

# Is it really the case that those who do not have do not...

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Occasionally an article just makes me sad for the state of humankind. [This one in the Guardian did this morning](#):

*Labour party supporters increasingly believe that welfare recipients are undeserving and that the welfare state encourages dependence, with a noticeable share saying that poverty is caused by a personal failing rather than a problem with society, a landmark study reveals.*

*A report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation examined the links between public attitudes to poverty, welfare and the state of the economy using data collected as part of the British Social Attitudes survey.*

As they note:

*It found that the traditional view that the poor were seen sympathetically during recessions has disappeared, with support for welfare "largely confined (to) recipients of unemployment benefits". The report says there is a "general trend" where the public accepts that individual characteristics rather than societal issues cause poverty.*

I agree with Julia Unwin, Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation who said:

*The stark findings of this report highlight the increasingly tough stance people are taking against people in poverty. We appear to be tough on those experiencing poverty, but not tough on its causes.*

That is what is happening. A diet of abuse of the poor, and of praise for the rewards of materialism has diminished us as people, undermined our empathy, destroyed our compassion and left us not caring for our neighbours.

We don't ask why there are no jobs. We blame those who do not have them.

We don't even seem to care about those who really cannot work. That apparently is their own fault.

I could say that this is the result of the decline of faith in our society. But I'm not even sure it is that. The logic of these attitudes has been embraced by some of faith, at least in the US but no doubt it's creeping here too. Prosperity is seen as a reward for virtuousness and poverty as the wages of sin, to use language not all will feel comfortable with.

And that's just wrong. Poverty exists because we permit it. Because we tolerate it. Because we ignore it. Because we pretend it could never happen to us or anyone we know. Because we'd rather watch the television. Because we want whatever next is advertised. Because we're told having is what matters and those that do not have do not matter as a result.

And yes, that makes me sad.

And angry.

And the fact that [IPPR said yesterday that Labour could no longer tackle child poverty](#), and in effect suggested it throw in the towel on redistribution just makes me angrier still.

If Labour gives up such issues, what is it for? I'm not sure I know.