

PRESS RELEASE



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Where to live Britain's best country life

- Orkney Islands retains crown as Britain's best rural place to live
- The nation's happiest adults live in Craven, Yorkshire
- South Cambridgeshire and Aberdeenshire named as nation's healthiest district
- Highest average weekly earnings (£921) are in Waverley, Surrey

Britain's best rural places to live have been revealed – and the Orkney Islands are top of the spots for the second year in a row.

The latest Halifax 2018 Rural Areas Quality of Life Survey found the top five hotspots included Rutland (East Midlands) in second place, followed by Wychavon (West Midlands) and Winchester and Waverley (South East).

The annual study analyses key factors that combine to determine quality of life across the nation, including employment, education, social and environmental factors.

The Orkney Islands maintained top score on employment rate (87%) and average spend per pupil on education (£9,662), a top three place in low anxiety levels, crime rate, primary class size and consistently high scores in life satisfaction and happiness.

Rutland revealed as runner up

Rutland in the East Midlands has the second best quality of life, scoring well across the measures, with a high average life expectancy (male 82 years and female 85 years) and 97% of adults considering themselves to be in good health.

Rutland residents have some of the biggest homes in rural Britain – with an average of 6.4 habitable rooms – and nine out of 10 homes (92%) having superfast broadband. School performance is the highest in England with 71% of 15+ year-olds achieving five or more GCSE results at grades A-C.

Wychavon in West Midlands, along with Winchester and Waverley in the South East, complete the top five. These areas all performed well in the Personal Well-Being Survey, as well as having high male and female life expectancy. Residents in Waverley also take home the highest weekly wage in the UK (£921).

Russell Galley, Managing Director, and Halifax, said: "With strong education and employment levels, low crime rates and residents loving life, not to mention breathtaking wide open spaces, the Orkney Islands have retained the crown of Britain's best rural place to live.

"The winning formula for quality of life in the countryside seems to consistently include high employment levels and top scores on wellbeing, along with low school class sizes and high average spend per pupil – more than twice the national average.

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“However, there is more variety and balance across the country scoring strongly across each category this year, with rural areas in the South East receiving higher weekly earnings, while the East Midlands have larger property sizes. On the southern coast, sunnier climates shine through in the rankings, while, lower house prices to earnings, wellbeing and class sizes give northern areas the desirability factor.”

Almost a third of the top 50 best places to live are in southern and east England

The top 50 rural places to live in Britain include nine districts in the South East and 10 each in both the South West and the East of England.

Six areas in Yorkshire and the Humber make the top 50 – these include Craven and Richmondshire (6th and 7th place respectively), as well as Stratford on Avon in the West Midlands (8th) and Monmouthshire in Wales (19st).

KEY FACTS

Labour Market

- **Employment** is highest in Orkney Islands, at 87.0% and Shetland Islands (85.5%). The GB average is 75.1%.
- **The highest weekly average earnings** are in Waverley (£921 per week), followed by East Hampshire (£883 p/w). The GB average is £655 per week.
- **The proportion of adults (16+ years) with the highest level of qualification gained** (such as a degree, NVQ level 4 and above, or professional qualification) is the highest in the Winchester (55.8%), followed by Waverley and Rushcliffe (both 54.0%) – all significantly above the GB average of 35.6%.

Housing

- **The biggest homes** are in Uttlesford in Essex, and Rutland, which both have an average of 6.4 habitable rooms. The smallest homes are in the Orkney Islands, East Lothian, Highlands, and Argyle and Bute (all with no more than 4.6 habitable rooms). The average number of habitable rooms in Britain is 5.4.
- 100% of homes in East Ayrshire have **central heating**; the national average is 97%.
- Copeland in the North West has the lowest **average house price to earnings ratio of 4.0**, followed by East Ayrshire (4.3). Some of the highest ratios are in Chichester (11.8) and South Oxfordshire (10.5). The GB average is 7.5.
- **Broadband** speed is based on the proportion of premises able to receive 5Mbps (mega bits per second). Harborough and Swale have the best internet access (both 99%), closely followed by Tendring (97%).

Local Environment

- The Western Isles and Highlands share the top spot for the lowest **population density**, with just nine people per square kilometre, compared to a national average of 276. At the other end of the

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scale, the most populated rural areas per square kilometre are Tendring in the East Midlands (422) and Wyre in North West (391).

- The lowest **traffic levels** are in the Western Isles with just 80 vehicles per square kilometre, Highland (108 vehicles/km²), and Argyll & Bute (137 vehicles/km). The Great British average is 9,729 vehicles/km.
- Western Isles has **the lowest burglary rate per 10,000 people (2.2)** followed by Orkney Islands (3.7), Shetland Islands (3.9), West Oxfordshire and North Norfolk (both 8.5) compared to GB average of 29.9 per 10,000.
- **The lowest CO2 emissions** are in Swale and Sedgemoor (both 1.5) followed by 15 rural areas, including Huntingdonshire, St Edmundsbury and South Somerset with 1.6 tonnes of CO2 per household against GB average of 1.7 tonnes of CO2 per household.

Weather

- **The lowest average annual rainfall** (561mm) is in Maldon in Essex. Eight of the 10 driest districts in Britain are in the east of England. The national average annual rainfall is 864mm.
- **The sunniest place in Great Britain** is the Isle of Wight where residents enjoy an average of 36.9 hours of sunshine a week (GB average 29.8 hours).

Health

- **The healthiest districts** are South Cambridgeshire and Aberdeenshire both with 96.8% or more households rating themselves in good or fairly good health. In Britain as a whole, 94.6% of households rate themselves as in good or fairly good health.
- **Life expectancy for males at birth** is highest in South Cambridgeshire (82.1 years). The average is 79.4 years.
- **Life expectancy for females at birth** is highest in Mid Devon (85.3 years). The average is 83.1 years.

Education

- **Primary school class sizes** are smallest in Scotland, with nine of the 10 local authority districts with the smallest primary school classes here. The Western Isles has the lowest in Great Britain with 17.3, compared to a GB average of 27.1.
- **Nine of the 10 local districts with the lowest secondary school pupil teacher ratio areas are in Scotland.** The Western Isles has the lowest secondary school pupil teacher ratio of 13.4, compared to 20.9 across Great Britain.
- **The best GCSE results** in England are in Rutland (70.8%). The GB average is 59.2%.
- **The highest average school (both secondary and primary) spend per pupil** is in the Orkney Islands (£9,662) – more than twice Great Britain's average of £4,642.

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Personal Well-Being

- **Personal well-being is based on four categories – life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety:**
 - Adults (16+) in Craven, Yorkshire and the Humber have the highest average rating for **life satisfaction** in Great Britain. Based on a score out of 10, the adults had an average rating of 8.5, compared with the GB average of 7.7.
 - With a rating of 8.7 (out of 10), adults in North Warwickshire believe what they do in life is **worthwhile**, the highest average rating in Great Britain. The GB average is 7.9.
 - The **happiest** adults are in Craven, with an average rating of 8.3 – significantly higher than the Great Britain average of 7.5.
 - Adults in Craven are also the least **anxious** with an average rating of 2.0. The average for Great Britain is 2.9.

Leisure

- Eden in Cumbria has the highest number of pubs per 10,000 adults (28.3) followed by Derbyshire Dales (26.7). The GB average is 10.1.
- For the active, Purbeck is the place to head to for health and fitness clubs where there are 3.7 clubs per 10,000 people. The GB average is 1.4.

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The Orkneys crowned Britain's best Rural place to live for second year - 2018



Britain's top 5 Rural areas



Rural areas with the best quality of life in each category

Key: National Average



Source: Halifax

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Table 1: 2018 Halifax Rural Quality of Life rankings – the top 50 areas based on annual data

Local Authority Districts (LAD)	Region	Ranking 2018
Orkney Islands	Scotland	1
Rutland	East Midlands	2
Wychavon	West Midlands	3
Winchester	South East	4
Waverley	South East	5
Craven	Yorkshire and The Humber	6
Richmondshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	7
Stratford-on-Avon	West Midlands	8
Uttlesford	East of England	9
Ryedale	Yorkshire and The Humber	10
South Oxfordshire	South East	11
Selby	Yorkshire and The Humber	12
St Edmundsbury	East of England	13
Suffolk Coastal	East of England	14
Purbeck	South West	15
Hambleton	Yorkshire and The Humber	16
West Oxfordshire	South East	17
Harborough	East Midlands	18
Monmouthshire	Wales	19
Eden	North West	20
South Cambridgeshire	East of England	21
Tewkesbury	South West	22
Chichester	South East	23
Babergh	East of England	24
Maldon	East of England	25
Cotswold	South West	26
Aylesbury Vale	South East	27
Wiltshire	South West	28
West Dorset	South West	29
East Devon	South West	30
Mid Devon	South West	31
Rushcliffe	East Midlands	32
Malvern Hills	West Midlands	33
South Norfolk	East of England	34
South Lakeland	North West	35
Vale of White Horse	South East	36
South Hams	South West	37
Huntingdonshire	East of England	38
Horsham	South East	39
North Warwickshire	West Midlands	40

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Shetland Islands	Scotland	41
East Hampshire	South East	42
Central Bedfordshire	East of England	43
Derbyshire Dales	East Midlands	44
North Devon	South West	45
Mid Suffolk	East of England	46
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	47
Teignbridge	South West	48
Ribble Valley	North West	49
North Kesteven	East Midlands	50

Source: Halifax

Table 2: Rural with the Best Quality of Life in each region in 2018

Local Authority	Region	Ranking 2018
Orkney Islands	Scotland	1
Rutland	East Midlands	2
Wychavon	West Midlands	3
Winchester	South East	4
Craven	Yorkshire and the Humber	6
Uttlesford	East of England	9
Purbeck	South West	15
Monmouthshire	Wales	19
Eden	North West	20
Northumberland	North East	95

Source: Halifax

Table 3: Rural areas with the Best Quality of Life in each category in 2018

Group	Variable	Local Authority District	Region
Labour (GB average is 75.1%)	Highest employment rate: 87.0%	Orkney Islands	Scotland
(GB- £655 per week)	Highest gross weekly Earnings: £921	Waverley	South East
(GB – 35.6%)	% of adults (16+) with highest qualification gained: 55.8%. This includes graduate and post graduate degrees, NVQ level 4 and above, and professional qualifications.	Winchester	South East
Housing (GB – 5.4)	Highest average number of rooms in house: 6.4	Uttlesford	East of England

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		Rutland	East Midlands
(GB – 97%)	Largest % of houses with central heating: 100%	East Ayrshire	Scotland
(GB – 7.5)	Lowest House price to earnings ratio: 4.0	Copeland	North West
(GB – 94%)	% of households with more than 5Mbps: LADs with 99% of premises having broadband speed in excess of 5Mbps	Harborough Swale	East Midlands South East
Local environment (GB- 276 per sq/km)	Lowest Population density per sq. km: 9	Western Isles Highland	Both Scotland
(GB- 9,729 cars/km)	Lowest traffic flows per square km: 80 cars /km²	Western Isles	Scotland
(GB-29.9 per 10,000 people)	Lowest burglary rate per 10,000 population: 2.2 per 10,000 people	Western Isles	Scotland
(GB – 1.7 tonnes CO ₂ emissions per household)	Lowest Total Consumer CO₂ Emissions: 1.5 tonnes per household	Sedgemoor Swale	South West South East
Health and weather (GB – 863.8 mm per year)	Lowest average annual rainfall: 561mm	Maldon	East of England
(GB- 29.8 hours per week)	Highest average weekly sunshine hours: 36.9 hours	Isle of Wight	South East
Health (GB – 94.6%)	Highest % of residents in good health: 96.8%	South Cambridgeshire Aberdeenshire	East of England Scotland
Male life expectancy (GB - 79.4 years)	Longest Male life expectancy at birth for males: 82.1 years	South Cambridgeshire	South East
Female life expectancy (GB -83.1 years)	Longest Female life expectancy at birth for females: 85.3 years	Mid Devon	South West
Education (GB-27.1 pupils per class)	Lowest average number of pupils in primary school class: 17.3	Western Isles	Scotland

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Secondary Education (GB – 20.9 pupil to teacher)	Lowest secondary school pupil – teacher ratio: 13.4	Western Isles	Scotland
Secondary Education Exams (GB- 59.2%)	Highest % of 15yr olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade: 70.8%	Rutland	East Midlands
Per pupil spending (primary and secondary) – (GB - £4,642 per pupil)	Highest per pupil spend: £9,662	Orkney Islands	Scotland
Personal Well Being GB- 7.7 from 10)	Highest Life Satisfaction rating out of 10: 8.5	Craven	Yorkshire and the Humber
(GB- 7.9 from 10)	Highest Worthwhile rating out of 10: 8.7	North Warwickshire	West Midlands
(GB- 7.5 from 10)	Highest Happiness rating out of 10: 8.3	Craven	Yorkshire and the Humber
(GB- 2.9 from 10)	Lowest levels of Anxiety rating out of 10: 2.0	Craven	Yorkshire and the Humber
Leisure (GB-10.1 per 10,000 people)	Number of pubs per 10,000 population: 28.3 per 10,000 people	Eden	North West
(GB-1.4 per 10,000 people)	Number of fitness & Health clubs per 10,000 population: 3.7 per 10,000 people	Purbeck	South West

Source: Halifax

Ends

Notes to editors:

Halifax Rural 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, health, and personal well-being. The survey is based on data at local authority district (LAD) level and examines 109 rural LADs in Great Britain. Data has also been gathered from a number of sources, including: Halifax, OFCOM (Broadband data), 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.

The quality of life reading for each LAD has been created by summing scores across 26 variables within 8 broad groups. Each LAD 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 seven group scores are summed to create an overall quality of life score.

Note:¹ The British Beer & Pub Association represents Britain's brewers and pub companies, members account for some 96% of beer brewed in Britain today, and own more than half of the nation's pubs. These members are from international brewers, to market-leading managed pub companies, the nation's largest tenanted pub companies and historic family brewers.

² health clubs and leisure centres covers commercial health & fitness clubs and the other local authority leisure centres, local authority swimming pools with gyms and universities with access for the public. Source: Leisure intelligence analysis supplied by John Turner Leisure Marketing Limited t/a Leisure Lists

This analysis was undertaken using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Urban Rural classification. This classification defines an area as a Rural Area if it lies in a town or village of less than 10,000, or as an urban area if it lies in a town or city of 10,000 or more residents. A rural LAD is one where the majority of these residents live in rural areas.

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Group	Variable	Period covered
Labour	Employment rate %	Jul 2016-Jun 2017
	Gross weekly Earnings £s	April 2017 (up rated by average weekly earnings index to September 2017)
	% of adults(16+) with highest qualification gained	2011 Census data
Housing	Number of rooms in house	England & Wales 2011 ONS Census Data Scotland – Housing Conditions Survey 2009/11 Northern Ireland November 2017 Halifax data
	% of houses with central heating and sole use of bathroom	England & Wales 2011 ONS Census Data Scotland – housing Conditions Survey 2009/11 NI – Halifax Data to October 2017.
	House prices to Earnings ratio	12 months to October 2017
	Broadband speed is based on % of premises able to receive 5Mbit/s (mega bits per second)	OFCOM 2016
Local environment	Population density per square km	2016 – ONS
	Traffic flows per square km	2016
	Burglary rate per 10,000 population	British Crime Survey 2017; Northern Ireland 2016
	CO ₂ Emissions per tonne per capita	2015 Department of Energy and Climate Change (covers period 2005-2015)
Weather	Average annual rainfall mm	Met Office Average 2009/2013
	Annual sunshine hours	Met Office Average 2009/2013
Health	% in good or fairly good health	2011 Census
	Life expectancy at birth for males	England, Wales & Scotland 2013/15; Northern Ireland 2011/13
	Life expectancy at birth for females	England, Wales & Scotland 2013/15; Northern Ireland 2011/13
Education	Number of pupils in primary school class	England and Wales 2017, and Northern Ireland 2015/16; Scotland 2016
	% of 15yr+ olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade or Scottish equivalent	2015/16
	Average state school (primary and secondary) spending per pupil	England 2017, Scotland 2015/16 and Wales 2017/18; NI 2013/14 – 2015/16
	Secondary school pupil teacher ratio	England 2016 (adjusted class size data), Wales 2016 and Scotland 2015/16 Northern Ireland 2016/17
Personal Well-Being	Life Satisfaction	April 2016-March 2017 ONS
	Worthwhile	April 2016-March 2017 ONS
	Happiness	April 2016-March 2017 ONS
	Anxiety	April 2016-March 2017 ONS
Leisure	Number of Pubs	2016 British Beer and Pub Association
	Number of Fitness & Health clubs	2016 Leisure intelligence analysis supplied by John Turner Leisure Marketing Limited t/a Leisure Lists

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