

# **Poverty Research Methods Course 15-19 July 2019**

## **Measuring Child Poverty**

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### **Outline**

Why is child poverty important to consider as distinct topic?

International concerns and the evolution of definitions of child poverty

Efforts to measure child poverty

Examples from around the world

Social policies used to tackle child poverty

Useful sources of microdata and tools for child poverty analyses

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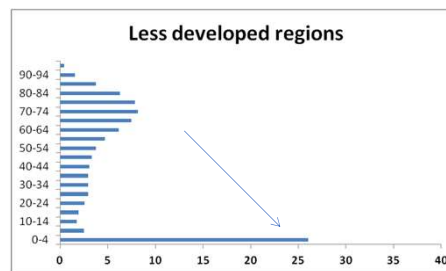
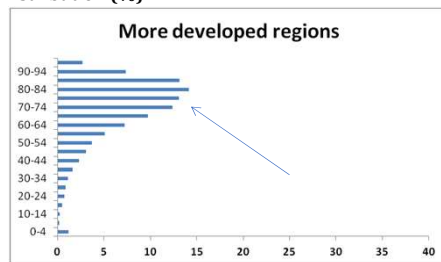
### Reasons for focusing on child poverty as a distinct issue?

- Immediate serious and long term impacts on survival, health and development
- Vulnerability of children, especially young ones, and their dependence on adults
- 'Routes out of poverty' available to adults not (legitimately) open to children
- Children in many countries account for a large proportion of the population and of the total poor; to tackle wider poverty requires tackling child poverty
- Policies to address child poverty also reduce poverty in general
- Impact of macro-economic policies on children – what is 'good' for the economy might not necessarily be good for children
- Rights based arguments – 1989 UNCRC, SDG target 1.2.2

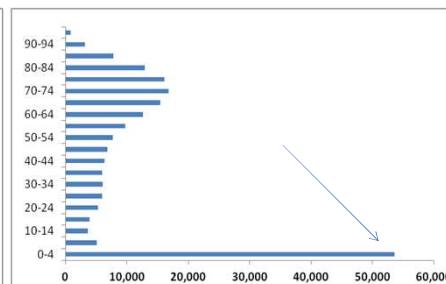
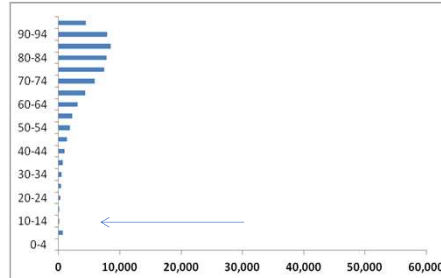
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### Mortality rates and numbers by age group, 1995-2000

Distribution (%)



Numbers (000s)



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Child Poverty - A Global Concern, *State of the World's Children Report 2005*

**The Guardian**  
 Friday, December 10, 2004  
 Published in London and Manchester  
 www.guardian.co.uk

**The Independent**  
 Friday 10 December 2004  
 No. 6,800 www.independent.co.uk  
 Price 10p (incl. VAT) (except in Ireland 10p)

**The greatest catastrophe**  
**Aids worst disaster in history, says UN chief**  
**Blighted childhood**  
**1 in 6 children are severely hungry; one in seven has no health care at all; one in five has no safe water and one in three has no toilet or sanitation facilities at home**  
**Over 640m children live in dwellings with mud floors or extreme overcrowding**  
**Over 120m children are shut out of primary schools, the majority of them girls**  
**180m children work in the worst forms of child labour**  
**1.2m children are trafficked each year**  
**2m children, mostly girls, are exploited in the sex industry**  
**3.6m people killed in conflict during the 1990s (45%) were children**  
**1,000,000,000**  
**One billion children are at risk today from war, poverty and hunger, failed by the world's governments**  
**Howard Jacobson: I defend my right to be rude and offensive**  
**IN THE 40-PAGE Arts & Books Review**  
**Percentage of 16- and 17-year-olds with access to the Internet by end of 2003**  
 North Africa & Middle East 12%  
 Latin America 7%  
 Sub-Saharan Africa 2%  
 Life Africa 51%  
 The Continent 51%

**African indicators**  
 Life expectancy at birth (years) 2003  
 Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) 2003  
 Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) 2003  
 Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births) 2003  
 Adult literacy rate (per 100) 2003

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**International Concerns**

1924 League of Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child

1959 UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child

1979 International Year of the Child

1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## 1989 UNCRC

- Binding on governments
- Rights to Survival, Development, Protection, Participation

**Article 4** *States to make provision of resources*

**Article 27** *right to adequate standard of living*

**Article 26** *right to social security and social insurance*

**Article 24** *medical assistance and health care*

**Article 28** *free, compulsory primary education*

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## 1990 World Summit for Children

Goals included:

- By 2000, a reduction of infant and under-5 child mortality rate by one third or to 50 and 70 per 1,000 live births respectively, whichever is less
- Global eradication of poliomyelitis by 2000 and elimination of neonatal tetanus by 1995
- By 2000, a reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-5 children by half
- Universal access to safe drinking water and to sanitary means of excreta disposal;
- By 2000, universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children;
- Maintenance of immunization coverage (at least 90% of children under one year of age by the year 2000)

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## 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children

Goals missed included reduction of child mortality, malnutrition, universal access to safe water, sanitation, primary education, gender equity in education

*“A mixture of conspicuous achievement and dispiriting failure”*

Carol Bellamy, Director UNICEF

*“Real and significant progress (being undermined) by setbacks, slippage and in some cases, real retrogression, some of it serious enough to threaten earlier gains”* Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General

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## Efforts to measure child poverty

### Why Not Use “\$1 a day” for Child Poverty?

Little is known about the income/expenditure/consumption needs of children and how these vary by age, gender and location. Any income poverty threshold for children would thus be set at an essentially arbitrary level given the current lack of knowledge about children’s needs

Household-based income ‘poverty’ analyses assume equal sharing within households. This assumption is unlikely to be correct.

The extent of child poverty is not just dependent on family income but also on public infrastructure and basic services, such as health, education and water supply.

Internationally-agreed *definitions* of poverty focus on outcomes (e.g. the effects of a lack of command over resources, deprivation) not inputs (i.e. low income) .

Technical challenges in using an income approach, e.g. calculating equivalent spending power of national currencies over time, equivalisation scales, controlling for infrequent, irregular or seasonal purchases, under-reporting bias and other measurement errors, data discontinuities, quantifying the benefits of ‘home production’, etc.

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## Absolute Poverty

After the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, 117 countries adopted a declaration and programme of action which included commitments to eradicate “absolute” and reduce “overall” poverty.

**Absolute poverty** was defined as *"a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services."* (UN, 1995)

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## Continuum of deprivation



In order to measure absolute poverty amongst children, it is necessary to define the threshold measures of severe deprivation of basic human need for:

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. food                  | 5. shelter              |
| 2. safe drinking water   | 6. education            |
| 3. sanitation facilities | 7. information          |
| 4. health                | 8. [access to services] |

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## Severe Deprivation of Basic Human Needs

- About 1 in 3 children (around 640 million) in developing countries are **severely shelter deprived** – *i.e. they live in extremely overcrowded conditions or in dwellings constructed from poor quality materials.*
- 30% of children (over half a billion) are **severely sanitation deprived** – *i.e. have no toilet facilities whatsoever.*
- 21% of children (over 400 million) are **severely water deprived** – *i.e. using unsafe open water sources, rivers or ponds or they have to walk 15 minutes to their water source.*
- About 1 in 5 children (i.e. aged between 3 and 18) are **severely information deprived** – *i.e. lack access to radios, televisions, computers, telephones or newspapers at home.*

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## Severe Deprivation of Basic Human Needs

- 17% of children in the developing world under 5 are **severely food deprived**, *i.e. heights and weights for their ages are below -3 standard deviations of the international reference population median; around 40% of all food deprived children live in South Asia.*
- 14% of children (around 275 million) are **severely health deprived**. *i.e. – they have not been immunised against any disease whatsoever, or they have had a recent illness causing diarrhoea and received no advice or treatment.*
- Around 13% children aged between 7 – 18 (145 million) are **severely educationally deprived** – *i.e. they have never been to school*

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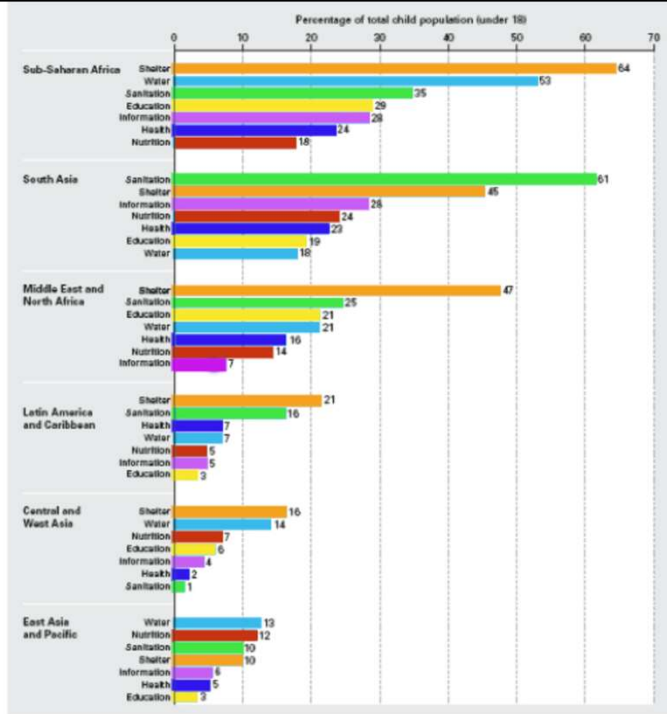
## Child Poverty in the Developing World

**34%** of children in the developing world (around 650 million) live in **absolute poverty** (i.e. experience two or more severe deprivations)

**56%** of children in the developing world (over one billion) experience **severe deprivation** of at least one basic human need

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### Severe deprivation among children in the developing world, by region



Source: SOWC 2005

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In 2006 the UN General Assembly adopted an international definition of child poverty, rooted in the CRC and unambiguously multidimensional:

“Children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic health-care services, shelter, education, participation and protection”

“According to this new definition, measuring child poverty can no longer be lumped together with general poverty assessments which often focus solely on income levels, but must take into consideration access to basic social services, especially nutrition, water, sanitation, shelter, education and information.”

UNICEF, [www.unicef.org/media/media\\_38003.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_38003.html)

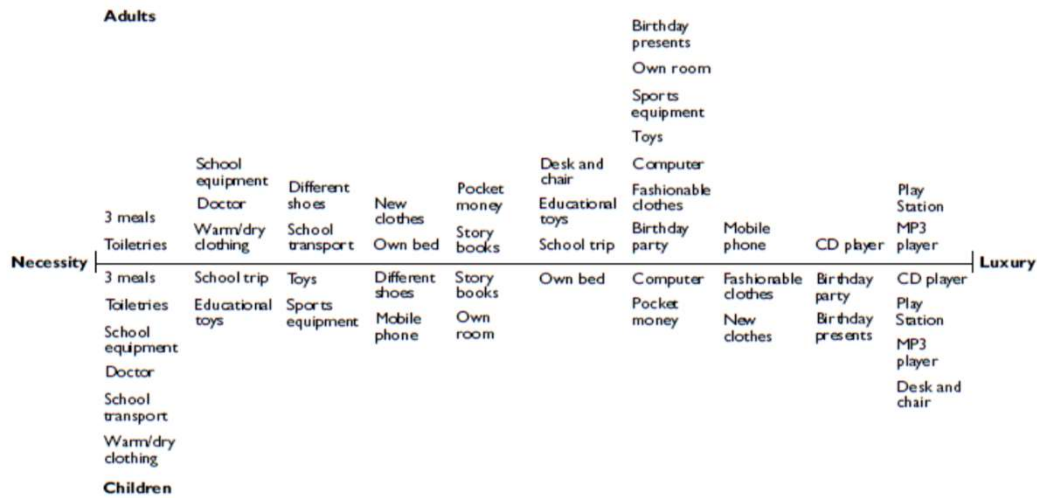
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## Other approaches

- Rights based approaches (Gordon et al., 2003; Redmond, 2008)
- UNICEF’s Multiple Overlapping Deprivations Approach (MODA) (Chzhen et al., 2014; De Neubourg et al, 2013)
- MPI for children (Alkire and Roche, 2012)
- Subjective measures of child poverty and wellbeing (Main, 2014; Main and Bradshaw, 2016; Rees and Main, 2015; Ridge, 2002)
- Consensual approach (Barnes and Wright, 2012; Nandy and Main, 2015; Kim and Nandy, 2018)... forthcoming work from Tonga, Uganda.

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Figure 6.1: A comparison of the adult and child views



Barnes and Wright, 2012

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## Policies to tackle child poverty

UK made remarkable progress in reducing child poverty between 1999-2006

- When the Labour party came into office in May 1997 there was mounting concern about child poverty and inequality

March 1999 - Tony Blair: *"Our historic aim will be for ours to be the first generation to end child poverty, and it will take a generation. It is a 20 year mission but I believe it can be done."*

Gordon Brown (Ch. of Exchequer) committed and channelled resources into tackling child poverty

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## What social and public policies were used?

### Promoting work and making work pay

- Welfare to work programs (New Deal)
- Measures to make work pay including:
- National minimum wage
- Working Families Tax Credit
- Reduced payroll taxes for low-income workers
- Lone parents not *required* to work

### Raising incomes for families with children

- Raising incomes for families with children
- Significant real increases in:
- Child Benefit
- Welfare grants for children under 10
- New Child Tax Credit for low-income families
- New Child Trust Funds

### Investing in children

- Paid maternity leave extended from 6 to 9 months
- Two weeks paid paternity leave
- Higher maternity grants for low-income families
- Right to request PT/flexible hours when children <age 6
- Universal preschool for 3- and 4-year olds
- Preschool for disadvantaged 2-year olds
- Sure Start for poorest areas, later Children's Centres
- Reductions in primary school class sizes
- Literacy and numeracy hours
- Increased education spending (from 4.5% to 5.6% GDP)
- Schools Building Programme
- Educational Maintenance Allowances
- Minimum school-leaving age raised from 16 to 18

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## Results?

### ~1% national income spent on policies for children and families

Anti-poverty initiatives amounted to a large real increases in spending on children.

By 2002-03, the UK government was spending an **additional £9billion/yr** [0.9% of GDP].

By April 2010, families with children were £2,000/yr better off; families in bottom quintile were £4,500/yr better off.

### Headline results

In 1999, 3.4 million children (1 in 4) were in poverty (whether defined in relative or absolute terms) and 2.6 million (1 in 5) were materially deprived.

By 2007/08, absolute poverty fell by 1.7 million – a 50% reduction;

Relative poverty fell by 500,000 – a 15% reduction; Material deprivation fell by 400,000 – a 15% reduction.

*Absolute poverty is income <60% median income in 1998/99, uprated only for inflation; Relative poverty is income <60% contemporary median income.*

*Material deprivation combines an index of lacking basic necessities & having low income.*

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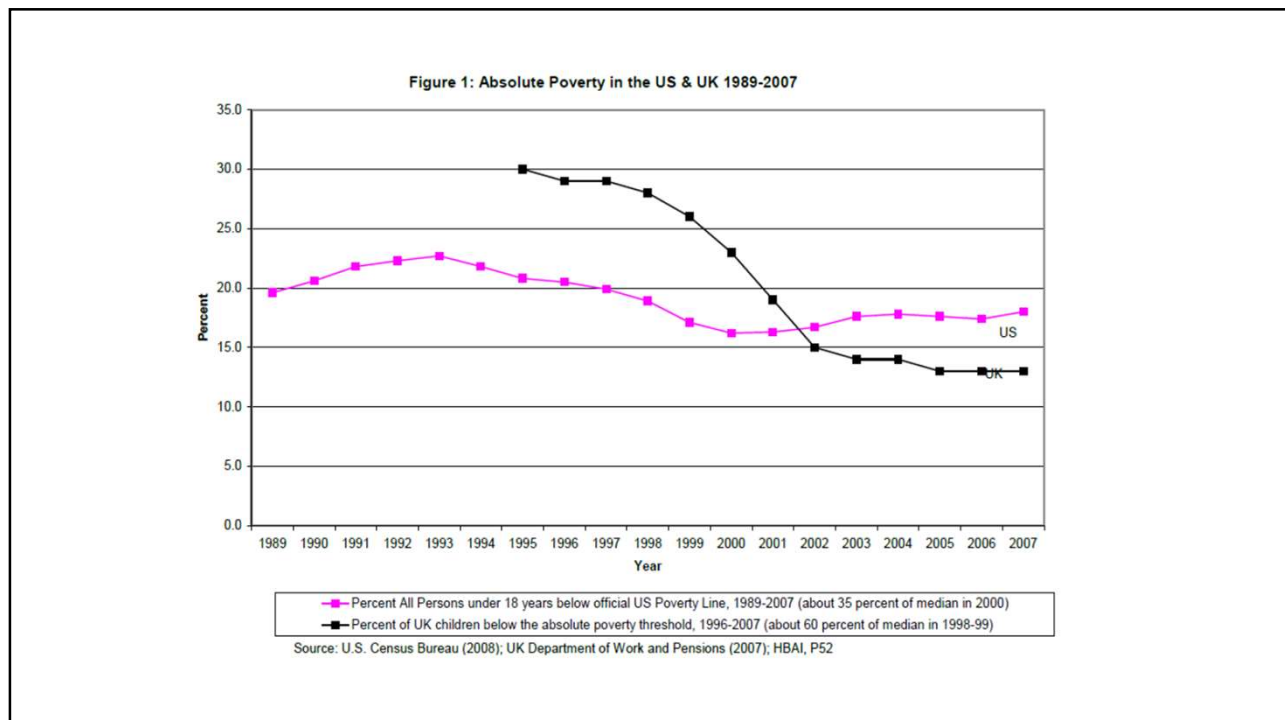
## Other impacts

- Families with young children increased spending on items for children, *decreased spending* on alcohol and tobacco
- Adolescents in lone-parent families had *improved mental health*, school attendance, and school intentions
- Sure Start led to improvements in 7 of 14 outcomes assessed (regarding parenting, child health, and child behaviour)
- Literacy and numeracy hours improved children's reading & maths results

After two decades of rising inequality, Labour gov't came into office committed to reducing child poverty, and with public support for that goal.

Policies promoted work, made work pay, and also raised benefits for non-working families and investments in children.

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## But... Costly distractions made an impact

- 9-11, War on Terror, Global Financial Crisis (2007-18)
- 2010 Change of govt, Coalition committed to Austerity led to
  - cuts to public expenditure
  - capping benefits to families
  - shifts to Universal Credit
  - changes in housing benefits ('spare bedroom tax')

But: increased provision of child care for 2-yr olds, free school meals for primary school children...

### 16 November, 2018, Professor Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

"- 14 million people, a fifth of the population, live in poverty.

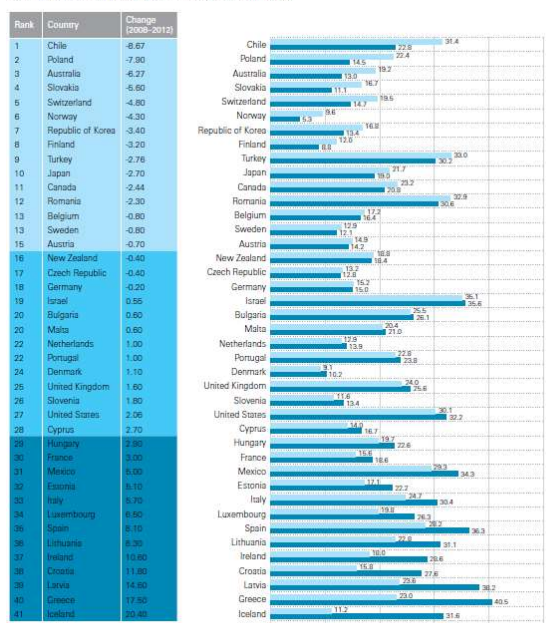
- Four million of these are more than 50% below the poverty line, and 1.5 million are destitute, unable to afford basic essentials.
- The Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts a 7% rise in child poverty between 2015 and 2022, and various sources predict child poverty rates of as high as 40%.
- *For almost one in every two children to be poor in twenty-first century Britain is not just a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster, all rolled into one.*

"The country's most respected charitable groups, its leading think tanks, its parliamentary committees, independent authorities like the National Audit Office...have all drawn attention to the dramatic decline in the fortunes of the least well off in this country. But through it all, *one actor has stubbornly resisted seeing the situation for what it is. The Government has remained determinedly in a state of denial.*"

[www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23881&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23881&LangID=E)

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League Table 1 Change in child poverty (anchored in 2008)



Source: UNICEF Innocenti Report Card No: 12 (2014)

Child poverty rate  
2008 2012

4-12-2017

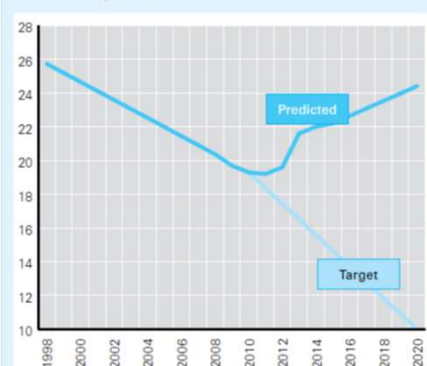
### JRF UK Poverty Report 2017

"Twenty years ago a third of children lived in poverty; this fell to 27% in 2011/12...

This progress is now at risk of reversing: poverty rates ... have started to rise again, to 30% for children."

[www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2017](http://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2017)

Relative child poverty rate, United Kingdom, 1998-2020



Source: Data from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, London, October 2011. The graph shows the percentage of children living in households below 60% of equalized median income before housing costs. For illustrative purposes, the 'Target' line assumes linear progress towards the 2020 goal.

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So, policies do matter, and do work... but bad policies can make things worse

- Poverty, and child poverty in particular, is not a law of nature.
- Poverty research is important, sometimes unpopular, and often necessarily political.
- Data for research are plentiful, accessible and often free to students and researchers.
- Policy makers require reliable data and evidence, if only to challenge prejudices and assumptions about why people are poor and what can be done about it.

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## Useful sources

- Integrated household survey network, [www.IHSN.org](http://www.IHSN.org)
- Demographic and Health Surveys, [www.dhsprogram.org](http://www.dhsprogram.org); [www.statcompiler.com/en/](http://www.statcompiler.com/en/)
- UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, <http://mics.unicef.org/>
- UNICEF Multidimensional Child Poverty and Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) tool, [www.unicef-irc.org/research/multidimensional-child-poverty/](http://www.unicef-irc.org/research/multidimensional-child-poverty/)
- LMICs - [www.dataforall.org/dashboard/ccmoda/index.php](http://www.dataforall.org/dashboard/ccmoda/index.php)
- EU MODA - [http://dataforall.org/dashboard/eumoda\\_adj/index.php/](http://dataforall.org/dashboard/eumoda_adj/index.php/)
- ECLAC Guide to Estimating Child Poverty, <https://dds.cepal.org/infancia/guide-to-estimating-child-poverty/introduction.php>
- IPUMS-DHS, [www.idhsdata.org/idhs/](http://www.idhsdata.org/idhs/)
- WORLD Policy Analysis Centre (UCLA), [www.worldpolicycenter.org/](http://www.worldpolicycenter.org/)
- PROSPERED Project, [www.prosperedproject.com/database-descriptions](http://www.prosperedproject.com/database-descriptions)

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