

Optimism and personal well-being: technical report

Exploratory analysis of the relationship between optimism and personal well-being using questions from the 2019 Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) survey.

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Table of contents

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Summary](#)
3. [Optimism questions summarised](#)
4. [Optimism and individual characteristics](#)
5. [Optimism and personal well-being](#)
6. [Regression analysis](#)
7. [Annex](#)

1 . Introduction

This technical report focuses on analysis of the relationship between personal well-being, optimism about the future, and perceived issues of national concern. Questions on these topics were included in the Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) survey during January, February and April 2019 to test their possible value for use in our quarterly [Personal and economic well-being release](#). This period included two months before the first anticipated date at which the UK would leave the EU (end of March 2019), and one month after.

We use the term "optimism" to refer to responses indicating a positive outlook about the future of the country as a whole, expectations about the economy, and the future of today's youth. We conversely use "pessimism" to refer to having a negative outlook on some or all of the issues. An additional question about the "most important issue facing Britain today" was also included to provide further insight into specific concerns that may give rise to optimism or pessimism.

The questions on optimism have a track record of use on other established surveys (for example, [Gallup World Poll](#)) but are not available from existing datasets alongside the four Office for National Statistics (ONS) personal well-being questions. We included the questions on the OPN survey to explore how optimism and personal well-being are related, and to understand whether these additional questions can be used to aid interpretation of the quarterly personal and economic well-being findings.

Academic research has shown that optimism is linked to improved personal well-being, for example, improved mental and physical health ([Conversano et al., 2010](#)), and lower levels of depression ([Kleiman et al., 2015](#)). Optimism has also been found to be associated with an individual's behaviour, such as participation in skills and training, having a healthy lifestyle, and improved problem-solving capability ([Conversano et al., 2010](#)). Additionally, optimistic people are more likely to seek social support ([Scheier et al., 2001](#)). These are all of interest in the UK today and demonstrate the relevance of the questions for policymakers.

Respondents in Great Britain were asked four questions regarding optimism and the most important issue facing the country:

1. "When you think of the future of the UK, which do you agree with more?"

The responses were:

- "The country's best years are ahead of us"
- "The country's best years are behind us"
- "Neither"
- "Don't know"
- participants could refuse to answer

2. "How likely do you think that today's youth will have a better life than their parents?"

The responses were:

- "Very likely"
- "Somewhat likely"
- "Neither likely or unlikely"
- "Somewhat unlikely"
- "Very unlikely"
- "Don't know"
- participants could refuse to answer

For our analyses we have combined the "Very likely" and "Somewhat likely" categories into a "Likely" category and the "Somewhat unlikely" and "Very unlikely" categories into an "Unlikely" category. This was done because of the relatively small sample sizes present in each of the five responses.

3. "Think about your expectations for the next twelve months, will the economy in the UK be..."

The responses were:

- "Better"
- "Worse"
- "The same"
- "Don't know"
- participants could refuse to answer

4. "What do you see as the most important issue facing Britain today?"

Respondents could reply:

- "Education"
- "The economy"
- "Brexit"
- "The NHS"
- "Immigration"
- "Housing"
- specify another issue

The first three questions were selected to mirror those chosen by [Gallup](#), so that comparisons could be made between them. The question regarding the most important issue facing the country was chosen to match that asked by [IPSOS Mori](#). However, IPSOS Mori asks the question with an open response and these responses are grouped into common themes. The OPN used closed responses based on the highest response categories in IPSOS Mori's survey.

Further details of the questions are outlined in the [Annex](#).

Data collection and sampling

The data were collected between January and April of 2019 and are reflective of the responses for the months of January, February, and April respectively. Data for March were unavailable because the [Opinions and Lifestyle \(OPN\) Survey](#) is an omnibus survey that only runs for eight months of the year. All responses were over the telephone.

The sample size of the OPN survey dataset included in this report is 3102 for the combined three months.

Weights

All data analysed in this report have [been weighted](#). A calibration weight has been applied to all cases to ensure the data are truly representative of the UK population. This weight is based on estimates from the Annual Population Survey (APS). Therefore, no further weights (for example, design weights) were needed for this survey.

Analysis

The analysis is based on descriptive statistics of the three optimism questions, the question on the most important issue facing the country, the personal well-being measures, and a range of personal characteristics and circumstances. This was followed by logistic regression to look at associations between personal well-being and these factors.

2 . Summary

Respondents in Great Britain were asked on the Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) survey during January, February and April 2019 whether the country's best days are ahead or behind us. Half of respondents (50.2%) said "neither", suggesting that they did not have a clear view of what the future would bring. Of those with a definite view, one-third (33.0%) reported that "the country's best years are behind us", while 16.8% reported "the country's best years are ahead of us."

Males were more likely to show optimism towards the future of the country than females, while those reporting a mental or physical health condition were more likely to show pessimism towards the future of the country than those without such a condition.

Over the same period, 44.4% reported that the future looks worse for today's youth, while just over one-third (35.5%) are feeling good about the future for young people. About one-fifth (21.1%) of people reported that it is "neither likely nor unlikely" that today's youth will have a better life than their parents.

Focusing on the economic outlook, more than half (59.2%) expected the UK economy to worsen in the next 12 months, while 31.7% believed it would stay the same, and 9.1% felt that it would improve.

When asked for opinions on the most important issue facing Britain today, the two most frequently reported issues were Brexit (54.4%), followed by the NHS (16.4%). Males were more likely than females to rate Brexit as being the most important issue facing Britain, while females were more likely than males to rate the NHS as being the most important issue.

Respondents with a mental or physical health condition were more likely to report the NHS as being the most important issue compared with those without such a condition. Respondents without a mental or physical health condition were more likely to report Brexit as being the most important issue compared with those that do have a mental or physical health condition.

Looking at the relationship between optimism and personal well-being, those reporting more pessimistic views also tended to report lower personal well-being. In line with [our previous findings](#), self-reported health (and other health-related issues), marital status, and factors related to economic activity have the strongest associations with how positively we rate our life satisfaction. Pessimistic views of the economy and the future of the country are associated with lower life satisfaction, while optimism about the future of today's youth is associated with higher life satisfaction.

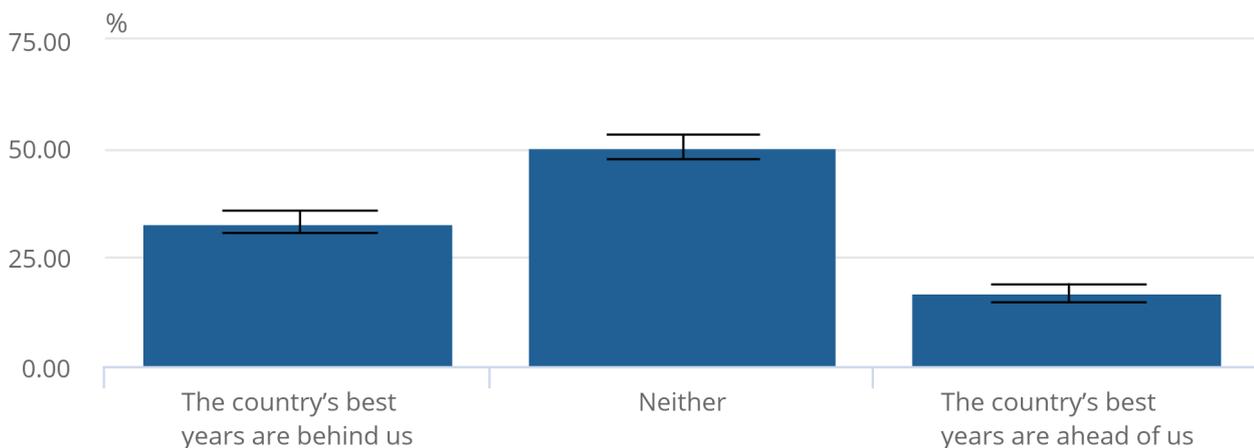
3 . Optimism questions summarised

Figure 1: More people said the UK's best years are behind us than ahead of us, but most expressed no view

Optimism about the future of the UK, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 1: More people said the UK's best years are behind us than ahead of us, but most expressed no view

Optimism about the future of the UK, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).

During the period January, February and April 2019, a majority of respondents in Great Britain did not give an explicitly positive or negative assessment of the future of the country. This may reflect a lack of confidence about what the future would bring, perhaps reflecting the uncertainties in the period preceding and just after the original date (29 March 2019) for the UK's exit from the EU. Of those that expressed a clear view, pessimism prevailed with 33.0% of respondents believing "the country's best years are behind us", while only 16.8% said "the country's best years are yet to come".

[The Gallup Poll](#) has collected the similar data in the United States, which found, in June 2018, that 55.0% of respondents believe that the United States' best years are ahead of them. This compares with just 16.8% of UK respondents who believed the same. Not only did UK respondents show less optimism, they also demonstrated far more uncertainty than did their United States counterparts. It is important to note that the time period in which the data were collected are not the same, so are therefore not directly comparable.

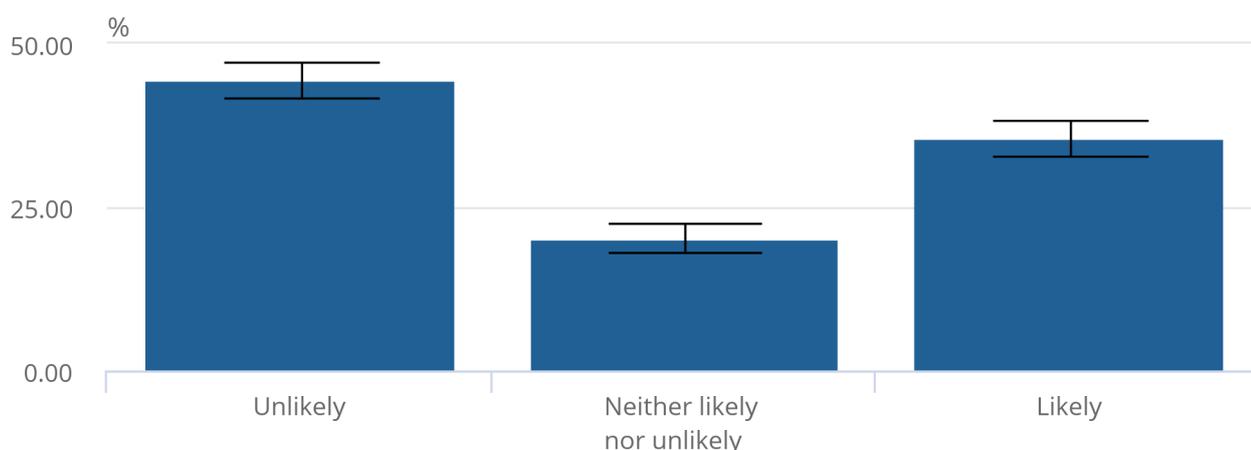
In the United States, a very low percentage of people (4.0%) had no opinion on the future of the United States. This compares with a much larger 50.2% of UK respondents who expressed no view as to the future of the UK. For context, the UK data were collected in the months of January, February and April 2019, during what was a time of uncertainty for the country. During this period there was a great deal of uncertainty politically. The UK Parliament had twice rejected the EU Withdrawal Agreement. This uncertainty may be reflected in these results.

Figure 2: 44.4% of respondents thought it unlikely that the youth of today will have a better life than their parents

Optimism about the future of today's youth, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 2: 44.4% of respondents thought it unlikely that the youth of today will have a better life than their parents

Optimism about the future of today's youth, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

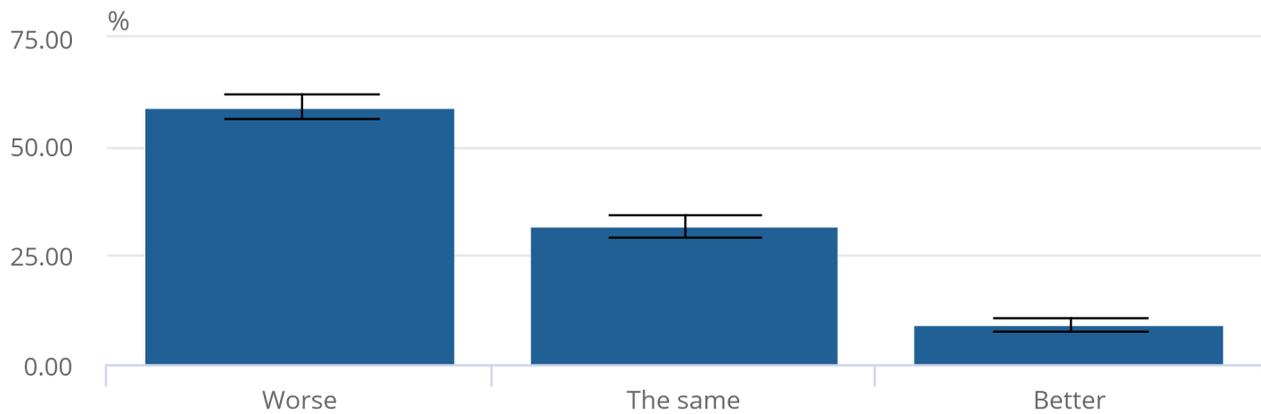
Over the same period, 44.4% of respondents believed it unlikely that the youth of today will have a better life than their parents, compared with 35.5% who thought they will, and 20.1% of people who said it was "neither likely nor unlikely". More respondents expressed a clear view when asked about the future of today's youth than did so when asked about the future of the UK generally.

Figure 3: Most respondents thought the UK economy will worsen in the next 12 months

Optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 3: Most respondents thought the UK economy will worsen in the next 12 months

Optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).

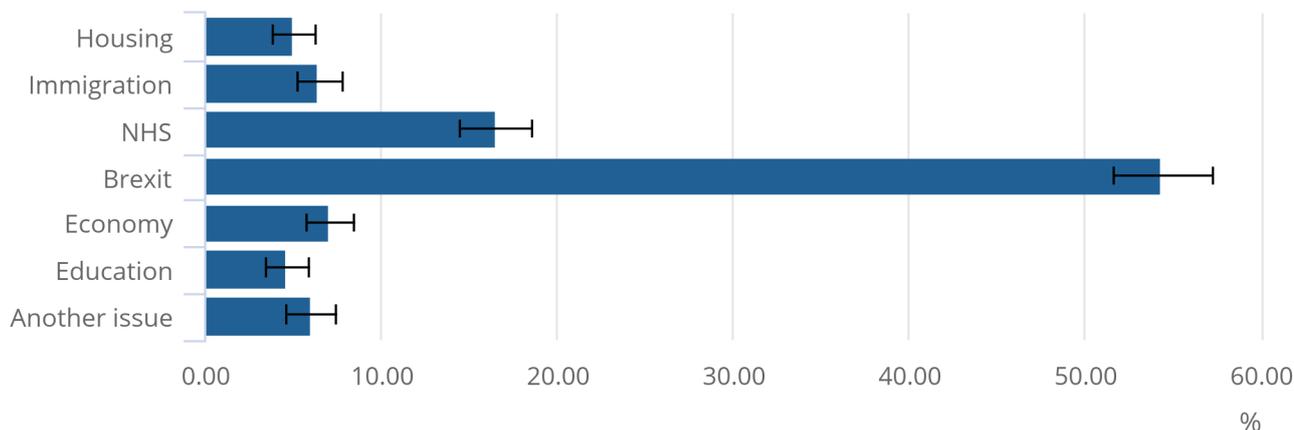
Most respondents (59.2%) expected the UK economy to worsen in the next 12 months. This was over five times higher than the proportion who thought it would get better (9.1%). Meanwhile, 31.7% of respondents thought it would stay the same. This suggests that during the spring of 2019, there was a distinct lack of optimism regarding the year ahead.

Figure 4: Respondents overwhelmingly thought that Brexit was the most important issue facing Britain

Opinions on the most important issues facing Britain today, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 4: Respondents overwhelmingly thought that Brexit was the most important issue facing Britain

Opinions on the most important issues facing Britain today, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).
2. Interviewer instructions – “If unsure of which category the response falls in please code ‘Or another issue’”.

Over the same period, 54.4% of respondents reported that the most important issue facing Britain was Brexit, while 16.5% said it was the state of the NHS. The high percentage noting Brexit as a main concern as well as the tendency towards pessimism or unclear views is likely to reflect the climate of uncertainty in which the data were collected.

4 . Optimism and individual characteristics

To shed more light on these findings, we also explored how different groups responded to the optimism questions, focusing on sex and health status. Other factors including age and unemployment were not included because of low response rates or no significant differences between variable responses.

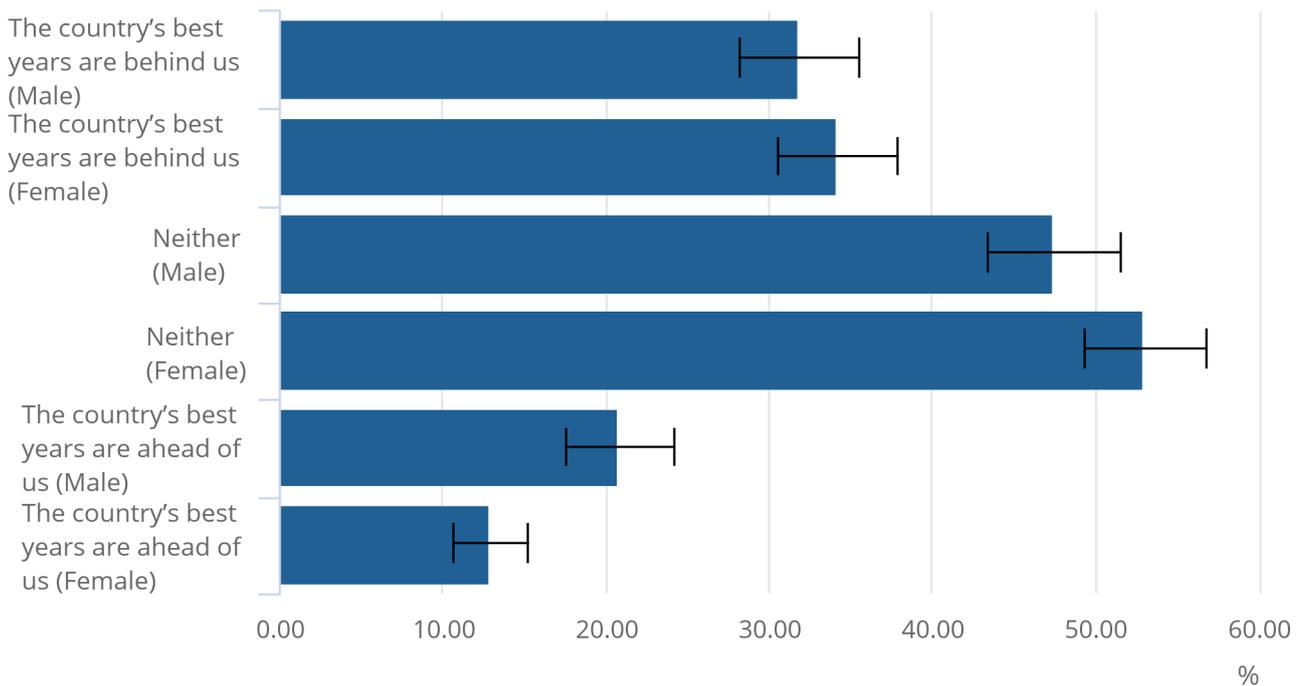
Sex

Figure 5: Males were more likely to say the country's best years are ahead of us than females

Optimism about the future of the UK by sex, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 5: Males were more likely to say the country's best years are ahead of us than females

Optimism about the future of the UK by sex, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

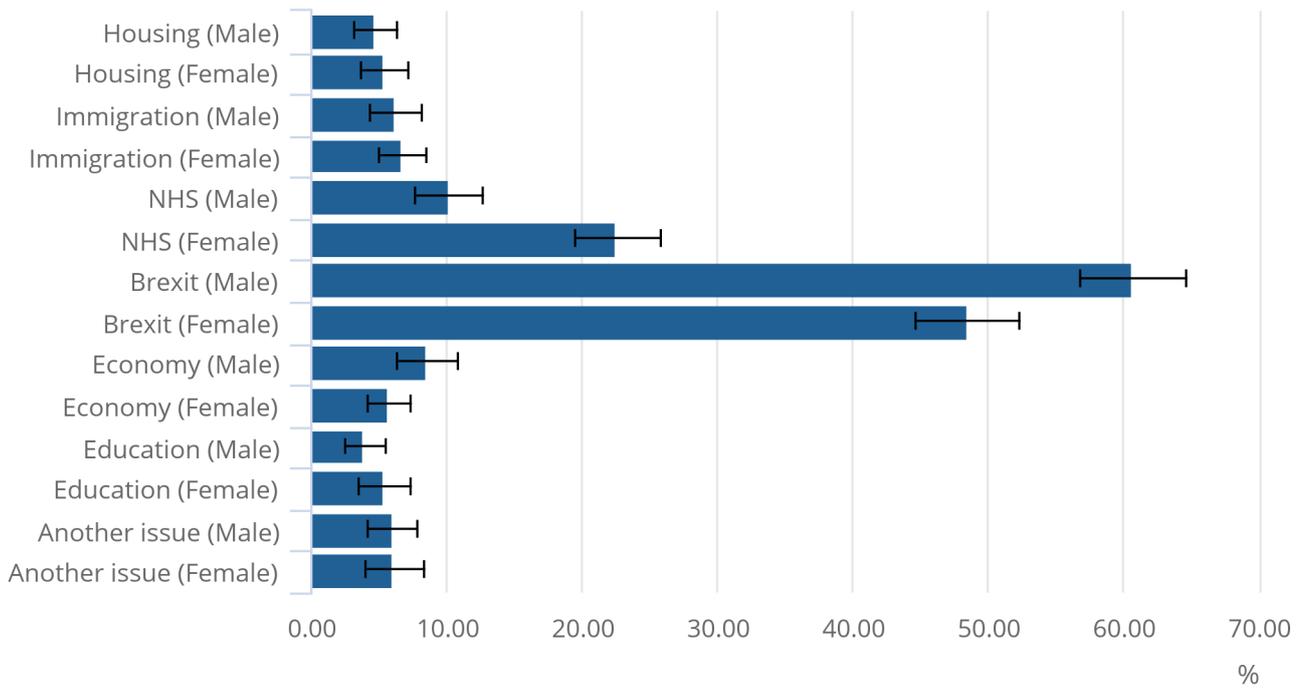
Males were more likely (20.8%) to say that "the country's best years are ahead of us" than females (12.8%). There were no differences between the sexes responding pessimistically or expressing no clear opinion.

Figure 6: Males were more likely to say Brexit was the most important issue facing Britain, while females were more likely to say the NHS

Opinions on the most important issues facing Britain today by sex, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 6: Males were more likely to say Brexit was the most important issue facing Britain, while females were more likely to say the NHS to say the NHS

Opinions on the most important issues facing Britain today by sex, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Males were more likely (60.6%) to say that Brexit is the most important issue facing Britain today than females (48.4%). Females were more likely (22.6%) to report that the NHS is the most important issue than males (10.1%).

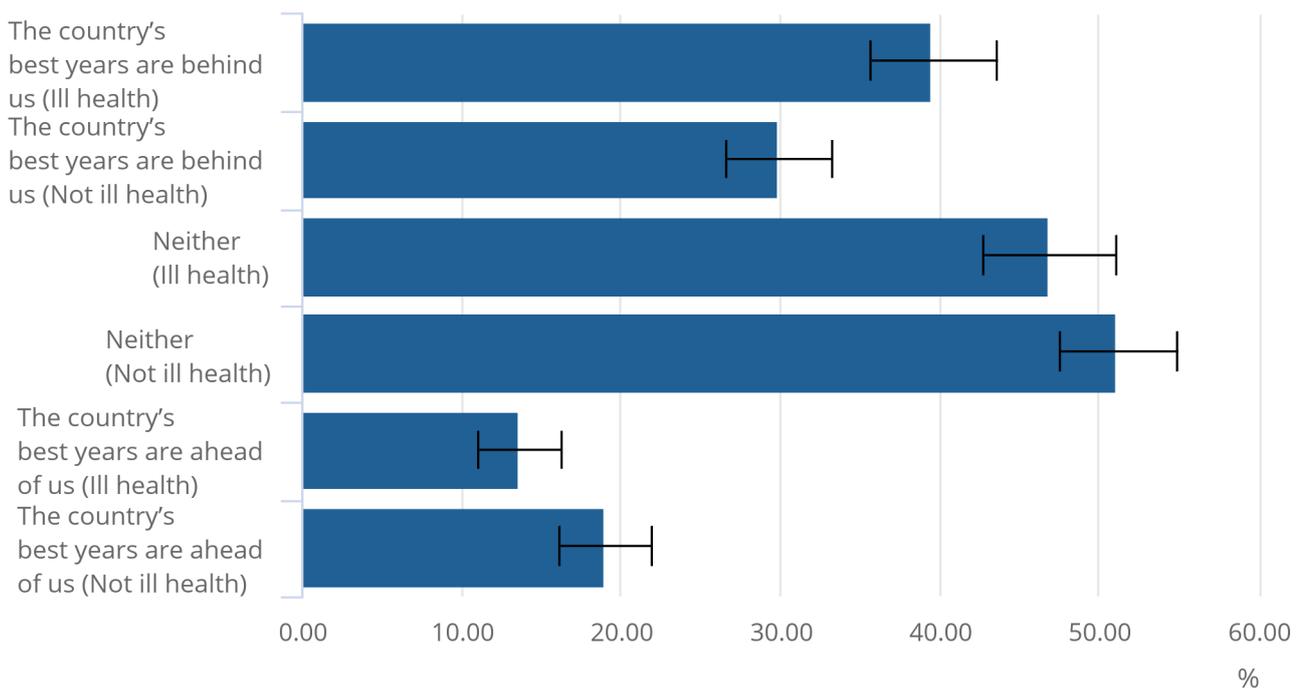
Health

Figure 7: Those reporting a mental or physical health condition or illness were more likely to say that the country's best years are behind us

Optimism about the future of the UK by health status, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 7: Those reporting a mental or physical health condition or illness were more likely to say that the country's best years are behind us

Optimism about the future of the UK by health status, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).

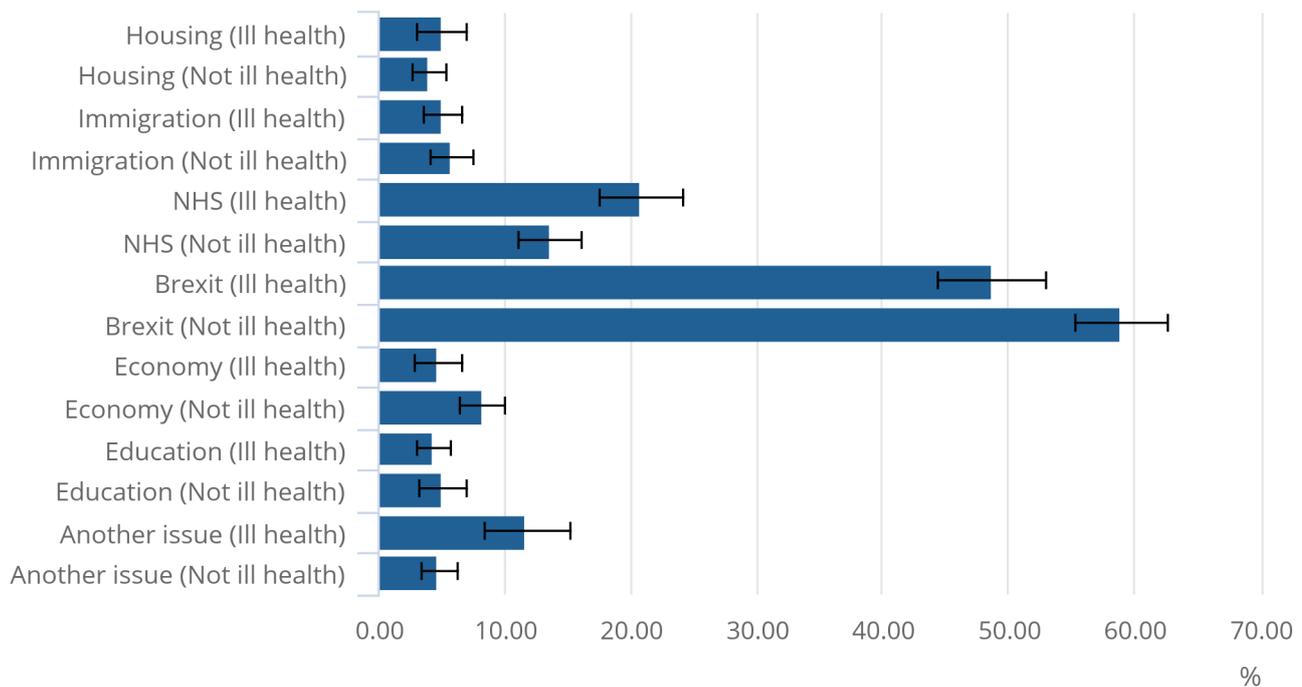
Respondents reporting a mental or physical health condition or illness were more likely (39.5%) to say that "the country's best years are behind us" compared with those that do not have a mental or physical condition or illness (29.9%).

Figure 8: Those reporting a mental or physical health condition or illness were more likely to say that the NHS was the most important issue facing Britain

Opinions on the most important issues facing Britain today by health status, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 8: Those reporting a mental or physical health condition or illness were more likely to say that the NHS was the most important issue facing Britain

Opinions on the most important issues facing Britain today by health status, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).
2. Interviewer instructions – “If unsure of which category the response falls in please code ‘Or another issue’”.

Respondents with a mental or physical health condition or illness are more likely (20.8%) to report that the NHS is the most important issue facing the country today compared with those who do not have a mental or physical condition or illness (13.5%). Respondents without a condition or illness are more likely (58.9) to report that Brexit is the most important issue than those with a condition or illness (48.6).

5 . Optimism and personal well-being

In this section, we explore how people in Great Britain in January, February and April 2019 rate their life satisfaction, happiness, and feelings that the things done in life are worthwhile and how this relates to optimism, as captured in their responses to each of the questions about the perceived future of the country, today's youth and the economy. Significance was assessed based on non-overlapping confidence intervals. As no significant relationships were found between levels of self-reported anxiety and optimism, this analysis is not discussed in detail here.

Life satisfaction and optimism

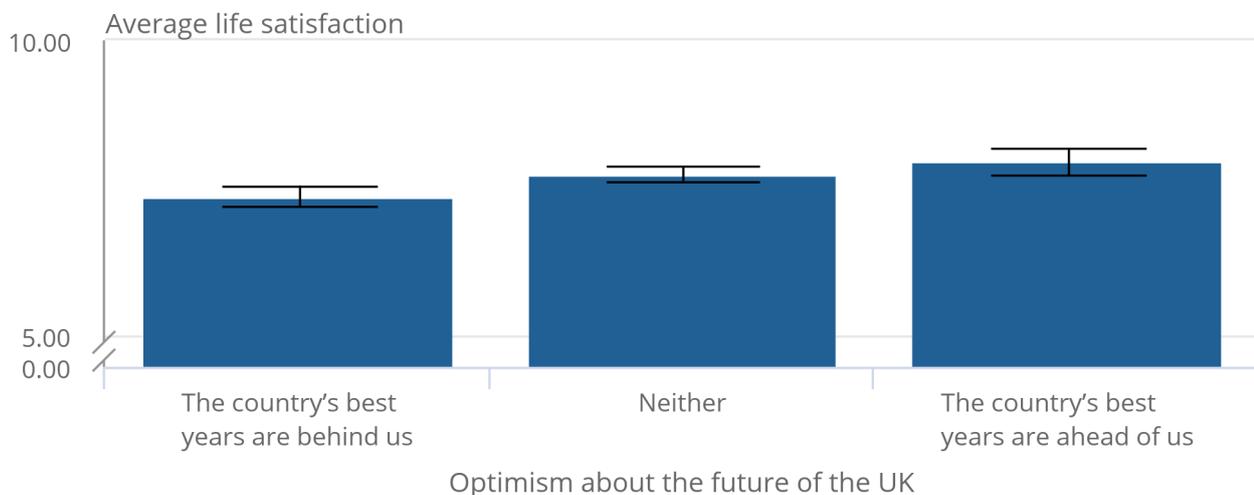
Average life satisfaction is significantly positively related to optimism about the future of the country, optimism about the future of today's youth and optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months.

Figure 9: Those who were optimistic about the future of the country had higher life satisfaction on average

Optimism about the future of the UK by average life satisfaction, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 9: Those who were optimistic about the future of the country had higher life satisfaction on average

Optimism about the future of the UK by average life satisfaction, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).

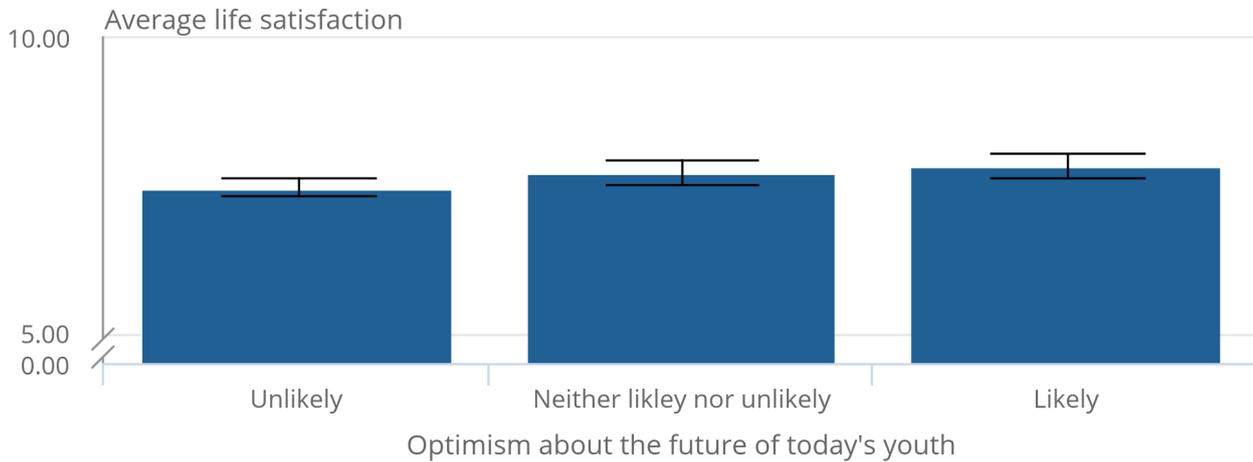
Ratings of life satisfaction are significantly higher on average among those who believe "the country's best years are ahead of us" (7.94) compared with those who think "the country's best years are behind us" (7.35).

Figure 10: Those who were optimistic that today's youth will have a better life than their parents had higher life satisfaction on average

Optimism about the future of today's youth, by average life satisfaction, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 10: Those who were optimistic that today's youth will have a better life than their parents had higher life satisfaction on average

Optimism about the future of today's youth, by average life satisfaction, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).

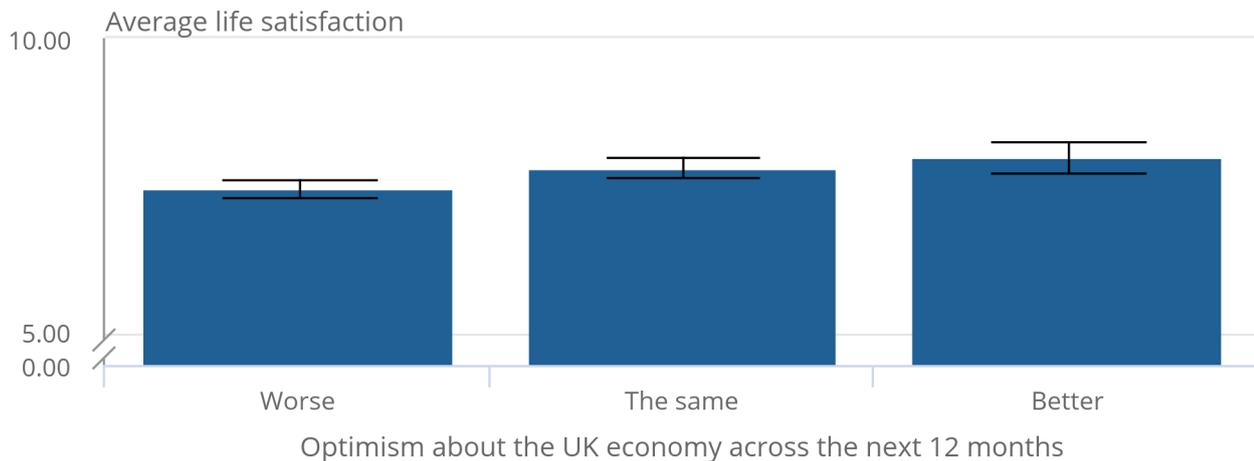
Those who think it likely that today's youth will have a better life than their parents also reported significantly higher life satisfaction on average than those who felt this unlikely (7.82 compared with 7.44).

Figure 11: Those who were pessimistic about the UK economy in the next 12 months reported lower life satisfaction on average

Optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months by average life satisfaction, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 11: Those who were pessimistic about the UK economy in the next 12 months reported lower life satisfaction on average

Optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months by average life satisfaction, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).

Those who expect the UK economy to get better in the next 12 months reported significantly higher life satisfaction on average (7.99) compared with those expecting it to get worse (7.45).

The data show a significant difference between the positive and negative responses to each of the three optimism questions. In other words, people responding negatively to the optimism questions report significantly lower life satisfaction than those responding positively or expressing no clear views to the same questions.

Happiness and optimism

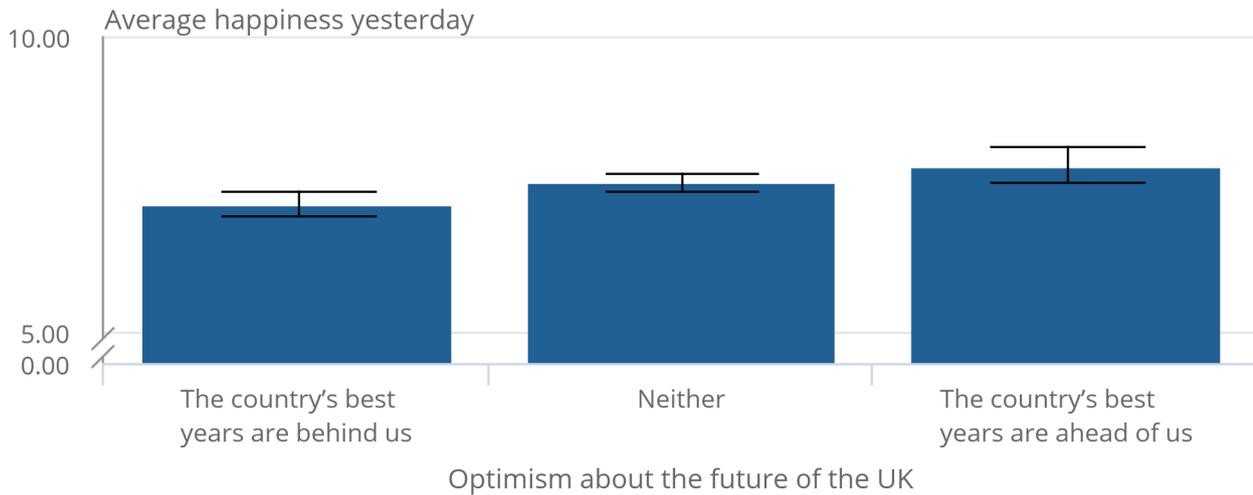
Average happiness is positively associated with optimism about the future of the country, and optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months.

Figure 12: Those who were pessimistic about the future of the country reported lower happiness on average

Optimism about the future of the UK by average happiness, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 12: Those who were pessimistic about the future of the country reported lower happiness on average

Optimism about the future of the UK by average happiness, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

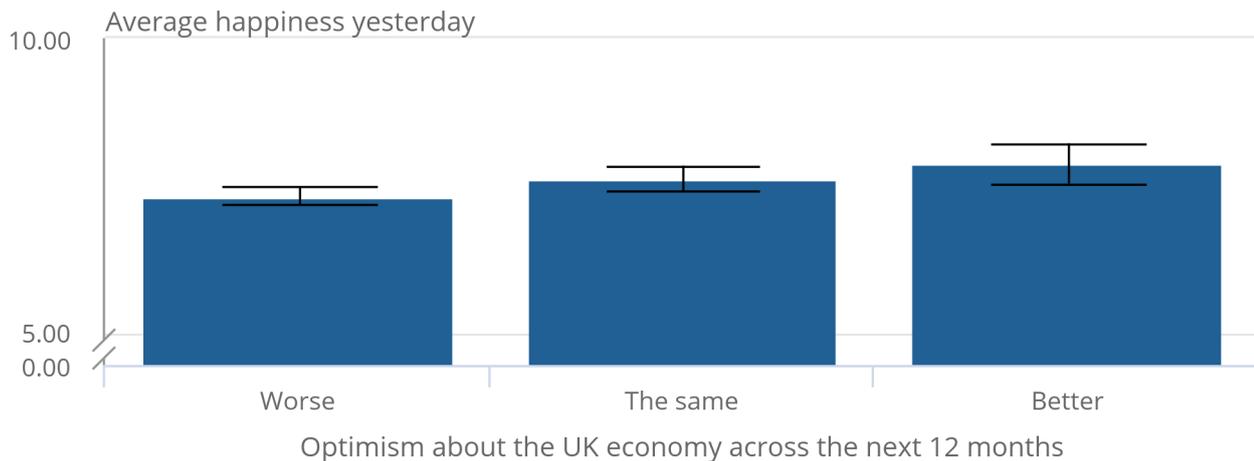
Those who believe that "the country's best years are ahead of us" give significantly higher ratings of their happiness on average (7.82) than those who believe "the country's best years are behind us" (7.17).

Figure 13: Those who were optimistic about the UK economy in the next 12 months reported greater happiness on average

Optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months against average happiness, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 13: Those who were optimistic about the UK economy in the next 12 months reported greater happiness on average

Optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months against average happiness, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).

Those who expected the UK economy to get better over the next 12 months were significantly more likely to report higher life satisfaction on average than those who expected it to get worse (7.87 and 7.31 out of 10, respectively).

No significant differences in reported happiness were found among those with more or less optimistic views about the future of today's youth.

Feelings that the things done in life are worthwhile and optimism

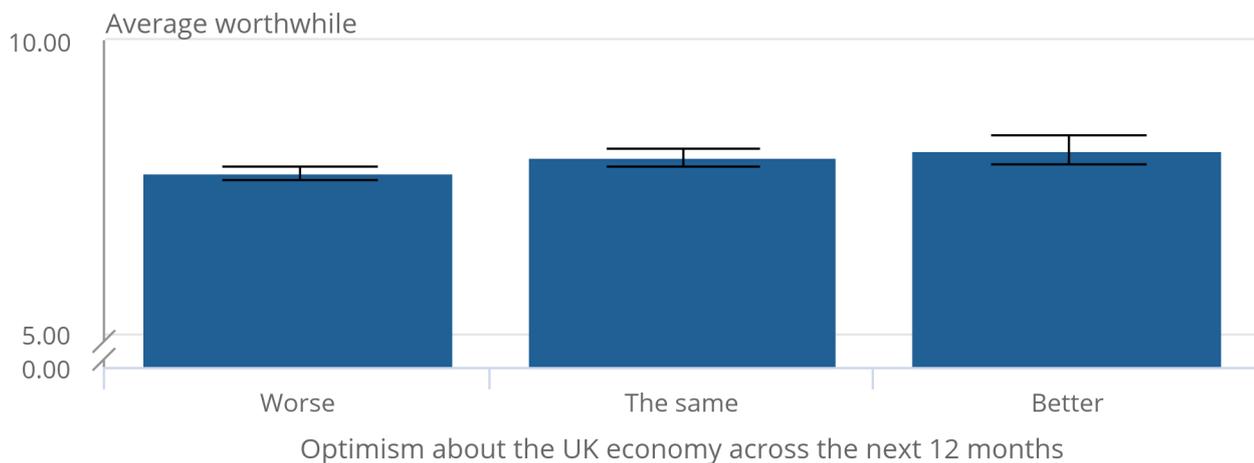
Average feelings that the things done in life are worthwhile is linked to optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months.

Figure 14: Those who were optimistic about the UK economy in the next 12 months gave higher ratings on average that the things they do in life are worthwhile

Optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months against average worthwhile, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Figure 14: Those who were optimistic about the UK economy in the next 12 months gave higher ratings on average that the things they do in life are worthwhile

Optimism about the UK economy in the next 12 months against average worthwhile, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Full details of the questions can be found in the [Annex](#).

Those expressing optimistic views about the UK economy in the next 12 months were more likely to give higher ratings when asked if the things they do in life are worthwhile (8.15) than those who are more pessimistic (7.74).

6 . Regression analysis

Aim

Regression analysis was used to examine associations between personal well-being and an individual's circumstances and characteristics. This technique can identify the strength of these statistical relationships but cannot establish causality. Regression analysis can be used for prediction (how likely something is to occur given certain conditions), for example, how likely someone is to report higher life satisfaction given their age group or their marital status while holding other factors constant.

Background

We have focused on life satisfaction in this analysis, as it was noted in our [previous analysis](#) (using Annual Population Survey (APS) and Effects of Taxes and Benefits (ETB)) that we can use observed characteristics to explain more of the variance of life satisfaction in regression analysis than the other three well-being measures. This analysis has used data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), using "low" (0 to 4) reported life satisfaction as a binary outcome variable, as with the previous analysis.

[Previous analysis](#) found that self-reported health, marital status and economic activity have the strongest associations (by the size of the coefficient) with our ratings of life satisfaction.

Age was the personal characteristic most strongly related with life satisfaction, with younger people reporting higher life satisfaction; this then falls at middle age, rises again in later years before falling again after age 75 years, representing [an S-shape of well-being](#) through life, supported by [well-being research \(PDF, 287KB\)](#).

Findings also concluded that people who own their own home outright or with a mortgage rate their life satisfaction more highly than those living in both private and social rented accommodation.

The aim of this analysis is to see, in addition to the above, if adding questions relating to the future (optimism and pessimism) also contributes to life satisfaction.

Data preparation

The comparatively small sample size of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) (on average 1,000 per month) has meant that some variables cannot be explored. Consequently, we have had to group variables in a less granular way than we would do in other circumstances, so that we could include it in the model.

Examples of this include "age", which was transformed into a binary variable representing those at least 65 years old, and "Reason for not looking for work", where those who responded saying they were a "student" or "childcare was too expensive" were combined in the analysis into an "Other" category to facilitate the modelling process.

Additionally, the OPN data do not include an economic activity variable which is equivalent to that in our previous work using the Annual Population Survey (APS), although some variables do relate to it. Therefore, direct comparisons cannot be made between the findings here and our previous analysis. The economic activity variables here included being in a "paid job in the last week" and "reason for not looking for work in the last week". More detailed information on variables included in the model can be found in the [Annex](#).

As optimism and the well-being questions are subjective measures, an additional self-reported measure of health might be detrimental to the analysis as it is closely related to the well-being questions. Therefore, self-reported health was also removed from the modelling procedure and instead other related health variables such as having a "mental or physical condition or illness" were used to provide a more objective overview of health.

Further checks were carried out on the variables selected for analysis, including for multicollinearity. Where variables were found to be highly correlated, we had to only select one to ensure the model assumptions were met. In these instances, we selected the variable which had the largest explanatory power (measured by p-values). Other variables were excluded from the analysis because of small sample sizes. The final list of variables used in the modelling is available in the [Annex](#). The dataset was then weighted using the [survey \(PDF, 429KB\)](#) package in R so that the data are representative of the population.

Modelling

Using the weighted dataset with the final list of variables selected, a "backward" stepwise regression was performed. The stepwise is run iteratively, starting with all variables included. It then removes insignificant variables one by one until the model only includes variables with a p-value below a 10% level. The aim here was to determine which factors would predict the likelihood of reporting low life satisfaction. As we only considered "low" (scoring 0 to 4) life satisfaction or higher life satisfaction (5 to 10), this represented a binary dependent variable, best suited to binary logistic regression.

The resulting model suggested four significant variables in predicting low life satisfaction. These are reason for not looking for work ($p=0.000$), marital status ($p=0.023$), housing tenure ($p=0.071$), and the optimism question about the future of the UK ($p=0.001$). The odds ratios from the model are presented below, reference categories were based on natural orderings and, where this is not possible, the modal class was chosen. Details are available in the [Annex](#).

Figure 15: The most significant predictor of low life satisfaction is being out of work due to an illness lasting more than four weeks

Odds ratios of factors affecting low life satisfaction, Great Britain, January, February and April 2019

Download this chart

[.xlsx](#)

Findings

Views about the future of the country

A new finding from this analysis is that those expressing a more pessimistic view of the future of the country, by saying "the country's best years are behind us", are 2.0 times more likely to report low life satisfaction than those saying the best years are neither ahead nor behind. Those who believe the best years are ahead are 1.5 times less likely to report low life satisfaction than those saying the best years are neither ahead nor behind.

Consistent with the analysis in previous sections, being optimistic or pessimistic has a significant association with reported well-being. Views about the future of the country was the only optimism question that emerged as a significant predictor of low life satisfaction. Additionally, it is important to note that this might not be a direct one-way relationship, but there may be a reverse association between life satisfaction and optimism not picked up by the model.

Marital status

Marital status is also an important predictor of low life satisfaction. The results suggest that those who are widowed are 3.2 times more likely to report low life satisfaction than those married or co-habiting with a partner, when we add the optimism question into the model. Those who are single or divorced are 2.1 and 2.7 times more likely, respectively, to report low life satisfaction, than those who are married or co-habiting.

These findings are consistent with [previous analysis](#) showing significant relationships between marital status and life satisfaction. In this case, marital status is likely to be an indicator of stable relationships, an important contributing factor to life satisfaction.

Housing tenure

Housing tenure is also a significant predictor of low life satisfaction. The findings show that those who rent their accommodation are 1.7 times more likely to report low life satisfaction, than those who own a property outright or have a mortgage.

Work and health

Among those not looking for work, those who said that they were not looking for work because they have been ill for more than four weeks were 7.0 times more likely to report low life satisfaction, compared with those in work or looking for work. The categories "retired" and "other" were not statistically significant in the model.

This was the biggest predictor of low life satisfaction in the model and is consistent with previous work highlighting the importance of health to life satisfaction.

Next steps

The three optimism questions were included on the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) in January and February of 2020 and will be included again in April 2020. We plan to report the findings from this latest period in the June 2020 release of Personal and economic well-being bulletin.

7 . Annex

OPN optimism questions

The next questions are about how you feel about the future of the UK and today's youth and issues facing the country today.

Each optimism question was asked to all respondents.

MFJ_1

When you think of the future of the UK, which do you agree with more...

Individual Prompt

Running Prompt

- 1) The country's best years are ahead of us
- 2) The country's best years are behind us
- 3) Or neither?
- 98) (Don't know)
- 99) (Refusal)

MFJ_2

How likely do you think that today's youth will have a better life than their parents?

Running Prompt

- 1) Very likely
- 2) Somewhat likely
- 3) Neither likely nor unlikely
- 4) Somewhat unlikely
- 5) Very unlikely
- 98) (Don't know)
- 99) (Refusal)

MFJ_3

Running Prompt

Think about your expectations for the next twelve months, will the economy in the UK be...

(Definition of the economy for interviewers to prompt)

- 1) Better
- 2) Worse
- 3) Or the same
- 98) (Don't know)
- 99) (Refusal)

MFJ_4M (respondents allocated to group 1 or 2 questions depending on random allocation)

Running Prompt

Question 4

What do you see as the most important issue facing Britain today?

Group 1 – MFJ_4M1

- 1) Education
- 2) The Economy
- 3) Brexit
- 4) The NHS
- 5) Immigration
- 6) Housing
- 7) Or another issue (please specify)

Group 2 – MFJ_4M2

- 1) Housing
- 2) Immigration
- 3) The NHS
- 4) Brexit
- 5) The Economy
- 6) Education
- 7) Or another issue (please specify)

- Ask IF MFJ_4M = 6

MFJ_4Mspec

What other issue do you see as the most important?

Note:

1. In the analysis groups 1 and 2 for MFJ_4M were combined to achieve a complete sample

The ONS4 personal well-being questions

MCZ_1

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays, where 0 is 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'?

MCZ_2

Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile, where 0 is 'not at all worthwhile' and 10 is 'completely worthwhile'?

MCZ_3

Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday, where 0 is 'not at all happy' and 10 is 'completely happy'?

MCZ_4

On a scale where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious', overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

Variables considered for modelling

Variables considered for modelling in logistic regression, after variable removal due to autocorrelation and multicollinearity and recoding variables into binary or natural ordering.

| Variable ID | Variable Description | Categories used in model after grouping | Reference class |
|--------------------|--|---|--|
| Cars | Those responding they have a car or have access to one | 0 – No access to a car 1 – Access to a car | |
| DeFact1 | Marital status | Married or co-habiting, Single, Widowed and Divorced | Married or co-habiting – modal |
| Ethnicity | Respondents ethnicity | White, Mixed, Asian, Black or Caribbean and Other | White – modal class |
| Healll | Respondent has physical or mental health condition or illness | 0 – No physical or mental condition or illness | Binary |
| HHTypA.16.64 | Respondent reported household type as "aged between 16 and 64". | 0 – At least one person in the household aged 65 and over 1 – Household aged between 16 and 65 | |
| HighEd4 | Reported education level | Degree, Below Degree, Other qualifications, None. | Degree |
| isWeekday | Respondent answering survey on a weekday | 0 – Not asked on a weekday 1 – Asked on a weekday | |
| JbAway | Respondents main reason for not working | Paid or unpaid leave, Illness, Mat/paternity leave, Waiting to start a new job. | Paid or unpaid leave – modal |
| LivWth12 | Respondent with someone in the household as a couple | 0 – Respondent not living as a couple or partnership 1 – Living with someone as a couple | |
| MFJ_1 | When you think of the future of the UK, which do you agree with more... | The country's best years are ahead of us, The country's best years are behind us, Or neither? | Neither – Neutral category |
| MFJ_2 | How likely do you think that today's youth will have a better life than their parents? | Likely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Unlikely | Neither likely nor unlikely – Neutral category |
| MFJ_3 | | Better, Worse | The same – neutral category |

| | | | |
|-----------|---|--|---|
| | Think about your expectations for the next twelve months, will the economy in the UK be... | And Or the same | |
| MFJ_4 | Most important issue facing the UK today... Brexit was the modal class so chosen as the reference | Education, The Economy, Brexit, The NHS, Immigration, Housing, Or another issue | Brexit – modal class |
| NoLWM | May I just check, what were the reasons you did not look for work in the last 4 weeks? | NA (Employed or looking), Retired, Ill for more than 4 weeks, Other | NA (Employed or looking for work) – modal class |
| ParTod | Those that are parents of any child aged between 0-4 in the household | 0 – No child aged 0-4 1 – Child aged 0-4 in household | |
| RSEX.Male | Male as reported gender | 0 – Female 1 – Male | |
| Start | Those reporting that they would be able to start work if they were offered a job next week | 0 – Not able to start work next week 1 – Able to start work next week | |
| sumgross | Respondents annual gross income | | Natural ordering |
| Ten1 | Accommodation type. Either a renter or own outright/mortgage. | Own or Mortgage, Renter | Own outright/mortgage – Modal class |