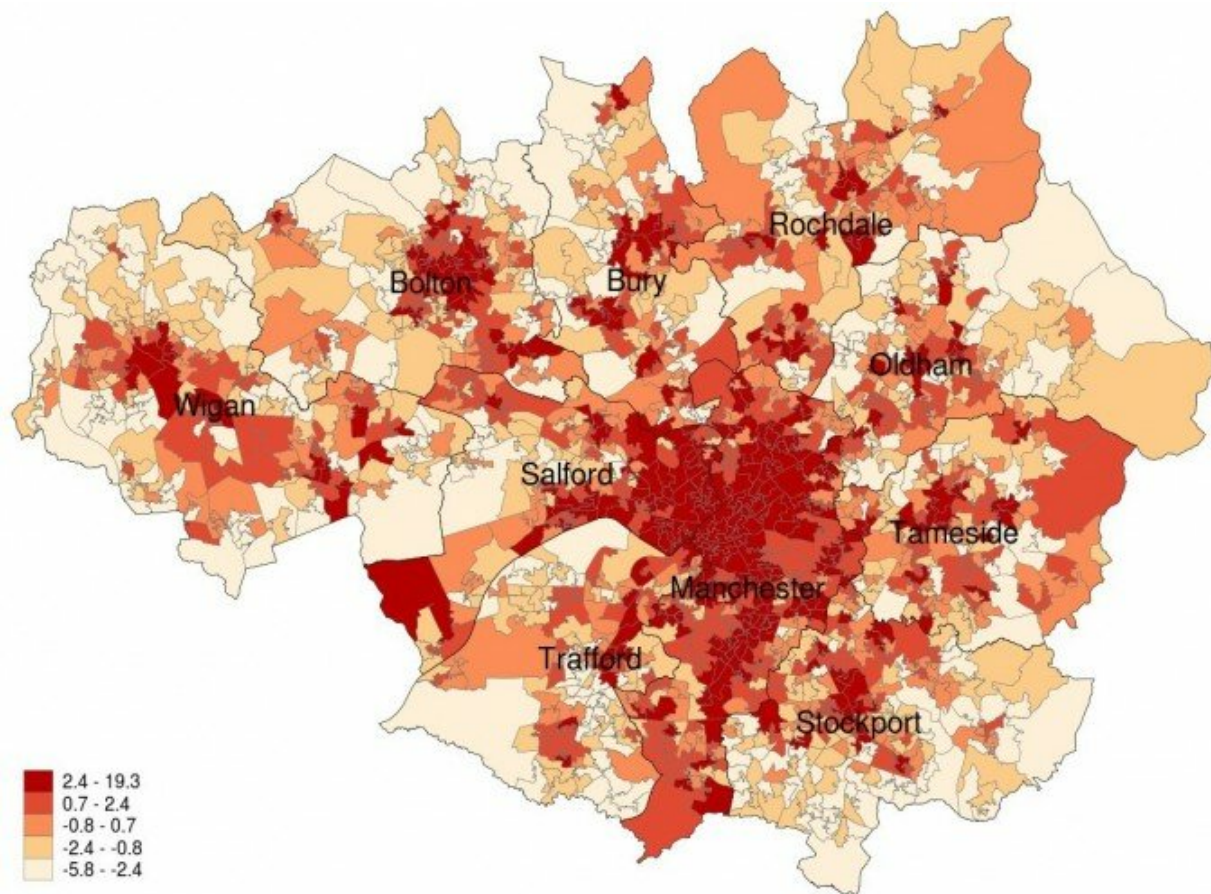


Growing social fragmentation driven by rising single people and private renters

January 25 2019, by Michael Addelman



Credit: University of Manchester

A University of Manchester study into social fragmentation in England using data from the last two censuses has revealed an increase from 2001

to 2011, especially for the North of England.

The rise was mainly driven by increases in the average number of single people across the country and the numbers of privately rented households across the country.

Between 2001 and 2011, there was a 7.5% increase in single people and a 90% increase in the privately rented household statistic, say the research team.

The study, says its authors, has profound implications on mental health provision in England.

Social [fragmentation](#), the absence of connections between individuals and society, was defined by the team as the numbers of private renters, single people, migrants and one person households in a community.

London, Yorkshire and Humber and the South Central, the study found, had the largest increases in private renting. Similarly, the North East, West Midlands and West Midlands had the largest increases in single people. London, however, had the highest levels on both factors.

Local neighbourhoods in Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester and Leeds had the highest levels of social fragmentation in the country in 2011.

London had the most neighbourhoods ranking high in social fragmentation and five Local Authorities with the highest levels were all in London. They were City of London, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham.

In comparison, areas in Northumberland, Warrington, Kettering, Solihull and the Southend-On-Sea had the lowest levels of social fragmentation. The Local Authorities of Rochford, Chiltern, East Dorset, South

Staffordshire, and Hart were the least fragmented.

"Private renting and single people have been long recognised as having an impact on social fragmentation- especially in mental health. Single people are also known to suffer from worse mental health outcomes. This study shows how these factors have become more prominent in recent years, impacting significantly on levels of social fragmentation," said Christos Grigoroglou.

The study, published in *BMJ Open*, also found that [urban areas](#) are more socially divided than the countryside, where people are more likely to lead more isolated lifestyles.

Migration, however, did not appear to impact on levels of social fragmentation - as measured by the numbers of people that move into an area from within the UK and the numbers of people who move into an area from outside the UK.

Health economist Christos Grigoroglou says the increases in private renting are likely to be a result of poor availability of social housing, unaffordable housing for 'generation rent', increasingly common short term employment and rising student numbers.

And the increase in the numbers of young professionals, students and divorces over the period are likely to have contributed to the rising numbers of single people.

The PhD Student said: "Private renting and single people have been long recognised as having an impact on social fragmentation- especially in mental health.

"Single people are also known to suffer from worse mental health outcomes.

"This study shows how these factors have become more prominent in recent years, impacting significantly on levels of social fragmentation.

Data scientist Professor Evan Kontopantelis said: "Higher levels of social fragmentation have long been linked with suicide, self-harm, mental disorders, and psychiatric health service use.

"Therefore, understanding social fragmentation can be a powerful aid to the organisation of healthcare services, by identifying areas that need to be targeted from social and healthcare interventions.

"Of particular interest is mental health and interventions to improve it, since [social fragmentation](#) appears to be a salient risk factor for poor mental [health](#)."

More information: Prevalence of mental illness in primary care and its association with deprivation and social fragmentation at small-area level: a spatial analysis in England. [www.research.manchester.ac.uk/ ...3-edf83127c65c](http://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/...3-edf83127c65c).html

Provided by University of Manchester

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