

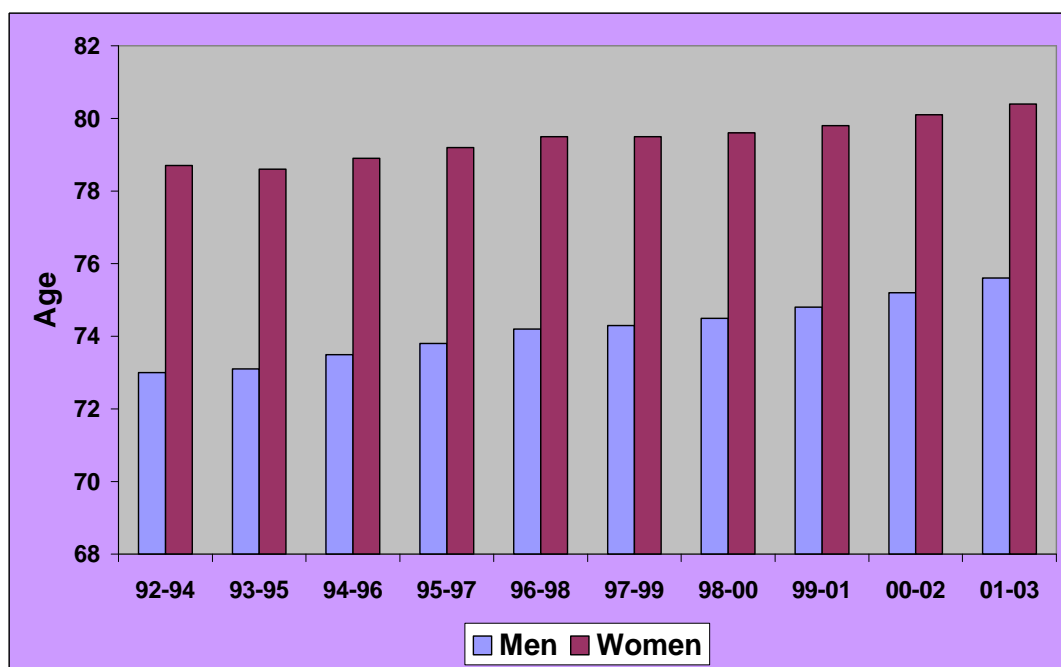
Indicators of social change

The socio-economic conditions of Northern Ireland have generally improved in recent years. However it is evident that some people within the population have not benefited to the same extent as others.

Health

Over the ten years to 2004, male life expectancy increased by 3 years and female by 2 years. There are however certain inequalities in the health of the region. Mortality rates are significantly higher in the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland and Government is committed to reducing the disadvantage faced by people because of where they live.

Figure 1 Life expectancy at birth



Source: *The Annual Report of the Registrar General, 2003 (NISRA)*

The rate of premature death in Northern Ireland has declined by a fifth, from 260 per 100,000 people in 1994 to 210 per 100,000 in 2004. In terms of both levels and trends, this is a similar picture to that in GB.

The variation in the rate of premature death within Northern Ireland by occupational class is substantial. At one extreme, the rate among managers is around 110 deaths per 100,000 population. By contrast, the rate among those who have never worked and the long term unemployed exceeds 350, while the rate among those in routine jobs is around 300.

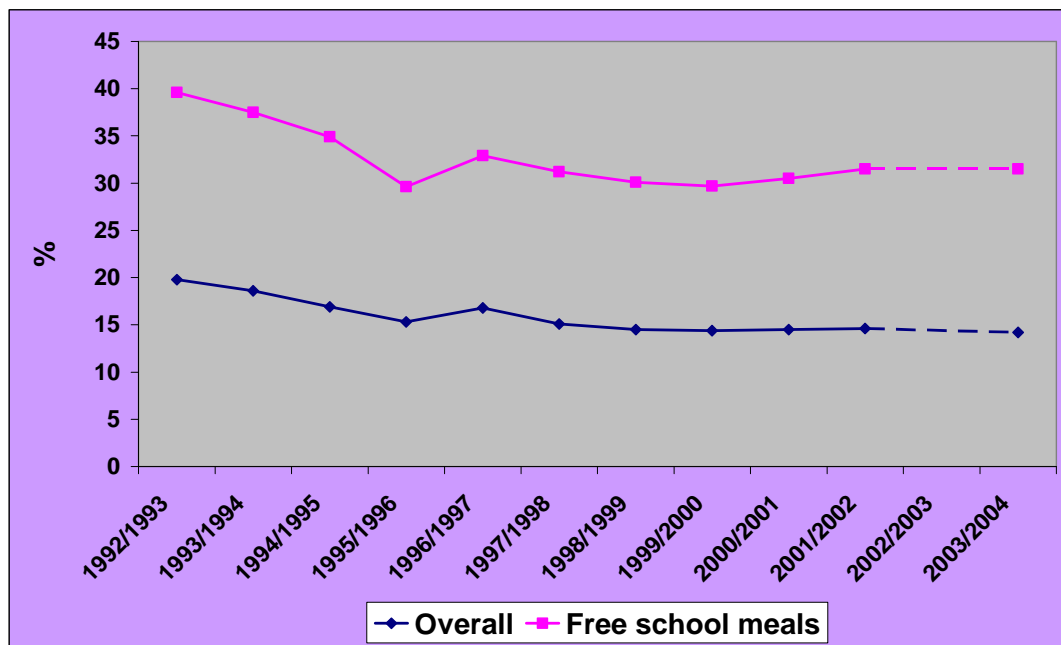
The rate of premature death among men is much higher than among women: in 2004, 260 per 100,000 population for men compared with 160 for women. Rates of premature death have been coming down in Northern Ireland, as in GB, for many years.

Twenty years ago, the rate of premature death in Northern Ireland was 330 per 100,000 (compared with 210 in 2004). In England and Wales, the comparable figures are 290 deaths per 100,000 in 1986 and 190 in 2004. As well as the continuing decline, it also seems as if the difference in premature death rate between Northern Ireland and England and Wales used to be greater than it has been in recent years. For example, over the period 1986 to 1994, the premature death was 11% higher in Northern Ireland than in England and Wales, whereas between 1995 and 2004 it was just 6%. This 5% difference is roughly equivalent to 160 extra premature deaths per year.

Education

In key areas such as education there has been significant progress. Children in our society are achieving more and better grades than previously. For example in 1992/93 approximately 20% pupils did not achieve 5 or more GCSEs grades A*-G, by 2003/04 this had reduced to 14%.

Figure 2 Proportion of pupils not achieving 5+ GCSEs (A* - G)



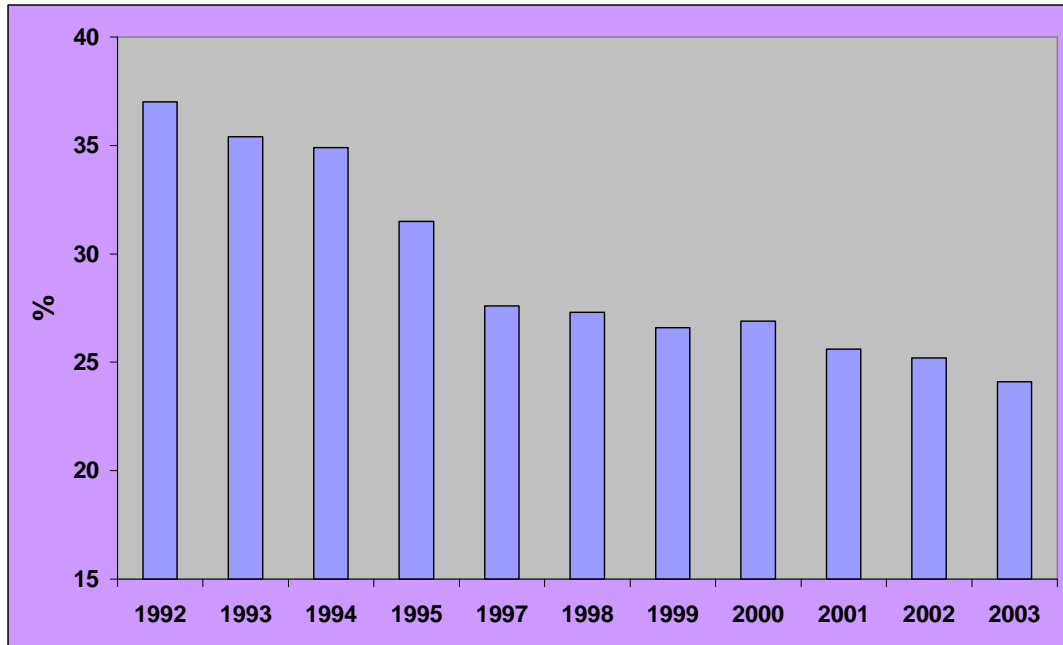
Source: DE (School Leavers Survey)

However some groups of children and young people within our society are not keeping pace with others. Disadvantaged children in receipt of free school meals are achieving significantly less in terms of qualifications as do children from a minority ethnic background. In general boys do less well than girls and the difference has not reduced in recent years. In targeting education initiatives at the most educationally disadvantaged children government aims to reduce the differentials between the worst performing and the best performing children in our society.

Levels of education and skills within the working age population have increased. In 1992 more than 37% of adults of working age had no qualifications, by 2003 this level had reduced to 24%. However some groups

are still educationally disadvantaged, specifically older adults, people with a disability and some 16-25 year olds.

Figure 3 Proportion of persons of working age without a qualification



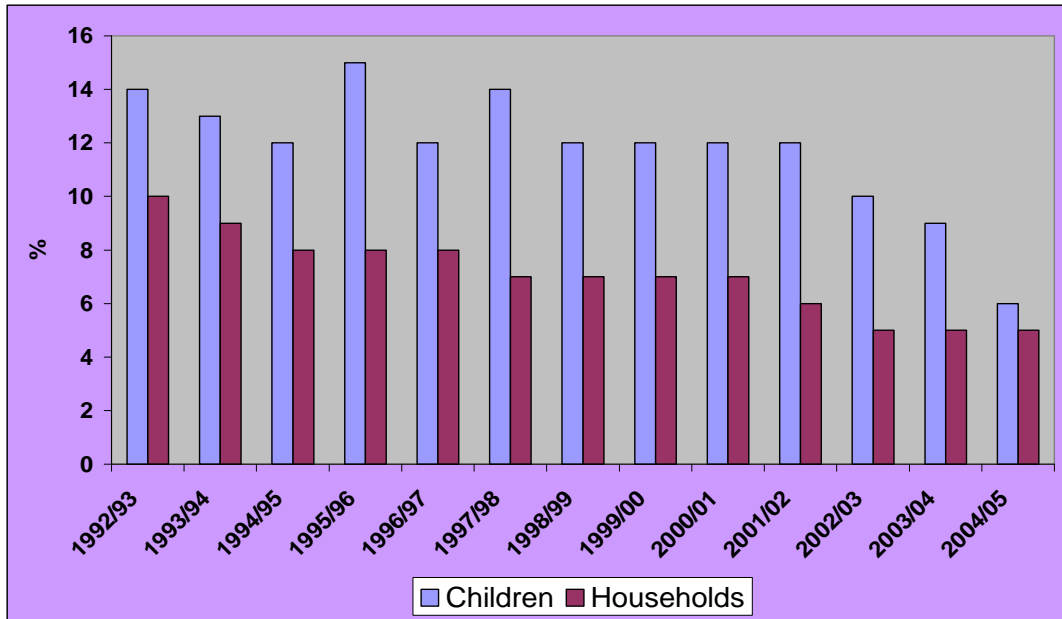
Source: Labour Force Survey, DETI

Housing

The quality of the environment in which we live has an impact on the well-being of the population. The quality of the housing stock continues to increase. In 1996 approximately 6% of households lived in unfit accommodation by 2001 this level had halved.

The proportion of children that live in over-crowded conditions has reduced from 14% in 1992/93 to 6% in 2004/05. However, in some places poor housing conditions still persist, most notably in the private rented sector.

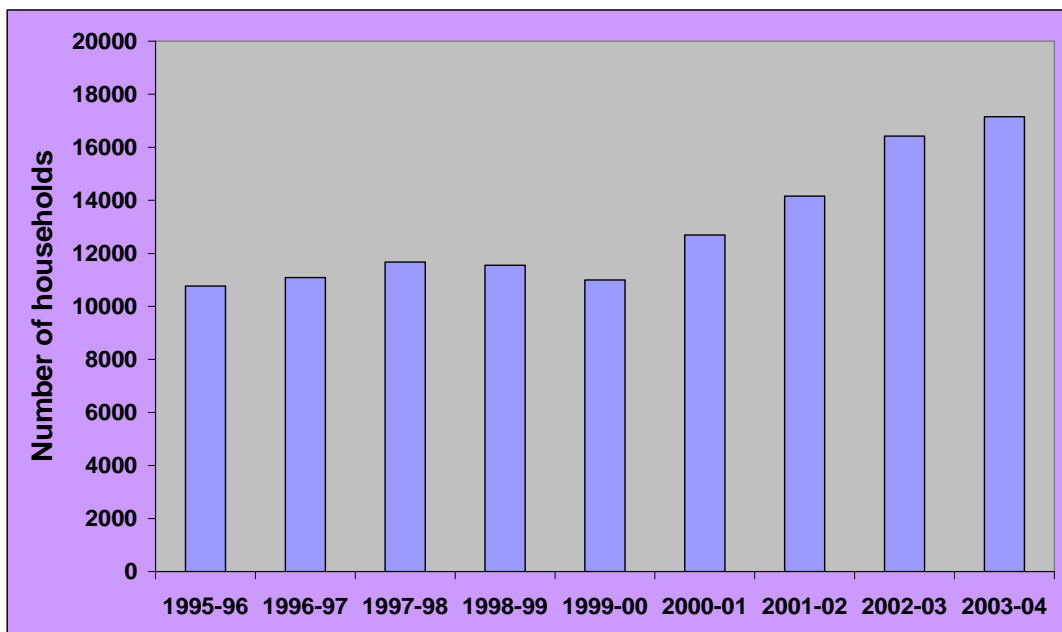
Figure 4 Proportions of children and households living in homes that are over-crowded



Source: Continuous Household Survey, NISRA

Homelessness has increased in Northern Ireland. In the period 1995/96 to 2004/05 the number of households 'presenting as homeless' to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive increased by over 60%.

Figure 5 Homeless households



Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive

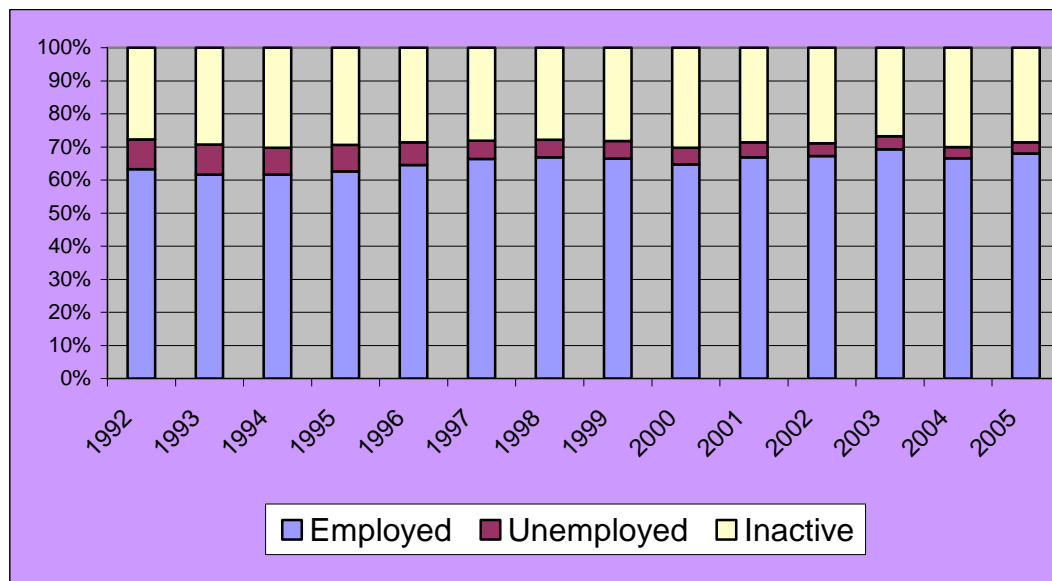
Single males and families are the most common types of household presenting as homeless. About half of those presenting are considered to be 'in priority need'. Even though the numbers are relatively small, the threefold rise in pensioner households presenting as homeless since 2000/01 is a cause for concern.

The labour market

The labour market in Northern Ireland has improved in terms of increasing employment levels and decreasing unemployment. The proportion of working age people in employment in 2005 was 68% compared to 63% in 1992. While this is the biggest rise in the UK (outside London) Northern Ireland is still behind the UK as a whole in terms of working age employment. In order for the NI working age employment rate to rise to the level of the UK would require an extra 56,000 people of working age to be in employment.

There are groups within society that show a distinct labour market disadvantage. Employment rates for people with a disability, although increasing, are still half that for the population as a whole. Older people and lone parents have lower than average employment rates as do young people aged 16-25.

Figure 6 Labour market status of the working age population



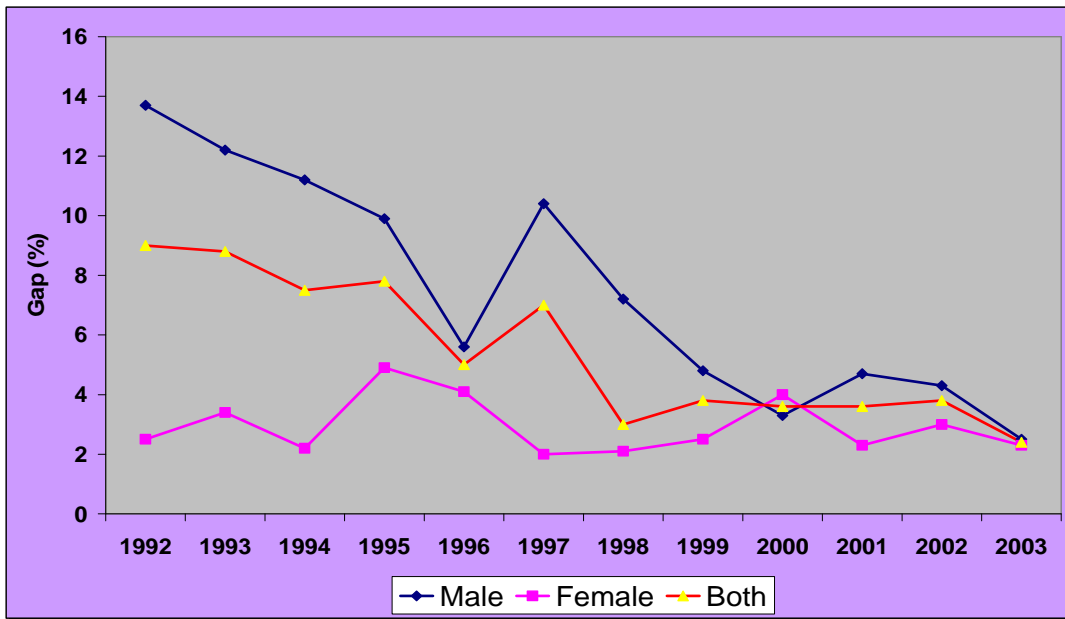
Source: Labour Force Survey, DETI, data for spring of each year

So

Economic inactivity is a major concern. The economic inactivity rate for all working age persons (27% in 2005) remains quite stable. The rate was 29% in 2000 and the current figure remains the highest of all the UK regions.

The proportion of the working age population unemployed has more than halved since 1992. Whilst unemployment is higher amongst males, Roman Catholics and single people, the greatest falls over time in the proportion of the working age unemployed has been amongst the former two groups.

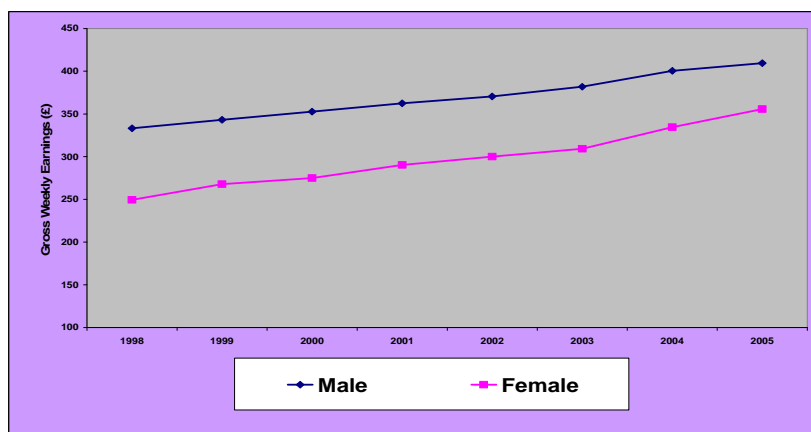
Figure 7 Catholic and Protestant unemployment rate gap



Source: 2003 Labour Force Survey Religion Report Update, NISRA

More people in Northern Ireland are currently in employment than ever before and average gross weekly earnings for full-time employees have increased. In real terms (1998 constant prices) average gross weekly earnings for men increased from £377 in 1998 to £438 in 2005 an increase of 16%. Earnings for females have increased by 28% in real terms over the same period (£282 in 1998 to £361 in 2005).

Figure 8 Average gross weekly earnings



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, NISRA

Although earnings in Northern Ireland have increased there remains a deficit compared to the UK as a whole. In 2005 median gross weekly earnings in Northern Ireland were 90% of the level for the UK as a whole, furthermore after the North East, Northern Ireland was the second lowest ranking region of the UK.

Average gross weekly household income in the Northern Ireland was £524 in 2004/05, 10% less than the average for the UK as whole (£583). Only the North East of England, Wales and Yorkshire and Humberside had a lower income level.

Financial exclusion

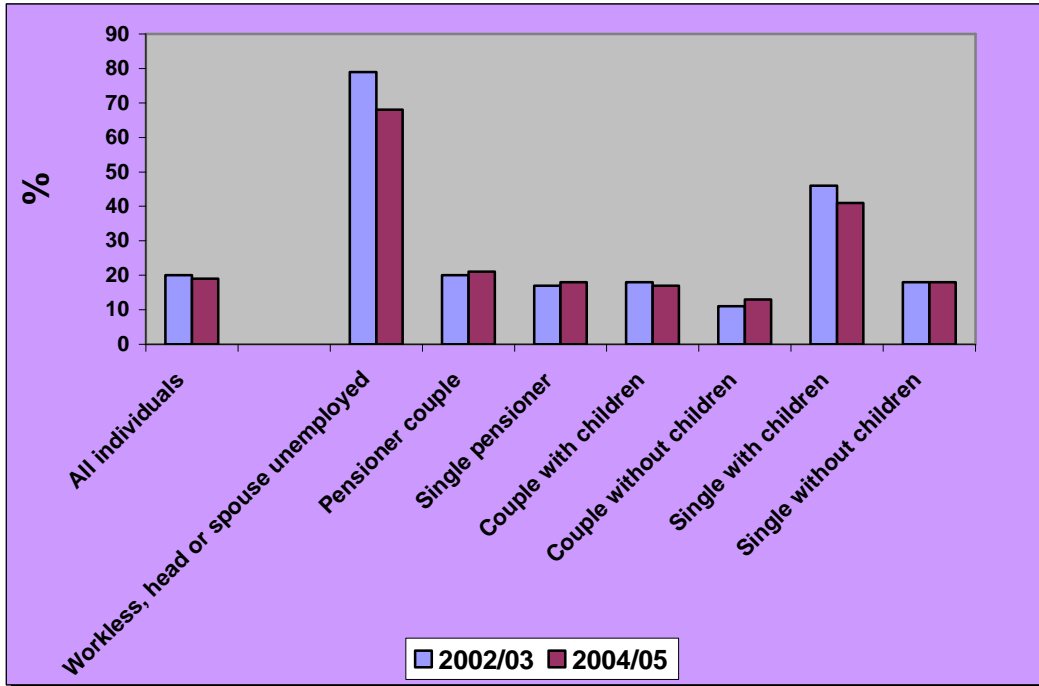
There is evidence of a higher level of financial exclusion amongst households in Northern Ireland than in the UK as a whole. As an indicator of financial exclusion 8% of households in Northern Ireland have no savings or bank accounts, double the level found across the UK as a whole.

Levels of household savings in Northern Ireland fall significantly behind that in the rest of the UK. Forty-one percent of households in NI have no savings compared to 27% of households in the rest of the UK. Furthermore some groups within Northern Ireland show significantly lower levels of savings than the population as a whole, for example approximately three quarters of lone parent households do not have any savings.

Income Poverty

Given the different experiences of certain groups in the population as outlined above it is not surprising that certain groups have a higher risk of living in income poverty (defined as less than 60% of the average household income) than others.

Figure 9 Risk of income poverty by household type

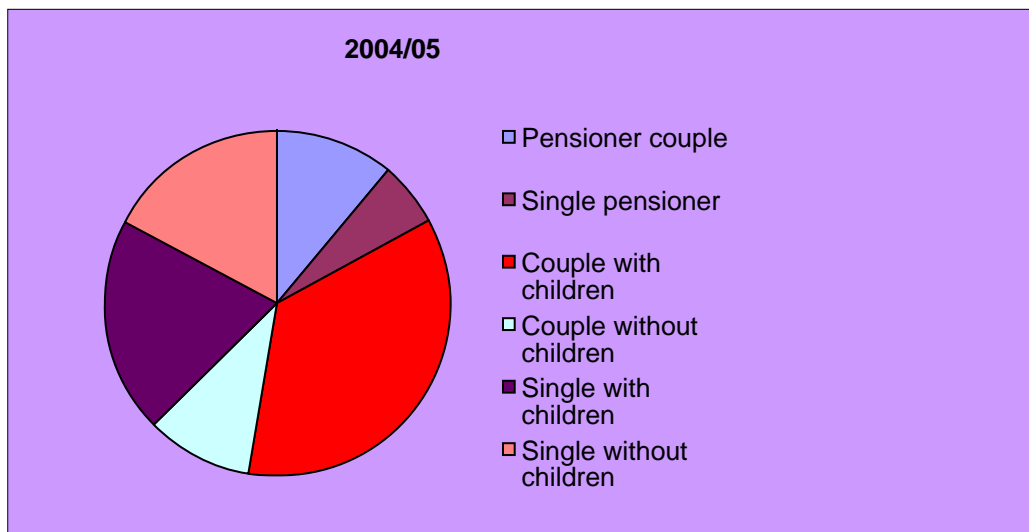


Source: Family Resources Survey, DSD

Over forty per cent of individuals living in lone parent households live in income poverty compared to around 20% of all individuals.

Across Northern Ireland as a whole in 2004/05 approximately one in five individuals live in households experiencing income poverty, this represents approximately 327,000 people. Over one-third (35%) of people living in poverty, live in a household comprised of an adult couple with children.

Figure 10 Composition of income poverty by household type



Source; Households Below Average Income NI, DSD (Note Income is after housing costs)

Poverty, Geography and different age groups

The risk of poverty in Northern Ireland is higher for individuals living in urban areas outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMUA).

Table 1 Risk of low by urban / rural location

	BMUA	Urban	Rural	Northern Ireland
All individuals	17	23	19	19
Children	22	30	20	24
Working age adults	16	21	15	17
Pensioners	12	16	33	21

Source; Households Below Average Income NI, DSD

Note Income is after housing costs

Almost one quarter (23%) of individuals living in such urban areas live in poverty, compared to 17% in the BMUA and 19% in rural areas. However this high level analysis for all people living in Northern Ireland masks differences across the life stages of individuals.

Children are most at risk of poverty in urban areas outside the BMUA. Thirty per cent of children in such urban areas live in income poverty, compared to 22% in the BMUA and 20% in rural areas. Working age individuals are similarly at the greatest risk of poverty if they live in urban areas outside the BMUA. However the pattern of pensioner poverty is different. Thirty-three per cent of pensioners living in rural Northern Ireland live in households experiencing income poverty, compared to 12% in the BMUA and 16% in urban areas outside the BMUA.