

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

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

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1 . Main points

- Measures of quality of life and progress taken together show that progress has not been consistent across individual, community and national well-being.
- Real gross domestic product (GDP) per head and the share of energy consumption supplied by low carbon sources increased in both the short- and long-term; there has been some positive progress in the percentage of people who reported low life satisfaction, which remained lower than five years ago, during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic period.
- Trust in the UK government remained unchanged at approximately the 1 in 4 level, and trust in others has remained broadly stable compared with a year ago.
- There were negative changes in the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and self-reported health status, which indicate that several aspects of individual well-being remained weaker than five years ago.

Our data sources have different geographical coverage and data collection periods. The five-year comparison baseline includes quarters affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

2 . Understanding well-being across individual, community and national dimensions

The [UK Measures of National Well-being \(UKMNW\) framework](#) is comprised of the headline measure set presented in this bulletin (updated quarterly), and the comprehensive set presented in the [UKMNW dashboard](#) (updated annually). The UKMNW framework provides a broad view of quality of life and progress in the UK. It considers how we are doing as individuals, in our communities and as a nation. It also considers whether well-being can be sustained in the future.

This approach aligns with international work measuring progress beyond gross domestic product (GDP). The final [United Nations Report of the Secretary-General's Independent High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP \(PDF, 1.624KB\)](#) proposes a conceptual framework for measuring equitable, inclusive and sustainable well-being and progress across current well-being, sustainability and resilience. It considers well-being across different dimensions, including individual, community, country and global perspectives.

In this bulletin, we analyse the headline measures using three dimensions of well-being: individual well-being, community well-being and national well-being. This approach helps to show how different aspects of quality of life and progress in the UK are interconnected, while also highlighting areas where trends differ. Where statistics from the wider UKMNW dashboard or other Office for National Statistics (ONS) publications are included, they are identified as additional contextual evidence.

3 . Headline measures at a glance

This section summarises the latest quarterly data for each headline measure and assesses both short- and long-term change. We assess change for each measure by evaluating whether there has been a positive change, a negative change, or it has stayed the same. We make this assessment based on the sentiment of the measure. For more information on how we assess change over time, see [Section 10: Data sources and quality](#).

4 . Individual well-being

The individual well-being dimension of the headline measure considers how satisfied people feel with life, how healthy they are, and whether young people are participating in education, employment or training.

In Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026, low life satisfaction remained stable compared with its pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels in Quarter 1 2019. However, it has shown some long-term improvement with 1 in 20 (5.0%) adults reporting low life-satisfaction compared with 6.4% in Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2021.

Similarly, the mean life satisfaction score, as reported in our [Quarterly personal well-being estimates - non-seasonally adjusted dataset](#), was 7.5 out of 10 in Quarter 1 2026. This remains statistically significantly lower than in Quarter 1 2019, before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, when it was 7.7 out of 10. However, there was long-term improvement compared with Quarter 1 2021, during the coronavirus pandemic, when it was 7.3 out of 10. These results suggest that life satisfaction has improved since the coronavirus pandemic, but it has not fully returned to its pre-coronavirus pandemic levels.

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) provide another perspective on individual well-being. Around 1 in 8 young people (13.0%) were NEET in Quarter 2 2026. This shows no short-term change (12.8% in Quarter 2 2025), but a negative long-term change compared with Quarter 2 2021 (9.7%). The proportion of young people who are NEET provides an indication of future opportunities and participation. The measure reflects current circumstances, but may also be associated with longer-term outcomes.

Additional evidence from our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: August 2026 statistical bulletin](#) provides wider context on perceived opportunities for progression. Slightly more than half of adults (51%) strongly disagree or disagree that everyone has a fair chance to progress based on talent and hard work. Furthermore, 63% of adults believe that a person's background has the greatest influence on their life outcomes.

Health is an important component of individual well-being and is associated with a range of social and economic outcomes. The latest data show that the proportion of adults reporting good or very good health has declined in the long-term. In Quarter 2 2026, 70.5% of people reported good or very good health, but this has declined compared with five years ago, where 74.5% of adults reported good or very good health.

5 . Community well-being

Community well-being reflects the relationships, trust and shared conditions that shape how people experience and participate in society. Measures in this dimension provide insight into social connection, trust and perceptions of fairness.

In Great Britain, around two-thirds of adults (65.3%) reported that, in general, they trusted most people in June 2026, with no statistically significant change from June 2025.

However, community well-being is about more than interpersonal trust. Recent data reported in our June update of our [UK Measures of National Well-being dashboard](#) show some improvement in people's connection to their local communities. The proportion of adults who felt they belonged to their neighbourhood increased from 53.3% in June 2025 to 63.6% in April 2026. In April 2026, 60.5% of adults agreed or strongly agreed that people from different backgrounds get along well in their local area, while volunteering remained unchanged at 33.1%.

6 . National well-being

National and global well-being considers the wider conditions that shape people's lives now and in the future. Our headline measure set includes the economic resources available to support living standards, the institutions people rely on, and the environmental conditions that underpin health, communities and future quality of life.

Gross domestic product (GDP) per head suggests that output has continued to recover. In Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2026, GDP per head was 2.2% above its pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic level, and 1.0% higher than the same quarter a year ago. GDP per head provides information on economic output per person, and the resources available within the economy.

Institutional trust remained broadly unchanged. Around 1 in 4 adults (25.1%) reported that they trusted in the UK government in June 2026, prior to the change of government administration, showing no change from a year earlier.

Wider evidence from our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: April 2026 statistical bulletin](#) shows that 2 in 10 adults (20%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that elections in the UK are fair and democratic. Common concerns when thinking about future elections included:

- spread of misinformation, disinformation and fake news (78%)
- bias in the media (63%)
- foreign influence on UK election results (53%)

Public satisfaction with other institutions found in our [UK Measures of National Well-being June 2026 dashboard](#) update also remained broadly unchanged. In March 2026, around 1 in 3 adults (33.8%) reported being satisfied with the courts and legal system, with no statistically significant change from the previous year. Views of the police were more positive, with around half of adults (50.9%) reporting satisfaction, also showing no statistically significant change over the same period.

Environmental conditions provide an important perspective on national well-being because they affect people's health, quality of life, and the sustainability of future progress.

Following the [pause](#) to our [Estimates of quarterly greenhouse gas emissions \(residence basis\), UK statistical bulletin](#), this release uses the low-carbon share of total energy consumption as the headline quarterly indicator of environmental progress. This measure provides a quarterly indication of the proportion of UK energy consumption supplied by low carbon sources, and it is calculated as the remaining share of total energy consumption once fossil fuel dependency, electricity net imports and non-biodegradable waste are excluded. Further information on why this measure was chosen can be found in our [UK Measures of National Well-being framework user guide](#).

In Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026, 21.2% of UK energy consumption came from low-carbon sources, up from 19.6% compared with a year ago, and 18.9% compared with five years ago. This indicates an increase in the share of energy consumption supplied from low-carbon sources.

Reducing the environmental impact of energy consumption should be viewed as one facet of a broader perspective of environmental well-being. For example, in addition to greenhouse gas emissions, the United Nations [Report of the Secretary General's Independent High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP \(1.624KB\)](#) mentions air and water quality, biodiversity and natural capital. As environmental changes generally occur over longer periods, there are limited quarterly data for the UK.

Overall, these measures present mixed findings of national and global well-being. Economic output and the share of energy consumption supplied from low-carbon sources increased, while measures relating to trust and satisfaction with institutions showed no statistically significant annual change.

7 . Analysing the three dimensions together

The three dimensions (individual well-being, community well-being, and national well-being) provide a broader overview of quality of life and progress than any single measure alone.

These measures suggest that progress has not been uniform across different aspects of well-being. There were positive changes in gross domestic product (GDP) per head and the share of energy consumption supplied by low-carbon sources. Trust in others and trust in the UK government showed no statistically significant change.

In contrast, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and self-reported health remained weaker than five years ago. Although the proportion of people reporting low life satisfaction was lower than during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, mean life satisfaction has not yet returned to its pre-coronavirus pandemic level (Quarter 1 2019).

These findings show how different aspects of well-being can change at different rates over time and how considering a range of measures alongside economic indicators can provide a broader understanding of quality of life and progress in the UK.

8 . Data on Beyond GDP: UK headline measures of national well-being

[Beyond GDP insights: UK headline measures of national well-being](#)

Dataset | Released 18 September 2026

Quality of life and progress beyond GDP in the UK, drawing on the new quarterly headline national well-being measures.

[Quarterly personal well-being statistics, August 2026](#)

Dataset | Released 28 August 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.

9 . Glossary

Gross domestic product (GDP) per head

GDP is the main measure of UK economic growth based on the total value of goods and services produced during a given period. GDP per head is GDP divided by the population. In this bulletin, GDP per head is presented as a chain volume measure (CVM) to remove the effect of price changes (inflation) over time.

Low carbon share of total energy consumption

The UK low carbon share of total energy consumption was originally published in [UK energy in brief 2012](#) by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) as the "proportion of UK energy supplied from low carbon sources". It covered the share of total UK energy supply coming from nuclear, wind, hydroelectric, bioenergy, transport biofuels and other renewable sources. It has continued through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

A person is NEET if they are aged 16 to 24 years and are not in education, employment or training. Within the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimate, a person is considered to be in education or training if they:

- are doing an apprenticeship
- are on a government employment or training programme
- are working or studying towards a qualification
- have had job-related training or education in the last four weeks
- are enrolled on an education course and are still attending or waiting for term to (re)start

10 . Data sources and quality

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).

The bulletin includes a combination of accredited official statistics and official statistics in development. Accreditation indicates that statistics have been assessed against the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value established in [The Code of Practice for Statistics](#). Each statistic is linked to the relevant source in the data tables published alongside this bulletin, so that users can access additional information on data quality, collection methods and revisions.

For some measures, UK-wide estimates are not available, and data may instead be presented for Great Britain, England and Wales, or another geography depending on the data owner and collection approach. Alternative sources may exist for the devolved administrations, but 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.

How we analyse and interpret the data

We publish the time series for each measure and its change over time where available. Changes in estimates are displayed over the short and long term. Short-term change is assessed as the latest estimate compared with one year earlier. Long-term change is assessed as the latest estimate compared with five years earlier.

However, for measures sourced from our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey](#), short-term change is based on the time point closest to the previous year. This may vary between 10 and 14 months because of the rotation of questions on our survey.

For gross domestic product (GDP) per head, the periods reflect dataowner guidance. Shortterm change compares the latest estimate with the previous quarter, and longterm change compares the latest estimate with the same quarter one year earlier.

We report confidence intervals and sample sizes, where available, to assist with data interpretation. These can be found in our [accompanying data tables](#). 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 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.

Feedback on our bulletin can be sent to qualityoflife@ons.gov.uk.

11 . Related links

[UK Measures of National Well-being framework user guide](#)

User guide | Updated 18 September 2026

User guide for UK measures of National Well-being framework (UKMNW). Includes metadata tables of the measures, information on how estimates are produced, and how change over time is measured.

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

Dashboard | Updated 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.

12 . Cite this bulletin

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