

7 December 2004

Coverage

United Kingdom

Theme

Social and welfare

Focus on Social Inequalities Improvements not spread equally

People in the United Kingdom are better off than in the past across a range of measures but the benefits are not spread equally.

Focus on Social Inequalities describes the different experiences of social groups in the UK today in six key areas: education, work, income, living standards, health, and participation. Published today by the Office for National Statistics, it looks at the 'advantaged' as well as the 'disadvantaged' and explores the relative differences between them.

Household income and educational attainment have improved overall but the gaps remain large. However, employment rates for most key groups that have been disadvantaged in the labour market have improved recently and at a greater rate than for the population overall.

Nevertheless, a significant minority of people are affected by a lack of material resources and the inequality in the health of the population has widened over the last few decades.

Education, Training & Skills – exam results differ by social status

In 2002, 77 per cent of children in year 11 in England and Wales with parents in higher professional occupations gained five or more A* to C grade GCSEs. This was more than double the proportion for children with parents in routine occupations (32 per cent).

Work – employment grows for the disadvantaged

Between spring 1999 and spring 2003 the overall UK working-age employment rate increased from 74 per cent to 75 per cent. For people aged 50 to 59/64 there was a rise from 65 per cent to 70 per cent and for lone parents a rise from 49 per cent to 53 per cent.

Issued by
National Statistics
1 Drummond Gate
London SW1V 2QQ

Telephone
Press Office 020 7533 5702
Email press.office@ons.gov.uk
Public Enquiries 0845 601 3034

Contact
Penny Babb 020 7533 6122
Email penny.babb@ons.gov.uk

Internet
www.statistics.gov.uk

Focus on Social Inequalities

TSO £40.00 ISBN 0 11 621757

Available free on the National Statistics website:

www.statistics.gov.uk/focuson/socialinequalities/



Income – gaps in income and wealth remain large

Between 1994/95 and 2002/03 the UK income distribution was broadly stable. Disposable income (adjusted for inflation) grew by over a fifth for both those on incomes at the top 10 per cent of the distribution and those at the bottom 10 per cent.

Living standards – people on low income less likely to have PCs

In 2001/02, 86 per cent of households in the highest income group (weekly income of £1,000 or more) in Great Britain had access to a home computer. This was almost six times the proportion of 15 per cent for households in the lowest income group (£100 to £200 per week). The gap was even wider for Internet connections (79 per cent and 10 per cent respectively).

Health – manual workers die earlier than others

For the period 1997-99, life expectancy at birth in England and Wales for males in the professional group was 7.4 years more than for males in the unskilled manual groups. This was almost two years greater than in 1972-76. In women, the gap in life expectancy was 5.3 years in 1972-76 and 5.7 years in 1997-99.

Participation – more volunteers from higher income homes

In 2001, 57 per cent of adults in England and Wales with gross annual household incomes of £75,000 or more had volunteered formally (such as raising or handling money for a charity) in the previous 12 months. They were almost twice as likely to have done so than those living in households with an annual income under £5,000 (30 per cent). More than half of each income group provided informal help such as giving advice: 57 per cent of those earning less than £5,000 compared with 80 per cent of those earning between £50,000 and £75,000.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. *Focus on Social Inequalities* is the latest in a series of on-line reports available on the National Statistics website and is the first to be published as a full report.
2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
3. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2004.