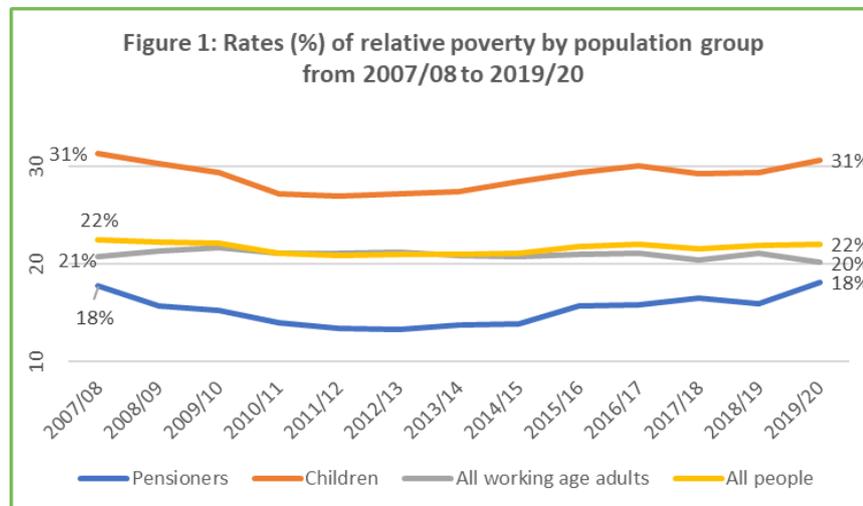


Latest official poverty stats illustrate scale of inequality in the UK pre-pandemic

By Graham Whitham

At the end of March, the Government released the [latest official statistics](#) detailing levels of poverty in the UK. This data covers 2019/20, therefore providing us with a snapshot of poverty levels right up to the eve of the pandemic.

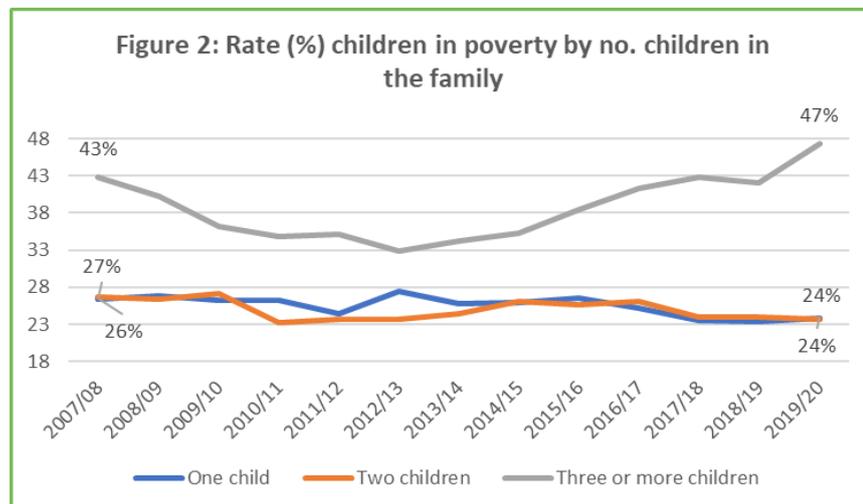
The data shows that 14.5m people were living below the poverty line in the UK in 2019/20. Of concern is the rise in child and pensioner poverty, with the percentage of children and pensioners living in poverty now back at pre-financial crisis levels (as illustrated in figure 1).



Looking at child poverty data specifically, we are starting to see the impact of the policy to restrict benefits to the first two children in a family that was introduced in 2017. As shown in figure 2, whilst children in families with three or more children have always been at greater risk of poverty, the gap had narrowed significantly in the years up to 2012/13. In the year from 2018/19 to 2019/20 the poverty rate for families containing 3 or more children shot up from 42% to 47%, whilst it remained stable for families with one or two children.

The data highlights a number of other disparities between different groups of the population. In 2019/20:

- Lone parent families were nearly twice as likely to be in poverty than couple families.
- 51% of all children in poverty were in families with a youngest child aged under five.



- Poverty rates were highest for people in households where the head of the household is from the Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnic groups and lowest for those from White ethnic groups.
- 46% of social renters and 33% of private renters were in poverty, compared to 12% of owner occupiers.
- The proportion of people in poverty was 35% for families where someone is disabled, compared to 28% for people living in families where no one is disabled.
- The proportion of children in poverty living in households where at least one person was in work was 75%.

Continued on the following page

What can be done?

These inequalities between different groups of the population aren't inevitable. An increase in Child Benefit of just £10 per week would [cut child poverty by 450,000](#). Scrapping the two-child limit would stem increases in child poverty. Addressing low pay would drive down in-work poverty. Reforming Universal Credit so it provides a proper safety net would stop people being plunged into hardship when they lose their job or have their hours cut. Increasing the availability of social housing and improving the rights of tenants in the private rented sector would address the link between poverty and housing tenure. Further improving the availability of childcare support would help address poverty among lone parents families and families with young children. This data should be driving the national responses to poverty and, in the aftermath of the pandemic, it is more important than ever that we have a coherent national plan for tackling the issue.



NB: The data presented in this article is for poverty measured as those household living below 60% of median income after housing costs have been taken into account. This is the main measure of poverty used by campaigners. There is a wealth of additional data, using both the main measure and other measures of poverty detailed in the [Households Below Average Income report](#).

Graham Whitham
GMPA, CEO

GMPA Impact Report 2017–2020

By Graham Whitham

Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) was incorporated in May 2016. The organisation was established to combat growing levels of poverty across the city region through policy and systems change. Initially GMPA's work was delivered through a voluntary network. Since 2017, we have grown the organisation's staff team and begun to develop and deliver several outputs that have enabled us to shape the way Greater Manchester responds to poverty.



We're really pleased to be publishing an [Impact Report](#) covering the three years from 2017 up to the end of 2020. It details GMPA's achievements during that period as we work towards our vision of a Greater Manchester free from poverty where all residents can realise their potential and access the benefits of living in a diverse and vibrant city region.

Our achievements to date include growing the number of Real Living Wage accredited employers, supporting local authorities in establishing anti-poverty strategies and initiatives, building a network of nearly 1400 stakeholders committed to addressing poverty and bringing together organisations from across the public, private and VCSE sectors to take collective action on food insecurity.

We have been able to evidence the value of our work through stakeholder feedback via annual surveys in 2019 and 2020, the results from the latter being detailed in this report. Feedback from the 2020 survey found that among GMPA's network:

- 97% believe that GMPA's policy and research reports are either very useful or useful for their work.
- 96% believe that the work of GMPA to help raise awareness of the effects of poverty and its causes is very important or important.
- 92% strongly agree or agree that GMPA is a vital source of information about how poverty can be tackled in Greater Manchester.
- 84% say that the work of GMPA has had a strong positive impact or positive impact on the extent to which their own work focuses on addressing the causes of poverty.

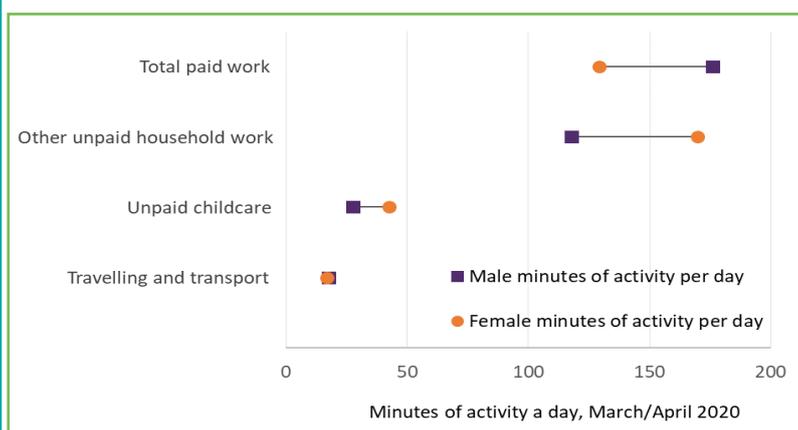
We are really proud of the contribution we've made to getting poverty higher up the agenda in Greater Manchester. This work wouldn't have been possible without support from members of our network and funders. Please take some time to look through the [report](#). We look forward to having an even greater impact over the coming years.

We cannot allow the pandemic to set gender parity back decades.

By Dr Andrea Barry, Senior Analyst, [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)



Before the pandemic, women were more likely to be stuck on low pay, more likely to be working in lower paid sectors and lower paid roles in higher paid sectors and trapped in underemployment due to childcare and transport barriers. Furthermore, before Covid-19, women already had a higher poverty rate. For working-age women in a family or household, their poverty rate was 21%. This is higher than the men in the family (19%). Covid-19 has made this worse, as those lower paid roles are the least likely to be allowed to work from home. Pre Covid-19, fifty-six percent of mothers made a change to their employment due to childcare, with 3 in 10 mums reducing their hours. This is simply unacceptable that women are unable to stay in employment simply due to unpaid labour.



When asked, women reported a reduction in paid work and further inequities in unpaid labour during the pandemic. According to the TUC, an unacceptable 7 in 10 women who applied for furlough were turned down. Nine in 10 have experienced higher anxiety and stress levels. Single mothers, particularly, are at breaking point according to Gingerbread. Ninety percent of single parents are women, and they are bearing the brunt of the effect of the pandemic.

The impact on finances cannot be ignored, as single mothers were struggling before the pandemic and this has only continued with 18% of single parents expecting their future financial situation will be worse and 13% are behind on their bills (this compares to 14% and 8% for couple parents). However, women, with or without children, were more likely to report they were behind in their bills during and before the pandemic, highlighting the precarity amongst women before the storm. Sadly, they were also more likely to report being made unemployed, whereas men were more likely to report being furloughed. To solve UK poverty, it is essential that women can participate in the labour market in the same fashion as men. A lifetime of lower earnings means women who are single pensioners have a higher poverty rate than men in the same situation.

In this discussion, we must also acknowledge the intersection of gender and age, as young women are particularly hit hard as they are 25% more likely to be furloughed and 87% more likely to lose their job. While this reflects the sectors they work in, with 4 in 10 young women having worked in retail or hospitality, it is still a stark reminder that all women have been impacted in different ways, and that again, the recovery must address these inequities. The unemployment rate for young women is 11.1%, compared to all women at 4.7%.

The impact of the pandemic on Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women has also been a harsh reality over the last year. The work and pay inequities that impact many BAME women have been exacerbated during the pandemic with stark results. In fact, according to the TUC, BAME women are twice as likely to be in low-paid work and occupations that expose them to a high risk of Covid-19 infections. Around one in eight BAME women are employed in insecure roles, compared with one in 16 white women and one in 18 white men. These positions are low paid, but also high-risk. This is unacceptable and must be addressed.

Thankfully at the beginning of the pandemic, the government recognised that it was important to act before more people were pulled into poverty. By implementing the £20 uplift to Universal Credit and recently, people on Universal Credit have been kept afloat during the pandemic. However, this is a temporary solution to alleviating poverty in the UK. In addition to making the lifeline permanent:

- We need a focus on creating new, good quality jobs across the country.
- Tackle known barriers to the jobs market such as issues with transport, unaffordable childcare, and lack of flexible work.

We cannot allow another International Women's Day pass with more women gripped by poverty. It is urgent to act immediately, so that we can continue our previous strides in gender equality. The full blog is available [here](#).



Dr Andrea Barry

The cost of learning in lockdown: March 2021 update

By David Bradley, England Development Manager (Cost of the School Day), Child Poverty Action Group

For the majority of children and young people up and down the country, school doors closed once more in January after just one day back in the classroom. Families were faced both with the prospect of home schooling children and with the challenges this presented for their household finances. As with the first school closures last year, [Child Poverty Action Group](#) (CPAG) and [Children North East](#) (CNE) wanted to hear directly from parents, carers, children and young people about what home learning was like for them. While the findings provide a snapshot of life in January and February 2021, the insights remain critical in helping us to understand how we can recover from the impact of the pandemic.



Parents and carers told us that they were struggling financially going into this lockdown and subsequently faced increasing costs and pressures which, despite their best efforts, have affected their children's experiences of learning during lockdown. Many low-income families faced the impossible choice of prioritising who gets access to scarce resources like laptops, bandwidth and one-to-one supervision. 35 per cent of low income families, who responded to our survey, were still missing essential resources for learning and children in receipt of free school meals were more likely to report sharing devices at home and using mobile phones to complete schoolwork.



In spite of these challenges, we heard about the extraordinary lengths that parents and carers were going to in order to help their children continue learning. We heard of mums waking up early to write out worksheets by hand and parents walking to school every day to pick up work packs. Families described how school staff worked tirelessly to deliver the best possible education in the circumstances, going above and beyond to try and bridge the gaps in resources where they could. This included lending out laptops, delivering printouts, supplying stationery and adjusting teaching to help all learners join in. Local councils also played an important role in getting additional support and resources to schools and families.

It's clear from the findings that many families need greater financial security to help them support children's learning, stay afloat and recover from the impact of the pandemic. As pupils ease back in to school, we need to recognise the role that family income plays in a child's education and shape our responses accordingly. Families described facing difficult decisions around home learning because they didn't have everything they needed to support their children. This 'permanent battle' caused stress and guilt for parents and often left less time to focus on learning. Any education recovery plan should place an emphasis on anti-poverty interventions in schools such as expanding the eligibility for free school meals to boost family finances and implementing extended schools provisions, to focus on pupil's mental health and wellbeing and support parents in to work.

The challenges and inequalities faced by low income families may have been made more acute by the pandemic, but they existed before COVID-19 and they'll continue to exist in our education system long after the crisis unless the government, local authorities, and schools work together to implement poverty aware policies and practices. During the autumn term, many schools worked hard to relieve cost pressures on families. For example, families told us that relaxed uniform policies had helped ease pressure on household budgets, allowing greater flexibility on where items could be purchased. Lots of schools had helped to provide additional items, such as extra stationery, face masks and pencil cases that were required to help keep people safe from the spread of Covid-19. However, the majority of families told us that they hadn't been supported in this way and many said that school costs had risen compared to previous years.



David Bradley

Through being poverty-aware and considering how policies and practices may impact households on a low income, schools and local authorities can continue to play an important role in relieving pressures on families, removing poverty-related stigma and helping to ensure children have everything they need to take part in education whether at school or at home.

You can find more information on how to achieve this through our Cost of the School Day project [here](#)

Greater Manchester Real Living Wage Campaign Update



It's been a particularly busy few weeks since the last update.

We are helping to develop the Action Plan outlining how we and our partners and allies can make Greater Manchester the first Real Living Wage City Region in the UK. As Campaign Co-ordinator I am meeting regularly with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the Action Plan involves as many local groups, organisations and individuals as possible. Further information on progress will feature in upcoming newsletters. In the meantime if you would like to know more about the development of the GM City Region Real Living Wage Action Plan or how you can get involved please [contact me](#).

On the March 18th I took part in a discussion entitled 'What have We Learned About Work During Covid-19 And What Needs To Change?' The discussion was part of the Manchester City Art Gallery series of events called Gallery Rethink and the other panellists were Elayne Redford, Manchester City Council, Fauziya Johnson, artist and Editor of Root-ed zine and Mark Burton, Steady State Manchester. The event used works on display in the gallery as a basis of a discussion about the world of post-Covid work. The recording of the event will be uploaded to the [Manchester Art Gallery You Tube Channel](#) soon so watch out for it.

As reported in previous newsletters the Campaign has had a long involvement in the work to develop Salford as a Living Wage Place. The hard work being done by all the partners is having a real impact on the ground. Only this week we heard of 4 more employers accrediting as real Living Wage Employers in the last month, bringing the total of Living Wage Employers in Salford to 59.

To end on another piece of relatively good news. From April 2021 workers above the age of 23 will receive the full National Living Wage (NLW). This is a change from the previous lower age limit of 25 for receiving the full current NLW hourly rate of £8.91. This is still some way below the Real Living Wage hourly rate of £9.50 per hour (£10.85 in London) but is still good news for some workers.

Best Wishes and Stay Safe.

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator [John Hacking](#)

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Twitter: [@GMLivingWage](#) Facebook: [facebook.com/gmlivingwage](https://www.facebook.com/gmlivingwage)

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign is a Greater Manchester Poverty Action programme.



GM Beyond Them & Us Research

The Belong Network are looking for participants to take part in a major national [research project](#) exploring the impact of Covid-19 on social cohesion across the UK. The 10 Greater Manchester local authorities are working with the University of Kent and the Belong Network to understand the impact of Covid-19 on social cohesion in the UK.

The project is looking for people to take part in focus groups over Zoom about your experiences of the pandemic. Questions asked will help the researchers to understand people's perceptions of others, their trust in different institutions, and how Covid-19 has impacted people's togetherness in GM and across the country.

Hearing your thoughts on the pandemic will be incredibly useful because it will help shape the direction of the work in your local area, and provide vital evidence to support this work in the future. The focus groups will be for the duration of approximately 1hr 15mins long and each participant will need to commit to attending a focus group in April and then again in May*. The dates of the focus groups to choose from in April are:

Wednesday 21st April at 11am

Thursday 22nd April at 11am

Wednesday 28th April at 1pm

*Dates for the focus groups in May will be communicated to participants directly once they have booked onto one of the focus groups in April

The University of Kent is giving participants a £10 gift voucher for attending each focus group.

Please contact [Megan](#) to book your place in a focus group session or if you have any further questions.



TOMORROW: Meet The Funder online event with The National Lottery Community Fund

Hosted by the Greater Manchester BAME Network.

GMCVO

The event is aimed specifically at Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community groups and organisations in Greater Manchester who are looking to apply for Awards for All, Reaching Communities or Partnerships.

The National Lottery Community Fund is exploring how best to identify, understand and reach communities often overlooked by funders. The Fund is aware that it has a lot more to do to reach and support diverse communities, with many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic organisations reporting that they have encountered barriers that leave them feeling excluded.

This event therefore not only provides the chance to find out more about the Fund's programmes, with a presentation and Q&A from the local team, but also to begin a conversation with them about how they might address these barriers and become a more equitable funder, through breakout sessions.

The event will be held on Zoom on **Thursday 15th April, 11am - 12.30pm**. You can [sign up to the event here](#).

Interpreting the COVID-19 Roadmap

Wednesday April 21st, 2021 from 1 - 2.30pm online via Zoom



The Government has begun to ease restrictions across the country as part of a four-stage plan to provide us with a 'roadmap out of lockdown'. VCSE sector organisations are eager to reconvene groups, utilise office spaces and provide much needed support to their beneficiaries as safely and effectively as possible. Different stages of the roadmap will impact organisations in very specific ways and interpreting the information available is not without grey areas.

This event is an opportunity for the Manchester VCSE sector to share its experiences and plans with each other, to think about the future and what the roadmap out of lockdown means for your organisation and beneficiaries and if your organisation has already reopened or is planning to, please join this event so we can all discuss and share how to reopen safely and effectively.

Book your place now at this free event via this [online booking page](#). More information about Macc [here](#)

Diversity Matters North West

Despite having to 'go online', Diversity Matters North West have continued to challenge inequalities in health and well-being and help people develop their potential and support each other. If you live in Tameside and need help with: access to food, picking up medications or essential shopping, advice on benefits or staying healthy at home, struggling with stress, anxiety, feeling isolated and lonely, coming to terms with losing a family member or if you are just unsure where to get help and support, then please call DNW's multi-lingual team on 0161 368 3268 Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm and leave your name and number in English, Bangla, Urdu, Hindi or Punjabi and one of their team will call you back. There is also a Tameside Befriending Project which is a telephone service for adults in the area who are experiencing loneliness and isolation and for women only – English classes, introduction to Zoom and employment support. [Find out more](#).



For more information about Greater Manchester Poverty Action

please visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or visit our [Facebook](#) page.

We want to find new ways of working together, share the network's successes and provide a voice for the people living in poverty in our region but we can only do this with your help and support.

Copies of previous newsletters are available on our [website](#) If you would like to submit an article please [get in touch](#) For more information please contact us by [email](#).

NB GMPA does not have full-time dedicated administrative support so please do not expect an immediate response.



Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of GMPA. We try to fact-check all articles and events, but if you notice an error please [let us know](#) so we can correct it in a future newsletter.