

貧窮

脫貧現已成為備受國際關注的問題，可是迄今國際間對衡量貧窮的準則仍未達成共識。

從純粹經濟角度而言，**收入貧窮**是指一個家庭的收入未能達到當地制訂的最低標準，而這個最低標準亦因應不同國家而有異。基本上，最低收入標準是按家庭而非個人釐定，並根據每個家庭的成員人數加以調整。經濟學者一般都採用經濟狀況（定義是**資源控制權**）低於可接受水平的家庭作為指標¹。同樣地，**極端貧窮**的國際標準是每日收入少於一美元。

很多時，貧窮的定義分為相對和絕對。**絕對貧窮**是按個人擁有多少金錢以滿足其基本需要，如食物、衣服、居所等，作為量度標準。絕對貧窮的概念並不涵蓋較廣泛的**生活質素**問題，或是社會整體的不平等狀況。因此，這個概念並沒有考慮到個人可有重大的社會及文化需要。由於這方面的不足以及來自其他方面的批評，遂催生了**相對貧窮**的概念。相對貧窮是指相對於社會上其他人的經濟狀況而言的貧窮：即當一些人的生活水平低於所屬社會的主流生活水平時，就是貧窮。一般對以上兩個概念的最大批評，就是兩者均主要針對收入和消費。

鑑於以上對貧窮的狹隘定義，社會排斥的概念遂應運而生。這個概念將多方面的困苦指數包含在對貧窮的概念理解之中。為進一步闡述相對貧窮或相對剝奪這個概念的定義，必須同時考慮三個因素：**收入因素**，當一個人的收入低於國家的貧窮線時，他/她就是貧窮了（貧窮線的定義是一個人所擁有的收入僅足以換取一定數量的食物）；**基本需要因素**，其覆蓋範圍較收入因素為廣，包括需要社區提供所需的基本社會服務，以免這些人陷入貧窮中；最後是**能力（或賦權）因素**，意指貧窮代表著缺乏某些發揮基本功能的能力²。

另一方面，社會科學學者對貧窮的理解，與經濟學者的觀點大相逕庭。經濟學者認為貧窮是個人的自由選擇，即個人控制自己的命運，故此應為自己的窮困負責。社會學者則對如何量度貧窮並不感興趣，一般主力研究貧窮的原因，例如文化、權力、社會結構以及其他主要非個人可以控制的因素。有鑑於此，有關方面必須充分理解貧窮的多維本質，特別是諸如**住宿貧窮**、**健康貧窮**、或是**時間貧窮**等社會因素，始能設計出較有效的扶貧方案。有關貧窮的社會學理論和假設，基本理念是個人均被身處的自然及文化環境所影響，這點對性別和家庭結都十分重要。

今天，一般認為人們不應只從經濟角度考量貧窮，因為貧窮同時也是社會、政治和文化問題。此外，一般也認為貧窮可削弱人權 – 經濟（工作和賺取足夠收入的權利），社會（享有醫療和教育的權利），政治（思想、表達和結社的自由）以及文化（維持自己的

文化身份和參與社區文化活動的自由)³。於 2000 年九月由全球領袖在聯合國千禧年高峰會所訂立的聯合國千禧年發展目標，旨在減少貧窮、致貧原因以及貧窮現象。為達成徹底消除極度貧窮和饑餓的目標，聯合國開發計劃署（UNDP）努力尋求於 1990 至 2015 年間將每日收入少於一美元的人民所佔比例減半。

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/poverty/>

Poverty

Reducing **poverty** has become an international concern, yet there is no international consensus on guidelines for measuring poverty.

In pure economic terms, **income poverty** is when a family's income fails to meet a federally established threshold that differs across countries. Typically it is measured with respect to families and not the individual, and is adjusted for the number of persons in a family. Economists often seek to identify the families whose economic position (defined as **command over resources**) falls below some minimally acceptance level.¹ Similarly, the international standard of **extreme poverty** is set to the possession of less than 1\$ a day.

Frequently, poverty is defined in either relative or absolute terms. **Absolute poverty** measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. The concept of absolute poverty is not concerned with broader **quality of life** issues or with the overall level of inequality in society. The concept therefore fails to recognise that individuals have important social and cultural needs. This, and similar criticisms, led to the development of the concept of **relative poverty**. Relative poverty defines poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society: people are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given societal context. An important criticism of both concepts is that they are largely concerned with income and consumption.

The concept of social exclusion emerged largely in reaction to this type of narrow definition of poverty. It has contributed significantly towards including multi-faceted indicators of ill-being into the conceptual understanding of poverty. To further develop the definition of the concept of relative poverty or relative deprivation, three perspectives are relevant; the **income perspective** indicates that a person is poor only if his or her income is below the country's poverty line (defined in terms of having income sufficient for a specified amount of food); the **basic needs perspective** goes beyond the income perspective to include the need for the provision by a community of the basic social services necessary to prevent individuals from falling into poverty; and finally, the **capability (or empowerment) perspective** suggests that poverty signify a lack of some basic capability to function.²

Social scientists' understanding of poverty, on the other hand, is critical of the economical idea of free choice models where individuals control their own destiny and

are thus the cause of their own poverty. Rather than being interested in its measurement, sociologists generally study the reasons for poverty, such as the roles of culture, power, social structure and other factors largely out of the control of the individual. Accordingly, the multidimensional nature of poverty, in particular social aspects such as **housing poor**, **health poor** or **time poor**, needs to be understood in order to create more effective programs for poverty alleviation. Hypotheses that typically play a role in sociological theories of poverty are based on the idea that individuals are influenced by the physical and cultural context in which they live, and it gives importance to gender and household structure.

Today it is widely held that one cannot consider only the economic part of poverty. Poverty is also social, political and cultural. Moreover, it is considered to undermine human rights - economic (the right to work and have an adequate income), social (access to health care and education), political (freedom of thought, expression and association) and cultural (the right to maintain one's cultural identity and be involved in a community's cultural life).³ The [Millennium Development Goals](#) - global targets that the world's leaders set at the [UN Millennium Summit](#) in September 2000 - are an agenda for reducing poverty, its causes and manifestations. As part of the goal of eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, [United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) seeks to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than 1 \$US a day.

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