

Featured graphic

Mapping the 2019 Indices of Deprivation

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Every few years, there is a buzz of excitement and something of a media frenzy surrounding the publication of new deprivation indices for England, with similar datasets published to different timetables for the rest of the UK. Some of this is ill advised, and occasionally in bad taste, with newspapers sending reporters and photographers to document the 'worst' or 'poorest' parts of the country. The old adage that 'what gets measured gets managed' is in the case of the English Indices of Deprivation at times more like 'what gets measured gets mocked'.

Yet despite such uses, and the fact that it is a partial and imperfect way of understanding the world, it remains the case that governments of all persuasions have used this tool to assess local need at a national level for more than two decades, going back to the Index of Local Conditions, which was based on 1991 Census data. I believe it is also a useful way to understand and compare places, so long as we are aware of what such indices do and do not measure. At present, we are able to rank all 32,844 lower layer super output areas in England using this metric, and it provides a very fine-grained view of multiple deprivation.

In this sense, it can be an extremely useful metric, although I would like to see a move away from the publication of individual LSOA-level ranks and perhaps the publication only of deciles or percentiles - e.g. so that instead of saying an area is ranked number one out of 32,844 for deprivation we could just say that 'this group of LSOAs are among the one per cent most deprived in England', thereby making the deprivation spotlight more diffuse, and possibly less stigmatising.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, which is part of the wider set of Indices of Deprivation, was published in September 2019 and I worked with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to produce a set of local authority-focused outputs that were released on the same day as the new IMD data. I was provided with the data in advance by the team at MHCLG, subject to strict data access protocols, in order to enable simultaneous publication of all outputs. The reason for taking on this project was to provide a national, standardised set of map and data outputs at the geographical scale which IMD data are most commonly used in.

In addition to media interest in the dataset, the release of new IMD data is also accompanied by the production of a large volume of new maps from individual local authorities across the country - and at the time of the 2019 release there were 317 of them in England. This often leads to the production of useful maps, but it can make comparisons difficult, with no standardised approach. Therefore, my goals with this data and mapping project were quite simple, as described below.

First, I wanted to provide a set of static maps that could be used across all platforms and on all devices - from small phone screens to large monitors. This accessibility aspect was very important to me. *Second*, I wanted to provide maps that were easy to understand, so I included some useful place labels for orientation, as well as adding building footprints to highlight the extent of the urban fabric. *Third*, I wanted to give users the ability to see how one local authority compared to others - so each map uses the same data classification and bar chart legend. In the case of Middlesbrough (see Figure 1) we can tell that 48.8 per cent of its LSOAs are among the 10 per cent most deprived in England. This is the highest figure nationally. By contrast, only 1.2 per cent of LSOAs here are among the least deprived in England.

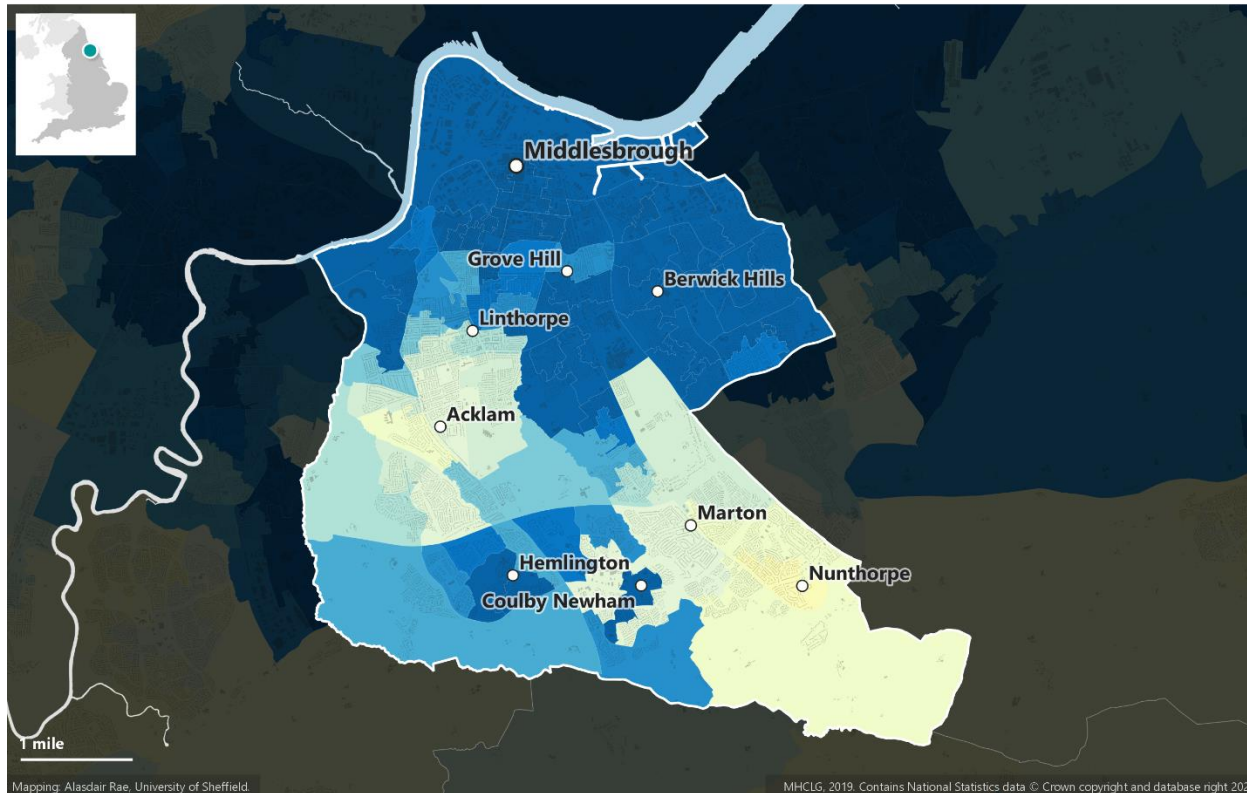
The maps have been used by a wide variety of organisations, including the Daily Mirror, Lancashire County Council, Suffolk County Council and thousands of other users who have downloaded content from the website. Owing to the ongoing demand, I have recently been working on a new set of outputs that will be released in collaboration with MHCLG and mySociety, to be published on a new website in mid-2020.

The maps for all local authorities in England can be found on the project website: <https://imd2019.group.shef.ac.uk/>

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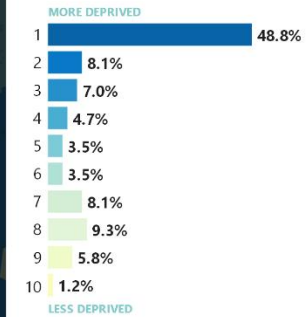
Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

MIDDLESBROUGH



Local authority profile

% of LSOAs in each national deprivation decile



What this map shows

This is a map of Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 data for **Middlesbrough**. The colours on the map indicate the deprivation decile of each Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) for England as a whole, and the coloured bars above indicate the proportion of LSOAs in each national deprivation decile. The most deprived areas (decile 1) are shown in blue. It is important to keep in mind that the data relate to small areas and do not tell us how deprived, or wealthy, individual people are. LSOAs have an average population of just under 1,700 (as of 2017).

