

# END FURNITURE POVERTY



## Executive Summary

# The Extent of Furniture Poverty 2026

A Public Health Crisis

Abby Preston (lead author), Daniel Peake,  
Angeline Rochford-Briggs, Claire Donovan  
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“This important report by End Furniture Poverty opens the front door on the lives of discomfort being lived in millions of British homes. The compounded effect of the austerity years means, even when there is food, there may be no table or a chair to eat it from.” **Gordon Brown**

## KEY FINDINGS

- Millions of people are still living without the essential furniture and appliances. When we compare the findings over time, **there is no clear evidence of a change in the overall levels of furniture poverty**. This suggests that furniture poverty is a consistent challenge for many people living in the UK.
- Deep furniture poverty, or the absence of three or more items, continues to persist. It has also not decreased.
- In 2022, we found that 7.85 million essential items were missing from British homes, and in 2025, we found no evidence that this has changed significantly, with 8.1 million essential items missing.
- **Furniture poverty is a public health crisis**. Living without the essential items of furniture causes vast harm to people’s physical and mental health.
- Of those in furniture poverty, **27% report severe impacts on their physical health** and **32% report severe impacts on their mental health**.
- Social renters are far more likely to report that furniture poverty has an extremely or very negative impact on their health than other tenure types:
  - Of those in furniture poverty, **51% of social renters** reported extremely or very negative impacts on their physical health compared to **21% of homeowners** and **17% of private renters**.
  - We see similar proportions with mental health. **62% of social renters** report a very negative or an extremely negative impact of furniture poverty, **versus 23% of homeowners** and **21% of private renters**.
- There are certain groups more at risk of furniture poverty than others:
  - **Social renters are four times more likely** to be in furniture poverty than homeowners, and **private renters are three times more likely** than homeowners.
  - People living on **£1,000 per month or less** are almost **four times more likely** to be in furniture poverty than those on **more than £2500** a month. Those on **£1,001–£1,500 per month** are **around twice as likely**.
  - People from **ethnic minority backgrounds** have approximately double the odds of being in furniture poverty than those of a White British background.
  - People with a **disability that affects their day-to-day** life are almost **twice as likely** to experience furniture poverty.
- Many households are teetering on the edge of furniture poverty. **Almost a quarter of households** could not afford to replace broken furniture and **almost 1 in 5** could not afford to replace broken electrical goods.

**Our survey tells us a simple story: furniture poverty isn't going away. Without stronger action, it never will.**

### **Furniture Poverty**

Furniture poverty is the inability to afford or access the basic furniture, appliances and furnishings that provide a household with a socially acceptable standard of living. People in poverty often address more urgent needs first such as food, energy, and shelter before a lack of furniture. Nevertheless, essential furniture and appliances are vital to lead a safe and secure life.

### **Our previous Extent of Furniture Poverty report**

Our Extent of Furniture Poverty report from 2022 helped us to understand how many people were living without the essential items of furniture for the first time. End Furniture Poverty commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) to carry out the survey, which found that 9% of both adults (4.8m) and children (1.2m) are in furniture poverty, with 7.85 million items missing nationwide.

This data also highlighted which socioeconomic groups were worse affected for the first time; social renters, ethnic minorities, and single adults with children being the most likely to experience furniture poverty. The 2022 report has been the bedrock of campaigning for End Furniture Poverty since its release.

### **The Scale of Furniture Poverty**

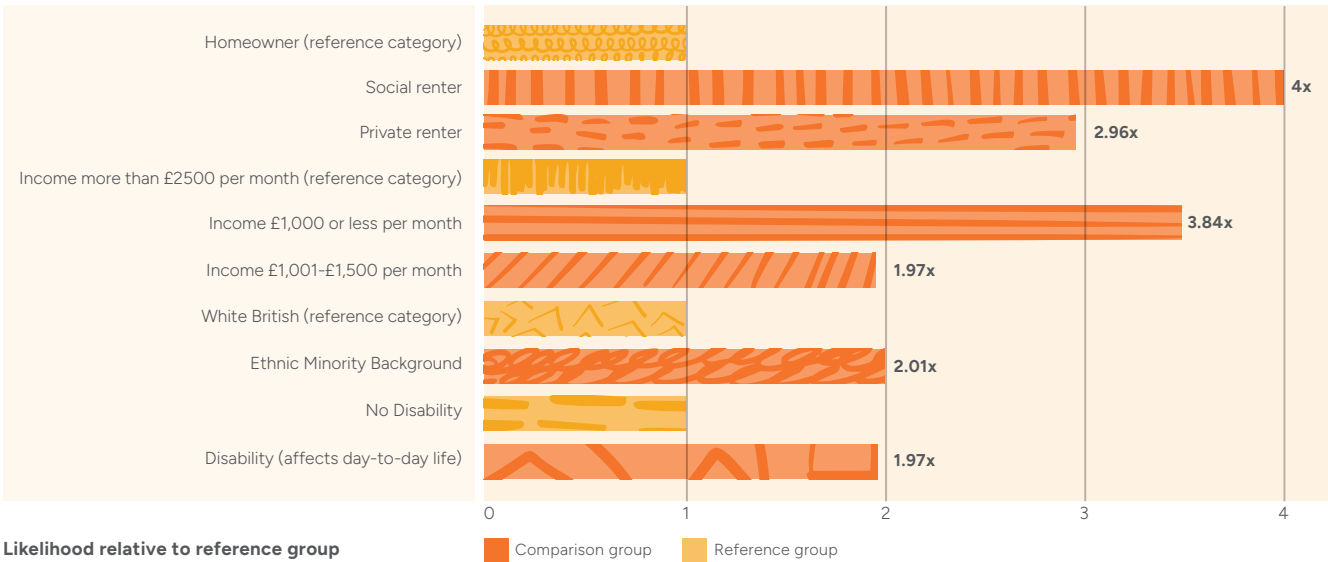
**“You just sit there and you're staring at the wall, and you think, how did I get here?”**

Furniture poverty remains a widespread issue across the UK. Drawing on nationally representative survey data from the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), this report finds no clear evidence of change in the overall levels of furniture poverty between 2022 and 2025. This shows that for many, furniture poverty is a fact of life, and its severity has persisted since 2022. The depth of furniture poverty in the UK also remains.

When we compare the findings of the number of people in deep furniture poverty, or people missing three or more essential items of furniture, over time, there is no evidence of any substantive change in overall levels. As in 2022, there are one million people living in deep furniture poverty, with many in 'furniture destitution'. Similarly, there has not been a statistically significant decrease in the number of items missing from British homes – with the current figure standing at 8.1 million items. This demonstrates the persistence and scale of the crisis.



## Who Is at Risk of Furniture Poverty?



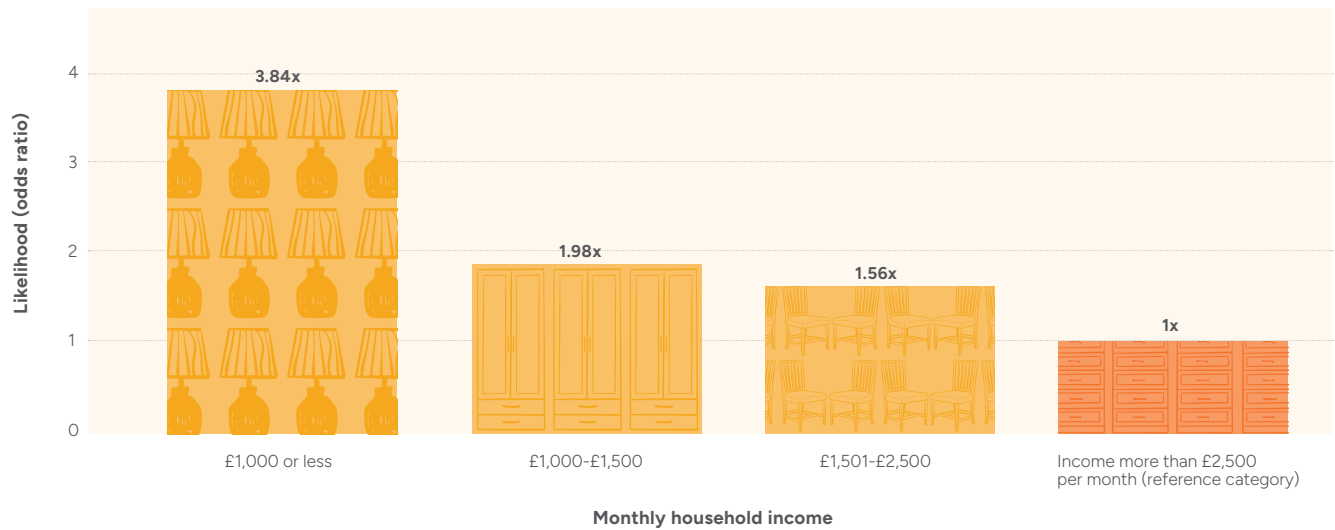
Furniture poverty is not a short term or temporary hardship. It reflects **structural drivers** including low income, insecure housing, disability, and systemic inequalities for ethnic minority households. **Renters-especially social renters-people on the lowest incomes, disabled people, and ethnic minority households** remain the groups most at risk. This year's new analysis confirms these factors independently increase the likelihood of furniture poverty even after controlling for housing tenure, income, age, ethnic group, disability status, economic activity, relationship status, and whether someone lives in an urban or rural area.

We have found that social renters face the highest risk, they are four times more likely to experience furniture poverty compared with homeowners. Linda is a social housing tenant who lives without flooring: "I know myself and downstairs, they haven't got a carpet either. A lot of the lads next door, they've had to buy it themselves. I mean, I don't know how they've afforded it. You can't afford to especially on benefits. To carpet a house on benefits is too much. Each week you'd have to be able to pay but none of us can get credit. So, we're stuck there as well."

Private renters also face a significantly elevated risk, being almost three times more likely than homeowners. We heard from Greg, a private renter who was living with broken furniture: "I was afraid to mention it to my landlord in case I was evicted, I know I would struggle to get another property at a similar price". This demonstrates the structural disadvantage of renting compared to owning your own home.



## Lower-income Households are Far More Likely to Experience Furniture Poverty



Unsurprisingly, income is one of the strongest determinants of furniture poverty. Having a higher income consistently and strongly reduces the risk. People living on **£1,000 per month or less** are **almost four times more likely** to experience furniture poverty than those on more than £2500 per month. Those on **£1,001-£1,500 per month are around twice as likely**.

Ethnicity and disability status also influences someone’s risk of furniture poverty. People from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with a disability that affects everyday life are both twice as likely to experience furniture poverty than White British people and those without disabilities respectively.

### The Consequences of Furniture Poverty

“I’m a diabetic on insulin and I can’t keep my injections cold, so I am getting ill...also I’m sleeping on the floor, I’ve got no bed”

For the first time, the report includes a robust assessment of the **physical and mental health consequences** of furniture poverty. The findings are stark:

- **27.5%** of people in furniture poverty report a **very or extremely negative impact on their physical health**.
- **32.3%** report a **very or extremely negative impact on mental health**.

### Physical and Mental Health Impacts of Furniture Poverty by Number of Items Missing



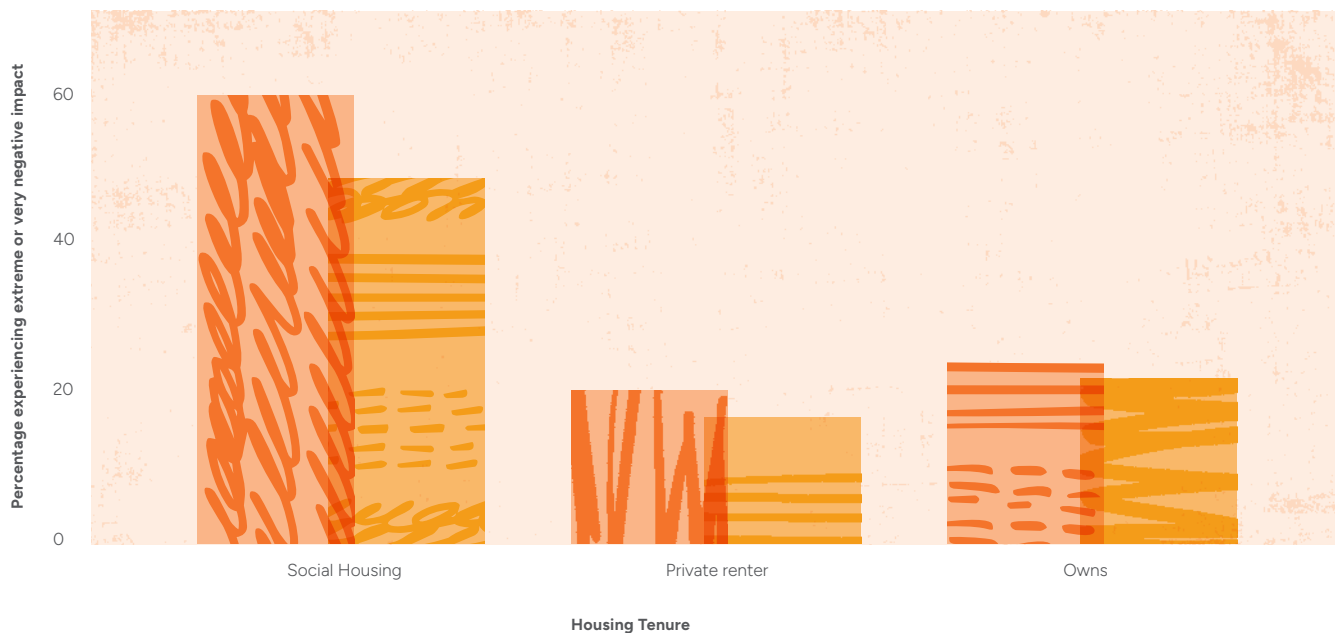
Among those in deep furniture poverty, the severity intensifies dramatically: **72.2% of those missing three or items** report an extremely or very negative impact on their mental health, compared to **59.7% living without two items** and **9.3% living without one item**. We see similar results with physical health, **55.8% of those in deep furniture poverty** experienced an extreme or very negative impact on their physical health, compared to **43.3% living without two items** and **11.7% living without one item**.

“We were embarrassed of where we lived and that isolated us from friends and family - we didn’t dare invite people over as we didn’t even have chairs for others to sit, the chairs we had for us I had borrowed from the local pub”.

The evidence from our interviews and focus groups paints a visceral picture of day to day life without the essential items needed to live safely and with dignity. Families are forced to sleep on floors, children must do homework without a table, people with disabilities cannot store medication safely without a fridge. Many face chronic pain, social isolation, shame, and heightened financial pressures. We asked David whether living without essential white goods makes his day-to-day living expenses higher: “It does yeah. Because I can’t eat that much. I can’t cook, can’t do anything like that. I can’t properly store the food. You know, you’ve got to eat out, if you can afford it that is, or you’ve got to buy cheap food that’s already cooked”.

It can also have negative health effects for children. We heard from most of the participants of our focus group how furniture poverty affects the whole family. Fern, a participant in our focus group, told us how “it affects children too. They can be bullied at school if they don’t have the right furniture”. Another participant told us: “My child was comparing [the flat] to other peoples’ houses, saying they have things, but I have nowhere to sleep and play”.

### Physical and Mental Health Impacts of Furniture Poverty by Tenure Type



As expected, social renters are vastly overrepresented in reporting extreme or very negative health effects of furniture poverty compared to other tenure types. This was seen in **just over half of social renters in furniture poverty (51%)** compared to **homeowners (21%)** and **private renters (17%)**. We see similar proportions with mental health. Of those in furniture poverty, **62% of social renters report a very or an extremely negative impact, versus 23% of homeowners and 21% of private renters**.

Furniture poverty is a **public health crisis**, with direct consequences for physical wellbeing, mental health, child development, and healthcare demand.

## Furniture Insecurity

“I was wondering if I can receive any assistance on getting a fridge freezer, mine broke three weeks ago and I’m unsure when I will be able to get one. I am currently living on pasta and very basic meals as I have nowhere to store food”.

The Government’s Child Poverty Strategy uses “deep material poverty” as a key metric, defining it as children lacking at least four out of 13 essentials (like fresh food and damp-free homes). One of the 13 essentials is the ability to replace appliances such as a washing machine, fridge, or cooker if they were to break. The Government have acknowledged that this measure of material deprivation can reflect a broader range of financial pressures that income-based statistics alone do not fully capture – and we believe this should be expanded to adults as well as children.

Alongside those already living without essential items, millions more are on the brink. New analysis of Understanding Society finds that almost a quarter (**22.2%**) of households cannot afford to replace broken furniture, and almost a fifth (**18.3%**) cannot afford to replace broken electrical appliances— a state we define as **furniture insecurity**. These households remain one crisis or breakdown away from falling into full furniture poverty.

## What Can We Do About Furniture Poverty?

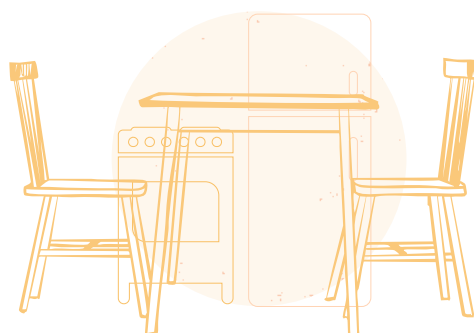
Despite some positive policy developments—including the abolition of the two child limit, a real terms rise to Universal Credit, and the introduction of the Crisis and Resilience Fund—support for essential furniture and appliances remains inconsistent and inadequate. **Local Welfare Assistance continues to contract**, the Household Support Fund has historically offered very little support for furniture, and the new Decent Homes Standard has excluded flooring provision, despite overwhelming evidence of its importance for safety, health, and wellbeing.

Yet there are clear solutions. The report sets out a pathway for national and local actors to reduce—and ultimately eradicate—furniture poverty. This includes strengthening crisis support, ensuring every local authority has a functioning LWA scheme, expanding furnished tenancy provision to **at least 10% of social housing stock**, and embedding high quality reuse within a blended model of support. A cost benefit analysis commissioned by EFP demonstrates that investment in furniture provision delivers significant public savings, reduces homelessness pressures, and supports better health outcomes.

There is a real opportunity with the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) to make furniture and appliance provision front and centre of crisis support. However, a great deal of work needs to be done to make this happen. Only 1% of the 2024/25 Household Support Fund (HSF) was spent on furniture and appliances, with 37% of local authorities reporting that they did not provide furniture and appliances through the HSF when responding to our FOI requests. The CRF needs an explicit focus on the essential items of furniture when it replaces the HSF in April 2026 and this should be monitored by the DWP - those who do not include furniture provision should, if necessary, be required to do so

Furniture poverty is solvable. It requires commitment, coordinated action, and recognition that **essential furniture and appliances are not luxuries but foundational to a decent standard of living**. As the stories in this report show, providing people with the basic items they need transforms lives—restoring stability, dignity, hope, and the chance to build a secure future.

**Together we can  
End Furniture Poverty.**



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