

# People from England's most deprived areas are ten times more likely to be in prison, analysis finds

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A study of prison rates from Cardiff University's Wales Governance Center reveals massive disparities between England's most deprived

areas and its least deprived.

The report shows that in 2021, the imprisonment rate for the ten most deprived local authorities in England—based on where prisoners were living prior to being jailed—was ten times greater (307 prisoners per 100,000) than that of the ten least deprived [local authorities](#) in England (30 per 100,000).

The North West as a whole (170 per 100,000) has an imprisonment rate that is considerably higher than the England and Wales average (131 per 100,000). Indeed, the North West has the highest imprisonment rate per 100,000 people of any region of England and Wales.

The analysis of publicly available data and information obtained through Freedom of Information requests forms part of a report responding to the Ministry of Justice's case for a new "Super Prison" in Chorley. The Ministry have appealed Chorley's Council to reject a planning application for a third prison in the area.

A decision on whether the prison will receive planning permission will now be made by the U.K. Secretary of State for Leveling Up, with a decision likely to be issued on or before 19 January.

Dr. Robert Jones, part of the Justice and Jurisdiction project at the Wales Governance Center, said, "A new super prison is being proposed at great expense despite a lack of evidence as to the performance or benefits of 'modern' prisons. Meanwhile, our analysis shows a clear link between imprisonment and poverty. The Ministry of Justice's decision to simply accept rising prisoner numbers rather than take active steps to reduce them will undoubtedly have significant economic, as well as human, consequences for the North West region.

"We argue that more prison places will 'level down' rather than 'level up.'

Rather than throwing good money after bad, a U.K. government interested in 'leveling-up' should seek to direct resources to tackle the chronic inequalities stemming from deprivation and poverty in communities across the North West."

The report adds that in December 2021, 15% of the prisoners (1,195) held in the North West's designated male resettlement prisons were from outside the region. Researchers say more can be done in the existing prison estate to ensure that resettlement prison places in the North West are used to house prisoners in their home region.

The report's lead author wrote to the Ministry in July 2022 to publish "the results of any research or analysis that the Ministry of Justice or His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service has carried out to compare the performance of older prisons versus newer, more modern prison establishments." In response, the Ministry of Justice confirmed that "no such research or analysis into the performance metrics of prison establishments which account for the age of those establishments has been undertaken."

Dr. Jones added, "The Ministry of Justice's case for a new prison rests on unevidenced claims around the benefits of 'modern' prisons, assumptions that a 'demand' exists for prison places that is based on projection measures beset by inaccuracy and 'large' uncertainty, and a 'regional' need for prison places that raises more questions over the Ministry of Justice's stewardship of the [prison](#) system than it does to provide answers.

"Our report underlines the need for [government officials](#), [policy makers](#) and practitioners to think more seriously about the relationship between imprisonment and deprivation. Against the backdrop of a spiraling cost of living crisis, rising poverty levels, and impending cuts to vital public services, there has arguably never been a more urgent or pressing need

for this discussion."

**More information:** Chorley Super Prison: The Case Against.  
[www.cardiff.ac.uk/\\_data/asset...e-Case-Against-1.pdf](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/_data/asset...e-Case-Against-1.pdf)

Provided by Cardiff University

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