

The cost-of-living crisis is real. The problem is the b...

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This [comment was posted on the blog](#) this morning in response to my post from yesterday afternoon on [questions that Andy Burnham should be asked](#) about the cost of living crisis:

The cost of living crises (sic) is a bit of a myth. Granted, a lot of people are struggling, but a lot are not. For example, shortly the football season starts and the stadiums will be full, as will the pubs around them. Go to an airport, and people are happy to buy fast food and alcohol at exorbitant prices. So I hardly call this a crisis!

I began writing a response, realised I was going over 300 words, and decided to make it a blog post instead:

I think you seriously misunderstand what a cost-of-living crisis means.

It does not mean that everyone is poor, that nobody can afford a pint, or that football stadiums and airports have to be empty. Britain remains a wealthy country. The issue creating the crisis is that wealth and the incomes arising from it are very unevenly distributed.

The reality is that millions of people are struggling to meet the cost of essentials from their incomes. Housing, energy, food, transport and other unavoidable costs have risen significantly, while many incomes have failed to keep pace. Those people do not cease to exist just because someone else can afford a season ticket or a holiday; they are simply less visible. You are choosing not to notice them. That, in itself, is part of the crisis of discrimination that the differential in our ability to manage the cost of living creates.

There is another problem with your argument. People do not necessarily stop all discretionary spending when their finances are under pressure. They cut elsewhere, use savings, take on debt, postpone major purchases or accept that they are saving less. A

pint at a football match tells us almost nothing about the financial resilience of the person buying it. The evidence is that resilience is declining. It always does before the system breaks.

Most importantly, averages and anecdotes conceal distribution issues. A country can simultaneously contain millions of people taking foreign holidays and millions struggling to pay their electricity bills. There is no contradiction in that, but there is a crisis.

So I do not think the cost-of-living crisis is a myth, as you imply. I think your examples demonstrate something quite different: we have a problem of inequality. Some people have been relatively insulated from the crisis. Others have borne an enormous share of its cost. That distinction is fundamental. It is the actual crisis that we face. That you are glibly ignoring it, presenting an argument in the process that it does not exist, is itself a problem. The conceit implicit in your chosen blindness to the issue results in a denial that makes this issue all the harder to deal with, but it exists nonetheless.

My question to you in that case is genuine. Why not do some reading, researching or even active investigation into the state of well-being of many (around 14 million) of your fellow people in the UK before presuming that because you cannot see them they do not exist or have a problem, when it is their absence from the football match, the pub, and its crowd that is the sign that the problem is real?

Look for and through the gaps, in other words. That is where the issue is. That gap is what the right-wing media ignore. Looking at the superficial is their approach. Why emulate them instead of seeking the truth, matched by a desire to address the issue? That is what the politics of care is about. It should speak for those made invisible by a world that only sees consumption, which a great many people are denied the chance to share.