Measuring National Well-being outputs: Summary of user feedback

Feedback from an online survey conducted to help us enhance the quality of the Measuring National Well-being outputs and consider different analysis to better meet user needs.

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1 . Introduction

In November 2010, Office for National Statistics (ONS) established the Measuring National Well-being (MNW) programme to provide accepted and trusted measures of the well-being of the nation. The MNW work is part of an initiative, both in the UK and internationally, to look beyond traditional headline economic growth figures to establish a fuller picture of UK progress.

The goal of the MNW is to support better decision-making among policymakers, individuals, communities, businesses and civil society. The measures include both objective data (for example, crimes against the person) and subjective data (for example, feeling safe walking alone after dark and the four personal well-being questions).

2 . Feedback survey

An important aspect of our work is to shed some light on inequalities in the UK, comparing people who are thriving with those struggling. Over the last months, we have reported some initial work on how best to measure well-being inequalities. We are planning more work in this area and are in the process of reviewing our publications and planning to provide in-depth analysis of our well-being data from an inequality perspective. For this reason, we have been investigating ways of improving our Measuring National Well-being (MNW) outputs, which include the National Well-being dashboard, domains and measures dataset and associated focus articles.

At the end of April 2018, we conducted an online survey to help us enhance the quality of the MNW outputs and consider different analysis that could be produced to better meet user needs. The online survey was advertised as follows:

- the Quality of Life in the UK release in April 2018

- blogs on the Government Statistical Service website, the National Statistical blog, and the What Works Wellbeing Centre website

- posts on the ONS Facebook and Twitter accounts

- GovDelivery email alerts

- newsletter to our known users and stakeholders across other government departments, devolved administrations, local authorities, businesses, charities, think tanks, and universities

The questionnaire for the online survey mainly consisted of closed questions, asking respondents how they use the MNW outputs and their priorities in well-being data and analysis. Some open-ended questions were included for respondents to provide comments about preferred forms of analysis and presentation of well-being findings. None of the survey questions were compulsory, so analysis is based on the responses received for each question.

From the end of February 2018, we conducted another online survey; the summary report of the main findings for the personal well-being outputs is also available separately.

3 . Responses

From April 2018, a total of 111 responses were received from the various channels through which the online survey was advertised. Out of the 111 respondents, 84 people provided information on the organisation where they worked or their role:

- members of the public (43%)

- government or public sector (14%)

- academia (14%)

- third sector, charities or non-governmental organisation (NGO) (13%)

- policymakers (6%)

- private sector (4%)

- other users, for example, administrators, communications or digital officers (6%)

4 . Feedback received

Main uses and importance of the Measuring National Well-being (MNW) outputs

Figure 1 shows that articles and bulletins were the most used outputs (82%), followed by the MNW dashboard (42%) and the MNW dataset (40%).

Figure 1: Usage of Measuring National Well-being outputs

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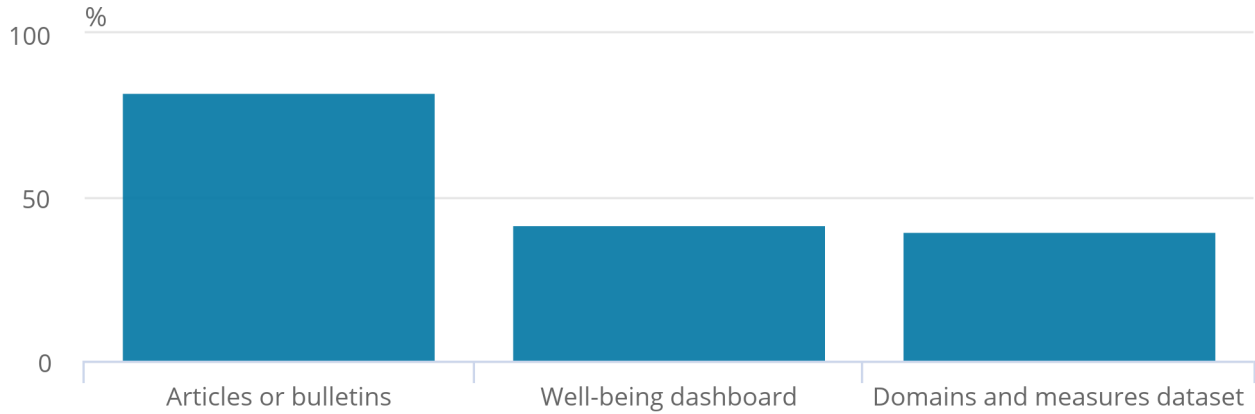
Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. 103 respondents answered this question.

2. This was a "tick all that apply" question so respondents could provide more than one response.

Relative to Figure 1, Table 1 shows the usage of MNW outputs by different user background and organisations. Respondents from the private sector were more likely to use articles or bulletins than the other sectors, while respondents from government or public sector were more likely to report that they use the MNW dataset.

Table 1: Measuring National Well-being output usage by profile of user

	Percentages			
	Articles or bulletins	**Well-being dashboard**	**Domains and measures dataset**	**Sample size (n)**
Members of the public	52	30	18	44
Government/public sector	34	28	38	29
Academia	48	24	28	25
Third sector/charities /NGO	46	31	23	13
Private sector	70	20	10	10
Other	45	18	36	11
All Sectors	48	27	26	132

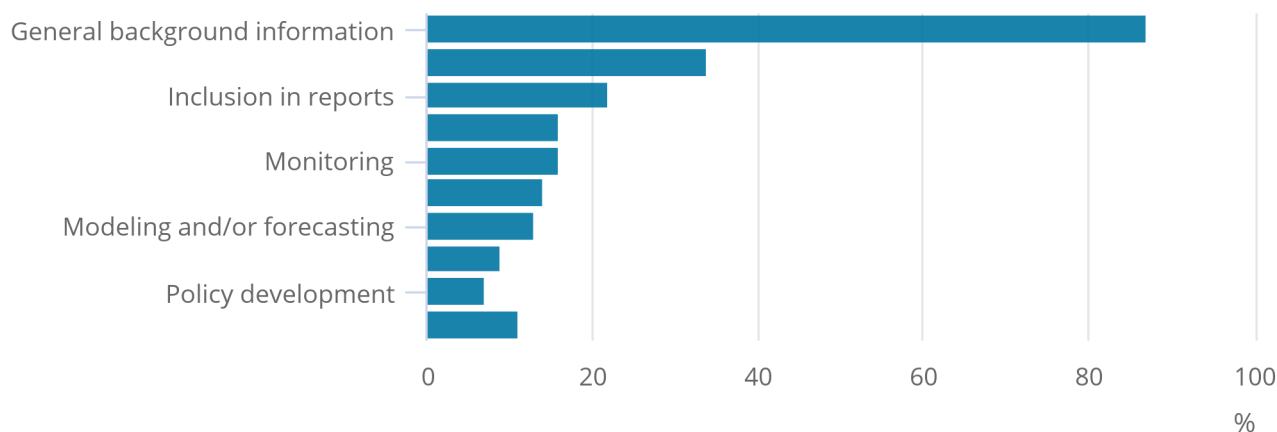**Source: Office for National Statistics**

Notes:

1. 132 respondents answered this question.

2. This was a "tick all that apply" question so respondents could provide more than one response.

Respondents were also asked whether they preferred text or visual analysis of MNW statistics; most want a mixture of both (66%) while 21% prefer visual analysis and only 13% textual analysis alone.

Respondents were asked what they used MNW outputs for and how important they are to their work. Figure 2 shows how the outputs were used.

Figure 2: Reasons for using Measuring National Well-being outputs

Notes:

1. 111 respondents answered this question.

2. This was a "tick all that apply" question so respondents could provide more than one response.

3. "Other" mainly includes personal interest.

The most common use for the MNW outputs was "General background information" (87%), followed by "Research" and "Inclusion in reports" (34% and 22% respectively). "Benchmarking" and "Monitoring" were the next most common uses (both 16%). Only a small percentage (9% and 7%) use MNW outputs for decision-making and policy development respectively.

Excluding members of the public, 83% said MNW outputs were very or moderately important to their work, and 8% said they were extremely important, while the remainder (9%) stated they were not important to their work.

Domains and measures usage

Respondents were asked which domains and measures they used (Figure 3). They were most interested in "Personal well-being" (82%), "Health" (77%), and aspects of social well-being, such as "Where we live" and "Our relationships" (both 56%).

Figure 3: Measuring National Well-being domains and measures usage

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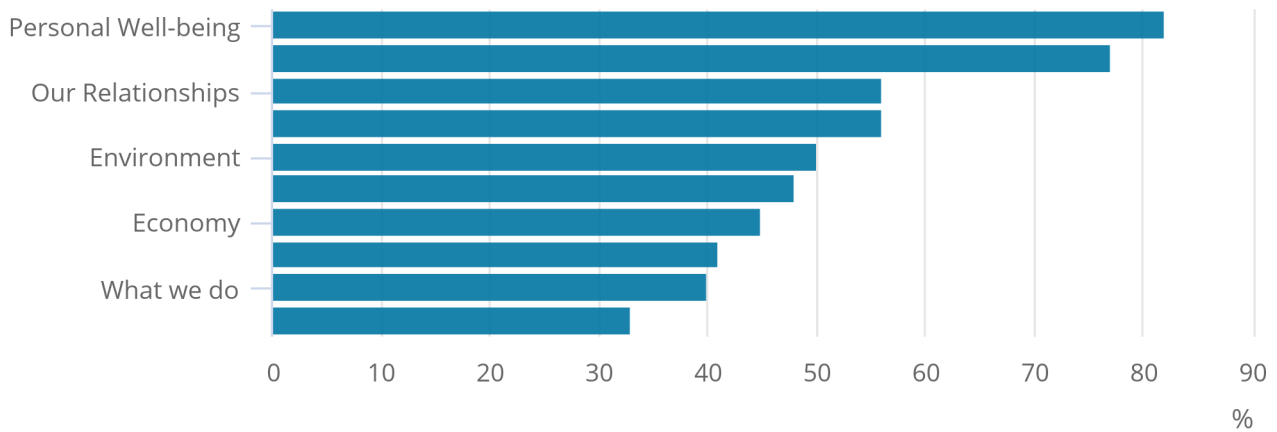
Source: Office for National Statistics
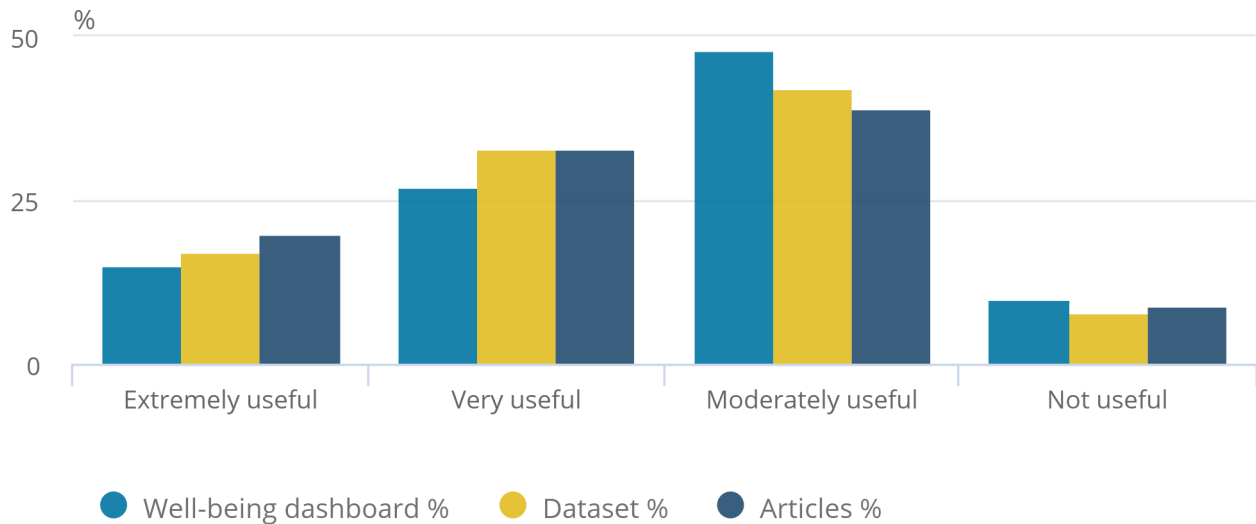
Notes:

1. 108 respondents answered this question.

2. This was a "tick all that apply" question so respondents could provide more than one response.

Expediency of MNW outputs

Respondents were asked how useful the MNW outputs were to their work (Figure 4). Over half (53%) found articles extremely or very useful to their work, compared with the MNW dataset (50%) and the MNW dashboard (42%). Conversely, 39% found articles moderately useful compared with the datasets (42%) and dashboard (48%).

Figure 4: Usefulness of Measuring National Well-being outputs

Figure 4: Usefulness of Measuring National Well-being outputs

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Based on 48 responses. Does not include those who reported "Did not use" and those who stated that they were members of the public.

Over 9 in 10 respondents that had used MNW outputs reported that they found the language used in all our outputs straightforward and easy to understand:

- MNW dashboard (98%)

- articles (95%)

- MNW dataset (95%)

Over 8 in 10 respondents that had used MNW outputs reported that there was just the right level of detail in all our outputs:

- MNW dashboard (90%)

- articles (87%)

- MNW dataset (86%)

Prior to April 2018, the dashboard was available on our Visual.ONS website. It has since moved to this site and respondents were asked whether they were aware of the dashboard. Out of 95 respondents who answered, almost half (46%) reported that they were not.

There were 83 people who responded to the question "Which is your key priority for National Well-being publications?" Over 6 in 10 (61%) reported having timely/frequent estimates, while 39% reported that having in-depth/granular analysis of the results was a priority (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Key priorities for Measuring National Well-being outputs

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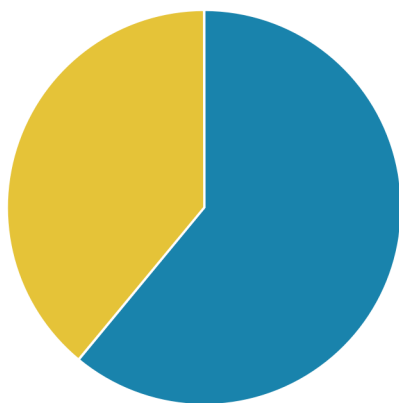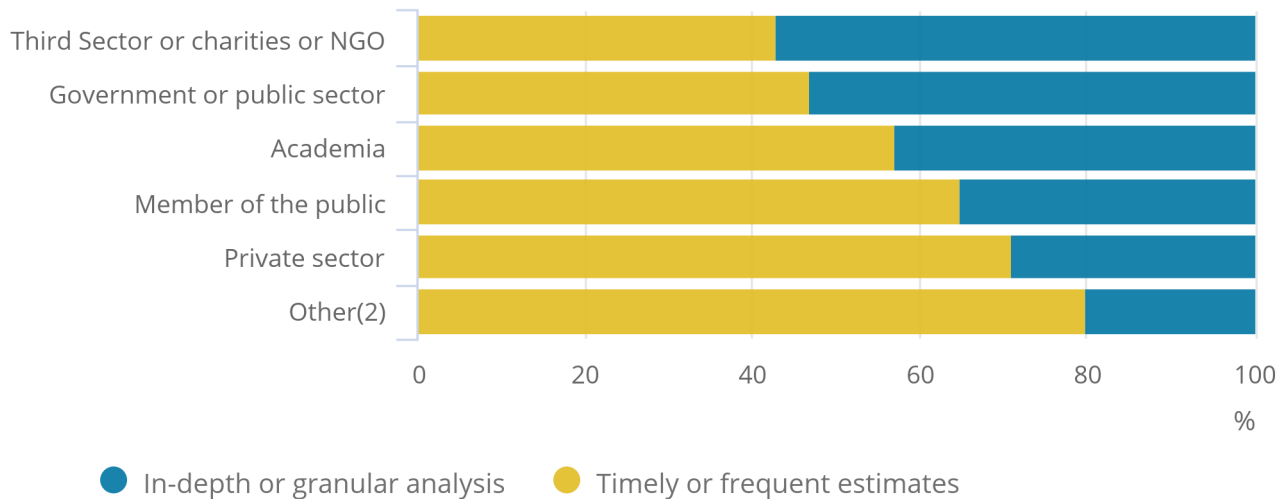

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. 83 respondents answered this question.

Figure 6 helps identify users' main priorities based on their background. It shows that timely/frequent estimates are a priority for a range of different users, including policymakers, communication or digital officers (80%), users from the private sectors (71%) and members of the public (65%) and academics (57%), while in-depth/granular analysis is a priority for users from the third sector, charities and NGOs (57%). A balance between having timely estimates and granular analysis is important for users from government and public sector.

Figure 6: Priority for Measuring National Well-being outputs by profile of user

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. 74 respondents who stated their profile answered this question.

2. "Other" includes policy makers and communication or digital officers

Suggested views on future publications

The feedback survey included some open-ended questions to help improve future publications. These included what analysis users would be interested in and other ways to present results.

Content of future publications

In one of the open-ended questions we asked, "What in depth analysis (if any) would you be interested in/would be relevant to your work?". The most popular suggestion by respondents was to see analysis by lower local geographical data:

"Breakdown by region/county."

"By smaller geographical areas where possible, i.e. LA/CCG, Ward, LSOA."

"District level statistics."

"General social trends especially regionally split."

"Lower geography. Anonymised person level data."

Other areas of interest for analysis were:

- education

- health

- housing trends

- household composition, poverty and homelessness

- loneliness

- work

Presenting future publications

Respondents were also asked whether there were any other ways to present results to make them more useful. Suggestions provided included:

"Ability to compare with local authority statistics."

"Simple graphs and explanations."

"Notification of articles appearing in mainstream press or other publications. Links to the relevant parts of the website. Podcast discussions."

"I think you should aim to reach as many different audiences as you can. There is clearly a growing academic audience, for whom journal papers, articles and conference presentations would go down well."

"The wheel! Was visually good for sharing, and dynamic."

5 . Conclusions and next steps

A wide range of users are interested in our Measuring National Well-being (MNW) outputs and the feedback survey has highlighted important areas and priorities for them. A priority is to ensure we have timely or frequent estimates and content. However, 39% of respondents also agreed that more in-depth information is needed to make our outputs more useful and only a small percentage reported to use MNW outputs for decision-making (9%) and policy development (7%).

In relation to the outputs, a priority is to ensure more analysis and articles are published in the future (which respondents rated themselves as most interested in), while not forgetting the importance of the MNW dashboard and dataset. With regards to the format of MNW outputs, users reported that the language used, the length and the amount of information in the bulletins generally meet their needs. However, the feedback survey has also helped identify where outputs can be improved, such as raising the profile of the MNW dashboard.

Over the coming months, we are planning to:

- engage further with our users to better understand how our outputs could be more useful for decision-making and policy purposes

- look for further collaboration opportunities to provide more in-depth information on important well-being drivers and local indicators

- better promote our well-being dashboard and explore opportunities to improve our visuals and interactive tools

If you would like to provide additional feedback about our MNW outputs, please contact us at QualityOfLife@ons.gov.uk or complete this ongoing feedback survey.