Twitter Thread by Imran

Imran
@imran_1

THREAD: Is the Govt changing its cherrypicking strategy on child poverty claims?

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

1. What PM wrongly claimed on child poverty in 2019, earning @StatsRegulation rebuke

2. What PM claimed on child poverty at PMQs on 18 Nov 20

Statement 1: "Actually there are 400,000 fewer children in poverty than there were in 2010."
Prime Minister on BBC's Andrew Marr show, 1 December, 2019
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/01121901.pdf

This claim on a set-piece media interview during the election campaign was incorrect. When the PM made this announcement, the latest poverty figures were HBAI 2017/8. Even using the most

favourable baseline year for the government, 2009/10, they showed child poverty had risen by 400,000 (BHC) and 200,000 (AHC) on the headline relative child poverty figure. On absolute child poverty, the measures showed no change (BHC) and a small fall of 100,000 (AHC) – a historically weak performance. The material deprivation figures showed a fall of 100,000 (low income) and a rise of 200,000 for severe low income since 2010/11 – when the new suite of questions was introduced.

In the first statement, the PM used 2010 as a baseline. At the time, relative poverty was rising and absolute poverty was historically weak - we could not see where the 400,000 claim had come from.

An earlier thread on the PM's past claims https://t.co/AKNrOAsxc0

> THREAD:
>
> How can PM level up the country if he cannot level with the public about how many children are in poverty?
>
> That's the question we should be asking ourselves after the @StatsRegulation ruled the PM incorrectly used child poverty statistics.
>
> — Imran (@imran_1) July 30, 2020

In the PMQs claim he talks about the last 10 yrs.

If he means since 2010, he'd be repeating his incorrect claim.

Does he mean the last 10 years for which we have statistics?

That would be starting at 2009/10 - under LAB & well before benefit cuts started to bite from 2012

Let's take a look, first, at the relative child poverty measure

Looking at the last 10 years, child poverty has RISEN by 200,000 (BHC) or 300,000 (BHC)

Table 4.3tr: Number of children falling below various thresholds of contemporary median income, United Kingdom[1,2]

Number of children (millions)

		Before housing costs			After housing costs			All children
		50%	60%	70%	50%	60%	70%	
	2008/09	1.5	2.9	4.3	2.6	3.9	5.1	13.0
	2009/10	1.4	2.6	4.2	2.5	3.9	5.1	13.2
	2010/11	1.2	2.3	3.9	2.3	3.6	4.9	13.2
	2011/12	1.2	2.3	4.0	2.2	3.6	5.0	13.3
	2012/13	1.3	2.3	4.0	2.2	3.7	5.0	13.4
	2013/14	1.2	2.3	4.0	2.4	3.7	5.2	13.4
	2014/15	1.3	2.5	4.2	2.6	3.9	5.3	13.5
	2015/16	1.4	2.7	4.3	2.6	4.0	5.4	13.6
	2016/17	1.5	2.7	4.4	2.6	4.1	5.5	13.7
	2017/18	1.6	3.0	4.5	2.8	4.1	5.5	13.8
	2018/19	1.6	2.8	4.4	2.9	4.2	5.4	14.0
Change	2017/18-2018/19 [3,4]	0.0	-0.2	-0.1	0.1	0.1	-0.1	0.2

Can the PM's 400,000 claim be borne out by the absolute child poverty stats? Remember, we normally expect this figure to fall, as society gets richer

No, absolute child poverty fell by 100,000 on both BHC/AHC - a historically weak performance

Table 4.4tr: Number of children falling below various thresholds of 2010/11 median income held constant in real terms, United Kingdom[1,2]

		Before housing costs			After housing costs			All children
		50%	60%	70%	50%	60%	70%	
FRS (GB)	1994/95	4.2	5.7	7.1	5.2	6.5	7.7	12.6
	1995/96	4.1	5.7	7.1	5.2	6.5	7.7	12.7
	1996/97	4.0	5.4	6.7	5.0	6.1	7.2	12.7
	1997/98	3.7	5.2	6.5	4.7	5.9	7.1	12.7
	1998/99	3.5	5.1	6.3	4.6	5.7	6.9	12.7
	1999/00	3.1	4.8	6.1	4.2	5.4	6.5	12.7
	2000/01	2.5	4.1	5.6	3.6	4.9	6.0	12.7
	2001/02	1.9	3.7	5.0	3.1	4.4	5.4	12.6
FRS (UK)	2002/03	1.8	3.4	4.8	2.8	4.1	5.3	12.9
	2003/04	1.7	3.2	4.6	2.7	3.9	5.1	12.9
	2004/05	1.6	3.0	4.5	2.5	3.8	5.1	12.9
	2005/06	1.5	3.1	4.5	2.6	3.9	5.1	12.9
	2006/07	1.6	3.0	4.4	2.6	4.0	5.1	13.0
	2007/08	1.5	2.9	4.4	2.7	4.0	5.1	13.0
	2008/09	1.4	2.8	4.2	2.5	3.9	5.1	13.0
	2009/10	1.3	2.5	4.0	2.4	3.8	5.0	13.2
	2010/11	1.2	2.3	3.9	2.3	3.6	4.9	13.2
	2011/12	1.3	2.6	4.2	2.4	3.8	5.2	13.3
	2012/13	1.3	2.5	4.2	2.4	3.9	5.2	13.4
	2013/14	1.2	2.4	4.1	2.5	3.8	5.3	13.4
	2014/15	1.2	2.3	3.9	2.4	3.7	5.1	13.5
	2015/16	1.2	2.3	3.9	2.3	3.7	5.1	13.6
	2016/17	1.2	2.2	3.7	2.2	3.5	4.9	13.7
	2017/18	1.3	2.5	3.9	2.4	3.7	5.0	13.8
	2018/19	1.4	2.4	3.9	2.5	3.7	4.9	14.0

Can the PM's claim to have cut child poverty by 400,000 be from the material deprivation measures?

No - because the new suite of measures goes back 9, not 10 yrs

No - we've seen a small fall on one measure and a small rise on the other

Table 4.5tr: Percentage and number of children falling below thresholds of low income and material deprivation, United Kingdom[1,2,3]

	Low income and material deprivation		Severe low income and material deprivation		
	Percentage	Number (millions)	Percentage	Number (millions)	All children
New suite of questions[5]					
2010/11	13	1.7	4	0.5	13.2
2011/12	12	1.7	3	0.4	13.3
2012/13	13	1.8	4	0.5	13.4
2013/14	13	1.7	4	0.5	13.4
2014/15	13	1.7	4	0.5	13.5
2015/16	12	1.6	4	0.5	13.6
2016/17	11	1.5	4	0.6	13.7
2017/18	12	1.6	5	0.7	13.8
2018/19	11	1.5	4	0.6	14.0

So, where is the 400,000 figure from?

The closest the PM can come to that would be if his baseline was even earlier and focused only on the BHC absolute poverty measure

Back to Contents

Table 4.4tr: Number of children falling below various thresholds of 2010/11 median income held constant in real terms, United Kingdom[1,2]

		Before housing costs			After housing costs			All children
		50%	60%	70%	50%	60%	70%	
	2008/09	1.4	2.8	4.2	2.5	3.9	5.1	13.0
	2009/10	1.3	2.5	4.0	2.4	3.8	5.0	13.2
	2010/11	1.2	2.3	3.9	2.3	3.6	4.9	13.2
	2011/12	1.3	2.6	4.2	2.4	3.8	5.2	13.3
	2012/13	1.3	2.5	4.2	2.4	3.9	5.2	13.4
	2013/14	1.2	2.4	4.1	2.5	3.8	5.3	13.4
	2014/15	1.2	2.3	3.9	2.4	3.7	5.1	13.5
	2015/16	1.2	2.3	3.9	2.3	3.7	5.1	13.6
	2016/17	1.2	2.2	3.7	2.2	3.5	4.9	13.7
	2017/18	1.3	2.5	3.9	2.4	3.7	5.0	13.8
	2018/19	1.4	2.4	3.9	2.5	3.7	4.9	14.0
Change	2017/18-2018/19 [3,4]	0.1	0.0	-0.1	0.1	0.0	-0.1	0.2

FRS

But this throws up some quirks/problems:

1. 2008/09 is obviously going back 11 yrs, not 10 yrs. So the PM's statement was inaccurate.

2. This would be only apply to the BHC absolute measure. There was a 300,000 RISE on the AHC relative measure in the same period

3. Significantly, it appears Govt has changed its strategy of claiming poverty reductions by cherrypicking statistics for the years since 2010

The cherrypicking strategy was something I raised with @StatsRegulation 3 yrs ago & got a sympathetic response https://t.co/4JTcrSjnae

It appears the Govt is now cherrypicking which years it uses for its child poverty claims

The record after 2010 is so poor, it seems it is reaching back as far 2008.

Including that year under Gordon Brown seems to give the PM 300,000 of his 400,000 claim.

To recap, I don't know for certain where the 400,000 claim comes from, but it seems to be from the BHC absolute measure over 11 years.

If that's true, then I'd urge Govt to spend more time on actually tackling rising child poverty than creative ways to hide that reality

ENDS

@threadreaderapp unroll