

Freedom of Information request 2013-4145

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Information request

I would like to know:

The number of families with one or more child(ren) that have a family income between £16,190 (the income threshold for free school meal availability under the Child Tax Credit criteria) and:

1. The average family income in the UK; and
2. The average family income for families with children in the

UK.

DWP response

In terms of entitlement to free school meals, if you get any of the following support payments your child is entitled to receive free school meals:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit
- Children who receive a qualifying benefit in their own right are also allowed to receive free school meals.

It should be noted that children in families in receipt of any of the eligible benefits and child tax credit may still be entitled to free school meals, even if their income is above the £16,190 threshold under child tax credit.

Children under the compulsory school age are also entitled to receive free school meals if their parent receives one of the above benefits and they are receiving education before and after lunch.

In all cases, a claim for free school meals must be made by or on behalf of the pupil before they are eligible to receive a free school meal.

The figures below are based on net incomes, include pensioners and include income from all sources, and are therefore not directly comparable to whether or not someone is entitled to free school meals.

Based on the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data for 2011/12, which is sourced from the Family Resources Survey (FRS), the median net family income for families in the UK was estimated at £17,632 per year. This includes families with working-age adults and/or pensioners. The median net family income for families with dependent children in the UK was estimated at £27,006 per year.

There were an estimated 7.8 million families in the UK with dependent children in 2011/12.

There were an estimated 300,000 families with one or more dependent children in the UK with a net family income of greater than £16,190 and less than the median net income for families in the UK, £17,632. This figure represents 4 per cent of families with dependent children in the UK.

There were an estimated 2.5 million families with dependent children in the UK with a net family income greater than £16,190 and less than the median net family income for families with dependent children in the UK, £27,006. This figure represents 32 per cent of families with dependant children in the UK.

Notes

1. In the HBAI and FRS a benefit unit (family) is defined as a single adult or a married or cohabiting couple, plus any dependent children. From January 2006 same-sex partners (civil partners and cohabitees) are also included in the same benefit unit. A household is defined as a single person or group of people living at the same address as their only or main residence, who either share one meal together or share the living accommodation. A household will consist of one or more benefit units. The figures above are based on families (benefit units).

2. A dependent child is defined as an individual aged under 16. A person will also be defined as a child if they are 16 to 19-years old and they are not married nor in a Civil Partnership nor living with a partner; and living with parents; and in full-time non-advanced education or in unwaged government training.

3. Incomes calculated here include earnings from employment and self-employment, state support, income from occupational and private pensions, investment income and other sources. Income tax payments, National Insurance contributions, council tax / domestic rates and some other payments are deducted from incomes.
4. Median net family income divides the number of families, when ranked by family (benefit unit) income, into two equal-sized groups.
5. Net family income figures have not been equivalised, which means that net family incomes have not been adjusted for the size and composition of the family. Income is calculated before housing costs and includes all sources of income.
6. The £16,190 income threshold for free school meal availability under the Child Tax Credit criteria is based on taxable income, as assessed by HMRC e.g. it does not include tax credits. The median net family income supplied here does include tax credits, and is net of income tax payments, National Insurance contributions, council tax / domestic rates and some other payments. Working families with a family income of less than £16,190 will not qualify for free school meals if the family works sufficient hours to claim Working Tax Credit.
7. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £1 and to the nearest 100,000 families. Estimates based on survey data are subject to uncertainty. The estimates are subject to sampling error.