

Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion

Investigations
Work in progress

Start date: Spring 2010

What are the trends in poverty and social exclusion in the UK?

Around 1 in 5 people in the UK live in poverty. Fundamental debates about the nature of poverty in the UK are likely to continue, giving space for Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion (MPSE) to provide accurate and reliable data.

MPSE aims to provide an independent and authoritative assessment of progress on poverty and social exclusion indicators across all the nations of the UK. It helps to maintain the status of poverty and social exclusion as subjects of public and political importance and to advance understanding of these issues.

This programme:

- Will continue to provide authoritative annual statements on poverty and social exclusion, with an additional focus on the impact of recession.

We aim to:

- Maintain and update data on the website www.poverty.org.uk and in a published report, through analysis of survey datasets.
- Reveal the current trends in Scotland.
- Show UK-wide trends in December 2010.
- Hold launch events for UK and Scotland research.

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For the latest information, visit:

www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion

At a glance

Programme title: Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion

Aim: This programme aims to provide an independent and authoritative assessment of progress on poverty and social exclusion indicators across all the nations of the UK

Timescale: 2010

Budget: £240,000

Contact: Chris Goulden (Programme Manager) or Louise Ross (Research Administrator)

During 2010, the JRF will continue its long-standing programme of work looking at trends in poverty and social exclusion. This paper outlines what we are doing, why, and what we hope to achieve through this work.

This information is correct at the start of the programme. However, our programmes of work develop throughout their course. For the most up-to-date information, visit: www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion

What is the issue?

Around 13 million people live in poverty in the UK – 1 in 5 of the population. Some 7.2 million of these are working-age adults, while 3.8 million children and 2.2 million pensioners in the UK are also living in poverty.

The UK has a higher proportion of its population living in relative poverty than most other EU countries: of the 27 EU countries, only 6 have a higher rate than the UK.

Policy and debate on poverty are in a state of flux; not only because of the recession. As the MPSE reports have indicated, progress on child poverty and many other indicators began to stall long before the recession hit (around 2004/05). It will also be important to monitor the impact of the recession on unemployment, wages and the cost of living.

Recently, there has been more questioning of the validity of a relative poverty measure. These fundamental debates about the nature of poverty in the UK are likely to continue, creating a space for MPSE to provide accurate and reliable data.

What do we want to achieve?

We aim to provide an independent and authoritative assessment of progress on poverty and social exclusion indicators across all the nations of the UK.

Both the UK Government and the devolved administrations have targets for the reduction of various aspects of poverty and social exclusion. MPSE is the only independent, consistently available resource non-specialists can access to assess progress on those targets.

The programme aims to assess the impact on people and to:

- advance public understanding of poverty and social exclusion in the UK;
- help maintain the status of poverty and social exclusion as subjects of public and political importance; and
- ensure that public debate and discussion on the subject is based on the facts as far as they can be ascertained.

It will be relevant to policy-makers and advisers in national and local government, academics, think-tanks and charities concerned with reducing poverty.

What are we doing?

JRF will continue to provide authoritative annual statements on poverty and social exclusion, with an additional focus on the impact of recession.

- Maintaining and updating indicators and associated material on the website www.poverty.org.uk through analysis of survey datasets.
- Providing a monthly email bulletin of the latest changes to the indicators.
- Revealing the findings from analysis of data on Scotland.
- Reporting on UK-wide trends in December 2010.
- Holding launch events for UK and Scotland research.

JRF aims to draw on this evidence to influence policy.

Why is this topic a priority for the JRF?

The measurement of poverty and social exclusion is core to JRF's goal to reduce poverty and disadvantage. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is able to remain independent of political considerations while providing consistent monitoring of indicators over time.

A key objective in JRF's Strategic Plan for 2009–11 is 'to provide authoritative annual statements on poverty and social exclusion'. This programme clearly fits that aim. The programme is a key part of making JRF a 'place to get the facts' and central to the organisation's data strategy.

What has informed our thinking?

MPSE has been a flagship programme for JRF for more than 12 years. It uses government data to assess the trends in poverty and social exclusion.

About the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust are two independent charities that work together to understand the root causes of social problems, identify ways of overcoming them, and show how social needs can be met in practice.

Our purpose is to influence policy and practice by searching for evidence and demonstrating solutions to improve:

- The circumstances of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage;
- The quality of their homes and communities;
- The nature of the services and support that foster their well-being and citizenship.

Most of our work centres on the interconnected themes of poverty, place and empowerment.

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