

New survey reveals wide differences in how European citizens view quality of life in their cities

The European Commission today releases the results of a Eurobarometer opinion poll looking at how citizens view the quality of life in 75 major European cities. In these challenging economic times, availability of jobs and housing costs remain dominant concerns. Although responses reveal wide disparities overall, the level of service for transport, health and education generally scores well. The wealth of information provided by the survey is not only useful for city planners and decision-makers, but also for citizens who would like to know which cities are seen as good places to live.

Commenting on these results, Commissioner Johannes Hahn, in charge of Regional Policy said: "A vast majority of our citizens lives in cities. I have already indicated that for this reason I want to give urban policy an extra impetus. This survey is very useful to help us better target investment in our cities. It is crucial to measure where citizens feel there has been progress and where there is room for improvement. Our approach towards cities, which focuses on all the different fields that matter, like environment, transport and energy, allows us to give the best responses to the complex mix of challenges in our cities."

The main findings of the survey include:

Health care, transport, jobs and housing

- Residents of north-western European cities are most satisfied with health care services: at least 80% of respondents in those cities say they are content. This is lower in many southern and eastern European cities.
- On public transport, the level of satisfaction ranges from 12% in Palermo (IT) to 93% in Helsinki (FI). City dwellers were asked how long it takes them to travel to their work or educational establishment. Unsurprisingly, commuting times are the longest in Europe's capitals and major cities, irrespective of the transport mode. In Amsterdam (NL), 48% of interviewees walk or cycle to their workplace. The motorbike is a common alternative to cars in Greek, Italian and Spanish cities.
- The picture in regard to job opportunities is rather bleak: there are only six cities (Stockholm, Copenhagen, Prague, Munich, Amsterdam and Warsaw) where more than half of respondents agree that it is easy to find a good job.
- Availability of affordable housing is an issue for respondents in two-thirds of the cities surveyed, with particularly striking results for Parisians (96%) and Romans (88%).

Pollution, fight against climate change

- A positive finding is that a large proportion of citizens think that their city is committed to tackling climate change.

- In most cities, noise is perceived as a big problem. This proportion ranges from 51% in Rotterdam (NL) and Strasbourg (FR) to 95% in Athens (EL).
- Air pollution is also perceived as a major issue, though there appears to have been an improvement in the situation regarding air pollution such as in Valetta (MT), Bratislava (SK) and Berlin (DE).

Poverty, security and trust

- A majority of inhabitants think poverty "is a problem" in their city, especially in Miskolc (HU), Riga (LV), Budapest (HU) and Lisbon (PT).
- A comparatively low proportion of people in several central and eastern European capitals as well as in Istanbul consider that "generally speaking most people in the city can be trusted".
- People tend to feel safer in their neighbourhood than in their city in general. When a city is perceived as clean, people also feel safer.
- In about one third of the cities surveyed, a majority of people express doubts that their city spends its resources in a responsible way. However, positive attitudes are expressed in many cities such as Luxembourg (LU), Munich (DE), Newcastle (UK) and Bordeaux (FR).

Immigration, presence of foreigners

- Opinions about the presence of foreigners are generally positive: in 68 cities, a majority of interviewees agree that their presence is beneficial. However they are less likely to consider that they are well-integrated.

This year's survey also looks at satisfaction with public spaces (such as markets, squares and pedestrian areas) and possibilities for outdoor recreation (such as walking and cycling). A vast majority of city dwellers are satisfied with these services: Oulu (FI), Helsinki (FI), Groningen (NL), Cardiff (UK) stand out in this category.

Note for editors

The survey was conducted between October and November 2009 in 75 cities across the European Union, as well as in Croatia and Turkey. All capital cities were included. 500 randomly selected citizens were interviewed in each city.

Previous surveys of this type were conducted by the European Commission in 2004 and 2006 ([IP/07/1177](#)). These surveys allow for comparisons between perception and "real" data from various statistical sources on issues such as urban safety, unemployment and air quality available through the [urban audit](#).

Complementary surveys have been carried out by [Germany](#) and [Finland](#).

Under cohesion policy 2007-13, €30 billion across the EU is targeted at specific measures to promote urban development.

The full report is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/themes/urban/audit/index_en.htm