

## The UK is more regionally divided than any comparable a...

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Inequality should be a key theme of this election. And not just absolute measures, either, important as they are. Regional inequality is also a massive issue in the UK:

- \* The [IPPR State of the North 2019](#) report shows how the UK is more regionally divided than any comparable advanced economy - in terms of e.g. productivity, disposable income and life expectancy.
- \* In addition, the UK has the most centralised government of any comparable economy.
- \* This centralisation has helped reinforce inequalities, as evidence shows that decisions taken in central London are biased towards London and the South East.
- \* Centralisation has also left the provision of local services weakened and undermined the capacity of local authorities to take investment decisions.
  
- \* Between 2010/11 and 2018, local authorities have seen 24% cuts after population growth and changing responsibilities ([IFS](#)), with cuts falling disproportionately on councils in more deprived areas ([BBC](#)).
- \* The [National Audit Office](#) notes that the financial position of local authorities has "worsened markedly". This has hurt those who depend on local services most; in 2018, only "a minority" of councils felt they would be financially able to provide the "bare minimum" in public services after 2023. ([FT](#))
  
- \* The increase to local authority funding in the 2019 Spending Round would go less than a fifth of the way to reversing this. In the manifestos:
  - \* Under Tory plans, local authorities would need to make further cuts to services, even with a council tax rise of 4%.
  - \* The Lib Dem plans would allow councils to meet demand at current level of services with a council tax rise of 2%.
  - \* Labour plans would allow for increased service provision, though still not to pre-2010

levels. ([IFS](#))

Empowering and funding local authorities is crucial for an efficient programme of public investment, but only one party is even vaguely near funding such a programme. For those with concern for the country beyond London, and all those who have concern for the vital services local authorities supply this is a deeply worrying situation.