileman

Pam Edmonds, 88, has been attending a day care centre near Exeter twice a week for seven years. It has been a lifeline ever since spinal problems left her unable to walk. A resident of Broadclyst, a small village a few miles outside Exeter, Edmonds, who lives alone, was isolated until she was referred to the day centre. "I couldn't go out on my own ever," she says.

Attending the Clyst Centre has revolutionised her social life. Volunteer drivers collect her and take her home, and in addition to the quizzes, playing cards and games, a highlight is the hot meal. "The dinner's always very good," she says.

The centre, located in a building attached to Pinhoe and Broadclyst GP surgery, is run by Clyst Caring Friends, a charity set up at the request of

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local doctors to help bring patients into the surgery and reduce the hours GPs were having to spend making home visits. It quickly expanded to provide a range of day care services, including chiropody. But funding cuts mean that the centre's future is precarious.

Until now, Devon county council's adult social care has funded the 24 places. But cuts mean the charity is faced with a £6,000 (20%) shortfall. As a result, Carole Traer, co-ordinator of Clyst Caring Friends, has already reduced her hours from five to three days a week and she fears that unless the centre gets more support, it will have to shut in a couple of years with detrimental knock-on effects for other services.

"A lot of what we do is carer support," she says. "Without that, the people who are caring for their spouses at home would never have a day off."

The charity's financial problems are symptomatic of the scale of cuts faced by public services. Many organisations are already feeling the effect of the summer's emergency budget, when initial cuts of £6.2bn were made. And many more are bracing themselves for next month's comprehensive spending review as the government sets out to tackle a £156bn deficit. The Office for Budget Responsibility has calculated that more than 600,000 jobs in public services will be lost by 2016.

In an open letter to staff last week, Stephen Hughes, chief executive of Birmingham city council, wrote that because the NHS and, to a lesser extent, defence and education have been protected, the rest of the public sector – including local authorities – will have to cut spending by 30% or more. "Our best estimate at present is that the city council will need to reduce its net expenditure by £330m over the next three to four years. That is about a third of our net spend ... It is really difficult to convey how big a problem that is."

Birmingham, Glasgow and Leeds have been identified as the areas that will suffer the biggest public sector job losses in the next few years, according to a recent report by the Local Futures Group. But it is in rural areas such as Castle Morpeth, in Northumberland, where the public sector accounts for 52.6% of total jobs, that the impact of the cuts will be much greater.

According to public sector trade union Unison, 22,000 local government jobs have already been axed in the past year, and it predicts hundreds of thousands more. The government has pledged to protect frontline services from cuts but Dave Prentis, Unison's general secretary, points out that if you reduce administrators and back office support staff, then "the frontline crumbles".

Analysis by Unison has found that care homes, day centres, libraries and children's homes are already shutting their doors, while charges for services such as homecare, meals on wheels, and nursery places are increasing. A report published yesterday by the Learning Disability Coalition paints a bleak picture, with 10% of local authorities in England already cutting services for their learning disabled residents. In Bolton, the council is consulting on proposals that would limit care services to adults with critical or substantial needs by November.

Ann Gill, 41, who lives in Bolton, cares for her husband. He has a congenital heart condition and cannot walk far. She says that her family would struggle to cope if her husband no longer qualified for 14 hours of support. "Quite a substantial part of that [support] is at a moderate-care level. If that goes, he will lose his social time, which is in effect my respite care," says Gill. She also cares for her mother, who has Alzheimer's, and her mother-in-law, who has dementia.

But the cuts could additionally cost her the part-time job she has as carer to two women who receive a direct payment for eight hours' support a week. "If their package goes, I'd lose my job," she says. Speaking for many, she adds: "I'm worried about how I'm going to cope."

Some names have been changed.

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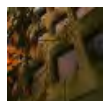
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enzee199

08 September 2010 9:19pm

1

You have to feel sorry for local authorities. They have virtually no autonomy from central government apart from setting the bin collection timetable and are now acting as the fall guy for the cuts which are really going to hurt.

The bulk of people receiving services fall into the substantial criteria yet authorities are only obliged to provide care for those in critical - the most serious cases. If they were to withdraw care from people in the substantial bracket it would place a lot of people at risk.

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How the coalition's cuts are affecting public services

Our specialist writers examine the impact of budget constraints on the different sectors

The Guardian, Wednesday 8 September 2010

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Randeep Ramesh on the NHS

The health secretary has wasted no time in reshaping parts of the health service. To save money, he has indicated that the popular NHS Direct service will be replaced with a cheaper alternative – although there are concerns over the lack of qualified staff to run it.

Andrew Lansley, who has a reputation for being pragmatic rather than ideological, also announced sell-off plans for the state-owned NHS Professionals, a jobs agency that has 50,000 workers on its books and places staff for 2m shifts a year at 77 health trusts.

But the biggest cull, so far, has been that of red tape. Regulators have been scrapped to save £180m in the health sector – consigning the agency that handles public health emergencies to oblivion and splitting up the fertility watchdog. Lansley also carved up the Foods Standards Agency, which had fought and lost a lobbying battle with the food industry over public health.

The real changes will come in the next two years. Under the government's plans, all 10 strategic health authorities and 152 primary care trusts are to be abolished, affecting more than 60,000 managers. It will be an expensive shakeup with costs of the changes pencilled in at £1.7bn. GPs will be handed responsibility for much of the £105bn health budget, removing the need for a layer of bureaucracy. There is more cutting to be done. Before the election none of the parties disagreed with the head of the NHS, Sir David Nicholson, who asked the health service for £20bn of savings by 2014. On taking office, Lansley warned that this "implied something like 3%-3.5%, probably about 3%, efficiency savings each year in the NHS". But he added: "We may need to do more, because we have increases in demand."

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Tom Clarke on welfare

Welfare is the single biggest slug of expenditure, and even the bureaucracy that funnels the cash is a mid-table spending department. It costs the Department for Work and Pensions around £8bn a year to distribute £145bn or so in benefits, and to chivvy those who receive them to do things such as find work.

Benefit administration – and the work of jobcentres – is the sort of less-glamorous function that will find itself doubly squeezed because of the partial protection being extended to more eye-catching hospitals and frontline troops. But cuts will hurt the poor, as was seen in the 1990s when penny-pinching and privatisation of housing benefit processing led to routine delays of several months in parts of the country.

Iain Duncan Smith is said to be fighting hard to defend the welfare-to-work element of the budget, and making some traction with his argument that a little expenditure here can reduce the bigger benefits bill. Even so, the work and pensions secretary's baseline in these negotiations is a sharp budget reduction. Casual staff have already been laid off from jobcentres, and I expect others to follow. Watch out for high-profile announcements about the involvement of businesses and charities being used to conceal the reality that there will be fewer resources available to help people find work.

Then there is pensions. The last government made great efforts to persuade poorer pensioners to claim benefits that topup pensions, as well as making these more generous. Pensioner poverty plunged as a result. Expect a big squeeze on this marketing and outreach work, because it is an easy cut to make, and because – by reducing take-up – it will yield bigger savings on the cash paid out. It's easy money, but money snatched from the most vulnerable of all.

Alison Benjamin on the voluntary sector

How can this government achieve its ambitions for a "big society" if the state withdraws support for voluntary organisations? With many grassroots groups across England – from community transport schemes to volunteer centres and children and young people's projects – already reporting that their local authority grants have been axed, that is the question being asked by voluntary sector leaders. Who will advise local residents wanting to take over and run the village library about issues such as VAT, Criminal Records Bureau checks and negotiating the lease, if the local council for voluntary services has closed? In more affluent areas, volunteers may be able to call on the expertise of colleagues and friends, not so in more deprived neighbourhoods.

Around a third of the voluntary sector's income, some £12.8bn, is from state funding in the form of grants and contracts, and more than £3bn a year is estimated to be at risk from cuts. Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude has suggested that voluntary and community groups can expect a bigger share of public funds following public spending cuts. Any gains are likely to be made by larger charities delivering public services through contracts, while small, community groups that rely on threatened council grants are unlikely to reap such benefits.

In London alone, a £26.4m grants scheme that funds 400 organisations is at risk if London Councils give the money back to individual councils to spend as they choose. With no obligation to spend it on voluntary organisations, councils are likely to withhold funds. But expect the voluntary sector to argue strongly, and perhaps with some success, that the speed and scale of spending cuts is damaging the foundations of big society, and that government departments must therefore be mindful of the need to strengthen civil society and look again at the impact of spending decisions on the sector.

Patrick Butler on children's services

Making cuts to services is hard at the best of times: it looks particularly

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tricky to be trying to make savings in the overheating, post-Baby Peter economy of children's social care, where councils are struggling with dramatically rising numbers of child protection referrals, more kids on the protection register and hundreds more youngsters being taken into care.

Schools, children's social care, family support and youth services typically account for around 45% of a council's total budget. The schools bit is protected, and many nervous councils are looking to effectively ringfence – and in some cases increase – spending on child protection.

The effect of that, however, will be to tighten the financial screw on the remaining "non-core" children's services: that could mean cuts of up to 30% in early intervention projects aimed at tackling problems in high-risk families before they spiral out of control and require the input of expensive safeguarding services.

Matt Dunkley, vice-president of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, warns crude cuts to early intervention will result in more referrals to child protection services further down the line. The association's submission to the comprehensive spending review will emphasise the wisdom of maintaining meaningful investment in prevention.

Dunkley uses the analogy of "a fence at the top of the cliff [prevention] and an ambulance at the bottom [child protection]". Take away the fence, he says, and you end up spending more money on ambulances at the bottom.

Councils have to think "radically and forensically" about how they reconfigure child protection services, he says. That means removing bureaucracy, and working more imaginatively with safeguarding colleagues in the police, schools and the NHS. It also means finding ways to retreat from the current, unsustainable risk-averse approach to child protection. That could be the hardest bit of all.

David Brindle on social care

As the single biggest component of local authority budgets, adult social care is braced to take a big hit. Just how big is unclear, but departmental directors are working on back-of-the-envelope figures of as much as 40% over three years.

John Jackson, director in Oxfordshire and spokesman on resources for the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, says you get to 40% by assuming a 25% cut across government and adding the rising costs of the ageing population, about 4% a year in real terms.

Like many other councils, Oxfordshire is embarking on a local consultation, asking people where cuts should fall. On a 40% basis, the target would be taking £80m out of a £200m pot, roughly half of which goes on older people's services and half on support for younger adults.

Some councils, including Warwickshire and Lincolnshire, are already looking at raising means-tested charges for services. Others, such as Derbyshire, intend to raise the threshold for service eligibility – although three in four councils already restrict eligibility to people assessed as in "substantial" or "critical" need.

Jackson thinks the potential of such measures is limited. "There are question marks over whether you can make significant savings by going to 'critical'," he says. "The real opportunities, in my view, lie in prevention of need for services."

Andrew Cozens, strategic adviser to Local Government Improvement and Development, agrees that councils will focus less on providing services and more on supporting people to make their own arrangements. "The idea that 'you should always get something' is being called into question," he says.

What could soften the cuts blow would be the transfer of NHS funds to plug some of the looming spending gaps. While this has been hinted at, social care leaders are not holding their breath.



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Rachel Williams on youth services

Young people seem to be bearing the brunt of the government's public spending cuts. George Osborne's scrapping of the Future Jobs Fund, which supported the creation of jobs for the young long-term unemployed, means that 90,000 work opportunities have been lost, according to Labour. The Young Person's Guarantee, which promises a job or training to every 18- to 24-year-old out of work for six months or more, is also being ditched. And many Connexions services, which offer those aged 13 to 19 careers advice and support with access to learning, expect to see their budget from the Department for Education (DfE) slashed by half.

The future of the so-called "September guarantee" of a sixth form, college or training place for every school leaver, is uncertain. Labour had pledged to extend it for another three years, but the coalition has only confirmed that it remains in place this year. And government-funded pilot schemes, such as the activity agreement, that were successfully engaging with the most vulnerable and hard to reach young people, so-called Neets – not in education, employment or training – are being ended early. In eight areas of the UK, 16- and 17-year-olds facing tough circumstances such as mental health issues, teenage pregnancy, homelessness and substance misuse were given learning and training opportunities, plus one-on-one support from a key worker. Managers at the West Yorkshire pilot, who had expected the programme to be rolled out nationally, say 60% of the 3,600 young people they have helped have moved into education and training. Another DfE pilot scheme being axed is Entry to Learning, which was aimed at raising Neets' self-esteem and confidence.

Charities and voluntary organisations providing activities for disadvantaged young people have also lost their funding. The last round of grants to the youth sector development fund, for example, has been cancelled.

Peter Hetherington on housing

Is housing becoming an increasingly devalued political currency? The coalition would argue, in varying degrees of enthusiasm, that its reform of the planning system should eventually lead to more homes being built. But the omens are not good. Builders, and housing associations, are despairing over the hasty decision to scrap housing targets alongside a regional planning regime. What to build, and where? No one really knows any longer.

The Home Builders' Federation, representing the big house-builders, has calculated that almost 60 local councils have either delayed housing plans, pending clarification of the reforms from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), or are refusing to determine house-building applications and are even removing allocated sites from previously adopted plans.

The National Housing Federation, representing not-for-profit housing associations, reckons that plans for 85,000 new homes have been dropped.

Cuts of £450m at the government's Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) – equal, some have calculated, to 6,000 homes – foreshadows, perhaps, a 33% budget reduction over the next few years. The federation says this could see more than 200,000 jobs lost or not created, 350,000 people added to already record housing waiting lists, and a loss of 142,000 planned homes by 2020.

The HCA itself is likely to survive a cull of quangos – although it will emerge in a different form, "smaller and more strategic". DCLG ministers are placing some faith in a "new homes bonus", a carrot for councils to approve plans for new homes with a promise of a central government pot to match increases in council tax gained from new developments. The idea is that this will turn nimbys into yinbys (yes, in my back yard) by helping to fund new community facilities. The department says it will publish a consultation paper before the forthcoming spending review.

Alan Travis on criminal justice

The Ministry of Justice has already agreed to Treasury cuts. Last month its director general of finance informed senior civil servants it planned to make a £2bn cut in its £9bn annual budget. Unions warned that 15,000 jobs are at risk, and prisons would have to close and courts be brought to a standstill. The Crown Prosecution Service has warned that its 25% budget cut will "delay and possibly deny justice". The structure of the National Offender Management Service is being "considered" as part of the department's contribution to the spending review. Under pressure to halt the £4bn prison-building programme, the justice secretary, Ken Clarke, has hinted that he could be in favour of an end to short-term jail sentences. He has set up a review of sentencing policy and new approaches to rehabilitation that could make savings to the £350m prison bill by using cheaper and more effective community punishments. But the main focus of his "rehabilitation revolution" is to involve the voluntary and private sectors in programmes inside and outside prison to stop reoffending and pay them by results.

The police are not exempt from deep spending cuts, and police chiefs warn it will mean having to lose officers. Plans in a police reform white paper to create a reserve army of volunteers prepared to act as community crime-fighters is one answer to budget cuts, another is forcing police recruits to work for free, and Nick Herbert, the police minister, has said he wants to see more special constables.

Mary O'Hara on mental health

Rethink, the charity that focuses on people with severe mental health problems, has been collating data on potential cuts to services since early August. Forty five per cent of respondents to its online survey from across the country have identified cuts to day services, while 40% said they were aware of in-patient beds being put at risk. A quarter (26%) of those who got in touch with the charity said mental health staff jobs were likely to disappear and 16% reported that early intervention services – something widely deemed to be increasingly important – were under threat.

Mind says that instances of severe cuts to local services are emerging, citing the example of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health Trust, which has announced a consultation that includes proposals that could result in 25% of community mental health jobs being axed. It also said there were indications that police mental health liaison officers could be reduced or disappear altogether.

Mind's chief executive, Paul Farmer, cautioned that cutting mental health provision when demand for assistance was increasing would "cost society far more in the long run".

Paul Jenkins, chief executive of Rethink, said: "It is easier for [health] trusts to make cuts to mental health budgets than it is to cut spending on procedures like heart bypasses or hip replacements. But we can't afford for mental health services to bear the brunt of the axe wielding."

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timbo2

08 September 2010 8:34am

8

Arguments similar to those of Matt Dunkley probably apply to the majority of these services.

There needs to be a rigorous impact assessment for any proposed cuts looking at the short, medium and especially long term costs of the consequences of what might happen now in terms of short term savings.

Sometimes the consequences are obvious, sometimes less so. It is not always easy to foresee (or worry) about long-term costs that will fall on someone else's budget.

If you squeeze a balloon it will push out in other places - or burst!



Scarboroughboy

08 September 2010 9:29am

38

There is much speculation of the as yet very vague public sector cuts but no mention what so ever regarding cuts in the private sector that are happening now.

I work for a private company that relies on NHS contracts, since May we have already lost 20 members of staff due to NHS financial cut backs, our company accountant has warned that before the full impact of the NHS reorganisation comes to full fruition we will be looking at possibly another 70/80 job loses.

For every job lost within the public sector it is calculated that as many as 4 may go in the private sector.

So much for the CONDEMed Alliances claim that the private sector can take up the jobs lost by public sector, it's a myth.



brianrouth

08 September 2010 10:09am

30

It's really sad.....what a mess. We've been down this road before with the last tory government but this time it seems really severe. It seems as though they don't have a clue as to the effects of these cuts and how much unemployment there will be let alone the isolation it will cause many people. My only hope is that we can get these morons out of office asap.

JALite

08 September 2010 10:17am

21



The problem for most of these services is that their underlying model, both structural and related systems, rely upon central Government policy control and public funding. These have been formed over thirteen years of New Labour's centralisation and policy initiatives. With the change in political philosophy, from New Labour's centralised public funded to Conservative (Coalition) decentralised limited public funded - small government big society, they are having difficulties in adjusting. Some of this is caused through the speed at which the Coalition is initiating change, but also with such massive and convoluted structures created within these organisations, change is almost impossible. I suspect that over the next few years many failing organisations will be replaced by new equivalents with structures and systems following the new political philosophy. As to related private sector losses, again many will fail but new ones will form in their place.



hacklesup

08 September 2010 10:41am

19

The truly sad thing is that there is no need to be so draconian.

This coalition is rushing through our welfare state like a tornado and will leave hardship and devastation in its wake.

I for one just don't trust the financial competence of Osborne.

Or the fact that the policies which he is gleefully inflicting on us won't affect his lifestyle or that of his nearest and dearest one whit.

And what about Cable ? He said during the election campaign that the Tory proposed financial medicine was too harsh...has he also changed his mind or was he, like Clegg, telling us porkies and pretending he was a nice guy so that we would vote for him

Already unemployment is up this month even before the cuts bite

Yes, we have been here before '**Unemployment is a price worth paying**' (**Lamont**).



jddlondon

08 September 2010 10:52am

14

I work for a private company that relies on NHS contracts, since May we have already lost 20 members of staff due to NHS financial cut backs, our company accountant has warned that before the full impact of the NHS reorganisation comes to full fruition we will be looking at possibly another 70/80 job losses.

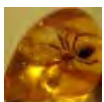
I think people are very foolish to think that public spending cutting will not have a knock-on effect to the private sector in more ways than one can imagine. In point of fact the government departments already subcontract work to private companies and I doubt if they will be immune.

Further, I have a colleague who works for a company that relies much of its work from the public sector involving in building and restoration work. They are bracing themselves for this work to dry up and job losses as government departments cut back budgets and 'make do and mend' with very little if any long-term capital investment in infrastructure. This will involve people from many different skills and trades.

This is just an example of many others that I can cite.

The voluntary sector will be asked to plug the gaps but as grants etc are being squeezed so how are they going to pay operational costs even if their labour is 'free'. Moreover, some will be charities and we all know that these first organisations to get hit in a poor economic climate where buying food and paying the bills become a priority to those who may give but now find themselves with a very insecure future.

It's going to get very, very grim.



Tarantella

08 September 2010 10:54am

10

Though I fear for what these cuts are going to do to the neediest, some pleasing economy measures have become apparent in my neck of the woods. The local council has axed its hideous 'newspaper', which had nothing of interest in and was probably read by almost no-one. And, whereas I have had 2 page letters from the council with the second page consisting of one line of text and the signature, they are now printing on both sides. Should have been done years ago.



socialistMike

08 September 2010 11:04am

12

It's all based on the mad idea that the economy has a fixed size, with the public sector 'squeezing out' the private sector. This is despite the obvious fact that GDP increases regardless of whether it is private or public sector activity.

So, getting rid of the public sector - or large chunks of it - will 'free up' resources and 'slack' for the private sector. No evidence is ever presented to support these claims.

The other stupidity - knowing stupidity, probably - is that depressing domestic demand will lead to growth from exports, since we will have no alternative.

But history shows us that depressing domestic demand just leads to sluggish economic activity, unemployment and degeneration. A small proportion of those sacked may get jobs in exports, but there is no causal link here.

I strongly suspect that it is all more or less deliberate misinformation and lies. They know that a depressed domestic economy will lead to a revival in profits for big capital - they will be able to pick up failed businesses and their assets cheaply, labour will become cheaper, political 'reforms' which worsen our living standards will become easier to push through.

This time it is more worrying though, long-term. There is no reason to think we will ever recover from a depression in the UK. That's because globalisation means capital doesn't need us anymore. We are becoming, as Marx described in previous times, 'surplus population' i.e. capital no longer needs us for its profits and will start seeking solutions to our continued existence in their economic system - that was the sort of thing which led to the Irish population being expelled to the UK, replaced by cows.

Already more profits are earned abroad than from the domestic economy and that is only going to increase, unless we return to global and domestic controls on the movement and deployment of private capital.



grisgris

08 September 2010 11:14am

38

None of the writers mention the disabled. I fear that services to disabled children may be viewed by many Local Authorities as 'non-core' services. It will be desperately sad if all the funding, innovation and effort that has been put into the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme is swept away.



salparadyse

08 September 2010 11:17am

32

The Tories don't care.

These cuts have nothing to do with economics. If they were that concerned about economics they would close tax avoidance loopholes, ban offshoring of accounts for UK residents and stop corporations from walking away without paying the hundreds of millions in tax they rightfully owe.

No, these cuts are based on one thing only - the Tories hate welfare of any kind (apart from welfare for the wealthy of course). Let people rot in the gutter, let them be homeless and destitute. Let the mad roam the streets and the abused languish in misery. All of them are scum who deserve everything they get for not pulling themselves out of their own mess.

As has been said on these pages before - the Condem Alliance should just admit that they're not prepared to pay for a decent society.



bob15

08 September 2010 11:46am

2

The new government has to accept this

Dunkley uses the analogy of "a fence at the top of the cliff [prevention] and an ambulance at the bottom [child protection]". Take away the fence, he says, and you end up spending more money on ambulances at the bottom.

How can it cut training and education and expect things to improve?
Will it save money by doing similar things elsewhere?

NHS Professionals, a jobs agency that has 50,000 workers on its books and places staff for 2m shifts a year at 77 health trusts.

Will this actually save money? Or are they expecting staff to receive less payments which will go to the private company as profits.

Workers need to contact local MPs and point out when savings actually will not be made or when any savings made will be just taken by the private sector.

<http://www.writetothem.com/>



MichaelRosen

08 September 2010 11:50am

12

Libraries are heading for the rocks. Yesterday, I heard that Haringey are going to chop the Schools Library Service, the fantastic service that supplies books into schools so that children can do their projects, follow up author visits, and generally support their study with a wide range of good books. The fact that such a service is to be cut tells you all you need to know about what is really happening to education, where worksheets are more important than books. Criminal.



The3rdMan83

08 September 2010 12:02pm

8

To summarise the coalition's strategy: make everyone unemployed then give them less; what little they have, sell it on to the private sector then have people buy it back with their dignity. What a miserable, miserable future we're facing. And AS IF the private sector is going to mop this mess up. In my hometown it's the private sector that's shedding the most jobs. Literally hundreds every month. Essentially what they're doing is worshipping the very system that's recently failed us by making it even more cutthroat.

And I had to pay £86.19 council tax this morning. What the FLIP is that being spent on?!!!! This country's a con; an embarrassment. I'm getting out in the New Year.

I predict that come the end of this Government's term, everyone will be working for Tesco.



harlequinmod

08 September 2010 12:14pm

3

hacklesup

8 September 2010 10:41AM

I for one just don't trust the financial competence of Osborne.

Osborne inherited a mess. The blame for this squeeze on Public Services lies firmly at the door of Mr Brown, it was he who expanded spending on Public Services to unsustainable levels. If only he'd have increased spending incrementally we wouldn't be in this mess but no, the idiot assumed that he had ended boom and bust.



joshthedog

08 September 2010 12:14pm

8

To me this shows how bankrupt and brainless Tory ideology is.

The cuts seem to be ideologically driven, as they were under Thatcher. However, the public services then did not support a raft of private initiatives which will perish at the hands of the new coalition. It is almost as if they cannot see or will acknowledge this... they are like the proverbial lemmings running towards the cliff-edge because they are driven by instinct rather than careful considered thought. By destroying the public sector they are also destroying private enterprise because the two have become so closely intertwined over the last 10 years it would a surgeon to separate them... a good one... with a vascular surgeon on standby to stop any bleeding.



merrick101

08 September 2010 12:20pm

8

GPs will be handed responsibility for much of the £105bn health budget, removing the need for a layer of bureaucracy.

Er, does anyone really think all our GPs will spend their time doing their accounting? This transfer will create a new layer of bureaucracy as GPs will be hiring staff to do their budgets.

It seems quite possible that the managers we sack from PCTs will get re-employed by GPs, shifting the bureaucracy and adding all the inefficiency of a brand new system being learned.



jonomac

08 September 2010 12:21pm

2

Why hand anything to GPs they are just a bunch of glorified overpaid receptionists for hospitals. Get rid of these buffons (GPs) and make them work in the far superior NHS Direct walk in centres. Just tear up the GPs contract and let them do their worst.



Fomalhaut88

08 September 2010 12:23pm

2

salparadyse :

As has been said on these pages before - the Condem Alliance should just admit that they're not prepared to pay for a decent society.

The deficit in the last year could not have been recovered if you had doubled ALL income taxes.

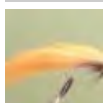
Given time, long-term debt would bring the whole show down, Greek-style.

If you want these public services, then be socialist enough to take the cost of them out of current taxation, and don't park the cost on your children.

You will find, and readily, that current taxation would not bear the cost of them. The economy could simply not bear it.

Your solution?... borrow the money and let your children pay for it.

And when others recognise the unsustainability of it, then, according to you "they're not prepared to pay for a decent society".



OrangeZonker

08 September 2010 12:23pm

timbo2

to reverse your argument, what the previous government should have considered :-

There needs to be a rigorous impact assessment for any proposed **spending** increases looking at the short, medium and especially long term costs of the consequences of what might happen as the result of government overspending and national deficit.



WelshPaul

08 September 2010 12:31pm

10

The NHS
Welfare
Youth services
Housing
Social care

All traditional bug bears of the Tories and are guaranteed to be first in the line of fire for the coalition. Bastards.



Rachelthedigger

08 September 2010 12:31pm

11

Sal Paradyse, you're right except for one thing. It isn't the Condem Alliance that isn't prepared to pay for a decent society, it's us. Just read the comments on any other thread that deals with unemployment, labour laws, children's services, prison reform... they're just a string of anti-everything-I-might-have-to-pay-tax-for rants that only Ebenezer Scrooge could be proud of, and this, FFS, is The Guardian. We begged for the harrow, we have got it, and we have only ourselves to blame.



mindwideopen

08 September 2010 12:32pm

7

RE: JALite 8 September 2010 10:17AM

I note that you seem to assume these draconian cuts will affect only "failing organisations".

History clearly shows us that previously when this country adopted the kind of drastic economic policies like those now being proposed by the current administration (in the 1930's and again in the 1980's), on both occasions it led to prolonged periods of economic stagnation as a result.

History also shows us that at the end of World War 2 this nation was faced with an economic deficit **two and a half times** the size of the current one; and yet, in spite of that deficit, the newly elected Labour government managed to rebuild this devastated country and create the welfare state and the National Health Service !

I am not saying there are no instances of waste or unnecessary bureaucracy in the public sector that need be addressed; however, the measures proposed clearly go way beyond that.

The truth is, the measures proposed are nothing short of 'economic vandalism' which risk driving this country into a double-dip recession and years of subsequent economic stagnation.

Furthermore, in proposing such an ill-advised course of action, the current administration has chosen not only to ignore the lessons of history, but also the numerous internationally renowned economists who have voiced serious concerns about the consequences of implementing such severe cuts, particularly whilst our economy is in it's current fragile state.

Be under no illusion, "The problem for most of these services" and indeed ALL OF US in this nation, is the purely ideologically driven package of cuts about to be inflicted upon this nation by the current administration, which - if we allow it to happen - will devastate our economy for years to come.

In closing, I would advise you not to 'buy' the Con-Dem propaganda; THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION, just as there was in 1945.



Katewashere

08 September 2010 12:48pm

7

Why is anyone surprised that the Tories have done this. Was Margaret Thatcher such a long time ago that people have forgotten?

The fact that these MPs (the same people in the expenses scandal) are accusing the public sector of being wasteful really is beyond the pale.

I work in the Public Sector and will be losing my job in October. I've decided after a career dedicated to public service to move to the private sector (already had offers) where I will be paid a wage I can buy a flat on, have access to a pension which won't be slashed and treated with much greater respect.

I suspect other highly skilled workers in the Public Sector will be doing the same.



johnspud

08 September 2010 12:50pm

Yes, it's a disaster but after 13yrs of spend,spend,spend, what do you expect? The current government didn't cause this shambles but are given the unenviable job of sorting it out. So, blame the previous crowd.



Enrico

08 September 2010 12:59pm

2

Cuts in the NHS are likely on a truly enormous scale due to demographic changes, a static budget and the 6th major reorganisation in the last 20 years - no other world health economy has had to endure this sort of disruption.

GPs are being asked to do the same job as Primary Care Trusts but with management costs of £9 per patient instead of £35 - a major cut.

Costs incurred by secondary care (hospitals) will be the major determinant of success of your local gp commissioning organisation not the gp commissioning. It is moot as to whether a layer of bureaucracy is being removed or just relocated and rebadged.

The NHS looks like it will be a brand rather than a national system in future. Look out

if you live in poor inner city area like Tower Hamlets with large numbers of patients off the national census as we may not be funded for these patients in the future. Also look forward to "co-payments" - that means paying for treatments, something that the British public rightly sees as the thin end of the wedge leading to a multi-tiered service of budget or top draw extra service depending on what you want.

Finally, I agree with SocialistMike that public services still increase GDP and are anachronistically being excluded from the equation of a growing economy. Education/Science/health and social services are the areas of growth for a mature economy and not producing commodities which will increasingly be automated and located in low wage economies in the east. Instead we have an economy that is developing according to the needs of the city/banking sectors. We need a new plan that recognises the need to reorientate our economy away from this and has a plan on how to do it; the CONDEMs aren't offering us this and New Labour agreed with them. Someone in the labour party needs to spell this out and give people something to organise around.



SecretSkivver

08 September 2010 1:51pm

1

If Labour hadn't spent 10 years pushing up unsustainable public spending on wasteful activities, egged on by a large minority who expect their lifestyles to be subsidised by the hard-working taxpayer, then the cuts wouldn't be necessary, would they?

There's no money left, remember?



The3rdMan83

08 September 2010 1:54pm

"It isn't the Condem Alliance that isn't prepared to pay for a decent society, it's us. ..We begged for the harrow, we have got it, and we have only ourselves to blame." - says Rachelthedigger

Define "us" and "we". Because me and you, which would constitute part of "us" and "we", have absolutely NOTHING in common. What do you say to that?



SaintLan

08 September 2010 2:02pm

5

Can I just say good article - concise, balanced and with some analysis on what is proving to be a hugely complex issue.

More like this please



Bobbyb71

08 September 2010 2:23pm

10

These cuts are hitting the most vulnerable. Projects for the disabled and elderly are being closed down are in south-west

It can be opposed. The unity of ordinary people in France will stop Sarkozy going down a similar route.

Yet, the British. Spineless, complacent and clueless when facing their own Governments destruction of the welfare state.

Im sure the BBC and the right-wing press wont let the Government down keeping the options and debate to a bare minimum



trader

08 September 2010 3:06pm

Katewashere

I work in the Public Sector and will be losing my job in October. I've decided after a career dedicated to public service to move to the private sector (already had offers) where I will be paid a wage I can buy a flat on, have access to a pension which won't be slashed and treated with much greater respect.

I suspect other highly skilled workers in the Public Sector will be doing the same.

Err, so that would be very good news for the economy then.

This is a start but more cuts are needed.



Fatigued

08 September 2010 4:25pm

2

Squaring the budgets within the realm of child protection is going to be enormously difficult simply because social work education and current practice sadly has not produced and developed the workers with the requisite skill sets. These will take time to develop. Furthermore risk management is exceptionally time consuming work requiring not inconsiderable levels of funding. Furthermore the political class need to appreciate that it is they who will in part be held responsible when things inevitable go wrong. there are no easy or cheap answerers in child protection.



mindwideopen

08 September 2010 5:01pm

6

"If Labour hadn't spent 10 years pushing up unsustainable public spending on wasteful activities" - SecretSkivver - 8 September 2010 1:51PM

Which wasteful activities do you have in mind, the rebuilding of our schools and NHS maybe ???!

The cuts we now face are not, "necessary" - that is Tory propaganda designed to 'con' the public into swallowing their ideologically driven 'economic vandalism'.

There is a credible alternative to their 'dogma' which will not cause economic devastation on a massive scale - remember that this country was faced with a deficit two and a half times as big at the end of World War 2 and we BUILT our way out of trouble !!

Finally, the previous Labour administration is NOT responsible for the economic situation in which we now find ourselves - **it was the unscrupulous behaviour of avaricious, gambling, 'Neo-Liberal' Tory-boys in the financial services sector that brought this country - and others - to the brink of bankruptcy !!**



slowreader

08 September 2010 10:31pm

1

Osborne inherited a mess. The blame for this squeeze on Public Services lies firmly at the door of Mr Brown, it was he who expanded spending on Public Services to unsustainable levels. If only he'd have increased spending incrementally we wouldn't be in this mess but no, the idiot assumed that he had ended boom and bust.

An example given in the article is of a mental health trust proposing to cut 25% of community mental health team jobs. Jobs in CMHTs didn't rise by 25% during the Brown years, so this level of cutting cannot be explained simply by claiming it's all Brown's fault. There is something else, something ideological at work here.



obscuribus

10 September 2010 11:16am

This article illustrates why the Left is out of power and ought to remain out of power for a long time. Sadly.

Thought and responsibility has been replaced by the comforting old mantra 'Tories=cuts=bad'

Does the Left accept that spending has to fall at all? If so what are its preferred 'cuts' please?

On the detail Ramesh notes that huge savings in the NHS were accepted by all parties and promoted by the head of the NHS himself prior to the Election, thus Government policy under Labour, also that 60000 managers are to go - is that wicked?

On justice Travis notes that the prison building programme may be halted and prisons may be closed, something he has agitated for for years. So why exactly is that now bad?

The Left seems to think its best bet is to argue that there must never be any change in funding or services, except to increase spending, and of course unionised manning levels

If thats the best you can do you do not deserve to be taken seriously

The tragedy of this posturing are that SOME of the cuts ARE disasterous and indeed some cuts - police for example - are unlikely to be deep enough, yet all that is lost in the generalised slogan, ALL CUTS ARE BAD

Pathetic



BarneyM

10 September 2010 3:29pm

From my perspective working in the voluntary sector for NAVCA, the Government's plans for Big Society have the potential to help voluntary organisations and community groups, and in turn, for those members of society that rely on these organisations to improve their lives. These people supported by local charities and community groups are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society.

However, we do not need to re-invent the wheel. The aims of the Big Society are already being delivered today, and have been for some time, through the existing networks of community and voluntary organisations around the country. I hear the Prime Minister talk about empowering the voluntary sector to provide more services and take on more responsibility. The way to do this is by building on the infrastructure and expertise that already exist in the sector. However, in the next sound-bite, I hear about cuts decimating community and voluntary organisations, eating away at the very infrastructure that the Government claims is vital.

NAVCA's research shows groups working with children and young people are being particularly hard hit and there is a growing strain on advice services hit by reduced income and increased demand. We are also seeing a decline in small grants funds – the thing that supports so many of the smallest voluntary organisations and provides the best value for money.

While cuts in this country's public spending are necessary to the health of the economy, if the left-hand of the Government is offering more power to local communities, the right-hand can't be taking away the ability for them to accept it.

Ultimately, if the state withdraws the support for voluntary organisations as Alison Benjamin predicts, then it is those that the Government claims Big Society will help most who will be hit hardest.



obscuribus

10 September 2010 6:34pm

BarneyM Fair comment. But there will be big cuts in grants to the 3rd sector, they are already happening. There may be some growth later to replace cuts in state sector services but I'm thinking that those charities who decided to avoid becoming dependent on Govt and local authority grants were smart indeed.

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Cutswatch



Scope warns cuts will further marginalise disabled people

Charity says coalition plans could push already 'invisible' group deeper into social exclusion

Randeep Ramesh, social affairs editor

The Guardian, Wednesday 1 September 2010



A wheelchair user. Photograph: David Olivery/Getty Images

A charity has warned that government spending cuts could leave disabled people on the "fringes of society" after its research revealed that many people with disabilities remain hidden in everyday life.

Scope, which campaigns for disabled people in general and those with cerebral palsy in particular, said 91% of people it polled believed disability should not mean fewer opportunities. However, almost the same proportion had never had a disabled person to their house for a social occasion, and only around 20% had had the chance to work with a disabled colleague.

The charity became concerned about the impact of cuts after analysis of the coalition government's emergency budget by the Institute of Fiscal Studies showed that some 20% of disability living allowance recipients would lose their entitlement under planned changes.

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The Guardian's online dating site

Richard Hawkes, chief executive of Scope, warned that the cuts would hit disabled people hardest, and could end up pushing them further into [social exclusion](#), possibly even cutting them out of society altogether.

"This is shocking evidence that shows that disabled people are still relatively invisible in day-to-day life," he said. "We are deeply concerned that the government's spending cuts will end up pushing disabled people even closer to the fringes of society."

He called for a full impact assessment before making any cuts to ensure "ministers understand the full consequences of reductions in critical support such as disability living allowance and incapacity benefit. These form a vital lifeline for many disabled people and their families."

There have been increasing concerns that the coalition government's pro-growth budget approach – in which cutting back the state is seen as a virtue – may end up costing more. Scope argues that the government could find itself causing "extreme distress and financial hardship to disabled people, which could end up creating greater dependency on the state and an even greater demand on the public purse".



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Cutswatch



How the coalition's cuts are affecting public services

Our specialist writers examine the impact of budget constraints on the different sectors

The Guardian, Wednesday 8 September 2010

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Article history

Randeep Ramesh on the NHS

The health secretary has wasted no time in reshaping parts of the health service. To save money, he has indicated that the popular NHS Direct service will be replaced with a cheaper alternative – although there are concerns over the lack of qualified staff to run it.

Andrew Lansley, who has a reputation for being pragmatic rather than ideological, also announced sell-off plans for the state-owned NHS Professionals, a jobs agency that has 50,000 workers on its books and places staff for 2m shifts a year at 77 health trusts.

But the biggest cull, so far, has been that of red tape. Regulators have been scrapped to save £180m in the health sector – consigning the agency that handles public health emergencies to oblivion and splitting up the fertility watchdog. Lansley also carved up the Foods Standards Agency, which had fought and lost a lobbying battle with the food industry over public health.

The real changes will come in the next two years. Under the government's plans, all 10 strategic health authorities and 152 primary care trusts are to be abolished, affecting more than 60,000 managers. It will be an expensive shakeup with costs of the changes pencilled in at £1.7bn. GPs will be handed responsibility for much of the £105bn health budget, removing the need for a layer of bureaucracy. There is more cutting to be done. Before the election none of the parties disagreed with the head of the NHS, Sir David Nicholson, who asked the health service for £20bn of savings by 2014. On taking office, Lansley warned that this "implied something like 3%-3.5%, probably about 3%, efficiency savings each year in the NHS". But he added: "We may need to do more, because we have increases in demand."

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Tom Clarke on welfare

Welfare is the single biggest slug of expenditure, and even the bureaucracy that funnels the cash is a mid-table spending department. It costs the Department for Work and Pensions around £8bn a year to distribute £145bn or so in benefits, and to chivvy those who receive them to do things such as find work.

Benefit administration – and the work of jobcentres – is the sort of less-glamorous function that will find itself doubly squeezed because of the partial protection being extended to more eye-catching hospitals and frontline troops. But cuts will hurt the poor, as was seen in the 1990s when penny-pinching and privatisation of housing benefit processing led to routine delays of several months in parts of the country.

Iain Duncan Smith is said to be fighting hard to defend the welfare-to-work element of the budget, and making some traction with his argument that a little expenditure here can reduce the bigger benefits bill. Even so, the work and pensions secretary's baseline in these negotiations is a sharp budget reduction. Casual staff have already been laid off from jobcentres, and I expect others to follow. Watch out for high-profile announcements about the involvement of businesses and charities being used to conceal the reality that there will be fewer resources available to help people find work.

Then there is pensions. The last government made great efforts to persuade poorer pensioners to claim benefits that topup pensions, as well as making these more generous. Pensioner poverty plunged as a result. Expect a big squeeze on this marketing and outreach work, because it is an easy cut to make, and because – by reducing take-up – it will yield bigger savings on the cash paid out. It's easy money, but money snatched from the most vulnerable of all.

Alison Benjamin on the voluntary sector

How can this government achieve its ambitions for a "big society" if the state withdraws support for voluntary organisations? With many grassroots groups across England – from community transport schemes to volunteer centres and children and young people's projects – already reporting that their local authority grants have been axed, that is the question being asked by voluntary sector leaders. Who will advise local residents wanting to take over and run the village library about issues such as VAT, Criminal Records Bureau checks and negotiating the lease, if the local council for voluntary services has closed? In more affluent areas, volunteers may be able to call on the expertise of colleagues and friends, not so in more deprived neighbourhoods.

Around a third of the voluntary sector's income, some £12.8bn, is from state funding in the form of grants and contracts, and more than £3bn a year is estimated to be at risk from cuts. Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude has suggested that voluntary and community groups can expect a bigger share of public funds following public spending cuts. Any gains are likely to be made by larger charities delivering public services through contracts, while small, community groups that rely on threatened council grants are unlikely to reap such benefits.

In London alone, a £26.4m grants scheme that funds 400 organisations is at risk if London Councils give the money back to individual councils to spend as they choose. With no obligation to spend it on voluntary organisations, councils are likely to withhold funds. But expect the voluntary sector to argue strongly, and perhaps with some success, that the speed and scale of spending cuts is damaging the foundations of big society, and that government departments must therefore be mindful of the need to strengthen civil society and look again at the impact of spending decisions on the sector.

Patrick Butler on children's services

Making cuts to services is hard at the best of times: it looks particularly

shouldn't do
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John Hudak: The four US states that have legalized cannabis have entered a brave new policy world, with the goal of inclusive growth

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tricky to be trying to make savings in the overheating, post-Baby Peter economy of children's social care, where councils are struggling with dramatically rising numbers of child protection referrals, more kids on the protection register and hundreds more youngsters being taken into care.

Schools, children's social care, family support and youth services typically account for around 45% of a council's total budget. The schools bit is protected, and many nervous councils are looking to effectively ringfence – and in some cases increase – spending on child protection.

The effect of that, however, will be to tighten the financial screw on the remaining "non-core" children's services: that could mean cuts of up to 30% in early intervention projects aimed at tackling problems in high-risk families before they spiral out of control and require the input of expensive safeguarding services.

Matt Dunkley, vice-president of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, warns crude cuts to early intervention will result in more referrals to child protection services further down the line. The association's submission to the comprehensive spending review will emphasise the wisdom of maintaining meaningful investment in prevention.

Dunkley uses the analogy of "a fence at the top of the cliff [prevention] and an ambulance at the bottom [child protection]". Take away the fence, he says, and you end up spending more money on ambulances at the bottom.

Councils have to think "radically and forensically" about how they reconfigure child protection services, he says. That means removing bureaucracy, and working more imaginatively with safeguarding colleagues in the police, schools and the NHS. It also means finding ways to retreat from the current, unsustainable risk-averse approach to child protection. That could be the hardest bit of all.

David Brindle on social care

As the single biggest component of local authority budgets, adult social care is braced to take a big hit. Just how big is unclear, but departmental directors are working on back-of-the-envelope figures of as much as 40% over three years.

John Jackson, director in Oxfordshire and spokesman on resources for the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, says you get to 40% by assuming a 25% cut across government and adding the rising costs of the ageing population, about 4% a year in real terms.

Like many other councils, Oxfordshire is embarking on a local consultation, asking people where cuts should fall. On a 40% basis, the target would be taking £80m out of a £200m pot, roughly half of which goes on older people's services and half on support for younger adults.

Some councils, including Warwickshire and Lincolnshire, are already looking at raising means-tested charges for services. Others, such as Derbyshire, intend to raise the threshold for service eligibility – although three in four councils already restrict eligibility to people assessed as in "substantial" or "critical" need.

Jackson thinks the potential of such measures is limited. "There are question marks over whether you can make significant savings by going to 'critical'," he says. "The real opportunities, in my view, lie in prevention of need for services."

Andrew Cozens, strategic adviser to Local Government Improvement and Development, agrees that councils will focus less on providing services and more on supporting people to make their own arrangements. "The idea that 'you should always get something' is being called into question," he says.

What could soften the cuts blow would be the transfer of NHS funds to plug some of the looming spending gaps. While this has been hinted at, social care leaders are not holding their breath.

Rachel Williams on youth services

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Young people seem to be bearing the brunt of the government's public spending cuts. George Osborne's scrapping of the Future Jobs Fund, which supported the creation of jobs for the young long-term unemployed, means that 90,000 work opportunities have been lost, according to Labour. The Young Person's Guarantee, which promises a job or training to every 18- to 24-year-old out of work for six months or more, is also being ditched. And many Connexions services, which offer those aged 13 to 19 careers advice and support with access to learning, expect to see their budget from the Department for Education (DfE) slashed by half.

The future of the so-called "September guarantee" of a sixth form, college or training place for every school leaver, is uncertain. Labour had pledged to extend it for another three years, but the coalition has only confirmed that it remains in place this year. And government-funded pilot schemes, such as the activity agreement, that were successfully engaging with the most vulnerable and hard to reach young people, so-called Neets – not in education, employment or training – are being ended early. In eight areas of the UK, 16- and 17-year-olds facing tough circumstances such as mental health issues, teenage pregnancy, homelessness and substance misuse were given learning and training opportunities, plus one-on-one support from a key worker. Managers at the West Yorkshire pilot, who had expected the programme to be rolled out nationally, say 60% of the 3,600 young people they have helped have moved into education and training. Another DfE pilot scheme being axed is Entry to Learning, which was aimed at raising Neets' self-esteem and confidence.

Charities and voluntary organisations providing activities for disadvantaged young people have also lost their funding. The last round of grants to the youth sector development fund, for example, has been cancelled.

Peter Hetherington on housing

Is housing becoming an increasingly devalued political currency? The coalition would argue, in varying degrees of enthusiasm, that its reform of the planning system should eventually lead to more homes being built. But the omens are not good. Builders, and housing associations, are despairing over the hasty decision to scrap housing targets alongside a regional planning regime. What to build, and where? No one really knows any longer.

The Home Builders' Federation, representing the big house-builders, has calculated that almost 60 local councils have either delayed housing plans, pending clarification of the reforms from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), or are refusing to determine house-building applications and are even removing allocated sites from previously adopted plans.

The National Housing Federation, representing not-for-profit housing associations, reckons that plans for 85,000 new homes have been dropped.

Cuts of £450m at the government's Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) – equal, some have calculated, to 6,000 homes – foreshadows, perhaps, a 33% budget reduction over the next few years. The federation says this could see more than 200,000 jobs lost or not created, 350,000 people added to already record housing waiting lists, and a loss of 142,000 planned homes by 2020.

The HCA itself is likely to survive a cull of quangos – although it will emerge in a different form, "smaller and more strategic". DCLG ministers are placing some faith in a "new homes bonus", a carrot for councils to approve plans for new homes with a promise of a central government pot to match increases in council tax gained from new developments. The idea is that this will turn nimbys into yinbys (yes, in my back yard) by helping to fund new community facilities. The department says it will publish a consultation paper before the forthcoming spending review.

Alan Travis on criminal justice

The Ministry of Justice has already agreed to Treasury cuts. Last month

its director general of finance informed senior civil servants it planned to make a £2bn cut in its £9bn annual budget. Unions warned that 15,000 jobs are at risk, and prisons would have to close and courts be brought to a standstill. The Crown Prosecution Service has warned that its 25% budget cut will "delay and possibly deny justice". The structure of the National Offender Management Service is being "considered" as part of the department's contribution to the spending review. Under pressure to halt the £4bn prison-building programme, the justice secretary, Ken Clarke, has hinted that he could be in favour of an end to short-term jail sentences. He has set up a review of sentencing policy and new approaches to rehabilitation that could make savings to the £350m prison bill by using cheaper and more effective community punishments. But the main focus of his "rehabilitation revolution" is to involve the voluntary and private sectors in programmes inside and outside prison to stop reoffending and pay them by results.

The police are not exempt from deep spending cuts, and police chiefs warn it will mean having to lose officers. Plans in a police reform white paper to create a reserve army of volunteers prepared to act as community crime-fighters is one answer to budget cuts, another is forcing police recruits to work for free, and Nick Herbert, the police minister, has said he wants to see more special constables.

Mary O'Hara on mental health

Rethink, the charity that focuses on people with severe mental health problems, has been collating data on potential cuts to services since early August. Forty five per cent of respondents to its online survey from across the country have identified cuts to day services, while 40% said they were aware of in-patient beds being put at risk. A quarter (26%) of those who got in touch with the charity said mental health staff jobs were likely to disappear and 16% reported that early intervention services – something widely deemed to be increasingly important – were under threat.

Mind says that instances of severe cuts to local services are emerging, citing the example of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health Trust, which has announced a consultation that includes proposals that could result in 25% of community mental health jobs being axed. It also said there were indications that police mental health liaison officers could be reduced or disappear altogether.

Mind's chief executive, Paul Farmer, cautioned that cutting mental health provision when demand for assistance was increasing would "cost society far more in the long run".

Paul Jenkins, chief executive of Rethink, said: "It is easier for [health] trusts to make cuts to mental health budgets than it is to cut spending on procedures like heart bypasses or hip replacements. But we can't afford for mental health services to bear the brunt of the axe wielding."

Public eye, page 6



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timbo2

08 September 2010 8:34am

8

Arguments similar to those of Matt Dunkley probably apply to the majority of these services.

There needs to be a rigorous impact assessment for any proposed cuts looking at the short, medium and especially long term costs of the consequences of what might happen now in terms of short term savings.

Sometimes the consequences are obvious, sometimes less so. It is not always easy to foresee (or worry) about long-term costs that will fall on someone else's budget.

If you squeeze a balloon it will push out in other places - or burst!



Scarboroughboy

08 September 2010 9:29am

38

There is much speculation of the as yet very vague public sector cuts but no mention what so ever regarding cuts in the private sector that are happening now.

I work for a private company that relies on NHS contracts, since May we have already lost 20 members of staff due to NHS financial cut backs, our company accountant has warned that before the full impact of the NHS reorganisation comes to full fruition we will be looking at possibly another 70/80 job loses.

For every job lost within the public sector it is calculated that as many as 4 may go in the private sector.

So much for the CONDEMed Alliances claim that the private sector can take up the jobs lost by public sector, it's a myth.



brianrouth

08 September 2010 10:09am

30

It's really sad.....what a mess. We've been down this road before with the last tory government but this time it seems really severe. It seems as though they don't have a clue as to the effects of these cuts and how much unemployment there will be let alone the isolation it will cause many people. My only hope is that we can get these morons out of office asap.

JALite

08 September 2010 10:17am

21



The problem for most of these services is that their underlying model, both structural and related systems, rely upon central Government policy control and public funding. These have been formed over thirteen years of New Labour's centralisation and policy initiatives. With the change in political philosophy, from New Labour's centralised public funded to Conservative (Coalition) decentralised limited public funded - small government big society, they are having difficulties in adjusting. Some of this is caused through the speed at which the Coalition is initiating change, but also with such massive and convoluted structures created within these organisations, change is almost impossible. I suspect that over the next few years many failing organisations will be replaced by new equivalents with structures and systems following the new political philosophy. As to related private sector losses, again many will fail but new ones will form in their place.



hacklesup

08 September 2010 10:41am



The truly sad thing is that there is no need to be so draconian.

This coalition is rushing through our welfare state like a tornado and will leave hardship and devastation in its wake.

I for one just don't trust the financial competence of Osborne.

Or the fact that the policies which he is gleefully inflicting on us won't affect his lifestyle or that of his nearest and dearest one whit.

And what about Cable ? He said during the election campaign that the Tory proposed financial medicine was too harsh...has he also changed his mind or was he, like Clegg, telling us porkies and pretending he was a nice guy so that we would vote for him

Already unemployment is up this month even before the cuts bite

Yes, we have been here before '**Unemployment is a price worth paying**' (Lamont).



jddlondon

08 September 2010 10:52am



I work for a private company that relies on NHS contracts, since May we have already lost 20 members of staff due to NHS financial cut backs, our company accountant has warned that before the full impact of the NHS reorganisation comes to full fruition we will be looking at possibly another 70/80 job losses.

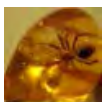
I think people are very foolish to think that public spending cutting will not have a knock-on effect to the private sector in more ways than one can imagine. In point of fact the government departments already subcontract work to private companies and I doubt if they will be immune.

Further, I have a colleague who works for a company that relies much of it work from the public sector involving in building and restoration work. They are bracing themselves for this work to dry up and and job losses as government departments cut back budgets and 'make do and mend' with very if any long-term capital investment in infrastructure. This will involve people from many different skills and trades.

This is just example of many others that I can site.

The voluntary sector will be asked to plug the gaps but as grants etc are being squeezed so how are they going to pay operational costs even if their labour is 'free'. Moreover, some will be charities and we all know that these first organisations to get hit in a poor economic climate where buying food and paying the bills become a priory to those who may give but now find themselves with a very insecure future.

It's going to get very, very grim.



Tarantella

08 September 2010 10:54am



Though I fear for what these cuts are going to do to the neediest, some pleasing economy measures have become apparent in my neck of the woods. The local council has axed its hideous 'newspaper', which had nothing of interest in and was probably read by almost no-one. And, whereas I have had 2 page letters from the council with the second page consisting of one line of text and the signature, they are now printing on both sides. Should have been done years ago.



socialistMike

08 September 2010 11:04am

12

It's all based on the mad idea that the economy has a fixed size, with the public sector 'squeezing out' the private sector. This is despite the obvious fact that GDP increases regardless of whether it is private or public sector activity.

So, getting rid of the public sector - or large chunks of it - will 'free up' resources and 'slack' for the private sector. No evidence is ever presented to support these claims.

The other stupidity - knowing stupidity, probably - is that depressing domestic demand will lead to growth from exports, since we will have no alternative.

But history shows us that depressing domestic demand just leads to sluggish economic activity, unemployment and degeneration. A small proportion of those sacked may get jobs in exports, but there is no causal link here.

I strongly suspect that it is all more or less deliberate misinformation and lies. They know that a depressed domestic economy will lead to a revival in profits for big capital - they will be able to pick up failed businesses and their assets cheaply, labour will become cheaper, political 'reforms' which worsen our living standards will become easier to push through.

This time it is more worrying though, long-term. There is no reason to think we will ever recover from a depression in the UK. That's because globalisation means capital doesn't need us anymore. We are becoming, as Marx described in previous times, 'surplus population' i.e. capital no longer needs us for its profits and will start seeking solutions to our continued existence in their economic system - that was the sort of thing which led to the Irish population being expelled to the UK, replaced by cows.

Already more profits are earned abroad than from the domestic economy and that is only going to increase, unless we return to global and domestic controls on the movement and deployment of private capital.



grisgris

08 September 2010 11:14am

38

None of the writers mention the disabled. I fear that services to disabled children may be viewed by many Local Authorities as 'non-core' services. It will be desperately sad if all the funding, innovation and effort that has been put into the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme is swept away.



salparadyse

08 September 2010 11:17am

32

The Tories don't care.

These cuts have nothing to do with economics. If they were that concerned about economics they would close tax avoidance loopholes, ban offshoring of accounts for UK residents and stop corporations from walking away without paying the hundreds of millions in tax they rightfully owe.

No, these cuts are based on one thing only - the Tories hate welfare of any kind (apart from welfare for the wealthy of course). Let people rot in the gutter, let them be homeless and destitute. Let the mad roam the streets and the abused languish in misery. All of them are scum who deserve everything they get for not pulling themselves out of their own mess.

As has been said on these pages before - the Condem Alliance should just admit that they're not prepared to pay for a decent society.



bob15

08 September 2010 11:46am

2

The new government has to accept this

Dunkley uses the analogy of "a fence at the top of the cliff [prevention] and an ambulance at the bottom [child protection]". Take away the fence, he says, and you end up spending more money on ambulances at the bottom.

How can it cut training and education and expect things to improve?
Will it save money by doing similar things elsewhere?

NHS Professionals, a jobs agency that has 50,000 workers on its books and places staff for 2m shifts a year at 77 health trusts.

Will this actually save money? Or are they expecting staff to receive less payments which will go to the private company as profits.

Workers need to contact local MPs and point out when savings actually will not be made or when any savings made will be just taken by the private sector.

<http://www.writetothem.com/>



MichaelRosen

08 September 2010 11:50am

12

Libraries are heading for the rocks. Yesterday, I heard that Haringey are going to chop the Schools Library Service, the fantastic service that supplies books into schools so that children can do their projects, follow up author visits, and generally support their study with a wide range of good books. The fact that such a service is to be cut tells you all you need to know about what is really happening to education, where worksheets are more important than books. Criminal.



The3rdMan83

08 September 2010 12:02pm

8

To summarise the coalition's strategy: make everyone unemployed then give them less; what little they have, sell it on to the private sector then have people buy it back with their dignity. What a miserable, miserable future we're facing. And AS IF the private sector is going to mop this mess up. In my hometown it's the private sector that's shedding the most jobs. Literally hundreds every month. Essentially what they're doing is worshipping the very system that's recently failed us by making it even more cutthroat.

And I had to pay £86.19 council tax this morning. What the FLIP is that being spent on?!!!! This country's a con; an embarrassment. I'm getting out in the New Year.

I predict that come the end of this Government's term, everyone will be working for Tesco.



harlequinmod

08 September 2010 12:14pm

3

hacklesup

8 September 2010 10:41AM

I for one just don't trust the financial competence of Osborne.

Osborne inherited a mess. The blame for this squeeze on Public Services lies firmly at the door of Mr Brown, it was he who expanded spending on Public Services to unsustainable levels. If only he'd have increased spending incrementally we wouldn't be in this mess but no, the idiot assumed that he had ended boom and bust.



joshthedog

08 September 2010 12:14pm

8

To me this shows how bankrupt and brainless Tory ideology is.

The cuts seem to be ideologically driven, as they were under Thatcher. However, the public services then did not support a raft of private initiatives which will perish at the hands of the new coalition. It is almost as if they cannot see or will acknowledge this... they are like the proverbial lemmings running towards the cliff-edge because they are driven by instinct rather than careful considered thought. By destroying the public sector they are also destroying private enterprise because the two have become so closely intertwined over the last 10 years it would a surgeon to separate them... a good one... with a vascular surgeon on standby to stop any bleeding.



merrick101

08 September 2010 12:20pm

8

GPs will be handed responsibility for much of the £105bn health budget, removing the need for a layer of bureaucracy.

Er, does anyone really think all our GPs will spend their time doing their accounting? This transfer will create a new layer of bureaucracy as GPs will be hiring staff to do their budgets.

It seems quite possible that the managers we sack from PCTs will get re-employed by GPs, shifting the bureaucracy and adding all the inefficiency of a brand new system being learned.

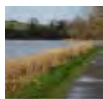


jonomac

08 September 2010 12:21pm

2

Why hand anything to GPs they are just a bunch of glorified overpaid receptionists for hospitals. Get rid of these buffons (GPs) and make them work in the far superior NHS Direct walk in centres. Just tear up the GPs contract and let them do their worst.



Fomalhaut88

08 September 2010 12:23pm

2

salparadyse :

As has been said on these pages before - the Condem Alliance should just admit that they're not prepared to pay for a decent society.

The deficit in the last year could not have been recovered if you had doubled ALL income taxes.

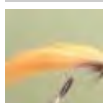
Given time, long-term debt would bring the whole show down, Greek-style.

If you want these public services, then be socialist enough to take the cost of them out of current taxation, and don't park the cost on your children.

You will find, and readily, that current taxation would not bear the cost of them. The economy could simply not bear it.

Your solution?... borrow the money and let your children pay for it.

And when others recognise the unsustainability of it, then, according to you "they're not prepared to pay for a decent society".



OrangeZonker

08 September 2010 12:23pm

timbo2

to reverse your argument, what the previous government should have considered :-

There needs to be a rigorous impact assessment for any proposed **spending** increases looking at the short, medium and especially long term costs of the consequences of what might happen as the result of government overspending and national deficit.



WelshPaul

08 September 2010 12:31pm

10

The NHS
Welfare
Youth services
Housing
Social care

All traditional bug bears of the Tories and are guaranteed to be first in the line of fire for the coalition. Bastards.



Rachelthedigger

08 September 2010 12:31pm

11

Sal Paradyse, you're right except for one thing. It isn't the Condem Alliance that isn't prepared to pay for a decent society, it's us. Just read the comments on any other thread that deals with unemployment, labour laws, children's services, prison reform... they're just a string of anti-everything-I-might-have-to-pay-tax-for rants that only Ebenezer Scrooge could be proud of, and this, FFS, is The Guardian. We begged for the harrow, we have got it, and we have only ourselves to blame.



mindwideopen

08 September 2010 12:32pm

7

RE: JALite 8 September 2010 10:17AM

I note that you seem to assume these draconian cuts will affect only "failing organisations".

History clearly shows us that previously when this country adopted the kind of drastic economic policies like those now being proposed by the current administration (in the 1930's and again in the 1980's), on both occasions it led to prolonged periods of economic stagnation as a result.

History also shows us that at the end of World War 2 this nation was faced with an economic deficit **two and a half times** the size of the current one; and yet, in spite of that deficit, the newly elected Labour government managed to rebuild this devastated country and create the welfare state and the National Health Service !

I am not saying there are no instances of waste or unnecessary bureaucracy in the public sector that need be addressed; however, the measures proposed clearly go way beyond that.

The truth is, the measures proposed are nothing short of 'economic vandalism' which risk driving this country into a double-dip recession and years of subsequent economic stagnation.

Furthermore, in proposing such an ill-advised course of action, the current administration has chosen not only to ignore the lessons of history, but also the numerous internationally renowned economists who have voiced serious concerns about the consequences of implementing such severe cuts, particularly whilst our economy is in it's current fragile state.

Be under no illusion, "The problem for most of these services" and indeed ALL OF US in this nation, is the purely ideologically driven package of cuts about to be inflicted upon this nation by the current administration, which - if we allow it to happen - will devastate our economy for years to come.

In closing, I would advise you not to 'buy' the Con-Dem propaganda; THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION, just as there was in 1945.



Katewashere

08 September 2010 12:48pm

7

Why is anyone surprised that the Tories have done this. Was Margaret Thatcher such a long time ago that people have forgotten?

The fact that these MPs (the same people in the expenses scandal) are accusing the public sector of being wasteful really is beyond the pale.

I work in the Public Sector and will be losing my job in October. I've decided after a career dedicated to public service to move to the private sector (already had offers) where I will be paid a wage I can buy a flat on, have access to a pension which won't be slashed and treated with much greater respect.

I suspect other highly skilled workers in the Public Sector will be doing the same.



johnspud

08 September 2010 12:50pm

Yes, it's a disaster but after 13yrs of spend,spend,spend, what do you expect? The current government didn't cause this shambles but are given the unenviable job of sorting it out. So, blame the previous crowd.



Enrico

08 September 2010 12:59pm

2

Cuts in the NHS are likely on a truly enormous scale due to demographic changes, a static budget and the 6th major reorganisation in the last 20 years - no other world health economy has had to endure this sort of disruption.

GPs are being asked to do the same job as Primary Care Trusts but with management costs of £9 per patient instead of £35 - a major cut.

Costs incurred by secondary care (hospitals) will be the major determinant of success of your local gp commissioning organisation not the gp commissioning. It is moot as to whether a layer of bureaucracy is being removed or just relocated and rebadged.

The NHS looks like it will be a brand rather than a national system in future. Look out

if you live in poor inner city area like Tower Hamlets with large numbers of patients off the national census as we may not be funded for these patients in the future. Also look forward to "co-payments" - that means paying for treatments, something that the British public rightly sees as the thin end of the wedge leading to a multi-tiered service of budget or top draw extra service depending on what you want.

Finally, I agree with SocialistMike that public services still increase GDP and are anachronistically being excluded from the equation of a growing economy. Education/Science/health and social services are the areas of growth for a mature economy and not producing commodities which will increasingly be automated and located in low wage economies in the east. Instead we have an economy that is developing according to the needs of the city/banking sectors. We need a new plan that recognises the need to reorientate our economy away from this and has a plan on how to do it; the CONDEMs aren't offering us this and New Labour agreed with them. Someone in the labour party needs to spell this out and give people something to organise around.



SecretSkivver

08 September 2010 1:51pm

1

If Labour hadn't spent 10 years pushing up unsustainable public spending on wasteful activities, egged on by a large minority who expect their lifestyles to be subsidised by the hard-working taxpayer, then the cuts wouldn't be necessary, would they?

There's no money left, remember?



The3rdMan83

08 September 2010 1:54pm

"It isn't the Condem Alliance that isn't prepared to pay for a decent society, it's us. ..We begged for the harrow, we have got it, and we have only ourselves to blame." - says Rachelthedigger

Define "us" and "we". Because me and you, which would constitute part of "us" and "we", have absolutely NOTHING in common. What do you say to that?



SaintLan

08 September 2010 2:02pm

5

Can I just say good article - concise, balanced and with some analysis on what is proving to be a hugely complex issue.

More like this please



Bobbyb71

08 September 2010 2:23pm

10

These cuts are hitting the most vulnerable. Projects for the disabled and elderly are being closed down are in south-west

It can be opposed. The unity of ordinary people in France will stop Sarkozy going down a similar route.

Yet, the British. Spineless, complacent and clueless when facing their own Governments destruction of the welfare state.

Im sure the BBC and the right-wing press wont let the Government down keeping the options and debate to a bare minimum



trader

08 September 2010 3:06pm

Katewashere

I work in the Public Sector and will be losing my job in October. I've decided after a career dedicated to public service to move to the private sector (already had offers) where I will be paid a wage I can buy a flat on, have access to a pension which won't be slashed and treated with much greater respect.

I suspect other highly skilled workers in the Public Sector will be doing the same.

Err, so that would be very good news for the economy then.

This is a start but more cuts are needed.



Fatigued

08 September 2010 4:25pm

2

Squaring the budgets within the realm of child protection is going to be enormously difficult simply because social work education and current practice sadly has not produced and developed the workers with the requisite skill sets. These will take time to develop. Furthermore risk management is exceptionally time consuming work requiring not inconsiderable levels of funding. Furthermore the political class need to appreciate that it is they who will in part be held responsible when things inevitable go wrong. there are no easy or cheap answerers in child protection.



mindwideopen

08 September 2010 5:01pm

6

"If Labour hadn't spent 10 years pushing up unsustainable public spending on wasteful activities" - SecretSkivver - 8 September 2010 1:51PM

Which wasteful activities do you have in mind, the rebuilding of our schools and NHS maybe ???!

The cuts we now face are not, "necessary" - that is Tory propaganda designed to 'con' the public into swallowing their ideologically driven 'economic vandalism'.

There is a credible alternative to their 'dogma' which will not cause economic devastation on a massive scale - remember that this country was faced with a deficit two and a half times as big at the end of World War 2 and we BUILT our way out of trouble !!

Finally, the previous Labour administration is NOT responsible for the economic situation in which we now find ourselves - **it was the unscrupulous behaviour of avaricious, gambling, 'Neo-Liberal' Tory-boys in the financial services sector that brought this country - and others - to the brink of bankruptcy !!**



slowreader

08 September 2010 10:31pm

1

Osborne inherited a mess. The blame for this squeeze on Public Services lies firmly at the door of Mr Brown, it was he who expanded spending on Public Services to unsustainable levels. If only he'd have increased spending incrementally we wouldn't be in this mess but no, the idiot assumed that he had ended boom and bust.

An example given in the article is of a mental health trust proposing to cut 25% of community mental health team jobs. Jobs in CMHTs didn't rise by 25% during the Brown years, so this level of cutting cannot be explained simply by claiming it's all Brown's fault. There is something else, something ideological at work here.



obscuribus

10 September 2010 11:16am

This article illustrates why the Left is out of power and ought to remain out of power for a long time. Sadly.

Thought and responsibility has been replaced by the comforting old mantra 'Tories=cuts=bad'

Does the Left accept that spending has to fall at all? If so what are its preferred 'cuts' please?

On the detail Ramesh notes that huge savings in the NHS were accepted by all parties and promoted by the head of the NHS himself prior to the Election, thus Government policy under Labour, also that 60000 managers are to go - is that wicked?

On justice Travis notes that the prison building programme may be halted and prisons may be closed, something he has agitated for for years. So why exactly is that now bad?

The Left seems to think its best bet is to argue that there must never be any change in funding or services, except to increase spending, and of course unionised manning levels

If thats the best you can do you do not deserve to be taken seriously

The tragedy of this posturing are that SOME of the cuts ARE disasterous and indeed some cuts - police for example - are unlikely to be deep enough, yet all that is lost in the generalised slogan, ALL CUTS ARE BAD

Pathetic



BarneyM

10 September 2010 3:29pm

From my perspective working in the voluntary sector for NAVCA, the Government's plans for Big Society have the potential to help voluntary organisations and community groups, and in turn, for those members of society that rely on these organisations to improve their lives. These people supported by local charities and community groups are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society.

However, we do not need to re-invent the wheel. The aims of the Big Society are already being delivered today, and have been for some time, through the existing networks of community and voluntary organisations around the country. I hear the Prime Minister talk about empowering the voluntary sector to provide more services and take on more responsibility. The way to do this is by building on the infrastructure and expertise that already exist in the sector. However, in the next sound-bite, I hear about cuts decimating community and voluntary organisations, eating away at the very infrastructure that the Government claims is vital.

NAVCA's research shows groups working with children and young people are being particularly hard hit and there is a growing strain on advice services hit by reduced income and increased demand. We are also seeing a decline in small grants funds – the thing that supports so many of the smallest voluntary organisations and provides the best value for money.

While cuts in this country's public spending are necessary to the health of the economy, if the left-hand of the Government is offering more power to local communities, the right-hand can't be taking away the ability for them to accept it.

Ultimately, if the state withdraws the support for voluntary organisations as Alison Benjamin predicts, then it is those that the Government claims Big Society will help most who will be hit hardest.



obscuribus

10 September 2010 6:34pm

BarneyM Fair comment. But there will be big cuts in grants to the 3rd sector, they are already happening. There may be some growth later to replace cuts in state sector services but I'm thinking that those charities who decided to avoid becoming dependent on Govt and local authority grants were smart indeed.

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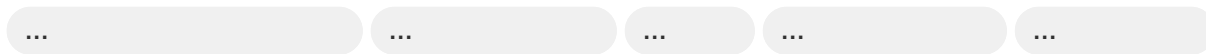
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Scope warns cuts will further marginalise disabled people

Charity says coalition plans could push already 'invisible' group deeper into social exclusion

Randeep Ramesh, social affairs editor

The Guardian, Wednesday 1 September 2010



A wheelchair user. Photograph: David Olivery/Getty Images

A charity has warned that government spending cuts could leave disabled people on the "fringes of society" after its research revealed that many people with disabilities remain hidden in everyday life.

Scope, which campaigns for disabled people in general and those with cerebral palsy in particular, said 91% of people it polled believed disability should not mean fewer opportunities. However, almost the same proportion had never had a disabled person to their house for a social occasion, and only around 20% had had the chance to work with a disabled colleague.

The charity became concerned about the impact of cuts after analysis of the coalition government's emergency budget by the Institute of Fiscal Studies showed that some 20% of disability living allowance recipients would lose their entitlement under planned changes.

Richard Hawkes, chief executive of Scope, warned that the cuts would hit

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disabled people hardest, and could end up pushing them further into [social exclusion](#), possibly even cutting them out of society altogether.

"This is shocking evidence that shows that disabled people are still relatively invisible in day-to-day life," he said. "We are deeply concerned that the government's spending cuts will end up pushing disabled people even closer to the fringes of society."

He called for a full impact assessment before making any cuts to ensure "ministers understand the full consequences of reductions in critical support such as disability living allowance and incapacity benefit. These form a vital lifeline for many disabled people and their families."

There have been increasing concerns that the coalition government's pro-growth budget approach – in which cutting back the state is seen as a virtue – may end up costing more. Scope argues that the government could find itself causing "extreme distress and financial hardship to disabled people, which could end up creating greater dependency on the state and an even greater demand on the public purse".



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Cutswatch



Lollipop patrol hit by cutbacks

Most lunchtime patrols are being cut in South Tyneside, reports Rachel Williams

[Rachel Williams](#)

theguardian.com, Monday 19 July 2010 11.47 BST

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Crossing patrols in the morning and at home time will not be affected. Photograph: Rex Features

They are archetypal community heroes, regularly feted in [the Queen's birthday and New Year's honours lists](#), for their role in keeping children safe from harm. But it seems lollipop ladies (and gentlemen) are not immune from local authority cutbacks.

A reader has been in touch to tell [Cutswatch](#) that almost 90% of lunchtime lollipop patrols are being cut by the council in South Tyneside. Residents have been up in arms, with [more than 200 signing a petition at one crossing site in Hebburn alone](#). Our reader explains their feelings:

"It seems crazy to cut a service that is there to keep young people safe, going against both common sense and the road safety agenda."

The council, which plans to ditch 67 of 80 patrols from September, says it makes sense because its surveys show more and more children are

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staying at school for lunch – so there are fewer nipping out to the chip shop and risking the roads to get their dinner.

Crossing patrols in the morning and at home time will not be affected. Says a spokesman:

"The council takes road safety very seriously ... The surveys have shown that a lot of [schools](#) in the borough keep pupils on the premises at lunchtime and the vast majority of those that do go home are accompanied by an adult, which has led to a significant fall in demand for the service."

But for Alan Reed, the man who got the petition together, it's about more than just children, and more than just safety. He accepts that fewer children are leaving school at lunchtime but says the patrols are vital for others in the area who use the busy crossing outside his shop – not least the residents of the sheltered accommodation across the road.

He's also concerned about the loss of a service which brings wider benefits to the area by encouraging a greater sense of community. Reed tells us:

"A lot of them come across to buy milk and bread. It's not just children who are vulnerable; it's the elderly too. It's a really dangerous place to cross. And the woman who does the patrol is good for the community – she talks to everyone who crosses."

The crossing patrol officers who are working now reduced hours have been [offered a one-off compensation payment of £500](#).

But is it just be South Tyneside, which is looking to make savings of £16m this year, that has decided this is an area it can afford to cut?

The [department for transport](#) says it doesn't collate figures for lollipop people, and nor does the [Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents](#), which suggests checking with councils individually.

RSPA spokesman Vicky Fraser says that it hopes as many patrols as possible can be kept active.

"Spending cuts are being made across the board, but we believe that the purpose of disestablishing a crossing patrol site should not be to save money, but should be to divert the patrol to another site where there is a greater need for its services."

A trawl of the web brings up at least two more examples, [one in South Lanarkshire](#) and [another in Edinburgh](#). Is it part of a much wider trend? Please let us know.



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After the National Audit Office concluded that the regulator was not fit for purpose in 2013, **Aimee Meade** highlights the key points from its follow-up report

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Charity Commission: We have to deliver the goods but the sector has to change too

As the National Audit Office releases its follow-up report on the regulator, the commission's director of policy and communications discusses the next steps, as **Sarah Atkinson** reports

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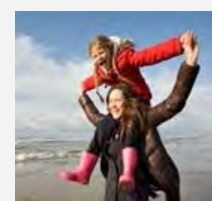
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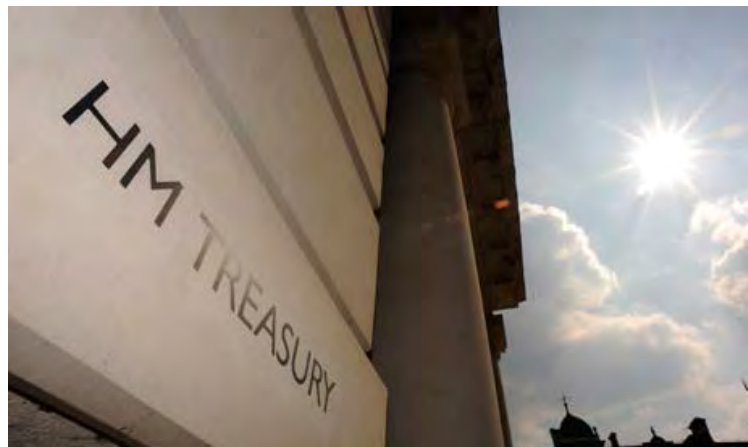


CPS cuts will put justice for the vulnerable at risk, says Law Society

'Wholly unacceptable' budget cut will cost government more in the long run, says solicitors' leader

Natalie Hanman

theguardian.com, Thursday 15 July 2010 14.39 BST



The Law Society says 25% cuts ordered by the Treasury will hit legal aid and the courts service Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

The Law Society has condemned government plans to cut costs at the Crown Prosecution Service as "wholly unacceptable".

The budget cuts were revealed today in a copy of the CPS's draft submission to the Treasury, which the Guardian has seen. They are the first indication from any Whitehall department of the impact of the 25% and 40% indicative cuts in budgets.

Suggestions in the submission for putting a greater emphasis on "virtual courts", paralegals and associate prosecutors would put access to justice at risk, the Law Society warned, and cost the government more in the end.

"Greater emphasis on paralegals and associate prosecutors is a false economy," said Law Society president Linda Lee. "We receive regular

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Budget cut of 25% will 'deny justice', warns Crown Prosecution Service
CPS adds that 40% reduction demanded of Whitehall would lead to

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reports from our members all over the country that the use of associate prosecutors frequently results in unnecessary adjournments and wasted costs as they are unable to make decisions to dispose of cases. Those decisions have to be referred back to their superiors at the CPS.

"Such delays and setbacks are not only costly for the CPS, but for [legal aid](#) and the court service. It would be wholly unacceptable for one government agency to seek to meet its savings targets by dumping costs onto others that are also having to find savings.

She added: "The ultimate losers from these plans for the CPS to slash its budget are the vulnerable clients in need of help dealing with housing, mental health and domestic violence. Access to justice is at risk from these kinds of reforms."

The CPS's submission to the attorney general's office also outlined job cuts of 1,820 – 22% of the total staff – over the next four years. It said a 25% budget cut would "damage [frontline services](#)" and "delay and possibly deny justice".

The Law Society is urging the government to find savings elsewhere in the criminal justice system, such as in very high cost cases.

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Government cuts in housing benefits will mean accommodation priced out of the range of many across the country. See how the figures add up where you live

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Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne plans big changes to housing benefit. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images

Within a generation there will be towns and cities all over the country where there is "no accommodation with a rent within the reach of people whose income is supported by benefits", according to the Chartered Institute of Housing, if measures in last month's emergency budget to save £1.8bn from housing benefit and allowances to the poor are enacted.

The institute says the chancellor's proposals "will hit low income households hard during the recession precisely when they are most in need of support". In his Budget, George Osborne imposed caps on housing benefit of £400 a week for a four-bedroom property and £250 a week for a two-bedroom home. The government estimates that 14,000 households will be affected, largely in London.

The government is planning at least six separate changes to Housing Benefit - which it says will save £1.8bn by 2014/15. One of the most

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Posted by Simon Rogers

Thursday 15 July 2010

14.24 BST

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significant is also one of the most complicated. The government says it will start:

Calculating Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates using the 30th percentile of market rents rather than the 50th percentile

At the moment councils decide the allowances for different types of accommodation by working out the median rent in that area, for that type of property. So, in Derby, for instance, the median one-room rental will be £50 a week.

If you don't know what the median is don't worry - basically, you line all the values up in order and the one slap bang in the middle is the median (if anyone feels like explaining this in a better way, why don't you do so in the comment field below).

The median is sometimes referred to as the 50th percentile (ie, it's 50% of the way along your line of values). What the government proposes to do is to reduce that to the 30th percentile - 30% of the way along the line. The bottom line is that housing benefit will pay less out for the same accommodation - and the difference will have to be paid by tenants, many of whom live entirely on [benefits](#) (although Housing Benefit is payable for people in work – as well as the unemployed).

The CiH have worked out exactly what this means across the country - and this is the data we're bringing you today.

So, for a couple with three children in [Grant Shapps](#) constituency of [Welwyn Hatfield](#), on the average gross salary for constituency (in 2009) of £575.60. Their income right now splits like this:

- take home earnings £438.25 (based on new increased tax allowance)
- Child benefit £47.10
- Child Tax Credit £55.15
- Total income £540.50

Their weekly outgoings look like this:

- Rent (at 50th Percentile) £212.88
- £28.73 need to pay in council tax (amount for Band D in Welwyn Hatfield)
- Housing Benefit before change £111.37
- Housing Benefit after change £82.61

They will have lost £28.76 in housing benefit a week - that's £1,495 a year. Their total disposable income after paying rent is £381.50 a month.

They will have gained only £1.40 a week from the government's increasing the tax allowance - £72.80 a year. Increasing the tax allowance, designed to take the poorest out of tax altogether, is costing the Treasury £3.7bn.

This doesn't take account of budget changes to tax credits and assumes a 6% contribution towards a pension.

We'd love to map out the data for you but local authorities don't use their own boundaries to work out rents in their area. Instead, they combine to measure them on the basis of something called Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA). This is not one of the EU's recognised NUTS areas - indeed we've found it impossible to get a national BRMA map from the [Department for Communities and Local Government](#) or anyone else. If you know of one - let us know.

But the data is below - what can you do with it?

[Download the data](#)

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--Sophie--, 33



WilliamP, 46

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 Aged 25 to 45
 In United Kingdom
 Within 20 miles
 Of



Voluntary Sector Network

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Voluntary Sector Network

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Data summary

| The effect of housing benefit cuts | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Click heading to sort | | | | |
| Region | Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) | 2 BED - median rent | 2 BED - new allowance | To be made up by tenant |
| East | Bedford | 132.33 | 126.58 | 5.75 |
| East | Bury St Edmunds | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| East | Cambridge | 163.4 | 138.08 | 25.32 |
| East | Central Norfolk & Norwich | 120.82 | 111.62 | 9.2 |
| East | Chelmsford | 149.59 | 142.68 | 6.91 |
| East | Colchester | 132.33 | 126.58 | 5.75 |
| East | Harlow & Stortford | 159.95 | 149.59 | 10.36 |
| East | Huntingdon | 126.58 | 120.82 | 5.76 |
| East | Ipswich | 116.22 | 109.32 | 6.9 |
| East | Kings Lynn | 115.07 | 109.32 | 5.75 |
| East | Lowestoft & Great Yarmouth | 109.32 | 102.21 | 7.11 |
| East | Luton | 138.08 | 132.33 | 5.75 |
| East | Peterborough | 115.07 | 109.32 | 5.75 |
| East | South East Herts | 178.36 | 166.85 | 11.51 |
| East | South West Essex | 159.95 | 149.59 | 10.36 |
| East | South West Herts | 195.62 | 184.11 | 11.51 |
| East | Southend | 149.59 | 138.08 | 11.51 |
| East | Stevenage & North Herts | 149.59 | 143.84 | 5.75 |
| EM | Chesterfield | 103.56 | 96.66 | 6.9 |
| EM | Derby | 105.86 | 97.81 | 8.05 |
| EM | Grantham & Newark | 103.56 | 96.66 | 6.9 |
| EM | Leicester | 113.92 | 109.32 | 4.6 |
| EM | Lincoln | 103.56 | 97.81 | 5.75 |
| EM | Lincolnshire Fens | 110.47 | 103.56 | 6.91 |
| EM | North Nottingham | 97.81 | 88.6 | 9.21 |
| EM | Northampton | 126.58 | 120.82 | 5.76 |
| EM | Northants Central | 109.32 | 100.57 | 8.75 |
| EM | Nottingham | 113.92 | 103.56 | 10.36 |
| EM | Peaks & Dales | 115.07 | 109.32 | 5.75 |
| EM | Wolds and Coast | 96.66 | 89.75 | 6.91 |
| Lon | Central London | 480 | 414.63 | 65.37 |
| Lon | Inner East London | 300 | 265 | 35 |
| Lon | Inner North London | 330 | 290 | 40 |
| Lon | Inner South East | 240 | 207.12 | 32.88 |

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|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 |

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Your partner's annual income:

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| | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| | London | | | |
| Lon | Inner South West London | 300 | 276.16 | 23.84 |
| Lon | Inner West London | 303.78 | 277 | 26.78 |
| Lon | North West London | 218.63 | 205.97 | 12.66 |
| Lon | Outer East London | 202 | 195 | 7 |
| Lon | Outer North East London | 189.86 | 178.36 | 11.5 |
| Lon | Outer North London | 230 | 218.63 | 11.37 |
| Lon | Outer South East London | 184.11 | 172.6 | 11.51 |
| Lon | Outer South London | 195.62 | 184.11 | 11.51 |
| Lon | Outer South West London | 253.15 | 218.63 | 34.52 |
| Lon | Outer West London | 207.12 | 195.62 | 11.5 |
| NE | Darlington | 97.81 | 88.6 | 9.21 |
| NE | Durham | 92.05 | 86.32 | 5.73 |
| NE | Northumberland | 92.05 | 86.3 | 5.75 |
| NE | Sunderland | 109.32 | 100 | 9.32 |
| NE | Teesside | 103.56 | 94.82 | 8.74 |
| NE | Tyneside | 105.86 | 97.81 | 8.05 |
| NW | Barrow-in-Furness | 92.05 | 86.3 | 5.75 |
| NW | Bolton and Bury | 103.56 | 92.05 | 11.51 |
| NW | Central Greater Manchester | 126.58 | 113.92 | 12.66 |
| NW | Central Lancs | 115.07 | 109.32 | 5.75 |
| NW | East Cheshire | 132.33 | 115.07 | 17.26 |
| NW | East Lancs | 92.05 | 87.45 | 4.6 |
| NW | East Thames Valley | 193.32 | 178.36 | 14.96 |
| NW | Fylde Coast | 124.27 | 113.92 | 10.35 |
| NW | Greater Liverpool | 115 | 103.56 | 11.44 |
| NW | Kendal | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| NW | Lancaster | 120.82 | 113.92 | 6.9 |
| NW | North Cheshire | 110.47 | 103.56 | 6.91 |
| NW | North Cumbria | 101.26 | 94.36 | 6.9 |
| NW | Oldham & Rochdale | 103.56 | 97.81 | 5.75 |
| NW | South Cheshire | 113.35 | 103.56 | 9.79 |
| NW | Southern Greater Manchester | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| NW | Southport | 126 | 115.07 | 10.93 |
| NW | St Helens | 103.56 | 97.81 | 5.75 |
| NW | Tameside & Glossop | 103.56 | 100.11 | 3.45 |
| NW | West Cheshire | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| NW | West Cumbria | 96.66 | 87.45 | 9.21 |
| NW | West Pennine | 86.3 | 85 | 1.3 |
| NW | Wigan | 97.81 | 92.05 | 5.76 |
| NW | Wirral | 113.92 | 103.56 | 10.36 |
| SE | Ashford | 138.08 | 132.33 | 5.75 |
| SE | Aylesbury | 155.34 | 143.84 | 11.5 |
| SE | Basingstoke | 159.95 | 149.59 | 10.36 |
| SE | Blackwater Valley | 172.6 | 165.01 | 7.59 |
| SE | Brighton and Hove | 189.86 | 172.6 | 17.26 |
| SE | Canterbury | 149.59 | 140.38 | 9.21 |
| SE | Cherwell Valley | 149.59 | 143.84 | 5.75 |

| | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| SE | Chichester | 165.7 | 155.34 | 10.36 |
| SE | Chilterns | 177.79 | 164.9 | 12.89 |
| SE | Crawley & Reigate | 172.6 | 165.7 | 6.9 |
| SE | Dover-Shepway | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| SE | Eastbourne | 149.59 | 143.84 | 5.75 |
| SE | Guildford | 212.88 | 195.62 | 17.26 |
| SE | High Weald | 172.6 | 161.1 | 11.5 |
| SE | Isle of Wight | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| SE | Maidstone | 149.59 | 143.84 | 5.75 |
| SE | Medway & Swale | 136.93 | 126.58 | 10.35 |
| SE | Milton Keynes | 149.59 | 138.08 | 11.51 |
| SE | Newbury | 159.95 | 149.59 | 10.36 |
| SE | North West Kent | 149.59 | 142.68 | 6.91 |
| SE | Oxford | 184.11 | 172.6 | 11.51 |
| SE | Portsmouth | 143.84 | 136.93 | 6.91 |
| SE | Reading | 182.96 | 172.6 | 10.36 |
| SE | Southampton | 155.34 | 143.84 | 11.5 |
| SE | Sussex East | 116.8 | 103.56 | 13.24 |
| SE | Thanet | 120.82 | 113.92 | 6.9 |
| SE | Walton | 205.97 | 195.62 | 10.35 |
| SE | Worthing | 153.85 | 143.84 | 10.01 |
| SW | Bath | 172.6 | 155.34 | 17.26 |
| SW | Bournemouth | 155.34 | 144.99 | 10.35 |
| SW | Bristol | 143.84 | 132.33 | 11.51 |
| SW | Cheltenham | 143.84 | 134.63 | 9.21 |
| SW | Exeter | 143.84 | 130.61 | 13.23 |
| SW | Gloucester | 120.82 | 113.92 | 6.9 |
| SW | Kernow West | 134.63 | 126.58 | 8.05 |
| SW | Mendip | 126.58 | 120.82 | 5.76 |
| SW | Mid & East Devon | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| SW | Mid Dorset | 130.03 | 122.9 | 7.13 |
| SW | North Cornwall & Devon Borders | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| SW | North Devon | 120.82 | 113.92 | 6.9 |
| SW | Plymouth | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| SW | Salisbury | 155.34 | 143.84 | 11.5 |
| SW | South Devon | 130 | 120.13 | 9.87 |
| SW | Swindon | 126.58 | 120.82 | 5.76 |
| SW | Taunton & West Somerset | 126.58 | 119.67 | 6.91 |
| SW | West Dorset | 138.08 | 132.33 | 5.75 |
| SW | West Wiltshire | 126.58 | 120.82 | 5.76 |
| SW | Weston-S-Mare | 126.58 | 120.82 | 5.76 |
| SW | Winchester | 189.86 | 172.6 | 17.26 |
| SW | Yeovil | 126.58 | 118.52 | 8.06 |
| WM | Birmingham | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| WM | Black Country | 111.62 | 103.56 | 8.06 |
| WM | Coventry | 113.92 | 103.56 | 10.36 |
| WM | Eastern Staffordshire | 107.01 | 101.26 | 5.75 |
| WM | Herefordshire | 120.82 | 113 | 7.82 |
| WM | Mid Staffs | 115.07 | 110.47 | 4.6 |
| WM | Rugby & East | 113.92 | 109.32 | 4.6 |

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| WM | Shropshire | 113.92 | 109.32 | 4.6 |
| WM | Solihull | 149.48 | 136.93 | 12.55 |
| WM | Staffordshire North | 97.81 | 87.45 | 10.36 |
| WM | Warwickshire South | 143.84 | 136.93 | 6.91 |
| WM | Worcester North | 120.82 | 113.92 | 6.9 |
| WM | Worcester South | 126.58 | 120.82 | 5.76 |
| YH | Barnsley | 90.9 | 86.3 | 4.6 |
| YH | Bradford & South Dales | 103.56 | 96.66 | 6.9 |
| YH | Doncaster | 97.81 | 90 | 7.81 |
| YH | Grimsby | 92.05 | 86.3 | 5.75 |
| YH | Halifax | 103.56 | 97.81 | 5.75 |
| YH | Harrogate | 136.93 | 126.58 | 10.35 |
| YH | Hull & East Riding | 92.05 | 80.55 | 11.5 |
| YH | Kirklees | 103.56 | 92.05 | 11.51 |
| YH | Leeds | 126.58 | 115.07 | 11.51 |
| YH | Richmond & Hambleton | 115.07 | 109.32 | 5.75 |
| YH | Rotherham | 100 | 90.9 | 9.1 |
| YH | Scarborough | 109.32 | 97.81 | 11.51 |
| YH | Scunthorpe | 92.05 | 87.45 | 4.6 |
| YH | Sheffield | 113.92 | 103.56 | 10.36 |
| YH | Wakefield | 109.32 | 103.56 | 5.76 |
| YH | York | 132.33 | 120.82 | 11.51 |

SOURCE: CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF HOUSING



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15 comments. Showing 50 conversations, sorted oldest first



Cuse

15 July 2010 2:33pm

15

I'm looking forward to the Guardian editorial on this tomorrow from the Ed, after today's efforts of:

Gosh - isn't it really rather spiffing how Dave speaks

and

Thatcher was right all along - the poor need to be eradicated

What'll it be tomorrow?

Benefit scroungers - feed them to the dogs before they litter the streets



noeconomist

15 July 2010 3:18pm

24

I hate this Lib Con government. It is pure ideological hatred of those worse off than themselves. Actively driving people from their homes, actively taking money away from those who have the least, actively adding to the dole queues with massive job cuts and then denying people the help they have paid all their working lives for.

They are scum.



jforbes

15 July 2010 4:01pm

2

At the moment councils decide the allowances for different types of accommodation by working out the median rent in that area, for that type of property.

I think its actually the VOA that worked out the median rent see;

www.voa.gov.uk/LHADirect

LHA direct



jforbes

15 July 2010 4:04pm

3

Also I think the table is wrong as 2 bed properties will be capped at £290pw?



Ancasta

15 July 2010 4:14pm

7

This is what always should have been the story -- not the reduction of housing benefit to £400pw, which affects only those in London or surrounding areas, or those with incredibly large families elsewhere, and which sounds very reasonable to those who are unaware of the very high cost of rental accommodation in the capital. For those of us who live above the Watford Gap, the current maximum benefit per week for a two bedroom place is £149.48 (in Solihul).

I am delighted to know that a single parent with 1-2 children in a two-bedroomed house in Hull will now no longer be able to claim a jaw-dropping £92.05pw for rent, but a much more reasonable £80.55pw. I'm sure he or she will not have any difficulty finding that extra £46 per month!

(I live a two bedroom house in the North West; my husband and I claim no benefits, in case anyone reading this thinks that I am personally affected by this change. I'm not -- I just think it is a deeply unfair change.)

Incidentally, you've marked East Thames Valley as being in the North West, which I suspect is an error...



right2education

15 July 2010 4:16pm

2

Lon Central London 480 414.63 65.37

The maximum payable for 4 bedrooms is £400. £414.63 would not be paid for 2 bedrooms.



jforbes

15 July 2010 4:33pm

12

The other subtler but more insidious change is the move from RPI to CPI to uprate the LHA ceilings.

CPI doesn't include housing costs (!) and is normally lower than RPI, so that over the years the LHA will reduce in real terms which is why the CIH rightly talk about the long term of these changes.



rubylu

15 July 2010 6:54pm

12

I'm glad the calculation in the article is for a family in work. What people often seem to conveniently forget in the hysteria about 'benefit scroungers' is that Housing Benefit is an in-work, as well as out-of-work benefit.

What really makes me sick is the way the benefits and tax credits system has been used to prop up private sector low pay and high rents and now somehow its the fault of the people who have no choice but to claim.



trow

15 July 2010 9:14pm

5

The thing is we were told we must expect the EU deregulation of the banks globalisation mass immigration otherwise our economy would collapse and we would be unable to afford our welfare state



oldefarte

16 July 2010 12:38am

6

The contrast between the way that this matter was initially widely presented by the government and the actual data and changes reminds me of Aneurin Bevan's famous comment about the Tories 'lower than vermin'



jentho

16 July 2010 1:35am

7

Interesting though that the government are still using median rents which means the whole edifice is still built on what the landlords charge, not what is a reasonable rent. Those on housing benefit just get a very low contribution, not a sensible rent. And house prices can still increase provided the rents can be wrung out of tenants who can't afford to buy.

Local councils don't set the areas used to calculate the LHA, nor the LHA. A quango does that (used to be the Rent Office, may still be)

The rich will eventually notice they've got rid of too many poor people from London and the Home Counties when there's no-one around to sweep the streets and make their morning latte.



EarlBH

16 July 2010 9:10am

10

Isn't it time the Lib/Dem **members** started to put their collective feet down?
Its one thing to hold the 'Balance of Power'.. but what Earthly good is that if you don't use it for 'good'?

If Lib/Dems don't act as a 'restraining force' on these sociopathic Tories then it beggars the questions...

- a). what was the REAL reason for them joining forces with the Tories??
- b). Will people EVER trust them again??



shring

16 July 2010 9:43am

7

I've just checked the figures for my area Harlow/Bishops Stortford, roughly £650 pcm for a 2 bed property.

Taking the example of a 2 bed property, the new cap levels for HB in this area will still cover the rent, in full, for a 2 bed flat.

For those HB tenants that are paying more than that for a 2 bed property, then they will have three options:

1. Negotiate the lower rent with their landlord
2. Move to a cheaper property
3. Make up the difference in rent

It remains to be seen what the net effect of these changes will be on the housing market.

I suspect that in the short term, some people will need to move.

A landlord would rather have some rent than no rent at all.

Where the cap makes properties no longer affordable for tenants who are unable to make up the shortfall then, unless those landlords are able to re-let their properties to non-HB tenants or to HB tenants that can afford to make up the difference, then those landlords will be facing voids.

Again, what would you do as a landlord ?

Accept no rent or some rent ?

The idea that, en masse, landlords who have accepted HB tenants in the past will suddenly be able to switch to non-HB tenants, imo is very unlikely.

So, in the medium to long term, I see landlord yields decreasing which will, inevitably mean that many landlords will get out of BTL altogether.

This will have a knock on effect on the housing market with downward pressure on values, rents and yields.

This is a good thing, which will make more homes, more affordable with including rents.

With the exception of central London and the more expensive properties in all areas, where there will have to be, inevitably, a lot of HB tenants relocating, the same effect, imo will occur up and down the country.



PitzRitz

16 July 2010 12:47pm

I have spent several hours on the data tables supplied by the Guardian and have posted an interim finding on the guardian flickr group page.



kjetilniki

16 July 2010 3:02pm

Please note our family on that income will not be eligible for Legal Aid or legal help because their gross income which includes tax credits and child benefit and ignores income tax and NI exceeds £2675pm
Altho', that said, their disposable income is too high by £30pm even after the HB reduction.

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Cutswatch



We're keeping a watch on cutbacks across the UK

Today's focus: How one council plans to reduce its spending by £40m

Patrick Butler

theguardian.com, Tuesday 6 July 2010 11.48 BST

[Jump to comments \(7\)](#)



How Martin Rowson sees the process

This is the first of our regular Cutswatch blogs, which will gather up information on public sector cuts from around the country. Input is already starting to come from readers, and we are following up on your accounts of cuts in your area. We're drawing on twitter and other internet sites, as well as more traditional sources, to paint a comprehensive picture of the extent of the cutbacks, and providing links for those who need more detail.

Tell us about public sector cuts in your area - post online at Guardian Cutswatch and contribute to our [Twitter page](#).

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How one council plans to cut £40m

Blackburn with Darwen council has the reputation of being one of England's best performing local authorities. But as local residents are about to find out, competence and efficiency doesn't shield you from hefty cuts.

On Thursday, the council's ruling executive board (a coalition of Conservative and Liberal Democrats, with a sprinkling of independents) will consider the first batch of 42 reports covering all aspects of the council's services as part of a "major rethink" of what it can afford to provide.

The trimming however has already begun, with £4m of cuts effectively imposed by the chancellor George Osborne in June when he decided to make in-year adjustments to Area Based Grants (ABGs). This is cash provided directly from Whitehall departments to the council to fund specific services.

You can see how it affects Blackburn with Darwen here: a whole range of services – from youth services (which lose over £700k) to road maintenance and Preventing Violent Extremism projects – have had between 25% and 100% of their ABG funding chopped overnight. More grant cuts are expected in the next few months.

The council's even more dramatic next step is to attempt to carve £40m from its annual budget over the next four years in anticipation of a 25% fall in income.

The council leader, Michael Lee, explains:

"The 25% reductions we face in our budgets are just the start; the future is uncertain. We are an ambitious council and have a good reputation for innovation and financial management. This will certainly help us, but we also need to make tough decisions. Where it is no longer possible to provide a service, we have looked at alternatives. But some of the things we are proposing will inevitably be unpopular, as people will see things they have come to expect either changing or stopping altogether."

The first wave of service reviews has looked at community and leisure services. They have proposed the following:

- The closure of council-owned buildings. These include a leisure centre and 16 community centres, which will close unless local community groups can take them over.
- Introducing charging for bulky waste and replacing lost

the inquiry, chaired by Sir Peter Gibson, will 'restore Britain's moral leadership of the world'

LIVE LIVE blog: all the latest from Westminster



Canadiansunshine, 42



GuyJ-81, 33

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household waste bins, closing council-run "pay points" and telling residents to pay council tax at newsagents.

- A formal review of the borough's library services.

On top of that the council has announced:

- The "decommissioning" of up to 23 children's services to save nearly £900,000, including parenting support projects and anti-bullying programmes, many of which are provided by charities and community groups (see appendix three of this report).
- A merger of the management structures of the council and the local NHS primary care trust (which itself faces 36% cuts, including the loss of a third of its workforce over the next three years). This proposal, thought to be the first of its kind in the country, will save around £2m. The council has also set in train plans to outsource its entire adult social care service to a social enterprise.

Public protests are expected at Thursday's council meeting, while local MP and former Labour minister Jack Straw has called the cuts "preposterous." A live web chat with Blackburn with Darwen chief executive Graham Burgess hosted yesterday by the Lancashire Telegraph gives a flavour of emerging public disquiet. More will come when the scale of job losses – as yet no estimates – becomes apparent.

But it is clear this will be only the start. Appendix four of this council paper shows the breadth of the planned service review from child protection and housing to crematoria and staff parking. As Lee says:

"We are determined to be in the best shape possible to make more of less. To do this we need to make significant changes and implement them as quickly as possible or we are just storing up even more pain for later."

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orangechoc

06 July 2010 12:02pm

1

Wouldn't this make the whistleblowers being fired sooner and the cuts quicker? Is this Guardian giving help to the Coalition to make the cuts?



DizzyG

06 July 2010 1:30pm

1

The Guardian wanted this government - shouldn't you be defending the cuts rather than this unconvincing abhorrence?



ralphmcgrath

06 July 2010 1:37pm

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



thecantonlighthouse

06 July 2010 2:04pm

1

They're even cutting the grass in the park over the road



InebriatEd

06 July 2010 7:37pm

The Guardian wanted a Lab-Lib pact. Not a ConDem one. The Libs have gambled a lot to get a PR referendum, and they are being bent over a barrel to get it.



freebornal

06 July 2010 11:05pm

2

The Libs have gambled a lot to get a PR referendum, and they are being bent over a barrel to get it.

but they're not getting a vote on PR are they? - just a wishy washy referendum on AV (which they'll probably now lose because we all hate them so much)

(oh! and 2 months later I've still not bought a copy of the Guardian)



Phil1Edinburgh

07 July 2010 11:22pm

Surely the Labour Party's Guardian should be asking the public where to make the cuts - which equal opportunities, health & Safety, Diversity or cycle officer should go?

The problem with a Labour paper is that all the journalists have a single ideology - only people paid for by the tax payer count.

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Children's services, jobcentres and a hospital feel the squeeze

Job losses at jobcentres and children's services, plus, hospital voluntary redundancy scheme

theguardian.com, Wednesday 30 June 2010 11.06 BST



More than 4,000 jobcentre staff could lose their jobs over the next year. Photograph: David Sillitoe

• More than 4,000 job centre staff may lose their jobs over the next year, according to a leaked memo.

The Department of Work and Pensions employs 80,872 employees in the state-owned jobcentres, which will have to be reduced to 76,500 over the next year.

• Almost 1,500 posts are to disappear in children's services at Britain's biggest local authority, Birmingham, over the next year as managers look to find £13m savings.

• A job freeze and voluntary redundancy scheme at Addenbrooke's hospital, Cambridge, means up to 500 posts will be lost over the next 12 months, including frontline nursing roles. The NHS trust employs around 7,000 staff.

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Three suns appear in the horizon over Mongolia, in an rare optical illusion known as antheilon



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An elephant calf makes an escape after it fell into a water storage pit



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Map: The schools affected by the cancelled rebuilding programme

More than 700 schools in England and Wales will be hit by the abolition of a nationwide rebuilding project. Browse the map or use the alphabetical index to see where the cuts will fall (the map may load slowly in certain browsers but will display correctly after you select an option in the unresponsive script message)

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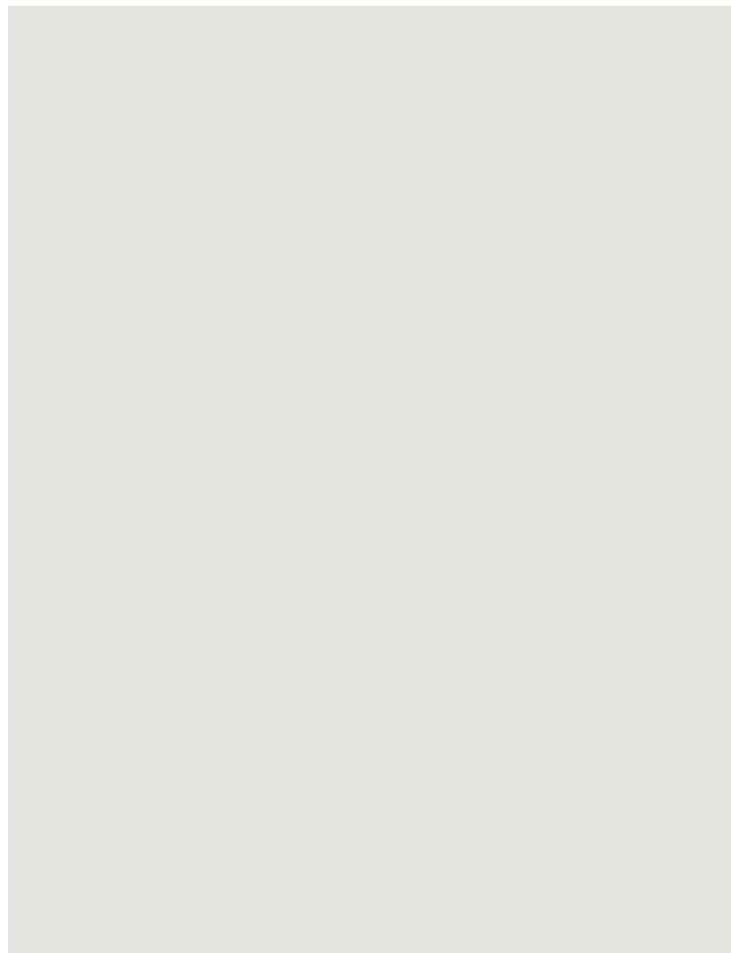
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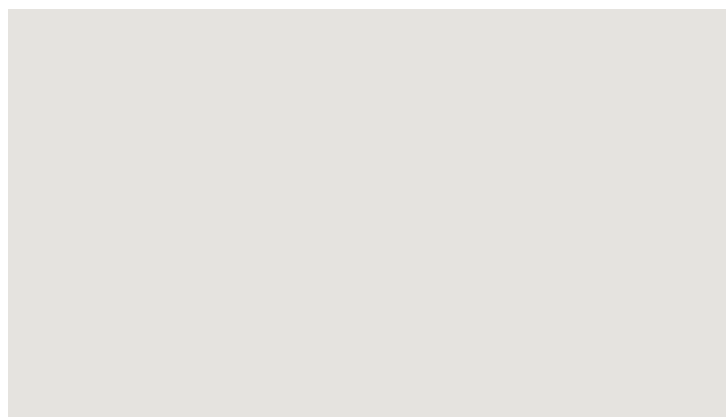


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| School | Local authority |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| All Saints | Barking and Dagenham |
| Aston Manor | Birmingham |
| Alperton Community School | Brent |
| Acland Burghley | Camden |
| Agincourt House PRU | Camden |
| The Archbishop Lanfranc School | Croydon (Joint project with Kingston) |
| St Andrews | Derby City |
| Alfreton Grange Arts College | Derbyshire |
| Alfreton Park Special School | Derbyshire |
| Armthorpe School | Doncaster |
| Acton High Secondary School (Post 16 and ICT) | Ealing |
| St Anns Special School | Ealing |
| Alderman Blaxill | Essex |
| The Appleton School | Essex |
| Ashley School | Halton |
| ARC PRU | Havering |
| Abbotsfield | Hillingdon |
| Abbey School | Kent |
| Astor High School | Kent |
| St. Anthony's | Kent |



| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| The Archbishop Lanfranc School | Kingston (Joint project with Croydon) |
| All Saints School | Kirklees |
| Archbishop Tenison | Lambeth |
| Alford John Spendluffe Technology College | Lincolnshire |
| Abbots Lea | Liverpool |
| Archbishop Beck Catholic Sports College | Liverpool |
| Archbishop Blanch CofE VA High School | Liverpool |
| Ashfield | Liverpool |
| Avenue Centre | Luton |
| St Angelas School | Newham |
| Arthur Mellows Village College (Glinton) | Peterborough |
| Admiral Lord Nelson | Portsmouth |
| Abbey SEN | Rotherham |
| Aston | Rotherham |
| Abbey Hill SEN | Stockton-on-Tees |
| All Saints CE | Stockton-on-Tees |
| Alderwood PRU | Suffolk |
| St Anthony's Catholic Girls' School | Sunderland |
| St. Aidan's Catholic School | Sunderland |
| All Saints RC Language College | Tameside |
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Television Last night's TV

How to Get a Council House; Party House – TV review

How do you get a council house? Sabrina and Lacey and Billie are desperate to know

● [Read Zoe Williams's recap of last night's Mad Men here](#)



Tower Hamlets housing officer Brian in *How to Get a Council House*. Photograph: Richard Ansett/Channel 4**Zoe Williams**

Thursday 17 April 2014 07.00 BST



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The explicit question is [How to Get a Council House](#) (Channel 4). The implicit subtitle is *You Can't*, and we follow a selection of families as they try and fail. On paper, the requirements are difficult enough – you have to be on the waiting list for around a decade, or you have to have a bailiff's notice in your hand, or you have to be on the streets. But that's not quite enough, because there are thresholds for vulnerability even among the homeless, and you have to show that you're more at risk than another homeless person. But it's actually more difficult even than that.

Sabrina, a 30-year-old teaching assistant, had been on the waiting list for 12 years when a flat eventually came up – dinky, dead clean, pretty central and, at £150 a week, cheaper than anything she'll find on the open market. But she still couldn't afford it, and had to walk away with the housing officer staring, baffled, after, wondering what else she thinks she's ever going to find. So the question underneath all that, at one point said out loud by a Tower Hamlets housing officer, is: can poor people afford to live in the centre of town? Especially the unemployed ones – what place do you have in a city, if you contribute nothing to its economy?

To make this point, there's a succession of unemployed people, plus Sabrina, who I think was there as a devil's advocate case study (but what about the people who aren't unemployed? What about the people who do everything right, who don't have children, who aren't ill, who do nothing to dent their market value, who perform a social service, what happens when they can't afford to live here? Who's going to assist your teachers then? Never mind what can she afford, what can your city afford to lose?). But parking her ...

Lacey was a single mother whose benefit cap made it impossible for her to stay in her flat. There was a time when she could have appeared on the telly as the right kind of poor person – married to a soldier, she could have been on *Bake Off* or in one of those programmes about choirs – but since she left her husband, no longer. Her situation, especially as she faces the prospect of having to move with the kids into a hostel or a B&B, is very affecting. She ties herself up trying to present it to her kids as fun, somewhere between a holiday and an adventure, and her acute young son asks her if they're going to live among other people who are homeless. But it doesn't really work on a human level. There's a reason *Cathy Come Home* doesn't have an arch young

narrator doing a stupid voiceover. To really get under the skin of people in a desperately anxious situation, more creativity is needed. You can't just do an audit of their monthly outgoings.

In the end, she doesn't have to move into a B&B; the council finds her some emergency accommodation, a flat almost identical to the one she's just been evicted from. She'll be able to stay there until another flat that she can't afford becomes available. Having adjusted her expectations down to near homelessness, she is utterly delighted.

Billie is a little more naive; pre-school twins and another child only a little bit older, she talks vaguely about getting a job once her youngest are at school, inviting the viewer to think things like, "Well, if you're out of action for the next four years, can't you do that in Wales?"

Ray, clean after years of various addictions, with a CV to match that series of events, is the only one who seems at all angry at this predicament; he's also the only one who doesn't eventually find anywhere and has to move city altogether. I guess the implication there is, know your place, povos. An identical flat to your current one, just as precarious, will only be found for the truly grateful. But maybe not – the real offence of this programme is all the obvious questions it doesn't ask, all the well-known facts it doesn't say. It calls the housing benefit bill "unsustainable" and never says this is because working people on minimum wage can't afford their rent either. It says there's a shortage of stock and never mentions that this is because councils were actively barred from building any by Margaret Thatcher. It's like making a programme about global warming where you just follow polar bears around, saying "there really isn't any food for them, here. Is it sustainable for them to still want to live in the Arctic?"

Moving on: someone said to me once that nobody over 30 would ever really understand "structured reality", the Made in Chelsea-type shows in which real people behave artificially, but over time come to inhabit their artificial selves, so that, neither actor nor person, they become a third being, a kind of bought-in screen-bot. I offer that to you vis-à-vis [Party House](#) (E4). I don't really get the point – load of young people, have parties. But I am over 30.

...



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Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Working Paper - Methods Series No.12

Public Perceptions of Poverty, Social Exclusion and Living Standards: Preliminary Report on Focus Group Findings

Eldin Fahmy, Simon Pemberton and
Eileen Sutton

April 2011

ESRC Grant RES-060-25-0052



Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Overview

The Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK Project is funded by the Economic, Science and Research Council (ESRC). The Project is a collaboration between the University of Bristol, University of Glasgow, Heriot Watt University, Open University, Queen's University (Belfast), University of York, the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The project commenced in April 2010 and will run for three-and-a-half years.

The primary purpose is to advance the 'state of the art' of the theory and practice of poverty and social exclusion measurement. In order to improve current measurement methodologies, the research will develop and repeat the 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey. This research will produce information of immediate and direct interest to policy makers, academics and the general public. It will provide a rigorous and detailed independent assessment on progress towards the UK Government's target of eradicating child poverty.

Objectives

This research has three main objectives:

- To improve the measurement of poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and standard of living
- To assess changes in poverty and social exclusion in the UK
- To conduct policy-relevant analyses of poverty and social exclusion

For more information and other papers in this series, visit www.poverty.ac.uk

This paper has been published by Poverty and Social Exclusion, funded by the ESRC. The views expressed are those of the Author[s].

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Abstract

This paper reports preliminary findings from qualitative development work preparatory to the *UK Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey*. Based on 14 focus groups interviews with 114 members of the UK general public, we focus here upon conceptual and measurement issues in the operationalisation of indicators of deprivation, social exclusion and wider living standards within large-scale social surveys. A further Full Report will investigate wider public perceptions of what it means to be poor in the UK today and wider perceptions of living standards and social exclusion.

Participants' understandings of the „necessities of life“ were varied, denoting both things which households cannot do without as well as those households should not have to do without. Participants' ability to make decisions with confidence on the items which constitute the necessities of life in our society today depend partly upon the contextual information provided, for example with regard to the normative judgments implicit within such deliberations, as well as in the assessment of need (including the substitutability of deprivation items). At the same time, potential problems of cognition, judgment and response were identified in relation to some items, and suggest the need for further cognitive testing in this area.

Although poverty was central to many participants' accounts of „social exclusion“, the latter term denoted a far wider range of disadvantages than those associated with poverty. Participants appeared to engage with the term „social exclusion“ at a conceptual level with an ease and fluency which was sometimes lacking in their accounts of what it means to be poor in the UK today. Participants' accounts, including suggestions on specific indicators, referred not only to those items viewed as *detrimental* to participation, but also those which *facilitate* participation as well as wider social well-being. This might suggest further thought be given to the adequacy of “deficit” models in capturing exclusion from social relations.

Key words: poverty, social exclusion, poverty measurement, deprivation, disadvantage

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Introduction

This report describes the results of a series of fourteen focus groups conducted as part of development work for the PSE Survey. The research upon which this report is based investigates public perceptions of poverty, social exclusion and living standards in the UK today by focusing on the following topics:

1. Definitions of poverty and social exclusion
2. Items and activities considered to be indicators of deprivation and social exclusion
3. Wider views on living standards and well-being

This qualitative development work is intended to inform the design of both the NatCen Omnibus module and the main-stage PSE survey. In this Preliminary Report we focus on participants' perceptions of the „necessities of life“, that is those items and activities which everyone should be able to afford to have or do in our society today and should not have to go without. The recommendations arising from this Report will contribute to the selection of necessities indicators in the forthcoming NatCen Omnibus module. We also report preliminary findings concerning the public's perceptions of „social exclusion“ including specific suggestions and recommendations arising from these discussions with regard to the measurement of social exclusion.

A Full Report will be made available in Spring 2011 outlining findings pertinent to all of the above themes on the basis of a detailed thematic analysis of interview transcripts. In particular, issues relating to the definition of poverty, social exclusion and living standards, as well as indicators of social exclusion will be discussed in detail in the Full Report. Nevertheless, a number of emerging themes are worthy of note here and should be taken into account in the development of survey instruments.

Firstly, whilst participants' initial definitions of poverty were sometimes restrictive, their deliberations on the necessities of life in our society today often reflected much broader conceptualisations of poverty. However, for many participants the notion of „necessities“ was itself problematic given the definition of the „necessities of life“ proposed above, with „necessities“ sometimes suggesting to participants a much more restrictive interpretation of items and activities that households *cannot* go without (i.e. rather than *should not* have to go without). Some participants felt that it was difficult to distinguish between items and activities that all households „should“ be able to have, and those which low income households „could“ in fact afford.

Secondly, many participants felt that determining which specific items and activities should be considered „necessities of life“ depends upon knowledge of a range of other contextual factors concerning the household's circumstances, including wider living standards and household composition. For this reason, participants were asked to consider the situation of an exemplar household comprising a couple with dependent children in making their deliberations. Nevertheless, in rendering the decision-making process more concrete this inevitably is also a significant factor in interpreting

participants" responses which requires further investigation. The above issues require further consideration in the Full Report as they have significant implications for the ways in which the survey questions are understood by participants and interpreted by researchers.

Background

In recent years a number of studies drawing upon budget standards approaches have used focus group methods in order to develop consensual approaches to budget setting. In 1998, a major research study undertaken by the University of York using focus group methods established a minimum income standard for Britain based upon a similar consensual methodology in order to define the level of income needed to enjoy minimally acceptable living standards (Bradshaw et al., 1998). Discussion groups were conducted in order to agree a working definition of „acceptable minimum" and to deliberate upon the household budget needed to enjoy minimally acceptable living standards for a variety of hypothetical households experiencing different circumstances. The minimum income standards set in the original research have subsequently been updated on an annual basis to take account of contemporary changes in perceptions of adequate living standards and consumer trends (Hirsh et al 2009, Davis et al 2010).

In 2010, Hirsch & Smith (2010) investigated the views of parents on „necessities" for families with children to inform a shortlist of items to be included in the ONS Omnibus survey. Again, this research adopted a consensual approach to budgeting by convening a series of discussion groups to establish budget standards for households of different types. Participants discussed the needs of a hypothetical family with either school-age or pre-school children in relation to items which should be regarded as things that every family in Britain should be able to afford if they want them. Group discussions involved negotiation and arriving at a consensus on necessary items, social participation and leisure activities for the families in question.

The use of focus group methods in order to explore perceptions of the necessities of life has also been undertaken as part of development work preparatory to the 1999 PSE survey. A series of focus groups was undertaken by academics at the University of Loughborough with the aim of exploring whether agreement could be reached on those items and activities which all people living in Britain should be able to afford and should not have to go without. Focus group participants negotiated and agreed lists of necessities which had been developed on the basis of 1990 Breadline survey findings (Gordon and Pantazis, 1997). Participants were also asked to consider the relative importance of different items and activities and the length of time that individuals or households could go without them without falling into poverty.

Our objective in this Preliminary Report is to build upon this developing evidence base by contributing to improvement in the measurement of deprivation and living standards in the 1999 PSE survey (Gordon et al, 2001; Pantazis et al., 2006). In this Preliminary

Report we will focus upon participant's specific suggestions concerning indicators of deprivation and wider living standards in the UK today. Recommendations arising from this research will contribute directly to question development in the NatCen Omnibus „Necessities“ module to be conducted in March 2011. Based on participants own suggestions and reflections on existing indicators, we make some recommendations on the „best“ subset indicators for inclusion in the Necessities module.

Sample design

Whilst the 1999 PSE revealed a high degree of consensus in public perceptions of necessities, these clearly also depend upon household circumstances and expectations (Pantazis et al., 2000). For example, the needs of pensioner households differed from those of households with children. Similarly, low income households tended to have a more restrictive interpretation of the necessities of life compared with households enjoying higher standards of living. Perceptions of the necessities of life also varied by age group and ethnic origin.

Since the aim of focus groups is generally to achieve consensus amongst participants, variability in public perceptions of the necessities of life needs to be taken into account in the recruitment of participants. The recruitment plan was based on a quota sample design which aimed to promote homogeneity in group composition with regard to factors relevant to participants' views, including:

- income status, household type, and ethnic origin (*primary strata*)
- gender, age, housing tenure, employment status, age of children (*secondary strata*)

A total of 14 focus group interviews were conducted in November and December 2010 in five different locations, including in each of the four territories comprising the UK: Bristol, Cardiff, London, Glasgow and Belfast. Separate group interviews were conducted amongst low income samples (5 groups), non-low income samples (5 groups), and mixed income samples (4 groups). These groups were also stratified by household type (11 groups) and minority ethnic status (3 groups). The profile of the achieved sample is described in Figure 1 (*overleaf*).

Focus group interviews typically comprised 6 to 10 participants with three groups being conducted in each location¹. Each group lasted approximately 2.5 hours in total. Participants were professionally recruited and all participants received a one-off gift payment of £35 plus travel expenses in recognition for their contribution to the research. Prior to attending their group discussion, participants completed the following instrumentation:

- A recruitment survey collecting respondent socio-demographic data

¹ Unfortunately severe winter weather conditions in Glasgow made it necessary to cancel one group (with older people) and seriously affected attendance at a second group with working age adults.

- A brief open-format questionnaire on deprivation, living standards and social exclusion

The main aim of the pre-group instrumentation was to encourage participants to begin to think in advance about suitable indicators of deprivation and indicators of wider living standards in the UK today. The recruitment survey also provided useful contextual information on the socio-demographic profile of the fourteen groups. A fuller description of the sample is provided in Appendix 2. In total, 114 participants took part in the 14 group interviews of whom 54% were female and 46% male. Over half (55%) of respondents reported monthly household incomes of less than £1,500, and exactly half the sample were owner occupiers. Single person households comprised 30% of the sample, and well over half (57%) of respondents cared for dependent children.

Figure 1: Summary profile of focus groups

| ID | Group Profile | N | Location |
|------|--|----|----------|
| BRS1 | Working age, no dep. children: non-low income. Older owner-occupiers living in detached homes, mixed sex group | 8 | Bristol |
| BRS2 | Working age, no dep. children: non-low income. Mixed age group owner-occupiers, predominantly male | 9 | Bristol |
| BRS3 | Pensioners: low income. Owner occupiers living in mixed dwelling types, predominantly female | 9 | Bristol |
| CDF1 | Pensioners: low income. Owner occupiers living in mixed dwelling types, predominantly female | 8 | Cardiff |
| CDF2 | Couples with dep. children: non-low income. Younger owner occupiers living in mixed dwelling types, mixed sex group | 9 | Cardiff |
| CDF3 | Single parents: non-low income. Mixed aged group renters living in semi-detached homes, predominantly female | 9 | Cardiff |
| LDN1 | Ethnic minority: mixed income. Mixed age group renters living in mixed dwelling types, mixed sex group | 9 | London |
| LDN2 | Ethnic minority: low income. Mixed age group LA/HA renters living in terraced houses and flats, mixed sex group | 8 | London |
| LDN3 | Ethnic minority: non-low income. Younger mixed tenure group living in varied dwelling types, mixed sex group | 8 | London |
| GLS1 | Working age, no dep. children: mixed income. Younger mixed tenure group, all male group | 3* | Glasgow |
| GLS2 | Single parents: low income. Younger private renters living in mixed dwelling types, predominantly female | 6* | Glasgow |
| NI1 | Couples with dep. children: mixed income. Younger private renters living in semis and terraced dwellings, mixed sex group | 9 | Belfast |
| NI2 | Single parents: low income. Mixed age group renters living in mixed dwelling types, predominantly female | 9 | Belfast |
| NI3 | Couples with dep. children: mixed income. Mixed age group owner occupiers living in semis and terraced dwelling, predominantly female | 10 | Belfast |

* Participant recruitment was affected by inclement weather conditions and transport disruption. As a result it was necessary to cancel one further group with pensioners in Glasgow

Research methods

Research was conducted in two overlapping phases. In Phase One, participants were asked to suggest potential indicators of deprivation in a relatively unstructured way using „brainstorming“ methods and based on an exercise participants were asked to complete before attending the discussion. Our aim here was to generate a consensus within groups on possible indicators based primarily upon participants own suggestions with some supplementary prompted items. Participants were asked to deliberate upon those items and activities which they considered to be necessities for a „typical“ family with children in the UK today based upon a hypothetical vignette. Sessions began by soliciting participant feedback on a selection of prompted items drawn from previous studies arranged thematically and relating to households“ accommodation, diet and clothing, household items, social and family life, and children“s items. Participants were encouraged to add freely to and amend items as appropriate using brainstorming methods. In each case, our objective was to seek consensus within each group on those items which everyone should be able to have or do in the UK today and should not have to go without because they cannot afford them. For these purposes, a consensus was recorded where more than half of group members agreed with inclusion of the item as a necessity, though in practice group decisions on many items were universally or near universally agreed by participants.

Drawing on participants“ suggestions in the Phase One groups, the objective in the Phase Two groups was to „test“ the new and prompted items agreed by Phase One groups, as well as to explore perceptions of wider living standards in the UK today, including things which might be viewed as desirable but non-essential, or as „luxuries. To do so, a number of additional items and activities were selected which based upon 99PSE and 03PSENI results are *not* widely viewed as necessities by the UK public. These items were added to the Phase One results and participants were then asked to sort the combined items into three categories using card-sort methods, as follows:

- **Necessities:** things which are essential and which everyone should be able to afford if they want them in our society today
- **Desirables:** things which many or most people have access to in the UK today but which are not essential in our society today
- **Luxuries:** things which are quite costly and exclusive and which fewer people have in our society today

The group observer recorded the outcome of group deliberations, noting if (near) universal agreement or a majority verdict was reached in each case. Our expectation is that a wider consensus may exist where, using different research methods, Phase 2 groups independently classify broadly the same subset of items and activities as „necessities“ as those initially suggested in the Phase 1 groups.

In examining social exclusion, a broadly comparable approach was adopted.

Participants' initial reflections on the nature of social exclusion were explored in relation to the connections between living standards and wider „quality of life“ issues and through the use of vignette methods to illuminate participants' conceptualisations of exclusion. (These findings will be explored in the Full Report). Participants were subsequently asked to make suggestions about *“the kinds of disadvantages which might make it difficult for people to fully participate in society”* based upon brain-storming approaches (Phase 1) and card sort methods (Phase 2). Our aim in the ten Phase 1 groups was to solicit participants' own suggestions on the basis of quite wide-ranging discussion. In the four Phase 2 groups, our aim was to „test“ a range of items based upon participants' suggestions in the Phase 1 groups and existing survey items. In these groups, participants were asked to distinguish between items which were either „essential“ or „desirable“ in avoiding social exclusion.

Findings: The necessities of life

Phase 1 findings

Table 1 (*below*) lists all those items considered and agreed by participants in one or more of the Phase One groups as „necessities of life“ in the above sense. It should also be noted that the items as agreed in different groups varied (sometimes considerably) in their wording from those detailed in Table 1. The detailed comments and recommendations arising from the groups relating to specific indicators are outlined in Appendix 1.

Participants' suggestions are of course varied and wide-ranging, and in advance of a detailed thematic analysis of interview transcripts it is difficult to draw firm conclusions at this stage. However, a number of general points are worthy of brief note here. Firstly, whilst participants' suggestions are generally similar to existing 99PSE/02PSENI indicators there are some signs that certain „traditional“ indicators, for example, those associated with diet, clothing, and family life, are of declining relevance. Similarly, participants' suggestions often indicated a strong consensus in favor of electronic and communication equipment which undoubtedly reflects wider technological and social changes.

Secondly, participants made many new suggestions in terms of specific items for potential further consideration. These were inevitably diverse but those agreed by group participants often focused in various ways on security (long term financial security, insurance against risks, hazard prevention), housing quality (insulation/energy efficiency, ventilation, daylight, communal space, good physical repair), and children's well-being and development (social and school activities, education, safety). Thirdly, aside from the general definitional issues discussed above, participants' responses and queries suggest various (overt) response problems associated with specific items. These relate to participants' decision making processes, and specifically to processes of

item cognition, judgment, and response, and are outlined in detail in Appendix 1.

Table 1: The necessities of life

ACCOMMODATION

- A damp free home
- Heating to warm living areas of the home
- Insurance of home contents
- Money to keep home in decent state of decoration
- Separate bedrooms for boys and girls aged over 10
- Separate bedrooms for all adults and for parents/children
- A communal area for whole household
- Adequate natural light
- Enough space for all household members
- Bath or shower facilities
- Sole use of household facilities
- Adequate ventilation and insulation
- Draft free windows
- Smoke/carbon monoxide alarm

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Washing machine
- Mobile phone
- Access to internet
- Microwave
- Fridge/freezer
- An iron
- Kettle
- Hairdryer
- Money to replace/repair broken electrical goods
- Sofa and/or easy chairs for household members
- Dining table and chairs for all household members
- Money to replace worn out furniture
- Bed, bedding, mattress for all household members
- Curtains/blinds

DIET AND CLOTHING

- Two meals a day for adults
- Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily
- Fresh fruit and veg. on a daily basis
- An adequate balanced diet (including meat, fish, vegetables and carbs)
- Money for a week/month's household food budget
- Warm waterproof coat
- Two pairs of all weather shoes
- New, not second hand, clothes
- An outfit for special occasions
- Three complete outfits for every household member
- Adequate nightwear
- Clothes in good/clean condition
- Adequate clothing and footwear for all seasons
- Non prescription medicines

SOCIAL AND FAMILY LIFE

- Holiday away from home once a year, not with relatives
- Family or friends around for a meal
- Visits to friends or family
- An evening out once a fortnight
- A car
- Local bus or rail fares
- Access to affordable local public transport
- Family outings
- Money for local sporting activities or classes
- A family meal together once a day
- Money to celebrate special occasions
- Theatre, concert, museum, cinema visits
- Personal time for adults away from family responsibilities

Table 1: The necessities of life (Contd.)

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS (Contd.)

- Access to an outdoor space within accommodation
- Books within the home
- Home computer
- TV
- Radio or music player

CHILDREN'S ITEMS

- Three meals a day for children
- Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily for children
- A garden for children to play in
- Books for children of their own
- Toys (e.g. dolls, teddies)
- Friends round for tea/snack fortnightly
- Leisure equipment for children
- School trips at least once a term
- Access to a safe outside area to play
- Fresh fruit or vegetables at least daily/twice daily
- Milk daily

FINANCIAL

- Paying rent/mortgage and household bills without getting into debt
- Regular savings for rainy days
- Small sum of money to spend on self weekly
- Life insurance for mortgage-holders
- Regular payments into a private or occupational pension plan
- New, properly fitted shoes for children
- Some new, not second-hand clothes for children
- School uniform for children
- Hobby or leisure activity
- Toys for personal development/education
- Toys (e.g. dolls, teddies)
- Sports equipment for children
- A mobile phone for older children
- Money for after school clubs
- Treats for children on special occasions
- Money for children's clubs, societies and related activities

Phase 2 findings

In the Phase Two groups participants were asked to classify a range of different items using card sort methods into „necessities“, and „desirable“ and „luxury“ items. Items including selected Phase One necessities and additional items intended to measure relative affluence. Table 2 (*below*) summarises results for those items which were universally agreed by all four groups as necessities (Col 1), for items viewed as necessities by a majority of the groups (Col 2), and for those identified by most groups as „desirable“ (Col 3) or „luxury“ (Col 4) items.

In general, there is a close correspondence between items universally agreed as necessities within Phase One groups and those universally classified as necessities in Phase Two. Groups of course sometimes reached different conclusions and where this is so we distinguish between universal agreement across groups (Col 1) and those classified as necessities in a majority of groups (Col 2). As might be expected given the absence of universal agreement across groups, the latter category includes many items which evoked a more equivocal response in the Phase One groups. These items (Col 2) in conjunction with items identified by most groups as „desirable“ (Col 3) are likely to

prove the most discriminating indicators in terms of identifying a deprivation threshold.

Table 2: Participant classification of standard of living items

1. NECESSITIES (universally agreed)

- Adequate nightwear (4)
- Non prescription medicines (3.5)
- Communal area for all household members (3.3)
- Three complete outfits for every hhd. member (3)
- Local bus or rail fares (3)
- A car in an area with poor public transport (3)
- Being able to celebrate special occasions (3)
- Milk daily for children (3)
- School uniform for children (3)
- A smoke/carbon monoxide alarm (2.6)

3. DESIRABLE ITEMS

- An outfit to wear for social or family occasions (1.75)
- A home computer (1.75)
- Microwave (1.75)
- A dining table and chairs for all household members (1.5)
- A DVD player (1.25)
- Enough space or privacy to read, write or listen to music (1.25)
- Small sum of money to spend on self occasionally (1.25)
- A music system or hi-fi (1)
- A garden to play in (1)

2. NECESSITIES (consensus)

- Attending local sporting or leisure classes (3.25)
- Draft free windows (2.75)
- Digital TV (2.75)
- An evening out once a fortnight (2.75)
- A treat on special occasions for children (2.75)
- Visits to cinema/theatre or other cultural event at least every three months (2.5)
- Leisure equipment (e.g. sports equipment, bike) (2.5)
- A mobile phone (2.25)
- Access to the Internet (2.25)
- A family outing once a month (2.25)
- Toys for personal development (2.25)

4. LUXURY ITEMS

- Membership of a gym or sports club (0.5)
- An iPod or MP3 Player (0.25)
- A school trip abroad once a year (0.25)
- A dishwasher (0)

NOTE: Parentheses indicate item scoring across groups. For each group, items are scored as follows: necessity (universal agreement)=1; necessity (majority decision)=0.5; desirable=0.25; luxury=0. Item scores were summed across the four groups to provide a crude ranking of participant decisions across groups.

Findings: social exclusion

Phase 1 findings

In the phase 1 groups, participants were introduced to the topic of social exclusion by asking them to consider what it meant to them to be able to fully participate in society. Participants were all familiar with the term „social exclusion“ and its common usage in public debates relating, for example, to disadvantage, deprivation, and the „underclass“. A much fuller analysis of these issues will be explored in the Full Report. However, it is clear that whilst poverty was, to varying degrees, integral to many participants' accounts of „social exclusion“, this latter term denoted a very much wider range of disadvantages than those associated with limited material resources and its impacts. Indeed, participants appeared to engage with the term „social exclusion“ at a conceptual level with an ease and fluency which was sometimes lacking in participants' accounts of the „necessities of life“ which everyone should be able to afford in our society today.

At the same time, the items suggested by participants were not only those which they viewed as *detrimental* to participation (e.g. discrimination, incapacity, fear, etc.), but also those which *enable* participation (e.g. supportive social networks, good health, access to good quality services). This might suggest further thought be given to the extent to which a „deficit“ model focused upon exclusion from social relations is adequate in capturing positive well-being. In practice, participants' suggestions about the kinds of disadvantages which they thought would make it difficult for people to fully participate in society referred to items with both negative connotations (associated with exclusion) *and* positive suggestions relating in various ways to social well-being and quality of life. The extent to which these are simply the obverse of each other is open to debate, but at the very least it is clearly also important that researchers focus upon the development of indicators of social well-being and quality of life alongside the measurement of disadvantage and exclusion.

Participants were asked to make suggestions about “*the kinds of disadvantages which might make it difficult for people to fully participate in society*” and these suggestions are outlined in Table 3 (*below*). Participants' suggestions were wide ranging included items that encompassed the range of B-SEM themes, as detailed below.

Table 3: Participants' perspectives on social exclusion

HEALTH & WELLBEING

- Good physical and mental health
- Disabilities
- Mental illness
- Life limiting illness
- „Healthy“ spiritual life

CRIME, HARM & CRIMINALISATION

- Living in a high crime area/area with a reputation for crime and ASB
- Being unable to insure your home
- Being afraid to go outside/go out at night
- Feeling safe
- Discrimination: homophobia, racism, sexism, ageism, disability, religion
- Bullying/harassment
- Domestic violence
- Not having sufficient visible policing
- Good criminal justice system
- Having a criminal record
- People in prison

SOCIAL RESOURCES

- Low confidence and self-esteem, shyness
- Lack of social contacts
- Not living close to family/friends
- Good(ish) relations with neighbours
- Support networks (e.g. family)
- Older people who lack support
- No one to turn to in a crisis
- Poor social networks/contacts
- Good social skills
- Good communication skills

LIVING ENVIRONMENT

- Good neighbours
- Good warden-assisted accommodation
- Homelessness
- Neighbourhood Watch area
- Safe park
- Community spaces
- Sense of belonging where you live
- Good neighbours

MATERIAL/ECONOMIC RESOURCES

- Poverty
- Adequate level of income
- Able to save
- Debt (manageable debt)
- Local bank/credit union
- Bank account
- Information on finance for young people
- Sensible state pension
- Not being able to afford social activities (adults and children)
- Funding to services: charitable, disabilities, women's aid
- Living on social benefits
- Not owning your own home

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

- Unemployment
- Few career opportunities in the labour market
- Long and/or unsocial hours
- Working in a high stress environment
- Harassment/bullying at work
- Being in debt
- Good contributory pension scheme (employer contribution)
- Caring responsibilities

Table 3: Participants' perspectives on social exclusion (contd.)

ACCESS TO SERVICES

- Access to healthcare: emergency dept, health centres
- Affordable dental care
- Access to GP/health centre (including rural areas)
- Home care services, district nursing
- Access to local shops
- Library
- Schools/education
- Adult education
- Breakfast clubs for children
- After school clubs
- Playgroups/nurseries
- Children's centre
- Youth centre
- Leisure centre/leisure facilities
- Local sporting club/sports facilities
- Café
- Pub
- post office
- Emergency services
- Refuse collection
- Church/place of worship
- Access to community facilities
- Lack of facilities in rural areas
- Good, regular, affordable transport links
- Sufficient funding/resources for services
- Local resources/funding to set up community groups/facilities
- Good publicity about community services
- Local news source
- Access to mobile phone/internet for social contact

POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

- Feeling unable to participate in or influence decision-making
- Having a say about your local area
- Community involvement
- Immigration and citizenship status
- Political participation
- Lack of community spirit

CULTURE, EDUCATION & SKILLS

- Poor education
- Qualifications, skills and work experience
- Lifelong learning opportunities
- Poor English language skills

Phase 2 findings

In the phase 2 groups, participants were asked to classify a range of different social exclusion items using card sort methods based upon a selection of items proposed in the Phase 1 groups and findings from previous surveys in this area. Participants were asked to sort the items into those that were either „essential“ or „desirable“ in avoiding social exclusion – none of these items were agreed in any of the phase 2 groups to be *neither* essential nor desirable in avoiding social exclusion.

Interestingly, across the four phase 2 groups there were no items that were universally (i.e. unanimously) considered to be essential for avoiding social exclusion by all participants. Nevertheless, in many cases a general consensus was evident across groups that certain items were essential in avoiding social exclusion, as detailed in Section 1 of Table 4 (*below*). Of these, the items that received that greatest support were: regular contact on most days with friends; workmates or neighbours; help with caring responsibilities; and good English language skills.

A much wider range of items were broadly considered to be desirable in avoiding social exclusion, or desirable but not essential in doing so - as detailed respectively in Sections 2 and 3 of Table 4 (*below*). It is difficult at this stage to draw firm conclusions with regard to the relative ranking of items since any such classification of the degree of consensus within and across groups is inevitably crude (see Table 4, note). However, much further analysis on the basis of a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts is certainly warranted in this area in exploring the relationships and interconnections between disadvantage and exclusion on the one hand, and social well-being and quality of life on the other. These issues will need to be addressed more fully in the Final Report.

Table 4: Participant classification of Phase 2 Social Exclusion Items

1. Essential to avoid social exclusion (consensus across groups)

- Regular contact on most days with friends, workmates or neighbours (0.83)
- Help with caring responsibilities (0.83)
- Good English language skills (0.83)
- Manageable debt (0.67)
- Confidence and self-esteem (0.67)
- Freedom from harassment/bullying at work (0.67)
- Good publicity about community services (0.67)
- Freedom from longstanding illness which limits your daily activities (0.66)
- Someone to turn to in a crisis (0.66)

2. Desirable to avoid social exclusion (consensus across groups)

- Good access to services (0.58)
- Good education (some qualifications/skills) (0.58)
- Feeling safe walking alone after dark in your local area (0.58)
- Freedom from verbal/physical abuse on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion (0.58)
- Freedom from verbal/physical abuse from another member of your household (0.55)
- Good mental and physical health (0.44)
- Work that is rewarding or socially valued (0.42)
- Good relations with neighbours (0.42)

3. Desirable but not essential to avoid social exclusion

- Full UK citizenship (0.33)
- Good career opportunities in the job and/or labour market in your area (0.25)
- Feeling able to influence decisions in your local area ((0.25)
- Owning your own home (0.22)
- Having no criminal record (0.22)
- Living in accommodation free from air pollution or heavy road traffic (0.17)
- Being involved in local community groups or activities in your area (0)

For each group, items are scored as follows: essential (universal agreement)=1; essential (majority decision)=0.66; desirable (majority)=0.33; desirable (universal)=0; Item scores were summed across the four groups to provide a crude ranking of participant decisions across groups.

Conclusions and recommendations

Participants' suggestions are broad in their scope and further analysis is needed to explore the public understandings of poverty and deprivation in our society today, as well as wider views on living standards and social exclusion. Nevertheless, our analyses so far raise some important issues with regard to: a) the nature and scope of participants own recommendations; b) conceptual and definitional issues in determining the necessities of life", and; c) measurement issues associated with participant decision-making processes.

Participants' suggestions and recommendations

Participants' comments and suggestions on the necessities of life in our society today were many and varied. Specific recommendations relating to individual items and activities are contained in Appendix 1. However, despite the scope of participants' suggestions, our initial findings suggest that certain „traditional" indicators of deprivation associated with diet, clothing, and family life may be of declining relevance in the UK today. Similarly, participants' suggestions often indicated a strong consensus in favor of electronic and communication equipment which undoubtedly reflects wider technological and social changes. Participants made many new suggestions in terms of specific items for potential further consideration and those agreed by group participants often focused in various ways on security (long term financial security, insurance against risks, hazard prevention), housing quality (insulation/energy efficiency, ventilation, daylight, communal space, good physical repair), and children's well-being and development (developmental and school-related activities, education, safety). It is recommended that special consideration is given to possible inclusion of items in these topic areas.

Deprivation indicators can also be thought of as comprising a sub-set of standard of living items denoting different levels of deprivation of necessities. In terms of identifying a poverty threshold it is therefore important to include items which are sensitive discriminators, that is items which are located close to the threshold between „necessities" and „desirable" in the minds of participants. Those items identified as „necessities" on the basis of a majority verdict, and those classified by participants as „desirable" (but non-essential) are likely to prove especially sensitive measures of deprivation and living standards. It is recommended that particular emphasis is given to „threshold" indicators of this type in the NatCen Omnibus module, including inclusion of some of these items in the survey.

Participants were also asked to make suggestions in relation to the wider forms of disadvantage which might make it difficult for people to fully participate in society. Their accounts indicate that whilst limited resources is clearly important in understanding wider forms of social exclusion, the latter term denotes a far wider range of

disadvantages, for example associated with social relations, networks, and participation, economic life, health and well-being, housing and environmental quality, and crime and social harm. In general, these suggestions provide a good „fit“ with the Bristol Social Exclusion Framework (Levitas et al., 2006). However, some suggestions such as „a healthy spiritual life“ are difficult to situate within the BSEM measurement framework. Other items, such as „sufficient visible policing“, „funding for (voluntary) services“, „good publicity about community services“, and wider issues of accessibility and affordability in service provision, draw attention to the extent to which social exclusion affects not only *personal* well-being and quality of life, but also characterizes the degree of *societal* equity and cohesion.

Definitional issues

Prior to detailed thematic analysis of interview transcripts it is difficult to draw firm conclusions at this stage, but our initial findings suggest some interesting definitional issues with regard to participants' views on the „necessities of life“. Firstly, for some participants the term „necessity“ was itself problematic insofar as participants frequently understand this to refer to items and activities which households cannot do without rather than things that all households should be able to afford. It is therefore recommended that consideration is given to minimising reference to „necessities“ since respondents' understandings of this term do not always accord with the PSE interpretation.

Secondly, participants' ability to make meaningful decisions with confidence on these items depends partly upon the contextual information provided. In this study, participants' deliberations focused upon a hypothetical vignette describing a „typical“ family with children. Group decisions partly reflected participants' interpretations of this family's circumstances both in terms of implicit moral judgments concerning eligibility, but also in the more specific sense that for many participants the importance (need) for an item depends upon individual and household circumstances, as well as the other resources they are able to draw upon (i.e. their substitutability). Related to this, participants' deliberations inevitably raised questions about the extent to which the availability of items is important in shaping participants' decisions. This is reflected in the importance attached to local services and amenities by participants in shaping decisions about what households should be able to afford (i.e. the extent to which items may be substitutable). For example, for many participants the importance of having access to a car depends on the availability of suitable public transport

Thirdly, in comparison with discussion of the „necessities of life“ participants appeared to engage with the term „social exclusion“ at a conceptual level with an ease and fluency which was sometimes lacking in their accounts of what it means to be poor in the UK today. Participants' accounts in relation to social exclusion, including suggestions on specific indicators, referred not only to those items generally viewed as *detrimental* to participation, but also to those which *facilitate* participation and promote wider social

well-being. This might suggest further thought be given to the adequacy of “deficit” models in capturing exclusion from social relations, and in particular that more attention is paid to what it means to be *included* within society in terms of social well-being, participation, and quality of life, including through the development better measurement of these concepts within large-scale surveys in this area.

Measurement issues

In addition to the above conceptual and definitional issues, our discussions with participants revealed a number of measurement issues associated with participants’ decision-making process primarily relating to item cognition and response. It should be noted that we are only able to comment here upon *overt* problems associated with item wording on the basis of queries and comments volunteered by participants. We do not exclude the possibility that further covert problems may exist for some items, and we recommend that these and similar deprivation items are subject to full cognitive testing in future work in this area.

Item cognition issues were identified with a variety of items and further details on specific problems are outlined in Appendix 1. Problems were identified with some items where wide variations exist in the quality of items available and with the associated costs. In the absence of sufficient information which might allow participants to make informed judgments about the relevant costs involved it can be difficult for participants to deliberate on the importance of different items. Some instances where this was an especial issue includes „iPod or MP3 player“, „holidays“, and „outing“ where cost implications are unclear and highly variable. It is recommended that consideration is given to providing an estimate of cost for some items where these are difficult for participants to estimate. In order to aid participants’ decision making consideration could also be given to more provision of suitable examples - as well as ensuring that these are generally comparable. Similarly, the use of adjectives such as „adequate“, „appropriate“ and „decent“ caused difficulties for participants. This was highlighted by participants’ contrasting opinions on the elements that constituted the item in question. It is recommended where possible to avoid the use of such adjectives.

Finally, it is clear that participants’ judgments about the items and activities which constitute the necessities of life are conditional upon the non-household and non-monetary resources (including public services and collective provision) assumed to be available to households. This is partly an issue of the substitutability of items and the information available to participants in making judgments of this type discussed above. However, more fundamentally this also highlights the importance of considering wider forms of social exclusion alongside an examination of the extent to which low income undermines people’s capacity to fully participate in society. It is therefore important to examine the range of reasons offered by survey respondents lacking deprivation items which extend beyond issues of affordability and the prioritization of household spending to encompass also wider barriers to effective participation, including those relating to poor health and disability, lack of availability, social isolation, and discrimination.

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APPENDIX 1: Comments and recommendations on specific indicators

1. Accommodation

| ITEM (See note) | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|--|---|---|
| <u><i>A damp free home</i></u> | This item was universally agreed to be a necessity and basic standard that all accommodation should meet. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u><i>Heating to warm living areas of the home</i></u> | This item was universally viewed as a necessity. With rising energy prices, energy efficiency and insulation were important considerations in participants thinking since poorly insulated homes are costly to heat. Participants suggested a number of related items, incl 'loft insulation', 'double glazing', 'adequate insulation', etc. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. Alternative items focusing on energy efficiency could be considered, such as 'a draft free home' or 'an adequately insulated and ventilated home'. It is recommended that a new item be included 'an adequately insulated and ventilated home' |
| Draught free windows | The item was widely viewed as a necessary. Participants drew on their experience of living in poorly glazed homes and the associated additional heating costs. | |
| Adequate ventilation and insulation | The item was viewed as essential in maintaining thermal comfort. Participants drew on their experience of living in poorly insulated homes and the associated costs (incl health costs) | |
| Adequate natural light | Some participants felt that adequate natural light as a feature of basic accommodation was a necessity. Participants suggested the importance of this item for well being and the enjoyment of their living environment. | It is recommended that new item be included 'good levels of natural light'. |
| <u><i>Money to keep home in decent state of decoration</i></u> | This item provoked considerable discussion with regard to how the item should be understood esp what 'decent' decoration entails (i.e. cognition problems). Some participants felt this could be interpreted as being able to follow the latest consumerist trends in household furnishings which did not qualify as a necessity. Others suggested 'a decent state of <i>repair</i> ' (rather than decoration). This rephrasing seemed to address participants' concerns incl the need to ensure the home is hazard free. | It is recommended that this item be included subject to rewording 'Money to keep home in a decent state of repair and decoration'. |
| Smoke/carbon monoxide alarm | Participants universally viewed both a smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm as being a necessity. Again, this is underpinned by a broader concern with maintaining a safe living environment. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'a smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm'. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|---|---|
| Separate bedrooms for all adults and for parents/children | All participants felt that separate bedrooms for adults was a necessity where needed, and that parents should not have to share a bedroom with their children. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'Separate bedrooms for adults' |
| <i>Separate bedrooms for boys and girls aged over 10</i> | This item was widely viewed as a necessity for children after the age of around 10 years old for reasons of privacy and space. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Bath or shower facilities | Some participants suggested bath and/or shower facilities within the home as a necessity and this was universally agreed. For many this was a 'taken for granted' item in contemporary society. | This item was widely viewed as a necessity and could be included. However, it may not be a sensitive measure and was not salient in participant accounts. |
| Enough space for all household members | Participants referred to the need for individuals to have a space that they could enjoy away from other members of the household. This was viewed as important in terms of privacy, but also for personal development, such as a space to read, listen to music or to do homework. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'Enough space or privacy to read, write or listen to music'. This wording was tested in Phase 2. It should be noted that these groups considered this to be a desirable item, therefore this may be a useful threshold item. |
| A communal area for all household members | Participants emphasised the importance of a shared social space in maintaining normal social and family relationships. Participants also referred to lifestyle changes assoc with more informal living patterns which make this item essential. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'A living room for all household members to share'. |
| Sole use of household facilities | There was widespread agreement that households should not have to share household facilities. Participants felt that sole use of facilities, such as a kitchen and bathroom, are necessary to ensure privacy and well being. Some participants noted that for some groups such as university students, communal living may be seen as a desirable choice. | It is recommended that this item be re-worded: 'Sole use of household facilities including kitchen and bathroom'. |
| <i>Insurance of home contents</i> (PSE99: '~contents of dwelling') | This item was widely agreed by participants as a means of safeguarding against unpredictable risks. Where proposed, buildings insurance was also seen as important for home-owning households. Some participants noted the increased risk of flooding as a further hazard that households should be able to insure against. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised wording: 'insurance of home contents'. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

2. Diet, clothing and footwear

| ITEM | COMMENT | RECOMMENDATION |
|--|---|---|
| <u>Two meals a day for adults</u> | Diet related items provoked much discussion about how a 'meal' is understood (main meal, snack, etc) (i.e. poss cognition issue), and how this related to changing lifestyles (less regular meals, snacking, eating out etc). Participants perceptions of an acceptable minimum also varied with some participants suggesting 'three meals a day', and others proposing an adequate and/or balanced diet as an alternative. | These items make assumptions about the desirability of specific dietary regimes which were not always shared by participants. Participants' definitions of a 'meal' also varied widely. Two main meals could be an alternative. Another alternative could be a new item 'an adequate balanced diet'. However, any changes may introduce other <i>more</i> substantial problems of interpretation and could conflict with other indicators. It is therefore recommended that these items are included without changes. |
| <u>Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily</u> | Whilst there was widespread consensus on the importance of this item the frequency was questioned with some participants suggesting 'every other day' was adequate. Others thought that an adequate and/or balanced diet would be a better. | |
| <u>Fresh fruit and veg. on a daily basis</u> | There was universal agreement amongst participants that this item is a necessity. Some participants proposed amending the frequency to 'at least daily'. | |
| An adequate balanced diet (including meat, fish, vegetables and carbs) | Some participants felt that diet items were too specific and 'an adequate and/or balanced diet' (or similar) would be preferable. Some participants suggested further explanation in brackets - 'including meat, fish, vegetables and carbohydrates'. | It is recommended that this new item is not considered for inclusion (see above). |
| Non prescription medicines | Some explanation on the definition of this item was given by interviewers referring to over-the-counter medications (analgesics etc). Participants then easily reached a consensus that this item is a necessity. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'non-prescription medicines such as flu remedies, ointments, drops or painkillers'. |
| <u>Warm waterproof coat</u> | There was universal agreement amongst participants that this item is a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Two pairs of all weather shoes</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity. However, some explanation was required suggesting possible cognition problems with regard to what was meant by 'all weather'. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to changes in item wording: 'shoes for both winter and summer use'. |
| Adequate clothing and footwear for all seasons | Some participants suggested a change to 'adequate footwear'. Others suggested clothing and footwear items be combined in one item 'adequate clothing and footwear for all seasons'. However, interpretations of what constitute 'adequate' varied so widely that generic questions of this type are likely to be of limited use. | It is recommended that this new item is not considered for inclusion. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|--|--|
| <i><u>New, not second hand, clothes</u></i> | Some participants noted changes in the public acceptability of second-hand clothes esp. charity shops bargains targeted by middle class customers. Others noted that new clothing may now be cheaper than second-hand clothing. Some participants suggested the item should be amendments including "some new not second-hand clothes". | It is recommended that this item is included subject to changes in item wording: 'some new not second-hand clothes'. |
| <u>An outfit for special occasions</u> | Whilst there was general agreement this item might be a useful threshold indicator as viewed were quite mixed. Participants emphasised the importance of social expectations and roles as well as the stigma of being single out or excluded. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to changes in item wording: 'an outfit for special occasions such as a family wedding or job interview'. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be a desirable item, so it may be a useful threshold item. |
| Three complete outfits for every household member | This item was widely suggested but consensus was difficult to establish partly for definitional reasons relating to the term 'outfit' (which was interpreted as meaning matching clothing by some participants). | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'three complete sets of clothing for every household member'. |
| Clothes in good/clean condition | Participants thought that going into detail on separate clothing items was unproductive and a general descriptor of clothing quality would be preferable. Participants suggestions included 'clothes in good condition', 'adequate clothing and footwear for all seasons', 'clean clothing' and 'appropriate clothing for season in good condition'. | It is recommended that further consideration be given to this new item subject to revised wording: 'appropriate clothing for all seasons in good condition'. |
| Adequate nightwear | Where discussed there was general agreement on this item. Discussions focused on cognition problems in interpreting 'adequate' and also whether this referred only to clothing specifically designed for this purpose. This item might be important if a hospital stay is needed, or for children attending sleepovers. | It is recommended that this new item be included subject to changes in item wording: 'pyjamas or night dress'. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

3. Household items

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Mobile phone</i> | There was widespread agreement that access to a phone at home was a necessity. For many, this meant either a mobile or landline. However, some groups and participants also felt that in addition to a landline, all adults should be able to have a mobile phone in the UK today to maintain social relationships, meet social obligations (incl work), and to keep themselves and others safe. Others noted that a mobile phone is in many cases also cheaper than a landline. | It is recommended that two new items be considered: 'access to a phone (incl mobile) at home' and 'a mobile phone'. Participant decisions about whether a landline and mobile phone are necessities were sometimes inter-related. This suggests a need for some modification of existing items. |
| <u>Access to internet at home</u> | Internet access was widely identified as a necessity in the UK today in a variety of contexts (e.g. seeking work, education, maintaining social networks, accessing information and services). Internet access for families with children was identified as especially important, and agreement on this item for adult-only households was less pronounced. Some participants noted that internet access via public libraries, etc might be an alternative but accessibility issues (and assoc indirect costs) were decisive here. Some participants felt that 'high-speed internet access' was important. However, the consensus was that basic access today usually in practice meant broadband access which was considered adequate. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. This item suggesting it may be a 'good' (sensitive) threshold indicator. |
| <u>Microwave</u> | A microwave was suggested by some participants <i>in addition</i> to use of a standard oven/hob. The substitutability of items (cooker/microwave) is an issue here (i.e. possible decision-making problem). Additional convenience (esp for families with children), energy saving, and low cost were decisive factors in participants decisions. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be a 'desirable' item, so it may be a useful threshold item. |
| <u>Fridge/freezer</u> | A fridge/freezer was suggested and quickly agreed by participants on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| An iron | Where discussed, an iron was suggested and quickly agreed by participants on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. | It is recommended that this item is not considered for inclusion. Whilst universally agreed as a necessity in one group, it was not salient in most groups' discussions suggesting that it is unlikely to be a good discriminating indicator. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

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|---|---|---|
| Kettle | Where discussed, kettle was suggested and quickly agreed by participants on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. | It is recommended that this item is excluded. Whilst universally agreed to be a necessity in one group, it was not salient in most groups' discussions suggesting that it is unlikely to be a discriminating indicator. |
| Hairdryer | This item was suggested by some participants and provoked some discussion focused on whether this item is essential for <i>all</i> people/households (gender being decisive here!). However, there was a consensus that households (incl the exemplar) should be able to have this item if they need it. | This item is recommended for further consideration by the research team. This item could be useful in identifying gender differences in the experience of poverty. |
| <u>Money to replace broken electrical goods</u> | This item was discussed some participants resulting in a clear consensus across groups. Some participants emphasised the importance of safety consideration (esp for hholds with young children). Others suggested that given the relative costs of repair/replacement, households should be able to replace broken/unsafe items (rather than repair) | It is recommended that item is included subject to revised item wording: 'Money to replace broken or unsafe electrical goods'. |
| Sofa and/or easy chairs for household members | Participants emphasised the importance of a shared living space for household social interaction. Having somewhere quiet and comfortable to rest and relax was also seen as important for personal well-being | It is recommended this new item be included 'Sofa and/or easy chairs for household members'. |
| Dining table and chairs for all household members | Many participants emphasised the importance of a communal living space for household social interaction. Some participants observed that changing lifestyles mean that this is less relevant today for them and others. Others noted that although they may be able to afford it, not all households have sufficient space - the complementarity of items is an issue. | It is recommended that a new item is included based upon revised wording: 'A table and chairs for all household members'. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be a 'desirable' so this may be a useful threshold item. |
| <u>Money to replace worn out furniture</u> | This and related items were very widely proposed and agreed as a necessities by many participants (i.e. no decision-making problems). However, considerable discussion focused on item wording (cognition problems). Some suggested that replacement furniture should not be interpreted to mean <i>new</i> furniture but simply 'functional' or 'in a good state of repair'. Others felt that it was necessary to repair 'broken' furniture rather than simply 'worn out' furniture. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording: 'money to replace broken or worn out furniture'. |
| <u>Bed, bedding, mattress for all household members</u> | This item was suggested and quickly agreed by participants in a number of groups on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Curtains/blinds | This item was suggested and quickly agreed by participants in a number of groups on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. Participants emphasised the importance of privacy as well as energy-efficiency savings | It is recommended that this new item be included 'Curtains and/or blinds'. |
| Access to an outdoor space within accommodation | This and related items were widely suggested and discussed. Participants emphasised the importance of open space within the accommodation for children to play (see children's items), and access to fresh air outside for all household members. Some participants noted that <i>availability</i> of suitable accommodation can be an issue [e.g. in London] - as a minimum households should have access to a outside balcony, terrace or small yard | It is recommended that this item be given further consideration in relation to standard of living items & soc exclusion (garden, area for children to play, parks/rec areas). |
| Books within the home | This item was widely agreed by participants. Participants emphasised the item's cultural, social and educational importance. Some participants emphasised that <i>second-hand</i> books were very cheap and should be within reach of all. How many books households should be able to afford depended on need. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording: 'books (incl second-hand) within the home'. |
| <u>Home computer</u> | This item was suggested and discussed by participants less frequently than internet access. Where discussed participants emphasised the importance of a home PC/laptop for children's education, and its role in accessing the internet for all household members. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be a desirable item, therefore this may be a useful threshold item. |
| <u>TV</u> | This item was widely agreed by participants. Participants emphasised cultural, social and educational importance. Some participants suggested a <i>digital TV</i> provoking a long (and somewhat technical) discussion and suggesting a possible cognition problem. However, 'digital TV' is likely to generate other more substantial problems of cognition. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Radio or music player</u> | Participants emphasised social/cultural significance and the need for (cheap) recreation and entertainment. Discussion focused on <i>quality</i> issues with alternative suggestions including a 'hi-fi', 'CD player', 'music system', etc. (i.e. possible cognition problems) | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording: 'A music system or hi-fi' NB) This revised wording was tested in Phase 2 and was generally viewed as a desirable item, so it may be a useful threshold item. |
| <u>DVD player</u> | This item was introduced in phase 2, participants did not consider this item to be a necessity, although participants did note that these devices could be purchased at relatively low cost. For some participants a DVD player provided 'cheap' entertainment. | It is recommended that this item is included. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be 'desirable', so it may be a useful threshold item. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

4. Social and family life

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|---|--|
| <u>Holiday away from home once a year, not with relatives</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity. Some participants queried whether this item should specify domestic or overseas holidays. Others found the sub-clause 'not with relatives' confusing (i.e. poss cognition issue). | It is recommended that the item is included subject to revised wording 'holiday away from home once a year'. |
| <u>Visits to friends or family</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity in promoting and sustaining social relationships. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>A car</u> | This item was strongly contested within groups. The availability of affordable (and suitable) local transport was a decisive factor here. A car was widely viewed as a necessity in areas lacking good public transport (incl rural areas) (i.e. poss substitutability problem), as well as for all families with children. Adequate access to suitable transport was viewed as vital in accessing jobs and services, and in ensuring personal autonomy. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Local bus & rail fares</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Money for local sporting activities or classes | This item was widely viewed as a necessity in maintain good health and well-being. Many participants distinguished between public and private facilities, the latter often being considered a luxury. Others participants considered 'leisure' in broader terms to incorporate evening classes and/or sporting activities, including as a spectator. Others noted that participation also depends upon <i>availability</i> issues (i.e. poss definitional issue). | It is recommended that consideration be given to a new item 'money to take part in local sports activities or classes'. Separate additional items 'money to attend evening or adult education classes' and 'money to attend sporting events' could be considered. |
| <u>Money to celebrate special occasions</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity. Participants generally discussed this issue in relation to the performance of social roles as a parent or family member (present giving for children at Xmas). | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Family or friends around for a meal</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity in promoting and sustaining social relationships. Some participants queried the frequency for this item (i.e. poss response problem), suggesting 'once a month' was sufficient. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>An evening out once a fortnight</u> | Participants were equivocal about this item. For some older participants, it was less applicable due to safety concerns after dark. In the main, discussion focused on <i>frequency</i> issues (i.e. poss response problem). Some participants suggested that this should be extended to 'once a month'. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Theatre, concert, museum, cinema visits | This item was widely agreed as a necessity in order to take part in 'normal' social activities, as well as for personal development. Participants disagreed on <i>which</i> activities should be included given different costs. Others suggested an estimate of <i>frequency</i> is needed (monthly or quarterly) | It is recommended that this new item is included subject to revised item wording: 'a trip to a theatre, cinema, museum or exhibition once a month'. |

5. Financial issues

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|--|---|
| <u>Paying rent/mortgage and household bills without getting into debt</u> | Where discussed there was widespread support for the inclusion of this item. Participants believed the accumulation of debt to significantly compromise individual autonomy and choices. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <i>Small sum of money to spend on self weekly</i> | This item received a mixed response with some participants interpreting this item as being by definition 'non-essential' (i.e. poss definitional issue). However, for most participants this item was seen as essential for the personal autonomy of individual household members. Some participants suggested the frequency of the item could be amended to 'once a month' to reflect the reality of household budgeting. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to changes in item wording: 'Small sum to spend on self monthly' NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be 'desirable' so it may be a useful threshold item. |
| Life insurance for mortgage-holders | Where discussed this item was widely supported. Participants suggested that such insurance policies served to protect households against the decline in income experienced following bereavement. | It is recommended that this item be excluded. This item was not salient in most groups' discussions suggesting that it is unlikely to be a good discriminating indicator. |
| Regular payments into a private or occupational pension plan | Where discussed this item was widely supported. Participants suggested that such pension plans had become increasingly significant as the value of state pensions decline. Therefore, the opportunity to set aside funds for retirement broadens the choices individuals have in later life. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'regular payments into a private or occupational pension plan'. |
| <u>Regular savings for rainy days</u> | Where discussed this item was widely supported. Participants believed the opportunity to save as an insurance against possible future risks should be afforded to all members of society. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

6. Children's items

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|---|--|
| <u>Three meals a day for children</u> | This item was viewed as less problematic than its adult equivalent, most groups easily reaching a consensus. Some participants suggested that "minimum" be added. | See adult items. |
| <u>Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily for children</u> | Some participants suggested that for children this should be amended to "at least twice daily". | |
| <u>Fresh fruit or vegetables at least daily</u> | This was debated in conjunction with the adult item above with the vast majority of participants easily agreeing it to be a necessity. | |
| Milk daily | Debate focused on the availability of milk in children's diets (free school milk) and its importance. | It is recommended that this item be excluded. This item is clearly viewed as a necessity and could be included on this basis. However, this may not be a sensitive measure and was generally not salient in participant discussions. |
| <u>New, properly fitted shoes for children</u> | Groups easily reached a consensus that this item is a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Some new, not second-hand clothes for children</u> | As with the adult item above this provoked much debate. Participants discussion distinguished between <i>handed down</i> clothing (from siblings etc) and <i>second-hand</i> clothing (i.e. poss cognition issue). The former was viewed as acceptable, though some participants noted that cost comparisons sometimes mean second-hand is not always cheaper (i.e. poss definitional issue). However, for most participants the importance of peer group acceptance meant that children should have at least some new clothes. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| School uniform for children | This item was suggested by participants and where discussed there was a clear consensus. Participant responses emphasised social expectations and desirability. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. A further new item 'suitable sports kit for school use' should be considered further. |
| <u>A garden for children to play in</u> | Most participants felt that this was probably a desirable item, rather than a necessity given accessibility issues (children living in inner city areas). However, it was widely felt that all children should have access to a safe outside area to play close to home' (below). | It is recommended that this item be included without changes. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be 'desirable', so it could be a 'good' (discriminating) indicator. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|--|--|--|
| Access to a safe outside area to play close to home | Item proposed by P1 groups (see above). Item confirmed as necessity in P2 groups. | It is recommended that this new item is included. |
| <i>Books for children of their own</i> | A few participants suggested that access to a library is sufficient, though others questioned their accessibility and practicality for young children. A general consensus was reached that all children should have access to at least some books which are their own. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <i>Toys (e.g. dolls, teddies)</i> | A general consensus was easily reached across groups that this item is a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Toys for personal development and education | Some participants felt that it is important that children should be able to have toys that are educational or stimulate development. However, participants were not always clear on what this meant (i.e. poss cognition issue) and concrete examples would help here. A number of specific suggestions were 'Educational toys' and 'Toys for personal development'. | It is recommended that further consideration is given to this new item subject to suggestions on suitable examples. |
| <i>Leisure equipment for children</i> | This item provoked significant definitional queries (i.e cognition problems) incl what is meant by 'equipment' and the scope of 'leisure' (incl sports, recreation, etc). Some participants suggested inserting the term 'basic'. It was widely agreed that concrete examples should be included (e.g. 'rugby ball', 'skipping rope', 'bike' etc). | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording 'leisure and sports equipment for children such as a bicycle, ballet shoes or a guitar' |
| Sports equipment for children | See above item. | See above. |
| <u>Hobby or leisure activity</u> | Participants suggested and agreed that hobbies or leisure activities were important for children's personal development. Where discussed, participants quickly reached agreement on this item | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Money for children's clubs, societies and related activities | Participants suggested and agreed that money for children social and leisure activities was important for their personal development. Where discussed, participants quickly reached agreement on this item | It is recommended that a new item is included 'money for children's clubs and activities such as guides or football training'. |
| Money for after-school clubs | Some participants suggested and agreed that money for after-school clubs was important for children's personal development. Where proposed participants quickly reached agreement on this item. Nevertheless, it is possible that cognitions problems exist with some participants interpreting this broadly to include out-of-school recreational activities. | It is recommended that this new item is not included. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|--|---|---|
| <i>School trips at least once a term</i> | This item provoked considerable debate focusing on the cost of the trip and whether the trip's purposes were educational. Participants also discussed the frequency of trips (i.e. poss response problems) with the term 'at least' suggested. Other participants suggested 'reasonable cost' and 'educational (school trips)'. | It is recommended that this new item is included 'money to pay for school trips at least once a term'. |
| Family outings | This item was widely agreed as a necessity in order to take part in 'normal' social activities today. Participants queried the nature (and cost) of activities involved (i.e. poss cognition problem), as well as their <i>frequency</i> . Some examples may be helpful here. Some participants may interpret this item to apply to <i>all</i> households not only those with children (i.e. poss cognition issue). | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording 'Family outings at least once a month, for example, to the seaside or zoo'. An additional new item [e.g.] 'a special day out once a month' could be considered for adults. |
| <i>Friends round for tea/snack fortnightly</i> | This item was universally considered a necessity but as with the previous item, the frequency provoked debate (i.e. poss response problems). 'Fortnightly' was thought outdated by some participants suggesting 'occasionally'. However, 'occasionally' is likely to create additional, more substantial cognition problems. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Treats for children on special occasions | This item was suggested by participants though the meaning of 'treats' varied between groups (i.e. poss cognition problems), to include food, sweets, etc as well as trips or cultural events. This item could also be interpreted to include treats on birthdays, Xmas, etc. | It is recommended that this item is not considered for inclusion without further clarification of question meaning. |
| <i>A mobile phone for older children</i> | This item provoked much debate with opinion remaining divided in some groups. Many participants viewed this item as a necessity for older children for reasons of personal safety and as a social networking tool. Views varied on the age that children should own a mobile phone with most participants in the range 10 to 14. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording 'a mobile phone for children aged 11 and over'. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

7. Luxury items

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|--|--|
| <i>Membership of a gym or sports club</i> | Participants easily reached agreement that membership of a gym or sports club is a luxury. There was some discussion of the importance of participation in physical/sporting activities, esp in view of anti-obesity health messages, but it was felt that this could be achieved by participation in other activities (e.g. local leisure classes). | It is recommended that this item is given consideration. This might be a 'good' (i.e. discriminating) indicator of living standards at the upper end of the distribution. |
| <i>An iPod or MP3 Player</i> | Participants noted that purchase costs differ widely between a top of the range iPod and a basic MP3 player, which can be purchased at relatively low cost. When asked to come to a decision, however, the majority of participants defined this item as a luxury. | In view of the problems with cost differentiation it is recommended that consideration is given to a guide valuation 'An iPod or MP3 player costing more than £75'. |
| <i>A school trip abroad once a year</i> | Discussion of this item included debate on educational value, cost ec. The potential for social exclusion if children/young people are unable to participate in such a trip was recognised by participants, however a majority regarded this item as a luxury. | It is recommended that this item be considered in conjunction with the item "A school trip at least once a term" (see Phase 1). It might be a good (discriminating) indicator. |
| <u>A dishwasher</u> | This item was not discussed by Phase 2 groups as the majority of participants in Phase 1 groups had viewed it as a luxury item rather than a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is given consideration. This might be a 'good' (i.e. discriminating) indicator of living standards at the upper end of the distribution. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

APPENDIX 2: Sample Profile

Table A1: Selected respondent characteristics

| Age group | N | Col% |
|------------------|------------|-------------|
| lt 30 | 20 | 18 |
| 30-44 | 36 | 32 |
| 44-59 | 23 | 20 |
| 60+ | 22 | 19 |
| TOTAL | 101 | 89 |

| Sex | N | Col% |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| female | 61 | 54 |
| male | 53 | 46 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 100 |

| Household type | N | Col% |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------|
| couple with dep children | 40 | 35 |
| couple no dep children | 13 | 11 |
| pensioner hhld | 18 | 16 |
| single parent | 23 | 20 |
| other | 13 | 11 |
| single non-pensioner | 7 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 100 |

| month | N | Col% |
|------------------|------------|-------------|
| less than £750 | 17 | 15 |
| £750-1,500 | 45 | 40 |
| £1,500-2,500 | 25 | 22 |
| more than £2,500 | 27 | 24 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 100 |

| Housing tenure | N | % |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| owner occupier | 57 | 50 |
| social rental (LA/HA) | 18 | 16 |
| private rental | 36 | 32 |
| other | 3 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 100 |

| Dwelling type | N | Col% |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|
| detached house | 23 | 20 |
| semi-detached house | 37 | 33 |
| terraced house | 33 | 29 |
| flat | 18 | 16 |
| other | 3 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 97 |

| Hhld income per | N | Col% |
|------------------------|----------|-------------|
|------------------------|----------|-------------|

Table A2: Group composition by selected respondent characteristics (column percentages)

| INCOME | BRS1 | BRS2 | BRS3 | CDF1 | CDF2 | CDF3 | GLS1 | GLS2 | LDN1 | LDN2 | LDN3 | NI1 | NI2 | NI3 | ALL |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Less than £750 | .. | .. | 11 | 38 | .. | 11 | .. | 67 | 11 | 38 | .. | 11 | 22 | 10 | 15 |
| £750 to £1,500 | 25 | 33 | 56 | 63 | 22 | 11 | 33 | 17 | 33 | 63 | 13 | 56 | 67 | 50 | 40 |
| £1,500 to £2,500 | 38 | 22 | 22 | .. | 33 | 44 | .. | 17 | 22 | .. | 25 | 33 | 11 | 20 | 22 |
| More than £2,500 | 38 | 44 | 11 | .. | 44 | 33 | 67 | .. | 33 | .. | 63 | .. | .. | 20 | 24 |
| TENURE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Owner occupier | 63 | 67 | 89 | 75 | 89 | 33 | 33 | 17 | 22 | 25 | 50 | 11 | 33 | 70 | 50 |
| Social renter (LA/HA) | 0 | 22 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 22 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 63 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 10 | 16 |
| Private renter | 25 | 0 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 44 | 0 | 50 | 44 | 13 | 50 | 78 | 67 | 20 | 32 |
| Other | 13 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| DWELLING TYPE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Detached | 50 | 33 | 78 | 13 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 0 | 20 |
| Semi-detached | 13 | 22 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 67 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 0 | 50 | 44 | 44 | 60 | 33 |
| Terraced | 13 | 44 | 11 | 25 | 33 | 33 | 0 | 33 | 11 | 38 | 13 | 56 | 33 | 40 | 29 |
| Flat | 13 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 11 | 0 | 67 | 33 | 56 | 38 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| Other | 13 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| AGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Less than 30 | 13 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 60 | 67 | 50 | 11 | 33 | 0 | 33 | 13 | 0 | 20 |
| 30-44 | 25 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 56 | 0 | 33 | 50 | 44 | 17 | 71 | 67 | 38 | 63 | 36 |
| 45-59 | 50 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 44 | 17 | 29 | 0 | 50 | 38 | 23 |
| 60+ | 13 | 33 | 100 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 |
| SEX | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 50 | 22 | 67 | 63 | 56 | 89 | 0 | 67 | 44 | 38 | 38 | 44 | 78 | 60 | 54 |
| Male | 50 | 78 | 33 | 38 | 44 | 11 | 100 | 33 | 56 | 63 | 63 | 56 | 22 | 40 | 47 |
| N | 8 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 114 |



Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Working Paper – Analysis Series No. 3

Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion: Final Report on Focus Group Findings

¹Eldin Fahmy, Simon Pemberton and Eileen Sutton

August 2012

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Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

Overview

The Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK Project is funded by the Economic, Science and Research Council (ESRC). The Project is a collaboration between the University of Bristol, University of Glasgow, Heriot Watt University, Open University, Queen's University (Belfast), University of York, the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The project commenced in April 2010 and will run for three-and-a-half years.

The primary purpose is to advance the 'state of the art' of the theory and practice of poverty and social exclusion measurement. In order to improve current measurement methodologies, the research will develop and repeat the 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey. This research will produce information of immediate and direct interest to policy makers, academics and the general public. It will provide a rigorous and detailed independent assessment on progress towards the UK Government's target of eradicating child poverty.

Objectives

This research has three main objectives:

- To improve the measurement of poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and standard of living
- To assess changes in poverty and social exclusion in the UK
- To conduct policy-relevant analyses of poverty and social exclusion

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Summary of Findings

Aims and methods

This report describes the results of focus groups research conducted in 2011 examining public perceptions of poverty, social exclusion and living standards in our society today. It investigates the items and activities considered by the general public in Britain and Northern Ireland to constitute living standards which all people living in our society today should be able to have. This work informs the design of a survey module on public perceptions of necessities delivered as part of the *ONS Opinions Survey (Spring 2012)* as well as the subsequent main-stage *2012 UK Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey*¹ in Britain and Northern Ireland.

A total of 14 focus group interviews were conducted in November and December 2010 in five different locations across the UK. Separate group interviews were conducted amongst low income, non-low income, and mixed income samples, and groups were also stratified by household type and ethnicity. Groups typically comprised 6 to 10 participants and lasted 2.5 hours in total. Participants' views were sought on the nature and consequences of poverty and social exclusion on the basis of general discussion and more structured tasks and activities. Participants were invited to comment on different definitions of poverty, and to agree upon a set of essential items and activities which everyone should be able to afford if they want them in our society today. Participants were also asked to expand on what it means to be able to fully participate in society, and to suggest indicators of wider social inclusion/exclusion on this basis. To facilitate discussion of social exclusion participants were asked to consider a range of hypothetical scenarios or 'vignettes' intended to illuminate participants' decision-making and judgements.

Understanding poverty

Participant understandings of poverty tended to broaden spontaneously as discussion developed, moving from subsistence definitions focusing on deprivation of 'basic' needs, to discussions of relative deprivation and its effects on social participation, social networks and support, living conditions, health, quality-of-life and wellbeing. Whilst there was widespread agreement that subsistence needs are most 'fundamental', this did not imply an assumption that other material and social needs can be discounted in defining poverty.

¹ The 2011 PSE-UK survey is known in the field as the '2011 Living Standards in Britain' and '2011 Living Standards in Northern Ireland' surveys

Poverty was widely understood as relative to prevailing living standards in our society and how these have changed over time, as well as being relative in terms of international comparisons. Participants made many new suggestions in terms of specific items for potential further consideration focused in various ways on security (e.g. long term financial security, insurance against risks, hazard prevention), housing quality (e.g. insulation/energy efficiency, ventilation, daylight, communal space, good physical repair), and child well-being (e.g. developmental opportunities, school-related activities, education, physical safety). We can only speculate as to the wider significance of these items, but these suggestions may reflect increased financial insecurity and its impacts for UK households, greater awareness of environmental concerns, and changing attitudes to childhood and children's entitlements.

These data suggest that any distinction between 'social' and 'material' necessities has little basis in participants' own reflections. Perceptions of material necessities emphasised their wider social significance in the performance of social roles, and in the avoidance of shame and stigma. In many cases, participants experiencing poverty reported going without basic material necessities themselves in order to meet wider social expectations (e.g. as good parents). These accounts do not therefore support the assumption of an implicit hierarchy of needs which might usefully inform anti-poverty policies. At the same time, they also highlight the negative consequences of contemporary consumerism for the capacity of many people to meet the rising expectations this generates.

Participants emphasised that rising living costs, high unemployment, and the general climate of economic uncertainty made the financial situation of many households increasingly precarious, even for groups traditionally seen as relatively affluent. Participants recognised that vulnerability to poverty reflected wider social inequalities of social class, educational attainment, gender, age, and ethnicity, and that people living on a low incomes had been hardest hit by the economic recession. However, for many, discourses of a 'squeezed middle' resonated with the increasing difficulties faced by working households in making ends meet.

Participants disagreed about the causes of poverty with views divided between broadly individual and structural explanations. Some participants expressed strong views on a perceived 'culture of poverty' and the associated intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. Whilst these accounts drew upon deep-rooted moral distinctions between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, other participants referred to the role of persistent structural inequalities, for example by emphasising the role of educational attainment and access to learning and job opportunities in shaping vulnerability to poverty.

Consideration of what is 'reasonable' or 'adequate' was central to participants' decision-making reflecting social judgements relating to norms of self-presentation, the avoidance of shame, and the value of social connections and norms. Participants' decisions on the 'necessities of life' also reflected judgements about the availability and

cost of items, and social trends in ownership and consumption of certain items. Moreover, the social pressure to 'keep up' with contemporary patterns of consumption (however extravagant) was acknowledged to create the potential for new social distinctions and processes of exclusion to emerge.

Living standards and social exclusion

At its most basic, for most participants a good standard of living involved sufficient income not only to afford the 'basics', but also to afford discretionary spending on luxuries either as a reflection of social status and/or as a means of promoting personal fulfilment and happiness. However, further discussion of what constitutes a 'good' standard of living revealed a more complex set of priorities focusing as much upon personal well-being, development, and security, and upon stable family and social relationships, as upon consumption as a signifier of status.

Participants emphasised the interconnections between living standards and personal autonomy, well-being and quality of life. Understandings of social exclusion are best viewed in this light as factors preventing people from being able to fully participate in activities and lifestyles which are widely enjoyed, or at least condoned, within wider society. Participants' understandings of social exclusion were therefore inextricably intertwined with wider perceptions of what constitutes 'the good life' in our society today, both with regard to material living standards, the opportunities and choices which a good standard of living affords, and their impacts for social and psychological well-being and personal happiness. At the same time, participants also emphasised the importance of community-based perspectives on social exclusion, and the crucial role of good quality local services and amenities in sustaining a sense of community cohesion.

Participants' definitions of exclusion focused upon experiences of 'unfairness', 'being left out' and a lack of 'belonging' arising, for example, as a result of material deprivation, social isolation, discrimination, or poor health. Poverty was integral to many participants' accounts of 'social exclusion' with many participants commenting on the overlap between these concepts. Nevertheless, social exclusion denoted a very much wider range of disadvantages than those associated with limited material resources in the minds of participants.

Participants' understandings of social exclusion were explicitly multidimensional according weight to social networks and personal wellbeing alongside economic participation. As such, they did not accord with dominant constructions of 'social exclusion' in terms of worklessness and benefit dependency within contemporary policy debates.

Perspectives on social exclusion were often explicitly intergenerational. In reflecting on personal experiences of exclusion from opportunities, choices, and life chances, participants emphasised how this contrasted with their elevated expectations for their own children and grandchildren - and for the kind of society needed to promote genuine

inclusion in future.

Nevertheless, contrasting views were very evident on the role played by personal agency and choice in explaining exclusion. These views also informed participants' accounts of just desserts and entitlements in determining what might constitute an acceptable level of social inclusion for people in different circumstances. Participants highlighted a wide range of issues associated with the multi-dimensional experience of exclusion relating, for example, to labour market participation, crime and social harm, the impact of troubled personal histories, housing problems, bereavement, and social networks and support.

Determining the 'necessities of life'

Our research suggests that some established indicators of deprivation may be of declining salience in public perceptions of the 'necessities of life' in our society today as a result of changing lifestyles and patterns of consumption. This does not imply that such indicators are no longer valid measures, but they may no longer be good discriminators of poverty status.

The group discussions reveal frequent disagreements between participants on the items and activities necessary to avoid poverty and social exclusion. Although focus groups aim to achieve general agreement, in some cases a simple majority decision was unavoidable and the extent to which the outcomes of deliberations involving 'democratic' procedures can be described as constituting 'consensus' is uncertain.

However, despite the diversity of views expressed our research uncovers little evidence of consistent variations in perceptions of the 'necessities of life' on the basis of household type, ethnicity, or income status. Whilst there is some evidence that people adapt their individual preferences to fit their circumstances, and therefore that people experiencing poverty may minimise their needs, these data do not suggest that this necessarily influences wider perceptions of what the UK public as a whole should be able to afford.

Moreover, this research highlights a range of potential cognition issues in participants' deliberations on the 'necessities of life'. Some participants also expressed concerns about the interpretation of the term "necessity" to denote items or activities that all people *should not* have to do without, rather than to denote those items and activities people simply *cannot* live without. References to what households and individuals 'should' be able to afford are potentially ambiguous in referring both to a normative judgement about entitlements, as well as to evaluative judgements concerning what households and individuals are in fact likely to be able to afford and need.

Some participants had difficulty in making judgements in the absence of the contextual information needed to determine need for households in different circumstances. Contextual information was also important in shaping participants' normative

judgements concerning entitlements with some participants drawing normative distinctions between the 'working' population and the 'poor', and between what we expect for ourselves and for others, in determining the 'necessities of life' in our society today.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This report describes the results of a series of fourteen focus groups conducted in 2011 as part of development work for the *UK Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey*². The research upon which this report is based investigates public perceptions of poverty, social exclusion and living standards in the UK today. It seeks to ascertain those items and activities considered by the general public in Britain and Northern Ireland to constitute living standards which all people living in the UK today should be able to have. This qualitative development work is intended to inform the design of a survey module on public perceptions of necessities delivered as part of the ONS Opinions survey. It will also inform the design of the subsequent main-stage Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey to be conducted separately in Britain and Northern Ireland in Summer 2012.

In this section we begin by summarising findings emerging from existing qualitative studies conducted in the UK on public understandings of poverty and social exclusion, and the items and activities needed to achieve an adequate standard of living. In this section we also describe the design of the study including sampling strategy and data collection methods.

In Section 2 of this report we outline main findings relating to participants' general perceptions of poverty, social exclusion and living standards in the UK today based on a thematic analysis of interview transcripts. In Section 3, we focus on participants' views of the 'necessities of life', that is those items and activities which everyone should be able to afford to have or do in our society today and should not have to go without. Section 3 also examines and summarises participants' suggestions on indicators of social exclusion and inclusion based upon group discussion and related tasks and activities. Our overall conclusions and recommendations are summarised in Section 4.

1.2 Background

Empirical research into poverty and social exclusion in the UK has for the most part focused on the applications of survey methods and quantitative approaches in estimating the extent, dynamics and social distribution of vulnerability to poverty and social exclusion. However, recent years have witnessed a growing appreciation in the UK and internationally of the potential of qualitative methods in understanding public

² The 2011 PSE-UK survey is known in the field as the '2011 Living Standards in Britain' and '2011 Living Standards in Northern Ireland' surveys

perceptions of poverty and social exclusion, and in documenting the experience and impacts of poverty and social exclusion. In this section, we therefore summarise recent qualitative work undertaken in the UK focusing on public perceptions of poverty and social exclusion and the items and activities considered by the public to constitute minimally adequate living standards in our society today.

This review seeks to identify existing evidence, in order to better understand public definitions of poverty and social exclusion and the underlying logic and values that guide the selection of items and activities viewed by the public as necessary to avoid poverty and social exclusion. The evidence reviewed below falls into two main areas: a) research seeking to advance understanding of public perceptions of the nature and meaning of poverty and social exclusion, and; b) research focusing on public perceptions of the items and activities necessary for individuals and households to avoid poverty and social exclusion. This review represents a sketch of what is known about 'lay' (as opposed to expert) understandings of poverty and social exclusion, as well as seeking to identify possible omissions and gaps in the existing evidence base. In this review we focus on adults' views on poverty and the necessities of life for all households in our society today but children's views on the experience of poverty and exclusion (see for example Ridge, 2002, 2009, 2011; Crowley and Vulliamy, 2007; Sutton, 2007; Walker et al., 2008).

The nature and meaning of poverty and social exclusion

Since the 1990s, growing recognition of the importance of involving low-income citizens in research on poverty has resulted in an increasing number of studies examining the experience of poverty often by adopting a participatory research approach. These studies have considerably advanced understanding of the nature and meaning of poverty and its material, social and psychological consequences from the perspectives of the 'real experts', namely, people experiencing poverty and exclusion. However, such studies do not in general provide unambiguous empirical support for the existence of a public consensus regarding the meaning and definition of poverty. Rather, they demonstrate the *plurality* of public conceptions of poverty, for example, with regard to preferences for 'absolute' versus 'relative' interpretations. For example, Beresford et al.'s (1999) research based upon discussion groups with low-income citizens asked participants to reflect upon competing definitions of poverty drawn from the *1995 British Social Attitudes* survey reflecting different interpretations of the scope of the term. Whilst all groups agreed unanimously that an irreducible 'absolute' interpretation based on physiological functioning constituted poverty, views differed markedly on wider interpretations based upon relative deprivation of material and social needs.

When participants are asked to define what poverty means to them a range of conflicting responses is evident. Within Beresford et al.'s (1999) study, participants' own definitions of poverty reflected a range of perspectives associated with financial and material constraint, restricted behaviours, and psychologically and spiritually based definitions. Similarly, research based on participatory methods with women across

Britain by the Women's Budget Group (2008) suggests considerable plurality of approaches to understanding poverty which emphasise both the material and relational dimensions of poverty. Thus poverty is understood both in terms of financial and/or material constraint, and with regard to social isolation, diminished citizenship, stigmatisation, denial of rights, and restricted ability to meet normative expectations.

The extent to which such understandings of poverty are differentiated by poverty status has been a focus of considerable interest, for example, whether people experiencing poverty have different views on the definition of poverty and of the items and activities needed to avoid poverty in comparison with 'non-poor' individuals. Research conducted by Dominy and Kempson (2006) with older people suggests that participants' responses indeed appear to be partly determined by considerations of financial and material well-being. These authors found that better-off participants tended to adopt a broader understanding of poverty related to financial insecurity during retirement and an inability to participate in chosen social activities due to a lack of money. In comparison, low-income participants tended to view the experience of poverty in more restrictive terms, associated with more 'extreme' forms of marginalisation such as homelessness and deprivation of basic necessities. These findings seem to contradict large-scale survey evidence on public perceptions of necessities which suggest that poor households have a more generous interpretation of the living standards which should be available to all (e.g. Pantazis, 2005, 2000).

A recurring theme in research with low-income participants is the tendency for participants to define poverty in absolute terms in ways which sometimes discount their own experiences of deprivation. For example, Crowley and Vuillamy's (2007) study described young people making references to 'tramps and the homeless as poor or as living in poverty, alongside those in developing countries' (see also Save the Children, 2011). Flaherty (2008) similarly found that low-income citizens often associate poverty with living conditions in developing countries, though participants accepted that deprivation also exists in the UK. Moreover, participants in Flaherty et al.'s study were more comfortable applying the term 'deprivation' to nearby estates and areas. His research also shows that people experiencing poverty sometimes tailor their expectations in ways which underplay their own experiences of disadvantage and deprivation.

These findings suggest that a tendency to discount personal experiences of poverty may constitute a strategy for coping with life on a low income as well as reflecting the social stigma associated with poverty. The sensitivities of research in this area in the context of the wider social stigma attached to poverty means that people are often understandably reluctant to identify themselves as 'poor' (e.g. Corden, 1996; Dean and Melrose, 1999; Novak, 2001). Moreover, as Sen (1995) argues, it is perhaps therefore unsurprising that people living on low-income may also reduce their expectations as a means of adapting to their situation. The phenomenon of 'adaptive preferences' is well documented in several qualitative studies. For example, Smith et al (2004) note that it is often difficult for many participants to look beyond immediate 'survival' needs, and that people experiencing poverty tend to rationalise and restrict their expectations as a

means of coping with severely limited resources. This tendency is also evident in research with older participants. Scharf et al (2006) observed that the stoicism and modest expectations that characterised many participants' accounts arose from comparisons participants made with living standards experienced in earlier life which were often marked by profound hardship. Where people have adapted over time to living within very modest financial means, views of what constitutes a necessity tend to be more limited and participants in Scharf et al.'s study tended to rationalise their situation on the basis of comparisons with other older people less fortunate than themselves.

To date, qualitative evidence on public perceptions of social exclusion has been much more limited. Richardson et al.'s (2002) study based on discussion groups with residents of 'deprived' neighbourhoods revealed that participants tended to define social exclusion in terms of an inability to fully participate in the kinds of activities which are considered 'normal' (or at least widely approved) within the wider society. These authors' findings also demonstrated the centrality of communication skills as key social activities in their own right, as well as highlighting the importance of publicly funded and provided services and the consumption of public goods, such as a safe neighbourhood environment, in avoiding social exclusion. Participants' accounts also emphasised the importance of personal agency and choices by making a clear distinction between people viewed as being at least partly responsible for their own exclusion, and people excluded as a result of the actions of others.

In contrast, Flaherty (2008) discovered a greater ambivalence towards the concept of social exclusion and very limited awareness of the term itself. Consequently, participants were bemused about being viewed as 'outside of the society of which they subjectively felt within', in part because they were proud of getting by and were able to draw on local networks providing strong material and emotional support. Whilst many participants experienced the consequences of social exclusion, Flaherty argues that this was not a 'lived concept'. Participants own definitions of social exclusion emphasised processes of extreme marginalisation for example as experienced by specific excluded groups (e.g. the homeless, prostitutes, drug addicts) rather than drawing attention to more ubiquitous forms of exclusion within the wider society of which they very much felt part. Strong social networks have long been recognised as a key resource for households in managing on a low income, and especially in mitigating the impacts of deprivation and disadvantage in poor areas (e.g. Vincent, 1991; Coates and Silburn, 1970). Flaherty's findings thus suggest that it is the loss or absence of these personal support networks which precipitate episodes of deep exclusion in participants' accounts.

Determining the 'necessities of life'

The above observations concerning public perceptions of poverty are also reflected in the public's judgements concerning the items and activities considered necessary to avoid poverty. Focus group methods were conducted by Middleton et al. (1999) as part of development work preparatory to the *1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of*

Britain in order to explore perceptions of the necessities of life. Middleton and her team conducted a series of focus groups with the aim of exploring whether agreement could be reached on those items and activities which all people living in Britain should be able to afford and should not have to go without. Participants negotiated and agreed lists of necessities which had been developed on the basis of earlier findings derived from the *1990 Breadline Britain Survey* (Gordon and Pantazis, 1997). Participants were also asked to consider the relative importance of different items and activities and the length of time individuals or households could go without them without falling into poverty.

Middleton et al (1999) found substantial variation in public perceptions of the nature and extent of poverty in Britain with notions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' (poor) being a persistent theme. Discussion also focused on perceived differences between absolute and relative definitions. Whilst views differed on the extent of absolute poverty in Britain (with participants from wealthier areas tending to underestimate the extent of poverty), a distinction between this concept and relative definitions was widely accepted. Relative poverty was described variously as 'allowing people a life rather than just an existence', 'giving more than just survival', and 'social poverty'. The ability to keep in contact with friends and relatives was felt to be the crucial element of relative definitions of poverty and the importance of social contact and relationships based on mutual support and reciprocity was emphasised by the groups.

In recent years several studies drawing upon budget standards approaches have also used focus group methods extensively in order to develop lay consensual approaches to budget setting. In 2008, a major research study using these methods established a minimum income standard for Britain based upon public perceptions of the items and activities needed to maintain minimally acceptable living standards (Bradshaw et al., 2008). Discussion groups were conducted in order to agree a working definition of what constitutes a 'minimally acceptable' income and to deliberate upon the household budget needed by households of different types to achieve this standard. These minimum income standards have been subsequently updated on a regular basis to take account of changing perceptions of what constitutes an 'adequate' living standard (e.g. Hirsch et al 2009, Davis et al 2010).

Hirsch and Smith (2010) investigated parents' views on the 'necessities of life' for families with children in order to inform the selection of items for inclusion in subsequent survey questionnaires on this topic. Again, this research adopted a consensual approach to budgeting by convening a series of discussion groups to establish budget standards for households of different types. On the basis of a consideration of the situation of different hypothetical families, participants deliberated upon the items and activities which all families need be able to afford in order to achieve minimally acceptable living standards in Britain today. However, Hirsch and Smith's study also demonstrates the challenges involved in establishing a consensus on the items and activities considered to be necessities of life in Britain today. Participants in this study had difficulty in determining the extent to which lacking specific items constituted 'identifiable hardship' in the absence of information on the wider basket of goods and services available to households. Often such considerations involved a distinction

between items which households ought to have, and those which it would be harmful for them to lack. A key criterion here often involved judgements on whether specific deprivations constituted more than simply a matter of convenience or comfort and also involved consideration of the likelihood of long term negative consequences for individuals and families. In particular, the likely impacts of potential deprivations on children's long-term prospects and life chances was an important motivating factor in the inclusion of many children's items such as a PC, access to the internet, money for classes and out-of school activities, etc.

Qualitative research with specific population groups also demonstrate the extent to which perceptions of need depend upon the composition and circumstances of households such that no single basket of items and activities is likely to be adequate for all households in characterising their living standards. A specific focus on different populations thus reveals different sets of preferences regarding necessities of life, for example for disabled people (Smith et al., 2004), families with children (Middleton et al., 1994), and households in rural areas (Smith et al, 2010). For example, access to a car is a widely perceived as a necessity of life for households living in more remote rural areas, and for households with young children, and this draws attention to the importance of contextual information about households' circumstances in public judgements concerning household need.

These studies also emphasise the centrality of social norms surrounding the fulfilment of social roles (e.g. as parents, spouses, employees, citizens) in shaping participants deliberations. Bradshaw et al (2008) note the importance of opportunities for social participation, and of the maintenance of social networks, in shaping participants' deliberations. Moreover, social participation is often considered fundamental in promoting emotional well being, and included a range of social and cultural activities, informal support networks and opportunities for economic participation through paid work for those able to do so. More fundamentally, participation was viewed as important in terms of self-presentation and the avoidance of shame through, for example, being able to afford appropriate dress, to entertain within the home, and being able to afford to participate in social activities undertaken or valued by peer groups. The importance of social relationships within families is also highlighted within participants' accounts. Although many participants within Hirsch and Smith's 2010 study emphasised that quality of family life cannot be equated in a simplistic way with command over resources, an inability to afford specific items and activities can nevertheless undermine family functioning, for example, as a result of being unable to afford a table and chairs so that all family members can eat together, family outings and holidays, and a night out for adults. Nevertheless, as Hirsch et al (2010) note, determining *how much* social participation is necessary, for example with regard to consideration of duration, intensity and frequency of participation, was much more difficult to establish consensus upon.

The above studies also demonstrate the importance of social change in determining participants preferences regarding the items and activities needed to avoid poverty, for example as a result of technological innovation, and changing tastes and patterns of

consumption. The changing role of information and communication technologies in people's lives (e.g. mobile phones, computers, internet access) has been a distinctive feature of participants' discussions of socially perceived necessities in all the above studies, as a result of the proliferation of consumer electronics within contemporary patterns of consumption. Nevertheless, whilst a public consensus appears to be emerging concerning the centrality of consumer electronics in contemporary social life and patterns of participation, the extent to which such items are considered necessary for different population groups and for people in different circumstances remains contested. As Hirsch and Smith (2010: 38) note:

Who needs what continues to be an issue of dispute...[this] level of disagreement appears to reflect the fact that the use of technology is still in transition, and some people retain attitudes about them not being necessary, which are attitudes that may eventually disappear

A further point of contention in determining public perceptions of the necessities of life involves considerations of *quality* in the items and activities considered to be necessities. Whilst making distinctions regarding the quality of items and activities viewed as necessities is often extremely difficult, such qualitative judgements are often decisive as social signifiers of status in the UK today perhaps reflecting the prevalence of consumerist attitudes within society (e.g. with regard to where people live, shop, take holidays, etc). This suggests that the capacity for some degree of *choice* in making consumption decisions appears to be an important factor in group discussion of items necessary to avoid poverty for example with regard to diet, clothing, leisure activities, etc. Bradshaw et al (2008) thus identify choice as a principal guiding participants' decisions making such that 'as a minimum, people should have some choice over what they eat, wear and do'.

To date, recent studies suggest that the current economic recession appears to be having little discernible impact on attitudes towards necessities, for example by encouraging more restrictive definitions of need. However, within Hirsch et al.'s 2009 study attitudes towards austerity varied across age groups with younger participants sensing that 'the party's over', parents welcoming a perceived decline in societal pressures to consume, and pensioners viewing the changed economic climate as validation of 'traditional' economising behaviours. At the same time, Hirsch et al. (2009) argue that there are some initial signs that additional items including occasional treats and comforts may be viewed by the public as increasingly important given the bleak economic outlook and the stresses this gives rise to. It is also likely that there is a 'lag effect' involved here such that it may take a number of years before such changing in economic circumstances feed through into public attitudes on this topic.

1.3 Research methods

Sample design

Whilst the 1999 PSE revealed a high degree of consensus in public perceptions of necessities, such perceptions clearly also depend upon household circumstances and expectations (Pantazis et al., 2000, 2006). For example, the needs of pensioner households differed from those of households with children. Similarly, high income households tended to have a more restrictive interpretation of the necessities of life compared with households enjoying higher standards of living. Perceptions of the necessities of life also varied by age group and ethnic origin.

Since the aim of focus groups is generally to achieve consensus amongst participants, variability in public perceptions of the necessities of life needs to be taken into account in the recruitment of participants. The recruitment plan used in this study was therefore based on a quota sample design which aimed to promote homogeneity in group composition with regard to key factors relevant to participants' views, including: income status, household type, and ethnic origin (primary strata), gender, age, housing tenure, employment status, age of children (secondary strata) .

A total of 14 focus group interviews were conducted in November and December 2010 in five different locations, including in each of the four territories comprising the UK: Bristol, Cardiff, London, Glasgow and Belfast. Separate group interviews were conducted amongst low income samples (5 groups), non-low income samples (5 groups), and mixed income samples (4 groups). These groups were also stratified by household type (11 groups) and minority ethnic status (3 groups). The profile of the achieved sample is described in Figure 1 (overleaf).

Three focus group interviews typically with between 6 to 10 participants were conducted in each location (two in Glasgow), with each group lasting approximately 2.5 hours in total. Participants were professionally recruited and all participants received a one-off gift payment of £35 plus travel expenses in recognition for their contribution to the research. Prior to attending their group discussion, participants completed the following instrumentation:

A recruitment survey collecting basic respondent socio-demographic data

A brief open-format questionnaire on deprivation, living standards and social exclusion

The main aim of the pre-group instrumentation was to encourage participants to begin to think in advance about suitable indicators of deprivation and indicators of wider living standards in the UK today.

The recruitment survey also provided useful contextual information on the socio-demographic profile of the fourteen groups. A fuller description of the sample is

provided in the Appendix. In total, 114 participants took part in the 14 group interviews of whom 54% were female and 46% male. Over half (55%) of respondents reported monthly gross incomes of less than £1,500, and exactly half the sample were owner occupiers. Single person households comprised 30% of the sample, and well over half (57%) of respondents cared for dependent children.

Figure 1: Summary profile of focus groups

| ID | Group Profile | N | Location |
|------|--|----|----------|
| BRS1 | Working age, no dep. children: non-low income. Older owner-occupiers living in detached homes, mixed sex group | 8 | Bristol |
| BRS2 | Working age, no dep. children: non-low income. Mixed age group owner-occupiers, predominantly male | 9 | Bristol |
| BRS3 | Pensioners: low income. Owner occupiers living in mixed dwelling types, predominantly female | 9 | Bristol |
| CDF1 | Pensioners: low income. Owner occupiers living in mixed dwelling types, predominantly female | 8 | Cardiff |
| CDF2 | Couples with dep. children: non-low income. Younger owner occupiers living in mixed dwelling types, mixed sex group | 9 | Cardiff |
| CDF3 | Single parents: non-low income. Mixed aged group renters living in semi-detached homes, predominantly female | 9 | Cardiff |
| LDN1 | Ethnic minority: mixed income. Mixed age group renters living in mixed dwelling types, mixed sex group | 9 | London |
| LDN2 | Ethnic minority: low income. Mixed age group LA/HA renters living in terraced houses and flats, mixed sex group | 8 | London |
| LDN3 | Ethnic minority: non-low income. Younger mixed tenure group living in varied dwelling types, mixed sex group | 8 | London |
| GLS1 | Working age, no dep. children: mixed income. Younger mixed tenure group, all male group | 3* | Glasgow |
| GLS2 | Single parents: low income. Younger private renters living in mixed dwelling types, predominantly female | 6* | Glasgow |
| NI1 | Couples with dep. children: mixed income. Younger private renters living in semis and terraced dwellings, mixed sex group | 9 | Belfast |
| NI2 | Single parents: low income. Mixed age group renters living in mixed dwelling types, predominantly female | 9 | Belfast |
| NI3 | Couples with dep. children: mixed income. Mixed age group owner occupiers living in semis and terraced dwelling, predominantly female | 10 | Belfast |

* Participant recruitment was affected by inclement weather conditions and transport disruption. As a result it was necessary to cancel one further group with pensioners in Glasgow

Data collection

In all of the discussion groups, participants' general views and opinions were sought on the nature and consequences of poverty and social exclusion on the basis of a general discussion of these concepts, as well as through more structured tasks and activities. In all groups, participants were asked to comment on different definitions of poverty as a basis for subsequent discussion (see *Appendix 1*). Participants were also invited to comment on what it means to be able to fully participate in society especially with regard to the opportunities and choices that this implies. To facilitate discussion of different aspects of social exclusion participants were asked to consider a range of hypothetical scenarios or 'vignettes' intended to illuminate participants' decision-making and judgements. More information on the specific questions and their wording based on an example of the interview topic guide is contained in the Appendices (see *Appendix 1*).

Research was conducted in two overlapping phases. In Phase One groups, participants were asked to suggest potential indicators of deprivation in a relatively unstructured way. Our aim here was to generate a consensus within groups on possible indicators based primarily upon participants own suggestions with some supplementary prompted items drawn from earlier survey studies of public perceptions of the necessities of life. Participants were asked to deliberate upon those items and activities which they considered to be necessities for a 'typical' family with children in the UK today based upon the situation of a hypothetical family comprising a couple with two children. Sessions began by soliciting participant feedback on a selection of prompted items drawn from previous studies arranged thematically and relating to households' accommodation, diet and clothing, household items, social and family life, and children's items. Participants were then encouraged to add freely to and amend items as appropriate using brainstorming methods. In each case, our objective was to seek consensus within each group on those items which everyone should be able to have or do in the UK today and should not have to go without because they cannot afford them. The dynamics of participant interactions within focus group mean that in practice group decisions on many items were made on the basis of universal or near universal agreement amongst participants. However, where strong differences of opinion existed, a majority decision was recorded where more than half of group members agreed with inclusion of the item as a necessity.

Drawing on participants' suggestions in the Phase One groups, the objective in the Phase Two groups was to 'test' the new and prompted items agreed by Phase One groups, as well as to explore perceptions of wider living standards in the UK today, including things which might be viewed as desirable but non-essential, and things which might be viewed as 'luxuries'. To do so, a number of additional items and activities were selected based upon findings from earlier studies conducted by Gordon et al. (2001) and Hillyard et al. (2003) are *not* widely viewed as necessities by the UK public. These items were added to the Phase One results and participants were then asked to sort the combined items into three categories using card-sort methods, as follows:

- **Necessities:** things which are essential and which everyone should be able to afford if they want them in our society today
- **Desirables:** things which many or most people have access to in the UK today but which are not essential in our society today
- **Luxuries:** things which are quite costly and exclusive and which fewer people have in our society today

The group observer recorded the outcome of group deliberations, noting whether general agreement existed. In some cases where discussion did not resolve the issue at hand a majority verdict was sought from participants and duly noted.

Our expectation is that a wider public consensus may exist where, using different research instruments, Phase 2 groups independently classified broadly the same subset of items and activities as 'necessities' as those initially suggested in the Phase 1 groups. It should be noted that the interpersonal dynamics of focus group interactions tend to towards consensus (though as we shall see this term is open to interpretation) and this may limit the diversity of participants' responses or the intensity of their views. At the same time, the impact of dominant individuals in shaping group dynamics and decisions can be significant in 'manufacturing' agreement. For these reasons, variability in public perceptions needs to be reflected in sample design by recruiting groups which are relatively homogenous with regard to key factors known to be relevant to public views on this topic (e.g. income, household type, etc). The focus on group processes and outcomes means that the primary unit of analysis here is the group interaction rather than individual participants' preferences, and in the following analyses the extent of differences in response between groups (e.g. as a result of differences in social composition) are considered alongside discussion of within-group differences in participants views and perspectives. General consensus in this context therefore refers both to the extent of within-group agreement *and* the absence of substantial between-group differences in perceptions of the necessities of life in our society today.

2. Definitions of Poverty and Social Exclusion

2.1 Definitions of poverty: participant perspectives

In all of the focus groups, participants were invited to reflect upon what it means to be poor in the UK today, and how poverty is best characterised and understood. Participants were first asked how they would define poverty 'in their own words'. During the brainstorming sessions participants' conceptions of poverty tended to broaden as the discussion developed in both low-income and non low-income groups. In line with previous research with low-income participants (e.g. Crowley & Vulliamy 2007, Flaherty 2008), participants initially provided 'absolute' definitions by citing examples of extreme poverty and marginalisation both in developing countries and in the UK. However, the scope of subsequent discussion relating to the restrictions which poverty places upon people often broadened spontaneously to include also discussion of the effects of material deprivation on social participation, social networks and support, living conditions, health, quality-of-life and wellbeing.

Participants across all groups referred to the material and financial dimensions of poverty:

GLS1 RM: Probably to me it's somebody who doesn't have that much money and [is] living on the crumbs...

However, many participants took a broader perspective on poverty which encompassed also its relationship with forms of social participation, and social networks and support. Others referred to the centrality of normative expectations associated with performance of social roles, for example as a parent in being able to provide children with opportunities to participate in normatively valued social activities:

N11 RF: A support network too I think is very important and if you're lacking that too, I mean people on your door step who you know have a pension and whose houses are well heated but they just have a lack of footfall and visitors, and they themselves would probably view themselves as being in poverty.

CDF3 RM: Being able really to have some sort of social life. You don't want to miss out on anything really. You want to go into town if you want you know.

CDF3 RF: Struggling to do everyday things, because I've been on both sides of managing and struggling with children, and being able to take them places, looking for where you can sort of take them where you don't have to spend too much money which is not very many places.

GLS2 RM: To be able to give your children a decent standard of life, diet and things like that, school, as well as socially.

GLS2 RF: Not being able to give your kids what you want to.

Others drew attention to environmental and neighbourhood problems, poor housing, and poor health, which were perceived to be associated with poverty and the adverse impacts these can have on wider quality of life and wellbeing:

BRS3 RM: Living in an area...where you've got no greenery, fields; it's all concrete and crammed in...It could well be they're on a very low-income and can't afford anything else, but it's just not very, everything's grey around you, everything concrete, it must be just closed in and very depressing. And usually going back to that sort of area you may well have a very high crime rate as well.

BRS3 RF: But it must be hard if you are on the poverty line, because you're not getting a proper diet as well, and maybe even having to live in one of these high rise flats which are absolutely dreadful, no garden or anything for the children, it must be awful.

LDN1 RF: I think poverty primarily is used as a word to define people's financial standing, but for me it's a state where financial standing can lead into other parts of your life. So because you don't have a certain sort of income, whether you're on benefits or whether you're employed, the whole gamut of your life is now affected by the financial clout that you have. So then it inputs into your social life and also your health, and whether you can have holidays and afford luxuries and the food you eat and the people you socialise with.

LDN2 RF: And then there's a lot of people then that ... can't eat adequately ... and then a lot of people getting depressed, they're getting depressed because they can't do nothing for themselves, they can't get a job, they can't better themselves. The children will go to school and all their friends have got the latest things and they can't afford it, they can't afford the latest gear and things like that. It's like a vicious circle, it's affecting them mentally as well you see.

NI3 RF: Poor housing, poor health, people who are, you know, they're just unable to look after themselves because they can't afford maybe even dental care because you have to pay for that now, you know, that is an incredibly big thing.

It is interesting to note in the context of subsequent discussion that participants' *initial* reflections often suggested quite restrictive interpretations of poverty in both low income and non-low income groups. Some participants drew attention to what one participant termed 'absolute poverty' held to exist in other parts of the world. Others highlighted examples of extreme hardship (including homelessness) in their local area:

GLS1 RM: When I think of poverty, I do think like absolute poverty...I think that's the thing that pops up into my head, rather than poverty which I know that there is over here

NI1 RM: It's a thin line...and dependent on where you live, like as in what country. I mean you see poverty when you see them doing these programmes on TV trying to raise money for children who I would say live in poverty, who don't know where the

next meal comes from. I don't think we're at that stage but the thin line may be not far from it.

BRS1 RM: Thinking of extremes there's homelessness which you see in Bristol city centre, because that's where you'd start first and foremost.

CDF2 RM: You see loads of those [homeless people] outside the station every day. Maybe it's not through their own choice but, you know, they've got nothing, all they've got is a bottle of gin or whatever...Most they've got is a sleeping bag or a blanket.

The absolute/relative dichotomy across counties or within cities or local areas was further explored as participants expanded on their conceptions:

LDN2 RF: Poverty's relative to the country you're living in. What is called [poverty] in the UK today might be a wealthy environment for somebody from another part of the world, like India or Africa

GLS1 RM: Everything's relative to circumstances around you. I mean you could be living in the very kind of richest suburb in Glasgow and be the poorest person in that neighbourhood, think of yourself as poor, when by kind of national standards you're nowhere near it. And you could be living in the poorest area in Glasgow but because [...] you get a job or something like that you could be the richest person there

LDN2 RM: What makes a person poor in a rich society, a society that is considered the fourth richest in the world, where you still have the underbelly, those who live on the baseline of the society [...] poverty is a relative thing yes

BRS2 RM: Probably there's a big envelope if you've got someone on the street who's got nothing, they're in poverty, you've got someone who's living in council accommodation with a couple of kids, just got a few pennies to scrape by, you could say they're in poverty, and then you've got people that's living in mansions and all the rest of it they plead poverty as well.

However, understanding poverty as relative to contemporary living standards and social norms can also have implications for peoples' perceptions of their own circumstances. Where poverty is widespread some participants suggested that this may lead people to minimise the hardships they face in struggling to make ends meet. The social stigma associated with poverty may also make it difficult for people to acknowledge the difficulties they face. For example, one participant reasoned that:

GLS1 RM: It [poverty] doesn't strike me as the type of thing that you would class yourself as [...] because you would always compare it to those around you and you would never actually realise unless it was blatantly obvious you're on the street or something like that [...] people would be wary of classing themselves as being in poverty.

During discussions of perceptions of poverty with low-income groups there were many

participants who provided personal testimony of the difficulties involved in struggling to get by on a low income, including reference to the social-psychological impacts of deprivation and low income. However, in line with earlier research (e.g. Flaherty, 2008), not all participants were comfortable in acknowledging their own circumstances in the context of group discussion. As a result, some tended to favourably compare their situation to others they regarded as worse off, or to adapt their preferences based on their own experiences and/or personal reference groups (typically the local neighbourhood or estate).

Nevertheless, participants often also defined poverty as having to go without the 'necessities of life', or having to forgo items and activities which are commonly taken for granted by people living in the UK today. Several participants provided examples of the difficulties of managing on a low-income, sometimes by referring to personal experiences:

NI3 RF: I think like living on the breadline is like poverty to me, just things being very tight and just barely keeping your head above water, you know, maybe just necessities rather than luxuries.

CDF2 RMI: Living on the breadline. They have [...] a roof over their heads but little sort of spare resources...You've just got the bare necessities; no luxuries. That's it, just getting through.

CDF3 RF: Having to think twice about whether you can put the heating on or not. Some people can just go and turn the heating on, some have to think is it cold enough and things like that, things a lot of us take for granted.

LDN3 RF: I think it's where you don't meet the basic needs of common living, like food, you can't provide three square meals for your kids and for the family, you're worried where is the next meal coming from, and I think that's the most important thing for me

BRS2 RF: Not having the basic necessities of life. I think there's different extremes of not being able to have like the latest technology and that sort of thing, it's not necessarily poverty, you might be excluded from a like certain society but you've still got the basic things.

CDF3 RF2: Not being able to make ends meet by doing things that you should really be able to afford to do every day.

For some participants poverty could be equated to not having the 'bare necessities', but for others the inability to afford the occasional treat or luxury item appeared to be an important characteristic of deprivation.

2.2 Absolute poverty and relative deprivation

Following this initial brainstorming exercise, participants were invited to comment on

different existing approaches to the definition of poverty with a view to their relevance for people living in the UK today (see *Box 1, below*). These examples were selected to represent a range of approaches to defining poverty in order to stimulate discussion around their relevance in the UK today:

Box 1: Definitions of poverty

Subsistence

“They do not have sufficient resources to meet their physical needs for food, shelter, warmth, light and sanitation for all members of the household”

Basic Needs

“They do not have sufficient resources to meet their physical needs and lack access to education, information, and health and social care for all members of the household”

Relative Poverty

“They do not have sufficient resources to fully participate in activities and living patterns which are widely available in the UK today”

Participants had different views on the intensity of deprivation represented in the different definitions they were asked to comment upon. Many felt that the three definitions were ordered in decreasing levels of intensity with ‘absolute poverty’ representing the most extreme forms of disadvantage:

BRS1 RMI: One [absolute poverty] is definitely very poor and definition two [basic needs] that is certainly not well off at all, so they’re...it’s just a little bit higher up the social ladder if you meet the basic needs. And definition three [relative poverty] [...] well that’s just a little bit higher standard. So it’s graded

BRS2 RM: To me they all seem like a level of poverty, but I suppose the first one is like a tramp living on the side of the road, he’s got nothing, he’s in poverty. The second one, meet physical needs, [...] [is] someone living in council’s whose got no money, haven’t got a car, live too far away from the school [...] something like that, can’t afford the kids’ clothes, that’s poverty

‘Absolute poverty’ and ‘basic needs’ definitions were those most readily understood and preferred by participants. ‘Absolute poverty’ here referred to an inability to meet physical needs for food, shelter, warmth, light and sanitation, and these items were viewed as constituting the most basic level of subsistence necessary for life in the UK today (and elsewhere):

BRS2 RM: I think it’s definition one [absolute poverty]. I think everyone should have resources for food, that’s a priority. I mean whether you’ve got children or not, it’s probably the main thing, and shelter

CDF2 RM: Number one [absolute poverty], it’s the basics of life ain’t it? [...] There’s no point having education and health [...] socialising, you’ve got to eat!

However, the complexity of such judgements is also revealed in participants' accounts. Whilst there was widespread agreement that subsistence approaches represented the most 'fundamental' needs to be satisfied, this did not necessarily imply an assumption that other material and social needs should be discounted in defining poverty but simply referred to a widely held ontological hierarchy informing participants' views on indicators of poverty. For example, whilst many participants preferred a 'basic needs' approach incorporating access to education, information, and health and social care services in addition to these subsistence needs, their explanations often drew attention to a wider range of social and material needs, as well as to wider societal norms and expectations, under this heading:

BRS3 RM: I think number two, basic needs [...] that's poverty [...] sufficient resources to meet your physical needs, which is warmth and cleanliness and food. And local access to education, information and health and social care, all we're talking about is going out to social clubs, it encompasses the whole lot really, to say that you haven't got the money to go to social clubs, and I think sort of that's basic needs.

BRS3 RF: I think the second one but there's a lot of people that start off all right and then they, when they're out of work they lose their homes, then they end up in bed and breakfast, and then they're put into somewhere where it's not so nice for what they're used to. I think that's what you'd call poverty as well.

Many participants compared their own situation to those living in the global 'South' when evaluating different definitions of poverty. The basic needs definition was also more relevant for participants who expressed a view that a subsistence definition was not applicable in the contemporary UK context, due to the accessibility of state education and health and social care service provision:

LDN1 RM: I think number two, because number one I think yeah, because it's about the state, everybody has his basic needs met in this country, but number two I think is the one that affects a lot of people ... if they're on a low wage, number two is obviously relevant to a lot of people. Number one is I think mostly, 80% of the time most of these needs in this country are met.

BRS3 RF: Because they can get the benefits I don't think that there's many people that would come into that first one [subsistence], that hasn't got enough, they get money so they've got a roof over their head, food, I don't think that first one would come into it so much because they do get benefits don't they?

However other participants disagreed with these views, drawing attention to issues such as the existence of homelessness in the UK, the inequality of access to some services, or the lack of information with regard to service or welfare provision:

BRS3 RM: I think there's quite a lot of people who haven't got a roof over their heads.

LDN3 RF: Everybody has access, if you know where to go for access...But it's how you get that access. It's whether people know about it. A lot of people don't know

what's out there, what they can get and what they can't get.

CDFI RM: There's plenty of things around, but number three they do not have sufficient, but it's having the...access to knowing where they come from. I mean if you've got quite a few friends, you get a lot more information than if you're an old lady sat in the flat on your own and you don't know about these centres

Some participants compared their own situation to those living in the global 'South' when discussing the concept of relative poverty. Again, this did not necessarily imply a discounting of the experience and impacts of poverty in the UK but rather that the nature of poverty in the UK is simply different from that experienced in 'developing' countries:

LDN3 RM: When I think of some of the countries like India or some of the countries in Africa, and you see people that really just cannot feed their families more than once a day if they're lucky, or some of the parents might have to go without food just to feed their children. And I think relative poverty is that, it's relative poverty, it's not nice when the pressure we feel on the children say who want these Reebok trainers or they want to go on these trips, it's not nice. We feel we have to do it but when you compare it to some people who just don't have food in the world, then I think it is relative poverty

However, drawing on their own life experiences many participants referred more widely to the implications of rising living standards for our understanding of poverty and the items and activities which everyone living in the UK should be able to afford. This understanding of poverty as relative to prevailing contemporary living standards and lifestyles was emphasised by several participants:

CDFI RM: Things have changed in my generation in as much as we used to have lino to keep the fire going now when I was a kid, whereas now you'd expect central heating

NI2 RFI: I do see it as relative, I mean I'm in the situation at the moment where the twins, they're both doing their GCSEs...What they really need is a laptop each, and 10 years ago, 15 years ago, people would have laughed at you if you said I think I'm poor because I can't afford laptops for my girls

Other participants favoured this definition viewing it as broader, encompassing aspects of social deprivation, and highlighting the importance of being able to participate in social activities:

NII RM: Poverty's not just about money and possessions now, it's about being able to participate in activities and have information about health and social care. It's not just about the financial aspects of it anymore, so the definition has broadened an awful lot. These things are seen as basic rights now - education and information.

BRS3 RM: If a person hasn't got a vast or sufficient income then they can't participate in activities. They're excluded from communities if you like. They're

frightened to get involved with neighbours in case the neighbours say well let's go down the pub tonight, and then they've got to open up and say sorry I can't, I can't afford it. So they're excluded...If you've got children going to school, exchange, trips, can't really afford it and there are people who really have to save hard just to send their children. And the parents go without I think rightly so that your child doesn't get...they should have sufficient to live and live properly, not have to say oh can't afford to do that.

NI2 RF: There's the psychological, emotional wellbeing thing...You may be covering your basic needs, but there's this underlying sense of low self-esteem, you know, guilt that kind of can be quite serious really in a way

In some cases participants described the relative poverty definition as equating to social exclusion:

BRS3 RM2: If you haven't got the money you can't indulge in things like holidays, for example, or transportation...You can't afford to go on holiday, can't do the normal things that most people who have got money do. So in a way you're socially excluded from that aspect of things.

NI2 RF1: It's important to feel part of something, part of your community, to be involved in activities and things that are going on...When my twins were babies social exclusion wasn't a phrase, I just remember feeling really lonely because I was on my own and they were so young I couldn't go out or do anything

2.3 What does poverty stop people doing?

There was considerable debate as to what was meant by the term "activities and living patterns" in relation to definitions of poverty based upon relative deprivation. Considerations of relative cost (e.g. in relation to dance classes), individual preferences (e.g. in relation to socialising), and wider social norms (e.g. in relation to holidays) were variously identified as important factors in shaping understandings of contemporary living patterns and activities:

CDF3 RF: If it means like sort of extra things like dance lessons or swimming lessons and things, then they can be quite expensive, so I wouldn't necessarily class someone living in poverty if they couldn't afford to send their child to dance lessons

BRS2 RM: It's down to the individual whether they want to go out and mix with other people or whether they want to stay at home and ...

BRS1 RM: Things like holidays and living patterns, I mean it might be the majority of people go on holiday but there are many that still can't afford to go on holiday, and they might consider themselves to be in poverty because they are, they can't afford that.

The question of what restrictions are placed upon people's capacity to fully participate in

society was explored further by asking participants 'What does poverty stop people doing?' An inability to afford an adequate diet and to maintain adequate warmth within the home were identified as central both in maintaining 'physical efficiency' and in meeting wider social expectations and cultural pressures:

BRS1 RF: Perhaps parents wouldn't have enough money to heat the house properly so they'd feel very cold. They would be noticing that...what they're being fed on would be very different than their friends perhaps who are a little bit more well off...There's lots of elements there where the children are going to feel poor, with the parents feeling guilty that the children are put in this position

CDF3 RF: You can buy sort of things that taste nice, like a packet of frozen chicken nuggets really cheaply, but inside them it's...parts of the chicken you really wouldn't want to know they're eating and it's all rubbish in there, it's not healthy food. But it's cheap and the kids like it, so people on that budget are going to buy things like that

LDN3 RF: I've got a lot of people around me who...[are] living on basic, just chips and junk food because they haven't got the money to buy good food or healthy food. I know one of the families...go and purchase all their stuff from Oxfam and stuff like that

The above quotes indicate that perceptions of material necessities emphasised their wider social significance in the performance of social roles (e.g. as good parents) and in the avoidance of shame and stigma. Other participants mentioned the difficulties people face in meeting the social obligations associated with family life as a result of an inability to afford appropriate dress or gifts on special occasions:

CDF2 RF: If you was on the breadline and you were invited to a wedding or a christening, you wouldn't be able to go, because you wouldn't be able to afford an outfit for yourself, your children and presents...Birthday parties, if the children were invited to birthday parties they wouldn't be able to go

One participant explained how an inability to participate socially can lead to feelings of shame, drawing on personal experiences of being unable to attend a family event due to the cost:

NI2 RF: When you get invited to weddings, people don't seem to realise you're not going, you make up some excuses but the reality of it is you just can't afford it...but keep up with the Jones' for want of a better word and just don't go because you can't afford it. But within the family or whatever I think it's very rude that you didn't go because you have that sense of pride that you didn't go ... you can't afford it yeah, but you make some kind of excuse...

However, participants also referred to the significance of social participation itself in the performance of social roles and conformity to the normative pressures placed upon individuals and families, for example being able to afford family holidays, regular exercise, and participation in sporting or cultural events widely taken for granted in the UK today. Interestingly, however, these items and activities are not necessarily viewed as necessities despite their evident wider social significance:

CDF3 RF: Well yeah, you can't go on holiday can you? I mean I know it's not a necessity but I think all children should experience some sort of a holiday within a family unit. You know, I think every family should be able to do some sort of activity together, and be able to afford to do that.

BRS3 RF: Yes. Social life, they don't have any do they. They've got no money to be able to go swimming or go to the cinema. That's the sort of things they have to stop because finance won't stretch to that.

Restrictions on spending and the difficulties and strains this creates in managing stretched households budgets were discussed by some low income participants. This was an especial issue for parents in view of societal expectations of what parents should be able to provide for their children and the concomitant feelings of guilt and shame for parents unable to do so as a result of a lack of money. In many cases, participants felt that parents go without basic necessities themselves (or accumulate unaffordable debt) in order to ensure that their children do not experience bullying or exclusion as a result of an inability to afford the items and activities valued by their peers. As in existing studies (Middleton et al, 1994, 1997; Beresford et al., 1999; Hirsch and Smith, 2010), children were prioritised particularly in terms of their educational and dietary needs:

NII RF: I think it's very stressful because you're continually having to balance, trying to balance money, trying to balance everything all the time and watching the prices of things all the time, and that is a constant stress.

LDN 3RF: Most parents who have children give priority to their children rather than look after themselves or buy something for themselves

BRS1 RF: If you've got children you really need it [access to the internet] at home because they're disadvantaged

BRS1 RF: Well if you've got children you probably would make sure the children had the proper diet, are well fed, and go without yourself, but make out to them that you've actually eaten earlier

Nevertheless, participants in the low-income groups described their difficulties in being able to afford club memberships and other associated 'extras' for their children, highlighting the feelings of guilt experienced by parents struggling to protect children from the stigma associated with poverty:

BRS2 RF: There's pressure as well on parents with children with school activities, the amount of money they've got to pay. If parents can't afford it and they think well, you know, my child's going to get picked on if he doesn't go; 'you're poor', attitudes like that with children...Some parents do forego their basics to let the children do what they want

GLS2 RF1: I actually talk my kids out of doing that [joining clubs]. It sounds terrible but I just can't afford it. I can't afford to take the kids to travel to the clubs, to pay for them at the clubs, and continue that every single week, I just can't afford it. And

to talk them out of it is, it makes you feel so bad.

GLS2 RF3: I have never said to my children I can't afford it, I would put it in another way, you know, if they have this they were very lucky to have this, so really put this off until a later date...you've got to put it in another way rather than tell them the facts of life that you're...They're still children...

GLS1 RM: Parents will do anything to get their kids that additional luxury, because kids who are better off, you know, they don't want their kids not to be same...and that's where things, parents will do anything they can...they would lose out themselves rather than actually see their kids worse off than others.

Restricted opportunities for social interaction due to a lack of money were viewed by some participants as undermining people's ability to maintain relationships and build new social ties both instrumentally (e.g. in relation to developing networks) and as an end in itself (e.g. in relation to family life and friendship networks):

BRS2 RF: Building friendships by going to the pub. I don't know, you just get chatting to the bloke stood next to you...so it prevents you from building new relationships, friendships, that type of thing.

CDF2 RM: The whole social structure is built on meeting people and networking with people and talking to people. And that's how I suppose society is based on...So if you don't have that interaction I suppose...you can become isolated and obviously devoid of social direction

NII RM: That definitely has an effect on your home life...relationship with your wife and your kids, you become more stressed out, short tempered and a bit ratty and all the rest of it. There's nothing to distract you from those things if you can't go out

Nevertheless, some participants reflected on the negative consequences of contemporary trends in consumption for the capacity of many parents to meet the rising expectations this generates. These quotes illustrate the unease expressed by some participants about the role that consumer driven preferences potentially could play in shaping notions of deprivation:

BRS3 RF: It doesn't stop with holidays does it, because now the youngsters they've got to put on the biggest and the best birthday party for their child; they've got to have themed parties now. It runs into thousands. What is this all about?

GLS1 RM: If you go back when you were younger yourself, you know, it is much different and parents would do even more so for their kids now than what they would have done back then. You know, going outside and playing and whatever it might be, things when you were younger didn't cost money, everything has to cost money now

2.4 Vulnerability to poverty in the UK today

As noted above, participants gave various examples of extreme marginalisation associated for examples with experiences of homelessness and destitution. However, participants also identified various social groups they considered to be especially vulnerable to wider forms of poverty, with families with children (especially large families) and older people being frequently mentioned. Participants talked about the additional costs associated with providing children with even basic items such as school uniforms and shoes and also about experiencing pressure to buy other more expensive items such as designer clothing in order to protect children from feeling excluded. Single parent families were thought to be particularly vulnerable by some. Other issues mentioned included a lack of jobs for school leavers and the consequences of recent policy changes such as curtailing of Educational Maintenance Allowance:

CDF3 RF: And school leavers, because if they didn't do well in school and they don't go to college, they can't claim benefits until they're 18...having to struggle if you are earning and you've got to, they can't claim that EMA, then you're under pressure and that's another way that people are in poverty

One participant talked about the particular difficulties experienced by children leaving the care system:

CDF3: RF: I think sometimes children who have been through the care system, foster care and, obviously if they get good foster parents then it's different, but if they're back and forward between foster parents and in homes I think they tend to do quite, not well in life, particularly at the beginning because once they become is it 18 and they're not in care anymore they're out rather than having that support from home, being able to live at home ... Because of that, and then they're out of the care system and they're in bed and breakfasts or somewhere.

A number of participants viewed older people as being more susceptible to poverty, often highlighting the impact rising costs of living, and in particular difficulties meeting the cost of fuel bills:

BRS2 RM: Pensioners, especially those who live on their own. They haven't got access to social networks. They can be very vulnerable health wise, financially, so a downward spiral.

GLS2 RF: Because when you work you get an income, but then when you retire your income's cut, but you've still got to eat and bills and everything.

CDF1 RM: It's a form of poverty. I mean being old, as you get older, it's a form of poverty because you've got to pay the same bills as someone who's out working

However one of the participants in a group for low-income older people disagreed, relating her experience of learning to go without, possibly demonstrating the existence of adaptive preferences:

CDI RF: I think it's less ... Because we know how to economise, you know, make a meal out of nothing.

Several participants also commented on the vulnerability of ethnic minority groups to poverty. The potential impact of locality and length of settlement in the UK were noted as contributory factors in explaining ethnic differences in vulnerability to poverty:

GLS1 RM: Ethnic minorities coming into the country could be at risk...probably because it's hard to socially integrate...and perhaps the chance of them getting jobs could be harder

LDN3 RF3: It depends again on the length of their settlement...in the UK. If you look at some of the ethnic minorities who have just arrived, who are just trying to settle, it can be difficult

Other groups thought to be more likely to experience poverty included disabled people, people with mental health problems, people with chronic illness, people providing unpaid care for children, older or sick people, and people poor literacy and basic skills:

BRS1 RF2: Their time needs to be taken up caring for the children or the elderly, so it doesn't give them any time to go out to work, or even if they did have work how are they going to care for the children?

BRS2 RF: Equally people with mental health issues...not being sort of accepted in society and knocking their confidence, therefore not able to get a job because they don't feel confident enough in interviews and that type of thing.

BRS2 RM: There's going to be a lot more people that don't meet the criteria [for disability benefits]. Although they are disabled, they can't work, they can't get about

NI2 RM: If you're in the situation where you haven't been educated well enough to read and write properly, I think that can lead to economic poverty anyway. If you're cut off from society around you, if you can't do the things that other people take for granted

The unemployed, the low paid, and households reliant upon social benefits were identified as especially vulnerable to poverty:

LDN1 RF: People on benefits, not like child benefits but benefits, probably not able to get a job. Those benefits are just I guess, prevents you from having no sort of income really it could be people who work, could be minimum wage or extremely low wages.

CDF2 RM: Well, no employment in the household whatsoever, I define living on the breadline.

However, participants in employment also recognised that whilst they might be regarded as a group who would be less likely to experience poverty, rising living costs, high unemployment, and the general climate of economic uncertainty made the financial

situation of many working age people increasingly precarious, even for groups traditionally seen as relatively affluent:

BRS1 RM: Well that could be any age...it's probably less likely for people sort of around my age, people who've been working all their life, but I mean it could happen, I got made redundant 18 months ago, my income dropped dramatically so I had to change our life. You have to adjust to it or it could happen, and especially now with the changes there are now, people losing jobs, drastic cutbacks.

BRS2 RM: Less, it should be less because they should be able to get a job, but I don't know if that's actually the case. You're either too young and they never get a job, and people are too old and retired and they've got nothing, then they're stuck aren't they. So in theory you think people of working age should be okay. Reality I think is probably somewhat different right now.

BRS2 RF: In 50 years' time there could be more sort of middle class people who find themselves in poverty. I think to myself like a graduate leaving university and then come out with debt and not able to get a career based job, and we're paying off debts and then not able to like get a mortgage. So by the time you're 70 and retired, am I going to be able to, have I been able to put by sufficient money because by the time I retire there's probably going to be no state pension anymore...how will I be able to support myself for the rest of my life?

2.5 Agency, choice and lifestyles

The role of agency and choice in relation to poverty was discussed by participants, and this was sometimes linked to considerations of mobility, with some participants from low-income groups highlighting the role of education in helping people to avoid poverty:

NI2 RM: You hear quite a lot about intellectual poverty, you know...if you're in the situation where you haven't been educated well enough to read and write properly, I think that can lead to economic poverty anyway

From a 'basic needs' perspective on poverty, access to education was seen by participants as vital in promoting social mobility and avoiding or escaping from 'material' poverty:

CDF3 RM: Everybody needs a decent education like. They'll probably grow up then to live in poverty as well without a decent education

LDNI RF: I've always been taught by my parents that...poverty is a state of mind, you might not have money today, it means you're broke, it doesn't mean that you're poor, it's just a state of mind. If you believe you're poor, not having enough information, not having any education...it makes you feel like you're boxed in, you're stuck...but if you're educated and you've got information you're able to go out there and actually reach out and do something for yourself

More fundamentally, participants highlighted the impact of poverty in restricting the

ability to make choices in life, for example in choosing where you live in or the school that your children might attend:

LDN2 RM: Even just sending your child to a particular school, you know, sometimes poverty can keep you from doing that ... But because you find yourself in a particular neighbourhood you do not have the means to say okay my child is not going to go to that school because of its record. So for me poverty is a limiting factor, it can really push you to the edge where you don't have choices...You don't have choice, you can't make choice.

BRS1 RM: Lack of opportunities in jobs, and also generally you're not meeting the people that we meet through education, through the workplace, that might actually mean you move up the ladder, the social ladder, and have job opportunities, so lack of opportunities as well

One participant from the low-income ethnic minority group held in London drew associations with Sen's (1985) theories of capability deprivation in relation to poverty citing the inability to maintain complete functionings due to a lack of material resources:

LDN2 RM: Sometimes I look at poverty as deprivation of one's capabilities...it's more than just an idea of money, it also entails whether I am able to do or to function because there is availability of funds for me to become all that I have to become. So I'm looking at it from that dimension as well

In contrast to Richardson and Le Grand's (2002) findings, there was disagreement within groups as to the extent of influence of personal agency on exclusion. As in earlier discussions, some participants expressed strong opinions on an apparent 'culture of poverty' and the supposed intergenerational transmission of disadvantage as a result of lifestyle choices rather than structural factors:

CDF2 RF: If one generation is poor it does seem to follow through that the generations after them live within the same way as their parents, grandparents have all lived...So in a way they don't want to help themselves. I don't know how you would retrain that to get the younger generations in these families to want to help themselves, to not be like their generations above them

These accounts drew upon deep-rooted moral distinctions between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, for example as reflected in the mainstream media's construction of homelessness. The following excerpts highlight some participants' views on the role of personal choices as a contributory factor in homelessness. It also highlights wider traditional moral distinctions between the honest, hardworking (deserving) poor and the feckless, lazy and/or dishonest (undeserving) poor which continue to shape public responses to poverty in the UK today:

GLS1 RM: You see people without these things, like people on the streets or whatever, and I appreciate it's almost kind of wrong to say it but there's an element of choice in it...be it drugs and alcohol or whatever else, it's almost kind of up to them

BRS3 RM2: We hear so many times in the local news or chitter chatter around the

local town of 'dropouts' and they can be in the town centres, and then they...go off around the corner and get in a motor car and drive home! They've always got dogs with them. Now if you can feed a dog surely you can feed yourself and your family

GLS2 RF3: There's obviously people getting the same amount money as us, and you see them walking about the street begging and smoking

CDFI RM3: I've worked, I've grown up with people who've never worked, they drink, betting and everything, and they've got the best of everything now, whereas I've got a small pension

BRS3 RF2: It's alright if it's brought on themselves where they're either drinking all their money or smoking it all or wasting it all, and perhaps don't even bother to earn it in the first place. I'm hard I just think they deserve what they get. But the person that's had a job and has tried really hard and then loses it through no fault of their own...that's the one I have sympathy for, who needs help, not the ones who are fit and able but can't be bothered to work.

2.6 Determining the 'necessities of life' in the UK today

Critics of the consensual approach have raised methodological concerns about the nature of the 'consensus' achieved in sample surveys of perceptions of necessities, for example by highlighting the conceptual and methodological difficulties in establishing a "valid" consensus on the basis of individualised survey responses (e.g. Walker 1987). From a methodological viewpoint, focus group methods encourage consensus through the investigation of inter-subjectivities arising from the dynamics of group dialogue. It is difficult to make definitive statements concerning the impact of such forms of 'collective reasoning' on the selection of items. However, it is nevertheless instructive to look at how the process of deliberation operates in achieving consensus within a group discussion context, and at how these processes may differ from the response process undertaken by individual survey respondents in selecting items within a household social survey. This section explores these issues by examining participants' strategies for making decisions on the 'necessities of life' in the qualitative group discussions and by considering the light these issues can shed on the nature of survey response on this topic for example with regard to issues of cognition, judgement, recall and sensitivity.

Cognition issues

The first comment made by one female participant revealed that some group members appeared to interpret the task as being asked to suggest items that people would be likely to prioritise if they were experiencing poverty, rather than the items all people should be able to afford and should not have to go without in our society today (i.e. in a normative sense):

BRS1 RF: The only thing with insurance is if you were on the poverty line insurance is probably one of the things that you'd let go

A range of related potential cognition issues were highlighted in participants responses. Firstly, some participants' judgement of specific items implied an evaluation whether the item was important in avoiding poverty in a definitional sense. For example, when asked if all adults should be able to afford some new clothes one participant remarked:

BRS1 RM: I'm going to say no. I don't think having new clothes is what takes you out of poverty personally.

BRS1 RM: I don't doubt that [*lots of people prefer new*] but I don't think that's what we're asking, I don't think it's a preference issue, I think it's...is that poverty? And I don't think it is, because I think you can have anything if you actually put your mind to it

After further discussions on the comparative costs of, or people's preferences for, new or second-hand clothes and dietary items these issues were still evident. Despite prompts from the researcher, participants in this group understood the task to involve selecting items necessary for people experiencing poverty rather than those items needed to live decently:

Int: Do you think fresh fruit or vegetables daily are important?

BRS2 RM: Not a necessity, no...In an ideal world yeah, everyone loves a bit of meat and a bit of fish and some, but surely if you're on the poverty line a bowl of porridge would just see you through

In some groups the terminology used in consensual research methods was also questioned, with participants expressing concerns about the interpretation of the term "necessity" to denote items or activities that all people should be able to afford, rather than to denote those items and activities people simply cannot live without:

GLS1 RM: There's a difference between what that family should be able to afford and what a necessity is...Maybe changing necessity to affordability, I think that's the word you're missing. I would say a TV is absolutely 100% this family should be able to afford, but it's not a necessity so it's difficult

NI3 RF: Well the way I would have to look at necessity is can you survive without it

Some participants also made distinctions between an item's economic costs and its social benefits in ways which again draw attention to the normative dimensions of the interpretation of necessities within consensual approaches to poverty measurement:

GLS1 RM: Because if we're asking the question do we think this family should be able to afford it? Then that's an economic question. Do I think it's socially beneficial for them to have this? Then yes.

To this extent, references to what households and individuals 'should' be able to afford are potentially ambiguous in referring both to a normative judgement about entitlements, as well as to evaluative judgements concerning what households and individuals are in fact likely to be able to afford and need. The latter interpretation of 'necessities' as items that are both affordable and widely enjoyed, and also impossible to do without in our

society today, was one widely supported within these discussion groups.

Need, entitlement and the abstract individual

As noted above, participants were provided with a hypothetical scenario or 'vignette' to facilitate group decision-making on 'necessities of life' items. However, some participants nevertheless had difficulty in making judgements on whether an item was a necessity due to a lack of contextual information to aid their decision-making such as the family's level of income or issues related to the contemporary costs of living for households in different circumstances:

GLS2RF: It depends how much he's earning first and foremost...Is he one of the management, part of the office staff or is he a nurse?...it just really depends

LDN2 RM: What sort of accommodation would he able to afford? Are they social housing, are they private housing?...In one of my comments I said why can't the wife go out and take some part time job to have some extra money coming into the family, I mean these days...both parents work in order to survive
BRS1 RM: It depends on where they live of course...if you live in a big city a car's just a nuisance.

BRS1 RM: I'd say car only if public transport not available.

NII RM: Yeah, I think it depends where you work and where your schools are

Such contextual information was also perceived to be important in shaping participants' normative judgements concerning entitlements often based upon underlying moral distinctions between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. Reference was made in many groups to the entitlements that were perceived to arise from fulfilment of social roles as workers (in terms of labour market participation) and as parents (in maintaining 'respectable' family life). Participants made provisos in terms of entitlement, for example highlighting reasonable expectations for a 'sensible' working family:

BRS3 RM: This family obviously are a sensible family, the man goes to work, he's got a couple of kids, if he can't afford to own a car then he won't - that will probably be the first thing to go. But if he can afford it you'd expect to have a car.

LDN3 RM: Well they should be able to afford to go out...If you're saying there's nobody working in the house then I'd say no way, but you've got a working household you would hope in this country that people could go out for a meal.

GLS1RM: I would be disappointed to know of a family where the husband works full time with two kids and he couldn't afford something to wear.

There were, however differing opinions expressed on issues of eligibility for people living on a low income or who were perceived to be 'welfare-dependent'. Whilst some referred to notions of universal entitlement, other accounts make distinctions between the 'working' population and the 'poor', and between what we expect for ourselves and for others:

LDN2RM: Everybody should own a car. I don't see why you should deprive the poor people of the use of a car...

CDF2 RF: I'm not being horrible to poor people but why should they be allowed to have double glazing when people who are working can't afford it.

BRS3 RF1: But it's all about buying second-hand clothes...I wouldn't like to see my grandchildren going to a charity shop and buying second-hand clothes when you can buy new at the supermarket.

BRS3 RF2: This is the [hypothetical] family that we're thinking of, we're not thinking of our grandchildren. We would buy for ours.

Whilst the terminology of need and necessity was often used by participants, the reasoning behind participants' statements was not always clear and it was not possible to follow-up all comments in the context of the group. However, in some instances participants elaborated by making reference to contemporary living standards and consumption norms within society. For example, in discussing domestic living arrangements, one participant explained his thinking by citing the social importance of family space relating to family cohesion. Another referred to the *social* significance of nutrition for example as a 'treat' for children aside from (and possibly detrimental to) any perceived nutritional value as part of a balanced diet.

Need and changing social norms

Participants' decisions on the 'necessities of life' also reflected judgements about the availability and cost of items, and social trends in ownership and consumption of certain items. To this extent, 'need' is socially constructed in relation to participants' perceptions of prevailing norms within contemporary society:

BRS1 RF: Most people have got a dressing gown.

CDF1 RF: Most of them [children] have got bikes haven't they?

NI2 RF: I think that it is really [a necessity], I think for a child not to have internet access in their house is unusual. You know, it's unusual nowadays.

The importance of new technologies (e.g. computers, mobile telephony, and internet access) in contemporary UK lifestyles provoked some interesting debates in this respect. Many participants emphasised the importance of keeping pace with changing technology and associated changing social norms. Having a computer and (high-speed) internet access was mostly viewed as a necessity in a contemporary UK context, particularly in terms of children's educational needs, but also for social contact, with evidence of the increasing importance of access to social networking sites:

NI2RF: I find it really helpful for Christmas shopping and things...I do think it is a necessity in today's society because it's such a major communication...

NI2 RF: I think [the internet]'s a necessity, just even for adults...I think just email as you say for shopping and looking for bargains and all that kind of thing...it's just part

of society now

NI2 RM: I don't have the internet, so I mean that's partly, I mean I'm a bit of a technophobe, but XXX has, I mean he has computers at school, goes to the library and gets it for free there if he really needs something for his homework. But he's not, he's 10 and coming 11, and so he's just getting to the stage where Facebook thing, so I can see myself having to cave in there.

Consideration of what is 'reasonable' or 'adequate' was central to participants' decision-making reflecting social judgements relating to norms of self-presentation, the avoidance of shame, and the value of social connections and norms:

LDN2 RF: It makes you feel you have a home. Home is where the heart is, what do they say in English, your home is your castle. So you have to have it in this sense because a family might come in for a cup of tea, you don't want them to go back "Oh my goodness, did you see those? Oh my goodness"

RN11 RF: [An evening out once a fortnight is] a necessity because otherwise you can't keep in contact with your friends, can't keep in contact with family. You know, we're talking about one night out every two weeks.

LDN2 RM: It is important that sometimes they forget about the children and go out somewhere and view their marriage and have time one for another.

Nevertheless, the social pressure to 'keep up' with contemporary patterns of consumption (however extravagant) was acknowledged to create the potential for new social distinctions and processes of exclusion to emerge. For example, the spiralling consumption of new technologies was also viewed as producing new forms of stigma in the form of digital exclusion with potentially damaging effects especially for children:

CDF1 RM: If you've got young children you're going back to the stigma thing now aren't you, if those two children haven't got a computer...they're in for a bashing when they go into school.

CDF3 RF: Kids these days if they haven't got a phone by a certain age, you know, when they're teenagers, then they get excluded as well

CDF3 RF: It's not that it's a necessity but they've all got one, and if they haven't then they stand out

However, as Hirsch and Smith (2010) found, participants' accounts of their decision-making sometimes also referred to estimations of how difficult it would be to do without the item in question, and therefore of the extent to which items and activities may be seen as 'luxuries' - however inexpensive they may be and regardless of how widely enjoyed such items are within our society today:

NI2 RF: It would be really awful not to have it [outfit for special occasions], it would be grim I think.

LDN3 RM: Is it really a necessity to have a DVD player? It's not about the price

because if something is cheap it doesn't mean you should go out and buy it. But if it's available and you can definitely do without it then I don't see it as a desirable or a necessity but as a luxury

Some participants presented similar arguments in relation to new technologies. Whilst acknowledging the social pressures driving consumption of such technologies and their widespread usage in the UK today, one participant argued that such items should not be considered as 'necessities' from the viewpoint of basic needs:

LDNI RF1: I struggle with people's definitions of what a luxury is and necessities, and there's certain objects for me like Wii or DVD players...people now feel that these things are necessities and, you know, basics that they should have, they think that they need to have that item which is not exactly very key to their sort of core life, and that's why I say that certain objects are luxuries

Thus a distinction appears to be drawn items and activities that are perceived to be key to human flourishing and those that are perceived to be driven by consumerist impulses.

2.7 What is a 'good' standard of living?

Participants were next invited to consider what having a good standard of living would mean to them. As part of this exercise, participants' were asked to comment on an existing definition of a minimum standard of living developed by Bradshaw et al (2008) and to reflect on what 'the opportunities and choices necessary to participate in society' means in the UK today³. For most participants, a good standard of living involved sufficient income not only to afford the 'basics' such as adequate accommodation, transport, social life, or paying the bills, but being able to afford discretionary spending on luxuries as a reflection of social status and/or as a means of promoting personal fulfilment and happiness.

Amongst those participants themselves experiencing 'good' living standards this was sometimes viewed by participants as a reward for their own past hard work (and sometimes financial acumen), with anticipated future rewards understood in terms of overseas holidays, leisure pursuits, a good car, material comfort and financial security. Implicit within these statements is a normative sub-text within which these rewards are viewed as the 'just deserts' for hard work:

CDF1 RF1: I've worked all my life, so my standard of living is quite comfortable....I don't have to really worry about much...but I've worked all my married life as well so...

BRS3 RF3: I've worked seven days a week all my life, so we've never spent much, not had any holidays until we retired 10 years ago. And now, yes we're comfortable, we

³ "A minimum standard of living in Britain today includes more than just food, clothes and shelter, it's about having what you need in order to have the opportunities and choices necessary to participate in society" (Bradshaw et al., 2008)

can go abroad maybe once a year, I can afford to play golf...I can afford to go out for a meal once a week. And I think I'm lucky now, I've got everything that I need

BRS2 RM: I've got a nice car, I've got a decent job, I've got my own house, I've got a lodger that lives with me but I need that to get by...I'm quite happy with the standard of living that I've got. I don't go, you know, everyone would like to go to the Seychelles every six weeks on holiday, but I can't afford that

However, a more abstract discussion of what constitutes a 'good' standard of living revealed a somewhat more nuanced set of priorities focused as much upon well-being, personal development, security, stability, family life and wider social relationships as upon consumption as a signifier of status:

LDN2 RM: A good standard of living is the ability to have a roof over my head, to have a family to talk with, and also to be able to provide for their basic necessities...and [the] ability to have things that would make them happy

LDN1 RF: A good standard of living is debt free...earning more than enough...you have a surplus and you're not just making ends meet. You've got a surplus of funds, you can save a reasonable amount per month...

LDN1 RF: I'm not really where I want to be in terms of my ability to do everything I want to do...It's not material objects I'm chasing...More money would enable be to possibly do more, develop myself intellectually more and have social pursuits which I know that other people in this system are having

BRS1 RM: Food on the table, extras, that you can feed your family, have a car, house is warm, clean and got chance to perhaps eating out regularly, theatre...

Beyond a discussion of specific material indicators of living standards, participants were also keen to discuss the interconnections between living standards and personal autonomy, well-being and quality of life. In particular, participants emphasised the importance of having quality time with friends and family as contributing to their well-being and that this sometimes conflicts with financial priorities:

BRS1 RMI: [Being] able to do what you want to do without having the worries that maybe you used to have

BRS1 RF: [to] meet all your bills and your needs fairly easily, and then still to have some money left over to have a choice of what we do with it

LDN1 RM: Because there are two sides to happiness; one is the physical side and one is the emotional side. The physical side is the food, shelter and clothing. The emotional side is your family, your friends, your circle, your spirituality, your holidays, your friends...to live in comfort is the balance of two...without thinking that you have to borrow in order to live within your means

LDN3 RM: Number one is having time for yourself and your family, being able to afford to have that time. And then number two being able to afford what you wouldn't normally be able to afford under normal circumstances

Others participants made connections between the physical and psycho-social aspects of individual well-being and the perpetuation of wider societal inequalities and barriers to opportunities:

BRSI RM: People are not as happy when they feel that society doesn't treat them fairly, when they feel that they are alone...it then does have a knock-on effect on the mental wellbeing of an individual, on the physical wellbeing of an individual, and then has an effect on the rest of us around it, because it creates that inequality in society

BRSI RM: If you've got the same opportunities and choices as those around you, then you can argue that is a fair society, and that creates a better society and a happier society.

Opportunities for a good education including opportunities for life-long learning and personal development were identified by participants as key resources – and their absence as key barriers to realising people's potential:

NI2 RF2: Simply because of money, why can they not develop their skills, enhance their full potential so that they're participating in society?

NI3 RF1: I think maybe the opportunity to upgrade your education if you want to, something like continuous education.

GLSI RM: Having a certain choice over what employment you take...not having to do a job you hate

NI3 RF3: For people who have maybe come out of school without qualifications and they get to a certain level and think actually I can't help the kids with their maths...Access to maths and English and stuff that, you know, they don't necessarily want to do something as big as going to the university

Some participants however prioritised opportunities for children in terms of education and participation in extra-curricular learning not simply as an instrumental good in promoting 'human capital' but as an end in itself in promoting personal development and well-being:

CDF2 RF: It's part of learning and like bringing up your children into...they're saying that children are sort of ASBOs and everything, but if you haven't got the opportunities to take them and show them there's better things to do than be hanging around on the streets...

BRSI RF1: A good wellbeing, making them feel that they're safe and they can grow, and the happier they get the more they'll grow.

BRSI RF2: It [education] makes them feel a worthwhile member of society instead of worthless

2.8 Perceptions of social exclusion

In the latter half of the group discussions, participants were asked about their

understanding of the term social exclusion and what it meant to them to be able to fully participate in society. These questions revealed mixed comprehension and familiarity with the terminology of 'social exclusion'. Some were not familiar with the term itself, or at least with its meanings and applications. However, in contrast to Flaherty's (2008) work, many others were familiar with the term 'social exclusion' and its common usage in public debates relating, for example, to disadvantage, deprivation, and the 'underclass'. Participants definitions ranged from relative deprivation of material goods, to those describing lack of social participation, autonomy, and security, the later being areas aligning more closely to the definitions provided by participants within Richardson et al.'s 2002 study.

Participants offered definitions encompassing what they termed as 'unfairness' and 'being left out' in everyday life. A few participants provided a more expansive definition of inclusion in society which included an emphasis on 'belonging', for example, as part of a wider community or society:

CDF3 RM: It means not fitting in really isn't it? If people don't fit in you feel socially excluded

CDF2 RM: Well, being socially accepted isn't it really, belonging isn't it?

BRS1 RF: I think it's kind of a feeling that you're useful in society as well, so even if that's, you might feel useful in different ways, like even if you're just looking after children or if you're at work or if you're volunteering in certain things. It doesn't mean you've got to have like a high powered job...just feeling that you're part of something.

Others drew attention to wider societal processes of exclusion associated with the persistence of poverty and class-based inequalities in shaping perceptions of individuals and neighbourhoods:

BRS2 RM5: Social exclusion is almost like a class thing. You've got like working class people and upper class people, that's like social exclusion as well isn't it?

NI3 RF: Well you could be excluded by class, even though we're not supposed to have a class system there still is a class system. So somebody from an estate with a bad reputation could be socially excluded in terms of jobs. Somebody sees that they're from that particular area, they won't employ them.

LDNI RF: Someone's income level determines how they value themselves and how they feel they can manoeuvre socially and where they want to go and who they want to be with and how they want to dress...and the newspaper they read... people draw inferences and they quantify you by the amount of money they think you have

The impact of locality, and neighbourhood disadvantage and stigma on people's choices and opportunities is especially prominent in participants' accounts, alongside concerns about declining community cohesion and fears of social isolation:

NI2 RF: Sometimes it can be as simple as the area, the neighbourhood that you live in. It could have a stigma attached to it and 'oh, they're from there, they're that kind of person'.

BRS3 RM: Another thing that has happened in our sort of lifetime, adult lifetime, and certainly happened in the present day for people younger than ourselves, is that people have got a lot more opportunity to go away from the place of birth or town where they grew up with all their friends. They leave school after five or six years and they're off. They get married, they're off the other end of the country, wherever, and unless you're a sociable person who will mix you're going to be so isolated, and this community thing becomes harder to build.

The impact of exclusion on children was once again highlighted. Some participants talked about unfairness, being "left out", or not fitting-in in educational settings, by referring to examples such as bullying at school (or for adults in the workplace) which might lead to exclusion. Others highlighted the social impacts of health problems and conditions which might prevent someone from being able to participate fully in society, including as a result of the prejudices and a lack of provision:

CDF2 RF1: I've heard it in like the terms of being bullied, when maybe we all discussed about children in an environment where a child is excluded for something.

GLS2RF: My son suffers from social exclusion in an autistic spectrum and suffers terribly...It's just how people treat him. To look at him you would never think he has Asperger's but he struggles with life in general, and it's the way he's been treated, it's just most of his life

LDN3 RM: My son was born prematurely...sometimes we think he's socially excluded at school, so even though financially he might have everything he wants, sometimes children find it difficult to talk to him...other friends of ours, one daughter has got cerebral palsy, she's only five and she's been bullied at school, so her parents ...financially they've got their own home, they've got all the material car...but the daughter's being bullied at school because of her special needs. And society doesn't get it

LDN3 RF: If you've got a disability...you're obviously excluded because the perception is that you aren't able to do things that normal people are allowed to do or are capable of doing...a lot of perceptions around disabled people is that they haven't got a good level of education or because they're physically disabled they can't do the things that we would want to do, get on a tube and travel to work and things like that

Participants who focussed on material aspects of social exclusion, in addition to basic necessities, also mentioned not being able to afford consumer goods such as cars, clothes - in particular designer brands - and items of technology. Generally, participants felt that children and young people were particularly vulnerable to stigma as a result of an inability to 'keep up' with the latest fashions in consumer electronics and fashion. For example, having a mobile phone, or access to social networking sites via the internet, was seen by some to be crucial for children and young people in particular:

CDF3 RF: If they can't go to the cinema when all their friends are going to the cinema, if they haven't got a mobile phone because they're all texting each other

every 30 seconds, then if they haven't got access to whatever their friends do as a group then they get excluded because they haven't got all that.

GLS1 RM: Social exclusion for me is if they're at school...and they're not able to socialise, that's how I looked at it...If they didn't have a hot shower to wash and things like that, that would exclude them, even things like...if they didn't have a PlayStation or something like that you could be excluded from the other kids because they didn't have the games and stuff like that, or even if they didn't have a new pair of trainers or something like that, you could be excluded that way because he was poor

NII RM: If all the kids in the school know that you're clothes aren't new or aren't yours first hand, you'll get slagged about it and there's a certain amount of bullying and battering that goes on at schools. And I think that also happens for things like iPods and mobile phones, what type of brand of shoes you wear...

GLS2 RF1: I've seen it first hand, if you've not got the latest things and the latest gadgets, the latest this, you're just excluded, it's as simple as that, and it's a shame

2.9 Is social exclusion different from poverty?

Participants were asked for their views on the relationship between social exclusion and poverty, with many participants seeing the two concepts as closely linked in various ways. Accounts draw attention to the conceptual 'overlap' between these terms, with poverty being viewed variously as a driver of social exclusion and as a consequence of exclusion:

NII RM1: If you draw two circles there's a big overlap between the two of them

LDN1 RM: I would say poverty is the bedrock or is the basis for exclusion...

LDN2 RM: Once you are socially excluded you are going to be poor

Nevertheless many participants believed that social exclusion was not only experienced by people living in poverty, but was related both to individuals' personal characteristics, including sociability and health status, as well as to the experience of gender, racial and disability discrimination:

CDF1 RF2: You don't have to be poor to be - how can I put it - a recluse.

BRS3 RM: Just because you've got income and you're fairly well looked after, if you like, you could also go into depression.

BRS2 RF: [It's] nothing to do necessarily with how much money you have. You can be excluded from activities because through race or through gender or if you're disabled... You have lots of money but you could be like a lonely old woman stuck in her flat with like no family or anything

Interestingly, despite the strong association between poverty and social exclusion in

participants' minds, one participant noted that people struggling on a low-income are in many cases nevertheless able to fully participate in society, often as a result of social resources linked to long-standing social networks in some economically disadvantaged communities. Interestingly, this comment also draws attention to the limitations of paid work as a framework for understanding exclusion:

CDF3 RF: It depends what your circle of friends, what they do. I've got a friend who's never worked, she's my age...she's never worked in her life, she's never wanted to work and she hasn't, she's on the dole. She's got three kids which she's brought up, and she lives in a council house in one of the roughest areas in Swansea...but...she's not excluded because she plays darts with all the people from her area, she's in the darts team. She goes out and does things like that - because she doesn't work she goes out in the daytime and meets them all for coffee in a local cafe and things like that. She's not actually socially excluded.

In part this may reflect an understandable reluctance on the part of participants to identify themselves with social labels which often have highly pejorative connotations, and reflexivity in research practice is therefore essential if researchers are to avoid unintentionally reinforcing the 'othering' of people experiencing disadvantage. Nevertheless, the above comment demonstrates that participants may not always subscribe to dominant public and policy discourses on 'social exclusion' centred upon inclusion through paid work.

2.10 Social exclusion vignettes

To facilitate further discussion of different aspects of social exclusion participants were next invited to discuss a number of hypothetical scenarios. These 'vignettes' were constructed in order to explore participants' decision-making and judgements by probing the factors which were salient in group discussions of each scenario, including manipulation of the vignette descriptors to test the impact of participants' judgements. Using social exclusion vignettes proved to be fruitful in facilitating more expansive discussions by providing group members with more concrete instances upon which to exercise judgement and deliberation than less structured brainstorming methods.

Whilst poverty was, to varying degrees, integral to many participants' accounts of 'social exclusion', this latter term denoted a very much wider range of disadvantages than those associated with limited material resources. However, contrasting views were evident on the role of personal agency and choice in explaining exclusion and these views also informed participants' accounts of just desserts and entitlements in determining what might constitute an acceptable level of social inclusion for people in different circumstances. These issues warrant further examination, and in much greater depth than is possible in a focus group setting.

Participants highlighted a wide range of issues associated with the multi-dimensional experience of exclusion relating, for example, to labour market participation, crime and social harm, the impact of troubled personal histories, housing problems, bereavement,

and social networks and support. In the discussion that follows we highlight some of the wider issues arising from participants' responses to the individual vignettes relating to: work and social integration (the case of Brian); complex personal histories (the case of Jimmy); disability and care (the case of John), and; isolation, social support and community (the cases of Barbara and Jo).

Work and social integration

Brian is a 50 year old divorcee. Since finishing his apprenticeship, Brian worked most of his life as a sheet metal worker. Five years ago he was made redundant, and since then he has found it difficult to find work using his skills. He currently works two jobs, as a cleaner at a local hotel and as a barman in the local pub in order to make ends meet. He lives alone in a rented flat and rarely sees friends and family due to long working hours. His main social contacts are with people he works with. He is interested in sport and enjoyed following his local football team, although he now rarely attends matches due to the cost.

Most participants thought that Brian was experiencing social exclusion as a result of significant life changes associated with redundancy and relationship break-up and that this had had a major impact on his ability to fully participate in society. Participants' accounts referred to the impact of long, unsocial working hours for low pay in preventing Brian from maintaining social networks and friendships. The adverse psychological impacts of exclusion were also noted, including the effects on personal identity and self-esteem which might also influence sociability:

BRS3 RM: He knows what he needs but he's got his life slightly upside down. He's having to work enormous hours to meet the end product, but at the cost of friendship and community. He hasn't got quite enough, you know, he's isolated himself really. He's working day time, evenings, long hours. He's seeing people but he's not seeing them on a one-to-one basis or as friendships. He's seeing them in the bar where he works, talks to them that way but his actual life hasn't got anything

LDN3 RF: Yeah, he's not able to mix with family and friends. He isn't able to enjoy time with them, which is a form of leisure or relaxing thing for him. He's working all the time and his life's not balanced and that can have other effects on him.

Participants across all geographical areas viewed Brian's situation as typical of many men of his age, arising both from long-term industrial decline since the 1980s and the worsening contemporary economic climate. The importance of opportunities for retraining, learning new skills, and continuing education was emphasised in participants' accounts, with age and ageism identified as prohibitive factors in the re-skilling of older workers in the UK:

BRS1 RM: This reflects the lifestyle of a lot of people unfortunately who have been made redundant and have had no choice but to take on a number of jobs, more than one job, and have literally not the same choices that we're all maybe used to

GLS2 RM: Typical today, very much so, a lot of men come through, finish school, have been brought up in the shipyard jobs, like heavy industry jobs, or just put in for apprenticeships. There's not very many apprenticeships left at all. And then coming to that age where there's no real sort of manufacturing industry left in Britain

GLS2 RM: So all these factories are all closing down, and guys like Brian are being turfed out, 50 years old, he's maybe too old to retrain for something else and people look and thinking well what's the point he's nearly at retirement age

Other participants made important qualitative distinctions between social interactions at work and those existing within wider friendship and family networks. The importance of friendship or family relationships *outside work* in terms of the social support and mutual trust these provide is also emphasised:

CDF2 RF: If he's working behind a bar, if there's something wrong he's not going to open his heart up to the customer across the bar is he?

CDF3 RM: He may be meeting them in work, but he is working so he's not really able to spend time sort of integrating with his friends. Over the bar yeah, but...he's not sitting down and having conversations

LDN3 RF: You can form a friendship and get on very well with your co-workers but that cannot take the place of your family...they have a special place in your life and you cannot replace them

Most participants diagnosed working long unsocial hours in poorly paid employment as Brian's main problem which severely limited his social and leisure time. However, views on the role of personal agency in Brian's situation differed with some participants viewing his position as a result of choices he had made or a perceived lack of 'effort'. One participant noted that long working hours and limited social life are realities for many people in the UK today and not necessarily symptomatic of a wider feeling of 'exclusion' from society:

BRS1 RF: Well he's got a job, he's got a flat, he's got two jobs, but I believe that he could make a bit more effort if he really wanted company. I think he could make an effort to be able to do that

BRS1 RF: Some people are excluded because people have prejudice against them, so like race, sexuality and things like that, but no one would be prejudiced against this person. So even though he works all these hours the opportunities are there for him if he wants them...It sounds a bit like my life actually, I don't really go out and I'm at work but I don't feel excluded from anything

Nevertheless, most participants were highly sympathetic to Brian's situation, especially with regard to the 'work ethic' which this case was viewed as representing. For these participants, social exclusion was mainly a product of circumstances and necessity rather than personal choices. Indeed, Brian was perceived to be meeting his obligations to society understood by participants in terms of economic 'independence' through paid employment but was nevertheless excluded from many of the perceived

benefits that economic inclusion confers:

LDN3 RM: I'd say this is a person who's fulfilling his responsibility in life against trying circumstances which sometimes we all have to do. So good for him I'd say, he's meeting his responsibilities...he's not a burden on the country, he's got two jobs

GLS1 RM: I feel actually sorry for this guy because he's doing all he can, and he's living along sort of norms of society but he's still socially excluded. And referring to this that he wants to see his friends and he wants to see his family, he wants to go and see the football, and he can't do these things. It's not through him being lazy or whatever else, it's just through circumstances

Complex personal histories

Jimmy is 21 years old. Since the age of 12, Jimmy has regularly consumed alcohol and recreational drugs. In his late teens, he became heroin dependent. In order to maintain his habit, he became involved in shoplifting and burglary. At the age of 17 he was convicted of his first offence and spent six months in a young offender's institution. Since then Jimmy has been sentenced repeatedly for offences relating to his drug dependency. Jimmy has found it difficult to maintain regular paid work with few qualifications and a criminal conviction. He currently lives in a hostel.

All the groups felt that Jimmy was excluded, although participants held varying views on the degree of personal agency, and in some cases culpability, in contributing to Jimmy's situation. This extract from the second Bristol group demonstrates the diverse views held by participants:

BRS2 RMI: Well I know it's a bit judgemental really...but I think there is places out there that don't cost anything...and they'll sort you out. But you've got to want to do it...if someone stays in that sort of lifestyle for years and years and years then if they're given the chance time and time again to get out of that situation...and they choose not to, then I would just leave them alone and let them get on with it

BRS1 RMI: You're in a no win situation because someone who's heroin dependent or anything like that, hasn't got a job, hasn't got any funds to buy that sort of thing, and the only way they can keep their habit is by nicking something. And they get themselves stuck in that circle until someone comes and rescues them

However, whilst recognising troubled personal histories as contributory factors in understanding Jimmy's situation, several participants maintained that Jimmy has made his own choices. The perceived availability of specialist support services are here used as a device to shift responsibility to Jimmy: it is assumed that such specialist services are available, adequate and effective 'cures' for social problems; it is also assumed that Jimmy therefore has chosen not to use these services:

BRS2 RM: There's help out there for people that's been abused and if he chose not to take it, chose to go down the alcohol and drug route, then he's excluded himself

Other participants thought that Jimmy may have made an initial choice to indulge in drinking alcohol and taking drugs, but recognised the power of addiction and associated difficulties in breaking free from heroin dependency, as well as the ensuing adverse impacts of a criminal history and homelessness on prospects for rehabilitation:

GLSI RM: It was a choice thing, he chose to drink alcohol, he chose to take drugs, therefore the choice was his at the start, he could have said no...most people take heroin always go back for more because of the kick that they get from it. And therefore once you're into it, it's much more difficult to...get out of

GLSI RM: At the age of 17 he was convicted of his first offence and spent six months in a young offenders' institution, and then it seems like he kind of spirals from there...the young offenders institution [has] perhaps socially excluded him to some extent...when you get in this kind of spiral of crime and offending and incarceration then it's very difficult to get out

BRSI RF: Living in a hostel isn't exactly encouraging him to get out and meet other people...because presumably he's just, his self-esteem is rock bottom

Disability and care

John is 38 years old and is married with two children. He is well qualified and has a university degree. John is a wheelchair user, and whilst his wife is at work, John's daughter cares for him. For the past three years, his daughter has returned home from school early, meaning that she has had to withdraw from her music lessons and the school netball team. Although, John is very well qualified and experienced in his job, he has had several unsuccessful job interviews. John is a keen sportsperson and swims regularly at the local sports centre. He also enjoys the arts, particularly cinema, although he experiences difficulties in accessing venues.

Participants' responses to the situation of John were in general less sympathetic to the subject's circumstances, viewing John's care needs as contributing to the exclusion of other family members acting as informal carers. Some participants felt that John might be experiencing disability discrimination within the labour market both with regard to recruitment practices and employers' obligations to make reasonable adaptations to facilitate the employment participation of disabled people:

CDF RM: And also balance unsuccessful job interviews that might be discrimination because he's a wheelchair user.

NII RM: Especially if they're going in the smaller companies, because smaller companies, make them wheelchair accessible with ramps and bars and disabled loos and all that sort of stuff, and that probably wouldn't be up for him.

However, in all groups participants felt that John's daughter was experiencing social exclusion, as a result of the impact of caring responsibilities for her and other family members wider activities and networks. At the same time some participants acknowledged a lack of institutional support services as a key driver in placing what

were viewed to be unreasonable caring demands on family members:

CDF2 RF: His daughter's the one who's being socially excluded mainly...because he still goes swimming and different things, but obviously she's got to give up things in her childhood to come home and care for him

NII RMI: I suppose the person who's excluded in all this is the daughter. She's not getting access to the after school club that she used to

NII RF: Yeah, he's not getting the help from health and social care. He's not getting like a home help so that his daughter can actually stay at school and do her things.

However, as with the case of Jimmy (above), participants' accounts make implicit assumptions about the availability of specialist support services, and about the perceived generosity of benefits payments, which serve to de-legitimize the unmet needs of the subject and blame the subject for the impacts of caring on other family members:

CDF2 RM: They have a level of standard of living they're happy with, so are they using the social exclusion of their daughter from school to keep the active lifestyle of living? And it looks like they are. I'm sure that he may be able to get benefits or get more benefits and he could be able to have a carer come in and look after him

NII RF: He's still getting out and he's still going to the cinema, and I think you're right, I think the daughter is the one who's...keeping up that rich lifestyle that he's used to, but she's losing out on...these classes or her netball team or whatever, and I think it's really important for a child to develop those at that age

CDF2 RM: It could be his own sort of attitude, he might be resentful...You don't know the extent of why he's in a wheelchair as well, why his daughter's got to come home to look after him.

Isolation, social support and community

Barbara is 75 years old. She is a single pensioner living on her own in a housing estate flat rented from her local housing association. She receives the basic state pension as well as housing benefit. She recently moved into her flat, having lived for many years with her husband who passed away two years ago. She has a son and daughter but they moved out of the area to seek work. Although there are some local shops, she uses public transport to attend the day centre run by the council, and to visit her GP and friends. She is currently in good health but sometimes feels lonely and worries about what would happen if she fell ill. She avoids going out at night because she does not feel safe going out on her own.

Where this scenario was discussed, participants tended to empathise with Barbara's situation and felt that recent major changes in her life clearly had had a detrimental impact on her situation. Although participants mostly did not refer explicitly to the terminology of 'exclusion', the death of Barbara's husband in addition to an enforced

move to an unfamiliar neighbourhood were widely viewed by participants as having adversely affected her opportunities for social participation and potentially also undermined her social confidence. It was recognised that it might be difficult for someone in Barbara's situation to reintegrate following such major upheavals in her life:

CDF1 RF: I think she lacks confidence with going out and different things

BRS3 RF: I'm a widow, I lost my husband, but I had to go out and find things; it doesn't come knocking on the door...Well now I do [have confidence], but I didn't when I had first to do it. I found it very difficult to walk into the library on my own; we'd always gone together

Similarly, although many older (especially female) participants shared Barbara's fear of going out at night this was not linked within participants' accounts with wider notions of 'exclusion':

CDF3 RF: I don't go out at all when it's dark no. I mean now [6.30pm] I wouldn't be out this late now, and I'll go from here now in onto the drive when in, lock the door and that's it

Many participants highlighted the perceived opportunities for social participation open to Barbara which might facilitate her social participation, for example through day centres, social clubs for older people and volunteering opportunities:

BRS3 RF1: She attends a day centre. You would think attending that day centre she would make friends with the people attending there.

BRS3 RF2: Plus the fact in our area there's an over 50s club, and some people that are going there are 90-odd, so she should be able to go out into the community and find something.

However, again whilst acknowledging and sympathetic to the circumstances of the subject contained within the vignette, participants' accounts did not situate this within a wider societal context which might constitute such experiences as 'social exclusion'. As a result, and in marked contrast to some of the vignettes discussed above (specifically Brian and Jimmy), the discussion of this vignette was individualised in ways which presented a narrative centred upon personal tragedy rather than being indicative of any wider social problems.

The final scenario (*below*) raised some similar issues in terms of social isolation and access to social support:

Jo is 28 years old. She is a single parent and has two children aged 2 and 5. She has not been in paid work since the birth of her first child. Social security payments and maintenance payments from her former partner are her only sources of income. She is unable to work due to the lack of affordable childcare, as her parents no longer live in the area. She feels isolated as she rarely has the opportunity to go out without her children. She lives in a flat on a local council housing estate in a small town. There are a few local shops but few safe play areas for children.

Where discussed, all participants strongly agreed that this subject was socially excluded. Participants' accounts of Jo's exclusion referred to a lack of social contact and support. Some participants felt that it was sometimes difficult to obtain sufficient practical support such as babysitting to facilitate paid work as a result of perceived generational changes in family solidarity and support. The impact of low income on opportunities for social participation was also noted as contributing towards social exclusion. Participants agreed that access to education, transport and support services were vital for single parents, particularly for those living in rural areas or without a car in order to combat social exclusion:

CDF3 RF2: To have someone to help her with the children and...the childcare and having...adult conversation

CDF3 RM: She'd be socially excluded because she can't afford to go anywhere

GLS2 RF2: I had more of a social life when my youngest one was at nursery because I was involved with the nursery...so I think it's what you make it as well

GLS2 RF4: There's quite a lot in my area anyway, but to pack up and go, these kind of places are far out so you need a car, you need transport to get to these places

At the same time, wider social expectations based on assumptions of stable, couple relationships were viewed by one participant as contributing to the exclusion of single people including (and perhaps especially) single parents:

CDF3 RF3: Yeah, socially excluded. I am as a person, as a single parent, you just don't get invited to things that married couples I know

However one participant remarked that despite Jo's situation being very similar to her own she had not considered herself to be excluded:

GLS2 RF: She probably doesn't even know she's socially excluded because I've never thought like my life the way, would never have dreamed, there's probably loads of people that are socially excluded for things and they don't know it.

The above comment again demonstrates that participants may not always subscribe to dominant policy discourses of exclusion which identify paid work as central to wider inclusion in society, and may not view their situation as one characterised by exclusion. It is important therefore that such debates are informed by public perceptions of what it means to be excluded, and specifically of the extent to which individuals' experience of disadvantage are framed within the context of exclusion from society, in order to avoid further reinforcing the discursive marginalisation of disadvantaged groups as 'other'.

2.11 Social differences in perceptions of poverty and social exclusion

It is not possible on the basis of these data to draw robust inferences about the impacts of social differences in shaping wider public perceptions of poverty and social exclusion. Our findings are based upon a relatively small, quota sample and as such are not

intended to be statistically generalisable, but rather to represent the range of circumstances thought to influence perceptions of poverty and the necessities of life including income, gender, household type, and ethnicity. The intersection of these characteristics means that it is also not possible to meaningfully isolate their effects within these analyses. Rather we seek to provide a more holistic account of the impact of social differences in shaping participants' perception of poverty and social exclusion.

Whilst any conclusions in this area are therefore necessarily tentative, there is nevertheless some evidence that perceptions of poverty and exclusion within this study may be influenced by social differences within the sample. Certainly, participants in the non-low income groups tended to suggest a somewhat wider range of items and activities as 'necessities of life' in comparison with participants in the low income groups. For example, in relation to the accommodation itself these groups made a number of additional suggestions including 'adequate natural light', 'a dining table and chairs', and 'draught-free, insulated home' not referred to by low income groups. Similarly, 'an outfit for a special occasions', 'adequate nightwear' and 'non-prescription medicines' were referred to in non-low income groups only. A wider range of social activities and children's items were also suggested by the non-low income groups in comparison with the low income groups, including for example, 'family outings', 'being able to celebrate special occasions', 'cinema/theatre and cultural activities', 'a treat on special occasions for children', and 'a hobby or leisure activity for children'. These findings appear to conflict with existing survey evidence suggesting that poor households identify a wider range of items and activities as necessities (e.g. Pantazis et al., 2000, 2006). Nevertheless, these findings would be consistent with adaptive preferences theories which suggest that poor households may modify their expectations in the light of resource constraints.

However, suggestions of social distinctions in responses to social exclusion are perhaps more compelling. Amongst discussion groups comprising families with children and older people, the importance of accessible, affordable and high quality local services was particularly emphasised. Amongst these groups, local services and infrastructure were viewed as important in sustaining thriving communities and in supporting their residents. Especially for older participants, the role of local services in sustaining a 'sense of community' was also acknowledged, and for both groups having a genuine say in local decisions was viewed as an important aspect of inclusion.

This 'communitarian' agenda might to some extent be contrasted with an emphasis upon individual experiences of exclusionary processes and their outcomes amongst ethnic minority participants, and amongst participants without children. The importance of good English language and communication skills was emphasised by ethnic minority participants, alongside a recognition of immigration and citizenship status as key dimensions of exclusion in our society today. For both participants without children and ethnic minority participants, a lack of confidence, esteem and social skills was seen as an important driver of exclusion, alongside recognition of deeper structural inequalities associated with unemployment, homelessness, domestic violence, and the impacts of crime. Although it would be easy to overstate these differences in view of the

substantial continuities in participants' accounts, the importance of community perspectives and local provision of services and infrastructure appeared to play a more salient role in the accounts of older participants and those with children, in contrast with participants without children and for ethnic minority participants whose accounts tended to emphasise structural factors associated with exclusion at an individual level.

2.12 Poverty, social exclusion and the impacts of recession

In view of participants' prioritisation of the provision of good public services in enabling participation, further exploration of the impact of current cuts in service provision is important in advancing understanding of social exclusion in our society today. The current economic climate and the perceived rising cost of living was mentioned by some participants as having implications for many people experiencing poverty in the UK, with some drawing on their personal experience:

GLS1 RM: I would say it [poverty] has slightly increased...people are feeling more poverty stricken because of...change of economic climate, and not everybody's affected I don't think...it has affected people slightly differently

LDN2 RF: Nowadays we've had the credit crunch...you've still got to do that penny pinching, you've got to count your pennies...you've still got to think well can I afford it, can I not afford it...It's just basic things you can't afford, if you're like myself I'm on benefits, I can't afford to go out and splash out, even Christmas I can't afford to splash out and buy something fantastic

Some participants appeared to conclude that those living on a low income had been hit the hardest by the economic recession, whilst others referred to discourses of a 'squeezed middle' in describing the situation of working households increasingly struggling to make ends meet. Several participants drew attention to the day-to-day difficulties of managing on stretched household budgets as a result of rising costs for basic necessities including food, heating and other utilities and services. As the Women's Budget Group (2008) note, an absence of security is identified by the public as central to the definition of poverty. Possibly as a result of the deteriorating economic climate of the period, this research also suggests that long term financial security, insurance against risks, and hazard prevention, were key priorities for participants, often reflecting pessimistic assessments of the prospects for future public welfare provision including during retirement:

NI1 RM: [you] should have some sort of pension...because the pension, state pension won't be worth tuppence by the time you've retired.

NI2 RF: I have absolutely no security for the future...I don't have any cash, my wage comes in and I don't have any security beyond that, so I think about that quite a lot

NI2 RF: I'm only 30 but I think by the time I come to retirement there won't be a state pension

However, participants often explained that items such as pension contributions and insurance were one of the first things that people forgo when finances are tight. Several participants admitted that their home was not insured and that they were currently unable to afford to save or deposit money into a pension fund. These findings might therefore suggest that financial insecurity and increasing precarity are likely to be an increasing concern as a result of the 2008 economic crisis and ensuing recession.

3. Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion

In this section we summarise participants' views on the 'necessities of life', that is, those items and activities which everyone should be able to afford to have or do in our society today and which no-one should not have to go without. We also examine and summarise participants' suggestions on indicators of social exclusion and inclusion based upon group discussion and related tasks and activities. As noted above (*Section 1.3*), research was conducted in two overlapping phases. In Phase One, focus group participants' views on potential indicators of deprivation and social exclusion were sought using relatively unstructured 'brainstorming' methods. Our aim here was to generate a consensus within groups on possible indicators, and drawing on participants' suggestions in these groups, our objective in the Phase Two groups was therefore to 'test' the items agreed by Phase One groups. In the discussion that follows we therefore begin by summarising participants' suggestions regarding the necessities of life and indicators of social exclusion separately for Phase One and Phase Two groups, before going on to consider the definitional and measurement issues these findings raise for the survey work in this area.

3.1 *The necessities of life*

Table 1 (*below*) lists all those items considered and agreed by participants in one or more of the Phase One groups as 'necessities of life', that is, those items and activities which everyone should be able to afford to have or do in our society today and no-one should not have to go without. It should also be noted that the items as agreed in different groups varied (sometimes considerably) in their wording from those detailed in Table 1 (*below*). The detailed comments and recommendations arising from the groups relating to specific indicators are outlined in Appendix 2.

Participants' suggestions are of course varied and wide-ranging, and the general conclusions emerging from discussions with participants' need to be interpreted within the wider context of the more detailed thematic analysis of transcripts presented in Section 2 (*above*). However, a number of general points are worthy of brief note here. Firstly,

participants' suggestions are generally similar to existing indicators included within earlier consensual poverty surveys conducted in Britain in 1999 (Gordon et al., 2000) and in Northern Ireland in 2003 (Hillyard et al., 2003). Nevertheless, there are some signs that certain 'traditional' indicators, for example, those associated with diet, clothing, and family life, are of declining salience in public deliberations on the 'necessities of life'. Similarly, participants' suggestions often indicated a strong consensus in favor of electronic and communication equipment which undoubtedly reflects wider technological and social changes.

Secondly, participants made many new suggestions in terms of specific items for potential further consideration. These were inevitably diverse but those agreed by group participants often focused in various ways on security (long term financial security, insurance against risks, hazard prevention), housing quality (insulation/energy efficiency, ventilation, daylight, communal space, good physical repair), and children's well-being and development (social and school activities, education, safety). In line with work by Hirsch and Smith (2010), participants' decision-making appeared to reflect the continuing importance of social relationships within families in defining those items and activities which all people should be able to have or do. Several items (e.g. a communal area, dining table and chairs for all household members, family and friends around for a meal, and family outings) reflected participants' emphasis on the importance of 'quality' time together for families. Thirdly, and aside from the general definitional issues discussed further below, participants' responses and queries suggest various (overt) response problems associated with specific items. These relate to participants' decision making processes, and specifically to processes of item cognition, judgment, and response, and are outlined in detail in Appendix 1.

Table 1: The necessities of life

ACCOMMODATION

- A damp free home
- Heating to warm living areas of the home
- Insurance of home contents
- Money to keep home in decent state of decoration
- Separate bedrooms for boys and girls aged over 10
- Separate bedrooms for all adults and for parents/children
- A communal area for whole household
- Adequate natural light
- Enough space for all household members
- Bath or shower facilities
- Sole use of household facilities
- Adequate ventilation and insulation
- Draft free windows
- Smoke/carbon monoxide alarm

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS



- Washing machine
- Mobile phone
- Access to internet
- Microwave
- Fridge/freezer
- An iron
- Kettle
- Hairdryer
- Money to replace/repair broken electrical goods
- Sofa and/or easy chairs for household members
- Dining table and chairs for all household members
- Money to replace worn out furniture
- Bed, bedding, mattress for all household members
- Curtains and blinds
- Access to an outdoor space within accommodation
- Books within the home
- Home computer
- TV
- Radio or music player

DIET AND CLOTHING

- Two meals a day for adults
- Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily
- Fresh fruit and veg. on a daily basis
- An adequate balanced diet (including meat, fish, vegetables and carbs)
- Money for a week/month's household food budget
- Warm waterproof coat
- Two pairs of all weather shoes
- New, not second hand, clothes
- An outfit for special occasions
- Three complete outfits for every household member
- Adequate nightwear
- Clothes in good/clean condition
- Adequate clothing and footwear for all seasons
- Non prescription medicines

SOCIAL AND FAMILY LIFE

- Holiday away from home once a year, not with relatives
- Family or friends around for a meal
- Visits to friends or family
- An evening out once a fortnight
- A car
- Local bus or rail fares

- Access to affordable local public transport
- Family outings
- Money for local sporting activities or classes
- A family meal together once a day
- Money to celebrate special occasions
- Theatre, concert, museum, cinema visits
- Personal time for adults away from family responsibilities

FINANCIAL

- Paying rent/mortgage and household bills without getting into debt
- Regular savings for rainy days
- Small sum of money to spend on self weekly
- Life insurance for mortgage-holders
- Regular payments into a private or occupational pension plan

CHILDREN'S ITEMS

- Three meals a day for children
- Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily for children
- A garden for children to play in
- Books for children of their own
- Toys (e.g. dolls, teddies)
- Friends round for tea/snack fortnightly
- Leisure equipment for children
- School trips at least once a term
- Access to a safe outside area to play
- Fresh fruit or vegetables at least daily/twice daily
- Milk daily
- New, properly fitted shoes for children
- Some new, not second-hand clothes for children
- School uniform for children
- Hobby or leisure activity
- Toys for personal development/education
- Toys (e.g. dolls, teddies)
- Sports equipment for children
- A mobile phone for older children
- Money for after school clubs
- Treats for children on special occasions
- Money for children's clubs, societies and related activities

In the four Phase Two groups participants were asked to classify a range of different

items using card sort methods into 'necessities', 'desirable' and 'luxury' items. Items for consideration in Phase Two comprised included those items selected by Phase One groups as 'necessities' and additional items drawn intended to measure relative affluence. Table 2 (*below*) summarises results for those items which were universally agreed by all four groups as necessities (Col 1), for items viewed as necessities by a majority of the groups (Col 2), and for those identified by most groups as 'desirable' (Col 3) or 'luxury' (Col 4) items.

In general, there is a close correspondence between items universally agreed as necessities within Phase One groups and those universally classified as necessities in Phase Two. Groups of course sometimes reached different conclusions and where this is so we distinguish between universal agreement across groups (Col 1) and those classified as necessities in a majority of groups (Col 2). As might be expected given the absence of universal agreement across groups, the latter category includes many items which evoked a more equivocal response in the Phase One groups. These items (Col 2) in conjunction with items identified by most groups as 'desirable' (Col 3) are likely to prove the most discriminating indicators in terms of identifying a deprivation threshold.

Table 2: Participant classification of phase 2 standard of living items

NOTE: Parentheses indicate item scoring across groups. For each group, items are scored as follows: necessity (universal agreement)=1; necessity (majority decision)=0.5; desirable=0.25; luxury=0. Item scores were summed across the four groups to provide a crude ranking of participant decisions across groups.

1. NECESSITIES (universally agreed)

- Adequate nightwear (4)
- Non prescription medicines (3.5)
- Communal area for all household members (3.3)
- Three complete outfits for every hhld. member (3)
- Local bus or rail fares (3)
- A car in an area with poor public transport (3)
- Being able to celebrate special occasions (3)
- Milk daily for children (3)
- School uniform for children (3)
- A smoke/carbon monoxide alarm (2.6)

2. NECESSITIES (consensus)

- Attending local sporting or leisure classes (3.25)
- Draft free windows (2.75)
- Digital TV (2.75)
- An evening out once a fortnight (2.75)
- A treat on special occasions for children (2.75)
- Visits to cinema/theatre or other cultural event at least every three months (2.5)
- Leisure equipment (e.g. sports equipment, bike) (2.5)

A mobile phone (2.25)
Access to the Internet (2.25)
A family outing once a month (2.25)
Toys for personal development (2.25)

3. DESIRABLE ITEMS

An outfit for social or family occasions (1.75)
A home computer (1.75)
Microwave (1.75)
Dining table and chairs for all hhd. members (1.5)
A DVD player (1.25)
Enough space or privacy to read, write or listen to music (1.25)
Small sum of money to spend on self occasionally (1.25)
A music system or hi-fi (1)
A garden to play in (1)

4. LUXURY ITEMS

- Membership of a gym or sports club (0.5)
- An iPod or MP3 Player (0.25)
- A school trip abroad once a year (0.25)
- A dishwasher (0)

3.2 Social exclusion

In ten Phase One groups, participants were introduced to the topic of social exclusion by asking them to consider what it meant to them to be able to fully participate in society. A vignette exercise was then undertaken where participants were presented with imaginary scenarios describing the situation of people experiencing different forms of social exclusion. Participants were subsequently asked to suggest the kinds of disadvantages which they thought would make it difficult for people to fully participate in society with researchers recording their suggestions on cards which were then placed on display boards.

In practice the items suggested by participants were not only those which they viewed as detrimental to participation (e.g. discrimination), but also those which facilitate participation (e.g. access to good public/private services), so that the suggested items had both negative and positive connotations. Participants' wide-ranging suggestions included items across the various themes and domains described by the *Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix* [B-SEM] (Levitas et al., 2006) intended to guide the operational measurement of social exclusion with the main PSE-UK survey. Table 3 (*below*) lists the items suggested by participants across the ten Phase One groups grouped under the relevant domains of the B-SEM framework. It is recognized that some of these items cross-cut these themes e.g. working long or unsocial hours is related to both economic

and social participation, and may also have an impact on health and well being. Participants also provided some new suggestions including having good social skills, a feeling of belonging, and a 'healthy' spiritual life, that do not easily 'fit' within the B-SEM framework.

Table 3: Social Exclusion Items – Phase I Participants' Suggestions

HEALTH & WELLBEING

- Good physical and mental health
- Disabilities
- Mental illness
- Life limiting illness

LIVING ENVIRONMENT

- Good neighbours
- Good warden-assisted accommodation
- Homelessness
- Neighbourhood Watch area
- Safe park
- Community spaces

CRIME, HARM & CRIMINALISATION

- Living in a high crime area/area with a reputation for crime and ASB
- Being unable to insure your home
- Being afraid to go outside/go out at night
- Feeling safe
- Discrimination: homophobia, racism, sexism, ageism, disability, religion
- Bullying/harassment
- Domestic violence
- Not having sufficient visible policing
- Good criminal justice system
- Having a criminal record
- People in prison

MATERIAL/ECONOMIC RESOURCES

- Poverty
- Adequate level of income
- Able to save
- Debt (manageable debt)
- Local bank/credit union
- Bank account
- Information on finance for young people
- Sensible state pension

- Not being able to afford social activities (adults and children)
- Funding for charitable/voluntary services
- Living on social benefits
- Not owning your own home

SOCIAL RESOURCES

- Low confidence and self-esteem, shyness
- Lack of social contacts
- Not living close to family/friends
- Good(ish) relations with neighbours
- Support networks (e.g. family)
- Older people who lack support
- No one to turn to in a crisis
- Social networks/contacts

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

- Unemployment
- Few career opportunities in the labour market
- Long and/or unsocial working hours
- Working in a high stress environment
- Harassment or bullying at work
- Being in debt (employment – pre check)
- Good contributory pension scheme
- Caring responsibilities

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

- Cultural differences
- Loneliness and isolation

POLITICAL & CIVIC PARTICIPATION

- Feeling unable to influence decision-making
- Having a say about your local area
- Community involvement
- Immigration and citizenship status
- Political participation
- Lack of community spirit

CULTURE, EDUCATION & SKILLS

- Poor education
- Qualifications/skills/job experience
- Access to lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Poor English language

- Good communication skills

OTHER

- Good social skills
- Feeling of belonging
- 'Healthy' spiritual life

ACCESS TO PUBLIC/PRIVATE SERVICES

- Access to healthcare incl. emergency care
- Affordable dental care
- Access to GP/health centre
- Home care services, district nursing
- Access to local shops
- Library
- Local schools and adult education
- Breakfast and after-school clubs for children
- Playgroups/nurseries
- Children's and youth centres
- Leisure centres/sports facilities
- Café
- Pub
- Post office
- Emergency services
- Refuse collection
- Church/place of worship
- Accessible community centre
- Good, regular, affordable transport links
- Sufficient funding/resources for local services
- Funding for community groups/facilities
- Info and publicity about community services
- Mobile phone and internet access

In the Phase Two groups, participants were asked to classify a range of different social exclusion items using card sort methods into those that were either 'essential' or 'desirable' for avoiding social exclusion. Some of the items discussed were derived from previous survey work in this area in Britain (Gordon et al., 2001) and Northern Ireland (Hillyard et al., 2003), and others were these suggested by Phase One group participants. These new items included full UK citizenship, good English language skills, and manageable debt. Interestingly, across the four Phase Two groups there were no items that were universally thought to be essential for avoiding social exclusion by all participants. The items that received greatest support were regular contact on most days with friends, workmates, or neighbours, help with caring responsibilities, and good English language skills. Table 4 (*below*) details the classification of the social

exclusion items by Phase Two group participants.

Table 4: Participant classification of Phase 2 social exclusion items

Essential to avoid social exclusion (majority)

- Regular contact on most days with friends, workmates or neighbours (0.83)
- Help with caring responsibilities (0.83)
- Good English language skills (0.83)
- Manageable debt (0.67)
- Confidence and self-esteem (0.67)
- Freedom from harassment/bullying at work (0.67)
- Good publicity about community services (0.67)
- Freedom from longstanding illness which limits your daily activities (0.66)
- Someone to turn to in a crisis (0.66)

Desirable to avoid social exclusion (majority)

- Good access to services (0.58)
- Good education (some qualifications/skills) (0.58)
- Feeling safe walking alone after dark in your local area (0.58)
- Freedom from verbal/physical abuse on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion (0.58)
- Freedom from verbal/physical abuse from another member of your household (0.55)
- Good mental and physical health (0.44)
- Work that is rewarding or socially valued (0.42)
- Good relations with neighbours (0.42)

Desirable but not necessary to avoid social exclusion

- Full UK citizenship (0.33)
- Good career opportunities in the job and/or labour market in your area (0.25)
- Feeling able to influence decisions in your local area ((0.25)
- Owning your own home (0.22)
- Having no criminal record (0.22)
- Living in accommodation free from air pollution or heavy road traffic (0.17)
- Being involved in local community groups or activities in your area (0)

For each group, items are scored as follows: essential (universal agreement)=1; essential (majority decision)=0.66; desirable (majority)=0.33; desirable (universal)=0; Item scores were summed across the four groups to provide a crude ranking of participant decisions across groups.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

In this section we summarise our main findings relating to participants' perceptions of poverty, social exclusion and living standards, and the items and activities considered to be 'necessities of life' in the UK today. We also discuss the implications of these findings for our understanding of poverty and social exclusion and for their definition and measurement within social surveys. Participants' specific suggestions concerning the necessities of life and possible indicators of social exclusion are broad in their scope. Nevertheless, our analyses raise some important issues with regard to the nature and scope of participants own recommendations (addressed in Section 4.1), and conceptual and measurement issues in determining the 'necessities of life' (addressed in Section 4.2).

4.1 Participants' suggestions and recommendations

The necessities of life

Participants' comments and suggestions were varied and diverse and specific recommendations relating to individual items and activities are contained in Appendix 1. However, despite the scope of participants' suggestions, our research suggests that some established indicators of deprivation, for example, associated with adequate diet, clothing, and family life, may be of declining salience in shaping public's perceptions of the 'necessities of life' in the UK today. This does not imply that such indicators are no longer valid measures. However, the extent to which indicators are good *discriminators* of poverty status is an important consideration, and this will of course vary over time as a result of changing lifestyles and patterns of consumption. For example, no access to an indoor toilet clearly remains a valid measure of deprivation, but in the contemporary UK context it is unlikely to substantially improve our capacity to predict poverty status, nor due low prevalence rates is this an item which is likely to be salient in public perceptions of the necessities of life.

Focus group methods can therefore make a useful contribution to the development of discriminating indicators of poverty because participants' suggestions tend to reflect prevailing public perceptions of the items and activities which are important in the UK today in determining status and as signifiers of social distinctions between 'poor' and 'non-poor' households. Whilst participants' initial definitions of poverty were often restrictive, their deliberations on the necessities of the life in our society today reflected much broader conceptualisations of poverty as relative deprivation. As a result, participants' own suggestions rarely included items which are widely taken for granted by most households in the UK today (e.g. a refrigerator, electricity supply, clean running water, etc), even though deprivation of such items would clearly constitute extreme disadvantage relative to prevailing living standards and lifestyles - and was viewed as such by participants. In identifying an optimal poverty threshold it is therefore important

to consider items which are located close to the threshold between 'necessities' and 'desirable' in the minds of participants. Those items identified as 'necessities' on the basis of a majority verdict, and those classified by participants as 'desirable but non-essential' are likely to prove useful discriminators of poverty status because they are close to the threshold between discretionary and essential expenditure in the view of members of the public (see *Table 4, above*). It is recommended that particular emphasis is given to 'threshold' indicators of this type in subsequent survey work on public perceptions of necessities.

Participants' own suggestions concerning the 'necessities of life' often indicated a strong consensus in favor of consumer electronics and mobile communication technologies which undoubtedly reflects wider technological and social changes. The increasing availability of these items (mobile phones, high speed internet access, flat screen multi-channel TV, etc) opens up a new arena within which social distinctions are reproduced and 'the poor' constituted as different from, and separate to, 'mainstream' society. Overall, participants made many new suggestions in terms of specific items for potential further consideration and those agreed by group participants often focused in various ways on: security (e.g. long term financial security, insurance against risks, hazard prevention); housing quality (e.g. insulation/energy efficiency, ventilation, daylight, communal space, good physical repair), and; child well-being (e.g. developmental opportunities, school-related activities, education, physical safety). Any wider inferences we might wish to draw concerning the underlying significance of such suggestions are of course highly speculative, but it may be that these suggestions reflect increased awareness of global financial insecurity and its potential impacts for UK households, greater awareness of environmental concerns (especially relating to energy efficiency in the context of rising energy prices), and heightened concern for child well-being and development in the context of deepening social inequalities and declining social mobility in the UK and elsewhere. It is recommended that special consideration is given to possible inclusion of items in these topic areas.

Social exclusion

Participants' familiarity with the concept of social exclusion was more mixed to the extent that for many participants the concept remained an abstract idea rather than being experienced as a 'lived reality' in the same way as poverty. Whilst most participants were familiar with the term's usage for example in public debates on disadvantage and the 'underclass', views differed quite widely on how social exclusion is best understood and measured. Definitions offered ranged from material deprivation, to social isolation, lack of social participation, lack of autonomy, insecurity and diminished well-being. Notions of belonging and being 'left out' or 'shut out' were important themes in participants' accounts. These were accompanied by narratives focusing on recognition of injustices arising from class-based inequalities and discrimination based upon age, gender, ethnicity, and disability as key drivers of exclusion. It is also important to recognise that participants' own understandings of social exclusion were multidimensional according weight to social networks and

personal wellbeing alongside economic participation. As such, they did not accord with dominant constructions of 'the socially excluded' in terms of worklessness and benefit dependency within contemporary policy debates. At the same time, perspectives on social exclusion were often explicitly intergenerational. In reflecting on their own experiences of exclusion from opportunities, choices, and life chances, participants emphasised how this contrasted with their elevated expectations for their own children and grandchildren - and for the kind of society needed to promote genuine inclusion in future.

At the same time, participants' understandings of social exclusion were inextricably intertwined with wider perceptions of what constitutes 'the good life' in our society today, both with regard to material living standards, the opportunities and choices which a good standard of living affords, and their impacts for social and psychological well-being and personal happiness. To this extent, defining what it means to be *included* in society was a task with which participants were often more comfortable than defining social exclusion. This suggests that a degree of public consensus may exist in relation to defining what it means to be able to fully participate in society which is perhaps less evident in understanding social exclusion, perhaps as a consequence of the diverse nature of the processes associated with exclusion.

However, whilst there was a clear recognition of the 'overlaps' between poverty and social exclusion, for participants identifying what it means to be able to fully participate in society extends far beyond a consideration of household budgets to encompass also the provision of public goods and the wider dimensions of social inequality. In particular, a fully functioning and inclusive community appeared to be used by many of the participants as a proxy for a healthy and inclusive society. The following factors were suggested and agreed by participants as desirable in avoiding social exclusion: home ownership, access to information and good quality local services, social contact and support, personal confidence and inter-personal skills, good educational provision, good career opportunities, rewarding or socially valued work, full citizenship, an ability to influence local decisions, good physical and mental health, good environmental quality, and freedom from violence, harassment and discrimination.

4.2 Conceptual and measurement issues

Despite the widespread adoption of consensual approaches to poverty measurement in the UK and elsewhere in recent decades, long-standing critiques of this approach are of continuing relevance in poverty measurement. Lister (2003) for example argues that 'studies that are genuinely consensual, in the sense of reaching a consensus through deliberation are rare'. The construction of 'consensus' using survey methods has also been challenged as creating 'consensus by coincidence' (Walker, 1987) or 'some kind of social consensus' (Halsey, 1985). Veit-Wilson (1987) for example argues that 'purists might claim that their approach is majoritarian and not consensual, since a consensus implies there are no objectors'. Certainly, it is important to acknowledge that general agreement about the designation of specific items and activities as 'necessities' need

not imply consensus about the rationale for such decisions and this should be borne in mind in interpreting the results of future surveys.

Nevertheless, despite the diversity of views expressed across this sample as a whole, our research uncovers little evidence of consistent variations in perceptions of the 'necessities of life' across social groups for example on the basis of household type, ethnicity, or income status. Groups were recruited with the aim of maximising within-group homogeneity with regard to key factors relevant to views on this topic, including income status, household type and ethnic origin. Nevertheless, it is the consistency of responses across groups that is most striking: with regard to income, household type, and ethnicity, there is general or widespread agreement (consensus) on the necessities of life in the UK today. In line with existing work on adaptive preferences, there is certainly some evidence that people adapt their individual preferences to fit their circumstances, and therefore that people experiencing poverty may minimise their needs. However, these data do not suggest that this necessarily influences general perceptions of what the UK public as a whole should be able to afford to have or do. Nevertheless, the group discussions do reveal frequent debate and sometimes disagreement between individual participants on the items and activities necessary to avoid poverty and social exclusion. Although focus groups generally aim to achieve general or widespread agreement, in some cases a simple majority decision was unavoidable. Whilst consensus need not as Veit-Wilson (1987) argues imply unanimity, the wider point he makes is important in understanding whether the outcomes of deliberations involving 'democratic' procedures constitute consensus.

In considering the consensual measurement framework adopted by Mack and Lansley (1985) in their landmark *Poor Britain* survey, Walker (1987) argues that these authors 'say little about the criteria people employ in judging whether something is a necessity', and goes on to argue persuasively that this raises fundamental questions about how people interpret the concept of 'necessity' and how people make judgments on 'necessities' for example with regard to the information needed to make informed decisions, the reference groups and contextual information people refer to in reaching a decision, and the consistency of responses derived using deliberative methods in comparison with more structured (and arguably individualised) survey methods. This research seeks to advance understanding of the deliberative processes shaping participants' responses in a qualitative context. In doing so, it also aims to facilitate better understanding and interpretation of survey data on the 'necessities of life'.

Our findings suggest some important definitional issues with regard to participants' views on the 'necessities of life'. Firstly, for some participants the term 'necessity' was itself problematic insofar as participants frequently understand this to refer to items and activities which households *cannot* do without, rather than being understood normatively to refer to things that all households *should* not have to do without. Understandings of 'necessity' here referred to a general conception of satisfying basic (absolute) needs rather than being constructed in terms of social desirability. For some participants, 'necessity' therefore implied a much more minimalist conception than that which they associated with poverty where the latter refers to an inability to afford a 'decent' or at

least minimally adequate lifestyle. Some participants felt that it was difficult to distinguish between items and activities that all households 'should' be able to have, and those which low income households 'could' in fact afford. It is therefore recommended that consideration is given to minimising reference to 'necessities' since respondents' understandings of this term vary significantly and do not always accord with the PSE interpretation.

Secondly, participants' ability to make decisions with confidence on these items depends partly upon the contextual information provided. In this study, participants' deliberations focused upon a hypothetical vignette describing a 'typical' family with children. Group decisions partly reflected participants' interpretations of this family's circumstances in terms of implicit moral judgments concerning eligibility, but also in the more specific sense that for many participants the importance (need) for an item depends upon individual and household circumstances, as well as the other resources they are able to draw upon (i.e. their substitutability). Normative judgments about what people should be able to afford therefore also involves consideration of what items and activities constitute basic needs for different groups in order to distinguish between items viewed as simply 'desirable' and those deemed 'necessary'. As such, it is difficult for participants to make reliable judgments on specific items in the absence of detailed contextual information which can be used to infer specific households needs, and in the absence of information on the wider basket of goods, activities, and services to which the household and its members have access.

Thirdly, participants' deliberations inevitably raised questions about the extent to which the availability of public goods and services is important in shaping participants' decisions on necessary items and activities. This is reflected in the importance attached to local services and amenities by participants in shaping decisions about what households should be able to afford (i.e. the extent to which items may be substitutable). For example, for many participants the importance of having access to a car depends on the availability of suitable public transport. More generally, participants' suggestions in relation to social exclusion identify a much wider array of *societal* processes (e.g. associated with restricted opportunities and choices) in preventing individuals' full participation in society and in undermining personal well-being. It should be noted therefore that social exclusion as discussed by participants in this study was not understood solely in terms of the circumstances of isolated individuals but also as a characteristic of the 'social quality' of societies.

In addition to the above conceptual issues, our discussions with participants revealed a number of measurement issues associated with participants' decision-making process primarily relating to item cognition and response. It should be noted that we are only able to comment here upon *overt* problems associated with item wording on the basis of queries and comments volunteered by participants. We do not exclude the possibility that further *covert* problems may exist for some items, and we recommend that these and similar deprivation items are subject to full cognitive testing in future work in this area. We present elsewhere a review of evidence based upon cognitive testing of selected items for potential inclusion in the *Living Standards in Britain* survey (Fahmy et

el., 2011).

Firstly, as discussed above, many participants felt that determining which specific items and activities should be considered 'necessities of life' depends upon knowledge of a range of other contextual factors concerning the household's circumstances, including wider living standards and household composition. For this reason, participants were asked to consider the situation of an exemplar household comprising a couple with dependent children in making their deliberations. Nevertheless, in rendering the decision-making process more concrete this inevitably is also a significant factor in interpreting participants' responses. It is important to emphasise that these findings relate to the circumstances of a 'typical' family with children, and the extent to which they can be generalised to all people living in the UK is uncertain. Indeed as noted above participants often had difficulty in making decisions without such contextual information. The extent to which survey respondents can therefore make informed decisions about the 'necessities of life' in the absence of contextual information remains uncertain, and these issues clearly therefore have important implications for the ways in which the survey questions on this topic are understood by participants and interpreted by researchers.

Item cognition issues were identified with a variety of items and further details on specific problems are outlined in Appendix 1. Problems were identified with some items where wide variations exist in the quality of items available and with the associated costs. In the absence of sufficient information which might allow participants to make informed judgments about the relevant costs involved it can be difficult for participants to deliberate on the importance of different items. Some instances where this was an especial issue includes 'iPod or MP3 player', 'holidays', and 'outings' where cost implications are unclear and highly variable. It is recommended that consideration is given to providing an estimate of cost for some items where these are difficult for participants to estimate. In order to aid participants' decision making consideration could also be given to more provision of suitable examples - as well as ensuring that these are generally comparable. Similarly, the use of adjectives such as 'adequate', 'appropriate' and 'decent' caused difficulties for participants. This was highlighted by participants' contrasting opinions on the elements that constituted the item in question. It is recommended where possible to avoid the use of such adjectives.

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APPENDIX 1: Data and methods

Table A1.1: Selected respondent characteristics

| Age group | N | Col% |
|-----------|-----|------|
| lt 30 | 20 | 18 |
| 30-44 | 36 | 32 |
| 44-59 | 23 | 20 |
| 60+ | 22 | 19 |
| TOTAL | 101 | 89 |

| Sex | N | Col% |
|--------|-----|------|
| female | 61 | 54 |
| male | 53 | 46 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 100 |

| Household type | N | Col% |
|--------------------------|-----|------|
| couple with dep children | 40 | 35 |
| couple no dep children | 13 | 11 |
| pensioner hhld | 18 | 16 |
| single parent | 23 | 20 |
| other | 13 | 11 |
| single non-pensioner | 7 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 100 |

| Hhld income per month | N | Col% |
|-----------------------|-----|------|
| Less than £750 | 17 | 15 |
| £750-1,500 | 45 | 40 |
| £1,500-2,500 | 25 | 22 |
| more than £2,500 | 27 | 24 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 100 |

| Housing tenure | N | % |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|
| owner occupier | 57 | 50 |
| social rental (LA/HA) | 18 | 16 |
| private rental | 36 | 32 |
| other | 3 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 100 |

| Dwelling type | N | Col% |
|---------------------|-----|------|
| detached house | 23 | 20 |
| semi-detached house | 37 | 33 |
| terraced house | 33 | 29 |
| flat | 18 | 16 |
| other | 3 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 114 | 97 |

Table A1.2: Group composition by selected respondent characteristics (column percentages)

| GROUP: | Bristol | | | Cardiff | | | Glasgow | | London | | | Belfast | | | All |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | - |
| INCOME | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Less than £750 | .. | .. | 11 | 38 | .. | 11 | .. | 67 | 11 | 38 | .. | 11 | 22 | 10 | 15 |
| £750 to £1,500 | 25 | 33 | 56 | 63 | 22 | 11 | 33 | 17 | 33 | 63 | 13 | 56 | 67 | 50 | 40 |
| £1,500 to £2,500 | 38 | 22 | 22 | .. | 33 | 44 | .. | 17 | 22 | .. | 25 | 33 | 11 | 20 | 22 |
| More than £2,500 | 38 | 44 | 11 | .. | 44 | 33 | 67 | .. | 33 | .. | 63 | .. | .. | 20 | 24 |
| TENURE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Owner occupier | 63 | 67 | 89 | 75 | 89 | 33 | 33 | 17 | 22 | 25 | 50 | 11 | 33 | 70 | 50 |
| Social renter | 0 | 22 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 22 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 63 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 10 | 16 |
| Private renter | 25 | 0 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 44 | 0 | 50 | 44 | 13 | 50 | 78 | 67 | 20 | 32 |
| Other | 13 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| DWELLING TYPE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Detached | 50 | 33 | 78 | 13 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 0 | 20 |
| Semi-detached | 13 | 22 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 67 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 0 | 50 | 44 | 44 | 60 | 33 |
| Terraced | 13 | 44 | 11 | 25 | 33 | 33 | 0 | 33 | 11 | 38 | 13 | 56 | 33 | 40 | 29 |
| Flat | 13 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 11 | 0 | 67 | 33 | 56 | 38 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| Other | 13 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| AGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Less than 30 | 13 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 60 | 67 | 50 | 11 | 33 | 0 | 33 | 13 | 0 | 20 |
| 30-44 | 25 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 56 | 0 | 33 | 50 | 44 | 17 | 71 | 67 | 38 | 63 | 36 |
| 45-59 | 50 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 44 | 17 | 29 | 0 | 50 | 38 | 23 |
| 60+ | 13 | 33 | 100 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 |
| SEX | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 50 | 22 | 67 | 63 | 56 | 89 | 0 | 67 | 44 | 38 | 38 | 44 | 78 | 60 | 54 |
| Male | 50 | 78 | 33 | 38 | 44 | 11 | 100 | 33 | 56 | 63 | 63 | 56 | 22 | 40 | 47 |
| N | 8 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 114 |

Box A1.1: Definitions of Poverty

Looking now at the definitions of poverty shown on Show Card A, we'd like you to think about which definition of poverty comes closest to your views. Is there one definition you prefer?

Which of these definitions do you think is most relevant to the situation of people living in our society today?

Box A1.1: Poverty Definitions

Households living in the UK today are poor if:

Subsistence

"They do not have sufficient resources to meet their physical needs for food, shelter, warmth, light and sanitation for all members of the household"

Basic Needs

"They do not have sufficient resources to meet their physical needs and lack access to education, information, and health and social care for all members of the household"

Relative Poverty

"They do not have sufficient resources to fully participate in activities and living patterns which are widely available in the UK today"

Appendix A1: Focus Group Topic Guide (Phase 1)

OPENING COMMENTS

My name is XXX and I am a researcher at the University of Bristol. I will be leading today's discussion. Before we begin I'd like to start by saying a little more about the research.

There's a lot of talk about poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and wealth in the media and politics. Journalists and politicians have a lot to say about it, but we're interested in finding out the views of the public. Today we will be talking about what YOU think are the "necessities of life" for people living in our society today – things that you think everyone should be able to have or do if they want to, and should not have to do without. We're especially interested in your opinions about what exactly we mean by poverty and social exclusion, and the things you think people really need to be able to have, or to do, to avoid them. We often do not hear the views of the public on these issues so the aim of this project is to give you a chance to have your say!

When we're discussing the topics today you may want to talk about your own standard of living and personal experiences, but you do not have to tell us anything that you do not want to. We'll be putting together a report based on what is said in the group discussions and to make this possible we'd like to record what is said. We will of course treat this discussion as confidential, and will not use your real names anywhere in the transcripts or report. It's also important that *everyone* taking part also agrees to treat what is said today by others in confidence. Is this all OK and clear?

We want to encourage as much open discussion as possible, so if there is something you want to say please don't hold back. If there are things which we haven't thought of, or which you'd like to talk about, that's OK too. So that we can accurately record what you have said we would be grateful if you could please talk one at a time and of course be respectful of other people's opinions. Is this all OK and clear?

INTRODUCTION

Q1: I'd like to start by asking you all to introduce yourselves and say a little about yourself – things such as the area where you live, who you live with, and how you spend your time.

PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY

Poverty means different things to different people. We'd like to get your views and ideas about what poverty means to you, and what you think it is like to be poor in our society today.

Q2: How would you define "poverty" in your own words? What does it mean to you?

Households living in the UK today are poor if:

Definition 1. Subsistence

“They do not have sufficient resources to meet their physical needs for food, shelter, warmth, light and sanitation for all members of the household”

Definition 2. Basic Needs

“They do not have sufficient resources to meet their physical needs *and* lack adequate access to education, information, and health and social care for all members of the household”

Definition 3. Relative Poverty

“They do not have sufficient resources to fully participate in activities and living patterns which are widely available in the UK today”

Q3: Looking now at the definitions of poverty shown on Show Card A, we’d like you to think about which definition of poverty comes closest to your views. Is there one definition you prefer?

Q4: Which of these definitions do you think is most relevant to the situation of people living in our society today?

Q5: Are there things which you think being poor stops people doing?

Q6: Do you think (GROUP TYPE) are more or less likely to experience poverty than other people, or does this make no difference?

THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE

Thank you for completing the questionnaire that we sent you. We’ve asked you to complete these because it will be useful now in talking about what we think are the necessities of life in the UK today. By ‘necessities’, we mean things that everyone should be able to afford if they want them, and should not have to do without.

We do not want to discuss what you personally need, but rather the things you think everybody should be able to have or do if they want to. Remember that we used the following example of an imaginary household:

SCENARIO 1: Tom (aged 38) and Jenny (aged 35) are a married couple with two children, Jack (aged 12) and Lizzie (aged 8). They live in the suburbs of a large city. Tom works at a local hospital and is the sole wage earner within the household. Both parents are in good health.

FAO: Couples with children

We’d like you to think of the situation of this household when doing this exercise. We’d like first to look at a list of items which has been used in earlier studies on this topic, and then look at your suggestions based on Exercise 1 (*‘Necessities of Life’*).

Q7: Looking at Show Card B, are there any items for adults that are not ‘necessities of life’? What about the items for children?

We asked you to think in advance about the kind of things that you think are necessities of life and to write these down (*Doc B*). We would now like to add to this list by going through your suggestions to see if we can reach agreement between us on what we think are the necessities of life in our society today.

Begin with free discussion. Note participant suggestions on blank cards and add to agreed listed items (Show Card B). Note degree of consensus.

Q8: Thinking about this household's accommodation, what kind of home would they need to be able to have to avoid poverty?

Q9: Thinking now about this household's basic lifestyle, things like their diet, footwear and clothing, what kind of things do you think are necessities of life for them in our society today?

Q10: Now let's talk about this household's living conditions and what is in their home. What kind of things would they need to have around the home to avoid poverty, for example, electrical goods, furnishings, and household connections and services?

Q11: There are lots of different social activities that are normal for people of all ages in our society today. What kinds of social activities should this household be able to do if they want to in our society today?

Now let's see if we can agree on a list of things which this household need to be able to have if they are to avoid poverty.

Compile and group participants' suggestions into main categories.

Q12: Could you cut out anything from this list? If not, why not? If so, what?

Q13: Imagine now you personally experienced an unexpected big cut in your household's income which meant you had to cut back on spending, for example as a result of losing a job. Which if any of these things do you think you would try to economise on first?

Q14: And which of these things would be your most important priorities in making sure that you could still afford them?

STANDARD OF LIVING

We've looked at the everyday items and activities that we think are necessities of life. However, we're also interested in the things which we might think of as luxuries. By a 'luxury' we mean something that is quite costly and exclusive which may be desirable

for people to have but which many or most people go without in our society today.

Begin with free discussion. Note participant suggestions on flipchart. Probe how important various factors are in reaching a collective decision.

Q15: What do you think it means to be wealthy in our society today?

Q16: In terms of your overall standard of living, what things do you think the wealthy have access to which you do not but might want to?

We'd now like to talk with you more generally about 'living standards' in our society today.

Q17: Overall, how would you rate your standard of living?

Minimum Standard of Living

"A minimum standard of living in Britain today includes, but is more than just, food clothes and shelter. It is about having what you need in order to have the opportunities and choices necessary to participate in society."

Q18: Some recent research in 2008 came up with this definition of a minimum standard of living. The definition here mentions opportunities and choices. Do you think that these are important too? In what ways?

Q19: What does a minimum adequate standard of living mean to you? And what does a good standard of living mean to you?

Q20: Imagine now that you experienced a long-term rise in your regular income, for example by getting a job, or a big rise in your pay or pension. What kind of things would you use this money for?

Q21: How important do you think standard of living is for people's overall sense of well-being and quality of life?

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

In addition to poverty, we're also interested in looking at other types of disadvantage which make it difficult for people to fully participate in society. Some people call this 'social exclusion'.

Q22: What does it mean to you to be able to fully participate in society?

Q23: What, if anything, does the phrase 'social exclusion' mean to you?

Q24: Do you think that social exclusion is different from poverty? Could someone be poor without being socially excluded? Could they be socially excluded without being poor?

VIGNETTE EXERCISE

We'd now like you to look at some imaginary scenarios which describe the situation of people experiencing different forms of social exclusion in their daily lives (*Doc E*).

Q25: Looking at the first example (*Case Study X*), do you think that this person is experiencing social exclusion in any ways?

Q26: Thinking now about the second example (*Case Study Y*), do you think that this person is experiencing social exclusion in any ways?

EXERCISE 2: BRAINSTORMING

Before coming to today's discussion, we asked you all to think about the kind of things that might mean that someone is experiencing social exclusion, and to write these down.

We'd now like to go through your suggestions and see if we can reach agreement between us on the kinds of disadvantages which make it difficult for people to fully participate in society and to enjoy the lifestyles, opportunities, and choices which are widely available in our society today.

Begin with free discussion. Note participant suggestions on flipchart. Probe how important various factors are in reaching a collective decision.

Q27: Let's think first about people's general standard of living. Apart from poverty, what kinds of disadvantages might make it difficult for people to fully participate in society?

Q28: What about people's personal relationships and the emotional and practical support available to them – what kind of things might mean someone is likely to experience social exclusion?

Q29: Turning now to people's working lives, what kind of things might mean someone is likely to experience social exclusion?

Q30: Let's look now at people's social lives and community involvement. What kind of things might make it difficult for people to fully participate in society?

Q31: Finally, thinking about people's wellbeing and quality of life, what kind of

things might mean someone is vulnerable to socially exclusion?

Now let's see if we can agree on a list of things which make it difficult for people to fully participate in society and to enjoy the lifestyle, choices and opportunities available to most people in the UK today.

Compile and group participants' suggestions into main categories.

Q32: Could you cut out anything from this list? If not, why not? If so, what?

Q33: Are there any things which you think are especially important for (GROUP TYPE)?

CLOSING THE GROUP

OK, before we finish our discussion we would like to give you a chance to raise any issues that you think we have not covered on this topic but which are important to you.

Q34: Are there any other topics that you would like to raise which we have not already covered?

Thank you very much for agreeing taking part in this research. The information you have provided is extremely useful to us and will help us greatly in putting together a report on the public's views on the necessities of life in the UK today. In the meantime do please contact us if there's anything you forgot to mention today but which you think is important.

The information you've provided will be treated in confidence, and we won't use your real names in any work connected with this project. We'd also like to remind you all to keep what was said by everyone taking part in today's discussion in confidence.

Finally, you should all have received an expenses form to cover the costs of taking part in today's discussion, as well as one-off gift payment in recognition of your contribution to the project. If you have any questions about this do please let us know after the session.

THANK PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX 2: Comments and recommendations on specific indicators

Table A2.1: Accommodation

| ITEM (See note) | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|--|--|
| <u>A damp free home</u> | This item was universally agreed to be a necessity and basic standard that all accommodation should meet. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Heating to warm living areas of the home</u> | This item was universally viewed as a necessity. With rising energy prices, energy efficiency and insulation were important considerations in participants thinking since poorly insulated homes are costly to heat. Participants suggested a number of related items, incl 'loft insulation', 'double glazing', 'adequate insulation', etc. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. Alternative items focusing on energy efficiency could be considered, such as 'a draft free home' or 'an adequately insulated and ventilated home'. It is recommended that a new item be included 'an adequately insulated and ventilated home' |
| Draught free windows | The item was widely viewed as a necessary. Participants drew on their experience of living in poorly glazed homes and the associated additional heating costs. | |
| Adequate ventilation and insulation | The item was viewed as essential in maintaining thermal comfort. Participants drew on their experience of living in poorly insulated homes and the associated costs (incl health costs) | |
| Adequate natural light | Some participants felt that adequate natural light as a feature of basic accommodation was a necessity. Participants suggested the importance of this item for well being and the enjoyment of their living environment. | It is recommended that new item be included 'good levels of natural light'. |

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| <u>Money to keep home in decent state of decoration</u> | This item provoked considerable discussion with regard to how the item should be understood esp what 'decent' decoration entails (i.e. cognition problems). Some participants felt this could be interpreted as being able to follow the latest consumerist trends in household furnishings which did not qualify as a necessity. Others suggested 'a decent state of <i>repair</i> ' (rather than decoration). This rephrasing seemed to address participants' concerns incl the need to ensure the home is hazard free. | It is recommended that this item be included subject to rewording 'Money to keep home in a decent state of repair and decoration'. |
| Smoke/carbon monoxide alarm | Participants universally viewed both a smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm as being a necessity. Again, this is underpinned by a broader concern with maintaining a safe living environment. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'a smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm'. |
| Separate bedrooms for all adults and for parents/children | All participants felt that separate bedrooms for adults was a necessity where needed, and that parents should not have to share a bedroom with their children. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'Separate bedrooms for adults' |
| <u>Separate bedrooms for boys and girls aged over 10</u> | This item was widely viewed as a necessity for children after the age of around 10 years old for reasons of privacy and space. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Bath or shower facilities | Some participants suggested bath and/or shower facilities within the home as a necessity and this was universally agreed. For many this was a 'taken for granted' item in contemporary society. | This item was widely viewed as a necessity and could be included. However, it may not be a sensitive measure and was not salient in participant accounts. |
| Enough space for all household members | Participants referred to the need for individuals to have a space that they could enjoy away from other members of the household. This was viewed as important in terms | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'Enough space or privacy to read, write or listen to music'. This wording was tested in Phase 2. It should be noted |

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| | of privacy, but also for personal development, such as a space to read, listen to music or to do homework. | that these groups considered this to be a desirable item, therefore this may be a useful threshold item. |
| A communal area for all household members | Participants emphasised the importance of a shared social space in maintaining normal social and family relationships. Participants also referred to lifestyle changes assoc with more informal living patterns which make this item essential. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'A living room for all household members to share'. |
| Sole use of household facilities | There was widespread agreement that households should not have to share household facilities. Participants felt that sole use of facilities, such as a kitchen and bathroom, are necessary to ensure privacy and well being. Some participants noted that for some groups such as university students, communal living may be seen as a desirable choice. | It is recommended that this item be re-worded: 'Sole use of household facilities including kitchen and bathroom'. |
| <u>Insurance of home contents</u> (PSE99: '~contents of dwelling') | This item was widely agreed by participants as a means of safeguarding against unpredictable risks. Where proposed, buildings insurance was also seen as important for home-owning households. Some participants noted the increased risk of flooding as a further hazard that households should be able to insure against. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised wording: 'insurance of home contents'. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

Table A2.2: Diet, clothing and footwear

| ITEM | COMMENT | RECOMMENDATION |
|--|---|--|
| <u>Two meals a day for adults</u> | Diet related items provoked much discussion about how a 'meal' is understood (main meal, snack, etc) (i.e. poss cognition issue), and how this related to changing lifestyles (less regular meals, snacking, eating out etc). Participants perceptions of an acceptable minimum also varied with some participants suggesting 'three meals a day', and others proposing an adequate and/or balanced diet as an alternative. | These items make assumptions about the desirability of specific dietary regimes which were not always shared by participants. Participants' definitions of a 'meal' also varied widely. 'Two main meals could be an alternative. Another alternative could be a new item 'an adequate balanced diet'. However, any changes may introduce other <i>more</i> substantial problems of interpretation and could conflict with other indicators. It is therefore recommended that these items are included without changes. |
| <u>Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily</u> | Whilst there was widespread consensus on the importance of this item the frequency was questioned with some participants suggesting 'every other day' was adequate. Others thought that an adequate and/or balanced diet would be a better. | |
| <u>Fresh fruit and veg. on a daily basis</u> | There was universal agreement amongst participants that this item is a necessity. Some participants proposed amending the frequency to 'at least daily'. | |
| An adequate balanced diet (including meat, fish, vegetables and carbs) | Some participants felt that diet items were too specific and 'an adequate and/or balanced diet' (or similar) would be preferable. Some participants suggested further explanation in brackets - 'including meat, fish, vegetables and carbohydrates'. | It is recommended that this new item is not considered for inclusion (see above). |
| Non prescription medicines | Some explanation on the definition of this item was given by interviewers referring to over-the-counter medications (analgesics etc). Participants then easily reached a consensus that this item is a necessity. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'non-prescription medicines such as flu remedies, ointments, drops or painkillers'. |
| <u>Warm waterproof coat</u> | There was universal agreement amongst participants that this item is a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Two pairs of all weather shoes</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity. However, some explanation was required suggesting possible cognition | It is recommended that this item is included subject to changes in item wording: 'shoes for both winter and |

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| | problems with regard to what was meant by 'all weather'. | summer use'. |
| Adequate clothing and footwear for all seasons | Some participants suggested a change to 'adequate footwear'. Others suggested clothing and footwear items be combined in one item 'adequate clothing and footwear for all seasons'. However, interpretations of what constitute 'adequate' varied so widely that generic questions of this type are likely to be of limited use. | It is recommended that this new item is not considered for inclusion. |
| <u>New, not second hand, clothes</u> | Some participants noted changes in the public acceptability of second-hand clothes esp. charity shops bargains targeted by middle class customers. Others noted that new clothing may now be cheaper than second-hand clothing. Some participants suggested the item should be amendments including "some new not second-hand clothes". | It is recommended that this item is included subject to changes in item wording: 'some new not second-hand clothes'. |
| <u>An outfit for special occasions</u> | Whilst there was general agreement this item might be a useful threshold indicator as viewed were quite mixed. Participants emphasised the importance of social expectations and roles as well as the stigma of being single out or excluded. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to changes in item wording: 'an outfit for special occasions such as a family wedding or job interview'. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be a desirable item, so it may be a useful threshold item. |
| Three complete outfits for every household member | This item was widely suggested but consensus was difficult to establish partly for definitional reasons relating to the term 'outfit' (which was interpreted as meaning matching clothing by some participants). | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'three complete sets of clothing for every household member'. |
| Clothes in good/clean condition | Participants thought that going into detail on separate clothing items was unproductive and a general descriptor of clothing quality would be preferable. Participants suggestions included 'clothes in good condition', 'adequate clothing and footwear for all seasons', 'clean clothing' and 'appropriate clothing for season in good condition'. | It is recommended that further consideration be given to this new item subject to revised wording: 'appropriate clothing for all seasons in good condition'. |
| Adequate nightwear | Where discussed there was general agreement on this item. Discussions focused on cognition | It is recommended that this new item be included subject to changes in item wording: |

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| | problems in interpreting 'adequate' and also whether this referred only to clothing specifically designed for this purpose. This item might be important if a hospital stay is needed, or for children attending sleepovers. | 'pyjamas or night dress'. |
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NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

Table A2.3: Household items

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
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| <u>Mobile phone</u> | There was widespread agreement that access to a phone at home was a necessity. For many, this meant either a mobile or landline. However, some groups and participants also felt that in addition to a landline, all adults should be able to have a mobile phone in the UK today to maintain social relationships, meet social obligations (incl work), and to keep themselves and others safe. Others noted that a mobile phone is in many cases also cheaper than a landline. | It is recommended that two new items be considered: 'access to a phone (incl mobile) at home' and 'a mobile phone'. Participant decisions about whether a landline and mobile phone are necessities were sometimes inter-related. This suggests a need for some modification of existing items. |
| <u>Access to internet at home</u> | Internet access was widely identified as a necessity in the UK today in a variety of contexts (e.g. seeking work, education, maintaining social networks, accessing information and services). Internet access for families with children was identified as especially important, and agreement on this item for adult-only households was less pronounced. Some participants noted that internet access via public libraries, etc might be an alternative but accessibility issues (and assoc indirect costs) were decisive here. Some participants felt that 'high-speed internet access' was important. However, the consensus was that basic access today usually in practice meant broadband access which was considered adequate. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. This item suggesting it may be a 'good' (sensitive) threshold indicator. |
| <u>Microwave</u> | A microwave was suggested by some participants <i>in addition</i> to use of a standard oven/hob. The substitutability of items (cooker/microwave) is an issue here (i.e. possible decision-making problem). Additional convenience (esp for families with children), energy saving, and low cost were decisive factors in participants decisions. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be a 'desirable' item, so it may be a useful threshold item. |

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| <u>Fridge/freezer</u> | A fridge/freezer was suggested and quickly agreed by participants on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| An iron | Where discussed, an iron was suggested and quickly agreed by participants on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. | It is recommended that this item is not considered for inclusion. Whilst universally agreed to be a necessity in one group, it was not salient in most groups' discussions suggesting that it is unlikely to be a good discriminating indicator. |
| Kettle | Where discussed, kettle was suggested and quickly agreed by participants on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. | It is recommended that this item is excluded. Whilst universally agreed to be a necessity in one group, it was not salient in most groups' discussions suggesting that it is unlikely to be a discriminating indicator. |
| Hairdryer | This item was suggested by some participants and provoked some discussion focused on whether this item is essential for <i>all</i> people/households (gender being decisive here!). However, there was a consensus that households (incl the exemplar) should be able to have this item if they need it. | This item is recommended for further consideration by the research team. This item could be useful in identifying gender differences in the experience of poverty. |
| <u>Money to replace broken electrical goods</u> | This item was discussed some participants resulting in a clear consensus across groups. Some participants emphasised the importance of safety consideration (esp for hhlDs with young children). Others suggested that given the relative costs of repair/replacement, households should be able to replace broken/unsafe items (rather than repair) | It is recommended that item is included subject to revised item wording: 'Money to replace broken or unsafe electrical goods'. |
| Sofa and/or easy chairs for household members | Participants emphasised the importance of a shared living space for household social interaction. Having somewhere quiet and comfortable to rest and relax was also seen as important for personal well-being | It is recommended this new item be included 'Sofa and/or easy chairs for household members'. |
| Dining table and | Many participants emphasised the | It is recommended that a |

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| chairs for all household members | importance of a communal living space for household social interaction. Some participants observed that changing lifestyles mean that this is less relevant today for them and others. Others noted that although they may be able to afford it, not all households have sufficient space - the complementarity of items is an issue. | new item is included based upon revised wording: 'A table and chairs for all household members'. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be a 'desirable' so this may be a useful threshold item. |
| <u>Money to replace worn out furniture</u> | This and related items were very widely proposed and agreed as a necessities by many participants (i.e. no decision-making problems). However, considerable discussion focused on item wording (cognition problems). Some suggested that replacement furniture should not be interpreted to mean <i>new</i> furniture but simply 'functional' or 'in a good state of repair'. Others felt that it was necessary to repair 'broken' furniture rather than simply 'worn out' furniture. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording: 'money to replace broken or worn out furniture'. |
| <u>Bed, bedding, mattress for all household members</u> | This item was suggested and quickly agreed by participants in a number of groups on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Curtains/blinds | This item was suggested and quickly agreed by participants in a number of groups on the basis of universal agreement. No cognition or decision making issues were evident. Participants emphasised the importance of privacy as well as energy-efficiency savings | It is recommended that this new item be included 'Curtains and/or blinds'. |
| Access to an outdoor space within accommodation | This and related items were widely suggested and discussed. Participants emphasised the importance of open space within the accommodation for children to play (see children's items), and access to fresh air outside for all household members. Some participants noted that <i>availability</i> of suitable accommodation can be an issue [e.g. in London] - as a minimum households should have access to a outside balcony, terrace or small | It is recommended that this item be given further consideration in relation to standard of living items & soc exclusion (garden, area for children to play, parks/rec areas). |

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| | yard | |
| Books within the home | This item was widely agreed by participants. Participants emphasised the item's cultural, social and educational importance. Some participants emphasised that <i>second-hand</i> books were very cheap and should be within reach of all. How many books households should be able to afford depended on need. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording: 'books (incl second-hand) within the home'. |
| <u>Home computer</u> | This item was suggested and discussed by participants less frequently than internet access. Where discussed participants emphasised the importance of a home PC/laptop for children's education, and its role in accessing the internet for all household members. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be a desirable item, therefore this may be a useful threshold item. |
| <u>TV</u> | This item was widely agreed by participants. Participants emphasised cultural, social and educational importance. Some participants suggested a <i>digital TV</i> provoking a long (and somewhat technical) discussion and suggesting a possible cognition problem. However, 'digital TV' is likely to generate other more substantial problems of cognition. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Radio or music player</u> | Participants emphasised social/cultural significance and the need for (cheap) recreation and entertainment. Discussion focused on <i>quality</i> issues with alternative suggestions including a 'hi-fi', 'CD player', 'music system', etc. (i.e. possible cognition problems) | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording: 'A music system or hi-fi' NB) This revised wording was tested in Phase 2 and was generally viewed as a desirable item, so it may be a useful threshold item. |
| <i>DVD player</i> | This item was introduced in phase 2, participants did not consider this item to be a necessity, although participants did note that these devices could be purchased at relatively low cost. For some participants a DVD player provided 'cheap' entertainment. | It is recommended that this item is included. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be 'desirable', so it may be a useful threshold item. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

Table A2.4 Social and family life

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|---|---|
| <u>Holiday away from home once a year, not with relatives</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity. Some participants queried whether this item should specify domestic or overseas holidays. Others found the sub-clause 'not with relatives' confusing (i.e. poss cognition issue). | It is recommended that the item is included subject to revised wording 'holiday away from home once a year'. |
| <u>Visits to friends or family</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity in promoting and sustaining social relationships. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>A car</u> | This item was strongly contested within groups. The availability of affordable (and suitable) local transport was a decisive factor here. A car was widely viewed as a necessity in areas lacking good public transport (incl rural areas) (i.e. poss substitutability problem), as well as for all families with children. Adequate access to suitable transport was viewed as vital in accessing jobs and services, and in ensuring personal autonomy. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Local bus & rail fares</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Money for local sporting activities or classes | This item was widely viewed as a necessity in maintain good health and well-being. Many participants distinguished between public and private facilities, the latter often being considered a luxury. Others participants considered 'leisure' in broader terms to incorporate evening classes and/or sporting activities, including as a spectator. Others noted that participation also depends upon <i>availability</i> issues (i.e. poss definitional issue). | It is recommended that consideration be given to a new item 'money to take part in local sports activities or classes'. Separate additional items 'money to attend evening or adult education classes' and 'money to attend sporting events' could be considered. |
| <u>Money to celebrate special occasions</u> | This item was widely agreed as a necessity. Participants generally discussed this issue in relation to the performance of social roles as a parent or family member (present giving for children at Xmas). | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Family or</u> | This item was widely agreed as a | It is recommended that this |

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| <p><u>friends around for a meal</u></p> | <p>necessity in promoting and sustaining social relationships. Some participants queried the frequency for this item (i.e. poss response problem), suggesting 'once a month' was sufficient.</p> | <p>item is included without changes.</p> |
| <p><u>An evening out once a fortnight</u></p> | <p>Participants were equivocal about this item. For some older participants, it was less applicable due to safety concerns after dark. In the main, discussion focused on <i>frequency</i> issues (i.e. poss response problem). Some participants suggested that this should be extended to 'once a month'.</p> | <p>It is recommended that this item is included without changes.</p> |
| <p>Theatre, concert, museum, cinema visits</p> | <p>This item was widely agreed as a necessity in order to take part in 'normal' social activities, as well as for personal development. Participants disagreed on <i>which</i> activities should be included given different costs. Others suggested an estimate of <i>frequency</i> is needed (monthly or quarterly)</p> | <p>It is recommended that this new item is included subject to revised item wording: 'a trip to a theatre, cinema, museum or exhibition once a month'.</p> |

Table A2.5 Financial issues

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|--|---|
| <u>Paying rent/mortgage and household bills without getting into debt</u> | Where discussed there was widespread support for the inclusion of this item. Participants believed the accumulation of debt to significantly compromise individual autonomy and choices. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Small sum of money to spend on self weekly</u> | This item received a mixed response with some participants interpreting this item as being by definition 'non-essential' (i.e. poss definitional issue). However, for most participants this item was seen as essential for the personal autonomy of individual household members. Some participants suggested the frequency of the item could be amended to 'once a month' to reflect the reality of household budgeting. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to changes in item wording: 'Small sum to spend on self monthly' NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be 'desirable' so it may be a useful threshold item. |
| Life insurance for mortgage-holders | Where discussed this item was widely supported. Participants suggested that such insurance policies served to protect households against the decline in income experienced following bereavement. | It is recommended that this item be excluded. This item was not salient in most groups' discussions suggesting that it is unlikely to be a good discriminating indicator. |
| Regular payments into a private or occupational pension plan | Where discussed this item was widely supported. Participants suggested that such pension plans had become increasingly significant as the value of state pensions decline. Therefore, the opportunity to set aside funds for retirement broadens the choices individuals have in later life. | It is recommended that a new item be included: 'regular payments into a private or occupational pension plan'. |
| <u>Regular savings for rainy days</u> | Where discussed this item was widely supported. Participants believed the opportunity to save as an insurance against possible future risks should be afforded to all members of society. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

Table A2.6 Children's items

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
|---|---|---|
| <u>Three meals a day for children</u> | This item was viewed as less problematic than its adult equivalent, most groups easily reaching a consensus. Some participants suggested that "minimum" be added. | See adult items. |
| <u>Meat, fish or veggie equivalent daily for children</u> | Some participants suggested that for children this should be amended to "at least twice daily". | |
| <u>Fresh fruit or vegetables at least daily</u> | This was debated in conjunction with the adult item above with the vast majority of participants easily agreeing it to be a necessity. | |
| Milk daily | Debate focused on the availability of milk in children's diets (free school milk) and its importance. | It is recommended that this item be excluded. This item <i>is</i> clearly viewed as a necessity and could be included on this basis. However, this may not be a sensitive measure and was generally not salient in participant discussions. |
| <u>New, properly fitted shoes for children</u> | Groups easily reached a consensus that this item is a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Some new, not second-hand clothes for children</u> | As with the adult item above this provoked much debate. Participants discussion distinguished between <i>handed down</i> clothing (from siblings etc) and <i>second-hand</i> clothing (i.e. poss cognition issue). The former was viewed as acceptable, though some participants noted that cost comparisons sometimes mean second-hand is not always cheaper (i.e. poss definitional issue). However, for most participants the importance of peer group acceptance meant that children should have at least some new clothes. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| School uniform for children | This item was suggested by participants and where discussed there was a clear consensus. Participant responses | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. A further new item 'suitable sports kit for school |

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| | emphasised social expectations and desirability. | use' should be considered further. |
| <u>A garden for children to play in</u> | Most participants felt that this was probably a desirable item, rather than a necessity given accessibility issues (children living in inner city areas). However, it was widely felt that all children should have access to a safe outside area to play close to home' (below). | It is recommended that this item be included without changes. NB) Phase 2 groups considered this to be 'desirable', so it could be a 'good' (discriminating) indicator. |
| Access to a safe outside area to play close to home | Item proposed by P1 groups (see above). Item confirmed as necessity in P2 groups. | It is recommended that this new item is included. |
| <u>Books for children of their own</u> | A few participants suggested that access to a library is sufficient, though others questioned their accessibility and practicality for young children. A general consensus was reached that all children should have access to at least some books which are their own. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| <u>Toys (e.g. dolls, teddies)</u> | A general consensus was easily reached across groups that this item is a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Toys for personal development and education | Some participants felt that it is important that children should be able to have toys that are educational or stimulate development. However, participants were not always clear on what this meant (i.e. poss cognition issue) and concrete examples would help here. A number of specific suggestions were 'Educational toys' and 'Toys for personal development'. | It is recommended that further consideration is given to this new item subject to suggestions on suitable examples. |
| <u>Leisure equipment for children</u> | This item provoked significant definitional queries (i.e cognition problems) incl what is meant by 'equipment' and the scope of 'leisure' (incl sports, recreation, etc). Some participants suggested inserting the term 'basic'. It was widely agreed that concrete examples should be included (e.g. 'rugby ball', 'skipping rope', 'bike' etc). | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording 'leisure and sports equipment for children such as a bicycle, ballet shoes or a guitar' |
| Sports | See above item. | See above. |

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| equipment for children | | |
| <u>Hobby or leisure activity</u> | Participants suggested and agreed that hobbies or leisure activities were important for children's personal development. Where discussed, participants quickly reached agreement on this item | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Money for children's clubs, societies and related activities | Participants suggested and agreed that money for children social and leisure activities was important for their personal development. Where discussed, participants quickly reached agreement on this item | It is recommended that a new item is included 'money for children's clubs and activities such as guides or football training'. |
| Money for after-school clubs | Some participants suggested and agreed that money for after-school clubs was important for children's personal development. Where proposed participants quickly reached agreement on this item. Nevertheless, it is possible that cognitions problems exist with some participants interpreting this broadly to include out-of-school recreational activities. | It is recommended that this new item is not included. |
| <u>School trips at least once a term</u> | This item provoked considerable debate focusing on the cost of the trip and whether the trip's purposes were educational. Participants also discussed the frequency of trips (i.e. poss response problems) with the term 'at least' suggested. Other participants suggested 'reasonable cost' and 'educational (school trips)'. | It is recommended that this new item is included 'money to pay for school trips at least once a term'. |
| Family outings | This item was widely agreed as a necessity in order to take part in 'normal' social activities today. Participants queried the nature (and cost) of activities involved (i.e. poss cognition problem), as well as their <i>frequency</i> . Some examples may be helpful here. Some participants may interpret this item to apply to <i>all</i> households not only those with children (i.e. poss cognition issue). | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording 'Family outings at least once a month, for example, to the seaside or zoo'. An additional new item [e.g.] 'a special day out once a month' could be considered for adults. |

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| <u><i>Friends round for tea/snack fortnightly</i></u> | This item was universally considered a necessity but as with the previous item, the frequency provoked debate (i.e. poss response problems). 'Fortnightly' was thought outdated by some participants suggesting 'occasionally'. However, 'occasionally' is likely to create additional, more substantial cognition problems. | It is recommended that this item is included without changes. |
| Treats for children on special occasions | This item was suggested by participants though the meaning of 'treats' varied between groups (i.e. poss cognition problems), to include food, sweets, etc as well as trips or cultural events. This item could also be interpreted to include treats on birthdays, Xmas, etc. | It is recommended that this item is not considered for inclusion without further clarification of question meaning. |
| <u><i>A mobile phone for older children</i></u> | This item provoked much debate with opinion remaining divided in some groups. Many participants viewed this item as a necessity for older children for reasons of personal safety and as a social networking tool. Views varied on the age that children should own a mobile phone with most participants in the range 10 to 14. | It is recommended that this item is included subject to revised item wording 'a mobile phone for children aged 11 and over'. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item

Table A2.7 Luxury items

| ITEM | COMMENTS | RECOMMENDATION |
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| <i>Membership of a gym or sports club</i> | Participants easily reached agreement that membership of a gym or sports club is a luxury. There was some discussion of the importance of participation in physical/sporting activities, esp in view of anti-obesity health messages, but it was felt that this could be achieved by participation in other activities (e.g. local leisure classes). | It is recommended that this item is given consideration. This might be a 'good' (i.e. discriminating) indicator of living standards at the upper end of the distribution. |
| <i>An iPod or MP3 Player</i> | Participants noted that purchase costs differ widely between a top of the range iPod and a basic MP3 player, which can be purchased at relatively low cost. When asked to come to a decision, however, the majority of participants defined this item as a luxury. | In view of the problems with cost differentiation it is recommended that consideration is given to a guide valuation 'An iPod or MP3 player costing more than £75'. |
| <i>A school trip abroad once a year</i> | Discussion of this item included debate on educational value, cost ec. The potential for social exclusion if children/young people are unable to participate in such a trip was recognised by participants, however a majority regarded this item as a luxury. | It is recommended that this item be considered in conjunction with the item "A school trip at least once a term" (see Phase 1). It might be a good (discriminating) indicator. |
| <u>A dishwasher</u> | This item was not discussed by Phase 2 groups as the majority of participants in Phase 1 groups had viewed it as a luxury item rather than a necessity. | It is recommended that this item is given consideration. This might be a 'good' (i.e. discriminating) indicator of living standards at the upper end of the distribution. |

NOTE: *italicised items*: item prompted by interviewers; underlined items: existing 99PSE item