

Social exclusion and political engagement

Research report – November 2005



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1 Introduction

1.1 Politicians and commentators are increasingly talking about the importance of responding to, and engaging with, the needs of those from socially and economically disadvantaged groups – the socially excluded. Political disengagement can itself be a form of social exclusion and there is much evidence to suggest that those socially excluded because of economic and social reasons are also excluded politically. They are less likely to turn out to vote and less likely to participate in non-electoral ways. As a result, ‘... democratic participation is falling and political influence is polarising according to class and wealth...’.¹

1.2 Research suggests that political disengagement and social exclusion consolidate and drive each other. However, there is difficulty in determining the exact relationship and causal direction between factors of social exclusion and levels and forms of political disengagement. This paper explores how and why those experiencing social disadvantage tend to also be the most politically excluded in society. It reviews the available literature on the subject and draws on existing research and evidence. It aims to explore some of the key causes and issues relating to political exclusion and, in doing so, it provides some pointers about how these barriers to political participation might be overcome.

1.3 The first section of this paper provides an introduction to social exclusion and the literature on it. In subsequent sections, we consider:

- the drivers of social and political exclusion;
- social exclusion and electoral participation;
- social exclusion and non-electoral participation; and
- social exclusion and political engagement among particular sub-groups.

1.4 In our concluding section we emphasise the importance of addressing both social and political exclusion and identify some of the key challenges in doing so. We have also included, in Appendix A, a brief review of the available information relating to the extent and nature of the different elements of social exclusion. Appendix B lists sources referred to in this paper.

1.5 This paper does not comment on participation at, and engagement with, the 2005 UK Parliamentary general election. The findings from the research conducted after the general election by the Commission and others was not available at the time of preparing this paper. Our report on turnout at the general election, due to be published in the autumn, will look at, among other things, turnout among different age groups and black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, and in socially deprived areas.

¹ ippr (2004), *The state of the nation: an audit of injustice in the UK*.

2 What is social exclusion?

2.1 Many definitions of social exclusion focus on the classification of target groups excluded, or at risk of being excluded, on the basis of factors of disadvantage. There does seem to be a limited consensus that social exclusion, besides its many disputed facets, ‘... embraces on the one hand an absence of financial resources and social capital, and on the other, a presence of obstacles to building them up’.²

2.2 There are several definitions of social exclusion. Social scientist Ruth Levitas describes the process of developing an agreed measure of social exclusion as ‘an ongoing struggle’.³ However, one definition we have been particularly mindful of while preparing this paper, is K. Duffy’s: ‘The inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life, alienation and distance from the mainstream society.’⁴

2.3 Duffy suggests that political disengagement, where it manifests itself in non-participation, is itself a form of social exclusion.⁵ It is not simply a case, then, of investigating whether political exclusion is caused by social exclusion but, rather, understanding that political exclusion is a type of social exclusion.

2.4 Social class, based on occupation and educational attainment, is often used as a ‘proxy’ for social exclusion, but this tells only part of the story. Social exclusion is related to understandings of poverty, which go beyond low income and address the multiple dimensions of deprivation.⁶ Consequently, it is widely accepted that sets of indicators, rather than a single ‘proxy’ indicator, are essential to gauge a better measure of the extent and nature of social exclusion in society.

2.5 Social exclusion is a multifaceted phenomenon and is considered by many to be both an outcome and a process. It is driven by a complex interplay of demographic, economic, social and behavioural factors, which means that people from certain backgrounds and experiences are disproportionately likely to be socially excluded: ‘The risks of social exclusion are not evenly shared but concentrated in the poorest individuals and communities.’⁷ This paper now goes on to look at factors of social exclusion and how the index of multiple deprivation is used to measure the many ‘drivers’ of social exclusion.

² Lessoj, C. and Jowell, R., ‘Measuring Social Exclusion’, (Working paper, No. 84, Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends (CREST), University of Oxford, 2000).

³ Levitas, R., ‘Defining and measuring social exclusion: a critical overview of current proposals’, paper given at joint Radical Statistics and British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS), (1999).

⁴ Duffy, K., *Social exclusion and human dignity in Europe*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe (1995).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Levitas, R., ‘Defining and measuring social exclusion: a critical overview of current proposals’, paper given at joint Radical Statistics and British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS), (1999).

⁷ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Social Exclusion Unit, *The drivers of social exclusion: a review of the literature – summary* (Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at the University of York, 2004).

3 The different 'drivers' of social and political exclusion

3.1 As the Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) explains, 'There are difficulties in understanding the direction of the relationship between drivers [of social exclusion]; drivers interact and overlap and there are problems in determining the underlying driver.'⁸ This becomes particularly evident when we come to focus our discussion on political exclusion as a form of social exclusion.

3.2 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) was designed 'to measure deprivation at the local level, to identify priority areas and target programmes... of government policy'. The concept originates from the mid-1980s but a review of the IMD by the University of Oxford suggests that the aim of creating an index (or indices) to measure deprivation at the local level, to identify priority areas and target programmes, has been a consistent feature of government policy since at least the mid-1960s.⁹

3.3 The IMD identifies seven main dimensions or facets of deprivation/social exclusion rather than relying on one proxy such as social class. The components of IMD are:

- income;
- employment;
- health deprivation and disability;
- education, skills and training deprivation;
- barriers to housing and services, and
- crime and living environment deprivation.¹⁰

Some of these are considered in this paper (and additional information about them has been provided in Appendix A) and together they contribute in numerous and complex combinations to: 'the inability [of certain groups] to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life, alienation and distance from the mainstream society'.¹¹

3.4 Political engagement has at least two facets: political participation (such as volunteering for a political party) and electoral participation (such as turning out to vote). Research indicates a link between both of these and social exclusion. Those suffering from social deprivation tend to also be the most politically excluded in society and political disengagement can itself be a form of social exclusion. According to ippr, '... democratic participation is falling and political influence is polarising according to class and wealth...'.¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Lessoj, C. and Jowell, R., 'Measuring Social Exclusion', (Working paper, No. 84, Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends (CREST), University of Oxford, 2000).

¹⁰ ODPM, *Indices of deprivation* (www.odpm.gov.uk, 2004).

¹¹ Levitas, R., 'Defining and measuring social exclusion: a critical overview of current proposals', paper given at joint Radical Statistics and British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS), (1999). Quote by Duffy, K., *Social exclusion and human dignity in Europe*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe (1995).

¹² ippr, *The state of the nation: an audit of injustice in the UK* (2004).

3.5 Ruth Turner, of the New Politics Network, has said that ‘... any lack of debate and effective communication between politicians and the electorate is worse for those living in social deprivation, since their voices are the quietest at the best of times’.¹³ Similarly, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation quotes Disraeli to illustrate the problem facing the UK: ‘... two nations: between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other’s habits, thoughts and feelings as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets’.¹⁴

3.6 Writing in a New Politics Network discussion paper, Simon Hughes MP has argued that ‘... it’s a quick step from social exclusion to effective disenfranchisement...’ and concluded that ‘... social exclusion will continue to corrode voter engagement unless candidates come forward who are willing to fight for the disadvantaged’.¹⁵ Similarly, in a speech in 2004, Lord Falconer suggested that increasing disengagement could be tackled by policies to help the most disadvantaged groups, linking political inactivity and disinterest to social circumstances.

3.7 The New Politics Network discussion paper *Disengaged and disinterested* in 2002 suggests that social exclusion has a significant impact on levels of political disengagement in this country and reports that people don’t vote because they believe that ‘... voting and electoral politics can’t and will not make a difference to their lives... which affects poorer voters more’. The Network argues that social instability and insecurity generate a lack of faith in politics and poorer people often seem to have a very different set of political priorities that will need reflecting in party manifestos.

3.8 Charter88 have argued that ‘... at its worst, political exclusion describes an experience of utter powerlessness within society... political and social exclusion are inextricably linked in a depressing and vicious cycle’.¹⁶ This is because when an individual feels unable to exert any influence over the most basic elements of their life – housing, education, food – asking them to vote becomes meaningless. In short, individuals from socially excluded groups have had ‘all agency’ removed.

3.9 Another New Politics Network publication – *Perspectives on social exclusion in 2001* – observes that ‘... political disengagement reflects and fuels wider processes of social breakdown... There’s interplay between being socially and economically disadvantaged, and failing to take up opportunities to take part in the democratic process’.¹⁷ This applies to not only voting at an

¹³ Turner, R., ‘Voter turnout, poverty and disconnection from the political process’, in *Disengaged and disinterested: deliberations on voter apathy* (New Politics Network, Winter 2002).

¹⁴ Benjamin Disraeli (1845) *Sybil: Or the two nations*. Book II, Chapter 5, Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks 1998. Quoted in Donald Hirsch, *Strategies against poverty: a shared road map* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004).

¹⁵ Hughes, S. (MP), ‘Revitalising politics,’ in *Disengaged and disinterested: deliberations on voter apathy* (New Politics Network, Winter 2002).

¹⁶ Lawrence-Pietroni, C., Director of Charter88, ‘The state of powerlessness’, in M. White (ed.), *Perspectives on social exclusion* (New Politics Network, 2001).

¹⁷ Lawrence-Pietroni, C., Director of Charter88, ‘The state of powerlessness’, in M. White (ed.), *Perspectives on social exclusion* (New Politics Network, 2001).

election, but also concerns political activities and participation more broadly. Additionally, the paper reports that by far the biggest issue is self-exclusion – people not voting, or joining parties, or going to public meetings ‘even though they could, if they wanted to’.

3.10 Related to this, Julian Le Grand explains in *Individual choice and social exclusion* that the deprivation associated with social exclusion can impede people’s ability to engage in political activities and that knowledge of, and their participation in, politics outside election times is significantly impeded by the absence of contacts with social networks.¹⁸ This is important because ‘... in democratic societies, majority interests dominate. In a society without social solidarity, there is no reason to suppose those interests will coincide with those of the socially excluded; indeed, depending on the reason for the exclusion, the interests of the majority and the excluded are likely to diverge...’.¹⁹

3.11 Another explanation of political participation can be found in a model developed by the academics Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker, which found that participation reflected ‘... skills, competences and confidence to engage in political participation’, meaning that some people were more likely to take up the participation options that were available.²⁰ This research identified the CLEAR model (see Figure 1, next page) outlining key factors promoting participation. In addition to the socio-economic status effect on participation, the CLEAR model identifies the existence of supporting organisations is another factor.²¹

3.12 Participation is also likely to increase in response to direct requests to become mobilised and when there is evidence that views are being taken into account by the relevant authorities. According to the CLEAR criteria, people’s ‘core’ criteria were:

- Has anything happened?
- Has it been worth the money? and
- Have they carried on talking to the public?

¹⁸ Le Grand, J., *Individual choice and social exclusion* (Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics, 2003).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G., *Political participation and locality effects: the impact of social capital and mobilisation* (University of Manchester, 2002).

²¹ Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC), ‘Delivering civil renewal: some lessons from research’, in *Mapping the public policy landscape* (2002).

Figure 1: Factors promoting participation: it's CLEAR

| Factor | How it works | Policy target |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Can do | The individual resources that people have to mobilise and organise (speaking, writing and technical skills, as well as confidence to use them) make a difference in their capacity to participate. | Capacity-building |
| Like to | To commit to participation requires a sense of involvement with the public entity that is the focus of engagement. | Sense of community, civic engagement, social capital and citizenship. |
| Enabled to | The civic infrastructure of groups and umbrella organisations makes a difference because it creates or blocks an opportunity structure for participation. | To build the civic infrastructure so that there are groups and organisations around to channel and facilitate participation. |
| Asked to | Mobilising people into participation by asking for their input can make a big difference. | Public participation schemes that are diverse and reflexive. |
| Responded to | When asked, people say they will participate if they are listened to, not necessarily agreed with, but able to see a response. | A public policy system that can show a capacity to respond. |

Source: Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G., *Political participation and locality effects: the impact of social capital and mobilisation* (University of Manchester, 2002).

4 Social exclusion and electoral engagement

4.1 In 2002, Karamjit Singh, one of the Electoral Commissioners, observed that ‘... it would be wrong to seek universal solutions to the problem of voter disengagement. In today’s diverse society, it is vitally important that research and policy responses in this area are sensitive to the different experiences and perceptions of different communities’.²² Similarly, a 1995 paper by Democratic Dialogue emphasised the ‘... diversity of experience of exclusion, depending on social perceptions of the excluded group and the attitude of the state’.²³

4.2 Detailed analysis of constituency variations in turnout by a team led by Paul Whiteley found that social resources explain much of the variance in turnout at the 2001 general election.²⁴ Their analysis found that the strongest factor that decreased turnout was the proportion of lone parents in a constituency probably, due to the fact that lone-parent families are generally more deprived than other types of families. There were also statistically significant relationships between the proportion of young people in a constituency and low turnout and, as a corollary, between the proportion of wealthy achievers and high turnout.²⁵ Similar conclusions were reached by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) who found that the economically inactive were the most likely to vote at the 2001 general election and the unemployed were the least likely (74% of economically inactive people voted and 48% of unemployed people).

4.3 According to Whiteley et al, there are well-established theoretical and actual relationships between turnout and the social characteristics of constituencies in Britain. The theoretical framework is based on the premise that inadequate ‘resources’ (material wealth, education, and skills and membership of organised groups) constrain or promote participation. Generally speaking, it is the case that constituencies with a higher proportion of poor, socially deprived and unemployed areas will have lower turnouts. This is not confined to the UK – in 1997, Arend Lijphart’s international comparative research found that low voter turnout means unequal and socio-economically biased turnout, with a ‘... near universal association between political participation and socio-economic status’.²⁶

4.4 At the same time, however, the analysis found that the political context and the marginality of the seat were also important in explaining turnout at a constituency level. Moreover, individual-level analysis using survey data shows that while there is a statistically significant relationship between social class and turnout and MORI estimated that 68% of social group AB voted

²² The Electoral Commission, *Voter engagement among black and minority ethnic communities* (2002).

²³ Democratic Dialogue, *Social Exclusion, Social Inclusion* (Report No. 2, 1995).

²⁴ Whiteley, P. et al, ‘Turnout’, in P. Norris (ed.) *Britain votes 2001* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Lijphart, A., ‘Unequal participation: democracy’s unresolved dilemma’ *American Political Science Review*, 91 (1997), No. 1.

compared with 53% of DEs,²⁷ however, other factors, especially attitudinal ones (such as political interest and party-related attachments) are stronger predictors.²⁸ The British Election Study (BES) team have found choice-based theories of participation to be stronger than sociological ones – in other words, the stimulus provided by an election is a stronger determinant of turnout than social characteristics.

4.5 In analysis for The Electoral Commission, ICM Research and Professor John Curtice concluded that turnout at the June 2004 elections, ‘... not only depends on the attitudinal and demographic characteristics of voters though, but also on the context in which they vote, with particular importance attached to the perceived intensity of the campaign and the performance and policy offerings of the individual political parties’.²⁹

²⁷ These are standard classifications used by the market research industry: A – higher managerial and professional, B – intermediate managerial and professional, C1 – administrative, clerical, non-manual, C2 – skilled manual, D – unskilled manual, E – on long-term state benefit including the unemployed and those on state pensions.

²⁸ Whiteley, P. et al, ‘Turnout’, in P. Norris (ed.) *Britain votes 2001* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁹ The Electoral Commission, *The June 2004 elections: the public’s perspective* (ICM/Professor J. Curtice, 2004).

5 Social exclusion and non-electoral engagement

5.1 The first *Audit of political engagement* found that propensity to vote at the next general election was 21 percentage points higher among ‘white collar’ than ‘blue collar’ groups: 60% among ABC1s and 41% among C2DEs.³⁰ These two social class classifications represent the so-called middle class (ABC1s) and the so-called working class (C2DEs). People are assigned to either group on the basis of their occupation. These differences also extended to other political activity. Our second audit found ABC1s twice as likely as C2DEs to take advantage of the opportunity to contact their elected representatives: two-thirds of those who present their views to their councillors or MPs are ABC1s. It also found that seven in eight of all those contacting MPs or councillors will be aged at least 35.³¹

5.2 The second audit also found higher political interest among ABC1s than C2DEs (66% to 39%). Political activism is higher among ABC1s than C2DEs (23% as compared to 7%), and lower among BMEs compared to whites (8% as compared to 16%). These findings echo those of the Home Office’s Citizen Audit of GB (2000), as summarised in ippr’s report, which showed that:

Across a range of different activities which could still be defined as ‘political’, there is a correlation with class and income... those in the lowest social class, the poorest in society and the less educated were less likely to be politically active than those who are in a higher social class, better off or better educated in 2000...³²

5.3 Using this and other research, ippr recently warned that ‘... if turnout falls, further still, there is a risk that the voices of the less well educated and less well connected will become even less audible’.³³ In addition, ippr found that people’s sense of empowerment, the feeling that they could influence decisions if they wanted to, is lower amongst the more deprived: 51% of the top social class felt they could influence decisions at a local level in 2003, compared to just 33% among the lowest social class.

5.4 ippr question whether the UK is witnessing a widening ‘citizenship gap’ between the rich and the poor and caution that ‘... the forms of political engagement which are increasing (those that are more individualised) display a stronger pro-middle-class bias with a danger that this gap between the “two nations” will continue to widen in the future’.

5.5 Social inequalities are prevalent when it comes to non-electoral political activities with higher socio-economic status areas displaying higher rates of [political] participation.³⁴ People living in such areas are more likely to have

³⁰ The Electoral Commission and the Hansard Society, *An audit of political engagement* (2004).

³¹ The Electoral Commission and the Hansard Society, *An audit of political engagement 2* (2005).

³² Referred to in Will Paxton and Mike Dixon, ippr, *The state of the nation: an audit of injustice in the UK* (2004).

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G., *Political participation and locality effects: the impact of social capital and mobilisation* (University of Manchester, 2002).

the skills, competencies and confidence to engage in political participation, and are therefore more likely to take up the participation options available to them.³⁵ The Home Office's 2001 citizenship survey shows that this picture also extends to civic participation and that there is lower 'social capital' and trust among those living in deprived areas.³⁶

5.6 Research by Charter88 has found that social class appears to have the most negative effect on perceptions of political efficacy and our first *Audit of political engagement* found differences by social class in terms of knowledge and interest in politics: 29% of C2DEs felt they knew at least a fair amount about politics, compared to 56% of ABC1s. Thirty-six per cent of C2DEs, compared to 63% of ABC1s, said they were fairly or very interested in politics. Furthermore, while the second Audit also found a strong aspiration on the part of most people to 'have a say in how the country is run', those from lower socio-economic groupings were relatively less likely to want to do so – shown in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Attitudes towards having a say

| Q. Do you agree or disagree... | | |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| 'I want to have a say in how the country is run' | | |
| | Agree | Disagree |
| | % | % |
| All | 67 | 17 |
| Male | 72 | 14 |
| Female | 61 | 19 |
| 18–24 | 64 | 19 |
| 25–34 | 69 | 15 |
| 35–54 | 69 | 14 |
| 55+ | 63 | 20 |
| ABC1 | 77 | 11 |
| C2DE | 56 | 23 |

Base: 2,065 adults, aged 18+, 2–6 December 2004 in UK.

Source: MORI for The Electoral Commission/the Hansard Society (2005).

5.7 While this analysis suggests a strong link between socio-demographics and non-electoral engagement, academics Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker stress that political participation is affected by more than socio-economic effects alone.³⁷ They argue that social capital is constrained or enabled by 'local institutional arrangements' and mobilisation by political parties and

³⁵ Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC), 'Delivering civil renewal: some lessons from research', in *Mapping the public policy landscape* (2002).

³⁶ Study referred to in Will Paxton and Mike Dixon, ippr, *The state of the nation: an audit of injustice in the UK* (2004).

³⁷ Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G., *Political participation and locality effects: the impact of social capital and mobilisation* (University of Manchester, 2002).

leadership. Public management and the structure of voluntary and community sectors, also have a significant impact on political participation.

6 Social and political exclusion: sub-groups

6.1 Having looked in general terms at the relationship between social exclusion and electoral, and non-electoral, engagement, we now go on to look at the extent and nature of political engagement among certain key sub-groups.

Young people

6.2 Previous Commission research has explored in depth the relationship between age and political engagement, including electoral engagement.³⁸ Key findings arising from the Commission's report in 2002 on voter engagement among young people include:

- Young people are some of the least likely people to turn out and vote.
- Survey data suggests that young people were the most likely to claim that they felt powerless in the electoral process at the 2001 general election.
- Young voters are particularly keen on the sense of participation, of 'having a say', while the rest of the electorate at large is likely to cite a sense of civic duty or responsibility to vote.
- There is some evidence that the cynicism expressed by young people is directed at established party politics or life in Westminster rather than political issues.

6.3 One of the report's main recommendations was that innovations need to be introduced to reduce the distance between young people, politicians and the electoral process. Also, it is most important that political parties attempt to engage young voters in all parts of the country and not just those who live in marginal constituencies, at the time of general elections.³⁹

6.4 More recently, research by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)⁴⁰ has found that parents' income and education is a major deciding factor in their children's interest in politics, when they are young but also in the longer term. The recent Young People's Social Attitudes Survey explores just how engaged young people are in politics and considers the long-term prospects of these young people's long-term interest and participation in politics due to the influence of their parents. Findings from the survey suggest that young people are likely to share their parents' views on sex, gender and politics and that '... those [12 to 19-year-olds] living in more affluent, and more educated homes, were more likely to think that everyone has a duty to vote'.

6.5 Parents are an important influence on their children's political engagement. The decline in interest in politics is significantly more noticeable

³⁸ The Electoral Commission, *Voter engagement among young people* (University of Manchester, (2002).

³⁹ The Electoral Commission, *Political engagement among young people: an update paper* (2004).

⁴⁰ NatCen undertakes an annual survey investigating change in British social, economic, political and moral values in society. Every year up to 3,600 12 to 19-year-old respondents are interviewed. For more information regarding the survey, visit: www.natcen.ac.uk/natcen/pages/op_socialattitudes.htm.

among young people whose parents are not politically interested compared to those whose parents are more politically interested: 16% and 48% respectively. NatCen found that ‘... young people’s political interest is significantly affected by the discussions they hear at home... early exposure to talk about politics has an important influence on their own eventual interest in the subject’.

6.6 The study also strongly suggests that a major factor in determining levels of political interest and engagement among young people is the degree of affluence/poverty and the educational attainment of the adult within the household in which the child is brought up, as shown in Table 2, below: 53% of young people in households where the adult had a higher educational qualification identified with a particular political party, compared with 32% of those in households where the adult respondent had no educational qualifications at all. These findings suggest if young people are not reached when they are at this ‘formative’ stage in their lives, it will be that much harder to interest them in politics and voting.

Table 2: Political interest (12 to 19-year-olds) by adult education level

| | Highest qualification of adult | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|---------------|--------|
| | Higher education % | A level equiv. % | GCSE equiv. % | None % |
| Great deal/quite a lot | 14 | 7 | 5 | 8 |
| Some interest | 25 | 27 | 21 | 19 |
| Not very much interest | 35 | 31 | 33 | 26 |
| None at all | 26 | 35 | 41 | 48 |

Source: Park, A., Phillips, M. and Johnson, M., *Young people in Britain: the attitudes and experiences of 12 to 19 year olds* (National Centre for Social Research, 2004).

6.7 The report found a dramatic fall in the proportion of young people who support or feel close to a particular party, or who would want a particular party to win a general election. This fell from 68% to 39% between 1994 and 2003 although this trend is also evident among adults of all ages. As Table 3, opposite, indicates, there is also a very close relationship between the levels of political interest expressed by an adult and that expressed by any young people living with them.

6.8 Additionally, Table 4, opposite, shows that 44% of young people living in the wealthiest household income quartile (£50,000 plus) are around twice as likely to agree that it is everyone’s duty to vote compared to 21% of those living in the poorest household income quartile (below £15,000). The NatCen report concluded that ‘... on all the measures we considered, young people from more advantaged backgrounds were significantly more likely than those from less advantaged backgrounds to be interested and engaged with politics’.

Table 3: Political interest (12 to 19-year-olds) by adult political interest

| | Adult political interest | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------------|
| | Great deal, quite a lot % | Some % | Not very much % | None at all % |
| 12 to 19-year-olds' political interest | | | | |
| Great deal/quite a lot | 16 | 6 | 9 | 2 |
| Some interest | 32 | 23 | 19 | 14 |
| Not very much interest | 32 | 34 | 35 | 25 |
| None at all | 20 | 37 | 37 | 60 |

Source: Park, A., Phillips, M. and Johnson, M., *Young people in Britain: the attitudes and experiences of 12 to 19 year olds* (NatCen, 2004).

Table 4: Percentage agreeing with statements by household income quartile

| | Household income quartile | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| | Below £15,000 % | £15,000– £28,999 % | £29,000– £49,999 % | £50,000 plus % |
| 'It's not really worth voting' | 15 | 11 | 6 | 4 |
| 'People should vote only if they care who wins' | 63 | 60 | 59 | 51 |
| 'It is everyone's duty to vote' | 21 | 28 | 34 | 44 |

Source: Park, A., Phillips, M. and Johnson, M., *Young people in Britain: the attitudes and experiences of 12 to 19 year olds* (NatCen, 2004).

BME groups

6.9 Previous Commission research has explored in depth the relationship between ethnicity and political engagement.⁴¹ The Commission's report in 2002 found that:

- People from black Caribbean and black African communities were the least likely to vote in the UK. Research has also shown that people of black African heritage have one of the lowest levels of registration.
- There is some evidence to suggest that dissatisfaction with political parties played a part in depressing turnout among BME communities.
- BME turnout rates are affected by generic factors including the younger age profile of these communities, the higher levels of social and economic deprivation experienced among these groups, and the fact that they predominantly live in urban areas where turnout levels tend to be lower than average.

⁴¹ The Electoral Commission, *Voter engagement among black and minority ethnic communities* (2002).

- Additionally, there are also community-specific factors affecting turnout such as lack of representation in high-profile public positions.

6.10 The first *Audit of political engagement* found that:

- Almost a quarter (23%) of those from BME communities said they have discussed politics or political news with someone else in the last two to three years, compared to almost two in five (39%) of white people.
- Only one in 100 (1%) have contacted an elected representative (at a local or national level) at some point over the last two to three years.
- One in 20 (5%) are defined as 'political activists', having done at least three from a list of eight political activities (excluding voting and the electoral activities included within the previous indicator).

6.11 Generally, those from BME communities are divided about the value of getting involved in politics at a national level: 29% agree getting involved can really change the way the UK is run, but 36% disagree and Operation Black Vote (OBV) have asserted that 'Too many [black Britons] believe that getting involved won't make a difference. A self-fulfilling prophecy becomes the only conclusion.'⁴²

6.12 Analysis of the 2001 Home Office Citizenship survey by Eldin Fahmy indicates that minority ethnic citizens participate less in political life. The study sought to explore to what extent the factors of socio-economic status, social capital and psycho-political attitudes shape political participation of citizens of ethnic minority communities.⁴³ Findings show that only a small minority of ethnic minority people appear to be 'active citizens', with 61% of respondents having not undertaken any of a range of political activities within the last year.

6.13 However, an ESRC-funded study into ethnic minority participation indicates that ethnic minorities are more actively involved in British political life than is assumed. Findings suggest:

- Those from black and minority ethnic communities seek to involve themselves in politics in alternative ways, such as becoming more involved in single issue campaigns, rather than formal party politics.
- There is a much wider degree of political involvement, '... beyond electoral politics to anti-deportation campaigns, literary circles and musical cultures'.
- Any political party that seeks the support of BMEs needs to understand this diversity of political participation.⁴⁴

⁴² Woolley, S., 'Standing up to be counted', in *Disengaged and disinterested: deliberations on voter apathy* (New Politics Network, Winter 2002).

⁴³ Fahmy, E., *Ethnicity, citizenship and political participation in Britain: findings from the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey* ('Citizenship and attitudes to governance in Britain', Project Working Paper 3, ESRC funded, University of Bristol, 2004).

⁴⁴ The ESRC-funded study into ethnic minority participation was undertaken by the Centre for Urban and Community Research based at Goldsmith's College, University of London and City University, London. Two hundred interviews were conducted, with an additional 70 interviews with members of BME communities involved in more formal politics. The report *Democratic governance and ethnic minority political participation in contemporary Britain* was written by Prof. M. Keith, Dr L. Bach and Dr K. Shukra.

6.14 According to this research, many BME communities are developing links that differ from 'traditional' politics. Such politics focuses on the issues that matter to them, with many people choosing such campaigns because they believe they can have a more relevant impact on their lives.⁴⁵

6.15 OBV have asserted that the British Asian community is disengaged from politics because 'equitable, representative decision-making institutions' are not multicultural. They explain that the onus is both on politicians, campaigners and the Asian communities to make a positive change with 'strategic participation in the mainstream' by Asian communities as the way forward⁴⁶ and, as reported in *The Guardian*, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) has urged for political parties '... to be brought under the scope of the Race Relations Act'.

Gender

6.16 In 2004, the Commission published its *Gender and political participation* report, which looked at the extent and nature of men and women's political participation in the UK and examined the existence of any activism 'gap' by gender. The main findings of this research were in the following areas:

- **Voting:** women and men are equally as likely to vote in local, regional and national elections.
- **Campaign politics:** women are less likely participate in activities such as party membership, party donations and contacting politicians.
- **Civic-oriented:** women are less likely to belong to voluntary associations, hobby, consumer or professional groups, and sports or social clubs.
- **Cause-oriented:** women are more likely than men to sign petitions and boycott or buy products for ethical reasons.
- **Overall:** women were found to be significantly less politically active than men.

6.17 Our second *Audit of Political Engagement* (2005) found that political interest is higher among men than women (61% against 45%) and that only 31% of women feel they know at least a fair amount about politics, compared to 52% of men. At the same time the audit found no significant difference between men and women in terms of their likelihood to vote at an immediate general election: an almost equal proportion of men and women say they would be absolutely certain to vote (53% of men and 51% of women).

The importance of 'place' and its effects on political engagement

6.18 A 2004 research report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that many different kinds of deprivation coincide in the most disadvantaged

⁴⁵ Keith, M., Bach, L. and Shukra, K., *Democratic governance and ethnic minority political participation in contemporary Britain* (University of London and City University, London).

⁴⁶ Viswanathan, A., 'Doing nothing not an option', in *Disengaged and disinterested: deliberations on voter apathy* (New Politics Network, Winter 2002).

communities.⁴⁷ Research suggests that disadvantage is strongly associated with place and a look at the 10 lowest turnout constituencies suggests a link between social context, including urbanity and deprivation, and turnout. A cursory look at the relationship between dimensions of social exclusion – represented in Table 5, opposite, by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) – and turnout levels, illustrates an apparent correlation between social exclusion and a person’s capacity or inclination to vote.⁴⁸

6.19 This trend is mirrored when looking at social class and registration rates. An ONS study for the Commission in 2005 indicates that 37% of black Africans, compared to only 9% of black Caribbeans, were found to be unregistered in 2000. Results also suggested that 16% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 22% of students were not registered. Further statistical analysis confirmed strong associations between non-registration and age, sex, ethnicity, tenure and mobility and the majority, 52%, of non-registrants in 2000 came from just three groups:

- those living with parents (in particular, ‘attainers’);
- those having moved within the six months prior to the qualifying date; and
- those renting from a private landlord.

6.20 Our second audit found that only 26% of C2DEs in very deprived areas are interested in politics, compared to 64% of C2DEs in very affluent areas. Strikingly, C2DEs living in very affluent areas are more likely to be interested in politics than ABC1s in very deprived areas. Additionally, the audit found a significant ‘neighbourhood effect’, with interest in politics markedly lower in areas with greater deprivation. Only 35% of residents in the most deprived 10% of areas of the country say they are interested in politics while 69% say the same in the most affluent 10% of areas.

⁴⁷ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Strategies against poverty: a shared road map* (December 2004).

⁴⁸ ODPM, *Indices of multiple deprivation* (2004).

Table 5: English constituencies with lowest turnout in UK at the 2001 general election and levels of social exclusion (multiple deprivation)

| Constituency | Within Standard Output Area (SOA) | SOA ranking in England* | Turnout at 2001 general election % | Constituency ranking UK by turnout at general election** |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Liverpool Riverside | Liverpool | 1 | 34.1 | 1 |
| Liverpool Walton | Liverpool | 1 | 43.0 | 6 |
| Manchester Central | Manchester | 2 | 39.1 | 2 |
| Salford | Manchester | 2 | 41.6 | 3 |
| Manchester Gorton | Manchester | 2 | 42.7 | 5 |
| Leeds Central | Leeds | 54 | 41.8 | 4 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | Kensington | 82 | 43.3 | 7 |

Notes: The level of deprivation is based on the IMD at SOA level, ward/district in 2004. No analysis is available at county council level in 2000 IMD, so no direct analysis is possible between 2000 and 2004 data. Scotland is not included in IMD 2000/2004 analysis.

*1 = the most deprived area in England.

**Out of a total of 659 constituencies.

Source: ODPM, *Indices of deprivation (2000)* and ODPM, *Indices of multiple deprivation (2004)*.

6.21 Comparison of turnout and IMD finds that the lowest turnout levels in England coincide with the most disadvantaged local wards in England. This suggests that certain factors of social exclusion, if not all, strongly affect a person's likelihood to vote or to take part in non-electoral participation. Additionally, whether people live in urban or rural areas also has an effect on participation rates. As Table 6, below, indicates: 'The differences in the rates of participation [social and political], are somewhat greater in "remote rural" districts, than in either "accessible rural" or urban districts.'⁴⁹

Table 6: Rates of non-participation in social, political, cultural or community organisations by wealth of household

| Location | All adults % | Adults in poorest fifth of households % | Adults in remaining four-fifths of households % |
|------------------|--------------|---|---|
| Remote rural | 55 | 69 | 49 |
| Accessible rural | 50 | 58 | 49 |
| Urban | 55 | 63 | 53 |

Base: 7,402 respondents were interviewed (828 remote rural; 1,382 accessible rural; 5,192 urban). Data is at the lower tier local authority level. Source: British Household Panel Survey, Waves 7–9; Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex; analysis by John Rigg, London School of Economics.

⁴⁹ New Policy Institute, *Indicators of poverty and social exclusion in rural England* (report for the Countryside Agency, December 2002).

6.22 The Joseph Rowntree Foundation argue that it is only by improving communities at this most local level that the worst form of disadvantage related to where someone lives can be addressed, and recommend making neighbourhoods better places to live and ensuring that ‘... local residents are central to decision-making about the future of their own homes and environment’.

Education and political participation

6.23 Professor John Curtice and Ben Seyd have found that while higher educational attainment is widely held to be a ‘democratic good’ encouraging adherence to democratic values and a greater propensity to vote, electoral participation has not, in fact, increased in line with widening educational opportunities and participation since the mid-1980s. That the very opposite seems to have happened is nothing less than a ‘puzzle of participation’.⁵⁰

6.24 Curtice and Seyd found that though electoral participation has fallen, non-electoral participation has increased. They assert that ‘The participation crisis in Britain is confined to the ballot box and it is not part of a wider decline in the willingness of citizens to engage with the political system.’ Crucially, ‘Educational attainment has never had, and continues not to have, much influence on electoral participation and so its expansion cannot be expected to insulate levels of turnout against whatever other forces that may be helping to depress them.’⁵¹

6.25 According to Curtice and Seyd, turnout is the only form of political activity where levels of participation between groups from different educational backgrounds approach equity. By contrast, results from the British Household Panel Survey found 60% of those with a degree regularly actively participated in social organisations compared with 48% of those with other qualifications and 37% of those with no qualifications.⁵² According to ONS, the main barriers to participation include: lack of money and time, personal circumstances such as caring responsibilities, access to transport, fear of crime and lack of information.

6.26 Curtice and Seyd conclude that a crisis could evolve if turnout levels continue to fall as non-electoral participation by the more educated increases: ‘There is an increased danger that the voices of the less well educated will become quieter still’ and Charter88 have similarly identified the dangers of a situation when those most in need of speaking out and defending themselves do not feel any power (or ‘agency’) to help them or to demand change.

⁵⁰ Curtice, J. and Seyd, B., ‘Is there a crisis of political participation?’, in Park, A. et al (eds.) *British Social Attitudes, the 20th report: continuity and change over the two decades* (NatCen, 2003/2004).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Institute for Social and Economic Research, British Household Panel Survey (2001), cited in ONS, *Focus on Social Inequalities* (2004).

7 Conclusion

7.1 The research summarised in this paper highlights that those experiencing social deprivation tend also to be among the most politically excluded within society. In this paper we have explored the main factors that are thought to drive social exclusion and political exclusion. These include unemployment and low income, poverty, education, skills and training deprivation, health deprivation and disability, access to transport, fear of crime, neighbourhood, and housing.

7.2 Research suggests a ‘... near universal association between political participation [electoral and political] and socio-economic status’⁵³ and political disengagement and social exclusion appear to consolidate and drive each other. However, the exact relationship and causal direction between factors of social exclusion and levels and forms of political disengagement remains difficult to determine.

7.3 Many commentators have expressed concerns about the development of a ‘participation divide’ and the risk that social and political exclusion will reinforce each other over time. Julian Le Grand explains that the deprivation associated with social exclusion can impede people’s ability to engage in political activities, which ‘damages democracy.’⁵⁴ On a more positive note, Democratic Dialogue have argued that with ‘... the necessary investment of time, resources, imagination and encouragement, excluded groups can be won to confidence and activism’.⁵⁵

⁵³ Lijphart, A., ‘Unequal participation: democracy’s unresolved dilemma’, *American Political Science Review*, 91 (1997), No. 1.

⁵⁴ Le Grand, J., *Individual choice and social exclusion* (Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics, 2003).

⁵⁵ Democratic Dialogue, *Social Exclusion, Social Inclusion* (Report No. 2, 1995).

Appendix A Drivers of social exclusion

This section looks at the different causes of social exclusion using a number of different sources.

Unemployment and low income

1.1 While recent years have seen a downward trend in unemployment nationwide, ‘... [it] is spatially very concentrated and there are still areas with a considerable “jobs gap” ’ according to the Social Exclusion Unit. Similarly, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, *Strategies against poverty*, shows poverty to be highly ‘place’-related: ‘The importance of place appears to have increased in recent years, with concentrations of disadvantage becoming more acute and people’s long-term prospect of escaping disadvantage more heavily influenced by geography.’⁵⁶

1.2 The following is a selection of findings and figures relating to unemployment and low income.

- According to ONS government figures, employment was just below 80% in spring 2003.
- However, the SEU explains that although unemployment is at its lowest for a generation, the fall in unemployment has not been matched by a fall in economic inactivity, e.g. those who are retired, looking after a home and those who are unable to work due to long-term sickness or disability.⁵⁷
- More than a fifth of the working-age population is economically inactive – this has hardly changed for the past ten years.
- The 2004 *Drivers of social exclusion* report suggests that unemployment can be caused by other drivers of social exclusion, such as ill health, low educational attainment and lack of skills.⁵⁸
- In 1999, the SEU’s *Bridging the gap* report on unemployment among 16 to 19-year-olds found that, at any one time, 9% of 16 to 18-year-olds (almost one in 10) are not taking part in either learning or work.⁵⁹
- More than 40% of young people who were out of work at 16 are also not in employment at 18.

⁵⁶ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Strategies against poverty: a shared road map* (December 2004).

⁵⁷ ‘Economically inactive’ are ‘those who are neither in employment nor unemployment. This includes the retired, those looking after a home and those who are unable to work due to long-term sickness or disability. Measures are based on International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidelines used in the Labour Force Survey’. From the glossary in ONS, *Focus on social inequalities* (2004).

⁵⁸ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Social Exclusion Unit, *The drivers of social exclusion: a review of the literature – summary* (Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at the University of York, 2004).

⁵⁹ The Social Exclusion Unit, *Bridging the gap: new opportunities for 16–18 year olds not in education, employment or training* (1999).

- ‘There has been an increase in pay differentials with more low pay and the risk of low pay affecting certain groups more – women, young people, older males, long-term sick and disabled, and ethnic minorities... Unemployment has knock-on effects in other dimensions of social exclusion including homelessness, health, crime and other drug and alcohol problems.’⁶⁰
- The first report from the Government’s ethnic minority employment taskforce highlighted the continuing disparity in the number of people from ethnic minorities who are without work. Minister for Work, Jane Kennedy, said ‘The employment rate for ethnic minorities is currently 59.4%, compared with 74.9 per cent for the overall population... Ethnic minorities are twice as likely to be unemployed.’

Young people and unemployment

1.3 There has been much analysis of youth unemployment, as the following statistics highlight:

- Not being employed or in any kind of education or training at the age of 16 to 18 increases the risk of remaining unemployed later in life.
- There is a long-term effect, with ‘... unemployment disadvantage persist[ing] as young people progress further into adulthood’.
- Seventeen per cent of those aged 16 to 18 work, but undertake no formal education or training.
- Those from an unskilled family background are over four times more likely to be out of education and training at 16 than those from managerial and professional families.
- ‘These labour market disadvantages are further compounded by other symptoms of social exclusion. Compared with their peers, non-participating young people are by the age of 21 more likely to be earning less if employed, to be a parent and to experience depression and poor physical health.’⁶¹
- Young people most at risk of unemployment include those:
 - whose parents are unemployed;
 - who are members of certain minority ethnic groups;
 - who face barriers such as teenage parenthood or homelessness;
 - who are young carers or ex-offenders;
 - who have a disability; and/or
 - who have been in care.

1.4 These findings suggest that social exclusion begins for some at a very young age, and may continue throughout their lives. Importantly, the research suggests that the younger ‘formative’ years of a person’s life have a lasting impact on their life-long prospects. They increase the likelihood of having a low income and experiencing poor physical and mental health. The SEU

⁶⁰ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Social Exclusion Unit, *The drivers of social exclusion: a review of the literature – summary* (Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at the University of York, 2004).

⁶¹ The Social Exclusion Unit, *Bridging the gap: new opportunities for 16–18 year olds not in education, employment or training* (1999).

suggest that ‘Sixteen is a critical point when for some, problems that have been brewing for years reach a crisis, and for others, problems begin that could have been avoided.’

Poverty

1.5 Certain groups in the UK are reported to be at greater risk of poverty, including women as well as children: ‘Nearly 1 in 4 women lived in poverty in 1999/2000, compared with 1 in 5 men – even before taking account of the “hidden poverty” that may exist in households where income and other resources are not shared fairly.’⁶²

Oxfam defines and measures poverty as below 60% of contemporary median net disposable income. Furthermore, ‘... minority ethnic groups are often... more vulnerable to poverty’. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are particularly vulnerable with more than two-thirds living in poverty in 2000/01.⁶³

- According to Peter Townsend, ‘Poverty does not only relate to subsistence, but must additionally be understood in relation to a person’s ability to participate in society’ and ‘Individuals, families and groups can be said to be in poverty when... their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities.’⁶⁴
- Oxfam reported in 2000/01 that there were nearly 13 million people living in poverty (measured as below 60% of contemporary median net disposable income) representing around one in four people in the UK. These figures include nearly one in three children (almost four million).⁶⁵
- Almost half of all poor children are concentrated in just 14% of wards, representing about a quarter of the child population, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Education, skills, training, literacy and truancy

1.6 An ONS report, *Focus on social inequalities*, explains that when a child grows up in deprivation, this deprivation could well continue throughout their adult life. It states that socio-economic gaps in education begin early and can widen through the education system.⁶⁶

- Educational inequalities are strongly linked with other social inequalities: ‘...educational attainment is a key factor in the difference between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in areas such as employment, income, health and living standards’.
- Poor educational attainment can be passed down through generations. It is an inter-generational dimension of social exclusion.

⁶² Department of Social Security, *Households Below Average Income 1994/5–1999/2000*, Corporate Document Services (2001), cited on www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp/poverty/thefacts.htm.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Townsend, P., *Poverty in the United Kingdom* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

⁶⁵ www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp/poverty/thefacts.htm.

⁶⁶ ONS, *Focus on social inequalities* (2004).

- ‘People with low basic skills and lower or no qualifications exhibit lower levels of public involvement’ and ‘Education can provide a route out of poverty and social exclusion.’
- Pupil ethnicity, whether English is a first language or not, incidence of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and eligibility for free school meals are key factors affecting educational attainment.⁶⁷
- According to ONS, pupils from Chinese and Indian groups ‘... consistently achieved above the national average across each Key Stage and at GCSE level... Black African, Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils, however, performed consistently below the national average for each Key Stage and at GCSE level.’ Certain ethnic groups have a tendency to achieve a greater proportion of higher-grade GCSEs than others.
- An international study – part of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – found that the key characteristics associated with low achievement are:
 - being from a lower socio-economic background;
 - being male;
 - having parents with lower or no qualifications;
 - living in a single parent household;
 - having many siblings;
 - attending a state rather than independent school; and,
 - attending a school with a high rate of FSM eligibility.⁶⁸

1.7 The *Skills for Life* survey conducted by the Department for Further Education and Skills (DfES) in 2002–3 assessed the basic skills of adults aged 16–65 in England and found that:

- Sixteen per cent had literacy skills below the standard of a D to G at GCSE level.
- Forty-seven per cent only possessed skills at this level.

1.8 The survey reported that characteristics of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills included being from a minority ethnic groups and also having English as an additional language. Low skills were also found among those living in deprived areas, people from lower socio-economic groups, older adults (aged 55–65), and those with poor health. Additionally, there were significant differences between ethnic groups and especially high proportions of people who had no qualifications were found among the Bangladeshi community (46% for women and 38% for men).

1.9 According to DfES estimates, more than 50,000 pupils a day miss school in England without permission and there are 7.5 million school days missed each year through truancy. Truants tend to have similar characteristics: ‘... they tend to be older pupils, from poorer backgrounds, have parents that are in low-skilled jobs, and live in local authority housing...’.

⁶⁷ ‘FSM eligibility is used as an indicator of low household income, deprivation and social class’: quote from ONS, *Focus on social inequalities* (2004).

⁶⁸ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study (www.oecd.org) (2000).

1.10 Between 1990/91 and 2001/02, permanent exclusions in England rose from 2,910 to 9,540, peaking with 12,668 permanent exclusions in 1996/97. The ONS report argues that though this represents a small proportion of the overall school population, ‘... being excluded from school has a big impact on the excluded child and also affects the wider community’.⁶⁹

Health deprivation and disability

1.11 The ONS explains the reasons for health inequalities are complex. However, as with other factors of social exclusion, ‘... there are links with people’s social and demographic circumstances such as their educational attainment, occupation, income, type of housing, sex, ethnicity and where they live’.⁷⁰

1.12 A good indicator of health inequalities is the relative widening of the gap in life expectancy between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in society:

- The *Focus on social inequalities* study confirmed that those in disadvantaged groups are more likely to die earlier and to be in poorer health compared with the rest of the population. By 1997 to 1999, the gap in male life expectancy at birth between professional occupations and unskilled manual occupations had grown to 7.4 years. For women, the life expectancy gap was 5.7 years.
- People with disabilities face multiple factors of social exclusion that compound the disadvantaged situation in which they find themselves.
- Disabled people ‘... face barriers which limit their ability to take part in society – inaccessible public transport, prejudice, discrimination in education, near invisibility in TV, theatre and film.’⁷¹
- According to the New Politics Network, only 40% of disabled people of working age were in paid employment in 2001.

Transport/access

1.13 As a contributor to social exclusion, ‘... poor transport can be an important factor in restricting access to opportunity’.⁷²

- One in four young people have not applied for a particular job in the last 12 months because of transport problems.
- One in 10 people in low-income areas have turned down a job in the last 12 months because of transport.
- Transport access is linked to young people dropping out of college.
- Forty-seven per cent of 16 to 18-year-olds experience difficulty with this cost.
- Six per cent of 16 to 24-year-olds turn down training or further education opportunities because of problems with transport.⁷³

⁶⁹ ONS, *Focus on social inequalities* (2004).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Reith, L., ‘Disabled and excluded’, in White, M. (ed.), *Perspectives on social exclusion* (New Politics Network, 2001).

⁷² The Social Exclusion Unit (2003).

Neighbourhood/housing

1.14 Research has shown that living standards have implications for people's happiness and well being, health and social participation:

- According to ODPM's 2001 English House Condition Survey, 33% of dwellings were found to be in a '... non-decent state, defined as property being unfit, in disrepair, in need of modernisation or providing insufficient thermal comfort. [Furthermore] almost half of all privately rented dwellings were considered non-decent (49%)'.⁷⁴
- Generally, living standards are the '... visible product or outcome of other forms of inequality'.

Rurality

1.15 In 2000/01, there were 2.6 million people in rural districts living in households with incomes below the most commonly used threshold of low income (60% of median British income after deducting tax, national insurance and housing costs). This is just under a fifth of the rural population. It represents a quarter of all those in England on low income.

1.16 The Countryside Agency has found that most indicators suggest there are significant levels of poverty and social exclusion in rural England. However, in general, there is less poverty and social exclusion in rural authorities than in urban ones.

Crime and the fear of crime

1.17 The Social Exclusion Unit suggests that the most powerful drivers of crime are community deprivation and income inequalities resulting from unemployment. Crime is spatially concentrated and associated with homelessness, poor health, parenting factors, drugs and alcohol misuse, school exclusion, leaving care and prison. Crime is disproportionately committed by people from socially excluded backgrounds.⁷⁵

- There is often a mismatch between the fear of crime and the actual risk of crime – research indicates that, in some circumstances, people who are at least risk of crime are actually more fearful of it.
- The 2001/02 British Crime Survey found that 31% of people said that fear of crime had a moderate impact on their quality of life, with a further 6% saying that their quality of life was greatly affected by it. In 2003/04, the study found that fear of violent crime fell from 21% to 16%.
- The Social Exclusion Unit suggests that poorer people are most likely to fear crime. Fear of crime varies by neighbourhood and individual characteristics with a strong association with age, gender and ethnicity.

⁷³ Cheshire, L., *Mind the gap: social exclusion report* (2003).

⁷⁴ Cited by ONS, *Focus on social inequalities* (2004).

⁷⁵ Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU), *The drivers of social exclusion: a review of the literature – summary* (University of York for the ODPM Social Exclusion Unit, 2004).

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