

# Community Life Survey 2015-16 Statistical Bulletin

## Headline Findings:

- Volunteering rates are virtually unchanged from the previous year with 47% reporting any volunteering at least once a month (also 47% in 2014-15) and 70% reporting any volunteering in the past 12 months (compared to 69% in 2014-15).
- In 2015-16, charitable giving remains consistent compared with levels seen in 2014-15 (75%), with 73% giving to charity in an average 4-week period.
- Civic participation (engagement in democratic processes, in person or online) continues to be the most common form of civic engagement. The proportion of people participating at least once a year has risen from 30% in 2014-15 to 34% in 2015-16. Levels of regular civic engagement (at least once a month) remain consistent with levels seen last year (4% compared to 5% in 2014-15) and previous survey years
- In 2015-16, 68% of people agreed that their neighbourhood pulls together to improve the area, up from 63% in 2014-15 and 60% in 2013-14.
- In 2015-16, a higher proportion of people (89%) agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, compared to 86% in 2014-15. This is the highest level recorded since 2003.
- There has been an increase in those who 'feel satisfied with their life', and levels are at the highest recorded since 2012-13 (average of 7.9 out of 10, where 0 is not at all satisfied and 10 is completely satisfied). Other measures of wellbeing remain relatively unchanged compared to 2014-15.



Cabinet Office

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Community Life

# Introduction



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The Community Life Survey is a major survey of adults (16+) in England, that aims to track the latest trends and developments across areas that are key to encouraging social action and empowering communities, such as.

- volunteering and charitable giving;
- neighbourhood (views about the local area, community cohesion and belonging);
- civic engagement;
- social action; and
- well-being.

This nationally representative survey aims to provide data on behaviours and attitudes within communities to inform and direct policy and action in these areas. The survey provides data of value to a range of users, including central government departments, public bodies, external stakeholders and the public.

These findings are Official Statistics and fall under the remit of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

More information can be found at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf>

## Survey design:

The Community Life Survey is a household survey carried out via face-to-face interviews from July 2015 to April 2016. The 2015-16 survey consists of a sample size of 3,000.

Further details regarding survey methodology can be found in the notes, and a full technical report will be released in Autumn 2016.

A small number of measures from the previous Citizenship Survey<sup>1</sup> have been incorporated into the Community Life Survey in order that trends in these issues can continue to be tracked over time. For other measures, a time-series is available for 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15.

## Notes:

1. Throughout the bulletin, a significant difference indicates a statistically significant difference at the  $P < 0.05$  level. This means that the probability of any observed change happening by chance is low (1 in 20).
2. When stating changes in previous survey levels, we only state those that are significantly different, unless otherwise stated.
3. Unless stated otherwise, results are compared to the previous survey year, 2014-15.

# Volunteering

See Table 1<sup>1</sup>

In 2015-16, 70% of respondents participated in any volunteering at least once a year and 47% at least once a month.

These levels are consistent with the previous year's survey, although annual volunteering levels remain lower than 2013-14 (74%).

Participation in informal volunteering remains higher than formal volunteering, a trend consistent across all survey years.

For formal volunteering, 27% of respondents participated regularly (at least once a month) and 41% reported having done so at least once in the last year.

For informal volunteering, 34% volunteered regularly and 60% at least once in the last year.

There is no change in the proportion of people taking part in employer-supported volunteering compared with 2014-15 (8%) and 2013-14 (8%), but levels are higher than those recorded in 2012-13 (6%).

Regionally, there has been a decrease in any volunteering at least once a year in London compared with all survey years since 2012-13. In 2014-15 levels were at 66% falling to 54% in 2015-16. All other regions remain consistent with the previous year (2014-15) apart from the East Midlands, which has seen an increase compared with last year, increasing from 68% to 80%.

Formal volunteering - providing unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations.  
 Informal volunteering - unpaid help as an individual to people who are not a relative.  
 Any volunteering - both formal and informal volunteering.  
 Employer supported volunteering - volunteering that is enabled by an individual's employer.

Figure 1: Formal, informal and overall volunteering, at least once a month; 2001 to 2015-16<sup>1</sup> (percentage)

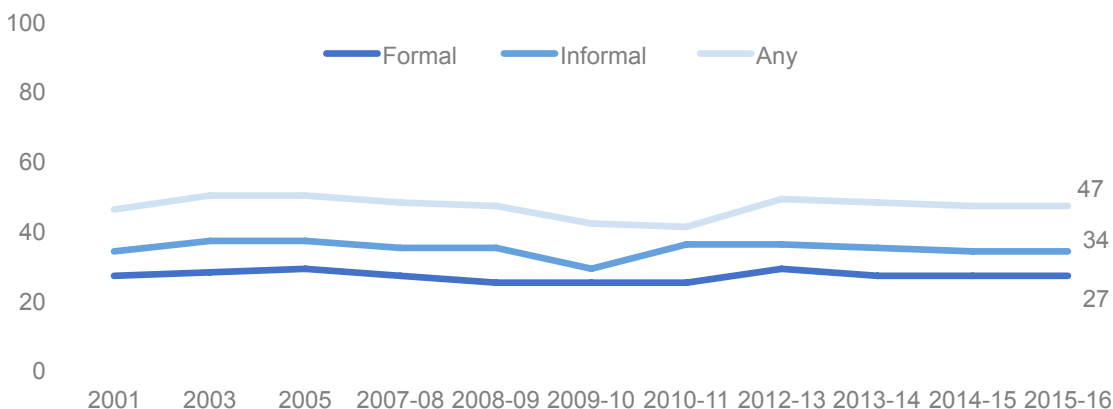
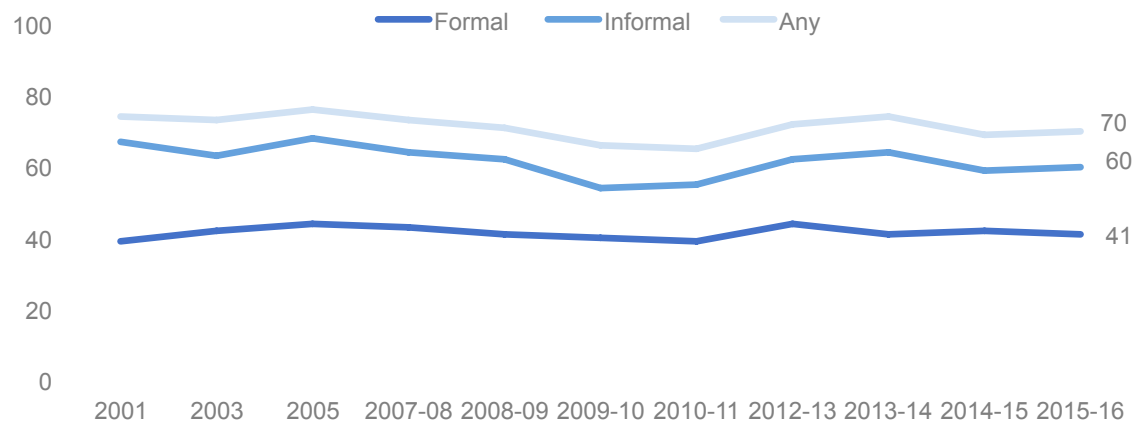


Figure 2: Formal, informal and overall volunteering, at least once a year; 2001 to 2015-16 (percentage)



<sup>1</sup>The citizenship survey was conducted on a biennial basis from 2001-2007, when it then moved to an annual cycle, therefore no data is published for 2006-07

# Charitable Giving

See Tables 5 & 6

Respondents are asked about their charitable giving habits four-weeks prior to interview.

Overall, 73% of people gave money to charity in the four weeks prior to being interviewed. This is broadly consistent with levels seen in recent years.

In 2015-16, people gave on average £22 to charity in the four weeks prior to interview, the same as last year (£22) and the highest levels recorded across all survey years.

Whilst the average proportion of people who gave to charity remains consistent with last year, there has been a change in the average amounts given. The proportion of people who gave an average of £10-£19 (22%) has decreased compared with the levels seen in 2014-15 (27%), but is consistent with all other survey year levels. The proportion of those giving £20-£49 has increased (28%) compared with last survey year (24%) and is higher than all other survey years.

Levels of charitable giving in London have decreased compared with all survey years since 2012-13, with 58% giving to charity 4 weeks prior to interview, compared with 72% in 2014-15. All other regions remain consistent with levels seen in the previous year (2014-15).

Figure 3: People who gave to charity 4-weeks prior to interview, 2005<sup>2</sup> to 2015-16 (percentage)

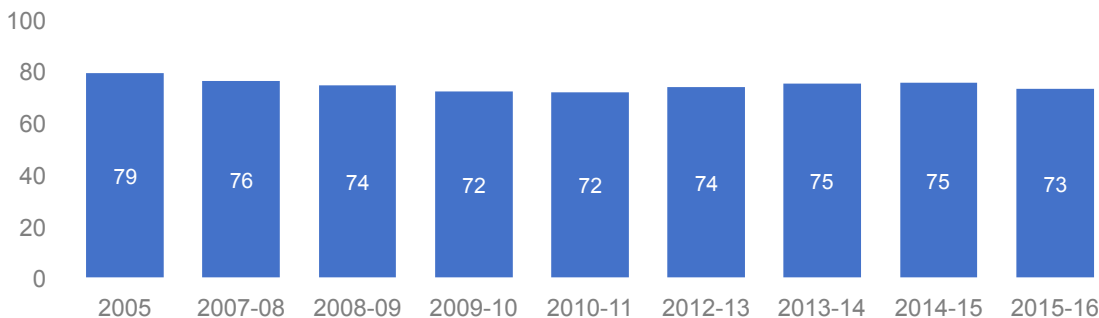


Figure 4: Relative change in the average amounts given to charity, 2005 to 2015-16 (percentage)

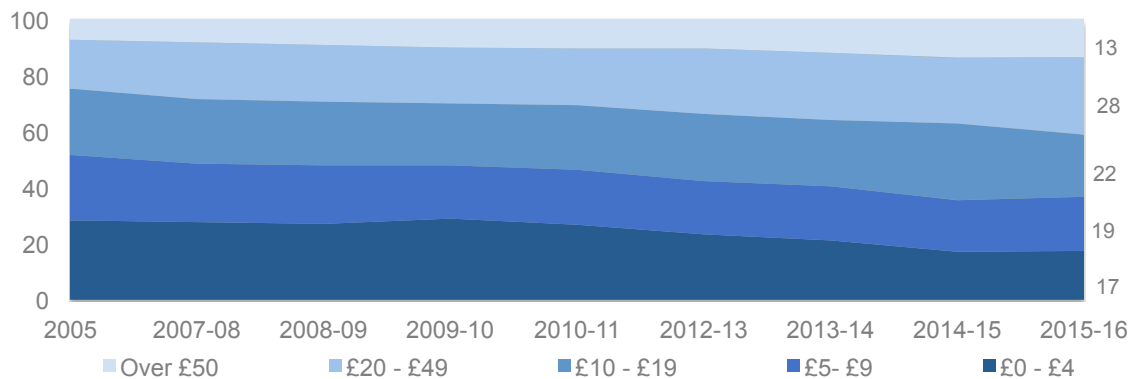
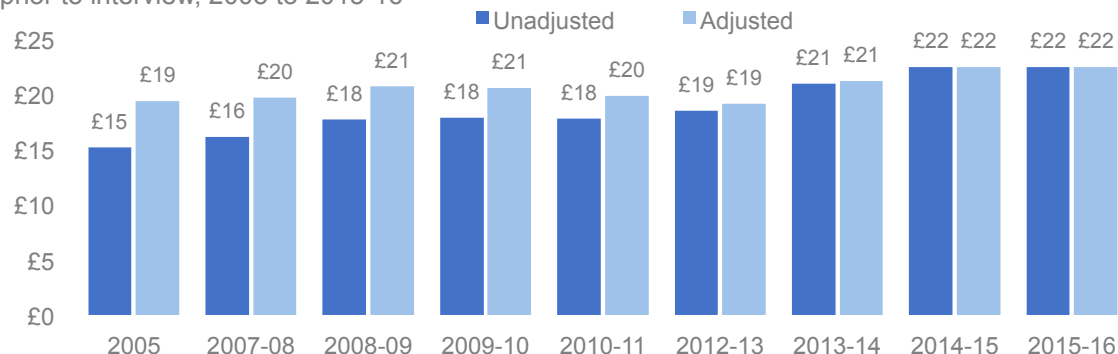


Figure 5<sup>3</sup>: Overall average amount (adjusted for inflation and unadjusted) given to charity 4-weeks prior to interview, 2005 to 2015-16



<sup>1</sup>The citizenship survey was conducted on a biennial basis from 2001-2007, when it then moved to an annual cycle, therefore no data is published for 2006-07

<sup>2</sup>Mean calculations exclude those who donated £300 or more

# Civic Engagement & Social Action

See Tables 1 & 7

In 2015-16, civic participation is the most common form of civic engagement<sup>1</sup> and this is true for both annual (34%) and monthly (4%) levels.

Whilst levels of regular civic participation (at least one a month) remain consistent (4% compared with 5% in 2014-15), the proportion of those reporting some civic participation at least once a year has increased compared with levels in 2014-15 (34% compared with 30%).

Civic consultation levels remain consistent for both annual (16%) and monthly (2%) participation compared to 2014-15. Civic activism also remains consistent, with 10% taking part at least once in the last year<sup>2</sup>.

Respondents were asked about both their awareness and involvement in social action in the last year. Over a third of people were aware<sup>3</sup> of social action (35%), remaining consistent with previous years. Involvement in social action (18%) also remains consistent compared to 2014-15 and 2013-14 (18%).

Civic participation – engagement in democratic processes, both in person and online, including signing a petition or attending a public rally.<sup>4</sup>  
 Civic consultation – taking part in consultations about local services, both in person and online.  
 Civic activism – involvement in decision-making about local services, both in person and online.  
 Social action – people getting together to support a community project in their local area.

Figure 6: Whether people engaged in civic participation, consultation or activism at least once a year, or at least once a month; 2012-13 to 2015-16 (percentage)

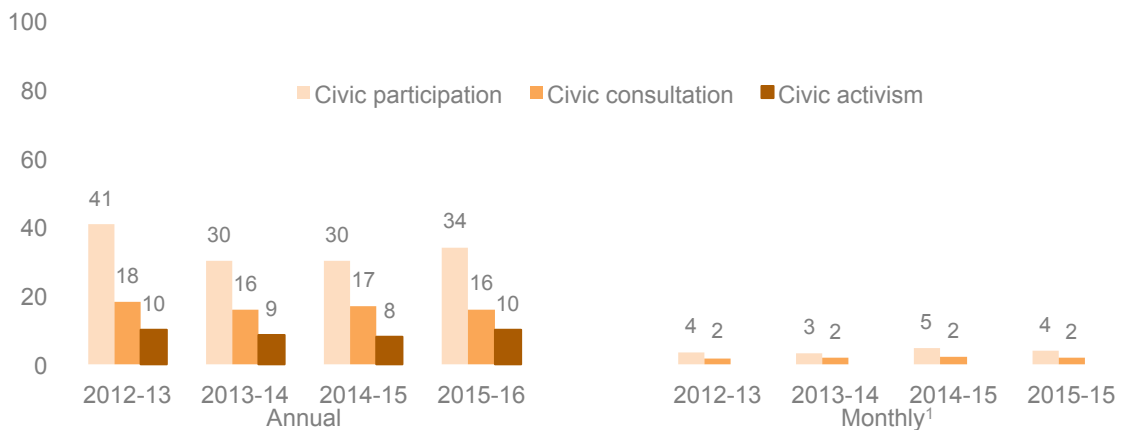
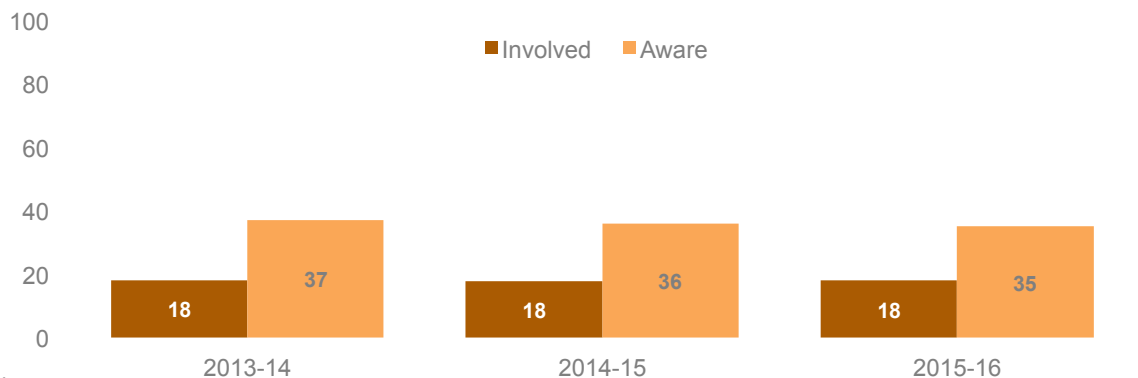


Figure 7: Whether people were involved or aware of social action in their local area at least once in the past year; 2013-14 to 2015-16 (percentage)



<sup>1</sup>The term civic engagement includes; civic participation, consultation and activism

<sup>2</sup>Civic activism is only measured on an annual basis and so monthly figures for engagement in civic activism are not available.

<sup>3</sup>After 2012-13, respondents were only asked if they were aware of social action projects if they were not involved in them, and therefore it is not possible to compare back to 2012-13

<sup>4</sup>Civic participation does not include 'voting' within its measures, therefore results shown here are not measuring voting behaviours of the 2015 general election. There is a separate question asked re. individual voting behaviour, which will be available in the data archive in Autumn 2016 ([www.data-archive.ac.uk](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk))

# Community Decisions

Influencing and involvement in decisions  
See Tables 14, 16 & 17

Consistent with findings from recent years, over a third (36%) of people agree that they can influence decisions that affect their local area.

More than two thirds (68%) of people agree that it is important to be able to influence decisions. This is consistent with 2013-14 and 2014-15 survey findings but lower than the 2012-13 survey and findings from the Citizenship survey.

There has been a decrease in the proportion of people who would like to be more involved in the decisions made by their local council, reducing to 39% in 2015-16 compared with 43% in 2014-15. This is the lowest level recorded in all survey years. Additionally, compared with 2013-14 (17%) and previous survey years, there has been an increase in the proportion of people who said that it would 'depend on the issue' (24%).

For the purpose of this survey, a local area is defined as an area within a 15-20 minute walk from your home.

Figure 8: People who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area, and those who feel it is important to be able to influence decisions, 2007-08 to 2015-16 (percentage)

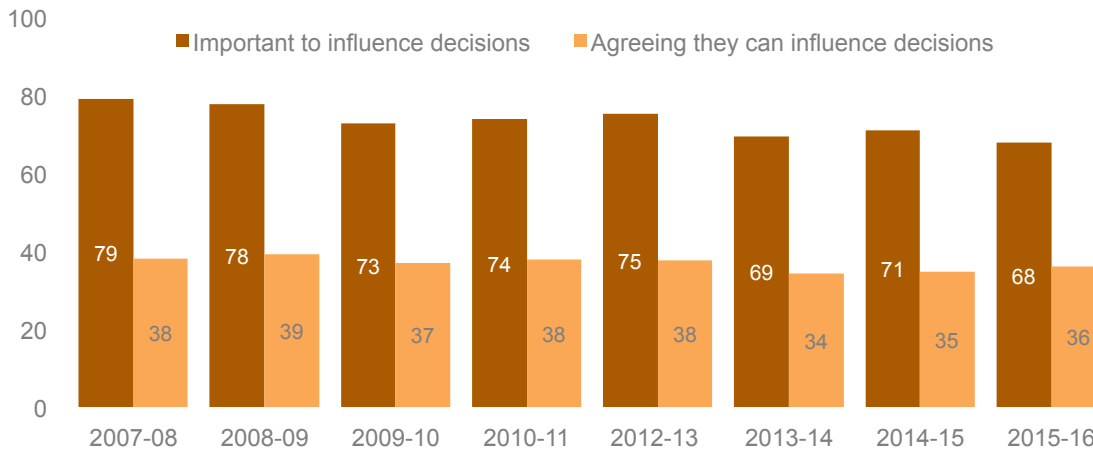
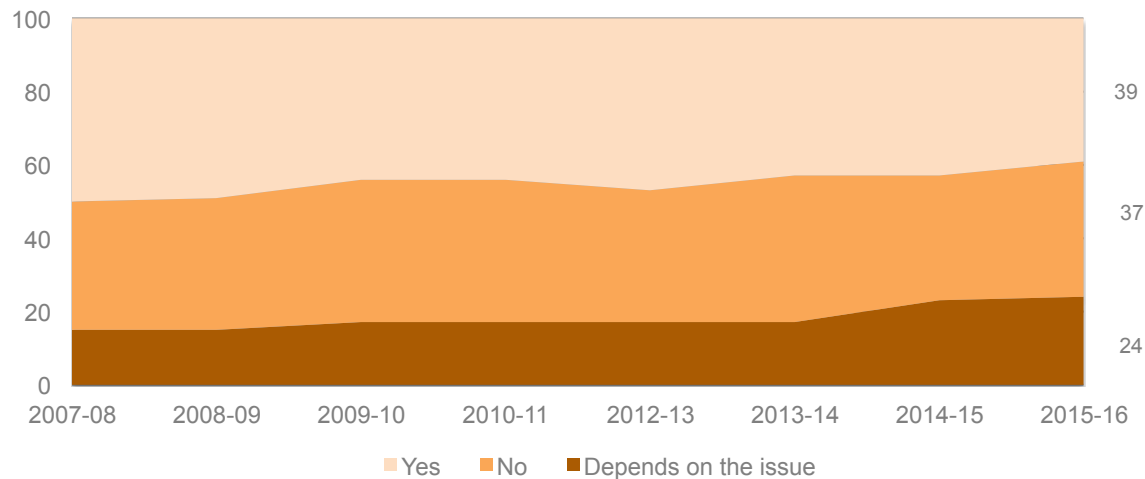


Figure 9: Whether people would like to be more involved in decisions made by their council affecting their local area, 2007-08 to 2015-16 (percentage)



# Neighbourhood

## Pulling together, Belonging and Community Cohesion

See Tables 8,10 & 13

Almost 9 in 10 people (89%) feel they belong strongly to Britain in 2015-16, comparable with levels seen in 2014-15 (87%), and higher than levels seen in 2013-14 (86%).

71% of people feel strongly that they belong to their neighbourhood, which is consistent with levels seen in 2014-15 (72%). However, levels remain lower than those recorded between 2005 to 2012-13.

Levels of community cohesion are at their highest since records began, with 89% of people agreeing that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

Over two thirds (68%) of people agree that people in their neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood, up from 63% in 2014-15.

Figure 10: People who feel they belong strongly to their neighbourhood or to Britain, 2005 to 2015-16 (percentage)<sup>1</sup>

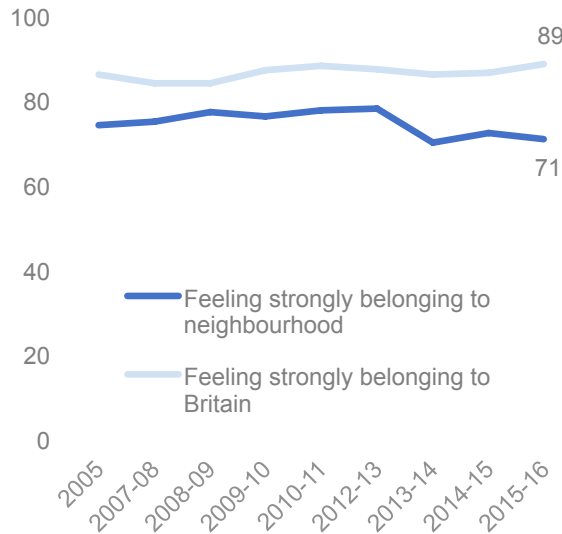


Figure 11: People who agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well, 2003 to 2015-16

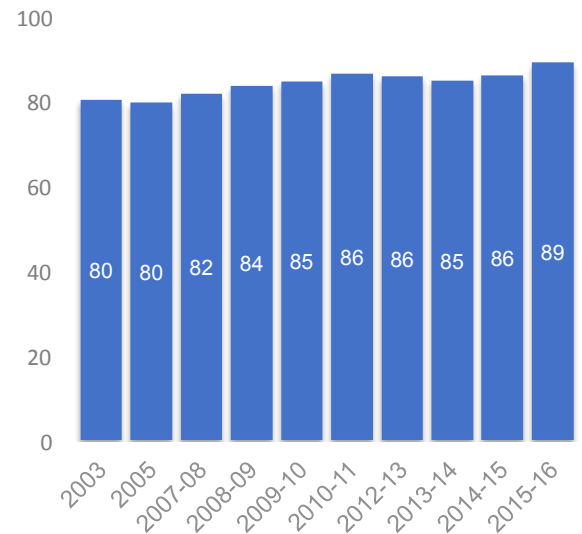
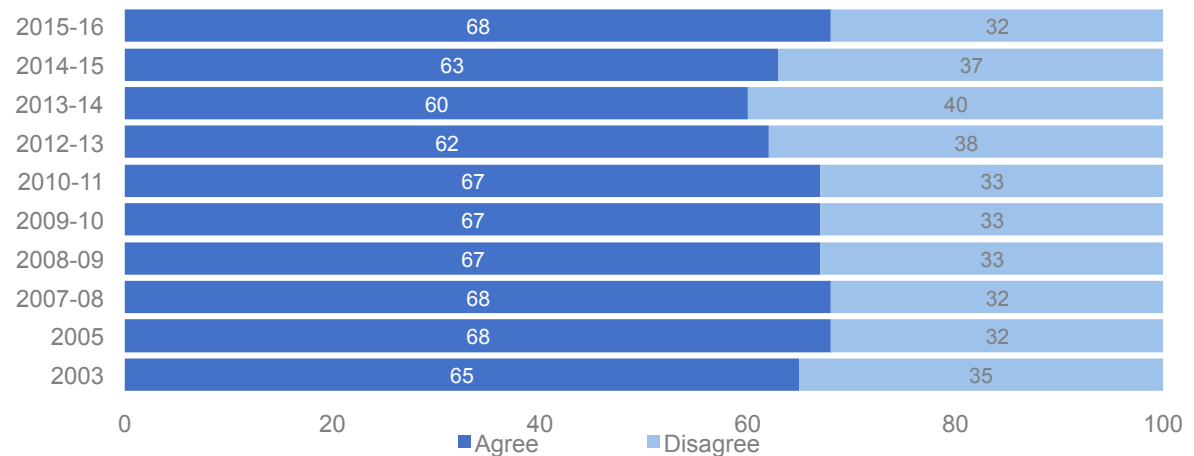


Figure 12: People who agree or disagree that people in their neighbourhood pull together to improve their neighbourhood, 2003 to 2015-16 (percentage)



<sup>1</sup>The Citizenship Survey was conducted on a biennial basis from 2001-2007, when it then moved to an annual cycle, therefore no data is published for 2006-07

# Neighbourhood

## Chatting to and borrowing from neighbours

See Tables 9 & 20

In 2015-16, over three quarters of people said that they chatted to their neighbours at least once a month, more than just to say hello. These levels are consistent with those seen in 2014-15 (79%) and 2013-14 (75%). However, levels are lower than the highest levels recorded in 2012-13 (80%).

46% either definitely or tend to agree that they borrow and exchange favours with their neighbours, which is consistent with levels seen in 2014-15, but lower than the levels recorded in 2012-13 (49%).

Figure 13: People who agree they chat to their neighbours at least once a month, 2012-13 to 2015-16 (percentage)

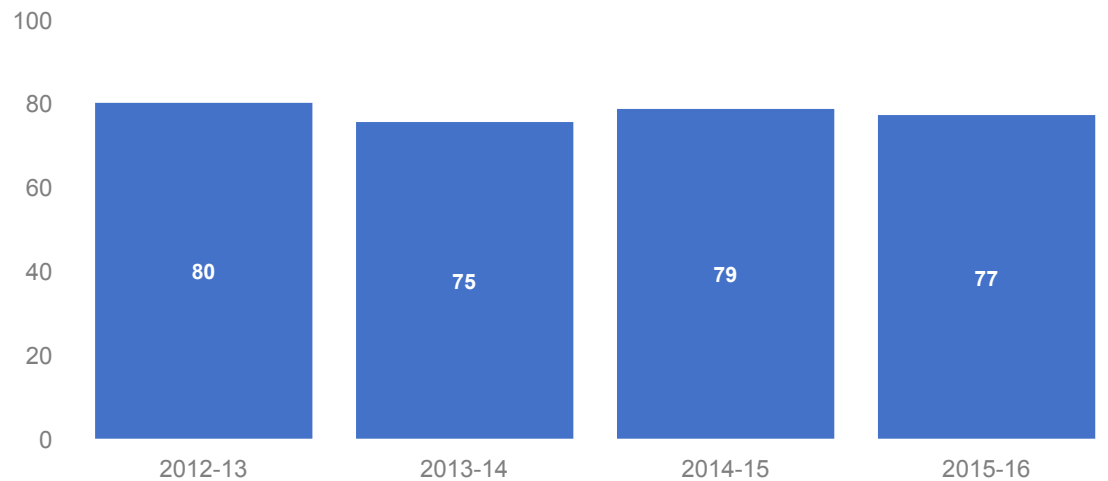
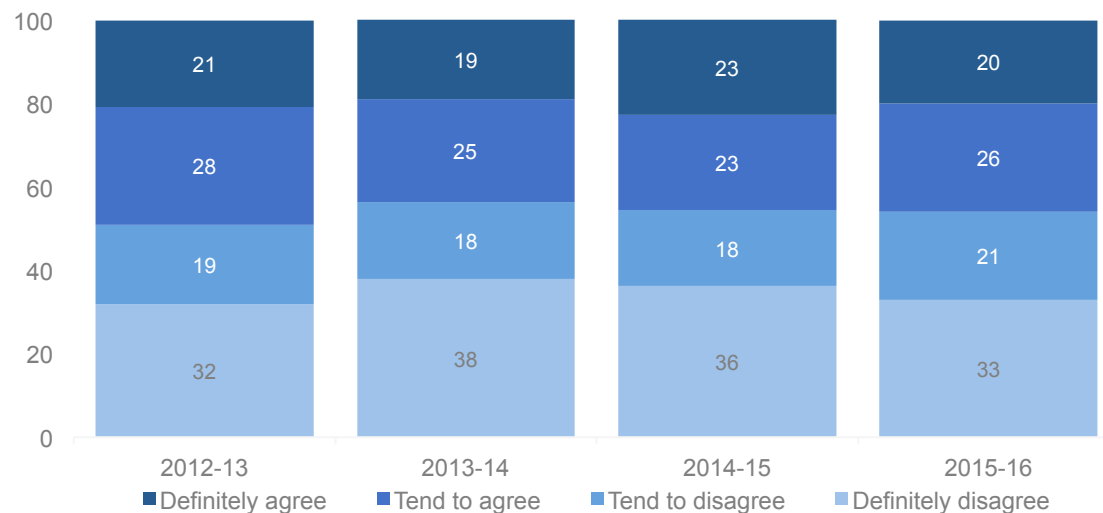


Figure 14: Extent to which people agree that they borrow things and exchange favours with their neighbours, 2012-13 to 2015-16 (percentage)





# Community

## Satisfaction and improvement

See Tables 12 & 21

In 2015-16, 86% of people felt 'very or fairly' satisfied with their local area, consistent with levels seen over recent years. Levels of those who are 'very dissatisfied' remain at only 2%, consistent with all other survey years.

18% of people reported that they felt that in the last two years their local area had become a better place to live in. This is similar with levels reported in 2014-15 (17%).

For the purpose of this survey, a local area is defined as an area within a 15-20 minute walk from your home.

Figure 15: People who are satisfied or dissatisfied with their local area as a place to live; 2008-09 to 2015-16 (percentage)

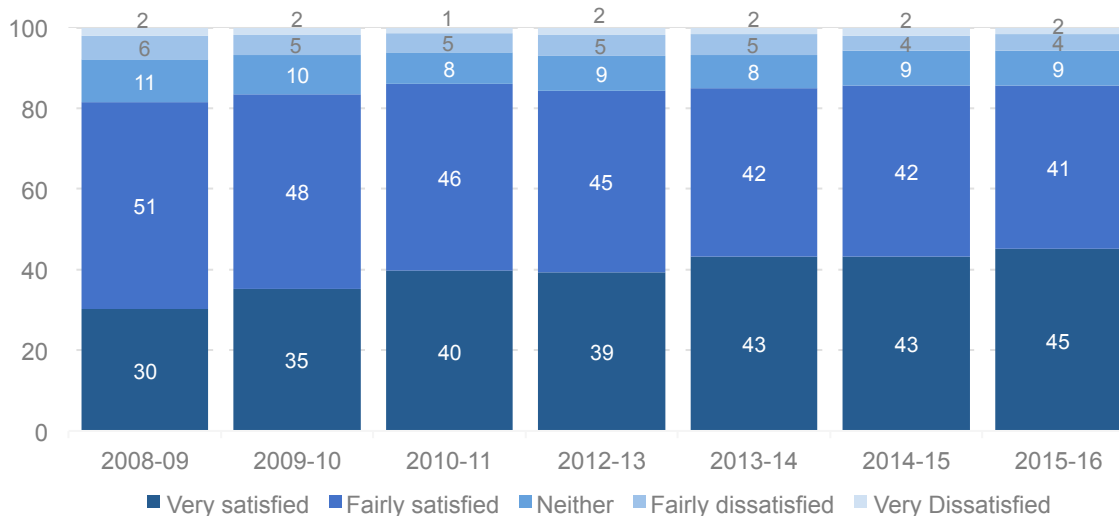
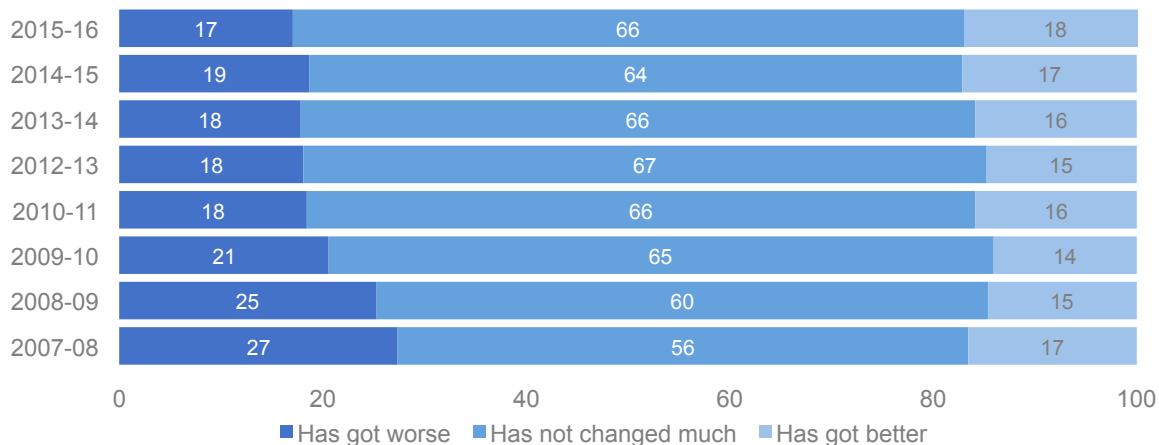


Figure 16: People who think their local area has got better, worse or not changed in the past 2 years; 2007-8 to 2015-16 (percentage)



# Wellbeing

See Tables 18 & 19

All measures of wellbeing are higher than the levels seen in 2012-13 and 2013-14<sup>1</sup>.

There has been an increase in people's average rating of overall 'life satisfaction' with average levels in 2015-16 at 7.9. This is up 0.13 points since 2014-15 and higher than any other levels recorded since 2012-13.

Average levels of 'happiness yesterday' in 2015-16 is 7.7, virtually unchanged compared with 2014-15 (up 0.01 points).

Average levels of whether people felt that 'the things they did in their life were worthwhile' in 2015-16 is 8.0, the same as levels in 2014-15.

Average levels of 'anxiousness yesterday' in 2015-16 is 2.5, remaining consistent compared with 2014-15 (down 0.16 points).

Levels of loneliness in 2015-16 are consistent with both 2014-15 and 2013-14. Over a third of people (34%) hardly ever felt lonely and 31% never felt lonely.

Measured on a scale where 0 is not at all satisfied/ happy/ worthwhile/ anxious and 10 is completely satisfied/ happy/ worthwhile/ anxious.  
Happiness and anxiousness is measured by asking 'how happy / anxious' respondents felt yesterday.  
Worthwhile is measured by asking respondents how far they felt the things they do in life are worthwhile.  
Life satisfaction is measured by asking respondents how satisfied they are with their life nowadays.

Figure 17: Average rating for wellbeing measures, 2012-13 to 2015-16 (mean)

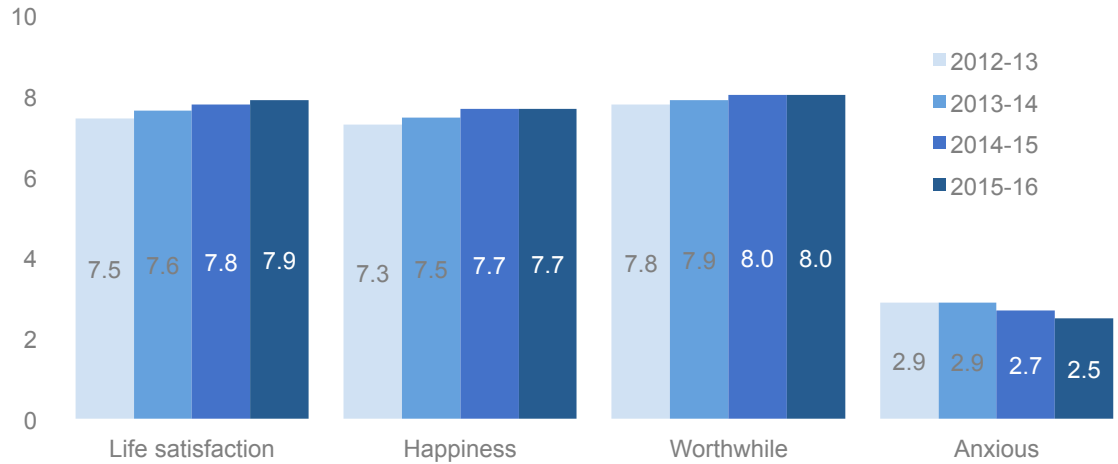
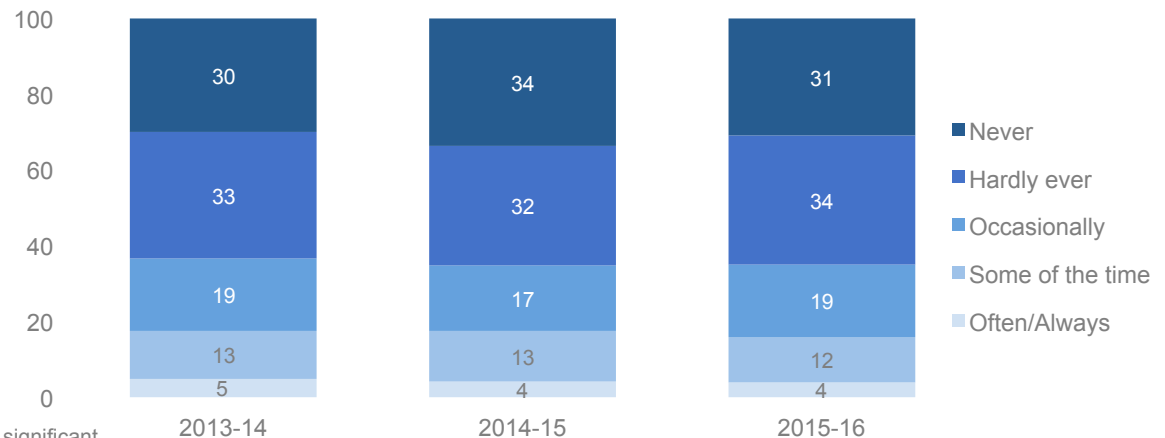


Figure 18: How often people felt lonely, 2013-14 to 2015-16 (percentage)



<sup>1</sup>The year-on-year differences that are reported are small but statistically significant

# Notes

## Contents of report

This Statistical Release sets out the key headlines from the Community Life Survey topic areas, supporting Cabinet Office's and Other Government Department's priorities. Additional measures and survey questions that are not included within this report will be available within the archived dataset, due to be published on the University of Essex data archive ([www.data-archive.ac.uk](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk)) in Autumn 2016.

## Background notes

The Community Life survey is commissioned by the Cabinet Office and the fieldwork is conducted by TNS-BMRB. It is an annual household survey, conducted via face-to-face interviews. This release is based on interviews carried out between July 2015 and April 2016. The exact total sample size for this period was 3,027. The median interview length was 36 minutes. Previous year's publications can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-life-survey>

The data are weighted to ensure the representativeness of the sample by compensating for differences in sampling probabilities and non-response by sub-group. Weighting is based on ONS 2013 mid-year population estimates in terms of age, sex and regional distribution.

All differences and changes reported in this release, both between groups and over time, are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, unless otherwise specified. This means that the probability of any observed change happening by chance is low (1 in 20). A 'ready reckoner' has been provided alongside the Excel tables which can be used to test for statistical significance between percentages in the tables at the 95% confidence level. More information will be available in the full technical report, which will be published in early Autumn 2016.

The Community Life Survey incorporates key measures from the previous Citizenship Survey and has used a comparable methodology in order that trends in such measures can be tracked over time.

The Cabinet Office has consulted twice with end users on a number of different issues to inform and shape the future of the survey, including the future methodology. A written response to the most recent consultation can be found at; <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/community-life-survey-development-of-future-survey-methodology>

We continue to welcome any feedback from users of the survey, along with the presentation of the annual headline findings.

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