

Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005 (WIMD) is the official measure of deprivation for small areas in Wales. It was developed for the Welsh Assembly Government by the Assembly's Statistical Directorate and the Local Government Data Unit. It replaces the index which was produced in 2000.

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■ ■ what is multiple deprivation?

■ ■ Deprivation is a wider concept than poverty. Poverty means not having enough money (or other essentials) to get by. Deprivation refers to problems caused by a general lack of resources and opportunities (not just money).

Multiple deprivation, in the sense that it is used for the WIMD, cannot be measured directly—it is not some special sort of deprivation. It is a mixture of separate kinds of deprivation, each of which can be measured to some extent. But they cannot just be added together to make an overall index because they may interact and have more impact if found in certain combinations.

■ ■ what is an index?

■ ■ An index is group of separate measurements which are combined into a single number. They are designed to show changes in a complicated variable like intelligence or industrial output. Values of the index can be compared with each other, sometimes over time and sometimes for different geographical areas.

For example, the Retail Price Index (RPI) is a well-known index based on the prices of goods bought by an average household. It includes everything from food and housing to entertainment. The RPI is used to measure changes in the cost of living.

Indexes are easy to work out and to understand. The problem is in deciding what to include and how much importance to give it—opinions could vary on both, and often do.

■ ■ how was the index put together?

■ ■ The WIMD 2005 is made up of seven separate kinds of deprivation:

- income
- employment
- health
- education
- housing
- access to services
- environment

Each of them was based on a range of different indicators which meant that they were measured in different ways using different units. So before they could be combined the measurements had to be altered to make them consistent.


For example, if the height of something had been measured in metres and the weight in kilograms it would not make sense simply to add them together.

Income and employment were classed as the most important factors, and they were made the biggest contributors to the overall index. Although there is more to deprivation than poverty, not having enough money or a job is a big part of it.

Wales has been divided into 1,896 areas each having roughly the same number of people. These are known as Super Output Areas: a standard way of dividing up England and Wales. Deprivation scores have been worked out for each of these areas: higher scores mean more deprivation.

An area has a higher deprivation score than another one if the proportion of people living there who are classed as deprived is higher. An area itself is not deprived: it is the circumstances and lifestyles of the people living there that affect its deprivation score. And it is important to remember that not everyone living in a deprived area is deprived—and that not all deprived people live in deprived areas.

what can the index be used for?

 The index can be used for:

- giving an overall deprivation score for each of the 1,896 areas in Wales;
- giving scores for the seven separate kinds of deprivation for each of the areas;
- comparing the deprivation scores for two or more of the areas;
- ranking the scores for all 1,896 areas or for a group of them (like those in a local authority), so that the areas can be put in order from the most deprived to the least;
- comparing two or more local authorities (or other groups of areas) by looking at the proportion of the areas in the local authority in the most deprived (say) ten per cent in all of Wales;

For income and employment it is possible to get the numbers of people classed as deprived living in an area (as well as a deprivation score). For the other five kinds of deprivation only the scores are available (because they are worked out using a range of indicators rather than just numbers of people). The data on which the index is based can be used to check for changes over time.



what can't the index be used for?

There are a few ways in which it is tempting to use the index, but which don't really make sense or which lead to unreliable results.

Tiny differences in the deprivation scores don't mean anything. There's no point rummaging among the decimal places trying to show that one area is more deprived than another.

You can't say how much more deprived one area is than another. If area A has a score of 40 and area B one of 20, it does not follow that A is twice as deprived as B. Or if A were ranked as the 100th most deprived area and B the 300th, it does not follow that A is three times more deprived than B. There can be a strong temptation to jump to conclusions like these, but they are definitely wrong.

It is an index of deprivation not affluence. If one area is much lower down the ranked list than another then you can say that it is less deprived but you can't say it is more affluent. The index is not based on the factors which mean that a place is affluent. Every area has people who are deprived and people who are affluent, but the index counts only those classed as deprived. It makes no difference whether the rest are nearly deprived but not quite, fairly well-off, or really rich.

The deprivation scores from the 2005 index can't be compared with those from 2000. The areas on which the indexes are based are different, and the indexes were worked out in different ways. But even if these changes had not been made, comparisons would still not be valid. An area's score is affected by the scores of every other area; so it is impossible to tell whether a change in score is a real change in the deprivation level of an area, or whether it is due to the scores of other areas going up or down.

The deprivation scores can't be compared with those from the deprivation indexes of other UK countries. To be able to compare an area in Wales with one in (say) England would mean having to design a joint England and Wales index—having two separate indexes wouldn't work.

There are no official local authority deprivation scores. Local authority scores can be worked out—but there are several ways to do it, and there is no single obviously right way to do it.

■ ■ **summary**

■ ■ With the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005:

- higher scores mean more deprivation;
 - you can tell if areas are deprived but not if they are affluent;
 - the scores can't be compared with those from the 2000 index, but the data on which the index is based can be used to check for changes over time;
 - the scores for Wales can't be compared with those for other UK countries;
 - there are no official overall local authority deprivation scores;
 - the scores of two different areas can be compared to see if one is more deprived, (but you can't tell by how much).
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