

Statistics update: Trends in violence affecting children

This is an update to the statistics published in our Beyond the Headlines report – a summary of key trends around violence affecting young people and the sectors that support them.

This update includes latest data on core indicators for homicides, violent offending, disproportionality, youth justice, education and poverty in England and Wales.

April 2025

Summary

In July 2024, we launched a series of [11 indicators](#) that we'll use to track changes in violence affecting children and young people (CYP) and in the sectors that are key to supporting those at risk. Since our last update in January, new data for 2023/24 has been published on six more indicators.

What the data shows

More children and young people were involved in violence.

More CYP were victims of homicide.	105 young people aged 16-24 were victims of homicide in 2023/24, up from 99 the previous year (2022/23). This is up 9% compared to ten years ago (2013/14) but remains significantly below the highs pre-Covid.
The number committing violent offences is also up...	15,542 children aged 10-17 were convicted or cautioned for violent offences in 2023/24, up 9% on 2022/23. The number of arrests of CYP for violent offences also rose, with the third consecutive annual increase, up 5% on 2022/23.
...and an increasing share are going on to reoffend.	After seven years of falling reoffending rates, the proportion of 10-17-year-olds who reoffended in 2022/23 increased by 0.3%pts to 32.5%. However, reoffending remains significantly below the rate ten years ago – 41% in 2012/13.

Black and mixed ethnicity children and young people are disproportionately affected.

The share of CYP in custody who are Black fell...	In 2023/24, Black 10-17-year-olds made up 24% of all CYP in custody an average per month, down 2%pts from 2022/23. This is the third year in a row that this figure has fallen.
...but Black and Mixed ethnicity CYP remain overrepresented.	Black 10-17-year-olds are still four times more likely to be in custody compared to their share of the population. The proportion of Mixed ethnicity CYP in custody has risen to 18% – three times their population share.

The wider context shows some are facing real challenges.

Persistent absence rates have fallen...	20% of children CYP were persistently absent from school (missing 10% or more of possible lessons) in England in 2023/24, down 1.3%pts from the year before (2022/23).
...but many children are still missing school.	The proportion of CYP persistently absent is still 9.1%pts above where it was pre-Covid (2019/20) and 9.3%pts above where it was ten years ago (2013/14). Rates of severe absence (missing 50% or more possible lessons) continued to rise – to 2.3% in for 2023/24 compared to 0.8% before Covid (2018/19).
And more CYP are living in poverty.	An estimated 3.85 million children were living in poverty in the United Kingdom in 2023/24, equivalent to 26% of all children. This is up 1.4%pts on 2022/23 and the second consecutive year to show an increase. It remains 1.9%pts below where it was ten years ago (2013/14).

Core indicators dashboard

How ratings have been assigned

For each of the indicators, we've compared the last available annual figures with three different time points: the previous year (2022/23); the year before the Covid-19 pandemic (2019/20) and 10 years ago (or the longest available period if 10 years of data is not available).

The first indicator provides a view of how the indicator has performed in the most recent period. The second indicator provides a sense of how the measure has performed since the pandemic. Covid-19 had a significant disruptive effect on many areas of society – how the indicator performs today relative to where it was before Covid-19 provides a sense of whether or not it has recovered or surpassed levels prior to the pandemic-related disruption. The third indicator provides a view of how the indicator is currently performing against the longer-run trend.

We've assigned ratings as follows:

Improving

For indicators where, at all three time points, the measure has shown improvement.

Worsening

For indicators where, at all three time points, the measure has got worse.

Mixed

For indicators where there is no clear trend based on the three time points (i.e. some point to improvement while others have got worse).

What's happened to our core indicators:

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2023/24)*	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2022/23)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2013/14)
Homicides 16–24-year-old homicide victims	Mixed [previously: mixed]	105	+6%	-26%	+9%
Violent offending Proven violent offences committed by children	Mixed [previously: improving]	15,542	+9%	-26%	-38%
Disproportionality Proportion of Black children in custody	Mixed [previously: mixed]	23.7%	-2.1pt	-4.5pt	+1.3pt
Youth justice Children's reoffending rate	Mixed [previously: mixed]	32.5%	+0.3pt	-1.7pt	-8.5pt
Education Proportion of children persistently absent from school	Mixed [previously: mixed]	20.0%	-1.3pt	+9.1pt	+9.3pt
Poverty Proportion of children in households in absolute poverty	Mixed [previously: mixed]	26.4%	+1.4pt	+1.6pt	-1.9pt

*All latest figures are for the financial year ending March 2024 (2023/24), except for reoffending rates, which are for children in the criminal justice system in the 2022/23 financial year, and school absence rates, which cover the academic year.

1. Homicides

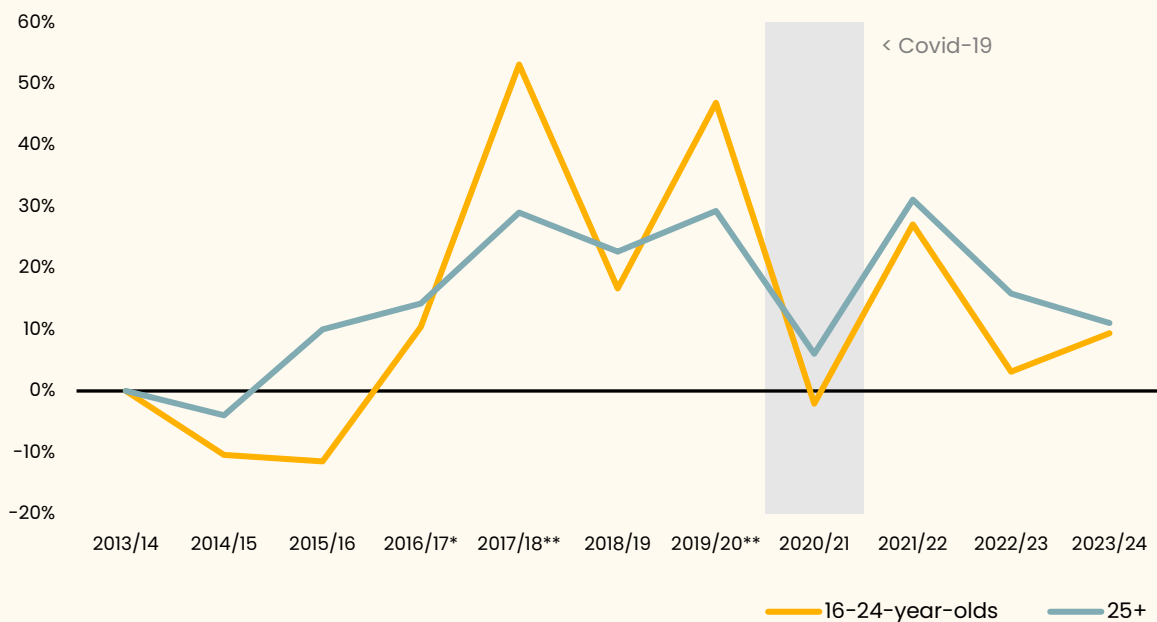
CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2023/24)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2022/23)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2013/14)
Homicides 16-24-year-old homicide victims	Mixed	105	+6%	-26%	+9%

Homicides provide a measure of the most extreme consequences of violence. We’re using the Home Office’s [Homicide Index](#) to measure how many 16–24-year-olds die by homicide each year. We have focused on this age range, as the data for 10–17-year-olds isn’t specifically broken down.

More young people were victims of homicide in the latest year.

Homicides of young people tend to be volatile, partly due to the low numbers involved. Following a decrease last year, 2023/24 saw the number of 16–24-year-old homicide victims rise. One hundred and five young people lost their lives to homicide in the latest year – a 6% increase from 2022/23. This contrasts with the number of homicides of adults aged 25 and above, which fell for the second consecutive year.

Figure 1. Number of homicide victims by age: percentage change since 2013/14 (England and Wales)



* To account for the recognition of Hillsborough victims in the 2016/17 homicide figures, we’ve manually reduced the published figures based on [victims’ age profile](#). ** Figures in these years were affected by several one-off events involving mass casualties, including the Westminster Bridge attack, the Manchester Arena bombing, the London Bridge attack, and the human trafficking victims who were found dead in a lorry in Essex.



In the last briefing, our homicide indicator had a **mixed** rating – the number of young people who were victims of homicide in 2022/23 was lower than in the previous year (2021/22) and the year before Covid (2019/20), but 14% up on ten years previously (2012/13). This latest update shows the picture is still **mixed** – the number of 16-24-year-old homicide victims was up compared to the previous year (2022/23) and ten years previously (2013/14), but remained 26% lower than the year before Covid (2019/20).

2. Violent offending

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2023/24)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2022/23)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2013/14)
Violent offending Proven violent offences committed by children	Mixed	15,542	+9%	-26%	-38%

To get a sense of how many children and young people are becoming involved in the criminal justice system, particularly in relation to violence, we've used the number of [cautions and convictions of 10-17-year-olds for violent offences](#) reported by the Youth Justice Board. We consider violent crimes to include violence against the person (including offences such as assault and homicide), robbery (which is theft with the use or threat of force) and sexual offences (including rape and other sexual offences).

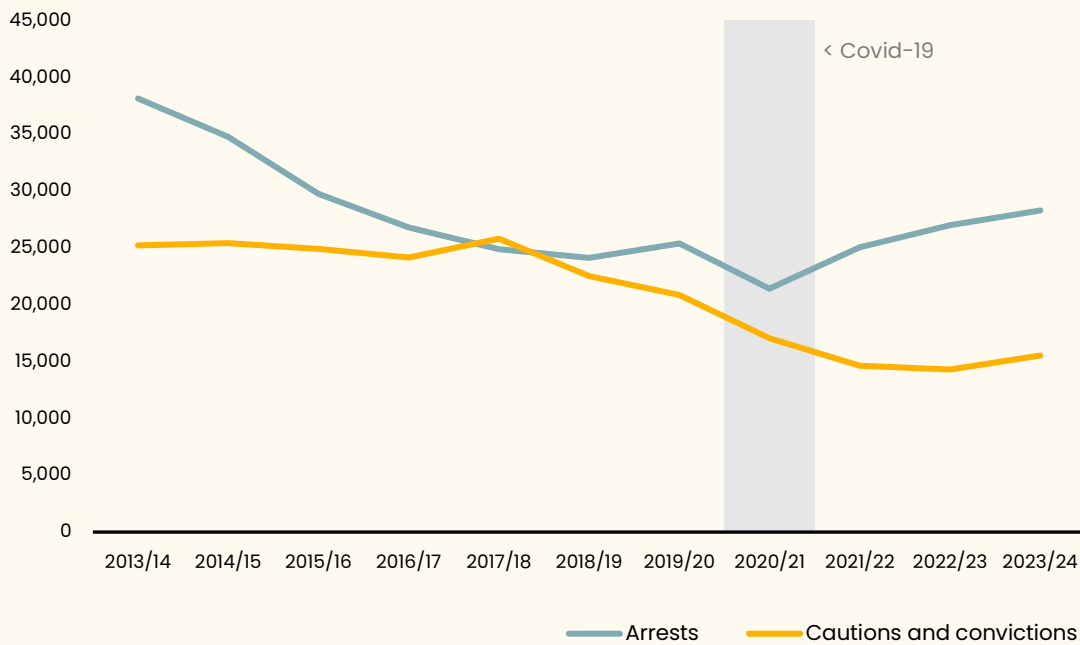
The number of children convicted or cautioned for violent offences is up.

Following five consecutive years of falling numbers of children convicted or cautioned for violent offences, the latest year saw the number increase. In 2023/24, there were 15,542 proven violent offences children were convicted or cautioned for, up 9% on the previous year. The number of arrests of children for violent offences also rose for the third year in a row – up 5% – meaning we could expect the number of proven violent offences to rise again in 2024/25.

In the last briefing, our justice system involvement indicator had an **improving** rating – the number of convictions and cautions of children for violent offences in 2022/23 was lower than in the previous year (2021/22), the year before Covid (2019/20), and ten years previously (2012/13). This latest update shows the picture is now **mixed** – the number of convictions and cautions was up compared to the previous year (2022/23), but remained lower than the year before Covid (2019/20) and ten years previously (2013/14).



Figure 2. Arrests and cautions/convictions of children for violent offences (England and Wales)



3. Disproportionality

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2023/24)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2022/23)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2013/14)
Disproportionality Proportion of Black children in custody	Mixed	23.7%	-2.1%pt	-4.5%pt	+1.3%pt

It's widely accepted that there are significant racial disparities in the youth justice system and who's affected by violence, particularly when it comes to Black children. It's important that this remains central to our thinking about violence. For this reason, one of our core focuses is racial disproportionality. One of the areas where this disproportionality is most stark is in the ethnicity of children serving custodial or prison sentences. To track this, we've used the proportion of [children in custody](#) on an average month who are from any Black background. For a more in-depth look at racial disproportionality in violence affecting young people, see our [recent report](#).

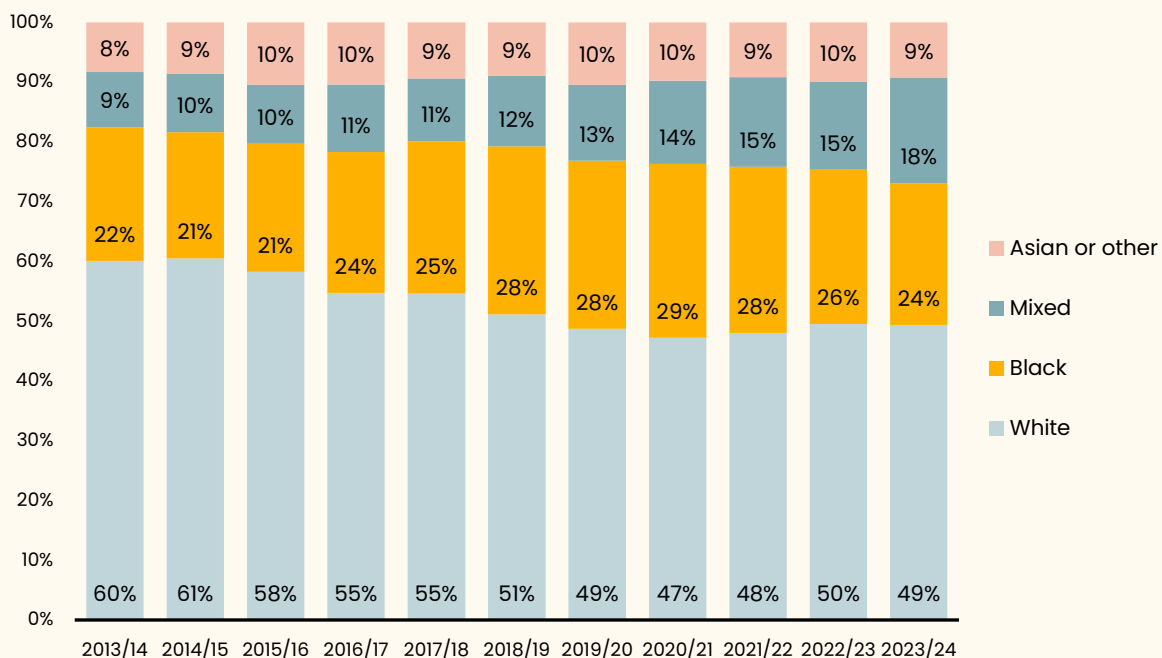
Black children made up a smaller proportion of children in custody.

Over the past decade, the total number of children serving custodial sentences has fallen, but this hasn't impacted children of all ethnicities equally. From 2013/14 to 2020/21, the number of White children in custody on an average month fell 64%. In comparison, the average number of Black children in custody fell only 41%. This led to the share of Black children in custody rising to 29% in 2020/21 – 4.9 times their share of the total population of 10-17-year-olds in England and Wales.

Since then, the share of Black children in custody has fallen, and in the latest year (2023/24) it fell again. However, it still stands at 24% – four times their population share. And while the share of Black children in custody has fallen, the share of Mixed ethnicity children has risen. In 2023/24, they were the only group to show an increase in the total number of children in custody – up 17% on 2022/23. They now account for 18% of the average monthly custodial population, despite making up only 6% of all 10-17-year-olds in England and Wales.

In the last briefing, our disproportionality indicator had a **mixed** rating – the proportion of children in custody on an average month who were Black was lower than in the previous year (2021/22) and the year before Covid (2019/20), but higher than ten years previously (2012/13). This latest update shows the picture is still **mixed** – the proportion of Black children in custody was down again compared to the previous year (2022/23) and the year before Covid (2019/20), but remained higher than ten years previously (2013/14).

Figure 3. Proportion of average monthly child custody population by ethnicity (England and Wales)



4. Youth justice

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2022/23)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2021/22)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2012/13)
Youth justice Children's reoffending rate	Mixed	32.5%	+0.3%pt	-1.7%pt	-8.5%pt

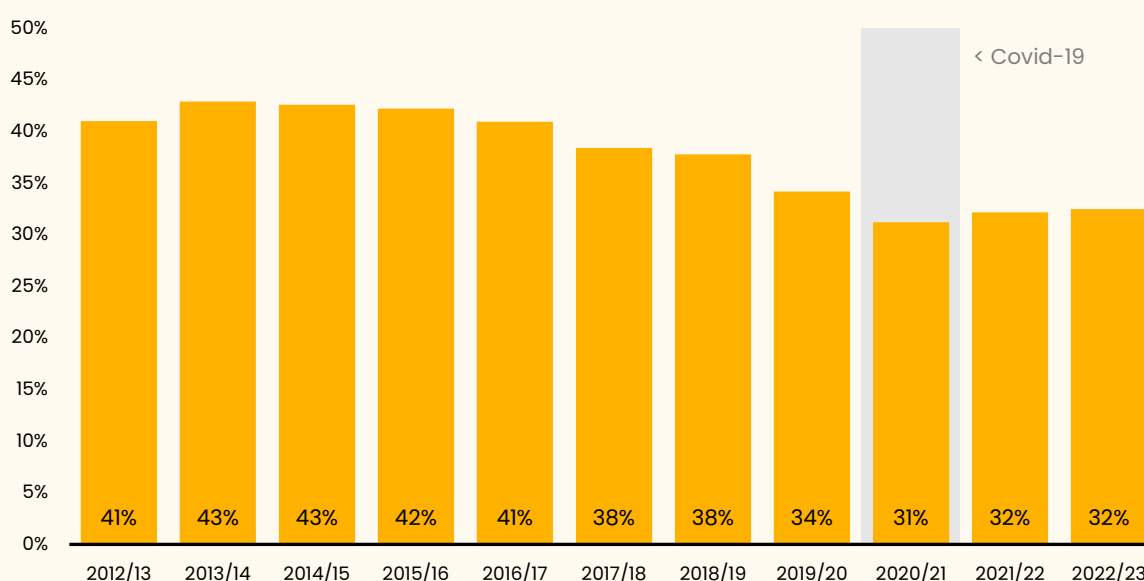
We've used children's reoffending rates as our core measure to track the youth justice sector. An offence is considered reoffending if it leads to a caution or conviction within 18 months of a previous offence (at the point either a caution or conviction was served or a period of incarceration ended).

The proportion of children reoffending rose again in the latest year.

Children's reoffending rates had been falling since 2013/14 until last year, when they increased by one percentage point (1%pt). In the latest year (2023/24), they rose again, by 0.3%pts to 32.5%. This represents 4,649 children who've reoffended. The average number of reoffences they were committing also rose – to 4.34 reoffences per person, from 4.07 the year before.

In the last briefing, our youth justice indicator had a **mixed** rating – children's reoffending rates were up on the previous year (2020/21) but down compared to the year before Covid (2019/20) and 2012/13. This latest update shows the picture is still **mixed** – children's reoffending rates are up again compared to the previous year (2021/22), but remain lower than the year before Covid (2019/20) and ten years previously (2012/13).

Figure 4. Proportion of children who reoffend (England and Wales)



5. Education

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2023/24)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2022/23)	Pre-Covid (2018/19)	10 years ago (2013/14)
Education Proportion of children persistently absent from school	Mixed	20.0%	-1.3%pt	+9.1%pt	+9.3%pt

We're using the proportion of children [persistently absent from school](#) (primary, secondary and special schools) in England as our core indicator for the education sector. A child is considered persistently absent if they miss 10% or more of possible lessons. Absence from school not only impacts attendance but is also associated with involvement in [violence](#). This, combined with the stark increase in absence since the pandemic, makes absence a priority for the sector.

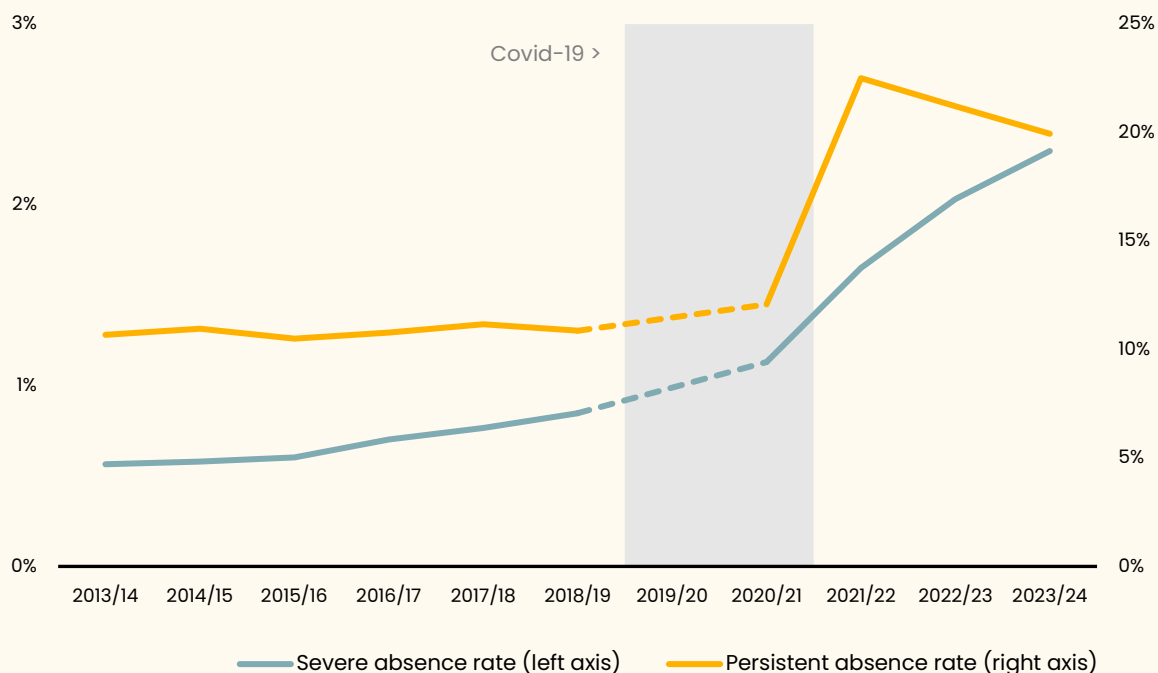
The proportion of children persistently absent is slowly falling.

Prior to Covid, the proportion of children persistently absent was fairly stable. However, after the pandemic rates of absence in England reached record highs – jumping from 11% in 2018/19 to 23% in 2021/22. In 2023/24, the rate fell by 1.3%pts for the second year in a row. But it still stands at 20% - up 9.1%pts compared to before Covid. In alternative provision (e.g. pupil referral units) the rate now stands at 83% persistent absence, down 0.4%pts from the previous year but up from 75% before Covid.

However, the proportion of children severely absent from school (missing 50% or more of possible lessons) has continued to rise in the latest year. It's a much smaller number – 2.3% of pupils in primary, secondary and special schools in England in 2023/24 – but up from 2.0% the year before and more than double the 0.8% rate prior to Covid. In alternative provision the severe absence rate is now 39.2%.

In the last briefing, our education indicator had a **mixed** rating – the proportion of children persistently absent was down from the previous year (2021/22) but up compared to the year before Covid (2019/20) and 2012/13. This latest update shows the picture is still **mixed** – persistent absence fell again compared to the previous year (2022/23), but remains higher than the year before Covid (2019/20) and ten years previously (2013/14).

Figure 5. Proportion of children persistently and severely absent from primary, secondary and special schools (England)



6. Poverty

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2023/24)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2022/23)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2013/14)
Poverty Proportion of children in absolute poverty	Mixed	26.4%	+1.4%pt	+1.6%pt	-1.9%pt

We've used the proportion of [children in households in absolute poverty](#) after housing costs as our core indicator for poverty. Absolute poverty is defined as the share of individuals whose household income (adjusted for inflation) is below 60% of the median income in 2010/11.

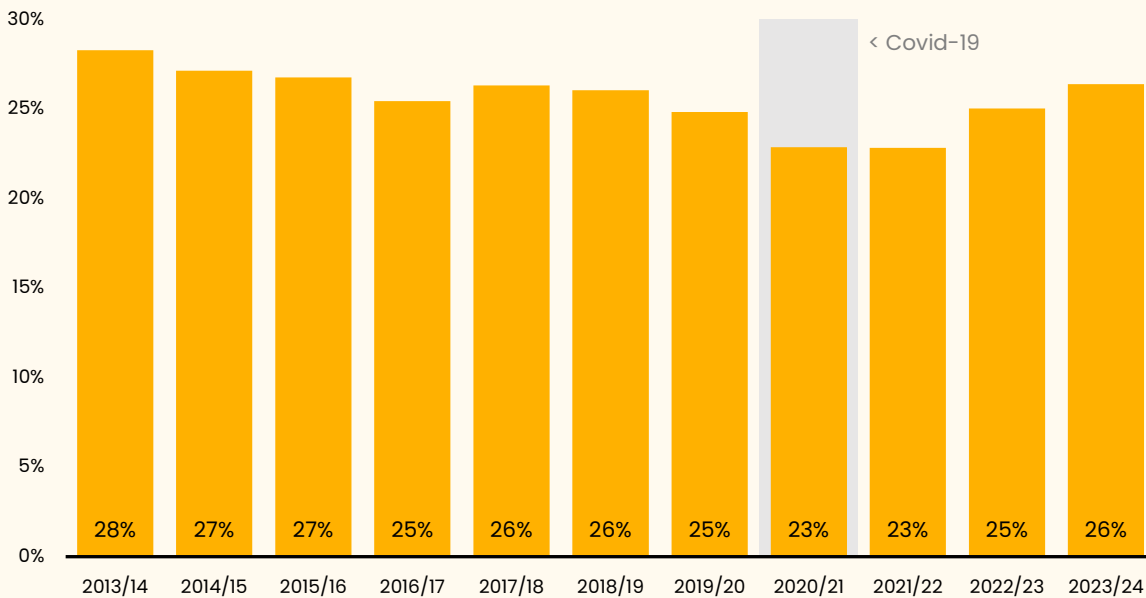
The proportion of children living in poverty rose again in the latest year.

Over the past decade, the proportion of children in the UK living in absolute poverty broadly improved. Temporary government schemes to support the poorest households such as the uplift to universal credit meant this continued during the pandemic. However, the past two years have shown meaningful



increases. In the latest year (2023/24), an estimated 3.85 million children were living in poverty in the United Kingdom, equivalent to 26% of all children. This is up 1.4%pts on the previous year (2022/23). It remains 1.9% below where it was ten years ago (2013/14), but the progress made over the past ten years appears to be reversing.

Figure 6. Estimated proportion of children in absolute poverty after housing costs (United Kingdom)



In the last briefing, our poverty indicator had a **mixed** rating – the proportion of children in absolute poverty was up on the previous year (2021/22) and the year before Covid (2019/20), but 3.8%pts below where it was ten years before (2012/13). This latest update shows the picture is still **mixed** – the proportion of children in poverty is up again compared to the previous year (2022/23) and the year before Covid (2019/20). However, it remains lower than ten years previously (2012/13).

