

UNIVERSALITY VS. MEANS TESTING

Some people believe that government programs such as public pensions, child care plans, and pharmacare should be “means-tested.” In other words, if an individual is above a certain income level, they will not be eligible for the government program.

Other people believe that such government programs should be fully universal. In other words, regardless of income everyone qualifies for the program.

Arguments for universality include:

- progressive income tax already acts as a means test
- there are administrative costs associated with implementing means tests
- shared experiences can lead to a stronger societal cohesion across classes

Arguments against universality include:

- programs for individual classes can build class solidarity
- there is higher cost when programs are universal
- the rich simply do not need extra benefits

What do you think? Should the wealthy be entitled to the same services and benefits as the poor? Some services but not others? No services whatsoever? Justify your position.