



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

A More Equal Wales: the Socio-economic Duty

Examples of inequalities of outcome due to socio-economic disadvantage and COVID-19.

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Background

The Socio-economic Duty requires specified public bodies, when making strategic decisions such as deciding priorities and setting objectives, to consider how their decisions might help reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

This document has been developed to showcase examples of some of the inequalities of outcome which arise from socio-economic disadvantage. It also demonstrates where these have been further exasperated as a result of Covid-19. It is hoped the content provides a useful starting point for policy makers in their consideration of inequality of outcomes arising from socio-economic disadvantage.

This document provides a snapshot of information in no particular order, it is not an exhaustive list and rather provides a starting point for the collation of further

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information and insight. To properly understand the impact of a decision, policy makers are urged to engage those affected by a decision, in particular, those who suffer socio-economic disadvantage across a range of communities and places of interest.

Focus areas are based on the [measurement framework that the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) uses to monitor equality and human rights.

Read the [guidance on the Socio-economic Duty](#) for further information.

Education

Examples of evidence demonstrating the links between socio-economic disadvantage and inequality of outcome¹

A literature review by the Centre for Research in in Early Childhood (CREC) finds that evidence they examined indicates that in the UK, especially, parents' socio-economic status continues to be the primary predictor of which children prosper in adult life. They report that the magnitude of early childhood inequality in the UK is well-documented; some estimates suggest that half the attainment gaps for pupils are already present at the start of primary school. Using Millennium Cohort study data, this research shows large gaps exist in the UK for

Examples of evidence on the further impact of Covid-19²

The effects of school closures on children's education and the effects of the deepest recession in history on the job and earnings prospects of those young people entering the labour market this year will be damaging, long-lasting and felt much more acutely by those who are already disadvantaged.

The Sutton Trust reports that pupils at independent schools are twice as likely to attend online lessons on a daily basis as are pupils at state schools, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has shown that this isn't simply a state/private divide. State schools serving better-off pupils are much more likely to be offering active help with

Useful sources of information

Statistics:

[Relative income poverty](#)

[Persistent poverty](#)

[Material deprivation and low income](#)

[Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(WIMD\)](#)

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Examples of evidence demonstrating the links between socio-economic disadvantage and inequality of outcome ¹	Examples of evidence on the further impact of Covid-19 ²	Useful sources of information
<p>vocabulary tests between children aged 4 and 5 from families with middle incomes and those from families with lowest fifth of incomes.³</p> <p>Data for Wales also shows pupils eligible for free school meals and children in care have poorer educational outcomes in schools on average with the gap widening as pupils get older.⁴</p>	<p>learning than are those serving more disadvantaged pupils. Since schools closed, children from better-off families have been spending 30 per cent more time on home learning than have poorer children. This is due to various reasons such as having access to more resources (e.g. private tutoring or chats with teachers), a better home set-up for distance learning (e.g. access to a laptop/tablet/ internet), and their parents reporting feeling more able to support them.</p> <p>The gap in learning time between better and worse-off children is already equivalent to at least seven days and will likely reach fifteen days if schools don't return until September. This is more than enough to have measurable impacts on outcomes and to undo many years progress towards better educational attainment by the most disadvantaged.⁵</p>	<p>Other Welsh Government statistics (e.g. education, health, etc.)</p> <p>Research:</p> <p>Well-being of Wales report</p> <p>Is Wales Fairer?</p>

1. These should be viewed as examples of evidence that could be considered when assessing the impact of a policy/programme. They do not represent a comprehensive picture of all of the evidence available, links in the resources section are provided to assist with this.

2. Ibid

3. Bertram, T. and Pascal, C. (2014) [Early Years Literature Review](#)

4. Welsh Government (2019) [Well-being of Wales 2018-19](#)

5. Johnson, P. (2020) [School closures have put an entire generation at a huge disadvantage](#)

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Work

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When considering all children in Wales, the likelihood of being in relative income poverty is much greater, and the gap is increasing for those living in a workless household compared to living in a working household (where at least one of the adults was in work).⁶

The pandemic has imposed the greatest cost on low-paid workers. Lower earners are three times as likely to have lost their job or been furloughed as high earners, and are more than twice as likely to do jobs exposing them to health risks⁷. Remote working tends to be easiest for those on higher incomes.⁸

As well as the lowest paid workers, sector shutdowns during the coronavirus crisis are also affecting the youngest workers, and women, the most. IFS analysis shows employees aged under 25 were about two and a half times as likely to work in a sector that is now shut down as other employees, and one in six (17% of) female employees were in such sectors, compared to one in seven (13% of) male employees. However, one mitigating factor is that the majority of affected younger workers and lower earners live with parents or others whose earnings are likely to be less affected, so many may suffer smaller hits to their living standards than otherwise.⁹

While the effects of this crisis on the labour market have been bottom heavy, with lower earners most affected, falls in income have been more evenly shared across the income distribution. The difference between earnings and income hits is explained by the fact that lower earners are quite spread across

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income quintiles; that many on the lowest incomes were not in work when the crisis began and so not exposed to the labour market shock; and that the social security system has played an important role in cushioning job loss and earnings falls at the bottom.¹⁰

6. Welsh Government (2019) [Relative income poverty – Housing tenure, economic status and type of employment, financial year ending 2019](#)

7. Resolution Foundation (2020) [A new settlement for the low paid](#)

8. Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020) [Covid-19 and inequalities](#)

9. Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020) [Sector shut-downs during the coronavirus crisis affect the youngest and lowest paid workers, and women, the most](#)

10. Resolution Foundation (2020) [Return to spender](#)

Living standards

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23% of all people in

Analysis by the Institute for Public Policy

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Wales were living in relative income poverty between 2016-17 and 2018-19. This figure has remained relatively stable for the past 16 time periods. At 23%, the figure is slightly lower than last year's. Children were the age group most likely to be in relative income poverty (at 28%) and this has been true for some time.¹¹

11% of children living in Wales between 2016-17 and 2018-19 were in material deprivation and low income households.¹²

Research (IPPR) projects that the coronavirus pandemic could leave 1.1 million more people in the UK in poverty at the end of 2020, including a further 200,000 children.¹³

The Understanding Society Covid-19 Survey (Wave 1) found that twice as many people expect their financial situation to get worse as those who expect it to get better, with this rising to three times in the bottom income quintile, and more than three times for single parents.¹⁴;

A report by the Resolution Foundation and Standard Life Foundation shows that the pandemic is seeing lower income households turn to borrowing, while higher income households increase their savings.¹⁵

A Resolution Foundation survey found that one-in-six renters who have reduced consumption to cover housing costs since the coronavirus outbreak are experiencing material deprivation, a rate three times higher than that of mortgaged home owners.¹⁶ As well as forcing many people in private rented accommodation to cut back on basic spending, the pandemic has resulted in some people, particularly the young, moving house. A survey by the Resolution Foundation found that around one-in-ten (10 per cent) private renters have moved house. Around half (47 per cent) of those who have moved house are 18-24 year olds, while three in five (62 per cent) have moved in with their parents.¹⁷

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This aligns with Bevan Foundation analysis that shows younger households are much less likely to have enough resources to cover a drop off in income than older households, with less than two-fifths of 25 to 34-year-olds have enough savings to replace a month of their regular income compared to nearly 90% of over-75s.¹⁸

11. Welsh Government (2020) [Relative income poverty: April 2018 to March 2019](#)

12. Source: [Welsh Government analysis of DWP data](#). Material deprivation is a measure of living standards. A person is defined as living in material deprivation if he or she is not able to access a certain number of goods and services. Low income households are those that had a total household income below 70% of the UK average household income – before housing costs were paid.

13. Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (2020) [1.1 million more people face poverty at end of 2020 as a result of coronavirus pandemic, finds IPPR](#)

14. Benzeval, M. et al (2020) [Understanding Society COVID-19 Survey, April Briefing Note: The Economic Effects](#), Working Paper No 10/2020

15. Resolution Foundation (2020) [Pandemic is seeing lower income households turn to borrowing, while higher income households increase their savings.](#)

16. Resolution Foundation (2020) [Coping with housing costs during the coronavirus crisis - Flash findings from the Resolution Foundation's coronavirus survey](#)

17. Resolution Foundation (2020) [Private renters fifty per cent more likely to have fallen behind with housing costs than mortgagors](#)

18. Bevan Foundation (2020) [Which Welsh households are most vulnerable to a loss of income because of Covid-19?](#)

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Health

Examples of evidence demonstrating the links between socio-economic disadvantage and inequality of outcome

There is a clear social gradient in terms of health outcomes as documented by the Marmot Review (2010 and 2020 update). It makes it clear that health is closely linked to the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and inequities in power, money and resources (i.e. the social determinants of health).¹⁹

Indeed, data for Wales shows that adults and children living in the poorest areas are having poorer

Examples of evidence on the further impact of Covid-19

There have been sharp differences in deaths from Covid-19. Between the start of March and the middle of April, age-adjusted death rates in the most deprived tenth of areas in the UK were more than double those in the least deprived tenth of areas. Those on lower incomes are the most likely to have underlying medical conditions that make them vulnerable to Covid-19.²¹

Members of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities are disproportionately contracting and dying from Covid-19. Analysis of Covid-19 related deaths in England and Wales, undertaken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), shows that the risk of death among some ethnic groups is significantly higher than that of those of White ethnicity. This is partly a result of socio-economic disadvantage and other circumstances, but part of the difference has not yet been explained. Even after taking account of age and other socio-demographic characteristics and measures of self-reported health and disability, the risk of a Covid-19-related death for males and females of Black ethnicity was 1.9 times more likely than those of White ethnicity, and males in the Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic group were 1.8 times more likely to have a Covid-19-related death than White males.²²

Further evidence on the impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities can be found in the evidence and

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health outcomes. Adults living in the most deprived areas of Wales have lower life expectancies than those living in the least deprived areas.²⁰

statistical papers published by the First Minister's BAME Covid-19 Advisory Group.

19. Marmot, M. et al. (2020) [Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review ten years on](#)

20. Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) [Is Wales Fairer?](#)

21. Blundell, R. et al (2020) [Covid-19: the impacts of the pandemic on inequality](#)

22. Office for National Statistics (2020) [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) related deaths by ethnic group, England and Wales: 2 March 2020 to 10 April 2020](#); First Minister's BAME

Justice and personal security

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The National Survey for Wales (2018-19) shows that people who were not in material deprivation were found to be more likely to feel safe in their local area, compared with those who were in material deprivation.²³

It was reported in April that calls to the Live Fear Free helpline and online requests for help and advice in relation to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence fell compared with the same period last year.²⁵ However, as Welsh Women's Aid point out, although numbers accessing services may go down at times, this does not mean survivors are not experiencing abuse or violence, rather it may be harder for them to access services.²⁶

Research by the University of Bristol shows that, notwithstanding some significant methodological limitations, existing analyses in the UK and internationally have consistently found vulnerability to domestic violence and abuse to be associated with low income, economic strain, and benefit receipt. This association is underpinned by a

A report by the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee states that although the 'stay at home' guidance was necessary to protect the NHS and save lives by flattening the curve of Covid-19 infection, for some people home is not a safe place to be, and such measures have increased the barriers to reporting abuse incidents. Those living with domestic violence may face greater risks at home during lockdown, as well as the issue of support services being harder to reach and provide. Indeed, the report finds evidence that suggests incidents are becoming more complex and serious, with higher levels of physical violence and coercive control.²⁷

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST), which provides research evidence for the UK Parliament, surveyed over

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complex set of relationships and interdependencies. ²⁴	1,100 experts in April 2020 asking them what their most important concerns were in the short, medium and long-term relating to the Covid-19 outbreak. In terms of crime, this found that experts are concerned about the potential increase of certain types of crime during the outbreak, such as domestic abuse, organised crime, corruption, cybercrime and hate crime. On criminal justice, experts worry about a backlog of cases in courts which were put on hold due to the pandemic. They are also worried about a surge of new cases as a result of the pandemic. Finally there are concerns about the health of prisoners at this time and want to know about plans for early releases. ²⁸	

23. Welsh Government (2020) [What factors are linked to people feeling safe in their local area?](#)

24. Fahmy, E. et al (2016) [Evidence and policy review: Domestic violence and poverty](#). A research report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

25. Wales Online (2020) [My message for domestic abuse victims, Jane Hutt AM](#)

26. Welsh Women's Aid (2020) [Responding to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence during the COVID 19 Pandemic](#)

27. House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2020) [Home Office preparedness for Covid-19 \(Coronavirus\): domestic abuse and risks of harm within the home](#)

28. Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2020) [Crime, justice, policing and COVID-19: What are experts concerned about?](#)

Participation

Examples of evidence demonstrating the links between socio-economic disadvantage and inequality of outcome

The National Survey for Wales (NSW) shows that in 2018-19, 87% of households had access to the internet. Household internet access varies by WIMD levels of area deprivation. In 2018-19, 92% of households in the least deprived areas had internet access, compared to 83% of households in the most deprived areas. The NSW also shows households in social housing were less likely to have internet access (75% of such households) than those in private rented (90%) or owner occupied (89%) accommodation. Those in employment were more likely to have internet access at home (96%) than those who were unemployed (84%) or economically inactive (78%).²⁹

Examples of evidence on the further impact of Covid-19

An article by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) shows that Covid-19 has shone a spotlight on a digital divide and highlights the effects of digital exclusion on those in poverty, with some feeling isolated and forgotten about. The JRF report that people are trapped in houses without access to food supplies and, without access to the digital world, cannot get news updates, public health notices, home-educate children, access food deliveries or update Universal Credit job searches. This can have both practical and emotional impacts. The closure of libraries (in line with the public health response to the pandemic) has not helped, as for many locked in poverty, libraries were the only source of online access.³⁰

The Understanding Society Covid-19 (Wave 1) Survey highlights the importance of having a computer for home schooling, with 79% of students requiring a computer (or tablet or laptop) for at least half of the work provided by schools, with only 6% not needing a computer for any schoolwork. The survey found that in Wales, only 9% of students had no

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access to a computer. However, 48% of students needed to share their devices with others.³¹

The NSW 2018-19 shows that 14% of respondents did not have access to a car.³² Using the reduced public transport that is available during the pandemic may put them more at risk in terms of Covid-19.

Compared to other regions in Great Britain, people in Wales were most likely to have access to a private garden (with almost all having access to gardens at 97%), but were the least likely to visit a park or public green space.³³

29. Welsh Government (2019) [National Survey for Wales 2018-19, Internet use and digital skills](#)

30. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2020) [Coronavirus response must include digital access to connect us all](#)

31. Benzeval, M. et al (2020) [Understanding Society COVID-19 Survey April Briefing Note: Home schooling](#), Understanding Society Working Paper No 12/2020

32. Welsh Government (2019) [National Survey for Wales 2018-19, results viewer](#)

33. Office for National Statistics (2020) [Coronavirus and the social impacts on the countries and regions of Britain: April 2020](#)

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