

A quarter of people in Wales have experienced poverty stigma 'always', 'often' or 'sometimes' in the past year

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A quarter of people in Wales have experienced stigma associated with poverty "always," "often" or "sometimes" in the past year, a [report](#) from Cardiff University has found.

The Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) has investigated the extent to which people feel negatively stereotyped, socially excluded or treated unfairly by others because of being on a low income. This can have an impact on [mental health](#) and lead to a reluctance to access vital support.

The results of the survey, conducted by YouGov and supported by WCPP's partner, the International Public Policy Observatory (IPPO), will help WCPP to support the public sector in Wales to understand, and avoid producing poverty [stigma](#) in its policies and services.

Other key findings include:

- Younger people experience higher levels of poverty stigma than [older people](#);
- People experiencing food insecurity experience three times as much stigma as those who don't;
- The most common form of poverty stigma participants said they encountered was when, 'people make negative assumptions about me because I don't have much money';
- People with disabilities, those who live in rented properties and benefit recipients are more likely to experience poverty-related stigma.
- Nine out of 10 adults perceive that [decision-makers](#), public services and the media contribute to poverty stigma.

Commenting on the report, Swansea Poverty Truth Commissioner, Karen Berrell, said, "Poverty stigma has a negative effect on the potential available across our communities. As someone coming from a place of lived experience, I believe it's incredibly important for our policy makers and public bodies to understand the impact of poverty stigma so that they can address it.

"We need to change the harmful attitudes that leave people feeling like

they are failing. Poverty and poverty stigma are not the outcome of poor life choices, but choices made at the highest levels of our political systems resulting in people not having enough money to live on and being socially excluded."

Report co-author, WCPP senior research fellow, Amanda Hill-Dixon said, "As well as struggling with insufficient income and [high costs](#), too many people are also having to deal with the stigma of poverty and the mental health and social exclusion burden that this can pose.

"Strikingly, almost everyone in Wales perceives structural poverty stigma, strongly suggesting that it is a systemic issue requiring our attention. And while many of the key drivers of poverty are outside of the control of Welsh local and national government, by tackling the stigma of poverty, the designers and providers of public and charitable services can limit its impacts.

"We are heartened that there is so much enthusiasm among public services to work with us and others to address this issue to improve the lives of those experiencing material hardship."

Swansea Council's Cabinet Member for Wellbeing Alyson Anthony said, "We are keen to better understand the role of stigma as a barrier to our residents accessing services and benefits and [community involvement](#) and our partnership with WCPP and Swansea Poverty Truth Commissioners will help inform Swansea Council's Tackling Poverty Strategy."

Bevan Foundation Head of Policy (Poverty) Steffan Evans added, "WCPP's report lifts the lid on an often underdiscussed aspect of poverty and helps us to understand what actions should be prioritized to address it.

"The root cause of poverty stigma is poverty itself, but stigma can exacerbate the impact of poverty. For example, if the deterioration in a person's mental health leads to them reducing their work hours, their risk of living in deeper poverty increases. Someone who chooses to not claim all the support they are entitled to will face even greater financial hardship. Children who are absent from school due to stigma around uniform, food or resources, will find it more difficult to get the best grades, increasing their risk of living in poverty in adulthood.

"The actions taken to address stigma should focus on areas such as these, which, alongside other interventions such as investing in a new generation of social housing and improving access to childcare, can help to shift the dial on [poverty](#) and to reduce its stigma."

More information: Lifting the lid on poverty stigma in Wales (2024). [wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/... n-poverty-stigma.pdf](https://wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/wcp-2024-08-15-n-poverty-stigma.pdf)

Provided by Cardiff University

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