The Community Wellbeing Index
2021 Data Refresh

It's what we do

Contents

You can jump back to this page by clicking this icon in the top of every page.

Foreword

by Charlotte Lock (Director of Data, Digital & Loyalty) and Rebecca Birkbeck (Director of Community & Shared Value)

The wellbeing of our communities in the UK has experienced more significant shifts over the past 12 months than at any time we have witnessed since the inception of the Community Wellbeing Index (CWI) in 2018. We have seen signals of increased pressure on mental health and prosperity, with a rise in antidepressant use across all regions of the UK, particularly in communities with lower incomes. We have also seen significant increases in unemployment and a corresponding uptake of free-school meals. Housing affordability has decreased and more pronouncedly in areas outside of London. While our communities have been dealing with the pandemic, they have been significantly less likely to sign petitions – which were either less prevalent or lower priority. It's only in Northern Ireland where we have seen significantly increased signing of petitions, likely related to the ongoing Brexit fallout for the country.

The extraordinary circumstances our communities have endured through the pandemic have seen some positive changes too. There have been infrastructural improvements, coinciding with greater home working, with rural communities in particular benefiting from increases in internet speeds bridging some of the urban-rural technology divide. Long periods of lockdown have also shifted the crime landscape with reductions in robberies, muggings and shoplifting across communities; whilst drug and anti-social behaviour related crimes have increased.

Throughout all of these changes, our Co-op members have become significantly more active in their communities, with the number choosing to select a cause through our Local Community Fund increasing in the majority of locations. The use of our Community Wellbeing Index has also grown exponentially. It has become a vital resource to help us and others understand and respond to the changes happening around us, for example by targeting the support provided by our Co-op Members Coronavirus Fund. Despite the changes, the 9 domains that we originally identified and grouped under Relationships, People and Place still remain the areas that matter, and the focus of our Co-op community strategy on fair access to food, mental wellbeing and skills and opportunities for young people has never been more relevant.

Introduction

The Community Wellbeing Index, developed by the Co-op in 2018 in collaboration with the Young Foundation and Geolytix, is the first measure of wellbeing at a local level across all four nations of the UK. With data for over 28,000 communities, covering more than 50 different wellbeing related indicators – the Index has proven to be a vital resource within the community wellbeing space, enabling both the Co-op and external users of the data, to gain hyper-local insight into the strengths of, and challenges facing communities across the UK.

At the Co-op, we have committed to refreshing the Index once a year, to ensure that the insight that it provides remains as accurate, relevant, and up to date as possible.

We are now on the fourth iteration of the data.

For the first time, as part of the annual refresh cycle, we have decided to produce a short report covering key findings from the 2021 update, with a primary focus on what has changed when comparing 2020 to 2021. This has largely come about as a result of the pandemic, and a desire to understand what impact Covid has had on different aspects of life – and wellbeing – in communities across the UK.

Key Findings

- Antidepressant use has gone up by **6.0%** across the UK, with an increase in every UK region.
- Scotland and Wales have seen the biggest year-on year (YOY) increase in antidepressant use, up by **9.3%** and **9.0%** respectively, followed by the West Midlands which has seen a **7.9%** rise.
- Communities with access to green space have seen a smaller YOY increase in prescription rates for antidepressants compared with locales that have more limited access.
- Unemployment across the UK has increased by **57.4%** in the last 12 months. London has been hardest hit, with unemployment rates up by **88.0%**, followed by the South East at **72.6%**.
- YOY increases in unemployment are higher in communities that have higher household income. This appears to be the case in every region of the UK with the exception of Wales.
- Free school meal rates have increased substantially when comparing 2020 to 2021 – and are up by over **10%** across the UK.
- Every region of the UK (with the exception of Northern Ireland) has seen a marked increase in the uptake of free school meals – the East Midlands and East of England have seen the biggest YOY increase, both up by over **18.0%**. This is followed by the North East at **17.2%**, Yorkshire and The Humber at **16.5%**, the South East at **16.4%** and the West Midlands at **16.2%**.
- YOY data shows an increase in internet speeds across **35.3%** of UK locales.
- Whilst London still has the fastest internet speeds on average, the largest increases have been seen in Wales at **58.3%**, Scotland at **45.8%** and the West Midlands at **43.3%**.
- YOY increases in average internet speeds are also stronger across rural communities up **40%**, compared with **22%** in urban locations.
- Whilst housing affordability scores have worsened by an average of **3.4%** on a national scale, areas such as the North West and Yorkshire and The Humber have seen affordability even more heavily impacted, with % changes in affordability of **7.1%** and **5.3%** respectively.
- Lockdown appears to have changed the nature of crimes across the UK. Anti-social behaviour has gone up by **35%** and drug related offences are up by **17%**. On the other hand, theft from the person (muggings) have decreased by **40%**, shoplifting is down by **28%**, burglaries have dropped by **26%** and robberies have decreased by **26%**.
- There has been a big shift in the number of people signing petitions in different regions of the UK. Northern Ireland has experienced the biggest YOY increase – a massive **99.8%** of communities have seen a rise in the number of people signing petitions. Other regions have moved the other way, such as Scotland and Wales, with decreases in **100.0%** of communities, followed by London at **99.8%** and the South West at **99.7%**.

People Pillar

Education and Learning

School quality

- There has been little change in school quality in 2021. Ofsted inspections have not taken place as usual over the last 12 months as a result of the pandemic.

Access to education

- Distance to the nearest school, distance to the nearest library and distance to the nearest adult education facility have also remained static. These are measures which are unlikely to see much of a YOY change.
- At a regional level, people in London have the best access to all three educational services – schools, libraries and adult education. London is followed by Northern Ireland (access to schools), the South East (access to libraries) and the North West (access to adult education).
- Averaging CWI scores for all communities within different regions of the UK produces the following results when focusing on access to education:

Region	CWI Score		
	Access to Schools	Access to Libraries	Access to Adult Education
East Midlands	48	54	47
Eastern	46	49	47
London	85	94	94
North East	45	56	43
North West	53	56	61
Northern Ireland	74	52	54
Scotland	44	53	51
South East	49	61	58
South West	40	45	40
Wales	43	53	51
West Midlands	41	47	53
Yorkshire and The Humber	49	56	52
UK	**47**	**53**	**51**

N.B. All Index scores are out of 100. A high score always represents a community that has scored well for a particular measure, and vice versa for a low score.

Health

Prescription rates for antidepressants

- Antidepressant use has gone up by **6.0%** across the UK, with an increase in every UK region.
- Scotland and Wales have seen the biggest YOY increase in antidepressant use, up by **9.3%** and **9.0%** respectively, followed by the West Midlands which has increased by **7.9%**.
- Prescription rates for antidepressants are generally higher in communities that have lower household income. In communities that have an average income of between £15,000 - £17,500 for example, antidepressant rates are at **15%** (up by **5.5%** compared with 2020). This is almost double the rate of communities that have an average salary of £30,000+, where antidepressant use is at **8.8%** (representing a **3.0%** YOY increase).
- London has seen the biggest YOY increase in antidepressant use amongst lower income households, followed by the South West.
- The disparity in the use of antidepressants between high income and low income locales is greatest in the East Midlands and the East of England.
- Communities with access to green space have seen a smaller YOY increase in prescription rates for antidepressants compared with locales that have more limited access. This re-affirms the widely accepted idea that access to green space can help to promote a better quality of life from both a mental and a physical wellbeing perspective.

Region	Antidepressants YOY Change
Scotland	▲ 9.3%
Wales	▲ 9.0%
West Midlands	▲ 7.9%
London	▲ 7.2%
Northern Ireland	▲ 7.1%
East Midlands	▲ 6.6%
North West	▲ 6.5%
Yorkshire and The Humber	▲ 6.0%
Eastern	▲ 5.4%
North East	▲ 4.8%
South East	▲ 4.7%
South West	▲ 3.5%
UK	▲ **6.0%**

Economy, Work and Employment

Unemployment rates

- Unemployment across the UK has increased by **57.4%** in the last 12 months. London has been hardest hit, with unemployment rates up by **88.0%**, followed by the South East at **72.6%**.
- Unemployment rates are higher in communities that have lower household income. In London this is particularly pronounced, with unemployment at almost **8.0%** within communities that have the lowest income households (bottom **20%**).
- Interestingly, YOY increases in unemployment are higher in communities that have higher household income. This appears to be the case in every region of the UK with the exception of Wales. This could be linked to Covid and the recent loss of work for people in middle income professions, in contrast to those in lower income jobs who may already have been struggling with a lack of job security or minimum hour contracts.

Region	Unemployment YOY Change
London	▲ 88.0%
South East	▲ 72.6%
Eastern	▲ 66.9%
South West	▲ 57.5%
East Midlands	▲ 52.2%
Yorkshire and The Humber	▲ 49.2%
West Midlands	▲ 48.0%
North West	▲ 46.9%
Scotland	▲ 45.4%
Wales	▲ 42.7%
North East	▲ 31.7%
Northern Ireland	▲ 00.5%
UK	▲ **57.4%**

N.B. Unemployment data for Northern Ireland is calculated separately within the Index, as it is based on Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) only, as opposed to Universal Credit which is used for the rest of the UK.

Free school meal rates

- Free school meal rates have increased substantially when comparing 2020 to 2021 – and are up by **11.2%** across the UK.
- Every region of the UK (with the exception of Northern Ireland) has seen a marked increase in the uptake of free school meals – the East Midlands and East of England have seen the biggest YOY increase, both up by over **18.0%**. This is followed by the North East at **17.2%**, Yorkshire and The Humber at **16.5%**, the South East at **16.4%** and the West Midlands at **16.2%**.
- There is, unsurprisingly, a link between unemployment and higher free school meal rates in all parts of the UK.

Region	Free School Meals YOY Change
East Midlands	↑ 18.4%
Eastern	↑ 18.3%
North East	↑ 17.2%
Yorkshire and The Humber	↑ 16.5%
South East	↑ 16.4%
West Midlands	↑ 16.2%
North West	↑ 15.8%
South West	↑ 14.2%
London	↑ 13.4%
Wales	↑ 08.8%
Scotland	↑ 03.3%
Northern Ireland	↓ 00.4%
UK	↑ **11.2%**

Place Pillar

Culture, Heritage and Leisure

- CWI scores within this section generally remain static, as they predominantly relate to metrics that aren't likely to vary too much YOY, for example – distance to the nearest art gallery and distance to the nearest swimming pool.
- London has the best access to areas for leisure, cultural spaces and place of worship, and communities within Northern Ireland have the highest number of listed buildings.
- At a regional level, the current picture is shown in the table below:

	CWI Score			
Region	Areas for leisure	Museums, art galleries, music halls and theatres	Places of worship	Listed buildings
East Midlands	59	48	63	45
Eastern	62	55	69	54
London	93	90	96	52
North East	57	53	51	41
North West	65	61	63	41
Northern Ireland	83	24	51	60
Scotland	56	37	37	37
South East	70	58	66	55
South West	60	52	53	53
Wales	46	43	66	39
West Midlands	56	51	52	45
Yorkshire and The Humber	65	56	63	46
UK	**61**	**51**	**59**	**47**

Transport, Mobility and Connectivity

At a UK level, 2021 data shows that England has the highest overall Index scores for Transport, Mobility and Connectivity at **51** (vs UK average **48**). This is followed by Wales at **43**, Northern Ireland at **42** and Scotland at **40**.

Communication - Internet

- YOY data shows an increase in internet speeds across **35.3%** of UK locales.
- Whilst London still has the fastest internet speeds on average, the largest increases have been seen in Wales at **58.3%**, Scotland at **45.8%** and the West Midlands at **43.3%**.
- YOY increases in average internet speeds are also stronger across rural communities, up **40%**, compared with **22%** in urban locations, potentially due to the rollout of rural broadband services. This is helping to bridge the gap in connectivity between urban and rural areas.

Region	Internet Speed YOY Change
Wales	▲ 58.3%
Scotland	▲ 45.8%
West Midlands	▲ 43.3%
Eastern	▲ 38.2%
South West	▲ 37.9%
North East	▲ 32.3%
South East	▲ 30.8%
Yorkshire and The Humber	▲ 30.0%
East Midlands	▲ 27.0%
London	▲ 21.9%
North West	▲ 21.1%
Northern Ireland	▲ 15.8%
UK	▲ **35.3%**

Housing, Space and Environment

Wales has the highest Index score of all UK nations for Housing, Space and Environment at **60** (vs UK average **54**). This is followed by Scotland at **58**, England at **53** and Northern Ireland at **35**. High scores for Wales are largely driven by good housing affordability, good air quality and low levels of pollution.

Housing affordability

- When completing YOY analysis, London and the South East score most poorly for housing affordability, in both 2020 and 2021.
- Whilst affordability scores have worsened by an average of **3.4%** on a national scale, areas such as the North West and Yorkshire and The Humber have seen affordability even more heavily impacted, with % changes in affordability of **7.1%** and **5.3%** respectively. This could be down to a change in work patterns as a result of the pandemic (home vs office working), leading to an increase in the number of people moving out of the city and into other areas.
- An analysis of ethnicity shows that housing affordability decreases significantly in communities which have a higher proportion of ethnic minority groups present.

Region	Housing Affordability YOY Change
North West	▲ 7.1%
Yorkshire and The Humber	▲ 5.3%
South East	▲ 4.4%
London	▲ 3.9%
Eastern	▲ 3.2%
East Midlands	▲ 3.0%
South West	▲ 2.1%
West Midlands	▲ 2.0%
North East	▲ 1.4%
Wales	▲ 1.4%
UK	▲ **3.4%**

N.B. Data on housing affordability is unavailable for Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Relationships Pillar

Relationships and Trust

Crime in the locale

- There haven't been any major changes in crime numbers across the UK when comparing 2020 to 2021, with around **6.2 million** crimes recorded in both years. However, there have been more significant increases and drops when looking at crime types, which could be linked to the pandemic.
- Most notably anti-social behaviour has gone up by **35%**.
- Theft from the person (muggings) on the other hand have decreased by **40%**, shoplifting is down by **28%**, burglaries have dropped by **26%** and robberies have decreased by **26%**.

Crime Type	YOY Change
Theft from the person	↓ 40%
Anti-social behaviour	↑ 35%
Other theft	↓ 28%
Shoplifting	↓ 28%
Burglary	↓ 26%
Robbery	↓ 26%
Vehicle crime	↓ 21%
Drugs	↑ 17%
Criminal damage and arson	↓ 11%
Bicycle theft	↓ 09%
Possession of weapons	↓ 06%
Public order	↑ 05%
Other crime	↑ 02%
Violence and sexual offences	↑ 01%
Total Crime	**0%**

Neighbourhood Watch supporters

- The number of Neighbourhood Watch supporters across the UK has increased by **13.7%** when comparing 2020 to 2021.
- Yorkshire and The Humber has seen the biggest jump in Neighbourhood Watch supporters, with a massive **60.9%** increase. This is followed by the North West at **18.5%**, Wales at **16.3%** and London at **16.2%**.
- The South East has seen the lowest % increase in Neighbourhood Watch supporters at **4.4%**, followed by Scotland at **5.4%**.
- Neighbourhood Watch have linked this increase in supporters to the pandemic and to national campaigns that have been launched over the last 12 months to help promote the scheme. They have also focused on ensuring that existing members are signed up centrally and not just on local databases, which could account for the significant increase in supporters.

Household churn

- The proportion of houses sold has increased in **22%** of UK communities.
- The South East and the South West have seen the biggest changes, with an increase in **26%** and **24%** of communities respectively. This is followed by the East of England at **23%**. London has seen the least change - just **9%** of communities have experienced an increase in the proportion of houses sold.
- It is likely that increases in house sales can be linked to the stamp duty break.

Equality

- Most Equality measures within the CWI are based on Census data and are not due to be updated until 2022.

House price gap

- 2021 data shows us that for houses sold within communities (as a rolling three-year view), London has the biggest house price gaps on average at **£372,133**. This is followed by the South East at **£250,868** and the East of England at **£172,543**.
- The difference between house prices is lowest in the North East, at **£94,058** on average.
- House price gaps have increased in **45.8%** of UK communities when comparing 2020 to 2021 data.
- London has seen the biggest increase, affecting **60.9%** of its communities. In all other UK regions, increases have been seen in between **40 – 50%** of communities.
- The stamp duty freeze may have driven prices up, increasing overall demand. It is also possible that any savings in stamp duty may have been added on to the value of a house, with sellers anticipating that buyers have more money to spend.
- House price gaps have decreased in **36.6%** of UK communities – this is most true in the East of England, with has seen a drop in **40.4%** of its communities.
- There has been no change in house price gaps in **17.6%** of UK communities.

Voice and Participation

Co-op member engagement

- YOY comparisons show a significant increase in the number of Co-op members selecting a cause through the Local Community Fund (LCF) - **64.6%** of UK communities have seen an increase in the number of Co-op members choosing a cause. The biggest change has been seen in London, where Co-op member engagement has gone up in a massive **91.9%** of locales.
- Such a significant increase in member engagement is likely down to the way in which we have focused on promoting membership and the LCF over the last year. It is also much easier for our members to select a cause compared with previous years – this can be done with just one click, or through the Co-op app.

Signing of petitions

- YOY figures show that **82.1%** of communities have seen a decrease in the number of people signing petitions, with an increase in just **17.9%** of locales.
- There are big regional variations. Northern Ireland has experienced the biggest increase – a massive **99.8%** of communities have seen a rise in the number of people signing petitions. This can be linked to a Brexit related petition – 'Trigger Article 16. We want unfettered GB-NI Trade' - calling for the removal of post-Brexit trade barriers between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.
- The North East has also seen a big increase in the signing of petitions, up in **75.1%** of communities, followed by the North West, up in **62.3%** of communities.
- The majority of UK regions have experienced a drop in the number of people signing petitions – most strikingly in Scotland and Wales (both at **100.0%**) followed by London at **99.8%**, the South West at **99.7%**, the South East at **97.3%** and the East of England at **92.2%**.
- 2020 figures were largely driven by a petition that was started by Marcus Rashford, calling for an end to child food poverty – this was one of the most widely signed petitions of all time, with over 1 million supporters. There were also a high number of COVID related petitions, such as those which requested more financial support for self-employed people and objection to school closures and lockdown, as well as petitions relating to the Black Lives Matter movement.
- In 2021, the petition with the highest number of signatures related to online abuse – calling for the addition of verified IDs to social media accounts. Sanctions against Israel also gathered a high number of signatures, as did petitions relating to England's progress through the Euros football tournament, with a request for an extra bank holiday if England won the competition.

If you would like to discuss the Community Wellbeing Index (CWI) in more detail or have any questions relating to the information contained within this report, please contact **communitywellbeing@coop.co.uk**

About Co-op

The Co-op is one of the world's largest consumer co-operatives with interests across food, funerals, insurance and legal services. Owned by millions of UK consumers, the Co-op operates 2,500 food stores, over 800 funeral homes and provides products to over 5,100 other stores, including those run by independent co-operative societies and through its wholesale business, Nisa Retail Limited

Employing over 62,000 people, the Co-op has an annual turnover of £11.5 billion. As well as having clear financial and operational objectives, the Co-op is a recognised leader for its social goals and community-led programmes. The Co-op exists to meet members' needs and stand up for the things they believe in.