

Standards of living have changed dramatically through the last century. My grandfather was born in 1919 in a house similar to this one (first slide) and lived there all through his childhood until he left home a young man and moved to Reykjavík along with one of his brothers. Those houses were quite common in Icelandic countryside at the time and were homes to people of little means, made out of mud, grass, stones and wood. They had no plumbing and through Iceland's rough winter the only water source was melted snow.

My grandfather passed away in 1999 and in those 80 years of his life living standards went from his birth conditions being acceptable to nothing less than all modern comforts. We have developed really quickly.

We are quite lucky in Iceland as we have good natural resources that make comfortable living conditions accessible to most homes. Our electric is cheaper than in other countries, we have clean natural water in our taps and as our hot water comes straight from the earth, heating is easy as well and not too costly.

My mother was a single parent in the seventies. There were no benefits available. Single mums had to work hard and I remember my mum always being at work. I would either go with her or stay with relatives as she worked evenings as well as daytimes.

Our organization, along with others, such as the feminist movement, fought to secure single parents, and people in general, help with the cost of living.

Single parents get higher benefits as they are doing the job of two, with the same household bills, but on a single wage. This lifts up our income but we are still a group that keeps coming up as one of the most vulnerable to falling below the poverty line.

The Icelandic benefit system is very complicated... (see the Brussel 2013 Interim report).