

What is poverty in the UK?

More than 13 million people in the UK live in poverty –more than one in five.

Poverty isn't just about money; it can affect everything from your chances of getting a job to the age at which you die. Across the world, those who 'have' consistently fare better than those who have not – and this is no less true in a rich country like the UK.

Oxfam believes that this is unacceptable.

Poverty and Health:

- Infant deaths are 50 per cent more common in children born to parents with manual occupations.ⁱ
- Two-fifths of adults aged 45-64 on below-average incomes have a limiting, long-standing illness – that's more than twice the rate for those on above-average incomes.ⁱⁱ
- Poorer children on average experience poorer health during their childhoods and the effects of this last throughout their lives. Three-year-olds in households with incomes below about £10,000 are 2.5 times more likely to suffer chronic illness than children in households with incomes above £52,000 ⁱⁱⁱ
- Adults in the poorest fifth of the income distribution are twice as likely to be at risk of developing a mental illness as those on average incomes.^{iv}
- A child born in the poorer Calton area of Glasgow has a life expectancy of 54, while those born in the more affluent Lenzie North area of the same city have a life expectancy of 82.

"It worries me, thinking about the future, because there is no light at the end of the tunnel."
Adam, Grimsby

Poverty and Employment:

- A majority of both children and working-age adults in poverty live in working households – 55.3 per cent of children,^v and 52.9 per cent of adults.^{vi}
- Almost 50 per cent of homeworkers – and around 20 per cent of migrant workers – may be paid less than the minimum wage, some earning as little as £1 per hour.
- Around 1 in 8 men and 1 in 4 women are paid less than £7 per hour.
- Median hourly wages in the most deprived 10th of areas of the UK are 40% lower than in the least deprived.

"I worked cutting leeks for 70 hours, and was paid just £20 for a week's work."
Anka, Lincolnshire

Poverty and Education:

- On average poorer children score less well on a range of educational measures such as reading tests and GCSE results: less than a fifth (19.4%) or white British boys eligible for Free School Meals were awarded at least 5 C grades in their GCSEs in 2009, in comparison to more than half (51%) of those not eligible.^{vii}

Child poverty:

“I pay the children’s school dinners up-front, because then I know at least they have got a hot meal inside them every single day.”
Stacy, Manchester

- 3.9 million children in the UK live in poverty, with more than half of these in working households^{viii}.
- Children born into poverty are more likely to have a lower birth weight, high infant mortality and poorer health than better off children.^{ix}
- Children from poorer backgrounds are more likely to play truant and to be excluded from school.
- 12% of parents in the poorest fifth of households cannot afford to send their children on a school trip at least once a term; 60% cannot afford to have a one-week holiday away from home with family.

Poverty and Gender:

- Proportionally, twice as many female employees receive less than £7 per hour than male employees^x.
- Girls have better educational outcomes than boys at school and are more likely to enter higher education and achieve good degrees, but women's median hourly pay is 21% less than men's^{xi}.

Poverty and Race Equality:

“You have to sit there in the winter, without the heating on, because you know you can’t afford it.”
Maureen, Clydebank

- All over the world, women and people from ethnic minority groups are likely to be poorer than the general population. The same is true in the UK.
- Sixty-five per cent of Bangladeshi and fifty-five per cent of Pakistani people live in poverty in the UK, compared to twenty per cent of the white British population^{xii}.
- Asylum-seekers are one of the poorest groups in the UK:
- Compared with a white British Christian man with similar qualifications, age and occupation, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim men and Black African Christian men have an income that is 13-21% lower^{xiii}.

For more information about poverty in the UK, see The Poverty Site - <http://www.poverty.org.uk/index.htm>
or contact Oxfam’s UK Poverty Programme - ukpoverty@oxfam.org.uk

ⁱ G Palmer, T MacInnes and P Kenway (2008) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2008*, New Policy Institute/Joseph Rowntree Foundation
ⁱⁱ <http://www.poverty.org.uk/summary/key%20facts.shtml>

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Unhealthy Lives: Intergenerational links between child poverty and poor health in the UK' *End Child Poverty Campaign, 2008*
^{iv} *ibid.*

^v <http://www.poverty.org.uk/16/index.shtml>

^{vi} <http://www.poverty.org.uk/39/index.shtml>

^{vii} DCSF: GCSE Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2008/09,
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000900/index.shtml>

^{viii} <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=hbai>

^{ix} <http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/areasofwork/childpoverty/endchildpovertynetwork/2156/effects/index.htm>

^x <http://www.poverty.org.uk/51/index.shtml>

^{xi} http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset?jsessionid=CCEC9BEFDC518C9E948FC37182209AFA.tcwwwaplaws3?asset_id=33316092&

^{xii} <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/poverty-rates-among-ethnic-groups-great-britain>

^{xiii} <http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/NEP%20Report%20bookmarkedfinal.pdf>