Poverty and Social Exclusion Project
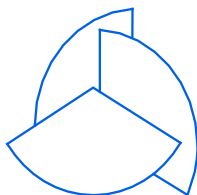
**Household and Individual Characteristics of those
in Poverty
Fiona Scullion and Paddy Hillyard**

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Introduction

This bulletin describes the household and individual characteristics of those who are living in poverty in Northern Ireland. It is based on the analysis of the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey which was carried out in 2002/2003[1]. Poverty will be examined using the consensual measure of poverty (lacking three necessities). Some 27 per cent (N=823) of all individuals are living in poverty.

Household and individual characteristics of those living in poverty will be analysed in two ways. First the risk of poverty: what groups are most likely to be poor? Secondly, the composition of the poor will be examined in relation to each of the characteristics.

Household Characteristics

This section examines the household characteristics of all individuals living in poverty.

Household Type

Figure 1 indicates that persons living in a lone parent household are at the greatest risk of poverty (67%) and this is over twice that of persons in all households (27%). Individuals living in couple households are least likely to be in poverty (20%).

**Figure 1. Risk of Poverty and Household Type**
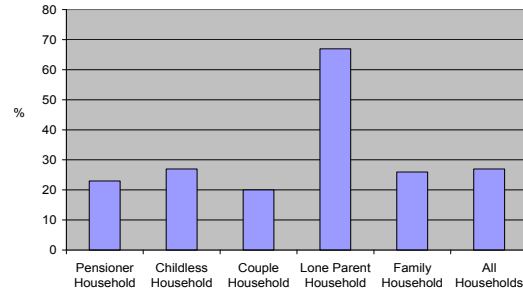
Households with Children

Households with children include family households and lone parent households combined. The risk of poverty rises as the number of children increases in a household. The risk of poverty for households with three or more children is 40 per cent in contrast to 32 per cent for households with one child.

Tenure

Persons living in social housing are at the greatest risk of poverty - homes rented from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (65%) and dwellings rented from a housing association (49%). In contrast persons living in homes owned outright (18%) or owned with a mortgage (18%) are least likely to be in poverty. The risk of poverty for private renters is 39 per cent.

Figure 2. Tenure and Poverty
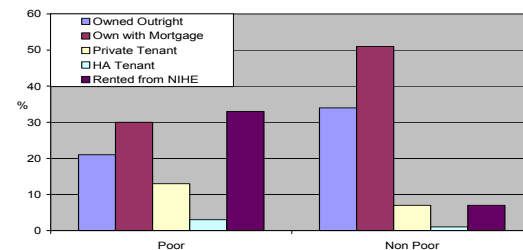
Persons in poverty mainly live in homes rented from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (33%) and homes owned with a mortgage (30%) (Figure 2). In contrast

persons who are not poor are most likely to reside in homes owned outright (34%) or with a mortgage (51%).

Household Income

A household's annual income was divided into quintiles, the poorest income band to the richest income band. Household income was obtained for each household in the study. Each individual on the household was recorded with the same household income. The annual income of a household relates to poverty. The risk of poverty decreases as the annual income of a household increases. The risk of poverty for persons living in households in the lowest income band is 56 per cent in contrast to 4 per cent for those in the richest income band.

Figure 3. Annual Income and Poverty
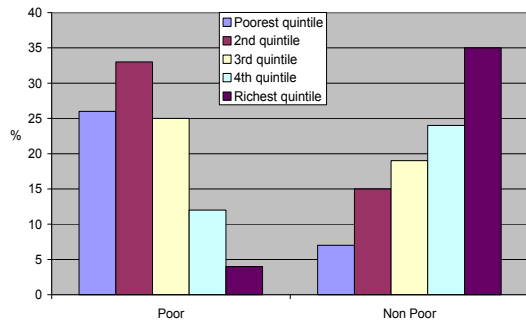
Persons in poverty mainly live in households in the poorest and second poorest quintile of annual income. In contrast over half of the individuals not in poverty are living in households with an annual income in the richest and second richest quintiles (Figure 3).

Noble Index

The Noble Index is a spatial measure of deprivation for Northern Ireland. It is made up of seven domains: income, employment, health & disability, education, skills and training, access to services and housing

stress. These domains are incorporated into an overall measure of deprivation. Wards are ranked according to their level of deprivation and then grouped into five bands from most deprived to the least deprived. Each household in the PSENI study was allocated into one of the five bands. Each individual in the household was given the same band.

Poverty is strongly related to the Noble Index of Deprivation. Those persons living in the most deprived areas are at the greatest risk of poverty (45%) in comparison with those living in the most affluent areas that are at the least risk of poverty (13%).

Figure 4. Noble Index and Poverty
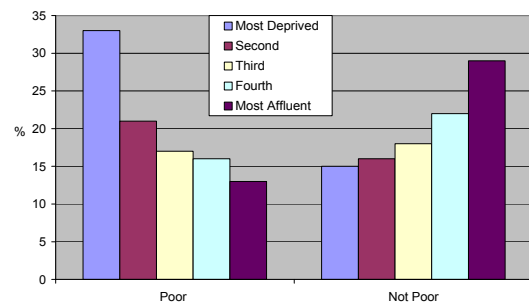
The distribution of persons in poverty and not in poverty across the five bands is very different (Figure 4). The majority of the poor are mainly living in the most deprived areas and second most deprived band. In comparison those not in poverty are living in the most affluent areas and second most affluent band.
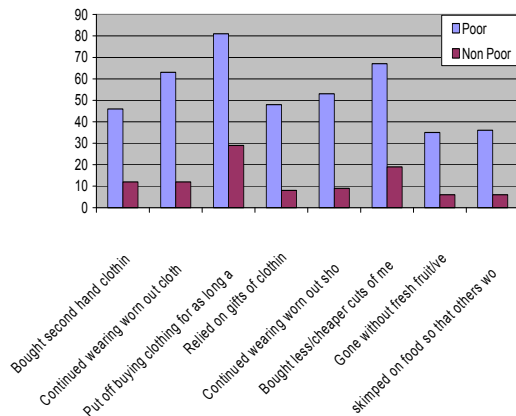
Economising

Everyone was asked if they possessed a range of items and if they did not, whether it was because they did not want them or because they could not afford them. The items covered seven domains: food, housing, clothes, information, durable goods, personal finances and social activities.

Poverty is strongly related to economising behaviours. Figure 5 and Figure 6 show that significantly more persons living in poor households economise on all of the items than those living in non poor households.

For instance persons in poor households are more likely to economise on their clothing and put off buying such items to save money (81%) in contrast to those living in non poor households (29%) (Figure 5.)

Figure 5. Economising and Poverty

Persons in poor households are more likely to economise on social activities such as shopping and visiting friends and family and amenities such as the telephone (Figure 6.) rather than cut back on essentials such as food.

Figure 6. Economising and Poverty
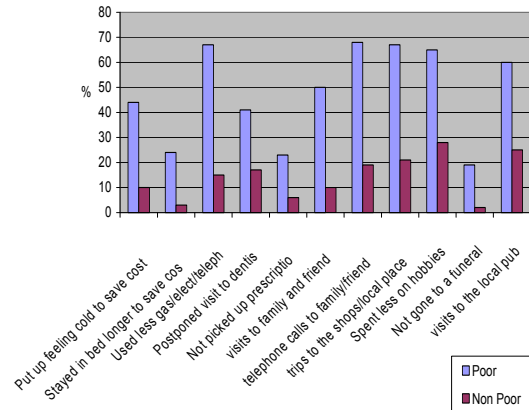
Individual Characteristics

Age

The risk of poverty was examined for all persons in households in the survey. This encompasses some 5100 people. Figure 7 indicates that children (0-15 years) are at the greatest risk of poverty (38%). The risk of poverty for adults is greatest for those aged 16-24 and 55-64 – 34 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.

Figure 7. Risk of Poverty for Each Age Group
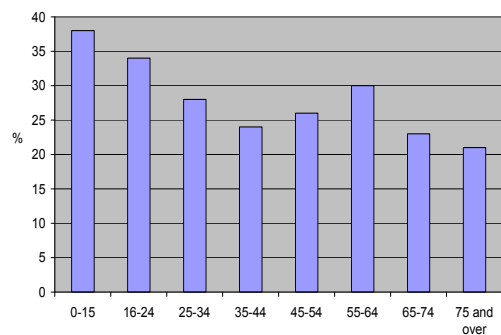
Gender

Women represent 57 per cent of all persons and men 43 per cent in the sample. Significantly more women (29%) are at a

risk of poverty than men (24%). Women represent 61 per cent of all individuals living in poverty with men denoting the remaining 39 per cent.

Marital Status

Table 1. Risk of Poverty and Marital Status

	Risk of Poverty %
Single, never married	32
Married and living with your husband/wife	20
Married and separated from your husband / wife	54
Divorced	45
Widowed	28

Table 1 indicates individuals who are married and separated from their spouse followed by those who are divorced are most likely to be in poverty. Those who are married and living with their spouse have the lowest risk of poverty.

In the sample some 27 per cent of all individuals are single, that is never married, 56 per cent are married and living with their husband/wife, 4 per cent are married and separated from their husband/wife, 5 per cent are divorced and 8 per cent are widowed.

The composition of poor individuals is quite different with 32 per cent being single, 43 per cent married and living with their spouse, 8 per cent married and separated from their spouse, 9 per cent divorced and 8 per cent being widowed.

Religion

Religion is significantly related to poverty. Catholics are at the greatest risk of poverty (32%) in contrast to 23 per cent of

Protestants and 23 per cent of those who have another and no religion.

In terms of the composition of the poor, however there are approximately the same proportion of Catholics (48%) and Protestants (50%) who are poor. The rest (2%) have another religion or no religion. In contrast over half of all individuals not living in poverty are Protestant (59%) 38 per cent are Catholic and 2 per cent have another/no religion.

Education

Poverty is significantly related to the highest level of qualifications a person has. Those with no qualifications are at the greatest risk of poverty (39%) in contrast to persons educated to degree level or higher who have the lowest risk (6%).
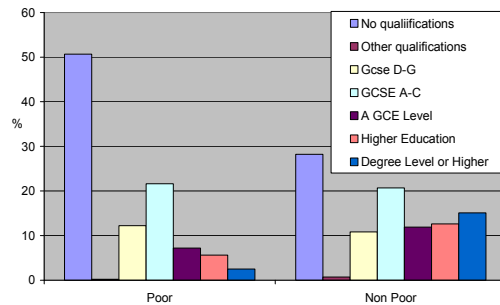
Figure 8. Qualifications and Poverty

Figure 8 shows individuals in poverty are twice as likely to have no qualifications as persons not in poverty. Individuals not in poverty have a better education with some 50 per cent being educated to A-level and further or higher education in contrast to 15 per cent of those in poverty.

Employment

Poverty is strongly related to economic activity. The economically inactive are twice as likely to be poor (38%) than those who are economically active. Some 42 per cent of those in poverty are economically

active compared with 66 per cent of those who are not poor.
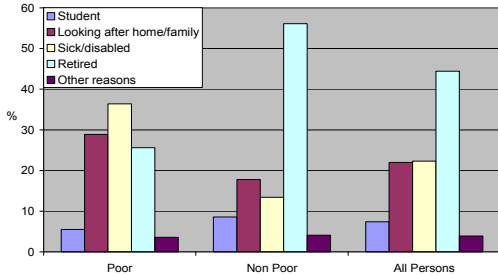
Figure 9. Economic Inactivity and Poverty

Figure 9 indicates that the main reasons the poor are economically inactive is due to looking after the home/family and illness or disability. In contrast the main reason the non poor are economically inactive is due to retirement. A contributing factor for this trend in Figure 3 is age. Half of individuals not in poverty that are economically inactive are 65 and over in contrast to 21 per cent of those who are poor.

Social Class

The Registrar General's Classification of Social Class is based on present or most recent occupation (kind of work done and skill required) and includes six categories: professional, managerial and technical, skilled non-manual, skilled manual, partly skilled and unskilled manual.

Social class is strongly related to poverty. Those individuals who are partly skilled or unskilled manual are at the greatest risk of poverty (44 and 41 per cent respectively) in contrast to those in professional (7%), managerial and technical (11%), skilled non-manual (23%) and skilled manual (30%).

The social class distribution of all individuals is made up of 33 per cent professional, managerial and technical, 22 per cent skilled non-manual, 17 per cent skilled manual, 21 per cent partly skilled and 7 per cent skilled manual. The distribution

of social class for poor individuals is quite different: 13 per cent professional, managerial and technical, 20 per cent skilled manual and 19 per cent skilled non-manual. Some 36 per cent are partly skilled and 12 per cent unskilled.

Ill Health

All respondents were asked if they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability that limited their daily activities or work.

Poverty relates to the incidence of limiting long term illness. Individuals with a limiting long-term illness are at a greater risk of poverty (40%) than those who have no limiting long-term illness (21%).

Some 31 per cent of all individuals have a liming long-term illness and 69 per cent do not. Persons in poverty are more likely to have a limiting long-term illness (46%) and this is significantly more than individuals not in poverty (25%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Limiting Long-term Illness and Poverty
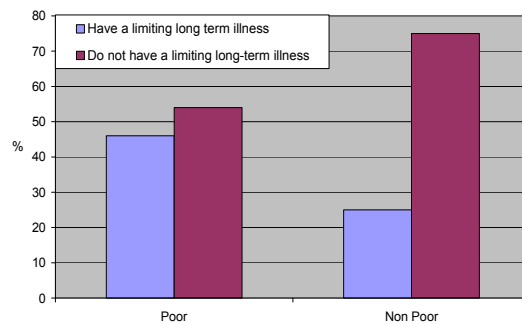
Respondents were asked to rate their state of health. Persons who stated their health to be poor (53%) are more likely to be in poverty than those who stated their health to be good (21%).

Some 31 per cent of persons in poverty rate their health to be poor in contrast to 10 per cent of those not in poverty.
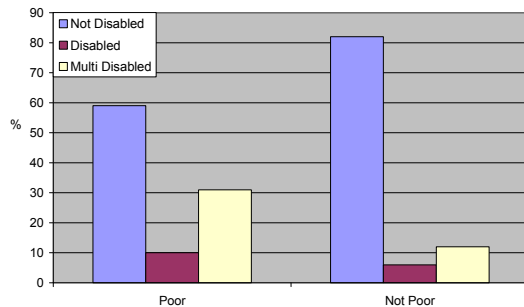
Disability

A measure of disability was created by analysing the number of persons who had a health problem that affected five areas of their life. These areas included a person's mobility, personal care, paid work, housework and social life. Those persons that were affected very much or quite a lot in one of these areas was defined as disabled and those affected in two or more of the areas were defined as multi-disabled.

Disability is significantly related to poverty. Individuals who are multi disabled are at the greatest risk of poverty (47%) in contrast to those who are disabled (38%) and those who are not disabled (21%).

Some 17 per cent of all persons are multi-disabled, 7 per cent are disabled and 76 per cent are not disabled. Figure 11 shows that persons in poverty are twice as likely to be disabled or multi disabled than those persons not in poverty.

Figure 11. Disability and Poverty

FURTHER INFORMATION
Further information about the bulletin can be obtained by writing to:

Equality Directorate Research Branch,
Office of the First Minister and Deputy
First Minister
Room A5.4
Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate,
Belfast BT4 3SG

Telephone: **(028) 9052 3244**
Textphone: **(028) 9052 2526**
Fax: **(028) 9052 8273**
E-mail: research@ofmdfmni.gov.uk
Publication now available on website:

www.research.ofmdfmni.gov.uk

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