

Quality of Life in Yorkshire and Humber: What matters?



Sheffield 'Cutting Edge' Sculpture by Steve Morgan

At a Glance

This report summarises the results of an on-line national survey carried out in July 2009 by Acxiom Limited.

The aim of the survey was to find out what aspects of quality of life and

wellbeing are most important to people and how satisfied they are with each of these aspects of quality of life, both within our region and elsewhere.

The survey finds that people in Yorkshire

and Humber are reasonably well satisfied with the quality of their lives compared to people elsewhere. However, current economic concerns are clearly a worry to many.

Background and Methodology

Yorkshire Futures has developed a 'Quality of Life Index' based on objective data relating to the region. This index ranks Yorkshire and Humber sixth out of nine English regions for overall quality of life. This research supplements the index with a subjective measure on how people perceive their quality of life. It also allows us to assess whether the measures used in the index reflect what is most important to people.

The Citizens Panel was set up by

Acxiom Limited in December 2007. It has been used by Yorkshire Futures and our partner organisations to investigate views on a range of topics (see www.yorkshirefutures.com). An e-survey went out in July 2009 and elicited over 3,780 responses from people across England, Scotland and Wales.

The questionnaire consisted of five main sections. Each asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 (not important)

to 10 (very important) a number of factors relating to their neighbourhood, work, money, work-life balance, and personal circumstances. Then, the respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the same factors, also on a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). The survey also asked for an overall satisfaction rating (from 1 to 10) and respondents were asked what single thing would most improve the quality of their life.

Findings

Table 1 shows the ten factors that scored most highly in importance to people in Yorkshire and Humber. When asked about what matters most, issues of basic security (in terms of being able to afford essentials, feeling safe where you live, and having a secure income) top the rankings. However, when asked specifically about work, enjoyment, job satisfaction, interesting work that makes good use of skills and working with people you get on with are seen as more important than pay and career prospects. Priorities of people in Yorkshire and Humber are very similar to the rest of Great Britain.

Table 1. Importance Ratings: Top 10

		GB	Yorkshire and Humber
1	To be able to afford essential bills	9.1	9.2
2	Feeling safe	8.9	9.1
3	Having a secure income	9.0	9.0
4	Work that you enjoy	8.8	9.0
5	Overall job satisfaction	8.8	9.0
6	Good health	9.2	9.0
7	Feeling confident about your children's wellbeing and future	9.0	8.9
8	Work that is interesting	8.6	8.8
9	Working with people you get on with	8.5	8.8
10	Work that makes the best of your skills	8.6	8.8

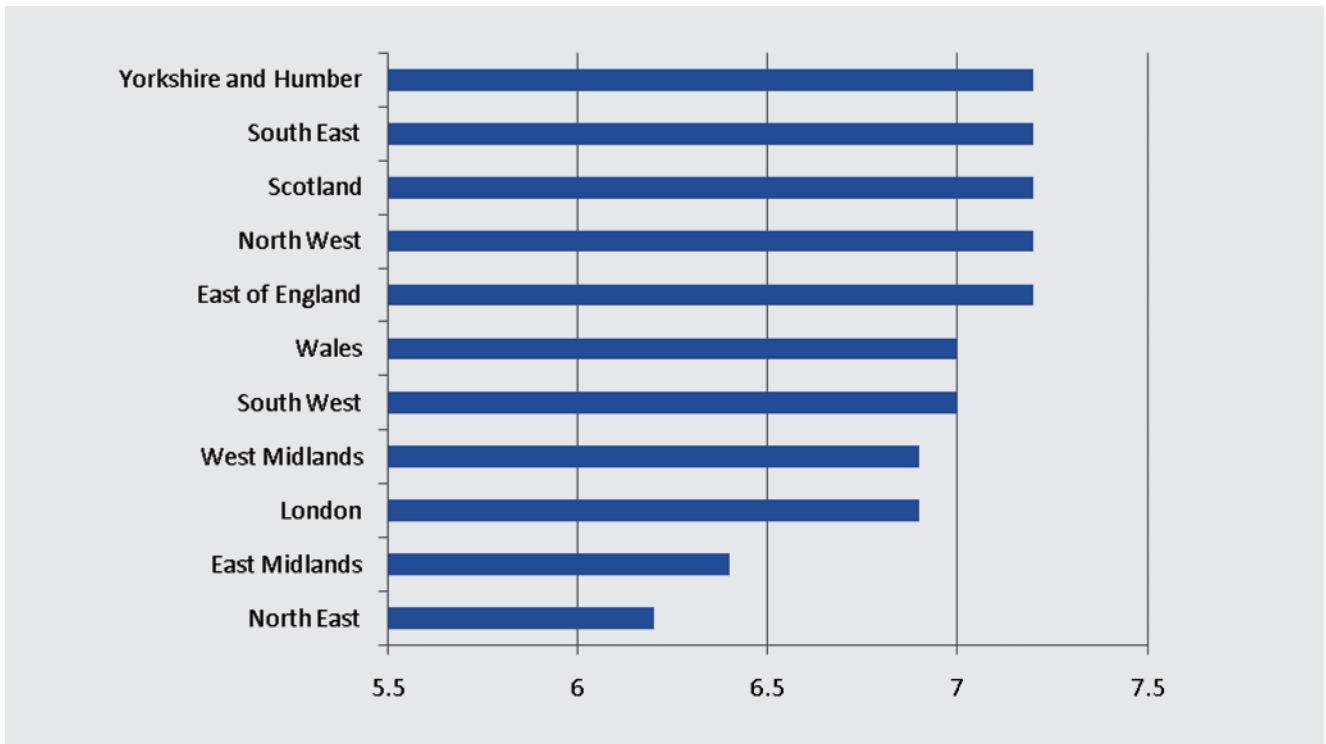
Looking at the size of the difference between importance and satisfaction ratings (table 2) allows us to identify areas perceived as important where current satisfaction levels are low. Addressing these areas will be crucial to improving quality of life of people in the region. The biggest differentials in Yorkshire and Humber relate to job and income security, confidence about the future, and work-life balance, in terms of people having time for themselves. Compared to the rest of the country, concerns in Yorkshire and Humber are particularly severe over job security and future prospects. However, in Yorkshire and Humber, people are more satisfied than elsewhere that they can afford to go on holiday and very much more satisfied in their access to outstanding countryside such as national parks.

Table 2. Difference between Importance and Satisfaction Ratings: Top 10

		GB	Yorkshire and Humber
1	Work that is secure	-1.8	-2.4
2	Having time for yourself	-1.5	-1.9
3	Having a secure income	-1.7	-1.9
4	Feeling confident about your children's wellbeing and future	-1.5	-1.9
5	Being in control of your future	-1.5	-1.8
6	To be able to provide for your children's future	-1.7	-1.7
7	Work that pays well	-1.6	-1.7
8	To be able to afford to go on holiday	-2.7	-1.6
9	To be able to afford essential bills	-1.5	-1.6
10	Good career prospects	-1.4	-1.6

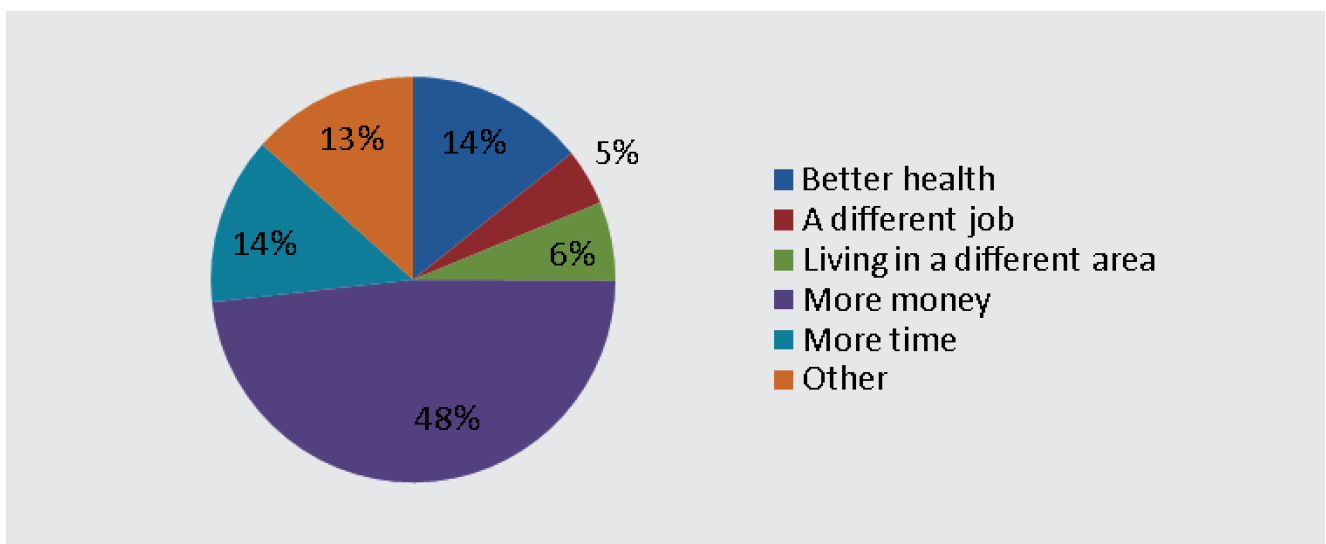
In terms of overall perception of quality of life, the average for Yorkshire and Humber is among the top ratings nationwide and marginally higher than the British average (Figure 1) - in contrast to the relatively low objective rating in the Quality of Life Index.

Figure 1. Overall Satisfaction Rating



When asked about what single thing would improve quality of life, the most common answer for Yorkshire and Humber and across the country is 'more money' - reflecting current economic concerns.

Figure 2. Single thing that would Improve your Quality of Life - Yorkshire and Humber



Conclusions

The Citizens Panel survey provides an insight into what is important to people and current levels of satisfaction.

When asked to rate the importance of a number of factors, the need to feel secure, both financially and physically is clearly a priority for most people. However, when it comes to work, having enjoyable and interesting work is frequently more important than pay or career prospects. The panel respondents claim not to be overly concerned with being able to afford the latest gadgets, clothes, or being able to afford the things their friends can afford.

Respondents were also asked about their current satisfaction with the same set of factors. Comparing satisfaction and importance ratings allows us to identify areas that are deemed highly important but have low satisfaction ratings. Job and income security and confidence about the future are concerns for many in these uncertain economic times.

There is a great deal of consistency between responses in Yorkshire and Humber and the rest of Great Britain. However, Yorkshire and Humber respondents seem to be less satisfied when it comes to issues of job and income security. Nevertheless, they are more satisfied that they can afford to go on holiday and appreciate the outstanding countryside of the region.

Despite current economic circumstances the majority of people seem to be reasonably happy with their lives - on average scoring their overall satisfaction over seven out of ten. Respondents in Yorkshire and Humber are very slightly more satisfied than the British average - but differences between most of the regions are very small. When asked about the single thing that would improve their quality of life, 'more money' is the most frequent response both regionally and nationally.

This research does not support the assessment from the Quality of Life Index that suggests quality of life in the region is worse than the English average. The survey's 'overall satisfaction' score suggests quality of life is the same or marginally higher than nationally.

Some of the measures used in the Quality of Life Index, such as crime measures, income and employment measures reflect the issues that people see as most important. But there are a number of factors including enjoyment of work, confidence and having time for oneself that impact a great deal on quality of life but are difficult to quantify in a meaningful way. The lack of objective measures for these highly subjective aspects of people's lives mean that Yorkshire Futures Index may give an unduly pessimistic view of the daily experience of people in the region.

Further Information and Project Details

The survey was completed by Acxiom.

The full report is available via Yorkshire Futures website or by calling 0113 394 9694.



yorkshire futures
www.yorkshirefutures.com

or call **0113 394 9764**

