

Press Release

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The fifth annual **Halifax Quality of Life Survey** tracks where living standards are highest in Great Britain by ranking local performance across key indicators covering the labour market, the housing market, the environment, education and health. The survey examines 408 local authority districts and is based on data at local authority (LA) level. Data has been gathered from a number of sources, including the ONS, DEFRA, the Met Office, the Department for Transport, Department of Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Welsh Assembly, and the Scottish Executive.

HAT TRICK FOR FOOTBALLER AND STOCKBROKER HAVEN SURREY'S ELMBRIDGE TOPS THE QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY 2010

Home to Chelsea FC's training ground, the multi-million pound mansions of St Georges Hill and Sandown Race Course, the Surrey borough of Elmbridge has long been a desirable location to live and tops the annual Halifax Quality of Life Survey for the third year running.

The Halifax Quality of Life Survey has placed Elmbridge in the top spot based on residents' health and life expectancy, employment, school performance and the weather they enjoy.

Why Elmbridge is a great place to live:

- Residents tend to be fit and well - 95% reporting good health
- There is a higher than average life expectancy (81.4 years).
- The employment rate is high at 75%, with many residents enjoying high incomes with weekly average earnings of £1,018.
- The level of school qualifications is above the national average - 77% achieve five or more GCSE results grades A-C compared with the national average of 74%¹.
- Residents also enjoy a relatively good climate - less rainfall per year than the national average (676 mm against 871 mm) and more weekly sunshine hours (32.7 hours against the national average of 30.0 hours).

Residents in the South East enjoy the best quality of life with over two thirds (32) of the top rated 50 local authorities being here. The East of England rates well with over a fifth (11) placed in the top 50. The remainder is split between three in West Midlands, two in the South West, one in East Midlands and just one in London.

Northern areas tend to receive high ratings on school exam results and environmental measures such as low population densities and low traffic flows whereas areas in the south of England typically perform better than elsewhere on average earnings, employment, health and weather.

Note: ¹ 74% is the average for England and Wales.

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Nitesh Patel, housing economist at Halifax, commented: "The old adage of 'Health, Wealth and Happiness', is the traditional measure of a good quality of life. For the third year running Elmbridge has delivered against a range of indicators to demonstrate that its residents have the best quality of life in Britain. The Surrey district scores highly on several measures, including health, life expectancy, employment, average earnings and school results.

"Many areas in southern England perform well in terms of average earnings, employment rates, health and the weather, whilst areas in the North tend to score highly on school exam results and physical environment characteristics such as low population densities and low traffic flows."

Key Facts

Employment is highest in Ryedale in North Yorkshire and the Shetland Islands, where the rate is 86.1%. Also scoring well are the Orkney Islands (85.4%) and Purbeck in the South West (83.8%)

Average earnings are highest in Kensington & Chelsea (£1,484 per week) followed by City of London (£1,206), Westminster (£1,158) and Elmbridge (£1,018).

The biggest homes are in South Buckinghamshire and Chiltern. The average house in those areas has 6.4 rooms.

The lowest percentage of vacant properties is in Taunton Deane (0.01%). 284 (70%) local authority areas have 2.0% or less of vacant dwellings.

Traffic flows are lowest in Scotland, which has 7 of the 10 best ranked districts on this measure. The lowest traffic levels are in the Western Isles, the Highlands, Orkney and Shetland Islands, Argyle and Bute and Isles of Scilly.

The lowest burglary rates per 10,000 households are in the Western Isles (2.7) followed by North Wiltshire (6.2) and the Orkneys (6.5).

The lowest per person CO₂ emissions are in London. The lowest emissions in Great Britain are in Tower Hamlets (1.7 tonnes of CO₂ per household), followed by Southwark (1.8 tonnes) and the City of London (1.9 tonnes). The national average is 2.5 tonnes per capita.

The lowest population density in Britain is in the Western Isles and the Highlands with just 9 persons per square kilometre.

The lowest average annual rainfall (508 mm) is in Castle Point. Eight of the ten driest districts in Great Britain are in the East of England.

The sunniest place in Great Britain is the Isle of Wight where residents enjoy an average of 37.4 hours of sunshine a week

Good health scores highly in Wokingham, Hart and Surrey Heath in the South East with 95% of households rating themselves in good or fairly good health. Nine out of the top ten areas on this measure are in the South East.

Life expectancy is highest in Kensington & Chelsea (84 years), followed by Westminster (83 years) and Epsom & Ewell (82 years). The top ten in this category is dominated by local authority districts in southern England.

Primary school class sizes are smallest in the Western Isles (14 pupils), followed by Shetland Islands and the Orkneys (both 17). Six of the ten local authorities with the smallest average primary school class sizes are in northern Scotland.

The best GCSE results in England are in Kensington & Chelsea where 92% of 15 year olds achieved five or more GCSE results, grades A-C, followed by the Isles of Scilly (91%), Sutton, Hammersmith & Fulham (both 88%) and Trafford (87%).

Table 1: Quality of Life Rankings – the top 50 Local Authority Districts in Great Britain in 2010

Local Authority District	Region	Quality of Life Ranking
Elmbridge	South East	1
Hart	South East	2
Wokingham	South East	3
Sevenoaks	South East	4
South Cambridgeshire	East of England	5
East Hertfordshire	East of England	6
St Albans	East of England	7
Uttlesford	East of England	8
Surrey Heath	South East	9
Chiltern	South East	10
South Bucks	South East	11
Aylesbury Vale	South East	12
Waverley	South East	13
Ashford	South East	14
Tonbridge and Malling	South East	15
Tunbridge Wells	South East	16
Guildford	South East	17
Brentwood	East of England	18
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East	19
Vale of White Horse	South East	20
Mid Sussex	South East	21
East Cambridgeshire	East of England	22
Horsham	South East	23
Mole Valley	South East	24
Richmond upon Thames	London	25
Tandridge	South East	26
Wealden	South East	27
Bracknell Forest	South East	28
Wycombe	South East	29
West Berkshire	South East	30
Mid Suffolk	East of England	31
Rushcliffe	East Midlands	32
Reigate and Banstead	South East	33
Three Rivers	East of England	34
Bromsgrove	West Midlands	35
Winchester	South East	36
Runnymede	South East	37
Huntingdonshire	East of England	38
Wychavon	West Midlands	39
Woking	South East	40
South Oxfordshire	South East	41
Epsom and Ewell	South East	42
South Gloucestershire	South West	43
Eastleigh	South East	44
Mid Bedfordshire	East of England	45
Malvern Hills	West Midlands	46
North Wiltshire	South West	47
East Hampshire	South East	48
Maldon	East of England	49
Fareham	South East	50

Table 2: Local Authority with the Best Quality of Life in each region

Local Authority	Region	Quality of Life ranking 2010
Elmbridge	South East	1
South Cambridgeshire	East of England	5
Richmond upon Thames	London	25
Rushcliffe	East Midlands	32
Bromsgrove	West Midlands	35
South Gloucestershire	South West	43
Hambleton	Yorkshire and The Humber	78
Congleton	North West	121
Castle Morpeth	North East	114
Aberdeenshire	Scotland	178
Monmouthshire	Wales	189

Table 3: Local Authority with the Best Quality of Life in each category

Group	Variable	Local Authority	Region
Labour	Highest employment rate: 86.1%	Ryedale Shetland Islands	Yorkshire & the Humber Scotland
	Highest gross weekly Earnings: £1,484	Kensington and Chelsea	London
Housing	Highest average number of rooms in house: 6.4	South Bucks	South East
	Largest % of houses with central heating: 99.7%	East Ayrshire	Scotland
Urban environment	Lowest Population density per sqm km: 8.5	Western Isles	Scotland
	Lowest traffic flows per square km: 66 cars /km	Western Isles	Scotland
	Lowest burglary rate per 10,000 population: 2.7 per 10,000 people	Western Isles	Scotland
	Lowest % of vacant properties: 0.01%	Taunton Deane	South West
	Lowest Total Consumer CO ₂ Emissions: 1.7 per household	Tower Hamlets	London
Physical environment	Lowest average annual rainfall: 508mm	Castle Point	East of England
	Highest average weekly sunshine hours: 37.4 hours	Isle of Wight	South East
Health	Highest % of residents in good health: 95.5%	Wokingham	South East
	Longest life expectancy at birth for males: 84.4 years	Kensington and Chelsea	London
Education	Lowest average number of pupils in primary school class: 14.4	Western Isles	Scotland
	Highest % of 15yr olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade: 92%	Kensington and Chelsea	London

Editors' Notes:

The Quality of Life index aims to quantify where living standards are highest in Great Britain by ranking local performance across a range of indicators covering the labour market, the housing market, the environment, education and health. The index has been produced at a local authority district level for all 408 Local Authority Districts in Great Britain.

The quality of life reading for each local authority has been created by summing scores across 15 variables within 6 broad groups.

Each local authority is given a score out of 10 for each variable contained in the index. Scores within each of the broad groups are averaged and then the six group scores are summed to create an overall quality of life score.

See separate technical note for more information on methodology of index and data sources.

Group	Variable	Period covered
Labour	Employment rate %	April 2009- March 2010
	Gross weekly Earnings £s	Apr-10
Housing	Number of rooms in house	2008. Regional data for 2001-08 used to project forward 2001 Census.
	% of houses with central heating and sole use of bathroom	2006. Regional data for 2001-06 used to project forward 2001 Census.
Urban environment	Population density per square km	2009
	Traffic flows per square km	2009
	Burglary rate per 10,000 population	2008-09-2009-10 England & Wales 2009-10 Scotland
	% of Vacant Properties	2009
	CO ₂ Emissions per tonne per capita	2008 Department of Energy and Climate Change
Physical environment	Average annual rainfall mm	Average 2001/2008
	Annual sunshine hours	Average 2001/2008
Health	% in good health	2001 Census
	Life expectancy at birth for males	2009
Education	Number of pupils in primary school class	2010- England & Wales 2009- Scotland
	% of 15yr olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade or Scottish equivalent	2009/10 England & Wales 2008/09 Scotland

"This report is prepared from information that we believe is collated with care, however, it is only intended to highlight issues and it is not intended to be comprehensive. We reserve the right to vary our methodology and to edit or discontinue/withdraw this, or any other report. Any use of this report for an individual's own or third party commercial purposes is done entirely at the risk of the person making such use and solely the responsibility of the person or persons making such reliance.."

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