

Outcomes for disabled people in the UK methodology

Methodological article with details around the definitions and data sources for the Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2020 article and datasets.

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Notice

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A small correction has been made to the housing situation definition. Previously the definition incorrectly indicated that the relationship to the household reference person (HRP) had been used, this has now been corrected to indicate that the relationship to the head of household (HOH) was used. Both the HRP and the HOH are legally responsible for the household, however when multiple people in the household have this responsibility, the allocation to a single person is slightly different in each definition.

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1 . Overview

This methodological article provides the detail around the definitions and data sources used in the [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2020](#) release. It also discusses how a number of data sources used in this release were affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and what the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has done to address this.

For this release, different datasets are used to produce estimates on a number of areas of life, covering different populations (Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of datasets used in “Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2020” release

Area of life	Data source	Population covered
Education	Annual Population Survey	UK
Employment	Annual Population Survey	UK
Housing	Annual Population Survey	UK
Well-being	Annual Population Survey	UK
Crime	Crime Survey for England and Wales	England and Wales
Social participation	Community Life Survey	England
Loneliness	Community Life Survey	England

Source: Office for National Statistics

2 . Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on data collection and statistics

There is significant public and policy interest in how employment, population and migration have been impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. At the same time the pandemic has affected our ability to collect data – including the need to pause face-to-face surveys. This [blog](#) outlines the main challenges, how the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is addressing them, the progress made so far and next steps across different areas.

Because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, all face-to-face interviewing for the [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#) , which feeds into the [Annual Population Survey \(APS\)](#) (one of the main data sources used in this release), was suspended and replaced with telephone interviewing. This change in mode for first interviews has changed the level of response and the non-response bias of the survey, affecting interviews from March 2020 onwards.

The change in non-response bias was significantly evident in a change to the housing tenure of the household reference person (HRP), with a lower proportion of rented addresses being included and an increase in the proportion of those owned outright by the occupier.

To mitigate the impact of this non-response bias, the ONS has looked at introducing housing tenure into the LFS weighting methodology. While not providing a perfect solution, this has redressed some of the issues that had previously been noted in the survey results. More information on the weighting methodology can be found in [Coronavirus and its impact on the Labour Force Survey](#). The ONS has also published an article that assesses the [impact on estimating well-being based on the APS](#). The ONS continues to examine the non-response bias, which may lead to further updates in future.

Estimates presented in this release have been weighted according to the updated methodology.

Please note that LFS and APS responses are weighted to official population estimates and projections that do not currently reflect the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The LFS is not designed to measure changes in the levels of population or long-term international migration. Rates published from the LFS and APS remain robust and reliable, however, levels and changes in levels should be used with caution. The ONS is analysing the population totals used in the weighting process and may make adjustments if appropriate in future.

3 . Glossary

Disability-related definitions

Disability

To define disability in this publication we refer to the [Government Statistical Service \(GSS\) harmonised “core” definition](#). This identifies a person as disabled when they have a physical or mental health condition or illness that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more, that reduces their ability to carry-out day-to-day activities.

The GSS definition is designed to reflect the definitions that appear in legal terms in the [Disability Discrimination Act \(DDA\) 1995](#) and the subsequent [Equality Act 2010](#).

The GSS harmonised questions are asked of the respondent in the survey, meaning that disability status is self-reported.

Impairment

For all analysis using the Annual Population Survey (APS), that is, for employment, education, housing and well-being, the following definition of impairment is used:

An impairment is defined as any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. Respondents were presented with a list of impairments and then asked to select all and subsequently their “main health problem”.

The commentary in this release refers to the main health problem. Analysis is limited to those who are also defined as disabled and does not explore where disabled people experienced more than one impairment. For further details see [Volume 3: Detail of Labour Force Survey variables](#).

From January 2020 onwards, the list of impairments in the APS changed because of the addition of autism (including autism spectrum condition, Asperger syndrome) as a possible response option. To include the most detailed list, the analysis of impairment types is based on a selection of data that incorporates this change: APS data collected between January 2020 and June 2020. To enable this, this selection of half year data was reweighted to the UK population. This considered the latest methodological developments to account for the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on data collection. As the response options changed, comparison with previous years is not recommended.

The impairments or condition categories compared in this release relate to the categories within the question in the survey. The exception is speech impediment, which has been grouped with the “other” category because of low sample size.

All analysis using the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), the [GSS harmonised principle for impairment](#) is used.

An impairment refers to health conditions affecting any of the following areas:

- vision (for example, blindness or partial sight)
- hearing (for example, deafness or partial hearing)
- mobility (for example, walking short distances or climbing stairs)
- dexterity (for example, lifting and carrying objects or using a keyboard)
- learning, understanding or concentrating
- memory
- mental health
- stamina, breathing or fatigue
- socially or behaviourally (for example, associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's syndrome)
- other (please specify)

Respondents were asked to select all impairments that applied to them.

Severity

Disabled people whose ability to carry out day-to-day activities is self-reported as "limited a lot" or "limited a little" by their impairment. Respondents were asked: "Does your condition or illness reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?" with the responses, "yes, a lot" and "yes, a little" being taken to indicate severity of disability.

Outcome-related definitions

Civic participation

Civic participation refers to engagement in democratic processes, both in person and online, including contacting a local official (such as a local councillor or Member of Parliament (MP)), signing a petition, or attending a public rally (this excludes voting).

Civic consultation

Civic consultation refers to taking part in a consultation about local services or problems in the local area through completing a questionnaire, attending a public meeting, or being involved in a face-to-face or online group.

Civic activism

Civic activism refers to involvement in activities in the local community, such as being a local councillor, school governor, volunteer special constable or magistrate (for those aged 18 years or over). Civic action also includes involvement (in person or online) in decision-making groups in the local area, for example, a group making decisions about local health or education services, a tenants' decision-making group, or a group set up to tackle local crime problems or to regenerate the local area.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse measured in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) combines the following types of abuse, which have occurred in the 12 months prior to the interview:

- non-sexual abuse by a partner or family member
- sexual assault carried out by a partner or other family member
- physical force, emotional or financial abuse
- stalking carried out by a partner or other family member

Employment

Employment measures the number of people in paid work or those who had a job that they were temporarily away from (for example, because they were on holiday or off sick) and differs from the number of jobs because some people have more than one job. The employment rate is the proportion of people aged from 16 to 64 years who are in paid work.

The [Guide to labour market statistics](#) contains a glossary of other terms used in this release.

Formal volunteering

Formal volunteering refers to giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations.

Highest qualification

Highest qualification applies to all respondents aged 21 to 64 years.

Housing situation

Conventional analysis of housing tenure explores outcomes at the household level. The analysis presented uses a different approach, defining housing situation for the person level. The [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article reviews the housing situation of disabled people, incorporating both tenure (the legal arrangements under which a person lives in a property, for example, owner-occupier, social rented housing or private rented housing) and relationship to the head of household (HOH, the person legally responsible for the household).

The relationship to the HOH for the first three categories listed (owner-occupier, social rented housing, private rented housing) is either the HOH themselves, spouse, cohabitee, civil partner or same sex cohabitee.

The housing situation of the individual is defined as:

- owner-occupier – includes owned outright, buying with mortgage or loan, or part rent and part mortgage
- social rented housing – includes renting from local authority, council, Scottish homes, housing association, charitable trust or local housing company
- private rented housing – includes renting from employing organisation or individual employer, relative of household member, another private landlord, or another organisation
- living with parents – this category ignores tenure (except to exclude rent-free or squatting) and looks at the relationship to the HOH (all those with one of the following relationships to the HOH are included in this category: child, stepchild, foster child, grandchild or child-in-law; this includes adult children)
- other – this category ignores tenure, except to include rent-free or squatting and looks at the relationship to the HOH (all those with one of the following relationships to the HOH are included in this category: parent, stepparent, foster parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, brother or sister, stepbrother or stepsister, foster brother or sister, brother- or sister-in-law, other relation, other non-relative, or undefined)

Informal volunteering

Informal volunteering refers to giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not a relative.

Loneliness

Those who feel lonely "often or always" refers to those who when asked "How often do you feel lonely?" selected the answer "often or always" from the following list of responses:

- "often or always"
- "sometimes"
- "occasionally"
- "hardly ever"
- "never"

These responses have been grouped together into an "other" category. This analysis is available in the [datasets](#).

Social action

Social action refers to involvement with issues affecting the local area by doing things like setting up a new service or amenity; stopping the closure of a service or amenity; stopping something happening in the local area; running a local service on a voluntary basis; or helping to organise a community event.

Standard Occupational Classification 2010

For details of the general nature of qualifications, training and experience for occupations, see Table 2 of [SOC 2010 Volume 1: structure and descriptions of unit groups](#).

Statistical significance

Any changes or differences mentioned in the [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article are “statistically significant”. The statistical significance of differences noted within the release are determined based on non-overlapping confidence intervals.

Well-being

Personal well-being measures ask people to evaluate, on a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied they are with their life overall, whether they feel they have meaning and purpose in their life, and about their emotions (happiness and anxiety) during a particular period.

4 . Data sources, coverage and quality

Labour Force Survey (LFS)

The overall and by sex employment estimates are based on data collected from the [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#). The LFS is a UK quarterly household survey of approximately 90,000 individuals each quarter. The survey does not cover communal establishments, except for NHS staff accommodation. Those living in student halls of residence or boarding school are included as part of their family household.

The LFS data referred to in the [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article relate to the Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2020 analysis provided in the [A08: Labour market status of disabled people dataset](#) as this provides the most up-to-date information.

The [Labour Force Survey performance and quality monitoring](#) reports provide data on response rates and other quality-related issues for the LFS, including breakdowns of response by LFS wave, region and by question-specific response issues.

The [Labour Force Survey Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) report provides qualitative information on the various dimensions of data quality, as well as providing a summary of the methods used to compile the output. All the analysis using the LFS in the [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article looks at the working age population only (those aged 16 to 64 years). The year 2013 is the earliest available using the current definition of disability.

Annual Population Survey (APS)

The [Annual Population Survey \(APS\)](#) is an annual survey based on data collected in wave 1 and wave 5 on the LFS, combined with an annual local area boost sample run in England, Wales and Scotland. The APS dataset contains approximately 300,000 individuals.

The survey does not cover communal establishments, except for NHS staff accommodation. Those living in student halls of residence or boarding school are included as part of their family household.

The APS datasets are produced for four different overlapping 12-month periods:

- January to December
- April to March
- July to June
- October to September

Analysis for this publication was conducted for the July 2019 to June 2020 period for most breakdowns. This is with the exception of the impairment's analysis using this survey, for which analysis covered the period January to June 2020 to accommodate a change in the main impairment question.

Analysis conducted using the APS has been restricted to 16- to 64-year-olds in the case of employment, housing and well-being analysis because the survey does not collect data for those aged 15 years and under and the disability variable is not robust for those aged 65 years and over.

Disability status is only collected for people aged 65 years and over at their first contact resulting in less data for this population. The weighting used does not account for the reduced sample size for this age group, making the data not fully representative of the population.

Education analysis using the APS has been further restricted to 21- to 64-year-olds as to only include those who are likely to have finished their education. Those currently enrolled on a course are also removed from the analysis. Because of the nature of the topic, well-being data are not collected by proxy, further reducing the sample size used in the analysis to approximately 100,000 APS respondents.

The age restriction of the survey means that we are not capturing the employment status, housing situation, well-being or highest education attainment of respondents aged 65 years and over.

Community Life Survey

The [Community Life Survey \(CLS\)](#) is a household self-completion survey of approximately 10,000 people aged 16 years and over in England. The survey can be completed either in a paper or online format; the question regarding disability status is asked online only. Analysis was conducted for the year ending March 2019.

The loneliness and social participation analysis is restricted to people 16 years and older and England only as the CLS does not collect data for under 16 years or the other countries in the UK.

Crime survey for England and Wales

The analysis presented in this release uses data from the [Crime Survey for England and Wales \(CSEW\)](#). This is a face-to-face victimisation survey, which asks approximately 35,000 respondents aged 16 years and over residing in households in England and Wales, about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to the interview.

The survey also asks for opinions on different crime-related issues such as the police and criminal justice system and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour. Individuals residing in group residences (for example, care homes or halls of residence) or other institutions are not included in the CSEW sample. The [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article focuses on domestic abuse of people aged 16 to 59 years as collected by the CSEW.

A full list of the strengths and limitations of the Crime Survey for England and Wales can be found in the [Crime in England and Wales QMI](#).

Domestic abuse data

The domestic abuse data presented in the [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article are collected in the CSEW self-completion module. For these questions, respondents are given a tablet computer to complete their answers. This module covers crimes such as domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking, where respondents are asked if they have experienced a range of different behaviours. Prior to 2017, the self-completion module was asked of people aged 16 to 59 years living in households in England and Wales. In April 2017, eligibility was extended to cover people aged 16 to 74 years.

The domestic abuse data within this release cover people aged 16 to 59 years for the year ending March 2020. To ensure comparability between year ending March 2019 and year ending 2014 data within the datasets, the domestic abuse estimates are based on people aged 16 to 59 years, despite the availability of data for those aged 60 to 74 years in 2020.

Any differences commented on in the analysis sections of the [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article are statistically significant at the 5% level unless stated otherwise.

5 . Strengths and limitations

Causality

The analysis conducted in the [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article is for the purpose of comparing the outcomes of disabled and non-disabled people. The analysis describes differences in these two populations but does not explore the cause of this difference. Further analysis, which is outside the scope of this article, is required to make judgements on causality. Please see the [Improving disability statistics in the UK](#) article for details of our future workplan.

Crime

The [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article focuses on domestic abuse of people aged 16 to 59 years as collected by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Therefore, the analysis cannot be compared with the measure of overall crime for people aged 16 years and over.

The survey has a large nationally representative sample survey that provides a good measure of long-term crime trends for the offences and the population it covers (that is, those resident in households). However, small sample sizes observed for domestic abuse have resulted in greater variability surrounding the estimates for the disabled population, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis.

The survey covers crime not reported to the police and is not affected by changes in police recording practice, but is a reliable measure of long-term trends.

A full list of the strengths and limitations of the Crime Survey for England and Wales can be found in the [Quality and methodology section](#) of the Crime in England and Wales statistical release.

Education as an outcome

This analysis accounts for all people aged 21 to 64 years who have a self-reported disability at the time the survey was conducted. However, prevalence of disability is highest among older people and survey respondents may or may not have had a disability during the time of their education. Factors such as age and disability onset may have a confounding influence on the data reported.

People with different impairments have different potential to attain qualifications. This analysis accounts for the highest level of achievement, but is unable to reflect if a disabled person has met their potential.

Age was restricted to those aged 21 years and over as [most people will not have been able to complete a degree level qualification before this age](#). Additionally, participants aged 21 years and over who were enrolled in education were excluded.

Data on the educational outcomes for disabled children is limited. Education outcomes data tend to report on Special Education Needs or Additional Learning Needs, which does not cover the same population as disabled children. In the absence of these data, we have used an existing source of information (APS data) to understand how attainment differs for disabled and non-disabled people. We are exploring how the existing evidence gap of educational experiences and outcomes for disabled people could be addressed.

Housing situation

The analysis has been carried out at the person level, meaning we can determine the living situation of the individual rather than just the housing tenure of a household that includes (or does not include) a disabled person. This is seen in particular in the category “living with parents”, where we have focused on the relationship to the homeowner rather than tenure, allowing us to explore differences in disabled and non-disabled people living with parents. Please see the [Glossary](#) for the definition of each housing category.

Students living away from home or those in boarding school are included in the household. This is particularly important when considering the numbers living with parents.

Impairments

Analysis by impairment is based on the “main impairment” as reported by the respondent. People often experience more than one impairment, but this analysis does not account for co-morbidities or the cumulative impact of living with more than one impairment simultaneously.

Loneliness

Loneliness proportions were calculated using the Community Life Survey, which is used in England only. Links to data for other UK countries are included in the [Related links](#) section.

Social participation

The [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article focuses on participation in two domains of social participation: civic engagement and social action and volunteering. In each domain, participation refers to any involvement in the 12 months prior to completing the survey.

In some areas (such as formal and informal volunteering), the Community Life Survey also records participation in the four weeks prior to completing the survey – these data could be used to assess more regular participation in these areas. However, to be consistent across our analysis, we have looked only at involvement in the previous 12 months.

Uncertainty and quality

The results in this release are survey-based estimates, so they are subject to a level of uncertainty as they are based on a sample rather than the whole population. Confidence intervals are provided around every estimate and give an indication of the range in which the true population value is likely to fall. The estimates in this release are supported with confidence intervals at the 95% level. This means that, if we repeated the sample, we would expect the true population value to fall within the lower and upper bounds of the interval 95% of the time (that is, 19 times out of 20).

Well-being

The [Personal well-being in the UK Quality and Methodology Information](#) report contains important information on the strengths and limitations and uses of the data, as well as how outputs are created and the quality and accuracy of those outputs. For more information on personal well-being, please see the [Personal well-being user guidance](#) and [Harmonised principles of personal well-being](#).

All analysis of well-being measures in the [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK](#) article compares mean scores between groups. Another method of comparing well-being scores between groups is to look at the proportions of people who are within certain thresholds that indicate well-being levels.

6 . Related links

[Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2020](#)

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Outcomes for disabled people across areas of life: education, employment, social participation, housing, well-being, loneliness and crime. Analysis by disability status and by age, sex, impairment type and severity, country and region based on survey data.