

# Measuring National Well-being - Older People's Neighbourhoods, 2013

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## Abstract

This is the first in a series of short articles examining the well-being of older people aged 50 and over using measures related to the Measuring National Well-being Programme. The Office for National Statistics measures of well-being are organised into ten domains with each domain having between three and five separate indicators. More information about all the measures can be found in the 'National Well-being wheel of measures' (ONS 2012a).

## Introduction

One of the indicators in the 'Where we live' domain is the percentage of people who agree that they belong to their neighbourhood. The information for this measure is taken from Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS) which collects information each year about the social and economic circumstances and attitudes of people. Respondents to this survey were asked if they felt they belonged to their neighbourhood and were also asked whether the friendships and associations they had with other people in their neighbourhood meant a lot to them. Having a strong sense of belonging to one's neighbourhood and a circle of local friends and associates has been shown to be related to greater community cohesion and a higher sense of security. Belonging strongly to a neighbourhood has also been shown to have a positive effect on health and well-being (Windsor et al, 2012).

## Key points

In the UK in 2009–10 for older people aged 50 and over:

- In each older age group a higher percentage reported that they felt that they belonged to their neighbourhood and that local friendships and associations meant a lot to them, compared with the average for all aged 16 and over.
- The percentage of older people who agreed that they belonged to their neighbourhood increased with age, from 69% of those aged 50 to 54 to 84% of those aged 70 and over.
- About 82% of those who agreed that they belonged to their neighbourhood also reported that they were satisfied with their life overall compared with 53% of those who disagreed.
- Those who agreed that local friendships and associations meant a lot to them increased with age from 64% of those aged 50 to 54 to over 80% of those aged 70 and over.

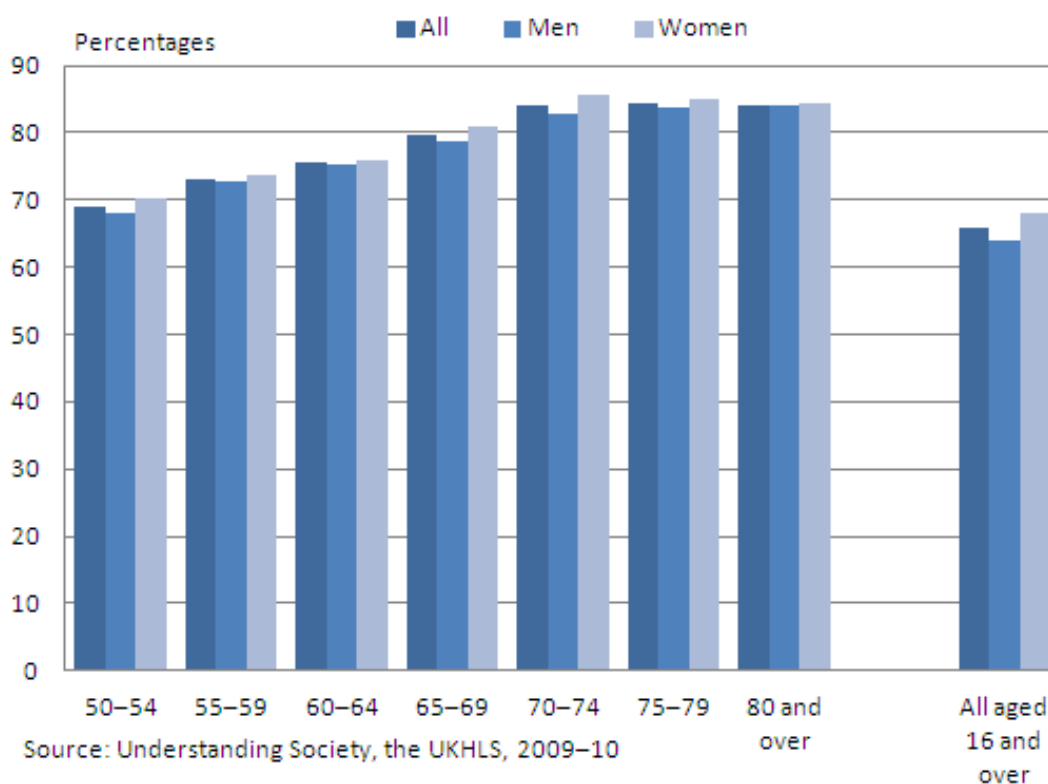
- About 81% of those who agreed that local friendships and associations meant a lot to them were satisfied with their lives overall compared with 64% of those who disagreed.

## Feelings of belonging to the neighbourhood

In 2009–10, 69% of people aged 50 to 54 in the UK agreed or strongly agreed that they belonged to their neighbourhood. This rose to 84% for those aged 70 and over. In each older age group the percentage agreeing that they belonged to their neighbourhood was higher than the average for all respondents aged 16 and over (66%).

**Figure 1: Belonging to the neighbourhood: by selected age groups and sex (1), 2009–10**

United Kingdom



### Notes:

1. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they 'strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree or strongly disagree' with the statement 'I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood'.

### Download chart

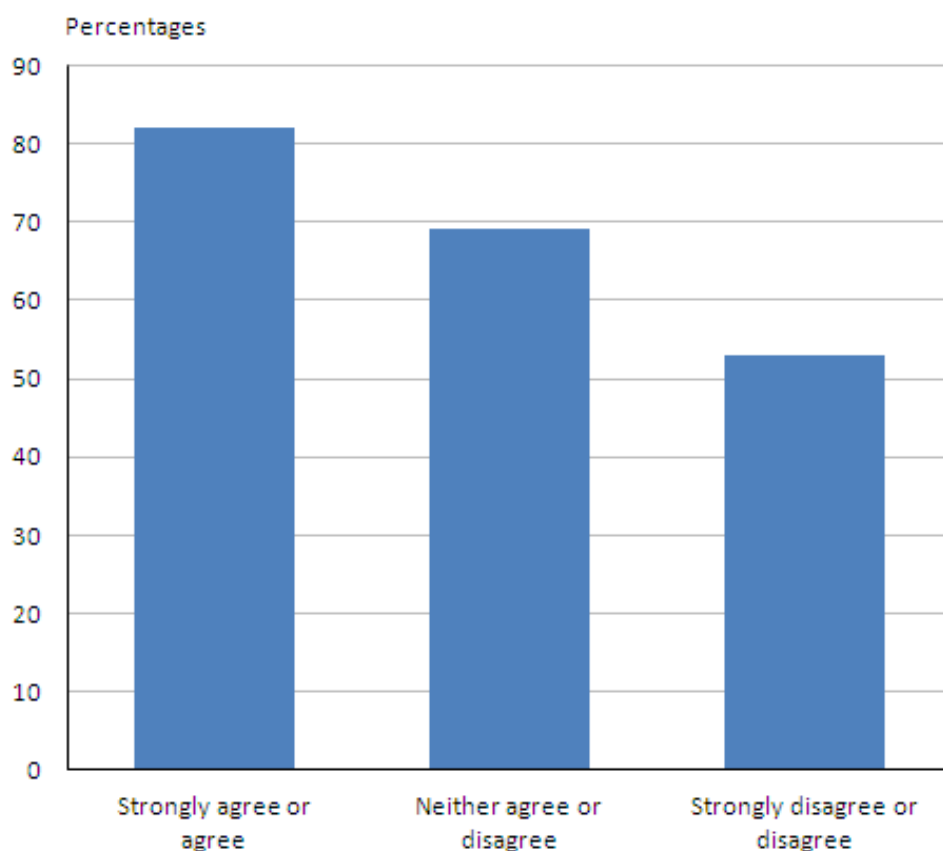
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Feelings of belonging to one's neighbourhood also varied slightly by sex for all respondents aged 16 and over: a higher proportion of women (68%) agreed or strongly agreed that they belonged to

their neighbourhood than men (64%). For those aged 50 and over there were only small differences between the sexes in each age group (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 2: Satisfaction with life (1): by belonging to their neighbourhood (2), 2009–10**  
United Kingdom



Source: Understanding Society, the UKHLS, 2009–10

**Notes:**

1. Includes those who were completely, mostly or somewhat satisfied with their life overall.
2. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they 'strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree or strongly disagree' with the statement 'I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood'.

**Download chart**

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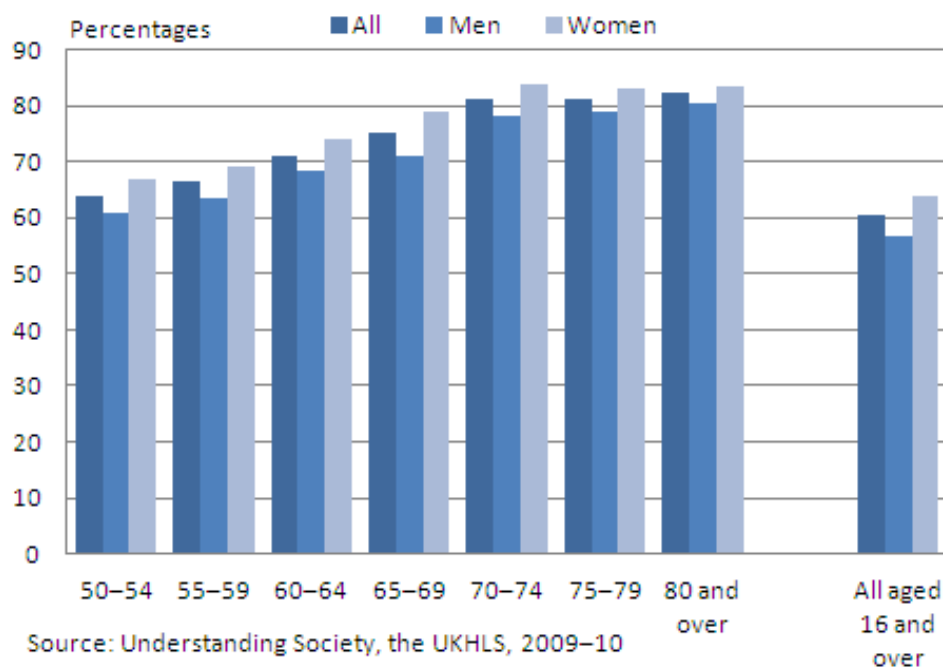
There was a relationship between overall life satisfaction and feelings about belonging to the neighbourhood. About 82% of those aged 50 and over who agreed that they belonged to their neighbourhood were satisfied with their lives overall compared with about 53% of those who disagreed (**Figure 2**).

## Importance of friends in the neighbourhood

Having friends that live locally can be one of the things that make a person feel that they belong to their neighbourhood. Friends are part of a person's support system and, unlike family, are chosen by the individual. They may often give advice on decisions and are companions in life who share interests and can be confided in (ONS 2012b).

**Figure 3: Friendships in the neighbourhood: by selected age groups and sex (1), 2009–10**

United Kingdom



### Notes:

1. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they 'strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree or strongly disagree' with the statement 'The friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot to me'.

## Download chart

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The 2009–10 UKHLS asked respondents if friendships and associations they have with other people in their neighbourhood meant a lot to them. Overall, 60% of respondents aged 16 and over reported that local friends meant a lot to them, with women (64%) more likely to report this than men (57%). Of those aged 50 to 54 years old, 64% agreed or strongly agreed that local friends meant a lot to them. This rose to over 80% of those aged 70 and over. In each older age group a larger percentage of respondents said that local friends meant a lot to them than the average for all aged 16 and over (**Figure 3**).

Just as with feelings of belonging to one's neighbourhood there was a relationship between levels of overall life satisfaction and having local friends and associations. About 81% of those who agreed or strongly agreed that local friends and associations meant a lot to them were satisfied with their lives overall compared to those who disagreed (about 64%).

## About the ONS Measuring National Well-being Programme

### NWB logo 2



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. It is about looking at 'GDP and beyond' and includes:

- Greater analysis of the national economic accounts, especially to understand household income, expenditure and wealth.
- Further accounts linked to the national accounts, including the UK Environmental Accounts and valuing household production and 'human capital'.
- Quality of life measures, looking at different areas of national well-being such as health, relationships, job satisfaction, economic security, education environmental conditions.
- Working with others to include the measurement of the well-being of children and young people as part of national well-being.

- Measures of 'subjective well-being' - individuals' assessment of their own well-being.
- Headline indicators to summarise national well-being and the progress we are making as a society.

The programme is underpinned by a communication and engagement workstream, providing links with Cabinet Office and policy departments, international developments, the public and other stakeholders. The programme is working closely with Defra on the measurement of 'sustainable development' to provide a complete picture of national well-being, progress and sustainable development.

Find out more on the [Measuring National Well-being](#) website pages.

## Background notes

### 1. Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Study

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 policy makers in their work, but the findings are of interest to a much wider group of people including those working in the third sector, health practitioners, business, the media and the general public.

#### Key facts

- 40,000 households – 2,640 postcode sectors in England, Scotland and Wales – 2,400 addresses from Northern Ireland.
- £48.9 million funding (until 2015).
- Approximately 3 billion data points of information.
- Innovation Panel of 1,500 respondents.
- Participants aged 10 and older.
- Building on 18 years of British Household Panel Survey.
- 35 to 60 minutes: the average time to complete each face to face interview.

#### How does it work?

Interviews began in 2009 with all eligible members of the selected households.

- Adults are interviewed every 12 months either face to face or over the phone using Computer Assisted Interviewing.
- 10 to 15 year olds fill in a paper self-completion questionnaire.

From 2010 some 20,000 participants aged over 16 also received nurse visits and provided a blood sample and some basic physical measurements (height, weight, blood pressure, grip strength).

## Data used in this analysis

The data in this analysis is from the adult self completion questionnaire of Wave 1 of the Survey and has been weighted using the interview with self completion individual cross-sectional weight (a\_indscus\_xw).

Throughout this article 'agree' refers to those who strongly agree or agree and 'satisfied' refers to those who report being completely, mostly or somewhat satisfied.

For more information about the UKHLS see [Understanding Society](#)

2. 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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This document is also available on our website at [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk).

## References

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2. ONS2012b Randall C (2012): Measuring National Well-being – Our Relationships, 2012, ONS. Accessed at [Our relationships](#)
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