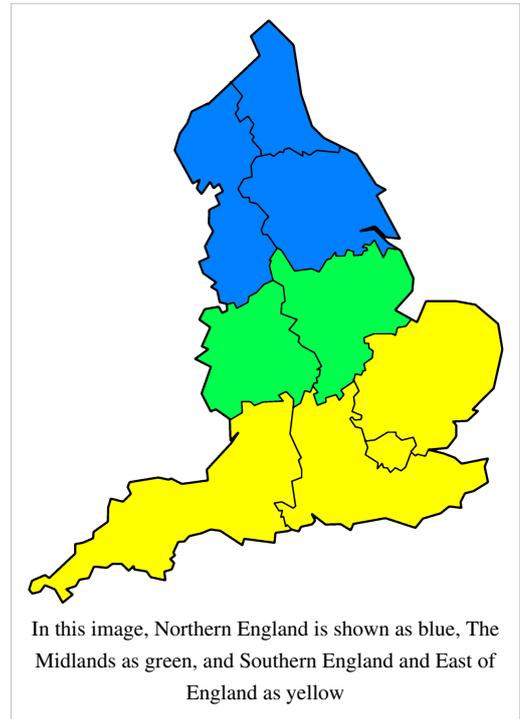


North–South divide (England)

In England, the term **North–South divide** refers to the economic and cultural differences between Southern England (the South-East, Greater London, the South-West and parts of the East) and Northern England (the North-East, North-West and Yorkshire and the Humber). The status of the Midlands is often disputed, geographically most areas of the Midlands are more Southern than Northern; this ambiguity also applies to East Anglia. In political terms, the South, and particularly the South-East (outside inner London), is largely centre-right, and supportive of the Conservative Party, while the North (particularly the towns and cities) is generally more supportive of the Labour Party. Support for the Liberal Democrats, and for many of the smaller parties, is generally more equally spread out.

An article in *The Economist* (15-21 September 2012) argued that the gap between the north and south in life expectancy, political inclinations and economics trends was growing to the extent that they were almost separate countries.^[1] They argued that one of the main causes of this was the migration of young professionals from the north to work in London, whereas it is much less common for young professionals from the south to move to a northern city.^[1]



Existence

The North–South divide is not an exact line, but one that can involve many stereotypes, presumptions and other impressions of the surrounding region relative to other regions. The existence of the North–South divide is fiercely contested. Some sources claim that not only does it exist, but that it is expanding. For example, a 'Cambridge Econometrics' report of March 2006 found that economic growth above the UK average was occurring only in the South and South East of England, whilst North East England showed the slowest growth.^[2]

A similar report in 2001 found that North East England, North West England had poorer health levels than South and South East England, as did Wales and Scotland.^[3] The same data has been interpreted otherwise to indicate only a very small difference.^[4] Indeed, results are highly dependent on the categories chosen for evaluation. As a generalisation, the following tend to indicate that there is some sort of north-south divide:

- Health conditions, which are generally seen as being worse in the north.^{[5][6]} though spending on health care is higher^[7]
- House prices, which are higher in the south, particularly the south-east.^[8]
- Earnings, which are higher in the south and east.^[9]
- Government expenditure, which is higher relative to tax revenues in the North,^[10] but higher in key areas such as infrastructure investment in the South.^[11]
- Political influence.^[12]

However, when factors such as the cost of living^[13] or urban poverty are included,^{[14][15]} the divisions are sometimes less clear.

Furthermore, many middle class and affluent areas are located near Leeds and Manchester. A report into wealth by Barclays Bank also highlighted the anomaly that the second-wealthiest parliamentary constituency after Kensington

and Chelsea is Sheffield Hallam. Yorkshire and Cheshire, geographically part of *The North*, include prosperous towns and suburbs such as Harrogate, Ilkley and Alwoodley in Yorkshire and Alderley Edge, Wilmslow and Chester in Cheshire. On the other hand geographically southern areas such as the Isle of Thanet in Kent have struggled with the same industrial decline as parts of the north. Cornwall, many London boroughs such as Hackney and Haringey and southern towns like Luton are other anomalies to the North-South divide with poor health and education.

This has led some commentators to suggest that other divisions, such as class^[16] or ethnicity might be more important.^[17]

Politics

The journalist Kelvin MacKenzie has suggested that the south of England needs a political party to campaign for its interests (including "home rule" for the region), and has registered the domain southernparty.co.uk for this purpose.^[18] His article in *The Daily Telegraph* said^[18]:

Further, I would like somebody, anybody, to fight for me – the middle class of London and the South East. The wealth created through long hours – the area works at least 10 per cent longer than anywhere else in the UK – is truly Herculean.

As a standalone entity, the people of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and London are 18th in the global GDP league, just ahead of Indonesia and just behind Turkey.

If you took this region out of the UK economy, it would be called Ethiopia.

City AM editor Allister Heath had made a similar suggestion in April 2012, and opined that increased powers for the London region might be obtained when the constitutional status of Scotland is debated.^[19]

Language and dialect

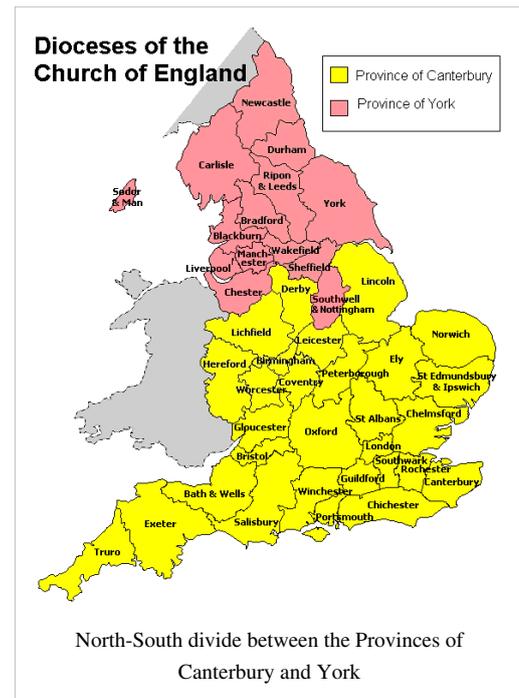
Although younger generations may be less likely to use speech that is specific to a particular town, there is still a clear difference between north and south; young Northerners are more resistant to sounding as if they are Southern than sounding as if they are from a different Northern town.^[20]

The division is sometimes used for comedy, but has its serious side as well. The London media are sometimes claimed to look down upon those with northern English accents. For example, Ken Livingstone (a Londoner) suggested that the press's unsympathetic treatment of John Prescott was partly because he is one to "speak like ordinary people".^[21]

Some linguistic research has concluded that many people in the North of England have a dislike of the /ɑː/ vowel in BATH words. AF Gupta wrote, "Many of the northerners were noticeably hostile to /grɑːs/, describing it as 'comical', 'snobbish', 'pompous' or even 'for morons'."^[22] On the subject, KM Petyt wrote that several respondents "positively said that they did not prefer the long-vowel form or that they really detested it or even that it was incorrect"^[23] Mark Newbrook has assigned this phenomenon the name "conscious rejection", and has cited the BATH vowel as "the main instance of conscious rejection of RP" in his research in the West Wirral.^[24]

Religion

Within the Church of England a North-South divide appeared in England with the Province of York and the Province of Canterbury. This drew rough lines for a North-South divide.



Explanation

Industrial decline is most usually given as an explanation for the North-South divide.^[25] During the Industrial Revolution, many northern cities underwent a process of intense industrialisation, as raw materials such as coal and iron ore could be found in these areas.^[26] This led to comparatively high wealth; Shaw, Greater Manchester reportedly had the highest concentration of millionaires in the country at the time.^[27] It also led to over reliance on a few key industries and, as heavy industry began to leave the UK for developing countries under the 'New international division of Labour',^[28] these areas declined rapidly. Events like the UK miners' strike (1984-1985) polarised public opinion and led to an increase in the divide.

Cultural dimensions

There is also a perceived cultural divide between the north and the south. The *It's Grim Up North* BBC television series and subsequent book attempted to tease out some of these divisions.^[29] Those in the north complained of having fewer cultural opportunities, the book also provided a view of southern life as faceless and bland.^[29]

When the commercial broadcaster Granada Television commenced transmission in 1956, it was primarily based in Manchester. Granada's strapline before both networked and regional programming was originally "From The North, Granada Presents...". A large arrow pointing Upward (North) was part of this caption. Granada Television's 1960s updated arrow (a G with an upwards arrow) was prominent on local idents and production endcaps until Granada's identity was divided between the ITV Granada and Granada Productions (later ITV Studios) brands as part of the creation of ITV plc in 2004.

Counterbalancing the image of the rich South/poor North divide are television programmes like *Cold Feet*, which feature Yuppie-esque, rich or upper-class Northerners, a deviation from the stereotypical North. Meanwhile *Only Fools and Horses* is based around working-class life in Peckham.

During regional television and radio broadcasts, mainly South-Eastern Standard English accents are heard and there are very few regional or typically 'Northern accents'. Northern accents are often regarded as humorous, celebrities like comedians Peter Kay and Johnny Vegas both have prominent Northern accents. However this is starting to change, with national stations such as BBC Radio 1Xtra employing northern DJs such as DJ Q, from Huddersfield

with a distinctive Northern accent, taking into account the current trend of Black music emerging from the north, such as Bassline House.

Some statistics suggest that the consumption of alcohol and fast food appears to be higher in 'The North', with the UK's fourteen 'fattest cities' to the north or west of the dividing lines detailed above.^[30]

The Midlands

Many Midlands towns and cities appear, at least historically, to have more in common with their northern counterparts than with those in the south. This is mainly because they have a history of concentrated industrialisation and post-industrial economic depression (especially in Birmingham, The Black Country, Coventry and Stoke-on-Trent), plus the dry ironic humour which is borne out of this, rather than the nonindustrialised 'service centre' and 'county' towns and cities of southern England, which are perceived to be singularly dominated by London (where the purpose of those towns was essentially to service the capital). The film *Once Upon a Time in the Midlands* (2004), starring Ricky Tomlinson, was made very-much in the character of the straight-talking and dry humoured northern comedies.

However, during the 1930s while the North (along with Wales, Scotland and Ireland) suffered badly from the Great Depression,^[31] the Midlands shared the fortunes of the South as these two areas of the country both prospered, with a booming Midlands motor car industry matching the Southern growth in manufacture of electrical goods.^[32] This not only placed the Midlands socially on the same side as the South during a crucial defining period in Northern working class cultural identity, but also has had still-visible matching effects on the landscape of both Midlands and South - a property boom in the middle years of the decade^[31] resulted in the proliferation in the of 1930s-style semi-detached houses in Midland areas such as Birmingham's south suburbs to match a similar manifestation in areas of the South such as West London.^[31]

As in the North, many Midlands towns and cities have experienced redevelopment, including a second Birmingham Bullring complex which replaced a postwar development, including a branch of the upmarket Selfridges department store, and The Mailbox redevelopment which houses a branch of Harvey Nichols. Solihull metropolitan borough is one of the most affluent in the country.^[33]

On the social side of the divide, most people from the Midlands usually refer to themselves as being a "Midlander" rather than a "Northerner" or a "Southerner" and very rarely partake on either side of the social rivalry or stereotyping. One exception to this is a certain resentment held by the people of Birmingham towards London due to what they see as excessive centralisation in the capital of England's cultural and political activity, which they commonly attribute to snobbery against provincial areas in general on the part of London authorities.

Closing the gap

Many Northern post-industrial cities and towns are now experiencing renaissance. Examples include Kingston upon Hull,^[34] Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Sheffield and the Midlands cities of Birmingham, Derby and Nottingham. A major new masterplan by British architect Will Alsop has been adopted for the regeneration of Barnsley. Some of the world's service industries and banks are relocating to northern cities, examples include the opening of Bank of New York, Google and RBS offices in Manchester. One can also note the present decentralisation of many BBC departments from London to Salford Quays, Greater Manchester.

Typically Southern upmarket department stores and shops have located new stores in the north; these include Harvey Nichols (opening first in Leeds, then Manchester and a small-format store in Birmingham) and Selfridges (two stores in Manchester and one in Birmingham). Exclusive shopping destinations such as Leeds' Victoria Quarter have led to the city being dubbed 'The Knightsbridge of the North'.^[35] Bradford based supermarket Morrisons, which mainly operated in the North of England acquired 479 stores when it bought Safeway in 2004, the majority of these new supermarkets were in the South of England.^[36] Other Northern founded Supermarkets such as Asda, The

Co-operative and Marks & Spencer are also popular in the South of England.

Writer and journalist Stuart Maconie argues that "there is no south of England... There's a bottom half of England... but there isn't a south in the same way that there's a north".^[37] He goes on to state that "there's no conception of the south comparable to the north. Good or bad, 'the north' means something to all English people wherever they hail from... [to southerners] it means desolation, arctic temperatures, mushy peas, a cultural wasteland with limited shopping opportunities and populated by aggressive trolls. To northerners it means home, truth, beauty, valour, romance, warm and characterful people, real beer and decent chip shops. And in this we are undoubtedly biased, of course". This suggests that all people in England have biased views regarding the North-South divide.^[38] Maconie says regarding on where the North starts that "Crewe is surely the gateway to the North" suggesting that Crewe is the most southern part of the North of England.^[39]

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