Locating Northern Ireland's most deprived

Blessed are the poor; for they alone have not the poor always with them. The honest poor can sometimes forget poverty. The honest rich can never forget it.[1]
~ G. K. Chesterton

For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.[2]
~ Jesus

Research compiled by Timothy P Hein

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[1] G.K. Chesterton, All Things Considered, Selected Works of G.K. Chesterton (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2018), paragraph 14.
[2] Matthew 26:11 (ESV).

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Introduction

Where are the most deprived in the Northern Ireland? The short answer: everywhere. And when we start to delve into the jungle of detail, that often leads to more questions than answers. What do we mean by "most deprived"? How is that different from "deprived"? Is everyone in a particular area accorded the same status? What about gentrification? As governments continue to march away from schemes and council estates to housing associations, who can say (or track) what is the "low-income" housing and where is it located?

Our research has been conducted in partnership with the FIEC but we trust that the results will be useful to evangelical churches from other denominations who are seeking to reach our most deprived communities.[1]

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[1] Research conducted by the author, based on data collected and analysed in 2019–20.

1. Methodology and poverty

1.1 Areas of analysis and discussion

First, this paper defines terms commonly used to describe various features of poverty research. Then it addresses the fundamental, albeit obvious, question: Is there really poverty in the UK? Third, this paper locates the "most deprived" in England. Fourth, this paper looks for FIEC church or gospel-centred activity in those areas, where it exists. Finally, some conclusions are drawn.

This paper is striving for a relatively complex approach to a complex set of questions. Not only is a definition of material deprivation complex, so too are the metrics for measuring and locating persons experiencing material deprivation. And from a Christian worldview, of course, there is the added complexity of spiritual deprivation, which the broader project seeks to incorporate into current understandings of deprivation. Furthermore, the data available is conflicting and conflicted in its results.

1.2 Data

First, what data are we using? This paper uses several data reports in an effort to create a hybrid of analysis:

- The respective *Index of Multiple Deprivation Reports* (IMD) for each country within the UK are used as a sort of baseline. These reports proves particularly helpful in locating areas where material deprivation is most likely to be experienced.
- End Child Poverty (ECP) resources – these are helpful for locating child poverty by region within the UK – such information is helpful to corroborate locations where people experience material deprivation.
- *Social Metrics Commission Reports* (SMC) – in particular, the trajectories and patterns their reporting produces.
- Data published by the John Rowntree Foundation.
- Published research in academic, sociological, anthropological, and socio-political journals researching material deprivation.
- Online and print media – Reporting and columns found in UK newspapers, the BBC and related media where it can be helpful; local newspapers (eg *Manchester Evening News*, *Liverpool Echo*, *Irish Times,* etc) may also provide helpful insights and local stories to explain deprivation particulars in specific neighbourhoods.
- Interviews – data taken from interviews with citizens, ministers, civic and government leaders are also employed, where available.
- Survey data, including surveys conducted by 20Schemes.[1]

1.3 Limitations of data sources

Each source comes with its own challenges. The IMDs are heavily focused on income as

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[1] Conducted by the author, based on data collected and analysed in 2019–20.

determinative of one's deprivation. Strictly speaking, one would have to ask each family/household to know the particulars of their material deprivation, which the IMDs do *not* do. To that extent, IMDs are particularly helpful about locating *area* where people experience deprivation, but not necessarily the particular *people* in those areas, meaning that someone could live in a "deprived area" but actually be living a rather middle-class life.

The *SMC Reports* are very helpful about lifestyle choices and the ability to live a comfortable life, tracking those trends and trajectories for those who can or cannot maintain what British people define as a minimal "comfortable" lifestyle. The careful reader can already detect the limitations. While the SMC has a researched process for identifying a "comfortable" lifestyle, it is nonetheless an elusive metric, no matter how much one tries to quantify it with data. Second, SMC is really tracking trends and trajectories, not necessarily explaining how someone experiences deprivation. Furthermore, some critics find the SMC has significantly *underestimated* the costs of living, especially for families with children (which is startling because nearly 40% of the population experiencing deprivation are families with children). Conversely, SMC research brings helpful insights into the emerging so-called "working poor".

Similarly, the John Rowntree Foundation (JRF) is also primarily looking at trends and does not label people or areas *per se*. Their analysis of government data and their own research is indeed innovative and helpful, limited as it may be.

While media may simplify or exaggerate researcher claims, local stories can provide helpful windows into the realities statistics that open up, but cannot engage. Further, most research in the social issues surrounding material deprivation are limited by the truthfulness of those completing their survey questions and the usual faults and strengths of research.

1.4 Usage of data sources

Next, how are we using that data? This paper seeks to produce a layered approach to what deprivation is, who experiences it, where they reside, and what impact church currently has and can have on people experiencing deprivation. This data is used to create a textured matrix of results. The IMDs and End Child Poverty data are used to locate material deprivation beyond the narrower view of schemes/council estates/housing associations etc, which are the second layer of locating material deprivation.

For the purposes of defining what it means to experience material deprivation, reports by IMDs, JRF and insights from SMC help us to triangulate a working definition of degrees of material deprivation. Increasingly important in this regard is to recognise the "working poor" – those who are not able to keep their financial commitments despite full-time employment (often working two jobs), or are at an income level where they do not qualify for much-needed benefits despite being unable to meet their monthly living costs. The factors are legion. For now, suffice it to say that, as most reports since at least September 2018 indicate, families with at least one adult and one or more children are most likely to be or become "working poor". This paper argues that "working poor" status is not only a fluctuating

category – one can easily move in or out of it, and many often do – it is often the gateway into or out of material deprivation.

In short, the goal of this project is to be beholden to no one single source, but at each turn, to be reliant on two or more sources for our data.

1.5 Complexities

On a closing note, it must be said that defining, quantifying and locating material deprivation is a massively complex issue. A common reaction is to see poverty as "simple problem", or to minimise the impact it has on people's lives, or to minimise the number of people who are affected.

Even worse, a common reaction is to say some people "earned" it. Such an accusation is akin to calling you, the reader, an upper-class-self-righteous-posh-ignoramus, simply because you have the means to access this report and read it somewhere warm where you're not under threat of eviction, or physical assault, or exhausted from working two labour-intensive jobs, because you don't have to worry about having no food to pack for your child's school lunch, or because you're not under a blanket on a street debating whether to finish reading this sentence or use the paper to start a fire so you are not so cold tonight.

Unfair, right? Maybe you, the reader, *are* experiencing some degree of deprivation too. Maybe someone gave you this research paper? Indeed, such reductionisms are infantile at best, ignorant and dangerous at worst. Furthermore, it cannot be lost on readers or researchers that the subject of study is *people* who are in difficult humanitarian situations: they may not have a place to sleep tonight, not had a proper meal today, they may have a child moving school for the third time this year, or parent(s) who do not care little about whether the child attends school, and even less about whether they do their homework.

This is not a tug at heartstrings. These statistics and analysis are to help us quantify the scope and breadth of what people nearer to us than we realise are experiencing every day. Souls are going to hell because they do not know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and, for some of them, hell may seem an improvement on their current living conditions. Such people are sleeping on the streets around our church buildings, or struggling to hang on to the flat next door to a church member, or sleeping in their car next to a deacon's workplace. Others are second or third generation families struggling to survive on benefits, some have a criminal record (be it as a restless youth or willing to do *anything* to make ends meet), live in a council estate or on an auntie's couch. Church, let us find them and do something to help them out of their material deprivation… As you read each sentence, please remember that there is a person in the UK struggling to survive the hour you've spent reading or studying. That is not a guilt trip, but a sober reminder of the stakes involved.

2. Defining terms

2.1 Definitions of poverty

It is important to clarify what one means by "poverty" or "material deprivation" – if for no other reason than that most institutions measuring and monitoring poverty tend to have their own definitions.

The Central Government has a poverty line of the anyone below the 60% median income. SMC has a poverty threshold based upon what a family reasonable needs to live "reasonably". IMD determines that those persons or areas in the lower 30% (Decile 3) or lower are "deprived". This is in contrast to the EU, which broadly defines poverty based on possession of basics for living – like two sets of clothes and access to running water, etc. How one defines being poor is vital to how one measures poverty, lest persons be excluded (or included) that should not be.

2.2 Glossary of terms

There are several terms and acronyms that can further complicate the discussions about material deprivation. In this section, we take a brief look at each term and describe their meaning with brief comment – an annotated glossary. Readers are encouraged to take any questions here charitably as they are likely answered in more detail within the appropriate context that a mere annotated glossary-like format is unable to do. Regardless, readers are encouraged to read this section carefully as well as refer back to this section later, as needed. Terms are discussed in alphabetical order for ease of reference.

For the purposes of this paper, and as a means to draw upon available data, this paper uses the various UK Indices of Multiple Deprivation Reports to construct a matrix for what constitutes "poor" or being in poverty. This paper uses the following nomenclature:

"Deprived"

"Deprived" and all cognates and synonyms ("material deprivation", "poor", "the poor") refer to someone experiencing poverty, generally speaking. Someone is deprived when lacking one or more essentials for basic human life in the UK (according to IMD metrics, for example). It includes persons within the bottom 30–11% of the IMD for one's country of residence; or those living at or below the poverty threshold (up to -3%). See also "Poverty threshold".

Depth of poverty

Refers to the extent to which someone is "deprived" or "poor", or to "how much they *don't* have". For example, a homeless man experiences a greater depth of poverty (for example, no home, work, healthy environment, etc) in that they often literally have nothing, whereas someone living on benefits alone may be poor, but not to the depths of the said homeless person.

"Experiencing poverty"

This is a more accurate way of saying "someone is poor" and similar to "someone is materially deprived". Poverty is a state of being that one can go "in" and "out" of, experience or not experience. For example, Susie loses her well-paying job in London, does not find employment for a year, has a bicycle accident and is disabled, has to change her line of work but cannot find work two years on, can no longer afford her flat. She is likely to experience poverty although she may come out of it someday. But Peter, whose parents were permanently unemployed and who has no qualifications and no prospect of a job, "experiences poverty" differently from Susie.

Hardship

This defines someone on the brink – or maybe within the threshold – of poverty: that grey area where the lines are difficult to define. To quantify this, we recognised persons just beyond +3% above poverty threshold as experiencing "hardship".

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
including SIMD (Scotland), EIMD (England) WIMD (Wales) and NIIMD (Northern Ireland)

The *Index of Multiple Deprivation* is Central Government's annual report on poverty. Each nation within the UK produces independent reports. This paper refers to such reports generally as "IMD" and when discussing a particular country's report, refers to the EIMD (England IMD), SIMD (Scotland IMD), WIMD (Wales IMD) and (NIMD) Northern Ireland. Since London functions as an area in its own right, its data is also recorded – LIMD (London). IMDs have seven domains comprising their index: Income; Employment; Health and Disability; Education, Skills and Training; Barriers to Housing and Services; Crime; and Living Environment.

"Least deprived"

Someone or something classified within the top 10% or above of the least deprived communities according to the IMD, based upon one's country of residence.

Lower-tier Area (LA)

Central government's unit of measure, a Lower-tier Area (LA) is a geographical area comprised of a city or region. Each LA is further divided into several Lower-tier Super Output Areas (LSOAs, see below). LAs are typically a major city or cluster of towns and their immediate surrounding area. For example, Liverpool is one LA. Similarly, the LA "Redcar and Cleveland" comprises the towns of both Redcar and Cleveland and their environs. ("Redcar and Cleveland 022D" and "Redcar and Cleveland 019a" are both LSOAs in "Redcar and Cleveland"). Generally, where towns are more sparsely populated, one finds such "combination" LAs. Big cities like London, Liverpool, Birmingham are individual LAs, as are some mid-sized cities like Bristol, Middlesbrough and Blackpool. The history explaining this is

political, complicated, and beyond the scope of this paper.[1] In short, LAs enable analysis at the city/town level, while LSOAS enable analysis at the neighborhood level.

Lower-tier Super Output Area (LSOA)

Central government's smallest unit of measure – a Lower-tier Super Output Area (LSOA) – is a demarcated geographical area of approximately 1,600 people. These are fixed groups of 33,485 areas based upon census data and have not varied since the 2016/17 IMD reporting. The history explaining how such lines were drawn is complicated and beyond the scope of this paper.[2] Data on LSOAs enable analysis at the neighbourhood level.

Material deprivation

The lack, or absence, in some fashion of material things which are essential for living – otherwise known as "experiencing poverty" (see above, "Deprived"). Further, this is also to distinguish from other kinds of deprivation that governments do not survey, but are nonetheless essential, namely, spiritual deprivation (see below, "Spiritual deprivation") – though we can also mention moral, hope, health and educational deprivation, to name but a few.

"Most deprived"

Someone or something classified within the bottom 10% or below of the most deprived communities according to the IMD, based upon one's country of residence. Or, living at -3% or more below the poverty threshold.

Persistent poverty

Refers to the length of time that someone has been in poverty, which can vary. This variation complicates determining who is "most deprived" and where they are located. A family may do well until the primary provider suffers job loss, or someone suffering hardship on a part-time job cannot pay bills due to being home with a flu, causing the domino effect of becoming behind on rent, etc. In other words, there are many who go in and out of deprivation to any degree, especially near the poverty thresholds where factors contributing to deprivation can be so volatile.

Poor/poverty

Refers to someone who is identified as "materially deprived" (see above) and may be used synonymously with "deprived" or "deprivation".

Poverty line

A so-called line of demarcation suggesting a person is either inside or outside the poverty

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[1] See Michael Noble et al., "Measuring multiple deprivation at the small-area level", *The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 Technical Report,*. Environment and Planning A, 2006, vol. 38, 169–85.
[2] Noble et al., "Measuring multiple deprivation at the small-area level".

line. This term is generally avoided as it is too arbitrary or simplistic, researchers preferring instead "poverty threshold".

Poverty threshold

The general point at which, at least statistically, one expects to find such a person or family to be experiencing poverty. Note that this is a term that is heavily, but not exclusively, dependent upon income levels. Further, this is different from a so-called "poverty line" which suggests a person is either inside or outside the poverty line. By "threshold", researchers are trying to communicate a range, not necessarily a fixed point (eg Steve is "in poverty" because he makes £400/month, Sara is not because she makes £425/month). Rather, there are multiple indicators – income, cost of living, economic factors – that can inform a threshold and give a more realistic picture.

Admittedly, this is somewhat of a simplification. The SMC's full report details the complexities of getting a precise definition of "poverty" and what the exact poverty threshold is, acknowledging the challenge of those "just above" whatever threshold one decides.[3] For example, if the threshold is 50% median income, what about the 51–55% crowd? Is an individual or family at 60% *really* "out" or "above" the poverty threshold if they are only one car repair or medical expense away from poverty? "Some self-employed people will report no income, hence appearing at the very bottom of the distribution, despite potentially having significant profits from their work."[4] Similarly, determining a poverty threshold by examining a combination of low income and material deprivation yields unreliable results.[5] Indeed, any threshold is an arbitrary one, hence the Commission's measurement decision is here adopted: the depth of poverty should (a) reflect how far each family in poverty is below the poverty line, and (b) also capture and report on families that are just above the poverty line.[6]

Relative poverty

The experience of poverty as one who is impoverished in a given country. This threshold varies from country to country as infrastructure, economy, government, living conditions and other factors for a given country as a whole vary. (See below, 2.3 Extended discussion: "Relative poverty".)

Social Metrics Commission (SMC)

The Social Metrics Commission is an independent research group dedicated to helping public

[3] Social Metrics Commission, *A New Measure of Poverty For the UK: The Final Report of the Social Metrics Commission*, Measuring Poverty, ed. Philippa Stroud (UK: Social Metrics Commission, September 2018), 50–52. For full discussion, see 17–77., https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/.
[4] Social Metrics Commission, *New Measure of UK Poverty*, 20.
[5] Social Metrics Commission, *New Measure of UK Poverty*, 70–71.
[6] Social Metrics Commission, *New Measure of UK Poverty*, 71.

policy makers and the public understand and take action to tackle poverty in the UK.[7] The work is led by the Legatum Institute's CEO, Baroness Stroud. A key feature of their work is to develop new metrics for measuring poverty and identifying those who experience it, with an aim at improved understanding of poverty and appropriate action to improve outcomes for those people experiencing poverty.

Working poor/In-work poor

Refers to families where one or more persons who are able to participate in the workforce are gainfully employed, yet their income does not meet their weekly needs such that families experience material deprivation at or below the poverty threshold. Often, this is the "pathway" or "descent" from hardship into the poverty threshold.

2.3 Extended discussion: "Relative poverty"

In conversations with people in Western countries, there is often the sentiment that being poor in a Western country is "better" than being poor in a low-income country. Or to use a specific example, better to be poor in England or Wales or Scotland or Northern Ireland than poor in the Central African Republic (hereafter, CAR).[8] Yet, in both places people are suffering the effects of material deprivation, though perhaps not on so different a scale as it may seem.

Several factors are at work to construct what material deprivation is.

First, we must take into account a nation's wealth. Yet, the prosperity of a nation does not mean everyone experiences or possesses that same level of wealth. Despite how obvious this is, it is fascinating how quickly poverty debaters forget this.

Second, a nation's poverty line, as defined by the government (or whomever), may be a statistical reality, but some people are able to live on either side of that line and experience an impoverished life. A two-income family of five may struggle to pay the bills in London or Edinburgh, but a similar family may be under less financial pressure if they live in Cardiff, Glasgow or Inverness. Does the first family qualify as "poor" despite being well above the income poverty line? The "working poor" will often struggle to make ends meet even though they have a so-called "decent" income.

In other words, thirdly, cost of living is perhaps of greater help to comparing and evaluating who actually lives in poverty as opposed to a simplistic cash amount definition (ie "making less than £X annually").

Fourth, one must take into account national structures and infrastructures that allow or prohibit a prosperous life.

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[7] Social Metrics Commission, https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk, accessed 22 September 2021.
[8] Central African Republic has the world's lowest GDP per Capita. See
https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world.html. Accessed 22 September 2021.

Fifth, opportunity for change tends to be a greater factor than often considered, though more difficult to define. A family in the UK *may* have more opportunity to escape poverty than a single man in the CAR – be it through government programs or charity support, grants, education, acquiring new and more marketable skills, starting a successful business, etc. Yet, if being in the UK makes it more difficult to access the support infrastructure and wealth of the nation to get out, that man in the CAR may be able, through temporary sacrifices, to escape poverty despite being in a less wealthy nation.

In a similar vein, commenting on the many ways to define poverty and an apparently false claim that UK poverty was above the European average, fullfacts.org wrote:

> *One of the reasons that there are so many measures available is that it's not always clear how to measure what we might think of as "poverty". Looking at 60% of the median income is one way to do so, but the Office for National Statistics points out that a low income doesn't necessarily imply a low standard of living.*[9]

Let us consider Bob who lives somewhere in the UK and Josef in the CAR, who have the same socio-economic class relative to their nation's economy. Both live within the 10% most deprived demographic in their respective countries for education, healthcare, employment, housing, crime/safety, etc. For Josef, taking at face value for the moment a stereotype, has very basic living arrangements, his war-torn country has minimal infrastructure, meaning that everything is limited for its poorest citizens, like Josef. Though the UK has infrastructure, the execution of it leaves Bob in a similar situation: he cannot afford or access the essentials (that may be inaccessible or non-existent for different reasons in the CAR), and the government-provided aid is often too delayed or otherwise insufficient – and the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation. In effect, though living in a more stable country, Bob's experience of poverty in the UK is not all that different from Josef's experiences in the CAR. The point is simple: you can be materially deprived or poor in any nation, and no matter which nation it is, material deprivation is neither desirable nor commendable, much less humane.

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[9] Abbas Panjwani, Full Fact, "The UK's poverty rate is around average for the EU", 9 January 2019, https://fullfact.org/economy/uks-poverty-rate-around-average-eu/, accessed 9 January 2019.

3. Is there poverty in the UK?

This section examines whether or not poverty exists in the UK and analyses who is experiencing it.

3.1 A Christian worldview

From a Christian worldview, failure to address the issue of poverty in the UK is not an option. The Lord expects generosity towards those in need, reflecting His Father's concern for the poor.[1] Consider the following:

- Jesus blesses the poor in spirit in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:3) and the poor in the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20).
- Jesus presumes regular giving to the poor (in Matt 6:2, Jesus says, "when you give").
- The poor having the gospel preached to them is evidence of the arrival of the Kingdom of God (Matt 11:5; Luke 7:22).
- Invitations to reception/banquet, like the gospel, should be given to the poor (Luke 14:13, 21).
- Jesus told the rich young man to give all to the poor as a test of the man's maturity (Mark 10:21; Matt 19:21).
- Jesus himself said the poor would always be among the church, unlike himself (Mark 14:7; Matt 26:11).
- Paul was told by the apostles in Jerusalem to 'remember the poor' (Gal 2:10), which he gladly did – this episode is akin to the early church wrestling with how to care for poor widows (Acts 6:1–7).

To the question, "Are there poor people in…?" Jesus's reply, most likely, would be a vigorous "Yes! And if you do not know where they are or who they are, go find them."

3.2 Poverty in the UK

The UK is indeed blessed with a relatively low degree of poverty. As a member of G7, G20 and seventh in world output by the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF), it is reasonable to ask whether anyone can be poor in such a prosperous nation.[2] The 2016 statistics reveal an estimated 23.5% of the EU population (about 18 million people) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.[3] When looking at people at risk of poverty, we can see that the UK is ranked 13th among EU nations with 17% of the UK population at risk of poverty, which is virtually identical to

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[1] See Deut 15:7; 11; 1 Sam 2:8; Job 5:15; Ps 9:18; 40:17; 69:33; 72; 109; 113:7; Prov 14:31; Isa 14:32; 25:4; Jer 20:13; Ezek 18:12; Amos 2:6; 4:1; etc.

[2] See *World Economic Outlook: Update* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, January 2019), 8, https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2019/01/11/weo-update-january-2019, accessed 28 September 2021. Note that Brexit and the possibility of a so-called "no-deal Brexit" weigh heavily on the UK's projected standing. Otherwise, the UK's ranking has hovered around fifth for many years before this.

[3] Emilio Di Meglio, ed., *Living Conditions in Europe: 2018 Edition*, Statistical books, Populations and Social Conditions (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018), 26, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-DZ-18-001, accessed 28 September 2021.

the EU's overall rate of 16.9%.

Table 3.1 | EU At risk of poverty Rate[4]

EU AT RISK OF POVERTY RATE

■ EU at risk of poverty rate

SERBIA	25.7
ROMANIA	23.6
BULGARIA	23.4
LITHUANIA	22.9
LATVIA	22.1
SPAIN	21.6
ESTONIA	21.0
ITALY	20.3
GREECE	20.2
CROATIA	20.0
LUXEMBOURG	18.7
PORTUGAL	18.3
EURO AREA 19	17.0
EURO AREA 19 UNITED	17.0
EU28	17.0
EU27	16.9
MALTA	16.9
GERMANY	16.8
BELGIUM	16.1
SWEDEN	15.9
CYPRUS	15.8
IRELAND	15.7
POLAND	15.6
AUSTRIA	15.0
HUNGARY	14.4
FRANCE	13.4
SLOVENIA	13.3
NETHERLANDS	13.3
DENMARK	13.2
SLOVAKIA	12.4
FINLAND	12.4
CZECHIA	11.5
ICELAND	9.1
NORWAY	
SWITZERLAND	
MONTENEGRO	
FORMER ALBANIA	
TURKEY	

Further, the UK poverty rate was lower than the EU in 2017 for in work at risk of poverty young people aged 18-24.[5]

Table 3.2 | In work at-risk-of-poverty rate among young people aged 18–24, 2017

Romania	28.2
Luxembourg	20.0
Denmark	19.1
Spain	19.0
Estonia	18.4
Bulgaria	14.7
Greece	14.1
Cyprus	13.7
Sweden	13.7
Lithuania	13.4
Germany	12.6
Italy	12.3
Euro area	11.9
Poland	11.4
European Union	11.0
Portugal	11.0
France	10.6
Netherlands	10.5
Belgium	9.4
Ireland	9.3
Austria	8.4
Croatia	7.3
Latvia	7.0
Hungary	6.6
United Kingdom	6.2
Slovenia	5.4
Malta	5.1
Finland	4.2
Slovakia	3.8
Czechia	1.5
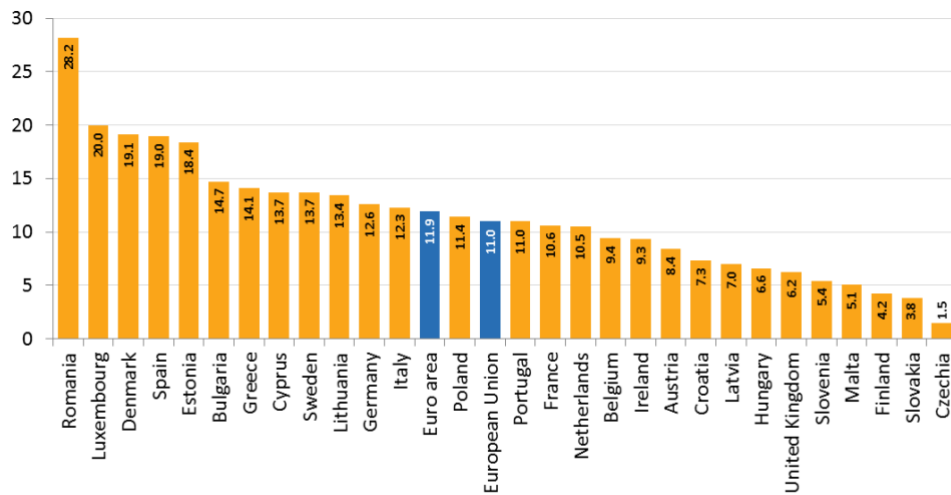
ec.europa.eu/**eurostat**

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[4] *European Living 2018*, 26. Values at zero are due to no available data.
[5] Statistics and chart are from "Young People in Work and at Risk of Poverty," *Eurostat*, 22 January 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20190122-1, accessed 28 September 2021.

In summary, the UK is below EU averages in two major categories of material deprivation – the so-called 'working poor' and those in poverty. It is important to note, though, that direct comparisons between the EU and UK are not entirely reliable as the EU and UK measure poverty differently.[6] Currently, these statistical comparisons lead only to general statements of comparison and no more. The material points here remain: despite UK's global wealth, there is a measurable and comparable degree of poverty, comparable with the UK's nearest neighbours in the EU.

But generalities do not suffice. In the UK 14.2 million people experience material deprivation, including families with children, disabled, elderly, young and old, working or not, single and married. Consider the following:

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[6] Compare methodologies in the following reports: *Measuring Material Deprivation in the EU: Indicators for the Whole Population and Child-Specific Indicators*, Methodologies and Working Papers (Luxembourg: Eurostat: European Commission, 2012), available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products- statistical-working-papers/-/KS-RA-12-018, accessed 28 September 2021; Tom Smith et al., *The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 Research Report*, Research Report (London: UK Government: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015), available at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015, accessed 28 September 2021 . For example, the EU looks at metrics such as owning a car, home, quantity of clothes, and other specifics to calculate material deprivation. Conversely, UK countries use the seven categories of deprivation: income, employment, health and disability, education/skills/training, barriers to housing, crime, and living environment (each with sub-domains).

Table 3.3 | Composition of UK Poverty by family types (2016/17)[7]

14.2 million people in poverty in the UK (2016/17), comprised of:

3,100,000
People in single families, no children

5,600,000
People in couple families with children

2,600,000
People in lone-parent families

700,000
People in pension-age single families

1,400,000
People in couple families, no children

800,000
People in pension-age couples families

Source: Family Resources Survey and HBAI dataset (2016/17), SMC Analysis.

Notes: Figures refer to total people in poverty in different family types. Family types taken from the HBAI dataset once SMC poverty indicators (assessed at the sharing unit level) have been allocated to each benefit unit.

Think about that… 39% of people in poverty are couples with children; 18% in lone parent families. Put another way, 57% of people in poverty are families with children (8,200,000). The largest group of people in poverty by family type is people living in couple families with children. SMC statistics indicate that as of 2016/17, 39% of people in poverty are couples with children and 18% are lone parent families – making a combined total of 57% of people in poverty being families with children. This is an increase from the constant since the early 2000s of about 55% (8.2 million people).[8]

Yet, poverty rates vary significantly between people in different family types. The second largest group by family type are singles without children (21%). SMC explains by Table 3.4 that, for example, more than half of people in lone parent families are judged to be in poverty. For people in pensioner couples and working-age couples with children, this figure falls to approximately one in ten (11.1% and 9.7% respectively).

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[7] Chart adapted from *Guide on Poverty Measurement* (New York and Geneva: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2017), 81, https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2018/ECECESSTAT20174.pdf, accessed 28 September 2021.
[8] Social Metrics Commission, *New Measure of UK Poverty*, 81.

Table 3.4 | Distribution of UK Poverty by family types (2016/17)[9]
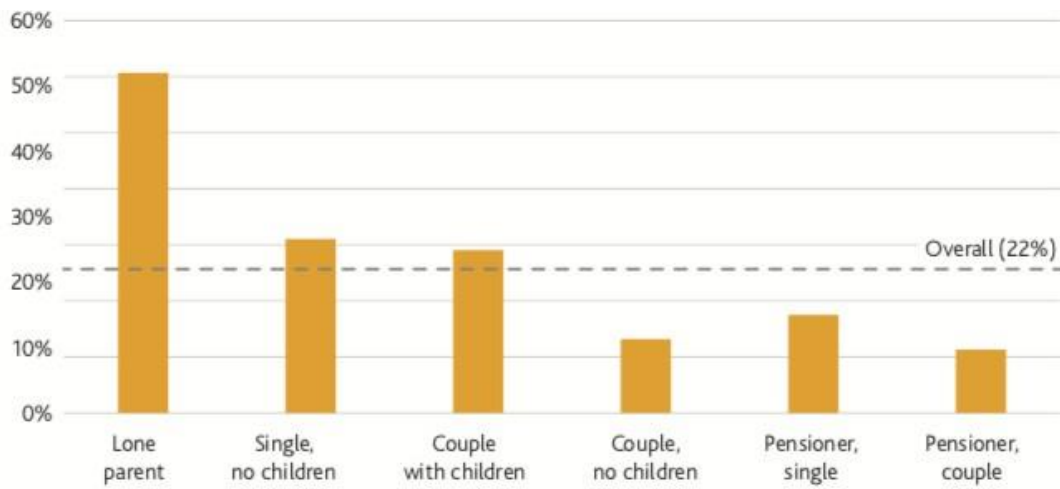
Source: Family Resources Survey and HBAI dataset (2016/17), SMC Analysis.

It is noteworthy that family types with children comprise two of the three largest highest poverty rates in this table. Also glaringly obvious is the high poverty rate of lone parents, which is more than double the overall poverty rate in the UK. Only slightly more troubling is just how consistent these findings are since 2001.

[9] Chart adapted from *Poverty Measurement Guide*, 82.

Table 3.5 | Changes in UK poverty rates since 2001 by family types[10]
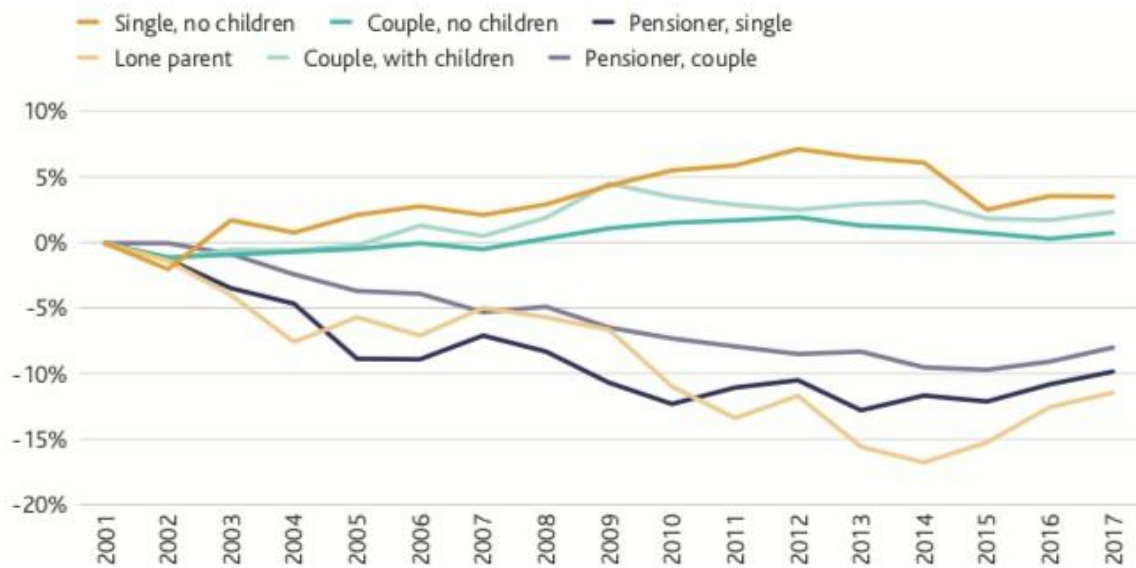
Source: Family Resources Survey and HBAI dataset (1998/99–2016/17), SMC Analysis.

In Table 3.5 we essentially see a surprising trend that seems contradictory to Table 3.4. The prevailing 'strata of poverty' over the last fifteen years has seen an increase in the number of singles with no children experiencing poverty. What this chart does not report is the increase in benefits and tax incentives to families with children – but notice that when those began to be cut starting in 2011 the trajectory is upwards (2012–14 likely being years of adjustment for families).

Looking for a more tangible, measurable definition of poverty is difficult. SMC defines a poverty threshold of £251.95 per week (£1007.80 per month/£12,093.60 per year) with a median income of £462 per week.[11] Keep in mind that this number has in view a real-world estimate of what it costs to have the bare minimum to be comfortable, as defined by UK cultural mores (which SMC regularly measures and updates via various research methods). To this extent, the SMC research provides a helpful starting point for quantifying what it means to experience material deprivation, though it is not without its challenges. Calculating thresholds for various family types generates the following calculations:[12]

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[10] Chart adapted from *Poverty Measurement Guide*, 82.
[11] See Social Metrics Commission, *New Measure of UK Poverty*, 77–78.
[12] Social Metrics Commission, *New Measure of UK Poverty*, 78, Table 9. SCM derived their analysis from of the Family Resources Survey and HBAI dataset (2016/17).

Table 3.6 | Poverty threshold by family type (Social Metrics Commission)[13]

Family type	2016/17 poverty threshold (£ available resources per week)	2018/19 poverty threshold (£ available resources per week)
Single		
No children	£146.13	£157
Lone parent		
One child	£196.53	£211
Two children	£302.35	£325
Couple		
No children	£251.95	£267.01
One child	£302.35	£320.49
Two children	£408.17	£432.66
Pensioner		
Single	£146.13	£154.90
Couple	£251.95	£267.01

When we extend these calculations to allow for varying numbers of children, the following additional family types can be assessed:

Table 3.7 | Estimated poverty threshold by larger family type[14]

Family type	2016/17 poverty threshold (£ available resources per week)	2018/19 poverty threshold (est.) (£ available resources per week)
Lone parent		
Three children[15]	£513.99	£550
Four children[16]	£619.81	£663
Single Pensioner		
One child	£251.95	£270
Two children	£357.77	£383
Pensioner, couple		
One child	£357.77	£383

[13] Table adapted from Social Metrics Commission, *New Measure of UK Poverty*, 78, which notes: "in one child cases, the child is assumed to be under 14. In two-child cases, one is assumed to be under 14 and one is assumed to be over 14."

[14] Table adapted from Social Metrics Commission, *New Measure of UK Poverty*, 78.

[15] The 2016/17 data is determined by calculating: £302.35 + (£105.82*2). The 2018/19 poverty line was determined by calculating 2016/17 multiplied by 7% adjusted for inflation.

[16] Determined by calculating: £408.35 + (£105.82*2). The 2018/19 poverty line was determined by calculating 2016/17 multiplied by 7% adjusted for inflation.

Two children	£463.59	£496

The different impact a single adult experiences compared with a couple, or compared with a couple with children is significant. Simply said, the larger the family, the larger the income needed to support a family. The *Households Below Average Income* (HBAI) 2018 report clarifies such distinctions:

> *To lie in the top half of the income distribution in 2016/17, a single individual needed a net income over £17,200, compared to a couple with two young children who required a combined net income over £36,000.*[17]

3.3 The complexities of measuring poverty

As helpful as this analysis is, flaws inevitably exist. Some believe the SMC has significantly *underestimated* the actual costs to families.[18] Yet, I suspect there are many that can only *dream* of having so much weekly income. For example, a couple where both are employed, paying £125/month for car costs will be much easier to manage than it will be for a single mother.

The complexities include the fact that the **age and medical needs of a child** vary widely: a family of three with two teens and an infant is vastly different from a family of two primary school pupils, yet the above reporting treats them largely the same. A family may be living in an inherited flat/home in London, but the cost of living in the area where that home is may evaporate the home cost savings if utilities, transportation, groceries, etc are inflated compared with living outside the city and commuting.

Similarly, Koch reveals how **women are helped to their demise by government benefits**.[19] Once a woman or mother begins receiving benefits, the process can soon turn to frenzy as women constantly battle to keep their benefits and complete required reporting and (surprise) home inspections. This can cause the kinds of interruptions that prevent developing the life habits necessary to get off the very benefits that they now require. Frequently drawn into dependence upon benefits programmes, council housing and then creating their own support networks, Koch's case study observes that many women in a given English council estate were not only dependent upon financial benefits from the government, but also informal relationships for income – doing a friend's laundry or renting a room for a few months or more to a friend or family member. These activities – just to make ends meet – are all unreported to prevent government scrutiny that would typically lead to decrease or loss of benefits. Indeed, some have

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[17] UK Government Department for Work and Pensions, "Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the UK income distribution 1994/95–2016/17", 22 March 2018, p.5, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691917/households-below-average-income-1994-1995-2016-2017.pdf, accessed 28 September 2021 .

[18] I am indebted to Donald Hirsch for his kind conversations and insights, though any fault or error in judgment is my own.

[19] See Insa Koch, "'The State Has Replaced the Man': Women, Family Homes, and the Benefit System on a Council Estate in England," *Focaal Brooklyn* 273 (2015): 84–96, https://doi.org/10.3167/fcl.2015.730107, http://search.proquest.com/docview/1734628322/abstract/499CFECC83264962PQ/1, accessed 28 September 2021.

been evicted from homes having thus been disqualified from benefits. In that case, the government determines that they are "choosing" homelessness, which absolves the government's responsibility to provide emergency/homelessness housing assistance. The common stereotype that "they have it easy on benefits…" is simply a myth born of ignorance to the plight of those in need and an over-emphasis placed upon the "bad apples" of any given people group.

Third, **men and women experience poverty and homelessness quite differently**. Often, women are left to parent children alone. Ongoing research continues to show the disparity of pay for many women, which has a noteworthy impact on women's poverty.[20] So much so, in fact, that Méabh Savage has shown how these differences warrant more careful legislation of social policies in Ireland and around the world. Citing the research of Mayock et al., it is common for some homeless women, for example, "to return to abusive relationships where they subsequently re-emerged into homelessness again, and were separated from their children, who were placed in the care of the state."[21] Further, late 2018 saw an increasing awareness of so-called "period poverty" for women young and old, complicating work, education, and life for girls and women experiencing poverty.[22]

Fourth, the **ethnic composition** of these groups – which include immigrant families as well as UK families from BME backgrounds (who may or may not be immigrants) – is another matter of some complexity. Data generally supports the perception that immigrants coming to the UK from materially deprived homes are likely to experience continued material deprivation in the UK. Second and third generation children may find upward mobility, even if they often have to overcome prejudice by non-immigrant UK citizens, and navigate educational and employment policies or tendencies' that do not account for their lived experiences. BME people in the UK consistently trend lower in most fiscal categories. While there are exceptions to these general trends, therein lies the conundrum: exceptional cases reveal the depth of inequality for many non-white UK citizens. However, when we look at the materially deprived, we find that

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[20] Fran Bennett and Mary Daly, *Poverty through a Gender Lens: Evidence and Policy Review on Gender and Poverty* (Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, May 2015), 98–101, 103, 105, https://www.spi.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Gender_and_poverty_Bennett_and_Daly_final_12_5_14_28_5_14.pdf, accessed 28 September 2021.

[21] Méabh Savage, "Gendering Women's Homelessness," *Dublin Inst. Technol.* vol. 16, no. 2 (2016): 11, https://arrow.dit.ie/ijass/vol16/iss2/4/, accessed 28 September 2021; See, Paula Mayock et al., eds., *Women's Homelessness and Domestic Violence: (In)visible interactions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54516-9_6, accessed 28 September 2021 .

[22] See Judith Wolf et al., "The Health of Homeless Women," in Mayock et al., *Women's Homelessness in Europe*, 155–78, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54516-9_7, accessed 28 September 2021; "Pledge to End Schoolgirl 'Period Poverty,'" *BBC News,* 14 November 2018, sec. Bristol, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-46205554, accessed 28 September 2021 ; "Free Sanitary Products 'Boost Attendance,'" *BBC News*, 28 November 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-england-hampshire-46361899/period-poverty-sanitary-products-improve-school-attendance, accessed 28 September 2021 .

material deprivation makes no ethno-racial distinctions, but people and policies and common practices often do.[23]

[23] Matthew Hunt, "Race/Ethnicity and Beliefs about Wealth and Poverty," *Social Science Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (2004): 827–53; Milly Williamson and Gholam Khiabany, "UK: The Veil and the Politics of Racism," *Race & Class* 52, no. 2 (2010): 85–96; Ceri Hughes and Peter Kenway, "Foreign-Born People and Poverty in the UK" (York, United Kingdom: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, July 2016); "Race Disparity Audit: Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures Website" (Westminster: Cabinet Office, 2017), https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk, accessed 2 November 2021; Tina Patel, "Race/Ethnicity, Crime and Social Control: An Introduction," *Social Sciences* 7, no. 12 (2018); Omar Khan, "The Colour of Money: How Racial Inequalities Obstruct a Fair and Resilient Economy" (Runnymeade, 2020), https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/2020%20reports/The%20Colour%20of%20Money%20Report.pdf, accessed 2 November 2021. See also the racial statistic provided in: Social Metrics Commission, "Measuring Poverty 2019: A Report of the Social Metrics Commission," Measuring Poverty (UK: Social Metrics Commission, July 2019), https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/, accessed 2 November 2021; Social Metrics Commission, "Measuring Poverty 2020: A Report of the Social Metrics Commission," Measuring Poverty (UK: Social Metrics Commission, July 2020); Noble et al., "The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 Research Report"; Andrea Barry, "Sewell report response: what does the data really tell us?" 7 April 2021, https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/sewell-report-response-what-does-data-really-tell-us, accessed 2 November 2021. See also JFR's myriad of illuminating resources at: https://www.jrf.org.uk/people/ethnicity, accessed 2 November 2021. Similarly, Snowdon shows how working-class white boys are at risk; see Christopher Snowdon, "The Lost Boys," 15 July 2020, https://app.spectator.co.uk/2020/07/15/the-lost-boys-2/content.html, accessed 2 November 2021.

4. Is there poverty in the Northern Ireland?

4.1 What data are we using?

This paper uses several data reports in an effort to create a hybrid of analysis, following the methodology common to all five reports (as described in Sections 1 and 2 above) and including the relevant Index of Multiple Deprivation report:

- Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation (NIMD)

- End Child Poverty (ECP) resources

- *Social Metrics Commission* (SMC) reports

- Data published by the John Rowntree Foundation

- Published research in academic journals and publications researching material deprivation

- Articles found in UK newspapers (print or online), BBC, local newspapers and other media

- Data taken from interviews with citizens, ministers, civic and government leaders

- Survey data, including surveys conducted by 20schemes[1]

Looking over ten years of data, and more narrowly at three-year averages, the John Rowntree Foundation estimates 370,000 people in Northern Ireland live in poverty.[2] This includes 110,000 children, 220,000 working-age adults and 40,000 pensioners. "Pensioners have the lowest rate of poverty, followed by working-age people without children. Poverty is highest among families with children."[3] The poverty rate in Northern Ireland is slightly lower than in England or Wales but slightly higher than in Scotland.[4]

4.2 The Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

The Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017 is constructed from 38 different indicators relating to 7 "domains" of deprivation. The domains reflect key areas of impact and the weights help quantify the impact of those domains. By using these seven domains, researchers can account for one factor's impact on the poor in relation to the others in various combinations. By weighting these domains, the research data keeps these domains in perspective, in reasonable relationship to each other.

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[1] Research conducted by the author, based on data collected and analysed in 2019–20.
[2] Helen Barnard, "Poverty in Northern Ireland 2018" (United Kingdom: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 20 February 2018), 2, https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-northern-ireland-2018, accessed 7 October 2021.
[3] Barnard, "Poverty in Northern Ireland 2018", 2.
[4] Barnard, "Poverty in Northern Ireland 2018", 3.

Table 4.1 | NIMDM17's seven domains (or aspects) of deprivation[5]

Domain	Percentage of NIMDM
Income deprivation	25%
Employment deprivation	25%
Health deprivation and disability	15%
Education, skills and training deprivation	15%
Access to services	10%
Living environment	5%
Crime and disorder	5%

The data for 2017 (NIMDM17) reveals that worklessness is a more telling factor of deprivation than income.[6] This is due, in part, to the fact that benefits are no longer counted as income, as was the case for prior deprivation reporting.[7] Common sense already tells us this though: most people have no income if they have no job. The same common sense tells us to look at child poverty: a poor child indicates a poor mother or father, regardless of whether that mother or father is present in the child's life or the child is a ward of the state. Furthermore, almost every city and town in Northern Ireland has government housing for those in need. It is clear that there are many in poverty in Northern Ireland.

4.2 Legacy of the Troubles

It is hard to underestimate the effect that the Troubles continue to have on Irish society, especially in Northern Ireland.[8] Indeed, anyone who seeks to understand Northern Ireland's complex social issues, not least how to bring the gospel to people in Northern Ireland, must gain an accurate working knowledge of the Troubles, though many have Britain's "Belfast Blindspot".[9] A detailed description and analysis of this massively important issue is beyond the scope of this project, but is addressed here in (woefully inadequate) outline for the sake of context.[10]

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[5] Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017 (NIMDM17) (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2018), 3, https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/NIMDM17-%20with%20ns.pdf, accessed 7 October 2021.

[6] NIMDM17, 6.

[7] ADD CITATION FROM NIMDM17 [Tech Notes, page 3???]

[8] The Troubles is a term used to describe a period of conflict in Northern Ireland that lasted about 30 years, from the late 1960s until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. See https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-troubles, accessed 2 November 2021.

[9] Roy Greenslade, "The Belfast Blindspot: Few Predicted That the Irish Border Would Become the Defining Issue of Brexit – but Then Again, the British Media Never Really Understood the Troubles, Special Report," *New Statesman* 148.5494 (2019): 30.

[10] For further reading, see: Tim Pat Coogan, *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal 1966–1995 and the Search for Peace* (Head of Zeus, 2015); Patrick Radden Keefe, *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2019); Gladys Ganiel and Jamie Yohanis, *Considering Grace:*

In short, because of the English and Scottish settlement of Northern Ireland, a pro-UK majority that was predominantly Protestant wanted to remain both in Ireland and part of the UK while still being (somewhat? basically?) Irish. Those displaced by the English and Scottish, as well as the rest of the Irish isle, were adamantly against joining the UK and were predominantly Catholic. These tensions gave rise in the 1960s through to the early 1990s (approximately) a season of peaceful protest turned vile and violent. The ire was ignited by the fiery rhetoric of characters like Rev Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams, and violence of the IRA, RUC and a host of paramilitaries. The Good Friday Agreement (1998) marked the end of the Troubles for most people, though demilitarisation of the paramilitaries would continue for years to come.

4.3 Impact of the Troubles today

Today, remnants of these paramilitaries are now street gangs and mafia-like crime organisations that often seize control of neighbourhoods, especially poor neighbourhoods. Drugs, violence, and ongoing hostilities towards 'the other' further perpetuate the ethos, if not the zeitgeist, of the Troubles, no less causing troubles of their own in the modern era. Consider this:

> *Northern Ireland is in transition from over 30 years of sustained political violence. Between 1969 and 1999 it is estimated that 3,636 people died in the Conflict (McKittrick et al. 1999, 147). Given the relatively small population of Northern Ireland (around 1.8 million people), the impacts of the Conflict have been pervasive (Fay, Morrissey and Smyth 1998). While the number affected by death, injury, trauma and displacement varies according to data source, definition and measurement, recent studies imply that the direct impact is higher than previously estimated. Referring to research undertaken by the Commission for Victims and Survivors in Northern Ireland (CVSNI), McAlister (2011) notes that around 500,000 people consider their lives to have been profoundly damaged by the Conflict. Approximately 170,000 of the current population lost a relative or someone close to them, and 107,000 people in Northern Ireland today consider themselves to have "sustained some kind of injury during ... the Troubles" (ibid).[11]*

That paragraph is worth careful dissection. Notice first that 28% of Northern Ireland's population, or just over 1 in 4, have sustained some kind of injury during the Troubles. If everybody has at least four friends, family members or acquaintances alive during the Troubles, it is quite likely *at least one* of them was injured… mathematically, it stands to reason that

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Presbyterians and the Troubles, <mark>None</mark> edition (Newbridge, Co. Kildare, Ireland: Merrion Press, 2019). On the ongoing impact of the Troubles in today's Northern Ireland, see the helpful insights in: Colin Coulter and Michael Murray, *Northern Ireland after the Troubles: A Society in Transition* (Manchester: University Press, 2008); Christine E. Merrilees et al., "Associations Between Mothers' Experience with The Troubles in Northern Ireland and Mothers' and Children's Psychological Functioning: The Moderating Role of Social Identity," *Journal of Community Psychology* 39.1 (2011): 60–75; Richard Dorsett, "The Effect of the Troubles on GDP in Northern Ireland," *European Journal of Political Economy* 29 (2013): 119–133; Brian Hanley, *The Impact of the Troubles on the Republic of Ireland, 1968-79: Boiling Volcano?* (Manchester: University Press, 2018).

[11] Siobhán McAlister, Deena Haydon, and Phil Scraton, "Violence in the Lives of Children and Youth in 'Post-Conflict' Northern Ireland," *Children, Youth and Environments* vol. 23., no. 1 (2013): 2, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.23.1.0001, accessed 14 October 2021. See also, Merrilees et al., "Associations Between Mothers' Experience with The Troubles in NI and Mothers' and Children's Psychological Functioning"; Keefe, *Say Nothing*. For similar impact in Republic of Ireland, see Hanley, *The Impact of the Troubles*.

countless more (75% of the Northern Irish population?) have been impacted by the stories and troubled lives those injured have endured. This is not to sound sensational, but whether the impact is profound or not, it is fair to say that everyone in Northern Ireland lives under the shadow and impact of the Troubles, and especially those living in the poorest communities of Northern Ireland.

In a word, Ireland is divided. There are literally walls dividing the street in half, dividing families and communities of people.[12] There is a religious wall – Protestant or Catholic? Or rejecting both? This divides everything in society. Indeed, the division begins on a Sunday. Where you go to church – or where your family went to church – determines where you live, what language you speak, what social clubs you are allowed to join, what sports you play, what kind of school and college/university you can go to (if at all), what political parties you can choose, who you can befriend, who you are allowed to marry, how you are allowed to raise your children, and then the cycle repeats for the next generation. Your family is marked by a history where someone was murdered because of these divisions; most people have family property that was lost, stolen, damaged or destroyed because of these divisions. Historically speaking, most people would not know anyone from a different background than their own. In a sense, it is the proverbial man on an island, and that island is your local town or village in Northern Ireland.

> *With cultural identity tied to place, space becomes important at the micro as well as macro level. Thus it is symbolically demarcated (by flags, murals, etc.) and physically defended … Approximately 95 percent of social housing in Northern Ireland is segregated by religious affiliation (Northern Ireland Housing Executive 2006), and over half the population live in exclusively Catholic or Protestant neighbourhoods (Census 2001) (Census 2011 data not yet available). For many people living in interface areas – geographical points where segregated communities meet – they are often separated from their neighbouring community by "peace walls". In 2009 it was estimated that the number of peace walls had trebled in comparison to the number prior to the ceasefires (McDonald 2009). In addition to residential segregation, 94 percent of the school population attends segregated education in Catholic or Protestant nursery, primary or post-primary schools (DENI 2008, 2). Research consistently reveals that leisure facilities and other services in predominantly Catholic or Protestant communities are not accessed by children and youth outside the community, specifically those from "the other" community (Byrne, Conway and Ostermeyer 2005; Hansson 2005). In addition to structural division, the "cultural infrastructure" associated with each community is expressed in preferred sporting activities, newspapers and political parties (Nic Craith 2003 in MacGinty, Muldoon and Ferguson 2007). The role of institutions, particularly the family, community and school, in reproducing ethno-national identities in Northern Ireland has been well established (McGrellis 2010; 2005; McAlister, Scraton and Haydon 2009; Leonard 2007; 2004;*

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[12] One of the best-known runs past Conway Street along Cupar Way, separating the Catholic Falls from the Protestant Shankill. Corrugated metal sheeting, its green paint reminiscent of Troubles-era security installations, reaches high into the air. It is topped by an even higher wire mesh, to block missiles. https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/why-belfast-residents-want-to-keep-their-peace-walls-1.3987423, accessed 2 November 2021.

Smyth et al. 2004; Boal 2002; Connolly and Neill 2001; Gallagher 2001).[13]

For many, the secular turn has renamed old divisions. The Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist vs. Catholic/Republican/Nationalist divide is quickly turning to simply a Unionist/Loyalist vs. Republican/Nationalist division. Many Northern Irish have simply exchanged their religious (sometimes spiritual) identification for a political identity. To be fair, such a change may also be as much the purging of "cultural Christianity" from "genuine Christian faith", so from an evangelical perspective the silver lining with this turn is that it is clearer who is truly following or faithful to Jesus, and who is following a banner or political cause. The challenge, in this regard, is that there still remains a kind of pop-culture historical memory of the religious factions that led to these divisions – one cannot escape, for example that Rev Ian Paisley fired up young men to take (oftentimes violent) action and parted from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to form his own Free Presbyterian denomination.[14] Indeed, as the stories are retold, subsequent generations pick up not just the history, but the attitudes and biases, and impetus for violence from their family.[15]

Being in Northern Ireland, one has a complicated sense of identity. The Good Friday Agreement allows that people born in Northern Ireland can choose to identify as Irish, British or both. Traditionally, one's religion leads to ethnic as well as political loyalties: Catholic/Republican/Nationalist Irish or Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist Briton.[16] On the one hand, there is a sense of being Irish – living on the island, ethnic Irish family histories – and yet choose to be governed by the UK rather than self-govern with fellow Irish, absorbing a some degree of British identity that in many cases trumps the Irish identity.

Politicians have followed these trends to their political gain more often than for the betterment of Northern Ireland.

> *As is well known, the implementation of the [Good Friday] Agreement has been very uneven. For two thirds of the time since 1998, the executive has been unable to form and for much of the period the Assembly has been suspended. The crisis continued not only in the early years, but even after the reinstitution of the Assembly and executive in 2007. Nonetheless much has been achieved: decommissioning, demilitarisation, prisoner releases, thorough reform of policing, strong equality legislation and more integrated work places than before, functioning North-South institutions which serve at least as exemplary, substantive moderation of the policies of the "extreme" parties, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin, and considerable evidence of rethinking in sections of the population. Equally well known, the numbers of peace walls separating Protestant and Catholic neighbourhoods has increased and general segregation remains, low-level communal violence (intimidation, harassment, pipe-*

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[13] McAlister, Haydon and Scraton, "Violence in Children and Youth," 4.

[14] The shadow of Paisley can be seen in the many stories throughout Ganiel and Yohanis, *Considering Grace*.

[15] See McAlister, Haydon and Scraton, "Violence in Children and Youth," 8–9.

[16] The Good Friday Agreement, 1998, Article 1, paragraphs 1, 6; Article 4, Annex 2. See also, section 2 Annex A section 1, paragraph 6. See also, ; Lisa O'Carroll, Brexit correspondent, "UK to Face Questions over Northern Ireland Citizenship Laws," The Guardian, 14 October 2019, sec. UK news, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/oct/14/uk-court-rules-against-derry-woman-in-irish-identity-case, accessed 14 October 2021.

bombs, intermittent sectarian attacks) are endemic, and some see the new DUP/Sinn Féin executive as functioning simply by dividing the spoils of office between their constituents. If individuals rethink in private, they have failed to make the leap into public change. If the balance sheet is one of success, it is certainly slower and less far-reaching than anticipated in 1998.[17]

And yet, since the Good Friday Agreement (1998) much has changed. To put this in perspective, most first year students at university today were born *after* the Good Friday Agreement was signed. The average person is not interested in talking about it and has moved on with life.[18] For some, the more recent LGBT and Abortion rights is their generation's "troubles".[19] And yet, there is a real sense in which social institutions and infrastructures are shaped by the Troubles.

Perhaps most unique to Northern Ireland's division is the violence that cements those decisions. Whether a Bloody Sunday or Friday, this "peace" wall or that paramilitary group, very often social and political divisions mixed in with diverse political or social factors. It is often said, historically, that education was the way for a poor Northern Irish Catholic to move up the social ladder – doing well in school to get a college/university degree was the poor Catholic's ticket "out" of poverty or hardship. Such a goal inevitably leads to communities – especially working-class ones – who stress education. Such stress translates into heavy investment and involvement in schools and pupils being well supported, a *community* where students are supported and encouraged to do well as a top priority. It is often said that Catholic schooling equips working-class Catholics in literature, culture, history and politics. Conversely, the Protestant working-class communities have, by and large, lacked articulate leaders. Much investment in Protestant working-class communities has come from state/European Union funding. But because of the more fragmented nature of their communities and lack of leadership, the impact has been lessened.[20] This fragmented nature of Protestantism struggles to unite the way Catholic churches. As that translates into other arenas, Catholics as a group are far better positioned to organise and rally to a united cause in a way that Protestants simply aren't structured to do.

Estate communities are especially susceptible to the kinds of isolation and the "us and them" mentality that fosters both division and protection from "the other".

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[17] Jennifer Todd, "Equality as Steady State or Equality as Threshold? Northern Ireland after the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement", 1998, IBIS Discussion Paper Series: Breaking the Patterns of Conflict; 1 (Dublin: University College Dublin. Institute for British-Irish Studies, 2009), 5, http://hdl.handle.net/10197/2362 , accessed 14 October 2021.

[18] C. Johnston, "A (Brutally) Honest Visitor Guide to Belfast," Slugger O'Toole, 28 January 2020, https://sluggerotoole.com/2020/01/28/a-brutally-honest-visitor-guide-to-belfast/, accessed on 29 January 2020. Note towards the end of the article, Johnston's exhaustion and indifference to pub chats about "The Troubles" with tourists.

[19] See, for example, Siobhán Fenton et al., "Northern Ireland's Peace Generation," *The Face* vol. 4, no. 2 (2020), https://theface.com/life/derry-northern-ireland-troubles-good-friday-agreement-youth-politics-activism-lgbt-volume-4-issue-002, accessed 14 October 2021; Brian O'Neill, "Video: Northern Ireland's Generation Peace…," Slugger O'Toole, 7 February 2020, https://sluggerotoole.com/2020/02/07/video-northern-irelands-generation-peace/, accessed 14 October 2021.

[20] I'm indebted to these insights from conversations with Presbyterian minister, Marty McNeely. I own any errors of judgment, which readers and Marty are welcome to point out.

Given limited contact, highly segregated lives and notions of "difference" established and reinforced over time, when young people from the two communities met this often resulted in violent clashes. Personal strategies to promote safety included: "managing" or concealing cultural identities when outside their neighbourhoods (for example, by altering dress – see McGrellis 2004), avoiding particular places, and staying in groups. Fear of being identified as "the other" impacted not only on feelings of safety and security, but also on choice of facilities or services and young people's freedom of movement. Those who chose to express their identity openly risked sectarian attack. They described how they employed additional methods to negotiate personal safety including being ever vigilant, establishing a reputation for fighting, always being in a group when outside their community, and always being prepared for attack (see also McGrellis 2004; Leonard 2007): "When you're off the estate you're always lookin' where the trouble might come from. Always lookin' over your shoulder... you always have to be in numbers. No way would I walk off the estate on my own" (Co. Fermanagh [young person's account]).[21]

In post-Troubles Northern Ireland, sectarian violence associated with desires for political/cultural equality, rights and freedom are now regularly explained in popular and political discourses as "recreational".[22] The gangs – as they are known in most places across the UK – are, in Northern Ireland, the "demilitarised" paramilitaries turned gangsters or mafia, often laden with drug crimes and violence. Sadly, each council estate and working-class neighbourhood becomes (to some degree) "turf" where "the other" is decidedly unwelcome.

The political volatility of Northern Ireland also makes change difficult. In the absence of consistent government assistance, the voluntary–community sector can be helpful to those experiencing material deprivation. However, government decisions – well intended or otherwise – are but a step away from disrupting this sector beyond repair unless a prudent relationship is maintained.[23] Back in the 1990s, the Belfast Agreement brought the bittersweet result of local governments taking the lead in the community and volunteer sector, but this led to a reduction of influence for these organisations already within the sector, meaning less help for those in need.[24] The recent devolution of Stormont and the arrival of Brexit is likely to resurrect these tensions, not least cutting off the many EU benefits programmes that have helped the poor of Northern Ireland.

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[21] McAlister, Haydon and Scraton, "Violence in Children and Youth," 8.

[22] McAlister, Haydon and Scraton, "Violence in Children and Youth", 10. See also, Siobhán McAlister, D. Scraton, and Deena Haydon, "Place, Territoriality and Young People's Identity in the 'New' Northern Ireland," in Barry Goldsdon, ed., *Youth in Crisis? "Gangs," Territoriality and Violence* (London: Routledge, 2011), 89–109; Siobhán McAlister, Deena Haydon, and D. Scraton, "Young People, Conflict and Regulation," *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice* vol. 51, no. 5 (2012): 503–20.

[23] See Derek Birrell and Arthur Williamson, "The Voluntary–Community Sector and Political Development in Northern Ireland, Since 1972," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, vol. 12, no. 3 (2001): 205–20, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27927726, accessed 14 October 2021.

24 Birrell and Williamson, "The Voluntary–Community Sector and Political Development in NI," 213–14.

Further complicating matters is the multi-layered impact of Brexit. Whether Unionist or not, many Irish are reconsidering or reconstructing whatever "British" identities they have.[25] What will come of the Irish border? No one knows for sure.[26]

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[25] For example, Simon Coveney, "The Special Bond between Ireland and the UK Will Not Be Undermined by Brexit | Simon Coveney," *The Guardian*, 31 January 2020, sec. Opinion, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/31/ireland-uk-brexit-peace-good-friday-agreement, accessed 14 October 2021.

[26] See Brendan Heading, "Assorted Thoughts on the Realities of Border Polling and Reunification," Slugger O'Toole, 1 February 2020, https://sluggerotoole.com/2020/02/01/assorted-thoughts-on-the-realities-of-border-polling-and-reunification/, accessed 14 October 2021.

5. Where are Northern Ireland' "most deprived"?

Where are the materially poor in Northern Ireland? The short answer is "everywhere" – in rural, semi-rural and urban areas.

5.1 The challenge of locating the most deprived

Identifying and locating the *most deprived* places and people is more challenging. One would naturally look at council estates and public housing neighbourhoods. However, the absence of nationwide lists requires contacting *every* local council, who are often reluctant to release such information. Furthermore, the privatisation of much public housing has also complicated the process of identifying poverty in such neighbourhoods. It is necessary, therefore, to rely on poverty reports to locate the most deprived neighbourhoods.

However, the reporting that leads to identification of "most deprived" is riddled with complexities. Identifying a place where there is a high number of people experiencing poverty does not mean *everyone* there necessarily experiences poverty. Second, the duration (how many months/years) or intensity (e.g. no income and on benefits? nearly homeless and on benefits? working poor? single? children? etc.) of the deprivation may vary for a given family or neighbourhood. Third, especially for those on benefits, is the fear of losing benefits and so respondents are often less clear on questionnaires and enquiries (be it over-reporting their need or deprivation, or under-reporting due to shame/guilt).

For many, there seems to be a discrepancy between what one sees – anecdotally or in media or journal articles – between the statistics on poverty and those experiencing material deprivation visible on the street. *How do they carry an iPhone and or have Sky TV? Where did that new Ford come from – aren't they "poor"?*

Brewer et al. explore a solution to the discrepancy between lowest income families' expenditures and income. They demonstrate that likely factors for the discrepancy include misreporting and that households completing government surveys "may feel that their responses to the survey may lead them to have higher tax bills or reduced entitlement benefits".[1] Indeed, why bite the hand that feeds you? And for most people in scheme or estate communities, a deep-seated distrust of government (born of multiple generations of failed government promises) would certainly not encourage reliable reporting, either.

Similarly, Belfield et al. argue that net household income inequality fell due to deliberate increases in redistribution, the tax and transfer system's insurance role during the Great

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[1] Mike Brewer, Ben Etheridge and Cormac O'Dea, C., "Why are Households that Report the Lowest Incomes So Well Off?", *The Economic Journal*, 127(605), October 2017, p.F46–F49, https://doi.org/10.1111/ecoj.12334.

Recession, falling household worklessness, and rising pensioner incomes.[2] Bourquin et al. concluded similarly, adding rising costs of housing as fourth significant factor.[3]

Further complicating locating the most deprived and poor – if gentrification, homelessness and other social issues were not enough – is the continued privatisation of council housing across the UK. This process has led to changes both in landlords (from the government to individuals, corporations, housing associations or Registered Social Landlords) and tenants (who are pressured to leave or otherwise choose to leave as the property or neighbourhood changes for the worse with the transfer).[4] Reflecting on the National Audit Office's examination of the financial costs and benefits of retaining a council housing property *versus* transferring to housing associations, Ginsgburg writes:

> *They calculated that transfer was considerably more expensive for the taxpayer than retention and renovation by councils, possibly as much as 30 per cent more expensive. The NAO calculated that a renovation programme for one million council homes would cost £1.3 billion more if it were done through stock transfer rather than allowing the councils to do it. However, the NAO considered that the benefits outweigh the extra costs citing such benefits as 'the transfer of risk, the accelerated achievement of improvements, the greater tenant participation' (NAO, 2003: 32) associated with transfer. There is no question that improvements have been accelerated by transfer, but that is only because local authorities were prevented from doing them. There is undoubtedly increased tenant participation in the form of involvement in management boards, but whether tenants exert any more collective influence than they did within local electoral politics is highly debatable. The notion of "risk transfer" as a benefit involves taking a very narrow point of view on behalf of the taxpayer. It appears to be celebrating the loss of a public responsibility for meeting basic needs, and the transfer of risk to RSLs and, implicitly, tenants.[5]*

The British Urban Housing report makes a similar conclusion:

> *Outperformance of original transfer expectations seems to have been most marked in relation to regeneration. One measure of this is the extent to which – in many instances – demolition and replacement of substandard housing has turned out to be significantly more extensive than initially anticipated.[6]*

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[2] Chris Belfield et al., "Two Decades of Income Inequality in Britain: The Role of Wages, Household Earnings and Redistribution," *Economica* 84.334 (2017): 157–79, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ecca.12220, accessed 28 September 2021.

[3] Pascale Bourquin et al., "Big Increases in In-Work Relative Poverty Rate Are about Much More than Just Low Pay," *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 18 June 2019, https://ifs.org.uk/publications/14196, accessed 28 September 2021.

[4] See Ginsburg's helpful historical survey of these developments from the governments of Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher to Tony Blair: Norman Ginsburg, "The Privatization of Council Housing," *Critical Social Policy* 25 no. 1 (2005): 115–35, https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018305048970, accessed 28 September 2021.

[5] Ginsburg, "The Privatization of Council Housing," 124. See also, Hal Pawson and Cathy Fancie, *Maturing Assets: The Evolution of Stock Transfer Housing Associations* (Policy Press, 2003), 35–36, https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/evolution-stock-transfer-housing-associations, accessed 28 September 2021.

[6] Hal Pawson et al., *The Impacts of Housing Stock Transfers In Urban Britain* (The Chartered Institute of Housing and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2009), 112, https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/impacts-housing-stock-transfers-urban-britain, accessed 28 September 2021.

Further, transfer HAs (Housing Associations) quickly widened from property investments to activity encompassing community engagement and investment initiatives way beyond the initial undertaking.[7] In other words, improvement came because existing buildings were destroyed and new ones built – typically at an initially higher rent (a modest increase, but an increase nonetheless). Then, the rest of the larger neighbourhood and community began to see development. While these are, on the one hand, positive things – old things refurbished or replaced, new life and vitality – in the end it is an all-too-common recipe for the gentrification of a materially deprived neighbourhood that ultimately pushes out those msot needing housing assistance. Gentrification does not happen overnight either, meaning neighbourhoods often endure extended periods of time with old and new juxtaposing or opposing each other, until one remains – often the economically-supported new to the detriment of those experiencing poverty. Similar reporting shows that both English and Scottish transfers showed that managerial effectiveness was maintained or improved slightly.[8] In other words, the claim that privatisation has *improved* social housing for those experiencing housing deprivation is questionable. In market terms, relying on private landlords who are trying to have a successful "business" built upon an impoverished consumer-base (who have little or no income to draw from) has produced minimal (if any) improvements for those experiencing housing deprivation.

The ongoing shortage of housing and affordable housing within England and the UK further complicates both understanding of where the materially poor live and who is there.[9] Maurice Mcleod voices a challenge that many face with popular and controversial "right to buy", arguing that one's home and community is not a commodity to sell and trade. While Mcleod no longer really qualifies on a needs basis to live on an estate, it has been his rental home twenty-four years, his community and neighbourhood – things one cannot commodify.[10] Indeed, to require people to move out once they are "out" of material poverty could well perpetuate the hardships

[7] Hal Pawson et al., *Impacts of Housing Stock Transfers in Urban Britain*, 112–13. Tragically, funding was typically only planned for the *development* of the dilapidated property, with no budget for improving the grounds and neighbourhood (which fell to the developer or residents, or was left undone). The net result was an "updated" house with the same failings of community infrastructure that originally led to the building's dilapidation.

[8] Pawson and Fancie, *Maturing Assets*, 36. See also, Stewart Smyth, "The Privatization of Council Housing: Stock Transfer and the Struggle for Accountable Housing," *Critical Social Policy* 33 no. 1 (2013): 37–56, https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018312457870, accessed 28 September 2021.

[9] See, for example, Linda van den Dries et al., "Mothers Who Experience Homelessness," in Mayock et al., *Women's Homelessness in Europe*, 179–208, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54516-9_8, accessed 28 September 2021; John Harris, "The End of Council Housing," *The Guardian,* 4 January 2016, sec. Society, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/04/end-of-council-housing-bill-secure-tenancies-pay-to-stay accessed 28 September 2021; Mark Stephens et al., "2018 UK Housing Review: Autumn Briefing Paper", 24; Glen Bramley and Suzanne Fitzpatrick, "Homelessness in the UK: Who Is Most at Risk?," *Housing Studies* 33 no. 1 (2018): 96–116, https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2017.1344957, accessed 28 September 2021; Alan Murie, "Shrinking the State in Housing: Challenges, Transitions and Ambiguities," *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy & Society* 11 no. 3 (2018): 485–501, https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsy024, accessed 28 September 2021.

[10] Maurice Mcleod, "I've Been Happily Renting My Council Flat for 24 Years – but for How Much Longer?" *The Guardian*, 30 September 2015, sec. Opinion, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/30/renting-council-house-24-years-right-to-buy-osborne-social-housing, accessed 28 September 2021.

that give council estates their bad rap, as if they are staging grounds for something better instead of a neighbourhood or community of its own right to improve.[11]

5.2 Overview of Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation 2017 (NIMDM17)

Challenges duly noted, we press on to locate Northern Ireland's most deprived by using the most reliable data can be found. The UK government uses its *Index of Multiple Deprivation* (IMD) to analyse the deprivation across the UK. These indices typically provide a weighted seven-domain matrix of factors which lead to people experiencing poverty, or "material deprivation", though each nation defines and weighs these measures differently. The NIMDM17 has the following seven domains:

- Income
- Access to Services
- Employment
- Living Environment
- Health and disability
- Crime and disorder
- Skills and training

NIMDM17 distinguishes between different sizes of neighbourhoods, giving scores for both that can seem contradictory. The smallest unit, what this paper calls a "neighbourhood", is referred to as a "Super Output Area" (SOA). Northern Ireland is divided into 890 SOAs with an average population of 2,100 people. Collections of SOAs are gathered into 11 groups called "Local Government Districts" (LGD), comprised of anything between 49 and 174 SOAs.[12] Northern Ireland also produces statistics for their 26 Local Authorities, or what this paper calls "towns" or "cities". For example, researchers can examine and compare Local Authorities in rural areas as distinct from urban Local Authorities – clearly, Belfast has a different set of challenges from Cranagh – and the data is arranged in these kinds of categories to allow for proper comparison.

For the purposes of this paper, we are aiming to locate the most deprived and assess how best to serve them – this means those living in the NIMDM17's 10% most deprived (Decile 1). We could be even more specific and say that the lowest 10% of these are experiencing

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[11] Interviews with families in any council estate will find people who work hard, consider the council estate their home, and who work for and hope for the betterment of their estate. For example, see testimonials reported in Ashley John-Baptiste, "When Council Estates Were a Dream," *BBC News*, 4 July 2019, https://bbc.co.uk/news/extra/iZKMPd0wjP/council_housing, accessed 28 September 2021; Dawn Foster, "The Tory Policy That Encourages People to Work Less Hard or Lose Their Home," *The Guardian*, 23 October 2015, sec. Housing Network, https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2015/oct/23/pay-to-stay-housing-tory-policy-penalises-hardworking-people, accessed 28 September 2021; Harris, "The End of Council Housing"; Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (Routledge, 2003), 137–171, https://www.routledge.com/Council-Housing-and-Culture-The-History-of-a-Social-Experiment/Ravetz/p/book/9780415239462, accessed 28 September 2021.

[12] For example, Fermanagh & Omagh is made up of 49 SOAs, Belfast comprises 174 SOAs. NIMDM17: Summary Booklet, 1.

destitution – that is a net total of 89 SOAs. However, we say this cautiously, as the statistical difference between #11 and #50 may be slight as the experience of poverty will not differ hugely between them (although the causes of deprivation may vary).

5.3 Using NIMDM17

In broad terms, this report associates the following terms specifically with each decile:

Decile 1   Most deprived
Decile 2   Deprived
Decile 3-4   Hardship
Decile 5-6   Median
Decile 7-8   Living well
Decile 9   Living very well
Decile 10   Least Deprived

This is similar to the decile analysis used throughout these reports. The NIMDM17 advises against relying on rankings, preferring readers analyse data at the decile level. Deciles group the results into blocks of 10% because, statistically, individual rankings become somewhat subjective and hair-splitting within the top 10%. On an individual level, maybe the person living in an SOA ranked #200 is suffering greater deprivation than someone in an SOA ranked #5. So, with caution, we may take note of some rankings in a general manner.

It is important to remember that just because an area has a higher concentration of material deprivation does not mean that *everyone* from that area is materially deprived. This data presents a broad picture that helps us see the general state of communities of 2,100 people – remembering that the data represents 2,100 real people and their families that no survey can ever fully explain. Furthermore, this is only data on people who can be recorded for the survey data at any given point in time. It is unclear how many households or people are able to slip out of the survey data's reach, go into or come out of poverty, or relocate between the time of the survey and the time of publication, etc. It is no secret to anyone who works to help those living in material poverty that statistics do not account for everyone. Ultimately, the best determination of an area is to knock on doors and talk to individual families. Thus, this data gives us a limited, perhaps even simplistic, but nevertheless helpful means of quantifying a very dynamic and fast changing reality.

We have chosen to focus on Super Output Areas (SOAs) – "neighbourhoods" – because this seems most helpful for a local church. Since the typical local church attendance in Northern Ireland is around 100 people, measuring by SOAs can be an effective way to measure local church outreach to the communities and determine more measurable goals.[13] By narrowing to specific neighbourhoods, this can also help to measure in more precise terms where a church is making inroads within a town, which is helpful in towns or cities that have a mixture of social

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[13] NIMDM17 allows data down into smaller neighbourhoods of the 4,537 Small Areas (SA), but Northern Irish data at this level is less reliable for the kind of analysis we are attempting.

classes and neighbourhoods, especially large cities like Liverpool or London. Hence, an SOA-based approach seems most helpful.

5.4 Locating Northern Ireland's poorest

Generally, the NIMDM17 reveals that Northern Ireland has several pockets of high relative deprivation, overwhelmingly in Belfast and in Derry City & Strabane.

Table 5.1 | "Top 20" most deprived areas in NIMDM17

Rank	SOA	Local Government Authority
1	East	Derry City & Strabane
2	Water Works 2	Belfast
3	Crevagh 2	Derry City & Strabane
4	Ardoyne 2	Belfast
5	Strand 1	Derry City & Strabane
6	The Diamond	Derry City & Strabane
7	New Lodge 2	Belfast
8	Woodvale 1	Belfast
9	Ardoyne 3	Belfast
10	Creggan Central 1	Derry City & Strabane
11	Greystone	Causeway Coast & Glens
12	Woodvale 2	Belfast
13	Brandywell	Derry City & Strabane
14	Woodville 1	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon
15	Water Works 1	Belfast
16	Ardoyne 1	Belfast
17	Woodvale 3	Belfast
18	Shankill 2	Belfast
19	Shantallow West 1	Derry City & Strabane
20	Collin Glen 2	Belfast

What is most striking about these 20 most deprived SOAs is that all but *two* are exclusively in Belfast or Derry City & Strabane, which "own" the top ten evenly between them. In fact, of the 100 most deprived, 50 are in Belfast, accounting for 29% of Belfast's 174 SOAs, the highest proportion of all Local Government Districts. Conversely, *none* of the 67 SOAs in Lisburn and Castlereagh (the region surrounding Belfast) are among the 100 most deprived SOAs.[14] On closer inspection, Belfast is noticeably divided: northeast of the A12 to city centre, then up to Ballymacarrett constitutes some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in all of *Northern Ireland* (apart from a few pockets on either side).

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[14] NIMDM17: Summary Booklet, 7.

Figure 5.2 | Number of most deprived neighbourhoods (SOAs) by Local Government District (NIMDM17)[15]
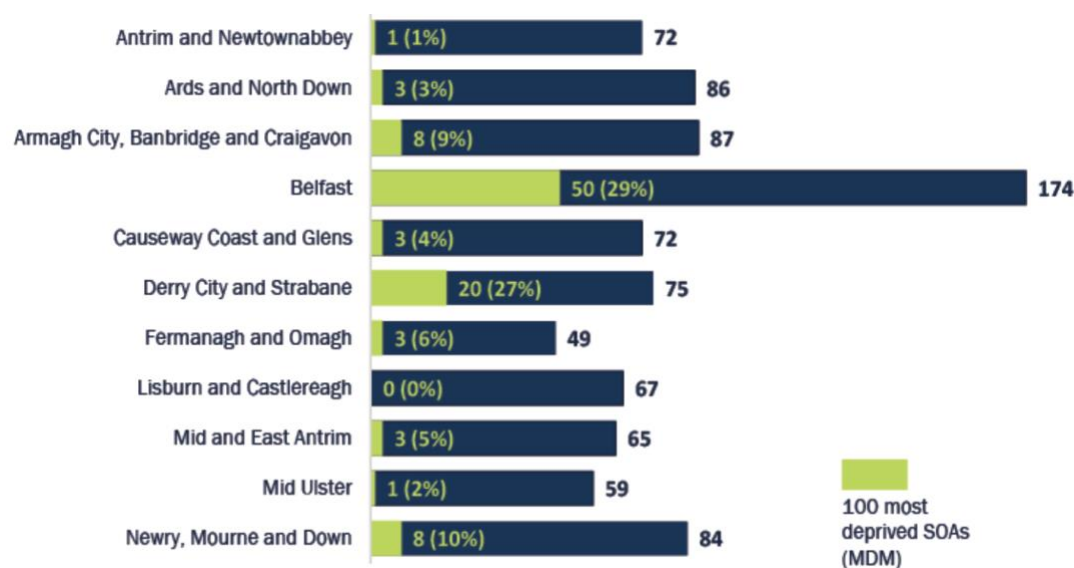

Figure 5.2 demonstrates that, after Belfast and Derry City & Stratbane, the 100 most deprived SOAs are fairly spread out. In other words, with the exception of Lisburn and Castlereagh, *everyone* in Northern Ireland is near to one of the most deprived parts of Northern Ireland. Four of the five *rural* SOAs that make the 100 most deprived are located in Newry, Mourne & Down (Crossmaglen (57), Creggan (72), Silver Bridge 1 (94), Forkhill 2 (100)); the other is in Derry City & Strabane (Glenderg (90)). The top 100 most deprived neighbourhoods (SOAs) are as follows:

Table 5.3 | The 100 most deprived neighbourhoods (SOAs)[16]

Rank (MDM)	Local Government District 2014 name	Urban/rural	SOA name
1	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	East
2	Belfast	Urban	Water Works 2
3	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Crevagh 2
4	Belfast	Urban	Ardoyne 2
5	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Strand 1
6	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	The Diamond
7	Belfast	Urban	New Lodge 2
8	Belfast	Urban	Woodvale 1
9	Belfast	Urban	Ardoyne 3
10	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Creggan Central 1
11	Causeway Coast & Glens	Urban	Greystone
12	Belfast	Urban	Woodvale 2
13	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Brandywell
14	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Urban	Woodville 1

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[15] Table taken from NIMDM: Summary Booklet, 7.
[16] SOURCE – NIMDM17???. Ranked according to Multiple Deprivation Measure.

Rank (MDM)	Local Government District 2014 name	Urban/rural	SOA name
15	Belfast	Urban	Water Works 1
16	Belfast	Urban	Ardoyne 1
17	Belfast	Urban	Woodvale 3
18	Belfast	Urban	Shankill 2
19	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Shantallow West 1
20	Belfast	Urban	Collin Glen 2
21	Belfast	Urban	Crumlin 2
22	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Culmore 2
23	Belfast	Urban	Whiterock 2
24	Belfast	Urban	Crumlin 1
25	Belfast	Urban	New Lodge 1
26	Belfast	Urban	Collin Glen 3
27	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Shantallow West 2
28	Belfast	Urban	Shankill 1
29	Belfast	Urban	Falls 3
30	Belfast	Urban	Falls 2
31	Causeway Coast & Glens	Urban	Ballysally 1
32	Belfast	Urban	New Lodge 3
33	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Creggan South
34	Causeway Coast & Glens	Urban	Coolessan
35	Belfast	Urban	Whiterock 3
36	Belfast	Urban	Twinbrook 2
37	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Ballycolman
38	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Ebrington 2
39	Belfast	Urban	Poleglass 1
40	Belfast	Urban	Ballymacarrett 3
41	Belfast	Urban	Falls 1
42	Belfast	Urban	Twinbrook 1
43	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Clondermot 1
44	Fermanagh & Omagh	Urban	Devenish
45	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Westland
46	Fermanagh & Omagh	Urban	Lisanelly 2
47	Fermanagh & Omagh	Urban	Lisanelly 1
48	Belfast	Urban	Upper Springfield 3
49	Belfast	Urban	Duncairn 1
50	Belfast	Urban	Clonard 1
51	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Shantallow West 3
52	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Urban	Drumgask 2
53	Belfast	Urban	Duncairn 2

Rank (MDM)	Local Government District 2014 name	Urban/rural	SOA name
54	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Urban	Court 1
55	Belfast	Urban	Clonard 2
56	Belfast	Urban	Water Works 3
57	Newry, Mourne & Down	Rural	Crossmaglen
58	Belfast	Urban	Blackstaff 1
59	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Carn Hill 2
60	Belfast	Urban	Highfield 3
61	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Urban	Callan Bridge
62	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Urban	Church
63	Belfast	Mixed urban/rural	Collin Glen 1
64	Belfast	Urban	The Mount 2
65	Mid and East Antrim	Urban	Northland
66	Belfast	Urban	Beechmount 2
67	Belfast	Urban	Shaftesbury 3
68	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Rosemount
69	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Creggan Central 2
70	Newry, Mourne & Down	Urban	Drumgullion 1
71	Ards and North Down	Urban	Scrabo 2
72	Newry, Mourne & Down	Rural	Creggan
73	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Urban	Annagh 2
74	Belfast	Urban	Whiterock 1
75	Newry, Mourne & Down	Urban	Daisy Hill 2
76	Belfast	Urban	Ladybrook 3
77	Belfast	Urban	Upper Springfield 2
78	Belfast	Urban	Ballymacarrett 2
79	Belfast	Urban	Botanic_5
80	Belfast	Urban	The Mount 1
81	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Urban	Drumgor 2
82	Belfast	Urban	Upper Springfield 1
83	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Urban	Drumnamoe 1
84	Antrim and Newtownabbey	Urban	Dunanney
85	Mid and East Antrim	Urban	Ballee
86	Derry City & Strabane	Urban	Shantallow East
87	Belfast	Urban	Glencairn 1
88	Belfast	Urban	Legoniel 2
89	Newry, Mourne & Down	Mixed urban/rural	Murlough
90	Derry City & Strabane	Rural	Glenderg
91	Mid and East Antrim	Urban	Moat
92	Mid Ulster	Urban	Coalisland South

Rank (MDM)	Local Government District 2014 name	Urban/rural	SOA name
93	Newry, Mourne & Down	Urban	Ballybot
94	Newry, Mourne & Down	Rural	Silver Bridge 1
95	Belfast	Urban	Ballymacarrett 1
96	Belfast	Urban	Woodstock 3
97	Ards and North Down	Urban	Glen 1
98	Belfast	Urban	Cliftonville 1
99	Ards and North Down	Urban	Central
100	Newry, Mourne & Down	Rural	Forkhill 2

In light of the fact that worklessness is a particularly significant factor for deprivation in Northern Ireland, it is instructive to compare the top twenty most deprived by the income domain and employment domain, as well as their ranking according to the Multiple Deprivation Measure (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 | Comparison of deprivation by MDM, income and employment[17]

	MDM Multiple Deprivation Measure	£ Income Deprivation Domain	Employment Deprivation Domain
1	East, *Derry City & Strabane*	Creggan, *Newry, Mourne & Down*	New Lodge 2, *Belfast*
2	Water Works 2, *Belfast*	Forkhill 2, *Newry, Mourne & Down*	Water Works 2, *Belfast*
3	Crevagh 2, *Derry City & Strabane*	Silver Bridge 1, *Newry, Mourne & Down*	East, *Derry City & Strabane*
4	Ardoyne 2, *Belfast*	East, *Derry City & Strabane*	Strand 1, *Derry City & Strabane*
5	Strand 1, *Derry City & Strabane*	Crossmaglen, *Newry, Mourne & Down*	Greystone, *Causeway Coast & Glens*
6	The Diamond, *Derry City & Strabane*	Ballysally 1, *Causeway Coast & Glens*	The Diamond, *Derry City & Strabane*
7	New Lodge 2, *Belfast*	Woodvale 1, *Belfast*	Shantallow West 1, *Derry City & Strabane*
8	Woodvale 1, *Belfast*	Ardoyne 2, *Belfast*	Whiterock 2, *Belfast*
9	Ardoyne 3, *Belfast*	Woodville 1, *Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon*	New Lodge 1, *Belfast*
10	Creggan Central 1, *Derry City & Strabane*	Strand 1, *Derry City & Strabane*	Crevagh 2, *Derry City & Strabane*
11	Greystone, *Causeway Coast & Glens*	The Diamond, *Derry City & Strabane*	Collin Glen 2, *Belfast*
12	Woodvale 2, *Belfast*	Woodvale 3, *Belfast*	Ardoyne 3, *Belfast*
13	Brandywell, *Derry City & Strabane*	Newtownhamilton, *Newry, Mourne & Down*	Brandywell, *Derry City & Strabane*
14	Woodville 1, *Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon*	Rosslea, *Fermanagh & Omagh*	Creggan South, *Derry City & Strabane*
15	Water Works 1, *Belfast*	Crevagh 2, *Derry City & Strabane*	Ardoyne 2, *Belfast*
16	Ardoyne 1, *Belfast*	Shantallow West 2, *Derry City & Strabane*	Creggan Central 1, *Derry City & Strabane*
17	Woodvale 3, *Belfast*	Church, *Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon*	Whiterock 3, *Belfast*
18	Shankill 2, *Belfast*	Brandywell, *Derry City & Strabane*	Water Works 1, *Belfast*
19	Shantallow West 1, *Derry City & Strabane*	Annagh 2, *Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon*	Ardoyne 1, *Belfast*
20	Collin Glen 2, *Belfast*	Creggan Central 1, *Derry City & Strabane*	Shankill 2, *Belfast*

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[17] <mark>SOURCE</mark>

There are several remarkable features. What is striking is that East (Derry City & Strabane) is in the top five for all three, while Water Works 2 (Belfast) is second in MDM and employment. New Lodge 2 is ranked the most deprived for employment, yet does not feature in the top twenty for income deprivation, but is nonetheless ranked #7 in MDM.

The collected data repeatedly places these Local Government Districts at the top of numerous ways of construing what are the "most deprived" areas as we have seen above. Hence a current "top ten" most deprived urban neighbourhoods/SOAs appears to be fairly straightforward:

Table 5.5 | "Top 10" most deprived neighbourhoods (SOAs) (==DATE==)

	Urban SOA
1	Crevagh 2 (Derry City & Strabane)
2	East (Derry City & Strabane)
3	Water Works 2 (Belfast)
4	Ardoyne 2 (Belfast)
5	New Lodge 2 (Belfast)
6	Strand 1 (Derry City & Strabane)
7	Ardoyne 3 (Belfast)
8	Greystone (Causeway Coast & Glens)
9	Crossmaglen (Newry, Mourne & Down)
10	Creggan Central 1 (Derry City & Strabane)

If we turn our focus exclusively to the rural poor, we find a rather different top ten most deprived:

Table 5.6 | "Top 10" most deprived rural poor (==DATE==)[18]

	Rural SOAs
1	Crossmaglen (Newry, Mourne & Down)
2	Cregan (Newry, Mourne & Down)
3	Genderg (Derry City & Strabane)
4	Silver Bridge 1 (Newry, Mourne & Down)
5	Forkhill 2 (Newry, Mourne & Down)
6	Newtownhamilton (Newry, Mourne & Down)
7	Rosslea (Fermanagh & Omagh)
8	Keady (Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon)
9	Newtownbutler (Fermanagh & Omagh)
10	Dungiven (Causeway Coast & Glens)

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[18] ==SOURCE??? NIMDM17==

Considering the urban and rural "top 10" together, it is striking how much deprivation is concentrated in Belfast, Derry City & Strabane; Newry, Mourne & Down; Causeway Coast & Glens; and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon. These five Local Government Districts have the greatest deprivation within their regions. Indeed, Derry City & Strabane have considerable urban *and* rural deprivation.

Where are poor families are located in Northern Ireland, strictly speaking, is quite simple: everywhere. The reality is that any church of 50 people is likely to have at least one or two families straddling the lines between working poor/hardship/most deprived – maybe even destitute. In Northern Ireland, it is statistically most likely to be higher likelihood in these ten areas. Many of them are children, perhaps even a child in your Sunday school class.

6. Where are gospel-preaching churches in Northern Ireland?

There are 890 SOAs (Super Output Areas) comprised of 4,537 SAs (Small Areas). Within Northern Ireland there are over 700 evangelical/gospel-preaching churches:

Table 6.1 | Gospel-preaching churches in Northern Ireland[1]

Church network	Number of churches (approx.)
Presbyterian Church of Ireland	530
Association of Baptist Churches Ireland	117
Elim Pentecostal Churches	49
Anglican Church	20
Vineyard Church	13
TOTAL	**729**

This research was conducted in partnership with FIEC – a fellowship of independent churches working together to reach Britain for Christ – but there are no FIEC churches in Northern Ireland.[2] Therefore churches were identified by: (a) belief that Jesus, God's only Son, died and rose again as an atoning, substitutionary sacrifice for sin for all who repent and believe, (b) a strong commitment in word and deed to tell everyone the gospel of Jesus Christ, and (c) a commitment to the authority and inspiration of the Bible as God's written word. Or in other words, churches that follow a Chalcedonian Creed orthodoxy, and in all other matters, charity.

Another striking feature of the 10% most deprived communities is the presence of which churches in a given neighbourhood. The contours of how and why a neighbourhood is or was Catholic or Protestant or otherwise is beyond the scope of this project. Simply said, if there are *only* or *predominantly* Catholic churches in or around an SOA, that neighbourhood is determined to be a "Catholic neighbourhood". For example, if an SOA had two large Catholic churches in or nearby, usually with one or more Catholic schools, and often a childcare centre, youth centre or sports fields – it is hard to miss the Catholic influence. Even if there was a single Presbyterian church hall or a Church of Ireland church nearby, it is quite rightly a predominantly Catholic neighbourhood. Similarly, where there are *only* or *predominantly* any number or mix of Protestant churches, even if a Catholic church may also be around, that neighbourhood is determined to be Protestant. Where there is obvious parity or an even mix of Catholic and Protestant churches, that neighbourhood is "mixed". If

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[1] Research conducted by the author, based on data collected and analysed in 2019–20.
[2] Since our research has been conducted in partnership with the FIEC, it therefore focuses generally on FIEC churches. Since there are no FIEC churches in Northern Ireland, our research was conducted among gospel-preaching/evangelical churches working in deprived areas.

the neighbourhood has no discernible church presence, it is determined to be "none". Half of the ten most deprived neighbourhoods have no discernible gospel witness. Of the 89 neighbourhoods that are the 10% most deprived, there are twice as many predominantly Catholic neighbourhoods as there are Protestant or mixed neighbourhoods.[3]

Table 6.2 | Predominant church presence in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods (SOAs)[4]

	Number of neighbourhoods	% of 10% most deprived
Catholic	40	44.94%
Protestant	19	21.35%
Mixed	22	24.72%
None	6	6.74

It is notable that Catholic SOAs nearly match the combined total of Protestant and mixed neighbourhoods. While six SOAs did not have a discernible church presence, these may also be areas where churchgoers have a church home more than two miles away.[5] It is hard to escape the conclusion that the Troubles still have a considerable impact on the structures of Northern Irish society. While this data cannot demonstrate "the Catholics have it worse than the Protestants", this does support the conclusion that a Catholic neighbourhood is more likely to experience poverty than a Protestant or otherwise.

Similarly, we looked for a discernible gospel witness in these 10% most deprived neighbourhoods. A "discernible gospel witness" has both geographical and theological meaning. Geographically, we determined that it meant that there was a church within the neighbourhood or within up to a two-mile radius of the neighbourhood.[6].

Table 6.3 | Discernible gospel witness in 10% most deprived neighbourhoods (SOAs)[7]

Gospel witness?	Number of neighbourhoods	% of 10% most deprived
Yes	40	44.94%
Unclear	13	14.61%
No	36	40.45%

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[3] "Mixed" means a neighbourhood/SOA that has both active Protestant and Catholic churches in the neighbourhood.
[4] Research conducted by the author, based on data collected and analysed in 2019–20.
[5] See above: we operate on the premise demonstrated by experience and testimony that most people in a materially deprived community typically do not travel more than a mile (except perhaps to commute by public transit to a job or meeting). Since there may be exceptions, for research purposes we have set a two-mile radius as a maximum limit; as a rule of thumb, "one mile plus" (e.g., 1.3 miles, 1.5 miles, etc).
[6] Depending upon the paths one can take to access a church conveniently, such as in rural and semi-rural areas, a church located up to two miles away was considered. In urban areas, this applied where there the church is literally down the road at or just over one mile. If a church it is a high traffic area, has a complicated route, or is just simply hard to get to by foot or public transit, such churches were not considered.
[7] Research conducted by the author, based on data collected and analysed in 2019–20.

Among 10% most deprived neighbourhoods, less than half have a discernible gospel witness (44.94%). A neighbourhood was deemed "unclear" if there was a church at a difficult distance or it was simply unclear that there was a church in the area that met the "gospel witness" criteria (see above). Regardless, this reflects reliably the general secularisation trend current in Northern Ireland.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has working partnerships with many organisations to play a key role in ministering to the physical needs of people.[8] For example, they founded the Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society in 1866 and, at time of writing, they have branched into care of older people, day care, residential respite care, supported living and other services for people with a learning disability and those with a physical disability, as well as working with people with addictions and offenders. With a £10 million operational budget, their Council for Social Witness oversees effective service on behalf of the church – meaning that it is not necessarily staffed by the church exclusively.[9]

Typical church engagement in poor areas is limited. In poorer urban areas, this is often via CAP centres (Christians Against Poverty), food banks and mental health programmes. Many try to do things that meet the physical needs of the local community and provide a platform for building relationship and cultivating a sense of community that can lead towards a gospel engagement through a Bible study, Alpha course or invitation to church. The "counterpoint" is that there are many dying churches in urban areas that are not thinking about engaging contextually in mission but are still operating from a "Christendom" mindset. With regards to the divided society context, the counterpoint is that there are simply very few churches left in nationalist/Catholic areas meaning that there is a sizeable proportion of the population that is unreached. Church planting is undoubtedly the only solution – however, any approach that seeks to engage Catholics with the gospel will encounter huge suspicion and opposition from the local Catholic church.[10]

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[8] See the PCI website: https://www.presbyterianireland.org, accessed 20 January 2020.
[9] See https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Mission/Social-Witness.aspx, accessed 20 January 2020. Furthermore, it appears this includes all of Ireland, not just N. Ireland.
[10] This paragraph in modified from an email exchange with Neil Harrison, whose insights greatly improved this paragraph and other parts of this NI report. Any errors are entirely my own, probably due to my not listening better to Neil or not voting for Trump.

7. Conclusions

In a word, Ireland is a divided country. People are divided politically, religiously, socially, linguistically and culturally. However, they are also divided spiritually – separated from the Holy God who created them and loves them, but cannot tolerate their sin. This holy Creator sent His Son to pay the price, to make atonement, to die the death they deserve so that in Christ they can live the life God desires them to have – a life of union and peace. What Northern Ireland needs is not a political party, Brexit, a unified Ireland or UK, but union with Christ.

Sadly, Christ's bride, the church, has often been implicated – at times, putting politics above faith. Perhaps the brightest gospel light a church has, after the clear preaching and teaching of the gospel, is to love the neighbour they are not "supposed" to love – a Protestant church "adopting" a Catholic community by friendship, support and encouragement perhaps? Rejection is likely and political motivations may be questioned. But how about sharing a loaf of bread or babysitting the kids for free so their parent(s) can get to or from work. For those who are able, how about offering fair paying jobs at your business, going with them on their court dates (and helping them get to court on time), offering them opportunities to escape destructive life choices, taking on an apprentice and teaching them a trade? When they ask you why, explaining the hope you have within you (1 Pet 3:15) and that you are showing them love and grace because that's what God did for you in Christ Jesus.

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