

ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

FACTSHEET - EXPLAINER

Name	Professor Sir Michael Marmot
Details, area of experience	Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London (UCL), Director of The UCL Institute of Health Equity and Chair of the World Health Organisation commission on social determinants of health.
Interview date	December 2020
Issues addressed	Economic and social inequalities. Poverty and deprivation. Equity of health and well-being. Effects of bad government policies and austerity. Income and capabilities of participating in society. Impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on social inequalities. Early years, education, and life expectancy. Concept of socio-economic deprivation instead of class.
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input type="checkbox"/> age <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> race <input type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Key words	Broad societal inequalities Income and Capability Poverty and Deprivation Health and well-being Bad government policies Covid-19 pandemic Early years, education, deprivation and Sure Start Socio-economic position, and social gradient

Brief summary (key points)

Michael Marmot wants us to understand that we need to see beyond economic inequality to include **broader social inequalities**.

There are **six areas** underpinning social inequalities in Britain identified in his report '*Fair society, Healthy Life*' published in 2010: early childhood years, education/life-long learning, employment/working conditions, minimum income for a healthy living, sustainable places to live and work and prevention by looking at social determinants.

It is not so much about economic inequality in itself, but about **poverty**: not having enough to live a healthy life. Someone might be earning an income, but not able to participate in society with no shame. It is about what you are capable of doing with your income for example buying presents for your grand-children. This is also part of a dignified healthy living.

Based on Marmot's report in 2010, early childhood development was highly correlated to deprivation and poverty. The more deprived a family was, the more negative impact it would have on the children development up to the age of 5. Parents shouldn't be blamed if they can't afford to buy a bed or even a book.

What is needed is a reduction in childhood poverty and setting up facilities/programmes like Sure Start to support parents. Even if it is not over by the age of 5, the life-long repercussions of adverse childhood experiences are well-reported within schools, jobs, income level and health.

Government needs to have health and well-being at the heart of every single policy. Two prominent examples of bad government policies implemented in 2010 without health and well-being placed at the centre of them led to disastrous outcomes for the poor. The reforms to the **tax and benefit system** led to a 14% reduction in income for those already struggling to make ends meet and the **cuts to the most deprived local governments** have meant that the greater the need, the less money was provided. This is clearly two policies that has resulted in the worsening of living standards for the poorest in society.

It is important to use evidence and data provided by independent organisations such as the Institute of Fiscal Studies to back-up your research/claims, to have voluntary and community organisations helping to do something about the needs of the poorest in society and to have government implement policies that do not make things worse.

There are **three reasons** why government policies are making societal inequalities worse: ideology with language used such as the 'underserving poor' and 'the toxic nature of the State'; vested

	<p>interests with the ultra-rich contributing to politicians' campaigns and incompetence.</p> <p>The Covid-19 pandemic has made the rich richer and the poor poorer because those working in poorly-paid jobs in the first place had their sector of the economy shut and since the furlough scheme covered only 80% of one's salary, it has meant that those people's salaries have gone below the poverty line. By contrast, those with a higher income were able to work from home meaning that their money hasn't been spent, leading to them becoming richer. The social inequalities already entrenched in Britain have been amplified and we can't afford to go back to normal.</p> <p>As a researcher, Michael Marmot has stopped using the term 'social class', because it implies a 'them and us' ideological binary narrative. It isn't helpful as many people would consider themselves as 'a bit working-class' too. Even if, he acknowledges that language such as the 'undeserving poor' does come from a class-based analysis.</p> <p>He would rather use the term 'socio-economic position' that includes deprivation and structural racism. It also takes into consideration the presence of a social gradient rather than two distinguished separate groups.</p>
Stand-out quotations	<p>"Having half of care workers not earning a living wage, when others are earning 200 times that I think most people would think that's wrong."</p> <p>"I think that we need to think about not just inequalities of income and wealth - important as they are - but inequalities of social conditions more generally."</p> <p>"It is not so much about how much you have, but what you can do with what you have and so that relative income, if everybody else has got much more than you have then participating in society - if your kids want the latest strip for their favourite football club and every other kid on the street has it, but your kids don't - not that is not the same as starvation, but it is part of participating in society without shame."</p> <p>"Government has to put equity of health and well-being at the heart of all government policy."</p> <p>"Documenting the evidence is vitally important. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) I quote what they do all the time. I said to the Head of the IFS once when Labour was in government, I said you seem to be critical of Labour's economic policy and they said we are independent not political analysts of what is going on and then</p>

	<p>during the conservative-led coalition government they were critical of them too.”</p> <p>“Ideally we need government policy that is not making the problems worse.”</p> <p>“I am not a priest, I am not good at what is morally right and morally wrong, it just doesn’t sit well. It sits very badly, and I think that needs to be address whether it is morally wrong to have billionaires I am not clever enough to answer that question.”</p> <p>“When I talk about minimum income for healthy living, I said Professor Jerry Morris who did these calculations included for an older person enough money to buy presents for their grand-children. That’s a minimum, that’s part of the minimum income for healthy living. If you can’t afford to buy presents for your grand-children, how can you live a life of dignity? And if you can’t live a life of dignity, how can you have a healthy life.”</p> <p>“Recognise that we don’t get change by individuals acting alone.”</p> <p>“Get together with like-minded people in their communities and be part of a movement for social and economic and ethnic/racial justice and that’s how we make change.”</p>
Main themes for learners	<p>What happens when government do not have health and well-being at the centre of all policies? (Michael gives two examples of policies that made the poor and most deprived areas in the UK even poorer).</p> <p>What are the three reasons why government implements bad policies? (Michael provides a detailed summary of three reasons why he thinks government has a proficiency in implementing bad policies).</p> <p>What has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on health and economic inequalities? (Michael explains how the Covid-19 pandemic has amplified health and economic inequalities already present before the pandemic).</p> <p>What are the six areas that needs to be address for broader societal justice? (Michael stresses that it is not only about economic inequality as such and that there are other areas that need to be addressed in order to have a much healthier society).</p> <p>What are the consequences of deprivation on early childhood development up to age 5? (Michael talks about good childhood fostering and how adverse childhood development occurs due to poverty and deprivation).</p>

	<p>In what ways using the term social class' is limited? (Michael gave the reason why he and his colleagues have stopped using the term 'social class' and why they would rather use the terms 'socio-economic position' and 'social gradient').</p>
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