

Article

# Measuring national well-being: Life in the UK, Apr 2017

An assessment of UK progress against a set of headline national well-being indicators, which include our health, natural environment, personal finances and crime. Change over time is also assessed to establish whether national well-being is improving or deteriorating.

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# 1 . Main points

- The latest update provides a broadly positive picture of life in the UK, with the majority of indicators either improving or staying the same over the 1 year period.
- Considering the 43 national well-being indicators, 15 improved, 18 stayed the same and 2 deteriorated, compared with 1 year earlier.
- Satisfaction with our jobs, health, and leisure time all showed improvements on a 1-year and 3-year basis.
- Fewer people reported their anxiety as very low between the years ending September 2015 and 2016.
- On environmental sustainability, the proportion of waste from households that was recycled fell over a 1-year period, while remaining unchanged over the 3-year period.

## 2 . Things you need to know about this release

In November 2010, the Measuring National Well-being (MNW) programme was established. The aim was to monitor and report “how the UK as a whole is doing” by producing accepted and trusted measures of the well-being of the nation. Twice a year we report progress against a set of headline indicators covering areas of our lives including our health, natural environment, personal finances and crime. The measures include both objective data (for example, unemployment rate) and subjective data (for example, satisfaction with job) to provide a more complete view of the nation’s progress than economic measures such as gross domestic product (GDP) can do alone.

This report is based on the most recent available data as of April 2017. It is important to recognise that the data underpinning the indicators are often from different sources with different timeliness and coverage. Please see the datasets for further information for each indicator. Alongside this release, we have also published:

- [national well-being measures dataset](#) containing: the latest data and back series, the indicators broken down by age, sex and region where applicable; and quality information
- an [interactive dashboard](#) showing trend data for each indicator alongside the assessment of change, compared with one year earlier

The dashboard replaces the [Measuring National Well-being static wheel](#). Please see our [recent blog](#) for more information on this change.

We regularly review our indicators in response to changing coverage, frequency and other quality considerations affecting our data sources. Changes have been made to one of the indicators included within the Measuring National Well-being programme (Table 1).

**Table 1: Summary of removed indicator and its replacement**

<b>Removed Indicator</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Reason</b>
7.3 Inflation rate (as measured by CPI)	Consumer Prices, ONS	ONS is moving from CPI to CPIH as a preferred measure of inflation. CPIH is a measure of UK consumer price inflation that includes owner occupiers' housing costs (OOH). These are the costs of housing services associated with owning, maintaining and living in one's own home. OOH does not include costs such as utility bills, minor repairs and maintenance, which are already included in the index.
<b>Replacement indicator</b>	<b>Source</b>	
7.3 Inflation rate (as measured by CPIH)	Consumer Prices, ONS	

Source: Office for National Statistics

Please contact the [Quality of Life team](#) with any comments or suggestions, including your views on improvements we might make.

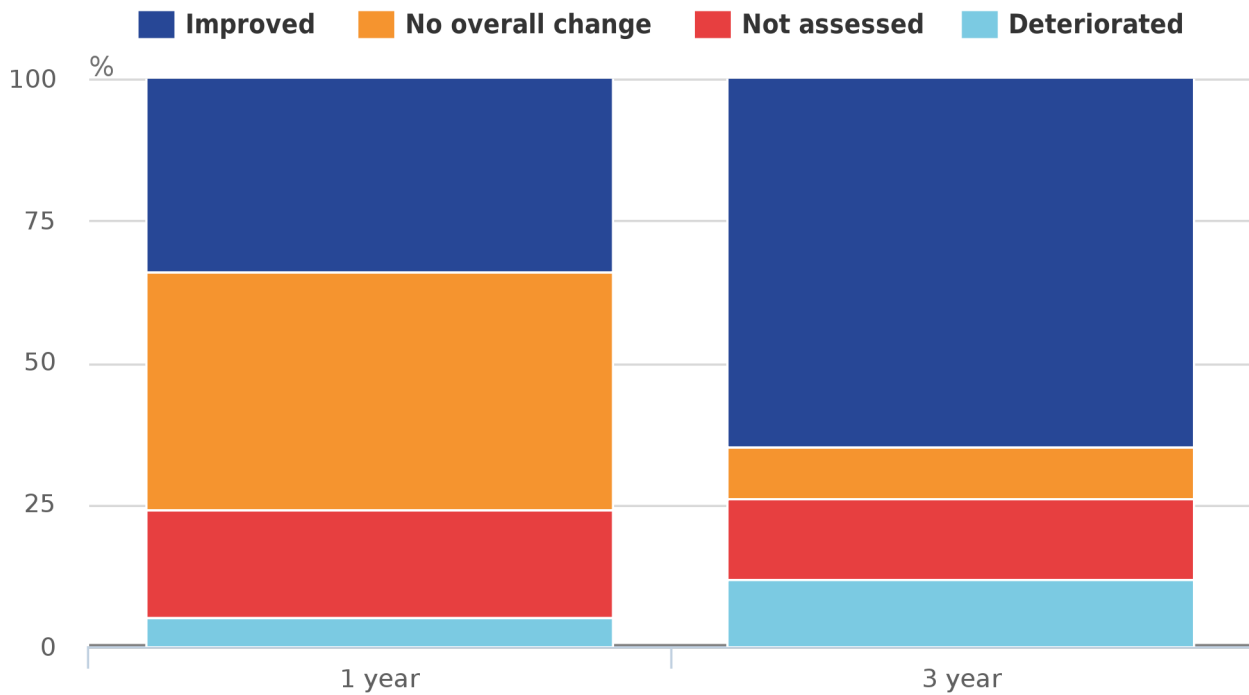
### 3 . Assessments of change

This report includes assessments showing the direction of change for each of the measures, whether they have improved, shown no overall change, or deteriorated (Figure 1). Comparisons have been made with the previous year's data, or the previously published figure where year-on-year data are not available, as well as an assessment of change over a 3-year period. For more information on how we assess change, please see the [Quality and methodology section](#).

The latest update provides a broadly positive picture of life in the UK, with the majority of indicators either improving or staying the same over the 1-year period. Areas of life that are improving include satisfaction with our jobs, health and leisure time. Two areas deteriorated over the 1-year – the proportion reporting very low anxiety and waste from households that is recycled.

**Figure 1: Assessment of change - national well-being measures**

UK, April 2017



Source: Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**

1. Although there are 41 indicators of national well-being, measures of healthy life expectancy and feeling safe walking alone after dark are presented for both men and women, and so there are 43 measures to assess.
2. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Over the 1-year period:

- 35% (15 measures) had improved
- 42% (18 measures) showed no overall change
- 19% (8 measures) were not assessed for this publication
- 5% (2 measures) had deteriorated

Over the 3-year period:

- 65% (28 measures) had improved
- 9% (4 measures) showed no overall change
- 14% (6 measures) were not assessed for this publication
- 12% (5 measures) had deteriorated

A number of measures have not been assessed, either because data are not available for comparison, or where the direction of change is not a clear indication of either improvement or deterioration.

## 4 . Which areas of our lives have improved?

Areas of life which are getting better include what we do in life, with improvements in both satisfaction with our job and satisfaction with our leisure time. A higher proportion of people also felt that they belonged to their neighbourhood. The proportion of people volunteering has also shown improvements, however, a recent release by ONS found that [while the number of people volunteering had increased in recent years, the average time spent volunteering per day has fallen](#).

There have also been improvements in people's financial situation, with real median household income increasing over both the 1 and 3 year periods. This improvement is also reflected in people's subjective view of their financial situation, with an increase in the proportion satisfied with their income and a smaller proportion stating they were struggling to get by financially. However, this data covers the reference period 2014 to 2015 while a recent release, based on data for the 12 months to December 2016 found that [respondents reported a worsening in their perception of both the general economic situation and their own financial situation over the last year](#).

Other areas that are improving include education, decreases in the percentage of UK residents aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications, and the proportion of those classified as not in education, employment or training (NEETS) falling over a 3 year basis. There has also been an increase in those who reported trust in national government, while in regard to the natural environment, total greenhouse gas emissions have fallen and the proportion of energy consumed from renewable sources has increased.

## 5 . Which areas of our lives have deteriorated?

Not all areas of life are improving. The proportion of people reporting their anxiety as very low has fallen over the 1-year period. However, it is worth noting that there is still an improvement over the 3-year basis. The proportion of waste from households that was recycled also fell over a 1-year period, while remaining unchanged over the 3-year period.

Other areas that have deteriorated over a 3-year basis are the mental well-being of the population, the proportion of people in unhappy relationships, and the proportion of people with someone to rely on. Other areas that have shown deterioration are satisfaction with accommodation and the proportion of people participating in sport once a week.

## 6 . Which areas of our lives have stayed the same?

On a 1 year basis, the majority of headline indicators showed little to no change. There were no annual improvements in those reporting the highest ratings of personal well-being, covering levels of life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness, between the years ending September 2015 and September 2016.

Healthy life expectancy remained unchanged for both males and females between 2011 to 2013 and 2013 to 2015, and while there was an improvement for male healthy life expectancy over the long-term, female healthy life expectancy remained unchanged.

Other areas include the percentage of people that have engaged with, or participated in, arts or cultural activity at least three times in the last year and the proportion of people feeling lonely often or always.

## 7 . Related links

[Personal well-being in the UK: Oct 2015 to Sept 2016](#)

[Personal well-being in the UK: local authority update, 2015 to 2016](#)

[Economic Well-being: Quarter 4, Oct to Dec 2016](#)

[Changes in the value and division of unpaid volunteering in the UK: 2000 to 2015](#)

[Understanding Society](#)

[Community Life Survey](#)

## 8 . Quality and methodology

The Measuring National Well-being (MNW) programme set out to establish measures that would help people to understand national well-being and also help monitor it. This report includes assessments showing the direction of change for each of the measures. Broadly speaking, indicators have only been assessed as having improved or deteriorated if the difference between the comparison periods is statistically significant using 95% confidence intervals. If a difference is said to be statistically significant, it is unlikely that it could have occurred by chance.

Confidence intervals give a measure of the statistical precision of an estimate and show the range of uncertainty around the estimate. As a general rule, if the confidence intervals around the estimate overlap with the intervals around another, there is no statistically significant difference between the estimates.

Some indicators have been assessed by experts, while voter turnout has been assessed using the actual increase or decrease as this is not an estimation. Other indicators have not been assessed. This is because either there are not enough data points to provide a comparison, or that the direction of change is not a clear indication of either an improvement or deterioration.