

## MEASURING POVERTY IN SCOTLAND: OUTCOMES FROM THE SEMINAR FOR USERS OF INCOME AND POVERTY STATISTICS

This document provides detail of what is being done in response to **points raised by delegates** at the Measuring Poverty in Scotland event in June 2008, and provides answers to the **questions** raised.

**The term “absolute poverty” is confusing as it is not really “absolute”; Why is the baseline 1998/99? Some discussion groups thought this should be dropped, others thought it was an important and useful benchmark.**

The Scottish Government focus on the relative measure of poverty (the National Indicator on Poverty is a relative) but will continue to publish ‘absolute poverty’ figures for children, working age adults and pensioners in the Scottish Households Below Average Income annual statistical bulletin.

The 1998/99 baseline is used because that was the year that the UK Government made a [commitment to eradicate child poverty](#). Absolute child poverty is the first tier of the child poverty measure, with relative poverty being the second tier and combined low income and material deprivation being the third tier.

**Before housing costs and after housing costs measures of poverty are both very important.**

Scottish Government will continue to publish both before and after housing costs poverty figures in the [Scottish Households Below Average Income](#) National Statistics publication.

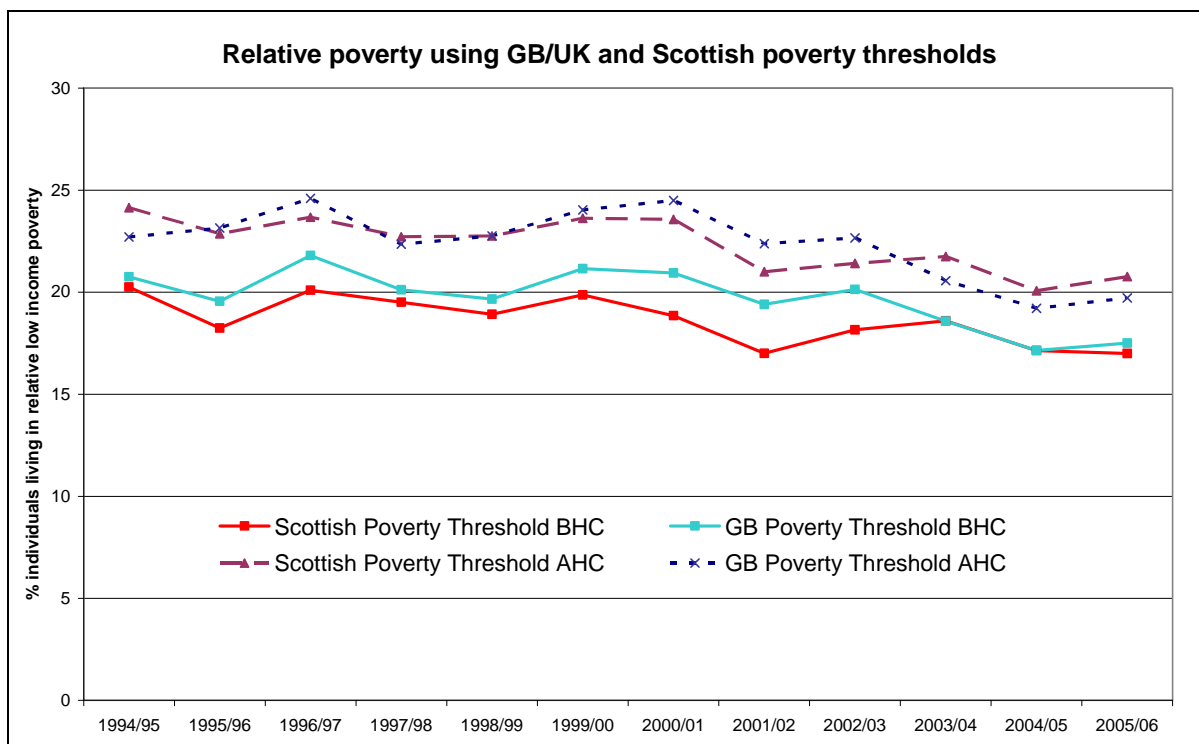
**The OECD equivalisation scale is not on the dataset deposited at the Data Archive and this is confusing.**

This comment has been passed on to the Monitoring Incomes team at Department for Work and Pensions who own the dataset and are responsible for depositing it with the data archive.

**Is it possible to use a Scottish poverty threshold to define poverty? Some people thought it doesn’t matter whether we use a UK or a Scottish median**

It is possible to use a Scottish poverty threshold. The chart below shows the percentage of individuals in relative poverty before and after housing costs, using 60% of the GB/UK median income and using 60% of the Scottish median income to define the poverty threshold. As the Scottish median income is slightly lower than the UK median income, fewer people fall under 60% of that value and are counted as poor.

While the Scottish Government is committed to supporting the UKs target to eradicate child poverty by 2020 (using a UK poverty threshold) and while fiscal powers are reserved to the UK Government, it makes sense to continue using the UK poverty threshold to measure poverty in Scotland.



**More HBAI analysis by household type, equality strands, geography and income decile would be useful.**

Several analyses have been added to the "[Main Analyses](#)" section of the Income and Poverty website.

Detailed information on the income distribution and characteristics of the income deciles will be included in the household chapter of *Scottish Economic Statistics* due to be published later this year.

Rates of absolute and relative poverty, both before and after housing costs, are published on the Income and Poverty website for rural and urban areas in Scotland, and the 15% most deprived datazones and the rest of Scotland. No other geographical breakdowns are possible using the Family Resources Survey data.

**It is difficult to find information on the Scottish Government website; Links to wider and more contextual information would be useful, as would more information about the UK-Household Longitudinal Survey and the Wealth and Assets Survey.**

The [Related areas and Links](#) section of the Income and Poverty website has been improved in the light of these suggestions.

**Details of the equivalisation scale used and the impact it has on families with disabled people and/or children.**

In response to this feedback, a short report on equivalisation scales is being commissioned and will be made available through the income and poverty website when complete later this summer.

**More information is needed about differences in employment, ideally longitudinal data about seasonal and temporary employment, and also information about travel to work and what seasonal workers do out of season**

A range of labour market statistics are available from the following places:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/Default.asp>

<http://www.sns.gov.uk/>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market>

Currently there is very limited longitudinal data available from these sources. Labour market statistics will explore in 2008/9 what other sources of longitudinal labour market data are available. ONS produce a range of analysis based on Census information on travel to work areas and commuters. See <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/ttwa.asp>

**SHS data is only available to people with SPSS which is very expensive.**

SHS Data are available at the UK data archive in SPSS and STATA, and within the Scottish Government the data are held in SAS. Whenever a special dataset request (i.e. something which is not available from the UK DA) is made every effort is made to give it out in a format which can be easily read into whatever package the analyst is using. In practice however, the majority of the time data is requested in SPSS. If you would like any more information on this then please contact the SHS team at [shs@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:shs@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

**It is important to keep questions harmonised between the SHS and other Scottish surveys**

All survey managers of the major Government surveys are committed to the Harmonisation agenda. We are working together to get a harmonised core of 20 questions (in the first instance) agreed. Once questions are finalised, they will be made available on the Scottish Government Website. The SHS hopes to introduce as many of the harmonised questions as is practicable for the start of 2009.

**Data on expenditure, cost of living, housing costs and housing availability is vital to understanding differences in poverty between urban and rural areas**

In response to this, Scottish Government Rural and Environment Analytical Services are taking forward a piece of work to map the availability of expenditure and costs of living in rural areas data available across Government. The results of this work will be made available on the income and poverty statistics website later this year.