



Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK

<http://www.poverty.ac.uk>

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1.30pm on Thursday, 28 MARCH, 2013

UK's largest poverty study shows over a third of Northern Ireland households deprived

Over a third of households in Northern Ireland are deprived according to researchers from Queen's University Belfast, who have conducted the largest and most authoritative study of poverty and deprivation to date in the UK.

Researchers from the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's have found that 36 per cent of households in Northern Ireland do not have what the majority of people consider to be the basic necessities.

Those households lack three or more of 22 necessities covering food, clothing, housing and social activities. 19 per cent lack six or more items and seven per cent lack 10 or more. Within those households over 115,000 adults and children (6.4 per cent of the population) are not properly fed by today's standards. The proportion of families unable to heat their homes is at an all time high of 13 per cent compared to three per cent a decade ago.

The findings are the result of the Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) project which published its initial findings on the extent of impoverishment in Northern Ireland today. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), it involved a team of six UK universities.

Professor Mike Tomlinson, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's said: "These findings present a bleak portrait of contemporary life for the bottom third of households in Northern Ireland. This situation, serious as it is, is set to get worse as benefit levels fall in real terms, as real wages continue a three-year decline and living standards are further squeezed. The decline in living standards poses an enormous challenge to the Northern Ireland Executive and its programme Delivering Social Change."

Further findings about Northern Ireland from the study include:

Family Life

- 29 per cent of people have 'sometimes' or 'often' skimped on food so that others in the household would have enough to eat
- Eight per cent of families cannot afford to send their children on a school trip once a term
- 30 per cent of families cannot afford one week's annual holiday away from home for their children

- 12 per cent of households cannot afford day trips with their family once a month
- Six per cent of families cannot afford to have a computer and internet access for children to do their homework
- 15 per cent of families cannot afford to give their children pocket money

Food Insecurity

- Six per cent of households cannot afford a meal with meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day
- Seven per cent of households are unable to afford fresh fruit and vegetables every day
- Two per cent of households (over 14,000) cannot afford two meals a day

Financial Insecurity

- 13 per cent of households are 'a lot below' the level of income which they say would keep them out of poverty and 17 per cent are 'a little below' the level
- 18 per cent of households have a 'constant struggle' to keep up with bills
- 43 per cent of households could not afford to pay for an unexpected, but necessary bill of £500
- A third of adults are unable to regularly save at least £20 a month for rainy days
- 28 per cent cannot afford to make regular payments into an occupational or private pension

Accommodation

- 13 per cent of households cannot afford to keep their home adequately warm
- 10 per cent live in a damp home
- Almost a fifth do not have enough money to keep their home in a decent state of decoration
- 8 per cent of families do not have enough space for every child of 10 or over of a different sex to have their own bedroom

Trends since 2003 in Northern Ireland:

- The number of households unable to heat their home is at a record high – now 13 per cent compared to three per cent in 2003
- The number of households unable to afford damp-free homes has also risen since 2003 – from four per cent to 10 per cent

- One in five households can't keep their home in an adequate state of decoration – up from 11 per cent in 2003
- A fifth of the population can no longer afford to spend a small amount of money on themselves each week compared to 15 per cent in 2003

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

ENDS

Media inquiries to Claire O'Callaghan, Queen's Communications Office, on 02890975391 or c.ocallaghan@qub.ac.uk

Notes to Editors:

1.) Professor Mike Tomlinson is available for interview on Thursday 28 March. Interview bids to Claire O'Callaghan.

2.) 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 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) in which 12,097 people were living (9,786 in Britain and 2,311 in Northern Ireland).

The full Living Standards questionnaire can be downloaded from the PSE website:

www.poverty.ac.uk.

4.) 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 Poverty and Social Exclusion (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 for life in the UK today, and people's actual living standards (rather than just income).

There are three steps involved:

a) 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.

b) 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.

c) 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.

5.) 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 and the University of York working with the NatCen and NISRA.

6.) The Queen's University team are: Professor Mary Daly, Professor Paddy Hillyard, Grace Kelly and Professor Mike Tomlinson.



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