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UK's rich and poor 'still live in different worlds despite the welfare state'

Poor people with the greatest need for good health care, education, jobs, housing and transport continue to have the worst access to opportunities and services 60 years after the founding of the welfare state, according to a new assessment of 21st century *Life in Britain*.

A series of ten analytical studies for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, launched today at a lunch meeting at the Royal Geographical Society's Annual Conference, use data from the millennial Census to uncover the continuing 'inverse care law' whereby poor communities have the least access to essential life chances and resources.

Comparing people and places across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the researchers at the Universities of Sheffield, Bristol and Edinburgh report on key examples of the inverse relationship between need and supply for specific services:

- **Doctors and nurses:** Areas with the highest levels of poor health have the lowest numbers of doctors, dentists and other health professionals living and working there. Only nurses, midwives and health visitors tend to be more concentrated in areas of higher need.
- **Teachers:** Areas with the greatest proportions of young people with no qualifications have the lowest availability of working teachers per head of population. The areas doing best have four times the density of teachers and one-third the rate of unqualified young people.
- **Sons and daughters:** In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, young people are more likely to obtain good qualifications if their parents' generation (people aged 40 to 54) are also well-qualified. This does not apply to Scotland where young people with good qualifications are geographically distributed more evenly.
- **Open all hours:** The UK is divided between 'work rich' and 'work poor' areas. In areas with low unemployment, the people who have jobs are more likely to be working very long hours that may affect their health and well-being. In areas of higher unemployment those with jobs are less likely to work long hours, but unemployment itself is associated with physical and mental health problems.
- **The office:** Geographical location as well as qualifications can influence the chances of obtaining a well-paid job.

more follows:

High-status jobs in the top levels of the government socio-economic classification system are concentrated in London and the South East. In areas where such jobs are relatively rare, there are higher proportions of people with good qualifications in low-status occupations.

- **Changing rooms:** Areas with high levels of overcrowded homes (including London, parts of the South East, cities in the Midlands and the North, and Glasgow) tend not to have many under-occupied homes. The areas with the highest levels of under-occupied property are found around the Home Counties and in parts of the South West, North Yorkshire and Wales.
- **A place in the sun:** The Census recorded 185,000 unoccupied holiday homes and second residences, most found in rural areas. These areas also tended to have unusually high proportions of local people who were renting their homes from a private landlord.
- **Top gear:** There is a geographical divide based on access to cars. Around a million households with dependent children do not have use of a car. By contrast an equal number of households, concentrated in the wealthy areas west of London, have three or more cars. The areas with the most families without cars are not only found in poor urban areas, but also in some rural areas.
- **In sickness and in health:** For the first time, the Census made visible the work of 5.9 million people providing care and support to others on an informal basis – including 1.2 million contributing more than 50 hours of care a week. Unlike the ‘inverse care law’ that applies to doctors, there is strong geographical link between informal care provision and need. The proportion of people with limiting long-term illnesses and informal care providers increases to the west and north of the UK, with the highest rates in the Welsh Valleys, parts of Scotland and areas around Tyneside and Merseyside.
- **Home front:** The poorest neighbourhoods with high proportions of families where no one is in paid work also tend to have the highest proportion of children and young people providing informal care for relatives or friends. The Census found 175,000 ‘young carers’ aged 5 to 17, including 30,000 who provided 20 or more hours of care a week.

The new analysis, delivered as ten short reports in a pack suitable for use by students, teachers, researchers and policy-makers, was carried out by Dr Ben Wheeler and Professor Danny Dorling from the University of Sheffield, Dr Mary Shaw from the University of Bristol and Dr Richard Mitchell from the University of Edinburgh.

Prof Dorling said: “Our analysis exploits the unique power of the most detailed Census data ever gathered on health, education, housing, employment and poverty. These are the aspects of British life that closely reflect the five ‘Giant Evils’ of disease, ignorance, squalor, idleness and want that William Beveridge identified in his 1942 report leading to the creation of a welfare state.

more follows:

“From that point of view, it is acutely disappointing to discover that so many opportunities and resources still depend on where people live. Wide and persisting inequality is reflected in big differences between ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ areas in terms of housing, education and health care as well as economic wealth. Perversely, people living in the poorest neighbourhoods with the greatest needs are often the least likely to have access to the services and support that would help them improve their lives and life chances.”

Dr Ben Wheeler said: “The Census data show quite clearly that although living standards have increased in 60 years, the rich and the poor in Britain continue to live in two different worlds. Our report maps these differences and aims to stimulate discussion about ways in which policy-makers can begin to bridge the divide. We hope that this will add significantly to the debate about divided Britain and the importance of tackling geographical as well as individual poverty.”

Note to Editors

Life in Britain: Using millennial Census data to understand poverty, inequality and place by Ben Wheeler, Mary Shaw, Richard Mitchell and Danny Dorling is published by The Policy Press and can be purchased online at www.policypress.org.uk or from Marston Book Services, PO Box 269, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4YN, price £49.99 plus £2.75 p&p.

The research is published as a pack consisting of a series of ten short reports, a summary, a supporting technical report and five A2 posters. The statistics and maps in the reports and posters are brought to life by contemporary photography and accompanied by discussion of contemporary trends and policy options.

A summary of findings is available from JRF, The Homestead, 40 Water End, York YO30 6WP or as a free download from www.jrf.org.uk. Free sample material is also available in the Reading Room at www.policypress.org.uk/

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Eliza Cook or **Jonathan Breckon** at the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) press office on **020 7591 3019**, mobiles **07789 486663** and **07813 762527** or email press@rgs.org.

Journalists are welcome to attend the launch event at 12.30pm, but will need to obtain a conference pass from the RGS press office.

(Issued by David Utting, JRF Associate Director (Public Affairs) 020-7278 9665 / 01727 762855 / 07930 313790 / david.utting@jrf.org.uk) Both Lynn Cotton in the Yprk press office and David Utting have pdfs of the 10 reports which we can e-mail as requested.