

Life in the **UK** 2025

Northern Ireland



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, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales tell us about their lives.

The purpose of this index is to assist governments and other decision makers across the UK to 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 2025 index was collected via a 26-question survey of 7,106 respondents using [Ipsos' KnowledgePanel](#), a random probability survey panel with selection based on a random sample of UK households. There were 919 respondents living in Northern Ireland. The fieldwork was carried out between 8th and 14th May 2025.



We have been able to increase the sample size in Northern Ireland this year. The larger sample size in 2025 allows for improved subgroup analysis, meaning we have been able to detect some further statistically significant differences between groups this year.

- Questions are categorised into four domains to measure people's social, economic, environmental, and democratic wellbeing. The average of these scores results in the overall collective wellbeing score.
- The overall collective wellbeing index score and the wellbeing domain scores have a value of between 0 and 100. It should be noted these index scores are derived scores and not percentages.
- 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 is used to help understand which demographic characteristics are most associated both with 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.
- Throughout the report, figures with an asterisk (*) beside them are statistically significant changes, tested to 95%, which means that we can have a high level of confidence that these represent meaningful changes over time or differences between groups of people.

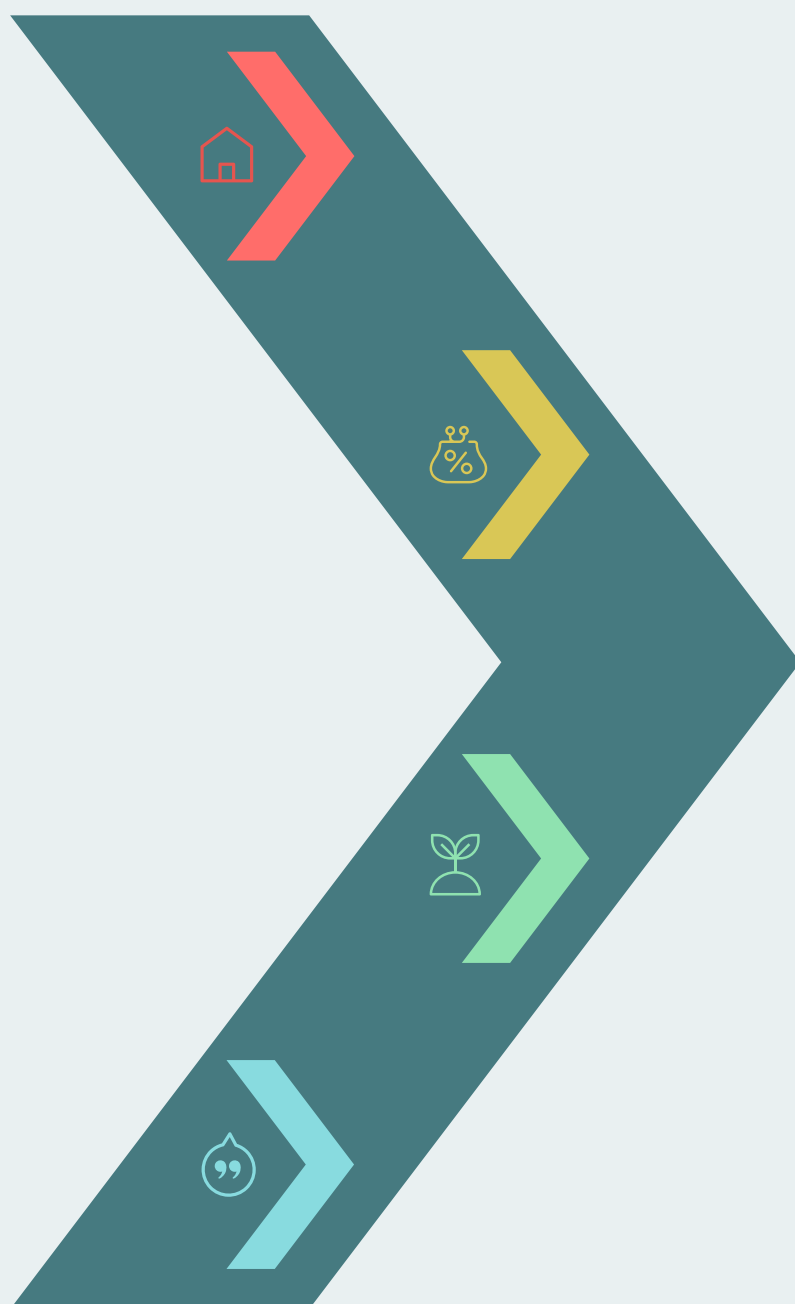
Many changes have happened in the world since we last conducted fieldwork in May 2024. Of particular note to the 2025 index, this is the first Life in the UK Index since Labour won the UK general election in 2024 and formed the first Labour government in 14 years.

Carnegie UK has been working with leading social research agency Ipsos since the inception of Life in the UK, with Ipsos conducting the fieldwork and analysis of the survey. 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 2025. 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 2025

At Carnegie UK, we are delighted to present the third edition of our Life in the UK – Northern Ireland index, a landmark research programme we have now committed to delivering until at least 2030. This report provides robust evidence about what life is like for people across Northern Ireland and reflects on patterns and trends in the scores since 2023.

Out of a possible score of 100, Northern Ireland's collective wellbeing in 2025 remained unchanged on previous years at **62**. The domain-level scores have also not changed in the three years since we began measuring wellbeing.

Economic wellbeing remains low at **69**, lower than the UK average of 72. Social wellbeing fares better at **73** and is broadly in line with the social wellbeing score for the UK as a whole. As in previous years, at **67** environmental wellbeing is better in Northern Ireland than for the UK as a whole.

Once again, however, it is Northern Ireland's democratic wellbeing that remains the lowest of all the domains at just **37**, and lower than the UK as a whole's score of 41. There are however small glimmers of hope beneath the unchanged democratic wellbeing headline score: people in Northern Ireland are less likely this year to have low trust in the UK Government and UK MPs, as well as in the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly members.

Across all these domains, individuals' experiences vary greatly by their circumstances, with income, disability status, type of household tenure, age, and community background all having notable impacts on people's overall wellbeing. With the increased sample size this year in Northern Ireland, we are now in a position to see some demographic differences that were not previously apparent, such as differences in community background.

Our aim at Carnegie UK is to ensure that everyone in the UK and Ireland has what they need to live well together now and into the future. Northern Ireland's recently approved wellbeing framework, "Doing What Matters Most", was agreed in February 2025. While change inevitably takes time, if embedded throughout decision-making processes and implemented effectively, there is hope that this framework will bear fruit by improving people's collective wellbeing in the coming years.

We hope that this report ensures that those with the power to change things, from the local to the national, have the insight and tools they need to put wellbeing at the heart of decision-making.

Sarah Davidson
CEO, Carnegie UK

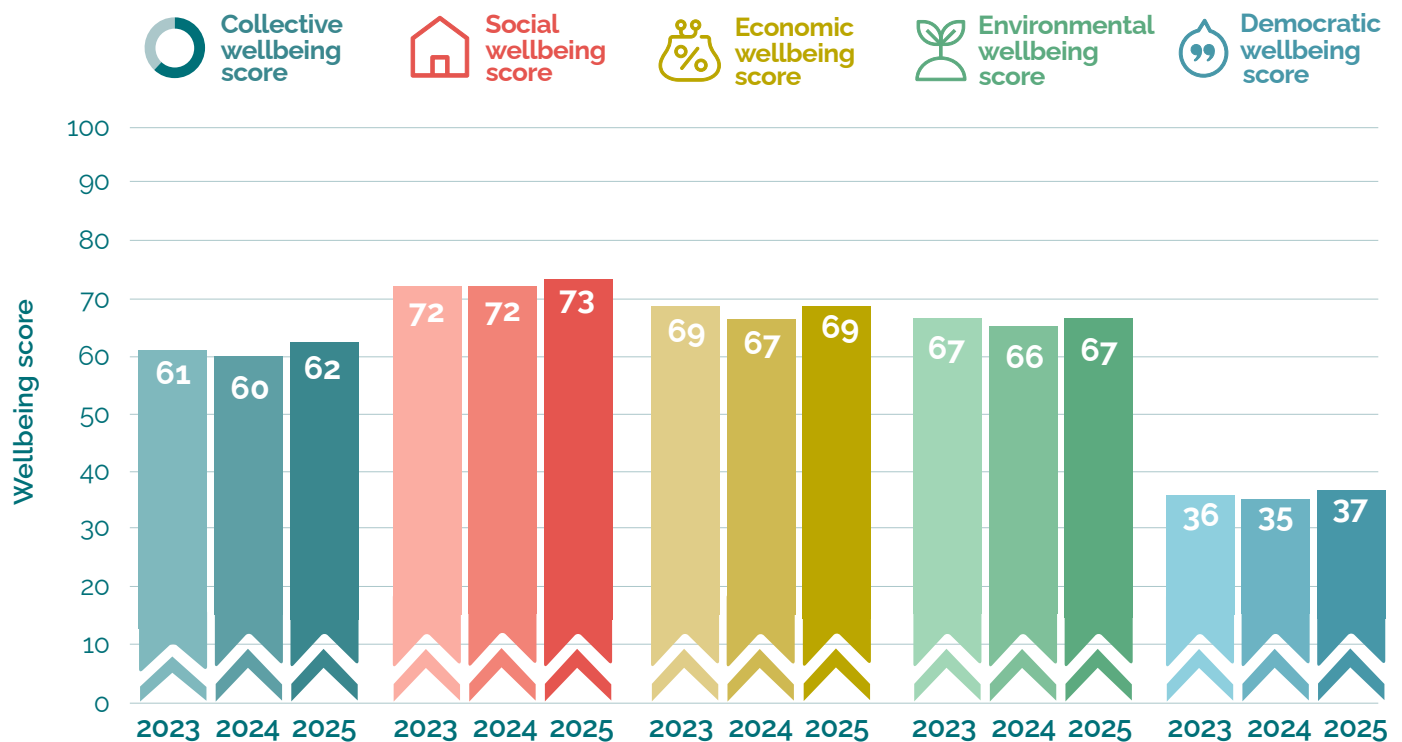


Collective wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2025

Now in its third year, Life in the UK is beginning to offer a longer-term story of what life is like for people in the UK and in each of its devolved jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland there is a continued picture of stagnation across the four wellbeing domains.

Overview of scores

The overall score for collective wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2025 is **62** out of a possible 100. Although the score was 60 in 2024, it is not a statistically significant increase that has been seen between the years. Although some of the scores are different across the years on the individual domains, none of these are statistically significant as either increases or decreases. We are therefore seeing continued stagnation.



Understanding what influences collective wellbeing

Across the three years of Life in the UK, scores for Northern Ireland have remained unchanged. People in Northern Ireland still have lower economic and, particularly, democratic wellbeing scores than the UK as a whole, although environmental wellbeing remains higher than for the UK overall. There have been promising improvements in some elements that contribute to democratic wellbeing, but these do not yet amount to a higher overall democratic wellbeing score in Northern Ireland.

It is also still the case that people within Northern Ireland have distinctly different levels of wellbeing based on their circumstances. The factors that are associated with especially wide gaps in collective wellbeing reflect those found in previous years.

In 2025, the following factors stand out as particularly important in predicting a lower or higher collective wellbeing score: >

- **The higher the household income, the higher the collective wellbeing score:** People with a household income of over £100,000 a year¹ have a collective wellbeing score of **73**. This is 21 points higher than for those whose household income is below £26,000 a year. Those with a household income between £26,000 and £51,999 have a collective wellbeing score of 63, and those with a household income of over £52,000 and below £100,000 have a collective wellbeing score of 66.
- **Being disabled is strongly associated with lower collective wellbeing:** Disabled people have a collective wellbeing score of **53**. This is 12 points lower than for those without a disability.

The following are also notable influences on a person's collective wellbeing: >

- **Living in social or privately rented housing:** People who rent their home from a council or housing association have a collective wellbeing score of **46**. This is 18 points lower than for those who are homeowners. People who are private tenants have a collective wellbeing score of **55**, also lower than for homeowners.
- **Age:** People aged 16 to 34 have a collective wellbeing score of **59**. This is seven points lower than for those aged 55 or over.
- **Community background:** People from a Catholic community background have a collective wellbeing score of **59**. This is six points lower than for those from a Protestant community background.

¹ The base size for people with a household income of over £100,000 a year was smaller than for other groups at 67 people, so findings should be treated with caution.

² The base sizes for private tenants (61) and social housing tenants (64) were smaller than for other groups, so findings should be treated with caution.

Collective wellbeing scores by region in Northern Ireland



The full visualisation of the UK map can be found on our website [here](#).

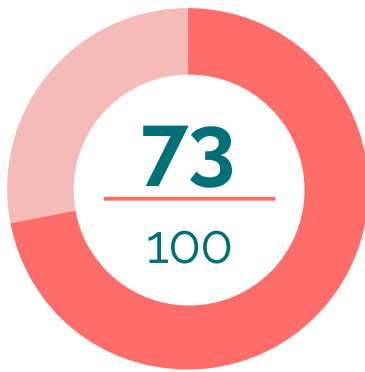


Social wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2025

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

73

100



Northern Ireland scores 73 out of a possible 100 for social wellbeing.

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.

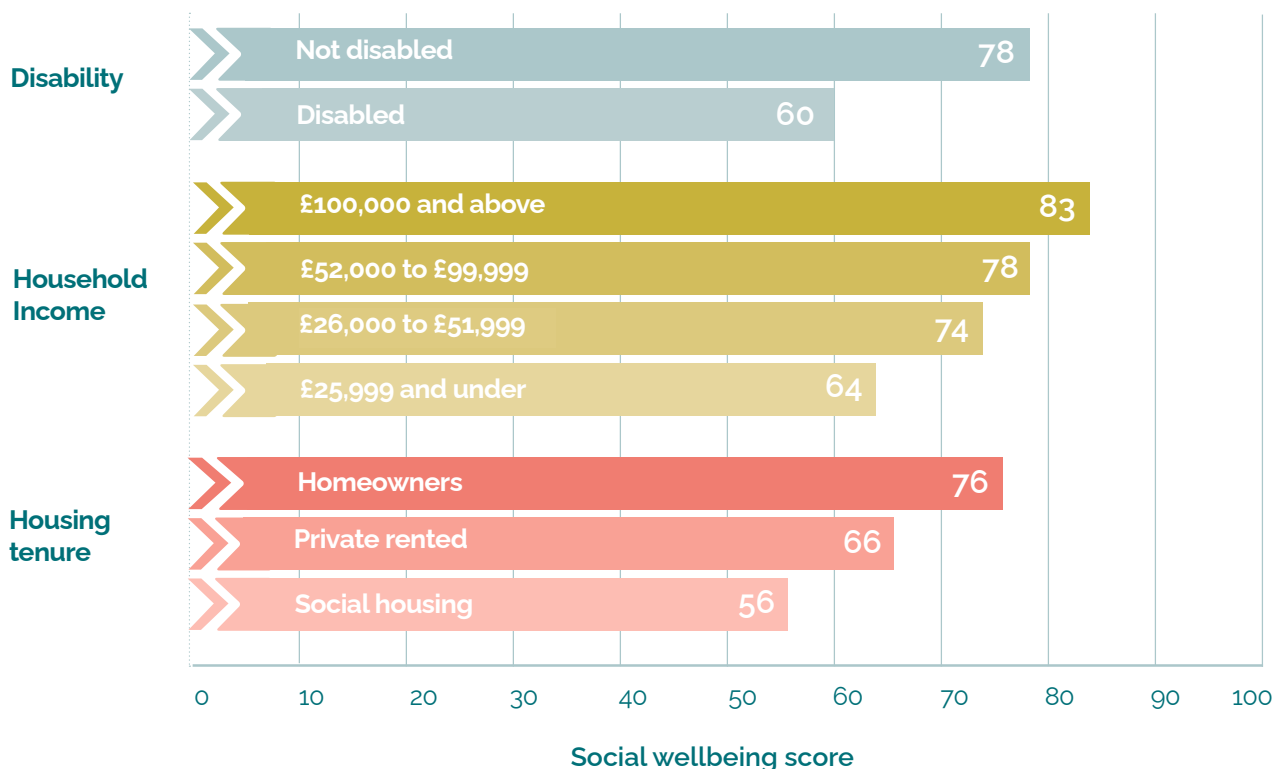
The people most likely to experience **high** levels of social wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2025 are: >

- People with an annual household income of above £100,000, who have a social wellbeing score of **83**. This is 19 points higher than for those with an annual household income of below £26,000. Those whose annual household income is between £26,000 and £51,999 have a social wellbeing score of 74, and those whose household income is between £52,000 and £99,999 have a social wellbeing score of 78.

In contrast, the people who are likely to experience **low** levels of social wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2025 are: >

- People who rent from a council or housing association, who have a social wellbeing score of **56**. This is 20 points lower than for homeowners.
- Disabled people, who have a social wellbeing score of **60**. This is 18 points lower than for those without a disability.

Disability, income, and housing tenure have the biggest effects on social wellbeing in Northern Ireland



Social wellbeing - standout statistics

While in some social indicators Northern Ireland does better than the UK as a whole, these are balanced by other indicators where things are worse.

- **72%** feel that they could rely on someone in their neighbourhood to help them if they were alone and needed help, six percentage points higher than the UK average.
- **64%** say that it is difficult to get a GP appointment when they need one, 16 percentage points higher than the UK average.
- **30%** find it difficult to access public transport that can get them where they need to go, 11 percentage points higher than the UK average.
- **27%** do not feel safe walking alone in their local neighbourhood after dark, six percentage points higher than in 2024.
- **10%** say that they are in bad general health, four percentage points higher than the UK average, while **11%** say they are in bad mental health, two percentage points higher than the UK average.

Summary

The social wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland is now **73 out of 100**. This score has not changed in a statistically significant way since Life in the UK first reported in 2023, but it remains higher than the UK as a whole.

However, there remain disparities amongst demographic groups related to clear inequalities in society. Disability status and housing tenure play key roles in a low social wellbeing score while high social wellbeing correlates to higher levels of income.

There have been few changes in social wellbeing compared to last year, however there are some differences compared to the UK overall. People in Northern Ireland feel that they could rely on someone in their neighbourhood to help them if they were alone and needed help, this is higher than the UK overall. People in Northern Ireland are also less likely than the UK overall to be able to access public transport that can get them where they want to go. One notable change between 2024 and 2025 is that people in Northern Ireland were more likely to feel unsafe walking alone in their local neighbourhood after dark.

On health-related measures, people in Northern Ireland remain less likely than the UK as a whole to be able to get a GP appointment at the time they need one. They are also more likely to be in poor general and mental health than the UK overall.

Social wellbeing requires everyone within a society to feel that they are a valued part of their community, and improving people's social wellbeing brings many benefits, both to individuals and society as a whole.



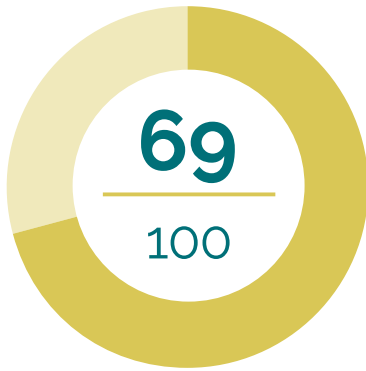


Economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2025

We all have a decent minimum living standard.

69

100



Northern Ireland scores 69 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.

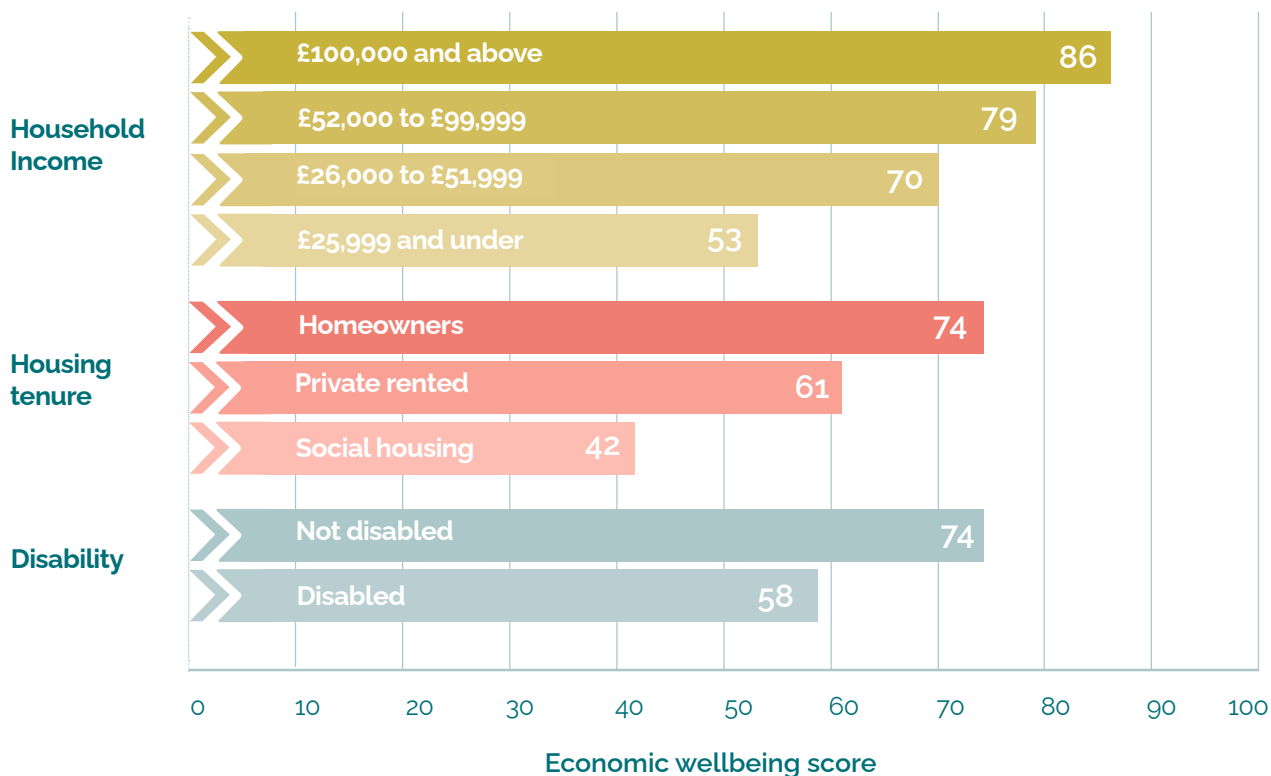
The people most likely to experience **high** economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2025 are: >

- People with a household income of over £100,000 a year, who have an economic wellbeing score of **86**. This is 33 points higher than for those whose annual household income is below £26,000 a year. Those with an annual household income of £26,000 to £51,999 have an economic wellbeing score of **70**, and those whose annual household income is between £52,000 and £99,999 have an economic wellbeing score of **79**.

In contrast, the people who are likely to experience **low** economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2025 are: >

- People living in social housing, who have an economic wellbeing score of **42**. This is 32 points lower than for homeowners.
- Disabled people, whose economic wellbeing score is **58**. This is 16 points lower than for those without a disability.
- People from a Catholic community background, who have an economic wellbeing score of **66**. This is seven points lower than for those from a Protestant community background.

Income, housing tenure, and disability have the biggest effects on economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland



Economic wellbeing - standout statistics

There is still a mixed picture for economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland.

- **81%** of people can afford to keep their home heated adequately. This has improved from 73% in 2024.
- **34%** of people are satisfied with the availability of job opportunities in their local area. This is higher than the UK overall result of 26%.
- **33%** of people report their household could not afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850, higher than the UK overall result of 28%.

Summary

The economic wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland has remained stagnant since 2023, at **69**, and remains lower than across the UK as a whole.

Although some indicators have improved, people in Northern Ireland remain less likely than people in the UK overall to be able to afford things like unexpected expenses, socialising outside of their home once a month, and a week's annual holiday away from home.

There have, however, been some improvements this year. People are more likely to be able to afford to keep their homes adequately warm, including in the winter. Some factors, including age and area deprivation, are less likely this year than in previous years to have an effect on people's economic wellbeing.

Unlike in the UK overall, dissatisfaction with job opportunities in the local area has not increased in Northern Ireland since 2024. Satisfaction with local job opportunities in Northern Ireland is also higher than it is across the UK as a whole.

However, as with the other domains we still see inequalities between those who have higher and lower levels of economic wellbeing. Unsurprisingly, higher economic wellbeing correlates with higher income, but other factors also have a notable effect, with disabled people, those in social housing and those from a Catholic community having lower levels of economic wellbeing.





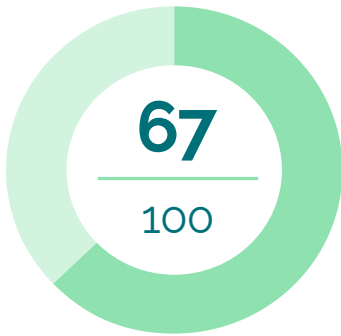
Environmental wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2025

We all live within the planet's natural resources.

67

100





Northern Ireland scores 67 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, protecting 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, and about noise pollution, air pollution, and litter in local areas. We also asked about levels of satisfaction with efforts to preserve the environment.

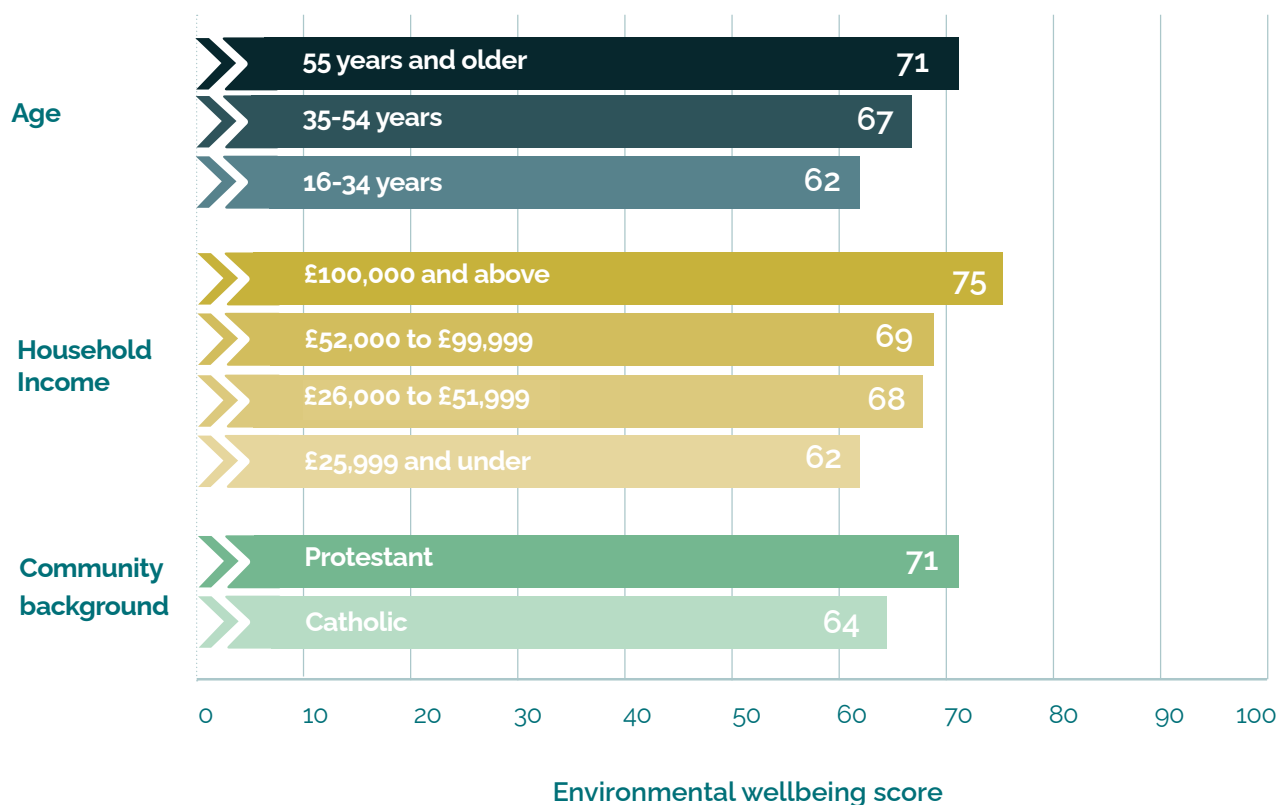
The people most likely to experience **high** environmental wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2025 are: >

- People over the age of 55, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **71**. This is nine points higher than for those aged 16 to 34.
- People with a household income of £100,000 and above a year, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **75**. This is 13 points higher than for those with a household income of below £26,000.

In contrast, the people who are likely to experience **low** environmental wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2025 are: >

- Disabled people, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **63**. This is six points lower than for those without a disability.
- People from a Catholic community background, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **64**. This is seven points lower than for those from a Protestant community background.

Age, income, and community background have the biggest effects on environmental wellbeing in Northern Ireland



Environmental wellbeing - standout statistics

Few changes have been seen in environmental indicators, but Northern Ireland continues to have higher environmental wellbeing than the UK as a whole.

- 69% of people are satisfied with the quality of their local open, public, or green space.
- 53% report problems with noise pollution in their local neighbourhood. However, this is lower than the UK overall result of 64%.
- 24% of people are satisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK, similar to previous years.

Summary

The environmental wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland has remained stable since Life in the UK commenced, with a score of **67** this year. People in Northern Ireland remain likely to have higher environmental wellbeing than the UK as a whole. People in Northern Ireland were also less likely to experience problems with litter, air quality, and noise pollution than the UK as a whole.

Age and income continue to be indicators of high environmental wellbeing, indicators that also appear in higher wellbeing in other domains. Being disabled remains a factor for lower environmental wellbeing, alongside being from the Catholic community.

Only 24% of people in Northern Ireland say that they are satisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK.





Democratic wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2025

We all have a voice in decisions that affect us.

37

100



Northern Ireland scores 37 out of a possible 100 for democratic wellbeing.

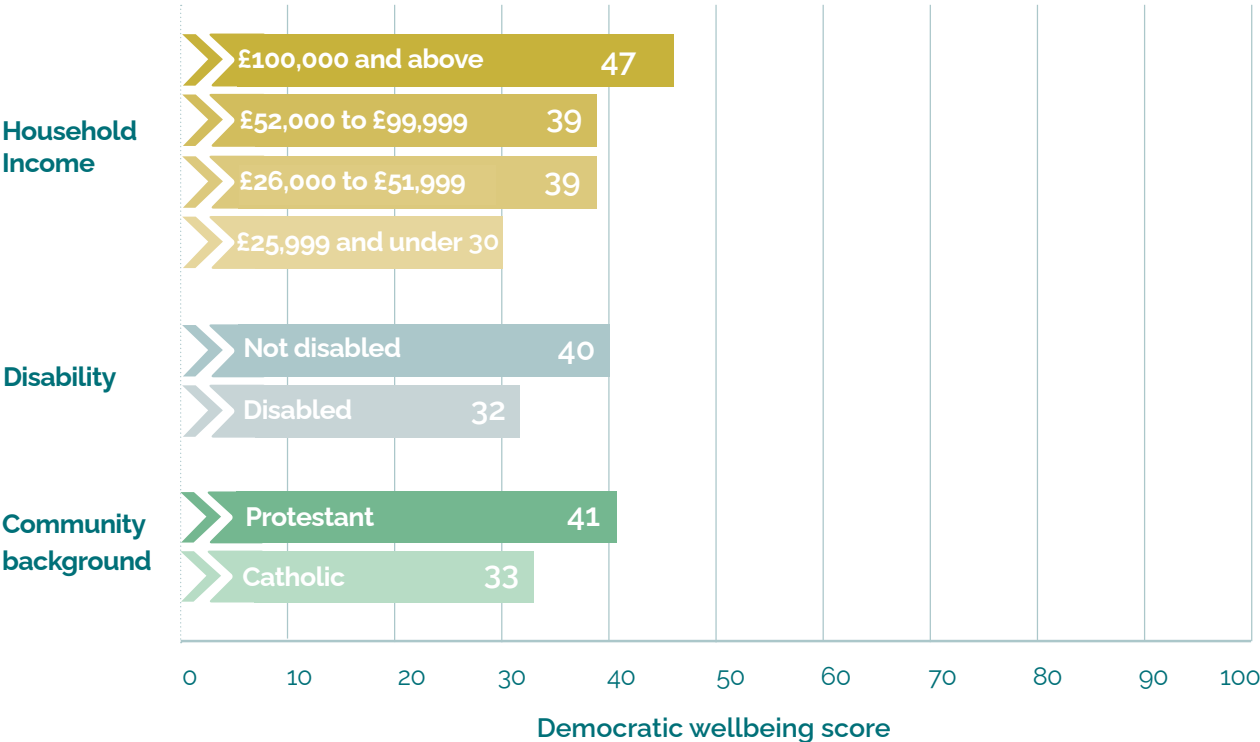
Democratic wellbeing is about everyone having a voice in decisions made that affect them. This means having local and national leaders who support participation, foster trust, and encourage diversity.

To understand democratic wellbeing in Northern Ireland in 2025, we asked questions about levels of trust in local, regional and national government(s), perceptions of personal ability to influence decisions.

Democratic wellbeing in Northern Ireland is chronically low for all groups, but the people who are likely to have the **lowest** democratic wellbeing scores are: >

- People with an annual household income of below £26,000, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **30**. This is nine points lower than for those whose annual household income is between £26,000 and £99,999, and 17 points lower than for those whose annual household income is £100,000 or more.
- Disabled people, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **32**. This is eight points lower than for those without a disability.
- People from a Catholic community background, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **33**. This is eight points lower than for those from a Protestant community background.

Income, disability, and community background have the biggest effects on democratic wellbeing in Northern Ireland



Democratic wellbeing - standout statistics

Trust in the UK Government has improved, as has trust in the devolved government and other institutions.

- **55%** of people in Northern Ireland have low trust in the UK Government, nine percentage points lower than in 2024. This is still higher than the results for the UK as whole at 45%.
- **46%** of people in Northern Ireland have low trust in the Northern Ireland Executive, eight percentage points lower than in 2024 and 20 percentage points lower than in 2023.

Summary

As in previous years, the democratic wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland is the lowest of all the domains, at **37** this year, and Northern Ireland has the lowest democratic wellbeing of any of the UK jurisdictions.

There have, however, been some improvements. Fewer people have low levels of trust in the UK Government compared to 2024, and fewer people have low levels of trust in MPs. Low trust in the Executive has improved from 66% in 2023 to 46% in 2025, with similar changes recorded for trust in Assembly members. These findings point to a continued improvement in trust in the devolved government and parliamentarians. This may reflect the ongoing positive effects of the restoration of the Executive in February 2024.

Like in other domains, change has not been felt evenly. Income, disability, and community background all have an impact on democratic wellbeing.



Collective wellbeing: standout statistics overview



Social wellbeing – standout statistics

While in some social indicators Northern Ireland does better than the UK as a whole, these are balanced by other indicators where things are worse.

- **72%** feel that they could rely on someone in their neighbourhood to help them if they were alone and needed help, six percentage points higher than the UK average.
- **64%** say that it is difficult to get a GP appointment when they need one, 16 percentage points higher than the UK average.
- **30%** find it difficult to access public transport that can get them where they need to go, 11 percentage points higher than the UK average.
- **27%** do not feel safe walking alone in their local neighbourhood after dark, six percentage points higher than in 2024.
- **10%** say that they are in bad general health, four percentage points higher than the UK average, while **11%** say they are in bad mental health, two percentage points higher than the UK average.



Economic wellbeing - standout statistics

There is still a mixed picture for economic wellbeing in Northern Ireland.

- **81%** of people can afford to keep their home heated adequately. This has improved from 73% in 2024.
- **34%** of people are satisfied with the availability of job opportunities in their local area. This is higher than the UK overall result of 26%.
- **33%** of people report their household could not afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850, higher than the UK overall result of 28%.



Environmental wellbeing - standout statistics

Few changes have been seen in environmental indicators, but Northern Ireland continues to have higher environmental wellbeing than the UK as a whole.

- 69% of people are satisfied with the quality of their local open, public, or green space.
- 53% report problems with noise pollution in their local neighbourhood. However, this is lower than the UK overall result of 64%.
- 24% of people are satisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK, similar to previous years.

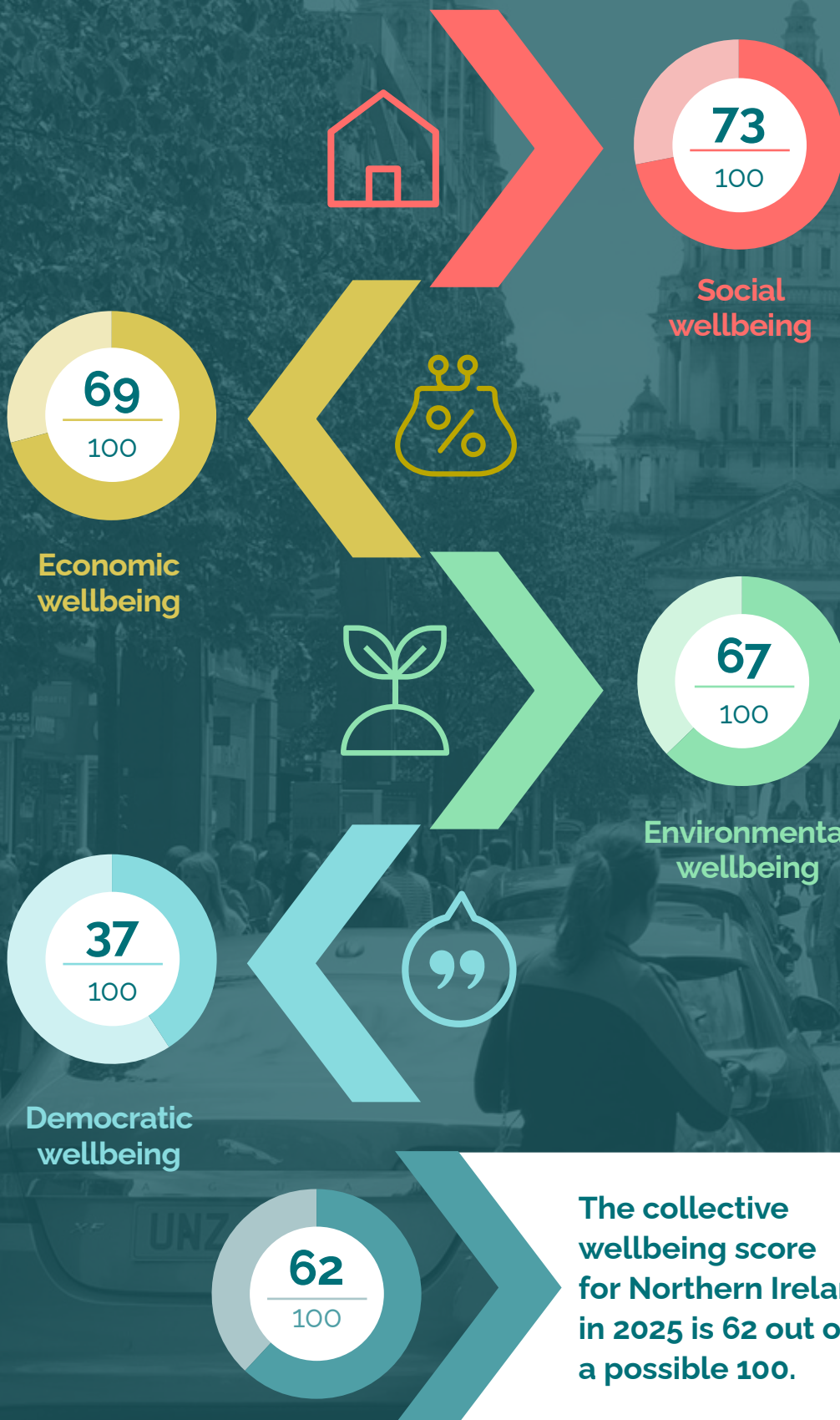


Democratic wellbeing - standout statistics

Trust in the UK Government has improved, as has trust in the devolved government and other institutions.

- 55% of people in Northern Ireland have low trust in the UK Government, nine percentage points lower than in 2024. This is still higher than the results for the UK as whole at 45%.
- 46% of people in Northern Ireland have low trust in the Northern Ireland Executive, eight percentage points lower than in 2024 and 20 percentage points lower than in 2023.

Collective wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2025: Scoring summary



Summary table of domain scores by key demographic characteristics

		Collective wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Environmental wellbeing	Democratic wellbeing
	Total	62	73	69	67	37
Disability	Not disabled	65	78	74	69	40
	Disabled	53	60	58	63	32
Age	16-34 years	59	71	67	62	36
	35-54 years	60	72	64	67	35
	55 years & over	66	75	75	71	40
Household Income	£25,999 and under	52	64	53	62	30
	£26,000 to £51,999	63	74	70	68	39
	£52,000 to £99,999	66	78	79	69	39
	£100,000 & above*	73	83	86	75	47
Area deprivation**	1st quintile (highest deprivation)	55	67	59	60	35
	2nd quintile	63	74	70	70	37
	3rd quintile	60	71	68	66	36
	4th quintile	64	73	74	68	40
	5th quintile (lowest deprivation)	66	77	75	71	40
Housing tenure	Social rented	46	56	42	57	29
	Private rented	55	66	61	63	31
	Homeowners	64	76	74	69	39
Gender	Women	61	71	67	68	37
	Men	62	75	71	66	37
Urban areas	Urban living	61	72	68	65	37
	Rural living	64	74	71	71	39
Community Background	Catholic	59	71	66	64	33
	Protestant	65	75	73	71	41

* The base sizes for household income £100,000 and above, private tenants (61) and social housing tenants (64) were smaller than for other groups, so findings should be treated with caution.

** 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 ('IMD1') being the most deprived and quintile 5 ('IMD5') being the least deprived.

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Northern Ireland



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