

The current state of wellbeing in Australia

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What is the current state of wellbeing in Australia?



How many & which Australian residents have high wellbeing?

Who has opportunities for a great quality of life – and who doesn't?



Do our communities support good wellbeing for all?

Do they provide residents with a good quality of life, including social connection & support, safety, amenity, services, infrastructure, environmental health, and economic opportunity?



Is our wellbeing at the expense of other's wellbeing? Are we fulfilling obligations to others – including those in other countries, and to non-humans?



Is our wellbeing sustainable over the long term? Or are we supporting wellbeing now at the expense of future wellbeing?

Tracking the wellbeing of Australians

Australia in the global context

OECD Better Life Index

World Happiness Report

Human Development Index

... and more

National wellbeing measurement initiatives

Measuring what Matters
& many other Australian Bureau of Statistics data products

Regional Wellbeing Survey

Carer Wellbeing Survey

SGS Cities & Regions Wellbeing Index

Australian Unity Wellbeing Index

Australian Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas

Mapping social cohesion

Mayi kuwayu

... and many more

Local, state and territory initiatives

More and more jurisdictions and communities are investing in their own wellbeing monitoring, using indicators important to them e.g. ACT Wellbeing Framework

Australia's wellbeing: How do we stack up globally?

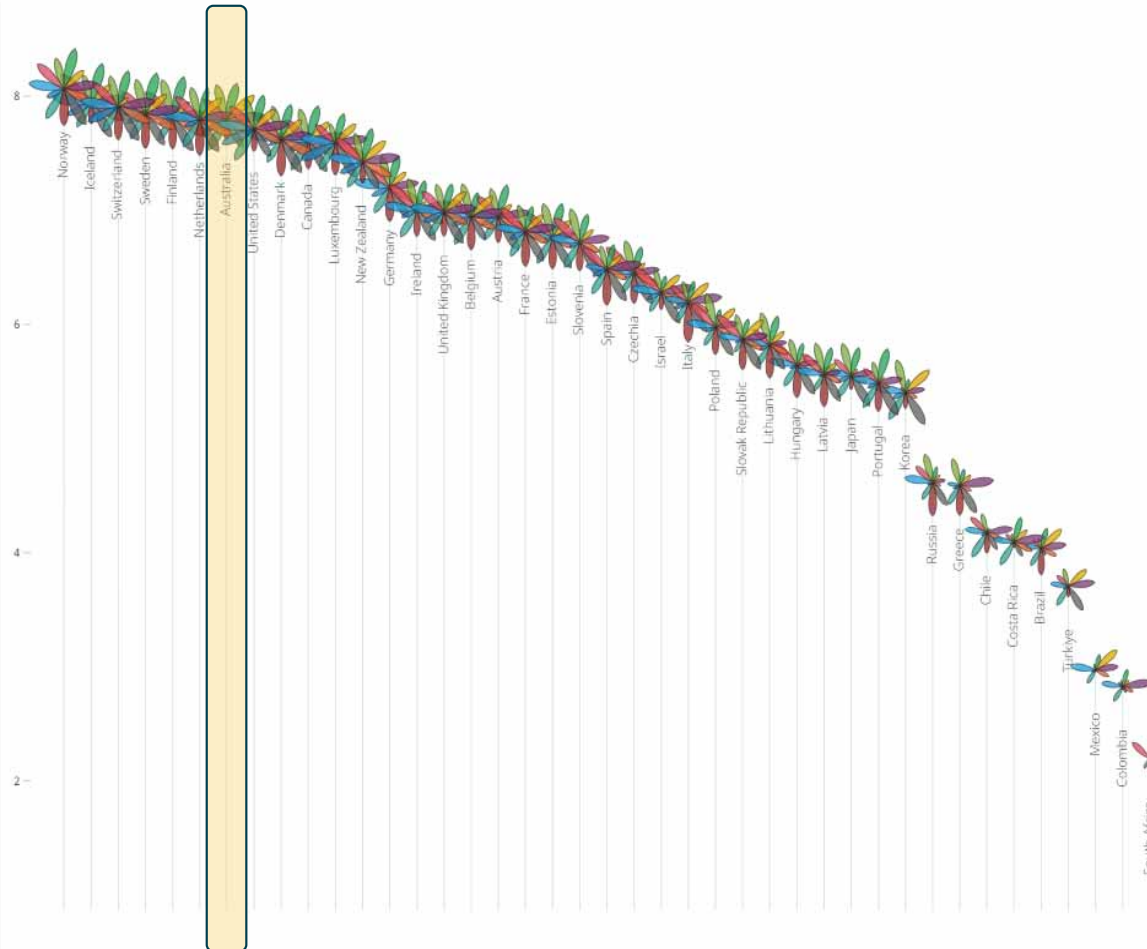
Create your Better Life Index ①

Adjust the sliders according to how important each dimension is to you (from 0-10):



Sort countries by:

Performance (Highest First)



The OECD Better Life Index ranks us 7th out of 41 countries (latest data 2021-2023)

The World Happiness Report ranks us 11th out of >140 countries (latest data 2024)

The Human Development Index ranks us 7th out of >70 countries (latest data 2023)

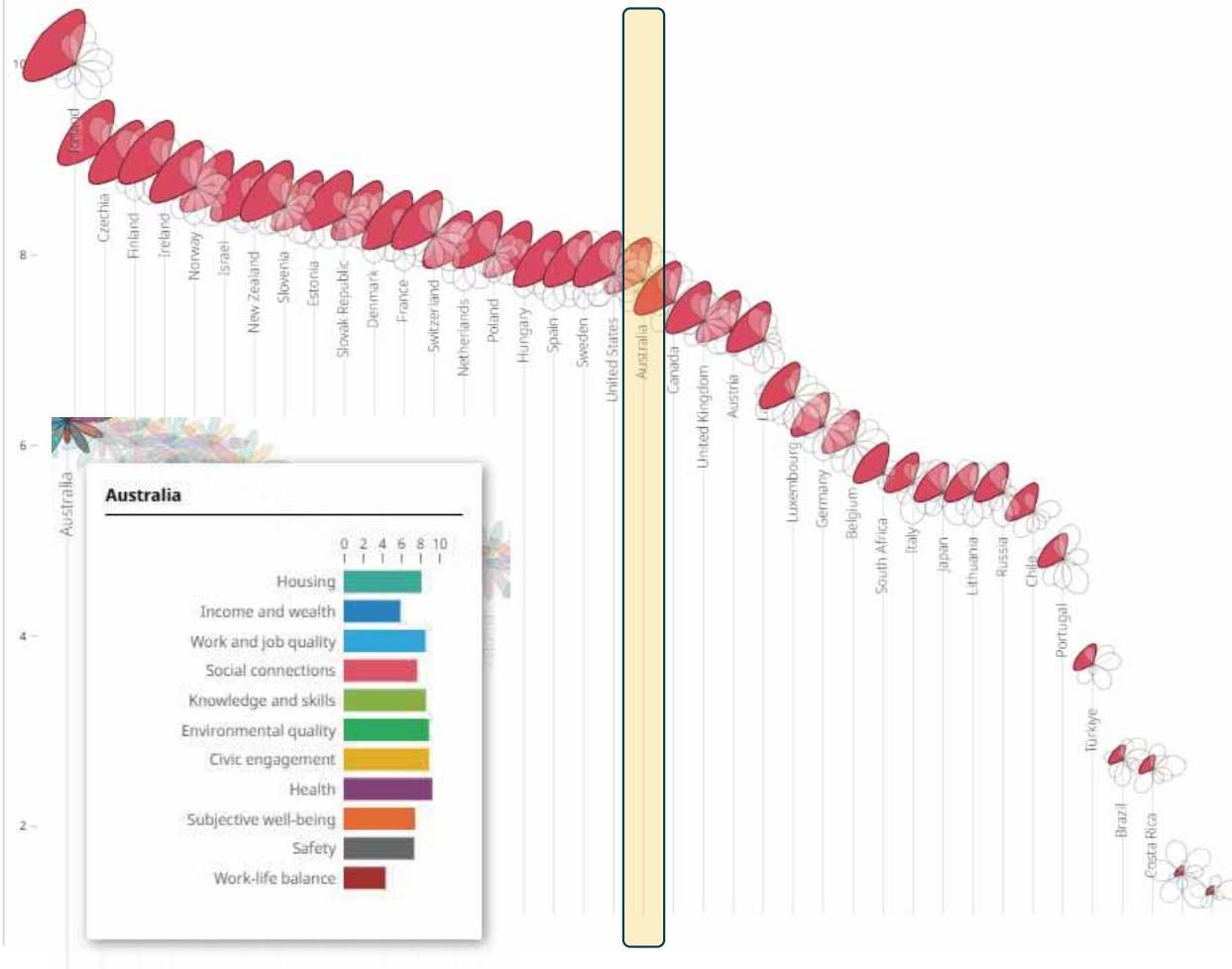
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The OECD Better Life Index ranks us 7th out of 41 countries

- 1st on civic engagement
- 2nd on housing
- 2nd on knowledge & skills
- 2nd on health
- 5th on environmental quality
- 6th on income and wealth
- 9th on work & job quality
- 13th on subjective wellbeing
- **20th on social connections**
- **29th on safety**
- **33rd on work-life balance**

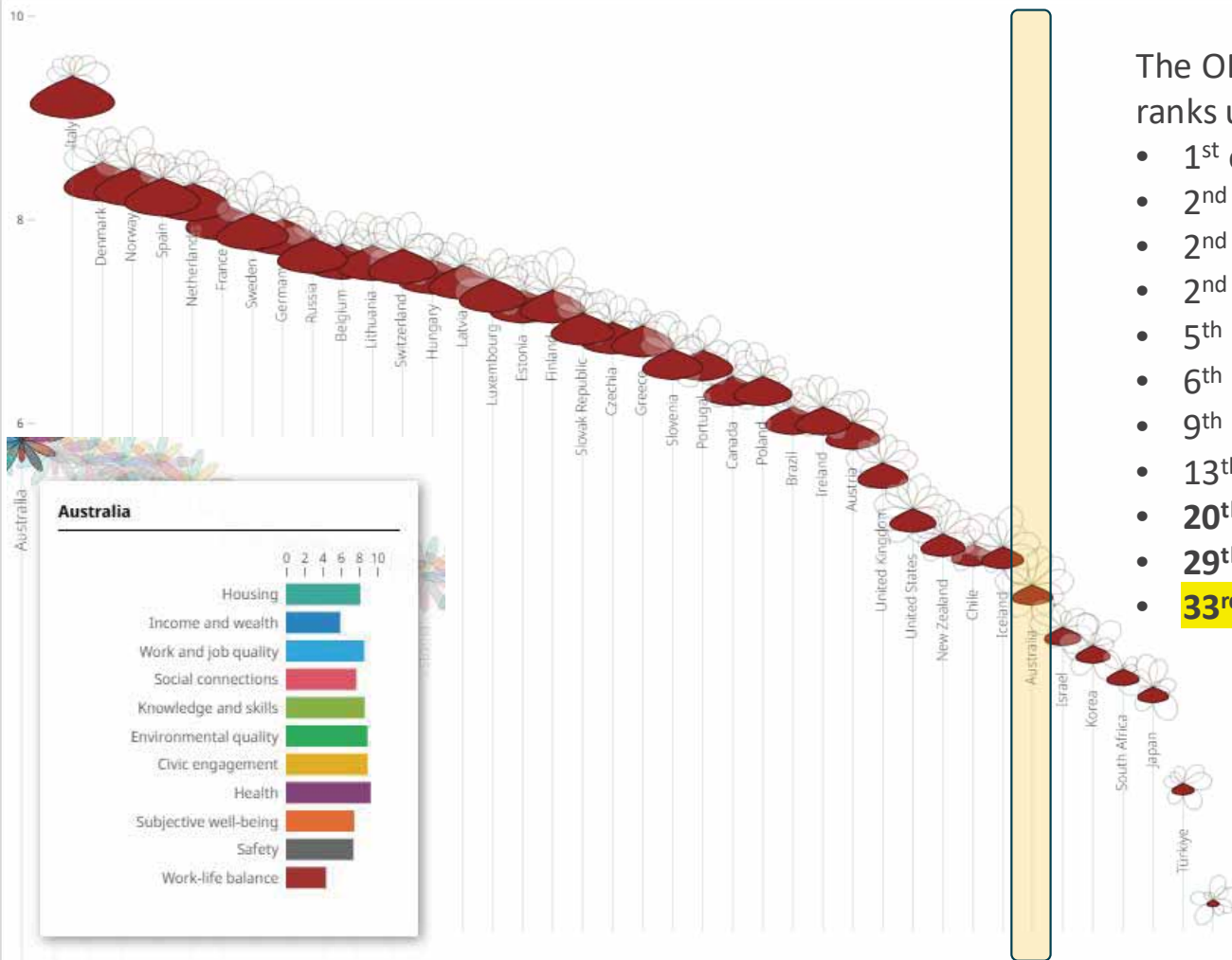
Australia's wellbeing: How do we stack up globally?

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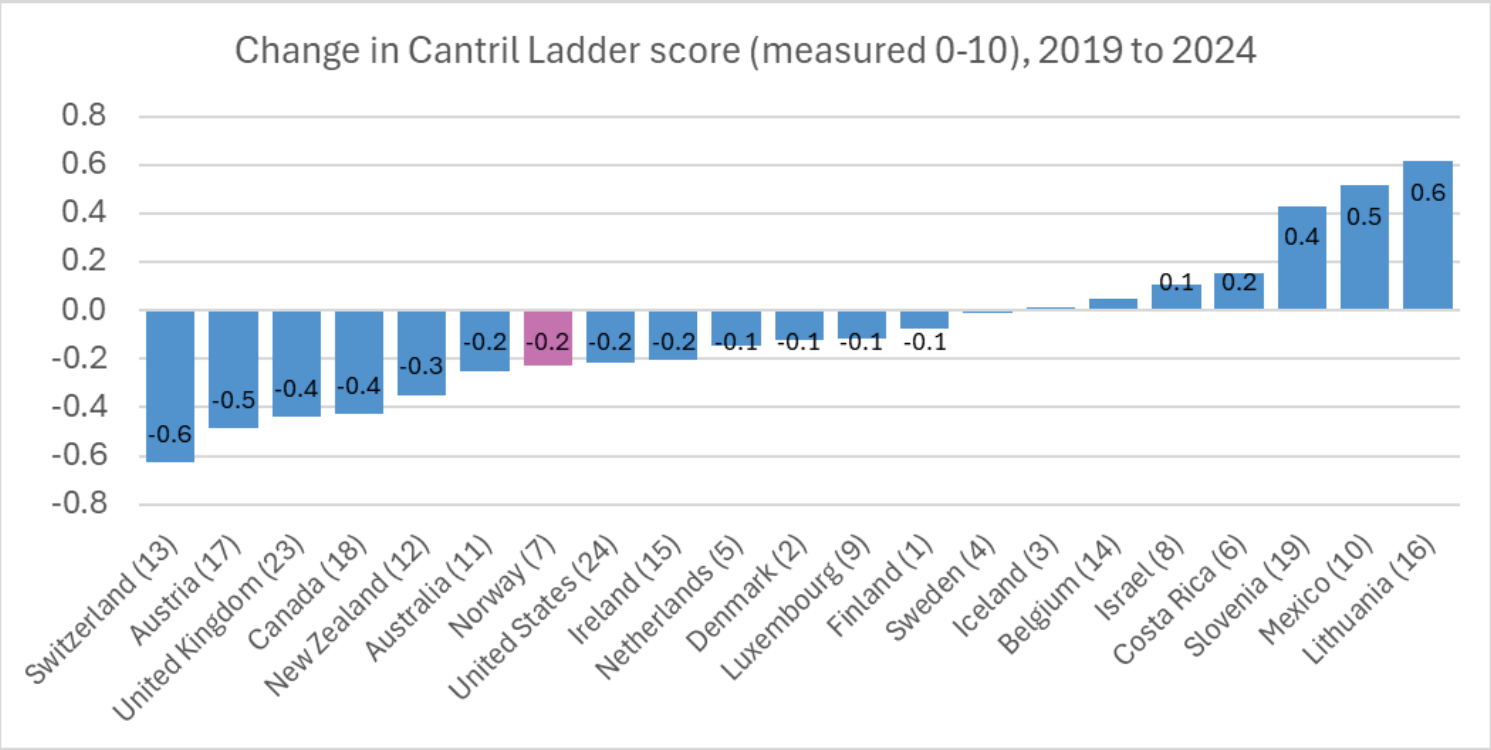


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Australia's wellbeing: How do we stack up globally?

Ranked 11th globally in the **2024 World Happiness Report**.



The average wellbeing of Australians declined between 2019 and 2024, according to the World Happiness Report

Of the top 20 ranked countries, only four had a larger decline than Australia in that time.

Australia's wellbeing: How do we stack up globally?

World Happiness Report

We have the **3rd highest inequality of wellbeing** of the top 20 countries – and inequality is growing.



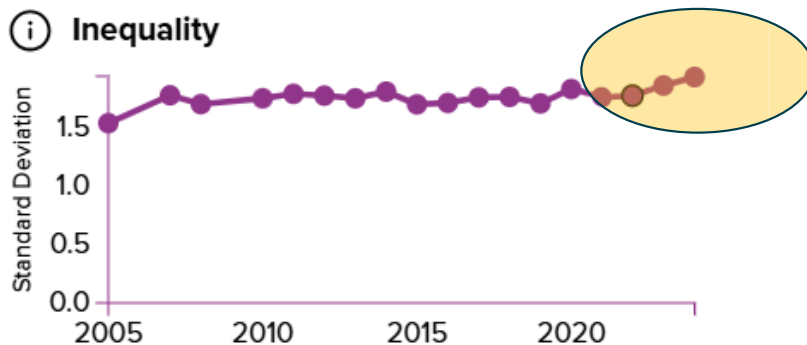
Australia

Rank: 11 | Average Life Evaluation: 6.974 (out of 10)

Happiness ranking

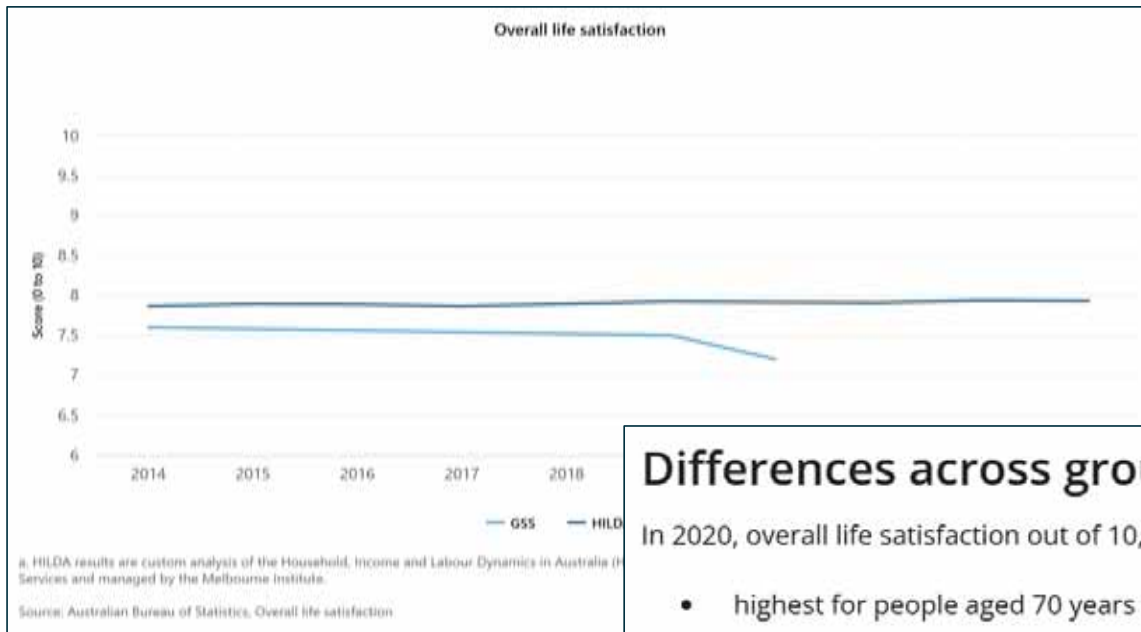


Inequality



Rank	Country	Life evaluation	Change (since 2012)	Inequality
1	Finland	7.736	0.347	2
2	Denmark	7.521	-0.172	28
3	Iceland	7.515	0.160	5
4	Sweden	7.345	-0.135	11
5	Netherlands	7.306	-0.206	1
6	Costa Rica	7.274	0.017	58
7	Norway	7.262	-0.393	17
8	Israel	7.234	-0.067	15
9	Luxembourg	7.122	0.068	-
10	Mexico	6.979	-0.109	71
11	Australia	6.974	-0.376	36
12	New Zealand	6.952	-0.269	32
13	Switzerland	6.935	-0.715	3
14	Belgium	6.910	-0.057	4

What does wellbeing inequality look like?



Measuring What Matters

Global Life Satisfaction,
whole population

Differences across groups

In 2020, overall life satisfaction out of 10, on average, was:

- highest for people aged 70 years and over and lowest for people aged 15-24 years (7.9 compared with 6.9)
- lower for people with a mental health condition than for people with no mental health condition (5.8 compared with 7.4)
- lower for people with disability than people with no disability (6.7 compared with 7.4)
- lower for people with a long-term health condition than people with no long-term health conditions (6.9 compared with 7.4)
- lower for people who described themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual than people who described themselves as heterosexual (6.3 compared with 7.2).

Australia's wellbeing strengths and challenges

Measuring What Matters Healthy

Life expectancy is going up – but so is prevalence of chronic conditions, and access to health services has worsened



Measuring What Matters Secure

Feeling of safety has declined, even though overall experience of violence has declined. Cost of living challenges are reducing our sense of security.

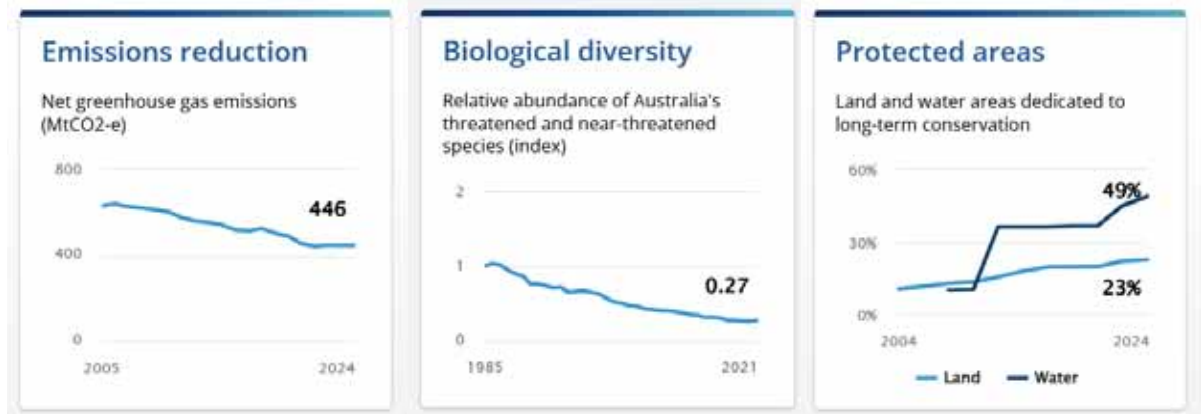


Australia's wellbeing strengths and challenges

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/measuring-what-matters/measuring-what-matters-themes-and-indicators>

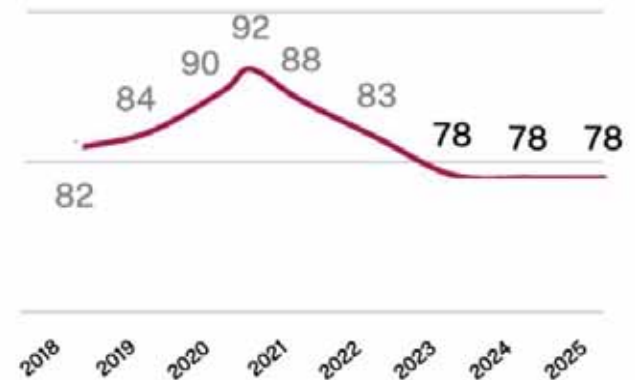
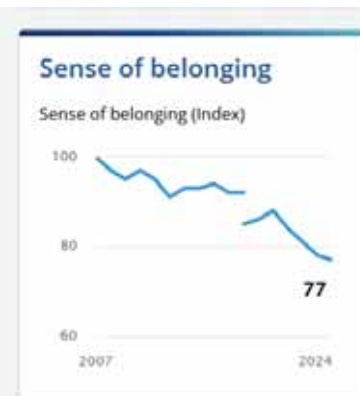
Measuring What Matters Sustainable

Emissions are reducing – but we need to increase efforts to meet our new 2035 targets. Protected areas have increased, but biological diversity has declined significantly.



Measuring What Matters – Cohesive and Scanlon Index – Social cohesion

Sense of belonging has declined. After a peak during COVID-19, social cohesion has fallen below pre-COVID levels, then stabilised.



<https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2025>

Australia's wellbeing strengths and challenges

Measuring What Matters Prosperous - Economy

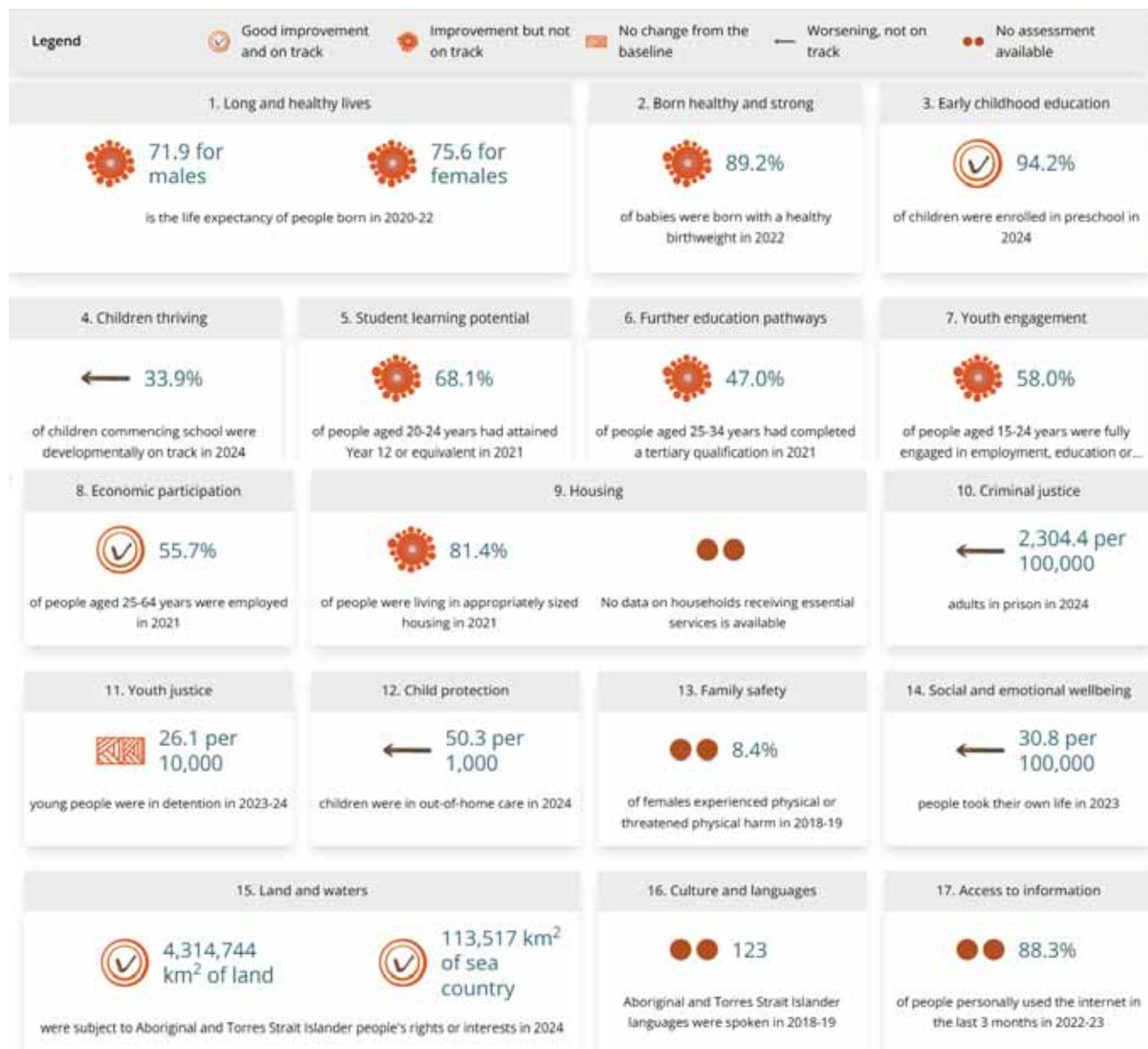
Household income and wealth has increased – but so has income and wealth inequality. The gender pay gap has decreased – but so has overall real wage growth..



Closing the Gap

Of 17 socio-economic outcomes:

- 4 improving and on track
- 7 improving – but not on track
- 4 worsening
- 1 no change
- 4 no assessment available



<https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard/>

Australian Unity Wellbeing Index 2025

- 25-year collaboration between *Australian Unity* and *Deakin University*
- Most comprehensive annual measure of how satisfied Australians feel with their personal lives and with life in Australia
- 2025: Over 10,000 Australian adults surveyed – the largest sample to date
- Findings present a snapshot of Australia's subjective wellbeing at the national, state, and electorate level



The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index

A novel and timely snapshot

- Fielded June 2025, providing fresh insight into how Australians feel post federal election
- Administered by the Social Research Centre, with most respondents (7,907) coming from Australia's most methodologically rigorous online panel – *Life in Australia*TM
- Small Area Estimation used to combine survey data with Census characteristics to create localised estimates
- Maps wellbeing across 148/150 federal electorates - revealing new insights into how location, income, age, and social factors shape Australians' quality of life



How Australians are feeling in 2025

Personal wellbeing remains relatively stable at the national level.

Includes satisfaction with areas of personal life (e.g. health, relationships, and standard of living).

Persistent wellbeing inequities:

- **Generational:** Younger adults continue to struggle
- **Socio-economic:** Lower-income, renting, experiencing unemployment population groups continue to record some of the lowest levels



Figure 2: Personal Wellbeing Index, 2002-2024 (telephone surveys) and 2024-2025 (online surveys)

A notable boost in **national wellbeing** – Australians are feeling more positive about life in the nation.

Includes satisfaction with areas of life in Australia (e.g. government, the environment, and national security).

Biggest rises in satisfaction with:

- **Government:** up 4.6 percentage points (pp)
- **The economy:** up 4.5pp
- **Business:** up 3.5pp

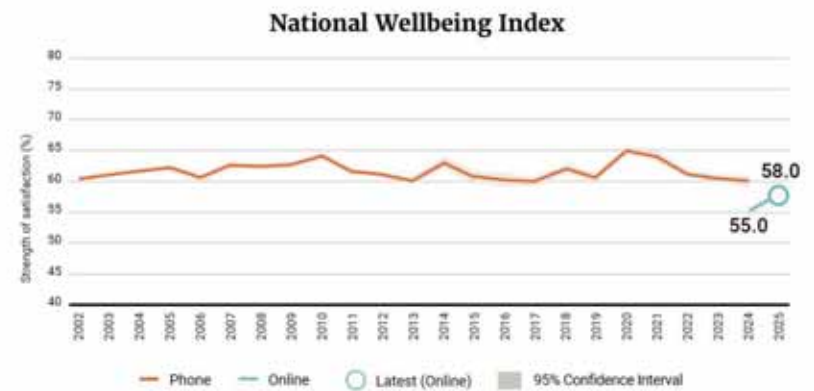


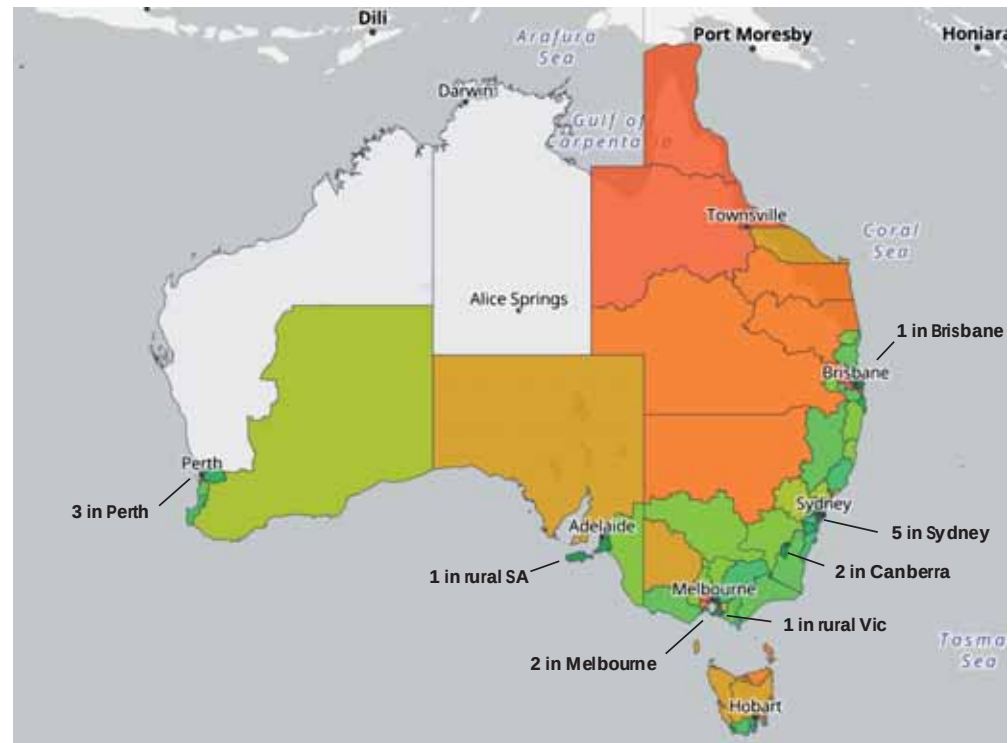
Figure 5: National Wellbeing Index, 2002-2024 (telephone surveys) and 2024-2025 (online surveys)

Personal wellbeing: highest -scoring electorates

Electorates were grouped into 10 mostly even groups (i.e., deciles) from lowest to highest estimates.

Electorates with the **top 10%** of personal wellbeing estimates are:

- **Mostly in capital cities**
- **Older:** All at or above the median national age (except Canberra!)
- **More socio-economically secure:** Higher household incomes, lower unemployment rates, fewer households renting



Lowest (red) to highest (green) Personal Wellbeing Index estimates mapped across 148 federal electorates

Personal wellbeing: urban - regional divide

Gaps in health and relationship satisfaction:

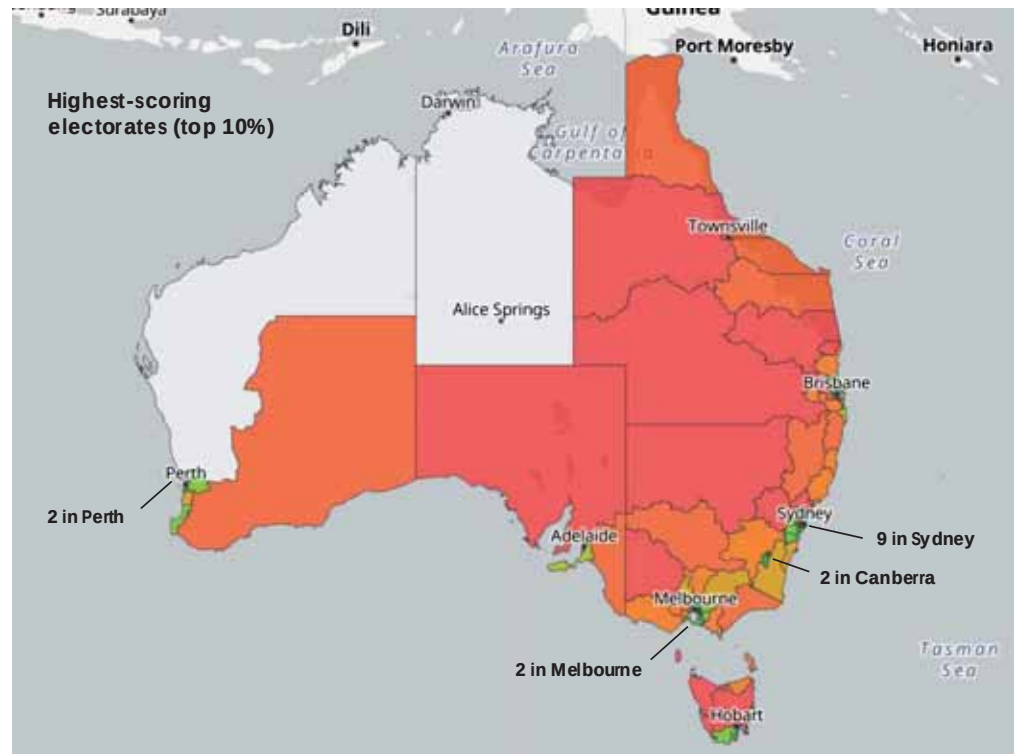
- Inner capital city seats (inner metro) record the highest average health satisfaction and the lowest relationship satisfaction
- Pattern flips for rural electorates, who report the highest satisfaction with relationships (but lower health)



National wellbeing: highest - scoring electorates

Electorates with the **top 10%** of national wellbeing estimates are:

- **All in capital cities**
- **More affluent:** all have median household incomes above the national median
- **More culturally diverse:** 1.5 times the share of overseas-born residents and culturally linguistic residents than the national average.



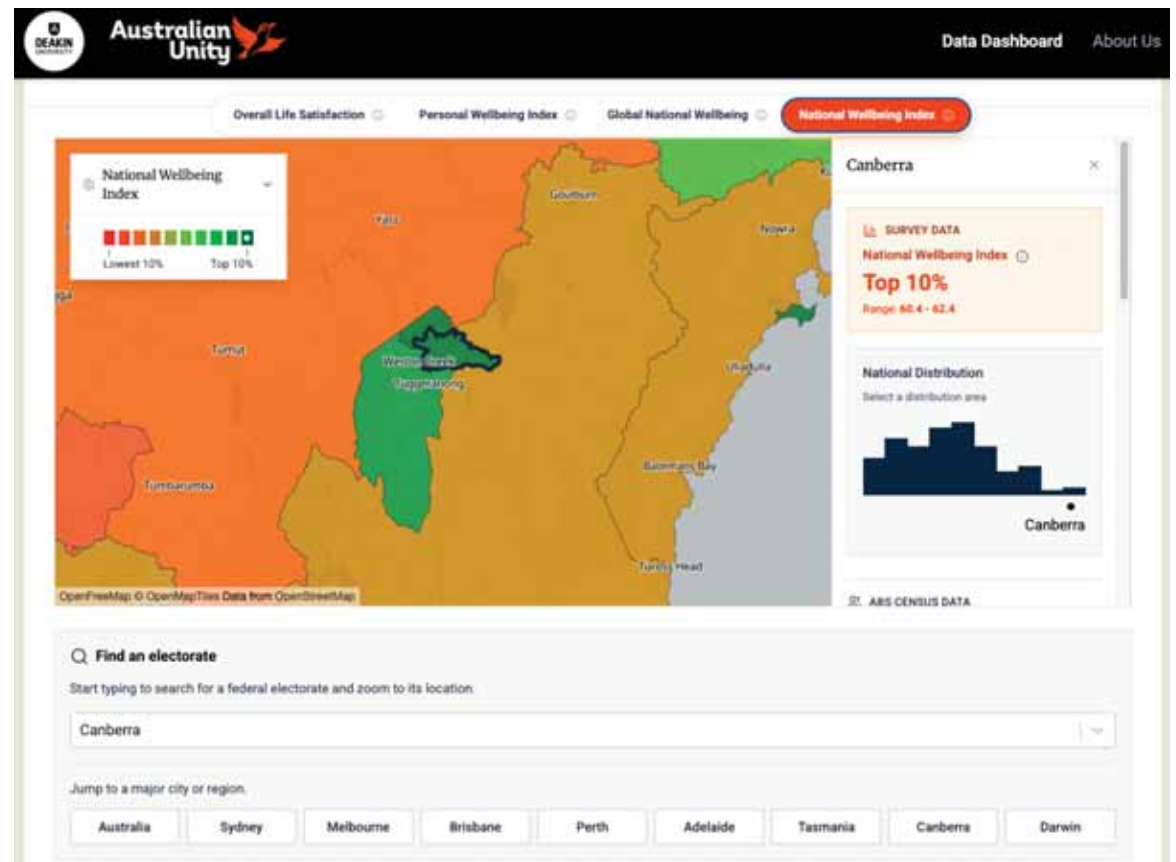
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National wellbeing: urban - regional divide

The biggest differences can be seen between inner metropolitan and rural electorates, who have very different levels of satisfaction with key areas of life in Australia.

See how your electorate compares

auwi.deakin.edu.au

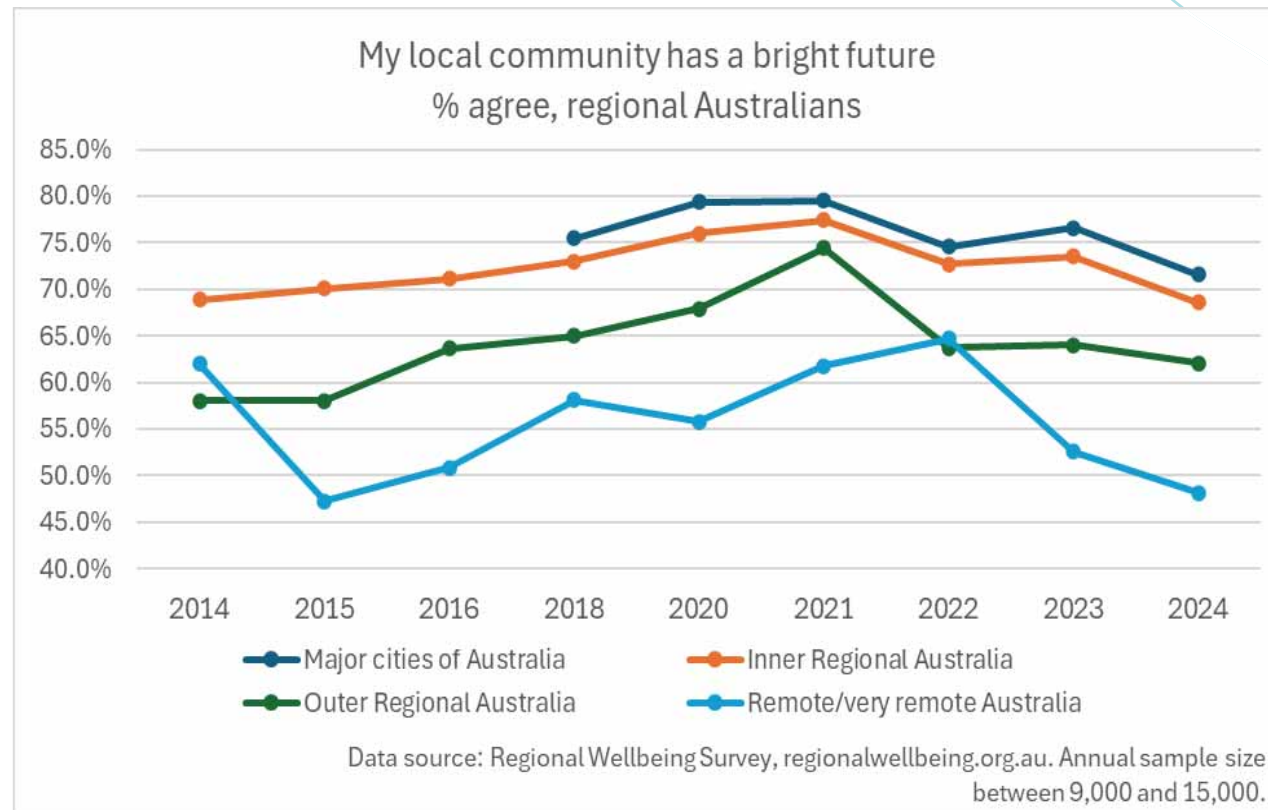


Regional Wellbeing Survey

Understanding the regional-urban divide

Confidence in the future has declined since 2021 in many Australian communities

The decline is bigger in outer regional and remote communities, and smaller in major cities and inner regional areas

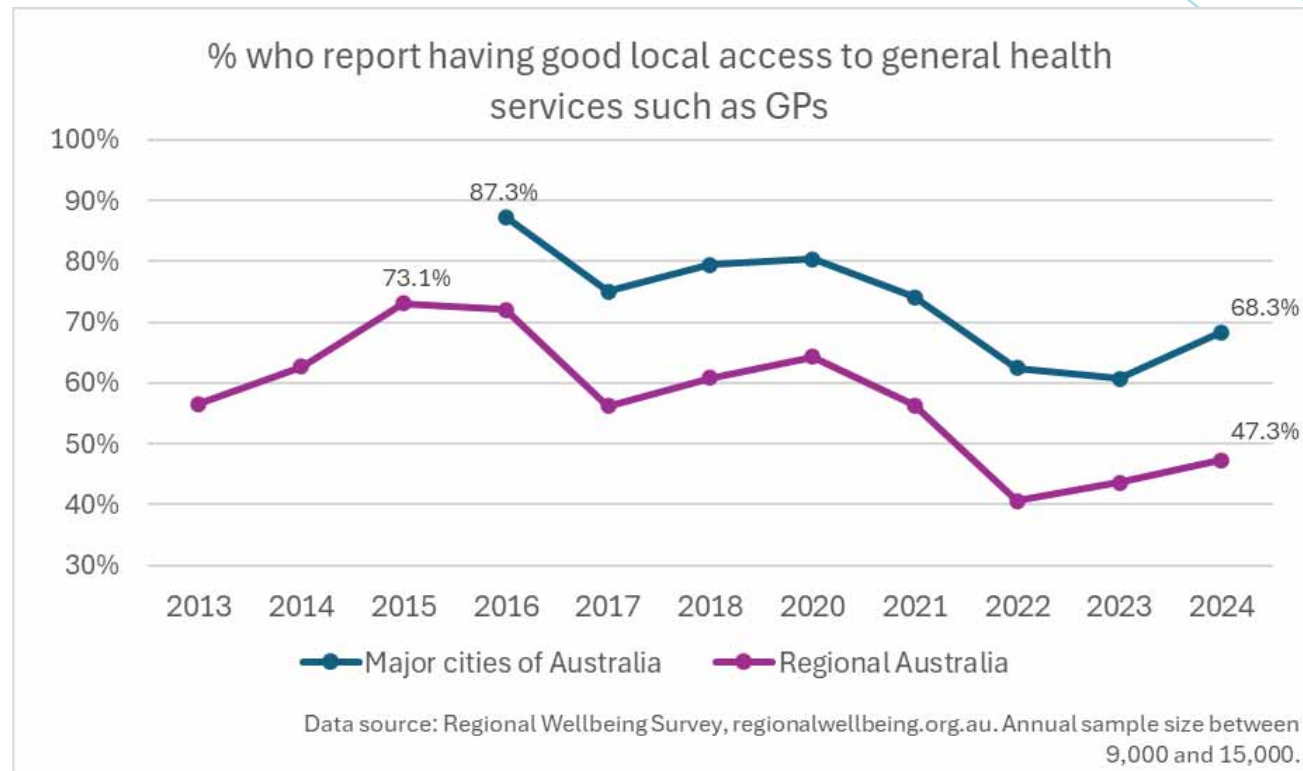


Regional Wellbeing Survey

Access to general health services

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Building wellbeing into regional decision-making: supporting and enabling Australia's rural leaders

Diverse rural communities need information targeted to their unique wellbeing needs

Three communities (Gannawarra, Stratford, 3862, Greater Shepparton)

Three different wellbeing frameworks

- Being able to influence decisions about the future of your community
- Accessing services
- Supporting people to look out for each other
- Getting into nature
- Managing often rapid population change – social cohesion, infrastructure, services

Regional Wellbeing Survey

Wellbeing inequalities

Some of the differences we see in wellbeing are expected, and others less so.

To understand how we move from measurement to action, we need to understand what is driving inequality – and rich data lets us identify the differences between those who are going well, and not so well, within different population groups.

What's your likelihood of having good wellbeing?			Male 77.3%	Retired 85.6%
% Australians with healthy personal wellbeing, 2023			Adult Australians 76.2%	Farmers 83.3%
Aged 18-29 72.7%	Unemployed 55.8%	Lived in Aus <10 years 66.9%	Language other than English 75.0%	Female 76.0%
	Identify as non-binary 33%-58%	Impacted by disasters 57%-68%	Children living at home 75.0%	Aged 60-69 83.9%
	Unpaid carers 41.7%	Aged 40-49 65.8%		

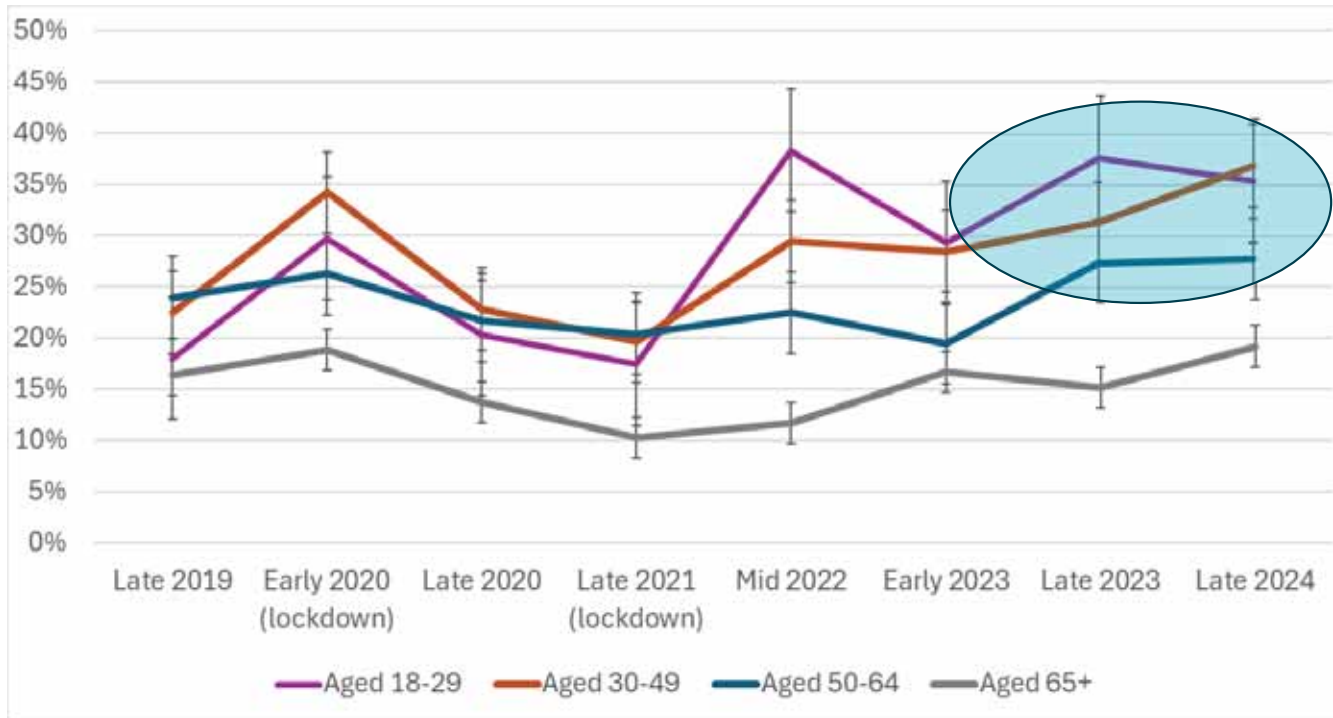
Living well in the ACT region

Understanding the changing wellbeing of Canberrans



ACT Wellbeing Framework

In 2023 to 2024, we identified increased illbeing amongst 30-49 year old Canberrans in particular



From 2019 to 2024, loneliness:

↓ 3.9% 18-29 year olds

↑ 5.1% 30-49 year olds

↓ 4.0% 50-64 year olds

↓ 2.9% for 65+

Other stresses for 30-49 years olds:

- Cost of living
- Volunteering demands
- Lower physical activity (for women)
- Higher caring responsibilities
- Time pressure
- Reduced confidence in the future

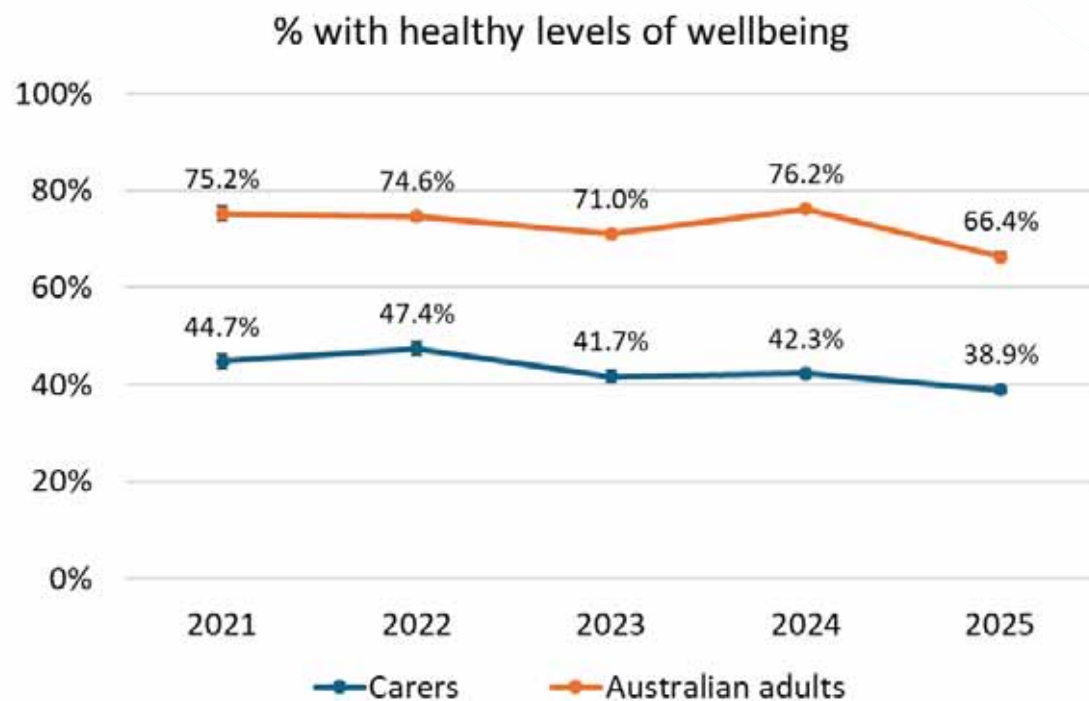
Action requires thinking holistically about addressing the multiple pressures causing a decline in wellbeing of this group. Schools, sports groups, workplaces, all have a role to play.

Addressing wellbeing inequality: understanding unique wellbeing needs of different groups

Unpaid carers

Australia's three million unpaid carers are half as likely as other Australians to have healthy levels of wellbeing.

This inequality is neither inevitable or acceptable – and we already know the things that work to address it.



Data source: Carer Wellbeing Survey, nationwide sample of 5,000 to 8,000 carers each year

Find out more: <https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/carers-wellbeing-survey/>



 Caring for others & yourself:
Carer Wellbeing Survey
October 2025

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Addressing wellbeing inequality

Unpaid carers

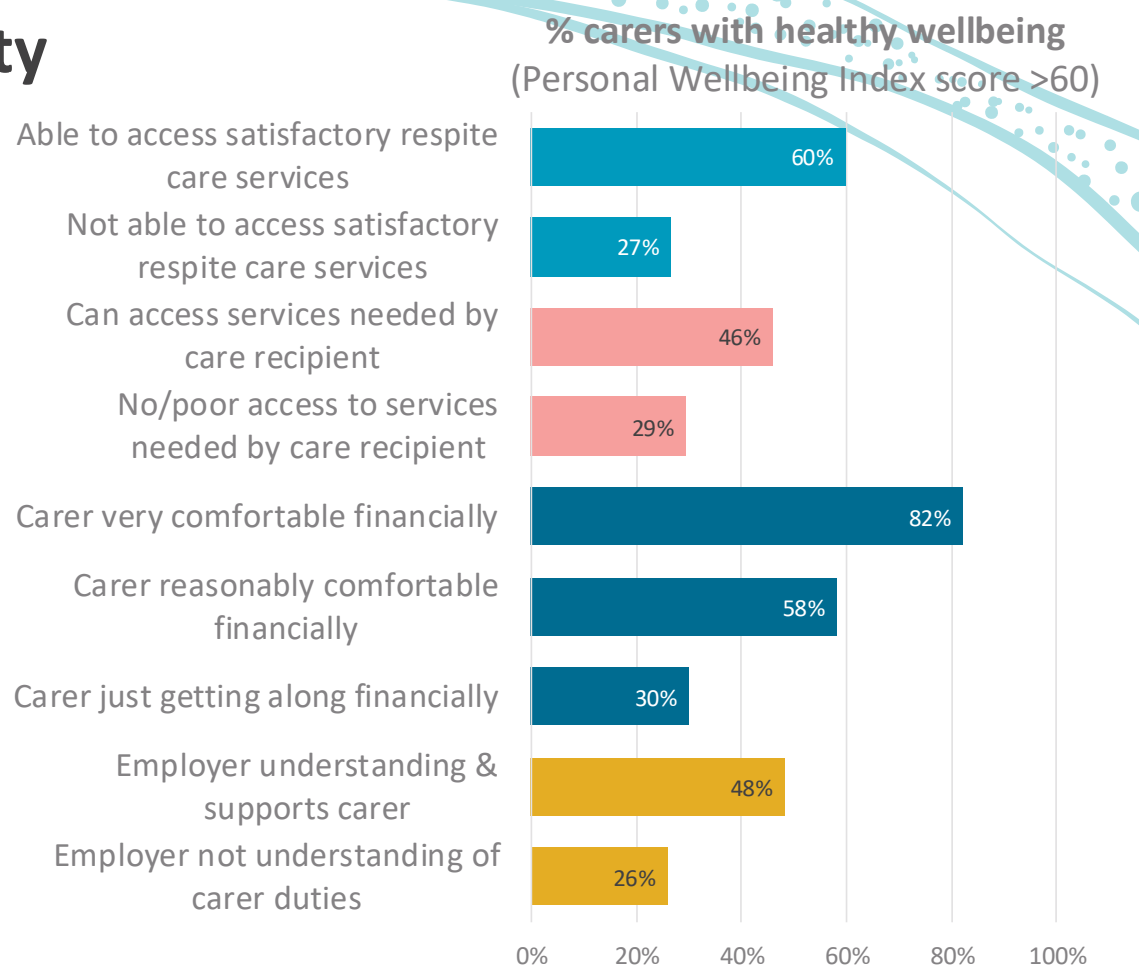
What works?

- Ensuring access to services carers need – for themselves AND the person they care for
- Support from employers & ability to maintain finances
- Access to formal and informal supports



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The state of wellbeing in Australia: conclusions

- **High wellbeing – but not for all** people, and not all aspects of wellbeing
 - Strengths: Material wealth, longevity
 - Challenges: Social connection, belonging, services, health
- **Rising inequality in wellbeing**
 - Persistent differences in opportunities for wellbeing for some, albeit with some change in some areas (younger people, carers, people with disability, single parents, many First Nations peoples)
 - Growing differences for others (rural communities, renters, 30-49 year olds, those affected by cumulative disasters)
 - **Within every group, there is diversity** – and we need to do better in learning from this diversity and understanding the strengths that support wellbeing, often against the odds
 - **We need sustained action tailored to unique wellbeing needs** of different groups to address inequalities