

Statistical bulletin

Personal well-being in the UK: April 2018 to March 2019

Estimates of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety at the UK, country, regional, county and local authority level.



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Release date:
23 October 2019

Next release:
14 November 2019

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1 . Main points

- In the year ending March 2019, there was little change in personal well-being measures in the UK, apart from a slight improvement in average happiness ratings which increased from 7.52 to 7.56.
- Over this period, the only significant change at country level was in Northern Ireland, where anxiety ratings increased from 2.53 to 2.83 (out of 10). This brought Northern Ireland back into line with the other UK countries on this measure.
- The first year from which we have a full UK baseline at local level is the year ending March 2013. Since then, average life satisfaction improved by 3.4% in the UK, with the largest improvement recorded in London (4.6%) at regional level.
- Over the same long-term period, average anxiety ratings in the UK improved by 5.3%, with the North West seeing the largest improvement (by 9.7%) at regional level.
- Across the UK, areas with persistently higher average well-being ratings, between the years ending March 2012 and March 2019, included the Orkney Islands, Na h-Eileanan Siar, and Shetland Islands in Scotland, and Fermanagh and Omagh in Northern Ireland.
- Over the same period, areas with persistently lower average well-being ratings included the London boroughs of Lambeth, Hackney, Islington and Camden.

2 . UK and country-level personal well-being

Between the years ending March 2018 and March 2019, there was very little change in the ratings of personal well-being measures. The only slight improvement was in the average rating of happiness, which increased slightly across the UK from 7.52 to 7.56, measured on a scale from 0 to 10. For the other measures of personal well-being – life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, and anxiety – average scores remained level with no significant changes over this period. For further details about UK-wide headlines, please see [Personal and economic well-being in the UK: August 2019](#).

At country level (Figure 1), there was an 11.9% increase in anxiety ratings in Northern Ireland, from 2.53 to 2.83 (out of 10), between the years ending March 2018 and March 2019. This was driven by a substantial decrease in people reporting very low ratings of anxiety from 47.0% to 41.1%. Looking at the long term, the anxiety scores in Northern Ireland continuously improved over the last seven years. The year ending March 2018 marked the end of a generally downward trend in anxiety in Northern Ireland since we began measuring in the year ending March 2012, with anxiety increasing markedly between 2018 and 2019.

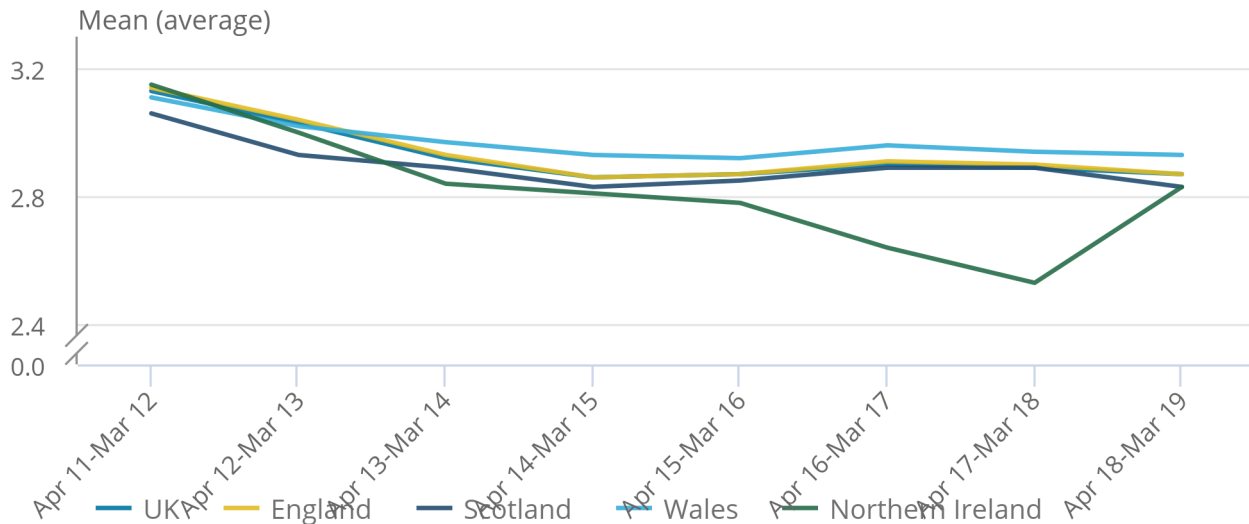
As has been the case in previous years, people in Northern Ireland gave better average ratings for life satisfaction, feelings that things done in life are worthwhile and happiness than people in England, Scotland or Wales. The increase in average anxiety score seen in 2018 to 2019 brought the average for Northern Ireland closer in line with the rest of the UK. For more information on headlines 2018 to 2019 personal well-being data for Northern Ireland, please see [Personal Well-being in Northern Ireland: 2018/19](#).

Figure 1: The average rating of anxiety has increased by 11.9% in Northern Ireland, bringing Northern Ireland into line with the other UK countries on this measure

Average ratings of anxiety, UK countries, years ending March 2012 to March 2019

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Average ratings of anxiety, UK countries, years ending March 2012 to March 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

3 . Main changes over time: life satisfaction and anxiety

We selected life satisfaction and anxiety as aspects of personal well-being to focus on as they capture both how we feel about our lives overall, and an important aspect of our day-to-day emotional state. For further analysis of the other well-being measures (happiness and feeling the things done in life are worthwhile), [please see our accompanying dataset](#).

Average life satisfaction ratings in the UK improved by 3.4% between the years ending March 2013 and March 2019. Among the constituent countries of the UK, they improved by 3.6% in England, 3.2% in Wales, 2.5% in Northern Ireland and 2.1% in Scotland.

Figure 2: Average life satisfaction has improved most in London over the last six years

Improvement in life satisfaction (% change), UK countries and regions, from the year ending March 2013 to the year ending March 2019

Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

Notes:

1. The personal well-being measures were first collected in England, Scotland and Wales at local level in April 2011 while in Northern Ireland in April 2012. The first year from which we have a full UK baseline at local level is therefore the year ending March 2013.
2. Data are weighted mean averages.
3. Changes in life satisfaction are positive, showing an improvement in average ratings over time.
4. The percentage changes over time for life satisfaction are significant for all the UK countries and regions.

[Data download](#)

We have seen the greatest improvements over time in areas that had some of the lowest average well-being ratings when we began measuring (Figure 2). For example, London continued to report some of the lowest average life satisfaction in the UK in the year ending March 2019 (7.58 compared to the UK average of 7.71), but also saw the largest improvements in well-being since the year ending March 2013 (4.6% compared to the UK percentage change of 3.4%).

By contrast, Northern Ireland, which consistently had the highest well-being ratings in the UK since we began measurement, saw the least improvement (2.5%). Although Northern Ireland still had the highest reported life satisfaction in the UK on average in the year ending March 2019 (7.89, compared to 7.71 in England, 7.68 in Wales and 7.69 in Scotland), the gap narrowed somewhat with other areas of the UK. For example, the average life satisfaction in Northern Ireland (7.70) was 3.5% higher than in England (7.44) in the year ending March 2013, while it was only 2.3% higher in the year ending March 2019.

Also at the local authority level, areas making the biggest improvements in life satisfaction were those that typically reported some of the lowest well-being. Between the years ending March 2013 and March 2019, Harlow had the greatest average increase in life satisfaction at 14.4%, followed closely by Fylde, Lancashire at 14.2%, and North Warwickshire at 14.1% (compared with the 3.6% average increase in England).

Welsh local authorities displaying a significant improvement in life satisfaction over this period peaked with Blaenau Gwent at 6.6%, followed by Merthyr Tydfil at 5.6%, Bridgend at 5.5%, Powys at 5.2%, and Torfaen 5.0%. These compared with an overall 3.2% for Wales.

In the case of the Scottish council areas, Midlothian at 6.9% recorded the greatest average increase in life satisfaction, followed by East Ayrshire at 6.6% – each approximately three times the average increase for Scotland (2.1%). Derry City and Strabane demonstrated a distinct increase in life satisfaction across this period at 8.0%, more than three times the Northern Ireland average of 2.5%. No other Northern Irish local areas showed a significant increase in life satisfaction during this time.

Looking at another measure of well-being (Figure 3), average anxiety ratings in the UK improved by 5.3% between the years ending March 2013 and March 2019. Within the UK, England is the only country to have seen a statistically significant improvement in anxiety ratings (5.6%) over this period, with the North West seeing the largest improvement (by 9.7%) at regional level. Overall, average anxiety levels in the UK showed a greater percentage decrease across the period from the years ending March 2013 to March 2019 than the percentage increase shown in average life satisfaction. Average anxiety at the UK level improved by 5.3%, whereas life satisfaction improved by 3.4%.

Figure 3: Average anxiety has improved most in North West England over the last six years

Improvement in anxiety (% change), UK countries and regions, from the year ending March 2013 to the year ending March 2019

Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

Notes:

1. The personal well-being measures were first collected in England, Scotland and Wales at local level in April 2011 while in Northern Ireland in April 2012. The first year from which we have a full UK baseline at local level is therefore the year ending March 2013.
2. Data are weighted mean averages.
3. Changes in anxiety are negative, showing an improvement in average ratings over time.
4. The percentage changes over time are significant for England and the North East, North West, East, London and South East regions.
5. The percentage changes over time are not significant for Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the regions of Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands and West Midlands and South West.

[Data download](#)

At a regional level, the most significant improvements in average anxiety levels were in areas where anxiety levels were consistently higher than the national average. Several regions in England, such as the North West, the North East, and the East of England reported relatively high average anxiety levels in the year ending March 2013 and subsequently showed greater improvements of 9.7%, 6.6% and 8.1% respectively by the year ending March 2019.

At the local authority level, the most significant improvement includes Horsham in West Sussex, showing a 46.4% decrease in average anxiety levels during this period, followed by Wellingborough, Northamptonshire at 39.4%, Eden, Cumbria at 37.3%, and South Derbyshire at 36.1%.

Lesser pronounced improvements, though still significantly above the England average, were recorded in the London boroughs of Brent and Harrow at 27.1% and 25.5% respectively as well as Wolverhampton, West Midlands at 26.0%.

In Wales, the local authorities of Wrexham and Denbighshire recorded significant improvements in average anxiety levels across this period at 16.5% and 14.9%, far above the Welsh average of 3.0%. In Scotland, North Ayrshire had the only significant improvement in average anxiety levels, with anxiety improving by 17.2%, over five times the Scottish average of 3.4%. There were no significant improvements in average anxiety levels in Northern Ireland at country and local level.

4 . Personal well-being by local area

Our personal well-being explorer tools shown in Figure 4 and 5, allow everyone to observe well-being in their local area and compare it with other areas. Some of the most insightful comparisons may relate to how specific areas have progressed over time.

It is possible to rank local authorities based on their average scores alone, however this may be misleading for various reasons such as different sample sizes, different confidence intervals and mode effects, as well as not comparing like with like (for example, we know that people in rural areas tend to rate their well-being more highly than people in urban areas). Comparisons between areas should be made with caution, and [confidence intervals](#) should be taken into account when assessing differences.

Figure 4: Personal well-being interactive maps

Average ratings, UK, years ending March 2012 to March 2019

Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

Notes:

1. Data are weighted mean averages.
2. The personal well-being measures were first collected in England, Scotland and Wales at local level in April 2011 while in Northern Ireland in April 2012. The first year from which we have a full UK baseline at local level is therefore the year ending March 2013.

Figure 5: Personal well-being explorer

Average ratings, UK, years ending March 2012 to March 2019

Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

Notes:

1. Data are weighted mean averages
2. The personal well-being measures were first collected in England, Scotland and Wales at local level in April 2011 while in Northern Ireland in April 2012. The first year from which we have a full UK baseline at local level is therefore the year ending March 2013.

[Data download](#)

5 . Areas of persistently high and low well-being

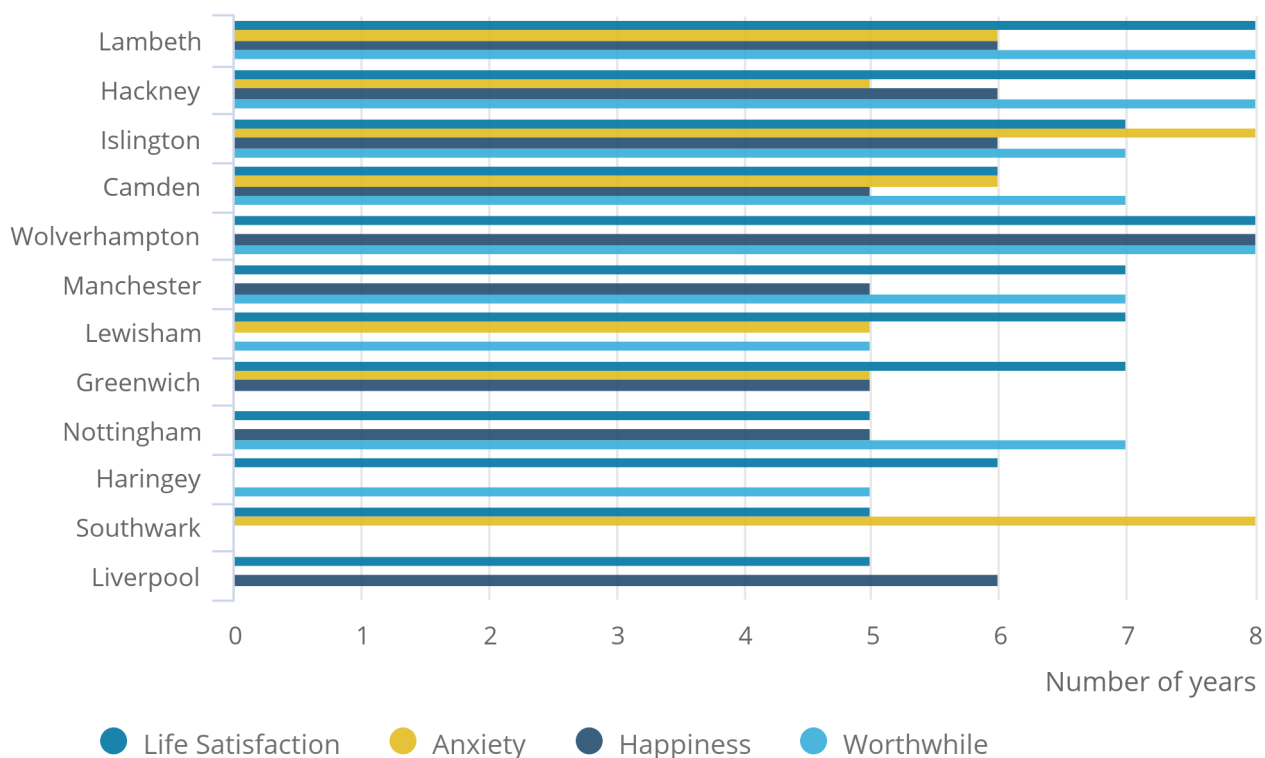
In this section, we explore whether some areas of the UK persistently had high or low ratings of personal well-being. For this analysis, we considered local authorities to have persistently high or low well-being if their average personal well-being ratings were in the top or bottom 10% for the UK in at least five years since the year ending March 2012 (year ending March 2013 for Northern Ireland) and for at least two of the four well-being measures.

Figure 6: Several London boroughs persistently report low well-being across all measures of personal well-being

Local authorities consistently reporting low average personal well-being ratings, UK, between the years ending March 2012 to March 2019

Figure 6: Several London boroughs persistently report low well-being across all measures of personal well-being

Local authorities consistently reporting low average personal well-being ratings, UK, between the years ending March 2012 to March 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

Notes:

1. The chart shows the local authorities consistently in the bottom 10% for average personal well-being in at least five of eight years (seven years for Northern Ireland) and for at least two out of four well-being measures, where one of those was either life satisfaction or anxiety.

Looking across the whole UK, several London boroughs (Lambeth, Hackney, Islington and Camden) persistently had some of the lowest personal well-being ratings reported across all measures since the year ending March 2012 (Figure 6). They were followed by Wolverhampton, Manchester, Lewisham, Greenwich and Nottingham which reported poor well-being scores for three measures. Although Wolverhampton scored poorly in most measures, it scored very well where anxiety is concerned, reporting consistently lower levels of anxiety compared to the UK average for five of the last eight years.

Figure 7: Areas of Scotland and Northern Ireland persistently report high well-being across all measures of personal well-being

Local authorities consistently reporting high average personal well-being ratings, UK, between the years ending March 2012 to March 2019

Figure 7: Areas of Scotland and Northern Ireland persistently report high well-being across all measures of personal well-being

Local authorities consistently reporting high average personal well-being ratings, UK, between the years ending March 2012 to March 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

Notes:

1. The chart shows the local authorities consistently in the top 10% for average personal well-being in at least five out of eight years (seven years for Northern Ireland) and for at least half of the well-being measures, where one of those was either life satisfaction or anxiety.

In the UK, the Scottish council areas of Orkney Islands, Na h-Eileanan Siar and Shetland Islands, and Fermanagh and Omagh in Northern Ireland consistently reported high ratings for all the four measures of personal well-being since the year ending March 2012 (Figure 7). They were followed by Causeway Coast and Glens in Northern Ireland, and the English local authorities of Ribble Valley and Eden, which reported high well-being scores for three measures. Additionally, as shown in [previous research](#), people’s well-being seemed to be highest in relatively rural areas across England, such as Chichester and North Devon.

Use caution when interpreting the results from Orkney Islands, Na h-Eileanan Siar and Shetland Islands. These areas are subject to mode effects as because of their remoteness, interviews took place only by telephone. All other areas used both telephone and face-to-face interviews.

Wales, as a whole, generally reported personal well-being average ratings similar to the UK, with fewer variations across local authorities compared with the other UK countries. This could explain why there are no areas in Wales standing out as scoring consistently high or low in well-being when compared with the UK average.

6 . Differences in personal well-being at local levels: case studies

What might help to shed light on why people persistently report higher or lower well-being in some areas more than others? We used the [Happy City Thriving Places Index](#) (TPI) to consider a wide range of local circumstances and how this might help us understand differences in personal well-being at local level. The TPI uses local-level indicators focused on local conditions, sustainability and equality to measure and inform progress towards well-being. The indicators from the latest 2019 TPI were used which are currently available for England and Wales only. It should be noted that the local authority personal well-being estimates included in this release are based on the most recent available data (April 2018 to March 2019), while the data for the local context indicators are often from different sources with varying timeliness. All TPI data used in these case studies is from 2016 or later.

In this section, two areas that reported low well-being (Lambeth and Wolverhampton) and two that reported high well-being (North Devon and Chichester) are presented as case studies to explore how well-being differs in each area and how this may be related to the range of local circumstances considered by the TPI. These areas were chosen as they have been identified as having particularly high or low average well-being ratings based on the analysis in Section 5. As the TPI indicators are currently available for England and Wales only, the case studies focused on local authorities with persistently high or low average well-being from these areas.

The case studies help illustrate that each local authority may face very different challenges in creating the conditions in which local people can thrive.

Lambeth: Low well-being case study

Lambeth was chosen as a case study because of its consistently poor average well-being levels for all four personal well-being measures. “Place and environment” is one of the 2019 TPI domains for which Lambeth reported a low score. In this area, the Housing, Safety and Local environment subdomains received a particularly low score. Another domain in which [Lambeth](#) had a low score is “Work and local economy”. Lambeth scored particularly low in relation to children in low income families (aged under 16 years).

Local environment

Lambeth received a low score of 2.55 out of 10 for the Local environment subdomain. This relates to the level of air pollution (fine particulate matter) in the area. According to data from [Public Health England \(2017\)](#), residents of Lambeth experienced a higher than average level of exposure to air pollution (fine particulate matter) at 12.0 micrograms per cubic metre in 2017, compared to 8.9 micrograms per cubic metre for England overall. Air pollution for Lambeth was also slightly higher than its surrounding areas in London – Wandsworth (11.6 micrograms per cubic metre), Merton (11.4 micrograms per cubic metre) and Richmond upon Thames (11.0 micrograms per cubic metre). As shown by [previous studies](#), living in an area of high air pollution can pose a health risk to residents and negatively influence personal well-being.

Crime

Lambeth received a low score of 2.34 out of 10 for the “Safety” category in the 2019 TPI, specifically relating to crime rates. It displayed an [offence rate of 109 per 1,000 population](#) for the year ending March 2019. This was a higher rate than some surrounding boroughs such as Wandsworth (80 per 1,000 population), Merton (68 per 1,000 population) and Richmond Upon Thames (66 per 1,000 population).

Additionally, Lambeth received a [crime severity score](#)¹ of 19.9 for the same period. The crime severity score gives more severe crimes a higher weight, to better reflect the level of harm to society and demand on the police caused by crime. The score for Lambeth was again higher than the surrounding boroughs of Wandsworth (13.7), Merton (11.5) and Richmond Upon Thames (10.8). It should be noted that [research](#) has found that fear or worry about crime happening to someone can have a real impact on personal well-being. If higher levels of actual crime also contribute to higher levels of fear of crime, then both of these factors may be a source of lower average well-being for residents of Lambeth.

Housing

Lambeth received a low score of 3.28 out of 10 for the “Housing” category in the 2019 TPI. This looks at issues such as housing affordability and quality of housing. House-purchase costs may be a particular challenge for many people living in areas of London, as indicated by the [House price to residence-based earnings ratio](#) data. This provides a measure of average house prices relative to average earnings for full-time employees in 2018. In Lambeth, a house-buyer could expect to pay around 13.9 times their average earnings to own a home. This is compared to a ratio of 8.0 for England overall, suggesting that residents of Lambeth may find housing less affordable than people living elsewhere in England. However, the ratio for Lambeth was only slightly higher than the one for London overall (13.1).

Income deprivation

For the “Basic needs” domain, Lambeth received a medium-low score of 3.85 out of 10. This was mostly because of a high number of children under 16 years living in low-income families, defined as those in receipt of Child Tax Credit whose reported income is less than 60% of the median income or are in receipt of Income Support or Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance. According to figures from [Public Health England](#), 23.4% of children under 16 years in Lambeth were living in a low-income family in 2016. This is higher than the percentage for England overall (17.0%). The percentage for Lambeth was also higher than some of the surrounding areas, such as Wandsworth (17.2%) and Merton (13.1%).

Wolverhampton: low well-being case study

Wolverhampton was chosen as a case study as it had persistently low average scores for life satisfaction but, more unusually, also had low average anxiety ratings. Overall, average life satisfaction, happiness, and worthwhile scores in Wolverhampton were all lower than the UK average. Wolverhampton is also one of 100 places recently invited to develop proposals for investment from the [Towns Fund](#) aimed at helping areas of industrial and economic heritage to benefit more from future economic growth. Wolverhampton presented a [low 2019 TPI score](#) for “Mental and physical health”, “Work and local economy” and “Education and learning” domains.

Health

Research shows that many factors influence our quality of life and well-being. [Our previous analysis](#) highlighted that, at national level, how people view their health is the most important factor related to personal well-being. [Other studies \(PDF, 826.18KB\)](#) have provided evidence which indicates that the things that matter most to personal well-being are people’s social relationships and their mental and physical health.

Wolverhampton scored low in the TPI “Mental and physical health” domain; especially in the mortality and life expectancy category (2.82 out of 10). According to the City of Wolverhampton [Public Health Annual Report 2017](#), men and women in Wolverhampton live 7.0 and 4.6 years respectively in poorer health than the average in England. The difference between total life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for men in Wolverhampton was 21 years, compared to an average of 16.1 years for men in England. Meanwhile, the difference between total life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for women in Wolverhampton was 21.9 years, compared to an average of 19 years for women in England.

Wolverhampton also had a low score in the “Healthy and risky behaviours” category (2.15 out of 10). This category includes levels of physical activity in the population. According to [Public Health England](#), only 52.1% of adults in Wolverhampton reported being physically active in the year ending March 2018, meeting recommended levels of physical activity. This is much lower than both the national average (66.3%) and the average for the West Midlands region (63.2%).

Education

Wolverhampton received a low score for the “Education and learning” domain. In particular, it received a score of 3.09 out of 10 for children’s education. According to [ONS figures](#), 58.0% of GCSE students achieved a standard 9 to 4 pass including Maths and English in the academic year 2016 to 2017. This is lower than the figure for the West Midlands as a whole (61.2%) and some surrounding areas such as Solihull (65.6%) and Birmingham (60.1%). This was also slightly less than the average for England (59.1%).

Employment

Wolverhampton received a low score for the “Unemployment” category (2.64 out of 10). According to [ONS figures](#), the unemployment rate in the year ending March 2019 for Wolverhampton was 6.5%. This was higher than some surrounding areas such as Solihull (3.7%), Coventry (4.6%) and Walsall (4.9%), and additionally higher than the national unemployment rate (3.9%). In this respect, it should be noted that [a large body of evidence](#) shows that unemployment has a particularly large, negative and long-lasting effect on subjective well-being, particularly life satisfaction.

Chichester: high well-being case study

Chichester recorded consistently high levels of personal well-being, specifically for average life satisfaction and residents feeling as though the things they do in life are worthwhile in at least five of the last eight years. The Thriving Place Index (TPI) indicated four domains in which [Chichester](#) scored particularly highly: “Place and environment”, “Mental and physical health”, “Work and local economy” and “People and community” domains. This is linked to its lower than average crime levels, high levels of physical activity, high employment rate and high voter turnout. Each of these are discussed in more detail below.

Crime

Chichester scored 5.82 out of 10 for the TPI domain of “Place and environment”, recording a score of 6.89 out of 10 for the safety subdomain. Lower than average [crime severity scores](#)¹ for year ending March 2019 in Chichester (8.0) as opposed to the average for England and Wales (14.1) may further the average life satisfaction of residents. A [number of studies](#) have found fear or worry about crime can have a real impact on personal well-being, regardless of whether the individual actually experiences crime themselves. A lower level of local crime and lower crime severity is likely to enhance the well-being of residents.

Health

Chichester scored 6.93 out of 10 for the “Mental and physical health” domain, scoring highly across all three subdomains of healthy and risky behaviours at 7.31 out of 10, overall health status at 6.91 out of 10, and mortality and life expectancy at 6.56 out of 10. According to the [National Child Measurement Programme](#) (NCMP), Chichester presented a lower than average prevalence of obesity among children aged 10 to 11 years (school year 6) with 13.6% of children within this age group meeting this criterion for the 2017 to 2018 academic year compared to the England average of 20.1% for the same period.

Chichester also had a larger average percentage of physically active adults, where physical activity is defined as consistently meeting the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommendations for physical activity (150 plus moderate intensity equivalent minutes per week). According to the [NCMP](#), in the year ending March 2018, an average of 71.4% of adults in Chichester were regularly engaging in physical activity, significantly higher than the average for England of 66.3%.

These examples of above average physical health and healthy lifestyles in Chichester may contribute to greater life satisfaction, as [previous analysis](#) has indicated poor health has among the most detrimental impacts on personal well-being, and better health is related to higher well-being.

Employment

Chichester recorded a score of 6.33 out of 10 for the TPI “Work and local economy” domain. The area also scored 5.12 out of 10 in the employment subdomain. Data from the Annual Population Survey (APS) showed that the [employment rate](#) in Chichester for the period between April 2018 and March 2019 was at 85.2%, significantly higher than the same measure across the same period for Great Britain, at 75.4%. This comparatively high employment status could be linked to its high scores for life satisfaction and feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile.

Community

Chichester recorded a score of 5.38 out of 10 in the TPI “People and community” domain, scoring highly in the participation subset of this domain (7.14 out of 10), which is exemplified by its high turnout at the 2017 general election. This local authority recorded a [voter turnout](#) of 70.5% compared with the UK figure of 68.8% at the most recent general election, potentially indicating a higher than average political engagement among residents.

North Devon: high well-being case study

North Devon recorded consistently high average levels of well-being, specifically for average life satisfaction and residents’ feeling as though the things they do in life are worthwhile in at least five of the last eight years.

The TPI indicates four domains in which [North Devon](#) scores particularly highly, offering potential insights into the this local authority scores in the life satisfaction and feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile measures. It scored highly in the “Place and environment” domain, particularly with the local environment and safety subdomains. This is mainly linked to low air pollution and crime levels.

North Devon also reported a high score for the “People and community” domain. Indicators that can influence this score include community participation, volunteering, clubs and societies, voter turnout and social fragmentation. North Devon had a high voter turnout which contributed to this high score. The area also scored highly in health and education domains, which are also investigated below.

Air pollution

North Devon recorded a moderate score of 5.48 out of 10 in the “Place and environment” domain of the TPI, scoring particularly highly in the subdomain of local environment at 6.86 out of 10. According to data from [Public Health England](#), North Devon presented a “lower annual concentration of human-made fine particulate matter at an area level in 2017, adjusted to account for population exposure”. Residents of this local authority experience a lower than average level of exposure to air pollution (fine particulate matter) at 6.2 micrograms per cubic metre, compared to 8.9 micrograms per cubic metre for England. This can contribute to heightened levels of life satisfaction through a lowered health risk posed to residents, possibly providing assurance that their local environment is not damaging to their physical well-being. As shown by [a study by the University of York \(PDF, 1MB\)](#), living in an area of high air pollution can pose a health risk to residents and negatively influence personal well-being.

Crime

North Devon scored high in the 2019 TPI “Place and environment” domain; especially in the safety category (6.81 out of 10). According to the [ONS Crime Severity Index](#)¹, North Devon had a lower than average crime severity score (8.0 compared to the average for England and Wales of 14.1) which may further the average life satisfaction of residents. It should be noted that [research](#) has found that fear or worry about crime happening to someone can have a real impact on personal well-being. If lower levels of actual crime also contribute to lower levels of fear of crime, then both of these factors may be a source of higher average well-being for residents of North Devon.

Participation

North Devon scored highly in civic participation with a higher than [average recorded voter turnout](#) of 73.5% at the 2017 general election compared with the UK figure of 68.8%.

Unemployment

North Devon recorded a score of 5.07 out of 10 on the “Work and local economy” domain, scoring highest in the unemployment subdomain at 6.58. According to [ONS figures](#), the unemployment rate in the year ending March 2019 for North Devon was 2.1%, which was lower than the average for England (3.9%). This may contribute to a heightened degree of both life satisfaction and individuals feeling as though the things they do in their lives are worthwhile. In this respect, it should be noted that [research](#) shows that being employed has a particularly positive and long-lasting effect on subjective well-being, particularly life satisfaction.

Health

North Devon recorded a score of 5.98 out of 10 for the “Mental and physical health domain” of the TPI. The highest scoring subdomain was healthy and risky behaviours at 6.96 out of 10, which describes the respondent’s engagement in activities beneficial or detrimental to their overall mental or physical health. North Devon reported a significantly lower average rate of “excess weight” among children aged 10 or 11 years, that is those classified as overweight or very overweight. In North Devon, [26.1% of children](#) met these criteria for the 2017 to 2018 academic year, falling below the English average for the same period of 34.3%.

In this section, we have highlighted that there are some aspects of life that have a significant impact on well-being, such as good health, positive relationships, and employment. Job quality is also important to well-being and this specific aspect will be explored in the upcoming release on [Job quality in city regions across the UK: 2018](#), including experimental analysis on the percentage of good jobs in city regions across the UK, broken down by demographic indicators, occupation and industry.

Notes for section 6: Differences in personal well-being at local levels: case studies

1. The crime severity score has been designated as Experimental Statistics and developed as an additional measure to supplement existing Office for National Statistics (ONS) statistics on crime. This new measure weights different types of crime according to severity, with more serious crimes carrying a higher weight to better reflect the level of harm to society and demand on the police caused by crime.

7 . Personal well-being data

[Personal well-being estimates](#)

Dataset | Released on 23 October 2019

Estimates of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety in the UK at country, regional and local authority level.

[Quality information for personal well-being estimates](#)

Dataset | Released on 23 October 2019

Confidence intervals and sample sizes for estimates of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety in the UK at country, regional and local authority level.

8 . Glossary

Personal well-being

Our personal well-being measures ask people to evaluate, on a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied they are with their life overall, whether they feel they have meaning and purpose in their life, and about their emotions (happiness and anxiety) during a particular period.

Thresholds

Thresholds are used to present dispersion in the data. For the life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness questions, ratings are grouped in the following way:

- 0 to 4 (low)
- 5 to 6 (medium)
- 7 to 8 (high)
- 9 to 10 (very high)

For the anxiety question, ratings are grouped differently to reflect the fact that higher anxiety is associated with lower personal well-being. The ratings for anxiety are grouped as follows:

- 0 to 1 (very low)
- 2 to 3 (low)
- 4 to 5 (medium)
- 6 to 10 (high)

Mode effects

A mode effect occurs when a different way of administering a survey affects the data collected. Testing has shown that people respond more positively to the personal well-being questions when interviewed by telephone rather than face-to-face.

9 . Measuring the data

Since 2011, we have asked personal well-being questions to adults aged 16 years and over in the UK to better understand how they feel about their lives. This release presents headline results for the year ending March 2019, along with changes over time since we started collecting well-being data in 2011. It provides data at a national level, country and local authority level. The four personal well-being questions are:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

People are asked to respond on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”. We produce estimates of the mean ratings for all four personal well-being questions, as well as their distributions.

Measuring National Well-being programme

The four personal well-being questions are included as measures for the wider [Measuring National Well-being \(MNW\) programme](#). The programme began in November 2010 with the aim of developing and publishing an accepted and trusted set of National Statistics, which help people understand and monitor well-being. The statistics in this bulletin are displayed through our [well-being dashboard](#), which reports how the UK is doing for the different areas of life that people in the UK said matter most to their well-being.

Quality and methodology information

The [Personal well-being in the UK Quality and Methodology Information report](#) contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
- uses and users of the data
- how the output was created
- APS data reweighting
- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data

For more information on personal well-being, please see:

- [Personal well-being user guide](#)
- [Harmonised principles of personal-well-being](#)

Feedback and future publications

Our users expressed a need for more information on lower geographies and more analysis on factors associated with personal well-being. Our release today aims to provide further analysis in this respect and we are planning to carry out more work on this for our next releases. If you would like to provide additional feedback about this specific work at local level or any opinions you might have about our well-being outputs, please contact us at QualityOfLife@ons.gov.uk.

10 . Strengths and limitations

Accuracy of the statistics: estimating and reporting uncertainty

The personal well-being estimates are from the Annual Population Survey (APS), which provides a representative sample of those living in private residential households in the UK. People living in communal establishments (such as care homes) or other non-household situations are not represented in this survey. This may be important in interpreting the findings in relation to those people reporting lower personal well-being.

The sample is designed to be as accurate as possible given practical limitations such as time and cost constraints. Results from sample surveys are always estimates, not precise figures. This can have an impact on how changes in the estimates should be interpreted, especially for short-term comparisons.

As the number of people available in the sample gets smaller, the variability of the estimates that can be made from that sample size gets larger. Estimates for small groups – for example, respondents from a single local authority – which are based on quite small subsets of the APS, are less reliable and tend to be more volatile than for larger aggregated groups.

From year ending March 2018, the sample for Northern Ireland received a boost, resulting in greater accuracy in a set of local authorities that had had relatively small sample sizes compared to others in the UK.

If the sample size of an estimate is less than 50 or if a corresponding threshold has a sample size less than five, then the estimate is suppressed. Additionally, we assess each estimate's critical value (or coefficient of variance) and colour code the estimates in the Headline Estimates download. If the critical value exceeds a score of 20, indicating that there is too much variance in the data to constitute a reliable estimate, then this estimate is suppressed. For more information on suppression, see the [personal well-being in the UK QMI](#).

Annual Population Survey data reweighting

Weighting answers to survey questions ensures that estimates are representative of the target population. Each person in the survey data has a “weight”, the number of people that person represents in the population, which is used to produce estimates for the population.

More accurate weighting is based on the latest available population estimates for that time period. When new population estimates become available, data can be reweighted to ensure better representation and so precision of estimates. For greater accuracy, it is common practice to revise previously published estimates when new weights become available.

Based on new population estimates, new well-being weights have been available for the APS data since March 2019. We have used this reweighted data to produce [annual personal well-being estimates](#) for the years ending March 2012 to 2019 at the UK country, regional and local authority level estimates, as we did for [our previous publication](#) for the years ending December 2012 to 2018. The reweighted data for the years ending June 2012 to 2019 and September 2012 to 2019 will be available in our upcoming publications early next year.

Statistical significance

Please note that:

- any changes mentioned in this publication are “statistically significant”
- the statistical significance of differences noted within the release are determined based on non-overlapping confidence intervals

11 . Related links

[Measures of National Well-being Dashboard](#)

Dashboard | Released on 23 October 2019

Latest data, times series data and detailed information for the measures of national well-being.

[Personal and economic well-being in the UK: August 2019](#)

Bulletin | Released on 12 August 2019

Estimates looking across both personal well-being (April 2018 to March 2019) and economic well-being (January to March 2019) in the UK. This bulletin is part of a new series on "people and prosperity" introduced in February 2019.

[Personal and economic well-being: what matters most to our life satisfaction?](#)

Article | Released on 15 May 2019

Examines how socio-demographic and economic factors are associated with life satisfaction. These factors include sex, age, health, marital and economic status as well as household income and expenditure.

[Measuring national well-being in the UK: international comparisons, 2019](#)

Article | Released on 6 March 2019

How the UK is faring in important areas of well-being compared with the member states of the EU and the member countries of the OECD.

[Understanding well-being inequalities: Who has the poorest personal well-being?](#)

Article | Released on 11 July 2018

Analysis of the characteristics and circumstances associated with the poorest life satisfaction, feeling the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety in the UK, from 2014 to 2016