

Life in the UK 2024

Northern
Ireland



Creating the Life in the UK Index

Carnegie UK's Life in the UK wellbeing index measures collective wellbeing across the UK. It is based on what people in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland tell us about their lives. The purpose of this index is to help governments across the UK focus their attention on the things that really matter to people, and to help us understand whether we are collectively living better or worse over time. The index will also help identify where progress is being made and the areas of our lives that require policy intervention.

The evidence for the 2024 index was collected via a 26-question survey of 6,774 respondents using [Ipsos' KnowledgePanel](#), a random probability survey panel with selection based on a random sample of UK households. The fieldwork was carried out between 9th and 15th May 2024, ahead of the announcement of the 2024 General Election.

This report provides an overview of findings based on the 716 respondents living in Northern Ireland. Reports that provide an overview of the overall [UK](#) findings, and the findings for [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#) are available to read on the Carnegie UK website. The overall collective wellbeing index score and the wellbeing domain scores have a value of between 0 and 100.

- The collective wellbeing scores, domain scores, and individual questions were all analysed to compare aspects of life for different groups of people in different parts of the UK.
- Regression analysis was used to help understand which demographic characteristics are most associated with both collective wellbeing overall, and with social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing specifically. We have used this analysis to structure the discussion of the demographic characteristics impacting on wellbeing throughout this report.

Carnegie UK and Ipsos designed, developed and analysed the Life in the UK index in partnership. More information on the methodology used to create the index and the full technical report are available [here](#).

Carnegie UK is committed to following the principles of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) in the production of our Life in the UK index. We outline how we adhere to these principles in our [Voluntary Statement of Compliance](#).

Carnegie UK works to put wellbeing at the heart of decision making. This report provides an independent and authoritative overview of collective wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024. We hope it makes the case for better measures of social progress and highlights where policy intervention is urgently required.

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Introduction: Life in the UK - Northern Ireland 2024

The Life in the UK index now provides two years of evidence about what life is like for people living in Northern Ireland. Out of a possible score of 100, Northern Ireland's collective wellbeing in 2024 was just 60. This score has shown no significant change since our inaugural publication of this index in 2023¹.

This year's index findings tell us that the collective wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland is stagnant, much like the rest of the UK. This stasis in living standards is driven by persistent and entrenched inequality across the four core domains of social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing.

It has been a significant year for democracy in Northern Ireland with the return of the Northern Ireland Executive after two years of absence, and a UK general election. This aligns with the evidence in our 2024 Life in the UK index, with people reporting a small improvement in trust in the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly members.

However, this modest improvement should not be taken for granted. **Democratic wellbeing remains critically low, and once again attracts the lowest scores across the four domains of collective wellbeing.** This is largely shaped by a growing sense that people feel unable to influence decision making in Northern Ireland and across the UK.

In nearly all areas that we measured, income inequality is the single biggest driver of low wellbeing. Our data also highlights the impact of factors such as disability, age, and community background on people's wellbeing scores.

Despite the multiple challenges facing decision makers in Northern Ireland, there is cause for hope. **The Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027² is ambitious and represents a significant opportunity to reconnect the work of the Northern Ireland Executive with the priorities of the people they seek to serve.** The Executive should be commended for its ambition to embed an outcomes-based and mission-led approach, monitored using a wellbeing dashboard.

Coherent and effective leadership is now needed to enact this vision. From Carnegie UK's legacy work with Community Planning Partnerships in Northern Ireland³, we know that there is rich learning about shared leadership and coproduction for decision makers to build upon.

At Carnegie UK we have worked for more than 100 years to help improve the wellbeing of people across the UK and Ireland. We believe in the power of evidence based public policy to improve people's lives. **We hope that this report can provide inspiration and ideas for policy makers in Northern Ireland as we continue our efforts to ensure we can all live well together now and into the future.**



Sarah Davidson
CEO, Carnegie UK

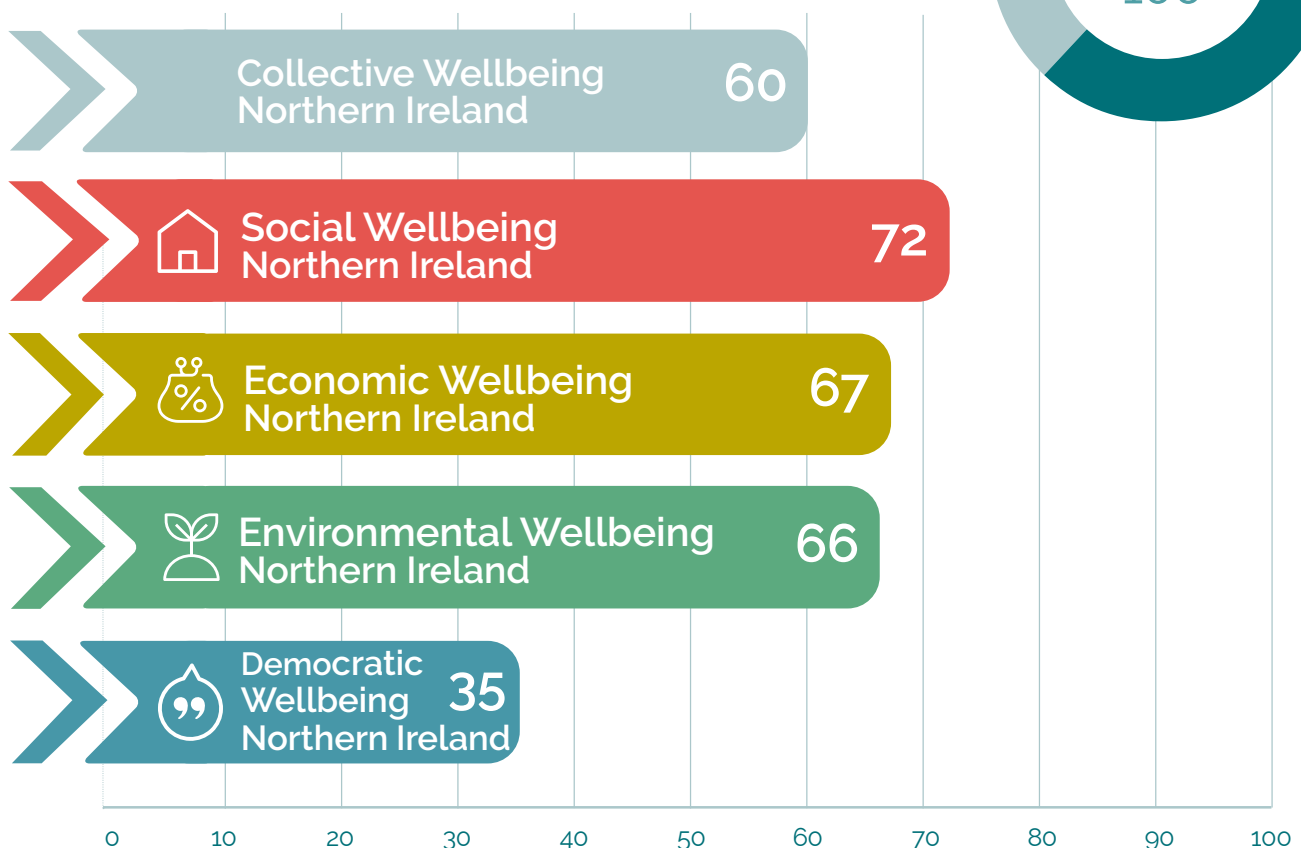
Collective wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2024

The story of life in Northern Ireland in 2024 is one of stagnant wellbeing⁴. Like the other jurisdictions of the UK, Northern Ireland has seen no improvement in wellbeing scores between 2023 and 2024. Northern Ireland is the jurisdiction in the UK with the lowest democratic wellbeing. **After two years of absence, the Northern Ireland Executive has a significant task ahead of it.** It is evident that people are experiencing democratic alienation. They feel unable to influence UK decision making, as well as the decisions made about their lives closer to home in Northern Ireland. Meanwhile, public services have continued to tackle the ongoing consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living emergency without the political and administrative leadership of a fully functioning government until earlier in 2024.

The evidence in this report underlines the scale of the challenge. However, the return of the Northern Ireland Executive and the election of a new UK government present an opportunity for new policies and ways of governing that deliver change for those who most need it. Now is the time to tackle the multiple and systemic threats to collective wellbeing evidenced in the 2024 collective wellbeing scores. The Northern Ireland Executive's proposed three-year Draft Programme for Government was published in September 2024. It sets out a longer-term framework and notably includes several missions that identify the government's ambitions for the remainder of the term. Broadly, these missions (People, Planet, Prosperity) and the cross-cutting commitment to "Peace" match the four domains of collective wellbeing.

Overview of scores

The overall score for collective wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024 is **60** out of a possible 100.





Understanding what influences collective wellbeing in Northern Ireland

People's experiences of life in Northern Ireland vary substantially according to a range of important factors, highlighting the reality of inequality between people and communities in Northern Ireland.

The following four factors stand out as particularly significant in predicting a lower or higher collective wellbeing score for people living in Northern Ireland >

- **People living with a disability** in Northern Ireland have an average collective wellbeing score of 54, which is nine points lower than for people without a disability (63).
- **Household income** is strongly associated with overall collective wellbeing in Northern Ireland. People with an annual household income below £26,000 have a collective wellbeing score of 55. This is nine points lower than the score of people earning £26,000 and above, who have a collective wellbeing score of 64.
- **People aged 16 to 34** have a collective wellbeing score of 55. This is ten points lower than the collective wellbeing score of people aged 55 and over (65).
- People from a **Catholic community background** have a collective wellbeing score of 58. This is five points lower than those from Protestant community backgrounds (63).

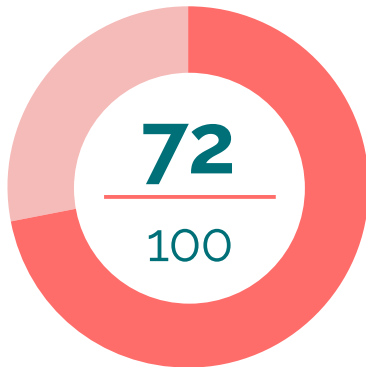


Social wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024

We all have the support and services we need to thrive.

72

100



Northern Ireland scores 72 out of a possible 100 for social wellbeing. This is the same score as reported in 2023.

Social wellbeing is about everyone being able to achieve their potential and contribute to society because they have their basic needs met. Our basic needs include having access to health and social care, education, housing, transport, digital resources and childcare.

To determine trends in social wellbeing across Northern Ireland, we asked questions about access to public services, community relationships, safety and community cohesion, and self-reported health and mental health.

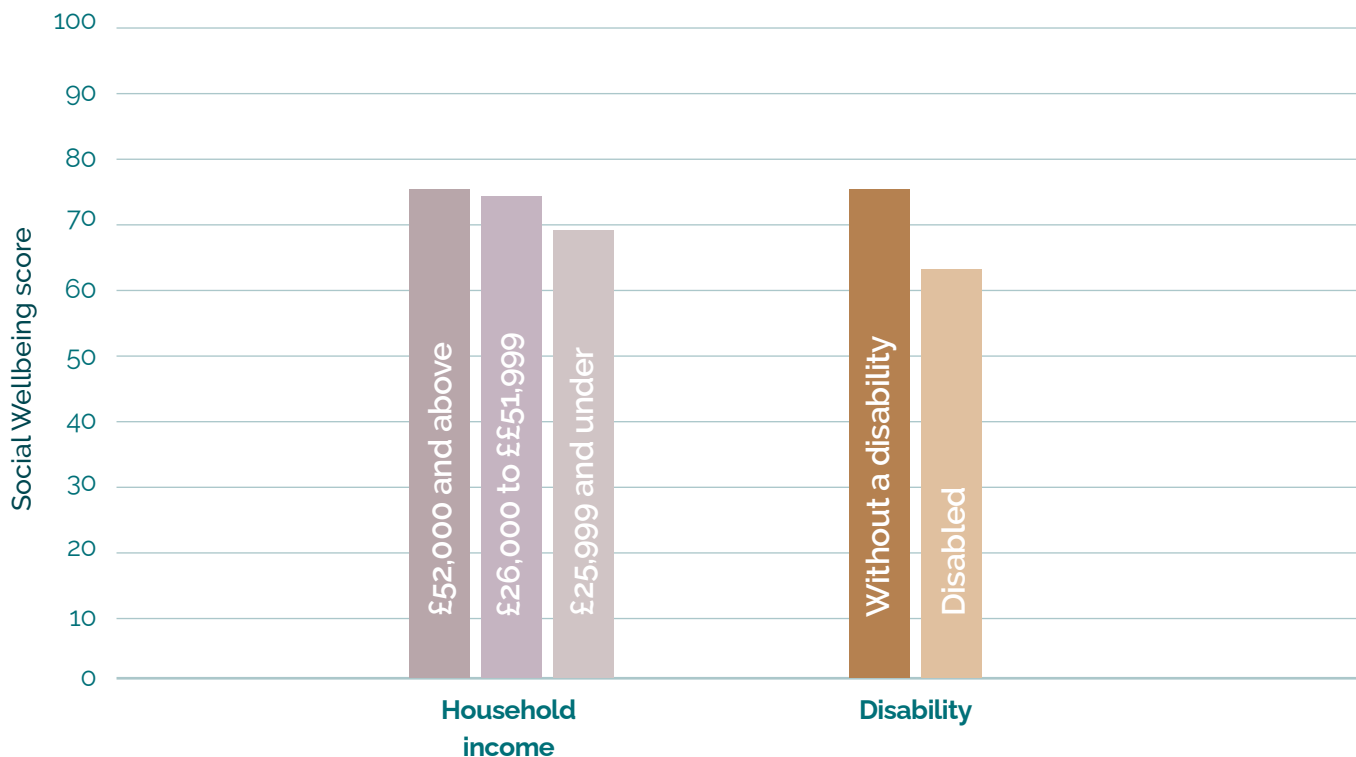
The group most likely to experience high levels of social wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024 are >

- **Middle and higher earners** - household income is strongly associated with social wellbeing in Northern Ireland. People with an income above £26,000 have a social wellbeing score of 76, seven points higher than those earning £26,000 or less (69).

The group most likely to experience low levels of social wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024 are >

- **Disabled people** - people living with a disability in Northern Ireland have an average social wellbeing score of 63, 14 points lower than for people without a disability (77).

People most likely to experience high and low levels of social wellbeing in Northern Ireland



Social wellbeing - standout statistics

- **66%** find it difficult to get a GP appointment at a time when they need one.
- **44%** have experienced discrimination over the past year.
- **21%** feel unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark.
- **14%** don't have anyone to rely on in their neighbourhood.
- **14%** have bad or very bad mental health.



Carnegie UK observations

The “People” mission in the 2024 Programme for Government sets an ambition to support everyone to succeed at all stages of their lives by improving access to opportunities. This mission closely aligns with Carnegie UK’s vision of social wellbeing.

The Northern Ireland Executive has identified several cross-cutting priority policy areas that will support the delivery of this mission. As the Life in the UK evidence demonstrates, the priorities outlined around safer communities, delivering more affordable childcare, cutting waiting times, providing better support for children and young people with special educational needs, and providing more social, affordable and sustainable housing will be critical to achieving this mission and in turn improving social wellbeing in the years ahead.

During the Northern Ireland Executive’s two-year absence, public services, already facing a tide of budgetary pressures and strain in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and amidst the cost-of-living crisis, deteriorated further⁵. This is reflected in the Life in the UK evidence. Notably, 66% of people in Northern Ireland find it difficult to get a GP appointment at a time when they need one (compared to 52% in England, 48% in Scotland and 49% in Wales). This must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Wellbeing cannot flourish when there is inequality between people and communities. **The stark differences in wellbeing scores based on protected characteristics such as disability, alongside the fact that 44% of people report that they have experienced discrimination in the last year, highlight that there is still a long way to go to make equality a reality in Northern Ireland.** The cross-cutting priority around better support for children and young people with special educational needs is a welcome start – but our evidence tells us that more must be done to address the identified wellbeing gaps.

Effective implementation of the Northern Ireland Executive’s new approach and delivery of the “People” mission could support a fundamental shift in government culture and practice and in the delivery of public services. A wellbeing approach offers the potential to tackle structural challenges and to define a new concept of public value to guide immediate and long-term decision making⁶. If successful, we would expect to see significant improvement in social wellbeing scores (and indeed the other domain scores) over the next few years.

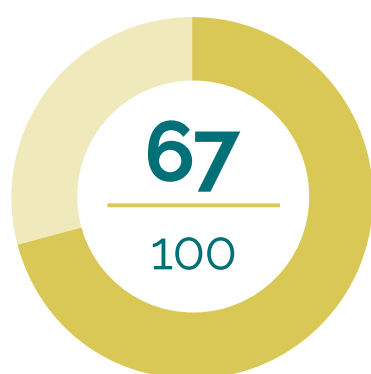


Economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024

We all have a decent minimum living standard.

67

100



Northern Ireland scores 67 out of a possible 100 for economic wellbeing.

Economic wellbeing means that everyone has a decent minimum living standard and can absorb financial shocks. This includes access to a decent income, affordability, financial resilience, job opportunities and skills.

To determine trends in economic wellbeing across Northern Ireland, we asked questions about skills and job availability, and the affordability of essential items like food and fuel.

The groups most likely to experience **high** levels of economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024 are >

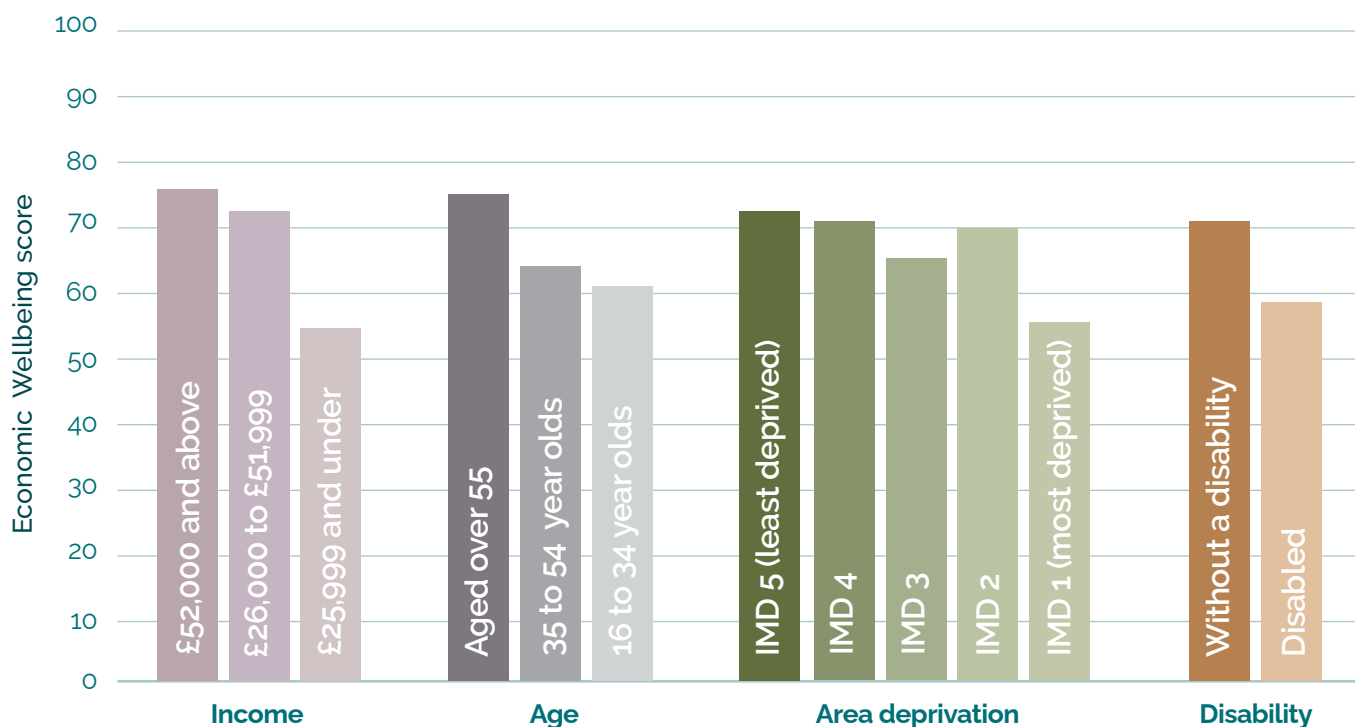
- **People with a middle and high household income** (above £52,000), who have an average economic wellbeing score of 76. This is four points higher than people with an income between £26,000 and £51,999 (72), and 21 points higher than people earning up to £25,999 (55).
- **People aged 55 and over**, who have an economic wellbeing score of 75. This is 14 points higher than the economic wellbeing score of 16 to 34 year-olds (61) and eleven points higher than the economic wellbeing score of 35 to 54 year-olds (64).

The groups most likely to experience **low** levels of economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024 are >

- **People living in Northern Ireland's most deprived areas (IMD1*)**, who have an economic wellbeing score (56) which is 14 points lower than people living in all other areas (70). (IMD 2 - 70, IMD 3 - 66, IMD4 - 71 and IMD 5 - 72).
- **Disabled people** - people living with a disability in Northern Ireland have an average economic wellbeing score of 59, 12 points lower than for people without a disability (71).

* The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) measures relative deprivation across the UK. Areas are ranked from the most deprived area (rank 1) to the least deprived area (rank 5).

People most likely to experience high and low levels of economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland



Economic wellbeing - standout statistics

- **35%** can't afford an unexpected expense of £850.
- **31%** are dissatisfied with the job opportunities in their local area.
- **29%** can't afford to go on holiday away from home.
- **15%** can't afford to socialise with friends or family outside of the home once a month.
- **10%** are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their education and skills.
- **7%** can't afford enough food for their household.



Carnegie UK observations

The Northern Ireland Executive's "Prosperity" mission sets a goal of improving economic productivity while making sure that Northern Ireland has an economy that works for everyone.

This mission somewhat aligns with Carnegie UK's vision of economic wellbeing. However, productivity is only a useful wellbeing goal if it supports and enables a range of wellbeing outcomes for all.

In common with much of the UK, high living costs combined with limited access to local job opportunities and a lack of affordable housing are keeping people in poverty in Northern Ireland⁷. **This is hindering the sense of control and agency that people have over their own lives and putting pressure on relationships.**

There are several cross-cutting priority areas within the Draft Programme for Government that – if successful in their implementation – should support improvement. The priorities outlined around growing a globally competitive and sustainable economy, providing more affordable childcare, and providing more social, affordable, and sustainable housing will be critical to improving economic wellbeing in the years ahead. The accessibility of services, particularly childcare for people living in both less affluent and rural areas, should not be overlooked.

This is particularly important because the Life in the UK index evidence highlights that there are large, significant and unacceptable gaps in economic wellbeing between different people and groups. Particularly at risk are people living in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland, and disabled people.

The economic wellbeing scores remind us that the impact of rising living costs is not a short-term problem but rather a long-term structural emergency influencing multiple aspects of people's lives⁸. It is concerning that 35% of people in Northern Ireland cannot afford an unexpected expense of £850, compared to 28% of people in England, 30% of people in Scotland, and 32% of people in Wales.

The cost of poverty goes beyond the hardship experienced by people living in low-income households. It has a long-term impact across society, including on the economy through reduced employment⁹, and on public services because of the persistent consequences of poverty for personal wellbeing¹⁰.

When focusing on delivering the productivity ambition in the "Prosperity" mission, the Northern Ireland Executive must ensure that this is carefully balanced with its ambitions to achieve prosperity for all.

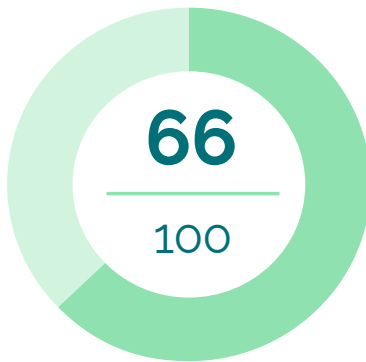


Environmental wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024

We all live within the planet's natural resources.



100



Northern Ireland scores 66 out of a possible 100 for environmental wellbeing.

Environmental wellbeing means that everyone has access to green and blue spaces and collectively we live within the planet's natural resources. This means we protect the environment for future generations.

To determine trends in environmental wellbeing across Northern Ireland, we asked questions about access to and the quality of local parks, rivers and other green and blue spaces. We also asked about levels of satisfaction with efforts to preserve the environment.

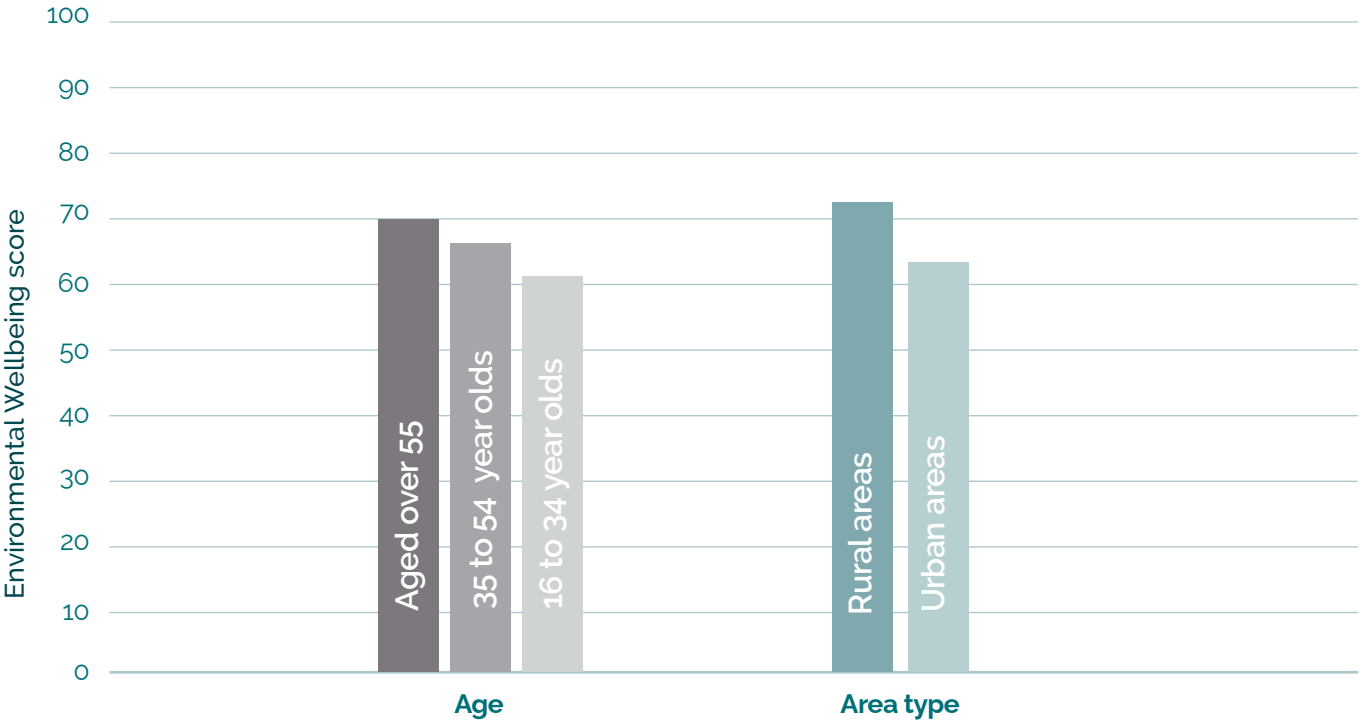
The people most likely to experience **high levels of environmental wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024 are >**

- **Residents of rural areas**, who have an environmental wellbeing score of 72, nine points higher than residents of urban areas (63).

The people most likely to experience **low levels of environmental wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024 are >**

- **People aged 16 to 34**, who have an environmental wellbeing score of 61. This is nine points lower than the environmental wellbeing score of over 55 year olds (70).

People most likely to experience high and low levels of environmental wellbeing in Northern Ireland



 Environmental wellbeing -
standout statistics

- Most people experience issues with litter (**79%**), and some with noise (**48%**) and air quality (**42%**) in their local neighbourhood.
- **39%** are dissatisfied with current efforts to preserve the environment.
- **15%** are dissatisfied with the quality of the local green or open space nearest their home.





Carnegie UK observations

The “Planet” mission outlined in the Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Programme for Government describes an ambition to harness the potential of a green growth economy. It also focuses on ensuring an equitable transition to a sustainable and affordable society as Northern Ireland takes responsibility for decarbonising its economy and society. At Carnegie UK, we recognise some of the aspirations in this mission in our own vision of environmental wellbeing.

The need to take action to tackle climate change is now more urgent than ever. It is disappointing that Northern Ireland's environmental wellbeing score has not improved in 2024. While the priorities outlined in the Draft Programme for Government around protecting Lough Neagh, publishing an environmental strategy, and developing a climate action plan are all encouraging steps forward, the Northern Ireland Executive should not overlook the urgency of implementation and action. The UK Climate Change Committee's most recent progress report found that despite the critical importance of adapting to climate change, there is only limited evidence of delivery in Northern Ireland¹¹.

At Carnegie UK we know that disproportionate exposure to pollutants and noise, and inadequate access to green and blue spaces like parks, woodlands and rivers - environmental injustice – pose a threat to collective wellbeing. This further entrenches inequality between people and communities in the UK. The impact of environmental injustice on multiple wellbeing outcomes should not be overlooked.

The Life in the UK index evidence suggests that a significant proportion of the population in Northern Ireland are dissatisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK (39%). There is also a relationship between environmental wellbeing and age, with scores improving as people get older. This indicates that many younger people are less satisfied with the quality of public parks and green spaces near their homes, and experience problems with noise, air quality and litter in their local neighbourhood.

As the Northern Ireland Executive gets to work delivering the environmental wellbeing ambitions within the Programme for Government in the months ahead, it could learn from its near neighbours in Wales. Wales has demonstrated the ability of a small, devolved jurisdiction to act swiftly and decisively on action to improve environmental wellbeing; it is now the second-ranked country in the world for rates of recycling¹². Furthermore, Wales's world-leading wellbeing legislation – the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act¹³ – places a legal duty on public bodies to think about the long-term impact of decision making on future generations.



Democratic wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024

We all have a voice in decisions that affect us.

35

100



Northern Ireland scores 35 out of a possible 100 for democratic wellbeing.

Democratic wellbeing is about everyone having a voice in decisions made that affect them. This means having local and national leaders who support participation, foster trust, and encourage diversity.

To understand democratic wellbeing in the UK in 2024, we asked questions about levels of trust in local, regional and national government(s), perceptions of personal ability to influence decisions, and experiences of discrimination.

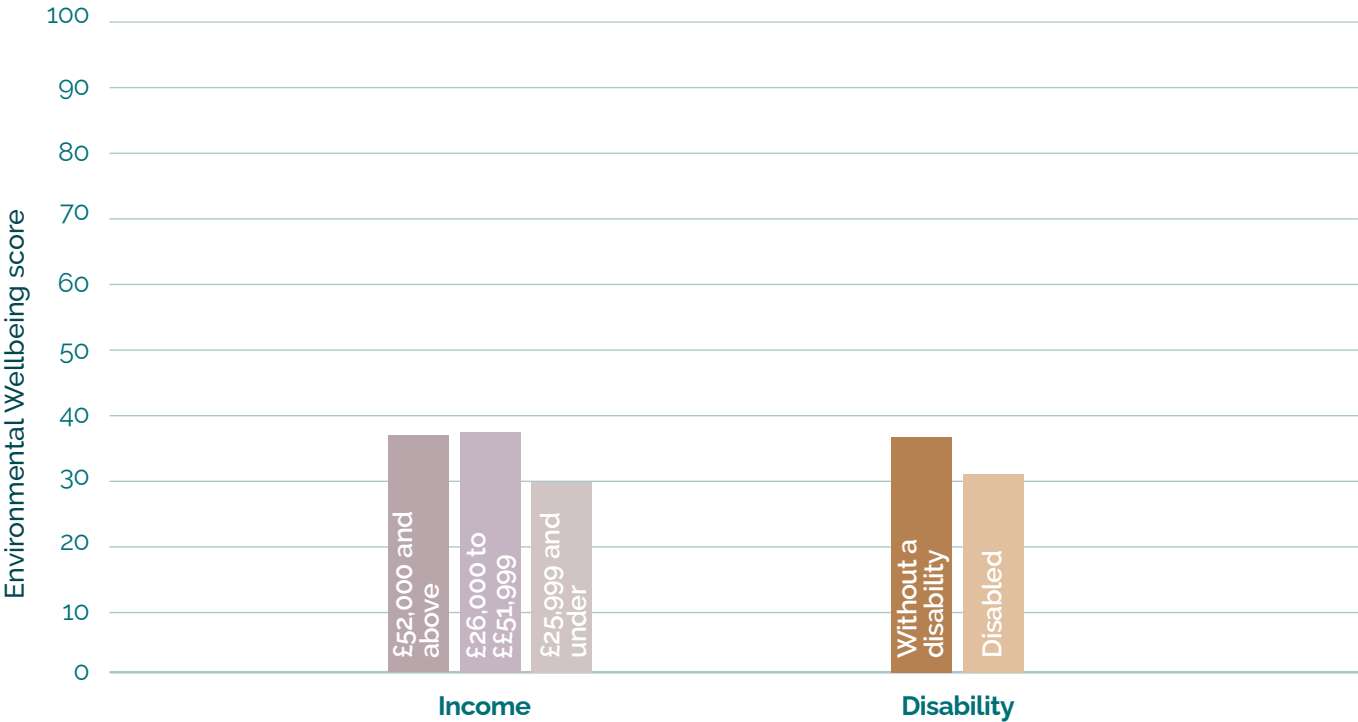
While markedly low across the board, the groups most likely to experience higher levels of democratic wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024 are >

- **Middle and higher earners** - People with an annual household income above £26,000 have an average democratic wellbeing score of 38, which is eight points higher than those with an income under £25,999 (30).

The people most likely to experience low levels of democratic wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2024 are >

- **People from a Catholic community background**, who have a democratic wellbeing score of 31. This is eight points lower than the score of those from Protestant community backgrounds (39).
- **Disabled people**, who have a democratic wellbeing score of 31. This is six points lower than the democratic wellbeing score of people without a disability (37).

People most likely to experience high and low levels of democratic wellbeing in Northern Ireland



 Democratic wellbeing -
standout statistics

- **78%** disagree that they can influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole.
- **69%** disagree that they can influence decisions affecting Northern Ireland.
- **64%** have low levels of trust in the UK Government.
- **62%** have low levels of trust in MPs.
- **58%** disagree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area.
- **54%** have low levels of trust in the Northern Ireland Executive, a 12-point improvement on the score as reported in 2023.
- **54%** have low levels of trust in Members of the Legislative Assembly, a nine-point improvement on the score reported in 2023.
- **33%** have low levels of trust in local councils.



Carnegie UK observations

The Northern Ireland Executive's "Peace" commitment sets out a cross-cutting ambition that everyone should feel the benefit of a growing economy, improved environment and fairer society. At Carnegie UK, we believe that the Northern Ireland Executive should take this ambition even further and make this goal the fourth mission, which includes improving public trust in institutions and building a healthier democracy in Northern Ireland for current and future generations.

The evidence in the Life in the UK index demonstrates why the Northern Ireland Executive must be more ambitious with its "Peace" priority, and why the UK Government should play its part in contributing to the economic, environmental and social justice goals. It cannot be acceptable that 78% of people feel unable to influence UK decision making, while 69% disagree that they can influence decisions affecting Northern Ireland.

2024 marks 25 years of the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly and power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive¹⁴. The recent report of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, which considered the effectiveness of the institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, underlined widespread public dissatisfaction with the stability and effectiveness of the Assembly and the Executive. It highlighted that "extensive and sustained public engagement is vital to determining the future of the institutions"¹⁵.

Wellbeing cannot be 'done to' people: it must be done by and with them. Giving people voice and choice, enhancing transparency, and promoting dialogue between people, sectors and communities, are all influential enablers of collective wellbeing.

A new UK government, the marking of 25 years of devolution, and a returning Northern Ireland Executive with a commitment to delivering a new approach and new ways of governing offer a moment in time to make headway in terms of increasing the systems, structures and processes of the participatory and deliberative engagement required to do public engagement well¹⁶. **This must be matched with the development of mechanisms to embed these approaches in policymaking and build a culture of participatory and deliberative democracy within Northern Ireland's institutions.**

Northern Ireland needs a bold agenda to re-engage people in our democracy and rebuild trust in those we elect to represent us. The Northern Ireland Executive has an opportunity to lead the way in developing and embedding new, deliberative methods of citizen engagement, building on the learning already acquired from pilots within local communities¹⁷ and civil society¹⁸.

Life in the UK: Northern Ireland 2024 - Policy Recommendations

The collective wellbeing scores in this report provide a baseline for both the re-established Northern Ireland Executive and the new UK Government to build on if they want to realise their ambitions of building new foundations and shaping a better tomorrow¹⁹.

The Northern Ireland Executive should be commended for its ambitions to embed an outcomes-based and mission-led approach, as set out in the Draft Programme for Government. At Carnegie UK, we know that the ability to monitor and communicate progress toward the achievement of outcomes or missions is critical in bringing about positive social change. We are pleased to see the development of the new NISRA Wellbeing Dashboard²⁰, which sets out the measures that will enable the Northern Ireland Executive to track progress over time.

Governments in Scotland²¹ and Wales²² have made similar commitments to outcomes-led approaches which so far have had variable levels of success in driving system-wide change. Those experiences tell us that any gap between rhetoric and reality will be a drag on implementation, and that political and executive leadership, while critical, are not sufficient on their own. A sustained focus on adopting and implementing a fresh approach to governing and providing adequate support for public bodies to think and act long term is required.

At Carnegie UK, we welcome the proposed structure and approach outlined in the Programme for Government. **As the Northern Ireland Executive moves to deliver this ambitious framework in the months and years ahead, we look forward to seeing how the inputs and outputs already identified will be balanced with achieving longer-term wellbeing outcomes.** We believe that there are three key areas of opportunity which Northern Ireland should grasp to deliver its ambitions. The Northern Ireland Executive should:

- As a priority, develop legislation that includes a duty for public bodies to play their part in delivering the wellbeing missions.
- Embrace the benefits of a whole-of-government approach.
- Include the priority of "Peace" as a mission, and develop plans for its delivery.



Develop legislation that includes a duty for public bodies to play their part in delivering the wellbeing missions

The delivery of wellbeing legislation (such as a Duty to Co-Operate) could provide the Northern Ireland Executive with the legislative framework and scaffolding to achieve the system-wide change set out within the Draft Programme for Government.

Evidence suggests that the effective implementation of a legislative framework on wellbeing could support a fundamental, positive shift in government culture and practice in Northern Ireland. This has the potential to release ambition and creativity in public services, enabling deep structural challenges to be better tackled. Legislation also offers an opportunity to define a new concept of public value which could guide immediate and long-term decision making. All this will need time, support and capacity development.

Such a bill would place a legal duty to deliver the wellbeing missions ("People", "Planet", "Prosperity" and the missing mission "Peace") on public bodies, meaning that they could be held to account for the improvement of specified outcomes for the people of Northern Ireland²³.

This duty to deliver must include the Northern Ireland Executive and its departments, otherwise it will be of limited impact. It should also apply to every organisation accountable to or procured by them and include private companies, agencies and local government in Northern Ireland.



Embrace the benefits of a whole-of-government approach

The Northern Ireland Executive has outlined its intention to deliver a mission-driven government; this means focusing on ambitious, measurable, long-term objectives that can deliver improved outcomes for people living in Northern Ireland.

The Executive has, for some time, recognised that such outcomes cannot be delivered by any single department working alone. The new Programme for Government throws into sharp relief the importance of finding ways of spanning traditionally entrenched silos in central government. Furthermore, this new framework of priorities offers an opportunity to take a whole-of-government approach, addressing the silo culture across all tiers and spheres of government and working instead towards a common vision and the collective delivery of shared outcomes.

The Northern Ireland Executive could and should build on the work previously undertaken by the Community Planning Partnerships in Northern Ireland on coproduction and the collective leadership required to strengthen joined-up working²⁴. A new era of respect for the role of local authorities and their partners would enhance the delivery of the proposed missions.



Include the priority of “Peace” as a mission, and develop plans for its delivery

Northern Ireland is one step ahead of the other governments of the UK in setting out a cross-cutting priority broadly focused on improving democratic wellbeing.

However, we believe that simply stating this priority does not go far enough. It is essential that all those in power work to build trust with the people of Northern Ireland: a failure to address the root causes of alienation will further threaten the foundations of democracy. As with the other parts of the UK, Northern Ireland needs a bold agenda to re-engage people in democracy and rebuild trust in elected representatives. The Northern Ireland Executive has an opportunity to lead the way in developing new, deliberative methods of citizen engagement²⁵.

We know that participatory democratic processes most usefully contribute to collective wellbeing if they are designed and delivered to high standards of inclusion and accountability.

If high standards are not achieved in the design, delivery and subsequent accountability mechanisms for a participatory or deliberative process, then there is a risk of increasing the disconnect between individuals and our democratic structures. Participants in these processes may be left with lower levels of trust than they started with if they are told that their views matter but are not informed about how they are acted on or taken forward.

The Northern Ireland Executive must take action to address the crisis in democracy. At Carnegie UK, we believe that the first step to achieving this should be a commitment to the effective delivery of new methods of citizen engagement, delivered as part of the missing “Peace” mission.



Collective wellbeing: standout statistics overview



Social wellbeing – standout statistics

- **66%** find it difficult to get a GP appointment at a time when they need one.
- **44%** say have experienced discrimination over the past year.
- **21%** feel unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark.
- **14%** don't have anyone to rely on in their neighbourhood.
- **14%** have bad or very bad mental health.



Economic wellbeing - standout statistics

- **35%** can't afford an unexpected expense of £850.
- **31%** are dissatisfied with the job opportunities in their local area.
- **29%** can't afford to go on holiday away from home.
- **15%** can't afford to socialise with friends or family outside of the home once a month.
- **10%** are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their education and skills.
- **7%** can't afford enough food for their household.



Environmental wellbeing - standout statistics

- Most people experience issues with litter (**79%**), and some with noise (**48%**) and air quality (**42%**) in their local neighbourhood.
- **39%** are dissatisfied with current efforts to preserve the environment.
- **15%** are dissatisfied with the quality of the local green or open space nearest their home.



Democratic wellbeing - standout statistics

- **78%** disagree that they can influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole.
- **69%** disagree that they can influence decisions affecting Northern Ireland.
- **64%** have low levels of trust in the UK Government.
- **62%** have low levels of trust in MPs.
- **58%** disagree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area.
- **54%** have low levels of trust in the Northern Ireland Executive, a 12-point improvement on the score reported in 2023.
- **54%** have low levels of trust in members of the Legislative Assembly, a nine-point improvement on the score reported in 2023.
- **33%** have low levels of trust in local councils.

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Appendix 1: Summary table of domain scores by key demographic characteristics

		Collective wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Environmental wellbeing	Democratic wellbeing
	Total	60	72	67	66	35
Disability	Not disabled	63	77	71	68	37
	Disabled	54	63	59	63	31
Age	16-34 years	55	69	61	61	32
	35-54 years	59	72	64	67	34
	55 years & over	65	77	75	70	38
Household Income	£25,999 and under	55	69	55	65	30
	£26,000 to £51,999	63	75	70	67	38
	£52,000 and above	64	77	76	67	38
Area deprivation	1st quintile (highest deprivation)	54	66	56	60	33
	2nd quintile	62	72	70	68	36
	3rd quintile	60	72	66	67	35
	4th quintile	62	74	71	67	38
	5th quintile (lowest deprivation)	63	77	72	69	33
Gender	Women	60	71	66	67	35
	Men	61	75	68	66	35
Urban areas	Urban living	59	72	66	63	35
	Rural living	62	74	68	72	35
Community background	Catholic	58	73	64	63	31
	Protestant	63	75	70	70	39

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Find out more about the work of the Network here: <https://povertytruthnetwork.org/>.

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> Collective Wellbeing in 2024 in Northern Ireland summary



Economic wellbeing



Social wellbeing



Environmental wellbeing



Democratic wellbeing



The Collective Wellbeing score for Northern Ireland in 2024 is 60 out of a possible 100.

Life in the UK 2024

Northern
Ireland



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