

Statistical bulletin

# Personal well-being in the UK: April 2021 to March 2022

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



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# 1 . Main points

- Average ratings of personal well-being in the UK have improved across all indicators in the year ending March 2022; but remain below pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels (the year ending March 2019).
- Average ratings for anxiety (0.18 point decrease), life satisfaction (0.15 point increase), and happiness (0.13 point increase) showed the largest year-on-year improvements since we started measuring well-being; this follows the biggest deterioration in all well-being scores in the year ending March 2021 during the pandemic.
- The proportion of people reporting very high levels of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness or very low levels of anxiety increased in the year ending March 2022; while the proportion of people reporting low levels of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness or high levels of anxiety decreased.
- Average ratings for life satisfaction increased (improved) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland compared with the previous year, with the largest improvement (0.16 point increase) being in England; improvement in life satisfaction for Scotland was not statistically significant.
- Average ratings of feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile increased (improved) by 0.07 points in England (from 7.71 in the previous year to 7.78 in the latest year); increases seen in other UK countries were not statistically significant.
- Average ratings for happiness increased (improved) for England and Wales, with the largest improvement (0.14 point increase) being in England; increases seen in other UK countries were not statistically significant.
- Average ratings for anxiety decreased (improved) across all four countries compared with the previous year, with the largest decrease (0.26 point decrease) being in Northern Ireland.

**Because of small sample sizes and large confidence intervals estimates, local authorities should not be ranked against each other. Estimates are intended for local authorities to compare over time and with other local authorities of a similar population size and structure.**

On 3 October 2022, we launched a review of the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) Measures of National Well-being](#), which includes personal well-being. You can share your feedback and contribute to the review by filling in [our online survey](#). The survey is open until 25 November 2022. For more information, please email [qualityoflife@ons.gov.uk](mailto:qualityoflife@ons.gov.uk).

## 2 . Personal well-being in the UK

This release provides annual estimates of personal well-being for April 2021 to March 2022. Some estimates for the periods April 2011 and March 2021 have also been updated. For more information, see [Measuring the data](#).

Average ratings of well-being have improved across all four measures of personal well-being for the UK in the year ending March 2022 when compared with the previous year ending March 2021 (Figure 1). The ratings were:

- 7.54 out of 10 for life satisfaction (7.39 in the previous year)
- 7.77 out of 10 for feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile (7.71 in the previous year)
- 7.45 out of 10 for happiness yesterday (7.32 in the previous year)
- 3.12 out of 10 for anxiety yesterday (3.31 in the previous year)

For life satisfaction (0.15 point increase), happiness (0.13 point increase), and anxiety (0.18 point decrease) these were the largest year-on-year improvements since we started measuring well-being in the year ending March 2012. Average ratings for feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile also increased in the latest year (0.07 point increase), but this annual change was not as large as that seen in other years (0.08 point increase in the year ending March 2015).

Despite improvements in the latest year, average ratings for all measures of personal well-being are still below pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels (year ending March 2019). Average ratings declined across the years ending March 2020 and March 2021, periods that were affected by the pandemic.

Between the year ending March 2012 and the year ending March 2019, average ratings of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile and happiness generally increased (improved) year-on-year.

Average ratings of anxiety declined (improved) between the year ending March 2012 and the year ending March 2015, before remaining relatively stable until the year ending March 2019.

### **Figure 1: Personal well-being improved in the year ending March 2022, but remained below pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels**

**Average (mean) personal well-being ratings, UK, year ending March 2012 to March 2022**

Source: Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey

#### **Notes:**

1. The y-axis has a break in it, meaning it does not necessarily start from zero.
2. Data are weighted mean averages.

#### **Download the data**

[.xlsx](#)

### **Levels of personal well-being**

In addition to reporting average ratings, potential differences in personal well-being can also be monitored by comparing people rating each aspect of their well-being at the highest or lowest levels within the UK.

Between the year ending March 2021 and year ending March 2022, the proportion of people reporting low levels of life satisfaction, feeling that things done in life are worthwhile, happiness or high levels of anxiety decreased. Of those surveyed:

- 5.1% reported low levels of life satisfaction (6.1% in the previous year)
- 4.1% reported low levels of feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile (4.5% in the previous year)
- 8.5% reported low levels of happiness (9.3% in the previous year)
- 22.5% reported high levels of anxiety (24.2% in the previous year)

However, the proportion of people reporting these thresholds across the four measures are still higher than their pre-pandemic levels (year ending March 2019) (Figure 2).

## **Figure 2: The proportion of people reporting low levels of life satisfaction, worthwhile or happiness, or high levels of anxiety decreased across all measures in the year ending March 2022**

**Proportion of people reporting low life satisfaction, worthwhile, and happiness or high levels of anxiety in the UK, year ending March 2012 to March 2022**

### **Notes:**

1. For the life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness questions a rating of 0 to 4 (out of 10) is low. For anxiety, a rating of 6 to 10 (out of 10) is high.

### **Download the data**

[.xlsx](#)

The proportion of people reporting very high levels of life satisfaction, feeling that things done in life are worthwhile, happiness or very low levels of anxiety increased in the year ending March 2022. Of those surveyed:

- 26.0% reported very high levels of life satisfaction (23.8% in the previous year)
- 32.6% reported very high levels of feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile (31.5% in the previous year)
- 32.3% reported very high levels of happiness (29.5% in the previous year)
- 36.0% reported very low levels of anxiety (33.1% in the previous year)

The proportion of people reporting these thresholds still remains below pre-pandemic levels (year ending March 2019) (Figure 3).

## **Figure 3: The proportion of people reporting very high levels of life satisfaction, worthwhile or happiness, or very low levels of anxiety increased across all measures in the year ending March 2022**

**Proportion of people reporting very high life satisfaction, worthwhile, and happiness or very low levels of anxiety in the UK, year ending March 2012 to March 2022**

### **Notes:**

1. For the life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness questions a rating of 9 to 10 (out of 10) is very high. For anxiety, a rating of 0 to 1 (out of 10) is very low.

### **Download the data**

[.xlsx](#)

Figures for the four well-being measures are available at a country, region, county, local authority and unitary authority level in the [reference tables](#) published alongside this bulletin.

## Personal well-being across the scale

The personal well-being measures are reported on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely". More information can be found in the [Glossary](#). This year, the proportion of people responding for each of these individual scores are published in the [reference tables](#). Data are only published for the year ending March 2022.

The most commonly reported response among adults in the UK was 8 out of 10 for life satisfaction (32.8%), feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile (31.5%) and happiness (24.9%). For anxiety, the most commonly reported response was 0 out of 10 (26.6%), indicating that over a quarter of adults were not at all anxious in the previous day.

As well as annual data, we also track changes in personal well-being from the Annual Population Survey (APS) on a quarterly basis to provide a more timely and detailed understanding of change. The datasets include unadjusted and seasonally adjusted data at the UK level. Unadjusted estimates are also provided by age, sex, country and region. These data are published alongside our [Quality of life in the UK bulletin](#).

More timely data on well-being are collected as part of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). Results from this are published fortnightly in our [Public opinions and social trends bulletin](#). To find out more about the difference between these two data sources, you can view our [Data collection changes due to the pandemic and their impact on estimating personal well-being methodology](#).

### 3 . Personal well-being by country and region

All regions and countries of the UK saw an improvement or no change in the average ratings of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety in year ending March 2022, compared with the previous year (year ending March 2021). However, not all changes in the ratings were statistically significant.

Average ratings for life satisfaction increased (improved) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland compared with the previous year. Average ratings in Scotland increased slightly (7.38 to 7.45), but this was not statistically significant. The largest improvement (0.16 point increase) was in England, from 7.38 in the previous year to 7.55 in the latest year. Average ratings increased by 0.15 points in Northern Ireland (from 7.54 to 7.69) and 0.11 points in Wales (from 7.37 to 7.48).

Average ratings of feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile increased (improved) by 0.07 points in England (from 7.71 in the previous year to 7.78 in the latest year). There were no statistically significant changes in average ratings of feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile for Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Average ratings for happiness increased (improved) for England by 0.14 points (from 7.31 in the previous year to 7.45 in the latest year) and Wales by 0.12 points (from 7.31 in the previous year to 7.43 in the latest year). Average ratings for happiness increased (improved) for England by 0.14 points (from 7.31 in the previous year to 7.45 in the latest year) and Wales by 0.12 points (from 7.31 in the previous year to 7.43 in the latest year), with no significant differences in other UK countries.

Average ratings for anxiety decreased (improved) across all four countries compared with the previous year, with the largest decrease (0.26 point decrease) being in Northern Ireland, which went from 3.11 in the previous year to 2.84 in the latest year.

**Figure 4: England had the largest increase in average life satisfaction ratings between the year ending March 2021 and year ending March 2022**

Average life satisfaction, happiness and worthwhile ratings by country in the years ending March 2021 and March 2022

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Average life satisfaction, happiness and worthwhile ratings by country in the years ending March 2021 and March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

Notes:

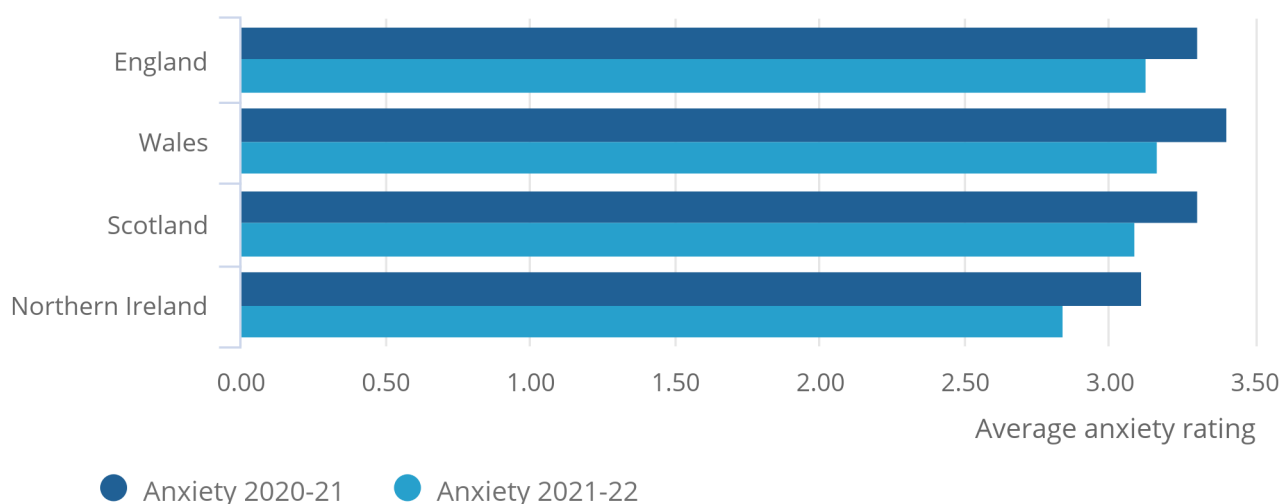
1 Data are weighted mean averages.

**Figure 5: Northern Ireland had largest decrease in average ratings for anxiety between the year ending March 2021 and year ending March 2022**

Average anxiety ratings by country in the years ending March 2021 and March 2022

Figure 5: Northern Ireland had largest decrease in average ratings for anxiety between the year ending March 2021 and year ending March 2022

Average anxiety ratings by country in the years ending March 2021 and March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

Notes:

1. Data are weighted mean averages.

At a regional level, improvements were seen for life satisfaction across all regions of the UK between the year ending March 2021 and year ending March 2022, although the increase for the South West was not statistically significant. The largest (0.25 point increase) improvement in life satisfaction rating was in Yorkshire and The Humber (which was 7.32 in the previous year and 7.56 in the latest year).

Average ratings for feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile showed statistically significant improvements in Yorkshire and The Humber (0.16 point increase) and the South East (0.13 point increase).

The North West (0.16 point increase), Yorkshire and The Humber (0.26 point increase), West Midlands (0.14 point increase), East of England (0.16 point increase), and South East (0.12 point increase) regions also saw statistically significant increases (improvements) in average happiness ratings when compared with the previous year.

At the regional level, improvements were seen across all the regions of the UK in average ratings of anxiety between the year ending March 2021 and the year ending March 2022, although the decrease (improvement) seen in the East Midlands, London and the South East were not statistically significant.



## 4 . Personal well-being by local area

Our personal well-being explorer tools shown in Figures 6 and 7 allow everyone to look at well-being in their local area.

Estimates are intended for local authorities to compare over time and with other local authorities of a similar population size and structure. Because of small sample sizes and large [confidence intervals](#), estimates for local authorities should not be ranked against each other.

### Figure 6: Personal well-being interactive map

Average ratings of personal well-being, UK, years ending March 2012 to March 2022

#### Notes:

1. Data are weighted mean averages.
2. Due to boundary changes in local authorities in Northern Ireland in 2015, data for Local Government Districts in Northern Ireland are only available from 2012 to 13.
3. Rounding processes may differ from those used in the datasets.

#### Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

### Figure 7: Personal well-being explorer

Average ratings of personal well-being, UK, year ending March 2012 to March 2022

#### Notes:

1. Data are weighted mean averages.
2. Due to boundary changes in local authorities in Northern Ireland in 2015, data for Local Government Districts in Northern Ireland are only available from 2012 to 13.
3. Rounding processes may differ from those used in the datasets.

#### Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

## 5 . Personal well-being in the UK data

### [Annual personal well-being estimates](#)

Dataset | Released 31 October 2022

Annual estimates of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety in the UK, by national, country, regional, county, local and unitary authority level.

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

Dataset | Released 31 October 2022

Confidence intervals and sample sizes for annual estimates of personal well-being in the UK, by national, country, regional, county, local and unitary authority level.

## 6 . Glossary

### Personal well-being

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.

For more information, see our [Personal well-being user guidance](#).

### Thresholds

Thresholds are used to present dispersion in the data. For the life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile and happiness questions, ratings are grouped. The ratings are:

- 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 are:

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

## 7 . Measuring the data

The data in this release come from the Annual Population Survey (APS). 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. Further information on the APS can be found on our [Annual Population Survey QMI](#).

This release presents headline results for the year ending March 2022, along with changes over time. It provides data at a national, country, regional, county and local authority level.

From 2021, the local authority breakdowns for Northern Ireland derived from the Annual Population Survey no longer represent the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's (NISRA's) [official statistics on personal well-being for Northern Ireland](#). This is because they use an alternative survey source, The Continuous Household Survey.

The figures in this bulletin have been rounded. However, comparisons have been based on unrounded data.

### October 2022 updates

When the latest population estimates are produced, it is common practice to reweight the data to ensure better representation and precision of estimates. In summer 2022, the APS completed a reweighting exercise and we have therefore revised the estimates for the years ending March 2020 and March 2021.

Some estimates for the periods between April 2011 and March 2019 have also been updated in this publication. This is because of changes in guidance on suppressing data, where estimates are no longer required to be suppressed solely based on their co-efficient of variation (CV) values. Previously published estimates were suppressed based on their CV values being over 20. We have also updated some estimates following quality assurance of previous publications.

Therefore, estimates published alongside this release supersede previously published data tables.

### Mode effects

Testing has shown that people respond more positively to the personal well-being questions when interviewed by telephone rather than face-to-face.

Prior to March 2020, this will have had a particular impact on local authorities in the far north of Scotland (north of the Caledonian Canal), where all respondents complete the survey via telephone. Since March 2020, the APS has largely been conducted over the telephone for respondents in all local authorities. A very small number of respondents have been interviewed face-to-face since September 2021.

### Statistical significance

Where comparisons between estimates have been made, associated [confidence intervals](#) have been used to determine the [statistical significance](#) of the differences. Comparisons have also been based on unrounded data.

Quality information for annual personal well-being estimates can be found in the accompanying data tables.

## 8 . Strengths and limitations

## Strengths

- The annual estimates of personal well-being have been certified by the UK Statistics Authority as being compliant with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and are [designated National Statistics \(PDF, 42.6 KB\)](#).
- Personal well-being questions are [harmonised](#), making the data more comparable, consistent and coherent.
- The Annual Population Survey (APS) provides a representative sample of those living in private residential households in the UK.
- The annual data from the APS used in this analysis provides the timeliest data on well-being at the granular level by local authority.
- Estimates for the years ending March 2020 and March 2021 have been revised based on a new set of weights, which are based on the latest population estimates available at the time.
- From the year ending March 2018, the sample for Northern Ireland received a boost, resulting in greater accuracy in a set of local authorities that had relatively small sample sizes compared with other local authorities in the UK.

## Limitations

- People living in communal establishments (such as care homes), or other non-household situations are not represented in the APS.
- Estimates for small groups (for example, respondents from a single local authority) are less reliable and tend to be more volatile than for larger aggregated groups as the sample size is smaller.

Further information can be found in our [Personal well-being in the UK Quality and Methodology Information report](#).

## 9 . Related links

### [Measures of National Well-being Dashboard: Quality of Life in the UK](#)

Data dashboard | Released 12 August 2022

Data dashboard providing an overview of the UK's progress against 44 indicators across the 10 domains of national well-being. National level data, trend over time and the assessment of change are presented for each indicator. The data sources and associated insight reports for each indicator can be accessed through the dashboard by following the links in chart subtitles.

### [Quarterly personal well-being estimates - seasonally adjusted](#)

Dataset | Released on 12 August 2022

Seasonally adjusted quarterly estimates of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety in the UK.

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

Dataset | Released on 12 August 2022

Confidence intervals and sample sizes for quarterly estimates of personal well-being in the UK.

### [Quarterly personal well-being estimates - non-seasonally adjusted](#)

Dataset | Released on 12 August 2022

Non-seasonally adjusted quarterly estimates of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety in the UK.

### [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 12 to 23 October 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released on 28 October 2022

Social insights on daily life and events, including the cost of living, location of work, health and well-being from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

## 10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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