Monitor of Well-being

& the Sustainable Development Goals

2026

Inclusive and sustainable **well-being** refers to quality of life here and now, as well as the extent to which this is being achieved at the expense of the well-being of future generations or the well-being of people living elsewhere in the world.

The concept of inclusive and sustainable well-being has three dimensions: 'here and now', 'later' and 'elsewhere'.

Well-being **'here and now'** concerns people who live in the Netherlands today. It refers to their quality of life and the quality of the environment they live in.

In principle, everybody who lives in the Netherlands is equally free to lead a meaningful life, regardless of their gender, age, religion, background or any other characteristics. In practice, not everyone has the same opportunities and people make different choices, which is why well-being varies between population groups and regions. This is also why we measure the distribution of well-being 'here and now'.

Well-being **'later'** is about people who will live in the Netherlands in decades to come and who, in order to achieve the same level of well-being as the current generations, will need access to resources that are being used today.

It will be difficult for future generations to maintain the same level of well-being as we enjoy today if there is a deterioration in mutual trust and large population groups participate less in our country's social, civic and political life; if technology becomes obsolete and infrastructure is neglected; if the natural environment is polluted and becomes uninhabitable for humans and animals; or if education is not accessible to all and people do not learn the skills that they need. Well-being 'later' therefore concerns the long-term sustainability of our well-being.

Finally, well-being **'elsewhere'** relates to the impact of our choices on people in other countries, both today and in the future.

This brochure summarises how the Netherlands is doing in terms of inclusive and sustainable well-being.

Well-being ‘here and now’

Well-being ‘here and now’ concerns the people who live in the Netherlands today, their quality of life and the quality of the environment in which they live.

Most people in the Netherlands are prosperous and satisfied

Most people in the Netherlands are satisfied with both their lives generally and with specific aspects of their lives, such as housing, work, and social life. In 2025, 85 percent of them were satisfied. In 2023, the Netherlands had the highest level of life satisfaction in the EU. But not everyone is equally satisfied: younger adults (aged 18-34 years), people with no basic educational qualification, and people born outside the Netherlands are less satisfied. On the other hand, people aged 65 or older, people who have completed higher education and people who were born in the Netherlands (and both of whose parents were also born in the Netherlands) are likely to be more satisfied with their lives than average. And despite the high overall level of satisfaction, over two million people scored their lives with a 6 out of 10 or lower. Less than half of the people in the Netherlands said they have a high degree of control over their own lives.

Material well-being is high and rising. Household disposable incomes and per capita consumption are rising and among the highest in the European Union (EU). Incomes are not distributed evenly, but are highly correlated with age. Young people under the age of 25 and older people aged 75 and older have lower incomes. In addition, households in which the primary earner has no basic educational qualification or was born abroad are more likely to have a lower income. Poverty in the Netherlands is relatively low and declining. Nevertheless, more people were concerned about their financial future in 2025 than in 2024.

At work: more stress but the same pay

Many people in the Netherlands are in employment, and the number of hours worked per person is gradually rising. Although there are fewer job vacancies, employment opportunities are increasing: (long-term) unemployment is low and falling, the labour underutilisation rate is falling, and net labour participation is rising. Labour productivity is also on the rise. All of this is going hand in hand with high levels of material prosperity, but also with increasing mental fatigue as a result of work. At the same time, a lower percentage of companies’ revenues is going toward wages and a larger share is taken as profits. Workers' hourly wages were at roughly the same level in 2024 as they were in 2009, after adjusting for the effect of inflation.

Decline in social interaction, volunteer work, and informal support

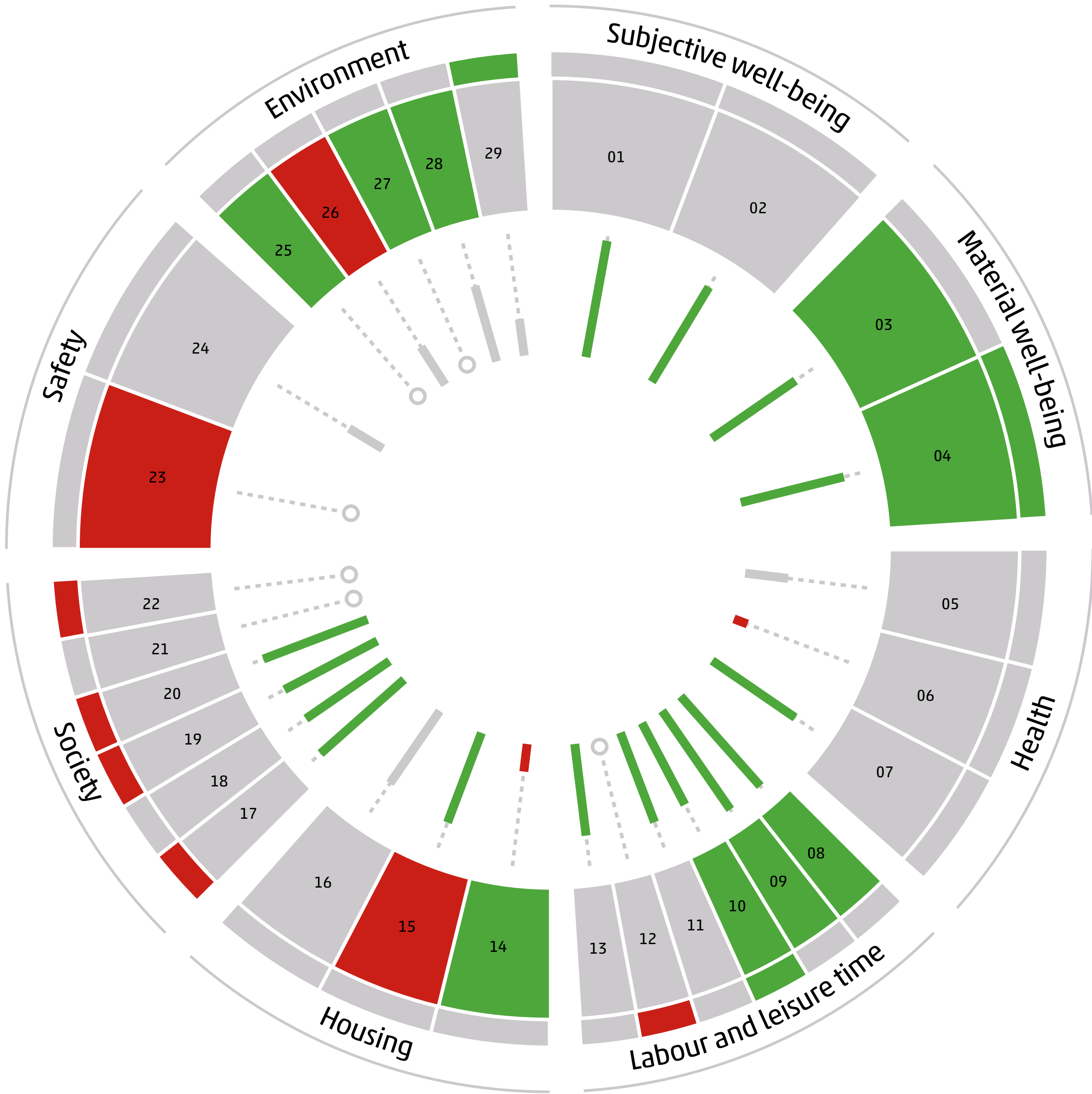
Participation in society - in the form of social interaction, volunteer work, and informal support - declined in 2025. The share of adults (aged 15 or older) who had engaged in volunteer work at least once in the past 12 months dropped to 47 percent. This decline is not evenly distributed across the different population groups in the Netherlands. It was most pronounced among people between the ages of 15 and 35, among people of Dutch origin, and among migrants from elsewhere in Europe. After an upward trajectory until 2024, 34.1 percent of people provide unpaid (informal) support for others in their free time.

It remains difficult to find an affordable home

The pressure in the Dutch housing market means that it is difficult to find suitable, affordable housing. The housing shortfall in 2025 was estimated at 400 thousand homes. It is becoming increasingly expensive to buy or rent a home, and a growing share of young adults are still living with their parents. For people who already own a home, however, housing is becoming more affordable. Despite rising house prices, households are spending ever less on housing costs as a share of their income, on average. In 2024, housing costs accounted for

Trends in inclusive and sustainable well-being and the SDGs ‘here and now’ visualised

The figure below shows the current trend for all the relevant indicators that make up well-being ‘here and now’, grouped into eight different themes. Below that, the same indicators are shown in order to compare the Netherlands with other EU countries.



Key

Medium-term trend (8 years)

Change (most recent year)

Increase in well-being

No change

Decrease in well-being

Insufficient data (quality)

The bars show the Netherlands' ranking in the European Union for each indicator.

High ranking

Middle ranking

Low ranking

No data

Subjective well-being
01 Satisfaction with life
02 Feeling in control of own life

Material well-being
03 Median disposable income
04 Individual consumption

Health
05 Healthy life expectancy of men
06 Healthy life expectancy of women
07 Overweight adult population

Labour and leisure time
08 Long-term unemployment
09 Net labour participation
10 Level of education achieved: HBO, WO
11 Satisfaction with leisure time
12 Time lost due to traffic congestion and delays
13 Satisfaction with work (employees)

Housing
14 Housing costs (rented and own homes)
15 Young adults (25-29 years) living with parents
16 Satisfaction with housing

Society
17 Contact with family, friends or neighbours
18 Voice and accountability
19 Trust in institutions
20 Trust in other people
21 Changes in values and norms
22 Voluntary work

Security
23 Often feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood
24 Victims of crime

Environment
25 Managed natural assets (terrestrial) within NNN
26 Quality of inland bathing waters
27 Nitrogen deposition and terrestrial nature areas
28 Urban exposure to particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)
29 Environmental problems

around 20 percent of people's disposable income on average. This is high in comparison with other EU countries.

Dutch people are satisfied with their living environment and their homes. It is worth noting, however, that a relatively small but growing group of people often feel unsafe in their own neighbourhoods. After years of declining crime rates, safety has been stable in recent years. The percentage of households experiencing disruption due to noise pollution is no longer rising.

Well-being 'later'

Well-being 'later' relates to the resources that will be available to future generations in order to achieve the same level of well-being that we enjoy today.

The Netherlands' (knowledge) economy is stable

Investment to maintain the Netherlands' economic capital is broadly stable as a percentage of GDP. Investment in new capital goods, knowledge and technological innovations is required in order to maintain the earning capacity of the Dutch economy. Investment in R&D and tangible fixed assets is stagnating, and investment in ICT is falling. The share of private R&D spending is rising as a share of GDP, while the share of public R&D spending is stable. The share of equity in the total assets of non-financial companies is increasing. The medium-term trend in the stock of physical and intellectual capital per hour worked is stable. However, the Netherlands is one of only a few countries where the stock of knowledge capital is not increasing.

The number of scientific publications that include contributions from Dutch researchers has become more subject to fluctuations in recent years. The number of patents per million inhabitants has declined from around 270 at the beginning of the century to 234 in 2025, but the trend is stable. The Netherlands is among the leaders in the EU-27 in terms of scientific publications and patents.

The educational level of the Netherlands is rising, and the share of people with no basic educational qualification is falling. Approximately a quarter of people aged between 15 and 74 have no basic educational qualification. The percentage of the adult population participating taking part in training and lifelong learning is high by EU standards. Well-being is not distributed equally across all groups in the population, however. People with a higher education degree enjoy a higher level of well-being in many areas of society.

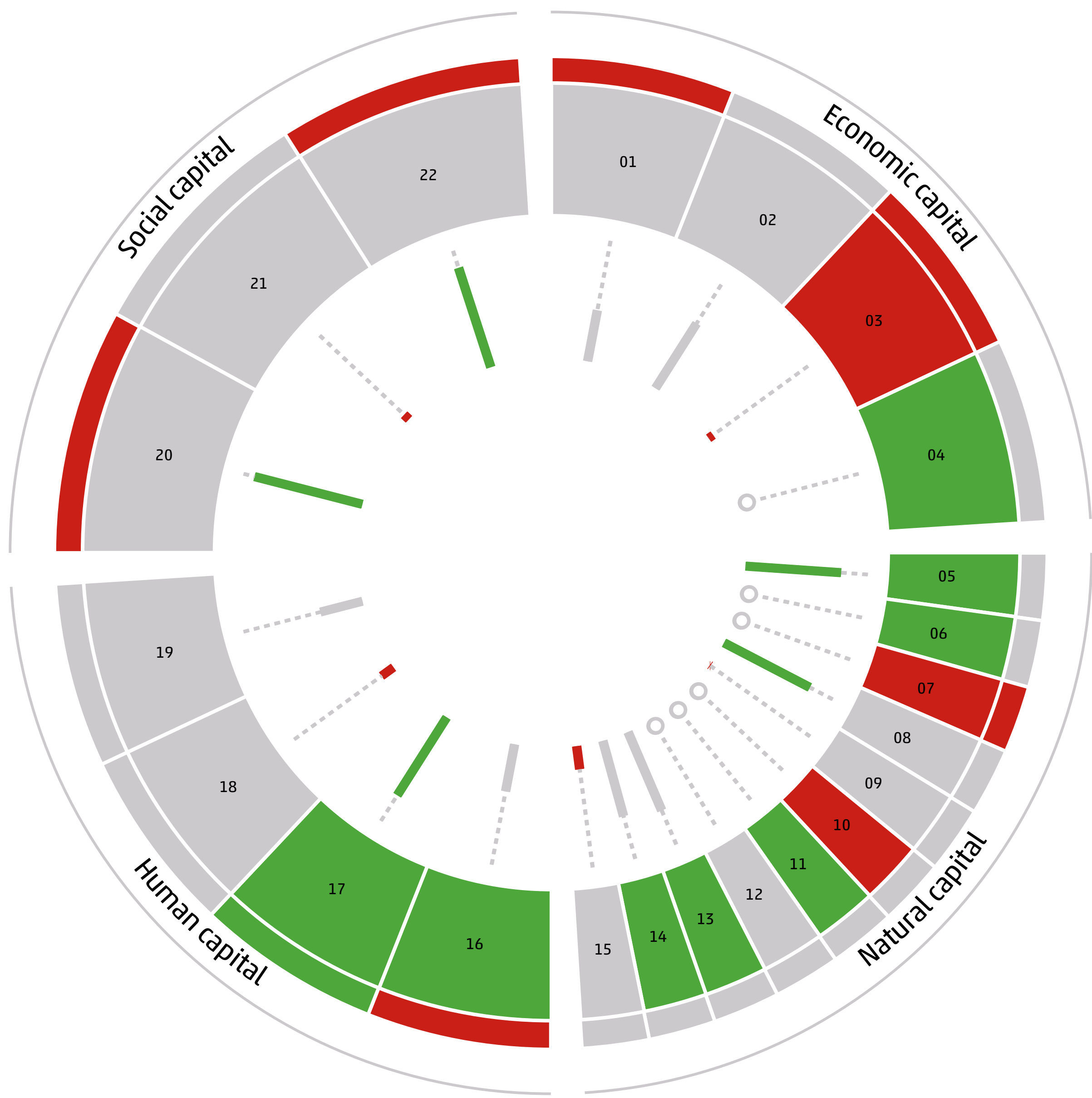
Pressure on natural capital remains high

In 2023, the Netherlands had by far the highest levels of excess nitrogen in the environment of the 18 EU member states for which figures are available. That year, nearly 70 percent of the Netherlands' natural land was suffering from excessive levels of nitrogen. The amount of green and blue space per resident is gradually decreasing, and the quality of surface water is poor. Biodiversity on land is declining, and biodiversity in fresh water and marshland is increasing.

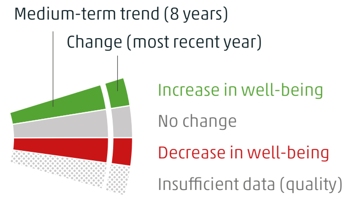
In recent years, efforts to make the economy more sustainable appear to have stalled. Investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency is at its lowest as a share of GDP since records began in 2018. The growth in the economic importance of the environmental sector has come to a halt. In 2025, greenhouse gas emissions rose for the first time in several years. Total energy consumption per resident is higher in the Netherlands than in most EU countries. In some respects, the pressure on natural capital is easing. The use of electric cars is growing rapidly, as is the share of renewable energy in total energy consumption. Air quality is improving, and the extraction of groundwater and freshwater from surface water sources is decreasing.

Trends in inclusive and sustainable well-being and the SDGs 'later' visualised

The figure below shows the current trend for all the relevant indicators that make up well-being 'here and now', grouped into eight different themes. Below that, the same indicators are shown in order to compare the Netherlands with other EU countries.



Key



The bars show the Netherlands' ranking in the European Union for each indicator.

- High ranking
- Middle ranking
- Low ranking
- No data

Economic capital
01 Physical capital stock
02 Knowledge capital stock
03 Average household debt
04 Median wealth of households

Natural capital
05 Renewable electricity capacity
06 Managed natural assets (terrestrial) within NNN
07 Green-blue space, excluding regular agriculture
08 Phosporus surplus
09 Nitrogen surplus
10 Fauna on land
11 Fauna in freshwater and marshes
12 Surface water with sufficien chemical quality
13 Ground water abstraction
14 Urban exposure to particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)
15 Cumulative CO_2 emissions

Human capital
16 Hours worked
17 Level of education achieved: HBO, WO
18 Healthy life expectancy of women
19 Healthy life expectancy of men

Social capital
20 Trust in other people
21 Feelings of discrimination
22 Trust in institutions

A less cohesive society, and therefore a less sustainable society

Society became less cohesive in 2025, mainly due to a decline in trust. A less cohesive society makes for a less sustainable society. Mutual trust is essential for a society that functions properly, and for the well-being of both current generations and future generations. The rising trend in levels of mutual trust has come to a halt, and in 2025 trust actually declined. That decline was particularly evident among people aged 25-54 , those with a secondary education diploma (HAVO, VWO, or MBO-2-4) and migrants. It was not only mutual trust that saw a decline: trust in institutions also declined in 2025. In this case, the decline was particularly evident among men, people aged 35-44, and people whose parents were born outside Europe.

Pressure on key systems

Strain on public services funded by the taxpayer will lead to further challenges for the well-being of future generations. Changes to the pension system that allow people to start accruing pension rights earlier have eased the pressure on the Netherlands' state pension system, but some people continue to lack proper pension coverage. Median household wealth is increasing, but so is average debt, including mortgage debt. In 2025, public debt rose again too, although the medium term continues to be downwards.

Other critical systems are also under pressure. The Netherlands is highly dependent on energy imports. In 2025, 72.9 percent of our energy consumption came from energy imports from other countries, and the levels of gas in our gas storage facilities were relatively low. Dutch banks would be less able to withstand a prolonged period of low economic growth, high interest rates, or high inflation than banks in other EU countries.

Well-being 'elsewhere'

The choices that people in the Netherlands make as they live their lives have an impact on people in the rest of the world. This impact can be positive, such as stimulating job creation and incomes growth in other countries. But it can also be negative, adding to the pressure on the environment and on resources in other countries.

The benefits of trade with the Netherlands are mainly enjoyed by other wealthy countries

Although an increasing quantity of goods are imported into the Netherlands from low-income countries, the vast majority still come from high-income and upper-middle-income countries. These are the countries where the most of the beneficial effects on jobs and incomes are felt. The Netherlands did not meet the OECD's target for development aid in 2024.

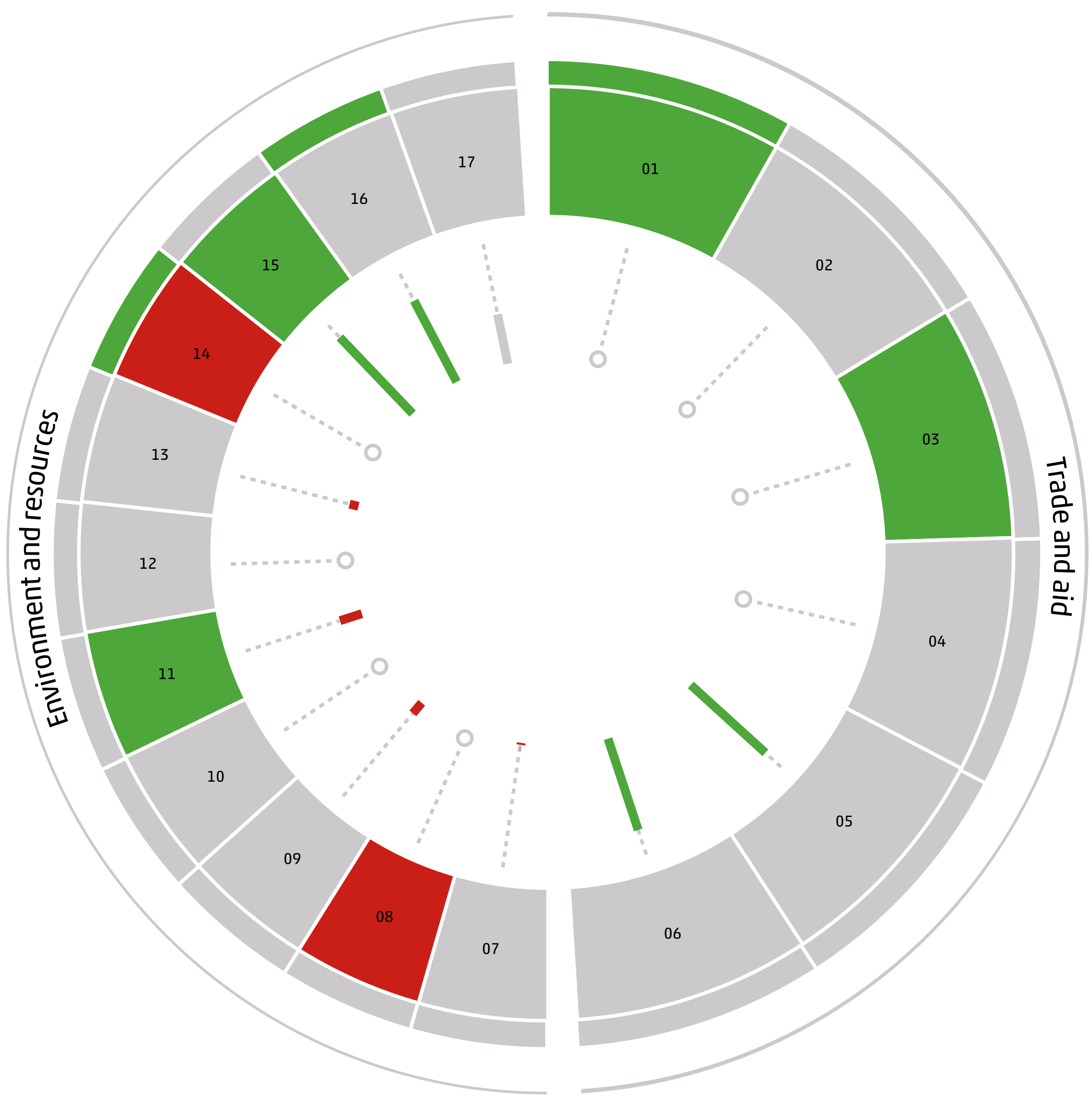
Pressure on the environment abroad due to consumption in the Netherlands

The resources that are imported into the Netherlands include raw materials. The extraction of these raw materials often has an adverse effect on the environment in the countries of origin. The Netherlands imports more raw materials per capita than most European countries.

Less land is required to support the consumption of citizens and the government in the Netherlands. Despite this structural downward trend, however, the land area required to support consumption in the Netherlands in 2023 was over three times the land area of the Netherlands itself. The amount of raw materials consumed by the Netherlands also decreased in 2023. Compared to other EU countries, Dutch consumption requires a very small land area and relatively few raw materials from other countries. However, this comparison probably produces an overly favourable picture because the member states of the EU are high-income nations with larger environmental and climate footprints than most other countries in the world.

Trends in inclusive and sustainable well-being and the SDGs 'elsewhere' visualised

The figure below shows the current trend for all the relevant indicators that make up well-being 'here and now', grouped into eight different themes. Below that, the same indicators are shown in order to compare the Netherlands with other EU countries.



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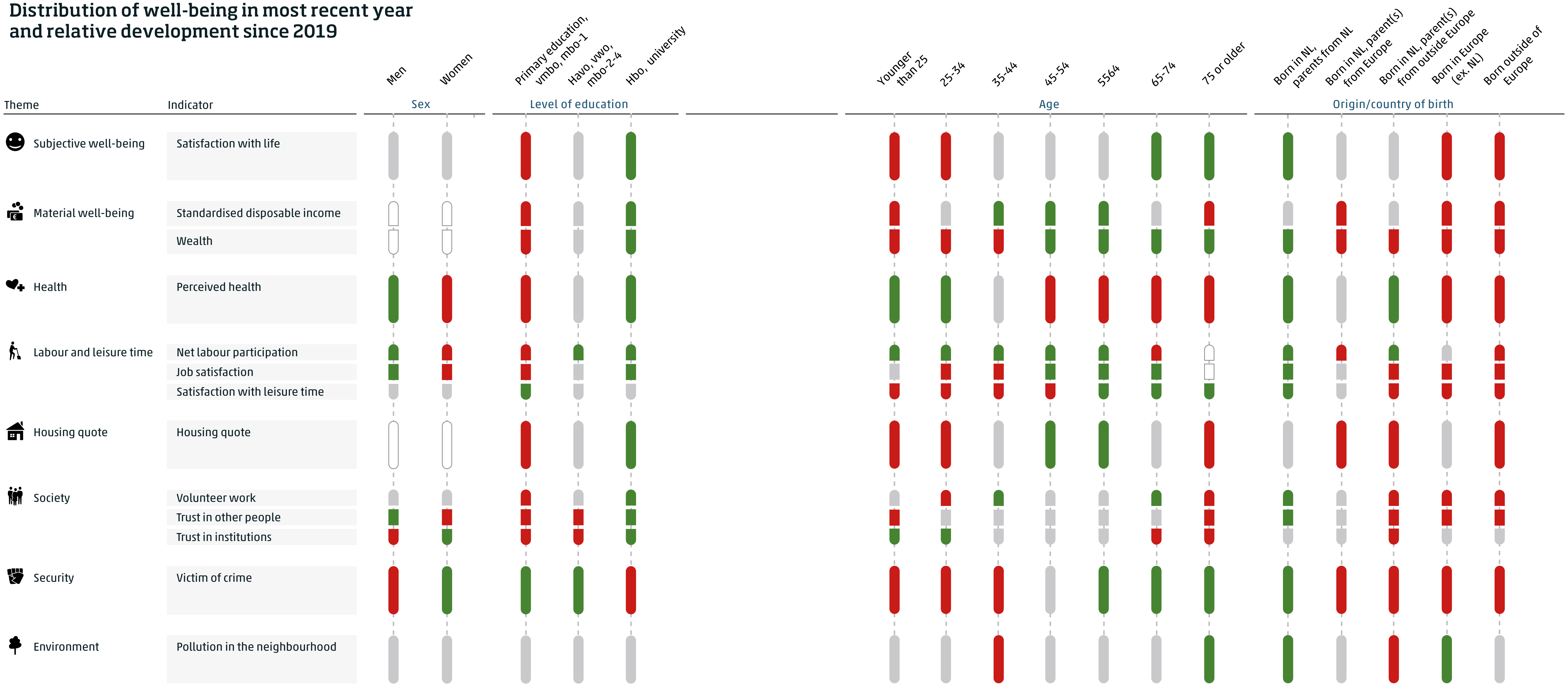
Trade and aid

01 Imports of goods from low-income countries
02 Imports of goods from lower-middle-income countries
03 Imports of goods from upper-middle-income countries
04 Imports of goods from high-income countries
05 Official development assistance
06 Remittances

Environment and resources

07 Fossil fuel imports
08 Fossil fuel imports from LDCs
09 Imports of metals
10 Imports of metals from LDCs
11 Imports of non-metallic minerals
12 Imports of non-metallic minerals from LDCs
13 Biomass imports
14 Biomass imports from LDCs
15 Land footprint
16 Material footprint
17 Greenhouse gas footprint

Distribution of well-being in most recent year and relative development since 2019



Total distribution (%)*	Men	Women	Primary education, vmbo, mbo-1	Havo, vwo, mbo-2-4	Hbo, university	Younger than 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	5564	65-74	75 or older	Born in NL, parents from NL	Born in NL, parent(s) from Europe	Born in NL, parent(s) from outside Europe	Born in Europe (ex. NL)	Born outside of Europe
Higher than average	25.0	16.7	16.7	16.7	70.8	20.8	20.8	14.6	33.3	50.0	43.8	47.9	77.1	0.0	16.7	12.5	0.0
On average	33.3	33.3	12.5	75.0	16.7	20.8	22.9	45.8	50.0	37.5	35.4	0.0	22.9	58.3	18.8	20.8	16.7
Lower than average	16.7	25.0	70.8	8.3	12.5	58.3	56.2	39.6	16.7	12.5	20.8	43.7	0.0	41.7	64.6	66.7	83.3

Legend

Well-being lower than national average

Well-being does not differ from national average

Well-being higher than national average

No data

Theme measured by one indicator

Theme measured by two indicators

Theme measured by three indicators

* The percentages are based on equal weighting of the 8 themes: each theme counts for 1/8th (12.5%). Indicators share this weight equally within the theme: with 1 indicator 12.5%, with 2 indicators 6.25% each, and with 3 indicators 4.2% each.

Monitor Well-being & the Sustainable Development Goals 2026. The indicators in the 2026-edition were updated until 25 March, 2026. All underlying information is available on the Statistics Netherlands (CBS) website, including a technical explanation (in Dutch) and tables containing the data used. In the Monitor, the emphasis is on the medium-term trends, based on data points from the period of 2018 – 2025.

Voor wat er **feitelijk** gebeurt

Uitgave 2026