

# Measuring National Well-being - Exploring the Well-being of Young People in the UK, 2014

Coverage: **International**

Date: **03 December 2014**

Geographical Area: **Country**

Theme: **People and Places**

Theme: **Children, Education and Skills**

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## Foreword

There were around 7.5 million young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK in 2012, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [mid-year population estimates](#). This is an important age of transition from childhood to adulthood, and the ways in which this transition is negotiated may affect current and future well-being. Arnett (2004) coined the phrase 'emerging adulthood' to describe this stage of life. As many have yet to make 'the transitions historically associated with adult status', such as marriage and parenthood, the aspects of life affecting a young person's well-being will differ from those of the rest of the adult population, and those that are the same may differ in their impact.

The [framework](#) for measuring national well-being indicators is grouped into ten domains. These domains of well-being are consistent at all ages. Most of the national well-being measures for the adult population also apply to 16 to 24 year olds. However, there are some measures which are particularly relevant for young people, such as not being in education, employment and training. Three domains – governance, natural environment and economy – are more contextual, so are not included in the young people's measurement framework.

ONS has developed a provisional set of headline measures of young people's well-being across seven domains, alongside [a set of measures for children](#) up to the age of 15. In March 2014, ONS published a consultation on the first iteration of these measures. The [consultation response](#) was published in July 2014 and an updated set of measures will be published in 2015. This report presents a baseline for 27 of the 28 measures<sup>1</sup> young people's well-being. It considers how selected measures compare across age groups, change over time or differ by gender<sup>2</sup> for young people aged 16 to 24. A similar analysis of the children's measures was [published in October 2014](#).

## Notes:

1. The measure 'proportion of young people who are fairly/very satisfied with their accommodation' needs further consideration.

2. [The differences between young men and women](#) for selected measures have been explored previously.

## Key points

- In 2013/14 in the UK, around 8 out of 10 young people aged 16 to 24 reported high or very high life satisfaction.
- Around 1 in 5 young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK reported some symptoms of anxiety or depression in 2011-12.
- 1 in 3 young people aged 16 to 24 in England were overweight including obese in 2012 compared with 3 in 5 adults aged 16 and over.
- The proportion of young people in England engaging with or participating in arts or cultural activities at least three times a year has increased from 78% in 2008-09 to 85% in 2013-14.
- 1 in 4 young people aged 16 to 24 in England and Wales were victims of crime in 2013-14, down from 1 in 3 in 2006-07.
- 1 in 10 young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK were finding their financial situation difficult or very difficult in 2011-12.

## Personal Well-being

### Young people's personal well-being

Since April 2011, the Annual Population Survey has included four questions which are used to monitor personal well-being in the UK:

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
2. Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
3. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
4. Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

Responses are on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'. High or very high levels of personal well-being for life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness are defined as 7 or more out of 10. However, for anxiety 3 or less out of 10 is used because lower levels of anxiety indicate better personal well-being.

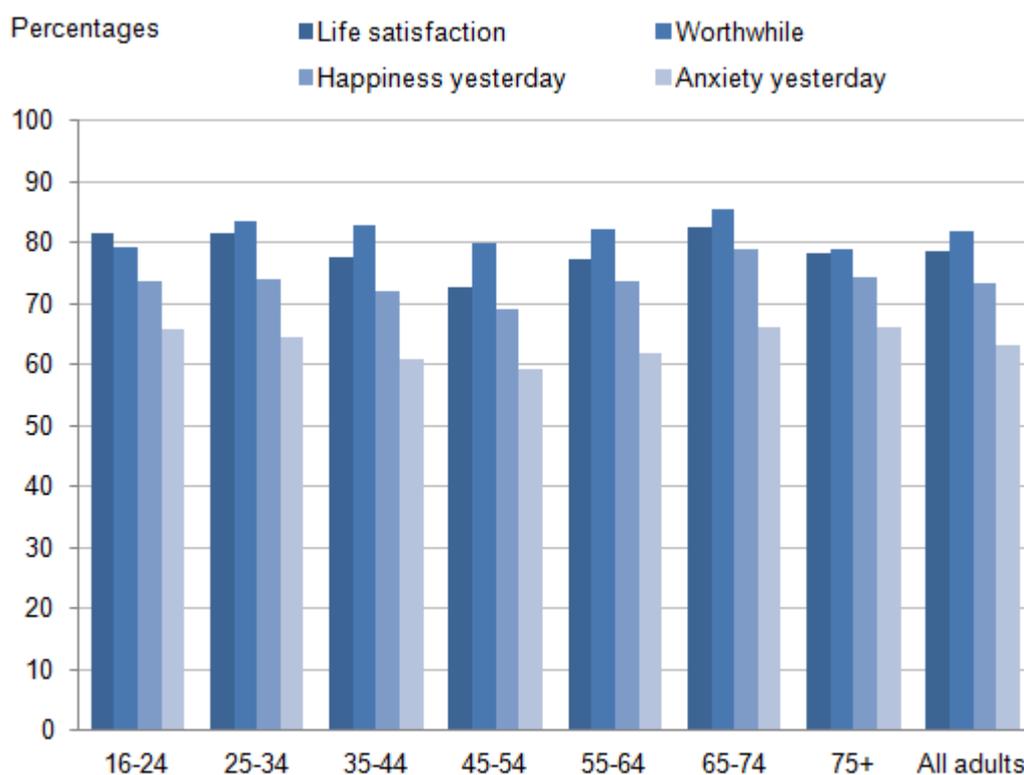
A higher proportion of young people reported having low or very low levels (0-3) of anxiety than all adults. Nearly 66% of 16 to 24 year olds reported low or very low anxiety in 2013/14, compared with around 63% of all adults aged 16 and over. Young people are also more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with their life compared with all adults.

In 2013/14, just over 81% of 16 to 24 year olds reported high or very high levels of life satisfaction (7-10), compared with nearly 79% of all adults. This may relate to the increase in freedom, independence and self-focus associated with the 'emerging adulthood' life stage. A similar

proportion of young people reported high or very high levels of happiness yesterday (7-10), compared with all adults in this period.

Despite larger proportions of young people reporting higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness and lower levels of anxiety, young people are less likely than all adults to consider the things they do in their life are worthwhile. In 2013/14, around 79% of 16 to 24 year olds considered the things they do in life to be worthwhile as high or very high (7-10), compared with nearly 82% of all adults. This measure fluctuates across age groups.

**Figure 1: Personal Well-being measures by age group, 2013/14**



Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

Source: Annual Population Survey (APS) - Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**

1. The data presented are derived from a customised weighted 12 month APS micro dataset. This dataset is not part of the regularly produced APS datasets and was produced specifically for the analysis of subjective well-being data.
2. Life satisfaction, Worthwhile and Happiness percentages relate to those who responded 7 to 10 on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 was not at all and 10 was completely.
3. Anxiety percentage relates to those who responded 0 to 3 on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 was not at all and 10 was completely.

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There has been little change in how young people rate their personal well-being over the three years 2011/12 to 2013/14. The proportion of 16 to 24 year olds reporting high or very high life satisfaction and that the things they do in life are worthwhile have remained stable. There has however been an increase in the proportion reporting high or very high happiness, from 71% in 2011/12 to just less than 74% in 2013/14, and low or very low anxiety, from 63% in 2011/12 to 66% in 2013/14. This compares with significantly increased proportions of all adults reporting improved well-being across all four personal well-being measures. [Measuring national well-being, personal well-being in the UK, 2013/14](#), provides an in-depth analysis of personal well-being over the last three years.

## Mental well-being

The mental well-being measure is the shortened version of the [Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale](#) (SWEMWBS). This was developed to measure the mental well-being of populations and groups over time. The SWEMWBS provides a mean score (out of 35) of mental well-being for the population. Changes over time can be assessed by examining differences in the mean score. However, it cannot be used to categorise good, average or poor mental well-being<sup>1</sup>.

The mean score of mental well-being for 16 to 24 year olds in 2009-10 was 25.0, which is very similar to the mean score of 25.2 for all adults.

## Notes

1. As well as not being designed to identify people who have, or probably have a mental illness, WEMWBS does not have a 'cut off' level to divide the population into those who have 'good' and those who have 'poor' mental well-being, in the way that scores on other mental health measures do, for example the GHQ 12.

## Our Relationships

A person's relationships with family and friends can affect their well-being in a number of ways. Good communication is important to healthy relationships: 'People who have close friends and confidants, friendly neighbours and supportive co-workers are less likely to experience sadness, loneliness, low self-esteem and problems with eating and sleeping...Subjective well-being is best predicted by the breadth and depth of one's social connections' ([Helliwell and Putnam, 2004](#)). An [analysis of experimental data](#) from the Annual Population Survey found that overall life satisfaction and personal relationships are related; those who reported a higher level of life satisfaction were more likely to report higher satisfaction with their personal relationships than those with lower levels of life satisfaction.

## Family

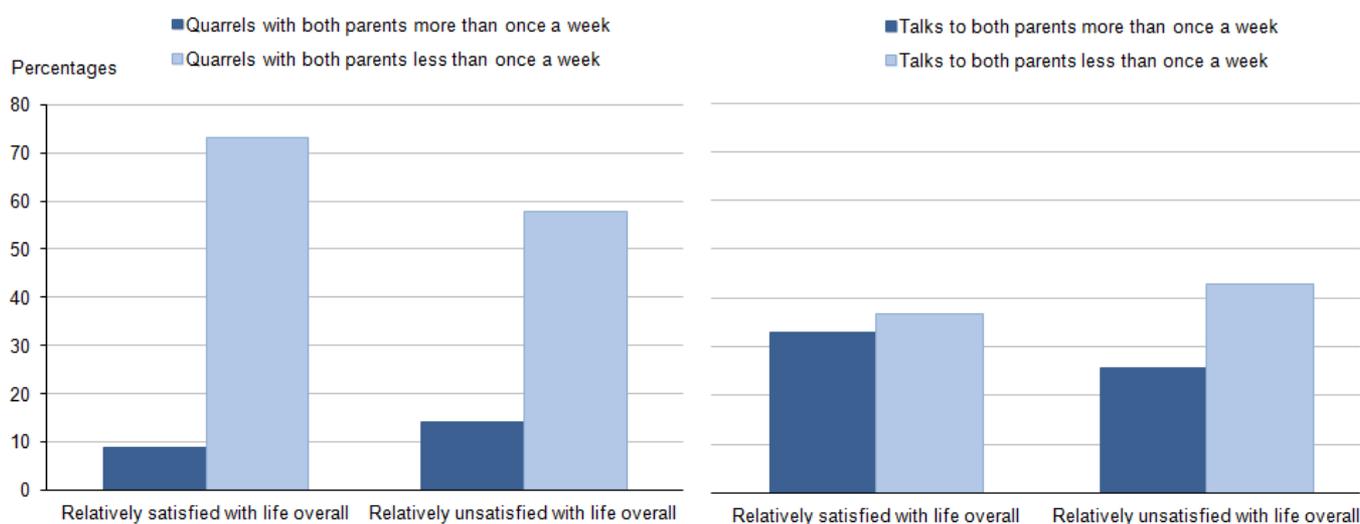
The young adults' module in the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (also referred to as Understanding Society) asked all 16 to 21 year olds about their relationship with their parents, whether or not they still lived in the family home. This data shows that young people aged 16 to 21 were more likely to quarrel with their mother than their father. Around 25% quarrelled with their mother more than once a week in 2011-12, whereas only 16% quarrelled with their father more

than once a week. This compares with nearly 28% of 10 to 15 year olds quarrelling with their mother more than once a week and 20% quarrelling with their father more than once a week. The smaller proportion of 16 to 21 year olds quarrelling with either parent, compared with children aged 10 to 15, is indicative of the increased independence young people experience.

As well as being more likely to quarrel with their mothers than with their fathers, young people were also more likely to talk to their mother about things that matter. Around 58% of 16 to 21 year olds talked to their mother more than once a week, compared with nearly 36% who talked to their father about things that matter more than once a week. This compares with around 63% of 10 to 15 year olds talking to their mother about things that matter and nearly 40% talking to their father. Amongst 16 to 21 year olds, women were far more likely to talk to their mother about things that matter, at 67%, than men, at 50%.

Young people who reported being relatively dissatisfied with life overall were 1.5 times more likely to quarrel with both parents more than once a week than those who were relatively satisfied with life overall. Furthermore, they were also less likely to talk to both parents about things that matter very often.

**Figure 2: Young people's quarrelling with and talking to parents by satisfaction with life overall, 2011-12**



Source: UK Household Longitudinal Survey

**Notes:**

1. Young people age 16 to 24.
2. Respondents were asked 'How often do you quarrel with your mother?'; 'How often do you quarrel with your father?'; 'How often do you talk to your mother about things that matter?' and 'How often do you talk to your father about things that matter?'
3. Excludes respondents who reported quarrelling with/talking to one parent more than the other.
4. Respondents were asked: "where '1' is completely happy and '7' is not at all happy, which best describes how you feel about your life as a whole?". Relatively happy is a score of 1 to 3, relatively unhappy is a score of 5 to 7, neutral is a score of 4.

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Data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey shows that in 2010-11 82% of 16 to 24 year olds had someone to rely on a lot. This is less than the proportion of all adults, where over 87% had someone to rely on a lot. The difference may be accounted for by the higher levels of marriage and partnerships in older age groups, compared with 16 to 24 year olds. Young women are more likely than young men to have someone they can rely on a lot (86% compared with 78%).

## Health

[Analysis](#) of the Annual Population Survey showed that amongst adults in the UK, self-reported health was the most important factor associated with subjective well-being. According to the [World Health Organisation](#) a person's health is affected by the social and economic environment, the physical environment and personal characteristics and behaviours. People with very bad health reported lower levels of life satisfaction and higher levels of anxiety than people in good health. In addition, [further analysis](#) identified that young people were more likely to report satisfaction with their health than any other age group.

### Satisfaction with health

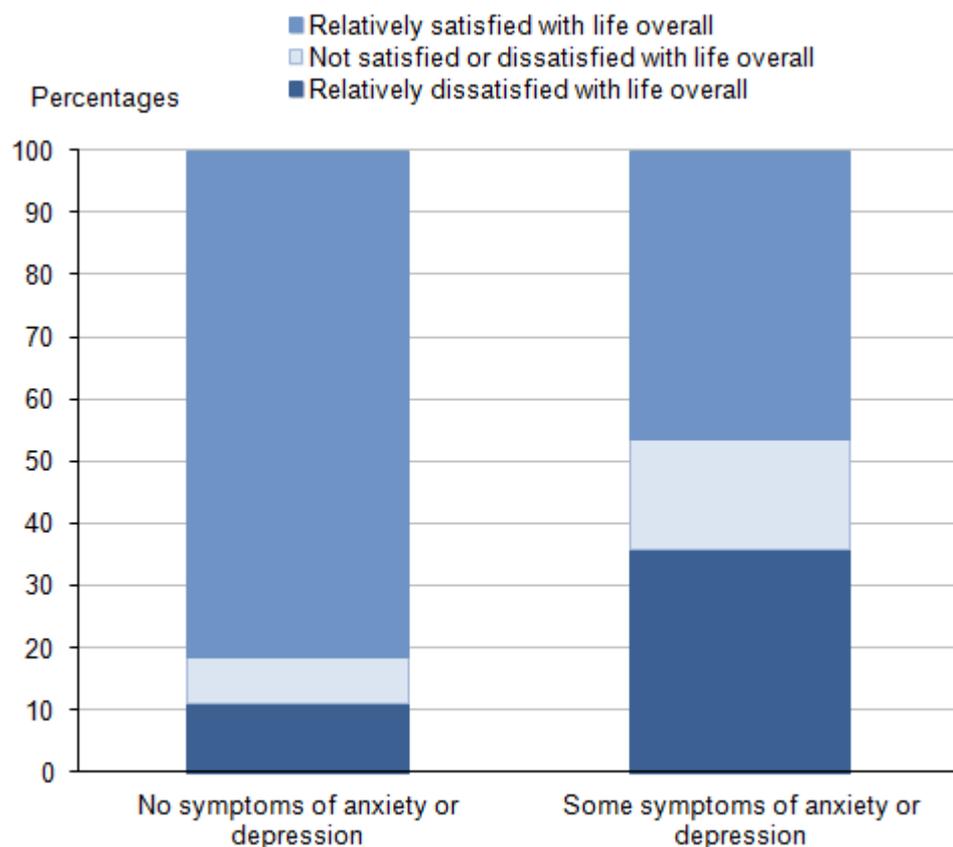
Data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) and the UK Household Longitudinal Survey show that until recently, the majority of young people reported being relatively satisfied with their health. In 2010-11 three-quarters (75%) of young people reported being relatively satisfied with their health, a similar proportion to that in 2002 (75%). However, in 2011-12 only two-thirds (66%) of 16 to 24 year olds reported the same. This recent decrease is reflected in the whole adult population: in 2010-11, two out of three (67%) adults reported being relatively satisfied with their health, whereas in 2011-12 fewer than three out of five (59%) were. Health problems develop with age, as can be seen in the proportions of adults with long-term illnesses or disabilities, so it is reasonable to expect young people to be more satisfied with their health than older people.

In 2011-12, young people who were relatively satisfied with their health were more likely to report being satisfied with life overall (87%) compared with those who were relatively dissatisfied with their health (48%).

### Mental health

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) [scores](#) from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey show that 21% of young people reported some symptoms of depression or anxiety in 2011-12. This is a similar proportion to all adults (18%). [Measuring national well-being – health](#) has an illustration of how GHQ scores differ by age group.

**Figure 3: Young people's satisfaction with life overall by symptoms of depression or anxiety, 2011-12**



Source: UK Household Longitudinal Survey

**Notes:**

1. Young people age 16 to 24.
2. GHQ12 assessment of psychosocial health.

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Of those young people reporting some symptoms of mental ill-health in 2011-12, around 46% were relatively satisfied with life overall, compared with 82% of those not reporting symptoms. Furthermore, this group was around three times as likely to be relatively dissatisfied with life overall than those not reporting symptoms.

**Disability and long-term illness**

Data from the Labour Force Survey shows that around 12% of 16 to 24 year olds reported a long-term illness or disability in April to June in 2014. This compares with 19% of 16 to 64 year olds reporting long term illness or disability in the same period<sup>1</sup>.

**Obesity**

Obesity [can increase](#) the risk of developing serious diseases, damage a person's quality of life and may trigger depression. The [Health Survey for England](#) uses objective measurements of height and weight to calculate Body Mass Index. It shows that the proportion of young people age 16 to 24 that are overweight including obese increased in 2012 compared with 2003.

In 2003, 31% of 16 to 24 year olds were overweight, including obese. In 2009 the prevalence for this age group reached 37%. There was a slight decrease between 2009 and 2011, before the rate increased to 36% in 2012. There was no significant difference in the rate of overweight including obese between 16 to 24 year old men and women in 2012. The 16-24 year old age group has significantly lower rates of overweight including obese when compared to the older age groups.

**Table 1a: Proportion of adults overweight, including obese, by survey year and age group (1, 2, 3)**

England, 2003-2007

	Percentages				
	2003	2004	2005 <sup>4</sup>	2006	2007
16-24	31.2	33.5	31.8	32.7	32.9
25-34	52.8	53.6	53.4	54.9	49.3
35-44	63.9	65.1	63.9	63.6	64.8
45-54	67.5	70.5	69.2	69.3	68.4
55-64	71.9	73.2	70.3	72.6	73.5
65-74	74.4	72.3	73.3	76.2	73.0
75 and over	68.2	69.3	65.2	68.9	69.0
All aged 16 and over	60.5	61.8	60.5	61.6	60.8

**Table source:** Information Centre for Health and Social Care

**Table notes:**

1. Adults aged 16 and over with a valid height and weight measurement 2003-2012
2. Overweight = BMI 25 to less than 30.
3. Obese = BMI 30 or more (includes morbidly obese).
4. All adults from core and boost samples in 2005 were included in analysis of 65-74 and 75+ age groups but only the core sample was included in the overall total.

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**Table 1b: Proportion of adults overweight, including obese, by survey year and age group (1, 2, 3)**

England, 2008-2012

	Percentages				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
16-24	33.5	37.0	33.4	32.4	36.3
25-34	51.9	48.0	53.1	51.0	51.3
35-44	64.5	62.1	66.3	64.6	63.8
45-54	69.2	71.0	71.1	71.5	72.2
55-64	73.4	74.6	75.5	71.9	73.0
65-74	77.1	78.3	77.5	74.4	73.0
75 and over	68.4	65.9	69.6	72.4	70.0
All aged 16 and over	61.4	61.3	62.8	61.7	61.9

**Table source:** Information Centre for Health and Social Care**Table notes:**

1. Adults aged 16 and over with a valid height and weight measurement 2003-2012
2. Overweight = BMI 25 to less than 30.
3. Obese = BMI 30 or more (includes morbidly obese).
4. All adults from core and boost samples in 2005 were included in analysis of 65-74 and 75+ age groups but only the core sample was included in the overall total.

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**Notes**

1. Background note regarding comparisons of disability data over time has more information.

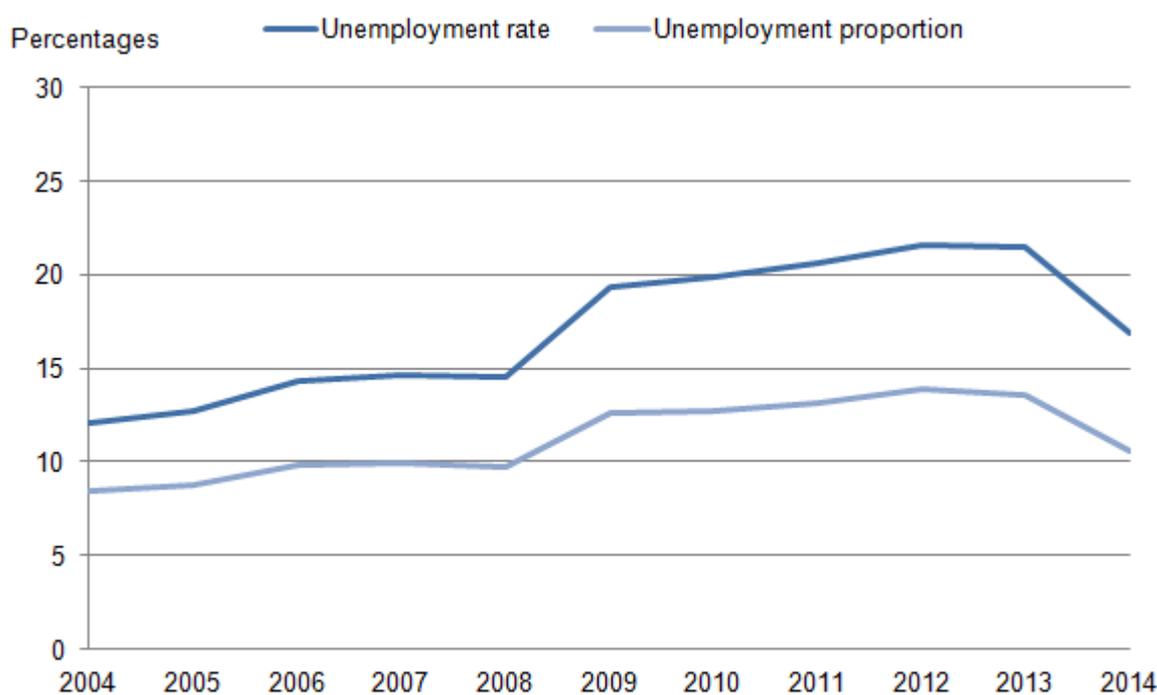
**What We Do****Unemployment Rate**

People may be economically inactive for a number of reasons; they are full-time carers, sick or disabled, or in full-time education, for example. Due to the economic downturn resulting in [pressures in the job market \(44 Kb Excel sheet\)](#) young people may decide to continue in full-time education. A lack of money due to unemployment may increase feelings of social isolation in young people as they cannot afford to socialise or go out and meet other people as often as they may like to. The

[Prince's Trust Macquarie Youth Index 2014](#) claims that, 'the longer people are out of work, the more likely they are to feel a lapse in confidence. Those who are long-term unemployed are significantly more likely to feel this way than those out of work for less than six months'.

Data from the [Labour Force Survey](#) shows that the unemployment rate<sup>1</sup> for young people has increased over the last decade from 12% in April-June 2004 to around 21% in the same quarter of 2013, before decreasing to just less than 17% in April-June 2014. During the last decade, unemployment in the 16 to 24 age group increased in most years with the largest increase of 5 percentage points between April-June 2008 and April-June 2009. This corresponds with the onset of the 2008 economic downturn. The unemployment rate in the 16 to 24 year old age group was higher for men than for women in every year from April-June 2004 to April-June 2014. Young people may be unemployed due to a lack of experience, education, qualifications, training or available jobs.

**Figure 4: Unemployment rate and unemployment proportion for 16 to 24 year olds, 2004-14**



Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**

1. April – June quarter
2. The unemployment rate is the proportion of economically active people who are not currently working but who have been looking for work in the last four weeks and are available to start within the next two weeks.
3. The unemployment proportion is the proportion of the total population of 16 to 24 year olds who are unemployed.

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While there has been an increase in unemployment amongst 16 to 24 year olds between April-June 2004 and April-June 2014, there has also been an increase in the proportion of young people remaining in full-time education beyond the age of 18. As a result, the number of economically active young people has reduced, thereby over-inflating the unemployment rate. Another measure of unemployment for young people is the unemployment proportion; the proportion of the total population of 16 to 24 year olds who are unemployed.

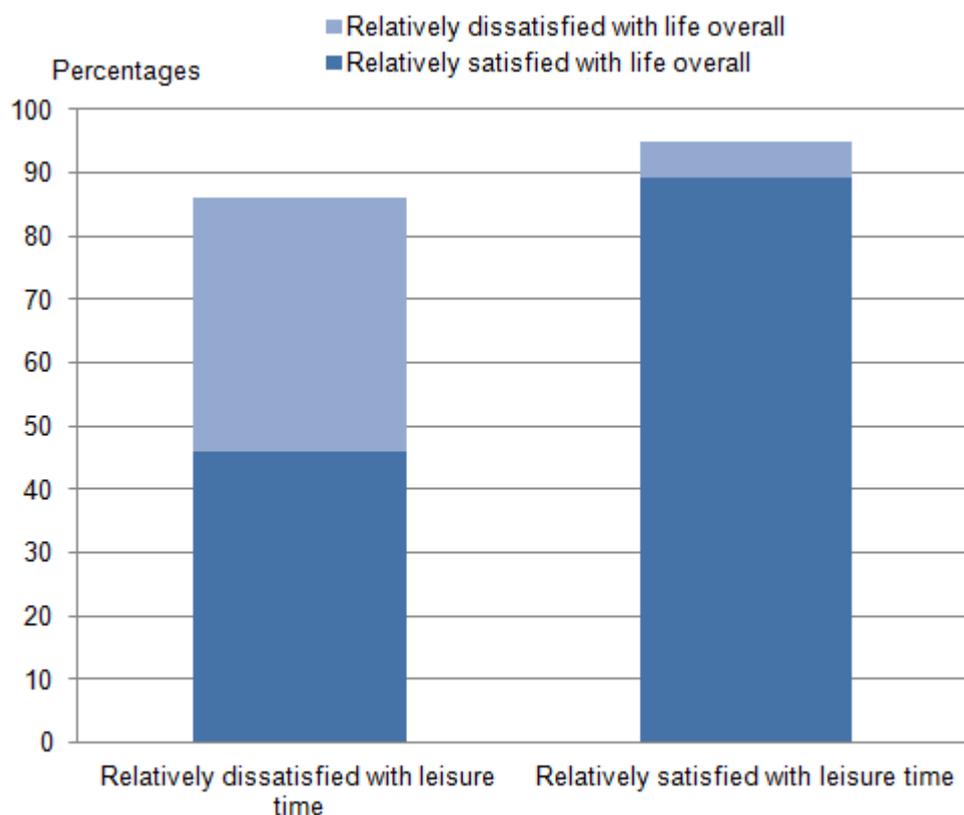
Over the last ten years the unemployment proportion followed a similar pattern to the unemployment rate. Amongst 16 to 24 year olds in April-June 2004 the unemployment proportion was around 8%. It then increased to around 13% in April-June 2013, before decreasing to just under 11% for the same period in 2014. [Analysis by ONS](#) disaggregated the unemployment proportion further to identify young people who were not in full-time education and were unemployed. It found that around 9% of 16 to 24 year olds had this status at the end of 2013, compared with 12% in 1993. This may be explained by the fact that more young people are remaining in full-time education.

## Leisure time

The UK Household Longitudinal Survey asks respondents to state how satisfied they are with the amount of leisure time they have. As a subjective measure, this is important to understand how people's time-use can affect their well-being. 'The amount and quality of leisure time is important for people's well-being for the direct satisfaction it brings. Additionally leisure, taken in certain ways, is important for physical and mental health.' ([OECD](#), 2009)

About two thirds of 16 to 24 year olds reported being satisfied with their amount of leisure time in 2011-12, little changed since 2002. Just over two thirds of men (67%) were satisfied with their leisure time compared with 57% of women in the 16 to 24 age group.

Around 40% of young people who were relatively dissatisfied with their leisure time reported being dissatisfied with life overall. This compares with around 6% of young people who were relatively satisfied with their leisure time being dissatisfied with their life overall. Furthermore, young people satisfied with their leisure time were almost twice as likely to be relatively happy with life overall than those who were relatively dissatisfied with their leisure time (89% compared with 46%).

**Figure 5: Young people's satisfaction with life overall, by satisfaction with leisure, 2011-12**

Source: UK Household Longitudinal Survey

#### Notes:

1. Young people age 16 to 24.
2. Excludes young people who reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their leisure time.
3. Responses to "How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with.....The amount of leisure time you have" on a 7 point scale varying from completely (or very) satisfied to completely (or very) dissatisfied.
4. Respondents were asked: "where '1' is completely happy and '7' is not at all happy, which best describes how you feel about your life as a whole?" Relatively happy is a score of 1 to 3, relatively unhappy is a score of 5 to 7, neutral is a score of 4.

#### Download chart

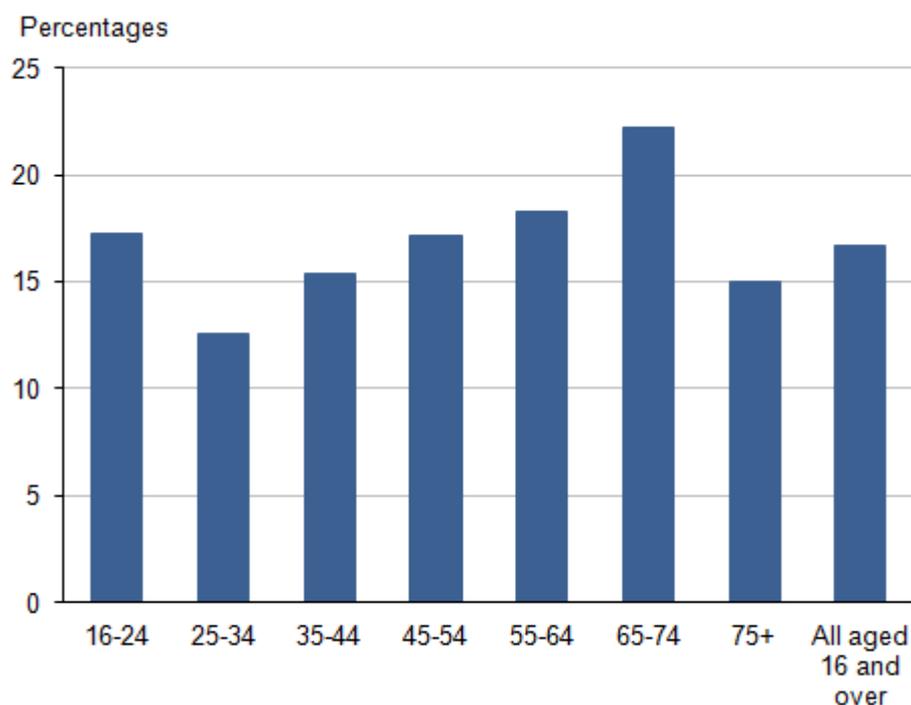
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#### Volunteering

'We define volunteering as any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation' ([Volunteering England](#)).

In 2010-11 the UK Household Longitudinal Survey asked respondents if they had volunteered in the last twelve months. There was little difference in volunteering amongst the 16 to 24 year old age group compared with all those aged 16 and over, at around 17%. However, this comparison masks differences between the age groups. Young people and those of retirement age are more likely to volunteer than any other age group, as illustrated in figure 6.

**Figure 6: Proportion of adults volunteering by age group, 2010-11**



**Notes:**

1. Respondents were asked: In the last 12 months, have you given any unpaid help or worked as a volunteer for any type of local, national or international organisation or charity?; Including any time spent at home or elsewhere, about how often over the last 12 months have you generally done something to help any of these organisations?
2. Excludes responses 'One-off activity' and 'helped or worked on a seasonal basis'.

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**Participation in at least one session of moderate activity a week**

Participation in physical activity and sport has been shown to be effective for reducing depression, anxiety, psychological distress and emotional disturbance. A review of research on this topic found that low-to-moderate physical exercise, even in a single session, can reduce anxiety. Another year-long study concluded that increases in aerobic fitness have both short and long-term beneficial effects on psychological health. Research also shows taking part in and spectating sport can have a positive impact on the well-being and happiness of individuals ([Sport England](#)).

Results from the Active People Survey show that in the 12 months April 2013 to March 2014, just over half (55%) of young people aged 16 to 25 in England participated in at least one session of moderate activity a week. This is a decrease compared with the 12 months October 2005 to Sept 2006 (56%) and compares with around a third (32%) of adults aged 26 and over.

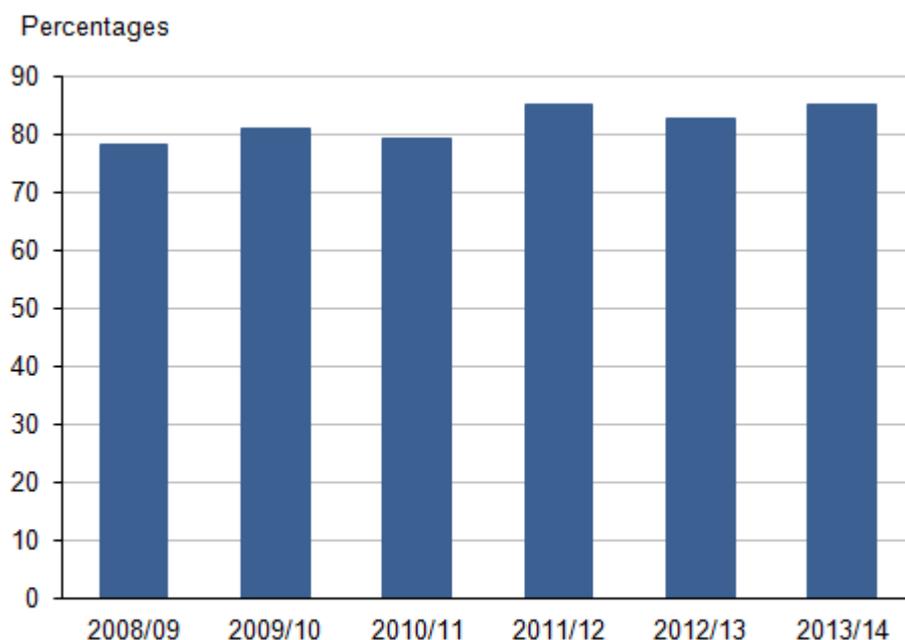
In all age groups in 2012-13 more men than women played sport at least once a week at 41% and 30% respectively. 'At a younger age, men are much more likely than women to play sport. But this difference declines sharply with age' ([Sport England](#)).

### Engagement or participation in an arts or cultural activity

'Creative activity has long been known to have tangible effects on health and quality of life. The arts, creativity and the imagination are agents of wellness: they help keep the individual resilient, aid recovery and foster a flourishing society' ([A Charter for Arts, Health and Well-being; National Alliance for Arts Health and Wellbeing](#)).

According to the [Taking Part Survey](#), in 2008-09, around 78% of 16 to 24 year olds engaged or participated in an arts or cultural activity at least 3 times in the 12 months prior to the survey. This increased to just over 85% in 2013-14. There was little difference between the 16 to 24 year old age group and all those aged 16 and over in 2013-14.

**Figure 7: Young people engaging with or participating in arts or cultural activities at least 3 times a year, 2008/09 to 2013/14**



Source: Taking Part Survey, DCMS

#### Notes:

1. Young people age 16 to 24.
2. Art and cultural activities include: heritage, museums, galleries, libraries and arts (includes attending e.g. theatre, and participating, e.g. painting).

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## Notes

1. The unemployment rate is the proportion of economically active people who are not currently working but who have been looking for work in the last four weeks and are available to start within the next two weeks.

## Where We Live

### Victims of crime

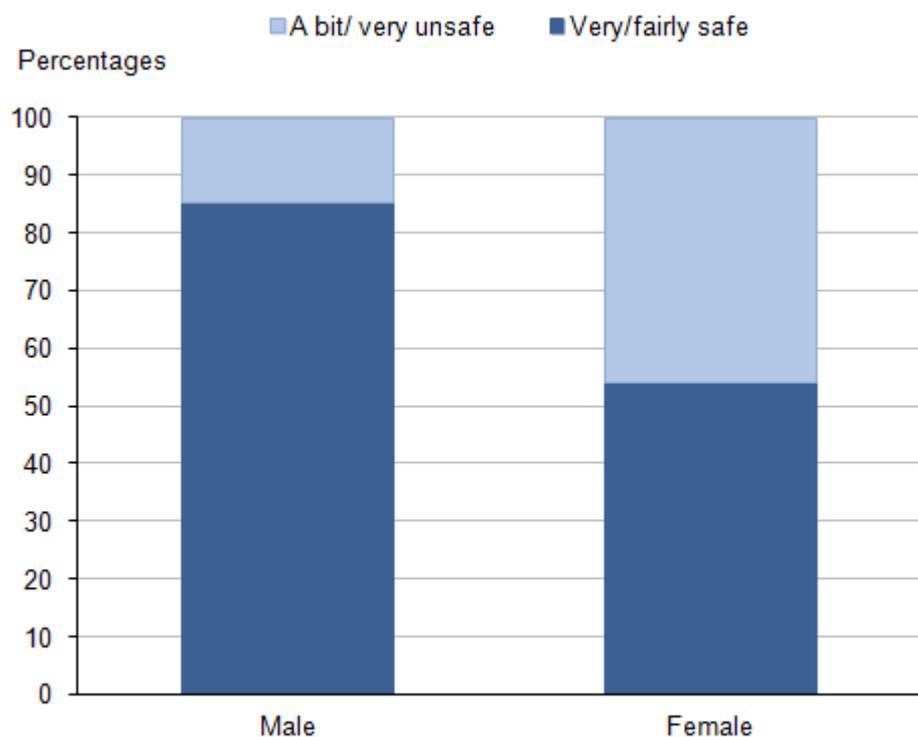
A person's well-being can be affected in many ways if they have been a victim of crime. There can be short or long term effects of crime and some people cope well with horrific crimes while others can be distressed by a minor incident ([Victim Support](#)).

According to the 2013-14 [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#), 1 in 4 (25%) young people aged 16 to 24 were victims of crime<sup>1</sup>, down from more than one in three (37%) in 2006-07. The proportions for men and women in this age group were similar in 2013-14 (24% and 26% respectively). Furthermore, over 1 in 10 young people aged 16 to 24 had been victims of personal crimes, which include violence, robbery, theft from the person, and other theft of personal property. The proportion of young people aged 16 to 24 in England and Wales who had been victims of crime in 2013-14 was 8 percentage points higher than for all respondents aged 16 and over.

### Feeling safe walking alone in their local area after dark

According to the 2013-14 Crime Survey England and Wales, 70% of young people aged 16 to 24 felt very or fairly safe walking alone in their local area after dark. This is very similar to the percentage of all adults aged 16 and over (71%). In the 16 to 24 age group a considerably higher proportion of men (85%) felt very or fairly safe walking alone after dark than women (54%). However, it should be noted that this may reflect 'social desirability bias': the CSEW is conducted face-to-face and young men may be reluctant to admit feeling unsafe in their local area.

**Figure 8: Young people feeling safe walking alone in their local area after dark, by sex, 2013-14**



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**

1. Young people age 16 to 24.
2. Although this question is asked in the Crime Survey of England and Wales, it does not ask specifically about safety in relation to crime.
3. There is also possible social desirability bias; in the context of a survey conducted face-to-face, young males may be reluctant to admit that they feel unsafe.

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**Belonging to the neighbourhood**

Data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey shows that in 2011-12, around half (49%) of 16 to 24 year olds reported that they felt they belonged to their neighbourhood. This compares with nearly two-thirds (63%) of all adults aged 16 and over. Even so, nearly 90% of young people reported that they liked their neighbourhood, which is similar to the proportion of all adults (94%).

Belonging to the neighbourhood leads to a greater sense of community and feelings of security. Of those young people who agreed or agreed strongly that they belonged to their neighbourhood in 2011-12, around 4 out of 5 reported being relatively satisfied with their life overall. This compares

with 3 out of 5 young people who disagreed or disagreed strongly that they belonged to their neighbourhood being relatively satisfied with their life overall.

### Accessing the natural environment

In a meta-analysis of twenty-five studies, [Bowler et al](#), found that natural environments may have direct and positive impacts on well-being. They explain that a natural environment setting may encourage physical activity, which can improve physical and possibly mental health. Furthermore, the natural environment may have ‘intrinsic qualities’ that may enhance well-being.

The [Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment](#), published by Natural England, presents data about visits taken to the natural environment and related behaviours and attitudes. In the year ending February 2013, around 62% of 16 to 24 year olds in England visited the natural environment<sup>2</sup> at least once a week. This compares with around 55% of all adults during the same period. Around 6% of young people had never accessed the natural environment in this period. The proportion of young people accessing the natural environment at least once a week has remained stable since the year ending February 2010 (58%).

### Notes

1. All CSEW crime
2. The natural environment is defined as the green open spaces in and around towns and cities, as well as the wider countryside and coastline. It excludes private gardens.

## Personal Finance

Respondents to the National Debate on ‘what matters to you?’ identified the importance of having adequate income or wealth to cover basic needs, such as somewhere to live and food on the table. A lack of finances can affect a person’s health, their access to community resources and their own contribution to that community. [Analysis by ONS](#) explored the relationship between personal well-being and income. Using data from the Annual Population Survey, it found that the lowest two income groups had the lowest scores in life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness yesterday, and the highest anxious scores.

### Household income

In 2011, around one fifth (20%) of 16 to 24 year olds lived in households with less than 60% of median income<sup>1</sup>. In 2005 just under a quarter (23%) of young people were in households with less than 60% of median income. Part of the change in the proportion living with this level of income could be attributed to the variation in median income. Using data from the Living Costs and Food survey, the [Office for National Statistics](#) identified that between 2007/08 and 2011/12 the median household income had decreased for non-retired households, but had increased for retired households.

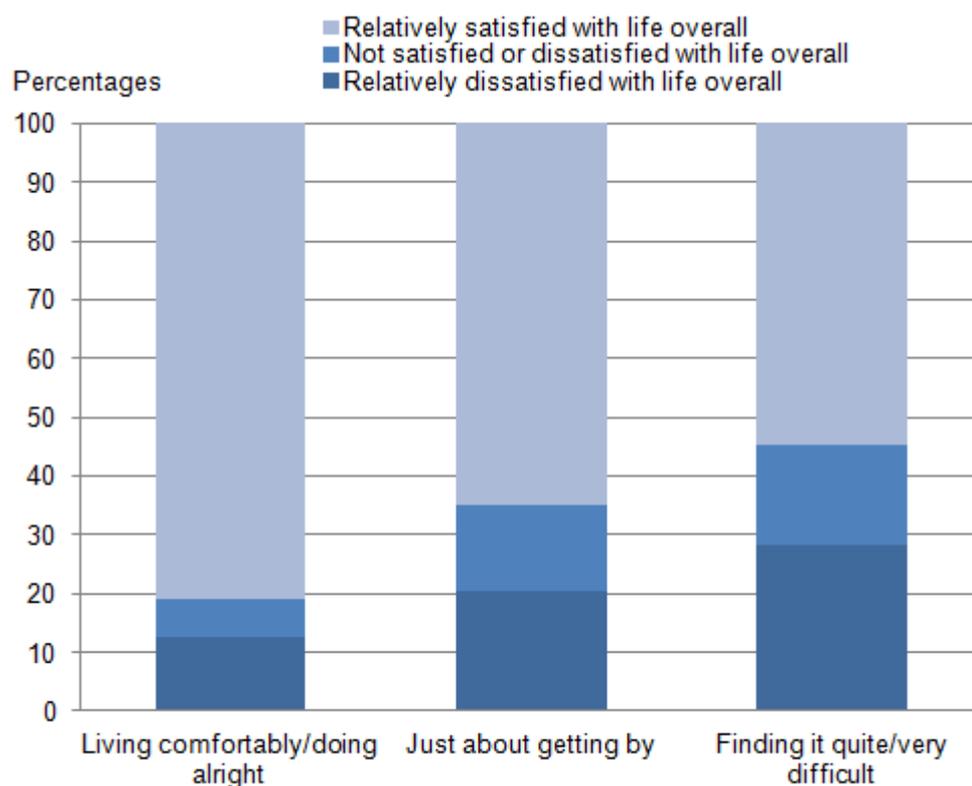
The [analysis of personal finance](#) illustrates the changes to median household income before and after housing costs since 1994/95. It explains that the fall in median income between 2009/10 and 2010/11 was mainly due to earnings increasing by less than the relatively high inflation rate over the period. The recent decrease in the proportion of individuals living in households with less than 60% of median income is not necessarily due to incomes increasing, but is a result of the fluctuations in the median income threshold. [Median household income](#) fell nearly 4% between 2007/08 and 2011/12.

## Subjective measures

As would be expected, with average earnings [falling in real terms since 2009](#), the proportion of young people who report being satisfied with their household income has decreased. Data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey indicates that the proportion of young people who were relatively satisfied with their household income has decreased from around 56% in 2002, to 52% in 2011-12.

This decline in satisfaction with household income is mirrored by an increase in the proportion of 16 to 24 year olds who found their financial situation difficult or very difficult. The BHPS data show that in 2002, 10% of young people reported that their financial situation was difficult or very difficult. This compares with 11% in 2011-12, according to the UK Household Longitudinal Survey. The economic downturn, which began in 2008, could be one reason affecting the financial situation of young people.

**Figure 9: Young people's satisfaction with life overall, by financial situation, 2011-12**



Source: UK Household Longitudinal Survey

**Notes:**

1. Young people age 16 to 24.
2. Responses to "How well would you say you yourself are managing financially these days? Would you say you are....?".
3. Respondents were asked: "where '1' is completely happy and '7' is not at all happy, which best describes how you feel about your life as a whole?" Relatively happy is a score of 1 to 3, relatively unhappy is a score of 5 to 7, neutral is a score of 4.

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(27 Kb)

Data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey illustrate the association between finances and well-being. In 2011-12, around 9 out of 10 (91%) young people who were relatively satisfied with their household income reported being relatively satisfied with life overall. This compares with around 5 out of 10 (49%) young people who were relatively dissatisfied with their household income. Similarly, nearly 13% of young people who were finding it difficult or very difficult to manage financially in 2011-12 reported being relatively dissatisfied with life overall, compared with around 28% who were 'doing alright' or 'living comfortably'.

**Notes**

1. This threshold is used as a proxy measure of poverty as it is considered an indicator of the income below which households are likely to be at risk of suffering hardship. Median household income is the middle point of the range of household income in the UK. Half of UK households have less than the median and half have more. Household income is equivalised to take account of the different sizes and composition of households.

**Education and Skills**

Education and skills were highlighted in the National Debate as being important to well-being. Having a good education and a strong skills-set equips you for the future. It is associated with a higher income, greater emotional resilience, and better physical health ([Sabates, R and Hammond, C, 2008](#)), all of which may have an impact upon personal well-being.

There is contradictory evidence about the effects of education on personal well-being, with some studies suggesting that middle-level education is related to the highest levels of well-being. Although there is a positive association between education and life satisfaction, Sabates and Hammond suggest that 'Maybe education has negative as well as positive impacts, for example through raising expectations that are not met and by leading to occupations that carry high levels of stress.'

**Qualifications**

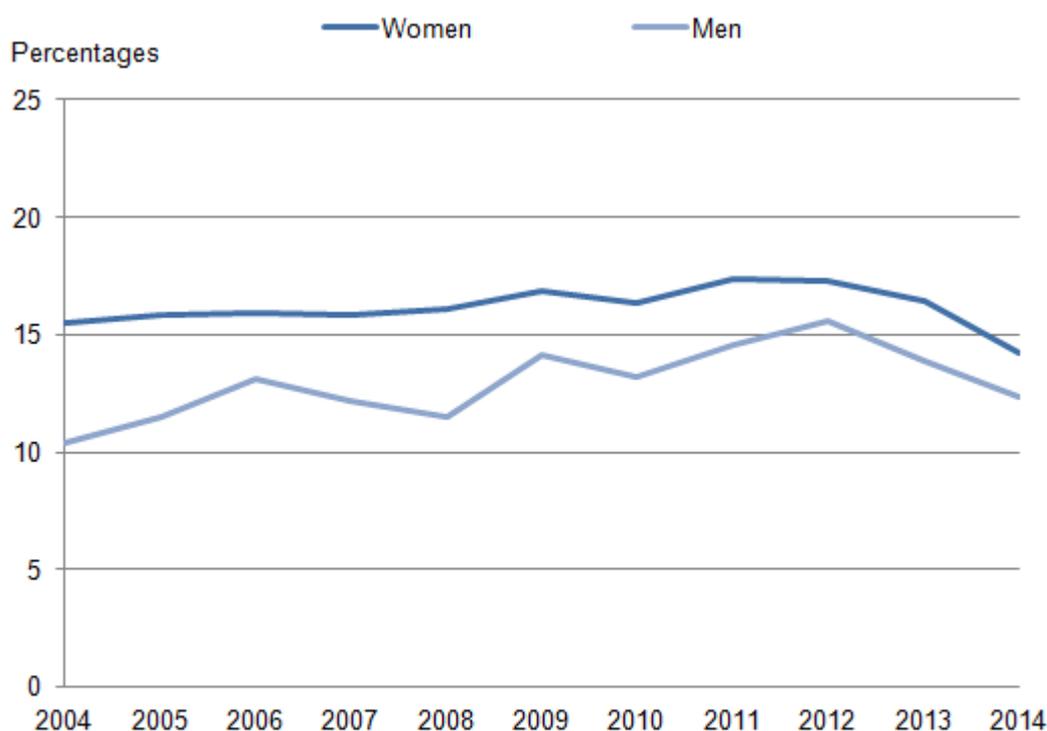
Statistics from the [Department for Education](#) show that the proportion of young people achieving the equivalent of five GCSEs graded A\*-C (National Qualifications Framework Level 2) by age 19 has increased every year since 2004. Around 86% of young people had attained a level 2 qualification<sup>1</sup>

by age 19 in 2013, compared with just under 67% in 2004, an increase of 19 percentage points. Similarly, the proportion achieving the equivalent of 2 or more A-levels by age 19 has increased by 17 percentage points since 2004. Around 59% of young people had attained a level 3 qualification by age 19 in 2013, compared with just over 42% in 2004.

### Not in Education, Employment or Training

The [Princes Trust Macquarie Youth Index 2014](#) found that young people categorised as NEET ranked lowest in terms of happiness and confidence. [ONS estimates](#) that around 13% of 16 to 24 year olds were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the quarter April – June 2014, a similar proportion to the same period in 2003. There has consistently been a higher proportion of young women than young men categorised as NEET. In 2014, around 14% of young women were not in education, employment or training, compared with just over 12% of young men.

**Figure 10: Proportion of young people not in education, employment or training, by sex, 2004-14**



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

#### Notes:

1. Young people age 16 to 24.
2. April – June quarter.

#### Download chart

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(26.5 Kb)

## Notes

1. Attainment of Level 2 equates to achievement of 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C or equivalent qualifications, and Level 3 equates to achievement of 2 or more A-levels or equivalent qualifications

## References

1. Arnett, JJ, (2004), *Emerging Adulthood; The Winding Road from Late Teens through the Twenties*, Oxford University Press
2. ONS, 2011 - [Findings from the National Well-being Debate](#)

## Background notes

1. The UK Longitudinal Household Survey (UKHLS) also referred to as Understanding Society is a unique and valuable academic study that captures important information every year about the social and economic circumstances and attitudes of people living in 40,000 UK households. It also collects additional health information from around 20,000 of the people who take part. Information from the longitudinal survey is primarily used by academics, researchers and policymakers in their work, but the findings are of interest to a much wider group of people. These include those working in the third sector, health practitioners, business, the media and the general public. [More information about the UKHLS.](#)
2. The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) was the precursor to the UKHLS. From Wave 2 of the UKHLS, around 6,700 respondents from the BHPS were added into the UKHLS panel. [More information about the BHPS.](#)
3. The four main estimates of personal well-being are based on data from the Annual Population Survey (APS) which includes responses from around 165,000 people. This provides a large representative sample of adults aged 16 and over who live in residential households in the UK. These questions allow people to make an assessment of their life overall, as well as providing an indication of their day-to-day emotions. Although 'yesterday' may not be a typical day for any one individual, the large sample means that these differences 'average out' and provide a reliable assessment of the anxiety and happiness of the adult population in the UK over the year.
4. The estimates of people with disabilities are derived from statistics on the economic activity of disabled people obtained from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The disability questions on the LFS have undergone several changes since 2010 and this has meant that comparisons over time have become difficult to interpret. There are two sets of changes in particular that have resulted in discontinuities in time series: 1. in January 2010, a rewording of the introduction to the section of the survey covering disabilities; and 2. in April 2013, changes to the wording of the disability questions in order to bring the LFS more into line with the definitions and questions used in other household surveys in the UK (see Table 1, below).

Consequently the estimates from 2010 onwards are not directly comparable with those for previous years. Also, the estimates from April 2013 are not comparable with those for either the 2010-2012 or the pre-2010 periods. In addition, from 2010 onwards it has been possible to produce estimates for women aged 16-64. Prior to 2010, estimates for women were only available for those aged 16-59.

The discontinuity in 2010 resulted from some differences in the reporting behaviour of respondents as a result of a change in the wording of the questionnaire. It resulted in higher estimates of the number of people either with a disability or long-term health problem. The most prominent effect was an increase, or step change, in the number of economically active people with a disability between Q4 2009 and Q1 2010 of around 300,000, or 8 per cent. At the same time there was a commensurate decrease in the number of people who were not long-term disabled. The discontinuity in April 2013 resulted from a further change in the reporting behaviour of survey respondents following changes to the wording of the questionnaire. These changes brought the LFS into line with the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Harmonised Standards for questions on disability and also enabled the LFS estimates to be consistent with the definitions used in 2010 Equality Act. The 2010 Equality Act superseded the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 which was the basis of the previously published LFS estimates.

The GSS Harmonised Standards focus on a 'core' definition of people whose condition currently limits their activity. In summary the core definition covers people who report:

- (current) physical or mental health condition(s) or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more; and
- the condition(s) or illness(es) reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

This differs from the DDA-based definition of disability previously used in the LFS in that it excludes the following groups which are "non-core" under the new Act:

- people with a progressive condition (specified in the Equality Act as HIV/AIDS, cancer or multiple sclerosis) that does not currently reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.
- people whose activities would be restricted only without medication or treatment.

As with all new questions, they are subject to ONS monitoring of responses for several quarters, and should therefore be interpreted with caution, especially when comparing with estimates for previous periods.

5. Art and cultural activities include: heritage, museums, galleries, libraries and arts (includes attending eg theatre, and participating, eg painting).
6. Throughout the bulletin, only statistically significant findings are commented on.

7. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html) or from the Media Relations Office email: [media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

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