



Poverty: Regional statistics

Standard Note: SN/EP/4627
Last updated: 15 May 2009
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Section: Economic Policy & Statistics

The lowest geographical level for which comparable poverty statistics are available across the UK is country/region (i.e. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the English regions, and inner and outer London). To be sufficiently reliable, these data must be presented as three-year moving averages. Because of larger surveys carried out in Scotland and Northern Ireland, single year figures can be produced.

Official poverty data are **not** available for smaller geographies, such as Parliamentary constituencies apart from Northern Ireland (see part 4.2). For information on other constituency-level data, see part 5 of this note, and SN/EP/5017, [Income and earnings by constituency: availability of data](#).

This note presents the latest data (to 2007/08) on overall poverty at the regional level, with breakdowns for children, working adults and pensioners (a summary table of the latest data for all countries/regions and each of these four groups is the annex (part 6) of this note). It also includes references to other reports produced for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

For users of the Parliamentary intranet only, a detailed [spreadsheet](#) is available, giving time series for overall poverty and the groups outlined above back to 1994/95. For other readers, some regional time series data tables are also available from the [DWP website](#) (see part 2).

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1 Background

Members of Parliament often express interest in poverty at a local level, for constituencies in particular.¹

The most widely used measure of poverty is living in a household with an equivalised (adjusted for family size) income below 60% of the median household.² These 'official' UK poverty data are taken from the annual Department for Work & Pensions' *Households Below Average Income* (HBAI) series. This is derived from the Family Resources Survey (FRS), a large-scale household survey.

However, while large, this survey does not give sufficient sample sizes to allow accurate sub-national statistics to be calculated. Even at the largest sub-national unit, region and country (i.e. Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland and the Government Office Regions in England), single-year estimates are considered to be volatile.³

Combining data from three years of survey data (using three-year rolling averages) is considered sufficiently robust to present overall poverty and breakdowns for three age groups (children, working adults and pensioners) at the region/country level. Note that **these data do not take into account regional differences in the cost of living**, other than housing (through the after housing costs measure).

This approach is not robust enough to present poverty statistics for areas smaller than the country/region, such as Parliamentary constituencies or local authority areas. In response to Parliamentary Questions requesting such information (apart from Northern Ireland, see part 4.2), the Government uses regional figures as the best available information. Part 5 of this note looks at other sources that provide proxy measures of poverty.

Readers may also be interested in Institute for Fiscal Studies research on regional poverty.⁴

¹ See, for instance, written answers concerning Peterborough constituency ([HC Deb 30 January 2008 c410w](#)) and Cornwall ([HC Deb 21 February 2008 c1023W](#)).

² The median household is that in the middle of the income distribution, with 50% of households having a higher income than this, and 50% an income below this level.

³ For Scotland and Northern Ireland data are available from an enhanced (or boosted) sample of the underlying Family Resources Survey from which HBAI poverty data are derived (see part 4 of this note).

⁴ IFS, [Poverty and Inequality in the UK 2008](#), pp53-59 (this analysis was not replicated in the 2009 edition)

2 Additional tables (time series back to 1994/95)

The official DWP data supporting the charts above are also available as a spreadsheet for users of the Parliamentary Intranet:

<http://hcl1.hclibrary.parliament.uk/notes/epas/snep-04627.xls>

The spreadsheet includes detailed tables giving time series back to 1994/95-1996/97, the first three-year period for which data are available at a regional level. There are tables presenting the data for overall poverty, as well as child, pensioner and adult poverty. The spreadsheet also includes data on both before and after deducting housing costs bases for all of the above. Some data, for Northern Ireland and the Inner/Outer London split, are not available for earlier three-year periods (signified by 'n/a').

For readers without access to the Parliamentary intranet, regional time series data tables are published alongside the DWP's *Households Below Average Income* report. These tables are available from the spreadsheets at www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2008/chapters.asp:

Overall poverty: [table 3.6](#) (risk, current period only);

Children: [table 4.18ts](#) and [4.19ts](#) (risk and numbers);

Working age adults: [table 5.8](#) (risk, current period only);

Pensioners: [table 6.8ts](#) and [6.9ts](#) (risk and numbers) and also tables using threshold of 50% of median income (rather than the standard 60%): [tables 6.18ts](#), [6.19ts](#).

3 Analysis of 2005/06-2007/08 figures & trends since 1994/95

3.1 Overall poverty

In terms of numbers living in poverty (before housing costs), the [additional tables](#) (table A1b) show that the North West had the greatest number of children in poverty of any region/country in 2005/06-2007/08 (1.4 million), followed by London (1.3 million). It is important to note that these areas have comparatively high populations: the data below take this into account by analysing the proportions of the population being poverty. However, while the South East has the highest population (8.1 million) it has 1.1 million living in poverty. The lowest poverty levels are found in Northern Ireland (0.3 million), although it has the lowest population (1.7 million).

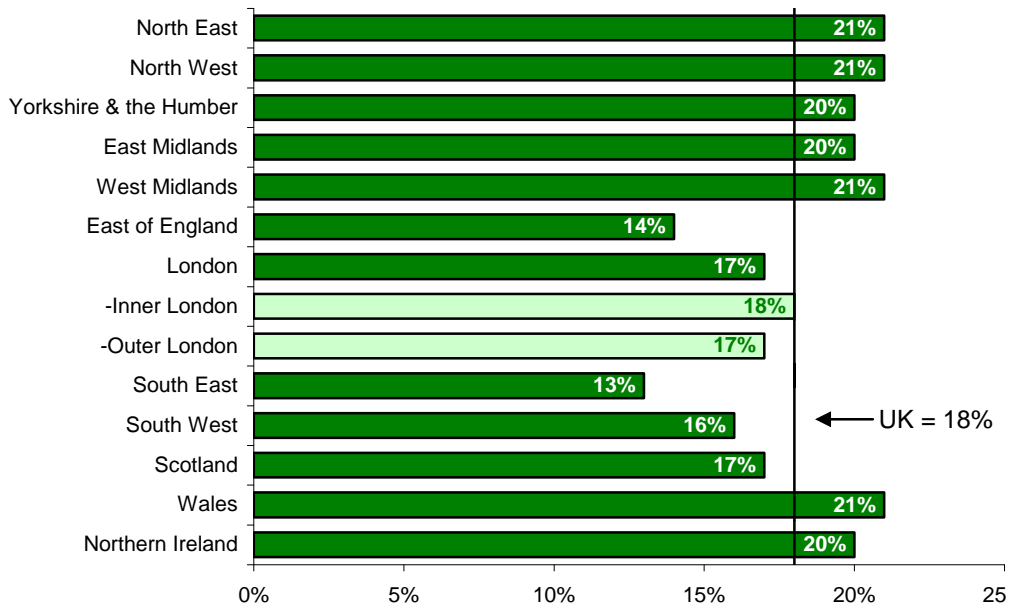
Over the whole period 1994/95-1996/97 to 2005/06-2007/08, the number of people living in poverty has risen in the East Midlands, West Midlands, London and the South East (although in all cases only by 0.1 million), while numbers have decreased in the North East, Yorkshire & the Humber and Scotland (again only by 0.1 million).

Chart 1 (overleaf) shows the proportion of the overall population living in households with incomes⁵ below 60% of the national median before housing costs have been deducted in 2005/06-2007/08:⁶

⁵ Equivalised, or adjusted for household size and composition to make income a better measure of living standards.

⁶ Equivalised, or adjusted for household size and composition to make income a better measure of living standards.

Chart 1: % of population in households with income below 60% of median:
2005/06-2007/08: before housing costs



While 18% of the UK population as a whole were living in poverty over this three-year period four regions had 21% of their population living in poverty (North East, North West, West Midlands, and Wales). The South East had the lowest proportion of its population in poverty (13%), followed by the East of England (14%). The poverty rate in Scotland was below the UK-wide rate (at 17%), while rates were similar between inner and outer London (18% and 17% respectively).

The [additional tables](#) (table A1a) show that over the period 1994/95-1996/97 to 2005/06-2007/08 the largest reductions in poverty rates on this measure were seen in the North East (down 4 percentage points) and Scotland (down 3 percentage points). The poverty rate had increased in only one region, West Midlands (by 1 percentage point). No breakdown was available within London until 1997/9-1999/00, but between then and 2005/06-2007/08 poverty rates were down 6 percentage points in Inner London, but up by 2 percentage points in Outer London).

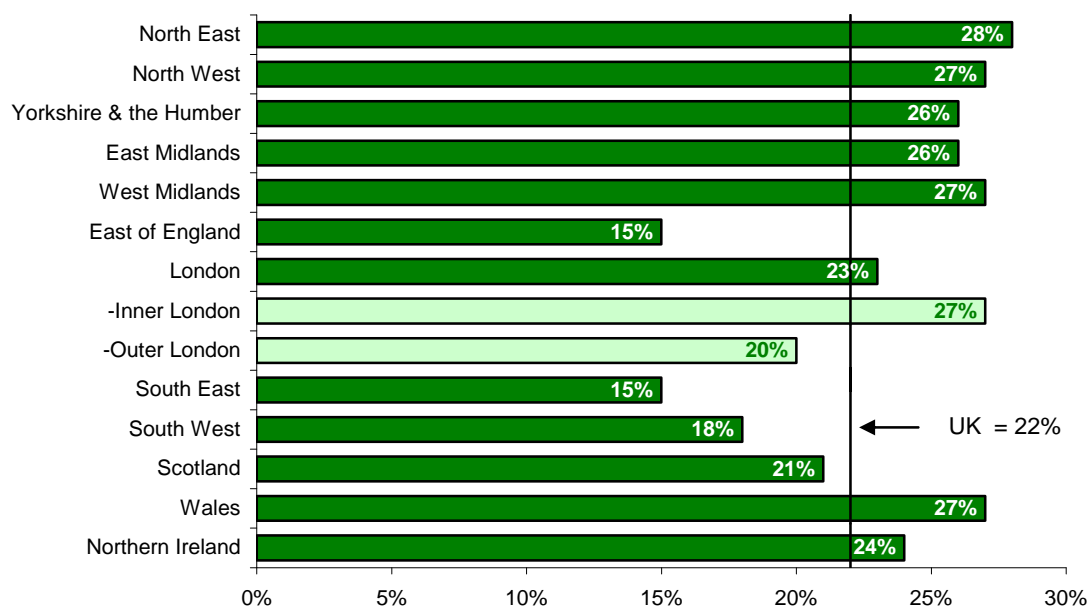
3.2 Child poverty

The [additional tables](#) (table A2b) show that the numbers of children living in poverty (before housing costs) in 2005/06-2007/08 were highest in the North West and London (0.4 million), although these are also two of the most populous regions (see data below for the risk of being in poverty). The lowest poverty levels are found in Northern Ireland (0.1 million), although it also has the lowest number of children (0.4 million).

Over the period 1994/95-1996/97 to 2005/06-2007/08, the number of children living in poverty has either fallen (in the North East, North West and Scotland, in each case by only 0.1 million) or remained the same in all countries/regions (no data for Northern Ireland nor inner/outer London).

The chart below shows the proportion of children living in poverty (before housing costs) in each country/region in 2005/06-2007/08:

Chart 2: Proportion of children in households with income below 60% of median, 2005/06-2007/08: before housing costs



While 22% of children in the UK were living in poverty over this three-year period, the highest rates were seen in the North East (28%), followed by the North West, West Midlands, Wales (and Inner London if treated separately from the rest of the capital). The lowest rates of child poverty were seen in the South East and the East of England (both 15%). Scotland's child poverty rate was below the UK-wide rate (21%), and while London as a whole was above the national rate (23%), the rate was much higher in Inner London (27%) than in outer London (20%).

As the [additional tables](#) show (table A2a), over the period 1994/95-1996/97 to 2005/06-2007/08 the largest reductions in poverty rates on this measure were seen in Scotland (down 8 percentage points) and Yorkshire & the Humber (down 5 percentage points). No region saw an increase in child poverty over this period (no data for Northern Ireland, nor inner/outer London).

Material deprivation & low income combined

Regional breakdowns are also available for a relatively new companion measure of child poverty, based on living in material deprivation and having relative low income (in this case below 70% of the median household, before housing costs). A family is deemed to be in poverty on this measure if they have a "material deprivation score" of 25 or more. Households are surveyed whether they have (and want) a range of 21 goods or services. These scores are weighted towards families that lack the items most other households have.⁷

These data have only been collected since 2004/05, and so are only available for two three-year periods. The proportions and numbers are shown in the table below:

⁷ For more details on the concept, see DWP, [HBAI 2007/08](#), appendix 2, p185

Child poverty (material deprivation & low income) by region/country since 2004/05

Number/proportion in material deprivation & household income below 70% of the median (BHC)
(three year rolling averages)

per cent/millions

	Proportions			Numbers		
	04/05- 06/07	05/06- 07/08	Change (% points)	04/05- 06/07	05/06- 07/08	Change
			2004/05-2006/07 to 2005/06-2007/08			2004/05-2006/07 to 2005/06-2007/08
Before housing costs						
England	16	17	1	1.8	1.8	0.0
North East	20	20	0	0.1	0.1	0.0
North West	19	20	1	0.3	0.3	0.0
Yorkshire & the Humber	17	17	0	0.2	0.2	0.0
East Midlands	17	19	2	0.2	0.2	0.0
West Midlands	20	21	1	0.2	0.2	0.0
East of England	11	10	-1	0.1	0.1	0.0
London	22	21	-1	0.4	0.3	-0.1
- <i>Inner London</i>	29	26	-3	0.2	0.2	0.0
- <i>Outer London</i>	19	18	-1	0.2	0.2	0.0
South East	11	11	0	0.2	0.2	0.0
South West	13	13	0	0.1	0.1	0.0
Scotland	15	15	0	0.2	0.1	-0.1
Wales	18	17	-1	0.1	0.1	0.0
Great Britain	16	17	1	2.0	2.0	0.0
Northern Ireland	15	14	-1	0.1	0.1	0.0
United Kingdom	16	17	1	2.1	2.1	0.0

Source: DWP, pers. comm., May 2009 (all based on Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data from the Family Resources Survey)

Notes: Please refer to notes on 'contents tab'

A family is in low income and material deprivation if they have a material deprivation score of 25 or more and a household income below 70 per cent contemporary median income, Before Housing Costs.

The highest proportions of the population (risk) of this form of child deprivation and poverty is seen in London and the West Midlands (both 21%). If Inner London is considered separately it has an even higher rate (26%), compared with 18% for Outer London. The lowest risk is seen in the East of England (10%) and the South East (11%). Data are only available for two three-year periods, and comparisons over short periods should be treated with caution. The proportion of children living in this form of deprivation/poverty fell in Wales and Northern Ireland (1 percentage point each), and by 3 percentage points in Inner London. The proportion of children living in this form of poverty increased by 2 percentage points in the East Midlands, and by one point in the North West and the West Midlands.

In terms of actual numbers, the greatest numbers of children living in this form of deprivation/poverty are in the North West and London (0.3 million, though as noted above they are two of the most populous regions), and the lowest (0.1 million) are in several regions. Little change was seen in the numbers of children in poverty over the two three-year periods (only Scotland and London, with reductions of 0.1 million).

3.3 Poverty among working-age adults

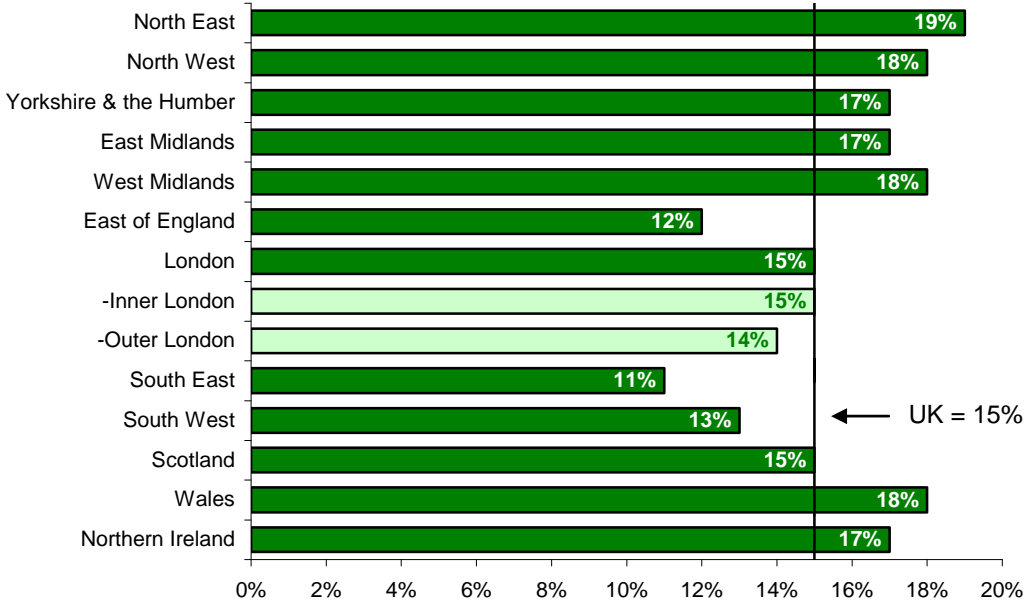
The [additional tables](#) (table A3b) show that the numbers of adults of working age living in poverty (before housing costs) in 2005/06-2007/08 were highest in the North West and London (0.7 million), although these are two of the most populous regions (see data below for the risk of being in poverty). The lowest poverty levels are found in Northern Ireland (0.2 million), although it has the lowest number of adults of any country/region (1.0 million).

Over the period 1994/95-1996/97 to 2005/06-2007/08, the number of people living in poverty increased in the North West, West Midlands, East of England, London and the South East (in

each case by only 0.1 million), while the numbers of adults in poverty were unchanged in all other regions (no data for Northern Ireland nor inner/outer London).

The chart below shows the proportion of adults of working age living in poverty (before housing costs) in each country/region in 2005/06-2007/08:

Chart 3: % of working-age adult population in households with income below 60% of median: 2005/06-2007/08: before housing costs



While 15% of adults in the UK were living in poverty over this three-year period, the highest rates were seen in the North East (19%), followed by the North West, West Midlands and Wales. The lowest rates of child poverty were seen in the South East (11%) and the East of England (12%). Scotland and London had the same adult poverty rate as the UK as a whole, although outer London was slightly lower (14%).

As the [additional tables](#) show (table A3a), over the period 1994/95-1996/97 to 2005/06-2007/08 poverty risk rates among adults fell by a percentage point in the North East, Yorkshire & the Humber and Scotland. The risk rate increased by 3 percentage points in West Midlands, and by 2 percentage points in the North West and the East Midlands (no data for Northern Ireland, nor inner/outer London).

3.4 Pensioner poverty (after housing costs)

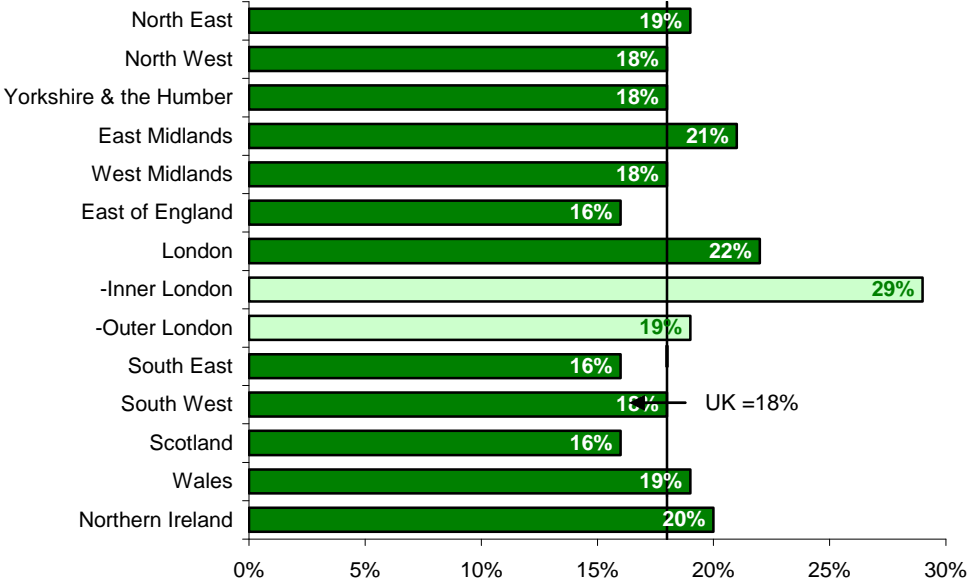
Whereas the data above were presented on an income before housing costs basis, pensioner poverty is often presented on an after housing costs (AHC) basis. For example, the Government has a pensioner poverty Public Service Agreement target based on the AHC measure.

The [additional tables](#) (table A4b) show that there were 0.2 million pensioners living in poverty (after housing costs) in 2005/06-2007/08 in several regions (the North West, Yorkshire & the Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England, London, South East and South West) and 0.1 million in the other regions. Over the period 1994/95-1996/97 to 2005/06-2007/08, the number of pensioners living in poverty after housing costs was reduced by 0.2 million in the South East and Scotland, and by 0.1 million in other regions

apart from the East Midlands and Wales (with no change, based on data rounded to the nearest 0.1 million).

The chart below shows the proportion of pensioners living in poverty (after housing costs) in each country/region in 2005/06-2007/08:⁸

Chart 4: % of pensioners in households with income below 60% of median: 2005/06-2007/08: after housing costs



While 18% of pensioners in the UK were living in poverty (after housing costs) over this three-year period, the highest rates were seen in London (22%) and the East Midlands (21%). Considered separately, inner London had a rate of 29% (11 percentage points above the UK level) and outer London 19% (1 percentage points below the UK level). The lowest rates of pensioner poverty were seen in the South East, East of England and Scotland (16% each).

As the [additional tables](#) show, over the period 1994/95-1996/97 to 2005/06-2007/08 pensioner poverty (after housing costs) rates fell across the board. The largest reductions were seen in Scotland (15 percentage points) and the North East (14 percentage points), and the smallest reduction in rates in the East Midlands (6 percentage points) and Wales (7 percentage points) (no data for Northern Ireland, nor inner/outer London).

4 Further sources & reports

4.1 Scotland

Since 2002/03 the Scottish Government has been funding a doubling of the sample size in the *Family Resources Survey*, the source for *Households Below Average Income* data, for Scotland. Since then, statistics for Scotland are more robust than for other areas of the UK. Single year figures can be presented, rather than the three-year moving averages given in the charts above and the statistical annex to this note.

The Scottish Government’s income and poverty page is at:

⁸ Equivalised, or adjusted for household size and composition to make income a better measure of living standards.

www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/IncomePoverty.

Until 2006/07 data, a separate *Scottish Households Below Average Income* report was published. This was re-titled Poverty and income inequality in Scotland for the 2007/08 data. See

- [Poverty and income inequality in Scotland 2007/08, May 2009](#); and
- [Scottish Households Below Average Income, 2006/07, June 2008](#).⁹

This includes analysis of the same groups used throughout this note, with time series (based on single years). There are also details of poverty in Scotland seminar at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/IncomePoverty.

Also, a January 2008 research briefing from the Scottish Parliament research service is available from: www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-08/SB08-05.pdf.

The House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee also examined Child Poverty in Scotland in its [February 2008 report](#), with the Government and Scottish Executive [responses](#) published in April 2008.

4.2 Northern Ireland

As with Scotland, the sample size for Northern Ireland has been increased to allow more accurate statistics (single year figures) to be produced rather than the three-year moving averages given elsewhere in this note. Northern Ireland's *Households Below Average Income* reports are available from:

www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/stats_and_research/stats-publications/stats-family-resource/households.htm

Analysis of the 2007/08 data is not yet available. However, a Northern Ireland Assembly written answer gave child poverty by parliamentary constituency based on the three years 2004/05-2006/07.¹⁰

The Northern Ireland Assembly's [Research & Library Services](#) have also published briefings on child poverty:

- [The Measurement of Severe and Persistent Childhood Poverty \(24/08\)](#)
- [Comparing Child Poverty in Northern Ireland with Other Regions \(23/08\)](#)

The NIA's Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister also inquired into child poverty in Northern Ireland in 2008, the report is available from: www.niassembly.gov.uk/centre/2007mandate/reports_07.htm.

4.3 Wales

The National Assembly for Wales has the following resources:

- Social Justice theme
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/socialjustice/?lang=en>

⁹ The 2005/06, 2004/05, 2003/04 (and [briefing note](#)) editions are also available online.

¹⁰ AQW 5066/09, 27 February 2009;
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/qanda/2007mandate/writtenans/2008/090227.htm#1>

- Child Poverty page
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/childpoverty/?lang=en>
- Child Poverty statistics page
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/socialjustice/childpoverty/?lang=en>

A National Assembly for Wales Members' Research Service report on Child Poverty was published in July 2008: <http://www.assemblywales.org/08-045.pdf>.

5 Other relevant constituency-level data

While income poverty data are not below the region/country level (other than in Northern Ireland) other measures can indicate those areas at greater risk of poverty.

Average earnings data are available at region/country, local authority area and Parliamentary constituency levels (although these data exclude non-wage income), while incomes data are available for regions/countries, local authority areas and constituencies but for **income taxpayers only** (derived from tax data). For more information, see SN/EP/5017, [Income and earnings by constituency: availability of data](#).

5.1 End Child Poverty constituency-level research

In September 2007 campaigning group End Child Poverty published research looking at children with low incomes at a Parliamentary constituency level.

While this research looks at low incomes, it does not correspond to the *de facto* official measure (living in a household with an income 60% below the median) and so by extension does not correspond to the measure used to judge progress towards the Government's target for reducing child poverty (see [SN/EP/3314](#)), which as noted above are not available below the region/country level.

Their statistics indicate areas with low incomes, based on tax credit data receipt statistics (from August 2006). They present a table of the 20 constituencies with the highest levels of families with low income (their local indicator of child poverty). This adds two elements together: (i) the proportion of children in families claiming tax credits and claiming benefits either "because nobody in the family is working (or nobody is working for more than 16 hours a week)" and (ii) children in families receiving Working Tax Credit, which "indicates how many children are in the poorest working families – those entitled to maximum Child Tax Credit, plus a Working Tax Credit entitlement related to their earnings."

For the full dataset, see www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/poverty-in-your-area. The [full constituency listing](#) on this combined measure is available from the BBC News website, along with a [national map](#).

End Child Poverty state that their research "is not a direct measure of exactly how many children are in poverty, but is a good indicator of which areas have the highest child poverty levels. It is the closest measure we have at the moment of local levels of child poverty."¹¹ They also note that:

While not all these children are classified as being in poverty, they represent a wider group of "have-nots" among children in the UK which allows us to compare the severity of the problem in different local authorities and parliamentary constituencies.

¹¹ <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/poverty-in-your-area>

While these figures are not on the 'official' measure, they may indicate areas which could reasonably be expected to be areas also experiencing higher levels of child poverty.

Note: End Child Poverty has a list of data by constituency, although these figures are for workless households only (the first element of the data outlined above). These figures do not include those in the poorest working families. The figures and constituency maps for each region are also available from: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/poverty-in-your-area>

5.2 Deprivation (proxy)

Data are available for various Indices of Deprivation (separate indices cover England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) at a range of different geographies.

These are not available for Parliamentary constituencies, but are available for smaller areas within them. See Library standard note [SN/SG/3265](#) for more information on deprivation indices.¹²

In response to a Parliamentary Question, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) deposited a spreadsheet detailing the number and percentage of children and pensioners that it classes as being 'income-deprived' in each Parliamentary constituency in England in 2007.¹³

Income-deprived in this context is based on the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index and Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index, both of which form part of the Indices of Deprivation 2007 (which cover England only).¹⁴ As with the End Child Poverty figures above, these figures are based on recipients of tax credits, and is therefore distinct from the income poverty measures outlined above.

¹² See also <http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/neighbourhoodrenewal/deprivation/deprivation07/>

¹³ House of Commons Library (DEP2008-2402), 17 October 2008; www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2008/DEP2008-2402.xls

¹⁴ www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm081016/text/81016w0011.htm#08101691000098

6 Annex: Summary table of poverty by region in 2005/06-2007/08

Summary table

Poverty by region/country, 2005/06-2007/08 (three year average): summary table

% of population below 60% of median household income (a)

per cent & million

	Overall		Child		Adult		Pensioner	
	risk (%)	N ^o (m)	risk (%)	N ^o (m)	risk (%)	N ^o (m)	risk (%)	N ^o (m)
Before housing costs								
England	18	8.9	22	2.4	15	4.5	22	2.0
North East	21	0.5	28	0.1	19	0.3	21	0.1
North West	21	1.4	27	0.4	18	0.7	24	0.3
Yorkshire & the Humber	20	1.0	26	0.3	17	0.5	25	0.2
East Midlands	20	0.9	26	0.2	17	0.4	27	0.2
West Midlands	21	1.1	27	0.3	18	0.6	23	0.2
East of England	14	0.8	15	0.2	12	0.4	19	0.2
London	17	1.3	23	0.4	15	0.7	21	0.2
- <i>Inner London</i>	18	0.5	27	0.2	15	0.3	22	0.1
- <i>Outer London</i>	17	0.7	20	0.2	14	0.4	20	0.1
South East	13	1.1	15	0.3	11	0.5	19	0.3
South West	16	0.8	18	0.2	13	0.4	22	0.2
Scotland	17	0.9	21	0.2	15	0.5	20	0.2
Wales	21	0.6	27	0.2	18	0.3	25	0.1
Great Britain	18	10.4	22	2.8	15	5.2	22	2.4
Northern Ireland	20	0.3	24	0.1	17	0.2	27	0.1
United Kingdom	18	10.7	22	2.9	15	5.4	22	2.4
After housing costs								
England	22	11.2	31	3.4	21	6.2	18	1.7
North East	24	0.6	33	0.2	23	0.3	19	0.1
North West	24	1.6	34	0.5	22	0.9	18	0.2
Yorkshire & the Humber	22	1.1	30	0.3	21	0.6	18	0.2
East Midlands	22	1.0	30	0.3	20	0.5	21	0.2
West Midlands	24	1.3	35	0.4	23	0.7	18	0.2
East of England	19	1.1	26	0.3	18	0.6	16	0.2
London	27	2.0	39	0.6	24	1.2	22	0.2
- <i>Inner London</i>	30	0.9	44	0.3	26	0.5	29	0.1
- <i>Outer London</i>	26	1.1	37	0.4	23	0.7	19	0.1
South East	19	1.5	26	0.4	17	0.8	16	0.2
South West	20	1.0	27	0.3	18	0.5	18	0.2
Scotland	19	1.0	24	0.2	19	0.6	16	0.1
Wales	24	0.7	32	0.2	23	0.4	19	0.1
Great Britain	22	12.8	31	3.8	20	7.1	18	1.9
Northern Ireland	20	0.3	26	0.1	18	0.2	20	0.1
United Kingdom	22	13.2	30	3.9	20	7.3	18	2.0

Source: DWP, pers. comm., May 2009 (all based on Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data from the Family Resources Survey)

Notes: Please refer to notes on 'contents tab';

(a) pensioner poverty on after housing costs basis

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