Abstract

This article is published as part of the Office for National Statistics Measuring National Well-being Programme (MNWB). The ‘What we do’ domain contains six measures which cover unemployment, employment, volunteering, leisure time and participation in arts and culture and sports. This article summarises these measures and also looks at associated data such as stress at work, work-life balance and free time activities.

Introduction

The Office for National Statistics measures of national well-being are grouped into ten domains with a total of 41 headline measures. More information about all the measures can be found here - National Well-being

This article summarises the six measures under the ‘What we do’ domain, which include:

• Unemployment rate.
• Percentage who were somewhat, mostly or completely satisfied with their job.
• Percentage who volunteered in the last 12 months.
• Percentage who were somewhat, mostly or completely satisfied with their amount of leisure time.
• Percentage of people who have engaged with, or participated in, arts or cultural activity at least three times in the last year.
• Adult participation in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport, once a week.

It also looks at associated data such as stress at work, work-life balance and free time activities.

Key points

• The percentage of the workforce aged 16 and over in the UK who were unemployed was 7.8% in April to June 2013, equivalent to 2.51 million people, a fall of 4,000 from January to March 2013.
• In 2010/11, 78.5% of adults aged 16 and over in the UK who were in work reported being somewhat, mostly or completely satisfied with their job.
• 16.8% of adults aged 16 and over in the UK reported they had done voluntary work several times a year or more in 2010/11, while 81.5% had never or almost never done any voluntary work.
• Just over 6 in 10 (60.9%) of adults aged 16 and over in the UK were somewhat, mostly or completely satisfied with their amount of leisure time in 2010/11.
• Over 8 in 10 (83.2%) adults aged 16 and over in England engaged with, or participated in, arts or cultural activity at least three times in the year prior to interview in 2012/13.
• Between October 2011 and October 2012, 36.0% of adults aged 16 and over in England participated in at least 30 minutes of sport at moderate intensity at least once a week, equivalent to 15.51 million people.

Unemployment and employment

'There is a strong evidence base showing that work is generally good for physical and mental health and well-being. Worklessness is associated with poorer physical and mental health and well-being'. - Gordon Waddell, A Kim Burton - Is Work Good for your Health and Well-being?

According to the Labour Force Survey, the percentage of the workforce aged 16 and over in the UK who were unemployed in April to June 2013 was 7.8%, equivalent to 2.51 million people$^1,2$. This was a fall of 4,000 in the number of unemployed people from January to March 2013 and 49,000 lower than April to June 2012. Despite these falls, unemployment remains much higher than a decade ago when the unemployment rate was 4.9% in April to June 2003 (ONS, 2013).

In April to June 2013 there were 29.78 million people in work in the UK, a rise of 69,000 compared to January to March 2013 and 301,000 higher than April to June 2012. The employment rate, which measures the percentage of people aged 16 to 64 in work, was 71.5% in April to June 2013$^3$ (ONS 2013).

Job satisfaction is an important factor in the well-being of employees. In 2010/11 just under 8 in 10 (78.5%) adults aged 16 and over in the UK who had a job reported being somewhat, mostly or completely satisfied with their job according to the UK Household Longitudinal Study(UKHLS)$^4$. This compares with 14.3% who reported being somewhat, mostly or completely dissatisfied with their job (UKHLS, 2010/11).
According to the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS), 20% of employees in Great Britain were either satisfied or very satisfied with all the seven facets of their job explored in the study and included in Figure 1 compared with 16% in 2004. The percentage of employees saying that they were satisfied or very satisfied rose for all the categories individually except for job security where the percentage fell from 64% in 2004 to 59% in 2011. In 2011, around three-quarters of employees were either satisfied or very satisfied with the scope for using their own initiative, the work itself or feeling a sense of achievement (WERS, 2011).

Work can have a positive impact on a person’s health and well-being. A survey from Populus conducted in March 2013 asked working adults aged 18 and over in England and Wales how...
stressed their work life made them feel. Just over a third (34%) reported that their working life made them feel very or quite stressful, while just under a third (32%) reported that their working life was not very or not at all stressful (Populus, 2013).

**Figure 2: Reasons for stress at work, 2013 (1)**

England and Wales

The same survey asked respondents who were employed how stressful aspects of their current job were. Nearly a third (32%) reported that they felt very or quite stressful with their frustration with poor management (Figure 2). Around a quarter reported feeling very or quite stressful about excessive workloads or unrealistic targets or not enough support from managers or job insecurity (Populus, 2013).
Getting the right balance between work and leisure may also be important to a person's well-being. Work-life balance is a concept which involves prioritising between work and a person's lifestyle which could include health, leisure and family. In a survey conducted by YouGov in November 2011 over three-quarters (76%) of adults in the UK reported that having a good work-life balance was an important indicator of a good employer (YouGov, 2011).

In June 2011, adults aged 16 and over in Great Britain were asked by the ONS Opinions Survey how satisfied they were on a scale of 0 to 10\(^5\) with the balance between the time spent on paid work and the time spent on other aspects of their life. The average (mean) rating of satisfaction was 6.4. When broken down by age group the average mean for those aged 16 to 24 was 7.1, for those 25 to 49 it was 6.1 and for those 50 and over it was 6.7.

**Table 1: Proportion of employees agreeing they achieve the right balance between their work and home lives: by sex and work sector, 2013 (1)**

United Kingdom (Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Private sector</th>
<th>Public sector</th>
<th>Voluntary sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Employee Outlook, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

**Table notes:**
1. March 2013. Due to rounding figures may not add up to 100%.

**Download table**

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According to a survey conducted in March 2013 by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), over half (57%) of employees in the UK agreed or strongly agreed that they achieved the right balance between their work and home lives (**Table 1**). Men are less likely than women to agree or agree strongly that they achieve the right balance (53% and 61% respectively).
Voluntary sector employees were most likely to agree or strongly agree that this was the case (61%), compared to 57% and 55% respectively for those in the private and public sector (CIPD, 2013).

Notes

1. This is a measure under the ‘What we do’ domain.

2. The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed people (aged 16 and over) divided by the economically active population (aged 16 and over).

3. The employment rate is the number of people aged 16 to 64 in employment divided by the population aged 16 to 64.

4. This is a measure under the ‘What we do’ domain.

5. Where nought is ‘not at all’ and 10 is ‘completely’.

Volunteering

Apart from paid employment individuals spend time on things which might be considered as ‘unpaid work’ or voluntary work.

‘Volunteering is vital to charities and civil society, helps to strengthen local communities, and improves the wellbeing of individuals who participate’ - Daniel Fujiwara, Paul Oroyemi and Ewen McKinnon - Wellbeing and Civil Society.
According to the 2010/11 UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS), 16.8% of adults aged 16 and over had done voluntary work several times a year or more\(^1\) (Figure 3). Over 8 in 10 (81.5%) had never or almost never done any voluntary work, while 1 in 10 (9.1%) worked voluntarily at least once a week (UKHLS, 2010/11).

Another survey that records the frequency of volunteering is the Community Life Survey (CLS) run by the Cabinet Office. In this survey, two measures of volunteering are covered, formal and informal\(^2\). Volunteering both formally and informally has generally risen over the past few years. In August 2012 to April 2013, 29% of adults aged 16 in England and over said they had volunteered formally at least once a month in the 12 months prior to being interviewed. This is a significant increase in the level seen in 2010–11 (25%) and in all years from 2007–08, before which there had
been a downward trend since 2005\(^3\). In August 2012 to April 2013, 44% of people said that they had volunteered formally at least once in the last year prior to being interviewed. This has significantly increased from 39% in 2010–11 and is also significantly higher than levels in 2008–09 and 2009–10 (CLS, 2012/13).

Over a third (36%) of people said they had volunteered informally at least once a month in the 12 months prior to being interviewed. This has significantly increased from 29% in both 2009–10 and 2010–11. In August 2012 to April 2013, 62% of people said they had volunteered informally at least once in the last year prior to being interviewed. This has significantly increased from 55% in 2010–11 and is also higher than the level seen in 2009–10 (54%) (CLS, 2012/13).

Notes

1. This is a measure under the ‘What we do’ domain.

2. Formal volunteering – giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations. This could be a small community group consisting entirely of volunteers, or through major organisations such as Health Trusts or national voluntary organisations. Informal volunteering – giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives. This could be babysitting for a friend or checking on an elderly neighbour.

3. Data for earlier years are sourced from the Citizenship Survey which was run by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Leisure, arts, culture and sport

‘Participation in both physical and non-physical leisure activities has been shown to reduce depression and anxiety, produce positive moods and enhance self-esteem and self-concept, facilitate social interaction, increase general psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction, and improve cognitive functioning’ (Haworth - Life, Work, Leisure and Enjoyment: the role of social institutions).

Having the right amount of leisure time is important, as it gives people the time to spend doing things they choose to do rather than the things they must do. According to the 2010/11 UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS) just over 6 in 10 (60.9%) adults aged 16 and over were somewhat, mostly or completely satisfied with their amount of leisure time\(^1\). This compares to just over a quarter (25.4%) that were somewhat, mostly or completely dissatisfied with their amount of leisure time (UKHLS, 2010/11).
### Table 2: Engagement or participation in an arts or cultural activity: by sex and age, 2008/09 to 2012/13 (1)

England (Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All aged 16 and over</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>16–24</th>
<th>25–44</th>
<th>45–64</th>
<th>65–74</th>
<th>75 and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport, Department for Culture, Media and Sport

**Table notes:**
1. At least three times in the year prior to interview. This covers engagement or participation in the arts (excluding reading for pleasure), museums and galleries, libraries, archives and heritage sites.

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According to the Taking Part Survey (TPS) run by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport over 8 in 10 (83.2%) adults aged 16 and over in England engaged with, or participated in, arts or cultural activity at least three times in the year prior to interview in 2012/13 (Table 2). More women than men participate or engage at 85.0% and 81.3% respectively. Since 2008/09, the proportion of engagement and participation has risen in most age groups, most notably by 6.9 percentage points for those aged 65 to 74 (TPS, 2012/13).

In the same survey, respondents were shown a list of activities and asked to pick the things they did in their free time. Table 3 shows the results by age-group.
# Table 3: Free time activities: by age, 2012/13

England (Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>16–24</th>
<th>25–44</th>
<th>45–64</th>
<th>65–74</th>
<th>75 and over</th>
<th>All aged 16 and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend time with friends/family</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat out at restaurants</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days out or visits to places</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/emailing</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport/exercise</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to cinema</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to pubs/bars/clubs</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport, Department for Culture, Media and Sport

**Table notes:**
1. Respondents were shown a list of activities and asked to pick the things they did in their free time.
Watching television has been a common pastime for decades. The latest data from the Taking Part Survey showed that in 2012/13 watching television in free time continued to be the most common activity reported by adults aged 16 and over in England (Table 3). Nine in 10 (89.8%) of all adults watched television in their free time and it was the most popular activity for age groups from 25 upwards (TPS, 2012/13).

For those aged 16 to 24, spending time with friends or family and listening to music was reported by the highest proportion of respondents (88.6% and 88.3% respectively). Overall, for adults aged 16 and over, spending time with friends and family was the second most popular activity at 87.2%, followed by listening to music (78.2%) and shopping (75.7%). The activities which were reported less frequently as age increased were listening to music, internet and emailing, sport and exercise, going out to pubs, clubs or bars and going out to the cinema (TPS, 2012/13).

Sport and physical activity can enhance individual quality of life and well-being by improving physical and mental health, educational attainment, and providing opportunities for positive social interaction that give a sense of belonging and inclusion.
Between October 2011 and October 2012, over a third (36.0%) of adults aged 16 and over in England participated in at least 30 minutes of sport at moderate intensity at least once a week\(^4\) according to the Active People Survey (APS) (Figure 4). This was equivalent to 15.51 million people, over 750,000 more people than in 2010–11 and 1.6 million increase on 2005–06. During the period October 2011 and October 2012, men were more likely than women to participate once a week (41.1% and 31.1% respectively). When analysed by age group over the same period, 3.79 million young people (54.0%) aged 16 to 25 participated once a week compared with 11.72 million adults (32.4%) aged 26 and over\(^5\) (APS, 2011–12).

Notes:
1. Adults aged 16 and over. One session a week (at least four sessions of at least moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes in the previous 28 days). Data are October to October.
Notes

1. This is a measure under the ‘What we do’ domain.

2. This is a measure under the ‘What we do’ domain. The measure excludes ‘reading for pleasure’ as this was thought to have covered most people.

3. Similar data for arts and culture for the devolved administrations can be found here:
   Scotland’s People Annual Report: Results from 2012 Scottish Household Survey, 13: Culture and Sport
   www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/08/6973/13
   The Arts Council of Wales, 2012 Omnibus Survey, Report on Main Findings (Art attendance and participation)
   www.artswales.org.uk/what-we-do/research/annual-surveys/wales-omnibus-survey
   Arts and Culture in Northern Ireland 2012
   www.artscouncil-ni.org/the-arts/literature-language-and-culture/traditional-arts/publications

4. This is a measure under the ‘What we do’ domain.

5. Similar data for sport participation for the devolved administrations can be found here:
   Scotland’s People Annual Report: Results from 2012 Scottish Household Survey, 13: Culture and Sport
   www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/08/6973/13
   Active adults 2012, Sports Wales
   Experience of sport and physical activity by adults in Northern Ireland”.
   Findings from the 2012/13 Continuous Household Survey.

Background notes

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

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References

1. APS, 2011–12 - Active People Survey

2. CIPD, 2013 - Employee Outlook, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development available at www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-spring-2013.aspx

3. CLS, 2012/13 - Cabinet Office Community Life survey


6. ONS, 2013 - Labour Market Statistics

7. Populus, 2013 - Populus


9. UKHLS, 2010/11 - Understanding Society


11. WERS, 2011 - BIS: Workplace Employment Relations Survey


About the ONS Measuring National Well-being Programme
This article is published as part of the ONS Measuring National Well-being Programme.

The programme aims to produce accepted and trusted measures of the well-being of the nation - how the UK as a whole is doing.

Measuring National Well-being is about looking at 'GDP and beyond'. It includes headline indicators in areas such as health, relationships, job satisfaction, economic security, education, environmental conditions and measures of 'subjective well-being' (individuals' assessment of their own well-being).

Find out more on the Measuring National Well-being website pages.