

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 hrs on Wednesday, 20 August 2014**

# Scottish poverty study calls on Governments to tackle rising deprivation

The percentage of households falling below society’s minimum standard of living has increased from 14% to 33% 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.

In Scotland today, when we compare people’s actual living standards with the minimum standards which the public thinks everyone should have, we find that:

* almost one million people cannot afford adequate housing conditions[[1]](#footnote-1);
* 800,000 people are too poor to engage in common social activities[[2]](#footnote-2); and
* over a quarter of a million children and adults aren’t properly fed[[3]](#footnote-3).

The survey shows that people in Scotland have the same view of what the minimum standard of living should be as those in the rest of the UK.

The survey also shows that there is slightly less poverty in Scotland than in the rest of the UK; 18 percent of children and adults in Scotland were poor at the end of 2012 compared with 22 per cent in the rest of the UK. People were regarded as poor if 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.

The [Poverty and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom (PSE) project,](http://www.poverty.ac.uk/) funded by the [Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC),](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/) has shown that even full-time work is not always sufficient to escape from poverty.

Experts will look at trends over the past 30 years and discuss how best to tackle the problems at a conference on *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Scotland and the UK*which begins in Edinburgh today [20th August]. The conference has been organised jointly by the PSE research team and the Scottish Government and is funded by the Scottish Government. It will be opened by the Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP.

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, in Scotland:

* Over 400,000 adults go without essential clothing.
* More than 200,000 children live in homes that are damp.
* Almost one in three people (30%) cannot afford to heat their homes adequately in the winter.
* Around 350,000 children live in cold homes in winter and 50,000 children live in households that cannot afford to heat their home.
* Almost one in four adults have incomes below what they consider is needed to avoid poverty.
* One in every eight (13%) adults in paid work is poor.
* One in five adults have had to borrow in the last year to pay for day to day needs.

Professor David Gordon, from the [Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/poverty/) at the University of Bristol, said: “The UK’s 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 in the UK are in arrears on their household bills in 2012 (21%) than at the time of the last PSE survey in 1999 (14%). The most common bills in arrears now are utility bills, council tax and mortgage/rent.

**Child poverty**

Results from the PSE project dispel the myth, often conveyed by UK 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. In fact, 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 and are white.

One in four adults in Scotland (25%) have skimped on their own food in the past year so that others in the household may eat. Despite this, 30,000 children live in families who cannot afford to feed them properly.

In UK households where children suffer from food deprivation, in 93% of cases, 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% 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% 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.”

**Work and poverty**

Wages are as low and working conditions are as bad in Scotland as in the rest of the UK.

In Scotland, one in every eight adults in paid work is poor (13%). In the UK, the figure is even higher at one in every six (17%).

Work is no longer a ‘route out of poverty’. Almost half of all working-age adults in poverty are in work (Scotland 46%; UK 45%).

For a large minority of people, even full-time work is not sufficient to escape from poverty: 31% of the working poor in Scotland work 40 hours a week or more (UK 39%).

One third of adults in employment in Scotland are in ‘exclusionary work’ (32%; UK 35%). They are in work but:

* in poverty OR
* in low quality work likely to damage their health or sense of well-being OR
* have experienced prolonged periods of unemployment in the last five years.

Professor Nick Bailey, from the University of Glasgow, said: “The UK Government continues to ignore the deep problems in the Scottish and UK labour markets; they do not have adequate policies to address this growing problem. UK and Scottish Governments both need to do more.”

**Public and private services**

Although today, more people see a range of public services as ‘essential’ than they did in 1999, including libraries, sports centres, museums, galleries, dentists and opticians, the use of many services has declined since then, primarily due to reduced availability, cost or inadequacy.

Professor Glen Bramley, from Heriot-Watt University, said: “It is worrying that, in the 21st Century, more than 40% 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. Nevertheless, poor households are significantly more likely to be unable to use three or more essential services than non-poor households (28% vs 17% in Scotland), while in rural Scotland 50% of households are excluded from three or more such services, compared with 20% overall.

**Housing and Neighbourhoods**

Key housing problems of inadequate heating, damp, family overcrowding, money for decoration, and housing debt/arrears have all got worse in Britain since 1999. Scotland is doing slightly less badly than the rest of UK in terms of current housing conditions and problems. But 63% of poor households in Scotland have housing problems, compared with only 14% of non-poor households. Nearly 2% of adults in Scotland have been homeless in the last five years.

Concerns about environmental and social problems in the neighbourhood are more common in Scotland, including state of streets/pavements, parking, drink/drug and dog-related issues. These problems are experienced much more by poor people and by residents of poor urban neighbourhoods.

# -ENDS-

**Notes to the editor:**

The conference takes place at the New Register House Dome, Scotland’s People Centre, 2 Princes Street, Edinburgh EH1 3YY on 20th August.

Interviews can be arranged in advance via:

* Ross Barker, Media Relations Officer, University of Glasgow – 0141 330 8593; ross.barker@glasgow.ac.uk
* Caroline Dempster, Press Officer, Heriot-Watt University – 0131 451 3443; c.m.l.dempster@hw.ac.uk
* Philippa Walker, Press Officer, University of Bristol - 0117 928 8086; [philippa.walker@bristol.ac.uk](https://mail.campus.gla.ac.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=HWC47zV-VEm7WH1UITTWZvtMH-oTjNEIoaYTSB1fL7TIXu-oCvMoQ4ygH2wmZocYrpEvaUPn-Tk.&URL=mailto%3aphilippa.walker%40bristol.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 Tuesday, 19th August.

Many of the findings are available online: [www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research](http://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 looks at views on minimum standards. This 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 second survey looks at actual living standards and this interviewed 5,193 households in 2012 (4,205 in Britain and 988 in Northern Ireland) comprising 12,097 people (2,775 in Scotland). The full living standards questionnaire can be [downloaded](http://www.poverty.ac.uk/system/files/PSE%20UK%202012_living%20standards%20questionnaire.pdf) from the PSE website: www.poverty.ac.uk.

The PSE: UK research was financed by the Economic and Social Research Council with some additional funding from the Scottish Government. 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.

**About the ESRC**

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funds research into the big social and economic questions facing us today. We also develop and train the UK’s future social scientists. Our research informs public policies and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective. Most important, it makes a real difference to all our lives. The ESRC is an independent organisation, established by Royal Charter in 1965, and funded mainly by the Government.

 [**ESRC Grant RES-060-25-000052**](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-060-25-0052/read)



1. Heating to keep home adequately warm; home in a decent state of decoration; damp-free home; enough bedrooms for children over 10 of different sexes to have own room; outdoor space where children can play nearby; and suitable space for children to study or do homework. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Adults should be able to afford to: attend events such as weddings or funerals; visit friends or relatives in hospital or other institutions; pursue a hobby or leisure activity; and participate in sports or exercise classes. Children should be able to: have a holiday away from home at least one week a year; have day trips with family once a month; attend clubs or activities; pursue a hobby or leisure activity; go on a school trip at least once a term; attend toddle/play group. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Two meals a day for adults, three for children; fresh fruit and vegetables daily for both; meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day for adults or daily for children [↑](#footnote-ref-3)