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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.

## Residents of Aberdeenshire have the best Quality of Life in Scotland

Residents of **Aberdeenshire** have the best quality of life in Scotland, according to the annual Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey. Inhabitants of Aberdeenshire tend to be in good health, with 93% reporting good health, and have a relatively high average life expectancy of 77.5 years. Those in full time employment typically enjoy relatively high incomes with weekly average earnings of £640 and almost three-quarters of residents (74%) own their own home.

On several other indicators, Aberdeenshire ranks above the Scotland average, including employment rate (82.6% compared to the Scotland average of 76.6%); school qualifications (84% achieve five or more SCQF level 4 awards compared to the Scotland average of 79%). Residents also enjoy a relatively good climate; there is, on average, 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).

**East Renfrewshire** is 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 £558 to £685); and home ownership in these three areas is at, or above, the Scotland average of 67%.

Houses in East Renfrewshire (4.8 rooms) and East Dunbartonshire (4.9) are on average bigger than the average for Scotland (4.6 rooms). Residents of East Lothian enjoy some of the best weather in Scotland, with an annual average rainfall of 791 mm and 26.5 hours of sunshine per week.

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

"Aberdeenshire tops the Bank of Scotland quality of life survey for 2009. 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 Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands. These islands score well on high employment rates, low burglary rates, small class sizes and secondary school exam results."

## **Quality of Life Performance by Category**

### **Labour market**

- Orkney Islands have the highest employment rate (85.7%), followed by Shetland Islands (85.5%) and Moray (83.1%).
- Average earnings are highest in Stirling (£716 per week), East Renfrewshire (£685), and East Dunbartonshire (£666). The average for Scotland is £555 per week.

### **Housing market**

- The owner-occupation rate is highest in East Renfrewshire (86%), followed by East Dunbartonshire (84%) and the Orkney Islands and Western Isles (both 75%).
- Houses in East Dunbartonshire are the biggest in Scotland with an average of 4.90 rooms, though homes in Western Isles (4.88) and the Orkney Islands (4.85) are not much smaller.
- 99% of houses in East Ayrshire have central heating.

### **Urban Environment**

- 5.0% of dwellings, or less, are vacant in 21 local authority districts. The lowest percentage of vacant properties is in North Lanarkshire (1.6%).
- Traffic flows are lowest in the Western Isles with just 66 vehicles per kilometre, the Highlands (101 per km) and Argyll & Bute (130 per km).
- The lowest burglary rates per 10,000 households are in the Western Isles (5.0), with the Shetlands Islands and the Orkneys also recording low rates (both 7 per 10,000 households).
- Lowest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are in Glasgow City (24.7 tonnes per household), followed closely by the neighbouring areas of West Dunbartonshire (26.1 tonnes) and North Lanarkshire (27.1 tonnes).

### **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 hrs).

### **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 (78.0 years), followed by Aberdeenshire (77.5 years) and East Renfrewshire (77.4 years).

### **Education**

- The average primary school class sizes are smallest in the Orkney Islands (13 pupils) and the Western Isles (14). Six of the ten local authorities with the smallest primary school class sizes are in northern Scotland.
- 90% of S4 students in East Dunbartonshire gained 5 awards at level 4 or better, the highest ranking in the country; this success rate was nearly matched in East Renfrewshire, Shetland Islands and the Western Isles (all 89%).

**Table 1: Quality of Life Rankings – the top 10 Local Authorities in Scotland 2009**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>2009 Ranking</b>
Aberdeenshire	1
East Renfrewshire	2
East Dunbartonshire	3
East Lothian	4
Midlothian	5
Shetland Islands	6
Orkney Islands	7
Moray	8
Edinburgh, City Of	9
Fife	10

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

<b>Group</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>
<b>Labour</b>	Highest employment rate: 85.7%	<b>Orkney Islands</b>
	Highest gross weekly Earnings: £716.1	<b>Stirling</b>
<b>Housing</b>	Highest owner Occupation rate: 86%	<b>East Renfrewshire</b>
	Highest average Number of rooms in house: 4.9	<b>East Dunbartonshire</b>
	Largest % of houses with central heating: 99.11%	<b>East Ayrshire</b>
<b>Urban environment</b>	Lowest traffic flows per square km: 66 cars /km	<b>Western Isles</b>
	Lowest burglary rate per 1000 population: 5 per 1000 people	<b>Western Isles</b>
	Lowest % of vacant properties: 1.6%	<b>North Lanarkshire</b>
	Lowest CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions per tonne per capita: 24.74 per household	<b>Glasgow City</b>
<b>Physical environment</b>	Lowest average annual rainfall: 775mm	<b>Dundee City</b>
	Most weekly sunshine hours: 28.40 hours	<b>Aberdeen City</b>
<b>Health</b>	Highest % of residents in good health: 93.34%	<b>Orkney Islands</b>
	Longest life expectancy at birth for males: 78 years	<b>East Dunbartonshire</b>
<b>Education</b>	Lowest No. of pupils in primary school class: 13	<b>Orkney Islands</b>
	Highest % of S4 group achieving 5 or more SCQF awards at level 4: 90%	<b>East Dunbartonshire</b>

**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.**

Group	Variable	Period covered
<b>Labour</b>	Employment rate %	April 2008- March 2009
	Gross weekly Earnings £s	Apr-09
<b>Housing</b>	Owner Occupation rate %	2007. Regional data for 2001-07 used to project forward 2001 Census.
	No of rooms in house	Scottish House Condition Survey 2004-2007
	% of houses with central heating and sole use of bathroom	Scottish House Condition Survey 2004-2007
<b>Urban environment</b>	Traffic flows per square km	2008
	Burglary rate per 1000 population	2008-09 Scotland
	% of Vacant Properties	2008
	CO2 Emissions per tonne per capita	2006 from Experian Plc
<b>Physical environment</b>	Average annual Rainfall	Average 2001/2008
	Annual sunshine hours	Average 2001/2008
<b>Health</b>	% in good health	2001 Census
	life expectancy at birth for males	2007
<b>Education</b>	No. of pupils in primary school class	2008- Scotland
	% of S4 group achieving 5 or more SCQF awards at level 4	2008/09 Scotland

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