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BY EMAIL

Review of the Measures of National Well-being

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Measures of National wellbeing consultation. Carnegie UK is one of the most prominent organisations involved in the development of wellbeing in public policy within the UK. Building on the work of the Stiglitz-Sen Fitoussi commission, we have advocated for the development of more holistic measures of social progress, and for the application of these measures to guide policy and decision-making.

We are delighted that the ONS are reviewing their national measures. As an organisation at the forefront of international developments on national accounts, the ONS has an opportunity to design and implement innovations on wellbeing. It is in a distinctive position to use its evidence, alongside its influencing power, to encourage decision-makers to take a wellbeing approach to government. Having holistic and timely data on a range of issues is increasingly important, given the collapse in collective wellbeing generally, and with the contiguous threats posed by the cost of living, energy, and climate crisis.

Indicators of collective wellbeing

Our programme of work on Gross Domestic Wellbeing (GDWe)¹ builds on the framework and data used within the ONS dashboard to create a single score of collective wellbeing.

Producing the score highlighted that there are significant gaps in, and delays with, the national wellbeing data presented by the ONS. This is particularly the case in relation to indicators of democratic wellbeing. For example, the ONS Wellbeing Dashboard indicators are simply trust in government and voter turnout. With the voter turnout only being measured for General Elections, this data does not adequately reflect the range of elements that contribute to democratic wellbeing, such as public participation and citizen engagement within communities more broadly.

Carnegie UK's research² on democratic wellbeing in 2022 highlighted why such timely data is so important. A lack of available information from official statistics limits our ability to check the temperature of our nation and get early warning of when problems in our society are impacting on our collective wellbeing.

¹ Wallace, J. Ormston, H., and Thurman et al. 2020. Gross Domestic Wellbeing: an alternative measure of social progress. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/gross-domestic-wellbeing-gdwe-an-alternative-measure-of-social-progress/>

² Heydecker, R., Ormston, H., and Wallace, J. 2022. GDWe: a spotlight on democratic wellbeing. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/gdwe-a-spotlight-on-democratic-wellbeing/>.

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In 2020, Carnegie UK undertook a thematic review of over 800 recommendations from nearly 50 commissions and inquiries broadly related to collective wellbeing since 2010. From Marmot to Grimsey, Dilnot to Taylor – our analysis highlighted many areas of mutual focus, challenge, and concern. This work informed Carnegie UK's own indicators of collective wellbeing within our SEED (social, economic, environmental, and democratic wellbeing) model. In Table 1., we provide an outline of the key indicators that we believe are important to measure. **We urge the ONS to consider these indicators within their review of the Measures of National Well-being dashboard.**

Measuring inequalities

Inequalities are obscured by measurement: Much of the data that feeds into the ONS measures of wellbeing are taken from samples of private households. They do not capture data from those who are homeless, in residential care, or that reside in caravan parks or gypsy/traveller communities. Children and young people are also systematically ignored in these measures except were referring to their future economic potential. Similarly, it is a choice to present data as the population average rather than the gap between those who are best and least well off in society. Explicit commitments to equalities by governments should be matched by equality measures in the wellbeing dashboard. **We would like to see equalities data adequately addressed within the review.**

Communication of wellbeing data

Wellbeing frameworks tend to include:

- A mission statement putting wellbeing at the centre
- A set of outcomes, like a good place to bring up children, or a more equal society.
- A larger set of indicators that measure progress towards these outcomes.

During the review, Carnegie UK recommends that the ONS consider their wider communications and engagement strategy. The data within the wellbeing dashboard should be given equal attention to reporting of Gross Domestic Product, which will not only demonstrate the significance of the data, but also the ONS' impartiality in terms of reporting.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important work, and congratulations on the progress you have made so far. Wellbeing measurement and wellbeing frameworks are a significant area of interest for Carnegie UK, and we would really like to stay connected: if you wish to discuss any of the points mentioned above, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely



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Table 1.

At Carnegie UK we believe that collective wellbeing happens when social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing outcomes are seen as being equally important and are given equal weight.

Carnegie UK SEED Domains	Key indicators
Social Wellbeing: We all have our basic needs met.	Local Environment
	Housing
	Transport
	Safety
	Proximity to Services
	Physical Health
	Mental Health
	Children's Education
	Adult Learning
	Cohesion & Belonging
	Culture
	Disability
	Gender & Sexuality
	Ethnicity
	Personal Wellbeing
Loneliness Volunteering Relationships	
Economic wellbeing: We all have a decent minimum living standard.	Income/Basic Needs
	Employment/Jobs (including job quality)
	Local Economy
	Social & Economic
Environmental Wellbeing: We all live within the planet's natural resources.	Energy & Emissions
	Waste
	Land
	Water
	Nature Air
Democratic Wellbeing: We all have a voice in decisions that affect us.	Connectivity
	Community Participation
	Political Voice/Influence
	Human Rights Participatory democracy