

Fact sheet

Tracing social productivity during the austerity years

Defining and measuring social productivity

The 2020 Commission coined the term social productivity to stand for empowering forms of public services which were delivered locally, and citizen-led. The commissioners argued that to ramp up social productivity over the coming decade would require more participative, citizen-service engagement, more local control over decisions and a shift in finance away from the centre.

To assess how far we have come, this short fact sheet presents results from a new index of social productivity based on available data in the Community Life Survey (2013–19).¹ This is a composite indicator using 12 variables to measure the following themes:

- 1 Action** such as civic/social action and volunteering;
- 2 Influence** over local decisions; and
- 3 Belonging** to the local community.

All data relate to England and its regions.²

Themes and variables for social productivity³

Action

Involvement in social action in local area at least once in the last 12 months

Any volunteering, at least once a month

Any volunteering, at least once in the last year

Civic participation at least once in the last year

Civic activism at least once in the last year

Given to a charitable cause in the last four weeks

Influence

Agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area

Attended a civic consultation at least once in the last year

Belonging

Chat to their neighbours (more than just to say hello) at least once a month

Feel they belong strongly or fairly strongly to their immediate neighbourhood

Agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together

Satisfied with their local area as a place to live

¹ The Community Life Survey can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-life-survey>

² Full methodology can be found in the Appendix.

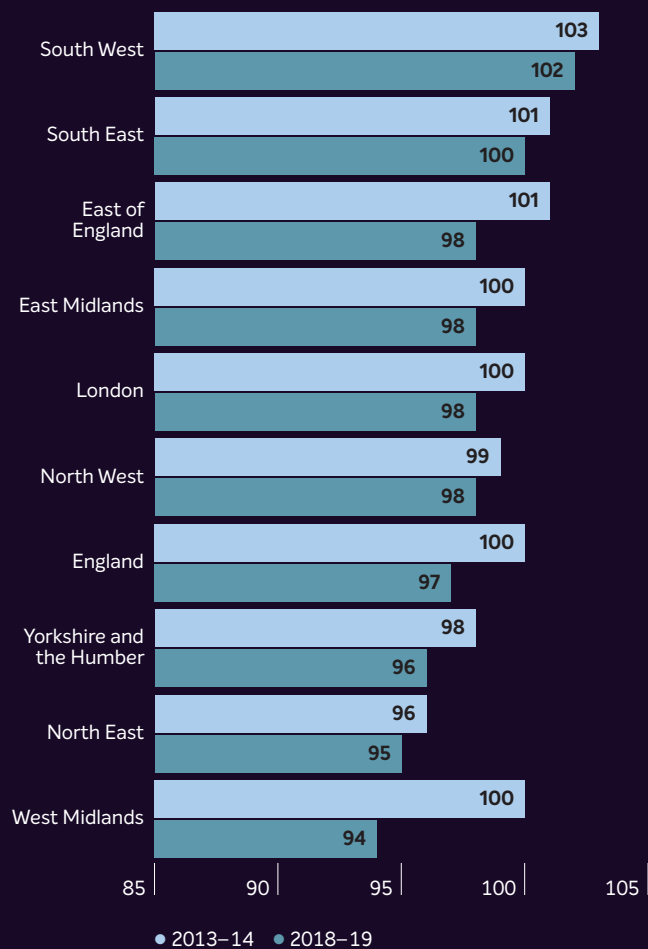
³ Each of the three themes is weighted equally in the construction of the index.

What happened to headline social productivity?

- The Social Productivity Index fell by 3% between 2013–14 and 2018–19.
- The biggest fall was experienced in the West Midlands which fell by 6%.
- Every region experienced a fall in social productivity during this time.

Regional Social Productivity Index, 2013–14 and 2018–19 (100=England in 2013–14)

Source: CPP calculations

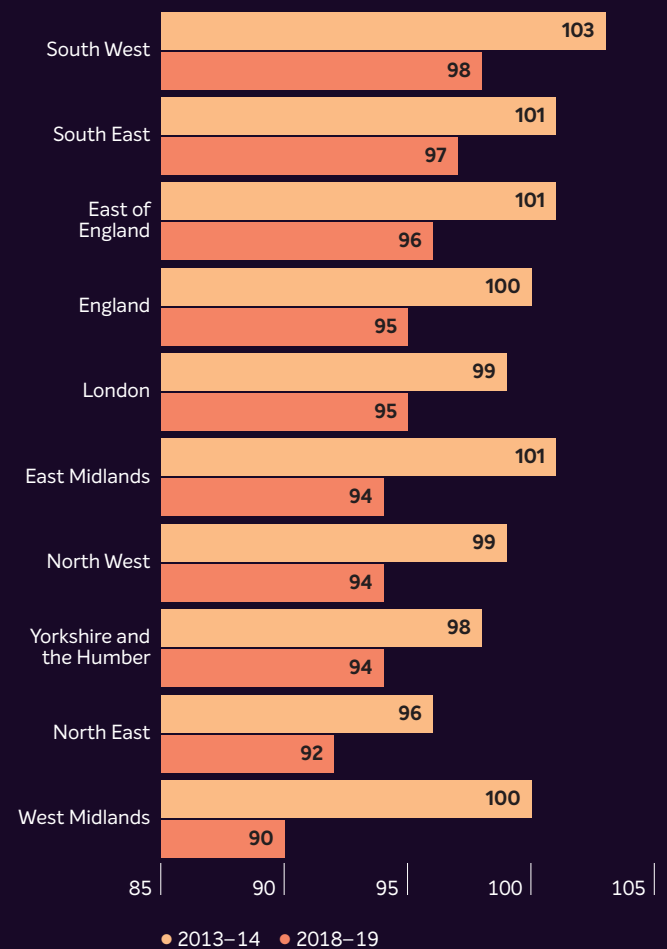


Which aspect of social productivity fell the most?

- The overall fall in social productivity was driven by a fall in the **Action** theme – down 5% in England.
- The starkest falls in **Action** were in the Midlands – 10% fall in the West Midlands and 7% fall in the East Midlands.
- The South West has consistently had the highest level of social productivity by region (top in both 2013–14 and 2018–19) though it has also experienced a decline.

'Action' score from the Social Productivity Index, 2013–14 and 2018–19 (100=England 2013–14)

Source: CPP calculations

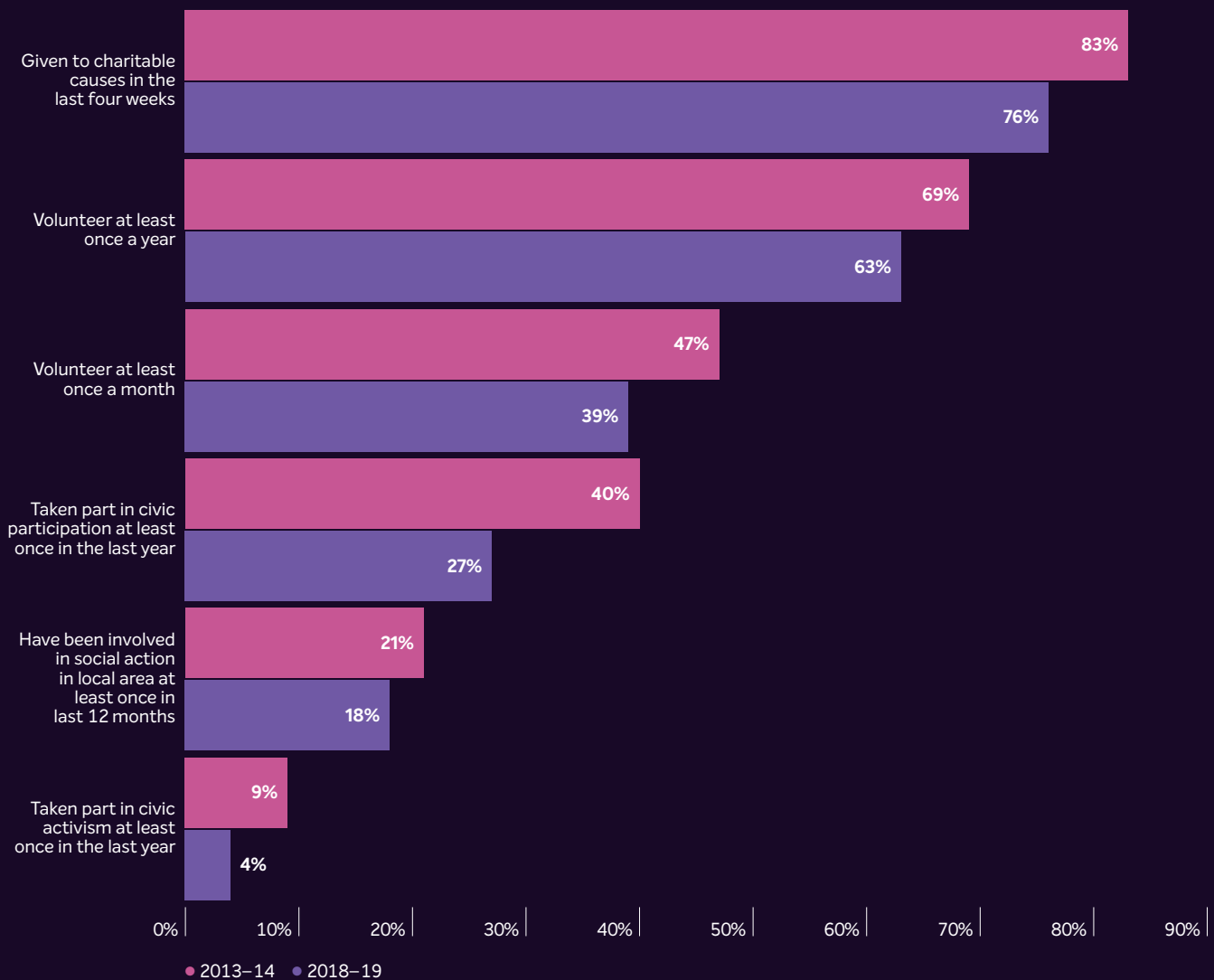


What has happened to the West Midlands?

- Yearly civic participation has fallen most dramatically – from 40% in 2013–14 to 27% in 2018–19.
- In terms of overall numbers of people, this equates to 600,000 fewer people engaging in civic participation by 2018–19.
- All **Action** measures have fallen in the West Midlands – including falls in volunteering (6%) and giving to charitable causes (7%).

Civic and social action by type in the West Midlands, 2013–14 and 2018–19

Source: CPP calculations



Why has social productivity fallen across the board?

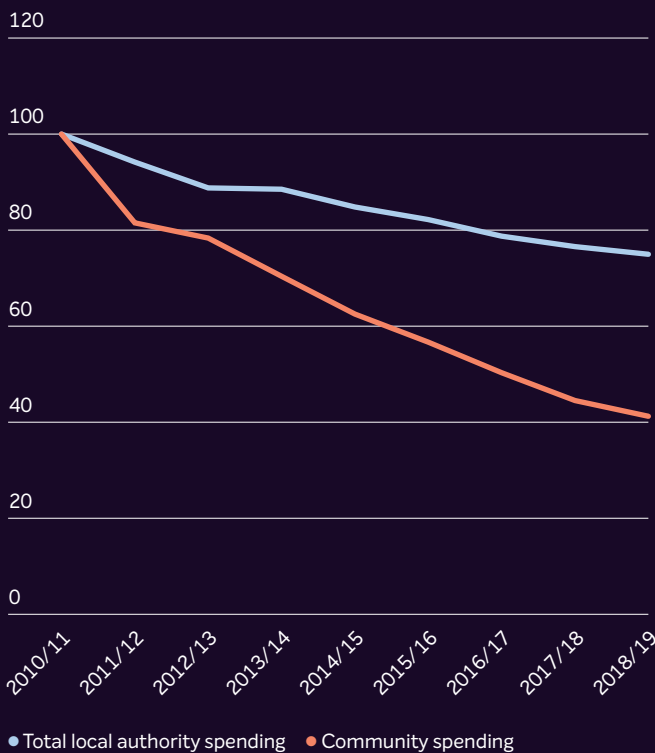
The destruction of community institutions and services

The decline in social productivity in England is perhaps unsurprising given the level of cuts to local government spending and in particular those aspects of local spending that support community cohesion and engagement.

In this context, this fact sheet presents a new measure of community spending which is defined as the level of per head spending on: libraries, open spaces, recreation and sports, Sure Start, and services for young people.⁴ This type of spending has been totally decimated over the last decade. While total local authority spending has fallen by 30%, spending on these important community activities and institutions has fallen by nearly 60%.

Community spending vs local authority spending per head (100=spending in 2010–11)⁵

Source: CPP calculations

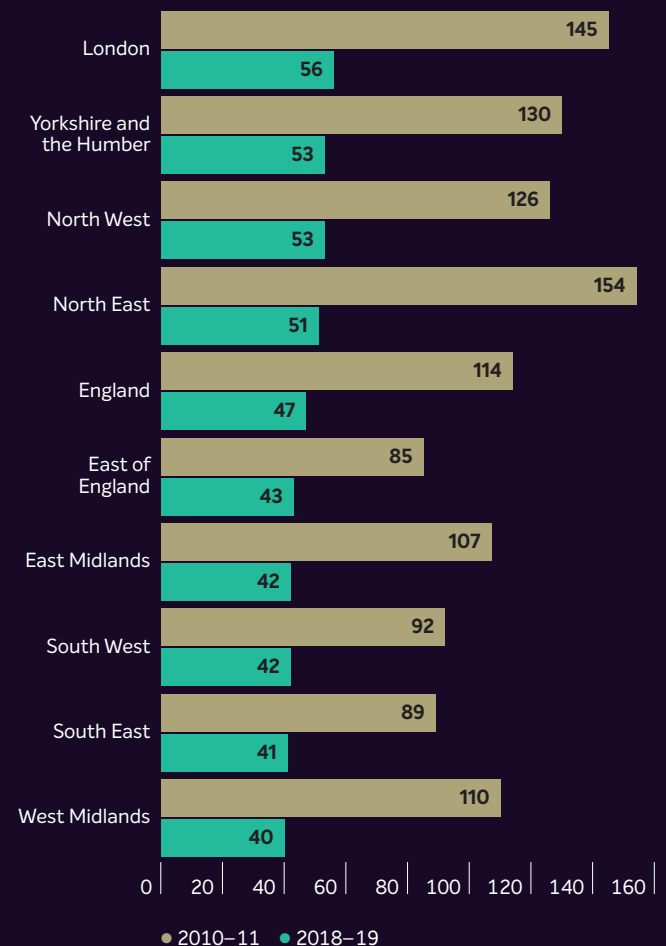


Where has community spending fallen the most?

- Cuts to community spending have been large across the country, with every region seeing massive falls.
- While the largest fall in community spending took place in the North East (from £154 per head in 2010–11 to £51 per head in 2018–19), the region with the lowest per-head spending is currently the West Midlands, with just under £40 spent per head in 2018–19.
- The West Midlands also saw the largest fall in spending on youth services of any region (81%), and the APPG on Knife Crime linked such cuts in Wolverhampton to increased knife crime in the area.⁶

Community spending in £s per head by region, 2010–11 and 2018–19⁷

Source: CPP calculations



4 Underlying data for our calculations come from MHCLG on local government spending by type and DfE on local authority and school spending. More details can be found in the Appendix.

5 Per head spending data is in real terms (2018–19 prices).

6 All-Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime & Violence Reduction (2020). *Securing a brighter future: The role of youth services in tackling knife crime*. Available at: <http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Securing-a-brighter-future-the-role-of-youth-services-in-tackling-knife-crime-v.2.pdf>

7 Community spending data is in real terms (2018–19 prices).