Statistical bulletin

Beyond GDP insights, UK measures of National Well-being: June 2026

Exploring quality of life and progress beyond GDP in the UK, drawing on the 59 national well-being measures published annually and the 7 headline measures published quarterly.

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1 . Main points

- While income and wealth measures remain broadly stable in the short-term, with some inequality improvements, around one in four adults (24.6%) reported that they find it fairly or very difficult to get by financially, accompanied by low consumer confidence.
- Health outcomes have worsened in the long term, with declines in healthy life expectancy and self-reported health, and an increase in depression and anxiety; satisfaction with the healthcare system has increased compared with a year ago.
- Some positive progress in aspects of social cohesion has been reported, particularly in regard to people's sense of belonging to their neighborhood, and in perceptions of influence over government decision-making; however, trust in government remains below the 3 in 10 level.
- Environmental measures show short- and long-term progress in emissions reduction but limited short-term improvement in areas such as biodiversity, recycling and water quality.
- Outcomes for young people are mixed, with little short-term change but an increase over the past five years in the proportion of those aged 16 to 24 years not in education, employment or training.
- High levels of satisfaction are reported across several aspects of life, including social relationships (85.8%), accommodation (88.6%), and main job (73.6%); these measures have remained stable, compared with a year ago.

2 . The UK Measures of National Well-being framework

This edition of the bulletin is designed to complement the UK Measures of National Well-being (UKMNW) comprehensive measure set, which is presented in our UK Measures of National Well-being dashboard. This framework has tracked national well-being since 2011. The dashboard provides a holistic view of progress and wellbeing in the UK through a focus on 10 "topic areas". These topic areas provide a structure to understand the dynamics and trade-offs between different aspects of life in the UK and how they affect well-being.

Our data sources vary in their geographical coverage and data collection periods. Short-term change is usually assessed by comparing the latest period with the previous year. Long-term change is generally defined as the change between the latest period and five years earlier. These may vary for some measures. Changes over time presented in this bulletin are either statistically significant or have been assessed as significant by the data owners.

For more information on our methods, please see the How we analyse and interpret our data subsection in Section 14: Data sources and quality and our UK Measures of National Well-being framework user guide.

3 . Personal well-being

Personal well-being provides the most direct insight into how people feel about their lives. The latest data paint a picture of stability in the short term, with all recent estimates showing no change compared with the previous year. However, there has been a long-term positive trajectory in the comparisons with data from five years earlier for some personal well-being measures.

In October to December 2025, 4.9% of adults reported low life satisfaction, 3.9% reported low feelings of worthwhileness, and 8.1% reported low happiness. In contrast, high levels of anxiety were more common, with 23.6% of adults reporting high anxiety. None of these measures showed a short-term change compared with the same period a year earlier.

However, there have been improvements in several of these measures over the longer term. Levels of low life satisfaction, happiness and anxiety have improved, compared with October to December 2020, while worthwhileness has remained stable. This comparison should be interpreted with caution, as October to December 2020 was during the COVID-19 pandemic period when well-being outcomes were particularly low. As a result, the observed improvements partly reflect recovery from an unusual base period, rather than sustained underlying gains compared with longer term pre-pandemic averages.

Other aspects of personal well-being also show short-term stability. In April 2026, 64.4% of adults reported feeling hopeful about their future, while 18.2% felt very or somewhat unfairly treated by society, with no meaningful change compared with a year before.

4 . Our relationships

People's relationships play an important role in overall well-being. They influence quality of life and happiness and encompass the connections individuals have with family, friends and their wider community.

People's relationships remain strong and broadly stable for most adults, particularly in terms of close personal connections. High proportions report positive relationship outcomes; 6 in 7 (85.8%) adults were satisfied with their social relationships in September 2025 and just under 9 in 10 (87.4%) reported that they had people they could rely on in April 2026, both showing no significant short-term change.

Within this stability, a small but persistent minority report poorer experiences. Around 1 in 16 (6.1%) adults reported feeling lonely often or always in April 2026, while 1 in 20 (5.0%) were fairly or extremely unhappy with their relationships in January 2023 to December 2024. These measures have shown no change over both the short and longer term.

Broader measures of community connection and trust show more moderate levels and have also remained stable. In April 2026, around 6 in 10 adults (60.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that people from different backgrounds get along well in their local area, while approximately two-thirds (67.7%) reported trusting most other people in March 2026, with neither measure showing significant short-term change.

These findings point to strong social relationships for most adults and stable but moderate levels of community connection and trust, alongside a small but persistent fraction of the population experiencing poorer relationship outcomes.

5 . Health

Physical and mental health are important components of well-being. Measures in this topic area include both objective and subjective measures of health, and satisfaction with the healthcare system, which reflects how the nation’s health is supported.

Recent data show mixed trends across these measures. Healthy life expectancy at birth in the UK has declined for both males and females in 2022 to 2024, compared with earlier periods. Males are expected to live 60.7 years in good health, which is down from around 62.4 years in 2019 to 2021 and 62.7 years in 2011 to 2013. Females are expected to live 60.9 years in good health, which is down from around 63.4 years in 2019 to 2021 and 63.7 years in 2011 to 2013. Self-reported health has also declined over the long term, with 70.4% of UK adults reporting good or very good health in early 2026, compared with 75.4% five years earlier.

Mental health measures show a similar pattern, with 24.6% of UK adults reporting some evidence of depression or anxiety (as assessed using the General Health Questionnaire) between January 2023 and December 2024. This is up from 21.8% in 2021 to 2022 and 19.7% in 2018 to 2019.

Despite these trends, around 7 in 10 adults (70.4%) reported being fairly or very satisfied with their health in March 2026, with no significant change in the short term. Additionally, satisfaction with the healthcare system has increased in the short term, with 57.2% of adults reporting satisfaction in March 2026, which is up from 50.1% the previous year.

Overall, these findings indicate a mixed picture of declines in healthy life expectancy and self-reported health, increases in measures of mental ill health, stable levels of satisfaction with health, and improved views of healthcare services in the short term.

6 . What we do

This topic area focuses on how people spend their time, including participation in work, leisure, and volunteering, and their satisfaction with these activities.

Satisfaction with main time use activities has remained broadly stable, including satisfaction with work and overall use of time. In March 2026, 73.6% of adults reported being fairly or very satisfied with their main job and, between December 2025 and January 2026, 59.3% were fairly or very satisfied with how they spend their time in a typical week. Both measures show no significant short-term change.

Despite this stability, differences remain in how time is allocated by sex. In March 2024, women spent an average of 57 minutes more per day on unpaid work than men. This highlights continuing differences in how unpaid work is shared between men and women.

Additionally, levels of participation differ across activities. Physical activity has increased over both the short and longer term, with 64.6% of adults meeting recommended levels (average of 150 minutes a week of "moderate plus intensity" sport and/or physical activity). This is up from 63.8% the previous year and 61.4% in 2019 to 2020. In contrast, other activities show stability or recent decline. Volunteering remained unchanged at 33.1% in April 2026. Engagement with arts and culture fell to 82.9% in October to December 2025, which is down from 90.0% the previous year. Visits to green and natural spaces remained stable at 60.9% in December 2025, with no change over time.

7 . Where we live

Where people live, the quality of their local area and their community, and how they feel about it can affect personal well-being. People's experiences of where they live remain broadly positive and stable, particularly in relation to housing and local conditions. A high proportion of adults (88.6%) reported being very or fairly satisfied with their accommodation in March 2026, and 74.7% were very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live in December 2025 to January 2026 (both with no significant short-term change).

There are signs of improvement in aspects of community connection. The proportion of adults who felt they belonged to their neighbourhood increased from 53.3% in June 2025 to 63.6% in April 2026, which indicates strengthening perceptions of social cohesion.

However, other measures show more persistent patterns over time. Crime levels remained stable in April 2024 to March 2025 at 43.0 personal crimes per 1,000 adults, with no short- or long-term change. Perceptions of safety have also remained steady over this period. Notably, there is a consistent gender difference, with 88.8% of men reporting feeling safe walking alone after dark, compared with 68.2% of women.

Access to digital infrastructure has shown no recent change, but has improved over the longer term, with the proportion of adults without internet access falling from 10.7% in 2020 to 4.9% in 2025.

8 . Personal finance

How households and individuals are managing financially affects many aspects of their lives, including living standards and economic security. The data suggest that the UK's financial position at the aggregate level has remained stable in recent years, with slight growth that we report as no short-term change in either income or wealth. Median equivalised disposable household income (in real terms) was £36,663 in financial year ending (FYE) 2024, showing no significant change from the previous year. Median household wealth was £293,700 in April 2020 to March 2022, which was unchanged from the previous period. However, income remains higher than pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels (£35,224 in FYE 2019), which indicates some longer-term improvement.

There are also signs of gradual improvement in aspects of financial inequality. Income inequality - as measured by the Gini coefficient - was 32.9% in FYE 2024, with no significant change from FYE 2023 (33.1%), but lower than FYE 2019 (36.0%). The gender pay gap for full-time employees was 6.9% in April 2025, narrowing slightly from 7.1% in April 2024 and 7.0% in April 2020. This continues a longer-term downward trend, falling by more than a quarter over the past decade.

These aggregate trends hide continued financial pressures for a proportion of households. In FYE March 2025, around one in five individuals (19.6%) were living in relative low income, after housing costs. In addition, 24.6% of adults reported finding it fairly or very difficult to get by financially in April 2026. This measure has shown no short-term change.

Together, these data show a mixed picture. Measures of income and wealth are stable in the short-term, and some structural inequalities have improved over the longer term. However, a substantial minority of households continue to experience financial difficulty, which indicates that improvements at the aggregate level are not evenly experienced across the population.

9 . Education and skills

Education and skills are important factors in people's socioeconomic outcomes; they shape employment opportunities, earnings and overall life chances. Recent data show continued short-term improvements in attainment and moderate, stable levels of public satisfaction with the education system and perceptions of education and skill levels. There are emerging longer-term challenges in youth labour market participation, indicating improvements in attainment are not consistently resulting in improved outcomes for all groups.

In 2025, 6.4% of UK adults aged 16 to 64 years had no qualifications. This is a short-term improvement from 6.9% in 2024, but no long-term improvement since 2020. Attainment at higher levels remains relatively high, with 68.9% of adults holding A level or equivalent qualifications or above in 2025, which is an increase from 67.5% in 2024.

Despite these improvements, the proportion of those aged 16 to 24 years who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) was 13.5% in January to March 2026. This is not a significant change compared with January to March 2025 (12.5%), but is an increase over the longer term from 10.7% in January to March 2021, indicating that outcomes for young people are more mixed.

Measures of human capital provide a broader view of the value of skills and experience within the workforce. In 2024, the UK's human capital stock - measured as the total projected lifetime earnings of working-age people in real terms - was estimated at £28.6 trillion. This is a decrease in the short term, though the overall level remains higher than in 2019 (£27.8 trillion). This shows the increasing value of workforce and experience in the long term.

Finally, self-reported perceptions show relatively stable levels of satisfaction with education and skills and the education system. In March 2026, just over three-quarters of adults (77.4%) reported being fairly or very satisfied with their own education and skills (with no significant short-term change). Satisfaction with the education system itself was lower, at 48.9%, and has also remained unchanged in the short term.

10 . Economy

The economy plays an important role in shaping the financial well-being of individuals, communities and the UK. Recent economic measures suggest a stable picture, with some signs of improvement in underlying conditions but weaker sentiment among households.

Economic output has shown modest short-term improvement, with gross domestic product (GDP) per head increasing by 0.9% in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026 to £10,215, compared with the same quarter a year earlier. This also shows a long-term positive change, with GDP per head increasing by 11.6% compared with Quarter 1 2021.

Labour market conditions also remain relatively stable. Between January and March 2026, around 1 in 20 economically active adults were unemployed and the unemployment rate was 5.0%. This represents no significant change compared with January to March 2025 (4.5%) or January to March 2021 (4.9%), which indicates relative stability in the labour market.

Inflation - as measured by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) - rose by 2.8% in the 12 months to April 2026. This shows a positive short-term change from 3.5% in the year to April 2025, suggesting a slowing in price growth and no long term-change compared with April 2021 (1.5%). This is because this measure reflects the symmetric nature of the inflation target, where positive 1% is the same as negative 1% around the 2% target.

Despite these relatively stable and improving measures, economic sentiment presents a less positive picture. The GfK Consumer Confidence Barometer stood at negative 25.4 in April 2026, which is the lowest level since October 2023. This suggests consumers remain pessimistic about both their personal financial situation and the general economic outlook.

Overall, these findings point to a divergence between economic conditions and public sentiment. While labour market measures show stability, and inflation and GDP per head show improvement, consumer confidence remains low.

11 . Governance

The story of governance and civic engagement is one of cautious stability. It is shaped by moderate confidence in institutions, and low trust in government and voter participation, but short-term improvement in people's sense of influence over government decision-making.

Satisfaction varies across important institutions, but shows little movement over time. One in three adults (33.8%) reported they are satisfied with the courts and legal system in March 2026 (with no significant change from the previous year). Views of the police are more positive, with around half of adults (50.9%) reporting satisfaction (also unchanged in the short term).

Trust in government remains below 3 in 10 adults, with only 29.2% saying they tend to trust the UK government in March 2026. This continues a pattern of limited confidence, with no significant short-term change.

Perceptions of influence show a more encouraging shift. In April 2026, 63.8% of adults agreed they do not have any say in what the government does. This is an improvement compared with 69.2% in June 2025, which suggests fewer people feel disconnected from decision-making than in the previous year. Although this is still a clear majority, this shift indicates a modest strengthening in perceptions of civic voice. However, this change should be interpreted with some caution, as the data were collected shortly before the UK local elections on 7 May, which may have temporarily affected people's views.

This improvement is set against a decline in formal political participation. Voter turnout at the 2024 General Election was 59.7%, which is the lowest turnout since 2001. This marks a decrease from 67.3% in 2019 and 68.8% in 2017, which highlights both short-term and long-term declines in electoral engagement.

Public attitudes towards institutions appear stable, with higher confidence in the police than in the justice system or government. Trust in government remains low, but perceptions of having a voice have improved slightly.

12 . Environment

The environment is relevant to people's quality of life because it makes human life and activity possible. Measures in this topic area cover aspects of climate change, the UK's natural environment and natural capital, and the effects of human activity on the environment.

There are signs of steady forward movement on climate change. UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions had fallen to 366.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2025, continuing a long-running downward trend. Emissions are now less than half of what they were in 1990, reflecting sustained changes in how energy is produced and used. This shift may be supported by the growing role of renewable energy, which reached a record high of 16.2% of total energy consumption in 2024. While the pace of change has been gradual, the direction has remained consistently positive.

However, this progress is not reflected equally across all aspects of the environment topic area. Household recycling, for example, has remained unchanged. Around 44.6% of household waste was recycled in 2023, and this has changed little over the past decade.

Similarly, efforts to protect nature have achieved long-term gains, but recent progress has slowed. By 2025, 36.4 million hectares of land and sea in the UK were designated as protected areas. This was a substantial increase compared with the mid-20th century when these protections did not formally exist. In the short term, this coverage has remained largely unchanged since 2020. However, these protections have not been enough to stop biodiversity loss. The abundance of priority species has declined sharply over the long term, falling to around 38.1% of 1970 levels by 2023 (1970 equals 100). Although this decline has stabilised in recent years, the overall picture remains one of substantial ecological loss.

Air pollution presents a more mixed but cautiously improving picture. The number of days with moderate or higher pollution levels in the UK has declined considerably in urban areas, falling from 15.6 days in 2010 to 6.2 days in 2024. Pollution levels in rural areas remain higher, with 11.0 days recorded in 2024. While air pollution in both urban and rural areas has improved since its peaks, rural levels have not yet returned to those seen in the early 2010s.

Water quality is another area where progress has been limited. Just under one-third (32.8%) of UK surface water bodies were classified as having "good" or "high" ecological status in 2024. This has changed little since 2009, suggesting that improvements to water quality have been difficult to achieve.

Against this backdrop of environmental pressures and gradual change, public behaviour offers an encouraging perspective. Around 86.0% of adults reported making at least some lifestyle changes to help tackle environmental issues in March 2026. This suggests a high level of awareness and a willingness among the public to act.

Overall, there has been clear and sustained progress in reducing emissions and increasing renewable energy use, alongside widespread public engagement. However, this contrasts with areas of limited change, such as recycling and water quality, and continuing long-term challenges, particularly for biodiversity.

13 . Glossary

Definitions of important terms used in this bulletin are available in the Definitions section of our UK Measures of National Well-being dashboard.

14 . Data sources and quality

All data sources for the measures referenced in this release can be found in our accompanying dataset.

This release brings together statistics across different geographies, sampled populations and time periods. Users should take care when making comparisons across measures, as the underlying data sources may differ in their definitions, coverage, question wording, and frequency. Where possible, we describe trends using the latest available data and comparable time points (for example, using the same quarter or period in a previous year).

This release contains accredited official statistics (previously called National Statistics), official statistics, official statistics in development (previously called Experimental Statistics), and non-official statistics.

UK-wide estimates are not available for some measures. Data may instead be presented for Great Britain, England and Wales, or another geography, depending on the data owner and collection approach. We present alternative sources for the devolved administrations, where they exist, in our UK Measures of National Well-being: measures metadata, though differences in methodology can limit comparability.

Some measures are produced using self-completion household surveys. These estimates may not be representative of people who do not live in private residential households, such as those living in communal establishments.

If you would like to provide additional feedback or share any opinions on our UK Measures of National Well-being outputs, email qualityoflife@ons.gov.uk.

How we analyse and interpret the data

We publish the time series for each measure and its change over time, where available. Change in each estimate is assessed over the short-term and long-term. Short-term change is typically assessed by comparison of the latest period with the previous year. Long-term change is typically defined as change from the latest period to five years previous.

For measures sourced from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, short-term change is based on the time point closest to the previous year. This may vary between 7 and 14 because of the rotation of survey questions.

The periods used to assess change for healthy life expectancy differ from other measures, to reflect overlapping assessment windows. The short-term assessment is made using the last non-overlapping period. The longterm assessment is made using the latest estimate with the earliest period available, which ensures sufficient separation from the shortterm change point and avoids situations where overlapping years would result in assessing change over only a very short interval.

Some of the environment-related measures differ in the periods that change is assessed, based on guidance from the data owners. Short-term change is assessed by comparison of the latest period with estimates over the previous five years. Long-term change compares the latest estimate with the earliest period available. This is to reflect the relatively slow movement of change in these measures.

We report confidence intervals and sample sizes, where available, to aid data interpretation. These can be found in our accompanying dataset. Where confidence intervals are available, we use these to assess the statistical significance of the change over time. Where confidence intervals are not available, change over time is assessed based on guidance from the data owner.

We assess change for each measure by evaluating whether it has had a positive change, negative change, or has stayed the same. We make this assessment based on the sentiment of the measure. For example, for the "life satisfaction" measure, we would report a positive change for "people reporting low levels of life satisfaction" if the percentage of people reporting feeling low life satisfaction had decreased.

For more information on our methods, please see our UK measures of National Well-being framework user guide.

15 . Related links

UK Measures of National Well-being framework user guide
User guide | Last revised 8 June 2026
User guide for the UK measures of National Well-being, providing more detail on the framework. Includes metadata tables of the measures, detail on how we produce estimates, and measure change over time.

UK Measures of National Well-being Dashboard
Dashboard | Last revised 8 June 2026
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.

Quarterly personal well-being statistics, May 2026
Dataset | Released 28 May 2026
Non-seasonally adjusted and seasonally adjusted quarterly estimates of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety in the UK.

16 . Cite this bulletin

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