

## What are the five evils in modern society?

<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2021/06/28/what-are-the-five-evils-in-modern-society/>

Published: January 12, 2026, 8:21 pm

---

During World War Two the Beveridge Review identified what it described as the five evils that threatened the social security of the UK. They were:

- \* Want (caused by poverty)
- \* Ignorance (caused by a lack of education)
- \* Squalor (caused by poor housing)
- \* Idleness (caused by a lack of jobs, or the ability to gain employment)
- \* Disease (caused by inadequate health care provision)

There is no doubt that many in the UK are vastly materially better off now than they were when Beveridge wrote. Despite that it is easy to identify issues around all these themes that remain of concern. But would they be my five evils now? I am not sure. The Hancock affair has made me think about this.

It's my belief that the greater evil now is that there is widespread political belief that these issues are no longer important. That seems to me to be a greater threat to tackling them in their modern incarnations than the issues themselves.

What then are the modern evils that threaten social well-being in the UK, it's constituent nations and, of course, elsewhere? I tentatively (because I think this list by no means definitive) suggest the following:

- \* Populist politics, for undermining the principle of truth in politics, and so threatening political narratives of progress;
- \* Press barons who control the political agenda and the messaging many people receive in ways that distort political truth;
- \* Police not willing to hold politicians to account for their breaches of the law, making them believe any abuse acceptable, so undermining democracy;

- \* Political patronage that seeks to control and limit those from amongst whom the appointments to positions of influence in public offices are made, so undermining any vestige of impartiality in their operation;
- \* Public underfunding fed by a narrative of austerity that seeks to deny opportunity.

I am interested in other's opinions on this issue. And suggestions do not need to start with P: that happened by chance.