Your notes

GCSE Sociology: revision notes

Poverty

Contents

1. Defining and measuring poverty
2. Who is at risk and why
3. The welfare state
4. Key terms
5. Quick questions
6. What to do next

Defining and measuring poverty

- **Absolute poverty** is lacking the basic necessities for survival, such as food, shelter and clothing.
- **Relative poverty** is being poor compared with the typical standard of living in a society. In the UK, households with less than 60% of the median income are usually counted as in **relative poverty**.
- Townsend (1979) measured **relative deprivation** using a **deprivation index** of items most people saw as normal, such as a week's holiday a year or a cooked breakfast on most days.

Who is at risk and why

- Groups at higher risk include children, lone-parent families, disabled people, some ethnic minority groups, older people and people on low pay or unemployed.
- Individual explanations blame the behaviour or culture of the poor, such as a "**culture of poverty**".
- Structural explanations blame the way society is organised, such as low pay, unemployment, cuts to benefits and discrimination.

The welfare state

- The **welfare state** was set up after the Second World War, based on the Beveridge Report (1942), which aimed to defeat five "giants": want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness.
- It includes the NHS, state education, benefits and state pensions. Debates continue about whether welfare reduces poverty or creates dependency.

Key terms

Absolute poverty	Lacking the basic necessities for survival.

Relative poverty	Being poor compared with the typical living standard in a society.
Relative deprivation	Lacking the things most people see as normal.
Deprivation index	A list of items used to measure deprivation.
Welfare state	State support for people's health, education and income.
Culture of poverty	The idea that the poor have values that keep them poor.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is absolute poverty?
2. What is relative poverty?
3. What income level usually counts as relative poverty in the UK?
4. Who measured relative deprivation with a deprivation index?
5. What were Beveridge's five giants?
6. When was the Beveridge Report published?
7. Which group is at higher risk of poverty?
8. What is a structural explanation of poverty?

Answers

1. Lacking the basic necessities for survival
2. Being poor compared with the typical living standard in a society
3. Less than 60% of the median income
4. Townsend
5. Want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness
6. 1942
7. Lone-parent families
8. Poverty caused by low pay, unemployment and discrimination

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.

Your notes