

# Scottish poverty study calls on governments to tackle rising deprivation

August 20 2014

---



The percentage of households falling below society's minimum standard of living has increased from 14 per cent to 33 per cent 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 comparing people's actual living standards with the minimum standards which the public thinks everyone should have, researchers found:

- almost one million people cannot afford adequate housing conditions
- 800,000 people are too poor to engage in common social activities
- over a quarter of a million children and adults aren't properly fed

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 per cent 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, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), 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 [20 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 per cent) 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 per cent) 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 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 per cent) than at the time of the last PSE survey in 1999 (14 per cent). 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 per cent) have skimmed 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 per cent of cases, at least one adult skimmed on their own food 'sometimes' or 'often' to ensure others have enough to eat. Women were more likely to cut back than men – 44 per cent 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 per cent 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 per cent). In the UK, the figure is even higher at one in every six (17 per cent).

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

For a large minority of people, even full-time work is not sufficient to escape from poverty: 31 per cent of the working poor in Scotland work

40 hours a week or more (UK 39 per cent).

One third of adults in employment in Scotland are in 'exclusionary work' (32 per cent; UK 35 per cent). 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 per cent 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 per cent vs 17 per cent in Scotland), while in rural Scotland 50 per cent of households are excluded from three or more such services, compared with 20 per cent 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 per cent of [poor households](#) in Scotland have housing problems, compared with only 14 per cent of non-poor [households](#). Nearly two per cent 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.

**More information:** The full living standards questionnaire can be downloaded from the PSE website.:

[www.poverty.ac.uk/system/files/PSE](http://www.poverty.ac.uk/system/files/PSE)

[%20UK%202012\\_living%20standards%20questionnaire.pdf](#)

Provided by University of Bristol

Citation: Scottish poverty study calls on governments to tackle rising deprivation (2014, August 20) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-08-scottish-poverty-tackle-deprivation.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.