

**WORKING PAPER 1**  
**THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

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**POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

This working paper is the first report of the Poverty and Social Exclusion Northern Ireland (PSENI) project, co-funded by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Department of Finance and Personnel and the UK Treasury's evidence-based Policy Fund. It is the first ever study of its kind undertaken in Northern Ireland and aims to provide:

- a baseline, early 21<sup>st</sup> century internationally recognized measurement of poverty and social exclusion in N. Ireland which can be updated periodically in the future;
- data on the extent to which poverty and social exclusion impact across the nine dimensions of equality specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- data which would allow the extent of poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland to be compared with that in the British Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey (Gordon et al 2000) funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and poverty levels in the Republic of Ireland, as identified by the Living in Ireland surveys.

Data on poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland has been limited. Measures of the extent of poverty have progressed very little since Townsend's study carried out in the later 1960s (Townsend, 1979; Tomlinson, 2000). Dignan and Mc Laughlin (2002) provide a detailed analysis of data on poverty and their limitations in Northern Ireland. The situation will improve in the future with the extension of the Family Resources Survey (FRS) to Northern Ireland but the sample size of the FRS will be relatively small. The present study will therefore remain important for some years to come.

## **THEORETICAL APPROACH**

The meaning and measurement of poverty and social exclusion has generated much debate throughout the course of the last century amongst academics and policy-makers alike. Working paper 2 of this series “Approaches to Measuring Poverty and Social Exclusion” looks at these developments and debates more closely. Here we provide only a brief description of our approach to the conceptualisation of poverty. The notion of social exclusion will be discussed at length in the main report to the project. Poverty is conceptualised as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, involving a plethora of factors relating to people’s standard of living. It is not viewed as simply having insufficient income. Rather it is viewed as an inability to meet basic needs such as diet, shelter, clothing and heating and to participate fully in the social activities, customs and norms which the society views as normal. In complex societies such inability is strongly related to, but not exclusively, the result of scarcity of income.

The origins of this conception of poverty was set in Townsend’s pioneering work in the UK in 1979:

individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources necessary to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they, are in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities (Townsend, 1979: 31).

Townsend developed a set of 12 deprivation indicators measuring different kinds of social activities and material circumstances. A major criticism of Townsend’s initial work, however, was that the selection of indicators was ad hoc. Building on Townsend’s work, Mack & Lansley (1985) introduced the notion of ‘consensual indicators’, which were developed by asking people to identify those items they regarded as essential (as compared with those that were ‘desirable’ but not essential for modern living). A further criticism of Townsend’s work, that a lack of a necessity might reflect choice rather than hardship, was addressed through development of the concept of ‘enforced

lack'. Individuals were thus held to be deprived of a necessity if they did not have it (because it was either not unavailable or unsuitable) and they could not afford to have it.

Research using this methodology in Britain in the 1980s (Mack and Lansley, 1985) showed that there was a remarkable homogeneity of views within Britain on what constitutes a basic standard of living. When the work was replicated in late 1999 as part of the British Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain (Pantazis et al, 1999) it was found that the homogeneity continued to exist and remained similar among different groups in society. The first aim of the PSENI project was, therefore, to explore whether the population in Northern Ireland as a whole hold a consensual view of the necessities of life and, as importantly, whether this consensus remains similar among different groups within Northern Ireland. This working paper describes the findings.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The first stage of the research involved constructing a comprehensive list of potentially necessary items and activities to put to a random sample of people in Northern Ireland. The aim was to establish which they considered necessities and the effectiveness of the items in marking out the 'poor' from the 'non-poor' and in recording differences between major groups (e.g. men and women, households with and without children). The British Poverty and Social Exclusion survey developed a list of items and activities after a series of discussions with 13 groups of people in different circumstances with the major objective of negotiating an agreed list (Bradshaw et al., 1998, p. 44). This resulted in additions and amendments to questions used in previous studies. These covered a number of material items such as 'fresh fruit and vegetables every day' and a number of social items such as 'visiting friends and/or family once a week' and 'going to a pub once a fortnight'. For comparative purposes, we adopted the majority of items and activities from the British study but dropped 10, added 19 items and made some changes to the wording to improve their understanding in a Northern Irish context. In total a list of ninety items and activities were selected.

The second stage of the research involved carrying out a survey of the general public to ascertain which items on the list they considered to be necessities. The Central Survey Unit within the Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency periodically carries out an Omnibus Survey that contains modules on a range of different topics. In June 2002 the project purchased a module in the Omnibus survey to ascertain people's views on the necessities of life. The survey is based on a random sample of 2000 addresses, drawn from the Northern Ireland Valuation and Lands Agency list of addresses and stratified by three regions: Belfast, East Northern Ireland and West Northern Ireland.

Everyone in the survey was presented with the list of ninety adult and children's items and activities and were asked to respond 'yes' or 'no' according to whether they believed them to be necessary or not. They were told: 'By necessary we mean everybody should be able to afford them and should not have to do without them'. A unique and original method of administering the list was adopted. All respondents were handed the interviewer's small portable computer and asked to respond 'yes' or 'no' to each item and activity by touching the screen. The order in which the items and activities were presented to respondents was randomly generated by the computer to avoid any bias, which a standard order might produce.

Although the Omnibus survey is based on a relatively large sample of addresses, it is not large enough to include more than a handful of people from ethnic minority groups because they form a small proportion of the population in Northern Ireland. To overcome this problem of non-inclusion, focus groups were convened with members of ethnic minority groups in order to ascertain what they considered as necessities. Another section of the population, who are not included in the survey because it sampled adults only, are children under 16. To overcome their absence, focus groups were also convened with this group.

## PERCEPTIONS OF ADULT ITEMS AND ACTIVITIES

The principal finding, which emerges from the study, is the remarkable level of agreement about the necessities of life in 2002. Table 1 and Table 2 list adult items and activities respectively. They have been divided into two groups: those receiving less than 50% or more support, a 'democratic majority' (see Pantazis et al, 1999) who perceive the items as necessities and those receiving less than 50%. Table 1 shows that there are 10 items which over 90% of the population consider all adults in Northern Ireland should possess: 'Enough money to pay heating, electricity and telephone bills on time'; 'Fridge'; 'Washing machine'; 'Dry, damp-free home'; 'Health/disability aids and equipment, if needed'; 'Replacing or repairing broken electrical goods such as fridges or washing machines'; 'Access to a decent pension'; 'Warm, waterproof coat'; 'Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration'; and 'Fresh fruit and vegetables every day'. At the other end, less than 14% of the population considered 'Access to the internet from home'; 'Dishwasher'; 'Satellite/cable TV' or 'Second home/Holiday home' as necessities.

**Table 1 Adult Items: Percentage stating 'necessary' in NI omnibus survey**

<b>Items &gt;50% perceived necessary</b>	<b>PSE NI</b>
	%
Fridge	99
Enough money to pay heating, electricity and telephone bills on time	99
Dry, damp-free home	98
Health/disability aids and equipment, if needed	98
Washing machine	95
Replacing or repairing broken electrical goods such as fridges or washing machines	95
Access to a decent pension	94
Warm, waterproof coat	93
Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration	92
Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	92
Vacuum cleaner	90
Home contents insurance	89
Good clothes to wear for job interviews	86

Two pairs of strong shoes	84
Central heating	84
Meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day, if you wanted it	83
Regular savings (of £10 a month) for rainy days or retirement	83
Telephone (includes mobile)	81
Replacing worn out furniture	79
Small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family	76
Good outfit to wear for special occasions such as parties or weddings	75
Presents for friends or family once a year	72
Television	71
New, not second hand clothes	62
Dictionary	61
Roast dinner once a week	59
Car	53
Deep freezer	52
Items <50% perceived necessary	
<b><i>Daily newspaper</i></b>	<b>34</b>
<b><i>Microwave Oven</i></b>	<b>33</b>
<b><i>Pet, if you want one</i></b>	<b>31</b>
<b><i>Tumble dryer</i></b>	<b>30</b>
<b><i>Video recorder</i></b>	<b>22</b>
<b><i>Home computer</i></b>	<b>20</b>
<b><i>Access to the internet from home</i></b>	<b>13</b>
<b><i>Dishwasher</i></b>	<b>12</b>
<b><i>Satellite/cable TV</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b><i>Second home/holiday home</i></b>	<b>6</b>
Note: weighted percentages <sup>1</sup> . Bold, italicised denote items which less than 50% of respondents deemed 'necessary'.	

Pantazis et al (1999) make the point that goods introduced into the market often start as luxuries and as time moves on and economic growth occurs they become necessities. These items may not yet be widespread in households in Northern Ireland. The fact that a dishwasher, satellite/cable TV and/or access to the internet from home, all relatively newer commodities in the market were considered by less than 15% of the Northern Ireland population as being necessary items also confirms this point. It will be

<sup>1</sup> The data were weighted in line with usual weighting in the N.I. Omnibus Survey. That is, the data were weighted to compensate for the lower probability individuals in larger households have in being selected for survey samples. The weighting applied to data from individuals in multiple person households in the Omnibus Survey = 0.50628.

interesting to compare these figures with data from 5 to 10 years time when such items become more commonplace and widely used within Northern Ireland households.

There was equally high consensus amongst the Northern Ireland population about social participation and being able to adhere to social and/or religious customs and norms. There was strong support for people being able to participate in religious rituals, for example: 'Celebrating special occasions such as Christmas'; 'attending weddings, funerals or similar occasions' and 'attending church or other place of religious worship'. Non-religious activities were also considered to be important necessities including 'Visiting friends or family in hospital'; 'visiting friends or family locally'; 'Having family days out' and 'Collecting children from school'. These suggest a strong cultural leaning towards maintaining close-knit ties with family networks in Northern Ireland. Aside from the strong emphasis on activities revolving around family and friends, 'Having a hobby or leisure activity' was also considered to be an important activity. Only three activities listed, were not considered by the majority of the population to be necessary activities: 'A holiday abroad once a year', 'Going out for an evening meal once a fortnight' and 'Going out for a meal in a restaurant/pub once a month'.

**Table 2 Adult Activities: Percentage stating ‘necessary’ in NI omnibus survey**

<b>Activities &gt;50% regarded as necessary</b>	<b>PSE NI</b>
	%
Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions	97
Celebrating special occasions such as Christmas	95
Visiting friends or family locally	91
Attending weddings, funerals or similar occasions	89
Visiting school, for example for sports day, parents evening	88
Family days out	86
Having a hobby or leisure activity	84
Collecting children from school	84
Attending church or other place of religious worship	75
One weeks annual holiday away from home (not staying with relatives)	60
Visiting family/friends in other parts of the country by bus or train four times a year	56
Having friends or family visit for a drink or meal once a month	51
Activities <50% regarded as necessary	
<b><i>Going out for an evening meal once a fortnight</i></b>	<b>40</b>
<b><i>Going out for a meal in a restaurant/pub once a month</i></b>	<b>35</b>
<b><i>Holiday abroad once a year</i></b>	<b>19</b>

One of the premises of the consensual approach to poverty is that there are few differences within the population about what the necessities of life are, by and large. To explore this further it is necessary to analyse the range of perceived necessities within specific sections of the population. One convenient and readily understandable way of doing this is to use scatter plots (Pantazis et al, 1999) and then fit what is known as a regression line which minimizes the total distances of all the individual items from the line. Underlying this approach is the notion that if a 45 degree line is drawn through a series of scatter points representing the perceptions of, say, men and women (with men represented along the vertical axis and women along the horizontal axis) then if there is total agreement on what constitutes necessities all the points will lie along the line. However, if men consider an item is more important than women, the point will fall above the line. On the other hand, if women consider the item more important the point will fall below the line. It is

customary to add two further lines to the scatter plot to indicate the 95% confidence levels for the sample. These are shown above and below the regression line. Any points lying above or below these lines indicates that it is possible to be 95% or more certain that the value obtained have not been obtained by chance but by some underlying factor.

**Figure 1: Differences between men and women**

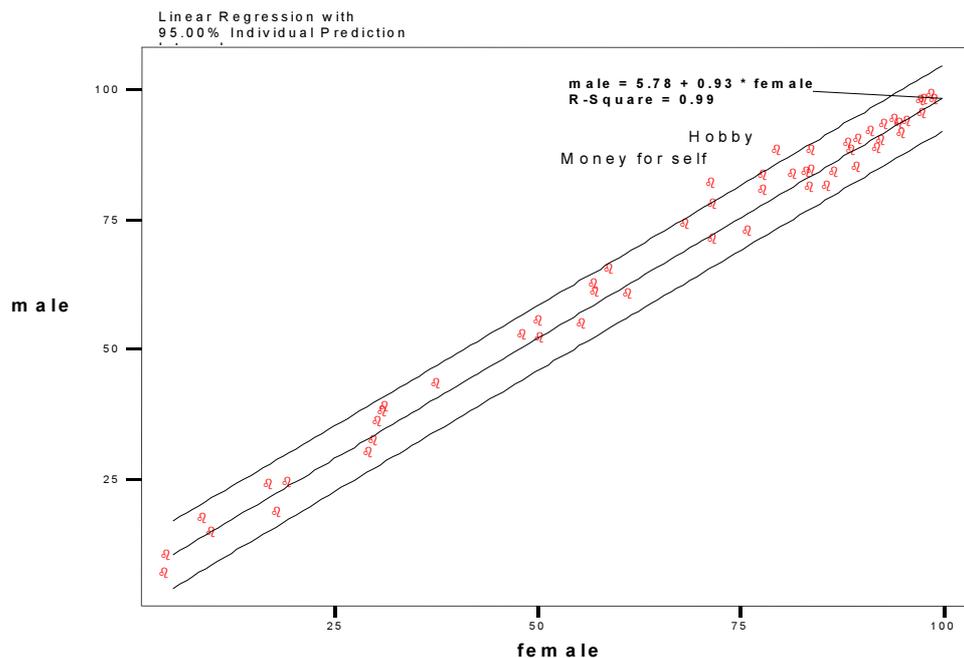
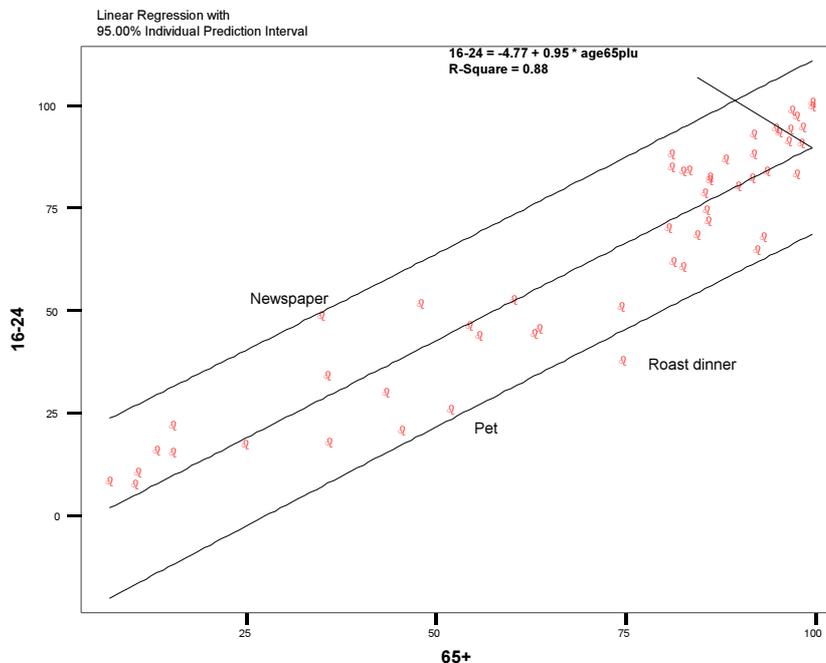


Figure 1 shows the scatter plot and the regression for men and women for both items and activities. As can be seen there is very close agreement between men and women on what constitute necessary items and activities. Overall, more men than women see these items and activities as essential. There are, however, some important differences. Men were more likely to agree that 'having a hobby or leisure activity' and having a 'small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family' were important. As noted by Goode et al (1998) and confirmed by Pantazis et al (1999), gender differences do tend to become more apparent in relation to those items and activities which fall under the remit of 'personal consumption' as opposed to 'household' consumption. Thus, as is the case in Northern Ireland, more men than women ranked items or activities that directly satisfied

their own needs above those for example relating to the household and/or family as a whole.

Given the inevitable 'generation gap', which exists between younger and older people, one may have thought that large differences would exist by age. However, as Figure 2 shows, minimal disagreement was found to exist between two age groups 16–24 and 65 or more in the NI population although older people generally tend to perceive more items and activities as essential. Younger people considered having a 'daily newspaper' as more necessary than older people, whilst having a 'roast dinner once a week' and having a 'pet if you want one' were considered more necessary by older people. Having a pet may hold greater importance to older people if for example they live alone, because a pet may afford them company and/or lend to greater feelings of security within their home, whilst a roast dinner once a week may form part of a weekly custom, in which the extended or nuclear family get together.

**Figure 2: Differences between younger and older people**



There were some interesting differences in perception between individuals who were single and those who were married. Figure 3 highlights that whilst 'going out for a meal' was considered more important to single people, comparatively, a 'dictionary', a 'car', 'roast dinner once a week' and a 'holiday away from home' were considered as more important to married people in the population.

Since single people are more likely to have the time and desire to engage in active and/or fuller social lives, it's not surprising that they considered going out for a meal once a fortnight as more important than their married counterparts. Married people on the other hand viewed 'having a roast dinner once a week' as important. The importance to married people also, of having a holiday away from home, a car and a dictionary may be attributed to the fact that married people may also have children, and these items and activities which may form an integral part of family life are thus more likely to be viewed as necessities by this group.

**Figure 3: Differences between single and married people**

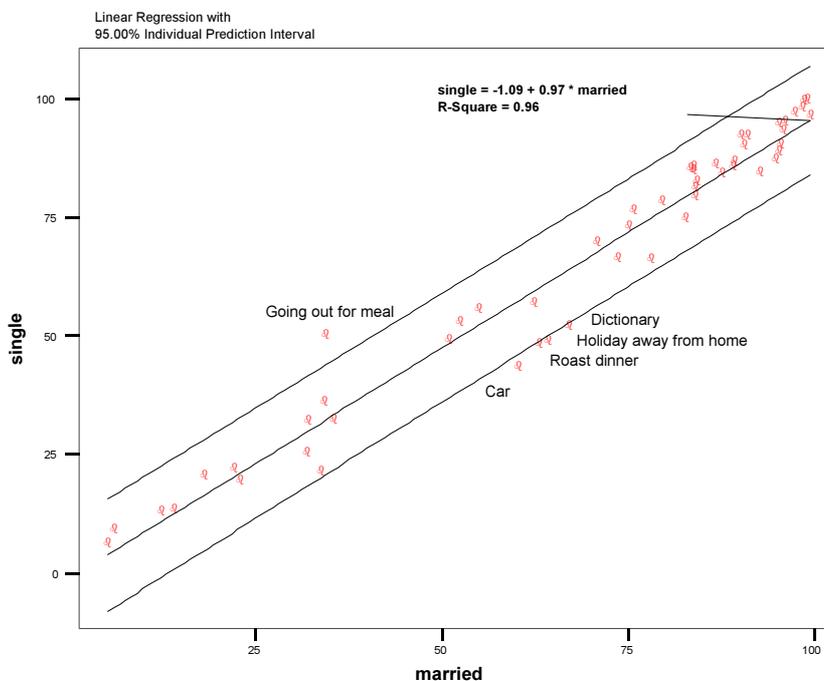
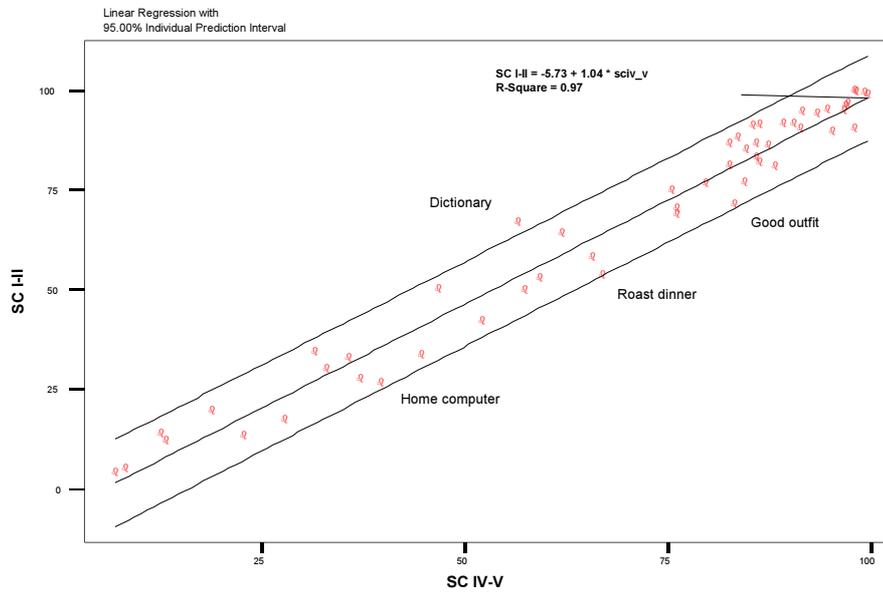
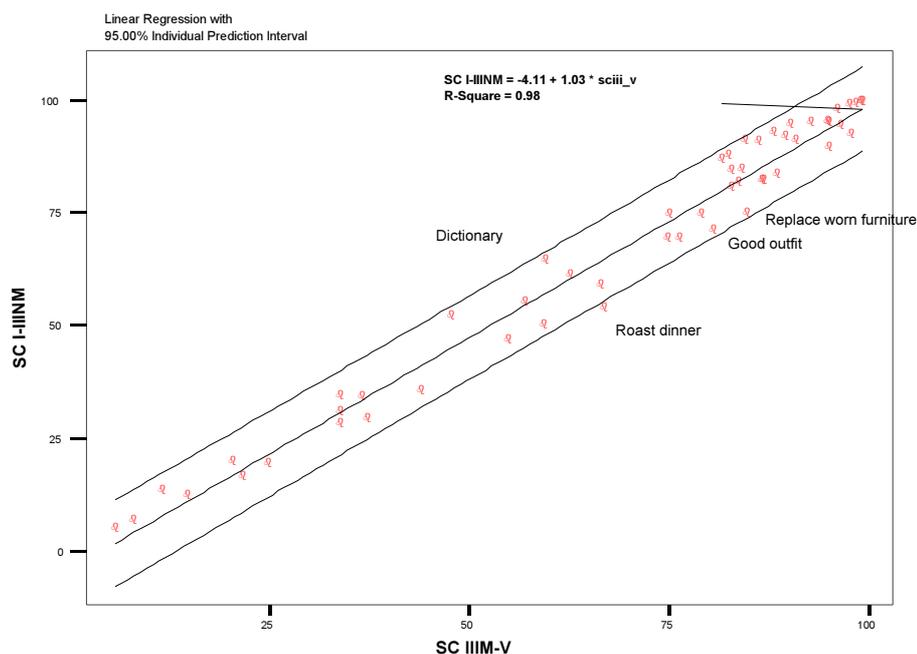


Figure 4 shows observed differences between occupational classes I-II and IV-V. For comparative purposes, occupational classes I-II and IV-V were grouped. Not surprisingly, the general trend is for more of the occupational classes to specify the items and activities as necessities. Moreover, more of those in occupational classes IV-V rated as essential 'a good outfit to wear for special occasions', a 'roast dinner' and a 'home computer', while a 'dictionary' was viewed as a necessity by groups I-II. When the social classes are divided up differently, we similarly find that the manual class grouping considered having a good outfit and a roast dinner as more important than those in the non-manual class grouping (see Figure 5).

**Figure 4: Differences between groups I-II and IV- V**



**Figure 5: Differences between groups I-IIINM and IIM-V.**



Although there is considerable unanimity between the poorest 20% and the richest 20% in Northern Ireland, poorer persons were more likely to rate the items and activities as essential (see Figure 6). There were a few differences, however. The poorest income quintile considered 'having a good outfit to wear for special occasions such as parties or weddings' as more important than those in the richest income quintile. This may reflect the greater frequency of such events in the lives of those on higher incomes and those on low incomes are less likely to prioritise a good outfit to wear, if for example there are more pressing needs relating to general subsistence. As an example, those in the poorest quintile were more likely to consider 'roast dinner once a week' as important.

Richer people perceived 'having a hobby or leisure activity' as an important necessity, indicative perhaps of their greater ability to be able to afford leisure pursuits. They also considered a dictionary as more important than those in the lower income quintile group.

Figure 6: Differences between highest and lowest income

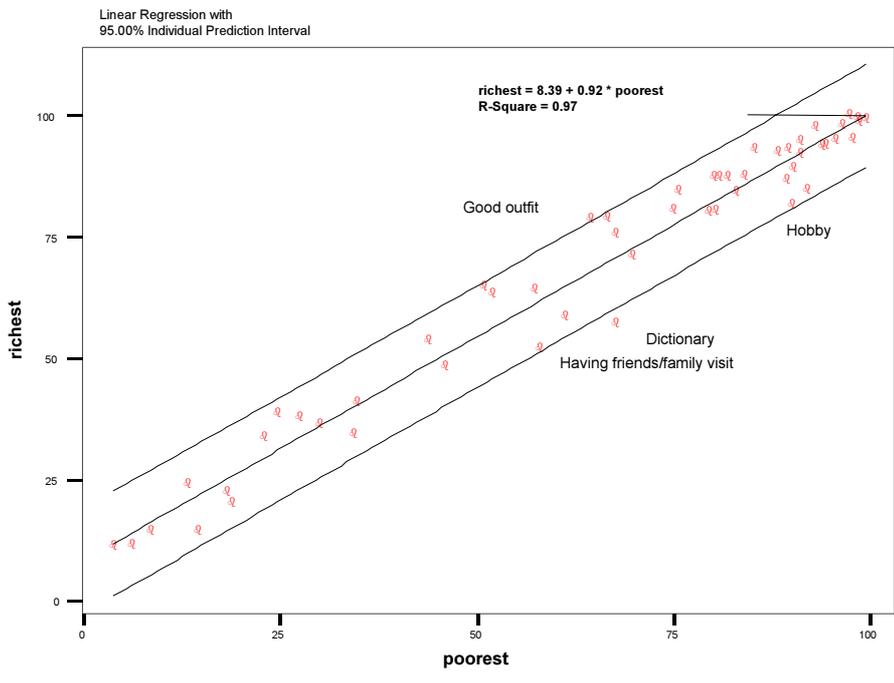


Figure 7 shows an analysis of perceptions of necessities according to tenure. This revealed some interesting variations between those who were social renters and owner-occupiers. Social renters considered a 'microwave oven' and a 'roast dinner once a week' as more important than owner-occupiers. This may indicate that social renters value a Sunday roast every week more than owner-occupiers because the latter may be more able to 'eat out' as a treat. In contrast, 'home contents insurance' was considered an important item for owner-occupiers. This is probably in view of owner-occupiers feeling at greater risk of their homes being burgled and their responsibility for home maintenance and repairs. Whyley (1998) however also makes the point that social housing tenants simply may not have the option of home insurance available to them as their homes are in areas deemed too 'high-risk' by insurance companies.

Owner-occupiers also considered having a car as more important than social tenants – indicative perhaps of the former living outside city fan-belts and more reliant on their own private transport for their personal and/or work use. Social tenants moreover are more likely to be concentrated in housing estates and dependant upon public transport.

**Figure 7: Differences between social renters and owner-occupiers**

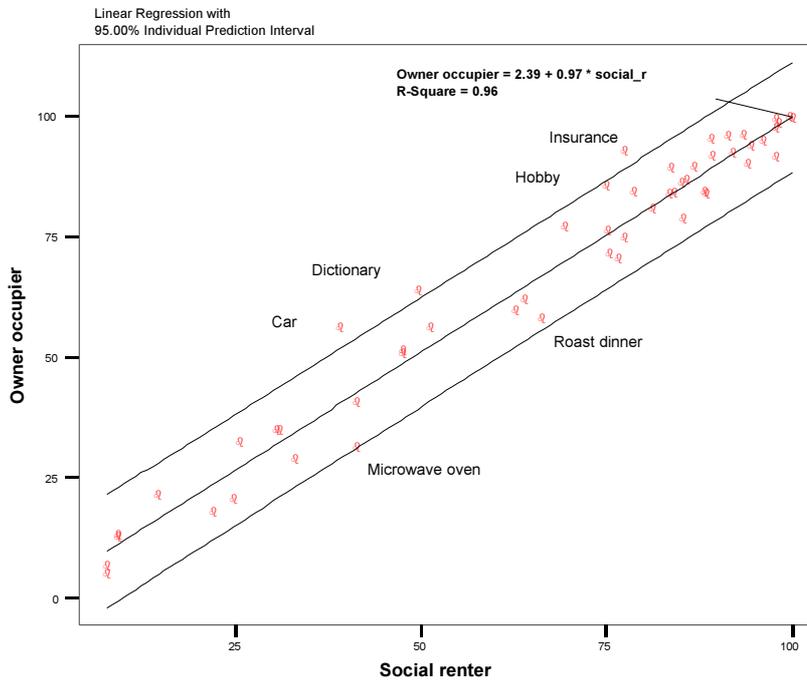
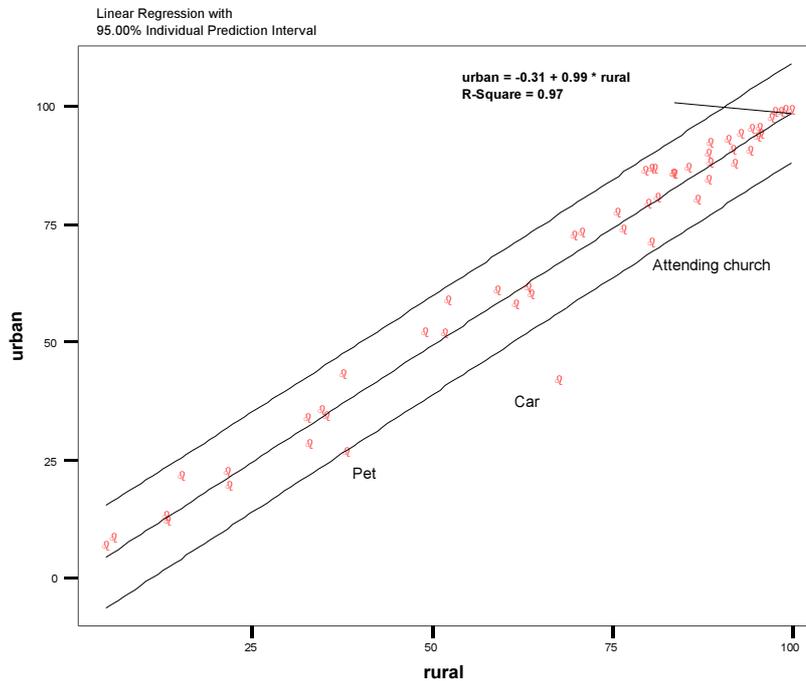


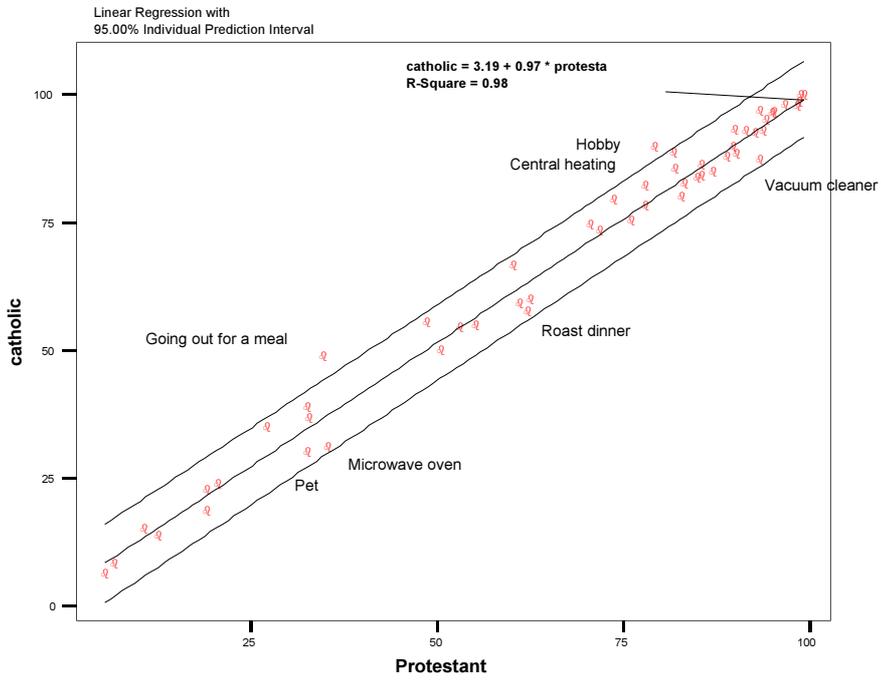
Figure 8 shows the comparisons between rural and urban dwellers. 'Having a car', a 'pet if you want one' and 'attending church or other place of religious worship' were more likely to be regarded as necessities by rural dwellers than urban dwellers. Given the greater physical isolation of rural locales and/or the lesser availability of regular public transport, it is not surprising that the car falls within this category. The greater importance attached to being able to attend a place of worship amongst rural dwellers may be indicative of the greater importance of the church as a site of social solidarity in rural than urban life.

**Figure 8: Differences between Rural and Urban Dwellers**



The divisions between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are notorious and religion is a major fault line. It is therefore of considerable significance that in relation to the necessities of life there is a very high level of agreement as can be seen in Figure 9. There are, however, some differences. Protestants are more likely to perceive a 'vacuum cleaner', 'a roast dinner once a week' a 'pet if you wanted one' and a 'microwave oven' as necessities than Catholics. In contrast 'going out for a meal', 'having a hobby or leisure activity' and 'central heating' are more likely to be viewed as necessities by Catholics than Protestants.

**Figure 9: Differences between Catholics and Protestants**



## PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN'S NECESSITIES

Presently, addressing the issue of child poverty is of paramount importance within national and inter-national social policy debates. Government policies within the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland have been developed to eradicate child poverty alongside other policy initiatives aimed at reducing poverty. To this end, it is important to consider what were regarded as necessities for children. Tables 3 and 4 show that the NI population consider 24 out of the 27 children's items and 9 out of 10 children's activities as necessities (using the 50 per cent 'democratic' approach). An even higher degree of consensus was evident than was the case for adult items and activities. More than ten children's items attracted a majority of over 90%, including 'new, properly fitted shoes' (99%), 'warm waterproof coat or jacket' (98%), 'three meals a day' (95%) 'their own bed' (94%) and 'books of their own' (92%).

'A pet, if wanted' (40%), 'computer games' (21%) and 'access to the internet from home' (20%) were not regarded necessities for children, although a 'computer suitable for doing school work' was regarded as a necessities item by just over half (56%) the population. Similar to trends in perceptions of adult necessities, necessities for children were also seen as constituting more than the basic physical needs of food, shelter and clothing (see Table 3). Notably, all nine children's activities, which were viewed as necessary, were considered to be so by at least 69% of the population. Only one social activity was not regarded as a consensus: 'going to the cinema regularly' (see Table 4).

**Table 3 Children’s Necessities Items: Percentage stating ‘necessary’ in NI omnibus survey**

<b>&gt;50% regarded as necessities</b>	<b>PSE NI</b>
	%
Health/disability aids and equipment, if needed	99
New, properly fitted shoes	99
Warm waterproof coat or jacket	98
Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day	97
Three meals a day	95
All the school uniform required by the school	95
Their own bed	94
At least four warm tops, such as jumpers, fleeces or sweatshirts	93
Books of their own	92
Buy new clothes when needed	92
Toys (e.g. dolls, play figures, teddies etc.)	88
Enough bedrooms for boys and girls over 10 to sleep separately	87
Educational games	86
At least four pairs of trousers, leggings or skirts	84
At least seven pairs of new underpants	83
At least 50 pence per week pocket money	82
Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least twice a day	80
Sports gear or equipment	76
Garden to play in	76
Construction toys such as Lego	72
New, not second-hand clothes	70
Computer suitable for doing school work	56
Bicycle	54
Comic, or magazine once a week	52
<b>&lt;50% regarded as necessities</b>	
<b><i>Pet, if wanted</i></b>	<b>40</b>
<b><i>Computer games</i></b>	<b>21</b>
<b><i>Access to the internet from home</i></b>	<b>20</b>

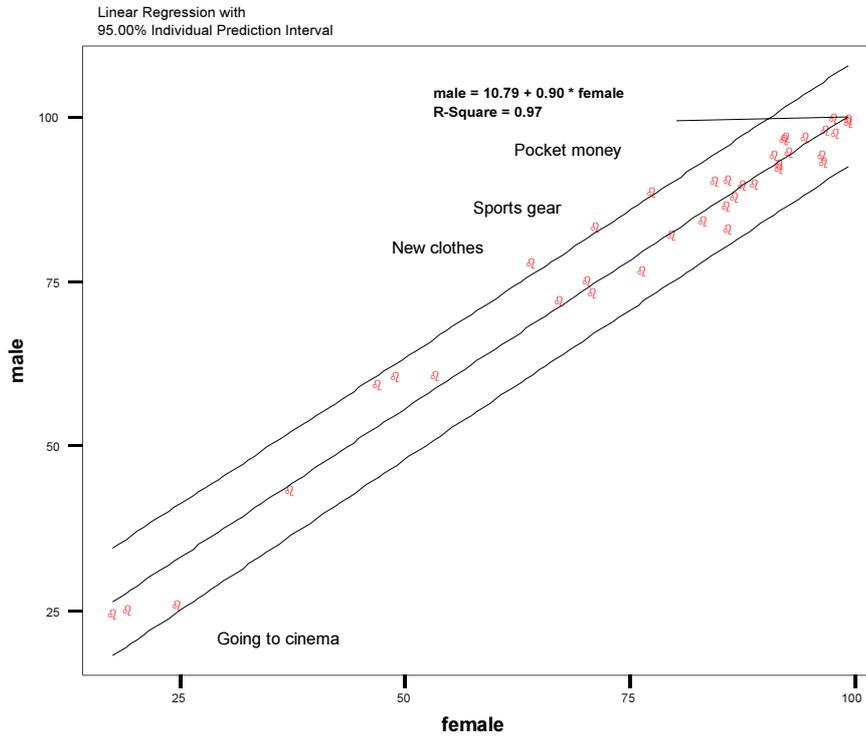
Note: weighted percentages. Bold, italicised denote items which less than 50% of respondents deemed ‘necessary’.

**Table 4 Children Necessary Activities: Percentage stating ‘necessary’ in NI omnibus survey**

<b>&gt;50% regarding as necessities</b>	<b>%</b>
Opportunity to take regular exercise	97
Celebrating special occasions such as birthdays	95
Having a hobby or leisure activity	94
Going on school day trips	92
Going on family day trips	89
Going to youth club or similar activity	88
Attending play group at least once a week for pre-school aged children	87
Having friends round once a fortnight	72
One weeks holiday a year away from home with their families	69
<b>&lt;50% regarding as necessities</b>	
<b><i>Going to the cinema regularly</i></b>	<b>25</b>

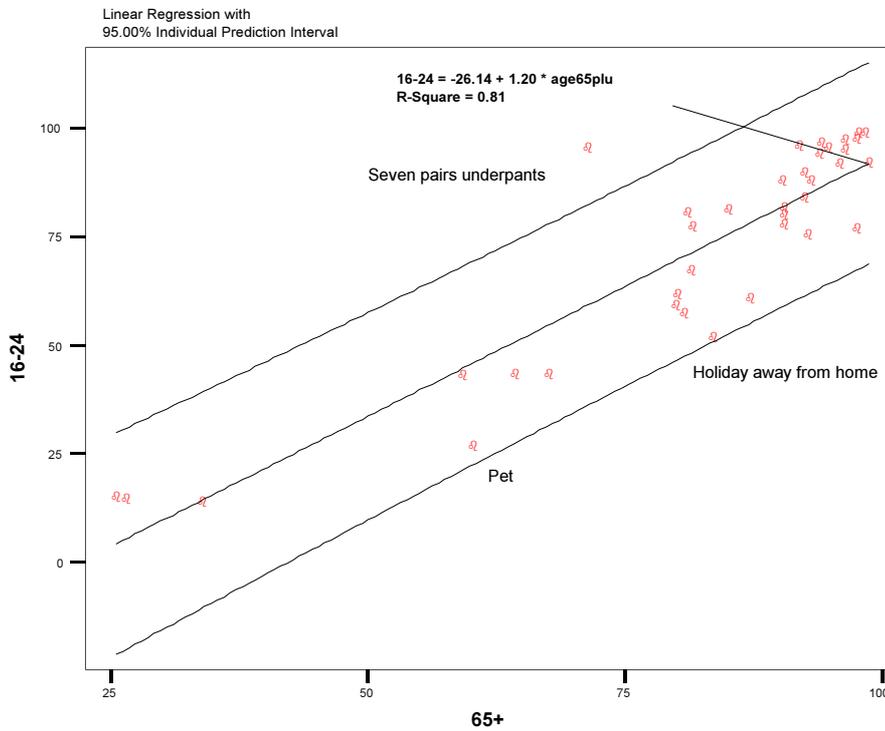
As noted above, there was a very high degree of homogeneity amongst the Northern Ireland population on perceptions of the necessities of life for children and as such, it is useful to look more closely at more subtle differences, which may exist between different sub-sets of the population. As was the case of perceptions in relation to adult items and activities, men attributed greater importance than women to items for children that came within the category of personal consumption. Hence having ‘at least 50 pence per week pocket money’, ‘sports gear or equipment’ and ‘new, not second-hand clothes’ were more likely to be regarded as necessities for children by men than by women (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Gender and perceptions of necessities for children**



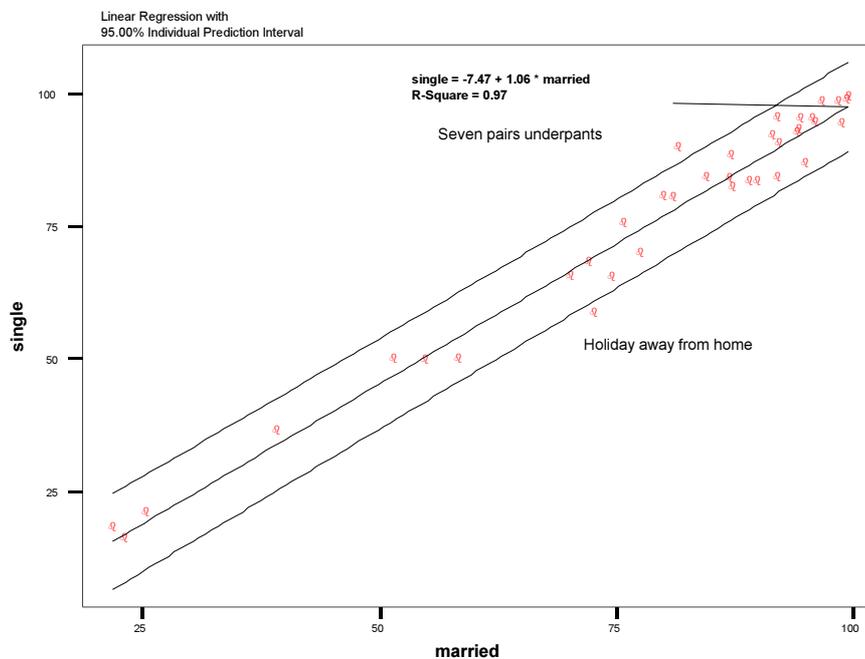
As was the case in relation to adult items and activities, diversity of opinion between older and younger people on children's items and activities was minimal. Older people more readily considered it important for children, to have a 'pet if wanted' and a 'holiday a year away from home with their families', whilst younger people placed greater priority on having 'at least seven pairs of underpants'. This may be in part a reflection of younger people's greater image consciousness.

**Figure 11: Differences between younger and older people on perceptions of children’s items and activities**



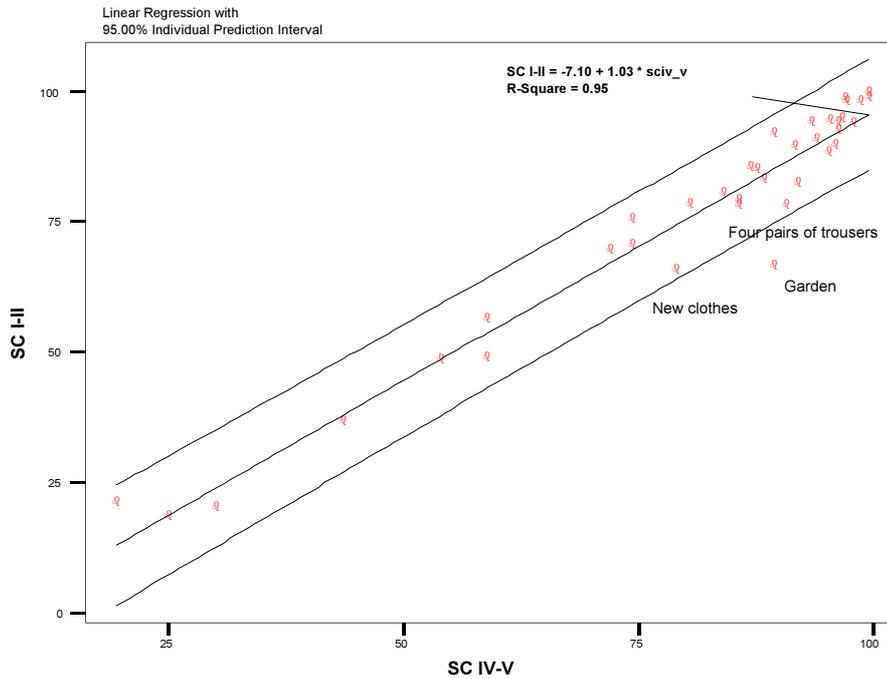
With regard to differences between single and married people on children’s activities, the latter gave greater priority to children having a holiday away from home, which was probably in view of married people having children themselves and so more inclined to value this norm of family life. Similar to young people on the other hand, single people in the population also considered it more important than married people for children to have at least seven pairs of new underpants.

**Figure 12: Differences between single and married people on perceptions of children's items and activities**

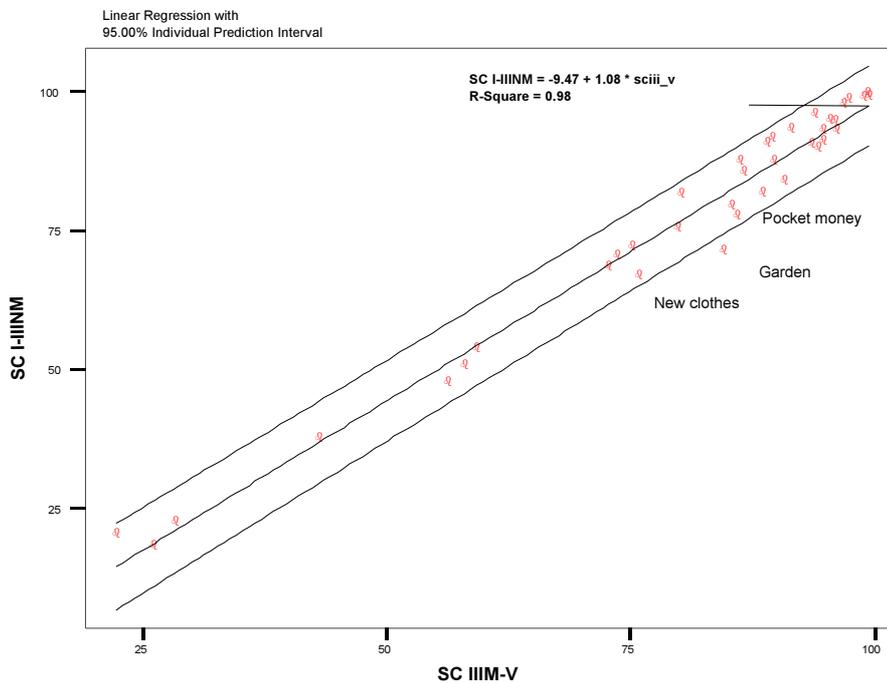


Differences between social classes showed that those in SCIV-V and in SCIIM-V both considered 'new, not second hand clothes' and a 'garden' as important necessities for children. The former also identified at 'least four pairs of trousers, leggings or skirts' as a necessary item for children, whilst the latter thought 'at least 50 pence pocket money per week' was an important item for children.

**Figure 13: Differences between SCI-II and SC IV-V groups on perceptions of children's items and activities**



**Figure 14: Differences between SCI-IIINM and SC IIIM-V groups on perceptions of children’s items and activities**

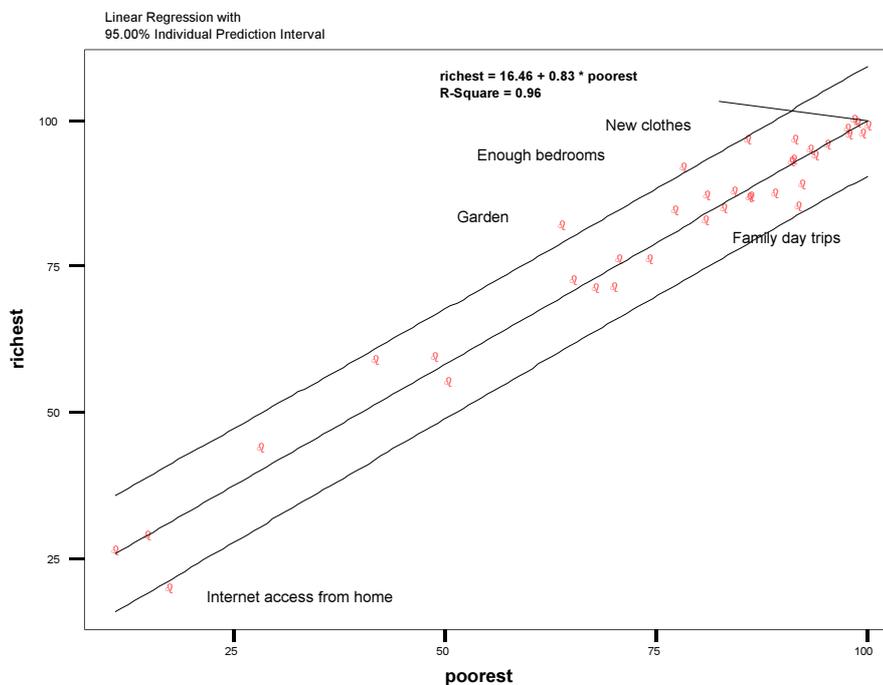


Not surprisingly, more of the poorest income quintile considers the items and activities to be essential. There were item-specific differences as well between these groups. Those in the poorest income quintile of the population were more likely to view having ‘garden to play in’ and ‘enough bedrooms for

children over 10 to sleep separately' as a necessity than those in the highest income group. This reflects lack of adequate play areas and generally crowded housing conditions for those with low income.

Higher income people were more inclined to value 'family day trips' and 'internet access from home' as being important for children, perhaps reflecting the ability of higher income households both to be able to afford to go on day trips and own a home computer. (see Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Differences between richest and poorest income groups on perceptions of children's items and activities**

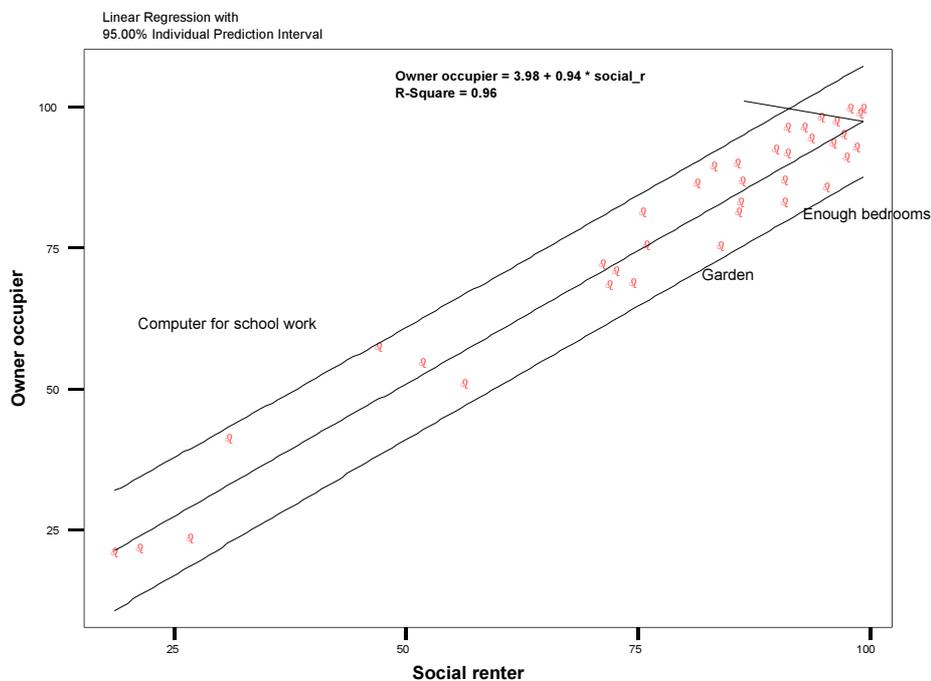


Interestingly, comparisons between social renters and owner-occupiers on children's items and activities, revealed social renters valuing the importance of 'a garden to play in' and having 'enough bedrooms for boys and girls over 10 to sleep separately' as more important than owner-occupiers. This reinforces, as discussed above in relation to differences between richer and poorer people, the fact that social renters are less likely to have a garden for their children to play and/or enough space for children to sleep separately, and, given that they have experience of these limitations, are thus inclined to

value the importance of these items over owner-occupiers whom for example, take these items for granted.

Owner-occupiers' inclination to view a 'computer suitable for doing schoolwork' as an important item for children, probably reflects again the greater likelihood of this item being available to children in owner-occupier households.

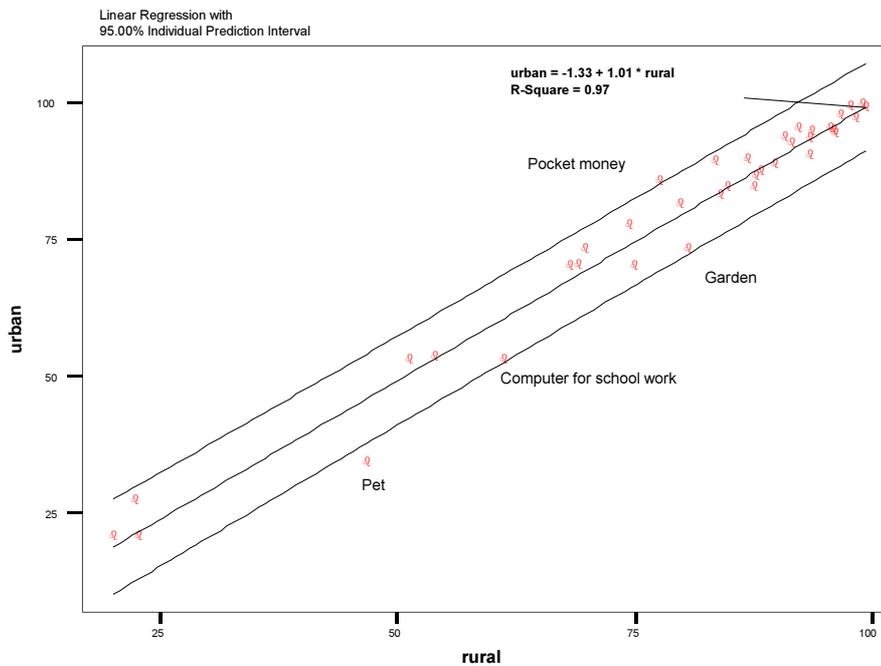
**Figure 16: Differences between social renters and owner-occupiers on perceptions of children's items and activities**



Perceptions between rural and urban dwellers about necessities relating to children showed that urban dwellers viewed 'at least 50 pence a week pocket money' as an important item for children. This is probably a reflection of the different ways of life that prevail for children who live in urban and rural areas, wherein the latter for example are surrounded by greater levels of materialism and commercialism and thus money is considered to be an important item for children to be able to partake in the norms of urban living. In contrast, rural dwellers showed support for more traditional items for children, such as having a 'pet, if wanted' and a 'garden to play in'. 'Having a computer suitable

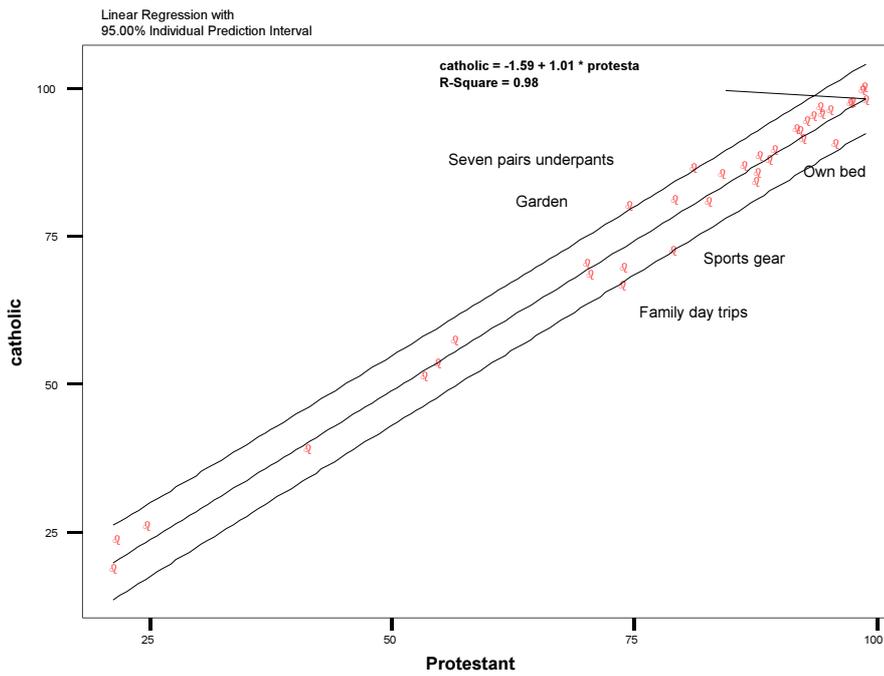
for doing school work' was also prioritized by rural dwellers, again reflective of an emphasis on traditional values such as children having a good education.

**Figure 17: Differences between rural and urban dwellers on perceptions of children's items and activities**



An analysis of views about children's items and activities as perceived by Catholics and Protestants, showed that more Catholics than Protestants thought a 'garden to play in' and 'seven pairs of underpants' were important items for children. Protestants on the other hand, viewed children having 'sports gear or equipment', 'going on family day trips' and having 'their own bed' as more necessary than Catholics.

**Figure 18: Differences between Catholics and Protestants on perceptions of children's items and activities**



## COMPARISON OF NECESSITIES BETWEEN NORTHERN IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN

The British Poverty and Social Exclusion study included a module on necessities in the GB Omnibus Survey in June 1999. There is, therefore, a three-year gap between the British survey and the Northern Ireland survey. While attitudes in Britain may have changed in the period it is nevertheless valid to make a comparison between the two regions. Another important point to note is that although the sample sizes are roughly similar, the British Omnibus survey is proportionally much smaller given the large differences in the size of the two populations, 1.5 million compared with 55 million. The final point to note is that the list of items and activities used are not, as already pointed out, identical.

**Table 5 Adult Items and Activities: Percentage stating ‘necessary’**

	PSE NI	PSE GB
	%	%
Fridge	99	89
Enough money to pay heating, electricity and telephone bills on time	99	--
Dry, damp-free home	98	93
Health/disability aids and equipment, if needed	98	--
Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions	97	92
Washing machine	95	76
Replacing or repairing broken electrical goods such as fridges or washing machines	95	85
Celebrating special occasions such as Christmas	95	83
Access to a decent pension	94	--
Warm, waterproof coat	93	85
Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration	92	82
Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	92	86
Visiting friends or family locally	91	84
Vacuum cleaner	90	--
Home contents insurance	89	79
Attending weddings, funerals or similar occasions	89	80
Visiting school, for example for sports day, parents evening	88	81
Good clothes to wear for job interviews	86	69
Family days out	86	--

Two pairs of strong shoes	84	64
Central heating	84	94
Having a hobby or leisure activity	84	78
Collecting children from school	84	75
Meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day, if you wanted it	83	79
Regular savings (of £10 a month) for rainy days or retirement	83	66
Telephone (includes mobile)	81	71
Replacing worn out furniture	79	54
Small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family	76	59
Good outfit to wear for special occasions such as parties or weddings	75	51
Attending church or other place of religious worship	75	42
Presents for friends or family once a year	72	56
Television	71	56
New, not second hand clothes	62	48
Dictionary	61	53
One weeks annual holiday away from home (not staying with relatives)	60	55
Roast dinner once a week	59	56
Visiting family/friends in other parts of the country by bus or train four times a year	56	38
Car	53	38
Deep freezer	52	68
Having friends or family visit for a drink or meal once a month	51	--
Going out for an evening meal once a fortnight	40	37
Going out for a meal in a restaurant/pub once a month	35	26
Daily newspaper	34	30
Microwave Oven	33	23
Pet, if you want one	31	--
Tumble dryer	30	20
Video recorder	22	19
Home computer	20	11
Holiday abroad once a year	19	19
Access to the internet from home	13	6
Dishwasher	12	7
Satellite/cable TV	7	5
Second home/holiday home	6	--

Table 5 compares adult and child items and activities between Northern Ireland and Britain. The most noticeable difference between the two areas is that a higher proportion of people in Northern Ireland consider most items and

activities to be essential compared with people in Britain. For example, some 99% of people in Northern Ireland considered a 'Fridge' a necessity compared with 89% in Britain. Similarly, in Northern Ireland 91% consider 'Visiting friend and family locally' a necessary activity compared with 84% in Britain.

**Figure 19: Adult items and activities regression plots**

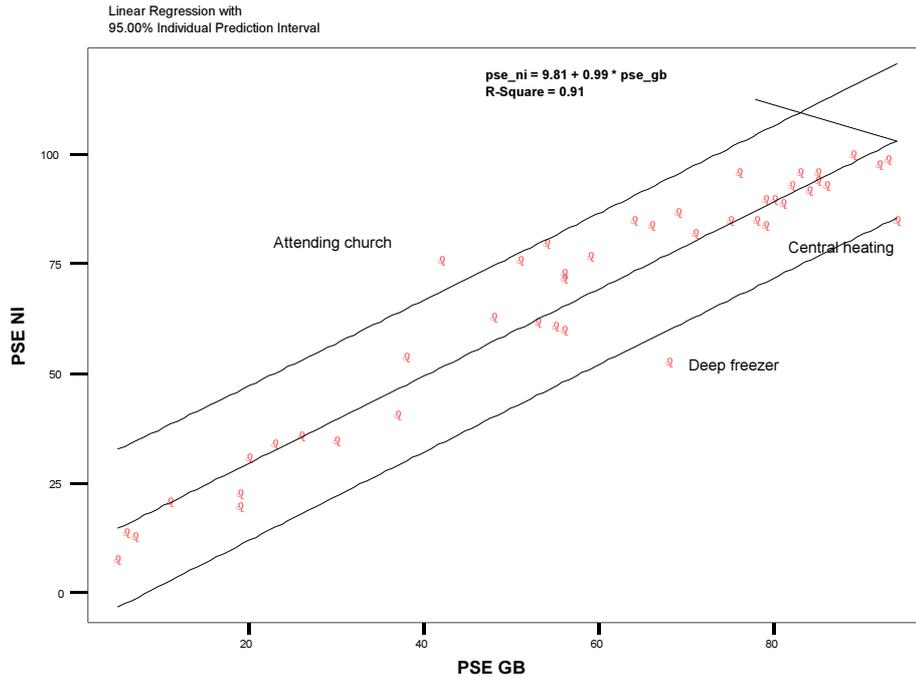


Figure 19 shows the regression plots for adult items and activities and as can be seen the most significant differences between the two areas are: 'Attending church', 'Deep Freezer' and Central Heating'. More people in Northern Ireland consider 'Attending Church' as an essential activity, whereas more people in Britain consider a 'Deep Freezer' and 'Central Heating' as essential. The difference in church attendance is not difficult to explain as religion plays a much more significant role in the cultural and national life in Northern Ireland. It is more difficult to suggest an explanation for the other two items. Perhaps the difference in the ownership of a deep freezer owes something to different life styles, the more rural nature of Northern Ireland society and the availability of fresh meat and differences in the penetration of supermarkets and the availability of frozen foods. The lower proportion of

people in Northern Ireland noting central heating as essential may be related to different cultural expectations and different forms of heat.

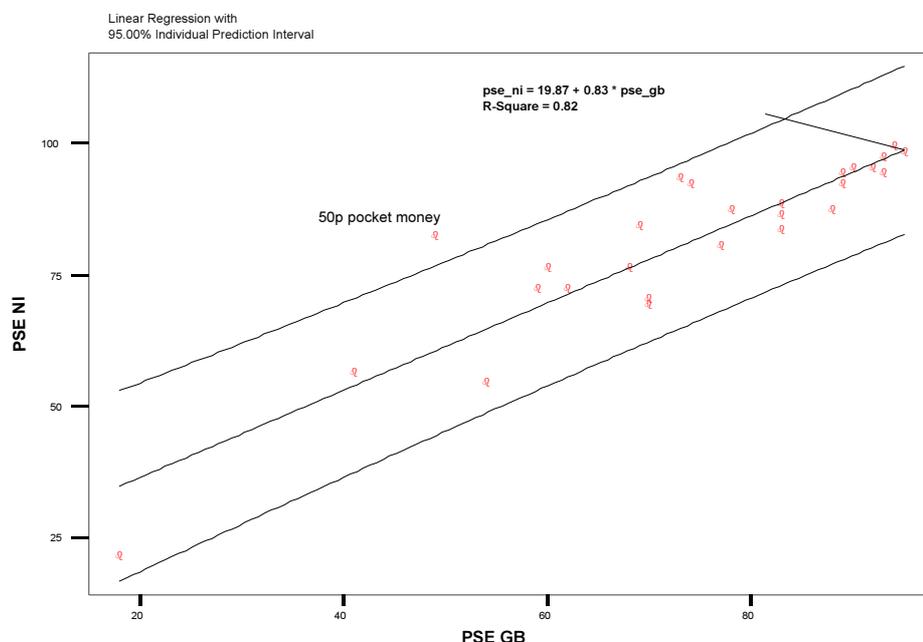
**Table 6 Child Items and Activities: Percentage stating 'necessary'**

	PSE NI	PSE GB
Health/disability aids and equipment, if needed	99	--
New, properly fitted shoes	99	94
Warm waterproof coat or jacket	98	95
Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day	97	93
Opportunity to take regular exercise	97	--
Three meals a day	95	90
All the school uniform required by the school	95	--
Celebrating special occasions such as birthdays	95	92
Their own bed	94	93
Having a hobby or leisure activity	94	89
At least four warm tops, such as jumpers, fleeces or sweatshirts	93	73
Books of their own	92	89
Buy new clothes when needed	92	--
Going on school day trips	92	74
Going on family day trips	89	--
Toys (e.g. dolls, play figures, teddies etc.)	88	83
Going to youth club or similar activity	88	--
Enough bedrooms for boys and girls over 10 to sleep separately	87	78
Attending play group at least once a week for pre-school aged children	87	88
Educational games	86	83
At least four pairs of trousers, leggings or skirts	84	69
At least seven pairs of new underpants	83	83
At least 50 pence per week pocket money	82	49
Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least twice a day	80	77
Sports gear or equipment	76	60
Garden to play in	76	68
Construction toys such as Lego	72	62
Having friends round once a fortnight	72	59
New, not second-hand clothes	70	70
One weeks holiday a year away from home with their families	69	70
Computer suitable for doing school work	56	41
Bicycle	54	54
Comic, or magazine once a week	52	--
Pet, if wanted	40	--

Going to the cinema regularly	25	--
Computer games	21	18
Access to the internet from home	20	--

Table 6 compares child items and activities. There are fewer differences in the proportion of items and activities which the two populations consider are essential. The one item in which there is a significant difference between the two populations concerns the provision of '50p pocket money, which is considered to be essential by a greater population of people in Northern Ireland as can be seen in Figure 20.

**Figure 20: Children's items and activities, regression plots**



## CONCLUSION

This analysis has shown a considerable degree of consensus within the population in Northern Ireland in regard to the necessities of life for both adults and children. While there are some important differences within different subgroups of the population, these are not extensive and different groups privilege different items. One important difference, however, which did emerge is with significant difference in 'personal' consumption compared with 'household' consumption, between men and women: men noted items which

satisfy their own needs above those relating to the household. There are also some significant differences between Northern Ireland and Britain particularly in relation to church attendance and a few ownership items. But perhaps, the most significant finding is the extent of the consensus between Catholics and Protestants. While there is much disagreement on the constitutional question, there is homogeneity of views on the necessities of life and the minimum standard of living in 2002. The findings suggest that notwithstanding the deep fracture, which is found in Northern Ireland along political grounds, which in turn is represented in highly segregated life styles; there is nevertheless broad agreement on the necessities of life.

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