



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

The English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 – Guidance

This guidance note is to aid interpretation of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It expands on the information provided in the [infographic](#). A full list of the data files and supporting documents available for the Indices of Deprivation 2015 is provided in the [annex](#) at the end of this note.

All of the data files and supporting documents are available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>

What is the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 and how can I use it?

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas¹ (or neighbourhoods) in England.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area).

It is common to describe how relatively deprived a small area is by saying whether it falls among the most deprived 10 per cent, 20 per cent or 30 per cent of small areas in England (although there is no definitive cut-off at which an area is described as 'deprived').

To help with this, deprivation 'deciles' are published alongside ranks. Deciles are calculated by ranking the 32,844 small areas in England from most deprived to least deprived and dividing them into 10 equal groups. These range from the most deprived 10 per cent of small areas nationally to the least deprived 10 per cent of small areas nationally.

¹ Lower-layer Super Output Areas, based on the 2011 Census.

You can use this information to describe the relative level of deprivation in an area. For example:

Small area X is ranked 5,000 out of 32,844 small-areas in England, where 1 is the most deprived. This means that small area X is amongst the 20 per cent most deprived small areas in the country.

You can look up deprivation data for a small area:

- on a dataset, if you know the small area's name or code. You can find the data [here](#). File 1 contains the Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks and deciles for all small areas in England and is sufficient for the purposes of most users.
- using an interactive mapping tool. One example is our Indices of Deprivation explorer. By entering a postcode or place name, you can see the small area that the postcode or place lies in, and information on its deprivation relative to other small areas: <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html>

You can find out about the range of tools available to help you use the data, including mapping tools and postcode look-ups, in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document.

A note on small areas

The small areas used are called Lower-layer Super Output Areas, of which there are 32,844 in England. They are designed to be of a similar population size with an average of 1,500 residents each and are a standard way of dividing up the country. They do not have descriptive place names (in the way that local wards do), but are named in a format beginning with the name of the local authority district followed by a 4 character code eg City of London 001A.

For ease of communication, these small areas are sometimes described as neighbourhoods, for example, in the Statistical Release which accompanies the data.

What do people use the Index of Multiple Deprivation for?

National and local organisations use the Index of Multiple Deprivation, sometimes in conjunction with other data, to distribute funding or target resources to areas. It is widely used across central government to focus programmes on the most deprived areas. Locally, it is often used as evidence in the development of strategies, to target interventions, and in bids for funding. The voluntary and community sector also uses the Index, for example, to identify areas where people may benefit from the services they provide.

What other Indices are available?

The Index of Multiple Deprivation is part of the Indices of Deprivation and it is the most widely used of these indices. It combines information from seven domain indices (which measure different types or dimensions of deprivation) to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation. You can use the domain indices on their own to focus on specific aspects of deprivation. There are also supplementary indices concerned with income deprivation among children (IDACI) and older people (IDAOPI).

The Index of Multiple Deprivation is designed primarily to be a *small-area* measure of deprivation. But the Indices are commonly used to describe deprivation for higher-level geographies including local authority districts. A range of summary measures is available allowing you to see where, for example, a local authority district is ranked between 1 (the most deprived district in England) and 326 (the least deprived district in England). Summary measures are also available for upper tier local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and clinical commissioning groups.

What can you use the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 for?

Comparing small areas across England

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 uses the same data sources and combines them in the same way for every small area in England. This means you can directly compare the ranks of different small areas in England. If a small area's rank is closer to 1 than that of another area, it is more deprived.

Identifying the most deprived small areas

You can identify which small areas are amongst the most deprived in England using the published deciles, for example, to show which areas are amongst the 10 per cent or 20 per cent most deprived small areas nationally. You can also apply different cut points to the ranks to identify, for example, the 1 per cent or 5 per cent most deprived small areas nationally.

Exploring the domains (or types) of deprivation

You can look at the domain indices to explore which types of deprivation, e.g. income or health, are more prominent within areas or to focus on particular types of deprivation and explore how areas rank on these.

Comparing larger areas e.g. local authorities

A range of summary measures highlighting different aspects of deprivation are provided for larger areas, including local authority districts. Because patterns of deprivation across larger areas can be complex, there is no single summary measure that is the 'best' measure. Comparison of the different measures is needed to give a fuller description of deprivation for larger areas.

You can find out more in section 3.3 of the [Research Report](#).

Looking at changes in relative deprivation between versions (i.e. changes in ranks)

All of the Indices of Deprivation measure relative deprivation at small area level as accurately as possible, but they are not designed to provide 'backwards' comparability with previous versions of the Indices (2010, 2007, 2004 and 2000). However, because there is a broadly consistent methodology between the Indices of Deprivation 2015 and previous versions, you can compare the rankings as determined at the relevant time point by each of the versions.

When looking at changes in deprivation between the Indices of Deprivation 2015 and previous versions, users should therefore be aware that changes can only be described in relative terms, for example, the extent to which an area has changed rank or decile of deprivation.

For example, an area can be said to have become more deprived relative to other areas if it was within the most deprived 20 per cent of areas nationally according to the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation but within the most deprived 10 per cent according to the 2015 Index. However, it would not necessarily be correct to state that the level of deprivation in the area has increased on some absolute scale, as it may be the case that all areas had improved, but that this area had improved more slowly than other areas and so been 'overtaken' by those areas.

You can find out more in section 3.4 of the [Research Report](#).

What can't you use the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 for?

Quantifying how deprived a small area is

The Index of Multiple Deprivation is a relative measure of deprivation. This means it can tell you if one area is more deprived than another but not by how much. For example, a small area with a rank of 1,000 is not half as deprived as a place with a rank of 500.

Identifying deprived people

The Index of Multiple Deprivation measures relative deprivation in an area and is suitable for use where deprivation is concentrated in small areas. Within every area there will be individuals who are deprived and individuals who are not. The Index is not a suitable tool for targeting individuals.

Saying how affluent a place is

The Index of Multiple Deprivation is designed to identify aspects of deprivation, not affluence. For example, the measure of income deprivation is concerned with people on low incomes who are in receipt of benefits and tax credits. An area with a relatively small proportion of people (or indeed no people) on low incomes may also have relatively few or no people on *high* incomes. Such an area may be ranked among the least deprived in the country, but it is not necessarily among the most affluent.

Comparing with small areas in other UK countries

Each country in the UK produces its own version of the Index of Multiple Deprivation using similar methodologies. However differences in the indicators used, the time periods covered and the sizes of their small areas mean that it is not possible to make direct comparisons between these indices.

The Office for National Statistics provides some guidance on how to make some comparisons across the four countries' indices:

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/Info.do?page=analysisandguidance/analysisarticles/indices-of-deprivation.htm>

Measuring real change in deprivation over time

As explained above, one can compare the rankings as determined at the relevant time point by each version of the Indices of Deprivation. But the Indices are not designed to provide 'backwards' comparability with previous versions so these should not be used as a time series. Changes between versions of the Indices which limit the ability to make comparisons over time are described in Section 3.4 of the Research Report.

Feedback

DCLG welcomes feedback on how these statistics and the various outputs are used, and how well they meet your needs. indices.deprivation@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Annex: What data files and supporting documents are available?

All of the data files and supporting documents are available from:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>

Data

The following tables are available to download alongside this release.

Neighbourhood (Lower-layer Super Output Area) level data

There are a number of files at neighbourhood level. The first of these contains the Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks and deciles, and is sufficient for the purposes of most users. Other files are available for users with more specific requirements.

- File 1 Index of Multiple Deprivation
- File 2 Domains of deprivation
- File 3 Supplementary Indices - Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index
- File 4 Sub-domains of deprivation
- File 5 Scores for the Indices of Deprivation
- File 6 Population denominators
- File 7 All ranks, deciles and scores for the Indices of Deprivation, and population denominators (CSV file)
- File 8 Underlying indicators
- File 9 Transformed domain scores

Summary data for higher-level geographies

- File 10 Local Authority District Summaries
- File 11 Upper-tier Local Authority Summaries
- File 12 Local Enterprise Partnership Summaries
- File 13 Clinical Commissioning Group Summaries

Appendix F of the Research Report and Appendix O of the Technical Report 'What data has been published' describe these data files in more detail.

Supporting documents

In addition to this guidance note, the following supporting documents have been published:

- A [Statistical Release](#) which presents headline findings, and narrates a story of the most deprived areas. It showcases the ways in which the Indices data can be used and described, and the range of measures available. The technical notes cover the main points which users should be aware of in using and interpreting the Indices (including change over time). It explains how

users can give feedback on the Indices, and how the department will keep users informed in future.

- An [infographic](#) which illustrates how the Index of Multiple Deprivation is comprised and some do's and don'ts concerning its use.
- [Frequently asked questions](#) which includes information on a range of tools available to help you use the data
- A [Research Report](#) provides guidance on how to use and interpret the datasets and presents further results from the Indices of Deprivation 2015. It includes a full account of the set of summary statistics available for higher-level geographies such as local authority districts, with an example of their use, and advice on interpreting change over time².
- A [Technical Report](#) presenting the conceptual framework of the Indices of Deprivation 2015; the methodology for creating the domains and the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation; the design principles and quality assurance carried out to ensure reliability of the data outputs; and the component indicators and domains³.

Meeting users' specialist requirements

The majority of users will find the Index of Multiple Deprivation and data being made available for the Indices of Deprivation 2015 sufficient for their purposes. Advice is provided on how to re-use the data to compile summaries for other higher-level areas than are published here, or to compile a composite measure of relative deprivation using different weights to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, in Appendix A and Appendix B of the [Research Report](#).

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015-research-report>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015-technical-report>