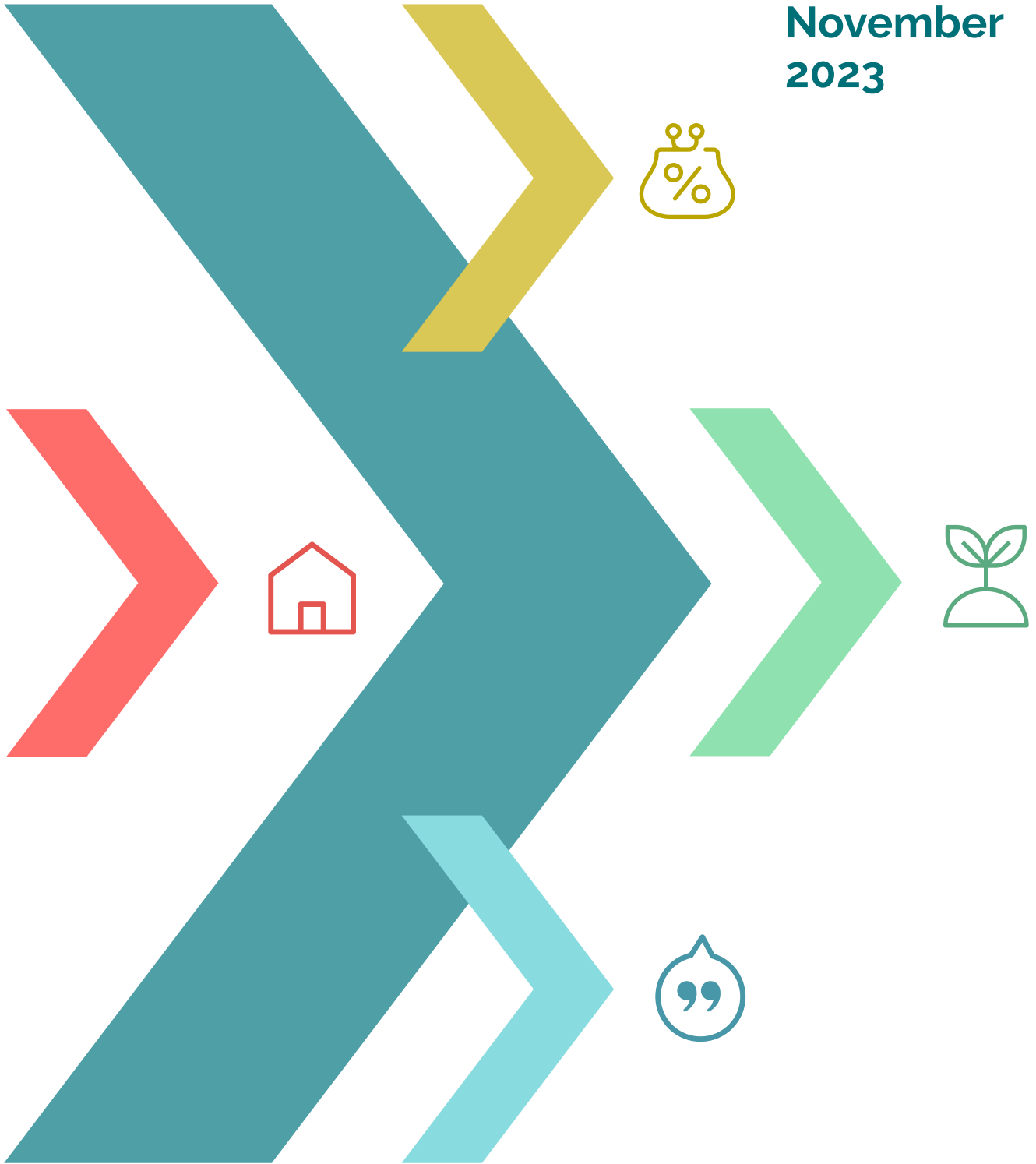


Life in the UK

November 2023





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Key findings



Disabled people and people who live in more deprived areas, have lower annual household incomes or live in social housing or private rented accommodation experience lower collective wellbeing.



Democratic wellbeing is exceptionally low, indicating a crisis in trust in institutions across the UK.



Older people have some of the highest levels of wellbeing while younger people experience multiple challenges to their wellbeing.



The Collective Wellbeing score for the UK in 2023 is 62 out of a possible 100.

Introducing Life in the UK

Making good policy decisions, based on good data, has never been so important.

People in the UK in 2023 are living less well today.¹ They have less money in their pockets amidst a crisis in democracy² and against the backdrop of a climate emergency and sharply rising inequalities.³

Despite ample evidence about the lived reality of these challenges, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remains the only single comparable number used as a barometer of progress in the UK today, driving policy making and shaping public debate. GDP sits at the top of a pyramid of statistics about units of production and was developed in the 1930s to fill gaps in available information about the state of the economy. It was never intended to be a measure of wellbeing or progress.⁴

However, there is something about the (deceptive) simplicity of a single number and in the absence of an alternative, GDP is often used to measure 'how life is' in the UK. But what if there were a single number that motivated governments to set collective wellbeing as the goal? Could we bring together data from different aspects of our lives to give a richer picture of how we are really doing? If so, could we track that over time to show whether things are getting better or worse? And in so doing, could we help to build the case in the UK for a broader approach to measuring and acting on what matters?

Those are the questions which inspired us to undertake this work.



The welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measure of national income."

Simon Kuznets (who first developed GDP), 1934



What we measure affects what we do; and if our measurements are flawed, decisions may be distorted."

Joseph Stiglitz, 2009



¹ See Carnegie UK, 2020 Gross Domestic Wellbeing (GDWe) An alternative measure of social progress. Available at: <https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/gross-domestic-wellbeing-gdwe-an-alternative-measure-of-social-progress/>. See also Ipsos Political Monitor Trend, 2023. Available at: Political Monitor ([ipsos.com](https://www.ipsos.com))

² Sheila McKechnie Foundation, 2023. Defending our Democratic Space: a call to action. Available at: <https://smk.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/defending-our-democratic-space-a-call-to-action/>

³ Carnegie UK, 2023. The Long Shadow of the Cost-of-Living Emergency. Available at: <https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/the-long-shadow-of-the-cost-of-living-emergency/>

⁴ Gaukroger, 2023. A critical assessment of GDP as a measure of economic performance and social progress. Available at: <https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/a-critical-assessment-of-gdp-as-a-measure-of-economic-performance-and-social-progress/>

Why collective wellbeing?

A key role of government is to create the conditions for a society where we can all live well together. At Carnegie UK we call this 'collective wellbeing'; everyone living well now, and into the future.

We have been involved in understanding and measuring collective wellbeing for over a decade. Over this time, we have supported governments to take a broader view of social progress and to balance social, economic, environmental and democratic (SEED) outcomes in decision making, resource allocation and long-term planning.⁵

There is a growing body of research and evidence which demonstrates that putting collective wellbeing at the heart of decision making really is an effective route to improving outcomes for citizens.⁶ Measurement is critical to this process: if collective wellbeing became a key measure of progress, it would inform public debate and government decision making, which would in turn determine where resources go, and what gets done.

In 2019, we began to experiment with a wellbeing index. Inspired by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing⁷ and the Oxfam Humankind Index,⁸ we wanted to see if it was indeed possible to create that single number that could answer the question of 'how life is' and address the distorting dominance of GDP.

The Life in the UK index is the output of that process of experimentation and refinement. It is our contribution to a broad movement that seeks to put wellbeing at the heart of how governments think and what they do.⁹



Social wellbeing

We all have the support and services we need to thrive



Economic wellbeing

We all have a decent minimum living standard.



Environmental wellbeing

We all live within the planet's natural resources.



Democratic wellbeing

We all have a voice in decisions made that affect us.

⁵ For example: Carnegie UK has supported the development of a [Wellbeing Framework in the North of Tyne](#) and the embedding of a Wellbeing Framework in Northern Ireland

⁶ For example: Impact of the Act – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and New Zealand's wellbeing: Is it sustainable and what are the risks? - Background paper to Te Tai Waiora: Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022 - 24 November 2022 ([treasury.govt.nz](#)).

⁷ Accessible at: Home | Canadian Index of Wellbeing | University of Waterloo ([uwaterloo.ca](#))

⁸ Accessible at: [rr-humankind-index-second-results-100613-en.pdf](#);jsessionid=36B9A91254D8CD1B0B4A5072406F3053 ([openrepository.com](#))

⁹ See for example: OECD Better Life Index, UN "Beyond GDP", Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership. Co-op Community Wellbeing Index, Office for National Statistics (ONS), Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Assembly. Read more at: Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGO) : Wellbeing Economy Alliance ([weall.org](#))

Our goal was to create an index that is:

➤ **timely – issued within six months of data collection**

➤ **comprehensive – covering all domains of wellbeing**

➤ **robust – both for individual indicators and index methodology**

➤ **relevant – people across the UK see it as relevant to their lives**

➤ **useful – for all of those interested in improving lives in the UK**

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 the UK as a whole, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and each of the English regions

➤ collective wellbeing and domain scores for different demographic groups.

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 we found 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 this report are Carnegie UK's alone. More information on the methodology is available [here](#).

Our collective wellbeing in 2023

The collective wellbeing score for the UK in 2023 is 62 out of a possible 100. The overall score is the average of scores for social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing and measures whether we are 'living well together'. A perfect score of 100 would mean that these domains of wellbeing are being experienced by everyone in the UK.

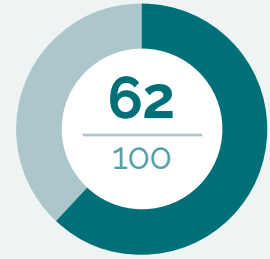
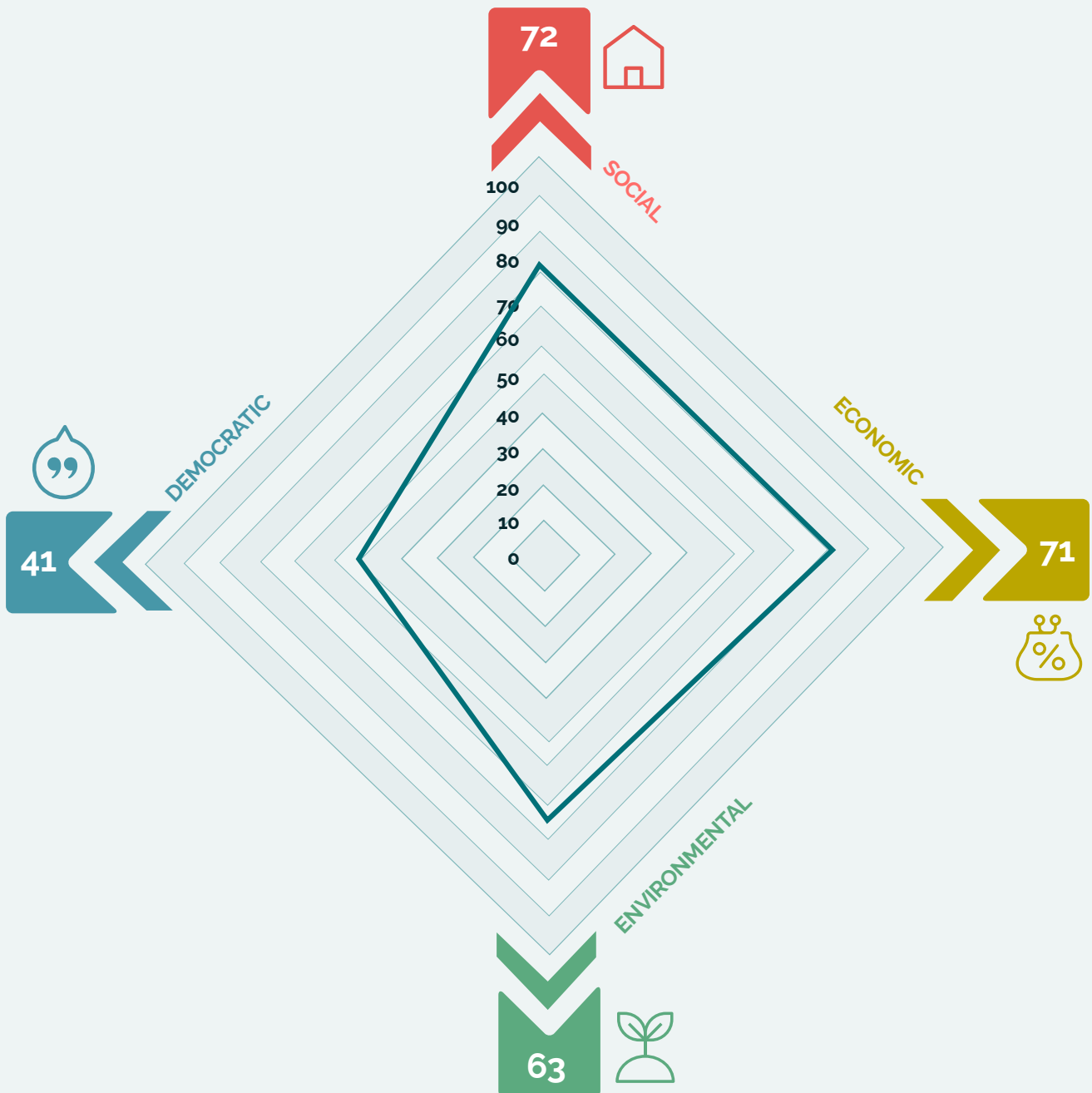


Chart 1: Wellbeing domain scores for the UK



Analysis shows certain demographic factors predict a lower or higher collective wellbeing score.



1. Disabled people have a lower collective wellbeing score compared to non-disabled people¹⁰ (55 compared to 64) (Chart 3).



2. People living in the most **deprived areas** have a lower collective wellbeing score compared to those living in the least deprived areas¹¹ (55 in the lowest quintile compared to 67 in the top quintile) (Chart 8).



3. People on the lowest **household incomes** have a lower collective wellbeing score compared to those on the highest (57 for those with household incomes of £25,999 and under compared to 66 amongst those with household incomes of £52,000 and over) (Chart 5).



4. Social housing **tenants** and private tenants have a lower collective wellbeing score than homeowners¹² (52 and 57 respectively compared with 64) (Chart 6).



5. **Younger** people have a lower collective wellbeing score compared to older people (59 for those aged 16 to 34 years compared to 65 for those aged 55 years and over) (Chart 4).



6. People living in **urban** areas have a lower collective wellbeing score compared to rural areas (61 compared to 66) (Chart 9).



7. People from Black, Asian and minority White **ethnic groups** and people with mixed ethnic backgrounds¹³ have lower collective wellbeing scores compared to people from a White British background. (56 for the Black ethnic group, 57 for the Asian ethnic group and 59 for both minority White ethnic groups and for people with mixed ethnic backgrounds, compared to 63 for people from the White British ethnic group) (Chart 10).

The collective wellbeing scores are broadly similar across England, Scotland and Wales. There are, however, differences between English regions, with the North East recording the lowest collective wellbeing score (at 58 out of 100) compared to the highest in the South West (65 out of 100) (Chart 2). A full breakdown of the regional scores is available in Appendix 2.

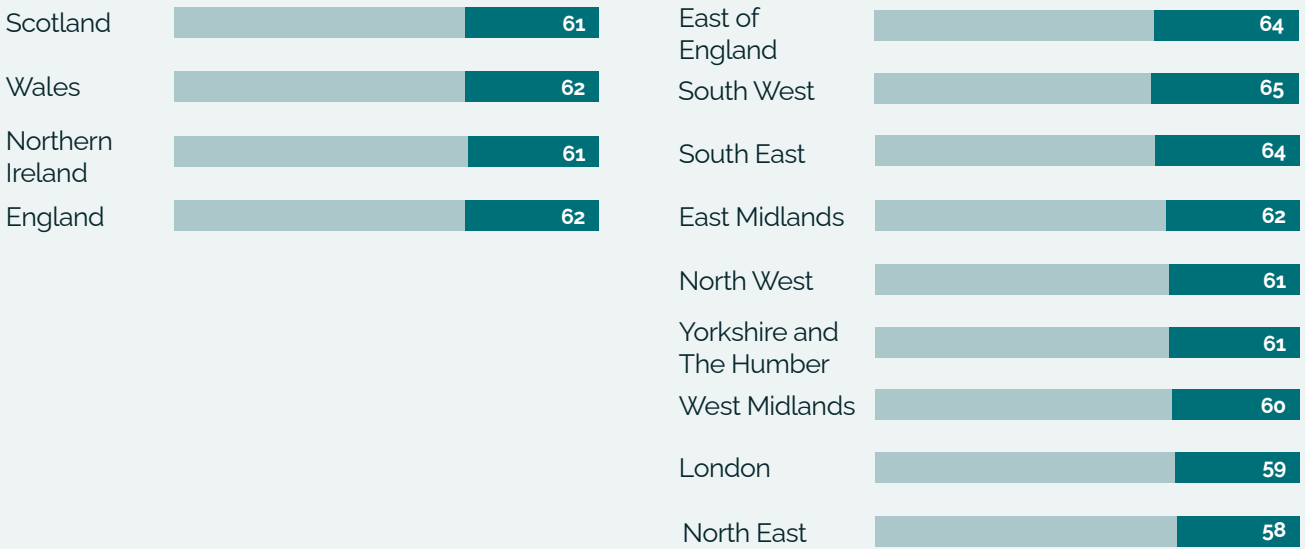
¹⁰ Disability is asked about in two questions: 1) Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more? (scale: Yes/No/Don't know/Prefer not to say). All who answer Yes at 1) are then asked 2): Does your condition or illness, or any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? (scale: Yes, a lot; Yes, a little; Not at all; Prefer not to say).

¹¹ Indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) is a measure of relative deprivation for small, fixed geographic areas of the UK. IMD classifies these areas into five quintiles based on relative disadvantage, with quintile 1 being the most deprived and quintile 5 being the least deprived.

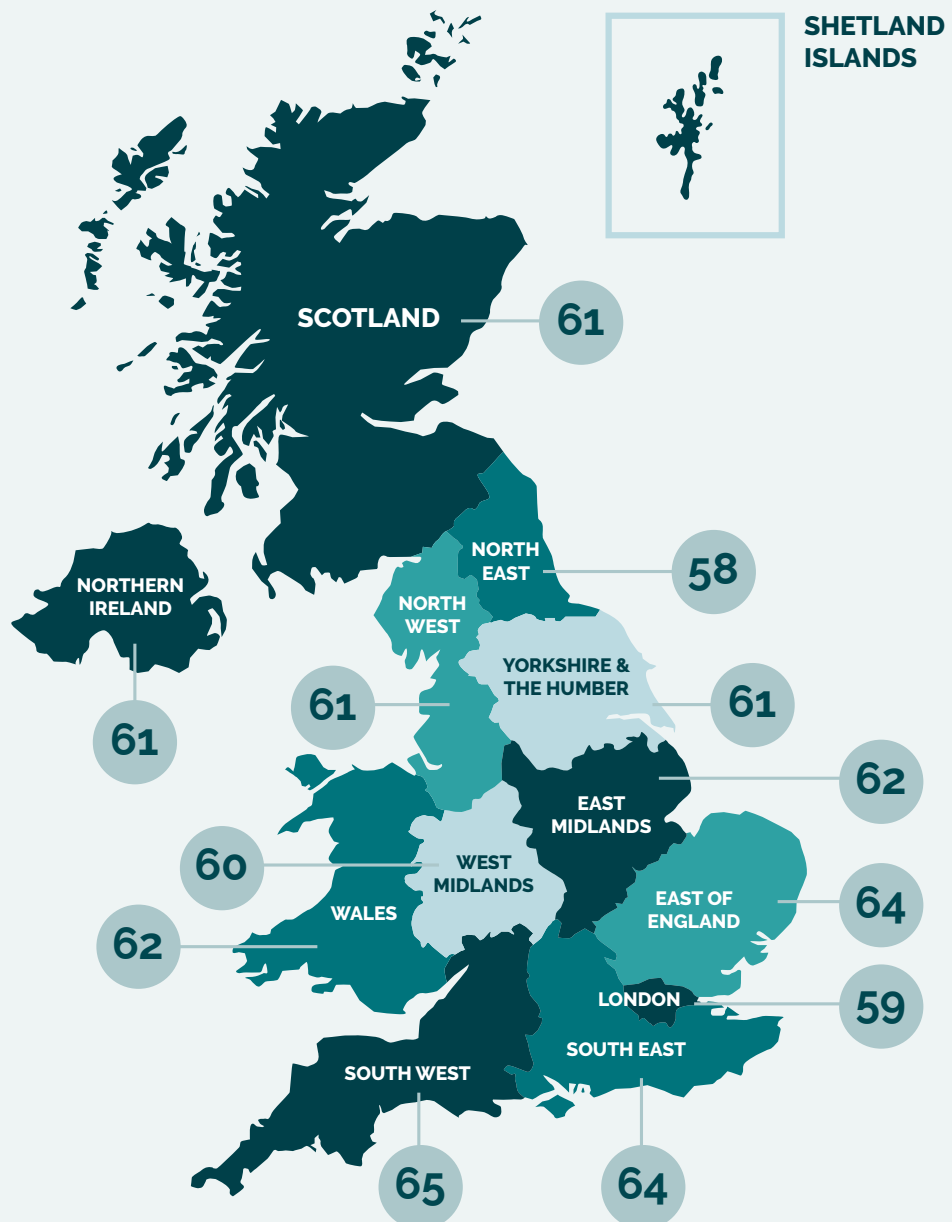
¹² 'Homeowner' refers to those who own their home outright or are buying on a mortgage.

¹³ In this research we have referenced the recommended UK Government list of ethnic groups. However, we recognise that standard ethnicity categories can be problematic. We welcome thoughts on how to improve practice in this area. We are producing a depth report on ethnicity to explore differences in more detail.

Chart 2: Collective wellbeing scores by region and jurisdiction



UK Total

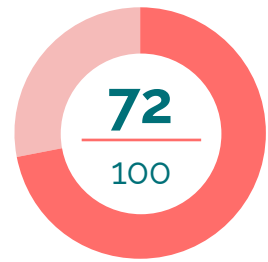


Social wellbeing >

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.

The UK scores 72 out of a possible 100 for social wellbeing.

The people most likely to experience high levels of social wellbeing are non-disabled, live in areas of affluence and are over 55 years of age. Being a homeowner, having a higher annual household income and identifying as belonging to White British ethnic group also lead to a higher collective wellbeing score. Living in a rural area and being male are also predictors of higher levels of social wellbeing, albeit less so than the demographic variables already listed. Disability has the largest negative impact on social wellbeing of all the socio-demographic characteristics we explored.



This is reflected in our findings of: >

1. A 13-point gap in the social wellbeing score between **disabled people** (63) and non-disabled people (76) (Chart 3).
2. An inverse linear relationship between **area deprivation** and social wellbeing: as deprivation decreases, social wellbeing increases. The social wellbeing score for those living in the most deprived areas is 66 compared to 77 in the least deprived areas (an 11-point gap) (Chart 8).
3. A linear relationship between **age** and social wellbeing; as age increases so do the wellbeing scores (Chart 4). The social wellbeing score for 16 to 34 year olds is 68 compared with 76 for those aged 55 and over (an 8-point gap) (Chart 4).
4. A 6-point gap in the social wellbeing score between social housing **tenants** (62) and private tenants (68) and a larger gap between tenants of both types and homeowners (75) (Chart 6).
5. A linear relationship between social wellbeing and household income: as **household income** increases so do social wellbeing scores. The social wellbeing score for those on the lowest incomes (up to £25,999) is 68 compared to 76 for those with household incomes of £52,000 and over (an 8-point gap) (Chart 5).
6. A gap in the social wellbeing scores between people from Asian (65), Black (67), 'Other' (68) and minority White (70) **ethnic groups** compared to those from the White British ethnic group (74) (Chart 10).
7. A 6-point gap in the social wellbeing score between those living in **urban** areas (71) and those in rural areas (77) (Chart 9).
8. A 3-point gap in the social wellbeing score between **men** (74) and **women** (71).

Chart 3: Wellbeing domain scores by disability (see Appendix 1 for full scores)

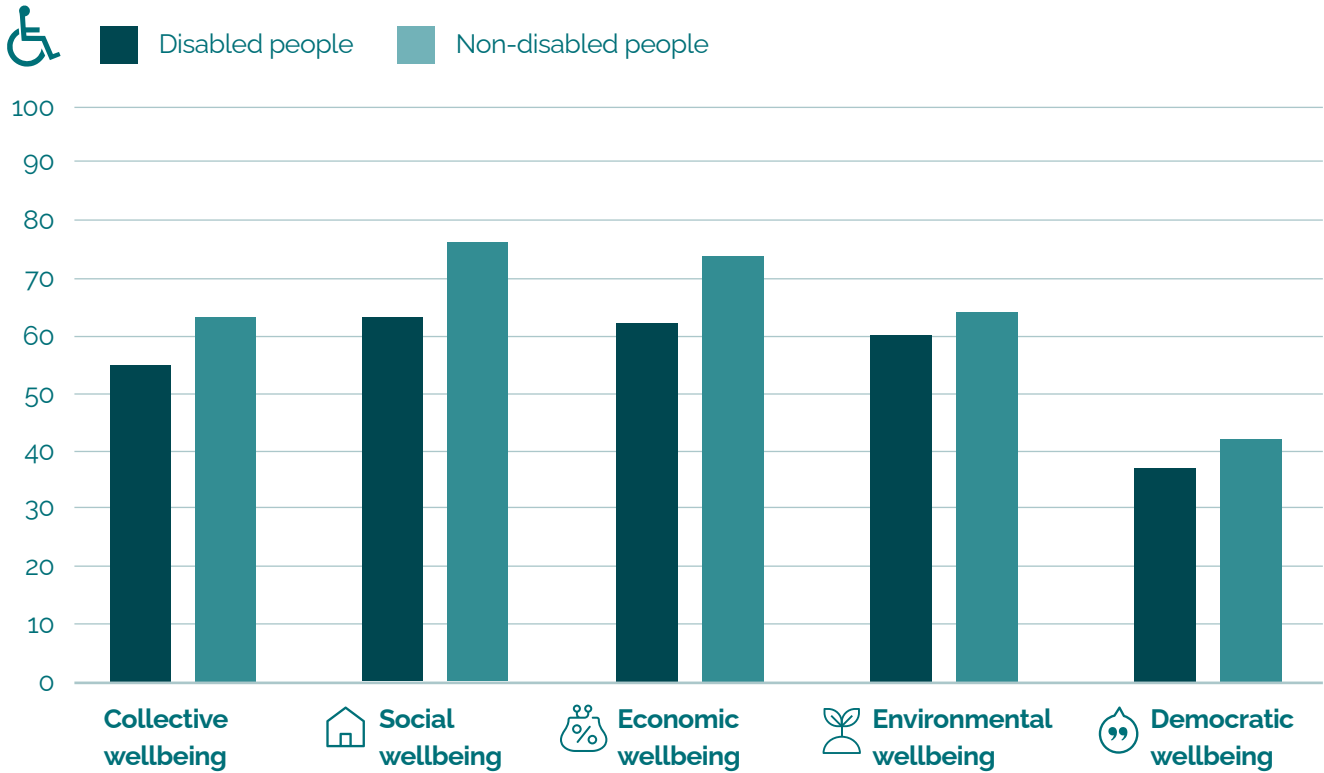
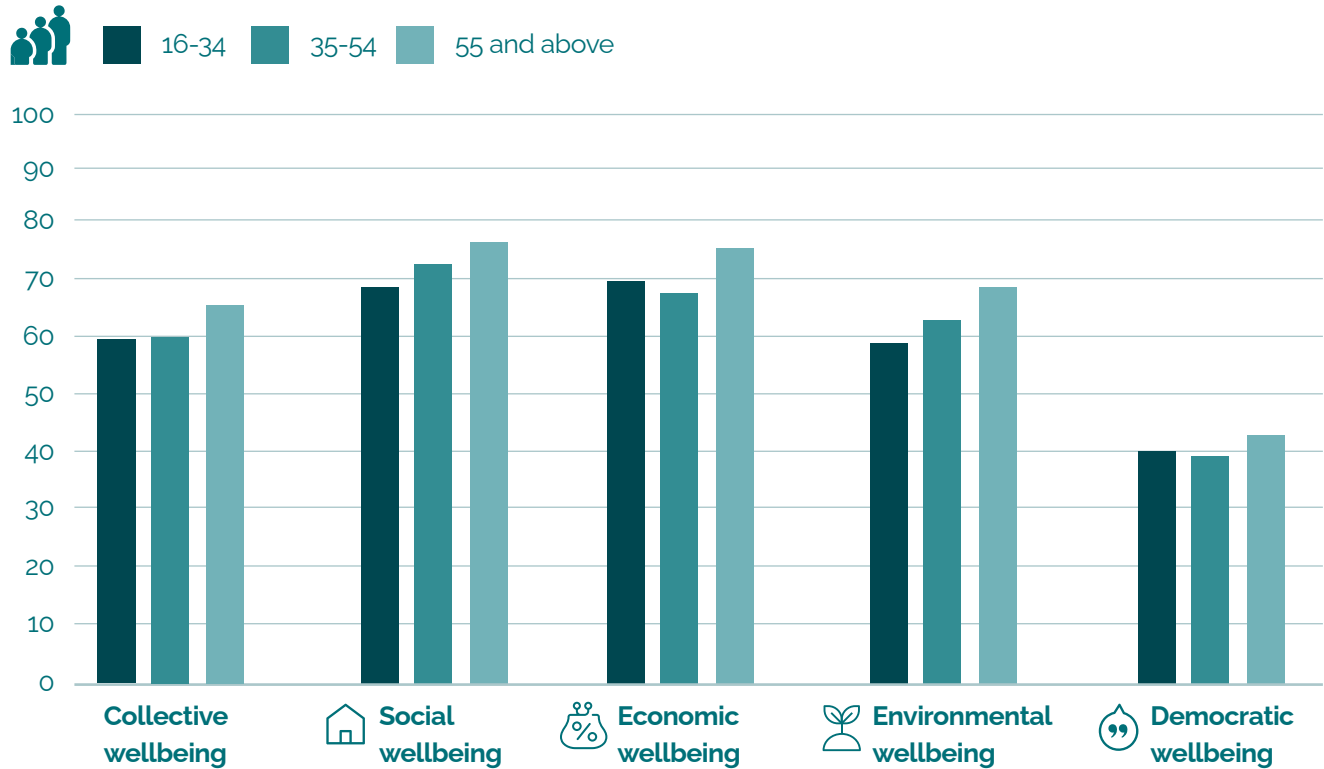


Chart 4: Wellbeing domain scores by age¹⁴ (see Appendix 1 for full scores)



¹⁴ 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 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.



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.

Overall, the UK scores 71 out of a possible 100 for economic wellbeing. As with social wellbeing, there are particular groups of people who are more likely to have high or low economic wellbeing scores.

Analysis reveals that those most likely to experience high levels of economic wellbeing are those with higher household incomes, homeowners and those without children in the household. (The more children in the household, the worse the economic wellbeing score.) The next most relevant predictors of a higher wellbeing score are being non-disabled, living in areas of affluence and being over 55 years old.



This is reflected in findings of: >

1. A linear relationship between **annual household income** and economic wellbeing (as household income increases, so do the economic wellbeing scores) up to £52,000-£99,999, above which it plateaus. The economic wellbeing score for the lowest income group is 60 compared to 82 in the top income group (a 22-point gap) (Chart 5).
2. A 23-point gap between the economic wellbeing score of social housing **tenants** (52) and homeowners (75) (Chart 6).
3. A 7-point gap between the economic wellbeing score of those who have **children** (65) and those who have no children (72) (Chart 7).
4. An 11-point gap between **disabled people** (62) and non-disabled people (73) (Chart 3).
5. An inverse linear relationship between **area deprivation** and economic wellbeing: as deprivation decreases, economic wellbeing scores increases. The economic wellbeing score for those living in the most deprived areas is 61 compared to 78 in the least deprived areas (a 17-point gap) (Chart 8).
6. A divide between the economic wellbeing scores of those **aged 16 to 54** on the one hand, and those aged 55 and over on the other. Scores are: 69 for those aged 16 to 34 years old and 67 for those aged 35 to 54, compared to 75 for those aged 55 and over (Chart 4).

Chart 5: Wellbeing domain scores by household income (see Appendix 1 for full scores)

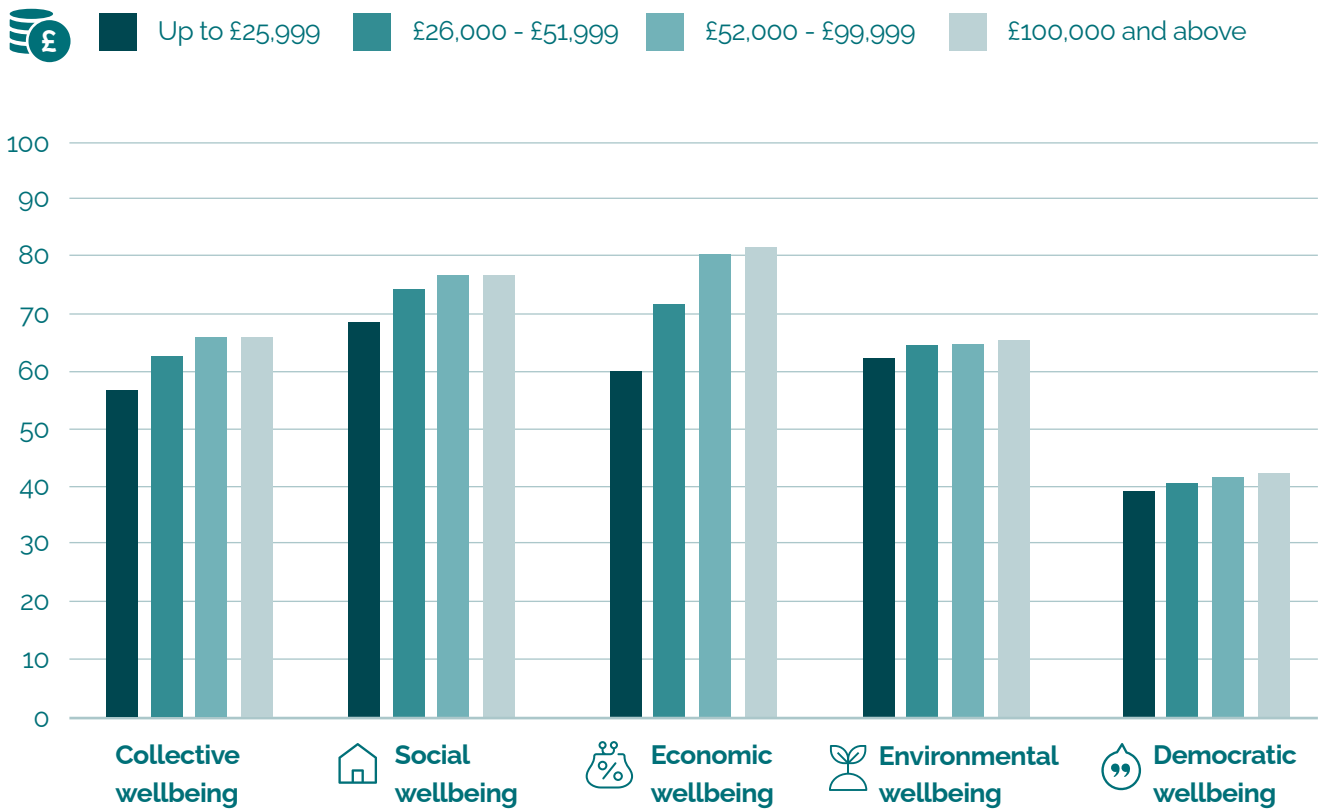


Chart 6: Wellbeing domain scores by housing tenure (see Appendix 1 for full scores)

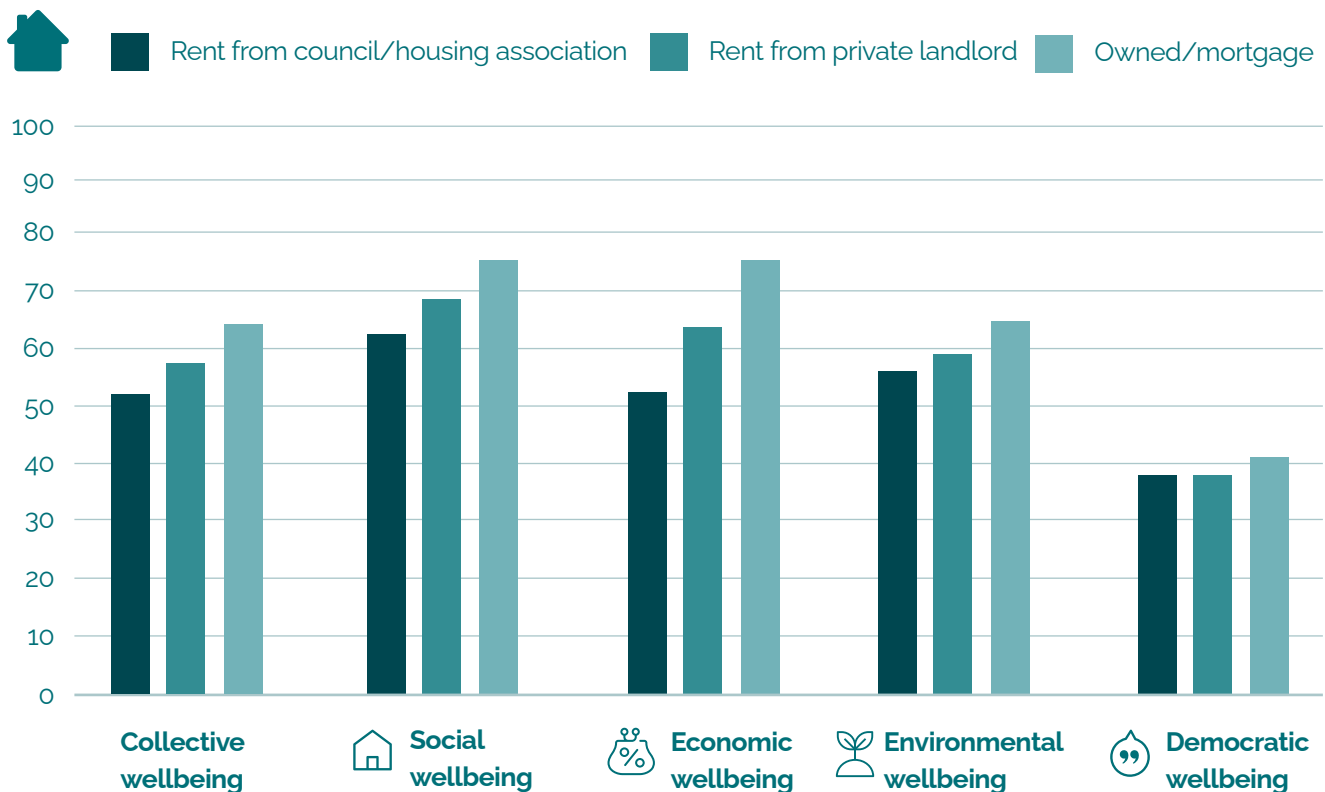
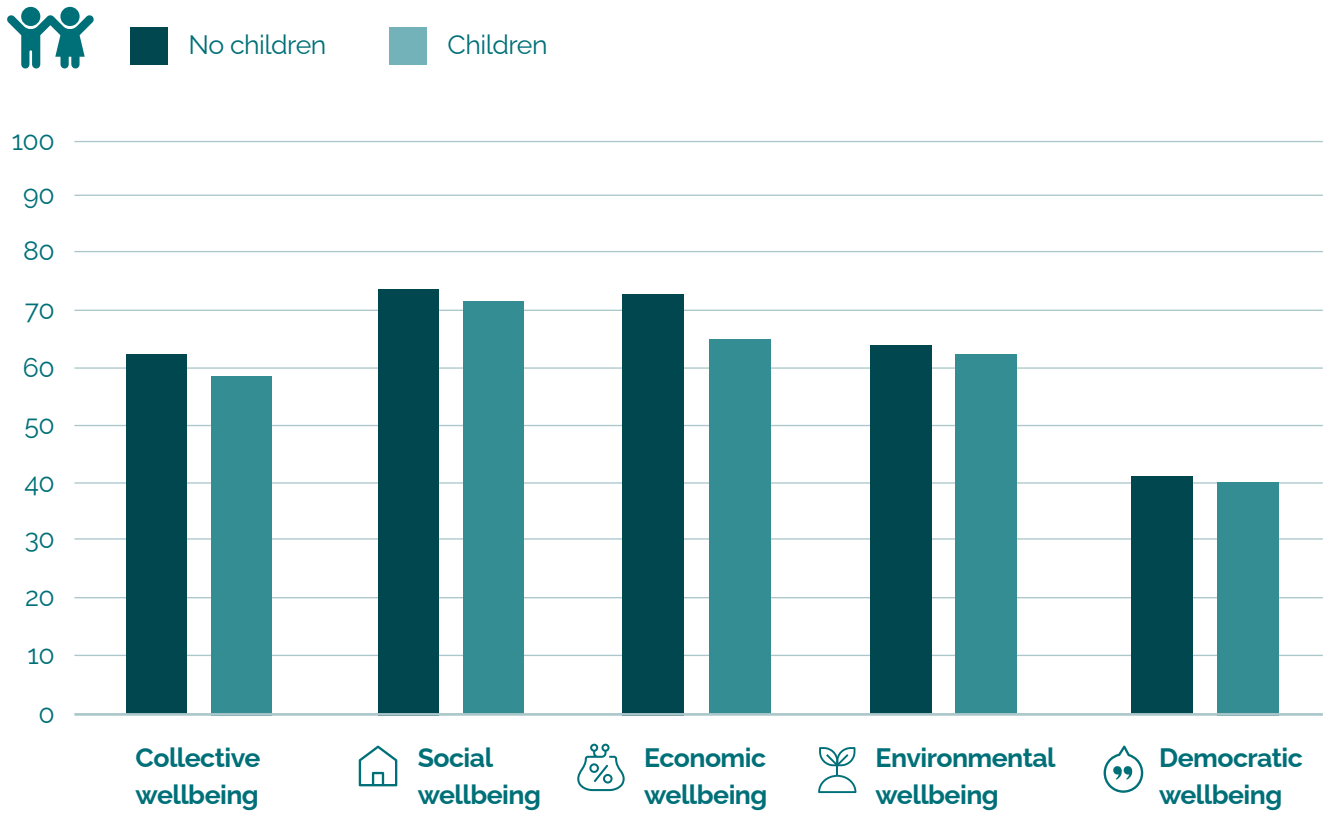


Chart 7: Wellbeing domain scores by children in the household (see Appendix 1 for full scores)



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.

The UK scores 63 out of a possible 100 for environmental wellbeing. England scores lower on environmental wellbeing than Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (63 compared to 65, 66 and 67 respectively).



Analysis shows that the demographic groups most likely to experience high levels of environmental wellbeing are those who live in more affluent areas, those living in rural areas and those aged over 55. Other relevant predictors are being non-disabled, being a homeowner and identifying as belonging to the White British ethnic group.

This is reflected in our findings of: >

1. An inverse linear relationship between environmental wellbeing and **area deprivation**: as deprivation decreases, environmental wellbeing scores increases. The environmental wellbeing score for those living in the most deprived areas is 56 compared to 69 in the least deprived areas. (A 13-point gap) (Chart 8).
2. A 10-point gap in environmental wellbeing scores between those living in **urban** areas (62) and those in rural areas (72) (Chart 9).
3. A linear relationship between **age** and environmental wellbeing: as age increases so do environmental wellbeing scores. The environmental wellbeing scores for those aged 16 to 34 is 58, and for those aged 55 and over it is 68 (a 10-point gap) (Chart 4).
4. A 7-point gap in environmental wellbeing scores between those who **rent** (an average score of 58 for those who rent privately or are renting social housing) and those who own their homes (65) (Chart 6).
5. A gap in environmental wellbeing scores between people from Asian (55), minority White (57) and Black (58) **ethnic groups**, people with mixed ethnic backgrounds (57) and people who identify as belonging to 'Other' ethnicities (59) compared to people from the White British ethnic group (65) (Chart 10).
6. A 4-point gap in environmental wellbeing scores between **disabled people** (60) and non-disabled people (64) (Chart 3).

Chart 8: Wellbeing domain scores by area deprivation (see Appendix 1 for full scores)



Chart 9: Wellbeing domain scores by rurality (see Appendix 1 for full scores)

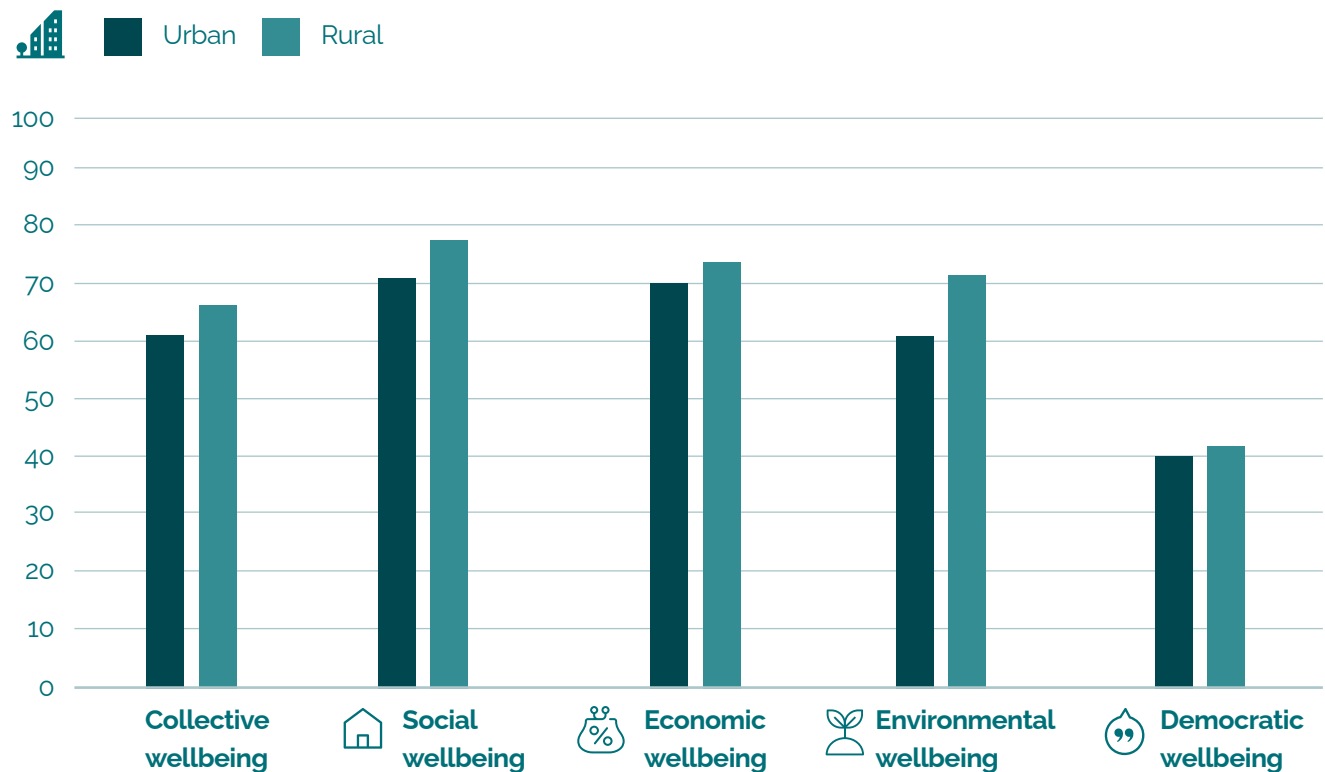
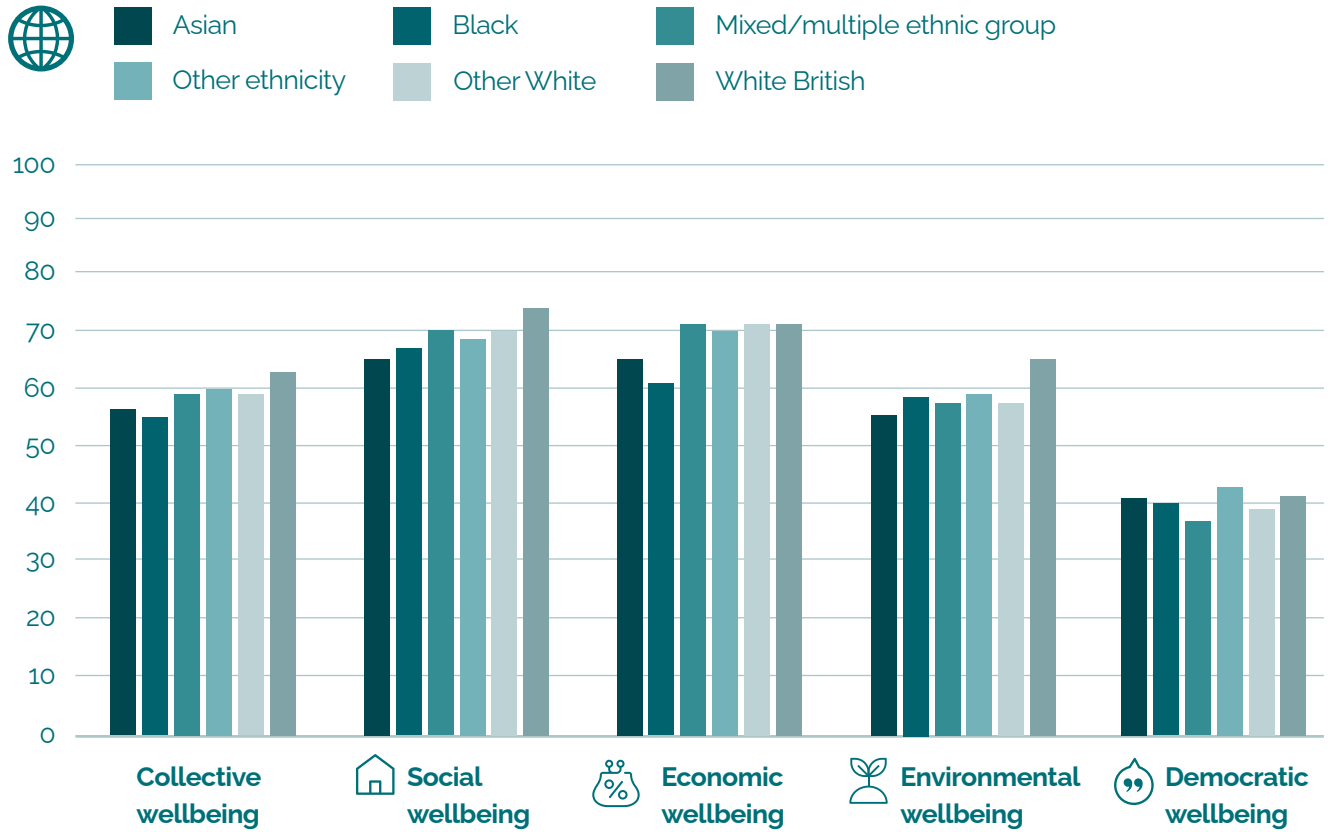


Chart 10: Wellbeing domain scores by ethnicity (see Appendix 1 for full scores)



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.

The UK scores 41 out of a possible 100 for democratic wellbeing, Northern Ireland reports lower democratic wellbeing scores than England, Scotland and Wales (36 compared to 39, 39 and 41). The democratic wellbeing score is the lowest of all wellbeing domains.



Low scores for democratic wellbeing were common across the population. Analysis shows that demographic variables explain less of the variation between people's democratic wellbeing score compared with other wellbeing domains. This reflects that there are wider issues influencing respondents' democratic wellbeing (for example, trust and influence) that go beyond core demographic characteristics.

Nevertheless, analysis shows that older people, those with higher annual household incomes or those who live in areas of affluence are most likely to have higher democratic wellbeing scores. Meanwhile, disabled people or people living in Northern Ireland are most likely to have lower democratic wellbeing scores.

This is reflected in our findings of: >

1. A 5-point-gap between the democratic wellbeing score for **disabled people** compared with non-disabled people (37 compared with 42) (Chart 3).
2. A 3-point gap between the democratic wellbeing score of those aged 16 to 54 (an average score of 40) and those **aged 55 and over** (43) (Chart 4).
3. A 4-point gap between the democratic wellbeing score of those with household **incomes** of up to £25,999 (39) and those with household **incomes** of over £100,000 and over (43) (Chart 5).
4. An inverse linear relationship between **area deprivation** and democratic wellbeing: as area deprivation decreases, democratic wellbeing scores increases. The democratic wellbeing score for those living in the most deprived areas is 38 compared to 42 in the least deprived areas (a 4-point gap) (Chart 8).

Wellbeing in detail

The Life in the UK index is built from a bespoke survey delivered by Ipsos which includes 26 core questions on wellbeing, across the four domains of wellbeing.¹⁵

The data is presented here in the form of negative responses to the questions; this provides an overview of the proportion of people across the UK who are not experiencing wellbeing in these areas of their lives. Further briefings will be issued to provide deeper insight into inequalities issues.



¹⁵ We also captured data on experiences of trust and influence for the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Assembly. This data is presented in the narrative in the jurisdiction reports but not in the overall domain score as it is not comparable across the UK.



Social

- **28%** feel unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark
- **16%** don't have anyone to rely on in their neighbourhood
- **40%** have experienced discrimination over the past year
- **10%** have bad or very bad mental health
- **7%** have bad or very bad general health
- **5%** find it difficult to access a grocery store or supermarket in person



Economic

- **30%** can't afford an unexpected expense of £850
- **23%** are dissatisfied with the job opportunities in their local area
- **22%** can't afford to go on holiday away from home
- **17%** can't afford to keep their home warm
- **11%** can't afford to socialise with friends or family outside of the home once a month if desired
- **7%** are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their education and skills
- **6%** can't afford enough food for their household



Environmental

- Most people experience issues with litter (**80%**), noise (**60%**) and air quality (**51%**) in their local neighbourhood
- **45%** are dissatisfied with current efforts to preserve the environment
- **12%** are dissatisfied with the quality of the local green or open space nearest their home



Democratic

- **73%** feel that they cannot influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole
- **56%** feel that they are unable to influence decisions at a local level
- **52%** have low levels of trust in the UK Government
- **38%** have low levels of trust in news media
- **26%** have low levels of trust in local councils
- **19%** have low levels of trust in the police
- **17%** have low levels of trust in banks
- **16%** have low levels of trust in the legal system and courts

Key messages from the first Life in the UK index

The need for governments to measure and report on what really matters

The data we've gathered clearly shows that we are not yet living well together in the UK. It also provides yet more evidence that if governments prioritise the measurement (and improvement) of economic production - GDP - over other indicators then they are missing critical information about citizens' lives which also ought to inform policy and spending choices.

This matters more than ever right now because the issues affecting our collective wellbeing require policy makers to put aside their default mode of short-termism and to lead by putting in place wide-ranging strategies for the long term.

Some places have already started to do this, for example by passing legislation that creates a statutory requirement for governments to embed foresight in practice, and to report on long-term societal wellbeing indicators beyond election cycles. This is already in place in countries such as New Zealand, France and Wales.

The UK Government must take a similar approach to understanding and delivering on wellbeing – one which understands and acts to improve our lives in the round.



The need for a more equitable society

Recommendation 1

Current and future governments across the UK (national, devolved and local) must act to reduce the wellbeing gaps between socio-economic groups identified by Life in the UK.

The collective wellbeing score for 2023 is 62 out of a possible 100. It is tempting to read this as a 'could do better' score. But our analysis shows that underneath this figure, inequality is rife. Disabled people, those living in more deprived areas, those with lower annual household incomes and social housing tenants experience lower collective wellbeing scores.

Aside from democratic wellbeing (where there is a high level of consistency across groups), these differences are not small. The economic wellbeing gap between the lowest income group and the highest is at 22 points. The environmental wellbeing gap between those living in the most deprived areas and the least deprived is 23 points.

By reflecting the totality of inequality back to us, the Life in the UK index provides us with a richer and more meaningful picture of how we are doing than other single measures such as GDP or dashboards of official statistics.

Social mobility is fragile as family background continues to impact earning potential, educational opportunities and health.¹⁶ Institutional and cultural racism means ethnicity also plays a significant role in health services, housing, education, justice, employment and many day-to-day experiences with impacts on physical and mental health.¹⁷

A society where everyone has equal access to collective wellbeing would benefit everyone.

Narrowing the wellbeing gap between demographic groups is essential for our collective wellbeing. Governments across the UK must do better.

¹⁶ Social Mobility Commission, 2022. State of the Nation 2022: A fresh approach to social mobility. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2022-a-fresh-approach-to-social-mobility>

¹⁷ For example, on race and the workforce see: TUC, 2022. Still rigged: racism in the UK labour market. Accessible at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/RacismintheUKlabourmarket.pdf> TUC and Carnegie UK, Operation Black Vote and Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2020. Race Inequality in the Workforce. Available at: <https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/>

The need for a renewed focus on quality of life and sustainability

Recommendation 2

The UK Government must legislate to protect the wellbeing of future and current generations and require wellbeing outcomes and indicators to be meaningfully incorporated into priority setting and budgets.

The Life in the UK data shows a clear linear relationship between age and each of the domains of wellbeing. Younger people experience worse social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing than older people.

We can identify a range of issues driving lower wellbeing scores for younger people.

- Neither work nor welfare is providing young people with economic security. Wages have been stalling since 2008,¹⁸ affecting younger cohorts the most, and the relative value of working age benefits has fallen.¹⁹
- National Insurance rises combined with frozen tax brackets (in a period of high inflation) and freezing the student debt repayment threshold hit the younger generation hardest.²⁰
- The percentage of younger people owning a home has declined since 2003. This is in stark contrast to the steady rate of ownership by the over-55s and increase in ownership by the over-65s.²¹

While these issues are framed in terms of economics, they have profound impacts on other domains of wellbeing. Polling undertaken for Carnegie UK by YouGov in February 2023 found that many people across the UK can't afford to spend time with friends and family, or to exercise freedom of choice about where and how they spend their time. Money, in short, is an enabler for many things, including social connection and choice.

Given their experience, it is perhaps unsurprising that those aged 18 to 24 in the UK are the least likely to say democracy serves them well (just 19% say it operates well against 55% who say badly) and are less likely to both be registered to vote and to vote.²²

Narrowing the wellbeing gap between different age groups should be a political priority for governments across the UK.

¹⁸ Resolution Foundation, 2023. Wages are flatlining • Resolution Foundation Accessible at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/wages-are-flatlining/>

¹⁹ RSA, 2022. The cost of independence: young people's economic security. Accessible at: <https://www.thersa.org/>

²⁰ Intergenerational Foundation, 2022. Packhorse Generation. Accessed at: [if.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Packhorse_Generation-the-new-tax-burdens-forced-on-young-people-by-inflation_FINAL2.pdf](https://www.if.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Packhorse_Generation-the-new-tax-burdens-forced-on-young-people-by-inflation_FINAL2.pdf)

²¹ Intergenerational Foundation, 2021. Stockpiling Space. How the pandemic has increased housing inequalities. Accessible at: [Stockpiling-Space-How-the-pandemic-has-increased-housing-inequalities_FINAL.pdf](https://www.if.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Stockpiling-Space-How-the-pandemic-has-increased-housing-inequalities_FINAL.pdf) (if.org.uk)

²² Electoral Commission Statistics from 2019 show that only 74% of 25-34-year-olds registered to vote and fewer still for younger age groups.

The need to strengthen democracy

Recommendation 3

Political parties and governments across the UK (national, devolved and local) must invest in fresh and sustained efforts to reverse the sense of alienation from local and national decision making and increase opportunities for meaningful participation.

The score for democratic wellbeing is substantially lower than all other wellbeing domain scores and brings down the overall collective wellbeing score for the UK considerably.

Given the pandemic, the health and social care crisis, the cost-of-living crisis and the climate crisis, it might seem surprising that democratic wellbeing scores are so much lower than the other wellbeing domains. But the democratic wellbeing score represents people's assessment of how government is responding to these crises. And on this assessment, most people have concluded that governments across the UK are failing.

Our findings reflect others that show low voter turnout. In 2022, just 6% of voters thought that their views influence decisions made by government ministers, and the majority of people felt that politicians did not understand the lives of "people like them".²³ Loss of trust in government has been a staple news item in relation to the behaviour of senior politicians and others in positions of responsibility during the Covid-19 pandemic.²⁴

For people to feel positive about participating in democratic processes and decision making, public trust in government is essential. But trust is earned, not a given.

It is essential that those in power work to build trust with the UK: a failure to address the root causes of discontent with the political system will threaten the foundations of democracy.

²³ IPPR, 2022. Road to Renewal: Elections, parties and the case for democratic reform. Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/publications/road-to-renewal>

²⁴ Financial Times, 2021. 'Partygate' strains trust in Boris Johnson's government. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/b50bc1cd-8de4-4a88-b444-c7f5913000c8>

➤ What next?

Life in the UK is a deep dataset that allows for insight across geographies and demographics. We will be publishing reports focussing on Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. We hope that the data will assist governments across the UK to focus attention on the things that really matter to people across the UK.

We will also be sharing briefings that present further data for demographics such as age and ethnicity. We are keen to hear from organisations that are advocating for communities of place and interest across the UK to discuss how our data can support their work.

We will be repeating Life in the UK in 2024 and 2025 and are looking forward to exploring how wellbeing is changing over time.



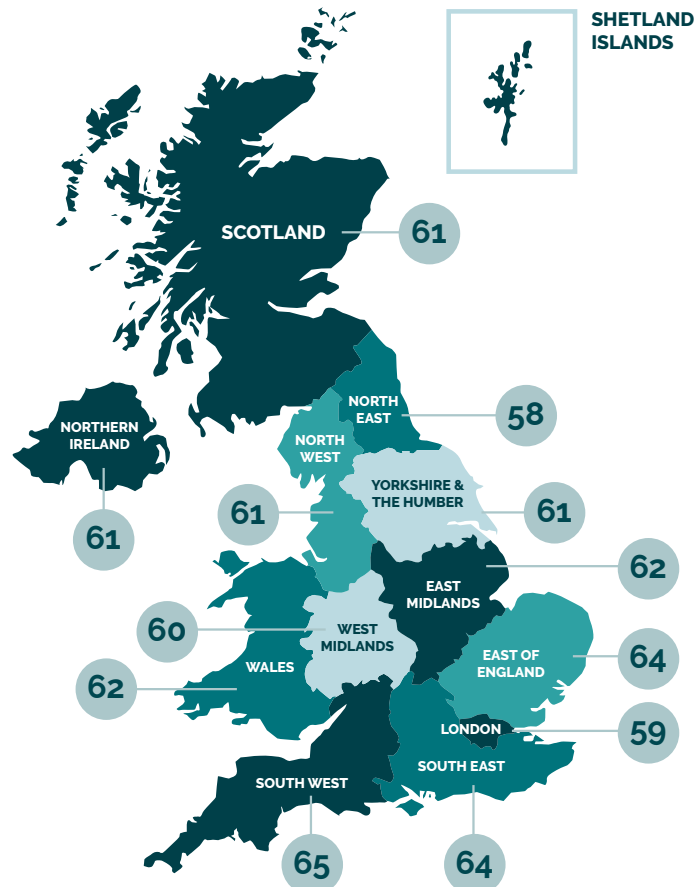
Appendix 1: Summary table of domain scores by key demographics

		Collective wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Environmental wellbeing	Democratic wellbeing
Total		62	72	71	63	41
Disability	Disabled people	55	63	62	60	37
	Non-disabled people	64	76	73	64	42
Age	16-34	59	68	69	58	40
	35-54	60	72	67	62	39
	55 and over	65	76	75	68	43
Household Income	£25,999 and under	57	68	60	62	39
	£26,000 to £51,999	63	74	72	64	41
	£52,000 to £99,999	66	76	80	64	42
	£100,000 and above	66	76	82	64	43
Area deprivation	1st quintile (highest deprivation)	55	66	61	56	38
	2nd quintile	59	70	68	60	40
	3rd quintile	63	74	71	65	41
	4th quintile	64	75	74	67	41
	5th quintile (lowest deprivation)	67	77	78	69	42
Housing	Social rented	52	62	52	56	38
	Private rented	57	68	64	59	38
	Homeowners	64	75	75	65	41
Gender	Women	61	71	69	63	41
	Men	63	74	72	64	41
Ethnicity	Asian	57	65	65	55	41
	Black	56	67	61	58	40
	Mixed/multiple ethnic group	59	70	71	57	37
	Other ethnicity	60	68	70	59	43
	Other White	59	70	71	57	39
	White British	63	74	71	65	41
Children	Children in household	59	71	65	62	40
	No children in household	62	73	72	64	41
Rurality	Urban	61	71	70	61	40
	Rural	66	77	74	71	42

Appendix 2: Summary table of domain scores by countries and regions

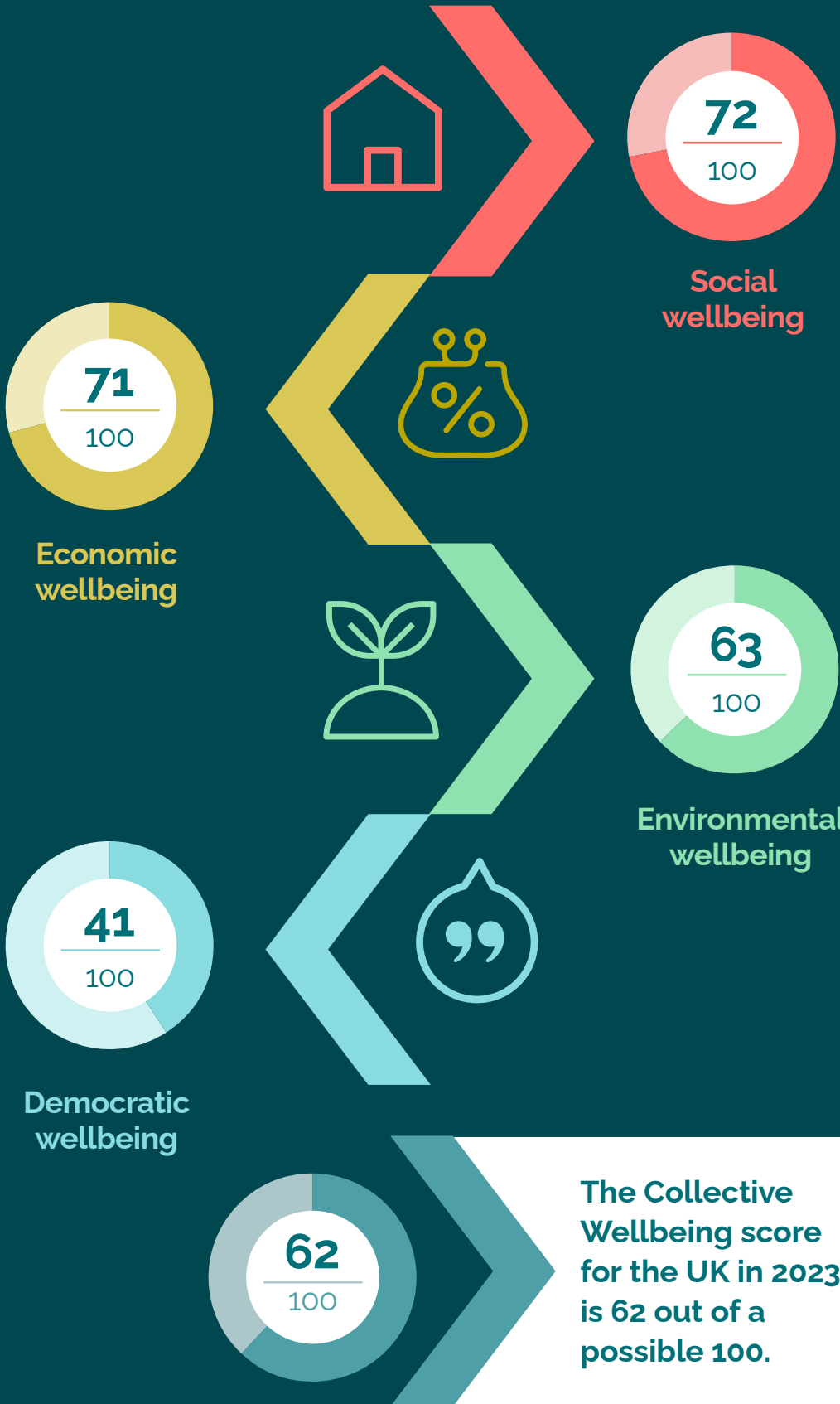
	Collective wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Environmental wellbeing	Democratic wellbeing
Total	62	71	71	63	41
North East	58	70	63	61	38
North West	61	71	69	61	41
Yorkshire and The Humber	61	71	70	64	39
East Midlands	62	72	71	65	41
West Midlands	60	71	68	61	40
East of England	64	73	73	67	42
South East	64	75	74	65	42
South West	65	76	74	68	42
London	59	70	71	55	41
England	62	72	71	63	41
Scotland	61	73	69	65	39
Wales	62	74	69	66	39
Northern Ireland	61	72	69	67	36

UK Total



Our Collective Wellbeing in 2023

Scoring summary



The Collective Wellbeing score for the UK in 2023 is 62 out of a possible 100.

Life in the UK



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