

Indicator 1: Family stability

Rationale

The family is the first and the most important building block in a child's life. Many of the early influences on children relate to the family setting in which they grow up. When things go wrong, this can affect a child's development and outcomes in later life. This is especially the case when family breakdown is part of a wider picture of disadvantage; feeding off or compounding other risk factors such as worklessness, indebtedness, mental ill-health or drug and alcohol dependency.

The quality of the parental relationship is also important, however. Intense conflict between parents has been shown to be detrimental to a child's future outcomes, while children raised by parents who report high relationship quality and satisfaction tend to have higher levels of wellbeing and more positive outcomes

The family stability indicator therefore seeks to measure the number of children that have experienced family breakdown, in particular children in low income families, and the proportion of parents that have a good quality relationship.

Definition

The Family Stability indicator measures:

- a) The percentage of all children who are not living with both their birth parents, by age of child.
- b) The percentage of children in low income households not living with both parents compared to the percentage of children in middle to higher income households.
- c) The percentage of children living with both birth parents where the parents report happiness or unhappiness in their relationship.

Latest results

Table 1. Percentage of children living with both birth parents, and the percentage of children in low-income households living with both birth parents compared to children in middle to high-income households

2012-13	Living with both birth parents	Not living with both birth parents
All children	70	30
Children in low income households	45	55
Children in middle/high income households	76	24

Source: Understanding Society, 2012-2013

Notes

1. All children are those aged 0-16 only.
2. Children in low income are defined as the 20% of children living in households with the lowest income, and children in the middle to high income group are the 80% of children living in households with an income above this; based on relative gross household income, before housing costs.
3. All figures are based on survey data and are therefore subject to a degree of uncertainty.
4. Analysis shows association only and is unable to show if there is a causal relationship between children living with both birth parents and income.
5. Figures are rounded to the nearest percent.
6. Percentages have been weighted in accordance with the survey guidance issued.
7. Data is for the United Kingdom

Table 2. Percentage of children living with both birth parents where the parents report happiness or unhappiness in their relationship

2011-12	Happy parental relationship	Unhappy parental relationship
Children living with both birth parents	76	24

Source: Understanding Society, 2011-2012

Notes

1. Children living with both birth parents relates to children aged 0-16 only.
2. Figures are based on are based on parents' self-reported level of happiness with their relationship, all things considered.
3. Figures are based on survey data and are therefore subject to a degree of uncertainty.
4. Figures are rounded to the nearest percent.
5. Percentages have been weighted in accordance with the survey guidance issued.
6. Data is for the United Kingdom.

Further information

An extensive explanation of the latest indicator update can be found at this link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/409336/social-justice-family-stability-indicator-2012-2013.pdf

Status

Last updated: March 2015

Next update: March 2016