

Life in the UK

2026

Ipsos

collective wellbeing Carnegie UK

The Life in the UK Index

Background

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 demonstrate to governments and other decision makers the value of focussing their attention on the things that really matter to people. It offers a way of understanding whether we are collectively living better or worse over time, helps identify where progress is being made, and points to the areas of our lives that require new or sustained policy intervention.

There have been many changes in the UK and globally since the 2025 edition of Life in the UK. Of particular relevance to the 2026 index is the fact that fieldwork was conducted two weeks after local and mayoral elections in England, and elections for the Scottish Parliament and Senedd in Scotland and Wales respectively. These elections led to changes in the composition of many local and national governments across the UK.

Method

- The evidence for the 2026 index was collected via a 26-question survey using Ipsos' KnowledgePanel, a random probability survey panel with selection based on a random sample of UK households. The fieldwork was carried out between 21st and 27th May 2026.
- The survey has been running since 2023 with fieldwork always conducted at a comparable time each year, in May. Sample sizes for each year are as follows:
  - 2023: 6,941
  - 2024: 6,774
  - 2025: 7,106
  - 2026: 6,731
- Samples were stratified to achieve a reasonable representation of respondents by jurisdiction, age, education, ethnicity, and community background (in Northern Ireland, based on religion and religion brought up in). In particular, the number of minority ethnic individuals was boosted to facilitate analysis by ethnicity.
- 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. These index scores are derived scores, not percentages.

- The collective wellbeing score, 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. Throughout the report, the lists of demographic factors that are associated with wellbeing are ordered by the strength of the regression co-efficient, with strongest first.
- This year additional demographic characteristics are included in the regression analysis that were not included in this analysis in previous years. These are: religion, sexual orientation, whether someone is a graduate or not, and working status. Where this additional analysis finds differences that align with statistical testing, these are shown. In some cases, the additional analysis has changed the strength of associations between demographic factors and wellbeing scores, so these should not be compared directly to previous years' results.
- Throughout the report, statistical significance testing has been carried out, tested to 95%, which means that we can have a high level of confidence that any changes represent meaningful shifts over time or differences between groups of people.
- The graphs do not show statistical significance, nor do they show all question response options meaning percentages do not always add up to 100%. This more detailed information can be found within the data dashboard via our website.

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 our collective wellbeing in the UK in 2026. We hope it makes the case for better measures of social progress and highlights where policy intervention is urgently required.


PLACE
REFILLERY & CAFE

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Introduction: Life in the UK 2026

This is the latest edition of our annual Life in the UK index, now with four years' worth of data trends, enabling us to take a slightly longer-term view of how people across the UK are living.

Overall, this is yet another year where we are seeing a deterioration or stagnation in results: on the whole, life is not getting better for most people across the country. Indeed, out of a possible score of 100, the UK's collective wellbeing in 2026 was **61**, a level which has fluctuated over the last four years but has declined by one point since last year.

Disappointingly, social wellbeing is now **72**, one point lower than last year, reflecting cumulative declines in areas including aspects of health, access to services, and experience of discrimination.

Economic wellbeing has also fallen, by two points since 2025, to **70**. Less local job availability and ability to afford the things that make life enjoyable, like holidays and socialising, are key contributing factors to this decline.

At **63** out of 100, people's environmental wellbeing has not declined, but it has not improved either, pointing to stagnation in people's experiences of their local and national environment since we began reporting in 2023.

Similarly, since improving slightly in 2025, democratic wellbeing remains unchanged this year at **41** overall. Although it has not worsened, it has not improved. It is still at a dire level presenting one of the biggest policy challenges facing society today.

Previous editions of Life in the UK have identified that beneath these top-line figures, people's experiences differ widely according to their circumstances. This remains the case. People with higher incomes and those in the least deprived neighbourhoods have higher wellbeing than others. Disabled people and those who live in social housing generally have lower wellbeing.



This year, we have added additional groups to our regression analysis, highlighting further important factors that lead to differences in wellbeing. This shows that graduates are more likely to have higher wellbeing than non-graduates, while LGB+ people face lower wellbeing than those who are heterosexual.

Our mission 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. We hope that this index points to where change and policy intervention are most needed in the UK to help make progress towards that goal. Above all, we hope that it will inspire more governments to embed effective wellbeing measurement in their own practice and to use that data to inform decision making that meaningfully improves people's lives.

Sarah Davidson
CEO, Carnegie UK

Our collective wellbeing in 2026

Collective wellbeing is about everyone having what they need to live well now and into the future. It goes beyond individual happiness or health. Instead, it looks at the holistic, bigger picture: how our society, economy, environment and democracy work together to support people and communities.

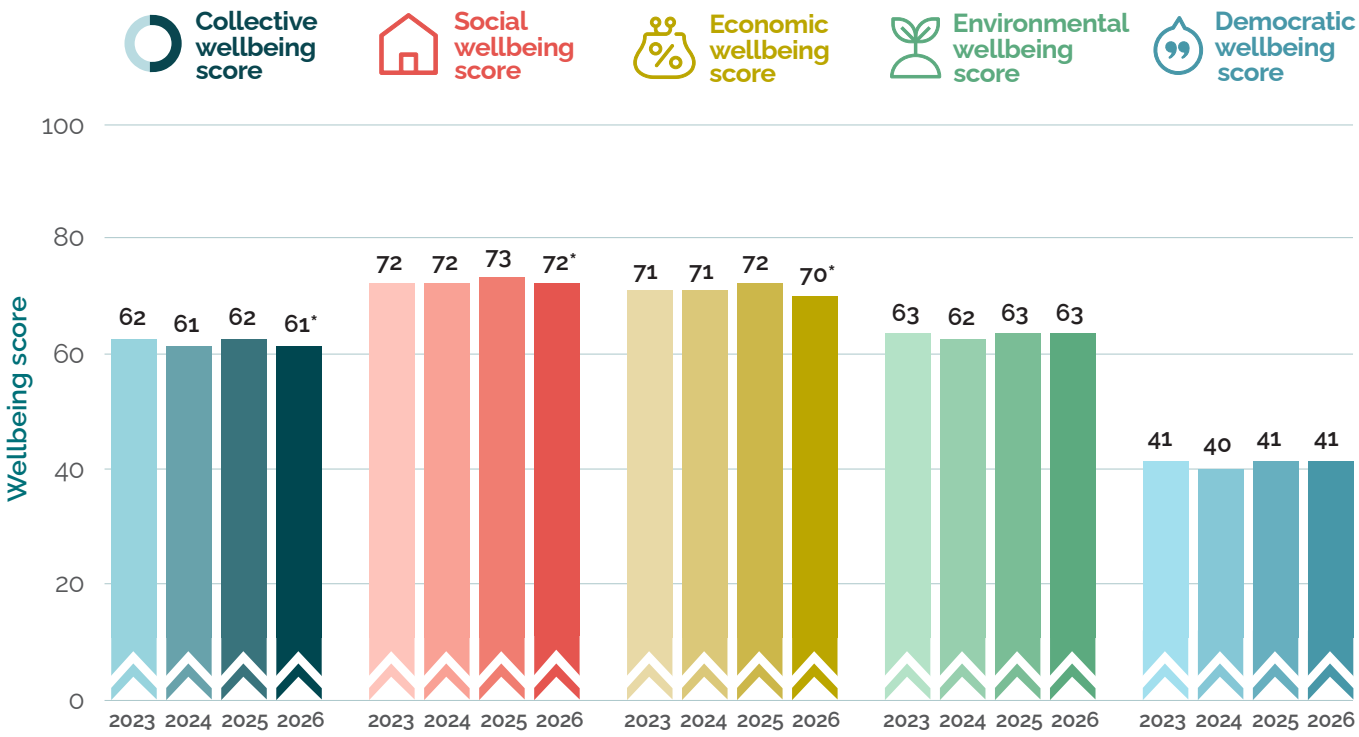
The overall score for collective wellbeing in the UK in 2026 is **61** out of a possible 100.



This score marks a drop from the 2025 results and is driven by decreases in both social and economic wellbeing. Democratic wellbeing remains at the same level as 2025, and environmental wellbeing has remained stagnant since 2023.

While we saw signs of progress in 2025, this year's results show some negative movements. We know that changes to collective wellbeing take time and that it is shaped by a range of different factors, but the overall pattern suggests that things are not improving – and in some important areas they are getting worse.

Figure 1: Life in the UK results since 2023.



**denotes statistically significant difference between 2026 and 2025 score at the 95% level. Due to rounding some of the differences between years are statistically significant, while others are not. For example, between 2024 and 2025 democratic wellbeing increased from 40.4 to 41.3 (a statistically significant +0.9-point change), while environmental wellbeing increased from 62.1 to 62.6 (a non-significant +0.5-point change).*

Understanding what influences collective wellbeing

This year's results present a concerning overall decline in the collective wellbeing of people in the UK for the first time since we started running this survey in 2023. We know from previous years that positive change is possible, and that effective policy and practice can support better wellbeing. However, progress is fragile, and concerted and consistent effort is needed to ensure that gains are maintained and built on over time. The 2026 results, particularly the declines in social and economic wellbeing since last year, point toward shaky foundations that must be strengthened in order to support progress.

The index also tells us that people's experience of life in the UK varies substantially according to their circumstances, highlighting the reality of inequality between people and within communities across the UK.

In 2026 the following factors stand out as particularly significant in predicting a lower or higher collective wellbeing score:

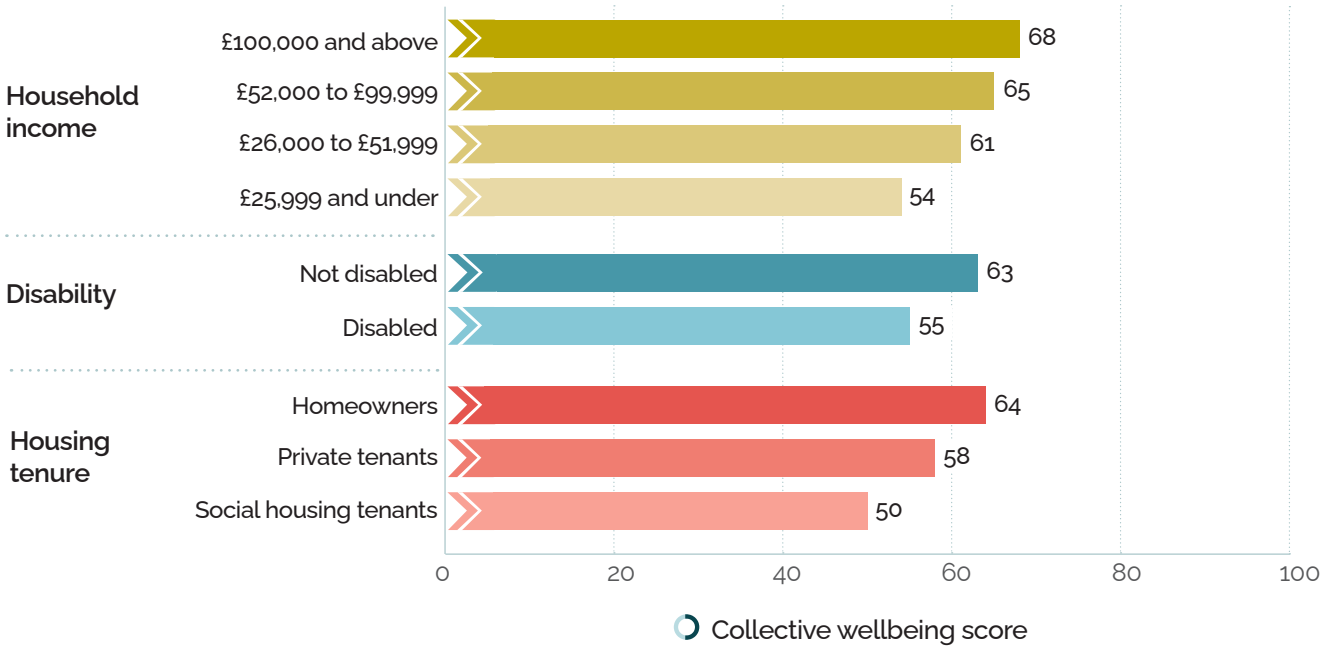
- **Having a higher household income.** People with annual household incomes of £100,000 and above have a collective wellbeing score of **68**. This is 14 points higher than for those with an annual household income under £26,000, who have a collective wellbeing score of **54**. People with an annual household income of between £52,000 and £99,999 are also likely to have some of the highest collective wellbeing scores (**65**).
- **Being disabled.** Disabled people have an average collective wellbeing score of **55**, which is eight points lower than for people who are not disabled (**63**).
- **Living in social housing:** People who live in social housing have a collective wellbeing score of **50**. This is 14 points lower than for homeowners (**64**). Those who rent privately have a collective wellbeing score of **58**.
- **Living in the least deprived areas.** People who live in the least deprived areas (IMD5) have an average collective wellbeing score of **67**. This is 13 points higher than for people living in the most deprived areas (**54**).[1]

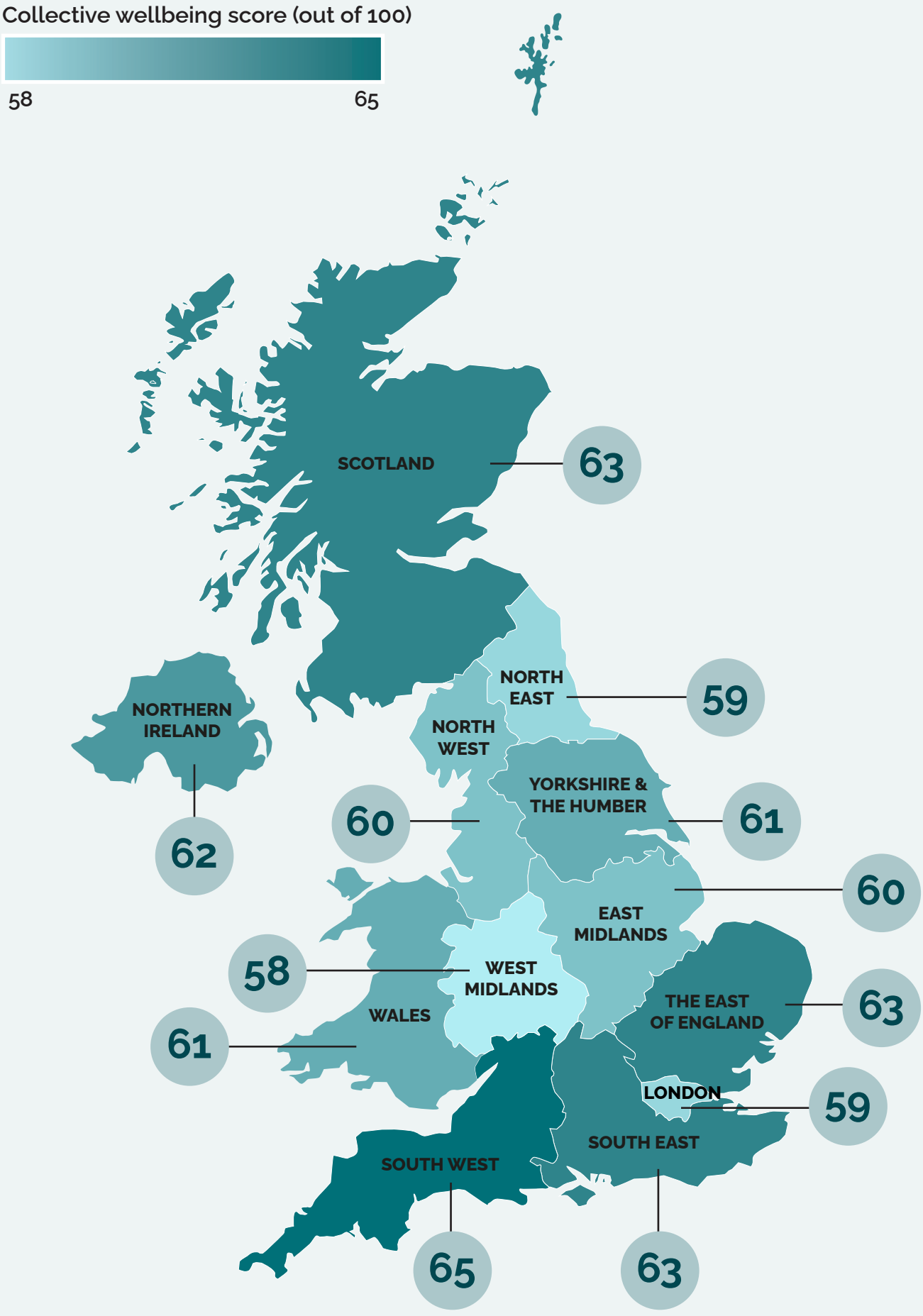
1 Indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) is a measure of relative deprivation for small, fixed geographic areas of the UK. IMD classifies these areas into five quintiles based on relative disadvantage, with quintile 1 ('IMD1') being the most deprived and quintile 5 ('IMD5') being the least deprived.

The following factors are also notable influences on people's collective wellbeing:

- **Being 55 or older.** People aged 55 and over have a collective wellbeing score of **65**. This is six points higher than for people aged 16 to 34 or 35 to 54 (each **59**).
- **Being a graduate.** Graduates have a collective wellbeing score of **64**, compared to **60** for non-graduates.
- **Living in an urban area.** People who live in urban areas have a collective wellbeing score of **60**, five points lower than for people living in rural areas (**65**).
- **Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or another sexuality that is not heterosexual (LGB+).** People who are LGB+ have a collective wellbeing score of **58**, four points lower than for those who are heterosexual (**62**).
- **Being a man.** Men have a collective wellbeing score of **63**, compared to **60** for women.
- **Being from an ethnic minority group, including White minorities.** People from an ethnic minority group have a collective wellbeing score of **58**, compared to **63** for those of White British ethnicity.

Figure 2. Factors that have the biggest impact on collective wellbeing

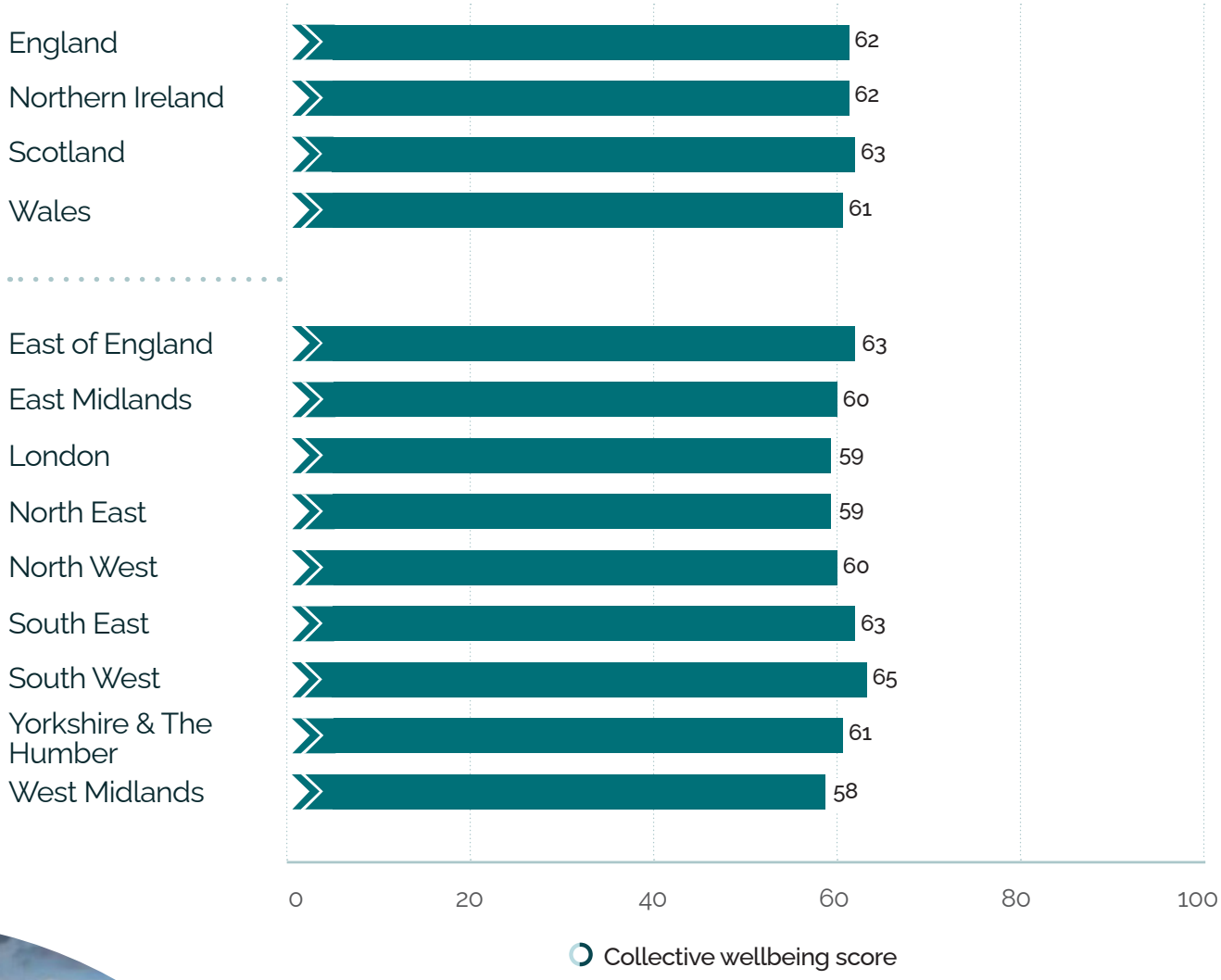




Map of collective wellbeing scores (out of 100) by region and jurisdiction.

The full visualisation of this map can be found on our website here.

Figure 3: Collective wellbeing scores by region and jurisdiction











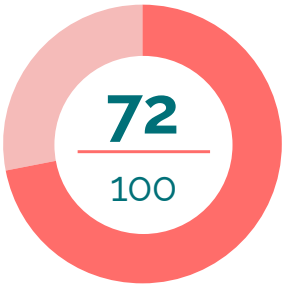
Social wellbeing in 2026

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

72

100





The UK scores 72 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 feeling healthy, having access to services, feeling safe in and connected with our communities, and being free from discrimination.

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

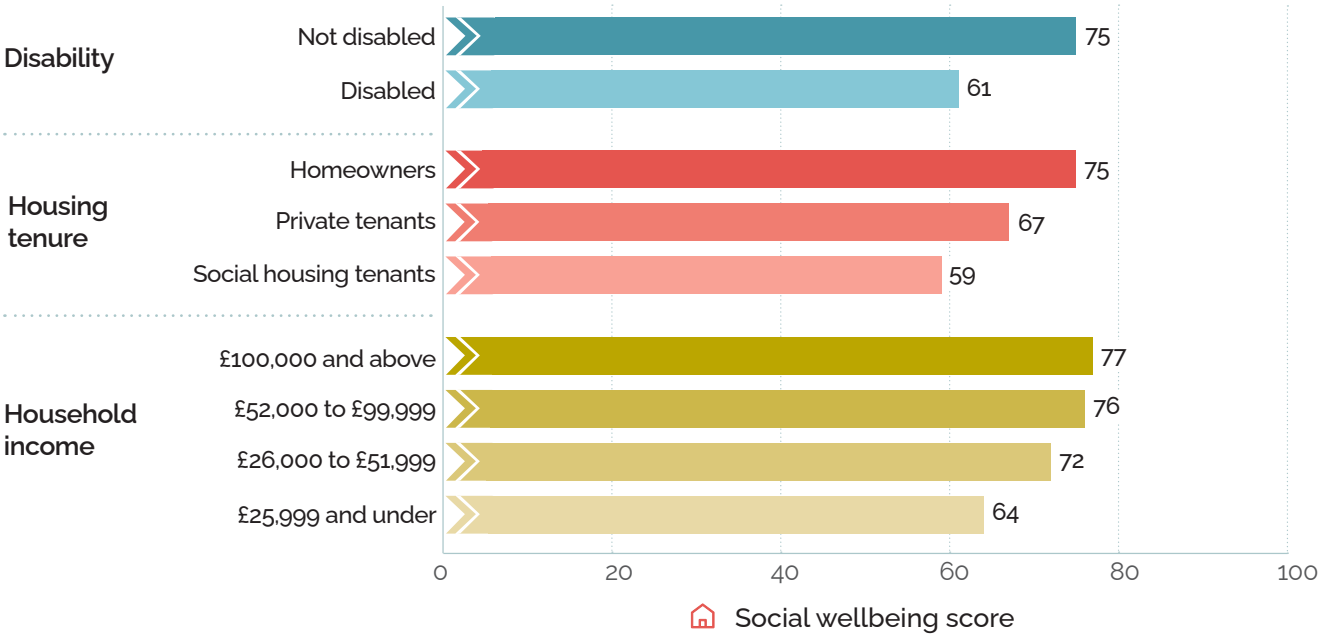
The groups most likely to experience **high** levels of social wellbeing in the UK in 2026 are:

- Those with household incomes of £100,000 and above a year, who have a social wellbeing score of **77,** 13 points higher than for those with household incomes of below £26,000 a year (**64**). Those with annual household incomes of £52,000 to £99,999 have a social wellbeing score of **76**, and those with annual household incomes of between £26,000 and £51,999 have a social wellbeing score of **72**.
- Those aged 55 and over, who have a social wellbeing score of **75**, four points higher than for people between the ages of 35 and 54 (**71**), and seven points higher than for those aged 16 to 34 (**68**).
- Those in the least deprived areas (IMD5), who have a social wellbeing score of **77**, compared to **65** for those in the most deprived areas. As area deprivation increases, social wellbeing scores decrease.
- Men, who have a social wellbeing score of **74**, four points higher than for women (**70**).
- Graduates, who have a social wellbeing score of **74**, three points higher than for non-graduates (**71**).

The groups most likely to experience **low** levels of social wellbeing in the UK in 2026 are:

- Disabled people, who have a social wellbeing score of **61**, which is 14 points lower than for people who are not disabled (**75**).
- People who live in social housing, who have a social wellbeing score of **59**. This is 16 points lower than for homeowners (**75**). Those who are private tenants have a social wellbeing score of **67**.
- LGB+ people, who have a social wellbeing score of **65**, eight points lower than for those who are heterosexual (**73**).
- People from an ethnic minority background, who have a social wellbeing score of **67**, six points lower than for those from a White British background (**73**).
- People in urban areas, who have a social wellbeing score of **70**, six points lower than for those who live in rural areas (**76**).

Figure 4. Factors that have the biggest impact on social wellbeing

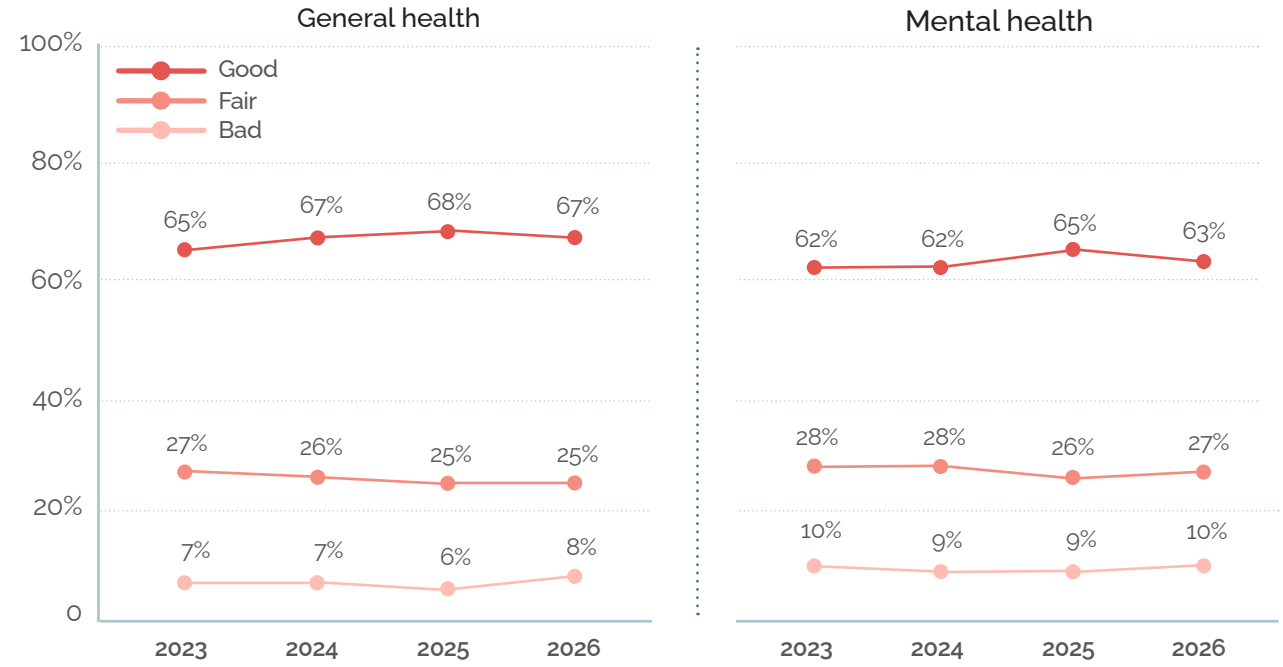


Social wellbeing: breakdown of results

Negative changes to some individual aspects of social wellbeing have compounded to result in lower overall social wellbeing.

The figures below show the trends since 2023 in the questions we ask around social wellbeing.

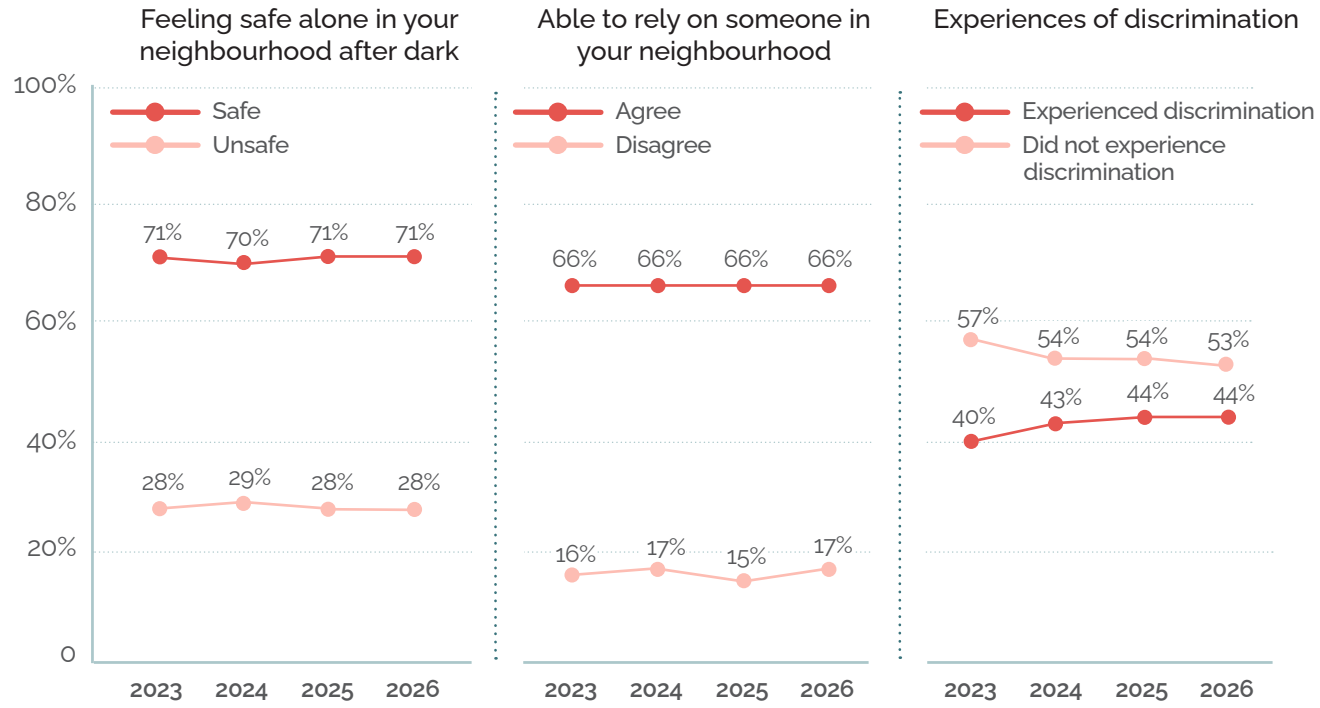
Figure 5. Perceptions of general and mental health



Qs: How is your health in general? And how would you describe your mental health in general?

- Overall, people are more likely to say that they have good general health (67%) than mental health (63%), a trend that has remained the same since the survey began.
- Nearly one in 10 (8%) people say they are in bad general health, two percentage points higher than in 2025, whilst one in ten (10%) say they experience poor mental health, similar to previous years.

Figure 6. Community cohesion



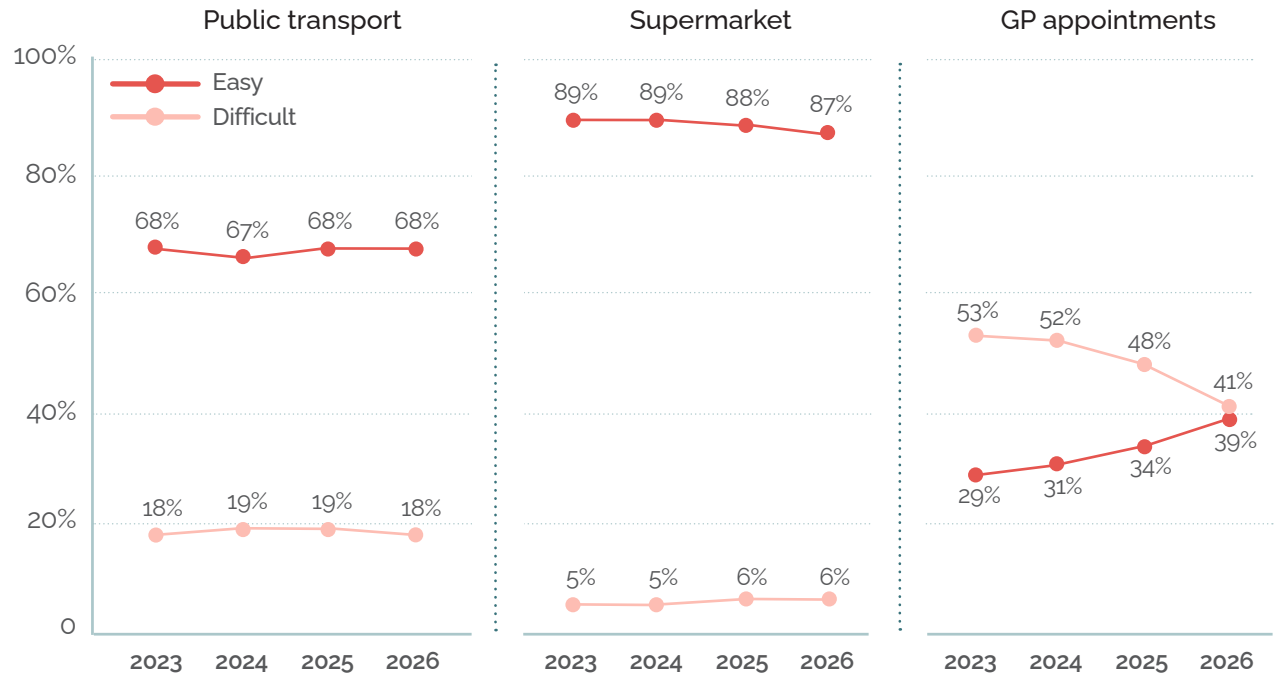
Q: How safe do you feel walking alone in your local neighbourhood after dark?

Q: To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statement? If I was alone and needed help, I could rely on someone in this neighbourhood to help me.

Q: How much, if at all, have you personally been unfairly treated or discriminated against in the last 12 months?

- 28% of people across the UK feel unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark, a figure which has remained at a similar level since the survey began.
- Although two-thirds (66%) of people agree that they are able to rely on someone in their neighbourhood to help them if they needed it, a substantial minority (17%) disagree.
- More than four in 10 (44%) people were unfairly treated or discriminated against in the last 12 months, similar to last year but four percentage points higher than in 2023.

Figure 7. Access to services[2]



Qs: Thinking of physical access, distance, opening hours and the like, how easy or difficult is it for you to: Access public transport (bus, metro, tram, train, etc.) that can get you to where you want to go; access a grocery shop or supermarket in person; get a GP appointment at a time when you need one.

- The proportion of people who find it easy to access public transport has not changed since the survey began, at just over two-thirds (68%).
- 87% find it easy to access a grocery shop or supermarket in 2026, two percentage points lower than in 2023 and 2024 (89%).
- Four in ten (39%) people now say that they find it easy to get a GP appointment at a time when they need one, five percentage points higher than in 2025 and 10 percentage points higher than in 2023. The gap between finding it easy and difficult to get a GP appointment has been closing.

2 The questions pertaining to access to public transport and GP appointments do not contribute to the overall social wellbeing score. See the technical report for more detail.

Summary

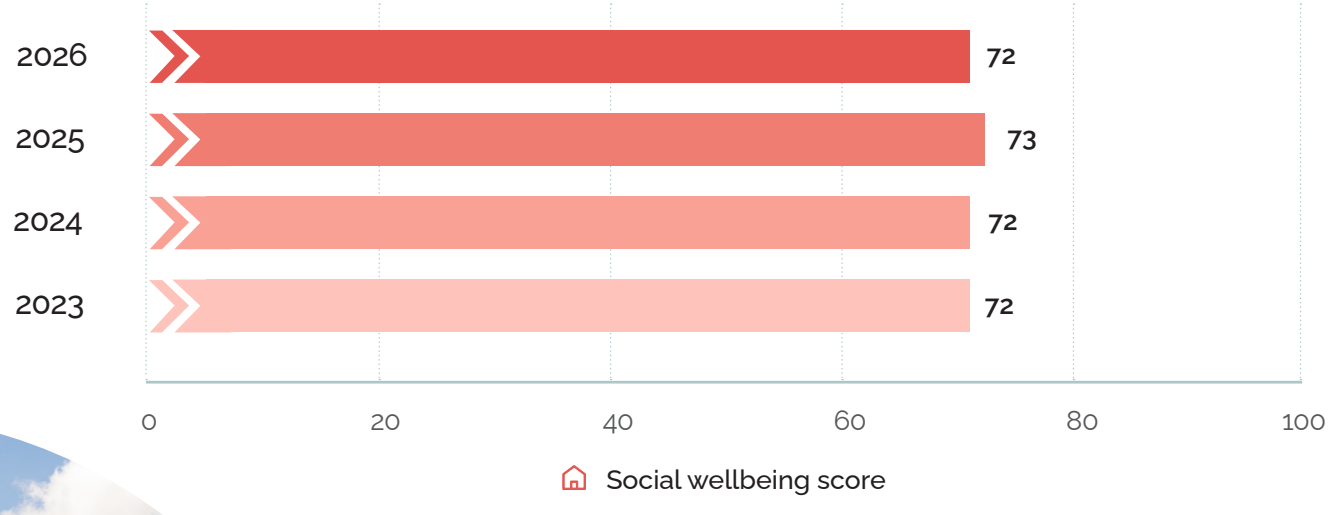
The UK's social wellbeing score is **72 out of 100** in 2026, one point lower than last year.

There is no single cause of this decline. Negative changes to some individual aspects of social wellbeing have compounded to result in lower overall social wellbeing.

The data shows that social wellbeing is not experienced equally. Disabled people, people living in both social and private rented housing, and people on low incomes continue to report lower levels of social wellbeing. New analysis for 2026 also shows that LGB+ people have lower social wellbeing scores than people who are heterosexual.

The cumulative impact of these changes means that, collectively, our social wellbeing has gone into decline. Too many people across the UK do not feel healthy, safe, and respected.

Figure 8. Social wellbeing scores over time





Economic wellbeing in 2026

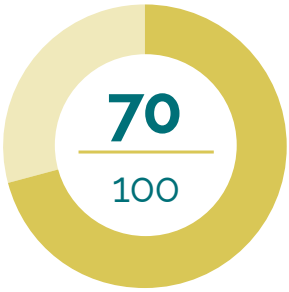
We all have a decent minimum living standard.



70

100





The UK scores 70 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 the UK, we asked questions about skills and job availability, and the affordability of essential items like food and fuel.

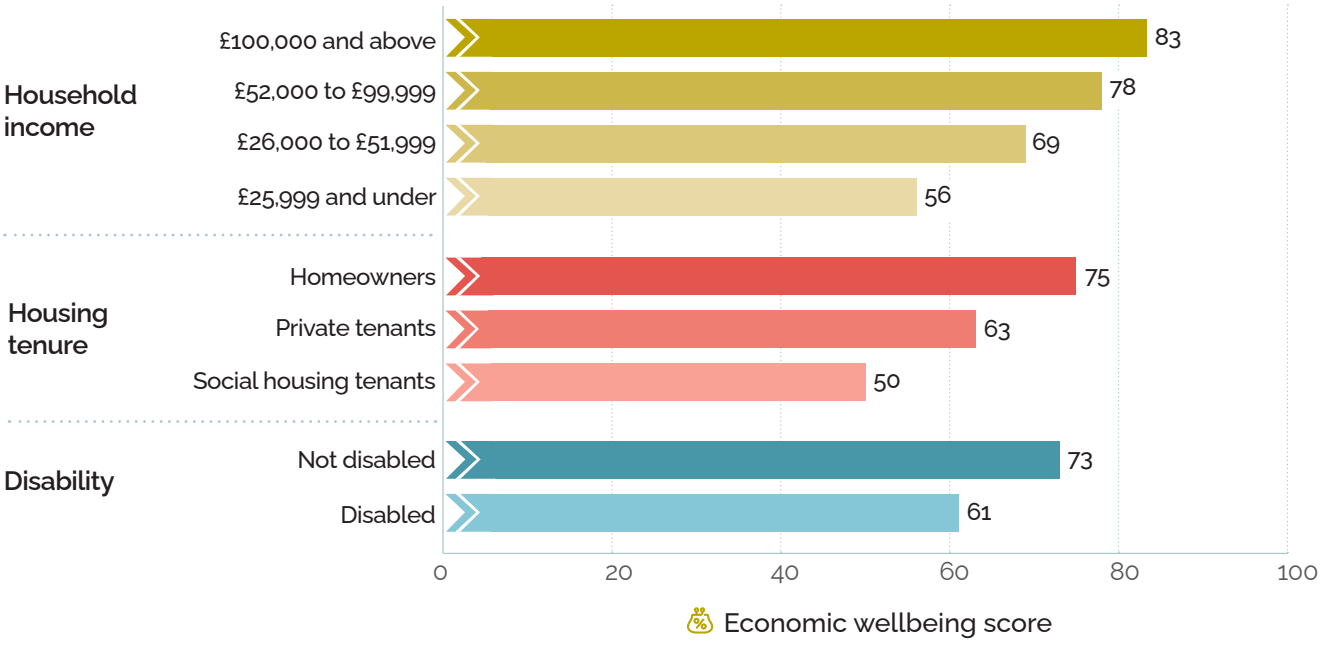
The people most likely to experience **high** levels of economic wellbeing in the UK in 2026 are:

- People with an annual household income of £100,000 and above, who have an economic wellbeing score of **83**. This is 27 points higher than for people with an annual household income of up to £25,999 (**56**). People with a household income of £52,000 to £99,999 have an economic wellbeing score of **78**.
- People aged 55 and over, who have an average economic wellbeing score of **75**. This is eight points higher than for those aged 35 to 54 (**67**). Those aged 16 to 34 have an economic wellbeing score of **68**.
- Graduates, who have an economic wellbeing score of **76**. This is eight points higher than for non-graduates (**68**).
- People who live in the least deprived areas (IMD5), who have an economic wellbeing score of **77**. This is 17 points higher than for people living in the most deprived areas (**60**).
- Men, who have an economic wellbeing score of **72**. This is four points higher than for women (**68**).

The groups most likely to experience **low** levels of economic wellbeing in the UK in 2026 are:

- People living in social housing, who have an economic wellbeing score of **50**. This is 25 points lower than the score for homeowners (**75**). Those who rent privately have an economic wellbeing score of **63**.
- Disabled people, who have an economic wellbeing score of **61**. This is 12 points lower than for people who are not disabled (**73**).
- People with children in the household, who have an economic wellbeing score of **66**, six points lower than for people with no children in the household (**72**). Households with more children have lower scores: people with three or more children under the age of 16 in the household have an economic wellbeing score of **60**, while those with two children in the household have a score of **66**, and those with one child have a score of **68**.
- People who are religious, who have an economic wellbeing score of **69**, three points lower than for those who have no religion (**72**).

Figure 9. Factors that have the biggest impact on economic wellbeing

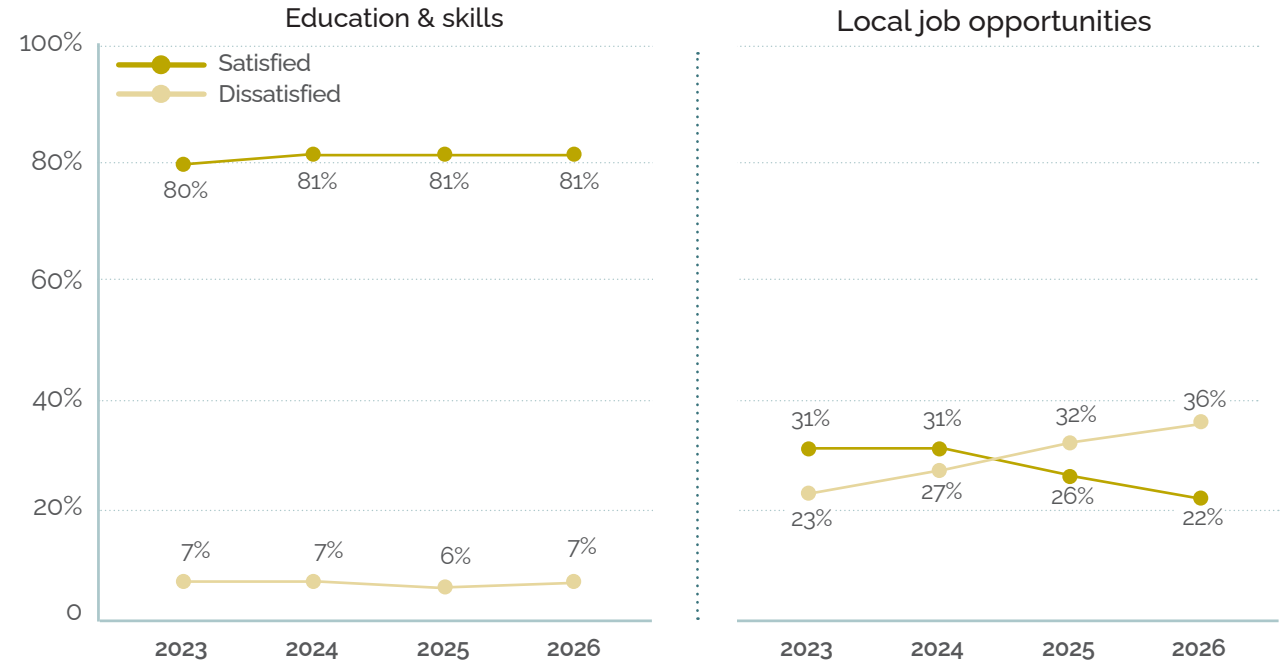


Economic wellbeing: breakdown of results

There has been a small but concerning drop in the number of people who say they can afford to pay for a decent minimum living standard, with many of the signs of progress that we saw in 2025 reversing.

The figures below show the trends since 2023 in the questions we ask around economic wellbeing.

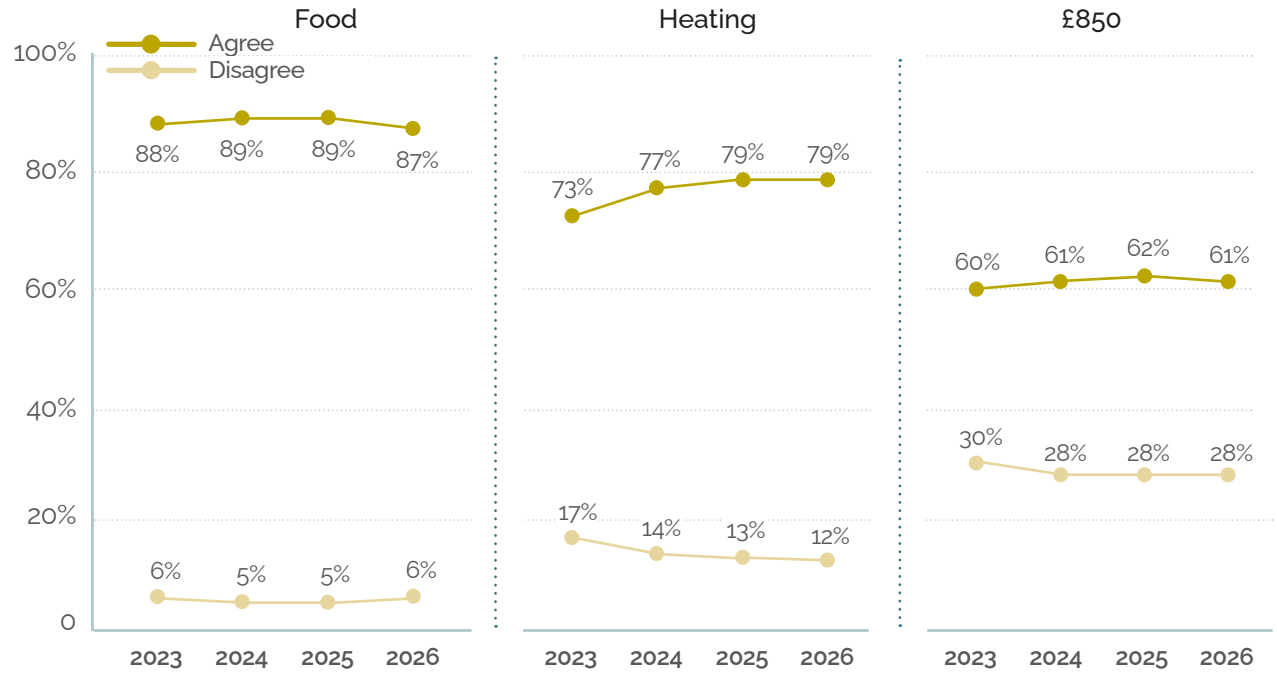
Figure 10. Perceptions of education, skills and local job opportunities



Q: How satisfied are you with your education and skills?
Q: Leaving aside whether you personally are looking for a job, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the availability of job opportunities for people in your local area?

- People have had high levels of satisfaction with their education and skills since the survey began, with around four in five saying they are satisfied with these (81% in 2026).
- Satisfaction with local job availability is now at the lowest level recorded since the survey began, at 22%. Meanwhile dissatisfaction now stands at 36% and is the worst level we have recorded over time.

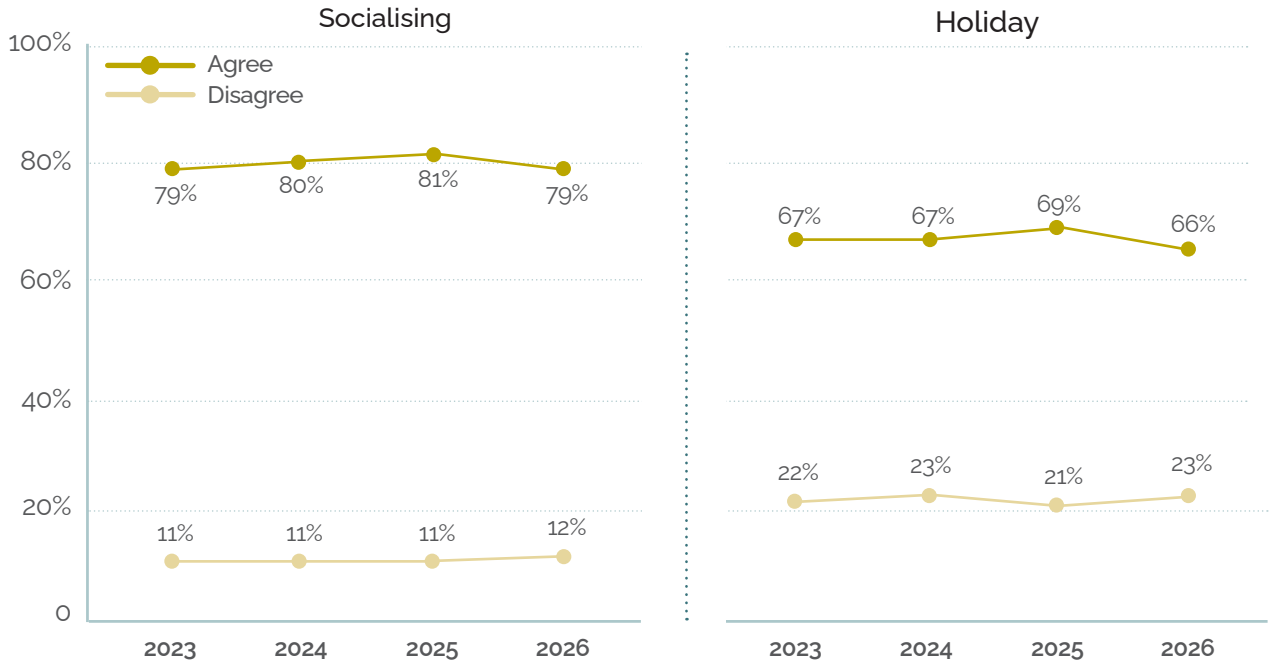
Figure 11. Affordability of essential items



Qs: There are some things that many people cannot afford, even if they would like them. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? My household can afford to buy enough food for everyone in the household; My household can afford to keep our home adequately warm (including in the winter months); My household can afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850.

- 87% of people can afford to buy enough food for everyone in the household, two percentage points lower than last year.
- The proportion of people who agree that they can afford to keep their house adequately warm remains at 79% whilst the level disagreeing with this is 12%, five percentage points lower than when the survey began in 2023.
- The proportion of people who say they could afford to pay for an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 has remained relatively stable over time, with three in five (61%) agreeing that they could. However, a sizeable minority (28%) could not afford this.

Figure 12. Affordability of leisure activites



Qs: There are some things that many people cannot afford, even if they would like them. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? My household can afford to socialise with friends or family outside of the home once a month if we want to; My household can afford to pay for a week's annual holiday away from home (not staying with relatives).

- After increasing in 2025, the proportion of people who can afford to socialise outside their home once a month has fallen back to 2023 levels (79%). Just over one in ten (11-12%) have consistently been unable to afford this since the survey began.
- Two-thirds of people (66%) can afford to pay for a week's annual holiday away from home, three percentage points lower than last year. A quarter (23%) say they cannot afford to do this.



Summary

Economic wellbeing in 2026 is **70 out of 100** and has decreased over the past year.

Economic wellbeing is not only about having a certain level of income. It encompasses the capacity to afford life's necessities, withstand financial shocks, access secure and fulfilling employment, and develop the skills needed for future opportunities.

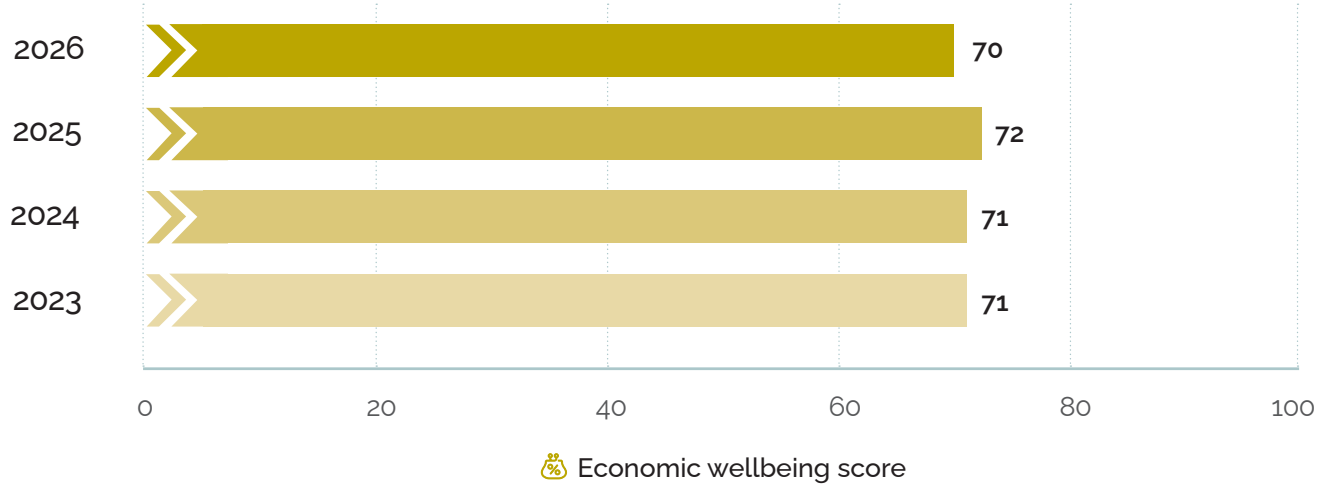
On the positive side, people still feel more able to keep their homes adequately warm than in 2023, and around the same proportion of people report being able to afford an unexpected expense of £850 as in previous years.

There have, however, been decreases in other areas of affordability. Fewer people feel able to pay for a week's annual holiday or for socialising with their friends or family outside of the home. Concerningly, there has also been a drop in the proportion of people who can afford to buy enough food for everyone in the household. These figures reflect the ongoing cost of living crisis experienced by households across the UK.

The proportion of people who are satisfied with local job availability is now at the lowest levels since Life in the UK began, with just over one in five saying they are satisfied compared to one in four last year and almost one in three in 2024.

These problems are also not evenly spread. Those on the lowest incomes, those living in social or private rented housing, and disabled people all continue to face worse economic wellbeing.

Figure 13. Economic wellbeing scores over time



Environmental wellbeing in 2026

We all live within the planet's natural resources.

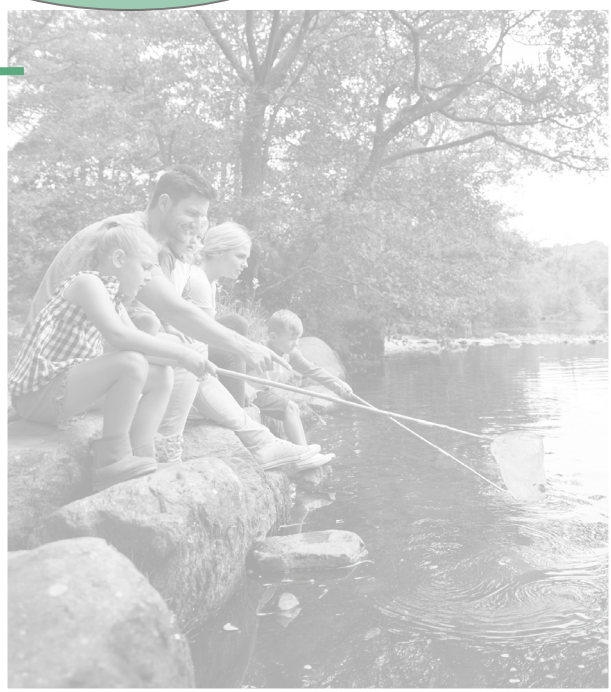


63

100









The UK scores 63 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 the UK, 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.

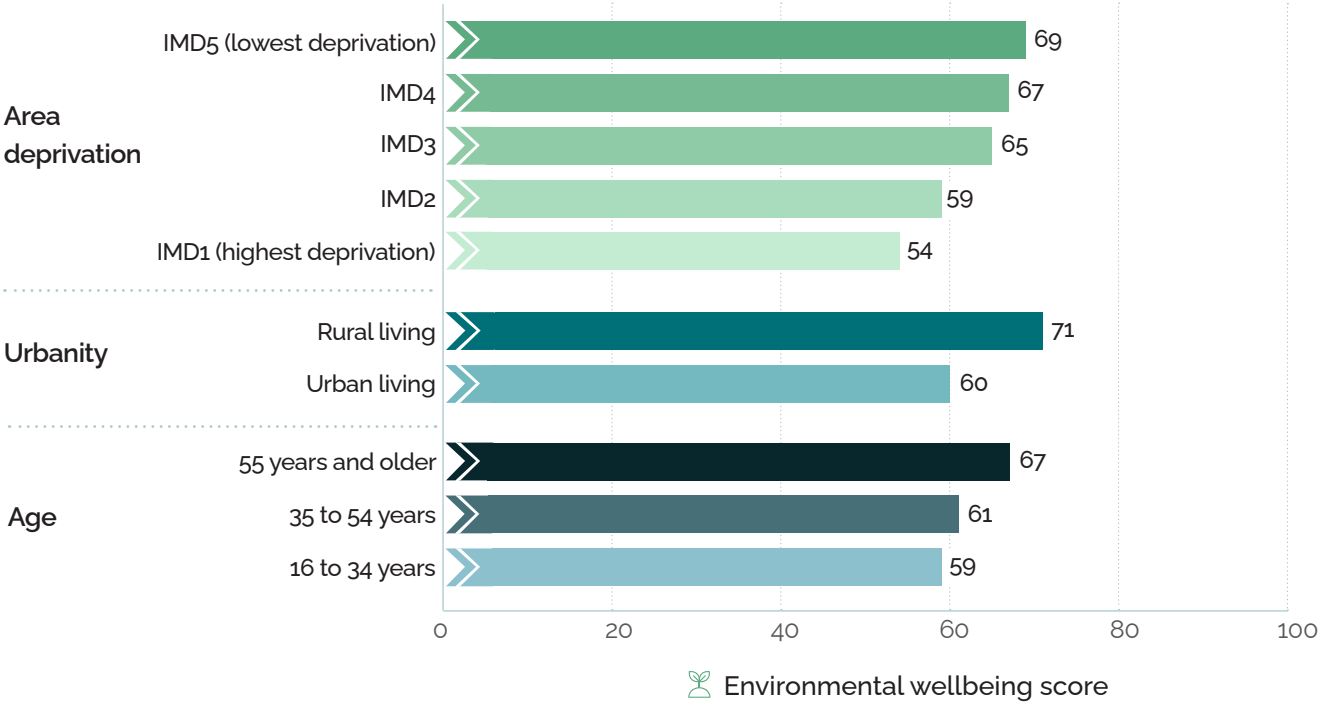
The people most likely to experience **high** levels of enivronmental wellbeing in the UK in 2026 are:

- People who live in rural areas, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **71**, 11 points higher than for those in urban areas (**60**).
- People aged 55 and over, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **67**. This is eight points higher than for those aged 16 to 34 (**59**), and six points higher than for those aged 35 to 54 (**61**).
- Graduates, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **64**, two points higher than for non-graduates (**62**).

The groups most likely to experience **low** levels of environmental wellbeing in the UK in 2026 are:

- Those who live in the most deprived areas (IMD1), who have an environmental wellbeing score of **54**, 15 points lower than for those who live in the least deprived areas (**69**).
- People who have an annual household income of up to £25,999, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **58**. This is eight points lower than for those with annual household incomes of above £52,000 (**66**), and five points lower than for those with an annual household income of between £26,000 and £51,999 (**63**).
- People from an ethnic minority background, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **57**, eight points lower than for those from White British background (**65**).
- Disabled people, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **59**, five points lower than for those who are not disabled (**64**).

Figure 14. Factors that have the biggest impact on environmental wellbeing



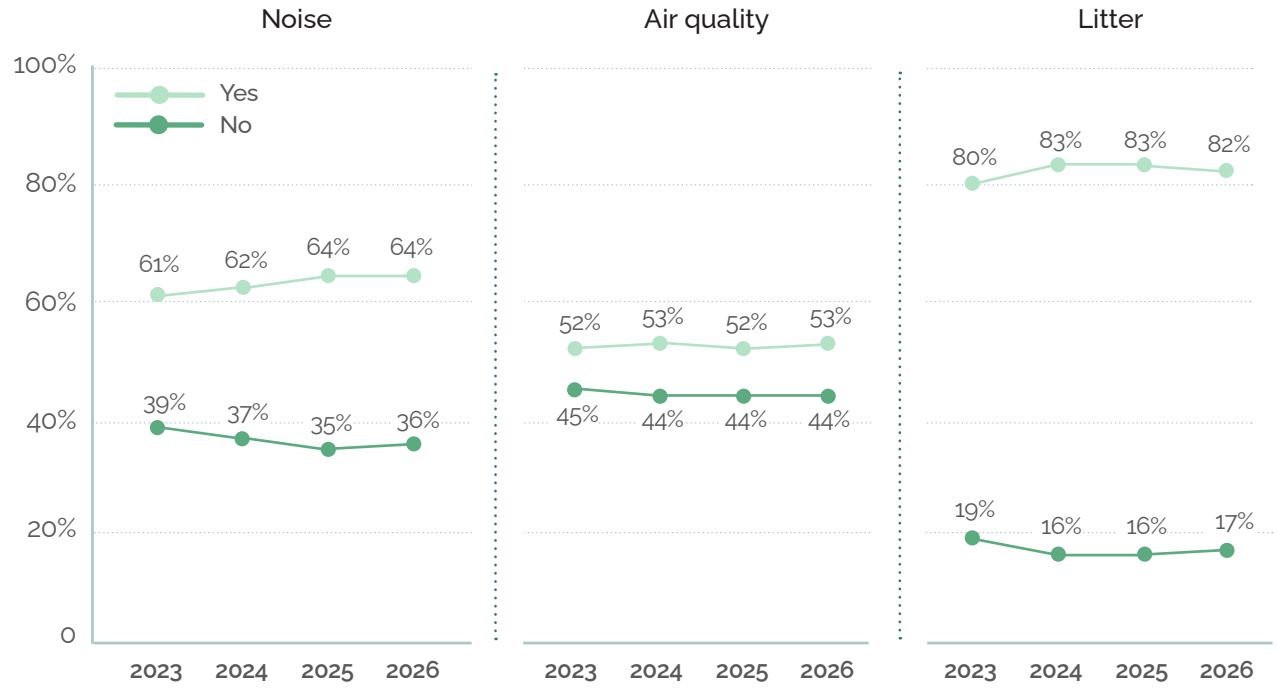


Environmental wellbeing: breakdown of results

People are not as dissatisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK as they were in previous years, but substantial problems with people's local environments remain.

The figures show the trends since 2023 in the questions we ask around environmental wellbeing.

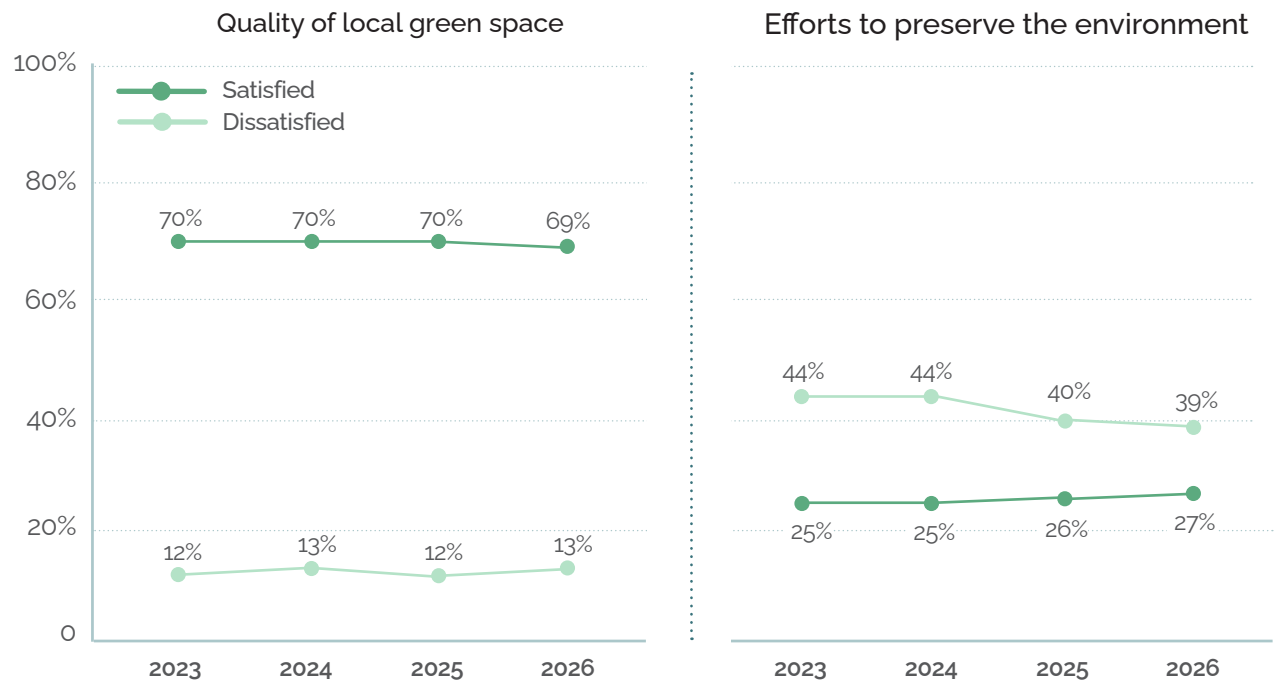
Figure 15. Issues with quality of local environment



Qs: Please think about your local neighbourhood. Do you have major, moderate, minor or no problems with the following? Noise; air quality; litter or rubbish on the street. Major, moderate and minor problems equate to yes; no problems equates to no.

- Just under two-thirds of people (64%) have experienced problems with noise in their local area whilst 36% have not.
- Over half (53%) of people experience issues with air quality in their local area, a figure which has remained relatively unchanged since the survey began.
- Of all three issues asked about, more people experience issues with litter in their local area (82%) than the other issues.

Figure 16. Perception of local public, green or open space and efforts to preserve the environment in the UK



Q: Please think about the public, green or open space in your local area that is nearest to your home, for example a park, countryside, wood, play area, canal path, riverside or beach. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of the space? This might include how well it meets your needs, whether it is safe, attractive, free of litter or other mess, and the quality of the facilities if there are any.

Q: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK?

- The level of those satisfied with the quality of their local public green, or open spaces has remained largely unchanged since the survey began, at 69% in 2026.
- Two in five (39%) are dissatisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK, similar to last year, but five percentage points lower than in 2023 and 2024.



Summary

Across the UK, widespread problems with noise pollution, air pollution, and litter or rubbish persist in people's local areas. While over two-thirds of people are satisfied with their local public, green, or open space, this still leaves room for improvement.

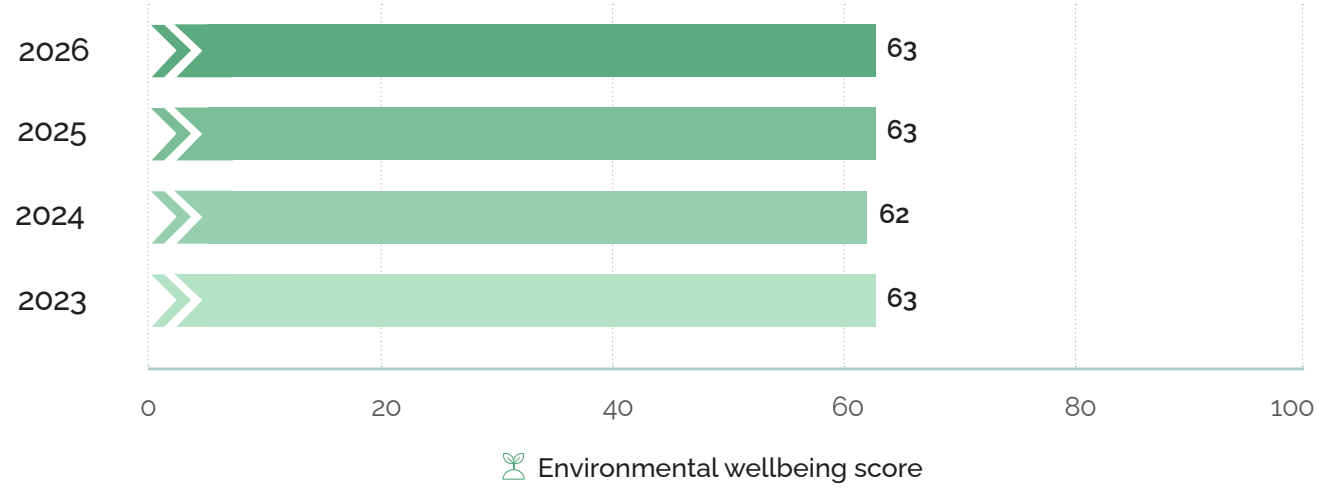
There is still only just over a quarter who say they are satisfied with broader efforts to preserve the environment in the UK.

As we have found in previous years and in other domains in this report, people's environmental wellbeing is shaped by many factors. Area deprivation, rurality and age have the biggest impact on environmental wellbeing.

Our data also shows that household income matters: those with household incomes of below £26,000 a year are likely to have lower environmental wellbeing than those with household incomes above this threshold.

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds (including white minorities) and disabled people face worse environmental wellbeing. These inequalities remain entrenched. Furthermore, new analysis for 2026 shows that graduates are likely to have higher environmental wellbeing than non-graduates.

Figure 17. Environmental wellbeing scores over time



Democratic wellbeing in 2026

We all have a voice in decisions that affect us.

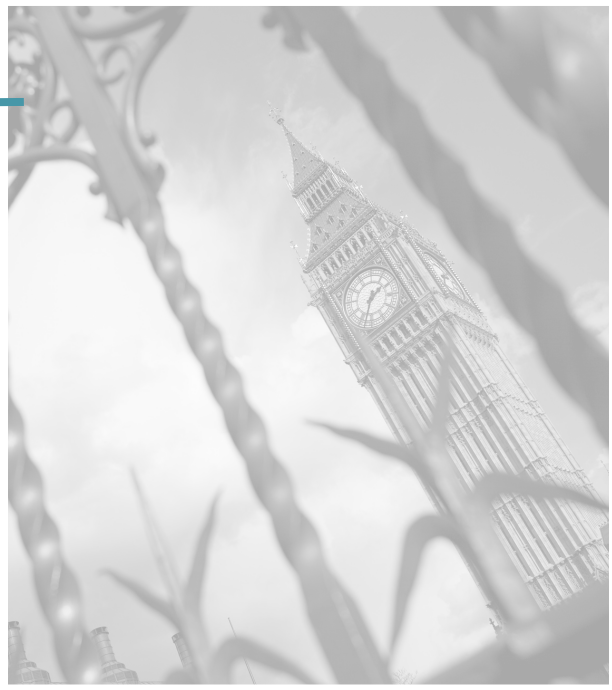




41



100





The UK scores 41 out of a possible 100 for democratic wellbeing.

Democratic wellbeing is about everyone having a voice in decisions 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 2026, we asked questions about levels of trust in local, regional and national government(s) as well as other national institutions, and perceptions of personal ability to influence decisions.

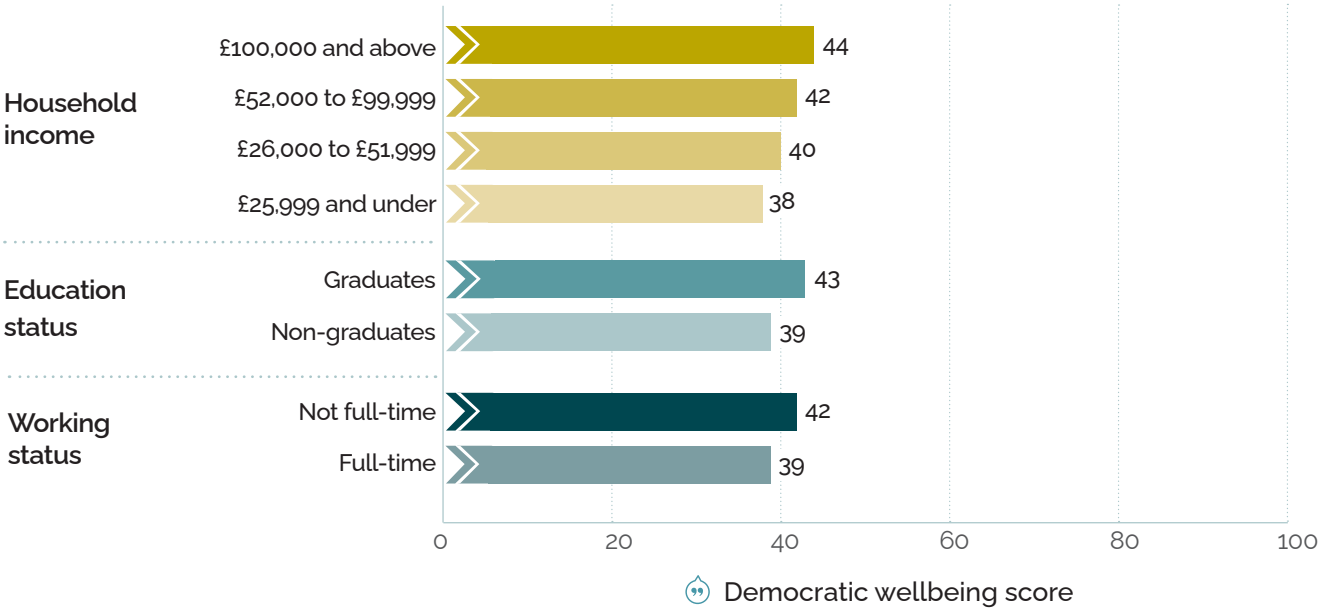
While markedly low across the board, and the lowest of any of our four wellbeing domains, the people with the **highest** levels of democratic wellbeing in the UK in 2026 are:

- People with a household income of £100,000 and above a year, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **44**. This is six points higher than for people with an annual household income of less than £26,000 per year (**38**). Those with an annual household income of between £52,000 and £99,999 have a democratic wellbeing score of **42**, and those with an annual household income of between £26,000 and £51,999 have a democratic wellbeing score of **40**.
- Graduates, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **43**, four points higher than for non-graduates (**39**).

The groups most likely to experience **low** levels of democratic wellbeing in the UK in 2026 are:

- People who work full-time, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **39**, three points lower than for those who do not work full-time (**42**).
- Disabled people, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **37**, five points lower than for those who are not disabled (**42**).
- People who live in the most deprived areas (IMD1), who have a democratic wellbeing score of **37**, six points lower than for those in the least deprived areas (**43**).

Figure 18. Factors that have the biggest impact on democratic wellbeing

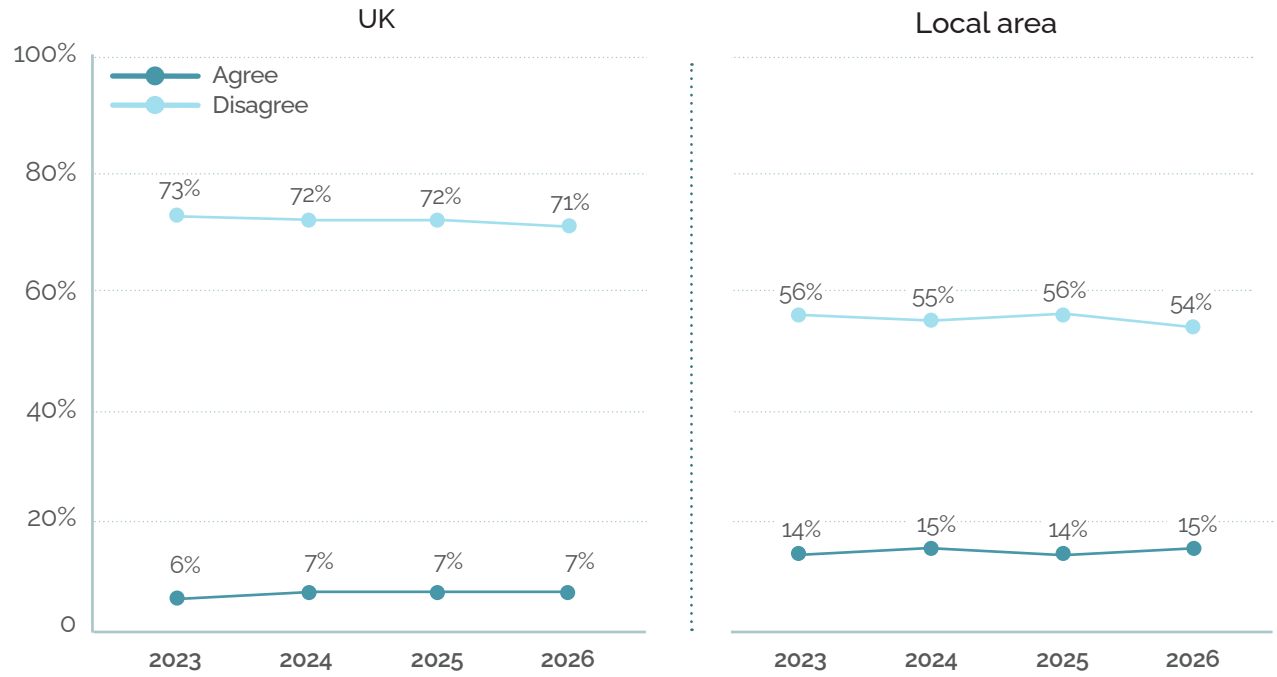


Democratic wellbeing: breakdown of results

The proportion of people feeling they can influence decisions affecting the UK has remained consistent since 2024. Trust in the UK Government remains higher than in 2023 and 2024. Trust in most other institutions remains stagnant or deteriorating.

The figures below show the trends since 2023 in the questions we ask around democratic wellbeing.

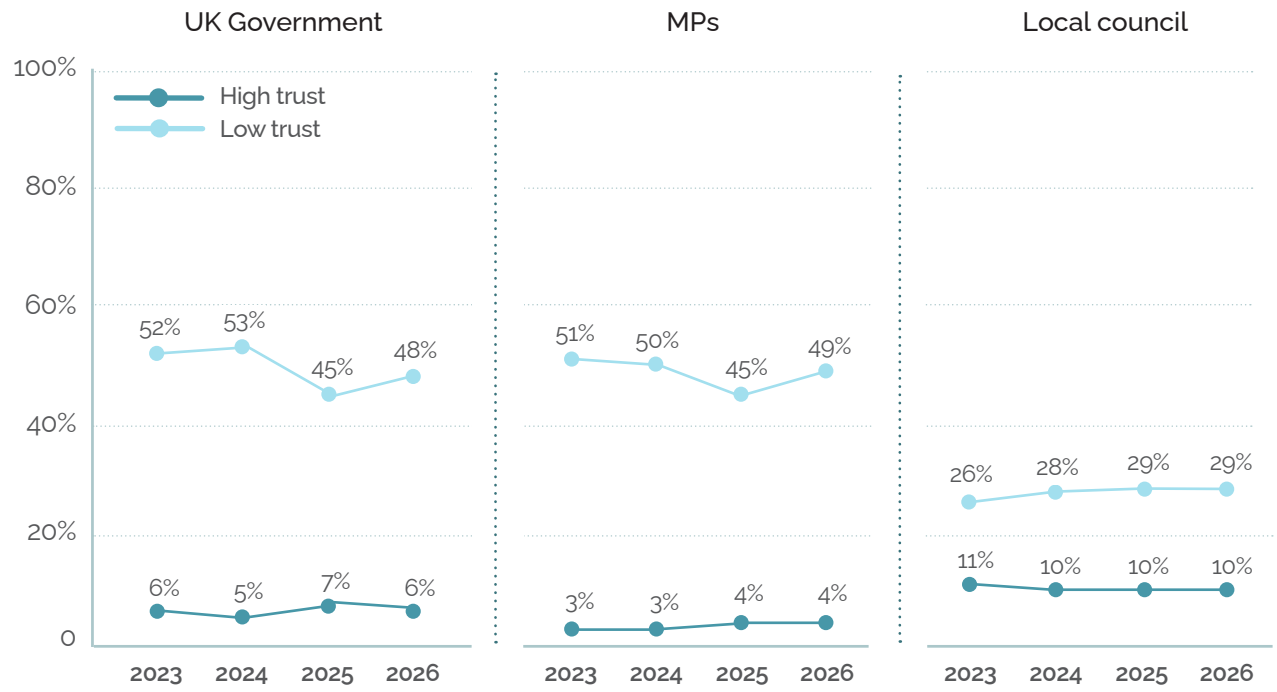
Figure 19. Perceptions of ability to influence decisions



Qs: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I can influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole; I can influence decisions affecting my local area.

- Only 7% feel they can influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole, unchanged since 2024.
- Only 15% feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area, similar to previous years.

Figure 20. Trust in governments and politicians[3]

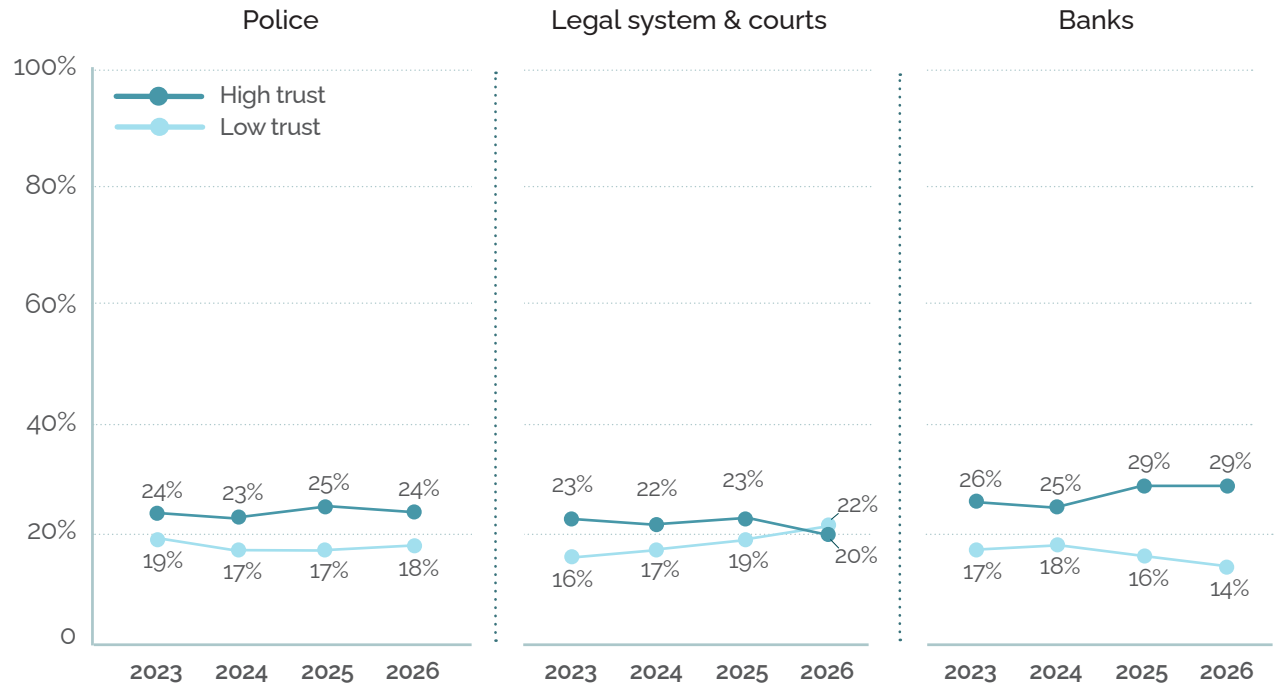


Qs: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust each of the following? UK Government; MPs; the local council for your area. Scores of 1 to 3 equate to low trust; 4 to 7 to medium trust; 8 to 10 to high trust.

- Nearly half (48%) of people have **low** trust in the UK Government, an improvement compared to 2023 and 2024 but three percentage points higher than in 2025.
- Trust in MPs has seen a small improvement compared to 2023, but low trust remains common in 2026.
- Three in ten (29%) people now have low trust in the local council for their area in 2026.

3 The question pertaining to trust in MPs does not contribute to the overall democratic wellbeing score. See the technical report for more detail.

Figure 21. Trust in institutions

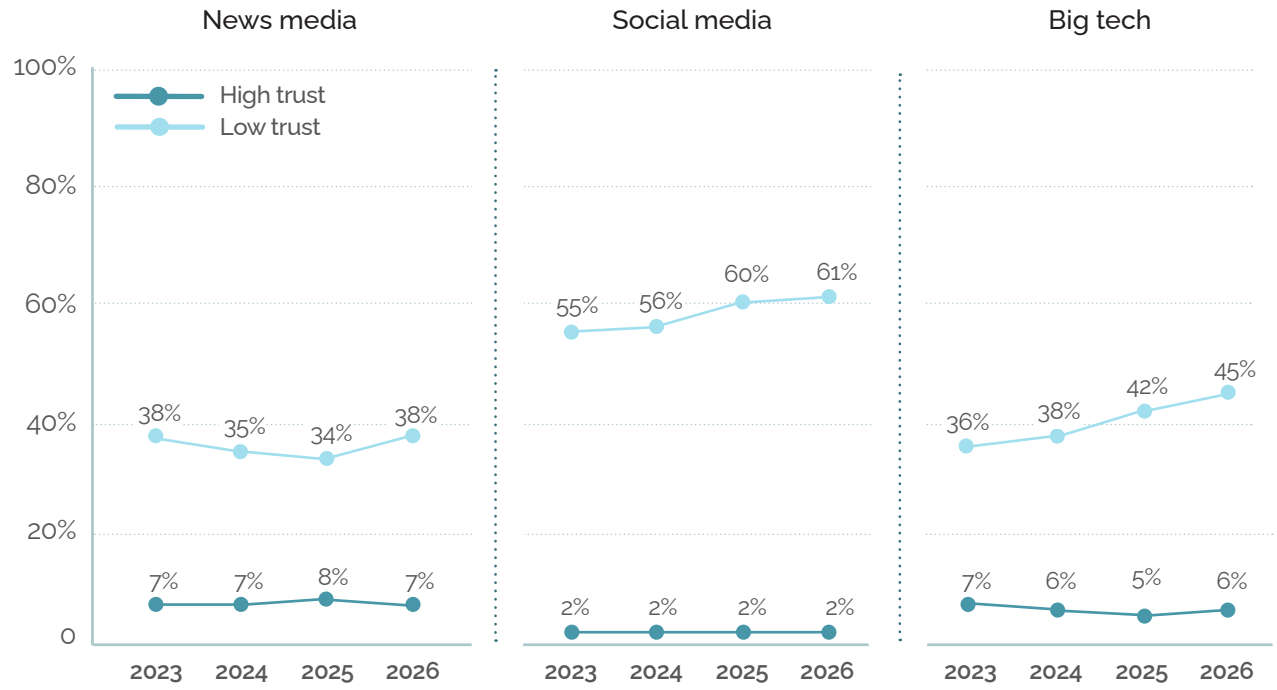


Qs: Where 1 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust each of the following? The police; the legal system and courts; banks. Scores of 1 to 3 equate to low trust; 4 to 7 to medium trust; 8 to 10 to high trust.

- Trust in the police has remained relatively stable over time, with around a quarter (24%) having high trust and just under one in five (18%) having low trust.
- More than one in five (22%) have low trust in the legal system and courts, three percentage points higher than last year. This level is now the worst it has been since the survey began.
- Trust in banks has improved since 2023 and 2024, with 29% now saying they have high trust and 14% saying they have low trust.



Figure 22. Trust in media and tech[4]



Qs: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust each of the following? The news media (e.g. TV, radio, newspapers); social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, TikTok); big tech companies (e.g. Google, Apple). Scores of 1 to 3 equate to low trust; 4 to 7 to medium trust; 8 to 10 to high trust.

- Four in ten (38%) people have low trust in the news media, a score which has worsened by four percentage points since last year. Only 7% say they have high trust in news media, a figure which has remained relatively unchanged since the survey began.
- Six in ten (61%) people now have low trust in social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, TikTok). Only 2% have high trust in social media, unchanged since the survey began.
- Nearly half (45%) of people now have low trust in big tech companies (e.g. Google, Apple), a figure that has increased each year since 2023.

4 The questions pertaining to trust in social media and big tech do not contribute to the overall democratic wellbeing score. See the technical report for more detail.

Summary

As we have seen in all previous years of Life in the UK, democratic wellbeing scores are lower than those in any other area of wellbeing. Once more, this points to widespread disengagement and lack of trust in the institutions that shape our lives.

Several of the small improvements we saw last year have flattened this year, with the proportion of people saying that they have low trust in the UK Government and MPs creeping backwards.

The proportion of people who have low trust in councils has remained stagnant since 2024. While trust in local councils is consistently better than trust in the UK Government this is nonetheless a concerning status quo. Likewise, at both a national and a local level, it is once again the case that very few people feel able to influence decisions that affect them.

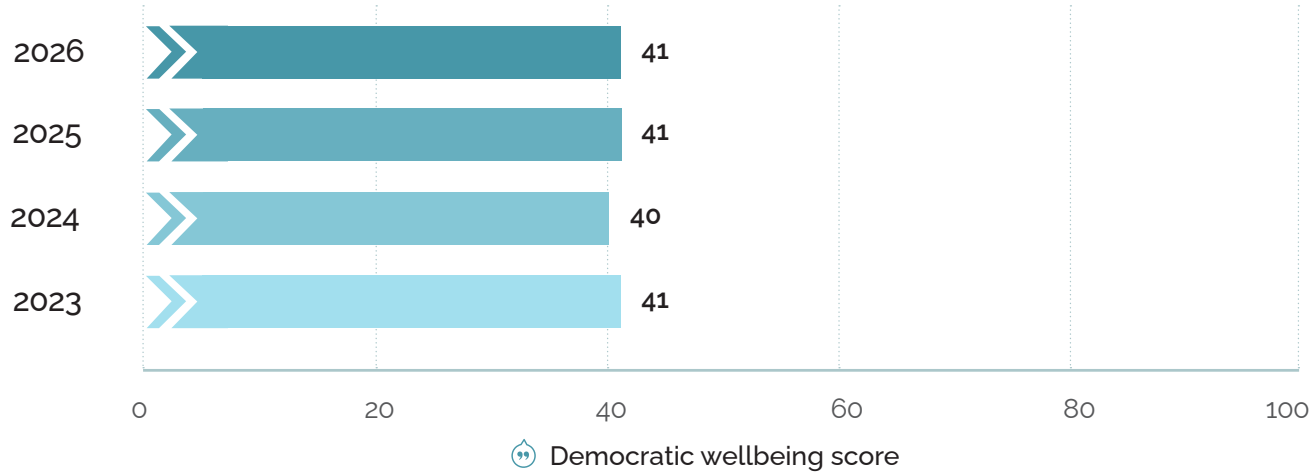
Other key institutions like the legal system, the news media, the police, and banks also play a key role in our democratic wellbeing. These institutions generally remain more trusted than those of the UK Government. However, trust in the legal systems and courts has fallen this year.

Similarly, trust in the news media has worsened this year, as has trust in big tech. As we saw in 2025, trust in social media remains low.

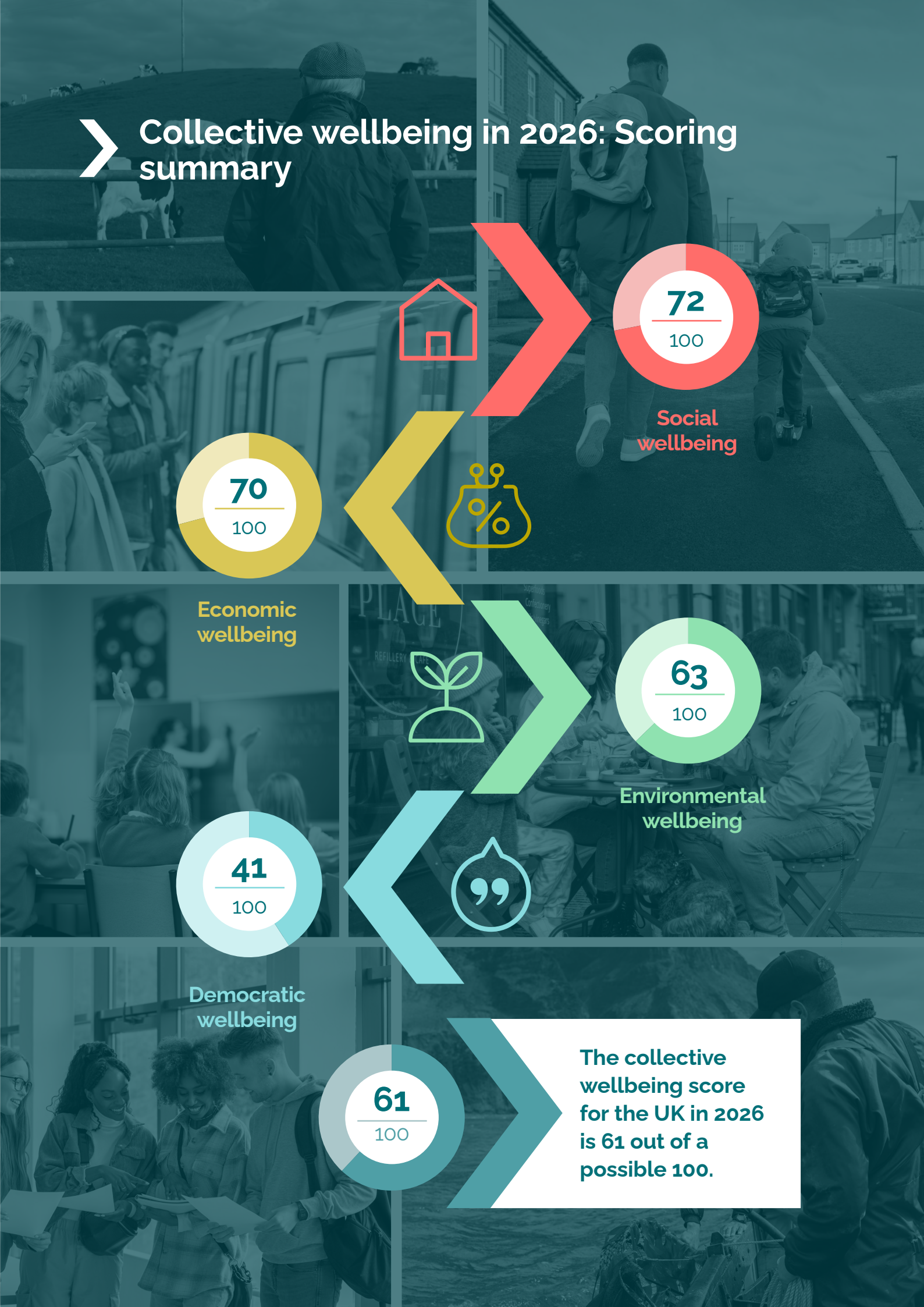
Combined, this paints a picture of a society in which people feel unable to trust many of the systems that they encounter as part of everyday life.

There are also notable inequalities within democratic wellbeing. People with higher household incomes remain likely to have higher democratic wellbeing. New analysis for 2026 shows that both graduates and those who do not work full time also have higher democratic wellbeing than non-graduates and those who work full time, respectively. Democratic wellbeing also remains lower among disabled people and those living in the most deprived areas.

Figure 23. Democractic wellbeing scores over time



Collective wellbeing in 2026: Scoring summary



72
100

Social wellbeing

70
100

Economic wellbeing

63
100

Environmental wellbeing

41
100

Democratic wellbeing

61
100

The collective wellbeing score for the UK in 2026 is 61 out of a possible 100.

Summary table of domain scores by key demographic characteristics

		Collective wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Environmental wellbeing	Democratic wellbeing
	Total	**61**	**72**	**70**	**63**	**41**
Disability	Not disabled	63	75	73	64	42
	Disabled	55	61	61	59	37
Age	16-34 years	59	68	68	59	41
	35-54 years	59	71	67	61	39
	55 years & over	65	75	75	67	42
Household Income	£25,999 and under	54	64	56	58	38
	£26,000 to £51,999	61	72	69	63	40
	£52,000 to £99,999	65	76	78	66	42
	£100,000 & above	68	77	83	66	44
Area deprivation	IMD1 (highest deprivation)	54	65	60	54	37
	IMD2	59	69	67	59	40
	IMD3	63	73	71	65	41
	IMD4	65	75	75	67	42
	IMD5 (lowest deprivation)	67	77	77	69	43
Housing tenure	Social rented	50	59	50	54	35
	Private rented	58	67	63	59	40
	Homeowners	64	75	75	65	41
Gender	Women	60	70	68	62	40
	Men	63	74	72	63	41
Ethnicity	White British	63	73	72	65	41
	Ethnic minorities (including White minorities)	58	67	65	57	41
Children	One child in household	60	71	68	60	41
	Two children in household	59	72	66	61	40
	Three or more children in household	56	67	60	59	40
	No children in household	62	72	72	64	41

cont.

		Collective wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Environmental wellbeing	Democratic wellbeing
Urbanity	Urban living	60	70	69	60	41
	Rural living	65	76	73	71	41
Education	Graduate	64	74	76	64	43
	Non-graduate	60	71	68	62	39
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	62	73	71	63	41
	Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (LGB+)	58	65	68	59	41
Religion	Religious	61	72	69	63	41
	No religion	62	72	72	63	40
Working	Full-time	61	73	72	62	39
	Not working full-time	61	71	69	63	42









Life in the UK 2026









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