

Life in the UK 2024



Creating the Life in the UK Index

Carnegie UK's Life in the UK wellbeing index measures collective wellbeing across the UK. It is based on what people in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland tell us about their lives.

The purpose of this index is to assist governments across the UK to focus their attention on the things that really matter to people, and to help us understand whether we are collectively living better or worse over time. The index will also help identify where progress is being made and the areas of our lives that require policy intervention.

- The evidence for the 2024 index was collected via a 26-question survey of 6,774 respondents using [Ipsos' KnowledgePanel](#), a random probability survey panel with selection based on a random sample of UK households. The fieldwork was carried out between 9th and 15th May 2024, ahead of the announcement of the 2024 General Election.
- The overall collective wellbeing index score and the wellbeing domain scores have a value of between 0 and 100.
- The collective wellbeing scores, domain scores, and individual questions were all analysed to compare aspects of life for different groups of people in different parts of the UK.
- Factor analysis was used to construct the index scores, and regression analysis was used to help understand which demographic characteristics are most associated with both collective wellbeing overall, and with social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing specifically. We have used this analysis to structure the discussion of the demographic characteristics impacting on wellbeing throughout this report.

Carnegie UK and Ipsos designed, developed and analysed the Life in the UK index in partnership. More information on the methodology used to create the index and the full technical report are available [here](#).

Carnegie UK is committed to following the principles of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) in the production of our Life in the UK index. We outline how we adhere to these principles in our [Voluntary Statement of Compliance](#).

Carnegie UK works to put wellbeing at the heart of decision making. This report provides an independent and authoritative overview of collective wellbeing in the UK in 2024. We hope it makes the case for better measures of social progress and highlights where policy intervention is urgently required.

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Introduction: Life in the UK 2024

The Life in the UK index now provides two years of robust evidence about what life is like for people across the country. **Out of a possible score of 100, the UK's collective wellbeing in 2024 was just 61.** This number is unchanged since our inaugural publication of this index in 2023.

This year's index findings tell us that the **collective wellbeing of people in the UK is stagnant.** This stasis in living standards is driven by persistent and entrenched inequality across the four core domains of social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing. It is of particular note, and significant concern, that in this landmark year for democracy, with a UK general election and a quarter century of devolution in Scotland and Wales, it is our democratic wellbeing that once again attracts the lowest scores.

In nearly all areas that we measured, **income inequality is the single biggest driver of poor wellbeing via its influence on issues such as housing tenure, household income and area deprivation.** Our data also highlights the importance of key factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, gender, and having children as all having a notable impact on people's wellbeing score.

Despite these worrying insights, there is cause for hope. A new UK Government with a significant majority in Parliament and an ambitious policy agenda represents an opportunity to grapple with the multiple, complex and systemic challenges facing people in their day-to-day lives.

The collective wellbeing scores in this report provide a baseline for ministers to build on if they want to realise their ambition of bringing about a decade of national renewal. This must start with an improved approach to measuring what really matters to people. It must also include a commitment to focus on renewing our democracy, given the persistent crisis in democratic wellbeing, and a different approach to governing, with a shift towards de-centralisation of decision making and the empowerment of communities.

We would like to see the new UK Government and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland build on this evidence as they seek to deliver meaningful reform and improvement in communities across the country.

At Carnegie UK we have worked for more than 100 years to help improve the wellbeing of people across the UK and Ireland. We believe in the power of evidence based public policy to improve people's lives. We hope that this report can provide inspiration and ideas for UK policy makers as we continue our efforts to ensure we can all live well together now and into the future.

Sarah Davidson
CEO, Carnegie UK



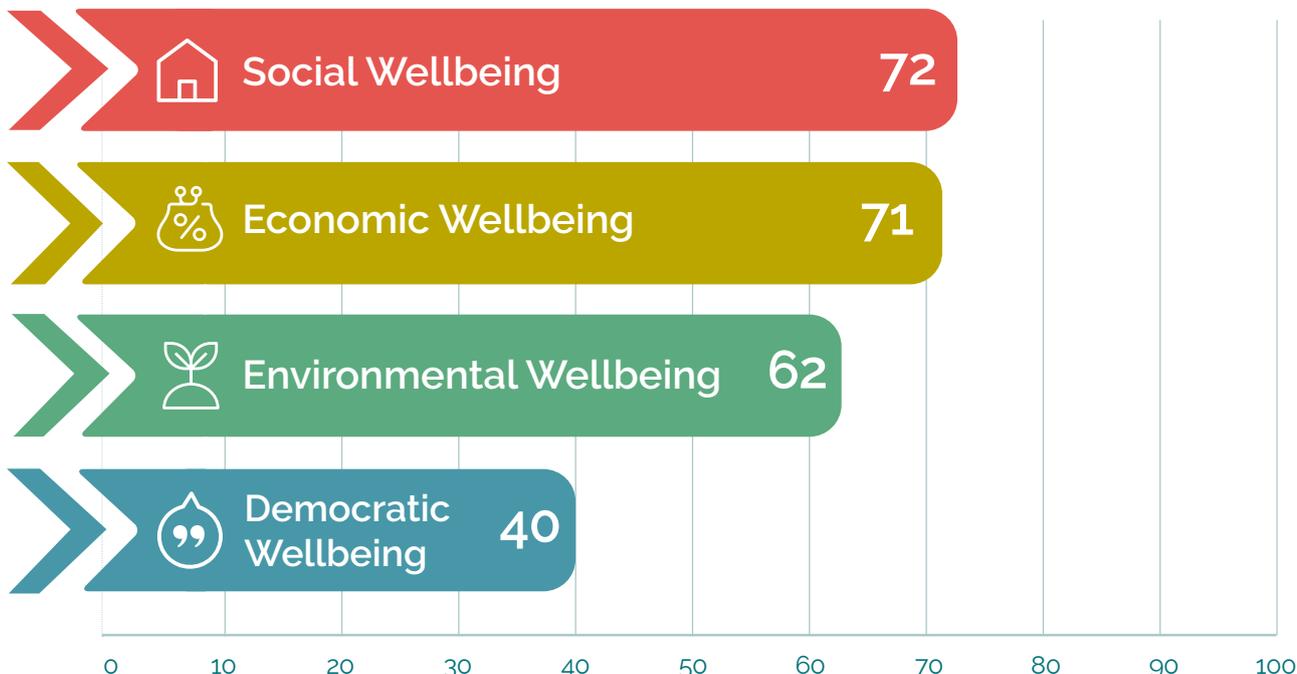
Our collective wellbeing in 2024

The story of Life in the UK in 2024 is one of persistent inequality and wellbeing stagnation. The UK has one of the wealthiest economies in the world¹. Yet the collective wellbeing scores for 2024 - largely unchanged from those reported in 2023² - suggest a society struggling against a tide of inequality, poverty and democratic alienation.

This evidence underlines the scale of the challenge facing the UK Government in the months and years ahead. Following the General Election result in July 2024, where turnout was down 7.5% compared to the last election in 2019³, there is an urgent need for positive social change. **A new UK Government presents an opportunity for new policies and ways of governing that deliver change for those who most need it** and to tackle the multiple and systemic threats to collective wellbeing evidenced in the 2024 collective wellbeing scores.

Overview of scores

The overall score for collective wellbeing in the UK in 2024 is 61 out of a possible 100.



Understanding what influences collective wellbeing

In 2024, there is no significant difference in the overall collective wellbeing scores across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

However, analysis of the index data tells us that people's experience of life in the UK varies substantially according to a range of important factors, highlighting the reality of inequality between people and within communities across the UK.

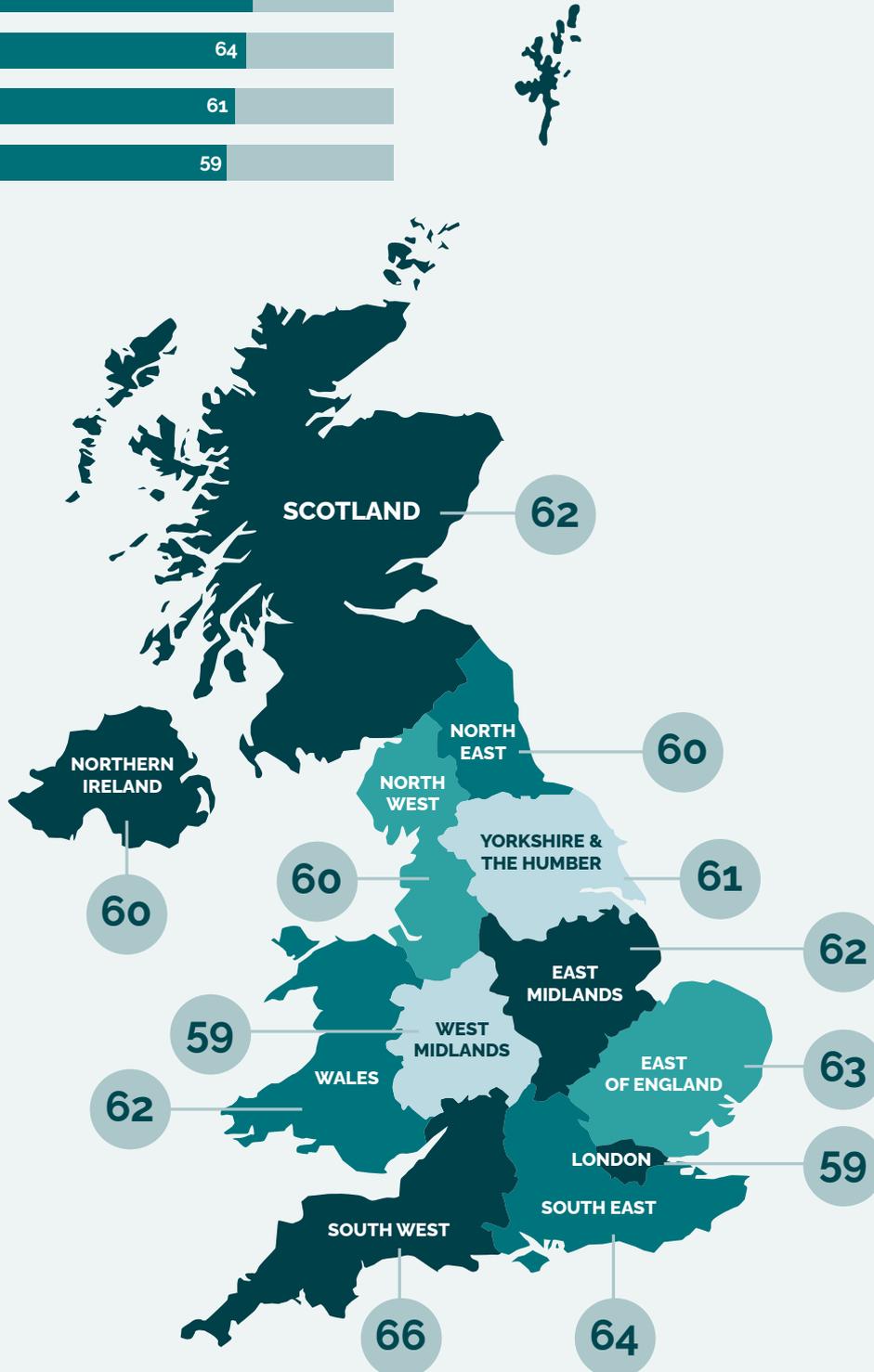
The following four factors stand out as particularly significant in predicting a lower or higher collective wellbeing score

- **Income** – Household income is a particularly strong predictor of collective wellbeing. People with an annual household income under £26,000 have a collective wellbeing score of 56. This is lower than all other income groups – notably 12 points lower than people earning more than £100,000 (68) and nine points lower than people earning between £52,000 and £99,999 (65).
- **Housing tenure** – Type and status of housing is another strong influence on collective wellbeing. People living in social housing have an average collective wellbeing score of 51, which is 13 points lower than for homeowners (64).
- **Disability** – People with a disability have an average collective wellbeing score of 55, which is nine points lower than for people without a disability (64).
- **Location** – Where people live, and the associated area deprivation, have a significant impact on collective wellbeing. People living in the UK's most deprived areas (IMD1) have an average collective wellbeing score of 54, which is 13 points lower than people living in the most affluent areas (IMD5) (67).

The following are also notable influences on people's collective wellbeing

- **Age** – People aged 16 to 34 have an average collective wellbeing score of 59, which is six points lower than people aged 55 and over (65).
- **Rural versus urban living** – People living in urban areas have lower collective wellbeing compared to people in rural areas (60 compared to 66).
- **Ethnicity** – People from Black, Asian and minority White ethnic groups and people with mixed ethnic backgrounds on average have a collective wellbeing score six points lower than people from a White British background (56).
- **Gender** – Women have an average collective wellbeing score of 61, two points less than that of men's average wellbeing score (63).
- **Number of children** – Collective wellbeing is higher for people without children and is particularly low for larger families with three or more children living at home. People with three or more children under the age of 15 in the household have an average collective wellbeing score of 56. This is six points lower than people with no children (62), four points lower than people with two children (60), and three points lower than people with one child (59).

Collective wellbeing scores by region and jurisdiction





Social wellbeing in 2024

We all have the support and services we need to thrive.



100



The UK scores 72 out of a possible 100 for social wellbeing.

Social wellbeing is about everyone being able to achieve their potential and contribute to society because they have their basic needs met.

Our basic needs include having access to health and social care, education, housing, transport, digital resources and childcare.

To determine trends in social wellbeing across the UK, we asked questions about access to public services, community relationships, safety and community cohesion, and self-reported health and mental health.

The people most likely to experience **high** levels of social wellbeing in the UK in 2024 are >

- **People aged over 55**, who have a social wellbeing score of 75. This is six points higher than the social wellbeing score of 16 to 34 year-olds (69).
- **People with an annual household income** above £100,000, who have an average social wellbeing score of 77. This is ten points higher than those with the lowest household income (67 for people earning up to £25,999).

The groups most likely to experience **low** levels of social wellbeing in the UK in 2024 are >

- **Disabled people**, with a social wellbeing score of 62, 13 points lower than the average score of people without a disability (75).
- **People living in social housing**, who have a social wellbeing score of 61. This is 14 points lower than the score of homeowners (75).
- **People living in the UK's most deprived areas** (IMD1*), who have a social wellbeing score of 65. This is 12 points lower than the score of people living in the most affluent areas (IMD5) (77).
- **Ethnic minorities**, including White minorities, who have an average social wellbeing score of 66, seven points lower compared with those from a White British background (73).
- **People living in urban areas**, with social wellbeing score of 71, six points lower than those living in rural areas (77).
- **Women**, who have a social wellbeing score of 71, three points lower than the score for men (74).

These findings are consistent with the 2023 Life in the UK index.

* The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) measures relative deprivation across the UK. Areas are ranked from the most deprived area (rank 1) to the least deprived area (rank 5).

People most likely to experience high and low levels of social wellbeing in the UK



**Social wellbeing -
standout statistics**

- **43%** say they have experienced discrimination over the past year. This is a three-point increase on 2023 (40%).
- **29%** say they feel unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark.
- **17%** say they don't have anyone to rely on in their neighbourhood.



 **Carnegie UK observations**

Meaningful social participation requires people to have accessible opportunities and networks, particularly important for more vulnerable groups whose wellbeing is at risk due to isolation or segregation⁴.

As such, it is concerning to see evidence of a rise in experiences of discrimination reported in the 2024 index scores. Just under half of people living in the UK (43%) say they have experienced discrimination in the last year, a three-point increase from 2023. These figures rise substantially for ethnic minority groups, with 68% reporting that they have experienced discrimination in the last year, compared to 40% of White British people.

Safety is also a significant issue to be addressed. Nearly one third of people feel unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark.

Wellbeing cannot flourish when there is inequality between people and communities.

Evidence tells us that facilitating conversations and interactions between diverse communities, sectors and professions promotes relationships, tolerance and understanding. However, the differences in wellbeing scores based on protected characteristics such as age, disability and ethnicity highlight that there is still a long way to go to make equality a reality.

The UK Government has outlined its intention to 'enact the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010', as well as deliver a landmark (Race and Disability) Equality Bill that would enshrine in law the right to equal pay for ethnic minority people, as well as strengthen protection against discrimination and racial inequity⁵.

If successful in its stated mission to break down barriers to opportunity, we would expect to see significant improvement in the gaps in social wellbeing scores (and indeed the other domain scores) between these protected characteristics over the next few years.



Economic wellbeing in 2024

We all have a decent minimum living standard.





The UK scores **71** out of a possible **100** for economic wellbeing.

Economic wellbeing means that everyone has a decent minimum living standard and can absorb financial shocks. This includes access to a decent income, affordability, financial resilience, job opportunities and skills.

To determine trends in economic wellbeing across the UK, we asked questions about skills and job availability, and the affordability of essential items like food and fuel.

Northern Ireland has an economic wellbeing score of 67, which is four points lower than the rest of the UK. This is a notable change when compared to the 2023 score of 69, (compared to 71 for the rest of the UK).

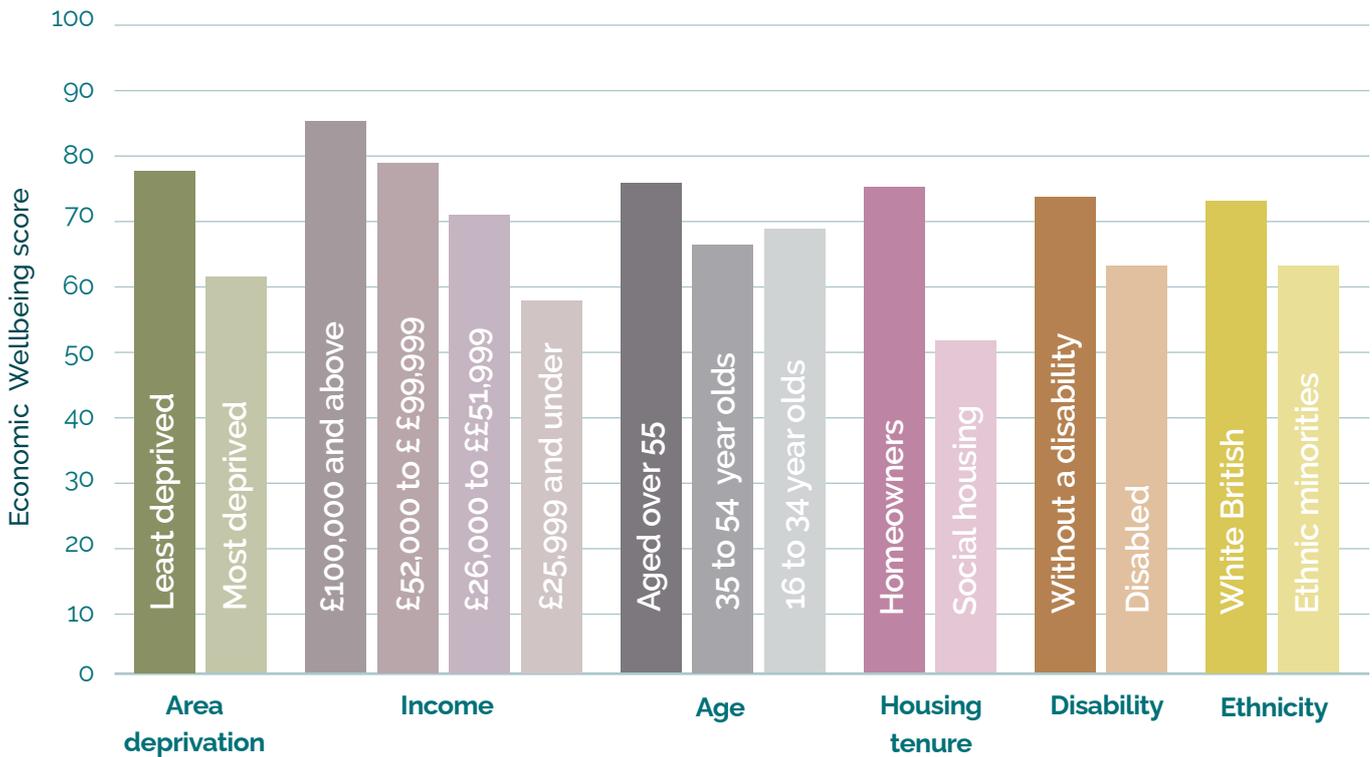
The people most likely to experience high levels of economic wellbeing in the UK in 2024 are >

- **People with an annual household income** above £100,000, who have an average economic wellbeing score of 85. This is a 27-point difference compared to those with the lowest household income (58 for people earning up to £25,999). This indicates a more pronounced relationship between income band and overall economic wellbeing than was seen in 2023.
- **Men**, with an average economic wellbeing score of 73, three points higher than women (70).

The groups most likely to experience low levels of economic wellbeing in the UK in 2024 are >

- **People living in social housing**, who have an economic wellbeing score of 52. This is 24 points lower than the score for homeowners (76).
- **Larger families**. Having children is a strong predictor of lower economic wellbeing. People with three or more children under the age of 15 in the household have an average economic wellbeing score of 59. This is 15 points lower than people with no children (74), and seven points lower than people with two children or one child (66).
- **Disabled people**, with an economic wellbeing score of 63. This is 11 points lower than the average score of people without a disability (74).
- **Younger people**. Those aged 16 to 34 have an average economic wellbeing score of 69, which is eight points lower than people aged 55 and over (77).
- **People living in the UK's most deprived areas** (IMD1), who have an economic wellbeing score of 61. This is 17 points lower than the score of people living in the most affluent areas (IMD5) (78).
- **People from Black, Asian and minority White ethnic groups, and people with mixed ethnic backgrounds**. These people have an average economic wellbeing score of 65. This is eight points lower compared with the score of those from a White British background (73).

People most likely to experience high and low levels of economic wellbeing in the UK



Economic wellbeing - standout statistics

- **29%** can't afford an unexpected expense of £850.
- **27%** are dissatisfied with the job opportunities in their local area. Dissatisfaction has increased by 4 percentage points (from 23% dissatisfied in 2023 to 27% in 2024).
- **23%** can't afford to go on holiday away from home.
- **14%** can't afford to keep their home warm, a three-point improvement from experiences reported in 2023 (17%).
- **11%** can't afford to socialise with friends or family outside of the home once a month if desired. This figure is the same as that reported in 2023.





Carnegie UK observations

The economic wellbeing scores underline that the impact of rising living costs is not a short-term problem, but rather a long-term, structural emergency influencing multiple aspects of people's lives⁶.

High living costs, combined with limited access to local job opportunities and a lack of affordable housing, are keeping people in poverty⁷. They are hindering the sense of control and agency people have over their own lives and putting pressure on relationships.

The cost of poverty goes beyond the hardship experienced by people living in low-income households. It has impacts across society, including on the economy through reduced employment⁸ and on public services as people tackle the symptoms and consequences of poverty on their personal wellbeing, like poor physical and mental health⁹.

We know that people need to have their basic needs met before they can improve other aspects of their wellbeing. But 29% of people in the UK can't afford an unexpected expense of £850, and 14% can't afford to keep their home warm. Additionally, 23% report that they can't afford to go on holiday, and 11% can't afford to socialise with friends or family outside the home once a month.

This data suggests that people are focusing on the essentials, with holidays and socialising outside the home no longer an option for many. **This is cause for significant concern, because relationships and social connectedness are important enablers of wellbeing.** The reality that having children is a predictor of low economic wellbeing also indicates that familial relationships are coming at a cost to the overall wellbeing of parents and their children¹⁰.

People who live in social housing have the lowest economic wellbeing scores. There is a sizeable 24-point gap between them and people who own their homes. Housing is an important issue for many people in the UK today; the crisis around stock, quality and cost is well known¹¹. A good housing system is one where all tenure types are viable, affordable and of high quality, and where people may move between them to suit their life needs at different times. We will in due course see if the UK Government's proposals to improve housing through the delivery of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill¹² positively influence scores in this domain.

The fact that 27% of people are dissatisfied with the job opportunities in their local area (a four-point increase from 2023) is notable and concerning. In future Life in the UK index scores, we will see if the UK Government's priority to 'make work pay' by providing greater job security, banning zero-hour contracts and delivering a genuine living wage go any way to positively influence the wellbeing scores in this area.



Environmental wellbeing in 2024

We all live within the planet's natural resources.



100



The UK scores 62 out of a possible 100 for environmental wellbeing.

Environmental wellbeing means that everyone has access to green and blue spaces, and collectively we live within the planet's natural resources, protecting the environment for future generations.

To determine trends in environmental wellbeing across the UK, we asked questions about litter, noise and air pollution, as well as access to and the quality of local parks, rivers and other green and blue spaces. We also asked about levels of satisfaction with efforts to preserve the environment.

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales all scored higher in terms of environmental wellbeing than England (66, 65 and 64 compared to 62). This is consistent with the 2023 index figures.

The people most likely to experience **high** levels of environmental wellbeing in the UK in 2024 are >

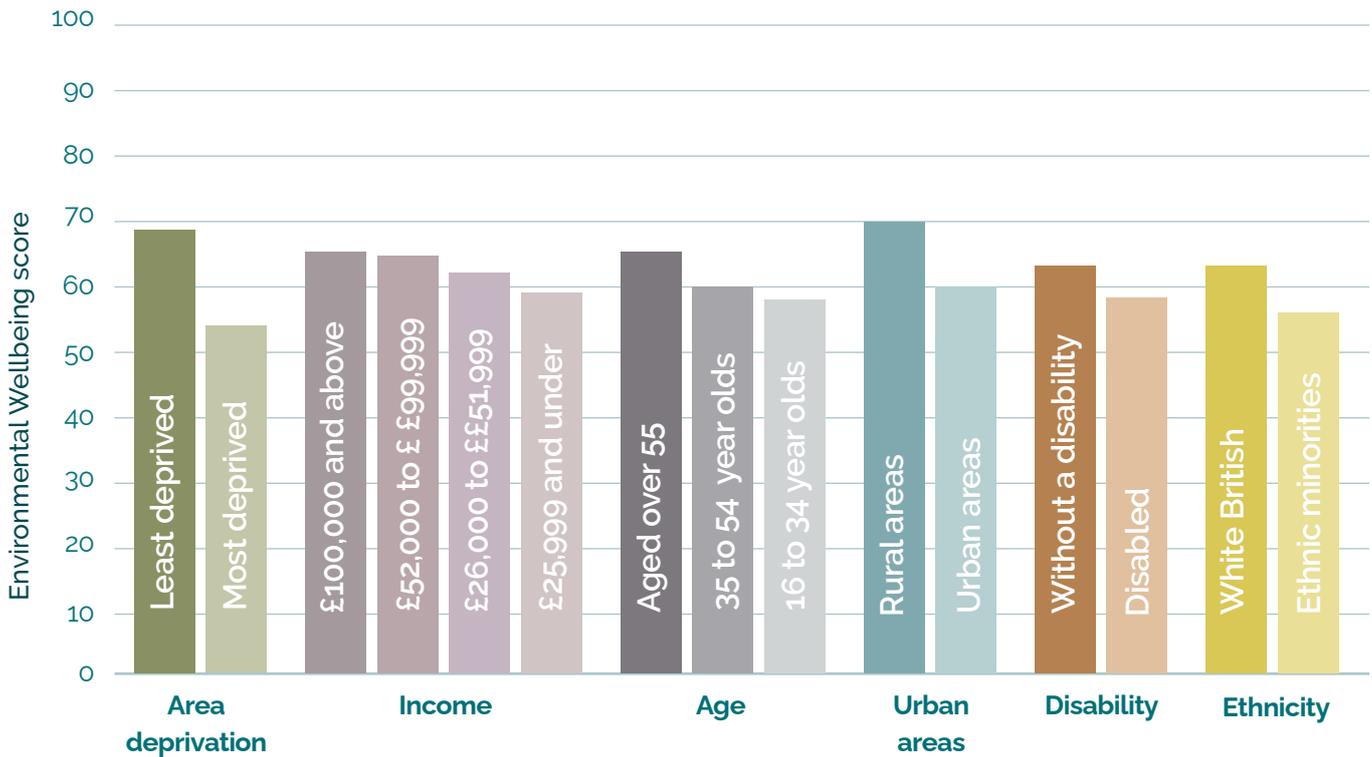
- **People living in the most affluent areas** (IMD5), who have an environmental wellbeing score of 69. This is 15 points higher than the score of people living in the UK's most deprived areas (IMD1) (54).
- **People with an annual household income** above £100,000, who have an average environmental wellbeing score of 65. This is six points higher than those with the lowest household income (59 for people earning up to £25,999).
- **Older people.** Environmental wellbeing increases with age: people aged 55 or over have an environmental wellbeing score of 66, eight points higher than the score of 16 to 34 year-olds (58).

The group most likely to experience **low** levels of environmental wellbeing in the UK in 2024 are >

- **People living in urban areas**, who have an environmental wellbeing score of 60. This is ten points lower than the average score of those living in rural areas (70).
- **Disabled people**, with an environmental wellbeing score of 58, five points lower than the average score of people without a disability (63).
- **People from Black, Asian and minority White ethnic groups and people with mixed ethnic backgrounds.** On average these people have an environmental wellbeing score seven points lower than people from a White British background (56 compared to 63).

There are no significant differences in environmental wellbeing based on gender, housing tenure or the presence of children in the household.

People most likely to experience high and low levels of environmental wellbeing in the UK



 Environmental wellbeing - standout statistics

- Most people experience issues with litter (**83%**), noise (**62%**) and air quality (**53%**) in their local neighbourhood. The proportion of people experiencing problems with litter by comparison to 2023 has increased by three percentage points.
- **44%** are dissatisfied with current efforts to preserve the environment.
- **13%** are dissatisfied with the quality of the nearest local public, green or open space.



 **Carnegie UK observations**

We are currently not living within the planet's natural resources and climate change is already affecting the UK. Not adapting poses significant threats to wellbeing that will devastate the health and biodiversity of communities¹³. As severe flooding, for example, becomes more common, the bacteria in flood water poses a significant and growing risk to human health¹⁴. In addition, extreme weather accounts for around one third of all food price inflation in the UK¹⁵.

The 2024 index data suggests that the threat of the climate emergency is being observed and experienced, and environmental wellbeing continues to suffer – with 44% of people continuing to report that they are dissatisfied with current efforts to preserve the environment.

The evidence indicates a clear relationship between factors such as where you live and how much you earn, and your overall levels of environmental wellbeing. As observed in the other domains, it is those living in the most deprived areas on the lowest incomes, and the younger age groups who report lower levels of wellbeing in this respect.

The disproportionate exposure to pollutants and noise and inadequate access to green and blue spaces like parks, woodlands and rivers – environmental injustice – is a threat to collective wellbeing. It further entrenches inequality between people and communities in the UK.

Ethnic minorities score significantly lower for environmental wellbeing, meaning they are less likely to have sufficient access to places like parks and woodland, and are more likely to experience poor air quality and noise pollution. **The intersection between environmental justice and racial justice demands that we advocate much more clearly for targeted action for communities that are and will be most affected by the impacts of climate change.**

If adequately funded, resourced and delivered, the UK Government's mission to accelerate to net zero by 'cutting bills, creating jobs, and delivering zero-carbon electricity by 2030'¹⁶ through the delivery of the Great British Energy Bill, the Water (Special Measures) Bill and a National Wealth Fund has significant potential to improve environmental wellbeing. If these policy interventions happen at scale and pace we would expect to see the UK's environmental wellbeing scores improve in the years ahead.



Democratic wellbeing in 2024

We all have a voice in decisions that affect us.

40

100



The UK scores 40 out of a possible 100 for democratic wellbeing.

Democratic wellbeing is about everyone having a voice in decisions made that affect them. This means having local and national leaders who support participation, foster trust and encourage diversity.

To understand democratic wellbeing in the UK in 2024, we asked questions about levels of trust in local, regional and national government(s), perceptions of personal ability to influence decisions, and experiences of discrimination.

Democratic wellbeing still varies notably across the UK in 2024. Lower levels of trust in the UK Government in Scotland and Wales means that both jurisdictions score a little lower for democratic wellbeing than England (both 39, compared with 41 for England), while Northern Ireland continues to score lower than the other UK jurisdictions (35).

These findings are consistent with the 2023 democratic wellbeing scores. However, amongst those respondents in Northern Ireland it is notable that trust in the Northern Ireland Executive has improved, with 54% reporting low levels of trust in 2024, compared with 66% in 2023, representing an improvement of 12 points. Similarly, trust in Northern Ireland Assembly members remains very low, but is showing signs of improvement, with 54% of people reporting low trust in 2024, compared with 63% in 2023. Meanwhile in Wales, trust in Welsh Parliament members has slightly declined, with low trust reported at 41% in 2024, compared to 35% in 2023.

While markedly low across the board, the groups most likely to experience high levels of democratic wellbeing in the UK in 2024 are >

- **People with an annual household income** above £100,000, who have an average democratic wellbeing score of 44. This is five points higher than those with the lowest household income (39 for people earning up to £25,999).
- **People living in more affluent areas** (IMD5), with a democratic wellbeing score of 43. This is six points higher than the score of people living in the UK's most deprived areas (IMD1) (37).

The group most likely to experience low levels of democratic wellbeing in the UK in 2024 are >

- **Disabled people**, with a democratic wellbeing score of 36, six points lower than the score of people without a disability (42).
- **People living in social housing**, who have a democratic wellbeing score of 35. This is six points lower than the score of people who are homeowners (41).

There were no significant differences in democratic wellbeing according to gender, ethnicity, presence of children in the household or urbanity.

People most likely to experience high and low levels of democratic wellbeing in the UK



 Democratic wellbeing - standout statistics

- **72%** feel that they cannot influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole. This is the same as reported in 2023.
- **55%** feel that they are unable to influence decisions at a local level.
- **53%** have low levels of trust in the UK Government.
- **35%** have low levels of trust in news media, a three-point improvement from low trust levels reported in 2023 (38%).
- **28%** have low levels of trust in local councils, a two-point increase in distrust compared to 2023 (26%).
- **17%** have low levels of trust in the police, a two-point improvement from experiences reported in 2023 (19%).





Carnegie UK observations

Wellbeing cannot be 'done to' people: it must be done by and with them. Giving people voice and choice, enhancing transparency and promoting dialogue are all influential enablers of wellbeing. **It is not right that democracy is working better for people with a higher annual income and living in more affluent areas, while younger people, those living in social housing and disabled people have much less agency over the decisions that impact their lives.**

For more people to feel positive about participating in democracy, trust in government and public bodies is essential. Trust is the foundation of a functioning democratic system. Improved citizen engagement, working transparently, actively communicating about decision making, and investing in responsible, reliable, and fair public services are all evidence-based actions that governments can take to improve public trust and confidence¹⁷.

Trust has been widely reported as in decline for some time¹⁸. Ahead of the General Election in July 2024, confidence in Britain's system of government was at a record low¹⁹. The fact that 72% of people feel they cannot influence decisions affecting the UK and 53% of people have low levels of trust in UK Government sets a very low bar for the new UK Government. As a matter of urgency, action is required if faith is to be restored in our local and national leaders and the institutions of our democracy.

The UK Government's legislative agenda and priorities on democratic reform outlined in the King's Speech in July may go some way to improving democratic wellbeing scores in future years. The English Devolution Bill, for example, aims to bring policymaking closer to people 'with skin in the game' and is focused on shifting decision making power away from Westminster.

However, these measures alone will likely not be enough to meaningfully turn around the current crisis in democratic wellbeing.

2024 is a significant year for democracy both in the UK and around the world. **A new UK Government and the marking of 25 years of devolution offers a moment in time for a bold agenda to re-engage people in our democracy and rebuild trust in those we elect to represent us.** Participatory and deliberative democratic initiatives, if designed and delivered properly, have an important role to play in this. They can be powerful tools for countering polarisation in our society and can help reconnect democracy to the decisions and issues that most impact people's daily lives.

Life in the UK 2024: Recommendations

The collective wellbeing scores in this report provide a baseline for the UK Government to build on if it wants to realise the stated ambition of bringing about a decade of national renewal²⁰.

The scores also provide stark evidence of the demographics of people who are being left behind in the UK today. It is on these groups that the local, regional and national governments of the UK should be focusing their attention if they are to make progress on closing the wellbeing gaps highlighted in the 2024 index.

Informed by the evidence from the 2024 Life in the UK index, we believe there are three areas of opportunity to meaningfully improve outcomes for people up, down and across the country. The national and devolved governments of the UK should:

- Take steps to measure what matters;
- Take action to repair democracy; and
- Adopt and implement a fresh approach to governance.



Measure what matters

If the UK Government is serious about delivering the 'plan for change' outlined in its 2024 manifesto, we strongly recommend that it adopts and implements useful and timely measures that track progress across a range of outcomes.

In our experience working with governments across the UK to implement an outcomes-based or 'mission led' approach, we have found that the lack of an identifiable, shared story about how we are doing as a country undermines public confidence that politicians and other senior leaders have citizens' best interests at heart.

Economic output data, such as Gross Domestic Product, has long been the dominant narrative. However, there is a growing movement of individuals, policymakers and institutions now highlighting why GDP may be a good measure of the economy, but a poor measure of social progress²¹.

The ability to monitor and communicate progress toward the achievement of outcomes or missions is critical in bringing about positive change for people living in the UK. Governments and their partners must have a compelling narrative and timely understanding of where we are, where we want to go, and what progress is being made. Carnegie UK's Life in the UK index demonstrates that it is possible to bring together data from different aspects of our lives to give a richer picture of how we are really doing. Not only is it possible to express this as a single number, but this number can be tracked over time to show whether things are getting better or worse.



Repairing democracy – the missing mission

Despite the UK Government stating a commitment to democratic reform in its 2024 manifesto, **repairing democracy is a mission so far absent from the UK Government's policy plans and proposals.** The 2024 Life in the UK index evidence highlights why this must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

It is essential that all those in power work to build trust with the people of the UK: a failure to address the root causes of discontent will further threaten the foundations of democracy. We need a bold agenda to re-engage people in our democracy and rebuild trust in those we elect to represent us.



Adopting a fresh approach to governing

The UK Government has outlined its intention to deliver a mission-driven government; this means **focusing on ambitious, measurable, long-term objectives that can deliver improved outcomes for people living in the UK.** Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have made similar commitments to outcomes-led approaches which have so far had variable levels of success in driving system-wide change.

This experience tells us that any gap between rhetoric and reality will be a drag on implementation, and political and executive leadership, while critical, is not sufficient on its own.

To successfully deliver these changes, there must be alignment of culture; incentives; rewards; training and development; recruitment; internal processes and procedures²². **A decentralising and empowering mindset is needed which respects the different roles of the devolved governments as well as local government, agencies, and the third and private sectors.**



Collective wellbeing: standout statistics overview



Social wellbeing – standout statistics

- **43%** say they have experienced discrimination over the past year. This is a three-point increase on 2023 (40%).
- **29%** say they feel unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark.
- **17%** say they don't have anyone to rely on in their neighbourhood.



Economic wellbeing - standout statistics

- **29%** can't afford an unexpected expense of £850.
- **27%** are dissatisfied with the job opportunities in their local area. Dissatisfaction has increased by 4 percentage points since 2023 (23%).
- **23%** can't afford to go on holiday away from home.
- **14%** can't afford to keep their home warm, a three-point improvement from experiences reported in 2023 (17%).
- **11%** can't afford to socialise with friends or family outside of the home once a month if desired. This figure is the same as reported in 2023.



Environmental wellbeing - standout statistics

- Most people experience issues with litter (**83%**), noise (**62%**) and air quality (**53%**) in their local neighbourhood. The proportion of people experiencing problems with litter has increased by three percentage points compared to 2023.
- **44%** are dissatisfied with current efforts to preserve the environment.
- **13%** are dissatisfied with the quality of the nearest local public, green or open space.



Democratic wellbeing - standout statistics

- **72%** feel that they cannot influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole. This is the same as reported in 2023.
- **55%** feel that they are unable to influence decisions at a local level.
- **53%** have low levels of trust in the UK Government.
- **35%** have low levels of trust in news media, a three-point improvement in perceptions reported in 2023 (38%).
- **28%** have low levels of trust in local councils, a two-point increase in distrust compared to 2023 (26%).
- **17%** have low levels of trust in the police, a two-point improvement on experiences reported in 2023 (19%).

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Appendix 1: Summary table of domain scores by key demographic characteristics

		Collective wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Environmental wellbeing	Democratic wellbeing
Total		61	72	71	62	40
Disability	Not disabled	64	75	74	63	42
	Disabled	55	62	63	58	36
Age	16-34 years	59	69	69	58	41
	35-54 years	59	71	67	60	39
	55 years & over	65	75	77	66	42
Household Income	£25,999 and under	56	67	58	59	39
	£26,000 to £51,999	62	73	71	62	40
	£52,000 to £99,999	65	76	79	64	42
	£100,000 & above	68	77	85	65	44
Area deprivation	1st quintile (highest deprivation)	54	65	61	54	37
	2nd quintile	59	70	68	58	39
	3rd quintile	62	72	72	63	41
	4th quintile	65	76	77	66	42
	5th quintile (lowest deprivation)	67	77	78	69	43
Housing tenure	Social rented	51	61	52	54	35
	Private rented	57	68	62	59	40
	Homeowners	64	75	76	64	41
Gender	Women	61	71	70	62	40
	Men	63	74	73	62	41
Ethnicity	Asian	57	65	65	54	41
	Black	55	66	56	58	39
	Mixed/multiple	56	67	62	58	36
	Other ethnicity	57	67	65	55	42
	Other White	60	70	72	57	41
	White British	62	73	73	63	40
	Ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities)	56	66	63	56	40
	White (including White minorities)	62	73	73	63	40

cont.

		Collective wellbeing	Social wellbeing	Economic wellbeing	Environmental wellbeing	Democratic wellbeing
Children	One child in household	59	71	66	60	39
	Two children in household	60	72	66	61	41
	Three or more children in household	56	68	59	59	38
	No children in household	62	73	74	63	41
Urban areas	Urban living	60	71	70	60	40
	Rural living	66	77	75	70	42



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Collective Wellbeing in 2024 Scoring summary



Social wellbeing



Economic wellbeing



Environmental wellbeing



Democratic wellbeing



The Collective Wellbeing score for the UK in 2024 is 61 out of a possible 100.

Life in the UK 2024



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