

Life in the UK England 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 globally and in the UK since the 2025 edition of Life in the UK. Of particular relevance to the 2026 survey is the fact that fieldwork was conducted two weeks after local and mayoral elections in England. These elections led to changes of administration in many areas.

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 England sample sizes for each year are as follows:
  - 2023: 4,550
  - 2024: 4,418
  - 2025: 4,466
  - 2026: 4,452
- 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 - England 2026

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

Disappointingly, for the first time since we began the survey, the overall collective wellbeing score in England has decreased by one point to **61** out of 100. There have been losses in three domain scores for England too, with only environmental wellbeing unchanged.

Social wellbeing has fallen by one point to **71**. This is lower than it was when Life in the UK first reported in 2023 and lower than in Scotland and Northern Ireland this year.

Economic wellbeing has fallen by two points to **70**, the lowest score Life in the UK has yet recorded in England. Beneath this headline figure, satisfaction with the availability of job opportunities in people's local areas is also at its lowest level since the index began.

Democratic wellbeing has also fallen after an upturn last year, and is back at **41**, in line with the scores seen in 2023 and 2024.

These changes all indicate that the limited progress we saw in 2025 has not been sustained into 2026, and point to the need for urgent action to reverse this concerning downward trend.

At the same time, we see persistent inequalities in how people experience life. Income; whether someone is disabled; place; age; gender, and ethnicity all affect people's wellbeing. Expanded analysis for 2026 also shows that further factors, including education status and sexual orientation, affect our chances of experiencing better wellbeing.



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 England to help make progress towards that goal. Above all, we hope that it will inspire more governments and authorities 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 England 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.

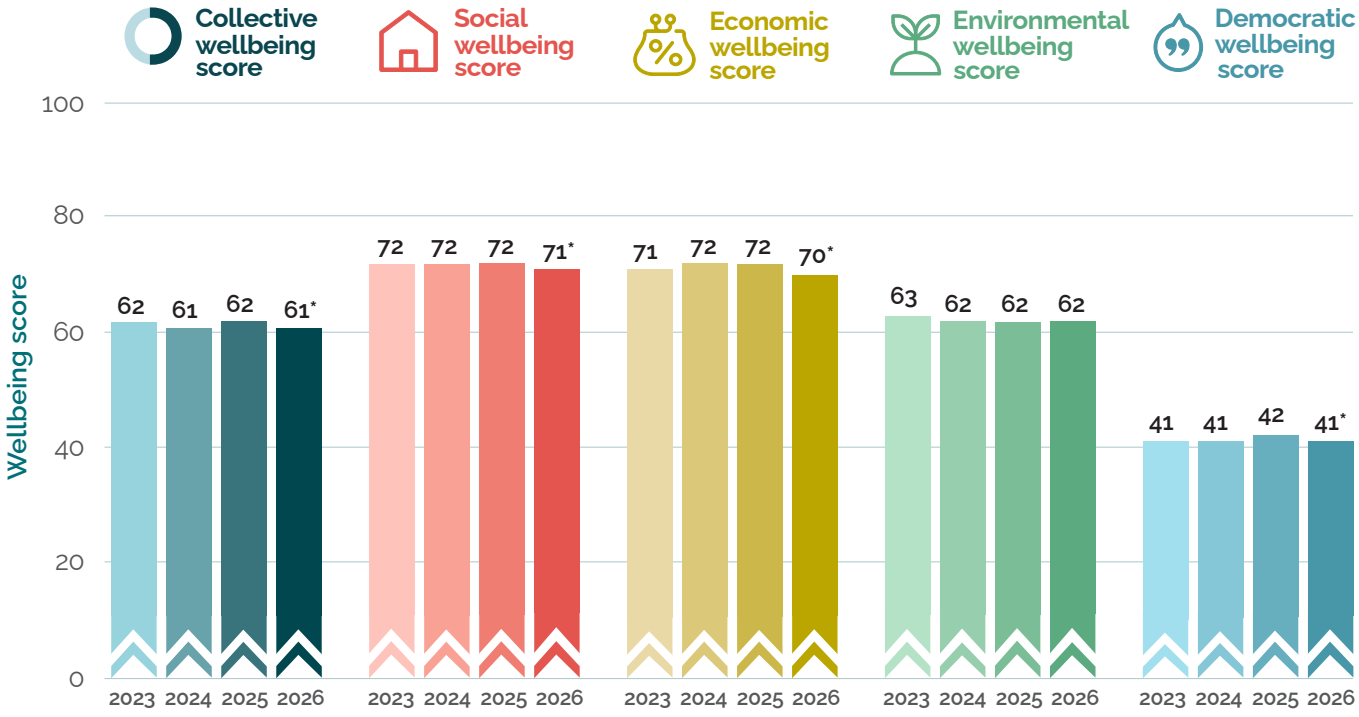


The overall score for collective wellbeing in England in 2026 is **61** out of a possible 100. This is one point lower than in 2025, marking the first statistically significant change in collective wellbeing that we have seen since Life in the UK began reporting in 2023.

This decline in collective wellbeing has been driven by losses in three of the four domains that Life in the UK considers. Social wellbeing is lower than previous years, and the same is true for democratic wellbeing, where the positive gains we saw in 2025 have been lost. Economic wellbeing in England is now at the lowest level since Life in the UK began.

The fact that negative changes have been seen in multiple domains is concerning and paints a picture of stalling and falling wellbeing that merits attention.

Figure 1: Life in the UK England 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 2025 and 2026 collective wellbeing decreased from 62.0 to 61.1 (a statistically significant -0.9 change), while between 2023 and 2024 collective wellbeing decreased from 61.7 to 61.4 (a non-significant -0.3 point change).*

Understanding what influences collective wellbeing

The scores we have seen this year point to a picture of stagnation and, in many cases, decline for collective wellbeing in England. They also show where more policy attention needs to be directed, both in terms of the specific issues that make up each domain, and the demographic and circumstantial factors that affect wellbeing.

As in previous years, we find that people's experience of life varies substantially according to their circumstances, highlighting the reality of inequality between people and within communities across England.

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

- **Having a household income of below £26,000 a year.** People with annual household incomes of up to £25,999 have a collective wellbeing score of **54**. This is 13 points lower than for those with an annual household income of £100,000 and above (**67**). People with annual household incomes of between £52,000 and £99,999 have a collective wellbeing score of **65**, and those with annual household incomes of between £26,000 and £51,999 have a collective wellbeing score of **61**.
- **Being disabled.** Disabled people have a collective wellbeing score of **54**, nine points lower than for people who are not disabled (**63**).
- **Living in a deprived area.** People who live in the most deprived areas (IMD1) have a collective wellbeing score of **54**. This is 12 points lower than for people living in the least deprived areas (**66**).[1]
- **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**). Private tenants also have a lower collective wellbeing score of **57**.

The following factors are also notable influences on collective wellbeing:

- **Being 55 or over.** People aged 55 and over have a collective wellbeing score of **64**. This is five points higher than for people aged 16 to 34 or 35 to 54 (each **59**).
- **Region**. People living in the South West of England have a collective wellbeing score of **65**. This is four points higher than the average for England (**61**).
- **Being a graduate.** Graduates have a collective wellbeing score of **64**, four points higher than for non-graduates (**60**).
- **Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or another sexuality that is not heterosexual (LGB+).** LGB+ people have a collective wellbeing score of **58**, four points lower than for heterosexual people (**62**).
- **Living in a rural area.** People who live in rural areas have a collective wellbeing score of **65**, while those living in urban areas have a collective wellbeing score of **60**.
- **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 Black, Asian and minority White ethnic groups and people with mixed ethnic backgrounds have a collective wellbeing score of **57**, six points lower than for White British people (**63**).

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.

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

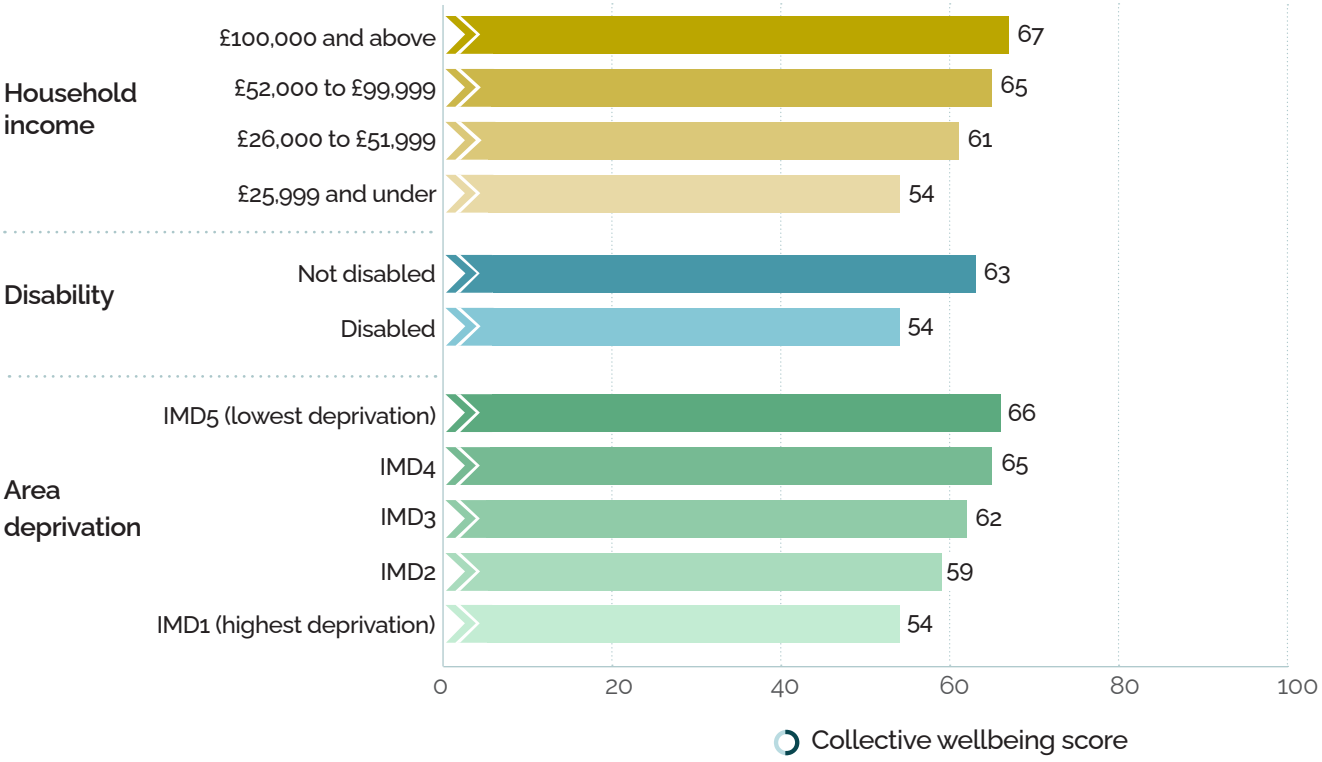
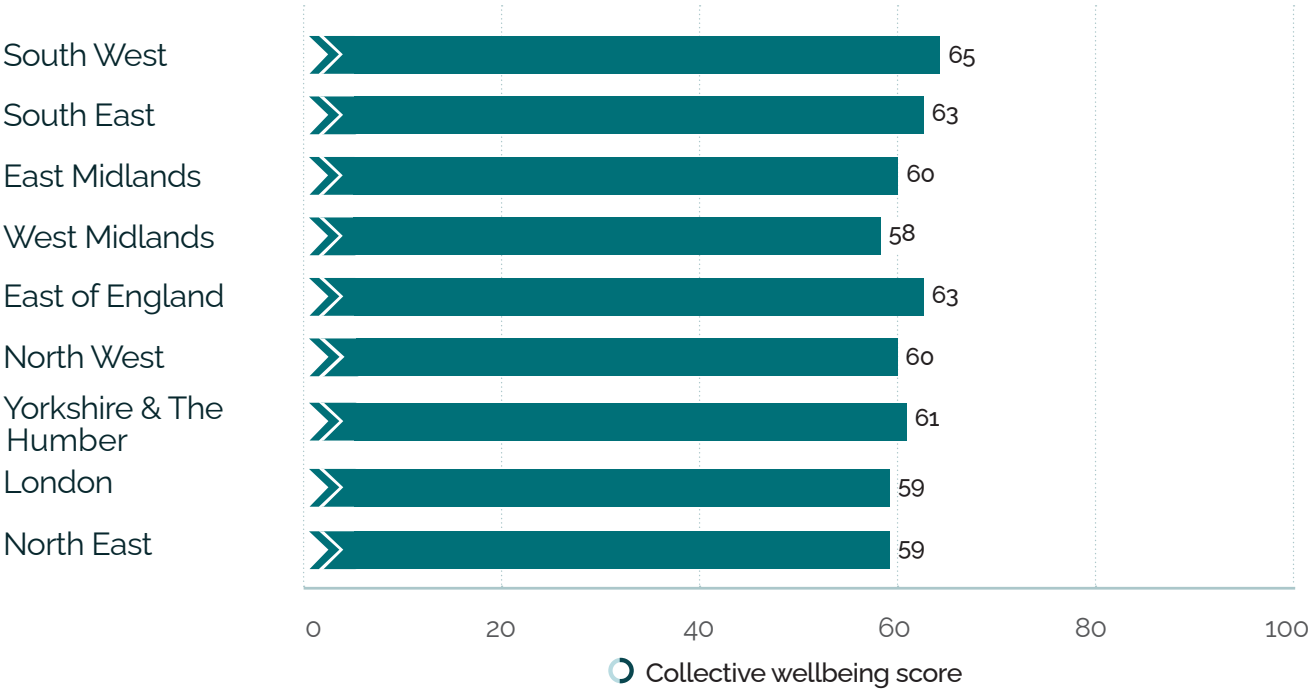


Figure 3. Collective wellbeing scores by region in England



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

Social wellbeing in England 2026

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







71

100





England scores 71 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 England, we asked questions about access to services, community relationships, safety and community cohesion, and self-reported health and mental health.

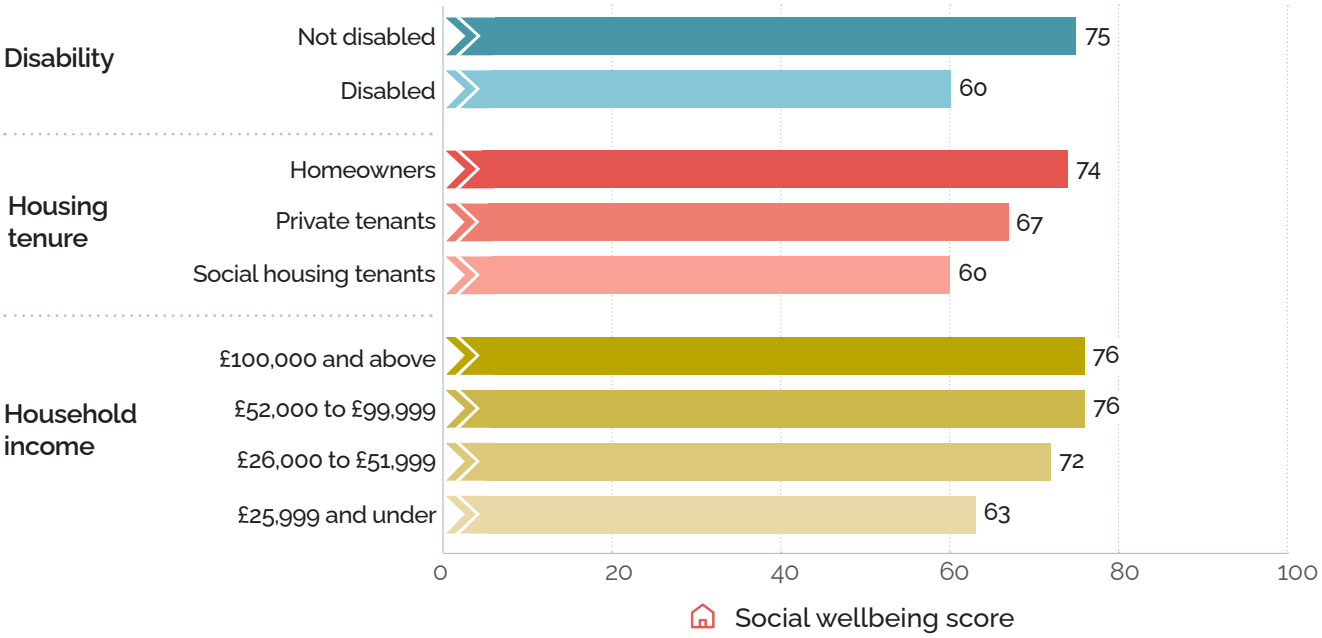
The groups most likely to experience **high** levels of social wellbeing in England in 2026 are:

- People aged 55 and over, who have a social wellbeing score of **75**, seven points higher than for people aged 16 to 34 (**68**). People aged 35 to 54 have a social wellbeing score of **71**.
- People who live in the South West of England, who have a social wellbeing score of **76**, five points higher than the England average (**71**) and eight points higher than for those in the North East of England (**68**).
- Men, who have a social wellbeing score of **74**. This is five points higher than for women (**69**).
- Graduates, who have a social wellbeing score of **74**, which is four points higher than for non-graduates (**70**).
- People who live in rural areas, who have a social wellbeing score of **75**, five points higher than for those living in urban areas (**70**).

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

- Disabled people, who have a social wellbeing score of **60**, 15 points lower than for people who are not disabled (**75**).
- People who live in social housing, who have a social wellbeing score of **60**, 14 points lower than for homeowners (**74**). People who rent their home from a private landlord have a social wellbeing score of **67**.
- People who have an annual household income of below £26,000, who have a social wellbeing score of **63**. This is nine points lower than for those with an annual household income of between £26,000 and £51,999 (**72**), and 13 points lower than for those whose annual household income is £52,000 and above (**76**).
- LGB+ people have a social wellbeing score of **64**, eight points lower than for people who are heterosexual (**72**).
- People who live in the most deprived areas (IMD1), who have a social wellbeing score of **64**, 12 points lower than for those in the least deprived areas (**76**).
- People from an ethnic minority background, including White minorities, who have a social wellbeing score of **67**, six points lower than for those from a White British background (**73**).

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

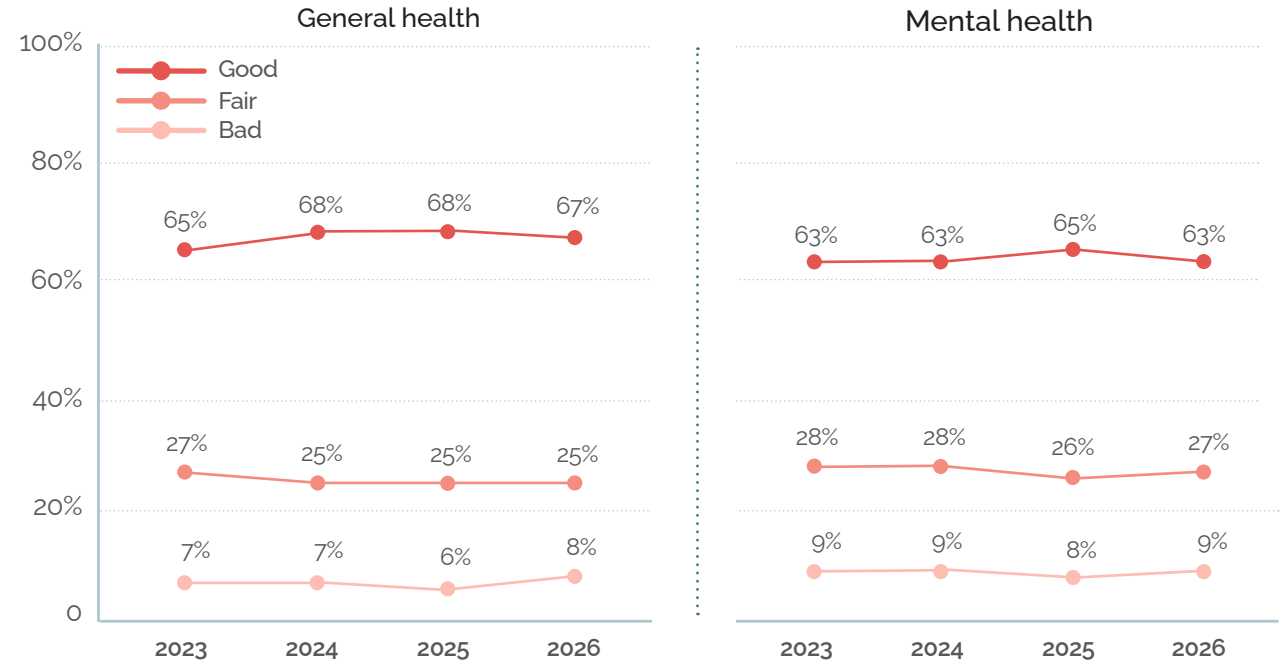


Social wellbeing: breakdown of results

Small downward shifts in several areas of social wellbeing have led to a drop in the headline figure.

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

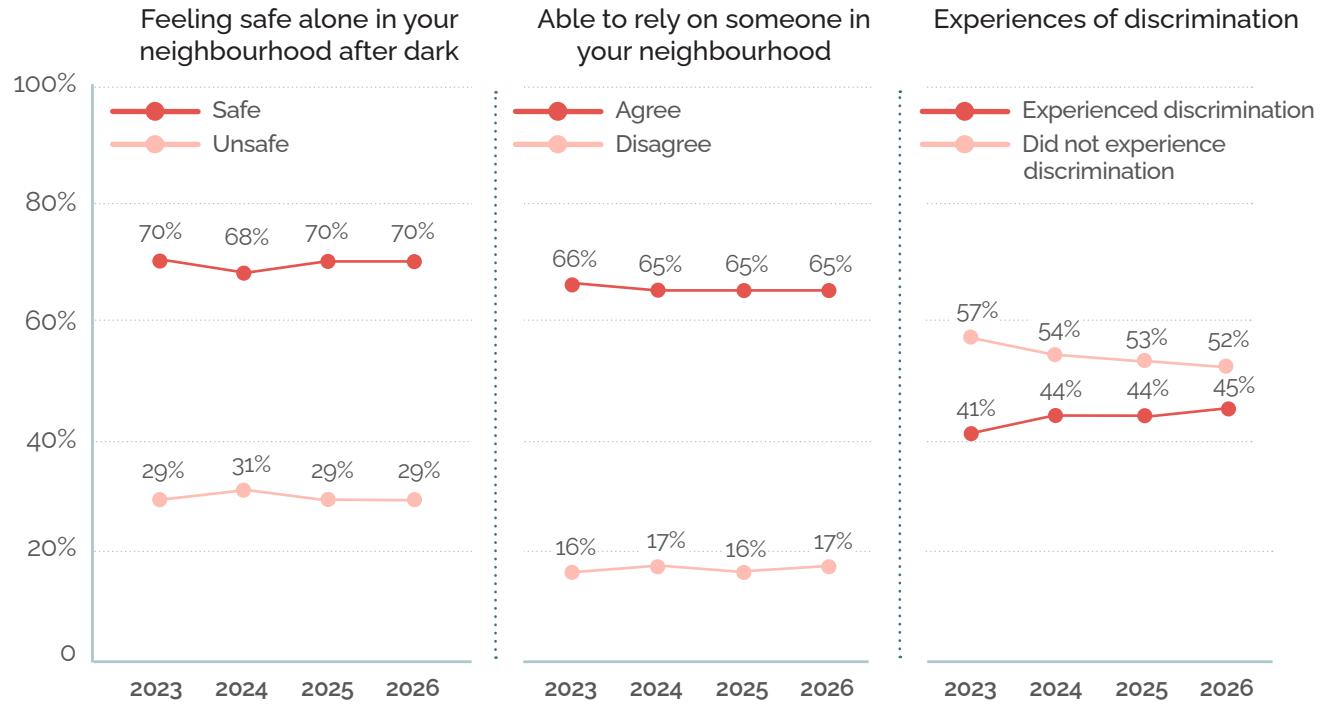
Figure 5. Perceptions of general and mental health



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

- Just under one in 10 (8%) people experience bad general health, two percentage points higher than last year.
- Just under one in 10 (9%) people experience bad mental health, similar to previous years.

Figure 6. Community cohesion



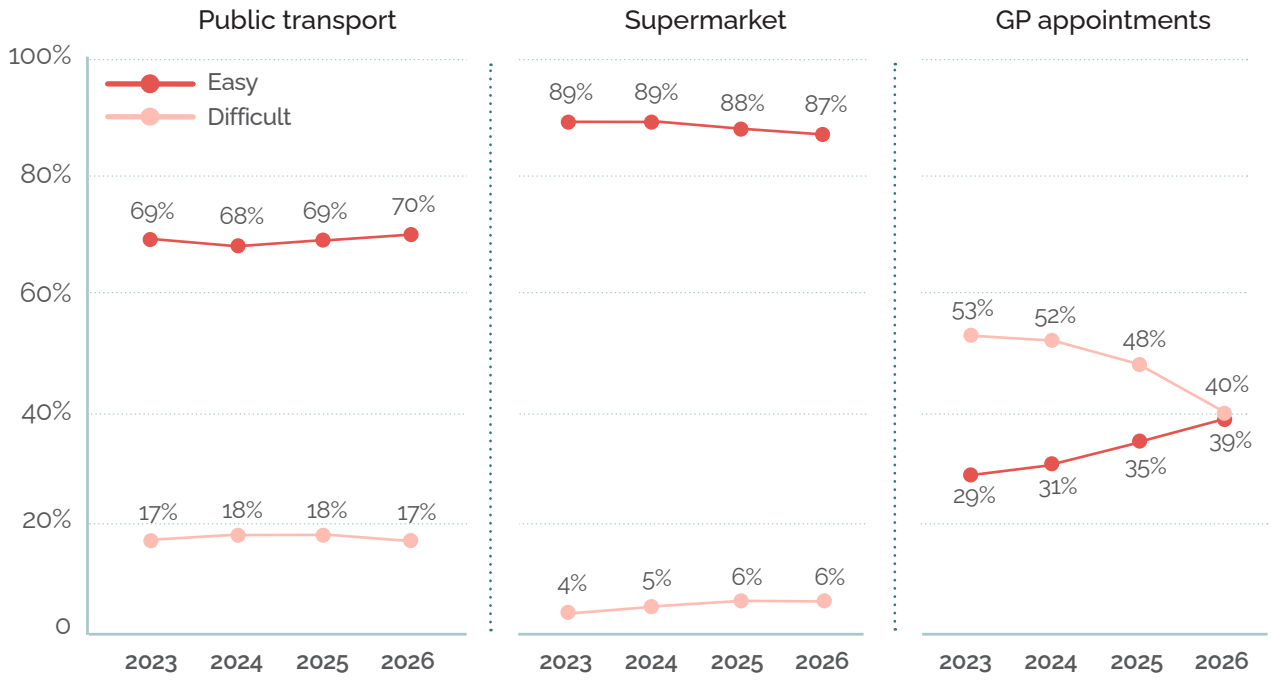
Q: How safe do you feel walking alone in your local neighbourhood after dark?

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?

- Seven in ten (70%) people feel safe walking alone in their local neighbourhood after dark, seven percentage points lower than in Scotland and six percentage points lower than in Wales.
- Just under two-thirds (65%) of people felt that if they were alone and needed help, they could rely on someone in their neighbourhood to help them, lower than the UK average.
- 45% of people in England have experienced discrimination in the last 12 months, 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.

- One in six (17%) people find it difficult to access public transport that gets them where they need to go, similar to previous years.
- 87% of people find it easy to access a grocery shop or supermarket in person, two percentage points lower than in 2023.
- Two in five (39%) people now find it easy to get a GP appointment at a time when they need one, 10 percentage points higher than in 2023.



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

England's social wellbeing score of **71** out of 100 in 2026 represents a small but concerning drop compared to 2025, and is lower than it was in 2023, when Life in the UK first reported.

The small improvements we saw last year in people's reported general health have been lost, and the proportion of people experiencing discrimination remains higher than it was in 2023.

As we have seen in previous years, people in England feel less likely than people in Scotland and Wales to feel safe walking in their neighbourhood after dark. People in England are also less likely than people in Northern Ireland and Scotland to feel they could rely on other people in their neighbourhood if they were alone and needed help.

However, while there is cause for concern across this year's findings, we have continued to see progress in people's ease with accessing GP appointments at a time when they need one. This has grown year on year, from 29% in 2023 to 39% this year, a welcome sign of progress.

The data once again show that there are real and persistent inequalities in how people experience life depending on their characteristics. Those at risk of especially poor social wellbeing include disabled people, those who live in social housing, and those with low annual household incomes.

Figure 8. Social wellbeing scores over time





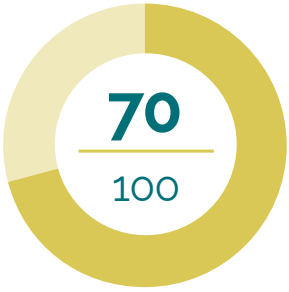
Economic wellbeing in England 2026

We all have a decent minimum living standard.

70

100





England 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 England, we asked questions about skills and job availability, and the affordability of essential items like food and fuel.

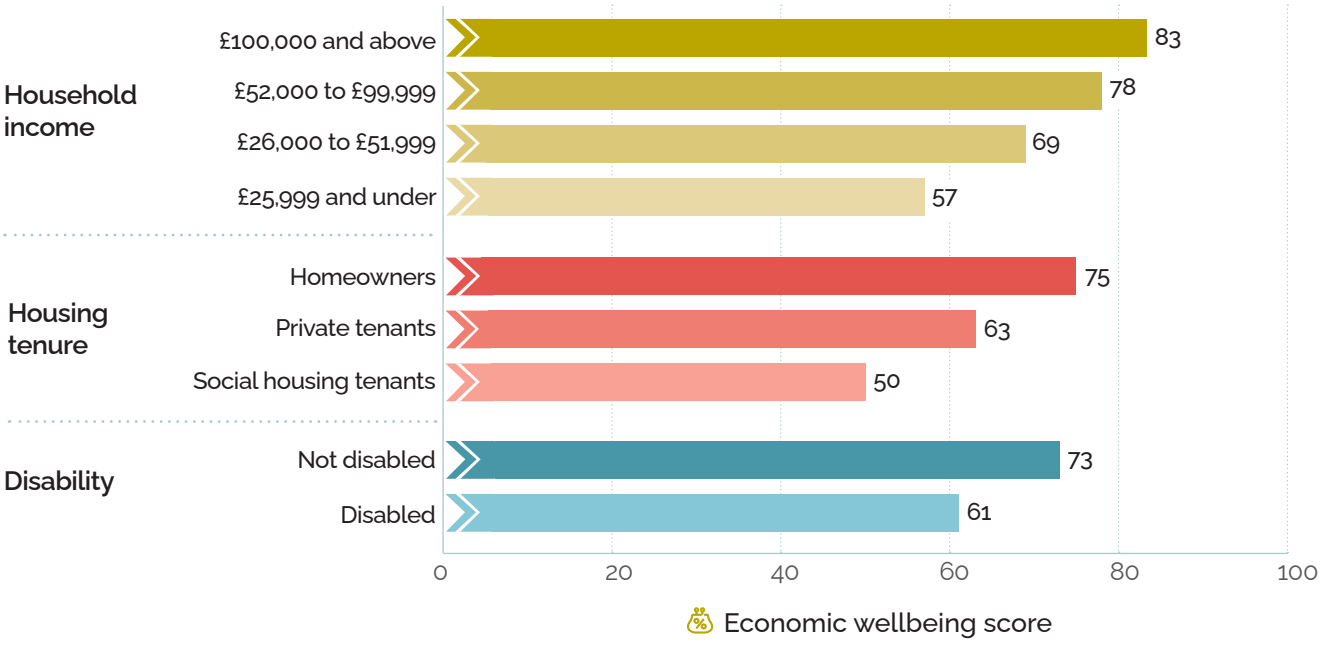
The people most likely to experience **high** levels of economic wellbeing in England in 2026 are:

- People aged 55 and over, who have an economic wellbeing score of **75**, eight points higher than for those aged 35 to 54 (**67**). People aged between 16 and 34 have an economic wellbeing score of **68**.
- Graduates, who have an economic wellbeing score of **76**, eight points higher than for non-graduates (**68**).
- People living in the South West of England, who have an economic wellbeing score of **74**, four points higher than the England average (**70**) and eight points higher than for those living in the West Midlands or the North East (each **66**).

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

- People with an annual household income of below £26,000 a year, who have an economic wellbeing score of **57**. This is 26 points lower than for those with annual household incomes of £100,000 and above (**83**). People with an annual household income of between £52,000 and £99,999 have an economic wellbeing score of **78**, and those with annual household incomes of between £26,000 and £51,999 have an economic wellbeing score of **69**.
- People who live in social housing, who have an economic wellbeing score of **50**, 25 points lower than for homeowners (**75**). Those who rent privately also have some of the lowest economic wellbeing scores (**63**).
- Disabled people, who have an economic wellbeing score of **61**, 12 points lower than for people who are not disabled (**73**).
- People who live in households with one or more children under the age of 16, who have an economic wellbeing score of **66**, five points lower than for those in households with no children (**71**).
- People living in the most deprived areas (IMD1), who have an economic wellbeing score of **60**, 17 points lower than for those living in the least deprived areas (**77**).
- Women, who have an economic wellbeing score of **68**, four points lower than for men (**72**).
- 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

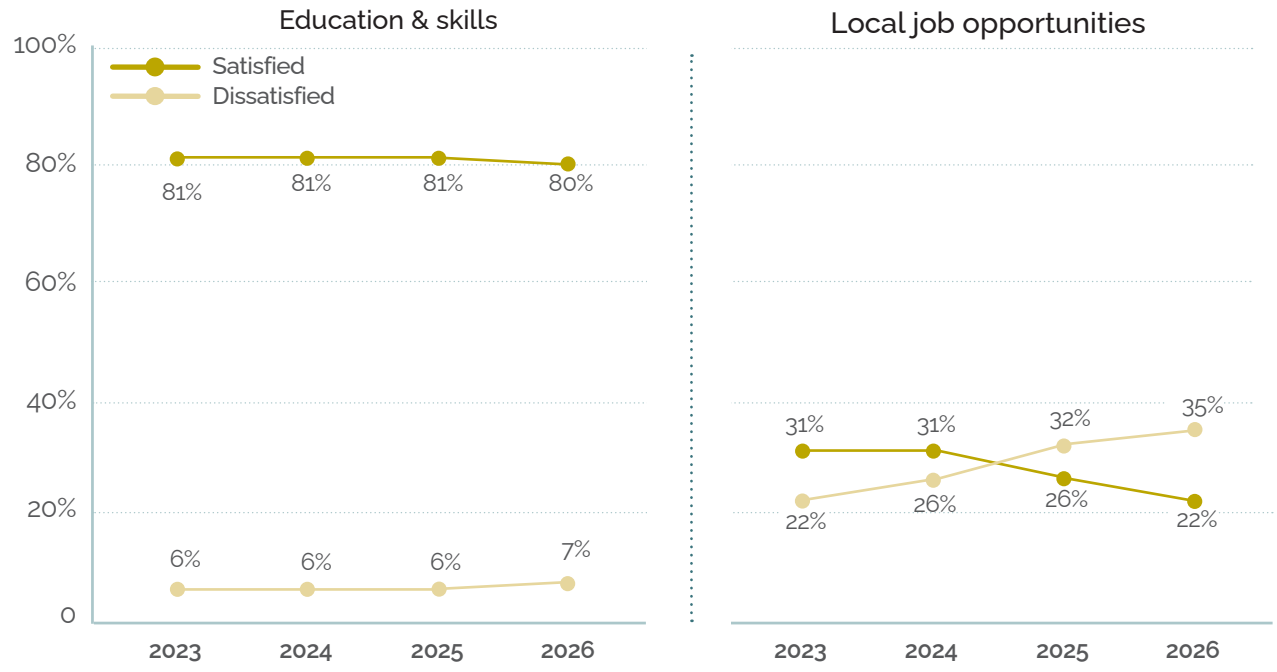


Economic wellbeing: breakdown of results

People are finding it harder to achieve a decent living standard, and satisfaction with local job opportunities is the lowest yet recorded by Life in the UK for England.

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

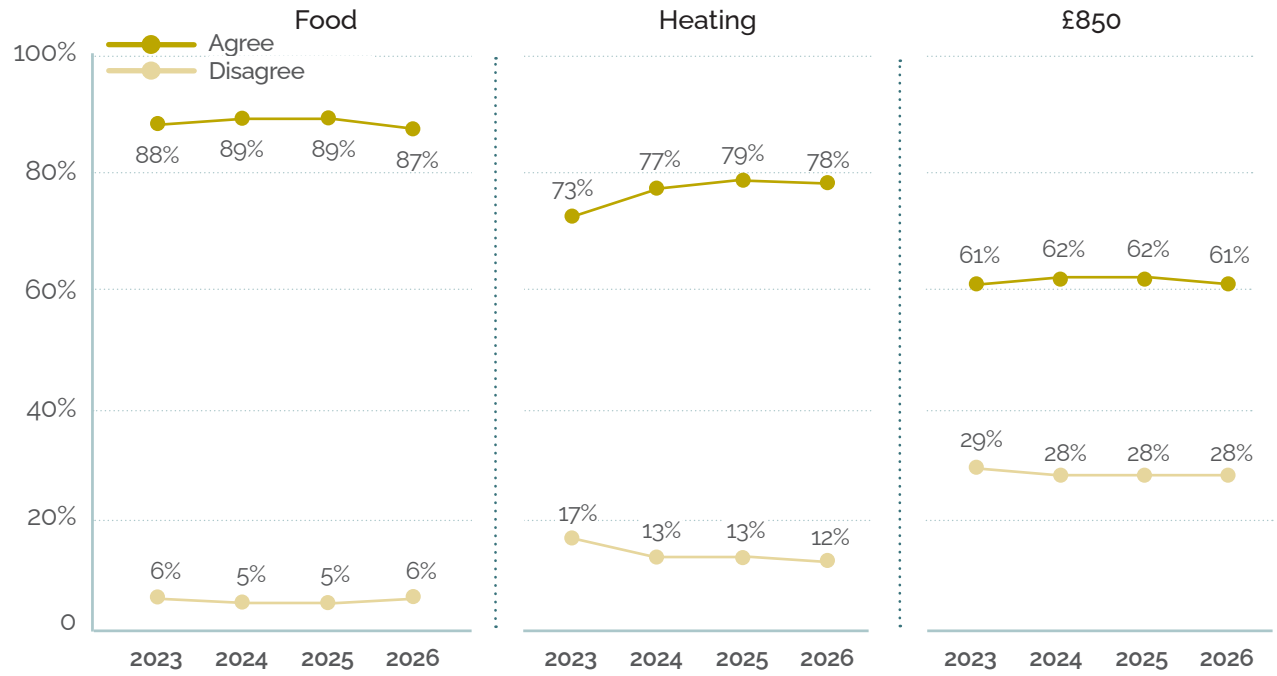
Figure 10. Perceptions of education, skills and local job opportunities



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?

- Four in five (80%) people are satisfied with their education and skills, similar to previous years.
- Just one in five (22%) people are satisfied with the availability of jobs in their local area, four percentage points lower than 2025 and nine percentage points lower than 2024.

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 agree that they can afford to buy enough food for everyone in the household, two percentage points lower than in 2025.
- 12% of people cannot afford to heat their homes adequately, though this is a five percentage-point improvement compared to 2023.
- Over a quarter (28%) of people could not afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850, similar to previous years.

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 (79%) people can afford to socialise outside their home once a month, similar to previous years.
- Just under two-thirds (65%) of people can afford to pay for a week's annual holiday away from home, four percentage points lower than in 2025.



Summary

At **70** out of 100, the economic wellbeing of people in England has deteriorated by two points this year and is at its lowest figure since Life in the UK began reporting in 2023.

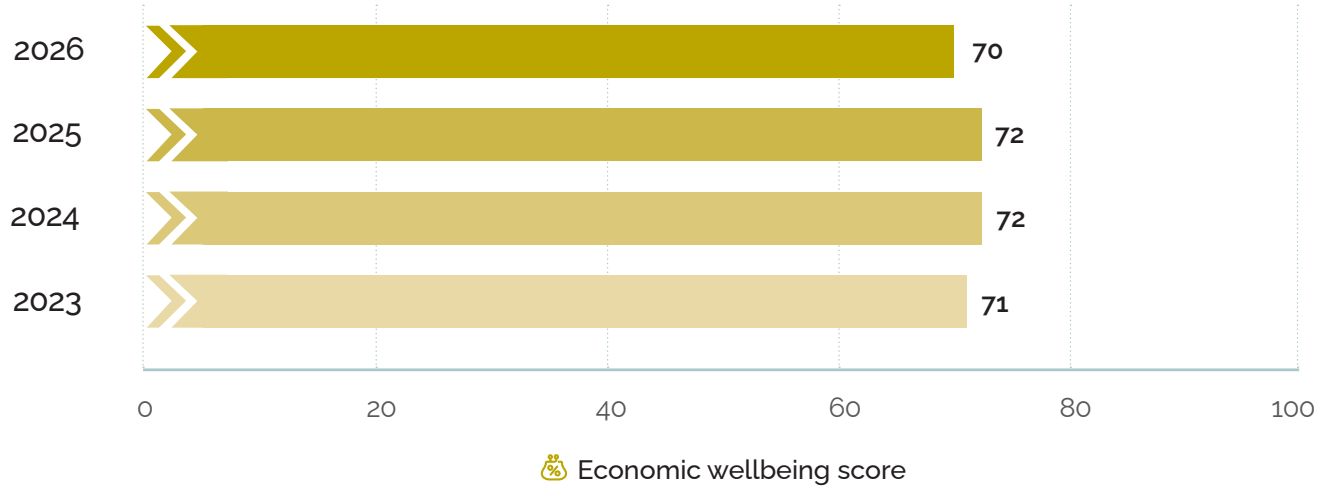
As last year, people are still finding it easier to heat their homes than they did in 2023. However, worryingly, people are less likely this year than in the last two years to say that they can afford to buy enough food for everyone in the household.

Beyond meeting essential needs, people are finding it harder than they did last year to afford to socialise outside of their homes once a month, or to go away on holiday away from home once a year.

There is also wide variation in economic wellbeing according to people's situations and backgrounds, continuing existing inequalities. It remains unsurprising but true that those on lower household incomes continue to have far lower economic wellbeing than those with the highest incomes, and face difficulties in meeting everyday costs. A similar gap exists between those living in social housing and those who own their own homes, as well as between people who are disabled and those who are not. Other factors including age, level of education, where someone lives, whether there are children in the household, and religion all impact economic wellbeing.

Last year, we noted that dissatisfaction with local job opportunities was rising. This year has only compounded that trend.

Figure 13. Economic wellbeing scores over time



Environmental wellbeing in England 2026

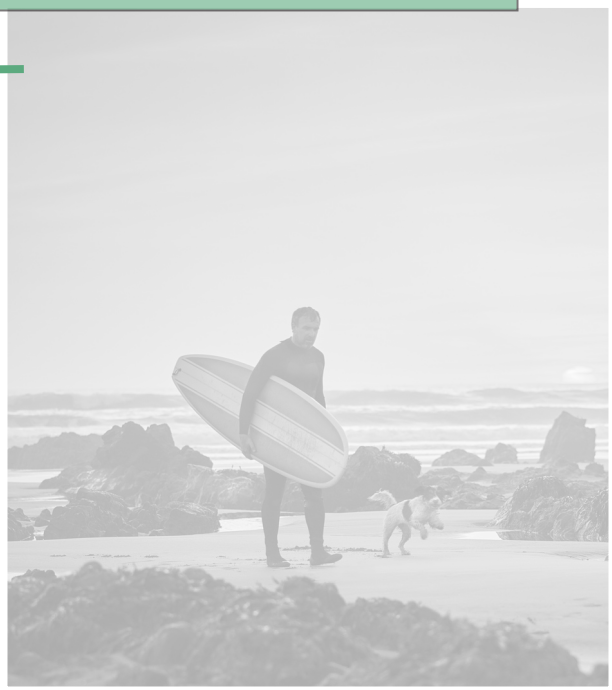
We all live within the planet's natural resources.

62

100









England scores 62 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 England, 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.

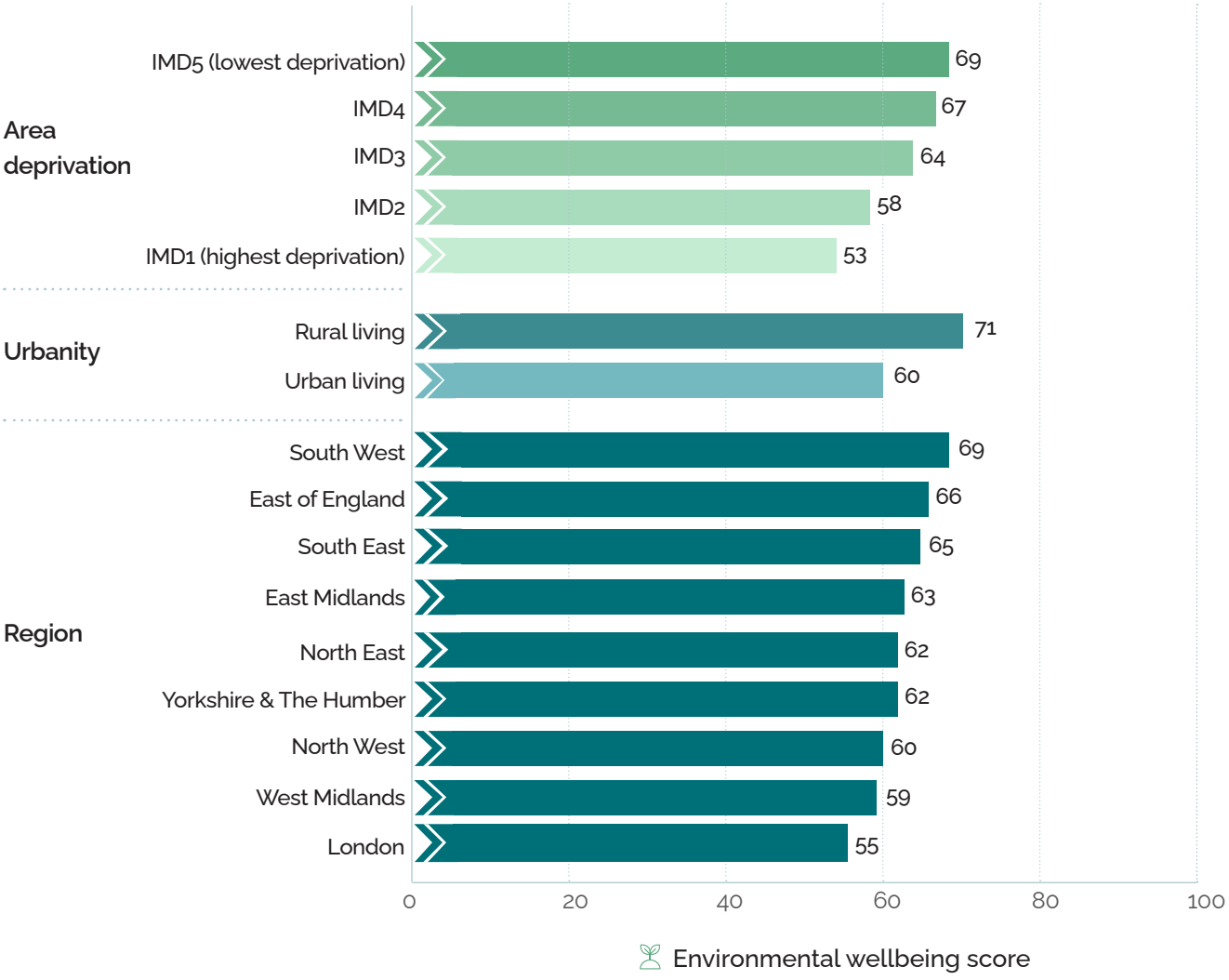
The people most likely to experience **high** levels of environmental wellbeing in England in 2026 are:

- People living 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 **66**, eight points higher than for people aged 16 to 34 years old (**58**).
- Graduates, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **63**, one point higher than for non-graduates (**62**).

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

- People living in the most deprived areas (IMD1), who have an environmental wellbeing score of **53**, 16 points lower than for those in the least deprived areas (**69**).
- People living in London, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **55**, seven points lower than the average for England (**62**).
- People with an annual household income of below £26,000, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **57**, eight points lower than for those with an annual household income of above £52,000 (**65**). Those with annual household incomes of between £26,000 and £51,999 have an environmental wellbeing score of **62**.
- Disabled people, who have an environmental wellbeing score of **59**, four points lower than for people who are not disabled (**63**).

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



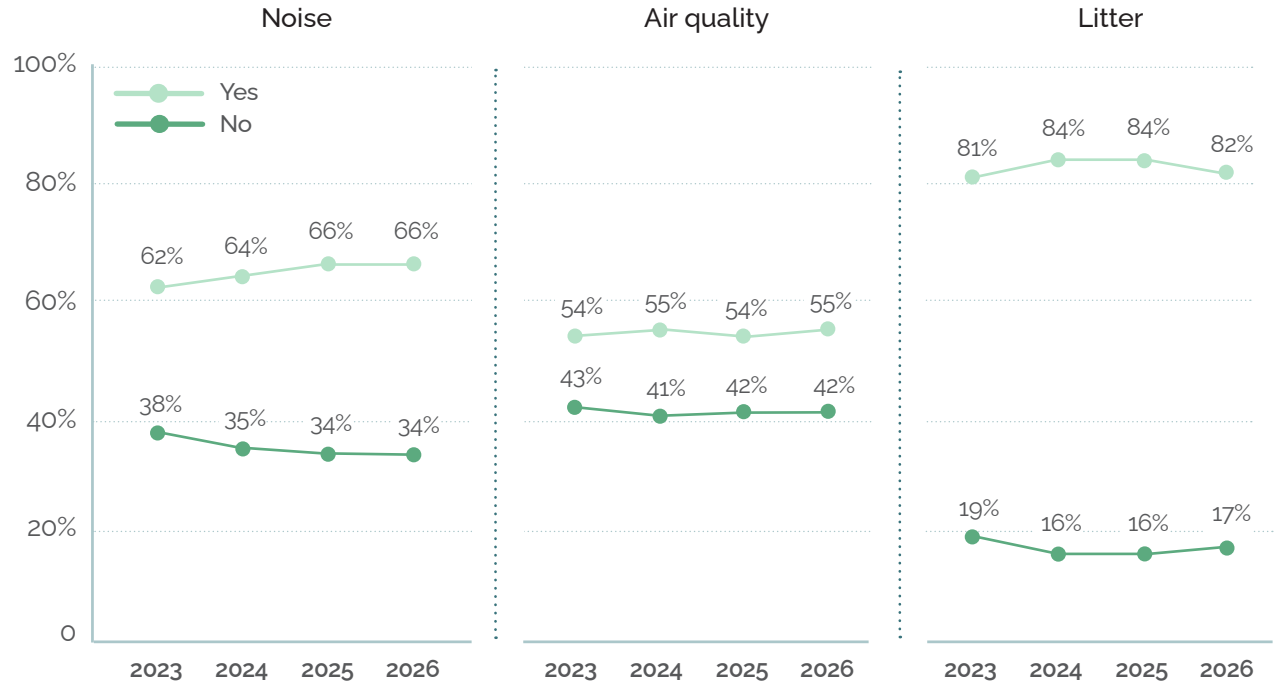


Environmental wellbeing: breakdown of results

There have been few changes in environmental wellbeing since last year, but people in England are more likely to experience problems with pollution than people in other parts of the UK.

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

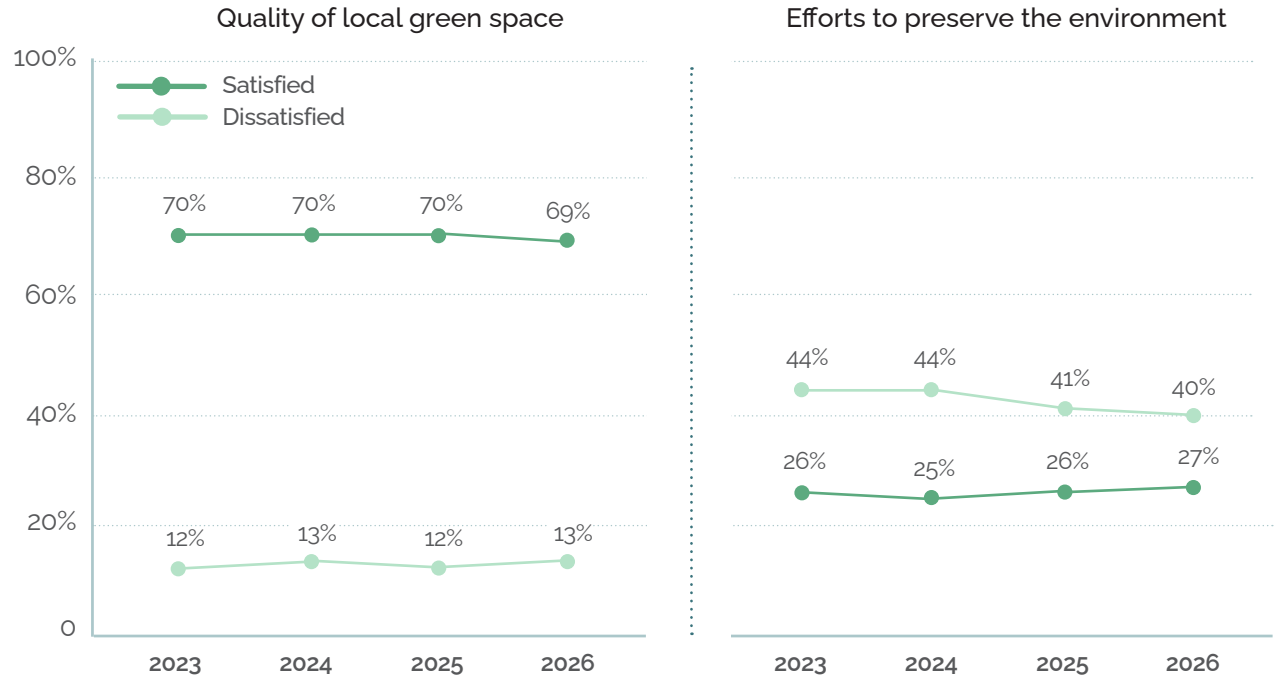
Figure 15. Issues with quality of local environment



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.

- Two-thirds (66%) of people experience problems with noise pollution in their local area, similar to last year, but four percentage points higher than 2023 and higher than in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- More than half (55%) experience problems with air quality in their local neighbourhood, higher than in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.
- Four in five (82%) people experience problems with litter in their local area, similar to previous years.

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?

- Just over two-thirds (69%) of people are satisfied with the quality of their local public, green or open space, similar to previous years.
- Two in five (40%) are dissatisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK, similar to 2025 but an improvement of four percentage points since 2023.



Summary

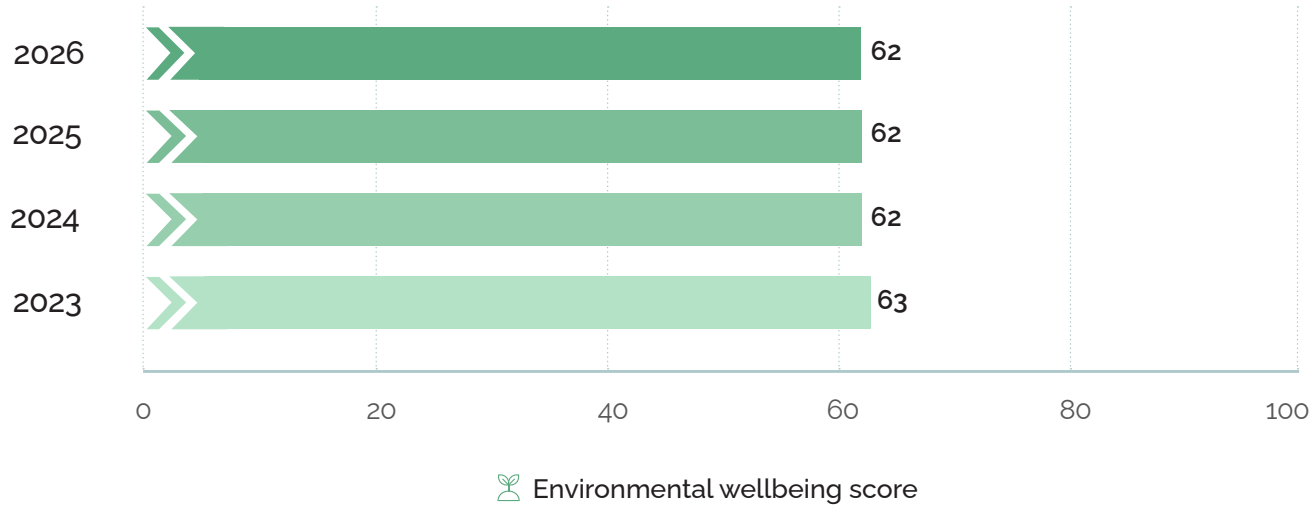
Unlike other domains in this report, England's environmental wellbeing has remained steady this year.

Nonetheless, many people continue to experience problems with noise pollution, air quality, and local litter. Both noise pollution and air quality are more likely to be problematic in England than in other parts of the UK.

Like last year, more people are satisfied with efforts to preserve the environment in the UK than in 2023 and 2024, but satisfaction with this is still low at 27%.

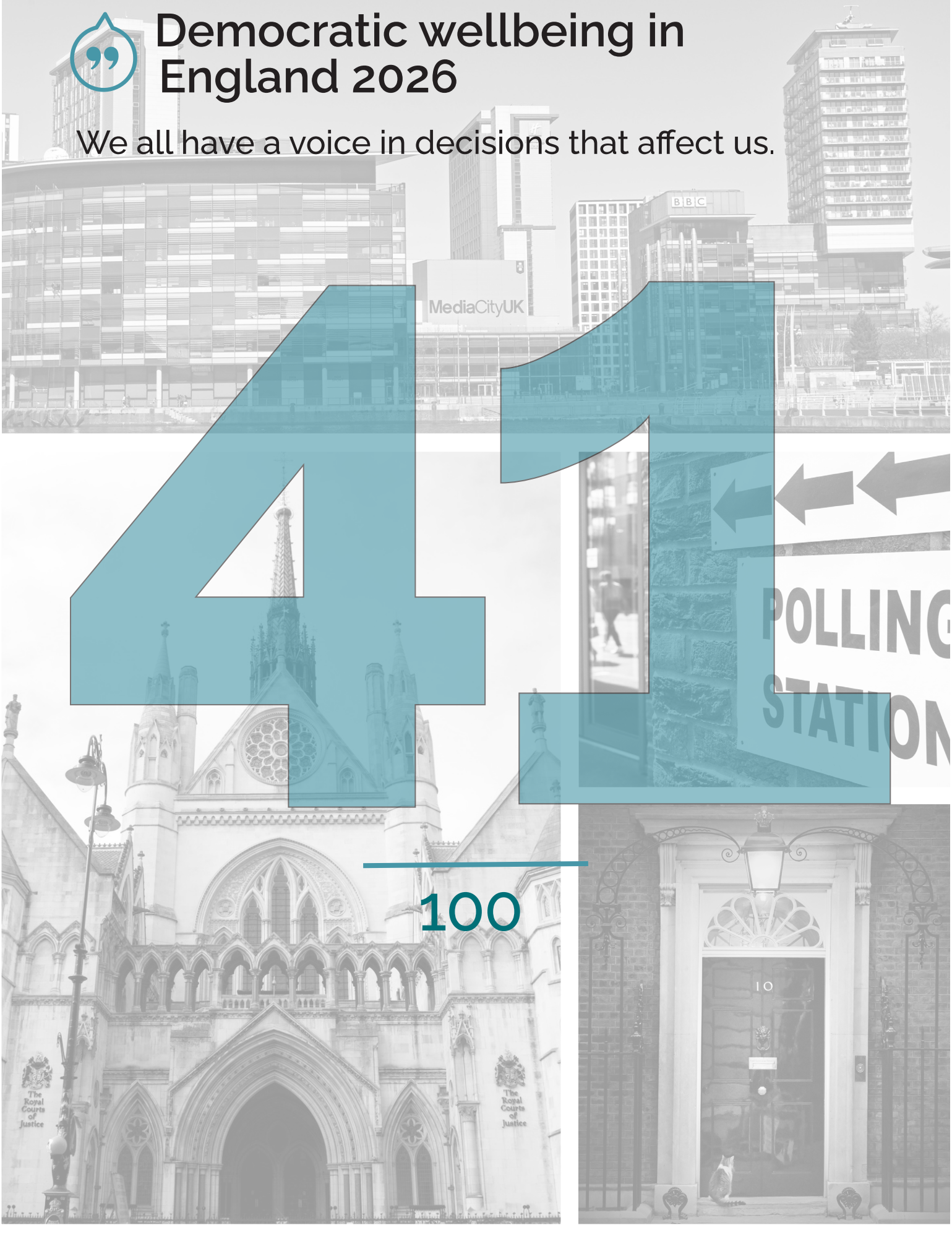
It is also true, as for other domains, that environmental wellbeing is shaped by factors like where someone lives, their age, and their income. These inequalities have remained evident across the years.

Figure 17. Environmental wellbeing scores over time



Democratic wellbeing in England 2026

We all have a voice in decisions that affect us.



41

100



England 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 England 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.

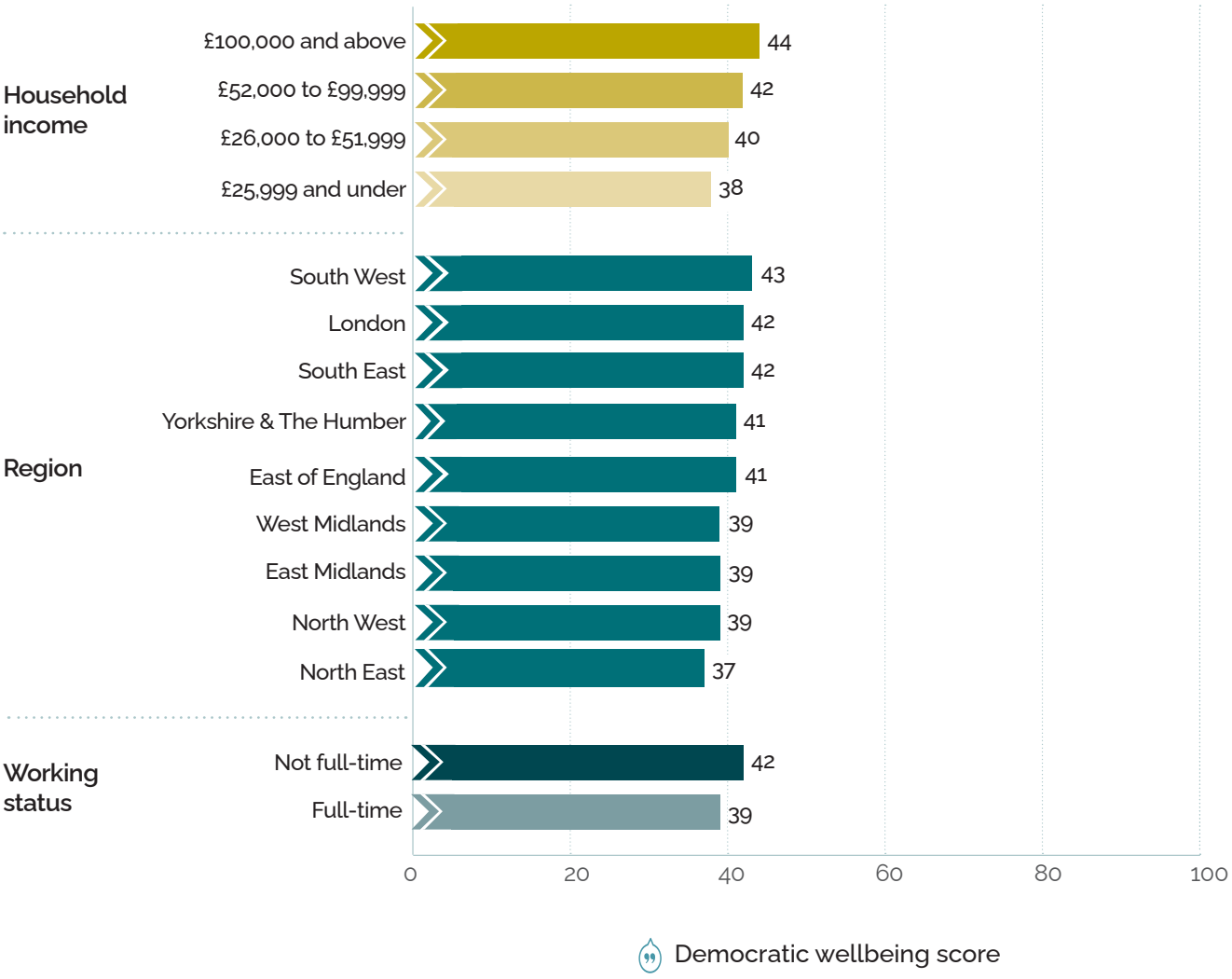
While markedly low across the board, and the lowest of any of our four wellbeing domains, the people with the **highest** levels of democratic wellbeing in England in 2026 are:

- People with an annual household income of £100,000 or more a year, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **44**, six points higher than for those with annual household incomes of below £26,000 a year (**38**).
- Those who do not work full time, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **42**, three points higher than for full-time workers (**39**).
- Graduates, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **43**, three points higher than for non-graduates (**40**).

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

- People in the North East of England, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **37**, four points lower than the England average (**41**) and six points lower than for people in the South West of England (**43**).
- Disabled people, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **38**, four points lower than for people who are not disabled (**42**).
- People living 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**).
- Women, who have a democratic wellbeing score of **40**, one point lower than for men (**41**).

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



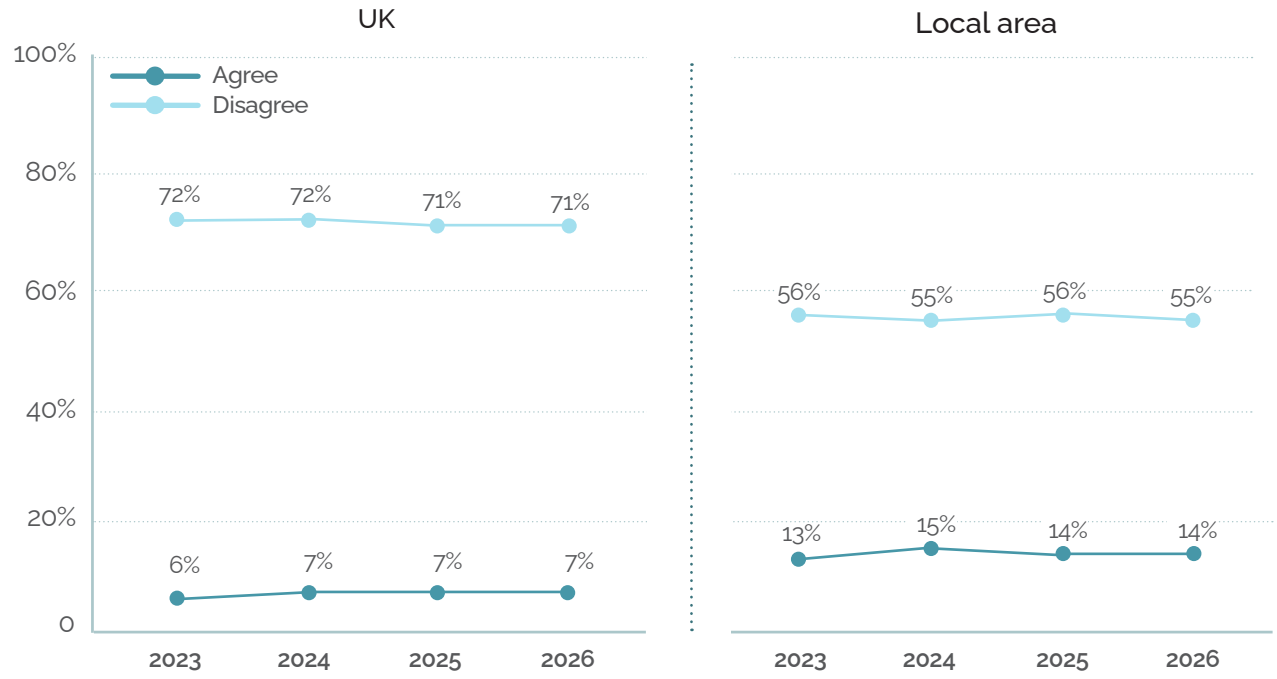


Democratic wellbeing: breakdown of results

The improvements we saw in trust in the UK government in 2025 have not been sustained, and people remain unlikely to feel they can influence decisions that affect them. Trust in other key institutions like the news media and the legal system has also deteriorated this year.

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

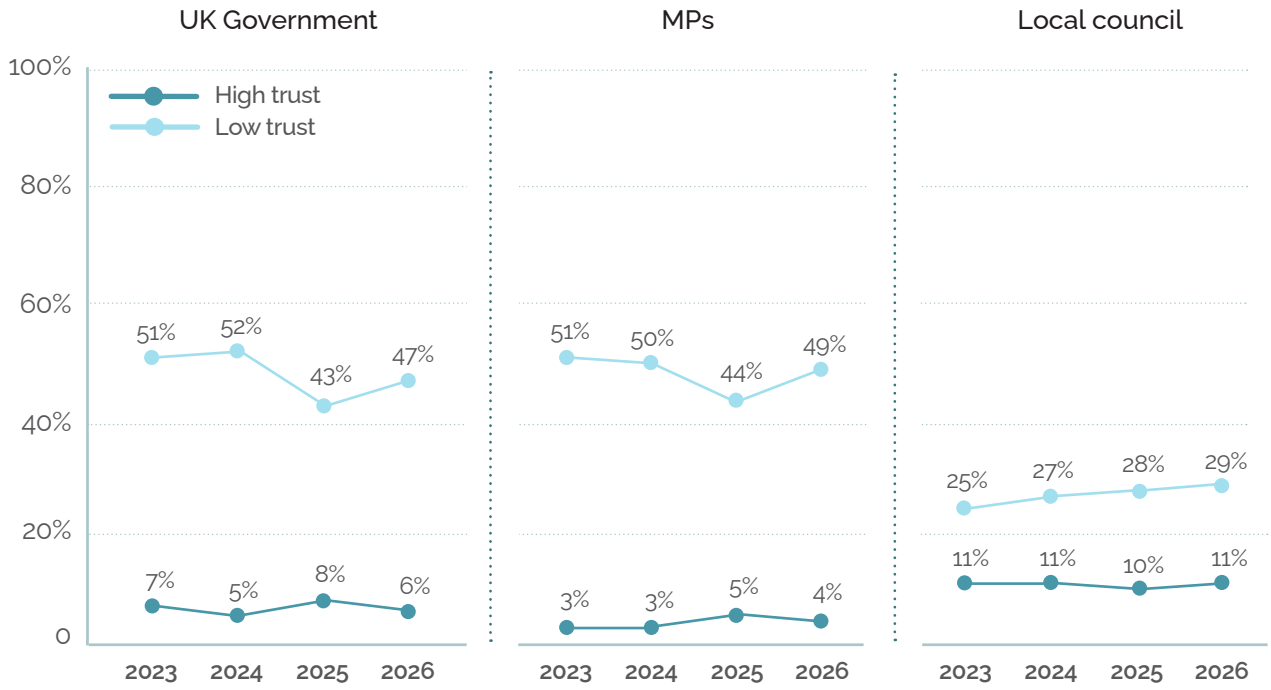
Figure 19. Perceptions of ability to influence decisions



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.

Fewer than one in ten (7%) people feel they can influence decisions affecting the UK, while only 14% feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

Figure 20. Trust in governments and politicians[3]



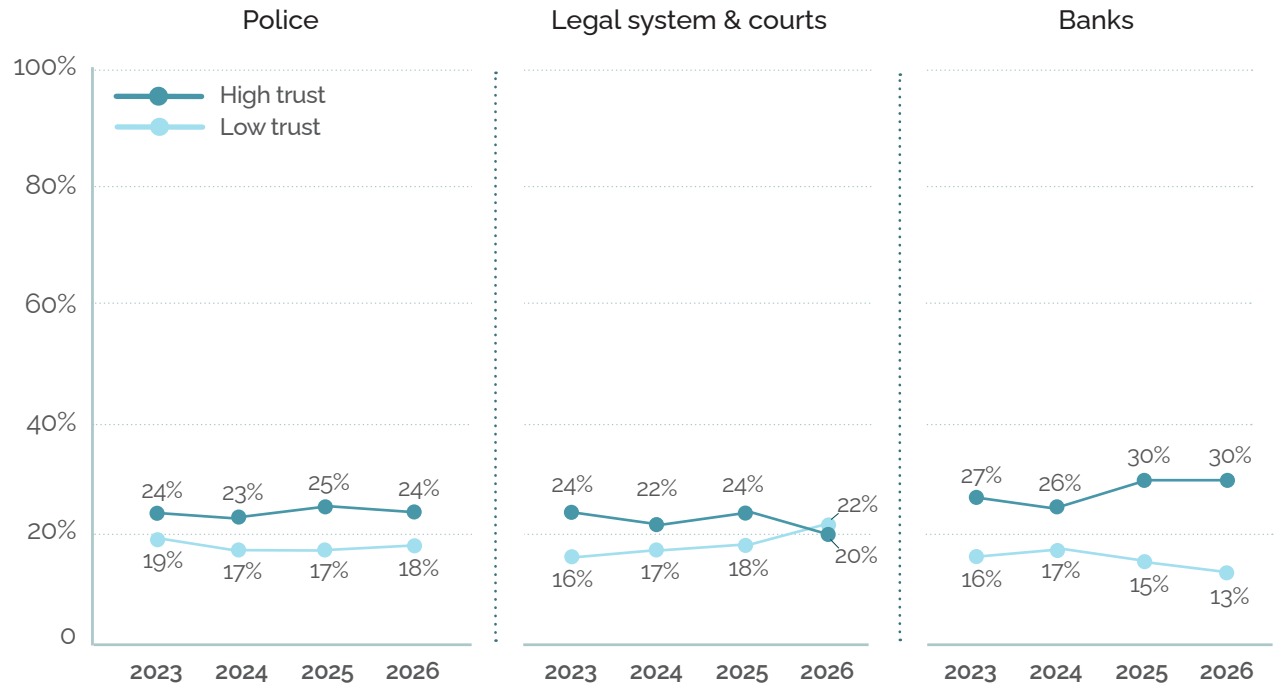
Qs: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust each of the following? UK Government; MPs; the local council for your area. Scores of 1 to 3 equate to low trust; 4 to 7 to medium trust; 8 to 10 to high trust.

- Nearly half (47%) of people have low trust in the UK Government, four percentage points higher than in 2025, though still a five-point improvement compared to 2024.
- Nearly half (49%) of people have low trust in MPs, five percentage points higher than in 2025 and similar to 2023.
- Three in ten (29%) people now have low trust in the local council for their area, four percentage points higher than in 2023.



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

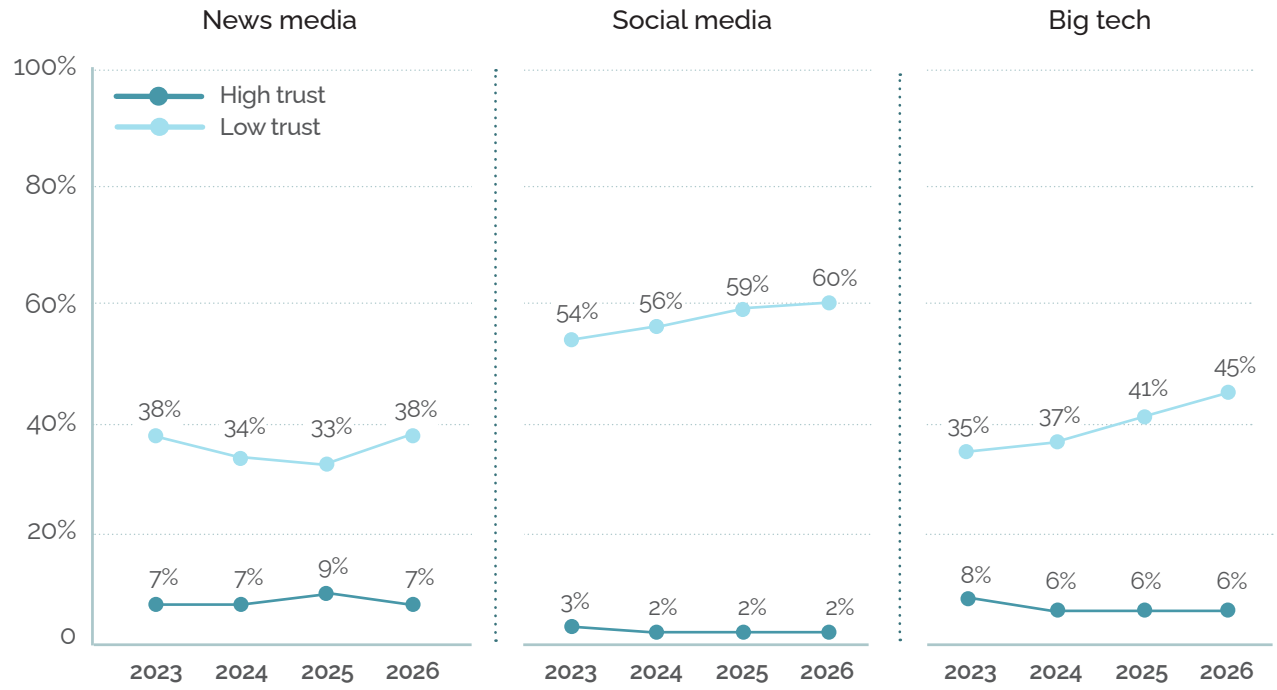
Figure 21. Trust in institutions



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.

- A quarter (24%) of people have high trust in the police, similar to previous years.
- One in five (22%) people have low trust in the legal system and courts, six percentage points higher than in 2023.
- Three in ten (30%) people have high trust in banks, four percentage points higher than in 2024.

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.

- Just under four in ten (38%) people have low trust in the news media, five percentage points higher than in 2025 and the same as in 2023.
- Six in ten (60%) people have low trust in social media, six percentage points higher than in 2023.
- 45% of people have low trust in big tech companies, 10 percentage points higher than in 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.

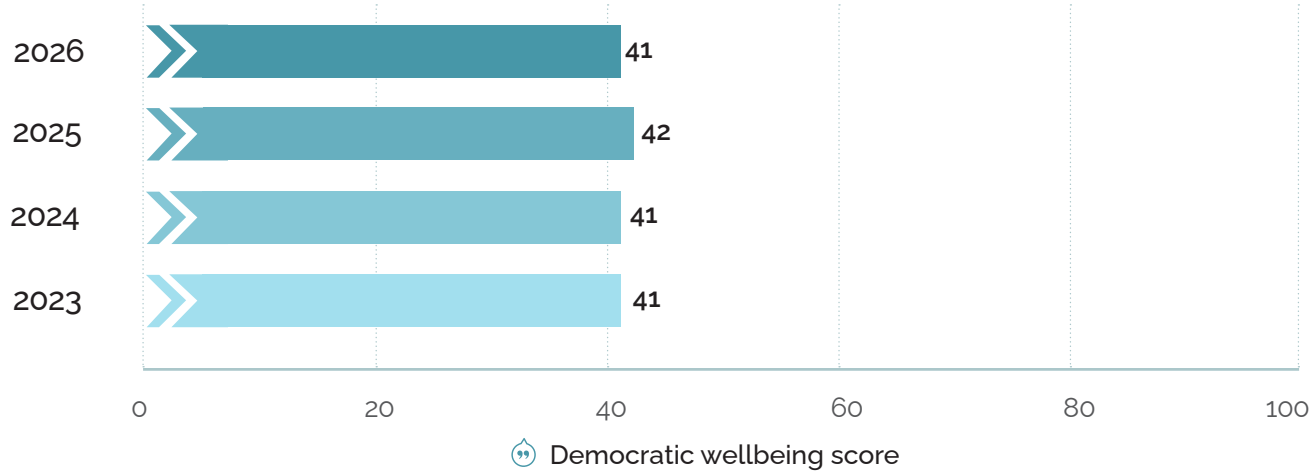
Summary

In last year's report we found that democratic wellbeing had improved, but this gain has been lost: at **41**, democratic wellbeing has returned to the score of previous years. This troublingly low score indicates widespread lack of trust in political and civil society institutions, as well as a perception that people are unable to influence decisions that affect them.

Nearly half of people have low trust in the UK Government, a statistically significant loss since the upward turn of the 2025 findings – albeit still a slight improvement on findings from 2023 and 2024. In addition, despite the changes resulting from the May 2026 local elections, people are no more likely to trust the local council for their area than they were last year. Indeed, the level of trust in local councils is lower in 2026 than it was in 2023. Similarly, people are no more likely than in previous years to feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

Some people are at higher risk than others of experiencing low democratic wellbeing, including people with lower household incomes and people who work full-time. Meanwhile, those in the South of England and in London, and those with a graduate-level qualification have higher democratic wellbeing.

Figure 23. Democractic wellbeing scores over time





Collective wellbeing in 2026: Scoring summary



71
100

Social wellbeing

70
100

Economic wellbeing

62
100

Environmental wellbeing

41
100

Democratic wellbeing

61
100

The collective wellbeing score for England 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**	**71**	**70**	**62**	**41**
Disability	Not disabled	63	75	73	63	42
	Disabled	54	60	61	59	38
Age	16-34 years	59	68	68	58	40
	35-54 years	59	71	67	60	39
	55 years & over	64	75	75	66	42
Household Income	£25,999 and under	54	63	57	57	38
	£26,000 to £51,999	61	72	69	62	40
	£52,000 to £99,999	65	76	78	65	42
	£100,000 & above	67	76	83	65	44
Area deprivation	IMD1 (highest deprivation)	54	64	60	53	37
	IMD2	59	69	67	58	40
	IMD3	62	73	71	64	41
	IMD4	65	75	75	67	42
	IMD5 (lowest deprivation)	66	76	77	69	43
Housing tenure	Social rented	50	60	50	54	36
	Private rented	57	67	63	58	41
	Homeowners	64	74	75	64	42
Gender	Women	60	69	68	62	40
	Men	63	74	72	63	41
Ethnicity	White British	63	73	72	64	41
	Ethnic minorities (including White minorities)	57	67	65	56	41
Children	No children	62	72	71	63	41
	One or more children in household	59	71	66	60	40
Urbanity	Urban living	60	70	69	60	41
	Rural living	65	75	74	71	41
Education	Graduate	64	74	76	63	43
	Non-graduate	60	70	68	62	40

cont.

		Collective wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Environmental wellbeing	Democratic wellbeing
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	62	72	71	63	41
	LGB+	58	64	68	58	41
Religion	Religious	61	71	69	62	41
	No religion	62	72	72	63	40
Working status	Full-time	61	73	72	61	39
	Not full-time	61	70	69	63	42





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