

Focus on Age

Life in the UK





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Introduction

Life in the UK measures the collective wellbeing of people across the UK.

We started with a simple question: can we bring together data from different aspects of our lives to give a richer picture of how we are really doing? And if so, can we compare experiences of different groups to better understand the inequalities in society?

This insights paper presents further detail on the inequalities we identified in wellbeing by different age groups in the UK.

About the index

Life in the UK provides:

- › a single score for collective wellbeing that will show if we are living better or worse over time.
- › a score for each of the four domains of wellbeing: social, economic, environmental and democratic.
- › collective wellbeing and domain scores for each of the nations and regions of the UK.
- › collective wellbeing and domain scores for different demographics.

How to read the wellbeing scores

The Life in the UK index has been designed to provide an overall assessment of 'how life is'. The overall index score is an average of the scores for each of the four wellbeing domains: social, economic, environmental and democratic. Higher scores indicate a higher level of wellbeing.

- › The index is based upon a 26-question survey of more than 6,900 people across the UK. The questions relate to the different domains of wellbeing and were tested with focus groups and an Advisory Group.
- › The survey was administered through the Ipsos Knowledge Panel, a random probability survey panel based on a random sample of UK households.
- › The overall collective wellbeing index score and the wellbeing domain scores have a value of between 0 and 100. Note that although the scores are a scale of 0 to 100, they are not percentages.
- › The collective wellbeing scores, domain scores and individual questions were analysed to compare aspects of life for different types of people and different parts of the UK. A summary table of the domain scores is contained in **Appendix 1**. We have only commented on statistically significant relationships.
- › We used factor analysis to construct the index scores and regression analysis to help us understand which demographic characteristics (including gender, age, income, disability, area deprivation, tenure and ethnicity) are most associated both with collective wellbeing overall and with social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing specifically. This analysis has been used to structure our discussion of the demographic characteristics impacting on wellbeing throughout this report.

In taking this approach, the Life in the UK index is unique. In the coming years we will be able to use this measure to track whether lives are improving. This year, our focus is on what the data has revealed about the extent of inequality in the UK.

Carnegie UK and Ipsos designed, developed and analysed the index in partnership. The recommendations outlined in the full report are Carnegie UK's alone. More information on the methodology is available [here](#).

Collective wellbeing

Carnegie UK has been involved in understanding and measuring wellbeing for over a decade. We have supported governments to take a broader view of social progress, to consider social, economic, environmental and democratic (SEED) outcomes as equally important in decision making, allocating resources and tackling the challenges of our time. Taken in turn, these domain scores evidence whether:

- everyone has access to the services and support that they need (social wellbeing)
- we all have a decent minimum living standard (economic wellbeing)
- we are all able to access a quality local environment and collectively live within our planetary boundaries to secure the environment for future generations (environmental wellbeing)
- we all have a voice in the decisions that affect us (democratic wellbeing)

Our analysis found that younger people are experiencing multiple challenges to their wellbeing while older people consistently have the highest levels of wellbeing. Overall the collective wellbeing score rises from 59 for those aged 16 to 34 to 60 for those aged 35 to 54 and then to 65 for those aged 55 and over (Table 1).

We have presented the analysis according to three age groups: 16 to 34 years old, 35 to 54 years old and 55 and over. This was an evidence-based decision: we reviewed a number of different categories, and in particular we reviewed the scores for 55 to 64 years old, 65 to 74 years old and 75 and over. We did not find significant differences in the wellbeing scores for those aged 55 and over and therefore have used one category to represent older life.

Table 1: Collective wellbeing and domain scores by age

	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 and over
Collective wellbeing	59	60	65
Social wellbeing	68	72	76
Economic wellbeing	69	67	75
Environmental wellbeing	58	62	68
Democratic wellbeing	40	39	43



Those aged 55 and over have a significantly higher collective wellbeing score than younger age groups:

- There is a 6-point gap in the collective wellbeing score between those aged 16 to 34 and those aged 55 and above.
- There is a 5-point gap in the collective wellbeing score between those aged 35 to 54 and those aged 55 and above.

Social wellbeing

Social wellbeing includes aspects from health and mental health to neighbourhood safety and relying on each other. A higher score means that we found higher levels of wellbeing for those people or places.

We found that there is a consistent relationship between age and social wellbeing: the older you get, the more likely you are to have a higher score for social wellbeing (Table 1).

Looking at what drives this disparity in scores, those aged 16 to 34 are most likely to have poorer mental health, feel unsafe, not have someone to rely on in their neighbourhood or to experience discrimination in comparison to those aged 35 to 54 or 55 and above (Table 2).

Health and mental health

- People aged **16 to 34** and **35 to 54** are significantly more likely to report **good health** compared with those aged 55 and over.
- There is an **inverse relationship** between age and the likelihood of reporting **bad mental health**. As age increases, the likelihood of reporting bad mental health decreases.

Safety and community

- People aged **16 to 34** are significantly more likely to report feeling **unsafe** walking alone in their local neighbourhood after dark than those aged 35 to 54 and 55 and over.
- There is an **inverse relationship** between **not** having **someone to rely on** in the neighbourhood if alone and needing help, and age. As age increases, the likelihood of reporting not having someone to rely on decreases.

Discrimination

- There is an **inverse relationship** between age and likelihood of having experienced discrimination in the last year. As age increases, experience of discrimination decreases.



Table 2: Positive and negative responses to individual questions on social wellbeing (%)

	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 and over	Total
Self-reported health is good or very good	69	66	62	65
Self-reported health is bad or very bad	7	7	8	7
Self-reported mental health is good or very good	50	57	76	62
Self-reported mental health is bad or very bad	17	10	4	10
Feels safe/fairly safe walking alone in local neighbourhood after dark	67	72	73	71
Feels a bit unsafe/very unsafe walking alone in local neighbourhood after dark	32	27	25	28
Able to rely on someone if alone and needed help	53	66	77	66
Not able to rely on someone if alone and needed help	24	16	10	16
Experience of being unfairly treated or discriminated against in the last 12 months	56	41	28	40
Not unfairly treated or discriminated against in the last 12 months	40	56	71	57



Economic wellbeing >

Economic wellbeing includes access to a decent income, affordability, financial resilience, job opportunities and skills. A higher score means that we found higher levels of wellbeing for those people or places.

We found that those aged 16 to 34 and 35 to 54 have significantly lower economic wellbeing scores than those aged 55 and above (Table 1).

Looking at what drives this disparity in scores, those aged 55 and above are significantly more likely than both younger age groups to agree that they can afford things across the board, be that keeping their homes warm, providing enough food for everyone in their household, taking a week's annual holiday away from home, socialising once a month outside the home and meeting an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 (Table 3).

Analysis also shows that those aged 35-54 have significantly lower economic wellbeing than both younger and older age groups. Indeed, they are less likely to report that they can keep their homes warm, afford an annual holiday away from home or socialise once a month compared to both younger and older age groups.

Table 3: Positive and negative responses to individual questions on economic wellbeing (%)

	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 and over	Total
Satisfied with education and skills	81	78	82	80
Not satisfied with education and skills	6	9	5	5
Can afford to keep home adequately warm	71	69	78	73
Cannot afford to keep home adequately warm	16	21	14	17
Can afford to buy enough food for everyone in the household	84	86	92	88
Cannot afford to buy enough food for everyone in the household	6	7	4	6
Can afford to pay for a week's annual holiday away from home (not staying with relatives)	61	61	77	67
Cannot afford to pay for a week's annual holiday away from home (not staying with relatives)	23	30	15	22
Can afford to socialise with friends or family outside of the home once a month if desired	78	75	83	79
Cannot afford to socialise with friends or family outside of the home once a month if desired	10	15	9	11
Can afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850	52	53	73	60
Cannot afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850	35	38	19	30

Education and skills

- People aged **35 to 54** are significantly more likely than those aged 16 to 34 and 55 and above to report dissatisfaction with their education.

Affordability: absolute poverty

We included two measures that relate to absolute poverty – the ability to keep one's home adequately warm and to buy enough food for everyone in the household. We found that:

- People aged **35 to 54** are significantly more likely to disagree that they can keep their homes warm compared to both younger and older age groups.
- People aged **16 to 34** and **35 to 54** are significantly more likely to disagree that they can afford to feed everyone in their household.

Affordability: relative poverty

The focus groups that informed survey design were clear that when it comes to money, it is also important to be able to afford to 'make memories' and enjoy life. Following from this, we included two measures that relate to relative poverty – the ability to afford a week's annual holiday away from home (not staying with relatives) and to socialise with friends or family outside of the home once a month if desired. We found that:

- People aged **35 to 54** are significantly more likely to disagree that they can afford a week's annual holiday compared to both younger and older age groups.
- People aged **35 to 54** are significantly more likely to disagree that they can afford to socialise outside of the home compared to both younger and older age groups.

Affordability: an emergency expense

We asked whether people could afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 as a loose estimate of whether people had financial security or a degree of wealth. We found that:

- Those aged **16 to 34** and **35 to 54** are more likely than those aged 55 and above to disagree that they could meet such a cost.



Environmental wellbeing

Environmental wellbeing includes access to green and blue spaces, quality of the local environment and collectively living within the planet's natural resources. A higher score means that we found higher levels of wellbeing for those people or places.

There is a linear relationship between age and environmental wellbeing: as age increases, so too does the likelihood of having a higher score for environmental wellbeing (Table 1).

Looking at what drives this disparity in scores, there is a linear relationship between satisfaction with green or open spaces near the home and age, and an inverse relationship between age and the likelihood of reporting major or moderate problems with noise, air quality and litter (Table 4).

Table 4: Positive and negative responses to individual questions on environmental wellbeing (%)

	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 and over	Total
Satisfied with the quality of the public, green or open space in local area	59	71	78	70
Dissatisfied with the quality of the public, green or open space in local area	17	13	8	12
Major/moderate problems with noise	29	21	15	21
Minor/no problems with noise	69	78	85	78
Major/moderate problems with air pollution	26	23	16	21
Minor/no problems with air pollution	70	73	82	76
Major/moderate problems with litter or rubbish on the street	39	36	28	34
Minor/no problems with litter or rubbish on the street	59	64	72	66



Local green space

- There is a clear **linear relationship** between satisfaction with green or open spaces near the home and age: as age increases, so too does the likelihood of reporting satisfaction with this space.

Problems with noise, air pollution and litter

- There is a clear **inverse linear relationship** between age and the likelihood of reporting major or moderate problems with noise: as age increases, the likelihood of reporting major or moderate problems decreases.
- When it comes to reporting major or moderate problems with air pollution, those aged **16 to 34** and **35 to 54** are significantly more likely to report major or moderate problems than those aged 55 and above.
- When it comes to reporting major or moderate problems with litter, those aged **16 to 34** and **35 to 54** are significantly more likely to report major or moderate problems than those aged 55 and above.

There are no statistically significant differences by age in the likelihood of reporting satisfaction or dissatisfaction with efforts to preserve the environment.



Democratic wellbeing

Democratic wellbeing includes participation, trust in key institutions and ability to influence decisions at a national and local level. A higher score means that we found higher levels of wellbeing for those people or places.

We found that people aged 55 and above have a higher democratic wellbeing score than those aged 16 to 34 and 35 to 54. Those aged 16 to 54 have a democratic wellbeing score of 40 compared to a score of 43 for those aged 55 and over (a 3-point gap) (Table 1).

Looking at what drives this disparity in scores, those aged 35 to 54 are significantly more likely to report low levels of trust than both younger and older age groups when it comes to the UK Government, local councils and the news media (Table 5).

With regard to the legal system and banks, those aged 16 to 34 and 35 to 54 are significantly more likely than those aged 55 and over to report low levels of trust. In terms of the police, the younger the age group, the more likely it is that trust will be low.

Table 5: Responses to individual questions on democratic wellbeing (%)

	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 and over	Total
Low trust in the UK Government	52	57	47	52
Low trust in local councils	23	30	24	26
Low trust in the legal system and courts	18	18	14	16
Low trust in the police	24	19	16	19
Low trust in news media	37	43	34	38
Low trust in banks	17	20	13	17
I can influence decisions affecting the UK	7	6	5	6
I cannot influence decisions affecting the UK	71	74	75	73
I can influence decisions affecting my local area	14	13	14	14
I cannot influence decisions affecting my local area	57	57	54	56

UK Government: trust and ability to influence

A key component of democratic wellbeing relates to trust in government institutions. We found that:

- There is an inverse relationship between age and low levels of trust in the UK Government: as age increases, the likelihood of reporting low trust decreases.
- People aged 16 to 34 are significantly more likely than those aged 55 years and over to disagree that they can influence decisions affecting the UK.

Local councils: trust and ability to influence

- People aged 35 to 54 are significantly more likely to report low levels of trust than both younger and older age groups.
- There are no statistically significant differences in the likelihood of agreeing or disagreeing that you can influence decisions affecting the local area by age.

Law and order: legal system, courts and the police

- People aged 16 to 34 and 35 to 54 are significantly more likely to report low levels of trust in the legal system and courts compared with those aged 55 years and over.
- There is an inverse relationship between low levels of trust in the police and age. As age increases the proportion reporting low trust in the police decreases.

Other institutions: news media and banks

- People aged 35 to 54 are significantly more likely to report low levels of trust in the news media than both younger and older age groups.
- People aged 16 to 34 and 35 to 54 are significantly more likely to report low levels of trust in banks than those aged 55 years and over.



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