ENERGY POVERTY

A unique deprivation*Energy Policy* **130**, 206–217 (2019)

Energy poverty is often defined as the inability to purchase sufficient energy for necessary amenities such as heating, cooling or refrigeration. As well-being indicators are being studied in more detail — with general indicators such as income being broken down into access to healthcare, employment, education and so on — the relationship between energy poverty and other kinds of deprivation must also be examined. Looking at the UK, Robert Marchand and colleagues at the University of Sheffield now demonstrate that energy poverty is indeed a distinct symptom of poverty and that tailored policies are needed to eliminate it.

The researchers used UK government fuel poverty data at the level of the ‘lower super output area’ (roughly 650 households) to extract the number of fuel-poor houses and regressed it to variables from the Index of Multiple Deprivations, which includes measures of income, employment, health, education, housing and living environment deprivation, and exposure to crime. They found that, overall, there is no statistically significant relationship between energy poverty and multi-indicator deprivation at the national level. However, they observed that the nature of the relationship varied significantly across the country, so they classified various local authorities on the basis of the strength and nature of the correlation. Altogether, they conclude that energy poverty, while weakly correlated with other deprivations in certain locations, is still a distinct type of poverty that needs concentrated research and policy development.

Fouad Khan

Published online: 15 May 2019

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-019-0395-1>