

Statistical bulletin

Young people's well-being in the UK: 2020

This headline release reflects the circumstances, views and well-being of young people aged 16 to 24 years in the UK prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

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1 . Main points

- Several measures of personal well-being of young women aged 20 to 24 years in the UK have declined in March 2020 from five years previously; there was a fall in the percentage of young women in this age group reporting very high life satisfaction and happiness, and very low anxiety.
- There is evidence of increasing anxiety and depression among young women aged 16 to 24 years in the UK, with nearly one-third (31%) reporting some evidence of depression or anxiety in 2017 to 2018; this is an increase from the previous year (26%) and the same period five years earlier (26%).
- There was a decline in young people's satisfaction with their health in the UK, with about half (52%) of those aged 16 to 24 years saying they were mostly or completely satisfied with their health in 2017 to 2018 compared with 59% in the previous year.
- An increasing proportion of young people aged 16 to 24 years in the UK reported that they were finding it difficult or very difficult to get by financially, with 9% saying this in 2017 to 2018, compared with 6% the previous year; in particular the increase was significant among young men of this age.
- Young people aged 16 to 24 years in the UK may also be feeling more disconnected from their communities, with a decrease in those agreeing or strongly agreeing that they felt a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood between 2014 to 2015 (57%) and 2017 to 2018 (48%).
- More positively, almost three-quarters of young women aged 16 to 24 years in England and Wales reported feeling fairly or very safe walking alone in their area after dark in April 2019 to March 2020 (74%), an increase of 16 percentage points compared with five years previously (58%); despite these gains, young men of this age continued to more frequently report feeling safe in these circumstances than young women in April 2019 to March 2020 (86% compared to 74%).

Statistician's comment

"The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and well-being is naturally a focus for many at present and something that the ONS is also exploring. The research we have published today gives a pre-pandemic perspective, making it a useful starting point to understand what has changed since. What we noted in particular were adverse effects on well-being and anxiety for women aged 20 to 24 years compared to five years ago."

Eleanor Rees, Head of the Social Well-being Team, Office for National Statistics

2 . Young people's well-being data

[Young people's well-being measures](#)

Dataset | Released 2 October 2020

Current domains and measures of national well-being for young people. Where available, a time series of data is presented along with links to other useful data sources and websites.

3 . Measuring the data

Young people's well-being indicators

We capture young people's well-being through a 28-indicator framework, covering the topics of personal well-being; our relationships; health; what we do; where we live; personal finance; and education and skills. This headline release focuses on the main changes in the most recent indicator data. Data for each of the 28 indicators are available to download via the [Young people's well-being measures](#) dataset.

We regularly monitor measures of young people's well-being to provide insight into how young people are faring in different areas of life. Because different sources are used for these indicators, caution should be taken when comparing indicators from different sources or change over time between these.

The findings are for adults aged 16 to 24 years (unless otherwise stated), and where possible, these data are also broken down by sex.

For each indicator, the most recent data have been used. Indicator data were known to be current as of 16 September 2020.

More recent data are available from the Community Life Survey and the Taking Part Survey, however, these are not yet available for the 16 to 24 years age group.

Data have been used at the UK level wherever possible. Any exceptions to this are noted in the text.

Assessment of change

We have only commented on data where the latest period available is 2017 to 2018 onwards. This is so that we are presenting a more up-to-date reflection on the state of young people's well-being in the UK. We have also only commented on the data if there is a statistically significant change.

The majority of the 28 young people's well-being indicators are sourced from self-reported survey data. These sources use samples of the total measured population to produce estimations. Given this, indicators have only been assessed as having increased or decreased 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.

Indicators relating to attainment of National Qualifications Framework levels 2 and 3 have been assessed using the actual increase or decrease, as this is not an estimation. The disability indicator has not been assessed because confidence intervals were not available for the data.

Change over time

The time frame used for change over time has been updated in this release to better align to the method used by [Measuring national well-being: domains and measures](#). This dataset assesses short-term change as one year and long-term change as five years. Where these data are not available, we have assessed change over the periods closest to these intervals.

The indicator relating to having people who would be there if you needed help, taken from the Community Life Survey, has not been assessed using the long-term change measure. This is because the [Community Life Survey](#) moved to a self-completion online and paper mixed-method approach from 2016 to 2017 onwards, with an end to the previous face-to-face method. Data from the 2016 to 2017 survey onwards are not comparable with data from the 2015 to 2016 or earlier surveys.

All analysis has been done using unrounded figures. Some figures may not sum because of rounding.

Young people's well-being in the devolved administrations

Some indicators are not currently measured at the UK level. Indicators measured through the Community Life Survey, the Health Survey for England, the Active Lives Survey, the Taking Part Survey, the Measuring Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey, the English Housing Survey, and the Department for Education's matched administrative data include data for England. Meanwhile, the indicators on victims of crime and feeling safe walking alone after dark cover England and Wales. Where this is the case, alternative data sources may be available for the devolved nations, but differences in methodology may affect the comparability of the data.

For some indicators, it may be possible to find more recent measures of the concept from a different source than that used as the headline indicator. For example, where we use a UK-level source for an indicator, more recent data may be available at a UK nation level, such as the Community Life Survey, the National Survey for Wales, the Scottish Household Survey or the Continuous Household Survey for Northern Ireland. Caution should be used when analysing or comparing data from these sources, as differences in methodology or wording may affect the comparability of the data.

For more information or data for Scotland, visit the [Scottish Government's website](#).

For more information or data for Wales, visit the [Welsh Government's website](#) or the [StatsWales](#) website.

For more information or data for Northern Ireland, visit the [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's website](#).

Strengths and limitations

In this release, the "Rely on" indicator has been updated to a different source and is now defined as "Percentage of people that have people who would be there for them if they needed help", taken from the Community Life Survey. This replaces "Proportion of people who have a spouse, family member or friend to rely on if they have a serious problem" taken from Understanding Society: The UK Household Longitudinal Study. The reason for this change in definition is to ensure new data are regularly available, as the previous data were last updated in 2014 to 2015, with no planned update before 2021.

For more information on the indicators and their sources, please see the [Young people's well-being measures](#) dataset.

4 . Related links

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on young people in Great Britain: 3 April to 10 May 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 22 June 2020

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on young people in Great Britain.

[Young people's well-being: 2017](#)

Article | Released 13 April 2017

How young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK are faring in a range of areas that matter to their quality of life, reflecting both the circumstances of their lives and their own perspectives.

