Mapping Britain’s Super-rich

Benjamin D. Hennig and Danny Dorling plot the geography of the top 1% of the wealthiest 1% in the UK.

This map shows where the super-rich in the United Kingdom live, or at least live for part of the time. The concept of having just one home or living in just one country may be foreign to many of the wealthiest people in the world; however, a large number of very rich people have addresses in the UK – often to avoid paying higher taxes elsewhere. Understandably, most of the UK’s wealthiest are a little reticent to advertise their addresses, but companies do try to gather information on them because they are prime targets for exclusive marketing.

WealthInsight is a company that collects information on people with assets in excess of US$30 million. The figures released to the public by WealthInsight correlate well with those published in the Sunday Times Rich List of 29 April 2012. WealthInsight releases data for only 20 UK cities and regions. Here we have superimposed that data on a population cartogram of the country, drawing circles with an area in proportion to the numbers of super-rich (in red) over people living in each city (in blue). Where they overlap, the circles turn into a purple colour. Where there are more super-rich than the population of a city might predict, there is an orange ring around a purple core, as shown around London. Where there are fewer super-rich than the population alone would predict, there is a blue outer-ring, as around Birmingham. The underlying map shows the distribution of poverty in the UK in grey shades.

Cities such as Leeds, Birmingham and Nottingham have fewer super-rich than might be expected – partly because they are not especially affluent urban centres but also, most probably, because their postcode does not include nearby areas such as the North Yorkshire stockbroker belt or the Cotswolds. Aberdeen, in contrast, has some multimillionaires: beneficiaries of the oil boom with an Aberdeen postcode who live some distance from that city. With Manchester it is hard not to speculate that a few extra footballers may have tipped it over the limit. In general, sports and other entertainment stars only make up a tiny proportion of the richest Britons, and are mostly not in any of the higher wealth leagues.

Note: Northern Ireland is a single postcode (BT). For this reason, members of the super-rich initially allocated to Belfast are not compared to the population of that city but to Northern Ireland as a whole.