

# Measuring liveability

## Liveability

The term 'liveability' refers to the qualities of a place (city, town, suburb or neighbourhood) that contribute to the quality of life experienced by those who live or visit there. Indicators of liveability typically include political stability, availability of goods and services such as health care and education, low personal risk and efficient infrastructure.

## Liveability surveys

There are a number of liveability rankings published each year that compare cities around the world. The London-based Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) publishes one of these. Each city is given a rating on 30 criteria across five broad categories:

- **stability**—the city and country are free from war and conflict, crime rates are low and the government is stable
- **health care**—access to hospitals and doctors is good
- **culture and environment**—air and water pollution are low, and there are green spaces, restaurants and entertainment facilities
- **education**—there is good access to high-quality schools and universities, and high levels of literacy for both males and females
- **infrastructure**—roads, public transport, telecommunications and power sources are accessible and reliable, and there is access to good sanitation and a safe water supply.



Source 6.6.1 The world's 10 most liveable and least liveable cities, as ranked by the Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012

The ratings are then totalled to give each city a score.

The EIU's 2012 liveability report ranked cities in Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland and New Zealand as the top 10 most liveable cities in the world. Cities in Africa, Papua New Guinea and South Asia were ranked among the least liveable cities. See Source 6.6.1.

## New criteria

In 2012, the EIU experimented with an alternative method of ranking cities, which added new spatial criteria:

- population density (urban sprawl)
- connectivity (proximity to other cities)
- green space
- air quality.

The new method compared only half as many cities overall, and Melbourne, Vancouver and Vienna, among others, were not considered. European cities filled five of the top 10 positions, with three from Asia, one from North America and one from Australia. Hong Kong (see Source 6.6.2) was ranked first, and Sydney came in fifth.

## Alternative surveys

Another annual survey is the quality of living survey conducted by the New York-based firm Mercer, the world's largest human resource consulting firm. European cities dominate Mercer's ranking, with



Source 6.6.2 The EIU's new spatially adjusted liveability ranking judged Hong Kong the world's most liveable city in 2015.

cities in Australia, New Zealand and Canada also ranked highly. Vienna, the capital of Austria, was Mercer's top-ranked city in 2015. At number 26, Singapore was the top-ranking Asian city.

The London-based lifestyle magazine *Monocle* has published an annual list of the most liveable cities since 2007. Tokyo, Japan, was ranked the most liveable city in 2015, followed by Vienna, Austria. Melbourne was ranked fourth and Sydney, fifth. The criteria used in this survey include personal safety and crime, climate, environmental issues, urban design and architecture, healthcare, public transport and international connectivity.

## ACTIVITIES

### Remembering and understanding

- 1 Describe the criteria used to determine the liveability of a city, town, suburb or neighbourhood.

### Applying and analysing

- 2 Why do you think Australian cities rank highly on all the liveability rankings?
- 3 Rank the seven categories used by the lifestyle magazine *Monocle* from 1 (the most important) to 7 (the least important). Justify your response.
- 4 Would you add any new categories to *Monocle*'s list of criteria? Why, or why not?

- 5 Study Source 6.6.1, then complete the following tasks.

- a List the continents in which the top 10 most liveable cities are located according to the EIU's 2012 global liveability ranking (GLR).
- b List the continents where the GLR locates the 10 least liveable cities.
- c List the continent (other than Antarctica) that has no city in either the top 10 or the bottom 10 in the GLR.
- d Name the only Australian city in the top 10 according to the spatially adjusted liveability ranking (SALR).
- e Describe the differences in location between the top 10 cities in the global liveability ranking and those in the spatially adjusted liveability ranking.