



Defining Quality of Living

People perceive many different things when they speak of quality of living. While everyone agrees that a high crime rate is undesirable and the air we breathe, the house, the environment we live in should be clean, there is great diversity in ideas about quality of living, thus reflecting the different use of the term and different understanding depending on age, gender social position, etc. of the person.

Given that basic individual needs are quite general, it is fairly unlikely that the quality of living components listed by two different individuals will differ to any great extent; what is more likely is that certain criteria of quality of living will have greater weighting than others at a given moment or in certain situations.

Although Quality of Life is a broadly used term, it should not be confused with what Mercer refers to as Quality of Living. Alongside the different personal and subjective assessments each of us may make, there are some aspects everyone would probably agree on as being important for having good quality of living standards such as personal safety and security, health issues, transport infrastructure, availability of consumer goods and adequate housing and schooling and recreation opportunities.

In fact, Quality of Life may involve a subjective assessment or opinion, whereas Mercer's criteria are objective, neutral and unbiased. Quality of Life is about a person's emotional state and personal life. One may live in the highest ranked city in terms of quality of living and still have a very bad quality of life because of unfortunate personal circumstances (illness, unemployment or loneliness, etc).

Indeed, definition of Quality of Life may differ according to levels of income, social status, health and/or weather conditions. For the purposes of this report, quality of living assesses the degree to which expatriates enjoy the potential standard of living in the host location. Quality of living also reflects the interaction of political, socio-economic and environmental factors in the host location.

Mercer has designed an objective way of measuring quality of living for expatriates based on factors that people consider representative of quality of living. Once a year, Mercer conducts a quality of living study in over 380 cities worldwide based on detailed assessments and evaluations of 10 key categories and 39 criteria or factors, each having coherent weightings reflecting their relative importance. The categories and factors are shown in the table below:

Mercer's Quality of Living Factors

