The State of our Social Fabric

Measuring the changing nature of community over time and geography

Will Tanner | James O'Shaughnessy
Fjolla Krasniqi | James Blagden

ONWARD

About Onward

Onward is a campaigning thinktank whose mission is to develop new ideas for the next generation of centre right thinkers and leaders. We exist to make Britain fairer, more prosperous and more united, by generating a new wave of modernising ideas and a fresh kind of politics that reaches out to new groups of people. We believe in a mainstream conservatism – one that recognises the value of markets and supports the good that government can do, is unapologetic about standing up to vested interests, and assiduous in supporting the hardworking, aspirational and those left behind.

Our goal is to address the needs of the whole country: young as well as old; urban as well as rural; and for all parts of the UK – particularly places that feel neglected or ignored in Westminster. We will achieve this by developing practical policies that work. Our team has worked both at a high level in government and for successful thinktanks. We know how to produce big ideas that resonate with policymakers, the media and the public. We will engage ordinary people across the country and work with them to make our ideas a reality.

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Thanks

Onward is a small non-profit that relies on the generosity of our donors and patrons to do our work. We are particularly grateful to our partners for the *Repairing our Social Fabric* programme – the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Power to Change and Shelter UK – and our patron Richard Oldfield, who have collectively made this landmark two-year programme possible.

We would also like to thank the many people who have helped at the various different stages in creating this landmark report, especially Jessica Hopwood and Francesca Fraser at Onward and the invaluable contributions from the members of the Steering Group set out later on. We would also like to thank the many academics that have provided great advice and insight, including Raj Patel of *Understanding Society*, and the many organisations that have voluntarily provided us with data during the difficult times of lockdown.

We are indebted, in particular, to our Founding Patrons: Martyn Rose, Michael Spencer, David Meller, Bjorn Saven, Richard Oldfield, Robert Walters, Tim Sanderson, James Alexandroff, Jason Dalby, Graham Edwards, John Nash and Theodore Agnew. Without this philanthropic support, our work would not be possible.

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Summary of the argument

There is a growing recognition that the social fabric of many places in Britain is fraying. More than two thirds of people believe that their community is in decline. Onward's work through the *Politics of Belonging* project has shown how, in response to this and other changes, people increasingly seek security in an uncertain and fast-changing world. This feeling of rootlessness is not impressionistic or ephemeral, the product of the worried well-off. It is real, and based on lived experience. It is keenly felt by ordinary people when you ask them about their local place. And it has had seismic consequences for our politics and society through the EU Referendum in 2016 and the realignment of party politics last December.

But while the language of "left behind communities" and "forgotten towns" has become commonplace, data to explain the politics of belonging - in particular as a social, and not simply economic, phenomenon - has been lacking. Indeed, the measures we have used in the past may be part of the problem: metrics of productivity or economic output only partially explain, and often obscure, the political anger and social anxiety that persist in many parts of the United Kingdom. We need new ways to measure the changing fabric of place if we are to better understand, and respond to, voters' concerns.

These issues have been heightened by the coronavirus pandemic, which has both tested the strength of the social fabric and revealed its enduring power. As Onward has found previously,[1] many places have rallied to the moment, generating mutual aid groups, neighbourly support and supporting formalised networks of support, such as civic society and local authorities.

But coronavirus has stretched communities and left some groups vulnerable. It has also created further schisms between young and old. Polling for this report reveals that older generations - who have spent much of the last six months shielding - have become more focused on freedom, rather than security, since lockdown. Meanwhile, younger generations have become more inclined to seek security over freedom, and feel less connected and trusting of their community than they did in April. Every region except London is now in favour of people taking jobs locally, even if it means they earn less, rather than moving away for work.

This is the context for Onward's *UK Social Fabric Index*, which combines an array of data on the elements of community which matter most to people to understand how the social fabric of the UK varies by geography and has changed over time. In doing so, we identify not only the places which demand the greatest attention, but the communities whose strength offers lessons for how others might respond. We find:

- When viewed nationally, it is clear that the UK has suffered a long-term and broad-based decline in the networks and institutions that make up the fabric of communities. People are less likely to be a member of a local group or volunteer, to attend church or community activities, or go on trips with their families than they were even ten years ago. They are less generous with their money to charities, and with their trust to civic institutions. People are less

likely to cohabit with other people, live in a stable housing tenure (home ownership or social rent housing), be free of debt, or hold a secure job. In these material ways, it is possible to chart how community is changing.

- This does not mean that every measure has got worse. Educational attainment, rates of crime and healthy life expectancy have improved considerably over time. People are more likely to have meals with their children and use extended family for childcare. These trends have mitigated the loss of community in some respects, including strongly in some areas, but they have not been able to reverse the decline of community in other ways.
- There is very wide variation in the social fabric of different places, based on the inherent characteristics of different places. The places with strong social fabric tend to combine high levels of Physical Infrastructure and Economic Value with enduring Civic Institutions and Positive Social Norms. The places that score particularly highly include London's commuter belt, the South of England, and the more prosperous parts of Scotland.
- Meanwhile other areas have social fabric that is worn out and fraying. Coastal areas, city suburbs and large towns are worst affected. These areas are concentrated in three parts of the country: The East of England corridor from King's Lynn to Kingston-Upon-Hull, South Wales, and along the M62 from Grimsby to Huddersfield. The growing social inequality between these places and the rest of the country is one reason for their economic decline.
- We are familiar with the national conversation about growing economic inequality over the last 40 years; our data suggests the same phenomenon exists in the social and cultural assets of the UK's communities. The social fabric strongly correlates with political volatility. Among the top decile of places in our index (those with the strongest social fabric), 44% of people voted to leave the EU, compared to more than 62% in the bottom decile, where the social fabric is most frayed. Local authorities in 'Red Wall' constituencies score 9 per cent lower on average than the UK average, and 13 per cent lower than the Conservative average. Estimating for constituencies, the stronghold seats the Conservatives won after decades of Labour dominance in 2019 have a score 30 per cent lower than the seat (Putney) lost to Labour.

This analysis lends considerable statistical weight to the commonplace feeling that community has been in decline, which can at times be expressed as nostalgia and which critics often dismiss for that reason. But the appearance of nostalgia is deceptive, as our work on *The Politics of Belonging* demonstrated. People don't believe there was a golden age when everything was better; in many regards, they know they are better off than previous generations. They do know, however, that in critical ways their quality of life has been deteriorating - in the strength of community and sense of neighbourliness that defines their place - and this loss matters deeply to people's sense of belonging.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the ways policymakers and politicians have tended to think about community needs to change. Economic policies alone - from new infrastructure to inward foreign and direct investment - are always welcome but not always sufficient to fix social problems; nor will community revival offset more precarious housing tenure or declines in job security. It is the interplay between economic and social factors that drives the improvement, or deterioration, of the social fabric of a place. This means that "levelling up" must be a social as well as economic endeavour. It also requires that the scale at which interventions take place may need to be at a local, community level, rather through regional or national action.

To make progress - and start to give people back a sense of belonging - policymakers will need to embrace a different set of interventions, using an approach which pulls on both social and economic levers within a specific local geography. They will need policies which seek not only to improve the economic prospects of an area, as Onward's report *Levelling Up* proposed, but those which strengthen the social fabric of communities by generating housing and job security, building civic institutions, and fostering local relationships and social capital. This was important in normal times but becomes essential as we emerge from the coronavirus pandemic, which has done so much to remind us of the enduring power of communities and the deep reservoir of reciprocal support available in society. This policy playbook will be the subject of our next paper, published in the coming weeks.

What does community mean?

In Onward's work on the politics of belonging, we identified a strong feeling among British people that their community is in decline. More than seven in ten people (71%) agree with the statement that "community has declined in my lifetime", including a majority across all age groups, ethnicities, levels of education and party allegiance. But what is community? Does it mean something different compared to a generation or two ago? Does it matter to people today, and if so, why?

"Community" is an idea frequently invoked but rarely defined. Etymologically, it is derived from the latin *communis*, meaning common, which is itself drawn from *com*, signifying joint or together, and *munis*, which is derived from *munire*, meaning to strengthen. From this springs the idea of reciprocity or fellowship that we associate community with today. But politically, the term has been applied in radically different contexts in the post-war context.

"The community" is at once how Aneurin Bevan intended to pay for the NHS, the European club that Margaret Thatcher thrice denied, and the little platoons that David Cameron hoped to empower through the Big Society. These definitional challenges are superimposed onto a vibrant academic debate about the importance of "social capital", a term first used by Lyda Hanifan in 1916 to describe "goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit".

More recently social capital has been popularised by Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam in his seminal work on the decline of community in America since the 1960s. In *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Putnam defines social capital as "'features of social organizations, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit." The idea that local networks, reciprocal assets and social trust are critically important for human flourishing and prosperity has gained currency in the years since, but the terminology has proved contentious. Some social scientists, for example, dispute the notion that social capital has many of the characteristics of capital,[2] criticising the "attempt to gain conviction from a bad analogy"[3]. Others point to the negative impacts of social capital, such as the potential to exclude people rather than bond them together.[4] On the other hand, many studies have shown positive effects including reduced crime,[5] improved education,[6] stronger community governance[7] and better, more effective institutions.[8]

To understand what community means, and how questions of social capital and strength apply, across the UK, Onward conducted a qualitative study of attitudes in all four countries of the Union. In four towns and cities around the UK, including Grimsby in the North East of England, Govan in Scotland, Enniskillen in Northern Ireland, Bridgend in Wales, we asked people what community meant to them, how it has changed for better or worse, and how they would like policymakers to think about community in future.[9]

Our working hypothesis was that, while the traditional notion of social capital is an important aspect of community strength, the concepts are not synonymous. The research revealed an understanding of community that is simultaneously narrower *and* deeper than traditional

academic or political definitions suggest. It is narrower in the sense that people view community as entirely local and place-based; it is deeper in the sense that the aspects of community that people value, or long for, are not merely social and civic, but also economic and institutional, ranging from jobs to transport connectivity to the quality of the town centre. It is this broader definition, which we term *Social Fabric,* that this study seeks to elucidate.

The recurring characteristics of social fabric

In our qualitative research, we identified a number of characteristics that are common to how people of different demographic and socio-economic backgrounds, and in markedly different places, conceive and experience the social fabric of their lives. In the section below we have summarised key themes from these deliberative workshops and highlighted pertinent remarks by respondents. These quotes are representative of the discussions unless otherwise stated. We found that:

- **Community is universally and without exception perceived within one's place.** When asked what community means to them, people naturally speak to neighbourliness, civic mindedness and social support within a tightly drawn community of people. People spoke of community as "the place that you love" and "growing up with the same families and seeing the same faces and just knowing everybody." There is a strong sense that knowledge of, and engagement with, neighbours is important for a strong community, in line with traditional academic definitions that place a high value on trust, reciprocity and norms. As leading thinker Robert Putnam states "civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations."[10] People tend to agree with the concept, well established in academia, of community as a depleting asset, in that social stocks of trust or networks "accumulate in use and diminish if they are not used."[11] There was very little association of community with larger spheres of identity, such as nation, ethnicity, religion or interest. Nor were ideas about online or virtual communities particularly meaningful to our interviewees, except insofar as they underpinned local physical community relationships.

"Community to me is a group of people, maybe in one area that tend to look out for each other, maybe have events that include everybody. If there's a problem in the area, try and help sort it out, look out for each other, and everybody sort of not knows what everybody is doing, but is interested in the wellbeing of others and for our area as well. That's really to me what community means."

Female, administrator, Enniskillen, discussing what the word community means.

- **Physical infrastructure is considered a valuable aspect of social fabric.** We found that people repeatedly associate community with the physical environment in which they live and the assets that environment affords them. People notice the state of their high streets, the quality of their bus and train services, the investment in their roads or roundabouts, and equate physical disrepair with social decay. Many spoke of how "many shops were closing" and felt these were "on the decline", with some urging new thinking on how "to bring people back into the town centre." This is because this infrastructure is not only economic but social, in that it mediates and facilitates social interaction and integration, and moulds those relationships in positive and negative ways. In our workshops, community was defined as "people who use the same services", including parks, public transport and other "facilities". Several European studies have shown the significant difference of social capital formation in rural settings and urban areas for bonding and bridging communities.[12] While such physical infrastructure is rarely understood as pure "social capital" in academic literature, it is similar to the critical role that many academics (Putnam, Bourdieu and Coleman, for example) assign to civic institutions in fostering and shaping social relationships.

"I think you need good facilities [to make a good community]. Like an example of this, it's probably the opposite but in Castlemilk [Glasgow], they don't have a shopping centre, and they don't have facilities nearby them so everyone from that community is having to travel out to other communities to do basic things like shopping. So, I think you need that. You need facilities to service and enable everybody in the community."

Female, bank worker, Glasgow, discussing what you need to make a good community.

- **There is a strong, but complex, relationship between prosperity and community.** It is clear from our qualitative research that people associate affluence with strong social ties. In Grimsby, for example, respondents told us they wanted a community more like Cleethorpes, the affluent seaside town up the road. People spoke of "everything leaving here [Grimsby] and going there [Cleethorpes]," and people "don't stop at Grimsby, they go to Cleethorpes because there's a swimming pool there or there are better things... there's nothing here to do". People tended to believe that high quality jobs and economic opportunities are essential for a strong sense of community to thrive. However, this relationship has limits. For example, several people associated too much wealth with a reduction in social connection: high fences, front lawns and gated communities were all cited as examples of societal breakdown, not success.

- Meanwhile, others associated social housing, including deprived Glasgow tenements, as examples of strong community. One respondent who grew up in a tenement flat spoke of how he “most of the time you did know those within your building and the people next door… also knew the kids you hung about with. And once we grew up, you still obviously maintain that kind of contact and still speak to them as you see them out and about… so I think that wouldn’t really happen if you were in a standalone building.” This reflects the wider literature, such as research from Sociologists Paul Dimaggio and Hugh Louch[13] which places a strong emphasis on the importance of paid work, the quality of labour and the security of housing as important economic variables in the development of communities.

“We've got a lack of money that people have or being brought into the area, the shops that we have here are on the decline. Industry, the fish industry is growing but compared to years ago, industry that is around here isn’t like it used to be. Zero-hour contracts which links into that, we have a lot of people on zero-hour contracts. Aspirations for people, people don't really aspire to be anything or want to do anything because unless you want to move out of Grimsby. High unemployment, it's quite benefit driven around here.”

Female, works in a school, Grimsby, discussing what respondents least like about their area.

- **Positive social norms and other informal constraints play a fundamental role in the maintenance of community.** At a fundamental level, a community depends on members agreeing on, and abiding by, a set of informal, often socially (rather than legally) enforced norms and constraints. This idea of an essentially *imagined* community has resonance in Britain today. Many of our respondents stressed the importance of neighbourly behaviour and basic reciprocity in their definitions of community - it was “people helping each other out” and “people who are supporting each other” - and disparaged anti-social forms of behaviour that broke the informal constraints they believed people should live by, including miscreant youth, health, antisocial behaviour, crime, and violence. This accords with a large body of academic evidence which underscores the importance of norms and values embedded in everyday interactions to our sense of community.
- Others expressed that community was something that people bought into with effort and time. Many reiterated that “you kind of get what you put in,” and that if “you don’t make an effort to put together a mix of people” then “you usually say there is no community”. This also reflects people's own experiences during lockdown. Most respondents spoke of wanting to “cling on to a little bit more of the community feeling” that the pandemic had afforded them, but this ultimately boiled down to how much disposable time they had when things returned

"back to normal". This raises questions about how much of people's reluctance about going back to work is about the loss of time that would involve for them and their community.

"I think with being such a small community... a lot of people know each other, and it's probably makes it more difficult for someone who really wants to partake in crime to do that because they're effectively afraid that someone might see them and might get reported back. I think as well as that it's more petty crime, rather than anything particularly serious in the area."

Male, works in PR for a large company, Enniskillen, discussing what crime is like in the local area.

- **Democratic and civic legitimacy was seen as important to people's sense of community, but many people are disengaged.** Since Alexis de Tocqueville, social observers have drawn parallels between associational life and democratic culture. Putnam, Charles Murray and others chart parallels between the decline of community in the twentieth century and the rise of more populist and antidemocratic sentiment. In our work, we found some evidence that local people viewed democratic institutions as synonymous with community, but usually there was a negative association. We heard criticism that money that could be spent on community life was being spent on salaries in the "town hall", that local councils were ineffective at reversing economic decline (on high streets for example) and that political decisions undermined community at both a local level (for example through high car parking charges) and national level (for example from public sector austerity). The overwhelming impression was that local communities had been let down by democratic structures in recent years, not supported or empowered by them. Addressing this deficit is clearly critical to re-empowering communities.

"There are people who are really proactive in their communities and most communities have somebody who's really on it, people who seem to be in touch with what the community needs rather than just giving it to a Councillor who really is not very much in touch... like a community champion type of thing, somebody could be that person that consults, that's the important word is that you consult with people, because often these decisions are made at their level and nobody's ever really consulted on what the money is spent on."

Female, primary school teacher, Bridgend, discussing what things government can do to help community.

"They [the Government] choose to fund or choose not to fund things, so ultimately they decide what communities have available."

Female, librarian, Bridgend, discussing what role government plays in community.

Towards a new measure of social fabric

Our research suggests a more nuanced and complex definition of community than either politicians or academics have traditionally accounted for. While it is true that people associate community with the interwoven relationships, norms and institutions of a local place, the influences that they believe determine the strength or weakness of that associational life are diverse, ranging from economic drivers such as employment and wealth to physical infrastructure such as transport links and local services. The civic, economic and public are enmeshed, not distinct, each serving to either tighten the weave of the social fabric or to fray it further.

If we are to understand whether, as people believe, community is truly in decline, we therefore have to not only consider traditional measures of social capital, as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has done for the last decade or so, but to incorporate economic, physical and behavioural data too. Only then will we gain a more complete picture of how community strength differs over different geographies, and how it has changed over time. In other words, we must measure, in a robust and accessible way, the common actions and social structures within a place that support, integrate and bind people together.

This is the purpose of Onward's *UK Social Fabric Index,* which seeks to develop a practical tool to measure not only the relative strength of the social fabric of different local places across the United Kingdom, but which elements are strong or frayed. The index is made up of five 'threads': Relationships, Physical Infrastructure, Civic Institutions, Economic Value and Positive Social Norms. Each thread equally incorporates three to five different stands, which are composed of multiple indicators, each representing a different statistical measure.

In developing the index, we have deliberately included only measures that relate to real or behavioural aspects of community, rather than their emotional effects. So, we have included the number of charities or the amount of green, public space, but not whether people feel a sense of charity to local people or pride in their area. This allows us to differentiate between inputs to community strength, on the one hand, and outcomes that these deliver, on the other. It also allows us to explore the nature of the relationship between social fabric and more nebulous feelings like belonging and social trust. We include the full methodology at Annex A.

Figure 1: Components of the UK Social Fabric Index

Table 1: Components of the UK Social Fabric Index

Thread	Description	Indicators
Relationships	The membership of formal groups in a community and their participation in activities with many people. This considers the clusters of social but formally organised groups of people in the public sphere of a community and community-owned assets.	Community-owned pubs per capita, Community-owned shops per capita, Assets of Community Value per capita, Charities per capita, Share of population reporting Gift Aid donations, Faith schools as a share of all schools, Religious marriages as share of all ceremonies, Share of people with no religion, Share who attend religious services and participate in religious groups, Membership organisations per capita, Share of population as members of Neighbourhood Watch or Residents' Association, Share of people who volunteer once a month, Share of people who volunteered in last year, Share of people who actively participate in a local organisation, Share of people who are a member of a local organisation, Share of people are satisfied with their leisure time, Share of parents who spend leisure time with their child(ren) several times a week, Regular sporting activity, Proportion of people who go out socially and meet friends when you feel like it.
Physical Infrastructure	The physical assets that are present in communities which facilitate, structure and organise people within a community. It explores the resources and infrastructure of place that act as centres of daily life interactions and social connections between people.	Independent businesses per capita, Convenience stores per capita, Allotments per capita, Sport green spaces/fields per capita, Other green spaces per capita, Libraries per capita, Bank branches per capita, Leisure centres per capita, Public houses and bars per capita, Community amateur sports clubs per capita, Cafes/restaurants per capita, Broadband coverage, Broadband speed, Local bus journeys per capita, Bus stops per square km, Train stations per capita, Exit and entries at train stations per capita, Average number of minutes spent travelling to work.
Civic institutions	The health of democracy and governance at both the local and national level. This considers the quality, trust and satisfaction of people with public institutions in the community in which they live.	Turnout at local elections, Turnout at general elections, Trust in Government, Parliament, Police, Media, Banks, Courts, Views on how well the Police, BBC, Unions, Banks, Press, NHS are run, Share of people who support the monarchy, Share of people who believe 'people like me have no say about what the government does', Good or outstanding schools per capita, Share of students who achieve 5 or more GCSEs at grades 9-4 or equivalent or 5 Highers in Scotland, Good or outstanding GP surgeries per capita, Share of people who rate local public transport as very good or excellent, Share of people who rate local medical facilities as very good or excellent.
Economic value	The tangible assets which hold a monetary and/or economic value to an individual or family within a community.	Share of people in secure housing, including owner occupiers and social rent, Share of people unemployed, Jobs per working age person, Share who are economically inactive, Average weekly hours worked for full-time and part time workers, Median gross weekly pay, Share of people put money away as savings, Average monthly savings, Average expenditure on groceries.

Positive Social Norms	The personal well-being and cultural attitudes of individuals and families in a community. It explores the influence of people's wider habits, behaviours and activities that are at play in a community,	Proportion of people with NVQ4 or higher, Proportion of people who live on their own, Age-standardised suicide rate per 100,000 population**,** Proportion of people who currently smoke, Proportion of adults who are dependent on alcohol, Healthy life expectancy, Number of police recorded crimes per capita, Marriages per capita, Proportion of households with children, Number of pregnancies in women under the age of 18 per 1,000 women aged 15-17.

Social Fabric Index

How does community vary by geography?

Despite its importance to voters, policymakers have a surprisingly weak understanding of how the fabric of society differs around the country. The growth of statistics by which to analyse how the economy is changing has not been matched by the development of measures to understand what is happening in society. This leaves deep gaps in our knowledge about the nature of different communities, and few avenues to assess how policy or economic change are affecting how people live together. There is an inevitable risk that reliance on economic statistics and a relentless focus on economic growth may have come at the expense of community flourishing. Most people believe community to be in decline, despite its importance in their lives. A lack of understanding and analysis of this phenomenon must be partly to blame.

This chapter seeks to redress that balance by exploring how strong or frayed the social fabric is in different places. To achieve this, we have built a detailed index of community strength - the *UK Social Fabric Index*. This builds upon previous indices that seek to achieve similar ends, including the Legatum Institute's Prosperity Index, the Young Foundation's Community Wellbeing Index, and Local Trust and OCSI's analysis of left behind neighbourhoods.

Onward's *UK Social Fabric Index* differs in a number of regards:

- First, it is explicitly based on the elements of community that people say are most important to them, taken from our qualitative work. This means we include elements on housing tenure mix, transport connectivity, job quality and community ownership as well as more traditional social capital indicators. These are arranged into five "threads" of the social fabric.
- Consequently, we incorporate a larger number 79 of statistical indicators into our index, which in aggregate present a rich and sophisticated understanding of social fabric and how it differs by place. Our hope is that our analysis will allow for more granular social policy, to support both local and central policymakers to intervene to strengthen different aspects of community in different places.
- In addition, we have compared our findings against a number of variables, such as the impact of the current pandemic, belonging, ethnic diversity, political views and deprivation, to understand how our estimations of social fabric relate to other characteristics of these places. These findings are set out in the next chapter.

For transparency and replicability, wherever possible we have used open-source, official statistics, at local authority level. This will allow other analysis to draw upon our findings as well as repeat indices to be created in future years, to show how successful policies have been.

Headline findings

- There is wide variation in the social fabric scores of different places around the United Kingdom, suggesting that some communities are far more resilient than others. The median social fabric score is 4.88, which is held by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. The local authority with the highest score, Richmond upon Thames, has a score 32% higher than the median, of 6.42, while the lowest, Kingston upon Hull, has a score of 3.43, 30% below the median. This suggests that the social fabric score in Richmond is nearly twice as high as in Kingston upon Hull using our composite measure.
- The places with the strongest social fabric are typically to be found in the South of England, especially in London's commuter belt, and in more prosperous parts of Scotland. The former includes: Chiltern, South Oxfordshire, South Cambridgeshire, Rushcliffe, St Albans and Windsor and Maidenhead. The latter take in East Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire. These places tend to benefit from strong social relationships and behavioural norms, which are not always found in cities, alongside prosperous local economies, including high levels of investment in local infrastructure, driven by proximity to major cities.
- The places with fraying social fabric are typically found in the Eastern corridor of England, South Wales and the North West of England. They include post-industrial towns such as Middlesbrough, Methyr Tydfil, Boston and Hartlepool as well as coastal communities such as Great Yarmouth, North East Lincolnshire and Blackpool. These places have often been considered economically left behind but their scores are as much driven by fraying communities, with low scores for Positive Social Norms, Civic Institutions and Relationships. This analysis lends a complementary, but differing, perspective to the often-quoted economic rationale for why these places have become the most politically volatile in the UK.
- These scores reflect to a large extent the nature of place. We find that one in four inland areas rank in the top quintile for Social Fabric, compared to only one in ten coastal areas. Rural areas composed of small villages have the highest scores as a result of strong Positive Social Norms, Relationships and Economic Value. The centre of cities also fare well because of strong Civic Institutions and Physical Infrastructure. In contrast, suburbs and large towns have low scores across all five elements of social fabric, redeemed only by their relatively strong Physical Infrastructure.
- Places with stronger social fabric tend to be less populous. Just over 3.7 million people live in the twenty local authorities with the lowest Social Fabric scores. This is 31% higher than the 2.9 million people who live in the twenty local authorities with the strongest social fabric. The average size of a local authority in the bottom quintile of areas with the most fraying social fabric is 186,548, compared to 166,824 in the top quintile.

Figure 2: Map of the social fabric of the United Kingdom

Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

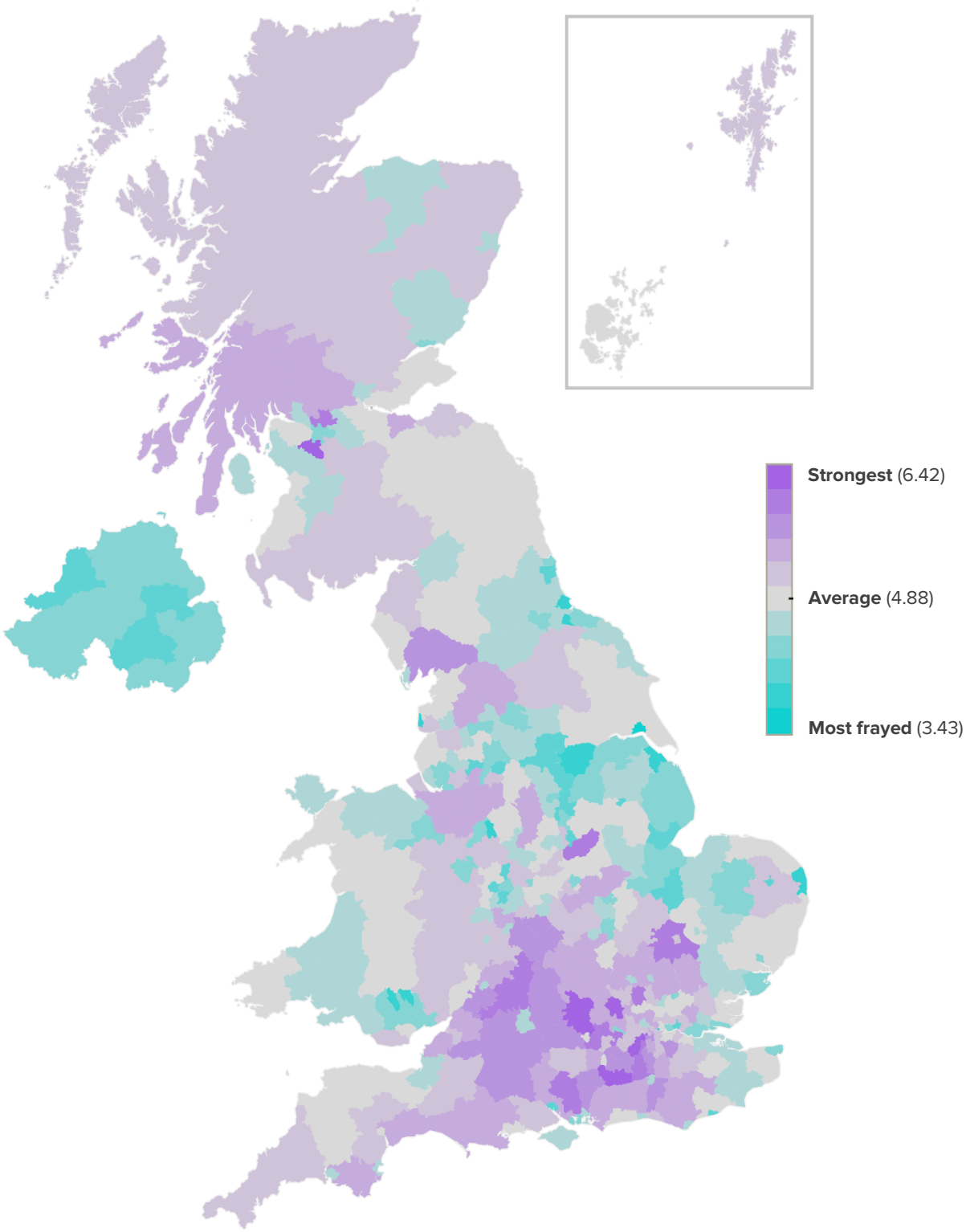


Table 2: Places with the highest and lowest social fabric scores

Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

Rank	Local Authority	Relationships	Physical Infrastructure	Civic Institutions	Economic Value	Positive Social Norms	Social Fabric
1	Richmond upon Thames	5.46	5.94	6.15	6.88	7.69	6.42
2	Chiltern	5.79	4.96	5.87	6.76	7.95	6.27
3	East Renfrewshire	4.83	4.46	7.55	6.93	7.52	6.26
4	Waverley	5.79	5.12	6.02	6.89	7.46	6.26
5	South Oxfordshire	6.43	5.45	5.60	6.52	7.13	6.22
6	Elmbridge	5.53	5.47	5.96	6.49	7.49	6.19
7	Rushcliffe	4.61	5.02	5.94	7.03	7.59	6.04
8	South Cambridgeshire	5.94	5.02	5.07	7.08	7.07	6.04
9	St Albans	4.89	5.44	5.76	6.77	7.28	6.03
10	Windsor and Maidenhead	5.36	5.10	5.95	6.50	7.22	6.03
11	East Dunbartonshire	4.60	4.74	7.15	6.03	7.34	5.97
12	Mole Valley	5.60	5.11	5.97	6.01	6.97	5.93
13	Cotswold	5.53	5.89	5.40	6.13	6.63	5.92
14	Winchester	5.88	4.81	5.60	6.54	6.71	5.91
15	Wokingham	4.92	4.82	5.52	6.77	7.39	5.88
16	Kingston upon Thames	4.68	5.58	6.65	5.37	7.08	5.87
17	West Berkshire	4.92	5.28	5.87	6.27	6.89	5.85
18	South Lakeland	5.44	5.43	6.30	5.54	6.30	5.80
19	Bromley	4.25	5.77	6.08	6.38	6.48	5.79
20	Vale of White Horse	5.43	5.05	5.56	5.80	7.01	5.77
360	Southampton	2.78	5.00	4.18	4.09	4.17	4.04
361	Rotherham	2.72	4.92	3.43	4.79	4.33	4.04
362	Wolverhampton	2.24	5.45	3.76	4.46	4.29	4.04
363	Derry City and Strabane	2.95	4.13	4.83	4.23	4.01	4.03
364	Nottingham	2.24	5.84	4.38	3.74	3.85	4.01
365	Mansfield	2.43	4.79	4.38	4.32	4.11	4.00
366	Hastings	3.30	4.39	4.72	3.40	4.19	4.00
367	Belfast	3.31	4.91	5.22	3.62	2.93	4.00
368	Sunderland	2.10	4.87	4.42	4.63	3.83	3.97
369	Boston	2.62	3.58	4.29	4.29	4.85	3.93
370	Barnsley	2.53	5.00	3.15	4.56	4.30	3.91
371	Stoke-on-Trent	2.31	5.49	3.70	4.41	3.50	3.88
372	Merthyr Tydfil	2.24	4.41	3.90	4.98	3.72	3.85
373	Doncaster	2.52	5.18	3.10	4.34	4.02	3.83
374	North East Lincolnshire	2.65	5.01	3.81	4.04	3.63	3.83
375	Hartlepool	2.40	4.77	3.78	4.36	3.32	3.73
376	Blaenau Gwent	1.95	4.18	3.87	4.50	3.91	3.68
377	Great Yarmouth	2.48	4.48	3.77	3.35	4.28	3.67
378	Blackpool	2.52	5.02	4.47	3.71	2.58	3.66
379	Middlesbrough	2.02	4.85	4.32	3.90	3.16	3.65
380	Kingston upon Hull	1.89	5.30	2.97	3.81	3.16	3.43

While it is axiomatic that, on average, people prefer to live in stronger communities than weaker ones, it is important to note that where a place ranks on the index is not a moral judgment on its relative worth. Rather, we believe that just as areas with weak local economies have too often been neglected by policymakers and allowed to decline, the same can be said for community. The people living in those areas with the most frayed social fabric have been let down by our weak understanding of what community strength looks like and an absence of consistent policy interventions to rebuild their resilience. If the Government's goal is to level up the UK then our obligation is to meet their needs - and strengthen their communities - as a priority.

Table 3: Social fabric scores by rurality
Source: Onward analysis, House of Commons Library

	Relationships	Physical Infrastructure	Civic Institutions	Economic Value	Positive Social Norms	Social Fabric
Core City	3.579	5.466	5.414	5.064	5.710	5.170
Other City	2.907	5.279	4.654	4.667	4.657	4.582
Large Town	3.546	4.969	4.856	5.095	5.179	4.874
Medium Town	3.797	4.834	5.002	5.427	5.563	5.070
Small Town	3.893	4.573	5.001	5.492	5.666	5.082
Village or smaller	4.533	4.664	5.085	5.452	5.862	5.264

1. Relationships: How do people live and associate in different places?

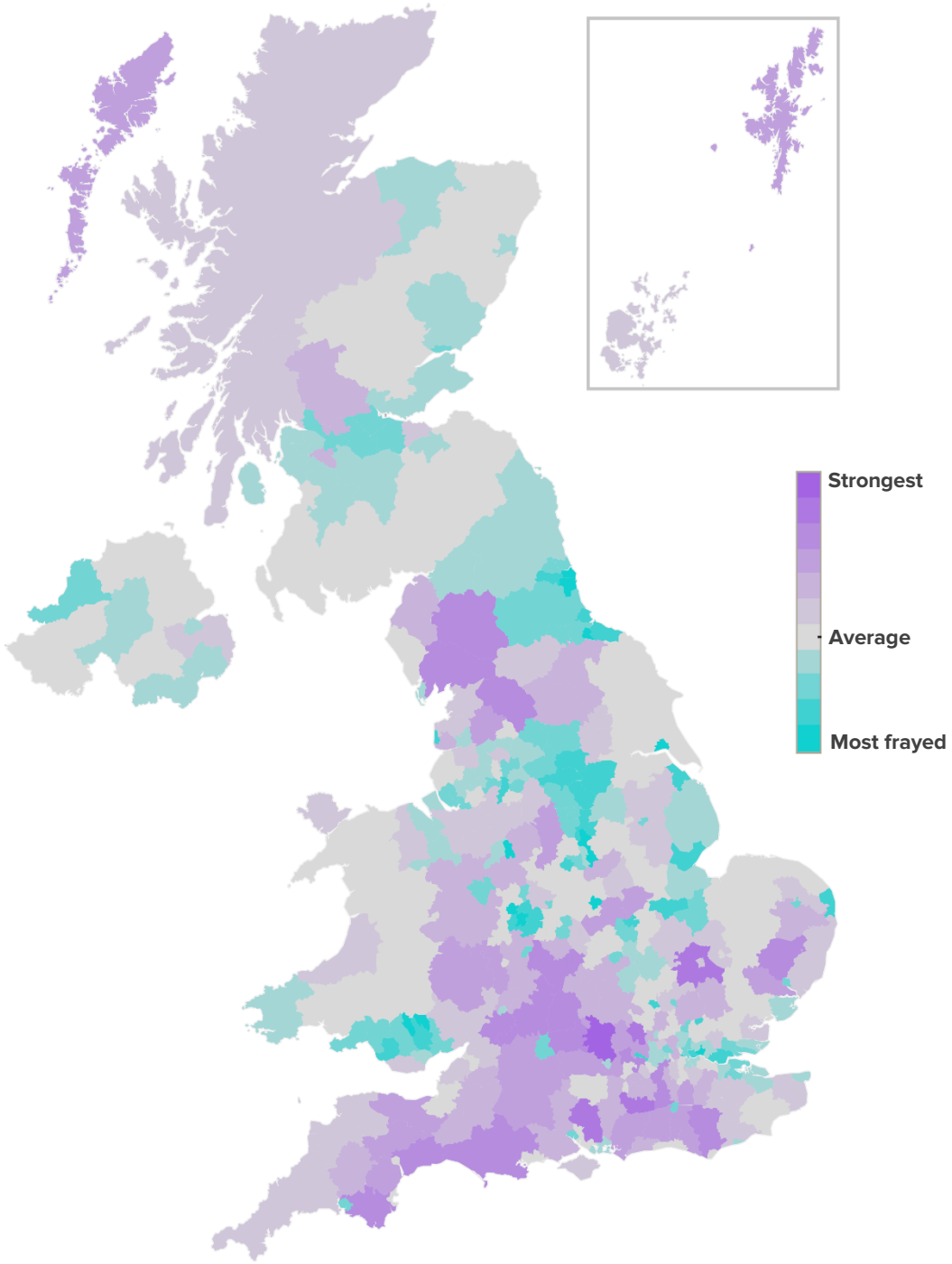
The first Thread in our *UK Social Fabric Index* is *Relationships*. This measures the associational life of a place - the strength of social relationships between neighbours, local groups and organisations and the wider community. The thread brings together a wide range of data, including on the level of support for charities, through both philanthropy and volunteering, the number of shops, pubs and other assets owned by the community, levels of religiosity and whether people spend their leisure time together or apart. We find that:

- The geographic distribution of scores closely matches the pattern for social fabric as a whole, to a greater degree than other threads. The places that perform well include local authorities in the South of England and North Scotland. Local authorities such as South Oxfordshire, South Cambridgeshire and Winchester appear to have the strongest Relationships. Areas such as Kingston upon Hull, Blaenau Gwent and Nottingham perform poorly on this score, as well as parts of London.
- There is a wide gap between the highest and lowest ranked areas. The highest ranked area, South Oxfordshire, is 68% above the median. The lowest ranked area, Kingston Upon Hull, is 51% below. Considering the raw score for this thread, South Oxfordshire has social relationships that are more than three times stronger than those in Kingston upon Hull.
- This is particularly driven by differing levels of civic participation. For example, people in the bottom quintile of areas for Relationships are only half as likely as the top quintile to be a member of a group, actively take part in membership activities, volunteer to the neighbourhood watch. This may be because those in the top quintile have twice as many charities and four times as many community assets in their area, and because people are nearly three times as likely to make donations through Gift Aid.
- There is much less variation between high scoring and low scoring areas on aspects of religiosity or social life. People in the top quintile of areas are only marginally more likely to wed in a religious ceremony, 40% more likely to send their children to a faith school, and around 50% more likely to be satisfied with the amount of leisure time they have.

Figure 3: Variation in the strength of Relationships around the United Kingdom
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

Top 10	
Score	Local authority
6.428	South Oxfordshire
5.942	South Cambridgeshire
5.880	Winchester
5.795	Chiltern
5.791	Waverley
5.677	Dorset
5.624	Mid Suffolk
5.599	Mole Valley
5.537	Craven
5.534	Elmbridge

Bottom 10	
Score	Local authority
2.241	Ashfield
2.240	Nottingham
2.236	Wolverhampton
2.204	Sandwell
2.138	Leicester
2.100	Barking and Dagenham
2.095	Sunderland
2.023	Middlesbrough
1.954	Blaenau Gwent
1.886	Kingston upon Hull



2. Physical infrastructure: How much does the lived environment differ between places?

The third thread is Physical Infrastructure. This measures the physical institutions and places that make up the lived environment of a place. It includes the high street, civic assets, meeting places and green spaces. To construct this thread, we brought together indicators for the number of convenience stores, libraries, allotments, leisure centres, sports clubs, cafes, banks, and local businesses, along with public transport usage and commuting times. We find that:

- There is a strong urban and rural split to Physical Infrastructure. The areas with the highest scores are mostly in cities while those with low levels of Physical Infrastructure are mostly to be found in rural or remote regions. Low levels of infrastructure in the Western, Orkney and Shetland Isles considerably skews the distribution: The Western Isles have a score 43% lower than the median while the top-rated area, Leeds, has a score just 30% above the median.
- It is notable that most parts of London do not score highly. Only Camden and Richmond upon Thames are represented among London Boroughs in the top 10 areas for Physical Infrastructure. This reflects the fact that while London has better transport links and digital connectivity, its boroughs are less likely to have green and open spaces and often have fewer local assets, such as libraries, cafes and convenience stores compared to the local population.
- There is relatively little differentiation between the Physical Infrastructure of places when split by quintile. For example, the top quintile of places has an average score only 27% higher than the bottom quintile. This hides some variation - for example, compared to the bottom quintile, the top quintile of places for Physical Infrastructure score 40% higher for open and green spaces and 41% higher for transport. But, in general, there is limited difference between the areas with the strongest Physical Infrastructure and those with the most frayed.
- As the map below suggests, the areas most affected by weak infrastructure include the East Coast of Scotland, East Anglia, parts of the South West and the East Midlands. These are all areas where rural communities predominate. In contrast to the other threads, the UK's regional cities and their surroundings, such as Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool all score highly for Physical Infrastructure.

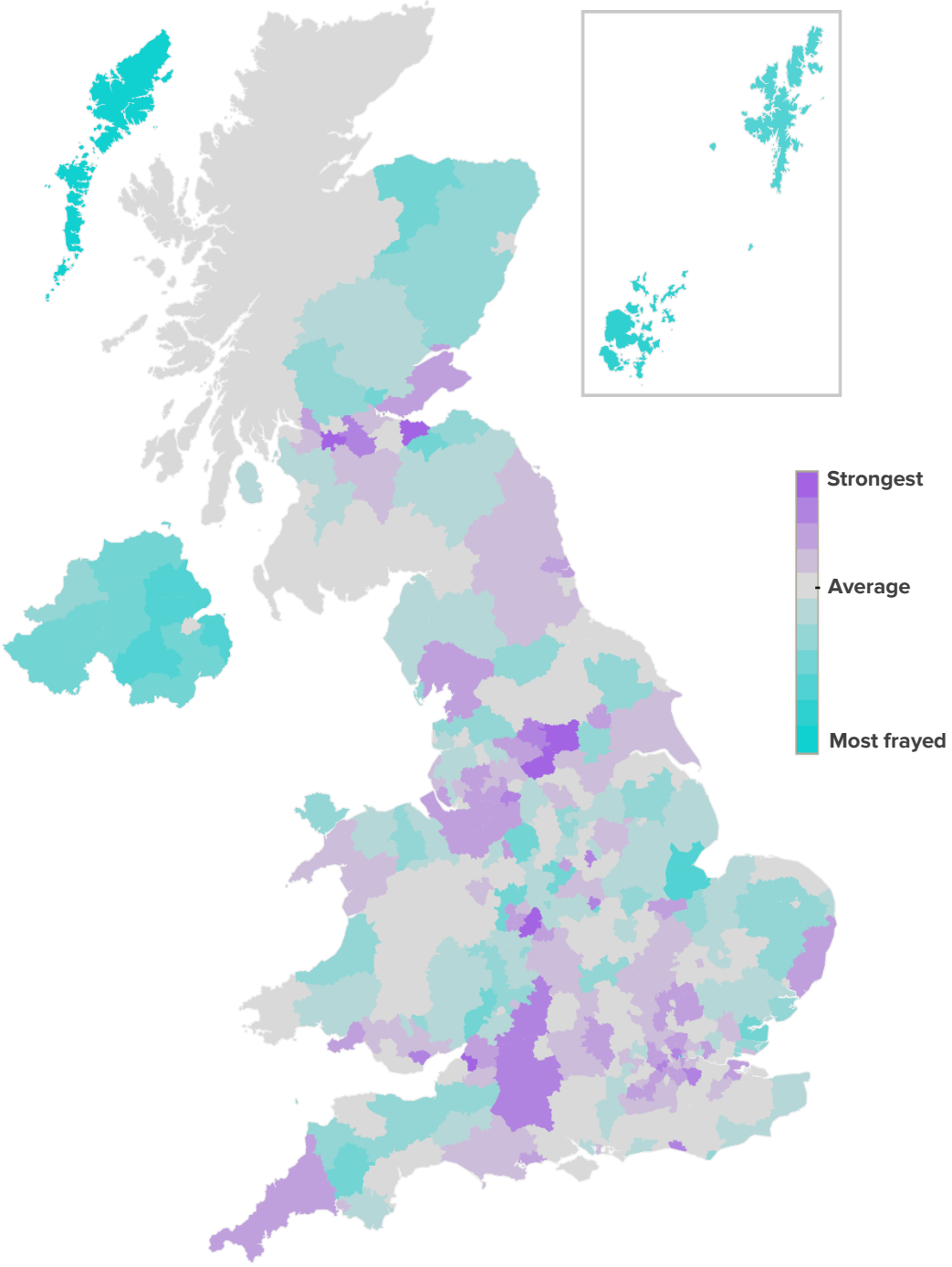
Figure 4: Variation in the strength of Physical Infrastructure around the United Kingdom
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

Top 10

Score	Local authority
6.329	Leeds
6.267	Birmingham
6.118	Glasgow City
6.098	Bristol
6.035	Kirklees
6.034	City of Edinburgh
5.967	Brighton and Hove
5.948	Camden
5.942	Richmond upon Thames
5.921	Stockport

Bottom 10

Score	Local authority
3.930	Clackmannanshire
3.902	Oadby and Wigston
3.852	Moray
3.833	South Derbyshire
3.741	West Devon
3.638	South Holland
3.577	Boston
3.396	Shetland Islands
3.324	Orkney Islands
2.726	Na h-Eileanan Siar



3. Civic institutions: How does social trust and engagement vary across the UK?

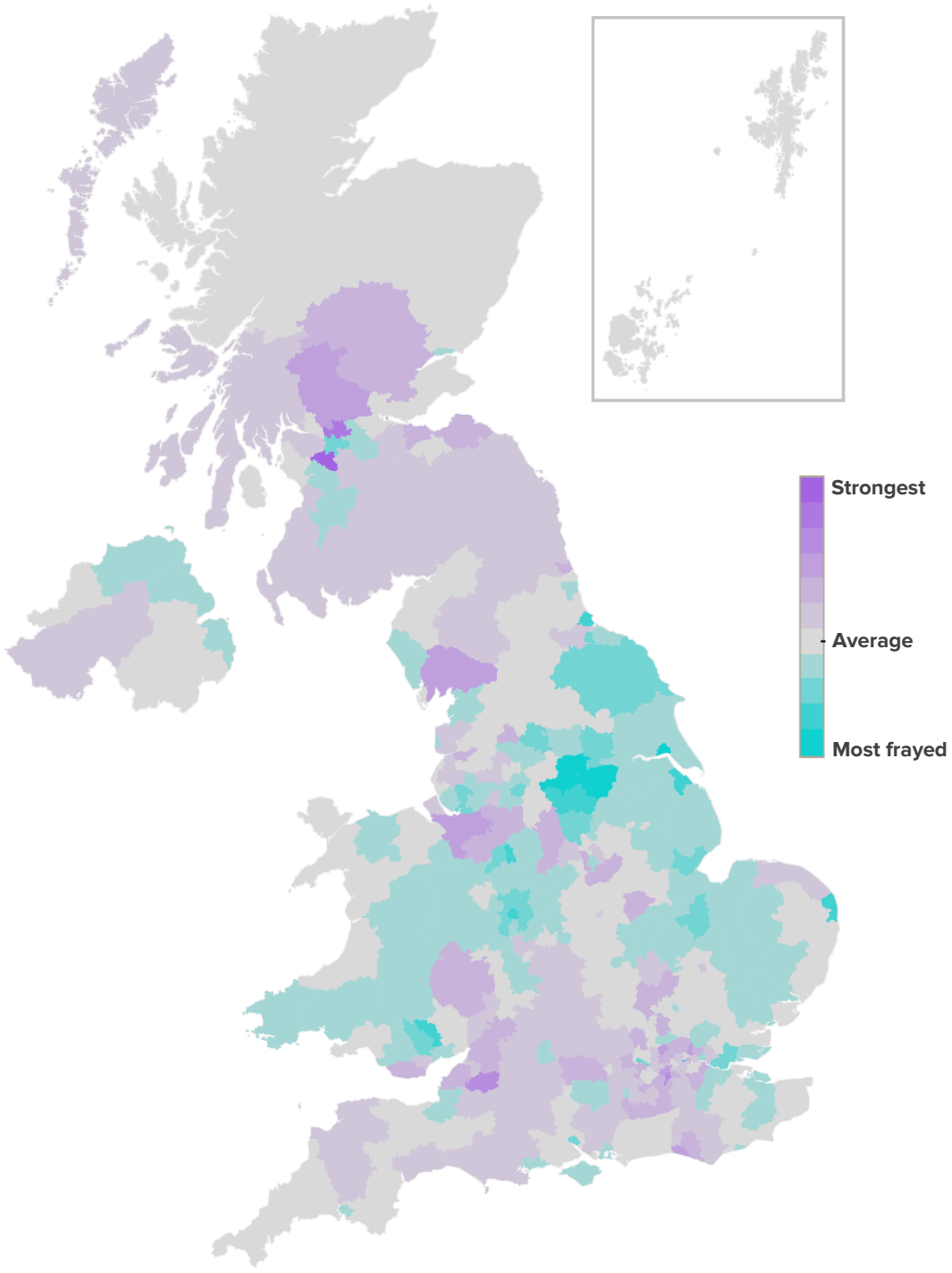
The second Thread in our UK Social Fabric Index is Civic Institutions. This measures levels of trust in, engagement with, and quality of the institutional architecture of different places. The thread brings together data on trust in government, the courts and police, banks, media and political parties with data on their quality and effectiveness and levels of voter turnout. We find that:

- Scotland, the South West and Greater London have relatively strong Civic Institutions. Much of the North East, East of England and Wales have relatively frayed Civic Institutions by our measure. There does not appear to be a strong urban dimension although post-industrial towns such as Hartlepool, Stoke-on-Trent and Doncaster are all in the bottom ten areas nationally.
- While there is relatively little variation between the strength of Civic Institutions in aggregate - the top 20% of areas average a score only 28% higher than the lowest quintile - this conceals wide variation across some indicators and between some areas. For example, areas with strong Civic Institutions (the top quintile) record roughly twice the turnout at general and local elections, and are more than one and half times more likely to trust the police, parliament and the courts. On individual measures, such as trust in the police and government, there is wide variation between law respecting areas such as Rushcliffe and Harrow and places with deep mistrust of civic institutions such as Belfast and Tower Hamlets.
- There appears to be very little relationship between the levels of civic and physical infrastructure in place. Of the top ten areas for Civic Institutions, one is in the top ten for Physical Infrastructure and only four are in the top quintile. Of the top ten areas for Physical Infrastructure, only two are in the top two quintiles and none are in the top ten. The top quintile, however, is less likely to be satisfied with how banks, the media or the NHS are run.
- There is considerable variation in the quality of public services between different parts of the country. For example, the areas with the strongest Civic Institutions (top quintile) have scores for good or outstanding GP surgeries that are more than three times higher than areas with weak institutions (the bottom quintile). Meanwhile the top quintile's scores are 50% higher for the number of good school places per capita.

Figure 5: Variation in the strength of Civic Institutions around the United Kingdom
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

Top 10	
Score	**Local authority**
7.553	East Renfrewshire
7.151	East Dunbartonshire
6.647	Kingston upon Thames
6.634	Bath and North East Somerset
6.535	Brighton and Hove
6.389	Stirling
6.341	Waltham Forest
6.304	South Lakeland
6.275	Harrow
6.231	Cheshire West and Chester

Bottom 10	
Score	**Local authority**
3.780	Hartlepool
3.770	Great Yarmouth
3.760	Wolverhampton
3.704	Stoke-on-Trent
3.686	Torfaen
3.434	Rotherham
3.393	Wakefield
3.153	Barnsley
3.101	Doncaster
2.971	Kingston upon Hull



4. Economic value: How does the economic fabric of a place relate to social fabric?

The fourth thread in our UK Social Fabric Index is Economic Value. This measures the economic assets and value created within a place, which provide stability for people, contributing to and to some degree underpinning the social fabric of community. Our composite measure includes a variety of indicators, including: job density, unemployment rates, full time and part time pay levels, savings rates, household expenditure, and housing tenure. We find that:

- London, the West Midlands and Scotland score highly for Economic Value. There is a large cluster of areas with high scores for this thread in the commuter belt between London and Birmingham. The South East as a whole is polarised between wealthy commuter towns, such as Wokingham (ranked 7th highest) and more disadvantaged coastal areas, such as Hastings (ranked 4th lowest). We again observe low scores along England's East coast, driven in part by low levels of employment, earnings and secure housing tenure (which includes owner occupiers and social rented housing).
- There is however relatively little variation between different areas. The highest ranked area for Economic Value, South Cambridgeshire, is only 35% above the median, whereas the lowest, Richmondshire in Yorkshire, is 36% below the median. This is the smallest spread of any of the five threads we have constructed, suggesting lower levels of variance between the extremes than for other elements of the index. This is reinforced by the variance between quintiles. There is only a 33% difference between the average score among the top fifth and bottom fifth of areas for Economic Value scores.
- This reflects the fact that we are measuring the aspects of an economy that relate directly to the social fabric. For example, areas with lower levels of earnings or employment have relatively high scores for secure housing tenure (which includes social rented housing), job density and levels of unemployment. Areas with strong Economic Value (top quintile) have demonstrably higher income levels, hours worked, savings rates and work more hours on average than those in the lowest quintile.
- There is an observable overlap between the areas with strong social fabric and Economic Value scores. Seven of the top ten areas for Economic Value feature in the top ten for social fabric as a whole, including Rushcliffe, South Cambridgeshire, Richmond Upon Thames, Waverley, St Albans, Chiltern and East Renfrewshire. However, this is an incomplete story, as several areas that score highly for social fabric have relatively frayed Economic Value. These include Barnet, Kingston upon Thames, South Lakeland and Wiltshire.

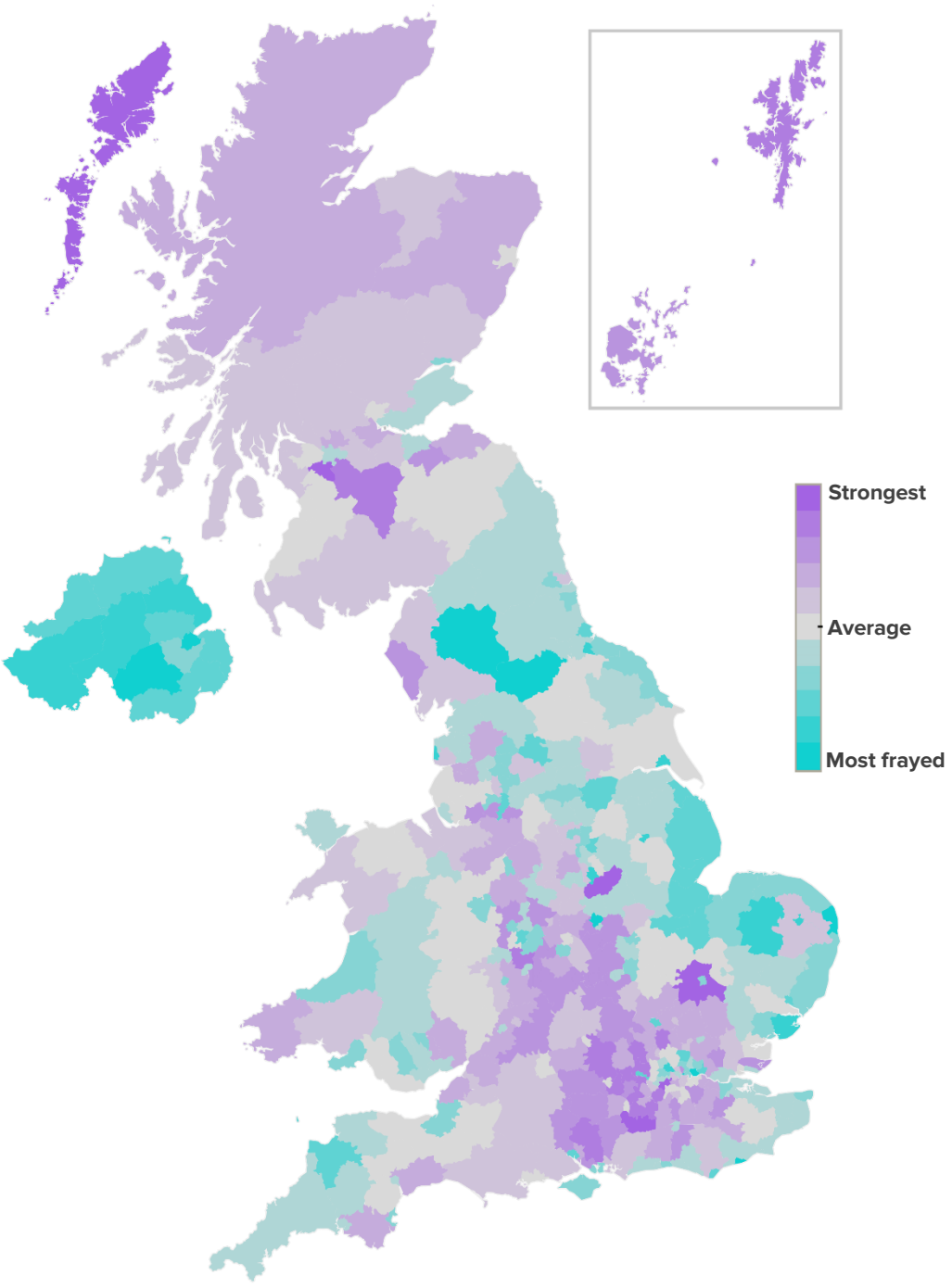
Figure 6: Variation in the strength of Economic Value around the United Kingdom
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

Top 10

Score	Local authority
7.076	South Cambridgeshire
7.032	Rushcliffe
7.014	Na h-Eileanan Siar
6.931	East Renfrewshire
6.887	Waverley
6.877	Richmond upon Thames
6.770	Wokingham
6.770	St Albans
6.757	Chiltern
6.728	South Bucks

Bottom 10

Score	Local authority
3.709	Lincoln
3.709	Blackpool
3.635	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
3.619	Belfast
3.605	Leicester
3.475	Eden
3.400	Hastings
3.400	Newham
3.350	Great Yarmouth
3.331	Richmondshire



5. Positive Social Norms: How does behaviour and culture differ in different places?

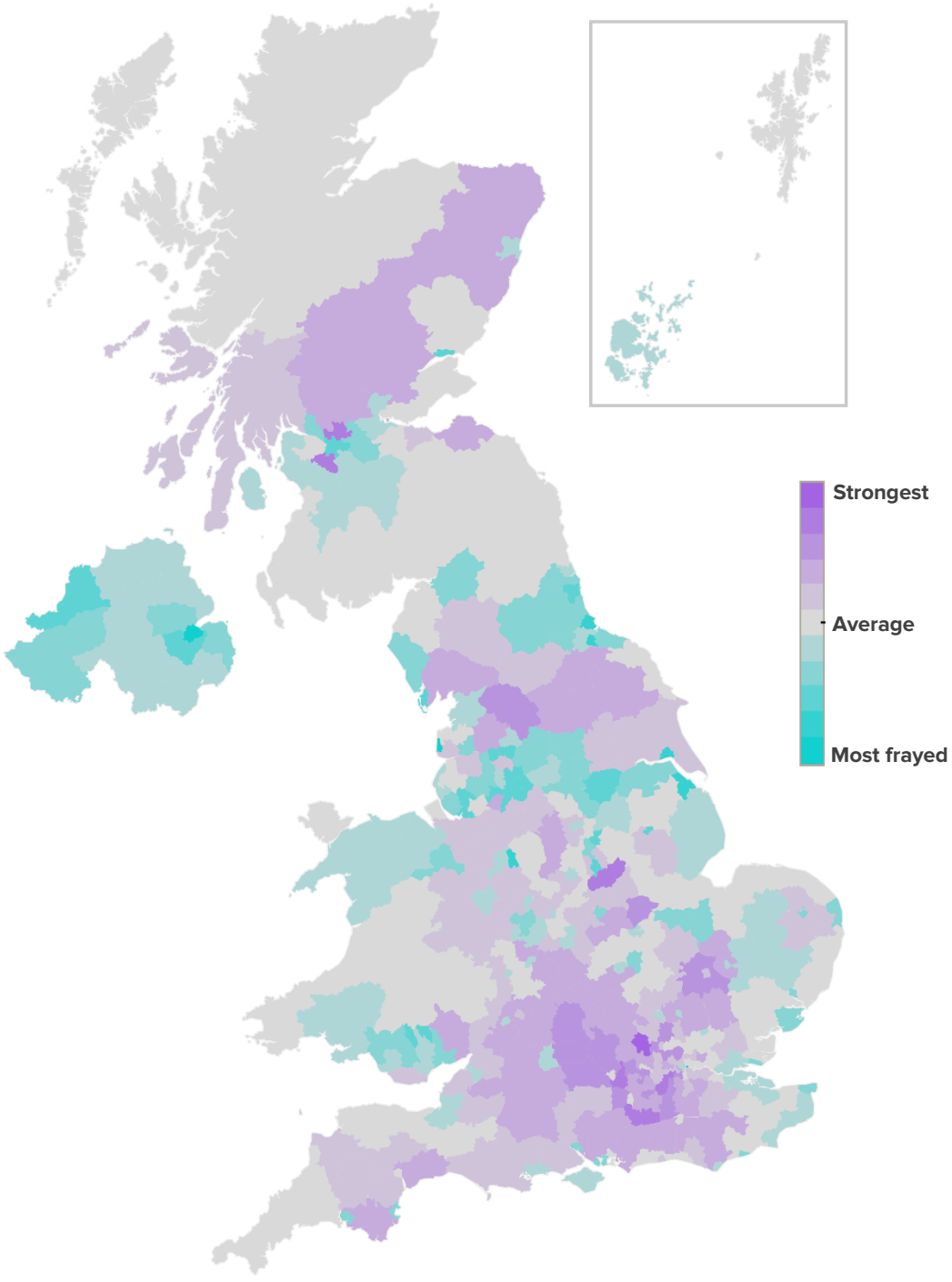
The fifth thread in our index is Positive Social Norms. This measures the behaviour, traditions and norms that underpin a community and the relationships within it. This measure includes metrics for the level of education (NVQ4 and above), levels of criminality, rates of marriage and family formation, teenage pregnancy rates, levels of suicide and substance use. We find that.

- The South of England and parts of Yorkshire and Scotland score highly for Positive Social Norms and behaviours. The top performing areas are concentrated in the commuter belt around London, including Chiltern, Elmbridge, Wokingham and Epsom and Ewell. Meanwhile the areas with the lowest scores are areas with a rich industrial heritage but which have suffered from post-industrialisation since the 1980s: Merthyr Tydfil, Sunderland, Dundee, North East Lincolnshire, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Blackpool.
- There is a visible overlap between places with strong Positive Social Norms and wider social fabric scores. Eight of the top ten areas for Positive Social Norms are in the top ten for social fabric. However only one of the bottom ranked areas, Belfast, is in the bottom ten for social fabric. Looking at the distribution of scores, we see the top performing quintile of areas hold an average score that is 61% higher than the bottom quintile.
- Looking at specific indicators, the area of greatest variation is education, where the top performing areas perform considerably better than areas with frayed Positive Social Norms scores. Areas with stronger Positive Social Norms (top quintile) are more likely to have children but less likely to be married, and have marginally higher life expectancy, than areas with frayed Positive Social Norms.
- As shown in the map below, there also appears to be a strong correlation between the Positive Social Norms scores of a local area and its political significance in recent years. The Red Wall of constituencies in the North and Midlands which drove the Conservative election victory in 2019 has noticeably lower Positive Social Norms scores compared to the traditional Conservative heartlands in the South of England.

Figure 7: Variation in the strength of Positive Social Norms around the United Kingdom
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

Top 10	
Score	Local authority
7.954	Chiltern
7.686	Richmond upon Thames
7.588	Rushcliffe
7.517	East Renfrewshire
7.489	Elmbridge
7.463	Waverley
7.389	Wokingham
7.340	East Dunbartonshire
7.324	Epsom and Ewell
7.280	St Albans

Bottom 10	
Score	Local authority
3.834	Sunderland
3.719	Merthyr Tydfil
3.642	Dundee City
3.631	North East Lincolnshire
3.499	Stoke-on-Trent
3.317	Hartlepool
3.162	Kingston upon Hull
3.160	Middlesbrough
2.934	Belfast
2.576	Blackpool



What is driving these statistics?

The *UK Social Fabric Index* incorporates five important threads that are consistent in fostering both the quality and quantity of connections, networks and trust among individuals and within communities. We capture many data sources that we know matter to ordinary people from our deliberative workshops and the academic literature to account for the state of communities in Britain today. But this in itself does not tell us what is driving the results or how different results relate to one another.

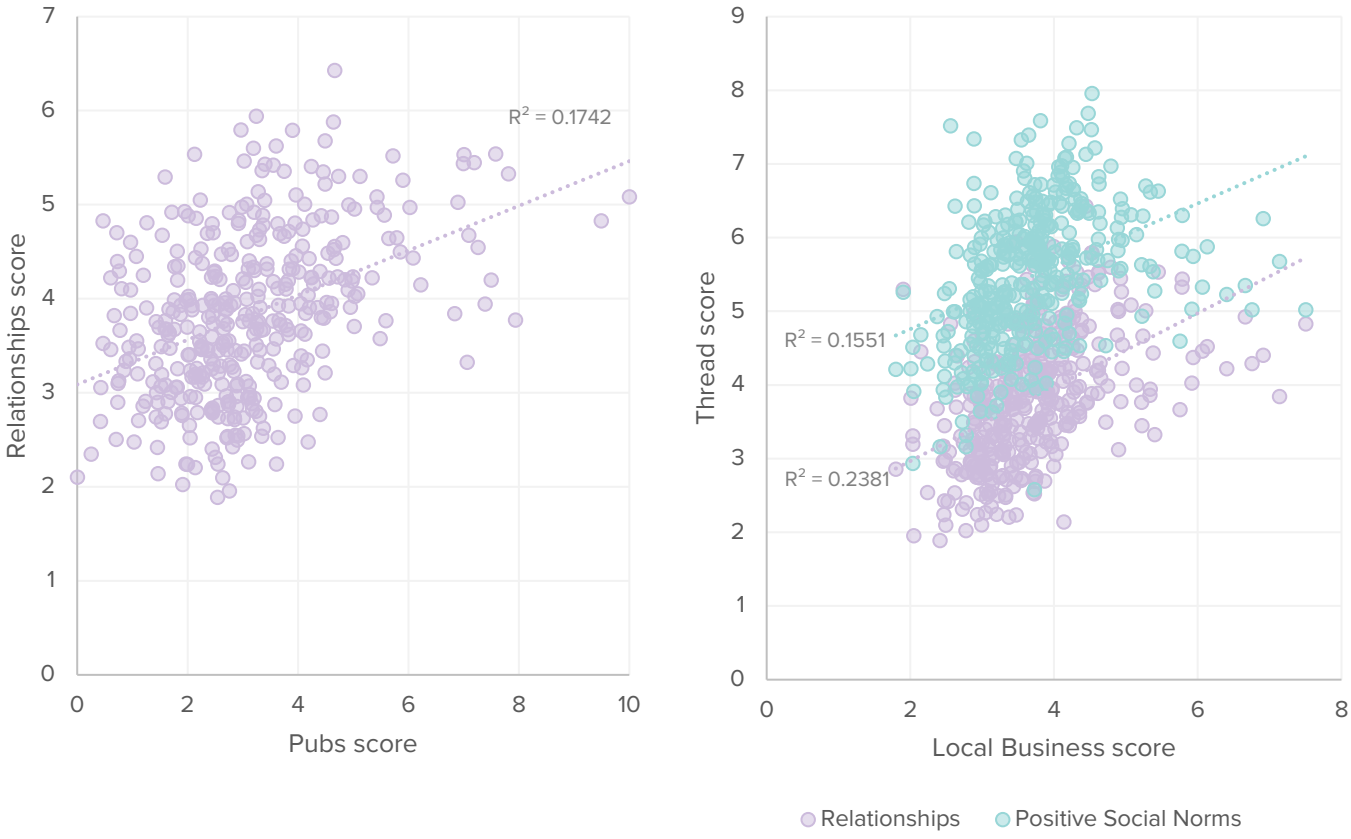
This section considers what drives local places' social fabric scores, which elements matter most and which are less important to community. To achieve this, we use statistical regression techniques to test how different threads relate to one another, and the strength of those relationships. We find that:

- **The strength of Relationships is strongly indicative of a place's social fabric.** There is a strong correlation between the quality of relationships within local places and the wider Social Fabric score. In particular, levels of volunteering, acts of charity and leisure time are the strongest drivers of Relationships in local communities. This highlights the importance of intangible social interactions to the wellbeing of local places, but also most specifically the positive impact of volunteering and group membership on places. Higher relationship scores are also strongly associated with higher scores for election turnout, better employment opportunities, health and levels of higher education. This affirms the importance that the wider social capital literature (Putnam, 1992, Hall, 1999) ascribes to local association in the pursuit of democratic society.[14]
- **The more active people are within their communities, the more politically engaged people are.** Political engagement appears to be the main driver for understanding the scores behind Civic Institutions. Our evidence suggests that the greater the proportion of community engagement and involvement, the stronger the sense of civic duty. Places with stronger Civic Institutions typically have higher scores for income, employment, levels of education. Civic Institutions are also positively correlated with Positive Social Norms, such as health outcomes and family values. The same elements that influence Relationships in local places - levels of volunteering, acts of charity and time available for social or leisurely activities - are also closely aligned with higher scores for Civic Institutions. In one way or another, it would seem that that political apathy and community disengagement are closely related.
- **Positive social norms and behaviours matter**. There is a strong statistical relationship between Positive Social Norms of a place and its Social Fabric score. Places with higher levels of marriage, numbers of families with children and lower teenage pregnancies tend to be healthier, more community-orientated and charitable places. Similarly, the proportion of people achieving post-18 education is strongly associated with high electoral turnout, higher levels of altruism and a variety of economic outcomes. Areas with more positive social norms tend to record higher levels of volunteering and greater time dedicated to leisure. This is

intuitive - social constraints and norms provide institutional guardrails that support prosperity and community - but has previously been hard to quantitatively measure.

- **Physical infrastructure is less important than public attitudes suggest**. There seems to be a relatively weak relationship between an area's Physical Infrastructure score and the other elements of our UK Social Fabric Index. This applies at both an aggregate level and at a more granular level: very few indicators of Physical Infrastructure are correlated with other threads of the overall score. This suggests that having higher levels of fixed infrastructure - from train stations, broadband connectivity, libraries and green spaces - is less important to the social fabric of a place than otherwise understood.
- However, there are two exceptions to this: the number of pubs and local businesses, including both independent businesses and convenience stores. These local institutions are moderately correlated with the R-squared value ranging from 0.16 to 0.24 with the Relationships thread and with higher scores for Positive Social Norms. This suggests that certain types of physical infrastructure - especially local hubs that bring people together - are more important than others and merely investing in connectivity or physical regeneration will not on its own materially improve the wider social fabric of a place.

Figure 8: Pubs and local businesses versus selected threads
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

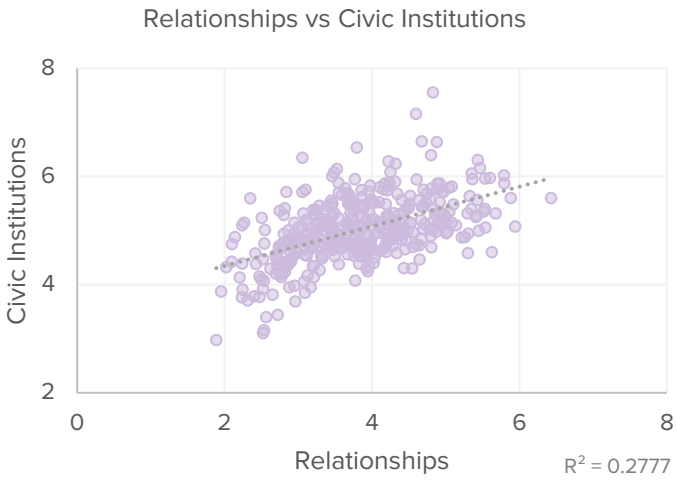


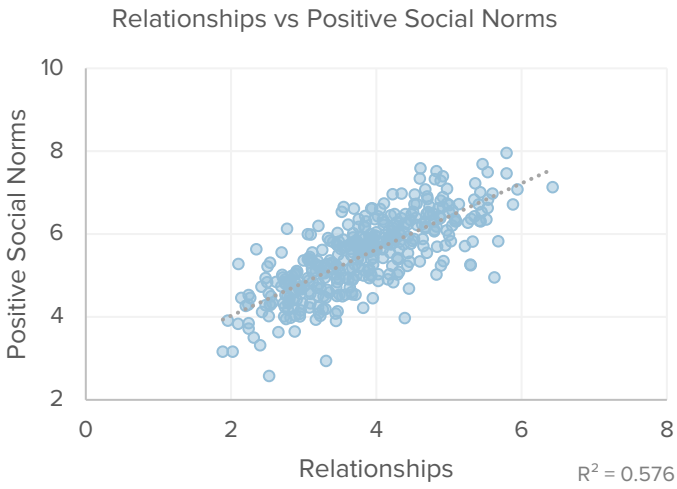
- **Economic variables, particularly stable employment, are higher where there is more social fabric**. Places with a greater proportion of people in employment - full-time or part-time - tend to have higher social fabric scores. Other aspects of local economies appear to matter more for some elements of a place's social fabric as we measure it. For example, the security of housing tenure does not correspond particularly strongly to threads of the social fabric, but it does link to other elements: for example, local areas with more social and owner-occupied housing have lower crime rates and higher incidence of volunteering. We find that income and expenditure have a positive relationship with higher levels of volunteering and acts of charity, which may be unsurprising given the time and financial constraints on many disadvantaged households. The role of good, stable employment to community strength is likely to come under strain due to the coronavirus-induced recession the UK is experiencing.

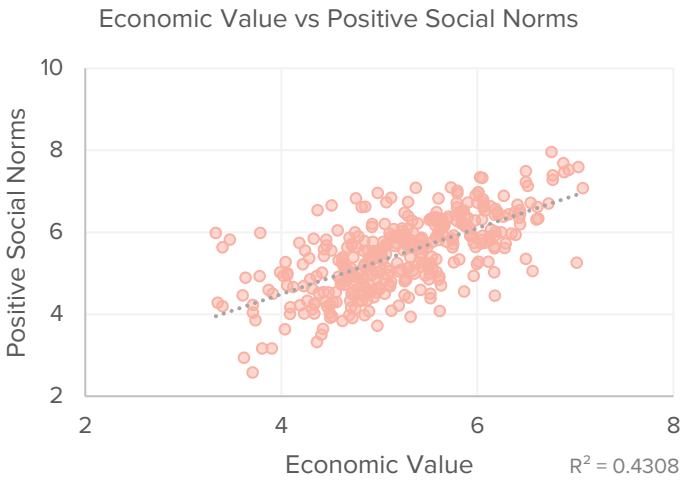
Table 4: Correlation matrix for five threads of Social Fabric
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

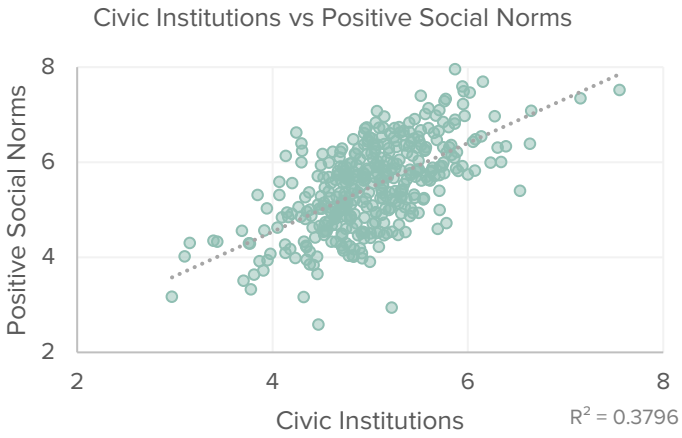
		Relationships	Physical Infrastructure	Civic Institutions	Economic Value	Positive Social norms
Relationships	Correlation	1				
	R-squared	1				
Physical Infrastructure	Correlation	-0.1261	1			
	R-squared	0.0159	1			
Civic Institutions	Correlation	0.5270	0.1265	1		
	R-squared	0.2777	0.0160	1		
Economic Value	Correlation	0.5736	0.0387	0.3814	1	
	R-squared	0.3290	0.0015	0.1455	1	
Positive Social Norms	Correlation	0.7589	0.0100	0.6161	0.65635	1
	R-squared	0.5760	0.0001	0.3796	0.4308	1

Figure 9: Scatter graphs for selected threads
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index









Outliers: Which local areas overperform or underperform on social fabric metrics?

The social fabric measure is a composite score that brings together a range of different indicators to try to understand the complex lived reality of a community within a single metric. By measuring all local areas on this consistent measure, we can start to understand which areas have strong communities and which suffer from a social fabric that is fraying and may need repair. In doing so, we have established that Physical Infrastructure is a less important driver than we first thought, and that it is local institutions and relationships that appear to underpin community.

There are, however, a number of areas that do not conform to the general pattern: places that are not economically prosperous but have strong social fabric; places which have frayed Positive Social Norms but have managed to build strong institutions and relationships; and places where frayed physical infrastructure is not mirrored by frayed social infrastructure. These outliers offer an alternative perspective of how social fabric is woven and what elements matter most in different contexts. Analysing these outliers can help us understand whether there are other routes to community strength than the one outlined above.

- There are 17 local authorities which score in the top decile for one thread of the social fabric but simultaneously score in the bottom decile for another thread. For example, Eden in Cumbria is in the bottom tenth of areas for Economic Value, but ranks in the top tenth for Relationships. Manchester and Nottingham score in the top decile for Physical Infrastructure but are among the lowest tenth of places for Economic Value, Relationships, and Positive Social Norms. Table 5 gives an account of the different cities, towns and rural areas which have varied results across the Social Fabric Index.
- A number of areas that score poorly on our *UK Social Fabric Index* appear to have strong Positive Social Norms. For example, Boston, in Lincolnshire, has the twelfth lowest social fabric score in the country. However, it scores above average for Positive Social Norms, with a lower crime rate, stronger family formation and better health outcomes than the average local authority. Barking and Dagenham is ranked 28th lowest in our *UK Social Fabric Index*, but has strong Positive Social Norms, with more families with children, less solitary living and lower levels of alcohol dependency than the average local authority.
- Unsurprisingly, none of the areas in the top decile for Social Fabric are in the bottom decile for any individual thread. However, a number of areas score highly for social fabric and poorly for Economic Value and Physical Infrastructure. South Buckinghamshire is 37th highest for social fabric but 293th for Physical Infrastructure, while Chiltern, second overall, is 164th. South Lakeland, 18th in the overall social fabric rankings, is 133rd for Economic Value, while Kingston Upon Thames, 16th overall, is 161st on Economic Value scores.

- The opposite is also true. Kingston Upon Hull, the place in the country with the most frayed social fabric, is 85th *for Physical Infrastructure, putting* it in the third decile, driven by higher than average broadband access and more available public transport. North East Lincolnshire, similarly, has the 7th lowest social fabric score but the 147th highest Physical Infrastructure score, in part because of higher broadband speeds and a greater number of sports clubs. These results further reinforce the idea that community is influenced by much more than just the physical infrastructure of a place.

Table 5: Local authorities ranked simultaneously in the top and bottom decile for different threads
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index

	Relationships		Physical Infrastructure		Civic Institutions		Economic Value		Positive Social Norms	
	Bottom	Top	Bottom	Top	Bottom	Top	Bottom	Top	Bottom	Top
Belfast				x			x		x	
Birmingham	x			x						
Bradford				x			x			
Derry City and Strabane				x			x		x	
Dudley	x			x						
Eden		x					x			
Glasgow City				x	x				x	
Leicester	x			x			x			
Manchester	x			x			x		x	
Nottingham	x			x			x		x	
Rochford			x					x		
Rutland			x							x
Shetland Islands			x					x		
South Staffordshire			x		x			x		
South Tyneside	x			x						
Stirling			x			x				
Tewkesbury			x							x

The effect of belonging

How does social fabric relate to other variables?

The previous chapters have shown how social fabric differs by geography - how the relationships, infrastructure and institutions that comprise community are distributed in different parts of the United Kingdom - and what is driving them. This is instructive in helping to understand the *stock* of community in different places, to help policymakers to identify where to intervene. As well as helping us understand what community strength looks like, and how it might be rebuilt where it is missing, what our analysis also brings out is the wide variation in social fabric across the UK. We are familiar with descriptions of *economic* inequality and the need to address them, but the *UK Social Fabric Index* also reveals a level of social inequality that is at least as acute.

It is essential to explore this further, and as part of our research, we considered how the social fabric relates to other political, economic and demographic variables about places in the UK, and sought to explain differences in attitudes and outcomes. This chapter explores those questions, setting out the relationship between the social fabric and its voting behaviour, indices of deprivation, ethnic diversity, belonging, and different areas' response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The relationship between social fabric and Brexit

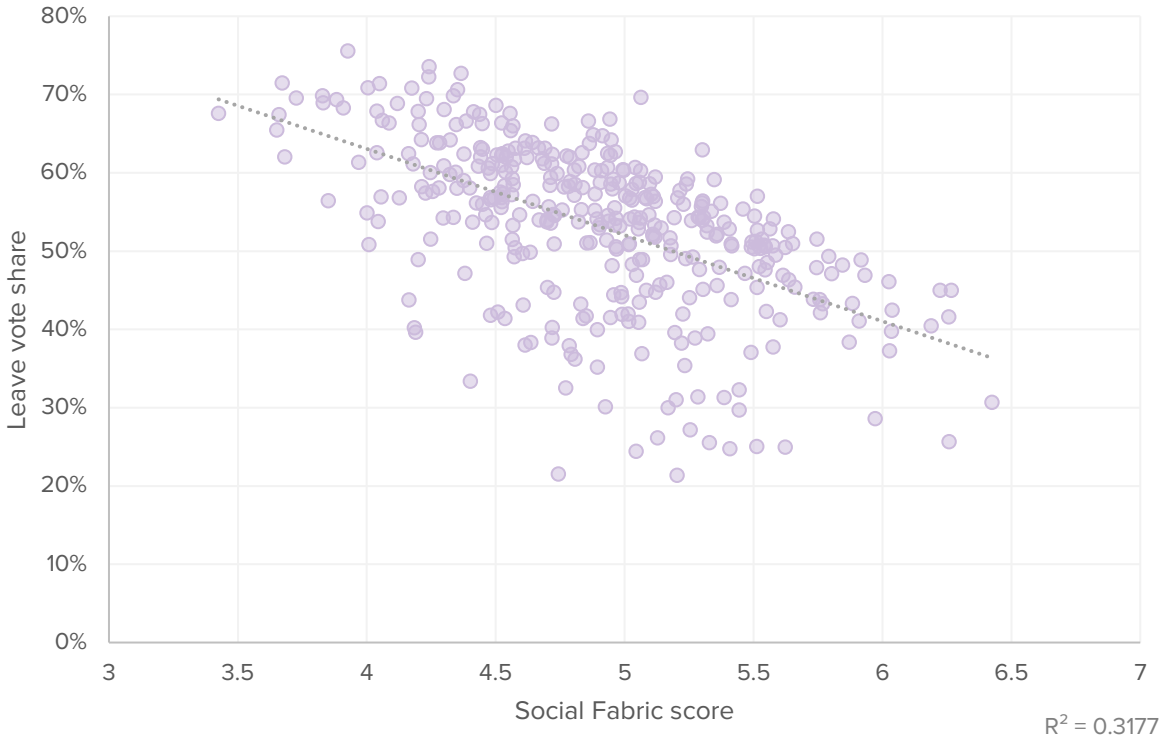
The electorate's decision to take back control from the EU in June 2016 was heavily related to geography. The places that voted Leave were overwhelmingly local areas in England and Wales, situated outside major cities, with typically older and less educated populations. Those that voted Remain were typically more metropolitan, younger and more professional. It has led to a sustained debate about so-called "left behind towns" and lagging regions - places whose people have not felt the benefit of economic growth and social progress.

We find a strong overlap between these places and our index of social fabric:

- **Places with a frayed social fabric are more likely to have voted to leave the EU.** Among the top tenth of places for Social Fabric, just 44% of people voted to leave the EU. This compares to more than 62% support for Brexit in local authorities in the lowest tenth of places for Social Fabric. Put another way, the tenth of local authorities most supportive of Brexit had an average social fabric score of 4.2. This is nearly a fifth (18%) lower than the tenth of areas who were most supportive of staying in the EU.
- **Leave-voting areas score particularly low on traditional social capital indicators, such as Civic Institutions, Relationships and Positive Social Norms.** For example, the tenth of areas most supportive of Brexit had an average Relationships score of 2.9, nearly two-fifths lower than the 4.0 for the most Remain-supporting decile of areas. The most Leave-supporting decile scores 28% less for Civic Institutions and 22% less on Positive Social Norms compared to the most Remain-supporting decile.

- **In contrast, Physical Infrastructure and Economic Value are much less correlated with support for Leave.** We find that the most Remain-supporting tenth of local authority areas have Physical Infrastructure only 2% better, on our measure, than the most Leave-supporting areas, and Economic Value of only 9% higher. This is further evidence that the vote to leave the EU was not solely about economic insecurity or the levels of infrastructure within different places, but that popular discomfort was as much cultural and social in its origins.
- Specific indicators bear this out. **Places with a high Leave vote share tend to have lower scores for charitable giving and number of charities, a lower rate of volunteering and fewer membership organisations.** Areas that supported leaving the EU are more likely to have residents who work close to where they live, have shorter commutes, and are less likely to use trains regularly. They also have longer working hours in conjunction with lower pay and savings. Remain-supporting areas, by contrast, are more likely to have higher rates of post-18 education and better transport connectivity.
- Although they tend to have lower social fabric scores overall, this reinforces previous Onward research which found that **Leave voters are more likely than Remain voters to identify with their local area**. 36% of those who voted Leave say that the area they grew up in is important to their identity compared to 28% of those who voted Remain. Similarly, 48% of Leave voters say that the area they live in now is important to their identity, whereas only 39% of Remain voters agree. This reinforces the evidence base for David Goodhart's distinction between 'Somewheres' and 'Anywheres'.[15]

Figure 10: Leave vote share versus Social Fabric
Source: Onward Social Fabric Index, House of Commons Library



The effect on political voting patterns and volatility

The last few years have been a period of unprecedented political flux. The last General Election saw a realignment away from the voting coalitions that have dominated British politics for the last sixty years and a greater level of volatility than we have seen in electoral history. There is a growing acknowledgement in British politics that this is down to deep currents within our society and economy: to what extent does the social fabric of places explain it?

- **At a local level, there is a strong relationship between party preference and social fabric**. Local authority areas run by Conservative and Liberal Democrat councils in England and Wales tend to score above average for social fabric. By contrast, of the 38 councils in the bottom decile of local authorities for social fabric, 22 (57%) are Labour-run and 9 (24%) have no overall control. These include places such as Doncaster, Barnsley, Great Yarmouth, Stoke-on-Trent and Nottingham.
- **Labour-run council areas tend to score above average on physical assets, but not on other threads**. 28% of local authorities in England and 32% of councils in Wales[16] are Labour-controlled. In these places, the social fabric scores are considerably lower than Conservative or Liberal councils, or the national average. This perhaps reflects the fact that nearly half (45%) of Labour-controlled areas are cities[17] which typically have better infrastructure but often have weaker social capital.
- **Local authorities in the Red Wall have lower scores for social fabric than the UK average**. The average social fabric score in the UK is 4.88, while the average score for a Red Wall constituency is 4.49. Areas like Wakefield and County Durham are all ranked in the bottom quartile for social fabric. These local authority areas tend to have higher scores for Physical Infrastructure in place, but lower scores for Positive Social Norms. Red Wall areas have higher prevalence of bus stops, green spaces, leisure centres, allotments, and a higher proportion of people in secure housing. They also have lower levels of education to NVQ4+, a lower rate of marriage formation, higher rate of smoking and alcohol dependency and higher rates of crime.
- **When estimating for parliamentary constituencies, the effect of the social fabric becomes even clearer.** Estimating the social fabric scores at a constituency level we find that the average social fabric score for the seats the Conservative Party gained at the 2019 General Election was 4.54, 11% lower than the 5.03 average score for seats the Conservatives held from the 2017 General Election. Meanwhile, seats that Labour held had an average score of 4.67, 21% lower than their single gain in Putney in London. Following the 2019 election, the Liberal Democrats and SNP both hold seats with very high social fabric, at 5.63 and 4.90 respectively.

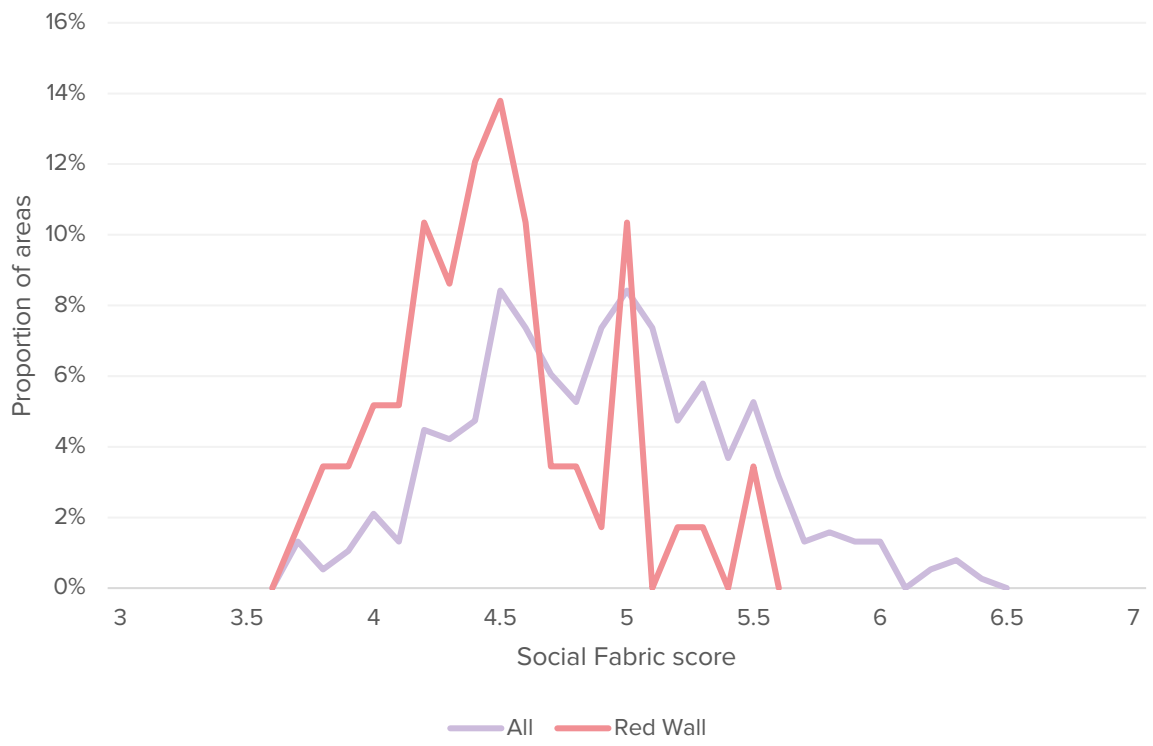
Table 6: Average scores by local authority by current controlling party

Source: Onward Social Fabric Index, House of Commons Library

	Relationships	Physical Infrastructure	Civic Institutions	Economic Value	Positive Social Norms	Social Fabric
Labour	3.160	5.179	4.848	4.827	4.956	4.594
Conservative	4.154	4.774	4.991	5.538	5.909	5.073
Liberal Democrat	4.623	4.974	5.544	5.671	6.379	5.438
UK average	3.819	4.901	5.013	5.232	5.483	4.890

Figure 11: Social Fabric scores for local authorities in the Red Wall vs whole UK

Source: Onward Social Fabric Index



- **The former Labour strongholds that fell to the Conservatives after decades of political control have the most frayed social fabric.** There are 24 seats in England where Labour lost control in 2019 after decades of political dominance, including where the seat had never returned anything other than a Labour MP. These seats, which include Bishop Auckland, Bolsover, Blyth Valley, Great Grimsby and Workington, have an average social fabric score of 4.38. This is 15% lower than Conservative Holds in 2019, and 28% lower than the one seat that Labour won, exemplifying the challenge between Labour's newer and older coalitions and the failure of Labour to speak to the cultural values of community in 2019.

Deprivation and social fabric

One of the most established and most-used composite datasets for analysing different local areas is the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This measures a range of factors associated with social deprivation such as health, employment, barriers to housing and services, income, crime and living environment. While our measure of social fabric has many similarities, in that it is measuring the characteristics of place and shares some of the same inputs, they are fundamentally different measures. We were therefore interested to understand the relationship between social fabric and deprivation. We find that:

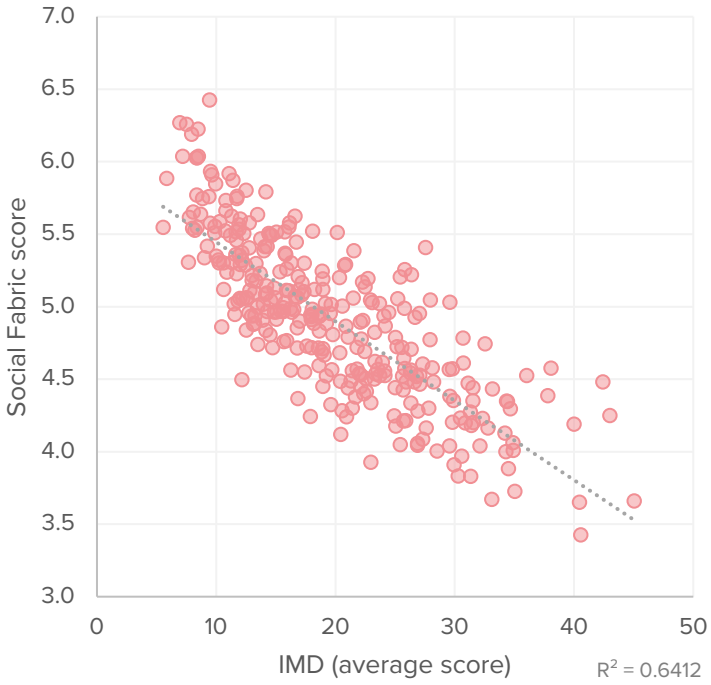
- **There is a strong correlation between the most deprived places in the United Kingdom and the places with the lowest scores for social fabric.** As shown below in Figure 12, there is a clear correlation between Social Fabric and deprivation, with a high R-squared value of 0.642 demonstrating a strong relationship. At an individual local authority level there is strong overlap too: Kingston upon Hull and Blackpool are some of the most deprived places in England but also have the first and third lowest scores for social fabric. By contrast, places like Chiltern and Waverley, which rank 2nd and 4th in our index, also have some of the least deprived neighbourhoods.
- **There are however exceptions.** For example, Islington is in the bottom decile for deprivation, but scores 5.4 on our *UK Social Fabric Index*, or Richmondshire, which ranks in the 8th decile for deprivation (where the 10th decile is least deprived), but scores 4.5 for social fabric. Cheshire West and Chester, for example, is in the middle of the distribution for deprivation but 47th in our *UK Social Fabric Index*, placing it at the top of the second decile.
- **Places with high deprivation scores particularly lack strong relationships.** While the IMD captures much of what matters in local places, it does not capture the aspects of local relationships incorporated within our index. We find that Relationships is negatively correlated with deprivation suggesting that the stronger the Relationships in places, the lower the IMD score. This appears particularly related to the levels of volunteering, acts of charity and leisure activities.

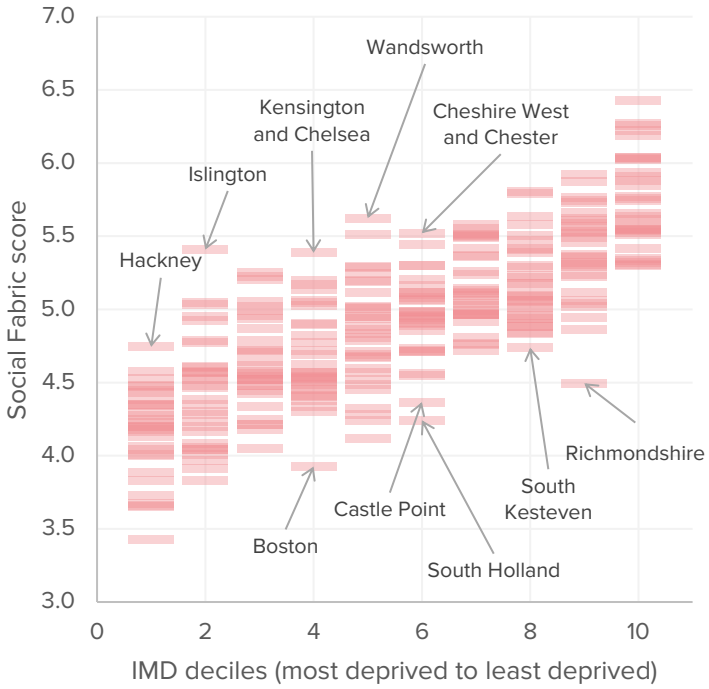
"Lots of the more deprived areas like the East March, West Marsh, Nunsthorpe and places like that have had lots of money poured into them to help regenerate and they've pulled down some bad housing and put in new housing which has had an effect on the community."

Female, student teacher, Grimsby, discussing the impact of deprivation on community

Figure 12: Distribution of local authorities by Social Fabric and IMD score

Source: Onward Social Fabric Index, IMD scores

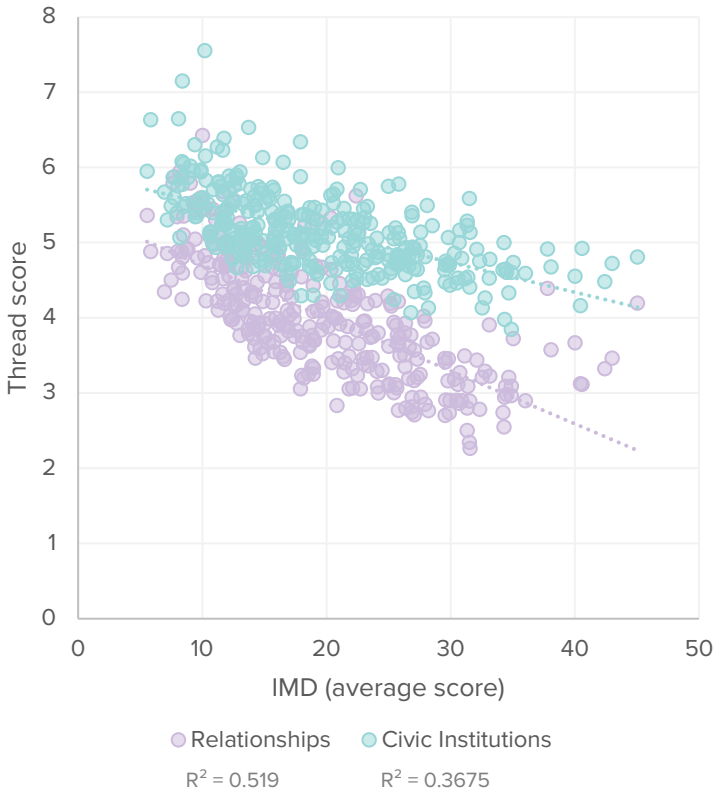




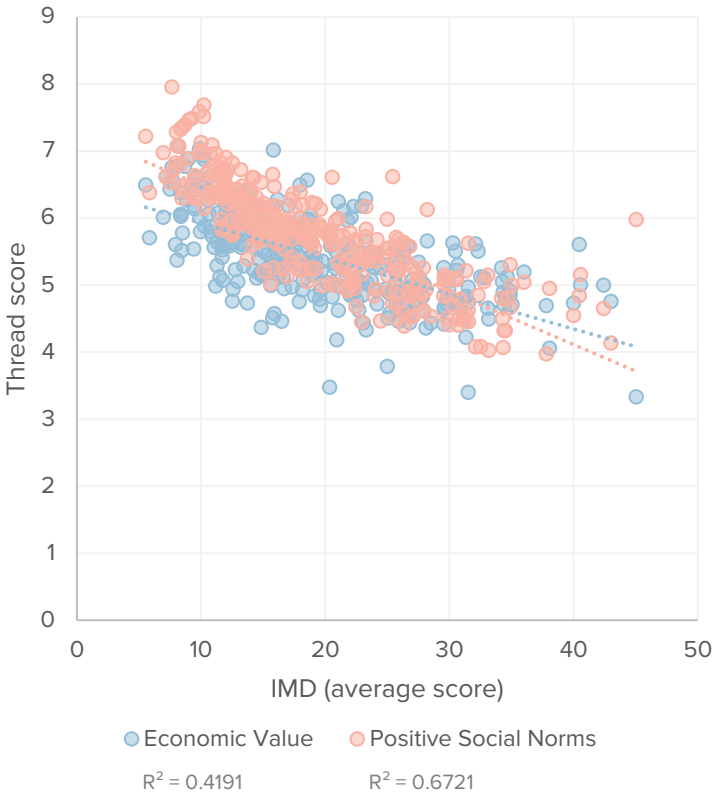
Figures 13: Deprivation correlated with different aspects of the Social Fabric

Source: Onward Social Fabric Index, IMD scores

Relationships and Civic Institutions



Economic Value and Positive Social Norms



Diversity and social fabric

- There appears to be no statistical relationship between the social fabric score of an area and the ethnic diversity of the population. This makes intuitive sense given that local authorities with low social fabric scores include both relatively diverse places, such as Nottingham, and relatively ethnically homogeneous places, such as Hartlepool; the places with strong social fabric include diverse places such as Kingston upon Thames and ethnically homogeneous areas such as the Cotswolds. In fact, the top tenth of areas by social fabric are on average slightly more ethnically diverse than the lowest decile for social fabric and all deciles are broadly similar in terms of ethnicity.
- When analysed by each of the five threads of social fabric a more nuanced picture emerges. The decile with the lowest scores for Relationships are considerably more diverse than the highest decile, with a diversity score of 2.66 compared to 1.97. In contrast, the decile with the highest scores for Physical Infrastructure are markedly more diverse than the bottom decile, with a score of 3.13 compared to 1.35. The top deciles for Civic Institutions and Positive Social Norms are also slightly more diverse than the lowest decile, although there is no clear correlation in general.
- This suggests that a strong social fabric is not the preserve of any one ethnicity, and that weak or fraying social fabric is not related to ethnic make-up of an area. In fact, areas with the greatest diversity typically score higher for education and family norms, shared space and better access to physical and civic infrastructure that allows people to "bridge" their differences, to use Robert Putman's terminology.

Coronavirus and social fabric

The last six months have added a whole new dimension to local communities, bringing people together in their place but also separating them through social distancing, lockdown policies and the human cost of the virus. A variety of research, including from the ONS, has shown how the crisis has led to rising levels of social isolation and heightened incidence of mental health problems, alongside more positive findings such as more time spent with family and in the local community. But how does the social fabric of different communities on our measure begin to explain how different areas have coped with the pressures of the pandemic, and indicate how they may respond to the recovery?

- **Local authorities at both ends of the social fabric spectrum have generally seen quite high COVID-19 death rates**. There is no statistical difference in the coronavirus mortality rate of the tenth of local authorities with the strongest social fabric and those with most frayed. This suggests that coronavirus mortality is driven by other factors, not least age, ethnicity, public health outcomes and obesity which we do not account for in our index. This is reinforced by a mixed picture among different local authorities. Some local areas with a strong social fabric,

such as Harrow and Lambeth, have among the highest death rates in the country (5th and 7th respectively). Meanwhile, areas in the lowest decile for social fabric, such as Middlesbrough and Hartlepool, have relatively high death rates.

- **There is some variation in transmission rates between areas with strong social fabric and those with weak social fabric.** The top tenth of areas by social fabric have had 5% fewer cases reported in the Government's official statistics than those in the bottom tenth. This is supported by the fact that many of the places which have suffered the most coronavirus-related deaths have low social fabric scores. For example, Brent, Newham and Hackney have the highest number of deaths and are ranked 228th, 310th and 222nd in our index respectively.
- **Places with strong Relationship scores tend to have a lower death and transmission rates from COVID-19**. The top tenth of local areas ranked by the strength of their *Relationships* have had 54% fewer deaths than those in the bottom tenth and 79% fewer cases recorded than the bottom tenth. The difference seems to be pronounced by the differing levels of volunteering and leisure time found in the local communities. Places like South Oxfordshire or Dorset have strong and formalised networks of social connection and exchange built from local membership groups and volunteering. Sandwell ranks the lowest place for leisure time and Newham being the 3rd lowest for volunteering; both have taken a high toll from coronavirus.
- **There is a negative relationship between coronavirus and *Physical Infrastructure*.** Cities like Liverpool, Birmingham, Leicester and large towns like Wigan, Bolton and Stockport all rank within the top decile for Physical Infrastructure, but also see a high death rate ranging between 113.5 to 150.4 within their communities. Understandably, this is driven to a large degree by good transport links.
- **Places with a strong social fabric tend to have a higher proportion of their population who have the ability to work from home**. Areas such as Richmond upon Thames, Elmbridge and St Albans rank in the top 10 for social fabric and all of which have over 30% of their population ever working from home. This compares to places with low social fabric, such as Blackpool, North East Lincolnshire and Kingston upon Hull, where only 20% do so.

"[Coronavirus] has shown [community] in a good light, I think people have mucked in and helped. There have been a lot of big community groups which have been set-up. People have been giving out meals every day... I think even immediate neighbours, people are looking out for each other. You know, if you've got an elderly neighbour you will say I will get this and I will get that for you. Everybody has mucked in really well."

Female, business owner, Glasgow, discussing the impact of coronavirus on their community

"I feel as though the sense of community is increasing everywhere since lockdown. Because so many people are used to working long hours, you don't actually mix much in the community. I certainly don't because I go to work early, come home late and tend not to venture very far. Whereas I think now you see people who seem to be making much more of an effort now to become more of a community."

Female, Welsh education promoter, Bridgend, discussing the impact of coronavirus on their community

Figure 14: Social Fabric vs homeworking

Source: Onward Social Fabric Index, Annual Population Survey, ONS

Belonging and social fabric

As Onward has found in previous research, voters increasingly seek security and belonging over freedom and autonomy. In this section we look at the relationship between our social fabric measure and people's perceptions of belonging, as measured by how strongly people feel they belong to their neighbourhood, as measured in *Understanding Society*.

- **There is a positive, but relatively weak relationship between belonging to one's neighbourhood and social fabric.** In the top decile of local areas for social fabric, net agreement with the statement "I feel I belong to my neighbourhood" is 56.9%. This compares to just 49.9% of people who net agree that they belong to their neighbourhood in the lowest decile for social fabric, a seven percentage point gap.
- **People with a stronger sense of belonging tend to live in places with stronger *Relationships*.** In the top decile of areas for *Relationships*, 57.4% of people agree or strongly agree that they belong to their neighbourhood. This compares to just 48.6% of people in the lowest decile. This variation is less pronounced when considering Civic Institutions, where those in the top decile are only 2 percentage points more likely to say they belong to their neighbourhood.

Figure 15: Net agreement of people who say they belong to their neighbourhood, compared by deciles of the social fabric index
Source: Onward analysis, Understanding Society

- **The age gap in how much people belong to their neighbourhood.** The feeling of belonging tends to grow with age. In particular, 78% of those aged over 65 feel that they belong to their neighbourhood. This compares to just over 45% of 18-34 year-olds.
- **People have a strong sense of belonging if they live in a rural place.** 69% of people who live in a rural neighbourhood say that they feel they belong. Those in their urban counterparts tend to feel that they belong less by 10%, with only 59% of people saying that they belong.
- **Women are more likely to say that they belong to their neighbourhood than men by three percentage points.** 63% of women feel that they belong to their neighbourhood, with only a mere 9% of women feeling that they do not belong. This is compared to the 60% of men who strongly agree and agree with the same statement.
- **The devolved nations have a higher sense of belonging than other parts of the United Kingdom.** In Northern Ireland, 76% of people feel they belong to their local neighbourhood. In Wales and Scotland, the numbers are 68% and 64% respectively. This compares to 58% in London and the South West and 59% in the East Midlands.
- **There is not a straightforward relationship between higher levels of education and belonging.** 62% of people with a degree feel that they belong to their neighbourhood, compared to 57% and 58% for those who only have A-levels and GCSEs respectively. But those that are most likely to feel that they belong are those with no qualifications. Just over 73% of people with no qualifications agree or strongly agree with the statement that they feel they belong to their neighbourhood.

"It's a sense of belonging really. And I think that's why our young people tend to want to come back here because they, you know, they've had those roots and there's that feeling they want to come home again, but there aren't that many opportunities for them, unfortunately."

Female, retired midwife, Enniskillen, when asked what community means

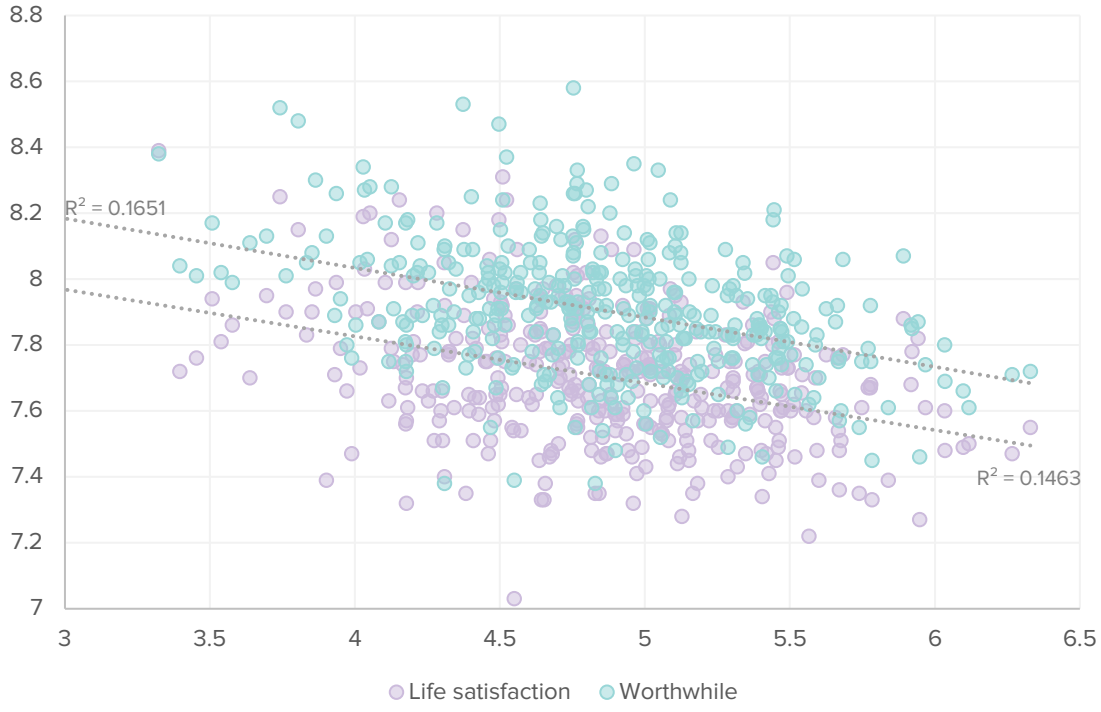
Wellbeing and social fabric

Traditionally, one way of measuring the social fabric of a place has been looking at self-reported measures of life satisfaction, worthwhile, anxiety and happiness. This section looks at how wellbeing and social fabric interrelate, focusing on those aspects of wellbeing which correlate to social fabric. This was not the case for all wellbeing indicators, which we have not included for this reason.

- **At first glance, it appears that the relationship between wellbeing and social fabric is weak.** Richmondshire is ranked 286th for social fabric and placed in the third lowest decile for social fabric, but is the highest ranked place for happiness. Similarly, the Orkney Islands ranks 213th for social fabric, but first for life satisfaction. This is in contrast to places like Kensington and Chelsea which ranks 67th for social fabric but places 15th lowest for life satisfaction and the lowest for happiness.
- **Statistically, the top decile for social fabric of places are marginally happier than those in the bottom decile.** Those in the top decile for social fabric have an average life satisfaction score of 7.76, which is less than 2% higher than areas in the bottom decile. The same is true of happiness, where the top decile (7.57) is just 2.4% happier than the bottom decile (7.39). Looking at change over time, it seems that the bottom decile of places are becoming happier faster than the top decile. Since 2011/12, life satisfaction in the bottom decile for social fabric has improved by 4.4% compared to 3.2% in the top decile and the average score for thinking that life is worthwhile has risen by 3.8% against 2.5% in the top decile.

Figure 16: *Physical Infrastructure* vs Wellbeing

Source: Onward Social Fabric Index, ONS Personal wellbeing



Industry and social fabric

The changing industrial composition of many places is intimately linked to their social fabric. The mining villages of South Wales and industrial towns of Northern England once had thriving communities but, as our index shows, now have frayed social fabric following the decline of industrial activity. Looking at the relationship between industry and social fabric, we find:

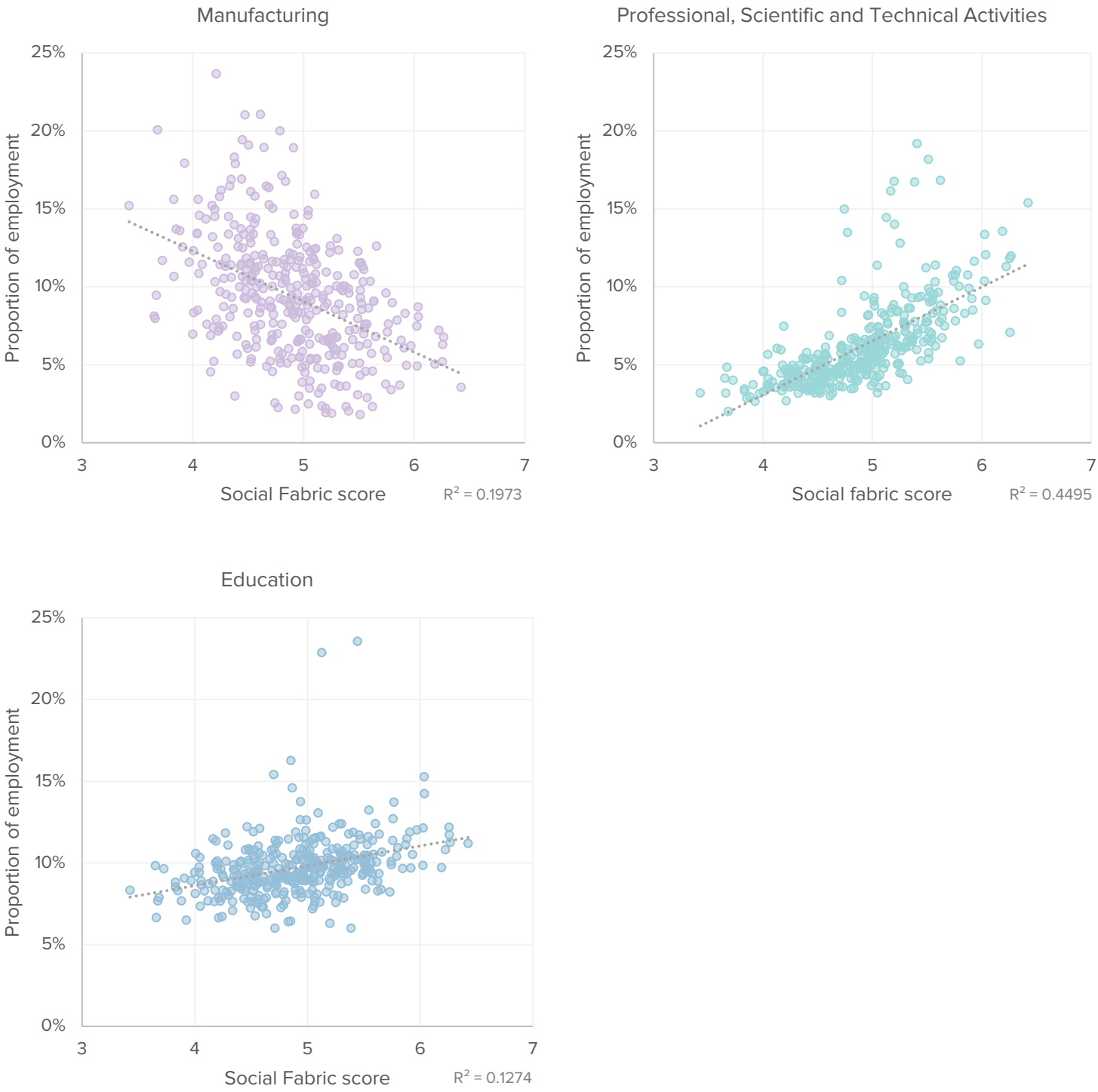
- **There is a negative relationship between the proportion of residents employed in the manufacturing industry and the strength of the area's social fabric.** In the top decile of areas for social fabric, an average of 7% of local industry is in manufacturing. This compares to 12% in the areas in the lowest decile for social fabric. A number of the areas in the lowest decile for social fabric still rely very heavily on manufacturing activity, such as Blaenau Gwent (20%), Fenland (16%) and Corby (24%). In the top decile, Richmond upon Thames and Kingston upon Thames rely on manufacturing for just 4% of activity, and Bromley for just 3%.
- **In contrast, places with strong social fabric have a comparatively much higher level of residents working in the digital and professional industry.** The top decile for social fabric have 7% of industry in information and communication and 10% in professional, scientific and technical activities. This is nearly three times the level of activity in these sectors for the lowest decile, who rely on information and communication activity for 2% of activity and professional, scientific and technical activity for 4%. For example, just 5% of economic activity in Kingston upon Hull is found in these two sectors combined, compared to 27% in Richmond-upon-Thames.
- **Interestingly, places with stronger social fabric have higher levels of employment in the education sector.** Areas in the lowest decile for social fabric have an average level of employment in education of 9%. This compares to an average of 11% for the highest decile for social fabric. Looking at individual local authorities at either end of the distribution, we see that places like Boston in Lincolnshire have only 6% of activity in education compared to 14% in places like Rushcliffe and 24% in Oxford.

"Good paying jobs are what make the economy run, and this is unfortunately a part of the city that just doesn't have that and that's a collective failure. It is not enough to throw up a Silverburn [shopping centre] or add a cinema onto Braehead [shopping centre] and call it a day there has to be more micro-management and macro-investment into these level left areas... there is no kind of industry in the area. The area has been stagnant for a long time and it's not because of the lack of people caring. It's, you know, the biggest employer is the shipyard and it's not the 60's anymore, it's not the backbone of our community in the way that it once was.... and nothing has replaced that."

Male, bank worker, Glasgow, discussing the role of industry in the social fabric of a place

Figure 17: Social Fabric vs employment in different industries

Source: Onward Social Fabric Index, ONS



Fraying?

How has Britain's social fabric has changed over time?

The belief that community is in decline has often been dismissed as a kind of rose-tinted nostalgia. For many years, there was an assumption in Westminster that because growth was strong, wages were rising and opportunities were growing, change was universally positive and to be welcomed. Partly as a result of Brexit and the 2019 General Election this has started to change. But how far has community in Britain actually changed over time?

There have been various attempts to measure the changing character of community in Britain in recent decades. In 1999, the late sociologist Peter Hall attempted to replicate Robert Putnam's study of associational life this side of the Atlantic. His study, *Social Capital in Britain*[18], considered the membership of civic groups and different facets of associational life and found that the erosion of community affairs witnessed in America had no equivalent in Britain. A follow up study in 2003 by Grenier and Wright[19] critiqued this assessment, using new data to posit that formal participation in voluntary organisations and political engagement are increasingly concentrated among more middle-class households and that social trust remains low - findings that the authors relate to rising inequality and the changing nature of work.

More recently, the ONS has published regular statistics on social capital across four domains - personal relationships, social support networks, civic engagement, and trust and cooperative norms. Covering the period from 2014/15 onwards, this data broadly substantiates the notion that social capital is in decline, with falling levels of neighbourly engagement, belonging, associational membership and caregiving. But these measures are by their nature limited. The academic literature has largely stayed within the confines of traditional social capital definitions, which (as we have seen earlier in this chapter) is just one part of how citizens identify with community. Meanwhile the work by the ONS and others focuses on a relatively short time period of the last decade, at most.

In this chapter, we attempt to build on these efforts, taking a longer and wider view of how different aspects of the social fabric have changed over time. This is particularly relevant in the context of the current coronavirus pandemic, which exerts huge pressure on the local networks, relationships and norms that underpin our communities. It has exposed the deep reserves of goodwill, mutual support and social solidarity that exist in many places, much of which had been invisible for many years. It has also revealed areas of weakness, where connections and understanding perhaps used to exist but no longer do. The pages that follow throw some light on how those gaps may have emerged.

1. Local association has declined even as interest groups have grown

Alexis de Tocqueville termed the art of civic association "the mother science". Edmund Burke wrote affectionately that "to be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society is the first principle of public affections". For at least the last three hundred years, it is through local and social associations that people have come together. Today, we find a complex picture in which the culture of local association is waning even as interest-based membership groups appear to be gaining in popularity:

- **According to *Understanding Society*, just under half of people in Britain (48%) were members of a group of some kind in 2017.** This includes all manner of groups, from political parties to women's and environmental groups. Overall, this is a decline of around 10 percentage points since 1991, when the British Household Panel Survey first started measuring group membership. However, the refreshed sample and a change in methodology between 2009-10 makes the long-run comparison less robust, even with the harmonised dataset we are using.
- **The decline in group membership, however, has been far from uniform across different kinds of groups**. Since 1993, using the same data, we find that the share of adults who are a member of the scouts or guides has more than doubled to 2.5% of the population, while the number of people who are a member of a pensioner's organisation has risen sevenfold to just 4% of the populace. The membership of professional membership organisations has risen by over twelve times, to 17% of the population, over the period.
- **However, there have been falls in membership of several kinds of groups with distinctly local forms**. For example, the number of people who are a member of a working men's or social club has fallen by around a quarter to one in ten people, the number who a member of a tenants' or residents' association has fallen by 38% to 6% of the population, and there have only been marginal (~2%) rises in the number of people who say they are a member of a trade union or the Women's Institute. The exception to this is "voluntary service groups" and "other community groups", where the share of people saying they are a member has tripled and doubled respectively since 1993.
- This uneven picture is reinforced by separate data from the Inter Departmental Business Register,[20] which tracks the activities of different types of business, including membership organisations, based on their standard industry codes. **Since 2010, the total number of local business units or branches registered as membership organisations has risen, from 26,110 in 2010 to 27,050 in 2019.** This has been driven, in particular, by a 32% rise in the number of local units registered as professional membership organisations and a 16% rise in the number of religious organisations. Meanwhile, the number of local units registered as political organisations and trade unions, for example, have fallen from 28% and 9% respectively.

Separate data from the Bank of England and TUC (Figure 19) demonstrates the long-run decline in actual membership rolls for trade unions, from half of employed workers in the 1970s to fewer than one in four today.

Figures 18: Group membership and participation, 1991-2017

Source: Understanding Society, Onward analysis

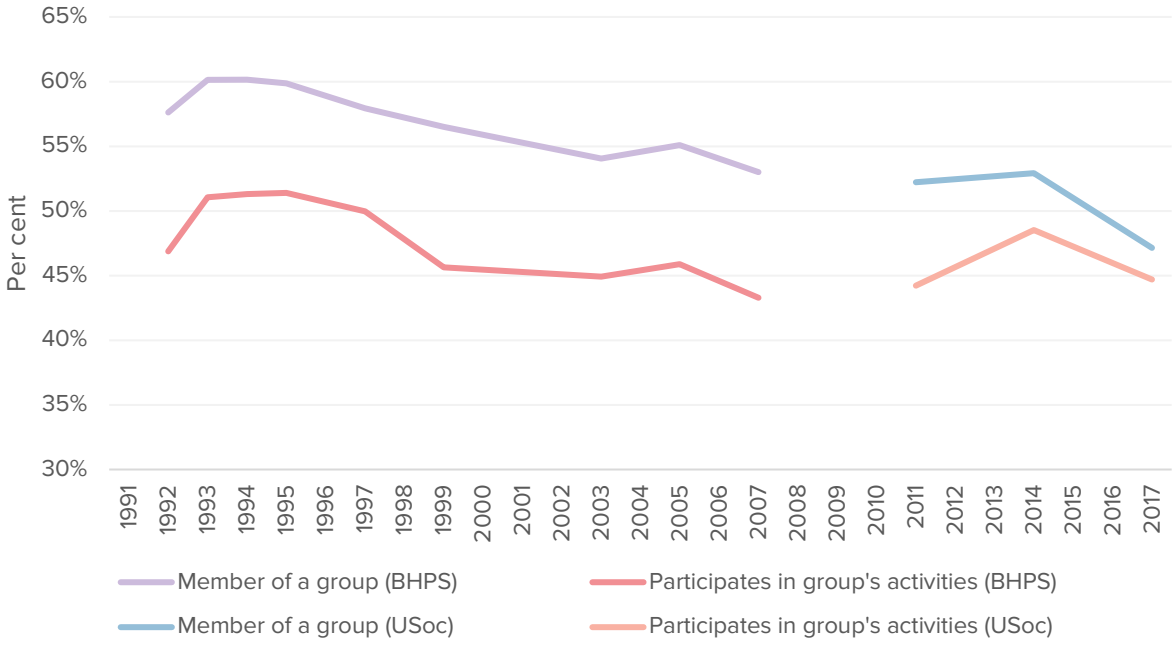
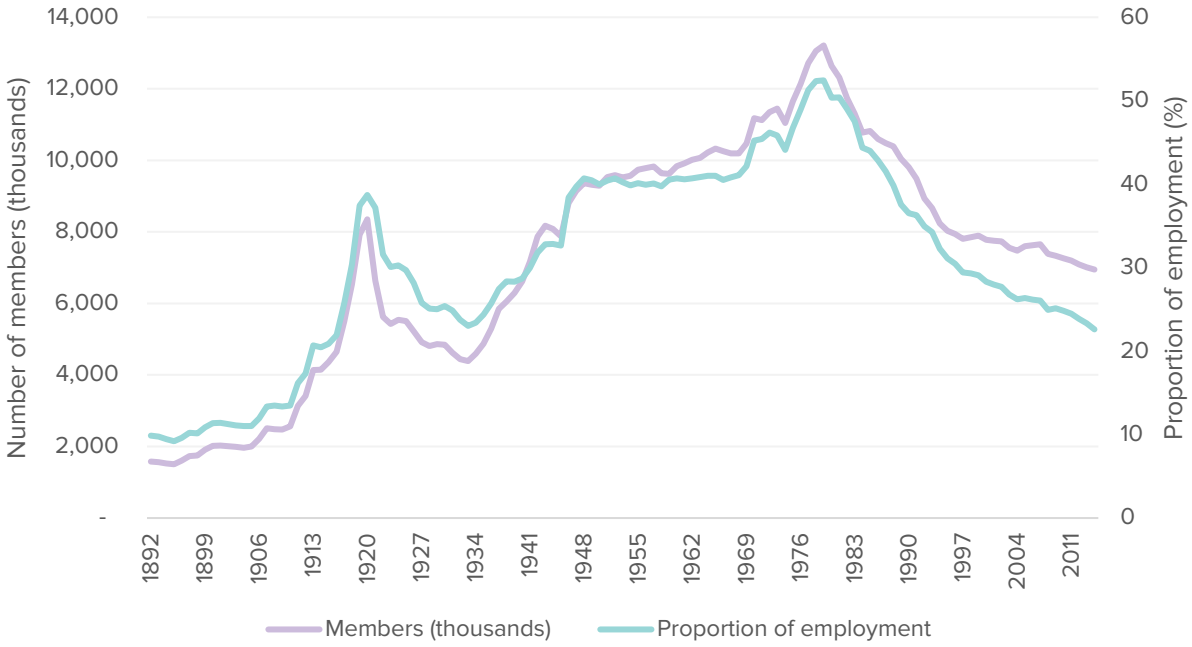


Figure 19: Trade union membership, 1892-2014

Source: Bank of England, TUC



2. We spend less time socialising with family and less time on leisure in general

The strength of our relationships is determined to a large degree by how much time we spend with our families, friends, neighbours and fellow citizens, and how we use that time. Our habits for socialising change over time and are influenced heavily by wider cultural and economic trends, such as what is permissible within society or how much disposable income we have, but they provide an important indicator for the health of a community. Looking at trends in Britain today, we find that:

- **There has been a broad decline in the time that parents spend with their children.** Between 2011 and 2017, the proportion of parents who engage in activities or outings with their children, such as parks, zoo, sports or the movies, at least several times a week declined from 36% to 29%. Meanwhile the proportion who do so fewer than once a month rose from 34% to 40% over the same period.
- **It appears likely that this is related to people having simply less time for leisure activities.** Taking a longer-term view over three decades, people have become generally less satisfied with the amount of leisure time available. The proportion of people very satisfied with the amount of time they could spend on leisure activities fell from 42% in 1996 to 35% in 2005, and has remained relatively stable since.
- **This has not translated into a reduction in sports participation, which has held steady over the last thirty years**, with around one in seven people regularly taking part in sporting activity. This contrasts heavily with working men's clubs, whose participation dropped by more than two thirds from 11% in 1995 to 4% in 2017.

Figure 20: Frequency with which parents spend time with their children on leisure activities or outings, 2009-2017

Source: Understanding Society, Onward analysis

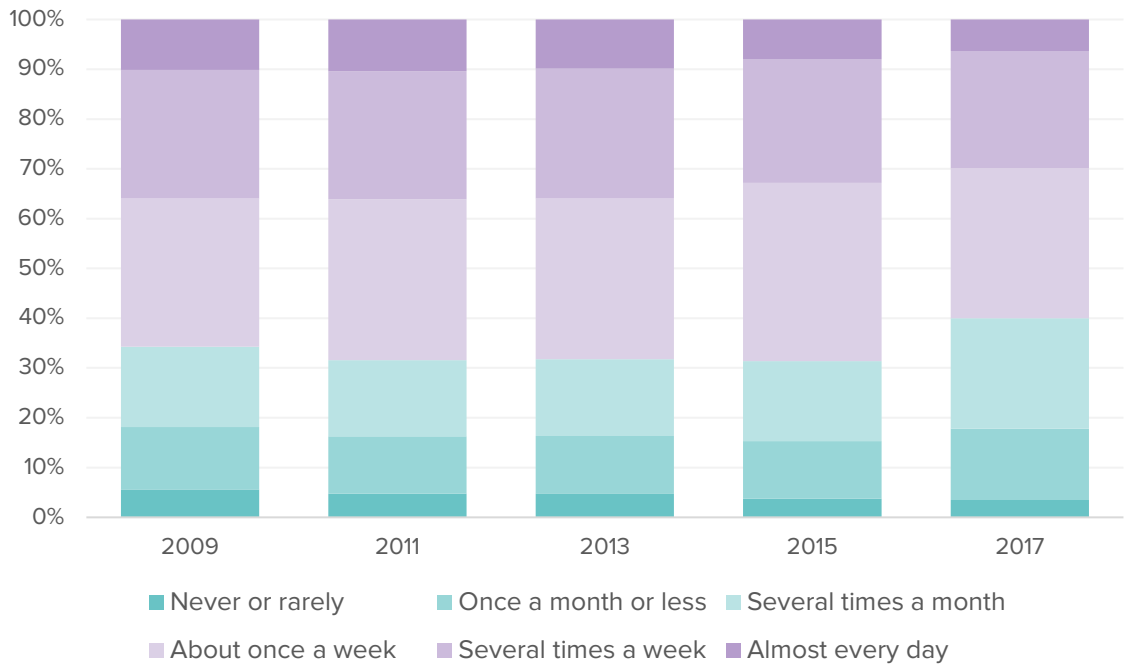
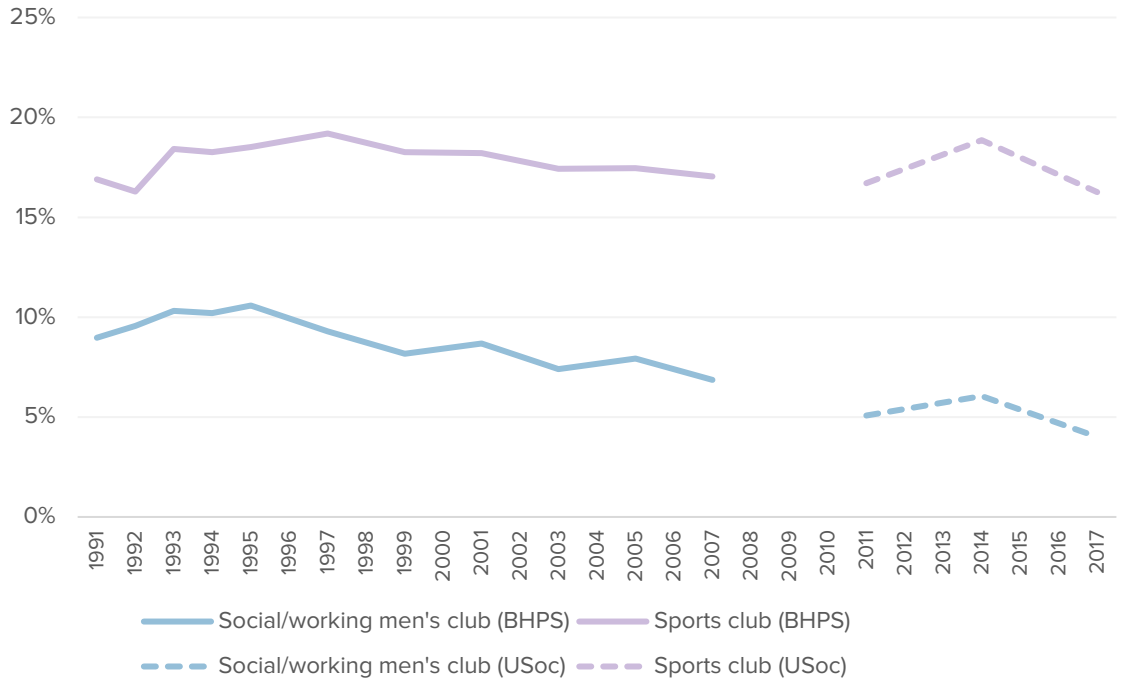


Figure 21: Proportion of people regularly participating in activities of sports clubs and working men's clubs, 1991-2017

Source: Understanding Society, Onward analysis



3. Donations to charity have increased but generosity has declined

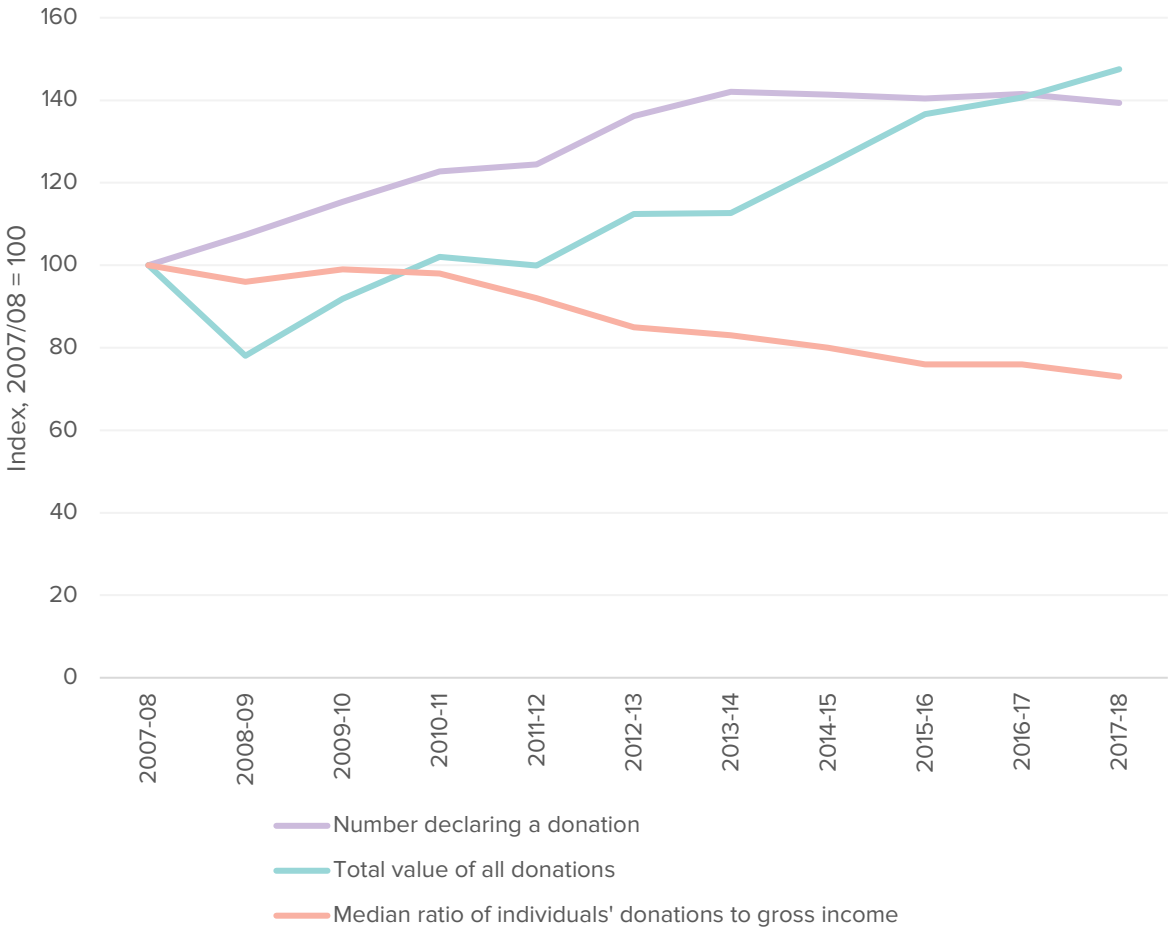
There are few better indicators of our commitment to each other than our propensity to give. Charity begins at home, as the saying goes, and the outpouring of philanthropic support for vulnerable people and for crowdfunded causes during the months of lockdown proved the deep well of charity that exists in Britain today. But how is charity changing over time and what is driving that change.

- **At an aggregate level, there has been a rise in the overall level of charitable support since the last recession in 2008 and a rising number of charities**. The number of charities present across England and Wales has steadily increased since the 2008 recession by 5% from 160,000 in 2009 to 168,000 in 2017.[21] People have also become more likely to declare donations to HMRC over the last decade to qualify for Gift Aid: the proportion of people declaring a donation in their Self-Assessment increased from 10% to 12% between 2007-08 and 2017-18. The total value of these donations increased by around 50% from £2,155m in 2007-08 to £3,179m in 2017-18.
- However, while **there are a greater number of charities receiving more money in total, levels of individual generosity are in decline**. In 2007-08, the average person donated, on average, £1 in every £100 they earned to charity. A decade later, in 2017-18, that figure had fallen by more than a quarter, to 73 pence. This is even greater among those who have the most to give. Those in the highest income bracket are most likely to give to charity - nearly two in five declared donations - but on average they gave just 22 pence in every £100 they earned. This means those most able to give to charity are than five times less generous in their charity than those least able to donate.

Table 7: Gift aid donations by income bracket, 2017-18
Source: HMRC

Gross income	Proportion declaring a donation	Total value of all donations	Median ratio of individuals' donations to gross income
Up to £50,000	8%	£524m	1.13%
£50,001 - £100,000	25%	£506m	0.60%
£100,001 - £150,000	31%	£292m	0.35%
£150,001 - £200,000	33%	£143m	0.29%
£200,001 - £250,000	34%	£85m	0.25%
£250,000+	39%	£1,628m	0.22%

Figure 22: Gift aid donations 2007-2018
Source: HMRC



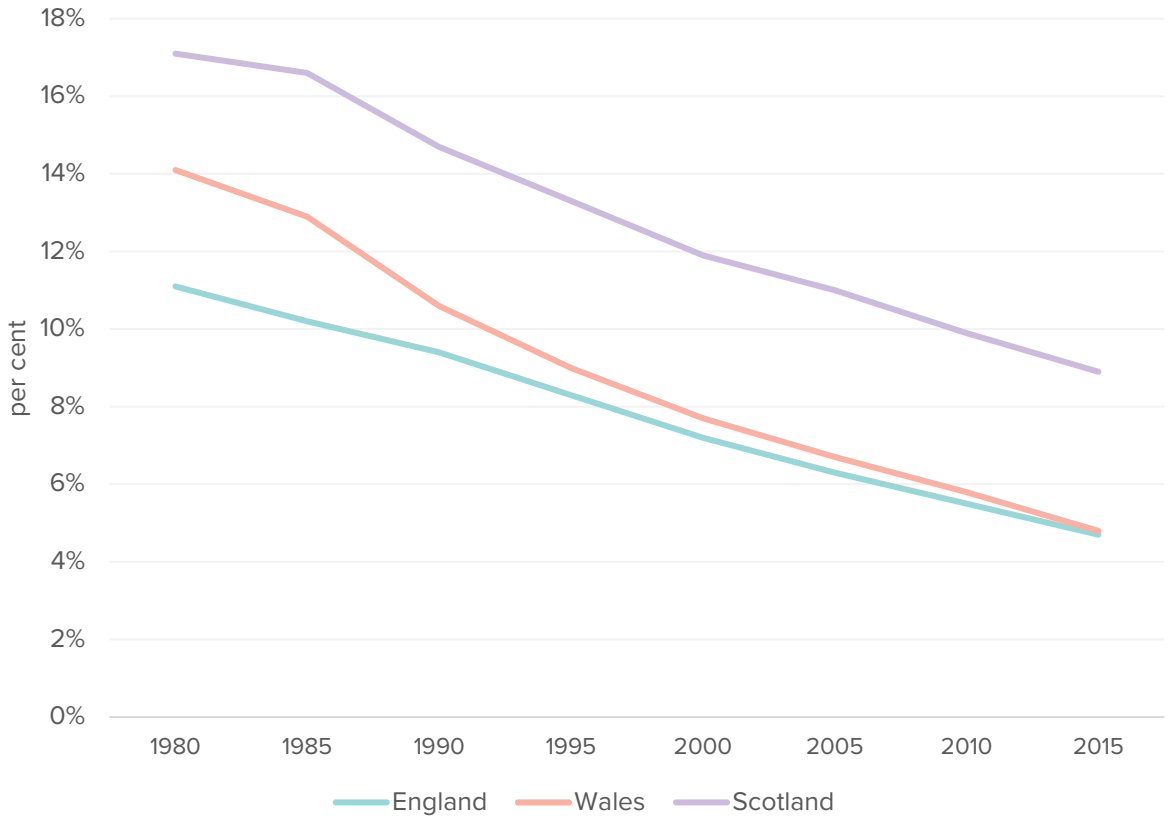
4. Religious participation and traditions have declined

A decline in altruistic generosity, if not frequency, may be related to the changing power of religion in British society. Religious worship and adherence have historically played an important secular role in society, encouraging reciprocal support, philanthropy and enforcing informal social norms that constrain individual behaviour. Churches, synagogues, temples and mosques are not only places of worship but places of social congregation.

We know that the last few decades have been a period of growing secularisation. According to the British Social Attitudes survey, irreligiosity has increased from one third (31%) of Britons in 1983, to just over a half in 2018 (52%). But how has this changed the social fabric of local communities?

- **Over the last thirty-five years, there has been a decline in the regular attendance of religious and Sunday services among Christian denominations**. Across Great Britain, attendance has more than halved, from 6.4 million in 1980 to 3.1 million in 2015.[22] These direct counts of attendance provide a fairly accurate estimate of the number of people at church on a given day.
- Data from the British Household Panel Survey suggests that **the early 1990s marked the high point for attendance with one in four people attending a religious service at least once a month in 1993**. This has fallen steadily in the years since, to 15% in 2006. In 1994, 14% of people said they regularly joined in the activities of local religious groups, but this has since fallen to 10% in 2007. More recent data suggests that, in 2016, 17% of people regularly attended services and, in 2017, 11% participated in the activities of religious groups.
- **The number attending a weekly church service has roughly halved in each of England, Wales and Scotland**, with the largest fall, from 14.1% to 4.8% in Wales. Scotland continues to have higher levels of weekly church attendance, falling from 17.1% of the population to 8.9% in 2015. In England, the share of people attending church weekly has fallen to 4.7%, fewer than one in twenty people.

Figure 23: Christian church attendance in England, Wales and Scotland, 1980-2015
Source: British Religion in Numbers



- Data on marriage solemnisation offers a longer run view on the decline of religiosity in Britain. **Since the late 1800s, the share of marriages that were religious has fallen from 95% of all marriages to 32% in 2017**. However, the vast majority of this decline has occurred since the mid-twentieth century. In 1891, the proportion of couples who married in a religious ceremony was 86% and this remained high, falling only 72% over the 66 years to 1957. Since 1957, the proportion has fallen precipitously.
- This can only be partly explained by falling rates of marriage of all kinds; **the number of civil marriages has remained relatively stable over the last forty years, as the number of religious marriages has fallen from over 25,000 a year to fewer than 8,000 a year**. If the current rate of decline were to continue, religious marriages would be consigned to history before the end of the next decade.

Figure 24: Proportion of marriage ceremonies that were religious or civil, opposite-sex couples in England and Wales, 1849-2017
Source: ONS

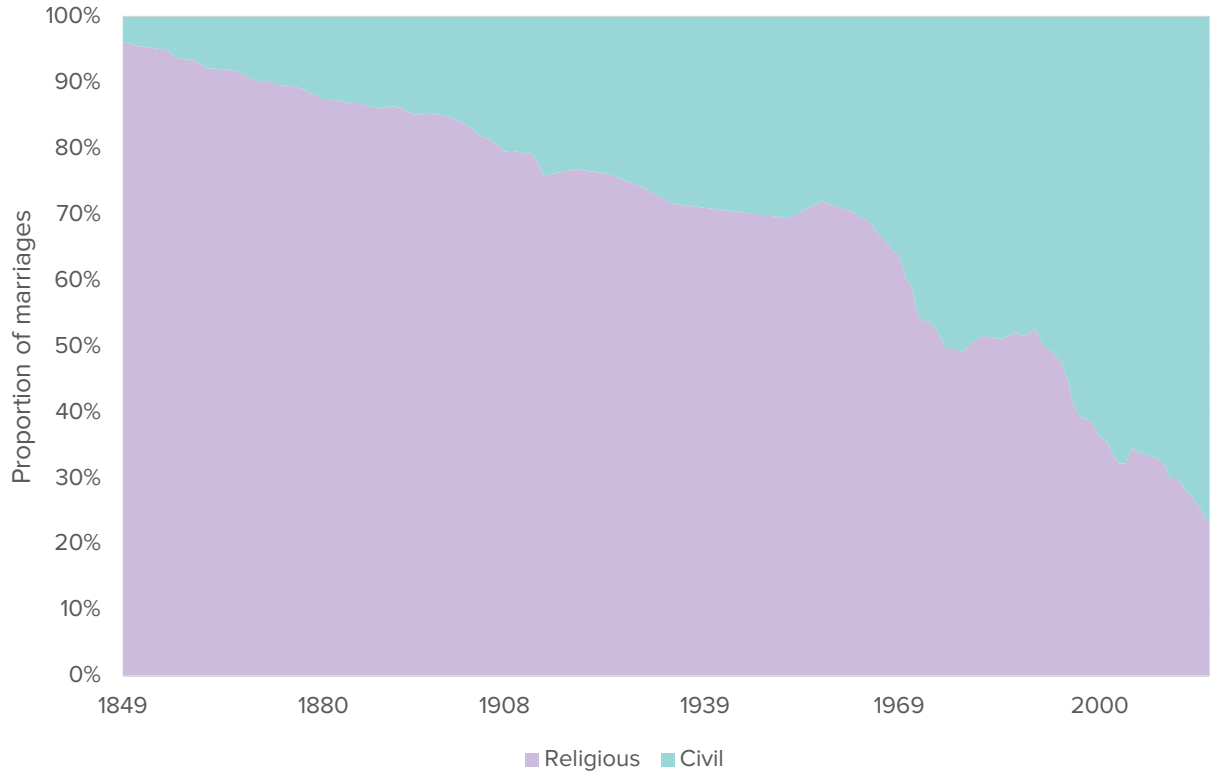
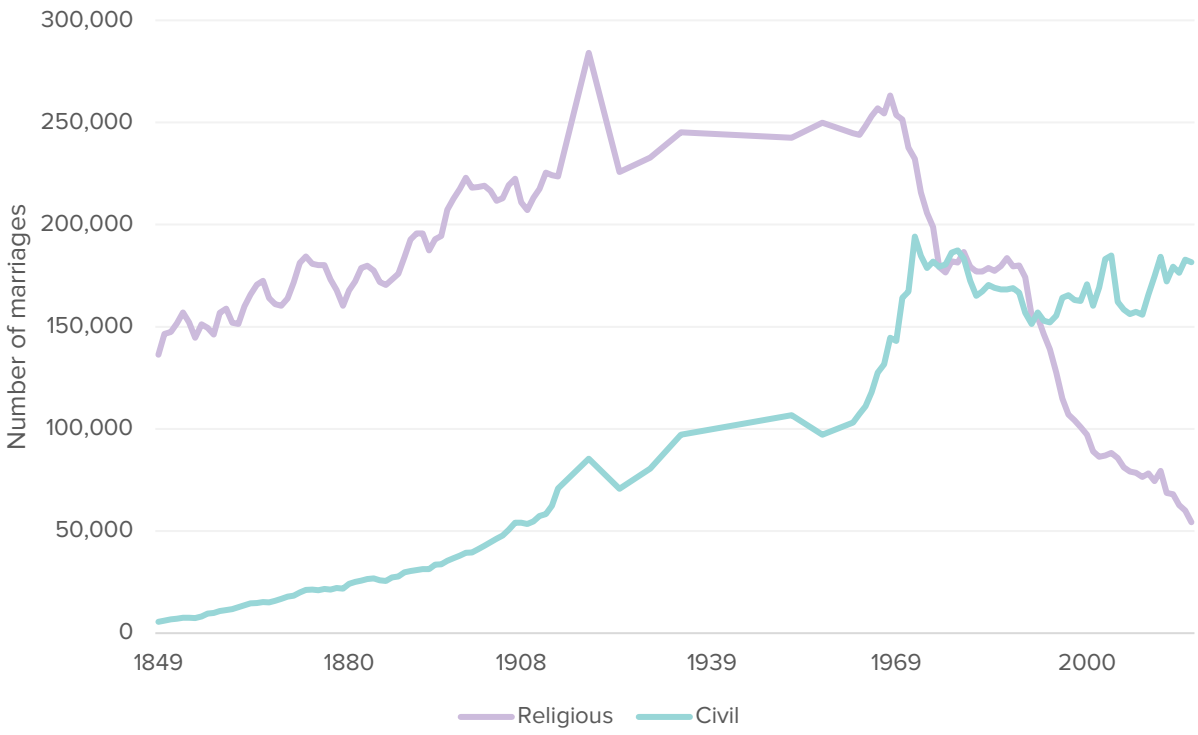


Figure 25: Number of religious and civil marriage ceremonies, opposite-sex couples in England and Wales, 1849-2017
Source: ONS



The decline of relationships

It seems clear that people's relationships to one another and our community have deteriorated over time. People spend less time volunteering or taking part in communal activity, and are less likely to be a member of a local membership organisation. We are less generous with our money even if we give more frequently. Our marriages are less likely to be held in a church, which we are less likely to attend on Sundays. These are not just religious trends but also represent a secular decline in civic participation and associational life.

It is hard to disaggregate these changes from broader changes in society and the economy. But we might tentatively reach two conclusions:

- **There is a generational effect at play.** Young people today are less religiously observant than their parents and less active in local associations. Many young people are not as invested or interested in the activities that were prominent in the past and more interested in joining interest-led groups. It seems that the more responsibilities involved in the activity, the less likely people are to want to commit and engage. But perhaps this obscures other, newer forms of social activity which traditional datasets do not cover. Is it true that younger people, who on other measures appear *more* socially conscious, are less locally engaged? If so, what does this mean for the future of local communities and the effects on local people as more community-

focused generations age and today's young people mature?

- **The importance of time**. It appears that time is a major factor in people's level of community activity. People feel that they have less time nowadays, despite working fewer hours a week. This may reflect longer commuting patterns (see below) or levels of commitment to work outside the traditional working week. The current pandemic has shone a light on this matter, giving people a respite from the frenetic pace of modern life and an opportunity to spend considerable time with family and in their local community. Will this natural experiment fundamentally change people's habits and behaviours, allowing stronger relationships to form?

5. The cultural landmarks of our lives are being lost but communities are taking back control

Seamus Heaney once wrote of the ability to "dwell without anxiety among the cultural landmarks of your life". Today people feel increasing anxiety as many of those landmarks - the pubs, libraries or post offices where we intermingle with fellow drinkers or shoppers and their families - are lost to time.[23] These landmarks have been in decline over a long period:

- **Since 2001, the number of public houses and bars has fallen by more than a quarter** (26%), to a total of 38,815. This means that there are now only 7 pubs for every 10,000 adults, compared to 11 pubs per 10,000 adults in 2010. More urban areas have seen a greater decline compared to rural areas. Across England and Wales, the number of pubs in rural towns and villages has fallen by 21% in the last two decades, from 13,535 to 10,730. Urban towns and smaller cities have seen a decline of 23% and major cities have seen a decrease of 29%.
- **Since 2005, the number of libraries has diminished by 28%**. The proportion of post offices has also declined, from just over 22,000 individual post office counters in 1982 to just over 11,000 in 2018. This means that communities are roughly half as likely (47%) to have a local post office than they were nearly two decades ago.
- Perhaps in response to this change, **the level of community ownership in Britain has increased.** The number of trading community owned shops has increased year-on-year since 1996, rising ten-fold from 34 to 346 as of 2017. This may also reflect the sustained focus of politicians to empower local people to take back control of their own assets and services, and a growing evidence base suggests that community run activities can be more responsive, less costly and better run than either public or private services, especially in areas of relative economic decline.[24] [25]

Figure 26: Number of post offices, pubs, and libraries 1982-2018

Source: House of Commons Library

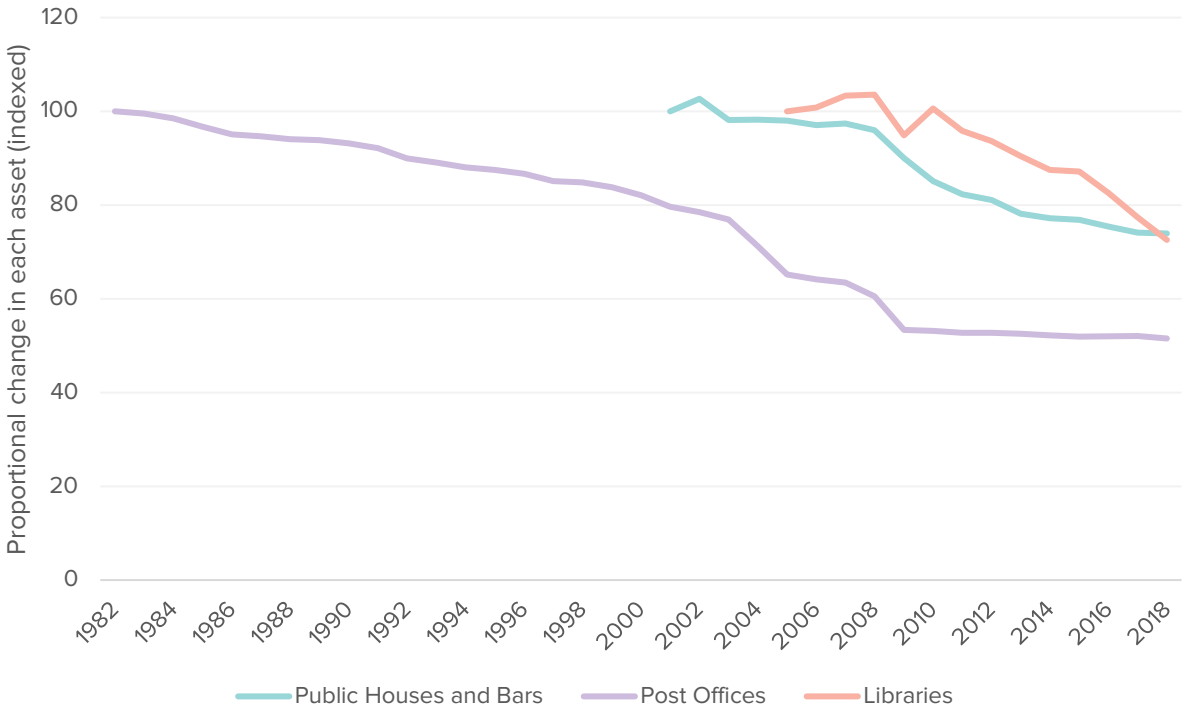
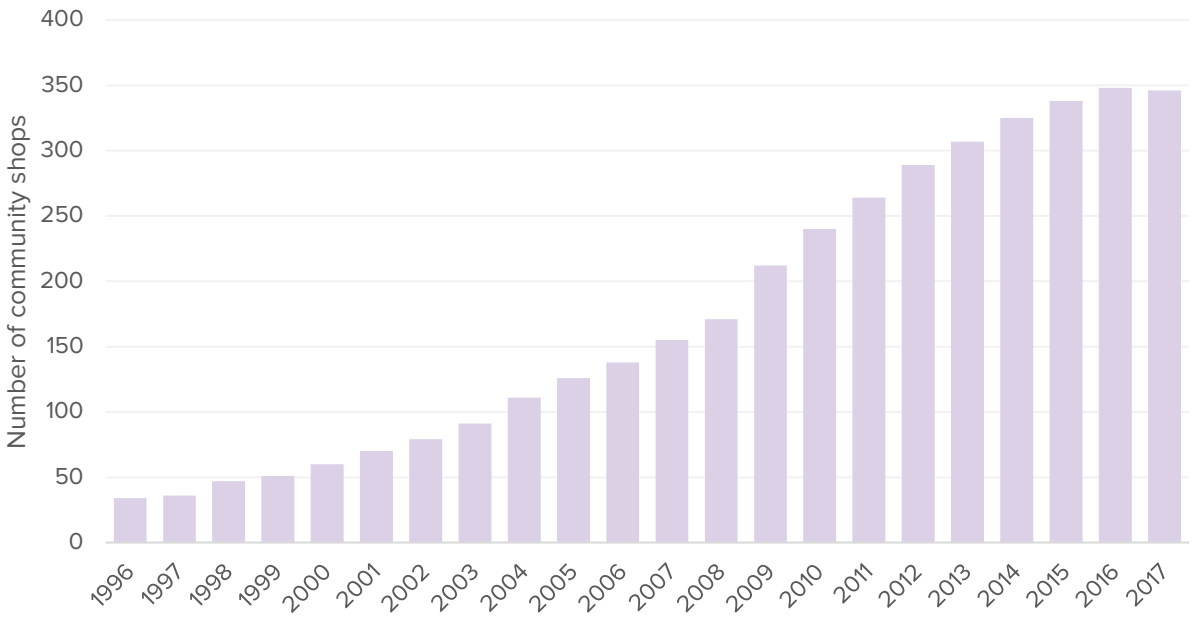


Figure 27: Number of community shops, 1996-2017

Source: Plunkett Foundation



6. People travel less by bus and commute further

While not often considered “social capital”, our qualitative research identified a belief that economic connectivity is a prerequisite for social connection. A regular bus service or a reliable train link allows people to meet friends, care for family or simply travel into town. When these services are dilapidated, underfunded or irregular, people notice and it affects their feelings about their community and the opportunities it offers. This is in the context of profound changes, at a national level, to our transport system:

- **While the proportion of all journeys taken by rail has steadily increased since 2002, from one in fifty journeys taken to around one in thirty, journeys by bus have declined**. This is especially the case in recent years: between 2015 and 2018, bus journeys fell from one in sixteen total journeys to one in twenty.
- **The relatively limited use of public transport is mirrored by the rising use of cars**. The proportion of households without access to a car fell from the 1950s, from 82% in 1951 to just 24% in 2018. During this period, the number of households who own more than one car has risen from virtually zero in the immediate post-war era to one in every three households today.
- Perhaps more notably, **people are also travelling further for work**. Average commuting times have increased from 23 minutes in 1991 to 27 minutes in 2017, a 17 per cent rise. This follows a clear wage pattern: people who commute further to work have higher incomes. Those whose commute lasts between one and two hours earn almost twice as much as those who live less than ten minutes from their place of work. If higher earners are travelling long distances to work and low earners are more likely to work and live in the same place, this may fundamentally change the nature of local communities.

Figure 28: Bus and Train Journeys
Source: Transport Statistics Great Britain

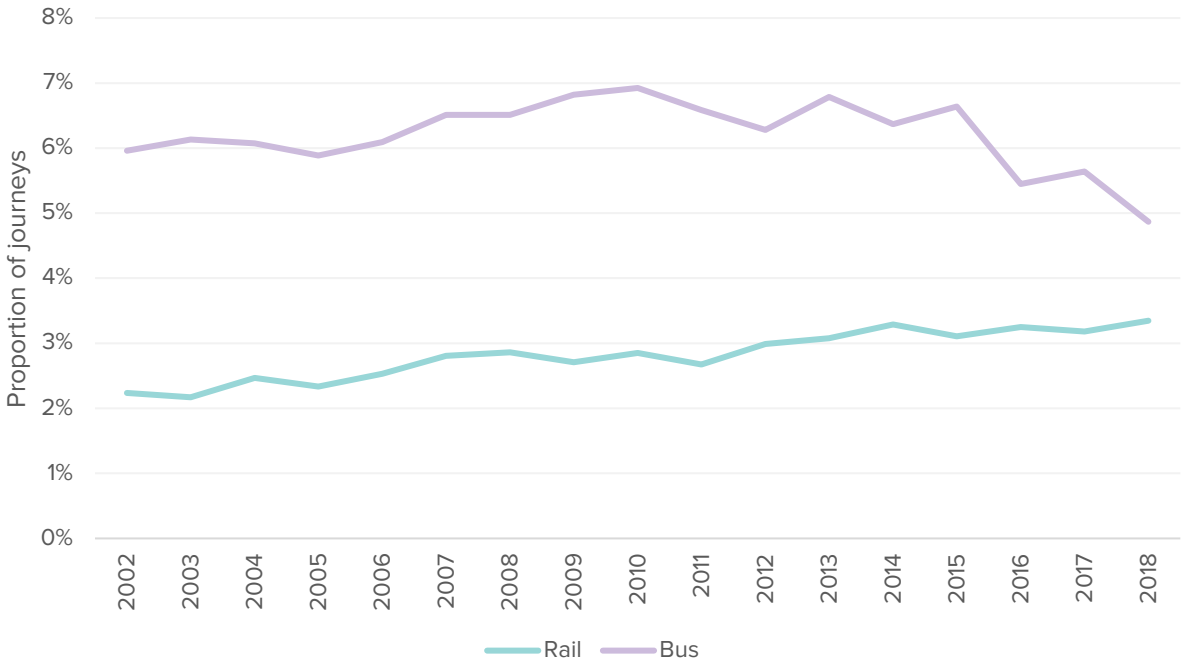


Figure 29: Car ownership, England, 1951-2018
Source DfT, National Travel Survey

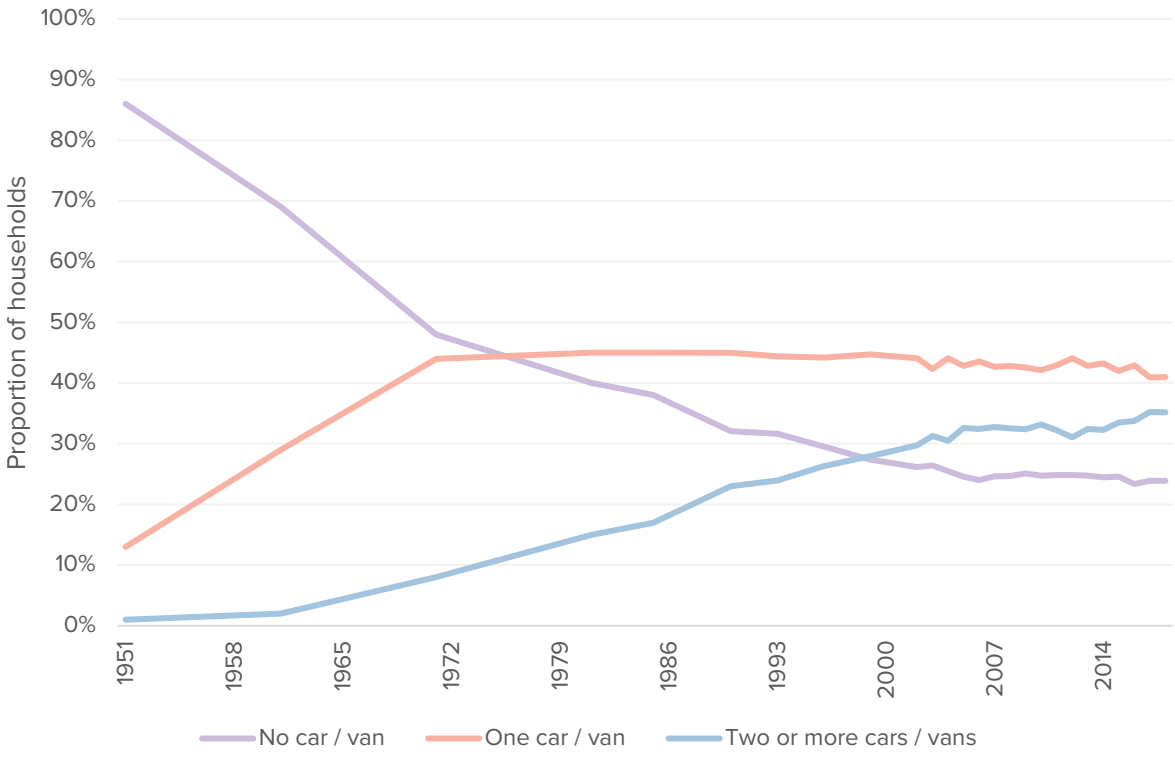
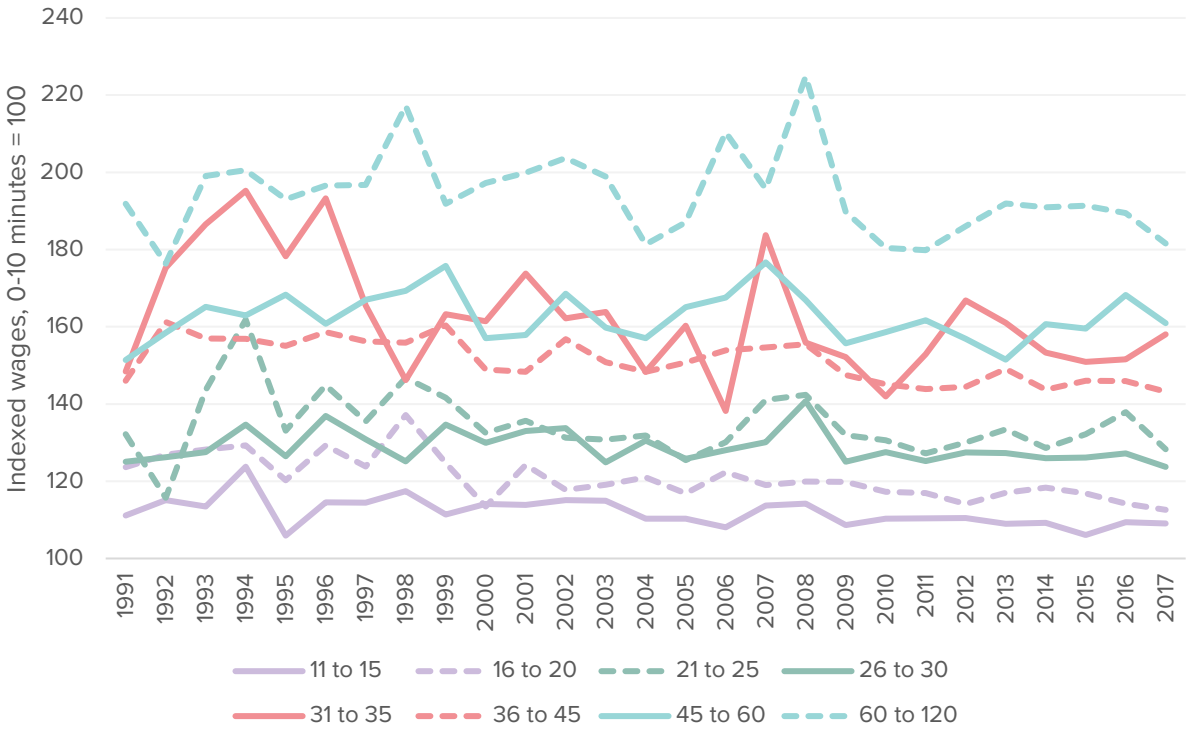


Figure 30: Median gross monthly income by commuting time, relative to those who commute for less than 10 minutes

Source: Understanding Society



Physical infrastructure as a mistaken priority

- The prevailing wisdom is that physical infrastructure matters a lot to an area's social fabric. People attribute the decline of local places with the missing presence of certain cultural landmarks. They reference the loss of a post office, a library or the connectivity of the local train station. However, our research has shown that the Physical Infrastructure of a place appears to matter less to the overall Social Fabric than other factors, such as the strength of Relationships or Civic Institutions. This is not to completely dismiss that they are a good vehicle of facilitating connection and social exchange, but that this has bigger implications for policymakers, whose focus is overwhelmingly on building new train stations, roads and high streets in left behind places. It may not on its own have the desired effect.
- Before the pandemic, people commuted further for work, travelled more to see people and were more mobile in their living patterns than before. This has undoubtedly brought many opportunities for many people, but there is a question about how good it is for the communities left behind. In the wake of the pandemic, we have an opportunity to ask: has greater roaming come at the expense of local communities? How do we ensure that people still value and contribute to their local communities in an increasingly mobile and global world?

7. Political engagement has deteriorated over time

- **The UK, like many democratic countries across the world, has seen political engagement decline over many years.**[26] Low turnout is particularly pronounced at local level: turnout figures for lower tier local council elections are often around 30 percentage points lower than when electing Members of Parliament, although local elections held on the same day as national elections typically have higher turnout as a result.
- **In national elections, there has been declining participation** from a historic average of between 70% and 80% before the 1990s to a low point of 59% in 2001. Since the turn of the century, turnout has not exceeded 70%, although it has steadily risen over the last five cycles. The downward trend is replicated at a local level. During the 1980s, local election turnout averaged around 42%. This declined to historic lows of 28% in 1998 and 2000 only rising to 35% since 2016.
- This has been reflected in **declining membership of political parties since 1928, and trade union membership since 1982**. For the three major parties, the last two decades have been volatile in terms of membership numbers. Since 2002, the Conservative party has experienced a 33% fall in membership. A similar story was true for the Labour Party until the late 2000s, when a change in Government and then new membership rules led to a marked increase. As a result, Labour membership is now 95% higher than it was in 2002.

Figure 31: Turnout at local (1973-2019) and general (1945-2019) elections
Source: House of Commons Library, The Elections Centre

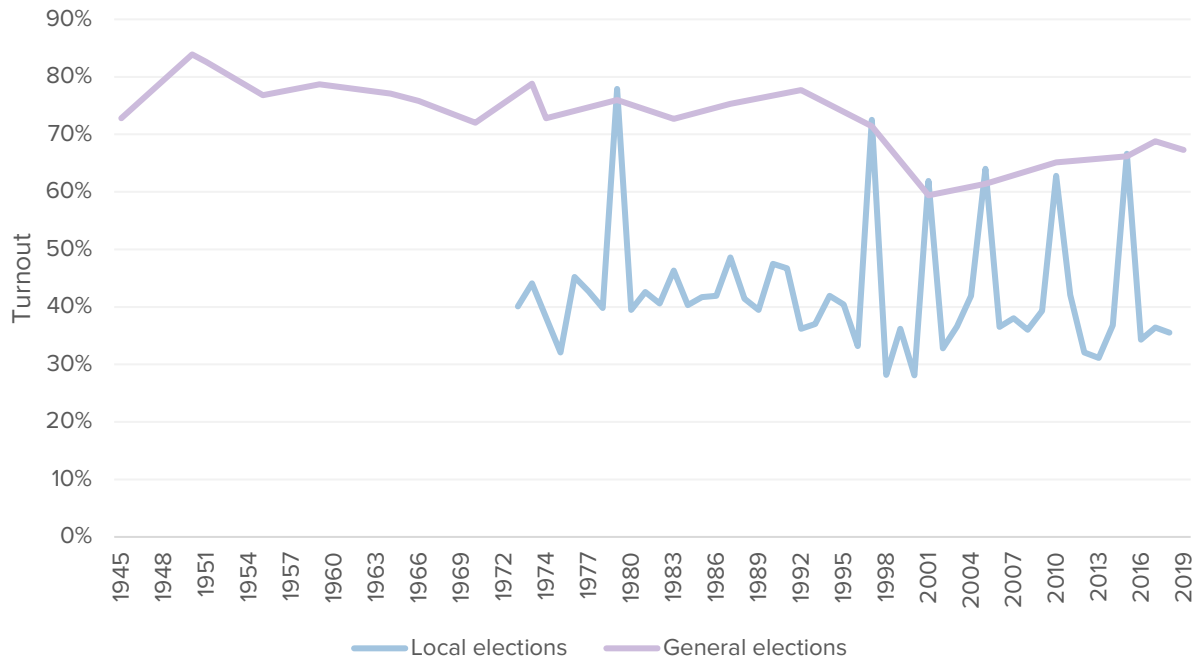
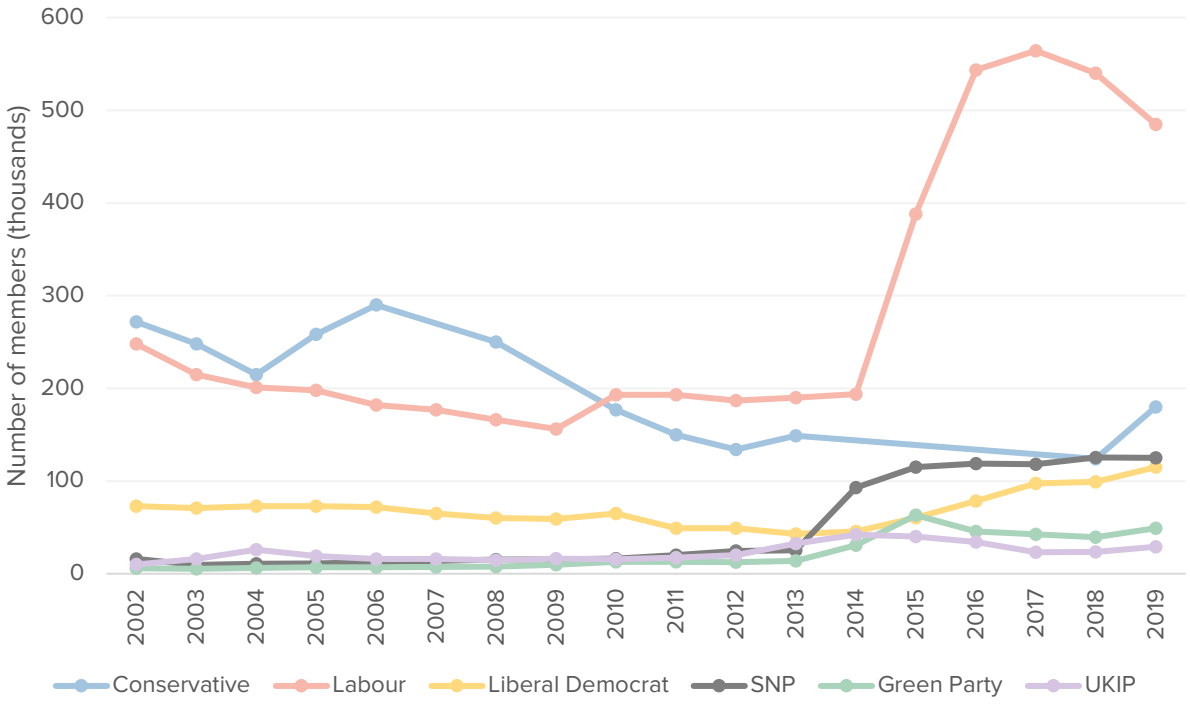


Figure 32: Membership of UK political parties

Source: House of Commons Library



8. Trust in, and quality of, civic institutions has declined

- Trust in civic institutions has changed markedly over time. **Going back as far as the early 1980s, we observe that trust has fallen considerably for the Church and Parliament, from 49% and 41% to 33% and 32% respectively**. Over the same period, trust in the Armed Forces and education system have both risen marginally, from 82% and 62% to 87% and 67%, respectively. Trust in the justice system has been volatile, falling from 67% in 1981 to 49% in 1999 before rising to 64% today.
- **Levels of support for the monarchy have strengthened over the period**. At the start of the period, only 65% of people thought it was important for Britain to have a monarchy. By 2012, the year of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, this had risen to 76%, before falling to 69% today. There has also been a steady decline in republicanism, from 10% of people thinking that the monarchy should be abolished in 1998, to just 5.7% in 2018.
- **One reason for rising support for some institutions may be rising levels of effectiveness.** For example, the proportion of pupils attending good or outstanding schools in England has risen from 68% in 2010 to 86% of pupils today. Meanwhile the share of people who agree that they have no say over what government does has fallen consistently since the 1980s. In 1986, 71% of people said they had no say over the government; by 2018 this had fallen to below 50%.

Figure 33: Proportion of people who have "quite a lot" or "a great deal" of confidence in institutions

Source: European Values Study

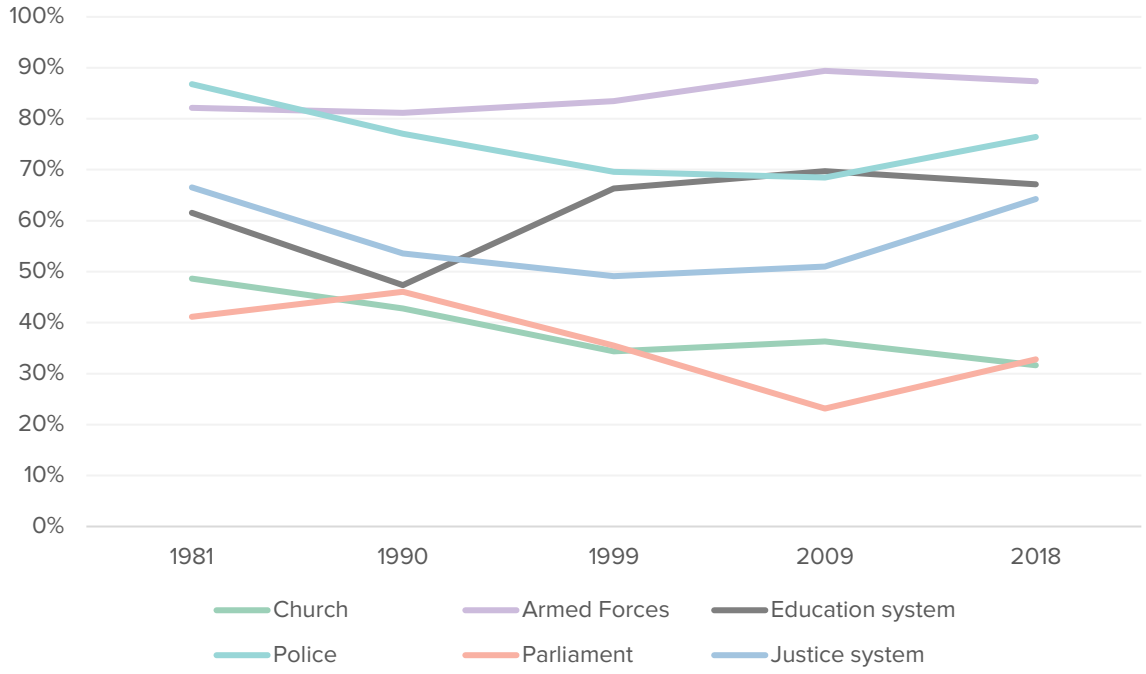


Figure 34: Perception of political efficacy, 1998-2018

Source: British Social Attitudes

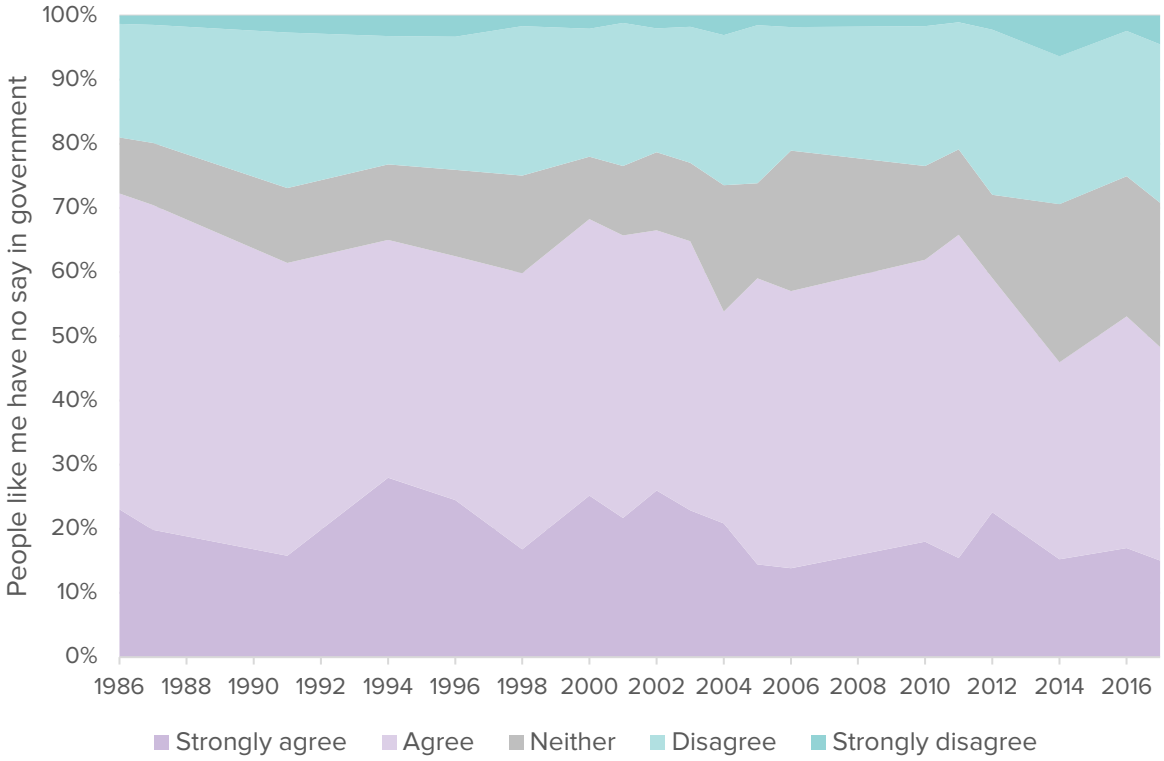
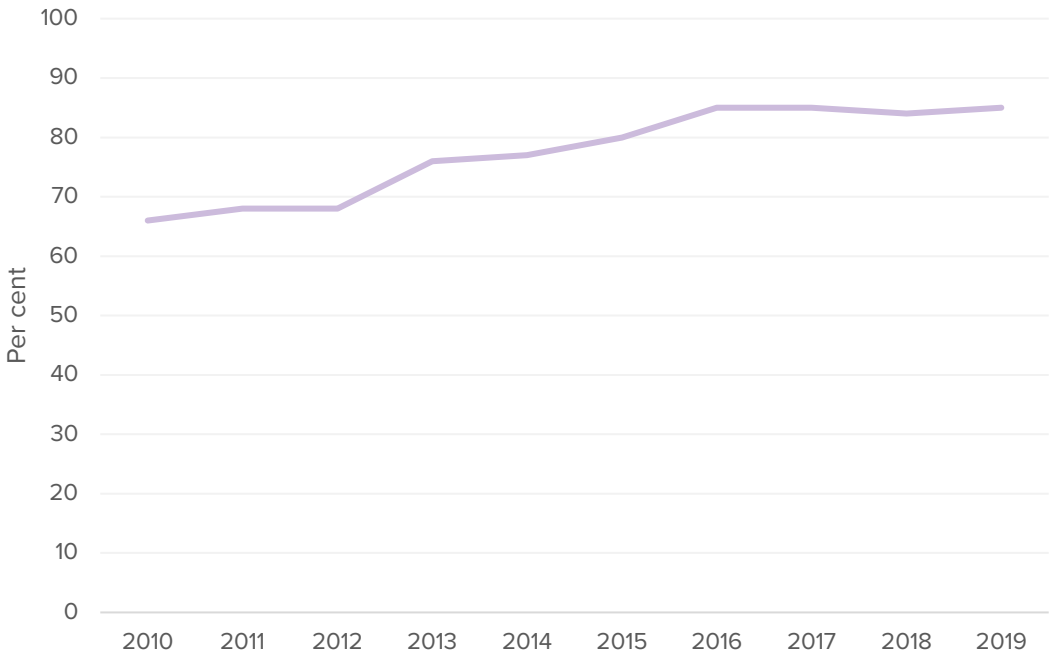


Figure 35: Proportion of pupils attending a good or outstanding school, 2010-2019

Source: House of Commons Library



The deterioration of trust

- We are less trusting, politically engaged or confident in our civic institutions than we were even a few decades ago. This is in spite of unprecedented freedoms and choice between parties and the development of new forms of democracy, including mayors and police and crime commissioners.
- Is declining turnout and political engagement a symptom of the political apathy or of something more, a growing distrust in democratic society? The decline in trust and the deterioration of political engagement should worry everyone, and has deep implications for the development of communities at a local level as well as the national political environment.

9. Secure forms of housing have become more scarce

- **The last 25 years have seen the proportion of people in a stable housing tenure fall.** The combined stable forms of tenure - owner occupation and social rent - increased steadily for two decades between 1961 and 1992, when they peaked at a combined 90% of all housing. However, since 1993, the number of people living in secure tenure has fallen considerably - due to the Right to Buy scheme allowing tenants to buy their social rented housing at a discount, and growth of the private rented sector. Since 2003, homeownership rates have also fallen. Overall, 78% of people now live in owned or social rented housing and more people now live in the private rented sector than in social housing for the first time since the 1960s.
- This trend is also reinforced by separate data from Shelter which looked at the historic decline of social housing. Since the Second World War up until the 1980s, **the average building of social housing per year has fallen by 95% from an average of around 126,000 social homes every year to 6,463 new social homes**[27] in 2018. As demonstrated by Figure 36, both social housing and homeownership have a positive bearing on how much people feel that they belong to their neighbourhood. Just over 56% of people in social housing and 66% of homeowners feel that they belong to their area, compared to the 7% and 12% respectively who do not.
- **The decline in homeownership and rise of private renting disproportionately affects younger generations.** For instance, 55% of 25-34 year-olds owned their own home in 1996, which fell to 35% in 2017.[28] However, 65-74 year-olds saw their rate of homeownership rise from 70% to 80% over the same time period.

Figure 36: The feeling of belonging by tenure
Source: Onward analysis, Understanding Society

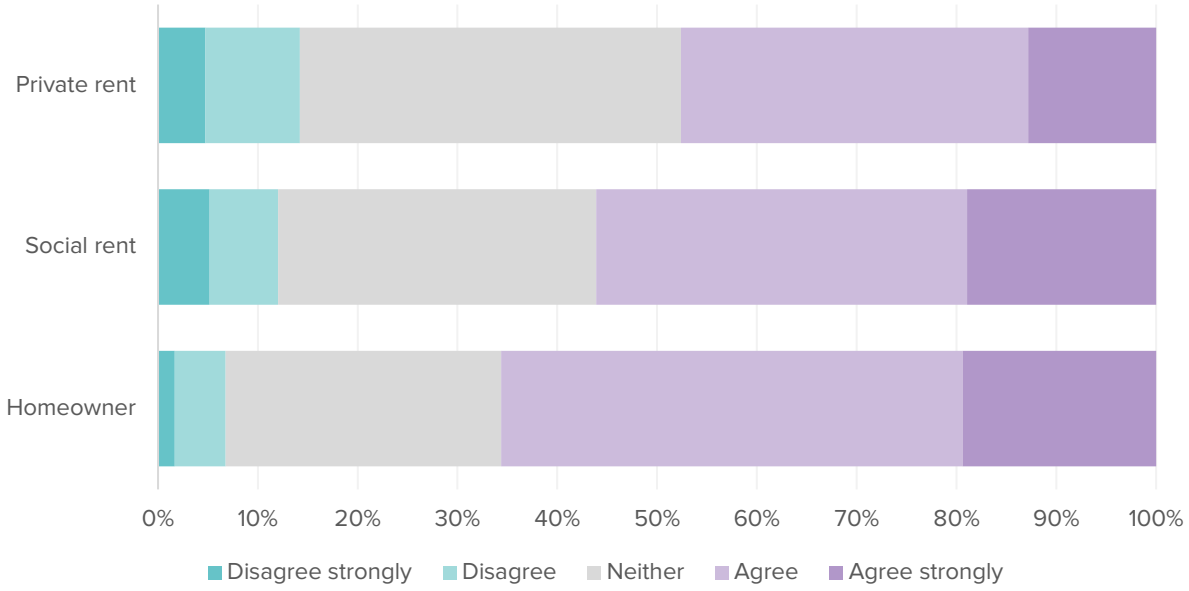
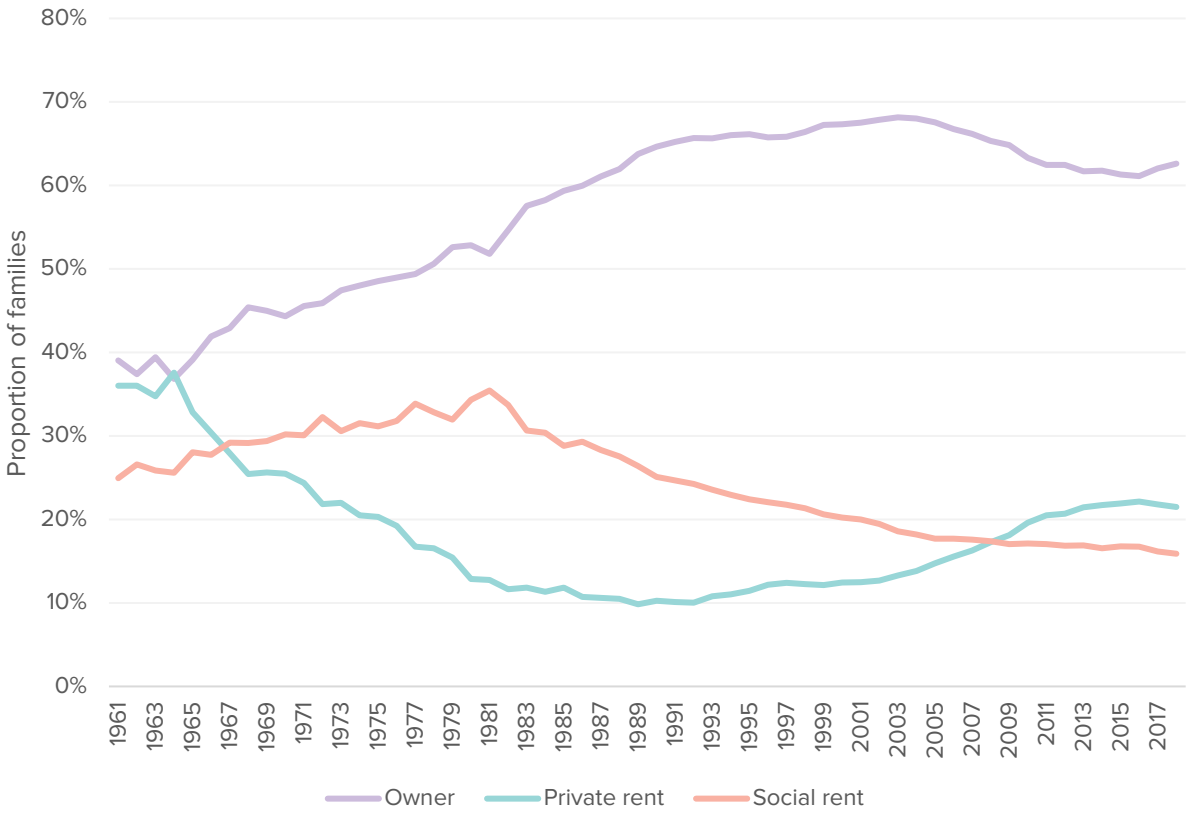


Figure 37: Housing tenure 1961-2018
Source: Resolution Foundation

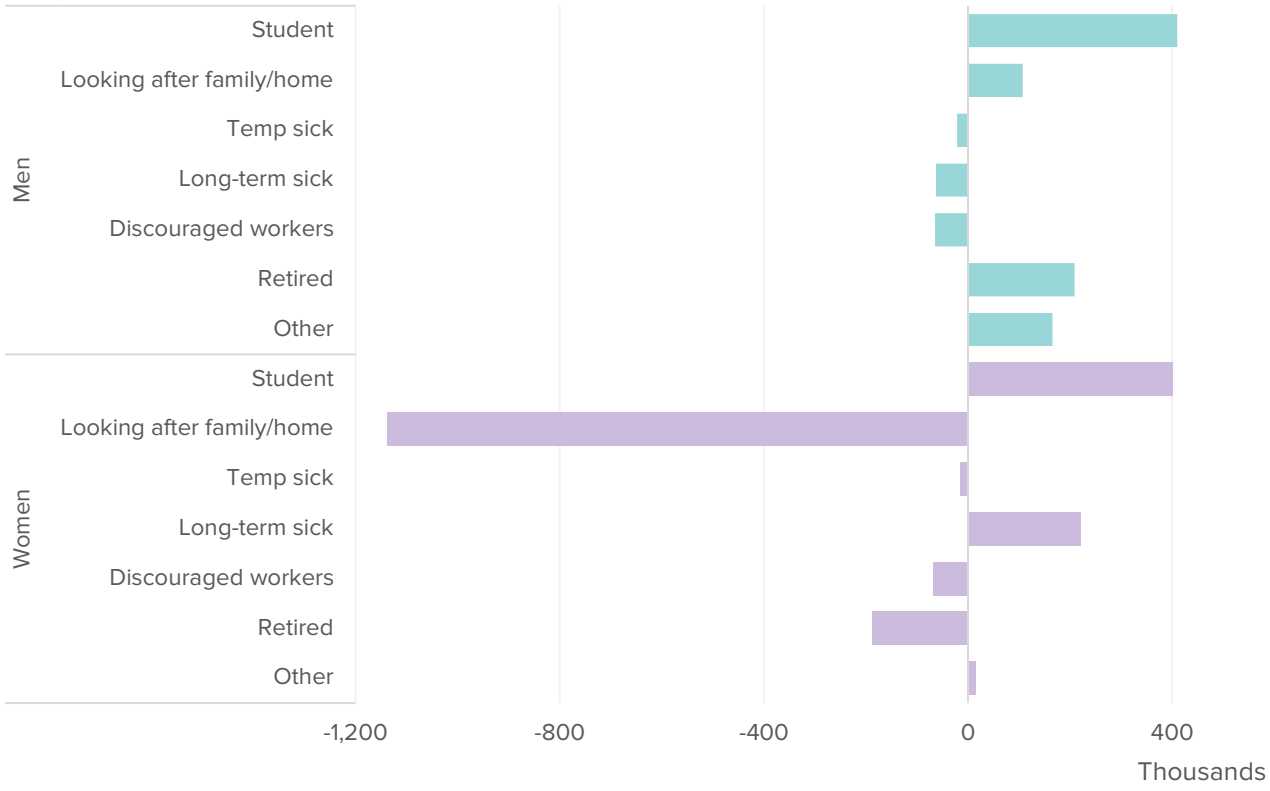


10. Work has become more available but also more precarious

- **The last twenty years have been a period of rising job availability, interrupted by the financial crisis in 2008 and now the COVID-19 crisis**. In the two decades before the pandemic, job density - the number of jobs relative to the working age population - increased to the highest level recorded (0.86), as unemployment reached a record low. The number of job vacancies per Jobseeker's Allowance claimant has also risen in recent years, rising from 0.3 after the 2008 recession to almost one (0.99) in 2017. This is however now rapidly changing in the wake of the current crisis.
- **Since 1971, and prior to the pandemic, the headline economic inactivity rate has fallen from 25% to 20% for 16-64 year-olds.** The inactivity rate for women fell from 45% to 25%, driven by falling numbers of women looking after family or the home. Economic inactivity for men, on the other hand, rose from 5% to 10% over the same period, caused in large part by a rise in university attendance and retirement.

Figure 38: Job density and vacancies per claimant, 2000-2019
Source: ONS

Figure 39: Change in economic inactivity by reason and sex, 1993-2019
Source: ONS



- **In real terms, average total weekly pay rose sharply in the run up to the 2008 financial crisis, peaking at £522 a week in 2007/08, but has yet to fully recover.** Following the crisis, average weekly pay fell steadily for six successive years before starting to recover to early 2020. Since the beginning of the pandemic, average weekly pay has slid back to £490 a week.
- The nature of work has also changed considerably. **The number of hours worked by someone in full time work has fallen marginally since 1992, with the average full-time worker now working 37.2 hours a week. However, those working part-time have seen their weekly hours increase from 14.8 hours a week in 1992 to 16.3 hours today.** This may reflect the fact that the number of people on so-called zero-hours contracts has risen five-fold from 200,000 to a million since the early 2000s.

Figure 40: Change in average weekly hours for full-time and part-time workers, 1992-2019
Source: ASHE

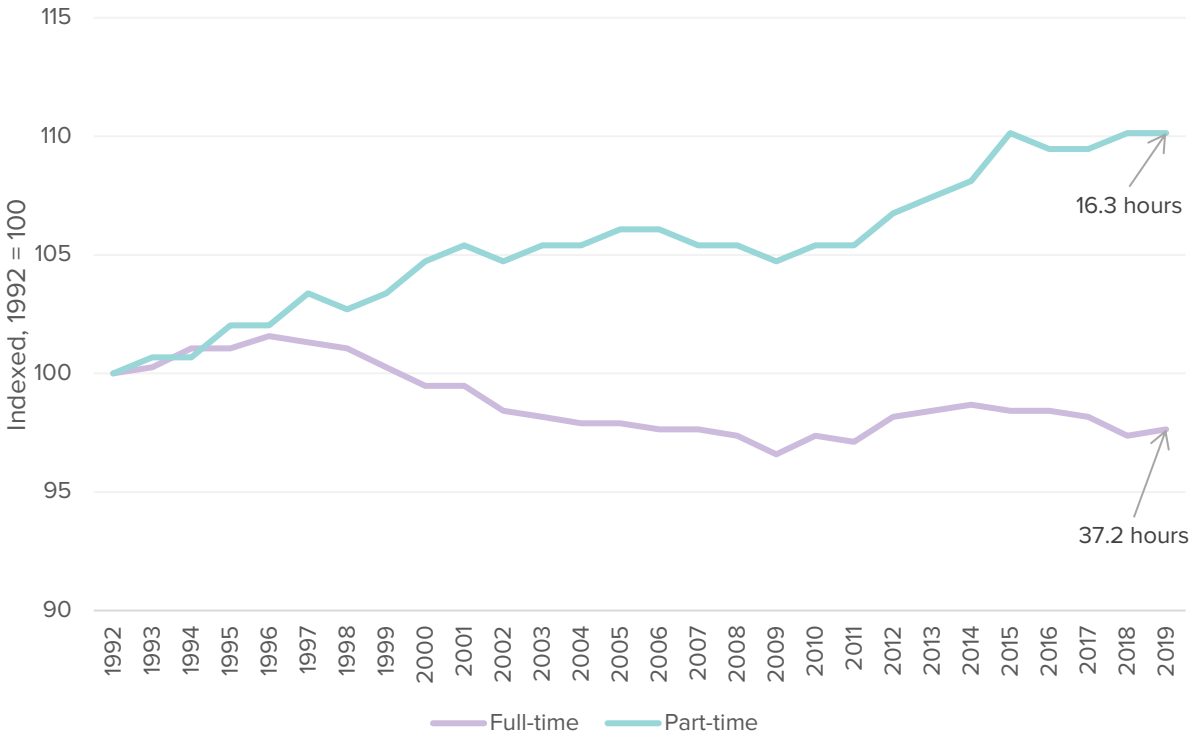


Figure 41: Real total weekly pay, seasonally adjusted, 2015 prices, 2000-2020
Source: ONS

11. People are saving less, spending more and borrowing more frequently

- The proportion of people in the UK who put aside part of their income as savings has remained remarkably stable since 1991.[29] However, **the savings ratio - the income households have available to save from their total resources - has declined recently and remained low since 2016**. This to some degree reflects wider economic uncertainty - the recessions of 1980, 1991 and 2008-09 all show up as peaks.
- The low savings ratio more likely indicates a build-up of personal debt and a reduction in household financial security. **Household debt is currently 125% of income - a substantial increase from the 80%-90% experienced in the 1990s**. Total consumer credit, excluding student loans, is now higher than it has ever been, and around four times the level of the early 1990s.
- Meanwhile, **weekly household expenditure on goods and services has increased over time.** Following a prolonged fall after the 2008 financial crisis, household spending troughed at £537 in 2013 and has risen to around £590 since, with a small decline to £586 in 2019.

Figure 42: Savings ratio, 1963-2020
Source: ONS

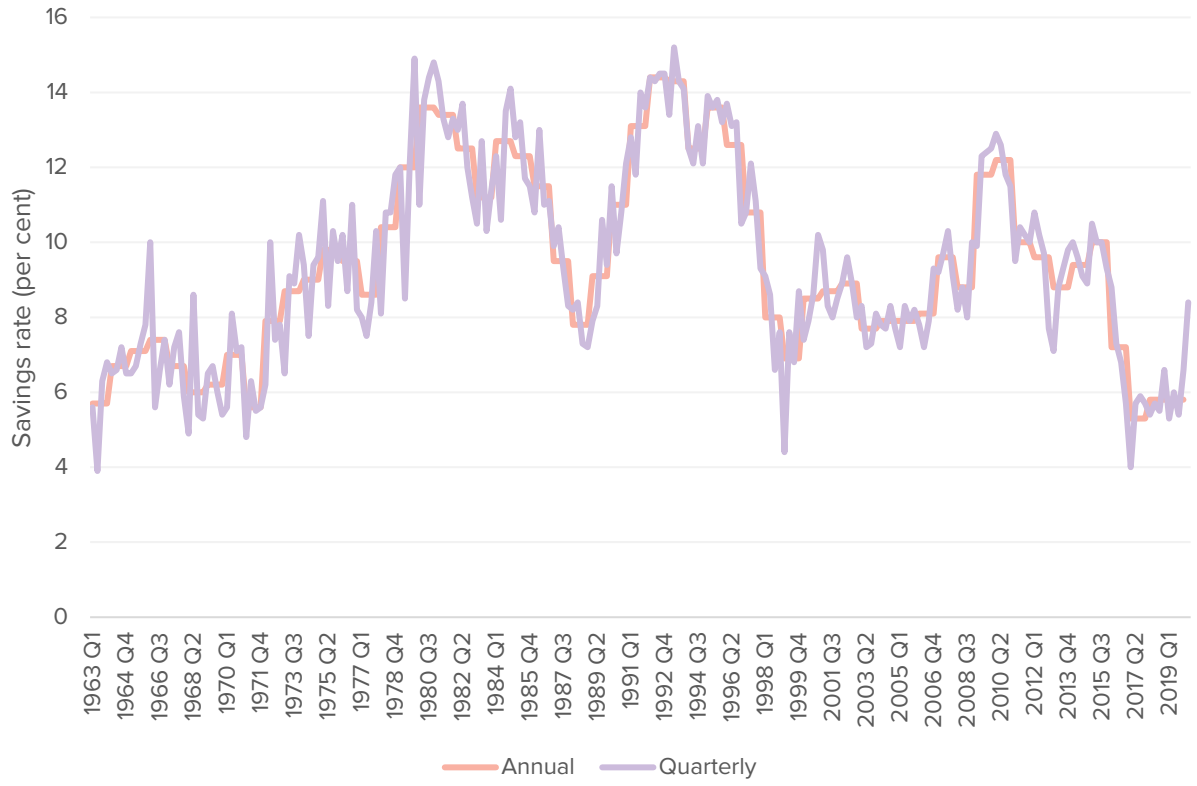


Figure 43: Total consumer credit (excluding student loans), 1993-2020

Source: ONS

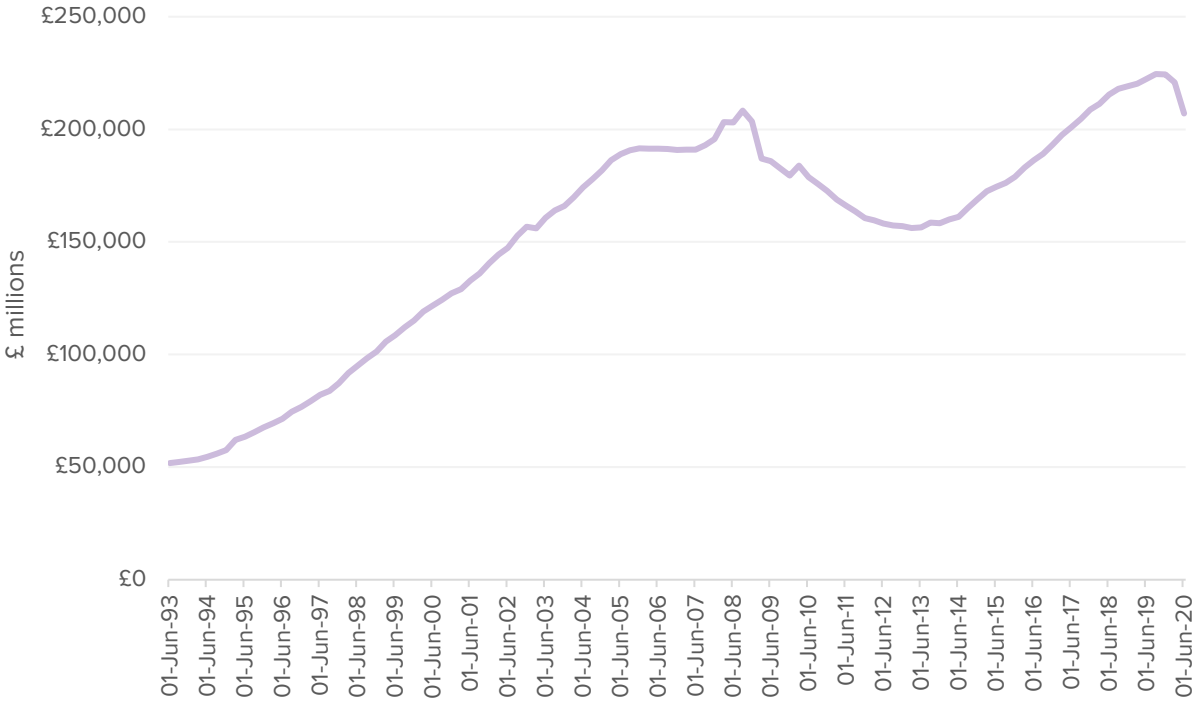


Figure 44: Household debt-to-income ratio, 1987-2019

Source: ONS

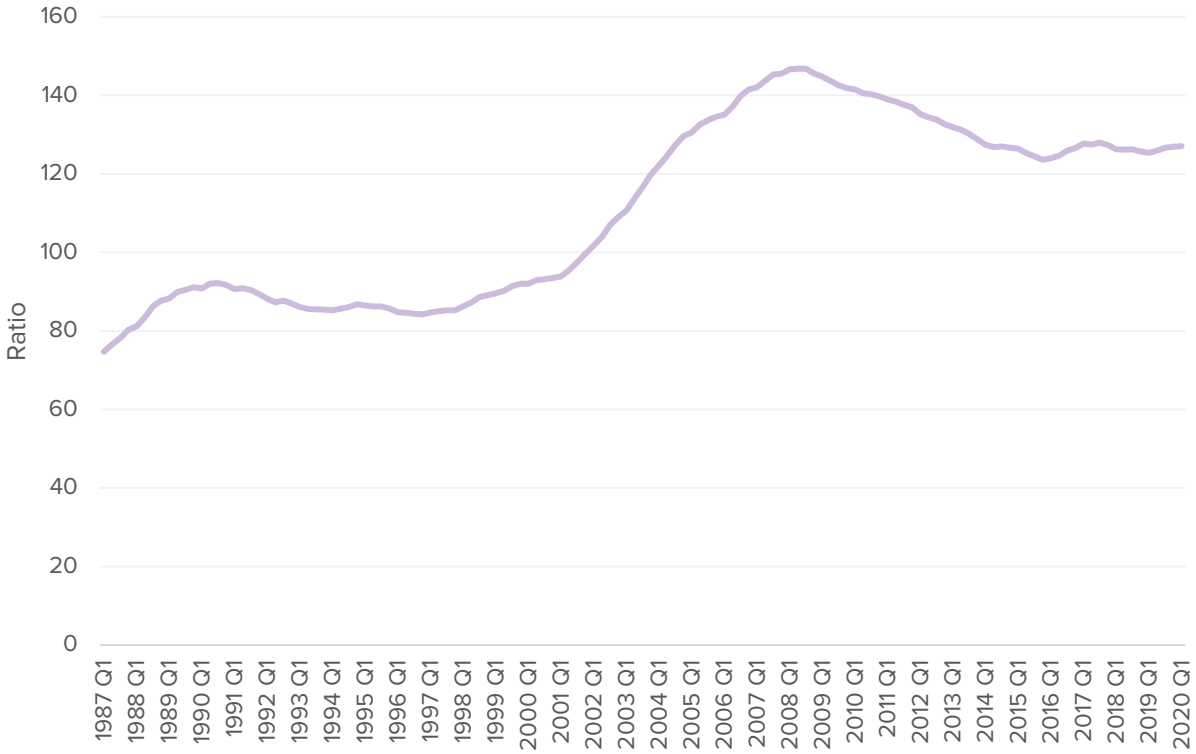
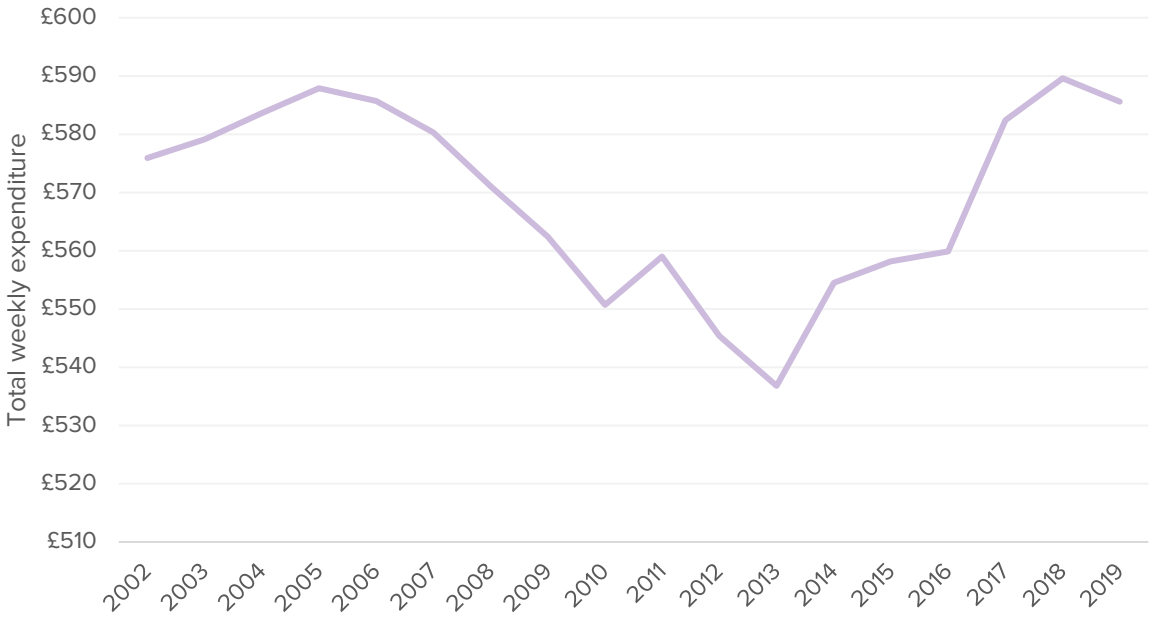


Figure 45: Average weekly household spending, 2019 prices, 2002-2019
Source: ONS



Are local economies becoming inherently less stable?

- Falling availability of secure forms of housing - both owner-occupied and social rented housing - is particularly relevant to the changing nature of community. Residents of these housing types tend to have much stronger feelings of belonging than those in the private rented sector. The growth of the private rented sector, whatever its other merits, poses challenges to the social fabric of many places, meaning people put down shallower roots and potentially contribute less. The task for policymakers is to ensure more people have secure housing, by building more social housing and reforming private renting.
- The same is true of employment. Before the pandemic, jobs were plentiful and unemployment low. But because of the growth in flexible employment and the rise of more precarious roles, the benefits of work to community seen in previous generations have not materialised. The question is whether such forms of labour are inherently insecure of whether local and national policymakers can develop new forms of protection in modern labour markets.
- The growth in employment has been driven in no small part by the growth of female participation in the workforce. This is a good thing, and previous Onward research suggests that people strongly support further action on gender equality. But it has nevertheless changed the way families spend time together and may have changed their ability to build local ties. Without sliding backwards on female empowerment, the question remains how neighbourhood connections and networks can be reestablished in joint working households.

12. Traditional family values have adapted to changing family structures

- Since 1996, the proportion of the population with children has declined marginally, from 45% to 42% today. However, **those parents that do have children are more likely to eat dinner with them: almost half of 10-16 year-olds have an evening meal with their family six or seven times a week, up from just a third in 1995**. More children than ever regularly eat evening meals with their family.
- **Over the last ten years, informal childcare in the form of friends and family has remained popular.** Parents with children aged between 0-2 and 12-15 are most likely to use friends and family as their main source of child support, compared to parents of 9-11 year-olds who are more likely to use childcare rather than friends and family. Today, parents are still more than likely to use friends and family over childcare, but the rise in the use of childcare for children aged 6-8 suggests that the traditional form of family and friends network is not being used as much as previously seen in the past.
- **Teenage pregnancy rates for 15-17 year-olds have fallen dramatically in the last decade, by 60%.** Since 1990, the teenage pregnancy rate has declined from 48 per 1,000 in the population to 17 per 1,000 in the population in 2018. Much of this decline took place in the last ten years, since 2007, which suggests attitudinal shifts among young women and wider availability of contraception have been effective.[30] Today, teenage pregnancy rates are at the lowest they have been in two decades.

Figure 46: Proportion of 10-16 year-olds who eat an evening meal with their family 6-7 times a week, 1994-2017

Source: Understanding Society

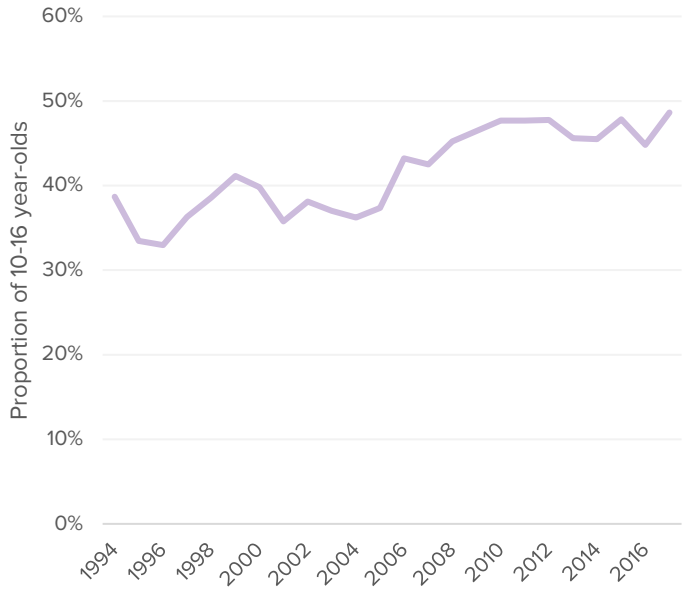
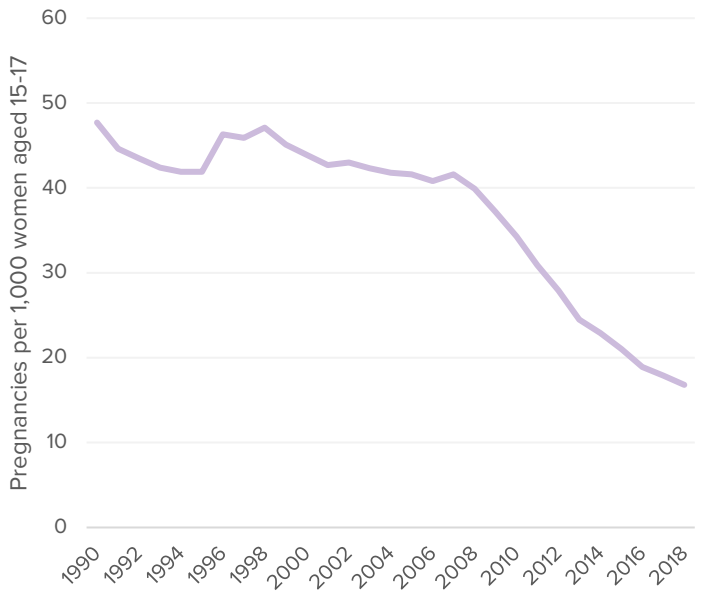


Figure 47: Number of pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15-17, 1990-2018

Source: ONS



- **The marriage formation rate - the number of new marriages relative to the population of single people - peaked in the 1970s** at 78 for men and 60 for women after a long period of upward growth. **In the 40 years since it has fallen precipitously**, to the lowest point in recorded history of 22 for men and 20 for women.
- **This corresponds to an increase in the proportion of people who are divorced.** In 2010, the proportion of people who are divorced was 11% higher than in 2002. In the same period, the proportion of people who were married fell by 5%, which is consistent with the long-term trends of decline in marriage.
- **The age at which people are choosing to get married for the first time is at a historic high of 31 for men and 29 for women, respectively.** This has risen remarkably since the late 1980s, when people got married in their early 20s on average. It is more in line with the previous average, however, in the first half of the 20th Century, the average age for a first marriage was 27 for men and 25 for women.

Figure 48: Age at first marriage, England and Wales, 1846-2011
Source: ONS

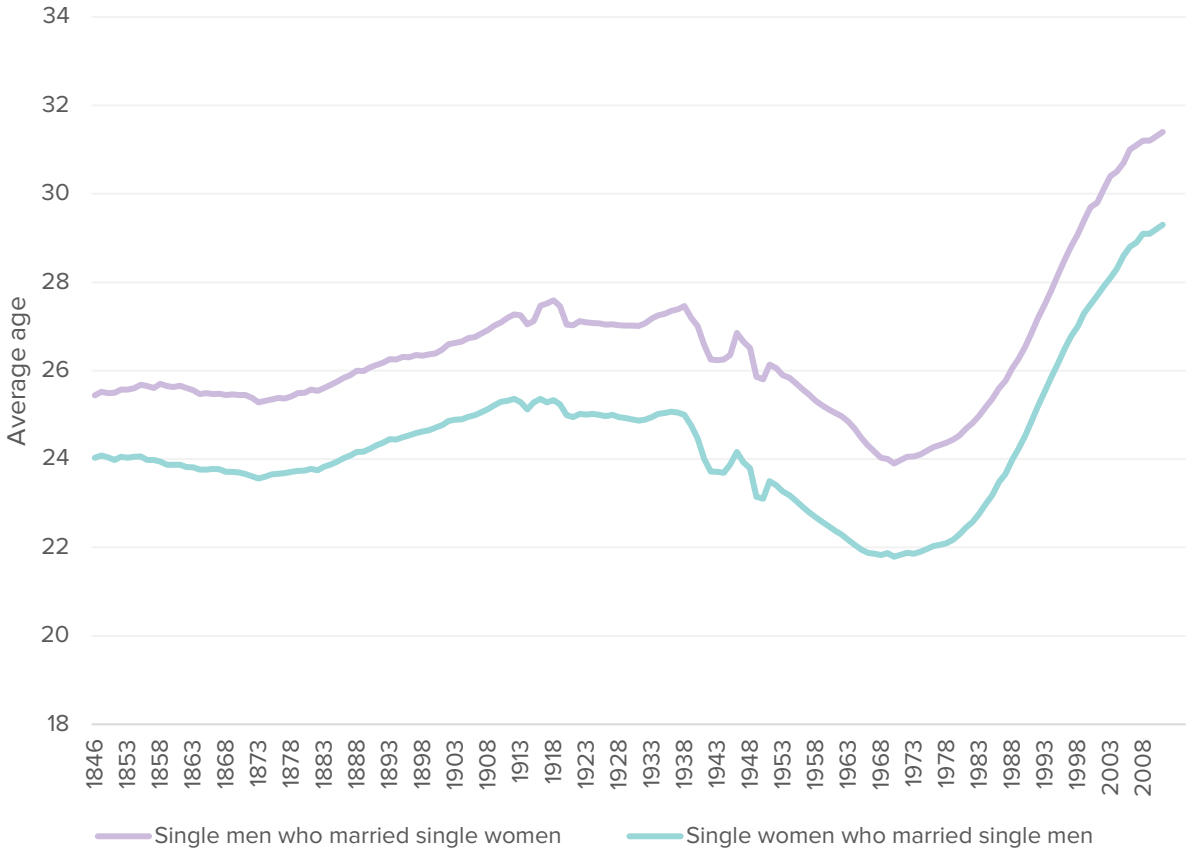


Figure 49: Historic marriage rate, by sex, 1864-2016

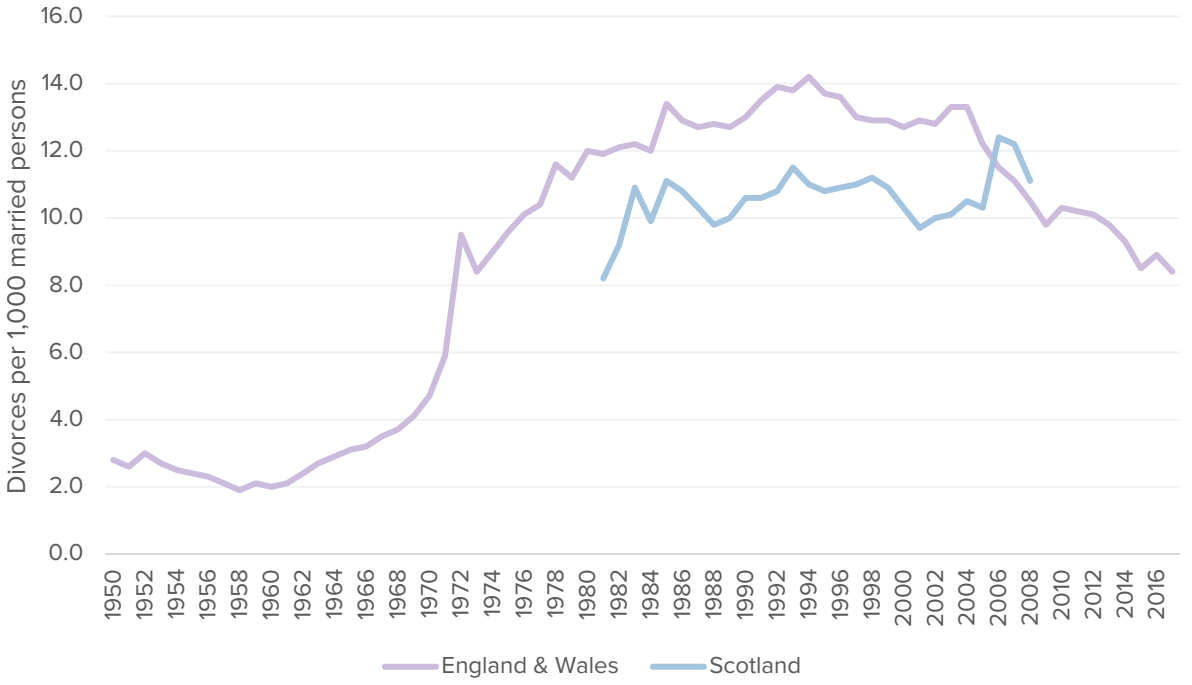
Source: ONS, National Records of Scotland

Note: Calculated as men/women marrying per 1,000 unmarried men/women aged 16 and over

Figure 50: Historic divorce rate, 1950-2017

Source: ONS

Note: Calculated as persons divorcing per 1,000 married population



13. Crime has fallen, suggesting people are more law abiding

- People's willingness to abide by the law and contribute to public safety are a crucial social norm that underpins communities. **Since the mid-1990s, the crime rate has steadily decreased from almost 20 million incidents to 5.7 million incidents today**. Fewer people are experiencing crime or becoming victims of crime suggesting that with time society has become safer and people less likely to commit acts of criminality. Data from England and Wales shows that criminal damage, violent crime and theft have all declined over time. Over the last 25 years, violence and theft has declined by 72%. Criminal damage is also historically low, having declined by 66% in just the last 13 years.

Figure 51: Crimes in England and Wales, 1981-2020
Source: ONS, CSEW
Notes: Excludes fraud and computer misuse

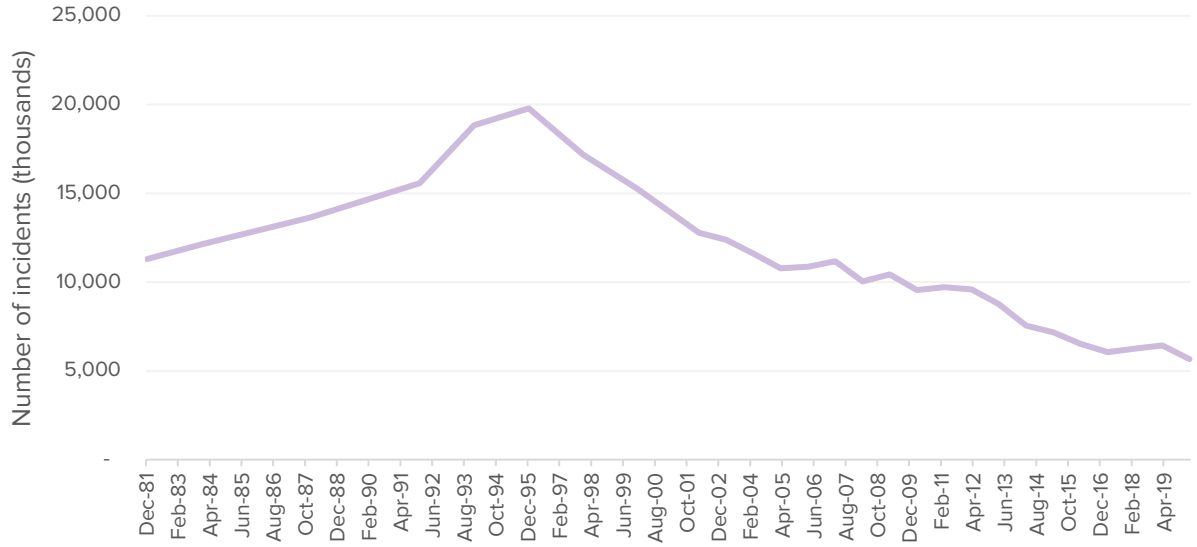
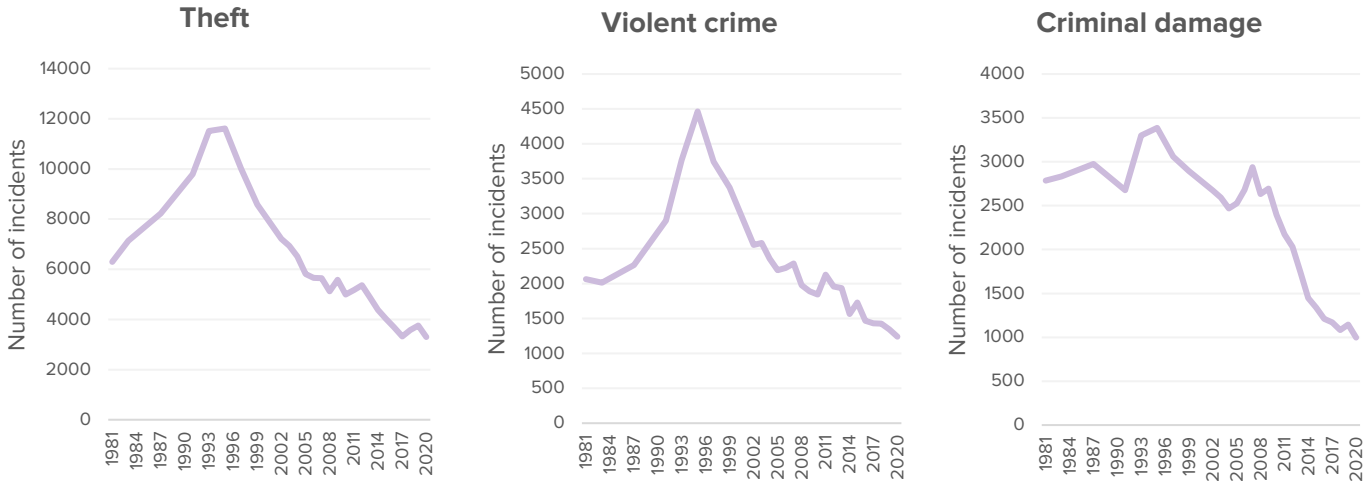


Figure 52: Crimes in England and Wales by type of offence, 1981-2020
Source: ONS, CSEW



14. People live longer, learning more, but living alone more frequently

- **The proportion of the population with at least NVQ4 level qualifications has risen steadily across all four nations.** Since 2005, the proportion of people with at least NVQ4 level or above has nearly doubled from 27% to 40% in the UK. All four nations have seen a steady increase in this number over the last sixteen years, with Scotland seeing the highest percentage increase of 15% over that period.
- People are living longer than ever before. **Life expectancy has increased over the last 20 years, with people now expected to live 82.9 years for women and 79.3 for men.** This is an increase of 3% and 4.7% respectively over that time period. In the period 2000-2002 to 2009-2011, healthy life expectancy - an estimate of lifetime spent in very good or good health - increased for both men and women, by 5.8% and 6%, respectively. However, over the last decade, women's healthy life expectancy has remained constant, while for men this figure has only increased 1%.
- **Suicide rates have fallen, unlike in some other countries.** The male suicide rate has consistently been higher than the rate for women, although both have been steadily declining. In 1981, the male suicide rate was 19.5% falling to 17.2% in 2018 of the total number of deaths. The female suicide rate has seen more of a steady decline from 10.6% in 1981 to 5.4% in 2018. This means that the difference between male and female suicide rates has increased from 8.9 to 11.8.
- There has been a rise in solitary living. **Roughly three in ten people live on their own, up from just 5% a century ago.** Much of the recent increase in the proportion of the population living alone is men aged between 45-64, who account for 42% of the increase in single person households.

Figure 53: Population with NVQ4 or higher

Source: Annual Population Survey

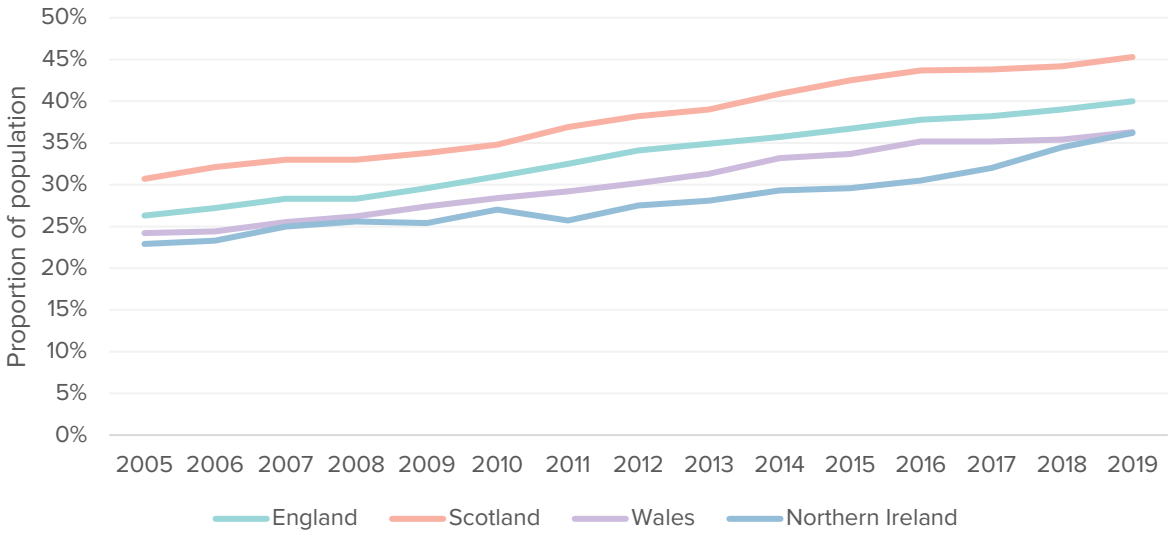


Figure 54: Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy, by sex, 2000-2018

Source: ONS

Notes: A methodology change in 2009-2011 creates a break in the time series

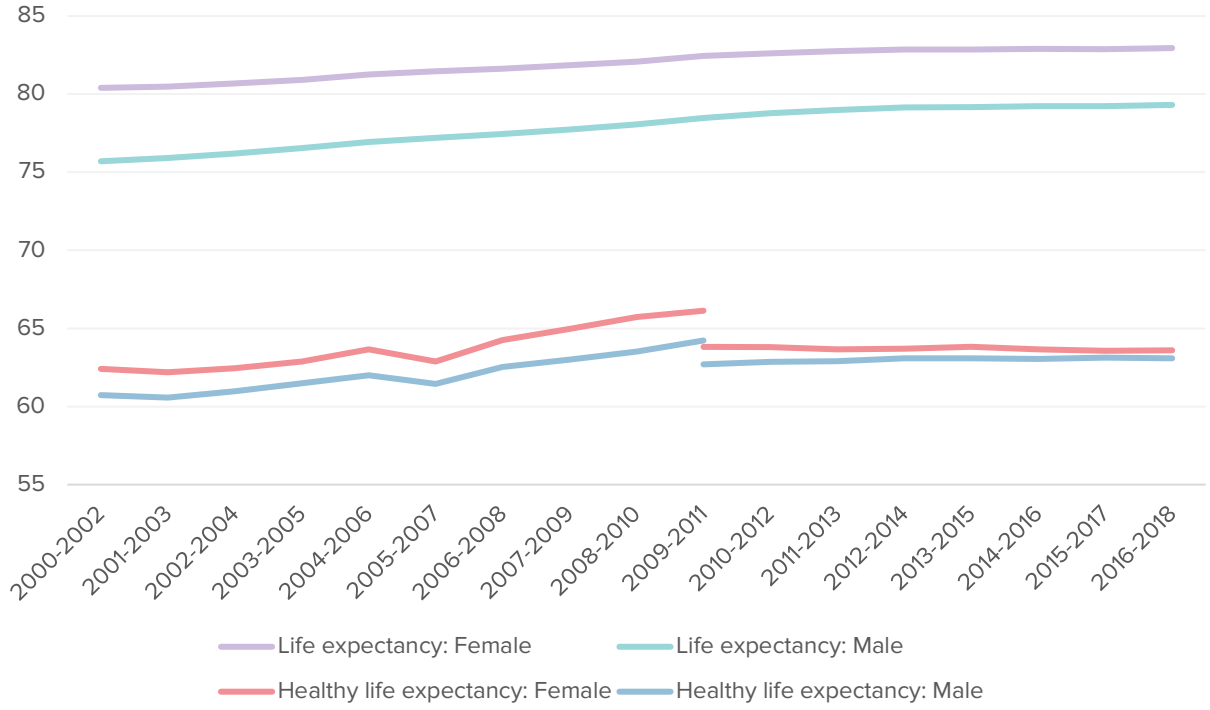


Figure 55: Suicide rate, 1981-2018

Source: ONS

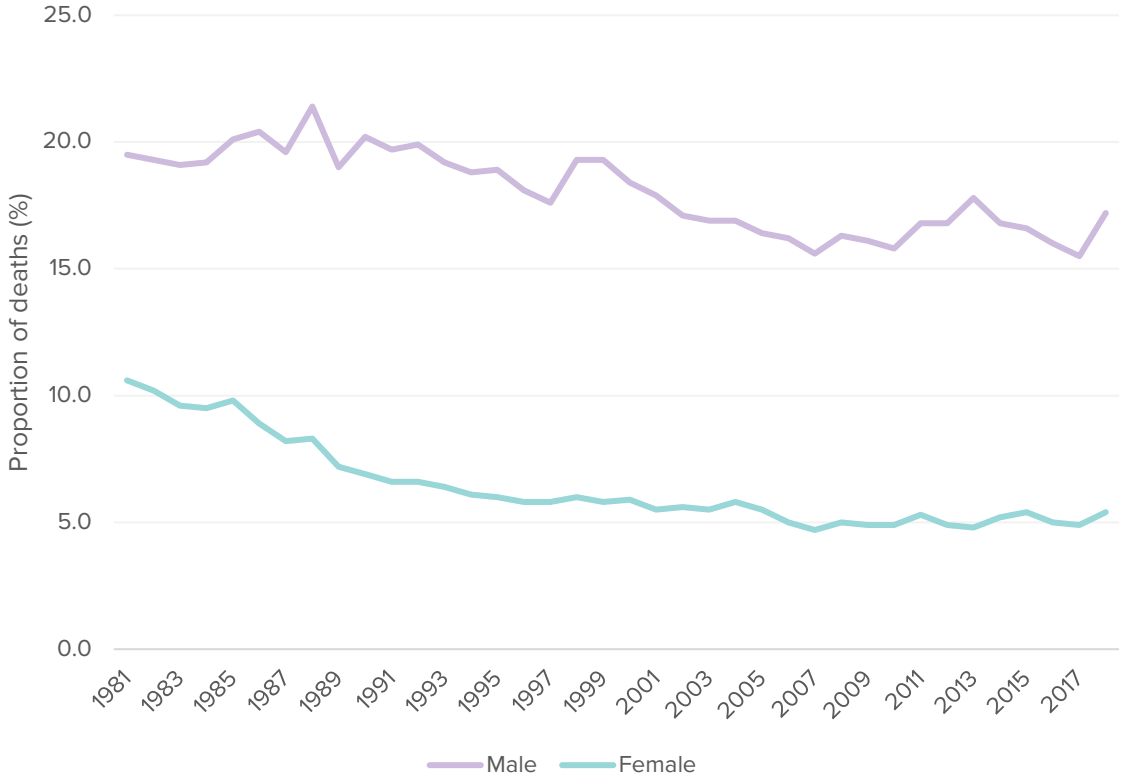
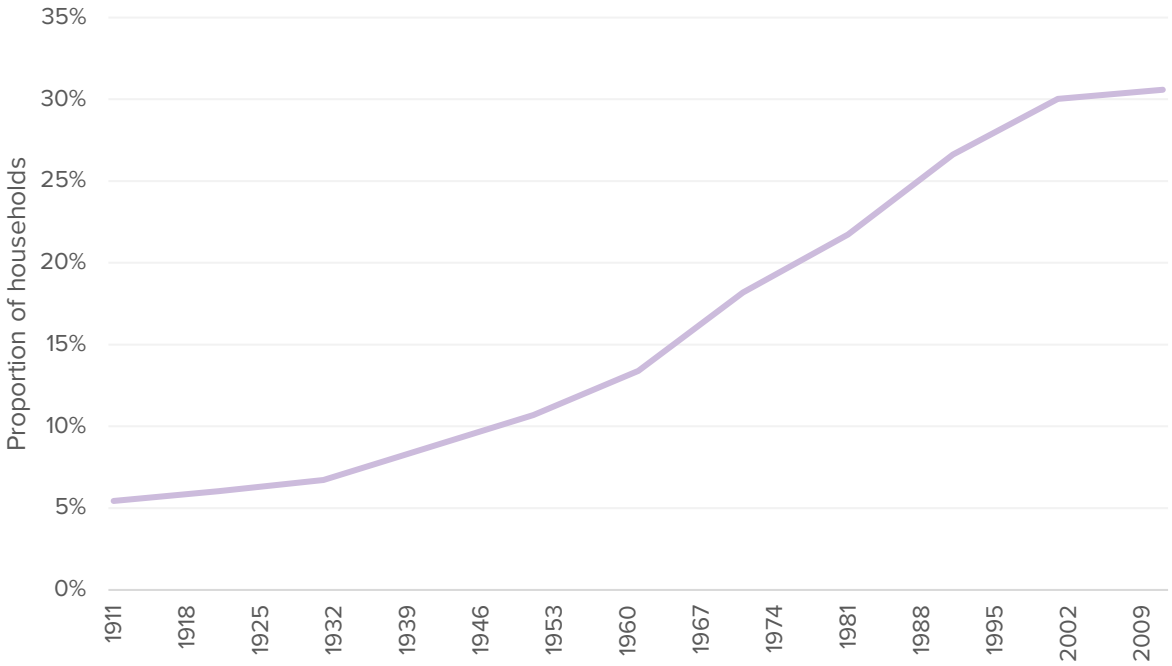


Figure 56: Proportion of the population who live alone, 1911-2011
Source: Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning; 2011 Census



Are social norms in decline or merely changing to modern life?

- There are many ways in which society has drastically improved in the last fifty years. We live in safer neighbourhoods, are better educated, and are in many respects healthier and happier than before. But we are also becoming more isolated, living alone more, getting married less, and having fewer children. Those families that do have children are spending time with them differently, although family meals and family childcare responsibilities remain popular. At face value these behavioural trends suggest people have *chosen* to become freer and less encumbered by responsibilities, and yet our polling and qualitative work has shown a clear demand for greater community and belonging. Might it be that economic changes and government policies, rather than individual choices, have led to changing social norms that, in fact, people find increasingly uncomfortable?
- More importantly, we need to understand what this growing alienation at a local level means for neighbourhoods and communities, which rely on high levels of social trust and mutual regard to function. How can people's desire for greater belonging be squared with a society that increasingly wants to live and spend time alone? Furthermore, should we even care? Social norms are organic and hard to control, influenced by human needs and interaction rather than government policy. In the past, policymakers, especially conservative or liberal politicians, have rightly shied away from policies that take a moral judgement on the choices people make. But given the known social benefits of neighbourliness and lifelong commitment, expressed through marriage, is there a case for government policy to more actively encourage them?

15. Have different places diverged over time?

It is not possible to recreate our entire index for previous years, due to the availability of all of the data, but we can use specific indicators from our social fabric threads to understand what has happened in the local areas which score highest and lowest on our index over the last twenty or so years. The results are necessarily partial but go some way to explaining whether communities are diverging or converging over time. We find that:

1. ***Volunteering.*** Volunteering levels (whether an individual participated in any volunteering in the last year) are estimated from Understanding Society and local authorities are assigned a score normalised between 0 and 10. Since 2001, more than half of local authorities have seen local participation levels in volunteering decline, but some places have seen this decline at a more rapid rate than other places. Among the places with the largest increases in their volunteering score are Cotswold, East Devon and Wiltshire, which all rank in the top decile for social fabric; but so are Barking and Dagenham and Torfaen, which rank 353rd and 324th respectively. If we look at the decile with the greatest decrease in their volunteering score, we see that 12 of these 36 areas are also in the top decile of social fabric (including Chiltern, Surrey Heath, and Guildford), but only one local authority, Hastings, is in the bottom decile for social fabric. It seems that places with the strongest social fabric are more likely to have seen greater variability (large increases and large decreases) in their volunteering score.

2. ***Pubs per capita.*** Most local authorities have seen the number of pubs per capita fall since 2001. This decline has been felt faster in places with a frayed social fabric: the bottom decile for social fabric saw a 37% decline in the number of pubs per capita, compared to a 29% decline for the top decile of areas. Places like Newham, Barking and Dagenham and Luton, have all seen the number of pubs per capita more than half over this period, although this may be related to population growth. Over the same period, places with a strong social fabric have also seen a decline, albeit a slower fall. The number of pubs per capita in South Oxfordshire, Wokingham, and Cotswold declined by 31%, 17%, and 14%, respectively. But there are expectations. East Dunbartonshire for example has actually seen an increase in the number of pubs per capita by 20% since 2001. Blackpool is ranked 378th for the most frayed social fabric and has seen an 8% increase.

3. ***Voter turnout.*** Since 2001, local authorities across the social fabric spectrum have seen steady increases in their turnout rate at national elections, aside from 15 local authorities which have seen a decline in their turnout rates (including 11 in Northern Ireland). Places with a strong social fabric have generally seen their turnout increase with time. Liverpool ranked 163rd for social fabric is the local authority with the fastest increase in turnout by 58%. This is in stark contrast to places with a frayed social fabric which have generally seen turnout decline or increase only marginally. For example, Merthyr Tydfil which ranks 372nd in our index has seen turnout decline by 0.3% over the last 18 years and places

such as Blaenau Gwent, Breckland and Boston have seen increases of just 0.2%, 1.8% and 3.1% respectively. In contrast, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster have seen their turnout rate increase by an average of 40%.

4. ***Job density.*** The areas that have benefited from rising job density appear to be those with the most frayed social fabric. Spelthorne and Epsom and Ewell, which rank 24th and 134th in our index, have seen job density shrink the fastest since 2001, by 20%. Places like North Warwickshire, Blaby and Barrow-in-Furness rank 178th, 118th and 293rdin our social fabric index and have all seen the job density in their local communities increase rapidly, by 85%, 60% and 40% respectively. In some places job density has not changed markedly. In East Dunbartonshire, which scores highly in our index, job density is identical to what it was 18 years ago and in Slough, which scores low for social fabric, has experienced only a mild fall in job density, by 1.9%.

5. ***Housing tenure*.** Places with a strong social fabric tend to have seen increases, rather than decreases in stable housing tenure in their local communities. For example, Richmond upon Thames, Ribble Valley and Wokingham have all seen some of the highest increases in the share of housing tenures that are stable (social rent or owner occupation) since 2001, of 10%, 8% and 6%, respectively. This is in contrast to places like Great Yarmouth and Norwich, which have seen rapid declines in the stability of their housing tenure. Both have seen housing tenure decline by 17%. The top decile for social fabric saw stable tenures decrease by 1.2% on average, whereas stable housing tenures in the bottom decile are 8.4% lower than in 2001.

6. ***Suicide rates*.** Places like Richmond upon Thames and Winchester have all seen suicide rates increase over the last 16 years, and are among the places with the fastest increase. Since 2002, both local authorities which rank 1st and 8th for the strongest social fabric have seen their suicide rate triple. This is compared to local authorities like Ashfield, Mansfield and Iverclyde which rank 321st, 365th and 209th for the most frayed of social fabric, but have all seen their suicide rate decline, by 82%, 73% and 67% over the same period.

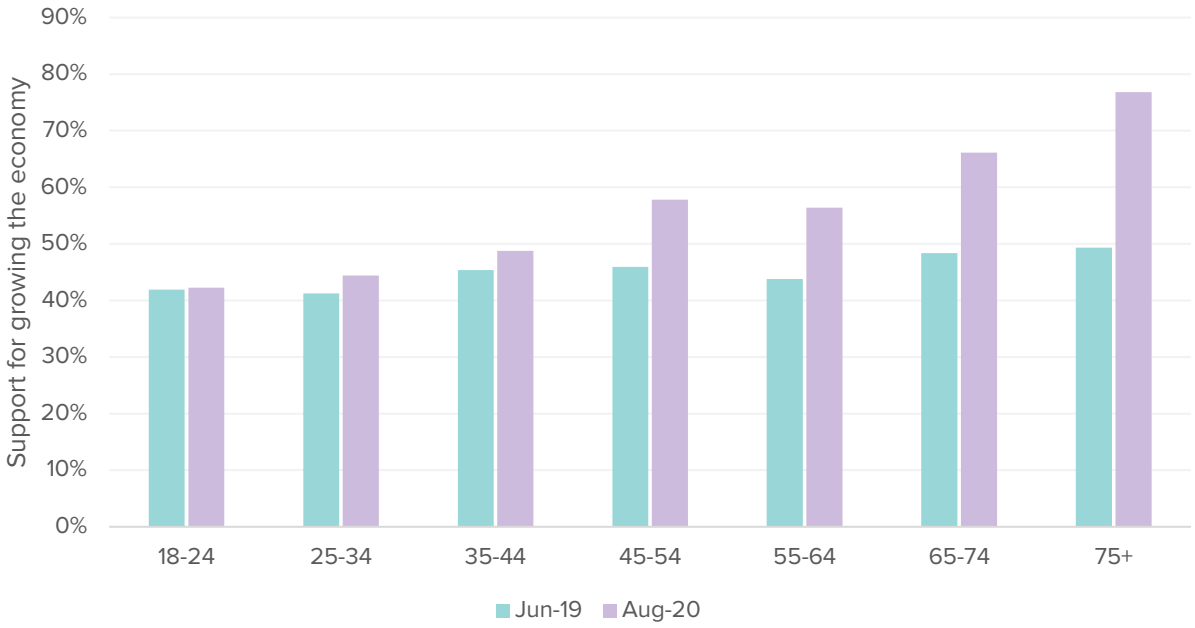
How do people feel about community today?

Last Autumn, Onward polling showed that people clearly felt the loss of community. In total, we found that 71% of people felt that community had declined in their lifetime. This appeared to be related to a growing desire for belonging and protection: when asked to choose between a government that focused on giving people more security and one that focused on giving people more freedom, we found that by a ratio of two to one, people wanted more security.

But last year already feels like a long time ago. The coronavirus crisis and the economic recession have fundamentally changed the way many people live, including by increasing insecurity and reduced freedom. To explore whether our findings remain true, and the impact of the pandemic on people's perceptions of social fabric, we replicated our questions from previous surveys to understand changing attitudes. We find that:

- **People still seek security over freedom, but by a smaller margin than last year.** In total, 57% of people want a government focused on giving people more security, and 43% want a government focused on giving people more freedom. This compares to 65% and 35% respectively in June 2019. While every age group, region and gender favours security overall, older generations have become more liberal. In the space of a year, the share of over-75s who favour freedom over security has risen from 1 in 4 (24%) to 4 in 10 (40%). Meanwhile the number of 18-24s who favour freedom has fallen, from 46% to 40%.
- **People still want change, but support for tradition is rising.** Support for preserving tradition rather than embracing change increased from 42% to 44% between June 2019 and today. We see that support for tradition increased among every age group, except 25-34 year-olds, among whom the preference for tradition declined by nine percentage points. Older generations are more likely to favour tradition, with support among over-75s rising by 12 points. London is still the least traditionalist region, although Londoners' preference for embracing change declined faster than anywhere else in the country.
- **There is rising support for growing the economy over strengthening society.** In 2019 a majority (55%) wanted the Government to strengthen society over growing the economy. Now, 55% would prefer it to grow the economy over society. This switch in preference was largely driven by older people and Leave voters. Support for growing the economy among 65-74 year-olds and over-75s rose from around 49% last year to 66% and 77%, respectively. 52% of Leave voters supported strengthening society in June 2019, but now 63% prefer growing the economy. Remain voters are still marginally in favour of strengthening society (46%).

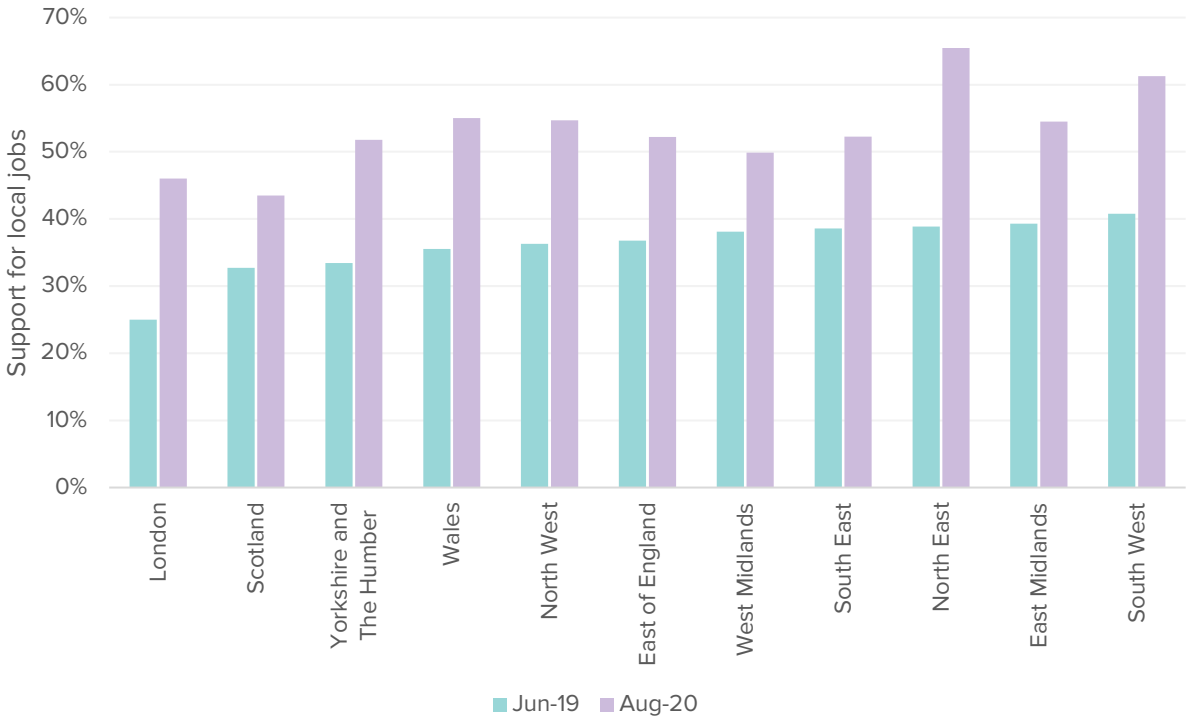
Figure 57: Support for growing the economy rather than strengthening society
Source: Onward analysis, Hanbury Strategy polling



- **Protect pubs and post offices**. Over half of the population (53%) think that we have a special responsibility to protect local institutions such as pubs and post offices from closure, rather than allow them to close if they are not being used. This is slightly lower than the 58% of people who agreed with that sentiment last year. Young people under 35 have become less likely to say that we have a responsibility to protect local institutions from closure (52% last year to 43% today). Support for institutions like pubs and post offices among older age groups is greater and has remained constant compared to last year. Londoners still show the lowest level of support for protecting local institutions (42%, down from 46%). People in the North East are now the most likely to support protecting pubs and post offices (60%, up from 57%).
- **People are increasingly supportive of taking jobs locally, even if they pay less, than moving away for work.** Across the UK, 52% of people agree with the statement "we should encourage people to take jobs within their local community, even if it means they are paid less" as opposed to "we should encourage people to take better paid jobs, even if it means moving away from the place they were born." This represents a sharp increase from 36% a year ago. Those living in the North East are 2-1 against people moving to find higher paid work if it means leaving the place in which they were born. London and Scotland are the only regions which support moving away from the local area. The greatest increases in support for local jobs come from people in the North East, London, and the South West.

Figure 58: Support for local jobs

Source: Onward analysis, Hanbury Strategy polling



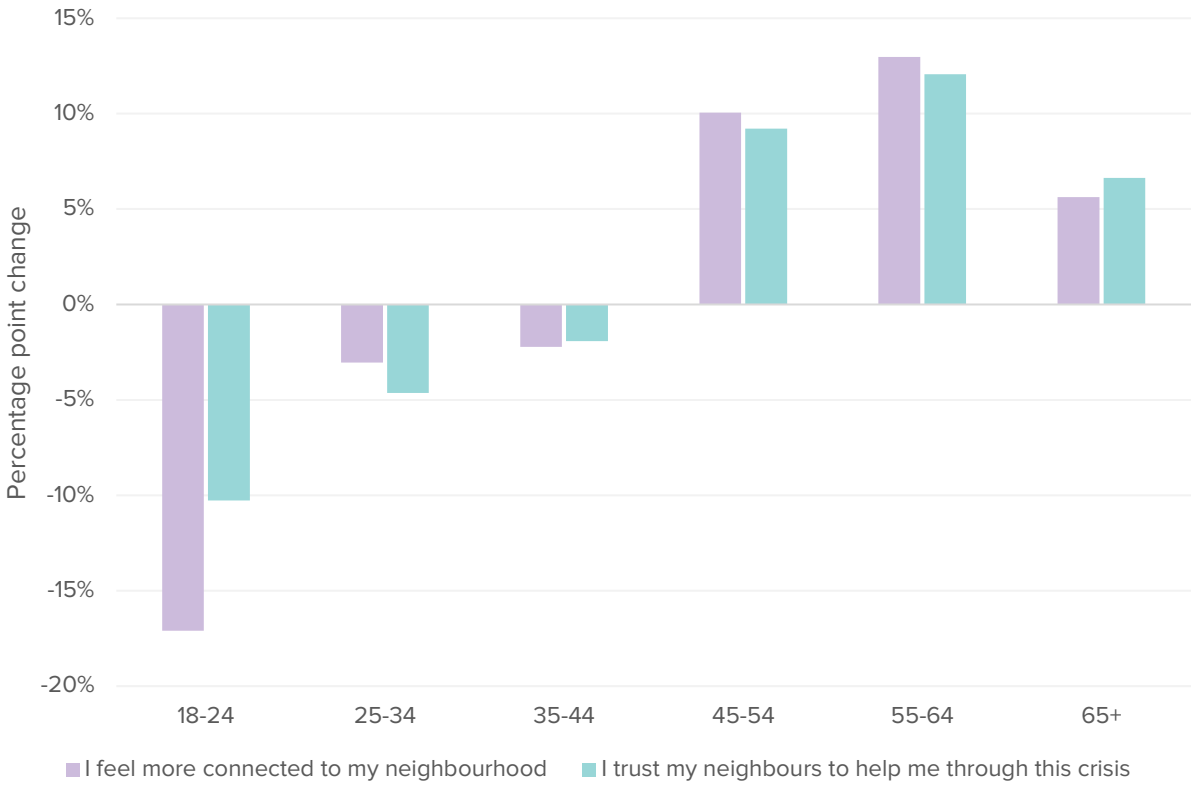
- **Londoners increasingly feel that the responsibility for tackling social issues should mainly be taken by communities and civic organisations, while other regions increasingly believe it is a national government responsibility.** Nationwide, support for government intervention has increased from 44% in June 2019 to 50% today. The East of England, Wales and Scotland saw support for government intervention to tackle social issues increase by 17%, 13% and 12%, respectively. Increased preference for government intervention, rather than communities and civic organisations, is particularly pronounced among 45-54 year-olds and over-75s.

We also repeated a series of questions we asked at the beginning of the pandemic (JL Partners, 24th March), to understand how people felt about their local community compared to late March. We found:

- **Young people increasingly feel disconnected from their communities, while older people are benefiting from a greater sense of connection.** 57% of people feel more connected to their local community than a month ago, unchanged from March earlier this year. But this belies significant divergence by age group. Those aged 18-24 have seen the largest decline in feeling connected to their community (52% to 42%), whereas those aged 55-64 saw an increase from 53% to 66% of people who feel more connected to their community than a month ago. People in the East, North East and Scotland have experienced a greater sense of connectedness in their communities compared to March this year; London and the West Midlands have seen an increase in feelings of isolation.

- **This generational divide is also seen in lower levels of social trust among younger generations.** Just over half of people say that they trust their neighbours to support them through this crisis, which has only marginally increased from 54% at the beginning of the pandemic. Just as with feeling connected to the community, the age curve has steepened during the course of the pandemic. Since March, the share of 18-24 year olds who trusted their neighbours fell by 10 percentage points (from 57% to 47%). In stark contrast, social trust among 55-64 year-olds increased by 12 percentage points (from 53% to 65%). Over-65s are now almost twice as likely to trust their neighbours than under-35s.
- For those aged over 65, we see that trust and connectedness have increased slightly since the start of the pandemic, but less so than 45-64 year-olds.

Figure 59: Change in connectedness and trust by age groups, March 2020 to July 2020
Source: Onward analysis, Hanbury Strategy polling



Conclusion

This study has exposed many societal trends, but three aspects in particular. First, that British society has suffered a broad-based and long-term decline in the strength of local community. This has been inferred previously from polling results and focus groups, but is borne out in hard data on group membership, civic association, economic activity democratic participation and family life. Not everything has got worse, but on many indicators the ties that bind us together have weakened. As Robert Putnam has stated: “naming this problem is an essential first step towards confronting it”.[31]

Second, that some places fare much worse than others. Some places are endowed with strong communities; others are suffering from weak social ties and fraying neighbourhoods. Indeed, the social divide between different parts of the country is as great, and in some respects greater, than the economic divide that receives greater political attention. But ultimately, it is this imbalance between the two that is the issue. Both have a simultaneous role in repairing the social fabric of local communities. The places with the least connected neighbourhoods are considerably more likely to have voted for Brexit and include many of the constituencies that the Conservative Party relied upon for their majority in 2019. The fraying of our social fabric has deep political consequences.

Third, that the traditional response to the deterioration of place - building new infrastructure and bringing new jobs - is important but is not likely to do enough to re-stitch the social fabric of lagging places. It is the security in an individual's personal life, like secure jobs and housing, alongside the important establishment of civic institutions to corral and drive community-led action, action to restore positive social norms, from strong families to higher levels of education, and support for tighter relationships in the form of volunteering, group membership and local philanthropy. These are the things that the areas with the weakest social fabric lack, and the things they look to politicians for help reviving.

There is a lot of talk of lifting left behind places and reviving forgotten towns. The Government has rightly made this agenda the heart of its plans to level up opportunity across the country. If it is to be successful it will need to use a different set of policy levers and engage a different set of partners than Whitehall has traditionally been used to. We need to start building local institutions, seeding local networks, empowering local leaders and devolving power - real power - to places to take back control of their own place.

This is what Onward’s *Repairing our Social Fabric* programme is focused on. The Social Fabric Index provides the baseline from which to work. We now know where in the country needs the greatest attention and which aspects of community have experienced the greatest change in recent years. The next step, which we will now begin in earnest, is to identify ways in which Government policy can respond - both locally and nationally - to redress the social imbalance and bring a sense of pride and belonging back to places that have lost it.

The coronavirus pandemic has reminded many of the inherent value of community. In the face of a devastating thread, people of all backgrounds have come together to support not only their loved ones but those in their street and neighbourhood. The outpouring of mutual support during lockdown offers great comfort that community can be revived. The challenge for policymakers now is to maintain and strengthen the social fabric as the recovery gathers pace and we begin to shape the post-pandemic future.

Annex 1

The UK Social Fabric Index

Local Authority	Rank	Social Fabric	Rank	Relationships	Rank	Physical Infrastructure	Rank	Civic Institutions	Rank	Economic Value	Rank	Positive Social Norms
Richmond upon Thames	1	6.42442	13	5.46325	9	5.94225	11	6.15317	6	6.87707	2	7.68636
Chiltern	2	6.26722	4	5.79457	164	4.96185	26	5.86875	9	6.75719	1	7.95373
East Renfrewshire	3	6.25783	55	4.82713	301	4.46143	1	7.55299	4	6.93103	4	7.51655
Waverley	4	6.25667	5	5.79102	115	5.12483	16	6.01801	5	6.88679	6	7.46272
South Oxfordshire	5	6.22318	1	6.42777	54	5.44592	58	5.59656	16	6.51523	12	7.13044
Elmbridge	6	6.18924	10	5.53393	44	5.47227	19	5.95596	18	6.4949	5	7.48915
Rushcliffe	7	6.03719	76	4.6058	145	5.01766	22	5.94279	2	7.03195	3	7.58774
South Cambridgeshire	8	6.03558	2	5.94168	144	5.01846	171	5.06939	1	7.07572	15	7.07263
St Albans	9	6.02764	47	4.88566	55	5.44216	37	5.7604	8	6.76989	10	7.28006
Windsor and Maidenhead	10	6.02529	19	5.36137	124	5.10199	20	5.94864	17	6.49583	11	7.2186
East Dunbartonshire	11	5.97116	77	4.59809	235	4.73856	2	7.15082	60	6.02813	8	7.34021
Mole Valley	12	5.93174	8	5.59871	120	5.10806	18	5.96754	61	6.01309	18	6.97128
Cotswold	13	5.9174	11	5.53192	12	5.89107	95	5.39845	45	6.13499	38	6.63056
Winchester	14	5.90921	3	5.88014	205	4.81315	59	5.5959	15	6.54369	32	6.71315
Wokingham	15	5.88343	44	4.91773	202	4.82077	70	5.51909	7	6.77033	7	7.38926
Kingston upon Thames	16	5.87101	69	4.67544	31	5.58189	3	6.64658	161	5.37305	14	7.0781
West Berkshire	17	5.84563	43	4.91781	90	5.28418	27	5.86668	31	6.27134	22	6.88813
South Lakeland	18	5.80257	15	5.43523	57	5.43397	8	6.30389	133	5.53891	76	6.30087
Bromley	19	5.79163	114	4.24911	17	5.76957	13	6.07871	26	6.38174	53	6.47903
Vale of White Horse	20	5.76848	16	5.42984	140	5.04577	63	5.5621	90	5.79599	16	7.0087
Bath and North East Somerset	21	5.75967	49	4.88056	99	5.19564	4	6.6341	102	5.70644	62	6.38161
Guildford	22	5.75718	59	4.79603	38	5.51262	62	5.5693	13	6.60241	75	6.30556
Stratford-on-Avon	23	5.7459	12	5.51712	127	5.08424	101	5.35153	23	6.42715	68	6.34944
Epsom and Ewell	24	5.74446	56	4.80579	219	4.76687	36	5.77441	56	6.05074	9	7.32448
Woking	25	5.73216	48	4.88341	138	5.05187	28	5.86458	54	6.0571	26	6.80386
Stroud	26	5.6607	20	5.35357	247	4.69482	15	6.05305	94	5.77787	60	6.42416
Surrey Heath	27	5.65186	51	4.85541	186	4.86918	112	5.30348	12	6.61394	40	6.61728
West Oxfordshire	28	5.63609	21	5.34713	151	5.00603	94	5.39864	120	5.60442	25	6.82424
Wiltshire	29	5.63511	29	5.10301	16	5.77801	78	5.47973	140	5.5142	77	6.30058
Reigate and Banstead	30	5.62349	85	4.5049	106	5.15391	76	5.49081	22	6.43379	46	6.53406
Wandsworth	31	5.6233	101	4.3465	119	5.11235	51	5.67288	63	6.01035	17	6.97442
Mid Sussex	32	5.61411	32	5.04882	173	4.92705	103	5.34499	38	6.18481	44	6.56485
Warwick	33	5.60342	62	4.74049	80	5.31085	50	5.68046	87	5.82433	55	6.46097
East Hampshire	34	5.58586	63	4.73194	270	4.60178	71	5.51673	24	6.41066	35	6.66821
East Devon	35	5.57721	18	5.40726	237	4.72676	124	5.25035	93	5.79009	33	6.71158
Barnet	36	5.57635	65	4.70256	47	5.46782	40	5.7485	205	5.12242	23	6.84043

South Bucks	37	5.5745	35	5.00415	293	4.49344	202	4.94674	10	6.72799	34	6.70018
Tandridge	38	5.56315	45	4.91556	195	4.84267	104	5.34102	51	6.06761	37	6.64887
Horsham	39	5.55318	28	5.1378	230	4.7508	164	5.09258	52	6.06494	31	6.71978
Trafford	40	5.54912	127	4.19917	65	5.39848	120	5.26437	20	6.43756	56	6.446
Rutland	41	5.54562	39	4.97141	334	4.22539	45	5.70922	101	5.73258	13	7.08952
Hart	42	5.54529	66	4.7001	248	4.68383	81	5.45632	67	5.98328	21	6.90289
Harborough	43	5.54054	30	5.08317	199	4.83441	145	5.14301	32	6.26672	64	6.37538
Derbyshire Dales	44	5.53199	31	5.08252	204	4.81667	32	5.8098	109	5.64175	73	6.30922
East Hertfordshire	45	5.52725	80	4.55388	42	5.48949	198	4.96356	75	5.90346	29	6.72587
Wycombe	46	5.52258	36	5.00341	152	5.00554	125	5.24288	84	5.84179	49	6.51928
Cheshire West and Chester	47	5.52075	104	4.31762	45	5.47082	10	6.23101	121	5.59919	111	5.9851
South Gloucestershire	48	5.51504	115	4.23625	63	5.40187	24	5.8877	85	5.83853	88	6.21084
Dorset	49	5.51496	6	5.67738	76	5.34368	111	5.31191	156	5.41593	139	5.82589
Harrow	50	5.51345	121	4.22327	114	5.12549	9	6.27521	230	4.9832	19	6.96008
Camden	51	5.51195	84	4.51968	8	5.94809	54	5.63961	127	5.57662	130	5.87574
Three Rivers	52	5.50897	82	4.52891	117	5.12334	146	5.14287	89	5.79705	20	6.95267
Cherwell	53	5.50355	68	4.6926	82	5.30411	84	5.44428	124	5.58593	50	6.49082
Wealden	54	5.50354	17	5.41926	203	4.82028	119	5.26852	103	5.69165	72	6.318
Cheshire East	55	5.49344	120	4.22582	69	5.38752	30	5.83066	78	5.87648	97	6.14675
Aylesbury Vale	56	5.49101	61	4.78273	167	4.95553	186	5.01897	35	6.20733	51	6.49051
Merton	57	5.4901	137	4.1051	37	5.51492	33	5.80118	178	5.29345	27	6.73587
South Hams	58	5.46689	14	5.44691	284	4.50936	191	4.99131	82	5.86258	48	6.52428
Bromsgrove	59	5.45848	89	4.47142	299	4.46799	93	5.40035	11	6.62195	71	6.33072
Stirling	60	5.44472	58	4.7987	341	4.17702	6	6.38896	136	5.52746	70	6.33144
Oxford	61	5.44371	38	4.97229	109	5.14472	114	5.29597	214	5.07166	28	6.7339
Uttlesford	62	5.41607	64	4.71368	257	4.64341	156	5.11735	50	6.0788	47	6.52714
Chichester	63	5.41358	23	5.30191	180	4.89774	207	4.93899	130	5.56333	65	6.36591
Cheltenham	64	5.41325	75	4.62916	137	5.05337	65	5.55576	122	5.5957	84	6.23226
Islington	65	5.40815	178	3.86119	14	5.78282	57	5.61288	41	6.17523	186	5.60864
Craven	66	5.4054	9	5.53696	194	4.84832	175	5.05555	278	4.76142	24	6.82474
Kensington and Chelsea	67	5.38617	72	4.66468	105	5.16521	136	5.18933	114	5.61998	78	6.29167
Sutton	68	5.38562	140	4.09377	64	5.4012	69	5.52084	129	5.56364	69	6.34863
Central Bedfordshire	69	5.37197	157	3.95507	74	5.35348	43	5.71423	72	5.92955	125	5.9075
Lewes	70	5.36688	33	5.04515	231	4.7478	34	5.78422	218	5.05416	89	6.20309
North Hertfordshire	71	5.35904	136	4.10813	72	5.37189	179	5.05126	68	5.97584	79	6.2881
North Somerset	72	5.35815	105	4.31529	240	4.71579	23	5.89951	57	6.04947	143	5.81069
Test Valley	73	5.35522	60	4.79566	184	4.88094	218	4.89409	44	6.14063	104	6.06477
Brentwood	74	5.34692	108	4.30021	268	4.61153	135	5.19481	21	6.4361	91	6.19195
Fareham	75	5.33683	147	4.02312	283	4.51691	72	5.50608	34	6.21134	59	6.4267

City of Edinburgh	76	5.32896	134	4.1552	6	6.03363	38	5.75654	242	4.9363	152	5.76312
Argyll and Bute	77	5.32286	97	4.40052	222	4.76363	64	5.56198	111	5.63156	82	6.25662
Eastleigh	78	5.32051	166	3.92744	210	4.8018	133	5.20392	53	6.06125	42	6.60814
Tewkesbury	79	5.31925	83	4.52392	335	4.21728	150	5.13403	64	5.99895	30	6.72204
South Northamptonshire	80	5.30641	50	4.86953	353	4.08294	195	4.97442	40	6.17814	58	6.42705
Tunbridge Wells	81	5.30447	96	4.40248	157	4.99017	235	4.82485	86	5.82513	52	6.4797
Ribble Valley	82	5.30242	26	5.26111	324	4.30825	221	4.8769	92	5.79059	81	6.27525
Bexley	83	5.30154	193	3.76701	171	4.93471	21	5.94365	71	5.95139	124	5.91096
Bracknell Forest	84	5.30105	181	3.84373	292	4.4947	88	5.41648	28	6.31862	57	6.4317
Solihull	85	5.29975	153	3.98236	61	5.41412	247	4.79037	27	6.34881	116	5.96308
Tonbridge and Malling	86	5.29755	118	4.22865	133	5.07177	224	4.86001	25	6.38961	119	5.93772
Runnymede	87	5.29053	102	4.34139	200	4.83261	182	5.02973	79	5.87273	63	6.37617
Stockport	88	5.29042	163	3.93025	10	5.92121	285	4.66774	46	6.12849	147	5.80439
Sevenoaks	89	5.28585	57	4.80301	176	4.9235	283	4.68413	74	5.92548	100	6.09315
Brighton and Hove	90	5.28369	190	3.79174	7	5.96744	5	6.53475	284	4.73435	205	5.39014
Perth and Kinross	91	5.27322	154	3.97579	267	4.62086	31	5.82821	123	5.58731	67	6.35393
Vale of Glamorgan	92	5.26401	132	4.17302	163	4.96635	29	5.86177	191	5.23062	101	6.08827
Teignbridge	93	5.25933	40	4.96864	197	4.84131	159	5.113	179	5.2859	102	6.08783
Southwark	94	5.25419	203	3.72851	51	5.46022	73	5.4975	100	5.74056	135	5.84415
Highland	95	5.25164	99	4.37347	182	4.88534	141	5.16523	49	6.0893	155	5.74488
Herefordshire, County of	96	5.24475	41	4.95225	252	4.66938	47	5.70749	198	5.17261	161	5.72204
South Ribble	97	5.23909	125	4.2047	308	4.41416	42	5.73723	73	5.92806	123	5.9113
Harrogate	98	5.23645	87	4.48289	156	4.99431	193	4.97872	187	5.25717	54	6.46918
East Lothian	99	5.23262	179	3.8601	337	4.20153	41	5.74763	58	6.04771	74	6.30614
Stafford	100	5.22829	79	4.55777	206	4.80802	280	4.69424	81	5.86554	87	6.21586
York	101	5.22598	123	4.21952	25	5.66406	184	5.02533	202	5.14777	103	6.07321
Bristol	102	5.22028	200	3.75482	4	6.09808	67	5.54298	143	5.49728	235	5.20823
New Forest	103	5.21454	71	4.67455	229	4.75232	228	4.84209	112	5.63039	93	6.17334
Chorley	104	5.20629	112	4.28357	262	4.63808	147	5.14272	55	6.05409	122	5.91302
Lambeth	105	5.20367	151	3.98897	78	5.31895	61	5.57496	147	5.45544	170	5.68002
Westminster	106	5.1996	54	4.82808	19	5.73849	89	5.41597	229	4.99456	259	5.0209
Ealing	107	5.19416	229	3.55	33	5.55549	48	5.70037	318	4.51393	36	6.65102
Warrington	108	5.19172	161	3.93518	56	5.44079	257	4.75367	42	6.17501	175	5.65394
Dacorum	109	5.17954	197	3.75765	97	5.2282	226	4.849	77	5.89318	96	6.16966
Monmouthshire	110	5.17889	143	4.05124	286	4.5059	206	4.93925	91	5.79461	43	6.60346
South Norfolk	111	5.17636	53	4.82992	336	4.21519	187	5.01184	107	5.64439	92	6.18044
Hammersmith and Fulham	112	5.16834	149	3.99832	142	5.01961	139	5.17097	116	5.61476	106	6.03804
Redbridge	113	5.16356	233	3.52487	92	5.25367	12	6.13547	335	4.36933	45	6.53447
Welwyn Hatfield	114	5.14167	224	3.6138	161	4.9725	180	5.04789	83	5.84971	85	6.22443

Croydon	115	5.13655	216	3.66377	71	5.37352	56	5.61505	190	5.24219	148	5.7882
Cambridge	116	5.12803	100	4.373	75	5.34703	113	5.29965	313	4.57543	105	6.04504
Na h-Eileanan Siar	117	5.12085	25	5.29513	380	2.72632	110	5.31226	3	7.01385	225	5.25669
Blaby	118	5.11855	209	3.68209	263	4.63506	170	5.07483	37	6.18514	108	6.01563
Hillingdon	119	5.11849	241	3.46552	70	5.38599	75	5.49396	192	5.22393	107	6.02302
Bedford	120	5.11761	225	3.59571	94	5.2431	52	5.65907	159	5.38936	165	5.70082
Mid Devon	121	5.11657	37	4.99895	331	4.26995	127	5.23558	209	5.10498	115	5.97338
Fylde	122	5.11116	88	4.47351	316	4.373	90	5.40816	132	5.54046	153	5.76068
Basingstoke and Deane	123	5.1108	167	3.92429	189	4.8629	253	4.75909	47	6.12059	129	5.8871
Malvern Hills	124	5.10935	34	5.02434	328	4.2917	194	4.97762	153	5.42865	140	5.82445
South Somerset	125	5.10339	52	4.83605	306	4.42721	138	5.17886	160	5.38591	167	5.68895
Daventry	126	5.09686	172	3.90472	226	4.75381	209	4.93321	30	6.28115	185	5.61139
Broxtowe	127	5.09452	230	3.54388	227	4.75349	25	5.87738	150	5.43266	132	5.86517
Rugby	128	5.08593	138	4.10088	228	4.75316	143	5.15724	118	5.61136	145	5.80698
Aberdeenshire	129	5.08421	199	3.75616	319	4.32623	168	5.07671	76	5.90265	66	6.35932
Shropshire	130	5.07962	74	4.63981	149	5.0081	268	4.72125	200	5.15482	131	5.87414
Mendip	131	5.06882	86	4.49814	322	4.30989	91	5.40655	176	5.29521	138	5.83433
South Lanarkshire	132	5.06715	271	3.25808	121	5.10609	100	5.3553	14	6.56442	252	5.05185
Havering	133	5.06338	274	3.2368	40	5.49391	98	5.37068	65	5.99426	233	5.22126
Spelthorne	134	5.0618	184	3.83337	220	4.7652	197	4.96747	128	5.57249	94	6.17047
Huntingdonshire	135	5.06095	103	4.33467	134	5.06361	304	4.57633	166	5.3477	113	5.98243
Hounslow	136	5.0584	280	3.2011	30	5.58805	96	5.37758	243	4.92843	90	6.19686
Lichfield	137	5.05755	144	4.03836	261	4.63841	320	4.49413	36	6.18747	120	5.92938
Shetland Islands	138	5.05684	42	4.92451	378	3.39626	154	5.1213	19	6.49442	213	5.34773
Hambleton	139	5.05683	81	4.54564	223	4.75911	346	4.29427	177	5.29393	61	6.39119
Waltham Forest	140	5.05445	304	3.05525	113	5.12815	7	6.34127	281	4.75122	109	5.99638
Chelmsford	141	5.05326	196	3.76075	116	5.12434	211	4.92647	104	5.68253	150	5.7722
Dumfries and Galloway	142	5.04555	195	3.76287	241	4.71061	97	5.37415	98	5.74835	180	5.63175
Haringey	143	5.04497	238	3.48429	68	5.38994	14	6.0714	326	4.45978	141	5.81944
Allerdale	144	5.0443	46	4.88925	300	4.46435	160	5.1038	135	5.52862	230	5.23546
North West Leicestershire	145	5.04099	159	3.94461	103	5.17703	210	4.92743	146	5.46802	169	5.68787
Broadland	146	5.03797	92	4.43739	351	4.11638	177	5.05204	108	5.64404	118	5.94001
Wirral	147	5.0301	250	3.44798	49	5.46298	66	5.55008	148	5.45077	229	5.23871
Wychavon	148	5.02847	78	4.59697	253	4.65809	263	4.7377	88	5.81567	215	5.3339
Cornwall	149	5.02823	141	4.09211	34	5.54287	158	5.11402	235	4.97196	201	5.42018
Bury	150	5.02094	185	3.82888	79	5.31524	116	5.29043	131	5.54354	243	5.12661
Somerset West and Taunton	151	5.02012	27	5.21907	333	4.23246	223	4.86701	213	5.07589	163	5.70615
East Cambridgeshire	152	5.01895	113	4.2798	295	4.48637	272	4.71252	168	5.33495	80	6.28111
South Ayrshire	153	5.01599	176	3.88315	245	4.70212	87	5.41701	165	5.35007	158	5.72761

Hertsmere	154	5.01592	152	3.98711	81	5.30474	265	4.72678	162	5.37276	168	5.68823
Reading	155	5.01412	231	3.54365	50	5.46137	126	5.23809	199	5.16314	174	5.66437
North Devon	156	5.00381	93	4.43366	225	4.75699	102	5.34789	239	4.94612	195	5.53439
Hinckley and Bosworth	157	4.99589	211	3.6766	279	4.54117	166	5.08735	96	5.75736	121	5.91696
East Riding of Yorkshire	158	4.99326	170	3.90549	77	5.33836	279	4.69474	206	5.1215	126	5.90621
Gwynedd	159	4.9905	145	4.02467	123	5.1042	132	5.20908	125	5.5853	256	5.02923
Enfield	160	4.98852	245	3.45807	32	5.56556	17	5.99807	352	4.18432	157	5.73658
Exeter	161	4.98602	148	4.00096	224	4.75864	68	5.52374	220	5.03987	187	5.60691
West Devon	162	4.98116	70	4.67522	371	3.74136	86	5.43127	245	4.92557	98	6.13237
Maidstone	163	4.97909	142	4.08623	187	4.86708	201	4.95039	164	5.35756	179	5.63418
Watford	164	4.96893	254	3.40427	107	5.15148	264	4.73531	99	5.74672	146	5.80688
Babergh	165	4.96634	24	5.2994	281	4.52334	302	4.58133	197	5.18406	228	5.24355
High Peak	166	4.96584	135	4.14686	259	4.6408	196	4.96836	194	5.21439	134	5.85878
Epping Forest	167	4.96426	221	3.62659	209	4.80433	282	4.68539	69	5.96434	156	5.74065
Gedling	168	4.96148	207	3.69786	285	4.50795	79	5.46915	169	5.32304	144	5.80938
Eden	169	4.96108	22	5.32778	276	4.55529	55	5.63302	376	3.47543	142	5.8139
Greenwich	170	4.95829	258	3.36099	118	5.1204	131	5.21515	185	5.25897	137	5.83593
Selby	171	4.95599	94	4.43075	343	4.17581	344	4.30359	110	5.63629	83	6.23349
East Suffolk	172	4.95289	90	4.45731	35	5.54028	240	4.81371	307	4.62376	216	5.3294
Sefton	173	4.95183	165	3.92867	87	5.29242	137	5.18879	163	5.35813	265	4.99114
Dartford	174	4.94739	219	3.64644	243	4.70289	252	4.76256	66	5.98378	176	5.64129
Forest of Dean	175	4.94623	119	4.22654	358	4.01732	118	5.27275	188	5.25438	117	5.96014
North Kesteven	176	4.94556	139	4.1007	311	4.40175	295	4.61748	158	5.39182	86	6.21606
Scottish Borders	177	4.94513	175	3.88423	310	4.40577	80	5.46514	181	5.27846	166	5.69203
North Warwickshire	178	4.94255	194	3.76591	282	4.5172	286	4.66346	59	6.04205	160	5.72414
Charnwood	179	4.93818	183	3.83889	126	5.088	167	5.07859	275	4.78925	128	5.89619
Oadby and Wigston	180	4.93545	208	3.69303	365	3.90211	53	5.65035	272	4.82201	41	6.60975
Rossendale	181	4.93432	124	4.2105	258	4.64305	122	5.2572	296	4.69581	133	5.86503
Arun	182	4.9338	67	4.69433	274	4.55885	181	5.03028	266	4.83942	194	5.5461
Milton Keynes	183	4.93063	272	3.25461	95	5.23774	161	5.0998	149	5.44494	184	5.61606
Lewisham	184	4.92583	260	3.33384	108	5.15074	163	5.09291	201	5.15222	127	5.89944
Staffordshire Moorlands	185	4.91394	73	4.64615	359	4.00302	325	4.46232	97	5.753	164	5.70523
Amber Valley	186	4.91007	206	3.70578	288	4.50332	106	5.32192	95	5.76	224	5.25933
East Northamptonshire	187	4.90536	150	3.99495	168	4.9446	291	4.64715	171	5.32055	183	5.61957
North Tyneside	188	4.90442	328	2.83644	48	5.46696	44	5.71102	139	5.51661	266	4.99106
Worthing	189	4.90059	177	3.88117	232	4.74515	169	5.07528	221	5.03763	151	5.76372
Cardiff	190	4.89473	244	3.46013	18	5.74779	121	5.25922	265	4.84044	238	5.16609
Renfrewshire	191	4.89424	268	3.28399	129	5.08115	82	5.45591	157	5.40279	227	5.24739
Northumberland	192	4.89365	256	3.38971	89	5.28669	83	5.44895	222	5.03303	217	5.30988

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	193	4.88516	174	3.88854	27	5.62497	274	4.71137	212	5.07606	244	5.12489
Mid Suffolk	194	4.88468	7	5.62415	321	4.32318	300	4.59954	246	4.92416	268	4.95238
Newark and Sherwood	195	4.88411	218	3.6562	110	5.13816	152	5.13201	224	5.00829	197	5.4859
South Staffordshire	196	4.87868	168	3.92197	363	3.93593	345	4.29712	33	6.24373	110	5.99467
Lancaster	197	4.86584	131	4.18131	58	5.42803	270	4.7154	234	4.9735	255	5.03095
Wyre	198	4.86363	109	4.29464	318	4.34236	107	5.3207	233	4.9766	207	5.38387
Rochford	199	4.8597	240	3.47275	355	4.04284	250	4.76718	29	6.28887	159	5.72687
Canterbury	200	4.85367	106	4.31418	305	4.42899	157	5.11415	277	4.7698	177	5.64123
West Lothian	201	4.85046	301	3.06931	170	4.93586	109	5.31389	134	5.5343	203	5.39894
Fife	202	4.83871	257	3.36161	53	5.451	192	4.98639	223	5.03185	209	5.3627
Melton	203	4.83785	117	4.2301	291	4.49695	233	4.83403	263	4.84503	149	5.78311
Maldon	204	4.83539	126	4.20246	360	3.98915	205	4.9407	175	5.29945	154	5.74519
West Lancashire	205	4.83232	201	3.74334	302	4.4596	123	5.25642	172	5.31616	206	5.38609
Falkirk	206	4.82926	302	3.0568	111	5.13684	174	5.05581	70	5.96422	273	4.93264
Torridge	207	4.82257	130	4.18881	330	4.27359	77	5.48232	341	4.33069	136	5.83744
Powys	208	4.82137	182	3.84009	148	5.01161	315	4.52241	217	5.05564	173	5.67709
Inverclyde	209	4.80764	237	3.49145	244	4.70218	108	5.31769	117	5.61471	276	4.91215
Rother	210	4.80698	95	4.42562	273	4.57158	200	4.95564	260	4.85459	231	5.22745
South Derbyshire	211	4.80549	180	3.84521	368	3.8334	317	4.51354	105	5.66497	95	6.17036
Pembrokeshire	212	4.80504	262	3.32423	177	4.9151	319	4.49691	62	6.01127	220	5.27766
Orkney Islands	213	4.79204	110	4.29165	379	3.32381	144	5.1532	43	6.17231	260	5.01923
North Norfolk	214	4.7887	155	3.96095	212	4.79738	105	5.33142	329	4.43429	202	5.41947
Copeland	215	4.78814	158	3.95076	256	4.6488	273	4.71249	39	6.17919	331	4.44944
Midlothian	216	4.78538	255	3.40062	361	3.97253	142	5.16442	48	6.11305	221	5.27628
Bolton	217	4.78285	275	3.23512	29	5.59283	115	5.29439	207	5.11101	303	4.68087
Dover	218	4.77517	107	4.31272	272	4.57241	185	5.02239	255	4.88472	249	5.0836
Tower Hamlets	219	4.77152	303	3.05647	132	5.07329	46	5.70877	304	4.6287	204	5.39038
Rushmoor	220	4.76511	213	3.67253	271	4.59948	259	4.7498	189	5.2439	190	5.55985
Ryedale	221	4.75763	160	3.94255	350	4.12579	349	4.24428	259	4.85597	39	6.61956
Hackney	222	4.74338	289	3.12021	62	5.40475	153	5.13148	319	4.50988	193	5.55058
South Kesteven	223	4.73828	191	3.77368	260	4.64039	229	4.84193	287	4.72281	162	5.71257
Adur	224	4.72847	202	3.73341	239	4.71786	176	5.05367	325	4.4599	172	5.6775
Isle of Anglesey	225	4.72716	111	4.28999	348	4.13378	227	4.84326	238	4.94714	200	5.42163
Angus	226	4.72548	234	3.50926	346	4.16583	236	4.82351	144	5.48971	178	5.63908
Kirklees	227	4.72331	300	3.07077	5	6.03482	244	4.79835	264	4.84141	281	4.87122
Brent	228	4.71967	293	3.09774	159	4.9808	39	5.75107	367	3.78562	112	5.98309
Havant	229	4.71916	283	3.19228	213	4.78854	281	4.69047	126	5.58111	214	5.34338
Aberdeen City	230	4.71863	235	3.49887	181	4.89677	243	4.80229	180	5.2838	245	5.11141
Braintree	231	4.71742	171	3.90491	313	4.39216	271	4.71497	225	5.00764	189	5.56744

Broxbourne	232	4.71722	306	3.00158	172	4.92938	222	4.87504	155	5.41984	211	5.36027
Ashford	233	4.71361	198	3.75641	233	4.74416	310	4.53446	215	5.0698	198	5.4632
Colchester	234	4.71335	188	3.80292	249	4.68032	248	4.78321	298	4.67294	181	5.62734
Crawley	235	4.71044	297	3.08147	91	5.27739	238	4.81718	244	4.92749	199	5.44866
Calderdale	236	4.70561	259	3.35169	60	5.41428	258	4.7506	154	5.42219	311	4.58928
Ceredigion	237	4.70109	122	4.22049	326	4.29944	151	5.1327	305	4.62694	232	5.22588
Denbighshire	238	4.69927	116	4.23134	317	4.34877	242	4.80356	182	5.27439	289	4.83828
Carmarthenshire	239	4.69888	214	3.67102	296	4.48083	262	4.73819	151	5.43242	237	5.17196
Wyre Forest	240	4.69054	162	3.9303	264	4.62784	305	4.57442	241	4.93772	208	5.38241
Erewash	241	4.68871	292	3.11221	185	4.87922	134	5.19639	250	4.89604	212	5.35967
West Lindsey	242	4.68089	129	4.19111	344	4.17478	299	4.60119	256	4.88219	191	5.55516
Conwy	243	4.6682	222	3.62398	287	4.50565	251	4.76474	173	5.30293	242	5.14368
East Staffordshire	244	4.66628	189	3.8003	275	4.55682	303	4.57648	288	4.71802	171	5.67977
Flintshire	245	4.64402	266	3.29001	303	4.45508	173	5.06022	145	5.47041	270	4.94438
Wigan	246	4.64263	264	3.30566	26	5.65783	314	4.52771	186	5.2573	328	4.46466
North Lanarkshire	247	4.63613	336	2.77377	20	5.68245	275	4.70822	138	5.52196	326	4.49422
Moray	248	4.63318	239	3.47596	367	3.85168	217	4.90846	152	5.42957	196	5.50026
Isle of Wight	249	4.62072	133	4.15853	211	4.80165	288	4.65422	312	4.5809	278	4.90833
Medway	250	4.6147	305	3.00463	67	5.39162	178	5.05195	253	4.88949	295	4.73583
West Dunbartonshire	251	4.6138	332	2.80296	59	5.41889	208	4.93476	137	5.52223	334	4.39018
Pendle	252	4.61085	220	3.63533	329	4.28197	35	5.78028	302	4.64301	299	4.71365
North Ayrshire	253	4.60665	284	3.18393	254	4.65665	225	4.85923	113	5.629	300	4.70443
Leeds	254	4.60426	317	2.90406	1	6.32905	328	4.435	240	4.94442	332	4.40878
Swindon	255	4.59296	290	3.11628	146	5.01674	313	4.52903	193	5.2208	250	5.08194
Torbay	256	4.57651	205	3.7145	160	4.97468	129	5.22718	330	4.43177	316	4.5344
Birmingham	257	4.5759	347	2.70395	2	6.26675	322	4.47946	332	4.41531	262	5.01404
Stockton-on-Tees	258	4.57346	329	2.81802	208	4.80731	92	5.40514	232	4.977	283	4.85983
Newcastle upon Tyne	259	4.57179	340	2.74665	22	5.67057	99	5.35888	315	4.55515	320	4.5277
Gloucester	260	4.56801	278	3.20926	242	4.70758	230	4.84118	254	4.88658	236	5.19544
Nuneaton and Bedworth	261	4.56712	313	2.94731	174	4.92452	148	5.14111	210	5.10387	298	4.71876
Preston	262	4.56615	246	3.45599	150	5.00777	172	5.06764	273	4.79536	322	4.50397
Stevenage	263	4.56441	318	2.90365	198	4.84033	324	4.46598	141	5.50621	247	5.10589
Swansea	264	4.56384	314	2.94084	39	5.50241	204	4.94245	310	4.60439	291	4.8291
West Suffolk	265	4.56234	146	4.02448	246	4.69996	331	4.39656	270	4.82432	282	4.86638
Derby	266	4.56179	343	2.73965	46	5.46991	278	4.69874	216	5.05598	286	4.84466
Gravesham	267	4.55757	253	3.4125	183	4.88371	277	4.70164	303	4.64106	240	5.14893
Dudley	268	4.55611	346	2.7125	21	5.67645	336	4.35113	211	5.08735	267	4.95311
North East Derbyshire	269	4.54798	337	2.76851	354	4.05151	356	4.13452	106	5.65764	99	6.12771
Scarborough	270	4.54119	192	3.77079	192	4.84996	360	4.07136	328	4.43442	188	5.57943

Carlisle	271	4.5383	227	3.57201	216	4.76927	212	4.92466	252	4.89185	317	4.53371
East Ayrshire	272	4.53542	243	3.46151	298	4.47463	294	4.63796	183	5.26419	288	4.83882
Northampton	273	4.53469	287	3.16505	166	4.95949	266	4.72669	291	4.71511	246	5.10711
Eastbourne	274	4.52852	210	3.67799	342	4.177	74	5.49632	337	4.36145	275	4.92984
Swale	275	4.52599	247	3.4542	238	4.7227	292	4.64378	276	4.78306	257	5.02621
Blackburn with Darwen	276	4.52486	269	3.273	162	4.9691	140	5.16926	289	4.71684	324	4.49612
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	277	4.52384	156	3.9575	304	4.4496	341	4.33465	308	4.62078	226	5.25664
Neath Port Talbot	278	4.52362	325	2.86361	139	5.05012	189	5.00224	174	5.30105	333	4.40111
Folkestone and Hythe	279	4.52341	223	3.61774	290	4.49948	231	4.83844	279	4.75797	279	4.90342
Kettering	280	4.52278	286	3.16658	266	4.62516	287	4.6558	249	4.89916	223	5.26722
Coventry	281	4.52092	316	2.90943	101	5.18203	255	4.75632	299	4.66956	248	5.08725
County Durham	282	4.51881	327	2.8524	84	5.30328	239	4.8159	226	5.00752	309	4.61497
Clackmannanshire	283	4.50882	273	3.25008	364	3.93003	199	4.96342	167	5.34161	251	5.05896
Redditch	284	4.50505	291	3.11601	320	4.32363	213	4.92358	227	5.00299	239	5.15907
Basildon	285	4.5009	288	3.1245	218	4.76748	354	4.16271	119	5.60585	287	4.84396
Richmondshire	286	4.49521	128	4.19911	347	4.15281	241	4.81176	380	3.33134	114	5.98103
Sedgemoor	287	4.48684	169	3.9075	338	4.1976	312	4.52941	300	4.65417	241	5.14554
Worcester	288	4.48466	204	3.72536	332	4.25384	261	4.73905	293	4.70933	263	4.99571
Luton	289	4.48066	360	2.50363	96	5.23231	128	5.23067	350	4.22057	234	5.21614
Liverpool	290	4.48038	307	2.97997	23	5.67004	297	4.60528	271	4.823	338	4.3236
Gateshead	291	4.4803	353	2.54897	86	5.29845	188	5.00347	219	5.05398	323	4.49662
Plymouth	292	4.47942	308	2.96677	83	5.30403	296	4.60553	261	4.85288	304	4.66788
Barrow-in-Furness	293	4.47159	252	3.44121	323	4.30894	215	4.91369	115	5.61615	357	4.07798
Sheffield	294	4.46505	296	3.08956	104	5.1696	369	3.84646	248	4.91436	219	5.30526
Bridgend	295	4.46098	341	2.74178	190	4.86011	293	4.64101	184	5.25914	292	4.80287
Newcastle-under-Lyme	296	4.44919	267	3.28909	280	4.52875	348	4.26687	208	5.11096	253	5.05026
Newport	297	4.44874	294	3.09172	98	5.22112	308	4.54299	267	4.83394	314	4.55395
North Lincolnshire	298	4.4476	215	3.66893	236	4.73825	307	4.55305	285	4.73269	315	4.54507
Telford and Wrekin	299	4.4413	319	2.90107	131	5.075	245	4.79445	301	4.6435	294	4.79248
South Tyneside	300	4.44107	369	2.26492	28	5.59972	149	5.13965	282	4.74649	330	4.45458
Tamworth	301	4.43799	334	2.78394	327	4.29652	254	4.75647	142	5.5059	284	4.84711
Oldham	302	4.43231	242	3.46543	130	5.08024	267	4.72508	280	4.75554	354	4.13524
Darlington	303	4.42491	331	2.8035	234	4.74007	117	5.2853	268	4.82996	327	4.4657
Bassetlaw	304	4.41404	279	3.20925	269	4.60526	340	4.33544	204	5.12243	293	4.79785
Rhondda Cynon Taff	305	4.41056	295	3.09124	88	5.28704	290	4.64909	294	4.70236	339	4.32306
Glasgow City	306	4.40142	311	2.94787	3	6.11788	363	3.97822	251	4.89506	358	4.06806
Southend-on-Sea	307	4.39954	321	2.8965	125	5.0996	330	4.41122	237	4.96972	308	4.62067
Lisburn and Castlereagh	308	4.38524	98	4.39362	362	3.94968	214	4.91767	297	4.69193	365	3.97329
Burnley	309	4.38516	276	3.22678	66	5.39715	249	4.78195	322	4.49454	360	4.0254

Newham	310	4.38115	367	2.34793	169	4.94193	60	5.5886	378	3.39999	182	5.62733
Wellingborough	311	4.37649	236	3.49371	191	4.85425	316	4.5203	323	4.48268	318	4.53149
Wrexham	312	4.37569	261	3.32666	307	4.41794	321	4.48218	228	5.00035	306	4.65135
Castle Point	313	4.36607	320	2.89827	352	4.10506	301	4.59139	196	5.19494	254	5.04071
East Lindsey	314	4.35259	226	3.57419	289	4.50149	284	4.67781	358	4.05888	269	4.95057
St. Helens	315	4.34921	277	3.2105	100	5.19285	357	4.13344	203	5.12428	356	4.08497
Hyndburn	316	4.34732	251	3.44278	251	4.67071	190	4.99544	286	4.72678	369	3.90088
Rochdale	317	4.34473	309	2.95871	136	5.05841	232	4.83482	292	4.71362	353	4.15807
Ards and North Down	318	4.3413	91	4.44852	372	3.69496	289	4.65176	349	4.22911	302	4.68216
Fermanagh and Omagh	319	4.3363	217	3.66216	366	3.86372	49	5.69062	365	3.87178	310	4.59324
Slough	320	4.33604	348	2.69432	158	4.98993	351	4.20061	347	4.2428	192	5.55252
Ashfield	321	4.33562	371	2.2414	196	4.84181	162	5.09444	236	4.97021	319	4.53024
Mid Ulster	322	4.32444	248	3.44865	357	4.02853	85	5.43533	368	3.77892	274	4.93078
Breckland	323	4.32292	164	3.9292	345	4.17459	318	4.50505	362	3.98889	261	5.01687
Torfaen	324	4.32262	310	2.95853	278	4.54727	375	3.68606	80	5.86633	313	4.55491
Harlow	325	4.30027	365	2.41808	165	4.95995	306	4.57167	269	4.82736	297	4.72432
Peterborough	326	4.29909	342	2.74032	43	5.47709	276	4.70386	340	4.33541	345	4.23875
Bradford	327	4.29585	333	2.78918	15	5.77866	342	4.32101	346	4.26433	336	4.32607
Gosport	328	4.28275	282	3.19608	314	4.38247	203	4.943	334	4.38208	321	4.51013
Portsmouth	329	4.2796	281	3.19684	112	5.13085	339	4.34105	321	4.49592	346	4.23331
Thanet	330	4.27192	270	3.2655	277	4.54992	219	4.89401	324	4.46768	351	4.18249
Caerphilly	331	4.25508	361	2.49642	122	5.10432	359	4.09544	283	4.74551	290	4.8337
Knowsley	332	4.24807	326	2.85692	265	4.62588	338	4.34931	195	5.19804	349	4.21021
Chesterfield	333	4.24642	339	2.75034	250	4.67676	352	4.1968	295	4.69962	277	4.90857
South Holland	334	4.24213	228	3.55179	373	3.63818	335	4.37486	345	4.28529	210	5.36052
Thurrock	335	4.24041	363	2.47452	221	4.76414	355	4.14765	257	4.87841	272	4.93731
Tendring	336	4.23131	232	3.53238	325	4.30268	216	4.91283	363	3.9132	325	4.49545
Halton	337	4.22769	285	3.16821	217	4.76842	364	3.94713	170	5.32118	367	3.9335
Causeway Coast and Glens	338	4.21414	186	3.82297	369	3.80475	332	4.38302	356	4.06435	264	4.99562
Ipswich	339	4.21266	315	2.93748	207	4.80795	311	4.53126	353	4.12167	305	4.66493
Corby	340	4.21168	349	2.69036	294	4.48746	309	4.54107	309	4.60832	296	4.73118
Redcar and Cleveland	341	4.20248	354	2.53937	179	4.90433	256	4.75444	316	4.52702	342	4.28724
Newry, Mourne and Down	342	4.19938	249	3.44807	370	3.76271	183	5.0265	357	4.06003	301	4.69959
Walsall	343	4.19932	358	2.51976	128	5.08344	366	3.91583	247	4.9162	312	4.56138
Leicester	344	4.19886	375	2.13847	11	5.91783	220	4.87704	375	3.6054	329	4.45557
Manchester	345	4.18953	344	2.72957	24	5.66746	327	4.45561	355	4.08796	363	4.00704
Dundee City	346	4.18385	324	2.87537	36	5.51715	326	4.45838	331	4.42606	373	3.64226
Mid and East Antrim	347	4.18322	173	3.90116	377	3.45382	298	4.60201	361	4.02114	271	4.93797
Tameside	348	4.17913	330	2.81699	143	5.01857	350	4.23245	262	4.85045	364	3.9772

Bolsover	349	4.17503	355	2.53632	315	4.37659	361	4.07123	311	4.58432	218	5.30668
Antrim and Newtownabbey	350	4.17126	187	3.81975	375	3.538	165	5.08817	351	4.19205	348	4.21834
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	351	4.16489	212	3.67395	376	3.50789	155	5.11935	373	3.63465	280	4.88863
Norwich	352	4.16284	298	3.08081	153	5.0028	246	4.79236	370	3.71036	347	4.22785
Barking and Dagenham	353	4.16198	376	2.10008	255	4.65181	260	4.74213	359	4.04416	222	5.27174
Salford	354	4.12672	338	2.75887	135	5.06066	337	4.34973	317	4.51937	366	3.94495
Cannock Chase	355	4.11835	323	2.87557	356	4.03332	365	3.94324	290	4.71588	258	5.02376
Wakefield	356	4.08613	352	2.56556	93	5.25305	377	3.39345	258	4.87711	335	4.34146
Sandwell	357	4.06043	374	2.20426	73	5.36195	358	4.12909	338	4.34322	344	4.26363
Lincoln	358	4.05573	322	2.88439	201	4.82862	237	4.82021	371	3.70941	359	4.036
Fenland	359	4.04874	299	3.0756	339	4.18183	362	4.05145	343	4.31352	307	4.62133
Southampton	360	4.04422	335	2.78201	155	4.99647	353	4.18112	354	4.09307	352	4.16843
Rotherham	361	4.0397	345	2.72261	175	4.9238	376	3.43443	274	4.79237	337	4.3253
Wolverhampton	362	4.03919	373	2.2364	52	5.4525	373	3.75991	327	4.45546	341	4.29166
Derry City and Strabane	363	4.02879	312	2.94775	349	4.12608	234	4.82863	348	4.23171	362	4.00978
Nottingham	364	4.00874	372	2.23979	13	5.83911	333	4.38129	369	3.73614	370	3.84739
Mansfield	365	4.00457	364	2.4251	214	4.78634	334	4.38066	342	4.31597	355	4.11478
Hastings	366	4.00017	265	3.29691	312	4.39421	269	4.71981	377	3.40019	350	4.18971
Belfast	367	3.99715	263	3.30909	178	4.90545	130	5.21816	374	3.6191	379	2.93394
Sunderland	368	3.9681	377	2.09509	188	4.86631	329	4.41935	306	4.62539	371	3.83434
Boston	369	3.92604	351	2.62245	374	3.5769	347	4.2904	344	4.29351	285	4.84695
Barnsley	370	3.90874	356	2.53412	154	4.99689	378	3.15307	314	4.56351	340	4.29613
Stoke-on-Trent	371	3.88321	368	2.31311	41	5.4915	374	3.70431	333	4.40832	375	3.4988
Merthyr Tydfil	372	3.85091	370	2.24185	309	4.4086	367	3.90492	231	4.98037	372	3.71882
Doncaster	373	3.83113	359	2.51947	102	5.18195	379	3.10105	339	4.3373	361	4.01587
North East Lincolnshire	374	3.82879	350	2.6515	147	5.0138	370	3.8119	360	4.03552	374	3.63124
Hartlepool	375	3.72659	366	2.40112	215	4.76976	371	3.77977	336	4.36479	376	3.31747
Blaenau Gwent	376	3.68232	379	1.95383	340	4.17706	368	3.86734	320	4.50182	368	3.91155
Great Yarmouth	377	3.67137	362	2.47565	297	4.47864	372	3.76987	379	3.34988	343	4.2828
Blackpool	378	3.65939	357	2.52259	141	5.02098	323	4.4687	372	3.70865	380	2.57604
Middlesbrough	379	3.65084	378	2.0233	193	4.84887	343	4.31946	364	3.90277	378	3.15982
Kingston upon Hull	380	3.42531	380	1.88614	85	5.30251	380	2.97056	366	3.80546	377	3.16187

Annex 2

Methodology

The *UK Social Fabric Index* is a framework to assess the community strength of places within the 382 local authorities in the UK, reflecting both the nature of lived experiences and the uniqueness of different local places that people live in.

It seeks to redefine the way in which community strength is measured and seen, moving away from the traditional understanding of economic or physical values within place, but also looking at the important features of community that people themselves identify and encounter within their day-to-day life.

In developing the *UK Social Fabric Index,* we used a two-fold approach using qualitative and quantitative methods to offer a unique insight into how the social fabric of local places have changed across the country. The approach involved:

1. **Deliberative workshops**

   We worked with people in local places across the country to hone our understanding of social fabric. Onward in partnership with JL Partners conducted four deliberative workshops in: Bridgend, Enniskillen, Glasgow and Grimsby. We undertook 12 interview sessions, which were moderated by JL Partners, between February (pre-lockdown) and July (post-lockdown). These sessions lasted 90 minutes each and followed a consistent discussion guide. The workshops focused on understanding what community means to people, what the ideal community is and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

   In selecting the participants, we attempted to capture a variety of backgrounds and experiences of different people; they consisted of 20-70 years-olds from the social grade of B, C1, C2, D and E, with an even mix of men and women. This provided a great opportunity to understand what matters to people and also what to include in our index.

2. **The data**

   Onward undertook a comprehensive data mapping exercise to identify and develop our taxonomy for creating a new understanding of community strength. Through this exercise, we established the geographic coverage and time-series limitations of the available data that we could incorporate into our index.

   We also held roundtable discussions with experts and academics to assure our conceptual approach to – and measurement of – Social Fabric. We used 79 indicators from over 50 different publicly available data sources to construct the index and accurately capture this.

Step by Step

1 Selecting the indicators

We identified the most relevant indicators and elements through the following criteria framework: 1) existing academic literature and expert advice gave us an understanding on the broad concepts involved in social capital, 2) the ideas of what matters in communities were developed with communities themselves from our deliberative workshops and 3) this was constrained by the data that are publicly and readily available.

Each of the five threads capture an important theme of the social fabric of local places that matter to ordinary people. They are organised by elements, which are in turn composed of indicators. The five threads have between three to five elements, and each element has around two to eight indicators.

We used an extensive variety of publicly available data sources and national surveys that gave as much coverage in terms of geography and time as the data would allow. Based on input from expert advice and existing literature, the index was refined to simplify the measurements and improve the reliability of what was being measured.

2 Imputed data

Scores for some indicators have been Estimated using survey data from *Understanding Society*. In these cases, we used individual responses to survey questions to make assumptions about local authority populations.

We used a standard set of demographics to estimate the relationship between the given indicator and characteristics such as rurality, education, age and ethnicity. We then applied the regression coefficients to local authorities to estimate a score based on the area's demographic profile.

3 Transformation

To ensure that higher scores always reflect a stronger social fabric, we reversed the scores for some indicators. For example, the crime rate was reversed such that places with fewer crimes per capita received higher scores for that indicator.

If an indicator was highly skewed or had a long tail, then we transformed the data to ensure that extreme values did not unreasonably affect an area’s score or make comparisons between areas meaningless. We did this by taking the logarithm of the values.

4 Normalisation

The indicators in the index are based on a number of different measuring units and magnitudes (for example: years, percentages, nominal and ordinal scales). The data for each indicator was normalised to allow us to create composite measures and compare scores for different local authorities across the index.

We approached this by using min-max scaling. The data is rescaled to a fixed range (zero and ten) which, for each local authority, assigns a score according to how close the value is to the best case (strongest) and worst case (most frayed).

$$X = \frac{x - min\,(x)}{max\,(x) - min\,(x)}$$

$X =$ normalised score

$x =$ raw score

5 Weighting

We would only introduce a weighting scheme if there was a clear rationale and good evidence, based on statistical tests, for treating some indicators as more important than others. We tested this approach using maximum likelihood factor analysis, which would allow us to assign weights to each variable based on the factor loadings.

We discovered two pitfalls with this approach. The first was how we treat missing data. We would be unable to assign weights to any local authority that is missing an indicator score. This would have reduced the coverage of our index. Second, as the current index is calculated with most recent data (it is cross-sectional), we would only have a sample size of 382; this is not large enough to give robust results.

Consequently, the scores are unweighted. In other words, each indicator and element receives an equal weight. Our current approach allows us to calculate the element score as a simple average of the available indicator scores. This removes a layer of complexity from our Index and maximises coverage.

Our Steering Group

We are delighted to have the support of an expert cross-party steering group to help guide the research programme over the next two years.

Lord James O'Shaughnessy
Chairman and Member of the House of Lords

Jon Cruddas
Labour MP for Dagenham and Rainham

Eilidh Whiteford
Former SNP MP for Banff and Buchan,
2010-17

Danny Kruger
Conservative MP for Devizes

Vidhya Alakeson
Chief Executive Officer of Power to Change

Dr Chris Wood
Assistant Director, Research, Public Policy and Public Affairs of Shelter UK

Frank Soodeen
Deputy Director of External Affairs of Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Alex Smith
Founder of The Cares Family and Obama Fellow

Rob Walsh
Chief Executive of North East Lincolnshire Council

Richard Clark
Former Executive Partner of Slaughter and May

Will Tanner
Director of Onward

Fjolla Krasniqi
Programme Manager

Endnotes

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About the authors

Will Tanner

Will Tanner advised the Prime Minister Theresa May between 2013 and 2017, as a Special Adviser in the Home Office and as Deputy Head of Policy in 10 Downing Street. He has also previously worked for the leading communications firm, Portland, and for the independent thinktank, Reform.

James O'Shaughnessy

James O'Shaughnessy has been a member of the House of Lords since 2015, and most recently served as Parliamentary Under Secretary for Health. He also served as No.10 Director of Policy to David Cameron, authoring the Conservative Manifesto and led the development and implementation of the Programme for Government. James was also involved in education reform, where he is regarded as one of the originators of the Conservative Government's free school programme. He has set up a number of organisations – Floreat, the International Positive Education Network, Edspace.

Fjolla Krasniqi

Before joining the team, Fjolla worked as Chief of Staff to Seema Kennedy OBE MP during her time as PPS to the Prime Minister, Theresa May. She also previously worked in the Parliamentary office of Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, while he was Foreign Secretary and at The Elections Centre with psephologists Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher. Fjolla has a Master's degree in Public Policy from University College London.

James Blagden

James Blagden joined Onward in 2018 and now works as a researcher specialising in data analysis and mapping. He previously studied at the University of Southampton and holds a Masters degree in Public Policy from the University of Reading.

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