

The Community Wellbeing Index:

people, place
and relationships

coop.co.uk/wellbeing



Executive Foreword



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Concern for community has shaped Co-op's purpose, values and principles since 1844. As a member-owned organisation we have the unique opportunity to connect with - and understand - the communities served by our different businesses today.

It's why our purpose is to "champion a better way of doing business for you and your communities" - responding to our members' needs and standing up for what they believe in.

Community isn't just about giving back money, it's about understanding what our communities need and helping our members get actively involved to make them stronger.

Our work in communities is wide-ranging, but focused on bringing people together and helping them find new ways to co-operate. Since we re-launched our membership scheme in September 2016 we've given over £24 million back to local causes through our Local Community Fund in the communities where our members live.

We have over 200 Member Pioneers - special people who share our passion to make great things happen - bringing our colleagues, members and local causes together to find new ways to co-operate and get things done in our communities.

We're working with the British Red Cross to campaign against loneliness, raising £6.5 million and tackling social isolation through our Community Connectors programme.

Our campaigning work to tackle modern slavery continues and this year we became the first corporate organisation in the world to sign the Anti-Slavery International Charter.

We also understand the importance of education in our communities and are now the biggest corporate sponsor of academies in the UK, currently running 12 academies and tripling this to 40 by 2022.

That's why we're pleased to be publishing the first ever Community Wellbeing Index which will help our Co-op and others make communities in the UK better places to live for everyone.

What is the Community Wellbeing Index?

The index is based on conversations with people across the UK about what makes their communities tick and gives us real insight into what contributes to community wellbeing at a genuinely local level. It gets to the heart of what's important in a local community - from strong relationships and active participation - to good, local schools, affordable housing and public transport links.

We're committed to developing our community work, and also supporting our members to make a measurable difference and help create true shared value in their communities. The index is already helping us think where we should take our community work next, how we could better target our Local Community Fund, and how we could focus our collective efforts. We encourage people and organisations to check out the inspiring examples of community action, see what the Index shows, and use this data to help make their communities stronger.



Understanding community wellbeing

We've been thinking for some time about how we can add even more value to local communities across the UK. It's important to Co-op that we understand what matters most to the communities we serve to help us focus our community work. We also want to provide others with a resource that can help them make a difference to their community.

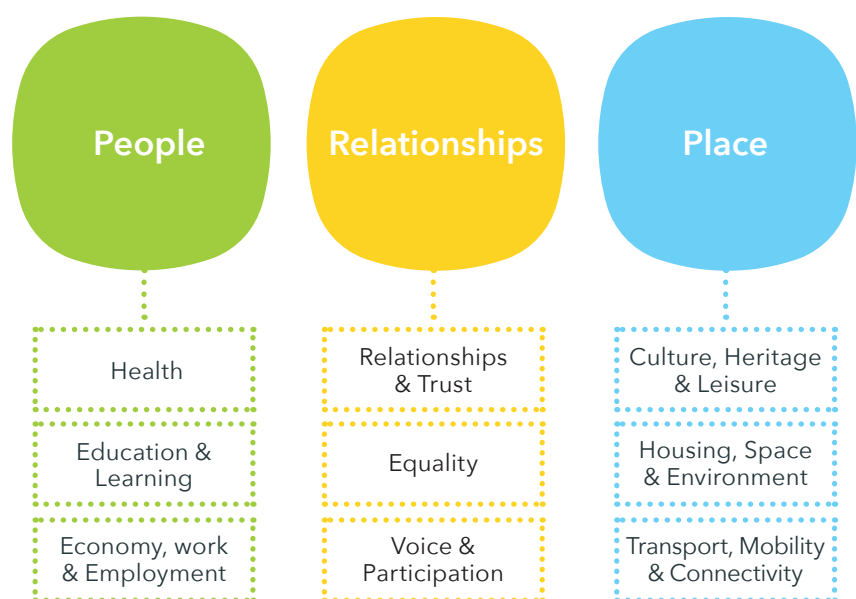
To find out more about local communities, and to promote and improve community wellbeing, we partnered with the Young Foundation and Geolytix to create the Community Wellbeing Index.

As well as looking at existing research and other frameworks, we spoke to experts from academia, think tanks, local government and the third sector. We also spoke to around 400 people across the UK about what matters to their communities.

We found that a sense of place is important in almost all definitions of community and that we would need to build our index with local geography in mind. This led us to define community wellbeing as:

"A collective feeling of leading a 'good life', shared and created by people and systems. Community wellbeing is more than people's individual wellbeing, it's the relationships between people and place."

Our research identified nine main areas that matter for community wellbeing, which people consistently referred to across all of our community workshops. These areas are grouped into people, relationships and place:



Measuring community wellbeing

Working with Geolytix and The Young Foundation we found the best available data to help measure each of the nine main areas of community wellbeing at a local level. We looked for data that would give us a sense of the social and material conditions for community wellbeing and an understanding of the different challenges and opportunities in each community.

We used reliable data sources to measure things like the frequency of buses, access to adult education facilities and public green space in each community. These measures were put into a common scale to create a national percentile ranking, then they were combined to create a score for each of the nine main areas.

We then grouped these scores together to give an overall Community Wellbeing Index score for each community.



People

Health

The services and infrastructure available to support individual and community physical and mental health

Research findings

Physical and mental health are major factors affecting community wellbeing.

The availability of health facilities was a major concern, with people worried about the future of childcare facilities, drug and alcohol centres, care homes and palliative care centres.

Indicators

- Access to health services
- Prescription rates for hypertension and heart failure
- Prescription rates for diabetes
- Prescription rates for depression
- Prescription rates for obesity
- Prescription rates for dementia

Education and learning

Access to learning opportunities, formal and informal, across all age groups

Research findings

Accessible and affordable education, for all age groups, including informal opportunities, was seen as crucial to community wellbeing. People also mentioned the need for appropriate community space and facilities, e.g. libraries where community activities and learning can happen.

Indicators

- Access to educational services and facilities
- School quality

Economy, work and employment

Availability and quality of work as well as a sustainable, accessible and diverse economy that supports communities

Research findings

Our research highlighted the importance of inclusive, sustainable and diverse local economies offering a range of shops and services, preferably within walking distance.

Availability of well-paid, secure local employment was also seen as important, particularly opportunities to enable young people to stay in the area where they grew up. Work-life balance also came up, reflecting the importance of time off to relax, spend time with family and friends, and get involved in communities.

Indicators

- Proximity of work to home
- Hours worked
- Household income
- Empty commercial units
- Free school meals
- Unemployment



Relationships

Relationships and trust

Family, social and community relationships but also the consequences of that trust breaking down into problems like crime.

Research findings

Our community workshops, people talked regularly about the importance of relationships to their sense of wellbeing - including family relationships, friendships, and local acquaintances.

Trust and safety were seen as central to community wellbeing. Strong social relationships reinforce trust and vice versa, but trust can be negatively affected by crime, inequality, antisocial behaviour and feeling unsafe. Issues associated with substance misuse, vandalism, violence and neglected public and private space also erode people's trust in each other and their sense of community wellbeing.

Indicators

- Social spaces
- Presence of young children
- One person household, aged 50+
- Proximity of work to home
- Number of sold houses
- Long-term health status
- Crime in the community
- Crime in nearest town centre

Equality

All the challenges people can face, from economic inequality to social, cultural and political inequality, both individually and as a community

Research findings

Equality was seen as central to community wellbeing - the resources people have access to and how they're treated.

Inequality is not just something that individuals experience, but also something that communities can experience collectively. It's about inequality within as well as inequality between communities.

Indicators

- House price gap
- Second home ownership
- Proximity to private schools
- Gap in qualifications
- Ethnic minority representation in professional occupations
- Income inequality
- Rate of home ownership

Voice and participation

Individuals having a voice and feeling involved in their community

Research findings

People talked consistently about the importance of being able to participate in community activities - and how having a voice and being involved benefits both communities and individuals.

Indicators

- Voter turnout
- Co-op member engagement
- Signing of petitions



Place

Culture, heritage and leisure

Access to arts and entertainment and people's sense of connection to their community's history

Research findings

Research participants talked about accessibility, inclusivity and affordability of culture, heritage and leisure opportunities for their own wellbeing and that of their community.

The sense of connecting to a shared history through local heritage was also seen as supporting collective wellbeing.

Indicators

- Places of worship
- Presence of artists and musicians
- Areas for leisure (sporting)
- Museums, galleries, music halls and theatres
- Listed buildings

Housing, space and environment

The quality and affordability of local housing, as well as access to community and green spaces

Research findings

Participants stressed the importance of affordable, quality housing close to work, family and friends.

There was also a desire for the local environment and public spaces to be clean, safe and inviting. People spoke about how broken shop windows, pollution, litter, fly tipping, dog fouling and damage to the natural environment decreased their community wellbeing.

Indicators

- Affordability of housing
- Overcrowding
- Public green space
- Public space
- Traffic air and noise pollution

Transport, mobility and connectivity

Individuals' ability to get around their community. This includes access to transport as well as technology

Research findings

The accessibility and affordability of local transport was raised by many participants, with some saying that a lack of transport left them 'geographically isolated'.

The difficulty older people face in accessing information and services on the internet was also raised, although younger people see its advantages in bringing communities together.

Indicators

- Internet provision
- Public transport



Co-operation in communities

Our research told us that many people want to come together and make a difference in their community but don't know where to start.

We hope that the Community Wellbeing Index will encourage co-operation in communities so that together we can create stronger, more sustainable and healthier places to live and work in the UK.

About the Co-op

The Co-op is one of the world's largest consumer co-operatives, with interests spanning food, funerals, insurance, electrical and legal services. It has a clear purpose of championing a better way of doing business for you and your communities. Owned by over 4 million members, the Co-op has 3,800 outlets in communities across the UK. It employs around 69,000 people and has an annual turnover of over £9.5 billion.

Find out more

coop.co.uk/wellbeing

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