



Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

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The Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK Survey 2012: Headline results for Scotland

The Poverty and Social Exclusion report is the result of two surveys undertaken in 2012 that spoke to over 2700 individuals in Scotland (and 14,000 across the UK). It is the largest and most authoritative study of poverty and deprivation ever conducted in the UK. The surveys asked people what they thought the minimum standard of living should be, and what standard of living they actually had. These headline results for Scotland highlights some of gaps between these two.

The first results from this study will be broadcast on ITV at 7.30pm on Thursday, March 28 in a special Tonight programme on 'Breadline Britain'.

Inadequate housing

- Over 1-in-5 people (21%) suffers from a damp, inadequately heated and/or poorly decorated home.
 - 1-in-14 people lives in a damp home (7%).
 - 1-in-12 people (8%) cannot afford to heat the living areas of their home.
 - 1-in-7 people (15%) does not have enough money to keep their home in a decent state of decoration.
- The majority of Scots (over 50%) think that everyone no one should have to suffer any of these things.
- 1-in-6 children (16%) lives in a home which is either damp or not adequately heated.

Going without food

- Almost 1-in-20 people in Scotland (6%) is unable to afford an adequate diet.
- The great majority of Scots (over 75%) think that all adults should be able to afford: two meals a day; fresh fruit and vegetables daily; and meat/fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day. 7% of adults lack at least one of these food items.
- The great majority of Scots (over 75%) think that all children should have: three meals a day; fresh fruit and vegetables daily; and meat/fish or vegetarian equivalent every day. 3% of Scottish families contain children who lack at least one food item.
- In all of the Scottish households where children lack a basic food item, at least one adult reported that they skimped on their own food so that others could have enough.

Insufficient clothing

- 1-in-14 adults (7%) cannot afford basic items of clothing: a warm, waterproof coat; and two pairs of all-weather shoes.
- 1-in-12 working-age adults cannot afford appropriate clothes for a job interview (8%). Among unemployed adults, the figure is more than 2-in-5 (41%).
- The majority of Scots (over 50%) think that everyone should be able to afford all of these things. 1-in-9 adults (11%) lacks at least one.
- The majority of Scots (over 50%) think that all children should have: a warm winter coat; new, properly fitting shoes; some new, not secondhand, clothes; at least 4 pairs of trousers, leggings or equivalent. 1-in-20 children (5%) has to go without one or more of these items.

Financial insecurity

- Overall, almost 1-in-3 adults (32%) suffers from at least one of forms of financial insecurity.
 - 1-in-12 households (9%) cannot afford household insurance.
 - 1-in-4 adults (28%) is unable to save £20 a month for rainy days.
 - 1-in-4 working age adults (23%) cannot afford to make regular payments into an occupational or private pension scheme.
- The majority of Scots (over 50%) think that everyone should be able to afford all of these things.

Household goods

- The majority of Scots (over 50%) think that everyone should be able to afford: a washing machine; a phone; curtains or blinds; a table and chairs; and to replace or repair broken electrical goods.
- Almost 1-in-4 adults (24%) cannot afford one or more of these items.

Social activities

- The majority of Scots (over 50%) believe that everyone should have sufficient money: to visit family/friends in hospital; to celebrate special occasions; to attend a wedding or funeral; to keep up a hobby; and to take part in sport or exercise. Almost 1-in-8 (13%) cannot afford one or more of these activities.
- The majority of Scots (over 50%) believe that there should be enough money for children 5 and over: to be able to join in celebrations on special occasions; to keep up a hobby; to take part in clubs or activities; to go on day trips with the family once a month; to go on a school trip once a term; and to have a holiday away from home one week a year. Almost 1-in-3 children (32%) lack one or more of these activities. 1-in-6 (17%) lacks two or more.

Comparisons with the UK as a whole

In comparison to the UK as a whole, the picture of deprivation in Scotland is not quite as severe. For example, there are 22 items which the majority of the UK population thinks all adults should be able to afford. For the UK as a whole, 33% of adults lack 3 or more of these 'necessities' is 33%. For Scotland, the figure is 29%. Further work is needed to establish the reasons for this but one factor is likely to be the higher cost of housing in England, particularly in London and the South East. Other factors may be the differential impact of the economic downturn since 2009 on different areas.

Commenting on these findings, Nick Bailey of the University of Glasgow said:

"These findings paint a very bleak picture of life for large numbers of people living in low income households in Scotland today. There is little comfort in the fact that levels of deprivation appear to be even worse in the rest of the UK. The absolute numbers in Scotland are still shocking."

Trends over time

For Britain as a whole, we can compare the results for 2012 with those for similar surveys in 1983, 1990, and 1999. These show that the situation today is worse than it has been for the past thirty years. In 1983, 14% of the British population suffered from multiple deprivation by the standards set by the public. Today, it is 33%. For a significant and growing proportion of the population, living conditions and opportunities have been going backwards. Housing and heating conditions, in particular, have deteriorated rapidly.

- The number of households unable to heat the living areas of their homes is at a record high – now 9% compared to 3% in the 1990s and 5% in 1983.
- Overcrowding is as high as it was in 1983: today 9% of families cannot afford enough bedrooms for every child aged 10 or over of a different sex to have their own bedroom (back up from 3% in 1999).
- The number of households unable to afford damp-free homes has risen from 6% in 1983 to 10% now.

Increasing numbers of children lack items considered essential for a stimulating environment and for social participation and development. For example, the proportion of school age children unable to go on school trips at least once a term has risen from 2% in 1999 to 8% today.

Commenting on the trends, Professor Glen Bramley of Heriot-Watt University said:

"The situation is already serious but it is set to get worse as benefit levels fall in real terms, as real wages continue a three-year decline and as living standards are further squeezed. The decline in living standards and the high level of financial insecurity pose an enormous challenge for both the Scottish and Westminster Governments."



These are just some of the stark findings of the Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) project which published the initial findings on the extent of impoverishment in the UK today.

The PSE approach (see Research Method below) – now adopted by the UK government and applied by a growing number of rich and developing countries – identifies the number of people falling below a publicly-determined minimum standard of living. This unique way of measuring poverty was pioneered in 1983 and repeated in GB in 1990 and 1999; in NI in 2003; and for the whole UK in 2012.

The first results from this study will be broadcast on ITV at 7.30pm on Thursday 28 March in a special Tonight programme on 'Breadline Britain'.

A summary of the findings for the UK will be available from the project website from 1.30pm on the same day – www.poverty.ac.uk.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Survey details

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 2,450 adults aged 16 or over in the UK with 111 in Scotland. The 'Living Standards 2012' survey was carried out between February and October 2012. It interviewed 11,600 individuals living in 5,200 households in the UK. Of these, there were 2770 individuals in 1250 households in Scotland. The full Living Standards questionnaire can be [downloaded](#) from the PSE website: www.poverty.ac.uk.

The research method

Official measures of poverty are largely based on the proportion of the population falling below particular levels of income (for example 60% of the median income after adjusting for household size and composition). The PSE research, by contrast, 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 based on looking at both:

- what the majority agree are necessities of life in the UK today, and
- people's actual living standards (rather than just income).

There are three steps involved:

1. An **attitudes survey** identifies what the population as a whole think are 'necessities': things that everyone should be able to afford and which no one should have to go without.
2. A **living standards survey** finds out who has and who does not have each necessity. It allows a distinction to be drawn between those lacking individual necessities by choice (preference) and those who lack them because they cannot afford them. Only those who cannot afford a necessity are included as being deprived.
3. **Deprivation counts** identify how many people cannot afford groups of these necessities and an **overall multiple-deprivation count** identifies how many cannot afford these necessities to the point that affects their whole way of life. Only items seen as a necessity by the majority of the population are included.

The [1983 Breadline Britain](#) survey pioneered this approach. It was used again in [Breadline Britain 1990](#), [PSE Britain 1999](#), Bare Necessities Northern Ireland 2002/023 and the latest [PSE: UK 2012](#) research.

The PSE-UK research was financed by the Economic and Social Research Council. It is a major collaboration between the University of Bristol, the University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt University, the Open University, Queen's University Belfast and the University of York working with the NatCen and NISRA. The **University of Glasgow** team are: Nick Bailey (Senior Lecturer), Maria Gannon (Research Associate) and Mark Livingston (Research Fellow). The **Heriot-Watt University** team are: Professor Glen Bramley and Kirsten Besemer (Research Associate).

Nick Bailey (Glasgow)

wk: 0141 330 3154
mob: 07910 696 840
email: nick.bailey@glasgow.ac.uk

Glen Bramley (Heriot-Watt)

wk: 0131 451 4605
mob: 07974 678641
email: g.bramley@hw.ac.uk