

The fourth annual Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey tracks where living standards are highest in Scotland by ranking local performance across key indicators; covering the labour market, the housing market, the environment, education and health. The survey covers 32 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 Scottish Executive and Experian plc.

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Residents of Aberdeenshire have the best Quality of Life in Scotland

For the second year running, residents of **Aberdeenshire** have the best quality of life in Scotland, according to the annual Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey.

The Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey has placed Aberdeenshire in the top spot based on residents' health and life expectancy, employment, school performance and climate.

Why Aberdeenshire is a great place to live:

- Residents tend to be fit and well - 93% reporting good health
- There is a higher than average life expectancy (78 years).
- The employment rate is high, at 80%, with many residents enjoying high incomes with weekly average earnings of £647.
- The level of school qualifications is above the national average - 83% achieve five or more SCQF level 4 awards compared to the Scotland average of 78%.
- Residents also enjoy a relatively good climate - less rainfall per year (999 mm against the Scotland average of 1,295 mm) and slightly more weekly sunshine hours (25.5 hours against the Scotland average of 24.9).

The Shetland Islands are second in the survey followed by **East Dunbartonshire** and **East Lothian**. All three are in the top 10 Scottish areas for weekly annual earnings (ranging from £576 to £670).

Houses in East Dunbartonshire, Western Isles and Stirling (all 4.9) are on average bigger than the average for Scotland (with 4.9 rooms against the Scotland average of 4.6). Residents of East Lothian enjoy some of the best weather in Scotland, with an annual average rainfall of 791 mm and an average of 26.5 hours of sunshine per week.

Nitesh Patel, economist at the Bank of Scotland, commented:

"Aberdeenshire again tops the Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey for 2010. Aberdeenshire scores highly relative to the average for Scotland on several indicators, such as health, life expectancy, employment, average earnings, school results and climate.

"Two of the top 10 areas for quality of life lie off the Scottish mainland - the Shetland Islands and the Orkney Islands - and five are in the north of the country. These areas score well on high employment rates, low population densities and burglary rates, small class sizes and good secondary school exam results."

Quality of Life Performance by Category

Labour market

- Shetland Islands have the highest employment rate (86.1%), followed by Orkney Islands (85.4%) and Highlands (81.0%).
- Average earnings are highest in Stirling (£717 per week), East Renfrewshire (£709), and East Dunbartonshire (£670). The average for Scotland is £569 per week.

Housing market

- Houses in East Dunbartonshire are the biggest in Scotland with an average of 4.90 rooms, but homes in Western Isles (4.88) and the Stirling (4.86) are not much smaller.
- 99.7% of houses in East Ayrshire have central heating.

Urban Environment

- The lowest population density in Britain is in the Western Isles and the Highlands with just 9 persons per square kilometre.
- 5.0% of dwellings, or less, are vacant in 19 local authority districts. The lowest percentage of vacant properties is in North Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire (both 1.9%).
- Traffic flows are lowest in the Western Isles with just 66 vehicles per kilometre, the Highlands (101 per km) and Argyll & Bute (129 per km).
- The lowest burglary rates per 10,000 households are in the Western Isles (3), with the Orkneys also recording low rates (7 per 10,000 households).
- Lowest CO₂ emissions are in Glasgow City (2.3 tonnes per household), followed closely by the neighbouring area of West Dunbartonshire (2.4 tonnes per household).

Physical Environment

- Dundee City has the lowest average annual rainfall (775 mm) followed by East Lothian (791 mm). Residents of Aberdeen City enjoy, on average, the most sunshine hours per week (28.4 hours per week). Dundee City has the next highest sunshine hours (27.6 hours) and Fife (27.0 hours)

Health

- Just over 93% of residents in Aberdeenshire, Orkney Islands and the Shetlands rate themselves as being in good health.
- Life expectancy is highest in East Dunbartonshire (78.3 years), followed by Perth & Kinross (78.2 years) and Aberdeenshire (78.0 years).

Education

- The average primary school class sizes are smallest in the Western Isles (14 pupils) and the Orkney and Shetland Isles (both 17). Five of the ten local authorities with the smallest primary school class sizes are in northern Scotland.
- 91% of S4 students in East Dunbartonshire and Shetland Islands gained 5 awards at level 4 or better, the highest ranking in the country; followed by East Renfrewshire, (89%).

Table 1: Quality of Life Rankings – the top 10 Local Authorities in Scotland 2010

Local Authority	2010 Ranking
Aberdeenshire	1
Shetland Islands	2
East Dunbartonshire	3
East Lothian	4
East Renfrewshire	5
Orkney Islands	6
Moray	7
Midlothian	8
Aberdeen City	9
Scottish Borders	10

Table 2: Local Authorities in Scotland with the Best Quality of Life in each category

Group	Variable	Local Authority	
Labour	Highest employment rate: 86.1%	Shetland Islands	
	Highest gross weekly Earnings: £717.4	Stirling	
Housing	Highest average Number of rooms in house: 4.9	East Dunbartonshire	
	Largest % of houses with central heating: 99.7%	East Ayrshire	
Urban environment	Lowest population density per sq km: 9	Western Isles and Highlands	
	Lowest traffic flows per square km: 66 cars /km	Western Isles	
	Lowest burglary rate per 10,000 population: 3 per 10,000 people	Western Isles	
	Lowest % of vacant properties: 1.9%	North Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire	
Physical environment	Lowest CO ₂ Emissions : 2.3 per household	Glasgow City	
	Lowest average annual rainfall: 775mm	Dundee City	
	Most weekly sunshine hours: 28.40 hours	Aberdeen City	
	Highest % of residents in good health: 93.34%	Orkney Islands	
Health	Longest life expectancy at birth for males: 78 years	East Dunbartonshire	
	Education	Lowest No. of pupils in primary school class (average): 14	Western Isles
		Highest % of S4 group achieving 5 or more SCQF awards at level 4: 91%	East Dunbartonshire and Shetland Isles

Editors' Notes:

The Quality of Life index aims to quantify where living standards are highest in Scotland by ranking local performance across a range of indicators, including the labour market, the housing market, the environment, education and health. The index has been produced at a local authority level for all 32 local authority districts in Scotland.

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.

A separate technical note with more information on methodology of index and data sources is available on request.

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