

Levelling up: wellbeing differences across areas and their political implications

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There is currently a large interest in inequality both across people and across areas.

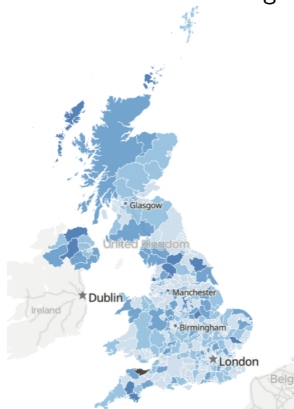
Despite a lot of attention being paid to income inequality, there is relatively little information on wellbeing inequality.

- How large is the spatial inequality of wellbeing across the UK?
- How do these differences impact people's behaviour?

Motivation

According to the Office for National Statistics, life satisfaction has been slowly rising across the United Kingdom in recent years.

However, there is substantial variation in average wellbeing between local areas.



Source: Office for National Statistics; Average ratings of life satisfaction, UK, years ending March 2019 to March 2020. A darker shade of blue indicates a higher level of life satisfaction.

Creating a Ranking of Local Authority Districts

We create a ranking of Local Authority Districts according to their levels of wellbeing and compare them to rankings based on standard Economic indicators.

Our analysis look at 305 Local Authority Districts in England. Using the Annual Population Survey (2011-2019) we rank authorities according to:

- Average Life Satisfaction (measured on an 11-point scale)
- The share of people who experience low levels of wellbeing (Life Satisfaction of 6 or less, bottom 20%)
- The unemployment rate
- The Index of Multiple Deprivation
- The hourly earnings

Rankings of best and worst LADs in England

Table 1 Panel A: Top 20 Ranked Local Authority Districts in England

| Local Authority District | Average Life Satisfaction | % Low Life Satisfaction | Rank Average Life Satisfaction | Rank Low Unemployment | Rank Low Deprivation | Rank Hourly Earnings |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| North Devon | 7.98 | 0.16 | 1 | 30 | 190 | 295 |
| Fylde | 7.96 | 0.13 | 2 | 13 | 98 | 139 |
| Fareham | 7.93 | 0.14 | 3 | 18 | 14 | 88 |
| Eden | 7.92 | 0.13 | 4 | 1 | 135 | 273 |
| Hart | 7.91 | 0.14 | 5 | 67 | 1 | 23 |
| Uttlesford | 7.91 | 0.12 | 6 | 7 | 31 | 96 |
| East Devon | 7.91 | 0.13 | 7 | 10 | 79 | 151 |
| Lichfield | 7.89 | 0.16 | 8 | 79 | 75 | 86 |
| Bolsover | 7.89 | 0.17 | 9 | 109 | 241 | 257 |
| Copeland | 7.89 | 0.17 | 10 | 167 | 247 | 74 |
| Daventry | 7.89 | 0.14 | 11 | 17 | 84 | 92 |
| Winchester | 7.88 | 0.15 | 12 | 96 | 21 | 54 |
| New Forest | 7.88 | 0.15 | 13 | 32 | 69 | 141 |
| South Oxfordshire | 7.88 | 0.13 | 14 | 33 | 17 | 46 |
| North Kesteven | 7.88 | 0.16 | 15 | 39 | 61 | 198 |
| Cotswold | 7.87 | 0.14 | 16 | 5 | 51 | 91 |
| Hambleton | 7.87 | 0.15 | 17 | 120 | 78 | 208 |
| Wychavon | 7.87 | 0.15 | 18 | 60 | 126 | 188 |
| Waverley | 7.86 | 0.13 | 19 | 65 | 4 | 51 |
| Rochford | 7.86 | 0.15 | 20 | 9 | 41 | 43 |

Source: Office for National Statistics, Social Survey Division. (2020). Annual Population Survey, 2004-2020: Secure Access. [data collection]. 17th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6721, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6721-16>

Table 1 Panel B: Bottom 20 Ranked Local Authority Districts in England

| Local Authority District | Average Life Satisfaction | % Low Life Satisfaction | Rank Average Life Satisfaction | Rank Low Unemployment | Rank Low Deprivation | Rank Hourly Earnings |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Slough | 7.44 | 0.24 | 286 | 215 | 231 | 131 |
| Harlow | 7.44 | 0.23 | 287 | 287 | 245 | 184 |
| Hastings | 7.44 | 0.22 | 288 | 155 | 287 | 282 |
| Oldham | 7.43 | 0.25 | 289 | 275 | 251 | 259 |
| Rochdale | 7.43 | 0.25 | 290 | 283 | 279 | 262 |
| Knowsley | 7.42 | 0.25 | 291 | 237 | 301 | 246 |
| Southwark | 7.42 | 0.23 | 292 | 272 | 284 | 14 |
| Nottingham | 7.41 | 0.22 | 293 | 296 | 298 | 278 |
| Haringey | 7.41 | 0.24 | 294 | 247 | 282 | 53 |
| Liverpool | 7.39 | 0.24 | 295 | 246 | 300 | 209 |
| Manchester | 7.38 | 0.24 | 296 | 290 | 305 | 220 |
| Barking and Dagenham | 7.37 | 0.27 | 297 | 291 | 303 | 167 |
| Islington | 7.34 | 0.21 | 298 | 202 | 293 | 4 |
| Greenwich | 7.32 | 0.25 | 299 | 269 | 253 | 21 |
| Camden | 7.32 | 0.22 | 300 | 201 | 233 | 7 |
| Lewisham | 7.30 | 0.24 | 301 | 210 | 283 | 20 |
| Enfield | 7.29 | 0.26 | 302 | 258 | 252 | 76 |
| Lambeth | 7.27 | 0.24 | 303 | 245 | 286 | 10 |
| Hackney | 7.26 | 0.25 | 304 | 248 | 304 | 33 |
| Wolverhampton | 7.20 | 0.29 | 305 | 301 | 285 | 268 |

Source: Office for National Statistics, Social Survey Division. (2020). Annual Population Survey, 2004-2020: Secure Access. [data collection]. 17th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6721, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6721-16>

Correlations of measures used for rankings

Table 2: Correlations of measures of subjective wellbeing and economic indicators across Local Authority Districts in England.

| | Average Life Satisfaction | Low Unemployment | Less Deprived (IMD) | Earnings |
|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Low Unemployment | 0.636 | 1.000 | | |
| Less Deprived (IMD) | 0.680 | 0.705 | 1.000 | |
| Earnings | 0.028 | 0.298 | 0.505 | 1.000 |

Source: Office for National Statistics, Social Survey Division. (2020). *Annual Population Survey, 2004-2020: Secure Access*. [data collection]. 17th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6721, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6721-16>

Voting Patterns across Local Authority Districts

Table 3: Correlations between the share voting Conservative in general elections and measures of subjective wellbeing and economic indicators across Local Authority Districts in England

| | % Voting Conservative (2015) | % Voting Conservative (2017) | % Voting Conservative (2019) |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Average Life Satisfaction | 0.673 | 0.714 | 0.624 |
| Low Unemployment | 0.629 | 0.536 | 0.398 |
| Less Deprived (IMD) | 0.749 | 0.650 | 0.481 |
| Hourly Earnings (Log) | 0.236 | -0.037 | -0.191 |
| % Low Levels Wellbeing | -0.691 | -0.615 | -0.487 |

Source: Office for National Statistics, Social Survey Division. (2020). *Annual Population Survey, 2004-2020: Secure Access*. [data collection]. 17th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6721, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6721-16>

Voting Patterns across Local Authority Districts

Table 4: Correlations between the share voting Brexit in the EU Referendum and measures of subjective wellbeing and economic indicators across Local Authority Districts in England

| | % Voting Brexit |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Average Life Satisfaction | 0.168 |
| Low Unemployment | -0.116 |
| Less Deprived (IMD) | -0.185 |
| Hourly Earnings (Log) | -0.668 |
| % Low Level of Wellbeing | 0.125 |
| % Voting Conservative | 0.100 |

Source: Office for National Statistics, Social Survey Division. (2020). *Annual Population Survey, 2004-2020: Secure Access*. [data collection]. 17th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6721, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6721-16>

Main Take-Aways

- Life Satisfaction is predicted well by Unemployment and by the Index of Multiple Deprivation, but not by Earnings.
- Conservative votes are more likely to come from areas with more satisfied people, with low unemployment, and which are less deprived.
 - In the most recent election areas with low earners are also more likely to vote Conservative
- Economic factors have become weaker over time at predicting voting patterns. Life Satisfaction appears to remain consistently good at predicting the Conservative share.
- The Brexit vote is correlated to both high life satisfaction and low levels of Wellbeing.