

Austerity results in 'social murder' according to new research

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The consequence of austerity in the social security system—severe cuts to benefits and the 'ratcheting up' of conditions attached to benefits—is 'social murder', according to new research by Lancaster University.

Dr. Chris Grover, who heads the University's Sociology Department, says austerity can be understood as a form of structural [violence](#), violence that is built into society and is expressed in unequal power and unequal life chances, as it deepens inequalities and injustices, and creates even more poverty.

The article, 'Violent proletarianisation: social murder, the reserve army of labour and social security 'austerity' in Britain', suggests that as a result of the violence of austerity working class people face harm to their physical and mental wellbeing and in some instances are 'socially murdered'.

Dr. Grover uses the article to call on the Government for change and action.

He refers to the process as 'violent proletarianisation' (the idea that violent austerity is aimed at forcing people to do paid [work](#), rather than being reliant upon benefits).

"To address violent proletarianisation what is required is not the tweaking of existing policies but [fundamental change](#) that removes the economic need for people to work for the lowest wages that employers

can get away with paying," says Dr. Grover.

Published in the journal, *Critical Social Policy*, Dr. Grover gives examples of where social security austerity has led to a range of harms:

- an additional six suicides for every 10,000 work capability assessments done;
- increasing number of people Britain dying of malnutrition
- increasing numbers of homeless people dying on the streets or in hostels

The article argues that austerity, the difficult economic conditions created by Government by cutting back on public spending, has brought cuts and damaging changes to social security [policy](#) meaning Britain has fallen victim to a brutal approach to forcing people to do low paid work.

"The violence takes two forms," says Dr. Grover. "First it involves further economic hardship of already income-poor people.

"It causes social inequalities and injustices in the short term and, in the longer term.

"Second, the poverty that violent proletarianisation creates is both known and avoidable."

Dr. Grover adds that only by fundamentally rethinking current social [security](#) policy can change that protects the poorest people be made.

More information: Chris Grover, Violent proletarianisation: Social murder, the reserve army of labour and social security 'austerity' in Britain, *Critical Social Policy* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/0261018318816932](https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018318816932)

Provided by Lancaster University

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