

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?

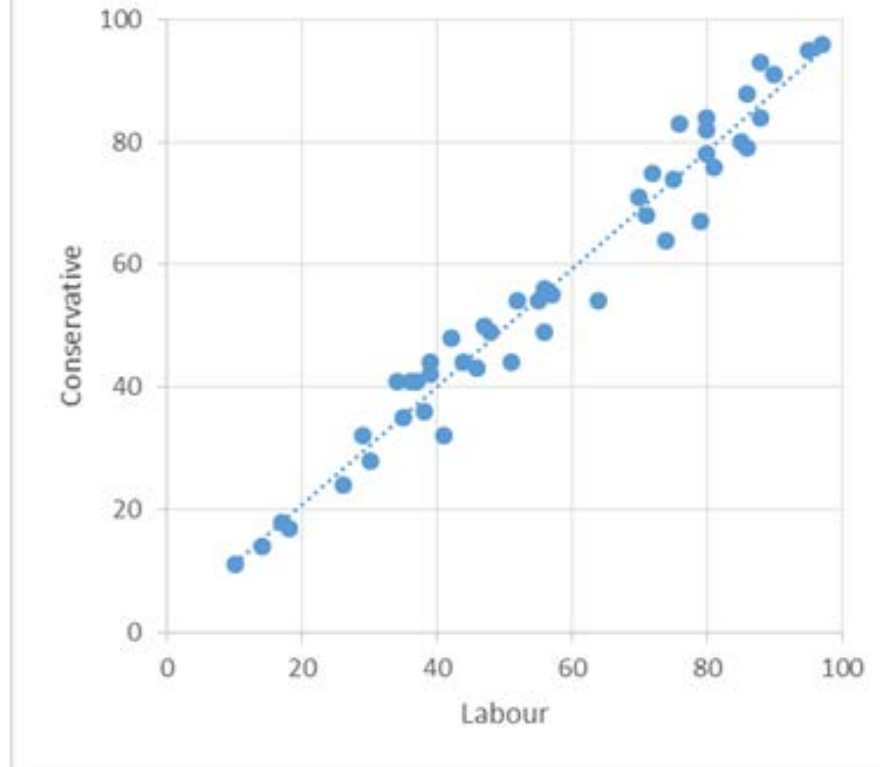
All previous surveys found high levels of consensus.

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 and routine occupations	Non-manual	Degree or higher	No qualifications	Household with dependent children	Owner	Renter	Top 40% households	Bottom 40% households	Conservative support	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	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

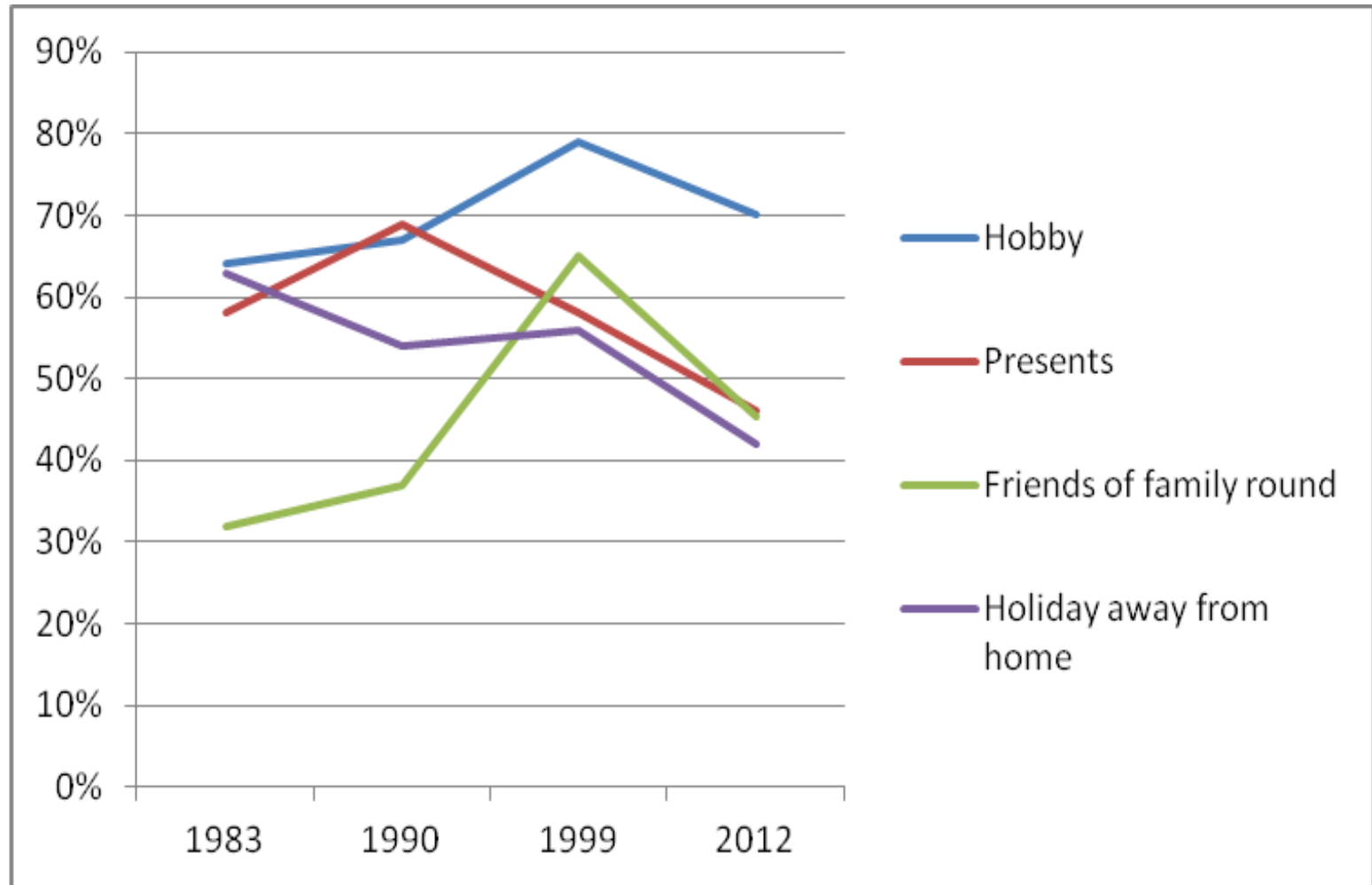
Falling support:

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