

So now you give a monkey's?

The policy wonk's guide to Hartlepool

Aveek Bhattacharya

April 2021

Photo by Andrew Curtis / Block Sands, Hartlepool Headland

The Social Market Foundation is Britain's leading cross-party think-tank, standing proudly in the centre-ground of politics since 1989.

Social Market Foundation, 11 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3QB
www.smf.co.uk | [@smfthinktank](https://twitter.com/smfthinktank)

SMF

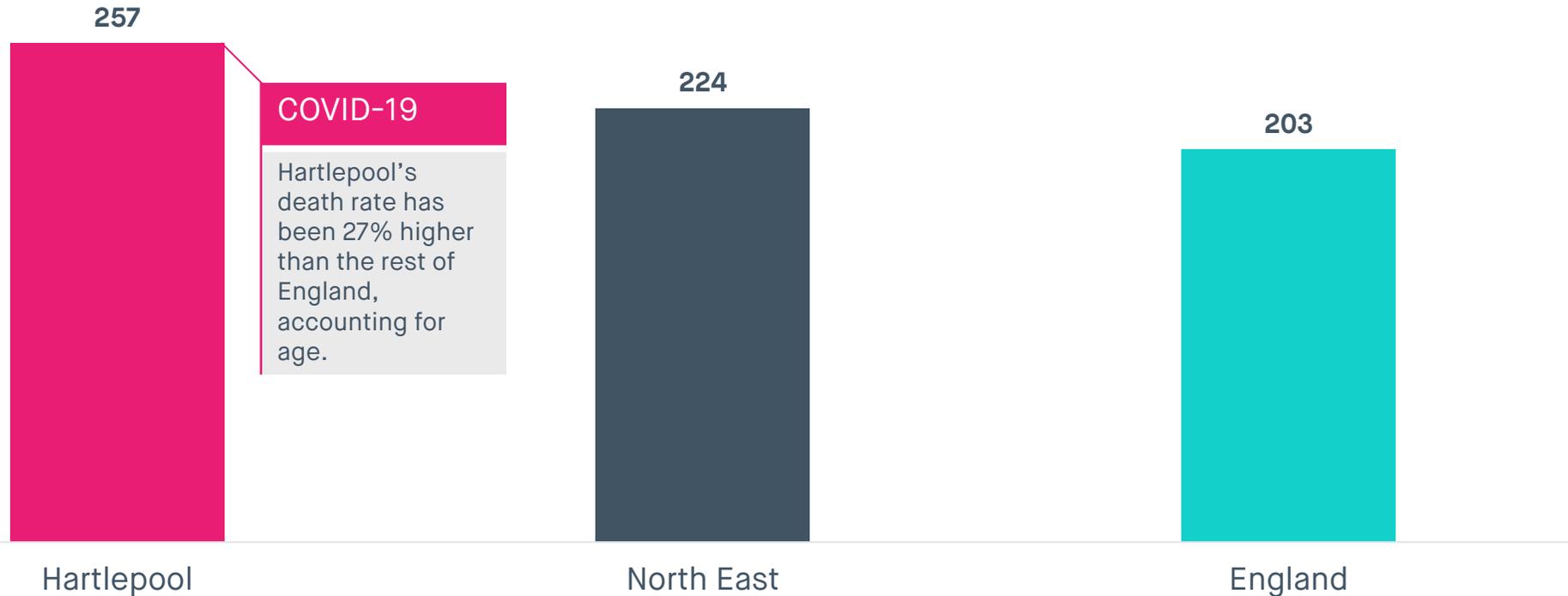
**Social Market
Foundation**

Hartlepool isn't just politically interesting. It also highlights many of the policy challenges facing the UK

- With a keenly contested by-election underway, all eyes will be on Hartlepool in the coming weeks.
- While the party politics of the constituency are fascinating, there is also a lot for policy wonks to learn from the area.
- In particular, it demonstrates several of the policy challenges facing local and national government, highlighting the scale of regional inequality and the magnitude of the task of 'levelling up':
 - Preventable illness
 - Stagnant wages and poverty
 - Educational challenges
 - Under investment
 - Concerns over 'social fabric'

Hartlepool has been disproportionately afflicted by COVID-19, with a death rate above the national and regional average

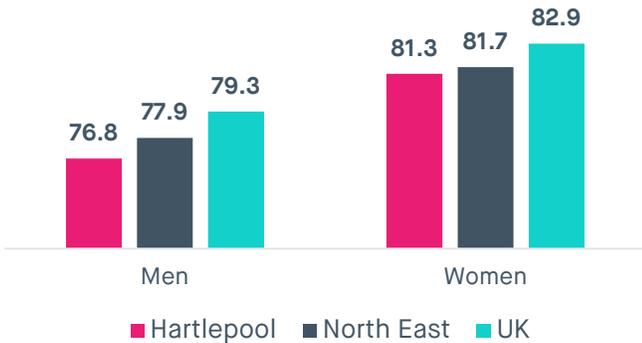
Age-standardised COVID-19 deaths per 100,000, 12 months to Feb 2021



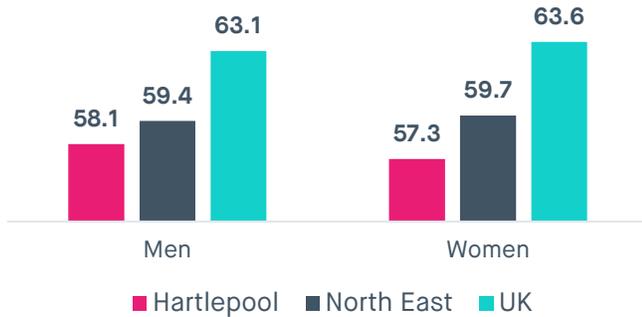
Source: *Office for National Statistics (2021), Deaths due to COVID-19 by local area and deprivation*

The town was vulnerable to the pandemic due to chronic illness, reflecting stagnant life expectancy and rising health inequality in the UK

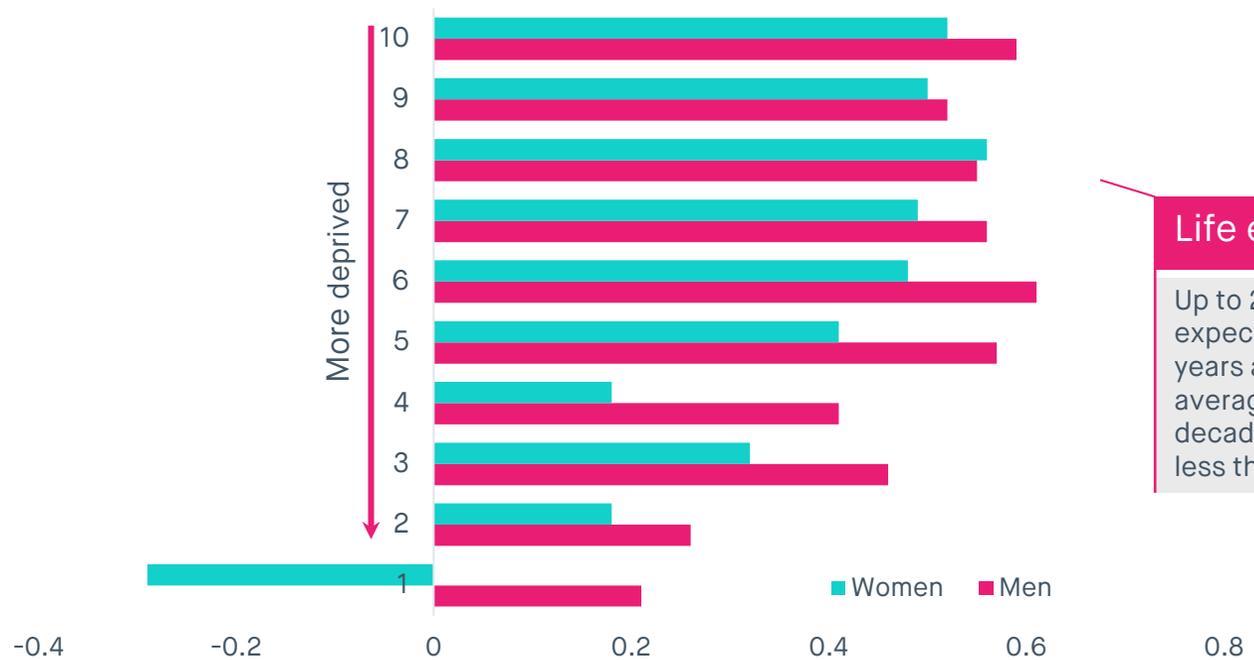
Life expectancy at birth, 2016-18



Healthy life expectancy at birth, 2016-18



Gain in life years between 2011-13 and 2017-19, England by Index of Multiple Deprivation Decile



Life expectancy

Up to 2010, life expectancy rose by 3 years a decade on average. In the last decade, it rose by less than a year.

Source: ONS (2019), *Health state life expectancy at birth and at age 65 years by local areas, UK*; ONS (2019), *Health state life expectancies by Index of Multiple Deprivation*; King's Fund (2020), *What is happening to life expectancy in the UK?*

Hartlepool is near the top of national tables for a range of lifestyle risk factors for preventable disease

Prevalence of Lifestyle Health Risk Factors in Hartlepool

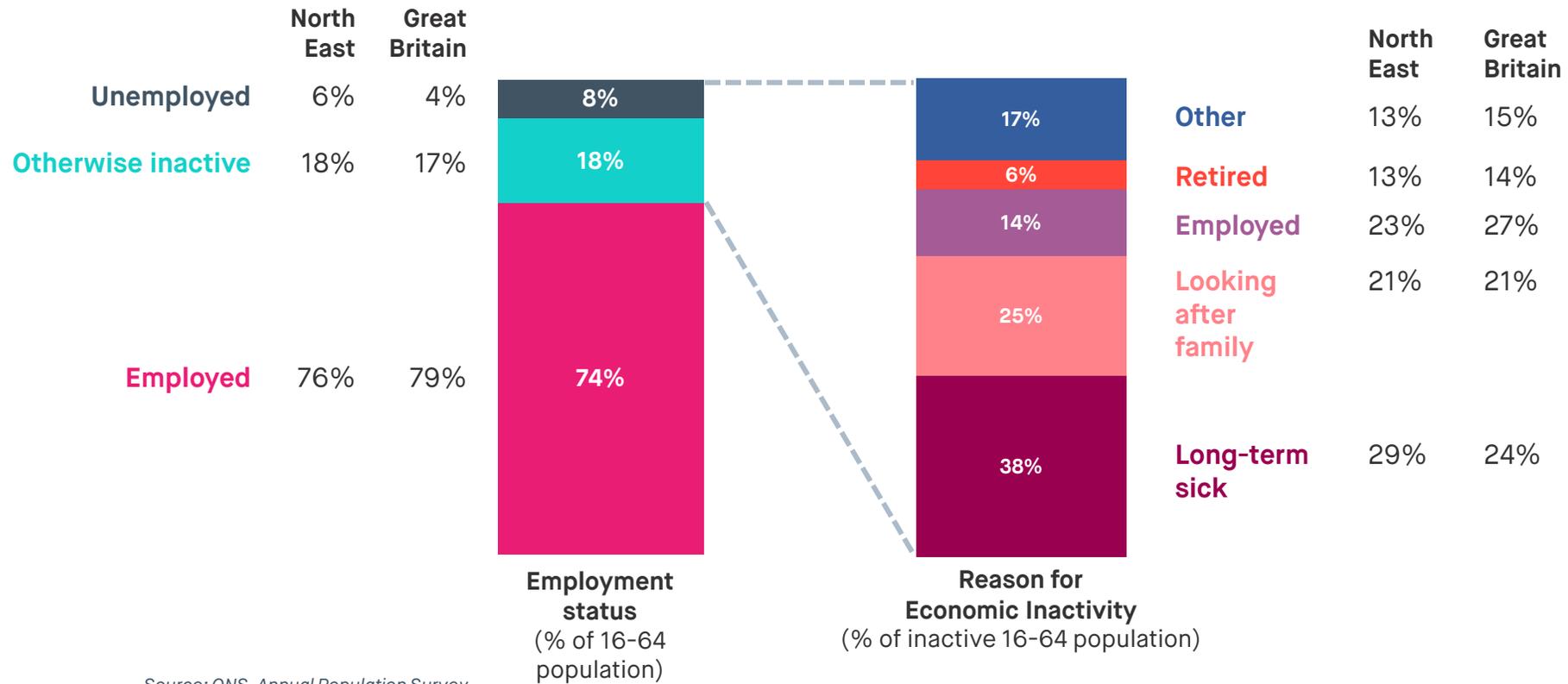
	Hartlepool	England	Hartlepool rank (out of 151 areas)
 Share of adults classified overweight or obese	76%	62%	2nd
 Share of adults that are current smokers	19%	14%	5th
 Alcohol-specific deaths per 100,000 people	17.6	10.9	13th

Though investment in prevention is estimated to be 4x as cost-effective as NHS spending, public health grants have been cut 22% in the last five years.

Source: Public Health England, [Obesity Profile](#); [Local Tobacco Control Profiles](#); [Local Alcohol Profiles for England](#); King's Fund, [Public health: our position](#)

Poor health affects Hartlepool's labour market as well, with two-fifths of the economically inactive population long-term sick

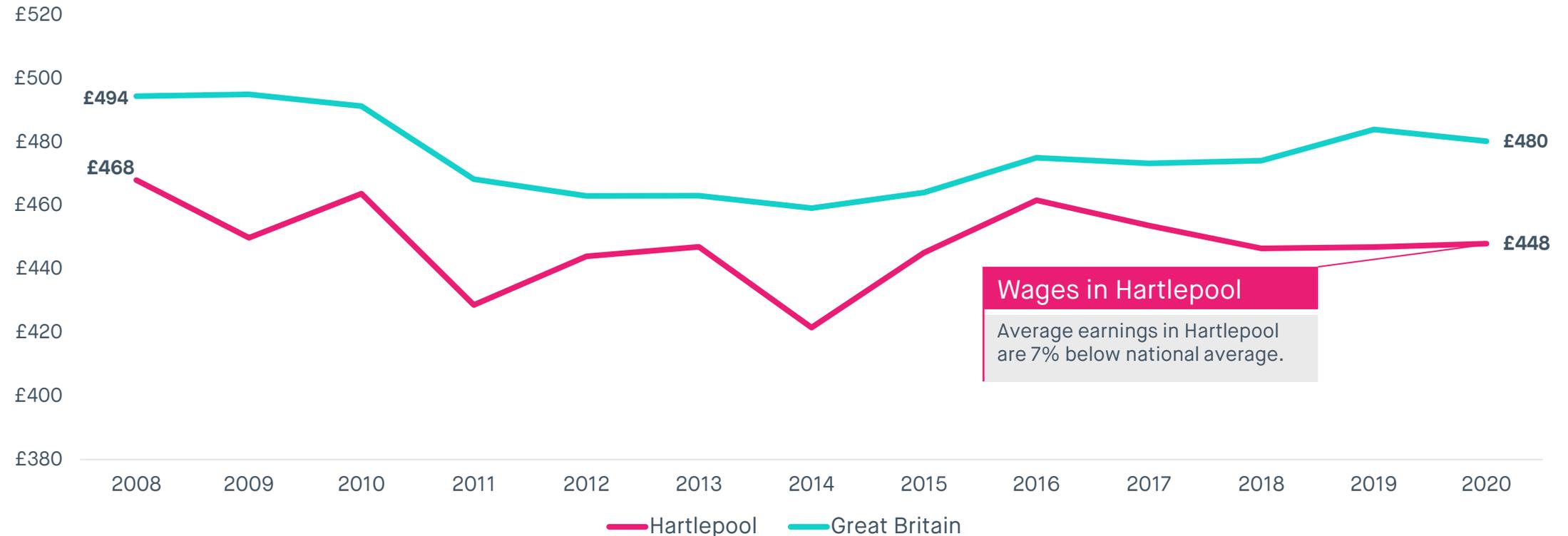
Hartlepool labour market, year to Sept 2020



Source: ONS, *Annual Population Survey*

For those in work, average earnings are relatively stagnant since the financial crisis – as in the rest of the country

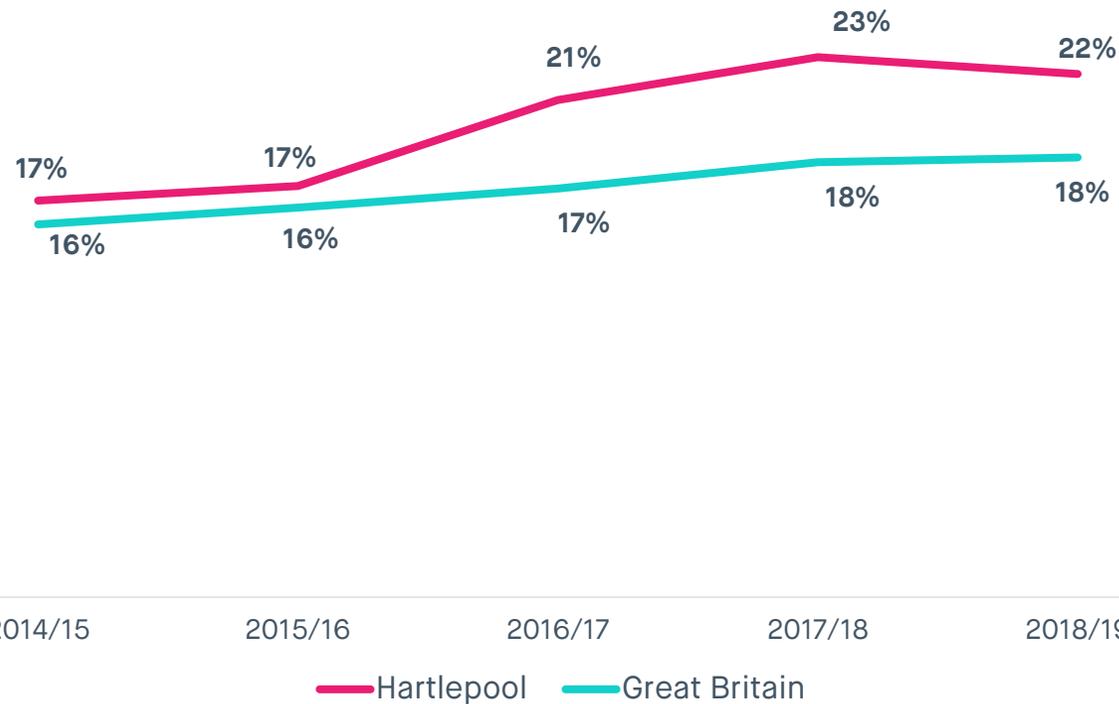
Real gross weekly pay, 2008-2020



Source: ONS, *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: CPIH All Items Index*

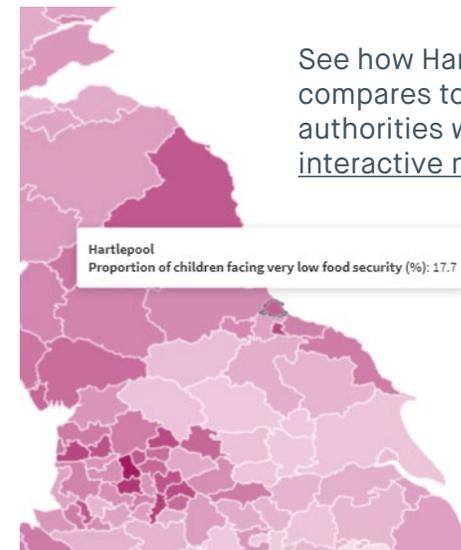
That weak economic performance has fed an increase in child poverty – with over a fifth of households facing deprivation

Proportion of under 16s living in relative low-income households, 2015-19



Source: Department for Work & Pensions, *Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014/15*; SMF, *Measuring and mitigating child hunger in the UK*

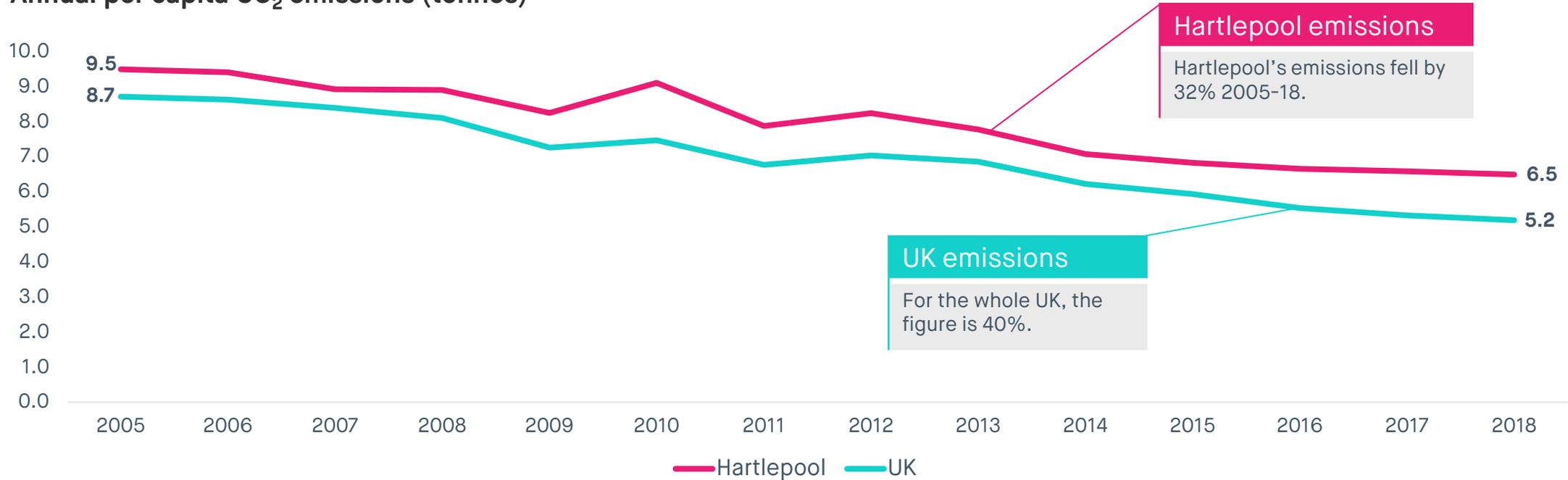
SMF modelling suggests that 17.7% of children in Hartlepool faced very low food security in 2020, putting it in the top 15% local authorities



See how Hartlepool compares to other local authorities with [our interactive map](#).

Climate transition is likely to be more painful for areas like Hartlepool with higher emissions, falling at a slower rate, than UK average

Annual per capita CO₂ emissions (tonnes)

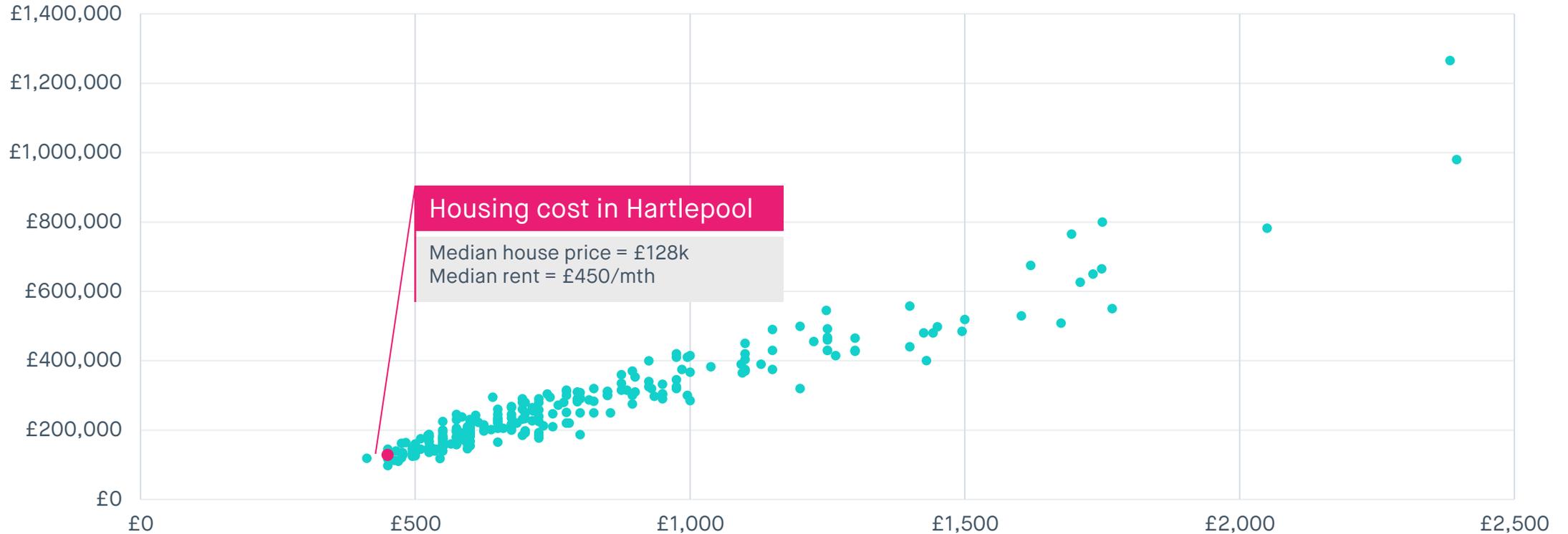


Places like Hartlepool highlight the Government’s need to win public consent for its Net Zero target and to consider the distributional implications of climate transition.

Source: BEIS, UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2018

Relatively cheap housing could be an asset for Hartlepool in terms of attracting economic activity...

Housing cost by local authority

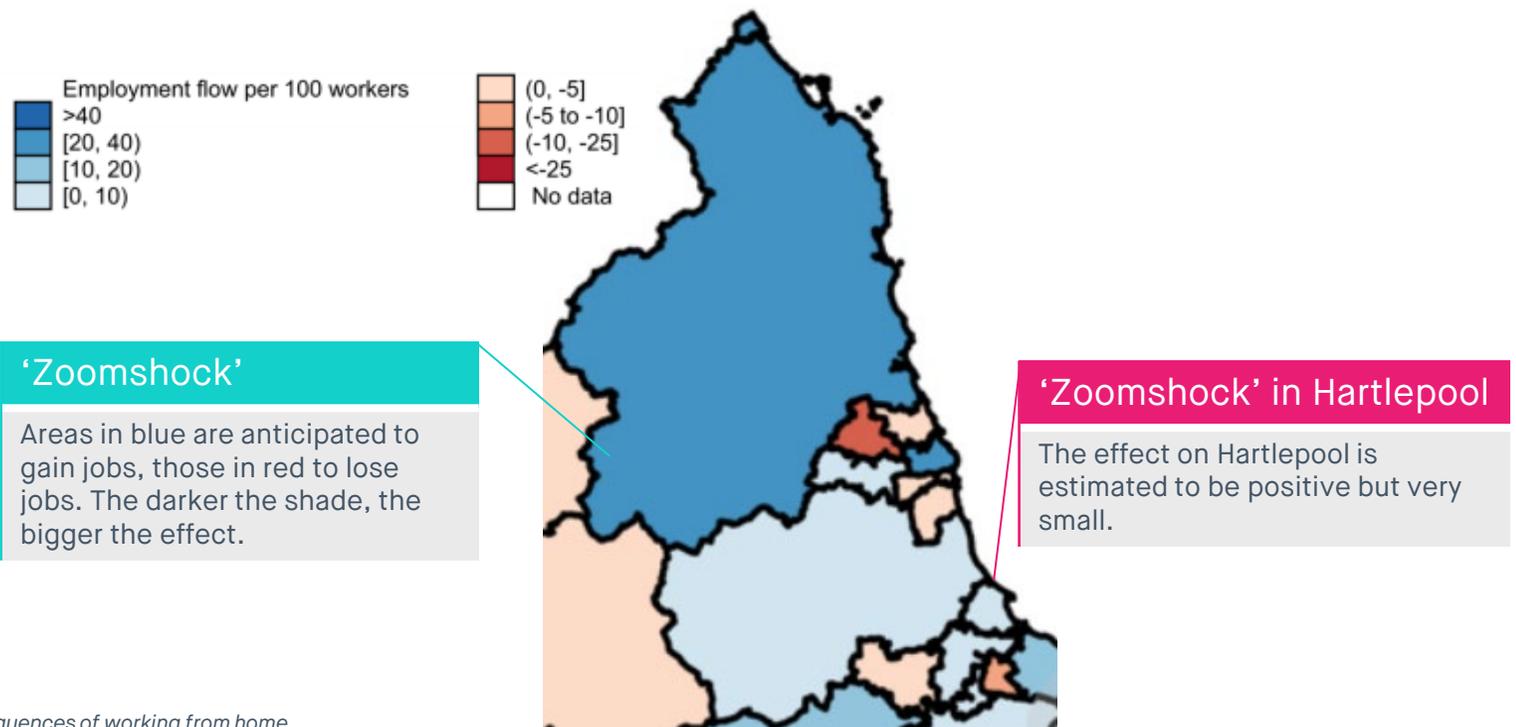


Source: ONS, *Median house prices for administrative geographies: HPSA dataset 9*; *Private rental market summary statistics in England*

...but projections based on current commuting patterns suggest Hartlepool will see little benefit from a shift to remote working

Estimated employment flow by local authority, North East England

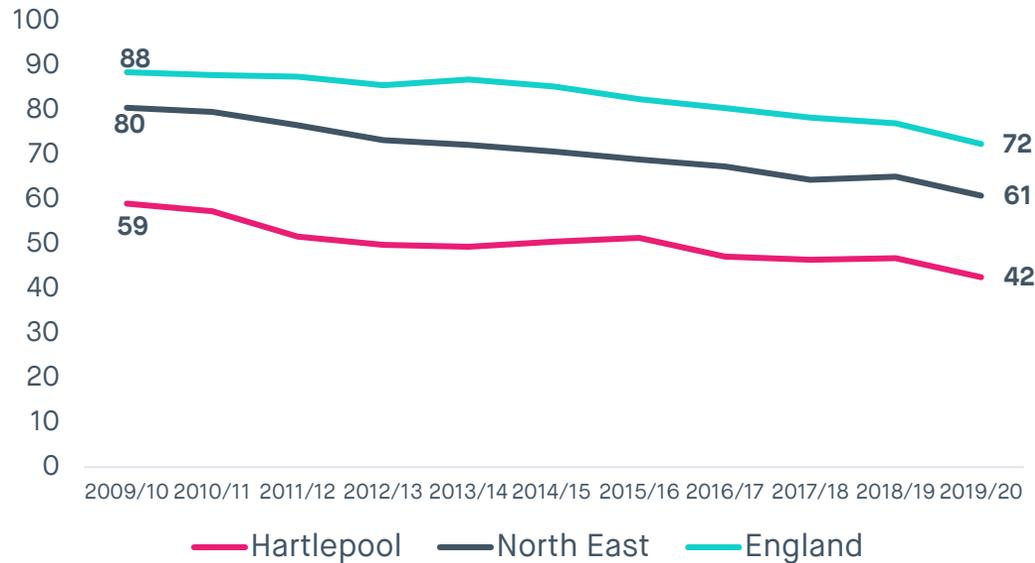
A group of economists have tried to estimate the possible effect of the 'zoomshock' on different local authorities, based on where people live, where they work and how well their job can be done from home.



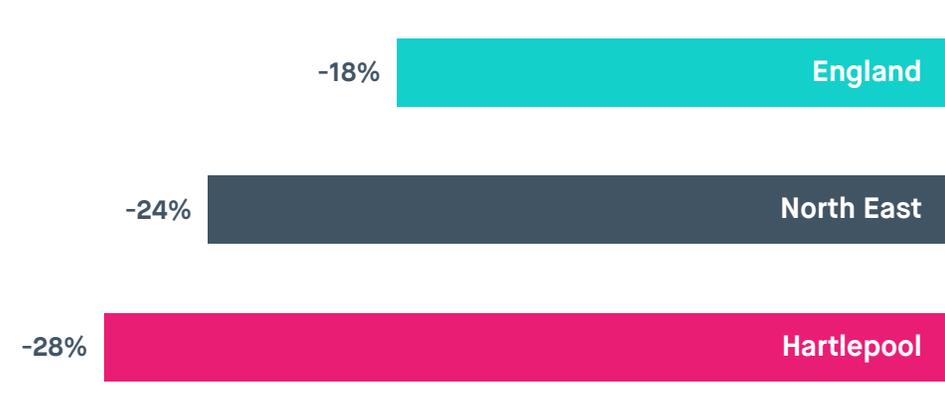
Source: De Fraja et al, *Zoomshock: The geography and local labour market consequences of working from home*

Investment in transport could support growth, but buses – much neglected in recent years – should be part of the package

Average number of passenger journeys on local bus services per head



Change in average number of passenger journeys on local bus services per head, 2009/10-19/20



As of 2018/19, Hartlepool was one of eight local authorities to have cut all funding for bus services.

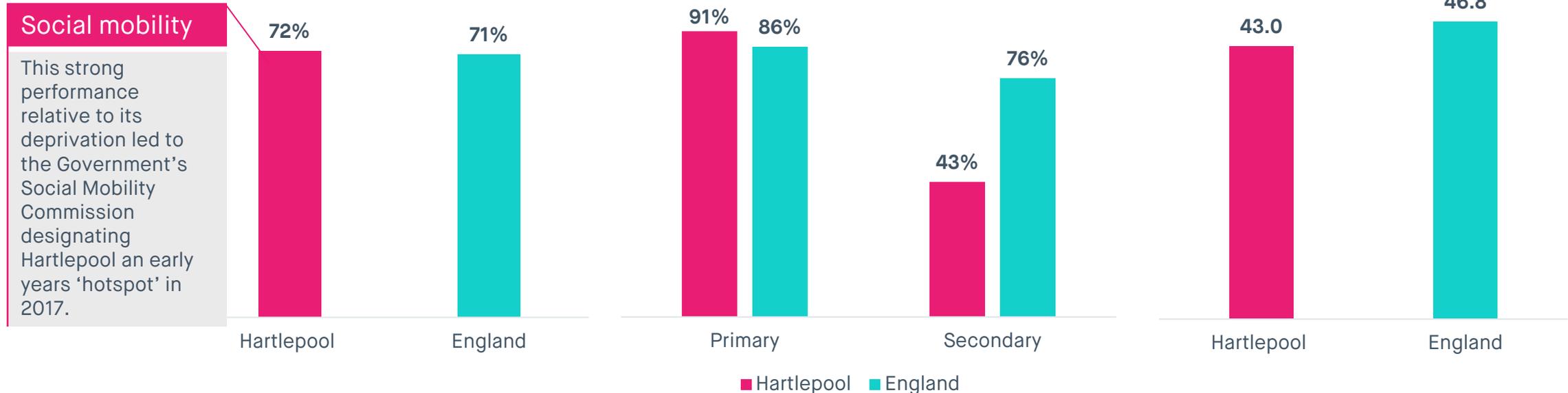
Source: DfT, Annual bus statistics: year ending March 2020; Campaign for Better Transport, The future of the bus

Young people in Hartlepool fare better in the early years of education, but achieve below average exam results at 16

% of children at expected level across all early learning goals, 2018/19

% of pupils in schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding', 2019/20

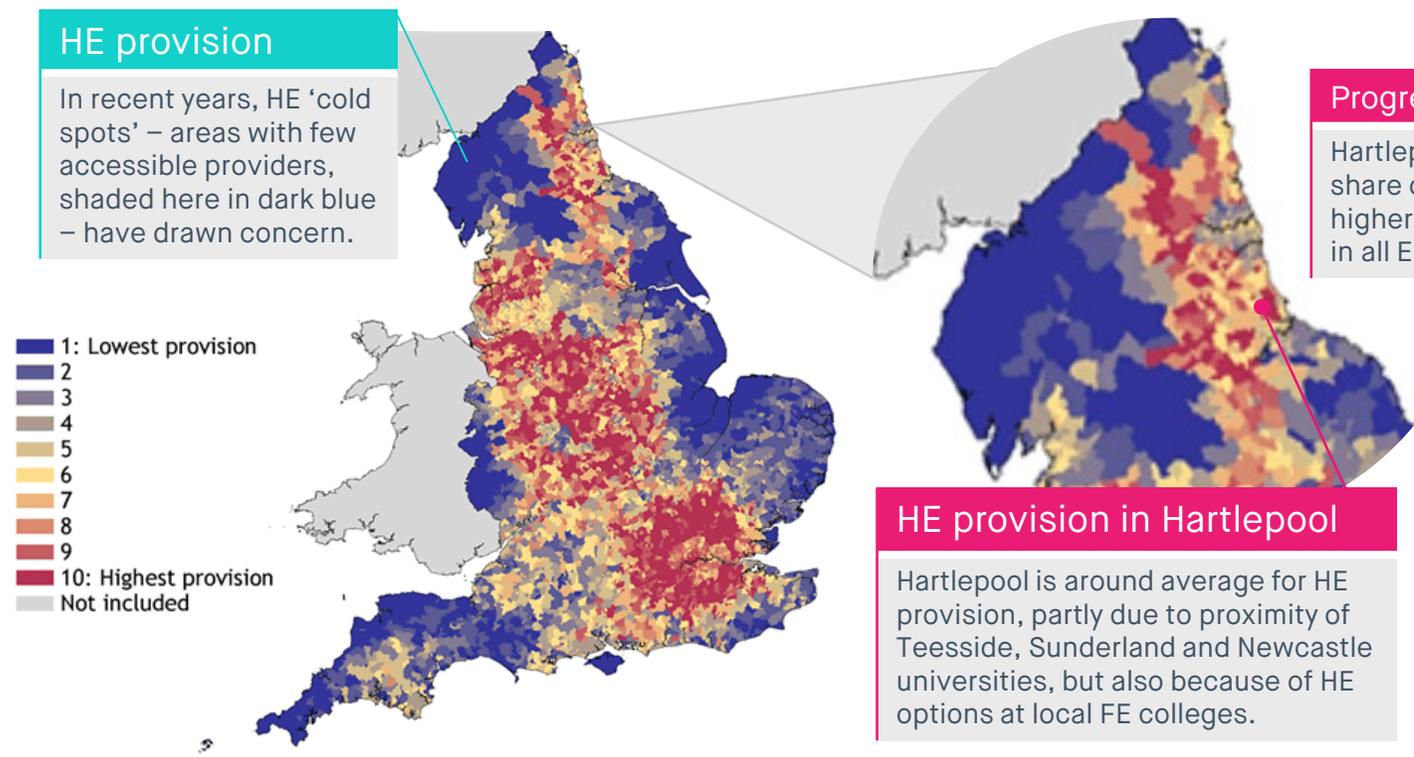
Average Attainment 8 score in GCSE or equivalent, 2019



Source: DfE, *Early years foundation stage profile results: 2018 to 2019*; *Key stage 4 performance (2019) revised*; LGA, *LG Inform*; Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2017*

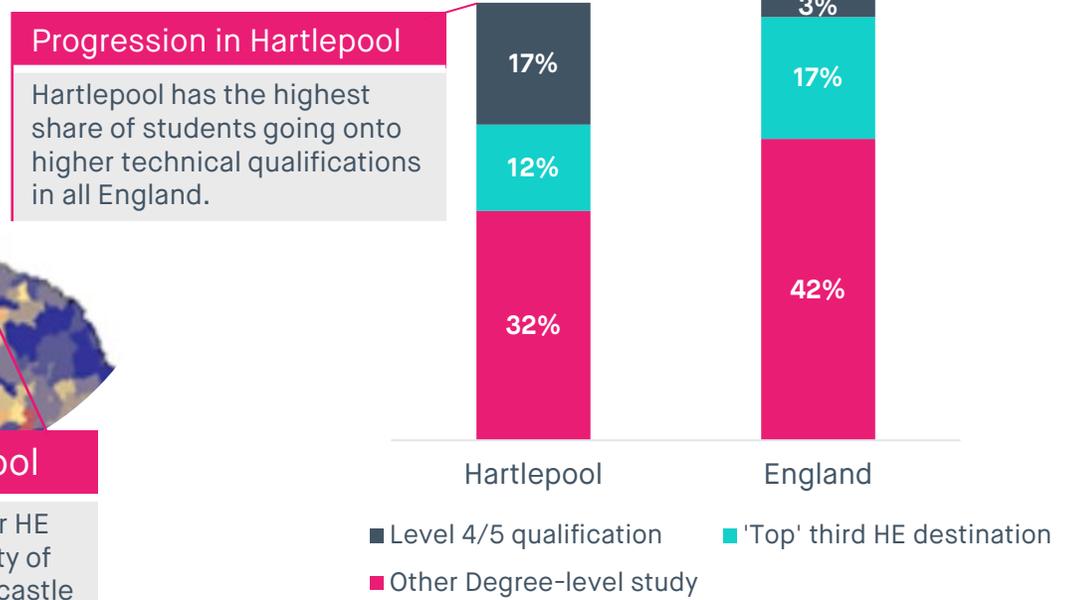
At post-18 level, FE colleges play a significant role in providing both vocational and higher education in Hartlepool

Higher education provision 'heatmap', population adjusted, 2012/13



Progression to Higher and Further Education

% of Level 3 (A-level equivalent) students, 2016/17

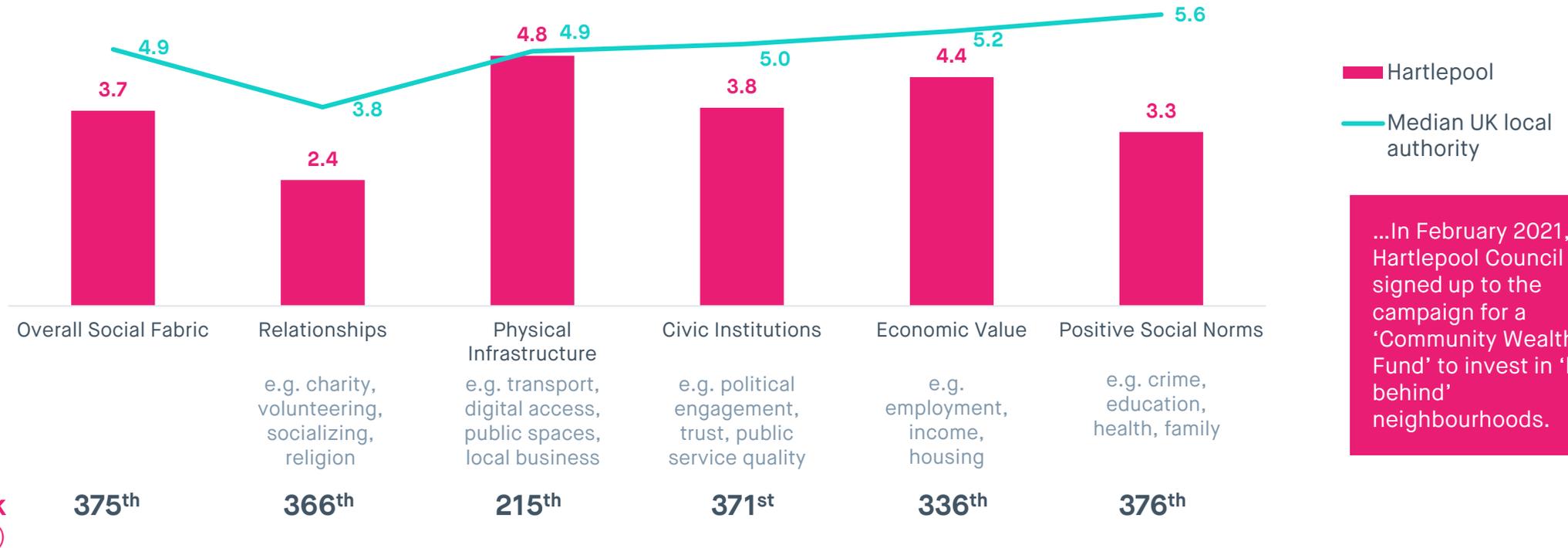


Source: HEFCE, Higher education provision in England; Gov.uk, Progression to higher education or training

The town exemplifies concerns about fraying ‘social fabric’ central to the ‘levelling up’ agenda

UK ‘Social Fabric Index’

Last year, the think tank Onward reviewed the ‘social fabric’ in each UK local authority, with Hartlepool ranking 6th from bottom overall...



...In February 2021, Hartlepool Council signed up to the campaign for a ‘Community Wealth Fund’ to invest in ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods.

Source: Onward, *The State of Our Social Fabric*; *Hartlepool Mail*

Yet for all these challenges, some measures of subjective wellbeing in Hartlepool are fairly close to the national average

Subjective wellbeing – average rating out of 10, 2019/20



Governments (most prominently New Zealand) increasingly use subjective wellbeing measures to guide policy. Yet for all its challenges, Hartlepool is around average for life satisfaction – but below average for reported happiness. The implications in terms of where policymakers should focus their attention are far from clear.

Source: ONS, *Annual personal well-being estimates April 2019 to March 2020 – Local authority update*