

'Appalling decline' in UK children's health—report

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Rising infant mortality, a surge in obesity and neglected tooth decay

have left UK children aged under five facing a "bleak" future, a report published on Monday warned.

The Academy of Medical Sciences said it had collected "wide-ranging evidence" of declining health among [young children](#) across the United Kingdom, with infant survival rates worse than in 60 percent of similar countries.

Over a fifth of five-year-old children are overweight or obese and one-in-four are affected by [tooth decay](#), the report said.

Children living in the most deprived areas were twice as likely to be obese than in affluent areas, it said, adding that the number of children living in extreme poverty had tripled between 2019 and 2022.

Vaccination rates, meanwhile, had plunged below World Health Organization safety thresholds, threatening outbreaks.

"Child deaths are rising, infant survival lags behind comparable countries and preventable physical and [mental health issues](#) plague our youngest citizens," said the report's co-chair, Helen Minnis.

"Unless the health of babies and young children is urgently prioritized, we condemn many to a life of poorer health and lost potential."

The authors recommended that the government and policymakers urgently implement effective early years interventions.

Investment in the earliest years, including preconception and during pregnancy, "delivers lifelong benefits" by establishing healthy foundations to reduce the risk of complex health issues, the report said.

Co-chair Andrew Pollard said the most "disconcerting" evidence in the

report was "an appalling decline in the health of our children, which makes for an even more bleak outlook for their future".

"There is clear evidence in the report that tackling childhood health conditions, addressing inequalities and providing early years social support can change the future of health and prosperity," he added.

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