

# 'Is Britain Fairer?': Key facts and findings on children

'Is Britain Fairer?' (2015) is the Equality and Human Rights Commission's five-yearly review of equality and human rights in Britain. This factsheet captures some of our key findings on children (people aged under 18).

The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) provides essential protections for the rights of children and a crucial remedy when their rights have been violated. The UK Government has made a commitment to give due consideration to the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) when making new policy and legislation. Figures from the Office of National Statistics indicate that there were **13.2 million children** living in Britain in 2013.

There are more children than adults living in poverty and many children live in substandard housing

In Britain, **27.4%** of children lived in households below **60%** of median income after housing costs in 2012/13, compared with **31.6%** in 2007/08.

Compared with the adult figures of **19.4%** and **20.1%** respectively, a greater percentage of children than adults lived in poverty in both 2012/13 and 2007/08. This was particularly high for Wales where **32%** of children lived in poverty in 2012/13.

In England,



**19.8%** of children were living in substandard accommodation in 2011/13, compared with **30.9%** in 2007/09, and the percentage of children and young people living in overcrowded accommodation fell slightly from **11.5%** in 2008/09 to **11.3%** in 2012/13.

In Scotland,



the percentage of households with children living in accommodation that did not meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard fell from **60.2%** in 2008 to **43.5%** in 2013. However, there was an increase in the percentage of households with children living in overcrowded accommodation between 2008 and 2013, from **4.5%** to **8.2%**. There were no data available for Wales.



School exclusions have fallen across Britain and levels of attainment have improved, though bullying affects many children

Exclusion rates (whether permanent or fixed-period) have fallen in England and Wales (based on data for 2008/09 and 2012/13), and Scotland (data for 2009/10 and 2012/13).



In England, there were **35.8 exclusions** per 1,000 pupils in 2012/13.

This is a decrease of **13.9 cases per 1,000** compared with 2008/09.



In Wales, there were **39.2 exclusions** per 1,000 pupils in 2012/13.

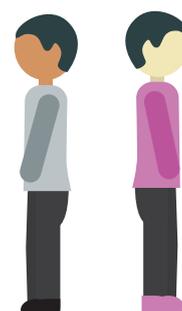
This is a decrease of **8.3 cases** compared with 2008/09.



In Scotland, there were **32.8 exclusions** per 1,000 pupils in 2012/13.

This is a decrease of **11.9 cases** compared with 2009/10.

In Britain, **3% of children reported that they had no close friends in 2009-10 and 2011-12.**



## In England,

**60.6% of pupils** achieved at least five A\*-C GCSEs or equivalent in 2012/13, including English and mathematics. This was an increase of 9.9 percentage points compared with 2008/09. In Wales, **52.7% of pupils** achieved at least 5 A\*-C GCSEs in 2012/13, an increase of 5.5 percentage points compared with 2008/09. In Scotland, **39.4% of pupils** achieved at least five Awards at SCQF Level 5 in 2012/13, an increase of 3.3 percentage points compared with 2009/10.



## The likelihood of being bullied in schools across Britain increases substantially if a child is disabled or is not heterosexual.

40% of children and young people with no disability reported being bullied. This compares to **58%** of children with a physical disability, **62%** with a learning disability, and **67%** with autism. Moreover, **39%** of heterosexuals reported being bullied compared with **76%** of bisexual, gay and lesbian children.



Another detriment to a child's wellbeing, aside from bullying, is emotional, physical or sexual abuse

The most common reasons for children **up to the age of 19** seeking counselling in the UK are depression and unhappiness, and family relationships.



**Of the ChildLine helpline calls,** physical abuse and emotional abuse (by any perpetrator) have been the most commonly reported across Britain.

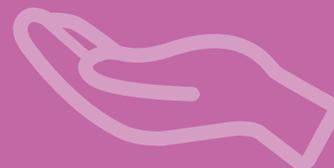
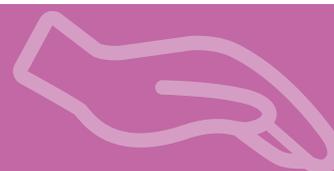


**Data on the country of origin of reported potential victims of trafficking show that in 2014 the UK was the sixth highest country of origin** for all victims of trafficking and the third highest, behind Albania and Vietnam, for minors (those aged 17 or under at the time of their first claimed exploitation).

The 2014 independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham found that, at a conservative estimate, approximately 1,400 children were sexually exploited over the period 1997 to 2013. The 2013 Children's Commissioner Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups concluded that despite increased awareness and a heightened state of alert regarding child sexual exploitation, children are still slipping through the net and falling prey to sexual predators.

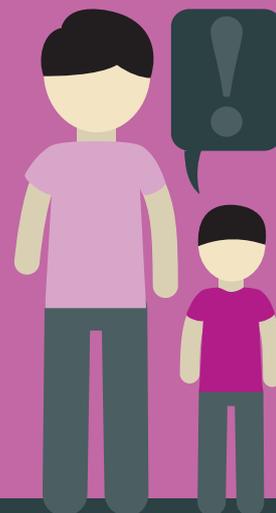


The 2011 Munro 'review of child protection' concluded that the child protection system is over-bureaucratized and needed to be reformed.



A statutory Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales, opened in July 2015, is investigating whether public bodies and other non-state institutions have taken seriously their duty to protect children from sexual abuse in England and Wales.

The Public Inquiry into Historical Child Abuse in Scotland, set up in October 2015, will examine instances in which a child was abused in care. It will also examine the ongoing effects of abuse on survivors and their families.



As well as abuse, problems remain in relation to mental health and homicides, although some health outcomes have improved



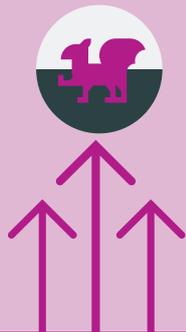
## Problems in access to children's mental health services in the UK were highlighted in a 2008 report by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

This noted that **1 in 10 children in the UK** had a diagnosable mental health problem, yet only around **25%** had access to the required treatment and care. It also expressed concern that children were sometimes treated on adult psychiatric wards.



## In Wales, difficulties have been reported with accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

It was reported that there was a **100%** increase in demand in the previous 12 months from 2014.



**Children aged under one year old** were most likely to be the victim of homicide (23.9 deaths per million inhabitants), followed by children aged 1-4 (5.9 per million). In fact, infants under one year old continued to have a higher homicide rate than all other age groups, including adults. This points to insufficient safeguards to protect what may be the single most vulnerable group in society. In England/Wales, 46 children and young people under 16 years old were victims of homicide in 2013/14 (homicide rate 4.3 per million).

The majority of homicides against children and young people under 16 were committed by a parent or step-parent, or by another family member, friend or acquaintance.

In Scotland, there were five homicides of under 16s in 2008/09 and two in 2013/14.

Between 2008 and 2013, the infant mortality rate in Britain **decreased** from **4.6 to 3.8 per 1,000 live births**. Rates for male and female infants **fell** by **0.9 and 0.6 respectively**.



The mortality rate for **boys** was **higher** than for **girls** in both years.



**In Britain**, life expectancy at birth rose by 1.2 years for boys, compared with 0.9 years for girls, to reach **78.9** and **82.7** years respectively in 2011/13. The gap between girls' and boys' life expectancy at birth narrowed by **0.4** years between 2007/09 and 2011/13.

The percentage of children and young people who were obese was **28%** in England, **34.4%** in Wales, and **30.6%** in Scotland, in 2012.

The figures in England are an improvement on the **30.3%** recorded in 2008, whereas Scotland recorded no significant change since 2008. Wales, by contrast, saw an increase in obesity by **0.1%** since 2008.

POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

