

# The Health of Older People in Places

An asset for economic & social improvement for all

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## Introduction

The HOPE project is a multidisciplinary research project funded by the Health Foundation under the Social and Economic Value of Health in a Place programme. The research team includes scientists from the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London (UCL) and the School of Geography at the University of Leeds.

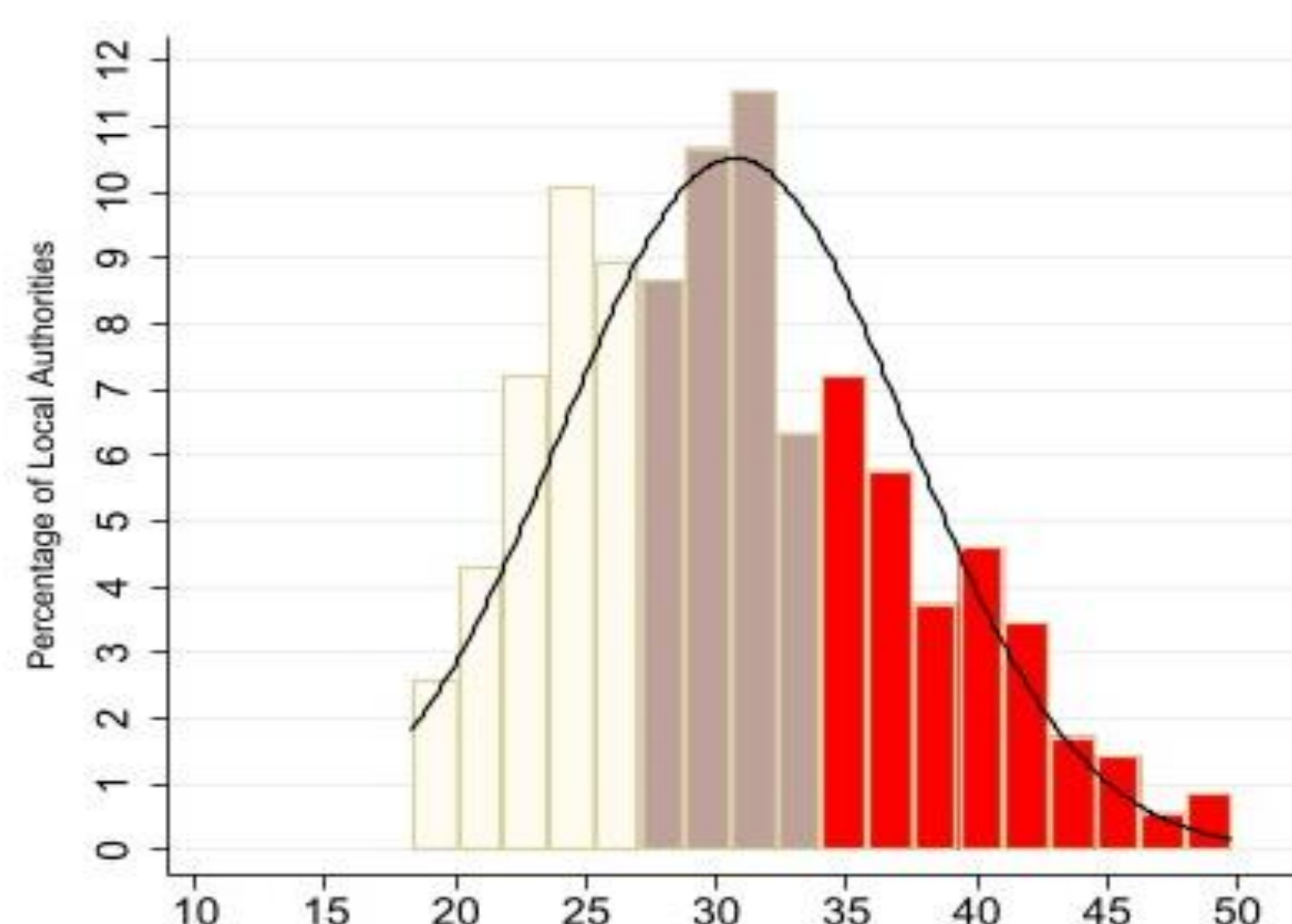
Findings from the HOPE project include:

- Community health for older people varies hugely across England & Wales.
- And has done so for decades.
- Community Health = Community wealth.
  - ...Especially if we ask people about their health.
  - ... if they work in a manual job.
  - ... And if they live in areas where certain industries are dominant
- Levelling Up older people's health in places = 250,000 more stayed in work in 2011.

## 1. Community health varies

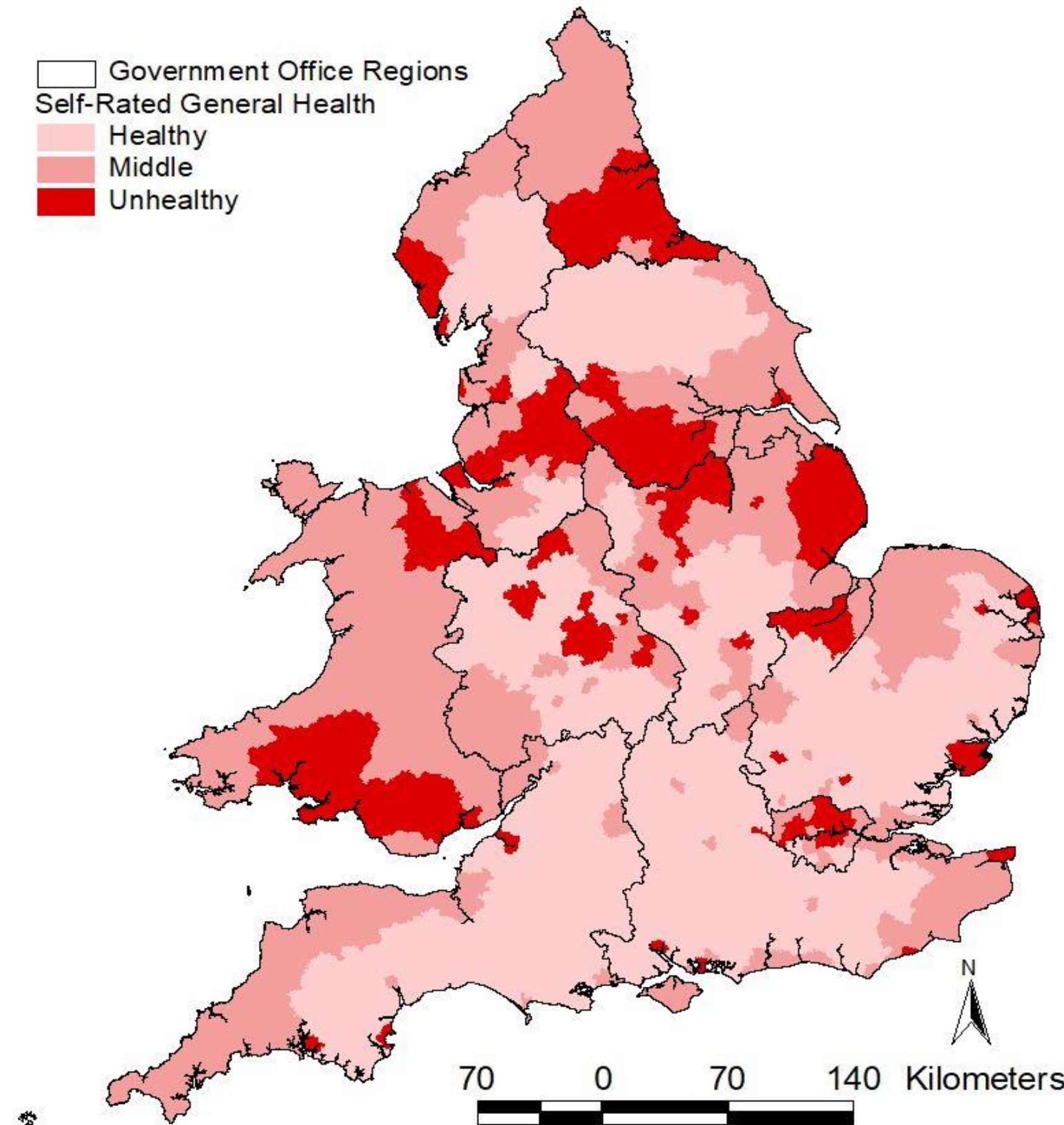
The HOPE project used nine measures of health in a place. When we applied these measures across places in England and Wales, we saw large geographic inequalities. For example, Figure 1 shows that the proportion of people aged 50 to 74 who report their health as "bad" (those that selected "fair" or "poor") ranges from a low of 18% in the 'healthiest' local authorities to a high of 50% in the 'unhealthiest' local authorities.

Figure 1 Histogram of 'bad' (fair and poor) self-rated health of 50-74-year-olds across local authorities in England and Wales, 2011



Older people's health in a place isn't equally distributed across the country either. Figure 2 maps the distribution of self-rated general health in each English and Welsh local authority area.

Figure 2: Self-rated health of those aged 50-74 across local authorities in England and Wales, 2011



The areas with better levels of health are in the south-east of England. "Middle" levels of health are found in many coastal areas. The areas with the lowest levels of health are the former industrial and coal mining areas of south Wales, the Midlands, northern England and the north-east, as well as some London boroughs and coastal locations.



## 2. Place health inequalities are entrenched...

Between 1991 and 2011 Disease Free Life Expectancy (DFLE) in England and Wales increased by 3.03 years for men and 1.73 for women. The DFLE gap between north and south remained entrenched, with DFLE at age 55 in the 'unhealthiest' area was 13.8 years, compared with 25.0 in the 'healthiest' area: a health gap of 11.3 years.

## 3. Health = Wealth

In places where a higher proportion of older people are in poor health, fewer people (of all ages) are in paid work.

- Women aged 50-74 from the 'healthiest' areas of England and Wales were 5.6% more likely to be in paid work than from the 'unhealthiest' areas (47.8% vs 42.2%).
- Men aged 50-74 from the 'healthiest' areas of England and Wales were 7.1% more likely to be in paid work than those living in the 'unhealthiest' (59.0% vs 51.9%).

Not just older people...



There's also a correlation between health in a place and younger people being in paid employment. Women aged 16 to 49 were 33.7% less likely to be in paid work in the 'unhealthiest' areas 26.3% in the 'healthiest' areas.



Particularly manual Occupations...

Those working in manual occupations were less likely to be in work 10 years later than those working in professional occupations. These gaps in employment outcomes was most marked for people living in 'unhealthy' areas. As well, outside of London, there was a gradient in service sector work exit, with the highest odds of work exit being in 'unhealthy' districts with rural related industries.

For more information:

