

Statistical bulletin

Measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP in the UK: August 2024

Exploring quality of life in the UK, drawing on the latest economic, environmental and social statistics. This quarter we focus on life satisfaction, healthcare and climate change.

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1 . Main points

- More people felt low satisfaction with their lives in the UK in January to March 2024 than in the same period five years ago.
- In May to June 2023, 4.8% of children aged 10 to 15 years reported low satisfaction with their lives in the UK, unchanged from 12 months ago; however, it was more common for children to report low happiness with their health, at 8.9%.
- Among adults in Great Britain who tried to contact their GP within the last 12 months, a third (33%) said it was “difficult” or “very difficult” when asked in June 2024; this is against a background of 87% of adults in Great Britain considering the NHS to be one of the most important issues facing the UK when asked in the same time period.
- There are indications that people's concern about climate change may be falling, with the share of UK adults expressing concern dropping from 85% in 2021 to 80% in 2024.
- UK greenhouse gas emissions are provisionally estimated to have fallen by 52.7% between 1990 and 2023, on a territorial basis.

2 . Life satisfaction

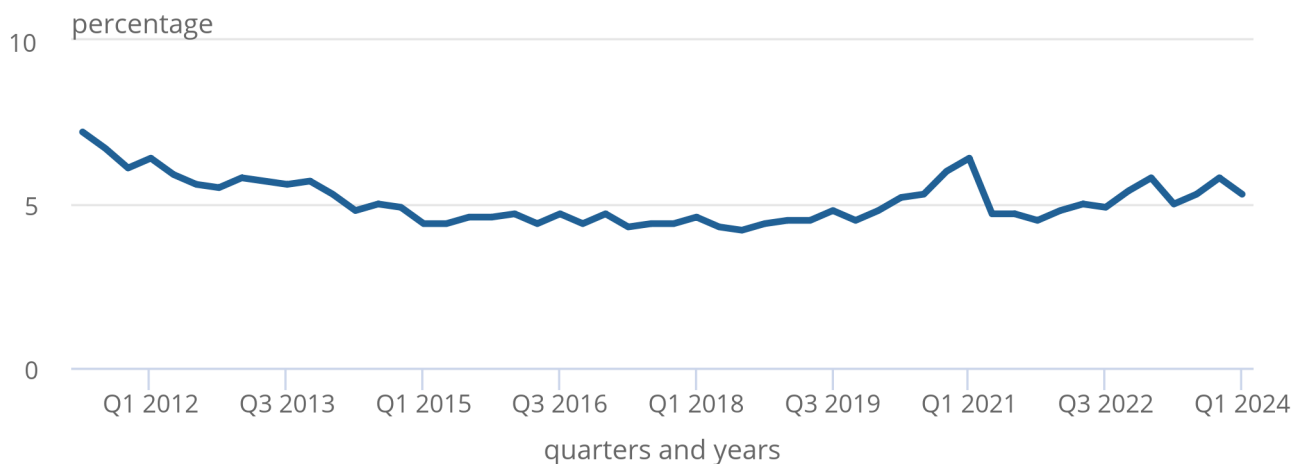
Among UK adults aged 16 years and over, 5.3% reported their satisfaction with their life as "low" in January to March 2024, as shown on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [UK Measures of National Well-being Dashboard](#) . This is higher than the same period five years ago (4.5% in January to March 2019).

Figure 1: More people felt low satisfaction with their lives in January to March 2024 than in the same period five years ago

Percentage of people rating the overall satisfaction with their life as low, Quarter 2 (April to June) 2011, to Quarter 1 (January to March) 2024, UK

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Percentage of people rating the overall satisfaction with their life as low, Quarter 2 (April to June) 2011, to Quarter 1 (January to March) 2024, UK



Source: Annual Population Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. People were asked "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? Where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
2. Low well-being is defined as those reporting 0 to 4 on a 0 to 10 scale.

Those aged 55 to 64 years tended to more commonly report low life satisfaction (8.7% of 55- to 59-year-olds and 7.3% of 60- to 64-year-olds), than those aged 35 to 39 years and under (4.6% of 35- to 39-year-olds).

Focusing on children aged 10 to 15 years, [there was no change in the proportion reporting "low" satisfaction with their life between 2022 and 2023, at 4.8%](#). However, it was more common for children to report low happiness with their health, at 8.9%.

Our [Personal well-being in the UK: April 2022 to March 2023 release](#) showed that adults who report a disability are more likely to also report low satisfaction with their life compared with those who do not report a disability (13.4% compared with 2.6%).

NHS England has highlighted that mental health problems represent the largest single cause of disability in the UK, estimating [1 in 4 adults experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any given year](#). NHS England reported just over [1 in 5 children aged 8 to 16 years in England had a probable mental disorder](#) in 2023; for example, difficulties with their emotions, behaviour, relationships, hyperactivity or concentration.

3 . Satisfaction with healthcare

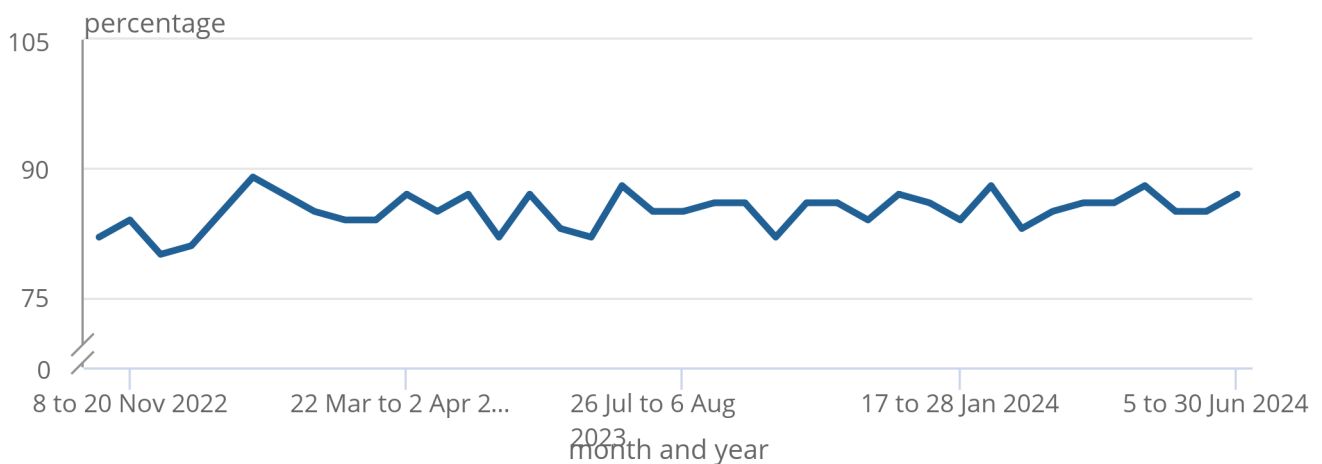
Our data show that [87% of adults in Great Britain consider the NHS to be one of the most important issues facing the UK](#), when asked between 5 and 30 June 2024.

Figure 2: The NHS continues to be considered one of the most important issues for adults in Great Britain

Proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue, Great Britain, October 2022 to June 2024

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Proportion of adults reporting the NHS as an important issue, Great Britain, October 2022 to June 2024



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?".
2. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

Latest NHS data for England estimate [an increase in medical appointments delivered by practices and primary care networks](#), from 23.8 million in June 2019 before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, to 28.7 million in June 2024. An NHS news release suggests [this increase can be attributed to upgrading telephone systems](#), as well as offering face-to-face, online and remote appointments.

NHS experiences and satisfaction data show that, [of those who tried to make contact with their GP practice in the last 12 months, 46% in Great Britain reported it being "very easy" or "easy"](#) when asked between 5 and 30 June 2024. Conversely, 33% of respondents in Great Britain reported contacting their GP practice as being "difficult" or "very difficult".

We have launched a new [Health Insight Survey](#), funded by the NHS, to gain a better understanding of NHS patient experience and giving patients the opportunity to offer regular feedback.

4 . Healthcare service productivity and the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Healthcare service productivity is a measure of the amount of service provided (which can be either a quality-adjusted or non-quality-adjusted output, and includes services such as dental services and vaccinations) for the quantity of inputs used (including, for example, personal protective equipment and staff). Productivity grows when output growth is greater than input growth. Find more information on our [healthcare productivity estimates](#).

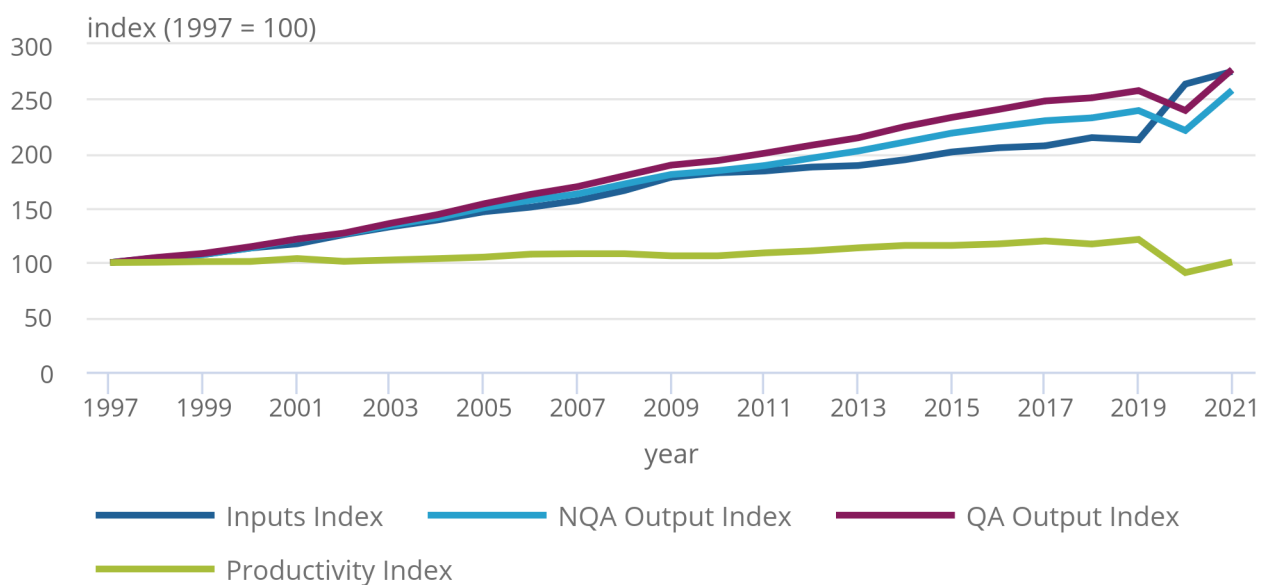
UK [public service healthcare productivity increased](#) by 10.8% in 2021, a partial recovery from a record fall of 25.1% in 2020. This growth was because of a larger increase in output, at 15.7%, compared with the growth in inputs, at 4.3%. Despite the substantial increase, public service healthcare productivity in 2021 had not recovered to its 2019 pre-coronavirus pandemic peak.

Figure 3: Healthcare productivity showed a partial increase in 2021 but was still below pre-coronavirus levels

Indices for healthcare inputs, non-quality-adjusted (NQA) and quality-adjusted (QA) output, and productivity, UK, 1997 to 2021

Figure 3: Healthcare productivity showed a partial increase in 2021 but was still below pre-coronavirus levels

Indices for healthcare inputs, non-quality-adjusted (NQA) and quality-adjusted (QA) output, and productivity, UK, 1997 to 2021



Source: Public service productivity from the Office for National Statistics

The increase in output in 2021 was mainly a result of increases in services, such as elective treatment and outpatient consultations, which had been delayed or cancelled during the pandemic. There was also an increase in COVID-19 related services including the vaccine rollout.

Healthcare inputs increased by 4.3% in 2021, on top of a record growth of 24.1% in 2020; a consequence of additional operational expenditure in response to the pandemic.

5 . Climate change concern and greenhouse gas emissions

Our [May 2024 Measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP bulletin](#) looked at how visiting green and natural spaces, and air quality can affect our health. It is also increasingly recognised that our environment (for example, pollution and flooding) and [climate change can negatively impact mental health conditions](#).

The latest [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero public attitudes tracker for spring 2024](#) indicates a lower proportion of UK adults expressed concern about climate change (80%) compared with autumn 2021 (85%).

We see similar trends in our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 5 June to 30 June 2024](#) bulletin, where 56% of adults in Great Britain consider climate change and the environment to be one of the important issues facing the UK, compared with 60% to 62% of adults in June 2023.

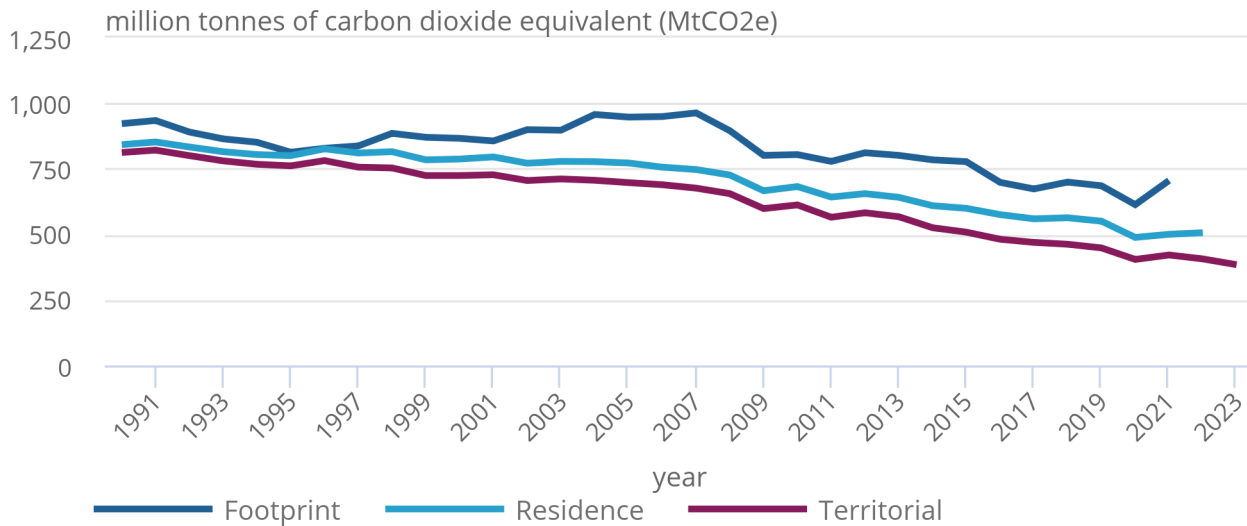
Any shifts in levels of climate change concern comes in the context of the UK making progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). All three emissions measures have declined since 1990, the first year for which comparable data are available.

Figure 4: UK greenhouse gas emissions have declined since 1990

Greenhouse gas emissions on a territorial, residence and carbon footprint basis: UK, 1990 to 2021, 2022 and 2023 (provisional)

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Greenhouse gas emissions on a territorial, residence and carbon footprint basis: UK, 1990 to 2021, 2022 and 2023 (provisional)



Source: UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, UK residence greenhouse gas emissions from the Office for National Statistics, and UK and England's carbon footprint from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Notes:

1. Territorial emissions cover emissions that occur within the UK's borders and are used to track UK-wide progress towards international and domestic targets, such as net zero emissions by 2050.
2. Residence (production) emissions are aligned with the UK National Accounts, enabling emissions to be linked to economic sectors and activity in them.
3. Footprint (consumption) emissions cover consumption of all goods and services by the UK, sometimes referred to as "carbon footprint".

Territorial emissions, the basis for monitoring the UK's net zero GHG emissions by 2050 target, are provisionally estimated to have been [384.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent \(MtCO2e\) in 2023](#) (PDF, 669KB), 52.7% lower than in 1990. For more information about UK emissions measures go to [Section 8: Data sources and quality](#) and [our explainer article](#).

Modelled emissions estimates on a residence basis are available quarterly. [Quarter 1 \(Jan to Mar\) 2024 emissions estimates](#) suggest a 1.5% increase compared with the same period in 2023. Emissions intensity for the same quarter was estimated at 0.183 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e) per million pounds of gross value added (GVA). This is down by 61.1%, or 0.287 tonnes of CO2e per million pounds of GVA, since 1999, the first available quarterly estimates, indicating the UK is moving towards a lower carbon economy.

Our latest [estimates of the UK low carbon and renewable energy economy \(LCREE\) for 2022](#), from our LCREE business survey, show turnover (£69.4 billion in current prices) and employment (272,400 full-time equivalents) were up by 28% and 8%, respectively compared with 2021, reaching their highest levels since the first comparable figures in 2015.

6 . Next steps

Quarterly gross domestic product (GDP) for [Quarter 2 \(April to June\) 2024, is due to be published on 15 August 2024](#).

Our next measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP bulletin, focusing on well-being, climate change and the environment, is due to be published on 14 November 2024, with Quarter 3 (July to September) 2024 GDP following on 15 November 2024.

If you have any feedback on this bulletin, please email qualityoflife@ons.gov.uk.

7 . Glossary

Gross domestic product (GDP)

The total value of output in the economic territory. It is the balancing item on the production account for the whole economy, domestic product can be measured as gross or net. It is presented in the accounts at market (or purchasers') prices.

Statistical significance

Measures have been assessed as having improved or declined if the difference between the comparison periods is statistically significant using expert advice or non-overlapping confidence intervals, where available. If a difference is said to be statistically significant, it is unlikely that it could have occurred by chance alone. More information on statistical significance and confidence intervals is available on our [uncertainty and how we measure for it for our surveys web page](#).

8 . Data sources and quality

Our second "Measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP" bulletin provides an opportunity to further bring together latest data from across the Office for National Statistics (ONS), wider government and academics on both observed measures of well-being and the relationships with main drivers. It is timed to set gross domestic product (GDP) in a wider context of broader economic, environmental and social progress, and provide a more holistic view of national progress, prosperity and well-being.

GDP is a sound but incomplete measure of economic progress because it omits the gains or damage caused by GDP growth on society and the environment, or how that growth is shared among society.

The ONS has been developing and improving new measures of national prosperity and well-being to offer greater understanding. For example, in 2023 for the first time we began publishing statistics on [inclusive income](#), which augment GDP to account for, for example, unpaid household work, ecosystem services and depreciation of human capital. Additionally in 2023, we reviewed our [UK measures of national well-being](#), taking on board stakeholder feedback to update our measures and interactive dashboard.

From 2024 onwards, the new "Measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP" quarterly releases will bring together existing published measures of progress to provide a more holistic view of quality of life in the UK.

Greenhouse gas emissions

Residence-based (production) emissions are part of our [UK Environmental Accounts](#). They enable emissions to be linked to economic sectors and the activity in them. They are one of three official measures of UK greenhouse gas emissions – [see our explainer article](#).

Greenhouse gas emissions intensity is calculated by dividing the level of greenhouse gas emissions by gross value added (GVA). GVA is the difference between output and intermediate consumption for any given industry. This means the difference between the value of goods and services produced (output) and the cost of raw materials and other inputs that are used up in production (intermediate consumption).

For a list of greenhouse gases, please see the [glossary](#) of our UK Environmental Accounts: 2024.

Productivity

The Chancellor of the Exchequer asked Sir Ian Diamond, the National Statistician, to undertake a review of public service productivity. To improve measures, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is now partnering with government departments, academics and expert users to help develop and improve methodology and data sources. The [Public Service Productivity Review](#) (PSPR) aims to produce improved measures of the value of public service productivity and will show its contribution to the UK economy. With public services currently equating to around one-fifth of the output of the UK economy, it is vital that statistics in this area provide a true reflection of productivity levels and are reported as accurately as possible.

Data coverage, strengths and limitations

This release brings together a wealth of published statistics to holistically consider the quality of life in the UK.

Please note that as this release brings together statistics across different geographies, sampled populations and time periods, caution should be used when making comparisons.

Where possible, trend-over-time data have been commented upon using the latest available data.

These statistics include [accredited official statistics](#) (previously called National Statistics), [official statistics in development](#) (previously known as experimental statistics) and other statistics. Accreditations give the user confidence in their use, having been assessed against the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value as outlined in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). For more information on statistical accreditation, please see the Office for Statistics Regulation's blog, [What does it mean to be an accredited official statistic?](#)

Each statistic has been hyperlinked in the text to allow the user to source the original data and methodologies.

For the indicators where the UK-wide data are not available, alternative data sources may exist for the devolved administrations (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), but differences in methodology affect the comparability of the data.

Comparability

Where changes over time are presented in this bulletin, associated confidence intervals are used to assess the statistical significance of the differences, explained on our [Uncertainty and how we measure for it for our surveys web page](#).

For some of the indicators that are not based on survey data, confidence intervals are not available. In those cases, change over time has not been assessed or has been assessed based on guidance from the data owner.

Some of the data have come from self-completion household surveys, the estimates may not be representative for individuals who do not live in private residential households.

9 . Related links

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

Dataset | Released 8 August 2024

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

[Public service productivity](#)

Article | Released 26 March 2024

Updated annual measures of output, inputs and productivity for UK public services between 1997 and 2021: service area breakdown, quality adjustment, latest revisions.

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

Dashboard | Released 8 August 2024

An overview of well-being in the UK on an individual, community and national level. Considers change across 59 measures of well-being, grouped by 10 topic areas.

[UK Environmental Accounts](#)

Landing page

How the environment contributes to the economy, the impact that the economy has on the environment, and how society responds to environmental issues. This page also hosts the development of natural capital accounts.

[UK natural capital accounts: 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 27 November 2023

Estimates of the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK

10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 8 August 2024, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP in the UK: August 2024](#)