

Polling results report: 8 December 2020

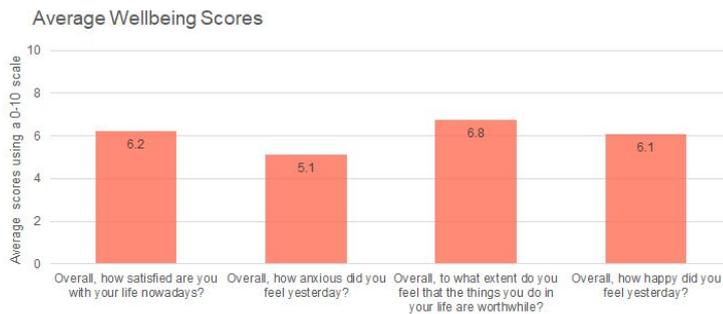
This report

This report covers the period between the 24 November and 07 December 2020. Participants were asked the four wellbeing questions from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) which we ask on a monthly basis. Social workers were also asked to reflect on the past year and to share with us their proudest achievements.

November wellbeing scores.

Participants were asked the four wellbeing questions, please see below in Fig 1.

Fig 1

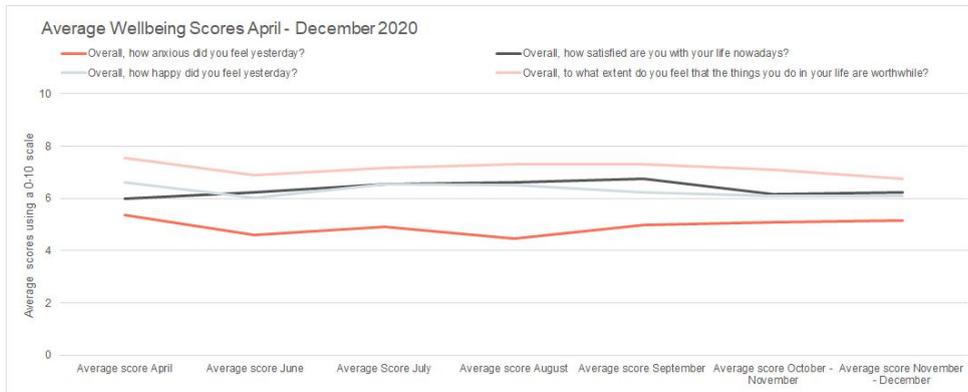


Participants are asked to score themselves from within a range of 1 - 10, where 1 is not anxious at all to 10 which is very anxious. The average score for anxiety has slowly crept up since September and is now at 5.1/10 whereas it was at 4.5 in August. At its highest in April, it was 5.4 when the first lockdown occurred. Life satisfaction remains at 6.2, where 1 is not satisfied and 10 is very satisfied. It has hovered around this average over time although reached 6.8 in September, its highest ever average. Feeling that life is worthwhile has dropped for the second month running and is at its lowest since we posed this question. Happiness has remained the same at 6.1 for the last two months, where 1 is not happy and 10 is very happy.

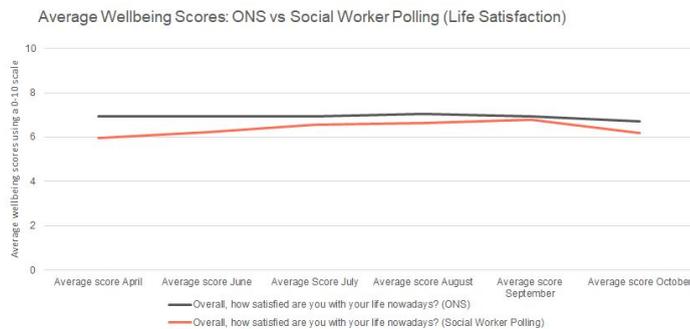
Wellbeing averages since April

The averages for wellbeing from April to November/December are provided in Fig 2 below:

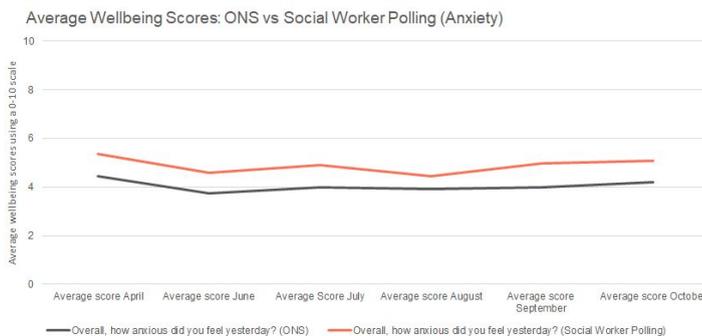
Fig.2



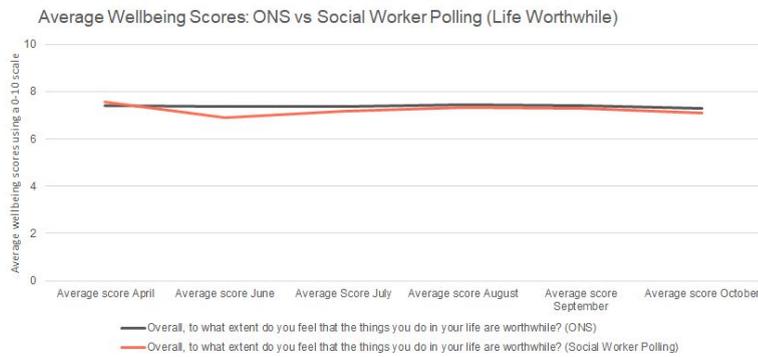
Comparison graphs between social worker averages and national population averages using the four well being questions from ONS.



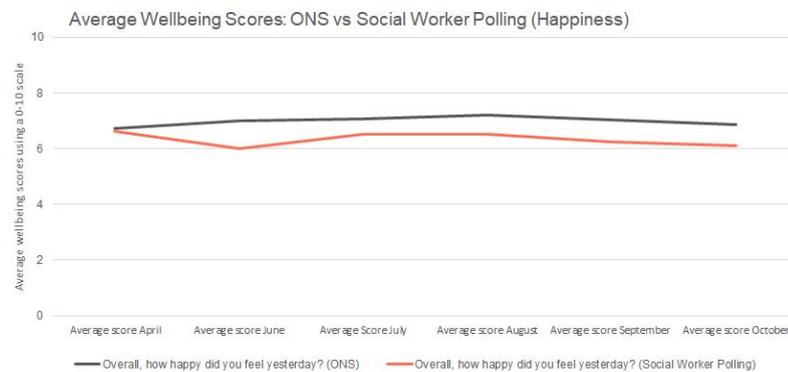
Life satisfaction for social workers rose over the first few months and then dipped as it went into September. Whereas the general population average has remained relatively stable, the social workers' averages have changed over time.



Social workers anxiety has remained higher throughout the pandemic than the general population but appears to follow a similar trajectory with two noticeable dips in June and August.



Social workers started with a higher average of life feeling worthwhile over the general population in April but then dipped in June returning to similar levels since. This wellbeing measure appears to be the most matched for the two cohorts.



Happiness started off at similar average scores for both cohorts in April but in June the figure dropped for social workers and never returned to the same level whereas the general population remained relatively stable across the same period.

Looking back over the year, what has made you proud:

64 practitioners gave free text responses to the question: *When you reflect back on this very strange year, what makes you feel proud about how you have managed your way through it?*

‘I have survived an unusual year and look forward to a better 2021’

Upon reflection, CSC staff told us they feel proud of their continued support for children and families, for maintaining social and workplace connections, and adapting to new ways of working. Also, they felt proud of finding the positives and practising self-care, for remaining in the profession despite difficulties, as well as surviving and managing through this year.

Continued support for children and families

‘The fact that we were able to continue and do our jobs to the best way possible, despite the challenges and the increased workload.’



Several workers shared a sense of pride around continued support for children and families despite the difficulties posed by the pandemic e.g. 'Proud to remain committed to my work as a social worker'. Another person shares pride around 'maintaining [the] quality of assessments' and another shares they are proud of their 'perseverance and keeping children at the core'. Being able to maintain *in person* contact was important to one professional who shares they are proud of having 'endeavoured to have as much face to face contact as allowed'.

Maintaining social and workplace connections

Many workers shared that maintaining social connections, e.g. with family and friends, helped them to manage their way through this year. For example, one person shares: 'I've maintained and perhaps deepened the important relationships in my life!'. In addition, staff also found that they have strengthened workplace relationships too. For example, one worker describes 'forging more helpful relationships with key workers...', and others describe having good support from team colleagues.

Finding the positives and practising self-care

Many workers shared that having a positive mindset, finding 'something positive every day' and 'taking each day as it comes' has helped them to manage this last year. Practitioners shared that practising gratitude, acceptance, and feeling a sense of hope towards a brighter future has helped them. Some workers shared feelings of resilience e.g. '[I am] more resilient than I realise'. Practitioners also spoke of focusing their energy into maintaining their own physical and mental health e.g. by using 'exercise as a way to stay healthy and relieve stress'. Indeed, some staff shared feelings of pride for 'not going off work sick'; 'keeping fit and sane' was mentioned by several staff. Some practitioners also shared that they feel proud of 'being honest', e.g. 'asking for help' and 'admitting to not being ok'.

Adapting to new ways of working

Many staff share a sense of pride of having 'adapted to a new way of working'. For example, doing their job now with children at home, completing direct work with children in a virtual context, and adjusting to new technology. One worker shares 'I am proud that I have maintained my professionalism with families and have adapted to new ways of working'. Similarly, another worker feels proud of 'building relationships with young people despite the circumstances'.

Remaining in the profession

For some staff, the weight of the pandemic left them questioning whether they wanted to remain in the profession. One person describes they changed jobs and 'quit local authority' due to 'high caseloads and what felt like [an] unmanageable intensity of work'. However, another social worker describes how 'through self-care, asking for help, [and] admitting to not



being ok', they were able to take the time needed to refresh and maintain in the profession. Another person shares they are proud of having 'retained staff' during this difficult time.

Surviving and managing this year

Many professionals shared a sense of pride for having survived and managed this last year. For example, 'I made it through', and 'I'm still here and managing'. However, for one person their feeling is that they are 'not proud, just need to do it'. Similarly, another person comments 'we actually just did it'. Others feel proud to have managed despite being in long periods of isolation and without seeing family or friends. For example: 'I feel proud I've managed to cope with the impact of shielding whilst fully working from home. I am clinically extremely vulnerable and haven't seen anyone other than my partner since March, but I'm managing, and so I'm proud of that.'

About WWCSC Polling

What Works for Children's Social Care runs regular polls with social workers who have registered with us. Social workers are currently employed in a range of organisations and we canvas their opinions about our current and future research agenda as well as topics impacting on social work practice. There are 864 social workers currently registered to participate. 81 Social Workers responded to this poll with 64 social workers providing free text responses on the accomplishments they are proud of this year.