



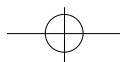
# findings



## Patterns of neighbourhood dissatisfaction in England

What are the major sources of neighbourhood dissatisfaction in England? What sort of people are the most likely to be dissatisfied with their neighbourhoods? Research using data from the Survey of English Housing in combination with the Census by Roger Burrows and David Rhodes at the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York found that:

- f** The most widespread source of neighbourhood dissatisfaction is crime. Over one-fifth of householders perceive crime to be a major problem in their area. Other major sources of neighbourhood dissatisfaction for 10 per cent or more of householders are: problems with dogs; poor leisure facilities; high levels of vandalism; and litter and rubbish in the streets.
- f** Forty-four per cent of householders reported no major problem or issues relating to their areas which they considered serious. Just over one quarter reported one problem that they considered serious, 14 per cent identified two problems and seven per cent identified three problems. However, almost ten per cent of all householders identified four or more serious problems or issues with their area.
- f** Householders expressing high levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction were found in all tenure groups. For example: amongst home-owners, 13 per cent of those living in terraced houses or flats in the North of England expressed high levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction; amongst households renting privately, 35 per cent of those headed by someone from a semi-skilled manual social class living in London or Northern England expressed high levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction; and amongst households living in social housing, 42 per cent in North East England headed by an unemployed person expressed high levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction.
- f** The places estimated to contain very dissatisfied households are wards characterised in official classifications as: social housing in London; high-rise housing; deprived industrial areas with heavy industry; inner London; cosmopolitan London; deprived industrial areas with large minority ethnic populations; and areas of low amenity housing in deprived city areas.
- f** A comparison of residents' own assessments of their neighbourhoods with the available indices of deprivation, shows that the Breadline Britain index matches most closely and the DETR Local Conditions Measure provides the poorest match. If policy makers were guided by this geography of neighbourhood dissatisfaction, rather than by existing measures, when targeting resources, the North-East of England would fare much better than it currently does.



## Introduction

Identifying disadvantaged areas is not always a simple matter. Perceptions of the geography of poverty are highly sensitive to the measurement tools used and contemporary policy-makers are now confronted with a profusion of such measures.

Although the construction of these various measures can be a matter of much technical complexity, the choice of which to use is anything but academic. The use of one measure over another in targeting social spending can, on occasion, lead to very different results, in that the rank order of deprivation scores varies significantly between indices. For policy-makers, researchers, activists and residents concerned with the regeneration of particular neighbourhoods the issue is crucial. In the scramble for resources, it would be very helpful if there could be at least some consensus as to the localities which should be prioritised. But which index - if any - should we use to identify such areas?

There is, of course, no simple answer to this question. However, it might be interesting to know if the areas which existing indices identify as disadvantaged are the same areas that those living there would identify as such. Is the map of neighbourhood disadvantage generated by existing indices the same as that which results when one pays close and systematic attention to what residents are saying about their local environments? If existing indices are to be used as a basis for identifying disadvantaged areas for area regeneration programmes and if policy-makers are to take residents' views seriously, then it becomes important to know the extent to which residents' views about their neighbourhoods coincide with the various maps of area disadvantage currently drawn upon by policy-makers and social researchers.

Using data from the *Survey of English Housing* (SEH) it is possible to examine the socio-economic characteristics of those residents who express high levels of dissatisfaction with their neighbourhoods. These results can then be combined with data from the Census to estimate the spatial distribution of such residents at ward level in England. The resulting 'geography of misery' can then be compared with a range of existing indices of area disadvantage.

### What are people dissatisfied about?

The most widespread cause of high levels of area dissatisfaction relates to crime (see Table 1). Over one-fifth of respondents perceive crime to be a major problem in their area. Other major sources of dissatisfaction which affect 10 per cent or more households are: problems with dogs; poor leisure facilities; high levels of vandalism; and rubbish in the streets.

Table 1: Rank order of sources of area dissatisfaction

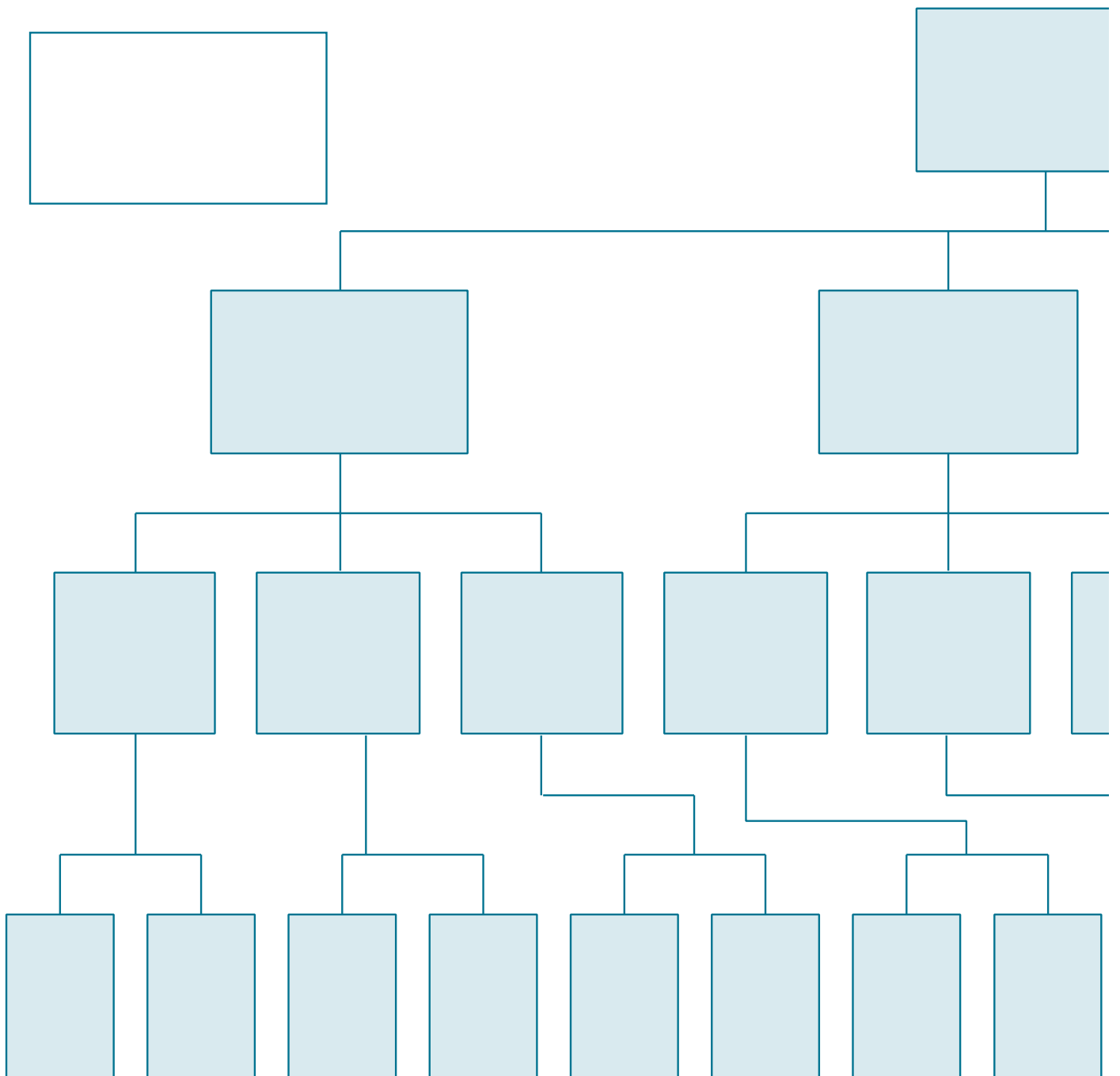
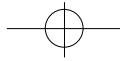
<i>Problem of issue</i>	<i>Rank order</i>	<i>% who perceive as a major problem or issue</i>
Crime	1	22
Dogs	2	16
Leisure Facilities	3	15
Vandalism and Hooliganism	4	14
Litter and Rubbish	5	13
Public Transport	6	9
Graffiti	=7	6
Noise	=7	6
Street Lighting	=7	6
Generally Unsatisfied	10	5
General Appearance	11	4
Neighbours	12	4
Schools	13	2
Rubbish Collection	14	2
Security	15	1
Unfriendliness	=16	1

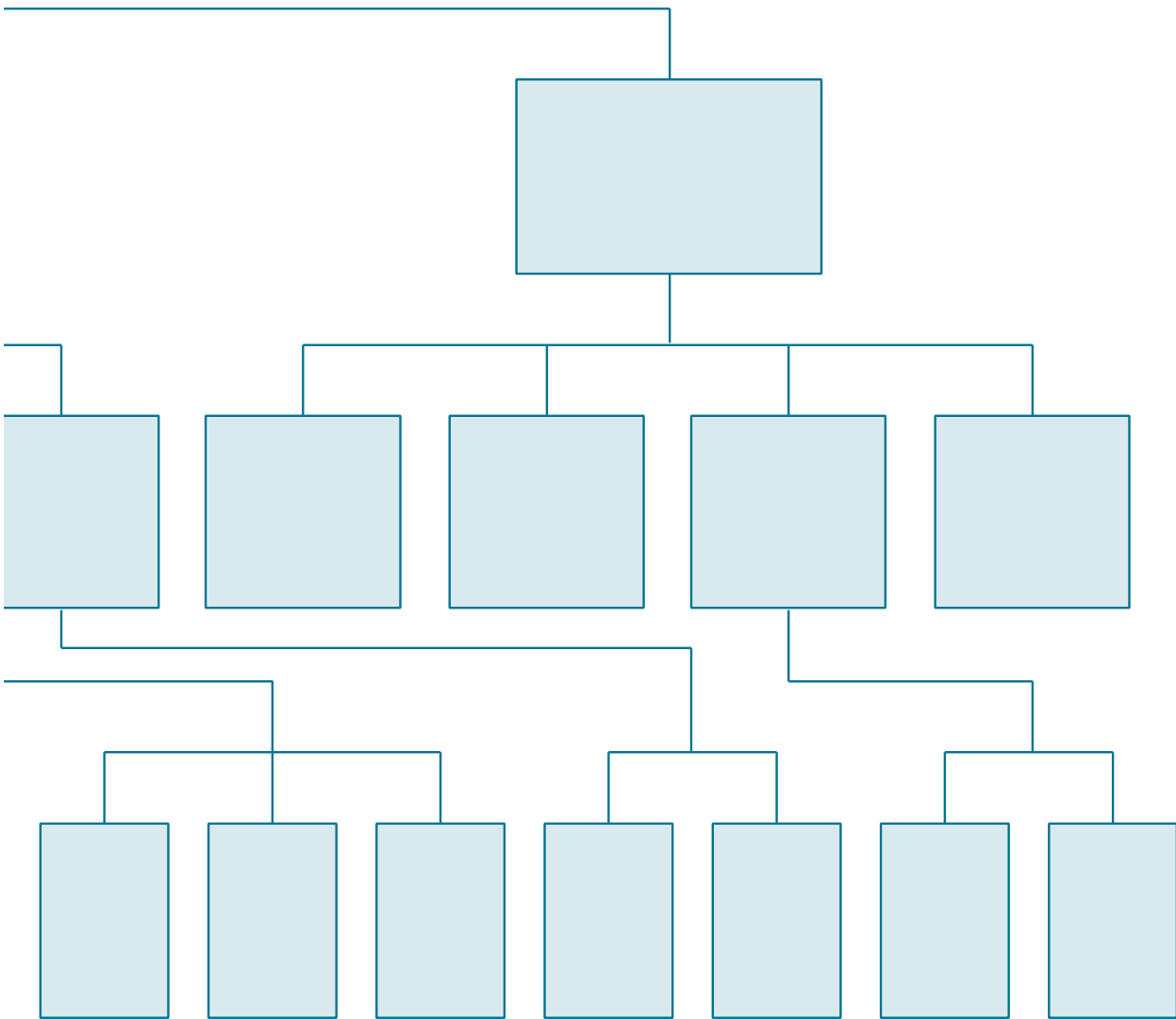
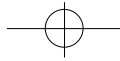
Forty-four per cent of householders in England reported no major problem or issues relating to their areas which they considered serious. Just over one quarter reported one problem that they considered serious, 14 per cent identified two problems and seven per cent identified three problems. However, almost 10 per cent of all householders in England identified four or more serious problems or issues with their area.

### Who is dissatisfied?

Figure 1 shows how patterns of neighbourhood dissatisfaction vary between different types of household. Each box shows the proportion of households expressing high levels of dissatisfaction with their neighbourhood, the estimated number of all such households in England and the variable which gives the greatest purchase on explaining differences in the proportion of householders who are dissatisfied with their neighbourhood. For example, the first box shows that of the 19,246,000 households in England some 10 per cent express high levels of dissatisfaction with their neighbourhood. This proportion varies most significantly across the different housing tenures.

Amongst all home-owners, seven per cent were dissatisfied with their neighbourhood; amongst all of those in the private rented sector 10 per cent were dissatisfied; and amongst all of those living in social housing 18 per cent were dissatisfied. However, within each tenure group the basis for differences in neighbourhood dissatisfaction varies.





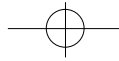


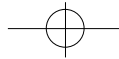
Table 2: Estimated mean levels of householders dissatisfied with their neighbours by the ONS classification of wards - groups and clusters

Groups	Groups %	Clusters %
<i>Clusters</i>		
1 Inner city estates	18	
<i>London public housing</i>		18
<i>high rise housing</i>		17
2 Deprived industrial areas	16	
<i>heavy industry</i>		17
<i>ethnic groups in industry</i>		14
3 Deprived city areas	15	
<i>inner London</i>		16
<i>low amenity housing</i>		15
<i>cosmopolitan London</i>		14
4 Industrial areas	12	
<i>primary production</i>		13
<i>better off manufacturing</i>		12
<i>growth points</i>		12
<i>traditional manufacturing</i>		11
5 Lower status owner-occupation	11	
<i>miners' terraces</i>		14
<i>margins of deprivation</i>		12
<i>textile towns terraces</i>		11
<i>industrial towns</i>		10
<i>declining resorts</i>		10
6 Metropolitan professional	10	
<i>young singles</i>		11
<i>urban achievers</i>		10
7 Middling Britain	9	
<i>mixed economies</i>		9
<i>expanding towns</i>		9
<i>West Midlands manufacturing</i>		8
<i>small towns</i>		8
8 Suburbia	8	
<i>classic commuters</i>		8
<i>leafier suburbs</i>		7
9 Mature populations	7	
<i>retirement areas</i>		8
<i>better off retired</i>		7
<i>remoter retirement areas</i>		7
<i>coastal very elderly</i>		6
10 Rural fringe	7	
<i>edge of town</i>		7
<i>industrial margins</i>		7
<i>town and country</i>		7
11 Rural areas	7	
<i>agricultural heartland</i>		7
<i>accessible countryside</i>		7
<i>remoter coast and country</i>		7
12 Transient populations	7	
<i>transient populations</i>		7
13 Established owner-occupied	6	
<i>green belt</i>		6
<i>outer suburbs</i>		6
14 Prosperous areas	6	
<i>affluent villages</i>		6
<i>established prosperity</i>		6
<i>concentrations of affluence</i>		5

Amongst home-owners, the main variation relates to differences in the type of accommodation, the social class and current economic status of the head of the household and, finally, the region. Amongst households renting privately, levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction vary in relation to social class differences and region. Amongst households living in the social rented sector, differences in levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction vary most in relation to the current economic status of the head of household, region and, amongst the retired at least, social class.

#### Where do dissatisfied householders live?

Using the results shown in Figure 1 in combination with Census data it is possible to estimate levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction for almost all wards in England. Table 2 shows estimates for different types of ward using a classification schema devised by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) which distinguishes between different groups and clusters of wards on the basis of a range of socio-demographic commonalities.



## Conclusion

This measure of neighbourhood dissatisfaction is a complex amalgam of objective and subjective elements. However, it is profoundly and starkly socially and spatially patterned.

The analysis shows that householders experiencing the deprivations associated with high levels of dissatisfaction with their neighbourhoods are not only located within the social rented sector - home-owners and privately renting households also live in problematic neighbourhoods.

Consequently, any area regeneration targeting of the 'worst estates' will miss a significant proportion of households living in what they themselves perceive to be squalid neighbourhoods.

The analysis also suggests that the 'geography of neighbourhood dissatisfaction' in England most clearly corresponds to the map of poverty generated by the Breadline Britain index, and is most weakly associated with the perception of the spatial distribution of poverty one gains when using the DETR Index of Local Conditions.

Finally, the research suggests that if policy makers were guided by this geography of neighbourhood dissatisfaction rather than existing measures when targeting resources, the North-East of England would fare much better than it currently does.

## About the study

The study was based upon a secondary analysis of data from the Survey of English Housing combined with specially commissioned data from the 1991 Census.

## How to get further information

A full report on the research, *Unpopular places? Area disadvantage and the geography of misery in England* by Roger Burrows and David Rhodes, is published by The Policy Press in association with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (ISBN 1 86134 097 4, price £13.95 plus £2 p&p). It is available from Biblios Publishers' Distribution Services Ltd, Star Road, Partridge Green, West Sussex, RH13 8LD, Tel: 01403 710851, Fax: 01403 711143.

Ward level estimates of the proportion of households expressing high levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction are available as an SPSS portable file via the Internet from the CHP web site at <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/misery.htm>.

The following *Findings* look at related issues:

- Understanding and preventing youth crime, Apr 96 (*SP93*)
- Life on a low income, Jun 96 (*SP97*)
- Poverty, housing tenure and 'social exclusion', Sept 97 (*H222*)
- Geographical variations in unemployment and non-employment, Apr 98 (*F408*)

Full details of all JRF *Findings* and other publications can be found on our website: <http://www.jrf.org.uk>. If you do not have access to the Internet or have any further queries on publications, contact the Publications Office on 01904 615905 (direct line/answerphone for publications queries only).

Published by the  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
The Homestead, 40 Water End, York YO30 6WP  
Tel: 01904 629241 Fax: 01904 620072  
<http://www.jrf.org.uk>  
ISSN 0958-3084

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an independent, non-political body which has supported this project as part of its programme of research and innovative development projects, which it hopes will be of value to policy-makers and practitioners. The findings presented here, however, are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Foundation.