

Why are people poor?

🕒 10min 🧑 6-19 INTERDEPENDENCE • HUMAN RIGHTS • SUSTAINABILITY

What do I want to find out?

Pupils' attitudes towards poverty, its causes and consequences, and whether it is inevitable.

What do I need?

- Seven opaque pots with lids, each with a hole big enough for a counter or bean to pass through.
- A bowl of counters or beans.
- A sheet to record the number of beans placed in each pot.
- The seven labels below, stating possible reasons for poverty.

not very clever	unlucky	not fair	don't know
it's just like that	none of these	lazy	

- These labels are based on terms used in the British and European Social Attitudes Surveys, but have been adapted for age suitability where necessary:
 - ignorance=not very clever
 - injustice=not fair
 - inevitable=it's just like that
- You might choose to use the original terms for older pupils.

📄 Download recording templates and images for these activities from the website:
www.risc.org.uk/toolkit

What do I do?

- Arrange the seven cards beside the seven pots.
- With the pupils in groups, give each of them three counters to vote for their preferred answers. Ask them why they think people are poor.
- Explain they can vote for three different reasons, putting one counter in each of three pots, or two and one, or put all three counters in one pot.
- Read each label out and clarify what it means. This allows pupils time to consider how they want to vote.
- When they have each decided pupils should vote, putting their counters into the pots at the same time, to minimise influencing each other.
- Pupils count the counters in each pot and recorded the numbers.
- Keep a record of the scores and any explanations or comments.
- The most popular responses are identified and comments noted, eg *What do we mean by not fair?* If there are votes for *None of these* ask what alternative answers could have been available.
- Explore how pupils' responses compare to those from the adult national survey, and think about why there are similarities or differences.



How do I analyse the results?

- Collate the results: add up the scores from the whole class and work out the percentage of votes for each reason. Does a pattern emerge?
- Consider the explanations and comments. Is there a prevailing view?
- Do words and phrases currently used in the media appear? (eg skivers, scroungers).
- Is it assumed that poverty only exists in the Majority World? Or is poverty in the UK and Europe viewed differently from poverty in Africa for example.
- Are there deserving and undeserving poor?

During the teaching that follows, discuss with pupils the appropriate responses to poverty – is it the responsibility of governments, faith groups or charities to take action against poverty? Do we as individuals or school communities have a role in causing or contributing to poverty, through low wages or climate change?

How do I measure the change?

- When you repeat the activity, at least a year later, pupils can compare the two sets of responses, look for change and think about what brought about that change.
- Look for an increasing awareness of what we can do to make a difference in preventing and responding to poverty, eg through food banks, Fairtrade, reducing carbon emissions, lobbying and campaigning.
- Look for evidence of a decrease in the belief that poverty is inevitable, or the fault of the individual, or responses that they don't know why people are poor.