

## Inequalities in Shetland

This is part of a Series of Papers providing information on Shetland’s strategic challenges.

This paper provides information about inequalities in Shetland, drawing on national and regional data, alongside local data, research and lived experience. It has been produced by a group of local experts<sup>i</sup>.

Shetland appears to be a well-off community. However, this data masks the underlying issues which tell a story of hidden and deep inequalities. These inequalities are different for different areas of Shetland, and for different groups of people living here. However, Shetland is not alone in the inequalities it faces.

With a comprehensive evidence base highlighting that inequalities are bad for all of us, this paper aims to shed light on the issues, so that they can be tackled more effectively.

### 1. Shetland Appears to be a Well-Off Community

Shetland has consistently high levels of employment. In 2023, the **employment rate in Shetland was 84.3%** compared to 76.6% for Great Britain and 74.7% for Scotland; the only area in the Highlands and Islands with a higher rate was Orkney, at 88.3%<sup>ii</sup>.

The **unemployment rate of 2.2%** in 2023 is low compared to 3.4% for Great Britain, 3.5% for Scotland, and other areas of the Highlands and Islands, again, except for Orkney, at 1.7%<sup>iii</sup>. Shetland’s Participation Measure provides the percentage of **16-19 year olds who are participating in education, training or employment**. Shetland has consistently maintained a high participation rate, ranging from 95.9% and 97.8%, amongst the top four performing local authority areas. In 2025 it was **97.5%**, which compares to 93.3% for Scotland, and higher than other areas of the Highlands and Islands<sup>iv</sup>.

In 2025 Shetland households had a **median income** of £41,007 and **mean income** of £49,407. Whilst the median and mean incomes are slightly lower than the UK, they are similar to Scotland, and are highest within the island areas of Scotland<sup>v</sup>.

2025	Median Income	Mean Income	Lowest Quartile
Shetland	£41,007	£49,407	£23,173
Orkney	£40,485	£49,815	£22,209
Na h-Eileanan Siar	£37,530	£45,754	£21,544
Argyll & Bute	£39,483	£48,632	£21,863
Highland	£44,906	£53,298	£25,141
Scotland	£41,593	£50,911	£22,818
United Kingdom	£44,634	£53,380	£24,655

Statistically, Shetland has low levels of poverty compared to the rest of Scotland and the UK. **Child poverty** levels (after housing costs), are the third lowest of Scotland’s 32 local authorities in year ending 2025, decreasing from 9.5% (386 children) in 2024 to **9.3%** (372 children)<sup>vi</sup>. This is compared with the Scottish average of 14.8%. This decreasing trend is different to rates in most Highland & Island areas where rates are both higher and increasing. For example, in 2025, Highland’s child poverty rate increased from 13.8% to 14.2%; Na h-Eileanan Siar from 12.1% to 12.9%; and Orkney from 10.7% to 12.2%.

There are **few visible signs of disadvantage** across Shetland, which are traditionally considered as indicators of poverty in the built environment, such as derelict or run-down buildings and homes, and waste land.

Shetland has the lowest rate of **recorded crime** in Scotland across local authority areas. In 2024/25 there were 180 reported crimes per 10,000 population, compared to 545 for Scotland, 220 for Na h-Eileanan Siar and 234 for Orkney<sup>vii</sup>, this includes sexual assaults and rape. There are also very few reports of **Hate Aggravated conduct** (for example, 1 per 10,000 population in Shetland, compared to 3 per 10,000 for Scotland, in 2023/24)<sup>viii</sup>. There isn’t a culture of people committing crime to fund drug use<sup>ix</sup>.

There is a broadly positive picture for Shetland across a number of key **health outcomes**, particularly when compared to Scotland<sup>x</sup>. Levels of premature mortality are lower (305.5 vs 426.1 per 100,000), cancer incidence and deaths under 75 are lower, and drug-related hospital admissions are substantially below the Scotland average (54.7 vs 192.3). Healthy life expectancy is notably higher for both females (70.8 vs 59.4 years) and males (68.3 vs 59.1 years), and rates of small birthweight babies are lower, suggesting generally favourable population health and early life outcomes. Alcohol-related hospital admissions are also considerably lower than Scotland overall, indicating some positive progress in reducing harm. Measures relating to early years public health are



generally positive, with rates of developmental concerns at 27-30 months generally slightly below the Scottish average, and National Dental Inspection programme outcomes rating Shetland in the top 2 health board for Primary 1 dental health for the past decade.

Shetland is also known as a welcoming community, with **high levels of community activity and rates of volunteering**. Over 650 third sector organisations are registered with Voluntary Action Shetland (VAS), with the total number thought to be higher. Shetland tends to have the highest volunteering rate in Scotland, with, in 2022, 75% of the population aged 16 and over involved in formal and/or informal volunteering, compared to the Scottish average of 46%<sup>xi</sup>. The Voar Redd Up of 2026 involved around 210 groups representing around 3,172 volunteers<sup>xii</sup>, whilst the Shetland Folk Festival is entirely volunteer run and delivered, unusual for an internationally recognised festival of its size<sup>xiii</sup>.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the **Scottish Government’s official tool for identifying and comparing levels of deprivation across small areas in Scotland**. There are now nearly 7,000 of these datazones in Scotland, each with between 500-1,000 people. Each is ranked from most deprived to least deprived for seven Domains (Income, Employment, Health, Education, Access to Services, Crime and Housing).

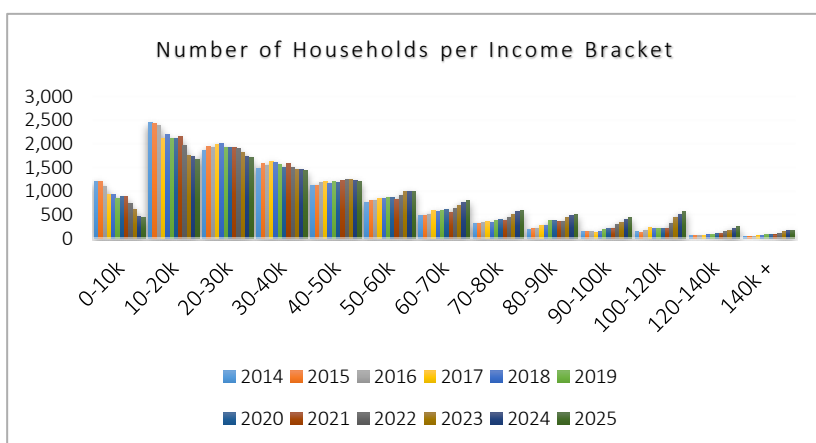
Across the six SIMD versions (2004–2020), Shetland has consistently ranked near the least deprived of Scotland’s 32 local authorities. In SIMD 2020, only one datazone of 30 in Shetland was within the 30% most deprived areas nationally<sup>xiv</sup>, and five were within the 30% least deprived areas<sup>xv</sup>.

## 2. Underlying Issues are Masked

However, the reality for many is very different.

While unemployment figures are relatively low, the **inactive rate** for Shetland is much higher and closer to the national average. Around 2,200 people or about 15.7% of the population aged 16 to 64 years in Shetland Islands were "economically inactive" in the year ending December 2023<sup>xvi</sup>.

In terms of **employment**, as with other small rural areas, those who are skilled and cannot progress in their careers here, leave for opportunities elsewhere<sup>xvii</sup>. Those people not in work (unemployed or economically inactive) tend to have many barriers to employment. The most recent figures (2026) from Shetland's Local Employability Partnership providers show almost a quarter of those seeking employability support have a disability<sup>xviii</sup>.



There have been changes in **median household income** in Shetland, although it remains relatively high compared to other areas in the North of Scotland. In 2014, Shetland’s median household income was comparable with the UK, and higher than the rest of the Highlands & Islands, and Scotland<sup>xix</sup>. Household incomes have increased since 2014, so the number of households per income bracket has declined for the lower income brackets and increased in higher income brackets.

As of 2025, 4% of Shetland’s households have a household income of £10K or less (440 households), and 20% have an income of £20K or less (2109 households). Whilst 9% of households have a household income over £100K (987 households). This is similar to other areas of the Highlands & Islands, and Scotland.

2025	% HH in 0-10K income bracket	% HH in 10-20K income bracket	% HH in 100-120K income bracket	% HH in 120K+ income brackets
Shetland	4%	16%	5%	4%
Orkney	4%	15%	6%	4%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	5%	17%	4%	3%
Highland	3%	14%	6%	5%
Scotland	5%	16%	6%	5%

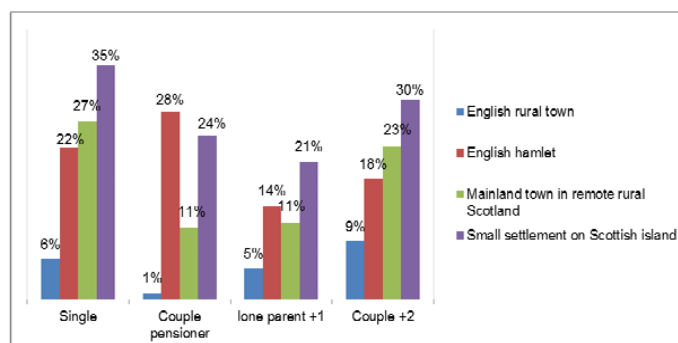
A single adult on Universal Credit receives roughly £75–



£100 per week, depending on age, before any additional elements or deductions<sup>xx</sup>; this is the same, wherever they live in the UK.

Due to Shetland's **high cost of living**, household income does not go as far as elsewhere in the UK. The Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland<sup>xxi</sup> evidences how much it costs for people (of different household types) to live at a minimum acceptable standard in remote rural Scotland, compared to elsewhere in the UK. For the most part, people in remote rural Scotland have similar ideas about what constitutes a minimum acceptable living standard as people elsewhere in the UK. However, in some cases the ways of achieving it are somewhat different, and in many cases living in remote rural Scotland makes the basket more expensive.

The budgets that households needed, in 2016, to achieve a minimum acceptable living standard in remote rural Scotland were typically 10-35% higher than urban UK. These premiums were most modest for pensioners and greatest for single people and families supporting children. For households living in the most remote island locations, too far from towns to make regular shopping trips, and those relying on heating oil in older homes, additional costs could be over 60% greater.

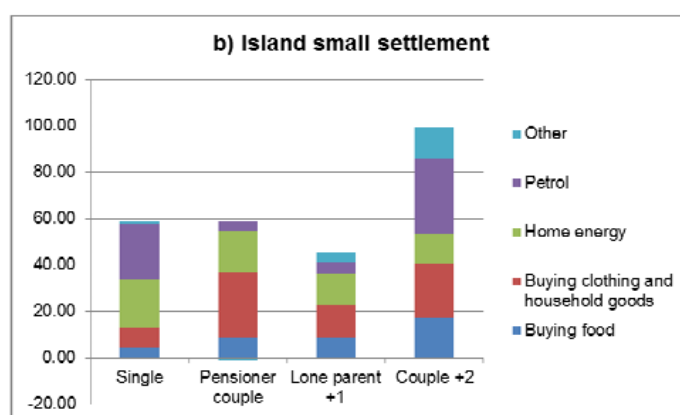


Additional costs (%) compared to urban UK households

The three principal sources of this premium are:

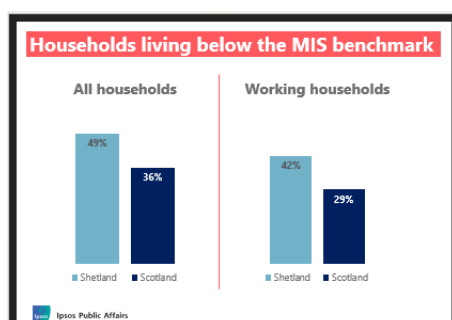
- The higher prices that households must pay for food, clothes and household goods;
- Much higher household fuel bills, influenced by climate and fuel sources; and
- The longer distances that people travel routinely, particularly to work.

The influence of these three factors varies considerably by household type. For singles, the most important factor is the cost of a long commute, which is particularly high relative to the budget for a single person. For pensioners, it is a combination of higher household fuel bills and having to buy many goods locally or by mail order. These differences reflect the different costs incurred by more and less mobile households.



Components of additional costs, £ per week addition, compared to English rural town

In 2017, the Partnership commissioned research to understand more about the **impacts of the high cost of living**, in Shetland<sup>xxii</sup>. At that time, it was estimated that a minimum income standard for the UK was, on average, 80% of the median income for non-pensioner households, whilst in Shetland it was 120% of the UK median, due to the additional costs.



The graph on the left uses data from the 2017 report, showing that, when costs are applied, the needs of households in Shetland, whether all households, or working households, are higher in Shetland than for Scotland, as a whole.

This research also examined **in-work poverty** in Shetland, concluding that the profile of households experiencing in-work poverty in Shetland were broadly in line with that for Scotland, as a whole. Typically: families relying on one earner; households with single and dual earners not able to work enough hours; women; those in part-time

employment; and those working in the retail, hospitality, service and social care sectors.



While the research participants tended to say they were satisfied with their lives and adopted a stoical outlook; for example, defining their needs in terms of what was available to them, it was clear nonetheless that many were experiencing levels of financial hardship more commonly associated with worklessness. They were generally in very low paid jobs and many felt stuck there due to what they perceived as limited opportunities to progress within their place of work or to find new work elsewhere in the Isles. They commonly found their jobs mundane as a result of being in the same role for a number of years. Living on a low income meant many found it difficult to achieve an acceptable standard of living and relied on benefits to cope. Difficulties affording heating, and transport to, from and around Shetland, were common, as were problems affording adequate food and running a car – viewed by many as a necessity in Shetland. The cumulative impact of these challenges often led to a diminished quality of life characterised by stress, depression, isolation and/or relationship strains.

'We can't afford to fix the car that's supposed to be mine. My partner has to have the other car. You don't like having to ask for lifts, it's not a good feeling, but it's just the way it is<sup>xxiii</sup>.'

While it was common for participants to have sought financial advice and support in the past, mostly from the Citizens Advice Bureau, a small number were hesitant about doing so, owing to a perception that “word travels” in a small community and seeking support would be tantamount to ‘publicising’ your financial difficulties. Research interviews with employers provided further evidence of the issues and challenges facing those in in-work poverty. While most of the employers offered different types of support that might benefit those on a low-income – such as paying a Living Wage, flexible working, childcare vouchers, subsidised travel and staff discounts – those employing predominantly lower skilled, manual workers; for example, in the retail, food and drink or business services sectors, were less likely to do so. Several employers also reported offering informal support to employees who were experiencing financial difficulties, including advances and loans. While this support was likely of great benefit to the employees concerned – and perhaps prevented them from having to rely on high interest credit or loans – it could have served to conceal the problem of in-work poverty to an extent, since those affected may not always be coming to the attention of external agencies.

In-work poverty is still apparent in Shetland in 2026; with households in receipt of all benefit entitlements to maximise their household income in addition to wages, still not being able to afford essential items<sup>xxiv</sup>. In 2017, 42% of working households in Shetland were estimated not to earn enough to have an acceptable standard of living<sup>xxv</sup>. While Shetland has lower relative child poverty rates than many urban parts of Scotland, as evidenced earlier, nearly three-quarters of children living in poverty in island and remote Scottish communities live in working households<sup>xxvi</sup>. This challenges the commonly held view of child poverty.

Data illustrating the impact on households in Shetland, whether working or not include:

- In 2015, when **food** parcels were provided through the Salvation Army, demand had increased in the previous five years, from 38 parcels a year to 178 parcels a year. Much of this increase was attributed to changes to the Welfare System, and the introduction of Universal Credit in Shetland<sup>xxvii</sup>.
- Foodbank usage in Shetland tripled between 2018/19 and 2023/24, but reduced in 2024/25 and 2025/26, primarily due to reduced provision through the Council. In 2025/26, an average of 85 parcels were distributed per month, compared to 137 in 2023/24. These supported 1,620 people during the year, with approximately 22% of those helped being under the age of 16 (an increase from 17% in 2024/25)<sup>xxviii</sup>.
- In a 2021/22 census of young people across Scotland, findings showed a proportion of young people experience food insecurity, including hunger. When asked how often they go to school or bed hungry 8.6% of the 1258 respondents in Shetland responded ‘Always or often’, whilst 29.3% responded ‘Sometimes’. 57.8% responded ‘Never’, whilst 4.3% ‘Preferred not to Say’. This compares to 8.3%, 25.8%, 62.1% and 3.7% across areas of Scotland as a whole<sup>xxix</sup>.
- Healthy food is nearly twice as expensive per calorie as less healthy food and the gap is widening<sup>xxx</sup>.
- 40% of households in Shetland were classified as experiencing **fuel poverty** for the three-year average 2022/24<sup>xxxi</sup>, a 9% increase from 2017/19, and an increase from 27% in 2016/18, when the new measure was brought in. Alongside Orkney and the Western Isles, Shetland has the highest levels of fuel poverty in Scotland. As the windiest and darkest place in the UK during the winter, with a lot of precipitation, this is as would be expected. It is exacerbated by no mains gas, higher electricity costs, complex house builds, and a high level of electric only household heating (about 50% of households)<sup>xxxii</sup>. Over 70% live in social housing,



the highest in Scotland, and it's estimated that households in fuel poverty in Shetland need an additional £2890 a year to reach an acceptable energy cost level, compared to £1180 for a Scottish household.

- The current Ofgem energy price cap for a typical property is £1,641 for a UK household. This compares to around £3,456 for a Shetland all-electric property<sup>xxxiii</sup>.
- A recent survey of Council housing tenants showed that 66% said that heating and energy costs were of greatest concern to them with the current cost of living (a 12% increase on the previous year)<sup>xxxiv</sup>.

The Shetland experience of inequality is further complicated because it is **dispersed across the islands**. It is individuals and households, rather than communities who face deprivation and social exclusion in Shetland<sup>xxxv</sup>. In other words, there is not a significant difference in the number of income deprived individuals within each of Shetland's datazones, compared to, for example, urban areas of Scotland<sup>xxxvi</sup>. This geography also explains why tools such as SIMD, which are designed to identify spatial concentrations of deprivation at the datazone level, do not provide an accurate measure.

Shetland Partnership research from 2006 remains relevant, concluding that: 'Living in difficult circumstances is no better in Shetland than in any other part of the country: the day-to-day existence for individuals and households struggling to afford to eat and pay for other essentials is the same. Indeed, the culture of self-reliance and the high standard of living, enjoyed by many, forces less fortunate people to **keep their circumstances hidden**. It can be particularly isolating and demoralising when people can see others around them enjoying these living standards and high-quality infrastructure. There is little opportunity for social contact and support from others experiencing a similar situation.' Unlike in urban areas, there may be less opportunities to share the challenges associated with a low income<sup>xxxvii</sup>.

This masking of real circumstances is also indicated by **issues of debt** dealt with by the local Citizens Advice Bureau. In 2023/24, £557,626.63 of debt was dealt with locally, with an average debt, per case of £9,451.30. This was much higher than the Scottish average of £5,750. In 2024/25, the average reduced a little, to £8,746.32 for Shetland, but remained higher than the Scottish average of £6,526. In 2025/26, the average Shetland case had increased again to £11,088.32. Around 20% of the local cases were in full time employment and around 3% were not in work (on benefits). Around 30% owned their own home, and around 70% had an income of £25,000 or over<sup>xxxviii</sup>.

Meanwhile there have been around 100 **homelessness** applications and assessments in Shetland, since 2018/19<sup>xxxix</sup>. Poor **housing condition** is a typical problem in remote areas of Shetland, with deprived inhabitants seldom in the financial or health situation to resolve it<sup>xl</sup>. **Child poverty** figures, AFTER housing costs, are still low, but comparative to other areas, they are worse than BEFORE housing costs, highlighting our high cost of housing<sup>xli</sup>.

Whilst there is a broadly positive picture around **health outcomes**, there are also areas of concern. Coronary heart disease deaths among those aged 45–64 are significantly higher in Shetland than Scotland (114.9 vs 74.9 / 100,000), limiting long-term conditions are more prevalent (40% vs 37%), suggesting a higher burden of ongoing ill health, and mental wellbeing scores, while slightly higher than Scotland, have declined in recent years. Alcohol-specific death rates, although lower than Scotland, show some fluctuation and recent increases compared to earlier periods, indicating a potential emerging risk although the impact of small numbers must be carefully considered. Caseload and referral data shows higher incidence of Learning Disabilities in Shetland, compared to the Scottish average, and sustained demand for neurodevelopmental diagnosis and support of a similar pattern to Scotland. Thus, overall, while Shetland performs well on many headline measures, there are clear challenges around cardiovascular health, long-term conditions, and maintaining recent improvements. It should also be considered that some of these positive outcomes are likely to be due to the mitigating impact of significant public sector and third sector provision within Shetland, giving relatively easier access to support compared to other areas<sup>xlii</sup>.

In relation to **crime**, qualitative data, beneath the official statistics shows a different picture. In 2024, a survey by Shetland Women's Aid found that **sexual violence** is normalised in Shetland, with abuse and harassment often minimised or excused and perpetrators rarely held accountable<sup>xliii</sup>. Women who responded to the survey said they felt unsafe and fearful, especially in social settings such as pubs and alcohol-related spaces, with a pressure



to tolerate negative behaviour. Women described being fearful of reporting, due to Shetland's close community, in addition to the feeling that reporting may not be taken seriously and that there are long waiting lists for therapeutic support. Over 50% of respondents (31 out of 58 women) said they had experienced discrimination as women, including sexual harassment or violence.

During recent focus groups, members of the community shared that they had been **verbally abused based on perceived racial identity** in public places, such as when walking down the street. These incidents weren't reported, with victims tending to shrug off the abuse but sharing that it makes them feel unsafe, particularly in certain areas, in the evening<sup>xliiv</sup>. Those reporting these experiences were ethnic minorities, religious groups and non-locals. The Scottish election campaign has seen candidates reporting abuse, intimidation and harassment, especially online<sup>xliv</sup>. Levels of **fraud** may be higher here, as a rising form of crime<sup>xlvi</sup>.

**Stigma and loneliness** are key features of inequality in Shetland<sup>xlvii</sup>. There is the strain of ensuring friends, family and neighbours remain unaware of financial or personal situations households may be facing, in part due to fear of being judged or talked about, and the stigma and shame people can feel. This may impact on whether or not households access the benefits they are entitled to. Young people highlighted that negative reputations or labels can stick for a long time, and are difficult to shake off<sup>xlviii</sup>.

Those groups reporting this are young people, people with mental health issues, substance use issues, those within the criminal justice system, low-income households and people new to Shetland. Impacts include avoiding asking for help or support, reduced networks of friends and family, not being able to access education, jobs and service, and a general impact on confidence and wellbeing. These feelings on loneliness can be exacerbated by geographical remoteness<sup>xlix</sup>.

In 2021, one fifth of respondents to a survey in Shetland, reported that they sometimes feel lonely, and 6.3% stated that they often feel lonely. The response was different across age bands, with over half of 18-29 year olds reporting feeling lonely in the previous two weeks, compared to only 6% of 65-69 year olds<sup>l</sup>.

Loneliness is seen as a major public health risk. It affects the body over time meaning people who are lonely are generally less healthy and more vulnerable to illness, such as heart disease and stroke, and are more likely to experience depression and anxiety. Loneliness increases the risk of dying earlier, and is seen to have impacts on social cohesion and economic productivity<sup>li</sup>.

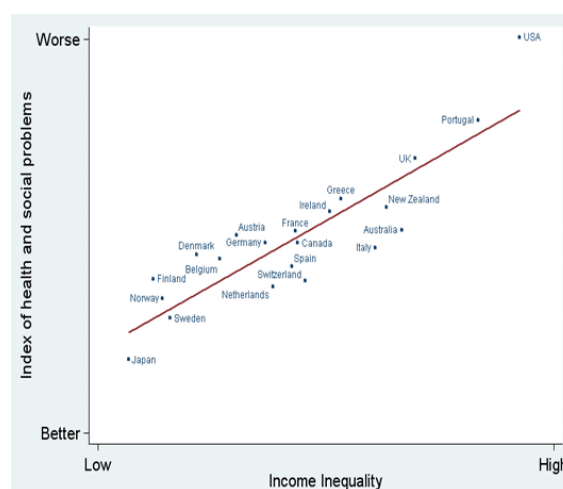
Recent engagement activity in Shetland evidenced that loneliness remains a significant issue. The work also highlighted more groups who can face stigma – survivors of abuse, ethnic minorities, religious and LGBTQ+ communities<sup>lii</sup>.

### 3. Tackling Inequalities is Good for All of Us

*The Spirit Level*<sup>liii</sup> puts forward the argument that, in developed countries, the more unequal a society, the poorer the outcomes for all those within that society.

A number of graphs in the book support the evidence that more equal societies are better societies for the vast majority of populations, and that the health and social impacts on society are statistically sensitive to inequality. Data is examined for a number of health and social indicators, including maths and literacy, infant mortality, homicide, trust, obesity and mental illness (including substance misuse). All show a correlation between worsening health and social issues and income inequality.

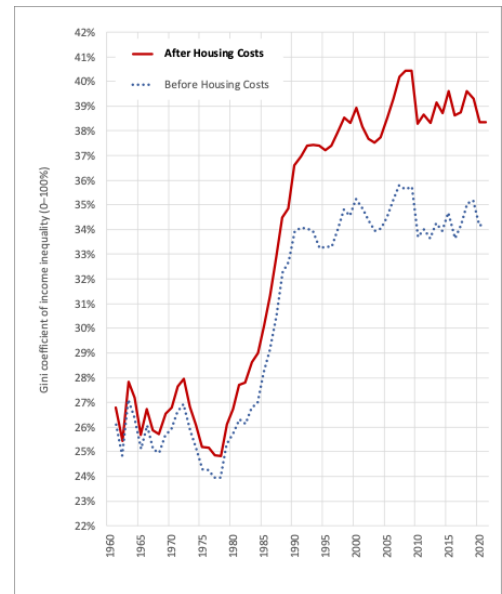
The Index Graph brings all of this data together. It shows that when all the health and social problems analysed in *The Spirit Level* are combined into an index there is a very strong relationship with income inequality. More unequal countries, such as the UK, tend to score worse on all these indicators than more equal ones. The authors' data analysis demonstrates a strong correlation between



inequality at a national level and social outcomes: correlation is not causation but the relationship is very strong and all the problems move together (a society with high levels of one type of problem will almost always score badly on all the other indices, even when they are quite obviously unrelated e.g. rates of obesity and rates of homicide). The data, therefore, suggests a single underlying cause outside of the separate health and social problems, which Wilkinson and Pickett determine to be inequality.

Their argument is that, as humans, we are sensitive to inequality because it gets under our skin. We are social animals who tend to see ourselves through other people’s eyes. People who live in more unequal societies are more likely to have to consider their social position more often. Where there are great disparities in income within a society, social distances are increased and the overall quality of social relations is damaged. People are more likely to suffer from prolonged stress which leads to chronic ill-health and this can affect personal relationships. It can also be the trigger for violence if people feel disrespected or threatened by social comparisons.

*The Spirit Level* asserts that if we are to make our societies more equal and more sustainable we are all going to have to change the way we live; to gain acceptance for those changes, we are going to have to trust each other a lot more. The authors determine that in a less trusting society, it can seem as if everyone is pitched against one another or one section of society is often depicted as gaining at someone else’s expense. On the other hand, they say that in a more equal society we would have far more chance to construct a consensus around what needed to be done to create the “Good Society”, one that is healthy, socially better and more sustainable.

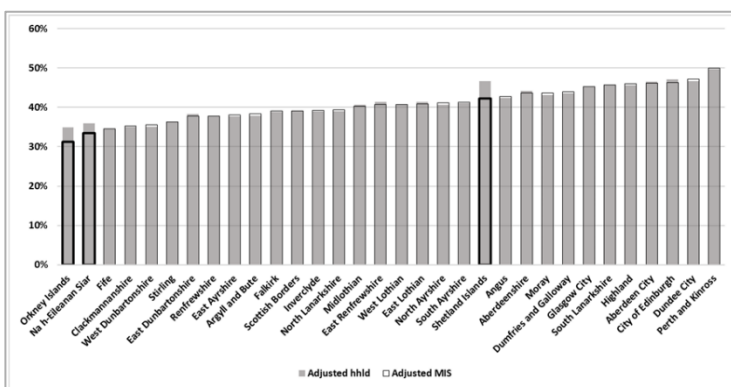


UK Gini Coefficient<sup>liv</sup>.

The Shetland Partnership commissioned a piece of research, in 2020, to investigate the relationship between income, living costs and various social and economic outcomes affecting households in Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles, as compared to the rest of Scotland<sup>liv</sup>. The analysis set out to investigate whether, in these island groups, where living costs are higher than in the rest of Scotland, households are being disadvantaged to a greater extent than suggested by their relatively favourable income profile.

Findings from the study confirm that people are facing hardship in Shetland while, on the surface, seeming to have relatively more favourable conditions than elsewhere in Scotland. In selected respects, these findings are repeated in Orkney and Eileanan Siar, but the finding of greater disadvantage, than predicted by income and unemployment rates, is far more clear-cut and generalised in Shetland. For example, the Scottish Household Survey finds that while Shetlanders have relatively high incomes on average and a relatively small proportion experience financial difficulties, their chance of saying they are doing well financially is much lower than most Scots with similar characteristics. Specifically, once household income and local area characteristics (such as unemployment rates) are taken into account, people in Shetland have the fourth-highest chance of financial

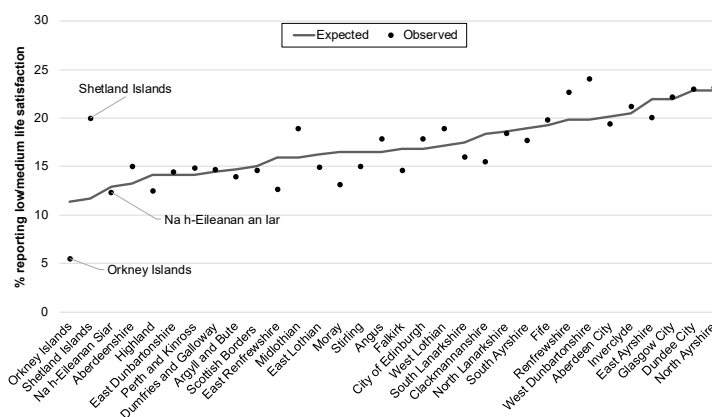
difficulties of any Scottish local authority. If income is adjusted for the higher living costs in Shetland, however, financial well-being relative to income is closer to the Scottish average. These results do not however apply to Orkney and Na h-Eileanan, whose residents have relatively high likelihood of coping well financially, relative to their income and area profiles, despite higher costs. Those reporting such financial difficulties are far more likely to experience material deprivation and to be in poor health.



Predicted Probability of Financial Constraint by Local Authority, Before and After Adjustment for Income After MIS



Further survey evidence from the Annual Population Survey corroborates this picture, by showing that in Shetland, households are more likely to report only low to medium life satisfaction, happiness or self worth, or medium to high anxiety, than would be predicted from their local economic profile (in this case using unemployment as the explanatory variable). These results are not repeated in Orkney or Na h-Eileanan, both of which have low unemployment and correspondingly low levels of households reporting negative aspects of well-being.



Percentage of People Reporting Low or Medium Life Satisfaction by Local Authority – observed and predicted values

These results do not demonstrate a straightforward relationship between income adjusted for the additional cost of living in Shetland identified in MIS and the various social outcomes associated with income. Clearly, the fact that in Orkney and the Western Isles, which also have high costs, outcomes are far more mixed (and in some cases better than predicted from socio-economic indicators) suggests that higher costs may contribute to but do not determine the Shetland outcomes. Moreover, for some social indicators, the relationship with income is much as expected in Shetland without the MIS adjustment. Yet for those identified here, it is clear that a conventional income profile of Shetland can lead to an underestimation of the severity of the social challenges that it faces. The fact that a pound earned in Shetland does not go as far as a pound earned elsewhere in Scotland in providing for the minimum necessities of life is likely to play a large part in contributing to this difference.

Yet Shetland isn't alone. The problems identified here are similar in areas across the UK<sup>vi</sup>. For example, employment has risen since 2005, yet poverty and inequality have not fallen (Dorling, 2024, p. 26). In the 1980s less than 10% of adults rented privately (Dorling, 2024, p. 30), whilst now around half of low-income families rent privately (Dorling, 2024, p. 100) and this compares to the UK's more wealthy households, for whom housing costs are relatively small due owning their homes, outright (Dorling, 2024, p. 37). In 2005, four-fifths of children in the UK lived in a family home that had enough bedrooms for every child aged over 10; this had not improved by 2019, even though there were far more bedrooms in the UK (Dorling, 2024, p. 48), and there has never been so many empty bedrooms (Dorling, 2024, p. 99). The majority of children in the UK are growing up in poor and modest households, so, for example, in 2019/20, 52% of all children were living in households that were home to the poorest 40% of all individuals (Dorling, 2024, p.53). This contributes to their inability to save – a third of all British children are living in homes where their parents cannot save even £10 a month (Dorling, 2024, p. 78); ironically there has been an increase in the proportion of poorer families that have been able to save since 2005, however, there has an exact match rise in the proportion of UK parents cutting spending on home contents insurance (Dorling, 2024, p. 80).

## 4. Differences within Shetland

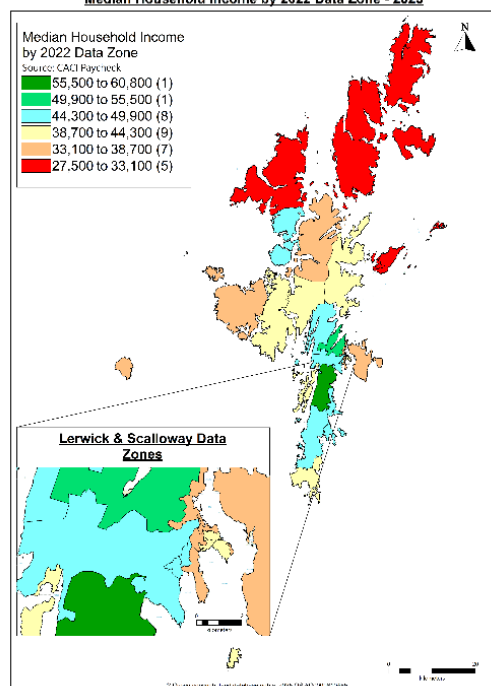
### 4.1 By Geography

The MIS evidenced that the **cost of living** increases for all household types, the further from Lerwick they live<sup>vii</sup>. For example, in Lerwick, the costs are up to 26% higher to have an acceptable standard of living compared to a UK urban area, up to 33% higher for areas within an easy to commute to Lerwick, up to 62% higher for areas remote from Lerwick<sup>viii</sup>.

**Household incomes** also have a geographic variation. The median income of households in Shetland is just over £41,000, so those areas on the map which are yellow, moving to blue / green, have similar to higher median income than for Shetland, whilst mainland areas to the west and north, and most of the islands have a lower median income than for Shetland as a whole. Since 2014, there has been a widening disparity between those areas with a lower and those areas with a higher median income<sup>lix</sup>.



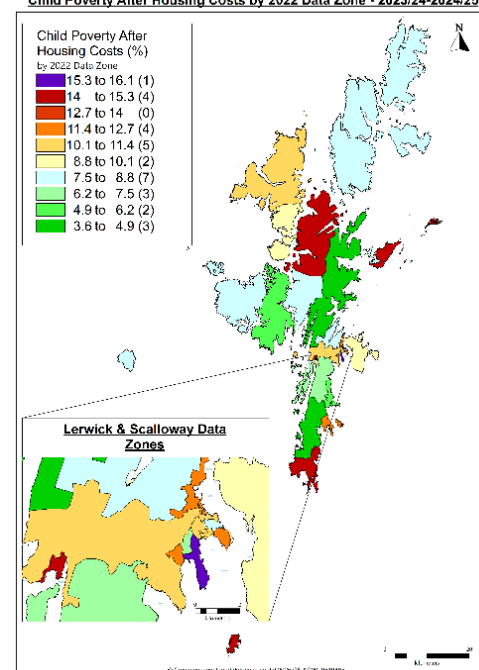
Median Household Income by 2022 Data Zone - 2025



There are areas of Shetland where there are greater opportunities for **employment**, depending on sector. For example, aquaculture in North Yell and Scalloway, and public sector jobs in Lerwick, and local hubs, such as Sandwick, Aith and Brae<sup>lx</sup>.

There is also a geographic aspect to levels of **Child Poverty** across Shetland. Areas on the map with yellow to blue / green have similar to lower levels of child poverty, compared to the Shetland average of 9.3%, whilst those that are yellow, through to orange / red / purple, have higher levels<sup>lxi</sup>.

Child Poverty After Housing Costs by 2022 Data Zone - 2023/24-2024/25



The latest, 2020, **Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation** provides the following information for spatial differences within Shetland<sup>lxii</sup>:

- The majority of Shetland's 30 datazones were in the sixth to eighth deciles across Scotland. Those in the third (20-30% most deprived) were an area of Stoney Hill (1774) and the fourth (30-40% most deprived) were an area in Lerwick South which includes Sandveien (2715). Those in the eighth (70-80% least deprived) were the datazone around Symbister (5499), around Brae, Muckle Roe and the south end of Northmavine (5203), around Weisdale (4965), around Whiteness, Nesting and Girsta (5270), and around Gulberwick, Quarff and Quoys (4916).
- The percentage income deprived in the most deprived datazones in Shetland was 11%, compared to 3% in the least deprived datazones. This was around 70 people, compared to teens and twenties for the least deprived datazone areas.
- The percentage of employment deprived was 16% in the Lerwick North area, 75 people, compared to 12% in the Lerwick South area (46 people). This area of Lerwick North is ranked 1291 most employment deprived in Scotland.
- The Access Domain determines accessibility to certain services. As would be expected, 22 of Shetland's 30 datazones are in the 15% most deprived datazones for access.

#### 4.2 By Characteristic

As has already been seen, the additional cost of **an acceptable standard of living** in Shetland is different for different household types. For example, the cost of an acceptable standard of living is 35% higher for a single person living in a small settlement on a Scottish Island, than a similar UK urban household, it is 30% higher for a couple with two young children, 24% higher for a pensioner couple and 21% higher for a lone parent with one young child. There are variations on this, depending on location within Shetland<sup>lxiii</sup>.

In 2011, the Shetland Partnership explored **young people's** perceptions and experiences of poverty, social exclusion and inequality<sup>lxiv</sup>. It provided the following key messages:

- Young people feel the lack of, and expense of, transport prevents them from accessing opportunities, which leads to seeking excitement through alcohol and drugs.
- Young people feel the lack of transportation and its cost are factors leading to isolation, which can cause mental health and substance use issues.
- Young people in Shetland find it hard to be an individual due to peer pressure and adult judgement.



- Stigmatisation and labelling due to the ‘Shetland Grapevine’ have very negative impacts on young people.
- Young people feel there are limited career choices in Shetland.
- Shetlanders are not aware of poverty on the islands.
- Young people are not aware of support services.

In 2026, the Making Shetland Fairer OPEN peer research project found young people valued the strong sense of community, kindness and connections within Shetland, but acknowledged not everyone has the same experience<sup>lxv</sup>. Four sources of inequality in Shetland were found:

- Wealth inequality and inherited privilege, making it easier for some to access opportunities including unequal access to training and work;
- Geographic disadvantage, both within Shetland (outwith Lerwick, worsening with distance), and for Shetland as a whole due to location and cost of living;
- Discrimination and social stigmatisation, both for all young people, who can feel discriminated against by older members of the community, and for individuals, who are excluded because of a belief or characteristic; and
- Digital Exclusion, highlighting the impact of gaps in provision.

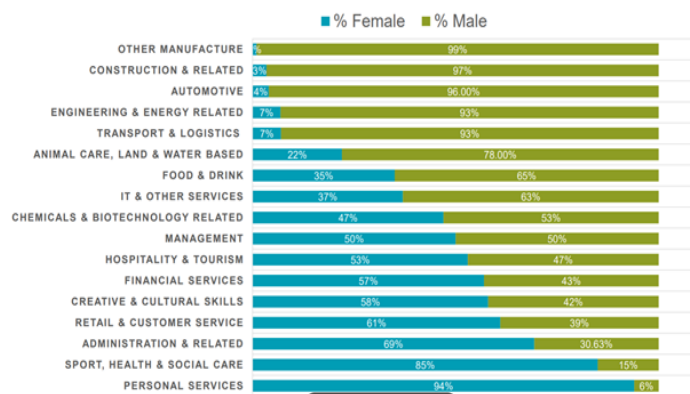
‘The support to achieve, grow and thrive should be available to every young person, not just to those with money and family connections.’

The research highlights the importance of ensuring the voices of all young people are considered in decisions which impact on them.

In 2024, young people reported negative stereotyping and discrimination, being seen as trouble-makers, simply by being with other young people, and getting penalised because of the actions of very few young people. This has resulted in young people being excluded from certain public spaces, restricting where they can ‘just hang out’. Young people also found that they could be paid less for doing the same job, and some employers refusing to hire anyone under 18 and not being taken seriously by services<sup>lxvi</sup>. Conversely **older** people reported difficulties of access, whether to buildings, transport and other facilities, or through digital means to access services, and fears of scams, creating feelings of reduced independence. As well as worries about the increasing cost of living, they reported a declining respect and kindness linked to age-related stigma and reduced societal value<sup>lxvii</sup>.

The same piece of work highlighted that those who are **disabled** and their families also experience challenges in terms of accessing buildings, transport and services, which are often not designed with them in mind – whether physical or, for example, opening times or the approach and communication of staff. There were reports of people being refused jobs, because of their disability and limited access to mainstream employment. Reports of discrimination, lack of understanding and feelings of stigma continue to be reported. This all results in those who are disabled feeling less able to fully participate in the community<sup>lxviii</sup>. Research shows that households containing a disabled person are significantly more likely to experience poverty than those without. For example, poverty rates of 28% for disabled people compared to around 20% for non-disabled people, with even higher rates (up to 33%) in families where disabled adults and children are present<sup>lxix</sup>. In 2025, the Disability Price Tag Report found that disabled households need an extra £1,095 each month, on average, in order to have the same standard of living as non-disabled households. This is to cover items such as medical equipment, higher energy bills and specialist support. The average Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is £465 a month, across households<sup>lxx</sup>.

Social experiences for **women** in Shetland have been covered earlier in the report. Despite girls having higher levels of attainment at SCQF Level 4, 5 and 6 than boys, across all subjects (including STEM), with the gap increasing at higher SCQF levels<sup>lxxi</sup>, the gender pay gap remains. In Scotland, on average, women working full-time earn 3.5% less per hour than men, though this is less than the UK average of 6.9%. The pay gap is higher, at 8-9%



for part-time workers<sup>lxxii</sup>. There continues to be well defined roles, based on gender. For example, Modern Apprentice starts by sex and occupational group<sup>lxxiii</sup>.

LGBT people in rural Scotland tend to experience higher levels of prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion, compared to urban areas, impacting on feelings of isolation and mental health and wellbeing<sup>lxxiv</sup>. This is not dissimilar in respect to race and religion in the Highlands and Islands; numbers are small, with people experiencing day to day friendliness but limited deeper integration, with the existence of racism<sup>lxxv</sup>. Research is limited, as it is for the experiences of those who are transgender.

## End Notes

<sup>i</sup> Director of Public Health, Head of Planning, Policy and Projects Officer (NHS Shetland), Chief Inspector (Police Scotland), Community Planning Team, Children's Services Policy (Shetland Islands Council), OPEN Peer Development Worker

<sup>ii</sup> Employment Rate is the proportion of people aged between 16 and 64 years in paid work or who had a job that they were temporarily away from, Office for National Statistics, published 16/04/24 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/S12000027-shetland-islands/indicators#select-an-indicator>

<sup>iii</sup> This indicator shows model-based estimates for the proportion of economically active people aged 16 years and over without a job who have been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and are available to start work within the next two weeks, Office for National Statistics, published 16/04/24 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/S12000027-shetland-islands/indicators#select-an-indicator>

<sup>iv</sup> Annual Participation Measure, Skills Development Scotland, published August 2025

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/annual-participation-measure>

<sup>v</sup> Local authorities have access to data on the income bands (£5,000 bands) of households by postcode (through CACI Ltd). The data can be used to calculate the median, mean and lowest quartile of geographic areas. Median income is the middle income value of all the people or households in an area, whilst mean income is the average income of the people or households in an area and the lowest quartile is the lowest 25% of the data.

<sup>vi</sup> Households Below Average Income (HBAI) provides the official measure of poverty at a Scotland and UK level, produced by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It covers the whole population. The latest HBAI-based figures for Scotland come from the Scottish Government's "Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2022–25" release (published 26 March 2026, using data up to financial year ending 2025, as a three-year average). 17% of people in Scotland are in relative poverty (after housing costs), and 21% of children. This data is not available at local authority level, so Children in Low Income Families (CiLIF) is used at a local level. It measures the number and proportion of children (under 16 and under 20 in education) living in low-income families, based on earnings and benefit records.

After Housing Costs (AHC) considers a household's expected expenses and can give a clearer picture of what their actual remaining income is likely to be. In contrast, Before Housing Costs (BHC) does not take any deductions into consideration. The DWP have changed the methodology they use to calculate household income, by linking administrative records on social security benefits to the Family Resources Survey (FRS), improving the accuracy of income data. The newer method produces lower estimates than the previous approach. The change has been back dated to 2022 for relative poverty before housing costs. After housing costs data is only available for 2024 and 2025. This requires caution with trend comparisons; further information is available here: <https://cpag.org.uk/news/child-poverty-falling-scotland>

UK Gov't, published 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2022-to-2025>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2025/06/recorded-crime-scotland-2024-25/documents/recorded-crime-in-scotland-2024-25/recorded-crime-in-scotland-2024-25/govscot%3Adocument/Recorded%2BCrime%2Bin%2BScotland%252C%2B2024-25.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://statistics.gov.scot/resource?uri=http%3A%2F%2Fstatistics.gov.scot%2Fdata%2Frecorded-crime>

<sup>ix</sup> Anecdotal, Chief Inspector, April 2026

<sup>x</sup> Based on the local equivalents of the [Scottish Government's Long Term Monitoring of Health Inequalities](https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/long-term-monitoring-of-health-inequalities-in-scotland-by-area-deprivation/long-term-monitoring-of-health-inequalities-in-scotland-by-area-deprivation/). Available at: <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/long-term-monitoring-of-health-inequalities-in-scotland-by-area-deprivation/long-term-monitoring-of-health-inequalities-in-scotland-by-area-deprivation/>. There can be a number of contributing factors for these indicators, and the impact of the type of services provided and threshold for access to services in different places should be considered alongside these outcomes. The impact of small numbers in Shetland should also be considered, and assumptions around trends should be applied cautiously.

<sup>xi</sup> Scottish Household Survey, 2022, Scottish Government, published December, 2023 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-household-survey-2022-key-findings/>

<sup>xii</sup> Shetland Amenity Trust, 2026

<sup>xiii</sup> Womex, 2025 [https://www.womex.com/virtual/shetland\\_folk\\_and](https://www.womex.com/virtual/shetland_folk_and)

<sup>xiv</sup> An area of Staney Hill

<sup>xv</sup> Brae, areas of Whiteness, Weisdale, Tingwall and Girsta, Symbister, Gulberwick & Quarff

<sup>xvi</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/aps> People are classed as "economically inactive" if they are not in employment but don't meet the criteria for being "unemployed". This means they have not been seeking work within the previous four weeks or were unable to start work within the next two weeks. Common reasons include being retired, looking after the home or family or being temporarily or long-term sick and disabled.

<sup>xvii</sup> Economic Development, SIC



<sup>xviii</sup> Employability Pathway, SIC

<sup>xix</sup> CACI Ltd, 2014 from Shetland's Commission on Tackling Inequalities (2016) *On Da Level: Achieving a Fairer Shetland*. Shetland Partnership. Available at: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1097/on-da-level-achieving-a-fair-shetland>, accessed May 2026

<sup>xx</sup> A single person in receipt of Universal Credit, who is not in any work, will receive £424.90/month if they are 25 or over (which is equivalent to £98/week) or £338.58 / month or £78/week if under 25. These are basic allowances only, many people will receive more or less, depending on rent (housing element), earnings (reduced via taper) and whether they have children, a disability or caring responsibilities. <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>

<sup>xxi</sup> At the core of this Minimum Income Standard were groups of residents in different parts of remote rural Scotland deliberating over what items households in their communities need as a minimum. Each group considered what things a household needs to be able to afford for a minimum, defined as follows: 'A minimum standard of living in Britain today includes, but is more than just, food, clothes and shelter. It is about having what you need to have the opportunities and choices necessary to participate in society.' The baskets of goods and services identified by the groups were costed at retail outlets and other suppliers identified as appropriate by the groups.

Hirsch, D., Bryan, A., Davis, A. and Smith, N. (2013) *A Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland*. Inverness: Highlands and Islands Enterprise

<https://www.hie.co.uk/media/3191/aplusminimumplusincomeplusstandardplusforplusremotepusruralplusscotlandplus-plussummaryplusandpluskeyplusfindings.pdf>

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2016) *Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland: A Policy Update*. Inverness: Highlands and Islands Enterprise

<https://www.hie.co.uk/media/6441/aplusminimumplusincomeplusstandardplusforplusremotepusruralplusscotlandplus-plusapolicyplusupdateplus2016.pdf>

NB: A Minimum Income Standard for Argyll & Bute, Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles is commissioned, with results in early 2027.

<sup>xxii</sup> Hope, S., Hockaday, C. and Setterfield, L. (2017) *Living Well in a High Cost Economy: In-work poverty in Shetland*. Ipsos MORI, with Hirsch, D. (Loughborough University) <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1099/living-well-in-a-high-cost-economy>

<sup>xxiii</sup> Perring, E. (2006) *Deprivation and social exclusion in Shetland*. Report prepared for the Shetland Partnership, Shetland Islands Council (Spring 2006) <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/downloads/file/49/deprivation-and-social-exclusion-in-shetland>

<sup>xxiv</sup> Employability Pathway, SIC

<sup>xxv</sup> Hope, S., Hockaday, C. and Setterfield, L. (2017) *Living Well in a High Cost Economy: In-work poverty in Shetland*. Ipsos MORI, with Hirsch, D. (Loughborough University) <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1099/living-well-in-a-high-cost-economy>

<sup>xxvi</sup> Scottish Government (2025) *Understanding the changing nature and context of poverty in Scottish rural and island communities since 2010*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/...> (Accessed: May 2026).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Shetland's Commission on Tackling Inequalities (2016) *On Da Level: Achieving a Fairer Shetland*. Shetland Partnership. Available at: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1097/on-da-level-achieving-a-fair-shetland>, accessed May 2026

<sup>xxviii</sup> Shetland Partnership Indicators, Shetland Food Bank Source. Provision through Anchor for Families ended, impacting on figures for 2024/25 <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/indicators/foodbank-usage/2>

<sup>xxix</sup> Scotland's Health and Wellbeing Census <https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-and-wellbeing-census-scotland-2021-22/>

Not all local authorities participated, so no other areas of the Highlands and Islands have results; the Borders is similar to the Scottish average.

<sup>xxx</sup> Food Foundation (2026) *The Broken Plate 2026*. London: The Food Foundation. Available at: (Accessed: June 2026).

<https://foodfoundation.org.uk/publication/broken-plate-2026>

<sup>xxxi</sup> The Scottish Government changed the definition and measures of fuel poverty, with levels around 50% of households reporting fuel poverty during the 2010s. <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/indicators/fuel-poverty/2>

<sup>xxxii</sup> Future Energy Team, Shetland Islands Council, April May 2026

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Current Ofgem energy price cap for a typical property is £1,641 for a UK household: 11,500kWh of gas @ 5.74/kWh and 29.09p/day and 2,700kWh of electricity @ 24.67p/kWh and 57.21p/day.

£3,456 for a Shetland all-electric property: example rate Flexible Octopus - High rate 35.27p/kWh / Low rate 15.61p/kWh = 61.68p/day, which is £2,972, £1,214 higher than a typical customer or 169% (for the average amount of heat required at £18,000kWh it would be £3,456). A heat pump operating using standard rate electricity could in theory cost £1,935 based on a COP of 2.5

<sup>xxxiv</sup> SIC Housing, Rent Survey 2026/27 (66%) and Rent Survey 2025/26 (54%) when asked 'What do you have most concerns about with the current cost of living'.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Perring, E. (2006) *Deprivation and social exclusion in Shetland*. Report prepared for the Shetland Partnership, Shetland Islands Council (Spring 2006) <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/downloads/file/49/deprivation-and-social-exclusion-in-shetland>

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation <https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/>

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Shetland's Commission on Tackling Inequalities (2016) *On Da Level: Achieving a Fairer Shetland*. Shetland Partnership. Available at: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1097/on-da-level-achieving-a-fair-shetland>, accessed May 2026

<sup>xxxviii</sup> <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/products-and-services/data-intelligence-and-benchmarking/common-advice-performance-management-framework/2016-17-report>

<sup>xxxix</sup> Shetland Islands Council, Housing Service

<sup>xl</sup> Perring, E. (2006) *Deprivation and social exclusion in Shetland*. Report prepared for the Shetland Partnership, Shetland Islands Council (Spring 2006) <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/downloads/file/49/deprivation-and-social-exclusion-in-shetland>

<sup>xli</sup> Scottish Government's "Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2022–25" release (published 26 March 2026, using data up to financial year ending 2025, as a three-year average).



After Housing Costs (AHC) considers a household's expected expenses and can give a clearer picture of what their actual remaining income is likely to be. In contrast, Before Housing Costs (BHC) does not take any deductions into consideration.

UK Gov't, published 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2022-to-2025>

<sup>xlii</sup> Based on the local equivalents of the [Scottish Government's Long Term Monitoring of Health Inequalities](https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/long-term-monitoring-of-health-inequalities-in-scotland-by-area-deprivation/long-term-monitoring-of-health-inequalities-in-scotland-by-area-deprivation/). Available at: <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/long-term-monitoring-of-health-inequalities-in-scotland-by-area-deprivation/long-term-monitoring-of-health-inequalities-in-scotland-by-area-deprivation/>.

<sup>xliiii</sup> Anonymous survey open to all women in Shetland, Autumn 2024, Shetland Women's Aid

<sup>xliiv</sup> Shetland Islands Council run Focus Groups to inform the Council's Equalities and Outcomes Monitoring Report, 2024

<https://www.shetland.gov.uk/community/equality-diversity#:~:text=For%202025%E2%80%932029%2C%20the%20Council%20has,decision%20making%20and%20service%20delivery.>

<sup>xlv</sup> Anecdotal, April 2026

<sup>xlvi</sup> Chief Inspector, April 2026

<sup>xlvii</sup> Shetland's Commission on Tackling Inequalities (2016) *On Da Level: Achieving a Fairer Shetland*. Shetland Partnership. Available at: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1097/on-da-level-achieving-a-fair-shetland>, accessed May 2026

<sup>xlviii</sup> Shetland Islands Council. (2011). *Poverty is Bad – Let's Fix It!!: A youth-led participatory investigation into poverty, social exclusion and inequality in Shetland (Final report, 6 December 2011)*. Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council.

<https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/3426/poverty-is-bad-let-s-fix-it->

<sup>xlix</sup> Shetland's Commission on Tackling Inequalities (2016) *On Da Level: Achieving a Fairer Shetland*. Shetland Partnership. Available at: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1097/on-da-level-achieving-a-fair-shetland>, accessed May 2026

<sup>l</sup> Healthy Shetland (2023) *Shetland Population Survey 2021/22*. Available at: <https://www.healthyshetland.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/PopulationHealthSurvey2021.pdf> (Accessed: May 2026).

<sup>li</sup> World Health Organization (2025) *From Loneliness to social connection: charting a path to healthier societies: Report of the WHO Commission on Social Connection*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/groups/commission-on-social-connection/report> (Accessed: May 2026).

<sup>lii</sup> Shetland Islands Council run Focus Groups to inform the Council's Equalities and Outcomes Monitoring Report, 2024. [Protected Characteristics Profiles – Shetland Partnership](#)

<sup>liiii</sup> Wilkinson, R.G. & Pickett, K. (2009) *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, London

<sup>liiii</sup> Stone, J. and Hirsch, D. (2020) *The consequences of living on a low income in Scotland's island communities*. Loughborough: Centre for Research in Social Policy, Loughborough University (for the Shetland Partnership)

<https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/downloads/file/82/the-consequences-of-living-on-a-low-income-in-scotland-s-island-communities>

<sup>liiii</sup> The Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland (2013 & 2016) had the following typologies for determining the required budgets for households to have a minimum acceptable standard of living, within Remote Rural Scotland: Town, Easy Access to Town, Difficult to Access to Town, Remote from Town.

<sup>liv</sup> Figure 3 Seven Children - Source: IFS (2024) 'Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK', Institute for Fiscal Studies, <https://ifs.org.uk/living-standards-poverty-and-inequality-uk> (accessed 11 January 2024).

<sup>lvi</sup> Dorling, D. (2024) *Seven Children: Inequality and Britain's Next Generation*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers Ltd.

<sup>lviii</sup> Shetland Partnership (no date) *Locality profiles*. Available at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/locality-profiles> (Accessed May 2026).

<sup>lix</sup> Local authorities have access to data on the income bands (£5,000 bands) of households by postcode (through CACI Ltd).

<sup>lx</sup> Economic Development, SIC

<sup>lxi</sup> UK Gov't, published 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2022-to-2025>

<sup>lxii</sup> SIMD 2020 is based on a range of indicator data from broadly 2016/19, depending on the domain and data source. Scottish Government (2020) *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/> (Accessed: May 2026).

<sup>lxiii</sup> Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2016) *Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland: A Policy Update*. Inverness: Highlands and Islands Enterprise

<https://www.hie.co.uk/media/6441/aplusminimumplusincomeplusstandardplusforplusremoteplusruralplusscotlandplus-pluspluspolicyplusupdateplus2016.pdf>

<sup>lxiv</sup> Shetland Islands Council. (2011). *Poverty is Bad – Let's Fix It!!: A youth-led participatory investigation into poverty, social exclusion and inequality in Shetland (Final report, 6 December 2011)*. Lerwick: Shetland Islands Council.

<https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/file/3426/poverty-is-bad-let-s-fix-it->

<sup>lxv</sup> OPEN Shetland (n.d.) *Making Shetland Fairer*. Available at: <https://www.openshetland.co.uk/projects/peer-research/making-shetland-fairer> (Accessed: May 2026).

<sup>lxvi</sup> Shetland Islands Council run Focus Groups to inform the Council's Equalities and Outcomes Monitoring Report, 2024.

<https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/downloads/download/17/protected-characteristics-profiles>

<sup>lxvii</sup> Shetland Islands Council run Focus Groups to inform the Council's Equalities and Outcomes Monitoring Report, 2024.

<https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/downloads/download/17/protected-characteristics-profiles>

<sup>lxviii</sup> Shetland Islands Council run Focus Groups to inform the Council's Equalities and Outcomes Monitoring Report, 2024.

<https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/downloads/download/17/protected-characteristics-profiles>

<sup>lxix</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2026) *UK poverty statistics: Disability*. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk> (Accessed: May 2026).



<sup>lxx</sup> Disability Price Tag, 2025: <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/disability-price-tag>

<sup>lxxi</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2025) *Equality Evidence Review*. Available at: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/5ugiqumm/equality-evidence-review-2025.pdf> (Accessed: May 2026).

<sup>lxxii</sup> Scottish Government (2026) *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2025: Gender pay gap*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings-2025/pages/gender-pay-gap/> (Accessed: May 2026).

<sup>lxxiii</sup> [modern-apprenticeship-supplementary-tables-quarter-4-2024-25.xlsx](#)

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Equality Network (2020) *Further Out: The Scottish LGBT Rural Equality Report*. Edinburgh: Equality Network. Available at: <https://www.equality-network.org> (Accessed: May 2026). Sexual orientation was not sufficiently evidenced to produce a formal findings summary from the 2024 SIC run Focus Groups.

<sup>lxxv</sup> Pietka-Nykaza (2024), *Social Relations Among Diverse Rural Residents in the Scottish Highlands*

## Appendix: Current Strategic Document Reference to Inequalities

A Co-Pilot Search across Shetland’s key strategic documents showed the following references to inequalities:

Strong / direct references (core theme or priority)

- Shetland Partnership Plan 2018–28  
→ “reduce inequality of outcome”
- Shetland’s Local Housing Strategy 2022–27  
→ “reducing poverty across Shetland”
- Community Learning & Development Plan 2024–27  
→ “reduce inequality of outcome... particularly for those who experience disadvantage and inequality”  
→ “Poverty & Inclusion... socio-economic disadvantage”
- Children’s Services Plan 2023–2026  
→ “reduce inequalities... children, young people and families”  
→ “reduce the impact of poverty on children and families”

Clear inequality focus (but slightly less central)

- Active Shetland Strategy 2018–2023  
→ “Reduce inequality of outcomes”
- Health & Social Care Plan 2025–2028  
→ “reduce inequalities and stigma in health and care” [
- NHS Shetland Strategic Plan 2024–2029  
→ “reduced health inequalities”

Referencing disadvantage, inclusion, or fairness

- Shetland Charitable Trust Strategy 2025–2030  
→ “support people facing... disadvantage”
- Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy  
→ “tackling underlying inequality”
- HIE Strategy 2023–2028  
→ “fairer... inclusive region”
- Skills Development Scotland Strategic Plan 2022–27  
→ “addressing inequality and poverty”
- Scottish Ambulance Service – Our 2030 Strategy  
→ “reducing inequalities... tackle health inequalities”
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (NatureScot)  
→ references “inclusion and social justice”
- Shetland Arts (SADA) Strategic Framework / Outcomes  
→ “inclusion and equality”

Community Development Plans / Local Place Plans / A Place in Childhood

- Minimal direct reference to aims or activity to address inequality within communities

