

# Percentage of children living with both birth parents, by age of child and household income; and estimated happiness of parental relationships.

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# Background

On 24<sup>th</sup> April the Department for Work and Pensions will publish *Social Justice: transforming lives – one year on*. The report provides the first benchmark across seven key indicators against which progress in delivering social justice will be measured.

The seven key indicators being used to measure progress in achieving social justice were outlined in the *Social Justice Outcome Framework* in October 2012. This followed the publication of *Social Justice: Transforming Lives* in March 2012 which set out the Government's vision for providing the support needed to turn around the lives of those experiencing multiple disadvantages.

The figures presented here are used in the progress report, and in the supporting documentation, to describe the current position of the stable family indicator.

# Methodology

The analysis uses data from Understanding Society (USoc) wave 2, 2010-2011.

More details on USoc can be found at the following link:

<http://www.understandingsociety.org.uk/>

The analysis is presented as follows:

## **Table 1: Percentage of children living with both birth parents, by age of child**

1. Shows the percentage of children at each age between 0-16 that live with both of their birth parents and the percentage that do not live with both birth parents.
2. Children not living with both birth parents include those born into or living in lone parent families, step-families, adoptive families, foster families or those who are in the care of relatives.
3. Children have been identified as living with both birth parents where an adult within the household has reported the child's natural mother and father as being resident.

## **Table 2: The percentage of children in low-income households living with both parents compared to the percentage of children in middle to high-income households, by child age group**

1. Children are categorised into low and middle to high income groups to show, by age group, the proportion in each that live with both of their birth parents and the proportion that do not.
2. Children in low income are defined as the bottom 20% of children living in households with the lowest income, and children in the middle to high income

## Children living with both birth parents

group are the 80% of children living in households with an income above this; based on relative gross household income, before housing costs.

3. To ensure figures presented are robust ages have been grouped when split by income group.
4. This type of analysis is unable to show if there is a causal relationship between children living with both birth parents and income.

### **Table 3: The estimated percentage of children living with both birth parents where the parents report happiness or unhappiness in their relationship**

1. Estimates are of the proportion of children living with both birth parents that live in families where the parents report a happy relationship, and where parents report an unhappy relationship.
2. Estimates we present are based on parents self-reported level of happiness with their relationship, all things considered. A relationship is classified as unhappy based on it being reported as 'extremely unhappy', 'fairly unhappy' or 'a little unhappy'. Where each parent within a couple responded but gave different answers, we use the answer of the least happy parent. Where only one parent within the couple responded, the happiness of the relationship has been classified according to that reply. It is recognised that this has the potential to introduce some degree of bias where relationships classified as happy would have been classified differently if the non-responding partner was unhappy. An analysis of cases where both partners answered suggests that in 88% of cases they would have been classified in the same way irrespective of which partners response we relied upon. Our overall judgment is that the potential bias introduced by our choice of treatment of such cases is likely to be small.
3. We also observe that there are a significant number of cases where no answer is given to the question on relationship happiness in the survey. Twenty-one per cent of children living with both birth parents have no data for parental relationship happiness available. We look to reflect this uncertainty in our estimates by providing ranges. In one estimate we assume all parents of those children with missing data have a happy relationship, while in the other estimate we assume all parents of those children with missing data have an unhappy relationship. In addition, we present confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level.

# Results

**Table 1: Percentage of children living with both birth parents, by age of child**

Age	Living with both birth parents	Not living with both birth parents	Unweighted base
<1	85	15	741
1	78	22	883
2	77	23	883
3	75	25	920
4	72	28	893
5	76	24	860
6	73	27	855
7	72	28	809
8	67	33	808
9	64	36	854
10	62	38	812
11	61	39	870
12	60	40	885
13	56	44	833
14	59	41	890
15	54	46	860
16	53	47	931
All	67	33	14587

Source: Understanding Society, 2010-2011

**Table 2: The percentage of children in low-income households living with both parents compared to the percentage of children in middle/high-income households, by child age group**

Age group	Children in low income households		Children in middle/high income households		All		Unweighted base
	Living with both birth parents	Not living with both birth parents	Living with both birth parents	Not living with both birth parents	Living with both birth parents	Not living with both birth parents	
0-5	52	48	84	16	77	23	5180
6-11	45	55	72	28	66	34	5007
12-16	35	65	61	39	56	44	4396
All	45	55	73	27	67	33	14583

Source: Understanding Society, 2010-2011

## Children living with both birth parents

**Table 3: The estimated percentage of children living with both birth parents where the parents report happiness or unhappiness in their relationship**

	Happy parental relationship	Unhappy parental relationship
High estimate of range	89	28
Low estimate of range	72	11

Source: *Understanding Society, 2009-2010*

Note: Table shows between 72-89 per cent of children are living with both birth parents in families where the parents report a happy relationship, and between 11-28 per cent where the parents report an unhappy relationship.

Base: 12,640 children.

### Notes (all tables):

1. All figures are based on survey data and are therefore subject to a degree of uncertainty. Small differences should be treated with caution as these will be affected by sampling error and variability in non-response.
2. Figures are rounded to the nearest percent.
3. Percentages have been weighted in accordance with the survey guidance issued.
4. Children's ages are at the time of survey.
5. Data is for the United Kingdom.

## Children living with both birth parents

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