

Our research

The research described in this report was commissioned by Building Communities Trust from Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI). It maps and ranks areas across the whole of Wales for the presence of civic assets, levels of engagement within communities and their connectivity in terms of access to jobs, transport networks and IT infrastructure.

In undertaking this research, we have created two new indexes. The Wales Community Assets Index (WCAI) has ranked all 410 Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) in Wales across domains of connectivity, community assets and engaged communities, to show the combined levels of community infrastructure.

The Wales Community Resilience Index (WCRI) merges the assets index with the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) to show the degree to which communities experience challenges with both deprivation and lack of infrastructure. There is a striking degree of convergence between the WCAI and the WIMD, far more than might have been expected in a country like Wales, where so many people live in rural areas. For most people in Wales living in disadvantaged areas, it also means living in areas lacking in community infrastructure.

Our findings

The research identifies a category of Less Resilient Areas (LRAs) which are conceptualised as MSOAs in Wales, with have high levels of need on both the WCAI and the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019. Areas ranked in the top 25% in Wales (ranked 1-102) identified as 'less-resilient' areas, by comparison only 27 areas are in the 20% most deprived on the WIMD, but are not classed as an LRA.

Strikingly, many LRA communities experiencing infrastructure challenges and deprivation are found on the peripheries of major urban centres, on post-World War II housing estates and in former mining communities.

The data suggests that, relatively speaking, most rural areas have been able to sustain their civic assets, despite not normally being described as wealthy and experiencing often very poor connectivity. Deeper analysis of the data suggests that many rural areas across Wales experience high levels of active and engaged communities.

Our research shows that communities with fewer places to meet, a less engaged and active community and poorer connectivity to the wider economy, experience significantly different social and economic outcomes compared to communities possessing more of these assets.

Communities with fewer of these assets have higher rates of unemployment, residents often do not have qualifications and experience limiting long-term illnesses than both areas typically regarded as experiencing deprivation which do have those assets and Wales as a

whole. They also have lower levels of community activity and receive lower levels of funding from both the state and charitable funders despite their social challenges.

And, despite the problems with connectivity, almost a third of households in LRAs do not own a car, making residents more likely to have problems accessing work and key public services.

Some of these findings are unsurprising: the relative peripherality of many LRAs has almost certainly led to the outmigration of more skilled, younger people; but the findings relating to health, community action and access to funding are not as obvious.

This unprecedented mapping and ranking of community infrastructure, combined with the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD), clearly demonstrates sustained, place-based inequality throughout the nation. These inequalities result in significantly different social and economic outcomes for people living in LRAs.

Recommendations: what needs to happen next

To reduce these place-based disparities we recommend that:

- 01** Welsh Government should distribute resources based on resilience as well as deprivation, recognising the additional challenges facing vulnerable people living on the margins of Welsh towns and cities.
- 02** Transport planners need to prioritise LRAs for public transport services, including funding community transport where necessary.
- 03** Welsh Government should develop mandatory guidelines to ensure that all future housing developments are "future proofed" with good transport access and minimum provision of community assets, like a community centre.
- 04** Welsh Government must ensure, through stronger guidance or legislation, that communities have a simpler process to take over key community facilities.
- 05** To build community resilience across Wales, Welsh Government must create a 'Community Wealth Fund' using the new wave of money to be released under 2022's Dormant Assets Act.
- 06** Funders need to recognise the needs of Less Resilient Areas and ensure they get their fair share of resources.

Where can I read more?

Please click [here](#) to download the BCT Policy Report (English)

Please click [here](#) to download OCSI report (English)

Please click [here](#) to download the Complete Research Dataset spreadsheet

About us

Building Communities Trust (BCT) was established in 2015 with the purpose of supporting asset-based community development, to enable people to make their own neighbourhoods stronger and better places to live in. With the support of a £16.5m endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund, we established the Invest Local programme to provide £1m over 10-12 years for 13 communities across Wales, for residents to invest according to their own priorities. These communities were identified due to their position on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) and their previous limited access to lottery funding.