



# POVERTY IN SCOTLAND



**“...EXPLORE WHAT POVERTY ACTUALLY  
MEANS, AND HEAR THE VOICES  
OF PEOPLE AFFECTED.”**

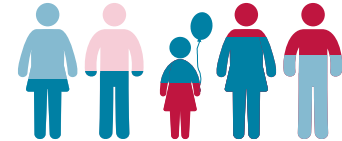
WELCOME



## Introduction

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### **‘Poverty in Scotland’ is a summary of Scottish Government statistics on poverty in Scotland for the most recent year, 2013/14.**



Alongside the numbers is testimony from real people who are living in poverty. This is to help give the numbers meaning, explore what poverty actually means, and hear the voices of people affected.

The Scottish Government has worked with the Poverty Truth Commission to put this together. The testimony has either been written by people living in poverty or taken from interviews people have given to the Truth Commission. You can read more about the Commission at the end of this report.

## What is poverty? Living on low incomes

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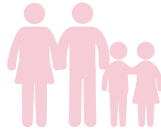
Households with incomes below 60% of UK median income (the poverty threshold) are said to be in relative poverty. But what does this mean in simple terms?

Two adults with a joint income of less than £272 a week would be living in poverty in 2013/14. That's to cover all bills and expenses,

including rent or mortgage payments. For other households, the poverty threshold is different. It's higher for larger families, with more people to feed and clothe, who tend to have larger homes to heat. And it's lower for smaller families, because these kinds of essential costs are usually lower. The illustrations below give more detail.



**TWO ADULTS WITH A JOINT INCOME OF LESS THAN £272 A WEEK WOULD BE LIVING IN POVERTY IN 2013/14.**



**A COUPLE WITH TWO CHILDREN ARE IN POVERTY IF THEIR INCOME IS LESS THAN £416 PER WEEK**



**A SINGLE PARENT WITH TWO CHILDREN IS IN POVERTY IF THEIR INCOME IS LESS THAN £326 PER WEEK**



**A SINGLE PERSON LIVING IN POVERTY HAS AN INCOME OF LESS THAN £182 PER WEEK**

## What is poverty? Having to cope and adapt

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### CARING FOR A PARENT

“ Growing up was really hard because my mum’s disabled, and she’s ill quite a lot. I became a young carer when I was about 13. My older siblings are way older than me and left home round about then. I had to cook and clean and, when my mum couldn’t do something like shopping and stuff, I had to do it. When I came home from school, I had to practically be a parent, but to my mum. I had to do everything, and fit in my homework when I could.”



### HAVING TO USE FOODBANKS

“ I try not to use foodbanks because they make me feel worse. They make me feel low, ashamed, it shows I’m struggling, it feels like another judgement. I know they’re there to help people, but that’s how they make me feel. Sometimes I have no option though.”

## Poverty before housing costs

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**In 2013/14, around one in seven people (14%) were living in poverty<sup>i</sup> in Scotland. That's 730,000 of us.**

**Of the 730,000, 440,000 were adults of working age; 140,000 were children; and 160,000 were pensioners.<sup>ii</sup>**



**14% OF CHILDREN  
WERE LIVING IN  
POVERTY IN 2013/14**



**14% OF WORKING-AGE  
ADULTS WERE LIVING IN  
POVERTY IN 2013/14**



**15% OF PENSIONERS  
WERE LIVING IN  
POVERTY IN 2013/14**

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i  
ii

This is relative poverty before housing costs  
Numbers may not sum to the total due to rounding

## Poverty after housing costs

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After housing costs in 2013/14, the number of people in poverty was higher. Looking at poverty in this way, 940,000 people (18%) in Scotland were living in poverty.

Of the 940,000, 600,000 were working age adults, 210,000 were children and 120,000 were pensioners.<sup>iii</sup>



**22% OF CHILDREN  
WERE LIVING IN  
POVERTY IN 2013/14**



**19% OF WORKING-AGE  
ADULTS WERE LIVING IN  
POVERTY IN 2013/14**



**12% OF PENSIONERS  
WERE LIVING IN  
POVERTY IN 2013/14**

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iii Numbers may not sum to the total due to rounding

## Changes in poverty over time

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Poverty rates fell in Scotland in the most recent year. They went down significantly for children and are now at their lowest since 1994/95. Rates fell a little for working-age adults and stayed the same for pensioners. Over a decade, poverty has fallen for children and pensioners but for people of working age there hasn't been much change.

But, after housing costs, poverty hasn't fallen to the same extent. Over the decade, child poverty has fallen but the rates remain high. In the latest year, more than one in five children lived in poverty.

Although the picture for employment and income improved in 2013/14, increasing rents and changes to housing benefit have meant little change in living standards for people in poverty. This is especially true for families with children.



## What is poverty? Making difficult choices

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### DOING WITHOUT NECESSITIES

“Poverty is not being able to do things that are necessities. Things that are important, like gas and electric, showers, bus fares, and having to worry that your daughter has a hole in a pair of shoes. She needs new shoes and I don't have the money. What do I do? Do I get gas or do I get shoes?”



### HAVING LIMITED OPTIONS

“She just wanted money for her birthday so she could put it towards her school trip to the outdoor centre. And I just felt so sad that that's what she had to ask for – for her birthday. Children should be children and not have that worry.”

## Employment is no longer a guarantee against poverty

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**We often hear that employment is the way out of poverty. But it's the quality and quantity of work – and how the tax and benefits system support people in work – that matters.**

So, a higher hourly wage, like the Living Wage, helps. If people are able to work more hours, that helps too, but some employment contracts can make that difficult.

And the tax and benefits system needs to make sure that people on low incomes take home more of their pay – that it's not taken away in lower benefits or reduced tax credits.

In 2013/14, around half of working-age adults in poverty (48%) lived in working families. And more than half of children in poverty (56%) also lived in families where someone was working.

These figures are down from the previous year – which is good news. In 2013/14, more people moved into employment, and there were increases in the number of hours people were working. In particular, there was a shift from part-time employment to full-time employment for those on the lowest incomes. This has helped some working families to move out of poverty.

# What is poverty? Dealing with stress and anxiety

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## SURVIVAL

“ I can’t survive on the minimum wage. I don’t earn enough to feed me and my family and have to borrow from other family members at the end of the month.”



## STRESS AND ANXIETY

“ Everything is going up in price. Everything except my wages. I worry so much I am making myself ill. I can’t afford to put the heating on, so sit in the cold and go to bed early. I don’t know what I’m going to do.”

## Poverty limits children's choices and opportunities

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The Scottish Government also reports on the number of children who are living on low incomes and experiencing “**material deprivation**”. This means doing without items the majority of the population think are basic necessities, because you can't afford them. This is a more direct way of measuring living standards, recognising that parents might do without basic items themselves to make sure their children can have them.



**IN 2013/14, ONE IN EIGHT CHILDREN (13%) WERE  
MATERIALLY DEPRIVED AND LIVING ON LOW INCOMES.  
CHILD MATERIAL DEPRIVATION IN SCOTLAND  
HAS BEEN INCREASING IN RECENT YEARS**

## What is poverty? Doing without

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### DOING WITHOUT

“ There’s such pressure on children to look the same, to wear the same, and I feel this even more strongly as a kinship carer. I’ll do without myself to keep her the same as others.”



### NOT BEING ABLE TO AFFORD THE RIGHT CLOTHES

“ Non-uniform days are hellish in school. As soon as you walk through the door, everyone stares at you as if to say – ‘what is she wearing?’ You should feel happy about going to school, not ashamed. But instead you’re instantly labelled as someone who can’t afford the right clothes. They think ‘their mums don’t care about them, they’re neglected’ – when really no-one knows anything about your story.”



## CHOOSING LESS HEALTHY FOOD BECAUSE IT'S MORE AFFORDABLE

- “ I want to feed my family a healthy diet, but rising food costs prevent me from doing so. I can buy 20 sausage rolls for the price of one melon; or five packets of biscuits for the price of a loaf of bread. The unseen costs of cooking meals are also a barrier I face. I have a prepayment meter. It costs me £4.00 to cook a chicken in the oven, so instead I opt for unhealthy ready meal chicken dinners, which only cost 12p to cook in a microwave.”

## Poverty affects pensioners' quality of life

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The Scottish Government also reports on material deprivation for pensioners. This is another way of measuring living standards – and simply asks whether pensioners have a set of basic items or can use an essential service.

Pensioners might be materially deprived because they can't afford to do something; but they might also be deprived because they are too ill; or they might be disabled and the service they need might not be accessible; or they might not have enough support. This helps to think about material deprivation in a broader way – that people might be deprived for a whole range of reasons, not just income.



**AROUND ONE IN ELEVEN PENSIONERS (9%)  
WERE MATERIALLY DEPRIVED**

## A determination to succeed

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**Poverty can be stigmatizing, but people in poverty still have dignity, and a determination to succeed.**



“ You always hear that Govan is full of people with alcohol and drug problems, we’re all lazy, nobody in Govan works. All you hear is bad, negative stories, you never hear good stories about Govan, never. If you get told often enough that the place you live in is rubbish, you begin to accept that it’s rubbish, that it’s not a good place to live. I’ve seen me fill in an application form at the training scheme for disabled people and I’ll put down in my address, ‘Govan’. And they tell me not to put Govan, just Glasgow, because if you say Govan, no-one’s going to employ you. And if they’re even doing that at the Job Centres... But I’ll write Govan. Because I’m proud of living in Govan. I am.”

“ People judge you by how much money you’ve got. Not by how rich in life and happiness you are.”





“ I still had my dream. My dream to go to university. Some people in my family didn't think I would make it, they didn't think I was good enough because I was from a poor area. But there have been people in my life who have believed in me. My big sister, people in the GK Experience (Youth Work Project), my friends who knew I could do it - I just needed to believe in myself. Which is a hard thing to do - to go against all the stigma. When I found out

I actually had a place in three universities, I cried. I cried because this time last year I never thought I would be sitting here with three offers to go to university. I just can't keep the smile off my face, it's so good, and it just feels like life's falling into place. After the summer I'm going to be studying for a BA Hons Business Management at Glasgow Caledonian University. My dream is coming true. I'm living it right now.”



**“THIS IS ABOUT ALL OF US.  
WHEN PEOPLE IN POVERTY ARE  
LISTENED TO, CHANGE HAPPENS.”**

## The Poverty Truth Commission

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The Poverty Truth Commission brings together two groups of people who rarely get the chance to work together. People whose professional lives affect those living in poverty, and people actually experiencing poverty. We believe we cannot understand poverty, let alone address it, until those who live with its reality every day, are at the heart of the process for change.

Over the last six years we have brought together some of Scotland's best known leaders and some of our economically poorest citizens. Currently in our third round, we have focused our conversations and listening on subjects (among others) such as kinship care, food poverty, welfare cuts and dignity.

The Poverty Truth Commission is not like many other commissions. We are not simply interested in gathering information, evidence and proposing what needs to change. Whilst we present clear challenges and call for change, we are primarily committed to being that change, seeking to demonstrate the approach and culture shift we advocate. We take what we learn and use it in our communities and organisations.

We are clear. Unless the people who experience poverty are able to shape the solutions, and not just be the recipients of the uninformed ideas of others, then nothing will really alter. This is about all of us. When people in poverty are listened to, change happens.

[www.povertytruthcommission.org](http://www.povertytruthcommission.org) @PTCScotland

## Relative Poverty in Scotland 2013/14

### BEFORE HOUSING COSTS

730,000 people (14%) in Scotland were living in relative poverty in 2013/14

**-90K** from 2012/13



140,000 children (14%) in Scotland were living in relative poverty in 2013/14

**-40K** from 2012/13



440,000 working-age adults (14%) in Scotland were living in relative poverty in 2013/14

**-40K** from 2012/13



160,000 pensioners (15%) in Scotland were living in relative poverty in 2013/14

**+10K** from 2012/13



### AFTER HOUSING COSTS

940,000 people (18%) were living in relative poverty in 2013/14

**-60K** from 2012/13



210,000 children (22%) were living in relative poverty in 2013/14

**-10K** from 2012/13



600,000 working-age adults (19%) were living in relative poverty in 2013/14

**-60K** from 2012/13



120,000 pensioners (12%) were living in relative poverty in 2013/14

**no change**  
from 2012/13



# In Work Poverty

## BEFORE HOUSING COSTS

210,000 working-age adults in poverty (48%) lived in working households in 2013/14

**-40K** from 2012/13



80,000 children in poverty (56%) lived in working households in 2013/14

**-30K** from 2012/13



## AFTER HOUSING COSTS

300,000 working-age adults in poverty (50%) lived in working households in 2013/14

**-70K** from 2012/13



120,000 children in poverty (56%) lived in working households in 2013/14

**-10K** from 2012/13



## More about Scottish Government research and statistics on poverty

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The Scottish Government publishes statistics and research on poverty every year.

This is a summary of the main statistics report, which has much more detail about poverty.

You can find this report and more – on severe poverty, wealth inequality, the living wage, and welfare reform – via the following weblinks:

### **Poverty statistics:**

[www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/IncomePoverty](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/IncomePoverty)

Note: We'll be updating this link with more information on 2013/14 poverty – including equality breakdowns – later in the year.

### **Poverty research:**

[www.gov.scot/Topics/Research/by-topic/poverty/publications](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Research/by-topic/poverty/publications)

### **Welfare analysis:**

[www.gov.scot/Topics/People/welfarereform/analysis](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/welfarereform/analysis)



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