

## Equalities in education: a selection of key facts

---

### Sources

Most of the key facts cited in this paper are taken from chapter 10 of *How Fair is Britain?*, published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in autumn 2010. The chapter can be accessed as an 80-page PDF document at [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/triennial\\_review/how\\_fair\\_is\\_britain\\_ch10.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/triennial_review/how_fair_is_britain_ch10.pdf).

In addition, some of facts here are cited from statistical first releases published by the Department for Education, as follows:

#### General

Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2010, provisional data published on 13 May 2010 and final data on 17 June 2010

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000925/index.shtml>

#### Early years

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results, 2009/10

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000961/index.shtml>

Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2008

<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/pzMedia/uploads/Downloadable/d96d563b-c083-428d-93ed-402fa4c44bdb.pdf>

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, 2008/09

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000911/index.shtml>

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, 2009/10

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000979/index.shtml>

DCSF: Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents, 2009

<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/pzMedia/uploads/Downloadable/d96d563b-c083-428d-93ed-402fa4c44bdb.pdf>

#### Primary education

Key Stage 1 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, 2009/10

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000968/index.shtml>

Key Stage 2 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, 2008/09

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000889/index.shtml>

Key Stage 2 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, 2009/10

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000972/index.shtml>

#### Secondary education

GCSE and Equivalent Results, 2009/10 (Provisional)

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000963/index.shtml>

GCSE and Equivalent Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, 2009/10 (Final)

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000977/index.shtml>

## **Exclusions**

Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools, 2008/09

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000942/index.shtml>

## **Eight areas of equality and inequality**

*How Fair is Britain?* focuses on eight principal areas of equality and inequality in the education system, as follows:

1. Level of development at age 5
2. Permanent exclusion from school
3. Bullying, respect and support at school
4. Educational attainment at age 16
5. Participation in higher education
6. Adult skills and qualifications
7. Adult learning
8. Use of the internet

Under each of these eight headings, the report summarises the evidence that is currently available in relation to each of the equality strands (also known as 'protected characteristics') in the Equality Act 2010. It notes and emphasises that there is substantially more data available in relation to disability, ethnicity and gender than with regard to the other strands.

In addition to dealing with the equality strands covered by the Equality Act, *How Fair is Britain?* frequently makes significant references to social class and material disadvantage, as measured respectively by the occupational categories used in the Census and eligibility for free school meals (EFSM).

In the following paragraphs the facts cited in *How Fair is Britain* are presented in relation to each of the strands in equalities legislation, and also in relation to social class and material disadvantage.

### **Age**

With regard to schools and settings educating pupils up to the age of 18, the Equality Act is relevant with regard to employment issues but not otherwise. However, educational experiences before the age of 18 have a significant impact over the whole life-span, not just on childhood. For example, people who are successful before the age of 18 are much more likely than others to access learning opportunities in later life.

Tools such as the internet are used to varying degrees by different age-groups to access information and other resources.

In the modern economy, so-called 'jobs for life' are increasingly rare. There is accordingly an increasing premium on the acquisition and development of generic skills, including skills in learning to learn. The opportunities offered by adult education are particularly significant to people who belong to groups which, historically, have fared relatively poorly in the school system before the age of 18.

## **Disability**

At age five, only 15 per cent of children with special educational needs (SEN) achieve a good level of development, compared with 56 per cent of children who do not have special needs.

Children aged five whose primary need is related to visual impairment are about half as likely to achieve a good level of development as pupils who do not have special needs – 29 per cent compared with 56 per cent.

Pupils with special needs are disproportionately represented in permanent exclusions – nearly three quarters of permanent exclusions involve pupils with some form of special need. Out of every 10,000 pupils with statements of SEN, 24 are excluded, compared with only three in every 10,000 who do not have such statements.

Disabled pupils, particularly those who are learning disabled, are more likely than others to experience bullying. More than four fifths of those who are disabled or have a statement of special needs report having been bullied.

Students with a disability are as likely to receive a good degree as those not known to have a disability. In relation to disability groupings, those with dyslexia are the least likely to attend a Russell Group university

## **Ethnicity**

At age five, pupils from African, African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds perform less well than other pupils. Overall, 50 per cent of all children achieve a good level of development, but for children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds the proportion is around 38 per cent, and for those of African and African-Caribbean backgrounds it is around 42 per cent.

At age 16, there are significant differences in attainment according to ethnicity, and these vary significantly between England's nine regions. The two large communities in which attainment is substantially below the national average are the African-Caribbean community and the Pakistani community. Overall, the attainment gap for African-Caribbean pupils was about 11 percentage points in 2009. But in the East Midlands and in Yorkshire it was close to 20 points, and in the North East over 30. There were also large differences between local authorities. The attainment gap in Lambeth, for example, was only four percentage points, whereas in Bristol, Camden, Hackney, Kirklees and Leeds it was at least 20.

Similarly in relation to the Pakistani community there are significant regional differences. Overall, the attainment gap in 2009 was almost eight percentage points. But in London the attainment of Pakistani-heritage pupils was four points *above* the national average, whilst in Yorkshire and Humber it was about 15 points below.

Overall, the exclusion rate is 9 in every 10,000 pupils. In the case of pupils from African-Caribbean backgrounds, however, the rate is three times as high – 30 in every 10,000. In the case of children who are of mixed white and African-Caribbean background, the rate is 25 in every 10,000.

Irish Traveller and Gypsy or Roma children are the most likely to be permanently excluded and they are the only groups whose performance has deteriorated sharply in recent years, dropping from 42 per cent and 23 per cent respectively obtaining 5 GCSEs A\*--C in 2003 to just 16 per cent and 14 per cent in 2007. However, the raw figures are very low and these percentages may mask differences in record-keeping rather than differences in performance.

Children and young people who are refugees or seeking asylum are frequently at a disadvantage educationally, since it can take weeks or even months after their arrival to find a school place.

With regard to bullying, over three fifths of African-Caribbean, African, white and mixed heritage young people report having been bullied. The proportions are slightly lower for pupils of Pakistani (58 per cent), Bangladeshi (52 per cent) and Indian backgrounds (49 per cent).

Post-18, young people of minority backgrounds attend less prestigious institutions, study lower status subjects, are more likely to drop out, and less likely to attain the highest qualifications.

For example, the proportion of African-Caribbean and African students getting first or upper second class degrees is still only at two-thirds of the level of white students. African, African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani communities all have at least 44 per cent of their graduates coming from a former polytechnic, whilst the average for other communities is around 34 per cent. Black students are least likely to attend a Russell Group university, with only eight per cent, compared with 24 per cent of White students.

It is relevant to note it is low status institutions, and low status subjects, that will bear the burden of the impending financial cuts.

## **Gender**

By the age of five, girls' development is more advanced in 11 of the 13 assessment scales on the early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile, which covers social and emotional areas of development as well as cognitive. The gap is greatest in writing – nearly three quarters of girls (72 per cent) reach the expected level, but barely more than half (53 per cent) of boys.

The two categories in which boys outperform girls are problem solving and knowledge of the world.

In the seven key scales of personal, social and emotional (PSE) development, and in communication, language and literacy (CLL) 61 per cent of girls achieve level 6 or more, compared with only 43 per cent of boys.

Boys account for about four fifths (78 per cent) of all permanent exclusions.

There is extremely high gender segregation in vocational training.

Women remain less likely than men to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM subjects) – they make up 48 per cent of first degree students on such courses, but 55 per cent of first degree students overall.

Women make up a higher proportion of students studying for their first degree in the UK. The proportion of women students rose steadily to 58 per cent in 2005/06 and has remained roughly at this level reaching 59 per cent of UK domiciled undergraduates in 2008/09. Three fifths (61 per cent) of all part-time students are women.

In 2008/09, subject areas with a high proportion of women included subjects allied to medicine (80 per cent), veterinary science (76 per cent), education (76 per cent) and languages (68 per cent). Subject areas with a high proportion of men included engineering and technology (84 per cent), computer science (81 per cent) and architecture, building and planning (69 per cent).

Of first degree qualifiers in 2008/09, more women than men obtained first or upper second class degrees (64 per cent) compared with men (59 per cent).

A higher proportion of women than men attend 'higher educational establishments' (namely, non-vocational institutions that have yet to be awarded university status), whilst men are more likely to attend a Russell Group university.

### **Religion or belief**

There is very little data at national level correlating educational experiences with religious affiliation. However, it can reasonably be assumed that a very high proportion (over 95 per cent) of Pakistani-heritage and Bangladeshi-heritage children and young people are from a Muslim background. Locally, some authorities collect and analyse data on religious affiliation, but this is not collated nationally.

### **Sexual identity and gender identity**

For lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) young people, and for transgender young people, there is relatively little hard data about educational attainment. There are strong indications, however, that compared with other young people they experience higher levels of bullying and harassment. Research more generally has shown that pupils who report having been bullied do worse than others in their GCSE exams, the difference being about 15 percentage points. At the age of 16 they are twice as likely to be not in employment, education or training (NEET) – 10 per cent compared with 5 per cent.

A survey by the NFER of teachers' perceptions found that almost a half (46 per cent) considered that bullying of pupils seen to be LGB is common, but only one in six (14 per cent) considered that such pupils were supported by their school.

A piece of local qualitative research has found that transgender young people are more likely to experience harassment and bullying than LGB pupils, and that that the problem appears to be worse for female-to-male than male-to-female people.

### **Social class and material disadvantage**

Only 35 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals reach the expected level of development at age 5, compared with 55 per cent of those who are not eligible.

Across all scales on the age 5 profile, only 58 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals achieve 78 or more points across all scales, compared with 58 per cent of those who are not eligible.

Boys eligible for free school meals have lower attainment than girls who are eligible, and this is the case whatever their ethnicity. For example, only 25 per cent of white British boys attain a good level of development at age 5, compared with 42 per cent who are not eligible.

On the basis of the income deprivation affecting children indices (IDACI), only 39 per cent of pupils aged 5 in the most deprived ten per cent areas achieve a good level of development, compared with 67 per cent in the least deprived ten per cent of areas.

Pupils eligible for free school meals are over twice as likely to be permanently excluded than those who are not eligible.

There are indications that young people whose parents are in professional occupations are slightly less likely to be bullied at school compared with those whose parents are in routine occupations.

Comparing across parental social backgrounds, 44 per cent of children from professional family backgrounds attend a Russell Group University, compared with 23 per cent of those from an unskilled family background.

---