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Guidance

Plans to stop reporting the Parental Conflict Indicator as official statistics: statistical notice

Updated 24 August 2026

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The consultation on plans to stop reporting the Parental Conflict Indicator as official statistics has now concluded. The department's response has been published.

Details

This notice gives details on plans to stop reporting the Parental Conflict Indicator as regular official statistics and invites users of these statistics to provide views and comments on these proposals.

The Parental Conflict Indicator was one of nine indicators set out under [Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families](#) to track progress in tackling the disadvantages that affect families and children's outcomes. Since this policy initiative was launched under the 2016 to 2019 May Conservative government and has been superseded by several iterative programmes including the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, and the Parental Conflict Indicator statistics have no statutory basis, the department plans to stop reporting them regularly.

The department continues to be invested in this area through its Reducing Parental Conflict programme, so we will consider further data analysis and publications in the future, in line with evolving government priorities.

The data for these statistics come from the longitudinal [Understanding Society](#) survey. These data are currently being collected again and will be available to academics and other interested stakeholders in 2028.

Data collected via the survey is securely stored by the [UK Data Service](#), where researchers can access it online. Associated documentation is available from the [Understanding Society](#) website.

Research value

Whilst these statistics have proved helpful when explaining the government's ongoing work via the [Reducing Parental Conflict programme](#), they cannot be used to estimate the programme's impact.

Furthermore, as explained in [the latest release](#), we do not believe there was sufficient evidence to confirm the 2-percentage-point reduction in the level of parental relationship distress amongst couple parents suggested by these statistics. This is because:

- these are estimates based on survey responses and respondents are never exactly representative of the overall population. This means that that our estimate of the incidence of relationship distress in the population will not be exact and is subject to sampling error. Our analysis suggests that sampling error could plausibly explain all or most of the recent change

- some of the reduction in reported relationship distress may also be explained by ‘attrition bias’. This is because our estimates are calculated from a survey which, in general, attempts to interview the same households for each wave of the survey. Our analysis of the survey data shows that those who reported relationship distress in a previous wave were less likely to respond in the next. This may, over time, reduce the proportion of cases in the sample which report relationship distress

In addition, the metric used to estimate conflict between separated parents (the frequency of contact between a child and their non-resident parent) is a proxy. Whilst the frequency of parent-child contact is an important measure by itself, evidence shows that the quality of parenting, parent-child relationships and interpersonal relationships, and the presence of interparental conflict, are much more important in shaping child development and later life outcomes.

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