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Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey 2012

THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE FOR CHILDREN

Gill Main and Jonathan Bradshaw

Introduction

The Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey 2012 uses the socially perceived necessities approach (see Mack and Lansley, 1985; Gordon et al, 2000) to explore the prevalence, depth and impacts of poverty and social exclusion in the UK. In order to establish which items and activities are socially perceived necessities an omnibus survey was undertaken. This asked a representative sample of the population of the UK to categorise a list of items and activities as 'necessary', 'desirable but not necessary', or 'does not apply'. Items are classed as socially perceived necessities if they are thought to be necessary by 50% or more of the population. This paper provides an analysis of the omnibus items relating to children. For the purposes of this research, adults were asked whether children's items were necessities or otherwise – the findings therefore represent what adults think children need.

In this paper, first the overall proportions of the population viewing items as necessities are presented, and where possible compared to the proportion of the population viewing these items and activities as necessities in previous surveys. Following this, variations between different sub-groups of the population are explored. There is another working paper¹ which provides evidence of the number and characteristics of children lacking these necessities.

Socially Perceived Necessities

Most child items and activities included in the omnibus were found to meet the criteria for socially perceived necessities. The results are shown in table 1. Of the **items**, five did not meet the 50% criterion. A bicycle was seen as necessary by 45% of the population, clothes to fit in with friends by 31%, a mobile phone for children over 11 by 26%, an MP3 player by 8%, and designer/brand name trainers by 6%. Of the **activities**, all but one met the criterion. Having friends round for tea or a snack once a fortnight was felt to be a necessity by 49% of the population, thereby just missing the 50% threshold.

Comparing the status of items and activities over time (from the 1999 PSE survey to the 2012 Survey), there is a fairly high level of stability for most items. It should be noted, however, that the 1999 survey covered Great Britain, whilst the 2012 survey was

¹ Gill Main and Jonathan Bradshaw (2014) Child poverty and deprivation in 2012, PSE Working Paper.

expanded to cover the UK. Differences of over 10% are highlighted in table 1. For the items, in three of the four cases where there is a large difference, a larger proportion of the population view them as necessities in 2012 compared to 1999. These are having a garden or outdoor space to play safely (92% in 2012 compared to 68% in 1999); meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least once a day (90% compared to 77%); and having a computer and internet for homework (66% compared to 41%²). For one item – having at least four pairs of trousers or similar – curiously the proportion viewing it as a necessity decreased from 69% in 1999 to 56% in 2012.

A somewhat different trend is apparent in children’s activities. For both of the activities where there is a difference of over 10% between the two surveys, adults are less likely to think of activities as necessities in 2012 compared to 1999. This is the case for going on school trips at least once a term (55% in 2012 compared to 74% in 1999) and having a holiday away from home for at least one week a year (52% in 2012 compared to 70% in 1999).

Table 1: Proportion of the adult population viewing items and activities as necessities, and comparisons between 2012 and 1999

	Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (2012)	CI (2012)	Proportion viewing item/activity as a necessity (1999)
Items			
A warm winter coat (coat)	97	96-98	95
Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day (veg)	96	95-97	93
Three meals a day (3 meals)	93	91-94	90
New, properly fitting, shoes (shoes)	93	91-95	94
A garden or outdoor space nearby where they can play safely (garden)	92	91-94	(68)
Books at home suitable for their ages (books)	91	90-93	89
Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least once a day (meat)	90	88-91	77
A suitable place to study or do homework (study)	89	87-91	-
Indoor games suitable for their ages (games)	80	78-82	(83)
Enough bedrooms for every child of 10 or over of a different sex to have their own bedroom (bedroom)	74	71-77	78

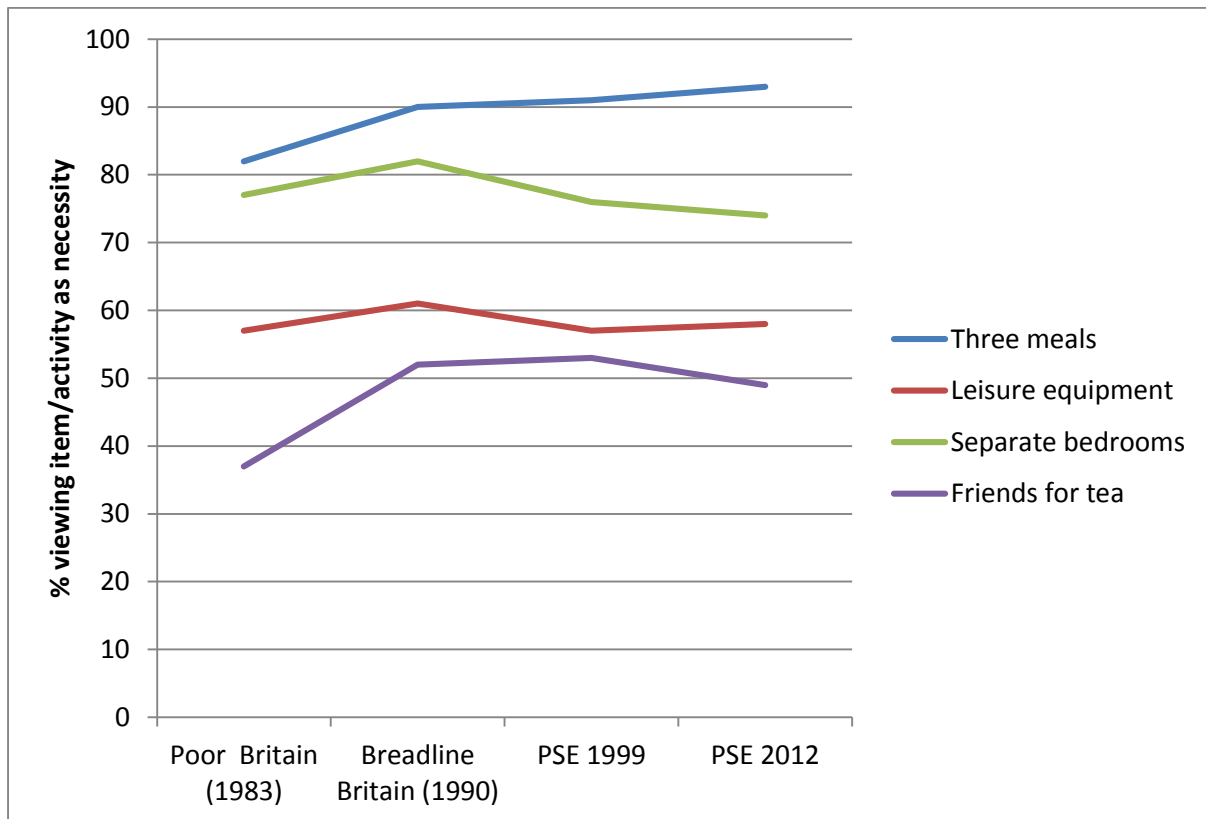
² However, this comparison is not as direct as the others since the question has changed substantively – in 1999 adults were asked whether children needed a computer at home, which has been updated to computer and internet for homework in 2012.

Computer and internet for homework (computer)	66	63-69	(41)
Some new, not second hand, clothes (clothes)	65	62-67	70
Outdoor leisure equipment (leisure)	58	55-60	60
At least four pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms (trousers)	56	54-59	69
Money to save (save)	54	51-57	-
Pocket money (money)	54	51-57	-
Construction toys (toys)	53	50-56	62
A bicycle (bike)	45	42-48	54
Clothes to fit in with friends (style)	31	28-34	-
A mobile phone for children aged 11 or over (mobile)	26	24-28	-
An MP3 player (mp3)	8	6-10	-
Designer/brand name trainers (pumps)	6	5-8	-
Activities			
Celebrations on special occasions (celebrations)	91	89-92	92
A hobby or leisure activity (hobby)	88	87-90	89
Toddler group or nursery or play group at least once a week for pre-school aged children (nursery)	87	84-88	88
Children's clubs or activities such as drama or football training (clubs)	74	71-76	-
Day trips with family once a month (family trip)	60	56-63	-
Going on a school trip at least once a term (school trip)	55	52-57	74
A holiday away from home for at least one week a year (holiday)	52	49-55	70
Friends round for tea or a snack once a fortnight (snack)	49	47-52	59

In addition to comparing results from 1999 to 2012, there are four items which were included in the 1990 Breadline Britain survey (see Gordon and Pantazis, 1997) and the 1983 Poor Britain survey (see Mack and Lansley, 1985). These can be used to examine trends over a longer time in perceptions of necessities. The proportion viewing three meals a day as a necessity increased between 1983 and subsequent years, but has stayed fairly stable since. In contrast, the proportion viewing outdoor leisure equipment as a necessity peaked in 1990, but has in other years been slightly lower. 2012 represented an all-time low for the proportion viewing enough bedrooms for every child of 10 or over of a different sex to have their own bedroom as a necessity, which was at its highest point in 1990. Finally, the proportion viewing having friends round for tea started at its lowest point in 1983, became much higher in 1990 and 1999,

but has fallen somewhat (although not to 1983 levels) in 2012. These findings are illustrated in chart 1.

Chart 1: Comparing four items over time from 1983-2012



Data for previous years from Lloyd (2006).

Variation by sub-groups

The above analysis demonstrates which items meet the criteria for socially perceived necessities, and how these have changed over time. However, another important factor in constructing measures of deprivation is degree of consensus – that is, how far different groups in society agree about the status of items and activities as necessities or otherwise. The consensual approach to poverty measurement, as the name implies, relies on the assumption that overall consensus in the population does not mask large and significant differences amongst sub-groups (Pantazis et al, 2006). This section therefore explores variations between sub-groups in terms of whether they think of items and activities as necessities or otherwise. Several characteristics, and groups of characteristics, are explored, including:

- Personal characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, country of residence)
- Family characteristics (marital status, having children in the household and the number of children, being a lone parent)
- Financial/employment characteristics (income and social class)
- Education level (highest educational qualification)

- Tenure type (renting or home owner)
- Health (subjective health and having a life limiting physical or mental health condition or disability)
- Political views (supporting the Conservative-LibDem coalition, or Labour)

For each characteristic, the confidence intervals around the estimates of proportions seeing items and activities as necessities are presented (showing whether there was a significant difference between different groups, and presented with the proportion in each group viewing the item or activity as a necessity, and the confidence interval around this) and relative risk (showing whether there is a different relative probability of two groups seeing items and activities as necessities). Where more than two sub-groups were examined, analysis was also carried out on two groups representing an approximation of opposite ends of the characteristic (for example in the case of age groups, analysis was carried out firstly on 7 groups, then comparing the youngest with the oldest). Probability levels are indicated throughout using * (at the 0.05 level) and ** (at the 0.01 level).

Personal characteristics

Age

Respondents were categorised into seven age groups -16-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; 65-74; and 75+. For eleven of the items and activities, significant differences existed between different age groups. This is well above the number of false positives that may be expected to occur when multiple statistical tests are performed (out of the 30 items, it may be expected that one in 20, so one to two in 31, would occur as false positives). Items and activities where there were significant differences are shown in table 2. These include:

- 3 meals and trousers (items): for these items, there seems to be a trend for the likelihood of seeing them as necessities to decrease as age increases.
- Clothes, toys, and money (items), and holiday and school trip (activities): for these items, there seems to be a trend for the likelihood of seeing them as necessities to increase as age increases.
- Bedroom, save and style (items) and snack (activities): for these items, there is a 'u' shaped pattern, with younger and older respondents being more likely than those in the middle age bands to see them as necessities.

Additionally, for four of the items (trousers, toys, money and save) and the three activities where there are significant differences (snack, holiday and school trip), the proportions in some sub-groups falls below the 50% mark at which items are deemed to be socially perceived necessities. Where these differences are large (for example in money, where proportions viewing the item as necessary range between 39%-86%), it should be borne in mind that the item, whilst meeting the criteria for a socially perceived necessities, may have different meanings for different groups of people.

Table 2: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to age group

	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-65	65-74	75+
Items							
3 meals	99	95	93	91	89	89	90
CI	97-100	91-97	89-96	87-94	83-93	84-93	84-94
clothes	60	61	58	64	69	74	78
CI	52-68	55-66	52-64	58-69	61-75	67-80	71-84
bedroom	80	71	67	73	73	77	84
CI	71-87	64-78	61-73	67-77	66-80	69-83	78-89
trousers	69	69	59	53	43	45	51
CI	60-77	63-74	53-65	47-59	37-49	39-51	43-60
toys	47	50	45	52	61	63	60
CI	37-58	43-57	38-52	45-58	55-67	55-70	52-68
money	47	39	44	51	59	74	85
CI	38-56	32-45	37-51	44-58	52-66	68-79	78-90
save	65	51	51	44	51	59	71
CI	55-73	44-57	44-57	38-50	44-57	53-66	64-78
style	33	26	26	27	38	32	41
CI	25-42	21-32	21-33	21-33	31-45	25-38	33-50
Activities							
snack	53	44	43	47	50	56	60
CI	44-63	37-50	38-49	41-53	43-57	48-63	51-69
holiday	46	49	55	44	54	60	68
CI	36-56	43-56	48-63	38-50	47-61	53-66	58-76
school trip	51	55	53	49	51	62	69
CI	41-62	49-61	47-59	42-55	44-57	55-69	61-76

Chart 2 shows the relative risk of viewing items and activities as necessities for older respondents, compared to younger respondents. Confidence intervals are indicated around the relative risks. Only items and activities where there is a statistically significant difference between younger and older participants are shown.

Chart 2: Relative risk of younger respondents regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to older respondents

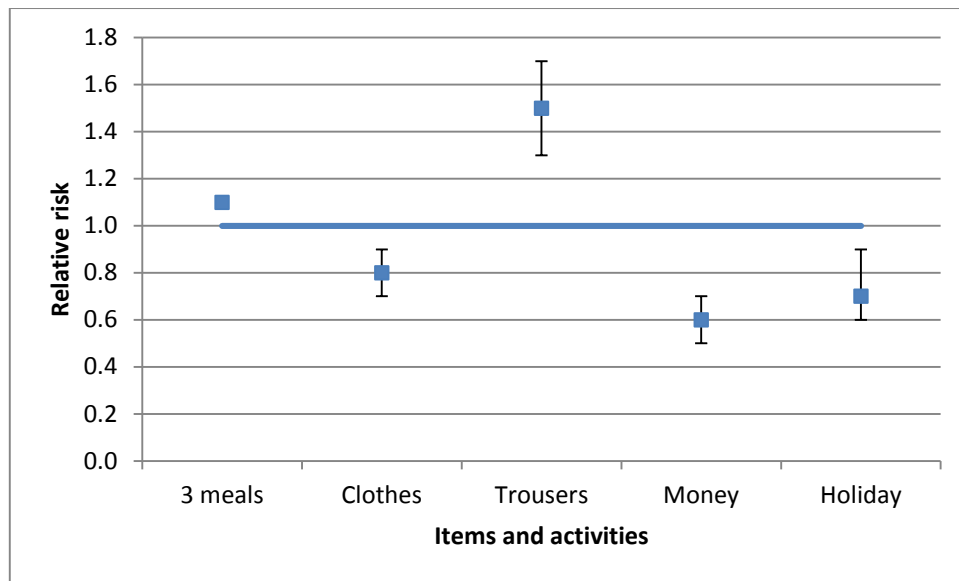


Chart 2 illustrates differences between age groups where the differences are linear – that is, where the likelihood of viewing items and activities as necessities either increases or decreases as age either increases or decreases. However, this pattern exists for only seven of the eleven items where a significant difference was noted. For the other items and activities, the association with age forms a u-shape. The relationships to age for these four items and activities are illustrated in charts 3-6. Note that the y axes on these graphs have been trimmed to exaggerate the differences between groups in order to better illustrate the shape of the data.

Chart 3: % viewing bedroom as necessary by age group

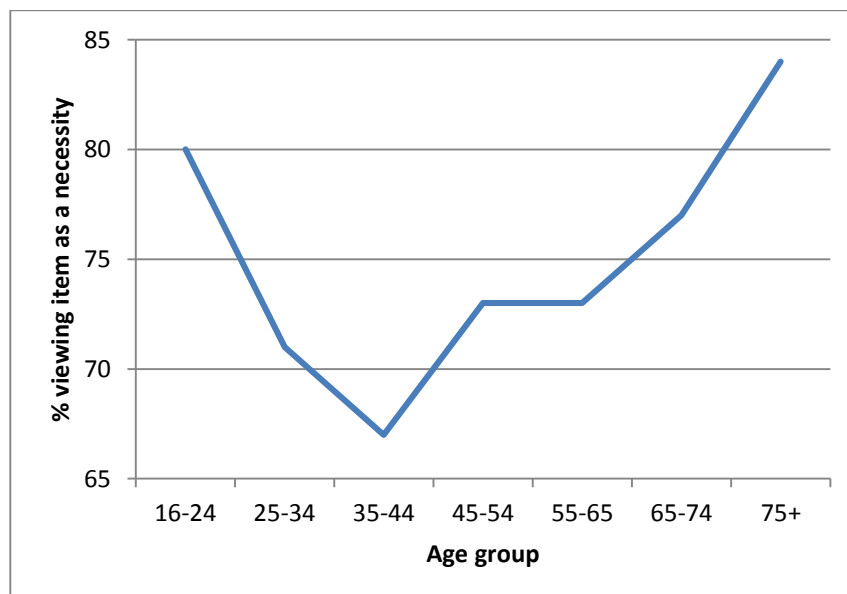


Chart 4: % viewing save as necessary by age group

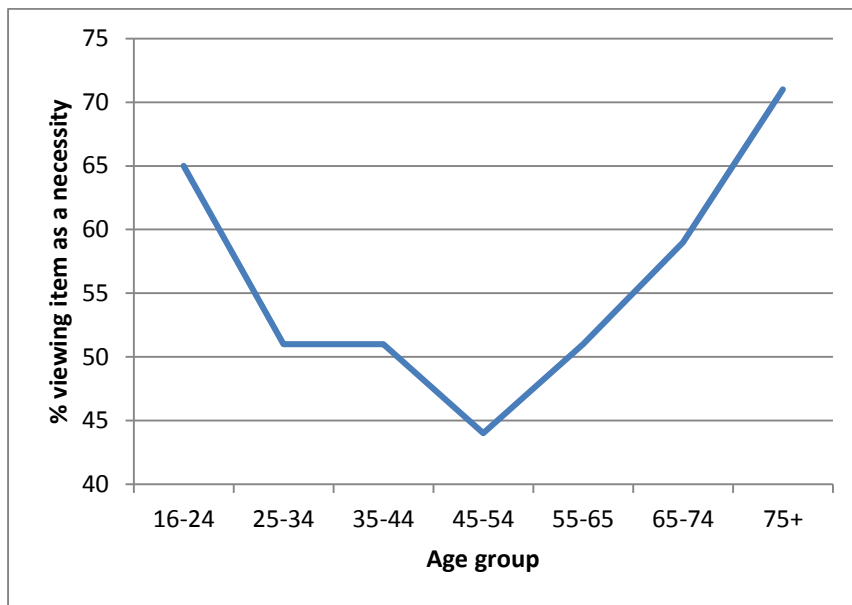


Chart 5: % viewing style as necessary by age group

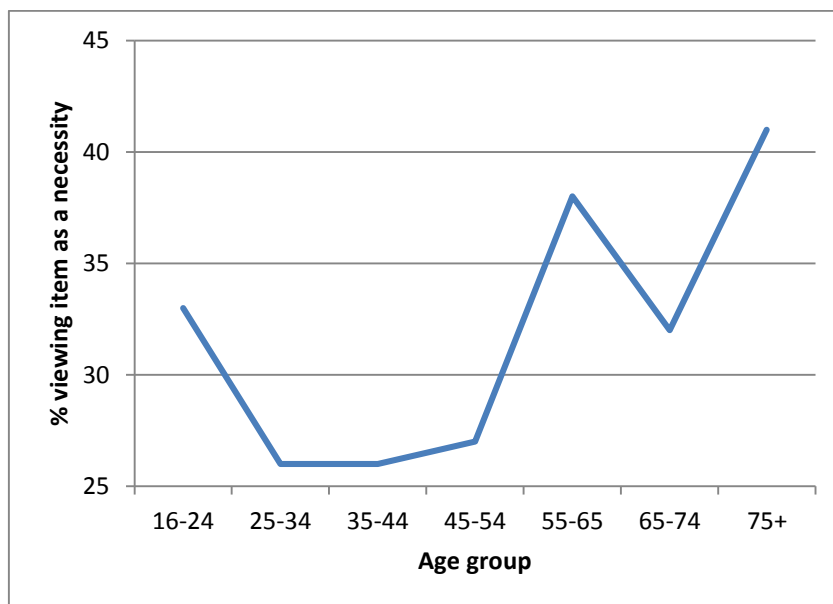
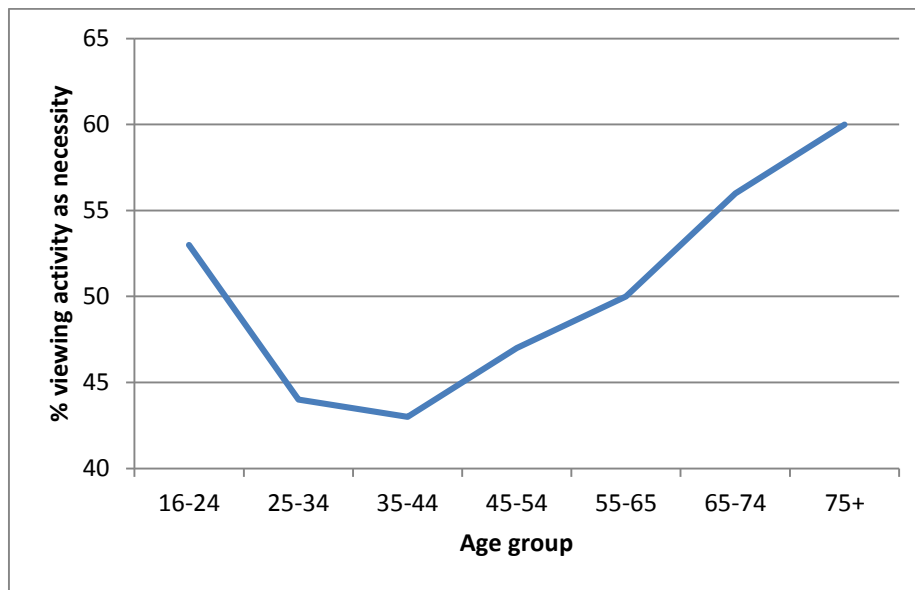


Chart 6: % viewing snack as necessary by age group



Regressions examining the logistic odds of viewing these items and activities as necessities were then run using quadratic as well as linear terms for age (NB. using age rather than age group, as was used above). A significant quadratic term would suggest that it is statistically significant that the youngest and oldest age groups are more likely to see items and activities as necessities than those in the middle of the age distribution. These terms can also be used to determine at what point the curve turns – that is, where in terms of age the probability of seeing items as necessities stops decreasing, and begins to increase again. When both age and the square of age are included in regressions, both terms were significant for all but style; age was not significant in predicting the odds of viewing style as a necessity, but the square of age was. The points at which the curves turned were³: 45 years for bedroom; 47 years for save; 37 years for style; and 42 years for snack. These are broadly reflected in the charts 3-6 above (although in some cases the grouping of data into age groups conceals the ‘true’ turning point of the curve; presenting charts based on age rather than age group is not informative due to the small numbers in each individual age option creating a great deal of ‘noise’ in the data). Regression coefficients are shown in table 3.

³ The point at which the curve turns was calculated using the formula: $age = -(b_1)/(2*b_2)$, where b_1 is the coefficient for age and b_2 is the coefficient for age squared).

Table 3: Regressions of age and square of age for items and activities with u-shaped relationships to age group

		b	Sig
Bedroom	Age	-0.0489	*
	Age squared	0.0006	*
Save	Age	-0.0843	**
	Age squared	0.0009	**
Style	Age	-0.0256	NS
	Age squared	0.0003	*
Snack	Age	-0.0416	*
	Age squared	0.0005	**

Gender

For three of the 31 items and activities, significant differences were found between men and women in terms of the likelihood of them seeing them as necessities. Women were more likely to see 3 meals and books as necessities, while men were more likely to see a hobby as a necessity. None of these differences crossed the 50% threshold. Results are shown in table 4.

Table 4: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to gender

	Male	Female
3 meals	90	95
CI	88-92	93-96
books	88	94
CI	86-91	92-96
hobby	91	86
CI	89-93	84-88

The different relative risk of men and women seeing items and activities as different was only significant for one item, style. The risk of men compared to women viewing this as a necessity was 1.3, with a confidence interval of 1.1-1.5.

Ethnicity

For five of the items and activities, significant differences existed between white and non-white respondents. Analysis by further sub-groups was not conducted due to relatively small numbers in some ethnicity categories. Table 5 shows the items and activities where a significant difference was found. These include:

- Shoes, toys, and snack: white respondents were more likely to see these items and activities as necessities.

- Trousers and school trip: non-white respondents were more likely to see these items and activities as necessities.

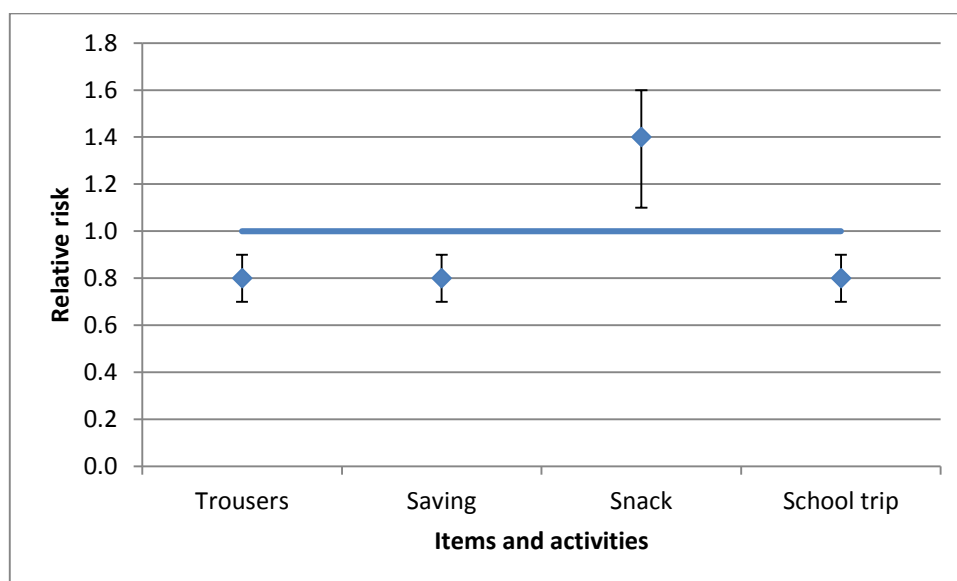
For one item and one activity, differences crossed the 50% threshold – for toys, only 42% of non-white respondents saw this as necessary whilst 54% of white respondents did; for snack, only 37% of non-white respondents saw this as necessary whilst 50% of white respondents did.

Table 5: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to ethnicity

	White	Not white
Shoes	94	86
CI	92-95	77-91
Trousers	55	70
CI	52-58	61-78
Toys	54	42
CI	51-57	35-50
Snack	50	37
CI	48-53	31-44
School trip	53	71
CI	50-56	62-78

Chart 7 shows the relative risk of white respondents viewing items and activities as necessities, compared to non-white respondents.

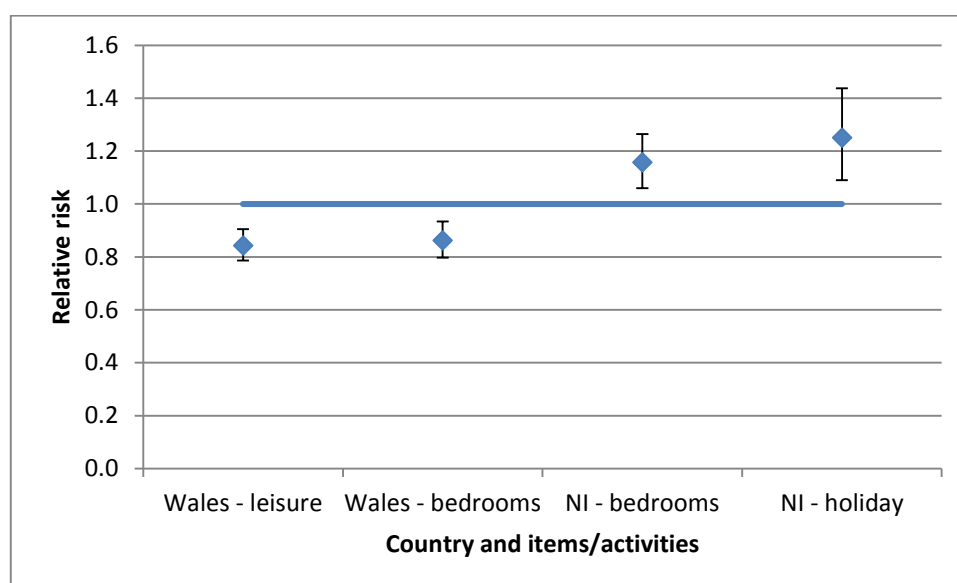
Chart 7: Relative risk of white respondents regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to non-white respondents



Country of residence

No significant differences were found based on respondents' residence in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland when all groups were compared together. When respondents from each country were compared to all others using relative risk ratios, those in Wales were found to be significantly but only slightly less likely to view leisure and bedrooms as necessities, whilst those in Northern Ireland were similarly significantly but only slightly more likely to view bedrooms and holidays as necessities. Results are shown in chart 8.

Chart 8: Relative risk of respondents from each country regarding items/activities as necessities



Family characteristics

Marital status

Respondents indicated which of five categories - single, never married; married or in a civil partnership; married or in a civil partnership but separated; divorced; or widowed – they were in. For nine of the 31 items and activities, the likelihood of viewing them as necessities varied according to marital status. These included:

- Single people tended to be more likely to see 3 meals, veg and trousers as necessities than many other groups.
- Married people tended to be more likely to see computer as necessary than many other groups.
- Divorced people tended to be more likely to see toys, computer, mobile, snack and school trip as necessary than many other groups.
- Widowed people tended to be more likely to see toys, money, mobile, snack and school trip as necessary than many other groups.

For four of these items and activities – trousers, toys, money and snack – differences between groups meant that some groups would class the items or activities as socially perceived necessities whilst others would not. Results are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to marital status

	Single	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
3 meals	95	92	89	88	89
CI	94-97	90-94	77-95	82-93	84-93
veg	98	96	89	94	94
CI	96-99	94-97	75-95	89-97	88-97
trousers	65	52	56	55	48
CI	61-70	48-56	42-69	46-64	40-56
toys	47	54	57	61	64
CI	42-53	50-58	42-70	52-70	56-71
money	49	54	55	60	72
CI	43-54	50-57	42-68	52-67	64-79
computer	64	69	59	70	55
CI	60-69	65-73	45-71	61-77	47-62
mobile	27	23	21	39	31
CI	23-31	20-26	12-34	30-48	24-38
snack	52	45	47	57	63
CI	47-57	42-48	35-59	48-66	54-70
school trip	51	53	55	63	67
CI	46-57	49-57	42-67	55-71	59-74

Using relative risk ratios, there was a significant difference between those who were single or never married and those who were married or in a civil partnership for only one item – trousers. Married respondents had a relative risk of 0.8 (CI=0.7-0.9) of seeing trousers as a necessity.

Presence of children in the household

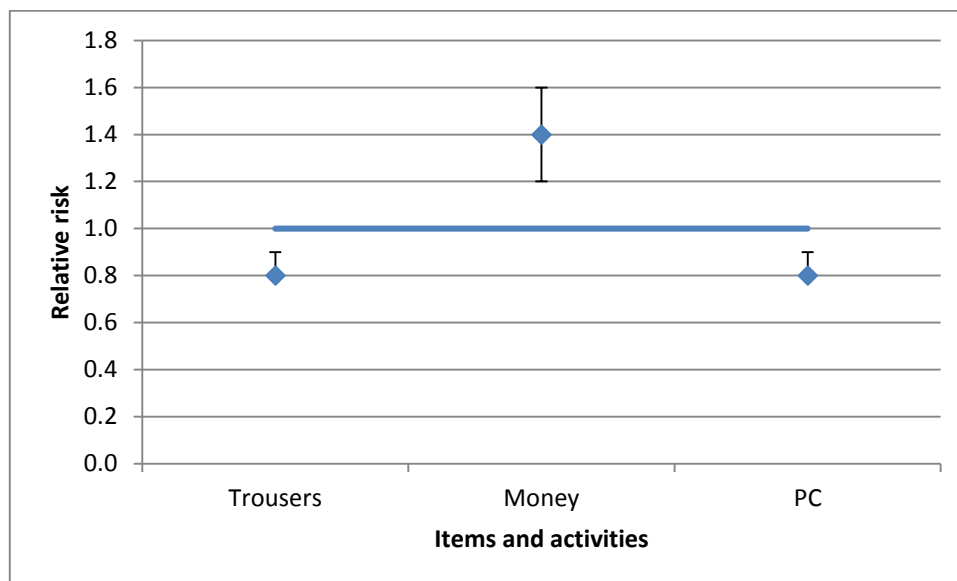
Respondents living in households with children were compared to those living in households without children. Significant differences were found for three items. Results are shown in table 7. Respondents in households with children were more likely to see trousers and a computer as necessities, while respondents in households without children were more likely to see money as a necessity. For money, this difference crossed the 50% threshold.

Table 7: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to whether there are children in the respondent’s household

	No children	Children
trousers	53%	64%
CI	50-57	59-68
money	59%	42%
CI	56-62	36-48
pc	63%	74%
CI	60-66	70-79

Chart 9 shows the relative risk of respondents in households with children seeing items and activities as necessities, compared to those in households without children.

Chart 9: Relative risk of respondents from households without children regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to respondents from households with children



Lone parents

Within households with children, lone parents were compared to other respondents. There was only one significant difference: lone parents were more likely to see a mobile as a necessity (49%, CI=37-60) than adults in households with children who were not lone parents (25%, CI=23-27). The relative risk of respondents in households with children who were not lone parents seeing a mobile phone as a necessity was 0.5 (CI=0.3-0.6).

Number of dependent children

Within households with dependent children, the effects of having one, two, or 3+ children were explored. This made a significant difference in relation to three items,

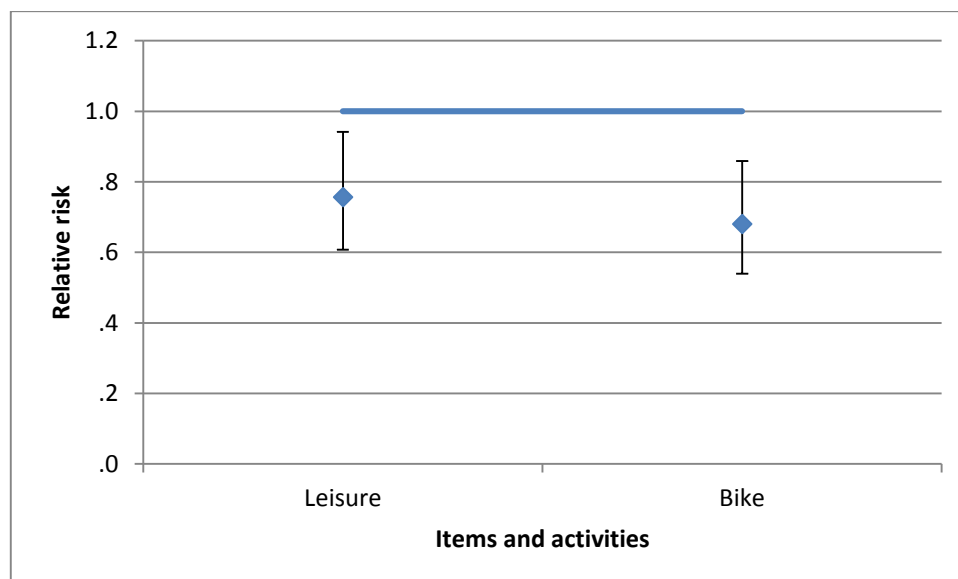
shown in table 8. For all items – 3 meals, shoes and bike – the likelihood of seeing items as necessities increased as the number of children increased. For bike, those with three children viewed the items as necessary whilst those with only one child did not.

Table 8: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to the number of dependent children in households with children

	One	Two	Three+
3 meals	93	99	100
CI	87-96	95-100	99-100
shoes	90	94	100
CI	82-95	89-97	99-100
bike	40	43	63
CI	32-48	35-52	50-73

Chart 10 shows the relative risk of seeing items and activities as necessities based on the number of children in the household. Those with one or two children were significantly less likely to regard leisure or bike as necessities than those with three or more children.

Chart 10: Relative risk of viewing items and activities as necessary, households with 1-2 children compared to households with 3+ children



Income and social class

Income quintile

Before housing costs income was equivalised using the PSE-MIS equivalence scale, and examined using quintiles. For ten of the items and activities, significant differences were found depending on the income quintile of respondents. These are shown in table 9. They include:

- Items which form an inverted 'u' shape – that is, the poorest and the richest are less likely to see them as necessities than those in the middle. These include clothes, money, and holiday.
- Items and activities for which the likelihood of seeing them as necessary decreases as income increases. These include bedroom, save, pumps, mp3, mobile, and school trip
- Items for which the likelihood of seeing them as necessary increases as income increases. This includes meat.

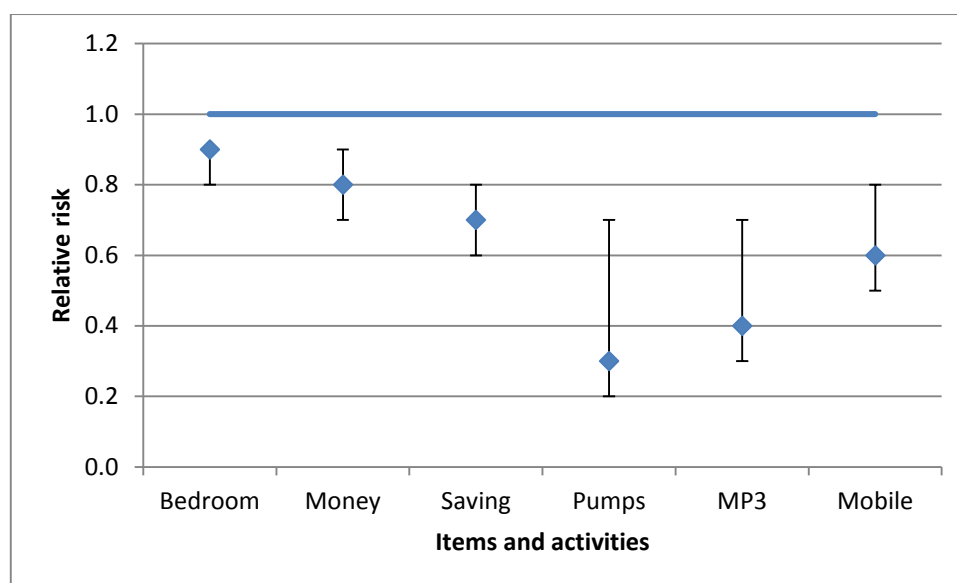
For four of the items and activities – money, save, holiday and school trip – groups differed in terms of whether they would class them as socially perceived necessities. For all of these, only those in the highest income quintile (ie. the richest) would not see them as necessities.

Table 9: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to PSE equivalised income quintile

	Poorest	2	Middle	4	Richest
clothes	63	75	70	60	59
CI	55-69	69-80	63-76	54-67	51-66
bedroom	83	76	81	74	62
CI	76-89	70-81	76-86	68-79	55-69
meat	86	90	87	93	94
CI	80-90	86-93	82-91	89-95	91-97
money	50	64	59	50	40
CI	43-57	57-70	53-65	43-57	33-47
save	64	59	56	49	42
CI	56-71	52-65	49-63	42-57	34-50
pumps	8	8	6	4	1
CI	5-14	5-13	4-10	2-8	1-4
mp3	12	9	8	6	3
CI	8-18	6-13	5-11	4-10	2-6
mobile	34	30	25	21	18
CI	27-41	24-37	20-31	16-27	13-24
holiday	50	57	56	57	41
CI	40-59	50-64	51-62	50-64	34-48
school trip	60	59	54	57	42
CI	51-69	53-66	47-60	50-64	35-49

The relative risk of those in the richest two quintiles seeing items as necessities compared to those in the poorest two quintiles are shown in chart 11.

Chart 11: Relative risk of those in the richest two quintiles regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to those in the poorest two quintiles



Social class

Those in five socio-economic categories (based on the NS-SEC) were compared. Significant differences were found for four items and activities. These are shown in table 10. For three of the four (bedroom, mobile and school trip), those in lower socio-economic categories were more likely to see items and activities as necessities. For one item – meat – there was a ‘u’-shaped relationship, with those who were in the highest and in the lowest categories more likely to see it as a necessity than those in intermediate groups.

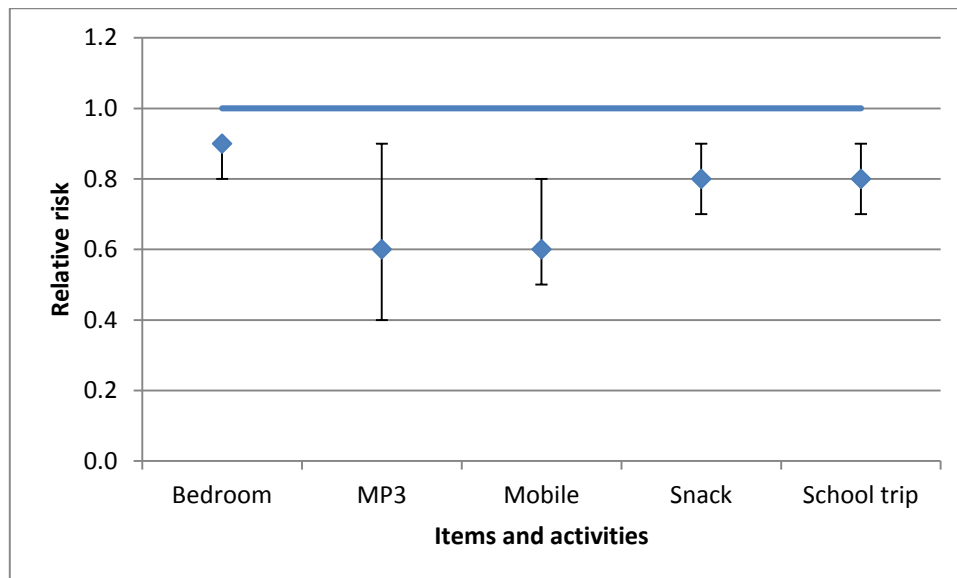
Those in managerial and professional categories did not see school trip as a necessity, whilst those in all other categories did.

Table 10: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to respondent’s social class

	Managerial and professional	Intermediate	Small employers/ own account	Lower supervisory and technical	Semi-routine and routine
Bedroom	68	73	72	80	79
CI	63-72	66-79	62-80	71-87	74-83
Meat	94	88	83	87	89
CI	92-96	83-91	76-88	80-92	85-92
Mobile	20	23	21	30	32
CI	16-24	18-29	14-30	22-40	28-37
School trip	49	52	53	60	61
CI	44-54	46-59	43-63	49-70	56-66

Chart 12 shows the relative risks of those in managerial and professional occupations seeing items and activities as necessities compared to those in other occupations.

Chart 12: relative risks of those in managerial and professional occupations regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to those in semi-routine and routine occupations



Educational attainment

Respondents were asked what their highest level of educational attainment was: university degree or above; higher education below degree level; A levels; GCSEs or equivalent; or no qualifications. These groups were then compared. Differences were found for 14 of the items and activities, based on highest educational qualification. These are shown in table 11. They include:

- A small number of items which those with low or no qualifications are less likely to see as necessities. These include: veg, meat, and study.
- A larger number of items which those with low or no qualifications are more likely to see as necessities. These include: bedroom, bike, money, save, pumps, mp3, style, mobile, snack, holiday and school trip.

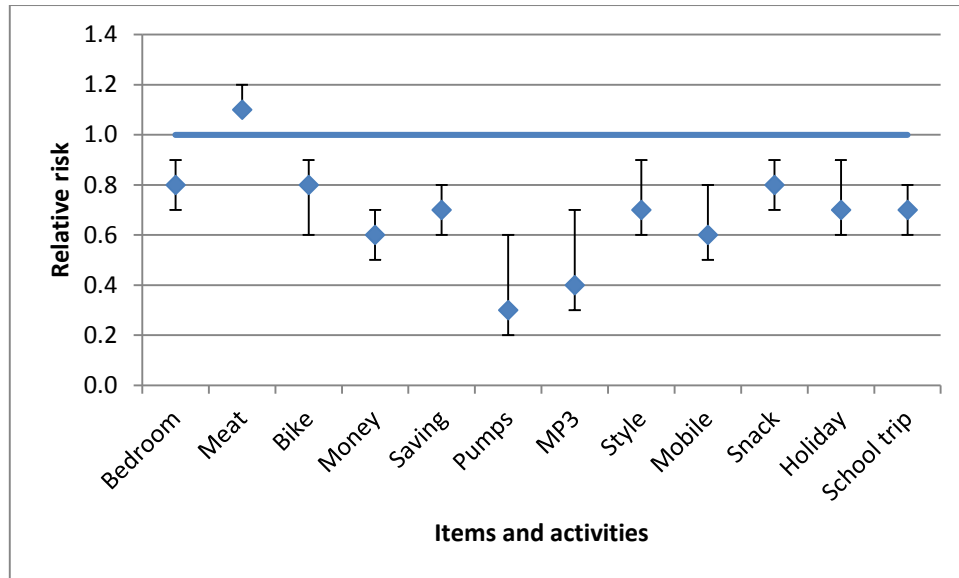
For several of the items – bike, money, save, snack, holiday and school trip – the differences would result in some sub-populations seeing items or activities as necessities whilst others did not. In all of these cases, those with lower levels of qualification were more likely to see items or activities as necessities.

Table 11: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to respondent's level of qualification

	University	HE below degree	A levels	GCSE or equivalent	No qualifications
veg	97%	97%	96%	96%	92%
CI	95-99	94-99	93-98	94-98	89-94
bedroom	63%	69%	77%	76%	81%
CI	58-68	62-75	71-83	70-81	75-85
meat	96%	93%	91%	89%	83%
CI	92-98	87-96	86-94	85-91	79-87
study	93%	89%	94%	88%	84%
CI	89-96	84-93	90-96	83-91	79-88
bike	39%	44%	36%	48%	54%
CI	33-45	37-51	29-44	43-54	48-60
money	41%	50%	45%	55%	71%
CI	35-47	43-56	37-53	50-59	66-76
save	43%	52%	48%	57%	67%
CI	36-50	45-59	40-56	51-62	62-72
pumps	3%	5%	5%	5%	11%
CI	1-6	3-9	2-9	3-7	8-15
mp3	4%	8%	4%	7%	14%
CI	2-8	5-14	2-7	5-11	11-19
style	30%	29%	31%	26%	40%
CI	24-37	23-36	25-38	21-31	34-46
mobile	18%	21%	27%	28%	31%
CI	14-24	16-28	22-34	23-32	26-36
snack	39%	52%	43%	52%	57%
CI	32-46	44-59	36-50	47-57	51-62
holiday	47%	48%	47%	51%	64%
CI	41-54	40-57	40-55	45-56	59-70
school trip	42%	55%	50%	56%	66%
CI	35-49	47-63	42-58	50-61	60-71

Chart 13 shows the relative risk of those with a degree or higher regarding items and activities as necessities compared to those with no qualifications.

Chart 13: Relative risk of those with degree or higher regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to those with no qualifications

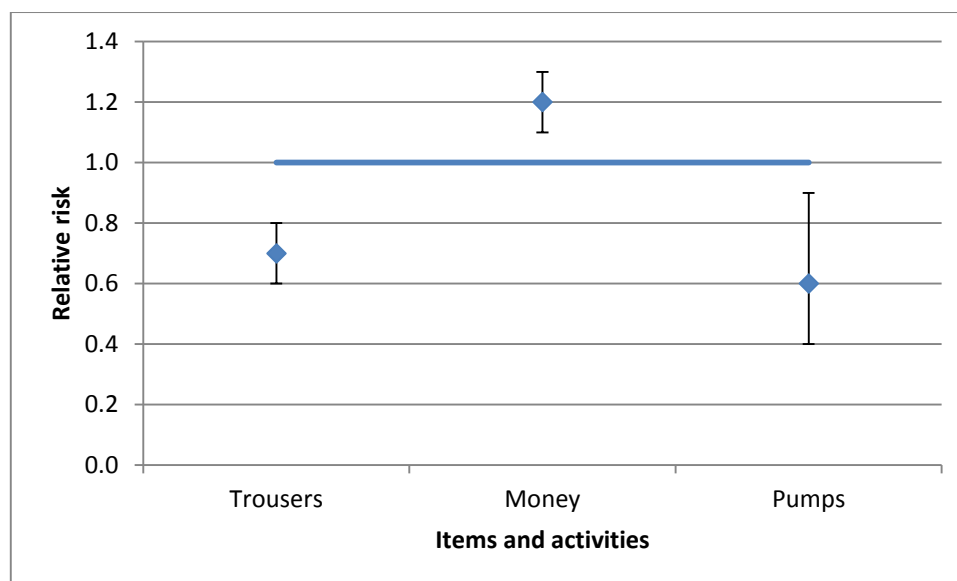


Tenure type

Those who owned their own homes (with or without a mortgage) were compared to those who rent. There was a significant difference for only one item – trousers. 36% of owners (CI=41-51) saw trousers as a necessity, compared to 67% of renters (CI=62-71). This difference crosses the 50% threshold.

Relative risks of seeing three items – trousers, money and pumps – were significantly different between owners and renters. Owners were less likely to see trousers and pumps as necessities, while renters were less likely to see money as a necessity. Results are shown in chart 14.

Chart 14: Relative risk of owners regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to renters



Health status

In examining the association between health and perceptions of necessities, two indicators of health were used. Firstly, an indicator of subjective health was used, comparing those rating their health as good, fair and poor. Secondly, an indicator of objective health was used, comparing those with a long-standing disability or health condition which impacted their activities with those who did not have such a condition.

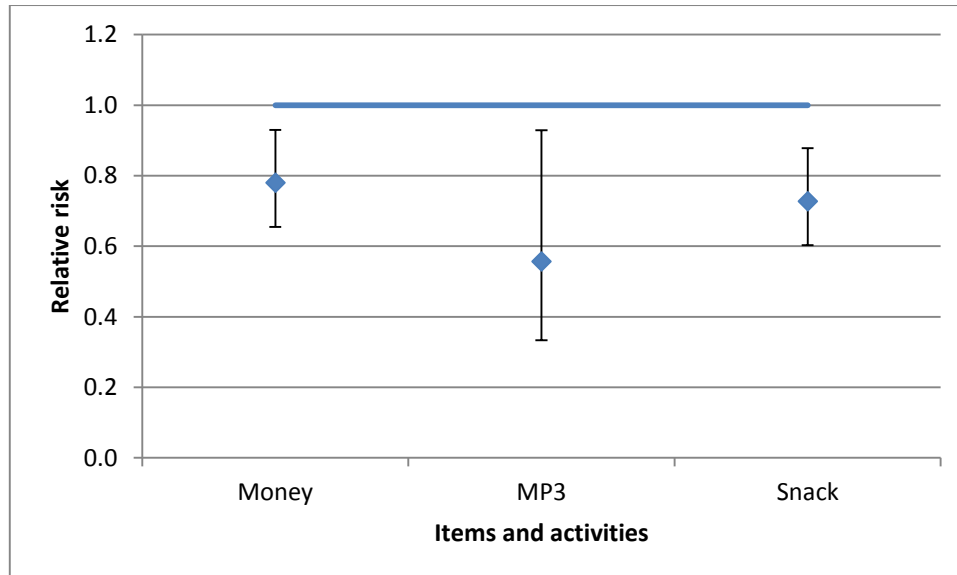
Table 12 shows items and activities for which a significant difference was found based on subjective assessments of health. Significant differences were found for four items and activities. In all cases, those rating their health as poorer were more likely than those rating their health as better to perceive items and activities to be necessities. For one of the activities – having friends round for tea or a snack – those in good health did not see this as a necessity whilst those in fair or poor health did.

Table 12: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to subjective health status

	Good	Fair	Poor
Money	50	69	65
CI	47-53	62-75	53-75
Snack	47	60	63
CI	44-49	53-67	51-74
Holiday	50	64	60
CI	47-54	57-71	49-71
School	52	67	62
CI	48-55	60-74	51-71

Chart 15 shows the relative risk of seeing items and activities as necessities for those in good health compared to those in poor health, where significant differences were found.

Chart 15: Relative risk of those with good health regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to those with poor health



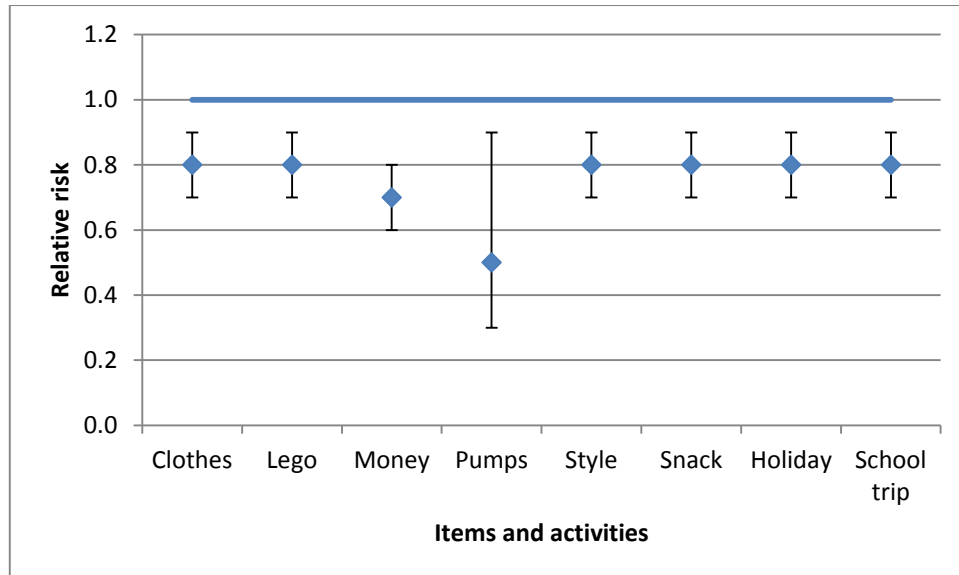
Using the objective health indicator, significant differences were found for five of the items and activities. Details are presented in table 13. For every item where a significant difference was found, those with a long-standing limiting disability or health condition were more likely to see items or activities as necessities than those without. For one activity – snack – this difference means that those with a limiting condition would see this as necessary whilst those without would not.

Table 13: Items and activities where significant differences exist according to whether respondent has a limiting long-standing health condition

	No limiting condition	Has limiting condition	Chi2	Sig
clothes	62	77	26.5	**
CI	59-65	72-82		
money	50	70	42.3	**
CI	47-53	64-76		
snack	46	61	23.1	**
CI	44-49	54-68		
holiday	50	65	23.2	**
CI	46-53	58-71		
school trip	52	66	20.8	**
CI	49-55	59-72		

Chart 16 shows the risk of those without limiting conditions seeing items and activities as necessities compared to those with such conditions.

Chart 16: Relative risk of those without a limiting condition regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to those with

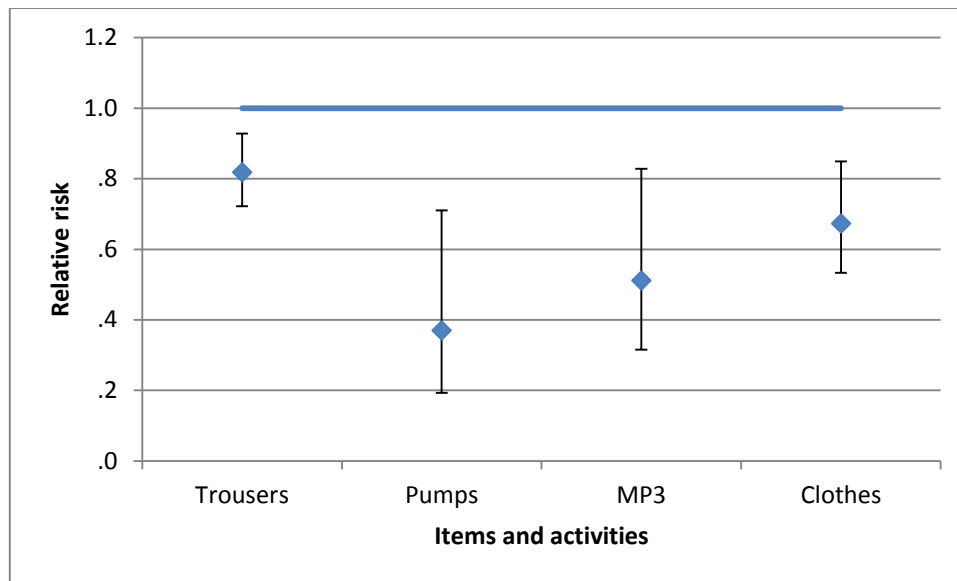


Political affiliation

Finally, those with a political leaning towards the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition were contrasted to those who support Labour. A significant difference was found for only one item – style – with Coalition supporters (25%; CI=21-30) less likely to see it as a necessity than Labour supporters (37%; CI=33-42).

Chart 17 shows the relative risk of Coalition supporters viewing items and activities as necessities compared to Labour supporters.

Chart 17: Relative risk of Coalition supporters regarding items/activities as necessities, compared to Labour supporters



Patterns in differences by sub-group

Overall, for most items and activities there are relatively few significant differences by sub group and, where significant differences were found, these are rarely large and rarely impact the classification of an item or activity as a socially perceived necessity. This section examines the number of significant associations between deprivation items and activities and respondent characteristics. A count of the number of associations – that each item or activity has with the characteristics tested, and that each characteristic has with the items and activities included – is presented. Table 14 summarises the associations each characteristic has with the deprivation items and activities, and vice versa. Of the items and activities, money and school trip have associations with the highest number of respondent characteristics; both have bivariate associations with nine characteristics. Of the respondent characteristics, level of education stands out as having the highest number of bivariate associations with deprivation items and activities – 11.

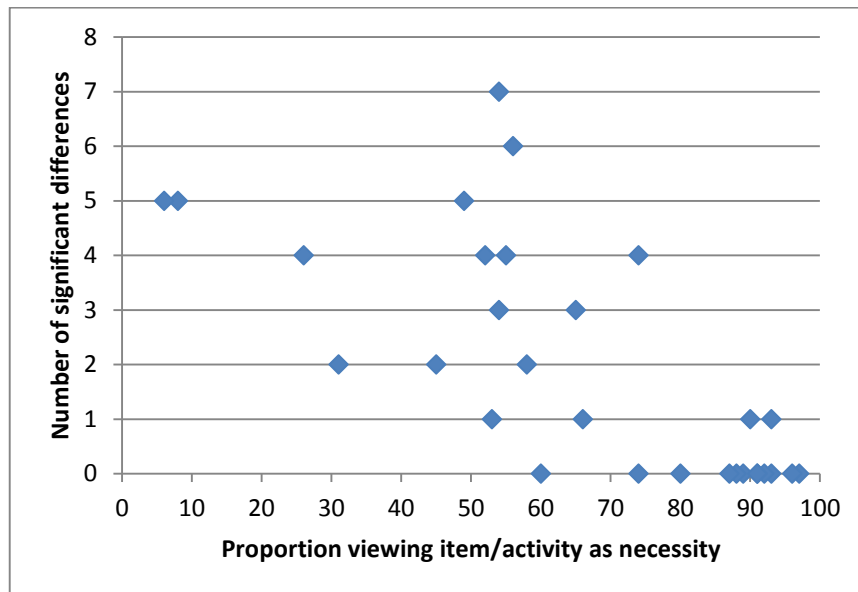
Table 14: Number of significant factors by deprivation item and by characteristic

	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Country	Marital status	Children in hh	Lone parent	No. children	Income	Social class	Education	Tenure	Subjective health	Objective health	Political affiliation	N significant associations
Items																
Coat																0
Veg																0
3 meals	X															1
Shoes																0
Garden																0
Books																0
Meat											X					1
Study																0
Games																0
Bedroom				X					X	X	X					4
PC						X										1
Clothes	X													X	X	3
Leisure				X				X								2
Trousers	X		X		X	X						X			X	6
Save			X						X		X					3
Money	X					X			X		X	X	X	X		7
Toys														X		1
Bike								X			X					2
Style		X												X		2
Mobile							X		X	X	X					4
MP3									X	X	X		X		X	5
Pumps									X		X	X		X	X	5
Activities																
Celebrations																0
Hobby																0
Nursery																0
Clubs																0
Family trip																0
School trip			X							X	X			X		4
Holiday	X			X							X			X		4
Snack			X							X	X		X	X		5
N significant associations	5	1	4	3	1	3	1	2	6	5	11	3	3	8	4	

Whilst it must be noted that not all possible sub-groups were tested, based on those which were included in analyses a pattern emerges: items and activities seen as necessities by a greater proportion of the population generally have fewer significant differences by sub-group. Of the items which were strongly supported as necessities

(defined here as over 75%), only two – three meals a day and meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent once a day – were significantly different by any sub group. No activities which were strongly supported as necessities had any significant differences by sub-group. The association between the proportion of the population viewing items/activities as necessities and significant differences by sub-groups is shown in chart 18.

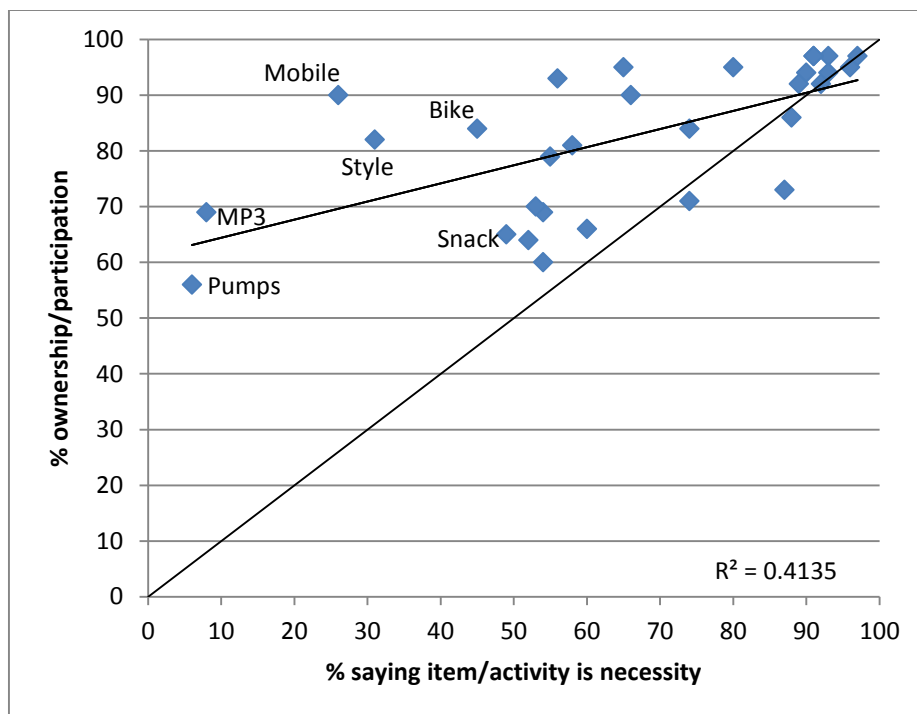
Chart 18: Proportion seeing items/activities as necessities by significant sub-group differences



Perceptions of necessity and prevalence of ownership

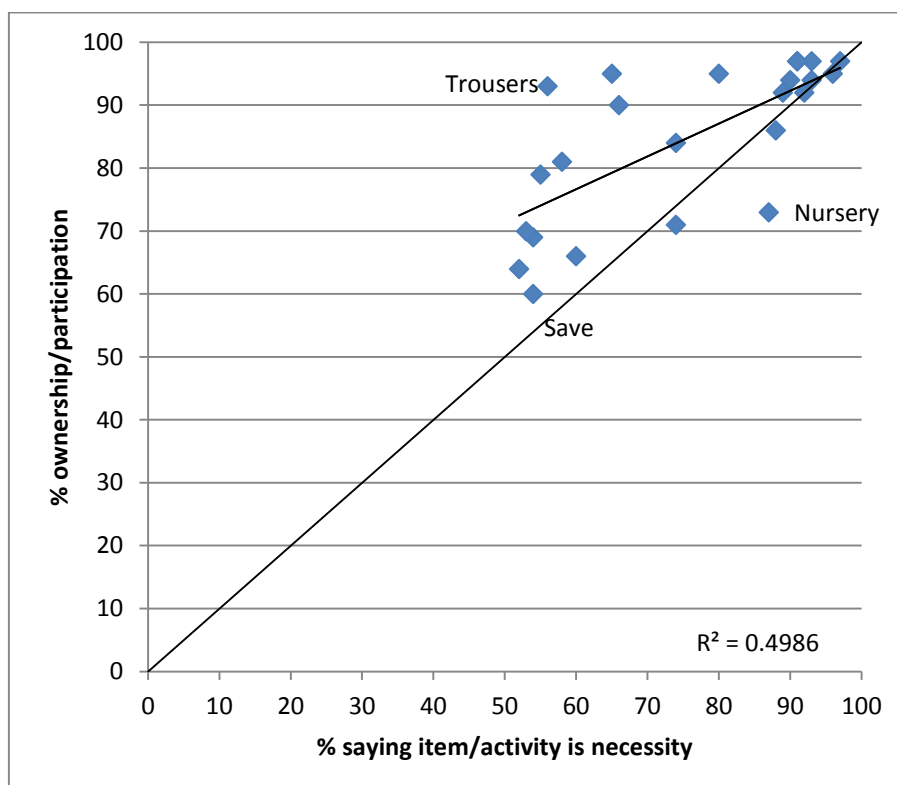
Given the relative nature of poverty (and of public perceptions of poverty) (Mack et al, 2013), one explanation for some items and activities being seen as necessities whilst others are not is prevalence of ownership. Chart 19 shows a clear association between perceptions that an item or activity as necessary and the proportion of children who have it; however, there are some exceptions – for example a mobile phone, a bike, and clothes to fit in with friends – which are owned by a substantial majority of children but are not seen as necessary.

Chart 19: Prevalence of ownership by % seeing item/activity as necessity (all items/activities)



The association between prevalence of ownership and the proportion seeing items and activities as necessities is stronger when only items and activities meeting the criteria of socially perceived necessities are included; shown in chart 10.

Chart 10: Prevalence of ownership by % seeing item/activity as necessity (necessities)



For the majority of items and activities in either case, the proportion owning them is greater than the proportion seeing them as a necessity. But there are several counter-examples to this, such as nursery. Whilst poverty is unquestionably relative, then, there are examples of items and activities which have become very widely owned but which have not passed into the public's perception of what is necessary. Public perceptions of poverty reflect that it is relative, but not that it is only relative.

Conclusion

In conclusion, minimal differences were found between sub-groups of the population in relation to public perceptions of necessities. This is in line with previous surveys (Pantazis et al, 2006) and with analysis of adult necessities (Mack et al, 2013). Where differences were found, in very few cases did different groups have wildly differing perceptions; most importantly, in very few cases did differences mean that some groups would see an item or activity as a necessity whilst others did not (ie. in few cases did fewer than 50% of one sub-group see an item/activity as necessities, whilst 50% or more of another sub-group did). Where variations did cross the 50% threshold, items and activities tended to already be near this threshold in terms of overall perceptions. Whilst further examination may therefore be valuable in assessing the validity of items and activities where multiple significant differences exist, no items or activities meeting the criterion for socially perceived necessities stand out as poor indicators of deprivation. A [heat map](#), showing overall proportions viewing each item and activity as a necessity and a breakdown by the various groupings tested in this paper, is available on the Poverty and Society Exclusion website⁴.

Whilst results indicate a high level of confidence in items and activities as indicators of deprivation, where differences do exist these can be helpful in informing debates around poverty and social exclusion. Firstly, the idea of *adaptive preferences* – that poorer people downwardly adjust their expectations in line with their impoverished circumstances (Nussbaum, 1999; Halleröd, 2006) – is challenged by findings presented here, in line with previous studies based on consensual poverty (Gordon and Pantizas, 1997). In the vast majority of cases where a socio-economic gradient can be observed in relation to the variables used and where significant differences existed, those in greater hardship (whether through income, education or poor health) were *more* likely to see items and activities as necessities. This suggests that whilst poorer people may be forced to adapt their lifestyles, they are not adapting their preferences in line with their means, and are very much aware of what they are missing out on. Secondly, findings around the number of significant differences for different items and activities provide support for the consensual approach to poverty measurement. Items and activities which were seen as necessities by higher proportions of the population overall, also tended to have the fewest (if any) significant differences by sub-group. Where multiple significant differences by sub-group did exist, this tended to be amongst

⁴ <http://poverty.ac.uk/pse-research/attitudes-necessities-groups-uk-2012>

items which were on the borderline of or below the threshold for socially perceived necessities. That higher levels of overall perceptions of items or activities as necessities is associated with higher levels of inter-group agreement about their necessity supports the idea that there is a broad and stable consensus around popular understandings of necessities. Finally, findings presented here resoundingly support the idea that the public consider poverty as a relative issue; whilst 'absolute' necessities such as adequate food and clothing are of course included in popular understandings of necessity, items relating to education (for example books and study) and leisure (for example garden and games) receive very high levels of popular support as necessities for children. This is corroborated by the finding that items and activities which are more widely agreed on as necessities reflect those which are owned by an overwhelming majority of the population. However, the converse – that items and activities which are not broadly agreed on as necessities are not owned by a majority of the population – is not fully supported. This suggests that public perceptions of poverty, whilst unquestionable relative, are not *only* relative; other explanations are needed to account for popular support for, for example, meat (seen as a necessity by 90% of the population and owned by 94%), whilst support for mobile (owned by 94%) remains very low – at 26%, well below the threshold to be considered a socially perceived necessity.

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