

# Measuring National Well-being - Exploring the Well-being of Children in the UK, 2014

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Geographical Area: **Country**

Theme: **People and Places**

Theme: **Children, Education and Skills**

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## Introduction

Children's well-being is an important part of the nation's well-being. In 2013, there were an estimated [12 million children](#) aged 0 to 15, nearly a fifth of the UK population. Research from The Children's Society has shown that a significant minority of UK children suffer from low well-being, which impacts on their childhood and life chances, and their families and communities (The Children's Society, 2014).

Children's well-being needs to be measured in a different way to adults. The [framework](#) for measuring national well-being puts indicators into 10 domains. Three domains (Governance, Natural Environment and Economy) are contextual and do not specifically relate to children's well-being. The remaining 7 domains are consistent at all ages. To measure children's well-being, the 7 domains have been adopted as a framework but have been populated with measures that reflect the aspects of children's lives that are important to them, and have the greatest effect on their well-being.

ONS has developed a provisional set of 31 headline measures of children's well-being across the 7 domains. These include both objective and subjective measures in the domains of:

- Personal well-being
- Our relationships
- Health
- What we do
- Where we live
- Personal finance
- Education and skills

In March 2014, ONS published a consultation on the first version of these measures. The [consultation response](#) was published in July 2014 and an updated set of measures will be published in 2015. This report presents estimates for 22 of the 31 measures of children's well-being<sup>1</sup>. These estimates can be thought of as a baseline for children's well-being. The report also considers how selected measures have changed over time or differ by gender, where this information is available.

## Notes

1. Other measures are still in development and need further consideration in response to the consultation. They will be included in the updated set of measures in spring 2015.

## Key Points

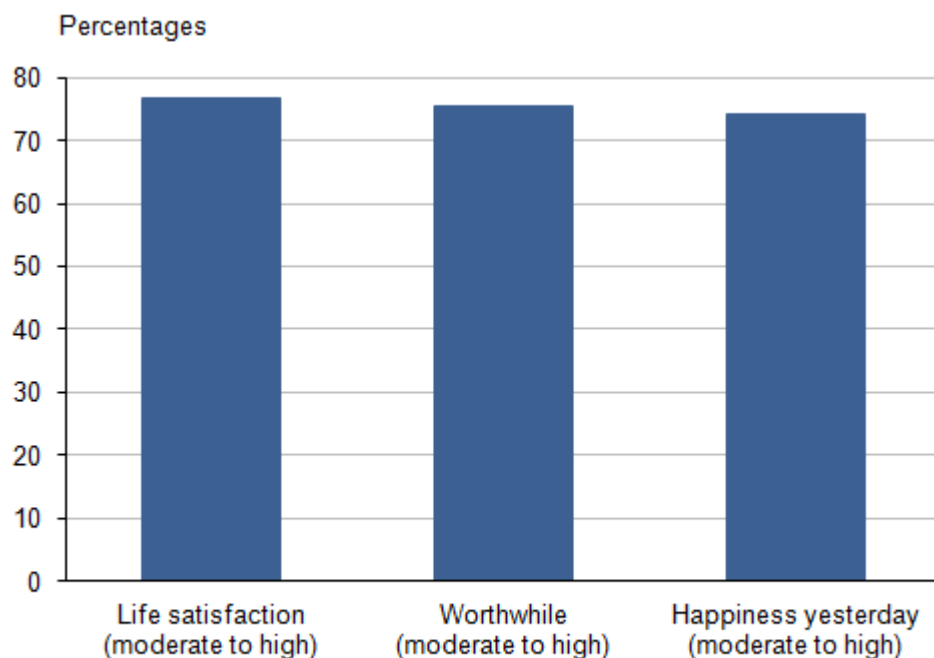
- Around three-quarters of children aged 10 to 15 in Great Britain rated their life satisfaction, the things that they do as worthwhile, and their happiness yesterday as moderate to high in 2013.
- In 2011–12 in the UK, 8 out of 10 boys (79%) reported being relatively happy with their appearance. Fewer than 7 out of 10 girls (68%) reported the same.
- Around 6 in 10 UK children aged 11 to 15 (61%) talked to their mother about things that matter more than once a week in 2011-12, compared with half (51%) in 2002. Similarly, 37% talked to their father frequently in 2011-12, compared with 31% in 2002.
- Around 1 in 8 children (12%) aged 10 to 15 in the UK reported being frequently bullied physically, in other ways, or both in 2011–12.
- The proportion of children in England aged 2 to 15 who were overweight, including obese, was 28% in 2012. Children aged 11 to 15 years had a higher prevalence of being overweight, including obese (35%) in 2012 compared with those aged 2 to 10 (23%).
- Nearly all children (98%) aged 10 to 15 in the UK used a computer at home during 2011–12. Girls were more likely to use it to complete their homework, while boys were more likely to play computer games.
- Around 12% of children aged 10 to 15 in the UK reported being a victim of crime in 2013/14, half of whom were victims of violent crime.
- The proportion of UK children living in households with less than 60% median income was 17% in 2011/12, down from 26% in 1998/99.

## Personal Well-being

Personal well-being measures are subjective indicators of a person's quality of life. They are based on how individuals report the different aspects of their lives including their lives overall, sense of purpose and how happy they are. Including personal well-being measures for children allows us to incorporate children's views, providing a fuller picture of UK children's well-being.

[The Children's Society's](#) household survey has included three of the four ONS personal well-being questions since 2012. It asks children to rate their happiness yesterday, their satisfaction with life overall, and whether they consider the things they do are worthwhile. The rating is on a scale of 0 to 10, where '0' is not at all and '10' is completely. The ONS measure of 'anxiety yesterday' is not included for children, due to ethical considerations. The proportion of children with a moderate to high level of well-being, which is [defined as](#) a score of 7 or more is used as the 'headline' measure.

In 2013, just over three-quarters (77%) of children aged 10 to 15 in Great Britain rated their life satisfaction as moderate to high (Figure 1). Similarly, three-quarters (75%) reported that they felt the things they did in their lives were worthwhile as moderate to high. Just under three-quarters (74%) reported a moderate to high level of happiness yesterday.

**Figure 1: Proportion of children scoring their personal well-being as moderate to high, 2013**

Source: The Children's Society

**Notes:**

1. Respondents were asked: 'Overall, how satisfied are you with life nowadays?', 'Overall to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?', and 'Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?'.
2. 'Moderate to high' is a score of 7 or more on a scale of 0 to 10.

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**Appearance**

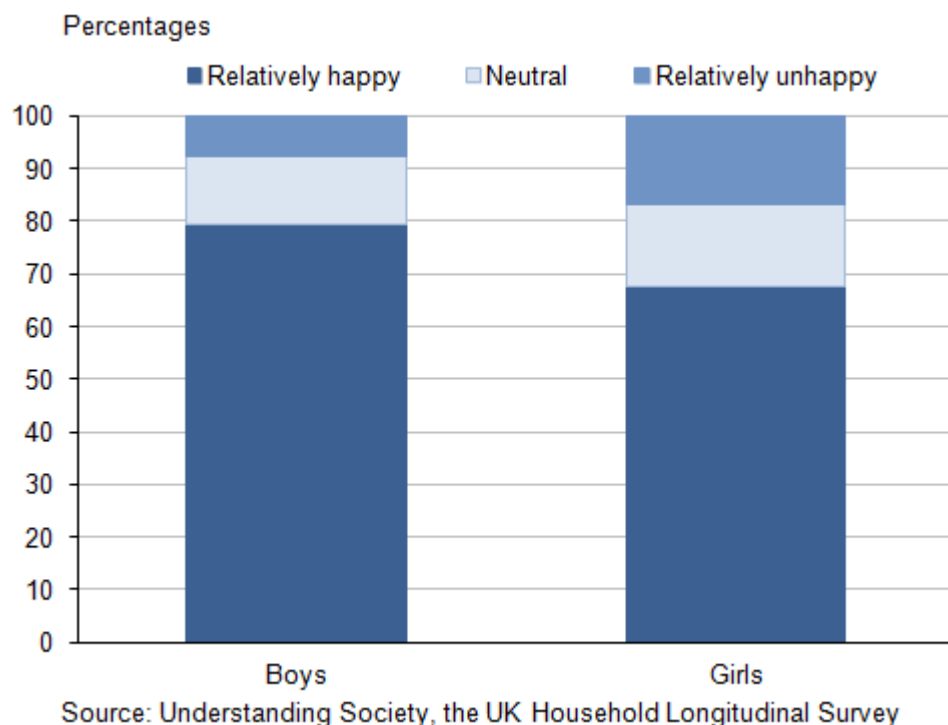
A key aspect of children's overall well-being is their satisfaction with their appearance. Cusumano and Thompson (2001) suggest that lower levels of satisfaction with appearance [could be linked](#) to the high importance of image in the current culture, or the greater public scrutiny occurring from the increasing use of various media such as social networking websites. [It has been suggested](#) that strong feelings of unhappiness about personal appearance (or dysmorphia) could be related to mental health problems, such as depression, social isolation or intense self-consciousness.

In 2011–12, nearly three-quarters (74%) of children aged 10 to 15 were relatively happy with their appearance. Around 1 in 8 (12%) were relatively unhappy with the way they look. This is according to data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study (also referred to as Understanding Society survey)<sup>1</sup>.

In 2011–12, girls aged 10 to 15 were more than twice as likely to be relatively unhappy about their appearance as boys of the same age at 17% and 8% respectively (Figure 2). In the same year, 8 out

of 10 boys (79%) reported being relatively happy with their appearance. Fewer than 7 out of 10 girls (68%) reported the same.

**Figure 2: Happiness with appearance, 2011-12**



**Notes:**

1. Respondents were asked: "where '1' is completely happy and '7' is not at all happy, please tick the box which comes closest to expressing how you feel about each of the following things... your appearance". Relatively happy is a score of 1 to 3, relatively unhappy is a score of 5 to 7, neutral is a score of 4.
2. Boys and girls aged 10 to 15

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UK Household Longitudinal Study estimates can be compared with those from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) for children aged between 11 and 15. The proportion of children aged 11 to 15 who reported that they were relatively happy with their appearance has decreased from 77% in 2002 to 71% in 2011–12. The proportion of 11 to 15-year-olds reporting they were relatively unhappy with their appearance has increased from 10% in 2002 to 14% in 2011–12.

## Notes

1. The UK Household Longitudinal Survey asks UK children aged 10 to 15 to rate their happiness with their appearance on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being completely happy and 7 being completely unhappy).

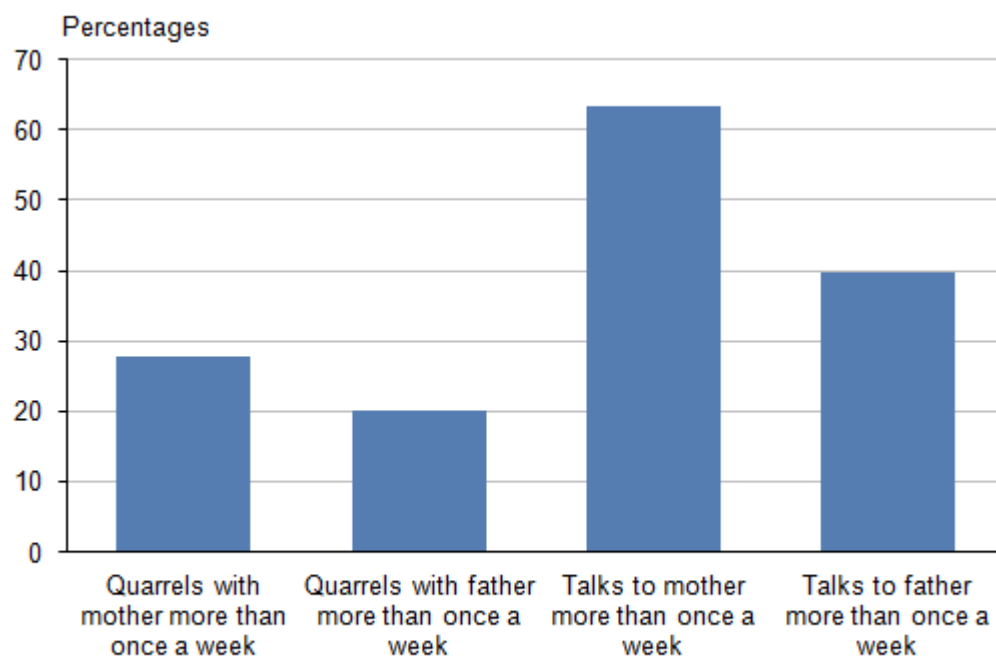
## Our Relationships

In [The Good Childhood Report 2013](#), The Children's Society highlighted the importance of family relationships to children's subjective well-being. It found that a measure of family harmony was substantially more indicative of children's well-being than family structure. Also, it found that 'the quality of family relationships is one of the three most significant aspects of life which contribute to children's overall sense of well-being' (The Good Childhood Report, 2013).

'[Predicting well-being](#)' published in 2013 by NatCen analysed data from the Millennium Cohort Study 2008. It found that 'children tend to have higher levels of wellbeing when they have good social relationships with family and friends...'. It also analysed changes in subjective well-being among 10 to 15-year-olds using two waves of data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey. This showed that 'social relations – both in the home and in school – continue to stand out as important predictors of well-being among young people'.

## Family

In 2011–12, around 28% of children aged 10 to 15 years reported quarrelling with their mother more than once a week, according to UK Household Longitudinal Survey data. This compares with 20% of children reporting quarrelling with their father more than once a week; most children reported hardly ever quarrelling with their father (60%). It should be noted that more children live with their mothers than with their fathers, which may explain some of the variation. Nearly all children who reported hardly ever quarrelling with their mother reported the same with their father (91%). However, among those children reporting quarrelling frequently with their mother, around half (51%) reported the same with their father.

**Figure 3: Children's frequency of quarrelling with and talking to parents, 2011-12**

Source: Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Survey

**Notes:**

1. Respondents were asked: 'How often do you quarrel with your mother/father?' 'How often do you talk to your mother/father about things that matter?'. Response options were: most days, more than once a week, less than once a week, hardly ever, don't have mother/father.

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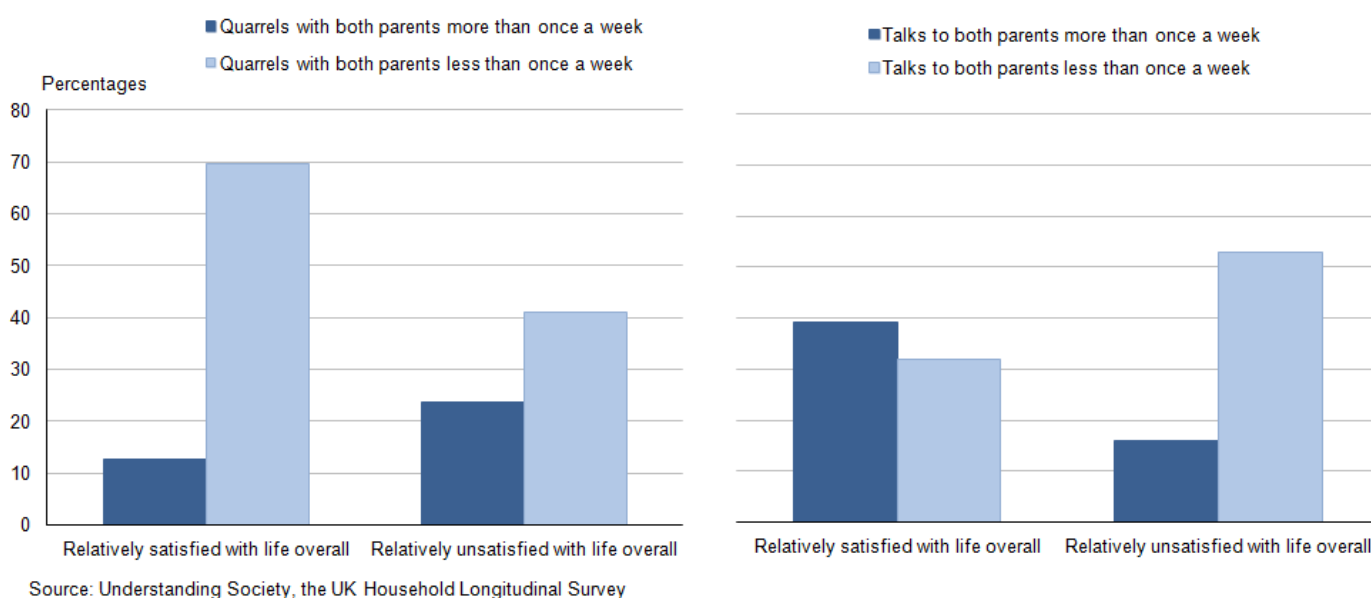
Children were more likely to report talking frequently to their mother than to their father about things that matter. In 2011–12, nearly two-thirds (63%) of children aged 10 to 15 years talked to their mother more than once a week about things that matter. This compares with nearly two-fifths (40%) who reported talking to their father.

The proportions of children aged 11 to 15 talking to either parent have increased since 2002. Around half of children aged 11 to 15 (51%) talked to their mother more than once a week about things that matter in 2002, compared with 61% in 2011–12. Similarly, 31% talked to their father more than once a week in 2002, compared with 37% in 2011–12.

Among children aged 10 to 15 who reported talking with their mother more than once a week about things that matter, 58% also reported talking frequently with their father about things that matter. Around 3 in 20 (15%) children in this age group reported hardly ever talking to either parent about things that matter in 2011–12.

Figure 4 illustrates that children who reported relatively high satisfaction with life overall also reported better communication patterns with their parents<sup>1</sup>. In 2011–12, nearly 70% of children aged 10 to 15 who reported being relatively satisfied with their life overall quarrelled less than once a week with both parents. This compares with just over 40% of children who reported being relatively unsatisfied quarrelling more than once a week with both parents. Children who were relatively unsatisfied with life overall were almost twice as likely to quarrel with both parents more than once a week as children who were relatively satisfied with life overall (24% compared with 13% respectively). Also, children who reported being relatively satisfied with life overall were around 2.5 times more likely to talk to both of their parents about things that matter more than once a week than children who reported being relatively unsatisfied with life overall.

**Figure 4: Children's quarrelling with and talking to parents by satisfaction with life overall, 2011-12**



#### Notes:

1. Excludes children who reported quarrelling with/talking to one parent more than the other.
2. Respondents were asked: 'How often do you quarrel with your mother/father?' 'How often do you talk to your mother/father about things that matter?'. Response options were: most days, more than once a week, less than once a week, hardly ever, don't have mother/father.
3. Respondents were asked: "where '1' is completely happy and '7' is not at all happy, which best describes how you feel about your life as a whole?". Relatively happy is a score of 1 to 3, relatively unhappy is a score of 5 to 7, neutral is a score of 4.

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Figures from The Children's Society schools survey show that nearly 60% of children aged 8 to 15 in the UK rated their happiness with their family as high<sup>2</sup> in 2010. Interestingly, boys were more likely than girls to rate their happiness with their family as high, at 62% and 56% respectively.

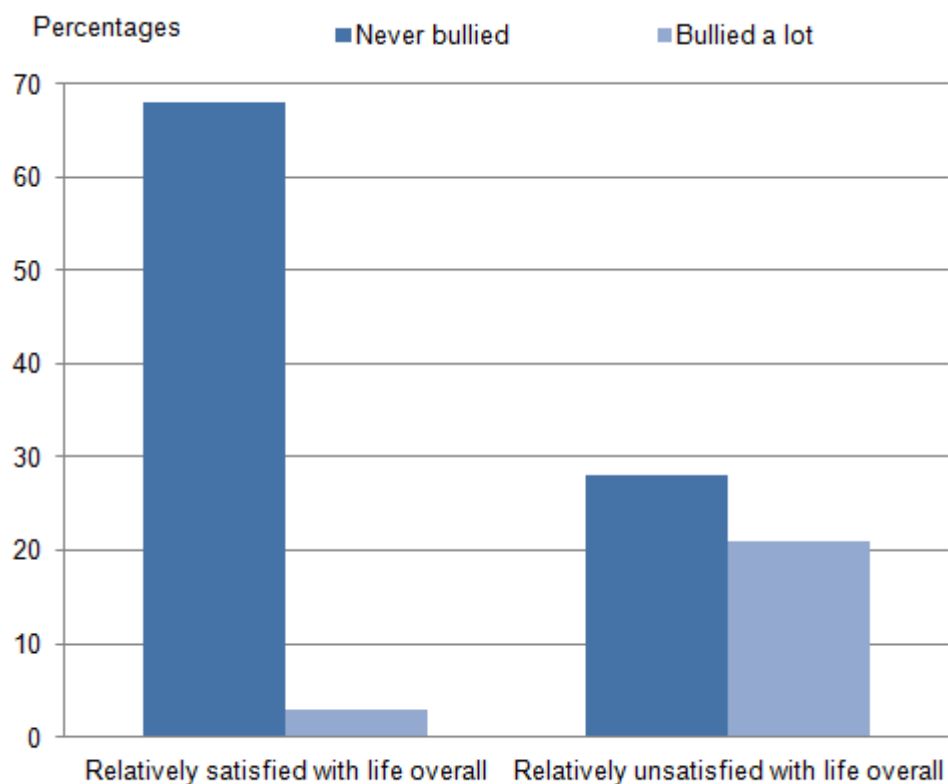
## Being bullied

Being bullied in school can affect a child's sense of self-worth, disrupt their education and potentially lead to mental ill-health. The Good Childhood Report 2013 found that children with low well-being were almost five times as likely to have been recently bullied. Similarly, the NatCen report found that children in the Millennium Cohort Study 2008 who were never bullied at school were more likely to report being happy all of the time.

According to the UK Household Longitudinal Study, around 1 in 8 children (12%) aged 10 to 15 in the UK reported being frequently bullied at school (either physically, in other ways, or both), in the six months prior to interview during 2011–12. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of children reported never having been bullied at school in the six months prior to interview. Boys are slightly more likely to be bullied physically, with 6% reporting frequent physical bullying, compared with 4% of girls.

Over two-thirds (68%) of the children who reported relatively high life satisfaction in 2011–12 reported that they had never been bullied (Figure 5). This compares with less than one-third (28%) of those reporting relatively low life satisfaction who reported that they had never been bullied. Over a fifth (21%) of those reporting relatively low life satisfaction stated they had been bullied a lot (either physically, in other ways, or both).

**Figure 5: Frequency of being bullied by life satisfaction, 2011-12**



Source: Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Survey

### Notes:

1. Excludes children who reported being bullied a little or quite often.



2. Respondents were asked: 'How often do you get physically bullied at school, for example getting hit, pushed around or threatened, or having belongings stolen?' and 'How often do you get bullied in other ways at school such as getting called names, getting left out of games, or having nasty stories spread about you on purpose?'. Responses options were: never, not too much (1-3 times in the last 6 months), quite a lot (more than 4 times in the last 6 months), a lot (a few times every week).
3. Respondents were asked: "where '1' is completely happy and '7' is not at all happy, which best describes how you feel about your life as a whole?". Relatively happy is a score of 1 to 3, relatively unhappy is a score of 5 to 7, neutral is a score of 4.

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According to data from The Children's Society's schools survey in 2010, just under two-thirds (63%) of children aged 8 to 15 rated their happiness with their friends as high. Around 6% of children rated their happiness with their friends as very low. There was no difference between boys and girls.

## Notes

1. The UK Household Longitudinal Study survey asks children aged 10 to 15 to rate their satisfaction with life overall on a scale of 1 to 7 (with 1 being completely happy and 7 being completely unhappy). These responses have been used to analyse how aspects of well-being compare according to different personal well-being scores.
2. The Children's Society survey asks children to rate how happy they are with various aspects of their lives on a scale of 0 to 10. This scale has been categorised using the definitions from the ONS personal well-being publication.

## Health

A healthy life cycle from before birth to teenage years is highly important for children's well-being as well as the future prospect of the child as an adult. The independent report 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives' (Marmot Review, 2010) states that policy objectives to reduce health inequality in the UK are required to 'give every child the best start in life' and to create a 'healthy standard of living for all'.

## Low birth weight

The 'life course perspective' as explained in the independent report 'Fair Society Healthy Lives' (Marmot Review, 2010) shows that early disadvantage is closely associated with poor outcomes in adulthood. This shows in various domains such as health, educational achievement and socio-economic status. A healthy transition from foetal development through to young adulthood enhances different aspects of human capital, and benefits society as a whole.

Low birthweight<sup>1</sup> is often linked to pre-term birth, foetal growth restriction and multiple births. Low birthweight is closely associated with disability, morbidity and mortality in infants and children, and has long-term consequences for health and social outcomes in adulthood. It is directly linked to the physical and emotional health and health behaviours of the mother before and during pregnancy. Mothers smoking during pregnancy, who are underweight because of poor nutrition, who have a long-standing illness such as hypertension or heart disease, or who suffer from alcohol abuse or drug addiction have higher risks of having a baby with low-birth weight (Bradshaw, 2011; Bakeo and Clarke, 2006; Chomitz et al., 1995).

For babies born with low birthweight in 2011 in England and Wales, around 61% were pre-term, and around 37% were born at term or post-term (ONS, 2011). Of babies born at term or post-term, just under 3% were born with low birthweight. This proportion has remained stable since 2009. In [Scotland](#), around 2% of babies born at term were born with low birthweight.

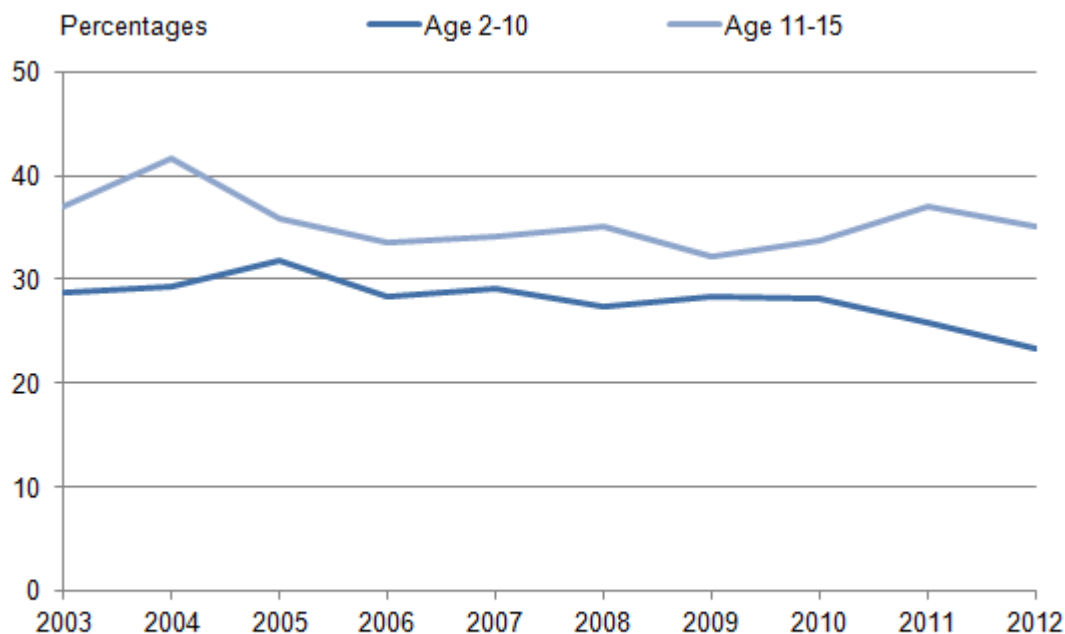
## Obesity

Obesity in children has become a public health issue in the turn of the 21st century. Research has suggested that being overweight or obese in childhood is linked to [immediate and long-term](#) physical and mental health risks. Mental health risks can come from body dissatisfaction, social discrimination, low self-esteem and low quality of life (Griffiths et al., 2010; Xavier and Mandal, 2005). Obese children rate their personal well-being as low, because of problems such as bullying at school, fatigue and difficulties in doing physical activities (Schwimmer et al., 2003).

In 2012, 14% of children aged 2 to 15 living in England were classified as overweight and 14% as obese, according to the [Health Survey for England](#). The prevalence of being overweight including obesity among children in England has fallen since 2004 when the proportion was 34%.

In 2012, children aged 11 to 15 had a higher prevalence of being overweight including obese compared with those aged 2 to 10 (35% and 23% respectively). Prevalence was the same for boys and girls in all age groups.

**Figure 6: Proportion of children who are overweight, including obese; by age group, 2003 to 2012**



Source: Health Survey for England

**Notes:**

1. Children with a valid height and weight measurement
2. In 2008, the definitions for children who were overweight or obese were revised from those used in previous years. This was to correct an error which meant that small numbers of children that should have been classified as either 'overweight' or 'obese' were omitted from these categories because of rounding of age and BMI thresholds. In no cases were results significantly different from those presented previously. This chart uses the new definitions for all years

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Data from the [Welsh Health Survey](#) suggest that 34% of children aged 2 to 15 living in Wales were overweight or obese in 2012. Data from the [Scottish Health Survey](#) show that 31% of children aged 2 to 15 living in Scotland were overweight or obese in 2012. In Northern Ireland, 21% of children aged 2 to 15 were overweight or obese in 2012/13, according to the [Health Survey for Northern Ireland](#).

**Self-assessed health**

According to the UK Household Longitudinal Study, 93% of children aged 10 to 15 perceived their health as excellent, very good or good in 2010–11. This is an indication of good physical health for a large majority of children. Various surveys include questions on self-assessed health for

children<sup>2</sup> and all indicate that the majority of children in the UK are happy with their health. The Health Survey for England shows that between 2003 and 2011 over 9 out of 10 (94% to 95%) children aged 15 and under (or their parents, in the case of young children) consistently rated their health as good or very good. Similarly the Welsh Health Survey shows that 95% of children under 16 years were reported to have very good or good health in 2013. There has been little change since 2007. [In Scotland](#), 95% of children under 16 reported very good or good health in 2011, while in Northern Ireland, 92% were reported as having very good or good health in 2012/13. Children are less likely to suffer chronic health problems than adults. Some of children's unhealthy behaviours (such as lack of exercise or smoking) have medium to long-term effects on health, rather than an immediate effect.

According to The Children's Society's 2010 schools survey, just over half (53%) of children aged 8 to 15 in the UK rated their happiness with their health as high. In contrast, nearly 1 in 10 (9%) rated their happiness with their health as very low.

## Notes

1. Under 2,500g
2. For example: The Children Society survey; The British Household Panel Survey; The Health Behaviour of School-aged Children survey

## What We Do

Leisure time is spent doing non-compulsory activities such as participating in sports and engaging in culture and arts, according to preferences and lifestyles and can form part of a child's identity. 'The amount and quality of leisure time is important for people's well-being for the direct satisfaction it brings. Additionally leisure, taken in certain ways, is important for physical and mental health'. (OECD, 2009).

### Leisure activities

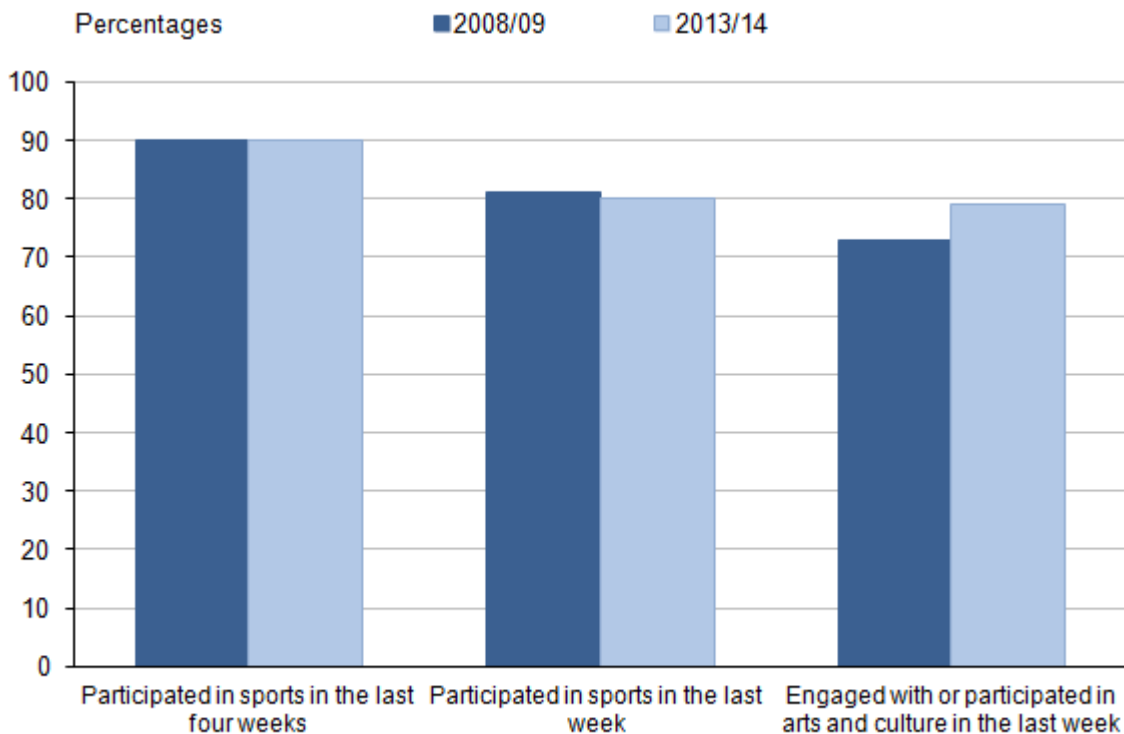
According to the Taking Part survey run by the Department of Culture, Media and Sports, 9 out of 10 (90%) children in England aged 11 to 15 reported taking part in sport during the last week in 2013/14. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of children aged 5 to 10 had participated in sports in the last week<sup>1</sup>.

In 2013/14, 90% of children aged 5 to 15 years had participated in sports in the four weeks prior to interview, a figure comparable with 2008/09 (Figure 7). Older children aged 11 to 15 years had a

higher rate of sports participation in the four weeks prior to interview compared with those aged 5 to 10 (97% and 84% respectively).

Boys were more likely than girls to participate in sport in 2013/14. Among 5 to 10 year olds, for whom sport in school is not included, 88% of boys aged 5 to 10 took part in sport in the four weeks prior to interview compared to 80% of girls. Among 11 to 15 year olds, 99% of boys participated in sport in the four weeks prior to interview, compared with 95% of girls.

**Figure 7: Leisure activities undertaken by children aged 5 to 15 years**



Source: Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Taking Part Survey

**Notes:**

1. Arts or cultural activity includes dance activities, music activities, theatre and drama activities, art and craft activities, street arts, circus, festival or carnival events, film or video activities, and engagement with libraries, museums or galleries, or heritage sites.

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'Swimming, diving or lifesaving' was the most common sport in which children aged 5 to 10 participated in during the four weeks prior to interview at 51%. For children aged 11 to 15 the most common sport was 'football' at 50%.

According to the [Welsh Health Survey](#), 51% of children aged under 16 were reported to have undertaken physical activity for at least an hour on five or more days of the previous week in 2012. [The Scottish Health Survey 2012](#) reported that children's participation in sport and exercise had decreased from 73% in 2009 to 66% in 2012. The '[Experience of sport and physical activity by young people in Northern Ireland](#)' report published by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure states that 96% of 11 to 17 year olds were involved in sport or physical activity within the week prior to interview in 2013.

The Taking Part survey also showed that in 2013/14, 98% of children aged 5 to 15 in England had taken part in an art or cultural activity (excluding reading) at least three times in the previous year<sup>2</sup>. The proportion of children aged 5 to 15 participating in at least one arts or cultural activity in the week prior to interview increased from 73% in 2008/09 to 79% in 2013/14. [The 2011 Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor for Wales](#) reported that during 2009 nearly three-quarters (74%) of children and young people aged 7 to 18 attended an arts event at least once a year, and 83% took part in an arts activity at least once a year. In [Northern Ireland](#), 76% of those aged 11 to 17 had participated in arts activities in 2013, and 88% had attended an arts event.

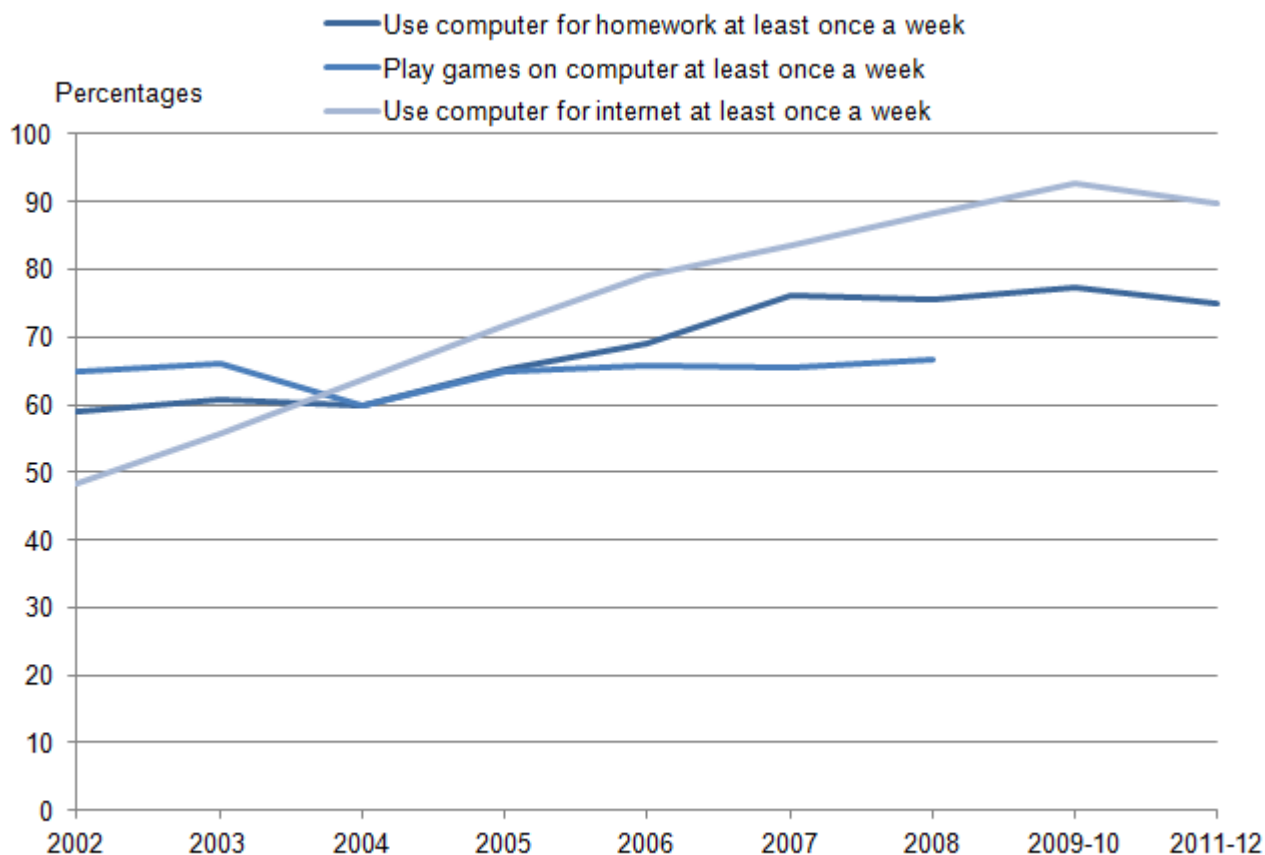
## Screen time

Concerns about the amount of time children spend in front of a screen, such as a TV or computer, and how it could be detrimental to physical and mental health have become widespread in recent years. A 2013 report by [Public Health England](#) found that higher levels of screen time, including watching TV and playing computer games, have a negative effect on self-esteem and self-reported happiness. However, using data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey, [Booker et al.](#) found that moderate amounts of screen time (1 to 3 hours a day) were associated with better well-being than excessive screen time (4 hours or more a day) or none at all. This finding was reaffirmed in the latest Good Childhood report by The Children's Society.

According to the UK Household Longitudinal Study, nearly all children (98%) aged 10 to 15 have used a computer at home in 2011–12. Children were more likely to use the computer at least once a week to connect to the internet than for schoolwork or coursework (88% compared with 70%). In addition, 85% belonged to a social network site, 96% had a games console and 75% spent more than an hour on a school night watching TV or DVDs.

Figure 8 shows that computer use has increased among children aged 11 to 15 between 2002 and 2011–12. It has increased particularly for browsing the internet, from 48% to 90%. The proportion of children using the computer for homework at least once a week also increased steadily between 2002 and 2007. Since 2008, the proportion has remained fairly stable and was 75% in 2011–12. In contrast, between 2009–10 and 2011–12, the proportion using the computer to connect to the internet at least once a week has decreased from 93% to 90%. This may be indicative of an increase in smartphone and tablet use by children to connect to the internet or for completing homework.

**Figure 8: Proportion of children age 11 to 15 using the home computer at least once a week; 2002 to 2011-12**



Source: British Household Panel Survey/ Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Survey

#### Notes:

1. Respondents were asked: 'How often do you use a computer at home for doing schoolwork or course work?' 'How often do you use the computer at home for connecting to the Internet, including for playing games?' 'How often do you use the computer at home for playing games?' Responses options were: every day, at least once a week, at least once a month, less often than once a month, never.
2. 'Play games on the computer at least once a week' is only available from the BHPS. UKHLS asks children how many hours they spend playing computer games on a typical school night.

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A similar proportion of boys and girls aged 10 to 15 used the computer to connect to the internet in 2011–12. However, there was a difference between the proportions of boys and girls using home computers for other purposes. Nearly three-quarters of girls (73%) used the home computer for completing homework at least once a week, compared with around two-thirds of boys (67%). Conversely, nearly three-quarters of boys (73%) spent up to three hours playing games on the home computer on a typical school night, compared with two-thirds of girls (67%). Boys were almost

twice as likely as girls to spend over four hours playing games on the home computer (9% and 5% respectively).

The Children's Society 2010 schools survey shows that around 54% of children aged 8 to 15 rated their happiness with their time use as high, while 7% rated it as very low. Happiness with time use can be used as a proxy measure of how much control and independence children have in their lives.

## Notes

1. It should be noted that the difference in sports participation could be due to 5-10 year olds only being asked (via a parental proxy) about sports participation outside of school, while 11-15 year olds are asked about sport in and outside school.
2. Arts or cultural activity includes: dance activities, music activities, theatre and drama activities, art and craft activities, street arts, circus, festival or carnival events, film or video activities, and engagement with libraries, museums or galleries, or heritage sites.

## Where We Live

A child's perception of the area they live in is important as it affects participation in local activities. Children who live in an area they consider safe will be confident to go outside and play. If they consider the neighbourhood to be friendly they may make friends with other local children.

## Crime

If a child has been a victim of crime, their perception of where they live can be affected. Being a victim of crime can be a traumatic experience, and can present itself emotionally or through changes in behaviour, such as taking precautions to avoid becoming a victim again.

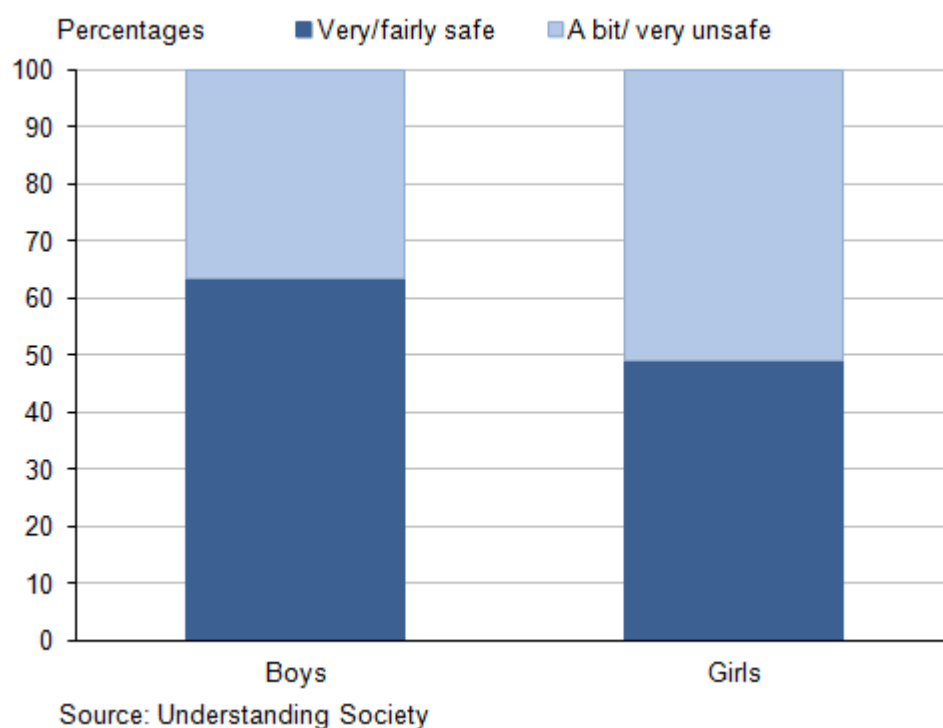
Around 12% of children aged 10 to 15 reported being a victim of crime at least once between April 2013 and March 2014, in England and Wales. This is a decrease of one percentage point from the previous year<sup>1</sup>. This compares with 17% of adults reporting that they were a victim of crime between April 2013 and March 2014. The most common type of crime children aged 10 to 15 were victims of was violent crime; around 7% of children experienced violent crime, with 5% victims of violent crime that resulted in injury.

Fear of crime can also affect how a child perceives their local area, and may restrict what they do and the activities they participate in. When asked about how safe they feel walking alone in their area after dark, 56% of children aged 10 to 15 felt very or fairly safe, according to the UK Household Longitudinal Survey. However, boys were more likely to feel very or fairly safe at 63%, compared with 49% of girls (Figure 9). Children who reported feeling very or fairly safe walking alone in their



area after dark were also more likely to be satisfied with their lives overall (91%), compared with those who said they felt very or a bit unsafe walking alone after dark (85%).

**Figure 9: Feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark, 2011-12**



**Notes:**

1. Boys and girls aged 10 to 15.
2. Respondents were asked: 'How safe would you feel walking alone in this area after dark?'. Responses options were: very safe, fairly safe, a bit unsafe, very unsafe.

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**Like their neighbourhood**

In 2011–12, 88% of those aged 10 to 15 liked the neighbourhood they lived in, according to the UK Household Longitudinal Study. The data also showed an association between liking the local area and being satisfied with life overall. Of those who like their neighbourhood 90% were satisfied with their lives overall compared with 75% of those who did not like their neighbourhood.

Around two-thirds (64%) of children aged 8 to 15 who responded to The Children's Society's 2010 survey rated their happiness with their accommodation as high. The proportion rating their happiness with their accommodation as very low was 7%.

## Notes

1. The [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#) (previously known as the British Crime Survey) asks respondents about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to the interview.

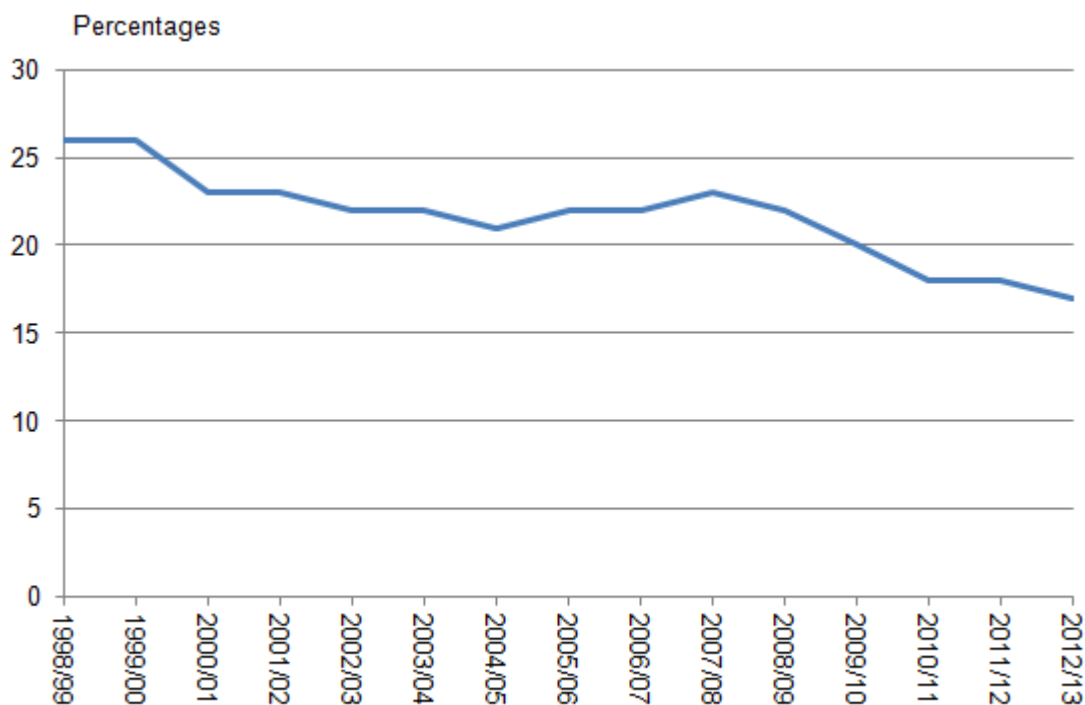
## Personal Finance

Personal finance can have a significant impact on people's sense of well-being, and the population's financial situation is an important aspect of National Well-being. It is also important for the well-being of children. A lack of finances can affect a person's health, their access to community resources and their contribution to the community. Being unable to do the things you would like to due to lack of money can reduce your level of life satisfaction, make life seem less worthwhile and affect how happy you may be.

### Households with less than 60% of median income

The [Department of Work and Pensions](#) (DWP) estimates that in 2012/13, there were 2.3 million children<sup>1</sup> (17% of all children) living in relative low-income households before housing costs (below 60 per cent median net disposable income in that survey year, before housing costs) in the UK<sup>2</sup>. The proportion of children living in relative low-income households has remained relatively stable since 2010/11, but has decreased by 9 percentage points compared with 1998/99 (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Proportion of children living in households with less than 60% of median income; 1998/99 to 2011/12**



Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Family Resources Survey

### Download chart

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(26 Kb)

### Workless households

[A recent ONS analysis](#) looked at the childhood factors that matter the most to the transmission of poverty and disadvantage between generations of people in the UK. It found that those who lived in a workless household at age 14 were around 1.5 times more likely to be in poverty, compared with those where one adult was working.

The Labour Force Survey shows that in 2013, the proportion of children aged 0 to 15 in the UK living in [workless households](#)<sup>3</sup> was 14%. This compares with 1 in 5 children (20%) in 1996. The proportion of children in workless households steadily decreased between 1996 and 2008. However, following the onset of the economic downturn in 2008, it increased from around 15% in that year to just under 17% in 2009. Since 2009, the proportion has decreased at a faster rate than between 1996 and 2009<sup>4</sup>.

### Material deprivation

[DWP figures](#) also show that the proportion of children in combined low income and material deprivation households<sup>5</sup> has remained around 13% since 2010/11. Numbers from 2010/11 onwards

cannot be compared with those from previous years, as the list of items which compromise the material deprivation index was updated to make it more representative of families' needs today.

Data from The Children's Society's 2010 schools survey shows around 63% of children aged 8 to 15 rated their happiness with their possessions (including money) as high. A higher proportion of boys rated their happiness with their possessions as high (66%) than girls (61%).

## Notes

1. A child is defined here as an individual under 16 years of age, or an unmarried or non-cohabiting 16 to 19-year-old in full-time non-advanced education. Unmarried or non-cohabiting 19-year-olds in full-time non-advanced education have been included in this definition since April 2006.
2. Caution needs to be taken when interpreting changes in the proportion of households below 60% of median income. Median income can fluctuate changing the proportion below 60% without making people better off, [as explained by Seddon](#): 'The reduction in the percentage below the poverty rate between 2009/10 and 2010/11 is in part attributable to the fall in median income rather than any substantial improvement of the financial situation of the people at the bottom of the distribution.'
3. Workless households are households that include at least one person aged 16 to 64 where no-one aged 16 or over is in employment.
4. These figures will be updated at the end of October 2014, and will include re-weighted LFS figures.
5. Material deprivation is an additional way of measuring living standards and refers to the self-reported inability of individuals or households to afford particular goods and activities that are typical in society at a given point in time, irrespective of whether they would choose to have these items, even if they could afford them. A suite of questions designed to capture the material deprivation experienced by families with children has been included in the FRS since 2004/05 and by pensioners since 2008/09. A child is considered to be in low income and material deprivation if they live in a family that has a final material deprivation score of 25 or more out of a possible 100 and an equivalised household income below 70 per cent of median income BHC.

## Education and Skills

Children's education and development of skills are important for their well-being and for that of the nation as a whole. Learning ensures that children develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes that they need for mental, emotional, social and physical well-being now and in the future (ONS, 2012).

## Educational attainment

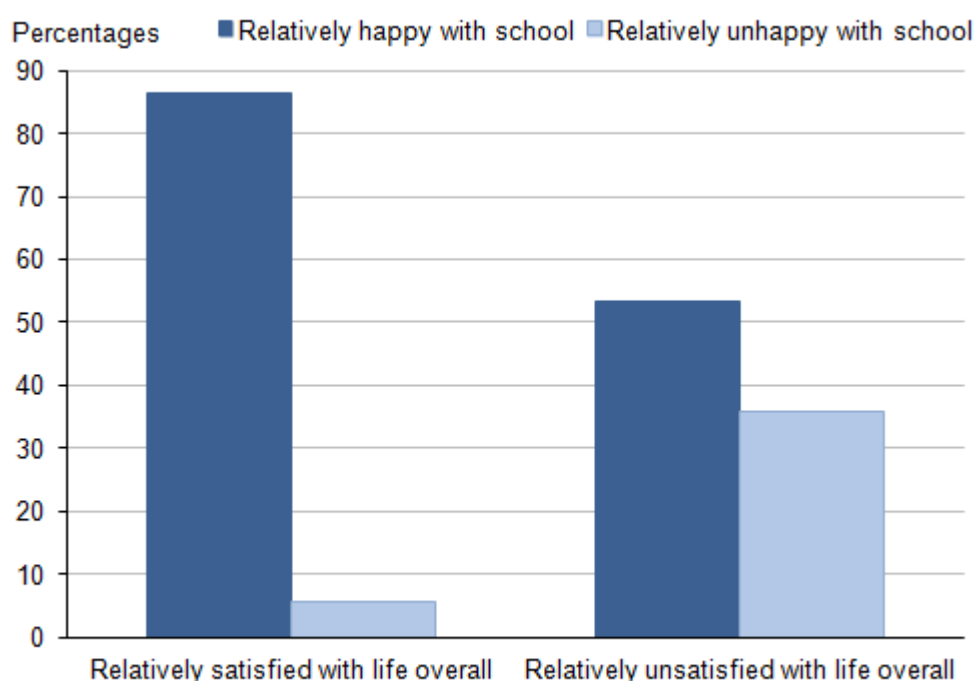
In line with national well-being measures, pupils' academic performance, as measured by achievement in their last year of compulsory education is included. In 2011/12, 59% of pupils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland achieved at least five or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C including English and mathematics. This increased from 53% in 2009/10. In Scotland, the percentage of pupils in their last year of compulsory education achieving five or more qualifications at SCQF level 5 or better was 37% in 2011/12.

## Happiness with school

It is not just children's achievements but also experience within school that is important to their overall well-being. A study of the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children looked at pupil and school effects during primary school. It found that different children have different experiences even at the same school, and that for well-being, 'child-school' fit is as important as attending a 'good' school (Gutman and Feinstein, 2008).

Data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey shows that when asked how happy (on a scale of 1 to 7) they were with their school, nearly 83% of children aged 10 to 15 were relatively happy in 2011–12. It also shows that children who reported being relatively satisfied with life overall were over 1.5 times more likely to be relatively happy with school than those who were relatively unsatisfied with their life overall (86% and 54% respectively) (Figure 11). Children who reported being unsatisfied with life overall were over six times more likely to be relatively unhappy with school than those who were relatively satisfied with life overall (36% and 6% respectively).

**Figure 11: Children's happiness with school; by life satisfaction, 2011-12**



Source: Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Survey

**Notes:**

1. Excludes children who reported being neither happy or unhappy with the school that they go to.
2. Respondents were asked: 'where '1' is completely happy and '7' is not at all happy, please tick the box which comes closest to expressing how you feel about each of the following things... the school you go to.' Relatively happy is a score of 1 to 3, relatively unhappy is a score of 5 to 7, a neutral score is 4.
3. Respondents were asked: 'where '1' is completely happy and '7' is not at all happy, which best describes how you feel about your life as a whole?' Relatively happy is a score of 1 to 3, relatively unhappy is a score of 5 to 7, a neutral score is 4.

**Download chart**

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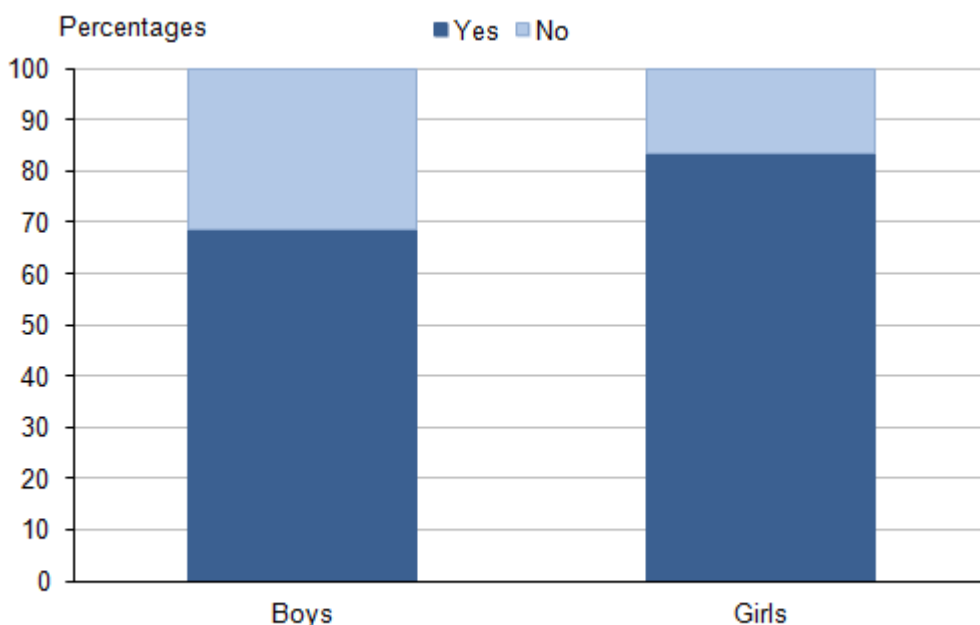
(27 Kb)

**Aspirations**

Having aspirations and an idea of where your life is heading is important for well-being. The UK Household Longitudinal Study asks children what they would like to do at age 16, for example, carrying on with education or getting a job. The categories, however, are too vague to capture definite aspirations and goals, for example, 'I want to train as a plumber and start my own business'. As such, the best measure available only captures academic aspirations.

In 2011–12, over three-quarters (76%) of 10 to 15 year olds stated that they would like to go to university. However, a higher proportion of girls aspire to university than boys (83% and 69% respectively) (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Proportion of children who would like to go to university or college; boys and girls, 2011-12**



Source: Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Survey

**Notes:**

1. Boys and girls aged 10 to 15.
2. Respondents were asked: 'What would you most like to do when you have completed your final GCSE/Standard Grade year at around age 16?', 'Would you like to go on to do further full-time education at a college or University after you finish school?' Responses options were: get a full time job; stay at school or college to do A levels/ highers; get an apprenticeship; do some other form of training; do something else.

**Download chart**[XLS](#) [XLS format](#)

(25.5 Kb)

**Background notes**

1. The UK Longitudinal Household Survey (UKHLS) also referred to as Understanding Society is a unique and valuable academic study that captures important information every year about the social and economic circumstances and attitudes of people living in 40,000 UK households. It also collects additional health information from around 20,000 of the people who take part. Information from the longitudinal survey is primarily used by academics, researchers and policymakers in their work, but the findings are of interest to a much wider group of people. These include those working in the third sector, health practitioners, business, the media and the general public. The data in this analysis is from the youth self-completion questionnaire module of Waves 1-3 of the Survey and has been weighted using the combined cross-sectional youth interview weight. [More information about the UKHLS.](#)
2. The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) was the precursor to the UKHLS. From Wave 2 of the UKHLS, around 6,700 respondents from the BHPS were added into the UKHLS panel. As the BHPS sample only included children aged 11 to 15, any comparisons with UKHLS data (2009 onwards) are for this age group only. [More information about the BHPS.](#)
3. The Children's Society has conducted a regular online well-being survey since July 2010 with a sample of 2,000 children and their parents. This uses a household panel that is run by the research agency Research Now. The survey was run every quarter until 2013 and then every six months since January 2013. Each wave has so far covered a representative sample of approximately 2,000 children, initially in UK, but in Great Britain since Wave 3. The survey includes quota sampling for age, gender and family socio-economic status (i.e. occupation of the main income earner, information provided by parent). Waves 1 to 9 included children aged 8 to 15, while Wave 10 included children aged 10 to 17. Each wave of the survey has included a standard set of questions that make up 'The Good Childhood Index' together with questions covering additional topics which have varied for each wave. The three ONS questions were added as additional questions for the first time in Wave 7 and repeated them in Waves 8, 9 and 10. [More information about The Children's Society surveys](#)

4. The Children's Society's 2010 schools survey was administered for The Children's Society by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). The sample covered a stratified sample of primary, middle and secondary schools in England. Schools were divided into five strata on the basis of the proportion of children attending the school who were entitled to free school meals. Schools were selected randomly within each stratum. The survey was administered in schools as an online self-completion questionnaire to children in Years 4 and 6 in primary schools and Years 8 and 10 in secondary schools. Data collection took place from October 2010 to January 2011. There were two alternative versions of the questionnaire for children in Years 6, 8 and 10 with mostly shared content but some variation to increase the topic coverage. These two versions were assigned randomly to different children in each school. There was a separate shorter version of the questionnaire for Year 4 children.
5. Where UK data are not available other sources from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have been included where available. Caution must be taken when comparing across countries due to differences in sources and methods.
6. Throughout the bulletin, only statistically significant findings are commented on.
7. Authors: Rachel Beardsmore and Veronique Siegler
8. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html) or from the Media Relations Office email: [media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

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This document is also available on our website at [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk).

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