

YEAR 2021

# GOAL 26: LIFE SATISFACTION

NEW BRUNSWICK WILL AIM TO MAINTAIN  
A SIMILAR QUALITY OF LIFE AND HIGH LEVELS  
OF LIFE SATISFACTION.



STATUS: UNCERTAIN

# Overview

## Importance

Happiness, or subjective well-being, can be measured in terms of life satisfaction, which involves a favourable attitude toward one's life, rather than an assessment of current feelings. Such measures, while subjective, are a useful complement to objective data to compare quality of life across the Canadian provinces. Life satisfaction is not evenly shared across the provinces; however, New Brunswick has a high level of life satisfaction and quality of life. This is important, as life satisfaction and higher levels of happiness are associated with better overall physical health and fewer long term health conditions.

## Problem

Life satisfaction seems to decrease as the population ages; and aging tends to be associated with poorer health and greater financial stress.

## Cause

There may be different factors that affect the life satisfaction of New Brunswickers. For instance, the personal health, income, sense of belonging, social cohesiveness, feelings of safety, and perceived stress levels of individuals may play an active role in influencing levels of life satisfaction and happiness.

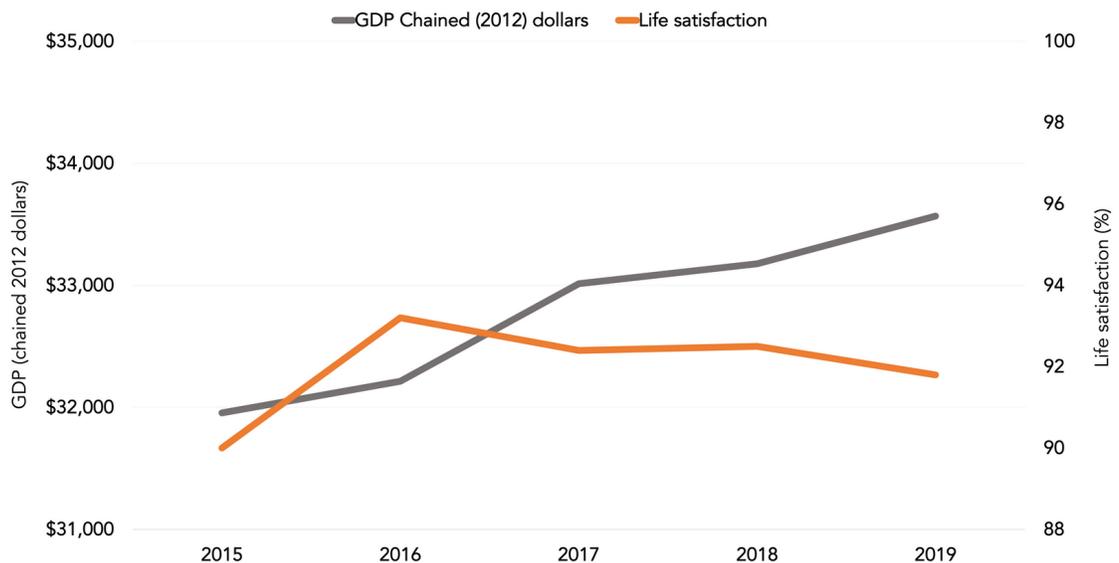
# In the Numbers

## Comparing GDP and Life Satisfaction

Figure 1 below shows the comparison between GDP and life satisfaction in New Brunswick. While there is a saying that "Money can't buy happiness," it is also general knowledge that income does play an important role in determining how satisfied and happy an individual or group is in life. As seen in the figure below, life satisfaction initially increases with an increase in GDP. However, as GDP continues to increase, life satisfaction begins to show a slight decline. This suggests that there may be a negative correlation between increase in GDP and life satisfaction.

Therefore, it is important and interesting to look at other social dimensions that may influence life satisfaction levels as well.

**Figure 1: GDP (chained 2012 dollars) vs. Life Satisfaction (percentage)**



(See full data set in Appendix D)

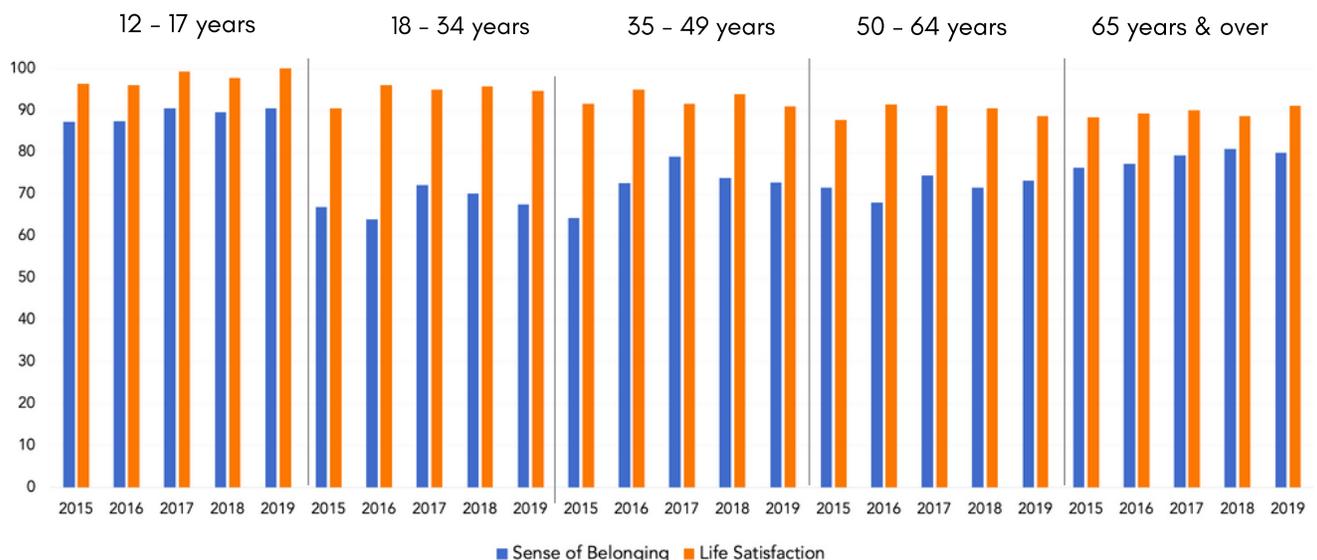
# A Closer Look

## Life Satisfaction and Sense of Belonging

Measuring feelings like happiness and life satisfaction can be very subjective in nature. In order to collect this data, researchers have relied primarily on self-report scales to assess happiness and life satisfaction. People respond to numbered scales (0-10), and their responses are then converted into percentages to indicate their levels of satisfaction, positive feelings, and lack of negative feelings. Subjective data can provide a personal evaluation of an individual's health, education, income, personal fulfilment and social conditions. This data is usually collected in the form of surveys and questionnaires.

Figure 2, shows that people have a higher life satisfaction and sense of belonging in their community when they are younger (12-17 years of age). Life satisfaction seems to stay relatively high when respondents are younger. However, once they reach a certain age (18-34 years), sense of belonging as well as life satisfaction seem to take a downward dip. People aged 35 years and above have a relatively consistent life satisfaction and sense of belonging to a community. Life satisfaction in New Brunswick after a certain age seems to remain relatively constant, with sense of belonging increasing after age 35.

**Figure 2: Life Satisfaction and Sense of Belonging**



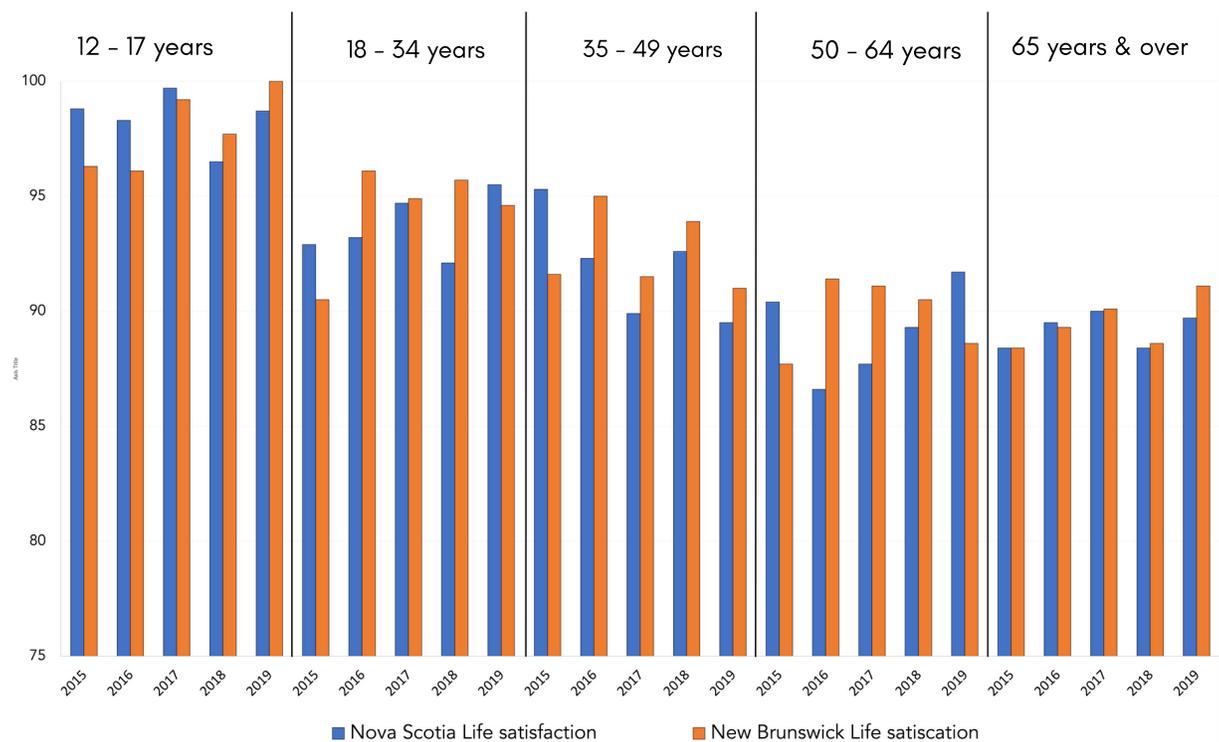
(See full data set in Appendix A)

# Life Satisfaction Compared to Nova Scotia

New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have similar geographic and population demographics. Hence, it is interesting to compare trends for life satisfaction between the two provinces. While making this comparison, we found that Nova Scotia tends to rank slightly higher than New Brunswick in life satisfaction among younger age groups (12-17 years of age).

Figure 3 shows that as populations age, life satisfaction in both provinces undergoes a decline for those aged 17 and above. Life satisfaction amongst the various age groups continues to decline with increases in age. This may be due to factors like joining the workforce, extra responsibilities, and a decrease in sense of belonging to a community. Although there is a decline in life satisfaction with age, life satisfaction levels in both provinces are high overall.

**Figure 3: Life Satisfaction Across New Brunswick and Nova Scotia**



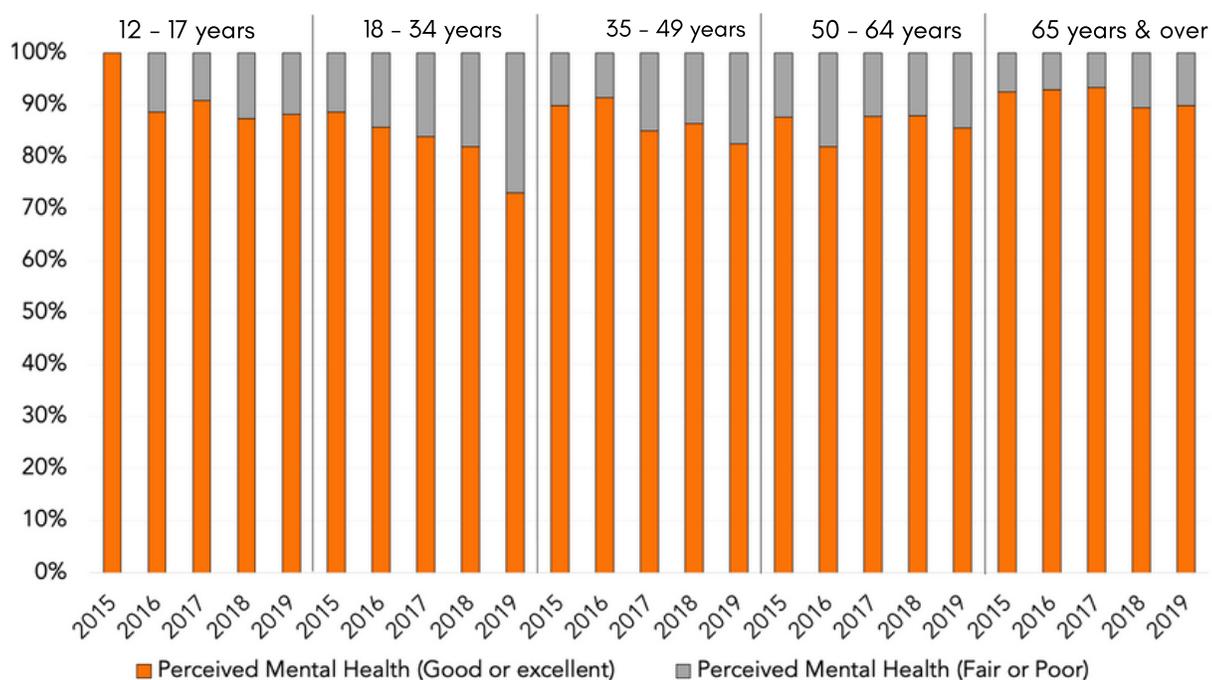
(See full data set in Appendix B)

## Perceived Mental Health Among Age Groups

Figure 4, shows the perceived mental health characteristics of different age groups in New Brunswick. The quality of a population's mental health corresponds with the people's quality of life. Excellent or good perceived mental health can indicate the presence a healthy population, and consequently a healthy workforce.

In New Brunswick, the percentage of people with fair or poor mental health in comparison to those with excellent or good mental health is relatively low. People aged 18-34 years score lower than all age groups, which means that the young working-age population of the province has lower quality of mental health. Perceived mental health appears to decline with age until age 34, after which it appears to fluctuate.

**Figure 4: Mental Health Among Different Age Groups**



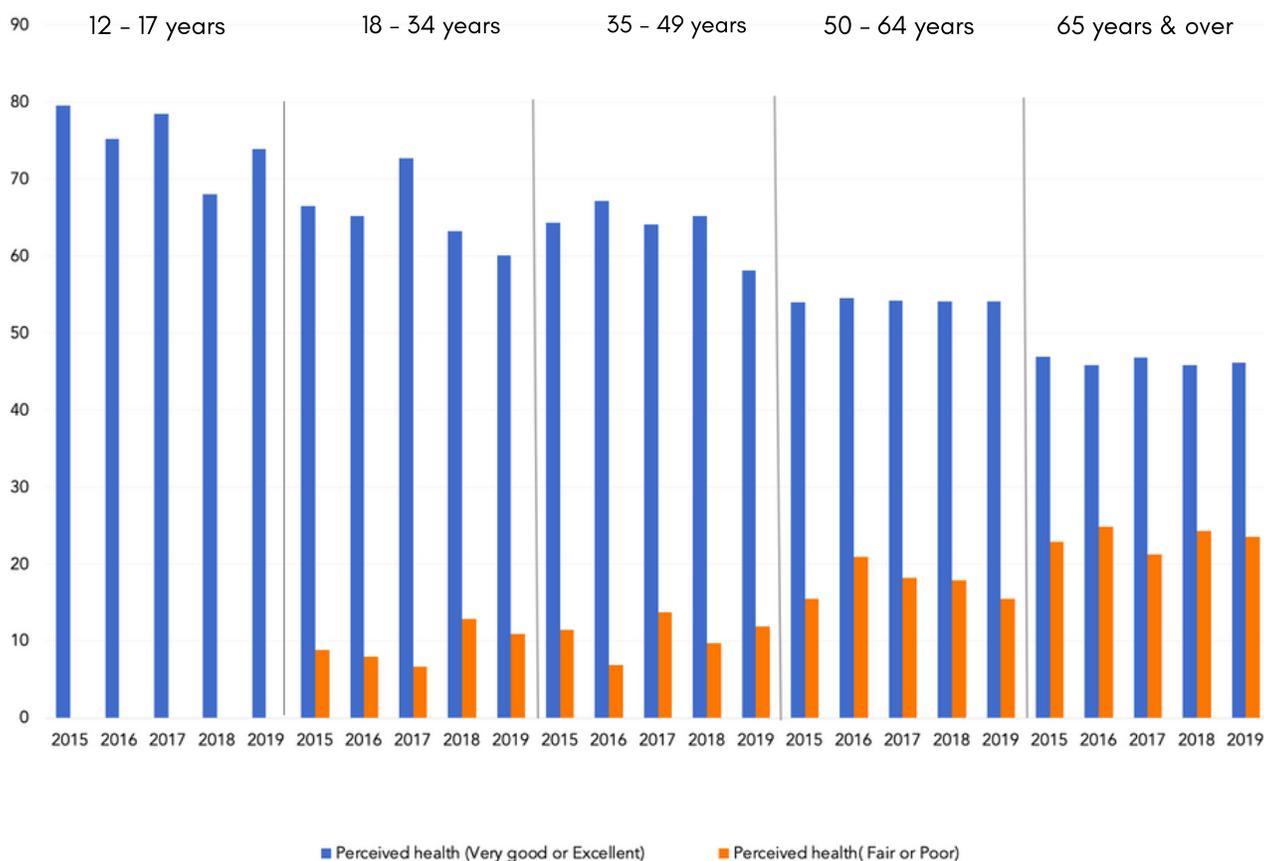
(See full data set in Appendix C)

## Perceptions of Health Among Different Age Groups

Figure 5 shows the perceived health characteristics (excellent or good, and fair or poor) for different age groups of New Brunswickers. The data on perceived health characteristics (fair or poor) is not available for individuals aged 12–17 years, as it was deemed too unreliable to publish by Statistics Canada. While it is imperative to look at the health of the population in order to know how well a province is doing, the data used must be approached with caution due to its subjective nature.

A healthy population is an indication of a healthy workforce; moreover, it also reflects upon the province's access to affordable, high quality health care services, good infrastructure, and public policies. New Brunswickers seem to express discontentment with their health as they age.

**Figure 5: Perceptions of Health Among Different Age Groups**



(See full data set in Appendix E)

# Summary

Currently, New Brunswick enjoys high levels of life satisfaction. The GDP of the province alone may not be a determinant of life satisfaction, although a high income does ensure better quality of life.

Standard of living and quality of life are reflections of social outcomes, and they are influenced by social factors such as sense of belonging to a community, quality of physical and mental health, age, and social cohesiveness - all of which play an equally important role in determining and influencing life satisfaction and happiness.

Because this year (2021) is the first time BoostNB has examined life satisfaction in the province, it is uncertain if this goal is progressing. However, as more data are analyzed over the years, the progression of this goal (or lack thereof) will become more apparent.

# Appendix A

## GDP (2012) Chained Dollars vs. Life Satisfaction in NB

12 years and over	Reference period	GDP Chained (2012) dollars	Life satisfaction
	2015	31954	90
	2016	32213	93.2
	2017	33014	92.4
	2018	33176	92.5
	2019	33568	91.8

*Source: Statistics Canada, Table 36-10-0222-01 Gross domestic product, expenditure-based, provincial and territorial, annual (x 1,000,000); Table 13-10-0096-01 Health characteristics, annual estimates*

# Appendix B

## New Brunswick Life Satisfaction and Sense of Belonging to a Community

Age group	Reference period	Sense of belonging to the community	Life Satisfaction
12 to 17 years	2015	87.2	96.3
	2016	87.4	96.1
	2017	90.5	99.2
	2018	89.5	97.7
	2019	90.5	100
18 to 34 years	2015	66.9	90.5
	2016	64	96.1
	2017	72.2	94.9
	2018	70.2	95.7
	2019	67.6	94.6
35 to 49 years	2015	64.3	91.6
	2016	72.7	95
	2017	78.9	91.5
	2018	73.9	93.9
	2019	72.8	91
50 to 64 years	2015	71.5	87.7
	2016	68	91.4
	2017	74.5	91.1
	2018	71.6	90.5
	2019	73.2	88.6
65 years and over	2015	76.3	88.4
	2016	77.2	89.3
	2017	79.3	90.1
	2018	80.8	88.6
	2019	79.9	91.1

Data Source: Statistics Canada (CCHS Data), Table 13-10-0096-01 Health characteristics, annual estimates

# Appendix C

## Life Satisfaction Across New Brunswick and Nova Scotia

		Nova Scotia	New Brunswick
	Reference period	Life Satisfaction	Life Satisfaction
Age group	2015	98.8	96.3
12 to 17 years	2016	98.3	96.1
	2017	99.7	99.2
	2018	96.5	97.7
	2019	98.7	100
	2015	92.9	90.5
18 to 34 years	2016	93.2	96.1
	2017	94.7	94.9
	2018	92.1	95.7
	2019	95.5	94.6
	2015	95.3	91.6
35 to 49 years	2016	92.3	95
	2017	89.9	91.5
	2018	92.6	93.9
	2019	89.5	91
	2015	90.4	87.7
50 to 64 years	2016	86.6	91.4
	2017	87.7	91.1
	2018	89.3	90.5
	2019	91.7	88.6
	2015	88.4	88.4
65 years and over	2016	89.5	89.3
	2017	90	90.1
	2018	88.4	88.6
	2019	89.7	91.1

Source: Statistics Canada (CCHS data), Table 13-10-0096-01 Health characteristics, annual estimates

# Appendix D

## Perceived Health and Mental Health Among Age Groups

Age group	Reference period	Perceived Mental Health Very Good or Excellent)	Perceived Mental Health ( Fair or Poor)
<b>12 to 17 years</b>	2015	78.1	-
	2016	72.5	9.3
	2017	74.4	7.5
	2018	70	10.1
	2019	72.2	9.7
<b>18 to 34 years</b>	2015	65	8.4
	2016	63.2	10.6
	2017	63.1	12.1
	2018	60	13.2
	2019	54.4	20.1
<b>35 to 49 years</b>	2015	68.6	7.8
	2016	70.6	6.7
	2017	62.1	10.9
	2018	64.1	10.1
	2019	63.5	13.5
<b>50 to 64 years</b>	2015	69.2	9.7
	2016	64.7	14.3
	2017	66.2	9.2
	2018	72.4	10
	2019	62.4	10.5
<b>65 years and over</b>	2015	70.2	5.7
	2016	67.5	5.1
	2017	70.4	5
	2018	65.5	7.7
	2019	66.6	7.5

The missing data for the 12-17 age group was deemed too unreliable for publication by Statistics Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada (CCHS data); Table 13-10-0096-01 Health characteristics, annual estimates

# Appendix E

## Perceptions of Health Among Different Age Groups

Age group	Reference period	Perceived health (Very good or Excellent)	Perceived health (Fair or Poor)
12 to 17 years	2015	79.5	-
	2016	75.2	-
	2017	78.4	-
	2018	68	-
	2019	73.8	-
18 to 34 years	2015	66.4	8.8
	2016	65.2	7.9
	2017	72.6	6.6
	2018	63.2	12.8
	2019	60	10.9
35 to 49 years	2015	64.3	11.4
	2016	67.1	6.9
	2017	64.1	13.7
	2018	65.2	9.7
	2019	58.1	11.9
50 to 64 years	2015	53.9	15.4
	2016	54.5	20.9
	2017	54.2	18.2
	2018	54.1	17.8
	2019	54	15.4
65 years and over	2015	46.9	22.8
	2016	45.8	24.8
	2017	46.8	21.2
	2018	45.8	24.3
	2019	46.1	23.5

The missing data for the 12-17 age group was deemed too unreliable for publication by Statistics Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada Table 13-10-0096-01 Health characteristics, annual estimates