



**HAPPY
CITY
INDEX**

POLICY REPORT

BRISTOL PILOT



ABOUT



THIS REPORT

This report highlights findings from the Happy City Index Project pilot, run in Bristol in 2015. The Index has been in development for the past five years and has been designed by Happy City in partnership with the New Economics Foundation (NEF). It is being piloted in Bristol in 2015, with the aim of rolling it out to other cities in 2016. This report draws on findings from the Bristol pilot to provide a glimpse of the possibilities for the Index to improve city decision-making and citizen engagement.

The report includes key findings of the pilot that fall under five policy themes: Work, Education, Health, Place and Culture. We will consult with policymakers over the remainder of 2015 to explore these findings in further detail.

The report also highlights the potential of the Index to act as a unified measure for city decision-making, with an emphasis on the multiple benefits of well-being. For comments and/or questions, please contact us at info@happycity.org.uk

HAPPY CITY

Happy City aims to facilitate sustainable happiness on a city scale. It runs communication campaigns, training programmes, and a wide range of projects that help individuals and communities focus on what really matters. This work provides cities with simple and replicable ways to understand, measure and improve well-being.

HAPPY CITY DELIVERS:

PROJECTS AND COMMUNICATIONS: delivering creative ideas and engaging activities, which promote happiness and well-being.

TRAINING: in well-being designed for individuals, schools, communities, the public sector and business.

HAPPY CITY INDEX: a world-leading way to understand, measure and improve local well-being.

Over the past 5 years, Happy City has run 36 training programmes, piloted 6 projects that have engaged over 5000 people, received over 10,000 social media followers, and registered interest from 51 cities in 23 different countries.

“Happy City is doing inspirational work to help Bristol become a beacon for health, happiness and wellbeing”

George Ferguson, Mayor of Bristol.



DIRECTORS NOTE



TOWARDS A WELL-BEING FOCUSED CITY: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Happy City was founded in response to growing global interest in alternative ways to measure progress and prosperity in the 21st Century.

Yet, despite this growing interest at a national and international level, and the world fast heading towards 75% urbanisation, there was still remarkably little action at a City scale to provide an alternative to the current paradigm.

Happy City has been exploring what matters to people in schools, communities, businesses, prisons, health centres and the corridors of power for 5 years. Our practical and scalable model of change for cities has, at it's heart the Happy City Index, the worlds first in-depth city-scale measure of wellbeing. The project has attracted support from many of the UK and the world's leading experts in the field, and funding from a broad range of backers.

From the outset, the Index has been designed to change both what we measure and how we measure it. It aims to help each individual understand, measure and improve their own wellbeing, community groups and businesses measure their social value, and policy makers to make sense of the complex connections between local conditions and action, and how people feel and function in their lives.

The focus for the rest of 2015 is to significantly develop the community facing engagement element of the Index, with a highly interactive set of on and offline tools exploring city well-being. The Index has the potential to act as a common currency linking up activity across a city, enabling people at all levels to thrive.

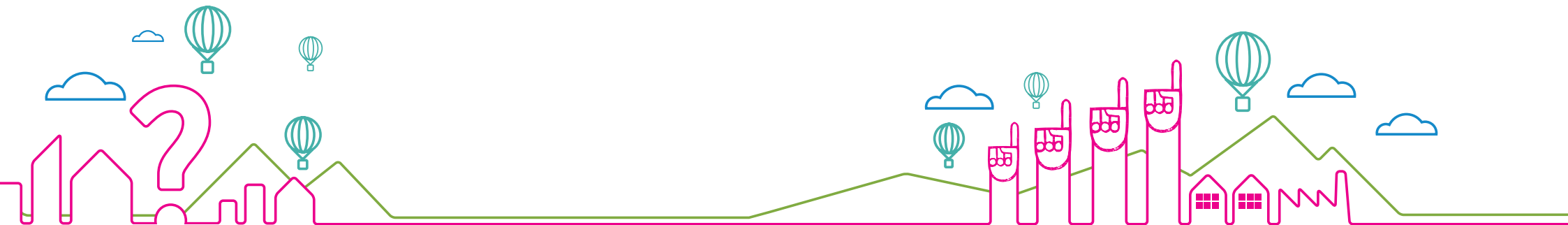
All these elements are in readiness for us to further respond to the level of interest in rolling out the project to cities around the world in 2016 and beyond. We look forward to sharing the journey with you.

Liz Zeidler

Director, Happy City

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



THE BRISTOL PILOT WAS DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT CITY PROGRESS CAN BE MADE THROUGH CITIZEN AND COMMUNITY-LED WELL-BEING MEASUREMENT. WE COLLECTED COMPREHENSIVE LOCAL WELL-BEING DATA, ENGAGING CITIZENS IN THE PROCESS. THIS REPORT SHOWS HOW OUR KEY FINDINGS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO INFORM LOCAL POLICY.

The report focuses on how well-being can act as a common currency for city decision-making. With ever limited resources, local policymakers need to know what factors are most important for people's well-being, and why. Channelling scarce resources in promotion of these key areas can create knock-on effects that make a lasting difference to people's lives - and can ensure great impact for less money if well-planned.

Index findings highlight the importance of the following factors in relation to five key policy themes:

KEY POLICY	KEY FACTOR THEME
WORK	UNEMPLOYMENT
EDUCATION	ADULT LEARNING
HEALTH	LONG-TERM SICKNESS OR DISABILITY
PLACE	SOCIAL FACTORS
CULTURE	CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Of course, we already know that factors such as unemployment and long-term sickness or disability are important. Well-being data shows the relative importance of these factors. For instance, the impact that unemployment has on well-being is three times larger than the impact of having a low income. Yet, the impact of unemployment is still not at large as social factors, such as having a friend or family member to discuss personal matters with.

Well-being data also shows the benefits of promoting these key factors. For instance, social factors are strongly related to people's health. Socially isolated individuals are more likely to suffer from mental and physical health problems; these individuals are more likely to be unemployed or absent for work; unemployed individuals are less likely to participate in cultural activities; and so on. Promoting key well-being factors has the potential to turn vicious cycles into virtuous ones.

WHY MEASURE WELL-BEING?

Well-being measurement has gained increasing prominence on both a national and international level since the European Commission 'Beyond GDP' report in 2009.¹ Advances in the study of well-being² have inspired a number of national governments to measure the well-being of its citizens, including the UK with its National Well-being Programme.³

These initiatives recognise that there is currently a gap in well-being measurement at a city level. Especially as cities have the most potential to gain from local well-being policy, with a large amount of opportunities and public support to improve citizen well-being.

In international rankings, the UK doesn't rank among the countries with a high level of well-being, in spite of being one of the world's most economically prosperous nations.⁴ However, these rankings clearly mask large-scale differences within the UK. The Index is an attempt to kick-start the process of unearthing what works at a city level for improving people's experienced well-being.

"The Happy City Index can move us towards a single common measure that every agency, public, private or business, can sign up to and measure its success against. Using this as a common benchmark, we have a powerful tool for joining up public services and driving real public sector reform that can be used all over the country and beyond."

**Paul Taylor, Head of Strategy & Operations,
Heart of the South West Local Economic Partnership**

There are three main reasons why governments are attempting to measure the well-being of their citizens:

1) A COMMON CURRENCY

All major policy sectors have an impact on well-being. However, these sectors often operate independently of each other, despite the potential benefits of working across policy silos. Measures of well-being have the potential to unify the development and assessment of policies with a common currency available not only to all policy sectors, but also to community organisations, businesses, groups and individuals across the city.

2) MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

Over the past 40 years, the measurement of well-being has developed to such an extent that we can now rigorously monitor the impact of policy areas that have traditionally been thought of as too intangible. This includes measuring the impact of green and social spaces and cultural policy.

3) BENEFITS OF WELL-BEING

Higher levels of well-being have been shown to have a positive impact on a number of conditions that we care about. These include improvements in physical and mental health, social and environmental behaviours, productivity and resilience. Promoting well-being should not be seen as a luxury. It needs to be a serious concern of governmental policy.

METHODOLOGY



HOW TO MEASURE CITY WELL-BEING A UNIQUE CITY FRAMEWORK

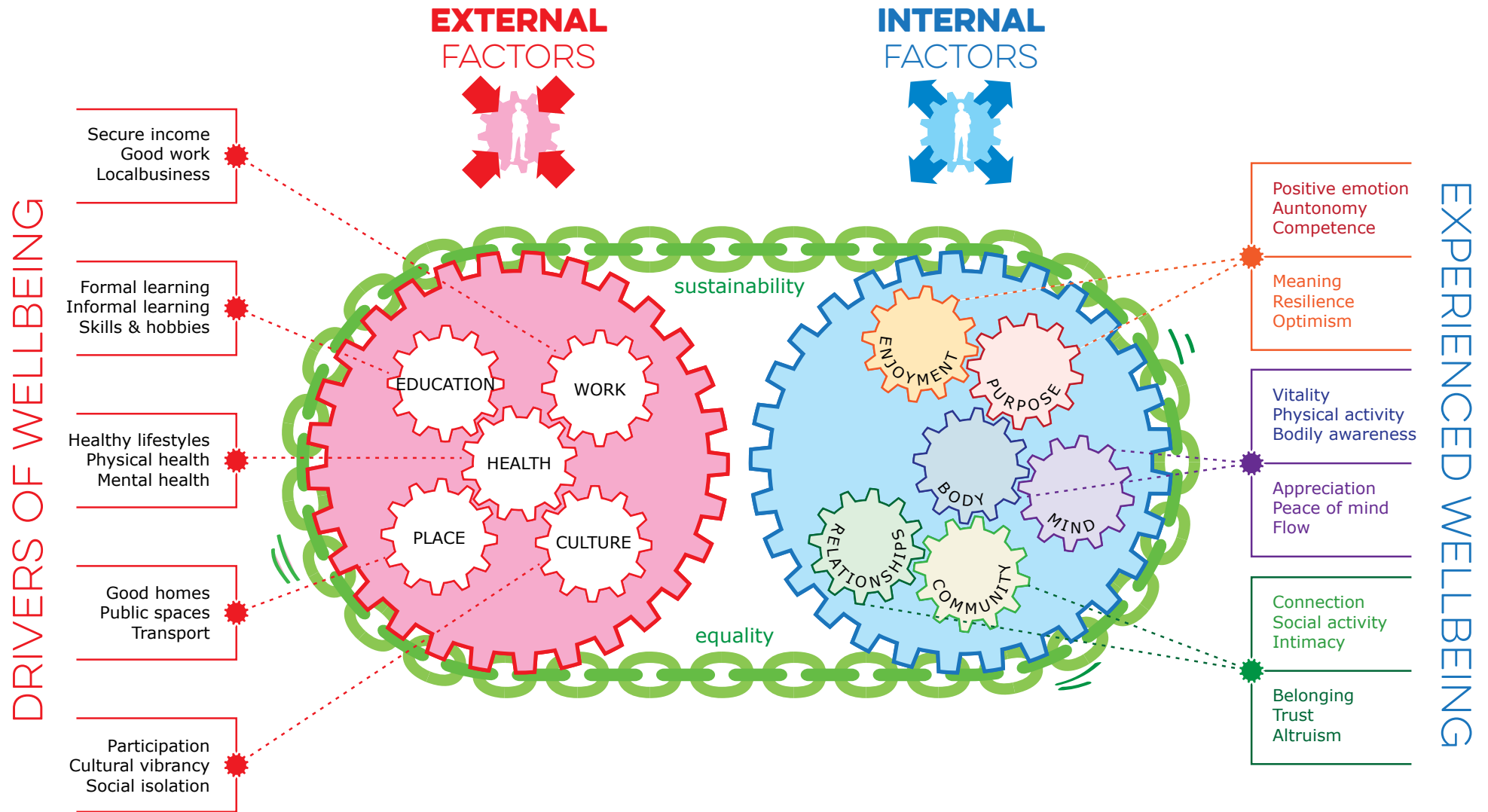
The Happy City Index is the first city-wide well-being measure in the UK. It measures well-being across Bristol by combining two different kinds of data:

- Pre-existing data (from local and national sources) on the “Drivers of well-being”, e.g. employment, education, health status, etc.
- Primary survey data (from the Happy City Survey) on “Experienced well-being”, e.g. people’s sense of purpose, resilience, community belonging, engagement, vitality, etc.

Bringing together these two types of data enables us to see the conditions that make a difference to people’s experienced lives across a city. Many cities collect data on the drivers of well-being (including Bristol, with its long-running Quality of Life Survey). However, cities do not currently measure the experienced well-being of their citizens. We may know, for example, that a particular group or ward has lower levels of education, employment or physical health, but we don’t know the impact that this has on their sense of community trust, autonomy or meaning. This matters. The Happy City Index has been designed to measure it.

THE INDEX PUTS THE RESULTS THROUGH THE LENS OF EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS.⁵ HAPPY CITY DECIDED THESE SHOULD BE INCLUDED BECAUSE WE THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO MEASURE EVERYONE’S WELL-BEING. THIS MEANS CONSIDERING THE WELL-BEING OF EVERYONE IN SOCIETY, BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE.

HOW TO MEASURE CITY WELL-BEING



THE BRISTOL PILOT



WE COLLECTED ONLINE SURVEY DATA FROM JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2015, SHARING THE SURVEY THROUGH A NUMBER OF MEDIA CHANNELS AND EMAIL DATABASES. WE ALSO COLLECTED OFFLINE SURVEY DATA FROM LIBRARIES ACROSS THE CITY.

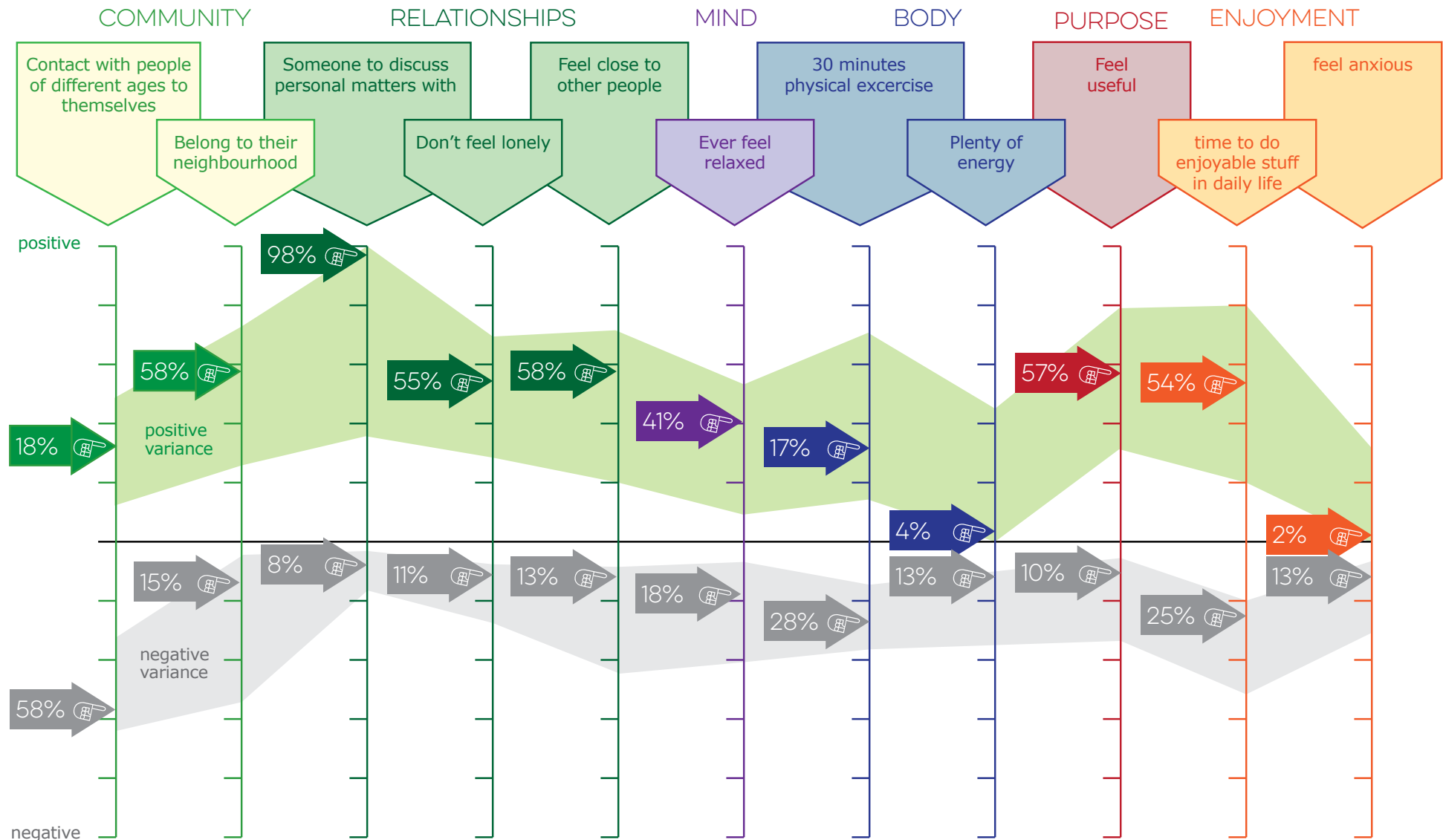
In total, we received over 800 survey responses, which were evenly distributed in terms of geography and (most) demographics. This enabled us to have representative data for citywide well-being. However, we did not receive enough responses to have representative data for each ward and two important demographics: young adults (16-24 year olds) and the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. With the next iteration of the online well-being survey, we aim to receive over 3000 responses, which will provide us with an even more representative ward level and demographic dataset. The findings in this report demonstrate some of the main ways in which a more comprehensive city well-being dataset could inform local policy.

BENCHMARK FIGURES

This first set of well-being data for Bristol can act as a benchmark from which we can assess the impact of local policies on city well-being.

With these benchmark figures in place, Bristol can inspire to create better conditions. For example, 58% of citizens do not have contact with people of different ages to them, and 28% of citizens never spend 30 minutes doing physical exercise each week; 15% feel they do not belong to their neighbourhood, and 8% feel they do not have someone they can discuss personal matters with. Why shouldn't we imagine a city that manages to halve each of these by 2020, and, in so doing, raises well-being among its citizens? This report highlights some of the ways in which we could begin to make that picture a reality.

CITY PICTURE OF WELL-BEING



CITY PICTURE OF WELL-BEING

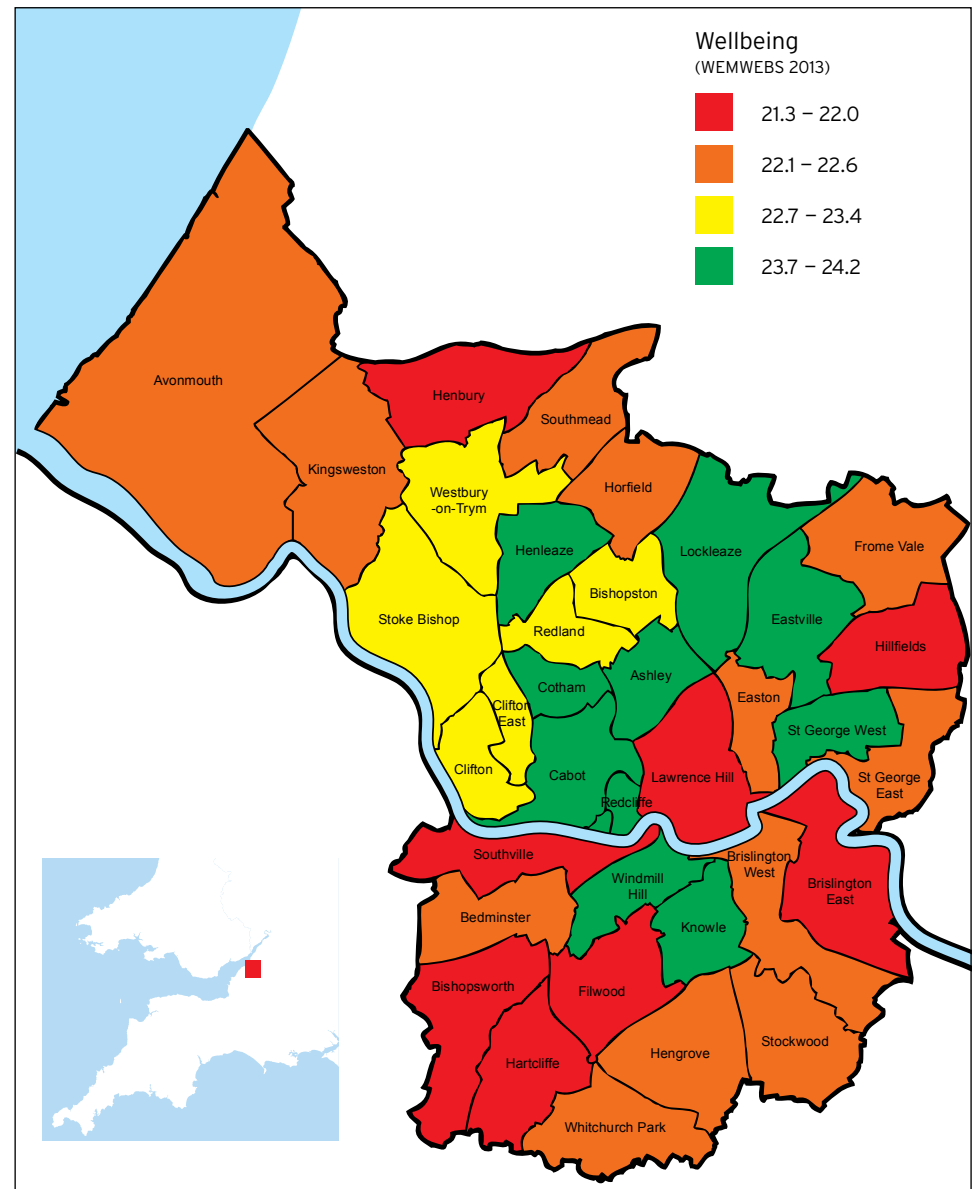
COMPARING COMMUNITIES

Levels of overall wellbeing vary across the city: ⁶

This suggests that policymakers need to pay attention to different well-being factors when promoting well-being in different wards. Future iterations of the Index will provide us with these more nuanced findings.

For example, we might find that Eastville, with low levels of community belonging, would benefit most from more green and social spaces, while Bedminster, with low levels of cultural participation, would benefit most from more public transport options. This level of detail will enable local policymakers to make a positive impact to people's lives even with limited resources available.

This overall wellbeing map will, as the Index develops, be overlaid with detailed information about the city-scale drivers of these levels and the nuanced but vital differences in the reality of people's experienced lives in each ward. Such data will help policy and interventions be targeted at where they are needed most.



KEY FINDINGS

FROM FIVE POLICY THEMES

THE FOLLOWING PAGES PROVIDE DETAIL ON SOME OF THE INITIAL FINDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF CITY WELL-BEING MEASUREMENT. THESE FINDINGS PROVIDE A GLIMPSE OF THE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE INDEX USAGE ONCE A FULL-SCALE ANNUAL DATASET IS UP AND RUNNING.

The Index data was analysed from March-May 2015, with partners from the University of Bristol. This report outlines key findings from the Index pilot in relation to five policy themes:

- ⚙️ Work
- ⚙️ Education
- ⚙️ Health
- ⚙️ Place
- ⚙️ Culture ⁷

In assessing each policy area, we have taken into account three things:

- The factors that have a significant impact on people's overall well-being (e.g. unemployment, low income, long working hours, etc.)
- The relative importance of each factor (e.g. the impact that unemployment has on well-being is three times larger than the impact of having a low income)
- The impact of key factors on each domain of people's experienced well-being. The Happy City Survey groups questions

These domains are based on established academic models of well-being and five years of asking communities and individuals about "what matters most" to them.

Looking at how conditions impact of each of these well-being domains enables us to understand people's experienced well-being in more detail. This in turn leads to a better understanding of the kinds of policies that can improve well-being.



KEY FINDING

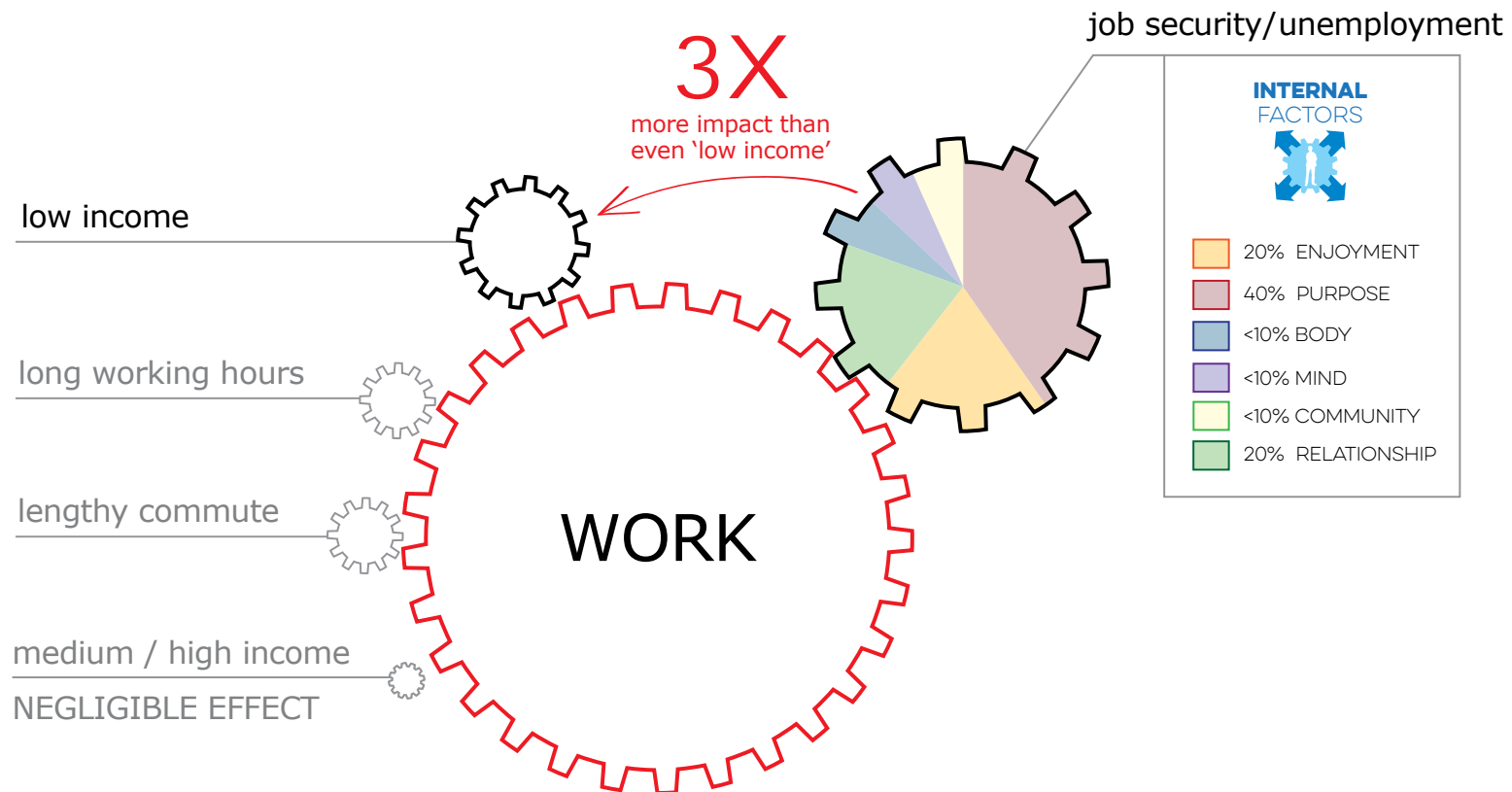
EMPLOYMENT MATTERS.

SUMMARY

Unemployment has a much larger negative impact on overall well-being than other objective factors, such as having a low income, long working hours and a lengthy commute. In contrast, the positive impact that having a medium or high income has on overall well-being is negligible.

FURTHER FINDINGS

The impact of unemployment and having a low income is mediated by geographic, social, and individual factors. The negative impact of unemployment is larger in wards with a greater proportion of individuals who have never worked (generational unemployment). Conversely, individuals with high levels of social support and family cohesion are not significantly impacted by unemployment; nor are individuals with high feelings of autonomy and resilience.



Policy theme: Education

KEY FINDING

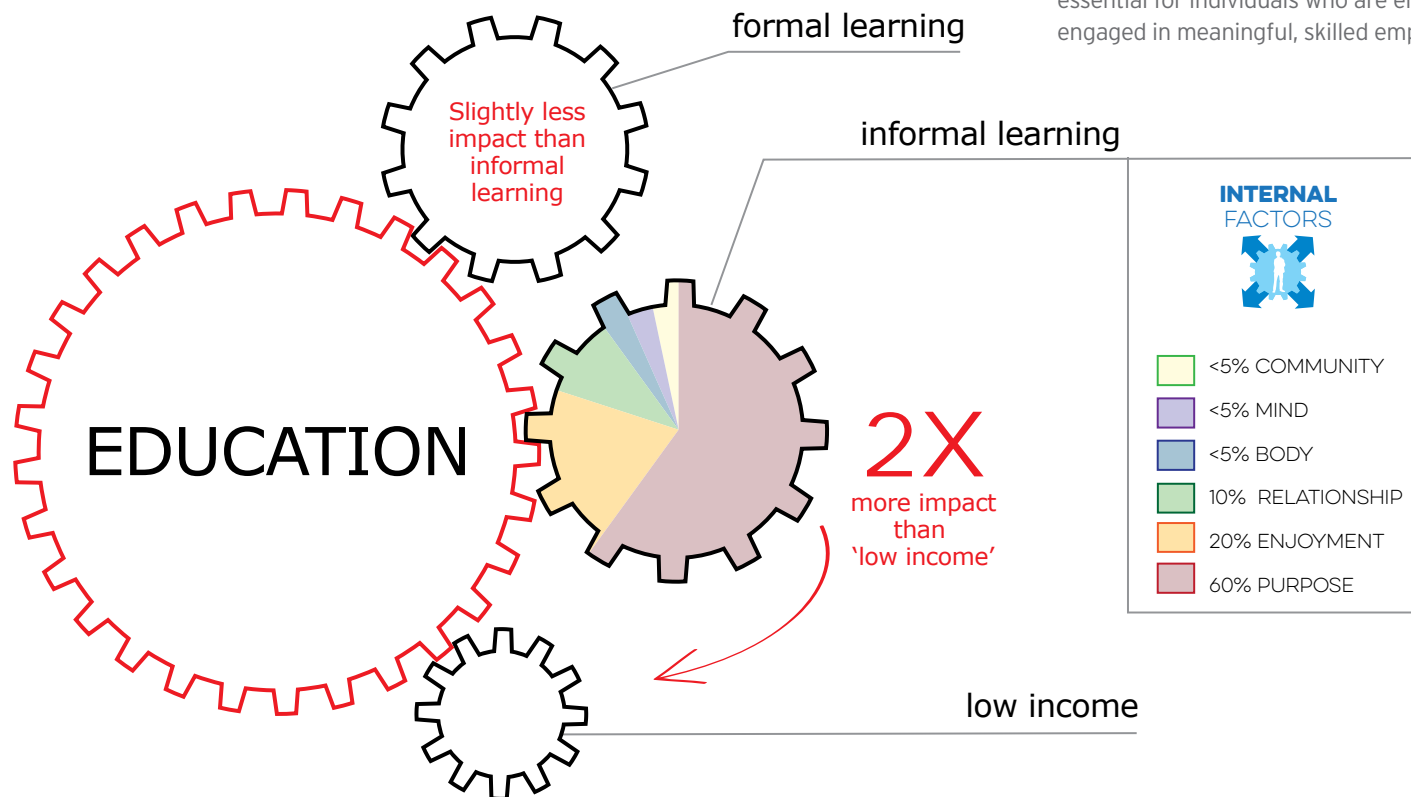
ADULT LEARNING MATTERS.

SUMMARY

Informal and formal learning has a larger impact on overall well-being than other important factors such as having a low income, as well as positive factors such as outdoor leisure time.

FURTHER FINDINGS

Informal and formal learning has an even larger positive impact for the retired or the unemployed. This makes sense once we consider how adult learning and unemployment impacts on the different domains of people's well-being. Both adult learning and unemployment largely impact on people's sense of purpose - their sense of autonomy, resilience, competence and optimism. Both factors also have a significant impact on people's relationships and enjoyment of life. This suggests that promoting adult learning is essential for individuals who are either unemployed or not engaged in meaningful, skilled employment.



KEY FINDING

LONG-TERM SICKNESS OR DISABILITY MATTERS

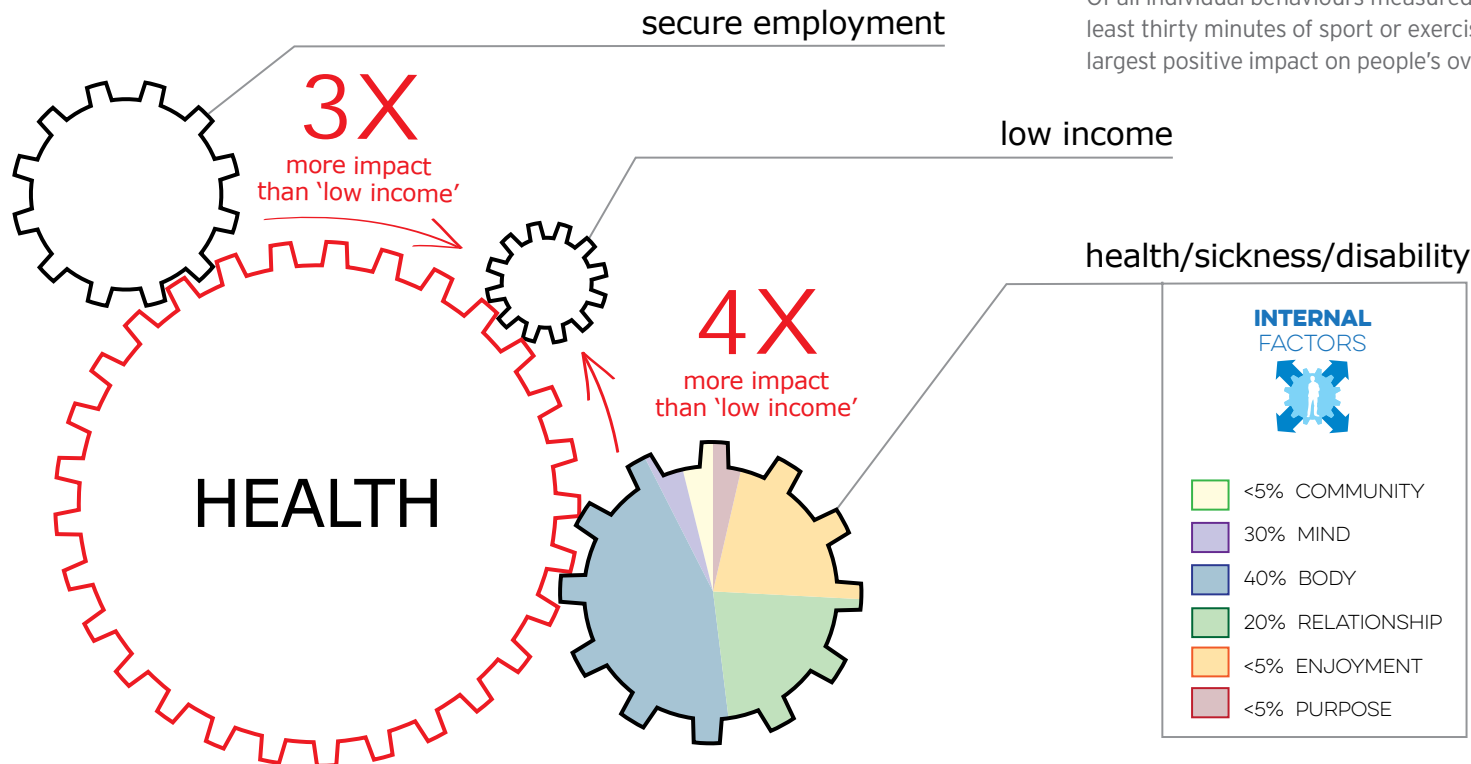
SUMMARY

Being long-term sick or disabled has the largest negative impact on well-being. It has a larger impact than other important factors, such as being unemployed and having a low income.

FURTHER FINDINGS

Long-term sickness or disability does not just impact people's physical well-being. It also has a large negative impact on people's relationships and mental well-being. This shows that there are multiple ways to improving the lives of individuals with a long-term sickness or disability beyond physical healthcare. The other key factors highlighted in this report - employment, adult learning, social factors and participation in cultural activities - all have a significant impact on these domains of well-being.

Of all individual behaviours measured, participating in at least thirty minutes of sport or exercise per week had the largest positive impact on people's overall well-being.



KEY FINDING

SOCIAL FACTORS MATTER.

SUMMARY

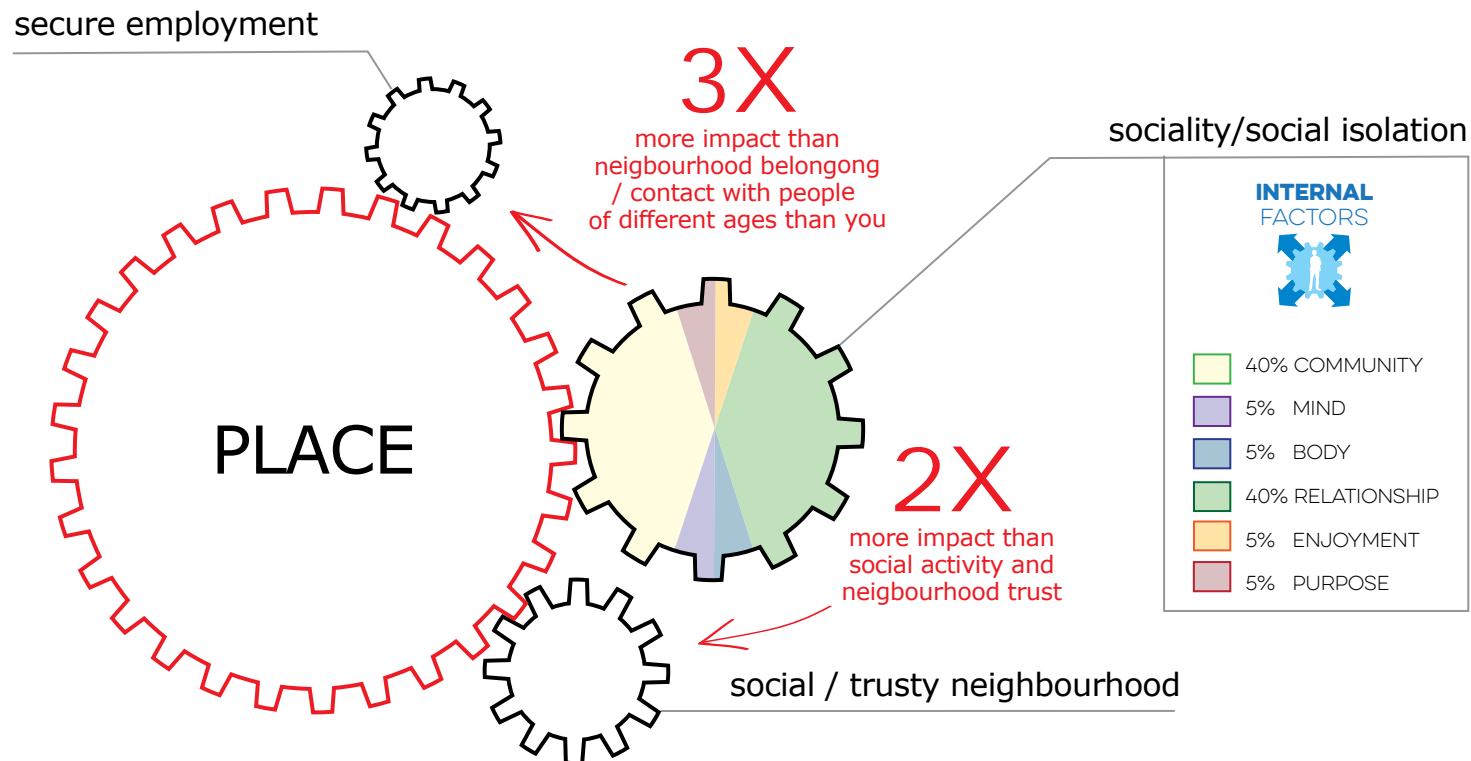
A person's perception of where they live and who they interact with are the main factors that have a positive impact on well-being. These include the following factors, in order of importance:

- Having a close personal relationship
- Meeting socially with friends, relatives or colleagues
- Community trust
- Neighbourhood belonging
- Having contact with people of different ages to you

FURTHER FINDINGS

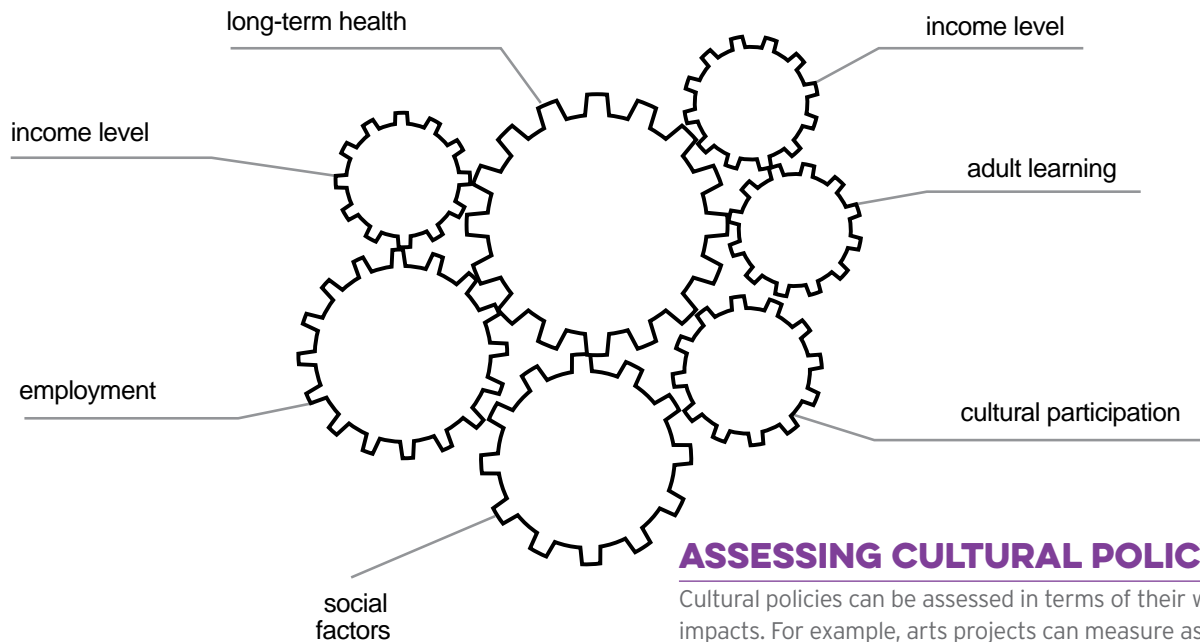
Planning on transport policies are significantly related to these social factors. For instance, the impact of crime and green space on overall well-being is largely determined by social and community factors. Wards with higher levels of crime have lower levels of overall well-being, with lower levels of community trust and social cohesion. In contrast, wards with greater accessibility to green space have higher levels of well-being, with higher levels of sociality.

Social factors have a significant impact on all domains of well-being.



KEY FINDING

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION MATTERS.



SUMMARY

We found that cultural participation strongly correlated with all of the key factors highlighted above: employment, adult learning, long-term health and social factors.

FURTHER FINDINGS

Participatory arts, such as dance and crafts, have a greater impact on well-being than audience arts, such as theatre. Participatory arts often enable people to feel absorbed in the relevant activity, combining challenging activities with an appropriate level of skill. The positive impact of the arts has been shown across various specific contexts, from care home residents to young offenders.⁸

The arts also contribute towards well-being via other pathways. Engagement with the arts is linked to better physical and mental health, and community cohesion or social capital. Arts activities have been shown to combat loneliness and social isolation, particularly among older people.⁹

Well-being evidence can inform strategic priorities, such as focusing more on participatory arts. The benefits of participatory arts may largely be due to the fact that they enable people to take an active part in their own development and the lives of their communities.¹⁰

ASSESSING CULTURAL POLICY

Cultural policies can be assessed in terms of their well-being impacts. For example, arts projects can measure aspects of the audience experience such as: engagement and concentration; learning and challenge; shared experience and atmosphere. This improves on the 'head-count' approach, which makes no attempt to assess the human impact of the arts on people's lives. By assessing these impacts, funders may be able to better align decision-making both with the motivations of artists and with the unique benefits of art for audiences.

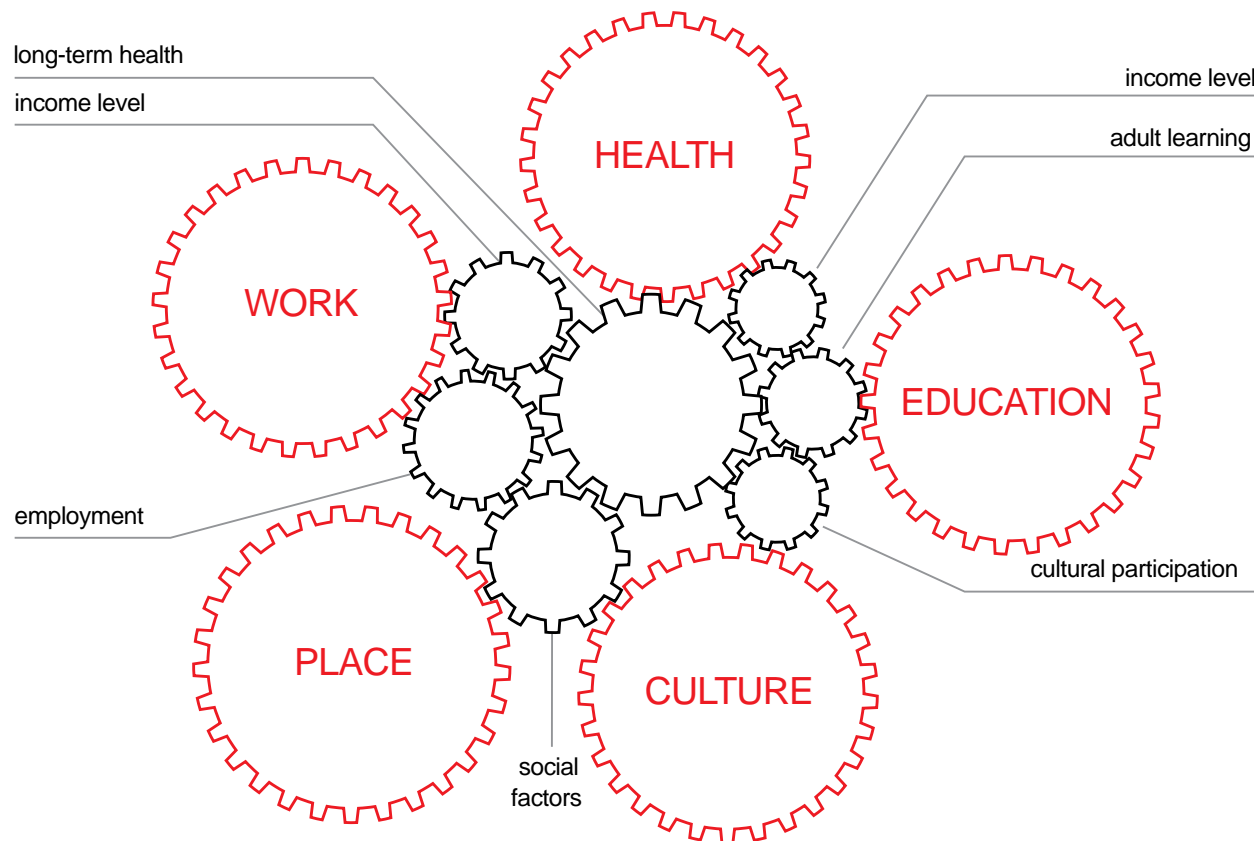
When considering the impacts of arts and culture spending we need to look not just at aggregate well-being but also at well-being inequalities. Cultural consumption as traditionally defined tends to appeal to wealthier, more educated individuals, who generally have higher well-being to begin with. Active steps must be taken to promote arts participation to less advantaged groups, so that local government subsidy of the arts narrows rather than widens inequalities.

CONCLUSION

WELL-BEING DATA CAN FIND POINTS OF LEVERAGE

From collecting well-being data across the city we can determine the key factors that impact on people's well-being. This report has shown the key factors for promoting well-being in five policy areas: work, education, health, place and culture.

For each policy area, we have shown how key factors impact people's well-being. For instance, unemployment impacts on people's sense of purpose, physical and mental well-being, and relationships. Other key factors, such as adult learning, social factors, and cultural participation, also have a significant impact on these domains. This highlights the positive knock-on effects that can be created by promoting any one of these factors:



LOCAL WELL-BEING AS A CENTRAL POLICY PILLAR

A well-being approach to local policy is not an add-on to be considered once economic policy objectives have been met: rather it combines economic and non-economic objectives into a single framework.

We have noted the potential economic and social benefits of well-being policy through this report. Higher well-being is associated with better health, sociality, and higher productivity, while 'city liveability' is an increasingly important criterion for companies deciding where to invest.

To reap these benefits, local well-being policy needs to be made across-departmental boundaries and from a long-term perspective. It is not enough to look at the obvious, direct connections between a given policy area and well-being: policymakers need to understand the various pathways through which their work impacts people's well-being. For instance, planning and transport policy influences well-being in a multitude of ways, from access to jobs and housing to physical health to community cohesion.

FUTURE POTENTIAL FOR THE HAPPY CITY INDEX

The Index pilot provides an initial picture of what the priorities would be for a Bristol as a well-being focused city, and the potential benefits of local policies that promoted those priorities. This, however, only hints at the possibilities to come.

By the end of 2015, we will have written-up the Index methodology with the University of Bristol, and developed our engaging digital tool for measuring well-being. This will enable us to take the Index to any city in the UK and collect a comprehensive city-wide dataset in a rigorous and cost-effective way.

In 2016, we plan to roll-out the Index to other cities in the UK and develop a global network of cities interested in setting up the Index. By 2017, we aim to have established well-being focused cities across the world. These cities will be engaging their citizens in the measurement of well-being and collecting comparable well-being data on an annual basis. Beyond 2017, we plan on helping well-being focused cities to become the norm, shifting the emphasis away from GDP growth towards what really matters.

REFERENCE

- 1 Stiglitz, J.E., Sen, A. & Fitoussi, J.-P., 2009. Report by the commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress.
- 2 Layard, R., 2005. Happiness: Lessons from a New Science, Penguin; Bok, D., 2010. The Politics of Happiness: What Government Can Learn from the New Research on Well-Being. Princeton University Press.
- 3 UK Office of National Statistic (ONS) National Well-being Programme: www.ons.gov.uk/well-being; OECD Better Life Index: www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/
- 4 2015 World Happiness Report: <http://worldhappiness.report/>
- 5 We do not consider these to be either drivers of well-being or aspects of experienced well-being (although they are likely to impact on both). Rather, they indicate the desirability of the city's well-being – the extent to which well-being is equally distributed and produced in a sustainable manner.
- 6 This data comes from the 2014 Bristol Quality of Life survey. Future iterations of the Index will allow us to break down overall well-being scores for each ward into key domains of well-being, allowing us to understand what city factors impact well-being and why.
- 7 In assessing the implications of well-being findings for cultural policy, we relied on findings from the well-being literature rather than the Index pilot.
- 8 Mowlah, A.et al.(2014)The value of arts and culture to people and society: An evidence review. Manchester: Arts Council England.
- 9 Cohen, G.D.et al.(2006). The impact of professional conducted programs on the physical health, mental health and social functioning of older adults. The Gerontologist, 46(6), 726–734.
- 10 Fujiwara, D.et al.(2014a). Quantifying and valuing the wellbeing impacts of culture and sport. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

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