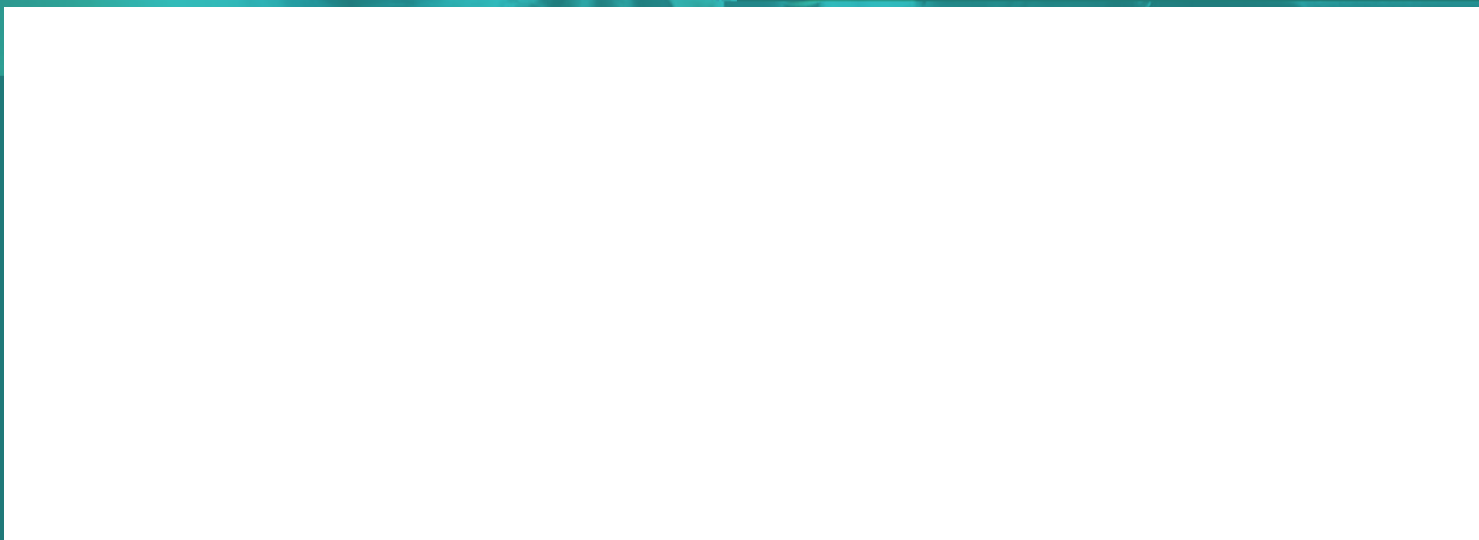




UCL



IOE is UCL's Faculty of Education and Society. From legacy to innovation, we have been shaping policy and helping government, organisations and individuals to navigate a radically changing society for the last 120 years.

UCL Public Policy is specialist unit helping to bridge the gap between research and policy. We connect academics with policymakers to support evidence-based policy. We draw on UCL's strengths across a wide range of disciplines to tackle the most urgent societal issues.

UCL Grand Challenges is a groundbreaking cross-disciplinary initiative designed to develop solutions to global problems. Bringing together experts from across a wide range of disciplines, they enable holistic responses to complex issues.

The UK's social inequalities have certainly been accelerated

Although some UK Government policies aimed at mitigating the impact of price rises are means-tested, the evidence

Recommendations

To build effective policy to address the cost-of-living crisis, the government should

Intersectionality and why it matters to policymaking

Intersectionality is the idea that social factors and identity characteristics that are part of people's everyday lives are not separate single issues but are interconnected and create specific experiences of privilege and disadvantage.⁹ Intersectionality as a concept can, therefore, help us to understand how social problems such as racism, sexism

Many organisations have developed trackers and initiatives dedicated to evidencing and analysing the impacts of the current crisis. For example:

- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation tracker¹³
- Centre for Cities tracker¹⁴
- Retail Economics tracker¹⁵
- Local Government Association Cost of Living Hub¹⁶
- Citizens Advice cost-of-living data dashboard¹⁷
- The Office for National Statistics¹⁸

However, despite being referred to as a crisis, the response to the cost-of-living and associated inequalities has not generated research and evidence collection at the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic and has, as a result, not generated such richness of available ‘real-time’ evidence.

This is, in part, due to the lack of data routinely collected about certain sections of society and a lack of intersectional approaches to standardised data collection. Participants in the project’s ThinkIns recognised that the current lack of intersectional analysis means that policy often produces partial, and so, ineffectual responses.

“Part of the data challenge we face is that young people are engaged in surveys etc at very low levels compared to older age groups. We often

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– Toby Murray, Senior Researcher, Royal Society of Arts

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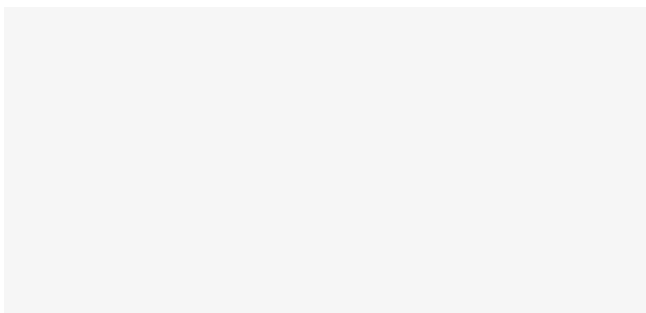
13 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, ‘Going under and without: JRF’s cost of living tracker, winter 2022/23’.

14 Centre for Cities, ‘Cost of living tracker’.

15 Retail Economics, ‘The Retail Economics – Cost of Living Tracker’.

16 Local Government Association, ‘Cost of living hub’.

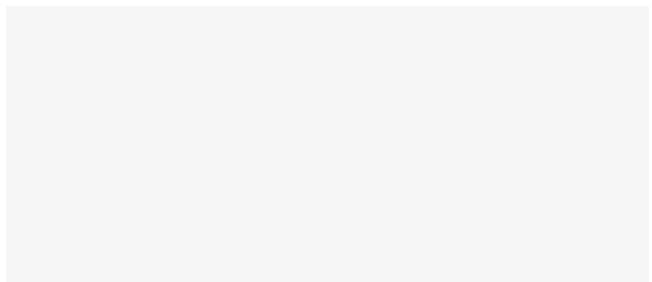
While the evidence collated about the various groups



One reason why those concerned with social policy are coming to recognise the importance of intersectional perspectives, is that it is apparent some policies repeatedly fail to produce their intended effects. Thinking and policies need to change to produce more effective impacts. For example:

Accountability:

Whilst accountability is critical for tackling the cost-of-living crisis and wider costs of poverty, assigning such responsibility to one government minister or single department is not necessarily a solution. Instead, as Helen Barnard, Director of Research, Policy and Impact at the Trussell Trust, says, it requires leadership from the top – a Prime Minister, a Chancellor, and a government **“who are committed to tackling it through every department”**. Failure to do this, as Sophie Metcalfe from the Institute for Government, explains, creates inefficiencies in the system. For example: **“fourteen government strategies over the last three years. Every single target was missed, but there was no accountability for that. Mistakes were repeated over and over again. You can have these high-level targets,**

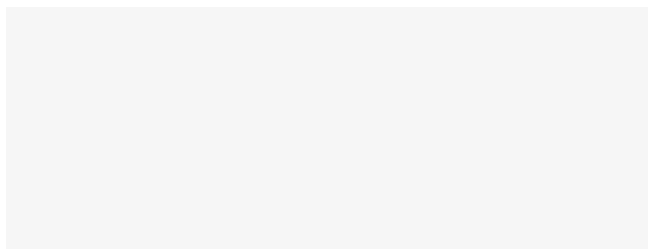


A common thread throughout discussions was the need for a new narrative around the 'cost-of-living crisis' – to shift terminology away from 'crisis' to acknowledge the long roots of the current situation and the entrenched high levels of poverty in the UK.

As part of the solution to achieving this, participants argued for rethinking the cost-of-living crisis as a **deprivation** crisis. Such reframing, Robert Hillier, of the National Zakat Foundation, suggested, would move conversation away from the false notion that if inflation comes down, the crisis will go away.

Similarly, Pordes Bowers highlighted that her team no longer refer to a cost-of-living crisis. Instead, the terminology of a cost-of-living response is used, in recognition of the fact that there is no short- or medium-term end point.

This crucial point was made across all three ThinkIns: that short-term thinking is antithetical to good social policy outcomes. In this case, man 0 Tw 111.49 (c) - JH' eB' Qs 7g G' Aa0% R#HNY("W' G% C5oR2% qv N0\$ 7a1\$ "G(N\$ N9H1#0



The three ThinkIns that inform this report were devised to help identify realistic solutions to the cost-of-living crisis. They started from the aim of giving due recognition to the complex ways that people are positioned. It quickly became apparent, however, that the participants, who grapple with these issues in their daily work, considered that rethinking policy solutions required the reframing of the problem. Many considered that the term cost-of-living crisis limits possible solutions. In particular, they considered that referring to the problem as a cost-of-living crisis is unhelpful in two ways. First, it limits the understanding of the timescale of both the problem and the solution. They considered that reframing it as about poverty would help since a) poverty is a longstanding issue and b) it would bring about the recognition that we have to take a long view in devising solutions. Second, the word crisis gives a false sense of security that addressing acute issues of costs will deal with the crisis in its entirety and alleviate root causes. As participants pointed out, it will simply address one pressure point for those living in poverty.

Intersectionality was an issue raised with the participants because the literature available increasingly makes clear that societal understandings are limited by treating people as if they belong to only one social category at a time, such as gender or social class position or racialized position. People experiencing the stresses glossed as 'cost-of-living crisis' fare differently, and have different solutions proposed for them according to the intersection of their socioeconomic position with others of their social characteristics. Age, for example, has been at the heart of debates about making provision for school children to have access to at least one nourishing meal per day. The participants in the ThinkIns recognised that single-issue solutions are not able to deal with the complexity of the cost-of-living crisis' because people are positioned in more plural and complex ways.

Tortoise Media with UCL Public Policy and Grand Challenge of Justice & Equality worked in partnership to convene, programme and moderated a series of ThinkIns, focused on the cost-of-living crisis and intersectionality. From [April-June 2023](#), three bespoke ThinkIns were hosted, which have informed the final report

80+

attendees from across our combined target guestlist joined at least 1 ThinkIn from a range of organisations, along with speaker contributions

attached

