Measuring wellbeing in Suffolk

2011-2016

Knowledge and Intelligence Team
Public Health and Protection
Contents
1. Executive summary ..........................................................2
2. Methodology and data quality ................................................2
3. Measures and domains ........................................................3
   3.1 Life satisfaction ..........................................................3
   3.2 Worthwhile ...............................................................4
   3.3 Happiness ...............................................................5
   3.4 Anxiety .....................................................................6
1. Executive summary

Since 2011, adults in the UK have been asked about their personal wellbeing as part of the Annual Population Survey in order to better understand how they feel about their lives. Results of the survey to date suggest that nationally, reported personal wellbeing has improved across all the measures during the five years the survey has been carried out. At a more local level, this is also largely the case; figures for the county of Suffolk almost exactly reflect those for both the East of England and England.

Figures for the districts and boroughs in Suffolk for all four of the domains measured (life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety) have seen more variation over the last five years, although generally do show that levels have improved. ‘Improvement’ is indicated here as higher mean ratings for the domains of life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness and lower mean ratings for anxiety.

Although there has been more variation during the 5-year period the survey has been running, most local authorities in Suffolk have remained within the same threshold for each domain, most often the ‘high’ threshold for life satisfaction worthwhile and happiness, and the low threshold for anxiety. The only exception is Forest Heath’s mean rating for happiness in 2013/14, which fell into the medium threshold.

2. Methodology and data quality

People taking part in the Annual Population Survey, a sample of around 320,000 individuals nationally, were invited to answer four questions relating to personal wellbeing by rating them on a scale from 0 to 10 where nought is ‘not at all’ and 10 is ‘completely’.

The four questions are as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td>Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthwhile</td>
<td>Overall, to what extent do you feel that things you do in your life are worthwhile?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ratings for each are divided into the following thresholds:

- Low = 0 - 4
- Medium = 5 – 6
- High = 7 – 8
- Very high = 9 -10

The results were then combined to give an overall mean rating for the United Kingdom and also broken down to provide mean ratings for the individual countries,
regions, counties and districts within it. The results were also weighted to reflect the size and composition of the general population.

It is not possible to calculate confidence levels for the mean ratings as the raw data has not been released; references tables for the data provided by ONS only show breakdown by percentage of the responses from each geographical area by threshold, not by individual score. In addition, some data has been suppressed as the sample size is small and therefore potentially unreliable. Due to the small sample size for all the districts and boroughs in Suffolk, data has been suppressed for reasons of confidentiality for at least one of the thresholds in each measure, therefore the mean ratings should only be taken as estimates, rather than actual figures.

3. Measures and domains

Results in Suffolk over the last 5 years broken down by district/borough.

3.1 Life satisfaction

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

Over the last five years, levels of life satisfaction recorded by the survey in both England and the East of England have increased. Mean ratings have risen from 7.46 in 2011/12 to 7.67 in 2015/16 in the East, and from 7.41 to 7.64 for England in the same period. Figures for Suffolk also reflect this trend, from 7.57 in 2011/12 to 7.68 in 2015/16. Mean ratings in Suffolk are consistently above both the national and regional figures.

Fig 1: Life satisfaction – mean ratings by district/borough in Suffolk, East of England and England 2011-2016

Data source: (Office of National Statistics, 2016) (Note axis does not start at zero)
Individually, the seven districts and boroughs in Suffolk reflect this trend, have all seen variation over the last five years, yet still achieve mean ratings within the high threshold.

- **Babergh**: mean rating is currently 7.63, lower than in 2011/12 and reached 8.02 in 2012/13.
- **Forest Heath**: lowest mean rating was 7.08 in 2013/14; its current mean rating, 7.75, is higher than when the survey began, although still lower than the mean rating in two of the previous years.
- **Ipswich**: mean rating, 7.11 in 2014/15 is the lowest recorded for any of the districts and boroughs over the last five years.
- **Mid Suffolk**: mean rating, reached a peak in 2013/14 at 7.93 and currently stands at 7.84.
- **St Edmundsbury**: mean rating for 2015/16, 7.70, is slightly lower than for 2014/15, which stood at 7.89.
- **Suffolk Coastal**: currently has the highest mean rating of all the districts, at 7.89 for 2015/16.
- **Waveney**: the 2015/16 mean rating (7.71) remains very similar to the figure for 2011/12 of 7.69.

### 3.2 Worthwhile

**Overall, to what extent do you feel that things you do in your life are worthwhile?**

Again, England and the East of England have both seen improvements in mean ratings for Suffolk has also seen an improvement in this period, from 7.78 in 2011/12 to 7.90 in 2015/16, although there was a slight fall in the mean rating in 2013/14 compared to the previous year.

Overall, the mean ratings for all seven districts and boroughs fall into the high threshold category for this measure, and the mean score for this indicator in all Suffolk’s districts and boroughs has improved over time.
Fig 2: Worthwhile – mean ratings by district/borough in Suffolk, East of England and England 2011-2016

Data source: (Office of National Statistics, 2016) (Note axis does not start at zero)

- **Babergh**: mean rating reached a peak in 2013/14 at 8.28 and stands at 8.01 for 2015/16.
- **Forest Heath**: mean rating fell to 7.40 in 2013/14 but rose again the next year and stands at 7.86 in 2015/16.
- **Ipswich**: recorded the lowest mean rating of all the districts and boroughs in 2013/14 over the last five years, at 7.38 and has the lowest mean rating for 2015/16 at 7.69.
- **Mid Suffolk**: mean ratings have been consistent over the last five years and have seen very little variation, from 7.94 in 2013/14 to 8.09 in 2014/15.
- **St Edmundsbury**: mean rating in 2015/16 (7.74) is lower than the figure for 2014/15 of 7.91, the highest mean rating for the borough during the last five years.
- **Suffolk Coastal**: mean rating for 2015/16 at 8.03 is the highest achieved by the district during the period of the survey.
- **Waveney**: has also achieved its highest mean rating in 2015/16, at 7.93.

### 3.3 Happiness

**Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?**

The trend for Suffolk overall for this measure largely mirrors that for the East of England and England – a general improvement over the last five years, with a slight fall in 2012/13. The figures for Suffolk for 2015/16 are very similar to those at national and regional level, with mean ratings of 7.56 for Suffolk, 7.53 the East of England and 7.47 for England.
Most of the mean ratings over the five years for all the districts and boroughs fall into the high threshold category. As with the other measures, there is a great deal of variation within the districts, with some years seeing higher mean ratings than others.

**Fig. 3: Happiness - mean ratings by district/borough in Suffolk, East of England and England 2011-2016**

Data source: (Office of National Statistics, 2016) (Note axis does not start at zero)

- **Babergh**: mean rating for 2013/14, at 8.18, was the highest of any district or borough for the whole period of the survey; by 2014/15 it had fallen to 7.64.
- **Forest Heath**: mean rating in 2013/14 was 6.86, taking it from a high to a medium rating and the lowest for any authority during the survey so far.
- **Ipswich**: In 2013/14, Ipswich was the only authority seeing an improvement on the previous year; its mean rating rose from 7.35 in 2011/12 to 7.54 in 2013/14, although for 2015/16 it is 7.26.
- **Mid Suffolk**: at 7.87, has the highest mean rating of all the districts and boroughs in 2015/16.
- **St Edmundsbury**: had the highest mean rating of all the authorities in 2014/15, but is joint second lowest with Babergh at 7.37 in 2015/16.
- **Suffolk Coastal**: has the second highest mean rating of the authorities in Suffolk for 2015/16 at 7.72.
- **Waveney**: lowest mean rating, 7.28 in 2012/13 is just above the lowest for 2015/16, 7.26 for Ipswich. For 2015/16, Waveney’s mean rating is 7.70.

### 3.4 Anxiety

**Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?**

As with the other three measures, mean ratings for anxiety regionally and nationally have fallen during the period of the survey. Unlike the other measures, the mean ratings for anxiety are positive the lower they are, that is a high score indicates high levels of anxiety within the population sample. Suffolk follows the same overall trend,
with a slight rise in 2013/14 but has ended with a lower mean rating for 2015/16, at 2.81, very similar to the figure for the East, 2.78 and England 2.87.

Mean ratings for all of the districts and boroughs have varied over the last five years but remained within the low threshold. All but three, Babergh, Forest Heath and Mid Suffolk, are lower in 2015/16 than they were in 2011/12.

**Fig. 4 Anxiety – mean ratings by district/borough in Suffolk, East of England and England 2011-2016**

Data source: (Office of National Statistics, 2016) (Note axis does not start at zero)

- **Babergh**: achieved the lowest mean rating of all the districts and boroughs during the five-year period in 2013/14 at 2.42, yet has the second highest mean rating of all the authorities for 2015/16, at 3.07.
- **Forest Heath**: recorded the highest mean rating of all the local authorities in the five-year period, at 3.51 in 2014/15; 2015/16 sees the mean rating fall to 2.81.
- **Ipswich**: mean ratings were consistently above 3 for the first four years of the survey; the mean rating for 2015/16 has fallen to 2.80.
- **Mid Suffolk**: mean ratings were slowly increasing year by year from 2011/12, reaching a peak at 3.19 in 2014/15; for 2015/16 the mean rating is 2.71.
- **St Edmundsburry**: mean ratings were decreasing year by year during the five years of the survey, reaching 2.47 in 2014/15 but have risen to 3.11 for 2015/16.
- **Suffolk Coastal**: mean ratings reached a peak at 3.20 in 2013/14 and have fallen to 2.47 in 2015/16.
- **Waveney**: in 2011/12 Waveney had the highest mean rating of all the districts and boroughs. At 3.27; it now has the joint third highest mean rating with Forest Heath of 2.81.
Bibliography