

Happiest European children in Netherlands, Britain ranks low

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The happiest children in Europe are in the Netherlands and Scandinavia but Britain is among the worst places to grow up, according to new British research published Tuesday.

A league table of young people's wellbeing places the Netherlands top of 29 European states, followed by Sweden and Norway, while Britain comes in at a lowly 24th.

The table, focusing on youngsters aged up to 19, was compiled by researchers at York University in northern England for the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) using data mainly from 2006.

The researchers assessed the countries using 43 separate criteria, ranging from [infant mortality](#) and [obesity](#) to factors such as poverty and housing.

Germany was eighth, France was 15th and Britain was ranked only above Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta.

The Netherlands scored high in all categories, while the Scandinavians were praised for having a low level of child deaths caused by accidents.

Scandinavian children also indulge in less "risky behaviour" -- which the researchers categorised as early sexual intercourse, smoking and drinking -- than their European counterparts.

Norway was top in the provision of housing and the "quality of neighbourhoods."

CPAG said the low ranking of Britain, despite its position among the world's leading economies, was "particularly influenced by the high number of children living in families where no parent works."

The British government said it had made progress on child wellbeing since 2006, but CPAG urged it to include child-friendly measures in Wednesday's Budget announcement as the [economic downturn](#) leads to higher unemployment.

CPAG chief executive Kate Green said: "We cannot afford a 'do nothing' Budget for [children](#). The report shows a clear link between high levels of child wellbeing and low levels of child poverty.

"If we fail to protect families during the downturn, progress on child wellbeing could go into reverse."

Overall ranking:

1. Netherlands
2. Sweden
3. Norway
4. Iceland
5. Finland
6. Denmark

7. Slovenia

8. Germany

9. Ireland

10. Luxembourg

11. Austria

12. Cyprus

13. Spain

14. Belgium

15. France

16. Czech Republic

17. Slovakia

18. Estonia

19. Italy

20. Poland

21. Portugal

22. Hungary

23. Greece

24. United Kingdom

25. Romania

26. Bulgaria

27. Latvia

28. Lithuania

29. Malta

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