Official Statistics

Children in low income families: local area statistics FYE 2015 to FYE 2020

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1. Introduction

This bulletin contains official statistics on the number and proportion of children living in low income families. Before Housing Costs (BHC), across the United Kingdom by local authority, parliamentary constituency and region.

Coverage of the statistics in this release has been extended from Great Britain to United Kingdom due to improvements in Northern Ireland source data.

These statistics complement and should be viewed as a companion release to the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) series on children in low income families, which includes more detailed information on trends and a wider range of estimates. These local area statistics are published later, and thus match the latest average HBAI survey estimates at national and regional level for the United Kingdom.

2. Main stories

The headline statistics for this release are:

- in financial year ending (FYE) 2020, there were 3.99 million children (aged 0 to 15) living in families in Relative low income and 2.49 million children (aged 0 to 15) living in families in Absolute low income in the United Kingdom. 30% of children were aged under 16 lived in poverty
- in the United Kingdom, the proportion of children aged under 16 in low income families was unchanged from the previous year
- the proportion of children in low income families aged under 16 living in low income families varies greatly, ranging from 9% to 39% across local authorities for Relative low income and from 6% to 37% for Absolute low income
- the local authorities with the highest proportions of children living in low income families for both Relative (38%) and Absolute (37%) measures is City of London
- City of London had the lowest proportion of children aged under 16 in low income families for both Relative (9%) and Absolute (6%) measures, alongside all regions and countries across the United Kingdom had more children aged 0 to 15 in poverty low income families than not in working ones for both Relative and Absolute measures

3. What you need to know

The statistics in this bulletin relate to the number and proportion of children living in low income families, before housing costs (BHC), across the United Kingdom. The main measure of children and period has used to deliver the number of low income families.

The statistics complement and are calibrated to DWP's Households Below Average Income (HBAI) series, which includes more detailed information on trends and a wider range of income households at a national and regional level, by presenting local area statistics.

There is no national impact of COVID-19 upon the data used in this release. The Family Resources Survey (FRS) 2019 to 2020 (which HBAI estimates are based on) had a very pre-pandemic baseline of household incomes.

A minor methodological change has been made to capture all income from child maintenance payments in the Family Resources Survey (FRS) and Universal Credit data included, which in turn has slightly increased some household incomes and slightly reduced some other incomes. This has been applied to the HBAI series, and the local area statistics. The impact on the number of children in low income families has been previously published statistics may be slightly different to those published in this year's release.

DWP has a statutory obligation to publish measures of Absolute and Relative low income for children, based on the Government's Social Mobility Strategy, as set out in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and the Child Poverty Act 2010 and Income Dynamics publications. HBAI is only able to provide estimates of children in low income families at a United Kingdom level, therefore there is significant demand for local area measures from users such as local authorities.

Measures of the statistics

Statistics are calibrated to the 3-year average HBAI regional and work status aggregates, thus the national and region totals in these statistics match equivalent estimates in HBAI for the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom financial year ending (FYE) 2020 figure is derived from the HBAI 3-year average from between FYE 2018 and FYE 2020.

A family must have claimed Child Benefit and at least one other household benefit (Universal Credit, tax credits or Housing Benefit) at any point in the year to be classed as a low income family. Children who are not in families claiming benefits are not included in the reference year, whereas Absolute low income measures families in low income, based on what low income looked like in FYE 2010. Income is Before Housing Costs (BHC) and is equivalised to take into account the size and composition of the household. More information about the methodology used throughout this release.

The statistics relate to activity throughout the financial year. The count of children refers to the age of the child at 31 March of each year.

Figures in this bulletin are rounded in accordance with the DWP rounding policy for Stat Xplore. Because of rounding, some figures may not sum to the total shown. The accompanying tables may not sum exactly to the rounded totals accordingly. See the rounding policy for more information.

Calculation of rates

Proportions (also referred to as rates) are calculated by dividing the uncrushed number of children in low income families by the uncrushed mid-year population estimates for the population aged under 16 in that geographical area. Populations have been taken from mid-year population estimates which are an estimate of the usual resident population as at 30 June for each year. Mid-year population estimates for the latest year are not yet available at the time of release.

Figures on the proportion of children are presented for children aged under 16 due to difficulty in identifying child dependents aged 16 to 19 in the mid-year population estimates. Statistics on the proportion of children in low income families in local authorities, Parliamentary constituencies, and ward level can be found in supporting data tables.

Stat Xplore

The proportion of children in low income families and number of children in low income families, including those aged 16 to 19, can be found on DWP's Stat Xplore tabulation tool Stat Xplore. The statistics released on Stat Xplore can be broken down by local authority, ward, and lower super output area. Stat Xplore also includes Urban/Rural (including Urban/Rural sub-divisions), ward and lower super output area. Stat Xplore allows users to analyse the number (and proportion) of children in low income families within and across small areas from FYE 2015.

The background information and methodology gives more information on the construction of these statistics.

4. Proportion of children living in low income families

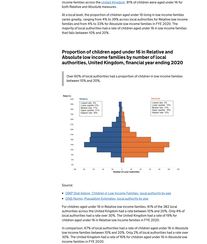
Figures in this section are presented for children aged under 16. Numbers for all children in low income families, including those aged 16 to 19, can be found on Stat Xplore.

In financial year ending (FYE) 2020, there were 3.99 million children (aged 0 to 15) in families in Relative low income and 2.49 million children (aged 0 to 15) in Absolute low income families across the United Kingdom. 30% of children were aged under 16 lived in poverty low income families.

In Relative low income, the proportion of children aged under 16 living in low income families varies greatly, ranging from 9% to 39% across local authorities for Relative low income and from 6% to 37% for Absolute low income. The local authorities with the highest proportions of children living in low income families for both Relative (38%) and Absolute (37%) measures is City of London.

City of London had the lowest proportion of children aged under 16 in low income families for both Relative (9%) and Absolute (6%) measures, alongside all regions and countries across the United Kingdom had more children aged 0 to 15 in poverty low income families than not in working ones for both Relative and Absolute measures.

Proportion of children aged under 16 in Relative and Absolute low income families by number of local authorities, United Kingdom, financial year ending 2020



Source:

- DWP Stat Xplore - Children in Low Income Families: local authority ward
- DWP Stat Xplore - Population Estimates: local authority by sex

Note: Figures on the estimated level are based on HBAI 3 year averages.

Proportion of children aged under 16 in Relative and Absolute low income families by local authority (quintiles), United Kingdom, financial year ending 2020

Source:

- DWP Stat Xplore - Children in Low Income Families: local authority ward
- DWP Stat Xplore - Population Estimates: local authority by sex

The proportion of children in low income families across local authorities can be seen in the map above. The local authorities with the highest proportions of children in low income families, approximately 20% of local authorities fit into each group, are in London, Birmingham and North Lanarkshire having been used for both Relative and Absolute low income measures.

In FYE 2020, areas with the highest and lowest rates were similar for Relative and Absolute low income measures.

The top quintile shows the group of local authorities which have the highest rates of children aged under 16 in low income families. Local authorities within the North West and West Midlands regions are within the top quintile.

In contrast, the bottom quintile shows the group of local authorities which have the lowest rates of children aged under 16 in low income families. Local authorities in the South East region are within the bottom quintile.

5. Areas with the highest and lowest proportions of children in low income families

Figures in this section are presented for children aged under 16. Numbers for all children in low income families, including those aged 16 to 19, can be found on Stat Xplore.

Highest proportions

In financial year ending (FYE) 2020, Middlesbrough was the local authority with the highest proportion of children aged under 16 in low income families for both Relative and Absolute measures at 39% and 33% respectively.

The 20 local authorities with the highest proportions of children aged under 16 in Relative low income families, United Kingdom, financial year ending 2020

The proportion of children in Relative low income families was highest in Middlesbrough (39%), increasing by 3 percentage points since FYE 2019.

Local Authority	Proportion of children (%)	Change on year (percentage point)
Middlesbrough	39.0	+3.0
Oldham	37.7	0.0
Rochdale	37.6	-0.7
Tendring	37.3	-0.6
Birmingham	36.9	+0.0
Blackburn with Darwen	36.5	0.0
Kingston upon Hull, City of	36.4	-0.6
Sandwell	36.3	+0.2
Manchester	35.8	-0.8
Hartlepool	35.1	-0.7
Burnley	35.1	-0.6
Bolton	35.1	+0.3
Kingston upon Hull, City of	35.0	-0.2
Walsall	34.8	+0.1
Wolverhampton	34.8	+0.2
Lewisham	34.4	+0.4
Wakefield-Leeds City	34.1	+0.1
Rochdale	33.8	-0.4
Hartlepool	33.8	+0.2
South Tyneside	33.8	+0.2

Source:

- DWP Stat Xplore - Children in Low Income Families (Relative): local authority by sex
- ONS Nomis - Population Estimates: local authority by sex

Oldham (37%) had the second highest proportion of children aged under 16 in Relative low income families in FYE 2020 after being the highest ranking local authority in the previous year (38%). Rochdale (37%) and Tendring (37%) were ranked in the next highest rate, increasing by 3 percentage points since the previous year.

Out of the top 20 local authorities with the highest proportions of children in Relative low income families, 8 are located in the North West.

The 20 local authorities with the highest proportions of children aged under 16 in Absolute low income families, United Kingdom, financial year ending 2020

The proportion of children in Absolute low income families was highest in Middlesbrough (33%), increasing by 4 percentage points since FYE 2019.

Local Authority	Proportion of children (%)	Change on year (percentage point)
Middlesbrough	33.0	+4.0
Blackburn with Darwen	32.0	+1.2
Oldham	31.8	+0.2
Tendring	31.1	-0.9
Birmingham	31.0	+0.1
Kingston upon Hull, City of	30.7	+0.3
Sandwell	30.2	+0.8
Burnley	29.7	-0.4
Manchester	27.6	-0.1
Middlesbrough	27.6	+0.1
Hartlepool	27.5	+0.4
Bolton	27.4	+0.1
Kingston upon Hull, City of	27.3	+0.6
Liverpool	26.8	+0.8
Walsall	26.8	+0.1
Wolverhampton	26.8	+0.7
Hartlepool	26.6	-0.6
South Tyneside	26.2	+0.1
Rochdale	26.0	-1.2

Source:

- DWP Stat Xplore - Children in Low Income Families (Absolute): local authority by sex
- ONS Nomis - Population Estimates: local authority by sex

Similar to Relative low income families, Blackburn (32%) and Oldham (32%) were within the top ranking local authorities with the highest proportions of children aged under 16 in Absolute low income families.

Out of the top 20 local authorities with the highest proportions, South Tyneside had the largest increase in the previous year with an increase of 6 percentage points to rate of 27% in FYE 2020.

Lowest proportions

In FYE 2020, City of London had the lowest proportion of children aged under 16 in low income families, with a rate of 9% for both Relative and Absolute measures.

The 20 local authorities with the lowest proportions of children aged under 16 in Relative low income families, United Kingdom, financial year ending 2020

The proportion of children in Relative low income families was lowest in City of London (9%), decreasing by 1 percentage point since FYE 2019.

Local Authority	Proportion of children (%)	Change on year (percentage point)
City of London	9.0	-0.7
Ceredigion	14.0	+0.0
Gwynedd and Anglesey	15.0	-0.1
Powys	15.0	-0.4
Richmond upon Thames	15.9	+0.7
Wokingham	15	-0.4
Isles of Scilly	15	-1.0
Wiltshire	15.2	-0.2
St Albans	15.3	-0.3
Hampshire and Fareham	15.3	-0.2
Wokingham	15.3	-0.2
East Hertfordshire	15.5	-0.5
Guildford	15.6	-0.1
Bracknell No. 1	15.7	-0.5
Bracknell No. 1	15.7	-0.5
Pfff Dorset	15.8	-0.2
Kensington and Chelsea	15.8	-0.1
Windsor and Maidenhead	15.8	-0.2
Vale of White Horse	15.9	-0.0
Chiltern	15.9	-0.1
Three Rivers	15.9	-0.1

Source:

- DWP Stat Xplore - Children in Low Income Families (Relative): local authority by sex
- ONS Nomis - Population Estimates: local authority by sex

As in the previous year, City of London (4%) and Ceredigion (5%) remained the two local authorities with the lowest proportion of children aged under 16 in Absolute low income families in FYE 2020.

Out of the top 20 local authorities with the lowest proportions, Isles of Scilly had the largest change per with a decrease of 1 percentage point to a rate of 8% in FYE 2020.

The 20 local authorities with the lowest proportions of children aged under 16 in Absolute low income families, United Kingdom, financial year ending 2020

The proportion of children in Absolute low income families was lowest in City of London (4%), decreasing by 1 percentage point since FYE 2019.

Local Authority	Proportion of children (%)	Change on year (percentage point)
City of London	3.7	-0.7
Ceredigion	4.9	-0.4
Gwynedd and Anglesey	5.1	-0.7
Richmond upon Thames	5.4	-0.3
Yeovil	5.8	-0.6
St Albans	6.1	-0.3
Kensington	6.1	-0.6
Kensington and Chelsea	6.2	-0.5
Wokingham	6.3	-0.2
East Hertfordshire	6.5	-0.4
Guildford	6.6	-0.4
Bracknell No. 1	6.6	-0.3
Three Rivers	6.6	-0.3
Vale of White Horse	6.6	-0.3
Bracknell No. 1	6.7	-0.3
Pfff Dorset	6.8	-0.3
Windsor and Maidenhead	6.8	-0.2
Pembs Mids	6.8	-0.2
Chiltern	7.1	-0.7

Source:

- DWP Stat Xplore - Children in Low Income Families (Absolute): local authority by sex
- ONS Nomis - Population Estimates: local authority by sex

Similar to Relative low income families, City of London had the lowest proportion of children aged under 16 in Absolute low income families, with a rate of 4% for both Relative and Absolute measures.

Although City of London had the lowest proportion of children for both Relative and Absolute measures, this may not be the most representative of children in low income families. City of London is not known for being a residential area, due to high commercial and business rates and residential property prices. The City of London Corporation's Department of Community and Children's Services has a statutory duty to promote the well-being of children and young people in the City of London.

6. Related releases

- DWP Stat Xplore - Children in Low Income Families (Absolute): local authority by sex
- DWP Stat Xplore - Children in Low Income Families (Relative): local authority by sex
- DWP Stat Xplore - Children in Low Income Families: local authority ward
- ONS Nomis - Population Estimates: local authority by sex

population of children aged under 16 across the United Kingdom.

> Figures on rates for children aged under 16 by local authority, Parliamentary constituency, and ward can be found as a timeseries going back to FYE 2015 via supporting data tables.

6. Family Type and Work Status

> The statistics in this section provide a count of the number of children aged 0 to 19 in low income families by family type and work status. They do not provide information on the proportion of children in low income by family type and work status. More information on these can be found in the HBAI release.

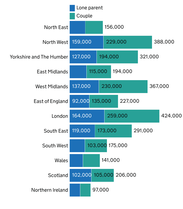
Family type

A lone parent family type means the parent or guardian has had no partnerships at any point in the financial year.

The number of children aged 0 to 19 in Relative low income families, region and country, family type, United Kingdom, financial year ending 2020

> There were more children in couple Relative low income families than lone parent ones across Great Britain.

Change to table and accessible view



Note: See Stat-Xplore for equivalent breakdowns of the statistics relating to Absolute low income.

Source: DWP Stat-Xplore, Children in Low Income Families (Relative), region by family type

> Totals may not sum due to rounding.

In financial year ending (FYE) 2020, there were more children aged 0 to 19 in Relative low income families with a couple family type across Great Britain. In Northern Ireland, there were slightly more children with a lone parent family type. However, this difference is marginal with almost half (49%) of the 97,000 children in Relative low income families in Northern Ireland being in couple families.

For the Absolute measure, all regions and countries across the United Kingdom had more children aged 0 to 19 in low income families with a couple family type in FYE 2020. The family type split was largest in the West Midlands with 64% of all children in Absolute low income families being in couple families, compared to 36% in lone parent families.

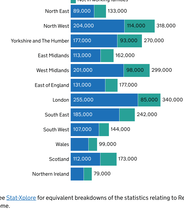
Work status

Work status reflects family employment activity throughout the financial year.

The number of children aged 0 to 19 in Absolute low income families, region and country, work status, United Kingdom, financial year ending 2020

> There were more children in working Absolute low income families than not in working ones across the United Kingdom.

Change to table and accessible view



Note: See Stat-Xplore for equivalent breakdowns of the statistics relating to Relative low income.

Source: DWP Stat-Xplore, Children in Low Income Families (Absolute), region by work status

> Totals may not sum due to rounding.

In FYE 2020, all regions and countries across the United Kingdom had more children aged 0 to 19 in working low income families, compared to not in working families, for both Relative and Absolute measures.

Over three quarters of all children in Absolute low income families in the South East were in working families. This was similar for the Relative measure where 78% of the 291,000 children aged 0 to 19 in low income families in the South East were in working families.

> More detailed statistics are available on Stat-Xplore which allows users to produce bespoke tabulations showing local area analyses by a range of breakdowns over time.

7. About these statistics

Figures for the latest financial year are provisional and subject to revision in subsequent releases. The statistics in this release are not directly comparable to the former DWP (children in out-of-work benefit households) or HMRC (children in low income families local measure) releases. Whilst they complement the statistics released in the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) publication, please note that they are produced from an entirely different data source with some differences in methodology, for example HBAI considers household incomes whereas these statistics cover family incomes (multiple families may live in the same household).

Definitions

Term	Definition
Children	Dependent individuals aged under 16; or aged 16 to 19 in full-time non-advanced education or in unwaged government training. Child age is derived as the duration from date of birth to 31 March in each year.
Family	A single adult, or a married or cohabitating couple; or a Civil Partnership; and any dependent children.
Equivalised income	Income is gross income Before Housing Costs (BHC) and includes contributions from earnings, state support and pensions. Equivalisation adjusts incomes for family size and composition: taking an adult couple with no children as the reference point.
Relative low income	A family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) in the reference year. A family must have claimed Child Benefit and at least one other household benefit (Universal Credit, tax credits or Housing Benefit) at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics.
Absolute low income	A family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) in the reference year in comparison with incomes in financial year ending (FYE) 2011. A family must have claimed Child Benefit and at least one other household benefit (Universal Credit, tax credits or Housing Benefit) at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics.
Work status	A family is defined as 'in work' if they have an accumulated period of at least 26 weeks paid employment or self-employment within the 52-week tax year. Employment activity is accumulated from either (or both) the adult claimant of Child Benefit and any partner(s) in the tax year.
Family type	Family type accounts for changes in family composition throughout the year (for example, re-partnering, multiple partners). A lone parent family type means the parent/guardian has had no partnerships at any point in the year.

Rounding policy

Numbers over 1 million are rounded to the nearest 10,000. Numbers less than 1 million are rounded to the nearest 1,000. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, with the exception of the tables and maps which are shown to 1 decimal place. Unrounded figures, with statistical disclosure control applied, can be obtained from Stat-Xplore. Perturbed figures from the underlying data available on Stat-Xplore or in accompanying tables may not sum exactly to the rounded totals accordingly.

Where to find out more

This statistical bulletin gives an overview of the important points and trends. More detailed breakdowns can be found via the supporting data tables or DWP's online tabulation tool Stat-Xplore.

The statistics within this release have been primarily sourced from the DWP RAPID (Registration and Population Interaction Database) longitudinal data set which provides a single coherent view of citizen interactions with DWP and HMRC within the tax year. The background information and methodology provides a fuller explanation on the purpose, coverage, construction, sources and limitations of the statistics.

Official statistics status

From this release, the experimental statistics label has been replaced by official statistics status. This means that our statistics meet the high standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value and comply with the UK Statistics Authority's code of practice for statistics. This decision by DWP's Head of Profession for Statistics reflects factors including user feedback, methodological robustness, coverage, and that the defined development phase for these statistics has ended.

Contact information and feedback

DWP would like to hear your views on these statistics. We would be interested in hearing what you use them for and how well they meet your requirements. Feedback and queries about the statistics can be sent to stats.consultation-2018@dwp.gov.uk.

Press enquiries should be directed to the DWP Press Office: 020 3267 5144

Lead Statisticians: Katie Wong and Russ Bentley

8. Related statistics

DWP Households Below Average Income (HBAI)

DWP Income Dynamics

DWP Family Resources Survey

Department for Communities Family Resources Survey

ONS working and workless households

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Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

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