

We've All Experienced The Crisis Differently

When it comes to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on health, jobs and families, there is no simple North-South or urban-rural divide.

According to a new analysis by think tank the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS), the areas where the health impact has been highest differ from those regions where job losses are more prevalent.

Areas of England where children are at greatest risk of the impacts of the virus tend to be different again. But the analysis does conclude that some local authority areas look vulnerable in multiple dimensions.

For example, Torbay and the Isle of Wight are both vulnerable in the areas of health, jobs and families.

The vulnerability seen in these two local authority areas is likely the result of their elderly populations, economic reliance on tourism and hospitality, and pockets of local socio-economic disadvantage.

The IFS analysis was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, forming part of the IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities.

The research finds that the balance between protecting public health, enabling economic activity and minimising the social costs of isolation could look very different in different parts of England, and are often very different even in neighbouring local authorities.

The findings within the report include that coastal towns are notably vulnerable to both health and economic impacts of the Covid-19 crisis. In many coastal towns, elderly populations are vulnerable to Covid-19, along with low-paid work in the hospitality sector which has been particularly badly affected by the pandemic. Many of these coastal towns are already economically deprived.

Parts of the northern spine of England are more vulnerable to the health impacts and the impact on families. Areas including South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire have relatively older populations and economic disadvantage placing children at greater risk from lost schooling opportunities.

Other vulnerable areas are clustered in the West Midlands, particularly around Birmingham, as well as the cities of the North West and North East.

Workers in the more affluent local authority areas are likely to have experienced greater job losses. However, workers in the shut-down sectors of retail and hospitality are often lower earners but work in relatively well-off areas.

The analysis identified some regional patterns in vulnerability, but neighbouring local authorities are likely to experience the crisis very differently.

For example, Nottinghamshire has very different exposure from that of neighbouring Leicestershire on all three dimensions of vulnerability.

London has some of the highest rates of Covid-19 to date, but its younger population seems less vulnerable to the serious health consequences of the disease.

The IFS analysis notes a very unequal health effect within London, with younger boroughs seeing fewer confirmed cases and lower death rates. But many London boroughs will face significant economic and social costs from the pandemic, with shut down sectors in hospitality and tourism especially important.

The IFS is calling on the government to design policy responses reflecting these different local needs, but concedes this will need a coordinated response from different services and layers of government.

Alex Davenport, an IFS Research Economist and an author of the report, said:

"There is a small group of local authorities in England where public health, local jobs and families are all more vulnerable than average. While several of these areas are in the North West, the group includes local authorities from Dorset to Northumberland. But it is Torbay and the Isle of Wight that stand out as the most highly vulnerable, reflecting their elderly populations, reliance on tourism and hospitality, and pockets of socio-economic disadvantage."

Imran Rasul, Research Director at IFS and Professor of Economics at University College London, and another author of the report, said:

"There is no single measure that captures all the different types of vulnerability during this crisis. The risks to public health, local economies and vulnerable families are spread across England in a patchwork. The crisis will require policymakers at different levels to coordinate their response, since the geography of vulnerabilities has shifted away from the traditional North-South or urban-rural divides."



Source: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14884>

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