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## Orkney crowned the UK's best place to live

- Orkney knocks Hart off top spot, Richmondshire now in second place
- South East England has the most areas in the top 50
- People in Rushmoor, Hampshire are officially the happiest in the UK

Orkney has finally been crowned the UK's best place to live, following the past two years as runner up, according to the 2019 Halifax Quality of Life Survey.

The archipelago, famed for its spectacular landscapes and archaeological treasures, sealed the top spot based on Orcadians' high employment levels, low crime rate, strong exam results, smaller primary class sizes and good health and happiness scores.

Richmondshire in North Yorkshire took second place (up from 9<sup>th</sup>), followed by Rutland in the East Midlands, Hambleton in North Yorkshire and Eden in Cumbria in fifth place

**Russell Galley, Managing Director, Halifax, said:** *"Orkney has consistently been considered one of the best places to live in the UK and Orcadians will be delighted to hear they have now taken the crown. Its remote location may not be for everyone, but this comes with the benefit of having high employment, low crime rates, smaller class sizes and more affordable housing."*

*"While the South East continues to have the most locations in the top 50, we've seen Northern areas perform particularly well on education while they also benefit from lower house prices when compared to average earnings."*

### More than half of the top 50 places to live are now outside Southern England

More than half (28) of the top 50 best places to live in the UK are now outside Southern England, with eight in the East of England, including St Albans (9<sup>th</sup>), East Hertfordshire (14<sup>th</sup>) and Uttlesford (18<sup>th</sup>).

East Midlands, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber each have five areas, including Rutland (3<sup>rd</sup>), Hambleton (4<sup>th</sup>), Ryedale (8<sup>th</sup>) and Derbyshire Dales (10<sup>th</sup>). The North West and Scotland both have two areas and Wales one – Eden (5<sup>th</sup>), Ribble Valley (23<sup>rd</sup>), Orkney (1<sup>st</sup>), Shetland (39<sup>th</sup>) and Monmouthshire (48<sup>th</sup>).

The South East has the most areas in the top 50, with 18. These include South Oxfordshire (6<sup>th</sup>), Vale of White Horse (11<sup>th</sup>), Waverley (12<sup>th</sup>) and last year's best place to live Hart (13<sup>th</sup>).

London has just two areas in the top 50 – Westminster (15<sup>th</sup>) and Richmond upon Thames (40<sup>th</sup>) and the South West one – Cotswold (7<sup>th</sup>).

## **Richmondshire in North Yorkshire takes second place**

Richmondshire in North Yorkshire moves into second place from 9<sup>th</sup> in 2017, a position boosted by excellent personal wellbeing scores across all measures of life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and low anxiety.

It also scores strongly on a low crime rate, traffic flows, population density and primary class size. It has one of the highest ratios of pubs to population, which is no surprise given its attraction to the many visitors wishing to take in the views and walks around the Yorkshire Dales.

## **North/South divide**

There is a clear distinction in key strengths between areas in the South and the North. Local Authority Districts in the South are particularly strong in the labour market due to high employment levels and average earnings, on long life expectancy and where adults rate themselves to be in good health. Geography also benefits these areas with more hours of sunshine and less rainfall.

In the North, most areas have relatively better housing affordability conditions with a low house price to earnings ratio. They also benefit from urban environmental factors such as low traffic flows, crime rates and fewer people per square kilometre – which in turn could explain why they have lower average primary school sizes.

## **Key facts**

### **What makes Orkney such a good place to live?**

- Residents feel fit and well with more than nine in 10 (97%) reporting good or fairly good health
- Orkney is one of the most affordable places to live with an average house price of £173,349, standing at 5.2 times the average annual pre-tax local income, compared to the national average of 7.3
- Orkney has the highest employment rate with nearly nine in ten (88%) 16-64 year-olds in work and weekly average earnings of £671
- The latest ONS figures indicate adults living in Orkney are amongst the most happy, satisfied and content in the UK, with low anxiety rates

- Residents enjoy one of the lowest crime rates in the country, with 5.9 crimes per 10,000 population, compared to a national average of 44.1
- They also have smaller primary school class sizes (18.6) and excellent exam results (75% - SCQF Achieving 5+ at Level 4 or better)

## Labour Market

- **Employment:** after Orkney (87.9%), Stroud (85.7%) and Dartford (85.4%) have the highest employment rates against the UK average of 74.2%.
- **The highest weekly average earnings** are in Kensington & Chelsea, at £1,392 per week (p/w), followed by Westminster (£1,188 p/w), St Albans (£1,112 p/w) and Richmond upon Thames (£1,077p/w). The UK average is £674 per week.
- **The proportion of adults (16 years and over) with the highest level of qualifications gained** (such as a degree, NVQ level 4 and above or professional qualification) is the highest in the City of London (94.8%), followed by Richmond upon Thames (70.4%) and Wandsworth (69.6%) – all significantly above the national average of 35.2%.

## Housing

- **The biggest homes** are in Mid Ulster, Northern Ireland having an average of 7 habitable rooms. The smallest homes are in the City of London, Tower Hamlets, and Westminster (all below 4.0 habitable rooms). The average number of habitable rooms in the UK is 5.5.
- Access to **superfast broadband** is measured by the proportion of premises able to receive 5 Mbps (mega bits per second). In over half (56%) of local area districts 94% of premises are able to receive or have access to superfast broadband. They include several areas in Greater Manchester (such as Manchester and Trafford), York, and Belfast in Northern Ireland. Across all areas of the UK, the majority of households have a good level of broadband access (a download speed of 2Mbps is regarded as the minimum for good broadband service).

## Urban Environment

- The four most sparsely populated areas are all in Scotland. The Western Isles and Highlands jointly take the top spot for lowest **population density**, with just nine people per square kilometre (pp/km), followed by Argyle & Bute (13 pp/km), Shetland (16 pp/km) and Orkney (22 pp/km).

At the other end of the scale, the most populated areas per square kilometre are all in London: Islington (15,818 pp/km), Tower Hamlets (15,564 pp/km), Hackney (14,485 pp/km) and Kensington and Chelsea (12,846 pp/km). The UK average is 272 pp/km.

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- The emptiest roads are mostly in Scotland. The lowest **traffic levels** are found in the Western Isles with just 75 vehicles per square kilometre, Highland (112 vehicles/km), Isles of Scilly (125 vehicles/km) and Argyll & Bute (142 vehicles/km). The UK average is 9,584 vehicles/km.
- Western Isles in Scotland has **the lowest burglary rate per 10,000 people (1.5)**, followed by Shetland (2.6) and Orkney (5.9). All are significantly below the national average of 44.1.
- Eight of the 10 areas with **the lowest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions** are in London. The lowest emissions are found in Tower Hamlets (0.9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita) and Newham (0.9 tonnes), followed by Hackney and Southwark (both 1.1 tonnes). The national average is 1.7 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita.

## Physical environment

- **The lowest average annual rainfall** (525 mm) is in Castle Point in Essex. Eight of the 10 driest districts in the UK are in the East of England. The UK average annual rainfall is 869.9 mm.
- **The sunniest place in the UK** is the Isle of Wight where residents enjoy an average of 36.9 hours of sunshine a week, above the national average of 29.7 hours per week.

## Health

- **The healthiest districts** are all in the South, with Hart and Wokingham both having 97% or more households rating themselves in good or fairly good health. Six of the top 10 areas are found in the South East, with the remaining found in the East of England (2) and Scotland and the South West (1 each). In the UK 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 Kensington and Chelsea (83.7 years). The UK average is 79.5 years.
- **Life expectancy for females at birth** is highest in Camden (86.8 years), three and a half years longer than the UK average of 83.1 years.

## Education

- **Primary school class sizes** are smallest in Scotland, with all top 10 local authority districts with the smallest primary school classes in Scotland. Western Isles has the lowest in the UK with 17.0 compared to a national average of 27.1.
- **The best exam results** in England are in Rutland with 81.4% pupils achieving a standard GCSE pass (9-4) in English and Maths, followed by East Dunbartonshire in

Scotland with 81% pupils achieving 5+ SCQF at level 4 or better. Both are above the UK average of 65.1%.

- **The highest average school (both secondary and primary) spend per pupil** is in Orkney (£9,662) – twice the UK average of £4,633.

## Personal Well-Being

- **Personal well-being is based on four categories – life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety:**
- Adults (16 and over) in Rushmoor in Hampshire have the highest average rating for **life satisfaction** in the UK. Based on a score out of 10, the adults in this area had an average rating of 8.6. The UK average is 7.7.
- With a rating of 8.7 (out of 10) adults in Rushmoor believe that what they do in life is **worthwhile**, the highest average rating in the UK. The national average is 7.9.
- The **happiest** adults are also in Rushmoor, with an average rating of 8.4 – significantly higher than the UK average of 7.6.
- Lisburn & Castlereagh and Newry, Mourne & Down in Northern Ireland come out top with adults the least **anxious** with an average rating of 1.9. The average for the UK is 2.9.

## Leisure

- Eden in Cumbria has the highest number of pubs per 10,000 adults (28) followed by Derbyshire Dales (27). The national average is 10.1.

**Table 1: 2019 Halifax Quality of Life Rankings – the top 50 Local Authority Districts in the UK**

Local Authority	Region	2017 Rankings	2019 Rankings	Movement
Orkney	Scotland	2	1	1
Richmondshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	9	2	7
Rutland	East Midlands	3	3	0
Hambleton	Yorkshire and The Humber	28	4	24
Eden	North West	33	5	28
South Oxfordshire	South East	14	6	8
Cotswold	South West	46	7	39
Ryedale	Yorkshire and The Humber	12	8	4
St Albans	East of England	15	9	6

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Derbyshire Dales	East Midlands	75	10	65
Vale of White Horse	South East	62	11	51
Waverley	South East	7	12	-5
Hart	South East	1	13	-12
East Hertfordshire	East of England	17	14	3
Westminster	London	13	15	-2
Winchester	South East	5	16	-11
Rushmoor	South East	125	17	108
Uttlesford	East of England	11	18	-7
Wychavon	West Midlands	4	19	-15
Harborough	East Midlands	31	20	11
South Cambridgeshire	East of England	35	21	14
Rushcliffe	East Midlands	56	22	34
Ribble Valley	North West	83	23	60
Surrey Heath	South East	104	24	80
Wokingham	South East	6	25	-19
Harrogate	Yorkshire and The Humber	27	26	1
Babergh	East of England	41	27	14
West Oxfordshire	South East	29	28	1
South Bucks	South East	64	29	35
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East	38	30	8
Warwick	West Midlands	65	31	34
Elmbridge	South East	92	32	60
Chichester	South East	40	33	7
Stratford-on-Avon	West Midlands	10	34	-24
Lichfield	West Midlands	30	35	-5
Malvern Hills	West Midlands	57	36	21
Rochford	East of England	162	37	125
Chiltern	South East	19	38	-19
Shetland	Scotland	71	39	32
Richmond upon Thames	London	36	40	-4
West Berkshire	South East	63	41	22
Basingstoke and Deane	South East	54	42	12

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South Hams	South West	66	43	23
Fareham	South East	80	44	36
St Edmundsbury	East of England	22	45	-23
Wycombe	South East	45	46	-1
Mid Suffolk	East of England	77	47	30
Monmouthshire	Wales	32	48	-16
Daventry	East Midlands	134	49	85
Selby	Yorkshire and The Humber	21	50	-29

Source: Halifax January 2019

**Table 2: Local Authority District with the best quality of life in each region in 2019**

Local Authority	Region
South Oxfordshire	South East
Rutland	East Midlands
St Albans	East of England
Wychavon	West Midlands
Westminster	London
Cotswold	South West
Richmondshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
Monmouthshire	Wales
Orkney	Scotland
Eden	North West
Lisburn & Castlereagh	Northern Ireland
Northumberland	North East

Source: Halifax January 2019

**Table 3: Local Authority District with the best quality of life in each category in 2019**

Group	Variable	Local Authority District	Region
<b>Labour</b> (UK average is 74.2%)	<b>Highest employment rate: 87.9%</b>	Orkney	Scotland
(UK- £674 per week)	<b>Highest gross weekly Earnings: £1,392</b>	Kensington and Chelsea	London
(UK – 35.2%)	<b>% of adults (16+) with highest qualification gained: 94.8%.</b> This includes graduate and post graduate degrees, NVQ level 4 and above, and professional qualifications.	City of London	London

<b>Housing</b> (UK – 5.5)	<b>Highest average number of rooms in house: 7.0</b>	Mid Ulster	Northern Ireland
(UK – 97%)	<b>Largest % of houses with central heating: 100%</b>	East Ayrshire	Scotland
(UK – 7.3)	<b>Lowest House price to earnings ratio: 3.3</b>	Copeland	North West
(UK – 94%)	<b>% of households with more than 5Mbps: in 56% of LADs, 95% of premises have broadband speed in excess of 5Mbps</b>	Newcastle Liverpool Leicester Norwich Brent Southampton	North East North West East Midlands East of England London South East
<b>Urban environment</b> (UK- 272 per sq/km)	<b>Lowest Population density per sq km: 9</b>	Western Isles	Scotland
(UK- 9,584 cars/km)	<b>Lowest traffic flows per square km: 75 cars /km</b>	Western Isles	Scotland
(UK-44.1 per 10,000 people)	<b>Lowest burglary rate per 10,000 population: 1.5 per 10,000 people</b>	Western Isles	Scotland
(UK – 1.7 tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> emissions per capita)	<b>Lowest Total Consumer CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions: 0.9 tonnes per capita</b>	Tower Hamlets Newham	Both London
<b>Physical environment</b> (UK – 869.9 mm per year)	<b>Lowest average annual rainfall: 525mm</b>	Castle Point	East of England
(UK- 29.7 hours per week)	<b>Highest average weekly sunshine hours: 36.9 hours</b>	Isle of Wight	South East
<b>Health</b> (UK - 94.6%)	<b>Highest % of residents in good health: 97.4%</b>	Hart	South East
Male life expectancy (UK - 79.5 years)	<b>Longest Male life expectancy at birth for males: 83.7 years</b>	Kensington and Chelsea	London
Female life expectancy (UK - 83.1 years)	<b>Longest Female life expectancy at birth for males: 86.8 years</b>	Camden	London
<b>Education</b> (UK- 27.1 pupils per class)	<b>Lowest average number of pupils in primary school class: 17.0</b>	Western Isles	Scotland
<b>Secondary Education Exams</b> (UK- 65.1%)	<b>Year 12 pupils achieving a standard GCSE pass (9-4) in English &amp; Maths: 81.4%</b>	Rutland	East Midlands

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	<b>(in Scotland % of 15yr+ olds with 5 or more SCQFs A-C grade including English &amp; Maths)</b>		
<b>Per pupil spending (primary &amp; secondary) – (UK- £4,633per pupil)</b>	<b>Highest per pupil spend: £9,662</b>	Orkney	Scotland
<b>Personal Well Being (UK- 7.7 from 10)</b>	<b>Highest Life Satisfaction rating out of 10: 8.6</b>	Rushmoor	South East
(UK- 7.9 from 10)	<b>Highest Worthwhile rating out of 10: 8.7</b>	Rushmoor	South East
(UK- 7.6 from 10)	<b>Highest Happiness rating out of 10: 8.4</b>	Rushmoor	South East
(UK- 2.9 from 10)	<b>Lowest levels of Anxiety rating out of 10: 1.9</b>	Lisburn & Castlereagh Newry, Mourne & Down	Both Northern Ireland
<b>Leisure (UK-10.1 per 10,000 people)</b>	<b>Number of pubs per 10,000 population: 28 per 10,000 people</b>	Eden	North West

Source: Halifax January 2019

## ENDS

### Note to editors:

The Quality of Life index aims to quantify where living standards are highest in the United Kingdom by ranking local performance across a range of indicators covering the labour market, the housing market, the environment, education, health, personal well-being and leisure. The index has been produced at a local authority district level.

The quality of life reading for each local authority has been created by summing scores across 24 variables within 8 broad groups.

Each local authority district 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 8 group scores are summed to create an overall quality of life score.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

Group	Variable	Period covered
<b>Labour</b>	Employment rate %	Jul 2017-Jun 2018
	Gross weekly Earnings £s	April 2018 (up rated by average weekly earnings index to September 2018)
	% of adults(16+) with highest qualification gained	2011 Census data
<b>Housing</b>	Number of rooms in house	England & Wales 2011 ONS Census Data Scotland – Housing Conditions Survey 2009/11 Northern Ireland November 2018 Halifax data
	% of houses with central heating and sole use of bathroom	England & Wales 2011 ONS Census Data Scotland – housing Conditions Survey 2009/11

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		NI – Halifax Data to November 2015.
	House prices to Earnings ratio	12 months to November 2018
	Broadband speed is based on % of premises able to receive 5Mbit/s (mega bits per second)	OFCOM 2016
<b>Urban environment</b>	Population density per square km	2017 – ONS
	Traffic flows per square km	2017 - ONS
	Burglary rate per 10,000 population	British Crime Survey 2018; Northern Ireland 2017
	CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions per tonne per capita	2015 Department of Energy and Climate Change (covers period 2005-2015)
<b>Physical environment</b>	Average annual rainfall mm	Met Office Average 2009/2013
	Annual sunshine hours	Met Office Average 2009/2013
<b>Health</b>	% in good or fairly good health	2011 Census
	Life expectancy at birth for males	UK 2014/16
	Life expectancy at birth for females	UK 2014/16
<b>Education</b>	Number of pupils in primary school class	England and Wales 2018, and Northern Ireland 2017/18; Scotland 2017
	Year 12 pupils achieving a standard GCSE pass (9-4) in English & Maths (in Scotland % of 15yr+ olds with 5 or more SCQFs A-C grade including English & Maths)	2016/2017
	Average state school (primary and secondary) spending per pupil	England 2017/18, Scotland 2015/16 (no new data) and Wales 2018/19; NI 2013/14 – 2015/16 (no new data)
<b>Personal Well-Being</b>	Life Satisfaction	April 2017-March 2018 ONS
	Worthwhile	April 2017-March 2018 ONS
	Happiness	April 2017-March 2018 ONS
	Anxiety	April 2017-March 2018 ONS
<b>Leisure</b>	Number of Pubs	2016 British Beer and Pub Association

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