



**Not for broadcast or publication before 00:01 Hrs on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

The fourth annual **Halifax Quality of Life Survey** tracks where living standards are highest in Wales by ranking local performance across key indicators; covering the labour market, the housing market, the environment, education and health. The survey covers 22 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 Welsh Assembly and Experian plc.

## **The Vale of Glamorgan Tops Quality of Life Survey For The Second Time In Three Years**

**Research from the Halifax shows that residents of the Vale of Glamorgan have the best quality of life in Wales.** Inhabitants of the Vale of Glamorgan tend to be in good health, with 90% reporting good health, and have a high average life expectancy of 78 years. Those in full time employment typically enjoy high incomes with weekly average earnings of £617 and over three-quarters of residents own their own home.

**On several other indicators, the Vale of Glamorgan ranks above the Wales average,** including employment rate (75.7% compared to the Wales average of 70.4%); school qualifications (62% achieve five or more GCSE results grades A-C compared to the Wales average of 55%) and residents enjoy a relatively good climate. There is, on average, less rainfall per year (1,098 mm against the Wales average of 1,381 mm) and more weekly sunshine hours (31.3 hours against the average in the Principality of 28.4 hours).

**Monmouthshire is second in this survey followed by Flintshire, Powys and Pembrokeshire.** Monmouthshire, Flintshire and Pembrokeshire are all in the top 10 Welsh areas for weekly annual earnings (ranging from £512 to £609 per week); whilst Flintshire and Powys are in the top three for the highest employment rate in Wales (around 77%). Life expectancy in all four areas is at either the same rate, or above, the Wales average of 76.9 years.

**Nitesh Patel, economist at the Halifax, commented:**

"The Vale of Glamorgan tops the Halifax quality of life survey for 2009. The Vale of Glamorgan scores highly relative to the average for Wales on several indicators, such as health, life expectancy, employment, average earnings, school results and climate.

"Out of the eight rural local authorities in Wales, 5 are in the top 10 of the quality of life survey. These are Monmouthshire, Powys, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and the Isle of Anglesey. Each of these areas scores well on the average house size, low traffic volumes, low burglary rates, good health, high life expectancy and small class size."

## Quality of Life Performance by Category

### Labour market

- **Flintshire has the highest employment rate (78.7%)**, followed by Wrexham (76.4%) and Powys (75.9 %).
- **Average earnings are highest in the Vale of Glamorgan (£617 per week), Monmouthshire (£609)**, and Cardiff (£580). The average for Wales is £516 per week.

### Housing market

- **The owner-occupation rate is highest in the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend (both 78%)**, followed by Monmouthshire (77%) and Flintshire (76%).
- **Houses in Monmouthshire are the biggest in Wales with an average of 6.00 rooms**, though homes Powys (5.90) and Ceredigion (5.87) are not much smaller,
- **97% of homes in Torfaen, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent have central heating.**

### Urban Environment

- **3.0% of dwellings, or less, are vacant in 21 local authority districts.** The lowest percentage of vacant properties is in Blaenau Gwent (0.03%).
- **Traffic flows are lowest in Powys with just 290 vehicles per kilometre**, Ceredigion (406 per km) and Gwynedd (512 per km)
- **The lowest burglary rates per 10,000 households are on the Isle of Anglesey (8.84)**, Ceredigion (11.15) and Pembrokeshire (12.88).
- **Lowest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are in Blaenau Gwent (25.75 tonnes per household)**, followed closely by Torfaen (26.19 tonnes) and Neath Port Talbot (26.21 tonnes).

### Physical Environment

- **Flintshire has the lowest average annual rainfall (856 mm)** followed by Wrexham (986 mm) and Isle of Anglesey (1,052 mm).
- **Residents of Newport enjoy, on average, the most sunshine hours per week in Wales (31.6 hours per week).** The Vale of Glamorgan and the Isle of Anglesey have the next highest sunshine hours (both 31.3 hours).

### Health

- **91% of residents of Monmouthshire and Gwynedd rate themselves as being in good health.**
- **Life expectancy is highest in Ceredigion (80.0 years)**, followed by Monmouthshire and Powys (both 78.6 years)

### Education

- **The average primary school class size is smallest in Ceredigion (20 pupils)** and Powys (21).
- **65% of students** in Powys have five or more GCSE results grades A-C, the highest ranking in Wales, followed by Gwynedd, Neath Port Talbot and The Vale of Glamorgan (all 62%).

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

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Quality of Life Ranking</b>
The Vale of Glamorgan	1
Monmouthshire	2
Flintshire	3
Powys	4
Pembrokeshire	5
Ceredigion	6
Isle of Anglesey	7
Newport	8
Wrexham	9
Carmarthenshire	10

**Table 2: Local Authorities in Wales 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: 78.7%	<b>Flintshire</b>
	Highest gross weekly Earnings: £617	<b>Vale of Glamorgan</b>
<b>Housing</b>	Highest owner Occupation rate: 78%	<b>Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend</b>
	Highest average Number of rooms in house: 6.00	<b>Monmouthshire</b>
	Largest % of houses with central heating: 97%	<b>Torfaen, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent</b>
<b>Urban environment</b>	Lowest traffic flows per square km: 290 cars /km	<b>Powys</b>
	Lowest burglary rate per 1000 population: 8.84 per 1000 people	<b>Isle of Anglesey</b>
	Lowest % of vacant properties: 0.03%	<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>
	Lowest CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions per tonne per capita: 25.75 per household	<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>
<b>Physical environment</b>	Lowest average annual rainfall: 856 mm	<b>Flintshire</b>
	Most weekly sunshine hours: 31.6 hours	<b>Newport</b>
	Highest % of residents in good health: 91%	<b>Monmouthshire and Gwynedd</b>
<b>Health</b>	Longest life expectancy at birth for males: 80 years	<b>Ceredigion</b>
	Lowest No. of pupils in primary school class: 20	<b>Ceredigion</b>
	Highest % of 15yr olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade: 65%	<b>Powys</b>

**Editors' Notes:**

The Quality of Life index aims to quantify where living standards are highest in Wales 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 22 LAs in Wales.

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
<b>Labour</b>	Employment rate %	March 2008-Apr 2009
	Gross weekly Earnings £s	Apr-09
<b>Housing</b>	Owner Occupation rate %	2007. Regional data for 200/-07 used to project forward 2001 Census.
	No of rooms in house	2001 Census.
	% of houses with central heating and sole use of bathroom	2001 Census.
<b>Urban environment</b>	Traffic flows per square km	2008
	Burglary rate per 1000 population	2008/09
	% of Vacant Properties	2006
	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	2009
	% of 15yr olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade	2007/08

"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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