


# Life in the UK
# Scotland 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 parliamentary elections in Scotland.

## Method

- The evidence for the 2026 index was collected via a 26-question survey of 6,731 respondents across the UK 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 similar sample sizes, with fieldwork always conducted at a comparable time each year, in May. The Scotland sample sizes for each year are as follows:
  - 2023: 1,132
  - 2024: 1,109
  - 2025: 1,035
  - 2026: 1,046
- Samples were stratified to achieve a reasonable representation of respondents by age, education and ethnicity. 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. It should be noted 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.*






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# Introduction: Life in the UK - Scotland 2026

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

Encouragingly, Scotland's overall collective wellbeing score has held steady at **63**, sustaining the improvement recorded in 2025 and sitting above the 61 recorded in both England and Wales this year. Environmental wellbeing has also improved compared to 2023, reaching **67**.

While there have been no changes in the other three domain scores this year, Scotland has avoided many of the losses that are seen in other parts of the UK. Social wellbeing is at **74**, in line with scores seen in previous years, and economic wellbeing is similar to previous years at **71**. Beneath this headline economic wellbeing finding, there has been a welcome improvement since 2023 in the proportion of people in Scotland who are able to afford to keep their home adequately warm, or to afford an unexpected expense of £850.

Democratic wellbeing once again remains concerningly low at **40**. More than half of people in Scotland have low trust in the UK Government – though this still represents an improvement since 2023 and 2024 – but trust in the Scottish Government, which was elected shortly before this Life in the UK survey was undertaken, has improved since last year.

For Scotland, this paints a mixed picture of how people are living today. While there have been some improvements, there have also been some losses, particularly in relation to how satisfied people are with the availability of local job opportunities.

Wellbeing is affected by factors like income, disability status, and where you live; improvements are not shared equally, and some people experience downturns more acutely, often for reasons entirely outwith their control.



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 Scotland to help make progress towards that goal. The anticipated refresh of the National Performance Framework provides the ideal opportunity for the Scottish Government to embed more effective wellbeing measurement, and to use that data to help deliver meaningful improvements to people's lives in Scotland.

**Sarah Davidson**
CEO, Carnegie UK

# Our collective wellbeing in Scotland 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.



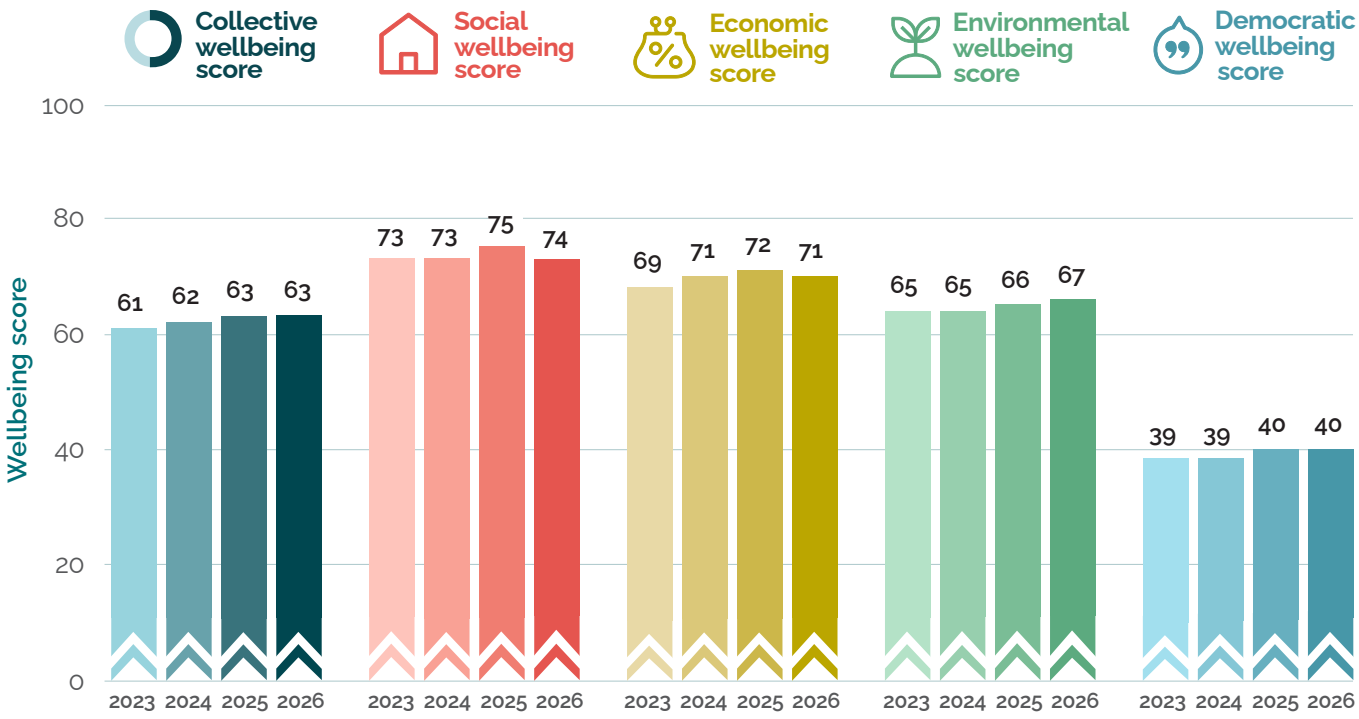

The overall score for collective wellbeing in Scotland in 2026 is **63** out of a possible 100. We saw this improve last year from the 2023 score and this increase has been sustained in 2026.

Social wellbeing has remained broadly unchanged since the first edition of Life in the UK in 2023, as has democratic wellbeing. Economic wellbeing has remained the same as it was in 2025 and is higher than it was in 2023.

Environmental wellbeing has also improved since 2023, with fewer people experiencing problems with air quality, and less dissatisfaction with efforts made to preserve the environment in the UK.

Collective wellbeing and each of its domains are shaped by a wide range of factors, many of which take time to influence outcomes. The sustained improvement in collective wellbeing is therefore a welcome finding from this year's survey, as is the gradual progress in environmental wellbeing.

Figure 1: Life in the UK - Scotland results since 2023




*Due to rounding some of the differences between years are statistically significant, while others are not. For example, between 2024 and 2025 economic wellbeing increased from 71.2 to 72.1 (a statistically significant +0.9-point increase), while environmental wellbeing increased from 65.4 to 66.0 (a non-significant +0.6-point change).*

# Understanding what influences collective wellbeing

Positive gains have been seen, and maintained, in Scotland since the first Life in the UK index in 2023. These trends show us that change is possible, and that small improvements across a variety of different areas have the potential to shape overall collective wellbeing.

The index also tells us that people experience very different levels of wellbeing depending on their circumstances, and that life in Scotland is still shaped by inequalities between and within communities.



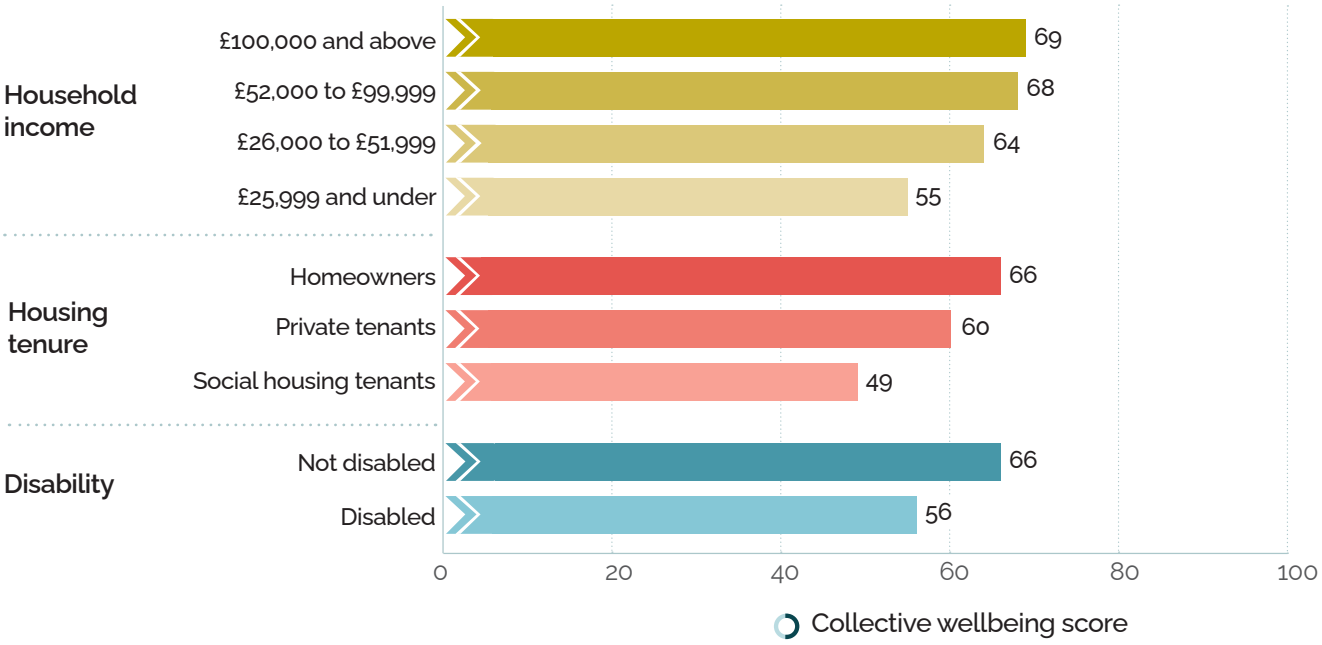
**In 2026 the following factors stand out as particularly significant in predicting a lower or higher collective wellbeing score in Scotland:**

- **Having a higher household income.** Those with annual household incomes of £100,000 and above (**69**) and those with an annual household income of between £52,000 and £99,999 (**68**) have the highest collective wellbeing scores. Those with annual household incomes of between £26,000 and £51,999 have a collective wellbeing score of **64**. Meanwhile, those with an annual household income of below £26,000 have a collective wellbeing score of **55**, 14 points lower than for those with the highest household incomes.[1]
- **Living in social housing.** People who live in social housing have a collective wellbeing score of **49**, 17 points lower than for those who are homeowners (**66**).
- **Being disabled.** Disabled people have a collective wellbeing score of **56**, 10 points lower than for people who are not disabled (**66**).

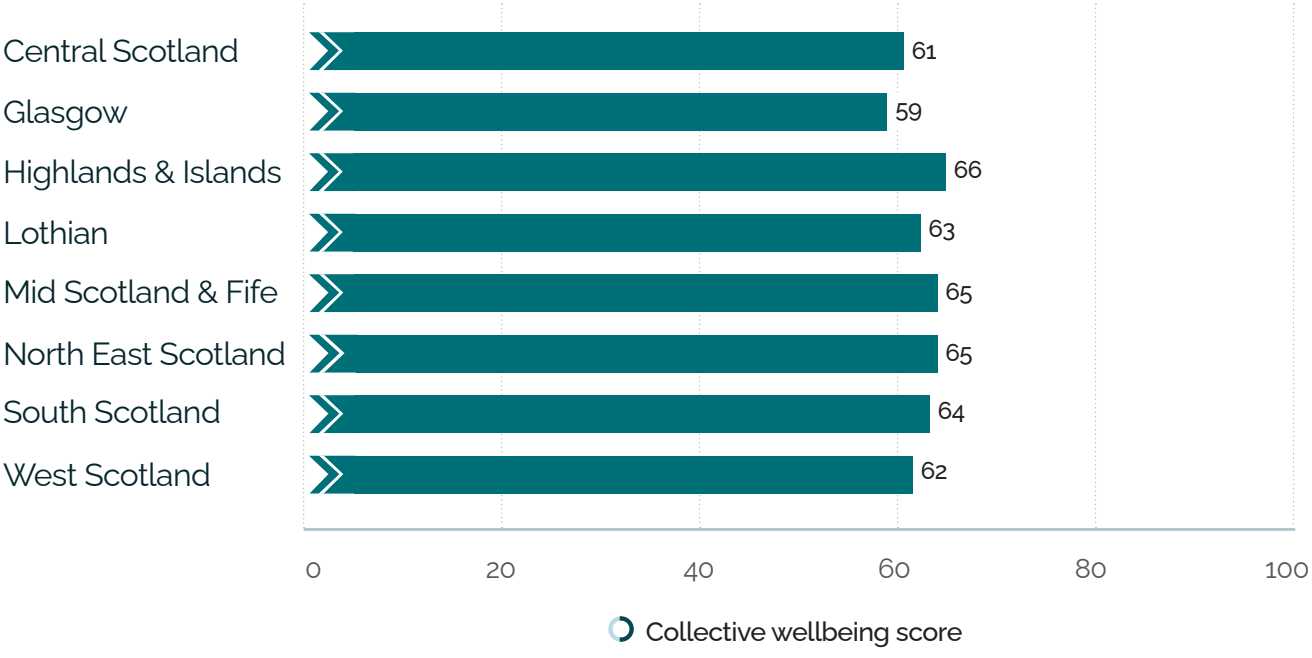
This year, three demographic characteristics were identified as being independently associated with collective wellbeing, compared with six in 2025. This change should be interpreted with caution, as additional demographic characteristics were included in the regression analysis for 2026, meaning results are not directly comparable with previous years.

1 The base size for people with an annual household income of £100,000 and above was smaller than for other groups at 92 people, so findings should be treated with caution.

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




## Figure 3: Collective wellbeing scores by region in Scotland




The visualisation of the Scotland map can be found on our website **here**.

# Social wellbeing in Scotland 2026

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



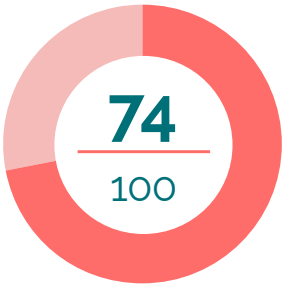




74

100






**Scotland scores 74 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 Scotland, we asked questions about access to services, community relationships, safety and community cohesion, and self-reported health and mental health.

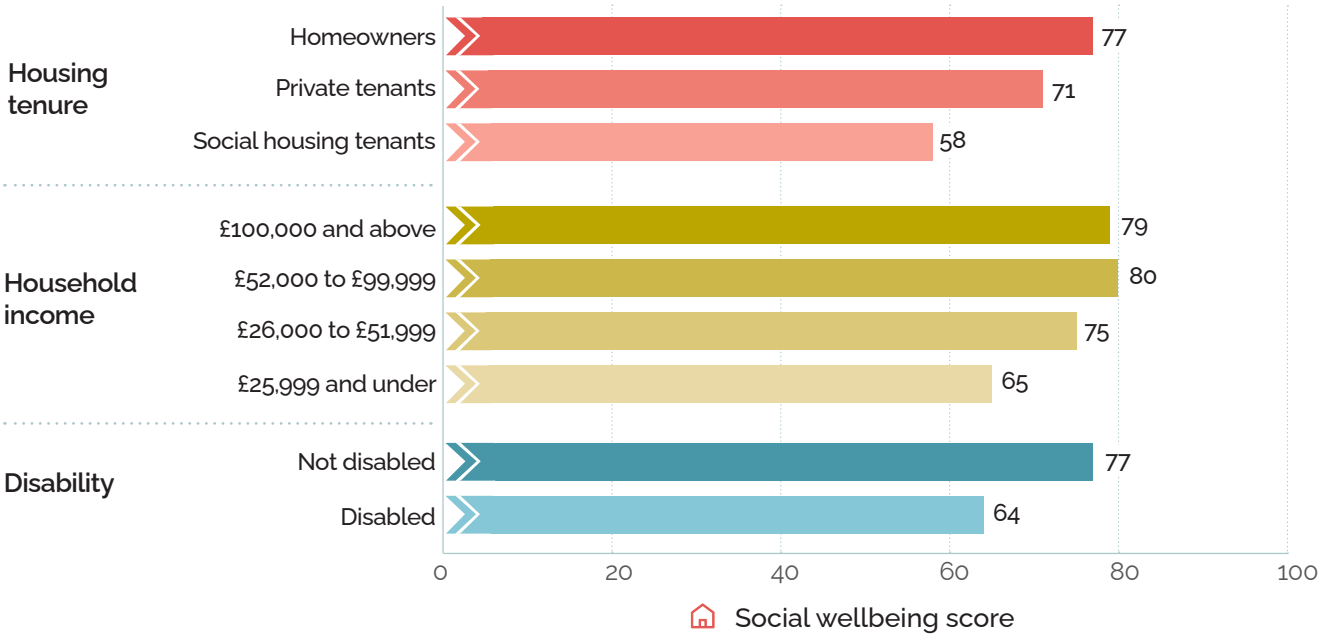
The groups most likely to experience **high** levels of social wellbeing in Scotland in 2026 are:

- Those with an annual household income of £100,000 and above or from £52,000 to £99,999, who have social wellbeing scores of **79** and **80**, respectively. People whose annual household income is between £26,000 and £51,999 have a social wellbeing score of **75**, while those with annual household incomes of below £26,000 have a social wellbeing score of **65**.

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

- People who live in social housing, who have a social wellbeing score of **58**, 19 points lower than for homeowners (**77**).
- Disabled people, who have a social wellbeing score of **64**, 13 points lower than for people who are not disabled (**77**).

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

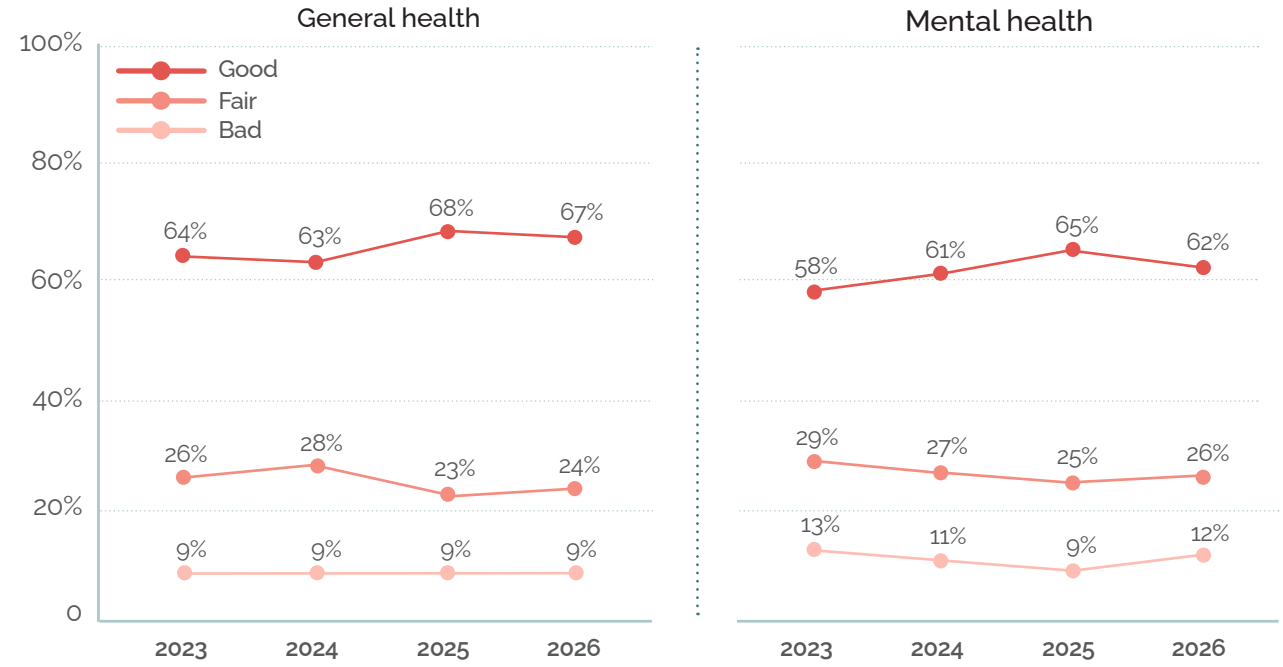



## Social wellbeing: breakdown of results

People in Scotland report poorer mental health than the UK overall, but higher levels of community connection and cohesion.

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

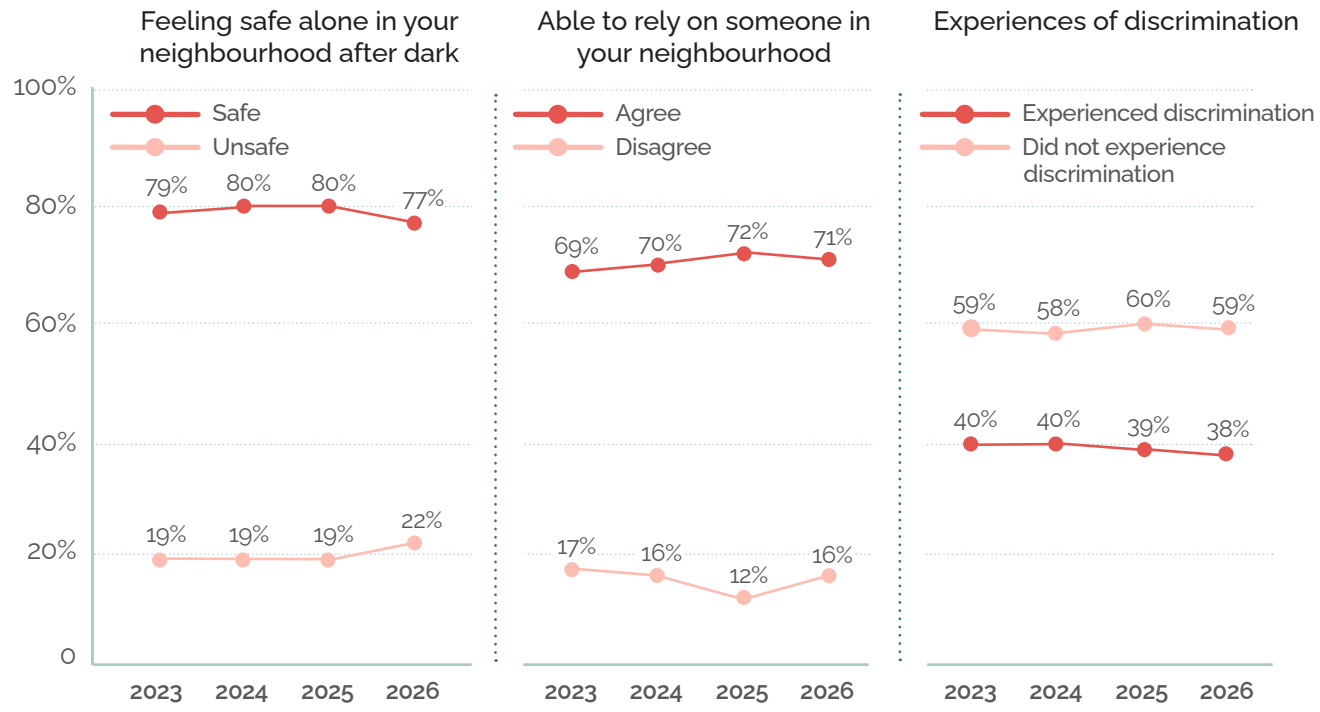
### Figure 5. Perceptions of general and mental health




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

- Two-thirds (67%) of people report being in good general health, similar to previous years and the UK average.
- More than one in nine (12%) people experience poor mental health, two percentage points higher than the UK average.

## Figure 6. Community cohesion



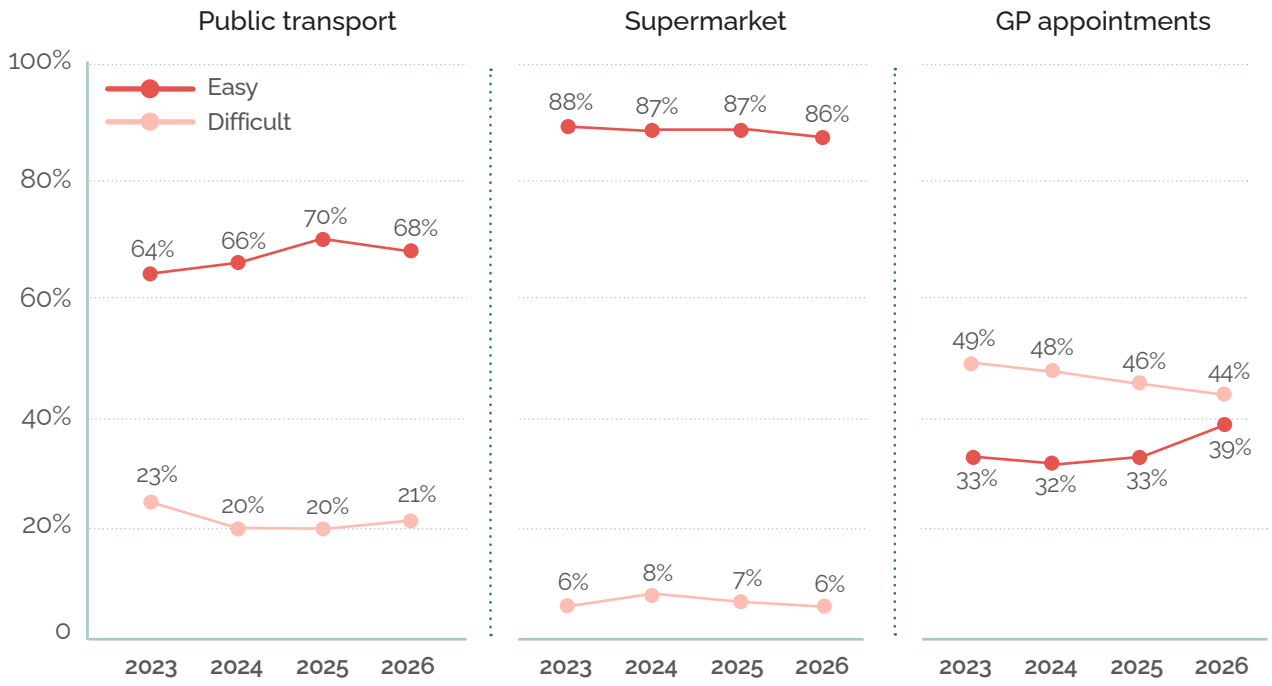

*Q: How safe do you feel walking alone in your local neighbourhood after dark?*

*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?*

- Just over three-quarters (77%) of people feel safe walking alone in their local neighbourhood after dark, six percentage points higher than the UK average.
- 71% of people say that they could rely on someone in their neighbourhood to help them if they were alone and needed help, five percentage points higher than the UK average.
- Just under four in ten (38%) people experienced discrimination in the last 12 months, six percentage points lower than the UK average.

## 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.*

- One in five (21%) people find it difficult to access public transport that can get them where they want to go, three percentage points higher than the UK average.
- 86% of people find it easy to access a supermarket or grocery shop in person, similar to previous years and the UK average.
- Two in five (39%) people find it easy to get a GP appointment at a time when they need one, six percentage points higher than last year.

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.

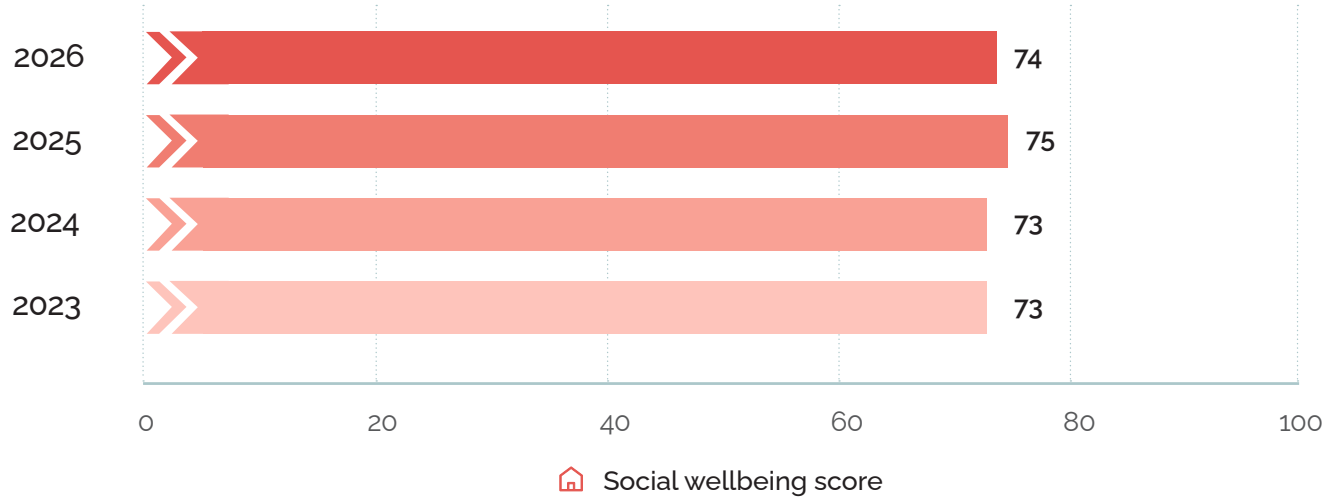
# Summary

Scotland's social wellbeing score of **74** in 2026 is in line with the scores for previous years, suggesting broad stability in people's overall social wellbeing. Below this there is however a mixed picture.

2026 has seen a positive improvement in how easy people in Scotland find it to access a GP appointment at a time when they need one, a similar trend to what we see across the UK as a whole. People in Scotland feel safer, more able to rely on their neighbours, and experience less discrimination than the UK average.

However, people in Scotland are more likely than the UK average to say that they experience bad mental health. They are also more likely to face difficulty accessing public transport that takes them where they need to go.

Figure 8. Social wellbeing scores over time






# Economic wellbeing in Scotland 2026

We all have a decent minimum living standard.

71

100




**Scotland scores 71 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 Scotland, we asked questions about skills and job availability, and the affordability of essential items like food and fuel.

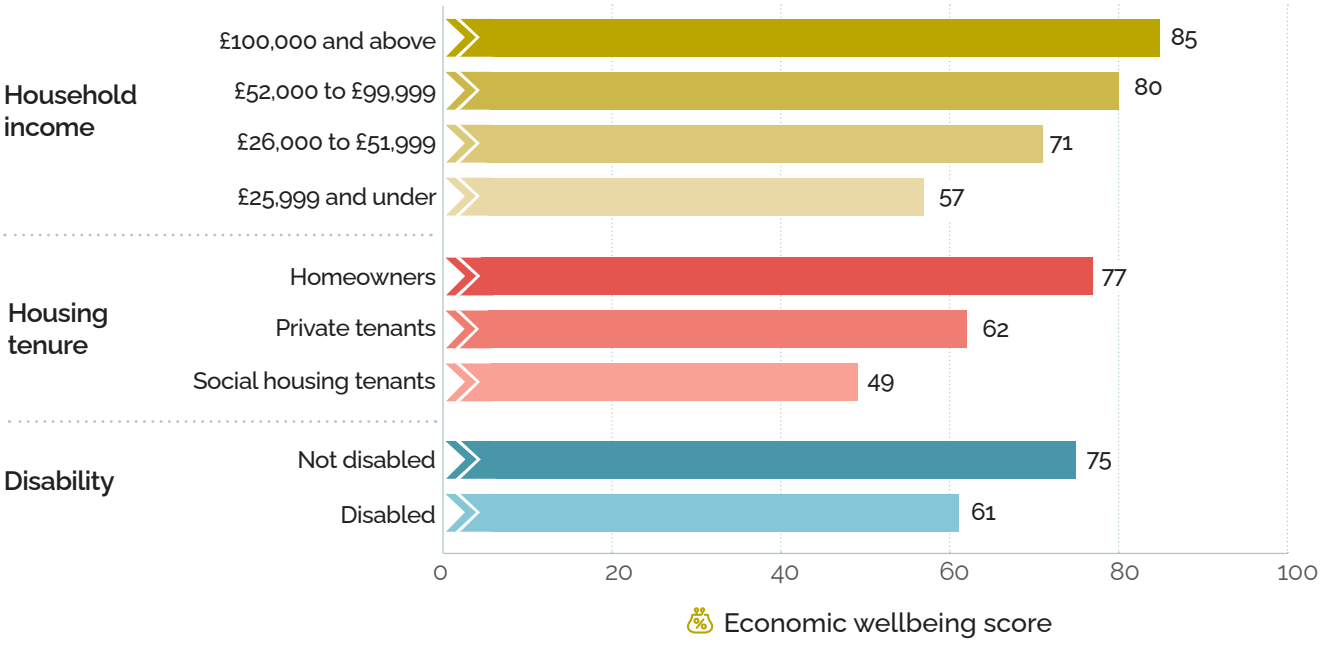
The people most likely to experience **high** levels of economic wellbeing in Scotland in 2026 are:

- Those with an annual household income of £100,000 and over, who have an economic wellbeing score of **85**. People with an annual household income of between £52,000 and £99,999 have an economic wellbeing score of **80**, and those whose annual household income is between £26,000 and £51,999 have an economic wellbeing score of **71**. Those with annual household incomes of below £26,000 have an economic wellbeing score of **57**, 28 points lower than for the highest-income bracket.
- People aged 55 and over, who have an economic wellbeing score of **75**, eight points higher than for those aged 35 to 54 (**67**).

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

- People who live in social housing, who have an economic wellbeing score of **49**, 28 points lower than for homeowners (**77**).
- Disabled people, who have an economic wellbeing score of **61**. This is 14 points lower than for those who are not disabled (**75**).
- People with one or more child under the age of 16 in the household, who have an economic wellbeing score of **69**, three points lower than for people with no children in the household (**72**).

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

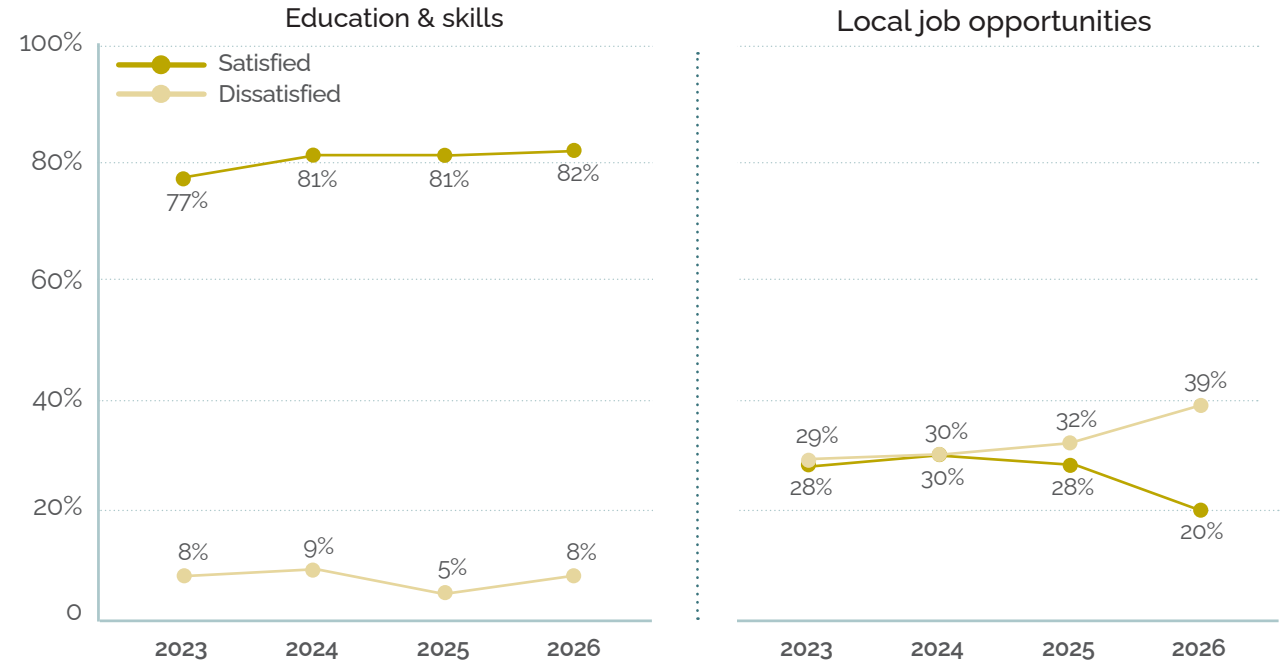



## Economic wellbeing: breakdown of results

People in Scotland are more able to afford some of life's necessities than in 2023, but dissatisfaction with local job opportunities has risen sharply.

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

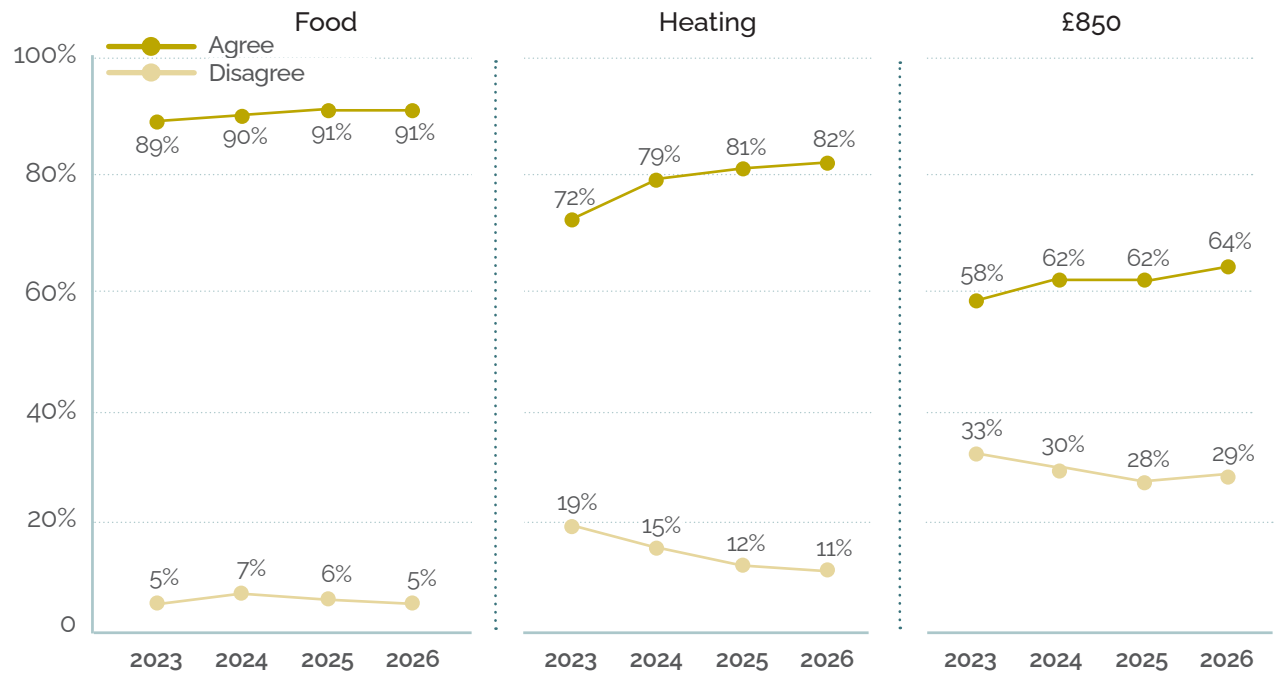
### Figure 10. Perceptions of education, skills and local job opportunities




*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?*

- Just under one in ten (8%) people are dissatisfied with their education and skills, similar to 2023 and 2024 but three percentage points higher than in 2025.
- Nearly two in five (39%) people are dissatisfied with the availability of job opportunities for people in their local area, seven percentage points higher than last year.

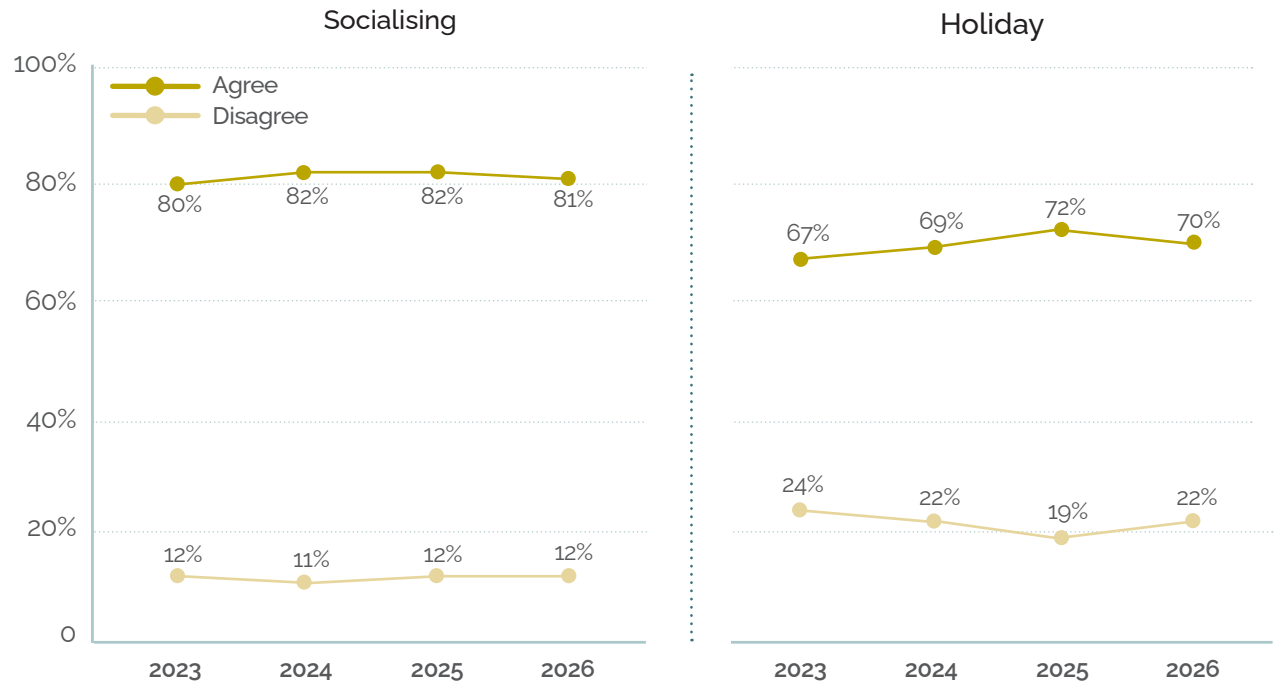
## Figure 11. Affordability of essential items




*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.*

- Nine in ten (91%) people can afford to buy enough food for everyone in the household, four percentage points higher than the UK average.
- Just over four in five (82%) people can afford to keep their home adequately warm, 10 percentage points higher than in 2023 and three percentage points higher than the UK average.
- Just under two-thirds (64%) of people can afford to pay an unexpected but necessary expense of £850, six percentage points higher than in 2023.

## 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).*

- Four in five (81%) people can afford to socialise outside the home once a month, similar to previous years and the UK average.
- Seven in ten (70%) people can afford to pay for a week's annual holiday away from home, four percentage points higher than the UK average



# Summary

Scotland's overall economic wellbeing has remained steady in 2026, avoiding some of the deteriorations seen at a UK level and in other parts of the UK.

Compared to 2023, people in Scotland are now more likely to be able to afford to pay for an unexpected but necessary expense of £850, and to keep their homes adequately warm including in the winter.

People in Scotland are also more likely than the UK average to be able to afford both basic needs like food for everyone in the household, and extras that make life enjoyable, like an annual holiday away from home.

After an improvement in 2025, dissatisfaction with skills and education has risen again, though this is broadly similar to 2023 and 2024. However, there has been a sudden drop in the proportion of people who are satisfied with the availability of jobs in their local area.

Figure 13. Economic wellbeing scores over time



# Environmental wellbeing in Scotland 2026

We all live within the planet's natural resources.

67

100










**Scotland 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 Scotland, 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 in the UK.

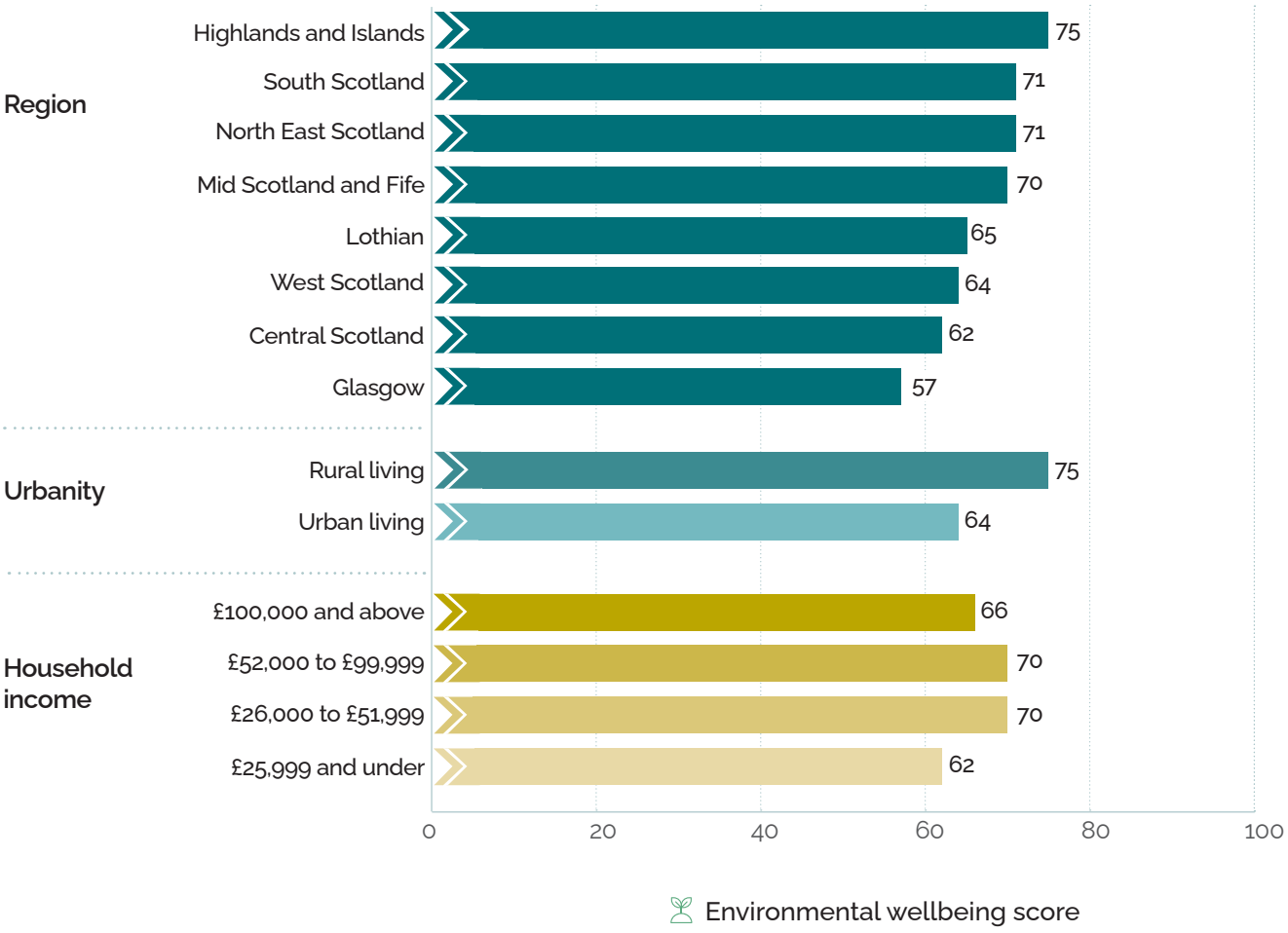
The people most likely to experience **high** levels of environmental wellbeing in Scotland in 2026 are:

- People living in a rural area, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **75**, 11 points higher than for those who live in urban areas (**64**).

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

- People who live in Central Scotland, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **62**. This is eight to nine points lower than for those living in Mid Scotland and Fife (**70**), North East Scotland (**71**), or the South of Scotland (**71**).
- People with an annual household income of below £26,000, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **62**. This is eight points lower than for those with an annual household income of between £26,000 and £99,999 (**70**).

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



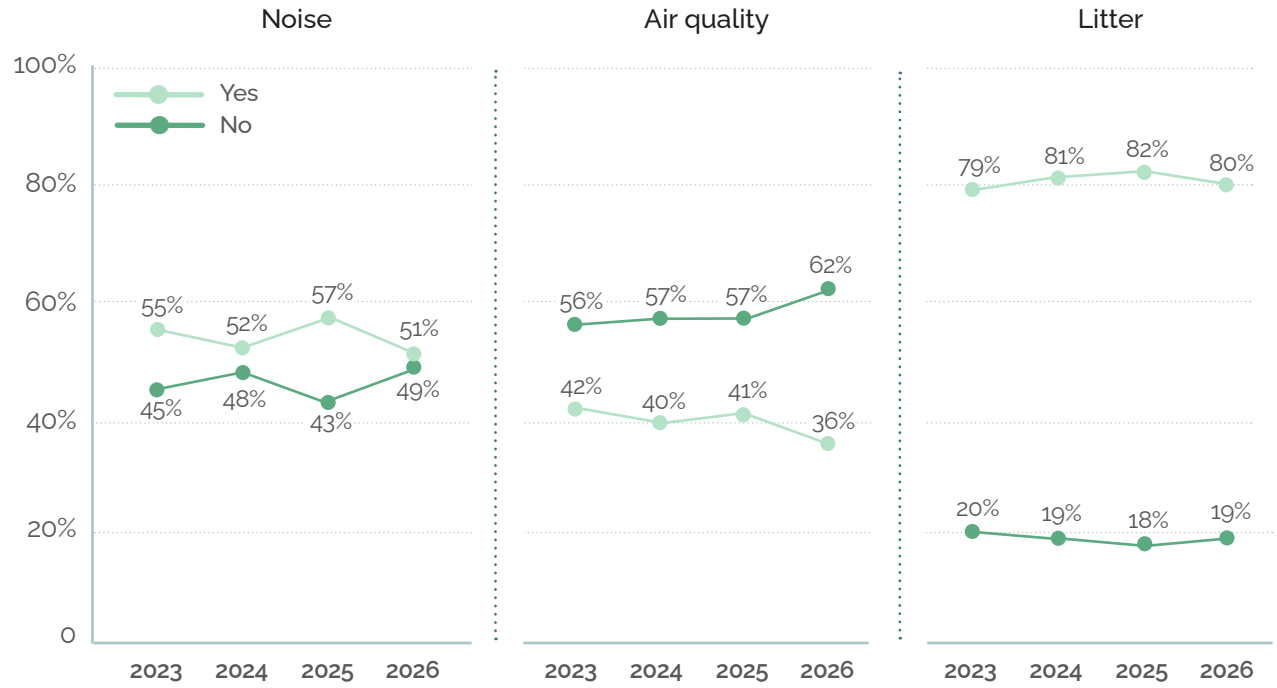



# Environmental wellbeing: breakdown of results

While problems remain in Scotland, people's experiences of noise and air quality have improved, and dissatisfaction with environmental efforts in the UK is reducing.

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

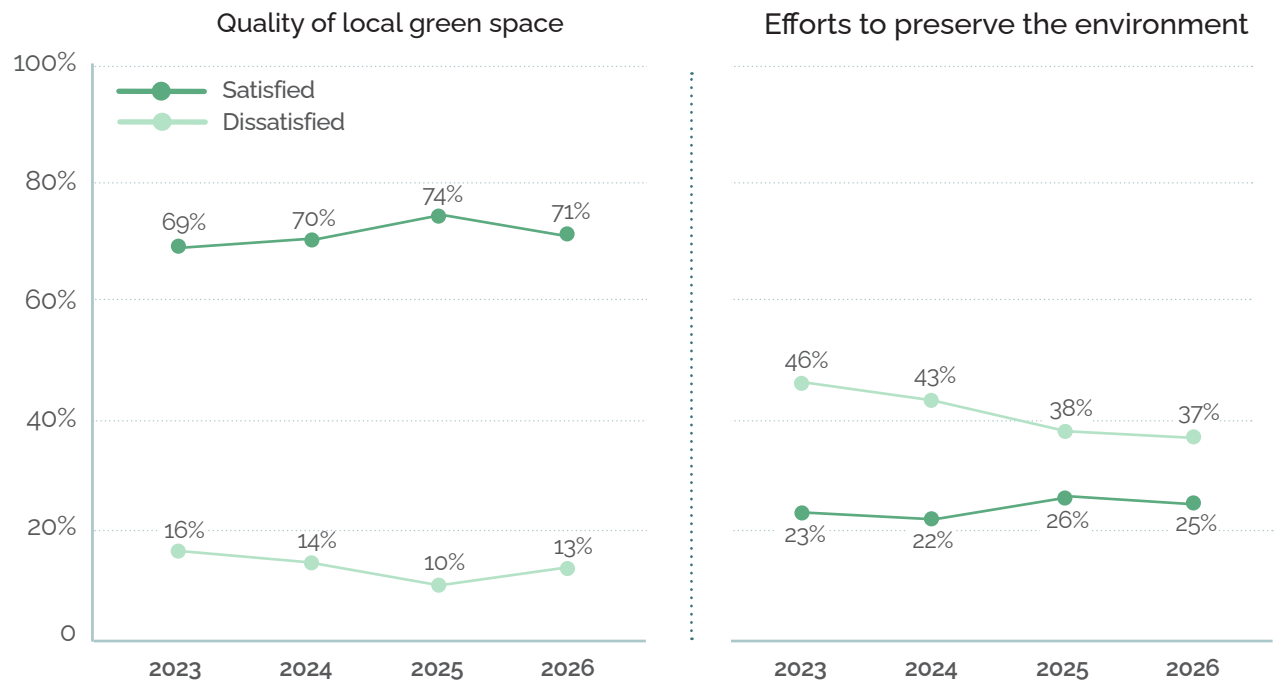
## Figure 15. Issues with quality of local environment




*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.*

- Half (51%) of people experience problems with noise in their local neighbourhood, a six percentage-point improvement compared to 2025 and 13 percentage points lower than the UK average.
- Just over a third (36%) of people experience problems with air quality in their local neighbourhood, five percentage points lower than last year, and 17 percentage points lower than the UK average.
- Four in five (80%) people experience problems with litter in their local neighbourhood, similar to previous years and the UK average.

## 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?*

- Seven in ten (71%) people are satisfied with the quality of their local public, green or open space, similar to previous years and the UK average.
- A quarter of people (25%) are satisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK, three percentage points higher than in 2024.



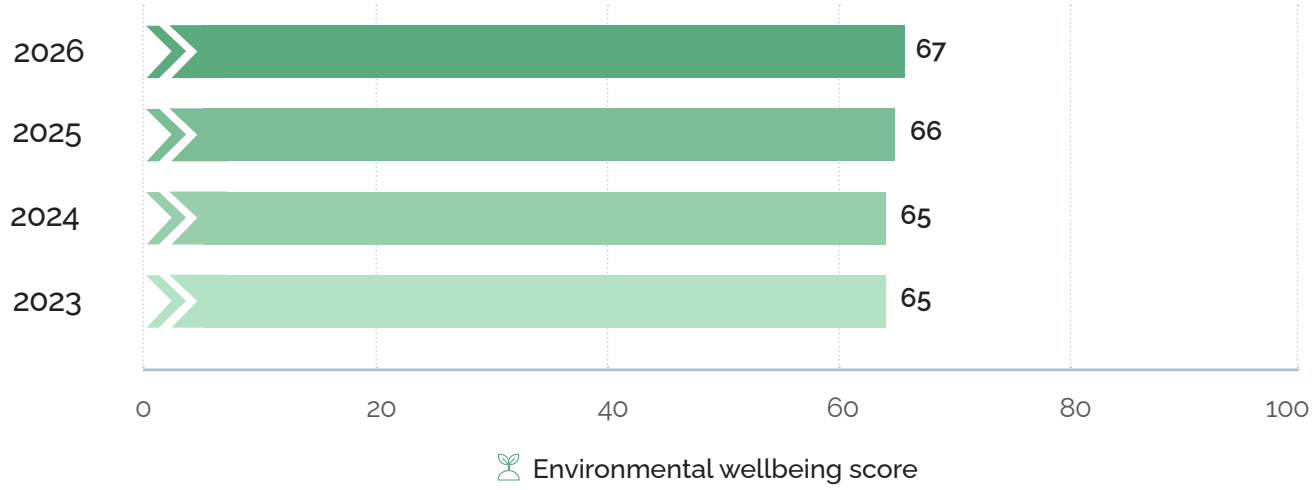
# Summary

Scotland's overall environmental wellbeing has seen an improvement since the first edition of Life in the UK in 2023 and remains higher than the UK average.

This improvement has been seen especially in areas such as noise pollution and air quality, both of which have improved since last year, and fewer people are dissatisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK than in 2023. These gradual improvements – which have not been mirrored in other parts of the UK – are welcome.

Nonetheless, four in five people still experience issues with litter, half have issues with noise pollution, and only a quarter of people in Scotland are satisfied with the efforts being made to protect the environment in the UK.

Figure 17. Environmental wellbeing scores over time



# Democratic wellbeing in Scotland 2026

We all have a voice in decisions that affect us.



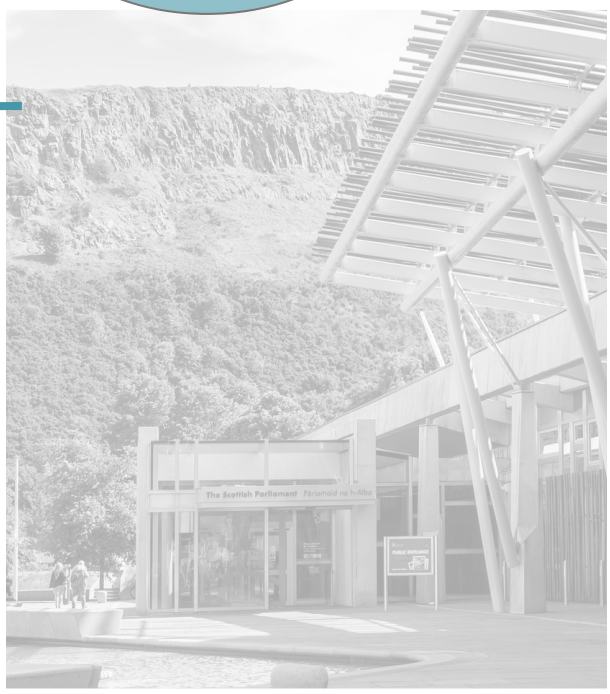

# 40







100






**Scotland scores 40 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 Scotland in 2026 are:

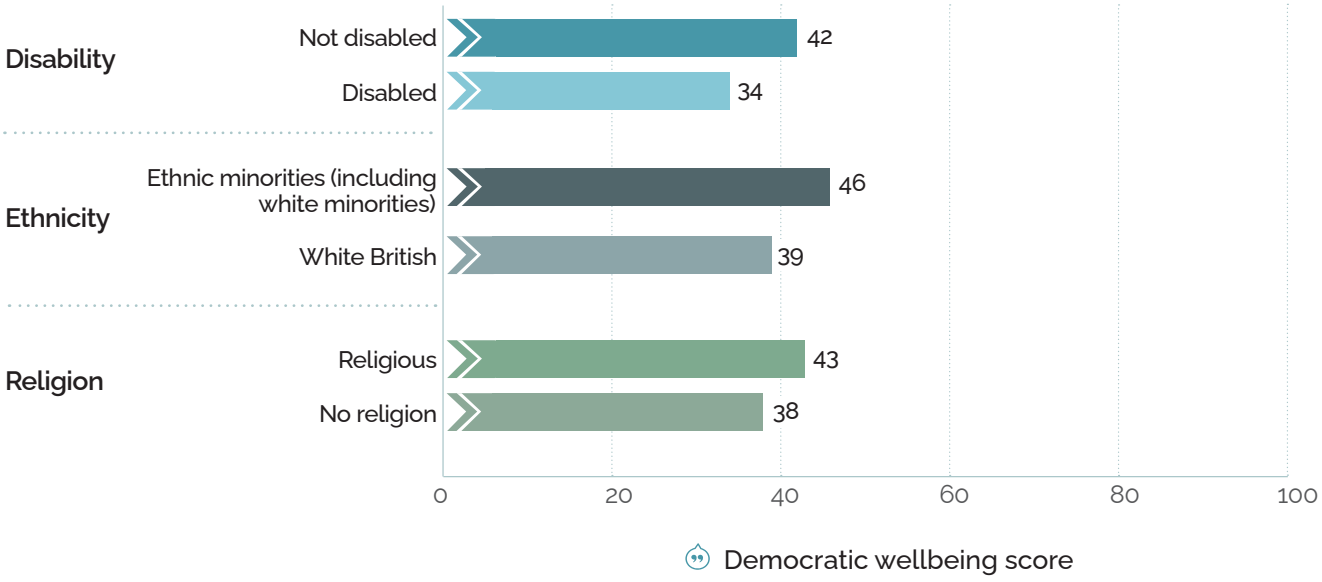
- People from an ethnic minority background, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **46**, seven points higher than for those of a White British background (**39**).[3]
- People who are religious, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **43**, five points higher than for those who have no religion (**38**).

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

- Disabled people, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **34**, eight points lower than for people who are not disabled (**42**).

3 The base size for people from an ethnic minority (including white minority) background was smaller than for other groups at 91 people, so findings should be treated with caution.

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



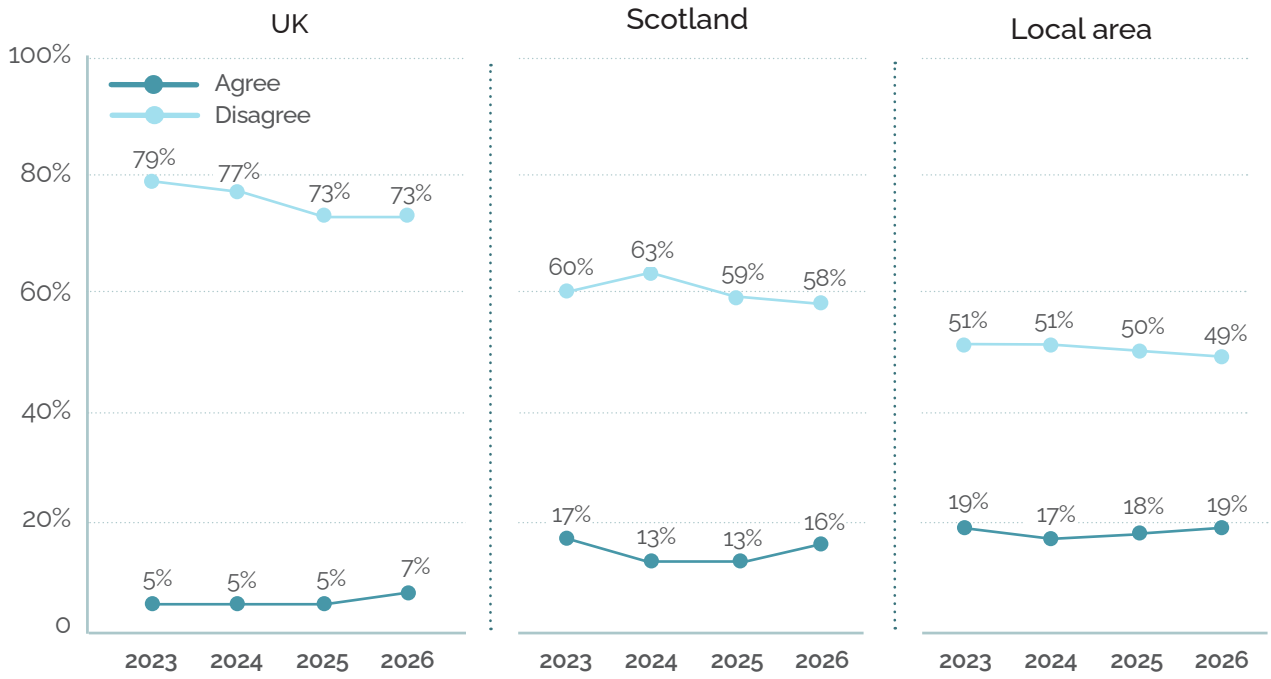



# Democratic wellbeing: breakdown of results

Overall trust in government and institutions remains low, though trust in the Scottish Government has improved since last year and people are less likely to feel unable to influence decisions that affect the UK than they were three years ago.

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

## Figure 19. Perceptions of ability to influence decisions[4]

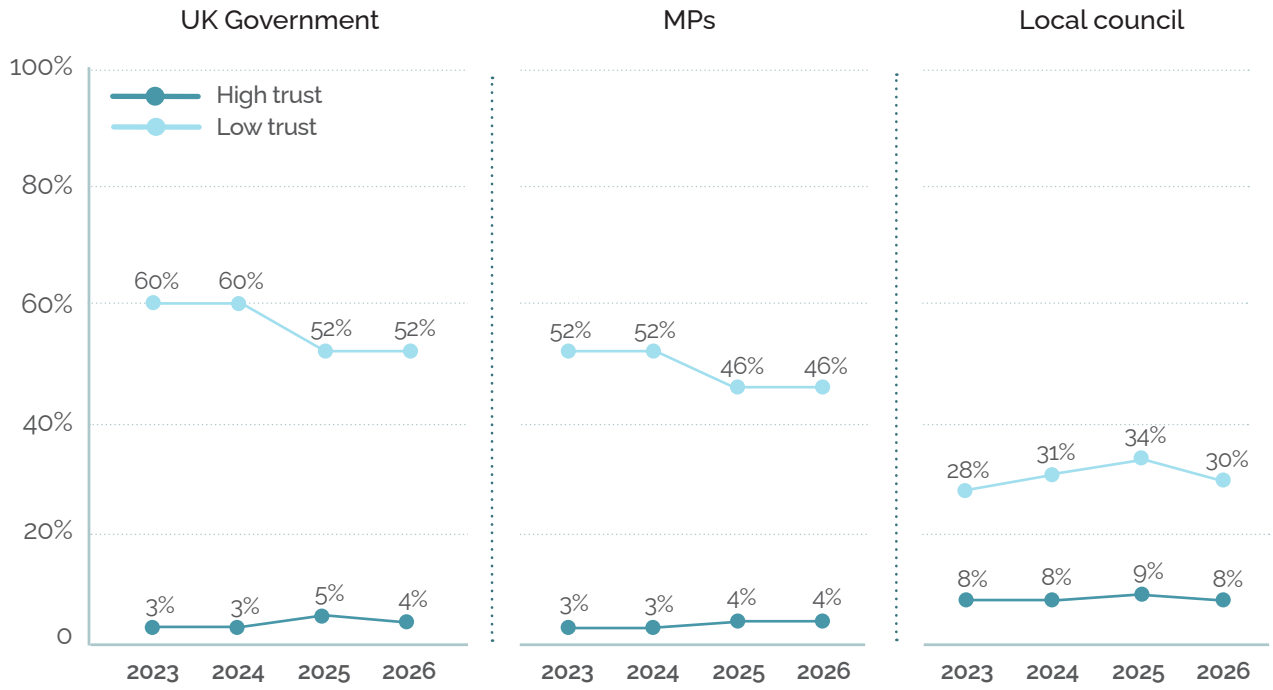



*Qs: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I can influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole; I can influence decisions affecting Scotland; I can influence decisions affecting my local area.*

- Only 7% of people feel that they can influence decisions affecting the UK, though fewer people disagree (73%) than in 2023.
- Just under three-fifths (58%) of people do not feel able to influence decisions that affect Scotland, similar to previous years.
- One in five (19%) people feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area, four percentage points higher than the UK average.

4 The question pertaining to influence in Scotland does not contribute to the overall democratic wellbeing score. See the technical report for more detail.

## Figure 20. Trust in governments and politicians[5]



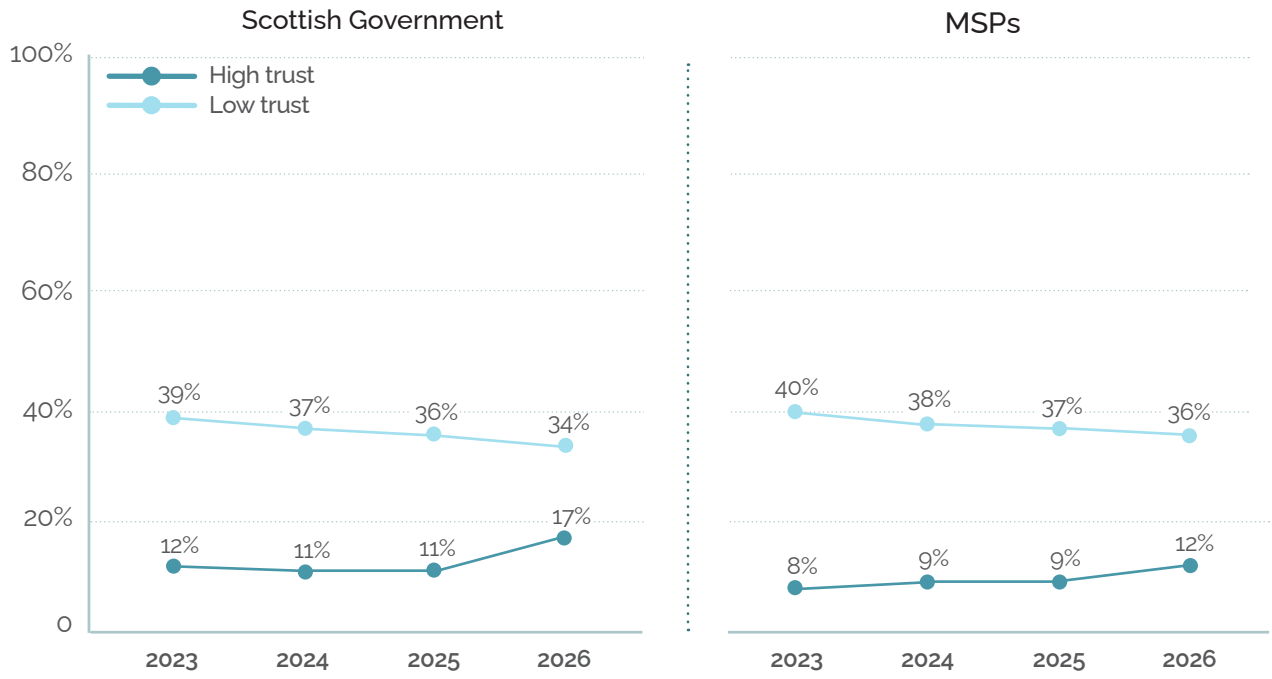

*Qs: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust each of the following? UK Government; MPs; the local council for your area. Scores of 1 to 3 equate to low trust; 4 to 7 to medium trust; 8 to 10 to high trust.*

- Half (52%) of people have low trust in the UK Government, unchanged since 2025 but an improvement compared to 2023 and 2024. A similar picture is seen for low trust in MPs, which now stands at 46%.
- Fewer than one in ten (8%) people have high trust in their local council, two percentage points lower than the UK average.



5 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 Scottish Government and politicians[6]

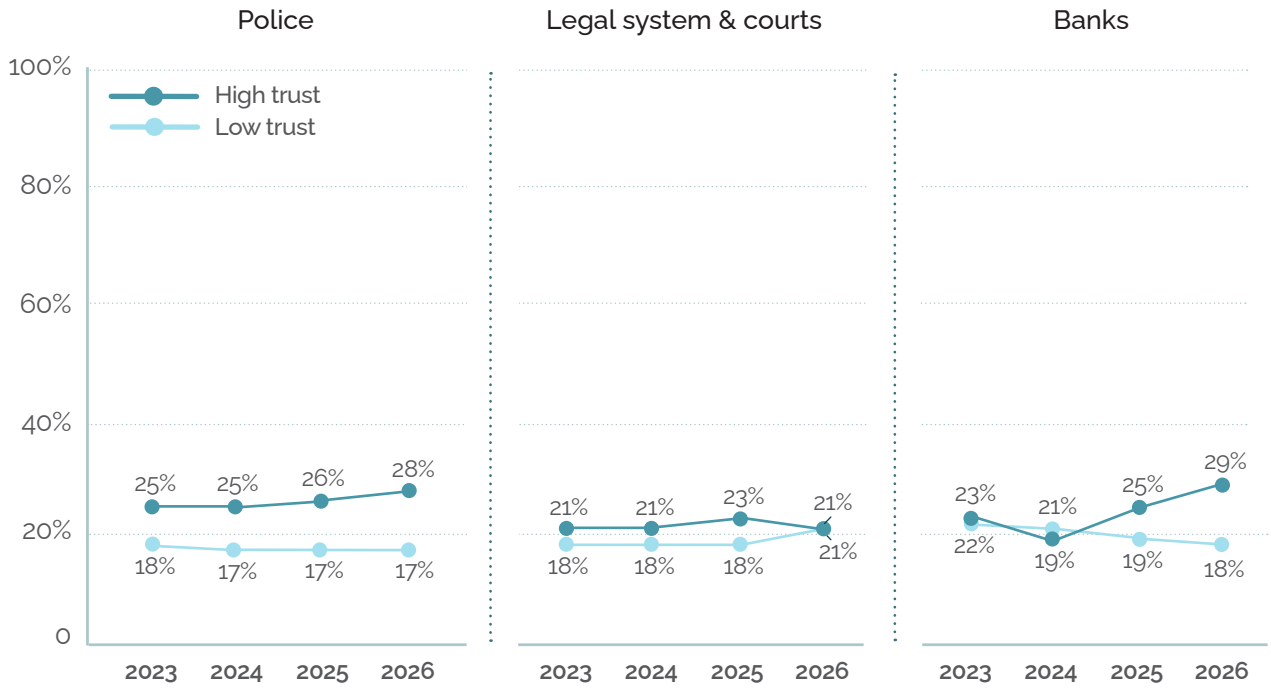



*Qs: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust each of the following? Scottish Government; Scottish Parliament members (MSPs). Scores of 1 to 3 equate to low trust; 4 to 7 to medium trust; 8 to 10 to high trust.*

- Nearly one in five (17%) people have high trust in the Scottish Government, six percentage points higher than last year.
- Just over one in ten (12%) people have high trust in MSPs, four percentage points higher than in 2023.

6 The questions pertaining to trust in Scottish Government and MSPs do not contribute to the overall democratic wellbeing score. See the technical report for more detail.

## Figure 22. Trust in institutions

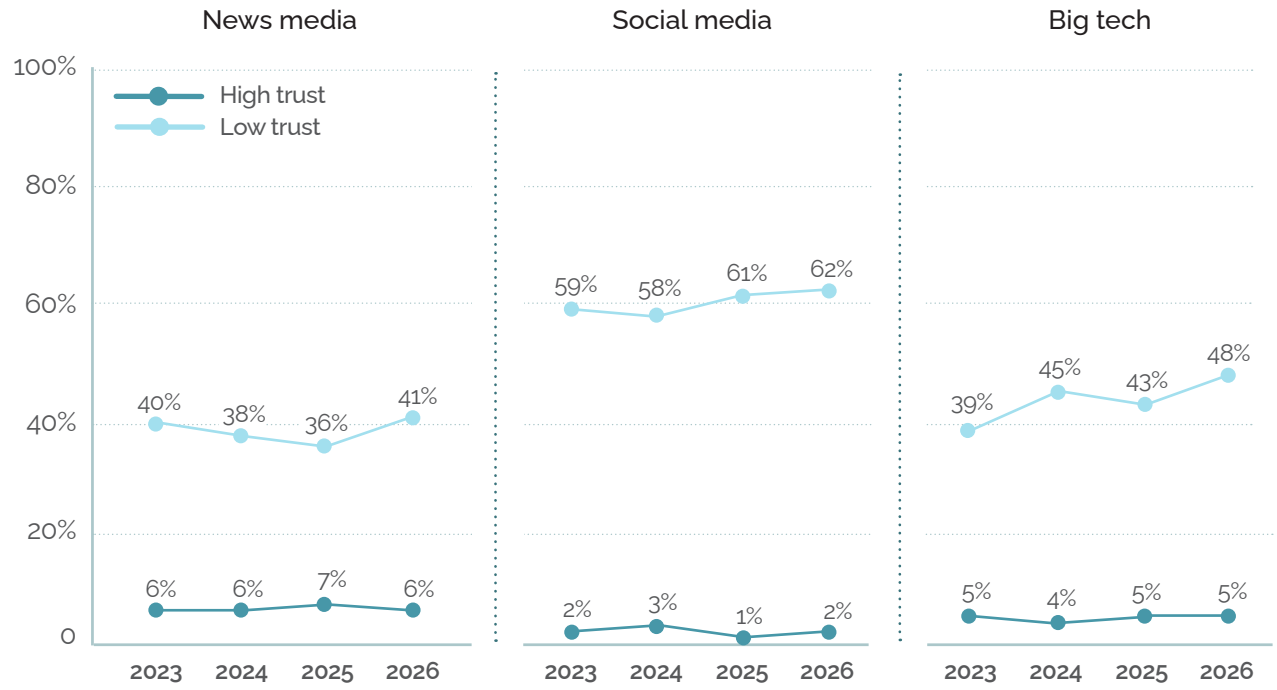



*Qs: Where 1 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust each of the following? The police; the legal system and courts; banks. Scores of 1 to 3 equate to low trust; 4 to 7 to medium trust; 8 to 10 to high trust.*

- Over a quarter (28%) of people have high trust in the police, four percentage points higher than the UK average.
- One in five (21%) people have low trust in the legal system and courts, with the same proportion having high trust, similar to previous years and the UK average.
- 29% of people have high trust in banks, ten percentage points higher than in 2024.



## Figure 23. Trust in media and tech[7]




*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.*

- Two in five (41%) people have low trust in the news media, similar to previous years and the UK average.
- Three in five (62%) people have low trust in social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, TikTok), similar to previous years and the UK average.
- Nearly half (48%) of people have low trust in big tech companies (e.g. Google, Apple), nine percentage points higher than in 2023.

7 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

Democratic wellbeing in Scotland remains low, a pattern that we see across the UK. This points to a continued lack of trust in key institutions, and a sense of being unable to influence the decisions that affect us.

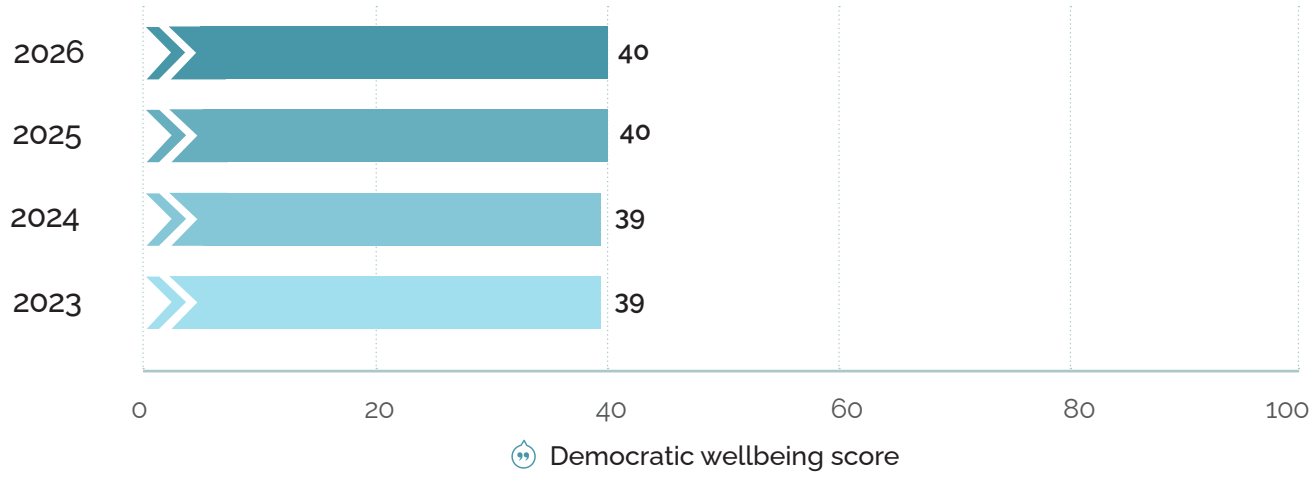
However, there have been some improvements: more people say they have high trust in the Scottish Government than in any of the previous three years of the index, and more people have high trust in MSPs than in 2023. Trust in the UK Government and MPs has largely retained the gains seen in 2025.

For people in Scotland, trust in Scottish political institutions also remains higher than trust in UK institutions: over half (52%) of people have low trust in the UK Government, compared to just over a third (34%) who have low trust in the Scottish Government.

The improvements to trust in national government have not been reflected in trust in local councils, with trust in local councils similar to previous years. Although compared to the UK average fewer people in Scotland have high trust in their local council, they are more likely to feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

Beyond political institutions, trust remains low in other key institutions. Trust in big tech companies (like Google or Apple) is worse than it was in 2023, and trust in social media is following a similar trend. Few people (6%) have high trust in the news media.

Figure 24. Democractic wellbeing scores over time



# Collective wellbeing in 2026: Scoring summary



**74**
100
Social wellbeing

**71**
100
Economic wellbeing

**67**
100
Environmental wellbeing

**40**
100
Democratic wellbeing

**63**
100

**The collective wellbeing score for Scotland in 2026 is 63 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** | **63** | **74** | **71** | **67** | **40** |
| **Disability** | Not disabled | 66 | 77 | 75 | 68 | 42 |
| | Disabled | 56 | 64 | 61 | 63 | 34 |
| **Age** | 16-34 years | 62 | 71 | 71 | 62 | 42 |
| | 35-54 years | 60 | 72 | 67 | 64 | 36 |
| | 55 years & over | 66 | 77 | 75 | 71 | 41 |
| **Household Income** | £25,999 and under | 55 | 65 | 57 | 62 | 38 |
| | £26,000 to £51,999 | 64 | 75 | 71 | 70 | 42 |
| | £52,000 to £99,999 | 68 | 80 | 80 | 70 | 40 |
| | £100,000 & above | 69 | 79 | 85 | 66 | 45 |
| **Area deprivation** | IMD1 (highest deprivation) | 58 | 68 | 65 | 61 | 37 |
| | IMD2 | 59 | 70 | 65 | 61 | 39 |
| | IMD3 | 64 | 74 | 72 | 70 | 41 |
| | IMD4 | 66 | 77 | 75 | 71 | 41 |
| | IMD5 (lowest deprivation) | 68 | 80 | 80 | 71 | 42 |
| **Housing tenure** | Social rented | 49 | 58 | 49 | 57 | 33 |
| | Private rented | 60 | 71 | 62 | 63 | 41 |
| | Homeowners | 66 | 77 | 77 | 69 | 41 |
| **Gender** | Women | 63 | 73 | 70 | 67 | 41 |
| | Men | 63 | 75 | 73 | 67 | 39 |
| **Ethnicity** | White British | 63 | 74 | 72 | 68 | 39 |
| | Ethnic minorities (including White minorities) | 61 | 69 | 67 | 60 | 46 |
| **Children** | No children | 63 | 74 | 72 | 67 | 40 |
| | One or more children in household | 62 | 72 | 69 | 65 | 41 |
| **Urbanity** | Urban living | 61 | 72 | 70 | 64 | 39 |
| | Rural living | 68 | 79 | 74 | 75 | 42 |

## cont.

| | | Collective wellbeing | Social wellbeing | Economic wellbeing | Environmental wellbeing | Democratic wellbeing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Education** | Graduate | 66 | 76 | 76 | 69 | 43 |
| | Non-graduate | 62 | 73 | 70 | 66 | 39 |
| **Sexual orientation** | Heterosexual | 64 | 75 | 72 | 68 | 40 |
| | Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (LGB+) | 59 | 69 | 68 | 60 | 41 |
| **Religion** | Religious | 64 | 75 | 71 | 68 | 43 |
| | No religion | 62 | 73 | 71 | 66 | 38 |
| **Working** | Full-time | 64 | 76 | 73 | 67 | 39 |
| | Not working full-time | 63 | 72 | 70 | 67 | 41 |

The base sizes for household income £100,000 and above (92), private tenants (61), ethnic minorities (including White minorities) (91) and LGB+ people (81), were smaller than for other groups, so findings should be treated with caution.






# Life in the UK
# Scotland 2026

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