



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Public Views on Child Poverty: Results from the second poll undertaken as part of the Measuring Child Poverty consultation

February 2013

Introduction

The principal measure of child poverty has, for many years, been based on relative income¹. In times of recession the relative poverty line tends to fall. The latest figures showed that 300,000 fewer children were in relative income poverty between 2009-10 and 2010-11 largely due to reductions in median incomes. At the same time absolute poverty² remained unchanged, implying that the living standards of children did not improve over this period.

Following the publication of the most recent child poverty statistics in June 2012³, the Government set out its intention to run a consultation to identify better measures of child poverty. This consultation ran from 15 November 2012 to 15 February 2013.

The consultation proposed that new measures of child poverty should be developed which would provide a broader understanding of the real experience of child poverty in the United Kingdom.

It was clearly stated in the consultation document⁴ that a key criteria for a new child poverty measure is that it should be widely accepted by the public as being a fair representation of those children growing up in poverty. As part of the wider consultation, two surveys have been undertaken to get an informed understanding of the views of the public, to complement existing survey data. The first survey took place in December and the results were reported in the DWP Ad Hoc Statistics series last month⁵. This initial survey asked the respondents what they thought was important in deciding whether someone was growing up in child poverty.

The second survey took place in February 2013 and asked two questions. The first question again asked what the respondents thought was important when deciding whether someone was growing up in poverty. The second question asked what areas it is important for the government to address to tackle child poverty.

¹ On the relative income measure a child is considered to be living in poverty if they live in a household with income below 60 per cent of equivalised median household income.

² On the absolute poverty measure a child is considered to be living in poverty if they live in a household with income below 60 per cent of equivalised 1998/99 median household income held constant in real terms

³ Department of Work and Pensions (2012) *Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the income distribution 1994/5 – 2010/11*. http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2011/pdf_files/full_hbai12.pdf

⁴ Department of Work and Pensions (2012) *Measuring Child Poverty: A consultation on better measures of child poverty* <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/m/measuring%20child%20poverty%20consultation%20document%20final.pdf>

⁵ Department for Work and Pensions (2013) *Public Views on Child Poverty: Results from the second polling undertaken as part of the Measuring Child Poverty consultation*. http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2013/public%20views_on_child_poverty.pdf

Methodology

The two questions with the potential for multiple responses were added to the NOP GfK Omnibus Survey. Interviewing was carried out using fully trained and supervised market research interviewers using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Respondents were selected using random digit dialling. Quotas are set in terms of region, sex within age and class. The data is weighted to bring it into line with national population profiles. The survey sample was designed to be representative of all adults in telephone owning households in the UK by region, sex, age and class. The polling took place by telephone between 8 and 10 February 2013 with responses recorded from 967 adults.

The questions asked were:

Question 1: "Could you please tell me how important you think each of the following are when deciding whether someone is growing up in child poverty?"

- A child who is living in a home which is damp or cold
- A child's family not having enough income
- A child having to care for a parent or living with a parent with a debilitating illness
- A child growing up in a household with unmanageable debts
- A child growing up in a household where no one works
- A child experiencing multiple family breakdowns
- A child going to a failing school with no chance to succeed
- A child whose parents lack qualifications and skills for employment
- A child who is suffering from poor health or disability
- A child growing up in a deprived area which is isolated or not safe
- A child having parents who are addicted to drugs or alcohol

Question 2: "The government is committed to tackling child poverty and providing children in poverty with better life chances. There are many areas which could be targeted. The following are ten possible areas where the government's efforts could be focused. Please could you say which of these areas it is important to concentrate on?"

- **Work** e.g. getting more families in poverty into work or getting more families in poverty working full time
- **Income** e.g. increasing incomes for families in poverty through benefits or raising wages
- **Debt** e.g. providing support for families to get out of unmanageable debt or helping families to save to prevent debt
- **Housing** e.g. reducing damp and cold houses or decreasing overcrowding
- **Better neighbourhoods** e.g. making deprived neighbourhoods safer to live in or with more local jobs
- **Skills** e.g. helping parents with no qualifications get them or raising

- parents' skills to help them find better paid jobs
- **Education** e.g. increasing the number of poor children who get good GCSEs and A levels or reducing the number of poor children who go to failing schools
 - **Strong families** e.g. preventing children experiencing multiple family breakdowns or helping children stay in contact with parents after breakup
 - **Parents' health** e.g. helping parents overcome ill health and move into work or reducing the number of parents suffering from mental health problems and addiction
 - **Children's health** e.g. reducing the number of children living in poverty suffering health conditions or reducing childhood obesity

The question order was randomised in the survey.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 show the results of the survey. In both questions the respondents were allowed four possible answers that rated how important they thought the area. These were: very important, important, quite important, not important or don't know.

The tables are ordered by the sum of the very important and important categories.

The results to the first question are comparable with the main results from the British Social Attitudes Survey (2009) which indicated that child poverty is viewed as a combination of factors relating to parents, families, local areas and welfare policies⁶. This was also found in the previous polling undertaken in December 2012.

⁶[NatCen | Study | British Social Attitudes 28th Report](#)

Table 1. Factors reported as important in deciding whether someone is growing up in child poverty (per cent)⁷

	Very important	Important	Quite important	Not important	Don't know		Very important/important
A child having parents who are addicted to drugs or alcohol	60	28	8	2	1		88
A child who is suffering from poor health or disability	50	31	14	5	1		81
A child having to care for a parent or living with a parent with a debilitating illness	48	32	15	4	1		80
A child going to a failing school with no chance to succeed	48	31	16	4	1		79
A child growing up in a deprived area which is isolated or not safe	45	34	15	5	1		79
A child experiencing multiple family breakdowns	44	35	16	4	1		79
A child's family not having enough income. ⁸	45	33	18	3	*		78
A child growing up in a household where no one works	45	33	16	5	1		78
A child growing up in a household with unmanageable debts	45	32	17	4	1		77
A child who is living in a home which is damp or cold.	43	33	18	4	1		76
A child whose parents lack qualifications and skills for employment	31	35	21	13	1		66

⁷Not all the rows add up to 100 due to rounding.

⁸ There were too few don't know responses to record

Table 2. Possible areas of government focus in tackling child poverty (per cent)

	Very important	Important	Quite important	Not important	Don't know		Very important/important
Work e.g. getting more families in poverty into work or getting more families in poverty working full time	53	31	13	1	1		84
Education e.g. increasing the number of poor children who get good GCSEs and A levels or reducing the number of poor children who go to failing schools	48	36	13	2	1		84
Parents' health e.g. helping parents overcome ill health and move into work or reducing the number of parents suffering from mental health problems and addiction?	51	33	14	1	1		84
Children's health e.g. reducing the number of children living in poverty suffering health conditions or reducing childhood obesity	50	33	13	2	1		83
Better neighbourhoods e.g. making deprived neighbourhoods safer to live in or with more local jobs	46	35	17	2	1		81
Strong families e.g. preventing children experiencing multiple family breakdowns or helping children stay in contact with parents after breakup	45	35	15	4	1		80
Housing e.g. reducing damp and cold houses or decreasing overcrowding	41	38	17	3	1		79
Debt e.g. providing support for families to get out of unmanageable debt or helping families to save to prevent debt	44	34	18	3	1		78
Skills e.g. helping parents with no qualifications get them or raising parents' skills to help them find better paid jobs	40	38	18	4	1		78
Income e.g. increasing incomes for families in poverty through benefits or raising wages ⁹	37	37	20	6	*		74

⁹There were too few don't know responses to record

