

Regional Trends

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Introduction

Regional Trends*, published today by the Office for National Statistics, seeks to contribute to decision making at national, local and European level, and to inform debate about the current state of the nation. It brings together data from a wide range of sources, both from within government and outside, to paint a comprehensive picture of the countries and regions of the United Kingdom.

In recent years there has been increased interest in regional diversity across the United Kingdom. While it is true that differences in income, housing costs, health and employment exist, in other aspects of life the regions may be similar.

An often-quoted difference is that income is higher in the South East of England and lower in the north of England. Over the period 1998-2001, average gross weekly income for households in London was more than one and a half times that of households in the North East of England, Northern Ireland and Wales [table 8.1]. London and the South East also have the highest proportion of people with a personal taxable income of £50,000 or more [table 8.5].

For the first time Household Income estimates *on a national accounts basis* have been published for local areas of the UK. The level and composition of Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) differs considerably between local areas [Tables 14.7, 15.6, 16.6, 17.5]. For example, Inner London-West had a per capita GDHI 64% above the UK average whereas the North of Northern Ireland had a per capita GDHI 28% below the UK average over the period 1997 - 1999.

However, this does not give a full picture as weekly household expenditure and housing costs for those living in the south of England are higher than the national average. Although house prices have risen faster than the rate of inflation in all areas, the north-south difference persists, the average dwelling price in London is now over £200,000 compared with less than £70,000 in the North East of England [table 6.9].

While these overall regional averages give a broad picture, they also mask considerable variability within regions. For example, although average weekly earnings for full-time employees in London in 2001 were the highest in the UK at £594 compared with the UK average of £442, within the region, average weekly earnings varied considerably. Some 10 per cent of men in London earned more than £1,204 but 10 per cent earned less than £267 [table 14.5].

One area where there is strong north-south difference is in people's health. In particular, death rates from circulatory diseases are much lower in the southern parts of the United Kingdom. The contrast is particularly striking for females: in 2000, the age-standardised mortality rates from ischaemic heart disease for females in the south and east of England were all less than 160 deaths per 100,000 population, whereas in Northern Ireland and the North East of England the rates were over 200 [table 7.3]. While death rates from breast cancer are highest in Wales and the Eastern health regions and lowest in Northern Ireland [table 7.7].

There are also differences in people's behaviour; for example, the North East of England has the highest proportion of young men found guilty or cautioned in England and Wales [table 9.10], and the rate of vehicle theft in the North West of England was more than double that in the East of England and the South East of England [table 9.1]. But adults in London were more likely to have been victims of robbery [table 9.2].

Comprehensive and up-to-date statistics about regions and subregional areas are increasingly demanded. In response to this, we have produced the Region in Figures series to complement Regional

Trends. The set of nine publications presents a wide range of subregional data at lower administrative levels for each Government Office Region in England and will be as valuable as the information in Regional Trends is to regional decision making. Further development of subregional data, which will also affect regional data, will be influenced by the Neighbourhood Statistics programme which is being led by the Office for National Statistics. The aim of this programme is to develop and make available new statistics for small areas to meet the needs of the National Strategy Action Plan 'A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal'. As these statistics become available over a number of years they will grow to cover an increasing range of subjects, such as crime, education and health. More information about the service can be found on the Neighbourhood Statistics web pages at www.statistics.gov.uk/neighbourhood.

Overview

Regional Trends provides a unique description of the regions and countries of the United Kingdom. In 17 chapters it covers a wide range of demographic, social, industrial and economic statistics, taking a look at most aspects of life. The chapters fall broadly into four sections: regional profiles (Chapter 1), the European Union (Chapter 2), the main topic areas (Chapters 3 to 13) and sub-regional statistics (Chapters 14 to 17). To make comparison between regions easy, information is given in clear tables.

Regional statistics are essential for a wide range of people including policy-makers and planners in both the public and private sectors; marketing professionals; researchers; students and teachers; journalists; and anyone with a general interest in regional information. *Regional Trends 37* brings together data from diverse sources and, for some topics, is the only publication where data for the whole of the United Kingdom are available in one place. Wherever data for the component parts of the United Kingdom are sufficiently comparable, figures have been aggregated to give a national average or total.

Coverage and definitions

Due to variations in coverage and definitions, some care may be needed when comparing data from more than one source. Readers should consult the Notes and Definitions file as well as reading the footnotes relevant to each table for help in analysing trends or comparing different sources.

Availability of Electronic data

The contents of *Regional Trends 37* will be available free of charge via the national Statistics web site (www.statistics.gov.uk).

Further Information

Regional and subregional statistics can be found in a range of other GSS publications, statistical bulletins and regular press releases. Much of the information included in the Population and Households and the Labour Market chapters of *Regional Trends* can be found on Nomis®, the on-line database run by Durham University under contract to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It contains government statistics down to the smallest available geographic area, which may be unpublished elsewhere. Additional subregional data can be accessed from the Neighbourhood Statistics web pages (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/neighbourhood>). In addition, subregional data for the Government Office regions in England can be found in the series Region in Figures; data for Wales are published on the National Assembly for Wales website, (www.wales.gov.uk); data for Scotland are published on the Scottish Executive website, (www.scotland.gov.uk); data for Northern Ireland are published on the Northern Ireland Office website, (www.northernireland.gov.uk). Details of these sources, and others, are available on the National Statistics website (www.statistics.gov.uk).

Contributors

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Information

Regional boundaries

The United Kingdom comprises Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Great Britain consists of England, Wales and Scotland. The Isle of Man and the Channel Isles are not part of the United Kingdom. The Scilly Isles are included as part of Cornwall throughout.

The Statistical Regions of the United Kingdom comprise the Government Office Regions for England, plus Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The local government administrative structure provides the framework for breaking down the regions into smaller areas. A map of the statistical regions of the United Kingdom, along with other key boundaries used in the tables, are given in the Notes and Definitions chapter.

Nomenclature for Territorial Units (NUTS)

Some data are presented using the European Nomenclature for Territorial Units (NUTS) area classification, primarily economic data in chapters 12 and 13. Further information on the NUTS classification is contained in the Notes and Definitions.

Subregional geography

The subregional information presented in Chapters 14 to 17 reflect the complete implementation of the local government reorganisation that happened between 1 April 1995 and 1 April 1998. Data for England in Chapter 14 are presented firstly by region. Within each region Unitary Authorities (UAs) are listed first in alphabetical order. Counties are listed next in alphabetical order. Within each County the Local Authority Districts (LAD) are listed alphabetically. Where still available, figures for former counties are shown at the end of the region. Chapter 15 on Wales and Chapter 16 on Scotland present data for the UAs and the New Councils respectively which replaced the former two-tier systems on 1 April 1996. Chapter 17 on Northern Ireland continues to give figures at Board or district level as available.

Full details of the local government reorganisation and the NUTS area classification are given in the *Gazetteer of old and new geographies of the United Kingdom* available from the National Statistics website.