

Gaps in health outcomes persist in English youth

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(HealthDay)—Despite a government program in England to reduce health inequalities, indicators for health outcomes in deprived youth did not improve between 1999 and 2009, according to research published online May 30 in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*.

Dougal S. Hargreaves, M.D., of the University College London Institute of Child Health, and colleagues performed a secondary analysis of data for participants aged 0 to 24 years in the Health Surveys for England conducted in 1999, 2004, 2006, and 2009. The four main outcome measures examined were self/parent-reported general health, presence of a longstanding illness, obesity, and smoking. Socioeconomic status was

defined by tertiles for occupational class.

The researchers found that none of the indicators showed a decrease in absolute or relative inequality between 1999 and 2009. Among children aged 0 to 12 years, the relative risk for poor general health increased significantly, from 1.6 in 1999 to 3.9 in 2009 for the most-deprived versus the least-deprived tertiles. The absolute difference in prevalence of longstanding illness increased from 1.3 to 7.4 for 0- to 12-year-olds and from -5.9 to 3.1 for 13- to 24-year-olds. Among children aged 8 to 15 years, absolute inequality in having tried smoking increased significantly in the first half of the decade, then decreased in the second half. Among youth aged 16 to 24 years, the absolute inequality in smoking prevalence continued throughout the decade.

"Despite a coordinated government strategy to address health gaps between different [socioeconomic groups](#), there was no reduction of inequality in health status and key risk factors in children and young people between 1999 and 2009; in fact, there was some evidence of increased inequality," the authors write.

More information: [Abstract](#)

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