# Community wellbeing:
## concepts, measures and evidence

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ingrid@whatworkswellbeing.org
whatworkswellbeing.org

# Introduction

The Community Wellbeing Evidence team at the What Works Centre for Wellbeing have carried out a [conceptual review](#) of how community wellbeing is currently defined and used in theory and practice.

This set of slides include the key findings from that review, and sets out some questions that might help you think about what community wellbeing means in your area.
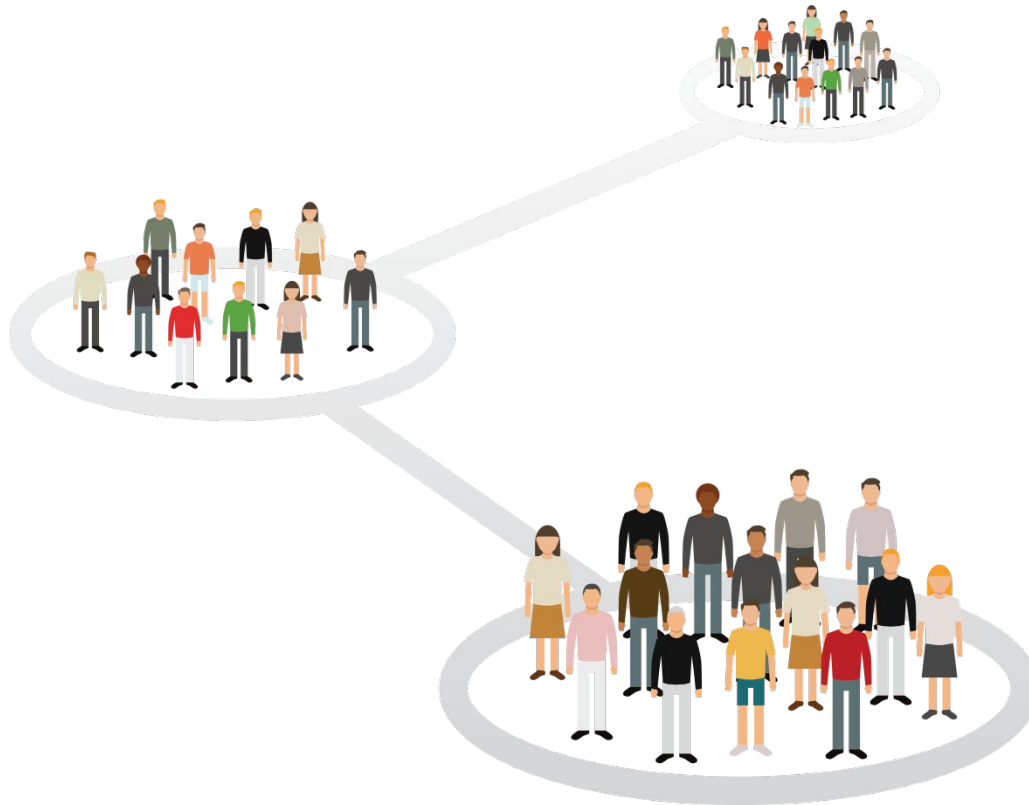
# What is community wellbeing?

**How aspects of the community impact on an individual's wellbeing**. This concept is focuses on how we feel about our community (for example our sense of safety, belonging and trust), and how community conditions affect our lives.

It looks at community from the point of view of the individual.

# What is community wellbeing?

**2**

**The wellbeing of the community itself.** This concept looks beyond the individual to a sense of being and feeling well together.

It's about the number and quality of social connections, the ability of groups to act together, and the people or groups that are excluded.

# Our working definition

"the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential."

*[Wiseman and Brasher, 2008: 358]*

# How can we assess community wellbeing?

1. Individual assessments of community scale domains
   These are often subjective measures (for example: trust, safety, access to heritage) which can nevertheless describe an aspect of wellbeing beyond the individual.
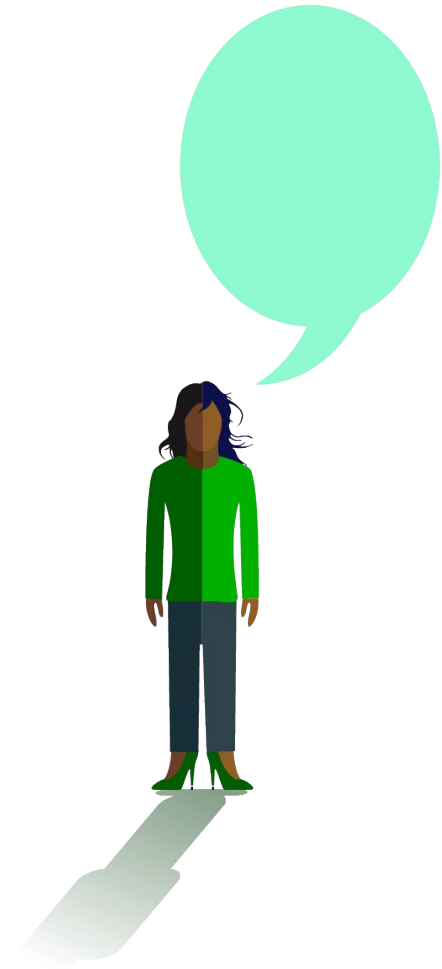
# How can we assess community wellbeing?

2. Information at the community scale about local life and conditions

These are generally objective measures such as crime rates, availability of local resources or access to services.

This information will often be available already through local or national data collection.

# How can we assess community wellbeing?

3. Capturing subjective aspects of local life that are not simply individual but reflect the ways in which people function and feel together.
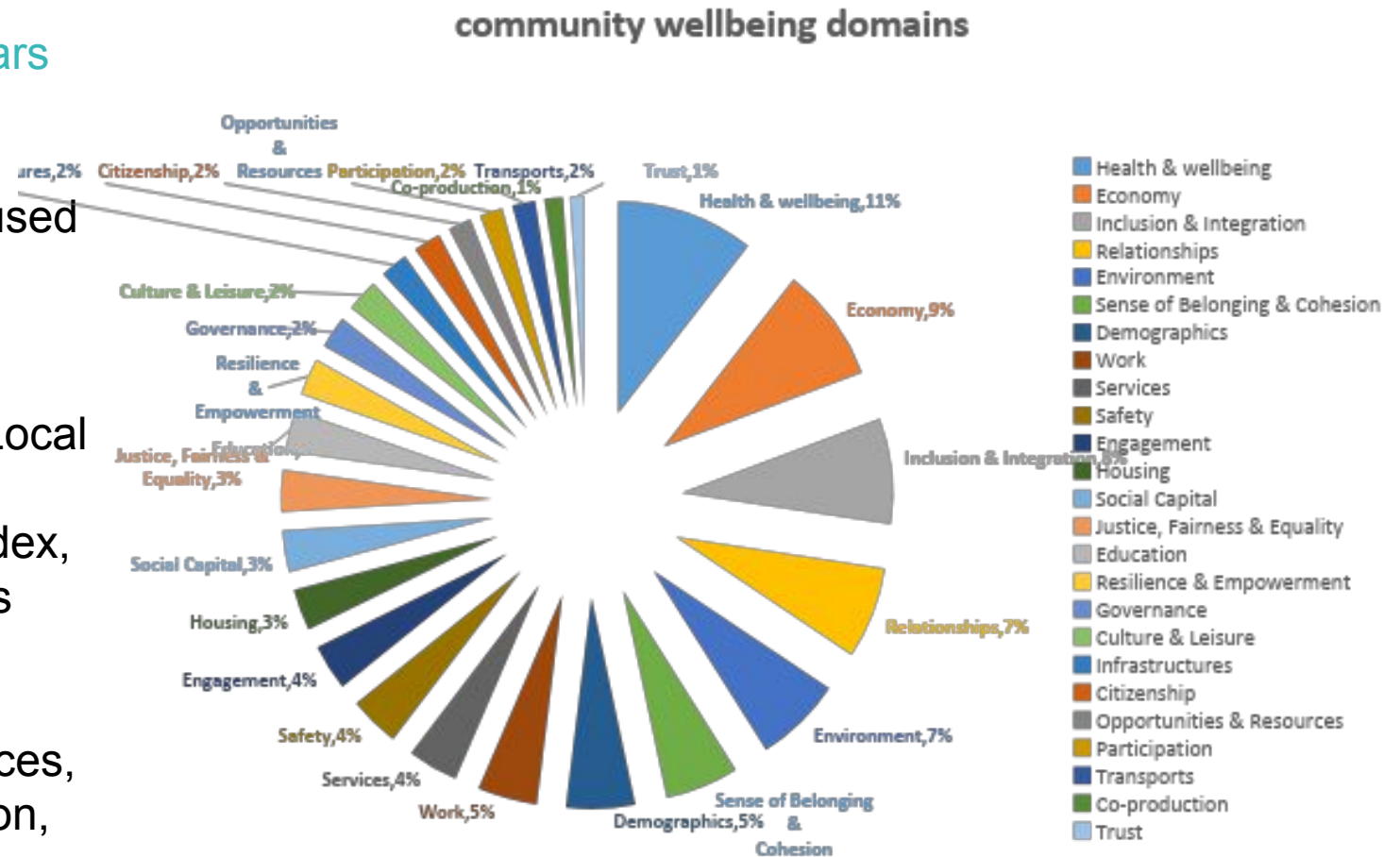
Capturing this 'extra something' may be tricky and require more creative approaches to collecting information - such as discussion groups, story-telling and analyses of local media.

# Existing indicators and frameworks

Systematic scoping review of indicators of community wellbeing in use in UK in last 5 years ([published](#) 2017)

- Included indicators, frameworks or scales used by governments (14), third sector (12) and academics (14)

- Some examples: Happy City Index, Think Local Act Personal Outcomes, Wellbeing and Resilience Measure, Oxfam Humankind Index, Well London, RSA Connected Communities

- The indicators covered a wide range of 'domains' including: health, economy, services, engagement, equality, participation, inclusion, trust, etc.



community wellbeing domains

Legend: Health & wellbeing, Economy, Inclusion & Integration, Relationships, Environment, Sense of Belonging & Cohesion, Demographics, Work, Services, Safety, Engagement, Housing, Social Capital, Justice, Fairness & Equality, Education, Resilience & Empowerment, Governance, Culture & Leisure, Infrastructures, Citizenship, Opportunities & Resources, Participation, Transports, Co-production, Trust

# A framework for community wellbeing

**People**
Close relationships and friendships
Strong networks of support to meet different needs
Feelings of trust and belonging

**Place**
Conditions that enable people to flourish – access to services, assets, facilities
Opportunities to enable people to flourish – jobs, education, leisure
Intangible cultural heritage, shared practices or history
Sense of safety in the community

**Power**
Voice and representation
A sense of control or influence over things which are important
Inclusive communities where nobody feels excluded

# Two important elements

### Inequality

The **spread** of individual wellbeing in a community, and the people and groups most **at risk** of having low wellbeing

### Sustainability

Sustaining wellbeing over time requires preserving **natural**, **economic**, **human**, and **social capital**

Related concept: **community resilience**

Community wellbeing theory of change

**1. Community conditions**
People - how we relate
Place - where we live
Power - having influence

**2. Interventions**
Policy and on the ground interventions

**3. Mechanisms of change**
Widening participation and governance
Enhancing social networks
Improving living conditions

**4. Intermediate outcomes**
Improved community conditions (people, place & power) and individual benefits

**5. Long-term outcomes**
↑ community wellbeing
↑ individual wellbeing

**6. Net savings**

**COMMUNITY WELLBEING**