Measuring Quality of Life: Does Local Environmental Quality Matter?

ENCAMS

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Does Local Environmental Quality Matter?

Contents

Executive Summary

ENCAMS interest in quality of life has grown steadily over the past 15 years. Through our consultancy work, research and surveys we have found evidence that local environmental quality is a significant element in how satisfied people are with the conditions in which they live. Local environmental quality can also affect what makes somewhere a good place to live, property prices, economic investment, regeneration and health.

Through an annual survey, ENCAMS has collected data on local environmental quality across England and the problems that affect it such as litter, fly-tipping and graffiti. Since the survey was first conducted in 2001 it has become apparent that not only do these problems affect quality of life, they also have underlying social and economic causes. However, we have never had the means to measure these.

In order to develop such a tool, and to better understand the relationship between local environmental quality and quality of life, we began a research project in 2004. The results of the first stages of this research are described in this report, key findings from which are below.

- Quality of life consists of nine different factors that could be grouped into two domains.
- Personal factors were among the most important for a good quality of life: health in particular, followed by enough money for basics, and good relationships with family and friends. Other important factors included satisfying leisure activities and secure, enjoyable work balanced with the rest of life.
- Neighbourhoods also had an effect on a person's quality of life, albeit to a slightly lesser extent. Whether a neighbourhood had a positive or a negative effect depended on the way it looked; the availability of parks and green spaces; activities for teenagers and centres for the community; a sense of belonging or community spirit; and perceived or actual levels of crime and antisocial behaviour.
- Many people were satisfied with the personal factors that affected their quality of life (e.g. health, relationships, money) but dissatisfied with aspects of their environment (e.g. crime, antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood appearance).
- Most people were satisfied with their overall quality of life although satisfaction did vary significantly between groups.

It was high amongst the under-25s but trailed off gradually into middle age (i.e. 45 -54) before rising again in later life. Women reported higher levels of satisfaction than men, as did people who were married or cohabiting and had families. Employment – either at work, at home or through studying – was associated with high levels of satisfaction, while being unemployed and long-term sickness had a detrimental effect on quality of life. Region also had an effect with people living in London reporting lower levels of satisfaction and people living in Yorkshire reporting higher levels.

- People also differed according to their Mosaic group. Mosaic is a postcode-based system that segments people into different groups that behave in the same way or have similar needs. The biggest difference here was between the more affluent groups (i.e. Rural Isolation, Symbols of Success, Grey Perspectives, Suburban Comfort, Happy Families) who were more satisfied with their quality of life than the less affluent groups (i.e. Welfare Borderline, Urban Intelligence, Blue Collar Enterprise, Municipal Dependency, Twilight Subsistence).

Taken together, these findings suggest that whilst local environmental quality is not the most important factor influencing how satisfied people are with the conditions under which they live, it does make a significant contribution. Furthermore, whereas the majority of people are satisfied with their relationships, health and money, the neighbourhood is often an area for concern. Policy makers and service providers would do well, then, to regard it as a priority for improvement and could benefit from tools such as Mosaic to help them better understand the needs of the people they serve.

ENCAMS believes that the results of this research will be of interest to central, regional and local government, and their partners in local strategic partnerships. Providers of social housing will also find much for them contained within this report. In fact, it should be of use to any body or organisation that has a remit to improve the quality of life of the people they serve. Not only does this report contain important information about what affects quality of life, it shows how the environment fits within this context, what the relationship is between the environment, economic and social factors, and what priorities for improvement should be.

Subsequent stages of the research, which will be reported elsewhere, will provide technical information about the tool ENCAMS has developed to measure quality of life.

1.1 History of Quality of Life Research?

The term 'quality of life' was first used by President Lyndon B. Johnson on 31 October 1964[1]. Speaking to an audience at Madison Square Garden about wide ranging social reforms, President Lyndon said: "These goals cannot be measured by the size of our bank balances. They can only be measured in the quality of lives that our people lead."

Lyndon may have coined the term, but the thinking behind it was not new. Questions about the nature of happiness and how to achieve a good society have occupied the minds of the world's greatest intellects for thousands of years. Aristotle believed that Eudaimonia, or goodness, was the ultimate goal of life and could be achieved through a lifetime of virtuous action and some degree of good fortune. Similarly, Socrates concluded that a happy life was one in which the individual was in touch with their better, higher feelings.

These theories were later revived by 18th century philosophers[2] including Jeremy Bentham, one of the leading thinkers of the Enlightenment movement. He argued that the best society was one in which the citizens were happiest, and the right act or public policy was that which produced the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.

If the aim of public policy is to affect happiness in the greatest number of people, then it follows that a method of quantifying happiness must be found. For if happiness cannot be measured then the impact of public policies upon it cannot be evaluated. It is precisely this activity that has occupied economists, psychologists, social scientists, health professionals and politicians increasingly over the last century, and it has led to three different approaches, each of which is described in more detail opposite.

## 1.2 Measuring Quality of Life

1.2.1 Economic Measures

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the total economic activity of a nation. It is defined as the market value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time. GDP was not designed to measure quality of life, but it was rapidly appropriated for this purpose; largely because GDP had the advantage of being calculated frequently, widely across different countries and consistently in the same manner.

The use of GDP as an indicator of quality of life is based on the assumption that consumers purchase goods and services that maximise their welfare. Therefore, any increase in a nation's economic activity implies that quality of life has also improved because there are more goods and services available to satisfy people's wants and needs.

GDP was first used in this way after the Second World War when there were high levels of unemployment and homelessness and people were suffering from malnutrition, poor health, poor housing and lack of education. Under these conditions, any increase in economic activity was guaranteed to improve peoples' quality of lives and GDP served as a useful, powerful indicator of progress.

Since then, however, the relationship between GDP and quality of life has become more complex. Over the past 30 years there has been a significant increase in the GDP of many countries including the United Kingdom[3], but peoples' satisfaction with their lives has remained relatively constant[4].

UK GDP per capita
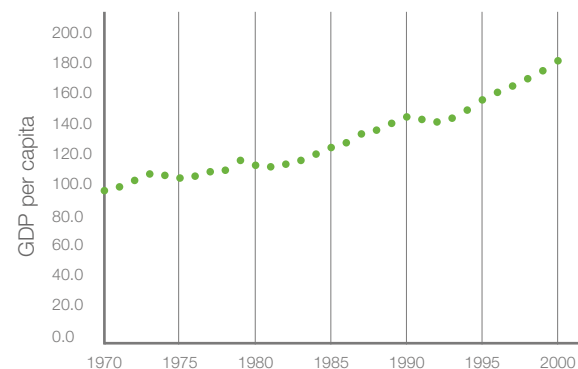
Eurobarometer: On the whole are you satisfied with your life? (UK sample)
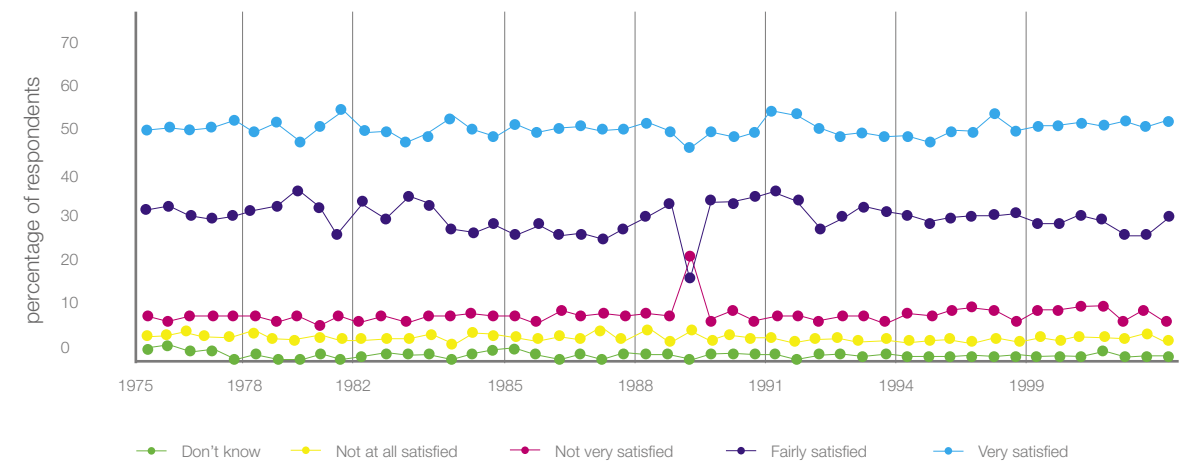
This apparent contradiction between levels of income and life satisfaction is called 'the prosperity paradox'[5] and has been attributed to several factors[6,7]. First, people react strongly to new life events and circumstances, but over time return to baseline levels of satisfaction. This process is called adaptation and means that if someone wins the lottery, for example, their mood may receive an initial positive boost, but after a year they are no happier than they were before they won the lottery. Second, people compare themselves with others and only if there is a mismatch will levels of satisfaction be affected (i.e. social comparisons). Hence, if an individual's income increases they will feel more satisfied, but only if it increases relative to a specific peer group. If the level of income achieved by the peer group also increases, then there will be no net effect on satisfaction. Finally, as an individual's income rises so too do their aspirations. This means that increasing levels of income may fail to satisfy because people soon start to aim even higher.

There are, in addition, other disadvantages associated with using GDP as a measure of quality of life. It fails to take account of several important areas of working life such as unpaid childcare, domestic or voluntary work and the black market. In addition, events that decrease quality of life, such as war and tornadoes, will also increase the economic activity of a nation, whilst economic activity in itself may have a long-term effect on quality of life by depleting natural resources.

These weaknesses have led to attempts to adjust GDP with other information[6]. Two further methods of measurement have also been developed. The first involves using GDP as part of an index that incorporates other, easily measurable indicators of quality of life. The second consists of measuring subjective well-being directly through surveys.

"Quality of life is the environmental, economic and social factors that affect how people feel about themselves and the place in which they live."

1.2.2 Objective Social Indicators

Social indicators are a set of statistics that serve as a proxy for quality of life which, some believe, is not in itself directly measurable[8] More generally, the term is used to describe any data pertaining to social conditions.

Social indicators are derived across a range of different domains such as health, crime, ecology, human rights, welfare and education. Examples include life expectancy, number of police per capita, basic water quality, percentage of young people unemployed and adult literacy.

Devising social indicators typically involves several distinct steps[6]. First, a conceptual model is developed to guide selection of the indicators. Second, indicators are chosen that best describe the phenomenon they are seeking to measure. Third, weights are given to each indicator based on its relative importance. Finally, weighted indicators are aggregated to provide an overall composite index of quality of life or presented independently.

This method of measuring quality of life is popular with government agencies and has also been used in a number of multinational projects. The Human Development Index, for example, is published annually by the United Nations and ranks countries according to their citizens' quality of life[9]. Criteria for calculating quality of life include life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted real income. The index is used to determine if a country is developed, developing or underdeveloped and to measure the impact of policies on people's quality of life. The most recent results published in 2006, but using data from 2004, ranked Norway as the most developed country and Sierre Leone as the least developed country. The UK occupied the 18th position out of 177 countries.

Another example of the use of social indicators to measure quality of life is by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an international body consisting of 30 member countries that share a commitment to democratic government and the market economy[10]. The OECD collects and publishes over 100 indicators that can be used to evaluate the position of any OECD country in the following fields: population and migration; macroeconomic trends; economic

globalisation; prices; labour market; science and technology; environment; education; public policies; quality of life and globalisation.

There are a number of strengths associated with using social indicators in this way[7]. Indicators capture important aspects of society that are not reflected by purely economic measures. Furthermore, they can be easily defined and quantified without relying on people's perceptions that are subject to bias.

Social indicators are, however, not without their problems[7]. Some degree of subjective decision making is involved in choosing variables to represent different aspects of quality of life and the relative importance of each one. Indicators may also be unreliable. For example, birth rate may be difficult to measure accurately in countries where babies are born at home rather than in hospital, and rates of certain crimes may be lower than expected because they are consistently under-reported. Another criticism is that objective indicators reflect the view of government or academics about what is good for society and may not accurately reflect a person's quality of life. In fact, some researchers argue that the only direct source of information about quality of life is the individual living that life. This has led to a third method of measurement – subjective well-being.

Criteria for calculating quality of life include life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted real income.
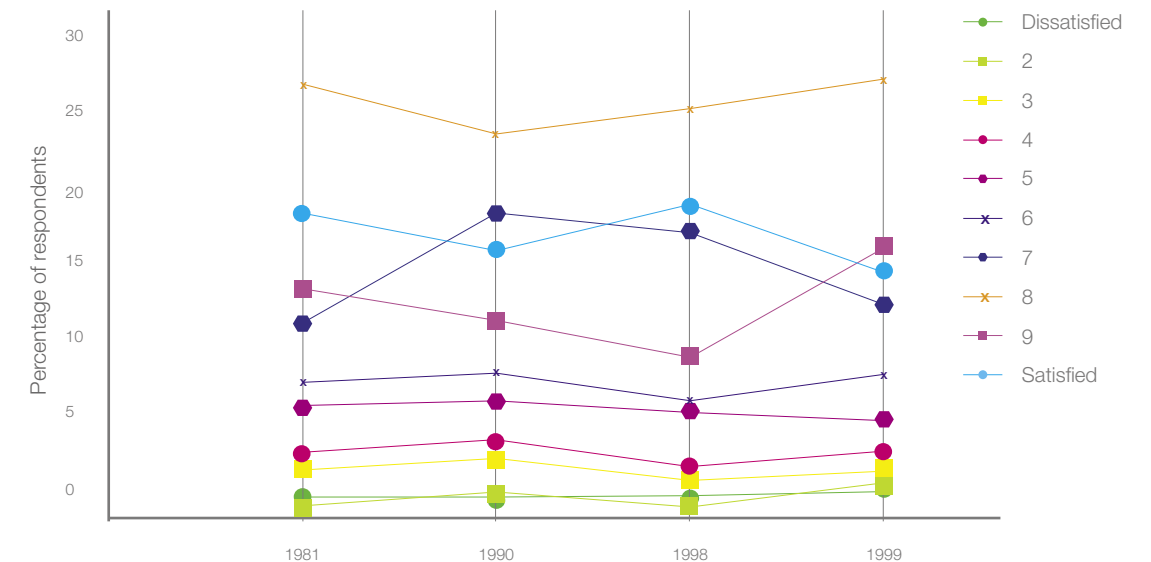
1.2.3 Subjective Well-Being

Subjective well-being refers to how people evaluate their lives[9]. These evaluations may be cognitive (e.g. life satisfaction or marital satisfaction) or they may consist of the frequency with which people experience pleasant emotions (e.g. joy) and unpleasant emotions (e.g. depression).

This approach to measuring quality of life has also been used by multinational projects including the World Values Survey. The World Values Survey is an investigation of sociocultural and political change conducted by a network of social scientists at leading universities around the world. Since 1981 four waves of interviews have been carried out in more than 80 societies across six continents. This makes it possible to carry out cross-cultural comparisons and analyse changes over time. Data from the UK show relatively stable levels of subjective well-being since 1981[11].

The biggest strength of this approach is its validity: it captures experiences that are important to the individual and provides information about any differences between perception and reality. Subjective well-being also correlates with other measures such as people's frequency of smiling, their ability to recall positive versus negative events from their lives, and reports from the respondent's family and friends.

However, self-report measures may be influenced by situational factors, suffer from response biases, memory biases and defensiveness. Questions about subjective well-being may not translate accurately into other languages making cultural comparisons difficult. Finally, people may not answer questions about well-being with how they feel, but how they think they should feel.

1.2.4 Combining Objective and Subjective Measures

The strengths and weaknesses associated with each of the approaches described above have divided researchers for many years[12]. However, the ability to formulate and implement effective policies is dependent on understanding how people make assessments about their quality of life and the objective conditions related to these judgements[13]. It has been increasingly recognised, therefore, that objective and subjective measures both have a place in quality of life research and that they should be regarded as complementary. Certainly this has been the approach in Germany where the Social Science Infrastructure Service collects and publishes statistical data about society, economy and the state, but also measures objective living conditions and subjective well-being[14].

Quality of life has climbed the political agenda in recent years.

1.3 Defining Quality of Life

Given the long history of quality of life research and how it has been approached from many different angles, it is not surprising that arriving at a single definition of what it means is extremely difficult. Some researchers have failed to define quality of life, whilst others have done so in a way that is dependent on their own objectives and the discipline in which they are working. Further confusion is added by using quality of life interchangeably with other terms such as happiness, well-being, life satisfaction, health status and living conditions.

For many years, ENCAMS has defined quality of life in the following way: "Quality of life is the environmental, economic and social factors that affect how people feel about themselves and the place in which they live."

We have chosen this definition because we believe it acknowledges the importance of both subjective well-being in determining quality of life and the objective conditions in which people live, be they environmental, economic or social.

1.4 Why is Quality of Life Important?

According to the American psychologist and writer, Martin Seligman[15]: "Feeling positive emotion is important, not just because it is pleasant in its own right, but because it causes much better commerce with the world. Developing more positive emotion in our lives will build friendship, love, better physical health, and greater achievement."

A good quality of life is no longer something individuals aspire to alone. It is the very matter on which government and public bodies are judged – their ability to improve the lot of the people that they serve. According to Adam Smith, the 18th century Scottish political economist and moral philosopher: "All constitutional governments are valued only in proportion as they tend to promote the happiness of those who live under them. This is their sole and end use."

Quality of life has climbed the political agenda in recent years. This is not surprising given the wealth of evidence to show that achieving a good quality of life can have a profound affect on other areas of a person's life. According to research, people who are more satisfied with their lives are less prone to disease and illness; live longer; are more productive in their work; are more positive generally; apply themselves more in problem solving tasks; give more of their time and money to good causes; and outperform others in tasks[5].

1.5 Application in England's Policy

1.5.1 Public Service Reform

The application of quality of life in English policy began in 1997 with the establishment of the Sustainable Development Unit. The Unit produced the UK's first sustainable development strategy in 1999[16], which recognised that economic growth alone was insufficient to secure a good quality of life for people – social and environmental factors also mattered. The Unit also provided baseline data for a core set of sustainable development indicators. These were benchmarks against which future progress could be measured.

In 2000, the Local Government Act gave local authorities the power to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of their local community, while placing a duty on them to prepare a long-term community strategy to improve quality of life issues locally with their partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Government recommended that local authorities should form local strategic partnerships to oversee the development and monitoring of these community strategies

Powers to promote well-being replaced the Best Value regime introduced by the Local Government Act 1999. Best Value stressed the need to achieve continuous improvement in service delivery whilst having a regard to factors such as efficiency, effectiveness and economy. However, the Government soon realised that many problems have underlying economic, social and environmental causes and require traditionally distinct services to work together. Furthermore, redesigning processes or changing working practices may improve services whilst having very little effect on people's actual quality of life.

It was against this background that the Audit Commission began to explore how to define quality of life and if it could be measured. They began a year long pilot process working with 90 local authorities, and published a set of 38 indicators divided across four broad headings in 2002[17].

Following 2002, there were a number of important developments. The International Earth Summit in 2002 put increased pressure on local authorities and their partners to consider the principles of sustainable development in their plans and activities, and following the Egan Review of Skills for Sustainable Communities in 2004, community strategies became sustainable community strategies. In 2005, the Government's 1999 sustainable development strategy was replaced[18] and a revised set of 68 indicators were published[19]. Local area agreements were also developed. They are based on sustainable community strategies and set out the priorities for an area agreed between government, the government office, the local authority and other key partners through local strategic partnerships.

Many of these developments gave rise to indicators of their own that the Audit Commission combined with the original 38 to form one consistent set[20]. All indicators were then brought together with other data sets to provide an accurate picture not just of quality of life in a local area, but public service delivery. This was called the Area Profiles project. Both the Audit Commission's quality of life indicator set and the Area Profiles project are considered in more detail below.

1.5.2 Audit Commission Quality of Life Indicators

The Audit Commission's local quality of life indicator set consists of 45 key measures that influence long-term well-being and cover a range of sustainable development issues. The indicators were derived from national policy priorities, but also research and public surveys. All the indicators have national data sources, and the Audit Commission makes data available for each local authority area. This means that local authorities do not have to collect data independently and it is possible to make accurate comparisons between different areas.

The indicators cover 10 themes. They are: people and place; community involvement and cohesion; economic well-being; housing; environment; transport and access; community safety; health and social well-being; education and lifelong learning; culture and leisure.

1.5.3 Audit Commission Area Profiles Project

The Audit Commission Area Profiles project brings together these 45 indicators with other data, information and assessments to provide an accurate picture of the quality of life and public service delivery in a local area. They are: (i) the financial resources entering an area and how they are spent; (ii) what residents and users of services think of the quality of life in their local area; (iii) what public service regulators such as the Audit Commission, the Healthcare Commission, and OFSTED have reported about local public services; (iv) a toolkit to assess the capacity and contribution of the voluntary sector to the quality of life and local services; (v) a toolkit to assess the capacity and contribution of the business sector to the quality of life and local services; and (vi) a toolkit to understand the quality of life for local 'communities of interest' such as black and minority ethnic communities and older citizens.

Area Profiles have a number of important uses, particularly for local authorities and their partners in local strategic partnerships that wish to formulate and monitor the success of their sustainable community strategies. They: (i) help local public service providers identify where improvement is most needed locally and monitor the success of any measures to drive change; (ii) provide a means to make information available to the public about the quality of life and services in their local area; and (iii) show government and other regulators what areas most need support.

1.6 ENCAMS Work

ENCAMS interest in quality of life has grown steadily over the past 15 years. Through our consultancy work and other research we have encountered evidence that local environmental quality, or the physical quality of public places, is a significant element in people's perceptions of their own quality of life. It can also affect what makes somewhere a good place to live, property prices, economic investment, regeneration and health.

In addition, through the Local Environmental Quality Survey of England (LEQSE), we have collected data on environmental indicators of quality of life. The survey, which was first conducted in 2001 and covers 12,000 sites across a range of different land uses, monitors standards in relation to cleanliness, different types of litter and more serious environmental crimes such as graffiti and fly-tipping. Analysis of the data, which is presented in an easy to read graphic and tabular form, suggests that many environmental problems, such as litter, have underlying social and economic causes. A high incidence of alcoholic drinks related litter, for example, could signal that an area has problems with underage drinking, whilst accumulations of fast food litter and paper tissues in a region may be associated with the poor diet and health of the people living there.

At present, ENCAMS does not have the means to measure these underlying economic and social factors. In order to develop such a tool, and to demonstrate unequivocally the link between local environmental quality and quality of life we embarked on a long-term research project in 2004. The Marketing Works, a brand and social research consultancy, was commissioned to undertake the research.

The results of the first stages of this research are described in this report. The report has been divided into sections that address the following questions: (i) what does quality of life consist of (and how does local environmental quality affect it)?; (ii) what is important for a good quality of life?; (iii) how satisfied are people with their quality of life?; and (iv) how does quality of life vary across Mosaic groups[21] (and is Mosaic a useful tool for policy makers)?

Subsequent stages of the research, which will be reported elsewhere, will provide technical information about the tool ENCAMS has developed to measure quality of life.

ENCAMS is not an expert on quality of life. Therefore, we obtained the support of a number of leading organisations in the field to deliver this project. We are also aware that quality of life has been intensively researched across the world. However, we believe there are at least three ways in which our work offers a fresh perspective. First, the model described in this report is based entirely on what people, rather than policy makers and academics, say is important for a good quality of life. Second, we have compared quality of life across different Mosaic groups. Finally, we intend to use both objective and subjective measures to track quality of life in our future research.

This research will complement that of the Audit Commission in several ways. It may be possible to use data collected by the Commission to measure those aspects of quality of life people identified as important by this research. Furthermore, since the Audit Commission model of quality of life is based to a large extent on government priorities, comparing it with the one described here will highlight areas where government policies are in line with what people want to achieve for a good quality of life, and areas where there is a mismatch.

ENCAMS believes that the results of this research will be of interest to central government departments such as the Home Office, Communities and Local Government, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). It will also be of interest to regional and local government, including local authorities, councillors, MPs, local strategic partnerships and regional government offices. In fact, any body or organisation – such as social landlords and housing associations – that has a remit to improve the quality of life of the people they serve will be interested in the research presented in this report as it provides important knowledge about what affects quality of life, how the environment fits within this context, what the relationship is between the different factors, and what priorities for improvement should be.

ENCAMS interest in quality of life has grown steadily over the past fifteen years.

2. Methodology

To ensure that this research was based solely on what people thought was important for a good quality of life the research process was divided into four phases. These are described in more detail in this section.

2.1 Scoping

The initial scoping phase consisted of a workshop attended by several experts in the field of quality of life research. They were:

- Ken Roberts, Professor of Sociology at the School of Sociology and Social Policy, Liverpool University;

- Nic Marks, Head of New Economics Foundation Centre for Well-Being;

- Mary Wright, Psychotherapist at Relate;

- Brian Johnson, Director of Research and Development at ENCAMS;

- Highly experienced employees from ENCAMS market research team.

This scoping phase was undertaken to ensure that existing research on quality of life was not duplicated in the context of the present study, but built upon. Furthermore, gathering the views of key stakeholders in the field meant that the objectives of this study could be tailored to reflect salient issues in quality of life research and develop a greater understanding of the area.

2.2 Consumer Depths and Workshops

Phase two of the research took place in early 2005 and consisted of four depth interviews lasting two hours each, followed by five workshops with 15 people in each group. Participants for the interviews and the workshops were recruited by Mosaic group and region.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain an overall picture of what quality of life meant to people, while the aim of the workshops was to understand the issues that affect it. The workshops also used several different tasks and methods of questioning people so that the most appropriate techniques for talking about quality of life could be identified, without imposing on the research preconceived ideas about what constitutes it. These techniques, which are described on the following pages, were used in later stages of the study.

Prior to the workshop, participants were asked to record elements of their day-to-day lives which they felt were good or bad or they were indifferent about. This was called the 'faces' enabling technique.
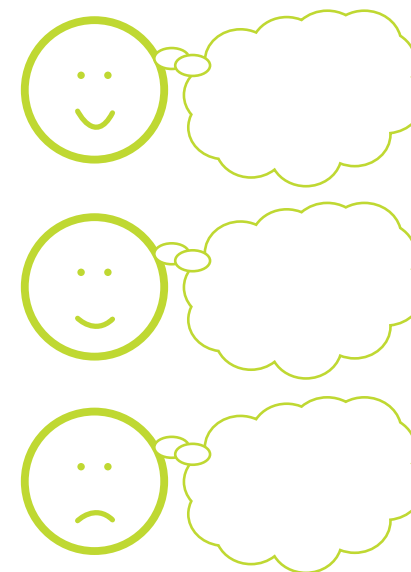
The 'worry head' allowed respondents to focus on those factors that negatively affected their quality of life and express pictorially what they worried about and to what extent. This technique proved useful in highlighting concerns which had not surfaced earlier.

2.3 Focus Groups

Phase three consisted of 22 standard length focus groups, recruited by postcode. There were two focus groups from each of the 11 principal Mosaic groups (see box overleaf). The focus groups had several objectives:

- to define what quality of life meant to the general public;

- to understand the main factors affecting quality of life from the public's point of view;

- to explore how these factors varied between Mosaic groups;

- to work towards a way of measuring quality of life by Mosaic group within a quantitative survey.

The techniques used in the earlier workshops were employed here to facilitate discussion and to enable respondents to consider all aspects of their lives.

2.4 National Quantitative Survey

The objective of phase four of the research was to quantify satisfaction with and the drivers of quality of life and to provide a base level for future tracking. It consisted of a quantitative survey conducted by telephone. A total of 3,691 individuals aged 16 to 75 were sampled nationally within England. Postcodes were profiled to ensure that a broadly representative sample was achieved by Mosaic category.

The composition of those surveyed is shown in the tables overleaf.

Mosaic[22]

Mosaic is a classification system that categorises people into recognisable types and groups based on data from a number of different sources. It is owned by Experian and operates on the assumption that people tend to live alongside other people of similar backgrounds, interests and means.

Mosaic classifies each of the 1.7 million postcodes in Britain into 61 distinct 'lifestyle types' which can be further aggregated into 11 groups. These groups accurately describe people in terms of their demographics, socioeconomic and behavioural characteristics and attitudes.

Mosaic helps marketers, researchers and service providers target groups and messages, deliver services with maximum efficiency and design services around people's needs.

Age

16-24	9.1%
25-34	12.5%
35-44	22.7%
45-54	20.5%
55-64	16.4%
65-74	18.1%

Social Grade[23]

AB[24]	15.7%
C1[25]	28.8%
C2[26]	28.3%
DE[27]	25.3%

Region

North East	3.5%
Yorks/Humberside	9.5%
North West	23.2%
East Midlands	5.6%
East Anglia	3.2%
West Midlands	13.0%
South East	11.3%
London	20.5%
South West	10.4%

Mosaic

Symbols of Success	8.2%
Happy Families	8.4%
Suburban Comfort	12.7%
Ties of Community	12.5%
Urban Intelligence	8.2%
Welfare Borderline	8.2%
Municipal Dependancy	8.3%
Blue Collar Enterprise	8.1%
Twilight Subsistense	8.4%
Grey Perspectives	8.2%
Rural Isolation	8.2%

Gender

Female	57.2%
Male	42.8%

Life Stage

Pre-family (18-34, no children)	10.7%
Young family (children under 10)	23.4%
Older family (children 13+)	19.8%
Post-family (35+ no children)	45.2%

Symbols of Success – 9.62% of population
Symbols of Success are people with rewarding careers who live in sought-after locations and are able to afford luxury items and premium quality products.

Happy Families – 10.76% of population
This group is made up of families with a focus on career and home, mostly younger age groups living in mostly post-war housing – small suburban estates or commuter villages. They are married or cohabiting with children (ranging from pre-school to teenage). There is a wide range of employment and educational levels within this group.

Suburban Comfort – 15.10% of population
Suburban Comfort are families who are successfully established in comfortable mature homes. Their children are grown up and finances are easier.

Ties of Community – 16.04% of population
People belonging to this group live in close-knit inner city and manufacturing town communities. They are responsible workers with unsophisticated tastes.

Urban Intelligence – 7.19% of population
Members of this group are young people with cosmopolitan tastes and liberal attitudes. They are well educated with a variety of occupations, working in charities, IT and the media. They live in houses or converted flats in urban areas or inner city suburbs.

Welfare Borderline – 6.43% of population
Welfare Borderline struggle to achieve a minimum standard of living and are reliant on the council for accommodation and benefits. They tend to rent mostly in flats from the council or housing associations. This category has a wide range of age groups, from retired people to those still at school.

Municipal Dependency – 6.71% of population
Municipal Dependency are families on low incomes who often live in large council estates where there is little owner-occupation. They tend to have grown-up children and several large families.

Blue Collar Enterprise – 11.01% of population
This group tends not to be well educated, but they are practical and enterprising and may have exercised their right to buy their council property whilst others still rent.

Twilight Subsistence – 3.88% of population
Twilight Subsistence are elderly people mostly in their 70s or 80s subsisting on meagre incomes in council accommodation, mainly sheltered housing or flats. Some have serious disabilities and/or illnesses such as cancer and heart disease.

Grey Perspectives – 7.88% of population
Members of this group are independent pensioners living in their own homes who are relatively active. They live in semi-detached and detached houses in suburban and semi-rural areas and have been established in the area for some time.

Rural Isolation – 5.39% of population
People belonging to this group live in rural areas where country life has not been influenced by urban consumption patterns. Most, but not all, have local, or at least rural, roots. They are demographically diverse in terms of age group and socioeconomic status. There is also a wide range of occupational situations, including farmers (inherited farms or newer smallholdings), self-employed (new media, arts, construction, antiques) and villagers (working locally in schools, social services, etc.).

3. What does quality of life consist of?

A good quality of life consists of a number of factors. This research identified two distinct domains into which these factors could be grouped. They were personal and neighbourhood quality of life and the descriptions follow on the next few pages. Respondents' comments are verbatim and shown in blue.

3.1 Personal Quality of Life

Personal factors were often among the most important for a good quality of life; health in particular, followed by enough money for basics, and good relationships with family and friends. Satisfying leisure activities and secure, enjoyable work balanced with the rest of life were also important, albeit to a slightly lesser extent.

3.1.1 Health

The single most important thing for quality of life was health. People believed that if they didn't have good health, they had very little else.

"If you've got health it doesn't matter about a lot of other things. If you haven't got good health the others don't really follow."
Welfare Borderline

"If you're lying on your bed with chronic fatigue syndrome you can't work, you can't look after your family, you can't relate."
Happy Families

There were people in all groups who suffered from health problems, or had done so in the past. Some groups though – Welfare Borderline, Municipal Dependency, Twilight Subsistence, Blue Collar Enterprise – were particularly affected.

3.1.2 Relationships

Relationships with families and friends brought a great deal of happiness in terms of having people to talk to, share social activities with, and provide support in a crisis.

"The family you always turn to if you've got a problem, they're always going to be there no matter what."
Municipal Dependency

Relationships were not always easy to maintain, however. Family and friends moved, had children and settled down.

Relationships, particularly with children, also brought worries: worries about safety, education, getting in with the wrong crowd, drugs and money. Worries about children occurred across most groups although there were differences between groups in terms of what they were concerned about. Those people living in urban areas were worried about where their children go and who they're with, whereas those living in rural areas were more worried about road safety and affordable decent housing. Those who had invested in property were worried about the effect of inheritance tax on their children.

"It's just worry about them being out and about. Not going to sleep until you hear them come in."
Suburban Comfort

"It's the worry of crashing."
Rural Isolation
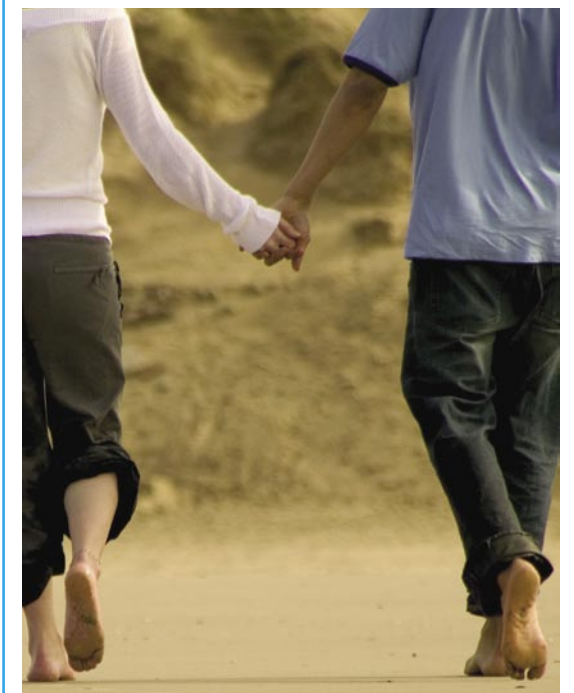
3.1.3 Money

Money made people happy. Having an unlimited amount of money wasn't the most important thing, however. It was about having enough money to be comfortable, so that you don't have to worry, and could do the things you want to do. Inevitably, respondents' definition of what constituted 'enough' money varied according to their Mosaic classification, with the biggest difference between those on high and low incomes.

"I'm successful in work, very well paid, that takes care of all my requirements."
Symbols of Success

"I worry when all the bills come in. I get quite depressed."
Welfare Borderline

People experienced a range of money worries including debts, difficulty getting on the property ladder, not being able to provide for their family, living on a fixed income, and having money for indulgences. Blue Collar Enterprise, Municipal Dependency and Welfare Borderline had the most severe money worries.

Urban Intelligence, Happy Families, Suburban Comfort and Ties of Community had moderate worries. Symbols of Success, Grey Perspectives and Rural Isolation had little or no money worries, while Twilight Subsistence had financial problems but were generally satisfied with their lot.

3.1.4 Leisure

Leisure provided for a happy life. Interests varied from golf (Suburban Comfort) to socialising with friends (Urban Intelligence), watching television (Blue Collar Enterprise) and bingo (Welfare Borderline).

Leisure was important because it gave people time to spend by themselves or with family and friends. It also brought variety to people's lives; had a beneficial effect on health and well-being; and provided an escape from the more mundane aspects of day-to-day life.

"What sets me up for the day is going to the gym. It's better than any anti-depressant you can get. I was on them for seven years, I was like a zombie."
Symbols of Success

Leisure activities were often limited by lack of money and lack of time.

3.1.5 Job

There were big differences between the groups in terms of how work affected their quality of life. For those who were retired – Grey Perspectives and Twilight Subsistence – work was not important. Among those who were working, some were concerned with job satisfaction (Symbols of Success and Rural Isolation) or work life balance (Symbols of Success, Happy Families and Ties of Community). Work was hardly mentioned by people on benefits (Welfare Borderline and Municipal Dependency). For them, financial survival was more important. Similarly, Blue Collar Enterprise was most concerned with earning money to pay bills. Those who had recently graduated from university and were at a crossroads in their lives (Urban Intelligence) were often frustrated with their jobs, while others were concerned about job security (Suburban Comfort).

"A job is not for life anymore, I keep thinking when is the next restructure going to be."
Suburban Comfort

"I'm not exactly doing what I want but I'm waiting to do what I want."
Urban Intelligence
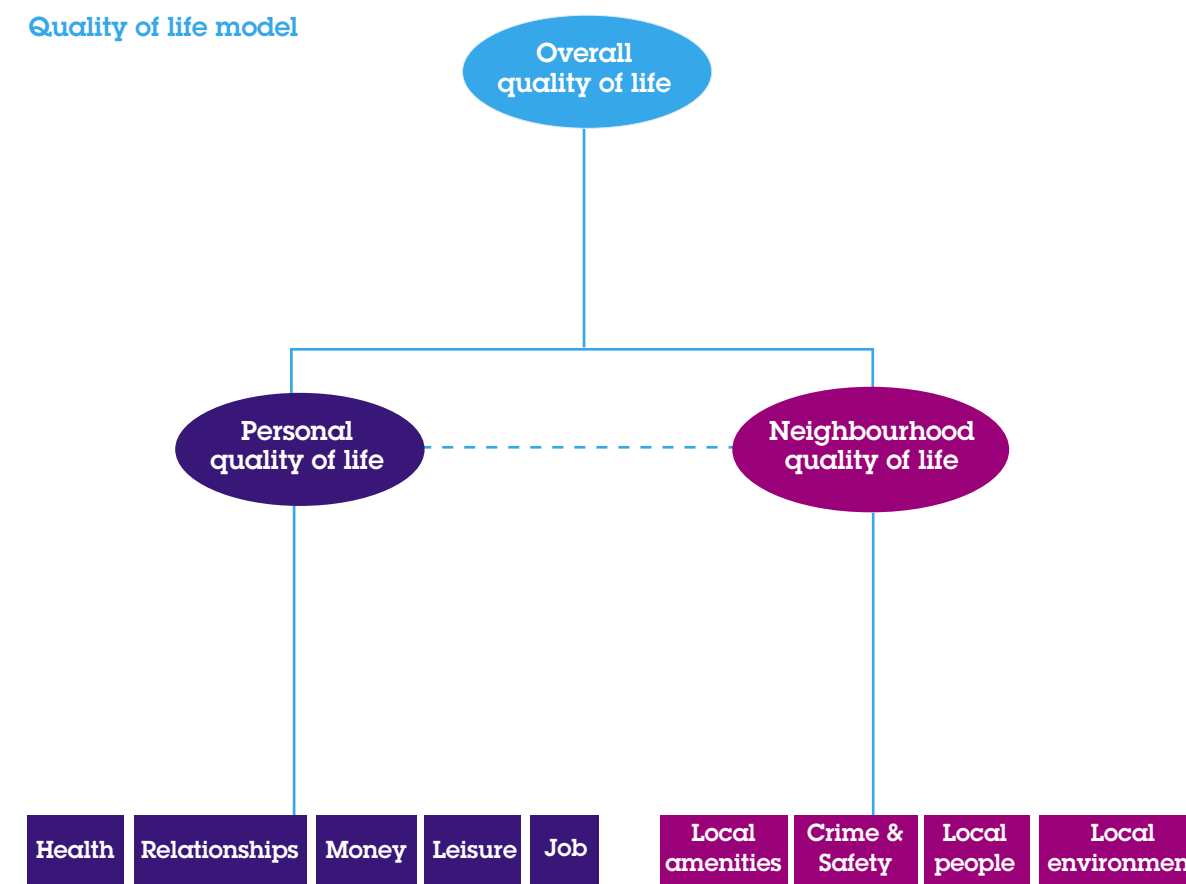
"You're always feeling guilty. You think you should be at home with them, at work you can't settle."
Ties of Community

Quality of life model

- Overall quality of life
  - Personal quality of life
    - Health
    - Relationships
    - Money
    - Leisure
    - Job
  - Neighbourhood quality of life
    - Local amenities
    - Crime & Safety
    - Local people
    - Local environment

3.2 Neighbourhood Quality of Life

Neighbourhoods had a significant effect on a person's quality of life that could be both positive and negative. For some, their neighbourhood was a place they could escape to (Symbols of Success, Suburban Comfort, Rural Isolation, Happy Families, Grey Perspectives). For others, it was somewhere they wanted to escape from (Blue Collar Enterprise, Welfare Borderline). Neighbourhoods could also confer status on a person, both good and bad.

"Work is hectic enough, earning a living, the old treadmill, it's nice to switch everything off, look out the window and see what's going on around you, nature."
Rural Isolation

"It's not important because I like to get away from it as much as I can. I use the house as a base, you just sleep there, work towards saving enough money to get away."
Blue Collar Enterprise

Whether neighbourhoods had a positive or a negative effect on quality of life depended on the way they looked. The availability of parks and green spaces; activities for teenagers and centres for the community were also important; as were a sense of belonging or community spirit and perceived or actual levels of crime and antisocial behaviour. All these elements contribute to local environmental quality and are considered in more detail in this section.

3.2.1 Local Amenities

Local amenities included shops; schools; pubs; somewhere for the community, particularly young people to meet; green spaces; and transport.

All groups believed there was a link between the lack of local leisure facilities for young people and problems such as vandalism, graffiti and drugs. Problems were particularly acute in deprived areas (Blue Collar Enterprise, Welfare Borderline, Municipal Dependency, Twilight Subsistence), although more affluent areas were not immune.

"You've got all these young people standing around the shops with nothing better to do. That's when they get up to mischief. They stand in little groups, gangs and it develops from there. It would be nice to have a youth centre, activities, maybe a football team for the area."
Municipal Dependency

People felt lucky to have access to green spaces, although they could also bring problems.

"We've got two large parks near us, they're well looked after and you don't get a lot of hassle. There was a drugs den going on, but the police, through pressure by the community, have got rid of them."
Symbols of Success

There were a range of transport issues that affected quality of life across all groups, although they were particularly pronounced among people living in rural areas. Rural dwellers were very dependent on having a car; where they lived acted as a barrier to friends and family visiting; and they had concerns about road safety. A car provided a means of escape for more deprived groups (Welfare Borderline, Municipal Dependency), while for others mobility was important at the cost of intrusive transport and concerns about road safety (Urban Intelligence, Happy Families, Blue Collar Enterprise, Ties of Community). Older groups (Grey Perspectives, Twilight Subsistence) wanted better public transport, whereas those in affluent areas (Symbols of Success, Suburban Comfort) were more likely to worry about street parking.

"If you haven't got a car or you can't drive you're absolutely scuppered really."
Rural Isolation

"You get in your car and go. It gives you freedom. If you get annoyed with your area you just go to someone else's, your mates, you can leave all your woes behind."
Welfare Borderline

3.2.2 Crime and Safety

Safety issues ranged from low level antisocial behaviour including young people hanging around and vandalism, to more serious types of crime such as drug dealing, burglary and car crime.

All groups had some experience of low level antisocial behaviour, burglary and car crime, and were worried about their children coming into contact with these problems, although problems were more likely to be experienced by Welfare Borderline, Municipal Dependency, Twilight Subsistence and Blue Collar Enterprise.

"These hooligans that go around on little motorbikes, scooters at about 40 mph on the pavement especially when it's dark."
Municipal Dependency

"Down the footpath beside the school, you'll see the blokes passing it over to the school. I reported it to the police but they do nothing."
Symbols of Success

3.2.3 Local People

People helped make somewhere a good place to live. A sense of belonging or community spirit was particularly important and common in rural villages, but also occurred in some urban and suburban areas.

"It is like a little village, very friendly, a good community there. Everybody knows each other, all different types of people. Very student-y in term time, but in the summer it's very quiet, all the students go home so it's quite nice. I don't mind them being there as well, I enjoy the hustle and bustle."
Urban Intelligence

Social events fostered a sense of community spirit, as did having lived in the same place for a long time and having experienced different life stages with your neighbours.

"The neighbours have seen [my daughter] grow up, I moved there when I was single, they've seen a whole change in me and been part of our lives really."
Happy Families

Getting involved wasn't easy, but it was rewarding and could help foster good relations with neighbours and help deal with problems, particularly those experienced by people living in deprived neighbourhoods.

3.2.4 Local Environment

The way a neighbourhood looked was important to most people. It was affected by how neighbours kept their houses; the general upkeep of an area by a local authority or housing association; fly-tipping; graffiti; and dog fouling. Problems with litter, fly-tipping and graffiti occurred across all Mosaic groups, whereas dog fouling was specific to Welfare Borderline, Blue Collar Enterprise and Municipal Dependency. The Welfare Borderline and Twilight Subsistence groups were the most ashamed of their neighbourhood's appearance.

"It's quite nice – they're always out there mowing and keeping it tidy."
Twilight Subsistence

"All along the edge of the cricket club and golf course, the litter thrown into the hedge is disgusting – supermarket trolleys, car wheels, old suitcases."
Grey Perspectives

3.3 Relationship between Personal and Neighbourhood Quality of Life

Although personal and neighbourhood quality of life were two distinct domains, there was a clear relationship between them.

For example, neighbourhood noise could affect a person's health by causing stress[28]. On the other hand, good neighbourhoods had a positive effect on the value of property, people got on with each other and there was a strong sense of community spirit. People who lived in places that were clean and safe with lots of amenities available felt that their friends were more likely to visit, and had access to good job opportunities and transport links. It was easier to exercise and use leisure facilities in neighbourhoods where people felt safe.

"I got clinically depressed about where I was living once, it was right on the edge of a busy dual carriageway, the constant traffic noise all the time, that was a nightmare. I was seriously depressed. I said we've got to move or I'm walking out."
Happy Families

"My mother doesn't like coming to me, she thinks it's a mess. I feel quite ashamed of it."
Welfare Borderline

"I can safely go out walking, safely leave my house and go for a run."
Symbols of Success

3.4 Abstract Factors

There were other, more abstract factors that were important for a good quality of life among a small number of people. These included having goals or a sense of purpose and plans for the future that might include retirement and financial security. Freedom and independence were also important, as was having a positive attitude.

3.5 Other Factors

Other factors were laughter and humour; children's education; having a nice home; pets; good weather; the wider environment; religious faith; and a good sex life.

A good quality of life consists of a number of factors. Research identified two distinct domains into which these factors could be grouped; personal and neighbourhood quality of life.

4. What's important for a good quality of life?

Section three showed that there are many factors that contribute to quality of life. The next stage of the research was to determine the relative importance of each one with a view to identifying priorities for improvement.

4.1 Importance of Factors

According to the quantitative research, all factors identified by the qualitative phase of the research were important for a happy life (i.e. scored at least 3.8 on a 5-point scale, where 1 = not very important and 5 = very important). In addition, the factors were scored across a very narrow range (3.8 – 4.8). This means that while one factor may have a lower importance rating than another, it is not unimportant. Rather it is less important relative to the other factors that were considered. In spite of this caveat, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the data.

The top three most important factors all belonged to the personal domain. They were health, relationships and money.

Neighbourhood factors occurred across the full range of importance scores (range: 4.1 to 4.7), and the most important was crime and safety.

4.2 Satisfaction with Factors

Satisfaction ratings were more varied than importance ratings. (Scores ranged from 2.61 to 4.48 on a 5-point scale where 1 = not very satisfied and 5 = very satisfied).

Health, relationships and money were not only the most important for a happy life, they were also among the top five factors people were most satisfied with.

Neighbourhood factors formed two distinct clusters: those that people were satisfied with (neighbours and the appearance of their neighbours' houses, safety, local amenities; range = 3.7 – 4.1) and those they were less satisfied with (crime, antisocial behaviour, facilities for teenagers, neighbourhood appearance, community spirit, local pollution; range: 2.6 – 3.4).

There were, in addition, some surprising findings. People liked their neighbours but felt there was little community spirit where they lived. They were dissatisfied with the level of crime where they lived but felt safe when out. They were dissatisfied with the appearance of their neighbourhood but not their neighbours' houses.

Importance Rating

Mean score
(1= not very satisfied, 5=very satisfied)

Satisfaction Rating

Quality of relationships
Good friends
Good neighbours
Overall health
Enough money for basics
Ease of getting around
Local amenities
Neighbours' appearance
Feeling safe when out
Financial security
Leisure activities
Job security
Money for extras
Social consideration
Job satisfaction
Leisure facilities
Hours at work
Amount of exercise
Local pollution
Community spirit
Neighbourhood appearance
Level of crime
Antisocial behaviour
Facilities for teenagers

■ Personal
■ Neighbourhood

1.0   2.0   3.0   4.0   5.0

Mean score
(1= not very satisfied, 5 = very satisfied)

4.3 Importance by Satisfaction

By plotting the importance of each factor by its satisfaction rating, it was possible to identify priorities for improvement. The following chart is divided into four quadrants. Those factors that fall within the top right quadrant are positive drivers of quality of life – they are important and people are satisfied with them. They include health, relationships and money.

Those factors that fall within the bottom right quadrant of the chart are negative drivers of quality of life – they are important but people are dissatisfied with them. They include crime, safety, neighbourhood appearance and local pollution, and should be seen as priorities for improvement.

Those factors that fall within the remaining two quadrants are of less interest because they are of low importance.

Importance versus satisfaction
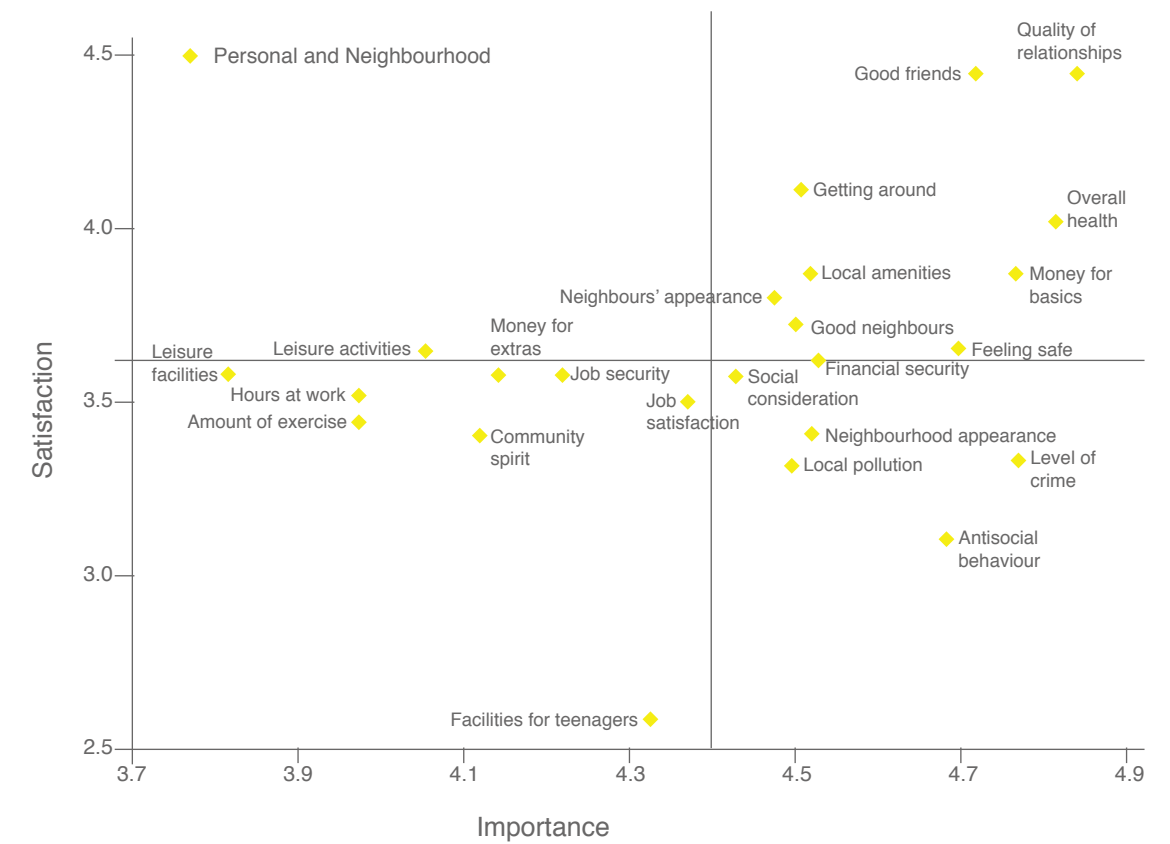
5. How satisfied are people with their quality of life?

It is possible to measure not only satisfaction with the factors that affect quality of life but also quality of life overall. The results described in this section show how satisfied people are with their overall quality of life and whether this varies with demographic variables and Mosaic group.

5.1 Overall Quality of Life Ratings

Most people are satisfied with their quality of life. On a scale of 1 – 10 , where 1 was extremely dissatisfied and 10 was extremely satisfied, the average score was 7.5.

Predictably, those people who were experiencing adversity or uncertainty, or had done so recently, tended to be less satisfied.

"It's been a fairly difficult year, two friends passed away last year. My closest friend has a long-term mental illness, which came on suddenly. I also found out they are making me homeless in three months."
Welfare Borderline

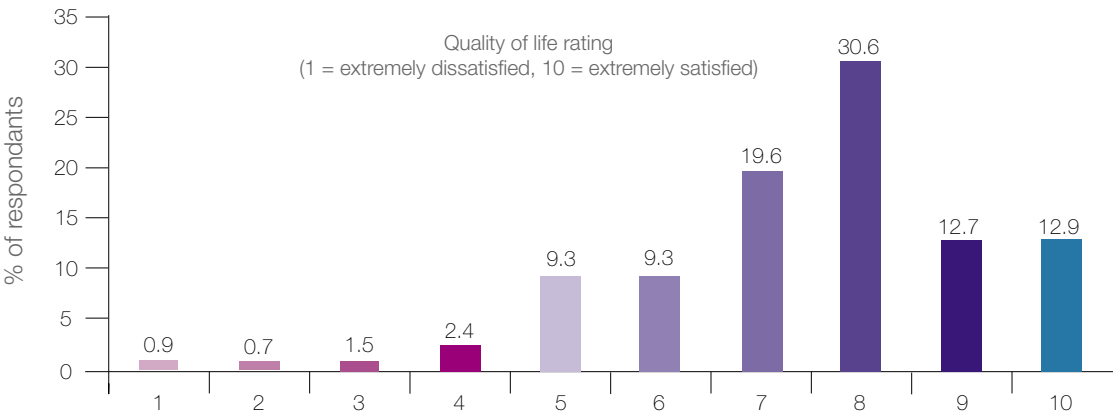Nonetheless, more than three-quarters of people (75.8%) rated their quality of life as 7 or above.

5.1.1 Demographics

Overall quality of life ratings depended on a variety of demographic variables including age, region, ethnicity, gender, life stage, marital status, socioeconomic group and working status.
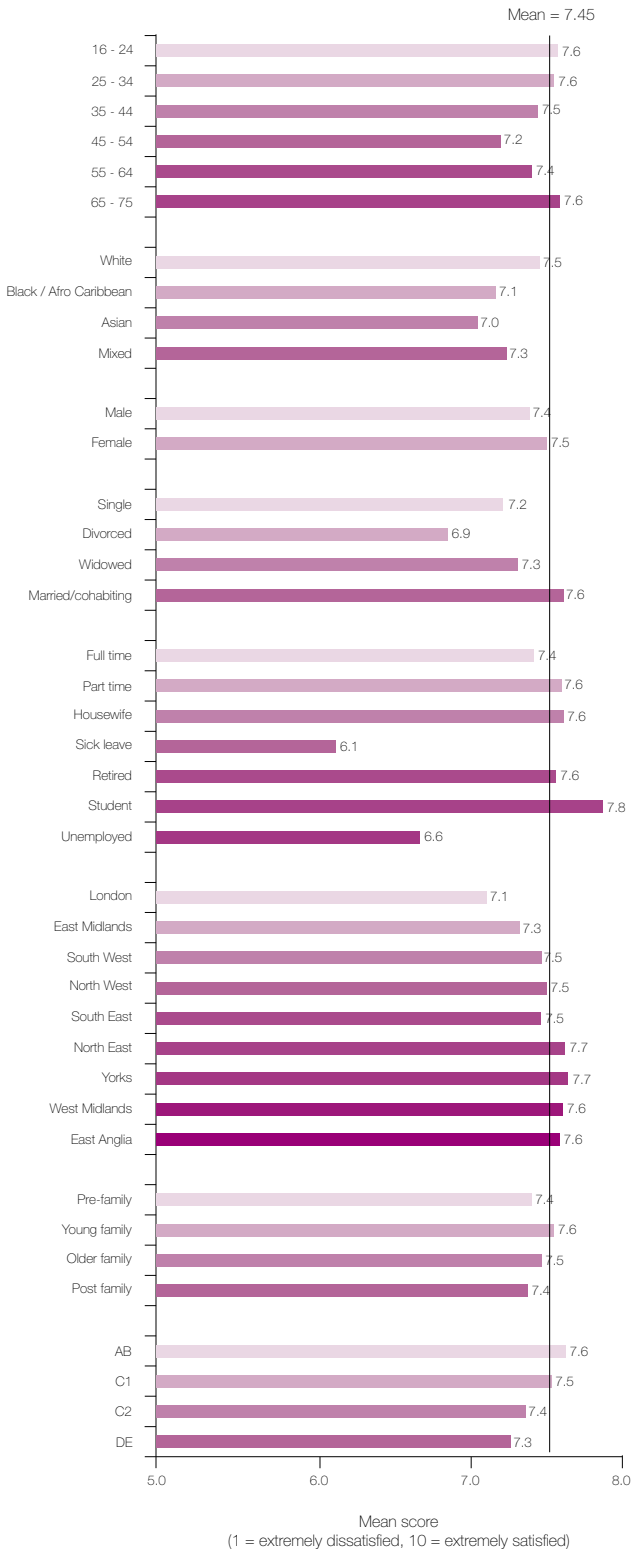
The most satisfied people were: the oldest and the youngest age groups (16 – 34, mean = 7.6; 65 – 75, mean = 7.6); white (mean = 7.5); female (mean = 7.5); married or cohabiting (mean = 7.6); students (mean = 7.8); lived in Yorkshire (mean = 7.7); had a young family (mean = 7.6); and belonged to socioeconomic group AB (mean = 7.6).

The least satisfied people were: 45 – 54 years old (mean = 7.2); Asian (mean = 7.0); male (mean = 7.4); divorced (mean = 6.9); on sick leave (mean = 6.1); lived in London (mean = 7.1); had a family that had left home (mean = 7.4); and belonged to socioeconomic group DE (mean = 7.3).
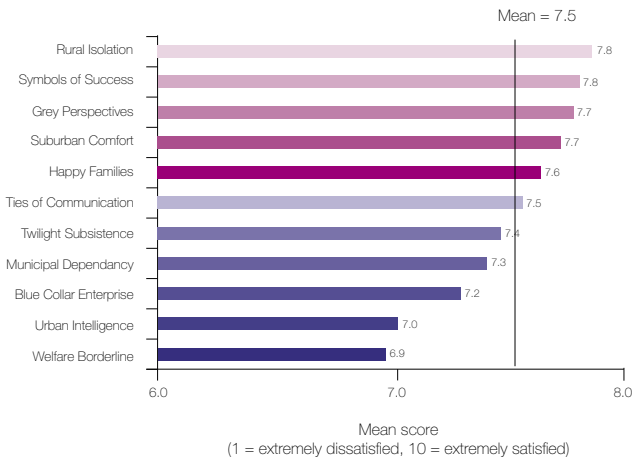
Quality of Life Ratings

Quality of life rating
(1 = extremely dissatisfied, 10 = extremely satisfied)

Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	0.9	0.7	1.5	2.4	9.3	9.3	19.6	30.6	12.7	12.9

Quality of Life Rating by Sociodemographic Factors

Mean = 7.45

	Mean
16 - 24	7.6
25 - 34	7.6
35 - 44	7.5
45 - 54	7.2
55 - 64	7.4
65 - 75	7.6
White	7.5
Black / Afro Caribbean	7.1
Asian	7.0
Mixed	7.3
Male	7.4
Female	7.5
Single	7.2
Divorced	6.9
Widowed	7.3
Married/cohabiting	7.6
Full time	7.4
Part time	7.6
Housewife	7.6
Sick leave	6.1
Retired	7.6
Student	7.8
Unemployed	6.6
London	7.1
East Midlands	7.3
South West	7.5
North West	7.5
South East	7.5
North East	7.7
Yorks	7.7
West Midlands	7.6
East Anglia	7.6
Pre-family	7.4
Young family	7.6
Older family	7.5
Post family	7.4
AB	7.6
C1	7.5
C2	7.4
DE	7.3

Mean score
(1 = extremely dissatisfied, 10 = extremely satisfied)

5.1.2 Mosaic Groups

There was also significant variation between the different Mosaic groups in terms of their overall quality of life rating. The more affluent groups – Rural Isolation, Symbols of Success, Grey Perspectives, Suburban Comfort, Happy Families – tended to have higher than average scores. Welfare Borderline, Urban Intelligence, Blue Collar Enterprise, Municipal Dependency, Twilight Subsistence – the poorest groups – tended to have lower than average quality of life ratings.

Quality of Life Rating by Mosaic Group

Mean = 7.5

Mosaic Group	Mean
Rural Isolation	7.8
Symbols of Success	7.8
Grey Perspectives	7.7
Suburban Comfort	7.7
Happy Families	7.6
Ties of Communication	7.5
Twilight Subsistence	7.4
Municipal Dependancy	7.3
Blue Collar Enterprise	7.2
Urban Intelligence	7.0
Welfare Borderline	6.9

Mean score
(1 = extremely dissatisfied, 10 = extremely satisfied)

6. How does quality of life vary across Mosaic group?

Section five demonstrated that there were marked differences between Mosaic groups in terms of how satisfied they were with their overall quality of life. This section explores those factors that may account for the differences. The results are presented starting with the group that achieved the highest levels of satisfaction with their quality of life as a whole and working down to the group that scored the lowest levels of satisfaction with quality of life. The summaries are not intended to provide a definitive answer to the question of what determines quality of life in each Mosaic group. Rather they give a broad overview of the relative importance of different factors and provide the basis for further research.

6.1 Rural Isolation

Rural Isolation were the most satisfied with their quality of life (mean = 7.8). Among those factors that were important to this group, there were slightly more that they were satisfied than dissatisfied with. Positive drivers included health, relationships and safety. Issues that needed addressing were ease of getting around and financial security.

This group had above average levels of satisfaction with a total of 13 factors, many of which related to their neighbourhood. For example, the group had above average levels of satisfaction with antisocial behaviour, feeling safe when out and neighbourhood appearance. They had below average levels of satisfaction in only two areas: local amenities and ease of getting around.

These results show that members of the Rural Isolation group differ in a number of important ways from members of the other groups. For rural dwellers, low levels of crime and antisocial behaviour and neighbourhood appearance contributed positively to quality of life. For all other groups, who lived in suburban and urban environments, these detracted from quality of life. The appearance of neighbourhoods was poor and levels of crime were high. In contrast, ease of getting around was a problem with living in the countryside, whereas for other groups it was a positive benefit.

6.2 Symbols of Success

Symbols of Success were the second most satisfied with their overall quality of life (mean = 7.8). Among those factors that were important to this group, there was an equal number that they were satisfied with than they were dissatisfied with. Positive drivers included health, relationships and enough money for basics. Crime, safety, antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood appearance and local pollution were issues that needed addressing.

This group reported higher than average levels of satisfaction with a total of 10 factors, which could explain their high overall quality of life score. They were particularly satisfied with factors that related to money, work and their neighbours' appearance. They were among the least concerned about facilities for teenagers, which is consistent with the view that this is an affluent group that can afford to pay for their children to go out to the cinema and restaurants.

6.3 Grey Perspectives

Grey Perspectives ranked third from the top in quality of life scores (mean = 7.7). Within this group there were substantially more positive than negative drivers of quality of life. Positive drivers included health, relationships and money for basics. Issues that needed addressing were antisocial behaviour and crime.

Members of this group were settled financially. They had time and money to enjoy leisure activities, which was reflected in the fact that 17 different factors achieved higher than average satisfaction scores. Satisfaction with money, levels of crime and safety were high. Amenities, including leisure facilities, and getting out and about were less important to this group as would be expected given their age.

6.4 Suburban Comfort

Suburban Comfort had the fourth highest quality of life score (mean = 7.7). There was an equal number of positive and negative drivers of quality of life among members of this group. Positive drivers included friends, relationships, health and financial security. Issues that needed addressing were crime and safety, antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood appearance and local pollution.

Members of this group were generally happy with where they lived and felt secure in their jobs. Five factors achieved higher than average levels of satisfaction. As in the case of Symbols of Success, most of these were related to long-term financial and job security. Only one factor was rated as below average importance – community spirit.

6.5 Happy Families

Happy Families had the fifth highest quality of life score (mean = 7.6). Of those factors that were important to this group, there were slightly more that they were satisfied with than they were dissatisfied with. Positive drivers were health, relationships, enough money for basics and safety. Issues that needed addressing were antisocial behaviour, crime, neighbourhood appearance and local pollution.

Even though crime, antisocial behaviour and neighbourhood appearance detracted from quality of life amongst members of this group, Happy Families still experienced above average levels of satisfaction in these areas. They were also more satisfied than most with their local amenities and facilities for teenagers, although job satisfaction was low.

There were no factors that this group rated as above average importance although they rated two as below average importance – ease of getting around and community spirit.

6.6 Ties of Community

Ties of Community ranked sixth in terms of satisfaction with their quality of life (mean = 7.5). Within this group were more factors that were important for a good quality of life that people were satisfied with than they were dissatisfied with. Positive drivers included health, relationships, ease of getting around and money for basics. Crime, antisocial behaviour, local pollution and neighbourhood appearance were issues that needed addressing.

People belonging to this group were more likely to be satisfied with hours at work, job security and job satisfaction. This is probably because they weren't in full-time employment. They were least likely to be satisfied with local pollution and social consideration. No factors were related as below or above average importance.

6.7 Twilight Subsistence

Twilight Subsistence had the fifth lowest quality of life satisfaction score (mean = 7.4). Among those factors that were important to them, there were far more positive than negative drivers. Positive drivers were relationships, health, ease of getting around, money for basics, financial security and local amenities. Negative drivers were crime, antisocial behaviour, facilities for teenagers, neighbourhood appearance and local pollution.

Members of this group assigned eight factors above average levels of satisfaction, suggesting that they are generally quite happy with different aspects of their lives. Many of these factors, particularly those related to the local environment, were also rated as above average importance making them strong positive drivers. Factors related to work and money were not important to this group.

This analysis is consistent with the view that members of this group lead severely restricted lives due to health, finances and mobility, which can be eased by interaction with people including family, friends and neighbours.

6.8 Municipal Dependency

Municipal Dependency ranked fourth from the bottom in terms of how satisfied they were with their quality of life (mean = 7.3). Among those factors that were important to them for a good quality of life, there was an equal number that they were satisfied and dissatisfied with. Positive drivers were relationships, health, ease of getting around and local amenities. Issues that needed addressing were facilities for teenagers, crime and safety, neighbourhood appearance and local pollution.

Within this group, only one factor was assigned above average satisfaction - local amenities. It was also rated as important suggesting that it is a strong positive driver. There were also a number of strong negative drivers, particularly neighbourhood appearance, facilities for teenagers and neighbours' appearance.

6.9 Blue Collar Enterprise

Blue Collar Enterprise ranked third from the bottom in terms of their quality of life score (mean = 7.2). Among this group there were far more negative drivers of quality of life than there were positive drivers. Negative drivers included facilities for teenagers, crime, antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood appearance, local pollution, job satisfaction and security. Positive drivers were health, relationships, enough money for basics, local amenities and ease of getting around.

Blue Collar Enterprise had below average levels of satisfaction with five factors, especially those that related to their local neighbourhood (e.g. neighbourhood appearance, feeling safe when out, community spirit, antisocial behaviour). They rated facilities as important, both for themselves and teenagers.

6.10 Urban Intelligence

Urban Intelligence had the second lowest quality of life score (mean = 7.0). Amongst those factors that were important to them, there were slightly more that they were dissatisfied than satisfied with. Positive drivers were health, relationships, money for basics and ease of getting around. The issues that most needed improving were crime, safety and job satisfaction.

Members of this group had below average levels of satisfaction across 10 different factors, many of which were associated with urban living (e.g. local amenities, crime, antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood appearance, local pollution). However, they assigned many of these factors as below average importance. These findings are consistent with the view that many people from this group do not live in nice neighbourhoods, but they are willing to put up with them because other factors are more important such as the 'buzz' of the place, or because they spend relatively little time at home relative to other groups.

6.11 Welfare Borderline

Welfare Borderline had the lowest quality of life ranking (mean = 6.9). Within this group there was an equal split between those factors that were important for a good quality of life that they were satisfied with, and those that they were dissatisfied with. Positive drivers included health, relationships, money for basics and ease of getting around. Issues that needed addressing were crime and safety, neighbourhood appearance and local pollution.

Although there were a number of factors that Welfare Borderline were satisfied with, they had below average levels of satisfaction with a total of 20 factors, especially with regard to community spirit and neighbours' appearance. This could explain their low overall quality of life score. They assigned one factor above average importance – leisure facilities – and no factors below average importance.

Since 2003, ENCAMS has made considerable progress towards identifying what is important for a good quality of life and how local environmental quality fits within this context. Some of our most important findings are discussed below.

First, quality of life consists of many different factors, of which neighbourhood is a significant component. This research found evidence of nine factors that could be grouped into two domains: personal and neighbourhood. Personal factors were among the most important for a good quality of life: health in particular, followed by enough money for basics, and good relationships with family and friends. Satisfying leisure activities and secure, enjoyable work balanced with the rest of life were also important, albeit to a slightly lesser extent. Neighbourhoods had an affect on a person's quality of life that could be both positive and negative.

Whether a neighbourhood had a positive or a negative effect depended on the way they looked. The availability of parks and green spaces, activities for teenagers and centres for the community were also important, as were a sense of belonging or community spirit and perceived or actual levels of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Among researchers it is widely believed that quality of life as a whole should be the sum of each of its domains[29] And while different studies have identified different domains there is some commonality between them. It seems sensible to compare the quality of life domains reported here with those used by the Audit Commission's Area Profiles project. This shows considerable overlap between what people want for a good quality of life on one hand and what policy makers think is important on the other hand. There are, however, differences. The Audit Commission's Area Profile's project records data about population dynamics and diversity, housing and education whereas these factors were not widely mentioned by the people in the present study. And while the Audit Commission model of quality of life includes the environment it emphasises both global and local issues while the people in the study were most concerned with what was happening in their more immediate vicinity. Finally, the people in this study spoke at length about relationships with family and friends, work (e.g. long-term job security), social consideration and local facilities, but these factors are missing from the Audit Commission model and there is a general lack of datasets to monitor them.

ENCAMS	AUDIT COMMISSION
NINE DOMAINS	TEN DOMAINS
	People and place
Health	Health and social well being
Leisure	
Relationships with family and friends	
Money and finance	Economic well-being
Work	
Concern for crime	Community safety
Local facilities	Transport and access
	Culture and Leisure
Local environment	Environment
Local people	Community involvement and cohesion
	Housing
	Education and life long learning

The second finding of interest in the present study was that while many people were satisfied with the personal factors that affected their quality of life (e.g. health, relationships, money), they were dissatisfied with aspects of their neighbourhood (e.g. crime, antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood appearance). This suggests that public bodies and other organisations that exist to improve people's quality of life would be well guided to focus on the environment as a means to do so.

Third, most people are satisfied with their overall quality of life. Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed rated satisfaction with their quality of life as 7 on a 10-point scale where 1 = extremely dissatisfied and 10 = extremely satisfied. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies including the European Commission's Eurobarometer and the World Values Survey, both of which found high levels of life satisfaction among samples of UK respondents that were stable across time.

Fourth, overall satisfaction with quality of life was high but it did vary significantly between groups. For example, the research found that satisfaction was high among the under-25s, then trailed off gradually into middle age (i.e. 45 -54) before rising again in later life. Women reported higher levels of satisfaction than men, as did people who were married or cohabiting and had families. Employment – either at work, at home or through studying – was associated with high levels of satisfaction, while being unemployed and long-term sickness had a detrimental effect on quality of life. Region also had an effect with people living in London and the East Midlands reporting lower levels of satisfaction and people living in Yorkshire reporting higher levels.

These effects have been found elsewhere[6] and while it is difficult to infer the mechanisms that give rise to them, some tentative conclusions can be drawn. People who enjoy the best quality of life are those who surround themselves with others – family, friends and workmates – and keep busy. Even the difference in levels of satisfaction between men and women could be attributed to the relationships they form with others. Since women tend to have a bigger social network than men this could act as a buffer against negative life events, while exposing women to more positive occurrences. Where a person lives can make a difference too.

One effect, however, was new and that concerned Mosaic groups. The biggest difference here was between the more affluent groups (Rural Isolation, Symbols of Success, Grey Perspectives, Suburban Comfort, Happy Families) who were more satisfied with their quality of life than the less affluent groups (Welfare Borderline, Urban Intelligence, Blue Collar Enterprise, Municipal Dependency, Twilight Subsistence). Given that Mosaic groups can be easily identified by their postcodes, the information in this report is likely to be of considerable use to policy makers and service providers when deciding how to improve people's quality of life.

Finally, Rural Isolation showed the opposite trend to many of the other groups considered in this report. These results show that members of the Rural Isolation group differ in a number of important ways from members of the other groups. For rural dwellers low levels of crime and antisocial behaviour and the good appearance of neighbourhoods contributed positively to quality of life. For all other groups, who lived in suburban and urban environments, these detracted from quality of life. The appearance of public places was poor, levels of crime and antisocial behaviour were high. In contrast, ease of getting around was a problem with living in the countryside, whereas for other groups it was a positive benefit.

The output from this project is a set of environmental, social and economic factors that the public perceive as affecting their quality of life both personally and at a neighbourhood level. The next stage of the research, which is currently underway, has two elements. First, we will identify a set of indicators for each of the factors that are based on published statistics. Second, we will present these indicators using the well-known and easily-understood ENCAMS Local Environmental Survey protocols. To date, an interim range of indicators has been identified and further work is underway to devise the final indicators. These will better reflect people's perspectives and fill any significant gaps where there are no pre-existing published data sets.

We anticipate that there will be the potential to apply this framework at a number of levels to provide profiles of local communities. These profiles will be of interest and value to the local communities themselves, but also to the local organisations responsible for service delivery. For example, local authorities, social landlords, the police, health authorities, regeneration agencies and economic development bodies, local strategic partnerships and crime and disorder reduction partnerships.

This proposed work complements the Audit Commission's Area Profiles project and also links closely to the agenda set out in the Government's Local Government White Paper, and the work of the Lyons Inquiry.

The aim of this work will be to develop a simple and comprehensible approach to community profiling that reflects the way that members of the public perceive and assess their local environment. The practical, management information provided will help communities and cross-sector agencies to achieve desired improvements in local environmental quality and service standards in a way that has a real impact on people's quality of life.

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24   AB: Higher and intermediate managerial / administrative / professional

25   C1: Supervisory, clerical, junior managerial / administrative / professional

26   C2: Skilled manual workers

27   D: Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, on state benefit, unemployed, lowest grade workers

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