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The Persistence of Union Membership in Coalmining Areas

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Introduction

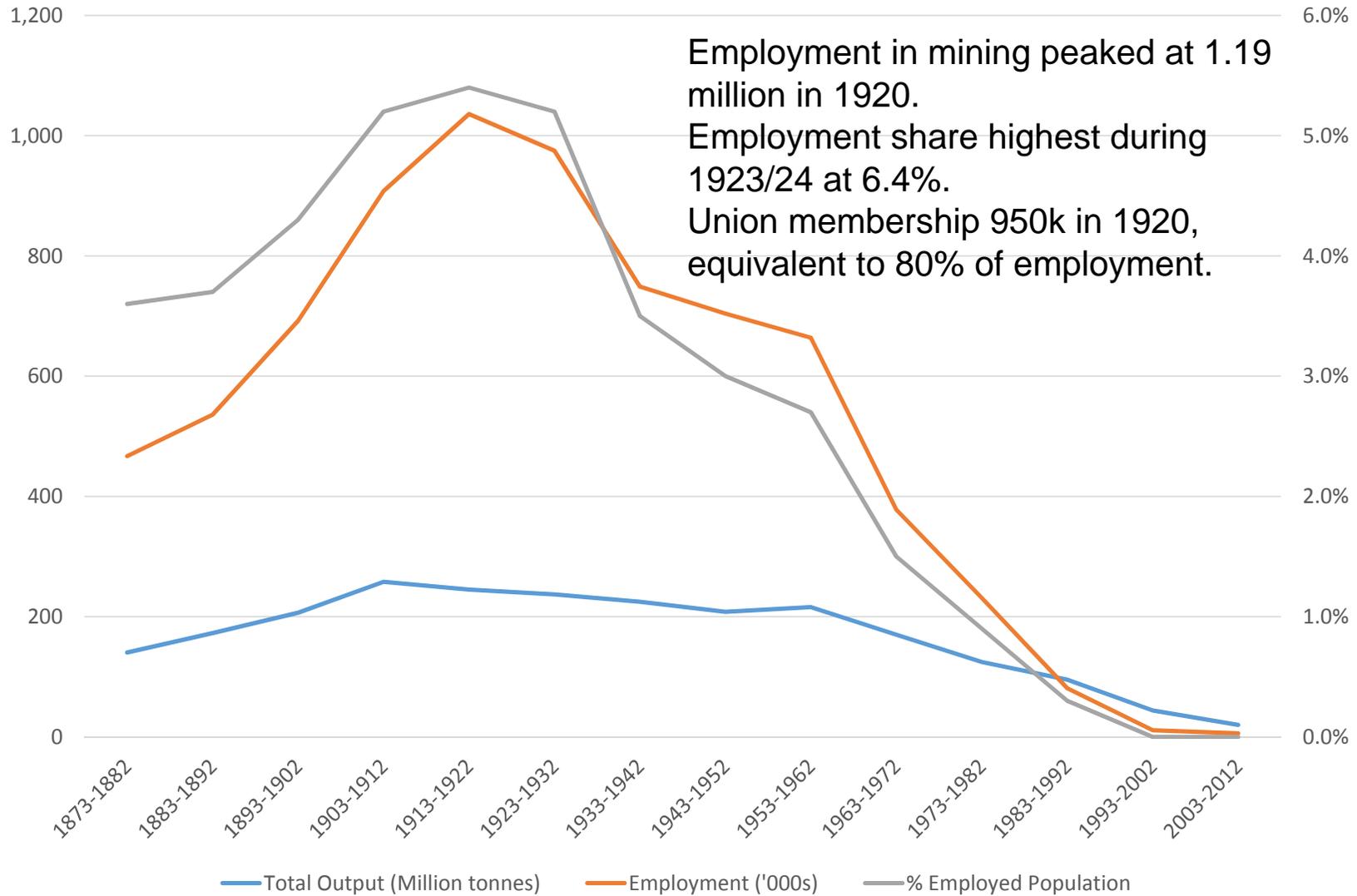
- Downward trend in union membership since peak in 1979 at 13.2 million. Currently 6.9 million, 24% of employees (BEIS, 2019).
- Regional variation across Britain still persists:
 - 18% in London; 28% across North and Scotland; 31% in Wales.
 - Cannot be explained by composition of employment.
- Colliery villages and towns located in areas once dominated coalmining remain among the most durable bases for the trade union movement (Beynon, 2014).
- Examine whether living within a coalmining area still influences union joining behaviour within GB.
 - Can we see evidence of 'spillover' to neighbouring areas?
 - Does the effect vary across Britain?

Spill-over and Path Dependence of Unions

- Within areas where there is an historical legacy of trade unionism, the propensity of workers to join trade unions appears to be greater due to the favourable attitudes that exist (Charlwood, 2002; Diamond and Freeman, 2002).
- Holmes (2006) demonstrates that higher unionisation rates in care homes and grocery stores in West Virginia and Pennsylvania are linked to the unionisation of the old coal and steel sectors in those areas. Trends are path dependent.
- Mechanisms? experience good; social custom model; commitment.
- Both family and wider social networks support union joining behaviour. Parents are particularly important socialization agents. Effect of parents on younger workers found to be greater when:
 - both parents are members as opposed to one;
 - parents are active in unions;
 - those workers are born in areas of high union density.

All add to 'path dependence'

Coalmining in the UK



The Dominance of Mining (1921 Census)

% Working Males (12 yrs+) Employed in Mining	
Industrial Areas of South Wales	35%
Nantyglo/Blaina	77%
Rhondda	74%
Mynyddislwyn	74%
Abertillery	73%
Durham	29%
Easington	75%
Derbyshire	24%
Bolsover	70%
Nottinghamshire	21%
Huthwaite	70%



Durham Miners Gala (est. 1871)

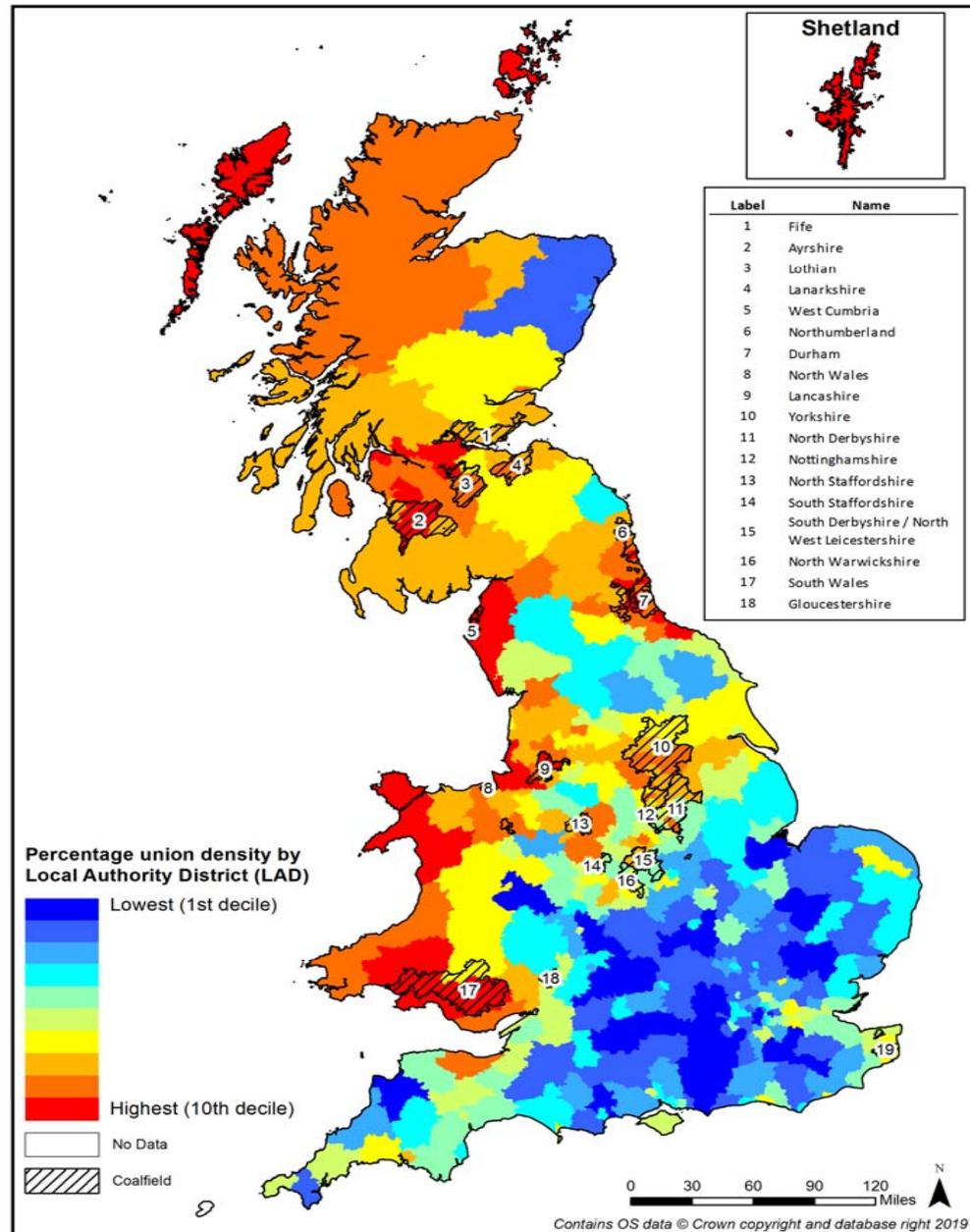
Tomorrow, Durham's narrow streets will be thronged with thousands of people, young and old, from the county's pit villages. ...Don't ever say "former" pit villages, even if the last mine closed in 1993. The colliery banners processing for hours through the city will tell us otherwise. It remains a politically and emotionally charged day for the working people of Durham. Nostalgia? Not when you see the bonds of connection and common purpose that such communities in the North East feel (Guardian, 12 July, 2013).

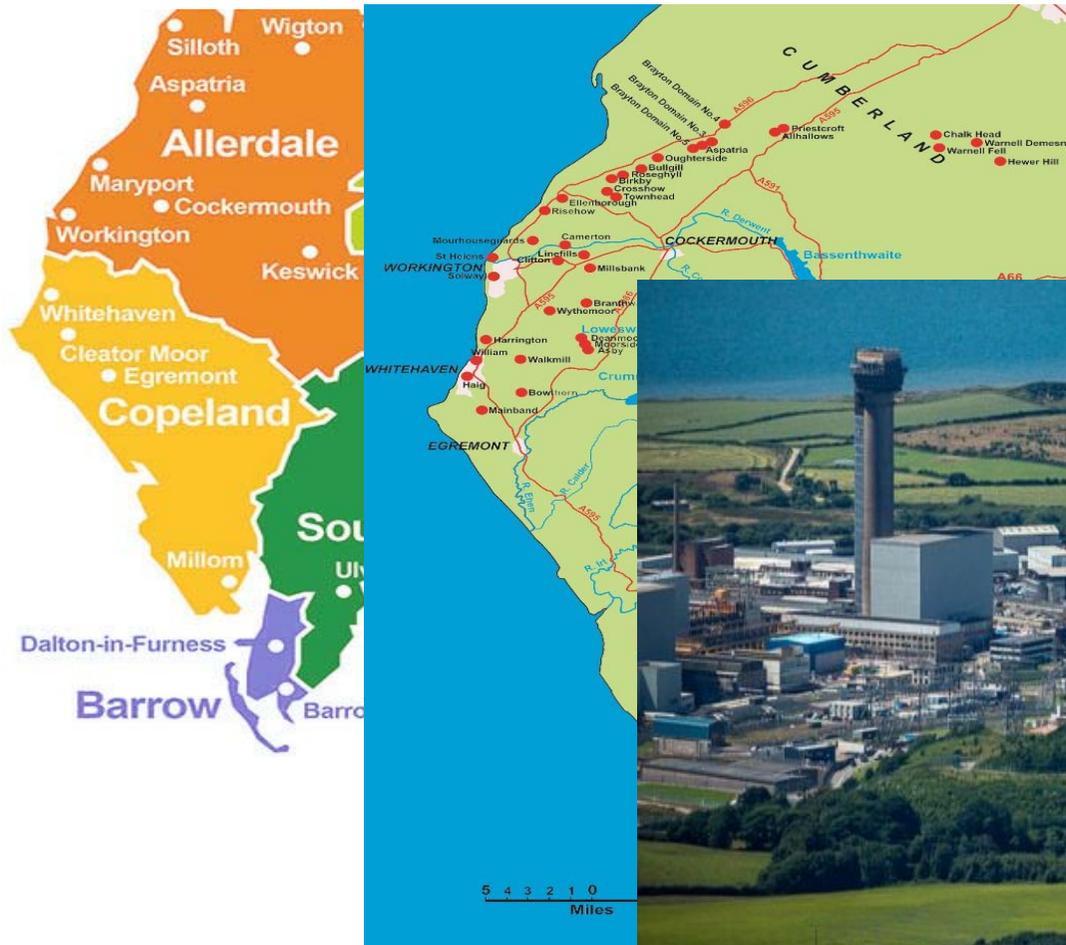
Data

- Information on union membership from UK Labour Force Survey 2000-2017 (asked in Q4 since 1992).
- Coalfield definition developed by Beatty and Fothergill (1995). Based upon ward level Census data for 1981, '10% or more of male *residents* in employment working in the coal sector' - with some flexibility.
- Coalfield data held in form of LSOA/Data Zone lookup tables. Can merge onto Secure Access versions of LFS from 2005 onwards.
- Distance to nearest coalfield (in km) have been derived from the centroids of all LSOAs/Data Zones within Great Britain. Calculated using road network travel distances using the Ordnance Survey's MasterMap Highways network.

Explore local area union membership data with our interactive mapping service:

<https://wiserd.ac.uk/unionmaps>



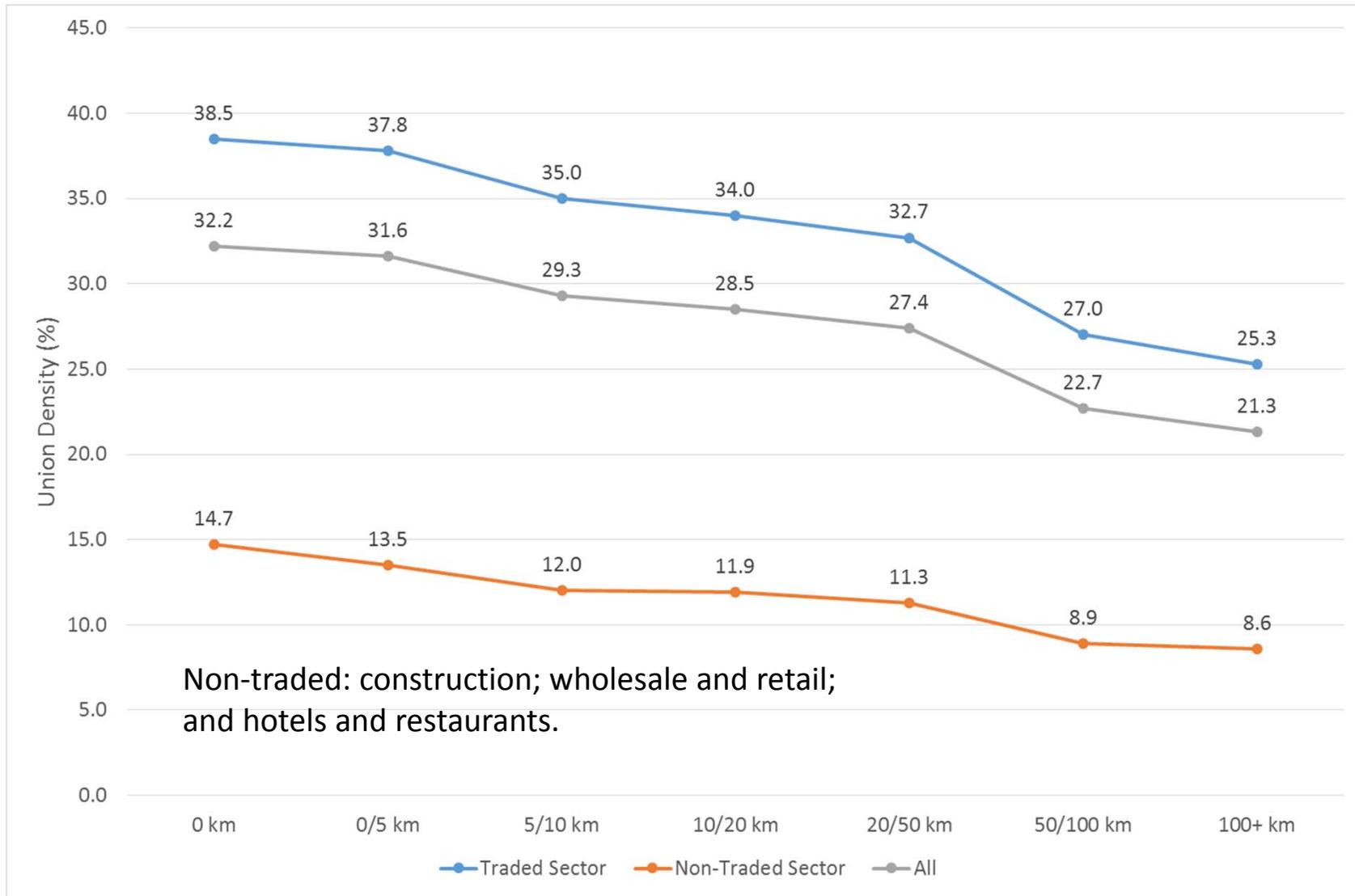


Cumbria: The Most Unionised Part of Britain

Low levels of migration to and from
these areas



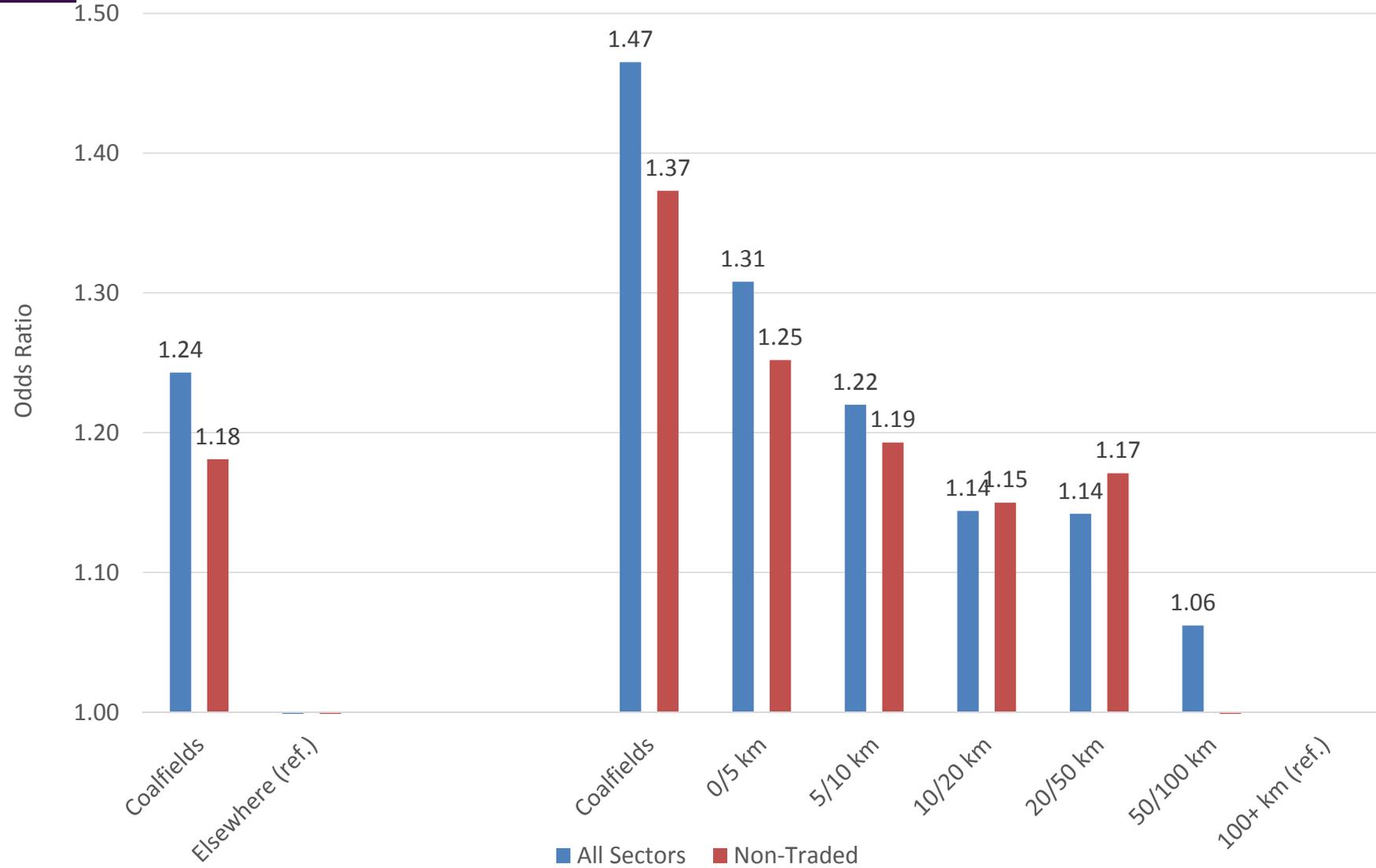
Union Membership and Distance from Coalfields



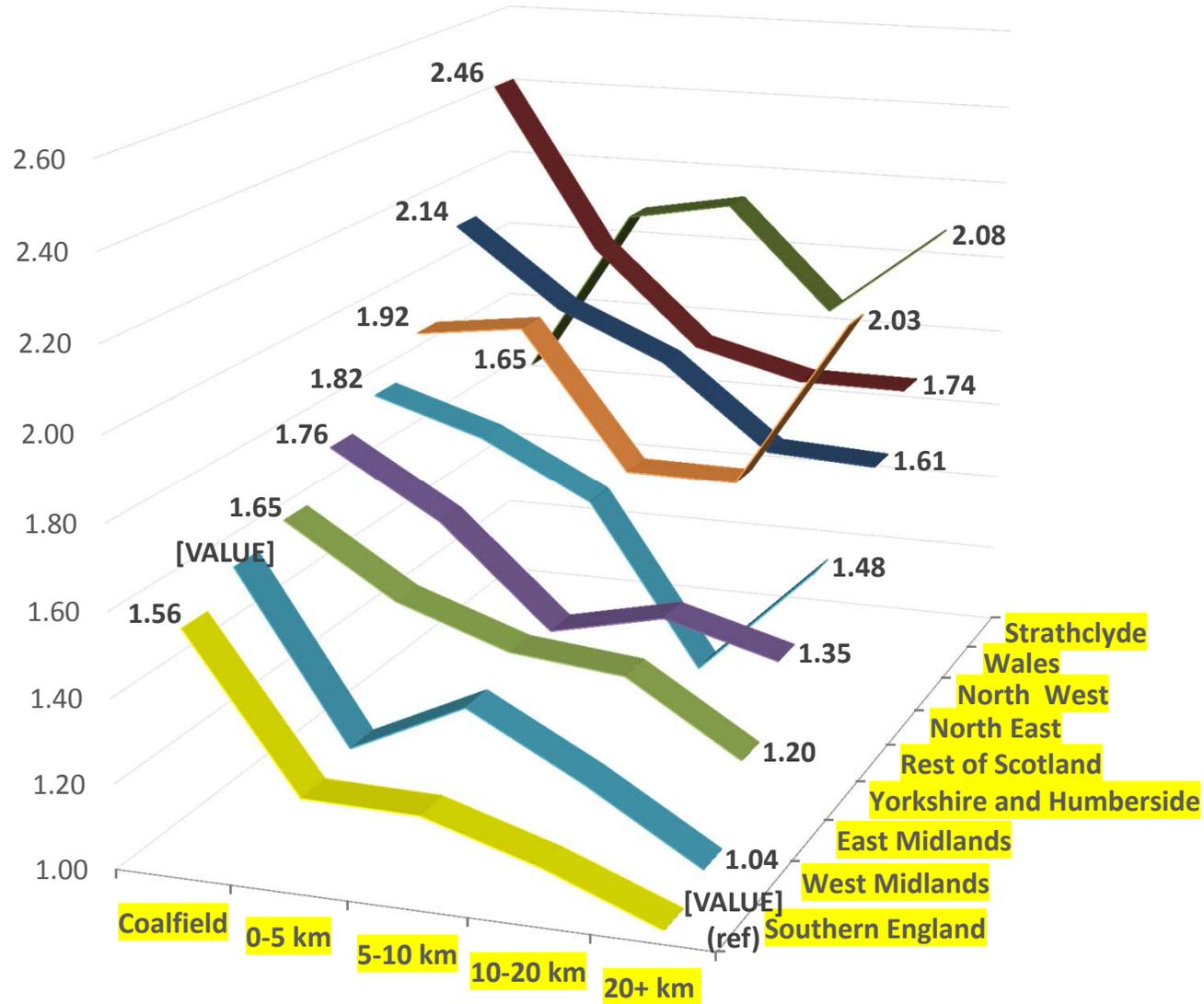
Multivariate Estimates of the Coalfield Effect

- Descriptive statistics suggest that living in a coalfield associated with approximately a 50% increase in rate of union density compared to those 100km away.
- Does this relate to the legacy of industrial heritage or is it simply a by-product of current geographical differences in the observable characteristics of individuals or the types of jobs that they are employed in?
- Estimate logistic regression to model the 'coalfield effect' after controlling for occupation, industry, sector of employment, workplace size, age, gender, year, proxy response, regional fixed effects and interview type.

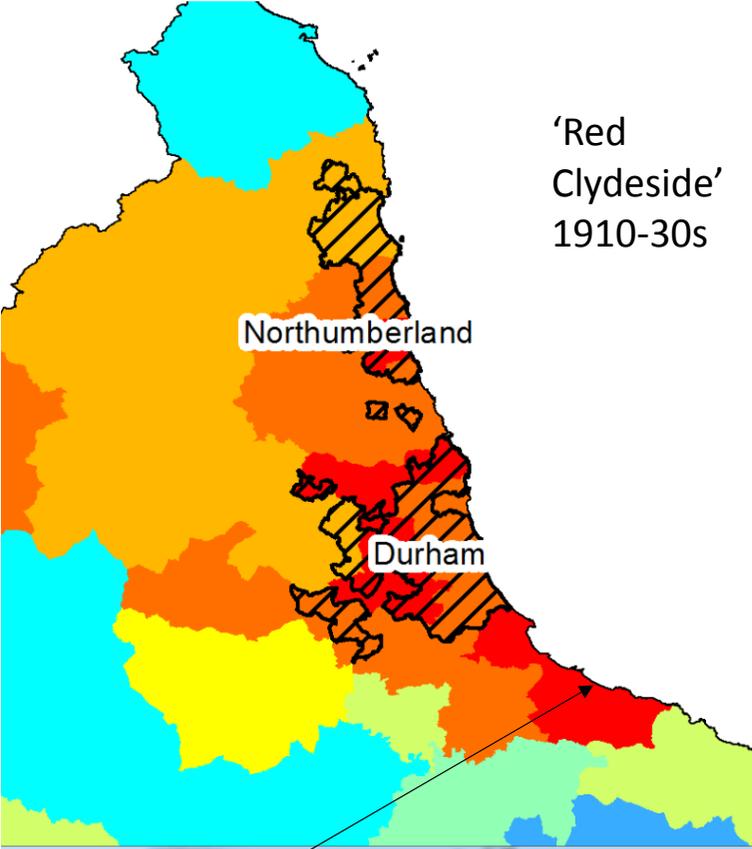
GB Estimates of Coalfield Effect



Regional Estimates of Coalfield Effect

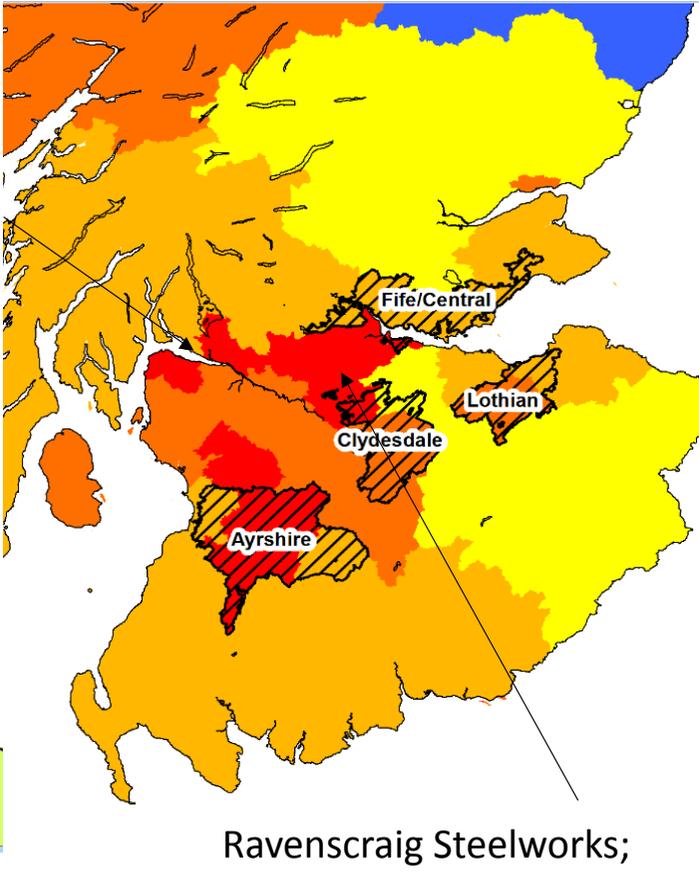


Not always easy to observe a 'coalfield effect' in the face of other influences or measurement error....



Redcar, South Teesside Steelworks

'Red Clydeside' 1910-30s



Ravenscraig Steelworks; Ex-mining areas

- **Significance of kith and kin** for generating the transmission of collective understandings of the labour movement.
- **Coalmining areas** remain a conduit of trade unionism and collective forms of consciousness. Unions and union membership are part of the 'ordinary'.



The Labour Force Survey was accessed via the Secure Lab at the UK Data Service whose support is gratefully acknowledged. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates. The use of these data does not imply the endorsement of the Office for National Statistics, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy or the UK Data Service at the UK Data Archive in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the data