

Breadline Britain: 1983-2013

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Music

1983: Pamela

Well, I do without food, I do without clothes for myself, I do without shoes, yeah I feel very poor.

1991: Yvonne

You are just existing, you are just about existing on what you're getting. It's just from hand to mouth or from hand to bill. Not even from hand to mouth, from hand to bill. And it is very hard.

2013: Martin

This isn't a life. This is a struggle, this is a real hard long road struggle. It's been a long road and there is no end to that road, it just keeps going on and on. It's like I am going to forever walk that road.

Commentary

ITV's Breadline Britain series of films, provide a unique insight into being poor in Britain and how this has changed-over the last thirty years.

The experiences of people living below a poverty line, based on what the population thought should be a minimum standard of living, were recorded in 1983, 1991 and again in 2013.

A series of short films was also made for the Poverty and Social Exclusion research project in 2011 and 2012.

The people chosen for all these films are from the groups most vulnerable to poverty.

In 1983, these were the elderly, people with disabilities, lone parents, the low paid and the unemployed, including young unemployed.

These same groups still remain vulnerable to poverty.

2013: Dave

Everyones got that ideal that father goes out works hard, brings home the bacon but it doesn't matter whether you go out and work hard or not nowadays... it sort of makes me feel like a failure really.

1983: Roy

Your feel useless. You can't feel like a man.

Commentary

The research method for measuring poverty, underpinning these films, was first pioneered in the 1983 Breadline Britain series.

Using nationally representative surveys, a minimum standard of living is established by finding out which of a wide range of items and activities the majority of the population think are essential – necessities which no-one should have to go without. As society has changed, new items have been tested to make sure that the minimum standard accurately reflects current views.

The surveys then identify who lacks these items and activities because they can't afford them. And for each generation having to go without necessities limits their whole way of life.

2012: Tyrone

It feels like I am in like a cell because I don't have any freedom. I only get to stay inside, inside the house.

1991: Joyce

To tell you the truth I am getting a bit fed up of, you know, doing without. Me kids do without, me hubby does without and I do without.

1983: Pamela

I am trapped altogether, I'll just have to stay here. I'm trapped in what I have got, this room and the kitchen, nothing at all.

Commentary

In many ways, British society has transformed extraordinarily.

In particular, the UK as a nation is much wealthier today, than it was back in 1983.

Yet, today, people face the same daily struggle just to get by as their counterparts did in the 1990s and the 1980s.

1983: Mavis

This isn't a standard of living. It's existence.

1991: John

Just cope, you know, day by day, week after week, it's the same thing all the time.

2012: Marc

It's not physically it is just in your head because you have to constantly think about money, constantly think about it.

Commentary

Over the last thirty years, the numbers of people falling below society's minimum standards has doubled.

