



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister
Creating sustainable communities



CASE-BROOKINGS
CENSUS BRIEFS

No.4

STICERD
TOYOTA CENTRE
Suntory and Toyota International Centres
for Economics and Related Disciplines

E·S·R·C
ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL

London School of Economics
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE
Tel: 020 7955 6679

Narrowing the Gap?

THE TRAJECTORY OF ENGLAND'S
POOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, 1991-2001

Alan Berube
November 2005

SUMMARY

- Although poor neighbourhoods have received considerable policy attention over the past several years, statistical obstacles have often confounded efforts to track the condition and trajectory of these places, especially across decades using census data.
- This paper uses data from the 1991 and 2001 censuses, and geographical information systems (GIS) analysis, to analyse what happened during the 1990s to a collection of neighbourhoods in England identified as “poor” in 1991. It extends earlier analysis conducted at CASE by Glennerster et al. (1999).
- In 1991, the 273 “poverty wards” represented the 3 percent most deprived small areas in England. They were concentrated in the Northern regions and London, and contained roughly 5 percent of the nation’s population. Compared to national averages, residents of these wards were more likely to live in social housing, be members of minority ethnic groups, and be “work-poor” (of working age, but not in work, study or a training scheme).
- Over the decade, the poverty wards made progress on a few key measures. Most poor neighbourhoods experienced declines in work-poverty, which were accompanied by employment gains most frequently in the Northern regions. Rising qualifications levels in poor neighbourhoods kept pace with those in the rest of the nation. Meanwhile, the proportions of households that own their home, and have access to a car, rose faster in the poverty wards than in the rest of the nation.
- On other measures of neighbourhood vitality, however, already-large gaps between poverty wards and national averages widened. The proportion of poor-neighbourhood children in lone-parent families rose from 27 to 40 percent from 1991 to 2001. Housing vacancy rates declined more slowly in the poverty wards than the rest of the nation, with most wards outside of London experiencing vacancy increases. The proportion of working-age people with a long-term limiting illness rose everywhere, but faster in poverty wards than elsewhere.
- In important respects, conditions in poverty wards improved over the 1990s, but the gap between those neighbourhoods and the nation as a whole remains very wide. Moreover, differences across regions, in some cases reflecting underlying demographic distinctions, complicate the overall picture. Important parts of the government’s agenda for improving poor neighbourhoods were put into place after the 2001 Census. These trends thus provide an important baseline for assessing progress during the current decade, and serve as a reminder that improvements in deprived areas often occur incrementally, and require long-term efforts rather than short bursts of special programmes.



INTRODUCTION

The fortunes of poor neighbourhoods represent an active area for government policy. Between the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, area-based programmes like Sure Start and Health Action Zones, and myriad other regeneration initiatives, much energy and money has been devoted to improving poor areas and outcomes for the people living there.

Yet detailed information as to the historical conditions and trajectories of poor neighbourhoods is difficult to find. Definitions of social and economic deprivation are constantly evolving. Meanwhile, shifts occur not only in the composition of neighbourhoods, but also in their very borders, frustrating efforts to track the health of places over time. A place identified as a “poor neighbourhood” in one year may be neither “poor,” nor even a “neighbourhood,” the next year.

This report departs from much previous research on poor neighbourhoods by tracking demographic and economic changes, as revealed in the 1991 and 2001 censuses, for a selected set of areas identified as poor in 1991. Glennerster and others (1999) studied these “poverty wards” as the basis for CASE’s ongoing study of 12 of the poorest urban areas in the country over seven years (Lupton 2001; Lupton 2003; Paskell and Power 2005). Rather than asking whether neighbourhoods in general have improved or declined, or whether today’s poor neighbourhoods are different from yesterday’s, this paper examines the changes occurring over the course of a decade in a set group of highly deprived neighbourhoods.

After reviewing how the poverty areas were defined and what data sources were used, the paper sets out the state of these poor neighbourhoods in 1991. It then explores changes that occurred in these areas across the 1990s on a variety of dimensions, including economic status, family structure, household wealth, and housing vacancy. It draws comparisons between the trajectory of these neighbourhoods, and their condition as of 2001, to the nation as a whole. In addition, the report examines the factors most closely associated with these changing conditions, such as regional location, tenure, industrial heritage, and ethnic composition.

The paper concludes with a discussion of what the results imply for government’s ongoing efforts to ensure that by 2021, no-one is seriously disadvantaged by where they live (PMSU and ODPM 2005). As this

analysis demonstrates, this ambitious goal, articulated in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, will require considerable investment, focus, and careful monitoring of deprived areas over time. The results from the 1990s, a decade of strong economic growth, suggest that even in the best of circumstances, progress in poor neighbourhoods occurs in a slow and uneven manner.

USING THE CENSUS TO TRACK NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE

Tracking a single set of poor areas over time using the census involves a series of methodological obstacles and decisions. This section explains this paper’s approach in four parts. First, it contrasts the approach used here to that applied in other recent research on poor neighbourhoods. Second, it discusses background on how the poverty wards were identified, including minor departures from the original Glennerster/Noden methodology. Third, it clarifies how the data were assembled to capture the same geographies in 2001 as in 1991, in light of electoral ward boundary changes that occurred in most of England during that time. Finally, it explains which census data were used to explore various dimensions of neighbourhood change, and how discrepancies between the 1991 and 2001 censuses were reconciled.¹

Longitudinal approach

This study focuses on a single set of places over time – 273 electoral wards identified as “poor” in 1991 – and examines a variety of demographic and economic changes occurring in those places using the 1991 and 2001 censuses. In using this longitudinal approach, the study aims to reveal the extent and pace of change over the course of a decade in some of the nation’s most deprived small areas, and to identify important correlates of those changes at the local level. This approach finds precedents in U.S. research and policy analysis, which has used that country’s censuses to track changing conditions across decades at the neighbourhood level (Pettit and Kingsley 2003; GAO 2003).

Notably, however, this method differs somewhat from that employed in related research on poor neighbourhoods in the 1990s. Much of the research conducted for and by the UK Government on poor neighbourhoods as a whole (that is, non-case-study research) has related to the Indices of Deprivation.

Briefly, the Indices aim to rank all neighbourhoods on an objective set of criteria, drawn from several separately measured domains, that are combined in a single weighted measure for each neighbourhood that represents the extent of “multiple deprivation.” Numerous area-based government initiatives have used multiple deprivation, or deprivation scores on a particular domain, to select the neighbourhoods or local authorities in which to focus spending, including the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Neighbourhood Management Pilots, the Single Regeneration Budget, and the New Deal for Communities (Tunstall and Lupton 2003).

Over time, however, the Indices have undergone several iterations, with attendant changes in the definition of multiple deprivation, and the geographic level at which it is measured. The first iteration was the 1991 Index of Local Conditions, which combined 13 census-based indicators into a single deprivation score for each local authority district, electoral ward, and census-based enumeration district (ED) (DoE 1995). The 1998 Index of Local Deprivation used a similar set of indicators, some updated to 1996–1997, but combined them somewhat differently to arrive at scores for local authorities (ward and ED scores were computed as well, but were simply re-computed from 1991 Census data) (DETR 1998). The 2000 Indices of Deprivation were calculated exclusively at the ward level (then summarised to the local authority level), and incorporated a much larger set of domains and indicators to arrive at an index of multiple deprivation (IMD) (DETR 2000). Finally, the 2004 English Indices of Deprivation analysed a new type of statistical geography – the Super Output Area (SOA) – and featured a revised, larger set of indicators and domains to measure multiple deprivation (ODPM 2004).

The several ways in which these studies measure “deprivation” complicate analysis of whether conditions have grown better or worse in any given geography. To be sure, relative, contemporary definitions of poverty and deprivation that evolve with changing living standards can serve as important metrics for policy. Yet policy must also make room for stable measures that can reveal the underlying extent of neighbourhood change not attributable to evolving definitions. In addition, to track those changes, the place-based measures must be available for the same geographical areas over time. The transition from local authority-based, to ward-based, to SOA-based

indices makes such inquiries difficult, as do changes in the organisation of local authority districts and modifications to electoral ward boundaries. In the future, SOAs will provide a consistent geographical concept for small area measures.

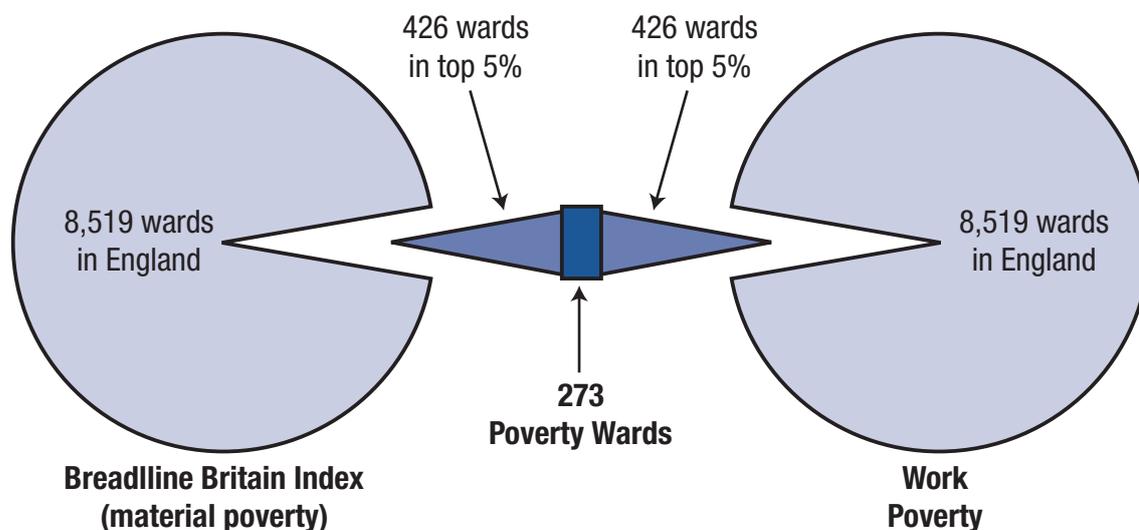
Some recent research has grappled with these measurement problems, including analyses by Lupton (2003, 2005). Her analysis of changes in 12 of Britain's poorest neighbourhoods draws on, among other sources, three decades of census data (1971–1991) and ONS benefit claims and labour market statistics dating to the mid-1990s. In some areas, however, Lupton is constrained to working with only those wards that did not undergo significant boundary changes over the inquiry period. Lupton's more recent nationwide study of the changing geography of worklessness portrays ward-level changes occurring during the 1990s, and like this study, employs 1991 and 2001 census data. For the most part, that study analyses work-poverty changes within wards as they were defined at the time of each census, and asks whether the incidence of work-poor neighbourhoods (those with at least 40 per cent of the working-age population not in work or study) has changed at the national, regional, and local authority levels. A section of that report does, however, track work-poverty changes at the ward level in six major conurbations where no ward boundary changes occurred between 1991 and 2001.²

Finally, the longitudinal approach employed here does not imply that this report tracks the same set of people over time. Neighbourhood progress and decline are highly dynamic processes, driven not only by changes occurring to the existing population, but also by the in- and out-movement of residents, and large demographic forces that alter the population of interest. For instance, an increase in the proportion of residents at the ward level with educational qualifications could owe to several factors: increased rates of degree attainment by existing residents; movement of more highly educated individuals into the neighbourhood; out-migration and/or displacement of less-educated residents; or simple aging of the population that removes a less-educated cohort of older individuals from the measure. In the end, the place may be

¹ Data from the 1991 and 2001 censuses are Crown Copyright and reproduced with the permission of the Comptroller of HMSO.

² These included the metropolitan areas of Tyne and Wear, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, West Midlands, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire.

FIGURE 1: Selection of the poverty wards, 1991



better-off with a higher proportion of qualified working-age residents, but those benefits may accrue to the original population in varying degrees depending on the underlying population dynamics. Thus, this analysis seeks to shed light on whether deprivation remained concentrated within certain small areas over the decade, and how the nation's population shifted between poor and non-poor neighbourhoods.

Identifying the poverty wards

The poverty wards for this report were identified using data developed by Philip Noden and colleagues at CASE in the late 1990s (Glennerster et al. 1999). They used two census-based indicators to measure poverty in 1991 at the electoral ward level (a commonly used proxy for neighbourhood): a measure of work-poverty, and a measure of material poverty known as the Breadline Britain Index (Gordon and Pantazis 1997).³ From there, they identified 284 wards in England and Wales that ranked within the top 5 per cent of all wards in both countries on each indicator. This study uses the same indicators and ranking methodology, but confines its analysis to England alone, as England is the focus of the government's signature policy to improve deprived areas (the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal). As a result, it identifies a somewhat smaller number of poverty wards overall (273) than the 1999 study (Figure 1). In 1991, these 273 wards accounted for 3 per cent of all English wards, but contained 2.5

million people, about 5 per cent of the country's population at the time.⁴

Importantly, this report makes no attempt to express whether the 1991 poverty wards were "poorer" or "richer" in 2001 than they were in 1991. Only one of the indicators used to construct the 1991 poverty wards, work-poverty, is available through the census itself.⁵ Nonetheless, trends in the particular neighbourhoods analysed here should be relevant for current policy, since 239 (88 per cent) of the 273 wards are located in the 88 local authority districts targeted by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.⁶ Moreover, the original poverty wards identified by Glennerster and others (1999) align fairly closely with the 3 per cent most deprived wards identified in IMD 2000 (Tunstall and Lupton 2003).

Recognising the variation in ward size across the country, the measures shown in this report are weighted by ward population, and are not simple arithmetic means of ward-level data. That is, indicators for the poverty wards, or sub-sets of those wards (by region or other characteristics), reflect the experience of the typical individual living in one of those neighbourhoods, and not the typical (or average) experience of the neighbourhoods themselves. This approach is preferable to treating as equivalent the experiences of Soho ward in Birmingham (population 29,000) and Markham ward in Chesterfield (population 1,700) in overall poverty-ward statistics.

Identifying consistent geographies in 2001

The 273 poverty wards were defined as of 1991, using 1991 census data. To view conditions in these same wards using Census 2001, it was necessary to isolate data for those same geographies in that later year. This was complicated by electoral ward boundary changes and the consolidation of several local authority districts into unitary authorities during the 1990s. For each local authority that contained at least one poverty ward in 1991, reports from the Boundary Committee for England were reviewed to determine whether the relevant wards existed in 2001 as they had in 1991.⁷ Of the 273 wards, 156 existed with the same, or nearly the same, boundaries as in 1991.⁸ These were located largely in the six major conurbations, where wards had not undergone boundary changes as of Census 2001; as such, the northern regions tended to be over-represented among these unchanged wards.

The remaining 117 poverty wards had undergone boundary changes extensive enough that no comparable wards existed in 2001. For these wards, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software was employed to create a rough approximation of the ward using Census 2001-based geographies. In 2001, Output Areas (OAs) were the smallest geographic units for which census data were reported. OAs were designed specifically for statistical purposes and built from postcode sectors. They replaced Enumeration Districts, which had been used in the previous four censuses. On average, OAs included about 125 households, and 175,000 of them were designated nationwide.⁹

For each of the 117 wards, GIS software was used to identify the collection of OAs that together most closely mirrored the 1991 ward boundaries.¹⁰ Map 1 shows that for poverty wards in two London boroughs, this method yielded fairly accurate, though

not exact, representations of the 1991 ward boundaries. Thus, there may be slight differences in the area base measured for the wards that changed boundaries during the decade. For this reason, the bulk of the analysis presented here focuses on proportions of population or households possessing certain characteristics in 1991 and 2001, rather than absolute numbers.

Comparing 1991 and 2001 census data

The final methodological hurdle in tracking a set of neighbourhoods concerns measuring the same indicator at each point in time. With respect to the census, this raises two issues. First, certain questions change from census to census, are added to/deleted from the questionnaire, or have their responses tabulated differently by ONS. For instance, the categorisations for socio-economic class were overhauled between the censuses, and classes in 2001 are not comparable to those for 1991. Similarly, the population that responds to a certain question (its “universe”) may change, complicating comparisons across time. Questions on economic activity and qualifications were asked of all respondents aged 16 and over in 1991, but only of those aged 16 to 74 in 2001 (ONS 2004a).

Second, ONS tabulates responses to certain questions differently depending on the level of geography for which they are reported. For 1991, this study uses census data reported for electoral wards. For 2001, it uses electoral-ward data for the 156 poverty wards whose boundaries did not change, but must use aggregated Output Area-level data for the 117 wards whose boundaries did change. ONS reports OA-level data in a different series of tables than electoral ward data, and as a trade-off to protect confidentiality within these small geographies, the information reported is less detailed, covering fewer and coarser categorisations.

3 A more complete explanation of the rationale for using these indicators can be found in both Glennerster and others (1999) and Lupton (2005).

4 One further distinction between this and the earlier CASE analysis deserves note. Beyond identifying 284 poor neighbourhoods in England and Wales, that study examined the incidence of poverty ward “clumps” in different areas of the country. Identifying these clumps allowed the researchers to assess the degree to which poverty areas were spatially concentrated, and also helped to control for the varying size of wards across the country. This analysis examines changes at the ward level, sometimes aggregated by region and other defining characteristics, but does not track changes for poverty clumps. Lupton (2005) also analyses changes in clusters of high work-poverty wards over time.

5 Breadline Britain has constructed a model for the 2001 census similar to that used to estimate ward-level material deprivation for the 1991 census (need cite here). However, that model is based on 1999 income data that do not take into account significant income-support measures, such as the Working Family Tax Credit, that were in effect as of the 2001 census. Moreover, the model supports estimates for wards defined as of the 2001 census, but not for geographies corresponding to 1991 wards.

6 These local authorities were selected for NRF funding based on the 2000 Index of Multiple Deprivation (Tunstall and Lupton 2003).

7 The author is grateful to Ruth Lupton for sharing her analysis of these reports.

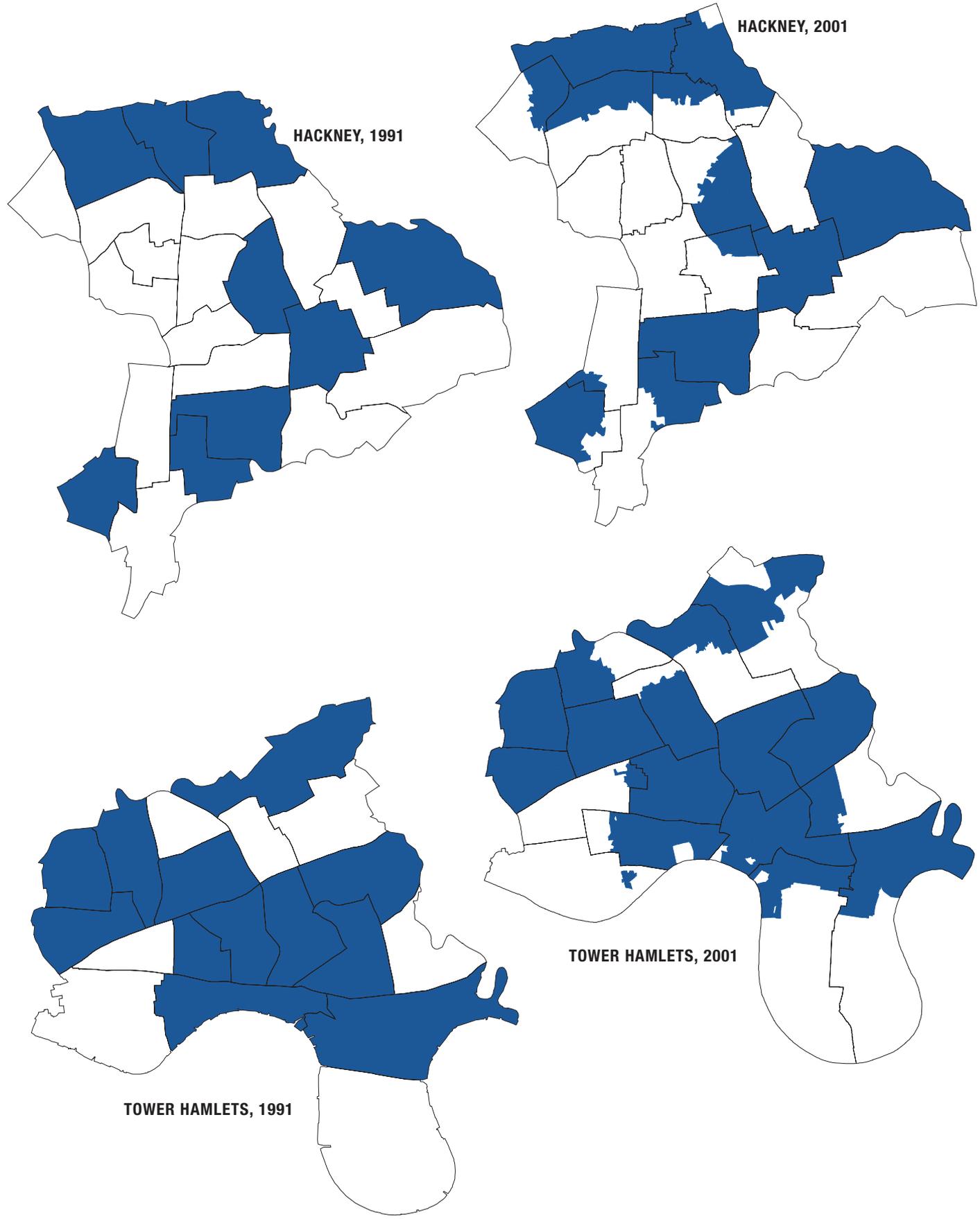
8 Several of these wards had changed names, but not boundaries.

9 Office of National Statistics, “Output Geography,” online at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/op12.asp>

10 Any OA whose geographic centre in 2001 lay within the boundaries of the 1991 electoral ward was included within the ward approximation for 2001.



MAP 1: Poverty Wards, 1991 and Output Area Proxies, 2001, Tower Hamlets LB and Hackney LB



For instance, it would be useful to know whether population turnover has contributed to demographic and economic change in poor neighbourhoods. While data on in- and out-migration were available for electoral wards, however, they were not available for OAs at the time of this writing.¹¹ Because of the differing information available at various levels of geography, it was necessary to exclude analysis of migration and some other demographic and economic variables. Throughout the analysis, the actual census table sources for each indicator are noted.

Some adjustments to the raw census counts were necessary to account for under-enumeration in the 1991 census compared to the 2001 census, and to “transfer” students in 1991 from their home addresses to their term-time addresses for comparability with 2001 data. The data sources and methodology used to make these adjustments are detailed in Lupton and Power (2004a) and Lupton (2005).¹² One particular aspect of these adjustments deserves note here. Raw census data from 1991 were adjusted to count students at their term addresses, rather than their home addresses, so that they could be compared with Census 2001 data. These adjustments are reflected in this report's analysis of changes in total population and economic activity at the ward level from 1991 to 2001. No adjustments were made, however, to raw data on other subjects, such as ethnicity, tenure, and housing vacancy, because no estimates were available as to the detailed characteristics of students at their term and home addresses in 1991. The inability to account for the impact of students in those areas may bias the analysis of changes at the detailed ward level, but the effects of those biases across all poverty wards, or large groups of poverty wards, is in all likelihood small.

THE POVERTY WARDS IN 1991

At the beginning of the 1990s, the poverty wards – identified using the combination of the work-poverty and Breadline Britain measures – represented 3 per cent of all English wards, and contained about 5 per cent of the nation's population. Not surprisingly, they were spread unevenly around the country, and their generally high levels of worklessness and material deprivation were associated with different

underlying characteristics, depending on the region in which they were located.

As Map 2 shows, the 273 poverty wards clustered in and around major English conurbations. The largest clusters appear in Greater London, Birmingham, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, and Tyneside. Overall, two-thirds of the poverty wards were located in the six major conurbations and London. That noted, a few non-metropolitan cities featured more than one poverty ward, such as Kingston upon Hull, Nottingham, and Bristol.

The map demonstrates that the location of the poverty wards reflected larger regional economic patterns. Together, the North East and North West accounted for more than half of all poverty wards (Table 1). In contrast, three regions contained fewer than five poverty wards each. The wards were not quite as concentrated at the local authority district level, with 36 per cent located in the top ten districts. Two East London boroughs (Tower Hamlets and Hackney) were among these ten, whereas seven were situated in northern conurbations. Liverpool figured most prominently, with 18 of its 33 wards among the 3 percent most deprived in 1991.

TABLE 1: Regional and Local Authority Location of Poverty Wards

English Region	Number	Local Authority District	Number
North West	87	Liverpool	18
North East	77	Manchester	15
London	44	Middlesbrough	12
Yorkshire & the Humber	22	Tower Hamlets	12
West Midlands	17	Knowsley	11
East Midlands	16	Hackney	9
South East	4	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	8
South West	4	Birmingham	7
East of England	2	Sunderland	7
		Gateshead	6
Percent in NE and NW	60.1%	Percent in Top Ten LADs	38.5%

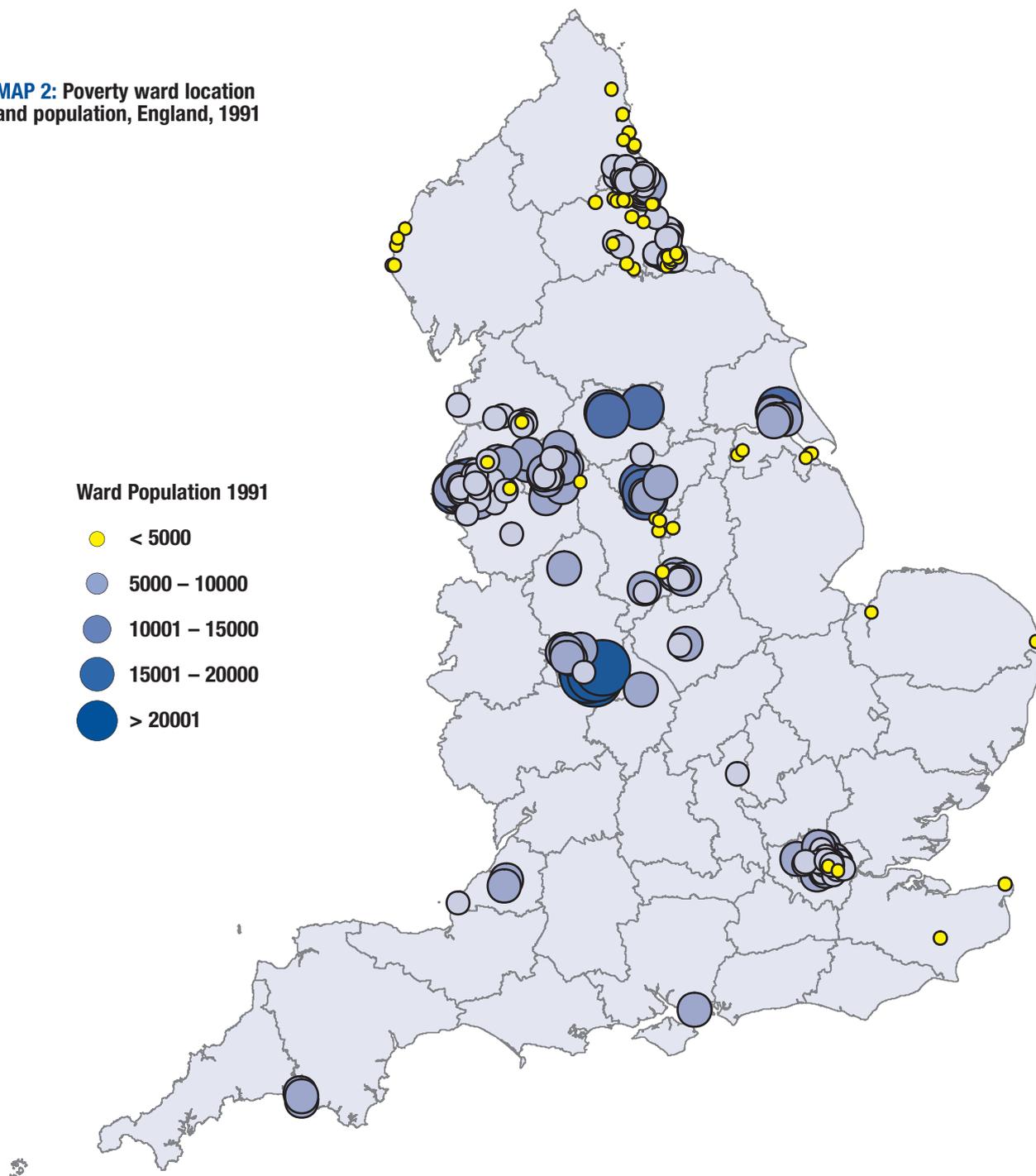
Source: author's calculations

Because CASE's earlier poverty ward analysis included Wales, the location of the 273 poverty wards in this study is slightly different. In particular, excluding Wales from this analysis results in the identification of additional poverty wards in areas of the country with

¹¹ The Nomis service, available through the ONS website, very recently introduced additional Census 2001 tables for output areas. See <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/census2001.asp>

¹² These included the use of mid-year population estimates in 1991 and 2001 to adjust total ward populations, and results from ESRC's Estimating with Confidence (EWC) programme to adjust 1991 ward student populations.

MAP 2: Poverty ward location and population, England, 1991



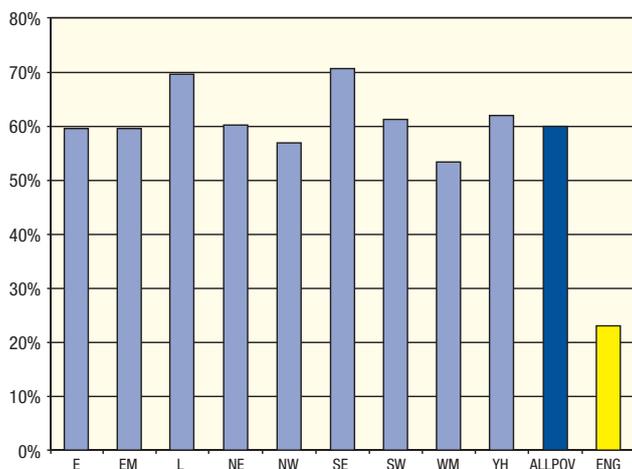
relatively higher material deprivation than work poverty. Thus, compared to Glennerster's analysis, this analysis identifies 10 additional poor wards in London (44 versus 34), and four more in the West Midlands (17 versus 14).

The poverty wards could be analysed along a variety of dimensions that describe their position at the beginning of the 1990s. This section, though, focuses on just four topics from the 1991 census – housing tenure, industry, ethnicity, and economic activity. In addition to regional location, these variables are employed in subsequent sections to chart the progress

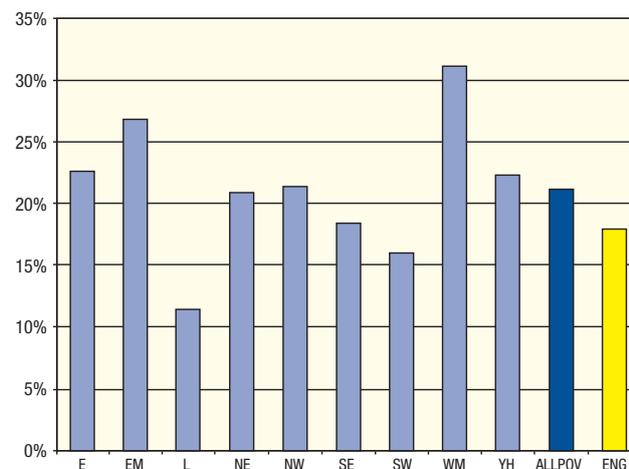
of poor neighbourhoods over the decade. For instance, the paper asks, did changes in work–poverty over the decade relate to the types of housing in which residents lived? Were increases in education in poor wards correlated with ethnic composition? To be sure, these are only simple first–order inquiries, and the true determinants of neighbourhood change are complex and inter–related. Nonetheless, reviewing where poor neighbourhoods started the decade in these four aspects does set a useful baseline for the outcome analysis, and offers a view as to how these conditions varied across neighbourhoods and regions ex ante.

FIGURE 2a–d: Characteristics of Poverty Wards by Region, and National Comparison, 1991

2a: Percentage in Social Housing



2b: Percentage Employed in Manufacturing



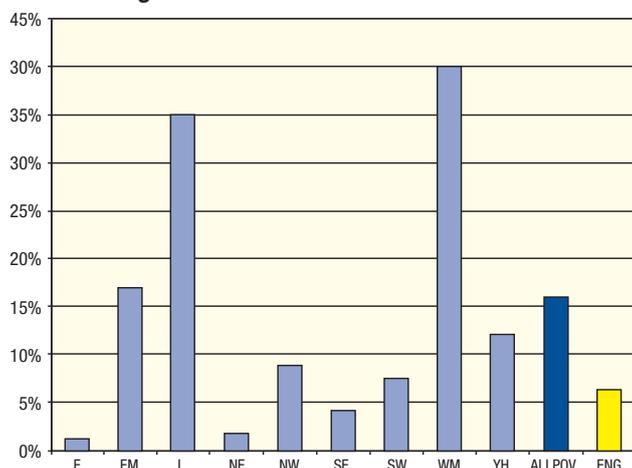
Housing Tenure

Overall, about 60 per cent of households in poverty wards in 1991 lived in social rented accommodation (Figure 2a). This compared with a rate of 23 per cent nationwide. In fact, nearly every one of the 273 poverty wards had an above-average proportion of its households in social housing. Though at least half of poverty ward households in each region lived in social housing, that housing tenure was more closely associated with poor neighbourhoods in the South. In London's 44 poverty wards, about 70 percent of households were in council or housing-association-owned housing. In the West Midlands, by contrast, poor neighbourhoods in and around Birmingham featured large numbers of households who owned their homes, or rented from private landlords.

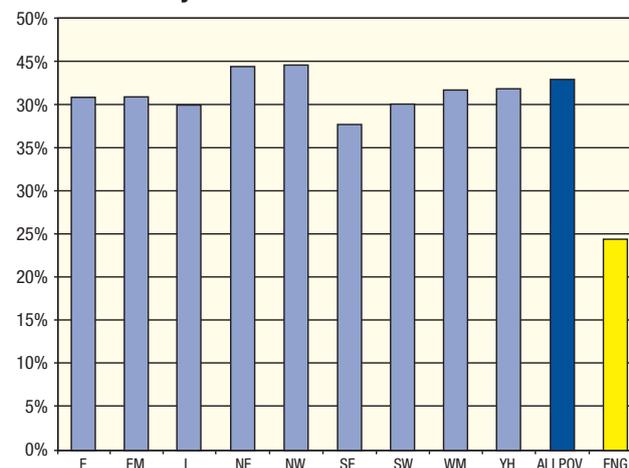
Industry

Classifications of worker industries changed considerably between the 1991 and 2001 censuses, complicating comparisons across time. However, it was possible to identify the proportion of population in these neighbourhoods employed in manufacturing jobs. Across all poverty wards in 1991, workers were only slightly more likely to be employed in manufacturing (21 per cent) than the national average (18 per cent). The varying industrial heritage of England's regions was apparent on this indicator, however. Significant percentages of poverty-ward residents in the West and East Midlands held manufacturing jobs, while this was true for only one in nine workers in London's poverty wards (Figure 2b). Thus, analysis of how changes from 1991 to 2001

2c: Percentage Non-White



2d: Work-Poverty Rate





related to manufacturing employment in 1991 would inevitably capture regional differences as well.

Ethnicity

The ethnic profile of poverty wards was marked by even stronger regional variation. Overall, minority ethnic groups accounted for 16 per cent of poverty ward residents in 1991, about two-and-a-half times the national average (6 per cent). Across the North East's poverty wards, however, fewer than one in 50 individuals was from a minority ethnic group in 1991 (Figure 2c). At the other end of the spectrum, poor neighbourhoods in the West Midlands and London featured very large minority ethnic group populations. In the West Midlands, these neighbourhoods were marked by large Indian and Pakistani populations, while in London they contained a mix of mainly Bangladeshi and Black Africans/ Black Caribbeans (Lupton and Power 2004b). As with industry, analysis of changing poverty-ward conditions along minority ethnic group lines in 1991 would reflect underlying differences between these regions of the country.

Economic Activity

The fourth dimension along which this paper analyses some poverty-ward changes from 1991 to 2001 is the proportion of ward population in 1991 that was work-poor, or of working age but not in work, study, or training. On this variable, there was somewhat less variation across regions in 1991, since by definition all the poverty wards ranked within the top 5 per cent of wards on this measure that year. That noted, poverty-ward status tended to be associated with work-poverty to a greater degree in the northern regions than the southern regions (Figure 2d). Across all poverty wards, the rate of work-poverty (43 per cent) was considerably higher than in the nation as a whole (24 per cent) in 1991.

SEVERAL CONDITIONS IMPROVED IN POVERTY WARDS 1991–2001

Given the deficits with which poverty wards started in 1991, and the decade of strong economic growth that followed, did the rising tide lift all boats, or did these neighbourhoods continue a long-term decline? The next two sections address this question, first by identifying indicators that moved in a positive direction, and then identifying those areas in which poor neighbourhoods seemed to lose ground in the 1990s.

A major focus of these assessments is whether, in the aggregate, poor neighbourhoods narrowed the gap between their overall conditions and national averages. The indicators tracked here were selected because they measure conditions broadly associated with Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for the 88 local authorities that receive Neighbourhood Renewal funds (PMSU and ODPM 2005).¹³

Then, for several of the outcomes analysed, the paper compares trends among the poverty wards themselves.¹⁴ In so doing, it explores whether ward progress or decline was strongly associated with any of the underlying factors examined in the previous section—location, tenure, industry, ethnicity, and economic activity. On three of these indicators – work-poverty, qualifications, and wealth (as measured by home ownership and vehicle access) – the poverty wards achieved gains in the 1990s that outpaced national trends. Unevenness characterised these improvements, however.

Some important “top-line” indicators that point to progress or decline in these neighbourhoods can be compared across censuses.

Work-poverty declined

Some of the most widespread improvements in the poverty wards occurred on work-poverty. A greater proportion of working-age adults in these wards were economically active in 2001 than in 1991. Overall, the rate of work-poverty in these neighbourhoods dropped from 42.8 per cent in 1991 to 38.4 per cent in 2001 (Figure 3). Moreover, the vast majority of poverty wards shared in the decline. Of the 273 wards, 210 (77 per cent) experienced a decline of at least one

FIGURE 3: Work-Poverty Rate, Poverty Wards versus England, 1991–2001

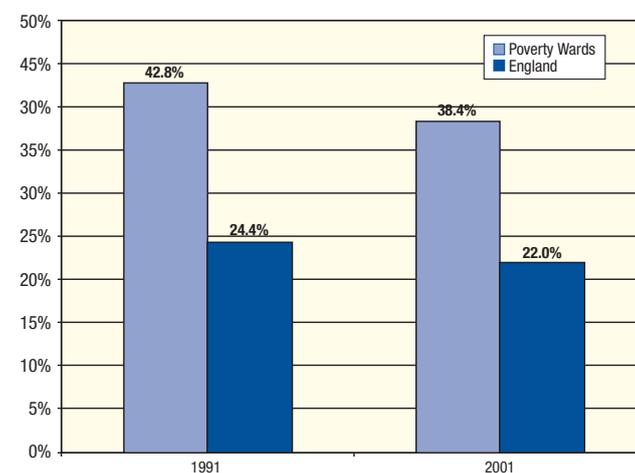


TABLE 2: Economic Activity Changes by Region, Poverty Wards, 1991–2001

	Wards	Work–Poverty Rate			Percent Employed			Percent in Study		
		1991	2001	change	1991	2001	change	1991	2001	change
East of England	2	40.9%	40.7%	–0.2%	54.1%	54.0%	–0.1%	2.6%	5.4%	2.8%
East Midlands	16	40.9%	35.2%	–5.7%	46.6%	46.7%	0.1%	9.9%	18.1%	8.2%
London	44	39.9%	34.5%	–5.3%	50.6%	50.9%	0.3%	7.6%	14.6%	7.0%
North East	77	44.4%	40.1%	–4.2%	47.9%	52.7%	4.9%	4.0%	7.1%	3.1%
North West	87	44.6%	39.7%	–5.0%	45.7%	47.9%	2.3%	7.0%	12.4%	5.5%
South East	2*	36.5%	32.7%	–3.7%	53.5%	53.7%	0.3%	7.7%	13.5%	5.9%
South West	4	40.1%	35.7%	–4.4%	52.9%	54.9%	2.0%	4.3%	9.4%	5.1%
West Midlands	17	41.7%	39.5%	–2.2%	46.3%	45.3%	–1.0%	9.0%	15.2%	6.2%
Yorkshire & the Humber	22	41.9%	39.4%	–2.5%	46.8%	48.2%	1.4%	8.1%	18.2%	10.0%
All poverty wards	271	42.8%	38.4%	–4.4%	47.4%	49.2%	1.8%	6.9%	13.0%	6.1%

Sources
 1991: SAS Table 8
 2001: Standard Table 28; Census Area Statistics Table 28
 * CAS Table 28 data approximating Pier ward in Thanet and Eaton ward in Milton Keynes were found to contain errors.

percentage point in their work–poverty rate; only 23 (8 per cent) saw an increase of that magnitude.¹⁵ Notably, the size of the overall decline in work–poverty in these neighbourhoods exceeded that occurring nationwide, narrowing the gap slightly between deprived areas and England as a whole.

Work–poverty, of course, represents a summary measure that captures several facets of economic activity. In particular, work–poverty may decline as the result of relative increases in the proportion of population in employment, or in study. As Table 2 shows, the largest overall percentage–point declines in work–poverty occurred in poor neighbourhoods in the East Midlands, London, the South West, and the North West. The degree to which employment gains, versus gains in the proportion of population in study, drove these declines varied considerably, however. In the East Midlands and London, work–poverty declined almost solely as the result of increases in working–age people who were students.¹⁶ Several wards in Nottingham and Tower Hamlets, for instance, actually saw small declines in the percentage of working–age people in employment, but major gains (sometimes 10 per cent or more) in student proportions. These individuals generally have low current incomes, but significant potential income, though they are likely to leave the neighbourhood before earning that income. By contrast, in the North East and North West, employment gains contributed crucially to work–poverty declines. In Merseyside, for instance, all ten of Knowsley's poverty wards saw the proportion of their working–age population in employment rise by at least 3 percentage points. In Tyneside, employment gains in Sunderland's seven poverty wards were even larger.¹⁷

Two additional factors associated with the work–poverty decline deserve note. First, the degree to which a ward was dependent on manufacturing employment correlated with its work–poverty changes over the decade. Table 3 separates the 273 wards into four groups based on their share of employment in manufacturing in 1991. The overall work–poverty decline in the wards least dependent on manufacturing (where between 4 and 15 per cent of workers were employed in that industry) was about twice as large as that in the wards most dependent on manufacturing (where that industry employed between 26 and 43 per cent of workers). This may reflect the continued decline of manufacturing in England during the 1990s, and reduced employment opportunities available to workers in that industry. Second, poverty wards characterised by greater concentrations of social housing actually experienced larger work–poverty declines than those with higher rates of home ownership or private renting (Table 3). This may reflect the gentrification of poor inner-city neighbourhoods in London, Liverpool and Manchester, which tended to have the highest

¹³ For example, trends on work–poverty, employment, qualifications and lone parenthood are closely associated with the several jobs/worklessness indicators tracked in the NRF areas; trends in the incidence of limiting long–term illness signal potential progress towards meeting health targets; and trends on home ownership may point (indirectly) to progress on neighbourhood satisfaction and decent housing.

¹⁴ It would have been possible to track changes on many additional census topics, such as ethnicity, age, household types and sizes, and commuting mode. However, neighbourhood changes on these subjects in one direction or another, while interesting in their own right, may not necessarily indicate economic or social “progress” or “decline” in the same way as the more outcome–oriented indicators examined here.

¹⁵ These results are largely consistent with those reported by Lupton (2005).

¹⁶ As Lupton (2005) observes, the differing declines in work poverty in different regions may relate to ethnic minority patterns as well; some Muslim women are unable to work or study unless in an all–female environment, which may explain the smaller declines experienced in poor neighbourhoods in the West Midlands.

¹⁷ Student–heavy wards could potentially bias this analysis if significant work–poverty declines are due to “studentification” (Curtis 2005) and not increasing economic activity among the non–student population. However, excluding from the analysis 29 poverty wards in which more than 20 per cent of adults were in study in 2001 (many of which lie in centre cities) does not change the results significantly. The overall work–poverty decline in those places was only slightly smaller, at 4 percentage points (versus 4.5 percentage points across all poverty wards).



TABLE 3: Work–Poverty Changes by Industry and Tenure, Poverty Wards, 1991–2001

1991 Category	Wards	1991	2001	change
Wards with least manufacturing employment (4–15%)	69	42.1%	36.2%	–5.9%
Wards with 15–20% manufacturing employment	68	43.5%	38.7%	–4.7%
Wards with 20–26% manufacturing employment	68	42.9%	38.9%	–4.0%
Wards with most manufacturing employment (26–43%)	68	42.9%	39.8%	–3.1%
Wards with lowest proportion in social housing (21–52%)	69	41.4%	38.7%	–2.7%
Wards with 52–60% in social housing	68	42.8%	39.1%	–3.7%
Wards with 61–70% in social housing	68	44.5%	38.8%	–5.7%
Wards with highest proportion in social housing (71–94%)	68	43.1%	37.0%	–6.1%

Sources
 1991: SAS Table 8
 2001: Standard Table 28; Census Area Statistics Table 28

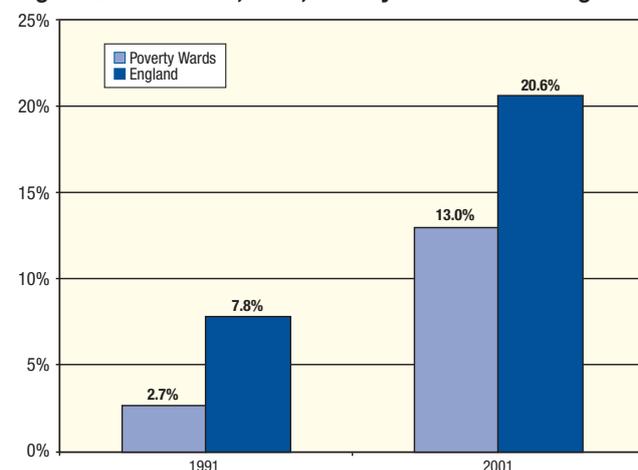
concentrations of social housing among the poverty wards in 1991.

Qualifications increased

Data on qualifications tabulated for the 1991 and 2001 censuses are not directly comparable. In particular, “higher-level” qualifications in 2001 include people with advanced professional qualifications (e.g., HNCs and NVQ levels 4/5), while those in 1991 do not.¹⁸ As a result, the statistics presented in this section usefully demonstrate the progress of poor neighbourhoods relative to the nation, and to one another, but do not portray the true change occurring between 1991 and 2001.¹⁹

Notwithstanding these definitional differences, the opening up of higher education in the 1990s helped produced significant, impressive gains in the proportion of England’s population with higher qualifications. In 1991, the proportion of adults aged 18 and up nationwide with a degree was 7.8 per cent; in 2001, the proportion with higher qualifications was 20.6 per cent (Figure 4). This increase was paralleled

FIGURE 4: Percentage of Adults with Degree, 1991, and Higher Qualifications, 2001, Poverty Wards versus England



in the poverty wards, where the proportion increased from just 2.7 per cent to 13.0 per cent over the course of the decade.

Most poor neighbourhoods experienced increases in this “higher qualifications” proportion of between 5 and 10 percentage points, though a significant number experienced much larger increases, of at least 20 percentage points. None experienced a decline (again, this reflects in part definitional differences between the censuses). While the percentage point gap between the poverty wards and the nation as a whole did not change much on this measure, it seems that poor neighbourhoods largely shared in the nation’s educational gains during the 1990s.

Regional differences did, however, inflect the overall trend in poor neighbourhoods. Notably, all 17 of the poverty wards experiencing the most rapid increases in the proportion of adults with higher qualifications were located in London. Wards in Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Southwark, and Tower Hamlets boroughs underwent dramatic changes in the educational profile of their populations. Increases were impressive in the Midlands as well, though London’s poor neighbourhoods clearly outshone those in the rest of the country (Table 4).²⁰ The regional pattern strongly suggests that the gentrification of East London neighbourhoods contributed to the rising levels of degree-holding, but that immigration may have played a role as well. Many immigrants arrive in England with degrees and qualifications awarded in their home country, though those credentials do not necessarily translate into high-paying jobs in Britain’s labour market (Dustmann et al 2003). In London, for instance, 31 per cent of ethnic minorities in 2001 held higher qualifications. Thus, the higher numbers of ethnic minorities living in poor neighbourhoods in London

TABLE 4: Changes in Qualifications by Region, Poverty Wards, 1991–2001

	Wards	Percent of Adults w/ Higher Degree/Qualifications*		
		1991	2001	change
East of England	2	1.0%	5.4%	4.3%
East Midlands	16	3.6%	14.0%	10.4%
London	44	6.1%	25.3%	19.2%
North East	77	1.4%	8.0%	6.5%
North West	87	2.2%	11.3%	9.0%
South East	4	1.6%	8.8%	7.3%
South West	4	2.0%	11.6%	9.6%
West Midlands	17	2.5%	12.0%	9.5%
Yorkshire & the Humber	22	2.2%	8.8%	6.5%
All poverty wards	273	2.7%	13.0%	10.3%
ENGLAND		7.8%	20.6%	12.8%

* Age 18 and over. See text for explanation of differences between 1991 and 2001 data.

Sources
1991: SAS Table 84
2001: Census Area Statistics Table 105

and the Midlands versus, for instance, the North East (see Figure 2c) may help account for the disparities in higher degree attainment across regions in 2001.

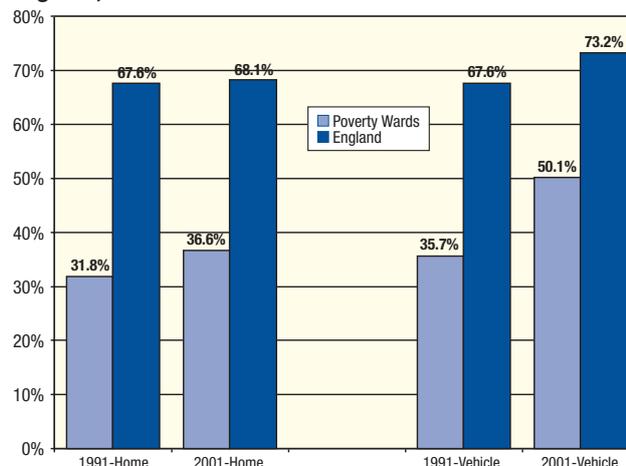
Home and Vehicle Ownership Increased

Though the census collects no information on household income, it does contain important data concerning the wealth of households—specifically, whether they own their home and have access to a vehicle. Indeed, Breadline Britain uses home and car ownership as key variables in its model of material deprivation (Gordon and Patanzis 1997). The degree to which residents of poor neighbourhoods hold these assets can thus serve as an important indicator of their long-term financial health.

On these counts, poor neighbourhoods made important progress in the 1990s in closing the gap with nationwide averages. While the national home ownership rate reported in the census held fairly steady between 1991 and 2001, the proportion of households living in the poverty wards that owned their homes – either outright or with a mortgage – increased nearly 5 percentage points (Figure 5).²¹ Similarly, while car ownership rose by about 6 percentage points nationwide, the proportion of households in the poverty wards who had a vehicle available to them rose by more than 14 percentage points. Those positive trends noted, the gap between poor neighbourhoods and England as a whole remained quite large, especially on home ownership.

What might have driven these increases in poor neighbourhoods? In contrast to some other trends, the

FIGURE 5: Percentage of Households Owning their Home, and with Access to Vehicle, Poverty Wards versus England, 1991–2001



regional patterns on these indicators were not especially strong. Increases in the home ownership rate in poverty wards generally ranged between 2 and 4 percentage points at the regional level, while increases in vehicle access ranged from 10 to 15 percentage points.²² Instead, with respect to home ownership, the level of social housing in a ward in 1991 seemed to relate most closely to its progress over the decade (Table 5). Specifically, the higher the share of a ward's households in social housing in 1991, the larger the increase in its home ownership rate over the subsequent 10 years. In fact, poverty wards without much social housing in 1991 (between 21 and 52 per cent of tenures) saw a slight decline in home ownership. This contrasts with an 8.3 percentage point increase in those wards with the most significant concentrations of social housing (at least 71 per cent of tenures). In poor neighbourhoods characterised by very large council estates, the Right to Buy, and demolition of obsolete social housing, may have contributed to increasing owner occupation in the 1990s. Even with these gains, however, wards marked by social housing concentrations at the beginning of the decade continued to lag other poor neighbourhoods, and the nation as a whole, by a considerable degree in 2001.

18 The data in this section compare the proportion of adults with a “degree” or “higher degree” in 1991 to the proportion of adults with any of the following: “first degree, higher degree, NVQ levels 4 and 5, HNC, HND, Qualified Teacher Status, Qualified Medical Doctor, Qualified Dentist, Qualified Nurse, Midwife, Health Visitor.” ONS (2004a).

19 Additionally, the question on qualifications was asked of and reported for all persons aged 18 and up in 1991, and those aged 16 to 74 in 2001. In order to establish a roughly comparable universe across the two censuses, in 2001, data for 16 and 17 year-olds were excluded from totals, and in 1991, all persons aged 75 and over were assumed not to have a degree.

20 Also notable is that residents of London's poverty wards held higher qualifications in 2001 (25.3 per cent) at a higher rate than the national average that year (20.6 per cent) after trailing in the rate of degree-holding in 1991.

21 In 2001, the relatively small number of households in shared ownership are excluded from this analysis, since no comparable category existed in the 1991 census.

22 The one regional outlier on this indicator was the East Midlands, where the percentage of households in its 16 poverty wards with access to a vehicle jumped 20 percentage points from 1991 to 2001.

TABLE 5: Home Ownership Change by Tenure, Poverty Wards, 1991–2001

	Wards	1991	2001	change
Wards with lowest proportion in social housing (21–52%)	69	43.4%	43.0%	-0.4%
Wards with 52–60% in social housing	68	36.2%	41.6%	5.4%
Wards with 61–70% in social housing	68	28.6%	35.7%	7.1%
Wards with highest proportion in social housing (71–94%)	68	16.8%	25.1%	8.3%

Sources
1991: SAS Table 20
2001: Key Statistics Table 18

TABLE 6: Home and Vehicle Ownership Change by Local Authority Type, Poverty Wards, 1991–2001

Ward location	Wards	Percent Owning Home			Percent w/ Vehicle Access		
		1991	2001	change	1991	2001	change
Central city in conurbation*	94	29.7%	33.8%	4.1%	33.6%	47.0%	13.4%
Other LAD in conurbation**	102	34.4%	40.3%	5.8%	36.4%	50.1%	13.7%
Non-metropolitan cities† and adjacent LADs	26	29.2%	31.6%	2.5%	37.1%	52.1%	15.0%
Other large LADs (> 100k)	18	34.2%	41.5%	7.3%	40.4%	59.0%	18.6%
Other small LADs (< 100k)	33	35.6%	44.7%	9.1%	43.5%	63.1%	19.6%
All poverty wards	273	31.8%	36.6%	4.8%	35.7%	50.1%	14.4%

* Inner London boroughs and "core cities" (Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Newcastle, Birmingham, Bradford and Leeds)
** conurbations include Tyne and Wear, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, West Midlands, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, and Outer London boroughs
† Coventry, Kingston upon Hull, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, Leicester, Nottingham, Stoke-on-Trent, Bristol, North Somerset and Plymouth

Sources
1991: SAS Tables 20 and 21
2001: Key Statistics Tables 17 and 18

A second factor that seemed to influence both home ownership and vehicle gains in poor neighbourhoods was the type of local authority in which the ward was located. Poverty wards in smaller places outside cities and conurbations had a “head start” on both these indicators in 1991, and made larger gains over the decade than other wards (Table 6).²³ This is not surprising, given the larger concentrations of local authority housing and private renting that characterise inner cities, the relative affordability of housing in smaller, outlying places, and the greater need for vehicles in those areas to reach employment centres. Indeed, the smaller increases in vehicle access in urban poor neighbourhoods could be viewed positively, to the extent they reflect greater orientation towards the use of public transit and demand for walkable neighbourhoods. Still, even in inner-city London, the proportion of households with vehicle access increased by double-digits in most poverty wards over the 1990s.

OTHER CONDITIONS DETERIORATED IN POVERTY WARDS 1991–2001

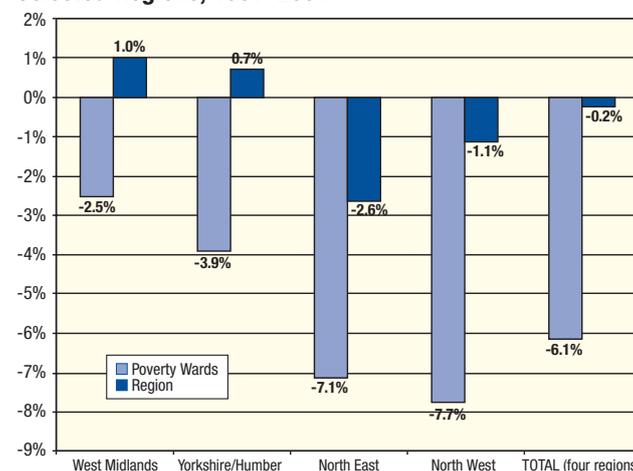
The good news for poor neighbourhoods overall on work-poverty, qualifications, and asset ownership was tempered in part by their struggles in other areas. On population, housing vacancy, and lone parenthood, the gap between the poverty wards and the nation widened in the 1990s. Yet just as the improvements were

marked by unevenness across regions, and among different types of communities, neither were the declines uniform.

Population declined relative to regional trends

The wards approximated for 2001 using Census Output Areas, while capturing largely the same geographic area as the 1991 wards, incorporate enough area outside the original boundaries, and exclude enough area within the original boundaries, to frustrate population change analysis. Therefore, it is only possible to examine population changes for the 156 wards whose boundaries remained largely the same from 1991 to 2001. As noted in the

FIGURE 6: Population Change, Poverty Wards versus Selected Regions, 1991–2001



methodology, these wards were primarily located in the six major conurbations outside of London. Ninety-two percent lay within one of four regions: the North West, North East, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and the Humber. Because these regions grew more slowly than the nation as a whole, it is more reasonable to compare population changes occurring in their poverty wards to those occurring at the regional level than at the national level (Lupton and Power 2004; Tunstall 2005).

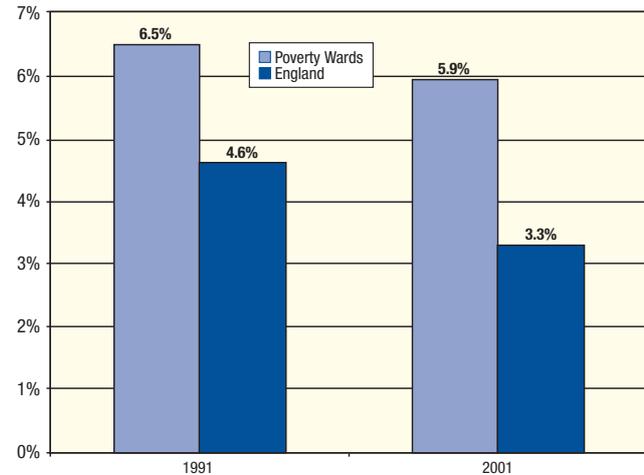
On that count, in each of the four regions, the poverty wards declined in population, either as their respective regions grew, or at a faster rate of decline than their regions (Figure 6). Together, those wards lost 6 per cent of their population from 1991 to 2001, while the combined population of their four regions was stable. Population increases were evident in selected poverty wards near major city centres and universities, such as Central and Hulme wards in Manchester, and Everton and Gilmoor wards in Liverpool. For the most part, however, population declines were widespread, affecting 109 of the 144 wards in these regions whose boundaries had not changed.

To be sure, population losses occurring in some poverty wards do not represent an unequivocally bad outcome. People leaving those wards may have relocated to better areas with stronger labour demand and a more liveable environment. At the same time, however, these trends may signal a longer “cycle of decline” in which better-off households leave behind an increasingly marginalised population, increased abandonment, crime, and negative social stigma (Power and Mumford 1999).

Housing vacancy declined only slightly, mostly in London

A related measure that was possible to measure in all poverty wards was the percentage of housing units that were vacant at the time of each census. The decline of neighbourhoods, especially in the North, has been linked to housing vacancy and abandonment. England witnessed a nationwide decline in vacancies from 1991 to 2001, from 4.6 per cent of all household spaces to 3.3 per cent (Figure 7). Overall vacancy rates fell in poverty wards, too, but by a smaller amount (about half a percentage point), leaving a larger gap between those neighbourhoods and the nation in 2001. Moreover, a larger number of poverty wards witnessed

FIGURE 7: Housing Vacancy Rate, Poverty Wards versus England, 1991–2001



increases than decreases in housing vacancy.

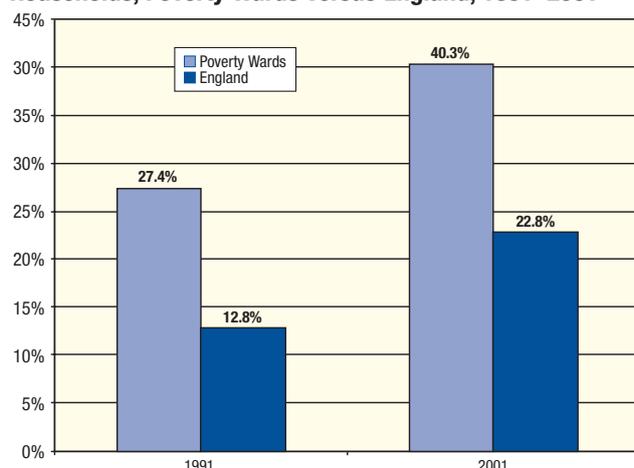
Regional trends were perhaps more apparent on this measure than any other, given the disparities in housing demand across regions in the 1990s. Of the 44 London poverty wards, fully 43 experienced a decrease in vacancy rates from 1991 to 2001. By 2001, several had housing vacancy rates under 1 per cent. To be sure, this reflects the growing popularity and vitality of these neighbourhoods, but also signals problems of supply and affordability in the wider London housing market. The story was somewhat more mixed in the Midlands, and even less positive in the northern regions. There, one-quarter or fewer of the poverty wards experienced drops in housing vacancy during the 1990s. Many poor neighbourhoods in Liverpool, Manchester, Tyneside and Teesside had vacancy rates of 10 per cent or higher in 2001. Thus, the slight overall decline in housing vacancy in the poverty wards reflects the combined effects of large declines in London and small increases throughout the North.

Lone parenthood climbed faster in poverty wards

Another important indicator of deprivation concerns the incidence of lone parenthood. Secular trends in marriage and child-rearing have led to an overall rise in the percentage of children living in lone-parent households over the last three decades (ONS 2004b). Greater labour market participation among lone parents, coupled with government support through tax credits, likely means that their families were relatively better off in 2001 than 1991 (Sefton and Sutherland 2005). Still, children raised in lone-parent families remain more likely to experience income poverty,

23 This categorisation of local authorities follows, in part, Turok and Edge (2003).

FIGURE 8: Percentage of Children in Lone-Parent Households, Poverty Wards versus England, 1991–2001



engage in risky behaviour, and suffer poor health outcomes (Marsh and Vegeris 2004).

From 1991 to 2001, the proportion of all children being raised by lone parents climbed by 10 percentage points nationwide, from 13 per cent to 23 per cent (Figure 8). In the poverty wards, the increase was even larger—from 27 per cent to 40 per cent. By 2001, then, two in every five children living in the poverty wards were living in lone-parent families. On this indicator, increases were especially widespread, occurring in nearly every single poverty ward over the decade. This implies that poor children became more concentrated in poor neighbourhoods over the 1990s. This may have eased the delivery of services targeted to those children (e.g., Sure Start), but also indicates that more children today may be raised in poor local environments.

Among the regions, the London poverty wards experienced the smallest overall increase in the proportion of children living in lone-parent families (Table 7). This trend was not necessarily the product of a regional economic phenomenon, however. Instead, the degree to which lone parenthood increased within neighbourhoods seemed to relate most closely to the presence of ethnic minorities. More specifically, ethnic Asian households tended to raise children in two-parent family settings at considerably higher rates than other groups.²⁴ As a result, in the poverty wards with the highest ethnic minority shares in 1991, the percentage of children living in lone-parent families increased by a smaller amount than in other wards. In addition to inner-city London neighbourhoods in Tower Hamlets and Hackney boroughs, poverty wards in the cities of Bradford, Birmingham, Sheffield and Bolton characterised by large ethnic Asian populations saw smaller-than-average increases in lone parenthood. Children in these families and neighbourhoods may still experience disadvantage, but may be better-off over the long term both socially and economically than those raised by lone parents.

Long-term illness rose faster in poverty wards

A final indicator of the challenge facing poor neighbourhoods in England is the high proportion of their working-age residents who have a long-term illness, health problem or disability that limits their ability to work. In 1991, already one in seven poverty ward residents of working age had such a condition, compared to one in 12 nationwide. The greater

TABLE 7: Changes in Lone Parenthood by Region and Ethnic Minority Share, Poverty Wards, 1991–2001

	Wards	Percent of Children in Lone-Parent HHS		
		1991	2001	change
East of England	2	24.7%	39.4%	14.7%
East Midlands	16	28.2%	41.6%	13.4%
London	44	27.8%	37.4%	9.6%
North East	77	26.9%	38.6%	11.7%
North West	87	29.9%	45.6%	15.8%
South East	4	29.7%	43.3%	13.6%
South West	4	30.0%	45.2%	15.1%
West Midlands	17	23.6%	36.3%	12.7%
Yorkshire & the Humber	22	23.5%	35.9%	12.4%
Wards with lowest minority ethnic group share (0–1%)	69	26.6%	40.1%	13.5%
Wards with 1–2% minority ethnic group share	68	28.7%	44.2%	15.5%
Wards with 2–23% minority ethnic group share	68	29.9%	44.8%	14.9%
Wards with highest minority ethnic group share (24–73%)	68	25.1%	35.0%	10.0%
All poverty wards	273	27.4%	40.3%	12.9%

Sources
1991: SAS Table 40
2001: Census Area Statistics Theme Table 1

TABLE 8: Changes in Limiting Long-Term Illness by Region, Poverty Wards, 1991–2001

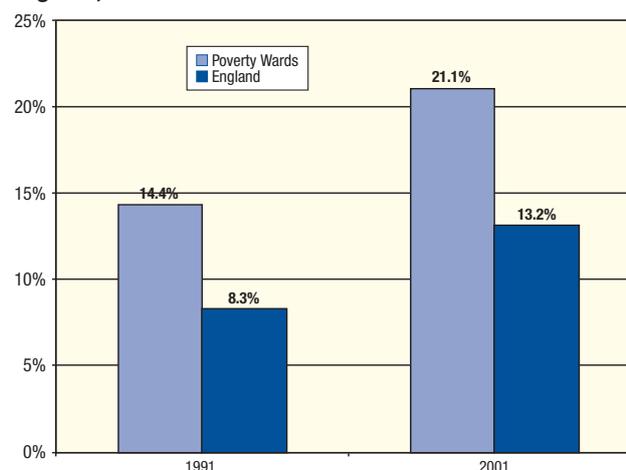
	Wards	Percent of Working-Age Adults w/ LLTI		
		1991	2001	change
East of England	2	10.6%	22.0%	11.4%
East Midlands	16	12.5%	19.2%	6.7%
London	44	11.8%	16.2%	4.4%
North East	77	15.8%	23.3%	7.4%
North West	87	15.9%	23.7%	7.9%
South East	4	11.9%	20.8%	8.8%
South West	4	12.8%	22.6%	9.7%
West Midlands	17	12.8%	19.1%	6.3%
Yorkshire & the Humber	22	13.9%	20.8%	7.0%
All poverty wards	273	14.4%	21.1%	6.7%
ENGLAND		8.3%	13.2%	4.8%

Sources
1991: SAS Table 12
2001: Census Area Statistics Table 16

incidence of limiting long-term illness (LLTI) in these neighbourhoods contributed to higher local economic inactivity and material poverty.

Although work-poverty in these wards declined over the decade, health problems grew. By decade's end, more than one in five working-age adults in the 273 poverty wards indicated that they suffered from a limiting long-term illness. These problems escalated throughout England as well, but by a somewhat smaller degree than in the poverty wards (Figure 9). The highest rates of illness were recorded in poor neighbourhoods in the North East and North West (Table 8). At least 30 per cent of poverty-ward residents in former mining areas like Easington, and in some central-city areas of Liverpool and Knowsley,

FIGURE 9: Percentage of Working-Age People with Long-Term Limiting Illness, Poverty Wards versus England, 1991–2001



had limiting long-term health problems. This coincides with the higher rates of incapacity benefit receipt that continue to characterise these regions (DWP 2004).

The lowest illness rates, and the lowest increase in the incidence of reported problems, were evident in London's poverty wards. These wards still had a higher proportion of their working-age population with LLTI in 2001 than the national average, but that proportion grew more slowly than the nationwide rate from 1991 to 2001. Thus, while the overall health gap between poverty wards and the rest of England widened in the 1990s, it was yet another trend marked by strong regional dynamics, leaving some disadvantaged corners of the country better off than others.

²⁴ In 2001, 11.5 per cent of households headed by a person of Asian or Asian British ethnicity with dependent children were lone-parent families, versus 21.5 per cent of those headed by a white British person, and 43.3 per cent of those headed by a black or black British person.



CONCLUSIONS

Government has set ambitious targets for the performance of poor neighbourhoods relative to the nation as a whole over the next 15 years. This effort to “close the gap” recognises that deprived areas may exacerbate the difficulties faced by their low-income residents, hinder the local delivery of high-quality public services, and frustrate efforts to achieve other broad goals, such as increased employment, reduced crime, and improved educational outcomes.

This report examines the decade-long progress of a selected set of neighbourhoods that represented England's most deprived small areas in 1991. In the aggregate, it finds that the rising tide during the 1990s did seem to benefit these places on key indicators of social and economic health. On work, qualifications, and asset ownership, poor neighbourhoods not only achieved improvements in their own right, but either kept pace with or slightly narrowed the gap between their conditions and national averages. On other indicators, however, these neighbourhoods seemed to lose ground. Population, housing vacancy, lone parenthood and health statistics revealed growing gaps between the neighbourhoods, their regions, and the nation as a whole.

The aggregate story, however, was marked by significant unevenness among the poverty wards themselves. In some respects, regional trends dominated. Poor neighbourhoods in London witnessed significantly larger declines in housing vacancy, larger increases in educational attainment, and smaller increases in LLTI than those in other regions. In the North, meanwhile, declines in work-poverty were much more likely to be associated with employment gains. Some regional patterns, however, seemed driven by underlying population and economic differences across poor neighbourhoods. Declines in work-poverty were muted in areas heavily dependent on manufacturing employment. Increases in home ownership were largest in neighbourhoods that had heavy concentrations of social housing at the beginning of the decade.

In the end, three messages emerge in analysing the trajectory of these poor neighbourhoods over the 1990s. First, where progress was evident, it erased only a small portion of the gap between these particular places and the nation as a whole. On “negative” indicators such as work-poverty, lone parenthood, housing vacancy and illness, measures for

the poverty wards were still anywhere from 50 to 100 per cent higher than for the whole of England. On “positive” indicators such as qualifications and home ownership, poverty ward measures were 50 to 100 per cent lower than those nationwide. Of course, these trends occurred largely before the Government launched its comprehensive strategy to lift poor neighbourhoods up to national averages, and those interventions may have quickened progress in some of these areas. At the same time, the mid-to-late 1990s were a time of extraordinary economic growth. It remains to be seen whether the most deprived neighbourhoods can achieve even larger gains in the absence of a roaring economy.

Second, efforts to monitor the trajectory, as well as the condition, of poor neighbourhoods should take centre stage in regeneration strategies. The indices of deprivation have shed important light on the circumstances of places judged to be the poorest at any given moment in time, and are crucial tools for measuring relative progress in remedying area-based deprivation. Yet consistent measures, applied in a consistent set of geographies over time, have an important role to play in helping decision makers and neighbourhood residents track the changing circumstances of places, and the effects of policies on those local dynamics.

Finally, whilst it is tempting to speak in broad terms about the challenges facing poor neighbourhoods, this report offers a stark reminder that differences abound among even the most deprived small areas. The history of places – their industrial legacy, their immigration narrative, and council homebuilding from decades ago – shape not only their present conditions, but also their future trajectories. Major policy decisions adopted without an explicit spatial imperative, such as the opening up of higher education and the Right to Buy, impacted neighbourhoods in very different ways based on their location, population, and housing stock. The North/South divide clearly affected poor neighbourhoods' fortunes, too, with greater evidence of growth and gentrification occurring in East London than in the northern conurbations. Thus, targets for the overall performance of deprived neighbourhoods, though important for setting agendas and making public services accountable, should not preclude more careful assessment of the divergent paths that these neighbourhoods follow—and the policy responses tailored to those realities.

REFERENCES

- Curtis, Polly. 2005. "Student centres." *The Guardian*, January 11.
- Department for Work and Pensions. *Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance Quarterly Summary of Statistics—November 2004*. London: DWP.
- Department of the Environment. 1995. *1991 Deprivation Index: a review of approaches and a matrix of results*. London: DoE.
- Department of the Environment, Transport, and the Regions. 1998. *1998 Index of Local Deprivation—summary*. London: DETR.
- Department of the Environment, Transport, and the Regions. 2000. *Indices of Deprivation 2000*. London: DETR.
- Dustmann, Christian, Francesca Fabbri, Ian Preston and Jonathan Wadsworth. 2003. *Labour market performance of immigrants in the UK labour market*. London: Home Office.
- Glennister, Howard, Ruth Lupton, Philip Noden and Anne Power. 1999. *Poverty, Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood: Studying the area bases of social exclusion*. CASEpaper 22. London: CASE.
- Gordon, D. and C. Patanzis, eds. 1997. *Breadline Britain in the 1990s*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.
- Government Accounting Office. 2003. *HOPEVI Resident Issues and Changes in Neighborhoods Surrounding Grant Sites*. Washington: GAO.
- Lupton, Ruth. 2001. *Places Apart? The initial report of CASE's Areas Study*. CASE report 14. London: CASE.
- Lupton, Ruth. 2003. *Poverty Street: The dynamics of neighbourhood decline and renewal*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Lupton, Ruth. 2005. *Changing Neighbourhoods? Mapping the geography of poverty and worklessness using the 1991 and 2001 census*. London: CASE.
- Lupton, Ruth and Anne Power. 2004a. *The Growth and Decline of Cities and Regions*. CASE–Brookings Census Brief 1. London: CASE.
- Lupton, Ruth and Anne Power. 2004b. *Ethnic Minorities in Britain*. CASE–Brookings Census Brief 2. London: CASE.
- Marsh, Alan and Sandra Vegeris. 2004. *The British Lone Parent Cohort and their Children 1991 to 2001*. London: Department for Work and Pensions.
- Office for National Statistics. 2004a. "Census 2001: Definitions." London: TSO.
- Office for National Statistics. 2004b. *Social Trends 34*. London: TSO.
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. 2004. *The English Indices of Deprivation 2004 (revised)*. London: ODPM.
- Paskell, Caroline and Anne Power. 2005. *'The future's changed': Local impacts of housing, environment and regeneration policy since 1997*. CASE report 29. London: CASE.
- Pettit, Kathryn L.S. and G. Thomas Kingsley. 2003. *Concentrated Poverty: A Change in Course*. Washington: Urban Institute.
- Power, Anne and Katherine Mumford. 1999. *The Slow Death of Great Cities?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. 2005. *Improving the prospects of people living in areas of multiple deprivation in England*. London.
- Sefton, Tom and Holly Sutherland. 2005. "Inequality and poverty under New Labour." In J. Hills and K. Stewart, eds., *A More Equal Society? New Labour, poverty, inequality and exclusion*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Tunstall, Rebecca. 2005. *Americans and Britons: Key Population Data from the Last Three U.S. and U.K. Censuses*. Washington: Brookings Institution.
- Tunstall, Rebecca and Ruth Lupton. 2003. *Is targeting deprived areas an effective means to reach poor people? An assessment of one rationale for area-based funding programmes*. CASE paper 70. London: CASE.
- Turok, Ivan and Nicola Edge. 1999. *The Jobs Gap in Britain's Cities: Employment Loss and Labour Market Consequences*. Bristol: Policy Press/Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks Tracy Kornblatt for valuable research assistance, Howard Glennerster and Philip Noden for laying the groundwork for this inquiry, and Ruth Lupton, Rebecca Tunstall, Anne Power, Caroline Paskell, Liz Richardson and Tony Champion for helpful comments and guidance.

The author completed much of the research for this paper while in London on an Atlantic Fellowship in Public Policy during late 2004, and is especially grateful to faculty and staff at CASE for providing him with logistical support and assistance with the UK census.

ABOUT THE SERIES

This paper is the fourth in a series of Census Briefs produced by CASE and inspired by the work of the Brookings Institution in the United States, whose Metropolitan Policy Program has played a creative role in informing and in part helping shape the recovery of U.S. cities. The series aims to help advance the debate on the future of cities and towns in Britain by presenting evidence on key urban and neighbourhood trends during the 1990s, using data from the 1991 and 2001 censuses.

In producing this series, CASE owes a debt of thanks to Bruce Katz and colleagues at Brookings for inspiring us to undertake this work jointly with them; to Professor William Julius Wilson of Harvard for his continuing interest in CASE's work on poor neighbourhoods and his willingness to join the wider urban debate in this country as well as in the US; to Professors Tony Champion, Duncan McClennan and Ivan Turok for their challenging advice and willingness to share expertise; to the Urban Unit at ODPM and the many other colleagues in government who have encouraged us to do this work; to Richard Best at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for supporting CASE's original work on the slow death of great cities and to Richard Rogers for lending his expertise and experience to our follow up to the Urban Task Force, Cities for a Small Country (Rogers and Power 2000).

Throughout, we draw on our work in CASE for the area study funded by the ESRC for which we track 12 of the poorest urban areas in the country; and on the work of our colleagues at the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, whose work on the US Census can be found at:

<http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/issues/demographics/demographics.htm>

