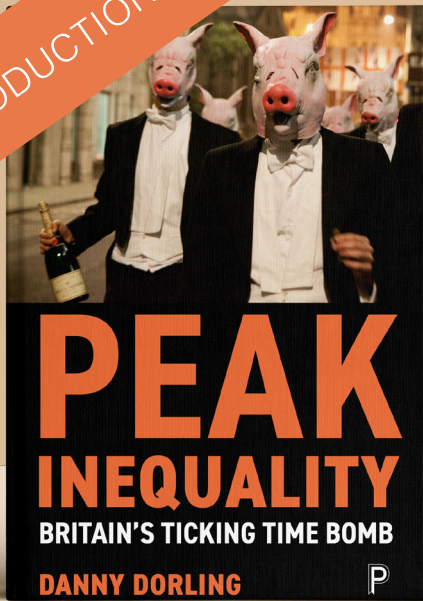


AN INTRODUCTION TO



# PEAK INEQUALITY:

## Britain's ticking time bomb

by Danny Dorling

**Inequality is the key political issue of our time. But have we now reached 'peak inequality'?**

The last few decades have seen seismic changes, including the effects of the Thatcher government and financial deregulation, the New Labour government of Tony Blair, the financial crash of 2008 and the Brexit Referendum result of 2016. How have these impacted on inequality?

In his new book, Dorling brings together brand new material alongside a carefully curated selection of his most recent writing on inequality from publications as wide ranging as the *Daily Telegraph*, *the Guardian*, *New Statesman*, *Financial Times* and the *China People's Daily*.



*"This is the essential book about a great affliction of our times. It will become the touchstone in this debate."*

George Monbiot

Covering key inequality issues, including politics, housing, education and health, he explores whether we have now reached 'peak inequality'.

### Something has to give

After almost half a century of increasing income inequality, it really does appear to have reached its peak, and this will impact on all the other inequalities in the UK.

House prices cannot keep going up because no-one will be able to afford to buy them, and no-one could afford the rent the landlords would try to charge to get a return on their investment.

Previously much of the media had claimed that immigration was the cause of lots of our woes. Now most people are learning that in many areas we cannot manage without migrant workers.

We are also learning that our education system gets especially poor results in comparison to the rest of Europe and is also one of the reasons for deteriorating mental health among the young. Teachers are also struggling to cope.

Health in general is problematic. The NHS in constant crisis and life expectancy stalling, and, in many areas, now falling. For example on June 18th 2018 the ONS announced that over and above the effect of ageing, deaths had risen by 5% in just the most recent year across all of England.

# “An all you need to know guide to inequality in the UK today”

Faiza Shaheen, Director of Class



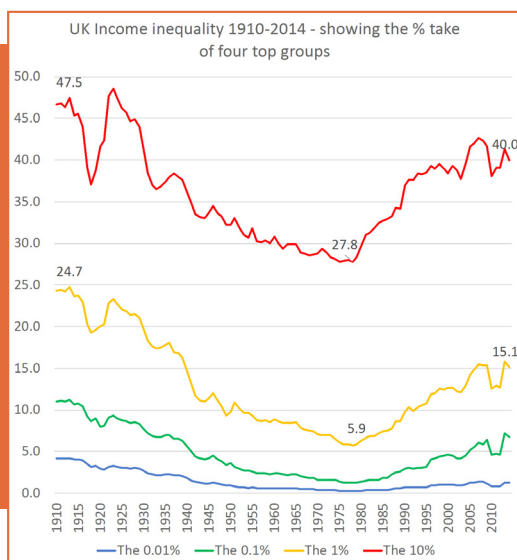
On top of this, the UK has put increasing numbers of people in prison, with little evidence of any benefit, and the prisons are now overcrowded, understaffed and in crisis.

Every part of the public sector is under strain, morale is at an all-time low, and something has to give.

The graph below shows us approaching peak inequality in 2018.

When the 1% take 15.1% of income they are taking 15.1 times mean average income.

When the 10% are taking 40% of all income they are taking 4 times mean average (on average!) But most of that is taken by the 1% (and the next 2%...)



## What the future holds

What is evident is that many of the current trends cannot go on indefinitely. In hindsight it is clear that things do, and often must, reach a peak, and that the future is bound to be different. The challenge is to imagine a future that is desirable – what might, just might, be possible.

When change truly happens, it at first strikes seasoned commentators as frankly impossible – a pipe-dream; then undesirable and full of negative consequences; then ‘just about possible’ once the clamour for change becomes overwhelming. Finally change happens and memories change with it. The same commentators will say that they believed in the change as desirable all along; they somehow saw it coming and so, too, were on the right side of history.

‘Peak Inequality’ concludes, crucially, by predicting what this future holds, as attempts are made to defuse the ticking time bomb while we simultaneously try to negotiate Brexit, and react to the wider international situation of a world of people demanding to become more equal.

*“What matters is ensuring that we are now at the peak and starting on our way down. It’s a long way down.”*

(page 391)

## FEATURES OF THE BOOK

There are over sixty chapters in *'Peak Inequality'*. The book has been designed so that each chapter can stand alone, as well as fitting into the broader narrative.

The introductory section explains just how damaging living with peak inequality is and how we are currently on the cusp of so much change, with the potential for things to become much better very soon.

The chapters are grouped in sections (politics, housing, demography, education, health and the future), each with its own introduction adding context and bringing each story up to the present day - the point at which economic inequality in the UK appears to have peaked.

*"The full consequences of eight years of cruel and counter-productive Tory austerity are devastating. There were more than 10,000 extra deaths during the first seven weeks of this year, official figures show, compared with the same period in the previous five years. That's a 12% increase. Professor Danny Dorling and Lucinda Hiam, who carried out the research, strongly implied that the extra deaths were, in part, the result of sustained underfunding to health and social care."* Jeremy Corbyn, 3rd May 2018 commenting on one of the hundreds of new findings revealed in the research that underlies this book<sup>2</sup>.



*"Graphically illuminates why and how place grounds social polarization in politics, housing, education, health, and social welfare – and offers steps towards a fairer world."*

Nancy Krieger, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

*"If you have an ounce of compassion - or self-interest - in your heart, Peak inequality is a must-read wake-up call"* Val McDermid, author



**PEAK  
INEQUALITY**  
BRITAIN'S TICKING TIME BOMB

DANNY DORLING



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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Danny Dorling wrote his seminal work *Injustice: Why social inequality persists* in 2010, and as an early proponent of reducing economic inequalities rapidly, he is now much sought-after as one of the foremost contributors to the debates surrounding it.

Danny has been mapping the social geography of the UK for over thirty years. Since improvements in computing and the availability of large digital databases, it has become possible to do this in unprecedented detail. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but typically many of these maps actually showed ten thousand statistics – allowing new insights to be gained into the social geography

of the UK. Many of the patterns which were revealed overlapped. Danny's detailed mapping has not been confined to the UK, but extends to Europe, bringing an international perspective to his insights. He also created [worldmapper.org](http://worldmapper.org), allowing a worldwide view of numerous subjects.

Over the decades it has become increasingly clear that what connected these patterns was inequality, especially the ever-growing economic inequalities - and that tackling inequality is the key issue of the day.

The photographs here were taken by Kristian Buss on 14 November 2011 in London. They show partygoers from the fictional Swillindon club, who tried and failed to gain entry to the Lord Mayor's Banquet that evening. On being ejected by the police, they joined the Occupy LSX protest at St Paul's Cathedral. During his speech at that banquet, David Cameron, the then Prime Minister, boasted that he now had 'an opportunity to begin to refashion the EU so it better serves this nation's interests'. David did not understand that his interests, his family's interests, and his rich friends' interests were not the national interest, nor did he understand that, collectively, the EU was in a much better bargaining position than he and his government were, or that every country within the EU was by then more economically equitable and mostly better run by better politicians than those of the UK.



<sup>1</sup> "The age-standardised mortality [ASMR] rate for deaths registered in Quarter 1 2018 was 1,187 deaths per 100,000 population – a statistically significant increase of 5% from Quarter 1 2017 and the highest rate since 2009." <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/quarterlymortalityreports/januarytomarch2018>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/tory-austerity-almost-certainly-increased-12468792>